

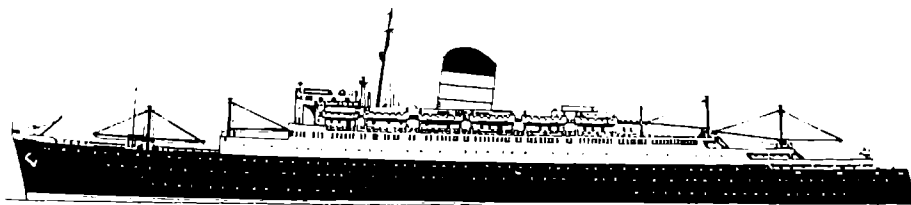
# *The Liverpool Nautical Research Society*

(Founded in 1938)

## THE BULLETIN

*Editor John Shepherd*

Volume 45, Number 1, June 2001



<b>San Demetrio</b> ( <i>Gordon Bodey</i> )	page 2
Log of the Ship <b>Harold</b> , Congo Voyage, 1869 ( <i>David Eccles</i> )	page 14
The Earliest Irish Sea Steamship Service ( <i>Terry Kavanagh</i> )	page 27
More About The First Copper Vessel ( <i>Charles Dawson</i> )	page 29
The <b>Denbigh</b> Project - Update ( <i>Andrew Hall</i> )	page 30
Readers' Letters and Queries	page 33
The Story of the Panama Canal ( <i>John Shepherd</i> )	page 36
Salute to the <b>Skirmisher</b> ( <i>T.E. Hughes</i> )	page 48

## The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

### *President:*

Mr A.S. Davidson

### *Vice-President:*

Mr H.M. Hignett

### *Chairman:*

Captain M.D.R. Jones

### *Vice-Chairman:*

D.K.C. Eccles

### *Council:*

G.Cubbin, R.Dennis (*Meetings Secretary*), J.E.Lingwood, D.Littler  
A.H.McClelland, J.Shepherd (*Editor*), G.F.Wright

### *Honorary Officers:*

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

### **Membership and all Correspondence**

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

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

*The Society is represented on the following websites:*

[www.merseyshipping.co.uk](http://www.merseyshipping.co.uk)  
[www.cronab.demon.co.uk](http://www.cronab.demon.co.uk)

Front Cover: The Cunard liner **Carinthia** of 1956.

Cunard sold the **Carinthia** to the Sitmar Line in January 1968 and she was renamed **Fairland**. In November 1971 there was another change of name to **Fairsea**. In 1988 Sitmar was purchased by P. & O. and the old **Carinthia** became the **Fair Princess**.

She operated cruises in Australian waters until the Autumn of 2000, and the old Cunarder is currently based at Hong Kong as a floating casino undertaking short cruises with the name **China Sea Discovery**.

## EDITORIAL

The conclusion of the Society's 'year' with the Annual General Meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> May seems an appropriate time to review *'The Bulletin'* over the past twelve months. It has been a successful year with the four regular issues appearing on time. In addition a *'Bulletin Extra'* was issued in mid-January in an attempt to clear some of the backlog of material which has been submitted for inclusion.

The print run for *'The Bulletin'* is now 220 per issue and this has increased from just 150 four years ago: these figures speak for themselves.

There is still a substantial backlog of excellent material which has been submitted by Members for possible inclusion in *'The Bulletin'*. Future issues have been pencilled-in up to to the end of the year, and it is proposed to increase the number of pages to 56 per issue, which is the absolute maximum for our rather primitive, but cost-effective, production methods.

*'The Bulletin'* will continue to be 95% text-based. This is for two reasons: firstly printing costs for photographs are high, and secondly photographs are all too often used as 'padding'. There seems to be a growing market for books of old photographs which is fine as long as the accompanying captions are accurate. In so many cases this is not so and the caption resembles a fairy story. My favourite to date relates to the **Empress of Britain** of 1930. Underneath a photograph showing a First Class suite on the *Empress*, the caption states: "*She was the largest vessel on the Canadian service, sailing to Chicago via Montreal.*" Well, just fancy that !!! The reality was that the **Empress of Britain** at 42,348grt could just make it to Quebec. She was prevented from proceeding to Montreal because of her deep draft (26 feet), and the height restrictions imposed by the Quebec Bridge and the Jacques Cartier Bridge. Even if the St. Lawrence Seaway had been constructed in 1930, the new *Empress* would have been 30,000 tons too large to negotiate it! Whilst it is possible to have a good laugh at ludicrous captions such as this, they are dangerous in the extreme to the historians of the future.

On the subject of accuracy I should like to thank Alan McClelland and Graeme Cubbin who meticulously proof read every issue of *'The Bulletin'* before it is printed. Those of you with computer screens will know that the more you stare at what is on the screen, the more you see what you want to see, and not what is actually there!

A thank you also to John Luxton who features the Society prominently on his Mersey Shipping website, including listing the contents of all the *Bulletins* for the last three years.

Contributions for possible inclusion in *'The Bulletin'* are always welcome and should be sent to the Editor. Full length articles, short fillers or letters will be gratefully received. There is a tremendous scope of knowledge and experience within the Society and we need to record it before it is lost forever.

John Shepherd  
1<sup>st</sup> June, 2001



## SAN DEMETRIO

*by L.N.R.S. Member Gordon Bodey*

*The following article is compiled largely from accounts and reports written at the time. The herosim, courage and resourcefulness shown by the men involved epitomised the spirit of the seafarers of the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy throughout the conflict.*

**SAN DEMETRIO (m.v.)    Official Number: 166623    Call Sign: G K K W**

Built in 1938 for the Eagle Oil & Shipping Co., London, by the Blytheswood Shipbuilding Co., Glasgow

A tanker of 8,073 grt; 4,815 net.    Length: 463·2ft; Breadth: 61·2ft; Depth: 33·1ft  
Service speed: 12 knots.    Normal complement: 42.

In October 1940 the **San Demetrio** (under the command of Captain George Waite OBE) was *en route* from Aruba bound for the Clyde via Halifax, N.S., carrying 11,200 tons of high-octane petrol. After a week's delay at Halifax due to a very active enemy submarine presence in the region, the **San Demetrio** sailed in convoy HX 84 for the Clyde on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> October.

The convoy consisted of 38 vessels of some 228,000 G.R.T. The ships were from at least eight nations with 23 being British - nine of which were oil tankers. These included the Liverpool owned **Athel Templar** and **Athel Empress** of United Molasses and Bowring's **Cordelia**. The convoy had one escort - the armed merchant cruiser HMS **Jervis Bay** under the command of Captain E.F.S. Fegen, R.N., which was equipped with a number of six-inch guns and had a speed of 15 knots.

On Friday 1<sup>st</sup> November 1940 at about 10.00 the **San Demetrio** was forced to drop out of the convoy when a fault developed in one of her main engine cylinders. She remained stopped for sixteen hours. At 02.00 the following morning, the fault remedied, her engines were re-started and she set off in pursuit of the convoy which was re-sighted at 10.00 on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> November. The day was clear and sunny with a light south-westerly breeze.

Just after 17.00 local time on that day, in position 52°26'N, 32°34'W (about 1,000 miles east of Newfoundland), the look-out on the **San Demetrio**, which had taken up station at the head of the port column of the convoy, sighted a large ship looming over the horizon bearing 30° on the port bow and at an estimated distance of seven to ten miles. The **Jervis Bay**, leading the column to starboard of the **San Demetrio**, had also seen the intruder and, with two blasts on her whistle, cut across the **San Demetrio's** bow *en route* to investigate. Some minutes later a loud explosion was heard which was thought to be a depth charge dropped by the **Jervis Bay**. This was followed soon afterwards by a signal hoisted on the commodore ship **Cornish City** (Reardon, Smith & Co. of Cardiff) for the convoy to turn to starboard; almost immediately a second signal ordered the convoy to scatter. The convoy commodore

aboard the **Cornish City** was Rear-Admiral H.B. Maltby (retd.). The approaching vessel was the German heavy cruiser **Admiral Scheer**, formerly classed as a pocket battleship, and the explosion heard was her first salvo being fired.

The pocket battleships were so called because they mounted six 11-inch guns as their main armament as opposed to the so-called 'Washington' cruisers' 8-inch guns. Three such vessels were built, of which the **Admiral Scheer**, with a displacement of 12,100 tons, was the second. She was one of the first German big ships to be diesel powered and she had a range of 9,000 miles at 25 knots. She was also to become the most successful of the German surface raiders. The very similar **Admiral Graf Spee** was, after the attentions of the Royal Navy, ignominiously scuttled outside Montevideo harbour on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1939.

The **Admiral Scheer** had passed through the Kiel Canal from the Baltic on 27<sup>th</sup> October 1940 and, evading detection, had passed westward through the Denmark Strait on 31<sup>st</sup> October. Her first target was the independently-routed Elders & Fyffe's **Mopan** which was encountered on 5<sup>th</sup> November at approximately 52°N, 31°W. The **Mopan** was carrying 1,500 tons of bananas and was bound for Garston. She was obliged to surrender when challenged by the **Admiral Scheer** and her crew of 68 were taken prisoner, after which she was sunk by gunfire. The **Mopan**, for whatever reason, had failed to pass on the information when the **Admiral Scheer** was first sighted, and convoy **HX 84** was fated to be the raider's first major target. The Royal Navy would also have found the intelligence useful.

Within half an hour of the raider's appearance, HMS **Jervis Bay** engaged the **Admiral Scheer** which by now was firing at all and sundry, but at near maximum range. The **Jervis Bay** was at the same time trying to close the distance with the attacker and in the process drawing her fire. Quite early in the action the **Jervis Bay** was struck heavily amidships below the waterline. Her main bridge was severely damaged by another shell which also resulted in Captain Fegen suffering severe injuries, including having one of his arms blown off. The **Jervis Bay's** main steering gear was put out of action and Captain Fegen went aft to fight the ship from the conning bridge, but within minutes it too was struck. An explosion was seen to occur aft causing a fire to break out and was thought to be a magazine exploding. Though mortally wounded, Captain Fegen immediately returned to the main bridge but was not seen again. When the **Jervis Bay's** colours were shot away a seaman rapidly clambered aloft and fastened another ensign to the rigging.

By now one of the **Jervis Bay's** holds was filling after being holed below the waterline and she was listing to port. Keeping up as much fire as possible on the **Admiral Scheer** and though ablaze from stem to stern, the **Jervis Bay** held on and saved one final salvo until well within range of the **Admiral Scheer**. Almost immediately after leaving it, from broadside-on to the **Admiral Scheer**, the order was given to abandon ship and within minutes the **Jervis Bay** had sunk. This occurred about two hours after the action had commenced. For his outstanding valour Captain Fegen was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

Captain Sven Olander of the Swedish cargo vessel **Stureholm** <sup>1</sup>, who had initially tried to put some distance between his ship and the **Admiral Scheer**, was so impressed by the scene he was witnessing that he felt compelled to return to the sphere of action, despite the obvious peril in doing so, to rescue any survivors that might be found. As a result of his great courage, 65 survivors from the **Jervis Bay** - most of them on life-rafts - were taken aboard the **Stureholm** without mishap and subsequently landed in Newfoundland. It was later reported that the **Admiral Scheer** had targeted the lifeboats with a hail of shrapnel.

The outstanding heroism of the **Jervis Bay's** crew had bought very precious time for the now defenceless convoy. It may also be conjectured that her guns had inflicted some vital, albeit repairable, damage on the **Admiral Scheer** in view of the latter's subsequent course of action when she had the whole convoy at her mercy. A number of the easy targets were, however, still within range of the **Admiral Scheer's** guns, among them the **San Demetrio**, which lay between the **Admiral Scheer** and a horizon now lit by a rising full moon in a clear sky.

The first shell to strike the **San Demetrio** hit her on the port bow, killing a young ordinary seaman, Ernest Daines, on look-out on the forecass head. This was followed almost immediately by a shell which struck amidships above the waterline. Captain Waite, in accordance with a pre-arrangement with the ship's engineers, had rung down to the engine room '*finished with engines*' immediately the first shell struck; this was also the signal to '*abandon ship*'. Immediately afterwards a third shell struck aft on the poop. The whole of the **San Demetrio's** midship section and her poop were now ablaze.

Two lifeboats got away - one commanded by the Chief Officer, Mr Wilson, and the other by the Second Officer, Mr Hawkins. The latter boat containing nine men, as it was about to pull away, was hailed from the rail and seven more men (among them Calum Macneil) managed to scramble down to join their crewmates. These additional hands were to prove vital. It was this boat's crew which was to turn the initial disaster into a saga of courage and fortitude over the next ten days in the face of mortal danger, combined with ingenuity in the face of unremitting hardship. Captain Waite, at this time, chose to remain on board the **San Demetrio**.

In the course of getting down into the lifeboat, John Davies (storekeeper) and John Boyle (engine-room greaser) both fell and injured themselves badly.

The scene was now illuminated not only by the full moon but also luridly lit by the flames of two other burning ships and blazing fuel oil spreading across the surface of the sea. Fortunately no other tanker had been struck. The **San Demetrio's** two boats' crews, knowing that their nemesis was at their elbows, pulled away as rapidly as possible fearing the inevitable. In the process the crew of the boat in the charge of Second Officer Hawkins narrowly escaped being captured by the **Admiral**

<sup>1</sup> *The Stureholm (Captain Olander), having landed the Jervis Bay's survivors, took aboard Mr Wilson (Chief Officer) and Mr Duncan and Mr Baird, the San Demetrio's 2nd and 5th Engineers and sailed for Britain. She was not heard of again.*

**Scheer** which was now almost upon them. (The actual sailing master of this boat was Calum Macneil, an A.B. from the Isle of Barra, who was an extremely experienced boatsman, whose skills almost certainly saved the lives of all those in the boat). The **Admiral Scheer** stopped and fanned the water with her searchlight, and ordered another lifeboat to draw alongside whose crew were then taken on board. The crew in the **San Demetrio's** boat stopped rowing believing that they would be the next to be ordered on board but, by some chance, they were not seen. The **Admiral Scheer** then made off at high speed. Her sudden departure from the scene when on the verge of a major triumph in her rôle as a destroyer of merchant ships raises two questions:

1. Had the Jervis Bay inflicted some debilitating, albeit temporary, damage on the **Admiral Scheer** necessitating an early retirement from the scene of action? Or,
2. Did the **Admiral Scheer's** commander fear the approach of British units of equal or greater strength? The standing orders for these raiders was to avoid such engagements.

Whatever the answers the **Admiral Scheer** neglected to fulfil her *raison d'être* that night.<sup>2</sup> Had she lurked below the horizon to the west of the convoy until dawn none of the ships in it would have been sure of their survival. In the event five ships of the convoy were lost, in addition to the **Jervis Bay**.<sup>3</sup>

Later that night a north-westerly gale set in which continued into the following day causing severe discomfort from seasickness to all the lifeboat's crew. It

<sup>2</sup> The **Admiral Scheer** headed south after the action and by the end of 1940 she was in the South Atlantic in the latitude of Cape Town. At the time the German High Command claimed complete destruction of convoy **HX 84** and stated that the **Admiral Scheer** had 'destroyed 86,000 tons of shipping at one blow'.

<sup>3</sup> Of the 38 ships in convoy **HX 84**, five ships totalling some 42,300 GRT were lost on 5<sup>th</sup> November 1940. These were:

**Jervis Bay** - 14,164 GRT. Armed merchant cruiser and escort vessel. 65 crew saved.

**Beaverford** - 10,042 GRT. Bound from Montreal to Liverpool carrying 8,425 tons of general cargo. All 77 crew were lost.

**Kenbane Head** - 5,225 GRT. Bound from Montreal and Sydney, N.S. for Belfast and Dublin with a general cargo. Out of a crew of 43, one gunner and one passenger and 23 crew were lost.

**Maidan** - 7,861 GRT. Bound from New York and Halifax carrying explosives. There were no survivors.

**Trewellard** - 5,025 GRT. Bound from Boston and Halifax to Liverpool carrying 7,800 tons of steel and 12 aircraft. Two crewmen died and 14 were missing, presumed dead.

On 6<sup>th</sup> November, as a result of damage sustained in the same attack:

**Fresno City** - 4,955 GRT. Sank in position 51°47'N, 33° 29'W. She was bound from Montreal and Sydney, N.S. for Oban carrying 8,129 tons of maize. Out of her crew of 37, one man was killed.

was also raining heavily and was bitterly cold. The lifeboat lay to a sea anchor with the crew at the oars throughout the night to keep the boat's head into the sea and wind with Calum Macneil wrestling with the tiller.

Dawn came with great seas still running but hopes of relief were temporarily raised in the fore-noon when a ship was sighted through the troughs. However, the lifeboat, despite lighting flares, was not seen. Late that afternoon another vessel was sighted which appeared to be stopped in the water and on fire. When within hailing distance she was recognised, to great astonishment, as the abandoned **San Demetrio**. The sea about her reeked of petrol. After setting the sea-anchor at a safe distance from, and on the **San Demetrio's** weather side, the boat's crew argued at length throughout the night as to whether to re-board her; but the day dawned to an empty horizon.

Having decided by now that there was a very faint hope of survival back on board with a quick and hot death should the worst happen, and that this option was preferable to a cold, lingering demise with no such hope, the lifeboat's crew set course in the general direction of the **San Demetrio**. The gale was still blowing but was beginning to abate. Almost unbelievably she was re-sighted about noon on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> November, still burning and pouring smoke.

The lifeboat's crew sailed to leeward of the **San Demetrio** and after putting the boat's blankets over the gunwales to prevent the possibility of striking a spark, returned on board by the remains of the same rope ladder, hanging over the starboard quarter, as had been used to leave her. It was a formidable task, however, for men soaked to the skin in icy conditions and suffering from exposure, weakness from hunger and the effects of constant sea-sickness, to clamber 25 feet up a rope ladder with the ship heaving up and down and the lifeboat in imminent danger of being smashed against its side in the heavy seas - especially so for the injured men.

After everyone was on board the **San Demetrio** it was attempted to secure the lifeboat and in so doing it was lost: however its loss would have been irrelevant had the worst happened.

From this distance in time, and to people not aware of the indescribable horror entailed in being adrift in the North Atlantic in winter in gale force conditions in a small boat, an act such as this may seem to have been one of collective lunacy, but to men in such dire straits any straw was worth clutching.

The survivors found, in addition to the fires still burning, a scene of great devastation which included the whole of the midships and poop section gutted by fire. Another shell had struck the bridge and everything to do with navigation and signalling had been destroyed. The forehold was flooded as a result of the collision bulkhead being pierced by shrapnel causing the **San Demetrio** to be down by the head in the water and her propeller partly out of it. The deck contained numerous shrapnel holes from which petrol spurted and washed across the deck every time she rolled in the continuing heavy seas. The steward's stores and fresh water tanks amidships were gone, but luckily two fresh water tanks aft were intact. In the engine room the water was three feet deep around the engineers' platform and all the fuel units were under

water. Additionally, steam and exhaust lines as well as electric cabling had been severely damaged. The good news, however, was that the cooling and lubricating systems and the main engines were undamaged, and a quantity of undamaged potatoes and onions, as well as eight loaves and some cans of condensed milk, had been found.

The first - and immediate - priority was to extinguish the fires; in particular the one amidships directly above No.7 port tank. To this end the engine room staff worked flat out to get a Paxman generator (usually used to power the de-gaussing system when in mined inshore areas) into working order so that the fuel-oil pump could be operated and thereby fire a boiler (thus generating steam pressure and enabling the ballast pump to be used). This was achieved a little after dark, but it was then found that it would not work because some of the cabling had been destroyed. The breaks were located and repaired and an auxiliary boiler, which had not completely cooled, was soon fired and operational and showing a steam pressure of 70 lbs or so.

It must be mentioned here that in addition to John Boyle and John Davies having suffered injury, George Willey the 3rd Engineer was suffering from severe frostbite in both feet, and the Chief Engineer, Charles Pollard, had a damaged hand (also sustained when boarding the lifeboat) which was very swollen due to an infection.

While the engineers were toiling to raise steam, everyone else was fighting the main fire using a bucket chain and they were greatly relieved when the fire hoses, attached to a line coupled to the ballast pump, became operational. After spending some hours tackling the blaze it was extinguished with, it was thought, little time to spare. The other major fire was in the foot-thick cork insulation, encased in cement and sheathed with steel plate - and in the contents of the meat storage unit aft. This fire was kept damped down until the following day when daylight allowed the casing to be hacked away and the fire to be put out.

The out-flowing petrol now had to be staunched. This was accomplished, reasonably but not wholly satisfactorily, with wooden plugs wrapped in cotton waste. The task was undertaken by all hands without other specific jobs, including the irrepressible Canadian-born, American-reared A.B. Oswald Preston<sup>4</sup> who seemed to take a delight in being often up to his neck in water as he hammered the plugs home.

It is not possible to detail the multitude of tasks, repairs, overhauls of machinery and equipment, and the checks on the viability of the electrical and mechanical parts of the propulsion system that were carried out under extreme conditions of cold and discomfort with little sustenance or sleep by the Chief Engineer and his three men over the first eighteen hours back on board, but one of these men merits particular notice here.

John Boyle, the engine-room greaser, had suffered injury and exposure - as

<sup>4</sup> Oswald Preston - 'Yank' - was presented, by the crew, as a token of their regard, with the *San Demetrio's* ensign. 'Yank' was believed to have been killed some time afterwards when a bomb destroyed the *Over-Seas Club* in London.

had the other men - but despite his suffering he worked with a will uncomplainingly and with great fortitude until the night of Friday 8<sup>th</sup> November when he collapsed. He lay uncomplaining in what scant comfort could be improvised but he died about midnight on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> November.

By the morning of Friday 8<sup>th</sup> November the danger of fire was virtually over; a pump had been rigged and left operating continuously overnight and the engine-room was virtually clear of water. Soundings of all the tanks were taken and found to tally fairly well with those prior to the attack indicating that there was no damage below the waterline. A major morale booster was the Chief Engineer's method of providing hot meals, albeit always potatoes and onions: he put them in a bucket of water and then inserted a steam drain pipe.

Because all the normal communication equipment between the bridge and the engine room had been destroyed, a very primitive but workable system of three lights, placed in line fore and aft high up in the engine room was installed. The forward light signalled '*ahead*', and a flickering of this light signified '*more speed*'. The middle light signalled '*stop*' and the after light '*go astern*'. Someone had to knock on the skylight with a hammer to draw the engineer's attention to any change in the lights but the system worked well. In addition, because the main steering equipment had been destroyed, control of the rudder had to be improvised from the charred remains of the small wheel in the steering flat aft - after unbuckling the plates around the vertical shaft connecting it to the bevels below, but it worked!

On the afternoon of Friday 8<sup>th</sup> November at 14.00 the **San Demetrio's** engines were tested going ahead and astern and were found to be working well. Half an hour later the order was passed to proceed ahead. It may seem beyond belief that all this could have been accomplished in just 24 hours after the crew, in a very debilitated and parlous state, reboarded her, but the **San Demetrio** had resumed her passage home.

It now fell to the deck department's skills to navigate the long, arduous and dangerous passage home which was estimated to be about a thousand miles. These efforts were severely hampered by three major factors in addition to the foregoing restraints:

1. the compass binnacle was smashed and the compass was unserviceable.
2. the ship's chronometer was beyond use and nobody had a wrist-watch which was serviceable.
3. no sextant was available.

Mr Hawkins, Second Officer (and now acting captain) and John Lewis Jones the apprentice had the onerous task of navigating by stars, sun and the first gleam of sunrise and the last of sunset - if they were to be seen. The off-and-on north-westerly gales of the previous three days had driven the **San Demetrio** progressively southwards and where landfall would be made, if at all, could not even be guessed at; the coast of France was just as likely as that of Ireland. 'S.O.S.' and 'HELP' had been painted in large white letters on various parts of the deck and what was left of the superstructure in the hope of them being seen by a patrolling aircraft.

Despite being able to make headway at up to nine knots, the often deteriorating weather combined with the ship still being down at the head due to the flooded forehold - which could not be pumped out because the forward ballast pump could not be made to work - caused a great amount of water to be shipped. This made the **San Demetrio's** response to the helm very sluggish and, therefore, she was difficult to handle. The problem was partly solved on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> November when the vessel's trim was altered by opening the valves from the most forward tank, No.9, and transferring part of its contents to space in No.6 tank just abaft the midships section (a slight list to starboard resulted but her head was now up). This was accomplished by the Chief Engineer and the apprentice going down into the bottom of the fume-laden pump-room where they worked at great risk to their own safety.

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> November opened with a strong south-westerly gale but this moderated as the day wore on. There was now some anticipation of making a landfall and a very keen lookout was kept from various parts of the ship which went on throughout the night with all hands, except the engine room staff, involved. At first light on Wednesday the cry '*Land Ahead!*' went up. The **San Demetrio** cruised slowly to and fro along the coastline all day looking for a sheltered bay with deep enough water in which they might take shelter. None could be seen, nor could it be decided where they might be. A lighthouse and even cottages were seen but the **San Demetrio** did not appear to have attracted anyone's attention; indeed, not a soul was sighted.<sup>5</sup>

The crew of the **San Demetrio**, in the belief that they would get the ship back home, had not yet buried John Boyle, but in view of the continuing uncertainty as to their own fate it was now decided to commit his body to the sea. At about 08.00 on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> November, following a short service conducted by Mr Hawkins, the body, covered in the red ensign which had flown aft throughout their ordeal, was committed to the deep.

Shortly after the ceremony it was also decided that Oswald Preston and Calum Macneil should paddle ashore in a small Shetland dinghy, which was still intact except for oars and sails, to seek help. Whilst in the process of getting the boat into the water a plane suddenly appeared and signalled '*Help on the way*'. The elation that this produced can be imagined. Within minutes the naval tug **Superman** was sighted and was soon alongside. The **San Demetrio's** crew were told that they were near Black Sod Bay. This is a large branched bay on the Atlantic-facing coast of County Mayo (north-west Ireland) bounded to the south by the mountain Slieve More and to the north and west by the Mullet Peninsula. The tug was there to take the **San Demetrio** in tow to the Clyde but a tow was definitely not going to be accepted! It is estimated that the **San Demetrio** had averaged about 8½ knots on the passage to this point.

Soon after the tug's arrival the destroyer HMS **Arrow** came to the scene and supplied them with a boarding party to assist on the last leg of the passage and she also

<sup>5</sup> *The San Demetrio had been seen by Mr Thomas Scanlon, principal keeper on Clare Island Light in the middle of the entrance to Clew Bay (south of Achill Head on Black Sod Bay), on the day she made landfall. He sent a telegram to Dublin which set in motion the events which led to the despatch of the tug Superman and HMS Arrow.*

provided, from her own meagre stores - being herself on the last leg of a long and arduous passage - some very welcome provisions. HMS **Arrow's** doctor also went across to the **San Demetrio** to attend to those of the crew requiring medical attention. Some survivors from the shipwrecked **Empire Wind** (the second officer and three engineers) were aboard HMS **Arrow** and transferred to the **San Demetrio** to assist on the last leg. Mr Hawkins decided to take the 'north-about' route home and so they set off - at times leaving the tug astern - for the Clyde. The only incident to occur on the last leg happened the following day when HMS **Arrow** destroyed a mine.

On the evening of Friday 15<sup>th</sup> November 1940, ten days after her momentous and hardly credible ordeal started, the **San Demetrio**, with her ensign flying at half mast, lay at the mouth of the Clyde. At daybreak the following morning she steamed up the Firth and dropped anchor in Rothesay Bay. On Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> November, after pumping out the after pump room and the forehold, the **San Demetrio** moved up to a berth at Bowling under her own power and at 16.30 she commenced discharging the remaining 11,000 tons of her original 11,200 ton cargo. |||||

### Notes

On the night of the attack the **Gloucester City** (Prince Line), which had lost her convoy, picked up a signal from the **Jervis Bay** stating that the convoy was under attack and giving the position. Captain Sydney Glyn Smith on the **Gloucester City** knew that there would be survivors adrift in boats and on life-rafts and steamed to the given position and picked up the crew of the **San Demetrio's** lifeboat in charge of Chief Officer Wilson. The **Gloucester City** then criss-crossed a 30-mile wide circle throughout the night picking up not only Captain Waite and three other men in the same boat, but also the occupants of six other lifeboats as well as men adrift on rafts - a total of 92 survivors - who were taken to Newfoundland. Bearing in mind that Captain Smith could not have known that the **Admiral Scheer** had retired from the scene he showed remarkable courage in the action he took and he was subsequently awarded the O.B.E.

During the action the **Beaverford** reportedly made a singular, heroic gesture - it could be no more - which also bought a little time for the convoy. She steamed straight at the **Admiral Scheer** which, nonplussed, had her attention temporarily diverted from the rest of the convoy. This, however, resulted in the **Beaverford's** complete destruction without survivors.

The crew members of the **San Demetrio**, with every assistance from the Eagle Oil & Shipping Company, and at its own expense, were subsequently awarded salvage; surely amongst the most hard-earned and meritorious awards on record. The judge, Mr Justice Langton, hearing the case said, among other things when making the award, that 'it was the happiest day's work he had ever been called upon to do.' Had

Captain Waite re-boarded the **San Demetrio**, then no salvage would have been awarded.

On 13<sup>th</sup> May 1941, Calum Macneil's name was published in the *London Gazette* 'as commended for brave conduct in the Merchant Navy' - surely a less-than-adequate official recognition of the man's bravery, conduct and service on that voyage.

To the other men who retrieved the **San Demetrio** the following most meritoriously-earned awards were made:

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| • To Charles Pollard, Chief Engineer   | O.B.E. (civil); Lloyd's Bravery Medal |
| • To A.G.N.Hawkins, Second Officer     | O.B.E. (civil)                        |
| • To George Pears Willey, 3rd Engineer | M.B.E.                                |
| • To John Davies, Storekeeper          | B.E.M.                                |
| • To Walter Fletcher, Bosun            | B.E.M.                                |
| • To Oswald Preston, Able Seaman       | B.E.M.                                |
| • To John Lewis Jones, Apprentice      | B.E.M.; Lloyd's Bravery Medal         |
| • To John Boyle, Greaser               | Posthumous Commendation               |

Sixteen months after this epic voyage the **San Demetrio** (under the command of Captain Conrad Vidot) bound from Baltimore for Halifax, N.S. and the U.K., carrying 4,000 tons of ethanol and 7,000 tons of motor spirit, was torpedoed by U 404 on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1942. This occurred in position 37°02'N, 73°50'W - about 100 miles due east of the entrance to Chesapeake Bay. The **San Demetrio** was carrying a crew of 43 and ten gunners. Sixteen of her crew and three gunners were lost. Captain Vidot was subsequently awarded the O.B.E.

### **Postscript**

When the worst of their ordeal was over, the crew of the **San Demetrio** discussed at length the apparent paradox of having a vast amount of low-flashpoint cargo beneath their decks whilst above deck there were two particularly fierce fires burning, especially as petrol had been constantly spurting out of the numerous shrapnel holes in the decking. They were well aware that there must be some logical explanation for the expected catastrophe not occurring. The following is offered as one explanation:

It is the vapour given off from such a liquid which ignites in, and whose combustion is sustained by, the oxygen of the surrounding air. The means of ignition were there in ample amounts; that this did not occur may have been due to one or more of the following factors:

- It was winter and both the sea and air temperatures were very low. The flash point of a liquid is '*the lowest temperature at which the vapour above a liquid will burn.*' Below this temperature insufficient vapour is produced by the liquid to maintain combustion. As the amount of vapour given off by a liquid is temperature-dependent, it is reasonable to assume that the relatively small amount of escaping cargo (critically none of the tanks had been ruptured), combined with its low temperature (and the factors below), may not have been producing vapour in sufficient concentration to maintain combustion at a level which would become self-sustaining and uncontrollable.
- The seas during the time that the **San Demetrio** was adrift, were constantly washing over the decking and dispersing the cargo that was escaping on to the deck and washing it over the side thus also helping to keep any build-up of vapour well below the critical level.
- For all of the time the **San Demetrio** was adrift, strong to gale-force winds were blowing which would have dispersed the vapour as it formed, also preventing the build-up of sufficient concentration of vapour to initiate and maintain combustion.

Regardless of the above points, the element of uncertainty was perilously weighted against the men who re-boarded the **San Demetrio**, and they did it knowing that this was so. Theirs was an action of inestimable courage *in extremis*.

### **Acknowledgements and Sources Consulted**

*A Rather Thin White Line* - John Stokoe - L.N.R.S. *Bulletin*, March 2001

*Lloyd's List and Shipping Gazette*

Lloyd's Registers

Lloyd's War Losses, World War II

*Saga of San Demetrio* - J.F. Tennyson (H.M.S.O. - 1942)

*San Demetrio* - C. Macneil

Seedie's List of Awards to the Merchant Navy for World War II

*The German Navy 1939 - 1945* - C. Bekker

*The Navy at War, 1939 - 1945* - Captain S. Roskill, R.N.

*The War at Sea, Volume 2* - Captain S. Roskill, R.N.

Letter from Captain K.G. Kelly of Galway to *Sea Breezes*, March 2001

### **Editor's Note:**

The Eagle Oil and Shipping Company was in existence for 47 years and traded under three different names and owned more than 90 ships until acquired by the Shell Group in 1959.

Formed in 1912, the company was first known as the Eagle Oil Transport Company and its purpose was the carriage of oil produced by the Aquila (Mexican

Eagle) Oil Company, established by Mr Weetman Pearson in 1908, who became Lord Cowdray in 1910. Orders were placed for nine 9,000dwt tankers, followed by ten 15,000dwt tankers which were the largest tankers in the world when they were launched.

The ships in the Eagle fleet were all given the names of saints in the Mexican calendar. They carried oil loaded chiefly at Tuxpan and Tampico mainly to the UK, but also to the United States and South American destinations. Three small, shallow draft tankers were built in 1927-28 to serve the Venezuelan oilfields on Lake Maracaibo.

At the end of 1930 the company name was changed to Eagle Oil & Shipping Company, at which time the fleet consisted of 28 ships.

In 1952 the Eagle Tanker Company was formed and any new ships delivered after that date were registered in its name. In July 1959 both Eagle companies were acquired by Shell and the fleet integrated with Shell Tankers Limited.

The last ship to be built with a 'San' name was the **San Conrado**, launched by the Furness Shipbuilding Company, Haverton Hill, on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1959. Her sister, originally laid down as the **San Casimiro**, was launched with the Shell name **Voluta**. Two other ships on order at Cammell Laird, Birkenhead were launched as the **Otina** and **Oscilla**.

In 1964-65 all those ships still carrying the 'San' names, but now carrying Shell colours were renamed with Shell names, marking the end of the last remaining evidence of the Eagle Oil & Shipping Company and Eagle Tankers Ltd.

i.s.

The Cunard Liner **Franconia** of 1923 aground on Orleans Island, about five miles from Quebec, on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1950.



## LOG OF THE SHIP 'HAROLD'

### CONGO VOYAGE - 1869

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

The Official Log Book was introduced in 1854 to prevent tyranny aboard foreign trade merchant ships. It was kept by the ship's master and was used to justify his report on the crew.

The Official Log Book listed penalties as follows:

- Not joining vessel 10 weeks' jail
- Leaving vessel on arrival without permission 1 month's pay
- Disobeying orders of master or officer 2 days' pay + 4 weeks' jail
- Continued disobedience 6 days' pay + 12 weeks' jail
- Damage or embezzlement 12 weeks' jail
- Smuggling Repay any financial loss to the shipowner

*Also listed in the Official Log Book were the daily food rations:*

	Bread,	Beef,	Pork,	Flour,	Peas,	Tea,	Coffee,	Sugar,	Water.
	lb.	lb.	lb.	lb.	pint	oz.	oz.	oz.	qts.
Sunday	1	1.1/2	-	1/2	-	1/8	1/2	2	3
Monday	1	-	1.1/4	-	1/3	1/8	1/2	2	3
Tuesday,	1	1.1/2	-	1	-	1/8	1/2	2	3
Wednesday	1	-	1.1/4	-	1/3	1/8	1/2	2	3
Thursday	1	1.1/2	-	1/2	-	1/8	1/2	2	3
Friday	1	-	1.1/4	-	1/3	1/8	1/2	2	3
Saturday.	1	1.1/2	-	-	-	1/8	1/2	2	3

- 1½ oz Molasses may be substituted for 1 oz Sugar
- 1lb Potatoes or Yams, ½lb Flour or Rice, ⅓pt Peas or ¼pt Barley may be substituted for each other
- 2lbs fresh meat per man per day in lieu of Salt Meat, Flour, Rice or Peas
- Beef and Pork may be substituted for each other

The 1844 Merchant Seamen's Act required each man to be issued with a daily ration of a half ounce of lime or lemon juice, plus a half ounce of sugar; also a weekly issue of a half pint of vinegar after eating salt meat for ten days. This continued as long as the salt provision was provided. Any infringement of this Act (which did not cover the European and Mediterranean trades), incurred a fine of £5 to the master and £20 to the shipowner.

The ship **Harold** was built at Whitehaven and registered at Liverpool on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1849. She then served in Brocklebank's Eastern trade for twenty years. The **Harold** sailed from Prince's Dock, Liverpool, on her final Brocklebank voyage on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1868, the Brocklebank Articles of Agreement reading:

- *Liverpool to Calcutta and any place in the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, and China and Eastern Seas and back to a final port of discharge in the United Kingdom. Term not to exceed three years. Crew to consist of three mates, carpenter, steward, cook, 11 seamen, 2 ordinary seamen and 5 apprentices (Total 24 men). No grog allowed.*

The Master (Thomas Steel) was aged 34, the mate 26, second mate 21 and the third mate 20. Except for the cook aged 60, the crew were aged between 20 and 35. The five unpaid apprentices were aged between 15 and 17. The cook was the only man to leave half his monthly wage as allotment.

After a nine month voyage the **Harold** returned to Prince's Dock from Calcutta where the crew were paid off and the vessel discharged a cargo of jute, saltpetre, sugar, tinsel, rice, hides and tea.

The *Seaman's Medical Guide* published in Liverpool in 1846 notes:

- *To prevent spread of contagious disease it is essential to clean and ventilate all spaces on board ship after discharging cargo from the East or the West Indies. This is best accomplished by suspending 'wind-sails' formed from the top-mast studding-sails down each hatchway. After complete ventilation, the hold, tween-deck, store and living spaces to be 'white-washed' with 'quicklime', which also helps to protect the ship's timbers.*
- *The bread-room should be whitewashed previous to storing the bread, and a 'windsail' frequently put in at sea, as nothing tends more to preserve the bread than airing it.*

The **Harold** lay at Liverpool for three months after her final Brocklebank voyage before purchase by Stuart & Douglas in March 1869 for their palm-oil trade. Stuart & Douglas owned a cooorage and warehouse in Bridgewater Street, trading hulks at Bonny, Brass and New Calabar in the Niger Delta, and a fleet of sailing vessels trading from Queen's Dock to the Guinea Gulf, India and Australia.

The **Harold** commenced loading cargo on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1869. The cargo for trading included haberdashery, pottery, ironware, muskets, cases of bottled gin and casks of rum. Corrugated iron and nails were loaded to build a factory, and weighing machines, a hoop-iron and shooks to form casks were carried to weigh and transport the homeward cargo.

John Young, aged 31, from Shetland was appointed master, and a notice was posted at the Mercantile Marine Office requesting a crew. The master picked his crew

on 29<sup>th</sup> July 1869 and the M.M.O. superintendent read to them these Articles of Agreement:

- *Liverpool to the West Coast of Africa to trade to any ports, bays and rivers therein and back to a final port of discharge in the United Kingdom, the term not to exceed three years. Crew shall consist of mate, carpenter, steward, cook, 8 seamen and 2 ordinary seamen (total 14) and shall (if required) be transferred to any other ship in the same employ at the same rate of wages, and shall not trade on their own account. NO GROG ALLOWED.*

Eighteen men signed the Articles, each was advanced a month's wages and instructed to join the ship at anchor in the Mersey on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1869. All the men had been ashore for over a month, only seventeen joined, one deserting in the river before the ship sailed.

The names and ages of the crew with their monthly wages were listed in the Official Log Book by the master:

Master	John Young	31	Shetland	
Mate	Miles Fieldman	44	Norfolk	at £6/10/-
2nd Mate	John James	25	Cameroon	at £4/10/-
Carpenter	Charles McCoombe	30	Liverpool	at £6/6/-
Steward	Alexander Ross	47	Ayr	at £3/15/-
Cook	Samuel Edwards	23	Antigua	at £3/-/-
A.B.	Charles T Elliot	42	Liverpool	at £2/10/-
A.B.	John Tullison	22	Kerry	at £2/10/-
A.B.	Charles Benson	27	Nova Scotia	at £2/10/-
A.B.	John Martin	27	Inverness	at £2/10/-
A.B.	John Russel	26	Croydon	at £2/10/-
A.B.	James Smith	29	Liverpool	at £2/10/-
A.B.	William Linnet	23	Kent	at £2/10/-
A.B.	Frederick Wilson	27	Germany	at £2/10/-
A.B.	Peter Johns	30	Malta	at £2/10/-
A.B.	Archibald Thompson	21	Glasgow	at £2/10/-
A.B.	John Clyne	28	London	at £2/10/-
O.S.	William Morrarty	19	Liverpool	at £1/15/-
O.S.	John Lynch	21	Riga	at £2/-/-

All the crew were on B.O.T. wages except for the carpenter who received 16/- extra as ship's cooper. The mate, carpenter and steward each left half their wage as a monthly allotment.

The *Harold* left the Mersey on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1869 for Rio Blanca. All reports in the Official Log Book were made by the master and witnessed by the mate. Those of death were countersigned by the carpenter.

The purpose of the voyage to the Congo was because war between Chiefs Oko-Jumba and Ja-Ja had prevented transport of palm oil from Bonny.

### LOG ENTRIES

16<sup>th</sup> August 1869, 20°59'N, 20°04'W (400 miles north-east of Cape Verde islands)

It being the 2<sup>nd</sup> mate's watch from 12-4am; at 3am I went on deck and found the 2<sup>nd</sup> mate John James asleep on duty. I woke him and told him not to let me find him so again.

23<sup>rd</sup> August 1869, 12°22'N, 21°02'W (400 miles west of Guinea Bissau)

Peter Johns off duty. Not fit for ship duty on account of venereal disease and requested to have medical treatment which was given according to the medical guide.

- The Medical Guide was the book supplied with the Admiralty Medical Chest which all foreign trade merchant ships carried under the 1844 Merchant Shipping Act. This Act required a British registered physician, surgeon or chemist to be employed as doctor on vessels with over 100 persons on board or 50 persons on voyages exceeding 12 weeks. Other ships did not require anyone with medical training.

25<sup>th</sup> August 1869, 07°51'N, 19°10'W (400 miles west of Freetown)

Have on several occasions spoken to Mr John James on his negligence of duty which he did not seem to take notice of, and at 4pm found fault with him for not looking after the work of the vessel and keeping the vessel in order. At 6pm he came to me and volunteered to go forward on A.B. duty as he considered he was not fit for 2<sup>nd</sup> mate at which I agreed. At 8pm I appointed Charles Thomas Elliot second officer who commenced his duty. Mr Elliot has been appointed bosun to take charge of my watch at £3/5/- wage per month, and John James de-rated to A.B. at £2/10/- per month.

31<sup>st</sup> August 1869, 03°20'N, 10°31'W (200 miles south of Monrovia)

Peter Johns resumed duty but still under medical treatment.

2<sup>nd</sup> September 1869, 01°29'N, 04°54'W (350 miles south-west of Takoradi)

Peter Johns off duty sick with venereal disease.

- Formerly used by slave traders, the Congo landing beaches were very difficult to identify from seaward. They were located near the mouths of narrow rivers protected from the south-westerly swell by a narrow spit of land and each had a distinctive land mark.
- AMBRIZETTE was approached from the south west using the 'Table of Juma' (visible 25 miles) as a land mark. The beach is located in a bay between Rio Couzo and Rio Ambrizette, but the uninterrupted ocean swell makes the anchorage uncomfortable.

- The Medical Guide recommended awnings to be spread and wind sails used when ships are anchored in tropical waters. The **Harold** was there for three months.

20<sup>th</sup> September 1869 (anchored off Ambrizette)

Found three gin bottles in John Clyne's bunk. Being asked about it he stated he had broached the cargo and took a case of gin to the forecabin and drank it.

22<sup>nd</sup> September 1869 (anchored off Ambrizette)

Peter Johns better and fit to stand anchor watch, but still under treatment.

28<sup>th</sup> October 1869 (anchored off Ambrizette)

Peter Johns returned to duty cured of venereal disease (after 10 weeks).

- The treatment for venereal disease was to inject powdered Acetate of Zinc under the foreskin; consumption of mercury pills, and to cover sores with Mercurial Ointment.

16<sup>th</sup> November 1869 (anchored off Ambrizette)

At 4.am Peter Johns was very quarrelsome and insulting and wanted to fight the steward on the quarter deck which the mate and I stopped. At 3.pm John Clyne came aft and told the mate that Peter Johns had been caught in the act of committing unnatural crime on one seaman and wished him to be put in irons. Whilst in the act of putting him in irons, Peter Johns, who was fighting drunk, stabbed John Clyne in his left side and the boy William Morrarty in the head and left arm, and attempted to stab others. His knife was thrown overboard and he was put in irons. To prevent the crew from murdering him he was sent aboard the **Royal Arch**, one of Messrs Stuart & Douglas' vessels at anchor close by. The cut and stabbed seamen's wounds were attended to according to the medical guide book.

- The treatment for stab wounds was to wash them with oil of turpentine, apply Friar's Balsam (or Turners Cerate) and to cover with lint and adhesive plaster.

17<sup>th</sup> November 1869 (anchored off Ambrizette)

At 6.30am the gig came on shore and reported to me that one of the crew was deeply stabbed, and when I came on board I found this man so badly stabbed I opened and dressed the wounds. At 10.am I called the crew aft and found by their own admission that the said Peter Johns and the boy William Morrarty who is stabbed, and Archibald Thompson and William Linnet did on the 16<sup>th</sup> broach the cargo and take rum from a cask which was the cause of the stabbing and other crimes committed by the crew. At 11.30am went aboard the **Royal Arch** to see the prisoner Peter Johns then in irons. When asked about the offences he had committed he stated he was drunk at the time. He still remains aboard the **Royal Arch** in irons until I get a proper place on board the **Harold** to keep him a prisoner in irons on bread and water.

22<sup>nd</sup> November 1869 (anchored off Ambrizette)

At 5.pm transferred Charles T. Elliot and John Russell to the barque **Royal Arch** according to the Articles of Agreement signed in Liverpool. At 5.50pm took Peter Johns on board the **Harold** a prisoner, and he remains on board in irons.

- The Stuart & Douglas barque **Royal Arch** had sailed from Liverpool under Captain B. Wilcot with 17 men nine months earlier for the Niger Delta. Captain

Evans was master when she departed the Congo on 13<sup>th</sup> December, but Captain Jones was master when she arrived at Queens Dock, Liverpool four months later to discharge 395 tons of ground nuts, 34 tons of palm nut kernels, 4 tons of coffee and 3,590lbs of ivory.

- When the **Royal Arch** arrived in Liverpool her master wrote this letter to the owners: "*I may say the barque **Royal Arch** arrived at Barbados with the master in irons, the crew having taken charge owing to him threatening to shoot them. He was dismissed from the ship by the Chief Justice of Barbados and put into jail, and I was appointed to take the ship to Liverpool. The ship was in the agent's debt and I was advised part of the ship's cargo of ivory, coffee, peanuts and ebony would be sold by auction. I objected to this and when the lighter arrived alongside I locked the hatches and threatened anyone who came on board. I set sail before seizure of the ship could take place, leaving the ship's papers and my certificate behind with the agent, and arrived at Liverpool twenty-seven days later.*" Signed: J. Jones, master.
- (No ebony listed in the Liverpool Custom House Bills of Lading)

#### 13<sup>th</sup> December 1869 (anchored off Ambrizette)

William Morrarty returned to duty after the wounding he had received from Peter Johns (after 4 weeks).

From Ambrizette the **Harold** sailed 90 miles north to the River Congo. In 1869 the cause of malaria was unknown. The Medical Guide recommended that vessels in dangerous climates should anchor with room to swing, with springs attached to the cables to enable the vessel to warp broadside to a sea breeze. A daily issue of 2 or 3 grains of quinine mixed with bitters in weak spirit and water was recommended to prevent 'swamp fever', and vinegar applied to hands and face to prevent mosquito bites. The **Harold** lay anchored in the River Congo for two months.

#### 18<sup>th</sup> December 1869 (anchored off Grass Island)

At 10.am the brig **Howan** on shore requested assistance of the **Harold** to lighten and get him off the sandbank.

- Grass Island is 37 miles up the Congo River from Cape Padrao.

#### 19<sup>th</sup> December 1869

At 11.am got ropes from the **Harold** to the **Howan** and commenced to take cargo out of him in boats to the **Harold**.

#### 24<sup>th</sup> December 1869 (River Congo)

The brig came off the bank and brought up with the anchor and chain belonging to the **Harold** as she had no anchors nor chains on board.

- Lloyd's rules required the **Harold** to have 240 fathoms of 1<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub>inch chain in two lengths (5 tons each), three bower anchors of 18cwt each for normal use, and a stream anchor (1/3 weight of bower - 6cwt) to use in calm deep water. In addition

1 kedge anchor ( $\frac{1}{2}$  weight of stream - 3cwt) with another half its weight ( $1\frac{1}{2}$ cwt) were carried to refloat the vessel after grounding.

1<sup>st</sup> February, 1870 (anchored at Ponta-da-Lanha, River Congo)

A Naval court was held on board this vessel on Peter Johns A.B. for indecent assault and stabbing and for breaching cargo. The court found him guilty of stabbing one man and of breaching cargo - rum - but acquitted him on the other crimes which would proceed by trial in England. He will be sent to England for trial by the first opportunity. (*President of Court: Walter Hailston, C/O HMS Growler*).

- HMS Growler, a 600 ton gun-boat, was on anti-slavery patrol from Sierra Leone.

8<sup>th</sup> December, 1870 (anchored at Ponta-da-Lanha, River Congo)

William Griffiths, A.B. and Thomas Jones A.B. from schooner Loango signed Articles on board the ship Harold for voyage to England.

- The Sligo registered schooner Loango had sailed four months earlier from Holyhead with a Welsh crew to trade on the West African coast. For health reasons they would be replaced by a native crew.

16<sup>th</sup> February 1870 (anchored at Ponta-da-Lanha, River Congo)

Lewis Lewis A.B. from the schooner Loango signed articles for the voyage to England.

Sent Peter Johns a prisoner on board the brig Rival bound for England as authorised by the Naval Court.

- The Charlottetown (Prince Edward Island) registered Rival arrived at London from the Congo on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1870 with six men on board.

From the River Congo the Harold sailed 120 miles south to Kinsembo, a small bay near the mouth of the Rio Doce (Rio Quicembo). The landmarks on the passage were a 50ft pinnacle rock on a hill crest visible 20 miles out at sea, followed by two palm trees on a spit of land.

9<sup>th</sup> April 1870 (anchored off Kinsembo)

Transferred John James from the ship Harold to the house on shore belonging to Messrs Stuart & Douglas. (He became the agent there).

12<sup>th</sup> April 1870 (anchored off Kinsembo)

Transferred the mate Miles Fieldman to command the barque Gartsherrie bound for England. Appointed John Clyne mate in Miles Fieldman's place at the same rate of wages £6/- per month.

- Owned by Liverpool Shipowners Company, the barque Gartsherrie had sailed from Liverpool for the Niger delta nine months earlier under Capt. Johnson with 12 men. She returned to Liverpool on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1870 with 3,000 billets of wood from Old Calabar; 20,000 bags of ground nuts and 111 tons of palm kernels from Kinsembo; also 150 casks in shooks returned due to lack of palm oil.

Sailing north from Kinsembo, the **Harold** called at Ambrizette for orders.

26<sup>th</sup> April 1870 (at Ambrizette)

When getting under way to proceed to Chinchoro in a very heavy sea, the port anchor caught in rocks and broke the flukes off. The anchor came up with both flukes broken off with nothing left but the shank.

- Chinchoro is 50 miles north of the River Congo between the Rio Massabe and the Rio Chiluloango. The landmark was the peaks of two red hills 318ft and 240ft high visible from 18 miles.

28<sup>th</sup> April 1870 (anchored off Chinchoro)

The steward Alexander Ross having been ill for ten days with the Coast Fever, Ague and Simple Fever was treated as the *Seaman's Medical Friend* directed with the medicines and amulants but seemed to lose all heart. At 9.20am he died and at 6.30pm he was buried at sea and his bag of clothes and papers were taken in the cabin in my charge to be produced to those with right to claim them.

- Log signed by master, mate and carpenter. Alexander Ross, aged 47 from Ayr, left £8-5s-6d wages due.
- The *Seaman's Medical Friend* written by Dr F.D. Fletcher, Lecturer of Anatomy at Liverpool Royal Infirmary, was used by Liverpool ship masters before the official *Shipmasters' Medical Guide* (written by Dr Leach, Port of London Medical Officer of Health) was published in 1869. Ague Fever was treated by applying mustard poultice and drinks containing tartar emetic, soporific powder and quinine.

20<sup>th</sup> May 1870, 06°57'S, 11°46'E.

Lewis J. Lewis A.B. died of dysentery, he having been cured of it once. I had instructed him not to drink coffee or eat sugar, which he did, and he got a second relapse of it and ague fever. He was treated as the medical guide directed for the same complaint but he was not strong enough to stand it and at 2.p.m he died and at 8.p.m he was buried at sea. He had no clothes of any account but some papers which I have in my possession.

- Log signed by master, mate and carpenter. Lewis J. Lewis, aged 24 from Amlwch, left £6/19/- wages due, including **Loango** wage).
- Dysentery was treated using ipecacuanha and tartrate of antimony.

After the deaths of these two men, the **Harold** sailed to Ambrizette for orders.

24<sup>th</sup> May, 1870 (achored off Ambrizette)

Received on board a Niger boy as steward for the voyage Ambrizette to Liverpool, and back to Ambrizette again.

The **Harold** returned to Chinchoro to complete loading.

15<sup>th</sup> June, 1870 (anchored off Chinchoro)

Slight breeze and cloudy when a very heavy 'Calama' came on with a very heavy sea rolling in on the land. Gave the ship chain at 80 fathoms, the sea bearing so heavy the jerks parted the port chain about 7 fathoms from the anchor. Let go starboard anchor and brought the ship up. Gave the vessel 80 fathoms on starboard anchor, the ship being in 3½ fathoms of water and a dangerous position. At 2.am with the land breezes made sail and lifted the anchor and went off in 6 fathoms of water and gave the vessel 80 fathoms of chain on starboard anchor. Still a very heavy sea running on the land.

- The stream anchor would now be shackled for use as the port anchor.

16<sup>th</sup> June, 1870 (anchored off Chinchoro)

While attempting to ship cargo from the beach to the ship three surf boats swamped and lost about 2 tons of palm nuts, the property of Stuart & Douglas. The beach so bad obliged to pack up shipping cargo.

17<sup>th</sup> June, 1870 (anchored off Chinchoro)

Received orders from the agent to proceed towards Liverpool with the ship. At 10.am lifted anchor, made sail and proceeded on our voyage towards Liverpool.

4<sup>th</sup> July, 1870, 00°00', 22°00'W

Crossed equator, winds light but cloudy sky. William Griffiths sick and off duty with a slight pain in the chest. Gave him medicine according to the Medical Guide book.

20<sup>th</sup> July, 1870, 11°15'N, 30°00'W

William Griffiths still sick and off duty. His complaint being a general decay of the body.

23<sup>rd</sup> July, 1870, 15°50'N, 36°00'W

At 6.30pm the mate reported to me William Morrarty and William Griffiths had quarrelled about a knife and that Morrarty had struck Griffiths in the face. I immediately went to the forecabin. He William Griffiths could not speak and he had marks of blows on his face. I put Morrarty in irons to prevent further mischief at 10.pm. He William Griffiths turned a little better and drank some tea at 11.pm. William Griffiths A.B. died at midnight.

24<sup>th</sup> July 1870, 16°10'N, 36°40'W

At noon the corpse was placed on the gangway and the funeral service read before committing the corpse to the deep. He William Griffiths has no effects, the few clothes he had were hove overboard on account of being full of vermin and not fit to be cleaned. Signed by master, mate and carpenter.

- William Griffiths aged 27 from Port Dinowic left £12/0/4d wages due including Loango wage.

16<sup>th</sup> August 1870, 47°04'N, 24°30'W

Exchanged signals with ship **Senator Weber** of Liverpool 140 days out of Callao for Antwerp. Supplied him with a few provisions: 1 cask beef (26 - 8lb pieces), 1 puncheon bread (in 72 gallon barrel) and ½ cask flour (100lbs).

- The **Senator Weber** arrived off Flushing 23 days later.

24<sup>th</sup> August 1870, 50°58'N, 20°00'W

Light easterly wind and clear. Sighted large brig steamer heading E.S.E.

- After a thirteen month voyage, the **Harold** arrived at Queens Dock, Liverpool on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1870 to discharge: 400 tons ground nuts, 73 tons palm kernels, 30 tons palm oil, 2 casks india-rubber, 9cwt ivory, 12 cwt copper ore and 10cwt coffee.

The crew signed two forms when they paid off the following day before the Shipping Master. These were Form A.C. (Agreement & Account of Crew), and Form M (Release of Crew at termination of voyage) The Deputy Shipping Master Mr J. Kendall entered the names of Samuel Edwards (cook), John Martin (A.B.) and John Lynch (O.S.) when these men marked an 'X' against their names.

These forms together with the Official Log Book signed by the Master were handed to the Superintendent of Mercantile Marine on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1870. Attached was this letter:

- *Sir, I write to apologise for omitting to make proper entry of wages of deceased seamen, also to make an entry of desertion of two men at Liverpool previous to sailing, one hardly been on board a short while and no wages being due, in fact he could hardly be said to have joined. The native African on board has been employed on ordinary labour owing to death of one of the crew. He was retained but as we are required to send him to his native place I did not think it necessary that he should sign articles.*

*I am sir, Yours respectfully,*

*John Young, Master, **Harold**.*

#### **CREW LIST (VG-Very Good, G-Good, M-Middling, I-Indifferent)**

Master	John Young	31	Shetland	Remaining with vessel
Mate	Miles Fieldman	44	Norfolk	Trans. to <b>Gartscherrie</b>
2nd Mate	John James	25	Cameroon	Transferred to factory
Carpenter	Charles McCoombe	30	Liverpool	VG VG
Steward	Alexander Ross	47	Ayr	Died on board
Cook	Samuel Edwards	23	Antigua	VG VG
A.B.	Charles T Elliot	42	Liverpool	Trans. to <b>Royal Arch</b>
A.B.	John Tullison	22	Kerry	Deserted in R. Mersey
A.B.	Charles Benson	27	Nova Scotia	Did not join
A.B.	John Martin	27	Inverness	VG VG
A.B.	John Russel	26	Croydon	Trans. to <b>Royal Arch</b>
A.B.	James Smith	29	Liverpool	VG VG
A.B.	William Linnet	23	Kent	VG VG
A.B.	Frederick Wilson	27	Germany	VG VG
A.B.	Peter Johns	30	Malta	Sent prisoner on Brig <b>Rival</b>
A.B.	Archibald Thompson	21	Glasgow	VG VG
A.B. (Mate)	John Clync	28	London	VG VG

# STEAM PACKET

## THE ISLE OF MAN STEAM

### Sailing Arrangements—Friday, 7

VICTORIA PRESS LTD.

B.S.T.	125cc. 750 c.c. Formula FRIDAY, 7th JUNE	Cycle Week O.A.P.'s SATURDAY, 8th	SUNDAY, 9th
High Water at Douglas	01.13 17.4 13.36 16.0	01.49 17.1 14.12 15.5	02.24 16.6 14.48
MONA'S QUEEN ... .. Capt. Kewenagh	D. to L. 16.00 L. to D.—p.m. D. to L. 23.55—2nd	L. to D. 10.00 D. to L. 16.00—1st L. to D.—p.m. D. to L. 23.55—2nd	L. to D.—a.m. D. to L. 11.00—3rd L. to D.—p.m. D to L. 23.55
BEN-MY-CHREE ... .. Capt. Collister	L. to D. 10.30 D. to L. 22.00	L. to D.—a.m. D. to L. 07.30 L. to D. 12.30 D. to L. 18.00—2nd	L. to D. 01.00 D. to Ardrossan 08.30 Ardrossan to D. 15.30
MANX MAID ... .. Capt. Kinley	L. to D. 01.00—2nd D. to L. 09.00—2nd L. to D. 15.30 D. to L. 23.55—1st	L. to D.—a.m. D. to L. 09.00—3rd L. to D. 15.30—2nd D. to L. 22.00	L. to D.—a.m. D. to L. 09.30—2nd L. to D. 16.00
MANXMAN ... .. Capt. Quirk	D. to L. 18.00—1st L. to D.—p.m.	D. to L. 06.00 L. to D. 11.00—2nd D. to L. 18.00—1st L. to D.—p.m.	D. to L. 09.30—1st L. to D.—p.m. D. to F. 18.30
MONA'S ISLE ... .. Capt. Ronan	Motor Cycle Excursion L. to D. 02.30 D. to L. 22.15	L. to D. 11.00—1st D. to L. 16.00—2nd L. to D.—p.m. D. to L. 23.55—3rd	L. to Llandudno 11.15 Cruise 14.30 Llandudno to L. 17.15
SNAEFELL ... .. Capt. Fargher	D. to Ardrossan 09.30 Ardrossan to D. 23.30	D. to L. 09.00—1st L. to D.—p.m. D. to L. 20.00—2nd	L. to D.—a.m. D. to L. 11.00—2nd L. to D.—p.m.
TYNWALD ... .. Capt. Moore	L. to D. 01.00—1st D. to L. 18.00—2nd	L. to D. 01.00 D. to L. 09.00—2nd L. to D. 15.30—1st D. to L. 23.55—1st	L. to F.—a.m. F. to D. 10.45 D. to L. 15.00
KING ORRY ... .. Capt. Bridson	D. to L. 09.00—1st L. to D.—a.m. D. to L. 20.00	L. to D.—a.m. D. to L. 08.30 L. to D.—p.m. D. to L. 20.00—1st	L. to D.—a.m. D. to L. 11.00—1st L. to D.—p.m.
PEVERIL ... .. Capt. Maughan	L. to D. 17.00		
CONISTER ... .. Capt. Dickinson	D. to L. 23.55	Discharge Vehicles	

The Sailing Arrangements for the returning T.T. Motorcycle Race traffic in 1974.

This was the last year that the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company operated eight passenger steamers. Note the 31 crossings scheduled between Liverpool and Douglas on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June. Up to 35,000 motorcycles are conveyed annually to the Isle of Man for the Races.

# MEMORIES

## PACKET COMPANY LIMITED.

June to Thursday, 13th June 1974

MONDAY, 10th	TUESDAY, 11th	WEDNESDAY, 12th	THURSDAY, 13th
001 15.9 15.27 14.1	03.41 15.1 16.09 13.4	04.26 14.3 16.58 12.8	05.16 13.7 17.52 12.4
to D.—a.m. to L. 16.00—1st to D.—p.m.	D. to L. 09.00 L. to D. 15.30	D. to Dublin 08.30 Dublin to D. 17.00	D. to L. 16.00
to L. 09.00—1st to D.—a.m. to L. 16.00—2nd	L. to D. 10.30	D. to L. 09.00 L. to D. 15.30	D. to L. 09.00 L. to D. 15.30
to L. 09.00—2nd to D. 15.30	D. to L. 16.00	L. to D. 10.30 D. to L. 16.00	L. to D. 10.30
	F. to D. 10.30		
	L. to Llandudno—a.m. Llandudno to D. 10.15	D. to F. 18.30	
		D. to Llandudno 17.30 Llandudno to L.—p.m.	L. to Llandudno 10.45 Cruise 14.30 Llandudno to L. 17.15
to D. 10.30	D. to Llandudno 17.30	Llandudno to D. 10.15	
	D. to F. 18.30	F. to D. 10.30	
to L. 17.00	L. to D. 17.00	D. to L. 17.00	L. to D. 17.00
to D. 17.00	D. to L. 17.00	L. to D. 17.00	D. to L. 17.00

This year the T.T. Races have been cancelled due to fears about spreading foot and mouth disease to the Isle of Man. The last time the Races were postponed was in 1966 when the Seamen's Strike lasted from 26<sup>th</sup> May until 2<sup>nd</sup> July. In that year the Races were re-scheduled for late August.

O.S.	William Morrarty	19	Liverpool	M M
O.S.	John Lynch	21	Riga	M M
A.B.	William Griffiths	27	Port Dinorwic	Died on board
A.B.	Thomas Jones	27	Amlwch	VG VG
A.B.	Lewis J. Lewis	24	Amlwch	Died on board
Steward	Native boy	16	Africa	Not signed on

- Concerning the 'Middling' reports, William Morrarty's name appears in the Log a number of times, including the assault on a dying man. John Lynch, a Russian, was never named. He possibly had language difficulty.
- The **Harold** sailed for 40 years. She served Stuart & Douglas until 1876, then sailed for 13 years under the French flag until she was broken up in 1889.
- What happened to the native boy who had no name and could not speak English? The **Harold's** owners were responsible for his return to Africa. There is no proof, but I do not think he ever returned there. These are the facts:

One of the **Harold's** owners was Peter Stuart, the son of a Genoese immigrant, who lived at Elm House, Crosby Road South, Seaforth. He was known for his compassion and hatred of the slavery still practised by African tribesmen. When the Census was taken in 1871, one of the seven servants living at Elm House was a 14 year old page boy named H. Kauss Spontbrook, born in Zambessa, Africa. Ten years later the butler of the household was a 22 year old African named Stonewall Jackson, born at Zambessa, Cape of Good Hope. Were these two the same person - the **Harold's** native boy? I think so. Stonewall Jackson, (named after a Confederate General), became a British Subject, married and spent the rest of his life in Crosby employed as a butler. He lived with his wife Mary and family at 7 Doric Street, Seaforth until his death in 1926. ||||

### THE MONDAY FACILITY

*Members' access to the Archives and Library at the Merseyside Maritime Museum on Mondays continues as follows:*

**JUNE** : Mondays 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th

**JULY** : Mondays 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th

**AUGUST** : Mondays 6th, 13th and 20th

**SEPTEMBER** : Mondays 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th

**OCTOBER** : Mondays 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th

## THE EARLIEST IRISH SEA STEAMSHIP SERVICE

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

As Charles Dawson's letter implies (*Bulletin Extra*, January 2001, p.35), there is conflicting evidence about whether the paddle steamers **Britannia** and **Hibernia** actually plied between Howth and Holyhead in October 1816. One usually reliable source says this pioneering cross-channel steamship service 'never materialised'.<sup>1</sup> However contemporary newspaper reports indicate that these two steamers gave a brief period of service before being withdrawn.

The sister vessels were built in 1816 by James Munn of Greenock, and James Cook of Glasgow supplied their 20nhp engines, as well as the apparatus for unshipping their paddle wheels during rough weather and strong beam winds. Each vessel was 77ft long, 24ft beam, 9ft draught and 112 tons burthen. There were three cabins on board, one with 'beds' for eight gentlemen, a similar one for ladies, and steerage accommodation for fourteen passengers. In addition there was space for six horses and eight carriages.

After arriving at Howth in early September 1816 both ships made several excursions around Dublin Bay. On the 5<sup>th</sup>, for example, the **Hibernia** (Captain Turner), took a party of guests for a short cruise during which she steamed four miles in three-quarters of an hour. The first trip to Holyhead began eight days later, according to this amusing letter from one of the Dublin-based steamship company's directors to a friend:<sup>2</sup>

*"The Hibernia steam packet worked out of Howth harbour at 9.am on the 13<sup>th</sup> inst., and intended to return from Holyhead next morning at eight o'clock. We were well freighted with philosophers, experimentalists, directors and a few of our letter carriers as ballast. Away we went with every flattering prospect; but no sooner had we got into the bay, than some impertinent and unnecessary waves, with great rudeness, disconcerted part of our apparatus. I confess that our nerves, although braced with science and expectation, were somewhat discomposed by this circumstance; in fact, it so much alarmed us, and the live lumber in the hold, that we determined on returning back immediately to Howth where we happily arrived in safety in the evening.*

*Not dismayed with our day's exploit, we sallied forth again on the 14<sup>th</sup>, and proceeded happily about five leagues, when a sudden shock from a heavy wave broke part of our machine. A council was held, when it was determined to have recourse to jury masts, and to the vulgar and ordinary machinery of masts and sails. A breeze from the W.S.W. then enabled our steam packet to reach Holyhead in safety, and we had the satisfaction of accomplishing the voyage in about thirteen hours.*

*On the 15<sup>th</sup> it was our intention to return to Howth, early and quietly in the morning, by the help of the said jury masts, but the steam or rather the wind that had brought us so gallantly into port on Saturday night, had most unaccommodatingly not*

*shifted, and in our attempting to turn to windward, the steam-boat missed stays, and we were under the necessity of putting back to Holyhead.*

*The wind fortunately moderated in the [Sunday] evening, and came round to the S.E. and at one o'clock on Monday morning, the **Hibernia** steam packet sailed for Howth, where she happily arrived on Monday night, having accomplished her voyage from Howth to Holyhead in about 87 hours from the time of her first departure from Howth, on Friday morning the 13<sup>th</sup> instant."*

History doesn't say whether our director sent any further particulars of other voyages, but we know from press reports that the **Britannia** and the **Hibernia** performed satisfactorily in October and early November 1816 - on one occasion the former vessel made the voyage from Howth to Holyhead in seven hours and returned in 7¼ hours.<sup>3</sup>

*"At the commencement, the wheel machinery, which was not sufficiently strong, was repeatedly out of order, and great prejudice was excited, by one of them putting back when two thirds across the channel on its very first trip; but for many weeks past, the Boats have gone regularly, and have made safe and expeditious passages, although the weather has been more boisterous than almost ever remembered."*

This newspaper report suggests the steam machinery had been strengthened. Nevertheless, the experiment ended in failure. To quote David Napier, the famous engineer, *"the engines were so complicated and cumbersome that they broke down with almost every gale of wind, and ultimately [both steamers] were laid up in Kingstown Dock [Dun Laoghaire] near Dublin, as useless."*<sup>4</sup>

### References

<sup>1</sup> D.B.McNeill, *Irish Passenger Steamship Services, Volume 2: South of Ireland*, (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, Devon, 1971), pp 140-41.

<sup>2</sup> *Chester Chronicle*, 11<sup>th</sup> October 1816

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 15<sup>th</sup> November 1816; *Chester Courant*, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1816

<sup>4</sup> David Bell (ed), *David Napier, Engineer, 1790-1869* (1912), pp 17-18.

### JUST FANCY THAT !!!

The Lloyd Italiano liner **Principessa Jolanda**, 9,200 gross tons, capsized on launching on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1907 from the yard of Società Esercizio Bacini, River Trigosa, Italy, and became a total loss! Fortunately, there were no casualties. There is a photograph of the disaster on page 370 of N.R.P. Bonsor's *South Atlantic Seaway* (Jersey, 1983) - c.d.

## MORE ABOUT 'THE FIRST COPPER VESSEL'

by L.N.R.S. Member Charles Dawson

(Please refer to 'The First Copper Vessel' by Terry Kavanagh, 'Bulletin Extra', January 2001, page 6)

On copper sheathing, colleague Terry Kavanagh will no doubt be as surprised as I was to find that, in early letters to the East India Company, it is mentioned that "*copper sheathing is a comparatively modern practice, a utility pointed out by Payton in 1616<sup>1</sup>, as also the advantage of double wood-sheathing.*"

Copper sheathing appears to have been forgotten at this early stage. For a century and a half afterwards, ships were still protected against attack by wood-sheathing, i.e. thin timber planks nailed to the hull over oakum. This is the old established method referred to by Captain Edward Fenton<sup>2</sup> in a letter to his promoter Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, on the preparations for his voyage of 1582/83. This voyage was officially intended to establish the first English trading base in the Far East but was an abysmal failure, seemingly due to Fenton's incompetence. It was left to Sir James Leicester, with his voyages from 1591 to 1594, to help bring the East India Company into being on the last day of 1600, when Queen Elizabeth signed the charter.

Regarding the sheathing, Fenton wrote:

"*So I have left Mr Bacare [i.e. Matthew Baker, the most notable shipwright of the day, who had moulded the flagship **Galleon Leicester** three years earlier] there with Mr Outrede to sheathe the shepe which I hope in xv days welle be redye.*"

The latter was Henry Outrede (or Oughtred), an active privateer of the time, from whom the ship, ex **Galleon Oughtrede**, had been bought for the expedition for £2,800. He undertook to "*gyve at his charges so much yacht planke readye sawed as wyll case or sheathe the said shypp*". We see here the special use of the word plank(e) as sheathing against attack from marine life.

Even after the idea of copper sheathing was revived progress was painfully slow, as with many new ideas considered by the Navy. A proposal made in 1708 to the Navy Board to sheath ships with copper was rejected out of hand and some fifty years passed before even a trial was carried out. This came about as a result of an Admiralty order, dated 10<sup>th</sup> September 1761<sup>3</sup> that ships should be copper-sheathed, after which the 32 gun frigate HMS **Alarm** was so treated.

Further trials took such a long time that the definitive order was not issued to the British Navy until 25<sup>th</sup> May 1779 to the effect that copper sheathing was to be extended to all frigates as and when they were refitted.

It is a pity that the writer of the *Chester Courant* article in 1787 gives no detail regarding the "*curious Invention, so as to make an outside Surface perfectly smooth*". It is difficult to imagine how this could be possible without being prohibitive in cost.

The Welsh lawyer turned copper tycoon, Thomas Williams, finally gained his virtual monopoly to supply copper sheathing to the Navy in 1792<sup>4</sup>.

The first all-copper vessel, apart from of course cooking utensils, was probably the experimental lifeboat made by William Wouldhave in 1789. His design was rejected by the committee that sponsored the famous design competition, which led to the construction, by Wouldhave's rival Henry Greathead, of his wooden boat which he named **Original**.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> (Editor) William Foster, *Letters Received by the East India Company*, Volume III, 1615, (London, 1899) 317 (n).
- <sup>2</sup> (Editor) E.G.R. Taylor, *The Troublesome Voyage of Captain Edward Fenton, 1582-1583* (Cambridge, 1959), 19.
- <sup>3</sup> Public Record Office Adm. 106/2 194, f 38; Navy Board confirmed to Admiralty 5.2.1762.
- <sup>4</sup> Dr J.R. Harris in a paper read before the L.N.R.S., 12<sup>th</sup> October 1961

---

## THE 'DENBIGH' PROJECT - UPDATE

by Andrew W. Hall, M.A.

On Monday 19<sup>th</sup> February Andrew W. Hall, M.A. of the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston visited the Society and presented an update on 'The Denbigh Project'. Andrew is Co-Principal Investigator of the Project. Despite very short notice there was an excellent turn-out of L.N.R.S. Members for what proved to be a fascinating presentation, superbly illustrated by colour slides of the Project.

*(Please refer to 'The American Civil War Blockade Runner Denbigh' by Barto Arnold, 'The Bulletin', Volume 43, Number 5, February 2000, pp 1 - 9)*

The **Denbigh** was built in No.4 dock at Laird's yard at Birkenhead and was completed in 1860. No.4 dock has recently been restored and was re-opened in November 2000. The **Denbigh** was completed for James Napier of the North Wales Steam Packet Company of Rhyl, Denbighshire, North Wales and on entering service was credited with a speed of 14 knots. It was originally intended to name the new paddle steamer the **Agnes Napier**, but she entered service from Liverpool to Rhyl as the **Denbigh**.

The railway line to Rhyl was opened in 1848 and it is interesting to note that four years earlier, in 1844, the steamer fare from Liverpool to Rhyl was 4/- (20p) cabin, 2/6d (12½p) deck. By 1859, the year before the **Denbigh** entered service, these fares

had dropped to 1/- (5p) cabin and 6d (2½p) deck as a result of fierce competition from the railway company.

Figures quoted for 1861 suggest that the **Denbigh** carried 61,353 'ordinary' passengers and 90,000 excursionists, plus 6,000 tons of general goods. *(These figures seem excessively high as in the late 1950s the Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company's St. Tudno and St. Seiriol were carrying nowhere near this volume of traffic in a short 13-week season - j.s.).*

In 1863 the **Denbigh** was sold to the European Trading Company which consisted of J.O. Brewer & Company of Mobile, Alabama; E. Erlanger & Company of Paris and J.H. Schroeder & Company of Manchester.

United States Consuls all around the U.K. coast were collecting information about potential blockade runners and a 'cover story' was circulated that the **Denbigh** would undertake a voyage to China.

The **Denbigh** in fact crossed the Atlantic and became a blockade runner making seven round voyages between Havana and Mobile and six between Havana and Galveston. After the Battle of Mobile Bay on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1864 the only port left open to the **Denbigh** was Galveston and she finally came to grief on the night of 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1865 when she struck Bird Key.



*The painting reproduced above shows the **Denbigh** leaving Mobile for the last time on 29<sup>th</sup> July 1864. Her after decks are crammed with bales of cotton.*

Andrew Hall explained that '*The Denbigh Project*' will continue for two more summers. The wreck lies in shallow water in Galveston Bay where the tidal range is 2½ feet and part of her paddle wheel is exposed at low water. Underwater visibility is very poor and hampers exploration of the wreck.

The long term aim is to recover one engine and one paddle wheel. It is not economical to attempt to recover the hull.

For Members with access to the Internet, the progress of the project can be followed on the Denbigh Project website at:

< <http://nautarch.tamu.edu/projects/denbigh/denbigh.html> >



Andrew Hall from the University of Texas (*centre*) chats with LNRS Vice-Chairman David Eccles (*left*) and LNRS Vice-President H.M.Hignett (*right*) [Photo: John Stokoe]

---

## **LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY INDEX**

*compiled by L.N.R.S. Member Gordon Bodey*

An Index of the contents of the Society's publications was originally compiled by Ray Pugh - for many years Editor of the Society - and this was subsequently updated by Olive Williamson. This present index, compiled as a database, is in a completely revised and amended form which has been updated to March 2001. Revised and up-to-date versions will be available periodically.

The Index contains entries for the Society's publications which are currently available for access at the Archives and Library of the Merseyside Maritime Museum or the Local History Archives of Liverpool Central Library.

Gordon Bodey's new and revised Index is presented in two parts: part one is an Index of Papers, Articles, Talks and Other Items of Interest appearing in the Society's publications; whilst part two is an Index by Author.

The new index is an amazingly comprehensive and detailed work.

In addition to Gordon Bodey's Index, Archivist John Moore has compiled a comprehensive index of the Society's material available at the Archives and Library - some of it previously not known about - and this is contained in a file labelled 'Q2' which is now available on the library shelves. |||||

**Copies of the Index will be available to Members from September**

## READERS LETTERS

*from L.N.R.S. Member Ian Cook*

### AMERICAN COUSINS AND LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

Firstly, congratulations to editor and contributors alike for the excellent and continued progress of our '*Bulletin*'. As one who was not a *Sea Dog* like many of my fellow members, forgive my indulgence but I write solely on the subject of my personal interest - the American Civil War and Blockade Running.

Congratulations to Charles Dawson and Ron Evans for their excellent recent pieces, also to Alan McClelland, the only man I know of on either side of the Atlantic who is able to understand and express the many complex and tangled issues surrounding British involvement in that War as highlighted in '*Liverpool and the Confederacy*' - *The Bulletin*, March 2001, p.12.

If only the 'politically correct' and historically ignorant of both sides of the Atlantic would understand the points made that you cannot judge history by the standards of today (Alan's own saying), and that historic, family, financial, political and business interests and more were all wrapped up in the various enterprises undertaken by British and Liverpool businesses during 1861-1865. The War was NOT solely about slavery, any more than our American cousins' feeling that it was settled by the pivotal northern victory at Gettysburg and, closer to home, members should be reminded of the antagonism from many in political circles against the plan to build an Alabama replica at Cammell Laird in the 1980s.

Sadly, most of the primary source personal documentation from Liverpool merchants was seemingly deliberately destroyed as the northern victory necessitated an 'alteration' of the recent past - principally for business reasons, of course, but sufficient remains, hopefully still to be unearthed which will prove what a complex but fascinating episode this was.

It seems the Liverpool Nautical Research Society is one of the few research bodies to understand the complexities of it.

*from Glen Ainsworth of Issaquah, USA*

### THE 'LIGHT OF THE AGE'

I received the **Light of the Age** articles by e-mail without any problem. I immediately printed them off and will save them to disk for lifetime safekeeping.

I am so delighted to finally have this treasure trove of information which I have been keen to acquire for a long time.

I should like to express my sincere appreciation to the Liverpool Nautical Research Society for the courtesy and kindness in transmitting the articles to me. I would also like to acknowledge the research effort that Cam Ford must have gone to in compiling the information.

The next time I'm in England I should very much like to visit the Society.

*from Peter Elson at 'The Liverpool Daily Post and Echo'*

THE 'WAVERLEY'

I am a great fan of 'The Bulletin' and I wondered if there is any chance you could squeeze details of the **Waverley's** 180th Anniversary Sailing to North Wales into your packed organ:

*"The 180th Anniversary of the launch of steam boat services between Liverpool and North Wales will be celebrated in ship-shape style, thanks to the 'Daily Post'. The world's last sea-going paddle steamer, the **Waverley**, will make a return Liverpool - Llandudno sailing, plus a cruise along the Anglesey coast, on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> June. The first steamer sailing from Liverpool to North Wales was on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1821 when the paddle steamer **Cambria** left from George's Dock (now the site of the Royal Liver Building) for Bagillt, between Flint and Mostyn."*

**WAVERLEY - FIRST CRUISE FROM LIVERPOOL SINCE 1977**

**TUESDAY 19<sup>th</sup> JUNE** : depart Liverpool Landing Stage 10.30am, due back 9.pm.

Return fare to Llandudno £19.95p, or including cruise to Holyhead £25.95p.

also

**WEDNESDAY 20<sup>th</sup> JUNE** : AFTERNOON CRUISE ALONG THE  
LANCASHIRE COAST TOWARDS BLACKPOOL

depart 10.30am, back 4.pm    Fare £12.95p.

**WEDNESDAY 20<sup>th</sup> JUNE** : EVENING SHOWBOAT CRUISE

depart 7.30pm, back 11.30pm    Fare £13.95p

*From Craig Wilson of Sydney, Australia:*

THE 'ELLAN VANNIN'

Many thanks for e-mailing me a copy of Ron Evans' excellent article about the loss of the **Ellan Vannin**. The quality, quantity and reliability of the information are just what I have been searching for.

I was considering submitting an article for 'The Bulletin', but comparing my efforts with Ron Evans' article, I wouldn't even consider it !

**READERS' QUERIES - CAN WE HELP ?**

*from Colin Liptrot of Bolton:*

Whilst walking along the beach between Ainsdale and Formby on 18<sup>th</sup> March, I noticed the remains of a large boat protruding from the sand. I wondered what boat this was and would be grateful for any information.

*from John Tomlinson of Hull:*

ATHEL TANKERS

I wonder if you could help me in my research into the Athel Line tankers of the 1950s and 1960s. I'm trying to compile a history of those I sailed in during that period - the **Athelfoam**, the **Athelbeach**, the **Athelduke** and the **Athelsultan**. Any help you could give me would be greatly appreciated.

*from Paula Doran:*

THE ss 'LISMORE'

Would you have any information on the ss **Lismore**. She left Cork Harbour for Liverpool on her maiden voyage on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1924 and was never seen again. The captain was my great grandfather Captain John Sayle. I know he joined the City of Cork Steam Packet Company in 1895.

*from Dinae Dunnigan of Arlington, VA, USA*

THE 'LORD RAGLAN'

I am searching for information on the ship the **Lord Raglan**. She was built at Quebec in 1854 and then sailed from Liverpool to Australia between 1854 and 1863.

*from Sylvia Rudd*

THE 'W.H. DAVIES'

I am hoping to find details of one of my ancestors who set sail from Liverpool in January 1854. His name was Thomas Postey Carling and he was master of the **W.H. Davies**. The ship was bound for New Orleans but was lost when it stranded on Barra Head at the south of the Outer Hebrides. He and all but one of his crew were lost.

*If any Members can help with any of these queries, please contact the Editor.*

## HELP SAVE OUR PLANET

The former Mersey Bar Lightship and Channel Light Vessel No.23 was launched in 1959 from the yard of Philip and Son at Dartmouth. The **Planet**, as she was named, was on the Mersey Bar station from 1960 until 1972 and after being refitted she was transferred to the English Channel from 1979 to 1989.

On 28<sup>th</sup> January 2000 the Mersey Light-vessel Preservation Society (MLPS) was formed with the intention of restoring the **Planet**. Patrons of the Trust are Robin Woodall, former master of the **Queen Elizabeth 2**; Linda McDermott of BBC Radio Merseyside and Angela Burns, whose father was the last skipper of the **Planet** before she left the Mersey Bar.

The MLPS, a registered charity, estimates that it will cost £300,000 to restore the **Planet**. The **Planet** is currently in the East Float, Birkenhead, lying alongside the Warship Preservation Trust's HMS **Plymouth**.

## **THE STORY OF THE PANAMA CANAL**

*compiled by John Shepherd*

*One of the greatest engineering undertakings in the history of the world was the construction of the Panama Canal. It was the 'moon shot' of its era: a story of old world failure and new world triumph which helped establish the United States as a world power. Half a million workers laboured in the tropical jungle for twenty years. Thousands gave their lives in pursuit of this centuries' old dream of linking the oceans. The Panama Canal today is their lasting monument.*

*Eight thousand people labour night and day to operate this cross-roads of world commerce. The canal is much more than a simple ditch dug across the continent; it is a gigantic lock and lake waterway which was built against all the odds.*

One of the 'perks' of being Editor of *The Bulletin* is that I can occasionally include an article on a favourite topic. The story of the Panama Canal has always fascinated me. I have never made the transit of the Canal on board ship although I have been to Colon and driven across the Isthmus on a bus - perhaps that's the next best thing! The primary source of material for this article is a BBC Television 'Horizon' documentary which was broadcast in 1988: my secondary sources consist of numerous magazine articles.

In October 1831 George Peacock was acting master of H.M. Corvette *Hyacinth*, a surveying ship on the West Indian station. Between 19<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> October 1831 Peacock crossed the Isthmus and produced a sketch for the best route for a railway; he also ascertained the tidal range in the Atlantic and the Pacific. The *Hyacinth* returned to Panama in February 1832 and this time George Peacock spent a fortnight obtaining much valuable information and data and completed a rough chart on the feasibility of constructing a canal from Port Limon on the Atlantic coast to the estuary of the Rio Grande on the Pacific coast.

The story began in Paris in 1879. It was an age of experiment and innovation with boundless faith in science and progress. France, which offered the best technical education in the world, was the home of great engineering. One of the national heroes was Count Ferdinand de Lesseps, builder of the Suez Canal, who was a brilliant innovator and entrepreneur, aged 74. His triumph at Suez ten years earlier had been celebrated all round the world. Verdi composed *Aida* in honour of the occasion. De Lesseps was dubbed 'le grand Français' - the great Frenchman. He had defied the experts who had maintained that the task at Suez was too big and he succeeded magnificently with an unobstructed 105-mile passage carved through the Egyptian sand at sea level. The canal had been paid for by 25,000 French small investors who committed two hundred million francs to the project and who made their fortunes when the shares soared in value.

So when in May 1879 de Lesseps convened a conference in Paris to unveil another great plan, all France sat up. He announced that he would build a second massive canal to complete the circle begun in Egypt so that ships could proceed

through his Suez Canal, across the Atlantic, then straight through the Central American land barrier to the Pacific. The proposed canal would mean that the voyage from New York to San Francisco, then an awesome 14,000 mile trip via Cape Horn, would be cut to 6,000 miles, a saving of four to five weeks' sailing time.

De Lesseps decided that his new canal would follow the course of the little Panama railroad which spanned the Colombian province of Panama at the narrowest part of the Central American isthmus. The distance was half that of Suez, a mere fifty miles, but the terrain was very different. A huge river, the Chagres, crisscrossed the proposed route. The whole area was covered in jungle, bristling with deadly insects and snakes. Most serious of all, the central part of the isthmus rose to a height of 120 metres, so a sea-level canal could be created only by shifting millions of tons of earth. De Lesseps was an entrepreneur, not an engineer, and although he had never been to Panama, he insisted it could be done. Suez had left him with an unshakable belief in the ability of French engineers. His audience, however, was not entirely convinced. When eminent French engineers rose to speak, they sounded a pessimistic note. Panama was a death trap they insisted, poisoned with tropical diseases and a sea-level canal could not possibly work. There was too much earth to move, and any attempt to cut through the Chagres River would produce a gigantic uncontrollable waterfall. The only solution would be to dam the Chagres, creating a large artificial lake, and to build locks to lift ships from the ocean up to the level of the lake. But the congress dismissed this scheme - a lock and lake canal was considered unnecessarily complicated and far more expensive than a sea-level canal. They were persuaded by de Lesseps: he was the man of the hour, the man to lead the glorious Panama enterprise, and he announced that as at Suez he would form a company and go to the people of France. His share offer was twice oversubscribed and in 1881 the first French engineers began to arrive in Panama. They faced a wilderness as dangerous as it was beautiful; a dense tropical rain forest where their days and nights were made a living hell by ticks, spiders, ants, mosquitoes and flies. There was sword grass that could shred skin like a razor, suffocating heat day after day, and mud and swamp. They worked in constant fear of poisonous snakes. And then there was the rain.

On the few visits he made to the site of his grand plan, de Lesseps saw only the dry season. But the rest of the year was very different. Nothing could have been further from the arid wastes of Suez. There was too much water everywhere, and the looping Chagres River could rise twelve metres in twenty-four hours.

The French built half a dozen settlements along the route of the railroad. They were primitive places with none of the comforts of home, but for many of the first arrivals there was high romance in this adventure. They began by clearing a path, several hundred feet wide, across the fifty mile isthmus. This alone was a tremendous labour since it involved cutting down the virgin forest. They then made test borings and calculated the volume of excavation and finally the digging began. No plans had been made to cope with the problems of the Chagres River which would have to be crossed repeatedly. Everyone was confident that when the time came, a solution would be found. No one expected the work to be easy, but failure was not contemplated.

Their faith in progress was total, and de Lesseps promised that as difficulties arose, men of genius would step forward to overcome them. Science would find a way. And so morale was high: it was the greatest construction project ever undertaken and it became a symbol of French national pride and endeavour. The progress made by the engineers and technicians was reported regularly in the French press and, such was the glamour of the work that hundreds more applied to join the Panama project. Every month brought fresh armies of unsuspecting labourers bound for the construction sites where the work was horrendous. One of them was the painter, Paul Gauguin, who worked there for several months on his way to the Caribbean. He wrote home to his wife: *"I had to shift earth from 5.30 in the morning to six in the evening in the tropic sun and rain, every day. All day I'm eaten by mosquitoes. During my time here I caught malaria, poisoned by the marshy air from the canal."*

Malaria and yellow fever were rife amongst the French workers and everyone believed that they were caused by noxious vapours emanating from the jungle vegetation. Doctors advised newcomers to avoid the night air, but such precautions seemed ineffective. The hospitals were full and three out of every four patients died. The purpose built French hospital on the slopes of Ancon Hill overlooking Panama City was well equipped and well staffed but there were no screens at its shuttered windows and in the garden flowering plants were protected from the ravages of ants by crockery potholders filled with water - a perfect arrangement for the breeding *Aedes Egyptii* mosquitoes which carried the dreaded yellow fever, whose favourite breeding place was in stagnant water. Thousands died: the majority were the victims of yellow fever and malaria, whilst others succumbed to typhoid, smallpox, food poisoning and snake bite. But always more workers followed, eager to take their place, all for the glory of France.

One ambitious young engineer declared: *"we are soldiers under fire, let us think only of the fight tomorrow and of victory."* Many of the senior engineers now believed that victory was impossible. Costs were spiralling and after six years only one tenth of the excavation had been done. Even more serious, no solution had been found to the fundamental problem of the Chagres River. Part of the problem lay in the kind of training the French received: they were taught to deal with the problems through computation - if they'd learnt to improvise they might have coped with the difficult and rapidly changing conditions. As it was, they were defeated by the climate and the treacherous terrain. Every dry season they moved millions of tons of earth from the Culebra Cut, the highest point of the planned canal route; then during the following rainy season the clay turned to mud and filled their excavations and enormous landslides wiped out weeks of work. It seemed a hopeless task and the French press enquired sceptically: *"Is Ferdinand de Lesseps a canal digger or a grave digger?"*

De Lesseps himself was impervious to criticism and remained defiantly optimistic. In 1886 and now aged 80 he arrived in Panama to declare unequivocally that the canal would be built. He posed with his engineers resplendent in the headgear of an Arab sheikh, a memento of his heyday in Suez. In the plaza at Panama City, thousands stood in the broiling sun to cheer de Lesseps, but despite his public

optimism, even he was beginning to change course. Within a year the bad news from Panama had reached France. In the face of plummeting share prices, de Lesseps finally altered his plan to incorporate locks which would lift ships over the isthmus. But it was too late: disaster was inevitable and when his company went bankrupt in 1889 it was the biggest financial crash in world history and the ensuing scandal brought about the fall of the French government. De Lesseps was tried for fraud and sentenced to jail but by now he had lost his sanity and ended his days in disgrace and obscurity.

On the Isthmus of Panama the corpse of French engineering was left to decay and was gradually enveloped by the jungle it had tried to conquer. For years afterwards in France the word Panama meant swindle, waste of life and unspeakable national disgrace. All that was true, but there were other reasons for the failure. The French made their attempt too early, before the necessary technology and medical science were available.

In America in 1901, twelve years after the bankruptcy of the French canal, an assassin's bullet ended the life of President McKinley. The Vice-President, Theodore Roosevelt, was sworn in and suddenly America had a new kind of leader. Roosevelt, the youngest ever president, had great ambitions. The United States was still a young country and he wanted to turn it into a major world force. He believed in sea power as a dominant factor in history and he dreamed of an American Navy commanding two oceans with an American owned and built canal.

American engineers had already achieved amazing results with the building of the Western railroads, the Brooklyn Bridge, and early skyscrapers such as New York's flat-iron building. In 1902 the Senate authorised the President to take up where the French had left off. However Colombia, which still ruled the province of Panama, began baulking at the terms proposed and it looked as though negotiations might drag on interminably. The stalemate was ended by the so-called 'Panama Revolution' of 1903 which was staged by a half dozen prominent Panamanians. Success was instant and bloodless because an American gunboat, the *Nashville*, appeared off Panama in time to prevent Colombia landing troops. The whole affair was over in less than a day and Panama knew which flag to wave!

No President had ever exercised gunboat diplomacy in such flagrant fashion. For a while Roosevelt tried to defend his actions with legal arguments. Later he dropped the pretence and told the crowd: *"I took the isthmus, started the canal, and then left Congress not to debate the canal, but to debate me."* And so on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1903, the American Secretary of State John Hay signed a new Canal Treaty. Under its terms, in return for a compensation payment of ten million dollars, Panama handed over a new Canal Zone to the United States. The Americans had complete sovereignty within the zone and the right to build a canal through it. The American public was thrilled with Roosevelt's plan and fuelled by a patriotic fervour, work began immediately. The first year of the American effort was disastrous: the labourers weren't organised; there was no overall plan for the construction, the food was bad and morale terrible. And when yellow fever broke out, hundreds fled as the French never had. Strong leadership was badly needed and it arrived in June 1905. Roosevelt

appointed a new chief engineer. He was John Stevens, a hard driving man of 52 with the reputation as the finest railroad engineer in America. He immediately stopped all excavation, saying that his first priority was to make Panama a fit place to live. To army doctor William Gorgas, John Stevens was a godsend. Unlike the French, Gorgas now knew that yellow fever and malaria were carried by mosquitoes and he had proved the point by eradicating the yellow fever mosquito in Havana after the Spanish-American War. In Panama Gorgas had been able to accomplish almost nothing. He had no money to work with and no official support in Washington. One powerful admiral was quite convinced that mosquitoes had no connection whatsoever with tropical fevers and refused to allocate money for window screens. Now Gorgas was to have whatever he needed to clean up the place. He found himself leading the most costly, concentrated public health campaign that the world had ever seen. Orders went out for a thousand brooms; 4,000 buckets; carbolic acid; mercury chloride; 8,000lbs of common soap and 120 tons of insecticide. Stevens personally signed requisitions for \$90,000 worth of wire screens. Clean-up brigades were recruited. It was an all-out assault on pestilence of every kind using every known technique. Houses were fumigated from top to bottom, drainage ditches swept clean. Streets were torn up for new sewers and roads and footpaths were paved for the first time. Piped water was provided along with hygienic drinking cups. Vegetation was cleared from living areas. Swamps and marshland were drained. Oil was sprayed to prevent the breeding of *Anopheles*, the malaria mosquito. Living quarters went up along with clubhouses and general stores. Whole communities offered all the modern conveniences in a tropical wilderness, two thousand miles from home. Stevens wanted nothing elaborate - just the kind of accommodation to attract the kind of skilled men he knew he would need with life made pleasant enough to make them want to stay for the long haul.

It was John Stevens who understood the real lesson of the French experience - the futility of trying to dig all the way down to sea level. And it was Stevens who convinced Theodore Roosevelt that the best plan would be to harness the geography of Panama and its phenomenal rainfall by building a lock and lake canal. He wanted to dam the Chagres River and create a manmade lake. This way most of the digging would be concentrated at Culebra Cut, the point where the canal cut through the highest ground. Stevens' proposal would involve shifting 300,000 tons of rock, but his lock and lake canal was still far more practical than the French sea-level attempt had been.

Roosevelt might have insisted on a sea-level canal which many people in Washington were advocating, but fortunately he listened to Stevens whose great creative contribution to the engineering of the job was a system of railroads that probably no one else could have devised. A project intended for ships became one of the biggest railway undertakings of all time. Stevens knew the real task was not the digging, but hauling the earth. This meant moving it by rail. He brought in bigger equipment than the French ever had and far more of it. By his system the spoil trains rolled endlessly. The objective was to keep the steam shovels working nonstop. To keep pace with the shovels, tracks for the trains had to be moved again and again by

brute force until a steam contraption called a 'track-shifter' was improvised to pick up and swing whole sections at once, doing the work of 400 men.

The 'spoil' as it was called, was hauled off to build the immense earth dam at Gatun. The damming of the Chagres River would create the largest manmade lake in the world. At the extreme ends of the canal, next to the oceans, pilings for huge breakwaters were sunk, then filled in with tons of rock and earth. Whole towns were to be built on hundreds of acres of landfill. By December 1905, Gorgas was able to announce that thanks to his public health campaign there was no more yellow fever on the isthmus.

The following year 24,000 men were working on the canal and Theodore Roosevelt decided to come and inspect the construction. It was the first time that an American President had ever left the country while in office and Roosevelt loved every minute of the visit. He came in November, the peak of the rainy season because, he told reporters, he wanted to see conditions at their worst. In three days he travelled up and down the whole fifty mile route of the canal. He talked strategy with Stevens and posed for a famous photograph at the controls of a 95-ton steam shovel, the mainstay of the work. Roosevelt wanted to know about everything - to hear what the men had to say. Then something quite unexpected happened - John Stevens resigned. Nobody has ever been able to discover the reason, but it seems likely that he felt broken by the gargantuan task. Roosevelt was furious and appointed in his place a man who couldn't quit - an army officer, Colonel George Washington Goethals.

Goethals was a very different man from Stevens - a picture of military formality. To many he seemed cold and remote. His staff, besides Dr Gorgas, now included two important army engineers and they were assigned two colossal tasks. Colonel David Gaillard would command the excavation at Culebra Cut whilst Colonel William Sibert was to build the Gatun Locks. Almost immediately, Goethals and Dr Gorgas were at loggerheads. Goethals, concerned about cost efficiency, thought the health campaign was badly managed under the easy going Gorgas and undertook a study to prove it. *"Do you know, Gorgas," he said, "that every mosquito you kill costs the United States Government ten dollars?"* *"But, just think,"* Gorgas replied, *"One of those ten dollar mosquitoes might bite you, and what a loss that would be to the country!"* The campaign continued as before.

Goethals' value to the canal project was enormous. He ran things magnificently. He and the other army engineers had built locks and dams before on American rivers; their professional background could not have been more appropriate. As during the French attempt, everything came by ship, including those who would do the heaviest work, except that now they came mainly from Barbados. Sometimes a thousand or more arrived on a single ship. For them, no special accommodation was provided. The pay however was considered excellent: ten cents an hour for a ten hour day, six days a week.

The main point of battle was Culebra Cut, a nine mile gorge cut through the high ground where thirty years before the French had concentrated much of their effort. A visitor wrote *'he who did not see the Culebra Cut during the mighty work of*

*excavation missed seeing one of the great spectacles of the ages.* ' With the work at full blast, the United States was digging the equivalent of the Suez Canal every three years. There were sixty steam shovels in the cut and about two hundred train loads a day were being hauled to the dumps. The average total excavation of just one day was greater than the French had been able to dig in a month. By noon, temperatures at the bottom of the cut hovered at around 120° Fahrenheit. One steam shovel's operator remembered it as 'hell's gorge'. Death and injury were commonplace. Men were caught beneath the wheels of trains or struck by flying rock. Dynamite became 'tender' from standing too long in the sun. One such premature explosion killed twenty three. In total, more explosive energy was expended in blasting through Panama than in all the wars the United States had fought until then.

There was rain, and rain, and more rain. Then the mountains began to slide - avalanches of mud and rock plunged to the bottom of the cut. Steam shovels were crushed like toys and miles of rail track were obliterated. In 1912, after one of the worst slides on record, Colonel Gaillard was beside himself. Gothels was called to the scene. "*What are we going to do now?*" said Gaillard. "*Dig it out again,*" said Gothels.

By 1912 the workforce numbered 50,000. Less than ten per cent, however, were Americans. Most were English speaking West Indians. The dividing line couldn't have been clearer: black workers were paid silver and American white employees received gold. Everything else was demarcated according to gold and silver. As in many parts of the United States at the time all was quite separate and seldom equal. The Americans were the locomotive engineers, surveyors, machinists, electricians and foremen. They were the school teachers, nurses, police and paymasters. The pay was good: clerks and book-keepers started at \$100 a month, a graduate civil engineer at \$250 and a steam shovel engineer got \$350 plus the glory of the job.

As work proceeded on the great locks, the true grandeur of the canal finally became apparent. The construction sites looked like something from the time of the Pharaohs, or as a contemporary Hollywood director would have filmed the Pharaohs. To deliver the wet concrete, a spectacular cableway was devised with thirty metre towers on tracks so they could be moved as the work progressed. Sand, gravel and Portland cement were fed into a mixing plant by one automatic railroad while another carried full bucket loads to the cableway where they sailed off to their destination at a speed of twenty miles an hour. For the locks on the Pacific side, tremendous cantilever cranes were used instead of a cableway, but the idea was the same: to keep the area free of everything except the huge steel moulds into which the concrete was poured. Unlike the Pyramids or the Great Wall of China, these gigantic structures were not simply a matter of putting stone on stone. All the locks were constructed in twelve metre sections and the big moulds, also on tracks, would then be moved to the next position and since numerous inner chambers, passageways and culverts were required, the job was anything but simple. The volume of concrete poured for the Gatun Locks alone was enough to build a wall half a metre thick and a metre high, right across the United States. No structure in existence in 1913 contained so much material. With an overall length of 300 metres and a width of 35 metres, each lock chamber was

considerably bigger than a ship the size of the **Titanic**. In fact, a single lock chamber, if stood on end would have been the tallest structure in the world, taller than the Eiffel Tower. One lock chamber could have held three Statues of Liberty, placed end to end, with room to spare. The water was to flow in and out of the chambers through main culverts as big as railway tunnels. The valves in these main culverts were composed of twin gates that weighed ten tons apiece. Water would be fed to the chamber floor by small cross culverts that were themselves big enough to admit a two horse wagon.

The giant steel gates were by far the largest ever built. Each one weighed 700 tons and they were hollow, like ships, so that they would be extremely buoyant once the water was in the lock chambers. They could be swung with an electric motor of only 40 horse power. Indeed the locks were a pioneering use of electric motors and electric control systems. With all their moving parts, the locks were giant machines. A single statistic hints at the amount of industrial technology involved. In the city of Pittsburgh alone, fifty different mills, foundries, machine shops and specialist manufacturers were contracted to produce the rivets, nuts, bolts, steel girders, steel plates and roller bearings to make the gates themselves which were then shipped to Panama in pieces.

May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1913, was a turning point in the history of Central America. Two steam shovels, as battered as if they'd been through a war met at the bottom of Culebra Cut and sounded their whistles. There was no more digging to do. The last concrete was laid at the locks on 31<sup>st</sup> May 1913 and with the Gatun Dam nearly finished, whole towns along the canal route were now being taken down, struck like stage sets, and carried off. Once Gatun Lake was filled, generators at Gatun Dam would produce the electricity to operate the locks, so the canal would provide all its own power. And with the end of the task so nearly in sight, Panama became an enormous attraction for tourists. They came by the thousand and one was ten-year-old Charles Lindbergh Jr. travelling with his mother. Remembering his excitement, Lindbergh years later would write: *"The very name America made one think of miracles. We had conquered a continent; we had abolished slavery, we had developed the automobile; we had invented the aeroplane and now we were building the Panama Canal."*

The first trial run through the locks was made by the tug **Gatun** in October 1913. The grand opening came the next summer on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1914 when the steamer **Ancon** crossed from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Unbelievably the canal had been finished ahead of schedule and it had cost less than expected. No bribery or corruption of any kind was connected with the work, a phenomenal feat, and largely the result of George Goethel's leadership. But no single construction effort in American history had exacted such a price. The cost to the United States was \$352 million. French and American expenditure together totalled \$639 million: at today's prices more than four and a half billion pounds. The human cost since 1904 was 5,609 dead of whom no fewer than 4,500 were black.

The canal was opened to the world and in time came the ships of the world. The passage of American battleships from ocean to ocean left no doubt that Theodore Roosevelt's dream had come true. Five years after the opening of the canal, Roosevelt

was dead but he died convinced that he would go down in history as the man who built the Panama Canal. The canal stands as a lasting tribute to his foresight.

The Americans succeeded in Panama because their timing was right. Advances in medicine and technology enabled them to solve the problems that had defeated the French. Most important of all, Roosevelt turned the venture into a great national enterprise, so brilliantly planned and coordinated that it would transform the United States from a fledgling state into a superpower.

Of the 12,000 ships that now use the canal every year, 2,000 rank as 'Panamax' size, as large as the canal can handle. Many barely fit into the locks, but like all the vessels they are expertly guided through by little electric locomotives, as many as six per ship. The complete fifty mile crossing from ocean to ocean takes an average of nine hours and the canal today is one of the busiest sea lanes in the world. Shortly before the canal was completed, a fine arts commission was despatched from Washington to decide how the appearance of the canal might be improved. Its conclusion was to do nothing; simply to preserve the canal as its builders had intended. And so it remains - there have been minor modifications since then, but today's canal is essentially the same magnificent concrete edifice constructed by Stevens and Goethals at the turn of the century.

The Panama Canal's chief asset is its unending supply of water. Water had been the main obstacle confronting the French at the very beginning, but with the damming of the Chagres, water turned out to be the key ingredient in the success of the American scheme. Every one of the 12,000 ships that makes the Panama transit each year uses up to 60 million gallons of water flushed from the lake through the locks and out to sea, a loss of 3 billion gallons every day. The canal works because it harnesses the natural conditions of Panama. There is a never ending supply of water from the forest which acts as a sort of rain making machine. It behaves like a sponge, soaking up huge quantities of water during the rainy season and then releasing it slowly during the long dry season to provide a constant year round supply of water to feed the canal. But the forest is under threat - two thirds of it has been chopped down this century and so the fate of the canal itself hangs in the balance. Its future depends on decisions taken in Panama City. In contrast to the affluent skyline, the hills around the city are littered with shacks put up by peasants who flock here in their thousands every year. The shanty towns are an ugly embarrassment to the Panamanian government, so it encourages the peasants to go to the forest and to build a new life by chopping down trees and farming in the clearings they create. In a few days acres of forest can be laid waste which took 60 million years to create. In the place of the trees they instal cattle. It's lucrative in the short term but within twenty years the animals will have loosened the rich topsoil and the rains will wash it away. If the process is allowed to continue, the face of Panama will become manmade deserts which drastically reduce rainfall. In the province of Los Santos, fifteen per cent less rain has fallen within the last ten years. Scientists in Panama are beginning to warn that the canal is in danger. Measurements of rainfall made by the Canal Commission's hydrology unit show an annual decrease of 5mm a year within the watershed. The large scale washing away of topsoil is silting

up the canal, further reducing its capacity. During a drought in the mid-1980s, the water level fell so low that the very largest ships could not use the Panama route.

Panama's leading environmentalist is appalled at the prospect for the future. He says: *"If in the next fifteen years we cannot control the destruction of the forest, especially in the upper Chagres region, the Panama Canal as we know it today will absolutely cease to exist."* Could it be that the rain forest which defeated the French and was tamed by the Americans will be destroyed by the Panamanians shortly after they have inherited the Panama Canal? Will this canal one day stand empty, an austere monument to engineering excellence and ecological folly? |||||

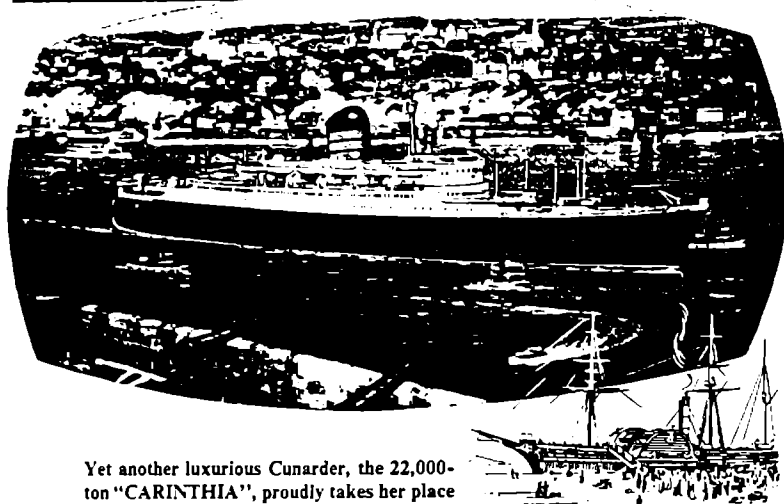
David Eccles writes:

Regarding the Panama Canal, good soft fresh water could be purchased from the Panama Canal Authority at the bunker piers at Cristobal and Panama, also by barge. However this cost money! The source of this fresh water was Gatun Lake and many steamships passing through the Lake filled their boiler feed-water tanks by removing a non-return valve to enable the feed tanks to be flooded through the General Service Pump Sea Suction. This practice of taking water from the Lake was illegal and the operation was never entered in the Log Book. The water was used to feed the boilers ONLY - not for domestic use. I don't know if this practice was related to the tradition of supplying the engine room (in ships I sailed in) with salmon sandwiches during the Canal passage!



*The steamer **Ancon** made the first official transit of the Panama Canal on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1914*

*Another New & Magnificent Cunarder  
for Canadian Service...*



Yet another luxurious Cunarder, the 22,000-ton "CARINTHIA", proudly takes her place in the long line of famous Cunard ships, fully upholding the tradition of sea service established by the "BRITANNIA" in 1840.

Large airy staterooms, magnificent lounges, smoking rooms, cocktail bars, glass-enclosed promenades, sports decks, a soda fountain—all are features of this great new liner built for Canadian service.

She and her sisters "SAXONIA" and "IVERNIA" are the biggest Cunarders yet built for service up the St. Lawrence to Quebec and Montreal.

# *Cunard*

For choice of ship and sailing date consult your local travel agent or apply CUNARD LINE, Cunard Building, Liverpool 3. (Liverpool CENtral 9201); or any Cunard Office.

---

**A YEAR WITH THE CARINTHIA** was the subject of John Shepherd's presentation on 17th April and was an autobiographical account of the time he spent on board in 1964 as an Assistant Purser.

As and when space in *The Bulletin* permits, it is hoped to include an account of John's time as 'A Purser's Clerk on the Queen Elizabeth in 1963'.

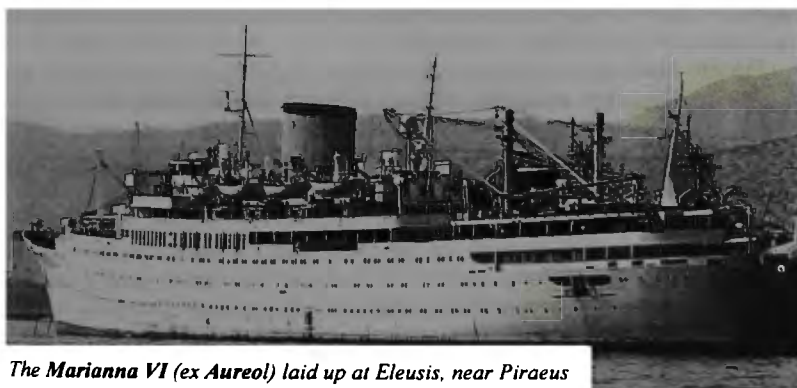
## FORMER LIVERPOOL LINERS IN THE NEWS

The **Carinthia** of 1956 is now operating as the **China Sea Discovery** based at Hong Kong (see inside front cover).

The Airtours Charter of the Royal Olympic Cruises' vessel **Apollon** has been terminated, although it still had two years to run. The **Apollon** was built in 1961 as the **Empress of Canada** and was bought by Carnival Cruise Lines and renamed **Mardi Gras** in 1972. She sailed as the **Olympic** and the **Star of Texas** before becoming the **Apollon** in 1995. At the moment the future of the former CPR *Empress* looks uncertain.

The **Aureol** is reported to have been sold for breaking up at Alang in India. Completed in 1951 for Elder Dempster she completed 203 round voyages on the West African passenger service. In November 1974 she was sold to the Marianna Shipping and Trading Company of Panama for use as an accommodation ship at Jeddah and renamed **Marianna VI**. The former **Aureol** has been laid up at Eleusis, near Piraeus, since 1989.

Please refer to : "Whatever Happened to the .....?" - The Bulletin, Vol.43, No.6, April, 2000.



*The Marianna VI (ex Aureol) laid up at Eleusis, near Piraeus*

### FOR IT TO HAPPEN ONCE IS UNFORTUNATE, BUT .....

The Isle of Man Steam Packet's passenger steamer **Tynwald** struck the breakwater on arrival at Douglas on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1938 - as a result of which Captain Woods was put on half pay for two months. This punishment however did nothing to improve his ship-handling skills for on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1938 he managed to hit both the Victoria Pier and the breakwater as a result of which he was relieved of command, suspended for three months, and had to submit to a medical before return to duty !

## SALUTE TO THE 'SKIRMISHER'

by T.E. Hughes

There is such a sense of finality about the expression '*Sold for breaking up purposes*', especially when linked to the name of a well known ship. In October 1945 this fate overtook the Cunard tender **Skirmisher** which for over 61 years had been a familiar ship on the Liverpool waterfront. Report had it that she was the oldest ship in service on the Mersey and there is no reason to doubt that report.

Sixty-one years is a long period as the life of the average ship goes. And from the day in 1884 when the **Skirmisher** left the Clydebank shipyard of her builders, Messrs J. & G. Thomson (the forerunner of John Brown & Co. Ltd.) to begin her work for her owners - the Cunard Company - she crowded much experience into her long and busy life.

Certainly it is given to few ships to have waited upon so many famous liners, including no fewer than seven holders of the Atlantic Blue Riband: **Oregon** (1883); **Etruria** and **Umbria** (1885); **Campania** and **Lucania** (1893) and **Lusitania** and **Mauretania** (1907).

When the **Skirmisher** was first commissioned in 1884, the largest Atlantic liner was 500 feet in length and had a gross tonnage of 7,375. Although in all her years the **Skirmisher** never crossed to New York, she probably carried more 'Atlantic' passengers than any vessel afloat.

Prior to June 1895 the Atlantic liners did not berth alongside the landing stage at Liverpool - they used to anchor in mid-stream, and it was one of the **Skirmisher's** duties to be in attendance for the embarkation and disembarkation of passengers. On 12<sup>th</sup> June 1895 Cunard's **Catalonia** became the first vessel to berth alongside Princes Landing Stage inbound and White Star's **Germanic** joined her to become the first vessel to embark passengers there.

One of the busiest periods of the **Skirmisher's** career came with the commissioning of the **Lusitania** in 1907, to be followed shortly by the **Mauretania**. These two great ships were seldom docked between voyages and special buoys were placed in mid-river at The Sloyne off Cammell Laird's yard. During their brief turn round the **Skirmisher** would be continuously ferrying between ship and shore, conveying hundreds of workmen, thousands of cases of stores and tons of fresh water. With the advent of the **Lusitania** and **Mauretania** an additional deck was added to the **Skirmisher**. This was necessitated by the enormous height of the two vessels, but it also provided additional passenger space which was fully utilised during the pre-war emigration boom. Elevated platforms were also erected on the landing stage at this time so that the gangways could reach the entrance halls.

The **Skirmisher's** service, however, was not entirely confined to her home port. In 1894 she acted as escort to Queen Victoria's yacht at the opening of the Manchester Ship Canal, and three years later she was present at the Diamond Jubilee Spithead Naval Review where she was in attendance on the **Campania**. The

**Skirmisher** also visited Dublin, Cardiff, Fishguard and the Clyde in the normal course of her varied duties.

Throughout the 1914-1918 War, the **Skirmisher** was busily employed waiting upon the huge convoys which brought thousands of United States and Canadian troops and huge cargoes from across the Atlantic, and she also assisted in extinguishing several outbreaks of fire which occurred on board various troopships lying in the Mersey. Perhaps her most noteworthy war exploit might have had a fatal ending. This occurred when rumours were current that enemy submarines might attack the Gladstone Graving Dock (which opened directly into the Mersey at that time). The **Skirmisher** was used as a blockade ship and placed athwart the dock entrance, all the crew being withdrawn. The idea of this was that should an attack materialise, the submarines would first have to blow up the **Skirmisher**, and thus diminish any actual damage to the dock.

At the end of the 1914-18 War the **Skirmisher** resumed her duties as the Cunard passenger tender, although on a reduced basis as the principal services were transferred to Southampton at this time. In 1932 she crossed to Dublin to act as tender to the Cunarders bringing delegates to the Eucharistic Conference.

Her service during the Second World War was equally noteworthy. The **Skirmisher** was 'blackened out' and painted an overall grey. She tendered the troop transports, and constantly carried fresh water supplies to vessels anchored in mid-river. This she maintained in all weather conditions and on nights when enemy raiders were busy over Merseyside. In 1944 the **Skirmisher** was ordered to Fishguard, there to await the arrival of the **Queen Mary**, homeward bound from America with Mr Winston Churchill and his official party returning from the Quebec Conference. The **Skirmisher** arrived at Fishguard but due to bad weather the **Queen Mary** proceeded direct to the Clyde.

In October 1945 the **Skirmisher** was withdrawn from service and partially dismantled in Langton Branch Dock and on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1947 she was towed to Garston for final demolition.

Such, then, is a brief resumé of the crowded years in the life of a busy ship. There must still be those on Merseyside today who can remember the **Skirmisher** lying alongside Princes Stage in the quiet early hours, waiting for port and shipping officials and maybe the press to embark. Smoke would be wisping from her funnel and then suddenly that shrill urgent summons from her whistle hurrying up heavy-eyed and leaden-footed laggards. Then there were the hours spent 'waiting off the Rock' for an incoming liner; sunny hours on a mid-summer Saturday afternoon, or the chill of a winter's morning with half a gale blowing and the comfortable fug of her forward saloon. |||||

#### **NELL DUFFY**

It was with great sadness that the Society learned of the death of Nell Duffy on 13<sup>th</sup> May. Nell was one of the regulars at the Society's monthly meetings and will be greatly missed.

## **THE LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY**

The mail dispute of late May has resulted in large quantities of letters having sunk without trace in Liverpool's Copperas Hill sorting office. Among these items, which may take several weeks to surface, are the Minutes of the Society's Annual General Meeting and the programme of meetings for the next session.

Accordingly the Chairman's Annual Report and the Minutes of the A.G.M. will be distributed with the September '*Bulletin*'.

Members are reminded that the Society's Monthly Meetings will resume on Thursday, 20th September. Details of the full Programme and Membership Cards will be sent out with the September '*Bulletin*'.



The **Grebe Cock** was built for the Liverpool Scow Towing Company Limited by Cammell Laird at Birkenhead in 1935.

She is probably best remembered for her involvement in the **Thetis** disaster of June 1939.

In 1966 the **Grebe Cock** was acquired by the Alexandra Towing Company and was broken up at Troon in 1967.

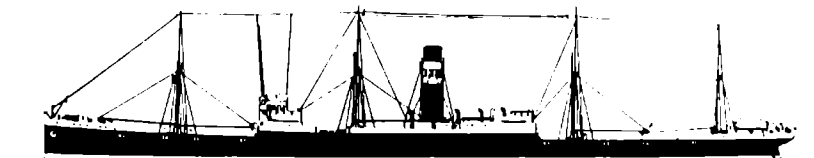
# *The Liverpool Nautical Research Society*

(Founded in 1938)

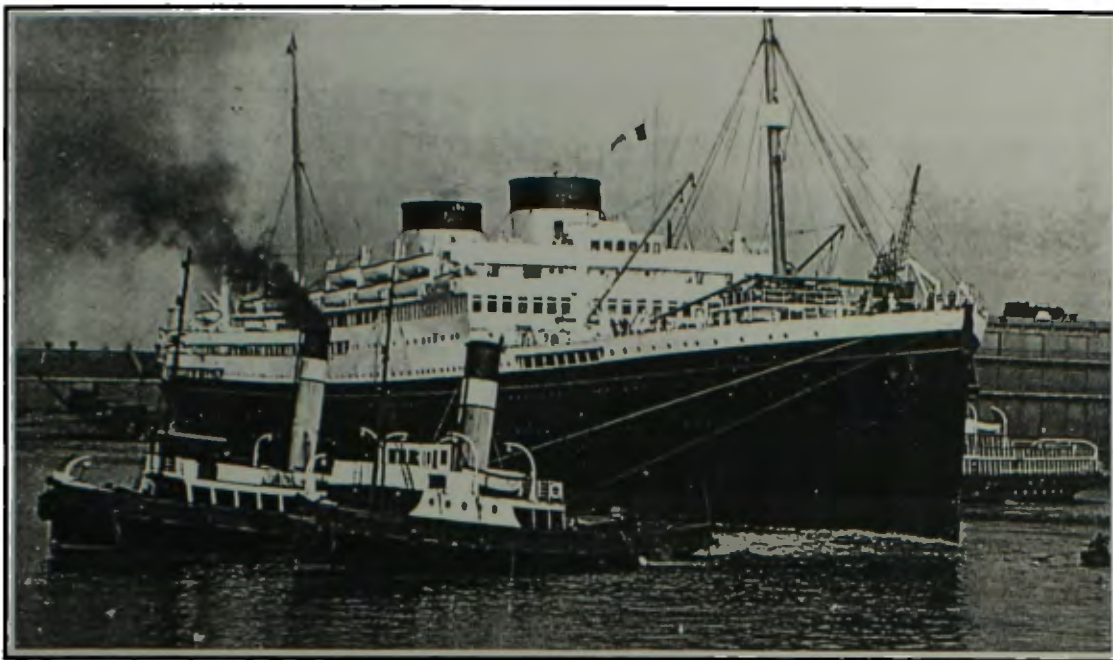
## THE BULLETIN

*Editor : John Shepherd*

Volume 45, Number 2, September 2001



Voyage with Brocklebanks to India on the ss <b>Maihar</b> in 1957 ( <i>James A. Pottinger</i> )	page 1
Quadrantal Confusion ( <i>Graeme Cubbin</i> )	page 14
<b>Hirundo's</b> Salvage of the <b>Skibladner</b> ( <i>Gordon Bodey</i> )	page 18
The <b>King Orry</b> (3) at the Internment of the German High Seas' Fleet, November, 1918 ( <i>David Handscombe</i> )	page 21
The <b>Nestor</b> and <b>Ulysses</b> of 1912	page 31
Big Boat in the Bay (part 2) ( <i>Ron Evans</i> )	page 35
Wartime Turn-Round of Ships ( <i>H.M.Hignett</i> )	page 42
Readers' Letters	page 45
Last Link with White Star - the <b>Britannic</b> of 1930	page 48



The Cunard-White Star liner **Britannic** being manoeuvred towards the Gladstone River Entrance.

Despite being a motorship, the **Britannic** has a powerful steam triple-chime whistle on her after funnel.

Can any reader identify the tugs ?

See '*Last Link with White Star - the **Britannic** of 1930*' on page 48

## The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

*President:*  
Mr A.S. Davidson

*Vice-President:*  
Mr H.M. Hignett

*Chairman:*  
Captain M.D.R. Jones

*Vice-Chairman:*  
D.K.C. Eccles



*Council:*  
G.Cubbin, R.Dennis (*Meetings Secretary*), J.E.Lingwood, D.Littler,  
A.H.McClelland, J.Shepherd (*Editor*), G.F.Wright

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

### **Membership and all Correspondence**

Hon. Secretary, L.N.R.S.,  
Maritime Archives and Library,  
Mersyside Maritime Museum,  
Albert Dock,  
LIVERPOOL, L3 4AA, U.K.

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

*The Society is represented on the following websites:*  
[www.merseyshipping.co.uk](http://www.merseyshipping.co.uk)  
[www.cronab.demon.co.uk](http://www.cronab.demon.co.uk)

*Front Cover:* Harrisons' **Huntsman** of 1921  
see 'Quadrantal Confusion' by Graeme Cubbin on page 14.

The next issue of '*The Bulletin*' will be sent out to Members in early December. Articles will include *The Sixtieth Anniversary of the Sinking of the Bismarck*, an eye-witness account by L.N.R.S. Member R.Varns; *Cheerful's Fateful Year* by Gordon Bodey, and account of the *Cap Arcona* incident by Charles Dawson.

## VOYAGE WITH BROCKLEBANKS TO INDIA ON THE ss *MAIHAR* IN 1957

*by L.N.R.S. Member James A. Pottinger*

from Lloyd's Register, 1957:

*MAIHAR Official Number: 140518 Signal Letters: G S C L*  
*Gross Tonnage: 7,563 Nett Tonnage: 4,657 Summer Deadweight: 11,214*  
*Built by Russell & Company at Port Glasgow, 1917*  
*Length: 490' 6" Breadth: 58' 2"*  
*Engines by J.G. Kincaid & Co. Ltd., Greenock*

It is only when one studies the present day pattern of seaborne trade and the types of ships now employed that one appreciates the revolution that has occurred over the past forty years or so.

Unlike the in-and-out container ships of today, the voyage to India and Pakistan on the *Maihar* in 1957 saw her spend 62 days at sea and almost double that time in port.

At that time it was inconceivable that there would be no Brocklebank, Holt, Ellerman, Clan or B.I. ships to be found in the ports of the world; all household names with a long and honourable history of trading and service over many years.

My own deep-sea experience in the late 1950s and early 1960s included service in a number of ships belonging to Thos. & Jno. Brocklebank Limited; long-established and well regarded shipowners, dating from the formation of the company in Liverpool in 1802 with the sailing ship *Active*. Brocklebanks were one of the oldest established shipowners in the world whose origins can be traced back to 1770 when Daniel Brocklebank built his first wooden ship at Sheepscutt near Portland, Maine.

Daniel was the youngest son of the Rev'd Daniel Brocklebank, the curate-in-charge of the Parish Church of Torpenhow, half-way between Maryport and Carlisle. The young Daniel was apprenticed to a shipyard in Whitehaven, Cumbria, before emigrating to the colony to start his own business.

With the start of the American War of Independence, Daniel left Sheepscutt on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1775 in the *Castor*, bound for Whitehaven where he arrived 32 days later. He was master of the *Castor* for a number of years afterwards until he came ashore in 1785. Daniel then founded a shipyard at Brantby in north Whitehaven and retired in 1800 when the business passed to his sons Thomas and John, becoming known as Thomas & John Brocklebank, popularly shortened to Thos. & Jno. Their first ship was the *Active* and they maintained a policy of building on spec, and if they could not find a buyer they operated the ship themselves.

On the expiry of the lease in 1865 Brocklebanks' Brantby yard closed, the final ship being yard number 157 the *Mahanada* (1). Many years later a group of ships was ordered which were all given 'M' names to commemorate the yard, and the 'M' nomenclature was retained until the final days of the company.

Thos. & Jno. Brocklebank took delivery of their first steamer, the **Ameer**, in 1889, and it was not until 1901 that the last of the sailing ships was disposed of: this was the **Holkar** which was sold to Germany.

During the period I was in the Merchant Navy breakbulk and general cargo constituted a major part of seaborne trade, although bulk carriers and tankers were gradually increasing in size. The tanker **Spyros Niarchos** of 47,000 tons deadweight, built by Vickers in 1956 was one of the largest vessels afloat.

Having completed my first deep-sea voyage with another company, I joined Brocklebanks' **Maihar** in May 1957 when she was lying at the Gyproc Wharf, Glasgow, just around the corner from the King George V Dock which, at that time, was full of Clan, Holt and Shaw Savill ships.

I had joined Brocklebanks for reason of immediate promotion and the chance to remain in steamships which I preferred. At that time the fleet was exclusively steam powered, either turbines or triple expansion reciprocating engines.

The **Maihar** had been built as long ago as 1917 by Russells of Port Glasgow, and was a typical vessel of that vintage with a straight stem and a tall funnel designed to support coal burning combustion; although she had a very handsome and shapely cruiser stern in contrast to the counter sterns of some of her contemporaries. The **Maihar** was fitted with a triple expansion reciprocating steam engine built by J. & G. Kincaid of Greenock, taking steam from four Scotch boilers which also provided steam for the auxiliaries in the engine room, winches and steering engine on deck.

At the time of my joining the **Maihar** she was in the final stages of a protracted refit by shipbuilders and engineers Alexander Stephen & Company. This work had taken almost eighteen months and was a major refurbishment. Her original boilers had been replaced with new oil fired units, many new pumps had been installed and the main components of the engine had been returned to the original builders for overhaul. All the accommodation had been completely renewed to modern standards, the *pièce de résistance* being the splendid permanent swimming pool built into the boat deck, not a temporary wooden framed canvas affair, but a proper flush pool on the boat deck aft of the funnel. This must have been unique on this class of ship, and I can well remember the looks of astonishment from passengers aboard a liner moored close to us at Port Sudan on seeing us running along the boat deck and disappearing from sight into the pool !

All the Engineer Officers were berthed in cabins arranged outboard amidships along the ship's side, with wide working alleyways inboard. As the sea often swept along these passages, the cabins had heavy waterproof doors with lighter mosquito jalousie doors inside. The chief and second officer and the chief steward were berthed in cabins abreast the dining saloon at the forward end of the centre castle, with the master above under the bridge.

A new officers' lounge had been built at the aft end of the centre castle, with a two berth cabin for deck apprentices directly above the after end of the boat deck. As built the **Maihar** had a break between the after block of accommodation and the

cabins abreast the funnel, but this gap was decked over except for a small break provided outboard on each side to leave space for the oil fuel bunkering valves.

The old radial davits had been replaced by the modern gravity type, but the original clinker built wooden lifeboats were retained. They required a good soak for the seams to tighten up each time they were put into the water.

Whilst internally the **Maihar** was to all intents and purposes a new ship, externally her appearance was much as it had always been. Her tall funnel gave perfect combustion now assisted by a forced draught fan.

With the reduced engine room manning as a consequence of the change from coal to oil firing, the two lifeboats formerly carried on the bridge were discarded and the two deckhouses on the aft deck abreast the mainmast were converted into mess rooms for the Asian deck and engine room ratings which eased the congestion in the poop accommodation. These deckhouses had apparently been used as chemical stores during the war and were to be the cause of some embarrassment and consequent legal tangle whilst we were in Colombo.

The fifth engineer officer and I had been doing some repairs to a cargo winch on the after deck, and following adjustment it was necessary to give it a trial. To do this the fifth hoisted and lowered the cargo hook smartly; too smartly as it turned out as a full sling of bagged cement dropped smack on top of a flimsy trailer on the dockside which was in fact obscured by these deckhouses. The winch repair had taken some time and during the wait some of the stevedores had taken a nap in the cab of the lorry. They had a very rude awakening and made a startled exit when the weight suddenly dropped on the end of the trailer and tipped it up! The legal ramifications of this incident dragged on all the while we were in Colombo and the captain and the fifth had to attend a number of meetings ashore in an effort to reach an amicable settlement.

It should be remembered that in the late 1950s new ships were still in great demand to replace war losses and shipyards were in the situation where they could turn away orders; so it made sense for Brocklebanks to spend a significant amount in modernising the **Maihar** as a stopgap until their new ships then under construction were commissioned.

As I was sailing as fourth engineer officer, and this was the first ship in which I had sole charge of a watch, I utilised the five days available before trials to familiarise myself with the machinery and all the pipelines and systems in the engine and boiler rooms.

The situation aboard was almost complete chaos with the yard staff trying to complete the work before the due date. There were swarms of workmen everywhere but gradually some order was achieved and we made ready for dock trials.

At the first swing of the engine water sprayed everywhere. Either in haste or ignorance a pipe fitter had led one of the cooling water pipes right across the track of the moving arms of the engine-driven air pump, and once they swung they sliced through the copper pipe with the resultant flood.

After finally making our way down the Clyde to the Tail of the Bank, our sea trials took three days due to continual stoppages for overheating bearings etc. Once the

**Maihar** was accepted the river pilot was dropped and we set sail for Middlesbrough on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1957. This was to be our first loading port for the deep sea voyage.

We had not steamed very far, however, when towards the end of my first night watch, the 20.00-midnight, I was aware of a clanking noise coming from the top of the engine. By this time we were prepared for the worst and were apprehensive in case some of the L.P. piston nuts had worked loose which could damage the cylinder cover.

After consultation with the captain it was decided to stop the ship and investigate. All the lagging was taken off and the numerous big nuts around the circumference were loosened. Some of the heat was then allowed to dissipate before the cylinder top was lifted off. On the **Maihar** the L.P. piston was 6ft 8ins in diameter so the cover was a fairly large lump! It was found that some of the piston junk ring nuts had loosened but luckily no damage had been done. We then lifted the cover on again and flogged up all the nuts and it was then that someone discovered that his torch was missing, the suspicion being that it had been left inside the cylinder!

There was only one remedy and the whole procedure had to be repeated: *lo and behold*, when the cover was taken off again there was the torch lying on top of the piston, still alight, too!

This emergency stop had come just after midnight and as far as we were concerned after all the trials and tribulations of the past week it was the straw that broke the camel's back; so after getting everything ready for getting underway again it was decided to drop anchor for the rest of the night rather than proceed. This was a most welcome break and allowed all the watchkeepers to catch up on some unbroken sleep and was much appreciated by the engineers who had borne the brunt of the work.

We spent the night peacefully swinging at anchor in the shadow of Ailsa Craig and got underway again after breakfast, and apart from slowing down off Land's End due to fog, we had an uneventful passage round to Middlesbrough.

We loaded cargo for five days at Middlesbrough and then crossed to Antwerp, spending just 24 hours there. We then recrossed the Channel to complete loading at the Royal Albert Docks at London. At that time cargo was worked only during the day at London in contrast to round-the-clock on the Continent. Continuous working put a strain on our elderly cargo winches which were already showing signs of trouble to come and needed a lot of attention to keep in working order; in fact they were our biggest headache and just could not stand up to the constant hammering. At least in London we were not liable to be called out in the middle of the night by the night winch-wallah holding a pile of bits from one of the winches!

In port when the main engine was shut down we kept only one boiler steaming to supply steam to the winches and other auxiliary machinery. This allowed the engineer officers to come off watches and work a day pattern of 07.00 - 17.00 with an hour for breakfast and lunch. The routine monitoring of the boiler and other machinery was entrusted to the donkeyman and greaser.

After eight days we completed loading and after undocking we entered the Thames and proceeded down river, dropping the last pilot off Dungeness. The **Maihar**

was now on her own and we settled down to sea watches uninterrupted by the stoppages and speed alterations associated with the coastwise passages.

All the officers on the **Maihar** were British, but following the usual company practice the crew ratings were nationals of India or Pakistan. The officers consisted of captain; first, second and third deck officers; chief, second, third, fourth and fifth engineers; a carpenter; two radio officers; chief steward and two deck apprentices. Brocklebanks were unique in that they employed their own radio officers, and did not hire them from Marconi.

Sea watches were on the usual pattern, viz:

midnight - 04.00	3rd Engineer	2nd Mate
04.00 - 08.00	2nd Engineer	1st Mate
08.00 - noon	4th Engineer	3rd Mate
noon - 16.00	3rd Engineer	2nd Mate
16.00 - 20.00	2nd Engineer	1st Mate
20.00 - midnight	4th Engineer	3rd Mate

This was intended to give a pattern of four hours on, eight hours off, but in practice various additional duties on deck and in the engine room meant that extra hours had to be worked at the end of the watch.

When entering and leaving port, or when on long river passages, the watches were doubled in the engine room by each watch keeper doing an additional two hours at the end of the normal watch period, thus establishing a 'six-on, six-off' pattern. This additional manning was necessary to provide cover during the various alterations of speed and manoeuvring.

One engineer handled the engine controls and the other operated the engine room telegraph and made the appropriate entry in the engine room movement book. On receiving a command from the bridge telegraph on the smaller inside pointer of the engine room telegraph, he would answer it by swinging the outside pointer to align with the bridge command which would be repeated by the bridge, and in this manner confirmation of all orders was made. '*Slow Ahead*' or '*Stop*' or whatever would then be entered in the movement book with the time to the nearest half minute; often with hurried orders some would be logged at the same time. The movement book was most important and could be crucial at any future court of enquiry subsequent to any collision or other accident.

The **Maihar** did not have many electrically driven auxiliaries and so no electrician was carried and any electrical maintenance needed was the responsibility of the 3rd engineer. Luckily, following complete re-wiring, there was little demand for his services in contrast with some ships where 'field days' were very much the norm for the poor third, and most afternoons after coming off watch at 16.00 were spent on electrical repairs.

In the engine room the watch keeping engineer was assisted by a Tindal, or charge hand, who looked after the boiler room with an assistant. Duties included

monitoring the steam pressure and water levels and cleaning the fuel burners. Two greasers in the engine room made up the watch keeping complement. As the engine was completely open and with no forced lubrication, all the oiling had to be done by hand, and the greasers were kept busy oiling all the engine and shaft bearings, and topping up the eccentric rod water cooling troughs.

In addition to being hand lubricated the temperatures of all the bearings had to be gauged by hand as there were no thermocouples on the other sliding surfaces of the bearings. Only experience could tell if something was not right, and the senses of smell, touch and hearing were all vital in the operation of triple expansion engines of this type. The most unnerving task to the newcomer was gaining the knack of swinging your arm in synchronisation with the revolving crankshaft so as to be able to touch the crank pin surface with your finger to gauge the temperature; the stroke of the pistons was almost five feet and the swing of each crank web coming towards you was fairly intimidating and any error could result in serious injury.

Different loading conditions and the varying density of certain cargoes imposed stresses in the after part of the **Mahair** which distorted the alignment of the propeller shaft bearings, causing them to overheat, and as soon as the sea temperature reached the seventies the circulating water cooling had little effect and we could easily have fried eggs on the thrust block and shaft bearings.

The **Maihar** was blessed with the provision of a duty mess and so there was no need to get showered and changed into uniform to go into the main saloon at mealtimes in the middle of a watch. All off-duty officers were, however, expected to take meals in the saloon and some chief engineers were especially insistent that their officers dress in the appropriate 'rig of the day' and attend meals in the saloon, long the prerogative of deck officers, senior engineer officers and passengers.

This was the **Maihar's** ninety-fourth voyage, and she was thought to have as complement the youngest average age in the Brocklebank fleet for 25 years with many of the officers, including the master and the chief engineer, sailing for the first time in their respective ranks.

During slack spells on an engine watch we gradually restored all the beautiful hardwood mounting boards on the gauge panels which had been covered with aluminium non-flammable paint at the time of overhaul, and all the brasswork was polished to gleaming splendour.

The **Maihar's** normal speed was only about 10½ knots which reduced in strong headwinds and currents. The engine turned at a leisurely 64rpm, and as far as I can recall she only exceeded that when passing out through the Straits of Gibraltar with a strong following tide and high propeller slip.

The normal pattern when going on watch was to enter the engine room at 'one bell'; that is fifteen minutes before the actual start of the watch, having already made an inspection of the steering gear. On arrival in the engine room normal procedure was to make a tour of all the running machinery, including a check on the shaft bearings and the stern gland down in the shaft tunnel. An inspection of the boilers was next and all being well it was time to meet up with the previous watchkeeper to discuss anything

of note, or to be given warning of any actual or likely machinery malfunctions before he went topside.

Promptness in relieving the watch was always appreciated, especially out East where the engine room temperature often reached 143°F. Some chatty engineers would stay down for a short while but more often it was a quick dash up to the fresh air to grab a couple of beers which had been cooling nicely in the refrigeration compartment!

We had to resist the urge to drink ice cold water whilst in the engine room, whatever the temptation. Traditionally we had a special gallon pail of fresh water with a drinking spout in the engine room, which soon became lukewarm in any event, and we took our cue from the native crew who drank only lukewarm tea but never ice water to quench their thirst. In the tropics it was recommended that we take at least two salt tablets each day to replenish the salt lost through perspiration, also a Paludrin tablet to ward off malaria. On the **Maihar** and other ships on this route it was normal to pour the water out of your shoes and wring out your boilersuit when coming out of the engine room at the end of a watch. Actually the boiler room felt cooler than the engine room due to the circulation of air caused by the upward draught created by the combustion in the furnaces.

As 4th engineer it was my job to attend to all the overhaul and maintenance of all the pumps, and to be responsible for all the oil fuel transfers. On a quiet watch it was usually possible to strip down a pump and to rebuild it on the next. As most pumps were new it was no big chore and in any case the **Maihar** chugged away with a minimum of fuss.

Five days out of London we called at the Spanish Moroccan port of Ceuta for oil fuel bunkers and as I was nominally responsible for filling the tanks I did not see anything of the port apart from the dock environs. The **Maihar** did not have any telephone connections to the bunkering stations on deck, but had a voice pipe in the boiler room to the deck. This rather antiquated arrangement made bunkering a somewhat fraught operation as when the oil was reaching the top of the sounding pipes in the after tanks it was necessary to sprint up the tunnel and shout to the man on duty at the voice pipe to give the signal to the shore to stop pumping, and many was the time that the valve cock on top of the sounding pipe had to be closed in a hurry without having time to pull up the steel measuring tape.

Our steady progress through the Mediterranean was only interrupted once when on my watch I detected some nuts on the air pump actuating lever slackening off, but the emergency stop was a short one and we were soon under way again. I was fast gaining the reputation of being either a 'Jonah' or of being exceptionally vigilant!

At this stage of the passage East it became necessary to adjust the clocks for the time difference. On some ships this was done an hour at a time, but on the **Maihar** we knocked half-an-hour off the 3rd and 4th engineers' watches. This meant that the 2nd engineer did not enjoy the shorter watches eastbound, but conversely did not have any additional time added to his watch when homeward bound.

The **Maihar** arrived at Port Said on 2<sup>nd</sup> July, twelve days out of London. We anchored among a large number of ships waiting to join a southbound convoy through

the Canal before getting under way at 03.40 the next morning. This was before the passing ship canal was built and vessels travelling in both directions in convoys passed each other in the wider waters of the Bitter Lakes. For many this was the first glimpse of the mystic East; even the smell coming off the land was different!

We did not have a permanent searchlight in the bows and so we used an old-fashioned carbon-arc light slung over the bow and positioned so that it illuminated the navigational markers and the adjacent bank. The canal passage took until 21.00hrs, and four days after clearing Suez at the southern end we arrived at Massawa, a port in northern Ethiopia, and anchored until the following morning when we went alongside.

I can truthfully say that this was the most uncomfortable port I have ever had the misfortune to enter. The heat was oppressive, exacerbated by the enclosed harbour; so much so that most of us slept on deck with spells in the vegetable handling room to cool off. Luckily we stayed only until the following afternoon when we sailed on the short passage down the coast to Assab.

This was a complete change from Massawa and we moored at a stone pier in a more or less open roadstead with a strong breeze blowing onshore to keep us cool. Assab was pretty basic and the highlight of our stay was to watch the changing of the uniformed guard in front of an imposing white building above the harbour. It was here at Assab that the 5th engineer's goldfish finally expired; he had bought them at a market at East Ham and had carefully nurtured them this far. In rough weather anyone passing his cabin always checked that the bowl was securely wedged and that the water had not washed out! We put the cause of death down to the possibility of contamination in the sand he had collected from the beach to replenish the bowl.

After three days at Assab we got under way for Djibouti, a short hop of just twelve hours steaming down the coast of the Gulf of Aden. The ease of departure was confirmed by taking only forty-five minutes from '*stand-by*' to '*full-away*'. Djibouti was almost as equally uncomfortable as Massawa, but we were only there overnight.

The next stop was Aden itself, a main bunkering port and stop-off point for many ships trading to the Near and Far East, and Australia. All cargo working and bunkering was carried out at anchorages, usually necessitating a number of ship movements. After taking on fuel and water we discharged some cargo into wooden barges, but this did not deter the bumboatmen who soon took up position alongside to display their large range of wares; the duty-free electrical goods and cameras being an especial attraction. They could readily assume the dialect of any prospective customer: broad Scots, Scouse and Cockney were no trouble to them! It was quite usual for us to give one of our Asian crew members the money to bargain on our behalf as they could usually drive down the price better than we could; in fact one of our donkeymen was an inveterate gambler and used to clean up at the greyhound racing when we were in any U.K. port.

We left Aden after three days and it was a blessing to get out into the open sea again after the spell of entering and leaving port. The **Maihar** was cleaned up and we experienced a relatively cool breeze, especially as it being July we were in the

Indian Ocean monsoon season when the wind blows strongly from the south-west, thus 'POSH' - port (north) out, starboard (north) home.

The **Maihar's** gremlins had not quite deserted her and we had a major breakdown five days out of Aden right in the middle of the monsoon. The first indication was what appeared to be a slack bottom end bearing; however it transpired that as it slackened the distance piece between the two halves broke off as it caught the bedplate as the shaft revolved. Incredibly the spare was too long and this resulted in us having to work in relays to hacksaw through six by four inches of cast iron to cut off a piece on both ends to make it fit between the crank webs.

During this time the **Maihar** lay broadside on and rolled so much that she started taking seas down the engine room skylight. We eventually had to shut this which did nothing to help the conditions in the engine room. It took us seven hours to get under way again.

My cabin was on the starboard side and so did not enjoy the breeze as those lucky enough to be berthed on the port side. We did not have any trunked ventilation or air-conditioning in the accommodation, but the two electric fans did stir up the warm air a little. In anticipation I had fabricated two wind scoops earlier in the voyage which could be fitted in the cabin portholes and these caught the slight draught caused by the **Maihar's** stately progress through the water. I had made these from some old oil drums and this created a fad with everyone scrounging empty drums and busying themselves with tin snips!

The Indian Ocean crossing to Ceylon took ten days and we arrived at Colombo to anchor inside the harbour. Eight days later we shifted anchorage and two days later we moved to yet another anchor berth. In Brocklebanks we had an anthem: "*six days shalt thou labour, and on the seventh thou shalt shift ship*"! This was a reference to the fact that whilst in port the engine room staff worked a normal six day working week with a half day on Saturday, but inevitably we had to go back on watches on a Sunday and raise steam to move to another berth.

We did in fact modify our working pattern in that during the hottest periods of the year in port we worked from 06.00 to 13.00 each day to escape the worst of the heat. This left the afternoon free to go ashore for all but the duty engineer, a task that was rotated amongst the staff.

After taking on more bunkers we sailed for Madras; first anchoring off the port and then moving to a berth the next day. As usual we shifted ship on Sunday and two hours later left for Calcutta. Whilst at anchor we amused ourselves by throwing coins into the water for the native boys to dive for. They had come out to our anchorage in little rafts made from a few logs tied together. Madras was depressing in and around the harbour area and we were not sorry to leave.

At this time there was severe congestion in the port of Calcutta and on arrival at the pilot station at Sandheads the **Maihar** anchored for what was destined to be a long spell. The Sandheads anchorage was some distance off the coast and was crowded with ships of all nationalities, each waiting their turn to go up the River Hooghly to the port. We were given no indication of our length of stay at anchor and naturally kept

our eyes glued to the pilot boat for any sign that it might send its small boat across with our pilot. A few lucky ships had received mail in this manner, a miracle of logistics performed by the ships' agents.

The pilot mother ship was a fairly big seaworthy craft, which it needed to be as there are often fierce gales in this locality. Pilots were transferred by means of heavy motor launches. Nine days after arriving at the anchorage the monsoon winds reached such strength that we had to raise steam on all boilers and move the **Maihar** due to the danger posed by another ship ahead of us dragging her anchor. We dodged around for most of the night in the teeth of the gale before anchoring again, and a couple of days later we had to repeat the exercise. It was only later that I found out that Alan Halcrow, a close neighbour of mine from Hamnavoe in Shetland, was the radio operator on the Nourse Line ship **Marjata** which was lying close by.

It was not until the eighteenth day after our arrival at the anchorage that we finally boarded our pilot and headed for the mouth of the river, the passage to our mooring off the Esplanade taking a whole day. This was the 'bore tide' season and a large wave swept up the river, and then down again about twelve hours later and as we were moored out in the river we had to keep sea watches with steam available and the engines ready, just in case. The tides were most spectacular and produced a solid wall of water about six-feet high rushing up and down the river. As it passed under the ship, she rose bodily under its force. Brocklebank ships all had special hawse pipe openings in the stern so that sections of the forward anchor chains could be split off and dragged aft and passed out through the openings to moor to the river buoys.

Calcutta was full of ships representing well known British companies: Clan, Ellerman, British India and Harrison. It was not unusual to have up to five Brocklebank ships in port at the same time which made for a pretty hectic social life. Calcutta was an eye-opener for the first tripper; families literally were born, lived and died on the pavement. The stark contrast between affluence and squalor was everywhere and babies from the poorest class were often deliberately deformed in order to evoke more sympathy when begging. Total confusion seemed to reign everywhere and no matter what time of night or day, every street was teeming.

Our oasis in this confusion was the excellent facility of the Swimming Club. We could join as honorary members for the duration of our stay and at this time it was still a 'whites only' enclave. The staff were mostly elderly Indians and it grated a little to see small boys shouting 'bearer' at some elderly attendant to hurry and bring a cold drink.

We completed discharge and began to load for the homeward voyage. During the twenty-six days the **Maihar** was in port we moved ship no less than four times, either to buoys in the middle of Kidderpore Dock or to another berth alongside. When lying off at the buoys we were provided around the clock with a small sampan type boat with a crewman and often his whole family on board, who used a single paddle to take us ashore and return again. Often when a group of us arrived back at the dockside at a late hour after being ashore, I would scull the boat off to the ship rather than rouse the boatman if he was bedded down for the night. This was quite an eye opener for him

and all the other boatmen around as they did not expect to find anyone aboard a large ship who could scull in this manner or who had any experience of small boats. I thus gained some notoriety in Calcutta docks!

Our next port of call was Khulna in East Pakistan where we were to load gunny. To reach the loading berth the **Maihar** had to proceed up a narrow winding river with her stern often brushing the trees and bushes on each side of the waterway. At the anchorage we received cargo from large steam propelled river boats which had barges lashed alongside. This was another less than pleasant berth as we were plagued by swarms of a moth type insect whose bite caused a nasty rash.

It was while we were at Khulna that we decided to put the motor lifeboat in the water, the engine having been regularly run during boat drills. However the exposure to sun and wind had played havoc with the seams and we had to hang the boat in the davits for a day to allow the seams to take up. A few of the off-duty officers decided to go tiger sight-seeing one Sunday and after loading the boat with crates of beer they disappeared up one of the creeks. However due to the myriad channels and creeks hidden among the reeds they got lost on the way back, and as the engine failed they eventually had to row. This was a touchy subject for the rest of the voyage.

We spent three weeks at Khulna as the loading was continually disrupted by heavy downpours of rain and in 1957 we did not have quick closing steel hatch covers, but wooden covers and tarpaulins. Some of the wooden hatchboards were made up of heavy slabs about six feet square.

After a down river passage lasting twelve hours we were on our way out to sea again. The open Indian Ocean was especially welcome after the humidity and insect infested ports.

A six day passage took us back to Colombo where we topped up with fuel and water. After four days at anchor the **Maihar** berthed astern of another Brocklebank ship, sailing six days later. It was while we were at Colombo that the incident of the cement bags on top of the lorry took place!

Colombo always seemed a more organised place than either Calcutta or Madras, and working from 6.am to 1.pm gave the engineers time to do some sight-seeing. The beach and swimming pool at the Mount Lavina Hotel further up the coast was a favourite venue. It was here at this time that a first trip radio operator from a Clan Line ship was tragically drowned in the swimming pool. Everybody was larking about in the water and assuming that everyone else could swim, and nobody took notice of him under the water in a corner of the pool. Unfortunately he could not swim and must have slipped in at the deep end.

We crossed the Indian Ocean to Aden and took on 1,242 tons of fuel oil. The fresh water was always salty at Aden and tea made with it was hardly palatable but at least it cut down on the need for so many salt tablets. We sailed as soon as bunkering was complete and at the entrance to the Red Sea we came upon a small Arab sailing craft which judging by its signals, was in some distress. We stopped and lay off to allow the craft to come alongside and we found that it was out of fresh water. After

passing over a few canisters the **Maihar** got under way again for our next port of call at Port Sudan.

As usual we anchored off the port before going alongside when a berth became available and loaded large sacks of gunny and bags of dates. It was evident from some of the bags that had burst that the contents were quite ripe, so much so that the dates were squirting up between the toes of the stevedores in the hold. They were the true 'fuzzy wuzzy' and they had their hair teased in clumps using a mixture of oil and camel dung, with a long wooden comb tucked in their hair which was periodically used to dig vigorously in the mop!

After three days alongside at Port Sudan we sailed for Suez and the Canal, the transit taking just under twenty four hours including the stop in the Bitter Lakes to let the southbound convoy pass.

The Gulf of Suez was one of the choke points as ships were converging on the Canal entrance and the southbound ships were setting course down the Red Sea. It was averred that the flag of convenience tankers set course point to point and would never deviate for any ship smaller than themselves; we certainly had to alter course on a number of occasions even when we had the right of way. In the final analysis, 'might was right'.

After the nationalisation of the Suez Canal by Nasser all the pilots were either Russian or Eastern Europeans until there were sufficient Egyptians trained and available. It always amazed me that the British and the French were of the opinion that nobody else would be able to carry out this duty when they left after the troubles. In fact this must be one of the easier pilotage tasks as the whole canal is lit and buoyed with little or no tide and there is never the hazard of meeting another ship coming in the opposite direction.

Once clear of Port Said we passed through the Mediterranean and sailed close enough to Malta during the night to see the lights of Valletta. We swept through the Straits of Gibraltar at 12½ knots on a following current. This was breakneck speed for the **Maihar**! By now we were all starting to get '*the Channels*' - the feeling that all seafarers get when the voyage is almost over and home beckons.

The voyage was completed with our docking in London on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1957, and it is interesting to note that from the total length of the voyage, no less than 114 days were spent at anchor awaiting a berth, or actually alongside.

This pattern of trading has all but disappeared as far as the British Merchant Navy is concerned. The breakbulk general cargo services are almost all handled by ships of other nations, but up to a few years ago it was still possible to spot the occasional reminder of a formerly well known fleet in some unfamiliar guise and colour scheme, a long way from her former trade routes. This becomes less and less likely as each year passes and inevitably it is only a matter of time, if that point has not already been reached, when there will be no examples left of what was once a fleet of ships with some character and even aesthetic beauty. It is possible that, in time, there will be no British Merchant Navy either.

### Postscript

The **Maihar** was sold in 1961 to Eastbound Tankers Corporation of Monrovia and renamed **Capella**. She arrived at Hirao in Japan on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1962 to be broken up, not a bad innings at 45 years old.

Going back to Brocklebanks, in 1911 the shares of the then Brocklebank family were purchased by the Cunard Board members Frederick, Percy and Dennis Bates, and in the same year the whole of the share capital of the Anchor Line was purchased by Cunard, leading to the formation of Anchor-Brocklebank. The remainder of the outstanding shares of the Brocklebank and Bates families were bought by Cunard in 1919.

The Brocklebank ships continued to be run on their traditional routes out to the East carrying their own colours and no inter-company transfers were effected by Cunard.

In 1968 Cunard-Brocklebank was formed. The Port Line was already under Cunard ownership. Incidentally the last two Port Line ships, the **Port Chalmers** (V) of 1967 and the **Port Caroline** of 1968 were given Brocklebank names and funnels in 1982. The last two Brocklebank ships were built in 1968 and then in 1971 Trafalgar House bought the shares of the Cunard Group. By 1973 the Cunard-Brocklebank fleet was down to six ships and in 1977 a number were laid up in the River Blackwater.

In 1983 the final pair of Brocklebank ships were sold and the Brocklebank name was resigned to the history books after 213 years. |||||

### MANX MODEL BOAT CLUB FESTIVAL, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> JUNE, 2001

L.N.R.S. Vice-President Mr H.M. Hignett has advised *'The Bulletin'* that L.N.R.S. Member Don Hayman exhibited his 4ft long model of the Ramsey Steamship Company's vessel **Ben Ain** and a kit model of the Clyde Puffer **Sealight** at the Manx Model Boat Club Festival.

Don won three prizes over the weekend: first place for a kit model of a working boat, the **Sealight**; first place for a working boat, the **Ben Ain**; and first place overall for the **Ben Ain**. The management of the Ramsey Steamship Company promptly offered to buy Don's model of the **Ben Ain** ! |||||

### FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

All Meetings are held at the Merseyside Maritime Museum and commence at 12.30pm

*Thursday, 20<sup>th</sup> September 2001*

#### "SOME INTRIGUING EMPIRES"

(Alan McClelland)

*Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> October 2001*

#### "GARSTON DOCKS AND RELATED INDUSTRIES"

(B. Brett)

The full Programme of Meetings and Membership Card is included with this *'Bulletin'* for paid-up Members of the Society.

## QUADRANTAL CONFUSION

*by Graeme Cubbin*

*The ss **Huntsman**, a large, four-masted cargo-liner owned by the Harrison Line, was homeward bound from Calcutta when War broke out on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939. The Admiralty diverted the ship round the Cape of Good Hope, and it was in the South Atlantic that she was intercepted by the German battleship **Admiral Graf Spee**.*

*The events described here are based on entries in notebooks and diaries kept by the Officers of the **Huntsman**.*

This cautionary tale from the War at Sea points to a fundamental difference, which prevailed at that time, between German and British attitudes to an elementary aspect of Navigation. It was a case of modern *versus* traditional techniques which came to head when a British Chief Officer, a prisoner of the German Navy, found himself accused of the crime of sabotage, the outcome of which, if proven, would have had dire consequences. It began when the Harrison steamer **Huntsman**, homeward bound round the Cape from Calcutta, was captured in the South Atlantic by the German pocket-battleship **Admiral Graf Spee** on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1939. The ship was not sunk immediately; instead a prize-crew was put on board, and the prize-master instructed to rendezvous with the warship in about a week's time. The **Admiral Graf Spee** then sped away in search of more prizes leaving the **Huntsman** to plod southwards in her own good time.

All went well for a day or two, and then an unseemly uproar broke out in the vicinity of the Chartroom. Apparently, the young German officers had routinely taken sights and found to their astonishment and dismay that their charge was scores of miles away from the position by dead-reckoning! Suspicion at once fell on the state of the compasses, then on the hapless Chief Officer, Alf Thompson, who was roundly accused of tampering with them. (Because of their unfamiliar pattern, the Germans had given him the task of checking the compass error by azimuths of the sun once or twice a day. His natural scruples about aiding the enemy had been overcome by a stronger desire to keep a check of the ship's position, which he was of course able to do).

In vain, Thompson protested his innocence, while Leutnant-zur-See Schuneman, the prize-master, stormed at him, threatening all manner of disagreeable consequences. Somewhat shaken, the Chief Officer asked to see the chart and the log-book. There were the true courses laid off, and noted; typical errors applied and corresponding compass courses indicated. He noticed that the ship had swung on to a southeasterly heading during the night, and at once the explanation dawned on him. The German navigators had applied the compass error *the wrong way!* What is more, he thought he understood why.

To determine how such a thing could happen, one must appreciate the difference between traditional British Merchant Navy practice, and modern German usage at that time. The Mariners' Compass had evolved over hundreds of years, but

Fig.I Lord Kelvin's Improved Compass.

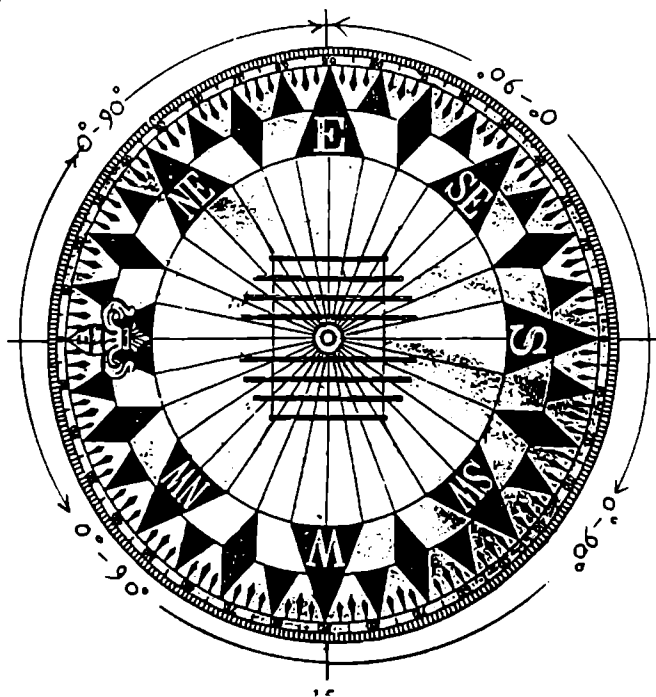
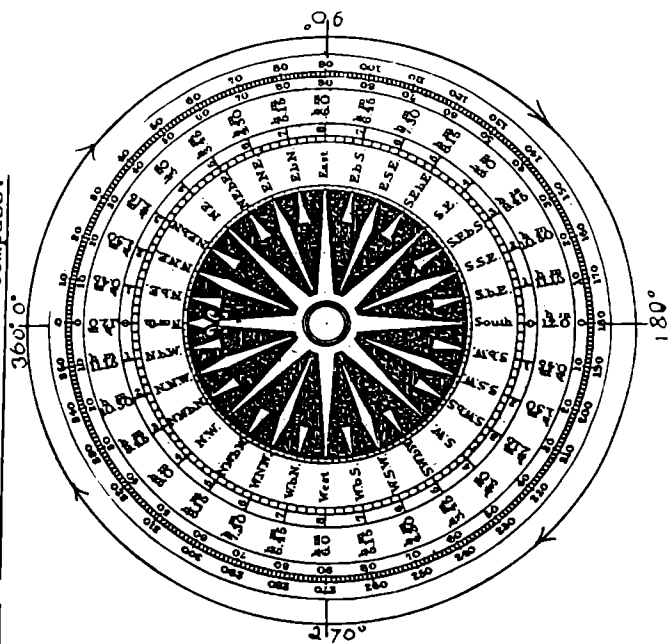


Fig.II New Pattern Compass.



the markings on the card had remained fairly constant until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century. The Compass card is divided into 32 points: four "cardinals" (N, S, E, and W); four "quadrantals" (NE, SE, SW, NW); eight "three-letter" points (NNE, ESE, etc.) and sixteen "by-points" (N by E, NE by N, etc.). A further refinement led to each point being divided into quarters, giving such convoluted headings as NE by N  $\frac{1}{4}$  N, W by S  $\frac{1}{2}$  S, etc. Furthermore, the age-hallowed convention of tracking the points from North towards East or West, and from South towards East or West meant that in two quadrants (NE and SW) the progression was to the right, or "clockwise"; and in the other two quadrants (NW and SE) to the left, or "anticlockwise" (always observing from the pivot, or centre of the card).

Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, there developed a tendency away from this seemingly complex system towards a straightforward, no-nonsense 360-degree notation, North being marked 0° (or 360°), East 090°, South 180°, and West 270°. The traditional points, most of which involved awkward fractions of a degree, were largely ignored (except for approximate relative bearings, e.g. "*Light bearing two points on the port bow.*"). The New Pattern Compass was adopted by most navies of the World, and today it is universal, but in 1939 British merchant ships still honoured the old system. Well, not quite, for Lord Kelvin's magnetic compass, introduced in the 1880s and immediately popular, attempted a compromise by marking the outer ring in degrees, *but in step with the old quadrantal sectors*, 90° to each quadrant, the degrees progressing clockwise or anticlockwise according to their respective sectors. (see Fig. I). So, instead of steering an old-fashioned SE by E, the compromise equivalent would be S 56 $\frac{1}{4}$ °E, or 123 $\frac{3}{4}$ ° on the New Pattern Compass. (Fig. II). (Invariably, of course, the intrusive fractions would be rounded up or down).

All this would be simply academic were it not for the influence of Variation and Deviation, the two components which make up the Compass Error. This is always named either East or West, and must be applied to all bearings and courses. Variation is the function of the Earth's magnetic field, and, although it varies geographically and has a slight annual change, it is, for all practical purposes, considered constant for a given year and location. Deviation is the function of the ship's inherent magnetism, and changes considerably on different headings. Hence the need for frequent checks on the compass error. It is one thing to find that error by observation; how to apply it is another question of fundamental importance. To convert a true course as drawn on the chart into a compass course for the helmsman to steer demands that Easterly errors must be applied to the Left, and Westerly errors to the Right. When transferring a compass bearing to the chart, however, the reverse procedure must be applied - Easterly to the Right, Westerly to the Left. Various mnemonics have been devised to assist navigators in this respect, perhaps the simplest being (at least, when I was a boy):

"Compass to TruE, Easterly is to the **Right** (of this phrase).  
(Therefore, W'yly is to the **Left**.)

TruE to Compass, Easterly is to the **Left** (of this phrase)  
(Therefore, W'yly is to the **Right**.)"

Note that the application of the Error is always said to be "Left" or "Right" when using a quadrantal compass card.

This, then, was the situation on board the German prize, **Huntsman**, fitted as she was with a traditional Kelvin magnetic compass. That the German officers were unfamiliar with this instrument is understandable. They belonged to a "modern" Service, and had been trained and brought up with the New Pattern Compass marked from 0° to 360°. And doubtless with gyros, too, which were similarly graduated, but were unaffected by magnetism.

However, the Germans were quite aware that variation and deviation had to be applied to magnetic courses and bearings. No doubt they, too, used mnemonics to bolster confidence, perhaps something Germanic corresponding to the English **CADET**, for example, used with the New Pattern Compass:

"Compass to True (C to T), Add Easterly error; (Subtract West)."

(And reverse the process when going from True to Compass).

*Note that the operative words in this context are "Add" and "Subtract".*

Whatever their methods, this was how the German officers applied the error to true courses to determine the course to steer. And the error, perhaps comprising a variation of 19°W and a deviation of 6°W (Error 25°W) could have been substantial. It was axiomatic that they would add Westerly error in all cases involving conversion from true to compass. And this was fine when the ship was heading in the SW quadrant (where the degrees graduate to the right), but having altered to the SE quadrant (where the degrees progress to the left), matters went badly awry.

For example, if the True course as dawn on the chart were, say, S 37°E (143°T), then:

True	S 37°E	True	S 37°E
Error	<u>25°W</u> (Right)	Error	<u>25°W</u> (Add)

Compass S 12° E (Correct !)

Compass S 62° E (Wrong !)

*Thus the ship was directed 50° off course! Fortunately for all concerned, the ship was far from land! Ironically, if the Germans had converted to the three-figure notation with which they were more at home, all would have been well:*

True	143°
Error	<u>25°W</u> (Add)
Compass	<u>168°</u> (Correct!) (i.e. S 12° E)

A brief comparative calculation over a distance of 100 miles places the vessel approximately 85 miles NNE of her anticipated position. It is little wonder that the Germans were peeved! After his well-informed explanation, Alf Thompson was reprieved and granted even more freedom in the bridge area, presumably to keep an eye on the navigation. For his compatriots it was one small victory amid defeat, a foretaste of the more dramatic victories which they would witness, first off the River Plate and then in Jossing Fjord, in the not too distant future. |||||

## **HIRUNDO'S SALVAGE OF THE SKIBLADNER**

*by L.N.R.S. Member Gordon Bodey*

*The following is an account of an action for salvage in the Admiralty Court in 1877. It serves to illustrate that weather and sea state could be the least of the dangers to a seafarer in days past.*

The Norwegian barque **Hirundo** (Captain Petersen) of some 332 tons register and laden with a cargo of mahogany was on passage from Tonala, Mexico to Queenstown for orders. Besides her Master and a mate, she was manned by a crew of eight hands (a ninth had deserted when she sailed). The Master and the mate were the only ones aboard with any knowledge of navigation and the Master was, reportedly, 'virtually an invalid incapable of great exertion.'

On 26<sup>th</sup> August 1877 in latitude 36° North, longitude 70°W (nearest given position), being approximately 320 miles east of Kill Devil Hills, near Kitty Hawk, N.C., the **Hirundo** fell in with the **Skibladner** (Captain Hansen), a Norwegian barque of some 381 tons register, (built in 1875 at Risør, Norway by P.Gunderson for the owner O.Casperson of Risør), which had left Fernandina, Florida on 23<sup>rd</sup> August with a cargo of turpentine and bound for Liverpool. Due to the general malaise about the progress of the **Skibladner**, closer enquiries were made by the Master and the mate of the **Hirundo**.

It was found that the Captain of the **Skibladner**, his wife and the first and second mates were all gravely ill with yellow fever. There was no one on board who could write up the ship's log or take observations to determine her position; she was literally lost and in mortal danger should the sea conditions deteriorate.

The Master and the mate of the **Hirundo** took observations and plotted their position and, accordingly, passed the information to those on the **Skibladner**. They then proceeded in company with her until nightfall when she was lost from sight. The following morning the **Skibladner** was not to be seen and the **Hirundo** sailed on.

The Inman Line's **City of New York** (Master F.S. Land) spoke to the **Skibladner** on 28<sup>th</sup> August and on arrival at New York reported the latter's predicament.

On 1<sup>st</sup> September in position 37°53'N, 68°54'W (some 350 miles east of the Delmarva Peninsula, and approximately 145 miles N.N.E. of their original meeting position) the two ships came upon each other again, the **Skibladner** flying distress signals. It is not known why the **Hirundo** made no more progress than the **Skibladner** in the previous six days. As no mention is made of her retracing her course to search for the other ship it must be assumed that both were labouring under contrary winds; if so, all the more extraordinary that they should cross each other's course again within sight of each other.

Some members of the *Hirundo*'s crew, including the Captain despite his invalidity, twice boarded the *Skibladner* and discovered that in the interval since their first encounter, the Captain's wife and the first mate had died of the fever and, in addition to the Captain and the second mate, one of the hands was now seriously ill with it. Under the circumstances it was decided that the mate of the *Hirundo*, Osman Osmandsen, should go on board the *Skibladner* and navigate her back to Liverpool - a distance of some 3,000 miles.

The decision to adopt this course seems inexplicable if the prime consideration was the safety of the people on board and of the *Skibladner* herself. Unless there were constraints which precluded it, the obvious course would seem to have been to make for one of the U.S. Eastern seaboard ports - comfortably within four days sailing. Whatever the reasoning behind the undertaking of such a Herculean task, the course was set for Liverpool.

During the voyage the *Skibladner*'s Master, second mate and two seamen also died of yellow fever. Marshall's *Devonshire* (Captain Purvis) reported having spoken with the *Skibladner* in position 44°N, 34°W on 17<sup>th</sup> September, by which time all the deaths had occurred, and supplying some medicines. This was perhaps something over 1,500 miles from the starting position of 1<sup>st</sup> September (a commendable feat in such straitened circumstances).

Besides navigating the vessel, Osman Osmandsen had to attend the sick as best he could and also work as a seaman as the *Skibladner* was so short-handed. Not unexpectedly he also contracted yellow fever and suffered severely but survived the ordeal. As a result of this remarkable feat of seamanship and courage throughout a voyage of nearly 3,000 miles lasting 41 days, the *Skibladner* was brought safely to Liverpool on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> October 1877. No further deaths were reported. She lay in the Mersey for six days before being taken into the Brunswick basin, and then a week later into Brunswick dock for unloading.

On arrival an action of salvage was instituted against the *Skibladner*, her cargo and freight, and for services rendered by the owners, master and crew of the *Hirundo*. The value all told of same was £5,135/13s/2d. (£5,135.66). The defendants did not deny the services and paid £515 into Court with a tender for costs. The plaintiffs submitted that the sum offered was insufficient. The case was heard in the Admiralty Court before Sir R. Phillimore on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1877.

The plaintiffs' barrister said: *"the sum was quite insufficient for the perils incurred by the salvors; the mate going on board in imminent peril of his life and throughout the whole length of the long voyage."* Also, *"those who remained on the Hirundo ran great risk from having only one navigator on board, and he an invalid. Besides which there was the danger of contagion from having had contact with the infected ship."* A recent similar case involving the German brig *See Nympe* was cited when an award of £1,400 was made on a value of £7,500, and that concerned African fever and, therefore, not infectious.<sup>1</sup>

The defendants' barrister claimed *"that in the latitude the Skibladner was fallen in with yellow fever was no longer infectious and so the nature of the services is*

*much exaggerated."* The Judge, however, found in favour of the **Hirundo** and in his summing-up said that: *"This is a case of most meritorious salvage. It is almost impossible to praise too highly the gallantry of the man Osman Osmandsen under the circumstances, or to doubt that the preservation of the lives of those who were on board, and of the vessel itself, was due to his courage and skill. .... the peril of yellow fever, in the judgement of those who advise me, was by no means over when he went on board."*

The Judge awarded a total of £900 and costs apportioned as follows: £600 to Osmand Osmandsen, £300 to the **Hirundo** and *"as it is a sailing ship and not a steamer, of the £300: £100 to the owner, £50 to the master, and the remainder to be divided between the crew according to their ratings."*

The **Skibladner**, now under the command of Captain Olsen, left the Mersey on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1877, reportedly for Fernandina, Florida. ||||

The Liverpool registered East Indiaman **Empire of Peace**, 1,549 tons gross (Merchant Traders Company) fell in with the brig **See Nympe** (which was on passage from Opobo, S.E. coast of Nigeria, to Scilly for orders) off the West Coast of Africa in June 1876 and found that the Captain and several of the crew had died of African fever and the rest were so ill as to be incapable of working the ship. The second mate and two seamen from the **Empire of Peace** volunteered to board the **See Nympe** and navigate her to Scilly.

At the time they went on board the **See Nympe** she had three feet of water in her hold. The dirt and stench were appalling. None of her own crew could work except to do a little steering and one more man died on the passage back. After 52 days the **See Nympe** arrived off Scilly.

In the subsequent action for salvage the Judge - again Sir R. Phillimore - whilst bearing in mind that the disease *'was not infectious or contagious'* and, *'that the ship had sustained no injury and encountered favourable weather'*, awarded the said £1,400, saying that he would endeavour to apply the principles governing salvage awards in the Court, viz: *'In giving a liberal award in cases of this description the interest of navigation, as well as humanity, will be greatly benefited.'*

The award was apportioned as: £480 to the mate, £360 to each of the seamen and £200 to the master-owner of the **Empire of Peace**.

Sources:

Admiralty Court Transcripts  
Lloyd's Lists  
Lloyd's Registers



**L.N.R.S. VICE-PRESIDENT RAY PUGH**

Ray Pugh, who died last December, has left a bequest of £850 to the Liverpool Nautical Research Society.

## THE KING ORRY (3) AT THE INTERNMENT OF THE GERMAN HIGH SEAS FLEET, NOVEMBER, 1918

*by David Handscombe*

*Warrant Officer David Handscombe R.N. has been working for the last ten years on a book detailing the career of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's **King Orry** (3). David has recently completed an amazing 280-page manuscript which I have had the privilege of reading. It consists of an almost day-by-day account of the **King Orry's** service during the First World War, plus a detailed record of her peacetime service from 1919-1939. The manuscript concludes with the **King Orry's** loss at Dunkirk on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1940. It is hoped that David's book will be published in the near future - it will be of great significance both to Naval historians and to Isle of Man Steam Packet Company enthusiasts. j.s.*

As the crew of the **King Orry** awoke from their sleep on the morning of 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918 they were still unaware that the armistice had been signed and that the war would be over in a few hours time. Rumours began to filter round the ship which was lying to buoys off Rosyth in the Firth of Forth. At 9.am the crew were mustered by Division on the after end of the promenade deck where they were addressed by the captain. He informed them that a signal had arrived on board from the Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet. The signal contained the news that at 5.10 that morning the Government of Germany had signed an Armistice and that at 11.am all hostilities against Germany and her allies would cease. Although this news had been expected for some time, official confirmation resulted in jubilation and cheering from the **King Orry's** crew. After the cheering died down, the captain held a short church service and no doubt a few tears were shed as the tension of four long years of carnage finally disappeared and memories of lost relatives and comrades flooded back. However, in the best traditions of the Royal Navy, once the church service was over the crew were given a period of physical training followed by the administration of more influenza prophylaxis. Although it had not been officially sanctioned by the captain, as the hour of eleven o'clock approached, the crew began to muster on the upper decks. At 11.am precisely, a saluting gun fired from somewhere on shore and the whole Fleet erupted into a mass of cheering sailors, accompanied by the sounding of ships' sirens. Leave was granted to the off-duty watch at 12.30pm and the **King Orry's** crew streamed ashore to take part in the rejoicing that was taking place in nearby Dunfermline and Inverkeithing, although they were under orders to be back on board by 5.pm. At 7.pm the crew were mustered again and informed that Admiral Sir David Beatty, Commander-in-Chief Grand Fleet, had sent a signal ordering all ships to '*Splice the Mainbrace*' and to celebrate the end of hostilities with Germany. Even though the war was now over, the **King Orry's** logbook records that at 9.pm '*darken ship*' took place.

At 11.30am the following morning, 12<sup>th</sup> November, the **King Orry's** crew were mustered yet again on the after end of the promenade deck. On this occasion, a personal message from His Majesty King George V to every member of the Grand Fleet was read aloud by the captain. The **King Orry** remained at her buoy for the next few days during which time everybody on board was speculating as to what the future held in store for them. They did not have to wait for very long as the initial terms of the Armistice would affect the future employment of the **King Orry**.

The Allies anticipated that it could take many months to finalise the terms of the Armistice and decide upon the future of the German Empire, but in the meantime it would be necessary to prevent Germany from waging any form of warfare. Although the German Navy was in disarray, the ships of the High Seas Fleet still posed a significant threat, especially should they fall into the hands of one of the extremist movements which were now fighting for power within Germany. The Allies therefore decided that the majority of the High Seas Fleet should be interned within a neutral port to await the outcome of the post war peace settlement. This settlement, or to be more specific, the directives that the allied powers would force Germany to abide by, would eventually be signed on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1919 and would become known as the Treaty of Versailles.

Germany was immediately ordered to prepare ten battleships, six battle cruisers, eight light cruisers, fifty destroyers and all of her U-boats for internment. The ships of the High Seas Fleet that were nominated for internment were to have all of their ammunition put ashore before they sailed from their German bases, and only to carry sufficient fuel to take them to their place of internment. On 13<sup>th</sup> November 1918 the Allies decided that as no neutral power had offered the facilities at any of its ports to intern the German warships, the U-boats would be sent to various British ports and the surface ships would proceed to Scapa Flow. All the ships nominated for internment were to be ready to proceed to the United Kingdom within seven days.

As these orders were being complied with by the German Naval High Command, the ships of the Grand Fleet awaited their orders from the Admiralty. It was known that many of the German warships were in a neglected state and the Admiralty wanted to show that the Grand Fleet was still in a high state of efficiency and that its morale was high. To this end, all the ships of the Grand Fleet were ordered to repaint their hulls and superstructure and to remove all signs of rust and weathering. The crew of the **King Orry** commenced painting ship on 13<sup>th</sup> November and finished the task on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

At 7.am on 19<sup>th</sup> November the **King Orry** was ordered to proceed to sea to take part in Fleet exercises. After being at sea for only a couple of hours, a signal was received which cancelled the exercise and instructed all ships to return to Rosyth to await further orders. The **King Orry** was secured to her buoy again by midday. During the afternoon the captain briefed the crew that His Majesty King George V was due at Rosyth the following morning and that he would review the Grand Fleet from the bridge of the commander-in-chief's despatch vessel, the destroyer HMS **Oak**. As the anchorages and moorings within the Firth of Forth did not permit all of the ships to be

ranged in line, some ships, including the **King Orry**, would be required to slip their moorings and steam slowly past HMS **Oak**, in 'line ahead'. The **King Orry** was in position to steam past His Majesty by 10.30 the following morning, and shortly afterwards the column of ships began to move slowly towards HMS **Oak**. The **King Orry** drew abreast of the destroyer at 11.40am and as she steamed past her crew raised their caps from their heads and gave 'three cheers' for His Majesty. The review was over by midday and all the ships involved returned to their respective buoys and anchorages shortly afterwards. King George V then went on board the flagship HMS **Queen Elizabeth** to have lunch with Admiral Beatty.

Later that afternoon the **King Orry** received a signal from the flagship which gave the awaited instructions for escorting the High Seas Fleet into internment, codenamed 'Operation ZZ'. The Grand Fleet would meet the High Seas Fleet between 8.am and 9.am the following morning, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1918. The German ships would be escorted into the Firth of Forth for inspection, before being escorted north to Scapa Flow. The **King Orry** had been detailed to take part in the operation.

There is a popular myth that has been repeated in many books about the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company. The story relates that the **King Orry** was personally selected by Admiral Sir David Beatty to take part and that she was to represent the Merchant Navy. The myth goes on that she led the German High Seas Fleet into internment at Scapa Flow. Although it would be nice to believe that such an honour was bestowed upon the small but proud Manx vessel, examination of the signal 'Operation ZZ' confirms that the story is untrue. The **King Orry** was indeed detailed to form part of the Grand Fleet reception committee which led the German ships into the Firth of Forth, but she was not involved in their subsequent movement to Scapa Flow. It is indeed a fact that the **King Orry** was the only former Merchant Navy vessel to take part in 'Operation ZZ', but there is no documented evidence to support the claim that she was invited to attend in order that she should be the sole representative of the Mercantile Marine. However, just because no documented evidence survives does not mean that Admiral Beatty did not request that the **King Orry** should take part.

The **King Orry**'s rôle during 'Operation ZZ' was to act as one of the five 'repeating ships', the others being the cruisers HMS **Blonde**, **Fearless**, **Blanche** and **Boadicea**. As the **King Orry** had acted as a 'repeating ship' for the Grand Fleet on many occasions she was an obvious choice and ideally suited. It is possible that the myth of her leading the German ships into captivity has arisen from the painting displayed in the Manx Museum in Douglas. The painting is by Arthur Burgess and was completed shortly after the War and shows the **King Orry** leading a column of British and German warships. Many people have speculated that the painting shows the **King Orry** ahead of the light cruiser HMS **Cardiff** (the British warship that actually led the German column) and that the ships astern of her are the German battle cruisers **Seydlitz**, **Moltke** and **Derflinger**.

The exact position of the **King Orry** is further complicated by a document called *Der Tag* (The Day) which was sold to the public as a souvenir shortly after the

event. It shows the position of all the British, Allied and German warships as they steamed into the Firth of Forth. The **King Orry** is shown at the rear of the centre column, again an incorrect position. Admiralty records confirm that the **King Orry's** actual position was in the centre of the middle column of warships. Immediately ahead of her at a distance of one and a half miles was the German battleship **Grosser Kurfürst**, and one and a half miles astern of the **King Orry** was the British light cruiser **HMS Phaeton**. The ships immediately astern of the **HMS Phaeton** were the German light cruisers **Karlsruhe**, **Frankfurt** and **Emden**. Close examination of Arthur Burgess's painting does in fact reveal that it gives an accurate portrayal of the position of the **King Orry** on 21<sup>st</sup> November. The three German warships behind the British light cruisers are easily identifiable as three funnelled German light cruisers, not two funnelled battle cruisers.

Having raised steam, the **King Orry** slipped her buoy at 3.am on the morning of 21<sup>st</sup> November 1918. After slowly manoeuvring into her allotted position she left harbour some fifty minutes later in company with the 4th Battle Squadron. All of the ships involved in escorting the Germans into the Firth of Forth were required to leave their anchorages and moorings off Rosyth very early in the morning as they were all required to be in position off May Island, which lies at the entrance to the Firth, by 8.15, ready to meet the High Seas Fleet at just after 9.am. It had been necessary to stagger the departure of the Grand Fleet from Rosyth over a four hour period to minimise the risk of collision. Once all the ships were on station, the various squadrons of battleships, battle cruisers and light cruisers would form into two lines, each steaming out into the North Sea. The northern line was known as the Red Fleet and flew a red burgee, while the southern line was known as the Blue Fleet. After the Grand Fleet met up with the High Seas Fleet, a third or centre line would be formed. This centre column of ships would be made up of the German warships steaming in 'line ahead' and four British warships. The light cruiser **HMS Cardiff** was stationed at the head of the centre column with the German battleships and battle cruisers astern of her. The whole fleet was under the command of Admiral Sir David Beatty on board his flagship **HMS Queen Elizabeth**.

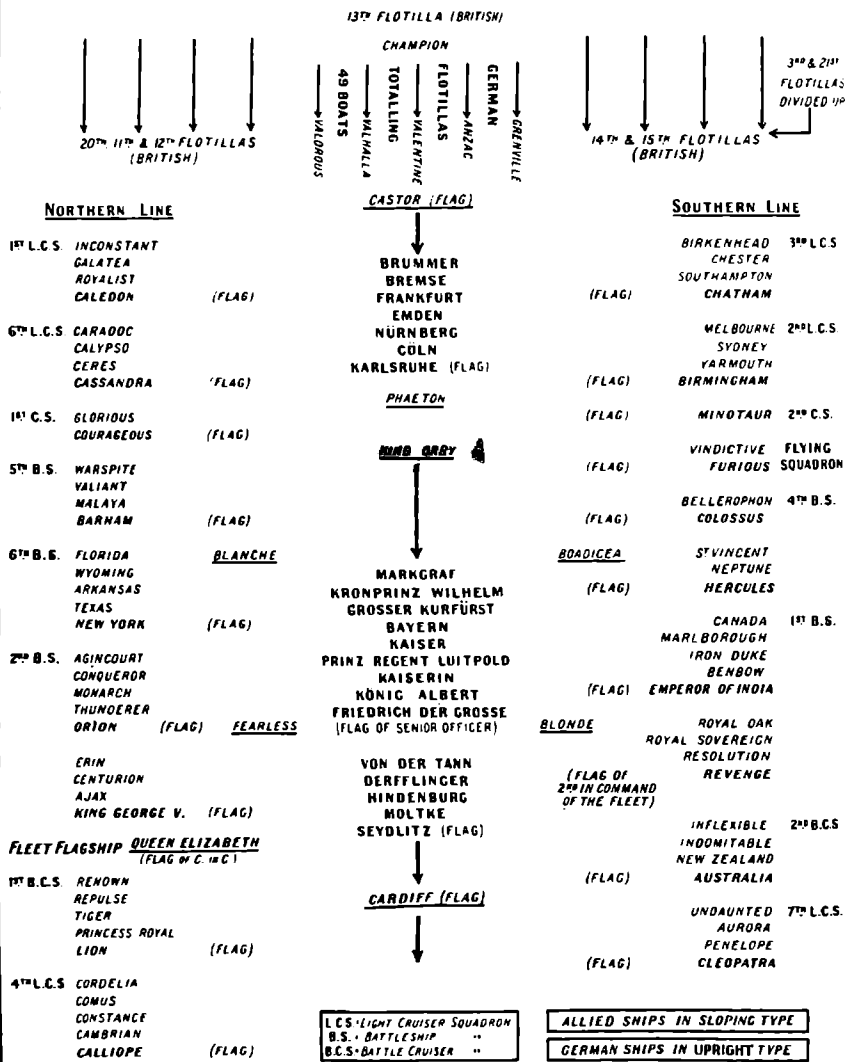
The Grand Fleet made an impressive sight as it steamed out into the North Sea. The northern column consisted of 40 warships, whilst the southern column totalled 37 warships. As the German ships approached, the northern and southern columns would steam past them and then at a given signal reverse their course 180 degrees and form up on either side of the High Seas Fleet at a distance of three miles.

The **King Orry** and the 4th Battle Squadron passed through the Black Rock Gate anti-submarine boom at 5.am and arrived off May Island at 7.am. Having detached herself from the 4th Battle Squadron, the **King Orry** was in her allocated position, equidistant between the northern and southern lines of the Grand Fleet by 7.30am. As the darkness gave way to daylight, the Grand Fleet waited for the arrival of the High Seas Fleet. As a precaution against German treachery, the Grand Fleet had been ordered to close up at 'Action Stations'; ammunition was to be available at each gun, but turrets were to be ranged fore and aft. To avoid any provocation, gun crews in

# INTERNMENT OF GERMAN HIGH SEAS FLEET

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1918

POSITIONS AT 10.0 A.M. OF SHIPS BOUND FOR THE FIRTH OF FORTH



exposed positions were to keep out of sight. The **King Orry's** 4-inch and 12pdr gun crews crouched down behind the bulwarks on the forecastle and poop deck.

Daylight on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> November 1918 revealed a cool misty day with the wind from the south-west, and the **King Orry's** logbook records the sea state as '3'. The Grand Fleet was sailing eastward on a course of 090 degrees at about 12 knots. At just after 9.10am, HMS **Cardiff** loomed out of the mist ahead of the Grand Fleet and steamed towards the **King Orry**. As she drew nearer the ghostly shapes of the German High Seas Fleet appeared out of the mist behind her. The **King Orry** approached the first German battle cruiser, the **Seydlitz**. Then four more battle cruisers appeared including the infamous **Derfflinger** which had been accredited with firing the shells which destroyed HMS **Invincible** and HMS **Queen Mary** at the Battle of Jutland. Next the battleship **Friedrich der Grosse** loomed into view, flying the flag of Rear Admiral von Reuter who had been given the unenviable task of commanding the High Seas Fleet and taking it into captivity. Another eight battleships steamed past and once the last one, the **Grosser Kurfürst** had passed, the **King Orry** made a 180 degree turn to port and took up station one and a half miles astern of her. The time was 9.40am.

At almost the same time as the **King Orry** reversed her course, Admiral Beatty ordered the two columns of the Grand Fleet to turn outwards and make a 180 degree turn and then to form up on either side of the defeated Germans. The three columns of warships which spanned a distance of nearly nineteen miles from front to rear ship, then steamed westward on a course of 270 degrees and headed back towards the Firth of Forth. The High Seas Fleet no longer posed a threat and Britannia once more ruled the waves.

At 10.40am Admiral Sir David Beatty sent the following signal to the Admiralty: *'The Grand Fleet met this morning at 0930, 5 battle cruisers, 9 battleships, 7 light cruisers, 49 destroyers of the High Seas Fleet, which surrendered for internment and are now being brought to the Firth of Forth.'*

The Allied Powers had ordered Germany to provide 10 battleships, 6 battle cruisers, 8 light cruisers and 50 destroyers for internment. From reading Admiral Beatty's signal to the Admiralty, it is evident that the full quota did not arrive. The tenth battleship, the **König**, and the eighth light cruiser, the **Dresden**, were still in drydock in Germany. The sixth battle cruiser, the **Mackensen**, was still at her builder's yard, whilst the fiftieth destroyer, the **V.30**, had struck a mine and sunk during the passage to the Firth of Forth. The **König** and the **Dresden** would eventually arrive at Scapa Flow on 6<sup>th</sup> December, along with the destroyer **V.127**, which was sent as a replacement for the **V.30**. The battleship **Baden** eventually arrived as a replacement for the still incomplete battle cruiser **Mackensen**.

The **King Orry's** log records that she passed May Island at 12.07pm. At 2.30pm as the ships approached the island of Inchkeith, the **King Orry** was instructed to leave the German column and take station astern of the French cruiser **Amiral Aube**, and then to follow her through the Black Rock anti-submarine boom. The boom was cleared at 2.42pm and the **King Orry** passed under the Forth railway bridge at

3.20pm. Her duties for this memorable day were now complete and the proud Manx steamer was secured to B2 buoy, adjacent to Rosyth Dockyard at just after 4.pm.

Under the watchful eyes of the Royal Navy, the ships of the High Seas Fleet were anchored in parallel lines from a position just off North Queensferry to a position some five miles up river, opposite the Naval armament depot at Crombie.

At 6.pm, a Divine Service and Thanksgiving for the Victory of the Allies was conducted by Captain Mosse on the after end of the **King Orry**'s promenade deck and all off-duty crew members attended. The Germans received a final humiliation as dusk approached when Admiral Beatty sent them the following signal: '*The German Ensign will be hauled down at sunset today, Thursday, and will not be hoisted again without permission.*'

As the men of the **King Orry** went to their bunks and hammocks that night, they knew that peace had finally arrived and that the menace of the High Seas Fleet was securely locked away within the confines of the Naval anchorage in the Firth of Forth.

Following their arrival in the Firth of Forth all the German ships were inspected and the breech blocks from all of the guns were removed, as was the wireless equipment. A limited amount of fuel was left on board, sufficient to get the vessels to Scapa Flow and to provide power for essential services such as heating, lighting and cooking. Once the inspections were completed the German ships were escorted to internment within Scapa Flow and the first vessels left the Firth of Forth on 25<sup>th</sup> November 1918.

The participation of the **King Orry** at the surrender of the German High Seas Fleet had not gone unnoticed by the Manx press and an article written by one Mr J.C. Christian appeared in the *Isle of Man Examiner* on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1918:

### THE DEVIL SHIP OF THE NORTH SEA

*Your readers may be interested in an incident I witnessed in the North Sea last Thursday when I was one of a number of London journalists at the surrender of the German Navy to the British Grand Fleet. That story, which is probably destined to become one of the most historic events in the annals of Britain, has already been told, so I will not trouble your readers by repeating it here. The story, however, that I am going to write about, has not been told. I should explain that each pressman was allocated to a different ship, so that there was only one civilian on each 'Man O' War'. I myself had the good fortune to be drawn for HMS *Warspite*, perhaps the finest ship in the battleship squadron and a sister of the flagship, HMS *Queen Elizabeth*.*

*We were roughly sixty miles out to sea and it was nine o'clock in the morning and I was looking out of the gun control tower from where one gets an ideal view. We had just received a message from the flagship that it was expected that we should sight the German ships at 09.25. Looking away on our starboard side, I saw a ship in the grey mist of the North Sea. I casually pointed to the object on the horizon. "That," said the Lieutenant Commander who had been deputised to look after me, "That is the **King Orry**, an Armed Mercantile Cruiser." "Really," I replied for this was very interesting.*

*My enthusiasm aroused his curiosity. Perhaps I had heard of her? Did I know her? One felt proud of being a Manxman and prouder still that a Manx vessel was taking part in the reception of the Hun ships. Later in the evening, when we had returned to our anchorage in the Forth, just below the famous bridge, a dreadful looking ship passed through the line, three cables away. I stood on the quarter deck and looked at her, for she was an object of much curiosity. In fact she might have been one of those Devil ships that came out of the pages of Dante. The Lieutenant Commander ran up to me, "That's the **King Orry**," he said, pointing to the phantom thing that was silently passing us at about 10 knots. Nonsense! Oh yes it was, but I was suspicious! Officers of His Majesty's Navy have a habit of sometimes pulling a civilian's leg! I appealed to the Quartermaster - the **King Orry** he replied decisively. So there was the Manx liner, superbly camouflaged. Her sides were painted in three colours: yellow, dark blue and a kind of dull red. The colours were painted diagonally, and I was told that at a distance a Hun submarine commander would have difficulty, not so much as discerning her, as in judging her course and speed.*

*If ever the **King Orry** should come to the Island in all the Glory of her war paint, I am quite certain she will give my Manx friends a great fright. She is known to the men of the Grand Fleet as the 'Devil Ship', and I am sure that the people of Manxland would like to see her as she really is. There used to be some seamen in the Island, especially at Ramsey, who could tell the name of a ship passing many leagues out to sea. I defy any one of them to name the **King Orry**, if ever she comes around Maughold Head with her war paint on: the promenade, I fear, would soon be cleared!*

The Manx people would get an opportunity to see the 'Devil Ship' of the North Sea in a few weeks time.

With the events of the previous day still prominently in their minds and the prospect of being demobilised from the Royal Navy about to become a reality, the crew of the **King Orry** were given little time to relax. Having been roused from their slumbers at 5.am on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, the crew commenced coaling ship from a barge that was brought alongside by a tug at 6.30am. On 25<sup>th</sup> November the crews of the 4-inch and 12pdr guns were drilled, although it must have seemed a pointless exercise.

Now that the war was over, the United States Navy was keen to get their battleships back to home waters. At noon on 1<sup>st</sup> December the **King Orry's** crew lined the ship's side and gave three cheers to their American Allies as the five battleships of the 6th Battle Squadron steamed past on their way back to the United States.

Maintaining fighting efficiency was still a requirement of the Navy and the **King Orry** returned to her rôle as a target towing vessel the next day. She left her buoy at 5.am and proceeded to sea with the 5th Light Cruiser Squadron to carry out a gunnery shoot. This procedure was repeated on 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> December. This was the last occasion on which the **King Orry** proceeded to sea as an active unit of the Royal Navy for when she returned to port she was ordered to proceed into the Naval Dockyard for the removal of Naval equipment. All worked stopped on Christmas Day and Boxing Day to allow everyone to enjoy the first Christmas at peace since 1913.

The long awaited sailing orders for the **King Orry** to 'pay off' arrived on board on 28<sup>th</sup> December 1918: she was to proceed to the River Mersey where she would be taken in hand by Cammell Laird to convert her back into a passenger vessel.

The **King Orry** was ready to leave Rosyth on the morning of 30<sup>th</sup> December and at 7.am all of her secret Grand Fleet documents were landed ashore to the Fleet Mail Office for onward despatch to the battleship HMS Colossus. The **King Orry** was clear of the lock by 1.pm and as she turned down river towards the North Sea, the traditional pennant used by warships to indicate that they were 'paying off' was raised to the head of her foremast. The pennant, by tradition, was the length of the ship. She passed under the massive structure of the Forth Rail Bridge for the last time and at 2.pm was clear of the Black Rock anti-submarine boom. As May Island disappeared astern at 4.pm the **King Orry** turned north and the Girdle Ness lighthouse near Aberdeen was abeam at 11.pm. Duncansby Head and Cape Wrath were passed on 31<sup>st</sup> December and New Years Day 1919 found the **King Orry** heading south towards the Irish Sea. The Isle of Skye was passed in the early morning and at 1.pm she was in the Sound of Mull. At reduced speed the **King Orry** steamed through the narrow waters of the Sound of Islay between the islands of Islay and Jura in the afternoon and at 7.pm on the evening of 1<sup>st</sup> January 1919 the Mull of Kintyre was abeam. The **King Orry** arrived off the Calf of Man at 12.45am the next morning and 'hove to' for a few hours. She got underway again at 5.am on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1919 and rounded Douglas Head at 6.45am and then dropped anchor in the middle of Douglas Bay, where she remained until 10.45am. A large crowd gathered on the promenade to gaze at this strange, yet familiar-looking, vessel. The **King Orry's** passage to Liverpool Bar was uneventful and she steamed past New Brighton in her camouflage and with her paying-off pennant once again flying from her foremast. At 4.pm she was anchored in the Sloyne off Cammell Laird's yard and as Captain Mosse rang down "*Finished with Engines*" the **King Orry's** career with the Grand Fleet was effectively over.

The **King Orry** finally 'paid off' at 8.am on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1919. The White Ensign was hauled down and replaced by the Red Ensign. Her log records: "*0800: HMS King Orry Paid Off out of Admiralty Service. Isle of Man Steam Packet Company took charge of ss King Orry.*"

### **Postscript**

The **King Orry** returned to passenger service with the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company in time for the 1919 summer season, and as she was arriving at Douglas in the early evening of 21<sup>st</sup> June, having operated the afternoon crossing from Liverpool, there was debate and discussion ashore relating to an incident at Scapa Flow that afternoon.

News had just been received on the Island that the interned German High Seas' Fleet had been involved in an act of treachery. The exact details were unknown, but one rumour had it that the Germans had attacked the British fleet and had escaped to sea and were on their way back to Germany.

As the following day (22<sup>nd</sup> June) dawned the correct details were filtering through to the press. The German High Seas Fleet had not attacked the British, but had scuttled itself and now lay on the bottom of Scapa Flow. There had been unrest and near mutiny within the German Navy ever since the terms of the Armistice had led to its internment. The Armistice was due to expire at 12.noon on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1919, and Germany was dragging its heels about signing the final peace agreement.

The British Government issued an ultimatum stating that if Germany did not sign the Treaty of Versailles by noon on 21<sup>st</sup> June, then the British were prepared to resume hostilities. This ultimatum gave the Commander of the Interned German Fleet, Admiral Ludwig von Reuter, an immense feeling of unease as the German ships at Scapa Flow could not defend themselves and would undoubtedly be taken over by the Royal Navy.

Secret messages passed between Berlin and the High Seas Fleet, and Admiral von Reuter was instructed to prepare to scuttle his fleet as the dishonour which would have been incurred by the German fleet being taken by the British was far greater than its actual loss. The German ships were all secretly prepared for scuttling and were told to wait for a pre-arranged code to be raised by the flagship. At 11.20am on the morning of the 21<sup>st</sup> June, forty minutes before the Armistice was due to expire, the secret signal was hoisted on the flagship's foremast: '*commence scuttling*'. To the British onlookers nothing appeared to be out of the ordinary until at 12.16 the battleship **Friedrich der Grosse** suddenly took on an alarming list and then rolled over on to her beam ends and sank. Within minutes the same spectacle was being repeated by every German warship at Scapa Flow. The Royal Navy was powerless to intervene and by late afternoon the German High Seas Fleet was no more.

A total of 54 ships had sunk : 10 battleships, 8 battle cruisers, 4 light cruisers and 32 destroyers. The Allies were outraged and the Germans finally signed the Treaty of Versailles on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1919. |||||

### THE MONDAY FACILITY

Members' access to the Archives and Library at the Merseyside Maritime Museum on Mondays continues as follows:

SEPTEMBER : 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th

OCTOBER : 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th

NOVEMBER : 5th, 12th, 19th and 26th



**No.12 -THE 'NESTOR' AND 'ULYSSES' OF 1912**

*compiled by John Shepherd*

In 1909 the Blue Funnel Line decided to operate an entirely new venture - a passenger and cargo service to Australia *via* the Cape - and ordered three new ships from Workman, Clark at Belfast. These were the **Aeneas**, **Ascanius** and **Anchises**. The new service began in 1910, was a six-weekly one and proved in the course of the next two years to be so successful that in 1912 two considerably larger ships, though of similar type, were ordered from the same builders. These were the **Nestor** and the **Ulysses**, and with them, the service was increased to monthly.

The third **Nestor**, launched on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1912, was a steel ship of 14,501 gross tons. She had seven holds and 'tween-deck spaces, one of them refrigerated. The enormous cargoes that could be carried were worked by 12 derricks slung from the masts and a further 16 'standing' derricks on cowl-headed derrick posts. There were 22 steam winches. The **Nestor** had a speed of 14 knots and to maintain this she had twin screws and two triple-expansion engines. She burnt 140 tons of coal a day at full speed.

The original passenger accommodation was for 275 in one class, raised for a time to 338. The **Nestor** was designed by Henry Bell Wortley, the Blue Funnel Line's naval architect, and cost just over £250,000. For a time the **Nestor** was the largest vessel on the Cape or Australian run until the **Ceramic** appeared in late 1913. She was larger than the P. & O. or Orient liners of the time, and 1,000 tons larger than the **Balmoral Castle** or the **Edinburgh Castle**. The **Nestor's** passengers appreciated her steadiness, roomy comfort and wide recreation deck space, as well as the fact that they had the freedom of the ship and no segregation into classes.

The **Nestor** ran her trials in April 1913 and sailed from Liverpool on her maiden voyage on 19<sup>th</sup> May. She was back in the Mersey on 19<sup>th</sup> September. During the **Nestor's** sixth round voyage the war broke out but she continued on the service until September 1915 when she was taken up for trooping, at first with the Australians. She carried large numbers of 'Anzacs' to and from the Dardanelles and came under fire several times from Turkish batteries. However the **Nestor** survived unscathed and with such a fine reputation among the Australian troops that in the years after the war she was frequently visited by them when on the Australian coast. In January 1916 the **Nestor** left Plymouth with troops as a unit of a very large convoy sailing *via* the Cape for East Africa, India and Mesopotamia. The **Nestor** continued trooping until the summer of 1917 when she was put under the care of the Shipping Controller as an essential carrier - her enormous deadweight capacity was too valuable to be lost on other duties. From April to November 1918 the **Nestor** made five round voyages across the Atlantic with essential foodstuffs and munitions.

At the end of this period she underwent a refit and in December 1918 returned to the Australian run, repatriating many Australians during her first few voyages. All five of Blue Funnel's Australian ships had survived the war and so the service was quickly resumed at full strength, and the *Nestor* settled down to 20 unbroken years of regular running. A smoke room and lounge were added at the after end of her boatdeck and in 1921 a major improvement was the fitting of superheaters. These reduced her coal consumption by 30 tons or so per day, her speed remaining the same at 14 knots, with a half knot in reserve.

In 1925 the imminent depression was beginning to be felt and in 1926 the *Aeneas* was taken off the run and put on the Far East service. As bookings fell, Holts joined up with the other Round-the-Cape service (White-Star/Aberdeen) so that sailings could be more rationalised between them and cut-throat competition avoided.

In 1935 the *Nestor's* accommodation was improved by the addition of some special cabins on the boat deck, and a little later her total capacity was reduced to 175 passengers by converting many 2-berth cabins into single berth. The following year the *Nestor* was involved in a very dangerous and difficult salvage operation. On 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1936 off the South Australian coast in very heavy weather she received a distress call from the Australasian United Steam Navigation Company's *Mungana*. This vessel (3,351 tons) had broken her shaft and was drifting on to the Margaret Brock Reef. The *Nestor* went to her aid but found that the *Mungana* was so close to shallow water that there was little room for manoeuvre. Lines were drifted down on buoys to the helpless ship but were all swept away. A boat was lowered and tried to pass a line but the attempt failed. Finally, with her last rocket, the *Mungana* got a line across the *Nestor's* deck. With this a towing hawser was eventually connected, and the *Mungana* was towed out of danger and on to Port Adelaide - a distance of 170 miles.

When the Second World War broke out the *Nestor* was kept on the run to Australia with cargo and passengers; one of her early jobs was to evacuate a large number of British children to Sydney. She remained on this route throughout the war except for one Far East voyage; her great carrying capacity was of enormous value in this work. The *Nestor* had the good fortune to come through the whole six years without ever being seriously attacked. However her sister, the *Ulysses*, when homeward bound *via* Panama fell victim to a German submarine off Palm Beach. She had been in collision with a tanker and her speed was thus reduced to some seven knots when she was hit and sunk on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1942.

When the war was over the *Nestor* reverted once again to the Australian service. In 1949 she was 36 years old and although she had been maintained in excellent condition, she could hardly be considered of modern design. Her speed was slow in comparison with the newer ships and her engines and boilers uneconomical. On 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1949 she left Liverpool on her last voyage for a long round of farewells in the Southern ports which had known her for so long. It is an interesting reflection on progress, or rather the lack of it, that the *Nestor's* final round voyage to Australia took her 5 months and 20 days, whereas a similar voyage took just 4 months when she was new in 1913. This was not just due to the *Nestor's* age and the decline

in the quality of bunker coal, but was mainly caused by the congestion, delays and disputes in her ports of call. After arriving back in the Mersey in June 1950 the *Nestor* discharged her last cargo and on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1950 the old ship moved briefly to Liverpool Landing Stage where a large Blue Funnel re-union party was held on board. Ex-masters, chief engineers and superintendents and many other ranks came from all over the British Isles to attend the function. When the party was over the *Nestor* left the landing stage and under her own power sailed to the breaker's yard at Faslane where *'the tallest funnel in the world'* was demolished by the British Iron and Steel Corporation.

Following the completion of the *Nestor* in May 1913, the *Ulysses* was ready by October of that year. Outbound voyages commenced on a Friday from Glasgow with calls at Liverpool, Las Palmas and Cape Town. Adelaide was usually reached in 39 days. On the homeward voyage the steamers called at Durban. Blue Funnel described the passenger accommodation as *'without any magnificence, but with the good solid comfort which is essential to the enjoyment of a long voyage'*. The *Nestor* and the *Ulysses* became so popular that their owners ordered a further, even larger, pair of 20,000grt vessels. With the advent of war this order was cancelled.

In November 1914 the *Ulysses* was requisitioned as a troopship and remained in that role until 1917. Because of the recession of the early 1920s passenger demand fell and in 1924 Blue Funnel embarked on a joint service to Australia with the White Star Line. In 1926 the Aberdeen Line was brought into the agreement and sailings were advertised as the White Star-Aberdeen and Blue Funnel Joint Service. After the collapse of the Kysant empire the White Star Australia interests were taken over by Shaw, Savill & Albion who continued the pool agreement with Blue Funnel.

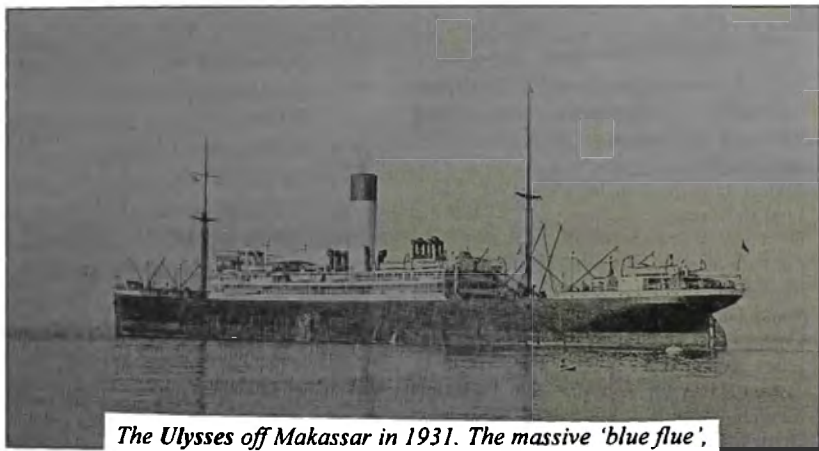
The Great Depression created even more problems for the Australian service and in 1930 and 1931 the *Ulysses* spent six months of the year laid up. In 1931 she made just one three-month voyage to the Far East. Between 1932 and 1934 the outbound voyage operated via the Suez Canal, returning via the Cape. Fares for the round voyage started at £135. In 1935 the *Ulysses* returned to her original schedule with her passenger capacity reduced to 175 following the conversion of some two-berth cabins into singles.

Shortly after leaving Liverpool on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1936 the *Ulysses* encountered very heavy seas which caused damage to the forecastle head. Seamen were sent forward to rectify the damage but a huge sea hurled the working party against the bulkheads in the well deck. Three men were killed and four seriously injured, and the *Ulysses* put into Swansea to land them ashore.

The *Ulysses* continued to sail to Australia up to May 1941 when she was sent to Hong Kong. Shortly after her arrival she was blown ashore in a typhoon in mid-September. She was sent to the Taikoo Dockyard for repairs and by December 1941, with the threat of war with Japan looming, it was decided that it was imperative for her to leave as soon as possible. On the eve of the attack on Pearl Harbour the *Ulysses* sailed for Singapore with dockyard fitters on board completing the work on her machinery. Near the Philippines she was divebombed by Japanese aircraft and

although the bombs missed, the ensuing clouds of smoke led the enemy to believe that they had hit their target and to claim that she had been sunk.

From Singapore the *Ulysses* sailed for Australia and on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1942 left for the U.K. via the Panama Canal. On 8<sup>th</sup> April, off Palm Beach, Florida, she was in collision with the American tanker *Gold Heels* and suffered serious damage to her bow. At a reduced speed of seven knots the *Ulysses* made for repairs at Newport News. Three days later, on 11<sup>th</sup> April, the *Ulysses* was struck by a torpedo from the German submarine U-160, forty-five miles south of Cape Hatteras in position 34°23'N, 75°35'W. Fortunately most of her passengers and crew got away in lifeboats before a second torpedo struck amidships. The *Ulysses* sank rapidly and an hour later all the 290 survivors were rescued by an American destroyer and landed at Charleston.



*The Ulysses off Makassar in 1931. The massive 'blue flue', that once familiar trademark of the Blue Funnel Line, stood seventy-five feet above her boat deck.*

### **LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY INDEX**

The Index, compiled by L.N.R.S. Member Gordon Bodey, was described on page 32 of the June 'Bulletin'. The Index contains entries for the Society's publications which are currently available for access at the Archives and Library of the Merseyside Maritime Museum, or the Local History Archives of Liverpool Central Library. The Index is in two parts: part one is an Index of Papers, Articles, Talks and other items of interest appearing in the Society's publications, whilst part two is an Index by Author. The Index runs to 50 A.4 sides and will be available to Members 'at cost' from mid-October. If you would like a copy of the Index, please send a cheque dated 1<sup>st</sup> October 2001 for £3.50 (made payable to 'The Liverpool Nautical Research Society') to John Shepherd, Flat 7 'Mount Court', Mount Road, WALLASEY CH45 9JS.

## **“BIG BOAT IN THE BAY .....”**

*(part 2)*

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

*“Big Boat in the Bay.....” was often the cry of newspaper vendors echoing around the streets of Douglas when a visiting liner or warship was anchored in the Bay. In this concluding part, Ron Evans details some of the interesting post-war visitors to Douglas; also the visit of the First Division Channel Fleet between 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> August 1907.*

### **The DUCHESS OF RICHMOND of 1929**

*Gross Tonnage: 20,022 Length overall: 601 feet Breadth: 75 feet Speed: 17½ knots*

The **Duchess of Richmond** was built by Wm. Beardmore & Co., Dalmuir for Canadian Pacific for the Liverpool-Montreal service and winter cruising.

The Douglas Harbourmaster logs record 'on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1939 the C.P.S. liner **Duchess of Richmond**, 11,821 tons net, landed pilot at 4.30pm.' Sometimes Liverpool pilots were put ashore in the shelter of Douglas Harbour due to the weather conditions at Liverpool Bar. The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's **Rushen Castle** also arrived at the same time with passengers from Liverpool.

Between 1939 and 1946 the **Duchess of Richmond** was requisitioned for trooping. Following a refurbishment by Fairfields at Glasgow, the name was changed to **Empress of Canada** and the vessel was given a white hull. She resumed her three-weekly Liverpool-Quebec-Montreal service on 16<sup>th</sup> July 1947. It was customary for the **Empress of Canada** to sound her sirens when rounding the Chickens Rock Lighthouse and the blasts came echoing back from the Calf of Man, disturbing all the seabirds nesting on the cliffs.

On 25<sup>th</sup> January 1953 the **Empress of Canada** caught fire and capsized at her berth in Gladstone Dock. She became a total loss and the hulk was towed to La Spezia where it arrived for demolition on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1954.

### **The ASCANIA of 1925**

*Gross Tonnage: 14,013 Length overall: 539 feet Breadth: 65 feet Speed: 15 knots*

The **Ascania** was built by Armstrong Whitworth at Newcastle for the Cunard Line's Canadian service from Liverpool to Quebec and Montreal. Between 1939 and 1947 she was employed as a troopship and was present at the invasion of Sicily and at the Anzio landings. In 1948 she operated a Liverpool-Halifax, N.S. service before being sent to Alex. Stephen for full reconditioning. On 21<sup>st</sup> April 1950 she resumed the Liverpool-Quebec-Montreal service and on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1952 the **Ascania** arrived in Douglas Bay on the occasion of a Manx Homecoming., probably the first to resume after World War 2. The IOMSPCo's **Snaefell** acted as tender.

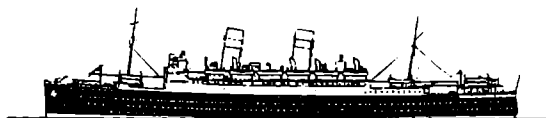
In November 1956 the **Ascania** sailed to Cyprus on trooping duties during the Suez crisis and she was broken up by J.Cashmore at Newport, South Wales in 1957.

"BIG BOAT IN THE BAY....."

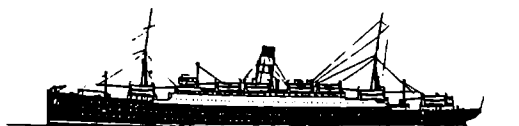
LINERS



*COSTA RICA 1910*



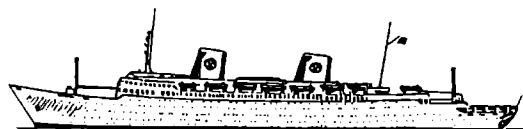
*DUCHESS OF RICHMOND 1929*



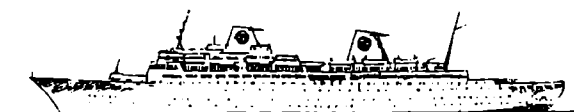
*ASCANIA 1923*



*CARINTHIA 1936*



*GRIPSHOLM 1936*



*KUNGSHOLM 1966*

TENDERS



*RUSHEN CASTLE 1928*



*RUSHEN CASTLE 1928*



*SNAEFELL 1948*



*MANXMAN 1953*



*ST TRILLO 1936*



*KING ORRY 1946*



*BALMORAL 1949*

### 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 & Company at Clydebank for the Cunard Line's Liverpool-Quebec-Montreal service. A précis of the **Carinthia's** career was included in 'Whatever Happened to the .....?' in 'The Bulletin', Vol.32, No.6, page 21. After completing her service for Princess Cruises as the **Fair Princess**, the ex-**Carinthia** is now based at Hong Kong as a casino ship named **China Sea Discovery**. On 30<sup>th</sup> May 1958 the **Carinthia** anchored in Douglas Bay with a party of Manx Homecomers on a visit to the Isle of Man. On this occasion the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's **Manxman** provided the tender services.

### The GRIPSHOLM of 1956

Gross Tonnage: 23,200 Length overall: 631 feet Breadth: 82 feet Speed: 19 knots

The **Gripsholm** was built in 1956 by the Ansaldo Shipyard, Genoa, Italy for the Swedish-America Line. She was intended for the Gothenberg-Copenhagen-New York service, although she spent much time cruising.

On 6<sup>th</sup> May 1965 the **Gripsholm** anchored in Douglas Bay on her Spring Adventure Cruise from New York and the ex-Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company's **St. Trillo** served as a tender, ferrying passengers between the ship and the Victoria Pier in Douglas Harbour.

The **Gripsholm** remains in service as the **Sea**, operated by Baffin Shipping Inc.

### The KUNGSHOLM of 1966

Gross Tonnage: 26,678 Length overall: 660 feet Breadth: 86 feet Speed: 21 knots

The **Kungsholm** was built in 1966 by John Brown & Company at Clydebank for the Swedish America Line's Gothenberg-Copenhagen-New York service. On 20<sup>th</sup> May 1972 the **Kungsholm** anchored in Douglas Bay on her Spring Adventure Cruise from New York and the **Balmoral** acted as tender. The **Kungsholm** visited Douglas again in subsequent years in the early 1970s and the **St. Trillo** provided the tender services.

## VISIT OF THE FIRST DIVISION CHANNEL FLEET TO DOUGLAS, 1st - 5th AUGUST, 1907

### BATTLESHIPS (King Edward Class)

H.M.S. **King Edward VII** (1905) 16,350 tons. Flagship. (Admiral Lord Charles Beresford)

H.M.S. **Britannia** (1906) 16,350 tons

H.M.S. **New Zealand** (1905) 16,350 tons

H.M.S. **Hindustan** (1905) 16,350 tons

### **BATTLESHIPS (Majestic Class)**

H.M.S. **Illustrious** (1898) 14,900 tons (Rear Admiral Robert S. Lowry)

### **BATTLESHIPS (Swiftsure Class)**

H.M.S. **Swiftsure** (1904) 11,800 tons

### **CRUISERS (Eclipse Class) Protected cruisers (second class)**

H.M.S. **Talbot** (1896) 5,600 tons (two funnels)

H.M.S. **Juno** (1898) 5,600 tons (two funnels)

The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's **Mona** and **Tynwald**, the Alexandra Towing Company's steam tug **Herald** and the Blackpool Steam Boat Company's **Queen of the North** acted as tenders to the fleet. Local yachts, rowing boats and motor boats also visited the fleet, many overloaded.

*"Anchorage, Douglas Bay. (Admiralty Office). Anchorage in Douglas Bay is open to the south-west winds and the holding ground is indifferent in most parts. A good temporary berth is about one cable north-west of the breakwater. A good single anchor berth for a vessel of war is further out in the bay, in 7 fathoms, with the Refuge Beacon bearing WSW ¼ W., and the Falcon Cliff Hotel N by W ¼ W."*

The fleet arrived from the south-east, steaming in two columns. Anchored on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> August 1907 at 10.30am in the North Bay, about 200 yards between each ship, the nearest to the shore being the flagship **King Edward VII**, about one mile from shore. Weather fine, bright sunshine, moderate breeze off the land, sea just slightly rippled.

Ships open to the public flew a yellow flag 1.30pm to 6.30pm daily.

The **Tynwald** and the **Herald** ran trips to the fleet in the afternoon. There were many regattas between boat crews from the warships with referee launches dressed overall.

On Thursday and Saturday nights between 10.pm and 11.pm the ships gave a searchlight display and combined with the Douglas Promenade illuminations provided a fine spectacle with dazzling and kaleidoscopic reflections from the cliffs and clouds.

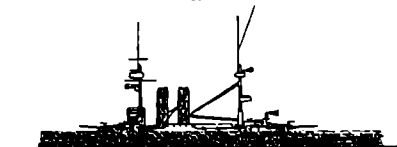
Early on Sunday morning 4<sup>th</sup> August the south-west wind increased and the barometer was falling and a considerable sea was running into the anchorage, with the result that Lord Beresford had sea-going steam on all ships in readiness for instant departure if necessary.

Later on Sunday the wind dropped, but the sea was too high to allow boarding.

The fleet departed at 11.30am on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> August 1907 in bright sunshine and a calm sea. The southern most cruiser weighed anchor and began to move away followed by the other ships in line ahead on a south-easterly course for Liverpool, to be joined

## "BIG BOAT IN THE BAY....."

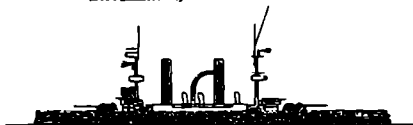
### WARSHIPS



BATTLESHIPS of the KING EDWARD CLASS 1901



BATTLESHIPS of the MAJESTIC CLASS 1898



BATTLESHIPS of the SWIFTSURE CLASS 1904



CRUISERS of the ECLIPSE CLASS 1896

### TENDERS



P.S. MONA 1903



TYNWALD 1891



P.S. QUEEN OF THE NORTH 1893



HERALD 1907 (Alexandre Towing Co. Ltd.)

at Liverpool the following day by the ships of the Second Division of the Channel Fleet which had been visiting Aberystwyth.

The fleet remained at Liverpool until Friday 9<sup>th</sup> August and then proceeded to Blackpool.

The Naval Review at Spithead also took place on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1907 (*Illustrated London News* of 17<sup>th</sup> August 1907 refers).

### THE TENDERS

tss **PEEL CASTLE** 1894 (ex **Duke of York**). Acquired by IOMSPCo 1912.

Gross Tonnage: 1,474 Length overall: 321 feet Breadth: 37 feet Speed: 17½ knots

Tender to the following liners in Douglas Bay:

11.6.1927 **Albertic** / 22.6.1930 **Doric** / 29.9.1930 **Polonia**

Disposal: broken up on the Clyde, February 1939.

tss **RUSHEN CASTLE** 1898 (*ex Duke of Cornwall*). Acquired by IOMSPCo 1928  
Gross Tonnage: 1,724 Length overall: 321 feet Breadth: 37 feet Speed: 17½ knots  
Tender to the following liners in Douglas Bay:  
29.7.1930 **Viceroy of India** / 17.7.1936 **Monte Pascoal** / 6.8.1939 **Costa Rica**  
2.12.1939 **Duchess of Richmond**  
Disposal: broken up at Ghent, January 1947

tss **SNAEFELL** 1948. Built for the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company  
Gross Tonnage: 2,489 Length overall: 344 feet Breadth: 47 feet Speed: 21½ knots  
Tender to the liner **Ascania** in Douglas Bay 5.6.1952  
Disposal: broken up at Blyth, November 1978

tss **MANXMAN** 1955. Built for the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company  
Gross Tonnage: 2,495 Length overall: 344 feet Breadth: 47 feet Speed: 21½ knots  
Tender to liner **Carinthia** in Douglas Bay 30.5.1958  
Final commercial voyage 4.9.1982; at present awaiting disposal at Sunderland.

trss **VICTORIA** 1907. (*ex Victoria, S.E. & Chatham Rly.*) Acquired by IOMSP 1928  
Gross Tonnage: 1,641 Length overall: 322 feet Breadth: 40 feet Speed: 21 knots  
Tender to the liner **Athenia** in Douglas Bay 9.5.1937  
Disposal: broken up at Barrow in Furness, January 1957

ps **MONA** 1889 (*ex Calais-Douvres*) Acquired by IOMSPCo 1903  
Gross Tonnage: 1,212 Length overall: 336 feet Breadth: 35.9 feet Speed: 18 knots  
Tender to the Channel Fleet in Douglas Bay, 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> August 1907  
Disposal: broken up at Briton Ferry in 1909

tss **TYNWALD** 1891. Built for the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company  
Gross Tonnage: 937 Length overall: 276 feet Breadth: 34 feet Speed: 18 knots  
Tender to the Channel Fleet in Douglas Bay, 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> August 1907  
Disposal: Broken up at La Spezia 1952

ps **QUEEN OF THE NORTH** 1895 Blackpool Passenger Steam Boat Co.Ltd.  
Gross Tonnage: 590 Length overall: 230 feet Breadth: 26 feet Speed: 15 knots  
Tender to the Channel Fleet in Douglas Bay, 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> August 1907  
Disposal: War loss as a minesweeper, 1917

mv **ST TRILLO** 1936 Lpl. & North Wales SS Co Ltd, sold to P.&A Campbell 1962  
Gross Tonnage: 314 Length bp 149.2 feet Breadth: 27.1 feet Speed: 13 knots  
Tender to the liner **Gripsholm** in Douglas Bay, 6.5.1965  
Tender to the liner **Kungsholm** in Douglas Bay 1967 and 1969  
Disposal: broken up in Dublin 1975

mv **BALMORAL** 1949 (on charter to P.& A. Campbell 1968-1978)

Gross Tonnage: 690 Length overall: 204 feet Breadth: 30 feet Speed: 15 knots

Tender to the liner **Kungsholm** in Douglas Bay 20.5.1972

Still in service.

Steam tender **HERALD** 1907 Alexandra Towing Company

Gross Tonnage: 387 Length overall: 125.3 feet Breadth: 28.2 feet Speed: 12 knots

Tender to the Channel Fleet in Douglas Bay 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> August 1907

Disposal: 1919, but not broken until 1953 at Bombay.

### **Sources and References**

“**Big Boat in the Bay .....**” has been compiled by the author from the Douglas Harbourmaster Logs 1907-1912 and 1925-1940, courtesy of the Manx Museum; also to the movements of ships described in *Sea Breezes*, *Ships Monthly* and *Shipping Today and Yesterday*. Extensive reference has also been made to the Duncan Haws *Merchant Fleets* series of books, and to the *Steamers of the Past* articles by Capt. J.H. Isherwood in *Sea Breezes*, from which the drawings which accompany this article have been taken.

Profiles of all the tenders and the liners **Costa Rica** of 1910 and the **Kungsholm** of 1966 are by the author. |||||

### **BOOK REVIEW**

#### **“A TOUR OF DUTY IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST”**

Edited and annotated by Dwight L. Smith

**E.A. Porcher and H.M.S. Sparrowhawk, 1865-1868**

ISBN 1-889963-06-2 \$34.95

*published by The University of Alaska Press*

Edmund Augustus Porcher was the captain of a Royal Navy vessel while he served an Esquimalt-based tour of duty on Vancouver Island. He was also a watercolour artist who made a remarkable array of sensitive and skilfully done paintings of what he saw, reproductions of which are included in the book. This volume - based on first hand documentation and illustrations by one participant in the ongoing British presence that helped to secure Canada's Pacific coasts - provides insight into what other functions or influence a warship and a naval commander might have besides a military or defensive rôle, the ostensible primary mission. Commander Porcher was a dutiful naval officer, but fortunately for readers today, he was also an enthusiastic tourist. Few such informative accounts have survived the intervening 135 years. Editor Dwight Smith, emeritus professor of history at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, has conjured an era through the unique voice of one of its standard bearers.

## WARTIME TURN-ROUND OF SHIPS

*by H.M. Hignett*

*This short article is a précis of the paper read to the Society by Mr Hignett on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> March. A copy of the full text is available on request by sending an A.4 stamped addressed envelope to the Editor.*

During wartime when ships were bound for the U.K., sailing either independently or in convoys, there were arrangements in place to advise the Admiralty to which ports they should be directed. Ships display complicated, fickle and sometimes unpredictable characteristics. Apart from damage caused by enemy action, expert attention was often required which could only be supplied by their builders. This was in addition to cargo requirements. A Government body was needed to co-ordinate the turn-round.

In 1906 a Merchant Shipping Act set up a Merchant Shipping Advisory Committee. It was realised that port congestion would be a major problem in time of war. In peacetime twelve major ports handled 80% of imports. However in the First World War, Southampton was practically closed to ocean traffic and London and the four principal West Coast ports had to cope alone. The depletion of dock labour, appliances, tugs, rolling stock, lorries, horses and carts at all ports seriously impaired rapid distribution of imports.

Liverpool had been developed for the fast throughput of imported food and materials to inland centres. In 1913 Liverpool handled 13.8% by weight of the total imports to the U.K., yet only 4.2% of the total population lived within a 15-mile radius of the port. The 1914 report to the Imperial Defence Committee pointed out that congestion of the transit sheds at Liverpool would arise at any time of pressure of traffic.

By January 1915 the Board of Trade and the Transport Department of the Admiralty were well aware of the congestion. During January there had been up to 70 vessels at anchor in the Thames awaiting a berth, and Southampton Docks were almost at a standstill due to conflicting military requirements.

Large numbers of dockworkers had been recruited into the armed forces and these were mostly the young, experienced and able men. At Liverpool 5,000 of the 16,000-strong workforce were in the armed forces, as were 1,000 of the 3,500 Manchester dockers.

In the Spring of 1915 the cargo handling situation was at its most difficult at Liverpool. The problem was to reconcile the demands of the Navy, Army and Transport Departments and to maintain the flow of cargoes of national importance. The Liverpool Co-ordination Committee was formed with representatives from the Admiralty, the War Office, the Board of Trade, the shipowners and the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board. A complaint was the priority given to Armed Merchant Cruisers whenever they arrived in the Mersey.

Dock work was not a reserved occupation and there were problems with the Ministry of Munitions recruiting dockworkers for factory work.

The increased importation of North American wheat arriving at west coast U.K. ports aggravated the congestion. It did not increase the supply of food to Britain but merely added to the line of vessels awaiting discharging berths. A Port and Transit Executive Committee (PTEC) with executive powers was established and absorbed the powers of the former committees. In October 1915 the PTEC demanded the 'pooling' of rolling stock and the eight largest railway companies achieved this in early 1916. Definite rules of priority for discharging

vessels according to the nature of their cargoes were drawn up. In July 1916 the PTEC reported a substantial improvement in the situation.

Turn-round problems were not confined to British ports. The French ports were congested with British forces, and colliers arriving from South Wales queued for discharging berths. France's coalfields were very close to the front lines and the demand for imported coal was more than the French ports could handle.

In early 1917 submarine warfare was taking its toll of British shipping but the Navy was reluctant to introduce a convoy system citing a lack of suitable vessels and the inability of merchant ships to maintain station. However the Liverpool Steamship Owners' Association made successful representations to the Government to the effect that a convoy system be introduced immediately. A Liverpool Convoy Committee, chaired by T. Harrison Hughes, was established and proved its worth when the American trooping programme commenced, ensuring fast turn-round times for convoys.

The Sea Transport Division was disbanded in 1920 but not entirely forgotten. Twelve million tons of imports were handled at the Mersey ports in 1925. Many of the problems during the First World War were caused by many berths not being suitable for general cargo. By 1939 it was thought that there would be sufficient berths on the west coast even if 75% of east coast shipping had to be diverted to the west. Congestion in the west would be avoided by three-shift dock working.

In 1936 a senior civil servant began planning the formation of a body needed to organise the operation of shipping in the event of war and the Shipping Defence Advisory Committee was established. Two years later in May 1938 Basil (later Lord) Sanderson was asked to join an embryo Ministry of Shipping with the duty of supervising the general turn-round of ships.

The Admiralty assumed control of all British merchant shipping on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1939. Organisation of convoy escorts and the conduct of the convoys at sea, the routes used by all shipping and the instructions to masters in the execution of the Admiralty's policy all rested with the Trade Division.

A bombing raid on London on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1940 showed that the Thames and the south coast ports were not suitable for normal shipping activity. The German aircraft were only forty minutes flying time away. The Admiralty stated that it had insufficient resources for the protection of large vessels in the Channel and the Thames approaches.

It was understood that, in time of war, stocks needed to be dispersed rapidly. Usually about one million tons of commodities were stored locally near the docks in areas vulnerable to air attack. It was a priority to keep wharves and quays clear - goods must be moved promptly to prevent delays in the turn-round of shipping.

The Diversion Committee of the First World War was reformed under the title of 'The Diversion Room'. Port Officers were recruited from all the major and many of the lesser ports. Following daily sessions in the Diversion Room, it was determined to which ports incoming vessels should be directed. The Admiralty announced advance details of expected convoys each consisting of up to seventy merchant ships. As the convoys neared their dispersal points they would be split into groups of vessels for particular ports.

The Thames ports had plenty of spare capacity, but it is interesting to note that during the period of the bombing of western ports, the number of ships sent to the Thames did not rise significantly. In peacetime the Port of London handled over 25% of the nation's imports and exports.

In May 1941 a Government reorganisation led to the formation of the Ministry of War Transport. For the next six months the Ministry ironed out the numerous problems until in

December 1941 Japan commenced hostilities against the U.S.A. and simultaneously attacked all British controlled territories in the East. The Ministry was warned that U.S. forces would soon commence arriving at U.K. ports; initially U.S. vessels were expected at the rate of one hundred 10,000-ton ships a year. The pressure on ports would increase far more than originally planned.

The bombing of Liverpool docks in May 1941 reached a point where it was stated that if it continued for a further two nights, then the port would be put out of action altogether. Liverpool had 130 berths for deep-sea vessels and 14 for coasters. At the end of the seven day May blitz there were just 12 berths still operational for deep-sea ships, but by the end of the month 96 of the 144 berths were back in use.

During the Second World War the Port of Liverpool was closed for a total of 54 days. A total of 1,285 convoys had arrived at the port, the largest consisting of 60 ships. Over 70 million tons of imports had passed through Liverpool.

Spare capacity and equipment from the London docks was used elsewhere. The Ministry of War Transport arranged an overside discharging port at deepwater anchorage berths off Gourock in the Firth of Clyde. Robert Letch, from the Port of London Authority, was charged with the development and organization. A large firm of Thames stevedores transferred its foremen and dock labour to Gourock. One hundred lighters were transferred from London to the Clyde.

By the end of 1941 key commercial and shipping executives were returning to the U.K. from the Far East. Most of the stevedoring work at the Normandy D-Day landings was undertaken by men from Liverpool and the Humber.

From the summer of 1944 until the end of hostilities Liverpool carried on receiving and despatching cargoes of all types. The Mersey does not receive much recognition regarding the wartime turn round of ships, but in two World Wars it was the key to most of the U.K. Trade. |||||

### **JUST FANCY THAT !!!**

Britain's first wavepower operated generating station came on stream in November, 2000. It is situated at Claddach, near Portnahaven at the south-west tip of the southern Hebridean island of Islay.

The wavepower station works by allowing the incoming waves to push an enclosed volume of air through a turbine placed at the rear of the air enclosure. The receding wave creates a vacuum which pulls air back in through the turbine and this 'push-pull' action creates electrical power which is fed into the national grid.

The wavepower generator is known by the acronym LIMPET (Land Installed Marine Powered Energy Transformer) and was developed by Wavegen and Queens University, Belfast. It provides enough power for approximately 400 homes.

### **ERRATA - JUNE 'BULLETIN'**

page 28 : River Trigosa should be River Trigosso

page 29 : James Leicester should, of course, be James Lancaster

Regarding copper sheathing, it seems I credited the Admiralty with more decisiveness than their due. R.J.B. Knight "*The Introduction of Copper Sheathing into the Royal Navy*", *Mariner's Mirror*, Vol.59 (1973), tells us that there was no single order to copper the entire fleet, but a succession of orders. *Charles Dawson*

## READERS' LETTERS

from Mr S. Kennedy of Hightown, Liverpool L38:

The **San Demetrio** story, so graphically told in the well-researched article in the June 'Bulletin', was, I believe, the basis of the 1943 film '*San Demetrio : London*'. It could also possibly have contributed to the inspiration for Philip Zec's famous cartoon, the original of which appeared in the *Daily Mirror* of 6<sup>th</sup> March, 1942.

Thank you for another splendid 'Bulletin'.



CARTOON BY PHILIP ZEC IN THE "DAILY MIRROR" 6 MARCH 1942

e-mail from Mike Stammers, Keeper of the Merseyside Maritime Museum:

Further to the **Skirmisher** article in the June 'Bulletin', readers might like to know that **Cunard** donated her bell to St Nicholas Parish Church (Liverpool Pier Head) where it is displayed in the Lady Chapel.

from Mr N.B. Owen, Lower Heswall, Wirral:

I should like to thank you for the excellent 'Bulletins' received over many years. Most enjoyable reading.

I am seeking information on the steam yacht **Vanduaara**. She was built in 1886 by D. & W. Henderson, Glasgow, with dimensions 169'8" x 24'1" x 14'2" and purchased by the Liverpool Pilotage Authority in 1915 to supplement the pilotage fleet. In 1923 she was sold and renamed **Frontiersman**. It is from this point in the

vessel's history that I look for facts to create a fuller picture of the partly uncorroborated family story surrounding this vessel.

It appears that the **Frontiersman** was purchased and prepared for a voyage to the West Coast of America, departing 1924/25. The vessel was to be crewed by those with sufficient monies to purchase a berth. The first appointed master lodged with my grandmother - Mrs Maude Smith of 10 Alfred Road, Birkenhead. My uncle, Norman Fowler-Smith, born in 1905, was offered a berth by the master.

Before the voyage commenced this master was replaced but his commitment to my uncle honoured. It appears that most of the personnel connected with the enterprise were adventurers. I gather it was a troubled voyage. Forward planning for the vessel's victualling and fuelling was bedevilled with financial misarrangements.

It is not known what route the **Frontiersman** followed, but by the time she reached the West Coast of America she was in a desperate plight. When she limped into port, possibly San Francisco, the authorities impounded her because of unpaid debts along the way. The ship's company dispersed.

My uncle remained in California until his death in 1953, though on the outbreak of war he returned to serve in the Royal Air Force.

Any confirmation or additional information would be most welcome.

from Mr J. Cowden of Lower Heswall, Wirral:

I recently arrived home after another long haul around the world. On this occasion I took in Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, Miami, Los Angeles, Auckland, Napier, Wellington, Brisbane, Canberra, Sydney and Singapore: after which I was ready for home! Met up with some friends of yesteryear and on most occasions 'talked ships'.

Naturally I paid a visit to the dock area of Buenos Aires. The docks here are commonly referred to as 'Ditches'. With the advent of containerisation B.A. has discarded its old inner dock system and built a fine container port. The enclosed inner dock system has all been converted into bars, restaurants and apartments. However, whilst walking round the inner docks I couldn't help but think that their lay-out had the appearance of the South End docks at Liverpool - Harrington, Toxteth and Brunswick: all enclosed and with swing bridges separating them.

As a result I paid a visit to the Harbour Master's office to enquire about some background. I was greeted warmly by the Harbour Master himself (I did explain that I was a Member of the Liverpool Nautical Research Society) and he appeared delighted to receive an overseas visitor. I can do no better than quote from a document he kindly gave me:

*"In 1887, merchant Eduardo Madero had a futuristic project for the port of Buenos Aires. He wanted to reproduce here the docks that he had seen in the British port of Liverpool. In 1910, thirty thousand vessels entered the port of Buenos Aires but the water was not deep enough for large vessels. It was not until 1911 that massive European investment allowed the construction of the New Port to commence."*

from Captain C.W. Andersen of Houston, Texas:

Captain Andersen has e-mailed the Society with a report from *The Mobile Register* giving details of diving operations on the wreck site of the **Alabama**:

(The American Confederate cruiser **Alabama** was built by Laird Brothers at Birkenhead in 1862 under a contract with Commander James Bulloch of the Confederate Navy. The British Government which had declared its neutrality in the American Civil War issued an order of detention on the vessel under construction, as yet unnamed but known as No.290. Before the enforcement officers could reach Birkenhead the ship, named **Enrica**, steamed down the Mersey without clearance. She made for the Azores where she picked up her armament which had been brought from Liverpool in two British ships. She was then commissioned as the **Alabama**.

Under the command of Captain Raphael Semmes, she swept the seas of Federal shipping for two years until she was sunk in the English Channel off Cherbourg by the USS **Kearsarge** on 19<sup>th</sup> June, 1864 - *Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea*.)

from "The Mobile Register":

'This year's dives on the **Alabama** wreck site were conducted from 9<sup>th</sup> June to 21<sup>st</sup> June and from 27<sup>th</sup> June to 2<sup>nd</sup> July. Both American and French divers took part.

'The Mobile-based CSS **Alabama** Association began its recovery of artefacts from the site last year. Prior to that, the French had recovered some 200 items since the discovery of the wreck by a French naval mine hunter on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1984. The work is now being sponsored by the Mobile-based organization in co-operation with the French.

'The artefacts raised this year are being shipped to the Warren Lasch Conservation Laboratory in Charleston, S.C. for cleaning and preservation. Many are expected to be displayed at the Museum of Mobile.

'Underwater archaeologist Gordon P. Watts Jr. reported that 40 to 50 artefacts were recovered this year, many from the quarters of Raphael Semmes, the **Alabama's** captain. Watts said that a rich covering of sediment in the hull of the ship, particularly in Semmes' quarters, had kept the artefacts in remarkable condition, including a decorated pipe bowl which had retained the smell of tobacco. The big surprise of the dives, said Watts, was the number of items found. He felt sure that as excavations continued in the hull, all sorts of organic material such as leather and fabric will be recovered. Sediment has prevented oxygen from deteriorating the artefacts and the cold water 200feet down in the English Channel has assisted the preservation.

'Plans are being made for further dives at the wreck site in 2002. Watts said he wants a larger vessel with the capacity to lift up to 25 tons. He also hopes to obtain the use of a remotely operated vehicle with the ability to take underwater photographs.

'The president of the CSS **Alabama** Association, Robert S. Edington of Mobile, said that he expects funding will be available for the dives in 2002 using much more sophisticated and expensive equipment. The budget for this year's dives was about \$160,000.' |||||

## LAST LINK WITH WHITE STAR - THE 'BRITANNIC' OF 1930

*compiled by The Editor*

Just over forty years ago, on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> December 1960, there sailed from the Mersey for the last time the famous and well-loved Cunard liner **Britannic**, bound for the shipbreaking yard of Thos. W. Ward Ltd at Inverkeithing, Fife.

Although the **Britannic** was owned by the White Star Line for little more than four of the thirty years of her service, she was almost universally regarded, unofficially, as a White Star liner for the whole of her career. That this should be so is not difficult to understand, since she carried the colours of the once-powerful North Atlantic line to the end of her days and there were few whose daily work brought them into regular contact with the ship who really became used to the idea of her being a Cunard liner.

The **Britannic** was launched on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1929 at Harland & Wolff's Belfast yard. She had a gross tonnage of 26,943 which made her the second largest motorship in the world (the Italian liner **Augustus** was the largest). Propelling machinery in the **Britannic** consisted of two 10-cylinder Harland-B. & W. 4-stroke, double acting oil engines, each driving its own screw shaft and giving a service speed of 18 knots. Her engines cut fuel consumption by 50%, down to 40 tons per day, compared with an oil-fired steamer of similar specifications.

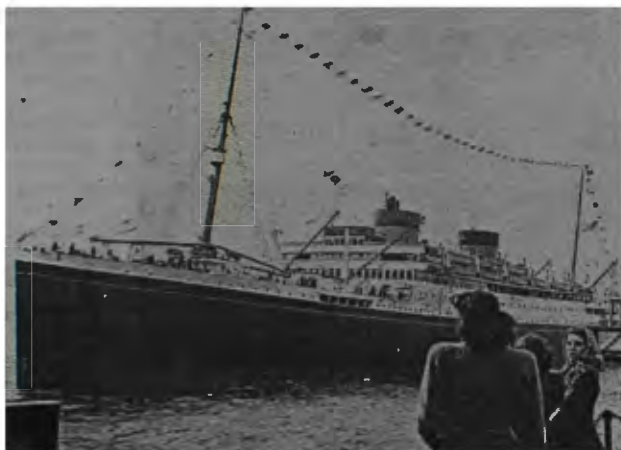
The **Britannic** began her maiden voyage from Liverpool to New York on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1930 with calls at Belfast and the Clyde. Designed during the period when control of the White Star Line was in the hands of Lord Kylsant's Royal Mail Steam Packet group, the **Britannic** and her sister ship **Georgic**, which followed two years later, were probably influenced by the success of the large passenger motorships owned by Royal Mail and some of its subsidiary companies. The two ships were the first British passenger liners on the North Atlantic to be fitted with oil engines and at the time of their completion they were the largest cabin-class liners in the world. As a new ship the **Britannic** had accommodation for 479 cabin-class and 557 tourist-class passengers.

Following the merger of the Cunard and White Star Lines in 1934, the **Britannic** retained her buff funnels with black tops, together with her familiar houseflag, which was flown above that of Cunard. After the merger the **Britannic** sailed on the Liverpool-New York service, but in 1935 she was placed on the London-Le Havre-Southampton-New York route, and for the next four years the **Britannic** had the distinction of being the largest liner to use the Port of London, berthing in the King George V Dock.

On the outbreak of the Second World War the **Britannic** became a troop transport and continued in that capacity for the duration of hostilities. She is credited with carrying more than 180,000 servicemen to and from ports all over the world, and with sailing 376,000 miles on war service.

The **Britannic** was requisitioned on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1939 for conversion into a troopship for 3,000 men, later increased to 5,000. Her first trooping voyage was from the Clyde to Bombay. March 1943 saw her sailing from the U.S.A. to Algiers with troops for the Sicily landings (Operation Husky). The **Britannic** was involved with repatriation work throughout 1946, mainly from the Far East and Bombay to the U.K.

After her war service the **Britannic** returned to Liverpool and was placed in the hands of Harland & Wolff for complete reconditioning. She made her first post-war trans-Atlantic sailing from Liverpool on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1948 and re-instated winter cruises from New York to the Caribbean and the Mediterranean. Apart from a collision with the U.S. cargo vessel **Pioneer Land** in the Ambrose Channel at New York, the **Britannic's** post-war service was largely uneventful.



ONE of Merseyside's favourite ships, the last White Star liner, **Britannic**, eases up to Princes Landing Stage in 1948, dressed overall for her post-war service. Her Liverpool-Cobh-New York crossings took eight days.

Picture:  
**BLUECOAT PRESS**

Speculation about the **Britannic's** future began in May 1957 when the Cunard Steamship Company announced that they had reserved a berth at the yard of John Brown, Clydebank, for the construction of a new liner of about 28,000 gross tons for the Liverpool-Cobh-New York service. Although not specifically stated, it was generally assumed that this ship was to be a replacement for the **Britannic**, but the following year Cunard cancelled the Clydebank reservation.

The **Britannic** continued in service but her machinery was reported to be deteriorating and constant maintenance and an increasing number of repairs became necessary. She suffered a serious disablement in New York through crankshaft damage which caused her to miss two voyages, and finally, during the unofficial seamen's strike of the summer of 1960, Cunard issued a statement that she would be withdrawn from service and sold at the end of the year.

In the event the **Sylvania** was transferred to the Liverpool-New York service until the final scheduled voyage which left Liverpool on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1966. |||||

*The Liverpool Nautical Research Society*  
(Founded in 1938)

## THE BULLETIN

*Editor : John Shepherd*

Volume 45, Number 3, December 2001



<b>Cheerful's Fateful Year</b> ( <i>Gordon Bodey</i> )	page 1
David MacBrayne - '150 Not Out' ( <i>The Editor</i> )	page 12
<b>The Victory</b> - the Manx Steamer which sailed to the Arctic	page 16
Some Intriguing Empires ( <i>Alan McClelland</i> )	page 18
<b>The Manxman</b> of 1904 ( <i>Ron Evans</i> )	page 22
<b>The 60th Anniversary of the Sinking of the Bismarck</b> ( <i>R.E.J. Varns</i> )	page 32
<b>Some Early Paddle Engines on the Mersey</b> ( <i>Terry Kavanagh</i> )	page 40

## **The Liverpool Nautical Research Society**

*President:*

Mr A.S. Davidson

*Vice-President:*

Mr H.M. Hignett

*Chairman:*

Captain M.D.R. Jones

*Vice-Chairman:*

Mr D.K.C. Eccles

*Council:*

G.Cubbin, R.Dennis (*Meetings Secretary*), J.E.Lingwood, D.Littler,  
A.H.McClelland, J.Shepherd (*Editor*), G.F.Wright

*Honorary Officers:*

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

### **Membership and all Correspondence**

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

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

*The Society is represented on the following websites:*

[www.merseyshipping.co.uk](http://www.merseyshipping.co.uk)  
[www.cronab.demon.co.uk](http://www.cronab.demon.co.uk)

*Front Cover: The Duchess of Hamilton of 1932. She became part of the amalgamated Caledonian MacBrayne fleet in 1973, before being broken up in 1974. (See: David MacBrayne, 150 Not Out, page 12)*

**"A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR  
TO ALL OUR READERS"**



## 'CHEERFUL'S' FATEFUL YEAR

by L.N.R.S. Member Gordon Bodey

CHEERFUL    Official Number: 70864    Signal Letters: N M V K

*The vessel was built in 1874 as the **Ethel Caine** by Osbourne, Graham & Co. at Hylton, Sunderland, for N. Caine Jr. of Liverpool and owned by him until 1882 when she was transferred to the ownership of John Ellis & Company of Drury Buildings, Water Street, Liverpool. The **Ethel Caine** was renamed **Cheerful** on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1883. She was an iron screw steamer of 1,014 tons gross, 637 nett; 226.1 feet in length, 30.1 feet breadth and 16.0 feet depth.*

In September 1884 the **Cheerful** (Captain J.M.Stevens) was engaged on her regular run from Liverpool to London via Falmouth and Plymouth. She had left Liverpool on the afternoon of Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> September and arrived off Pendennis Point - two miles around the headland from Falmouth - at about 07.00 on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> September. An hour later as she was moving towards her berth inside the port area she was struck squarely abaft the mainmast on her starboard side by the bows of the French steamer **Clydach** (939grt - Captain Ordronneau) of Nantes. The **Clydach** was en route from Bilbao to Cardiff with a cargo of iron ore and had called into Falmouth to coal. An oddity of this incident was that both vessels had been built at the same yard - the **Clydach** in 1880.

The damage sustained by the **Cheerful** was a split in her starboard side which extended from the rail to the turn of the bilge; being 4ft. wide at the top and 9in. wide at the bottom. Additionally, some of her cabin accommodation was destroyed, but without injury to anyone. Within minutes the **Cheerful** began to go down by the stern.

Captain Stevens, immediately perceiving the implications of the collision, ran the **Cheerful** alongside and as close to the nearby breakwater as possible where she settled in an upright position soon afterwards. Here she lay with her bridge just showing above the water at high tide, and at low tide her stern in about 11ft. and her bows in about 7ft. of water. A number of passengers and the crew were able to scramble on to the breakwater without mishap. The **Clydach**<sup>1</sup>, meanwhile, with a large hole punched in her port bow, was also beached.

Work quickly commenced on removing as much cargo as possible from the **Cheerful**, as tides permitted. While this work was in progress the Salvage Association despatched, post-haste, 10-inch and 8-inch pumps to effect a speedy recovery of the vessel. Patching and pumping continued apace and Captain Stevens was able to report

<sup>1</sup> The **Clydach** (Captain W. Gibb) in 1887 was in the ownership of A.Y. Mackay of Grangemouth. She sailed from Rostock for Harnosand (225 miles north of Stockholm) on 1<sup>st</sup> October. The following day, whilst proceeding north-eastwards near Sandhammaran (on the Swedish mainland and N.N.W. of the island of Bornholm), the **Clydach** was struck by the bow of the Aberdeen steamer **Benamain** (381grt) and sank within half an hour. All the crew were saved. The **Benamain** survived the collision.

on the 17<sup>th</sup> September that the **Cheerful** was raised and afloat. Having been taken into one of the adjacent dry-docks and repaired in quick time, the **Cheerful** then continued her voyage to London. The Salvage Association received a telegram from Captain Stevens on 27<sup>th</sup> September announcing her safe arrival at London that morning, and advising that she was to dock on the afternoon tide. So ended her first brush with disaster.

Fate's second attempt on the life of the **Cheerful** was not long delayed. Some five months later on the night of 1<sup>st</sup> February 1885 the **Cheerful** was in the English Channel, bound for Plymouth on her return run to Liverpool, having left London the previous day. At about 22.00 when some 8 miles S.S.W. of Anvil Point (itself 9 miles S by E of Poole), with a fresh gale blowing from the S.W. accompanied by heavy squalls, rain and a heavy cross sea, she hauled down her masthead light and hoisted two red lights; she also started burning blue flares and sounding her whistle.

The above signals were sighted by the steamer **City of Hamburg** (1,219grt - Captain D. Lamont; owners Palgrave, Murphy of Dublin), which was on passage from Rotterdam to Belfast and Dublin with a general cargo, when about ¾ mile distant from the **Cheerful**. Coming up within hailing distance, the **City of Hamburg** was informed by the master of the **Cheerful** that his vessel had lost her propeller and he asked to be towed to Portland, some 16 miles distant, which the **City of Hamburg** readily agreed to do.

After some considerable difficulty, due to the fierce weather and sea conditions, the **City of Hamburg** made fast ahead of the **Cheerful** with two hawsers - one on either side of the **Cheerful's** bow - and commenced the tow at about 00.15 on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, with Anvil Point bearing N by E about 5 miles distant; both vessels in the meantime having drifted some three miles nearer the shore on which the wind and sea were fast setting them.

At about 03.00 with the Shambles [a 2½-mile long, ½-mile wide bank of sand and broken shell starting some two miles east by south of the Bill of Portland (the southernmost spit of Portland) and lying roughly in a W.S.W. to E.N.E. direction] bearing W.S.W. and about half a mile distant, and with a full gale now blowing from the south, the port hawser parted. The **City of Hamburg's** engines were immediately slowed and she continued to tow at minimum speed. Fifteen minutes later the starboard hawser also parted whereupon the engines were stopped and the hawsers hauled aboard. Both vessels, meanwhile, were drifting towards the Shambles (and, it was said, Portland Race) with the set of the tide. At this point the **Cheerful** immediately let go her anchor and was eventually brought up about 2½ miles N.W. of the Shambles Light (¼ mile east from the eastern tip of the Shambles).

There was, fortunately no involvement with the Portland Race\* which occurs about a mile to the south of the Bill of Portland about the Portland Ledges and, there-

*\*At the confluence of the very strong south-going streams running down either side of Portland with the east and west-going Channel streams, an often violent, fast-flowing turbulence occurs - particularly in heavy weather and with a gale blowing against the stream as in this instance.*

fore, to the W.S.W. of the Shambles, whereas the vessels were passing roughly E.N.E. of the Shambles. In the prevailing conditions, and in total darkness, the grim possibility of this happening must have seemed a very real prospect and would almost certainly have spelt total disaster had it occurred.

When daylight came the **City of Hamburg**, which had stood by the **Cheerful** for the remainder of the night, steamed across the starboard bow of the **Cheerful** in order to attempt (at the request of the **Cheerful**) to pass another line aboard (from just ahead of her), but in doing so drifted towards the **Cheerful**. The **City of Hamburg** thereupon put her engines full ahead and her helm hard aport but was caught by a '*terrific squall*' and driven athwart the **Cheerful's** bows. While veering away to starboard, the **City of Hamburg's** port quarter fouled the stem of the **Cheerful** causing damage to both; the **City of Hamburg's** side being split from deck level to waterline, allowing a large quantity of water to pour into a hold.

The **City of Hamburg** could no longer offer help and was now herself in grave danger. Accordingly she made for Portland Roads where she anchored at about 09.00 in relative safety. Her master sent a message to Weymouth giving the **Cheerful's** position and details of her predicament. This resulted in the despatch of the tug **Queen** which '*succeeded after several partings in the terrific seas in placing a tow rope aboard*' and then managed to pull the **Cheerful's** bows around and off the shore. The **Cheerful** was thus saved from going ashore and the **Queen**, with the aid of another tug, the **Commodore**, took her in tow between Portland and the Shambles and arrived in the safety of Portland harbour during the afternoon of 2<sup>nd</sup> February. (It was variously stated that the **Cheerful** was towed to Falmouth, 125 miles away, but in view of the ferocity of the prevailing weather and the proximity of the safety of Portland harbour, this seems hardly credible).

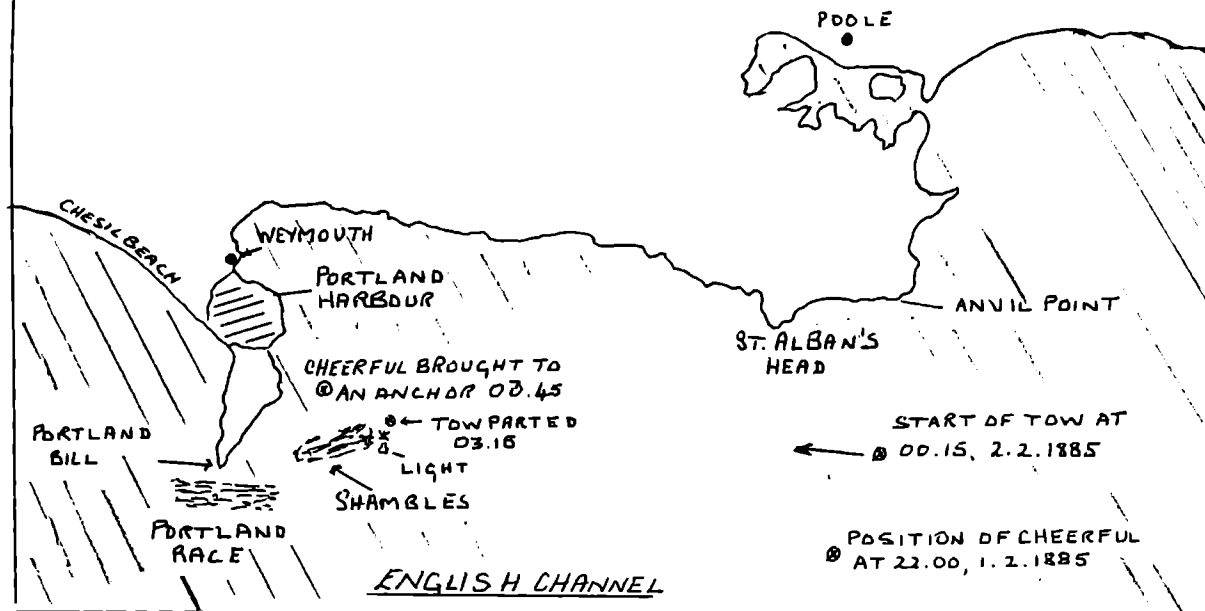
Subsequently the Liverpool ocean-going screw-tug **Knight of St. John's** arrived to tow the **Cheerful** back to Liverpool. The tow passed the Lizard at 10.00 on 8<sup>th</sup> February 1885, and Holyhead on the morning of Thursday 12th February (when, curiously, she was reported as the **Ethel Caine**), and they arrived in the Mersey later that day.

The **City of Hamburg** <sup>2</sup> was not long delayed and after repairs had arrived

<sup>2</sup> *The City of Hamburg continued in the ownership of Palgrave, Murphy & Co. until detained at Hamburg in 1917 and remained there until the end of the war, whereupon she reverted to her Dublin owners. After less than a year she was sold to another Dublin firm, W. McAllum, and soon after that to Greek owners becoming the Penaghis Dracatos. Three more ownership and name changes followed (all Italian - one of them registered in London, 1922/25), and she was registered from 1931 until 1944 as the Tenace before disappearing from the Register, aged 63 or 64.*

THE ABDORTIVE TOW OF THE 'CHEERFUL' BY 'CITY OF HAMBURG'

ONE INCH = APPROX. 6 MILES



and discharged at Dublin before sailing from London on 7<sup>th</sup> March for Suakin (a former port in N.E. Sudan on the Red Sea).

Consequent on the above incident a salvage action was instituted by the owners of the **City of Hamburg**, *et al*, against the owners of the **Cheerful**, for services rendered. The **Cheerful**'s owners counterclaimed for the damage occasioned during the performance of the 'alleged' services. The case was heard before Mr Justice Butt on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> November 1885.

The plaintiffs contended that *'but for the services of the City of Hamburg, the Cheerful must have been driven ashore near St Alban's Head. Also, in rendering the services, she had consumed 10 tons of coal and sustained considerable damage.'* Furthermore, that *'inside the Shambles, where the Cheerful had been towed to, she was in comparative safety.'* It was also stated, fairly accurately, that the **Cheerful** had been towed sixteen miles.

The defendants denied the above assertions and also claimed that *'the Cheerful, though deprived of her steam power, and to a considerable degree unmanageable, was in no immediate danger when the City of Hamburg took her in tow ..... and that the City of Hamburg did not render any beneficial services.'* It was further claimed that *'the Cheerful had been placed in a worse position than when first taken in tow, and the danger to her was greatly aggravated by the damage that was done by the negligence and want of skill by those on board the City of Hamburg.'* The latter claim referred to the collision which the defendants said occurred when the **City of Hamburg** *'fell into a trough of the sea and got out of command.'* Rather perversely the defendants maintained that there had been no shorewards drift during the incident. It was also denied that it was as a consequence of the message relayed to Weymouth by Captain Lamont that the **Cheerful** was ultimately saved.

The two Elder Brethren of Trinity House, who were advising the Judge, concurred with the contention of the defendants that there was no imminent risk to the **Cheerful** of going ashore when she first broke down eight miles off Anvil Point. However, it would have been difficult to imagine anything other than her being driven ashore within hours, with much loss of life, had the **City of Hamburg** not intervened. In the course of his ruling, Mr Justice Butt said that *'he was loath to find against the plaintiffs, but must abide by the authorities laid down on this subject'* which stated *'that unless the salvors, by their services, conferred actual benefit on the salvaged property, they are not entitled to salvage remuneration.'*

The counter claim by the **Cheerful** was also dismissed; the Elder Brethren advising that in the position of the incident, and given the weather at the time, the **City of Hamburg** was not negligent *'though greater care and skill might have been used and would have avoided the collision.'* The valiant efforts made by the **City of Hamburg**'s crew at great risk to themselves and their ship received no recognition - no award was made as to costs - other than in the Judge's own awareness as noted.

Having been towed back to Liverpool by the tug **Knight of St. John's**, the **Cheerful** was soon repaired and back in service on her usual run. Her popularity was such that she attracted a regular clientele of passengers despite the faster, safer and

reliable alternative train journeys. The total number of passengers on board the vessel at any given time would not have been known, except by the crew, as many people booked a passage on the day of departure at each port of call but the number is believed to have been, generally, about twenty.

Late on the night of Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July 1885, some five months on, fate was again about to reach out to the *Cheerful*. She was still under the command of Captain Stevens and was heading towards Land's End en route to Liverpool, having left Falmouth during the afternoon carrying a general cargo and a number of passengers.

A Royal Naval squadron of the Channel and Combined Fleet was exercising off the south-west coast at this time. The squadron was under the temporary command of Admiral Sir Geoffrey Hornby, C.-in-C. Portsmouth, flying his flag in HMS *Minotaur*. In the squadron was HMS *Hecla*, a torpedo depot ship, under the temporary command of Captain A.H. Markham<sup>3</sup>. It is assumed that the *Hecla* had a prime rôle in these exercises as Captain Markham was the captain (1883-1886) of HMS *Vernon*, the naval torpedo school at Portsmouth.

The *Hecla* had been laid down at Harland & Wolff's yard on 7<sup>th</sup> March 1878 as the merchant vessel *British Crown*, but before she was completed she was purchased by H.M. Government and modified to serve as a torpedo depot ship. She was engined by Forrester & Company of Liverpool. As built the *Hecla* was un-armoured (but was subsequently provided with armour cladding) and carried scant weaponry. She was, virtually, a floating factory for the repair of equipment and the servicing of torpedoes, of which she carried a very large quantity. The torpedoes were for use by destroyers and torpedo boats - submarines<sup>4</sup> were then still in the future. Her complement when commissioned was 277.

<sup>3</sup> A.H. Markham became commodore of the training squadron (1886-1889) and was promoted Rear-Admiral in 1891. As second-in-command of the Mediterranean squadron under Sir George Tryon, he was flying his flag in HMS *Camperdown* on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1893 when, during exercises off the coast of Syria, the *Camperdown* rammed and sank the flagship HMS *Victoria* with great loss of life. The court martial exonerated him on the evidence that he had been carrying out the orders of his commander-in-chief.

Throughout his career Markham seems to have had, on the surface, what nowadays might be called a 'gung-ho' attitude. This ranges from his attacking Arab pirates when he was a midshipman to suppressing the 'illegal' labour trade in the South Seas as a lieutenant; from his heroic, but naïve attempt on foot (without dogs) to reach the North Pole in 1875/76 (which nearly succeeded, but which also nearly ended in total disaster) as a commander under Captain George Nares, to his part in the *Victoria* disaster as an Admiral.

Markham was almost like a character out of the 'Boys' Own' paper, and as such he was admired and respected. Beneath the surface, however, an opposite picture was the case and by the time of the *Cheerful* disaster the querulous nature of his character was more in evidence.

<sup>4</sup> It may be of some interest to note here a prescient comment in a book of the period:

"The submarine boat is really a form of torpedo craft. Submerged boats played some part in the American Civil War; and in 1896 a vessel of the kind was built for the United States Navy, designed for a radius of sixty miles under water, with a speed of eight knots. These boats, of

*course, act against the enemy by discharging torpedoes. The crew breathe by means of a large supply of compressed air. In the Goubet, built for the Brazilian Government in 1896, it was claimed that three men could live for twelve hours, or even longer, by the supply of compressed air. Twelve hours is a considerable time ..... but it is clear, nevertheless, that the submarine's range of action must be limited. The difficulty of vision is a prime defect. Still, the application of scientific knowledge and of engineering skill seems endless and equal to every emergency, and who knows but the submarine boat may prove the great destructive agency of the navy in the twentieth century."*

At 07.00 on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July 1885, the **Hecla** was detached from the squadron to convey a torpedo boat to Pembroke for '*immediate and necessary repairs*' and having done so she got under way from Milford Haven at 19.00 that same evening to resume her duties with the squadron. From early in the evening a heavy sea mist had developed accompanied by intermittent patches of dense fog. Captain Markham issued orders that the steam whistle was to be '*constantly sounded whenever fog enveloped the ship*'. Once clear of the land the course was set S.S.W. in order to clear the Longships (about a mile and a half due west of Land's End) by some ten miles.

On Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> July at 04.00 and about 25 miles N.N.W. of the Longships, the **Hecla** and the **Cheerful** were steaming on converging, and almost opposite, courses to each other and, still shrouded in fog, each was unaware of the other's proximity. At this time the **Hecla** was reportedly making a steady nine knots on a course S.W. by  $\frac{1}{4}$  W, and the **Cheerful** 8 knots on a N.N.E. course. It was now broad daylight.

At about eight minutes after 4.am, with the watches on both ships having just changed, the two ships sighted each other coming out of the fog. The **Cheerful** was sighted two points ( $22\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ ), and possibly some three hundred yards, off the **Hecla**'s starboard bow. Those on the **Cheerful** saw the **Hecla** bearing towards them almost stem to stem and at about two to three hundred yards distant. The **Hecla** attempted to alter her course to S by E while the **Cheerful**'s course was also changed, but, inexplicably, to one which brought her port side athwart the bows of the **Hecla**. Both ships thereupon reversed their engines. Within five minutes the **Hecla**, still with about two knots of forward way on her, struck the **Cheerful**, bow-on, just abaft the funnel splitting her side from rail to keel. The **Cheerful** began to go down at the bow immediately, and four minutes later she had plunged out of sight leaving some forty people struggling in the water.

Notwithstanding the manoeuvres to avoid a collision, the inevitable outcome had been anticipated on board the **Hecla** (Captain Markham as well as off-duty officers had now arrived on deck, as had several other crew members), and lifeboats had been swung out and their crews were standing by to put them into the water. One minute (reportedly) after striking the **Cheerful**, the **Hecla**'s boats were in the water where they recovered thirty-nine passengers and crew, many of them clinging to the shattered bow of the **Hecla**.

Of those picked up, Mrs M. Holbrook of London, a passenger, and David Jones (variously named as Johns), the second mate and officer-of-the-watch on the

**Cheerful** when the collision occurred, died shortly afterwards despite sustained efforts by the **Hecla's** medical officers to resuscitate them. It is believed that they both drowned.

Initially nine crew and passengers were reported lost. It was later stated, as noted above, that only the crew would actually know how many passengers were on board at the time and it was thus feared that the loss of life could be greater. Of the casualties, three were known to be crew members and included the stewardess, Mrs Connolly. Another was a boy of about ten who was travelling with his father who had been rescued. The final number of casualties was to be thirteen.

The **Hecla** lost her stem and suffered a 10ft long rent in her port bow extending above and below the waterline allowing the fore compartment to fill, but as watertight doors abaft the compartment had been closed immediately the collision occurred, she was able to stay afloat. This necessity had been overlooked by the officer-of-the-watch, but was perceived by another officer, Lt. M. Brooks, who had, fortuitously, arrived on the bridge just before the impact and issued the necessary order; Lt Brooks also took the initiative in ordering the lifeboats to be readied.

The **Hecla** remained at the scene of the disaster for three and a half hours, during which time a collision mat and three thrummed mats (sheets of canvas with short lengths of rope yarn woven into them) were placed over the hole in her bow. Additionally the fore topsail was hauled round and under the bows and secured as a cover over the mats, and the foremast bulkhead abaft the flooded fore compartment was securely shored up with heavy timbering from inboard. The **Hecla** then set course, 'steaming easily', for Plymouth where she arrived the following day.

On Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1885 an inquest was opened on board HMS **Hecla** into the deaths of Mrs Holbrook and Mr Jones conducted by the Coroner of Saltash and assisted by the Town Clerk. The inquest was due to commence at 09.00 but the **Hecla** was lying in Plymouth Sound and the Coroner did not arrive on board until noon. It was then considered too late to assemble a jury from onshore and, most irregularly, a jury was empanelled from among the officers of the **Hecla** (excluding those who had been on watch at the time of the collision). A solicitor observed the proceedings on behalf of the owners of the **Cheerful**. The inquest report is not available but the proceedings appear to have been not overlong before arriving at a verdict which was to the effect that death '*was caused by the collision of the two vessels*'.

Eight days later on 31<sup>st</sup> July a court martial assembled on board HMS Royal **Adelaide** (flagship) at Devonport for the trial of Captain Hastings A. Markham and Sub-Lieutenant William C.M. Nicholson. The proceedings took place between the aforementioned date and 4<sup>th</sup> August 1885. The President of the Court was Rear-Admiral A.C.F. Heneage, second-in-command of the Channel Squadron, supported by eight other officers and a barrister-at-law, acting as Deputy Judge Advocate.

The charge read as follows:

*"To enquire into the cause of the collision between HMS Hecla and the Steam Ship Cheerful, of Liverpool, which resulted in the loss of the latter ship, and to try Captain H.A. Markham and Sub-Lieutenant W.C.M. Nicholson on the following*

*charges:- First. Against Captain Markham. Negligently or by default hazarding the safety of HMS Hecla by proceeding at an unduly high rate of speed, taking into consideration the foggy state of the weather at the time. Second. Against Sub-Lieutenant Nicholson. Negligently performing the duty imposed upon him as officer of the watch, by which the safety of the ship was hazarded."*

A great deal of testimony was given at the trial; only some of which can be touched upon here.

The first charge of proceeding at an excessive speed in the prevailing conditions was denied by the accused who said that nine knots was a moderate speed in those conditions. This contention was supported by Lt. F.St.Leger Luscombe, who was the officer of the middle watch, and called as a witness. He said that: *'During the last hour of his watch [03.00 to 04.00] it was foggy. Occasionally he could have distinguished a vessel 400 yards off. .... Nine knots an hour was a moderate speed in a mist for the Hecla, which would not so readily answer her helm at six knots as she would at nine.'* At no time was any consideration given to reducing speed.

Three other officers concurred with the above, including Navigating-Lt. F.A.G. Rich who also said: *'The Hecla's rudder was certainly not large enough for manoeuvring. She answered her helm pretty well, but slowly.'*

Captain Markham testified that shortly after leaving Milford Haven *'they steamed into a dense fog, and at once the ship was eased from full speed to as slow as possible.'* (He was also to say that she could not go at much more than half speed because she only had steam up in two boilers). It became much less foggy when the land was cleared (some ten miles from Pembroke Dock) and *'was comparatively clear'* by 10.pm. He also said that *'the Hecla was really only going half a mile an hour in excess of her proper half speed'* i.e. she was capable of seventeen knots [?].

During the first watch it was foggy (as opposed to misty) off and on and Captain Markham was on the bridge from 22.00 until midnight. The officer of that watch, Lt. W. Rickets, also said that the *Hecla* was proceeding at nine knots. The distance from Milford Haven to the place of the collision was some one hundred and ten miles (ninety five nautical miles); this distance was covered in possibly only eight hours (at least one hour's normal steaming was lost due to the conditions at the start of the passage), giving an average of twelve knots. The defence seems to have successfully concentrated the Court's attention on the figure of nine knots (which itself might have been considered excessive in the conditions at times that night), there being no report of the Court examining the defence on the distance covered in the time available.

A number of other conflicting statements were given by witnesses for the defence in the reported evidence (a Court transcript of the case is no longer available) regarding other aspects of the incident which were not reported as being challenged by the Court; e.g. the new watch officer said that he ordered the helm *'starboard'*<sup>5</sup> when the *Cheerful* appeared on the *Hecla's* starboard bow, and the *Cheerful* *'ported her helm'*. The officer going off watch said that when he heard the *Cheerful's* whistle off

the starboard bow he ordered the **Hecla's** helm to be '*ported*', and he thought that the **Cheerful** '*starboarded*' her helm.

Lt. M. Brooks, who did not keep watch on board the **Hecla**, had gone up to the bridge just prior to the collision. He said '*he had observed the Cheerful immediately he got on the upper deck, from five to ten seconds before the collision took place*'. With both vessels by now attempting to go full speed astern and assuming a closing speed of just four knots, i.e. about seven feet per second, the distance between them at that point would be only some 70 feet, or less. Lt. Brooks then went on to say "*.... if the Hecla had placed her helm to starboard at once [when evasive action was first taken, and when he was below], and increased to full speed instead of reversing her engines, from what he saw he should say that it would not have prevented a collision*". This conjecture apparently went unchallenged by the Court.

There is hardly any evidence reported as given by crew members of the **Cheerful** except that given by Captain Stevens, in itself very little. In it he outlined the circumstances just prior to the collision as stated above and he also said that '*When he left the bridge just before 4 o'clock in charge of the second mate, the weather was clear and the ship was put to eight knots.*'

While Captain Stevens was giving his account of the incident it was mentioned that an important witness from the **Hecla** (the fore cathead look-out man) would not be called because the owners of the **Cheerful** declined to allow the witness to attend as there would be an inquiry in the Admiralty Court. As the Admiralty Court case transcript is not available it can only be speculated as to what evidence this witness might have had to offer in favour of the **Cheerful's** case; and, by inference, against his superiors.

The above brought an admonishment from Court member Captain Kennedy who said: "*If the owners of the Cheerful declined to send important witnesses, it was so much the worse for them*".

None of the **Hecla's** look-out men (four) was asked to give evidence regarding the cause of the collision or the action taken leading up to it. They were only asked about the state of the weather (as regards range of visibility), and each account was at variance with the others. No two estimates of the range of visibility given by witnesses tallied: the lowest was 100 yards and the highest 900 yards.

On the second charge, fellow officer defence witnesses testified fulsomely on behalf of the officer of the watch - the most junior officer of the deck - regarding his qualifications, competency, and responses to the situation he found himself in (even

<sup>5</sup> At this time (and, indeed, into the 20th Century), the order to '*port the helm*' was given in order that the ship's head would turn to starboard and *vice versa*. [This results in unequal thrust on the sides of the rudder so that if, for example, the helm is *ported*, when in forward motion, the main thrust from the water is on to the rudder's starboard side thus pushing the stern to port and the bow to starboard]. It can be seen that this, especially in an emergency, could lead to a wrong order being given or to the order being misinterpreted by the helmsman. If the complication of trying to go astern was added to the equation then the result could be total chaos.

though he came on duty some minutes after the start of the watch - by his own admission - and possibly less than alert). None of the above points were examined or challenged by the Court.

Sub-Lieutenant Nicholson chose, as his defence, to read a well-prepared statement to the Court after first saying *'that he felt sure that he might fearlessly submit himself to the judgement of the Court without further remark, but he thought it more respectful and also more befitting the gravity of the issue the Court had to try ...'* [that he should read the statement]. In it he presents a picture of himself in the few minutes he was involved in the incident as a clear-thinking, totally competent officer with a total recall of all the pertinent details, and of his considered responses to the unfolding disaster confronting him. Towards the end of his statement he said: *'He, therefore, could not share any of the blame, if blame there was, for this untoward accident.'*

An opinion offered by two witnesses was that, had the **Cheerful** simply continued on her course as when first sighted, no mischief would have occurred; both vessels clearing each other, albeit closely. Captain Markham, in his statement to the Court, stated that had the fog been dense enough for neither vessel to sight the other, neither vessel would have taken action and the collision would not have occurred. Whatever truth there was in these contentions, the anxiety of Captain H.A. Markham to rejoin the squadron may have been that which terminated **Cheerful's** fateful year.

At the end of the proceedings the Court deliberated for half an hour before finding that the charges against both defendants were not proved, and acquitted them.

HMS **Hecla** was paid off in 1893 and was replaced by a purpose-built vessel HMS **Vulcan** (6,630 tons displacement) which was commissioned at Portsmouth on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1893 (with the crew of the **Hecla** being transferred to the **Vulcan**) and at that time considered the most complex vessel in the Royal Navy and something to wonder at! In addition the **Vulcan** had all the operational attributes of a conventional cruiser, albeit lightly armed. The **Hecla** was, however, re-commissioned in 1898. In 1900 it was said *"probably no vessel has her name bound up with the history of the modern naval school as this old ship"*, and that her captains were noted for their 'skill and scientific attainments'.

In 1912 the **Hecla** was rebuilt to act as a depot ship for destroyers and was finally sold in 1926. HMS **Hecla**: 6,400 tons displacement; 391.5 ft in length, 38.8 ft breadth, 24.3 ft depth.

#### **Acknowledgements and Reference Sources:**

Iain MacKenzie, Curatorial Editor, Admiralty Library

Admiralty Pilotage Books and Charts

Conway's *All the World's Fighting Ships*

D.N.B. 1912 - 1921

Liverpool Shipping Gazette and Telegraph

Lloyd's Registers and Lloyd's Lists

Navy Lists, 1885 - 1890

*The Nelson Navy Book* - J.C. Hadden

*Officers of the Royal Navy Tried by Court Martial* (H.M.S.O.)

*The Rules of the Game* - A. Gordon

## DAVID MACBRAYNE - '150 NOT OUT'

*by the Editor*

*David MacBrayne was born in Glasgow in 1817 - two years after Waterloo, in the reign of George III and the premiership of Lord Liverpool. He was born at a time when steam was about to replace sail as a means of propulsion. Roads hardly existed in the Western Highlands of Scotland, except for those laid down by General Wade after the 1715 Rebellion, between 1725 and 1737. It was quicker to go by sea. The Crinan Canal was opened in 1801 and the Caledonian Canal, after a false start, was finally opened in 1847. This article looks at how the MacBrayne name has been involved in West Highland shipping services for 150 years.*

In 1851 many of the steamers plying from Glasgow to the Clyde and West Highlands were operated by Messrs G. & J. Burns, who also had ships sailing to Belfast and Liverpool and were very much involved in the running of the Cunard Company's trans-Atlantic liners and connecting services.

As the West Highland ships were a relatively insignificant part of the Burns' empire, it came as no surprise when they sold them off to one David Hutcheson, who had actually been managing them for some time.

David's brother Alexander was another partner as was David MacBrayne, a nephew of the Messrs Burns; in fact MacBrayne's appointment was one of the conditions of the sale. The date was 10<sup>th</sup> February 1851.

The fleet which David Hutcheson & Company inherited comprised eight paddle steamers. The main sphere of operation, called the Royal Route because Queen Victoria had traversed part of it only four years previously, was from Glasgow through the Crinan Canal to Oban and Fort William, and then on through the Caledonian Canal to Inverness. Four years later, in 1855, Hutcheson built new tonnage to serve the Outer Isles. In 1864 the *Iona* was built for the Glasgow-Ardishaig service and went on to give 72 years of service on the route. In 1878 the *Columba*, arguably the greatest Clyde steamer of all time, was built - complete with her own post office and barber's shop!

In the late 1870s the Hutcheson brothers retired, leaving the firm in the sole hands of David MacBrayne. From 1879 (when he was 65) he carried on the business in his own name.

The firm of David MacBrayne quickly took over the services to Islay and the other southern Hebridean islands. In 1880 the railway reached Oban and MacBrayne soon responded by increasing sailings and inaugurating a daily mail service from Mull.

The company did not have a great deal of capital and new ships to the standard of the ever expanding railway fleets on the Clyde were out of the question. At the turn of the century MacBraynes was a veritable transport museum of historic craft.

In fairly quick succession new railways reached the West Coast of Scotland - at Fort William, Kyle of Lochalsh and Mallaig - and MacBrayne's fleet rosters were altered to meet the new situation. The new century, however, brought further changes,

not least the coming of the fast, smooth and economical turbine steamer and the implications for MacBrayne's Clyde services.

At last, in 1902, at the age of 88, David MacBrayne admitted his two sons into full partnership; he still maintained his involvement until his retirement four years later when the firm became a private limited company, with David Hope MacBrayne as chairman. The old man died in 1907.

There followed a period of new building, largely utilitarian ships for the mail routes to the islands and lochs. Several ships were lost in the Great War of 1914-18 and a much-reduced fleet operated in the 1920s. In 1927 three prominent vessels were lost by stranding or fire and D.H. MacBrayne '*threw in the towel*' and withdrew the company's tender for the mail contract.

Thanks to a rescue operation jointly with the LMS Railway and Coast Lines Ltd., a new company was formed - David MacBrayne (1928) Ltd with Sir Alfred Read of Coast Lines as chairman. To retain the mail contract the new company had to commission four new vessels. Comfortable and reliable, though not necessarily beautiful, three were motor vessels, the last, the **Lochfyne**, being Britain's first 'diesel-electric' ship.

In 1935 David MacBrayne Ltd (the '1928' was now omitted) took over two magnificent vessels from Turbine Steamers Ltd., and this allowed the withdrawal of the veterans **Iona** and **Columba**. The **St Columba**, uniquely carrying three funnels, took up the mail route from Glasgow to Ardrishaig and the **King George V** became the all time favourite at Oban, sailing to Staffa and Iona.

The six years of the Second World War saw the temporary abandonment of excursion sailings but an increase in other traffic due to military movements. In 1948 the LMS shares in the company were nationalised, and David MacBrayne Ltd acquired the ships and goodwill of McCallum, Orme & Co. Ltd. which for many years had operated cargo sailings to the Islands from Glasgow.

The main revolution of the post war years came in the 1960s when in 1964 the Government provided finance to commission three car ferries to link Skye with the Outer Isles, Skye with the mainland at Mallaig, and Mull with Oban and Morvern. The new ships loaded vehicles by means of a hoist, replacing overnight the age-old derrick or cargo plank system.

In 1969 the state owned Scottish Transport Group was formed to operate not only MacBraynes, but also the Caledonian Steam Packet Company (dating from 1<sup>st</sup> June, 1889) on the Clyde. Inevitably the two shipping companies were soon amalgamated becoming Caledonian MacBrayne on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1973. The 'CalMac' vessels soon sported the red Caledonian Steam Packet lion in a yellow disc in the centre of the red MacBrayne funnel. Gourock became the head office of the new company and the old MacBrayne office in Robertson Street, Glasgow was closed.

The pressing need for the new management was for the provision of modern roll-on, roll-off facilities to cater for the increasing need for fast turn-rounds and the transport of heavy goods vehicles. In six short years this was largely achieved. Linkspans had to be provided at ports throughout the network, those at Ardrossan and

Brodict (Arran) being the first. The down side was the withdrawal of old favourites - perhaps the **King George V** in 1974 being the greatest casualty.

In 1990 Caledonian MacBrayne became wholly owned by the Secretary of State for Scotland (since 1999, The Scottish Executive).

Caledonian MacBrayne now operates a fine, modern fleet. In 2000 a very sophisticated Lochnevis was built for the Small Isles (Rum, Muck, Eigg and Canna), and the final vessel in the present upgrading programme, the new Hebrides for the Uig (Skye) to the Outer Isles route, was launched by the Queen in August 2000, the first MacBrayne vessel ever to be launched by a reigning monarch.

### **The future for Caledonian MacBrayne**

Caledonian MacBrayne, as a ferry company whose sole shareholder is the Scottish Ministers, has an essential role in serving local communities and businesses, some of which rely almost entirely on the supplies and visitors the company transports. These lifeline services are possible only with the support of a deficit grant (£19 million for the financial year 1.4.2000 / 31.3.2001) from the Scottish Ministers. The company operates to a break-even budget after taking into account the deficit grant.

As a provider of services to economically fragile outlying communities, Caledonian MacBrayne is currently facing the challenge of major changes. At the beginning of the current financial year, the Scottish Transport Minister Ms Sarah Boyack published a consultation paper '*Delivering Lifeline Ferry Services*' in response to the European Directive on maritime cabotage, under which State Aids (subsidies) may be paid only to fulfil a Public Service Obligation (PSO) and the services so covered must be open to competition. Under this EU directive, the Scottish Executive will invite tenders for the Clyde and Western Isles ferry services with the subsidy being paid to the successful bidder.

Caledonian MacBrayne's long and proud record of providing essential services is at risk. The unnecessary exposure of Caledonian MacBrayne to the public tendering process could mean the cherry-picking of the most lucrative services. Not only that, but the tendering process proposes the use of five-year contracts that will serve as a disincentive to investment in new ships, new services and in recruitment and training.

The Scottish Executive has also suggested splitting Caledonian MacBrayne into an operating company and an infrastructure-owning company. This will invariably create unnecessary bureaucracy, inefficiency and a lack of accountability. There is a precedent here with Railtrack, and what a spectacular fiasco that has turned out to be !

It is nothing short of scandalous that the Scottish Executive is seeking to expose these lifeline services to negative commercial pressures, to end the cross-subsidisation of vital routes, to fragment a successful network and to dry up investment in safety and skills.

It is now 150 years since David MacBrayne began his association with steam-powered passenger and cargo ships, beginning a long tradition of service to the

communities of the West Coast of Scotland. The provision of these lifeline services has always involved commercial and practical challenges which Caledonian MacBrayne continues to meet through its willingness to invest in the finest maritime skills and marine technology.

Caledonian MacBrayne is part of everyday life for thousands of people who live and work along the West Coast of Scotland and in the Hebridean Islands, and CalMac services are integral to the economy of the area. *For Goodness' sake, just leave Caledonian MacBrayne alone !!!*

### **MacBrayne Memories .....**

MacBrayne's crews became folk heroes of the Hebrides. They got through to the Islands in the wildest weather when lesser men would have run for shelter and lesser vessels would have sunk. MacBrayne was a lifeline of paramount importance because without his fleet and the regularity of his sailings few communities could have survived. No wonder there was a love-hate relationship between the islanders and their link with the rest of the world which is expressed in the well known yet still memorable lines:

*"The earth belongs unto the Lord, and all that it contains,  
Except the Western Islands, as they are all MacBrayne's"*

In 1925 MacBrayne's *Glencoe* was in her 79th year of service. A notice in the third class accommodation read:

*This cabin has accommodation for 90 passengers when not  
occupied by cattle, sheep, cargo, or other encumbrances.*

Still on the *Glencoe*, the story is told of her master, Captain Baxter, who on hearing the cry '*Minister Overboard!*' is said to have stopped the engines and called down from the bridge "*What denomination?*" Back came the answer: "*Wee Free*". Captain Baxter leapt without a moment's hesitation to the engine room telegraph and rang for full speed ahead !

### **Further Reading:**

This article has not even scratched the surface of the story of David MacBrayne. A new 190 page book entitled *Royal Road to the Isles* was published in August 2001. Written by Ian McCrorie, its 190 pages tell the fascinating story of 150 years of MacBrayne shipping. The book contains many previously unpublished photographs.

**Royal Road to the Isles** ISBN 0-9507166-1-8 by Ian McCrorie  
*published by Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd., The Ferry Terminal, Gourock PA19 1QP*

## THE 'VICTORY' - THE MANX STEAMER WHICH SAILED TO THE ARCTIC

*compiled from research by Charles Dawson and Malcolm McDonald*

*A few weeks ago, L.N.R.S. member Ron Evans contacted me with the following story. Some old friends of his from Vancouver recalled that when they were teaching a prospecting course to an*

*Inuit group near Gjoa Haven on King William Island in the Arctic they came across the remains of an old ship. The local Inuit had been salvaging pieces of iron from the wreck for very many years. It was thought the ship had been named Victoria and had once sailed between the Isle of Man and the mainland. This turned out to be basically correct - except that the ship's name should have been Victory.*

*j.s.*

The paddle steamer **Victory** was built by Humble and Hurry of Liverpool and was registered by them on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1826 as of 69 tons burthen, 96' 6" in length, 16' 1" beam and 7' 9" depth.

The **Victory** was chartered by a Manxman, Mark Cosnahan, who was resident in Liverpool and she was placed on the Liverpool and Douglas service in the late summer of 1826. Cosnahan called a meeting in Douglas in November 1826 and offered shares of £50 in his venture to the Manx public. Anyone who took up three shares or more would be eligible for free passage in the **Victory**. To his surprise and disappointment Cosnahan did not get the support he expected.

Cosnahan continued his efforts and the **Victory** remained on her weekly run between Liverpool and Douglas for the remainder of the 1826-1827 winter. This was increased to three round trips a week during the early part of the 1827 summer but the **Victory** was losing money and Cosnahan withdrew from the venture.

It was to be another two and a half years before a similar attempt to attract support for a steamer service in the Isle of Man was made, but this time it resulted in the formation of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company.

In 1827 John Ross submitted a scheme to the Admiralty for a voyage of discovery to the Arctic in a steam vessel. When they did not approve, Ross asked a friend of his, Sheriff (Felix) Booth (of gin fame) to finance him.

The paddle steamer **Victory** was purchased and re-registered to J. Ross in London on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1829 when her dimensions were given as 80 tons burthen, 93' 6" x 18' 4" x 5' 5". The vessel was refitted for the ice and fitted with a new engine by Braithwaite & Ericsson.

At the time Ericsson was working to produce, amongst other things, distilling systems - hence the connection with Booth. The new engine did everything in its power (or rather, the lack of it) to give marine steam a bad name. After sailing from London on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1829 the **Victory** only made it as far as Woolwich before breaking down. After repairs she reached Gravesend at 3½ to 4½ knots (this speed was

quoted in Captain John Ross's log). The paddles were hoisted out of the water for the ocean passage.

Ross, in his published account, attributed the failure of his expedition to Ericcson's engine. Ericcson responded with a lengthy rebuttal laced with sarcasm. His main claim was that the engine was only experimental and he had never expected Ross to go to the Arctic with it. When he was aware of Ross's intentions, he had too little time to prepare it for the trip. Furthermore Ross's engineers, stated Ericcson, were incompetent to properly operate it or 'trouble shoot' any problems it developed. Ross, a somewhat hot-headed naval officer, apparently wanted to settle the dispute by challenging Ericcson to a duel, but Booth intervened to prevent it. John Ericcson (1803-1889) went on to become one of the foremost developers of the screw propeller.

The paddle steamer **Victory** eventually made it to the Arctic. She was under the command of John Ross, and his nephew James Clarke Ross was second in command. She had a complement of 25. The **Victory** had been provisioned for 1,000 days and a store ship was to have accompanied the expedition but the crew mutinied at Loch Ryan and she never sailed.

On reaching the Arctic, Ross ordered the **Victory's** engines to be dismantled and placed ashore. Some months later they were cut up to replace sheathing torn from the **Victory's** stem.

Ross's expedition conducted surveys of King William Island, the Boothia Peninsula and the Gulf of Boothia (the latter two being named after the merchant). On 1<sup>st</sup> June 1831 James Ross and a party determined the exact position of the Magnetic Pole, then at Latitude 70° 5' 17" North, Longitude 96° 46' 45" West by the absolute inaction of several horizontal needles. A limestone cairn was erected containing a canister with a record of the event. The party returned to the **Victory** through blinding snowstorms after being away 28 days.

The **Victory** was finally abandoned in the Arctic ice on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1832. The expedition was later rescued by the Hull whaler **Isabella** on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1833.

### **Further reading**

Sir John Ross - *Narrative of a Second Voyage in Search of a Northwest Passage and of a Residence in the Arctic Regions during the years 1829-1833* (London, 1834)

John Guthrie - *A History of Marine Engineering*, especially pp 47-55.

Maurice J Ross - *Polar Pioneers: John Ross and James Clarke Ross* (Montreal McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994)

### **THE MONDAY FACILITY**

The Archives and Library at the Merseyside Maritime Museum will be closed for stocktaking until the end of January 2002.

**The Monday Facility will resume on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2002.**

Full details of all dates for 2002 will be given in the January 'Bulletin Extra'

## SOME INTRIGUING EMPIRES

*by Alan McClelland*

*A précis of the presentation given to the Society by Alan McClelland  
on 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2001.*

By 1937 some folk in Government circles were convinced that conflict with Germany was almost inevitable. A shipbuilding consultative committee was set up to survey berth capacity, output of machinery and yard allocation. It advised on steps necessary in the event of war to satisfy the tonnage programme of the Admiralty and the Mercantile Marine Department of the Board of Trade. The chairman was Amos Ayre. The outcome was 'Hypothesis Y' and this facilitated basic planning which needed little alteration throughout the Second World War.

Amos Ayre was born in South Shields in 1885. He served his apprenticeship with Wood, Skinner & Company and studied at the Armstrong College - now the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. He was awarded the King's Prize and an Honours Medal. After working in shipyards in Dublin and Belfast, Ayre was appointed the first manager of the Govan Labour Exchange and became an expert on public service issues. During the First World War he eventually became responsible for the war effort in Scottish shipbuilding and repair facilities. By the standards of the time he enjoyed sound relationships with responsible labour leaders. Ayre always maintained his deep interest in ship design and building. His thoughts on prefabrication and standardisation were both novel and practical. In 1918 Ayre, with his younger brother Wilfrid, set up the Burntisland shipyard, employing lessons in supply, construction and design learnt during the war. The year 1921 witnessed his first publication '*Theory and Design of British Shipbuilding*'. Drawn increasingly into national shipbuilding affairs, Amos Ayre severed his connections with the Burntisland yard in 1936. In 1939, when the Ministry of Shipping was created, he was appointed Director of Merchant Shipbuilding and Repairs.

A man of practical, straightforward attitude, Amos Ayre inspired his department. The highest possible standards in design and planning were maintained whatever the wartime difficulties. For example, Ayre insisted that all merchant ship prototypes should be tank tested, and that potential operational problems must be borne in mind, including station-keeping in convoys, the vagaries of the Atlantic, and the adequacy of cargo handling gear. Of particular concern were ballasting arrangements and the need to provide sufficiently powerful propulsion machinery in all classes of vessels.

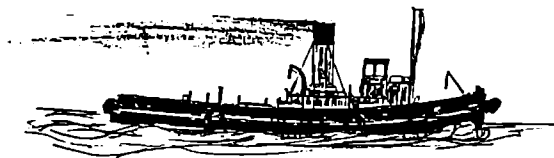
Typical of Ayre's direct influence was the design of the TID tugs. They were 70 feet in length overall and for ease of construction in a wide variety of yards had a hard chine, straight line hull form. In post war years these tugs, for example the **Bonita** of the Liverpool Lighterage Company, proved successful in extended commercial service. Some 180 of them were completed.

Inevitably as the Second World War progressed so particular military needs grew. Amongst them was that for the transportation of heavy, indivisible loads. Christen Smith's BEL ships proved invaluable in this connection, and as demand grew the **Belpareil** built in 1926 by Sir W.G. Armstrong-Whitworth & Company was taken as a model for new tonnage. Sir Amos Ayre (as he had become) enlisted the assistance of Commander Gabriel Smith of the Royal Norwegian Navy to accelerate the development of what was to be the **Empire Elaine**. Constructed by Vickers-Armstrong & Company at Barrow, she was a single screw oil engined ship capable of 12 knots, and her main cargo gear consisted of three derricks, each with a 120-ton lifting capacity. Military planning next generated a demand for higher speed. As a consequence the hull form was lengthened and refined and the steam turbine driven **Empire Viceroy** and her sister ships were delivered. Their double reduction geared machinery made them capable of 15 knots. Technical considerations arising from production circumstances resulted in four ships of the type completed by the Greenock Dockyard Company being given turbo-electric drive. Although they were single decked it may be noted that the Ben Line employed several of them on its services in peacetime for a considerable number of years.

Towards the end of the war the need arose for yet more vessels with heavy lifting gear and it was decided that they should be of what pre-war charterers called 'handy size', i.e. up to 330 feet in length and capable of accessing a wide range of ports. William Gray & Company had already produced modified versions of their Scandinavian steamers to act as crane ships in Russian ports with no suitable arrangements for unloading heavy material. The firm was now asked to produce vessels capable of transporting not only heavy vehicles and other plant, but also cased oil, coal and other bulk commodities. Known as the **Empire Malta** class, these oil fired steamers with engines aft earned the nickname 'Empire Heinz's' because of their adaptability. Equipped with with one 80 ton derrick serving No.3 hatch, one 50 ton at No.1 and eight 3 ton derricks, their raised quarterdeck configuration gave no clue as to the flexibility of their internal arrangements. The transverse bulkheads at either end of No.3 hold had moveable portions giving access to Nos. 2 and 4 holds. In way of No.3 hold there were side tanks for water ballast - these in addition to forepeak and double bottom tanks and one hundred tons of permanent ballast amidships to limit the angle of heel when heavy lifts were made. It is worthy of note that the **Empire Caicos** became the **Sugar Transporter** in 1950. In the August of 1952 she brought the first cargo of bulk sugar to be unloaded at the specially equipped berth on the north side of Liverpool's Huskisson Branch Dock No.3.

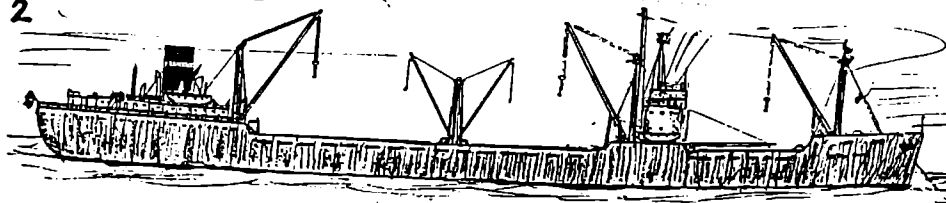
At an early stage in the Second World War misgivings were expressed about a shortage of fast general cargo liner tonnage, and in 1941 the Select Committee on Expenditure brought the matter directly to the attention of the Government. Publicity was given to the **Empire Song** built to a pre-war Clan Line design with a twin screw propulsive arrangement involving triple expansion engines and Bauer Wach exhaust turbines, supposedly capable of maintaining 16 knots. Amos Ayre and his colleagues decided that a completely new approach was required and planning was initiated

1



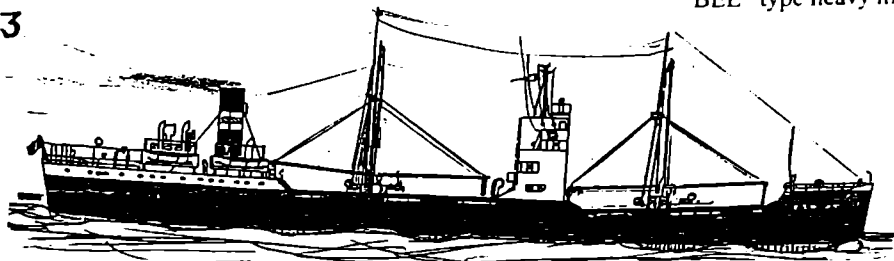
TID

2



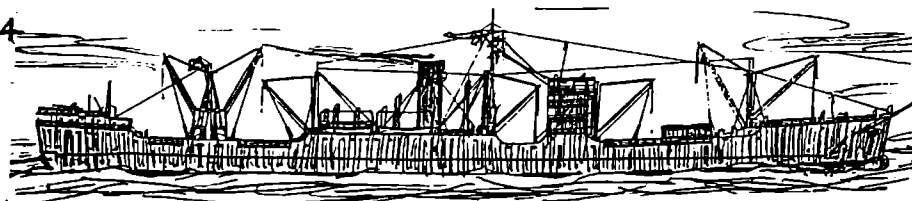
"BEL" type heavy lift

3



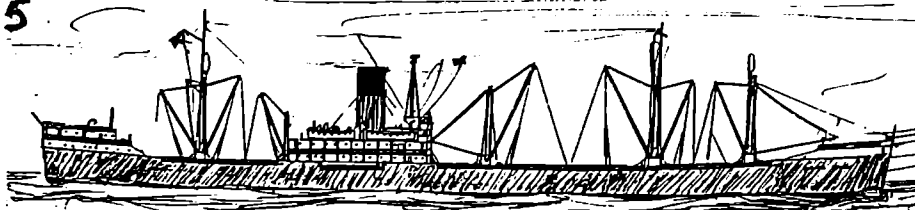
EMPIRE MALTA type

4



Greenock Clan design

5



Fast standard cargo liner

towards the end of 1941. Early in 1942 the Furness Shipbuilding Company, Haverton Hill, was commissioned to develop the outline design and to become the parent firm when construction was authorised. Messrs Richardsons, Westgarth were to undertake work on a simplified geared turbine unit, taking steam from water tube boilers, and oil engine manufacturers were also involved. By May 1942 the general arrangement specification, structural drawings, model resistance and self-propelled model tests had all been completed. Principal features were an abnormally long foredeck; an upper deck not sheered for some 130 feet amidships; the provision of 10 and 5 ton derricks to serve six cargo hatches, with heavy lifts of 50 tons at No.2, 80 tons at No.3 and 30 tons at No.5. The sustained speed was to be 15 knots with 'a suitable margin' and a single screw was to be employed. Private owners were to be granted licences to build vessels conforming to the standard type whether turbine or oil engine driven. Passenger accommodation in twelve staterooms was included in the final design. The lead ship was the **Empire Chieftain** launched by the Furness yard in 1943, to be followed by eleven others in the period up to 1945. Yet more were completed for private accounts. Eminently successful in operation, the standard fast cargo liner concept is said to have provided a bench mark in British practice and operation. There is evidence, it may be added, that the 'suitable margin' referred to earlier enabled some vessels to attain at least 18 knots when special circumstances made it necessary.

Subjected to a vast number and variety of demands from the Admiralty as well as those for merchant ship loss replacement and repair, the British shipbuilding industry's achievements in the Second World War were considerable. There can be little doubt that the influence of Sir Amos Ayre as Director of Merchant Shipbuilding & Repair was of the utmost significance in all programmes including those for the special merchant ship types dealt with in this paper. ||||

#### Sources and suggestions for further reading:

C.B.A. Behrens, *Merchant Shipping and the Demands of War*, H.M.S.O. & Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1955.

W.H. Mitchell & L.A. Sawyer, *Empire Ships of World War II*, The Journal of Commerce and Sea Breezes, Liverpool, 1965.

*Shipbuilding & Shipping Record*, 1940-1945

*The Journal of Commerce*.

Trans., I.N.A.

Trans., N.E.C.I.

H.M.S.O. - special publications, e.g. committee reports



#### Acknowledgements

David Eccles, John Hill, John Howard and Michael Jones (personal communications)

*Statements made in the presentation were the writer's responsibility and did not necessarily reflect the views of any of the above.*

## THE 'MANXMAN' OF 1904

*by Ron Evans*

MANXMAN Official Number: 118603 Signal Letters: HMRS (GFPS from 1934)  
Steel Triple Screw Steamer

Tonnage: 2,174 gross, later reduced to 2,030 gross; 611 nett.

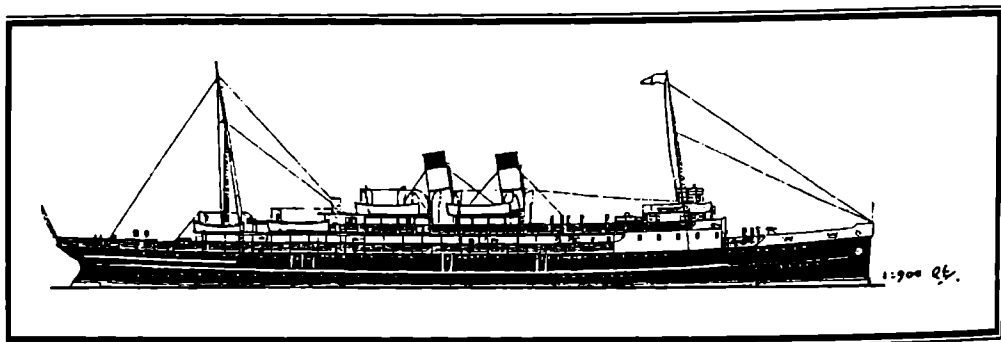
Built in 1904 by Vickers, Sons & Maxim Ltd., Barrow-in-Furness

Dimensions: Length overall: 341-0ft Breadth: 43-1ft Depth: 17-3ft

Triple Screw, 3 sets Parsons direct acting turbines, speed 22 knots

Owners: 1904-1914: Midland Railway Company Limited

1920-1939: Isle of Man Steam Packet Company Limited



*This article on the **Manxman** completes a series by Ron Evans about the early turbine steamers on Isle of Man routes. The 1905 **Viking** was featured in the February, 2000 'Bulletin' and the 1908 **Ben-my-Chree** featured in the March, 2001 'Bulletin'. [j.s.](#)*

The **Manxman** (1) was built by Vickers, Sons and Maxim Limited at Barrow-in-Furness for the Midland Railway Company and was launched on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1904, the ceremony being performed by Miss Beal.

The **Manxman**, on her trials in September 1904, achieved an average speed of 22.65 knots over a six-hour run, and over three double runs of the measured mile she averaged 23.004 knots. She was to prove very competitive with the **Viking** in the years before 1914. The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's **Viking** was described in 'The Bulletin', February, 2000 and an appendix to the article 'The Search for Speed' included further particulars from the Company's records of **Manxman** (1) and provided a detailed comparison with contemporary vessels.

The **Manxman** was the largest of four similar cross-channel steamers built specially for the Midland Railway Company's services from the new port of Heysham to Belfast and the Isle of Man. The new ships were all designed by Sir John Biles with the **Antrim**, built by John Brown, and the **Donegal**, built by Caird, being the nearest

sister ships. Both were twin screw vessels with four-cylinder triple expansion engines. The **Londonderry**, built by Denny, had triple screws and direct drive turbines. The **Manxman**, built for the Isle of Man service, also had triple screws and direct drive turbines.

The Midland Railway Company had developed Heysham as a terminal port for its railway link to its main line services to provide an overnight through-service to Belfast and a summer season only service to the Isle of Man. The **Manxman** was used for her first four months on the Heysham-Belfast service in conjunction with the **Antrim**, **Londonderry** and **Donegal**, and she inaugurated the Heysham-Douglas service on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1905, which proved to be very successful.

The **Manxman** was classified as a shelter-deck ship with three decks, main, upper and promenade, whilst above was another shade-deck forming an unobstructed promenade for day and excursion passengers. The vessel was certified to carry 1,155 first-class and 865 second-class passengers plus a crew of 80, and was extremely well fitted out with luxurious internal fittings and furnishings which were claimed to be unequalled in any other vessel, and the equivalent of the richly furnished railway carriages of the day for which the Midland Railway Company was famous.

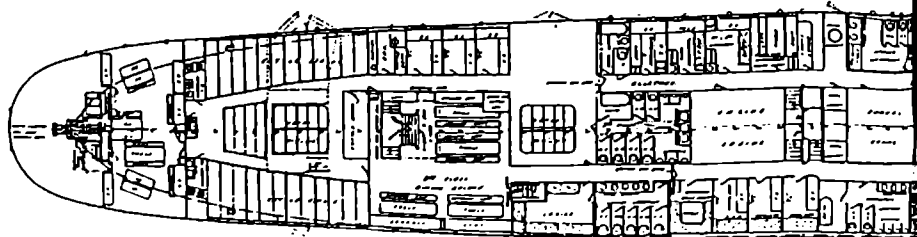
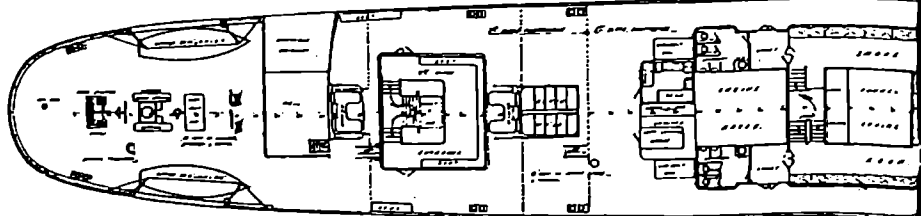
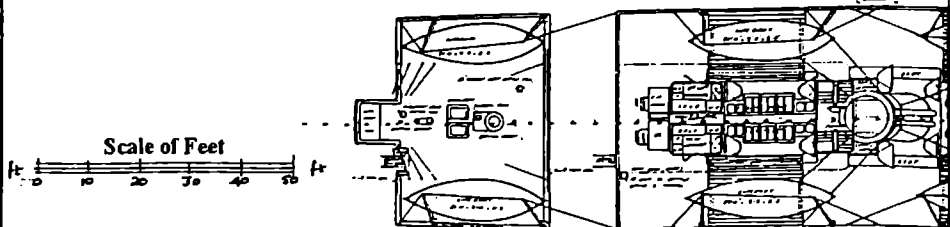
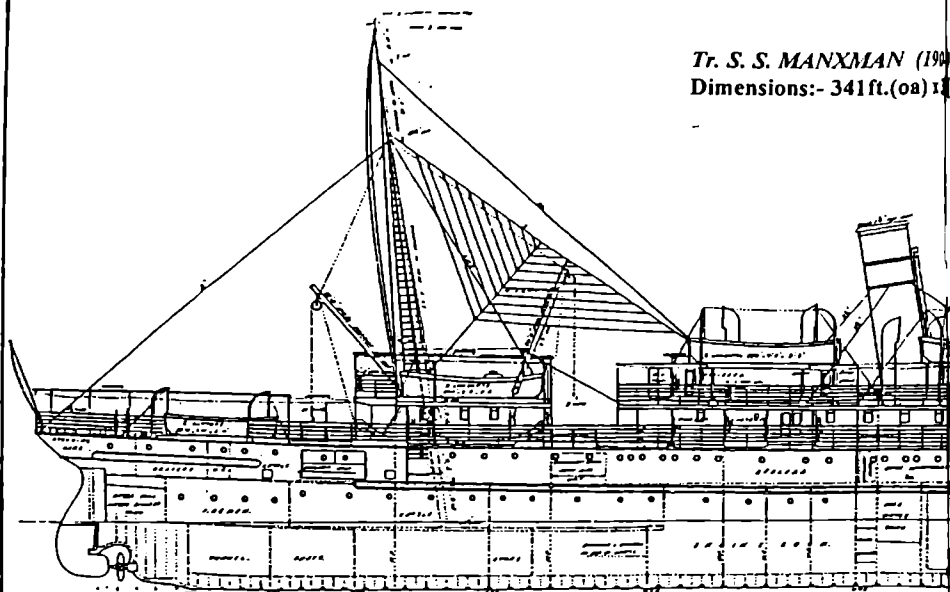
There were several large public rooms, resembling the public rooms of first-class hotels. The smoke room featured a delicate arched ceiling 14ft high with wall panelling in polished tropical hardwoods. The dining saloon had seating for 100 persons. The **Manxman** was designed for either day or night service and was able to relieve the other three vessels on the Belfast night service and she introduced a number of single-berth cabins in the first-class and some four-berth cabins in the second. All four ships were at that time outstanding among cross-channel vessels, far in advance of anything running previously to Belfast and the Isle of Man, and were the first turbine vessels on the routes and the first to be fitted with wireless. However the **Viking** (1905) and the **Ben-my-Chree** (1908) of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company were very soon to outclass them on the Fleetwood and Liverpool to Douglas services respectively.

The **Manxman** became very popular on the Heysham-Douglas service on which she made one return voyage daily in the summer season, laying-up at Barrow in the winter for her refit and relieving the other Belfast vessels when they refitted.

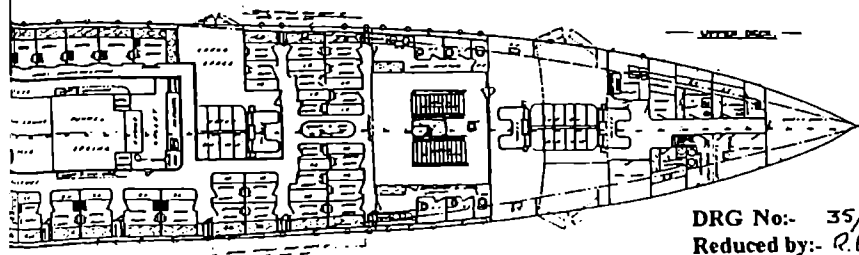
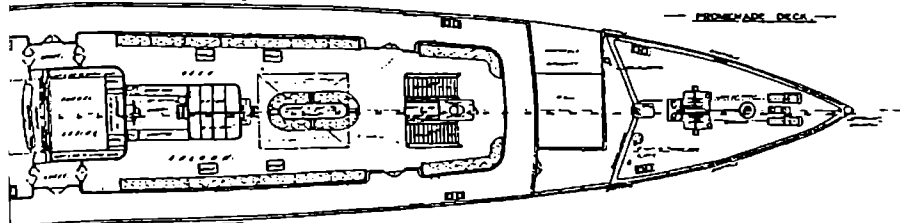
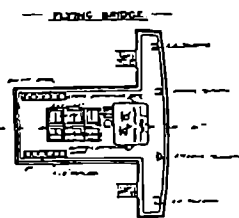
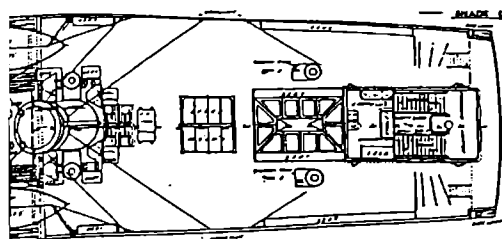
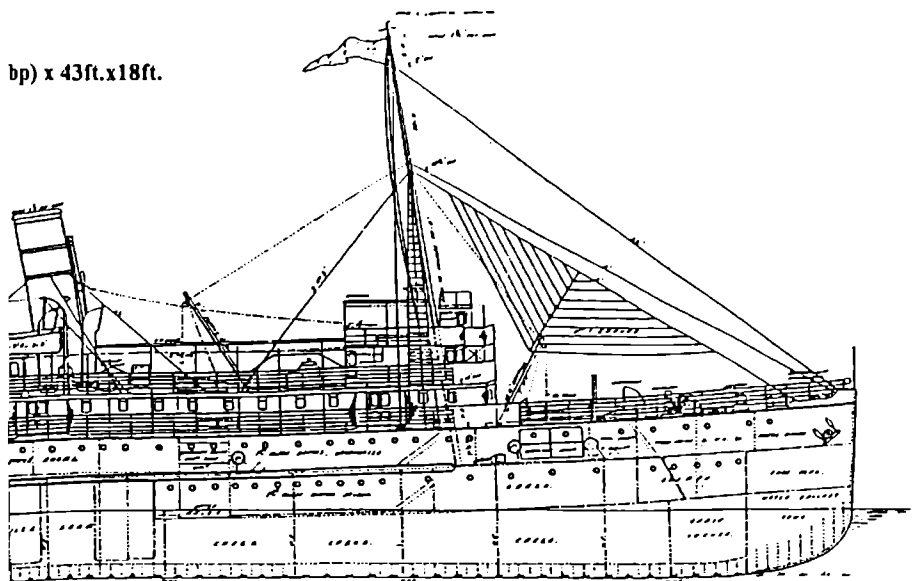
In 1915 the Admiralty purchased the **Manxman** for conversion into an aircraft carrier and her war service in the First World War I is described in the second section of this article.

The appearance and condition of the **Manxman** at the end of the war was such that the Midland Railway Company refused to repurchase her. Because of a severe shortage of ships due to war losses and the requirements for additional carrying capacity, the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company purchased the **Manxman** from the Admiralty in 1920. Vickers Ltd. at Barrow carried out and completed the extensive refurbishment that was required in July 1920. Her appearance was improved with the removal of the 'caps' from her funnels, the bulwarks forward were retained, the forepart below the bridge was plated in for about 40ft and the former skid-decks for

*Tr. S. S. MANXMAN* (1904)  
 Dimensions:- 341ft.(oa) 11



bp) x 43ft.x18ft.



DRG No:- 35/1/97  
Reduced by:- R. Evans

the midship lifeboats were replaced in a more substantial way. The boat deck was made continuous to the short deck at the mainmast and the 'quarter boats' were repositioned on this. There was no need to change the name, although surprisingly this was the first vessel to carry the name **Manxman** in the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's fleet.

The **Manxman** became the Company's commodore ship and was placed on the Liverpool-Douglas service, replacing the **Ben-my-Chree** (3), lost in the war. Although a little shorter than the **Viking**, she was of greater tonnage and remained the Company's largest ship until the **Ben-my-Chree** (4) came into service in 1927.

In 1921 the **Manxman** was converted to burn oil fuel, and together with the **Manx Maid**, which was also oil fired, maintained the Liverpool-Douglas service during the 1926 coal miners' strike.

A steering fault was discovered in July 1925 when the **Manxman** was lying at the Princes Landing Stage and the **Mona** (4) took her sailing and the **Curraghmore** was chartered from the LMS Railway whilst repairs were carried out.

In 1928 the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company purchased the **Antrim** and renamed her **Ramsey Town**. In the 1930s, with the completion of newer ships, the **Manxman** was engaged in thrice weekly trips to either Dublin or Belfast, and in 1939 on the outbreak of the Second World War she was again requisitioned for war service. The **Manxman** completed eighteen years service in the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's fleet, mainly on the Liverpool-Douglas route, and gained tremendous popularity which was maintained even following the introduction of new ships.

### **Machinery**

Triple screws were driven by Parsons direct drive turbines, a high pressure turbine on the centre shaft exhausting into the low pressure turbines on the wing shafts. The astern blading was incorporated in two wing turbines. Nominal horsepower was 1300 and indicated horsepower 10,000, which was much greater than in reciprocating engines. Two double ended and one single ended Scotch boilers working at 200psi supplied steam. The **Manxman** could carry 170 tons of coal in her bunkers and consumed 7.4 tons per hour, steaming at 22 knots. An interesting comparison between reciprocating and turbine engineered ships, with similar hulls, found that the **Londonderry** was about one knot faster, on a lower fuel consumption, than the **Antrim** and the **Donegal**, whilst the **Manxman** was  $\frac{3}{4}$  knot faster than the **Londonderry**.

### **The 'Manxman' at war, 1914 - 1919**

The **Manxman** was requisitioned by the Government on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1914 for troopship and later purchased outright by the Admiralty and commissioned on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1916 for conversion into an aircraft carrier. She arrived at Chatham Naval Dockyard for conversion on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1916 and conversion work was not completed until December 1916.

The conversion was very extensive and hangars were built forward and aft of the funnels. Paired masts and derricks on each side of the hull replaced the masts, forward bulkheads were fitted and a sloping flight deck was built from the fore end of the forward hangar to the bows. A large gantry projected over the stern with an electric crane on each side.

The **Manxman's** major defect was her limited coal capacity of 170 tons, sufficient only for 23 hours steaming at 18 knots, a range of 414 nautical miles. Additional coal storage was provided on either side of the upper decks amidships, in former passenger accommodation, increasing the bunker capacity to 450 tons sufficient for a range of 995 nautical miles. Her draft increased from 10ft 4in forward and 13ft 1in aft, to 15ft 8in forward and 15ft 9in aft and lower hull openings were plated up.

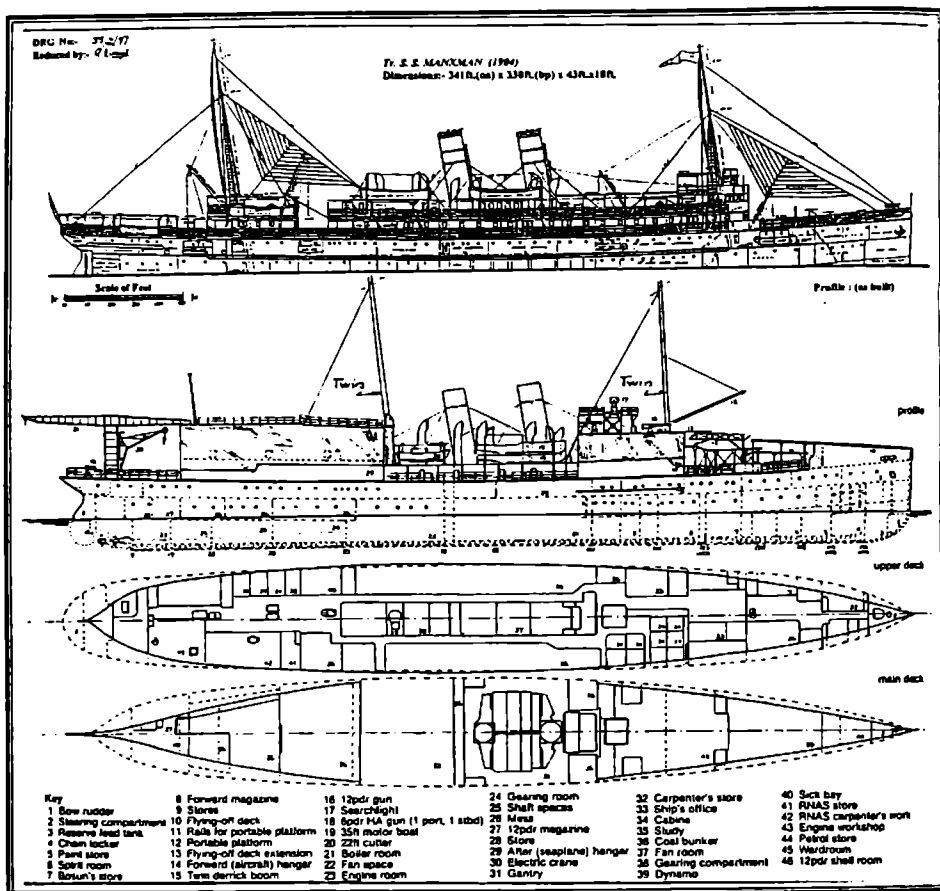
Admiral Jellicoe requested that HMS **Manxman** be assigned to the Grand Fleet on completion, following experience at Jutland (31<sup>st</sup> May 1916) when a Short 184 carrier aircraft from HMS **Engadine** (herself a former cross-Channel steamer) succeeded in observing some of the enemy's dispositions. Conventional reconnaissance aircraft had failed in their mission to do this. Unfortunately the **Manxman** when she came into service was too slow to meet the requirements of the Grand Fleet, being good for a sea speed of only 16 knots, and this dropped to 14 knots when she was cleaning boilers. She was also unable to launch reconnaissance aircraft. The **Manxman's** most important achievement came in early 1917, and was to prove that a Sopwith Pup fighter aircraft, suitable for defence against Zeppelins, could fly off a flight deck in a length of only 20 feet, given sufficient wind over the deck. This led to the development of flying-off platforms in British cruisers and battleships.

In October 1917, HMS **Manxman** was transferred to the Mediterranean and based at Taranto with HMS **Ben-my-Chree**. In January 1918 the German battlecruiser **Goeben** had been caught in a minefield and had stranded in the Dardanelles. The **Manxman** steamed out of Brindisi carrying two Short 320 torpedo bombers which could launch heavy 18-inch torpedoes. Unfortunately preparations took too long and when all was ready on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1918 the sea was too rough for the aircraft to take off and the **Goeben** managed to make Constantinople.

In June 1918 four carriers were assigned to the Mediterranean fleet at Malta. These were the **Engadine**, **Manxman**, **Riviera** (another cross-Channel steamer) and the **Vindex**. The **Vindex** was none other than the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's **Viking**, whose name had been changed when taken over by the Admiralty. In 1919 the **Manxman** returned to the U.K. and the Admiralty sold her to the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company.

### **The 'Manxman' at war, 1939 - 1949**

In 1939 the **Manxman** was again requisitioned for war service and was immediately used for trooping in the English Channel. She was involved in the evacuation of the B.E.F. from Dunkirk, St Malo and Cherbourg until 18<sup>th</sup> June 1940, bringing out 5,754 troops in total. In late May 1941 the vessel returned to Douglas,



Particulars of *HMS MANXMAN* (ex *Tr. S.S. MANXMAN* (1) of the Midland Railway Company).

04.08.1914. Requisitioned for trooping duties.

17.04.1916. Commissioned by the Admiralty for conversion to an aircraft carrier. Arrived at Chatham Naval Dockyard 25<sup>th</sup> conversion completed December 1916. Assigned to the Grand Fleet, and transferred Mediterranean in October 1917.

Displacement (deep):- 3091 tons.

Dimensions:- Length: 334.0ft. (bp) 343.0ft. (oa) Beam: 43.1ft. Draught: (deep) fwd 15.8ft. aft 15.9ft.

Flight deck dimensions:- Length 86.0ft. x 28.0ft. reducing to 11.0ft. at the bow. Lift 18.0ft. x 14.0ft.

Performance:- SHP: 8500. Speed: 15knots. 18knots max. Fuel: 430 tons (coal). Endurance: 995 (nautical miles).

Armament:- Four 12pdr 12cwt guns (130rpg) and two 6pdr Hotchkiss anti-aircraft guns (55rpg).

Complement:- 250.

Aircraft:- Forward: Four single seat wheeled Sopwith Pup Fighters. These planes were dismantled for rapid assembly and were fitted with floatation bags for recovery. Aft: Four large Short floatplanes to carry torpedoes.

Modifications:- Forward hanger for four aircraft with the usual large four aircraft hanger aft served by electric jib cranes.

A rolling deck was fitted to get aircraft from the forward hanger onto the flight deck. Twin masts and derricks fwd and aft. Aft centreline cantilever gantry crane to hoist up and traverse inboard seaplanes landing astern whilst underway.

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. Purchased by the Isle of Man Steam Packet Co. Ltd. for their Douglas/Liverpool service.

being laid up at The Tongue in the inner harbour alongside the Viking as temporary accommodation vessels for HMS Valkyrie which had been established at Douglas as a Radar Training Establishment. At this point the **Manxman** was again purchased by the Admiralty and renamed HMS **Caduceus**, pendant number 4.293, and was fitted out as an RDF training ship at Birkenhead to operate from Douglas in conjunction with the cross-Channel vessel **Isle of Sark**, and a former French minelayer, the **Pollux**. 'V' and 'W' destroyers including HMS **Winchelsea** also operated out of Douglas. In 1943 the base of the flotilla was moved to the Clyde.

In May 1945 the **Manxman** was refitted as a troopship and was based at Dover repatriating prisoners of war and troops. In February 1946 she was transferred to the Harwich-Hook of Holland B.O.A.R. military service and repainted in Isle of Man Steam Packet Company livery, but she never again operated on its routes. The **Manxman's** contract with the British Government finished in 1949 and she left Harwich on 25<sup>th</sup> February to steam north. She arrived at Barrow on 28<sup>th</sup> February and is reported to have been surveyed with a view to further service, but the costs far outweighed her life expectancy. The **Manxman** was sold for scrap and left Barrow on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1949 under tow of the tug **Warrior** and was delivered to T.W. Ward's demolition berth at Preston.

#### **Shipbuilder's Model**

A shipbuilder's model of the **Manxman** (1) to a scale of 1:48 in the livery of the Midland Railway Company was originally displayed at St Enoch Station, Glasgow and was later moved to the Gratton Model Engineering Works at Derby. The funnel colours of this model had, however, been repainted white with black tops; perhaps when the original vessel was requisitioned for trooping and before the vessel was taken into Isle of Man Steam Packet ownership.

#### **Sources and Acknowledgements**

General arrangement drawings (as built) are reproduced from the original shipbuilder's drawings, courtesy of the present shipbuilders, VSEL, Barrow. Further particulars have been included in this article from the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's engineering records courtesy of the Superintendent Engineer, Mr Mike Casey (now retired). Profile drawings as the **Manxman** (1) of 1920, by the author are to a scale of 1:900.

The plans and particulars of HMS **Manxman** (1) after conversion to a seaplane carrier, are reformatted from drawings by Robert Nailer, British Carrier Aviation.

#### **Bibliography**

*The Centenary of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company* (Douglas, 1930)  
*Island Lifeline*, Connery Chappell (1980)  
*Steam Packet Ships* (5th edition - 1987) Fred Henry  
*Eight Decades of Heysham-Douglas* (1985) A.M. Goodwyn  
*British Carrier Aviation* (1988) Norman Friedman  
*Troopships to Calais* (1988) Derek Spiers  
*Merchant Fleets 25. Midland Railway Company* Duncan Haws  
*The Life and Times of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company* (1994) John Shepherd

# 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.

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

Name	<i>Empress Queen</i>	<i>Viking</i>	<i>Ben-my-Chree (3)</i>	<i>Manxman (1)</i>	<i>HMS Amethyst</i>	<i>Ben-my-Chree (4)</i>	<i>Lady of Mann</i>
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 diagonal	direct drive turbines	direct drive turbines	direct drive turbines	direct drive turbines	geared turbines	geared 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	-----	4nr.	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.ft.	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 rm.	128ft.	118ft.	-----	-----	-----	110ft.	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.	-----	6ft.6ins	7ft.0ins.	2/5'0"1/5'7	2/5'9"1/6'7	-----	-----
Speed:-							
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.

This comparative schedule "The Search for Speed" has been prepared by the author from marine engineering records of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company kindly provided by the Superintending Engineer, Mr Mike Casey (now retired), in October 1995. These records are now in the archives of the Manx Museum, Douglas.

Ron Evans January 2001

## BOOK REVIEW

### STEAM PACKET PROFILES

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

#### PROFILES AND PLANS OF SHIPS OF THE ISLE OF MAN STEAM PACKET COMPANY LIMITED, 1830 - 2000

Ron Evans needs no introduction to readers of *'The Bulletin'*. He has contributed several major articles over the last three years which have included the Ellan Vannin tragedy and profiles of the three early turbine steamers on Isle of Man routes - the **Manxman** of 1904, the **Viking** of 1905 and the **Ben-my-Chree** of 1908. These three were the real fast craft of their day, often completing the Liverpool and Douglas passage in under three hours, only five minutes or so longer than today's so-called 'fast craft' - the Seacats.

As an Isle of Man Steam Packet Company enthusiast for over fifty years, it is always a pleasure to come across a fresh approach to the subject. Ron Evans' new book *Steam Packet Profiles* takes a very welcome fresh look at the seventy-one vessels which have been owned and operated by the Company in its 171 year history. There are profile drawings and plans of fifty-nine of the Company's ships, many of them drawn by Ron Evans himself. A synopsis of each ship's career accompanies the drawings and plans. In addition there are ten appendices which provide a wealth of detailed information.

Ron Evans, of Pontefract, West Yorkshire was born on the Isle of Man, but he left in 1960. His book *Steam Packet Profiles* is the result of a lifetime's interest in the Company's ships. Ron created most of the illustrations himself, using his skills as an architect and surveyor.

Ron says that his book is dedicated to his brother, Cyril, who lives at Colby, Isle of Man, and is a keen model ship builder. Explaining his book Ron Evans wrote: *"Despite the destruction and loss in past years of many irreplaceable ship plans and building records, much has survived or has been salvaged. Most of the shipbuilders' original plans and associated material are to be found in the collections held in museums, university and municipal archives, and in the records of the Company."*

I would strongly recommend *Steam Packet Profiles* as bringing a new approach to the history and the ships of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company.

*i.s.*

**STEAM PACKET PROFILES** is available now from Ron Evans at 16 Beech Crescent, Darrington, Pontefract, West Yorkshire WF8 3AE, price £15.00 *plus* £1.50 post and packing

Website: < [www.ronaldevans.freemove.co.uk](http://www.ronaldevans.freemove.co.uk) >

## REMEMBERING A GREAT NAVAL BATTLE

### THE 60th ANNIVERSARY OF THE SINKING OF THE 'BISMARCK' - MAY, 1941

*by L.N.R.S. Member R.E.J. Varns*



Sixty years have passed since the action to be described in the following article took place, but the memory of it has dimmed but little in the author's mind. Each May brings a further reminder of the last action fought between a German and a British battleship. However, before going into the details of the actual shooting match it is necessary to go over the events leading up to the meeting and the situation in the area where it took place.

The early months of 1941 found Europe in the hands of the Axis powers. Britain had been standing alone in the face of the enemy for almost a year. At sea the position was going from bad to worse with an ever increasing toll of ships sunk by U-boats which were operating from the Norwegian coast and along the French Atlantic seaboard. Matters were so bad that the War Cabinet had almost decided to discontinue publication of the monthly tonnage losses as it was felt that this was contrary to the national interest. German surface vessels had already been operating in the Atlantic - the Admiral von Scheer in the latter part of 1940, and the battlecruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau had done considerable damage in the early months of 1941 before retiring to Brest. The new battleship Bismarck had been working up in the Baltic and there was intelligence that her consort, the Tirpitz, would soon be ready to take part in action on the high seas. In the Mediterranean the German airborne invasion of Crete began on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1941.

It is a report made in the early hours of the following day, 21<sup>st</sup> May, which starts the chain of events to be related here. This was to the effect that two large German warships with a heavy screen and accompanied by eleven merchant ships had been sighted steaming northward in the Kattegat, the stretch of water between Denmark and Sweden which is the outlet from the Baltic to the North Sea.

There had already been indications that an enemy operation might be about to take place. An unusual amount of air reconnaissance had been noticed both east and west of Iceland and over the British naval base at Scapa Flow. Foremost in the mind of Admiral Sir John Tovey, commander-in-chief Home Fleet on board his flagship **King George V**, was the possibility of another German capital ship breaking out into the Atlantic. The cruiser **Suffolk** on patrol in the Denmark Strait was alerted, and the cruiser **Norfolk** sailed from Hvalfjord, Iceland to join her sister and to permit her to refuel.

In the meantime a large number of possibilities had to be considered as to the reasons for the observed German movements. These included the intention to land enemy forces in Iceland or even the Faeroes; the possible reinforcement of either men or supplies in the Norwegian bases or a sortie into the Atlantic with supply ships for raiders already in French Atlantic ports. All these had to be considered and Allied forces' movements taken into account such as troopship convoys with reinforcements for the Middle East and inward convoys from the U.S.A. and Canada. Thus it was vitally important for the commander-in-chief to learn as soon as possible the intended course of action of the German ships.

The forces which Admiral Tovey had available for immediate operations and their positions on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1941 were as follows. In Scapa Flow were the two battleships **King George V** and **Prince of Wales**, both modern sister ships with a main armament of ten 14-inch guns. However only the **King George V** was fully worked-up and ready for action. The battlecruiser **Hood**, flying the flag of Vice-Admiral Holland and in her heyday the pride of the Royal Navy, was now rather outmoded in the light of up-to-date warship construction. She lay at anchor with the cruisers **Galatea**, **Aurora**, **Kenya** and **Neptune**. The 6-inch gun cruiser **Hermione** was due to anchor at Scapa Flow later on 22<sup>nd</sup> May following repairs to one of her turrets, whilst the **Arethusa**, with the Vice-Admiral Orkneys and Shetland, was on a visit to Iceland and due to anchor at Reykjavik. Twelve destroyers were available for escort duty.

Although she did not form part of the Home Fleet the aircraft carrier **Victorious** was under orders to provide air escort for the troop convoy WS8B en route for Gibraltar from the Clyde. Another big ship assigned to that convoy was the battlecruiser **Repulse**, already in the Clyde and ready to sail. With the news of the possible departure of the **Bismarck** the Admiralty placed both of these vessels under the commander-in-chief's, Home Fleet, orders. Thus, on paper at least, the force available to deal with one enemy battleship and either a pocket battleship or a heavy cruiser, seemed quite formidable. However the **Bismarck** was undoubtedly a tough proposition. She was brand new and larger than any of the Royal Naval ships; her beam was understood to be at least six feet greater, so making her a very stable gun

platform; and her degree of sub-division and heavy armour protection gave her superior qualities as far as damage control was concerned. She was as fast as, or even faster, than the British capital ships and she had had the opportunity to work up her ship's company and fighting capabilities to a high degree in the comparatively sheltered waters of the Baltic.

The British ships were somewhat varied in their qualities and in many respects were not, individually, an equal match to the **Bismarck**. The **Repulse** was twenty-five years old, weakly armoured and with short fuel endurance. The **Hood** was almost as old and many of the advances and improvements in warship design had passed both ships by. The **Victorious** and the **Prince of Wales** were, conversely, too new, having joined the Fleet, respectively, one week and two months previously. Neither ship had fully undertaken her working-up programme. In fact the aircraft carrier **Victorious** had only put to sea on the morning of 21<sup>st</sup> May to embark her aircraft and none of her 'hostilities-only' pilots had any experience of landing on a carrier before. This left only the flagship **King George V** with any length of service which might be considered as a fair match for a vessel such as the **Bismarck**.

After much consideration of dispositions and possible moves by the enemy, Admiral Tovey decided to split his heavy ships into two forces. Further photo reconnaissance by long-range Spitfires sighted two large enemy units in Grimstad Fjord just south of Bergen. One was identified as being the **Bismarck**, the other a Hipper class cruiser.

The first force, consisting of the **Hood**, the **Prince of Wales** and six destroyers left Scapa Flow about midnight on 21<sup>st</sup> May with orders to refuel at Hvalfjord and then to cover the patrols north of 62 degrees North. The sight of these two great vessels weighing anchor so late at night after a day of much inter-ship boat movement had aroused the local rash of 'buzzes', as rumours in the Navy were termed, and many wild guesses were made, especially as all other ships were placed on short notice to steam.

Worsening weather conditions on 22<sup>nd</sup> May made further air reconnaissance difficult, and finally impossible. An attempt to gain some knowledge of the position of the enemy warships was eventually made by manning a '**Maryland**' target-towing aircraft with experienced naval fliers and despatching it to the Norwegian coast. The outcome of this flight, in itself a major navigational feat, was to reveal that neither German ship was where it was last sighted and must presumably be at sea. Orders were immediately given for the remaining ships at Scapa Flow to sail at 22.00. The **Suffolk** was to return to the Denmark Strait to join the **Norfolk**, and the **Arethusa** was to join the **Manchester** and the **Birmingham** south of Iceland. Vice Admiral Holland's squadron including the **Hood** and the **Prince of Wales** proceeded direct to the Denmark Strait.

The morning of 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1941 found the **King George V** and the **Victorious**, along with the Second Cruiser squadron and destroyer escorts off the Butt of Lewis heading into a moderate sea from the north-west, with a cold wind and an overcast sky. The **Repulse** joined the fleet from the Clyde. The outlook for air

reconnaissance was rather poor. Throughout the morning and into the afternoon the ships pushed on until at 15.00 course was altered to the west to cover the line of escape should the **Bismarck** be heading for the Atlantic.

The vastness of the ocean to be covered without the aid of air search was immense, and the fact that it was now more than twenty-four hours since any knowledge of the enemy's position had reached the commander-in-chief made life rather trying for all those engaged in the operation. The **Suffolk** was the ship to break the anxiety being felt that the enemy had been lost when at 19.22 on 23<sup>rd</sup> May, while steaming on a south-westerly course in her patrol area in the Denmark Strait, she sighted two warships on her starboard quarter at about seven miles distance, rather dangerously close if they proved to be hostile. This was the case and in the two or three minutes before the **Suffolk's** captain could alter course and make for the nearby fog bank, the two ships were identified as the **Bismarck** and an attendant cruiser, later established to be the **Prinz Eugen**. The **Suffolk** sent out her '*enemy report*' signal at once.

Whilst hidden in the fog the **Suffolk** watched the white dots on her radar screen pass her, and when clear she emerged from her natural protective screen and proceeded to shadow the enemy from about fifteen miles astern. The **Norfolk**, also in the fog, received the signals and made all haste to close the enemy position. Just over an hour later she steamed out of the fog to find the **Bismarck** and the **Prinz Eugen** on her port bow at a range of some six miles and on almost opposing courses. The **Norfolk** was immediately engaged by the **Bismarck** and three salvos straddled her with another falling into her wake, but apart from some large splinters coming on board she was fortunately not hit.

The two cruisers continued to shadow the enemy ships throughout the night of 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> May giving Vice Admiral Holland time to plan an interception course for the **Hood** and the **Prince of Wales** which were heading north-north-west at 27 knots. Both ships went to action stations soon after midnight and hoisted battle ensigns. In late May in the northern latitudes darkness is never complete. Visibility was poor with occasional mist patches which caused the **Norfolk** and the **Suffolk** to lose touch with their prey at times. On one such occasion the approaching battle squadron had to slow down and alter course. At 04.30 on the morning of 24<sup>th</sup> May visibility was twelve miles and at 05.35 the two enemy ships were sighted on the starboard beam.

The **Hood** and the **Prince of Wales** altered course to close and at 05.52, when the range was down to 25,000 yards the **Hood** opened fire, followed within seconds by the **Bismarck** and the **Prince of Wales**. Considerable debate and examination of both German and British records have revealed that the **Hood** mistook the **Prinz Eugen** for her larger consort and was directing fire at her instead, but the **Bismarck**, with accurately directed salvos was soon on to her target, the **Hood**. Within a minute a hit was scored by the **Prinz Eugen** which started a large fire by the **Hood's** mainmast. This rapidly spread forward high above the main deck before dying down. At 05.55 a turn away from the rapidly closing enemy was ordered and just as the British ships commenced to turn two splashes were seen alongside the **Hood**.

Almost instantaneously a vast eruption of flame shot upward many hundreds of feet from between her two masts, from the centre of which a great incandescent ball soared skywards. Seconds later all that remained of this great battle cruiser were her bows and stern sliding down under the water, completely disappearing within about two minutes.

All through the opening minutes of the action the **Prince of Wales** had been firing at the **Bismarck** undisturbed, but now she was to draw the enemy's main fire in full strength. The **Prince of Wales** was a new ship and as such she was being plagued with faults and breakdowns, and before she could turn away and seek the cover of a smoke screen, she was hit by four 15-inch and three 8-inch shells; one 15-inch shell making a shambles of her bridge and leaving only Captain Leach and the Chief Yeoman alive and uninjured although both were, momentarily, dazed and shocked. Fortunately the **Bismarck** did not follow the **Prince of Wales** when she turned away, for although she had herself received two hits, she was still in full fighting trim and could well have dealt with her partially crippled adversary just as she had so effectively done with Britain's largest warship.

It was not realised at the time that the **Bismarck** had reduced speed and was trailing an oil slick. Subsequent reports from both the **Suffolk** and a Coastal Command Sunderland failed to receive the attention that they deserved. In effect it was necessary for the German ships to reach a port where the **Bismarck** could receive dockyard attention. She would either have to return along her earlier tracks to Norway and the Baltic or to head for the French coast where she could be docked at Brest or St Nazaire. The **Norfolk** continued to shadow the **Bismarck** as she headed to the south west and the broad reaches of the North Atlantic, and after temporarily losing her in the increasingly misty weather, the **Norfolk** picked her up again on the afternoon of 24<sup>th</sup> May when her course had become generally southerly. Additional British ships were becoming involved in the operation, some from escort duties to very important convoys, or from patrols. These vessels included 'Force H' from Gibraltar which comprised the **Renown**, **Ark Royal**, **Sheffield** and six destroyers; the **London** from a convoy en route from Gibraltar to the U.K.; the **Rodney** and four 'Tribal' class destroyers escorting the liner **Britannic** to the U.S.A.; the **Ramillies** from a convoy in mid-Atlantic; the **Revenge** from Halifax N.S. and the **Edinburgh** which was hunting blockade runners near the Azores.

The commander-in-chief Admiral Tovey was making heavy weather on his interception course on the **King George V** and realised that he could not reach the enemy fast enough to afford support that day. At 1500 on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1941 the aircraft carrier **Victorious** with the 2<sup>nd</sup> cruiser squadron as escort was detached to attempt a torpedo attack which, if successful, would possibly slow the escaping **Bismarck** and permit her destruction. By late evening the weather conditions were again worsening but nine 'Swordfish' aircraft were flown off. After making a dummy attack on a U.S. Coastguard cutter they were guided to their target by the **Norfolk** and finally pressed home their attack against the **Bismarck** in the face of heavy anti-aircraft fire. One hit was scored but this was later established as having caused no major damage.

During the early hours of the morning of 25<sup>th</sup> May the **Bismarck** finally succeeded in giving her shadowers the slip, in much the same way that her consort, the **Prinz Eugen**, had managed earlier to detach herself during a period of bad visibility. Complicated re-organisation of courses and search areas now had to be made, bearing in mind any limitations forced upon individual ships due to lack of fuel etc. For the rest of the day the areas to be swept revealed no signs of the enemy warships and this state of affairs continued into 26<sup>th</sup> May until at about 10.30 that morning a long range Coastal Command Catalina flying boat reported sighting a battleship. The position plotted was 125 miles south-west of the **Rodney** and 112 miles west-north-west of the **Renown** and her squadron. The **Ark Royal** was now able to get her aircraft up to shadow what was confirmed as the lost **Bismarck** and the need to slow her down again, if possible by torpedo, became a necessity.

The first strike of Swordfish to get aloft made a practice attack on the cruiser **Sheffield** scouting ahead of the **Renown** in poor visibility. The result of this was to reveal that the magnetic pistols in the torpedoes were unreliable, and a second strike of aircraft had their weapons primed with the older but reliable contact pistols. Attacks were then made on the **Bismarck** in the face of extremely heavy anti-aircraft fire and it was doubtful whether any of the hits claimed were in fact scored or not. However, one of the last two aircraft to land on the **Ark Royal** late that evening reported that the **Bismarck** had made two complete circles and had stopped before they were forced to leave. By this time the four 'Tribal' class destroyers which had been with the **Rodney** made contact with the enemy and plans were made to attack with more torpedoes during the night, although rising winds and seas and the now erratic course which the **Bismarck** was steering made concerted attacks difficult, plus the fact that her firing was still extremely accurate and sustained whenever the destroyers closed with her.

A review of the positions of the closing warships late on 26<sup>th</sup> May showed that a concerted attack before dark was impossible. A night action under the prevailing conditions with so many individual ships in close proximity would have been hazardous in the extreme. Although the destroyers under Captain Vian made sporadic attacks during the night it was not until the early hours of 27<sup>th</sup> May that the final plans were formulated for the attack by the battleships.

The **Bismarck** had been steering erratically between north-west and north since her rudders were damaged and it became Admiral Tovey's intention to get into a position where the enemy would be silhouetted against the dawn sky at first light. The **Rodney** was now in company with the flagship **King George V** and as the night wore on tension increased with the knowledge that at last it seemed probable that the final battle would take place with the coming of day. Stormy weather was making the plotting of accurate positions and identification difficult and it was not until full daylight was upon them that the two British battleships moved in towards their adversary.

The **Norfolk** again almost made the fatal mistake of approaching the **Bismarck** too closely, but she was able to provide a visual link between the

approaching battleships which led to a final alteration of course by the commander-in-chief to bring his ships into contact with the enemy.

At 08.43 on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1941, almost a week since she had first been sighted in the fjord near Bergen, the **Bismarck** was in sight from the **King George V**. Four minutes later first the **Rodney** and then the flagship opened fire. It took two minutes for a reply to come from the German ship and the writer's memory of seeing that spurt of flame from the grey shape fine on the port bow remains very vivid, and the knowledge that at least two or more 15-inch shells were on their way did not leave a very excited feeling in one's stomach ! It was with great relief, shared by most of the viewers, that the **Bismarck's** opening salvo was seen to fall just short of the **Rodney**, and when the third salvo straddled and almost hit her, the **Rodney** turned to port to allow the full weight of her 16-inch guns to bear, which, as she had become the target ship, she was very justified in doing.

Admiral Tovey remained on his course directly towards the enemy for up to twelve minutes after opening fire and then a turn to the south brought the full broadside of the **King George V** into action just on 09.00. The **Rodney** was now opening a gap between herself and the Admiral and she too turned south to conform with the flagship. By this time the **Bismarck** had suffered at least one damaging hit which had destroyed her main fire control, and a marked deterioration in the accuracy and volume of her fire became evident from then on. A steady and increasing amount of fire was being directed at her from both the **King George V** and the **Rodney** which had brought their secondary armament into action whenever possible. The 8-inch guns of the **Norfolk** and the **Dorsetshire** were also brought to bear. The **Dorsetshire** had closed up during the night at her highest attainable speed, guided by the reports from the destroyers, but heavy seas had finally forced her to reduce speed to about twenty knots by dawn. However, she fired her first salvos from 20,000 yards at 09.04, but as there were so many splashes from shells falling around the **Bismarck** she had to cease fire soon after, as she was unable to observe her fall of shot.

Another course reversal became necessary for the British units in order that they could maintain their devastating pounding, and gradually fire from the **Bismarck** became less and less until by 10.00 on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1941 she lay a battered, burning wreck; her mast down, funnel gone and her guns pointing in all directions. A pall of black smoke blew away down wind and it could be seen that her interior was an inferno with members of her crew running along the upper deck and jumping into the sea.

Nevertheless her flag still flew and she had not surrendered, so it was necessary to hasten her sinking as soon as possible. The **Rodney** used her 24-inch torpedoes on her and the **Norfolk** fired four 21-inch torpedoes and scored at least one hit, but it was left to the **Dorsetshire**, the last ship to arrive on the scene, to deliver the *coup de grâce* with two tinfish on either side before the pride of the German Navy turned slowly over to port until, when bottom up, she sank beneath the waves.

Thus ended what proved to be the final occasion when a large German warship ventured out into the Atlantic to endanger the British lifelines at sea. |||||

## THE L.N.R.S. AWARD

Members will recall that our chairman has taken several opportunities to announce the intention to institute a Liverpool Nautical Research Society award, with the aims of encouraging formal interest in nautical research and enlarging our membership. As a consequence of the generosity of certain members of the Society, a special fund has been created, and the matter may now be given effect.

After much detailed discussion and consultation, the Council has decided to make an award of £200 in the first instance, to be competed for by students at any level in higher education. Dependent on the initial response, the "L.N.R.S. Award" may well become an annual event. Invitations to compete for it will go out to students at Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool Hope College and the University of Liverpool.

Competitors will be required to submit papers of not less than 1500 words and not more than 2000 words on historical or contemporary topics in the maritime industries. Particular consideration will be given to work dealing with maritime Merseyside, its past, present or possible future. The final decision on the winner of the Award will be made by a sub-committee of the Council, who may seek advice from, or co-opt, external assessors. The winner will be required to submit a synopsis of his or her paper for publication in *'The Bulletin'*. The Society will retain the right to vary the rules of the competition in the light of experience.

The intention is to launch the competition for the "L.N.R.S. Award" in January 2002; entries to be submitted by October 2002, and the award presented in January 2003.

*a.h.m.*

---

## GRAEME CUBBIN'S HARRISON LINE HISTORY

At long last it would seem that Captain Graeme Cubbin's definitive history of Harrison Line is to be published. It is difficult to believe that he handed over his manuscript to the appointed editor at the World Ship Society ten years ago ..... and still the book has not yet reached the printers ! There is now renewed impetus to complete the project with a new editor and a new team in place, eager to get on with the job.

If all goes according to plan, a 550 page A4 hardback history (similar in format to the splendid P. & O. book put out a few years ago) will be published by early summer, 2002. This Harrison history will be much more though, because it will not only contain the usual WSS fully illustrated fleet list, but will be anecdotal also: it will tell the story of the ships *and* the people. In short it will bring the Harrison story to life, as told in Graeme's inimitable style.

The Company needs to gauge how much support there is likely to be from would-be purchasers of what promises to be a magnificent work. It is probable that this volume will be available at a little under £30. If you are interested in purchasing a copy, please advise Mrs Jill Mills at Charente Ltd., Mersey Chambers, Covent Garden, Liverpool L2 8UF.

*j.s.*

## SOME EARLY PADDLE ENGINES ON THE MERSEY

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

Most of the early paddle steamers on the Mersey were driven by side lever engines with low pressure flue boilers, the Government ordained lock-up pressure of steam being 4½ lbs/psi. <sup>1</sup> This species of inverted beam engine comprised vertical cylinder, piston rod, crosshead and side rods on one end of the side levers and crosstail and connecting rod on the other. Since the side levers were pivoted, the piston raising one end must lower the connecting rod at the other, thereby actuating the crank. Although this type of marine engine was excessively heavy and bulky, it lasted into the 1860s partly because the long length of the connecting rods suited paddle wheel propulsion.

Fawcett & Littledale (later Preston) of Liverpool supplied the engines for numbers of large seagoing paddle steamers besides those for many of the smaller ferry boats. In 1822, for instance, they installed the 100hp side lever engines (consisting of two 42-inch diameter cylinders) in the **St. Patrick** steam packet, of 300 tons. Her machinery *'was constructed and finished in a most correct and masterly manner'*. The 130ft long **St Patrick** was built by Mottershead & Hayes at Liverpool and rigged as a two-masted schooner with foretopsail. She sailed between Liverpool, Dublin and Bristol and was the first steamer to ply in Manx waters. Her sister ship, the *'extremely swift'* **St George**, launched from Dawson & Pearson's yard at Liverpool in 1822, was *'the sharpest-built vessel in the trade'*. She, too, had 100hp side lever engines from Fawcett & Co., and these were reportedly *'set a-going for the first time, not until the vessel was under way with passengers for the Isle of Man; so well could the manufacturers rely on their correctness and precision, that no previous trial was deemed necessary.'*<sup>2</sup>

In contrast, the machinery on board the early ferry steamers was much less reliable. It was said of the Seacombe paddler **Thomas Wilson** (1845) for example, that her engine often used to stop at its 'dead' centre (with the piston at either end of its stroke) while crossing the Mersey. The engineer then had to insert a crowbar through holes in a grating on deck in order to lever the crank round and get the engine restarted. <sup>3</sup> Similar to most early river steamers, the **Thomas Wilson** had a single-cylinder engine: *'the moving parts of which are "balanced" (by means of a cast iron paddle board, or otherwise) in such a manner as may best assist the centres; but such an arrangement is always objectionable from the difficulty experienced in starting, and from the impossibility of preventing a disagreeable jumping motion in the vessel from the unequal speed at which the paddle wheels are driven'*.<sup>4</sup>

To make matters worse, the paddle wheels of conventional design with a single float entering the water with a considerable shock, lost power and caused vibration. Various solutions were tried including the oblique paddle wheel invented by Lt. Wm. S. Hall of Chelsea, an army officer on half pay. Instead of fixing a single paddle float to each arm of the wheel as usual, Lt. Hall fixed the boards in zigzag

fashion, 'thus producing a continuous float board crossing and recrossing the main shaft or axis in constant succession, by which [he claimed] great evenness of action will be obtained.'<sup>5</sup> In April 1839 the Woodside steamer **Helensburgh** was fitted with a pair of his patent wheels for an experimental trial on the Mersey. According to one newspaper report: '*The result was highly satisfactory, the tremulous motion having been entirely removed, while her speed has been rather accelerated.*'<sup>6</sup> There is, however, no evidence to show that Lt. Hall's invention was adopted.

By 1839 the established method of producing an even turning movement for the paddle shaft was to employ two side lever engines driving cranks set at right angles to one another. However, the great weight and size of twin side levers meant that such an arrangement was unsuitable for small coasting and river steamers. Heavy engines increased draught, thus restricting the depth of water in which the vessel could operate and the size of engine reduced the space available for passengers and cargo.

Many attempts were made to reduce the space required by side lever engines. One method was to place the cylinders in a fore and aft position instead of athwartships. One cylinder was positioned directly below the paddle shaft, the piston driving the crank by side rods. The other cylinder was placed fore or aft of the crankshaft which it drove through side levers.

This hybrid arrangement gave way to a much lighter and more compact direct acting type of engine, built initially for the naval paddle steamer **Gorgon** of 1837, in which the upright cylinders were set under the paddle shaft, driving the cranks directly by connecting rods without intervening side levers. The piston rods were guided by a special form of parallel motion which ensured that they moved only in a vertical direction. Unfortunately the shortness of the connecting rods put a heavy strain on the parallel motion mechanism and an uneven turning movement of the paddle shaft resulted.<sup>7</sup>

These difficulties led in turn to the development of other types of direct acting engines, some of which had long connecting rods, the steeple engine among them. In the steeple engine the vertical cylinders were placed beneath the paddle shaft. The crosshead engaging the end of the piston rod was positioned some distance above the paddle shaft which it drove via a long connecting rod returning downwards towards the cylinder. The crosshead could slide in a slotted guide provided in a frame which projected above the deck like a steeple; hence the engine's name.

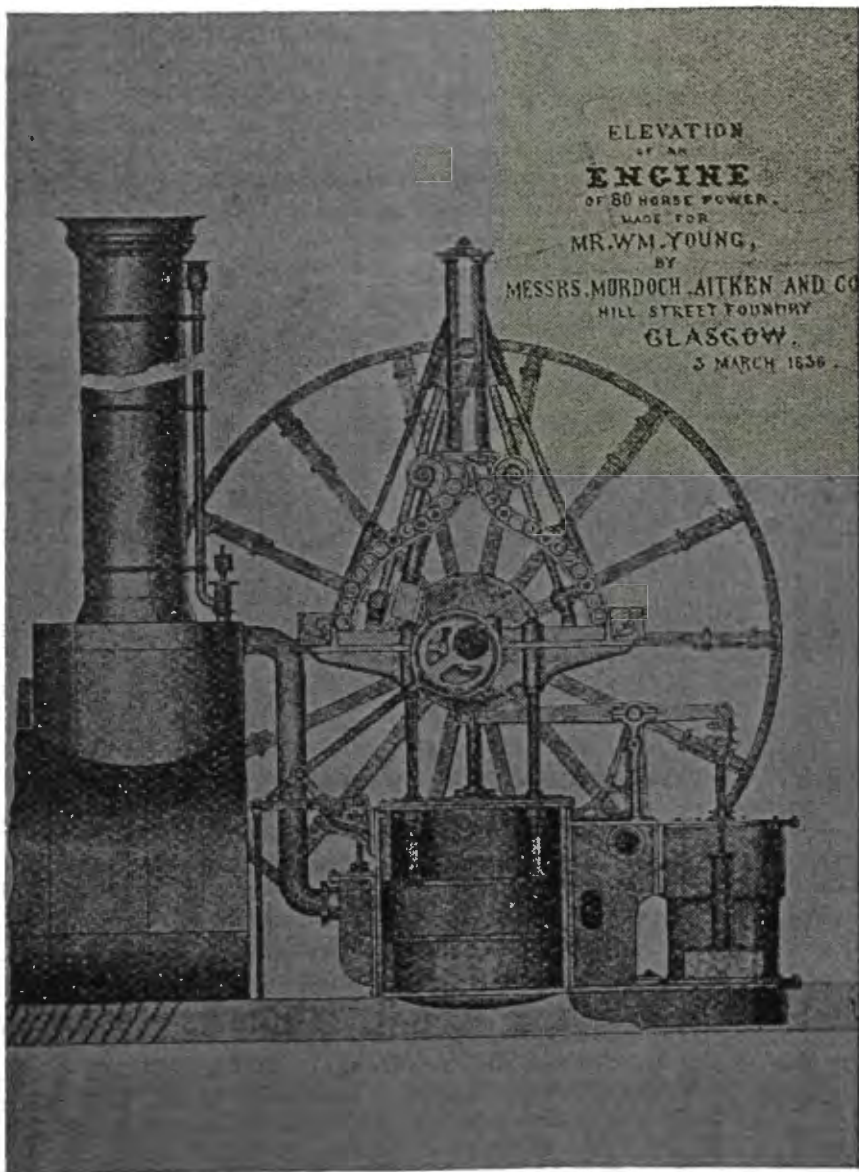
Steeple engines were great favourites on the Clyde, although not on the Mersey. Even so, one of the first river steamers to be fitted with such an engine, the 108-ton **St Mungo**, was sailing between Liverpool and Rhyl from 1836. This paddle steamer, built by R. Duncan & Co. of Port Glasgow the previous year, was '*considered one of the fastest boats afloat.*' The 70hp single cylinder steeple engine, originally made by Murdoch, Aitken & Co. of Glasgow was rebuilt and the flue boilers replaced by Thomas Vernon & Co. of Liverpool in August 1838.<sup>8</sup> Two years later, in November 1840, the six year old 92-ton iron-hulled paddler **Kilmun**, built by John Wood & Co. of Glasgow, with a 20hp steeple engine by David Napier, commenced plying between Talacre Harbour, Point of Ayr and Liverpool.<sup>9</sup>

It is quite possible that Napier's engine was further improved at the nearby Eyton Brothers' Mostyn Foundry, in the Dee estuary. There the Eytons designed a direct-connecting type of marine engine, '*combining extraordinary lightness with power and economy of space*'.<sup>10</sup> They installed a pair of these 90hp engines in the *Taliesin*, a paddle steamer built by them in 1842 for the Mostyn to Liverpool route. The engines weighed about 15 tons each, had long connecting rods but no beams and were only about four feet in length, so the cylinders must have been placed directly below the crankshaft. Moreover, this type of engine was suitable for both large steam vessels and shallow-draught river steamers which suggests they straddled the paddle shaft with the guides extending steeple-like above the deck.

Although it is not possible to be entirely certain about the engine lay-out, there is no question that the 121-ton *Taliesin*, which measured 92·8ft x 16·4ft x 9ft, was a powerful and fast sailing steam packet.<sup>11</sup> After her trials in June 1842 it was reported that: '*the speed of the boat, constructed rather wide, with a view to towing and carrying cargo, and short so as to turn in a confined space to suit the particular station, averages full ten miles an hour, when there are upwards of two hundred persons on board. A much higher rate of speed will most likely be effected when the stiffness of the new machinery wears off by use.*'<sup>12</sup>

The following May (1843) there was an eagerly awaited race between this beamy Welsh built steamer and the crack Liverpool built paddler *Erin-go-Bragh* from Liverpool as far as Hoylake, a distance of nine miles, which the unfancied *Taliesin* won by '*a fair mile*'. Those who had backed the favourite lost '*considerable sums*' and '*the exulting Taffies*' could be seen later '*clinking their full purses*' on the Pier Head at Liverpool. A reporter wrote: '*this decisive triumph reflects great credit on Messrs Eyton, the makers of the Welsh-built engines of the Taliesin, as her hull is by no means so well modified for speed as that of the Erin-go-Bragh.*'<sup>13</sup> The *Taliesin* added to her growing reputation in late November 1843 when she sailed from Liverpool to Mostyn in the height of a gale, and reached her destination in 3¼ hours. She was, apparently, the only vessel able to make passage from the Lancashire port on that day; '*all the other steam vessels which sailed were compelled to beat back for shelter.*'<sup>14</sup>

Four years earlier in 1839 the diagonal-cylinder paddle engine by Davenport & Grindrod was introduced to the port of Liverpool. They fitted a pair of these engines, weighing only 27 tons, in the *Alice*, a small iron steamer built by John Grantham for the Bridgewater Trustees. The engines were placed in the centre of the vessel with the two diagonal cylinders (each of 31inch diameter by 3ft 3in length of stroke) arranged in a line with the keel, inclining inwards towards the paddle shaft, and with the pistons acting downwards. The piston rods were engaged at their lower ends by crossheads from which long connecting rods worked upwards on to the cranks. The most important weight-saving improvement was the replacement of the usual cast iron frames by wrought iron columns to support the crankshaft and its bearings or entablature. The small space occupied by this type of engine left more room for passengers and it was considered to be particularly suited for river navigation where the breadth of beam must be limited. The builders also claimed that the simplicity of



their construction rendered them less likely to expensive repairs. Be that as it may, these 60hp diagonal engines drove the 14ft diameter paddle wheels at 35rpm and gave a speed '*which far exceeded the constructor's expectations.*'<sup>15</sup>

The Alice was built in sections at Page & Grantham's boiler yard and then assembled on a vacant piece of ground at the Duke's Dock pierhead from where she was launched in August 1839.<sup>16</sup> The Alice was of 170 tons, 95ft long, 20ft on the beam and drew 4ft 6in of water. She was intended both for carrying passengers and for towing flats and coastal vessels between Runcorn and Liverpool. The Alice replaced a hired steamboat which apparently left much to be desired in respect of comfort and speed. One report said that this chartered paddle steamer was '*so ill constructed that it is impossible for persons of respectable character to feel at ease in mixing with low society on board who are allowed to drink, smoke, swear etc etc*' and the voyage took twice as long as it ought to have done.<sup>17</sup>

The Bridgewater Trustees were very pleased with the Alice. They wrote to Grantham in December 1840 stating: '*that the expectations formed of her by the proprietors have been fully and satisfactorily realized, in her stability, light draft of water and sailing qualities. She has, in every respect, answered the purpose intended in the trade in which she has been employed. The passage of the Mersey between Liverpool and Runcorn is often very difficult to make in stormy weather of which we have had a more than usual succession in the present year; yet, notwithstanding this circumstance, and the tugging of from ten to fifteen heavily laden vessels at a time; as well as invariably (and unavoidably) taking the ground between tides, the Alice has withstood every strain and has not sustained the least perceptible damage or derangement.*'<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, her captain James Foulkes, a man with eighteen years' experience as master and mate of steamers, said that he had never met with her equal for taking the ground. In September 1843 his employers, the Bridgewater Trust, purchased a similar vessel, the two year old 60hp paddle steamer *Blanche* of 156 tons register, built by Davenport, Grindrod & Patrick at Liverpool.<sup>19</sup>

George Forrester & Company of Liverpool introduced an inverted-cylinder paddle engine in 1843. They put a set of these 330hp engines in the paddle steamer *Helen McGregor*, of 573 tons register, built by John Laird at Birkenhead in 1843 for the Hull and Hamburg trade. The engines consisted of two inverted cylinders, 3ft 6in diameter by 4ft 6in length of stroke, carried on four wrought iron columns. The cylinders were arranged athwartships with the piston rods projecting down and connected at their lower ends by a crosshead. The crosshead was guided by parallel motion and from it worked a long connecting rod, swinging between the two cylinders. The steam pressure was low, only 3½lb psi, supplied by tubular boilers; and the 23ft 6in diameter paddle wheels turned at 23½ rpm.<sup>20</sup>

By now George Forrester & Company were also constructing oscillating engines in which the cylinders swing on trunnions resembling the mountings of cannons. The swinging action of the cylinders enabled the thrust of the piston rods to act directly on to the cranks without the use of connecting rods, crossheads or guides.

Forresters installed two pairs of 60nhp oscillating paddle engines, with cylinders of 31in diameter by 36in length of stroke, in the new double-ended iron steamers *Queen* and *Prince*, built by Lairds for the Woodside service in 1844. Two years later they fitted another pair in the somewhat similar *Wirral*.<sup>21</sup>

At the time these ferry steamers and their oscillating engines were generally regarded as new-fangled inventions, and the levity of Liverpoolians towards them is best understood by noting the following extract from Albert Smith's *'Narrative of an Expedition to the end of Birkenhead'*, published in 1846: *'We left the George's Pier, Liverpool, on board the odd steamer which conveys anybody who "don't care two pence" (paid for the journey) to Woodside, on the other side of the Mersey. The steamer was a curious affair. It had all sorts of strange decks and seats, and a rudder and wheel at either end, so that it could "go ahead" or take "half a turn astern" with equal facility; and the engine was directed upon deck. Two iron bars kept oscillating from out of the hatches, as if a gigantic metal lobster was imprisoned below and these were his feelers: by them was the machinery governed.'*"<sup>22</sup>

Not everyone was amused by oscillating engines of course. Their movement in the confined space of a vessel's engine room was an added source of danger, as evidenced by the fatal accident which happened on board the *Queen* to a fireman named William Grace in April 1845:

*'The deceased joined the boat on Thursday last, and on Sunday afternoon he went with her from Woodside slip, at five o'clock. When the boat reached the Liverpool side of the river, the engines were reversed, in order to bring the boat alongside the pierhead. The deceased, who was below in the engine room, put his head up between the frame and the crank of the starboard engine and called to the engineer for a pricker, when the crank came down and crushed his head against the frame, and so fractured his skull as to cause his death in a few moments. The deceased was a steady man and attentive to his duties, and no blame appeared to be attached to anyone.'*<sup>23</sup>

This fatality was soon forgotten however, and the oscillating paddle engine became very popular on the Mersey. Indeed, exactly the same type of engine was used by John Grantham and others for driving screw propellers. But their work on screw propulsion must be considered elsewhere.

### Notes and References

<sup>1</sup> This legislation was honoured more in the breach than in the observance. See the author's essay *Early Mersey Passenger Steamers in Sixty Years of the Liverpool Nautical Research Society: A Nautical Miscellany* (1998)

<sup>2</sup> *The Kaleidoscope*, Vol.2 (1822) p.402

<sup>3</sup> E.C. Woods and P.C. Brown, *The Rise and Progress of Wallasey* (Liverpool 1929), pp116,117.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Murray, *Marine Engines* (1851) p.3, quoted in P.Allington & B. Greenhill, *The First Atlantic Liners* (London,1997), pp. 130-1.

<sup>5</sup> AD1837 Patent No.7519, p.3

- 6 *Gore's Advertiser*, 25 April 1839
- 7 F.E.Dean, 'Marine Engines', *Shipping Wonders of the World*, ed. C. Winchester (2 vols, London 1937) pp.370-1
- 8 *Chester Chronicle*, 21 Oct.1836 and 26 April 1839; James Williamson, *The Clyde Passenger Steamer* (Glasgow 1904) pp.72-3
- 9 David Bell (ed), *David Napier, Engineer* (Glasgow 1911), p.58; *Chester Courant*, 17 Nov.1840; Port of Chester Shipping Register. Flintshire Record Office, Hawarden. S/1 (Item 2/1840). The **Kilmun** was owned by Sir Edward Mostyn, Bt, of Talacre (<sup>48</sup>/<sub>64</sub>ths) and his agent John Dawson of Gronant, Merchant (<sup>16</sup>/<sub>64</sub>ths).
- 10 *Chester Chronicle*, 21 Jan. 1842
- 11 FRO. S/1 (Item 4/1842) 10/1847. The **Taliesin** was lengthened to 114.4ft in 1847. S/1 (Item 10/1847). She was re-registered at Cardiff in 1850.
- 12 *Chester Chronicle*, 3 June 1842
- 13 *Ibid*, 26 May 1843
- 14 *Liverpool Mercury*, 30 Nov. 1843
- 15 T. Patrick, *Mechanics' Magazine*, Vol.33 (1840) pp. 310-11; *Gore's Advertiser*, 12 Dec. 1839. It is highly likely that the engineer Thomas Patrick, a partner in the firm of Davenport & Grindrod, was responsible for the detailed design of these engines.
- 16 *Gore's Advertiser*, 15 August 1839. This was before Grantham, Page & Co. had established a shipbuilding yard at the south end of Brunswick Dock.
- 17 F.C. Mather, *After the Canal Duke* (Oxford, 1975) p.108
- 18 John Grantham, *Iron, as a Material for Ship-Building* (Liverpool 1842), pp 93-94.
- 19 Liverpool Shipping Register, MMM. (Item 92/1842) The **Blanche** was sold abroad in 1868. The subsequent fate of the **Alice** is unknown as she wasn't liable for registration, being employed solely in inland navigation.
- 20 Dean, *op cit*, p.373
- 21 C.L.D. Duckworth and G.E. Langmuir, *West Coast Steamers* (3rd ed. Prescott, 1966), pp 33, 120.
- 22 Albert Smith, "Narrative of an expedition to the end of Birkenhead", **Bentley's Miscellany**, Dec. 1846, p.636
- 23 *Chester Courant*, 23 April 1845

### ROYAL IRIS OF THE MERSEY

The Mersey ferry **Mountwood** is undergoing an extensive refit, similar to that of the **Woodchurch** (now the **Royal Daffodil**). The completion of the refit has been delayed due to the Cammell Laird collapse earlier in the year.

It is understood that the **Mountwood** will be renamed **Royal Iris of the Mersey**. This is because the previous holder of the name **Royal Iris** is still in existence, though lying in a derelict condition in the Port of London adjacent to the Thames Flood Barrier.



## THE CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Maritime Archives and Library,  
The Merseyside Maritime Museum,  
Albert Dock, Liverpool L3 4AA

*1<sup>st</sup> December, 2001*

Dear Members,

It is very good to see that the number of people attending our monthly meetings at the Merseyside Maritime Museum is slowly increasing, which not only confirms the quality of our speakers but also shows an increasing interest in our fields of research. The numbers have grown to the point which requires your Chairman to adopt some rather specialised ways of counting heads as the Education Suite fills up, and the numbers attending approach the maximum permissible under the Museum's safety regulations. It will not surprise you to hear that as I make my count, the total never quite reaches the permitted maximum!

I see in the *Daily Telegraph* this morning that there is a colour photograph of the arrival of the pontoon and the linkspan bridge for the new ferry terminal at Birkenhead. It is an important moment for the Mersey and it is interesting to observe that it is significant enough to be featured in a national newspaper. The steelwork was constructed in Belfast, towed to the Mersey by local tugs and the ferry terminal is to be commissioned in the New Year.

On the other hand, P&O Ferries are about to leave Liverpool and transfer their main service to the newly dredged port of Mostyn on the Dee. This will be another operation which will be watched with great interest. I am told by Members who live in the West Kirby area that they have already sighted large ferries conducting berthing trials at Mostyn.

Since my Annual Report, the Society's new website has been established and I recommend it to everybody who has the facility to visit it. You will find the website at < [www.lnrs.org.uk](http://www.lnrs.org.uk) >. This is another factor which will increase our activities and increase the number of requests for research. I am glad to be able to report that the Society's enlarged research team is coping very well.

As you will see in this issue of *The Bulletin*, the Society intends to launch a competition early in the New Year for its new award for works of research or study with the aim of encouraging the younger generation towards our interests in local maritime history and its preservation.

You will also be glad to hear that there will be a *Bulletin Extra* published early in the New Year.

I wish everyone a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

Captain M.D.R. Jones,  
Chairman,

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

## **OBITUARY**

### **ALAN ROWSON - died 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2001**

For very many years Alan Rowson had been an avid collector of maritime and local history books. Since retiring from his appointment as consultant pathologist some fifteen years ago, Alan had devoted considerable time and energy in pursuing a wide range of interests in these fields.

On joining the Liverpool Nautical Research Society, Alan Rowson's talents were very soon appreciated and he was offered the post of Society Archivist. This he was happy to accept, and working in conjunction with the staff of the Merseyside Maritime Museum's Archives Department he helped to collate and catalogue the Society's then disparate archival collection. This is now deposited with the Merseyside Maritime Museum's main archives and constitutes an invaluable research tool in regular use.

Alan Rowson then continued to assist the staff of the Archives Department with the never ending task of reviewing and updating its extensive collections of documents and photographs. In the process he amassed an encyclopaedic knowledge of local shipping families and other worthies. He was always ready to share this information with anyone who was genuinely interested.

Alan Rowson was endowed with a great sense of humour and a pleasantly direct and helpful manner. Those of us who were privileged to know him will cherish memories of him with appreciation. He will certainly be missed.

*L.N.R.S. President, A.S. Davidson.*

---

## **REPORT ON MEETING** **GARSTON DOCKS AND RELATED INDUSTRIES**

*by B. Brett*

Mr Brett spoke to a well attended meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> October. He commenced by saying that he had lived in Garston for 35 years.

Garston was noted as a medieval village situated at the mouth of a substantial stream which flowed into the River Mersey. It was an obvious place for a settlement. The main occupation was fishing. In 1790 the local saltworks relocated to Garston. The first enclosed dock at Garston was built by the St Helens Canal and Railway Company in 1850. Between 1851 and 1881 the population of Garston quadrupled and by 1901 stood at 17,000.

Using a series of maps, Mr Brett outlined the expansion and decline of the port. Up until the miners' strike of 1984, Garston had been a major exporter of coal to Northern Ireland. Today its main exports are scrap metal and fertilizers. There is a rail container depot close to the port.

j.s.

## **WORLD SHIP SOCIETY PROGRAMME, DECEMBER 2001 - JUNE 2002**

- 11.Dec. SONG OF THE CLYDE : A W.S.S. slide show
- 8.Jan. MERSEY FERRIES EVENING : Gordon Ditchfield
- 12.Feb. THE KIEL CANAL : A W.S.S. slide show
- 12.Mar. CRUISING WITH P & O : Bill Mayes (Thames Valley Branch)
- 9.Apr. TITANIC - 90 YEARS ON
- 14.May A LIFETIME OF SHIPS (part 2: 1960s-2000) : Ron Baker
- 11.June BRANCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING followed by Members' slides

*Meetings are held in Sam's Bar Function Room, at the corner of Old Hall Street and Tithebarn Street. Nearest Merseyrail station : Moorfields. Commence 7.00pm.*

### **RECOMMENDED WEB SITE**

L.N.R.S. Member Captain P.A. Woods has e-mailed the Society and recommended the following website as being of interest, containing as it does many prints of Liverpool shipping: < [www.20thcenturyimages.co.uk](http://www.20thcenturyimages.co.uk) >

## **PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS**

All Meetings are held in the Education Suite at the Merseyside Maritime Museum and commence at 12.30pm

*Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> December, 2001*

### **ANNUAL CHRISTMAS SOCIAL AND QUIZ**

*Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> January, 2002*

### **THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR AS FOUGHT FROM ENGLAND**

K. Jerry Williams

*Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2002*

### **BRUNEL'S SHIPS : 'GREAT WESTERN', 'GREAT BRITAIN' and 'GREAT EASTERN'**

Dr Dennis Griffiths

*Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2002*

### **THE BUILDING OF THE CENTRE SECTION OF THE 'COSTA CLASSICA'**

Linton Roberts

*Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2002*

### **THE STORY OF 'SALT POOL' (FRODSHAM)**

AND FINALLY .....

### THE THEFT OF THE 'FERRET'

For pure drama the theft of the **Ferret** in 1880 is unique in the annals of shipping. She was built by J. & G. Thomson of Govan in 1871 with a gross tonnage of 343, and with a length of 171 feet. The **Ferret** was placed on Burns' service between the Clyde and Belfast but two years later was sold to the Dingwall and Skye Railway Company for the Strome Ferry-Portree service.

In October 1880 a Mr Smith, together with a Mr Walker and a Captain Wright planned to charter the **Ferret** on the strength of a doubtful bank credit and brazen effrontery. Mr Smith said his wife had been ill, and a Mediterranean cruise would be just the thing to restore her to health. The **Ferret** was at her builders for overhaul, and on obtaining possession, Mr Smith arranged for a crew to join her at Greenock from where she sailed to Cardiff, where the crew was changed. On 25<sup>th</sup> October 1880 the **Ferret** sailed for Marseilles, but she never arrived. En route to the Mediterranean her starboard lifeboats were painted green and passing through the Straits of Gibraltar she displayed her number and asked to be reported.

Under cover of night the **Ferret** steamed back through the Straits. Her two unpainted lifeboats were thrown into the sea, her white funnel was repainted black and her name was changed to **Benton**. In due course the **Ferret** was posted as missing and the underwriters paid a total loss.

The **Benton** called at the Cape Verde Islands for water and stores and arrived at Santos, Brazil on 20<sup>th</sup> December 1880. With literally a pistol at their heads, the crew had no option but to continue to serve. At Santos the **Benton** declared her voyage as being from Cape Town in ballast for England. She loaded a cargo of 4,000 bags of coffee at Santos consigned to Marseilles and sailed on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1881. She set course for Cape Town and arrived there on 29<sup>th</sup> January where her cargo was sold for £11,000.

Mauritius and several other ports were next tried, but by then shipping circles in general were aware that something most irregular was happening and the 'business activities' were curtailed. Eventually the **Benton** reached Melbourne where an unsuccessful attempt was made to sell her. A diligent Customs officer noticed that the official number and registered tonnage engraved on the coamings of the ship's main hatch did not agree with those on the 'official' ship's papers. The Australian Customs seized her on 27<sup>th</sup> April 1881 and Smith, Walker and Wright were all arrested and received heavy sentences.

The **Benton** (ex **Ferret**) was purchased by the Adelaide Steamship Company and continued in its service for another 39 years, before being wrecked near Cape Spencer on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1920. |||||

#### Sources:

The Story of Burns & Laird Lines, *Sea Breezes*, Vol.8, page 108  
*Burns and Laird*, Colin Campbell and Roy Fenton, 1998. ISBN 1 901703 07 X

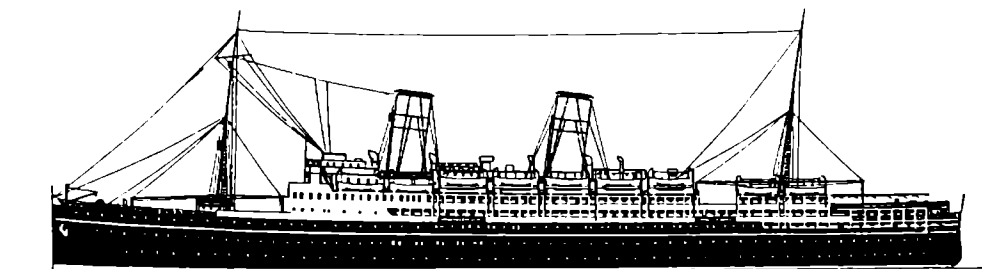
# *The Liverpool Nautical Research Society*

(Founded in 1938)

## **BULLETIN EXTRA**


(Supplementary Issue : mid-January, 2002)

*Editor : John Shepherd*



*ALSATIAN / EMPRESS OF FRANCE (I)*

Power Pioneers on the North Atlantic ( <i>The Editor</i> )	page 1
Liverpool to New York, First Class, in 1902	page 7
A History of the Hales Trophy ( <i>David Marsh</i> )	page 10
The 'Queens' at War	page 18
A Purser's Clerk on the <b>Queen Elizabeth</b> in 1963 ( <i>John Shepherd</i> )	page 26
The First and Last Voyages of the <b>Queen Mary</b>	page 35
The <b>Alsatian / Empress of France</b> of 1914	page 42
Storm Warning : Shipping Slow to React	page 47



**WINTER NORTH ATLANTIC**  
The Cunard liner **CARINTHIA** on passage  
between Greenock and Halifax, N.S.  
on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 1965  
(Photo : John Shepherd)

## ***The Liverpool Nautical Research Society***

### ***President:***

Mr A.S. Davidson

### ***Vice-President:***

Mr H.M. Hignett

### ***Chairman:***

Captain M.D.R. Jones

### ***Vice-Chairman:***

Mr D.K.C. Eccles



### ***Council:***

G.Cubbin, R.Dennis (*Meetings Secretary*), J.E. Lingwood, D.Littler,  
A.H.McClelland, J.Shepherd (*Editor*), G.F.Wright

### ***Honorary Officers:***

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

### ***Membership and all Correspondence***

Hon. Secretary, L.N.R.S.,  
Maritime Archives and Library,  
Merseyside Maritime Museum,  
Albert Dock,  
LIVERPOOL, L3 4AA, U.K.  
(e-mail: < [kingorry@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:kingorry@globalnet.co.uk) > )

***The Society is represented on the following websites:***

[www.merseyshipping.co.uk](http://www.merseyshipping.co.uk)

[www.cronab.demon.co.uk](http://www.cronab.demon.co.uk)

### ***From the Editor:***

This is the second year in which a '*Bulletin Extra*' has been produced. Normally the Society produces four editions of '*The Bulletin*' each year, but if the finances are healthy and there is sufficient material in the Editor's file, then a supplementary issue is produced. This year the '*Bulletin Extra*' is very much a Western Ocean issue - a large amount of material covering passenger shipping on the North Atlantic has recently come to hand and this is the result. Many of our Members will recall the post-war heyday of the Atlantic liner, and several (including the Editor) spent many years working on these ships. They were happy times - the like of which we shall never see again. J.S.

## POWER PIONEERS ON THE NORTH ATLANTIC

*compiled by The Editor*

*The story of the historic voyages of the **Sirius** and the **Great Western** has been told many times, but the advertisements for the two vessels are perhaps unknown to the majority of readers; they make interesting and enlightening reading, and show the competition for passengers between the two ships. It does not seem to have occurred to the owners that their vessels were making maritime history.*

*Advertisements for the **Sirius's** voyage appeared in the press before those of the **Great Western**. The announcements were brief and to the point:*

### **FOR NEW YORK**

*The new and powerful Steam-ship "**Sirius**"*

*700 tons and 300 horse power, Lieut. Richard Roberts, R.N., Commander, is intended to sail from London Docks on Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> March, 1838, at Ten o'Clock in the Morning, calling at Cork Harbour, and to sail from there on Monday, the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April, 1838, at Twelve o'Clock at Noon.*

### **Fares**

*Cabin 35 Guineas, including Wines, Provisions and Bedding. Second Cabin 20 Guineas, including Provisions and Bedding. Steerage 8 Guineas, including Provisions.*

*Thirty feet luggage allowed for each Cabin Passenger, Twenty feet luggage allowed for each Second Passenger, and Ten feet luggage allowed for each Steerage Passenger exclusive of Bedding.*

*Returning from New York on 1<sup>st</sup> of May, 1838.*

*This Vessel having been at work for nearly EIGHT MONTHS, the Machinery has been fully tried, and her great speed ascertained. The Cabins are fitted up for the accommodation of families.*

*Further information afforded on application to Macgregor Laird, British and American Steam Packet Company's Offices, 137 Leadenhall Street, London; at Rotterdam, Hamburg, Hull, Bristol, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dublin, Cork or Clarence Dock, Liverpool.*

It will be noticed that the **Sirius** was advertised as a three-class ship. The fares were those currently charged in ordinary sailing packets of the time and there was no lack of competition from these packets. The **Saint Mark**, 550 tons, left Liverpool for New York with the **Republican**, 610 tons, on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1838; the **Champlain** sailed from Liverpool for Philadelphia on 26<sup>th</sup> March; the **South America**, 616 tons, left Liverpool for New York on 1<sup>st</sup> April, whilst the barque **Louisa** left Liverpool for Boston on the same date. Other sailings advertised for United States ports at the same time as those of the **Sirius** and the **Great Western** were taken by the **Susquehanna**,

600 tons; the **Garrick**, 1,004 tons; **Pennsylvania**, 808 tons; **Jupiter**, 310 tons; **Concord**, 306 tons; **Gibraltar**, 280 tons and the **St. Lawrence**, 450 tons.

The eight months' service mentioned in the advertisement was on the run between London and Cork for the St. George Steam Packet Company, which eventually became the City of Cork Steam Packet Company. The **Sirius** was chartered by the newly formed British & American Steam Packet Company because its own vessel, the paddle steamer **British Queen**, was not completed on time. A week after the **Sirius** announcement, the Great Western Railway Company, owners of the paddle steamer **Great Western**, issued an advertisement for its steamer's Atlantic voyage. There can be no doubt that it was stimulated by the **Sirius** announcement. The railway company emphasised that its vessel was specially built to withstand the rigours of the Atlantic, and was not merely a coastal paddle steamer. The **Great Western** was so large that it would not be necessary to waste time calling at Cork; only the 'best' passengers would be carried (she was a one-class ship), and her captain was familiar with the entrance to New York! One wonders if the **Sirius's** captain was not. This **Great Western** notice appeared simultaneously with the second, unaltered, **Sirius** advertisement:

*For New York  
The "Great Western" Steamship  
Of 1,340 tons Register  
With engines of 450-horse power  
Lieut. James Hosken R.N., Commander*

*Will sail from Bristol, at Two o'Clock p.m., on the 7<sup>th</sup> April, 1838*

*This ship is built with an extraordinary degree of strength, and equipped for the sole purpose of maintaining a constant communication between England and New York. Previously to her sailing she will have made several trips to sea, and her passage from the Thames to Bristol. She stows with ease sufficient coal for twenty-five days' steaming at full consumption. It is unnecessary, therefore, to incur the delay of calling at Cork.*

*Her accommodations comprise one hundred and twenty-eight sleeping places for one class of passenger, divided between upper saloon staterooms, state-rooms in the fore cabin (in point of convenience equal to the saloon, and having attached to it a distinct steward's establishment, to be used or not at the pleasure of the passengers), and staterooms in the poop or cuddy; besides which there are twenty good bed places for servants. The provisions, wines, &c, are of every description, and of the best qualities. Persons desirous of securing staterooms will please apply at the Great Western Railway Office, London; Messrs Gibbs, Bright & Co., Liverpool; Messrs Hamilton, Glasgow; Mr R. Hall, Cork; and to C. Claxton, Managing Director, Great Western Steam Ship Office, Bristol.*

*Passage money to be paid on booking. Rates to New York, 35 Guineas. From New York, 30 Guineas; Children under 13 years and servants, Half Price; Steward's Fees each way £1 10s. For Families a reduction will be made in proportion to their*

*numbers and the berths they require. To Officers on duty in Her Majesty's service and their families some allowance will be made for travelling expenses to Bristol, and those from the depot at Cork will have their passage money by the regular steamers to Bristol allowed for.*

*No letters will be taken except upon payment at the rate of 1/- the single sheet; newspapers and slips threepence each. Parcels in proportion to the size and weight; and a small quantity of light goods at £5 per ton. Specie and valuables half per cent.*

*It is intended that the **Great Western** should start from New York on her return to Bristol (which port has been fixed upon as the best for a Western departure and arrival, and at the same time a convenient distance from the Metropolis) between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of May. A surgeon of high qualifications has been engaged, and a branch pilot for the Bristol Channel and Irish Coast is attached to the ship; and the Captain is perfectly acquainted with the coast of and entrance to New York and Long Island Sound.*

*For further particulars apply to the parties above named; and if by letter (post paid) to Christopher Claxton, R.N., Managing Director, Bristol, or to Gibbs, Bright & Co., Liverpool.*

The **Sirius** left her ports at the advertised times, while the **Great Western** was delayed a day by bad weather. The **Sirius** arrived safely off New York on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1838, after an ocean passage of 18 days, 10 hours at a mean speed of 6.7 knots; having consumed 450 tons of coal. The **Great Western** steamed in a few hours after her, having taken 15 days 5 hours, at a mean speed of 8.8 knots. Only two Atlantic crossings were made by the **Sirius**, but the **Great Western** crossed sixty-four times in all before she was broken up at Vauxhall in 1857.

### **The British & American Steam Navigation Company**

The British & American Steam Navigation Company was the first North Atlantic steamship line to be successfully floated and the first to start a service.

An American, Dr Junius Smith, was responsible for the Company's formation. The idea came to him during a 57 day passage from England to New York by sailing ship but nothing tangible resulted until 1<sup>st</sup> June 1835, when Smith published a prospectus for a steamship line from London to New York, the capital required being £100,000. Meeting with no support, he published a more ambitious prospectus in October 1835, the proposed capital being increased to £500,000. Isaac Solly, who had been chairman of the London & Birmingham Railway agreed to lend his name to the project, and applications for shares were received in a steady flow.

It was not until October 1836 that the Company signed a contract with Curling & Young of London for a 2,000 ton wooden paddle steamer, which was laid down as the **Royal Victoria**, but was subsequently renamed **British Queen** in honour of Queen Victoria's accession to the throne. It had been intended that she should make

her maiden voyage in the spring of 1838, but Claude Girdwood & Company of Glasgow, the engine-builders, went bankrupt. Considerable delay occurred before the contract was taken over at an increased price by Robert Napier of Glasgow, and it became evident that the ship would not be completed for another year at least.

Meanwhile, the Great Western Steam Ship Company had been established at Bristol, and its **Great Western** was expected to be ready for her first North Atlantic voyage early in 1838. The British & American Company was determined to be first in the field and its only course was to start with chartered tonnage. The choice was extremely limited, but three of the Company's directors were also directors of the St George Steam Packet Company, which was operating a service between London and Cork. A new steamer, the 703 ton **Sirius**, had been completed for them towards the end of 1837 and arrangements were made for her to be chartered by the British & American Steam Navigation Company.

The **Sirius** left London with 22 passengers during the afternoon of 28<sup>th</sup> March 1838, commanded by Lt. R. Roberts, RN and on her way down the Thames overtook the **Great Western** of the rival Great Western Steam Ship Company, which was undergoing trials. A little later the sailing packet **Quebec**, destined for New York with 171 passengers, came down the river in tow of a steamer and some of her passengers wagered that she would reach New York before the **Sirius**.

The **Sirius** was scheduled to proceed via Cork, from where she was due to sail on 2<sup>nd</sup> April. The steamer **Victory** was advertised to carry transshipment passengers from Bristol, and the steamer **Ocean** from Glasgow and Liverpool. The latter was delayed by fog and the **Sirius** was unable to sail until 10.am on 4th April, when her passenger complement comprised 30 state cabin, 29 fore cabin and 35 steerage, a total of 94. She had loaded 450 tons of bunker coal, 58 casks of resin and 20 tons of fresh water, but she carried no cargo; she was riding dangerously low in the water. Rough weather was experienced during the voyage and Lt. Roberts had trouble with the crew who wanted him to turn back. Land was sighted during the afternoon of 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1838 and the **Sirius** finally anchored off the Battery, New York, early the following morning, a few hours before the **Great Western**. The voyage time is usually quoted as 18 days 10 hours, but the time difference of about 4½ hours does not seem to have been added. The **Sirius's** success can be attributed largely to the invention in 1834 by Samuel Hill of surface condensers, which enabled fresh distilled water to be fed to the boilers, doing away with the necessity of clearing them of salt every three to four days.

The **Sirius** sailed from New York on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1838, reaching Falmouth in 18 days. One of her passengers was James Gordon Bennett, the editor of the *New York Herald*. She proceeded to London and made another round voyage to New York, and, despite having been earmarked for a third, was returned to her owners, as it was found that the high charter price coupled with disappointing passenger lists made further employment unprofitable.

The **Sirius** lasted until 16<sup>th</sup> January 1847 when she ran on to a reef in Ballycotton Bay, near Youghal, and became a total wreck.

### *The Great Western Steam Ship Company*

The story goes that at a meeting of the committee of the Great Western Railway in October 1835, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the chief engineer, suggested jokingly that the London-Bristol main line, then in its early stages of construction and not opened throughout until 1841, should be extended from Bristol to New York through the medium of a steamship service, but Thomas Guppy, one of the founders of the railway, took him seriously and later in the month he, Brunel and a shipping authority, Lt. Christopher Claxton RN, had a series of discussions which culminated in a prospectus of the Great Western Steam Ship Company being issued in January 1836. The capital of £250,000 was soon subscribed and the first general meeting was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1836.

Brunel, who for some years previously had taken a great interest in naval architecture, was asked to design the Company's first steamship and William Patterson, of Wapping, Bristol, was chosen as the builder.

The 1,340 ton wooden paddle steamer **Great Western** was laid down in June 1836 and was launched on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1837 in the presence of a crowd of about 50,000. On 18<sup>th</sup> August she sailed for London to have her engines installed by Maudslay, Sons and Field. She underwent her first steam trials on the Thames on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1838 and exactly a week later started off for her home port. Less than an hour after leaving Gravesend some oil on the felt packing of one of the boilers became ignited. The fire was soon extinguished, but not before the **Great Western** had grounded on a sandbank and some of the stokers had rowed ashore. Brunel himself stepped on a charred ladder rung when climbing down to the stokehold to survey the damage but fortunately escaped with only a bad shaking.

The **Great Western** arrived at King Road, near the mouth of the Bristol Avon, at 6 pm on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1838. She was due to start her maiden voyage to New York on 7<sup>th</sup> April, but a heavy gale sprang up and she did not leave until 10 am on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> April, commanded by Lt. James Hosken, RN. Owing to exaggerated reports about the fire, fifty intending passengers had been scared away and only seven actually sailed. On the whole, good weather was experienced during the voyage, the engines worked well and land was sighted on the morning of 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1838. At 5 pm the same day the **Great Western** tied up at Pike Street Wharf, New York, just a few hours after the **Sirius** which must, therefore, be regarded as the first steamer to start a service across the North Atlantic. On the other hand, the **Great Western's** passage was completed in 15 days 10¼ hours (after making allowance for difference of time between Bristol and New York, in those days reckoned as 4½ hours), compared with her rival's time of 18½ days over a shorter route, and was of greater significance as she had been built for trans-Atlantic service, whereas the **Sirius** was a chartered steamer, built for the cross-channel trade between England and Ireland.

Homewards, the **Great Western** left New York at 2.20 pm on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1838 with 68 passengers, arriving at King Road at 11.15 am on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May at an average speed of 9.14 knots. Altogether she made five round voyages during 1838, the average

of her passages being stated as 16 days 1½ hours westbound and 13 days 4 hours eastbound.

Despite the fact that the **Great Western's** large size compelled her to moor at King Road, where she loaded and unloaded her cargo from and into lighters, the Bristol Docks Company insisted on levying heavy dues. In 1842, therefore, it was decided to sail her alternately from Bristol and Liverpool, but the advantages of berthing at Liverpool soon became so obvious that in 1843 she made it her regular terminus.

The **Great Western** lasted until 1857 when she was broken up at Vauxhall, London. |||||

### Sources:

*North Atlantic Seaway* : Volume 1 : N.R.P. Bonsor

*Power Pioneers on the North Atlantic* : E.W.Argyle : *Sea Breezes* Vol.15, p.200

### THE MONDAY FACILITY

Members' access to the Archives and Library at the Merseyside Maritime Museum on Mondays will resume in 2002 as follows:

JANUARY : Monday 28th  
FEBRUARY : Mondays 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th  
MARCH : Mondays 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th  
APRIL : Mondays 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th  
MAY : Mondays 13th, 20th and 27th  
JUNE : Mondays 10th, 17th and 24th  
JULY : Mondays 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th  
AUGUST : Mondays 5th, 12th and 19th  
SEPTEMBER : Mondays 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th  
OCTOBER : Mondays 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th  
NOVEMBER : Mondays 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th



*The Chairman and Council of the  
Liverpool Nautical Research Society  
wish all Members a Happy and Prosperous New Year*

## LIVERPOOL TO NEW YORK, FIRST CLASS, IN 1902

An account of a voyage from Liverpool to New York in the Cunard liner **Lucania** in February 1902, from letters written during the voyage by a first-class passenger, Mr Hayward M. Davenport.

Contrast this with an account which appeared in the Spring, 1998 '*Bulletin*' of a third-class passage in the **Lucania's** sister ship, the **Campania**.

### Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> February, 1902:

Arrived at Liverpool at 3.55pm so the train was well to time. We are now sailing down the Irish Sea. This is a very fine ship, the dining room large and the entire ceiling studded with electric lights and very lofty. There is a roaring open fire burning in the drawing room. The library and writing room where I am writing this is very comfortable and the smoke-room is decorated in black carved oak with an open fire and little nooks all round with tables for cards. The ship is wonderfully steady at present but there is a good deal of vibration forward here in the writing room. There are about 200 first-class passengers on board so we shall not be overcrowded. The bugle is just sounding for dinner.

### Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> February:

We were off Queenstown this morning about eight and took the mails (an immense number) on board, also a few more passengers, nearly all second-class, and left at 9.am. It was blowing very hard in the harbour and when we got clear of the land we began to feel it pretty stiff. We had a bright sun all the morning and a strong wind which made the ship roll a good deal. Attended morning service in the dining saloon at 10.30 taken by the purser. The wind is dead astern so we do not pitch much and are shoving along at a great pace. Have passed two steamers, each of about 8,000 tons going into the gale and having a bad time with every sea sweeping them clean. The **Lucania** rolled her saloon ports clean under all dinner so you can imagine the sea when it does that to a ship like this.

### Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> February:

Neither of us got much sleep last night owing to the roar of the sea in our ports. This morning we asked to change our state-room so they have given us a lovely lofty cabin on the saloon deck, larger than the other and much nicer in every way, more air and headroom, so we are in luck's way. The cost of our new cabin would be half as much again. I cannot write very clearly owing to the vibration and general heave but it is so much steadier here than in the writing room. At 12 noon today we had come 578 miles from Daunt's Rock, the point from which they measure the run across. If the wind keeps in the north-east we shall arrive in New York, weather permitting, Friday evening. Passed a large four-masted steamer at 4.30, a Liverpool ship homeward bound.

Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> February:

Wind continues fresh with squalls and showers. We had a good run of 529 miles and are now about midway.

Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> February:

The sea is quite smooth with a long swell which makes the ship pitch. At noon we had done 506 miles, a decrease on yesterday, owing to heavy weather during the night. This morning we talked to the *Umbria*, 70 miles away from us, with the Marconi apparatus. Then at 11 o'clock we passed one of the Atlantic Transport Line going our way and left her as if she was standing still, also a Wilson steamer from Hull. Ran through a thick mist for about an hour; this we expect as we are off the Banks of Newfoundland.

Had a great treat after lunch going all over the ship's engines. We went right down the shafts which run in water jacket bearings without the slightest friction or sound of any kind. Then to the boilers of which there are thirteen - the heat down there is awful - the poor wretched stokers black as ink and the water pouring off them. We then saw the steering gear; it is terrific the noise down there when the screws race.

Played shuffle-board with a Danish passenger which we much enjoyed. The glass is falling and is now at 'rain'. Up to now it has been a record passage for the time of year.

Thursday, 6<sup>th</sup> February:

Last night we met a strong north-westerly gale and our ship continually ships seas, water coming on to the hurricane deck which they have now closed in with canvas sheets. We made only 436 miles.

Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> February:

The wind increased again last night and we are only going half speed to save shipping the heavy seas. A passenger nearly got his legs broken as about thirty deck chairs set loose by a sea coming on board carried him right down the deck about forty feet. A big sea has just struck us breaking on the skylight of the smoke-room on the flying deck. The distance travelled has just been put up and is only 342 miles. The ship has laboured heavily all this morning; there is a good foot of water on the lower deck, and very often the same on the hurricane deck on the weather side. We do not expect to arrive at New York now until Saturday afternoon.

Saturday, 8<sup>th</sup> February:

It has turned bitterly cold and the gale is still with us so we shall not get ashore until Sunday morning. There is a roaring fire in the smoke-room which is very welcome. We hear by Marconi from Nantucket that they have had a severe blizzard in New York and that the harbour is frozen up, so we shall take longer than usual getting alongside as they have to send tugs ahead to break a way through for us. Passed a French steamer

this morning having a rather bad time of it; she was only about 4,000 tons and pitching pretty heavily.

Last night we signalled a Hamburg-Amerika ship by rocket. It is now 3.30pm but we are not yet in sight of land; hope to see Sandy Hook before dark. The day's run was 352 miles. At 6.30pm we passed the **Saxonia** homeward bound. It is freezing hard and the bows are all ice. We passed a three master schooner this afternoon with a flag of distress still flying from her masthead; there was no sign of a boat about or anyone in the rigging.

Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> February:

Freezing very hard, the bow of the ship and decks all solid ice. We have just passed the Statue of Liberty and the tugs are busy breaking up the ice flows for us to get into dock. One of the big Hamburg-Amerika steamers is alongside her quay, also the **Hohenzollern**. We did well to get in when we did in spite of the gale. I have made enquiries and found that the **Philadelphia** is a day overdue, and the **Cymric** very much overdue. |||||



Queen Elizabeth

The Queen Elizabeth alongside at Cherbourg with the Britannic preparing to berth astern.

# A HISTORY OF THE HALES TROPHY

by David Marsh (*Solicitor for the Hales Trophy Trust*)

## *The Blue Riband of the Atlantic*

In April 1838 the paddle steamer **Sirius** crossed the North Atlantic from east to west in 18 days, 10 hours and 22 minutes, at an average speed of 6.7 knots and became the first ship to make a record crossing of the Atlantic under power. The title 'The Blue Riband' came into use in the late nineteenth century, though history does not say why this phrase was used for Atlantic records or who first used it.

The separate records for eastbound and westbound crossings have been regularly broken since the **Sirius** made the first record run with eastbound voyages generally being faster due to prevailing winds and currents.

The first crossing in under ten days was by the Cunard steamship **Britannia**. In August 1840 she crossed from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to Liverpool in 9 days, 21 hours, 44 minutes, averaging 10.98 knots. In so doing, the **Britannia** took the trans-Atlantic record from the famous **Great Western**, which had easily beaten the time of the **Sirius** within days of the first record.

The first westbound crossing in under ten days was by the **Cambria** in July 1845. She averaged 10.71 knots between Liverpool and Halifax, crossing in 9 days, 20 hours, 30 minutes. In 1843 there was an eastbound crossing in just under nine days, the British ship **Hibernia** crossing at 11.80 knots.

## *Competition gathers pace*

With a variety of routes available, it was only sensible that the record should be based on average speed rather than crossing time. The first ship to better 15 knots was the **Baltic** early in 1873.

In 1882 the **Alaska** made the first westbound crossing averaging more than 16 knots, a rare instance of a new overall record being established on a voyage in that direction. The westbound 'Blue Riband' would change hands 19 times in the next 12 years. The **Alaska** bettered her own time twice in 1882 (eastbound) and again in 1883 (westbound), taking the record speeds for both directions to over 17 knots.

In May 1889 the **City of Paris** made the first eastbound crossing at more than 20 knots. The Cunard liner **Lucania** crossed eastbound in 5 days 11 hours 40 minutes in 1895 at an average of 22.00 knots, a record which lasted two-and-a-half years before being broken by the **Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse** which became the first of four German vessels to claim the 'Blue Riband' over the following decade. Cunard and the British Government joined forces to regain the Blue Riband with the **Lusitania**, which in 1907 became the first vessel to complete the crossing in under five days. Her sister, the **Mauretania**, proved still faster and held the Blue Riband from 1909 to

1929. Her best crossing was at an average of more than 26 knots and she brought the passage time down to four-and-a-half days.

After the First World War the Germans began building liners again. The **Bremen** and the **Europa** were built concurrently at different shipyards and it was reported that the Germans planned to sail both liners across the Atlantic at the same time on a dual maiden voyage to take the Blue Riband away from the **Mauretania**. However a fire aboard the **Europa** during her fitting out delayed her introduction by a year. The **Bremen** completed her maiden voyage in the summer of 1929 and instantly took the Blue Riband from the **Mauretania**. The **Bremen** and the **Europa** were the first to use overlapping hull-plates and bulbous bows to reduce resistance. The **Bremen** took the eastbound record to 28.51 knots, and the **Europa** the westbound record to 27.92 knots.

### **Harold Hales and his ambition**

Born of Scottish parents in Hanley, Staffordshire in 1868, Harold Keates Hales began his career working in a pottery and then became a motor engineer and a dealer in bicycles, cars, aeroplanes and pianos. He and a friend made the first non-stop run in a car from London to Edinburgh in 1904. During the First World War, Hales took part in the landing at Gallipoli and was decorated three times.

In 1929, after twelve years in the Far East, he founded Hales Brothers, a London shipping company. From 1931 to 1935 he represented Hanley in Parliament. Hales donated the Hales Trophy for the Blue Riband of the Atlantic in 1935. In his autobiography, he gives his reasons:

*"The record for the fastest crossing of the North Atlantic ocean had been held for 22 years by the **Mauretania** when the North German liner **Bremen** set a new record for the crossing, only to lose it shortly afterwards to her sistership **Europa**, which in turn had to yield to Italy's **Rex**, which astonished the world by making the fastest passage at an average speed of 29 knots. This keen competition suggested to me that the time had come for me to fulfil my long-cherished ambition to present a trophy for international competition.*

*"I decided to offer a trophy to be held by the ship making the quickest Atlantic passage. More than 38 years ago, as a young motor engineer, I had formed three definite ambitions which were all to be gratified while I was still in harness. The first was to save £10,000 - not a very uncommon ambition in a young man; the second was to sit in the House of Commons for my childhood home - less usual, perhaps, but normal enough; and my third ambition was to present a trophy which would serve as a stimulus to the craft of speed and mechanical perfection which I have loved so well.*

*"In those early days I had visions of ocean greyhounds of revolutionary design, cleaving their paths to New York and back again in as few hours as the **Great Western** had needed days. Before I die, I thought, I will present a trophy to be held by the country whose liners hold the Atlantic record. I said nothing to anyone of my*

*ambition. At any moment some millionaire might have forestalled me; but no one did, and today the Hales Trophy is an established fact."*

### **The Hales Trophy**

In 1931, when Hales returned from India, where he had made his second fortune as a representative for British manufacturers, he began to draw up his plans for the Hales Trophy. It is probable that the many debates in the House of Commons on the construction of the liner **Queen Mary** helped to revive in his mind the dream of a trophy to celebrate the craft of 'speed and mechanical perfection'. In his autobiography, Hales describes the Trophy, which was made by Henry Pidduck & Sons Ltd., silversmiths of Hanley, and insured for the (then considerable) sum of £850. *"It is made of solid silver, heavily gilt, and weighs between six hundred and seven hundred ounces. The total height, including the onyx plinth, is nearly four feet. It has two finely modelled figures surmounting the globe, the uppermost figure being symbolic of speed overcoming the forces of the Atlantic, and urging forward a modern liner.*

*"The Atlantic Ocean is depicted by pale blue enamel, and the liner route is indicated by a red line, also in enamel. The four winds are symbolised by the use of four sailing ships resembling the caravels sailed by Columbus in 1492. The girdle encircling the globe contains four beautifully enamelled panels illustrating four ships - the **Great Western, Mauretania, Normandie and Rex**. The globe is supported by two figures of Victory. Seated figures represent Father Neptune with his trident, and his wife Amphitrite. The plinth is of green onyx, beautifully carved.*

*"The trophy will be held from time to time by the steamship line whose ship makes the shortest time according to its engine-room log over the complete journey across the Atlantic. The common point for arrival in the United States will be Nantucket Lightship. Starting points on the European side are the Bishop Rock Light for ships sailing from the Channel, and the Fastnet Light for vessels sailing from Liverpool, and the Cape Tarifa lighthouse for ships sailing from the Mediterranean."*

### **The first holder of the Trophy**

At the time, the main rivals for the fastest trans-Atlantic crossing were the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique of France and the Societa Anonima Italia of Italy. A Trust Deed was drawn up and Trustees were appointed under the chairmanship of the Duke of Sutherland. It was important that the trophy should gain recognition from the competing steamship lines, so Harold Hales invited representatives of leading steamship companies to become Trustees. Sir George McLaren Brown represented the Canadian Pacific Railway, Pierre de Malglaive represented the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique and Gualtiero Fedrigoni represented the Societa Anonima Italia. The Trust also created places for Sir Robert Vaughan Gower, Hales' lawyer; Gordon Ralph

Hall-Caine, a fellow MP and a friend of Hales; and Charles Jarrett, a retired Lieutenant-Colonel.

The Italian liner **Rex** had crossed in the fastest time at an average speed of almost 29 knots in 4 days, 13 hours, 58 minutes between 11<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> August 1933. Therefore, before the Trophy was commissioned, Hales wrote to the Italian ambassador in London saying that he would like to present the Trophy to the **Rex**, and pointed out that she was the only holder of the Blue Riband on the Mediterranean run from Gibraltar to the Ambrose Light, and the only Italian ship ever to hold the title. The reply from the Italian government was immediate and appreciative, welcoming the scheme and, when the design was submitted, approving it without alteration.

While the Hales Trophy was being built, the French liner **Normandie** made a record crossing on her maiden voyage and again on the return trip to France, when between 7<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> June 1935 she crossed the Atlantic in 4 days, 3 hours, 25 minutes at an average speed of 30.31 knots. Therefore the Trustees amended the Trust Deed to add a new rule that when a new record run was made, the former holder of the record would hold the trophy for a further three months to give an opportunity of retaining the record. If this happened, the owners would retain the trophy, but the name of the ship which had briefly held the record would be inscribed on the trophy as a record holder.

### **Competition continues**

After the award to the Societa Anonima Italia for the **Rex**, and the subsequent award to the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique for the **Normandie**, the next record holder was Cunard's **Queen Mary**. Cunard, however, said that they were not interested in breaking speed records, so they never claimed the Hales Trophy. The trophy remained with the **Normandie**, which regained the record in the summer of 1937 at an average speed of 30.58 knots.

In August 1938 the **Queen Mary** recaptured the record at a fraction under 31 knots, but again did not claim the trophy, much to the disappointment of Harold Hales.

During the Second World War there were no attempts on the record. Harold Hales died, ironically in a boating accident, in 1942. The trophy had been returned to the Trustees by the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique before the war, and it was stored with the silversmiths who made it, awaiting a new challenger.

### **A significant advance**

In the spring of 1952 the **United States** was commissioned. This new liner was fitted with a propulsion system originally designed for aircraft carriers and was significantly more powerful than pre-war liners. The **United States** was designed to incorporate all the latest advances in design, including the first extensive use of lightweight aluminium in her superstructure. Her interior was modern and fireproof.

The **United States** was 990 feet in length, 101 feet breadth and of more than 50,000 gross tons. Her top speed was 38.32 knots and she could carry 1,928

passengers and 1,093 crew. She was not as big as the **Queen Mary** or the **Normandie**, but she was still a superliner.

The maiden voyage of the **United States** began on the eve of the Fourth of July, 1952. Her progress was reported every day in the columns of *The New York Times* and hundreds of other newspapers. She crossed the Atlantic in just three-and-a-half days and broke the record with an average speed of 35.59 knots on her outward voyage - about four knots faster than the previous record and the greatest single increase in the record crossing speed yet recorded. She arrived in France to a heroine's welcome and was still more tumultuously received when she crossed the English Channel to Southampton, where thousands of people lined the roadsteads to cheer her in. The **United States** returned to New York on 14<sup>th</sup> July and received a huge welcome as the first American ship in a century to hold the Blue Riband of the Atlantic.

The Duke of Sutherland who was still chairman of the Trustees of the trophy, consulted the remaining Trustees and the trophy was duly awarded to the **United States**. The presentation took place in the first-class dining room aboard the ship on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1952, where General John Franklin, the president of United States Lines, accepted the trophy.

Whilst the **United States** remained in service, the trophy was displayed at the New York offices of the United States Lines. When the ship was de-commissioned, the trophy was sent to the American Merchant Marine Museum at the US Merchant Marine Academy at King's Point, New York.

The **United States** was not without competition. Cunard never admitted it, but there has been speculation that the **Queen Elizabeth** attempted at least one record crossing of the Atlantic, but without success. Another liner that might have made a challenge was the **France**, launched in 1962. The **France** made several fast Atlantic crossings, but none broke the record. In the 1960s the **United States** and the **France**, faced with growing competition from aircraft, altered their schedules to work as running-mates providing a weekly service in each direction on the North Atlantic.

The **Queen Mary** was de-commissioned in 1967, the **Queen Elizabeth** in 1968 and the **United States** in 1969. The **France** followed five years later. The **Queen Elizabeth 2**, launched in 1967, never came close to the record. She was plagued by engine problems in her early years and was in any event more of a cruise ship than a means of fast ocean transport.

Record breaking was very expensive. The **Normandie**, for instance, used 29 tons of fuel per hour at her usual operating speed of 24 knots, and this rose to more than 40 tons at 30 knots. The era of the great trans-Atlantic passenger liner was over.

### **New interest in the Blue Riband**

In 1985 interest in the Blue Riband and the Hales Trophy was rekindled first by the **Virgin Atlantic Challenger**, a fast powerboat which had been designed to cross the North Atlantic at a speed faster than the **United States**. The champions of such vessels - built primarily for breaking records - contemplated taking action to

revive the Hales Trophy Trust in the hope that a craft of their design could be developed to win the Hales Trophy. Initially the response was hostile - there was much opposition to the idea that the trophy might be awarded to the owners of a large speedboat rather than a true passenger-carrying ship with a purpose other than mere speed.

### **Hales Trust revived**

In December 1985 the British Maritime League, an independent association promoting British seagoing activities, instructed solicitors to explore the possibility of reviving the Trust to safeguard the award of the trophy to a proper claimant.

Research showed that the Duke of Sutherland had been the last surviving Trustee and that, if no other Trustees had been appointed, the power to appoint new Trustees and the legal authority to revive the Trust would rest with the executors of the Duke of Sutherland's estate. The estate refused Virgin Atlantic's request to appoint new Trustees because its vessel was not a passenger-carrying ship with a primary purpose other than speed.

The League then approached the Duke of Sutherland's executors, who accepted assurances that the new Trustees would not award the trophy to a powerboat and agreed to appoint the proposed new Trustees, provided that the courts approved. On 20<sup>th</sup> February 1987 the Duke's executors applied to the courts, who approved the appointment of three new Trustees: The Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal (chairman), Commander Michael Ranken (then secretary to the League) and Commander Robin Kent (distantly related to Hales). On 19<sup>th</sup> May 1988 five additional Trustees were appointed.

### **New challengers for the Trophy**

At the time numerous challenges for the trophy were advanced. The first, in the summer of 1985 was by **Virgin Atlantic Challenger** which struck a submerged object and sank on 15<sup>th</sup> August. The **Virgin Atlantic Challenger II** tried again in 1986 and, having refuelled three times on the voyage, achieved a crossing at an average speed of 36.79 knots between the Ambrose Light and the Bishop Rock. The Trustees, however, did not award the trophy to Virgin because its craft was a boat whose purpose was speed alone, and because it had to be refuelled en route. So Mr Richard Branson, proprietor of Virgin, instituted a separate trophy, the North Atlantic Challenge Trophy, and promptly awarded it to himself!

In 1988 Tom Gentry's **Gentry Eagle** successfully made a faster crossing than the **Virgin Atlantic Challenger II**, refuelling once en route. The Trustees did not make an award to the owners of the **Gentry Eagle** because she was too small to qualify as a ship. In the same year Azimut SpA of Italy attempted a crossing with a powerboat, but the engine failed. Other proposed attempts made known to the Trustees would probably have been ruled out of order: those of Richard Noble's proposed jet-

powered boat; of **Ilan Voyager** and the French **Jet Ruban Bleu**, which made unsuccessful attempts in 1991 and 1992. All of these challenges would not have been approved by the Trustees because the vessels were too small to be regarded as ships.

### **The Trust's new criteria**

In 1989 the Trustees confirmed that the Rules in the Trust Deed remained in effect and, acting under the Rules, established new criteria for assessing claims to the trophy in modern circumstances. The main criteria are that the crossing must not put at unreasonable risk the safety of any search-and-rescue services, nearby vessels or aircraft; that the ship must be duly certified as having been designed, built, maintained and used in accordance with the rules of any recognised classification society; that the ship must be self-sufficient in crew, fuel, food, fresh water, spare parts and other supplies and must not require resupply during the crossing; that modern radio, satellite navigation or underwater acoustics or sonar will not invalidate a challenge; that the approved runs must be between either Fastnet Rock, Bishop Rock or Tarifa Point and Nantucket Buoy (or, for smaller ships, the Ambrose Light); or Inishtrahull Island or Bishop Rock and Father Point (Canadian run); that the ship must have a demonstrable prime maritime purpose other than the winning of any trophy or speed record; that the ship should be surface-piercing, propelled by water-reaction and with the bridge above the waterline; and that the challengers should give the Trustees 28 days' notice of the earliest starting date for any challenge.

### **'Hoverspeed Great Britain'**

The Incat 74 metre wavepiercer **Hoverspeed Great Britain** made her attempt on the North Atlantic record on her delivery voyage from Australia to the United Kingdom via the Panama Canal and New York. She did not carry passengers or cars during the crossing and, had she done so, her fuel consumption would probably have been too great to avoid refuelling. However, the Trustees decided that the absence of cargo or passengers did not disqualify her from consideration for the award.

The record held by the **United States** since 1952 was at 35.59 knots. Between 19<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> June 1990 **Hoverspeed Great Britain** crossed at an average speed of 36.97 knots, substantially faster than the **United States** and the **Virgin Atlantic Challenger II**. The Trustees admitted Hoverspeed Ltd's claim on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1990, and Hoverspeed was appointed the holder on 27<sup>th</sup> September 1990. The American Merchant Marine Museum handed over the Hales Trophy to the Trust's solicitor and the trophy moved to the offices of Hoverspeed in London.

In the early 1990s the Italian built monohull **Destriero**, powered by gas turbines, crossed the Atlantic non-stop at an average speed of 53 knots, which stands as the record crossing speed. However the vessel was not a commercial craft and was not eligible for the Hales Trophy.

### **The 'Catalonia'**

At just before 22.30 (local time) on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1998, the 91 metre wavepiercing catamaran ferry **Catalonia** reached Tarifa Point at the western entrance to the Mediterranean, having crossed the Atlantic faster than any passenger ship before. In doing so she also became the first to sail more than 1,000 miles in a 24-hour period. The record of 1,015 nautical miles was achieved in the latter stages of the voyage as the fuel load lightened. It is understood that the previous record was 934 nautical miles set by the **Hoverspeed Great Britain**.

Seventy-six hours, thirty-two minutes and eight seconds earlier the **Catalonia** had passed the Nantucket Light, offshore from New York, officially beginning an attempt to win the Hales Trophy. The **Catalonia** crossed at an average speed of 38.8 knots.

There are few ships which could hope to match the achievements of the Incat (Tasmania) built **Catalonia**. According to Incat Chairman and Hales Trophy technical director Robert Clifford, there are no other contenders: "*No other fast ferry I know of has the necessary credentials to take the Hales Trophy - it requires a unique combination of speed and endurance. There are vessels that can go fast but not carry the amount of fuel needed or be able to handle the tough weather and sea conditions.*"|||||

#### **Editor's note:**

The **Catalonia's** successful eastbound trans-Atlantic attempt for the Hales Trophy was part of her delivery voyage from the Incat shipyard in Hobart, Tasmania to the Spanish region after which she is named. The **Catalonia** began commercial operations between Barcelona and Palma de Mallorca on the principal Balearic island of Majorca (Mallorca) in June 1998. The 150 nautical mile crossing is scheduled to take 3.5 hours. The **Catalonia** is owned by Buquebus whose head office is in Buenos Aires. The **Catalonia** is capable of carrying 900 passengers and 225 cars at a maximum speed of 43 knots.

Nearer to home, the **Hoverspeed Great Britain** operated the Heysham - Belfast route in 2001.

j.s.

### **WRITING FOR 'THE BULLETIN'**

Articles for possible inclusion in '*The Bulletin*' are always welcome and should be sent to the Editor at the address given on the inside front cover. A good length is about four to five A.4 close-typed sides, but letters and short 'fillers' are also welcome. In the interests of accuracy, a proof will be sent to the author for checking before the article appears in '*The Bulletin*'.

j.s.

## THE 'QUEENS' AT WAR

compiled from articles in *Shipbuilding & Shipping Record* (May and August, 1945),  
and *The Shipbuilder and Marine Engine Builder*.

The **Queen Mary** had sailed from Southampton on Wednesday, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1939 with a record number of 2,332 passengers on what was to be her last commercial voyage for more than six years. She docked at Pier 90 at the foot of West 50th Street in Manhattan as usual and lay there all through the first winter of the war.

On her first arrival at New York just over three-and-a-half years earlier, Sir Percy Bates had announced that the owners had received no request from the Government to put in stiffening for guns, and that the **Queen Mary** should be regarded exclusively as a 'ship of peace'. With her enormous potential troop-carrying capacity, that was not the last word on the matter, but in the autumn of 1939 it was clear that no decision had yet been reached on what should be done with the **Queen Mary**. The year closed with the world's two largest liners, the **Normandie** and the **Queen Mary**, lying side by side at New York.

Meanwhile, the **Queen Elizabeth** was being completed in John Brown's shipyard, Clydebank, and in normal circumstances would have joined the **Queen Mary** on the North Atlantic service in July 1940. Her presence at Clydebank had become a source of anxiety to the Government, for not only did she present a sitting target to enemy planes, thus endangering the entire shipyard, but her vast hull took up space which was needed urgently for other work.

In February 1940 the Admiralty requested that the **Queen Elizabeth** should leave the Clyde at the earliest possible date and 'remain away from the British Isles'. The number of ports outside the United Kingdom which could receive the world's largest liner was limited. It was decided, therefore, to send her to New York. This involved an Atlantic crossing with the ever-present danger of submarine attack.

On 26<sup>th</sup> February 1940, escorted by six tugs, the **Queen Elizabeth** left the fitting out basin at Clydebank and proceeded down the Clyde to an anchorage at the Tail of the Bank. Three days later, shore leave was stopped and her crew was advised of the ship's destination. Shortly afterwards the **Queen Elizabeth** sailed for New York and arrived safely on 7<sup>th</sup> March and berthed alongside the **Queen Mary**. For nearly a fortnight the two ships lay immobile, side by side.

On 1<sup>st</sup> March 1940 the British Government finally informed Cunard that they would be requisitioning the **Queen Mary**. Painters began covering her with a fresh coat of grey paint and the mud which had been driven by the tides under her keel during the six months she had lain alongside Pier 90 began to be removed by suction pumps. It would have been a dull German agent who did not draw the now obvious conclusion that the **Queen Mary** was soon to sail and on 21<sup>st</sup> March she left for what was described both there and, two days later in London, as 'an unknown destination'.

There was no prompt news about the ship, but by the end of April it had been reported from Cape Town that earlier in the month the **Queen Mary** had been seen in

Table Bay. She had refuelled there and sailed to Sydney, N.S.W. where she arrived on 17<sup>th</sup> April. Her interior fittings, which had not already been removed in New York, were taken ashore for storage and her passenger accommodation was adapted for carrying 5,000 troops. The **Queen Mary** sailed on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1940 with a full complement of Australian troops for the Clyde.

Shortly after her arrival back in the U.K., France surrendered to the Nazis and the British Empire stood alone. The Mediterranean had become the key theatre of war. On 26<sup>th</sup> June 1940 the **Queen Mary** embarked 5,000 British troops and then made a rendezvous with other transports such as the **Aquitania** and the **Mauretania** to form one of the greatest convoys ever to leave for the Middle East.

It was rumoured that Hitler had offered a reward of the equivalent of \$250,000 and the Iron Cross with oak leaves to any U-boat commander who could sink the **Queen Mary**. Britain's troopship capacity would be reduced by almost twenty per cent should the ship be sunk or severely damaged.

The war partnership of the '*Queens*' began in the spring of 1941. A few months earlier Cunard White Star had been advised that the **Queen Elizabeth** was to be employed on Government service and at the beginning of November 1940, having lain at New York for eight months, she sailed to Singapore to be fitted out in readiness for carrying Australian and New Zealand troops to Suez.

Before the **Queen Elizabeth** could become one of His Majesty's Troop Ships (HMTS) she had to have the remains of her launch gear removed from her bottom plates which would then have to be cleaned and painted. She had been in the water, continuously, for two years. There were only five dry docks in the world that could take liners of the '*Queens*' size. The King George V Dock in Southampton, specially built for the sisters, was unusable because it was within range of Nazi bombers; the American dock at Bayonne was denied because of U.S. neutrality; the Esquimalt dock on the west coast of Canada was too far away, and the French dock at St Nazaire (built for the **Normandie**) was out of the question. This just left Singapore. To get to Singapore from New York the **Queen Elizabeth** would have to make two stops to take on fuel and water at Trinidad and Cape Town - she had been designed for five-day voyages.

Both the '*Queens*' left Sydney at the beginning of April 1941, sailing together in convoy, the **Queen Mary** making her sixth voyage as a transport and the **Queen Elizabeth** making what was, in effect, her first voyage as a passenger-carrying liner. Before they sailed they were joined by the **Mauretania** with 4,400 New Zealand troops.

With the entry of Japan into the war on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1941, the '*Queens*' began their long service as transports for U.S. troops. The initial successes of the enemy and its swift progress towards Singapore menaced the whole of the Far East and imperilled the Australian continent which had so largely denuded itself of armed forces to serve the Allied cause in the Western Hemisphere. Again the value of the super-transport was to be demonstrated.

At this moment of crisis the '*Queens*' were in North American waters, undergoing one of their periodic overhauls. Their troop-carrying capacity was further increased and on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1942, three days after the fall of Singapore, the **Queen Mary** left Boston for Sydney with 8,200 U.S. troops. Three weeks later, also carrying over 8,000 American soldiers, the **Queen Elizabeth** began a 7,700 mile voyage from San Francisco to Sydney.

Whilst on passage from Boston to Rio, increased U-boat activity near Trinidad forced the **Queen Mary** to divert to Key West and it was there on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1942 that Captain Bisset took over command of the *Mary* from Captain John Townley. Bisset, as a junior officer on the **Carpathia**, had taken part in the rescue of the *Titanic*'s passengers.

At Rio de Janeiro, where the **Queen Mary**'s size forced her to anchor in the roads on 6<sup>th</sup> March, an Axis plot aimed at sinking her was already under way. A group of German and Italian spies had somehow discovered the liner's sailing schedule and had broadcast this vital information to U-boats lurking off the Brazilian coast. The message was fortunately intercepted and Captain Bisset was directed to get the *Mary* out of Rio several hours ahead of her scheduled sailing time. The Germans had been so sure that they would sink the **Queen Mary** that Axis radio actually reported her destruction. The broadcast was monitored in the **Queen Mary**'s radio room, and Captain Bisset told the radio officer to '*keep the news under your hat. Don't let the troops know we've been sunk. It might worry them!*'

The **Queen Mary** landed her American troops at Sydney on 28<sup>th</sup> March 1942, Then it was back to New York; across the Atlantic to Gourock; from there to Suez and from Suez back to New York.

Soon after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour both the **Queen Mary** and the **Queen Elizabeth** came under American control. Though they remained British vessels, the liners were under the direct operational command of the United States on a sort of 'reverse lend-lease' basis. During Winston Churchill's visit to Washington in the last days of 1941, General George C. Marshall had asked the Prime Minister about the possibility of modifying each ship to carry a complete American army division of some 15,000 men. General Marshall was concerned that, should either of the liners be sunk, there would be lifeboats for only about half the troops on board.

In August 1942 the **Queen Mary** left New York for the Clyde with, according to Captain Bisset, 15,125 troops and altogether 15,988 persons on board the ship which, he said, was the largest number ever carried in one ship up to that time.

The summer of 1942 was the first occasion that the '*Queens*' had returned to home waters since 1940. Arrangements were made for officers and men to take as much leave as possible, but such leave could not be of long duration as the North African campaign was going badly. Rommel was striking for Suez. Reinforcements for the Eighth Army were needed urgently. Once again in British ports the transports gathered, among them the **Queen Mary** and the **Queen Elizabeth**. They then sailed for Suez by way of Freetown and Simonstown.

On 27<sup>th</sup> September 1942 the **Queen Mary**, under the command of Captain Illingworth sailed from New York with 10,398 American troops on board. This was the voyage on which the collision with the **Curacoa** occurred.

At 09.00 on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> October, HMS **Curacoa**, a twin-screw anti-aircraft light cruiser of 4,290 tons displacement, 450 feet in length, assigned along with a six destroyer anti-submarine screen to guard the **Queen Mary**, sighted her charge. The **Queen Mary** had come over from New York without escort until then, relying on her speed and a planned zigzag, known as 'Zig-Zag 8', for her chief defence. The zigzag took about 40 minutes to complete at a speed of 28½ knots.

The **Curacoa's** best speed was 25 knots, and so the **Queen Mary**, despite the zigzag, would ultimately overtake her escort. At 12.20, Captain Boutwood of the **Curacoa** sent a signal to his convoy, which was still well astern: *'When you are ahead I will edge in astern of you.'* His duty, of course, was to guard the **Queen Mary** against air attack. They were now in a zone where the danger was increasing, and although the sea was rough with a heavy westerly swell, the weather was fine and clear.

By 13.30 the **Queen Mary** was close astern of the **Curacoa** and at 14.12 the **Queen Mary's** bows struck the **Curacoa** on her port side aft at a fine angle and split the warship into two parts, both of which sank almost immediately. By the hard practice of the war, the **Queen Mary** steamed straight on, over and through the wreck.

The 'Most Secret Emergency' despatch from HMS **Bulldog** to the Admiralty, Commander-in-Chief, Western Approaches, at 14.20 read: *"HMS Curacoa rammed and sunk by Queen Mary in position 55°50'N, 08°38'W. Queen Mary damaged forward, speed 10 knots"*.

Fortunately the **Queen Mary's** collision bulkhead held well and she managed to make 13½ knots and arrived safely in the Clyde without assistance.

The tragedy was a well kept secret and was not known about in the U.K. until after the end of the war in Europe. However, legal proceedings were commenced in 1943. On 21<sup>st</sup> January 1947 Mr Justice Pilcher held it to have been the duty of the **Curacoa** to stay clear of her convoy and that she was solely to blame.

The Admiralty appealed and on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1947 Pilcher's judgement was varied in that the **Queen Mary** was now held to be one-third to blame, and the **Curacoa** two-thirds. The majority view was that the **Queen Mary's** lookout was also deficient and she too should have taken action to avoid the collision.

Both parties appealed and on 8<sup>th</sup> February 1949 five Law Lords moved that both the appeal and the cross-appeal should be dismissed. As in most collisions there was misunderstanding on both sides, chiefly because the watch of both ships was unsatisfactory. Whatever the regulations and obligations, and whatever right the **Queen Mary** had to trust the experience of the **Curacoa** as an escort while carrying out 'Zig-Zag 8', when the courses were seen to be converging the **Queen Mary** *"ought to have gone to port earlier and more than she did"*, and she, therefore was also partly at fault. On the other hand it was commonly agreed that it was the duty of the **Curacoa**, the generally much more manoeuvrable ship, to keep clear of the **Queen**

**Mary**, which she had no reason to believe had abandoned her zigzag and the cruiser "*should have gone hard a-starboard at least two minutes before the collision*". Both acted, it is true, and both failed, because they moved too little and too late.

So did the name 'Curacoa' become a synonym for the bitter epitaph of 'Accidental Death' on 329 seamen, lost in an open sea without need or benefit.

Having been temporarily repaired on the Clyde, the **Queen Mary** sailed to Boston for further repairs, and then brought American troops to Gourrock. She then embarked 10,000 troops for Suez where she arrived on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1943. This was followed by the **Queen Mary** taking part in an exceptional convoy which left Suez on 25<sup>th</sup> January. Five ships - the **Queen Mary**, **Aquitania**, **Ile de France**, **Nieuw Amsterdam** and the **Queen of Bermuda** were ordered to return the entire Australian expeditionary force in the Middle East, amounting to over 31,000 men, to defend their homeland and to take part in the planned offensive against Japan.

The **Queen Mary's** speed was necessarily reduced to that of the slowest in the convoy, the 18 knots of the **Queen of Bermuda**, and Captain Bisset, who was again in command of the **Queen Mary**, was appointed commodore of the convoy. The **Queen Mary** had 9,995 Australian troops on board and would have been the chief target in the event of an attack. In spite of the unnecessary risk created by the Navy's insistence on keeping the **Queen Mary** in the convoy, all went well and the ship arrived in Sydney on 27<sup>th</sup> February, 1943.

The voyage described above was part of what is known in the **Queen Mary's** record of war service as '*the long voyage*'. It began when she left the Clyde at the end of December 1942 and did not end until her return to the Clyde in April 1943. In the intervening four months the ship visited West, South and East Africa, Egypt, Arabia, the British East Indies and Australia, steaming over 40,000 miles and burning over 56,000 tons of fuel. By the time she reached home waters again she had carried over 30,000 troops.

For three years the '*Queens*' had been based for the greater part of the time on Sydney and the two ships had steamed some 339,000 miles and carried 105,000 troops. Now, their task in Eastern waters accomplished for the time being, they took up the vital duty of maintaining a continuous ferry service across the Atlantic, assisting the transportation of hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops to Britain in preparation for the assault on enemy-occupied Europe. The pre-invasion build up of American troops in the U.K. was named 'Operation Bolero'.

When the building of the '*Queens*' was first projected, it was on the basis that two such ships on the regular trans-Atlantic service could economically do the work of three, but as military transports, stripped of their luxury fittings, the '*Queens*' carried across the Western Ocean in one year twice as many 'passengers' as were carried on this service in peacetime by the entire Cunard White Star fleet. From May to September 1943 the average number of troops carried by each ship on each voyage exceeded 15,000. On 25<sup>th</sup> July 1943 the **Queen Mary** left New York with 15,740 troops and a total complement, including her crew, of 16,683. The next westbound passage, leaving the Clyde on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1943, had on board the Prime Minister,

Winston Churchill, and his special party, bound for the Quebec Conference. During the winter months of 1943-44, despite adverse weather, the average number of troops did not fall below 12,000 in the case of the **Queen Mary** and 13,000 for the **Queen Elizabeth** - figures which rose with the coming of summer, so that by the end of 1944 the two ships could claim to have ferried across the Western Ocean since their war service began a total of 944,000 troops, of whom 80 per cent had travelled eastward from America.

Both the '*Queens*' had been divided into three vertical and completely segregated troop accommodation areas designated 'Red', 'White' and 'Blue', and each soldier on boarding was given a coloured button corresponding to his unit's assigned area. A ship's Standing Order restricted the men to their unit's area for the duration of the voyage. The great weight of 15,000 troops on board caused the '*Queens*' to list, for instance if they all gathered on one side for a farewell look at New York. Captain Grattidge estimated that a list of only five degrees would increase the draft between two and four feet, and be sufficient for the **Queen Mary** to scrape the top of the Hudson Tunnel when she was outward bound from New York. The only solution was for the troops to remain perfectly still as the liner passed over the tunnel.

Just after departure from New York the captains of both the '*Queens*' took the opportunity to address the troops on a subject of great importance to everyone on board: the ship's survival. Captain Gordon Illingsworth's message in October 1943 was as follows:

*"I call upon all officers and men to obey my orders to the letter. I have but one task. It is the job of bringing this ship safely to port, and that job, God willing, I will do. It is not important that you, numbering some 15,000, arrive safely in the Firth of Clyde, but it is important that the ship be brought safely to anchor there. Remember that. You and I are not indispensable to the successful prosecution of this war but the ship is. You will keep in mind, therefore, that all your thoughts during the crossing will be directed towards her security. Enemy forces will be at work, and the Hun will try every device in his power to bring the 'Queen' to harm. Submarines will trail us and aircraft will harass us. They have done it before and we have every reason to believe they will do it again. But the 'Queen' will take care of herself. From now until you disembark, think in terms of the ship. Treat her gently and do not abuse her. She stands ready to do for you what she has done for thousands who have gone before. Keep her confidence and do not betray her by carelessness or misdeed. Do these things and the ship will bring us to the mouth of the Clyde on Tuesday next."*

Major disciplinary problems were rare during the shuttle voyages, and the most serious infraction the Military Police usually had to contend with was the troops' almost universal disregard for the ban on gambling.

On the westbound run the '*Queens*' left the U.K. with from 2,000 to 5,000 'passengers' - a hybrid complement that provided the ships' officials with problems of catering and accommodation, compared with which straightforward trooping was simple. There might be two to three thousand prisoners of war to be berthed and fed in accordance with international requirements; there might be groups of service

personnel; and for a certainty there would be 'special' passengers, diplomats, business and industrial leaders who had been granted official permission to travel overseas.

Both the **Queen Mary** and the **Queen Elizabeth** were in New York on VE Day, 7<sup>th</sup> May 1945, and their combined whistles helped to swell the crescendo in the port on that day which signalled the capitulation of Germany.

The 'Queens' were chosen to bear the brunt of the repatriation programme of U.S. troops. The **Queen Mary** carried 14,777 American troops from the Clyde to New York, arriving on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1945. Seven weeks later, on 11<sup>th</sup> August, the **Queen Mary** arrived at Southampton for the first time since 1939, and three days later, on 14<sup>th</sup> August, Emperor Hirohito announced Japan's unconditional surrender to the Allied Powers.

This sparked an immediate and vocal public demand for the rapid repatriation of all overseas U.S. forces not absolutely required for occupation duty. By maintaining a regular Southampton-New York shuttle service, the '*Queens*' transported nearly a quarter of the 500,000 U.S. troops returned to America by October 1945. Both ships retained their 'degaussing girdles' as the North Atlantic was still littered with dozens of drifting German magnetic mines sown during the last months of the war.

In February 1946 the **Queen Mary** made her first crossing to New York with G.I. brides and their children. This was known as 'Operation Diaper'. In May she sailed to Halifax, N.S. with Canadian soldiers' brides and children and, at last, on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1946, she finally returned to Southampton, free of military or marital service, and commenced a massive refit to resume the purpose for which she was built, the prosaic one of making money.

The **Queen Elizabeth** commenced her maiden passenger voyage from Southampton to New York on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1946. Ironically, on the eve of her departure, Sir Percy Bates died. He was responsible for the building of the two ships, probably more so than any other single individual. The **Queen Mary** resumed her peacetime passenger service on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1947.

### **Further Reading:**

*Gray Ghost - The RMS Queen Mary at War* - Steve Harding ISBN 0-933126-26-3

*Queen Elizabeth - from Victory to Valhalla* - David Hutchings ISBN 0-946184-55-0

### **WARTIME VOYAGES OF THE 'QUEEN MARY'**

New York, Trinidad, Fremantle, Sydney.

Sydney, Fremantle, Cape Town, Simonstown, Freetown, Clyde.

Clyde, Freetown, Cape Town, Simonstown, Trincomalee, Singapore, Sydney.

Sydney, Fremantle, Bombay, Fremantle, Sydney.

Sydney, Fremantle, Trincomalee, Fremantle, Sydney.

Sydney, Singapore, Fremantle, Sydney.

Sydney, Fremantle, Trincomalee, Suez, Trincomalee, Fremantle, Sydney.

Sydney, Hobart, Sydney, Freetown, Trincomalee, Suez, Trincomalee, Fremantle, Sydney  
(2 voyages)

Sydney, Hobart, Sydney, Fremantle, Trincomalee, Suez, Trincomalee.  
Trincomalee, Cape Town, Trinidad, New York.

New York, Boston, Key West, Rio de Janeiro, Cape Town, Fremantle, Sydney.

Sydney, Fremantle, Cape Town, Rio de Janeiro, New York.

New York, Clyde.

Clyde, Freetown, Simonstown, Suez, Simonstown, Rio de Janeiro, New York.

New York, Clyde.

Clyde, New York, Clyde (2 voyages)

Clyde, Boston, New York, Clyde.

Clyde, Freetown, Cape Town, Aden, Suez, Massawa, H.M. Base East Indies, Fremantle,

Sydney, Fremantle, Cape Town, Freetown, Clyde. (*The Long Voyage*)

Clyde, New York or Halifax, Clyde (28 voyages)

### **WARTIME VOYAGES OF THE 'QUEEN ELIZABETH'**

Clyde, New York.

New York, Trinidad, Cape Town, Singapore, Fremantle, Sydney.

Sydney, Hobart, Sydney, Fremantle, Trincomalee, Suez, Trincomalee, Singapore, Fremantle,  
Sydney.

Sydney, Jervis Bay, Fremantle, Trincomalee, Port Tewfik, Trincomalee, Fremantle, Sydney.

(2 voyages)

Sydney, Hobart, Sydney, Fremantle, Trincomalee, Port Tewfik, Trincomalee, Freetown, Sydney

Sydney, Auckland, Nuku Hiva, Esquimalt, B.C.

Esquimalt, Vancouver, San Francisco.

San Francisco, Nuku Hiva, Sydney, Fremantle, Simonstown, Rio de Janeiro, New York.

New York, Clyde.

Clyde, Freetown, Simonstown, Suez, Cape Town, Simonstown, Rio de Janeiro, New York.

New York, Clyde.

Clyde, New York or Halifax, Clyde (35 voyages). |||||

### **BLOWING THE WHISTLE**

Captain R.J.N. Nicholas RD, RNR, was the somewhat eccentric regular master of the **Carinthia** during the early and mid 1960s. He had a passion for blowing the ship's whistle. The tugs at Liverpool all received three prolonged blasts as the **Carinthia** left the landing stage, followed by three more mighty blasts as the **Carinthia** passed New Brighton - Captain Nicholas' wife lived in Elmpark Road, Wallasey. The Liverpool pilot cutter, the tender at Greenock and the Clyde pilot launch **Cumbræ** also received the treatment, plus any lighthouses passed close to on passage, such as the Mull of Kintyre. Approaching the Belle Isle Straits in summer the **Carinthia** regularly encountered thick fog - whole days of it on some voyages, and the whistle was sounded at collision regulation intervals of one long blast every two minutes. One developed a knack of sleeping through this - it was only when the whistle stopped if the fog cleared that caused you to wake up!

*j.s.*

## A PURSER'S CLERK ON THE 'QUEEN ELIZABETH' IN 1963

*by John Shepherd*

I left school in June 1962 with three very undistinguished A-Levels. My grades might have been better had it not been for the fact that I had spent much of my A-Level years studying Captain Cotter's *The Apprentice and his Ship* which was then newly published. I was just about 'word-perfect' in vast areas of this book including the Collision Regulations which I can still recite to this day! I had set my sights on joining the Liverpool Pilotage Service and in August 1962 I presented myself at the Pilotage Headquarters at Canning Pier Head for an interview with Captain R. Smith, the Superintendent of Pilotage.

I was sent for medical examinations and it was then found that my eyesight was not sufficiently sharp for me to proceed with my chosen career, although my colour vision was perfect. This was a bitter blow and I took a temporary job with the Ellerman Hall Line in their offices in Tower Building. I spent my days writing out 'confirmatory orders' in the engineering department, under the watchful eye of the Superintendent Engineer, one Adam Will.

A friend from my schooldays, Robert Walgate, invited me to have a word with his father who was master of the *Empress* liners in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Captain Walgate suggested that I might like to think about joining the Purser's staff, and so I applied to both Canadian Pacific and Cunard.

Neither company was taking on new staff over the winter of 1962-63. Cunard had sent the *Saxonia* and the *Ivernina* to John Brown at Clydebank to be converted into cruise liners, and so I remained in the Ellerman Hall Line offices. In late February 1963 I received a letter from Harry Roden in Cunard Building, asking me to attend for an interview. I was given a typing test (of the two-fingered variety!) and sent for a language test to see if my conversational French and German was good enough. This was taken at Spaul's School of Languages, up about five flights of stairs in an ancient office block in Dale Street. Fortunately I had remembered sufficient to enable me to pass, and then it was off to Cornhill to get my discharge book (R.783921) and seaman's indentify card.

I received instructions to join the *Queen Elizabeth* at Southampton on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1963, and travelled south the day before. The *Elizabeth* was just back from a series of five-day cruises from New York to Nassau in an attempt to profitably occupy the slack off-season on the North Atlantic.

The sheer size of the *Queen Elizabeth* was staggering. I was familiar with the *Caronia* and the *Mauretania* from their visits to the Mersey, but boarding the *Elizabeth* by the crew gangway and finishing up on the working alleyway was like entering a maze. I eventually found my way to the passenger accommodation and to the First-Class Purser's Office where the relief staff were arriving for duty. I can't say that I was made particularly welcome - I would be an irritation in that I knew

absolutely nothing about the Purser's Office routine and would have to be taught 'from scratch'.

The **Queen Elizabeth** carried a purser's staff of about thirty split between four offices : first class, cabin class, tourist class and the crew purser's office which looked after the accounts of wages for the 1,000+ crew. There was a chief purser who was a 'figurehead', two staff pursers - one to look after the ship's accounts, and the other to supervise the passenger entertainments, and about twenty five assistant pursers ranging from senior assistant pursers down to lowly purser's clerks. About ten of the purser's staff were female (known in Cunard as lady assistant pursers, not as purserettes as in the Union-Castle and P&O), and there was certainly a 'glass ceiling' - the ladies never gained the dizzy heights of senior assistant purser. One exception was perhaps the social directress - one Elizabeth Sayers on the **Queen Elizabeth** - whose main function seemed to be arranging tables for bridge in the afternoons. Included in the purser's staff were three baggage masters - one for each class of passenger, who looked after the stowage and forwarding of passengers' baggage. An interpreter was carried who worked in the tourist-class purser's office. He had a reasonable working knowledge of most European languages, although the assistant pursers themselves were required to be fairly fluent in either French or German. Coming under the control of the purser's department were the ship's printers, the orchestras and the entertainers (of which more later).

The accommodation for the male assistant pursers was fairly good, given that the ship had been designed in the mid 1930s, and vastly superior to that provided on the **Queen Mary**. It consisted of about twelve mainly two-berth cabins on the boat deck, on the starboard side forward, so at least we had fresh air and daylight. The ladies' cabins were scattered throughout the ship, and the chief purser, the two staff pursers, and the cabin-class and tourist-class pursers had cabins in the main passenger accommodation.

During the Southampton port periods, the returning leave party staffed the purser's office, and the remaining staff were given a few hours off duty. From arrival at Southampton to the next sailing day was usually about 36 hours, but this was broken by the crew boat drill which took place during the morning of the one complete day in port. Unless you lived locally it was not possible to get home due to the compulsory attendance at this drill. It was stated company practice for all officers and crew to work five voyages on, and then take one voyage off on leave, but in reality this rarely happened due to staff shortages, sickness etc. I worked for fourteen weeks (seven round-voyages) before I got my first voyage off which amounted to just ten days' leave.

The work in the port period was not particularly onerous and 'office hours' (9.am - 5.pm, with two hours off for lunch) were worked. The paperwork for the forthcoming voyage was prepared as far as possible, and passenger mail was sorted and marked with cabin numbers for distribution on sailing day. The crew purser's staff were perhaps the busiest in port at Southampton with maybe up to 250 crew to pay-off and replacements to sign-on. The **Queen Elizabeth**, and indeed all the Cunard liners,

had ship's articles known as a 'running agreement' whereby the articles were open for a six-month period during which officers and crew were signed on and off as required, but at the end of the six months the articles were 'closed' necessitating a general pay-off and sign-off by all officers and crew, after which a new set of articles was opened for the next six months. The crew purser on the **Queen Elizabeth** in the early 1960s was Ralph Jones, a veteran of the **Lancastria** disaster of World War II.

I remember that the crew purser's office on the *Elizabeth* was situated directly behind the first-class purser's office on 'A' deck amidships, in the heart of the first-class passenger accommodation. A fireman or greaser with a query about his wages was not encouraged to come wandering along to see the crew purser! On the **Queen Mary** the situation was even more bizarre - the crew purser's staff had taken over the squash court viewing gallery, high up on the so-called 'sun deck', immediately aft of the forward funnel, and adjacent to the dog kennels! At least there was plenty of fresh air and some natural light. The crew purser and his staff should have been down on the working alleyway, where all the crew could have had access. The crew purser's staff was strictly a male preserve - the ladies were never allowed anywhere near!

During the time the ship was in port, meals were taken in the magnificent first-class dining room. A limited, but totally adequate, 'port menu' was available. When the **Queen Elizabeth** was at sea the assistant pursers took their meals in the cabin-class restaurant, whilst the senior staff remained in first class. We were allowed to choose anything we wished from the extensive menu, and the cabin-class menu was the equivalent of the first-class menu on the **Carinthia** class. We ate superb food but after a few weeks one just longed for fish and chips in Southampton or a hamburger from the Market Diner at New York!

As I have mentioned, a full scale boat drill muster took place at Southampton. Each of the male assistant pursers was allocated a muster station on the promenade deck and it was his responsibility to arrange the passengers assigned to his particular boat station. The passengers were lined up in rows with the women and children to the front, and everyone was required to don lifejackets which had to be secured by means of a reef knot (or, as the American passengers preferred, a 'square knot'). After an inspection by a senior officer a taped announcement was made over the ship's tannoy system, advising the passengers exactly what to do in the event of a genuine emergency. I am still word-perfect in this announcement, and it's thirty-four years since I last heard it!

The departure of the **Queen Elizabeth** from Southampton was very much dependent on the time of high water and on my first voyage this necessitated what Cunard called an 'overnight embarkation' with the ship sailing at about 06.30 the following morning. Passenger embarkation commenced the previous evening about 18.00hrs and three special trains were run from London's Waterloo Station right into the Ocean Terminal at Southampton. First to arrive was the train carrying the tourist-class passengers, followed about an hour later by the cabin-class train, and finally the first-class passengers arrived in their Pullman coaches. The purser's staff were on hand by the passenger gangways to 'check-in' all the passengers and obtain passport details

etc. In 1963 the shadow of McCarthyism still hung over the United States Immigration Service, and a complete passenger manifest had to be prepared by the time the *Queen Elizabeth* reached Cherbourg, which was then air-mailed to New York so that the passengers could be checked before our arrival. Computers were not even thought of in 1963 - everything was done on manual typewriters and masses of carbon paper. We always seemed to cope and I can't recall an instance when the manifest wasn't prepared by our arrival at Cherbourg, even with 2,000 passengers on board. A similar rigmarole was required for the crew and manifests were prepared for a full-scale crew immigration muster on arrival at New York.

The actual allocation of cabins and berths to the passengers was done 'shore side' and representatives from the shore staff were on hand until sailing time in an attempt to sort out any problems. The tourist accommodation on the *Queen Elizabeth* consisted mainly of four-berth (two upper, two lower) inside cabins and the usual complaints consisted of 80-year old passengers allocated an upper berth, or the lack of any natural light. With a completely full ship (and in 1963 both the *Queens* were full to capacity on several peak-season crossings), there wasn't a lot that could be done.

After the passengers had boarded on the overnight embarkation the purser's offices closed down about 23.00 and re-opened at 09.00 the following morning. When the *Elizabeth* was at sea, the offices were open from 09.00 - 12.00, and from 14.00 to 18.00.

The *Queen Elizabeth* left her berth at about 06.30 and was off Cherbourg about noon. Depending on the tide the *Elizabeth* either went alongside or anchored in the harbour. Both the Cunard *Queens* were too large to use Le Havre which was a much more convenient port for passengers travelling to and from Paris, as it was about 120 miles nearer to the French capital than Cherbourg.

A boat train was run from Paris and after passengers, luggage and some express cargo had been loaded the *Queen Elizabeth* sailed for New York. Immediately after departure from Cherbourg a boat drill was held for the newly embarked passengers and the ship settled down for the four day passage across the Western Ocean.

All the four purser's offices were situated inboard with no natural light or fresh air and so it was something of a relief to go off duty at 18.00 and get out on deck for a while. A favourite place of mine was the first-class sports deck above the verandah grill, aft of the funnels. There was never anyone up there in the early evening and there was a superb 360° degree view of the ocean.

Being a new purser's clerk, I took my meals on the 'first-sitting' which meant dinner was at half past seven. Senior staff were required to change into mess uniform for the formal evenings at sea but until I had completed my six months 'probation' I did not have to buy mess kit.

It was necessary to alter the clocks an hour each night to adjust the five hour time difference from U.K time to Eastern States time. On the westbound passage this meant stopping the clocks for sixty minutes each night that the *Elizabeth* was at sea. Generally this was done at midnight, but some masters preferred the option of stopping

the clocks for three periods of twenty minutes each at 20.00, 23.00 and 02.00 the following morning. As you may imagine this created huge confusion with the passengers - and with some of the crew.

Each evening that the ship was at sea the purser's staff were required to turn-out and assist with 'games'. These alternated between bingo and horse-racing. The bingo was quite straightforward and the horse-racing consisted of six wooden 'horses' placed on a canvas track across the dance floor. A passenger was invited to shake the dice which determined which horses moved and for how many places on the track, and one of the deck sailors was on hand to move the horses as required. The staff purser in charge of entertainments called the bingo numbers and provided a commentary for the horse races, and the assistant pursers sold the tickets between the games and races. To provide a musical interlude whilst the tickets were being sold, the *Queen Elizabeth's* resident organist, Ray Baines, played selections of popular tunes. 'Games' usually started about 21.30 and lasted for an hour.

In an effort to win back passengers from the airlines, Cunard introduced professional entertainers on its vessels in the early 1960s. These were usually second-rate 'passed their sell-by date' cabaret artists. There was always a dance team (who were also required to give passengers dancing lessons) and a vocalist. Names such as Flack and Lamar, Boyer and Ravel, Brett Stevens come to mind. A regular cabaret artist was the magnificent Adelaide Hall who seemed to enjoy criss-crossing the Atlantic entertaining Cunard's passengers. Rough weather always caused the dance teams problems, but with the exception of the stormiest nights, the show always went on.

Following the cabaret there was dancing in the lounges until midnight to the music of the three orchestras on board. In first class the junior assistant pursers were not required to dance with the passengers: in cabin class and tourist class they were, and this was a job I hated above all others!

The *Queen Elizabeth* settled down into sea routine very quickly. All the passengers had to be seen by both the purser's staff (who issued landing cards for New York) and by the travel bureau staff (who dealt with their onward travel arrangements). A lot of time was spent selling duty-free booze to the passengers. Under U.S. Customs regulations, each incoming passenger could land five U.S. 'quarts' of liquor, and Cunard had produced special 'five bottle packs' which were sold to the passengers during the voyage and then delivered to cabins just before arrival at New York.

Both the *Queens* carried branches of the Midland Bank for the purpose of changing passengers' currency. There were three branches - one for each class of passenger - and they saved the purser's staff one of the biggest jobs of the voyage. On all the other Cunard liners the purser's staff had to deal with cashing travellers' cheques and currency exchange themselves.

Whilst the purser's offices closed for general business at 18.00 each day, the first-class office remained open with a skeleton staff so that first-class passengers might have access to the safe deposit until 20.30. Many first-class passengers

deposited valuable jewellery in one of the two hundred or so safe deposit boxes at the start of the voyage, and several required access to these boxes before going down to dinner. One of the worst crimes the purser's staff could commit was to 'over-carry' the contents of a safe deposit box at the end of the crossing: the boxes were all double and triple checked to ensure that they were empty on arrival in port.

The *Queens*' schedule meant that every Sunday was spent at sea. The crew were delighted to see the Blue Ensign flying as it meant they were entitled to a 'Sunday at Sea', which ensured them an extra half-day's pay. For the passengers the Sabbath was marked by the Ship's Divine Service which was held in the first-class main lounge, and passengers from all classes were invited to attend. The staff captain took the service which was usually well attended. Ray Baines at the organ provided the accompaniment for the hymns. Unfortunately Ray didn't know many hymn tunes and the same old hymns turned up with monotonous regularity every Sunday. For some reason we never ever sang '*For those in peril on the sea*' on any Cunard liner I sailed on - maybe the Company had banned it!

Another significant event every voyage was 'passing the *Queen Mary*'. The time we were expected to pass was made known to the passengers and the outside decks were always crowded long before she hove into sight. Usually the two *Queens* passed each other at a distance of about five miles and it was all over in ten minutes as they passed at a combined speed of almost 60 knots or 70 miles per hour.

When the E.T.A. of arrival at New York was confirmed, the 'landing arrangements' cards were run-off by the ship's printers advising all passengers of the procedures for U.S. immigration and customs. A cable was sent to the Port Health Authority requesting 'Free Pratique' and advising that there were no infectious diseases on board.

The *Queen Elizabeth* took a pilot off the Ambrose Channel Light Vessel and proceeded under the newly completed Verrazzano Narrows suspension bridge which connects Staten Island with Long Island. Just beyond the bridge was the Quarantine Anchorage where the *Elizabeth* slowed down and the port, immigration and customs officials boarded by tender. The ship then proceeded slowly past the Statue of Liberty and across New York Bay to the North River where she berthed, at high water slack, at Cunard's time-honoured Pier 90, at the foot of West 50th Street in Manhattan.

On my first voyage we docked in the early hours of the morning. I was not required to be on duty until about 06.00 and so I spent an hour watching from my vantage point on the first-class sports deck as the *Queen Elizabeth* was manoeuvred by about ten Moran tugs into her berth. Despite having arrived in several hundred, if not thousands, of ports world wide since that day in March 1963, no other arrival has made such an impression on me. It was difficult to believe that I was actually there, in the heart of Manhattan, with the floodlit Empire State Building only a couple of miles away.

Once back on duty in the purser's office I soon discovered the reality of the situation. The passenger immigration checks were thorough and time consuming and it was almost noon by the time the last of the tourist-class passengers had been cleared

# THE CUNARD STEAM-SHIP COMPANY LIMITED

## ABSTRACT OF THE LOG OF

# R.M.S. "QUEEN ELIZABETH"

CAPTAIN S. A. JONES, R.D., R.N.R.

## SOUTHAMPTON via CHERBOURG to NEW YORK

Oct. 1963	Distance	Latitude N.	Long. W.	Weather, etc.
Thurs. 17				At 1200 BST (1100 GMT) left Ocean Terminal, S'ton
" "				At 1400 BST (1300 GMT) Nab Tower ab'm—Departure
" "	64			At 1657 BST (1557 GMT) CH.1 buoy abeam—Arrival
" "				At 2154 FT (2054 GMT) CH.1 buoy abeam—
				DEPARTURE CHERBOURG
Friday 18	414	49.52	12.18	Mod. W'ly breeze, mod. sea and swell, cloudy, clear
Saturday 19	693	48.28	29.50	Strong SSW gale, very r'gh sea, h'vy swell, cloudy, clear
Sunday 20	615	45.07	44.00	Storm force W'ly winds, very rough sea, heavy swell
Monday 21	719	41.48	59.34	Mod. NW to light SW breeze, mod. to slight sea/swell
Tuesday 22	654	To New York		At 1048 DST (1448 GMT) Ambrose Channel
	3,095	miles		Light Vessel abeam—ARRIVAL
				At 1306 DST (1706 GMT) alongside Pier 90, New York

Passage, Cherbourg to New York — 4 days, 17 hours, 54 minutes  
 Steaming Time—4 days, 17 hours, 54 minutes. Detention—Nil  
 Reduced Speed—20 hours, 11 mins. Average Speed—27.17 knots



A typical Autumn crossing of the Western Ocean

and left the ship. All members of the crew also had to clear immigration and after answering a series of questions, some of a highly personal nature, I was finger printed and photographed. I was given a temporary landing permit (an 1.94 I think it was called) until my more permanant laminated 'Alien Crewman's Landing Permit' was prepared. I still have this plastic card which states *'the rightful holder of this card is an alien crewman granted shore leave in the United States. Valid only if the bearer is employed aboard a vessel now in a United States port'*.

The **Queen Elizabeth** had a quick turn round in New York and was due to sail again at noon the next day. There wasn't much time for sightseeing as the purser's staff were busy preparing for the eastbound crossing. I remember I did manage to get a couple of hours off and made for the Empire State Building and had my photograph taken at the top! On my way back to the ship I discovered the Market Diner at the foot of West 52nd Street. I doubt if there's any crew member from any Cunard liner who hasn't had a hamburger and french fries from the Market Diner. It must be as famous as 'Joe Beef's' at Montreal or the 'Smugglers' at Durban!

Embarkation commenced at about 10.00am and was complete by 11.30. There seemed to be an 'open ship' policy as regards visitors at New York, with the visitors almost outnumbering the passengers. About an hour before sailing time every effort was made to persuade the visitors to return ashore but inevitably one or two missed the last gangway and had to be transferred back to the pier by one of the harbour tugs.

As the **Queen Elizabeth** sailed down the North River, passenger boat drill was carried out and was usually complete before passing under the Verrazzano Bridge. The purser's staff were busy mustering all the passengers and obtaining details for the manifests for arrival at Cherbourg and Southampton.

To expedite matters the British immigration officer sailed with the ship. Although he had absolutely nothing to do on the westbound passage and was treated as a first-class passenger, he commenced interviewing the Southampton-bound passengers on the first day of the eastbound passage. With perhaps 1,500 passengers bound for England on a busy crossing he had his work cut out to see everyone before arrival.

The purser's office routine was very much the same as for the westbound crossing. Routine queries were dealt with, irate passengers soothed, onward travel arrangements confirmed and duty free liquor sold. British Customs allowed each passenger to import just one litre, and these 'one bottle packs' were distributed before arrival at Southampton.

Arrival at Cherbourg was usually mid-morning and once again there was uncertainty whether the **Queen Elizabeth** would berth alongside or anchor in the harbour until the berthing instructions cable was received. All official radio messages to and from the *Elizabeth*, and indeed all the Cunard liners, were sent and received in company code. This consisted of groups of five letters which were transmitted and received in the Morse Code and the whole process was a nightmare for the radio officers. When a message was received one of the assistant pursers was required to

decode it, and then get the decode checked by one of his colleagues. The decode would then be typed on to the bottom of the original 'Marconigram' and returned to the officer of the watch on the bridge. Similarly all official traffic from the ship to the company's shore offices had to be coded, checked, and then taken to the radio room for transmission. It was a long rigmarole which of course could take place at any time of the day or night.

As the **Queen Elizabeth** crossed eastbound the ship's clocks had to be advanced one hour each day. Usually this was done at one o'clock in the morning, but there were still some masters who preferred three blocks of twenty minutes each.

On arrival at Cherbourg, French immigration and customs boarded and checked all the disembarking passengers. About 95% of these were bound for Paris and special trains were waiting at the Gare Maritime. Depending on what time the **Queen Elizabeth** was required to dock at Southampton there was occasionally 'shore leave' granted to passengers who had the chance to wander to the town for two or three hours.

Although it was not widely publicised, Cunard carried 'cross-Channel' passengers and about sixty or so were usually embarked at Cherbourg for passage to Southampton. The **Queen Elizabeth** crossed the Channel at a leisurely eighteen knots and typically anchored at a point off Cowes, Isle of Wight to await the tide. She would eventually dock alongside the Ocean Terminal at about 23.00 and a handful of passengers would take advantage of the 'optional disembarkation' with the remainder sleeping on board before general disembarkation at about 09.00 the following morning. In actual fact it took almost a full twenty-four hours from arrival off Cherbourg to disembarking the last passenger at Southampton which somewhat negated the effect of the express ocean passage.

The last night of the voyage was a busy time for the purser's staff, especially staff purser Gerry Nolan, with the ship's accounts having to be prepared and typed. All the takings from the ship's bars and shops had to be paid in to him and balanced, both in U.S. dollars and pounds, shillings and pence. There were no calculators in those days - just a 'ready reckoner'. One of the lady assistant pursers typed the accounts on a manual machine and the whole process was usually completed by about two or three in the morning.

The returning leave party of purser's staff rejoined the *Elizabeth* about eight in the morning and took over the purser's office port routine, enabling those of us who would be sailing again on the next voyage to get a few hours off duty.

Looking back on the ten months I spent on the **Queen Elizabeth** in 1963, I recall them as a very happy, if extremely busy time. The year 1963 was probably the last when both the *Queens* were operating at full capacity during the summer season; the following two years were disastrous for Cunard, and the seamen's strike of 1966 sealed the fate of both the *Queens*.

I left the **Queen Elizabeth** in November 1963 to join the Liverpool based **Carinthia** where I spent three and a half very happy years. But that's another story! ||||

# THE FIRST AND LAST VOYAGES OF THE 'QUEEN MARY'

## MAIDEN VOYAGE

*by Cecil Beaton*

*(The Queen Mary left Southampton for New York on her maiden voyage on 27<sup>th</sup> May, 1936.  
This contemporary account first appeared in 'Vogue' Magazine.)*

The year was at its best in England. The new leaves sufficiently light and delicate to permit the architecture of the trees to be seen; the May trees in blossom. All roads to Southampton were busy with a stream of cars speeding to the Queen Mary. On the dock, a large yellow caterpillar, the awning gangplank, led to the new monster ship, where a Hieronymus Bosch inferno of activity, so strangely in contrast with the bucolic scene outside, assumed an almost terrifying unreality.

Here, in the electric light, it could be any time of day or night in any country, for the crowds, swarming like excited ants to inspect the vessel, were of every nationality, and the background of stained woods gave no indication of being British. Along, up, down, the crowds bustled, while stewards shouted, "Keep moving, please". Streams of people were winding in curves against the general tide. To spread pandemonium among the ants, sirens went off, hooters and fog horns were blown, and after the hurried leave-takings, the boat was launched on its historic career.

Aeroplanes roared above, the pearl-coloured funnels rent the very earth with their hoots. The photographers clicked their lenses and the cinema men ground the wheels of the 'eyes of the world', while the thousands on board waved to the greater thousands on land. The fluttering handkerchiefs subsided while the black and gold uniformed band clashed out the anthem *Britannia Rules the Waves*.

Gradually the boats in the sea dispersed and became distant specks, and comparative calm gave to the vast crowds aboard opportunity to move in droves seeing the beauties and magnificences of England's latest pride and joy. Reminiscent of the unhappy day when, for the first time, one inspected the new school, the school that was to be one's prison for so many weeks, now a cursory tour of inspection was made of the new, strange surroundings that were to become gradually so familiar and be for the next few days one's home.

The crowds swarm round the swimming pool, into the vast lounges, in cocktail bars, smoke rooms, children's playgrounds, dog kennels, private dining-rooms, drawing rooms, massage and writing rooms. Eventually, exhausted from their long trips of discovery, they settle down to rest and while away the time as on any other Atlantic crossing. The men bring out their pipes with a vengeance, women their shorts and sailor trousers. Everyone eats enormously, socialises a lot, and there is leonine prowling of the decks and greed for exercise, since this is a British boat.

On this particular trip there is never a quiet moment, every public room always filled to overflowing. The writing desks are never innocent of souvenir

collectors, and after the second day the company's supply of 25,000 postcards is exhausted. The ink runs low in the wells, and stamps give out entirely. At night, the betting on the run of the ship reaches great heights; the value of the pool reaches four figures.

When constructing a boat, even a luxury liner, the English do not consider their women very carefully. There are hardly any large mirrors in the general rooms, no great flight of stairs for ladies to make an entrance. The decorations have a monotony without uniformity; there is too much woodwork. The effort at being modern is decidedly forced, and the Wadsworth surrealism does not look well in close juxtaposition with the bronze pilasters of renaissance knights in the smoking lounge. The Verandah Grill, however, is by far the prettiest room on any ship - becomingly lit, gay in colour and obviously so successful that it would be crowded if twice its present size. The cabins are beautifully equipped and more refreshingly decorated than on any other boat. There are less paper-cap galas than on a French boat, and sportsmen are taken greater care of with squash-racket courts, pools, deck tennis and the excitement of the afternoon horse-racing.

Below, in an underworld of turbines and boilers, a new world is inhabited by efficient workers who are responsible for the running of this vast new city that has been built for the sea. It is incredible that one human mind can understand so vast a mechanism as this. How it could have been evolved is a miracle. The **Queen Mary** is a great and magnificent ship, fast, smooth-running. There are many small rooms in which it is possible to hide from the onslaught of fellow passengers.

The approach to New York itself was historic and emotionally deeply moving. Aeroplanes roared past the portholes of the cabins. Stewards fidgeted about the luggage.

The air became uncanny with the screams of hooters, roars of engines, cheers of humanity and the clash of bands. The aeroplanes above swooped with alarming ferocity and deafening noise to drop roses. A Versailles *grands eaux* effect was produced by the fountains of fire boats. From every window kisses were blown and handkerchiefs waved, and the cheers reverberated down the caverns of the skyscrapers, which belched forth paper fluttering as though flocks of doves had been released. The air was filled with confetti. Every available inch of roof space was crowded. Along the Battery, the crowds had been standing since daylight, forty deep. New York, most appreciative of all achievement, gave a magnificent welcome to the **Queen Mary**.||||

*When the **Queen Mary** left Southampton for New York on the morning of 5<sup>th</sup> May 1967, Captain William Law had been given a sealed envelope which he locked in his safe. On 8<sup>th</sup> May he was instructed by radio to open this envelope. He did, and at once read its contents to the heads of departments. The end of the **Queen Mary** was set for the autumn, and that of the **Queen Elizabeth** for a year later. The larger ship had been expected to stay in service for another five years at least and so the shock was far greater. Her failure to attract cruise passengers, in spite of a refit in 1966 costing*

*over £1 million, was in fact the deciding reason for ending the careers of both ships. Each was running at a loss of £¾ million per year.*

## **LAST TRANSATLANTIC CROSSING**

(The **Queen Mary** left New York for Southampton on her final trans-Atlantic crossing on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1967, arriving on 27<sup>th</sup> September. Among the 100 or so representatives from the press on board was the '*Guardian*' reporter, who sent these reports).

### **WHEN A QUEEN SAYS GOODBYE:**

They do these things well in New York. It began in the ship's smoking-room where Mayor Lindsay made a speech and presented the captain with a bronze medallion and a commemoration plaque. Then the mayor moved off, and shortly afterwards so did the **Queen Mary**, leaving New York for ever.

On the pier the crowds were piled like confetti after a popular wedding, and a 55-piece brass band was almost inaudible through the cheers. Unhurriedly, placidly, she moved out into the Hudson River.

At times it seemed she would never get through the flotilla of small boats that gathered to see her off. The **Isabel McAlister**, the **Grace Moran**, the **Ocean Queen**, the **Brooklyn**, the **William J. Tracy**, the **Lackawanna** - these, and at least a hundred more, swirled around, beside themselves with excitement, and hooting themselves hoarse in siren-tones ranging from the tiny squeaks of a motorboat to the mellow boom of the **Queen Mary's** sister-Cunarder, the **Franconia**, just in from Bermuda and berthed at the next pier.

And every one got the courtesy of the sea, with three blasts of reply from the **Queen Mary's** stupefying whistle (it can be heard ten miles away and when you are standing, as I was, twenty feet from it, even eardrums stuffed with cotton-wool buckle as though a bomb has gone off).

Down the river she moved, faster now. The little ships took up escort positions on either side; overhead swooped at least a score of helicopters, buzzing around like so many mad dragonflies; the fireboats pointed their hoses skywards and switched on; now every ship's siren was sounding in chorus, and the **Queen Mary's** answer never stopped.

The Manhattan skyline slid gently away; the Statue of Liberty waved her torch; the red-white-and-blue paying-off pennant made for this occasion by the **Queen Mary's** crew, and more than a hundred yards long, streamed from her mast.

Now the little ships were dropping behind one by one; now she was under the Verrazzano Narrows Bridge, looking until the last second as if she wasn't going to make it, and giving the people lining its elegant span three tremendous whistle blasts as she passed beneath.

Now she was out in the open sea. And then from astern came the salute of a great liner. It was the **United States**, bound, like the **Queen Mary**, for Europe. And it



The Queen Mary leaving New York for the last time on 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 1967  
*(photographed by John Shepherd from the Franconia)*

was the United States, which, in 1952, had taken from her the Blue Riband of the Atlantic. An hour later her rival was disappearing over the horizon.

In a poignant moment of pure theatre the **Queen Mary**, eastbound across the Atlantic for the last time in her life, had met her own history.

*As the **Queen Mary** and the **Queen Elizabeth** passed each other in mid-Atlantic for the very last time, the two ships exchanged wireless messages. The Master of the **Queen Elizabeth**, Captain William Law, sent this message to Captain Treasure Jones, Master of the **Queen Mary**:*

**To: Master, R.M.S. QUEEN MARY**

**"As we pass you on your Final Atlantic Voyage, we send you Greetings and express our sadness that time is running out and that you will soon be leaving this Atlantic Ocean which you have crossed so many times. We salute the 'Old Atlantic Greyhound' and the last of the 'Cape Horners'."** LAW

*Captain Treasure-Jones replied from the **Queen Mary**:*

**To: Master, R.M.S. QUEEN ELIZABETH**

**"We thank you very much for your nice message and I in particular as this is probably my last voyage in Command on the North Atlantic, where I have met so many fine ship-mates and people from all parts of the world. I am indeed proud to have commanded this 'Fine Lady' and to have the pleasure of taking her around the Horn - a new and exciting experience for both of us on our last voyage. We the '**Queen Mary**' salute our younger sister who unfortunately will be following in our wake much too soon."** TREASURE JONES

### **ABOARD THE QUEEN MARY, ARRIVING AT SOUTHAMPTON**

*27<sup>th</sup> September 1967*

*by 'Guardian' reporter*

The **Queen Mary**'s much trumpeted final double crossing of the Atlantic, accompanied by unlimited nostalgia and unprecedented goodwill, ended at Southampton last night in disappointing deflation at the dockside.

Because of an overtime ban by the port's crane drivers, the 1,500 passengers who made the liner's last scheduled trip before she goes to her new owners in California had to carry their own luggage off the ship.

The liner's master, Captain Treasure Jones, had a blunt comment to make on the situation: *"I think it's a damned poor show that this should happen on our last arrival in Southampton, on our last voyage home."*

But there was no mistaking the warmth of the rest of Southampton's feelings as they welcomed the first of the *Queen* liners back to the Solent.

Pleasure steamers, their rails jammed with waving cheering passengers, launches, ferry boats, yachts, hovercraft, fireboats - anything, it seemed, that could float, followed this fine old lady (her captain's description) up the Solent on her last triumphant arrival.

A battery of car horns hooted a welcome off the Isle of Wight, a passing destroyer yelled over the loud-hailer: "*God Bless You, Queen Mary, you look as wonderful as ever*", and a tiny London coaster played a jig on her siren before saluting formally.

"*Thank you*", yelled back Captain Jones, waving his cap.

Past a line of tankers roaring greetings from their berths at Fawley, past the fireboats spraying jets of water high into the air, to swing slowly into the streamer-decked Ocean Terminal to the strains of *Sing As We Go* from a brass band on the quayside, and to a swelling roar from a thousand throats as noisy as her own siren blast.

### **All night revels on board**

Southampton's welcome was the end of an historic sad day for the old *Queen*, which began in the early hours of the morning with some of the gayest parties ever held aboard the ship.

As champagne toasts were drunk, and the all-night revels went on until dawn, Captain Jones thanked passengers in the streamer and balloon decorated ballroom for making the last trip such a happy and memorable one.

As he finished speaking, near to tears himself, crowds of passengers in evening dress surged round him singing *For he's a jolly good fellow* and *Auld Lang Syne*.

At Cherbourg, where 600 passengers embarked for the last six-hour trip across the Channel, and the Press party aboard was swelled to 100, the ship was presented with a silver medal commemorating her war and peacetime service by the vice-chairman of the local Chamber of Trade, M. Jean Vaur.

And now it is all over. The engines have stopped and the water is still.

The *Queen Mary* rests against the quayside as hundreds of crewmen and traders swarm around and about her, but the activity is not the same, for although those engines will once again churn Southampton Water, the era of the 81,000 ton luxury liner has ended. |||||

*The cities of New York, Philadelphia and Long Beach all placed bids for the Queen Mary. Vice Mayor Robert F. Crow of Long Beach rushed to London with his city's bid of \$3.45 million on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1967 and two days later Cunard accepted it.*

## **VOYAGE TO LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA**

Part of the agreement for the sale of the *Queen Mary* to Long Beach was that passengers should be carried on her long delivery voyage, which would be regarded as a cruise. For very good reasons, Cunard refused to book the cruise. The *Queen Mary*

was too large for the Panama Canal, which meant rounding Cape Horn. Although not an enticement to ordinary patrons of cruises, the ship might perhaps withstand even bad Cape Horn weather better than she could another consequence of her inability to traverse the Canal. She would have to cross the equator twice and steam long stretches through the tropics without air conditioning. Nevertheless the new owners decided to have their cruise and made the booking arrangements through the Fugazy Travel Agency of New York.

On the morning of Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> October 1967, with 1,040 American passengers on board, the **Queen Mary**, Captain John Treasure Jones in command, made her final exit from Southampton. She sailed not from the Ocean Terminal, but 107 berth in the Western Docks, and 14 navy helicopters flew over her in anchor formation, while a Royal Marine band played *Auld Lang Syne*. ("It should have been *California, Here I Come*", said one of the spectators). Inevitably, many of the passengers were elderly (the minimum price for two was £395), and one of them said to a local columnist, "*I feel like a Pilgrim Father !*"

The 14,500 mile voyage was much longer than that of the **Mayflower**, incomparably less uncomfortable and as free of danger as any sea voyage can be. Yet, the forebodings of Cunard were justified. The tropical heat over long glaring days and sweating nights made life unpleasant for the passengers, and worse than that for some of the crew in their maritime equivalent of Edwardian servants' quarters. An assistant chef collapsed from the heat in his cabin, died and was buried at sea. There were complaints about the service. Only 860 instead of the usual 1,100 crew had been signed on and so she was understaffed. Probably unknown to the passengers, a stiff argument between crew and management had taken place the day prior to leaving Southampton. A bonus of £25 had been offered for the voyage; the crew had asked for £75, and in the end had accepted £40, but there was considerable lack of enthusiasm in the service. A couple who had left the ship at Rio de Janeiro and flown home to Long Beach, told the press the **Queen Mary** was '*a nightmare of rats and cockroaches*', but the U.S. health officials who inspected her on arrival at Long Beach passed her as clean.

The **Queen Mary** arrived off Long Beach on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1967, 40 days and 14,559 miles out of Southampton. About 100 miles off shore she was welcomed by an aircraft dropping flowers, and from 65 miles out the first of the small craft greeted her, and thereafter until she was tied up she was never alone. Yachts, cabin cruisers, barges, U.S. Coast Guard cutters and more, amounting, it was said, to 10,000 in all, greeted California's new possession.

Two days later, on 11<sup>th</sup> December, Captain Treasure Jones formerly handed over the **Queen Mary** to Long Beach. Her register was given to the British Consul General to return to England. Her propellers were disconnected from the engines and the **Queen Mary** was classed as a 'building'.

Finally, in the presence of Mayor Edwin Wade, the British ensign and the Cunard house flag were hauled down, and the 'stars and stripes' hoisted at both mastsheads. "*Thus ended the ship Queen Mary,*" said Captain Treasure Jones. |||||

## FORGOTTEN LINERS OF LIVERPOOL

### THE 'ALSATIAN' / 'EMPRESS OF FRANCE' OF 1914

The Allan Line can be traced back to 1819. On 23<sup>rd</sup> May of that year an advertisement stated that the 169-ton brig *Jean*, commanded by Captain Alexander Allan, would shortly be sailing to Canada. She sailed on 5<sup>th</sup> June and was the forerunner of a large fleet of sailing ships placed in service on the North Atlantic by the Allan family.

The first Allan Line steamer, the 1,764 ton iron screw *Canadian*, was launched by Wm. Denny & Brothers of Dumbarton on 13<sup>th</sup> July 1854 and sailed from Liverpool for Quebec and Montreal on 16<sup>th</sup> September.

Early in 1910 the Allan Line issued a statement that it was proposing to build two 20 knot steamers. Various postponements took place and eventually two smaller and slower ships were laid down - the *Alsatian* and the *Calgarian*.

Among North Atlantic liners of what might be called the '600-foot class', there has arguably not been a more magnificent pair than these two with their quadruple screws driven by four sets of direct-acting steam turbines, and their cruiser sterns - the first on the North Atlantic. They were second to none in the Canadian trade for size, speed and luxury of accommodation. However their particular type of machinery was soon outmoded and considered uneconomical.

The *Alsatian* and her sister were ordered in October 1911. The success of Canadian Pacific's *Empresses*, which had been in service since 1906, decided the Allan Line to go one better and to produce two ships which would overshadow their rivals and set a new standard on the Canadian route. The order for the *Alsatian* went to William Beardmore and Company of Glasgow and her design conformed with Admiralty requirements for vessels to be used as armed merchant cruisers in time of war. The lifeboat equipment was well in excess of B.O.T. requirements and consisted of 18 lifeboats and 28 collapsible boats, with a motorboat equipped with wireless - the first time that such an item of equipment had figured in the life-saving appliances of an Atlantic liner.

The *Alsatian* had bunker space for 5,700 tons of coal and consumed about 270 tons a day. Her service speed was 18½ knots.

Passenger accommodation was the finest yet seen on the Canadian route and equal to the best on the New York service, with magnificent public rooms and nothing spared in passenger comfort on what was only too frequently a cold boisterous voyage. The *Alsatian's* original passenger capacity was for 263 first-class, 596 second-class and 976 third-class. Her crew numbered 500.

The *Alsatian* was launched on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1913. Her gross tonnage was 18,485 and she had a length of 600ft and a beam of 72.2ft. In December 1913 she ran her trials off Skelmorlie in a strong gale, but the new ship averaged 20.48 knots. She then went off on a 600 mile run in the Irish Sea and averaged 19.5 knots.

On 17<sup>th</sup> January 1914 the **Alsatian** left Liverpool on her maiden voyage to Halifax N.S. and St John, N.B. At the end of May 1914 the **Alsatian** brought home many of the survivors of the **Empress of Ireland** disaster.

About this time the idea began to form for the fusion of the Allan Line with Canadian Pacific, which was down to just one *Empress* on the North Atlantic. For instance, a joint victualling department was established at Liverpool and, in due course, a joint maintenance department. Finally it was made known in 1915 that Canadian Pacific was to absorb the Allan Line and a new company, Canadian Pacific Ocean Services Limited was established on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1915 to operate the combined fleets.

It was to be some time before the fusion was finally completed. An Allan Line circular dated 1<sup>st</sup> January 1916 made it clear that the company would continue to operate under its old name under the management of Allan Brothers & Company in Great Britain and H. & A. Allan in Canada.

An article in the *Liverpool Journal of Commerce* on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1917 stated: 'The recent fusion of Canadian Pacific Ocean Services Limited with the Allan Line was formerly completed yesterday, when the former company took over in their entirety the management, control and general operation of the Allan Line steamers, together with the head and branch offices of the company.' Had it not been for the war the takeover would undoubtedly have received much more prominence than it did.

Meanwhile, following the outbreak of war on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1914, the **Alsatian** was taken over by the Admiralty on 7<sup>th</sup> August and served as an armed merchant cruiser. She was armed with eight old 4.7in guns and took on 5,600 tons of bunker coal so that she could spend prolonged periods at sea and joined the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron. She patrolled off Lisbon and later New York, on the prowl for German liners breaking out of port.

The work of the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron then moved to the windswept waters to the north of the U.K., from Iceland to the Lofoten Islands. The **Alsatian** was first employed on patrol off the Shetlands, and while in this service she was instrumental in rescuing the crew of the wrecked **Oceanic**<sup>1</sup> which went ashore on Foula Island on 8<sup>th</sup> September, 1914.

<sup>1</sup> The **Oceanic** (White Star Line, 1899, 17,274grt) had been posted to the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron on the Northern Patrol on 27<sup>th</sup> August, 1914. She was commanded by a Royal Navy Captain (W.F. Slayter), who had no experience of so large a ship, and her own master, Captain Henry Smith, was also on board. On 8<sup>th</sup> September the **Oceanic** stranded in flat calm and clear weather three miles south-east of Foula Island, 20 miles west of Shetland. The ship was attempting to navigate at high water to the west of the island but due to a navigational error, compounded by dual responsibility, (Captain Smith was overruled when he said she was too close in), the fast current carried the **Oceanic** off course and she grounded on Hoevidi Rocks in the Shaalds. The trawler **Glenogil** transferred some 400 men from the **Oceanic** to the **Alsatian**, which was now standing by.

On 11<sup>th</sup> September attempts to save the ship failed. The battleship **Hannibal** put a 6 inch hawser on board, but the **Oceanic** was impaled. Two weeks later rough seas caused the

*Oceanic's bottom to be stove in. Courts Martial followed. The navigator (D. Blair) was blamed and (surprisingly) the two captains absolved. But the Admiralty thereupon changed the procedures so that these large cumbersome ships, larger than all but the largest battleships, were under the control of their regular captains and staff, with the Royal Navy being responsible for the Northern Patrol actions. It was also ruled that there should not be two captains.*

The **Alsatian** was based at Liverpool and re-armed with 6 inch guns and sent up to the Northern Patrol as flagship of the Squadron, a position she retained for the next two years. Early in 1915 she was provided with two A.A. guns and with D/F apparatus. The **Alsatian** continued in northern waters until December 1917 when the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron was disbanded. She is reputed to have steamed 266,000 miles and to have examined 15,000 ships while with the squadron. She then went on Atlantic convoy work with her sister the **Calgarian**. On 1<sup>st</sup> March 1918 the **Calgarian** was torpedoed four times by U-19 off Rathlin Island with the loss of 49 lives. In May the **Alsatian** was in collision with the **Ausonia** in the Mersey, but without serious damage.

At the end of the war the **Alsatian** and the rest of the Allan fleet came under C.P.R. Management, with herself as the principal unit of the combined fleets and the **Empress of Britain** second, followed by the **Victorian** and the **Virginian**. At the end of January 1919 the **Alsatian** returned to her builders for a thorough refit and on 4<sup>th</sup> April she was renamed the **Empress of France**. Her accommodation was now for 287 first-class, 504 second-class and 848 third-class passengers.

The **Empress of France** left Liverpool for Canada on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1919 and quickly regained her previous reputation. In August 1920 she crossed from Liverpool to Quebec in 5 days 20 hours and 6 minutes at an average speed of 18.8 knots. It was not until September 1920 that the reconditioned **Empress of Britain**, now converted to burn oil fuel, joined her old rival. In 1921 the new company was reorganised and 'Canadian Pacific Steamships Limited' replaced the 'Canadian Pacific Ocean Services' of 1916. The black tops were removed from the ships' funnels which became plain buff.

In May 1922 the **Empress of France** moved to the Hamburg-Southampton-Le Havre-Quebec service and at the end of the year went on charter to the Clark Tourist Agency of New York for a world cruise. Later in 1923 the Prince of Wales (Edward VIII) travelled in her as 'an ordinary passenger' so that 'he might join in the fun'. The world cruise was repeated for the Clark Tourist Agency.

In 1924 the **Empress of France** returned to her builders for a refit and conversion to burn oil fuel. She could carry 3,600 tons of fuel, sufficient for a round voyage. The stokehold crew fell from 117 to 34. The **Empress** returned to service on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1924 and crossed to Canada at an average speed of 19.3 knots, returning eastbound at 19.14 knots. Her best passage was at 20.49 knots.

On 31<sup>st</sup> October 1928 the **Empress of France** left Southampton for Vancouver, via Suez, and spent a year on the trans-Pacific service. For this her hull was painted white, with a dark blue band and green waterline, and she retained this colour scheme until the end of her Canadian Pacific service. She was deputising for the

regular vessel, the **Empress of Canada** of 1922, which had returned to the U.K. to be fitted with new machinery. The **Empress of France** left Hong Kong for Liverpool, again via Suez, on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1929, and on arrival was given a refit during which her accommodation was altered to 331 first-class, 384 second-class and 352 third-class.

In 1930 the **Empress of France** resumed the Liverpool-Canada service but there was not much to occupy her as the new *Duchesses* were in service. She made her last voyage on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1931 and following her return to Liverpool she sailed up to the Clyde where she arrived at the fitting out berth of the Fairfield Company on 28<sup>th</sup> September. The old ship lay there dejectedly for three years until 20<sup>th</sup> October 1934 when she was sold to W.H. Arnott Young for scrapping at Dalmuir. On 24<sup>th</sup> November she arrived at the breaking up berth.

The **Alsatian / Empress of France** had a working life of only eighteen years and her comparatively early withdrawal seems to have been due to three causes: 1) the slump years; 2) the fact that her owners had somewhat overbuilt; and 3) by 1930 standards her direct drive turbines were obsolete and uneconomical. The *Empress*, however, had served Canada well and will be long remembered as one of the grandest vessels that ever sailed the St. Lawrence or the Mersey. ||||

### Sources:

*Sea Breezes*, April 1957, p266

*Merchant Fleets, Canadian Pacific* : Duncan Haws

*North Atlantic Seaway*, Volume 1, N.R.P. Bonsor

### **FORTHCOMING MEETINGS**

*All Meetings are held in the Education Suite at the Maritime Museum  
and commence at 12.30pm:*

*Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2002*

**BRUNEL'S SHIPS - 'GREAT WESTERN', 'GREAT BRITAIN'  
AND 'GREAT EASTERN'** (Dr. Denis Griffiths)

*Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2002*

**THE BUILDING OF THE CENTRE SECTION OF THE 'COSTA CLASSICA'**  
Linton Roberts

*Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2002*

**THE STORY OF SALT POOL (FRODSHAM)**  
Tony Barratt

*Thursday, 16<sup>th</sup> May, 2002*

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

## BOOK REVIEW

### FEILDEN'S MERSEY

A selection of the post-war ship photographs of Basil Feilden

*by John Clarkson and Roy Fenton*

Basil Feilden was one of the most gifted photographers to have recorded the shipping scene on the Mersey during some of its most glorious years. This album contains 127 of his best post-war images, most of which have not been readily available for many years. A wide selection of ships is featured, from the Canadian Pacific white *Empresses* to coaly tramps and oily tankers. Captions give details of the ships and their careers.

One of my great regrets is not having taken more photographs of Mersey shipping in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s. Mersey favourites such as the Cunard and Canadian Pacific liners, the ubiquitous Blue Funnel, Harrison and Clan cargo vessels and coastal craft such as the *St Tudno* and *St Seiriol* had always been around, and there seemed no reason to suppose that this wouldn't be the case for many more years to come. In the event they all disappeared almost overnight it seemed, and the photographs which have survived are now priceless memories of an era which has gone for ever.

'Feilden's Mersey' covers the full range of ships that could be seen in the Mersey during the late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. Perhaps my favourite is the front cover shot of the magnificent three-funnelled *Empress of Scotland*. I was amused by the caption showing the Greek *Granny Suzanne* (built as the *Iron Chief*). Apparently the Greek Tsaviris family used the name repeatedly, mainly for elderly ships often on their final voyage to the breakers!

'Feilden's Mersey' is a landscape format soft-back book of 80 pages, priced at £8.00. It will have a wide appeal amongst ship enthusiasts in general and in particular the many people who remember the Mersey in its heyday.

'Feilden's Mersey' is available now from J. & M. Clarkson, 18 Franklands, Longton, Preston, PR4 5PD, U.K. The price is £8.00 plus £1.50 postage (UK) or £3.00 seamail.

*Highly recommended : j.s.*

ISBN 1-901703 - 61 - 4

## **STORM WARNING : SHIPPING SLOW TO REACT**

The North Atlantic is getting rougher. The implications for the shipping industry are significant. Voyage times are already increasing, and vessels are frequently running into trouble. Naval architects are divided as to what, if anything, needs doing. Experts at a climate change conference held recently in London were united in their fears of increasing Atlantic storminess. *"Things are getting worse. I just wish we knew how much worse,"* said climate analyst Dr Alan Brompton.

Dr David Cotton, who leads the satellite waves research programme at Southampton Oceanography Centre stated: *"There has been an increase in wave height and it is quite unequivocal. Measurement from light vessels and weather ships shows that the yearly increase in winter mean significant wave height in the north-east Atlantic is close to two per cent."*

Norway is in the teeth of the onslaught, and during the early 1990s it suffered a relentless battering from waves well over 15m high. One weather station even logged a monstrous 26.4m (86.6ft) wave. Shaken by these reports and a by a sinister pattern of anecdotal evidence, the Norwegian government called a meeting of oceanographers, oil companies and insurers. The committee concluded that the government's fears were justified, but that there was a lack of hard evidence. As a result, an EU-backed working group was formed called Waves and Storms in the North Atlantic (WASA)

A conclusive report has finally emerged entitled 'The wave climate of the north-east Atlantic over the period 1955-1994: the WASA wave hind-cast'. The document admits, albeit reluctantly, that conditions have indeed deteriorated. It concludes that *"the wave climate in most parts of the north-east Atlantic and in the North Sea has undergone an increase of the maximum annual significant wave height, over the last forty years, of about five to ten centimetres per year."*

The area west of the Shetlands is reputed to be the worst part of the Atlantic. Here a combination of storms from the south combines with a long swell from across the Atlantic to make seas especially unpredictable.

Another sector to be affected by worsening sea conditions is the weather routing industry. One example is Met Route. *"Three years ago one of our clients, Shell, came to see us to discuss an increase in their Atlantic crossing times,"* said Captain John Doody of Met Route. *"As a regular winter trader they are in a good position to observe such changes. What they had noticed was that on their Sullom Voe to Portland, Maine route, the crossing time had increased from 11-12 days to 16-17 days. A couple of ships even turned back due to the bad conditions."*

Just why extreme wave heights are increasing is currently a bone of contention among oceanographers. One theory that has stood the test of time, however, is that the increase in extreme wave height is the result of the North Atlantic Oscillation (NAO). (refer to 'Bulletin Extra', mid-January 2001, page 42).

The NAO is an ocean flux much the same as the much-publicised El Niño. It is driven by a pressure difference between the Azores and Iceland. In the words of WASA, the NAO *"has significantly intensified in the past 30 years."* |||||



**WINTER NORTH ATLANTIC**  
The Cunard liner **CARINTHIA** on passage  
between Greenock and Halifax, N.S.  
on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 1965  
(Photo : John Shepherd)

## AND FINALLY.....

### WIND OF CHANGE MAKES WAVES IN SHIPPING FORECAST

The Shipping Forecast, the BBC Radio 4 institution and insomniacs' choice, is to lose one of its most eccentric names after complaints from Spain.

The name Finisterre - which describes an area off north-west Spain - is to be dropped following complaints from the United Nations World Meteorological Organisation that it caused confusion. Finisterre, which has featured in the forecast since 1949, is derived from the ancient belief that the far western tip of Spain was "finis terre", the end of the earth. But Spain uses the term to describe a slightly different, smaller area.

France, which has overall responsibility for forecasts off the Atlantic coast of Europe, was ordered to make Britain change its area name.

From 4<sup>th</sup> February, British broadcasters will rename the zone Fitzroy, chosen in memory of the founding father of the Meteorological Office, Admiral Robert Fitzroy<sup>1</sup>, who allegedly committed suicide in 1865 after forecasting the weather incorrectly.

A spokesman for the Met. Office said: *"The Spanish were adamant that they wanted to keep their Finisterre. We had no alternative. After all, they have used it for years and it is in their patch."*

But British fans of the forecast - which is broadcast by the BBC four times a day to thousands of listeners who have never boarded a ship - were quick to complain.

The pressure group, the Voice of the Listener and Viewer, said the forecast's list of names - Viking, North Utsire, South Utsire, Forties, Cromarty, Forth, Tyne, Dogger, Fisher, German Bight, Humber, Thames, Dover, Wight, Portland, Plymouth, Biscay, Finisterre, Sole, Lundy, Fastnet, Irish Sea, Shannon, Rockall, Malin, Hebrides, Bailey, Fair Isle, Faeroes, Southeast Iceland - was like a 'familiar poem' that defined British cultural heritage.

The eccentric list of winds and rain had inspired poetry, literature, works of art and tea towels.

The dropping of Finisterre was considered as momentous as the 1956 reforms, when Heligoland was replaced by German Bight.

A member of the Royal Naval Association said: *"I hope they don't concede Gibraltar as quickly."*

<sup>1</sup> Robert Fitzroy (1805-65) is best remembered for the voyage of the **Beagle**, 1831-36, in which he was accompanied by the naturalist Charles Darwin. Fitzroy was first appointed to command the 240-ton **Beagle** in 1829 and was engaged in surveying the Straits of Magellan and adjacent areas until 1830 when he brought the ship home. There then followed the world voyage with Darwin which concluded Fitzroy's career at sea.

Fitzroy was elected a member of parliament and introduced a bill for the improvement of conditions in the merchant navy. In 1854 the government decided to set up a meteorological department of the Board of Trade and Fitzroy was chosen as its first superintendent. ||||

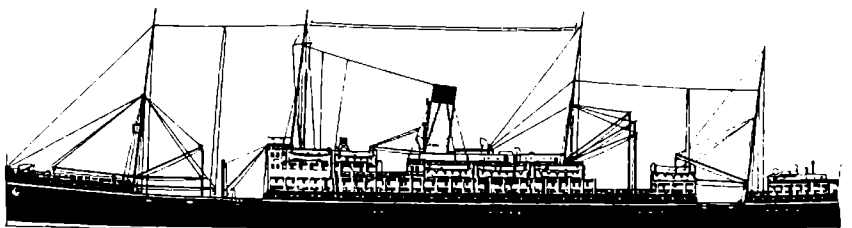
# *The Liverpool Nautical Research Society*

(Founded in 1938)

## **THE BULLETIN**

Volume 45, Number 4, March 2002

*Editor : John Shepherd*



<b>The Battle of Hood and Bismarck : part 1 HMS Hood</b>	page 1
<b>Captain Robert Pape and the Barque Maitland</b> ( <i>Gordon Bodey</i> )	page 9
<b>A Troubled Voyage on the ss Manipur</b> ( <i>James A. Pottinger</i> )	page 17
<b>Devonshire Built for Mersey Owners</b> ( <i>Derek Blackhurst</i> )	page 22
<b>Bibby Line - Ships and More Ships</b> ( <i>Christina Spencer</i> )	page 30
<b>The Liverpool Pilotage Service in 1966</b> ( <i>Keith Taylor</i> )	page 37
<b>Readers' Letters</b>	page 40
<b>Music to My Ears</b> ( <i>Francis Kitts</i> )	page 43



The **Queen Elizabeth** alongside the Ocean Terminal at Southampton in April, 1963. Note the bunkering barges alongside. In the foreground is the lido deck of the **Carmania**, (ex **Saxonica**) just returned to Southampton following her conversion to a cruise liner.

*(photo: John Shepherd)*

**The Liverpool Nautical Research Society**

*President:*

Mr A.S. Davidson

*Vice-President*

Mr H.M. Hignett

*Chairman*

Captain M.D.R. Jones

*Vice-Chairman*

Mr D.K.C. Eccles

*Council:*

G.Cubbin, R.Dennis (*Meetings Secretary*), J.E. Lingwood, D.Littler,  
A.H.McClelland, J. Shepherd (*Editor*), G.F.Wright

*Honorary Officers:*

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

*Membership and all Correspondence*

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

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

The Society is represented on the following websites:

[www.merseyshipping.co.uk](http://www.merseyshipping.co.uk)

[www.cronab.demon.co.uk](http://www.cronab.demon.co.uk)

**Front Cover:**

The Bibby Line's **Shropshire** of 1926. She was built by the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Company of Govan. After 13 years on the Burma run, she was commissioned by the Admiralty in 1939 and Cammell Laird converted her into an armed merchant cruiser. She was torpedoed and sunk off Greenland on 13th May 1941.



# **THE BATTLE OF 'HOOD' AND 'BISMARCK'**

*In the December, 2001 'Bulletin', L.N.R.S. Member R.E.J. Varns gave an eye-witness account of the sinking of HMS Hood and the Bismarck from his vantage point on board the battleship King George V.*

*In 2001 a Channel Four expedition set out to find the Hood and the Bismarck and to unravel the mysteries behind their sinkings.*

*The primary source of material for this article is the television documentary broadcast in December 2001.*

## **part 1: HMS HOOD**

On the 24<sup>th</sup> May 1941 the mighty HMS Hood, the biggest ship in the Royal Navy, faced the legendary German battleship Bismarck. Their encounter was one of the last great battleship confrontations. Witnesses were aghast at the scale of the destruction. The captains of nearby ships were ordered to sketch what they saw. HMS Hood, the undisputed master of the seas, was hit by the Bismarck. Moments later she was rent in two by a towering explosion, six hundred feet high. She sank in less than two minutes. In the history of naval battles, it was by far the most cataclysmic sinking ever. The loss rocked the British people for HMS Hood was no ordinary ship. As Sir Ludovic Kennedy put it: "*The Hood was the most loved of all the ships in the Navy. She'd shown the flag all round the world.*"

HMS Hood was a household name for twenty years. Now she's a distant memory. But for some the sinking of HMS Hood will never be forgotten. On the anniversary of the catastrophe, the Hood Association meet at the little Norman church at Bolder in Hampshire. Former sailors who served on the Hood, the families and friends who lost loved ones; they all meet to remember HMS Hood and her crew. Amongst them is Ted Briggs. Out of a ship's crew of 1,418, only three men escaped as the ship plummeted to the seabed. Ted Briggs is the only one alive today. Like the families of the men who died, Ted has many unanswered questions. How could a ship, as big and as heavily armoured as the Hood, sink so quickly? A Court of Inquiry admitted the evidence was contradictory and inconclusive. It has been said that her design was flawed, that her steel was brittle and that the Admiral on board made a wrong decision. Experts now believe that the Hood's own after magazines, her ammunition stores, were hit, then exploded and broke the ship in two. Ted Briggs has another question which has haunted him for sixty years - why did he and only two other men survive? At the Portsmouth Royal Naval Memorial the year 1941 is dominated by the lost sailors of HMS Hood.

Sixty years on, there's now hope of some of those answers for Ted Briggs and the families of those who died.

American born David Mearns is a director of Bluewater Recoveries. He has a rare expertise: to locate and investigate shipwrecks which lie at the outer limits of deep

ocean research. In his career he's found over forty wrecks for cargo companies and governments. His dream is a mission that many have said is impossible: to find and film the wreck of the mighty **HMS Hood**. For six years David trawled through Admiralty papers at the Public Records Office. Finally he found the vital clues he needed - transmissions sent from a British ship which was shadowing the battle, **HMS Norfolk**. Back at his office at Midhurst in Sussex, David took all the clues he had found and plotted them on to Naval charts.

The **Hood** lies in treacherous Arctic waters between Greenland and Iceland. She's also nearly two miles below the surface. To find and film the **Hood** would be a major achievement. Unlike commercial wrecks, battleships are not open to salvage. After lengthy negotiation David finally received British Government permission to film the **Hood**, but he also wanted the blessing of the families and friends of the lost men. If the *HMS Hood Association* had been unhappy with the plans, David Mearns has always maintained that the project would have been called off.

Channel Four agreed to fund David Mearns's deep ocean search for the **Hood**, but it soon became clear that this super high-tech multi-million pound expedition would not be complete without catching a glimpse of the other sunken giant at the heart of this story - the **Bismarck**.

The biggest German warship ever built, the **Bismarck** had been found before in 1989 when underwater video technology was relatively crude. But locating her again wouldn't be easy. The original expedition took two years to find her and kept her location secret. The **Bismarck** is three and a half miles down and in treacherous terrain, somewhere in the middle of an underwater mountain range.

#### Summer, 2001, Cork, Ireland:

*David Mearns has mobilised an international team of deep ocean experts and some of the most advanced underwater search technology in the world. The plan is to first scan the ocean floor with sonar to locate the wrecks. Then a remote operated vehicle (r.o.v.) will descend five times beyond the reach of a nuclear submarine. At these huge depths, it will film each ship. What started as a dream six years ago at last got underway in the summer of 2001 as the research vessel, the **Northern Horizon**, slipped out of Cork into the vast expanse of the North Atlantic. This was the start of a voyage of over 3,000 miles: its goal to gaze once more on the last great battleships.*

May 1941 was a dark time for Great Britain. The whole of Europe was in the hands of Nazi Germany. Dunkirk had fallen, America was still neutral and Pearl Harbor was months away. The citizens of London, Liverpool, Hull and Coventry were suffering the worst ever nights of the blitz. Britain's only lifeline was the North Atlantic convoys from Canada and the U.S.A., but these ships carrying vital food and materials were under constant attack. German warships and U-boats had destroyed 700,000 tons of merchant shipping in April 1941 alone. Britain's survival hung in the balance.

From the outset of war Britain had been worried about the **Bismarck**. Launched in 1939, this hugely powerful ship was a potentially fatal threat to the Atlantic lifeline. The **Bismarck** was 790 feet long, she had eight massive 15-inch guns, thirteen inch thick armour and a top speed of 30 knots. She was alleged to be unsinkable. She was certainly the most powerful naval weapon in the world. But she had yet to become operational. The British watched and waited.

Then, on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1941, intelligence from Sweden and Norway confirmed their worst fears. The **Bismarck** had been sighted heading towards the Atlantic and she had to be found before she got to the shipping lanes. With her speed and fire power she could decimate merchant shipping before the Royal Navy had a chance to respond. For two days British ships and aircraft scoured the Norwegian coast for the **Bismarck**. A long range RAF spitfire spotted her in a fjord and photographed her, but the **Bismarck** slipped away in the night. Tension was high.

The problem for the British Navy was guessing where the **Bismarck** would enter the Atlantic. There were four possible routes. Groups of British cruisers, smaller and faster ships, were sent to patrol the two farthest routes. If they sighted the **Bismarck** they were to follow her and call in the big guns. The Home Fleet, based in the Orkneys, would cover the other two possible routes.

The Royal Navy's giant battle cruiser HMS **Hood** along with the brand new battleship the **Prince of Wales** were sent to take up station south of Iceland ready to engage the **Bismarck** if she was spotted.

Not only were the crew unperturbed, they were also supremely confident in HMS **Hood**, not least Ted Briggs. At the age of 13 he had marvelled at the sight of the **Hood** and dreamt of serving on her.

But the **Hood's** formidable reputation was earned in peacetime. For years the **Hood** had toured the world as a symbol of British naval power. Since her launch in 1918 she had reigned supreme in an era of battleship diplomacy. At over 860 feet long, the **Hood** was the Navy's biggest ship and the emblem of its global might. Between 1923 and 1924 she voyaged throughout the Empire, sailing over 40,000 miles and receiving over 700,000 visitors. But behind the fun and games on deck, the **Hood** was a subtle reminder of just who ruled the waves.

Imperial symbol she may have been, but by 1941 she was old technology. The **Hood** was designed during the First World War and construction began on her in Glasgow in 1916. But suddenly the work was halted. Three British battle cruisers had just been sunk at the Battle of Jutland by the Germans. As the Admiral at the scene commented: *'There seemed to be something wrong with the design of British ships'*. What was wrong with the British ships was that they had insufficient deck armour.

For decades, warships had heavy steel side or belt armour. But, over the years, as guns got more powerful and fired over longer ranges, shells were now plunging down from greater heights. Bill Jurens is a forensic expert and adviser to the U.S. Navy: *"Plunging fire is anything that is going down steeply enough so that it doesn't intercept the belt armour before it hits the decks. That's the fire that's dangerous because it goes right through into the magazines and engineering spaces."*

The **Hood** was quickly redesigned but crucially only the front half of the ship was given extra deck armour in a bid to keep the weight down. The intention had always been to have her in for a refit and to strengthen the after part of the ship, particularly over the aft ammunition magazines. Somehow, with all her diplomatic goodwill missions, there never seemed to be the right time.

The **Hood** and the **Prince of Wales** crept along the south side of Iceland ready to engage the **Bismarck**. On board the **Hood** was Admiral Lancelot Holland. His orders were to quickly get in close to enemy ships. At short range the enemy shells would hit the **Hood's** thick side armour. Admiral Holland knew he must not expose the **Hood's** weak upper armour to long range plunging shells.

At 7.22 on the evening of Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1941 Able Seaman Newall on board the British cruiser HMS **Suffolk** spotted the **Bismarck**. Within minutes the **Suffolk's** sister ship, HMS **Norfolk** was transmitting this message to the Fleet: *'Emergency. One battleship, one cruiser bearing 330 degrees, range seven miles.'* The **Bismarck** was accompanied by the heavy cruiser **Prinz Eugen**, trying to slip into the Atlantic via the Denmark Strait. The **Suffolk** and the **Norfolk** started to shadow them, broadcasting the position to the **Hood** and the **Prince of Wales**.

Admiral Holland did not reply. He simply set an interception course. By maintaining radio silence, he hoped to come upon the Germans unawares. But, at midnight, the **Suffolk** lost the **Bismarck** in a snowstorm. Without her radio updates, the **Hood** was sailing blind. By 2.am Admiral Holland knew that the Germans must be agonisingly close. Then, at 02.47, the radio crackled into life again. It was the **Suffolk** reporting that she had regained contact. Admiral Holland's navigators began to plot the best possible interception course. The **Bismarck** and the **Prinz Eugen** were only fifteen miles away, but they were slightly ahead of the **Hood** and the **Prince of Wales**. Admiral Holland tried to narrow the gap. Both forces were going flat out, upwards of 30 knots.

At 05.37 on the morning of 24<sup>th</sup> May, Admiral Holland made his move. He had his ships turn and race in at full speed, straight at the Germans. He was desperate to get in close to avoid plunging shells. At 05.53 the British opened the firing. But, because they were trying to get in close, the British ships were charging straight at the Germans. Only their forward guns had an unimpeded view of the target. Admiral Holland had to judge precisely when he was close enough to avoid plunging enemy shells, then he could safely turn side on and have all his guns fire. He was only seconds away from this ideal position.

Witnesses disagree about this crucial turn to port. Some say the **Hood** was in the middle of it; others say it never happened. If the **Hood** had completed the turn, then her side armour would have taken the brunt of the hit and she would have survived. But it wasn't to be.

Each time the **Bismarck** fired, a salvo of eight shells, each weighing over a ton, left her guns at nearly twice the speed of sound. They had over ten miles to travel: the journey time was under thirty seconds. Ominously, according to witnesses, the hit

was somewhere on the after half of the deck, exactly the area which was under armoured. Immediately the **Hood** began to sink. Ted Briggs and many others just managed to get out of the top decks but they were instantly dragged down by the enormous suction as the ship sank. At the very point of death, Ted Briggs was suddenly propelled to the surface: quite how, to this day, no-one knows. On that terrible day in 1941, Ted Briggs thought that he would be the last person ever to see the mighty **Hood**.

The last resting place of HMS **Hood** lies halfway between Greenland and Iceland. David Mearns and his team on board the **Northern Horizon** arrived in near perfect weather. They would need it - the **Hood** was a needle in a haystack. The search area was over 600 square miles. This ambitious search would start by scouring the ocean floor with sonar, nearly two miles below.

The **Northern Horizon** travelled up and down the search area in parallel lines. Astern, she paid out over four miles of steel cable attached to the sonar. When the sonar was floating just above the sea bed, it sent up a continuous stream of images. David Mearns wanted to find evidence to confirm the idea that the shell from the **Bismarck** penetrated the after ammunition magazines. If so, they should find the ship split in two. Whatever the case, there would be a lot of debris on the sea bed - the **Hood** suffered a catastrophic sinking.

The search area was massive - bigger than a major city. Every line through the search area took ten hours. The first ended at 1.20 in the morning without a single trace of the **Hood**. The **Northern Horizon** then had to turn around and that took another five hours because of the four miles of cable she was dragging behind.

Line two started at 6.30 the next morning. On only line three out of a possible fifteen the sonar picked up something manmade. The **Northern Horizon** turned and commenced line four. Another fourteen hours went by. After sixty years hidden from the world, it looked as though the **Hood** had now been found. The only way to confirm the find was to send down the eyes of the mission - the r.o.v. - the remote controlled submersible.

The final high definition sonar images showed a unique map of a battle strewn landscape. It was both revelatory and puzzling. It showed not two, but four large pieces with a mass of smaller debris, all spread over an area two miles wide. The largest part was most likely the **Hood's** main hull, but when David Mearns measured the sonar image on the computer, he got the impression that the **Hood** was lying on her side.

The 'Magellan' r.o.v. is an ultra deep sea remote controlled submersible, bristling with state-of-the-art video cameras and high powered lights. It's attached by a 100ft long umbilical cord to the compressor, a separate unit that houses all its support systems. Together the whole system is connected to the **Northern Horizon** by two miles of steel cable inside which are power and fibre optics. The journey time to the bottom is two and a half hours. The r.o.v. headed towards the largest piece of the wreck. On the way was an underwater landscape littered with debris. It was hard to

identify any particular part. Unusually for these depths there was a strong current, stirring up silt and affecting visibility. Then, out of the murk came an extraordinary sight - a towering cavern of metal, shorn clean off. David Mearns and his team gazed in awe at the very first video pictures of the wreck of HMS Hood.

Ted Briggs was soon caught up in the remarkable success of David Mearns's mission. The first underwater pictures were beamed back by satellite. It was an event of historic proportions and made the headlines the next day. As the world heard about the incredible discovery of HMS Hood, Ted Briggs packed to leave for Iceland. The expedition would take him back to where it all began, sixty years earlier.

With only their fifth shot ever fired in combat, the gunners on the **Bismarck** hit and sank HMS Hood at a distance of ten miles. How did they achieve such deadly accuracy so quickly? Film taken from the German cruiser **Prinz Eugen** shows how both sides in this battle were trying to sink an enemy ship which to the naked eye was just a tiny dot on the horizon.

Geoffrey Brooke was a gunnery officer on HMS **Prince of Wales**. On board the only surviving World War 2 British warship, HMS **Belfast**, he explained how ships of the time were able to hit moving targets at long distance. Until about 1908 or so, all the guns were trained and fired actually at the gun. This wasn't very satisfactory because in the middle of an action where there's smoke and shell hits and water-spouts, it was very hard for the men controlling the guns to concentrate, so somebody had the bright idea of putting a director very high up in the ship.

On the gun directors were mounted range-finders; two huge telescopes mounted thirty feet apart. With both telescopes pointing at the target, the angle between the two would give the range, but getting the two telescopes to point at the target was down to the skill of the operator. It was like the range-finder in an old Leica camera - the picture you were looking at was in two halves and you could get them to coincide by twisting a knob at the side and then read off the range.

But getting the range of the target was only the first problem. There were wind conditions to take into account, temperatures and powder temperatures which would combine to make the first couple of shots fall inaccurately. To deal with all those variables, navies turned to a high-tech solution - the transmitting station (t.s.). If the director was the brains of the gunnery system, the t.s. was really the heart. It was a very early type of mechanical computer which was fed various data: the range to the enemy, their course, the wind speed and air temperature. Operated by eight men, it constantly calculated the exact angle the guns had to be set at to hit the target. But, whatever the technology, battleships were never at rest. Firing from a moving, rolling, pitching platform was immensely difficult. Either side would only be able to get about one in a hundred shells on target.

Timing in this 'clash of Titans' was crucial. Only seconds before the **Hood** could turn her ten inch thick side armour towards the German ships, she was hit. The **Bismarck's** crew were probably amongst the most accurate gunners afloat, but the fact

## CAPTAIN ROBERT PAPE AND THE BARQUE 'MAITLAND'

*by L.N.R.S. Member Gordon Bodey*

Captain Robert Pape was the great grandfather of Liverpool Nautical Research Society member William James Pape II of Waterbury, Connecticut, U.S.A. In 1875 when Robert Pape joined the **Maitland** his son, William James I, was not yet two years old. In 1887, at the age of thirteen, William James Pape was to leave Liverpool - his birthplace and home - to settle with relatives in America. Here he succeeded greatly, and in doing so he became the founding father of the Pape family in New England. William James Pape II is now the head of the family in America.

This article is a brief outline of the **Maitland's** initial voyages and of those whilst Robert Pape served on her, and of some of the background to life at sea at that time.

The **Maitland**, official number 64846, call sign N.W.H.V., registered at Halifax, N.S., was a single-deck, three-masted barque built at Maitland, Hant's County, Nova Scotia in 1871. Her length was 162 ft, breadth 33 ft, and depth to hold 19 ft. The **Maitland** was of 713grt, 653 nett.

The **Maitland's** first owner was John Edward Dewolf, merchant, of Halifax, N.S. (from a family that was to have long and close ties with Liverpool, as well as some of its members becoming resident there), and her first master was Alonzo Nickerson of Halifax, N.S.

The first recorded foreign-going trading voyage of the **Maitland** was from Savannah to Liverpool with a cargo of 2,098 bales of cotton and 1,124 bags (and 60 barrels) of oil cake. She is thought to have sailed from Savannah about 15<sup>th</sup> February 1872. After arriving in the River Mersey on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March, the **Maitland** had to wait until the afternoon tide of 20<sup>th</sup> March before being berthed at the West Quay of Brunswick Dock to discharge her cargo. Unloading was completed by 26<sup>th</sup> March but the **Maitland** remained at her berth until 29<sup>th</sup> March and was then taken down river and into Sandon No.6 graving dock where she remained for five days. It is believed that the time spent in dry dock was in order to complete any fitting-out not done by her builder and to have the vessel's bottom coppered; these jobs were invariably carried out on Canadian-built wooden vessels upon their first visit to Liverpool in readiness for the commencement of trading in tropical waters.

On leaving the dry dock, the **Maitland** was moved to the north side of the Victoria Dock to load a general cargo for Baltimore which included drums of caustic soda, firearms, steel tyres (presumably for horse-drawn wagon wheels), chain, saddlery, cutlery and 776 cases of tinplates. The nature of much of the cargo loaded - apart from the caustic soda - would appear to have had a direct connection with the great opening up of the American West which was then taking place. Loading was completed by 1<sup>st</sup> May 1872 when the **Maitland** cleared for sea. She sailed from the Mersey for Baltimore on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> May, duly arriving there on 9<sup>th</sup> June. It was a slow passage, averaging only about three knots.

Having discharged and reloaded, the **Maitland** sailed from Baltimore for Belfast on 17<sup>th</sup> July, arriving there on 21<sup>st</sup> August 1872 - another protracted crossing. Although her cargo is not noted, it is thought that she would have carried bagged grain back from Baltimore; at this time it was common for the Maritimes' sailers - often in ballast - to voyage from Liverpool to Baltimore in order to load grain (a lucrative cargo)<sup>1</sup> for the U.K.

The crew of the **Maitland** which signed for this voyage to Belfast (all signed at Baltimore for the voyage, of whom five had re-signed after the voyage to Liverpool) comprised (besides the master): a first mate, a second mate, a cook/steward, eight able seamen and two ordinary seamen; one of the able seamen failed to join. The absence of both a carpenter and a bosun on the voyage may seem odd, but it was not uncommon for both to be considered unnecessary. Four crew members were Canadian, four British, five from various European countries and one Barbadian - the cook/steward. On the **Maitland's** arrival at Belfast five of the able seamen promptly deserted.

On this voyage the cook/steward was paid the same rate as the first mate, £7/5s/0d per month, the second mate £5/15s/0d and the able seamen £4/10s/0d per month. One able seamen, aged 20, signed on for £3/12s/0d per month but, possibly dissatisfied by his lower rate of pay, he was the one who failed to join the ship. Of the two ordinary seamen, one signed at £3/12s/0d and the other at £3/0s/0d per month.

By 1875 - the year in which Robert Pape joined her - the **Maitland**, having been owned successively by John Edward Dewolf, John William Dewolf and Jonathon McCully (all of Halifax, N.S.), was now registered to the ownership of John Starr Dewolf of 'Elleslie', Aigburth Drive, Liverpool.

Robert Pape passed as Master Mariner in 1871 at Liverpool - ticket number 82317. He was a native of Workington, Cumbria and had been married at St John's, Old Haymarket, Liverpool in January 1871. By 1875 he had two young children and was living at South Chester Street, Toxteth, Liverpool (this street of houses had been built on the site of what, less than 25 years previously, had been farmland adjoining Mather's Dam with its ancient working windmill known as Toxteth Park Mill).

On Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> July 1875, Robert Pape, aged 32, signed on as first-mate of the **Maitland** at Middlesbrough for a voyage to Bluff, New Zealand, and return - eventually - to Antwerp. However, this was an 'unrestricted voyage', i.e. the Master had *carte blanche* to trade *en route* should the opportunity offer, to the Indian Ocean region, and the duration of the voyage (within a three-year period) - as well as the ports of call - was indeterminate. The Master, John Joseph Sowerby, aged 41, of Devonport, also signed on the vessel that day, and this was also his first voyage on the **Maitland**.

<sup>1</sup> Another sought-after and lucrative cargo from the Eastern Seaboard ports to the U.K. (and elsewhere) was 'case oil'. This was cans of naphtha (a mixture of volatile liquid petroleum fractions) which were pre-packed in wooden crates (tankers not then being available) for stowage and hence called 'case oil'.

In addition to the Master, first mate and second mate, the **Maitland** set sail from West Hartlepool (she had shifted there from Middlebrough on 6<sup>th</sup> July) on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> July 1875 with the following crew:

a carpenter, eight able seamen, an ordinary seamen, a cook and a steward.

Wage rates were very variable and depended on:

- The availability of suitable crew.
- The urgency of the need to complete a crew.
- Whether the crew were joining a ship returning to a home port (this seems to have had the effect of depressing the wage rates offered).

Other factors, doubtless, also had an influence.

At the start of this voyage the able seamen were paid £3/5s/0d per month compared to the £4/10s/0d on the voyage described earlier. Ordinary seamen received £2/15s/0d per month, again less than on the earlier voyage.

Besides the crew which actually sailed from West Hartlepool, three able seamen who had signed on did not sail. One had received an advance of £4/17s/6d, and another an advance of £3/5s/0d. An ordinary seaman also received a month's wages in advance and failed to sail. This practice is seen to have been widespread and was to be encountered at least once with each new crew signed.

Of the original crew of fifteen who set sail from West Hartlepool, only the first mate, second mate and the ordinary seaman were to complete the round voyage.

Only scant information is known about the **Maitland's** passage to Bluff. The assumption, based on her passage time, has been made that she would have sailed via Cape Horn - some 1,500 miles less than a passage via Cape Town. She arrived at Bluff on 5<sup>th</sup> November 1875, after sailing for 121 days. This represents an average daily run of about 105 miles<sup>2</sup> for the 12,500 mile (minimum) passage.

Bluff is the port for Invercargill (the most southerly city of New Zealand and then, as now, an expanding community), eighteen miles away which was then being

<sup>2</sup> An average daily run of 95 to 105 miles may seem unduly slow sailing. The barque *Cyprus* (Troop & Son), 1,119gt, under Captain Raymond Parker (of Tynemouth Creek, N.B. and aged 27) is credited with making nine consecutive trans-Atlantic crossings (often cited as the pinnacle of fast sailing for a barque) for a total passage time of 219 days between 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1878 (the start of her maiden voyage from St John, N.B. to Liverpool) and 8<sup>th</sup> September 1879. However, the actual period of these passages was between 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1878 and 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1879 for a total passage time, according to Lloyd's daily reports, of 239 days, giving an average crossing time of 26½ days. On one of the passages (starting from Deal - where she had been at anchor overnight - to Baltimore), she is believed to have waited off Sandy Hook for orders for some time, thus prolonging the passage to 46 days. If this passage is omitted, the passage time for the other eight crossings was 193 days at an average of 24 days each - an average daily run of about 125 miles. The above passages, according to the source information on the CD-ROM 'Ships and Seafarers of Atlantic Canada' (and again excluding that of 46 days) took 211 days at an average of 26 days each and, therefore, an average daily run of about 115 miles. The **Maitland's** average daily runs over months of passage time, under often less favourable sailing conditions were, therefore, on occasions not unduly small.

established as the centre for the grain export trade - as well as other agricultural products - of the Southland region.

In common with all vessels trading to New Zealand at that time, the **Maitland's** cargo would almost certainly have consisted of manufactured goods, ranging from household utensils to farm implements; from simple machinery to building materials and from woven materials of all kinds to finished mass-produced consumer goods. In return the **Maitland** would have carried away raw wool, timber, barrelled oysters (a widely-exploited resource in the waters off Bluff), and possibly barrelled salted fish.

The **Maitland** remained at Bluff until 24<sup>th</sup> December 1875. It would appear that she was delayed due to crew problems. It is recorded that three crew members deserted at Bluff, and two more were discharged on being jailed there. These included the cook who deserted and the steward who was jailed. In view of the exigency of the situation, a steward was signed at £8/0s/0d per month (10/- more than the first mate), but this was probably because he also acted as cook (no replacement cook being recorded); able seamen at £6/0s/0d per month, and ordinary seamen at £4/10s/0d per month. Again there were non-joiners, one of whom had been given a £3 advance. Some of those signed on at Bluff seem to have done so on short-term articles as they were released by mutual agreement and paid the balances of wages due at subsequent ports.

Having finally mustered an adequate crew (manpower resources would have been very meagre at Bluff in those days), Captain Sowerby set sail from Bluff on Christmas Eve 1875 for Newcastle, N.S.W. on what was to be his final voyage. On passage across the Tasman Sea, Captain Sowerby died. Robert Pape immediately signed off as first mate and re-signed as master. The second mate, William Glover, aged 34 and from Workington, Cumbria, was likewise signed off and re-signed as first mate. One oddity noted here is that two men shown as able seamen, and not previously noted in the crew lists, are also recorded as signing on in the Tasman Sea on the following day - at one shilling per month, a rate possibly identifying them as supernumeraries, although they were not recorded as such; nor are they recorded as stowaways.

The **Maitland**, under Captain Pape's command, arrived at Newcastle on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> January 1876. Four able seamen were promptly released by mutual agreement, as noted above, as were the two 'shilling-a-month' men signed in the Tasman Sea. In return five able seamen and two ordinary seamen were signed - again on short-term articles to be terminated by mutual agreement at the next port of call, Bombay. The rates of pay were now almost back to the original rates.

It is worth noting here that although a hand might be listed as an able seaman, he was not necessarily experienced to that level, if at all. It was frequently the case that men signed in foreign ports were landsmen trying to work their passage home (or trying to get to somewhere else to try their luck), having previously emigrated. In addition, their inexperience placed an extra burden on an already overburdened crew

(and, it was justifiably contended, often posed a threat to the safety of the ship) sometimes leading to violent reprisals against such men; it was a very harsh environment in which to be found wanting.

Many men who were signed in foreign ports with, or without, the necessary experience were often only trying to earn a sojourn at the nearest bar in the next port of call; the incidence rate for such cases was very high and is indicated by the large number who were jailed as a result.

The **Maitland** left Newcastle, N.S.W., for Bombay on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> January, arriving there on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1876, having averaged only about 64 miles per day on the 6,250 mile voyage. Again, an assumption has to be made about the cargo, if any, loaded at Newcastle for Bombay but, in common with the majority of other vessels loading at Newcastle, the most probable cargo to be carried away would have been coal.

At Bombay the men signed at Newcastle were released and replacements signed, including a cook. Again problems arose with the crew. Six were discharged after being jailed (one having been given a £3 advance); the cook was removed by the Consul a week before the ship left Bombay, but a replacement was signed; and one able seaman, also with an advance of wages in his pocket was not seen again!

The crew which finally sailed the **Maitland** from Bombay was composed of ten different nationalities. The rates of pay being offered to new signings had first dropped dramatically; an able seaman being worth only £3/0s/0d per month, an ordinary seaman £1/10s/0d, a carpenter £4/5s/0d - even the cook could command only £4/0s/0d per month. The fact that the **Maitland** was sailing for Europe may have given Captain Pape sufficient leverage to offer these rates, but it may also have been the case that because the most recent signings were mainly non-British, the rates would have been considered adequate. However, as crew members began to disappear and sailing day drew near the rates offered to replacements had to be adjusted upward regardless of nationality - six A.B.'s being signed on at £4/0s/0d per month. Ironically the last signing (the day before sailing), a Dutch A.B., signed for £3/5s/0d, accepted a £2 advance and vanished the same night.

Leaving Bombay on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1876, the **Maitland** sailed for Antwerp via the Cape of Good Hope, passed to the west of the Cape Verde Islands and, whilst passing through the Azores, was spoken to on 22<sup>nd</sup> September. She was reported as having arrived off Ventnor, Isle of Wight, on 9<sup>th</sup> October when she reported herself 110 days out of Bombay. However this latter report appears erroneous as she passed Deal the same day (Deal is about 125 miles from Ventnor), being then 115 days out from Bombay. It is believed that the **Maitland** arrived off Flushing on 10<sup>th</sup> October and she is recorded as docking at Antwerp on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> October 1876, having taken 116 days on the approximately 11,200 mile passage from Bombay to Flushing; an apparent average daily run of some 96 miles. The actual mileage covered would, in reality, have been in excess of the above (due to the variability in the courses steered owing to wind, weather and currents) as, therefore, would have been her daily run. No record of the cargo has been located.

From the first signing at Middlesbrough until her return to Antwerp sixteen months later a total of 56 men (excluding Captain Sowerby) signed articles on the **Maitland**. Of these, three of the original signings completed the voyage as noted. At the various ports of the voyage seventeen men signed off by mutual agreement; seven failed to join, five deserted, eight were jailed, three were removed by Consuls, and a further thirteen signings brought the vessel home. A total of £39/7s/6d (£39.37p) was lost in giving advances to men who did not join, were jailed after receiving an advance or who were removed from the vessel before it sailed. It is not known how much money was forfeited by men who deserted or were jailed, but on balance it would seem likely that some of the monies advanced to non-joiners, absconders and those detained had to be written off.

Captain Pape retained command of the **Maitland** and sailed her from Antwerp for Cardiff on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November, arriving on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> November 1876. She may have called at another port on the way, but it is not recorded. Captain Pape signed off on 16<sup>th</sup> November and returned to Liverpool on leave. By 30<sup>th</sup> November he was back in Cardiff where he re-signed as master to take the **Maitland** to the Far East.

It is believed that Captain Pape was accompanied by his wife Martha and their three young children on this voyage, but if so it was not recorded in any documents at present to hand relating to the voyage. [The **Maitland's** log book has not been located, but this would be unlikely to have had such information recorded in it; shipmasters were not noted for recording anything other than that which was required by law.] It was particularly common in Maritimes' vessels of this time for masters to be accompanied to sea by their wives and children; their presence was rightly considered a civilising influence in an otherwise unrelentingly harsh existence - not least, perhaps, on the masters themselves. However, the family members were not listed as passengers or crew and the only evidence for their presence on board is usually from diaries or personal letters to home.

While at Cardiff the **Maitland** completed her loading for Yokohama (as her scheduled final port of call) with the stock cargo - between these ports - of coal, and sailed on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> November, again on an unrestricted voyage. The **Maitland** was to return to Liverpool from Yokohama as and when a full cargo had been loaded.

On this voyage, in addition to the master and a first mate, the **Maitland** carried the following crew: a bosun, a carpenter, a cook/steward, nine able seamen, two ordinary seamen, and a boy (Charles Thompson of Liverpool, aged 13). Rates of pay on this voyage were as at the start of the previous voyage, although one ordinary seaman was paid only £1/0s/0d per month. The boy's rate of pay was ten shillings (50p) per month and he must have been a very thrifty boy; after a 17-month voyage, earning him £8/10s/0d (£8.50p), he paid off with £7/16s/2d (£7.81p). The carpenter, William Richard of Barmouth, must also have been a sober, thrifty man. Out of his earnings of some £102, he paid off with £84/9s/3d.

Although this was a passage of some 14,500 miles (via the Cape of Good Hope), in taking almost seven months to arrive at Yokohama it must be assumed that

Captain Pape had either traded or been delayed (a very common occurrence for a multitude of reasons) en route, although no details are available. The only known report of his vessel's progress states that she passed eastwards through the Sunda Strait on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1877. The **Maitland** arrived at Yokohama on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> June and on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1877, Captain Robert Pape died on board his ship at Yokohama.

The exact cause of his death is not known, but considering the endemic nature of certain potentially fatal, insect-borne, diseases in the regions he voyaged in, it is more than likely that his death resulted from one such cause. A great number of Europeans succumbed to such diseases each year. The first mate, David Davies, signed off and re-signed as master on the same day, and the bosun, 28-year old William Furniss<sup>3</sup> of Birkenhead, assumed the<sup>4</sup> mate's duties (although not signing as such) in so far as he was able.

It speaks well of Captain Pape's command - and of his original choice of crew- that in contrast to the previous voyage, out of the crew of sixteen (other than the Master) which set sail from Cardiff, thirteen members completed the round voyage whilst the other three signed off by mutual consent in Yokohama. None were recorded as having been jailed. Captain Pape had also shown foresight at the start by employing two extra hands.

The new master signed three able seamen at Yokohama, one of whom, a German, was (for reasons not stated) removed by the Consul one week later.

The **Maitland** remained at Yokohama until Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> October 1877. One of the reasons for the extended stay is believed to have been the administrative procedures in connection with the death of Captain Pape. She then sailed for Hiogo (the present-day prefecture of Hyogo); the port being Kobe. She did not arrive there until eighteen days later and may have called to load elsewhere along the way. Whilst at Kobe she completed loading for her return to Liverpool; her main cargo was reported to be bagged rice. One of the Yokohama signings deserted at Kobe and a replacement able seaman was signed - an American who worked as bosun in place of William Furniss and who was paid the full rate of £6/0s/0d per month.

On Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November the **Maitland** sailed from Kobe for Falmouth for orders, passing through the Sunda Strait on 24<sup>th</sup> December. Her sailing time for this

<sup>3</sup> *This man appears to be William H. Furniss, at home on leave with his parents at 9, Mill Lane, Liscard, Wallasey in April 1881. His father (also William H. Furniss) was formerly a merchant ship owner.*

<sup>4</sup> *Whilst not invariably so, it was often the case at this time that navigation skills were the prerogative of the master, and that mates of Maritimes' sailers were sometimes relatively unskilled (either by training or practice) in navigation, often being employed for their ship and crew-handling skills. It was found, therefore, when necessity demanded, that a suitable able seaman, or the bosun as here, would be called upon to carry out the mate's duties. However, it was also the case that many mates held a master's certificate - and, therefore, the necessary navigation skills - but sailed as mates for years before acquiring their own command and could, again as in this case, assume the role of master when required.*

leg of the passage was comparable with that of the outward passage. She was reported passing St Helena on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1878 and arrived off Falmouth on 22<sup>nd</sup> April where she received orders to proceed to Liverpool. The **Maitland** arrived in the River Mersey on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> April after a protracted passage of 178 days.

Shortly after the completion of this voyage the **Maitland** was sold to Charles Murdoch, another Halifax merchant, who did not trade with her, but within a year sold her to Norwegian owners. It was a common practice for vessels of the Maritimes, once they had completed their seven-year certification period, to be sold on to Norwegian owners who would then sheath the hulls with two-inch thick planking, giving the vessels many extra years of trading life. |||||

### Sources

This article is mainly compiled from data obtained from 'Ships and Seafarers of Atlantic Canada', a CD-ROM produced jointly by the Maritime History Archive and the Maritime Studies Research Unit, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St Johns, Newfoundland, and used by kind permission.

**'Wooden Ships and Iron Men'** - Frederick William Wallace

*Liverpool Telegraph and Shipping Gazette*

*Lloyd's Lists*



*Life Member of the Liverpool Nautical Research Society, Mr William J. Pape II, is editor and publisher of the Waterbury Republican-American. Mr Pape's great-grandfather was Captain Robert Pape, Master of the barque Maitland.*

## A TROUBLED VOYAGE ON THE ss 'MANIPUR'

*by L.N.R.S. Member James A. Pottinger*

The last of my three deep sea trips on the Brocklebank ship **Manipur** was memorable for all the wrong reasons in that the fates had apparently decreed that everything that could go wrong eventually did.

The ship was one of four sisters, others were the **Maidan**, **Magdapur** and **Mahronda**, all built just after World War II, and they were unique at the time in having a set of high and low pressure steam turbines driving through double reduction gears, with Foster Wheeler water tube boilers operating at a relatively high pressure.

Brocklebanks were somewhat conservative, but at the same time innovative, as later developments were to show, and had previously stuck to three cylinder turbines with single reduction gears and Scotch boilers.

Obviously they were not fully convinced of the effectiveness of the installation on the above quartet as they reverted to low pressure turbines and Scotch boilers on subsequent ships until the introduction of the **Makrana** in 1957 and the later **Mangla** / **Mathura** class.

I had just completed a round voyage on the **Manipur** and was due to re-join her at Liverpool in December 1960 after a spell of leave, and whilst travelling down from Glasgow I met up with the Chief Engineer on the same train.

However, on arrival at the ticket barrier at Liverpool we were met by one of the company Engineering Superintendents who gave us the news that our ship had been involved in a major mishap when passing out of the dock locks at Newport, South Wales the previous day when bound for Liverpool.

Apparently a piece of one of the teeth on the large main reduction gear wheel had broken off and subsequently crunched its way through all the mating gears, with results that can only be imagined!

The double reduction gear arrangement consisted of each end of the rotor shafts of the two turbines having a small toothed wheel which engaged in a larger secondary train of gears, which in turn engaged a large diameter wheel, approximately 7 - 8 feet in diameter, which was keyed to the propeller shaft.

By this means the very high revolutions of the turbines were reduced to an economical propeller shaft speed.

At this time the full extent of the damage could not be assessed, but fearing the worst it was decided that the Chief Engineer would return home on the next train to await events. I was instructed to travel across to Middlesbrough to join the **Mangla** until a clearer picture emerged.

After being geared up ready to go on another deep sea voyage this turn of events was upsetting, but it did in fact give me the opportunity to join one of the company's newest ships, and which was innovative in that she had a.c. electrics for all purposes, including cargo winches. Brocklebank pioneered this previously on an earlier ship, but it applied only to the engine room and domestic auxiliaries on board;

the development of the more precise control of winches using a.c. current not being sufficiently reliable at that time.

I arrived on the **Mangla** on 16<sup>th</sup> December, and returned to the **Manipur** at Newport on the 28<sup>th</sup> where she was in the final stages of having the gearing re-assembled.

The repair had been effected by removing the whole gear assembly and sending it back to the original manufacturers, David Rowan at Glasgow. They machined a strip about 6ins wide all round the mating toothed faces of each gear wheel, removing the damaged teeth in the process.

After consultation with Lloyd's Register it was decided that we would proceed on a shortened deep sea voyage at reduced speed, at 65 RPM instead of the normal average of 112 RPM. We spent Hogmanay and New Year at Newport and nursed the ship up to Birkenhead for final loading, eventually sailing for the Middle East and India on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1961.

All seemed to go well at the more leisurely speed until when steaming down the Red Sea the motor on the electric bilge pump burned out. We then had to use the large main ballast pump for this intermittent duty. By the time we reached Aden, however, this important pump was also showing signs of trouble, so much so that it was decided to have both units repaired before going any further.

Both motors were sent ashore for rewinding, and we were then moved to an outer berth away from the normal bunkering moorings, and it was whilst we were there that our next major mishap occurred.

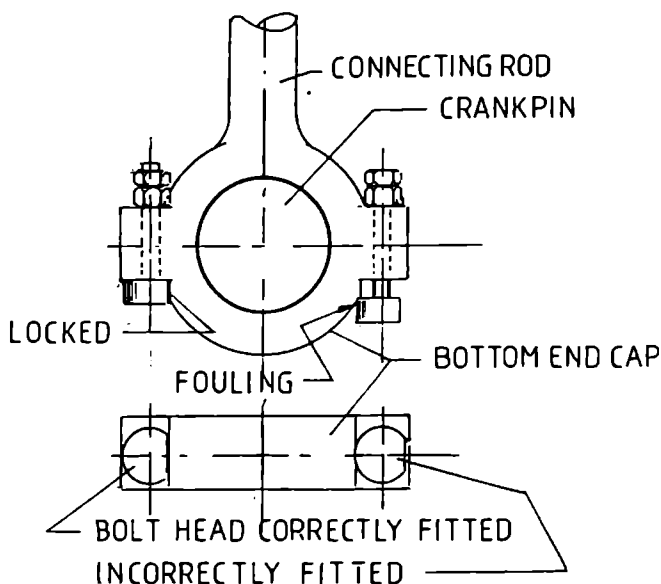
With main engines and boilers shutdown we were on day work in the engine room, and it was early one morning that everyone on the ship was wakened by what can only be likened to someone violently shaking the whole ship from end to end. This gradually subsided, as also did the lights and all power, with some loud and expensive sounding noises emanating from the engine room. Those nearest descended the engine room ladders four steps at a time and even amid the rapidly darkening murk it was possible to see small pieces of metal whizzing and ricocheting around the on-line diesel generator situated nearest to the main condenser. The engine itself was still turning slowly, but one of the piston connecting rods and the piston itself could be seen flailing out of the side of the shattered crankcase.

Our immediate priority was to get one of the other two generators up and running, having three in all, and take the electrical load, and to shut down the damaged unit. It could then be seen that the whole engine was thrust up in the centre, with large sections of crankcase missing on the inboard side of the engine. Internally, one of the bottom end bolts was broken, the other bent and grossly deformed, with the result that the connecting rod had bent sufficiently to allow the piston itself to come out of the liner and was literally shooting in and out horizontally instead of vertically under the action of the crankshaft still being driven by the other four pistons, all the while spraying the immediate area with small metal fragments.

What to do now !

The true nature of the damage was not immediately appreciated back home after our initial report to the owners, as we kept receiving telexes requesting what spares we required for the damaged engine. In the meantime I had taken some photos of the damage, and it was only on receipt of copies of these and our final answer, "*one new diesel generator!*" that the penny finally dropped.

Subsequent investigation at the end of the voyage as to the reason for the damage revealed the cause originated during an overhaul by a shore based company after a previous voyage. One of the bottom end bolts had been fitted around the wrong way with the locking flat on the head facing outwards, instead of having the flat butting hard against the shoulder of the bottom end, a design which was intended to stop it turning when the nut was being tightened. (*see diagram*).



In effect the bolt was never properly pulled home as the round shoulder was fouling the bottom end half shell and was thus left slack. All the load was being taken on the single bolt on the other side, which was in fact fitted correctly. The uneven load caused this bolt to stretch and finally break. The offending bolt then bent, and the whole assembly came loose off the crankshaft and allowed the piston to come down out of the liner and burst through the adjacent crankcase door, which then tore out a chunk of the side of the engine as it disintegrated; the whole main frame of the engine also being grossly distorted so that the centre of the engine was pushed up a good few inches.

Again after a series of telexes and phone calls to the owners and Lloyds, it was felt that by using the steam turbine driven boiler water feed pump for boiler supply instead of the electric feed pump, and thereby reducing the electrical load, and by crossing our fingers, we would be able to continue the voyage running one diesel generator instead of running two as normal. The remaining generator would, however, have to be kept in immediate readiness, as two were always required to be on line when anchoring, manoeuvring, and working cargo using the electric winches. By dint of careful husbanding of the electrical load, and with everyone giving tender loving care and attention to the two remaining diesels, we plodded around the Indian coast calling at Trincomalee, Calcutta and Vizagapatnam, before heading home again, arriving in the London River on 24<sup>th</sup> April; a short trip by our normal standards which usually averaged around six months.

Our troubles were still not over, however, as passing Southend on our way up the Thames we noticed that all power was being lost in the main turbines and the vacuum gauge was registering zero. In a steam turbine installation, a good vacuum in the exhaust side of the steam cycle is critical. As we were in a congested area and in the shipping lane we had no option but to anchor until we could regain power.

All the engine room staff went over the machinery for hours in an attempt to trace the vacuum leak. The sudden drop indicated on the pressure/vacuum gauge indicated a major leak, but to no avail, and the possibility of calling tugs was on the cards. It was only a few hours later whilst we were all sitting on the main starting platform scratching our heads, a wisp of steam vapour was noted rising from under the insulation cladding on the LP turbine.

This was not normal, and the source could only be found by stripping off all the metal covers and cladding underneath. This revealed that there was actually a crack in the top half casting of the turbine adjacent to one of the square access manholes.

By this time we thought we had seen everything and were determined not to allow it to be a case of *'so near and yet so far'*. After some discussion and head shaking it was decided to attempt to mend the crack with 'Thistlebond' compound. This was basically a fibreglass repair kit, as used to repair damaged car panels etc, and provided it held sufficiently to allow full vacuum to be restored while the turbines were run up to full speed astern, we would take the risk to proceed up river under our own power.

The two components were carefully mixed and applied, with apparent success after curing, and the message was passed to the bridge. We thought that we had coped with just about everything the fates had thrown at us, but they decreed that we would be further tested.

When we tried to heave up the anchor it was found that it had fouled a submarine cable on the river bed, and it was only after several hours of effort that we were able to get clear. It was during this latest trial that the river pilot had the temerity to make an uncomplimentary remark about Brocklebanks, and the **Manipur** in particular, and to the effect that he was going to miss some shore engagement. Unfortunately he made the remark to our long suffering captain, who by this time was

just looking for someone to make a smart remark; thus a fairly pointed and expletive laden ripost was directed at the pilot!

We docked safely at Tilbury, but not to be outdone just as we were 'finishing with engines' and shutting down the main boilers, a joint blew out on one of the main steam pipes. We were all past caring by now and not at all fazed by such a trifle!

This was my last trip on the good ship **Manipur**, but when home at Greenock on ticket leave I saw her passing up river on her way to Glasgow to have a new generator installed: luckily I had my camera with me and was able to record her passage.

The ships of this class were fairly hard worked and none too popular with the engine room staff to the extent that most did one trip only. Over my period in the ship I shared the advantage of the stayers in that promotion came quickly to fill the vacancies after each trip. |||||

*ss MANIPUR, completed in December 1945 by William Hamilton & Co. Ltd., Port Glasgow. She was the first ship delivered to her owners after the end of the War, but she was built to wartime restrictions and modernised in 1947.*

*8,569 gross tons 4,991 net, 11,570 deadweight tons*

*504ft 7ins overall length, 62ft 8ins extreme breadth, 27ft 8ins summer draught*

*Two steam turbines, HP and LP, double reduction gearing to single screw, manufactured by David Rowan & Co. Ltd., Glasgow.*

*Two watertube boilers, 490 lbs/sq.in. superheat 475 lbs/sq.in.*

*One donkey boiler 105 lbs/sq.in.*

*Three Ruston five cylinder diesel generators*

*The Manipur was delivered to Hong Kong breakers in December 1966 and arrived at Whampoa on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1967 for scrapping.*

#### **FORTHCOMING MEETINGS**

*All Meetings are held in the Education Suite at the Maritime Museum  
and commence at 12.30pm:*

*Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2002*

#### **THE BUILDING OF THE CENTRE SECTION OF THE 'COSTA CLASSICA'**

Linton Roberts

*Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2002*

#### **THE STORY OF SALT POOL (FRODSHAM)**

Tony Barratt

*Thursday, 16<sup>th</sup> May, 2002*

#### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

## DEVONSHIRE BUILT FOR MERSEY OWNERS

*by L.N.R.S. Member Derek Blackhurst*

George Philip left his native Aberdeen in 1854 at the age of 41 to settle in the Devonshire port of Dartmouth. He had been employed by the well known shipbuilders, Hall & Company, and he obtained employment as a foreman shipwright with a William Kelly who opened a small yard at Sandquay, on the banks of the River Dart. The yard built a number of schooners such as the **Margaret & Elizabeth** and the **Cicerone** before facing closure and bankruptcy in 1861. George Philip entered into a partnership with an Adam Couch as shipbuilders with a small yard in Dartmouth and they launched a couple of schooners, the **Pickwick** and the **Una**, before dissolving the partnership in 1864. This is really the true date for the start of Philip's, although the yard buildings at Noss proudly proclaim the firm's establishment date as 1858. George took over the now vacant yard previously occupied by Kelly at Sandquay and his first recorded launch was the brig **Fawn** for Brixham owners in 1866. He was joined in 1865 by his son Alexander, after he had served his time with Laird & Company at Birkenhead. From this date the firm was known as Philip & Son, and Alexander gradually took over until the death of his father in 1874 when he assumed full responsibility for the company.

The company was always undercapitalised and in 1878 Alexander Philip was declared bankrupt. He overcame this obstacle and building continued but at a reduced rate. By 1895 the firm was manufacturing its own steam engines and wood was gradually giving way to iron. In this year the first order for the Admiralty was launched, a steam instructional pinnace for use by the Britannia Royal Naval College at Dartmouth.

One of the first Dartmouth built vessels to be owned in Liverpool was the wooden brigantine **Retriever** built for the London firm of Newman Hunt & Co. Ltd. in 1876, and subsequently sold to C.T. Bowring & Co. Ltd., of Liverpool in 1901. On her sale she was described as a barquentine of 216 tons gross. She was reported as being on fire and sinking in the North Atlantic on 8<sup>th</sup> February 1904 whilst on passage from Glasgow to St Johns, Newfoundland with a cargo of coal. The master and crew were rescued by the British ship **Adra** (2,796/1895) and landed at Portland. Another second-hand vessel purchased by Liverpool owners was the steam yacht **Glenalva** launched for her builders, Philip of Dartmouth, in 1875. She was of 8 tons gross and was equipped with an 8hp engine by Plenty & Sons Ltd., of Newbury. Prior to her sale to J. Holt & Company of Liverpool she was fitted with a Philip's patent water tube boiler to burn coal or wood for her intended service on the African rivers by the Niger Company. She was registered in the Cameroons, West Africa.

The first launch for Liverpool owners was on 10<sup>th</sup> September 1892 when the **George Holt**, a composite pilot schooner, was launched for the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board. She gave the Board good service until her sale in 1904 to the Falkland Islands Co. Ltd. for inter-island trading. She was renamed **Lafonia**, registered at

Stanley, and served until 1931 when she was converted to a lighter and her register closed.

Alexander Philip died in 1899 and control passed to his two sons, George N. Philip and John N. Philip who, in 1905, converted the firm into a limited liability company. The yard continued to prosper and launched a 30ft cargo launch, the **Carmen**, in 1910 for the Liverpool firm of Allerdice & Company. With the start of the Great War in 1914 the yard was expanded and built a variety of vessels for the Admiralty and the War Office. These were mainly single-screw steel tugs for inland waterways use in Europe by the Army, as well as a large number of steam pinnaces for the Admiralty. It is interesting to note that as late as 1918 the yard was still building steam tugs with wooden hulls for the War Office.

With the end of hostilities the yard needed to expand but finance was a problem once again. Any hopes of expansion to the Sandquay yard were blighted by the Admiralty who were highly protective of the College which occupied the quay above Philip's yard. The other main shipbuilder in Dartmouth during the war period was Simpson, Strickland & Co. Ltd. who had originally occupied a yard adjacent to Philip's at Sandquay but who, in 1893, moved from Sandquay across the river to a new yard at Noss. They developed this yard until they decided to go into liquidation in 1917. No satisfactory reason for this surprise decision has ever emerged. The yard would have been ideal for Philip & Son but was financially out of reach. The north-eastern builders, Swan Hunter & Wigham Richardson Ltd came to Philip's aid by taking a debenture and this enabled Philip & Son to purchase the Noss yard and also allowed for further expansion in 1924 with the purchase of a floating dock.

A most welcome order was received from the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board in 1918 when the pilot cutter **James H. Beazley** was ordered. She was launched on the 9<sup>th</sup> June 1921 and lasted until towed away for demolition in July 1958. Her cost was £46,500, and she was equipped with a 650 IHP triple expansion engine built by Philip's giving her a speed of 11 knots. The company continued to operate the two yards at Sandquay and Noss, but control passed out of the Philip family to Swan Hunter.

The higher ferry, or more correctly the floating bridge, was purchased by Philip & Son Ltd. in 1920 and is still operated by the company to this day. The ferry had operated, on and off, from 1831 and had had a number of owners until bought by Philip.

The inter-war years were difficult for most shipbuilders and the Dartmouth yards were no exception. The Elder Brethren of Trinity House were welcomed with open arms when they ordered the first two of a series of lightvessels for delivery in 1935. This initial order was quickly followed by a further six before hostilities once again interrupted the peacetime building programme. In 1936 the Company received one of its most prestigious orders from the Admiralty for a wooden non-magnetic research vessel of 770 tons displacement at an estimated cost of £158,000. The **Research** was planned to be rigged as a brigantine and no expense was spared in her construction. The keel was laid in October 1937 and the hull was launched in April

1939. The vessel was inspected by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1939. All work was suspended in late 1939 due to the commencement of hostilities, and due to Treasury influence the hull spent the war years in idleness on the Dart. The engines had not been installed and in 1952 the **Research** was towed away for scrap. A sad end for a magnificent vessel and a great opportunity lost for a sail training vessel for the youth of the country.

The Second World War brought a flood of orders from the Admiralty and the Air Ministry, and the wooden shipbuilding skills of the yard were fully utilised in the building of wooden minesweepers and air-sea rescue launches. The yard was bombed in 1942 and badly damaged with the loss of 20 workers killed and 40 injured. A total of 263 vessels of all types were built during the War ranging from motor minesweepers, corvettes, minelayers, tugs and numerous small craft. With the return to peace the yards were slowly wound down and the battle for orders commenced. One of the first post-war orders was for five new lightvessels for Trinity House, ordered in 1945. A further four followed in the following year. It was not until the January of 1948 that Merseyside owners returned to Dartmouth with a welcome order by the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board for the diesel electric pilot cutter **Sir Thomas Brocklebank**. She was launched on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1950, a fine vessel of 675 gross tons being driven by two oil engines driving two generators connected to a single electric motor developing 920 shp, and geared to a single shaft. She served the Board until sold to Danish owners in 1976. She was then converted to carry passengers and renamed **Odysseus**, and gave various Danish owners good service until scrapped at Vejle in 1982.

Following the completion of the **Sir Thomas Brocklebank**, 1950 saw the placing of an order for two twin-screw passenger ferries for Wallasey Corporation, the **Leasowe** and the **Egremont**, sister ships of 566 tons. The keels of both vessels were laid in a double ceremony in October 1950. The **Leasowe's** keel was laid by Miss Pat Wensley, and the **Egremont's** by Miss Penny Price. The ferries were each designed to carry 1,350 passengers and the first down the slip was the **Leasowe**, launched by the Mayoress of Wallasey, Mrs Wensley on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1951. Both were handed over in 1952 and gave good service until sold in 1974 and 1976 respectively. The **Leasowe** went to Greek owners and is still in service, as is the **Egremont**, sold to the Island Cruising Club in Salcombe for use as a headquarters ship for its sailing fleet.

Following the ferry order, the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board ordered a single-screw pilot cutter, the **Edmund Gardner**. The order was placed in July 1951 and the vessel was launched on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1953 and handed over on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1953. In 1982 she was sold for display at the Merseyside Maritime Museum. This order was followed by another for a near sister ship, the **Arnet Robinson**, for the same owners. Launched on 8<sup>th</sup> October 1957 the new vessel was a single-screw pilot cutter and she served the Board until 1982 when she was sold to Penespy Offshore Ltd. of Liverpool for further service as a seismic survey ship, being renamed **Pensurveyor** for this purpose. Liverpool owners, K. Mehmet, bought her in 1988 and she was resold in 1991 to Turkish owners. She is still in service (2001) as a passenger vessel owned by

Fergun Denizcilik, operating from Tasucu in Southern Turkey to Girne in Northern Cyprus.

The year 1957 brought an order for a pair of ferries for Birkenhead Corporation, namely the **Mountwood** and the **Woodchurch**. They were launched in 1959 at a cost of £246,000 each and are still in service on the Mersey. The yard built a total of 35 lightvessels during its existence including the **Planet** for the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board for the Liverpool Bar station. A further five were built for the Commissioners of Irish Lights. The **Planet**, launched in 1960, was sold to Trinity House in 1972 and became No.23 in its fleet. She became the last manned lightvessel when on the Channel station until her withdrawal in 1989 when she was sold to Pound's Marine Services of Portsmouth. The **Planet** was resold and was opened to the public as a museum ship at Birkenhead but is currently up for sale once more.

Philip's Sandquay yard was closed in 1960 and was converted into a yacht marina with the offices becoming an hotel. The floating dock was sold for scrap and the last lightvessel was launched in 1962. The company gave up steel shipbuilding in 1963 and concentrated on repair work at the Noss yard. Philip & Son was taken over by Reeves Ltd., a Totnes firm of timber importers, in 1965.

The last vessels supplied to Liverpool owners were two wooden pilot launches which were launched in 1962 for the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board. These were the **Petrel** and the **Puffin**, each of 57 tons gross with a length of 70 feet. The **Petrel** lasted with the Board until sold in 1979 to S.C. Boats of Liverpool who, according to reports, sold her to South American owners in 1996. The **Puffin** was reported sold to Pilot R. Coomes in 1979 and after a spell owned on the Wirral, was last reported sunk by vandals at Connah's Quay on the Dee in 1996.

Philip's yard carried on building a number of small pleasure craft until 1969 when Mr Philip Pensabene took over from Reeves Ltd. The only order of note after this date was for the yacht **British Steel**, launched in 1970, and sailed by Chay Blyth single handed around the world against the prevailing currents in 292 days in 1970/71.

Various attempts were made to keep the yard open but it was finally announced in October 1999 that all building and repair work would cease after 141 years. The Company now operates two yacht marinas on the River Dart at Sandquay and Noss, the higher ferry at Sandquay and the hotel complex also at Sandquay, and is looking forward to the future as a leisure company. |||||

### **VESSELS BUILT BY PHILIP & SON AT DARTMOUTH WITH LIVERPOOL CONNECTIONS**

1. **RETRIEVER** Wooden brigantine. Yard No.44

O.N. 73620 216g 204n 117.8 x 22.8 x 13.6ft.

28.2.1876: Launched for Newman, Hunt & Co., London.

1901: Owned by C.T. Bowring & Co.Ltd., Liverpool. Shown as a barquentine.

8.2.1904: Sank in the North Atlantic whilst on passage from Glasgow to St. Johns, Newfoundland with coal. Master and crew rescued by British ship **Adra** (2796/1895) and landed at Portland. Vessel set on fire while sinking.

2. **GLENALVA** Steam Yacht

O.N. 94203 8g, 6n, 14TM. 46.45 x 8.4 x 3.45ft.

Engine: 1. 2-cyl. 5" & 6". 8 H.P. No.683 by Plenty & Sons Ltd., Newbury

1885: Launched for Alexander Philip, Dartmouth.

28.5.900: Sold to J. Holt & Co., Liverpool for use on the African rivers by the Niger Co. Fitted with Philip's patent W.T. boiler before sale to burn coal or wood.

Registered: Cameroons, West Africa.

3. **GEORGE HOLT** (No. 10) Composite pilot schooner. Yard No. 96.

O.N. 102058 110g, 90n, 194TM. 101.0 x 21.5 x 11.5ft.

1892: Ordered.

10.9.1892: Launched for the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board, Liverpool.

1904: Sold to the Falklands Islands Co. Ltd., (Frederick E. Cobb, manager), London, for inter-Island trade and renamed **LAFONIA**; registered Stanley.

12.3.1931: Register closed, converted to a lighter.

4. **CARMEN** Single-screw cargo launch. Yard No. 385.

30.0 x 7.5 x 4.5ft.

Engine: (No. 127E) C.2-cyl. 4.5" x 9" x 5". Boiler: (No. 20B) 3.9ft. x 2.9ft dia.

1910: Launched for Allardice & Co., Liverpool.

5. **JAMES H. BEAZLEY** Steel steam pilot vessel. No.3. Yard No. 582.

O.N. 145866 456g, 188n. 153.7ft OA. 144.7 x 27.5 x 14.0ft.

Engine: 650 IHP. T.3-cyl. 13.5", 22" & 36" x 24". R.T. boiler: (No. 126MB). 14.25ft x 10.75ft diameter by A.F. Craig & Co.Ltd., Paisley. 180psi. 11 knots. Price :£46,500.

9.6.1921: Launched for the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board, Liverpool.

7.1958: Sold to Van den Bossche for demolition at Boom. Arrived Antwerp 4.8.58 in tow of tug **Englishman**.

6. **SIR THOMAS BROCKLEBANK** [No. 1] Pilot Cutter. Yard No. 1189.

O.N. 183794. 675g, 210n. 165.0 x 31.5 x 14.5ft.

Engine: Diesel electric by G.E.C.-National Gas. 920 SHP @ propeller. 13.3 knots.

Contract price: £154,990 *plus* extras £3,129 *less* £375 (Non-supply of bridge controls) *plus* deck stiffening £63 (for the Admiralty). Profit: £17,084.

1.1948 Ordered by the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board, Liverpool.

2.5.1950: Launched.

1976: Sold to Henning Bjornland, Denmark and renamed **ODYSSEUS**. Converted to a passenger ship.

1982: Sold to K.A. Jorgensen, Svenborg, Denmark.

10.1982: Sold to John Schmidts Produktforretning, Denmark

25.10.1982: Arrived Vejle for demolition.

7. **LEASOWE** Twin-screw passenger ferry. Yard No. 1225.

O.N. 183825. 567g, 311n. 145.0 x 34.0 x 12.25ft.

Engines: Oil, 8-cyl. 2 SCSA. HRL 8. Each 615 BHP, by Crossley Brothers Ltd., Manchester.

Price: £139,210 *plus* extras £2,330 *plus* deck stiffening £21 (for the Admiralty)  
Loss: £1,206.

3.1950: Ordered by Wallasey Corp. 18.5.51: Launched. 22.11.51: Handed over.

1972: Transferred to Merseyside Passenger Transport Executive.

1974: Sold to Astro Alendente Armarora, Greece for £34,000; renamed **NAIAS II**.

1980: Sold to Mestos S.A., Piraeus, Greece and renamed **CAVO DORO**.

1998: Owned by Overseas Atlantic Supply Corp., Piraeus, Greece. Tonnage now 874g.

499n. 2001: Still in service.

8. **EGREMONT** Twin-screw passenger ferry. Yard No. 1226.

O.N. 185429. 566g, 310n. 145.0 x 34.0 x 12.25ft.

Engines: Oil, 8-cyl. 2 SCSA. HRL 8. Each 615 BHP, by Crossley Brothers Ltd., Manchester.

Profit: £2,012.

3.1950: Ordered by Wallasey Corp. 10.12.51: Launched. 31.3.52: Sailed for Liverpool. 1972: Transferred to Merseyside Passenger Transport Executive.

15.6.1976: Left Birkenhead under tow for the Island Cruising Club, Salcombe, for use as a moored headquarters ship. 2001: Still in service.

9. **EDMUND GARDNER** [No.2] Single-screw pilot cutter. Yard No. 1243.

O.N. 185476. 701g, 202n. 177.5ft OA., 165.0 x 31.75 x 12.4ft.

Engine: 2 Oil 6-cyl. 4 SCSA to single shaft by G.E.C./ National Gas & Oil Engine Co. Ltd., Ashton-under-Lyne. Diesel electric. 920 SHP.

Contract price: £189,230 *plus* extras £4,186 *plus* increased costs £16,457 *plus* deck stiffening £89 (for Admiralty). Profit: £1.114. Additions to contract price: £2,061; additions to profit: £3,243.

7.1951: Ordered by the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board, Liverpool.

9.7.1953: Launched. 2.12.1953: Handed over.

1982: Sold for exhibition at the Merseyside Maritime Museum.

2001: Still in existence.

10. **ARNET ROBINSON** [No.3] Single-screw pilot cutter. Yard No. 1293.

O.N. 187181. 734g, 202n. 170.0 x 31.75 x 12.4ft.

Engine: Two 6-cyl. 4 SCSA oil engines by National Gas & Oil Engine Co., Ashton-under-Lyne (1,280 BHP) connected to an electric motor (920 SHP) by G.E.C. Ltd., Rugby. Contract price: £272,170. Profit: £1,463.

5.1956: Ordered by the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board, Liverpool.

8.10.1957: Launched. 17.3.1958: Handed over.

1982: Sold to Penespy Offshore Ltd., Liverpool for use as a seismic survey ship and renamed **PENSURVEYOR**.

1988: Sold to K. Mehmet, Liverpool.

1991: Sold to unspecified Turkish owners and renamed **FATIH**.

1998: In service as a passenger vessel owned by Fergun Denizcilik and operating from Tasucu, southern Turkey to Girne, northern Cyprus.

2001: Still in service.

11. **MOUNTWOOD** Twin-screw passenger ferry. Yard No. 1304.

O.N. 301325. 464g, 160n. 143.5 x 39.1 x 11.3ft

Engines: Two HEN8/350 each 680 BHP. by Crossley Brothers Ltd., Manchester.

Contract Price: £246,365. Profit: £13,263.

12.1957: Ordered by Birkenhead Corporation.

6.7.1959: Launched. Owners now Merseyside Passenger Transport Executive

2001: Still in service.

12. **WOODCHURCH** Twin-screw passenger ferry. Yard No. 1305.

O.N. 301339. 464g, 160n. 143.5 x 39.1 x 11.3ft.

Engines: Two HEN8/350 each 680 BHP. by Crossley Brothrs Ltd., Manchester.

Contract Price: £246,785. Profit: £14,871.

12.1957: Ordered by Birkenhead Corporation.

29.10.1959: Launched. Owners now Merseyside Passenger Transport Executive

2.5.1960: Handed over. 2001: Still in service.

13. **PLANET** (Bar Lightship) Non-propelled light vessel. Yard No. 1312.

O.N. 301353. 453g, 292n. 125.3 x 26.5 x 16.4ft.

Contract Price: £171,541. Profit: £8,461.

Fitted with generating sets by Rushton & Hornsby Ltd., Lincoln.

9.1958: Ordered by Mersey Docks & Harbour Board, Liverpool.

24.5.1960: Launched. 9.9.1960: Handed over.

4.9.1972: Removed from the Bar station and sold to Trinity House, London and numbered '23' in their fleet. Was the last manned lightvessel when on the Channel station. Demanned 10.6.1989.

25.7.1991: Sold to Pound's Marine Services Ltd., Portsmouth for £20,000 and arrived at Portsmouth under tow.

1991: Re-sold and opened to the public as a museum ship at Birkenhead, Merseyside.

2001: For sale.

14. **PETREL** Twin-screw wooden pilot launch. Yard No. 1323.

O.N. 303862. 57g, 23n. 70.66 x 16.0 x 5.0ft.

Engines: C8TLFM. 350 BHP. by Rolls Royce Motors Ltd., Shrewsbury.

14.87 knots. Double diagonal timber hull.

8.1961: Ordered by Mersey Docks & Harbour Board, Liverpool.

1962: Handed over.  
1979: Sold to S.C. Boats, Liverpool.  
1996: Reported sold to South American owners.

15. **PUFFIN** Twin-screw wooden pilot launch. Yard No: 1324.  
O.N. 303861. 57g, 23n. 70.66 x 16.0 x 5.0ft.  
Engines: C8TLFM. 350 BHP. by Rolls Royce Motors Ltd., Shrewsbury.  
14.75 knots. Double diagonal timber hull.  
8.1961. Ordered by Mersey Docks & Harbour Board, Liverpool.  
19.6.1962: Launched  
1979: Sold to Pilot Roger Coombes.  
1984: Owned by W. King, Wirral.  
1996: Reported sunk by vandals at Connah's Quay, Deeside, North Wales.



*The launch of the MOUNTWOOD from the yard of Philip & Son, Dartmouth, on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1959*

**PHILIP & SON LTD.**  
**SHIPBUILDERS AND ENGINEERS**

The history and yard list of a fascinating West Country Shipyard  
*by Derek Blackhurst*

In **Philip & Son Ltd.** author Derek Blackhurst tells in detail the story of the Philip family who built up this West Country business, and its ups and downs in peace and war. All known completions by the yard are listed, with full career details for all but the minor craft. With a wealth of photographs this book is an important contribution to the maritime story of the West Country, and to British shipbuilding history.

A 160-page, A4 fully illustrated hardback.

*Special Price for L.N.R.S. Members £21 (including post and packing)*  
from: Mr D. Blackhurst, 1 Hamstone Court, Great Gates, Salcombe, Devon TQ8 8JY

## **BIBBY LINE - SHIPS AND MORE SHIPS**

*by Christina Spencer*

*Christina Spencer is the Archivist for Bibby Line Group. She spoke to the Liverpool Nautical Research Society in November 2001, the title of her talk being "A Story of Love, Murder, Deceit, Intrigue and Success : The History of the Bibby Line". This article is a précis of her presentation.*

Ever since it was founded, Bibby Line has always been located in Liverpool and still has its head offices there. It has successfully survived the many ups and downs of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries' shipping to lay claim to being one of the world's oldest shipping companies still in private ownership.

The Bibby Line was founded in 1807 by John Bibby. He was the fourth of the five sons of a farmer in Eccleston, near Ormskirk. As the family holding was not big enough to provide a living for all the sons, John had no hesitation in heading for the teeming and bustling town of Liverpool. He found his first job with an iron merchant but he wanted more from life and very much desired to be his own man.

In 1805 John Bibby married a young lady called Mary Mellard who brought into the marriage a quarter of her father's £10,000 fortune, a sum which helped John in setting up his shipping business. John Bibby's interest in ships began in 1801 when he acquired a share in a small 60-ton Dove, in partnership with his friend John Highfield, with whom he had formed a merchant business.

John and Mary had four sons and two daughters. Three of the four sons, Joseph, John and James joined their father's business. Thomas, the third son, went to St John's College, Cambridge, to take a BA and MA in theology.

At the beginning of the 19th century ship owning on its own was not an attractive proposition. Pirates, shipwrecks and dishonest masters were just a few of the risks taken by a ship owner. Sailing ships, at the mercy of the weather, could not sail to fixed schedules, and the lack of effective business communications meant that a vessel could wait for months in lay-up for repairs and re-equipment. The profits of a voyage came from the sale of the goods exported and the raw materials imported. In effect merchants often used their sailing ships as their own delivery and collection vehicles.

The first Bibby ships regularly sailed as post boats, amongst others, from Parkgate (Wirral) to Dublin. However, they were also soon trading to the Baltic and to South America. Apart from occasional voyages to some of the more exotic parts of the world, it was in the Mediterranean that the Bibby fleet began to establish its reputation.

By the mid 1830s the Bibby fleet consisted of some eighteen vessels mainly bound for Mediterranean ports, but also sailing for Bombay and even further east to Canton, the only Chinese port open to foreign trade until the end of the Opium War in 1841. The total tonnage of the Bibby fleet at that time was something like 5,500 tons. Not a lot by today's standard, but quite a respectable size for that time.

The ships carried varied cargoes, sailing from Liverpool with textiles, pottery and manufactured goods of every kind, including large quantities of machinery, copper, shot, beef, soap, cast iron wheels, glass cables and coils of rope and bringing back fruit and wine from the Mediterranean and Portugal, hides from South America, spices, silk and cotton from India, and from Demerara sugar, wood, coffee, cotton, molasses and rum. There is still an original bill of lading in existence, which has survived from 1836, for the **Mary Bibby**, named after the wife of the founder, and at 300 tons the largest vessel in the fleet at that time. The bill shows that the **Mary Bibby** brought back 3,462 packages of tea and 15 bales of silk. It also tells that it took three months to unload and load her again ready for her next voyage.

The first vessels in the fleet were small, varied and cheap. However, from 1812 Bibby started to acquire ships built specially for them. In 1820, for example, when George IV ascended to the throne, John Bibby marked the occasion with the launch of his latest vessel named after the new monarch.

John Bibby became a very prosperous man. He was a shareholder in the Royal Bank of Liverpool and also an extensive property owner. He possessed several houses and cottages, and a number of warehouses. But success always seems to run in 'peaks and troughs' and the Bibbys were no exception.

John's wife Mary had died whilst their children were still at school and he never remarried. Whilst John Bibby was at the height of his business success, tragedy struck on Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> July 1840. The following day at about 2pm a farmer named Henry Ambrose noticed a hat floating in a pond at Stand Park, a farm north of what is today Aintree Racecourse. On closer examination he saw that it was attached to the body of a man. He dragged the body out with a pitchfork and from a pocket book, the only item found on the body, discovered that it was John Bibby. The hat had been squashed down over John's head and there was a dent in the left side as if it had been struck with a stick. Otherwise the clothing was not disarranged nor dirty. The apparent murder was reported in all the local and national papers and an inquest established the cause of death as drowning while in a 'state of deep sleep'. John's relatives were convinced that there had been foul play and offered a reward of £500, and negotiated a Royal free pardon, but no one came forward. Police investigations eventually concluded that John Bibby had been robbed, knocked senseless and then carried to the pond where he was thrown in and drowned before he could regain consciousness.

John Bibby bequeathed to his sons a substantial shipping business with a flourishing Mediterranean trade. At his death his estate was valued at almost £25,000, a considerable sum in those days. Brothers John and James took over the management of the business and of the two it was James who took the greater interest in shipping.

James wanted to invest more in shipping, but John was very nervous about this and eventually withdrew altogether to concentrate on the yellow metal and copper business. James recognised that this was a period of change for the shipping world and for the Bibby fleet. Steam vessels had been around since 1812 and iron ships since 1819, but Lloyd's Register only recognised each type of vessel as being seaworthy in 1822 and 1837 respectively. In 1838 the screw propeller was introduced. James Bibby

was far sighted enough to recognise the virtues of iron steamers sooner than many of his competitors in Liverpool and by 1850 he had invested in several iron screw steamers. By 1856 the Bibby fleet consisted of thirteen steamers and five sailing ships. Regular services continued to the Mediterranean and Black Sea ports.

In 1859 the famous association began with what was to become the Belfast shipyard of Edward Harland, later Harland and Wolff. James Bibby became friendly with Edward Harland who advised him on technical aspects. This resulted in orders being placed for six steamers in 1860. Of Harland's first 21 ships, 18 were built for the Bibby fleet.

Whilst the ships delivered from Harland & Wolff became larger and longer, their motive power did not advance. The single stage expansion steam engines guzzled coal and needed large onboard bunkers at the expense of cargo. The more economical compound engine became available in the 1860s and most Bibby vessels were adapted to use it, and all new ships were fitted with it. When the Suez Canal opened in 1869 it rang the death knell of the sailing ship and confirmed the superiority of the steamer by substantially reducing voyage times to the East. The opening of the Canal had a significant impact on the operations of John Bibby, Sons & Company. Until 1871 the Post Office continued to send mail overland, but then the British Government acquired a substantial holding in the Canal. As a result P & O, who had held the government contract to carry mail to the East since 1842, built new steamers specifically to use the Canal and naturally no longer had any need of assistance from the Bibby fleet. Bibbys found themselves with a number of steamers which were too large for the reduced trade to Alexandria, and these vessels were transferred to an Atlantic service to Boston, USA.

This innovation was the suggestion of Frederick Leyland, the accountant for John Bibby, Sons & Company, who had become a partner in 1859. Leyland had started work as a clerk, aged 14, but he was undoubtedly a man of talent and James Bibby recognised this and gave him every power of attorney over the business when, in 1873, he retired to take up the life of a country gentleman. James' trust was severely betrayed when Leyland's ambitions outstripped his loyalty and he took down the Bibby nameplate and replaced it with his own. Whatever the truth of the story, Leyland acquired a majority shareholding in the firm, although James Bibby still retained a minority interest himself.

Shipping, however, runs in the veins of the Bibbys and in 1880, as steam became supreme and Liverpool had taken over from London as Britain's principal port, James Bibby re-entered the shipping scene with two new ships. By coincidence his nephew Arthur (son of Thomas Bibby, the clergyman) had fallen out with the other directors of the Beaver Line at this time, and had resigned from the board. Arthur was looking for another and more independent opportunity to become involved in shipping management. Both James and Arthur saw the vast potential in the Burma trade and in March 1888 Bibbys placed their first order with Harland and Wolff since 1870. Two steamers, the **Lancashire** (1889/3,870) and the **Yorkshire** (1889/3,870), were delivered as general cargo ships and two years later in 1890 were converted into

passenger ships for the Burma service. With these two vessels the tradition of naming Bibby vessels after English shire counties was started, and this still continues today. The one-class only passenger liners **Shropshire** (1891/5,721) and the **Cheshire** (1891/5,708) followed in 1891, and a further four ships were ordered from Harland and Wolff by 1897, these being troopships for the Burma service.

The **Lancashire** left Liverpool for Rangoon in July 1891 on the first of the Bibby Line's scheduled passenger and cargo services. Her four masts and tall, pink black-topped funnel, the insignia of the Bibby Line, became a familiar sight for successive generations. The **Lancashire** recorded the fastest passage to date to Rangoon at 23 days and 20 hours.

The Bibby Line took on with relish the existing operators on the Burma run. Bibby's superiority lay in their more modern steamers and soon the competition was feeling the strain from this. Services were also started to Colombo in Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Here the developing tea and rubber estates not only generated profitable cargoes, but also further opportunities for passenger traffic, since most of the estates were managed by Europeans. This, of course, ruffled the feathers of the lines already calling at Colombo, including P & O.

Bibby vessels regularly carried about 200 tons of rice from Rangoon to Colombo where it was discharged and replaced by tea. This double freight homewards was a welcome bonus. Lead, zinc, silver and other ores from the Burmese mines also began to fill the holds of Bibby steamers.

The passenger service was at first sluggish but soon the ships began to carry more and more passengers. The reliability of Bibby's twin screw steamers led the Government to approve them for colonial civil servants travelling to and from the East.

During the first few years of operation the Bibby Line schedules earned an enviable record for never having been interrupted by an accident. The reputation of every liner company depended upon its reliability and punctuality and a serious accident to one of the fleet could prove to be a major setback. As well as maintaining Bibby's reputation for a modern fleet, which was essential for retaining passengers, the delivery of the **Derbyshire** in 1897 at a cost of £130,000 allowed the company to have a spare vessel available. At the start of 1897 James Bibby died at the age of 84 leaving an estate valued at £1.8 million. He had poured £480,000 of his own money into the new shipping venture which bore his family name. It was a considerable act of faith but he knew that the Bibby Line was likely to be successful and he safeguarded the future of the Company in his will.

On the outbreak of the Boer War it was found that the Bibby liners were eminently suitable for use as troop transports as they had two decks above the water line for accommodating troops, one more than was usual, the reason being that the extra deck had been designed for storing tea. In October 1899 the **Yorkshire** became the first Bibby steamer to be chartered by the Government to carry troops to South Africa. She was soon followed by the **Cheshire**. Whilst trooping work interfered a good deal with Bibby's regular services, there was some regret when these lucrative contracts ended.

On the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the Bibby Line had seven well equipped steamers, five of which were ten years old or less. All of them were requisitioned by the Government. The **Oxfordshire** (1912/8,648), a general cargo ship, was the first British merchant ship to be requisitioned, two days before war was declared on 4<sup>th</sup> August. She was fitted out as a hospital ship and performed valuable service until 24<sup>th</sup> March 1918, carrying over 53,000 wounded, visiting 34 ports and sailing over 172,000 miles. The Admiralty praised her work in the Dardanelles campaign for embarking many sick and wounded from the Anzac beach.

The **Lancashire** (1914/9,542), **Worcestershire** (1904/7,170) and **Gloucestershire** (1910/8,124) became troop carriers or armed merchant cruisers during the War. The **Herefordshire**, built in 1905 for the Burma service, was converted into a hospital ship and served the forces of Salonika, Mesopotamia and East Africa until the end of 1917. By the end of World War I Bibby Line ships had carried 200,000 British and over 25,000 American troops. The only war loss was the **Worcestershire** which sank on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1917 with the loss of 12 lives after striking a mine outside Colombo.

In the inter-War years the Bibby Line operated cargo liners and cruise ships offering holiday voyages to such places as Egypt and Madeira.

The Second World War began with the immediate entry of the **Devonshire** (1939/11,275) into active service as a troopship. She was requisitioned by the Ministry of War Transport in August 1939 and left Southampton and did not return to the U.K. for four years.

The Bibby Line suffered two losses during the War, the more serious being the sinking of the **Yorkshire** on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1939. She was torpedoed by U.37 whilst in convoy off the French coast and sank in nine minutes with the loss of 33 passengers and 25 crew, including the captain.

The second loss was the **Shropshire**, (1926/10,550) which was renamed HMS **Salopian** (there was already a cruiser named **Shropshire**) and commissioned at Cammell Laird, Birkenhead, as an armed merchant cruiser. She was initially allocated to the Northern Patrol and escorted North Atlantic convoys. On 13<sup>th</sup> May 1941 HMS **Salopian** was torpedoed and sunk by U.98 off the coast of Greenland. Fortunately 278 survivors were picked up and saved.

Although only two ships were lost, several others became victims of enemy action. In April 1941 passengers and crew were lost during severe aerial bombardment of the **Staffordshire** (1929/10,654) as she was sailing off the Hebrides. The **Cheshire** (1927/10,550) was twice torpedoed, once in 1940 and again in 1942, but remained afloat. She too was later converted to become a troopship.

The **Devonshire** was the first Bibby vessel actually designed as a troop transport and was launched at the Fairfield yard in July 1939. She could carry 1,300 troops and 212 cabin-class passengers.

The **Worcestershire** (1931/11,453) was also torpedoed whilst part of a convoy in the North Atlantic, and the **Dorsetshire** (1920/7,450) and the **Somersetshire** (1921/7,450) were both bombed and torpedoed whilst serving as

hospital ships. The venerable **Oxfordshire** (1912/8,648), then the oldest ship in the fleet, repeated her World War I role as hospital ship and was based at Freetown, in the Far East and in the Mediterranean. She was finally sold out of the Bibby fleet in 1951 and was broken up in 1958.

The war status of the **Derbyshire** (1935/11,660) is slightly confused by the fact that she served in three different capacities during the war. On the outbreak of war she was converted to serve as an armed merchant cruiser and, like the **Worcestershire** and **HMS Salopian**, she was allocated initially to the Northern Patrol and also spent time escorting North Atlantic convoys. In 1942 a decision was made to return the **Derbyshire** to trade and merchant service, but in February 1943 she was converted to serve as a Landing Ship Infantry (Large). In this capacity the **Derbyshire** landed troops for Operation 'Husky', the Allied invasion of Sicily, and she also landed troops at Anzio. On 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1945 the **Derbyshire** became the first Allied vessel to enter Rangoon after the Japanese surrender. In November 1947 she returned to the Bibby Line Burma service.

At the D-Day landings, four of the Bibby fleet, the **Cheshire**, **Devonshire**, **Lancashire** and **Worcestershire**, all took part in taking troops from England to the Normandy beach-heads.

In 1952 the Government asked for another troopship, a new **Oxfordshire**, to be built for long-term charter. Full order books and delays encountered in British shipyards meant that she was not delivered until 1957. The new **Oxfordshire** was the largest and last of the Bibby troopships, the 'most modern troopship afloat', and at 20,000 tons gross, she was twice the size of any previous Bibby Line ship. However, the **Oxfordshire** was almost an anachronism by the time she entered Government service. Five years later, in 1962, with the end of National Service in sight, the Government terminated the trooping contract. Overseas transport became cheaper by plane, reaching destinations in hours rather than weeks. The **Oxfordshire** was sold to Sitmar for whom she sailed as the **Fairstar**.

Despite the problems caused by two World Wars, the Bibby Line had good Government contracts and survived relatively well. In the years following the Second World War business picked up until about 1970, when the Company hit a trough and found itself in extremely difficult and hard times.

There was a severe depression in the U.K. and shipping was not exempt from it. In 1970 the Bibby fleet consisted of twenty ships with a total tonnage of over one million deadweight. World trading conditions worsened and the freight market plummeted, as did the market value of the ships. Heavy losses were incurred and eventually the Company had to declare a moratorium. Many jobs had to be sacrificed and ships had to be sold. It was 'touch and go' for the Company as a whole. But thanks to Sir Derek Bibby's leadership the Company once again pulled through.

In September 1980 the Bibby Line suffered its most severe peacetime loss. The largest ship in the fleet, the 169,000 ton **Derbyshire** (formerly the **Liverpool Bridge**) was bound for Japan with iron-ore from Canada. The **Derbyshire** foundered during typhoon 'Orchid' on 9<sup>th</sup> September when approximately 230 miles south-east of

Okinawa with the loss of 44 crew members and two wives. A recent Government report following an independent inquiry into the circumstances of her loss totally and categorically vindicated the crew of any blame.

So much for the history of the Bibby Line. What sort of ships sail for the Company today? Alas, the Bibby Line has no more passenger liners or ships with the space to carry passengers. The ships are still called after the English shire counties but are now liquefied gas carriers and chemical parcel tankers. The Bibby Line still trains British cadets and, in a joint venture with Harrison Line, offers extensive marine services and ship management to the maritime community. The Bibby Line has three times been awarded the Queen's Award for Export Achievement. More recently, in 2001, the Company was awarded the Queen's Award for Enterprise.

The Bibby Line today is part of Bibby Line Group, a diversified company. As well as the marine business there is a contract logistic division, and an invoice factoring business. In fact they are one of the largest non-bank factors in the U.K.

The Bibby Line Group today is a major employer in Liverpool and will celebrate its 200th birthday in 2007. ||||

## EIGHT GUINEAS, FIRST CLASS, LIVERPOOL TO MARSEILLES

### **BIBBY LINE OF TWIN-SCREW MAIL STEAMERS**

**TO EGYPT, CEYLON, BURMAH, AND SOUTHERN INDIA**

*(Sailings Fortnightly, via Marseilles)*

Offers special facilities for passengers to and from

**SOUTH of FRANCE, the RIVIERA, ITALIAN LAKES,  
CORSICA, EGYPT, PALESTINE, etc.**

As the bulk of the Eastern passengers by this line embark and disembark at Marseilles, those desirous of the short trip (6½ days) between England and Marseilles are afforded very ample accommodation on these fine twin-screw vessels, at very moderate rates.

For such as desire a week at sea, with the most favourable surroundings, this has become a very favourite trip.

Passengers taking Return Tickets from Liverpool have the option of returning by any of the Bibby Line Steamers, or overland through Paris to London, first class; similarly passengers may proceed to Marseilles from London by rail, and return by sea.

**FIRST-CLASS FARE £8:8s. SINGLE; £15 RETURN.**

**MOTORS.**—Special arrangements are made for the Carriage of Motors, and these are now largely availed of by those visiting the South of France, Riviera, etc.

For all further information apply to

**Messrs. BIBBY BROS. & Co., 26 Chapel Street, Liverpool,  
or 10/11 Mincing Lane, London, E.C.**

*Thanks to L.N.R.S. Member Mr S. Kennedy of Hightown for submitting this  
Bibby Line advertisement from the 1920s.*

## THE LIVERPOOL PILOTAGE SERVICE IN 1966

*by Keith Taylor, Liverpool Pilot (retired)*

This article was first published in the Liverpool Post Office  
'Sports and Social' magazine in September, 1966.

*"Your true pilot cares nothing about anything on earth but the river.  
The pride in his occupation surpasses the pride of Kings"*

Mark Twain

Words spoken by the most famous pilot of all time.

Our own River Mersey also ranks among the most dangerous stretches of water, frequented by ships of the world in their many varying forms.

In 1766 the first Liverpool Pilotage Act was passed: *'For the better regulation of Pilots for the conducting of vessels into and out of the Port of Liverpool'*. Until 1766 the pilots had offered their services to Masters under a freelance system.

Service [in 1966] is provided by three pilot cutters, each of about 750 tons; two launches for high speed runs out to the Bar, and one small river launch.

The training of apprentice pilots plays an important part in the efficiency of the Liverpool Pilot Service. Scholastically, four GCE passes are required. Other essential qualifications apart from the scholastic standard are physical fitness, eyesight to the standard of the M.O.T. sight test, a swimming certificate and a high standard of mental alertness.

During his apprenticeship a potential pilot will be required to reach a set standard for his yearly examinations. All the examinations conducted by the Pilotage Authority will be oral, before an examination committee formed by senior pilots and hydrographical experts of the Port. Whilst serving as an apprentice, he starts on the long road to becoming a much respected figure in the maritime world and in the next five to seven years learns all the buoys, beacons, banks, wrecks, courses and tidal sets in the area extending from St Bees Head in Cumbria to Anglesey, and from the Isle of Man to Speke Perch in the River Mersey. In addition to this, the elementary and basic rules of ship handling are practised during his service on the cutters, launches and motor punts. Later, when the position of senior apprentice is reached, he will accompany pilots and take part in the navigation of the ships. This system is time proved as one of the best, if not the best, method of training a man to his responsibility in handling an unaccountable toll of tonnage and lives.

A typical day begins with the ringing of a telephone. I am required to join No.3 pilot cutter at Princes Landing Stage to sail for the Point Lynas Station which is off the north coast of Anglesey near Amlwch. Here I shall await the arrival of the ship I am to pilot. Life on a modern cutter is very comfortable. There is sleeping accommodation for 24 pilots, a dining saloon, television lounge and sun lounge. Time

is spent yarning round the table with my colleagues, playing cards, reading or viewing television. Incidentally, a lot can be and is learned during those yarns. Incidents experienced by the older men can be 'stored' by the youngster for future use if required. All pilots are individuals, but during one's life in the service a bond is formed professionally and socially with the rest of the pilots and their families.

Just after supper one of the apprentices informs me that contact has been made with my ship. A quick wash, shave and change from 'lounging' gear and I am ready to start work. There will be no sleep for me tonight. On going to the bridge of the cutter, I am told the vessel is called **Yamanashi Maru**, draft 27 feet, 10,000 tons and bound for Birkenhead.

A signal from the bridge and the apprentices lower the motor punt into the water; I jump into the boat and off we go. A fair breeze is blowing from the westward but these small punts handled with the skill and care of an apprentice coxswain are safe and dry. Alongside the ship there is a slight sea, making the punt move about quite a lot: not to worry, though, a quick leap and I am on the ladder.

After greeting the captain the ship is started on the last phase of her long voyage. A course is given to the helmsman, full speed ahead. My interest is aroused by this vessel as she is one of the very latest of her class of super-fast cargo ships, speed 23.6 knots, motor engines and every possible aid to navigation comprising of VHF radio, radar, automatic steering and echo sounder.

The run to the Bar lightship will take approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes, allowing for the flood tide pushing us along. During this time I do my best to put the captain at ease as to the docking of his ship. In general most deep sea captains have natural apprehension because it is fully realised that this is the most hazardous part of the voyage with all its attendant risks of localised volume of ships and strong tidal effects. At no other major port in the world is there so sharp a rise and fall in the tide. A spring tide in Liverpool can rise as much as nine feet in one hour. Plus the 40 miles of quays, locks and basins which has been nicknamed 'the rockery'.

On approaching the Bar lightship and the entrance to the main channel, speed is reduced from full sea speed to harbour or manoeuvring speed. This allows me to use the engines ahead or astern immediately as required. Direct contact is made on VHF radio with the dock master at the Alfred Locks. All the relevant information is supplied such as other vessels' movements, my docking time and the vessel's final berth, which in this case will be the West Float. By varying the ship's speed I can adjust my time of arrival off New Brighton to rendezvous with the tug which will assist in swinging the ship's head or bow to tide. This sounds simple, but it is a manoeuvre which requires every attention as the tug could easily be capsized or rammed.

With the tug made fast forward, we commence to swing the ship allowing for the effect of the tide pushing the ship up river. The combination of ahead and astern movements on the engine are used to swing the vessel in a limited space. In nautical language this is called 'turning short round'.

Tugs play a very important part in the work of ship handling and I use two methods of signalling my instructions to the tug captains. By pea-whistle to the bow

and assisting tugs and with the ship's whistle or siren to the stern or after tug. A code of long and short blasts indicates the direction in which to pull.

The **Yamanashi Maru** with her bow to tide is now in a position to start her final approach to the Alfred North Lock. Instructions are passed by telephone to the chief mate in charge of the bow mooring party as to the ropes I shall require him to use in the docking operation.

I nurse the ship slowly to the lock entrance, on an angled approach. No flood tide here, close to the river wall, so I give the engine an occasional turn astern to nullify the effect of the head tug pulling. Close in now, the head rope goes ashore and all the slack is hove in. Head tug signalled, pull bow to port; stern tug, pull to starboard. Slowly she straightens up with the lock slow ahead, steady the helm, and she sails down the middle of the lock and into the Alfred Basin. Here the ship is moored until the water level in the basin is adjusted to that of the dock system.

The next stage of the operation presents its own problems. Space in which to manoeuvre a ship some 500ft long plus tugs, approximately 800ft in all, is always at a premium, especially going through bridge passages. Tidal effect no longer occupies my mind; the direction and force of the wind, however, do receive my consideration regarding its effect on the ship.

A long blast on the head tug's whistle indicates the gates are opening and the bridge will be lifted. We can now proceed. All the ropes are let go and clear and the ship is carefully manoeuvred through the first of the passages. Every possible care is exercised to ensure that the ship does not touch or, as we say, 'land' on the wall. A ship's hull with all that weight behind it is no match for solid granite. Slowly we move through the Birkenhead dock system of the East and West Floats, clear the second passage at the Duke Street Bridge and with the tugs and myself ever watchful, the **Yamanashi Maru** is manoeuvred into her appointed berth. All fast fore and aft, tugs let go and clear, the engines room telegraph is rung to 'Finished with Engines'.

With the ship safe and sound in her berth a change of atmosphere is soon apparent on the bridge and the tension that has been with us for the last five hours dissipates. As a pilot a sense of achievement is felt in a 'job' completed. |||||



No.4 Liverpool Pilot cutter  
**William M. Clarke** was built  
in 1937 and lasted until 1961  
when she was sold to the  
Humber Pilotage Authority  
and renamed **Frank Atkinson**.  
She is seen here on station  
off Spurn Point at the  
mouth of the Humber.

## READERS' LETTERS

From L.N.R.S. Member Prof. R.H. Greenwood, of Swansea:

I enjoyed reading 'The Bulletin' (December, 2001) with the stirring stories of ss **Cheerful** and the demise of the formidable **Bismarck** - also the amazing affair of the theft of the **Ferret**.

May I add one postscript to the **Ferret** story. She was taken over in 1881 by the Spencer Gulf Steamship Company of South Australia who restored her original name of **Ferret**. This company was taken over by the Adelaide Steamship Company in 1882 and the **Ferret** lasted until 11<sup>th</sup> November 1920.

From L.N.R.S. Member James Cowden of Lower Heswall, Wirral:

I read with much interest the article 'A Purser's Clerk on the **Queen Elizabeth** in 1963' ('Bulletin Extra', January 2002). Whilst I myself only ever served on much smaller tonnage, the following points from the article caught my eye:

- No electric typewriters
- No calculators, etc etc.

An awful lot of people never did appreciate the amount of work that went into balancing a Portage Bill and preparing an Account of Wages, which included so much. However, I always felt quite proud when at the end of the voyage, when all the strings were pulled together, everything balanced! If you look at a 'check-out' in the likes of Tesco, they would laugh you out of town if you asked them to balance a Portage Bill! Such is progress.

It didn't go un-noticed the name 'Joe Beef' getting a mention at Montreal. I wonder how many ex-seafarers passed through the place. Memories of the halcyon days of British shipping!

I have finally completed an addendum to the Elder Dempster Fleet History, about which I still receive correspondence. It all keeps me occupied!

Many thanks for another excellent 'Bulletin'.

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

I thought you might like the following to add to the **Victory** story ('The Bulletin', December, 2001):

From the 'United States Journal', February, 1841:

The first paddle wheels of the 'oblique' type patented by a Mr Robertson of Liverpool were fitted to p.s. **Victory** in 1828. Sir John Ross remarked, in the advertisement to the second edition of his Steam Navigation, 1837, that: '*on her passage from Liverpool to London, notwithstanding the vessel was loaded, so as to bring the axle of the wheel within one foot of the water-line, she actually gained on her sister ship the **Harriet**, which used formerly to beat her; and she [the **Victory**] performed the voyage in less than four days, including her detention in several places. The floats of these wheels being diagonal, or fitted to the frame, at an angle of 45 degrees, enter the water without the splash which a vertical float makes; and both, on entering and rising,*

*throw off the water instead of compressing and lifting it; and by immersing them to such a depth that they cannot be rolled out by any motion of the vessel, without any loss of power, makes the action of the engine more steady, while by meeting with more resistance at its deepest point of revolution, must have the effect of propelling the ship faster.'*

From Francis Kitts, of Great Lever, Bolton, Lancashire:

It is now about twelve hours since the 'Bulletin Extra' came through the letterbox, giving me time to engross myself in forty-nine pages of sheer excellence! I was particularly fascinated by the article 'A Purser's Clerk on the *Queen Elizabeth*'; especially as it runs parallel with 'Queen Mary - her early years recalled' by C.W.R. Winter, one of her junior electrician officers. This was published in 1986 by Patrick Stephens of Wellingborough.

I note the reference to Ray Baines, the *Queen Elizabeth*'s organist. In 1945, when I was a theatre organist, Ray Baines was a serious looking, thin faced lad with a bit of a wave in his hair. He was pianist to Kitty Masters on several of her tours, studied the organ under the fabulous Sid Torch and was employed by Union Cinemas, Gaumont British etc; also doing regular BBC broadcasts.

My only proxy connection with Atlantic liners was that my MD for three years was Florence de Jong (Auntie Florrie to you!) who was organist on the maiden voyage of the *Queen Mary* and who, in a symbolic sentimental gesture, accepted Cunard's invitation to be organist on the ship's final voyage.

From L.N.R.S. Member Mr G.C. Read of Meols, Wirral

I am writing to compliment you on the accuracy of 'A Purser's Clerk on the *Queen Elizabeth*' ['Bulletin Extra', January, 2002]. I went through all that in 1949. I don't remember the passengers getting shore leave at Cherbourg - I thought the stay was too short. I did not know that Ralph Jones [Crew Purser - *Queen Elizabeth* in 1963] had been on the *Lancastria*, but there was a Purser E.G. Thomas who was on her and he was reputed to have saved one of the bell boys by dragging him through a porthole. Keep up the good work - I enjoy 'The Bulletin'.

### **THE MONDAY FACILITY**

Members' access to the Archives and Library at the Merseyside Maritime  
on Mondays continues in 2002 as follows:

MARCH : Mondays 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th

APRIL : Mondays 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th

MAY : Mondays 13th, 20th and 27th

JUNE : Mondays 10th, 17th and 24th

JULY : Mondays 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th

## INVERNESS STEAMER 'BEN-MY-CHREE'

*L.N.R.S. Member Alistair Deayton has sent the following information about the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's **Ben-my-Chree** (1) of 1845:*

I recently acquired a bundle of old newspapers and the *Aberdeen Herald* for Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> May 1860 has an advert quoting:

**BEN-MY-CHREE** from Granton every Friday morning and from Aberdeen Friday evening for Cullen, Lossiemouth, Burghead, Nairn, Cromarty, Invergordon, Chanory Point (Fort George) to arrive Inverness Saturday afternoon.

Returning from Inverness every Monday afternoon and Invergordon every Tuesday morning at 06.00, calling off the above ports.

*Master: Captain Macdermaid*

*Granton Agent: Geo. Mathieson*

*The **Ben-my-Chree** (1) was launched for the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company by Robert Napier at Glasgow on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1845. She was given the engines of an earlier Manx steamer, the **Queen of the Isle**.*

*The 'Ben' remained with the IOMSPCo until 1860.*

*The numerous histories of the IOMSPCo make no mention of this interlude on the Moray Firth.*

*The **Ben-my-Chree** was certainly sold later in 1860 for further trading in West Africa, and as late as 1930 she was reported to be lying as a hulk in the Bonny River.*



The **Ben-my-Chree** (1) of 1845 in Douglas Bay

## STEAM PACKET MEMORIES

*From 1927 the passenger steamers of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company were equipped with powerful triple chime whistles. To Francis Kitts it was*

### MUSIC TO MY EARS

A recent bungle with railway information caused me to be very early in arriving at the Isle of Man Sea Terminal at Liverpool Landing Stage. I was early; the boat was late. I nodded off in sheer ennui; my mind going back some sixty-six years to my first voyage to the Island.

It was full tide, all those years ago, and I walked up the connecting bridge to the landing stage to find, moored thereto, an exquisite and white-gowned muse of a princess, with a Steam Packet red funnel crowned with the most elegant tiara. Perhaps more an Ascot hat!

Mesmerised by this poetic steel apparition, I boarded her, my parents guiding me to the forward lounge. I explored everywhere in fascination, till suddenly this fair lady gave voice! It was a shattering and prompt three-note trumpet chord which could have, in biblical times, demolished the Walls of Jericho! It could give heart failure even to anyone down in the toilets on the main deck. It certainly scared me a little. But from then on I was in love with this wonderful ship, the **Ben-my-Chree** (4) of 1927, and I started an obsessive investigative interest in triple chimes, which possibly led to my subsequent adult vocation as an organ builder.

Now triple chimes are not important enough to get a mention in *The Oxford Companion to Ships and The Sea*. Theoretically, I suppose they were to give a craft a signature tune, though ringing the changes on but three notes quickly runs out of individual permutations. The *Titanic* always seems to be portrayed as having a triple chime whistle on each of her four funnels.

The purpose of a device incorporating three whistles is not quite clear. As rarely do all three 'speak' instantaneously, could it be a fail-safe ploy by the shipyard?

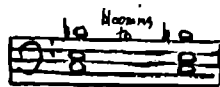
Without going technical, it has long been a truism that a major third interval in music, say C to E, is a sweet sound to the ear. A minor third, say C to D# (organ builders are not allowed to say D flat), has the hint of gloom.

Around 1950 when I lived in Douglas, Isle of Man, I wrote to Mr Arthur J. Fick, the general manager of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company, offering as an organ builder to 'revoice' the triple chimes of the Manx steamers to make them 'speak' as they were intended. The whistles could easily be regulated at the Willet & Bruce steam control box near the base of each funnel. Mr Fick wrote me a stern letter, saying that: "*these devices are not there for aesthetic purposes, but to tell other ships to get out of the way*"!

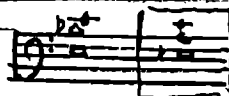
The first triple chime to be fitted to a Manx steamer was installed by Cammell Laird on the **Ben-my-Chree** of 1927. It was perhaps the most powerful and crisp of all the ships based at Douglas, sounding the notes Tenor F, Tenor B and

Quotes from my recognition book of 1950

Lady The deep, notes of the following intervals



Ben Three notes. Prompt speech. No bloom



High winds sometimes, from a distance, make the "Squared" intervals resultant

King Orry Distinguished aurally from Mona's Queen by triple chime sounding a flattened fourth between two of the notes, plus a high pitched resultant note. (Overblowing ?)

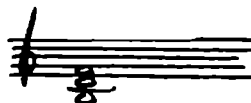
Mona's Queen Distinguished from King Orry by triple chime sound the following intervals. Lowest note taking considerable time to bloom



Tynwald Eerie sound of triple chime, caused by a perfect fifth slightly underblown and a twelfth interval possibly resultant



Snaefell Merseyside "howl" sound the intervals

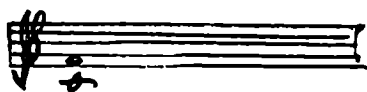


the notes blooming, one after the other in this order



Viking

Having only one single organ whistle mounted forward of first funnel, the duple chime must be achieved by sounding the second organ whistle (on after face of funnel) simultaneously. Perfect fourth of unmistakable string tone. Not very loud. Speaks promptly, then loses power, and takes a while to rebloom



Middle C#. Tenor F, being a sub-third to Middle C#, gives the inherent sweetness, while the Tenor B adds an authoritative dissonance. This chord could be heard all over Merseyside.

Then, in 1930, the centenary **Lady of Mann** from Vickers Armstrong's Barrow yard came on station with another triple chime, sounding Tenor C, Tenor E and Tenor A# blooming to Tenor B. This was a deeper sound than that of the *Ben*. In place of the *Ben*'s sweeter and higher chord was a chronic huffing and puffing, slow blooming, protest. At least the two sets of chimes were different. On the retirement of the *Lady* in 1971 to her Dalmuir graveyard, her triple chime was acquired by the Bass Brewery at Runcorn to sound on in an industrial capacity.

After the War, the **King Orry** and **Mona's Queen** (1946) both had triple chimes of confused intervals containing hard and dissonant 4ths, and in 1947 the **Tynwald's** triple chime had a 5th content which at least made her different. In 1948 came the **Snaefell**, whose triple chime foibles made her instantly recognisable: she sounded, in this order, Middle D, then Middle F, then Tenor B, and a further tug on the whistle lanyard made them sound simultaneously. Distinctive, but eerie, as the chord contained two Minor thirds.

We now come to the **Manxman** (1955), that poor burnt out hulk which is periodically dragged round the coast to various haunts as was Mussolini's torso after the War, with bits dropping off everywhere. A sad fate for a once proud ship. Hers was a sweet triple chime, sounding Tenor G, Middle C and Middle E, C to E being the major third sweet interval.

And what do we have nowadays? Single note metallic burps!!!



The **King Orry** (4) of 1946 blows her powerful triple chime whistle as she approaches Liverpool Landing Stage



## THE CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Maritime Archives and Library,  
Merseyside Maritime Museum.

1<sup>st</sup> March, 2002

Dear Members,

By the time the next edition of *'The Bulletin'* is published I shall have relinquished my position as Chairman of the Society as my three-year term of office comes to an end at the Annual General Meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> May. Therefore this is my last opportunity to write to you in *'The Bulletin'* as Chairman.

It is inevitable that in writing this letter I shall want to look back over the last three years and to review how the Society has progressed during that time. In doing so I certainly do not attempt to seek any credit for myself, for it is the Council and the Membership which make the Society tick. I simply felt that as Chairman my role was to bring people together.

For me the most encouraging thing about the last three years has been the number of Members attending the monthly meetings, and the general atmosphere at those meetings which says much for the quality of the speakers and the general interests and friendship amongst the membership. The numbers attending our meetings continue to grow, swelled to some extent by visitors, which is also very encouraging. The increase in the membership of the Society in general can only illustrate its success and the importance of its aims.

Due to the generosity of Members of the Society, the L.N.R.S. Award was launched last month with the aim of encouraging interest in nautical research and particularly involving the younger generation. To this end we have enlisted the help of the teaching faculties in the places of learning in the north west of England.

During the last three years the Society was represented at five local history and culture exhibitions; took part in three radio programmes on nautical history; published thirteen editions of *'The Bulletin'*, and two editions of *'Bulletin Extra'*.

I am very much encouraged by the continued expanding use of 'The Monday Facility' at the Archives and Library at the Maritime Museum and to the amount of assistance provided to Members and non-members by our Research Team.

And so it goes on. I could add much more but this letter is beginning to read like an annual report. I just want to finish by saying that it has been an honour and a pleasure to be Chairman of the Liverpool Nautical Research Society.

Yours sincerely,

Captain M.D.R. Jones,  
Chairman,

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society.

## BOOK REVIEW

### THE DECLINE AND REVIVAL OF THE BRITISH PASSENGER FLEET

*by Nick Robins*

In 1960 there were 115 British registered ships with berths for 50 or more passengers. These ranged from the mighty Cunard liners which maintained the North Atlantic ferry routes, to the diminutive **Mombasa** which operated the British India Line's East African coastal services. Britain was at the centre of a web of passenger routes.

This fleet rapidly halved in numbers over the next ten years. By 1980 there were only 13 British registered passenger or cruise ships. There were many reasons for this decline, not least the arrival of the jet airliner, but rising fuel costs, the onset of containerised cargo handling and industrial unrest also contributed. In 2001 there were 16 ocean-going British passenger ships, numbers boosted in 2000 by the transfer of most of the Princess Cruises fleet from Liberian registry to the British register.

This book traces the demise and modest revival of the British fleet between 1960 and 2000, within its proper historical context. It records the career highlights of each of the ships and describes the features characteristic of each vessel and its owners. The book describes how the 'baronial hall' type of internal décor aboard the old **Reina del Pacifico** was displaced in the 1930s with the arrival of the Orient Line's **Orion** with her spacious, light and airy public rooms. The subsequent need to replace the war-torn fleet then put design and innovation to one side until the **Southern Cross**, the **Oriana** and the **Canberra** were conceived.

Nick Robins reminds us that even in the late 1950s the boardroom tended to view air travel as a fad. In 1959, 1.5million passengers crossed the North Atlantic by air, and only 0.9 million crossed by sea.

I found the text extremely accurate: at just one point, when describing Canadian Pacific, have the 'gremlins' got in. Canadian Pacific began passenger operations between Canada and Liverpool with the **Empress of Britain** and the **Empress of Ireland** in 1906, and *not* 1914. The **Empress of France** remained in service until her final voyage from Quebec to Liverpool in November 1960, and *not* 1957 (see photo on opposite page).

**The Decline and Revival of the British Passenger Fleet** is a 'must' for the library of any ocean liner enthusiast. Within its 160 pages there is a wealth of information and the book is profusely illustrated with excellent black and white photographs. At £14.99 it represents extremely good value for money.

*J.S.*

### **THE DECLINE AND REVIVAL OF THE BRITISH PASSENGER FLEET**

ISBN 1-898392-69-2 Nick Robins

Published by Colourpoint Books, Unit D5, Ards Business Centre, Jubilee Road,  
Newtownards, County Down, N.I. BT23 4YH Price £14.99 STG.



The **Empress of France** in the Gladstone Graving Dock, Liverpool, in January 1960 being overhauled for her final year on the Liverpool to Montreal service.

*(photo: John Shepherd)*

## AND FINALLY.....

### ENTHUSIASTS IN HUNT FOR GLEN LINE VETERAN TO SERVE IN NEW ROLE AS MEMORIAL TO THE 'HALCYON DAYS' OF THE BRITISH SHIPPING INDUSTRY

*(from the NUMAST 'Telegraph', submitted by Alan McClelland)*

The search is on to find the **Glenfalloch**, a 1962 veteran of Blue Funnel Glen Line and one of the few remaining ships designed by naval architect Harry Flett.

After she was sold out of the Glen Line fleet, the 11,918grt vessel was renamed **Qing He Cheng** and may have been scrapped. But, if she's still in existence a group of enthusiasts is anxious to bring her back to the U.K. and restore her.

Des Cox is coming up with the money to buy the ship and has been promised a berth by the Port of London Authority to display the **Glenfalloch**. "*There is tremendous interest worldwide in this type of vessel, so we decided we should try and find one still in service,*" he said. "*The ships built for Blue Funnel were the best-built of all.*"

Mr Cox has entrusted Glen Line veteran John Stanford Taylor with the task of finding the ship, but after three years of searching and many false leads, the **Glenfalloch's** whereabouts remains a mystery. A 'sighting' was received as recently as last month, but opinions vary as to whether it was the **Glenfalloch** or her sister ship **Glenogle**.

It is felt that the **Glenogle** was almost certainly scrapped, but the **Glenfalloch** may have escaped to become a training ship. It is, however, difficult to get reliable information out of China.

Whilst other countries - notably the U.S.A. and Canada, have preserved vessels from the 1960s era, the U.K. has nothing. Malcolm McLeman, a former radio officer with Blue Funnel, says: "*We have historic ships, but nothing from people's own lifetimes. We need something from the halcyon days of the British Merchant Navy in the 1950s or 1960s.*"

#### **IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF 'THE BULLETIN'**

The June 2002 issue will continue the story of the **Hood** and the **Bismarck** with an account of the finding of the wreck of the **Bismarck**. The lead article will be '*The Introduction of Steam Pilot Boats at Liverpool*' by Gordon Bodey, and in the *Steam Packet Memories* feature, Ron Evans will describe the differences in appearance in the Manx post-war passenger fleet. There will be a full account of Denis Griffiths' talk to the Society on Brunel's ships.

Because the Editor and the Secretary will be away in early June, it is anticipated '*The Bulletin*' will be sent out to Members towards the end of May.

The Subscription Reminders for the year 1<sup>st</sup> May 2002 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2003 will also be included with your copy of '*The Bulletin*'!

*J.S.*