The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

(Founded in 1938)

THE BULLETIN

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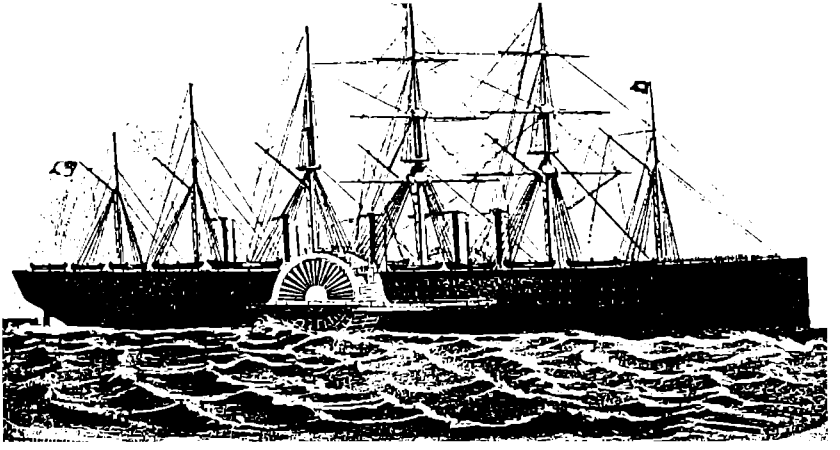
Editor : John Shepherd



The Cunard Liner **Sylvania** in Canadian Vickers' floating dock at Montreal in July 1967. The **Sylvania** ran aground whilst on passage from Montreal to

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

Membership and General Correspondence:
The Liverpool Nautical Research Society.
Maritime Archives and Library,
Merseyside Maritime Museum,
Albert Dock,
LIVERPOOL, L3 4AA, U.K.

'Bulletin' related matters:
John Shepherd,
Flat 7, "Mount Court",
Mount Road,
WALLASEY, CH45 9JS, U.K.

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

Front Cover:
Brunel's **Great Eastern** was laid down at Millwall on 1st May 1854 and was ready for launching on 3rd November 1857. This 'white elephant' broke only one record in her career: during the whole of her existence she remained by far the largest ship in the world. The **Great Eastern** was broken up on the beach at New Ferry, Birkenhead, between 1889 and 1891.

OBITUARY

PHILIP JOHN HOLT TEBAY

1928 - 2002

In May 1996, I, as a rather apprehensive, newly-elected incumbent, had just accepted the Chairmanship of the Liverpool Nautical Research Society (L.N.R.S.), a singular honour. My first question, containing only a mild trace of panic, was: *"What do I do now?"* The response came promptly from John Tebay, the well-respected Hon. Secretary of our Society: *"Thank the members for their confidence, and promise to serve the Society to the best of your ability."* I gathered my scattered wits and did just that - with, I hope, conviction. Thereafter I never looked back, for John was always on hand to offer guidance and advice whenever doubts or problems arose.

For that was the essence of John's philosophy: Pilot and guide to shipmasters on the Mersey; friend and guide to all with whom he came in contact in other walks of life.

Born in Wallasey in 1928, John Tebay completed his formal education at Wallasey Grammar School in 1944. It had always been his desire "to go down to the sea in ships", and not even the tragic loss of his Pilot father in the wreck of No.1 Pilot Boat **Charles Livingston** on Ainsdale Beach in November 1939 could deflect him from his purpose. So John joined the Liverpool Pilot Service, obtaining his sea-going experience with Alfred Holt. His professional career embraced many facets. First licensed in 1952, he became a First Class Pilot in 1956. Shortly afterwards his expertise was sought by Esso Tankers Ltd., and he became their choice Pilot, bringing deep-laden supertankers up the Mersey to berth at the Tranmere Jetties. Another prestigious appointment was as Pilot to the Royal Yacht **Britannia** when Her Majesty the Queen visited Liverpool in the 1980s. John's talents, however, were not confined to navigation and ship-handling, impressive though they were. A skilful administrator and negotiator, he was, for many years, Chairman of the Liverpool Pilots' Association and their representative on the Pilotage Committee. From 1974, he was Chairman of the National Pilots' Technical Sub-Committee, and was appointed United Kingdom representative on the Department of Trade's delegation to the European Maritime Pilots' Association, which visited all major European ports over a period of twelve years. For his work in this field John was awarded the E.M.P.A. Gold Medal.

John applied to join the L.N.R.S. soon after his retirement in 1988. He was at once made welcome, for his reputation had forestalled his application! It so happened that the post of Secretary became vacant a year or so later and John was invited to fill the void. To the members he was the obvious choice; to John, the new boy, it was a

complete surprise, but he accepted nonetheless, and proceeded to perform his duties with diligence and distinction.

One of his earliest self-imposed tasks was to create a detailed list off all Liverpool Pilots since the mid-18th Century to 1991 - a sort of Pilots' *'Who's Who'*. The list comprises over 1,500 names and was compiled from records held by the Pilotage Authority and the Merseyside Maritime Museum. It took several years in the making and is now a standard work of reference, a fitting memorial to John and his long-standing devotion to his colleagues.

John wrote many well-researched articles for various specialised publications, including our own *Bulletin*, and the papers he read occasionally at our monthly meetings were always eagerly anticipated and well attended. It was no coincidence that the Society's membership doubled during his tenure.

Word of the affliction which struck John down came as a shock to everybody, and our hearts went out to June, his wife, and to his children. News of his death a week or two later on 24th April 2002 simply added to our grief and to our growing sense of bewilderment. Certainly, John, and his rare brand of amiable affability, will be missed, and we shall all lament his passing. But life must continue, and (in the words of Alfred, Lord Tennyson) ....

"..... the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still."

But to those whose privilege it was to know and work with John, and whose delight it is to recall his memory, the pleasure and sheer satisfaction inspired by that privilege far exceeds the pain of his passing. John has gone, but his work lives on.

G.C., May, 2002.

HOUND OF THE SEA

by John Tebay

John Tebay regularly contributed to 'The Bulletin'. In this article, written in 1998, he recalls his experiences as Pilot of the Boeing Jetfoil ***Cú na Mara****, the Mersey's first fast craft, introduced on the Liverpool to Dublin route in 1980.*

On 13th February 1980 a Boeing Jetfoil, to be named **Cú na Mara** (Hound of the Sea), arrived in Gladstone Dock on the deck of the **Antonia Johnson**. Built in

Seattle, and intended for the B. & I. Line, she was to carry 250 passengers on a 3¼ hour passage between Liverpool and Dublin at approximately 45 knots.

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

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

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

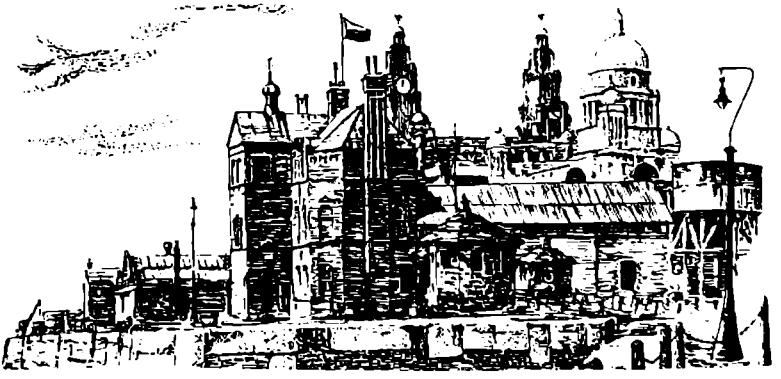
In the third week of February 1980 the Mersey trials and training began. If the **Cú na Mara** was in Liverpool she would be berthed in the Waterloo system. Joining time for those required was around 07.30 and we would be in the river by 08.30. With

Langton abeam she would be up on the foils and passing the Rock at 43 knots through the water. Initially at this speed it took some time in adjusting as to how quickly we closed with other vessels. The same applied for the other port users! The **Cú na Mara** seldom needed more than 5 degrees of helm for course alterations, and Crosby Bend could be made on a continuous gentle swing. When overtaking on Crosby Bend one had to be careful not to swing wide as at 70 feet per second, the jetfoil could readily be over towards the inward side of the channel. It has to be remembered that, apart from some naval vessels or specialised small craft, few if any port users had experience of a speed more than three times the average, especially in a winding channel. Whilst in an emergency the **Cú na Mara** could come off the foils and thereby bring up very quickly (actually five seconds from full speed), she would then need a clear straight stretch to take off again.

Apart from the River and Bar Lightfloat shake-down trips, the runs to Dublin also started in February 1980. As it was neither practical nor desirable to discharge (or pick up) a pilot at Liverpool Bar, I would carry on for the passage to Dublin, and then make the return trip. In good weather it was quite a novelty to be passing the Lynas pilot station in a little over seventy minutes after leaving the stage! With reasonable weather the trip was a pleasure, but if the sea and swell started to increase beyond 4 - 5 feet, it became less comfortable. Whilst not rolling or pitching, there would be an element of slamming or jerkiness, and as the tops of the seas hit the bottom of the exposed hull it made an unsettling noise. An operating limit of 10 feet (3 metres) wave height had been imposed. On one trip from Dublin something went wrong and we started to 'porpoise' - that was not at all pleasant and we had to 'land' whilst the fault was rectified. Fortunately the passenger seats had seatbelts. On the humorous side was the astonishment registered by seagulls as they made their customary 'laid-back' take off from near the bows, and then suddenly realised they weren't going to make it!

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

John Tebay, March, 1998.



INTRODUCTION OF STEAM PILOT BOATS AT LIVERPOOL

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

Introduction

The first steam-propelled vessel seen on the River Mersey is not known with certainty, but an item in the *Liverpool Mercury* of 19th May 1815 read:

"We understand that an Iron Boat is now constructing for our River to be navigated by steam; it is intended to ply between Liverpool and Runcorn."

A report of the vessel's arrival in the Mersey appeared in the above paper[1] for Friday 30th June 1815, and also in the *Courier*, but it did not actually name the vessel (the event was overshadowed by the Battle of Waterloo twelve days previously and had very minor novelty interest by comparison). In a paper by A.C. Wardle (a founder member of the L.N.R.S.) read to the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire on 25th April 1940, the vessel is named as the **Elizabeth** (given as built by John Wood of Port Glasgow in 1812).

Mr Wardle also quoted the relevant diary entries of the man responsible for her coming to Liverpool (Lt. Colin Watson - stationed in Liverpool with the East Yorkshire Militia), who believed there was a bright future for such vessels, and these entries are worth re-quoting here:

"Friday, 2nd June. Left Clyde and brought up in Lamlash, Isle of Arran. Dreadful storm all night.

"Saturday, 3rd. Still in Lamlash.

"Sunday, 4th. Left about 1 o'clock, and after undergoing great peril reached Port Patrick the same night 12 o'clock. Detained here by accident but principally by want of money till Saturday 24th., when we left Port Patrick and were obliged to bring up in Ramsey Bay, Isle of Man, an accident throwing off one of our paddles. We were detained there (here I drew on Mr W. Kipack in the name of the Company by £6-6-0).

"Tuesday, 27th. Left the Isle of Man with a fine breeze, day lovely; but after working hard all of it and the night, we found on the morning of Wednesday 28th, we had been deceived by our compass and were off the coast of Wales. Again unshipped our paddles and drifted nearly to Dublin ere we could get back to work but luckily did effect that and anchored off George's Dock Pier, Liverpool ....."

Lt. Colin Watson was assisted in this adventure by one Hargrave, a naval officer relative, and by a boy, also named Watson.

[1] *Liverpool Mercury*, Friday 30th June, 1815:
LIVERPOOL STEAM BOAT *"On Wednesday last, about noon, the public curiosity was greatly excited by the first Steam Boat ever seen in our river. She came from the Clyde, and in her passage called at Ramsey, in the Isle of Man, which place she left early on the same morning. We believe that she is intended to ply between this port and Runcorn, or even occasionally as far as Warrington. Her cabin will contain about one hundred passengers."*

Mr Wardle's paper also mentions a report of a steam barge named **Pluto** working on the Mersey in 1813.

However, what is known with certainty is that two paddle steamers - the **Duke of Wellington** (59grt) and the **Prince Regent** (58grt) - were built at Runcorn in 1816, and that by 1829, when the Dock Board's first recorded interest in the new method of propulsion for the Liverpool Pilot Service boats is noted, there had been 44 such vessels registered to Liverpool owners. Of these vessels, 41 had been built on the Dee or the Mersey and the Dock Board was aware that it was perceived in some quarters as not keeping up with the trend of progress.

The Early Interest

The first noted declaration by the Pilotage Committee of an interest in acquiring a steam-driven pilot boat was recorded at the Pilotage Committee meeting of 9th December 1829 and stated:

'The Committee beg strongly to recommend to the consideration of the Pilots the great advantage to the service from having a Steam Boat attached to the Establishment in order to aid them in the more prompt & quick discharge of their duties. This consideration is forced upon the Committee in consequence of the very great reduction in the number of active & efficient Pilots & the great complaints of the public of there not being sufficient number of pilots for the wants of the increased trade of the Port.'

At this time there were 120 pilots and 32 apprentices.

This perceived need for a faster, less weather-dependent, means of providing a pilotage service due to the rapidly growing trade of the port and the shortage of qualified pilots was in marked contrast to that of only nine years previously when, at the Pilotage Committee meeting of 12th December 1820, a complaint from the Journeymen Pilots regarding *'the great increase in the number of Pilots and praying that no more than four apprentices be allowed into each boat'*, was discussed. The strength then consisted of 138 licensed pilots and 31 apprentices licensed for pilotage duties (after three years in the Service an apprentice could qualify for a licence, but even if granted he remained an apprentice until the end of his seven-year indenture period); in 1814 there were 98 and 44 respectively. There were also, in 1820, twenty-four non-licensed apprentices; each pilot boat carrying a total of five apprentices. As most of the pilots in the Service in 1820 were relatively young it was considered that to continue with the above number of apprentices would result in overstaffing and thus in a lowered standard of livelihood for all. The Committee accepted the argument and ordered that after the number of apprentices per boat had reduced to four, no greater number was to be allowed thereafter. It also said that of the four apprentices per boat, no more than two were to be licensed to act as pilots at any one time.

At a subsequent meeting of the Committee on 2nd February 1830, when the substance of the 9th December 1829 declaration was reiterated, it was Resolved:

'That in order to render such boat efficient & advantageous she should be held as a joint stock company by all the Pilots of the Port. That a meeting of the Pilot Committee be held at a time to be fixed on, when they will explain to the Pilots their views as to the manner in which the Steam Boat shall be applied for their general advantage, when the whole of the Pilots shall be invited to attend, either to assent to or dissent from the proposed plan & if agreed to by the majority of the Pilots that they will become Subscribers to the proposed Boat.'

It was also then said that in the first instance it was proposed to hire a boat *'the wish of the Committee being only for pursuing the plan further on the condition of it being found useful & advantageous.'*

Whether due to lack of interest (or direct opposition) on the part of the pilots, or possibly second thoughts on the part of the Pilotage Committee, further discussion of the experiment was not recorded in its Minutes until 5th December 1833. On that date it was resolved by the Committee to recommend to the pilots to apply 10% of the gross receipts of the Pilotage Service either to the building or the purchase of a steam boat, and for an annual percentage to be levied for the running expenses of the boat; any surplus to be pooled with the net earnings and divided as then practised.

This proposal must have been given short shrift by the pilots, leading to the Committee at its meeting on 17th December 1833, Ordering:

'That the Pilots forthwith get a document signed pledging themselves to carry into effect the order of the Committee made on the 5th December relative to the contemplated Steam Boat.'

The directive appears to have been ignored by the pilots and discussion of the matter lapsed until at a meeting on 1st May 1834, and in a more conciliatory tone, the Committee resolved:

'That the Pilot Committee have determined to have a steam boat employed in the Pilot Service, and they request that such pilots as are inclined to take an interest in the said boat, will register their names within fourteen days from this day - and that such arrangements shall be made to render the Steam Boat profitable to the Owners and that the money necessary for the purpose be raised in the way stated in the Resolution of the Committee on the 5th December 1833.

'The Committee direct that a copy of the above Resolution be sent to each Pilot Boat, to be put up in the Cabin, that all the Pilots may have an opportunity of registering their name for the shares they wish to take.'

Another sixty-two years were to elapse before steam propulsion was implemented in the Liverpool Pilotage Service.

The Transition

By 1895/96 a number of factors were taxing the minds of the Dock Board regarding its ability to maintain an adequate Pilotage Service, the following being the principal ones:

- the depleted strength of its Pilotage fleet. (Previous to 1883 the pilot boats had been privately owned, but on 8th February 1883 ownership of all the boats passed to the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board [MD&HB] - acceptable compensation for the owners having been agreed).
- the decrepit state of some of the boats which were in everyday service.
- the increased dangers posed to sailing pilot boats and their crews from the great numbers of steamers now coming up to the port of Liverpool.
- the vast number of vessels now entering and leaving the port each year.
- the manner in which pilotage fees were disbursed among the pilots.
- the increasing barrage of criticism being levelled by press and public alike

  and, not least,
- the belief that winter weather conditions were set to become more severe.

These points will now be considered in turn:

In January 1895 the pilotage fleet comprised only eight vessels. Twenty-five years previously a total of eleven boats were in service, and as long ago as 1820 there had also been a fleet of eleven vessels in commission. No new additions to the fleet were being considered (publicly) as will be seen below.

At this time only one boat, the schooner **George Holt** (boat No.10 - built 1892) was less than 30 years old and three were 40 years or more old. The state of most of the boats in service, in the context of the often extreme conditions in which they operated for long periods, was at best below standard and in some cases lamentable. There was no regular programme of maintenance with boats only being dry-docked for necessary repairs after repeated complaints regarding their seaworthiness.

A case in point was No.7 boat, the **Lancashire Witch**, which was 33 years old. Complaints about leaks were frequent and culminated in the Pilotage Superintendent stating in a report of 28th December 1895 that she was leaking under the port quarter above the copper and needed to be put into graving dock. Even without knowing the extent of the problem the dry-dock time was initially set at four tides from 30th December. On the latter date it was stated that *'No.7 boat had come up from the 2nd Hoylake Station on that date leaking seriously, in consequence of which the whole of the pilots on board did not think she was fit to remain on the station.'* However, a report on her problem was not ready until 5th January and the following day a letter was sent by the Board directing Messrs. Clover, Clayton & Co. to carry out the work necessary with a view to permanently stopping the 'private leak' complained of. On 28th January 1896 a report from the Superintendent stated that: *'Repairs recently carried out on No.7 Pilot Boat have not made any improvement to the amount of water she makes while at sea.'* Meantime, on 21st January, No.2 boat, the **Leader** - some 40 years old - also had to be put into dry dock for necessary repairs.

Dangers posed to the pilot boats whilst waiting for, or approaching, ships had

increased dramatically with the rise in the number of steamers [2], many quite fast and large, which were now in service. Three such incidents were:

- On 17th March 1895, No.4 pilot boat, the **Auspicious** - a cutter - was lost. She had been lying at anchor in fog at the Mersey Bar when she was run down by the **Dynamic** of the Belfast Steamship Company. Fortunately no lives were lost in this incident.
- Early on the morning of 7th December 1895, No.5 pilot boat, the **Criterion**, was abandoned after being in collision with the **Cambroman** (4,902grt) of the British & North Atlantic Steamship Co. off Point Lynas, fortunately without loss of life although it was reported that the 16 survivors were adrift in the boat's punt for some hours. However, No.5 pilot boat remained afloat and was successfully towed back to Liverpool for repair. Two days after the collision the Superintendent reported that the mainmast rigging of No.5 was at least nine years old and the foremast rigging even older. Repairs to No.5 were completed by 20th January 1896.
- More bad news was to come a week later as reported in the *Liverpool Daily Post* of Tuesday 27th January 1896: *'Yesterday afternoon word was brought to the Landing Stage, fortunately by the arrival of the crew - that another of our fast-diminishing fleet of pilot boats had been run down, this time somewhere in the vicinity of the North-West Lightship. On enquiries being made, it was ascertained that the ill-fated boat was No.6, of which Mr. Thomas Edwards, Egremont, was the captain. The boat had been on the Western Station since last Thursday week and was returning home with the captain, five boat hands, and a cook on board. When about a mile to the northward she came into collision, during a heavy fog, with the outward bound steamer* ***Moorhen*** *(1,756grt) for Antwerp, belonging to the Cork Steamship Company. The pilot boat sank within four minutes of the collision. The* ***Moorhen*** *took all the pilots on board, and happily all on board were saved. The steamer at once anchored and lay to for an hour, and when the fog lifted she returned to the river and docked, where she will today undergo inspection. The rescued crew were landed at the stage in their own punt which had been taken in tow. With yesterday's disaster the fleet of pilot boats belonging to the Dock Board is now reduced to half-a-dozen. A few years back there were a dozen in the service, but disaster and decay have brought the number to six; the boats that have come to grief have never been replaced. The craft that was sunk yesterday was named the* ***S.R. Graves*** *and was a schooner yacht. She had been a useful boat but had had many ups and downs and met with frequent disaster before the one which has now finally closed her career.'*

On 17th March, the Board's solicitor was to accept the sum of £1,599 in full settlement

[2] In the hundred years prior to the introduction of steam pilot boats in 1896, a total of eight boats (discounting any wrecked ashore) had been sunk in service. Of these, six were lost between 1877 and 1896 (one, the **Mersey**, being sunk twice) as a result of collisions with steamers.

of any claim against the owners of the **Moorhen** for the loss of No.6 boat.

By 1896 the number of shipping movements in and out of the Mersey was in excess of 14,000 annually. Employed to handle this huge volume of traffic were 193 first-class, 17 second-class and 7 third-class pilots. Of the first-class pilots, 44 were designated 'Special Pilots' i.e. appropriated to particular shipping companies and therefore often not available on service in the boats, leaving 173 pilots on regular service.

The pilots' age-old method of remuneration was based on the earnings of each boat being pooled for the benefit of that particular boat after allowing for certain disbursements. After the boats were taken into the Board's ownership in 1883 the Compulsory Pilotage Fee [3] consisted of two parts:

1. Pilot Boat Rate which was allocated to the Board for the boats' maintenance etc, and which was typically (in 1896) 26% of the total fee, *and*
2. Pilotage Rate which was allocated for division among the licensed pilots.

That there was no Joint Stock of Earnings, i.e. all Pilotage Rate earnings being pooled for the benefit of all, often led to boats 'jumping the queue' for work and this led to frequent complaints and petitions to the Committee by aggrieved colleagues.

The cost of administration, and its incomplete control, of such an unwieldy system had long been matters which vexed the Board greatly; so much so that at the Pilotage Committee meeting of 29th October 1895 *'The Chairman of the Committee* [F.H. Henderson] *referred to the question of the present state of the Pilotage Service and said that the Committee would not be prepared to go into the question of either the building of new sailing pilot boats or steam pilot boats until the pilots intimate their desire by a document signed by a majority of the pilots in active service, free of conditions, to adopt a system of Joint Stock of the Earnings ... It was then suggested to the pilots' representatives that when the meeting takes place on the 18th proximo, for receiving nominations of pilots to sit on the Committee, they should*

[3] **Liverpool Compulsory Pilotage Rates - 1896**

Inward Foreign (including docking) from any point between Middle Mouse Island (2 miles N.E. of Cemaes Bay, Anglesey) on true bearing of South and Great Ormes Head on true bearing of South:

Pilotage 6/8d., Pilot Boat 2/4d = Total 9/- per foot [of draught]

Ditto from any point East of Great Ormes Head, on true bearing of South:

Pilotage 5/11d., Pilot Boat 2/1d = Total 8/- per foot

Coastings: Half the above rates

Outward Foreign: from dock or river to the Bar Light Vessel

Pilotage 2/11½d., Pilot Boat 1/0½d = Total 4/- per foot

Trial Trip, not farther than the N.W. Light Ship and back:

Pilotage 5/11d., Pilot Boat 2/1d., = 8/- per foot

Coastings: Half the above rates

[A separate set of fees applied for the requested attendance of a pilot on river and docks movements and launchings where a pilot's presence was not compulsory.]

intimate on the printed form of nomination that the pilots be asked to vote for the Joint Stock of Earnings and thus bring the matter to the test. The pilots' representatives said they would see what could be done in that direction but that, hitherto, no headway could be made with the pilots who were in each case 'a law unto themselves' and all had their individual views in the matter which they aired.' However, on 2nd July 1896 the Joint Stock of Earnings system was finally adopted.

The fast-declining pilotage fleet had prompted a notice to appear in the *Daily Post* early in January 1896, extolling the virtues of an invention by a Mr Mundy of a combination pilot boat/lifeboat. The loss of No.6 boat on 27th January brought a letter to the Editor on 29th January from 'Estuary' on *'Seeing.... yet another Pilot Boat disaster'* and asking if anything more was to be heard of Mr Mundy's invention. 'Estuary' went on to ask: *'If these unfortunate pilot boats had had steam power, is it unreasonable to suppose that these accidents might have been avoided?'*

The winter weather conditions of 1894/95 had been particularly severe; between 4th January and 6th March 1895 every single day was reported as having a minimum temperature below freezing point, with February's temperatures being particularly, and persistently, low. The anticipation of another severe winter, in combination with some of the factors noted above, was making the need for implementation of steam pilot boats imperative. In the statement quoted above the Chairman also said: *'The winter season is coming on when bad weather may be anticipated and in the event of anything extraordinary happening to the Service, he would not in any way accept the responsibility of it ...'* In the event, the winter of 1895/96 was not as severe as that of the previous year.

On 25th February 1896 the Pilotage Committee met to discuss: *'As to the desirability of building new pilot boats for the Pilotage Service.'* It was resolved to recommend [to the Board]: *'That this Committee be authorised to arrange for the building of Two Steam Pilot Boats, as may be necessary.'* A memorandum was also issued as to the appointment of a consulting naval architect to prepare plans, specifications, moulds and drawings, obtain tenders and superintend the construction of the boats in the event of the recommendation being passed by the Board. After the meeting had risen the Chairman stated:

'That he had arranged with the pilots' representatives present viz: Wm. Taylor & W. Evans to meet him at his office in Water Street at between 2 o'clock & 3 o'clock on Friday afternoon next when he would show them proposals for the new steam pilot boats.' This would indicate that much private discussion on the matter had already taken place - and decisions arrived at - and that it could no longer serve any useful purpose keeping it so.

One week later a memorandum from the Board's general manager, Miles K. Burton, was sent to the Pilotage Superintendent requesting, as soon as possible, a report showing how the Service should be worked with the two new steam pilot boats.

The anticipation of a future of worsening winters may well have been the deciding factor in the Board finally grasping the nettle and hauling itself out of the

Dickensian era, and into the era of the clients it was serving. But having done so, and to its credit, it then proceeded with alacrity.

The Building

At its meeting on 10th March 1896 the Committee resolved to appoint Mr Henry Fernie Payne, aged 32, to undertake the requirements of its memorandum of 25th February. Mr Payne was to receive 2% of the contract price of the first of the two vessels, and 1% of the contract price of the second vessel. In addition he was to be allowed his hotel and travelling expenses if the boats were to be built outside of Liverpool.

Robert Simpson, Pilotage Superintendent, submitted the requested working plan for the new service on 9th March 1896 which was at follows:

'It would have to depend on:

a). The number of Pilots it is intended to provide accommodation for in each steamer and whether the principle of attaching Pilots to particular boats is to be adhered to.

b). The Pilots who attended a conference with the Pilotage Committee have spread a rumour that the Pilots are to be attached to the steamers as they are at present in the schooners. With the Pilot fleet composed entirely of steamers this could be done, but with a composite fleet I do not see how it is to be done. I would, therefore, suggest that as the steamers have to prove their adaptability to the requirements of the Service, an arrangement be adopted by which every Pilot in turn may be boarded from the steamers on the Western Station, Point Lynas; the Pilots otherwise remaining attached to the six schooners as they are now, which would make the least amount of change while the question of steam versus sail is being decided by the actual experiment.

If this view be adopted, I would suggest that one steamer be always on duty off Point Lynas for a fixed period: say, a fortnight. The other steamer to remain in port for outward duty when required. Four schooners to fill the other stations as at present. When half the complement of the steamer's Pilots ... have been boarded, fill up again from the schooners next on turn and do this day by day. The work of the schooners to go on otherwise as it does at present ... '

One week later the Committee Chairman sent the following sharp reply:

'Dear Mr Simpson,

In the report you sent to the Gen. Manager with suggestions as to the working of the combined steam and sail service you have completely overlooked two things:

1. *The two Steam Pilot Boats are intended to <u>be at sea 12 days</u> and in port not more than two days every fortnight and any scheme which keeps the vessels longer in port will be condemned.*
2. *As soon as the Steam Pilot Boats get on the station it is our intention to withdraw from the Service the two oldest or least reliable sail boats.*

Please think the matter over again keeping these two points in view. F.Henderson.'

[In the event, three sail boats were withdrawn immediately the steam boats went into service].

While the discussions continued within the management about the operation of the new system in the Service, other eyes were viewing the impending development.

The Board received a letter on 14th March from Colonel W.R. Slacke, Commander of the Royal Engineers based at Chester. He thought that the new boats could be used:

1. For examination of vessels entering the port in time of war, *and*
2. For assisting in laying out the submarine mining defences [against surface ships].

In reply the Board informed Colonel Slacke of the proposed specifications of the boats and reminded him of '..... *the need of the boats to be in regular service in the Port & Bay of Liverpool and that, except in time of feared invasion or actual hostilities in this particular neighbourhood, any disruption would be of considerable effect and expense, and compensation would have to be paid to enable the Board to find replacements. The provision of a bow derrick and cleats etc.* [for mine-laying] *could be included in the design if a satisfactory arrangement is come to with the War Department.*' Eventually discussion on this matter was to peter out. However, it is of some interest that the forthcoming conflict was already anticipated and being prepared for by the War Department.

Two other gentlemen having the foresight to realise that a Superintendent Engineer would shortly be required submitted their applications for the post even before the plans had been drawn, but they were to be unsuccessful as will be seen.

The completed specifications, the price and the terms of payment, and conditions of building of two steam pilot boats having been agreed to and signed by Messrs Murdoch & Murray of Port Glasgow, the Board resolved to apply its seal to the agreement on 26th May 1896. The yard numbers were to be 147 and 148.

It was also agreed that Mr H.F. Payne be appointed 'Inspector' and the Builders to be paid the sum of £7,305 for each vessel as follows, upon receiving the Certificate of the Inspector:

- *25% of the contract price of each vessel when the hull is framed, and the cylinders of the engines are cast.*
- *25% when the Hull and Decks are fully plated and riveted, and the machinery and boilers are at an approved stage.*
- *25% when the vessel is launched, and the machinery fitted on board, and,*
- *25% after delivery to the Board, on their behalf, by the Inspector.*

Mr Payne's commission was to be paid on the same basis as the payments to the Builders and on production of his certificates, and he was to make visits to the Builders: *'Every fortnight until the vessel is nearly plated, then oftener as the work goes on; to be present at all boiler and other tests; special visits before each instalment is due, and finally when each vessel is finished to remain on the spot from a week to 10 days.'*

The Board informed the Builders that it would itself supply the punts (no doubt from the sailing boats it was to sell off) - the Builders to supply the davits and

tackle - and thereby obtained a discount of £30 off each steamer. The Board also said that only one spare tail shaft would be required and thus obtained a further discount of £25. Strangely, it would seem that the original specifications had not included electric lighting, or any ancillary use of electricity, as on 9th June the Board sanctioned the acceptance of a quote from Messrs Murdoch & Murray of £276 per vessel to install an electrical system.

The new era in the Pilotage Service was also to be overseen by a new Superintendent. On 7th February 1896, R.J.P. Simpson, who was then aged 70, and had been in the post almost 37 years, wrote to the Board's General Manager seeking retirement from active service *'which cannot be delayed much longer'*. This was requested *'not so much on account of old age and increasing infirmity, as from a change of system in the working of the Pilotage Service, which will ultimately require a naval engineer to take my place.'*

Prior to his appointment to the post Mr Simpson had served in the Royal Navy for nineteen years after being enrolled at the age of fourteen, and he was credited with the rank of Lieutenant when he joined the MD&HB. However, according to the *Navy Lists*, his career was briefly as follows:

- In 1847 at the age of 21 he was appointed as a 2nd Master [navigator], and from 30th August 1847 until 27th November 1851 served as such on HMS **Spider**, a schooner, stationed off the south-east coast of America [The Bermuda Station].
- From the latter date he was posted in the above capacity to p.s. HMS **Tartarus** in the Mediterranean (on *particular service* in October 1853).
- He was promoted to Master [navigator or pilot - one rank below Lieutenant] from 13th September 1854 but without appointment until 10th January 1855 when he joined HMS **Desperate** (a steam vessel whose type is not known), and in which he served until January 1859. [It was customary for promotion to be accompanied by a period ashore on half pay which could be for months, or even up to four years in the case of captains].
- It appears that he had been on half pay for some two months (and already working in some capacity for the MD&HB) when he was offered promotion (to Lieutenant) and an appointment to HMS **Dauntless** [a steam screw frigate built at Portsmouth in 1847/48, re-commissioned in 1859], going out to West Africa as the flagship, when he obtained the post of Pilotage Superintendent.

In submitting his request for retirement Mr Simpson also petitioned the Board for a superannuation allowance. He pointed out in his petition that upon his appointment by the Dock Board he had declined the aforementioned Royal Navy appointment in order to continue in the Board's service. He also said that during his service in **Desperate**, he had served in the Baltic and the Crimea and was engaged six times with Russian batteries and gunboats.

Citing in his petition his long, hard-working and faithful service to the Board he said that he hoped that the Board would take these facts into account and that his superannuation would be a favourable one. The Board granted him an allowance of £350 p.a., *'during the pleasure of the Board from 2nd. of July next, it being*

understood that Mr Simpson will render assistance to the Board as may be required.' At retirement his salary was £650 p.a.

The post of Pilotage Superintendent was then advertised and it was hoped that a *'local man not over 40 years old, with at least two years service as an Officer* [R.N.], *Master* [Mariner] *or Pilot could be appointed.'* At first the Board thought that a salary of £400 p.a. should be offered, but soon afterwards decided that £300 p.a. would be more appropriate! Starting salaries had not improved greatly down the years; when Joseph Cook had been appointed to the post in 1839 his salary was £130 per annum. It was also required - although not explicitly stated - that the successful candidate should be abstemious.

Fifteen suitably qualified applicants were short-listed. Of these, eight were Master Mariners; one, Wm. H. Blundell, was the Dockmaster of the Queens' Dock group and had formerly been a first-class pilot; another was Charles Graham who had been the Nautical Editor of the *Journal of Commerce* for the previous five years or so; and a third was Edwin Beeson, a serving first-class pilot of 18 years standing in the Board's service. Of the fifteen, five were disqualified after being found to be non-abstemious.

Charles Graham held an Extra Master's certificate and after serving for over six years as a chief mate with Alfred Holt, he had latterly been Master of one of their vessels. However, he had worked on shore too long for the Board's liking and was not a local man.

On 16th June 1896 it was resolved by the Committee to appoint Edward Cole Wheeler, aged 32 years, as the new Pilotage Superintendent at £300 per annum from 2nd July 1896, *'... it being understood that his whole time and attention are to be given to the duties of his office, and he is not to be entitled to any Superannuation allowance on his retirement from the Service.'* Edward Wheeler had reportedly been with the Hall Line for some years - having served at least four years as master. His only working time ashore had been for a period of 18 months at Clover's dockyard. He had also, literally, been pencilled in as a last-minute candidate.

In the meantime, Mr Payne had been gathering information about the sail plans of similar vessels to those now building, and used at Hull and Dungeness, and had prepared an amended sail plan with a larger sail area and an extra boom at the stern of the vessel (it is not known if this ancillary propulsion was actually used on these first steam vessels). He also, on 27th July 1896, forwarded his certificate for the first stage of No.1 boat and photographs of her in the frames. Murdoch & Murray were to be paid the first instalment on receipt of a letter from them enclosing a policy of insurance as per contract. [This was required at each stage of the building and remained effective until the vessel was handed over to the owners.] The Committee also this day voted to name No.1 Steam Pilot Boat, **Francis Henderson**.

By 13th August the second stage of No.1 and the first stage of No.2 boats had been completed, but a hitch occurred in the third stage of No.1 due to a faulty casting having to be redone. It was said that the launch would not now be until the 9th or 10th

September. In fact it was to be 25th September before the launch of No.1 boat took place and the Board declined to make any special arrangements to mark the occasion.

One of the punts was insured for £25 and shipped to Port Glasgow on a steamer for the sum of 25/- (£1.25p) by Mr Payne's arrangement. Mr Payne also submitted a sketch for a 'wave abater' for each of the boats which the Board approved, provided the cost did not exceed £7 per vessel. These were subsequently installed and consisted of a galvanised steel tank filled with oil from which a pipe, fitted with a control valve, ran over each side of the vessel.

On 15th September Joseph E. Sumner (master of No.10 boat) and Thomas Edwards (master of No.9 boat) were named as the masters designate of No.1 and No.2 steam pilot boats respectively. Both were to proceed to the Clyde and come round with the **Francis Henderson** when completed. It was also decided that Mr Payne *'do select a Chief Engineer at 55/-* (£2.75p) *and a Second Engineer at 35/-* (£1.75p) *per week, also a fireman, at the port wages* [£1/10/0d (£1.50p) per week] *for No.1 boat.'* This he duly did and Thomas Cannon was appointed as Chief Engineer at 60/- (£3) per week, and Peter Fox as Second Engineer at 42/- (£2.10p), with the proviso *'...that the Engineers and fireman do find themselves in victualling and bedding.'* This was, in fact, less than previously proposed as the Pilotage Superintendent had suggested an additional 10/- (50p) per week per man on the original rates in lieu of victualling and bedding.

It was also resolved on the above date to name No.2 steam pilot boat **Leonard Spear** after the Committee member of that name.

Another letter sent by Mr Payne to the Board on 5th October stated that the **Francis Henderson** would proceed from Glasgow (where fitting-out was taking place) to Port Glasgow under her own steam on 6th October. One week later he sent a letter enclosing survey report No.10. This survey had involved three days of inspection work and steam trials (Mr Cannon had joined the vessel on 28th September) which had proved satisfactory. He also commented on a delay to No.2 boat due to the weather; he had objected to the caulking of the decks in wet weather and had had it stopped. The **Leonard Spear** was to be successfully launched on Wednesday, 21st October 1896.

After the Committee meeting on Friday 12th October the Pilotage Superintendent proceeded to Port Glasgow in order to travel round to Liverpool on the **Francis Henderson**. She arrived at Liverpool on 19th October, some 36 hours or so after leaving Port Glasgow. However, although the Board had agreed to take over No.1 Steam Pilot Boat provisionally on 19th October, numerous small alterations and additions at an extra cost of almost £500 had to be completed before she entered service. The Board most generously (and seemingly out of character) decided to waive a penalty of £20 per week which it could have exacted for the late delivery of each of the vessels.

Fruition

Mr Payne's final certificate with respect to the **Francis Henderson** was issued on 20th October 1896, stating that No.1 Steam Pilot Boat was finished. The only

noted recognition of this event was that *'Messrs Robinson & Thompson* [of 11, Bold Street] *to be asked to take photographs of the* ***Francis Henderson*** *for the Committee.'* On Monday 26th October, with Mr Edward C. Wheeler on board, the **Francis Henderson** [4] left Canning Half-Tide Dock for sea on the afternoon tide. The first vessel boarded from her off Point Lynas was the **Holt Hill** (2,398grt), a Liverpool registered, four-masted barque from San Francisco, in the early hours of 28th October.

The **Leonard Spear** arrived in the Mersey on 22nd November 1896 and sailed to her station the following day (all the extra fittings and alterations carried out on the **Francis Henderson** were applied to the second boat before she left Port Glasgow). The two steam boats and three sail boats (No.1 **Queen**, No.5 **Criterion** and No.10 **George Holt**) now ran the service; four boats always at sea and one in port (on harbour and outward duty). Within eighteen months two more steam boats (the **Queen Victoria** and the **David Fernie**) had been built at the same yard (for a tender price of £8,530 each), and were put into service in the first week of May, 1898.

Consequent upon the successful building and introduction of the first two steam pilot boats, Henry F. Payne was asked by the Board to quote his fee to superintend the Engineering Department (on a consultancy basis), including the engineers *et al*; to inspect the boats when they were in port; to report on any repairs he considered necessary; to submit detailed reports on each vessel whenever they were dry-docked; and to give his advice on any other matter in connection with the vessels. He requested £100 per annum to start and after 12 months an additional £25 p.a. for each additional steam pilot boat joining the Service, which terms were accepted by the Board. As a result of a steady expansion of the pilot boat fleet (and the addition of other types of vessel) he was, by 1916, receiving fees of £365 p.a. from the Board.

Postscript

Each of the sailing pilot boats was disposed of in turn - some of them subsequently having very eventful lives - but the last to go (and her going is recorded in full elsewhere [5]) was the **George Holt** on 23rd September 1904 when she sailed as the **Lafonia** to the Falkland Islands.

An interesting economic insight of the times is given by the first dry-docking of the **Francis Henderson.** A letter to the Board from the Suter Hartmann & Rathjen's Composition Co. Ltd. of 2nd February 1897 offered: *'To thoroughly clean and scrape*

[4] The complement of each of the steam pilot boats comprised 36 first-class pilots (including two masters), five second-class pilots, and two third-class pilots. In addition, each carried six boathands (the new term for apprentices) and three candidates. It was decreed at this time that Second Masters of the steam pilot boats would be required to hold, or obtain, Home Trade Certificates, and also to be not older than 45 years. Of the above crew, 13 pilots from each steamer remained on shore each cruise for outward and harbour duties.

[5] L.N.R.S. *'Bulletin'*, Spring, 1993.

the bottom of No.1 Steam Pilot Boat, and apply thereto from keel up to [a height of] *10ft aft and 8ft forward two coats of our 'Hartmann's Genuine Rathjen's Composition' (one coat Anti-corrosive and one coat Anti-fouling), and to coat from the height mentioned above up to 11½ft aft and 12ft forward with two coats of best quality Zinc White, inclusive of all labour and materials for the nett sum of £21/10s/0d.'* [£21.50p]

The **Francis Henderson** remained in the Pilot Service until November 1917 when she was sold to Thomas T. Kennaugh of Liverpool and converted for coastal trading. She was renamed **Pickavance** on 22nd March 1918. The Register was closed on 20th November 1929 after she was broken up on the Clyde. ||||

Francis Henderson Official Number: 106814 Call Sign: J H K S
A steel screw steamer of 275grt, built for the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board
Length: 128.2ft Breadth: 24.1ft Depth: 11.7ft

Reference Sources:

- The Database of *'Steam Vessels Registered to Liverpool Owners'* by L.N.R.S. Member Olive Williamson.
- *Early Steamships on the Mersey*, a paper by A.C. Wardle, Transactions of The Lancashire and Cheshire Historical Society, Vol.92 (1940)
- *History of the Liverpool Pilotage Service*, John S. Rees
- Minutes of the Liverpool Pilotage Committee 1820/42; 1894/98
- Miscellaneous papers of the Pilotage Committee of the MD&HB 1894/98
- Navy Lists, 1847/1881
- Various issues of the *Liverpool Mercury* and *Liverpool Daily Post.*

CORRECTION

CAPTAIN ROBERT PAPE AND THE BARQUE *'MAITLAND'*

('The Bulletin', Vol.45, Number 4, March, 2002)

In the article about Captain Robert Pape and the Barque **Maitland**, it was wrongly assumed that the **Maitland**, based on her passage time, might have travelled via Cape Horn to Bluff, New Zealand.

It is now known that this would have been impracticable. In view of the passage, therefore, being via the Cape of Good Hope, her average daily runs over the longer distance would have been at least 112 nautical miles.

My thanks to Mr H. Hignett for bringing this to my notice.

Gordon Bodey

THE BATTLE OF '*HOOD*' AND '*BISMARCK*'

*In the March, 2002, 'Bulletin' the story of the Channel Four Television expedition to locate the wreck of HMS **Hood** was told. This second part looks at the destruction of the **Bismarck** and the search for the wreck by the expedition led by David Mearns on board the research vessel **Northern Horizon**.*

part 2: The BISMARCK

The British Navy was on a state of high alert at the end of May 1941. The legendary German warship **Bismarck** was prowling the North Atlantic. She'd sunk the pride of the British Navy, the mighty HMS **Hood** in only two minutes, and she also seriously wounded Britain's newest battleship, the **Prince of Wales**.

In London the Admiralty issued this now famous order to every ship within striking distance: "*Sink the **Bismarck***".

In May 2001 at the Imperial War Museum the sixtieth anniversary of Britain's great naval victory, the sinking of the **Bismarck**, was celebrated. This World War 2 naval battle has become legendary: the greatest warship afloat sunk on only the ninth day of her maiden voyage. But behind the myth is a story of epic bravery - and blunder. The outcome could have been so very different. Triumph was very nearly disaster. And over the whole affair hangs a question no-one has yet answered: did the British really sink the **Bismarck** ? Amazingly, some German survivors claim that they sank their own ship.

In the summer of 2001, a Channel Four Television expedition steamed far out into the North Atlantic to find and film the last resting place of one of the most famous warships of all time and to probe the mystery of just who sank the **Bismarck**. The voyage was part of a hugely ambitious project. Expedition leader David Mearns is a world authority on deep ocean exploration. He became the first person to discover the wreck of the **Bismarck's** victim, HMS **Hood**.

The **Hood** had lain at the bottom of the Denmark Strait, between Greenland and Iceland for sixty years. For the first time in history, the team located and filmed her wreck and solved many of the mysteries surrounding her sinking. But the **Hood** lies on a flat, underwater plain. Finding and filming the **Bismarck** was an altogether different proposition, despite the fact that she's been found before. The **Bismarck** was discovered by American explorer Bob Ballard in 1989 when underwater video technology was relatively primitive. The images of her were unclear and the survey of the wreck incomplete. It also took over two years to find her, and her location was kept secret.

David Mearns has since researched all the reported positions for the **Bismarck's** sinking and has come up with a search area of 400 square miles. Locating the **Bismarck** again will be hard: she is three miles down in one of the deepest abysses of the North Atlantic. However, the previous expedition left a vital clue. The

Bismarck is said to lie on the deeply ravined side of an underwater volcano. There is only one such geological feature within the area.

The key to finding the wreck would be one of the most advanced underwater sonar units in the world. It can operate at huge depths, scouring up and down the ocean floor with sound waves to create a detailed map of the area. The remote controlled submersible (r.o.v. : remotely operated vehicle) would then be sent down and it would deliver the highest quality video pictures of the **Bismarck** and they could then be used to conduct the first ever comprehensive survey of the wreck. If the **Bismarck** was found, naval historian Dr Eric Grove and underwater forensic expert Bill Jurens would be able to assess whether the **Bismarck** was in fact sunk by British torpedoes or scuttled by her own crew. The inspection of the damage along the sides of the ship should shed some light on how much water she was taking in before the Germans claimed that they opened the sea cocks and exploded scuttling charges. The idea of the scuttling charges is controversial: there is some anecdotal evidence from survivors that they were installed. It fits the German Naval mindset: better to sink the ship yourself than to risk it falling into enemy hands.

The battleship **Bismarck** was a legend from the day she was launched in 1939. Adored by Hitler, the **Bismarck** was a towering symbol of the technological supremacy of the Third Reich. She was designed to be indestructible and very fast. She was built in secret at Hamburg. At 820 feet long, the **Bismarck** was Germany's biggest warship. She was bristling with eight fifteen-inch guns and she had thirteen-inch thick steel armour and a top speed of 30 knots.

Even as she lay in harbour the **Bismarck** was a drain on the British Navy who had to cover her every possible move. Let loose in the North Atlantic, she would be a lethal threat to the merchant convoy ships supplying Britain. But despite the formidable credentials of his ship, the **Bismarck's** new commander was not happy. German Admiral Gunther Lütjens was an Atlantic veteran. On a two month mission in early 1941 leading the battleships **Scharnhorst** and **Gneisenau**, Admiral Lütjens sank 116,000 tons of British merchant shipping. Despite being outnumbered ten to one, the German Navy was winning the war at sea. Their strategy was to avoid clashes with warships and instead attack the merchant convoys. Hitler's plan was to starve Britain into submission. But it's not clear that Admiral Lütjens had much faith in his Führer's strategy.

The broadcaster Sir Ludovic Kennedy, who took part as a young officer in the action against the **Bismarck**, believes Admiral Lütjens was at odds with Hitler and Naziism. When Hitler inspected the **Bismarck** at Gotenhafen, Admiral Lütjens had the officers arranged on the quarterdeck to receive him, and all the junior officers gave Hitler the Nazi salute, but Lütjens gave the old naval salute: he wasn't going to kowtow to Naziism.

In fact, Lütjens own grandmother was Jewish. Gerhardt Lütjens was ten years old when his father left to take up command of the **Bismarck**. Gerhardt recalls that there were many Jewish officers in the German Navy - a great many, and they were

protected. Admiral Lütjens own brother had fled to Switzerland at the start of the war. Lütjens loyalty to the Navy had made him stay, but from the start he had serious doubts. The armed forces hadn't really appreciated that the war was a total waste of time, but of course it was realized later. Very early on in the war Gerhardt Lütjens recalls his father telling him that he did not think Germany could ever be victorious - for one thing, Germany just didn't have enough oil. But the Admiral was a military man and he did his duty. Whatever his reservations, Admiral Lütjens was determined to put on a good show. He inspected the crews of the **Bismarck** and her consort, the heavy cruiser **Prinz Eugen**, and he reminded them of their obligation to do their duty.

Finally, after nearly five years of building and preparation, the awesome **Bismarck** slipped out of the Baltic on her maiden voyage. Her mission was to decimate the Atlantic convoys. But Lütjens knew success would depend on how long the ships could remain undetected. The **Bismarck** was in fact spotted almost immediately after her departure. There was an ornithologist off the south coast of Norway who was part of the Norwegian 'underground'. He photographed anything of interest that he saw and on 22nd May 1941 he photographed the **Bismarck**, and then the **Prinz Eugen**. So much for remaining undetected.

Admiral Lütjens' preferred route into the Atlantic was north of Iceland through the Arctic. But, unknown to the Germans, the Denmark Strait between Greenland and Iceland had been staked out by two British cruisers, HMS **Norfolk** and HMS **Suffolk**. They started to shadow the German ships and sent out the alert. Lurking just off the south coast of Iceland and waiting to pounce were the massive HMS **Hood** and the brand new battleship **Prince of Wales**. The Germans had been ambushed.

The **Bismarck's** crew leapt into action. The state-of-the-art gunnery quickly sank the **Hood** and left the **Prince of Wales** badly damaged. But as the **Bismarck's** gunnery crews cheered, Lütjens was already a very worried man. With his attackers in disarray, Lütjens made for the vast expanse of the Atlantic. But he still couldn't shake off the cruisers **Suffolk** and **Norfolk** - they stuck to the **Bismarck** and the **Prinz Eugen** like glue. Lütjens suspected that the British cruisers could be using a new long range radar which far out-performed the Germans' own. For a huge surface ship like the **Bismarck** in hostile waters, that would be disaster. Lütjens knew that he faced a situation he had not anticipated. He soon realised that waging a hit and run war against convoys under such conditions, when there was no means of escaping, and no safe means of reaching a tanker, would be senseless. This affected his entire state of mind: it had a negative effect on his whole attitude and he allowed himself to become depressed. For Lütjens his mission was over just as it was starting. He was sure he couldn't hide, and he soon found out he couldn't run.

The **Bismarck** had been hit by the **Prince of Wales** below the waterline. She was losing oil and her speed was down. She had to get back to a safe port. The nearest was over 1,000 miles away.

Back on board the research vessel **Northern Horizon**, there was good news. A weather window had opened up, hopefully long enough to complete the mission.

After days of waiting because of bad weather, expedition leader David Mearns could launch the sonar unit. It would travel 15,000 feet down into the deep ocean to hunt for the **Bismarck** and it was hoped that the wreck would be found on the first sonar pass through the search box. When the sonar was 1,000 feet from the seabed, the **Northern Horizon** towed it using satellite navigation on a perfectly straight line through the search area. The line was twelve miles long with the ship moving at two miles an hour. The first pass went on well into the night. The sonar generates a split image showing the terrain to the left and the right of the unit. But in the centre, the area right underneath the sonar, is a blind spot. As the **Northern Horizon** got nearer and nearer to the end of the first line, it seemed that the team might have had some bad luck. There were some hints of small debris, but strangely no sign of the massive hull.

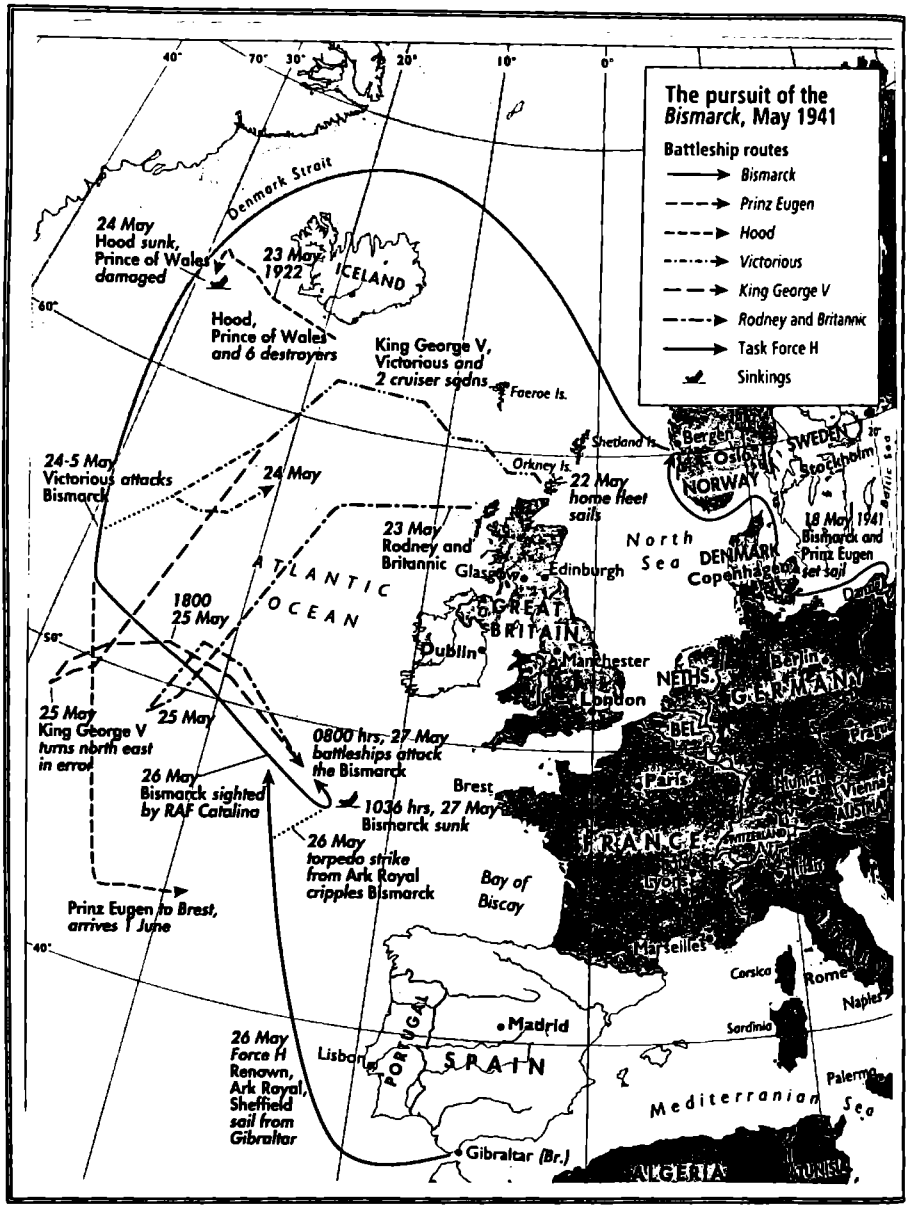
The **Bismarck's** main hull should have shown up as a large hard edged rectangular image in the sonar sweep. David Mearns felt that the main hull was right under the towfish, and in the blind spot. The **Northern Horizon** turned round to make another pass through the search box. With over five miles of cable behind, the turn had to be slow. It would be another twelve hours before the sonar was back over the debris field again. On the second pass the main hull was located, at the centre of the debris field. It seemed to be intact. The **Bismarck** could soon give up answers to a sixty year old mystery.

The day after the **Bismarck** destroyed HMS **Hood**, Sunday 25th May 1941, was also Admiral Gunther Lütjens' 52nd birthday. He received birthday greetings from the Führer himself. He and his ship were commended by Hitler on the dramatic sinking of the **Hood**. But Lütjens had also just pulled off a tactical masterstroke.

The previous day the cruisers HMS **Suffolk** and HMS **Norfolk** and the limping **Prince of Wales** continued to track the **Bismarck** and the **Prinz Eugen** south. Closing in from the east was the commander-in-chief of the British Home Fleet, Admiral Sir John Tovey. On board the battleship **King George V** he was steaming at high speed, along with HMS **Repulse** and the aircraft carrier **Victorious**. Convoy escorts HMS **Rodney** and HMS **Dorsetshire** were diverted to the chase.

At midnight Admiral Tovey ordered a torpedo attack on the **Bismarck** by the aircraft from HMS **Victorious**, but they failed to inflict any damage whatsoever. Then, in an audacious move at night, Admiral Lütjens had his ships separate. The **Bismarck** double-backed through a rain squall and then headed east whilst the **Prinz Eugen** veered south-west. In the confusion the new experimental British radar lost both German ships. The **Bismarck** had slipped her pursuers and was alone in the vast expanse of the North Atlantic.

Admiral Lütjens was in the clear. His intelligence sources intercepted British radio traffic. They reported the British had lost the **Bismarck**. Lütjens didn't believe them: he felt sure that British radar must be plotting his every move. He broadcast a long rambling message to shore asking for U-Boat and air support. It was a fatal mistake. The transmission was immediately intercepted by the British and the now distant **Prinz Eugen**. By intercepting the transmission from the **Bismarck** at various


The pursuit of the Bismarck, May 1941
Battleship routes
Bismarck
Prinz Eugen
Hood
Victorious
King George V
Rodney and Britannic
Task Force H
Sinkings
Denmark Strait
24 May Hood sunk, Prince of Wales damaged
23 May 1922
ICELAND
Hood, Prince of Wales and 6 destroyers
King George V, Victorious and 2 cruiser sqdns
Faeroe Is.
Shetland Is.
Orkney Is.
22 May home fleet sails
24-5 May Victorious attacks Bismarck
24 May
23 May Rodney and Britannic
Glasgow
Edinburgh
North Sea
Bergen
Oslo
NORWAY
SWEDEN
Stockholm
Baltic Sea
DENMARK
Copenhagen
18 May 1941 Bismarck and Prinz Eugen set sail
ATLANTIC OCEAN
1800 25 May
GREAT BRITAIN
Dublin
Manchester
London
NETHS.
BEL.
GERMANY
Berlin
Prague
Paris
Munich
Vienna
AUSTRIA
FRANCE
Lyon
Marseilles
Corsica
Rome
Naples
Sardinia
Palermo
Mediterranian Sea
25 May King George V turns north east in error
25 May
0800 hrs, 27 May battleships attack the Bismarck
26 May Bismarck sighted by RAF Catalina
Brest
1036 hrs, 27 May Bismarck sunk
26 May torpedo strike from Ark Royal cripples Bismarck
Bay of Biscay
Prinz Eugen to Brest, arrives 1 June
26 May Force H Renown, Ark Royal, Sheffield sail from Gibraltar
Lisbon
PORTUGAL
Madrid
SPAIN
Gibraltar (Br.)
ALGERIA
TUNISIA
60°
50°
40°
70°
30°
20°
10°
0°

radio stations on land, the Admiralty in London was able to get a rough directional fix on the **Bismarck's** position. It seemed to them that she was heading east, to German occupied France. But the data was inconclusive: they decided that Admiral Tovey had a better view of the situation and they sent him the raw data to make his own calculations and to draw his own conclusions.

Unfortunately, on board the **King George V**, Tovey's staff got their calculations 'back to front'. Instead of heading east in pursuit, they turned north, believing the **Bismarck** was heading back to Norway. Instead of closing in on their prey, the British were steaming at top speed in the wrong direction. Yet again, Lütjens was oblivious to his own good luck. At noon he solemnly addressed his whole crew: it was clear he felt they were destined to fight a battle which they could not win. Soon afterwards the Captain of the **Bismarck**, Ernst Lindermann, tried to lift crew morale: he told them they were now only 600 miles west of France, soon to be inside Luftwaffe air cover. He assured them that they would make it home.

Back in London the Admiralty were confused by the fact that the British ships pursuing the **Bismarck** had turned north: they thought that Admiral Tovey must know something that they didn't. Their calculations still showed the **Bismarck** heading east to a port in northern France. To make sure, R.A.F. Coastal Command was asked to sweep over the easterly route. The Admiralty's hunch was right and the **Bismarck** was found again. Unfortunately she was now 150 miles east of the fleet and Tovey's ships would never catch her. Somehow the German ship had to be slowed down.

The **Northern Horizon** arrived on the very spot where the **Bismarck** sank sixty years before. Expedition leader David Mearns waited anxiously as his team prepared the r.o.v., the remote controlled submersible. It would descend to the very bottom of the ocean and from there it would feed back high quality images of the great ship and all the debris that fell off as she sank. With four days already lost due to bad weather and the outlook uncertain, the filming started quickly.

After its four hour journey to the seabed, the r.o.v. dropped down right on top of the mass of debris. The plan was to progress through it and hopefully to locate the main hull of the ship. Only then could a search be made for the signs of the torpedo damage which the British claim sank the **Bismarck**. Or would evidence be found that the Germans scuttled their own ship?

As the r.o.v. proceeded forward through the field of debris, it came across larger and larger pieces. The range finding apparatus used to aim the main guns was sighted, then the mainmast, lying bent in two, up side down. One of the **Bismarck's** one-thousand ton gun turrets was next discovered: as the ship rolled on her descent to the ocean floor it would have fallen out and now lies up side down. Then into camera shot loomed the biggest piece yet: the main superstructure containing the bridge.

After exploring the field of debris, the team drew a blank. The main hull, the ship herself, where all the answers lie, didn't seem to be in the same area. The search went on all night and into the next day. This was challenging terrain: an underwater mountain range rivalling the Alps in size. The ridges along the tops of the ravines were

limiting the view. The r.o.v. could be on the wrong side of a ridge, with the main hull just over the top.

Admiral Lütjens on board the **Bismarck** had outsmarted the vastly superior forces of the British Navy for over two days. Then his luck ran out - the R.A.F. had spotted the **Bismarck** heading for France. But one by one the chasing ships reached their fuel limits and had to turn back. Eventually only Admiral Tovey's own ship HMS **King George V** and the cruiser **Norfolk** were left, but they were still over 150 miles behind the **Bismarck**. The convoy escorts, HMS **Rodney** and **Dorsetshire** which had been diverted, were also too far away.

Tovey's only hope lay with the Force 'H', the British Mediterranean fleet, which had been sent up from Gibraltar the previous day. They included the cruiser HMS **Sheffield**, and the aircraft carrier HMS **Ark Royal**. She carried a squadron of Swordfish bombers. Despite their antiquated appearance, these canvas and wire biplanes were a pioneering design, and they were still the only aircraft that could haul a torpedo off the ship's deck

As a last ditch effort they were ordered to attack. The hope was that they could slow the **Bismarck** down. But the weather off the Spanish coast was abysmal. Nevertheless, fifteen Swordfish headed off on a 300-mile round trip to find the German warship. What the Swordfish pilots were not told was that the **Sheffield** was half way between the **Ark Royal** and the **Bismarck**: a message had been sent to the **Ark Royal**, but it was lying, unread, in the air squadron's in-tray. The Swordfish pilots saw a warship in the mist and spray below them and assumed it was the **Bismarck**. The Swordfish went in to attack: their own ship, the **Sheffield**. Disaster was only avoided because a new type of detonator had been fitted to the torpedoes and they all failed to explode.

Unless the **Bismarck's** speed could be reduced by midnight, Admiral Tovey's ships would have to turn for home because of lack of fuel. He immediately ordered the Swordfish of Force 'H' to launch another attack. This time the torpedoes were fitted with the old type of detonator.

With the gale still raging, the second attack took off. To launch the torpedoes it was necessary for the Swordfish to slow down to 90 knots and to keep 90 feet above the water: it was no good dropping a torpedo too fast or from too great a height as they were somewhat delicate and would break up. The **Bismarck** was firing her main armament into the sea ahead of the Swordfish, sending up great, blinding columns of spray. The Swordfish had to launch their torpedoes into the trough between the waves, otherwise it would 'porpoise' and not run. Amazingly every single aircraft returned to the **Ark Royal** with little more than minor damage, but to the pilots it seemed that their attack on the **Bismarck** had failed.

To Admiral Tovey the situation now looked desperate. He had only a few hours' worth of fuel left. Quiet resignation started to set in. Despite the huge efforts by the Royal Navy it seemed that the **Bismarck** would slip the net.

Then, slowly, dismay gave way to disbelief. The **Sheffield**, which was shadowing the **Bismarck**, sent a signal to Admiral Tovey: *'Course of Bismarck, due North'*. The course which the **Bismarck** had been steering was south-east towards Brest or St Nazaire. Tovey said to his officers on the plot: *'I fear poor Larkum* [the captain of the **Sheffield**] *has joined the reciprocal club'*, meaning he thought the **Bismarck** was going from right to left, when in fact she was going from left to right which is an easy mistake for an inexperienced officer to make.

At the time it was not known that the **Bismarck's** rudder had been seriously damaged by a torpedo dropped from one of the **Ark Royal's** Swordfish aircraft. Then the aircraft which was shadowing the **Bismarck** also reported her heading north.

The **Bismarck's** rudders could not be repaired and the greatest warship afloat steamed around in circles, having been brought to heel by a tiny canvas and wire biplane. If Lütjens prediction was correct, in an ocean now swept by radar and policed by aircraft, battleships could no longer hide. The **Bismarck** drifted towards her executioner, powerless to escape her fate.

The night before his death, Admiral Lütjens sent this message to shore: *'To the Führer of the Third Reich. We fight to the last with firm faith in you, my Führer, and with unshakable confidence in Germany's victory.'* He got this reply: *'All Germany is with you. What can be done will be done. Your devotion to duty will strengthen our people in their fight for survival. Adolf Hitler.'*

On board the **Northern Horizon** the remotely operated vehicle (r.o.v.) was ready to return to the seabed. This time it also carried a bronze plaque in memory of the sailors of the **Bismarck**. It had been hoped to lay the plaque on the bow of the **Bismarck**, but with the main hull proving elusive and fears that the weather might break, it was decided to compromise. The plaque was placed on the biggest part of debris already found, on the superstructure, near Admiral Lütjens' bridge.

Shortly afterwards, a huge trench was located, dug out of the underwater mountainside by the **Bismarck**. The sinking hull of the **Bismarck** hit the seabed at around twenty-four miles an hour. It blasted an impact crater over a mile wide, but because it hit the steep slope of an extinct underwater volcano, the hull started to slide. The **Bismarck's** huge 50,000 ton heavily armoured hull charged down the slope, ripping out a deep trench nearly two miles long. The r.o.v. was now in that trench, and heading downhill.

The clarity of the water at 15,000 feet is breathtaking. The images of the massive hull were better than anyone had dared hope for. At last a scientific analysis of the wreck can shed light on the historical accounts of this famous battle.

As the dawn came up on the morning of Tuesday 27th May 1941, the British ships started to circle the **Bismarck**. At 08.47 they opened fire. The big battleships HMS **King George V** and HMS **Rodney** along with the cruisers **Dorsetshire** and **Norfolk** launched salvo after salvo. The **Bismarck**, unable to steer, wandered aimlessly through a fire storm. The British shells soon turned the upper part of the

Bismarck into a wreck, very rapidly. Within a very few minutes one of the finest battleships in the world was converted into a useless, burning wreck. The Germans tried to respond to the British attack, but at 09.02 HMS **Rodney** scored a direct hit on the **Bismarck's** forward control tower. Her last remaining gun, the after turret, was obliterated by a 16-inch shell at 09.31. The **Bismarck's** guns fell silent: her crew were defenceless.

The British continued to hurl thousands of shells at the crippled German ship for the next hour: it was estimated that between two and three hundred hit their target. Despite all this, the **Bismarck** still refused to sink. There have always been questions asked as to why the Royal Navy did not simply pull back and torpedo this essentially helpless ship.

Virtually everyone who was on the deck of the **Bismarck** died. Most of the survivors were men such as engineers, who worked below decks.

At 10.21 Admiral Tovey was at his limits on fuel. There were reports of imminent German air and U-Boat attacks. Much to the amazement of the Admiralty, Tovey broke off the action and headed for home. The cruiser HMS **Dorsetshire** was ordered to torpedo the **Bismarck**. Tovey's action caused a tremendous crisis between himself and Churchill - Tovey had sailed away with the **Bismarck** still afloat.

But the evidence of the expedition now suggests that Tovey's decision was not so strange. It's clear from a detailed examination of the hull that the handful of torpedoes that the British had already fired had had a much greater effect than previously believed. Earlier in the action the **Rodney** and the **Norfolk** had fired four torpedoes each at the **Bismarck's** starboard side. A survey of the hull revealed that four out of the eight hit. Tovey may well have seen that the **Bismarck** was going to sink. The conclusion of the expedition was that the **Bismarck** was indeed sunk by British torpedoes. If the Germans did open the sea cocks to scuttle the **Bismarck**, as anecdotal evidence from survivors claimed, it only hastened the inevitable.

At 10.38 the **Bismarck** started to roll over.

The **Bismarck** carried a crew of 2,500 men. Eight hundred men got away and attempted to swim towards HMS **Dorsetshire**. The **Dorsetshire** and the destroyer **Maori** moved in to rescue the German sailors. But shortly after the ships came to a halt, there was a warning of a U-Boat attack.

All British warships were under strict orders to move off under such circumstances. To be static in the water near a submarine was considered suicidal. Of the 800 German sailors who had survived the shelling, nearly 700 were left in the water. At 19.00 on the evening of 27th May, almost nine hours after the **Bismarck** sank, a German U-Boat arrived on the scene to look for survivors. Just two were found; the remaining 700 had drowned in the stormy seas. No one knows just how Admiral Lütjens had met his death.

Winston Churchill was in the House of Commons at the time and he was handed a piece of paper. He announced to the House that he had just received news that the **Bismarck** had been sunk. Everybody cheered except for one man, M.P. Harold Nicholson, the writer, and he more than most sensed the human tragedy in the loss of so many lives. Four thousand sailors, including two Admirals, died in the battle of **Hood** and **Bismarck**.

Just one hundred and twelve **Bismarck** survivors were landed at Newcastle and spent the rest of the war in camps in Canada.

Today many of those who remain meet at the memorial to their lost shipmates in the Bismarck family estate near Hamburg. With them are some of the men who sank them. Together, both sides still remember the 4,000 men of **Hood** and **Bismarck** who died.

Although they didn't realise it at the time, these men took part in one of the last chapters of the battleship era. Such huge gunships were never built again. The battle of the **Hood** and **Bismarck** proved that the most powerful weapons that either side possessed could now be destroyed by something cheaper, smaller and more mobile. Soon aircraft would come to dominate naval warfare. |||||

THE MONDAY FACILITY

Members' access to the Archives and Library at the Merseyside Maritime Museum on Mondays continues in 2002 as follows:

MAY: Mondays 13th, 20th and 27th
JUNE : Mondays 10th, 17th and 24th
JULY : Mondays 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th
AUGUST : 5th, 12th and 19th
SEPTEMBER : 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th
OCTOBER : 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th

MONTHLY MEETINGS

The Society's Monthly Meetings will resume on Thursday 19th September commencing at 12.30pm in the Education Suite at the Maritime Museum.

Details of the full programme for the 2002 - 2003 session will be published in the September *'Bulletin'*.

BRUNEL'S SHIPS - *'GREAT WESTERN'*, *'GREAT BRITAIN'* AND *'GREAT EASTERN'*

by Dr Denis Griffiths

Dr Griffiths spoke to the Society on 21st February, and this précis of his presentation has been compiled from his book: "Brunel's Ships".

Isambard Kingdom Brunel - The Man

It is a testimony to Isambard Kingdom Brunel's engineering genius that he is the one Victorian engineer to achieve the immortality of enduring popular fame. Brunel's range was simply astonishing, creating tunnels, bridges, railways, docks and shi ps. He worked in timber, stone, brick and especially iron.

Isambard Kingdom Brunel was born at Portsea on 9th April 1806. At the time his father, the émigré engineer Marc Brunel, was working on his block mills in Portsmouth dockyard. After studying mathematics at Caen and Paris, Isambard spent time in the Paris works of Louis Breguet, the leading French maker of chronometers and scientific instruments, and he completed his education in the workshops of Henry Maudslay, the leading British engineer. As might be expected of the son of a great engineer, Brunel's dominant ambition was to stand at the head of his father's profession, recognised by his peers and a wider public as *the* engineer.

Brunel was driven by an obsessive-compulsive personality, something that found outlets in his unceasing schedule of work and his habitual chain-smoking of cigars. Brunel took no fee for his work with the Great Western Steamship Company and invested his own money in the company. For Brunel the development of the steamship was an engineering legacy from his father and an opportunity to test his vast range of engineering skill and limitless vision against the most demanding engineering environment of the age. In the space of twenty years he would perfect the wooden paddle wheel steamship that his father had pioneered; introduce new materials into every aspect of ship structure and design, and apply a new propeller system to create the modern ship.

By the time he died, tragically young, Isambard Kingdom Brunel had taken the ship to a scale and power which dwarfed the imagination of his contemporaries. Brunel worked on ships to the very end: he was on board the **Great Eastern**, supervising preparations for sea trials, when he had a stroke on 5th September 1859 and he died ten days later. He was only 53.

The Steamship *'Great Western'*

1,340 tons. Length: 212 ft, Breadth: 35.3 ft. Built by William Patterson at Bristol, engines by Maudslay, Sons & Field, London. Launched: 19th July 1837.

Isambard Kingdom Brunel is given the credit for originating the idea of a steamship line between Bristol and New York, the proposition being raised at a

meeting of the Great Western Railway Company directors in October 1835. Concern was expressed that the proposed line between London and Bristol exceeded in length any railway then planned, but Brunel countered with the remark: *'why not make it longer and have a steamboat go from Bristol to New York?'* Most of those present took the remark as a joke, but following the meeting Brunel discussed the idea with engineer Thomas Guppy. By the mid 1830s steamships were fairly common in the coastal waters around Britain, and services operated to European ports as far south as Gibraltar. A limiting factor in any steamship's operation was its coal consumption, and coal bunkers occupied valuable cargo space. A small bunker capacity meant that more cargo could be carried but it limited the time which could be spent under steam, and hence distance between ports if steam power was to be continuously employed. Naturally sails could be used with or without steam assistance, but the whole idea of employing steam was to enable the ship to operate irrespective of wind. On a short sea route a ship could carry sufficient coal and cargo to make the venture worthwhile, but on longer routes steam power was considered as auxiliary and only employed to supplement sail propulsion in light or contrary winds.

In the mid 1830s it was generally believed that a steamship could not carry enough fuel for a direct voyage from Britain to New York and that the voyage would have to be accomplished in stages. One route proposed was via the Azores, whilst another involved the Atlantic crossing between Valentia on the west coast of Ireland and Halifax, Nova Scotia. There were problems in estimating the coal consumption and bunker capacity requirements for an Atlantic voyage due to the variable nature of coal. Because of his railway work, Brunel was well aware of the problem with coal. Welsh steam coal was by far the best and for a service across the Atlantic from Bristol this could be classed as local and readily obtained. However, bunkers would need to be lifted in New York as it would be totally impractical to bunker the ship for a round voyage.

The 1,340 ton wooden paddle steamer **Great Western** was laid down in June 1836 at the yard of Patterson and Mercer, Bristol and was launched on 19th July 1837 in the presence of a crowd of about 50,000.

Brunel was given complete responsibility for the selection of the machinery to propel the **Great Western** and he invited tenders for machinery of about 400hp from a number of manufacturers. After careful consideration, Brunel recommended that Maudslay, Sons & Field of Lambeth should be awarded the contract to supply the engines and boilers. In recommending Maudslays, Brunel wrote to the directors: *'You will remember that it will be the longest voyage yet run; that in the event of unfavourable weather a total failure might be the result of the engine not working to its full power, or consuming too great a quantity of coal - a very common occurrence with engines apparently well made after six or seven days of constant work - and lastly, that the future success of the boat as a passenger ship - nay, even of the company's boats generally, and to a great extent and for some time, the reputation of Bristol as a steamboat station, may depend on the success of this first voyage. It is*

indispensible, therefore, to secure as far as possible, a machine that shall be perfection in all its detail from the moment of its completion.'

Whilst the construction of the hull continued, Brunel made regular visits to Maudslay's factory at Lamberth to monitor progress on the machinery. This was necessary from a professional point of view in order to ensure quality, but also for financial reasons as payment for the machinery had been arranged in instalments, each instalment being due at a particular stage of construction.

It had been decided to have the machinery installed in London rather than at Bristol for a number of reasons including the fact that modifications to the engines, the largest built to that date, would be easier close to Maudslay's engine works at Lambeth rather than in Bristol. Accordingly the **Great Western** left Bristol, under sail, for London on 18th August 1837 and arrived at the East India Dock four days later and lay there until March 1838 whilst her machinery was installed and the accommodation fitted out.

Once the installation of the machinery was complete, the **Great Western** was moved to a river berth at Brunswick Wharf early in March 1838 in order to prepare for engine trials. Two trial trips were arranged during the month, these taking the **Great Western** down to Gravesend and back. Prior to the first trial on 24th March the boilers had been under steam for two days and slow turning of the engines whilst at the berth confirmed that all was well. On trial a speed of 11 knots was achieved for a period whilst near Gravesend.

With all aspects of the ship performing to expectation, the **Great Western** could be moved to Bristol to prepare for her first voyage. The trip to Bristol commenced on 31st March with a number of distinguished visitors on board including Brunel's father. The visitors left when the **Great Western** was off Gravesend, but about half an hour later a strong burning smell was noticed with smoke and flames being observed near the base of the funnel. Fearing for his ship, the master, James Hosken, put the **Great Western** aground on the mud of Leigh. The chief engineer, George Pearne, entered the smoke filled engine room and opened the feed water supply to the boilers in order to fill them and so prevent a rapid rise in pressure due to the additional heating caused by the fire; had he not taken this action an explosion could have resulted.

In an attempt to go down the fore stokehold ladder, Brunel stepped on a burnt rung which gave way. He fell to the bottom, about twenty feet, falling on to the chief engineer. After a few hours, no material damage having been done, the **Great Western** got up steam again and resumed her passage to Bristol.

The **Great Western** arrived at King Road, near the mouth of the Bristol Avon, at 6pm on 2nd April. The ship was actually too wide to pass through the locks into the Cumberland Basin without removing the lower part of her paddle wheels. Promises from the harbour authorities that the lock entrance would be widened came to nothing. She was due to start her maiden voyage to New York on 7th April but a heavy gale sprang up and she did not leave until 10am on Sunday 8th April. Owing to

exaggerated reports about the fire, some fifty intending passengers had been scared away and only seven actually sailed.

During the first crossing to New York considerable troubles were experienced in maintaining steam due to the difficulties in getting coal to the boilers from the ends of the ship. The coal had to be transported in barrows or baskets, and as coal stocks close to the boilers were consumed, it was necessary for the coal trimmers to collect supplies from further and further away; not an easy task with the ship pitching and rolling. On the fifth day out the chief engineer decided that the trimmers and stokers should work twelve hours instead of eight. Conditions did not improve when the trimmers and stokers went off watch as their sleeping berths had been placed close to the boilers and it was too hot for effective sleep, resulting in considerable fatigue. At times the coal supply rate became so slow that two of the four boilers had to be shut down. On 19th April, eleven days after leaving Bristol, and four days before arrival at New York, George Pearne, the chief engineer, had to turn out all the engine room hands with the promise of an extra half dollar's pay in order to shift coal from the extreme end bunkers. On a number of days seamen had to assist the trimmers and stokers with the moving of coal and disposal of ashes.

The **Great Western** finally tied up at the Pike Street Wharf, New York, at 5pm on 23rd April 1838 after a passage of 15 days 10¼ hours (after making allowance for the time difference between Bristol and New York, in those days reckoned as 4¾ hours). No problems had been experienced with the engines on the maiden voyage, but several stops had been made to resecure loose paddle floats. The **Great Western** arrived in New York with over 100 tons of coal still in her bunkers, 445 tons having been consumed on the passage. At New York George Pearne, the chief engineer, was scalded when blowing-down the boilers and subsequently died as a result of his injuries.

Apart from problems with an overheating bearing, the return eastbound crossing was made without incident and the **Great Western** proved that an Atlantic steamship service was practicable. Over the years she also illustrated that such a service was also profitable, returning working profits in each of her service years 1838-1846, despite the fact that she never sailed during the winter months.

The success of the **Great Western**, coming on top of the enormous critical success of the railway project that spawned her, provided Brunel with the status he craved: he was now *the* engineer.

Given the problems of docking at Bristol, a decision was taken to use Liverpool alternately with Bristol as terminal port for the 1842 season. Liverpool offered enclosed dock facilities as well as good railway communications. The move was a success and Liverpool became the **Great Western's** U.K. port from 1843. From Liverpool the Great Western Steamship Company (GWSS Co) was in direct competition with the Cunard Line, although that concern sailed to Boston and not to New York. The Cunard mail ships were however subsidized and the **Great Western's** profits were not as high as before the Cunard services commenced. Money was also required to complete the **Great Britain** and in 1844 the GWSS Co. attempted to sell

the **Great Western** to P&O. A purchase price of £32,000 was agreed but the sale fell through due to a dispute about boilers and surveys.

In February 1841, after seventeen round voyages to New York, Lloyd's Surveyor had reported that the **Great Western** was in a perfectly sound state, free from the slightest indication of decay in all parts to which he had gained access. Two and a half years later, in September 1843, Thomas Guppy reported on the state of the boilers and informed the GWSS Co. directors that they could be made to operate efficiently for another year or two for the outlay of £1,000. Guppy did however recommend that they be replaced and this was accepted. Guppy designed a new tubular boiler which would operate at a pressure of 12 psi and would occupy little more than half the space of the originals, the space saved being available for extra cargo. The cost was £3,000.

The **Great Western** remained in service with the GWSS Co. until withdrawn at the end of the 1846 season. She arrived at Liverpool on 12th December at the conclusion of her 45th voyage. The **Great Western** was then sold to the West Indies Royal Mail Steam Packet Company. She was a successful and profitable ship but had to be sold in order to finance the salvage of the **Great Britain** from Dundrum Bay (Co. Down, N. Ireland). The **Great Western** was finally sold for scrapping in August 1856, and Brunel went to visit her whilst she was being scrapped at Castle's Yard, Millbank, on the Thames.

The Screw-Propelled Iron Steamship *'Great Britain'*

3,270 tons. Length: 289ft, Breadth: 50ft. Built in drydock; floated 19.July 1843
Two pairs of geared diagonal engines driving a six-bladed propeller, 15½ feet diameter.

With the **Great Western** in service and operating successfully, the owners looked towards a second ship, and to this end purchased a cargo of African oak. Although the second vessel was originally intended to be constructed from wood, a change of mind quickly took place, resulting in the first of many delays which were to plague the ship. At the Annual General Meeting of the Great Western Steamship Company on 7th March 1839 it was stated: *'After, however, the most ample investigation, the directors have finally determined to build your next vessel of iron and are now far advanced in preparation for her construction which will be carried out under the most skilful superintendence.'* It is easy to see Brunel's influence in these changes, but he could not have forced any decision on the directors..

The **Great Western** was running well and had a successful season on the Atlantic, so there must have been a strong inclination to build the same again. The decision to build the next ship of iron was a major step, for no ship of the intended size had been built from iron at that time, and there was no iron shipbuilding expertise in the area. No local shipbuilder was willing to submit a tender and the GWSS Co. decided to undertake the job itself. A strip of land near Wapping Wharf, Bristol, was acquired, workshops were built and a dry dock excavated.

The keel of the GWSS Co's second vessel was laid without ceremony in the new dry dock in 1840. At that time it was intended to name her the **Mammoth**. Brunel worked with Guppy and Patterson on the design of the hull, Patterson having the greatest input in terms of the form. Guppy was responsible for the actual construction and Brunel, the structural engineer, would have considered the strength aspects. In practice there would never have been such strict demarcation as the men would have worked as a team, although those actually on site, Patterson and Guppy, must have dealt with many of the building problems as they arose.

In terms of iron ship construction, the **Great Britain** was a one-off. There were no rules to follow for construction and the designer had a very free hand within the limits imposed by the materials available. One of these limits was the maximum size of iron plate which could be obtained. Patterson drew the lines for the **Great Britain** but these were greatly changed as the size of the ship increased. Wood had given way to iron and paddle propulsion was about to be replaced with screw.

In 1839 the Ship Propeller Company built the 200 ton **Archimedes** to prove the concept of the screw propeller at sea. The company realised that access to key decision-makers would be critical and the **Archimedes'** first trial took place near London Bridge on 16th October 1839 Having proved that the screw was a useful propeller, the **Archimedes** set off on a 'Round Britain Tour' to publicise the screw and she arrived at Bristol in May 1840. The GWSS Co. chartered her for a series of trials and Brunel had the vision to modify his new iron transatlantic steamer into a screw vessel, bringing together for the first time the two key developments that created the modern ship. Alone of all those who saw the experimental ship he recognised the fundamental advantages of the screw for full-powered ships of the largest size. Within days Brunel had compiled a powerful report to the directors of the GWSS Co., as their engineering adviser, recommending that the new iron transatlantic steamer then under construction should be adapted for the screw propeller.

The **Great Britain** was rigged as a six-masted schooner, with the second mast also carrying square sails, the total sail area being about 16,000 square feet. As with the **Great Western**, studding sails could also be carried. The four after masts were stepped on to the deck using hinges as they could not be carried down to the bottom of the hull due to the propeller shafting.

The triangular form of engine fitted to the **Great Britain** was based on a patent taken out by Sir Marc Isambard Brunel; there being four cylinders, two on each side of the ship, driving an overhead crankshaft. Although the engines were novel, the boilers were not, being of the flue type and essentially out of date. It was difficult to imagine why such an old boiler concept was employed when the ship herself was pushing forward the boundaries of marine technology. Maximum boiler pressure was only about 5 psi.

Delays to the building of the **Great Britain** were the product of a cash-flow problem caused by the reduction in the revenues from the **Great Western** as a result of the competition from the Cunard Line ships. She was made ready for the Prince Consort to attend her floating ceremony on 19th July 1843. Although the engines had

not been installed, the funnel and six masts had been placed in position for the sake of appearance.

After the floating ceremony the **Great Britain** returned to her building dock to receive her machinery and internal fittings and it was not until April 1844 that she was ready for her trials. Difficulty was experienced in getting her out of the dock until a diver discovered a baulk of timber wedged under her keel. It now became clear that she was too large to negotiate the two groups of locks which separated her from the River Avon. Six months later, on 26th October 1844, she passed through the inner locks from the Floating Harbour to the Cumberland Basin with the aid of a massive wooden cradle which gave her increased buoyancy.

On 11th December an attempt was made to tow the **Great Britain** into the Avon, but before half the ship was through the lock it was evident that she was stuck between the copings and the order was given to pull her back into the Cumberland Basin before she became jammed with the falling tide. An army of workmen removed the coping stones and on the following night's spring tide the **Great Britain** was successfully towed into the River Avon. These difficulties had arisen owing to the abandonment of the original plan to tow the vessel, light, to some other port for her engines to be installed.

After making three trial trips from her anchorage at King Road, the **Great Britain** sailed for London on 23rd January 1845. She remained there for over four months during which time she was thrown open to the public. Why there was such a protracted stay in London is difficult to imagine when the GWSS Co. was urgently in need of funds, but it would seem that the directors and others associated with the ship enjoyed the partying and praise which constituted a major part of the sojourn. The **Great Britain** left London on 12th June and sailed for Liverpool via Cowes, Plymouth and Kingstown, arriving on 3rd July, well over five years since her keel had been laid.

The maiden voyage to New York departed on 26th July 1845 and took 15 days 1¾ hours at an average speed of just over 8½ knots, appreciably faster than the majority of contemporary crossings, but nevertheless, decidedly disappointing. Some 60 passengers and 600 tons of cargo were carried. The **Great Britain** remained at New York for 19 days during which over 21,000 people visited her.

The **Great Britain**, on her second and final transatlantic voyage of the 1845 season, lost all the blades from her propeller. Brunel had worked on a second propeller design when the ship was in Bristol and this spare was fitted over the winter lay-up. It was a four bladed solid unit and at seven tons it was heavier than the original. Being of solid construction there was optimism that it would last longer than the first propeller.

In 1846 the **Great Britain** left Liverpool on her third transatlantic voyage on 9th April. Apart from the failure of the air pump on the outward passage, resulting in the need to proceed under sail alone for six days; the second season seemed to offer improvement as passenger bookings steadily increased. Passage times were being reduced: on her fourth round voyage the westbound crossing took less than fourteen days and she returned eastbound in a little over thirteen days.

On her fifth outward voyage, the **Great Britain** left Liverpool on 22nd September 1846 with 180 passengers but disaster struck at 9.30pm the following evening when she ran aground on the Irish coast in Dundrum Bay (north-east of Newcastle, County Down). Arrangements were made to try and get the ship clear on the next spring tide on 28th September, but a gale the previous day prevented this. It was decided to drive the ship further ashore to a position of greater safety. Attempts were made to protect the **Great Britain** by creating breakwaters but they were soon carried away in gales.

On 8th December 1846 Brunel went to Dundrum Bay and wrote: *'I was grieved to see this fine ship lying unprotected, deserted and abandoned by all those who ought to know her value and ought to have protected her. I can only imagine two alternatives; the one to break her up on the spot and make the most of the materials, the other to get her afloat and into port and to restore her to good condition. If she is brought into port she may be worth, unrepaired, between £40,000 and £60,000.'*

Brunel was well wide of the mark in terms of the selling price, for the **Great Britain** fetched only £18,000 when sold to Gibbs, Bright & Company in 1850.

Salvage started in March 1847 but it was not until August of that year that the **Great Britain** was refloated. She was towed to Belfast Lough for repairs and then on to Liverpool. It says much for the strength of her iron hull that when she was refloated it was still in excellent condition.

The Great Western Steamship Company had under-insured both of its ships and with the sale of the **Great Britain** it was wound up. It will be remembered that the **Great Western** had been sold to fund the salvage of the **Great Britain**.

Although the company which built and owned Brunel's first two ships had failed to make a lasting impact on the maritime world, the ships were a success and Brunel made a valuable contribution to the shipping and maritime industries in Britain. Furthermore he gave his services to the company without accepting any payment.

The **Great Britain** was extensively rebuilt by her new owners and in May 1852 reappeared with a pair of funnels and only four masts. After one round voyage from Liverpool to New York the **Great Britain** sailed from Liverpool for Australia on 18th August and spent the remainder of her service as a steamship on this run. She was laid up at Birkenhead in February 1876 after completing thirty-two round voyages to Australia, and six years of idleness followed. She was then sold, her engines were removed and she made two voyages to San Francisco via Cape Horn as a full-rigged ship. On the third voyage, in 1886, she was badly damaged in a storm near Cape Horn and was forced back to the Falkland Islands and served there as a wool and coal hulk until 1933. In 1937 she was beached at Sparrow Cove, F.I.

Thirty years passed before an increasing desire to preserve the **Great Britain** culminated in Dr Ewan Corlett, a naval architect, making an appeal for action in the correspondence columns of *The Times*. In 1968 an appeal for financial assistance met with a gratifying response, and thanks largely to a donation of £150,000 from property millionaire Jack Hayward it was possible to proceed with the scheme.

Instead of towing the **Great Britain** across the Atlantic it was decided to place her on a submersible pontoon and to this end the tug **Varius II** and the giant pontoon **Mulus III** arrived at Sparrow Cove in March 1970. The holes in the **Great Britain's** hull and a large crack on the starboard side were patched, the remains of her masts were cut down and on 6th April pumping out the flooded hull commenced. By the following morning the **Great Britain** was afloat and she was manoeuvred on to the **Mulus III**, after which the pontoon and her massive cargo were towed to Port Stanley, arriving on 14th April.

The 9,000 mile tow back to Bristol left the Falkland Islands on 24th April and arrived at the mouth of the Avon on 22nd June 1970. The **Great Britain** was towed into Avonmouth Docks for a few minor repairs and on 5th July she started the treacherous nine mile journey up the River Avon. All went well and the two sets of locks at Bristol Docks were safely negotiated. On 19th July 1970 the **Great Britain** was eased into the Wapping Dock, from which she had been launched by Prince Albert 127 years ago to the day.

The Steamship *'Great Eastern'*

Following the salvage of the **Great Britain** from Dundrum Bay, Brunel devoted his time to other engineering problems but he never completely lost touch with, or interest in, maritime matters and in 1851 he once more associated himself with the steamship. The Australian Mail Company solicited his opinion on the best size and class of ship to operate a mail service from Britain to Australia. After some consideration he advised the building of iron ships of 5,000 - 6,000 tons capacity with only one stop for coal, at the Cape of Good Hope.

The major problem with oceanic steamship operation was that of coal; invariably supplies had to be sent overseas on sailing colliers and such an operation was expensive. For a ship to carry sufficient coal for a return voyage to Australia without the need to bunker anywhere, it would have to be very large indeed. Scale did not worry Brunel: it was just another engineering challenge which could be resolved by the application of sound reasoning, and plenty of money.

Brunel wrote: *'In February and March 1852 I matured my ideas of the large ship and in March I made my first sketch of one with paddles and screw. The size I proposed was 600ft by 70ft, and in June and July I determined on the mode of construction now adopted of cellular bottom; intending to make the outer skin of wood for the sake of coppering.'* Making the outer skin of wood, with copper sheathing to prevent attack by *teredo navalis* and other wood-boring worms, was a novel concept for an iron ship but was probably considered essential due to the ease with which an iron hull became fouled by marine growths. In the 1850s anti-fouling coatings were not effective and copper suffered less than iron, but copper could not be fitted directly to an iron hull due to the electrolytic effect.

Brunel discussed his ideas with the directors of the Eastern Steam Navigation Company. That concern had been established in 1851 with the hope of securing mail

contracts to India, Australia and China but in 1852 P&O had been awarded these contracts and the company no longer had a function. Brunel gave it one. In July 1852 a scheme was proposed for the construction of a large steamer which would carry all its own coal for a round voyage to Australia or similar distant place, and at the end of 1852 the directors agreed with the proposal.

The proposed ship would require more powerful machinery than had been installed in a ship to that time and there were engineering limitations. A single-screw propulsion system would require a massive propeller shaft and the thrust block would certainly present difficulties. Twin-screw arrangements were a possibility but there was little experience of such systems. Paddle wheels were less efficient than screw propellers but they did have advantages, particularly at times of shallow draft, such as might be experienced when operating in certain harbours. Brunel sketched an arrangement of paddle and screw propulsion in March 1852 and this was the scheme finally adopted.

Brunel was responsible for the design of the ship, for preparing the contracts and for detailing the specifications; his powers were considerable indeed. The contract for constructing the hull was let to John Scott Russell and it was signed in December 1853. Russell's price for the hull was £275,200 and he even offered to reduce the price to £258,000 if he was awarded the contract for the second ship (it was originally intended to construct two vessels).

Russell had a shipyard at Millwall on the Thames but it had no building dock. It was obvious that the construction of a building dock would be prohibitively expensive and a decision was taken to build the ship above the high water level and launch her into the water. The angle of the slipway for a conventional lengthwise launch would have resulted in the highest part of the hull (the forecastle) being some 100 feet above ground level causing major difficulties in the absence of suitable cranes. A sideways launch was the only possibility. The area in which the ship was to be built and launched had to be strengthened by timber piles driven into the ground. Some 1,500 piles, 24 feet long, were driven into the solid ground below the surface and these were bound together by longitudinal and transverse timbers before a thick bed of concrete was poured between them.

Only the best design practices were to be allowed and those practices were dictated by Brunel who had rebuked Russell for employing the earlier ideas he had used for smaller ships. This new venture broke all existing bounds of scale and new rules had to be devised. There was rivalry between the two men with regards to who should be considered the father of the ship and this rivalry simmered and occasionally erupted throughout the years of construction. Brunel considered himself as both the originator of the project and designer of the ship and took offence when he felt that he was not being given due credit.

It was obvious to Brunel that such a large ship could not be dry-docked because there were no facilities in existence or even planned, and so the vessel would have to be grounded on a gridiron in order to enable routine hull maintenance to be undertaken. The grounding requirement, and possibly the implications of operating the

ship far away from good repair facilities, may have led Brunel to consider the idea of a watertight double bottom. He was certainly aware of the consequences of flooding should the hull plating be punctured from his experience with the **Great Britain** at Dundrum Bay. The eminent naval architect Sir Westcott Abel was impressed by Brunel's design: *'It must be agreed that Brunel's handling of the design of the* ***Great Eastern*** *before 1860 stands out as a milestone in the progress of building ships of iron and later steel.'*

From the early days of the project Brunel devoted much time to the question of propelling the great ship and after giving consideration to a variety of possibilities came to the conclusion that a combined screw and paddle arrangement would best suit the ship.

That the screw propeller was superior to the paddle wheel, Brunel had no doubt but it was not a simple matter of choosing one over the other; this ship was the largest yet envisaged and it was intended to operate in shallow river estuaries, particularly the Hoogly in India, as well as in deep oceans. Although the deep-water draught of the ship was to be about 30 feet, a maximum draught for entering the Hoogly would be about 23 feet. A single screw to transmit the intended power would have had to be about 28 feet in diameter and so it would not be completely immersed in the river resulting in poor manoeuvrability.

A twin-screw arrangement could have been chosen but there was little or no experience on constructing and operating twin-screw steamers at that time, and the installation of the machinery would have presented problems for hull construction. The eventual choice of a combined system seems reasonable in the light of the information available to Brunel at that time, although control of two entirely separate propulsion systems was likely to present problems. It has to be realised that Brunel was designing a ship to operate to India and Australia and he had to consider the restrictions applicable to these areas and not just the conditions which could be found crossing the Atlantic.

Throughout the period he was considering the power plant, Brunel was in constant communication with his friend Joshua Field and the pair disagreed on a number of points. Field considered that the steam pressure should not exceed 15psi on the grounds that mechanical problems increased with pressure. By 17th July 1852 Brunel had decided that the screw engines should deliver 60 per cent of the required power and the paddle engines 40 per cent.

In a memorandum dated 28th April 1853 Brunel wrote: *'We are now seeking tenders for the engines to be installed in a ship of the following dimensions: Length 680 feet; beam 83 feet; mean draught about 25 feet; screw engine, indicated horsepower 4,000; paddle engine, indicated horsepower 2,600; to work with steam 15lbs to 25lbs; speed of screw 45 to 55 revolutions, paddle 10 to 12.'* Brunel considered the screw engine to be the important part of the propulsion system: *'The principal part of the propelling power of the ship will be thrown upon the screw; and upon these engines therefore will mainly depend the performance of the ship, and*

particularly upon their constant never-failing working, probably for thirty or forty days and nights, must depend the certainty of the ship's performance .....'

Brunel monitored the construction of both sets of engines in his capacity as Consulting Engineer.

The **Leviathan**, as the ship was intended to be called, was laid down on 1st May 1854 and was ready for launching on 3rd November 1857. Her name was changed to **Great Eastern** during this period.

Without doubt Brunel's biggest technical failure with respect to the **Great Eastern** was the launch. Brunel would not consider a free launch due to the inherent dangers this posed to the hull; it had to be a controlled launch. Technically the system was all that should have been required but nature, in the form of friction and gravity, decided otherwise. The ship did move, but grudgingly, and it became obvious that things were not going according to plan. However Brunel persisted: he had no alternative as the ship had to be moved from the building area due to possible litigation. After many attempts, during which the movement could be measured in inches rather than feet, he resorted to brute force and decided that the ship needed to be pushed down the incline. Hydraulic rams were the solution. Even then progress was slow and it was not until the end of January 1858, some three months after the launching process started, that the **Great Eastern** was afloat.

Brunel had certainly made mistakes in his assessment of the situation and to make matters worse the launch was conducted in the full glare of the public attention as the company had sold tickets in order to recoup some of the expenditure.

Building and launching costs had exhausted the Eastern Steam Navigation Company's funds. In due course a new concern, the Great Ship Company, as formed with a capital of £340,000 and the **Great Eastern** was bought for what, at first sight, was the bargain price of £160,000, her total cost to date being about £720,000. The original intention of running her to the East was abandoned and, instead, it was decided that she should operate on the North Atlantic.

On 9th September 1859 the **Great Eastern** steamed down the Thames and through the Straits of Dover into the English Channel, bound for Portland. Just four days previously, on 5th September, Brunel had suffered a massive stroke which resulted in his death on 15th September.

An explosion occurred in the **Great Eastern's** engine room as she was passing Hastings, killing six engineers and injuring a number of others. The ship herself was not seriously damaged and proceeded on an extended trial trip to Holyhead where she was inspected by Prince Albert. The **Great Eastern** was then laid up at Southampton until the following summer.

The maiden voyage to New York left Southampton on 16th June 1860. The passage time was 11 days 13¼ hours at an average speed of 11.36 knots which was below expectations although decidedly faster than the average for those days. There were only 35 fare-paying passengers, but 418 crew members. A two-day cruise to Cape May was arranged and 2,000 passengers were embarked at $10 each (excluding meals). As there were berths for only 300 passengers, the 'cruise' was a complete

fiasco. The **Great Eastern** left New York on her eastbound crossing at the end of August and had the misfortune to fracture her propeller shaft in mid Atlantic. A new shaft was fitted during the following winter.

In 1861 the **Great Eastern** left Milford Haven for New York on 1st May with 100 passengers, and returned on 25th May with 194 passengers. She was then chartered to the British Government to carry troops to Quebec and sailed from Liverpool on 27th June 1861 with 2,568 on board; at that time by far the largest number carried across the North Atlantic on one voyage of any ship.

On 10th September 1861 the **Great Eastern** sailed from Liverpool for New York with over 400 passengers - a sure indication that the public's confidence in her was increasing. On the second day out her steering gear and both paddle wheels were put out of action during a severe gale and the ship eventually made Queenstown (Cobh) under her screw propeller alone.

The **Great Eastern** made three round voyages to New York in 1862. However, whilst arriving at New York on the third voyage, she struck an uncharted rock off Montauk in Long Island Sound and punctured a hole 80 feet long by 9 feet wide in her flat bottom. The inner hull had not been penetrated, but even so it looked as if the **Great Eastern** was doomed as there was no dry dock in existence nearly large enough to accommodate her. Eventually the ship was patched up and sailed for home in January 1863 after £70,000 had been spent on repairs. The **Great Eastern** incurred a substantial loss in 1863 and the Great Ship Company went into liquidation in December.

In February 1864 Daniel Gooch, locomotive superintendent of the Great Western Railway, and two colleagues bought the **Great Eastern** at an auction for £25,000, the true cost being £95,000 as they had already acquired £70,000 worth of Great Ship Company bonds.

The **Great Eastern** was next chartered as a cable ship to the Telegraph Construction and Maintenance Company. Ten of her boilers and one funnel were removed to make way for large tanks capable of storing the cable. The **Great Eastern** sailed on 4th June 1865 with 4,600 tons of cable and 7,000 tons of coal on board. Operations began at Valentia (West Ireland) on 22nd July and by 1st August over 1,000 miles of cable had been paid out. The cable then parted and sank in water over 2 miles deep. All efforts at recovery failed and on 10th August the **Great Eastern** returned to port.

In March 1866 a new company, the Anglo-American Telegraph Company was formed, and the **Great Eastern** sailed from Valentia on 13th July. The new cable was laid without incident and the **Great Eastern** steamed into Heart's Content Harbour, Newfoundland, on 26th July. On 2nd September the **Great Eastern** succeeded in recovering the 1865 cable and six days later again arrived at Heart's Content, thereby completing a second transatlantic cable.

The **Great Eastern** was next chartered by the *Société des Affréteurs du Great Eastern*, of Paris, for a series of voyages between New York and Brest, catering for passengers proceeding to and from the Paris Exhibition of 1867. She received new

boilers, steam steering gear (the first to be installed in any ship) and a thorough refit at the hands of G. Forrester & Co. of Liverpool at a cost of about £50,000. The **Great Eastern** left Liverpool for New York on 26th March with just 123 passengers (amongst them the young French science-fiction writer Jules Verne, author of *Around the World in Eighty Days*). The ship returned from New York direct to Brest on 16th April. Heavy losses were incurred by the charterers, and the New York - Brest sailings were abandoned.

In 1869 the **Great Eastern** was engaged in a spell of cable-laying from France to North America, followed by one from Bombay to Aden. She was then laid up at Milford Haven for many years. From time to time attempts were made to find profitable employment and it was announced in 1883 that a company had been formed to purchase and employ her in carrying coal between the Firth of Forth and the Thames; the intention being to load 20,000 tons of coal in sacks on each southbound voyage. The scheme fell through!

In 1886 the **Great Eastern** was chartered to David Lewis' Great Eastern Exhibition Company Limited and became an exhibition ship at Liverpool. Later she was employed in a similar capacity at Dublin and Greenock. She was sold by auction in October 1887 for £26,000, the intention being to use her as a coal hulk at Gibraltar. This idea came to nothing and a month later she was sold to Henry Bath & Sons, shipbreakers, for £16,000. She left the Clyde on 22nd August 1888 for New Ferry, Birkenhead, where she was scrapped. Breaking up started on 1st January 1889 and was completed some thirty months later.

So ended the career of a 'white elephant' which did, however, manage to break one record in that, during the whole of her existence, she remained by far the largest ship in the world. It was not until 1899 that another ship equalled her in length, (the **Oceanic**), and it was 1901 before her tonnage was exceeded (the **Celtic**). A principal reason for the failure of the **Great Eastern** was undoubtedly the undeveloped state of marine engines and boilers at the time she was built. |||||

Further Reading

Brunel's Ships by Denis Griffiths, Andrew Lambert and Fred Walker.
ISBN I 86176 102 3 published by Chatham Publishing

*Isambard Kingdom Brunel, probably the most celebrated if not the most innovative engineer of his day, created a number of quite revolutionary steamships - the **Great Western** which was the first practical transatlantic paddle steamer; the **Great Britain**, the first iron-built screw-driven liner; and the monster **Great Eastern** which remained the largest ship in the world for over half a century. Brunel also worked with the Admiralty on the introduction of the screw propeller into naval service.*

*The story of Brunel and his ships, however, is surrounded by myth and self-created propaganda. In this book, a multi-talented team of marine engineer, historian and naval architect combine to analyse the scientific and economic context of the ships; the sum and substance of Brunel's contribution; and the technical features of his ships. It is illustrated in depth with original draughts, contemporary prints and photographs. At a time when the **Great Britain** is becoming the central focus of attention at Bristol Docks, this book will draw attention again to a most remarkable engineer and ship designer.*

POST WAR STEAM CARGO LINER DEVELOPMENTS

by Alan McClelland

As the Second World War drew to a close British cargo liner operators faced difficult technological and commercial considerations. Tonnage losses due to enemy action had to be made good as soon as possible. War-built tonnage could not supply the total demand, and in any case some of it was unsuitable for certain trades except as stopgaps.

During the war marine engine builders were set to design straightforward types of machinery across a wide range of powers. They were encouraged to make use of land-orientated technology and expertise wherever it was appropriate to do so. This was particularly the case with regard to turbine installations, and they also benefited from advances called for by the Admiralty. Water tube boilers with advanced steam conditions and improved gearing were results of this situation. Engine and boiler spaces were made more compact.

In 1945-46 there was little to choose on paper between steam turbine and oil engine propulsion for fast cargo liners, taking into account a wide variety of technical and cost factors. On long hauls some, but not all, shipping companies found the diesel less reliable and more expensive to maintain.

Brocklebanks' loyalty to steam turbines made economic sense in the immediate post-war era. The **Manipur's** sister ship **Maidan** of 1946 featured in an exhibition late the next year to illustrate the owners' development policy since 1914. A leaflet, which served as a commentary to the display, emphasised the extent to which electricity was employed aboard the newest liners. It stated that this was because the **Maidan's** *'speed involves her spending more time in port than at sea'*. Shippers were advised that the extensive use of electricity meant that *'for the first time the company has a ship fitted throughout with mechanical cargo ventilation which can be continued under all weather conditions'*. A further advantage was that *'judged by results of the **Maidan's** first voyage under arduous circumstances, a system of air driers bids fair to eliminate sweat damage'*.

By 1952 the employment of boiler fuel in diesels which were themselves subject to constant improvements, meant that steam turbine installations faced stiff competition. That year Brocklebanks commissioned the **Maipura** with three Scotch single ended boilers to produce steam at 260 lbs./sq.in. for her turbines. By contrast Alfred Holt & Company accepted the **Nestor** with two watertube boilers supplying steam at 770 lbs./sq.in. to her double reduction geared turbines built by Metropolitan-Vickers of Manchester. Other steam turbine propelled cargo liners completed in 1952 were the **Benreoch, Cairndhu, Cairnrowan, City of Winchester, Manchester Explorer, Manchester Pioneer, Manchester Spinner, Roonagh Head** and **Sunda** -all with double reduction geared machinery.

Sources:

- *Shipbuilding and Shipping Record*, 13.11.1947, plus later editions
- *Transactions*, Liverpool Nautical Research Society, Vol. IX, 1955-61, *'The Development of Marine Machinery'* by Sir Stewart Mactier and W.H. Falconer.
- *Merchant Ships - British Built 1952* (Southampton 1953)
- Transactions NECI.

Looking forward from the first-class sports deck on the **Queen Elizabeth** in 1963.
(See *'A Purser's Clerk on the Queen Elizabeth in 1963'* - Bulletin Extra, January, 2002)
(Photo : John Shepherd)

AN ACCUMULATION OF ANNIVERSARIES

The year 2002 sees some significant anniversaries.
For the ocean liner enthusiast there are at least five:

1] February marked the 60th anniversary of the destruction by fire and subsequent capsize of the French Line's **Normandie** at New York. 2] 9th January was the thirtieth anniversary of the destruction, also by fire, of the Cunard-White Star liner **Queen Elizabeth** in the harbour at Hong Kong. 3] April marked the ninetieth anniversary of the loss of arguably the most famous ocean liner of all time - the **Titanic**. 4] 3rd February marked the fortieth anniversay of the entry into service of the **France**, the last liner ever built specifically for North Atlantic service and finally 5] 21st June is the fiftieth anniversary of the delivery of the fastest liner of all time, the **United States**, to her owners, the United States Lines.

And so it goes on - perhaps *'Bulletin'* readers can remember a few more ..... ?

Nearer to home, 16th September 2002 marks the 40th anniversary of the final sailing of the much loved **St Tudno** from Liverpool to Llandudno and Menai Bridge, an event which will be marked by a special *'Bulletin'* article.

THE SOCIETY'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 16th MAY 2002

The full text of the Chairman's Annual Report, a copy of the Accounts, and the Minutes of the A.G.M. will be included with the September *'Bulletin'*.

JUST FANCY THAT !!!

from the *'Oban Times'* of 2nd May, 2002

FORCE FIVE STOPS ANIMALS - NOT HUMANS - GOING TO SEA

A scientific report before the European Commission recommending that animals should not be transported by sea-going ferries if the wind is above 24mph has been branded as *'meddlesome, irrelevant and totally superfluous'*.

If taken on board, the suggestion by the Scientific Steering Committee on Animal Welfare would mean that it is fine to send humans to sea in force 5/6 winds, but not animals!

AND FINALLY

The following letter appeared in the Journal of the well-known company Stothert & Pitt in February, 1964:

"Sublime Sir:

Many unworthy Oriental gentlemen, myself included, find very great bliss in reading your most elegant journal. We all think it very much best value for money - particularly as it costs nothing.

Very much interested in your products, for which my company would like exclusive agency in Far East. Please kindly send samples and prices with full instructions how to use. Also commission terms and details of rake-offs.

I prostrate myself in pleasurable anticipation,

Yours deferentially, Sing Dum, Merchant, China."

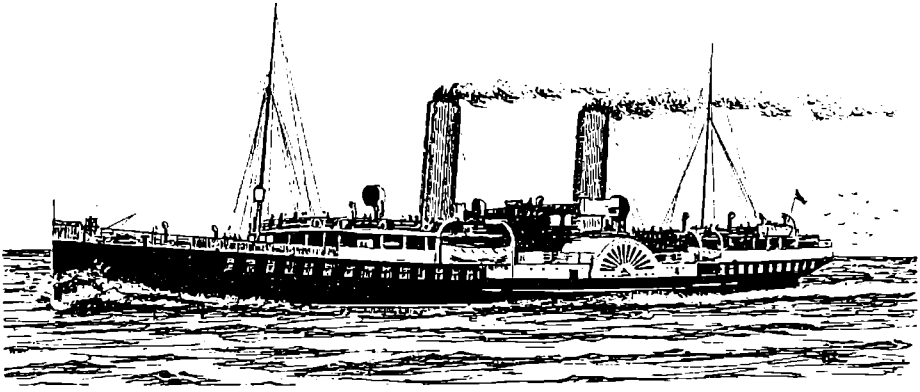
The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

(Founded in 1938)

THE BULLETIN

Volume 46, Number 2, September 2002

Editor : John Shepherd



A SUMMER'S EVENING OFF THE ROCK LIGHT, NEW BRIGHTON

20th June 1981, 19.30hrs.

The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's **Manx Maid** is inward bound from Douglas, Isle of Man. Behind her Brocklebank's **Markhor** is outward bound. On the right of the photograph, having just passed the Rock Light, is the B. & I. Line's Boeing Jetfoil **Cú-na-Mara**, outward bound to Dublin

(photo: John Shepherd)

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

Membership and General Correspondence:
The Liverpool Nautical Research Society.
Maritime Archives and Library,
Merseyside Maritime Museum,
Albert Dock,
LIVERPOOL, L3 4AA, U.K.

'Bulletin' related matters:
John Shepherd,
Flat 7, "Mount Court",
Mount Road,
WALLASEY, CH45 9JS, U.K.

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

Front Cover:
*The **La Marguerite** was built by the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Company of Govan in 1894 for the Thames-Continental service of Palace Steamers. She was purchased by the Liverpool and North Wales Steamship Company in 1904 and sailed from Liverpool - Llandudno - Menai Bridge until the outbreak of war in August 1914, and again from 1920 until her final voyage on 28th September 1925.*
(Original drawing by John Nicholson)

IT'S A WONDERFUL DAY OUT !

THE STORY OF THE LIVERPOOL & NORTH WALES STEAMSHIP CO

by John Shepherd

16th September 2002 marks the fortieth anniversary of the final sailing of the ***St.Tudno*** *on the Liverpool - Llandudno - Menai Bridge route. Two months later the Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company went into voluntary liquidation. This article looks at the story of the company and the ships it operated. The Company advertised its services in the 1940s and 1950s with the slogan "It's a Wonderful Day Out!"*

Early Days

The Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company had its beginnings in the early days of steam navigation in Britain. Various small owners had done their best to establish steamer communication between Merseyside and North Wales, but the only company of any note was the St George Steam Packet Company, famous in its day for the development of services to Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man. Among the memorable ships which it owned were the **Sophia Jane** (the first steamer to Australia, in 1831), and the **Sirius** (the first westbound steamer across the Atlantic, in 1838). The future Liverpool and North Wales Company therefore had some famous predecessors.

On 15th April 1843 the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company acquired the North Wales passenger and cargo service from the St George Company and placed its new steamer, the **Erin-go-Bragh**, on the run. She was followed by the paddle steamers **Fairy**, **Prince of Wales** and **Prince Arthur**.

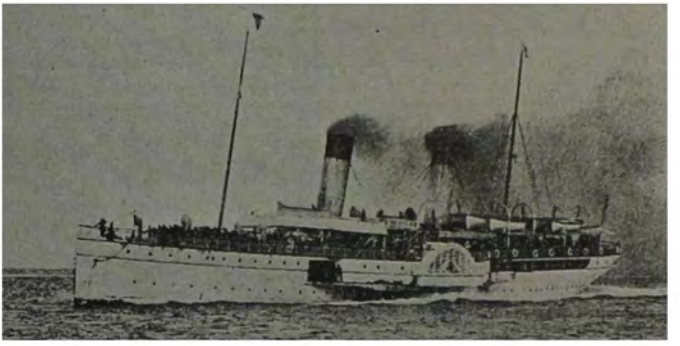
In 1881 these services were taken over by another new concern, the Liverpool, Llandudno and Welsh Coast Steamboat Company Limited. Except for the **Prince Arthur** it soon disposed of the vessels formerly operated by the City of Dublin Company. The **Bonnie Doon**, built by T.B. Seath in 1876, was bought in 1881. She ran for only one season and was replaced by a new paddle steamer, the **Bonnie Princess**.

The Fairfield connection

An important transition stage in the history of the Liverpool - North Wales steamer service occurred in 1890. At that time the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Company had on its hands two paddle steamers, the **Paris** and the **Cobra**. The **Paris** had been built in 1875 by John Elder & Company of Govan - as the Fairfield Company was then known - for the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway and had been placed on its Newhaven-Dieppe service. She was too slow for cross-Channel work and alterations made to her paddles brought little improvement in speed. In 1888 the **Paris** was sold back to her builders, now Fairfields, in part exchange for a new and faster ship. Fairfields re-boilered her and re-conditioned her for service somewhere else - but where?

The **Cobra**, built by Fairfields in 1889, was designed to open a daylight service between the Clyde and Belfast for G. & J. Burns. She ran for a single season before being returned to her builders as unsatisfactory - and so Fairfield's had two steamers on their hands, and no place for them to go. Like others before them who had tonnage which they did not know

what to do with, Fairfields thought of the North Wales service. Accordingly the New North Wales Steamship Company was formed and the two ships were registered in the name of Mr Richard Barnwell, the managing director of the Fairfield Company. The **Cobra** was renamed **St Tudno**. There are no records to prove that the **Paris** ever sailed on North Wales services.



The first **St Tudno** was built as the **Cobra** for G. & J. Burns

The formation of the Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company

After only one summer of competition (1890) the Liverpool, Llandudno and Welsh Coast Steamboat Company went into liquidation and a new company, the Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company was registered on 19th January 1891 to replace the rival concerns of the previous year. In the prospectus issued to the public dated 21st February 1891 it was stated that during the 1890 summer season the three steamers **St Tudno**, **Bonnie Princess** and **Prince Arthur** (there was no mention of the **Paris**) had carried over 214,000 passengers; the **St Tudno** had been sold and that the Liverpool, Llandudno & Welsh Coast Steamboat Company had gone into liquidation; and that the new company had been formed to fill the vacancy and take the place occupied by the rival concerns of 1890. The whole of the goodwill, property and assets of the Liverpool, Llandudno and Welsh Coast Steamboat Company, including the lease of the pier at Menai Bridge, had been acquired by the new company on, it was considered, very moderate terms. The two well known ships, the **Bonnie Princess** and the **Prince Arthur**, which had been sailing for the old company for many years, were acquired. To replace the **St Tudno**, a new ship had been ordered from Fairfields, and Fairfields themselves would become large shareholders in the new company.

The new steamer referred to in the prospectus was launched in April 1891 and given the name **St Tudno** (2). Trials were run on 4th May and she achieved 20·4 knots. On her voyage from the Clyde to Liverpool the new ship averaged 19 knots. The **St Tudno**(2) had accommodation for 1,061 passengers. A handbill for the 1891 season lists the Liverpool - Menai Bridge return fare as 8/- (40p) saloon, 5/- (25p) steerage.

The **St Tudno** (2) was always a heavy burner of coal, consuming six or seven tons an hour. In 1891 bunker coal at Liverpool was 4s 6d (23p) a ton, but the price was constantly on the increase. The **St Tudno** (2) lasted for twenty-two summers on the North Wales service. She

The **St Tudno** (2) was the first 'new-build' for the newly formed L&NWSSCo.

made occasional trips to the Isle of Man from Llandudno, and in July 1907 she was scheduled to make three trips from Liverpool around Anglesey for a fare of 7s 6d saloon and 5/- (25p) steerage. It was also usual for the **St Tudno** (2) to make a special sailing to Bardsey Island once a year, leaving Liverpool at 8.am and returning at 10.pm, with a call at Llandudno. For several seasons she left Menai Bridge and Llandudno early on Monday mornings enabling Liverpool businessmen and merchants to be back in the City for the ten o'clock opening of markets and exchanges.

At the end of the 1912 season the steamer was sold to the Hamburg-Amerika Line and registered in the name of the MacIver Steamship Company for use as a tender at Southampton. On 23rd September 1914 the **St Tudno** was taken over by the British Government and used as a tender to transports arriving at Spithead and the Solent. She became a troop transport in the Channel service from 1916 until 1918 and then was laid up until 1922 when she was disposed of to the Dutch shipbreakers T.C. Pas.

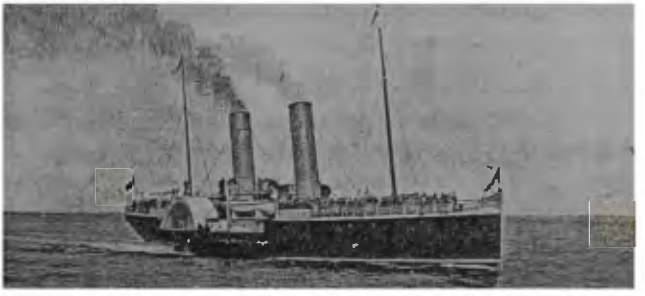
The **Bonnie Princess** was taken over on the formation of the L&NWSSCo.

The new **St Tudno's** running mate in 1891 was the **Bonnie Princess**, taken over from the Liverpool, Llandudno and Welsh Coast Steamboat Company. T.B.Seath & Company of Rutherglen had built this iron-hulled steamer in 1882 to replace the **Boonie Doon**. She had a passenger capacity of 620 and a speed of 14 knots.

By 1895 the Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company had decided to dispose of the **Bonnie Princess** and to build a faster paddle steamer that would be more economical to run. She was sold after the 1895 season to the Hastings, St Leonards and Eastbourne Steamboat Company. The **Bonnie Princess** left the Mersey for the last time on 27th May 1896 but her life on the south coast was short - in 1899 her owners are listed as the shipbreakers G.B. Pas of Holland.

A new ship for the new company : the 'St Elvies' of 1896

After the sale of the **Bonnie Princess** in 1895, services were improved by the addition of the larger and faster **St Elvies**, a handsome two-funnelled, two-masted paddle steamer built by the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Company. She looked like a junior version of the **St Tudno** (2), with her funnels not quite so widely spaced. The **St Elvies** was launched on 13th April 1896 and became one of the most useful and hardest-worked ships which the company ever owned. On trials the **St Elvies** reached almost 20 knots, and she had a service speed of 18½ knots. By the Whitsuntide of 1896 she was ready for her maiden voyage.



The **St Elvies** of 1896 lasted until 1931

Originally the funnels were rather short and were painted yellow with black tops; but to give improved draught and to cope with the smut nuisance, a taller pair, painted plain yellow, was fitted in 1899. The **St Elvies'** bridge was placed amidships between the paddle boxes until it was moved forward during her 1910-11 refit. The passenger capacity was 991 (as against the **St Tudno's** 1,061), and she burned only half the amount of coal of the **St Tudno**.

The **St Elvies** had a varied roster, including the Friday Liverpool - Menai Bridge service and half-day sailings to Llandudno and occasionally to Blackpool. She was perhaps best known for her trips from Llandudno to Douglas and 'Round the Isle of Anglesey'.

Early in her career, the **St Elvies** was involved in the only mishap of consequence in the history of the Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company. On 19th September 1896, while outward bound to Llandudno on a Saturday afternoon excursion with about 250 passengers on board, she came into violent collision with the tug-excursion steamer **Hercules**, moored off New Brighton. The **Hercules**, of the Snowdon Passenger Steamship Company, was almost cut in two and sank immediately. Her crew of nine all jumped overboard and were picked up except for the second engineer who was drowned.

The bow of the **St Elvies** was stove in and her stem twisted. Her forward compartments quickly flooded, but the water-tight compartments held and there was no danger of her sinking. She put alongside New Brighton pier and her passengers returned to Liverpool aboard one of the Wallasey ferries. The collision was established as being caused by a failure of the steering gear.

Following the ourbreak of the First World War the **St Elvies** was requisitioned in March 1915 and she served as the leader of 'P' Unit of the Patrol Minesweeping Service, Firth of Forth, from 1916-1919. She flew the pennant of Commander L.D. Fisher, RN, whose Lieutenant was William Highton, RNR, a master with the Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company.

Apart from her duties as a minesweeper, the **St Elvies** was also a fleet tender and had the distinction of carrying King George V on one occasion. As a minesweeper she gained the distinction of finding and bringing ashore, intact, the first German horned mine to come into British hands. For this extremely hazardous work Admiral Jellicoe sent the ship his personal congratulations and Lieutenant Highton was awarded the DSC.

After her war service the **St Elvies** returned to passenger service and made her first sailing on Whit Saturday in 1919 under the command of Captain Highton. Throughout the 1920s the **St Elvies** carried out an intensive and varied programme of sailings every summer until the decision was taken to replace her. Her last voyage on Sunday 14th September 1930 was a 'Round Anglesey' excursion. The **St Elvies** is perhaps best remembered for her Llandudno-Douglas sailings which used to be advertised as 'a bracing sea trip to the Isle of Man' - bracing oneself against her heaving decks and lifting one's feet up from a deck chair as the sea swilled down her flush-built promenade deck!

After her final voyage the **St Elvies** was laid up in Morpeth Dock, Birkenhead, and partly demolished. She was then towed on to the beach at New Ferry and during the Spring of 1931 her hull was demolished by R. Smith & Sons.

Amalgamation with the Snowdon Passenger Steamship Company

Further tonnage came in 1899 following the amalgamation of the Snowdon Passenger Steamship Company with the Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company. The Dodd family of Merseyside were tug-owners who placed two of their vessels, the **Hercules** and the **Columbus**, on Sunday excursions from Liverpool to Llandudno. The accommodation was rather rough and ready, but the fare was low and the beer plentiful. Observing how the **St Tudno** attracted a better class of passenger, W.H. Dodd persuaded the other members of the family that this was the way to run a profitable excursion business - offer passengers a ship with comfortable accommodation built specially for the purpose. The Snowdon Passenger Steamship Company, which the family launched, went to Lairds of Birkenhead for a smart paddle steamer.

The **Snowdon** of 1892 was taken over by the L&NWSSCo in 1899

The **Snowdon** was launched in 1892 and had a certificate for 462 passengers with a speed of 14 knots. Before long the **Snowdon** established herself as a popular ship. On Sundays she sailed from Liverpool to Menai Bridge, and on weekdays from Llandudno to Caernarvon, calling at various piers on the way. Occasionally she sailed to Douglas, Blackpool or Holyhead. This was the general pattern of her sailings until 1899 when the Snowdon Passenger Steamship

Company amalgamated with the Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company. W.H. Dodd became managing director and from 1928 he was the chairman until his retirement in 1932.

In November 1915 the **Snowdon** was requisitioned and converted to a minesweeper. She was based at Harwich and her war service was uneventful. Following a refit on the Clyde in 1918, the **Snowdon** was attached to a flotilla of paddle minesweepers based at Belfast and it was not until July 1920 that she returned to the North Wales coast, following a major overhaul.

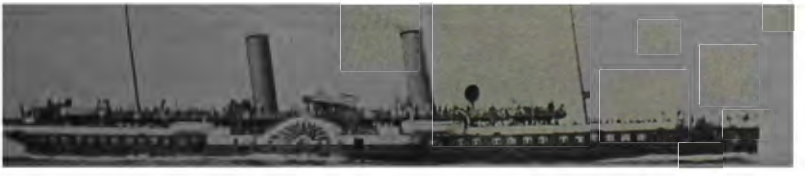
Towards the end of her career the **Snowdon** was based at Blackpool for the 1930 summer season, taking the place of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's **Tynwald**. Besides making local trips in Morecambe Bay, the **Snowdon** operated excursions to Llandudno and Douglas from the Lancashire resort. At the end of the 1931 season the **Snowdon** sailed to the shipbreaking yard of Smith & Company at Port Glasgow.

The famous 'La Marguerite'

In 1904 the Company bought one of the finest and most popular steamers ever to sail along the North Wales coast, the famous **La Marguerite**. She had been built by Fairfields in 1894 for the Thames-Continental service of Palace Steamers, which operated under the management of the Victoria Steamboat Association Limited. The **La Marguerite's** maiden voyage was from London to Boulogne on 23rd June 1894. Marguerite was one of the daughters of Arnold Williams, an energetic pioneer of improved steamboat services on the Thames.

The Victoria Steamboat Association ran into financial difficulties and in April 1895 a company known as New Palace Steamers was incorporated to operate the **La Marguerite**. Under the New Palace Company, the **La Marguerite** sailed from Tilbury to Boulogne on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays and to Margate or Ramsgate on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays - lying idle on Tuesdays. This routine continued until the end of the 1897 season after which Ostend was included in her schedule.

Unfortunately the popularity of the **La Marguerite** was not sufficent to make her profitable. For the 1904 season she was transferred to the Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company and it was hoped that with the lower wages and cheaper fuel in the north she would begin to pay her way.



Arguably the most famous steamer ever on the North Wales run - the **La Marguerite**

The **La Marguerite** made a trial trip from Liverpool to Llandudno and Menai Bridge on 12th May 1904 with guests of the company on board and berthed at the newly completed St George's Pier at Menai Bridge. With a length of 341·6 feet, the **La Marguerite** remains to this day the longest vessel to enter the Menai Straits. At the time of her trial, she still carried the New Palace colours. The **La Marguerite's** first summer season on the North Wales coast lasted from 2nd July until 12th September 1904, and her running mates were the **St Tudno** (2) and the **St Elvies**. During the winter refit of 1909-1910 the **La Marguerite** was re-boilered and given a new set of funnels which improved her appearance. She occasionally sailed at Easter and during

Whit Week, and her main summer season was from late June until mid-September. It is not recorded that the **La Marguerite** sailed on any route other than the principal Liverpool - Llandudno - Menai Bridge service.

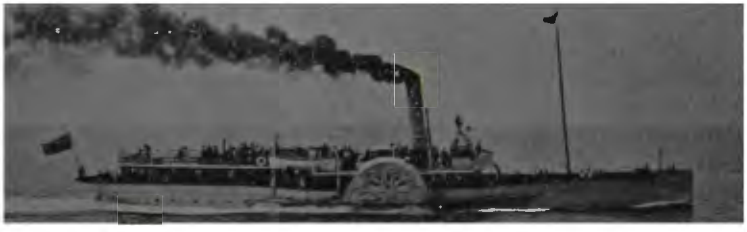
Following the outbreak of war on 4th August 1914 the **La Marguerite** was immediately laid up and she remained inactive until the authorities requisitioned her in March 1915 as a cross-Channel troop transport. Under the command of her regular master on the North Wales service, Captain John Young, the ship is said to have steamed more than 52,000 miles and to have carried about 360,000 troops across the English Channel from Southampton. Her war service was marred by a boiler explosion which killed four of her engine room crew.

The **La Marguerite** was returned to the Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company in 1919 and spent the summer months on charter to the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company. Following war losses the Manx company was very short of tonnage and finding it difficult to cope with the huge numbers of holidaymakers wishing to travel to the Isle of Man in 1919.

The **La Marguerite** resumed her North Wales sailings on 22nd May 1920. The ship was now 26 years old and coupled with intensive use during the war, a series of mishaps occurred. Off the Great Orme at Llandudno in 1923 her rudder chain broke and the paddles had to be skilfully manoeuvred. Then, in the following year, on 18th August she suffered a mishap to her paddles after she had left Llandudno on the return trip to Liverpool and her passengers had to be transferred to the **Snowdon** which came alongside. In 1925 it became known that it would be the last season for the **La Marguerite**, and in the event her final sailing took place on Monday 28th September. She was sold to Thomas Ward for demolition and on 22nd October 1925 left the Mersey for Briton Ferry, South Wales, where she was broken up.

Two second-hand paddle steamers for short cruises from Llandudno

In the decade before the First World War the Company was enjoying the peak of its popularity. With the purchase of two more paddle steamers in 1907, it operated a fleet of six vessels and offered a wide range of sailings. The new additions were the **Southampton**, originally built for the Southampton, Isle of Wight and South of England Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, and renamed the **St Elian**, and the **Rhos Trevor**, purchased from W. Hawthorn in 1909 and renamed **St Trillo**.



The St Elian(1) *ex* Southampton was already 35 years old when purchased by the L&NWSSCo

The **Southampton** was built by Barclay, Curle and Company of Glasgow in 1872, so she was already 35 years old when purchased by the North Wales company. For 30 years she sailed on the Southampton - Isle of Wight service until sold to G. Power & Sons of Newhaven who re-sold her to R.R. Collard, also of Newhaven. The Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company needed a small vessel to operate against the opposition steamers of the Colwyn Bay

and Liverpool Steamship Company, and the **St Elian** (*ex* **Southampton**) was used to attract passengers from Rhyl and Rhos-on-Sea to connect with its principal sailings. With the outbreak of war in 1914 the **St Elian** was laid up and did not sail again - she was now 43 years old - and she was broken up in 1915.

By coincidence the **Rhos Trevor** had also been built for the Southampton company in 1876 as the **Carisbrooke**. She and her near sister, the **Prince Leopold**, were purchased by the Colwyn Bay and Liverpool Steamship Company in 1906, although the Mersey Trading Company took over as managers the following year, when the **Prince Leopold** was renamed **Rhos Neigr**. On 20th July 1908 the **Rhos Neigr** foundered off Rhos-on-Sea pier whilst on passage from Llandudno to Blackpool after striking an unidentified object. Her fifty passengers were rescued and brought ashore by boat. Some 57 years later, in April 1965, the wreck was dispersed by explosives.

Following the loss of the **Rhos Neigr**, the Mersey Trading Company went out of business at the close of the 1908 season and the **Rhos Trevor** was sold to A. Hawthorn of Rhyl, who re-sold her to the Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company in the spring of 1909. She was renamed **St Trillo** and operated short coastal cruises. She had a speed of about 12 knots and a licence to carry 463 passengers.

The **St Trillo** (1) *ex* **Carisbrooke** was sold to Spanish owners in 1921

On the outbreak of war all sailings were suspended, but by 12th August 1914 the **St Trillo** was back in service, to be followed by the **Snowdon** on 14th August and the **St Elvies** on 27th August. These three vessels continued until the normal close of the season. The **St Trillo** and the **Snowdon** carried on excursion sailings from Llandudno throughout the summer of 1915, but by 1916 the **St Trillo** was sailing alone. Her programme of sailings continued until 29th September 1916 when she made the last ever departure by a steamer from Rhos-on-Sea pier. During a severe gale on 7th - 8th January 1917 the berthing head collapsed and was carried on to the beach at Colwyn Bay, where it broke up.

The **St Trillo** became a minesweeper based at Liverpool from October 1916, and returned to her normal peacetime duties in 1919. Towards the end of September 1919 there was a railway strike in Britain and the **St Trillo** was immediately pressed into service to help relieve the transport difficulties between North Wales and Liverpool. Leaving Menai Bridge at 8.am and calling at Bangor, Beaumaris and Llandudno, she reached Liverpool at about 1.30pm. After loading mails, parcels and passengers she set off again, making her calls in the reverse order. This routine continued for about ten days until the strike ended.

On Thursday 14th July 1921 the **St Trillo** struck the Swelly Rock, between the Tubular and Suspension bridges across the Menai Strait. She slid up the rock, heeled over, and remained fast. Lifejackets were issued to the 290 passengers who were soon transferred to the **Snowdon** and the Blackpool pleasure steamer **Greyhound**. With the rising tide the **St Trillo** suddenly slipped off the rock into deep water. In October 1921 the **St Trillo** was sold to a Spanish owner who renamed her **San Telmo**.

The 'St Seiriol' (1) - a new steamer which never sailed for the Company

At the end of the 1912 season the **St Tudno** (2) was sold to the Hamburg-Amerika Line and two years later the company intended to replace her with a new ship which would have been quite an innovation on the North Wales service. It was something of a surprise in the first place that she was to be constructed by A. & J. Inglis of Glasgow, instead of by Fairfields, and she was to be the company's first screw steamer, driven by geared turbines. The new ship was named **St Seiriol** but due to labour problems she was not launched until 7th July 1914, just a few weeks before the war began. An unusual feature of the launching was the absence of any lady to perform the naming ceremony. Instead the chairman of the company, Mr Henry MacIver, christened the vessel.

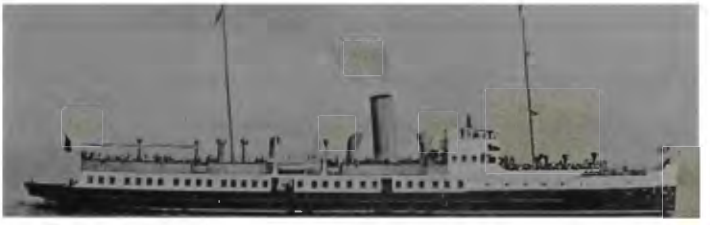
The St Seiriol (1) - a new turbine steamer which never sailed on her designed route

Following the outbreak of war the **St Seiriol's** movements were rather obscure. She ran her trials before the end of 1914, painted in her owners' colours, and afterwards was laid up at the Gareloch for a time. It is likely the company intended to run her on the North Wales route at Easter 1915, but she was requisitioned as a transport on the cross-Channel run to France, where she remained until February 1916. Following her transport duties the **St Seiriol** was converted to a minesweeper and on 25th April 1918 she struck a mine off Harwich and was lost, with an officer and fifteen crew members killed, and five wounded. The Clyde turbine steamer **Atalanta**, and the North Wales company's **Snowdon** took off survivors. The **St Seiriol** settled on the Shipwash Shoal, but she sank into the sand before any salvage operations could be effected.

A German minesweeper replaces the 'St Seiriol'

Following the sale of the **St Trillo** in 1921, the Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company replaced her with its first twin-screw steamer. She was the **Hörnum**, a vessel originally built as a minesweeper for the German Navy, but not completed until after the war. J.C. Tecklenborg of Wesermunde completed her in 1919 and she went to the Hamburg-Amerika

Line as a passenger tender, and also operated on the Hamburg-Heligoland run. When purchased by the North Wales company in 1922, the name was changed to **St Elian** (2). She looked a smart ship on the North Wales service, even if she could not disguise her obvious 'Made in Germany' appearance. By one of those strange twists of fate which occur from time to time, the **St Elian** was the **St Seiriol's** (1) replacement; the company's first screw steamer, and had been laid down as a minesweeper. Her arrival re-opened many old sailings, and for the first time in years passengers were able to visit Bardsey Island. More frequent trips were made to Blackpool and Holyhead. In fact the **St Elian** (2) was a veritable 'maid of all work'. A surviving handbill announces the **St Elian** as taking a day excursion from Liverpool to Blackpool on Sunday 8th July 1923 at 2.45pm, allowing one and three-quarter hours ashore, at a return fare of 4/- (20p).



The **St Elian** (2) was built as a minesweeper for the Imperial German Navy

In 1926 the **St Elian** was laid up because of the coal shortage caused by the General Strike. Such supplies as the company were able to obtain later in the season were allocated to the paddle steamers **St Elvies** and **Snowdon**. The **St Elian** resumed her sailings in 1927, making her last run on Saturday 10th September, from Menai Bridge to Liverpool. As things turned out, this was her last sailing for the company.

In December 1927 it was announced that the **St Elian** had been sold to the Societa Partenopea Anonima di Navigazione of Naples to operate to the islands of Capri and Ischia. She left the Mersey for Italy on 26th December and was still in service at Naples up to 1971. The **St Elian** was renamed **Partenope** on her arrival in Italy in January 1928, survived the war and her name was again changed to **Ischia** in October 1949.

The new 'St Tudno' (3)

In 1926 the **La Marguerite** was replaced by a new twin-screw geared turbine steamer - the **St Tudno** (3). Handsome and comfortable though the new **St Tudno** was, the regular passengers did not accept her readily. Old loyalties and memories die hard.

The **St Tudno** (3) was launched from the Fairfield yard on 2nd February 1926 by Mrs Margaret McMahon. On trials on 22nd April she reached 19¼ knots over the measured mile, a quarter of a knot more than her contract speed. The new ship's maiden voyage was fixed for Saturday 22nd May 1926. She received a warm send-off from Liverpool and at Llandudno rockets were fired in welcome. Owing to the difficulties of getting a screw steamer alongside, the calls at Beaumaris and Bangor were discontinued. During the 1926 season the Bangor Corporation steam ferry **Cynfal** transferred the Beaumaris and Bangor passengers from the **St Tudno** as she proceeded towards Menai Bridge, but the arrangement was not a success and was not repeated.

The **St Tudno** opened her first season in a difficult period when the national coal strike of 1926 seriously interfered with railway traffic and with the sailings of the company's

THE LIVERPOOL & NORTH WALES STEAMSHIP COMPANY LTD.

Telegrams: "ST. TUDNO, LIVERPOOL 3" 40 CHAPEL STREET, LIVERPOOL 3. Telephone: CENtral 1653-1654

DAILY SAILINGS

AT REDUCED DAY EXCURSION FARES

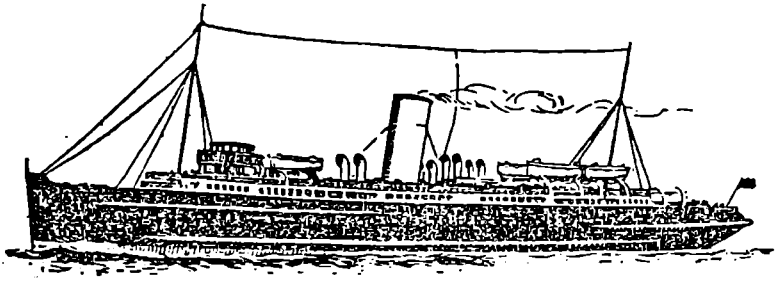
Liverpool to Llandudno and Menai Bridge

(SUBJECT TO ALTERATION WITHOUT NOTICE)

From Sat. 5th June to Mon. 20th Sept. 1954

SUNDAYS INCLUDED

From PRINCES LANDING STAGE, LIVERPOOL (weather and other circumstances permitting)



"ST. TUDNO" OR "ST. SEIRIOL"

Leaving		Each Day	Leaving		Each Day
LIVERPOOL		10.45 a.m.	MENAI BRIDGE ...		3.45 p.m.
LLANDUDNO	due	1.05 p.m.	LLANDUDNO	due	5.0 p.m.
"	dep.	1.15 p.m.	"	dep.	5.15 p.m.
MENAI BRIDGE	due	2.40 p.m.	LIVERPOOL ...	due	7.40 p.m.

N.B.—Passengers for Bangor, Caernarvon, Beaumaris, and other Anglesey Resorts—Crosville Bus Service from Menai Bridge

DAILY THROUGH BOOKINGS FROM ALL PRINCIPAL RAILWAY STATIONS

Sunday Trains depart Manchester Victoria 8.50 a.m., Central 9.20 a.m., commencing 6th June; Exchange 8.40 a.m., commencing 20th June, connections for this Sailing.

FARES—One Class Only (Including Pier Tolls) between	REDUCED DAY EXCURSION	PERIOD RETURN	SINGLE
Liverpool and Llandudno ...	12/6	15/-	8/6
Liverpool and Menai Bridge	15/-	17/6	10/-

SPECIAL REDUCED **Day Return Fare** FRIDAYS Only LIVERPOOL to LLANDUDNO OR MENAI BRIDGE **10/-**

These tickets are not available to return by rail under inter-change arrangements.

DAY TRIP PARTIES SPECIALLY CATERED FOR AT REDUCED FARES IF PREVIOUSLY ARRANGED (FRIDAYS EXCEPTED)
CATERING LUNCHEONS FROM 5/- TEAS FROM 4/- CAFETERIA, BUFFETS AND REFRESHMENT BARS
PRIVATE CABINS may be booked in advance.

INTERCHANGE BOAT AND RAIL ARRANGEMENTS (BANK HOLIDAYS EXCEPTED)

Passengers holding Day or Period Steamer Tickets have the option of returning by Rail on surrendering the Return Half-Boat Ticket and on payment of the undermentioned rates, receiving single ticket to destination.

From LLANDUDNO (Day 7/-, Period 5/6) From MENAI BRIDGE OR BANGOR (Day 8/-, Period 6/-)

Rail passengers can return by steamer on payment of following supplementary charges at the Steamship Booking Offices, Pier Gates :—Llandudno 5/6, Menai Bridge 6/-

Tickets may be obtained alongside vessels or in advance at Travel Agencies or Company's Office.

Children over 3 and under 14 years, Half-Fare. Bicycles 3/6 single Journey, including Pier Tolls.

Passengers allowed 1-cwt. Personal Luggage free of charge. Luggage in Advance for Llandudno or Menai Bridge, or *vice versa*, 5/- package, collected and delivered (Local Liverpool area, 5/8 per package.)

Tickets are issued, Passengers and Goods carried, subject to the Company's Conditions of Carriage as exhibited at the Offices and on the Vessels.

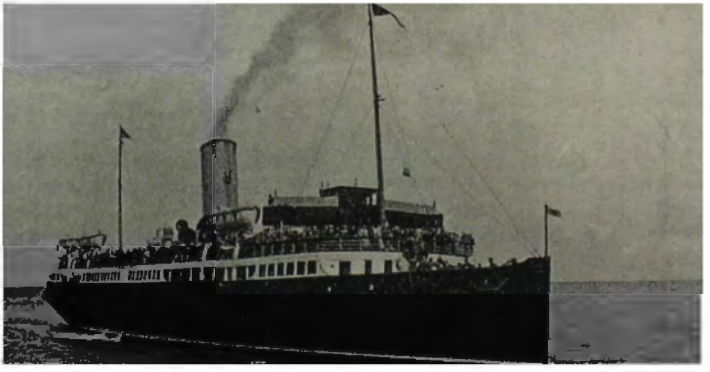
coal-burning vessels. Being an oil burner, the **St Tudno** continued to carry large crowds and offered the public a reliable means of reaching the North Wales coast.

In 1928 the appearance of the **St Tudno** was altered slightly (improved ?) by the removal of the cowl on her funnel. She remained on the Liverpool - Llandudno - Menai Bridge run, her only deviation being two sailings from Llandudno to Douglas, Isle of Man, in September 1931. It is said that she went to Douglas because the new **St Seiriol** (2) had been licensed only until the end of August through an error on her certificate.

At the beginning of the war the Admiralty requisitioned the **St Tudno** and she became an examination boarding vessel. She was not a success, probably because of her shallow draught (just 9ft to allow her to navigate the Menai Straits at low water). With a head sea she behaved well; in the most moderate of beam seas she rolled heavily.

The **St Tudno's** wartime log records: *'Dover, 8th October 1939: To be sailed for London as soon as convenient to undergo repairs. As she will probably be withdrawn from duty as a Downs ABV* [armed boarding vessel] , *defect list is only to include items to make good damage sustained recently.'*

To all intents and purposes, this was the end of the war for the **St. Tudno**. On 5th December 1939 the **St Tudno** was transferred from service as an armed boarding vessel to service as an accommodation ship at Stangate Creek (Sheerness). Her crew were paid off on 9th December 1939 at Blackwall, and on 8th February 1940 she was towed to Sheerness. She remained there until 24th December 1944 when her wartime log records *'to return to trade'*. It seems that the **St Tudno** was based in the Scheldt in 1945, before being returned to her owners in time for the 1946 summer sailings.



Perhaps the most magnificent vessel ever built for pleasure cruises in U.K. waters : the **St Tudno** (3)

The **St Tudno** (3) made her first post-war sailing from Liverpool to Llandudno and Menai Bridge on Saturday 8th June 1946. In pre-war days she had operated with first and second class accommodation; she re-appeared in 1946 as a one-class ship.

The post-war era opened well with several good seasons: then, slowly and relentlessly, the rapid increase in family motoring and coach tours had its effect and the smaller number of passengers grew even smaller. In October 1953 three take-over bids were announced for the Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company. Shareholders accepted an offer by Mr C.G. Mack, one of the directors, and by Mr Gilbert Innes, which left the company in existence with the same board.

Sailings continued more or less normally until 1960 when troubles began to build up against the company The season opened on 4th June but the **St Tudno** was laid up on 9th July for the two-week duration of a seamen's strike.

The **St Seiriol** (2) was withdrawn after the 1961 season, but the **St Tudno** (3) opened the seasonal sailings on 9th June 1962. But as the weeks slipped by, events showed that the end was near. The financial losses during various strikes and a reduction in passenger numbers owing to a succession of dull and wet summers, gave the directors no opportunity of recouping their position. The **St Tudno** closed the 1962 season on Sunday 16th September 1962 and this proved to be her final sailing.

A writ of attachment was fixed to the foremast of the **St Tudno** on 9th November 1962, following the granting of a warrant to solicitors acting for the claimants of a boat which had been struck by the **St Tudno** off Menai Bridge in the previous summer. The case was heard three days later and the claimants were awarded £575 12s 6d in damages.

Like a Greek tragedy the tale of woe gathered force. The final blow fell on 19th November 1962 when a meeting of the creditors was told that the Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company would go into voluntary liquidation.

On 25th March 1963 it was announced that the **St Tudno** had been sold to Van Heyghen's shipbreaking yard at Ghent. She left the Mersey, under tow and bound for Ghent, on 13th April 1963.

The 'St Seiriol' (2) - a new running-mate for the 'St Tudno' (3)

After the entry into service of the new **St Tudno**(3) in 1926, four years were to pass before there were any more changes to the fleet. At the close of the 1930 season the **St Elvies** was disposed of after 35 years of service and in the following year the **Snowdon** was sold to shipbreakers.

To replace these paddle steamers the Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company had ordered the **St Seiriol** (2), a smaller version of the **St Tudno** (3) from the Fairfield yard. After the **St Tudno** had been in service for a few years, the disproportion between herself and the **St Elvies** and the **Snowdon** became too pronounced.

At the launching ceremony on 5th March 1931, Mrs Kenneth Lampson, daughter of the company's chairman, named the new ship **St Seiriol** (2). Trials on 23rd April saw her reach 18½ knots and a month later, on 23rd May, the **St Seiriol** made her maiden voyage. The new ship was a smaller edition of the **St Tudno** and her internal arrangements were essentially the same. The **St Seiriol** would be used on the company's secondary services such as excursions from Llandudno to Douglas, half-day excursions from Liverpool to Llandudno, and she would relieve the **St Tudno** on Fridays on the Liverpool - Llandudno - Menai Bridge run.

The **St Seiriol** provided a mixed programme of 'entertainment' for her passengers. On her 'Round Anglesey' sailing on Sunday 18th August 1935, attractions offered included horse racing, bingo, a balloon race, an ankle competition, a sweepstake on the time that the ship would pass South Stack, and a prize for the lucky programme number.

On Sunday 3rd September 1939 the **St Seiriol** left Liverpool as usual for North Wales. When she was about twenty miles out, Neville Chamberlain made his fateful announcement on the radio. She went on to disembark her Llandudno passengers and then returned to Liverpool.

Shortly after the outbreak of war the Government put her to work, painted in wartime grey, transporting troops across the English Channel. She served in this capacity until May 1940. After she had sailed for Cherbourg with a full complement of troops on 20th May, she was instructed to return to Dover. The **St Seiriol** was the first ship to make for Calais two days later.

Surviving heavy bombing, she arrived at the port to discover that there was no possibility of embarking troops as the Germans had taken possession. She was then ordered to leave as quickly as possible.

The **St Seiriol** was one of the first vessels to arrive at Dunkirk at the start of 'Operation Dynamo'. Three of her lifeboats were damaged and her wireless aerial carried away. Adjacent to the **St Seiriol**, the well known London pleasure steamer **Crested Eagle** was embarking troops and received a direct hit from a bomb. The **St Seiriol** went to her assistance and working for five and a half hours in a hail of bombs she managed to rescue about 150 burnt and half-drowned survivors from the **Crested Eagle**. The **St Seiriol** made a total of seven crossings to Dunkirk. A few days later, on 17th June 1940, the Minister of Shipping, Ronald Cross, sent Captain Dop of the **St Seiriol** the following message:

"I write on behalf of the Government to convey to you and the members of your ship's company the gratitude and admiration felt for the help freely given and endurance displayed by you all in the evacuation of Dunkirk. This operation, in which the Merchant Navy joined as partner of the fighting services, was carried to a successful conclusion in the face of difficulties never before experienced in war. I am proud to pay tribute to your share and that of your ship's company in a great and humane adventure destined to occupy a place of honour in the pages of history".

For some time after Dunkirk the **St Seiriol** was laid up in the Stanley Dock at Liverpool. Then, still under Captain Dop, she sailed for the Clyde and again worked on the transportation of troops, making several trips to Northern Ireland.

The **St Seiriol** (2) of 1931 was a smaller version of the **St Tudno** (3), designed for the secondary services

On her release from Governemt service in December 1945, the **St Seiriol** returned to her builders for reconditioning. Like the **St Tudno**, she resumed her passenger sailings as a one-class ship. She sailed back to Birkenhead from Fairfields on 10th April 1946 and nine days later made her first post-war voyage from Liverpool to North Wales. The piers at Llandudno, Beaumaris, Bangor and Menai Bridge were crowded with schoolchildren, most of whom had never before seen the Liverpool steamer.

After the 1947 season the Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company discontinued the sailings round Anglesey. Because of silting, Caernarvon Bar was difficult to cross, and on one of the trips the **St Seiriol** had grounded briefly.

In the early hours of 3rd July 1958 the night watchman discovered several fires aboard the **St Seiriol** while she lay at anchor in Llandudno Bay. The efforts of Captain Kennedy and crew members prevented a major disaster. A steward was afterwards charged with setting fire to the ship.

The **St Seiriol** was involved in strike action on Saturday 13th August 1960 and was withdrawn from service and did not sail again that year. In 1961 the steamer completed a full season and her last sailing was a day excursion from Llandudno to Douglas on Wednesday 6th September. After this she was laid up for the winter in the Morpeth Branch Dock, Birkenhead. Early in 1962 rumours were circulating that the **St Seiriol** would not be working that year. On 28th February it was made known that the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company would take over the Llandudno-Douglas run with its own ships. No one felt any surprise a month later when the **St Seiriol** was offered for sale. On 22nd October 1962 it was learnt that the **St Seiriol** had been sold for demolition and on 13th November she left the Mersey for the last time under tow of a Dutch tug for breaking up by Van Heyghen at Ghent.

A return to short coastal cruises with the motor ship 'St Trillo' (2)

With the entry into service of the **St Seiriol** in 1931 the Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company was operating just two turbine steamers. There were no short coastal cruises from Llandudno Pier so in 1934 the Alexandra Towing Company based its tender **Ryde** at Llandudno, for one summer season only. The following year, 1935, saw the return of a paddle steamer to the North Wales coast when the Cambrian Shipping Company ran the **Lady Orme** from Llandudno to the Menai Straits and on short coastal cruises. This steamer had been built at Paisley in 1888 for David MacBrayne and was well known in West Highland waters as the **Fusilier**.

The St Trillo (2) of 1936 was the only motorship in the fleet.

The Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company responded by ordering from Fairfields a twin-screw, twin-funnel motorship. She was launched as the **St Silio** and was completed in time for the 1936 season.

After the war the name was changed to **St Trillo** and she continued her programme of short cruises from Llandudno Pier. With the company in voluntary liquidation at the end of 1962, the **St Trillo** was offered for sale and on 19th February 1963 was purchased by P. & A. Campbell, well known for excursion services in the Bristol Channel. The **St Trillo** continued to

be based at Llandudno each summer until 1969, and she was finally broken up on the banks of the River Liffey at Dublin in 1974.

*The Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company was finally 'wound up' in the early months of 1963. The ships had all been sold and on 13th May 1963 a sale of fittings and equipment from the **St Tudno** and **St Seiriol** was held at a Liverpool salesroom. The contents of the office at 40 Chapel Street were sold on the following day. It was an opportunity for former passengers to acquire souvenirs. The curtain finally came down on 11th September with the disposal by auction of the office at 40 Chapel Steet.*

*The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company maintained a summer service from Llandudno to Douglas from 1962 until the final sailing on 2nd September 1982. The Liverpool to Llandudno route was taken over by the Manx company in 1963 until the last sailing in 1980, although the Isle of Man steamers were too large to proceed up the Menai Straits to Menai Bridge. Following the withdrawal of the **St Trillo** by P. & A. Campbell in 1969, the IOMSPCo also offered an afternoon cruise from Llandudno Pier towards Point Lynas on the days when the Liverpool-Llandudno sailings operated.*

*In recent years very occasional sailings have taken place, usually operated by the **Balmoral**. On two occasions the **Waverley** has sailed from Liverpool to Llandudno. The **Lady of Mann** usually operates a Llandudno-Douglas day excursion in late May.*

*There are many on Merseyside, including myself, who remember with great fondness the **St Tudno** and **St Seiriol**. It was indeed 'a wonderful day out'.*

THE LIVERPOOL AND NORTH WALES STEAMSHIP COMPANY LIMITED

LIST OF VESSELS OWNED AND OPERATED BY THE COMPANY

ST TUDNO (2) Steel paddle steamer Cost: £50,000.
built by the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Co Ltd., Govan.
compound diagonal engines by Andrew Lang
Length 265.4ft, Breadth 32.6ft, Depth 11.4ft. Gross Tonnage: 794
Launched: 19th April 1891 Trials Speed: 20.4 knots Passengers: 1,061
Disposal: sold in October 1912 to the MacIver Steamship Company for use at Southampton as a tender by the Hamburg-Amerika Line. Troop transport during First World War. Broken up by T.C. Pas, Holland in 1922.

BONNIE PRINCESS Iron hulled paddle steamer
built by T.B.Seath & Co of Rutherglen for the Liverpool, Llandudno & Welsh Coast Steamboat Company. Transferred to the L&NWSSCo on its formation in 1891.
Diagonal oscillating engines by A.Campbell & Son.
New engines and boilers by J. Jones fitted in 1888.
Length 240.0ft, Breadth 26.2 ft, Depth 9.3ft. Gross Tonnage: 434
Launched: 1882 Speed: 14 knots Passengers: 620
Disposal: sold in November 1895 to the Hastings, St Leonards and Eastbourne Steamboat Company Limited. Broken up by G.B. Pas, Holland, in 1899.

ST ELVIES Steel paddle steamer Official No: 105390 Call Sign: J G C S
built by the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Co Ltd, Govan
Length 240.6ft, Breadth 28.3ft, Depth 10.2ft. Gross Tonnage: 567. Passengers: 991
Launched: 13th April 1896 Trials speed: 19¾ knots, Service speed: 18½ knots
Disposal: Last voyage 14th Sept. 1930. Sold to R. Smith & Sons in Spring 1931; partly demolished in Morpeth Dock, Birkenhead, hull broken up on New Ferry beach.

SNOWDON Steel paddle steamer Official No: 99404 Call Sign: J G C Q
built by Laird Brothers at Birkenhead for the Snowdon Passenger Steamship Company.
transferred to the L&NWSSCo in 1899 upon amalgamation of companies.
two-cylinder compound diagonal engines,.
Length 167.9ft, Breadth 24.6ft, Depth 10.7ft. Gross Tonnage: 338 Nett: 134.
Launched: 26th April, 1892 Speed: 14 knots
Disposal: Broken up by Smith & Company at Port Glasgow at end of 1931 season.

LA MARGUERITE Steel paddle steamer Official No: 102875 Call Sign: N K H T
built by the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Co. Ltd., Govan, for Palace Steamers Ltd (managers: Victoria Steamboat Association Ltd), and bought by the L&NWSSCo in 1904.
compound diagonal engines
Length: 341.6ft, Breadth: 40ft, Depth: 21.6ft. Gross Tonnage: 2,205; from 1904: 1,554.
Launched: 1894 Trials speed: 21 knots
Disposal: Sold to Thomas Ward at Briton Ferry for demolition and sailed from the Mersey for South Wales on 22nd October 1925.

ST ELIAN (1) Iron paddle steamer Official No: 62236
built by Barclay, Curle & Company of Glasgow for the Southampton, Isle of Wight & South of England Royal Mail Steam Packet Company in 1872 and named **Southampton**.
Purchased by the L&NWSSCo in July 1907 and renamed **St Elian**.
Compound diagonal engines; speed: 11 knots.
Length: 150.1ft, Breadth: 20.1ft, Depth: 8.7ft. Gross Tonnage: 203 Nett: 83.
Disposal: Laid up on outbreak of First World War, and subsequently broken up.

ST TRILLO (1) Iron paddle steamer Official No: 72360 Call Sign: J G C R
built by Barclay, Curle & Company of Glasgow for the Southampton, Isle of Wight & South of England Royal Mail Steam Packet Company in 1876 and named **Carisbrooke**.
sold to Colwyn Bay & Liverpool Steamship Company in 1906, retained name **Carisbrooke**.
sold to Mersey Trading Company in 1907 and renamed **Rhos Trevor**.
acquired by L&NWSSCo on 15th April 1909 and renamed **St Trillo** (1)
Length: 165.7ft, Breadth: 20.1ft, Depth: 8.0ft. Gross Tonnage: 198.
Compound diagonal engines, speed 12 knots. 463 passengers.
Disposal: Sold to Spanish shipowners in 1921 and renamed **San Telmo**.

ST SEIRIOL (1) Twin-screw, geared turbine steamer. Official No: 137413 Call Sign: JHGD
built by A. & J. Inglis Ltd., of Glasgow. Speed: 17 knots.
Length: 250ft, Breadth: 30.1ft, Depth: 10.5ft. Gross Tonnage: 928
Launched in July 1914: never sailed for the Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company.
Requisitioned as a troop transport 1915-16.
Converted to minesweeper: struck mine off Harwich and sank on 25th April, 1918.

ST ELIAN (2) Steel twin-screw steamer. Official No: 145954 Call Sign: K M H Q
built by J.C. Tecklenborg of Wesermünde as a minesweeper for the Imperial German Navy and completed in 1919. Purchased by Holland-Amerika Line and named **Hörnum**.
Purchased by the Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Co in 1922 and renamed **St Elian** (2).
Length: 185ft, Breadth: 24ft, Depth: 10.7ft. Gross Tonnage: 412.
Triple expansion engines, 6-cylinder; coal-fired boilers; speed 15 knots. 528 passengers.
Disposal: Sold in December 1927 to Societa Partenopea Anonima di Navigazione of Naples and renamed **Partenope** for the Naples to Capri and Ischia services. Renamed **Ischia** in October 1949. Still in service as late as 1973 (last entry in Lloyd's Register).

ST TUDNO (3) Steel twin-screw steamer. Official No: 147367 Call Sign: G M P Q
built by the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Company of Govan, launched 2.Feb.1926.
Length: 318.4ft, Breadth: 44.1ft, Depth: 20.5ft. Gross Tonnage: 2,326 Nett: 943.
Four steam turbines, single reduction gearing, speed: 19 knots. 2,493 passengers.
Final Voyage: 16th September 1962. Disposal: Sold for breaking up to Van Heyghen Frères, Belgium. Left Mersey under tow of tug **Nordzee** on 13th April,1963.

ST SEIRIOL (2) Steel twin-screw steamer. Official No: 162343 Call Sign: G P C R
built by the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Company of Govan, launched 5.Mar.1931.
Length: 269.7ft, Breadth: 37.1ft, Depth: 19.4 ft. Gross Tonnage: 1,586 Nett: 657.
Four steam turbines, single reduction gearing, speed 18½ knots. 1,500 passengers.
Final Voyage: 6th September 1961. Disposal: Sold for breaking up to Van Heyghen Frères, Belgium. Left Mersey under tow of tug **Ebro** on 13 November 1962.

ST TRILLO (2) Steel twin-screw motor vessel. Official No: 164287 Call Sign: M L K L
built by the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Enginering Company of Govan, launched 24.Mar.1936 as the **ST SILIO**. Name changed after war service.
Length: 149.2ft, Breadth: 27.1ft, Depth: 10.0ft. Gross Tonnage: 314 Nett: 122.
Engines by Crossley Brothers of Stockport, speed: 13 knots.
Disposal: Sold to P.& A. Campbell in March 1963 and continued to operate short cruises from Llandudno Pier until the end of the 1969 summer. Broken up at Dublin, 1974.

Sources

Numerous articles in *Sea Breezes / Ships Monthly* up to 1971.
West Coast Steamers (Duckworth and Langmuir), Stephenson, Prescot, 1966.
Numerous press cuttings from *Liverpool Daily Post*, *Liverpool Echo*, *Llandudno Advertiser*

THE MONDAY FACILITY

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

SEPTEMBER : 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th
OCTOBER : 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th
NOVEMBER : 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th

FIFTY YEARS AGO

THE RECORD-BREAKER ss *"UNITED STATES"*

by special correspondent of the 'Shipbuilding and Shipping Record'

I have had the thrilling experience of crossing the Atlantic in the new holder of the Blue Riband, the **United States**. Partly because of her dual purpose as a high-class passenger liner carrying 2,000 persons and as a transport for 14,000 troops she incorporates many unusual features, and should not be examined and criticised as one might a North Atlantic liner designed primarily for attracting passengers.

Whilst the fact that the **United States** has made the fastest ever North Atlantic crossings is of considerable importance and undoubted publicity value, it is true that the most significant contributions which the new ship has made to shipbuilding and shipping are unconnected with speed.

The record breaking eastbound maiden voyage of the United States:

4th July 1952:	Mileage (20 hrs, 24 mins):	696	Speed: 34.11 knots
5th July 1952:	Mileage (22 hrs, 30 mins):	801	Speed: 35.6 knots
6th July 1952:	Mileage (22 hrs, 30 mins):	814	Speed: 36.17 knots
7th July 1952:	Mileage (23 hours) :	833	Speed: 36.21 knots
8th July 1952:	Mileage (2 hrs -Bishop Rk)	47	Speed: 23.5 knots

From Ambrose Channel Light Vessel, New York to Bishop Rock : 2,942 miles
Average Speed: 35.59 knots

The unusual materials, particularly aluminium alloys, used in the public rooms and cabins will undoubtedly influence strongly those of future passenger vessels. The absence of deck planking is probably the most striking change from the conventional. The green / blue shade seamless decking which replaces it has a good appearance, but looking down from bridge deck level the overall view of the ship lacks that trim, clean appearance which only wood decking can give.

The **United States** was built by the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, Newport News, Virginia for the United States Lines, New York, and with the co-operation of the United States Marine Administration. Gibbs and Cox, New York, were the naval architects. They commenced their design in July 1945. The keel was laid on 8th February 1950 and she was named on 23rd June 1951. The word 'named' is deliberately used here instead of 'launched' as the ship was built in a graving dock, 960 feet in length.

The internal decoration of the **United States** is quite revolutionary in material and treatment and was designed by Smyth, Urquhart and Marchwald, a New York firm of women decorators. This company also designed the interior of the **America**.

As the specification required that the ship be completely fireproof, certain limitations were initially placed on conventional materials. The furniture is all metal-framed and all fabrics are either Dynel, a linen-like non-inflammable material, or have been completely fireproofed. The public rooms have been broken up by partitions and it is understood that the primary purpose of this is to allow attachment for troop sleeping accommodation should rapid

conversion ever be necessary. Indeed the fact that the naval architects and interior decorators had always to consider this alternative use for the ship must be borne in mind when judging her as a passenger vessel.

The public rooms are positioned throughout in the conventional manner, with the dining saloons at a low deck level. The first-class dining saloon seats only 400 passengers and this calls for two sittings - lunch is served at 12.noon and 1pm.

Cabin-class passengers have their own lounge, smoking room, dining saloon, library and writing room. First-class and cabin-class passengers share the gymnasium and the swimming pool.

Tourist-class passengers have at their disposal a lounge, smoking room and theatre. Their dining room is forward on A deck. It is noticeable that there is not that same falling off in the quality of the decorations and fittings of these tourist spaces compared with the first and cabin-class public rooms, which feature is so characteristic of the vast majority of passenger ships.

An extensive hospital has been provided consisting of an operating theatre, semi-private rooms for men and women, an isolation ward, waiting room, dispensary and surgeon's office. Two surgeons and an X-ray operator are carried.

Although the **United States** is to carry 14,000 troops in an emergency, no signs of the appropriate berthing and other arrangements are seen. It is believed that the necessary fittings are concealed behind the linings of the pillars, shipsides and bulkheads.

An outstanding feature is the fact that the **United States** has been air-conditioned throughout. This is surely the first time on this type of vessel that the crew spaces have also been thus served. Even the dog kennels are air-conditioned; it does seem rather overdone to have provided them also with thermostatic climate control regulators !

During the construction of the **United States** the aluminium rivets were first heated to 1,040°F., held there for half an hour, and then put into deep freeze cabinets at 40° below zero. An alcohol bath protected the rivets from sticking together while in the deep freeze cabinets. The rivets were issued to the riveters in containers which retained the cold and prevented ageing. Some 1,200 - 1,500 of these rivets were driven by a two-man team during an eight-hour day.

Little information is available on the construction of the **United States**. Much of her was prefabricated in assemblies of up to 100 tons. The funnel designs were tested in a wind tunnel to obtain the best shape for carrying the exhausts clear.

In line with all the other vague information about the vessel's construction, Rear Admiral H.C. Shepherd, chief of the U.S. Coast Guard Office of Merchant Safety, has stated that in hull safety she is *"twice that required by international standards"*. As intended, this statement lends itself to the widest interpretation but one does understand from it that an exceedingly high standard of sub-division has been given.

Practically nothing has been released on the means of propulsion apart from the fact that the **United States** is driven by reduction geared steam turbines through four propellers, the two inboard of them being five bladed, and the two outboard four bladed. While little has been stated officially, it is commonly reported that the boiler pressures are of the order of 1,200 lb. It is widely believed that a horsepower of 158,000 was specified but, as is common, the builders have given more than the guaranteed horsepower. It is believed that the **United States** is capable of 40 knots.

The estimated cost of the **United States** is $70 million.

THE ARRANGEMENTS MADE FOR THE RECEPTION OF THE *'UNITED STATES'* ON HER MAIDEN ARRIVAL AT LE HAVRE AND SOUTHAMPTON ON 8th JULY, 1952.

S.s. UNITED STATES

Arrival and departure Havre and Southampton

HOURLY INTEGRATED SCHEDULE

July 8th-9th-10th

This schedule gives hour to hour details of the arrangements made for Continental and British Press and Official Guests to visit the s.s. " United States " on her maiden voyage at le Havre and Southampton.*

(This is an amended schedule dated July 4, 1952)

Continental Press boarding the " United States " at le Havre, include representatives from French, Spanish, Italian, Swiss, Belgian, German and Dutch papers.

British Press Party includes representatives from B.B.C. ; Radio and Television ; Newsreels ; National, Provincial and Shipping Press.

All given times are liable to adjustment.

JULY 7

Local times

18.22	Press Party of 70 (approximately) leaves Waterloo, Platform 14, for Southampton. Party includes representatives from United States Lines. Press passes and all available information to be distributed. Drinks served on train.
19.55	*Party of approximately 91 (excluding United States Lines' staff) leaves St. Lazare for le Havre. Party includes app. 49 Press and 52 French officials. Dinner served on train.*
20.10	Train from Waterloo arrives at Southampton Docks. Party disembark.
20.15	At Berth 9, three local Press representatives join the party.
20.20 app. ..	Embark s.s. " Normannia."
20.30 app. ..	Press Office, staffed by Mr. Tayleur and Miss Preziosi, set up at Polygon Hotel.
21.00 app. ..	Dinner, preceded by drinks, served on board " Normannia."
22.26	*Continental Party arrive at le Havre from Paris. Autobuses meet train and transport guests to Hotel Normandie and others where accommodation has been reserved for them.*
23.15	s.s. " Normannia " sails from Southampton for le Havre.

JULY 8

06.00	s.s. " Normannia " arrives at Quai du Southampton, le Havre. Breakfast served on board.
06.00 app. ..	*French Press breakfast in hotels.*
06.30 app. ..	British Press disembark and proceed by autobuses to Quai Joannes Couvert.
06.30 app. ..	*French Press proceed to Quai Joannes Couvert.*
06.35 app. ..	BRITISH AND FRENCH PRESS PARTIES UNITED ON JOANNES COUVERT.
07.00	
07.20 app. ..	First Class passengers begin to disembark from s.s. " United States " at le Havre.
07.30 app. ..	Combined British and French Press board ship.
08.00 app. ..	First Class passengers begin to disembark.
08.00 app. ..	*Official guests from Paris breakfast in their hotels at le Havre.*
08.15 app. ..	Plane in position at le Havre to bring photographs back to London (Croydon).
09.00 app. ..	Cabin and Tourist Class passengers disembark.
09.00 app. ..	*Guests from Paris leave hotels for ship.*
09.15 app. ..	*Guests from Paris and le Havre board ship.*
09.17	First Class boat train leaves shipside for Paris.
09.20 app. ..	*Conducted tour of ship for guests.*
09.30 app. ..	Plane leaves le Havre for Croydon with photographs.
10.26	Cabin and Tourist Class boat train leaves shipside for Paris.
10.30	Vin d'Honneur.
10.30 app. ..	Plane from le Havre arrives at Croydon.
11.15	*French guests begin to disembark.*
12.00	" United States " sails for Southampton.
12.15 app. ..	*Cocktails at bar of Gare Maritime for French guests. Lunch at Gare Maritime for French guests.*

13.00 app.	..	Lunch for combined Press Party on board "United States," followed by tour of passenger accommodation.
14.30 app.		Press Room moves from Polygon Hotel to Ocean Terminal Buildings.
15.00 app.		Newsreels, B.B.C., etc., begin to arrive at Southampton Docks.
15.20 ..	..	Train leaves Waterloo for Southampton—probably carrying majority of London journalists visiting the "United States" at Southampton.
15.30 ..	..	*Special train for French guests leaves Gare Maritime for Paris.*
15.30 ..	..	Train leaves Waterloo for Southampton Central.
16.53 ..	..	15.20 train from Waterloo arrives at Southampton Central. Neil Bruce will meet this train. Buses will take Press from Southampton Central Station to Ocean Terminal Buildings.
17.26 ..	..	15.30 train from Waterloo arrives Southampton Central.
17.43 ..	..	*Special train for French guests returning from le Havre arrives at Paris.*
18.00 ..	..	s.s. "United States" arrives at Southampton.
18.30 ..	..	British Press party of app. 150 go on board.
18.45 app.	..	First Class passengers disembark.
18.45 app.	..	Press reception and buffet for app. 350 Press and photographers in Ballroom. General Franklin addresses assembly.
19.20 ..	..	Train leaves Southampton Central for Waterloo. (Normal B.R. service.)
19.30 app.	..	*Continental Press Party leaves the ship. Clears customs and immigration.*
19.45 app.	..	*Buses leave taking Continental Press to Hurn Airport.*
19.50 ..	..	"The Statesman" all-Pullman special boat train for First Class passengers leaves shipside for London.
20.30 ..	..	Cabin Class special boat train leaves shipside for Waterloo.
20.45 app.	..	*Continental Press arrive at Hurn Airport.*
20.48 ..	..	Train leaves Southampton Central for Waterloo. (Normal B.R. service.)
20.51 ..		19.20 train from Southampton arrives Waterloo. (Normal B.R. service.)
21.00 app.	..	*Plane leaves Hurn airport for le Bourget taking Continental Press back to Paris.*
21.15 ..	..	Tourist Class special boat train leaves shipside for Waterloo.
21.28 ..	..	"The Statesman" all-Pullman special First Class boat train arrives Waterloo.
22.15 app.	..	*Plane arrives le Bourget with Continental Press.*
22.19 ..	..	Cabin Class special boat train arrives Waterloo.
22.30 app.	..	*Dinner served for Continental Press at le Bourget.*
23.00 ..	..	Tourist Class special boat train arrives Waterloo.
23.00 app.	..	*Buses from le Bourget take Continental Press to points in Paris. Press not wishing to eat at le Bourget may leave for Paris by earlier buses.*

JULY 9

09.00 ..	..	Press Room at Polygon Hotel open.
10.02 ..	..	First Special train for luncheon guests leaves Waterloo for shipside.
10.20 ..	..	Second Special train for luncheon guests leaves Waterloo for shipside.
11.45 ..		10.02 special train for luncheon guests from Waterloo arrives at shipside.
12.00 ..	..	Guests making their own way to the "United States" for the V.I.P. Luncheon should be at Ocean Terminal Buildings.
12.05 ..	..	10.20 special train for luncheon guests from Waterloo arrives at shipside.
12.15 ..	..	Cocktails on board the "United States."
12.50 ..	..	Lunch for 400 V.I.Ps., first class dining room.
15.00 ..	..	Luncheon ends. Inspection of "United States" by V.I.P. guests.
16.35 ..	..	Special train for guests leaves shipside for Waterloo.
16.54 ..	..	Special train for guests leaves shipside for Waterloo.
18.26 ..	..	16.35 special train for guests from Southampton arrives Waterloo.
18.37 ..		18.54 special train for guests from Southampton arrives Waterloo.

JULY 10

09.00-10.00		
09.00 ..	..	Press Room at Ocean Terminal Buildings staffed.
09.15 ..	..	Tourist Class boat train leaves Waterloo.
10.15 ..	..	Cabin Class boat train leaves Waterloo.
11.05 ..	..	Tourist Class boat train arrives shipside.
11.15 ..	..	"The Statesman" all Pullman leaves Waterloo for Southampton.

Do I Like the "*United States*" ? - A fair question that demands a fair answer

by Gordon Graham

As the world's newest great ship berthed at Southampton and received a welcome that thrilled everyone on board, I was asked *'Do you like this ship ?'*

A fair question demands a fair answer; and a fair answer must allow for several factors that appear to have been overlooked by those who would have replied with a brief and unqualified *'No !'*

It seems to me that the **United States** is unique in that she was not designed fundamentally as a large luxurious fast passenger vessel but (1) as a large fast passenger vessel that can be converted easily and rapidly for carrying troops: (2) as a large ship as nearly fireproof as science can make her: and (3) as a ship indicative to some extent of American taste, culture and progress in interior equipment and decoration. Under (1) and (2) the **United States** cannot be compared with any other ship afloat; and an attempt to draw comparisons with either of the British 'Queens' is to be unfair to both ships and both nations. Under (3) one might use the **America** for purposes of comparison.

There is the legend of the Oklahoma American serviceman who, making his first sea voyage in the **Queen Mary** and disembarking in the Clyde, looked up at the ship's superstructure towering a dozen decks above his head and remarked proudly, *"Now, why don't those British build a ship like this ?"*

On boarding the **United States** I admit that I felt a trifle apprehensive. Here was the greatest of all American ships with three women responsible for her interior equipment and decoration! All my fears proved groundless: one apartment after another, as I made a rapid preliminary tour of the ship, had a quietly soothing effect due mainly to carpets, hangings and furniture coverings innocent of the great sprawling patterns in gorgeous Technicolor so prevalent today. The glaring exception is the first-class smoking room: it is dull, depressing and dismal and I shall be surprised as well as disappointed if some changes are not made in this apartment after her first round trip.

I like the attitude of the stewards. At luncheon, for example, I was asked *"What would you take for sweet, Sir?"*. I replied, *"I'd like something that isn't on the menu"*. The steward replied, *"Even if it isn't on the menu, Sir, it may be in the ship. And if it's in the ship, you'll have it, I promise you."* Sure enough, it was in the ship and I had it - the first avocado pear I've tasted for fifteen years.

Now, what is there I don't like?

Public rooms with ceilings one deck high give a heavy, depressing effect, especially with black floors, and ceilings having recesses in which indirect lighting casts deep shadows: but, for rapid conversion in the event of war, you don't want to have to start filling in decks! (And that, incidentally, had to be done with the **Nieuw Amsterdam** in 1940).

Metal chests of drawers and metal dressing tables tend to be cold, noisy and monotonous - I heard them described as 'office furniture'. But in the interests of non-inflammability one must accept these slight disadvantages.

Small, compact easy chairs contrast strangely with the deep, wide, sumptuously upholstered easy chair which has become so much of a tradition in British ships of all types. But experience proves that the compact chair is nearly as comfortable and far more convenient. In a ship of the size of the **United States**, accommodating two thousand passengers, it becomes imperative to save space wherever possible.

As a non-American I feel that it ill becomes me to criticise an American's interpretation of the American way of life, or of American taste, culture and progress. So many Americans travel far, and frequently; why should they not equip their new ship as they like? They are not compelled to earn dollars towards national solvency, nor need their domestic shipping schedules be adjusted to release ships for pleasure cruises in the dollar area. But, after hearing the ship's orchestra play twice over *'God Save the Queen'*, I feel that someone ought to present the conductor with a copy of the harmonising that is usual in Britain

*"Do I like the **United States**?"* With the reservations I have just made, my answer is *"Yes."*

A Very Fine Product

Lt.-Colonel Austin Bates, chairman of the General Council of British Shipping and a Cunard director, arrived in Southampton from New York in the **United States** in October 1952. He described the new liner as 'a very fine product'.

He said she combined the knowledge of the British and American navies. All their experience during the last war had been built into her.

"I take my hat off to a fine piece of naval architecture," said Colonel Bates, *"I am full of envy but devoid of hatred or uncharitableness. There is room on the Atlantic for both of us."*

The record-breaking speed of the new ship had, he thought, caught the imagination of the public. But he did not suppose the **United States** would do that speed again unless there was another war.

Asked about Cunard's plans for the North Atlantic service, Colonel Bates said: *"If anyone is prepared to act as fairy godmother and present us with £16 million on a plate, what a ship we could build!"*

Colonel Bates was returning after his first visit to America for 20 years.

LONDON LAUGHS (No 5,710) By LEE

"Don't look now, dear, but I think we're being followed!"

(By courtesy of the London "Evening News")

The **United States** was withdrawn from passenger service in November 1969 and laid up at Newport News. In 1973 the US Maritime Administration bought the ship and she was laid up at Norfolk, Va.
Over the last thirty years the **United States** has been towed to various ports around the world, rather like Mussolini's corpse after World War 2, with various bits dropping off on the way. The hulk is at present back in the United States at Philadelphia. *j.s.*

STEAM AND MOTOR LAUNCHES ON THE MERSEY

by Mike Stammers, Keeper of the Merseyside Maritime Museum

Tracing the history of service craft, especially the small ones, is never an easy task compared with research on cargo and passenger ships. Service vessels by their nature do not attract attention and they have no prestige. Yet at the same time they provide a vital service to a port. In the case of Liverpool, we are looking at a wide range and number of vessels including tugs, dredgers (bucket, suction and grab), hopper barges, rubbish disposal barges (both on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and going out beyond the Bar), lightships, buoy tenders, salvage vessels, salvage camels, pilot boats, oil refueling vessels, coaling barges with or without elevators, grain elevators, flats and barges, floating cranes, a fire fighting vessel etc. I am sure that other types can be added to the list and over the many years of the LNRS 'Bulletin' and its predecessors, the history of a particular type or an individual vessel has been published.

However, in all those thousands of words, I do not remember reading much about the small launches that were used by various bodies to communicate with ships in dock or in the Mersey. This note does not pretend to be comprehensive but is more of a request to the expertise of the LNRS to find out a bit more about these small service craft. My starting point is George's Dock. There are a number of late 19th century photographs of this dock, usually with the camera at the south-east corner pointing towards St Nicholas' Church on the opposite side, and almost invariably along with various schooners discharging there is a steam launch.

One's immediate thought was that this must belong to the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board. The first clue that they might have maintained a steam launch - perhaps for dock inspections - is a picture of the opening of the Alexandra Dock in December 1880 in the *Illustrated London News*. This shows a small steam launch in the background which could only have been official given that this was a ceremony performed by the Princess of Wales. In 1897 the Pilotage Committee authorised the hire of the steam launch **Bertha** for supplying pilots to ships in the river rather than relying on hiring gig boats. The experiment was successful and they purchased the **Ernie** from Plymouth the next year. This had been built at Cowes in 1885 and was renamed **Edward C Wheeler** after the then Liverpool Superintendent of Pilotage. This small launch was replaced by a much bigger vessel of the same name ordered from the Lytham Shipbuilding and Engineering Company and was 46 tons gross, 65 feet 4 inches long, and 15 feet in the beam, with 16 horsepower engines. This had the appearance of a small tug and was sold in 1920 because of rising costs and dwindling numbers of schooners picking up pilots in the river. The replacement was the first of the pilotage motor launches, and one of their later motor boats is still afloat in private ownership and currently berthed at the Maritime Museum. The Board also deployed a flotilla of survey launches which I think were built by Hornbys of Birkenhead and again there is certainly one survivor which was berthed at Fiddler's Ferry in 2001.

The Mersey Docks & Harbour Board also modernised the River Police with the replacement of their gig boat with a steam launch in 1899. This was in turn replaced in 1906 by the **Argus**, again built at Lytham, 29 tons gross, 55.8 feet in length and 12.8 feet in the beam, with compound engines which delivered 10½ knots on trials.

Besides the Dock Board, the Mersey Missions to Seamen had several steam launches. The **Bertha** (possibly the same boat that the MD&HB had hired in 1897) was offered to the Mission in 1897 by its parent body. Apparently it was a gift from a well-wisher, one Colonel Lefroy. Unfortunately the **Bertha** was too slow and too expensive to maintain and was promptly

handed back. The following year the **Good Cheer**, the replacement, proved to be up to the job and made 841 visits, including 41 to the lightships, within her first year of operation. The **Good Cheer** (2) was launched at Lytham in 1902. At 24 tons gross, 50.8 feet in length and 12 feet in the beam, she was much larger and lasted until 1912 when she was replaced by a motor launch.

It now appears that the Anglican Mission to Seamen was not the only sailors' charity to have a launch. A new stock of copies of historic photographs has arrived at the Maritime Museum shop and among them is a carefully posed picture of a steam launch in George's Dock with a banner along its rails for the Liverpool Seamen's Friend Society. This organisation, whose full title was The Liverpool Seamen's Friend Society and Bethel Union, was founded in 1820 and was non-denominational and offered support not only to seamen, but to their families left behind and to emigrants taking ship at Liverpool. It had a floating chapel converted from an old whaler in Salthouse Dock. In 1900 it was given a new headquarters and hostel - the Gordon Smith Institute - by Samuel Smith MP in memory of his son. The Institute closed in 1975 and the foundation plaque is displayed in the Museum of Liverpool Life. I imagine the Society's launch operated in much the same way as that of the Missions to Seamen, transporting chaplains and helpers to ships in the river to hold services, deliver tracts, and to encourage seamen not to be persuaded by the temptation of the 'crimps' but to sign up with the Sailors' Home or respectable boarding houses ashore. What happened to their steam launch, I have yet to discover. It is likely that the rapid decline of deep sea commercial sail brought an end to this kind of mission. The long voyages of these sailing ships often meant that their crews had large amounts of pay owing to them on arrival at Liverpool, and the 'crimps' were only too anxious to part them from it as soon as possible.

If any member of the LNRS has done any work on these small craft, I would be interested to learn more. |||||

J.S. Rees *'History of the Liverpool Pilotage Service'*, Liverpool, 1948, p185-6.
J.M. Dakres *'A History of Shipbuilding at Lytham'*, Kendal, 1982, p53.
M.R. Kingsford *'The Mersey Mission to Seamen 1856-1956'*, Abingdon, 1957, p63.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

The Society's Programme of Monthly Meetings resumes for the 2002-2003 Session as follows. All Meetings are held in the Education Suite at the Merseyside Maritime Museum and commence at 12.30pm (coffee and biscuits available from 12.noon).

Thursday 19th September
"DONKEY BOILER JETS THROUGH 163ft OF SHIP"
Mr H. Hignett and Mr D. Eccles

Thursday 17th October
"A SMALL SHIP TO PORTUGAL"
Mr A. Balfour

Thursday 21st November
"HARRISONS OF LIVERPOOL"
Captain M.D.R. Jones

THE BATTLE OF NEW BRIGHTON

by LNRS Member Charles Dawson

New Brighton lies at the north-easterly tip of the Wirral peninsula, separating the Rivers Mersey and Dee. Mr James Atherton devised New Brighton in 1830 as an exclusive place of residence and recreation for the Nobility and Gentry. With its fresh water springs, its all-healing sea water, and its dignified architecture, it was all very reminiscent of an eighteenth century spa.

The impressing of men for service in the Navy was probably one of the most hated aspects of life for the merchant seaman. Outward-bound vessels were apparently immune, presumably because Merchant Associations were able to bring their influence to bear in the right quarters. For homecoming men, the practice of pouncing upon the homeward-bound seaman before he could set his foot ashore had, by the 1750s, reached such proportions that it actually led to a fight between the Navy and the Merchant Service - and on Merseyside!

At the beginning of June 1755, HMS **Winchelsea** [1], Francis William Drake, Commander, was lying at the mouth of the Mersey, having orders from the Admiralty to impress seamen. Observing the English merchant ship **Upton** of Liverpool, Thomas Birch, Master, from Maryland approaching the port, Drake send his ship's barge to board her. To his surprise, Watson, her master-in-charge, found all the **Upton's** hands armed with muskets and cutlasses and her 'great guns' loaded - in those days merchant vessels could be operating under a Letter of Marque [2] as privateers, and were well equipped for the purpose. Birch hailed the barge from his cabin window announcing that his men had 'confined' him and taken command, while the men warned the barge to keep off or risk the chance of being sunk. The barge sheared off a little, Watson possibly being a little unsure at this stage just what to do. The **Upton's** seamen boldly left in the ship's yawl and, rowing up to the naval vessel, swore that they would open fire upon the men in her if they attempted to hinder their landing.

After the two boats had exchanged musketry fire, the merchant men actually attempted to board the barge, sword in hand, but the naval men took full advantage of this mistake in tactics, driving them to the offside of their boat so that she overset so far as to fill. The **Upton's** men, who a short time before had declared that they would rather die than be taken, immediately surrendered to the fifteen in the barge, *"choosing rather to be press'd than drowned"*, as the *Public Advertiser* report of 15th June 1755 put it. With typical journalistic over-exuberance, this gazette went on to say that several on both sides had been mortally wounded. Nothing more of this claim was heard when the facts were being laid before counsel to be advised what punitive action was to be taken. Since the seamen had certainly wounded Watson in the eye, *"whereby he lost the sight thereof"* and hurt others of the barge's crew, their reception on board the man-of-war *"whither they were at once conveyed"* may perhaps be imagined.

A few days later Drake, with this victory fresh in his mind, sent the **Winchelsea's** barge, this time in charge of Lieutenant Gideon, to meet another incoming ship, the **Tarleton** of Liverpool, James Thompson master, *"from Barbados and Guinea* [3] *, being then under sail to come round the Rock of Liverpool"*. Once again, when the barge came alongside, she found a ship's crew armed with blunderbusses, pistols and cutlasses, one of the ship's guns loaded with grapeshot and was once more threatened, in appropriately forcible language, to keep off or be sunk. Lt. Gideon repeatedly asked for the master, but again he appears to have retired to his

cabin. The person claiming to be Captain Thompson was in fact James Berry, the carpenter. He, *"in a contemptuous manner, waved his hat at the barge, and with the crew gave shouts and cheers or halloas which was* [sic] *attended with many curses and wicked oaths and threats that they would cut any person in pieces who should board them".*

Lt. Gideon held strictly to naval etiquette and asked them if they would not at least pay some respect to His Majesty's colours by showing those of their ship and lowering their top-gallant sail. This angered the **Tarleton's** men and apparently impaired their marksmanship; of the volley they fired it is only alleged that *"several of the shot fell near the barge and one of them struck the barge's stern-post".* Lt. Gideon, however, returned the fire, also apparently quite harmlessly, and then rowed back to his ship to acquaint his chief with the facts so that he might have the opportunity of firing upon the **Tarleton** herself as she passed by. Even this was done, again apparently without any great success, so that the **Tarleton** was able to continue her passage. The barge followed her, but at a respectable distance, so that when the **Tarleton** came into Liverpool, her hands had ample time to make their escape from her, *"by means of which not one of them could be impressed unto His Majesty's Service".*

"Cases and Opinions 1701-1781", printed in Burrell & Marsden's Admiralty Reports, dismissed the pathetic complaint of Captain Birch from the **Upton's** cabin window that he was shut up there by his crew against his will with *"it is probable that the master made this declaration only to excuse himself".* It was not deemed advisable to proceed against him, perhaps because all his men, in spite of what was suggested as his connivance at their show of resistance, had been caught and duly impressed. A prosecution against the crew collectively was advised, but no record of this being carried out could be found; indeed the Navy, having in the end got them - and at some expense [4] - was not likely to want to lose them by their being put in gaol.

Against Captain Thompson the same allegation was made as against Captain Birch, i.e.that he never attempted to prevent his men from acting as they did, but *"retired at the request of his people into his cabin, though he was neither compelled to do so, nor confined therein".* But it was possible to corner Thompson on another count, i.e. his refusal to show his ship's colours and lower her top-gallant sail. He was arrested and according to the Registry of Admiralty Warrants, two London merchants became bail for him in the sum of £200, and a decree was made for his release on 12th November 1755. But the case of *"Our Sovereign Lord the King in his office of Admiralty against James Thompson, now or late master of the ship called the **Tarleton**",* dragged its slow length along, through the eighteen interlocutory hearings devoted to settling the form of the pleadings until April 1757, nearly two years after the offence. Then the prosecution was dropped on condition that the defendant who, incidentally, had never been tried, *"submits to pay the expenses"* - whatever they were.

Perhaps Thompson's London friends came to the rescue again, for the "expenses" were paid and the merchants released from their bail. It seems that neither the resistance of seamen to impressment nor the assumption by merchant officers of a neutral attitude in such encounters were in themselves regarded as very serious matters, except perhaps amongst certain civil lawyers entertaining formal views about the Royal Prerogative and looking for an easy commission.

Marryat's [5] later expressed opinon through the mouth of Mr Oxbelly upon a similar occasion in Mr Midshipman Easy's adventures was apparently in the making in 1755. *"That the men have a right to resist if possible",* says Mr Oxbelly, *"is admitted; they always do so, and never are punished for so doing. Under the guns of the frigate, of course, we should only have to submit; but those two boats do not contain more than twenty-five men, I should think, and our men are the stronger party. We had better leave it to them and stand neuter."*

With acknowledgements for the basic story to W. Senior's article on the subject in *The Mariner's Mirror*, Volume 1, No.2, 1911, pages 148-151.

Notes

1. HMS **Winchelsea**, 432 tons, 6th rate, 20 guns, launched by Robert Carter at Limehouse Hole, London, on 17th May 1740. In French captivity during 1758; broken up in 1761.
2. The **Upton**, Captain Birch in command, under Letter of Marque, arrived at Gambia on 9th May 1759 with a prize taken off the Canary Islands, the cargo being valued at £5,000. A 'Letter of Marque' was issued in Britain by the Lord High Admiral, or Commissioners executing his office, licensing the commander of a privately owned ship to cruise in search of enemy merchant vessels, either as reprisal for injuries suffered or as acts of war. The ships so licensed were also themselves sometimes referred to as letters of marque, though more usually called privateers. The earliest mention of such a letter is in 1293 and they continued to be issued in time of war or of reprisal until privateering was abolished at the Convention of Paris in 1856. A Letter of Marque normally describes the ship, her owners and officers, the amount of surety which has been deposited, and stresses the necessity of having all prizes condemned and valued at a Vice Admiralty Court for the payment of prize money. The practice of licensing privateers by special commissions was very often a highly profitable affair and many owners were anxious to equip their ships with guns in wartime to prey on such merchant shipping as they might come across. In spite of the official commissions they carried, many of them were not too particular about the nationality of the ships they attacked, acting more as pirates than as licensed privateers. It was a form of warfare much criticised by all navies, as the rewards of a successful privateering voyage were often so great that they attracted seamen away from service in regular warships.
3. The **Tarleton** had brought 340 slaves into Liverpool in 1752 from Guinea.
4. It is significant that the cost of impressing seamen reached its highest ever in 1756 at £114 per man, at the beginning of the Seven Years War. The average cost between 1550 and 1750 had been about £5 !
5. Captain Frederick Marryat (1792-1848). The son of a merchant in the West Indies trade, Marryat was born in London. He entered the Navy in 1806 and served until 1830, reaching the rank of captain, and began to write just before his retirement. Marryat has narrative power and his knowledge of the sea and contemporary Naval life was first-hand, and - within the limitations of the time - he has produced an authentic account of Naval life. Captain Marryat wrote *'Mr Midshipman Easy'* in 1836. In 1817 he introduced his Code of Signals for Merchantmen.

From the Editor

In an attempt to squeeze more of the proverbial quart into the pint pot, this edition of *'The Bulletin'* has been produced in '9-point' type. Normally *'The Bulletin'* is produced in '10-point'. I hope Members will not have too much difficulty in coping with the slightly reduced type size, but if it is a problem, please write and let me know.

There is still a considerable back-log of excellent material on hand for inclusion in *'The Bulletin'*. Whilst this is a very happy position for me, as Editor, to be in; if you have recently submitted an article for *'The Bulletin'*, please be patient ! Thank you. *j.s.*

JOHN TEBAY

A TRIBUTE BY CANON BOB EVANS

The Thanksgiving Service for John was truly a celebration of a wonderful life of caring and of loving others. The Church was packed with family and friends, all of whom knew that their lives had been enhanced by such a person. The Lesson was 1 Corinthians 13 ..... a fine summary of the man ..... "Love will never come to an end".

I first met him in 1960 and we became instant friends. John was always there for you and nothing was too much trouble, he never failed us. Meeting him as a Liverpool Pilot when I was Chaplain in the Mersey Mission to Seamen for thirty years; sitting alongside him at so many nautical lunches and dinners; chatting in the Liverpool Nautical Research Society, especially in the Archives on Mondays - all of this makes me remember him with a smile and thankfulness that we knew John Tebay. He was a gentle man. To say that he will be missed is not even near sufficient to express our feelings, but all we have are words.

One friend put it this way: "John was ever a kind, courteous, loyal friend to all who came in contact with him."

Almost my last thoughts at the funeral were the final lines of Masefield's *Sea Fever*.

'And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow rover,
And a quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the last trick's over.'

I pray that John may be at peace and that our love will ever be there for his family.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From L.N.R.S. Member Ian Cook:

It was with shock and sadness that I read John Tebay's Obituary in the June *'Bulletin'*. Although I did not know John well, my membership of the Society offered me the chance to realise his devotion, commitment and caring towards fellow members. Indeed, the last time I spoke to John, apart from a quick 'hello' at a lecture, was when he took time out, at his own expense, to notify me at short notice of an *ad hoc* lecture on my nautical subject - blockade running. It was not John's speciality, and he was not there; but this act sums up my memories of him - thinking of others and going out of his way to assist. He was a fine man. My sincere condolences to his family.

From L.N.R.S. Member Captain Andersen of Houston, Texas:

A GOOD READ

I recommend to you and the Society *"The Rebel Raiders"* by James Tertius de Kay. Published by Ballentine Books (ISBN 0-345-43182-0).

This piece of history covers the construction of CSS **Alabama** (Laird 290), **Oreto** (Miller Yard) and two 'Laird Rams'. The majority of the events are centred about Liverpool and the interaction of the Crown, Confederate Agents and United States Agents. It is a thoroughly good read and was enlightening to me. This is a piece of history to be read.

From L.N.R.S. Member James A. Pottinger of Aberdeen:

BROCKLEBANK ENGINEERING POLICY

I was interested to note Mr McClelland's note on Brocklebank's **Maidan** in the June issue of *'The Bulletin'*.

The quartet of **Manipur, Magdapur, Maidan** and **Mahronda** were commissioned between 1945 and 1947, all with two Foster Wheeler water tube boilers operating at 475 psi, and driving HP and LP turbines. These boilers were of the ESD type, and certainly on the **Manipur** they gave us endless problems with leaky economiser tubes, and it was a constant fight to maintain sufficient stock of distilled feed water. This was exacerbated by having to shut down the steam to steam generator every few days to descale the tubing coil inside, and by the time it was up and running again we were at danger levels in the feed water tank.

Expanding the leaking economiser tubes was a horrific job, clad in gas masks and asbestos gloves; we were then working in the path of the hot gas flow all the while as some of the gas outer casing had to be removed to access the tube bank. As this casing had been dismantled so often it was then impossible to make it gas tight, and the leaked gas and fumes made it most unpleasant behind the boilers.

On one trip across from India to the United States we had to call at Malta to repair the tubes, and call again at Algiers to take on more water. The mitigating factor on this ship was that promotion was swift for those of us who stuck by her as one trip was usually enough for most !

It may be significant that after these four ships with water tube boilers, Brocklebanks then went back to Scotch boilers with HP, IP and LP turbines for the next seven ships. Watchkeeping on the **Matra** of 1949 was a picnic in comparison with the **Manipur**.

The somewhat hybrid **Makrana** then made an appearance in 1957. She was reputedly the brainchild of Commander Jenks, the then head Engineering Superintendent, who made the

maiden trip on the ship. She had two Scotch boilers and one water tube boiler, this lone boiler supplied steam to the HP and LP turbines, and certainly kept the watchkeepers on their toes!
The succeeding **Mawana**, **Mangla** and **Mathura** then conformed to modern common practice of being fitted with two water tube boilers, and HP and LP turbines.

from L.N.R.S. Member Charles Dawson of Sundbyberg, Sweden.
'THE BULLETIN', JUNE 2002
I hope you may be interested in the following notes on various items in the June *'Bulletin'*:
1. Steam Pilot Boats by Gordon Bodey
A reference to Terry Kavanagh's article *'Early Iron Vessels on the Mersey'* in *The Bulletin*, Vol.43, No.2, August 1999, shows that the first steam-propelled vessel on the Mersey could not have been built of iron. She was the p.s. **Elizabeth**, launched by John Wood of Port Glasgow on 20th November 1812, (Parliamentary Report of 12th June 1822) and she must have been built of wood since her builder never constructed in any other material in those early years, if ever. The yard ceased operation in 1853.

2. The p.s.**Duke of Wellington** was built by William Wright, and the p.s. **Prince Regent** by William Rigby.

3. In 1862, Brunel's p.s. **Great Eastern** was on her third round voyage to New York, the second from Liverpool. Her captain, Walter Paton, her seventh commander, decided to anchor in Long Island Sound because his ship was heavily laden. When passing Montauk, there was a 'peculiar jolt' and in due course it was discovered that she had struck an uncharted rock, creating a hole 80 feet x 9 feet in her flat bottom. Fortunately the inner of her double skin had not been penetrated. Even so, she appeared doomed, as there was no dry dock in existence nearly large enough to accommodate her. (N.R.P. Bonsor, *North Atlantic Seaway*).

The U.S. engineer Edward S. Renwick*, born 1823, solved the problem. He took the bold decision to build a giant wooden cofferdam large enough to cover the hole, sink it in the appropriate position, fit it over the hole, make it watertight and then pump it dry.

Owing to the exigencies of the Civil War, it was difficult to find a supplier of iron plates sufficient to patch the hole, but all the difficulties were finally overcome, the plates were successfully fixed to the outside of the hull from the floor of the cofferdam and the p.s. **Great Eastern** sailed for home early in January 1863. The repair cost £70,000. (James Dugan, *The Great Iron Ship*, London, 1953).
* Third son of James Renwick, U.S. Scientist and author, born Liverpool 1790, of a distinguished Scottish Lowland family, died New York 1862. (*Encyclopedia of American Biography*).

From L.N.R.S. Member John B. Hill of Hexham, Northumberland
THE 'MANXMAN'
Having just read the March 2002 issue of *'The Bulletin'*, I was reminded of the frequency with which references are made to the vessels of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company, and I drew the obvious conclusion that there must be considerable interest in the Manx Company's steamers amongst members of the L.N.R.S.

One morning in 1982, I came across the **Manxman** at the Pier Head, with a grey funnel and bearing the name **Moskva**. At first I was quite mystified, believing that the **Manxman** might have been sold, but that did not explain the large vehicles on the quayside, or the number of people milling about on the upper decks. Apparently the **Manxman** had been

chartered for filming in the Barbra Streisand production *'Yentl'*. In this role the steamer cruised off North Wales and around Liverpool Bay under the name **Moskva**, with a dark grey funnel.

As you will have gathered, I am an avid reader of *The Bulletin* and I would like to take this opportunity of saying how well I think it is doing. My one regret is that having only tenuous connections with Liverpool shipping, I am unable to contribute any articles which would be of interest to readers, for I have noticed that nearly all of the contents of *The Bulletin* have some connection with the nautical history of Merseyside.

From L.N.R.S. Member F.W. Hawks of Billingshurst, West Sussex

INVERNESS STEAMER **'BEN-MY-CHREE'**

With reference to the article *'Inverness steamer **Ben-my-Chree**'* in the March issue of *The Bulletin*, the following may be of interest:

While continuing to be registered at Douglas, Isle of Man, the **Ben-my-Chree** was registered in the ownership of J. Bremner of Leith on 29th February 1860, and was then sold on 9th April of the same year to J. Johnstone of Edinburgh who transferred the registry to Leith on 10th May 1860.

Johnstone re-sold the vessel to J.MacKillican of Invergordon during 1861, who sold her on to H.E. Moss of Liverpool on 17th September 1862, subsequently going to P.Stuart and P.Douglas, also of Liverpool, three days later.

The registration was transferred to Liverpool on 19th January 1863, and the vessel was re-registered at Liverpool on 14th August 1863 on her conversion to a sailing vessel (schooner rigged). The Register was finally closed on 28th January 1871 on the vessel's reduction to a hulk in the Bonny River in what is now Nigeria.

From Andy Adams of Harwich, Essex (Information Officer, Corporation of Trinity House)

THE TRINITY HOUSE PILOT TENDER **'VIGIA'**

I am researching the history of the Trinity House pilot tender **Vigia**. She was requisitioned in 1941 and served on the Mersey as the nominal base ship for HMS **Ariel**. I have confirmed this fact from a book on naval shore establishments. However, the book lists her as being attached to **Ariel** until 1945 whereas in correspondence I have had with Mr Jim Colledge, he states that in 1943 she was transferred to the War Office. She returned to Trinity House in September 1945.

I suspect that when she was transferred to the War Office she was employed in servicing the A.A. Forts in the Mersey Estuary. I wonder if you can confirm or refute this suspicion.

I would be grateful for any leads as to photographic sources. I have both pre-war and post-war photographs, but nothing from the wartime period.

THE MISSING SHIPS

The sad tale of ships lost at sea is a familiar one, but in late June 1952 came the unusual story of three vessels lost before they sailed - lost, in fact, before they were built. The explanation of this is because of inadequate steel supplies, shipowners and builders are now facing serious losses of ships from their building programmes. At the launch of the motorship **Obuasi** for Elder Dempster Lines at Belfast, Sir Frederick Reibeck, chairman of Harland & Wolff pointed out that in 1951 they had every reason to believe that in the first six months of 1952 they would launch 11 ships with a total tonnage of some 110,000 tons. Including the **Obuasi**, however, only eight vessels totalling 80,000 tons were sent down the ways. Sir Frederick's forthright description of the state of affairs at Belfast was echoed by Lord Rotherwick, chairman of Clan Line steamers who could build only two ships a year, instead of the three planned.

ROUGH WEATHER ON THE *'GREAT EASTERN'*

A short article submitted by L.N.R.S. Member Gordon Bodey

The prominent Liverpool merchant T.B. Forwood, besides being in poor health had, in August 1861, suffered the loss of his wife. He was ordered to take a sea voyage to assist him to regain his health and so, with his son [later Sir] W.B. Forward, set off from Liverpool for the recuperative voyage. The voyage account is by W.B. Forwood.

" On the 7th September, 1861, we embarked on board the steamer **Great Eastern** for New York, the Liverpool dock walls being lined with people to see the great ship start. She was far and away the largest vessel built up to that time, being 679 feet long, 83 feet beam, 48 feet deep, with a tonnage of 18,915; she was propelled by two sets of engines, paddle and screw. It was a memorable voyage. Three days out we encountered a heavy gale, which carried away our boats, then our paddle wheels. Finally our rudder broke, and the huge ship fell helplessly into the trough of the sea. Here we remained for three days, rolling so heavily that everything moveable broke adrift, the saloon was wrecked, and all the deck fittings broke loose. Two swans and a cow were precipitated into the saloon through the broken skylights. The cable broke adrift, and swaying to and fro burst through the plating on one side of the ship. The captain lost all control of his crew, and the condition of things was made even more alarming by the men breaking into the store-room and becoming intoxicated. Some of the passengers were enrolled as guards; we wore a white handkerchief tied round our arms and patrolled the ship in watches for so many hours each day.

My father was badly cut in the face and head by being thrown into a mirror in the saloon, during a heavy lurch. I never knew a ship to roll so heavily, and her rolls to windward were not only remarkable but very dangerous, as the seas broke over her, shaking her from stem to stern, the noise reverberating through the vessel like thunder. We remained in this alarming condition for three days, when chains were fixed to our rudder head and we were able with our screw engines to get back to Queenstown. My father returned home, not caring to venture to sea again.

An amusing incident occurred during the height of the storm ..... the condition of the great ship was serious and much alarm was naturally felt. At this juncture a small brig appeared in sight under close-reefed sails. The brig seeing our condition bore down upon us and came within hailing distance. My father instructed Captain Walker of the **Great Eastern** to enquire if she [the brig] would stand by us, and to offer her master £100 a day if he would so so, but no answer came. The little vessel sailed around us again and again, and the next time she came within hailing distance, my father authorised Captain Walker to say that he would charter the ship, or if necessary buy her, so anxious was he that she should not leave us. She continued to remain near us all day, and then with the weather moderating, she sailed away on her voyage.

Two years afterwards the captain of the brig called at the office, saying that he had been told by a passenger that Mr Forwood had offered him [the brig's captain] £100 per day for standing by the **Great Eastern**, and claiming £200, two days' charter money. I need not say that he was not paid, but I think my father made him a present!"

The new centre section for the **Costa Classica** shortly before being launched from Cammell Lairds, Birkenhead, on 27th November, 2000.

REPORTS ON MEETINGS

ENGINEERING THE *'COSTA CLASSICA'* PROJECT

by Linton Roberts

Linton Roberts, sometime project manager for Cammell Laird, spoke to a packed meeting on Thursday, 21st March. Mr Roberts said that the building of a new centre section for the **Costa Classica** was one of the most ambitious jobs that the yard had ever attempted.

There were three principal problems: 1] how to build the unit, 2] how to launch it (it would be like a huge square box), and 3] how to cut the **Costa Classica** in half.

The order was placed with Cammell Laird in September 1999 for the centre section and the specification, said Mr Roberts, was 'loose'. The new section would contain an additional 300 cabins. The ship would be available at Birkenhead for the work to be carried out between 23rd November 2000 and 26th March 2001.

The doors of Cammell Laird's building hall are 29 metres in height, and the new centre section would be 35 metres tall. This meant that the new section would have to be built in two parts - upper and lower. The main lower part would weigh 5,000 tons, and the upper part 1,500 tons. Once the two parts were complete a lifting frame, with a capacity of 2½-3,000 tons was hired at a cost of £500,000 and the top part was positioned on the lower part in an operation lasting six hours. The entire new centre section then remained on the slipway below the building hall for eight weeks.

The launch date was set for 27th November 2000. It was not possible to launch the section using standard slipways; a special system, involving hydraulic jacks, had to be devised. The new section weighed 6,500 tons, was 44 metres long with a flat 'front' and would stop 'dead' in the river. The 'launch' was planned with local pilots, and two tugs were on stand-by in the Mersey. By this time there was intense media coverage as the **Costa Classica** had turned back to Italy five days earlier, whilst actually on passage to Birkenhead.

Mr Roberts said that ideally the new section should have been constructed in a drydock: at its launch it was 95% complete.

Much planning had gone into how the **Costa Classica** would be split. After the 'split' both the bow and stern sections would need supporting. The bow section (7,500 tons deadweight) would have been moved into the wet basin, whilst the stern section (12,000 tons deadweight) would have remained in the drydock. The new centre section (6,500 tons) would then have been floated in.

Mr Roberts described the **Costa Classica** project as a 'step too far' for Cammell Laird, although the technology to do the job existed. On 22nd November 2000 the **Costa Classica** was on passage from Italy to Birkenhead with 75 Cammell Laird men on board. The decision to abort the project was obviously taken on the spur of the moment - the ship had no charts for La Coruna when she arrived off the port and put the Cammell Laird workmen ashore.

As to why the **Costa Classica** turned round, Mr Roberts suggested that her owners, Costa Crociere, had just been taken over by Carnival Cruises with a consequent re-think about future operations. It was stressed that it was *not* due to poor workmanship by Cammell Laird. The new mid section is now for sale and Mr Roberts felt that it would probably go for scrap.

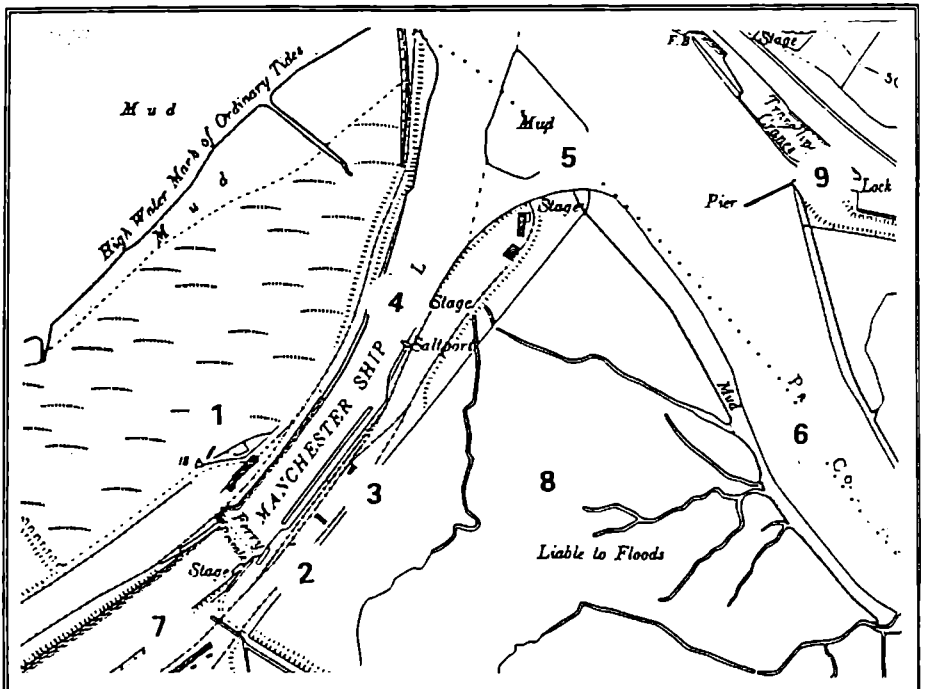
Mr Roberts explained that it is quite normal for payment to be made at the end of a contract, without any intermediate payments. Cammell Laird had financed the £25 million project over twelve months. The contract was drawn up under Italian law.

In conclusion Mr Roberts said that the building of the centre section for the **Costa Classica** was *'an engineering success, but a financial disaster'*. |||||

THE STORY OF SALTPORT

A summary of the presentation given on 18th April 2002 by L.N.R.S. Member Antony J. Barratt on the camp for navvies building the Manchester Ship Canal at Marshville and the nearby port of Saltport, both near Frodsham, Cheshire

Saltport was situated at the confluence of the River Weaver and the Manchester Ship Canal, while Marshville was situated about one mile to the west on Frodsham Marsh.



1 Gravel Wharf
2 Passenger landing stage
3 Finger Jetty & & landward wharf
4 Dolphins
5 Temporary Wharf
6 Weaver timber pond
7 Possible dwellings for dockers
8 Deposit Ground No 1
9 Weston Marsh Lock

Marshville

Much has already been written about the Manchester Ship Canal (MSC), but little has appeared about the men who built it and how they lived. Where there was no adequate local accommodation to rent, the contractor built camps for his workers. Camps built on the Cheshire

section of the canal were located at Eastham (opposite the Ferry Inn), Ellesmere Port (on the MSC wharf, north of Ellesmere Port Boat Museum), Ince, Frodsham Marsh (Marshville), Weston Marsh Lock, Acton Grange, Stockton Heath, Latchford and Thelwall. In 1891 perhaps 6,000 people were living in the camps. Signposts were erected to guide prospective workers to site offices: this was probably done to prevent local residents being assailed by enquiring navvies.

Marshville was the only camp with two-storey huts. As well as workshops and a substantial railway engine shed, Marshville had community buildings including a shop, reading room, school and mission hall. In total the contractor employed 118 'missionaries' to minister to the workers and also help educate their children. Even though drink was a problem, alcohol was sold in the shop. To counteract the demon drink, the Liverpool Women's Temperance Association was asked to enlighten the men. Apparently more successful was the provision, at some camps, of large coffee houses. Social and sports events were also organised.

Wives of married navvies could act as 'cook/housekeeper' for the single men who lived in dormitory style accommodation. For acting as housekeeper, her family enjoyed its own accommodation at the reduced rent of 8/- (40p) a week, whilst single men paid 13/- (65p) for bed, board and a supply of coal. The average wage was about £1-10s-8d (£1.54p). A local medical officer of health was very complimentary about the conditions the men enjoyed.

The MSC was the first project in Britain to have an accident service and trained first-aiders. There were also three purpose-built hospitals linked by ambulance engine. Robert Jones, surgeon of Nelson Street, Liverpool, supervised these arrangements. Each hospital was staffed and had 28 beds, whilst the one at Ellesmere Port had a garden for the patients. If Jones was needed he was called by telegram and travelled by ferry to Eastham and then by ambulance engine to the incident. Injured men received half pay if married and quarter pay if single. Those unable to resume their work were found light duty tasks such as points operators and watchmen.

Marshville was used for about six years with the first buildings being occupied in 1888. Two deaths, both in 1889, indicate the variety of men employed. A 'youth', Harry Sutton, was killed on 16th September at Frodsham, whilst a month later at nearby Weston Marsh Lock, Samuel Hall, a 93 year-old navvy, died.

Saltport

Little seems to have been written previously about Saltport. Investigations reveal that in all there were eight wharves, two of which were subsequently replaced. These were:

- The Temporary Wharf - built 1888
- The Gravel Wharf - built in late 1891
- Two cattle wharves, north and south, built 1891 and later rebuilt.
- The Southern Wharf and Finger Jetty - built 1892
- The Passenger Wharf - built 1893
- The Dolphins - built 1893

With the exception of the cattle wharves, most of the other installations had disappeared by 1905.

A dredging wharf was also built about 1920 - 1922.

The Temporary Wharf was to allow materials in during the construction phase. There is some confusion as to the shape of this wharf; at least one description implies that it was 'L'-shaped, with the shorter part of the 'L' roughly along the line of the present canal. With a length

of about 300ft, it could accommodate a 400-ton schooner or four flats. On the wharf were a 10-ton derrick, a 70ft jib and a 12-ton travelling crane. Interestingly it appears that the railway tracks on the wharf were at right angles to the wharf edge. This layout may have made the wharf suitable for the coal tip proposed in April 1893, but not proceeded with. The Temporary Wharf was probably provided as Captain Park Yates of Ince imposed a number of restrictions across his land on both the rail and road links to the site which the MSC used.

The Gravel Wharf was built to unload materials for the building of the Weaver Sluices. Much of this material came from Barrow-in-Furness and was carried by ships owned by James Fisher. It was converted to a cargo wharf early in 1892, although being on an island, its value must have been somewhat limited.

The Ship Canal Act provided that two cattle wharves be constructed. The original wharves were made of timber and were 50ft long by 15ft wide. The northern wharf appears now to be a pontoon on the original site, whilst a concrete slope to accommodate tidal variations has replaced the southern wharf.

Provision of a trading wharf at Saltport was not part of the original plan. In 1888 a suggestion was made that a wharf to handle copper imports might be built. Nothing came of this proposal: then in mid-1891 a wharf to export salt was suggested. Leader Williams, the MSC engineer, proposed that the wharf should be at Stanlow Point, but was told to produce plans for both sites. A tender of £5,092 for a 600ft long finger jetty, an inner barge dock, and the southern wharf was accepted in early 1892. A proposed rail link to the main line was never built. Although officially opened on 22nd July 1892, the ss **Millicent** had already shipped the first salt cargo on 29th June. Prior to the official opening the area had been called Weaver Pool, but on 22nd July it was renamed Saltport.

By the end of 1892 further facilities were being asked for. Inside the finger jetty was the barge dock, described as 35ft wide but from photographs and diagrams it appears to have been about 20ft wide and 12ft deep. The inner dock was still being excavated to the full length of the finger jetty as late as October 1893, just three months before the canal opened.

The gravel and southern wharves, together with the finger jetty, had at least seven cranes, although some reports say twelve were planned. Some of the cranes may have been adapted from cranes used on the construction of the canal. At Eastham, a large shed about 200ft x 60ft had been built for the construction of the lock gates. When this work was finished the shed was moved to Saltport to serve as a warehouse, whilst later in 1893 a further 6,000 square yards of storage space was provided.

Although passengers had been carried to and from Saltport from 10th October 1891, a passenger wharf was not opened until the middle of 1893. Prior to this, passengers had been landed by boat or left to scramble over floating timbers ! Ferries left Northwich at 11am and called at Acton Bridge, Sutton Weaver and Saltport, and arrived at Eastham to connect with the 3.30pm ferry to Liverpool. One of the four passenger vessels used was the **St Mawes Castle** with a passenger capacity of 259. Purchased from Falmouth in 1891 she was lost in the Indian Ocean in 1897 having been sold to Australia.

Due to increased demand for berths in October 1893 it was decided to build two dolphins north of the finger jetty. Vessels were already being moored to the bank when in March 1893 the Norwegian ship **Tolvo** heeled over. Nine months later the British ship **Edinburgh** was damaged whilst moored to the bank.

The final wharf to be built was the dredging wharf. It was constructed about 1920 to service Nos 1 and 2 deposit grounds which remained in use until about 1944.

The Weaver estuary was used as a three mile long timber pond with space being left for navigation.

The first recorded foreign vessel to use Saltport was the Norwegian **Deodata** with a cargo of timber from New Brunswick. She arrived on 10th November 1891. These early vessels probably unloaded in mid stream or at the Temporary Wharf. The ss **Rosalind** unloaded 650 tons of cement in eighteen hours at the Temporary Wharf in May 1892.

As well as coastwise vessels, ships arrived from Scandinavia, the Mediterranean, the East and West coasts of the United States and the River Plate. Outward cargoes went to Iceland, Cuba and India, as well as coastwise. Direct inbound cargoes included timber, iron, resin and grain. Transhipped inbound cargoes included tobacco, wine, tea, cotton and pitch. Outbound was mainly salt, with some general cargo.

On 11th August 1893, eleven ships were in port and twelve were due. It was claimed that Saltport threatened both Hull and Hartlepool in the Baltic timber trade. The cost of using Saltport for timber from Hamburg to Manchester was only half that of using Hull.

Regular services in 1893 included London weekly (for a short while it was twice-weekly), Glasgow weekly and French ports. The Prince Line commenced a regular service to the Mediterranean on 20th May 1893.

Stevedoring appears to have presented some problems. The first contractor asked to be released from his contract after a few weeks, whilst the second had to be rescued by police after he had taken refuge on board a ship from the dockers he said he could not afford to pay. The work was subsequently taken over by the MSC.

Transhipment of cargo along the canal ended at the end of 1894 and Saltport lost its only rail link in 1895. In addition damage to berthed vessels from the wash of passing ships tended to put shipowners off the port. Saltport also had to compete with the re-opened Runcorn Docks which had better transport links, but the death blow came from an unexpected source. In November 1893 the MSC proposed to place twenty more timber piles in the Weaver. The Acting Conservator of Mersey objected and told the MSC to move the existing piles as he had not approved them which meant that Saltport lost its timber pond.

The MSC had talked of building a dock as big as any at Liverpool in the Weaver estuary. At least one Beaver liner, the **Lake Nepigon** laid up there from 10th August 1892. At about 4,000 tons she remains the largest vessel ever to enter the Weaver. Two of her sister ships may also have laid up there.

Perhaps more realistic was a Great Western Railway plan in 1893 to build wharves fronting both the Weaver and the canal to import grain, timber and minerals while exporting iron and coal. A new railway link to the main line was also proposed. After some dithering the MSC agreed to the plan but it never materialised. ||||||

Principal Sources:

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Engineer Magazine, 26th January, 1894
Lancashire Merchant & Ship Canal News, 1888-1894
Leech, Sir Bosdon *The Manchester Ship Canal*, Manchester, 1907.
Manchester Library and Record Office

Engineering Lecturer: *"Are there any questions?"*

Student: *"Yes sir, what is the horse-power of a donkey engine?"*

BOOK REVIEWS

ORKNEY & SHETLAND STEAMERS

by L.N.R.S. Member Alistair Deayton

The replacement of P&O Scottish Ferries by Northlink as the ferry company serving Orkney and Shetland in October 2002 brings to an end an unbroken line of ownership that stretches back to the dawn of steam navigation and before. The North of Scotland, Orkney & Shetland Steam Navigation Company, known as the North Company, operated from 1875 for a century, until, as part of the P&O Group, it was renamed P&O Ferries (Orkney & Shetland Services).

The ferry services are still an important part of the economy of Orkney and Shetland. Although aircraft have had an impact on passenger services over the past few decades, much of the freight and many passengers are still carried by ferries to and from Aberdeen or Scrabster. The inter-island services have also been important as a means of communication. Ships such as the **St Ola**, **St Rognvald**, **Earl of Zetland**, **St Clair**, **Orcadia** and **St Sunniva** have all served the islands well over the past hundred or so years and ferry services to Orkney and Shetland look set to continue for a long time to come.

Inside the pages of Orkney & Shetland Steamers are over 200 images from the past two centuries of the ferries, the piers and the people they served. They are accompanied by an informative text and give an insight into the history of the companies that have served Orkney and Shetland over the past two hundred years as well as the ships that have plied the sometimes treacherous waters of the North Sea.

ISBN 0-7524-2377-0 Price: £12.99 Tempus Publishing, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 2QG

WHO SAILED ON THE TITANIC? : THE DEFINITIVE PASSENGER LIST

by Debbie Beavis

The author, a former LNRS Member, has spent a decade researching the passenger lists for the **Titanic**. Her project started when she found differences in the listings of the several authorities issuing the information over the first years following the disaster. There were at least three Inquiries into the disaster - one in the UK and two in the USA. Each inquiry used a passenger list from a different source. The White Star passenger lists were compiled from tickets issued at Southampton and Cork. Some of the tickets purchased in Southampton were for passengers joining the ship at Queenstown, so that there was a duplication of names.

The lists of survivors were compiled by several different organisations - the United States Immigration Service gathered most of the material. The Purser's staff on board the **Carpathia**, using forms not appropriate to the task, compiled a list of the names of the passengers rescued. On the **Carpathia's** arrival at New York the medical services were the first to board and immediately took many of the stricken survivors to hospitals in and around the city, instead of waiting until the Immigration Officers had checked all the survivors. Many bodies picked up from the sea were taken to other ports, such as Halifax, N.S.

The author demonstrates the confusion of the officials in trying to gather the names of the survivors as well as those lost. The result of the chaotic circumstances is that we are not entirely sure a] just how many passengers were on board the **Titanic** when she cleared Queenstown, and b] exactly how many survivors there were. Debbie Beavis has produced a definitive list and with an error of (+/- 5), 825 passengers lost their lives.

A thoroughly researched subject and a well-written, readable book. *HMH*

ISBN 0-7110-2880-X Price £19.99 Ian Allan 2002

THE TUG *'WILLIAM JOLLIFFE' / 'SALVAGE CHIEF'*

by Rick James

This article first appeared in 'Argonauta', the Journal of the Canadian Nautical Research Society in April 2001. Thanks to Mr H.M. Hignett for submitting the article, and for obtaining the permission of Rick James to include the article in the LNRS 'Bulletin'.

Construction

The iron screw steamer **William Jolliffe** (Official Number 91255, Signal Letters KCNM) was built in 1885 by J. Readhead & Company of South Shields. She was a large tug for her day, being 149ft in length, 26½ft in breadth, and with a depth of 14 feet. The 1897-1898 entry in Lloyd's Register states that she was 382 tons gross, 58 nett. The **William Jolliffe's** framework was iron, with five watertight compartments. She had two masts and two funnels.

Two compound surface condensing, direct acting, inverted steam engines with cylinders of 30 inches and 60 inches diameter drove the **William Jolliffe's** single screw with 164 nominal horsepower. The tug's first registry entry in Canada in 1914 records that the original boilers were replaced by two steel, single ended, Scotch marine boilers of 120 pounds pressure constructed by the Commercial Boiler Works of Seattle, Washington in 1913.

Operational History

The **William Jolliffe** was built for a prominent firm of Liverpool tug owners. William and Thomas Jolliffe founded the company W. & T. Jolliffe in 1854 and became actively involved in ocean and river towage and also operated summer excursion sailings from Liverpool to North Wales. By 1892 the firm was managing a fleet of some twelve screw and paddle tugs. Family names for the company's tugs were introduced in 1879 with the launching of the screw driven **Thomas Jolliffe**. Six years later the **William Jolliffe** was launched.

The Mersey-based tug fleet was widely known around the coast of Great Britain and it was also commonplace for Liverpool tugs to be regularly reported as coming and going from continental ports such as Bremen and Hamburg. The **William Jolliffe** was operated primarily as a 'cruiser', picking up windjammers and towing them into harbour or out to the open sea. 'Cruiser' was a British term commonly used from 1880 onwards and applied to the larger steam tugs with a good bunker radius and especially those in the fleets working out of Liverpool. These tugs often spent time cruising the Western Approaches to the English Channel hoping to come upon inward-bound sailing ships which had been slowed by unfavourable winds and which were willing to pay for a tow.

The **William Jolliffe** was also capable of handling large salvage jobs and was often involved with assisting and towing disabled vessels. With her large size, powerful engines and good sea keeping qualities, the **William Jolliffe** was recognised as being well designed for deep sea work. The *'Billy'*, as the **William Jolliffe** was commonly referred to, performed a major salvage feat in 1894 when, under the command of Captain James Clare, she rescued the Dundee steamer **Loch Marie** drifting off the north-west coast of Ireland after the steamer had used up all her bunker coal.

The Atlantic Transport liner **Maryland** had already managed to get a line to the **Loch Marie** to prevent her from drifting on to the beach. Unfortunately the **Maryland** could not hold the **Loch Marie** and she broke adrift. A few days later the **William Jolliffe** relocated the

derelict, put three men on board, passed across a hawser, and brought the **Loch Marie** into Belfast Lough. The **Maryland's** crew received £1,500 whilst the **William Jolliffe's** crew received £7,500 as the salvage award for the rescue.

The **William Jolliffe** was purchased by the British Columbia Salvage Company in 1907 for use as a salvage vessel and she sailed out to British Columbia. Founded in Victoria, British Columbia in 1903, B.C. Salvage was a subsidiary of the B.C. Marine Railway Company, owned by Bullen Brothers, later to become Yarrows Ltd. One of the shareholders and a director of the Company was Captain J.W. Troup, general superintendent of the B.C. Coast Steamship Service of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). Consequently the salvage company maintained a close relationship with the big transportation company. B.C. Salvage was the first salvage company in the province and operated, along with the **William Jolliffe**, the **Salvor** (the *ex*-**Danube**, a 215ft iron steamship) and the 113.5ft wooden steamer **Maude**. When the company was reorganised in 1916 it was renamed the Pacific Salvage Company Limited.

In November 1911 the **William Jolliffe** was sent out to search for the CPR steamer **Tees** missing somewhere along the west coast of Vancouver Island. A faint signal for help from the **Tees** had been picked up by the steamer **Niagara** and relayed on. Jack Robertson, the relieving chief engineer on the **William Jolliffe** recalled that as the **Tees** hadn't been heard from in nearly a week, excitement was running high. He also remembered that they *'had pretty bad weather, but what a ship! The 'Jolliffe' could ride it out like a duck!'* The **Tees** was eventually found tied up to the beach in a sheltered inlet. She had struck a rock on leaving Kyuquot and stripped her propeller and damaged her rudder.

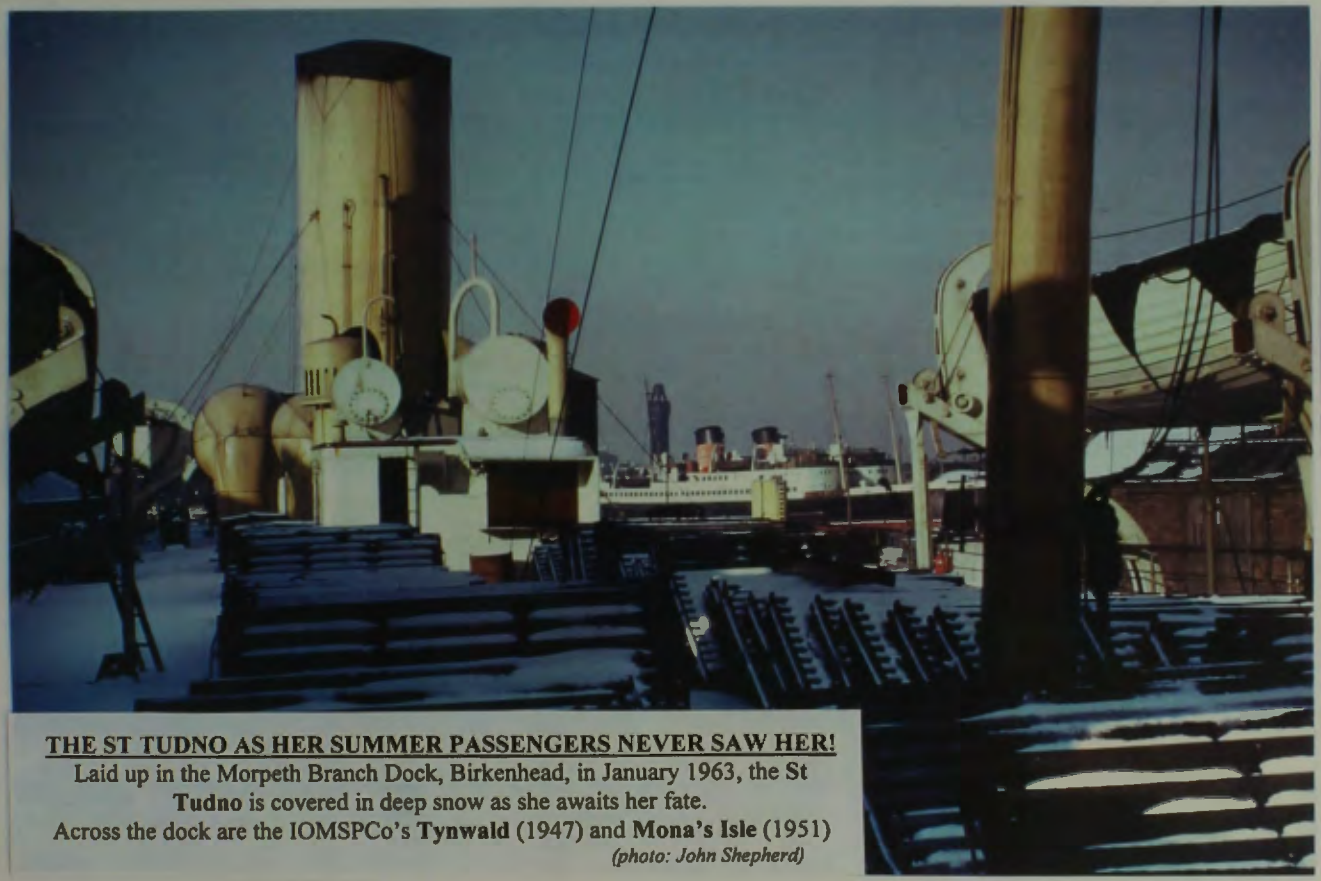
When the **William Jolliffe** was sold to the CPR in 1914, her registry was finally transferred from Liverpool to Victoria on 9th April, and on 7th May she was renamed **Nitinat**. The boilers needed replacing and her former owners couldn't afford the expense, but the CPR had the **Nitinat** fitted with new ones at Bullen Bros. shipyard. She was also converted to burn oil fuel at this time.

The CPR assigned the **Nitinat** to general work and later placed her on the regular transfer service of railway car barges between Vancouver Island and the CPR's mainland terminus at Vancouver. The big steam tug was called upon to perform one unusual job when she hauled the large Heffernan floating dock, required for the construction of Victoria's Outer Wharf, from Seattle to Victoria. Seattle shipping interests insisted that two tugs would be needed but the old, but still powerful, tug proved capable of performing the job on her own.

The **Nitinat** (*ex*-**William Jolliffe**) retired from general towing work and returned to salvage duty when the CPR sold the tug back to the Pacific Salvage Company of Victoria in June 1924. The salvage company refitted her with pumps and other salvage gear and on 31st August 1924 the old tug was renamed **Salvage Chief**. She only operated under this name for a few short months: early in February 1925 she was wrecked on Merry Island in the Gulf of Georgia, between Vancouver Island and British Columbia (50°N, 125°W).

The Loss of the Salvage Chief (ex William Jolliffe)

On 6th February 1925 the **Salvage Chief** left Victoria Harbour with a crew of fourteen on board under the command of her master F.C. Stratford. She had been despatched to assist the Hecate Straits Towing Company's tug **Cape Scott** which was struggling to regain control of two huge Davis rafts which she was towing. *(Davis rafts were an ingenious method devised for towing logs along the West Coast of Canada. A flat boom of logs was lain and then woven together with wire rope. Logs were piled on top and then more wire rope was laid over the top of the whole package. The resulting raft would draw 15 to 20 feet of water, and sit above the water about the same height. A powerful tug could make about three knots with this unusual*



THE ST TUDNO AS HER SUMMER PASSENGERS NEVER SAW HER!

Laid up in the Morpeth Branch Dock, Birkenhead, in January 1963, the St **Tudno** is covered in deep snow as she awaits her fate.
Across the dock are the IOMSPCo's **Tynwald** (1947) and **Mona's Isle** (1951)

(photo: John Shepherd)

tow). The **Cape Scott's** difficulties had begun when she encountered bad weather when passing through the Active Pass.

The **Salvage Chief** reached the **Cape Scott** and on 7th February the two tugs worked to free the Davis rafts which had grounded on Merry Island, just off the Sechelt peninsula. When the **Salvage Chief** was manoeuvring into position, one of the Davis rafts began drifting down on her and the tug attempted to move clear. Unfortunately this put the **Salvage Chief** over some rocks and she slammed down heavily on a pinnacle in the trough of the waves and remained fast.

The **Salvage Chief** was stranded 500 yards off shore. A strong south-east breeze was blowing and it was two hours before high water at the time of the incident. The **Salvage Chief** was hard aground amidships with a large hole in her hull under the boilers. Her crew were forced to abandon her for the **Cape Scott**. At high tide just the **Salvage Chief's** bow remained out of the water. Attempts to pull the **Salvage Chief** clear only wedged the hull more firmly. Salvage experts examined the wreck and in the continuing bad weather it was decided to declare the **Salvage Chief** a total loss. There was $50,000 of insurance on the vessel and $25,000 on the cargo.

The **Salvage Chief** was never refloated, but the wrecking scow **Skookum II** did recover some of her machinery and equipment. The **Salvage Chief's** hull eventually broke up and disappeared beneath the waves. ||||

AND FINALLY .....

GIN AND GENERAL AVERAGE

In January 1950 a motorship, disabled by reason of water having entered her fuel tanks, used the last bottle of gin on board in an unsuccessful endeavour to start her engines. Enterprising though this novel form of priming may be, the question arises as to who is liable to pay for the bottle of gin. Alcoholic liquors are not so expensive on the high seas as they are on shore, unless, in the case of this particular motorship, the owner placed a scarcity value on his precious bottle and, as it were, blackmailed the master or chief engineer before he would consent to the consumption of his inflammable spirit in so unaccustomed a manner. The question of who meets the bill, be it large or small, appears to depend on whether the vessel was in peril at the time the sacrifice was made. If she was, then beyond all question the act of injecting the gin into the cylinders was *'an extraordinary sacrifice intentionally and reasonably made for the purpose of preserving from peril the property involved'*, and as such, a general average act. In such circumstances ship, freight and cargo would share in making good the sacrifice in proportion to their arrived values, and the underwriters on these various interests would pay the claim, after proper adjustment - unless, of course, the shipowner elected to buy the owner of the bottle of gin another, in replacement, in order to preserve an unblemished insurance record!

Shipbuilding and Shipping Record, 12th January, 1950

GENERAL AVERAGE : A term in marine insurance for the adjustment of a loss when cargo on board a ship belonging to one or more owners has been sacrificed for the safety of the whole, whereby the amount of the loss is shared by all who have shipped cargo in the vessel. There are strict rules which bind a claim for general average; the loss must have been voluntary and not accidental, must not have been caused by any fault on the part of the owner claiming general average, must have been necssaary and successful in saving the remainder of the cargo, and must have been made by the order of the master of the ship. j.s.

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

(Founded in 1938)

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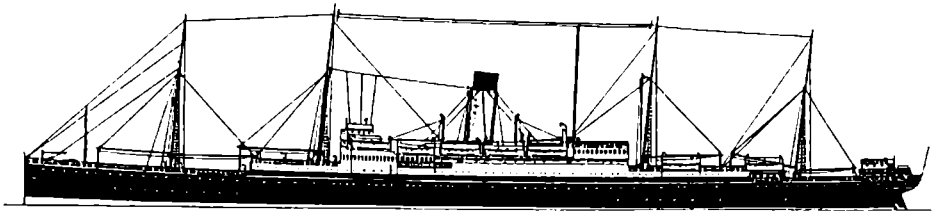


TWO TRAGIC BOHEMIANS

by L.N.R.S. Vice Chairman Gordon Bodey

*In this article Gordon Bodey describes the tragic fates of two vessels of the same name in the Leyland Line fleet: the **Bohemian** of 1870 and the **Bohemian** of 1900.*

BOHEMIAN (1)

Official Number: 63280; Call Sign: J P S H

The first **Bohemian** of this account was a three-deck cargo vessel built for the Bibby Line in 1870 by Harland & Wolff of Belfast and registered at Liverpool. She was a single-funnelled, single screw, straight-stemmed vessel of iron construction with four masts, barque-rigged, and some 3,113grt. Service speed was 11 knots. The **Bohemian** (1) was 400 feet in length, 37·2 feet breadth and 28·4 feet in depth. She traded to the Mediterranean for the Bibby Line until 1873 and then afterwards, along with the rest of the Bibby Line fleet, she traded as part of the Leyland Line. [1]

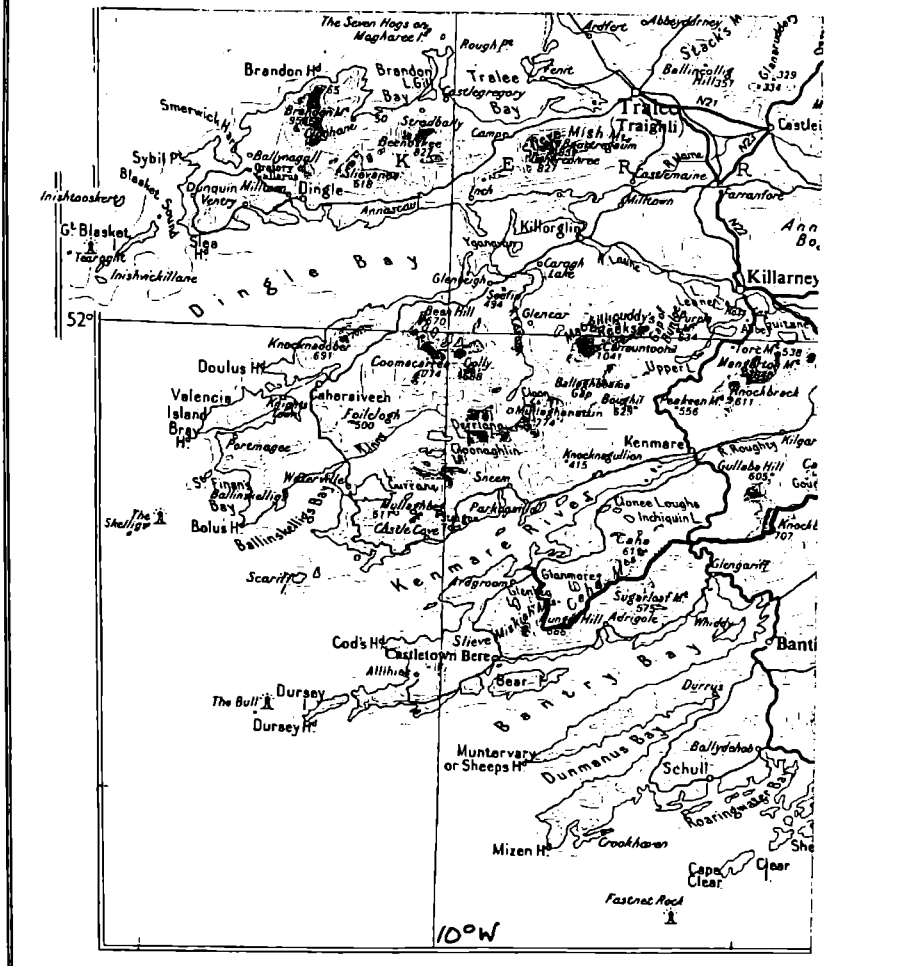
After having compound engines installed by J. Jack of Liverpool, the **Bohemian** commenced service on the Liverpool-Boston run on 24th November 1877. She remained on this run until wrecked near Crookhaven, Ireland (51°28'N, 9°43'W), about three miles north east of Mizen Head, on 6th February 1881 with the loss of 35 lives.

On 27th January 1881 the **Bohemian** left Boston for Liverpool under the command of Captain William Moyon Grundy (Cert.No. 87136). She had a crew of 49 but also, and counted separately, four men to look after the refrigerator *'fitted for the carrying of dead meat'*, and a man to look after the livestock then on board. In addition there were two Distressed British Seamen (DBS) - sick men from some previous voyage being returned home - and a stowaway on board: in all some 57 persons. The ship was fully laden with a cargo of provisions, bagged grain, baled cotton, hides, 28 live cattle and a large quantity of *'dead meat'*. The **Bohemian** was drawing 21ft.5in. forward and 24ft.8in. aft - her usual trim.

There were two navigating compasses in use on board: the standard compass on the bridge and a steering compass in the wheelhouse - the courses being set by the standard. In addition there was a spare compass and a boat's compass on board. The ship's life-saving facilities consisted of two lifeboats and two pinnaces with a total carrying capacity, in heavy weather, of 60 to 70 persons. Although said to be in good

[1] *This came about in 1873 when James Bibby was persuaded to retire (aged 60) by his now partner (from 1859), and former accountant, Frederick Leyland (then aged 41) who immediately had the firm's name changed to F. Leyland & Company. Leyland had, reportedly, gained a majority shareholding in the firm by 1873 - although it is not known how this could have been contrived without the knowledge of James Bibby. However, although keeping a minority shareholding in the Leyland Line, James Bibby was soon to return to ship-owning in his own right.*

order, the wooden lifeboats were stowed close to the funnel and the wood, therefore, was somewhat dry and the planks less than watertight. Although overhauled from time to time, they had not, in fact, been in the water for about eighteen months, whereas the pinnaces had been in the water at Boston the day before sailing.



The south west coast of Ireland

A good passage was made across the Atlantic and by noon on 6th February the **Bohemian** was about 70 miles almost due west of Tralee Bay. She was steering a south-easterly course at 10½ knots in clear weather with the wind light and variable

from S. to S.E. No sail was being carried [it was still common at this time for steamers to use wind power, when conditions were suitable, in order to conserve coal]. The second mate was on the noon to 6 p.m. watch (watchkeeping was then six hours on, six hours off), and at about 5.30 p.m. the Skellig Rocks (six to seven miles off the south-west coast of Kerry) were on the port bow on the horizon. The same course was being kept at 7 p.m. and the Skelligs Light was then on the port beam at an estimated distance of 11 miles.

At 6 p.m. the second mate had gone below and the first mate had assumed charge of the deck. With the **Bohemian** continuing on the same course and at the same speed, and with two able seamen stationed on the forecastle on lookout, the Calf Light was on the port beam some three miles distant at 8 p.m. By 9 p.m. a thick fog had enveloped the area limiting the lookouts' visibility to no more than an estimated two to three ship's lengths ahead but, notwithstanding this, the **Bohemian's** speed was not reduced. At 9.15 p.m. the engine room telegraph was put to 'stand-by' and the steam whistle was being sounded at regular intervals. By this time the master was on the bridge (as was the third mate who was at the standard compass), and as he had expressed a wish to communicate with Brow Head by signal (for what purpose it is not known), the **Bohemian** was standing in towards the land and still at full speed.

Just before 9.30 p.m. the master was overheard by a crew member, Wm. Clancey, to give an order that *'the ship was to be kept two points off'*, after which he went down to the chart room. Some minutes later he returned to the bridge and was overheard to exclaim, *"Good God, what have you been doing - hard a-port, hard a-port"*. A little before 9.45 p.m. *"Breakers ahead"* was shouted up to the bridge by a look-out man, whereupon the mate had the engines put to full speed astern - but it was too late. Before the manoeuvre could take effect, the **Bohemian** had run aground on the rocks stretching out into the sea which are part of Mizen Head, about three miles west of Brow Head [Crookhaven is about 2 miles E.N.E. of Brow Head].

Captain Grundy immediately ordered the boats to be cleared away. The starboard pinnace, with nine hands aboard, was the first to be cleared but in being lowered it was stove in. The starboard lifeboat was lowered next but suffered the same fate as the pinnace. [The disablement of the boats was later attributed to there being insufficient guys on the davit heads.] The two port boats were then swung out but almost immediately the pinnace was destroyed when the mainmast collapsed and fell across it. The remaining lifeboat, in the charge of the second mate Mr S. McIsaacs, was lowered successfully and then hauled to the **Bohemian's** stern by means of a line. The two sick men on board were sought - but not found - and then the master ordered the ship's boy and some crew members down into the boat. Shortly after this was complete the hold on the painter, the line by which the lifeboat was being held alongside, was lost and it drifted astern of the **Bohemian**. The oars were rapidly shipped but as the lifeboat was pulling up to her, the **Bohemian** slid off the rocks and plunged stern first into the depths some twenty three fathoms down.

Hearing the sound of cries in the water, the occupants of the lifeboat steered towards them and managed to find and retrieve six men clinging to the remains of the

starboard pinnace, bringing to twenty-three the number in the lifeboat. During the night two of these men died of exposure, but the remainder were landed safely the following morning inside Three Castle Head (three miles N x W across Dunlough Bay from Mizen Head). A very fortunate survivor was the bosun, Mr J. Reardon, who had jumped overboard before the ship sank. He had managed to grab hold of, and hang on to a bale of cotton. which during the night was carried on to the shore. At daylight two men could be seen clinging to a rock about a mile and a half from the shore, but owing to the now severe weather conditions they could not be rescued and were drowned.

A report was published on Monday 7th February 1881 stating that an *'unknown four-masted cattle boat steamer was wrecked in Dunloup* [sic] *Bay, near Crookhaven, Ireland, on Sunday night, 6th February'*. It also said that it was thought that everyone on board had perished. A following message said that part of the crew was lost, two men were sick, *'and that two men were stranded on a nearby island but unable to be saved as yet'*.

The following day it was reported that the captain was among those lost, and that there had been five cattlemen on board whose fate was unknown. A list of 31 persons, given as drowned, was published. These included Captain William M. Grundy, three deck officers and all four engineers.

By Tuesday 8th February the weather had deteriorated badly with a full gale blowing and the sea state made it impossible for the pilot cutter to attempt any rescue or recovery of bodies. This remained so on the following day and again nothing could be done. A great deal of the **Bohemian's** cargo was scattered over a wide area indicating the severity of the damage sustained in going aground.

On 10th February a more detailed newspaper report of the incident was published in which some members of the crew gave their accounts of the circumstances of the wrecking. This report stated initially that the **Bohemian** was wholly on the rocks off Crookhaven, surrounded by deep water, but in a very critical position. It was also said that Messrs Leyland & Company had reason to believe that three of the men who were in charge of the refrigeration apparatus, and of the cattle on board, had also been rescued.

Robert Stringer, an able seaman from Dublin, gave the first of the survivors' accounts. He said that the **Bohemian** had left Boston ten days before the occurrence, i.e. 27th January, and went on: *"Nothing remarkable occurred on the passage. We had easterly winds, but of a moderate description. I was on the look-out all of this night; we passed the Calf Light at about eight o'clock. It was then calm, and I distinctly saw the three rocks which mark the Calf Light. There could be no mistake as to that. After we passed the Calf the weather got very thick, and the next thing I heard was a telegraph signal to the engineer to stand by. About ten minutes after that I reported breakers ahead, and sung out 'hard-a-port; full speed astern' The mate on the bridge heard the call, and the order was executed. About five minutes afterwards the steamer struck."*

He said that the whistle was being sounded previous to that on account of the fog, and that the crew were rushing about. The captain, who was perfectly cool, told

them to be quiet and to prepare the boats. Robert Stringer continued *"We all made for the two starboard boats and got them swung. Five or six got into the first boat but it was stove. The second boat was also damaged owing to the rolling of the vessel on the rocks. We succeeded in launching the port lifeboat. There were four of us in the lifeboat, including Mr McIsaacs. We got a line and hauled the boat aft. The captain said nobody was to get into the boat before the two sick men, but when they were looked for they could not be found. The boy was put in and the others followed, making eighteen. The engineers were waiting to go in, but at this moment the line broke adrift and we drifted astern. We were pulling back to the ship when she heeled over and sank stern foremost. We subsequently heard men crying for assistance, and we found five men in a damaged boat, two of whom died before we reached land."*

The second mate was reported to have attributed the grounding to a mistake on the part of the third mate in carrying out the instructions of the captain. He said he thought it possible that as the wind was blowing on the starboard bow at the time, the third mate misinterpreted the captain's orders and kept her two points off the wind instead of two points off the shore. As the second mate was below deck when the incident occurred, his knowledge of it must have been obtained second-hand after the event. His conjecture that the order was to keep the vessel two points off the land does not bear scrutiny - the land was not to be seen in the prevailing conditions, and it seems hardly credible that an order which could not be properly acted upon would have been given.

The Liverpool tug **Cruizer** had arrived at the scene on the evening of 7th February but had been unable to provide any assistance owing to the prevailing conditions. She was still at the scene of the disaster on 14th February and she took out the Liverpool Underwriters' agent, Captain Flood, to the **Bohemian's** last known position to verify that she had actually sunk. Only remnants of her dispersed cargo remained.

A formal investigation into the circumstances attending the stranding of the **Bohemian** was held at St George's Hall, Liverpool on the 1st and 2nd March 1881 before Thomas Stamford Raffles, Stipendiary Magistrate, assisted by Captains E.A. White, RN, J.J.Wilson, and A.P. French (acting as nautical assessors). Having considered all the evidence available - a summary of which is contained in the above account - and in answering a number of questions asked by Mr Paxton, Solicitor for the Board of Trade, the following (summarised) conclusions were reached by the Court:

- The stranding of the vessel was due to her being steered on a course, except in the clearest of weather, dangerously near to the land. Despite the fog which came on thick at about 9 p.m., she continued at full speed and the master was not justified in proceeding at that speed.
- No change in the course was made when the vessel was abeam the Calf Light even though carrying on with the course would place the ship where she struck.
- The order to keep the ship two points off [the land], if carried out, might have avoided disaster; but, on the contrary, she was steered towards the land. The

misunderstanding was due to the ambiguity in the issuing of the order by the master.

- Whilst the boats carried by the vessel were sufficient and proper for their purpose, the Court was not satisfied as to their condition. Indeed, the only lifeboat which was successfully launched needed to be bailed with two buckets.
- The suddenness of the sinking combined with the disablement of three of the boats were the main factors in the great loss of life.
- The master, despite being to blame for the loss, kept his presence of mind and endeavoured to save life in so far as he was able until his ship sank beneath him.
- No wrongful act or default of duty was attributed to the First Officer.

BOHEMIAN (2)
Official Number: 113400; Code Sign: R T V J

The second **Bohemian** was a steel, single screw vessel of three decks, fitted with wireless, and built in 1900 by Alexander Stephen, Glasgow for F. Leyland & Company of Liverpool, where she was registered. She had a length of 512 feet, a beam of 58·2 feet and a depth of 34·3 feet. Her gross tonnage was 8,548; 5,542 nett. The **Bohemian** had a triple expansion engine with cylinders of 32in., 54in and 90in diameter. Working steam pressure was 190 lbs per square inch, giving her a service speed of 13 knots.

After completion at Glasgow the **Bohemian** sailed for Liverpool on 29th August 1900 under the command of Captain N. McCallum, satisfactorily undergoing sea trials en route. She arrived on 31st August and went into service on the Liverpool-Boston run, commencing her maiden voyage on 10th September. The **Bohemian's** average round voyage time was seven weeks with the actual crossing usually taking twelve days.

The **Bohemian** functioned mainly as a cargo carrier but also had accommodation for 115 passengers. In addition, she was able to carry up to 800 cattle when required; cattle-carrying provision was still a feature of Leyland vessels at this time and they carried men whose sole work was the care of the beasts. The **Bohemian** generally carried a crew of 115 which included two stewardesses.

During the 1914-18 war, in common with many other vessels of her kind, the **Bohemian** was in regular use as a troopship and army supplies carrier. During the latter part of 1918 she made calls at New York and Montreal carrying American and Canadian troops home from Europe. When this work came to an end she was handed back to her owners and, after refurbishment, was put back into service on the Liverpool-Boston run. In 1920 the **Bohemian** was the fourth largest vessel in Leyland's fleet of 29 ships.

The **Bohemian** left Boston on Saturday evening 28th February 1920 bound for Liverpool, under the command of Captain E.C. Hiscoe, who had commanded her from 1913 until 1918, and who, after some months ashore, had been re-appointed her master on 4th February 1919. The **Bohemian** was to call at Halifax, Nova Scotia, 386

miles from Boston, for bunkers. She had on board 65 passengers and 115 crew. Her cargo consisted mainly of baled cotton, but no cattle.

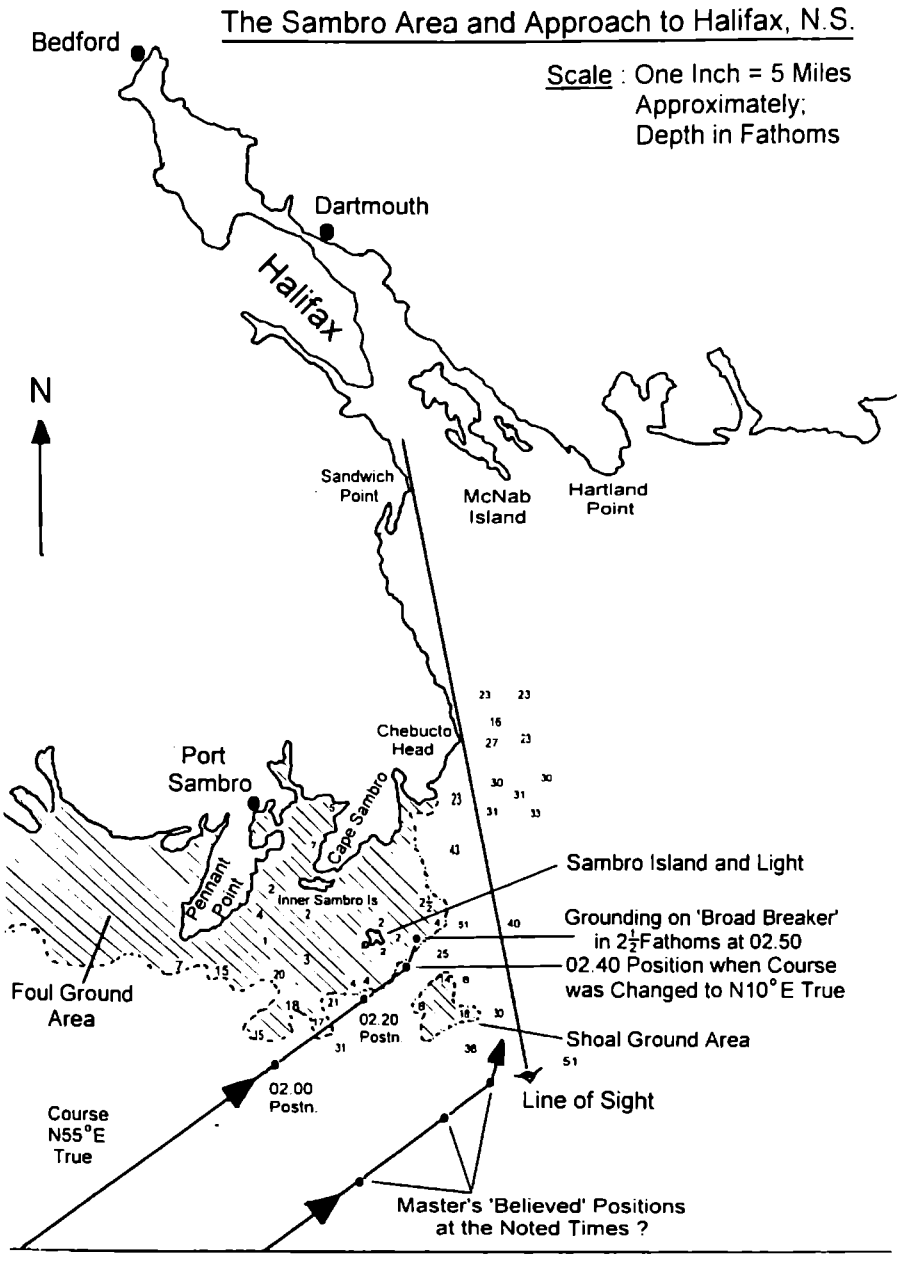
When the **Bohemian** left Boston she was drawing 24 feet 7 inches forward and 25 feet 8 inches aft. She was equipped with three compasses; the standard having been adjusted two months previously and showing but two degrees of error. All of her deck officers held a master's certificate.

With the **Bohemian** steering a course of N55°E true, the Brazil Rock (5½ miles almost due south of Baccaro Point, Nova Scotia, and 7½ miles E½S of Cape Sable) was passed at one mile distant at 5.10 p.m. on 29th February 1920. At 8 p.m. the **Bohemian** passed Little Hope Island (4 miles almost due east of Joli Point), some 6½ miles distant on the port beam. The **Bohemian** was continuing on this course at 1.30 a.m. on 1st March when, in accordance with his instructions left in the night order book, the master was called. At 1.58 a.m. the Radio Direction Finding Station on Chebucto Head (44°30′N, 63°31′W) - on the west side of the beginning of the approach to Halifax harbour - was asked for a radio bearing by the master of the **Bohemian**, this being supplied at 2.05 a.m. and given as *'Chebucto Head approximate bearing from 207° east of true north'*.

The master consulted the chart and decided that the radio bearing was incorrect. As he considered that he had a visibility of five to six miles (despite frequent heavy snow showers) he continued on his dead reckoning without attempting to verify his position by other means or to take soundings. The officer of the watch, second officer Samuel Blackmore, in whom the master appears to have had implicit confidence, did not suggest the necessity of verifying the ship's position by taking soundings or by obtaining further radio bearings.

At 2 a.m. the telegraph had been put at 'standby', and at 2.20 a.m. speed was reduced to 'slow' (4 to 5 knots); the master intending to continue for another two to three miles before hauling up for the pilot station [off Chebucto Head]. At 2.40 a.m., without any recourse to verification of the ship's position, the course was altered to N10°E true. As the alteration was taking place, the Sambro Light (on the south-east of Sambro Island, some 115 feet above sea level and, from a ship's bridge 20 feet above sea level, visible from at least 17 miles away under normal conditions) was - as later stated in evidence - sighted at a distance of '5 to 6 miles'. At about the same time the explosive signal (which detonated at ten minute intervals) at Sambro was heard, followed shortly afterwards by the Chebucto Head fog horn (something over nine miles from the **Bohemian's** presumed position, but only 6½ miles from her actual position).

Given that the Sambro Light was at the estimated distance, it should have been expected that the Sambro Light Vessel at the entrance to Sambro Harbour would also have been visible to port at the same time as the Sambro Light itself. However, it was not; nor was its absence from the field of view queried, nor, therefore, the presumed position and distance of the ship relative to Sambro Light. Considering the numerous and barely submerged ledges known to be within close range of the vessel, she was not hauled up (as might have been expected) and soundings taken.


The Sambro Area and Approach to Halifax, N.S.
Scale : One Inch = 5 Miles Approximately; Depth in Fathoms
Bedford
Dartmouth
Halifax
N
Sandwich Point
McNab Island
Hartland Point
Chebucto Head
Port Sambro
Cape Sambro
Pennant Point
Inner Sambro Is
Sambro Island and Light
Grounding on 'Broad Breaker' in 2½Fathoms at 02.50
02.40 Position when Course was Changed to N10° E True
Foul Ground Area
02.20 Postn.
Shoal Ground Area
02.00 Postn.
Line of Sight
Course N55°E True
Master's 'Believed' Positions at the Noted Times ?

At about 2.50 a.m. on Monday 1st March 1920 the **Bohemian's** passengers and crew were shaken from their sleep as a tremendous shudder ran through the ship as she halted abruptly in her tracks (some actually slept through the grounding and had to be woken by stewards). They came on deck into a bitterly cold night to find that a blinding snowstorm was raging and that the **Bohemian** was firmly on the ground. She was, in fact, aground from her bow to just abaft the midships section, having run directly on to the 'Broad Breaker' slabs (these are part of the Sambro Ledges which extend up to 6 miles SSE at uneven and mainly shallow depths from Sambro Harbour); one mile east of Sambro Light, 5½ miles SE of Port Sambro, and some 17 miles almost due south of Halifax.

The only consoling aspect was that the sea was comparatively calm, albeit with a strong ground swell. This was to prove crucial in the subsequent rescue and the low number of fatalities (in the circumstances).

A wireless distress message was immediately transmitted which was received at Halifax. This resulted in the very prompt despatch of the ocean-going tug **F.W.Roebling** from Halifax, which was the nearest place from which assistance could be obtained; Port Sambro itself was only a small, isolated fishing community with foul ground to sea in all directions, and with many barely-submerged slabs as noted above.

Meanwhile, the **Bohemian's** crew were ordered to assist the passengers to gather together whatever personal effects they could reasonably take with them, and then to put them aboard the lifeboats. The lifeboats when lowered were to remain moored to the **Bohemian** and await any rescuing craft.

The Revd. John W. Storrie, a Congregational Minister of Marion, Massachusetts, who was travelling with his wife and two children, later said: *"Some of us thought the ship had docked at Halifax, but soon there were ominous signs that something very different had happened. The vessel began to lurch and I then overheard an officer telling the men to get the passengers into the boats as quickly as possible ... The organisation was perfect, and within forty-five minutes all the passengers were in the boats and safely lowered. We all had an unfortunate experience in our boat,"* went on Revd Storrie, *"The falls jammed as the lifeboat was being lowered, and when one end reached the water, the other remained ten feet up in the air. To right the boat the lowering ropes were severed and it fell with a splash into the water* [fortunately it fell squarely and no mishap ensued]. *It was a trying time while waiting in the boats, particularly for the women and children. It was bitterly cold, while the rocking of the small boat added the discomfort of seasickness to our troubles....."* The stewards had, however, provided each passenger with blankets thus helping to make their ordeal less rigorous.

Another passenger said later that *"It was a cruel night for a shipwreck. The Blind Sisters* (sic) [This shoal is about half a mile north east of 'Broad Breaker'] *are rocks which have a terrible reputation on the coast; no vessel has ever been known to ground there and get off again."* He expressed a warm tribute to the exemplary conduct of the crew and to the remarkable coolness shown by the passengers. One of

the stewardesses, who was later landed at Liverpool, was to recall "... *none of the passengers was hysterical, or even excited, because everyone seemed to realise that there was no immediate danger. ..... the crew had a very dangerous and trying time in their endeavour to get the ship off the rocks. The vessel was covered with a coating of ice, which made it very difficult for them to keep their feet.*"

Some three hours after the boats had been got away, and just as daylight was breaking, the **F.W.Roebling** came upon the scene. The snowstorm had continued to rage during this time but fortuitously abated just as the tug appeared. The transfer of the passengers to the tug proceeded smoothly and within three hours she was heading off back to Halifax (she was to return later in the day). Most of the **Bohemian's** crew remained with the ship.

The initial statement about the grounding which appeared in *Lloyd's List* on Tuesday 2nd March and sent from their own correspondent from Liverpool the previous day, read: *'At 4 o'clock this afternoon Messrs Leyland & Co. received at their Liverpool office a cable from Halifax contradicting a report that 184 lives were lost from the steamer **Bohemian**. The message was in the following terms "**Bohemian's** passengers safe in Halifax, crew following"'*

The first factual report that Lloyd's received from the scene was on 1st March from a Salvage Association surveyor - taken there by the tug along with some salvage men - and stated *'three holds were filled with water, but it was hoped to be able to save the vessel if no storm breaks'*. The holds flooded were Nos 1, 2 and 3, with No 4 hold, the machinery space, and the after holds dry. The cargo of baled cotton was being jettisoned from the flooded fore holds. However, it was later reported that the weather had risen and the steamer was being 'pounded heavily' and that the crew were still throwing the cargo of cotton overboard. A wireless message from the master received on 2nd March said that the prospects of saving the vessel were poor, and this was followed by another later in the day saying that the vessel had broken in two and was being abandoned. The day ended with the following message being received:

'It seems that a number of the crew remained on board the vessel last night in order to help in the effort to save the vessel by jettisoning her cargo. Early this morning it became apparent that the vessel was about to go to pieces and it was decided to leave her to her fate. Three boatloads [of the crew] *got safely away and the remainder were taken off by the tug **F.W.Roebling**, which opportunely came to the scene. It was probably during this transfer that the casualties occurred.'*

At the start of the day the unanimous verdict of the master, surveyor and salvage experts had been that the **Bohemian** was quite safe for two or three days. As soon as all the passengers were safely away, the Salvage Association surveyor had organised a salvage effort with the crew's assistance. This entailed, besides jettisoning the cargo as stated, filling the after tanks with a view to lifting the fore part sufficiently clear of the rocks to enable the vessel, by her own engine movements, to be dragged off. It was stated *'comprehensive gear including pumps and hauling gear'* was being used.

By nightfall on 1st March the **Bohemian's** deck was covered with snow over a coating of ice, and a strong wind was whipping snow and hail fiercely the length of the ship. In addition she was being pounded heavily by the strong swell. The remarkable efforts of the crew under such conditions were, however, to be in vain. At 3 a.m., some twenty-four hours after grounding, the **Bohemian** broke her back; the after part of the vessel remaining afloat for some time after she broke in two - in fact until 10 a.m. on 2nd March. An 'Exchange' message reported that *'seventeen members of the crew were left clinging to the after part of the vessel when it was abandoned and most of them were rescued by the tug. It was very difficult to work the lifelines owing to the heavy seas.'*

When the **Bohemian** broke, about one hundred men were still on board - most of them on the after end. Despite the valiant efforts of the rescuers aboard the tug, seven members of the crew among those on the after end perished. The loss of life was not attributable to negligence at this time, but was wholly due to the prevailing conditions and their effects on the lifelines and the rope ladders; these were ice-covered and those using them to escape - many with frost-bitten hands - were unable to control their descent. As the heavy swell made it impossible to keep the tug securely alongside the stricken vessel, some men fell into the sea between the ship and the tug and it is believed that they were crushed to death. Many of those rescued had suffered severe friction burns to their hands, whilst others were injured falling on to the deck of the tug. All the dead were from Liverpool.

By Wednesday, 4th March only a small part of the bow was still to be seen clinging to the rock. The cotton bales thrown over the side during the first day were scattered over a wide area and work went on for some days afterwards to retrieve them. It was during the course of this work that some of the bodies were recovered.

A lighter aspect in the aftermath of the tragedy was that some days after the rescue took place, forty members of the **Bohemian's** crew were invited to an evening's feasting and entertainment at the home of Nova Scotia's Senator Dennis. Miss Clara Dennis acted as hostess, and Mrs W.J. Armitage, the Convenor of the Field Committee of the Navy Defence League, was also present. The latter lady was responsible for providing every member of the rescued crew with a complete set of new clothing (every one of them having lost their entire possessions with the ship) soon after being landed at Halifax.

On 14th March the Dominion Line's **Canada** (Captain J. Davies) arrived at Liverpool from Halifax, having left there on 6th March. Besides several hundred passengers of her own, she brought home 59 passengers and 4 crew members (the two stewardesses, a baker and a steward) from the **Bohemian**. In addition there were also 134 passengers on board from the American liner **St Paul** which had put back into Halifax having developed boiler trouble when some 800 miles east of New York, bound for Southampton.

Cunard's **Royal George** arrived at Plymouth, en route for Southampton, on 20th March and landed the purser and 76 other crew members from the **Bohemian**.

Whilst on passage, one of the initial survivors (William Whiting, Quartermaster) died from pneumonia engendered by exposure during his ordeal.

Before the **Bohemian** was abandoned all the luggage left behind by the passengers was retrieved by the stewards, bundled up in blankets and despatched to Halifax aboard the tug. The only reported loss was that of a collection of rare books collected over a lifetime by Revd Storrie, which was stowed in one of the holds (the collection was travelling with him because he was returning to England to settle there). Despite the length of time the vessel remained afloat - and the great amount of belongings which were retrieved - the **Bohemian's** official log, slate log and other papers inexplicably disappeared.

As a result of the stranding a Court of Inquiry was convened at the Custom House, Halifax N.S. on 5th and 6th March 1920, before Captain J. Blanchard Henry, Commissioner, assisted by Captain Neill Hall and Captain C.O. Allan, acting as nautical assessors. Mr W.A. Henry, KC, appeared on behalf of the owners and master.

After its consideration of the evidence, a summary of which is contained in the foregoing account, the Court reached the following findings:

- *The vessel was well found and equipped, and had been properly navigated from Boston until approaching Sambro at 1.30 a.m. on 1st March.*
- *That the master had ample time to obtain another radio bearing from Chebucto Head Direction Finding Station before setting the ship on a northerly course; but he did not do so.*
- *That the master did not take the necessary steps to obtain an accurate estimate of the vessel's distance off the Sambro Light.*
- *That the master might easily have hauled away from Sambro Light - which would have been the proper thing to do under the circumstances - as there was no hurry to make port before daybreak.*
- *That the master, either thoughtlessly, or through some unexplained reason* [the Court rejected out of hand the master's contention that it was simply over-confidence on his part], *continued on his northerly course, and into danger, without availing himself of soundings, or taking a bearing abaft the beam, which would immediately have given him the vital information to enable him to avoid the stranding.*

It was also said that:

- *The Court might look askance upon the disappearance of the logbooks, slate, and other papers were it not for the master's sworn statement that he had lost his certificate at the same time.*

With regard to the Court's rejection of Captain Hiscoe's contention that over-confidence on his part had been the cause of the incident this must, nevertheless, have been a major factor in its occurrence - albeit an inexcusable factor. Captain Hiscoe had made this passage numerous times and well knew the nature and extent of the Sambro Ledges and must - however mistakenly - have believed the vessel to have cleared them and to be on course to pass to the east of Chebucto Head (approximately six miles

NNE of Sambro Island Light) and, therefore, in the channel to Halifax, when he put his ship on her northerly heading; this is the only part of the immediate area where the **Bohemian** could not have taken the ground on a northerly course.

It is not now possible to know if the vessel was being deliberately navigated through the passage (about ¾ mile wide but deep - see chart diagram [2]) between the main area of the Sambro Ledges and the area to the south marked 'shoal ground' (nor can it be known if it was common practice for masters to sail so close to this dangerous ground in order to shave time off the passage), or whether the master did believe that the vessel was passing south of the latter.

For vessels approaching Halifax from a westerly direction, complete clearance of the southernmost area of the Sambro Ledges is indicated when a clear line of sight between Chebucto Head and Sandwich Point is obtainable (weather permitting) - and is shown so on the chart. This would indicate that the safe passage to the south of the area marked 'shoal ground' is the one which should be taken, although the least depth over this area of ground is marked on the chart as eight fathoms. However it is significant that the master had said that he intended to steam on another *'two to three miles'* before hauling up for the pilot station; he could not have achieved that objective in the distance stated had he been altering course from a position to the south of the shoal ground area.

As noted above, the course was changed to N10°E at the same time - reportedly - as the Sambro Light was sighted (one mile prior to which the vessel had unwittingly cleared about 200 yards to the south of the Pennel Shoal at a depth of four fathoms and ¾ mile due south of Sambro Island). But after steaming on this course for ten minutes at about five knots the **Bohemian** struck one mile east of the light, i.e. when the course was changed the vessel was approximately one mile south east of the Sambro Light and with some 20 fathoms of water beneath her (ironically, had she kept on her original course for another two miles or so, the grounding would not have occurred).

It is implicit that the vessel was 'presumed', by her master, to be to the south of the shoal ground area from the stated estimated distance from the Sambro Light when it was sighted. The Court thought that if this had been so, the lightvessel (its precise location at that time is not stated) would have been seen at the same time. However, in view of where the **Bohemian** actually was when the Sambro Light was sighted, the island itself (about 800 yards west to east, and 500 yards south to north, and fifty feet in height at the northern part) would, presumably, have obstructed a view of the lightvessel; hence the reason why its absence from the field of view should have been questioned.

The Court, in saying that the master might easily have hauled away from the Light (unnecessary if at the stated estimated distance), appears to have been implying an awareness on the part of the master of an error in the estimate which should have prompted him to haul away. That he did not do so would imply a belief, on the master's part, that the estimate was correct. However, it is questionable whether two very well qualified and experienced officers would both have come to the same

erroneous conclusion about the range of visibility, and the estimated distance of the Sambro Light. It is upon this point that the occurrence of the tragedy turns; especially so as the discrepancy between the actual and the estimated distances (one mile as opposed to a possible six miles) was so great. The conclusion could be drawn that the officers knew that they were on the innermost passage but had overestimated the distance run, thus making the change of course prematurely (and thus accounting for Captain Hiscoe's claim of over-confidence). It may also have been the case that, in the prevailing conditions, the Sambro Light was not seen at all until the situation was beyond recovery.

In finding Captain Ernest C. Hiscoe at fault for the casualty, the Court credited him for his previous excellent record and particularly for his conduct during the recent war - he was said to have been responsible for his vessel (the **Bohemian**) avoiding direct submarine torpedo attacks on three occasions - and decided to take a lenient view with regard to punishment. His certificate, No. 00551, was suspended for three months from 8th March 1920.

The Court found that Second Officer Samuel Blackmore (Master's Certificate No. 039432) was lacking in his sense of responsibility and duty for not suggesting to the master the necessity of making the checks noted above. The Court censured him.

At this time radio was still in its infancy and had not yet found general acceptance by navigators. The Court stated a wish to impress upon navigators the desirability of the more extensive use of the facility, which it saw as a distinct advantage to mariners in checking their positions.

Footnotes

[2] The positions marked on the diagram for the times 2 a.m., 2.20 a.m. and 2.40 a.m. have been derived from the reported time of the incident, its location, and the information given at the Inquiry. The positions marked as the master's 'Believed' positions are approximately those where the vessel would have been, had she actually been five miles from the Sambro Light when it was sighted.

Acknowledgements and Sources

Mr & Mrs J. Reynolds of Billinge
Mr S. Grace of Southampton City Library and Archives
Admiralty Charts and Pilotage Manuals
Bibby Line, 1807-1990 by Nigel Watson
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Lloyd's Registers

THE SAGA OF THE *"FLYING ENTERPRISE"*

by The Editor

Fifty one years ago, in December 1951, a long series of gales in the Western Approaches brought its toll of shipping casualties, but only rarely has the floodlight of publicity been so focused on one incident as was the case with the **Flying Enterprise**.

The **Flying Enterprise** was a ship of 6,711 gross tons and was owned by the Isbrandtsen Company of New York. She was built by the Consolidated Steel Corporation of Wilmington, Delaware, in 1944 and was one of the U.S.M.C. "C.1" Class, propelled by two Westinghouse geared turbines.

The **Flying Enterprise** was on a voyage from New York to Hamburg with general cargo and the first news that she was in trouble was received by Land's End Radio at 12.53 p.m. on 28th December 1951 when she reported that she was encountering a severe hurricane in latitude 49°20'N, longitude 17°20'W, some 450 miles to the west (264·4°T) of Land's End. She reported that her situation was 'grave' with a 30 degree list to port, and that she was 'just drifting'.

The motorship **Sherborne** responded and said that she was proceeding at the utmost speed and hoped to be at the scene in seven hours. Forty minutes later, at 1.33 p.m. the **Flying Enterprise** radioed to say that her earlier urgency signal had now become an SOS.

Throughout the daylight hours of 29th December 1951 the **Flying Enterprise's** passengers and crew were transferred to the safety of the **Sherborne** and the **Southland**. By evening Captain Kurt Carlsen was alone on his ship. If he stayed there, he reasoned, there was a chance of salvage. He was reasonably confident that his ship could survive and that a careful tow could bring her safely into port.

On 30th December Captain Carlsen received the news that the powerful *Bustler*-class tug **Turmoil**, built by Henry Robb at Leith in 1945 and on charter from the Admiralty to the Overseas Salvage & Towage Company of London, would proceed to the assistance of the **Flying Enterprise** once she had completed towing a disabled tanker into Falmouth.

At dusk on 3rd January 1952 the **Turmoil** arrived at the scene, steaming in at 12 knots. Captain Carlsen faced a daunting task now: he had to attach a tow line single handed. Four times he managed to grasp the line as it shot from the **Turmoil** over the slanting deck of the **Flying Enterprise**, and on each occasion the 40-knot wind carried it away.

Although Captain Carlsen was evidently in need of aid, Captain Parker of the **Turmoil** shrank from ordering another man on board the **Flying Enterprise** because of the extreme dangers involved. So, no one actually told 27 year old Kenneth Dancy, the mate of the **Turmoil**, to join Captain Carlsen on the **Flying Enterprise**. However, for one brief second on 4th January, when yet another attempt to put a line on


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board was in progress, the stern of the **Turmoil** and the stern of the **Flying Enterprise** drew level as they bucked about in the heaving waters. It was at that moment, on impulse, that Kenneth Dancy grabbed the stern rail and achieved fame with his heroic leap on to the **Flying Enterprise**.

The following day, 5th January, fog and drizzling rain had closed in but a tow line was eventually secured in the calmer conditions. Now the **Turmoil** began the 350 mile tow towards Falmouth. Captain Parker had opted for a long towline - nearly half a mile - to minimise the chances of it snapping and for three days the **Flying Enterprise** wallowed and yawed along in the wake of the tug at a steady 3½ knots. At times, owing to heavy swell, the **Flying Enterprise** was 60 degrees out of line with the tow.

Various craft including United States destroyers stood watch and guard and rendered what (sometimes very small but nevertheless stimulating and encouraging) assistance they possibly could. Late in the afternoon of 8th January 1952 the **Flying Enterprise** came within sight of the Lizard. She was now an object of enormous curiosity. A flotilla of small boats came out to get a closer look and aircraft circled overhead. By midnight on 8th January the gales had returned and early in the morning of 9th January the towline parted. The **Flying Enterprise** was once again wallowing in the heavy seas and Captain Carlsen and Kenneth Dancy could tell that she was gradually sinking.

At 3.22 p.m. on the afternoon of 10th January 1952 both men jumped into the sea from the now horizontal funnel and were picked up by the **Turmoil** nine minutes later. Shortly afterwards the **Flying Enterprise** slipped over to 90 degrees and sank. In a strange twist of fortune - or misfortune - after the hawser parted the **Flying Enterprise** drifted up-Channel and passed her target of Falmouth before she finally sank.

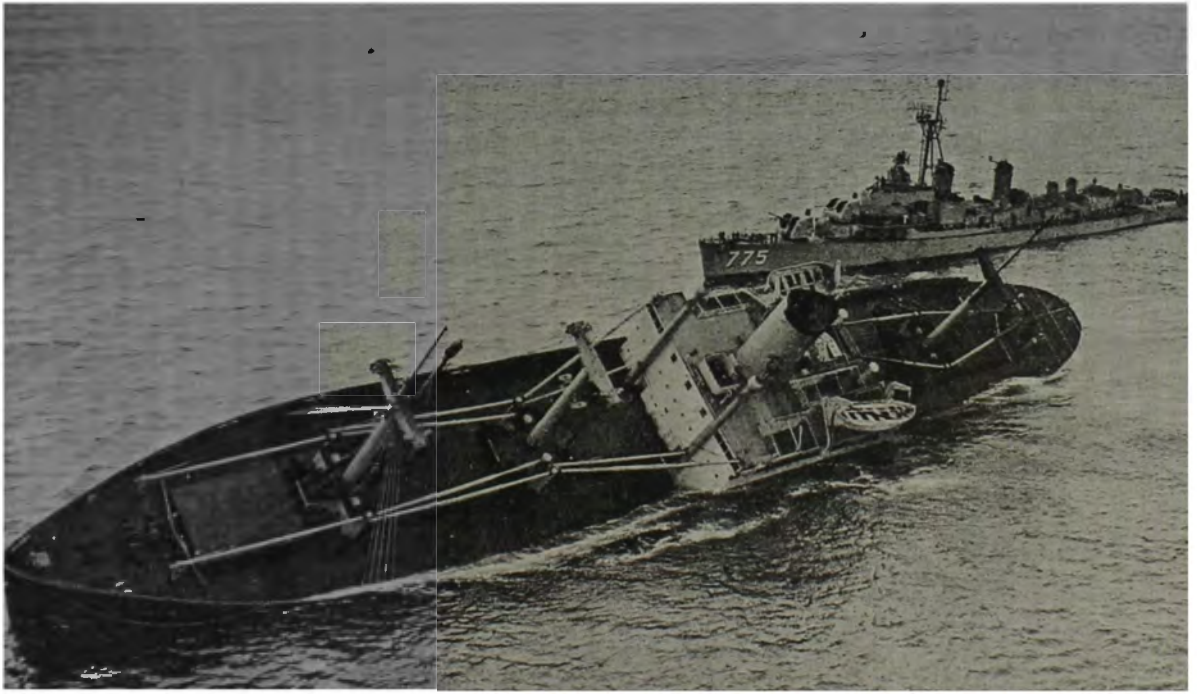
A marine underwriter expressed the opinion that the gallantry of Captain Carlsen in staying on board his ship, after ensuring that the passengers and crew were safe, caught the imagination of the marine insurance market to an even greater extent than it did that of the general public. Of the courage and endurance of Captain Kurt Carlsen, encouraged later by the presence on board the **Flying Enterprise** of the mate of the tug **Turmoil**, Kenneth Dancy, it is impossible to speak in terms of high enough praise. Isbrandtsen Lines made ex-gratia payments to the master and crew of the **Turmoil**, and Captain Dan Parker and Kenneth Dancy were awarded the Lloyd's Medal for Meritorious Service. |||||

OBITUARY

"TED TOZER"

It was with much sadness that news was received of the death of Ted Tozer on 5th October. Ted served his apprenticeship with the Lamport & Holt Line. He was very active in nautical research in the 1950s and 1960s and was L.N.R.S. Treasurer throughout the 1970s. Some readers may recall that in that era, as indeed now, the Society had a very wide ranging membership, amongst whom Ted was a prominent figure. Our sympathies go out to his wife Ingebjorg and to their sons Andrew and Nigel.

a.m.



Captain Kurt Carlsen and Mr. Kenneth Dancy, mate of the "Turmoil," catch a line from the U.S. destroyer "Willard Keith," which is sending coffee and food aboard the "Flying Enterprise"

WHAT SHIP ? - HARDSHIP !

by L.N.R.S. Member James E. Morris

Mr Morris writes:
'As a retired Manchester Pilot and a close and lifelong friend of the late John Tebay, who influenced me to become a member of the L.N.R.S. some years ago, I write to say that I have gained enormous pleasure from my association.
'*The Bulletin* always commands my full attention and interests me greatly, and I should like to add my congratulations on its excellence. Personal contributions always delight me but cause me to become very nostalgic !'

"Thou shall not enter alehouses or houses of ill repute, unless upon your master's lawful business"

So stated a clause of the Indenture that was to bind and apprentice me to Messrs Evan Thomas Radcliffe and Company, Steamship Owners, Cardiff, South Wales for a period of four years to *'learn the business of a seaman'*. This was not the only restrictive discipline imposed by the document by a long way but the one that intrigued and puzzled me most, and as I advanced into my 'time' and became more senior as an apprentice (or 'junior officer' as our posh title described us!) it was occasionally my experience to be sent ashore by the mate to find the 'old man', who was supposedly ashore on ship's business but was wanted in an emergency. The true interpretation of the clause was soon brought home to me!

Trampship style management and operation had apparently changed very little since the introduction of steam and certainly not at all between the wars. Their fortunes had been dictated and affected greatly by years of world depression in the late 1920s and early 1930s, but Cardiff 'tramps' in particular, with their basic trades of 'coal out' (Welsh) and 'grain home' (River Plate and South America generally; Black Sea etc) seemed to have fared better than most.

It was never my intention to follow the sea in such a manner but at the time, being desperate to 'get into the war' (obviously some mental deficiency!) and being too young for the Royal Navy which was really my preference, I had applied to more than twenty different shipping companies for a cadet or apprenticeship without success. Ever increasing shipping losses at the time were making it very difficult to find a berth. My only pre-sea training had been gained as a devoted sea cadet. However, a chance meeting with a neighbour who was a Master Mariner in command, and on survivor's leave at that time, produced a promise that he would 'get me away' but warned that I would probably never forgive him for the rest of my life. (I did eventually forgive him - reluctantly!) That was a challenge that I could not at the time refuse! It seemed that this gentleman, of Welsh birthright and determination, was a first cousin to a director of the said mentioned company, and in a very short time my father received an offer of an apprenticeship for me.

I remember well to this day the major comment that my father made regarding my aspirations: *"I hope you know what you are doing?"* I thought I did but I didn't! But I did learn in a very short time that I shouldn't have done it!

The days of medical examinations, sight tests and interviews and the gathering together of : 1 uniform with cap and badge; 4 white uniform shirts, 6 pairs of black socks; 4 blue working shirts; 2 pairs dungarees; 4 pairs underpants; etceteras, were all too long in my excitement to get on with it, and then suddenly, early one morning, I was in the car with my father, approaching a wharf alongside which were moored three grey painted vessels, all bristling with guns; the outer two being handsome ships and the ugly and dilapidated 'sister' in the middle being mine.

My heart was sinking as fast as we were climbing the gangway which was very steep as she was 'light ship'. 'We' being my father; Captain Denham, the marine superintendent who had met us at the agent's office very early that morning; and myself. Proceeding to the lower bridge deck we entered the captain's cabin which was most impressive with its dark wood panelling and beautifully ornate brass oil lights suspended from the deckhead (oil lighting was always used when in port or at anchor).

Here we met Captain Davy Jenkins, master of the vessel and a very Welshman from Llangranog, Cardigan Bay. Of small stature and unkempt style he was dressed in the blue pinstripe trousers of his suit, a matching waistcoat and rolled-up sleeves of a collarless off-white shirt. After greeting my father and a brief discourse, he turned to me and shaking my hand in limp style remarked: *"Whilst aboard my ship and from now on, I will be your father."* My first impressions of the man were not electrifying but as time wore on and experience followed experience he gained my greatest respect as a seaman, mentor, friend and master of my chosen calling.

The Chief Officer was summoned to the cabin. He was also a Welshman and of almost giant proportions, and one whom I never did quite take to throughout our enforced relationship. Very little conversation passed between us as he took me down to the half-deck to introduce me to my shipmates-to-be: three lusty lads, all with at least two years service, and the senior apprentice just about finishing his time. It happened to be 'smoko' and they were in working gear (weren't we always - apart from uniform to go ashore) and covered in white-lead or red-lead or oil or tar or some such, but at that moment enjoying their mugs of tea and the inevitable cigarette and gossip. It was somewhat frightening to be confronted with such an awesome and seasoned trio and as the new boy I feared that I should be well tested before being accepted. How right I was !

We all sat around the messroom which can't have been more than 8 feet to 10 feet square, and was at the forward end of the apprentices' accommodation in the half-deck on the starboard side and on your left as you entered from an inside alleyway through a single weather door. You first stepped into a very small reception area between the messroom and the main cabin (which was on the right) and this was where food and store lockers were situated on the outside bulkhead which also had a centre porthole. The messroom table, the length of the room, ran fore and aft down the centre and was fixed at the forward end to the outer bulkhead. Hardwood benches,

resembling shaped and slatted garden seats backed on to the bulkheads on either side of the table and provided the only seating that we could ever enjoy. There were no washing facilities whatsoever. Food was brought from the galley in kits (metal trays), bowls and any such containers, and after the meal all washing up was done in buckets of water that had to be heated by steam jets in the galley and placed on the table or bench seat for the purpose. All other forms of sanitation, including the washing of clothes and the necessary attention to acts of personal hygiene were likewise performed from a bucket on the bench (or out on deck) because there just wasn't a bathroom or shower. Imagine the scene when four hulky youths, usually having spent many days or even weeks at sea, were all desperately trying to prepare themselves for a run ashore, at the same time!

We each acted as 'peggy' for one week at a time although, on that first horrendous voyage my 'turn' seemed to come round more frequently than that of the others! Being 'peggy' (like 'mother') meant that you were responsible for all domestic chores including all the cleaning of the accommodation and, in particular, the victualling of its hungry inhabitants (including the little treats that could be begged, bought, or more likely stolen from the chief steward's or cook's store). There was great rivalry amongst us and we were very competitive in our efforts to be the best; consequently we lived in scrubbed, polished and shining splendour and woe betide any visitor who left their mark!

The main cabin had three double tiers of bunks on the outboard bulkhead, and a bench settee about four feet long and three double tier wardrobe lockers on the inboard bulkhead (where all your best uniforms and civilian clothes gathered mildew constantly). At the top of the cabin there was a 'brightworks' - so known because it had fancy brass handles and highly polished woodwork and provided one drawer each for six occupants.

The only form of heating was a massive and ugly 'bogey' that was a coal burning stove which could only be used in port because of the obvious dangers that it would create if the ship were rolling heavily when at sea. Thus, we spent our days and nights in the winter on the North Atlantic invariably half frozen, always sleeping fully clothed (apart from the extreme cold, in those days you might well have been required to vacate the premises in a hurry!) and with our oilskins over our other bunk coverings and usually waking up with everything frozen to the bulkhead.

On my first voyage we carried the Vice-Commodore of the convoy and his staff, which included two RN signallers who were billeted with us for lack of any other accommodation; and with six human beings confined in such a limited space, turns had to be taken when performing such simple acts as changing clothes or whatever, and 'privacy' was just a word in the dictionary. The only exception to this, as I remember from that first voyage, was a time during one particular middle watch when a large explosion and shudder through the vessel caused us to believe that we had been hit, and the four of us who were off watch leapt from our bunks in unison and seemed to pass through the limited door space as one! It turned out to be, on that occasion, an

over enthusiastic escort which had dropped off a pattern of depth charges and landed one almost under our stern.

There was no domestic refrigeration as such, only iceboxes, which were insulated walk-in lockers. These limited the amounts of fresh foods that could be carried and consumed by the length of time it took the ice to melt. Salt meat and salt fish were the standard alternatives and when in the tropics a glass of limejuice often replaced fresh fruit or vegetables. The iceboxes were scrupulously cleaned and sanitised before the beginning of every passage and made ready to receive new ice blocks as they came aboard, but with unavoidable deposits of dried animal blood and other wilting and rotting materials soon accumulating they quickly became unhygienic and decidedly unpleasant. Like many others with similar experiences to mine, I am sure, I often muse when confronted by modern regulations of 'use by' and 'best before' dates now printed on food packaging, and I marvel that we ever survived.

The deck crew consisted of the Bosun, Carpenter, 6 ABs, 2 Ordinary Seamen and 4 Apprentices. As such we were general factotums. We were watchkeepers, with one apprentice in each watch and one on day work, and in addition to our normal watch we did all the steering whenever a Pilot was on board. We were responsible for, and jealously guarded, everything forward of the bridge including all fixed and running gear, masts, derricks, beams and hatches, anchors and cables - you name it - and there was not a wrinkle that we didn't know and woe betide any sailor who put a foot anywhere near our domain unless invited to do so. Seamanship had to be our forte, for the tramp man's adage was always 'Never order anyone to do anything that you cannot do yourself'. In addition, of course, we were always turned out in weather emergencies at sea because we did not incur the expense of overtime as with other crew members. At this time we also had our 'action stations' and were responsible to the Chief Petty Officer D.E.M.S. Gunner and were at his beck and call as required. The essential academic knowledge of our profession, the understanding of navigational mathematics, spherical trigonometry, physics, hydrostatics, meteorology and etceteras, which had to be mastered for our future examinations and qualifications, had to be accomplished in our spare time.

It was a hard life where 'four on and stay on' was often a reality and the clock was only there to tell you the time and not the end of your labours. We worked 'Field Days' when required (which graciously allowed us to put in an extra four hours labour in addition to the normal eight), and days of arrival or departure could be endless. We complained that we were ill fed but always managed to supplement our diet by thieving as many of the goodies as we could when storing ship. The chief steward and his suppliers were always at loggerheads as to the number of items that had supposedly been delivered on board but were just not always in evidence and they never seemed to realise that the supply line directly passed our cabin door! I well remember a very large and beautifully iced Christmas cake disappearing whole when in New York one festive season - down our throats! Even amateur gardeners' allotments ashore were not sacrosanct and when lying at anchor off some attractive

coast line, the jolly boat often did nocturnal trips to return resembling a green grocer's delivery van!

The Indenture also guaranteed the privilege of free laundry when in foreign places and all necessary medical attention whilst away from home, but advised that time off would only be granted at the discretion of the master or his representative. On my last voyage as an apprentice (acting 3rd Officer) and after a lengthy period of over two years absence and well out of my 'time', I requested home leave on arrival back in London and was asked by the marine superintendent (the same one!) *"What do you want to go home for - one egg a month?"* A reference, of course, to the food ration at the time.

But, we were handsomely remunerated at the rate of:

£10 for the first year
£12 for the second year
£18 for the third year
£20 for the fourth year

At the time a subsidy existed in the form of a 'war bonus' which valued your life during your first year of service by paying you just £5 per month, but thereafter increasing to £10 per month and then you were really 'in the money'. Not forgetting, of course, that all forms of emolument ceased from the moment that you were sunk, should you be so unlucky. Mind you, it was still always necessary to make a phone call upon arriving back at any port to ask: *"If you'd like to see me, Mum, could you possibly send me the fare?"*

On completion of your Indenture and providing you had been diligent in your work and dedication and had made the necessary sacrifices to the benefit of the Company, and that reports from the masters under whom you had served were favourable, then you were awarded a special ex gratia bonus of £50 - which just happened to be the amount of premium that was necessarily deposited by your father when first you joined!

Upon qualifying as 2nd Mate I was offered employment by Canadian Pacific Steamships Limited and throughout the rest of my seafaring career I went on to serve in practically all their vessels of the day, both passenger and cargo. I consider myself very fortunate in having experienced the immediate post war era of the last of the great Atlantic liners.

My first appointment was as 5th Navigating Officer on RMS **Empress of France**, and my new workplace was a gigantic maze, awe inspiring after that to which I had become accustomed . My single cabin was bigger than the one I had previously lived in along with six others and washing facilities were, of course, en suite.

To eat at a table in the elegant first-class dining room, dressed in one's finery and without restriction, and to be waited upon by an immaculately turned out steward was something. To be confronted with the intricacies of the incredibly extensive menus (on the first few occasions, anyway) was something else.

But I quickly began to enjoy meeting people outside the normal scope of my existence and to savour the very special atmosphere that in those days was the

hallmark of first-class travel by sea. A way of life so easy to succumb to and one that could not possibly be other than interesting, satisfying, acceptable and in some ways unreal!

'Chalk and cheese', 'cheese and chalk', 'ridiculous to the sublime' - or vice versa. Comparisons are odious, it is said, and although the choice of lifestyle between my early beginnings and that of the liners in which I now served was never in doubt, I remained forever grateful for the grounding in my profession that I had received in the rough and tumble of trampship training and existence and I believe that it taught me well - *the business of a seaman* !! |||||

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

All Meetings commence at 12.30 p.m. and are held in the Education Suite at the Merseyside Maritime Museum. Coffee and biscuits are available from 12 noon.

Thursday, 21st November 2002
"HARRISONS OF LIVERPOOL"
Captain M.D.R. Jones

Thursday 19th December 2002
ANNUAL CHRISTMAS SOCIAL AND QUIZ

Thursday, 16th January 2002
"THE CUNARD WHITE STAR LINER *QUEEN ELIZABETH*, 1938-1972"
John Shepherd

RICHARD (DICK) EVANS - COXSWAIN OF THE MOELFRE LIFEBOAT

Two L.N.R.S. Members, Ron Dennis and Idris Parry, attended the unveiling of a plaque at Moelfre on 1st October 2002 to commemorate the heroism of Richard (Dick) Evans. Dick was 16 when he joined the crew of the Moelfre Inshore Lifeboat in 1921. He succeeded his uncle, John Mathews, as coxswain in 1954. Five years later he was awarded his first R.N.L.I. Gold Medal for the rescue of the crew of the **Hindlea**, driven ashore by hurricane force winds at almost the same spot north of Moelfre where the **Royal Charter** was wrecked exactly a hundred years earlier, in 1859.

Dick achieved the unique distinction of a second R.N.L.I. Gold Medal in December 1966 when he and his crew saved ten men from the Greek ship **Nafsiporos** which had broken down in heavy seas off Point Lynas. Dick retired as coxswain in 1970 and died last year at the age of 96.

The commemorative plaque was organised by a local panel of historians and Anglesey County Councillors. It was unveiled by Dick's granddaughters Rhian and Eirian before a large gathering of family, friends and admirers, together with representatives from the R.N.L.I. The plaque can be seen above the front door of his home, a 'semi' called Gwynlys, which is on the right as you drive down the main road into Moelfre. *Dick Evans - "A Hero of the Waves"*. r.d.

NOTES AND QUERIES

The North Wales services in 1890

from David Docherty

I read the article in the September *'Bulletin'* about the Liverpool and North Wales Steamship Company with great interest and felt that you would be interested in some additional notes that relate to 1890 and the involvement of the Fairfield company in the North Wales trade.

1. Fairfield initially offered the **St Tudno** (*ex* **Cobra**) to the Liverpool, Llandudno and Welsh Coast Steamboat Company (LLWCSBCo.) While the proposal was backed by some of the Steamboat Company's directors, it was blocked by the City of Dublin company, who, following the incorporation of its North Wales interests into the LLWCSBCo in 1881, held a significant shareholding in the company. It was only following this rebuff that Fairfield decided to go it alone - with the support of some LLWCSBCo directors who had resigned following the failure of the **St Tudno** proposal. While these directors were doubtless involved in the New North Wales Steamship Company, it appears that the key players in the service provided during 1890 were people who had been involved in the Fairfield backed Isle of Man venture of three years earlier (the Manx Line of 1887) - in modern parlance they put their own management team in. Indeed the connection between the Isle of Man venture and the North Wales one was not lost on some press commentators.
2. There are press references to the **Paris** operating on the North Wales coast in 1890. Press advertisements refer to her commencing her service on Saturday 28th June 1890 and continuing throughout July. The adverts tend to disappear, however, in early August. The *Llandudno Advertiser* carries a press report of her first sailing, and at the end of July carries a note to the effect that there was no truth in the rumour that she was to be withdrawn at the beginning of August. Given that references to her in adverts ceased around that time, I suspect that the **Paris** was withdrawn in early August. The *Llandudno Register* also reported on her introduction, adding the comment that there was some debate as to whether the **Paris** or the **Prince Arthur** was the faster boat.
3. During the 1890 season the LLWCSBCo. gave serious consideration to launching a new company to take over its interests and to build a steamer capable of competing with the **St Tudno**. A company was incorporated - The Liverpool and Menai Straits Steamship Company - but as far as I can see a prospectus was never issued and no attempt made to attract shareholders. The new company was dissolved in 1893.
4. On an unrelated point I am not convinced that the original intention behind the building of the **Bonnie Princess** in 1882 was to replace the **Bonnie Doon** (acquired by the LLWCSBCo in 1881). I think the LLWCSBCo meant to keep her but needed to raise funds.

The "*Victory*" and the Jolliffe family

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

1]. Regarding the items about the ship **Victory** in recent issues of '*The Bulletin*', (December 2001), it may be of interest to readers to know that more information on her engines appears in the paper by Eng. Captain Edgar C. Smith, OBE, RN, entitled '*Some Episodes in Early Steam Navigation*' (Newcomen Society Transactions, Volume 8, 1927-28, 56). Smith's source was the notebooks Nos 34 and 35 of Simon Goodrich, engineer of Portsmouth Dockyard, which are preserved in the Science Museum. Goodrich can be considered as the Pepys of engineering in its heroic age, says Smith. Details of Braithwaite & Ericsson's engines are described and illustrated.

An interesting fact is that the **Victory's** boiler was essentially of the same form as fitted to their locomotive '*Novelty*' which took part in the famous Rainhill trials in October 1829. There was no flue; draught was provided by bellows.

Goodrich's notes on the **Victory's** engines and her trials cover a period in April and May 1829. From this we learn that the ship was fitted out for Ross's Arctic Expedition by Fletcher, Son & Fearnall, Poplar; one of the oldest steamship builders on the Thames, which existed until 1924/25.

2]. Further to the article which appeared on page 42 of '*The Bulletin*' (September 2002), it is perhaps of relevant interest that the Jolliffe family came early into shipowning. They appear to have come originally from Hampshire; they were possibly Huguenots. Hylton Jolliffe MP (*see Note below*) and William Jolliffe, presumably brothers, or father and son, became two of the eighteen directors of the General Steam Navigation Co.Ltd. of London of 1824, possibly the earliest shipping company to own sea-going steamers.

The company was set up on the initiative of Thomas Brockelbank, a Greenwich timber merchant, who had in 1821 completed the wooden paddle steamer **Eagle** in his own yard at Deptford, and ran her on a London-Margate excursion service. Together with William John Hall, who operated sailing vessels between London and Hull, he decided to seek partners and they became the first two directors when they set up the G.S.N.Co. Hylton Jolliffe, MP, was the first Chairman of the company from 1824 to 1828.

Two steamers of the G.S.N.Co. fleet that were named after Jolliffes had interesting histories. The **Hylton Jolliffe** was launched on 8th January 1825 as the **Trinacria** by J. Scott & Son, the famous Greenock shipbuilders. After a short season running between Naples and Palermo, she was bought by the G.S.N.Co. in July 1825 for its London-Hamburg service. She was sold by the company in 1829 to the Turkish Government and renamed **Sagir-I-Kebir** to serve as a naval transport.

The **William Jolliffe** was built in 1826 by W. Everdon of Deptford for the G.S.N.Co's London-Hamburg service.

The Liverpool based tug company W. & T. Jolliffe (perhaps founded by sons of the previously mentioned brothers?) was bought out in March 1908 by the Alexandra Towing Company.

The "*Great Eastern*"

from L.N.R.S. Vice-Chairman Gordon Bodey

With regard to the tumultous 1861 voyage of the **Great Eastern** (see *'The Bulletin'*, September 2002, page 34), the actual sailing date from Liverpool was Tuesday 10th September. Members who may be further interested in the event will find a detailed and comprehensive account of it in George S. Emmerson's book *'The Greatest Iron Ship, ss Great Eastern'*, pages 100-109.

The account also contains details (including diagrams) of the method devised by Hamilton E. Towle, an American engineer of Boston, who was a passenger on the voyage, to regain control of the rudder; thus enabling the vessel to use her screw and return to Queenstown.

The "*Ceramic*" - the 'Relief of Bootle'

from L.N.R.S. Member Tony Felton

The **Ceramic** was known as 'The Relief of Bootle' because so many of her crew (including my late father) came from Bootle and the surrounding area.

It is now exactly sixty years since the **Ceramic** was torpedoed off the Azores by U 515 on the night of 6th/7th December 1942. There was just one survivor from the 656 persons on board. A Mrs Hardy, from Tunbridge Wells, Kent, is currently researching the **Ceramic's** final voyage and is hoping to publish a book. She has been assisted by Mr Eric Munday, the sole survivor, and also by the survivors of U 515.

The **Ceramic** was built by Harland & Wolff at Belfast in 1912. She had a gross tonnage of 18,495; 11,729 nett; and a deadweight of 19,590. Triple screws gave her a speed of 15½ knots. She was delivered to the White Star Line on 5th July 1913 and six days later was present, with 600 guests on board, at the Mersey Pageant when King George V opened the Gladstone Graving Dock.

The **Ceramic** left Liverpool on her maiden voyage to Sydney on 24th July and was the largest ship on the Australia and New Zealand run until the **Mooltan** of 1923. She still holds the record for the loftiest masts to pass under the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

During the First World War the **Ceramic** operated as a troopship until May 1917 when she was used in the Liner Requisition Scheme, carrying mainly refrigerated cargo on the Australian route. She returned to the White Star Line in 1919, but in 1934 transferred to Shaw, Savill & Albion following the formation of Cunard - White Star.

In February 1940 the **Ceramic** was commissioned as a troopship. She left Liverpool on 23rd November 1942 with 378 passengers and 278 crew and gunners. Around midnight on 6th/7th December she was torpedoed by U 515 off the Azores with the loss of 655 persons. The sole survivor, Royal Engineer sapper Eric Munday was picked up by U 515 for interrogation. Not until much later did the British Admiralty discover where and when the **Ceramic** sank. It was only when Mr Munday was able to write from a P.o.W. camp near Hamburg that some of the facts became known. |||||

WATERFRONT LANDMARK FACES YEAR OF RECKONING

One of Liverpool's most prominent waterfront buildings will be demolished - at a cost of £27million - if no suitable buyer can be found within a year. The Tobacco Warehouse, in the docks area north of the Pier Head, has been derelict and neglected for twenty years, but it is often used as a backdrop for film makers.

Campaigners want the 14-storey building to be transformed into an iconic space which would enhance Liverpool's cultural life. They say it could echo the renaissance of the Baltic flour mill at Gateshead or the Fort Dunlop building in Birmingham.

The warehouse's owners will apply for permission to demolish the Grade 2 listed building, which was built in 1900, if a buyer cannot be found. Detractors claim that it has become a rotting eyesore which has held back regeneration of the Stanley Dock area.

John Elcock, project manager of the Liverpool Architecture and Design Trust, said: *"It will cost around £27 million to demolish the warehouse. For this sum we could build another Imperial War Museum North. We need to get the focus on this area because at the moment all hearts and minds are focused on creating a fourth grace"* [The 'three graces' are the Liver Building, the Cunard Building and the Port of Liverpool Building at the Pier Head - it is proposed to add a fourth 'grace' to the south of the Port of Liverpool Building.]

The warehouse was used to store tobacco and has low ceilings - just 6 feet 6 inches high - enough for two bales of tobacco. It has little natural light and would be expensive to redevelop - at least £90million, it is estimated.

"The warehouse enjoys a key position at the end of the Leeds-Liverpool Canal," said Rob MacDonald, a reader in architecture at Liverpool John Moores University. *"Its future will affect plans to extend the waterway past the Pier Head."*

He said that one use could be for archive storage. Floors could be removed to let light in and apartments could be built on the upper levels. Mr MacDonald compared the building's plight to that of the Albert Dock thirty years ago. Since its restoration in the 1980s the Albert Dock has become a major tourist attraction in Liverpool and has six million visitors a year.

English Heritage said that if the Tobacco Warehouse was demolished it would be a very big loss to the city. *"It is a very important landmark building,"* said Peter de Figueiredo, historic buildings inspector.

Alan McClelland writes: *"The original 'three graces' were so named by the internationally famous Professor Reilly of the Department of Architecture at Liverpool University. He was describing the Clarence Dock Power Station chimneys."*

INSPIRED LUNACY FROM 'LLOYD'S LIST':

Lloyd's List has decided that from now on ships will lose their femininity and will be referred to as "*it*", not "*she*". *"We see it as a reflection on the modern business of shipping"* said Julian Bray, the paper's editor. *"Ultimately they are commodities, not things that have characters."* The Bulletin will always refer to a ship as "*she*". j.s.

CHANGE OF COURSE FOR MERSEYSIDE MARITIME MUSEUM ?

There would appear to be a ground swell of change underway at the Maritime Museum and it is appropriate to record Dr David Fleming's comments (which appeared in the *Liverpool Daily Post* recently), plus three short relevant articles about the Merseyside Maritime Museum:

Writing in the *Liverpool Daily Post*, Dr David Fleming, OBE, Director of National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, stated:

"People can be assured that the collection of ship models at the Merseyside Maritime Museum will never be sold off.

"The museum is in need of refreshment and National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside is about to create a new special exhibitions gallery as part of long-term plans to renew all the current displays.

"This new gallery will feature an exciting exhibition on Liverpool at war. For the time being there will be fewer ship models on display than recently, but all our models will be looked after properly and many will return to display as we develop our plans for a major museum of Liverpool.

"Museums must be allowed to change their displays around so that they appeal to the broadest of audiences. Without change, they become fossilised.

"Alas, no museum has enough room to show all its collections at one time - there is always a lot in storage, waiting for the opportunity to come out on display."

WORLD OF MODELS GALLERY

by Mike Stammers, Keeper of the Merseyside Maritime Museum

The aim of the project is to refurbish an existing gallery (World of Models) which is now over 13 years old and which will provide a much needed facility for the Merseyside Maritime Museum, i.e. a temporary exhibition space. The need for this has long been felt. The original space designated for this was on the top floor. However, this environment has proved to be unsuitable for receiving major loan exhibitions and in the early 1990s the policy of developing the corporate business of the Museum meant that the space was increasingly needed to host lunches and trade shows.

Various smaller spaces have been used for smaller, mainly internally organised shows, and whilst these have been successful there is now a need for this mature museum to bring more marketable change and to provide the opportunity to show a wider diversity of its considerable collections. Opportunities to bring bigger outside shows have had to be passed by. In particular, exhibitions offered by the National Maritime Museum such as 'Sea of Faces' and 'South', both highly attractive shows, have had to be rejected for lack of space.

The old 'World of Models' gallery will be converted into a flexible space with new lighting and floor coverings and a stock of flexible display cases. A rotating selection of models will be displayed in the adjacent 'Art and the Sea' gallery in two

new display cases, and in conjunction with paintings and ship carvings. The ship bottling demonstration area will be re-located to this gallery as well. The first major temporary exhibition in the refurbished space will open in the summer of 2003 and will be about Liverpool and the Second World War. This coincides with a major commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic. Thereafter it is intended to develop a close partnership with the National Maritime Museum and other maritime museums to show new shared temporary exhibitions.

No ship models are being sold or scrapped (contrary to newspaper reports) and there will continue to be many models all around the building. Those in reserve can be inspected by researchers and model makers on an appointment basis. The catalogue of models is available in the Museum shop and we continue to add to the collection. Our latest purchase is a sailor-made picture model of the ss **Great Britain** in her final steam ship guise. |||||

THE IDEA OF A MARITIME MUSEUM

by Dr C. Northcote Parkinson

writing in the L.N.R.S. 'Transactions' - Volume 3 - 1946 / 47

Allowing for changes brought about by the passage of time and inevitable differences in emphasis, Dr Northcote Parkinson's comments are still significant ....

In an attempt to interest you in the idea of a Maritime Museum in Liverpool I shall begin by pleading such right as I have to be heard. My first plea is that I am a Lecturer in Maritime History. When the National Maritime Museum was formed - and before it opened its doors to the public - I constituted fifty per cent of the staff. I knew then - I think I know now - how a Museum is formed. I have seen it happen.

A Museum is no longer a collection of objects under glass, grimly surveyed by people whose sole care is to prevent their being stolen. A Museum is nowadays a more enlightened, a more lively institution than that. The change could best be summarised perhaps by saying that a Museum consists primarily today of people rather than things. By people I mean those who work in it, those who endow it, those who support it and those who frequent it for their use and pleasure. A Museum is nothing without its active friends.

There must be exhibits. What are they to be? We might list the exhibits under these headings: 1] Ship models, 2] Marine paintings, prints, drawings and photographs, 3] Printed books, 4] Manuscripts, 5] Instruments and 6] Relics. Those are the obvious categories, but the arrangement would, of course, be according to subject and period.

Then there must be books. Our Maritime Museum should have a library. How else could the assistants answer the questions which are hurled daily at every Museum of any reputation? When was this ship launched? What harbour does this picture represent? From what period does this model date? Without a reference library these questions could never be answered.

My next plea is that our Maritime Museum should be controlled (not necessarily owned by) a body of Trustees, and not preferably by the City of Liverpool as such. My plea is founded on two main considerations. First, I maintain that the scope of the Museum should stretch - and must stretch - far beyond the municipal boundary. I will go further than that. The Museum should have the closest connection (just as Liverpool has always had) with Boston, Philadelphia, Halifax and Newfoundland. Were I to choose a name for it, I should call it ***'The Atlantic Museum'***. Second, I maintain that the Liverpool Shipowners are the men without whose support the Museum must fail. What the Museum needs is their support, their archives and their builders' models.

Sometimes I allow myself to dream of what a Maritime Museum here in Liverpool could be. I think its main theme should be the story of trans-Atlantic shipping - that would be the point, as it were, where Liverpool and Boston should be drawn most closely together. The main sections would be three in number: the age of sail; the age of transition; and the age of steam. But other galleries would be needed too. In one we should see the growth of Merseyside. In another we might see what an 18th century counting house looked like. The Museum should include a restaurant, a cinema, a lecture-room and (for members of this Society) a Club.

One room might be a memorial to Nathaniel Hawthorne; a place to which Americans would be especially welcome. And somewhere near the entrance I can imagine a statue of John Masefield, the poet of Merseyside and perhaps our greatest poet of the sea.

Suppose it is agreed that such a Museum, or something remotely like it, is desirable, what are the immediate steps to take? The first step is to urge on the City the appointment of Trustees. The second is to begin enrolling the people on whom the future Museum is to rely. This Society is the nucleus but it is not more than that. We must seek more widely for help and encouragement. It is only by the co-operation of the City, the University, the neighbouring boroughs, the shipowners and shipbuilders, together with such Societies as this, that our Museum can ever come into being.

Dr. C. Northcote Parkinson, 1946.

THE SHIP MODELS COLLECTION

by Dr Alan Scarth

A précis of the Introduction to the catalogue of the Ship Models Collection of the Merseyside Maritime Museum, written in 1995.

"TODAY THE SHIP MODELS ARE, AS THEY HAVE ALWAYS BEEN, THE LARGEST AND MOST IMPORTANT GROUP OF OBJECTS IN THE MARITIME HISTORY COLLECTION AT LIVERPOOL"

The maritime history collection of the Merseyside Maritime Museum, now part of the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, was begun in 1862 with the gift of a ship model to the Mayer Museum, the predecessor of the Liverpool

Museum. At that time public interest in ships and seafaring, particularly in and around Liverpool, then the "second port of the Empire", was undeniably strong.

In 1924 Robert Gladstone, an enthusiastic local maritime historian and great-nephew of the famous Liberal Prime Minister, began a campaign for a special shipping gallery and the systematic collection of ship models. In 1931 his persistence was rewarded when Liverpool Museum, under its new Director Dr Douglas Allan, opened a display of ship models and paintings. Over the next decade Dr Allan enthusiastically set about building up the collection. By 1939 it was clear that the collection, by then totalling over three hundred models, numerous paintings and other items, was outgrowing its gallery and plans were put in hand, under Gladstone's inspiration, for the construction of a maritime museum behind the Liverpool Museum building in William Brown Street. On his death in March 1940 Gladstone left a substantial bequest for the construction of a maritime museum which has, since 1980, proved invaluable in supporting just such a development on the Liverpool waterfront.

The destruction of Liverpool Museum during the May Blitz of 1941 resulted in the loss of about sixty ship models, mainly of fishing boats and other small craft. Fortunately, most of the collection had already been evacuated to premises in North Wales and remained safe throughout the war. During the 1950s the collection remained largely in storage, but continued to grow steadily, especially after the appointment, in 1956, of Edward Paget-Tomlinson as Assistant in Shipping, effectively the museum's first Keeper of Shipping. During the 1960s the collections of ship models and paintings grew steadily. In all, some 600 models were included in the handlist of which he was co-author in 1967.

During the 1970s, amid major changes in the shipping industry, the ship models collection continued to develop significantly under the present Keeper of the Merseyside Maritime Museum, Mike Stammers. Between 1970 and 1980 about two hundred models were added, including a number on long-term loan from shipping companies. By the late 1970s, thanks to the wholehearted support of the Merseyside County Council the first stage in the development of the long-awaited maritime museum on the Liverpool waterfront was finally underway.

The dramatic development of the Merseyside Maritime Museum since its first, small-scale opening in June 1980 is one of the major success stories in British museums in recent years. From modest beginnings it soon expanded into a large warehouse block at the Albert Dock, and now, with five floors of indoor displays and a large, outside 'Ships and Quaysides' site, attracts over 350,000 visitors each year.

Throughout this highly successful development programme, museum curators and conservators have continued to care for and expand the ship models collection. In 1995 there were about 1,000 non-miniature ship models and 900 miniatures in the collection. Some 260 non-miniature models, plus 750 miniatures were on display at the Museum in 1995. Thus, in that year, over half of the total models collection was on display, a very high proportion by any comparable museum's standards.

"The ship models at Liverpool clearly comprise one of the finest collections of its kind in the world."

REPORTS ON MEETINGS

"DONKEY BOILER JETS THROUGH 163ft OF SHIP"

(Thursday 19th September, 2002)

presented by LNRS Vice-President Harry Hignett and Chairman David Eccles

Harry Hignett sets the scene:

*The **Kingswood** was built in 1929 and was of 5,038 gross tons. She was owned by the Joseph Constantine Steamship Line Limited of Middlesbrough-on-Tees and in 1936 was a member of the company's nine ship deep sea fleet all occupied in world-wide tramping. The Constantine Line also operated an eight ship fleet of coasters.*

*The **Kingswood** was 405·4 feet in length, 53·8 feet beam. She was a three-island vessel with short well-decks at Nos 1 and 5 holds, the bridge deck extending over Nos 2 and 4 holds. Her engines were triple expansion with a low pressure turbine driving the single screw.*

Steam was provided by two single ended boilers and an auxiliary (donkey) boiler, all with a working pressure of 200 lbs per square inch. The main boilers were at the after end of the boiler room; the donkey boiler in a recess at the forward end between the two bunker feeders. Immediately forward of the donkey boiler was a strong wooden bulkhead separating it from No 3 hold where temporary bunkers could be carried if necessary.

Captain Stoker-Johnson joined the **Kingswood** in April 1936 and in September of that year, on his second voyage as her master, sailed from the north-east coast of England to South Africa via the Baltic, arriving at Cape Town in late October. The **Kingswood** continued on to Durban to complete discharge. She then sailed north to Lourenço Marques (now Maputo) where she lay at anchor for a further ten days until ordered by wireless to proceed to South Australia to load zinc concentrates at Port Pirie in the Spencer Gulf.

On arrival on Boxing Day 1936 the **Kingswood** anchored off Port Germein (some 11 miles north of Port Pirie) to await a berth. Arrangements had been made to commence loading on Monday 4th January 1937. Apart from a brief visit by the company's agent, there was no contact with the port.

For eight days the officers and crew relaxed and enjoyed the warm sunny weather. A southerly breeze brought coolness via the many small wind chutes projecting from portholes. Laundry was brought up to date using buckets of water obtained from the hand pump outside the galley, and carried carefully to the quarters.

Breakfast on Sunday 3rd January was, as usual, from 8 to 9 a.m. Being Sunday, it was leisurely. Steam was being raised on the main boilers for the move alongside the loading berth the following day. The auxiliary boiler was at full working pressure to power the engine room pumps and deck machinery - the derricks were to

be topped after breakfast. Down below only the donkeyman was working and even he had left the boiler room to speak to the second engineer who was chatting with the other engineers at No 4 hatch.

The wind was a strong southerly and as it blew over the lower bridge Captain Stoker-Johnson took his after breakfast constitutional, walking up and down alongside No 3 hatch, between the saloon house and the engineers' accommodation, swerving to avoid the small bunker hatches and the winches of No.3 hold. The mates were in their respective rooms; the stewards were clearing the saloon. The cook and his mate were preparing the midday meal and the sailors and firemen sat on No 5 hatch discussing the kind of damage they would impose on the products of the Adelaide Brewery - without a thought for the damage those products could do to them!

Then, at five minutes to nine on 3rd January 1937, there was a tremendous roar - not quite a blast, more of a rolling thunderclap.

The crew on the after deck stared with amazement and awe as a huge black pall shot into the air - a dense cloud of smoke, certainly - but they could also see large objects such as lumps of coal, hatch boards and even dunnage flying upwards above the midships accommodation. A hatch board severed the main wireless aerial.

Two or three seconds later, as the hatch boards and coal debris and other items clattered down on the deck there was a moment's silence; then another roar, this time higher pitched, accompanied by a series of about five louder, staccato bangs.

Amidships Captain Stoker-Johnson had been thrown some twenty feet from near No 3hatch to the port side of the bridge housing; the cap he had been wearing was recovered later on the lower bridge deck, inside out. He was stunned for a time and on regaining consciousness he found his face covered with blood from a forehead wound. On sitting up he could see the deck where he had been walking now heaped with hatch boards, battening irons, coal and coal dust, and even a cowl ventilator twisted and crushed. The chief officer had been pulled from his room and thrown across the alleyway into a storeroom. The saloon pantry seemed to be covered with several inches of coal. The engineers' accommodation was all but destroyed; three rooms had been knocked into one as the wooden tongue-and-groove bulkheads were shattered. The second engineer's two violins lay on his settee - one completely shattered, the other unharmed.

Within three minutes the crew were all clambering around No 3 hatch. When the mate crawled across the debris outside the saloon house the bosun pointed out that the damage was not confined to amidships. At the same time the lamptrimmer ran from forward shouting: *"There's a hole in the starboard bow; something's hit us!"* The mate took a party consisting of the bosun, carpenter and lamptrimmer to the forecastle head and looked over the bow. They could see a large hole with jagged edges in the bow plating just above the waterline. And firmly in the hole there was a large, strange, steel structure.

Whilst the deck crew were opening up No.1 hatch, the mate's party went into No 2 and looked down into a weird scene of hatch boards, dunnage and beams lying in a heap, covered in coal dust, on the tank tops below.

As soon as they could they all climbed down into No 1 lower hold, having to make their way past severely buckled `tween deck plating. There they could see a large cylindrical object - an almost unrecognisable donkey boiler.

In the meantime the engineers were making their way down into the engine room. Several platforms and ladders were twisted or distorted. In the light of hand torches they could see extensive damage, with debris from insulation, coal, cinders etc; and there was extensive structural damage with pipes shattered and oil and water dripping everywhere. They climbed down into the boiler spaces which were almost unrecognisable: the main boilers seemed to have been completely displaced. Standing between the boilers they found they could see through the wooden bulkhead to a fog of minute coal particles in No 3 hold. The donkey boiler was missing.

The second engineer shut down the main boilers which were then in the process of warming up.

The captain, mate and chief engineer stood on the lower bridge trying to adjust their minds to the fact that the **Kingswood** was a completely dead ship. The galley was unusable and a hatch beam which had been dislodged in No 3 hold had fallen and penetrated No 3 double bottom tank which contained the last of the fresh water.

The auxiliary boiler, weighing at least 15 tons, had been driven from its position at the forward end of the boiler room, through a wooden bulkhead and three steel bulkheads and, in total, had travelled 163 feet in a few seconds to end up projecting from the starboard bow in a hole 30 feet in diameter, the jagged edges of which were only two feet above the waterline.

The master of a passing steamer, the **Toulouse** (Sweden) heard the explosion and saw the pall of black smoke. He put about and lowered a boat with three doctors (two of whom were passengers). The boat party boarded the stricken **Kingswood** to find there were no casualties, and returning to the **Toulouse** radioed a report to the authorities at Port Pirie.

Fortunately the **Kingswood** had a slight port list and as the breeze had died down, no water entered the hull. Two days later, on 5th January 1937, she was towed into Port Pirie.

The first report of the damage, cabled to Lloyds of London, stated:

"Donkey boiler blown through all forward bulkheads, a total of 163 feet on starboard side. Boiler lodged in forepeak making 30 foot hole in starboard bow. Boiler projecting out from plating.

Force set main boilers back three feet to strike main engines, which were, in turn, set back three inches. Cylinder feet broken; front column bent.

All pipe work in engine room spaces, condenser, main engine feed pumps, low pressure turbines all badly damaged. Some damage to bridge structure."

David Eccles provides the details:

The donkey boiler supplies steam in port. Boilers are safe as long as you can see the water level. The safety valves are set at 5% above the safe working pressure

(SWP) at annual survey and the boiler is hydraulically tested to twice the SWP every ten years and with a 'safety factor' of eight would explode at eight times the SWP.

The **Kingswood's** donkey boiler was a single ended Scotch Boiler 12 feet in diameter x 10 feet 6 inches long, designed for a working pressure of 200psi. It had two 3 feet 4 inches diameter furnaces and 168 tubes of 3¼ inch diameter, of which 60 were stay-tubes. When new, the marginal stay-tubes (fitted close to boiler axis) were 5/16 inch thick, others 1/4 inch, and the plain tubes 3/16 inch thick. The boiler was not bolted down but lay in a cradle free to expand but prevented from movement by fore and aft collision chocks and thwartship gusset stoppers. To conserve heat the shell and back of the boiler were lagged with asbestos cement.

This boiler was built at Wallsend in 1929. All plain tubes were renewed in 1933, and one stay-tube in March 1935. A month before the explosion eleven stay-tubes ruptured whilst discharging cargo in South African ports and these were fitted with tube-stoppers. When this was reported to the company, the ship was informed that the boiler would be re-tubed during Special Survey in the U.K.

On passage to Australia the boiler was cleaned and descaled by the donkeyman. The second engineer reported that the combustion chamber tops were completely descaled, blisters removed from sides and backs, leaving patches of scale 1/16 inch thick on the tube plate. The scale 3/32 inch thick on furnace crowns was mostly removed. The safety valves were overhauled by the second engineer who refitted the original compression rings, but left the easing gear disconnected after losing one of the valve spindle hoods.

(After the explosion the surveyor reported scale 1/8 inch on top of the port combustion chamber, 1/16 inch on top of the starboard combustion chamber with 3/16 inch scale on the sides. There was 1/4 inch thick scale on the furnace crowns).

After cleaning, the boiler was filled with sea water ready for use at anchor. It was used during day time only, with fires banked overnight, except for one night when both fires were drawn after a stay-tube ruptured. This stay-tube was fitted with a stopper the following morning. A boiler water sample taken the day before the explosion (Saturday) gave a salinometer reading of 10 ozs of salts per gallon. As one gallon of sea water contains 5 ozs of salts, the safe working limit was 20 ozs per gallon.

After the water test, the donkey boiler was pumped up from the sea to raise the water level, then shut down with the water gauge cocks closed, the starboard fire drawn and the port fire banked.

As main steam was required for Monday morning, the centre fires were lit in both main boilers on Saturday afternoon, leaving the main stop valves part open with super heater drain cocks fully open to allow circulation as steam was generated.

Due to the noise of escaping steam, the second engineer entered the stoke-hold at 7 a.m. on Sunday morning to find the main boiler pressure gauges indicating 20/25 psi with steam blowing freely from the superheater drains. After adjusting each main stop valve he returned to the stokehold to inspect the donkey boiler, noticed the pressure gauge reading 40 psi, and observed the port furnace fire glowed red with

black surface coal. The starboard fire was out. Using the extended rods he opened the steam and water gauge cocks and by the beam of his torch noticed the gauge glass indicated three quarters full of water. He did not check the water gauge by blowing it through.

At 7.30 a.m. the second engineer was joined by the donkeyman who was instructed to have 100 psi steam on the donkey boiler by 9 a.m. The starboard fire was lit and when the pressure approached 95 psi the donkeyman left the stokehold, reporting to the second engineer that the pressure was between 95 and 100 psi with the water gauge showing 3/4 glass. A few minutes later the boiler exploded.

The following events occurred within a few seconds:

1. Due to overheating the port combustion chamber crown and tube plate collapsed inwards causing the top two rows of tubes to be withdrawn from the tube plate, allowing saturated steam to enter the combustion chamber. All moisture in this steam evaporated due to the high temperature (approx 1,800°F) causing an instant increase in pressure which the remaining wasted stay tubes (1/16 inch thick) could not support, allowing the front tube plate to bulge outward. This bulge caused the marginal stay tubes to withdraw from the starboard combustion chamber, sheared the tube stopper cast iron buttons, allowing the boiler content to enter the starboard combustion chamber.
2. The expanding super heated steam (an invisible gas) exploding out of 168 tube holes and both furnaces, blew off the smoke box doors and furnace fronts and pushed both main boilers aft about five feet until their movement was stopped by contact with the ends of the engine room side bunkers. This movement crushed the feed pumps and forced draft fan; smashed the main engine H.P. cylinder and back column, air pump, main condenser and exhaust turbine casing, and twisted all engine room steam piping out of shape.
3. When the main boilers came to rest the reaction force of the super heated steam pushed the donkey boiler forward 163 feet through three 1/4 inch steel bulkheads and pierced the ship's side. The track of the boiler was to starboard as most heat energy was released from the port combustion chamber.

After the explosion the hull was made watertight, the damaged machinery shored and a donkey boiler installed in the hold. The **Kingswood** departed from Port Pirie on 27th April 1937 for South Shields, towed by the Dutch tug **Ganges**. Calling at Albany, Freemantle, Aden, Port Said and Oran she arrived at Readhead's Shipyard Quay on 14th September 1937 for three months of repairs.

The Board of Trade Inquiry into the **Kingswood** explosion was held at Newcastle in April 1938. Sketches of the damaged boiler were produced which showed the position of the plugged stay tubes (three in the port nest - eight in the starboard) and the collapsed port combustion chamber crown and tube plate. This indicated to the Court that the water level was below the second row of tubes when the combustion chamber collapsed.

The Court of Inquiry agreed that the explosion could not have resulted from normal conditions for which the boiler was designed and constructed. The Inquiry was unusual as the water level and steam pressure at the time of the incident were unknown and the donkeyman could not be questioned as he had deserted in Australia.

The water gauge and pressure gauge were never found, but the safety valves were found in a damaged condition, the compression rings missing but the gap set at the original setting.

The Court of Inquiry found that the explosion was due to the failure of corroded stay tubes caused by firing the boiler with insufficient water content. |||||

A SMALL SHIP TO PORTUGAL

(Thursday 17th October, 2002)

presented by Mr A. Balfour

Mr A. (Sandy) Balfour's illustrated talk covered a period he spent sailing with the General Steam Navigation Company (G.S.N.Co.) of London aboard the **Gannet** in the short sea trade from London to Oporto in northern Portugal for wine. Sandy Balfour was seeking experience in the short sea trade after making long deep sea voyages and six months on the **Gannet** from January to June 1965 seemed the solution. The post on the **Gannet** was advertised in the well known Liverpool shipping paper (sadly now long defunct) *The Journal of Commerce*.

After a brief outline of the history and business of the G.S.N.Co. Sandy Balfour described joining the vessel at Limehouse Dock, London, which 37 years ago was full of other short sea traders. Outward bound down the Thames, Sandy recalls that steering to quarter points of the compass was required. He recalled passing the wreck of the East German vessel **Magdeburg** at Northfleet Hope above Gravesend. Standing out in his memory was the density of the Thames traffic, together with that of the Dover Strait and the English Channel.

Sandy Balfour continued his presentation with references to Portugal as a trading partner with Britain of very long standing, and described its major exports and fishing industry. He showed the meeting a selection of his excellent slides of Oporto and the River Douro, the wine lodges and the baroque style architecture.

On one northbound passage the **Gannet** was in a Channel collision with the German cargo vessel **Katharina Kolkman** which resulted in the sinking of the German ship with the loss of one life. The full scale rescue operation which ensued was described in full. The **Gannet** sailed to the Tyne for repairs to bow damage.

After a few more voyages in the **Gannet**, Sandy Balfour returned to further deep sea service prior to obtaining his master's certificate.

The **Gannet** was sold in 1984 and became the **Sarah**, operating between Canada and the West Indies. She was lost later in the same year whilst attempting to enter harbour at Anguilla during Hurricane 'Klaus'. She struck a rock and sank. |||||

THE CUNARD *"ALPS"* AND *"ANDES"* OF 1852

In 1852 the directors of the Cunard Line were very concerned about the Admiralty's insistence on the wooden paddler type of ships which were subsidised for the carriage of mails, especially as the new Inman Line had proved the superiority of the iron screw steamer.

The Admiralty was responsible for the details of the mail agreements as the ships which were subsidised were regarded as the Navy's first reserve. Their Lordships' attitude with regard to paddle propulsion was particularly illogical, for this had already been condemned for warships on account of its obvious vulnerability, but a reactionary Board had reversed its predecessor's decision to build iron frigates and had pronounced them to be dangerous in action after experimental firing against an iron-hulled river steamer, which, incidentally, had been condemned as unsafe some years previously!

For the secondary services which were not subsidised the shipowners could please themselves, and the Cunard company ordered four iron screw ships from Denny of Dumbarton, with machinery from the related firm of Tulloch & Denny. Two of these were the **Alps** and the **Andes** which were retained for the Cunard service whilst the other two (originally intended to be named **Balbek** and **Melita**) were sold while under construction and became the **Australian** and the **Sydney** for a new service to Australia, operated by the Australian Royal Mail Steam Navigation Company.

The **Alps** and the **Andes** were the first iron screw Cunarders ordered by the company (the **British Queen** had been built by Denny in 1849, but only joined the Cunard fleet in 1878). They were originally intended for a service, with other small ships owned by Cunard in association with the MacIver Company, between Liverpool and Chagres on the Isthmus of Panama, via New York and Jamaica. The principal aim of this service was to provide facilities for goldminers to reach the Californian fields by the overland route across the Isthmus.

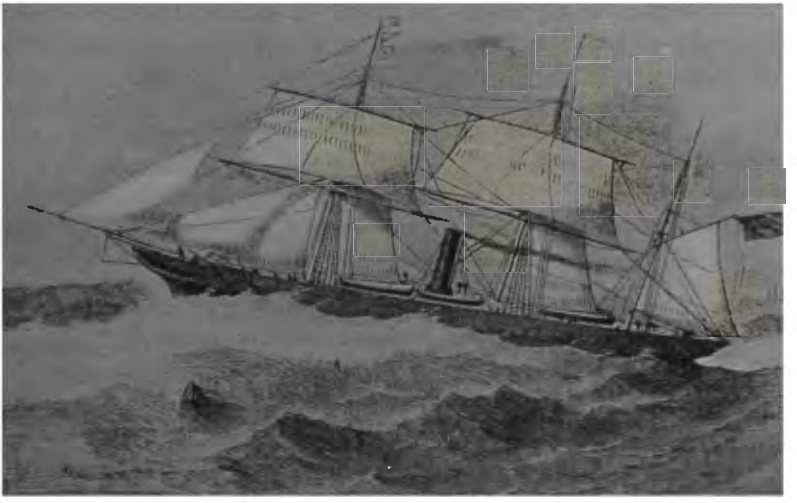
The **Alps** and the **Andes** were sister ships with a length of 236·5 ft, a beam of 34·1 ft and a depth of hold of 24 feet. Gross tonnage was 1,852; nett 1,440. The cost for the pair was £60,700. They had accommodation for 62 first-class passengers in staterooms around a saloon 55 feet long, and quarters for over 120 emigrants although this could be greatly increased. In addition they could each carry 1,000 tons of cargo on a maximum draught of 16 feet 6 inches.

As an alternative to the proposed Chagres service, the new steamers could run to Boston direct on the service which the main line steamers had been forced to give up owing to the competition from the Collins Line.

The propelling machinery consisted of a beam engine similar to that installed in the paddlers, adapted to screw propulsion and geared to the shaft. The propeller was two-bladed, 14 feet in diameter by 18 feet pitch. Two boilers, with six furnaces in

each, supplied the steam at 11 lbs/sq.inch on the safety valve, and consumed 18cwt of coal per hour, the bunker stowage being 400 tons. Speed was just 9 knots.

By the time the **Andes** was ready for service in December 1852 there was some doubt about the practicability of the Chagres service, although the scheme had alarmed the directors of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company. The **Andes** sailed from Liverpool on 8th December 1852 and reached a point 80 miles west of Cape Clear when she met very heavy weather and after sustaining serious damage put back to Liverpool for repairs, sailing again on 25th December. The **Alps** left Liverpool on her maiden sailing on 2nd February 1853 and made a 15-day passage to New York which was considerably better than that of her sister. Considering their size, however, they were excellent seaboats and although they were underpowered subsequent voyages were made in better time.



One of the four Denny-built iron screw sister ships of the "Alps" and "Andes" class

According to the *North British Daily Mail* of 3rd June 1853, both ships were undergoing extensive alterations to their engines after completing two voyages only at the yards of Caird of Greenock, and McNab and Clark.

Both ships were taken up for trooping during the Crimean War. The **Alps** was the first; for a time she was paid at a flat rate of £3,600 per month, but this was later reduced to 40s a ton on 1,440 tons. When the **Andes** was taken up at the end of the year she secured 50s (£2.50p).

The **Alps** left Liverpool on her first trooping voyage in April 1854, did the run to Plymouth to embark her men in 33 hours and took them out to Malta in 8½ days

although she had a fire on board on passage and 60,000 cartridges had to be thrown overboard. After disembarking the troops at Malta she returned to the U.K. and sailed for Varna carrying troops herself and towing two sailing transports filled with Lancers.

The **Andes** was at first loaned to the French and left Liverpool in November 1854 to pick up her troops at Marseilles. Both ships then did a lot of local work, particularly evacuating the wounded from Balaclava to Skutari Hospital. The **Alps** and the **Andes** arrived home at the end of their trooping duties in June 1856 and were then employed for a time on commercial service to the Mediterranean before returning to the Western Ocean.

In 1859 both ships were sold to J. & G. Thomson, the shipbuilders, in part payment for new tonnage, and were immediately resold without even going up to the Clyde. The Spanish Government bought the **Andes**, and she was placed on service between Cadiz and Havana, being renamed **Lagos**.

Following her sale the **Alps** was lengthened by 30 feet by Harland & Wolff at Belfast and was then operated by the West Indies & Pacific Steam Navigation Company. She lasted until 1871 when she was broken up.

Sources:

The Denny List, Volume 1, page 37, (National Maritime Museum, 1975)
Merchant Fleets - The Cunard Line - Duncan Haws
Shipbuilding & Shipping Record : page 25, 3rd July 1952

THE WORLD SHIP SOCIETY - MERSEYSIDE BRANCH

PROGRAMME FOR 2002-2003 SEASON

Meetings are held at Sam's Bar Function Room, corner of Old Hall Street and Tithebarn Street, Liverpool City Centre. Meetings commence at 7 p.m.

10th December, 2002
MERSEY AND ISLE OF MAN SHIPPING (1960s and 1970s) : Ian Collard

14th January, 2003
THE WIDENING THAMES (A WSS Slide Show)

11th February, 2003
CAMMELL LAIRD Part VI (John Taylor)

11th March, 2003
THE BRUNNERS & MOND RIVER FLEET (Bill Leathwood)

8th April, 2003
VOYAGERS ACROSS THE SEA (Alan Moorhouse)

13th May, 2003
A LIFETIME OF SHIPS, PART 2 - 1960s-2000 (Ron Baker)

SPOT THE DIFFERENCES ..... ?

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

Classic Ships of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company Limited (1945-1955)

KING ORRY (4) 1945; MONA'S QUEEN (4) 1946; TYNWALD (5) 1947; SNAEFELL (5) 1948; MONA'S ISLE (5) 1950; MANXMAN (2) 1955.

Built by: Cammell Laird, Birkenhead
Dimensions: Length overall 344·0 ft; Breadth 47·0 ft; Depth 18·0 ft; Speed 21½ knots
Machinery:Twin screw; 4/steam turbines, single reduction gearing, 1008nhp, 8500shp
(Except **Manxman** which had 2/Pametrada steam turbines, double reduction gearing)

Probably the most often repeated question about these six 'classic' ships of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company Limited (IOMSPCo.), built between 1945 and 1955, is ***"what were the differences between them ?"***

This article attempts to answer this question before the passage of time dims memories and individual characteristics are forgotten.

Four ships of the IOMSPCo. were lost by enemy action during World War 2:
Mona's Queen (3), 1934. Mined and sunk at Dunkirk 29.May,1940
Fenella (2), 1937. Sunk by air attack at Dunkirk 29.May,1940
King Orry (3). Bombed and sunk at Dunkirk, 30.May,1940
Tynwald (4). Torpedoed and sunk Algeria, 12.November,1942

To replace these war losses and as early as 1943/44 the IOMSPCo. invited bids for initially three ships based on the plans of the **Fenella** (2) and **Tynwald** (4), both of which had been built before the war by Vickers Armstrong Ltd at Barrow. The proposed new ships were to be larger and faster and with more passenger accommodation, and their promenade decks were to extend to the end of the shelter deck accommodation without any break at the mainmast, except for car loading wells as described.

Cammell Laird and Company of Birkenhead were successful in these bids and the names of **King Orry**, **Mona's Queen** and **Tynwald** were given to the first group of ships. These were to prove so successful that three more vessels followed them to the same design and dimensions, named **Snaefell**, **Mona's Isle** and **Manxman**. The name **Fenella** was given to a new cargo motor ship built in 1951 by the Ailsa Shipbuilding Co. Ltd., Troon. The new **King Orry** was the first of this new building programme to cater for the rapidly developing post-war tourist industry in the Isle of Man and to replace the other rapidly ageing vessels of the fleet.

The new ships were of almost identical appearance with a pronounced sheer, tumblehome and camber across the decks of 11½ inches in a beam of 47 feet. They were considered to be of classic proportions and appearance and were very well

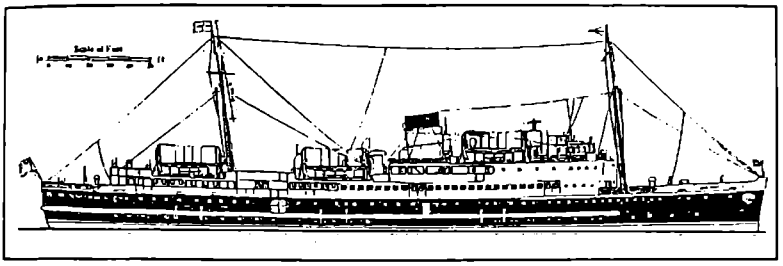
received by both passengers and crew. They all carried six 28 ft lifeboats which were all constructed in beautiful diagonal teak carvel and varnished; not painted black as might appear from photographs.

The only real problem was the increasing requirement to carry motor cars. The new **King Orry** and **Mona's Queen** were designed to cater for this with the provision of a car loading well to give access to the shelter deck on the starboard side only. Cars had to be craned on or off at Douglas. The later vessels had this car loading well on both sides. The need to load and discharge cars caused many difficulties for the Douglas Harbour Masters in organising the berthing of these vessels. Occasionally all six could require a berth at Douglas at the same time. The new **Manxman** (1955) could carry up to twenty cars but it was not until the introduction of the specially designed car ferries **Manx Maid** (2), 1962, and **Ben-my-Chree** (5), 1965, that this problem was really solved. These latter two were the first ships designed for the IOMSPCo as car ferries, with patent ramps for side loading at any state of the tide.

The **King Orry** (4) and **Mona's Queen** (5) were identical vessels as built but various changes made during winter refits made the vessels more easily identifiable. Some of these changes were incorporated in the later vessels which followed them, and some changes were unique to the new vessels themselves.

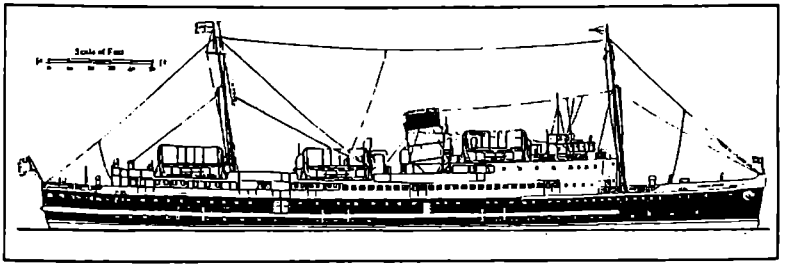
The new ships were provided with eight very comfortable private cabins which could be reserved prior to departure. In 1967 the IOMSPCo's passenger steamers were changed from two class operation to single class and the **Manxman's** passenger certificate was altered from 1,049 first-class, 1,344 second-class and 68 crew to 2,302 passengers and 60 crew.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCES.....?



KING ORRY (4) 1945
Official Number: 165282. Signal Letters: GMJM.
Gross Tonnage: 2485. Launched: 22.11.1945. Yard Number: 1169. Cost: £402,095.
Maiden Voyage: 18.04.1946. Final Voyage: 31.08.1975. Broken-up: 1979.

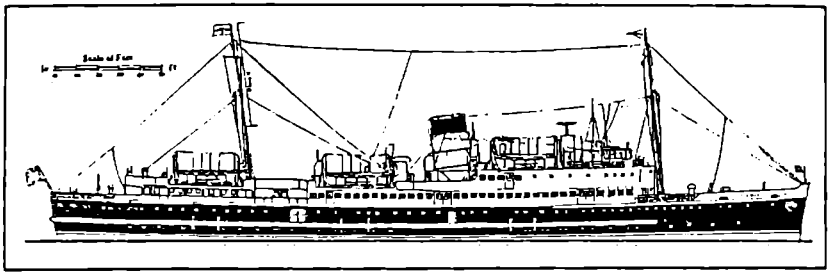
Car loading "well" on starboard side only, for loading cars by crane onto shelter deck.
Rectangular returned ends to promenade deck over shelter deck gangways.
Six windows in bridge front of first class lounge, with eight windows, both sides, below bridge deck.
No glazed screen below after end of bridge deck. Canvas dodgers were fitted in bad weather conditions.
Glazed screen (26 windows) with four small windows, both sides, to forward end of shelter deck.
1948: Open flying bridge fitted above wheelhouse extended to full width of vessel in the following year.
1954: Radar hut built above No.1 Fan Room on bridge deck for Radar Scanner.
1960: 20.0ft. open sided extension to bridge decks on both sides of funnel to accommodate inflatable life rafts.
1961: The cravat cowl was removed from the funnel, the only post-war ship to have her cowl removed.
Open rails around stern, sometimes covered with white canvas covers. Mainmast cross-trees, ¼ way mast truck/hounds.



MONA'S QUEEN (4) 1946
Official Number: 165283. Signal Letters: GMJR.
Gross Tonnage: 2485. Launched: 05.02.1946. Yard Number: 1170. Cost: £411,241.
Maiden Voyage: 26.06.1946. Final Voyage: 16.09.1961. Broken-up: 1981.

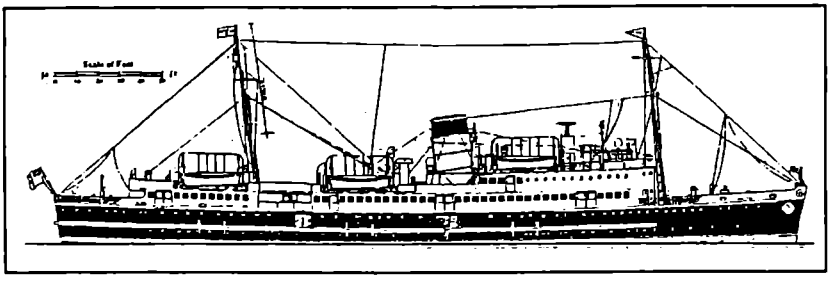
For a couple of years, the black hull paint extended to shelter deck windows, as pre-war *Fenella*.
Car loading "well" on starboard side only, for loading cars by crane onto shelter deck.
Rectangular returned ends to promenade deck over shelter deck gangways. Rounded ends in later ships.
Six windows in bridge front of first class lounge, with eight windows, both sides, below bridge deck.
No glazed screen below after end of bridge deck. Canvas dodgers were fitted in bad weather conditions.
Glazed screen (26 windows), with four small windows, both sides, to forward end of shelter deck.
1948: Open flying bridge fitted above wheelhouse, extended to full width of vessel in the following year.
1954: Radar hut built above No.1 Fan Room on bridge deck for Radar Scanner.
Open rails around stern, sometimes covered with white canvas covers.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCES.....?



TYNWALD (5) 1947
Official Number: 165284. Signal Letters: GJVX.
Gross Tonnage: 2487. Launched: 24.03.1947. Yard Number: 1184. Cost: £461,859.
Maiden Voyage: 31.07.1947. Final Voyage: 26.08.1974. Broken-up: 1975.

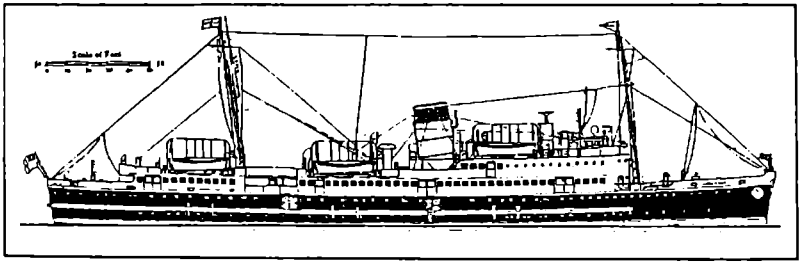
Car loading "wells" on both sides of vessel, for loading cars by crane onto shelter deck.
Built with an open flying bridge extending over the full width of the vessel.
1954: Radar Hut and Radar Scanner over No.1 Fan Room.
Six windows in bridge front of first class lounge, with eight windows, both sides, below bridge deck.
Glazed screen (5 windows), both sides, below after end of bridge deck.
Glazed screen (36 windows), both sides, to shelter deck from car loading "well" forward to bridge front.
Open rails around stern, covered with white painted canvas covers.



SNAEFELL (5) 1948
Official Number: 165287. Signal Letters: MAVK.
Gross Tonnage: 2489. Launched: 11.03.1948. Yard Number: 1192. Cost: £504,448.
Maiden Voyage: 24.07.1948. Final Voyage: 29.08.1977. Broken-up: 1978.

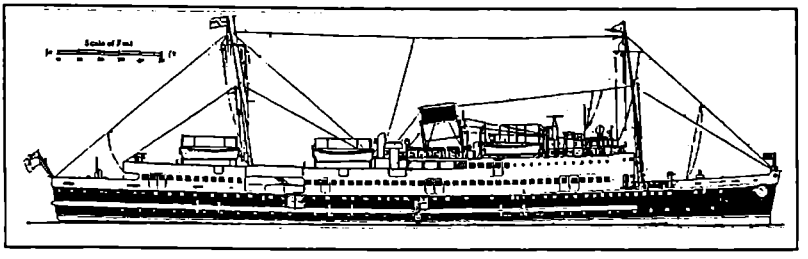
Car loading "wells" on both sides of vessel, for loading cars by crane onto shelter deck.
Built with an open flying bridge extending over the full width of the vessel.
1954: Radar Hut and Radar Scanner over No.1 Fan Room.
Eight windows in bridge front of first class lounge, 12 windows starboard side, 10 windows port side, below bridge deck.
Glazed screen (5 windows), both sides, below after end of bridge deck.
Glazed screen (36 windows), both sides, to shelter deck from car loading "well" forward to bridge front.
Glazed screen (12 windows), both sides, to shelter deck from car loading "well" aft to end of promenade deck.
Open rails around stern, and on forecastle, covered in white steel mesh. "Three Legs" Rondel both sides of bow.
Mainmast painted black, mast truck to ½ way hounds to deck. Mainmast cross-trees, ½ way mast truck to hounds.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCES.....?



MONA'S ISLE (5) 1950
Official Number: 165288. Signal Letters: GCXY.
Gross Tonnage: 2491. Launched: 12.10.1950. Yard Number: 1209. Cost: £570,000.
Maiden Voyage: 22.03.1951. Final Voyage: 27.08.1980. Broken-up: 1980.

Car loading "wells" on both sides of vessel, for loading cars by crane onto shelter deck.
Built with an open flying bridge extending over the full width of the vessel. White or green canvas covers to bridge rails.
1955: Radar Hut and Radar Scanner over No.1 Fan Room.
Eight windows in bridge front of first class lounge, 12 windows starboard side, 10 windows port side, below bridge deck.
Glazed screen (5 windows), both sides, below after end of bridge deck.
Glazed screen (36 windows), both sides, to shelter deck from car loading "well" forward to bridge front.
Glazed screen (12 windows), both sides, to shelter deck from car loading "well" aft to end of promenade deck.
Solid bulwark rails around stern painted white. Open forecastle rails covered in white steel mesh.



MANXMAN (2) 1955
Official Number: 186349. Signal Letters: MTQC.
Gross Tonnage: 2495. Launched: 08.02.1955. Yard Number: 1259. Cost: £847,000.
Maiden Voyage: 21.05.1955. Final Voyage: 04.09.1982. Awaiting disposal: 2002.

Car loading "wells" on both sides of vessel, for loading cars by crane onto shelter deck.
Built with an open flying bridge extending over the full width of the vessel. Green canvas covers to bridge rails.
Built with Radar Hut and Radar Scanner over No.1 Fan Room. Cross-trees to both masts fitted above masthead lights.
Eight windows in bridge front of first class lounge, 12 windows starboard side, 10 windows port side, below bridge deck.
Glazed screen (5 windows), both sides, below after end of bridge deck.
Glazed screen (36 windows), both sides, to shelter deck from car loading "well" forward to bridge front.
Glazed screen (12 windows), both sides, to shelter deck from car loading "well" aft to end of promenade deck.
Solid bulwark rails around stern painted white. Open forecastle rails covered in white steel mesh.
Four lifeboats on promenade deck carried on Welin gravity davits. "Three Legs" Rondel both sides of bow.
1960: 20.0ft. open sided extension to bridge decks on both sides of funnel to accommodate inflatable life rafts.

BOOK REVIEW

THE BRITISH MERCHANT NAVY : IMAGES AND EXPERIENCES

Paintings by Robert Lloyd

For many people the golden age of shipping was the 1950s and 1960s, when the British Merchant Navy had hundreds of handsome ships, providing satisfying and worthwhile careers for tens of thousands of British seafarers. It is now possible to relive these glorious years with the work of acclaimed marine artist Robert Lloyd. Paintings of over 60 passenger liners, cargo liners, tramps and tankers are reproduced in full colour. Ships featured range from the passenger liners **Canberra**, **Caronia** and **Oriana**, through cargo-passenger liners such as the **Amazon**, **Ceramic** and **Helenus** to cargo liners including the **Fourah Bay**, **Glenogle** and **Markhor**. Tankers like the **Halia** and tramps such as the **Welsh City** are not neglected.

Complementing each painting is a text written by a well known shipping author telling the story of each ship and its owner, and a photograph of the ship. Woven into the narratives are the memories of those who knew the ships intimately from having sailed on them. Whether humorous, wry, tragic or poignant, these personal reminiscences help complete the picture of the Merchant Navy in the 1950s and 1960s, and explain why those who were at sea during that period often speak of it as *'the best time of my life'*.

The British Merchant Navy: Images and Experiences reproduces 55 of Robert Lloyd's paintings to full-page size, with a further ten reproduced as smaller cameos, plus 45 black and white photographs. The book contains 112 pages in landscape format and is cloth bound with a full cover dust jacket.

The British Merchant Navy: Images and Experiences costs £24 plus £3 postage and is available from:

J.& M.Clarkson, 18 Franklands, Longton, Preston PR4 5PD
(Credit card order line : 01772 612855)

THE MONDAY FACILITY

Members' access to the Archives and Library at the Merseyside Maritime Museum on Mondays will resume in 2003 as follows:

JANUARY 27th
FEBRUARY 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th
MARCH 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th and 31st

(left) The Cunard liner **Carinthia** leaving Montreal in the summer of 1964.

(below, left) The **Carinthia** passing under the Jacques Cartier Bridge at Montreal on her last sailing of the season in November 1964.

(below, right) The same scene, just six weeks later, in January 1965 with the St Lawrence frozen.

(all photographs Joan Gower-Rees)

RO-RO SERVICES, WATER TRANSPORT AND OPPORTUNITIES

by Alan McClelland

It has been reported (e.g. *Liverpool Echo Business*, 20.viii.02) that the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company results have been adversely affected by the removal of some P & O ferry services to a terminal at Mostyn on the Welsh shore of the Dee. It has also been commented that the notion of creating a ro-ro facility accessible at all states of the tide on the Liverpool side of the river is in limbo. Proposals for such a development were submitted to the Department of Transport in December 2001. At least two points arise from this situation:

1. Delays to ferry services occasioned by the necessity to lock in and out of the dock system on the Liverpool side have been common knowledge for a long time, as has the trend for the size of ferries to increase.
2. Encouraged by the E.U.'s forthcoming 'Marco Polo' initiative, continental shipping interests actively contemplate the creation of new coastwise and short-sea ro-ro routes. One wonders if Port of Liverpool transport companies have considered taking any informed practical interest in this matter.

The Marco Polo initiative, due to commence in 2003, has arisen out of concerns about ever increasing road congestion and the degradation of the environment. It emphasises the well known fact that shifting freight by ship or barge, when appropriately regulated, is both highly fuel efficient and environmentally friendly. In addition to ro-ro services, attention is to be directed to other types of shipping and to barges.

Successive British governments since the Second World War have taken insufficient interest in continental waterway and coastal trade developments and done little or nothing to encourage relevant shipbuilders and operators. An outstanding illustration of this is the scant attention given to the continuing evolution of the river-sea ship concept. Those British shipyards which did produce efficient designs have now closed down. Broad waterways when they have been re-engineered have all too often been left incapable of accommodating sea-going vessels of as little as 1,000 tonnes capacity. A relatively local example of this state of affairs is the neglected River Weaver. Even routine dredging of this potentially important waterway has been abandoned.

One must hope that politicians will soon address the need for a 'joined up' shipping and inland water transport policy. Headline catching piecemeal schemes simply are not good enough. One would also hope that any such policy has a social dimension, taking into account the employment, training and working conditions of the crews of vessels in whichever trades.

BULLETIN 'EXTRA'

For the third successive year a *Bulletin 'Extra'* will be produced in mid-January and will feature the full story of the **Princess Victoria** disaster of 31st January, 1953.

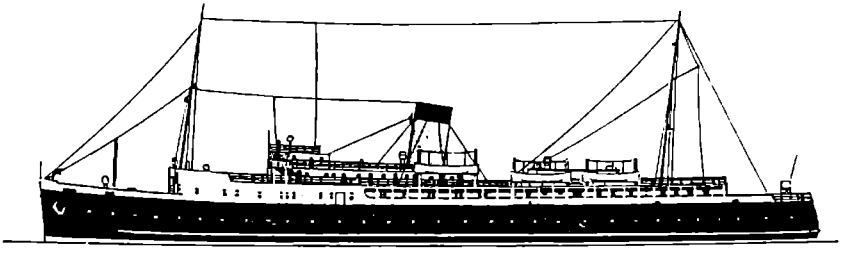
The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

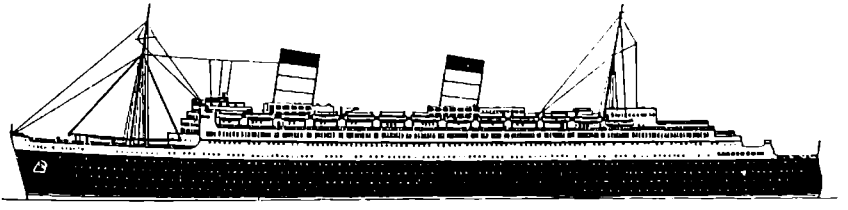
(Founded in 1938)

BULLETIN EXTRA

Supplementary Issue, mid-January 2003

Editor : John Shepherd





The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

Membership and General Correspondence:
The Liverpool Nautical Research Society.
Maritime Archives and Library,
Merseyside Maritime Museum,
Albert Dock,
LIVERPOOL, L3 4AA, U.K.

'Bulletin' related matters:
John Shepherd,
Flat 7, "Mount Court",
Mount Road,
WALLASEY, CH45 9JS, U.K.

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

Websites:
The Society is represented on the following websites

www.merseyshipping.co.uk
www.cronab.demon.co.uk

From the Editor:

First of all, the Chairman and the Members of the Council of the Liverpool Nautical Research Society would like to wish all readers of *'The Bulletin'* a very happy and prosperous year in 2003.

This is the third consecutive year that the Society has produced a mid-January *'Bulletin Extra'*. Somewhat unusually this contains just two articles this year. The first deals with the loss of the British Transport Commission's Larne-Stranraer vessel **Princess Victoria** on 31st January 1953. When reading through the findings of the subsequent Court of Inquiry, one wonders if the lessons of the **Princess Victoria** disaster have ever been totally learned?

The second article tells the story of the **Queen Elizabeth**, the world's largest liner throughout her career. Thirty years ago, in January 1973, the *'Elizabeth'* was lying on her starboard side in Hong Kong harbour after capsizing following a series of fires started by arsonists. It was a tragic end for a fine ship. *j.s. January, 2003.*

THE MONDAY FACILITY

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MARCH 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th and 31st
APRIL 7th, 14th and 28th

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

All Meetings are held in the Education Suite at the Merseyside Maritime Museum and commence at 12.30 p.m. Coffee and biscuits are available from 12 noon.

Thursday, 20th February, 2003
"AN ANGLESEY SHIPWRECK"
(Mr P. Day)

Thursday, 20th March, 2003
"DECLINE OF BRITISH SHIP OPERATING SINCE 1965. THE CASE OF ELDER DEMPSTER OCEAN GROUP"
(Prof. P.N. Davies)

Thursday, 17th April, 2003
"SHIPBUILDING ON THE RIVER WEAVER"
Mr A. Barratts

(MRS. M. FERGUSON)

Officers of *Princess Victoria* (1947) on press cruise, June 1947
(*left to right*) Third Officer William McInnes, Radio Officer David Broadfoot, Captain James Ferguson, Chief Officer Shirley Duckels, Second Officer Leslie Unsworth.
All except Mr. Unsworth were lost with their ship on 31 January, 1953.

(H. M. REA)

Princess Victoria (1947) approaching Larne

FIFTY YEARS AGO

THE LOSS OF THE *"PRINCESS VICTORIA"* ON 31st JANUARY, 1953

by The Editor

Cross-Channel passenger vessels have, with a few notable exceptions, enjoyed an immunity from disaster, considering the frequency and nature of their voyages, criss-crossing day and night the main sea lanes around our coasts.

On Saturday 31st January 1953 the Larne-Stranraer mail ferry ***Princess Victoria*** *left Stranraer at 7.45 a.m. with 125 passengers and a crew of 49 on board and headed into one of the worst gales in the North Channel for many years. Soon after clearing the relatively sheltered waters of Loch Ryan a heavy sea burst open the stern doors of the motorcar deck and caused immediate and serious flooding which resulted in the vessel capsizing and foundering at 1.58 p.m. Only 41 people were saved including 10 of the crew.*

On the fiftieth anniversary of the disaster this article contains a contemporary account of the actual voyage and summarises the findings of the Court of Inquiry and the subsequent Appeal.

THREE EARLIER VESSELS OF THE SAME NAME ON THE NORTH CHANNEL

PRINCESS VICTORIA (1)

The first vessel to bear the name **Princess Victoria** on North Channel services was built in 1890 for the Larne & Stranraer Steamship Joint Committee. The order was intended for Harland & Wolff at Belfast but they were unable to guarantee delivery within the desired time scale and so William Denny and Brothers of Dumbarton built the ship. So good was the result that Dennys built all her successors.

The **Princess Victoria** (1) was a vessel of 1,096 gross tons, with a length of 280 feet and a breadth of 35·5 feet. With two-cylinder compound diagonal engines driving paddle wheels she had a service speed of 19 knots. The **Princess Victoria** (1) was defined as a cattle carrier (700 could be carried) with passenger space and so had special ventilation to confine the smell. She lasted until September 1910 when she was sold for scrap.

PRINCESS VICTORIA (2)

The second ship to carry the name **Princess Victoria** on the North Channel was a turbine steamer built by Dennys at Dumbarton in 1912. She had a gross tonnage of 1,678 and a length of 312 feet overall. Triple screws gave her a trials speed of 20·4 knots and the scheduled Larne-Stranraer passage time was reduced to two hours. Between 1914 and 1919, the **Princess Victoria** (2) was a troop transport sailing between Southampton and French ports and on 1st January 1923 she was transferred to the ownership of the London, Midland & Scottish Railway, following the rationalisation of the railways. The **Princess Victoria** (2) lasted until March 1934 when she was sold and broken up in Norway.

PRINCESS VICTORIA (3)

At its meeting in January 1938, the Board of the London, Midland and Scottish Railway grasped the nettle and approved the building of its first cross-channel roll-on/roll off ferry. In addition, expenditure of almost £200,000 was approved to provide terminals at Stranraer and Larne for a stern-loading vehicle and passenger ferry.

The third **Princess Victoria** was launched from Denny's Dumbarton yard on 21st April 1939. She had a gross tonnage of 2,197, a length of 322 feet overall and a beam of 48·1 feet. Accommodation was provided for 875 first-class and 542 second-class passengers. The final cost of the ship was £190,860-5s-5d.

Internally the new ship incorporated many novel features. The entire main deck was given over to the motorcar. Apart from the engine room casing there was no obstruction and 80 cars could be accommodated. Cars were driven on and off through an opening in the stern which was closed by two low doors while the vessel was under way.

The new **Princess Victoria** was also the first diesel propelled vessel to be built for the LM&SR. A trials speed of 19·93 knots was attained, and the mean over six hours was 19·25 knots.

The ship entered service on 5th July 1939 but had hardly settled down on her designed route when war broke out on 3rd September. The **Princess Victoria** was ideal for minelaying duties and was immediately taken over by the Admiralty and joined the First Minelaying Squadron. On 19th May 1940 the **Princess Victoria** struck a mine at the mouth of the Humber and sank with the loss of 36 of her crew. There were 85 survivors.

THE *"PRINCESS VICTORIA"* (4) OF 1947

from Lloyd's Register:

PRINCESS VICTORIA Official Number: 168901 Call Sign: G M Z N
Gross Tonnage: 2,694; Nett: 1,405. Length: 309·8 ft; Breadth: 48·1 ft; Depth: 13·0 ft
Owners (*from 1st January 1948*) : The British Transport Commission

In December 1944, the Shipping Committee (London) of the London, Midland & Scottish Railway approved the ordering of a replacement for the **Princess Victoria** of 1939. The new vessel was to be a virtual repeat of the 1939 *Victoria* and the Government granted a licence permitting the construction of the vessel. Five firms were invited to tender, but replies were received from only two, and the lower of these, from William Denny & Brothers of Dumbarton, quoted a basic price of £313,000.

Externally the only difference between the 1939 ship and her successor was the positioning and shape of certain ventilators: otherwise the two ships were identical. Internally, however, the car deck did not extend to the full length of the ship. The space forward of the engine room casing was given over to lounge and cabin accommodation.

The new **Princess Victoria** (4) was named by Lady Burroughs, wife of the LM&SR chairman, on 27th August 1946. Sea trials were carried out on 7th March 1947 and a maximum speed of 19·6 knots was attained from her diesel engines. The mean for a six hour run was 18·9 knots and so the new ship was a fraction slower than her 1939 sister. The new ship took up service on the Larne-Stranraer route on Tuesday 18th March 1947.

The Transport Act 1947 received the Royal Assent on 6th August 1947 and had as its prime object the establishment of a British Transport Commission. From 1st January 1948 all the major railway undertakings were vested in public ownership, and this included the London, Midland and Scottish Railway which had owned and operated the Larne-Stranraer vessels since 1923. Captain Harry J.B. Perry was appointed marine superintendent for Scotland.

The 'Milk Run'

During the winter of 1941-42 the Ministry of War Transport and the Ministry of Food turned to the problem of increasing the milk supply to Scotland and provision was made for the transportation of milk from Northern Ireland via Larne and Stranraer. Throughout the period of

(F. H. McCARLIE, STRANRAER)

Princess Victoria (1947) with milk tankers arriving at Stranraer

the war, and for some years after, the milk in churns was carried by the mail steamer. During the winter of 1947-48 the expensive expedient of transporting the milk churns by air was employed, but from November 1948 the sea route was used again.

In May 1949 the car deck of the **Princess Victoria** was strengthened to allow a load of 240 tons to be carried. In addition, at this time, a spray door (the 'guillotine' door) was fitted at the stern. This could be raised or lowered as required in an attempt to prevent spray entering the car deck. Following this strengthening, road tankers carrying milk could be transported on the **Princess Victoria** thus speeding up the slow business of handling thousands of individual milk churns. In July 1949 trials were started with 12-ton tankers being carried on the service sailings. Over the following winter the **Princess Victoria** was exclusively occupied with the 'milk run' and made two sailings each way each day. She left Larne at midnight and at 8.30 a.m. Empty tankers returned on the ship's departures from Stranraer at 5.30 a.m. and 8 p.m. The situation became even more acute in the early 1950s resulting in extra 'milk run' sailings operating and car traffic being turned away to allow space for the road tankers.

A Warning Unheeded

During all this intensive sailing on the 'milk run', the **Princess Victoria** was not entirely accident free. Two incidents in particular are of great signficance and were repeatedly referred to during the Inquiry into the vessel's loss.

Tuesday, 25th October 1949:

The **Princess Victoria** experienced heavy weather as she crossed from Larne to Stranraer on the 'milk run' with her load of road tankers. In the high seas running, some of the tankers broke loose from the wires lashing them to the deck and this caused the ship to take on a 10° list. The **Princess Victoria** was unable to berth at Stranraer due to the severe weather and she lay at anchor in Loch Ryan for two hours. Milk was released from some of the tankers to reduce the list and the car deck flooded to a depth of about 9 inches. Some fuel also leaked from the tankers and concern was expressed that it took forty minutes for the scuppers to clear the car deck.

Saturday, 24th November 1951:

The **Princess Victoria** left Stranraer at 11.30 p.m. on Saturday 24th November 1951 in good weather. A strong north-west gale quickly developed and when attempting to enter Larne Harbour the ship proved difficult to handle and would not respond to the bow rudder. On the second attempt the **Princess Victoria** seemed to be setting down on the shore and her acting master, Captain Duckels, swung her round into the gale. The ship struck a substantial sea which broached her stern doors and a large quantity of water flooded the car deck. The **Princess Victoria** then returned to Stranraer with her cargo of empty milk tankers still on board as Captain Duckels thought it inadvisable to make a further attempt at berthing at Larne. It was noted at the time that it required ninety minutes for the car deck to rid itself of water and the **Princess Victoria** anchored in Loch Ryan at 5.30 a.m. on the morning of Sunday 25th November.

Applications by the **Princess Victoria's** owners for a certificate enabling her to operate on the Fishguard to Rosslare service were refused by the Ministry of Transport on the grounds that the route was exposed to heavy Atlantic swells. With a heavy following sea it was felt that the **Princess Victoria**, with her low stern doors, could be 'pooped' in certain conditions and her car deck flooded.

THE LAST VOYAGE OF THE *"PRINCESS VICTORIA"*

At the end of January 1953 the **Princess Victoria** was operating the mail boat service between Larne and Stranraer. The severe weather of the morning of 31st January affected not only the North Channel, but also a large swathe of Western Europe.

The **Princess Victoria** was scheduled to leave Stranraer for Larne at 7 a.m., but she sailed forty-five minutes late at 7.45 a.m. The delay was caused by having to load 45 tons of cargo by hand: the high winds made it impossible to use the quayside crane. No vehicles could be loaded because of the conditions: the **Princess Victoria** was rising and falling some six feet in the heavy swell as she lay alongside her berth. Just 125 passengers boarded the ship and these included the Deputy Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, Major J.M. Sinclair, and the MP for North Down, Lt. Col. Sir Walter Smiles. A party of 23 employees of Short Brothers & Harland at Wig Bay boarded the ship to take advantage of the company's two-monthly free travel facilities to have a weekend at home in Ireland.

British Railways' shore staff at Stranraer were of the opinion that the **Princess Victoria** would not be sailing, but at 7.45 a.m. on Saturday 31st January 1953 she left her berth with a total of 125 passengers and 49 crew under the command of her regular master, Captain James Ferguson. Portpatrick coastguard reported the wind speed as 75mph and increasing. At 8.06 a.m. the **Princess Victoria** transmitted the following message: *"**Princess Victoria** to GPK* [Portpatrick Radio] *I am now leaving Stranraer bound Larne".*

No one on duty on the ship's bridge survived the disaster, so it is impossible to know precisely just what course the **Princess Victoria** followed. Evidence from the survivors states that the vessel made slow progress up Loch Ryan and took forty-five minutes to arrive off Milleur Point. In north-westerly gale conditions it would have been usual for the **Princess Victoria** to continue north for some distance before turning west in order to leave ample sea room between the ship and the North Rhins coast, and also to keep clear of shallow coastal waters where the seas would be steeper and more dangerous.

Precisely what happened next will never be known as everyone on the bridge was lost in the disaster. Captain Ferguson had to cope with the following problems:

1. Shortly after clearing Milleur Point and losing the partial shelter of the North Rhins peninsula, Captain Ferguson seems to have decided that the weather was too extreme and to return to Loch Ryan.
2. After the **Princess Victoria** had turned round and was running before the storm, a large sea or a series of seas stove in the stern doors and water started to flood the car deck. A party of four crewmen under the Second Officer was sent to close the doors but they had been buckled and would not stay shut. Further attempts were clearly exposing the men to the risk of being washed overboard and so the attempt was abandoned.
3. Unable to return to Loch Ryan in the conventional manner as this would have exposed the now open stern to the heavy following seas, Captain Freguson opted for the difficult manoeuvre of returning stern first, steering with the ship's bow rudder. He turned the **Princess Victoria** head to wind and sent three men up to the fo'c'sle head to remove the securing pin from the bow rudder and free it for use. However, heavy seas were breaking over the fo'c'sle, the bow rudder pin proved difficult to move, and the attempt had to be abandoned because of the danger to the men themselves.
4. Captain Ferguson seems to have decided that he had no option other than to resume his original course and head out into the storm for Ireland.

At 9.46 a.m. the **Princess Victoria** transmitted the following message: *"**Princess Victoria** to GPK - XXX* [urgency signal] *Hove to off mouth of Loch Ryan. Vessel not under command. Urgent assistance of tug required."* The prefix XXX indicated that the **Princess Victoria** was in trouble, but not in immediate danger of sinking.

The situation rapidly deteriorated and at 10.32 a.m. the following message was received at Portpatrick Radio: *"**Princess Victoria**. SOS. Four miles north-west of Corsewall.*

Car deck flooded. Heavy list to starboard. Require immediate assistance. Ship not under command[1]".

[1] It should be noted that 'not under command' would suggest that the **Princess Victoria** was drifting and that her engines were stopped. The vessel would not be able to manoeuvre.

The **Princess Victoria's** list was originally estimated at ten degrees. However after the XXX signal had been transmitted at 9.46 a.m., two developments substantially aggravated the list. The cargo secured on the higher, port side, of the car deck slid down to the lower, starboard side. The second development related to the layout of the ferry's main deck. The car deck occupied only the after part of this deck (as far as the engine room casing); at the forward end there was passenger accommodation with the two areas separated by a bulkhead with a fireproof (***not*** watertight) door. Initially the flooding was confined to the car space, but slowly and gradually the water began to find its way through the fireproof door and into the passenger accommodation.

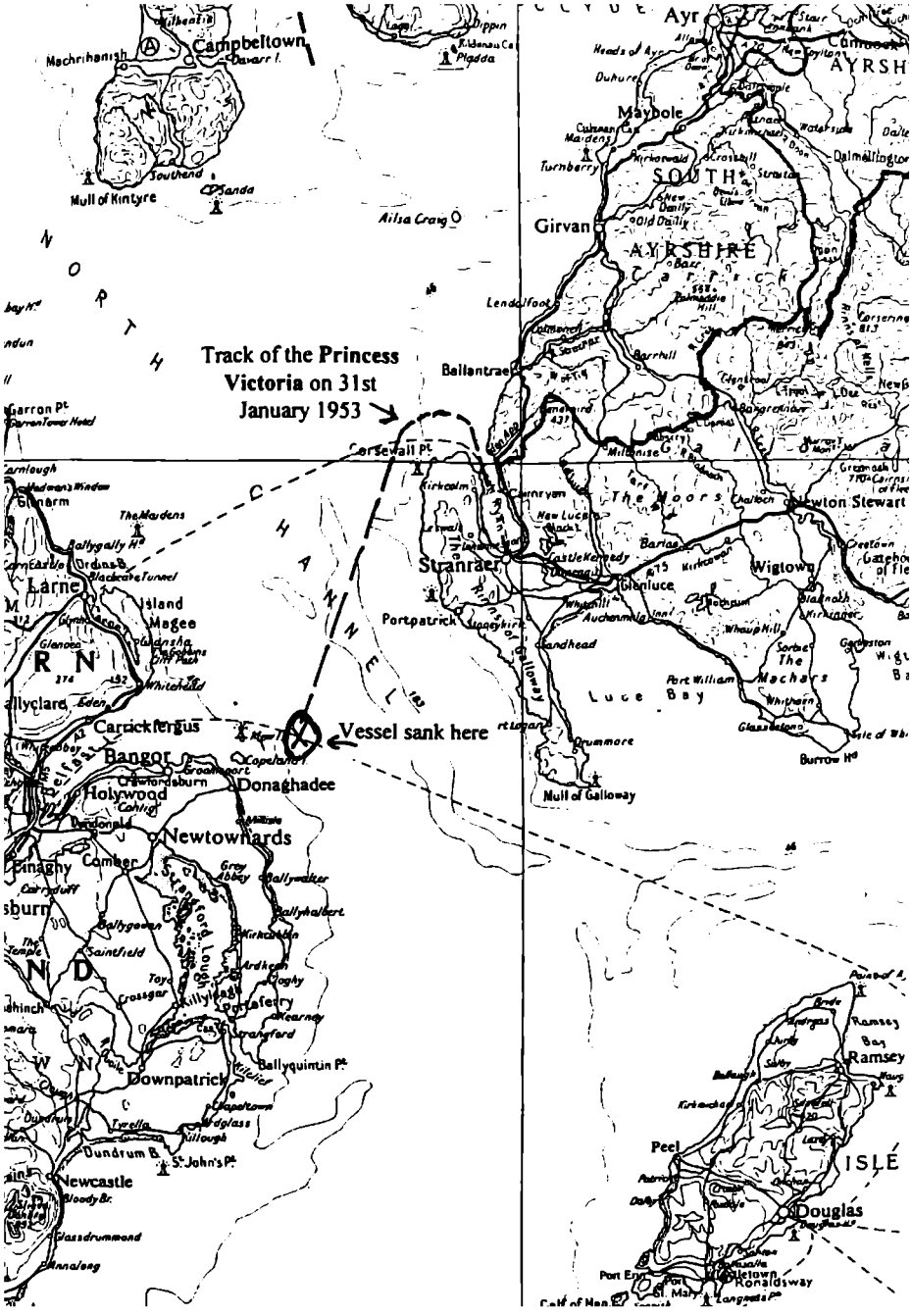
The SOS was responded to initially by two vessels, the Portpatrick lifeboat **Jeanie Spiers**, and the destroyer **Contest** which was lying at Rothesay on the Isle of Bute in the Firth of Clyde.

The passengers seem to have been unaware of the various changes of course off Loch Ryan. However they soon became aware of the list to starboard and their growing fears were confirmed when Captain Ferguson advised them over the ship's tannoy that the **Princess Victoria** was going through a crisis and that the crew would assist passengers in donning lifejackets. The passengers were assembled in one of the lounges and the crew were having the greatest difficulty in assisting them to move around the ship with the increasing list. Cold, violent seasickness and the eventual loss of all but the emergency lighting contributed to the suffering.

With the **Princess Victoria's** engines still functioning, Captain Ferguson nursed his ship along at an estimated five knots towards the coast of Ireland. By noon the list had increased to 35 degrees with about 200 tons of water and cargo on the starboard side of the car deck. In preparation for a possible order to abandon ship, the passengers were transferred from the lounge to the higher, port side of the main passenger deck (the 'promenade' deck). Lines were rigged to help them make the arduous climb. Some were too elderly, infirm or seasick to attempt the climb and chose to stay in the relative shelter of the lounge. Meanwhile the crew worked to prepare the lifeboats for launching, although there was very little chance of this being achieved with the ship listing so severely.

At 12.52 p.m. the **Princess Victoria** transmitted: *"Position critical. Starboard engine room flooded"* and this was followed at 1.08 p.m. by *"Now stopped, ship on her beam end"*. The news that the **Princess Victoria** had stopped astounded the observers on shore who believed she had been drifting without power since her first distress signal at 9.46 a.m. which stated *"not under command"*, and was repeated in her first SOS at 10.32 a.m. Whilst the search was being concentrated off the Rhins Peninsula, the **Princess Victoria** had in fact inched and crabbed her way across the North Channel. Even more astonishing news came at 1.35 p.m. when the stricken vessel radioed: *"Can see Irish coast"*, followed at 1.54 p.m. by *"Estimated position now five miles east of Copeland, entrance to Belfast Lough"*.

Although the **Princess Victoria** was within sight of safety, with the engines stopped the gap was unbridgeable. With the ship on her beam end and close to capsize, Captain Ferguson gave the order to abandon ship. The final message from Radio Officer David Broadfoot was transmitted at 1.54 p.m. It was *"Sorry for Morse OM* [Old Man] *On beam end. Estimated position now five miles east of Copeland"*. It can be assumed that the **Princess Victoria** sank almost immediately after this message was sent.


Track of the Princess Victoria on 31st January 1953
Vessel sank here
Campbeltown
Machrihanish
Mull of Kintyre
Southend
Sanda
Ailsa Craig
Ayr
Maybole
Girvan
Ballantrae
Stranraer
Portpatrick
Newton Stewart
Wigtown
Glenluce
Mull of Galloway
Larne
Carrickfergus
Bangor
Holywood
Donaghadee
Newtownards
Comber
Downpatrick
Newcastle
Ramsey
Peel
Douglas
Port Erin
Ronaldsway
Isle of Man

Some passengers had been assisted up to the port side of the boat deck and into lifeboats. Because of the list they could not be launched but they were freed from their lowering tackle in the hope that they would float free when the **Princess Victoria** sank. She went over slowly with passengers and crew jumping on to rafts, into lifeboats or into the water. Some climbed over the port guardrail as she rolled over, ran up the hull, and made their way along the barnacle covered keel before jumping clear. The **Princess Victoria** lingered for a few moments, just long enough for one of the three lifeboats launched to be smashed by a wave against her and the occupants thrown out and then she sank. Help was still fifty minutes away .....

The Rescue Operation

The first ship to join the search for the **Princess Victoria** had been the Portpatrick lifeboat **Jeanie Spiers**. She was also the last to arrive at the scene of the sinking as she had concentrated her efforts off Corsewall Point where the **Princess Victoria** had first reported being 'not under command'. The **Jeanie Spiers** (equipped with radio telephone) could not communicate directly with the **Princess Victoria** which was fitted only with wireless telegraphy (morse). All messages between the two had to be passed by Portpatrick Radio and the coastguard.

The first ship to reach the scene of the sinking and find survivors was the **Orchy** [1.090grt; owned by W. Sloan & Co, built by Ailsa S.B. Co, Troon in 1930] which was one of four ships sheltering off Black Head at the mouth of Belfast Lough and which joined the search on their own initiative. They did so after hearing the re-broadcast by Portpatrick Radio of the **Princess Victoria's** message timed at 1.35 p.m. stating that she could see the Irish coast.

At 1.21 p.m. the Donaghadee lifeboat, stationed south of Copeland Island, was called out and the **Jeanie Spiers** and the destroyer **Contest** (on her way from Rothesay) re-directed to the Ulster coast. The Donaghadee boat headed north towards the Larne-Stranraer shipping lane, but then heard over her radio telephone that the **Princess Victoria** (at 1.54 p.m.) had given her position as five miles east of Copeland Island, and so she headed east. The correct position of the **Princess Victoria** was in fact five miles north-north-east of Copeland.

As a result of this confusion the first vessels on the scene were not official rescue ships but the four small merchant vessels which had been sheltering in the lee of Black Head. They were the **Orchy**; the cattle steamer **Lairdsmoor** [990grt; built in 1948 by Wm. Denny & Brothers for Burns & Laird Lines Ltd.]; the coastal tanker **Pass of Drumochter** [813grt; built in 1944 by A. & J. Inglis Ltd., Glasgow and owned by the Bulk Oil Steamship Co. Ltd.]; and the trawler **Eastcotes** [built in 1919 and owned by J. Marr & Son].

At 2.48 p.m. the **Orchy** came upon wreckage and survivors in lifeboats and liferafts. The scene of the disaster had been located. She radioed: *"Come to me. I am among people and bodies."* At 2.49 p.m. Portpatrick Radio sent: *"Come on the air with your position."* The **Orchy** replied: *"Five miles east of Copeland and drifting quickly."*

The mountainous seas still running made it impossible to launch the **Orchy's** lifeboats, and as she was only lightly loaded she was riding too high in the water to reach survivors with lifebelts attached to ropes. Her master, Captain Matheson, radioed: *"Position hopeless. Cannot lower lifeboats but doing our best"*.

At 3.12 p.m. the **Pass of Drumochter** radioed Portpatrick: *"Coming up to lifeboat full of people"*. She then released oil to smooth the seas and took the **Princess Victoria's** lifeboat in tow until specialist rescue ships arrived. Portpatrick Radio asked the '*Drumochter*' at 3.15 p.m. for her exact position, and she replied: *"We are four and a half miles north-east of Mew Island"*.

Only the trawler **Eastcotes**, riding lower in the water, was able to rescue seven people from the sea with boathooks - to discover that six of them were already dead.

The Donaghadee lifeboat **Sir Samuel Kelly** arrived on the scene at 3.51 p.m. She picked up 34 survivors, most of them from two lifeboats and a raft. The destroyer **Contest** arrived a few minutes later and rescued seven survivors, followed almost immediately by the Portpatrick lifeboat.

A Coastal Command air-sea rescue 'Hastings' aircraft had arrived above the scene at 3.31 p.m. and dropped equipment to survivors. The aircraft was also able to guide the **Contest** towards the survivors.

The search was called off just before 6 p.m. when between 41 and 44 (accounts vary) survivors had been rescued from the **Princess Victoria's** complement of 174. No women or children survived, nor did any of the ship's officers. It seems that most of the women and children were in the lifeboat which was smashed against the **Princess Victoria's** upturned hull just before she sank.

If only .....

The Coastal Command air-sea rescue Hastings aircraft was based at Aldergrove airport near Belfast. She had taken off at 10 a.m. that morning to assist vessels in distress off the Western Isles of Lewis and Barra. She arrived too late to be of significant assistance to the **Princess Victoria**, but she was able to demonstrate what might have been achieved had aircraft assistance been requested at the start.

The salvage tug **Salveda** had been at anchor off Whiting Bay, Isle of Arran on the morning of 31st January but had gone to the aid of vessels in distress off Barra following an SOS. The **Princess Victoria's** first call at 9.36 a.m. had been of the lower category XXX (Urgency). By the time the '*Victoria*' sent out her first SOS at 10.32 a.m. the **Salveda** was too far committed on her passage to Barra.

Two tugs, the **Warrior** and the **Brigadier**, had been lying at Cairnryan (five miles from Stranraer in Loch Ryan) until Friday 30th January and had then sailed for Douglas, Isle of Man, too far away to answer the **Princess Victoria's** initial request for tug assistance.

The **Princess Victoria's** first two messages had included *'Not Under Command'* which indicated to Portpatrick Radio, the Coastguard and the Portpatrick lifeboat that the ferry's engines were stopped and she was drifting in the storm. This led to the search being confined initially to the coast between Corsewall Point and Portpatrick.

If only .....

THE COURT OF INQUIRY INTO THE LOSS OF THE MOTOR VESSEL *"PRINCESS VICTORIA"* ON 31st JANUARY 1953

The formal investigation ordered by the Minister of Transport, Mr Alan Lennox-Boyd into the loss of the motor vessel ***Princess Victoria*** *in the Irish Sea on Saturday 31st January 1953 was fixed for hearing at the Petty Sessions Courts Building, Chichester Street, Belfast on Monday 23rd March at 10.30 a.m.*

The President of the Court was Mr John H. Campbell, QC, and he was assisted by three assessors, Captain C.V. Groves, a Younger Brother of Trinity House, Dr A. M. McRobb, Professor of Naval Architecture at Glasgow University, and Mr J. Shand, of the staff of the Admiralty Merchant Shipbuilding and Repair Department.

Among the parties represented by counsel were the Ministry of Transport, the British Transport Commission, William Denny & Brothers, the Mercantile Marine Service Association, the Navigators and Engineer Officers' Union, the National Union of Seamen and other trade unions, and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

Mr W.W.B. Topping, QC, who was conducting the investigation on the Ministry's behalf, said in his opening statement that he would ask the Court to pay particular attention to the places where there was water in the vessel as there would be technical evidence in respect of such matters which would be very material.

The gale

When the **Princess Victoria** sailed from Stranraer on the morning of 31st January she had on board a crew of 49 and 125 passengers and about 43 tons of cargo. The previous afternoon the BBC broadcast a warning of a gale in the Malin and Irish Sea areas, and the Meteorological Office at 2.55 a.m. on 31st January issued a warning of a severe gale in the Malin area. This would mean wind of Force 9 Beaufort Scale or between 41 and 47 knots. Counsel said he mentioned this because the Court would be going into the question of the decision to sail.

The vessel appeared to leave Loch Ryan on her normal course at about 9 a.m. She then proceeded in a northerly direction. It would seem as if prior to that a sea had been shipped which had the effect of buckling the rear doors, and the vessel was turned into the wind either with the object of making back into Loch Ryan or possibly to give the crew an opportunity of getting the stern doors re-secured.

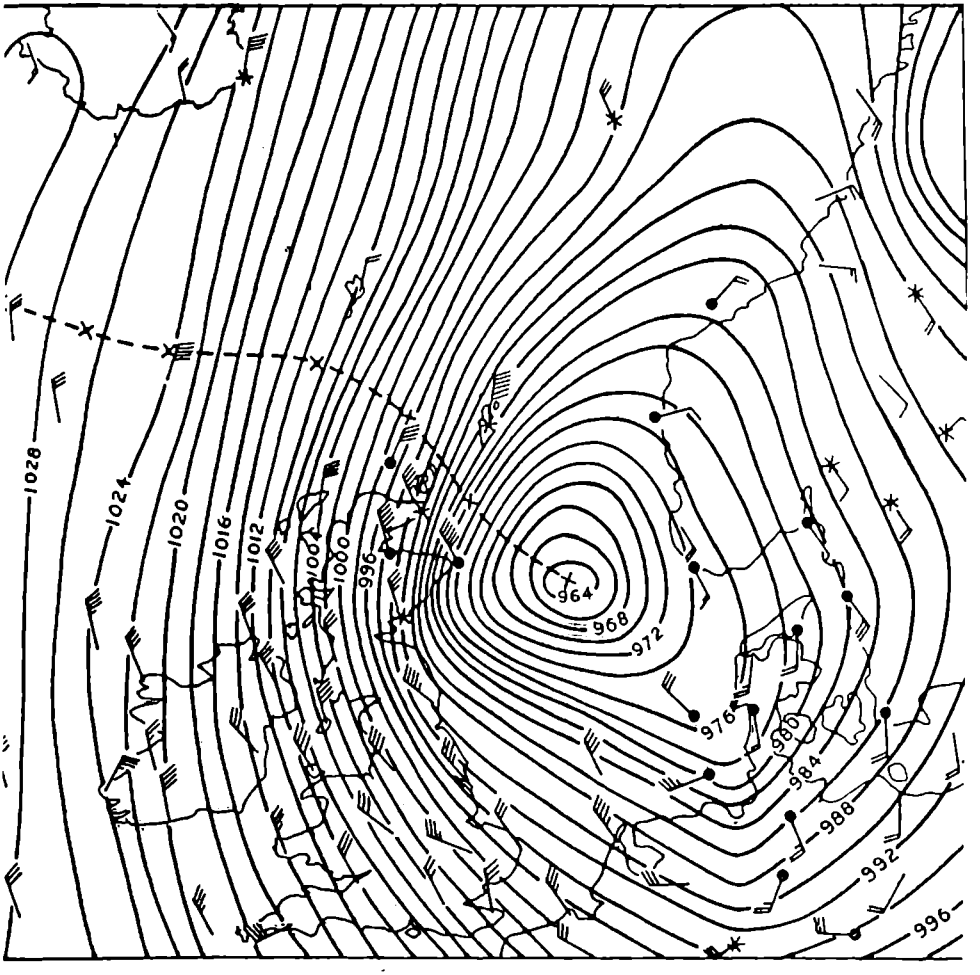
Mr Topping continued by saying that a little later the **Princess Victoria** was again sighted turned back on her usual course, but at 9.46 a.m. her master, Captain James Ferguson sent a radio message to the effect that he was hove-to off Loch Ryan, that his vessel was not under command, and that the urgent assistance of tugs was required.

It would be a matter of major concern for the Court as to whether or not the rescue operations proceeded on the assumption that the ship was at the mouth of Loch Ryan or if she was making for the Irish coast. Counsel pointed out that when, at 1.47 p.m., the master said he could see a lighthouse which he took to be Copeland Island, he was probably seeing the Black Head Light on the north side of Belfast Lough. To some extent this may have affected the arrival of the rescue vessels.

The Court would probably consider the question of the master holding the passengers on board during this time, but the evidence of naval and other craft which were being sent to his assistance would make it quite clear that rather than lower boats and put passengers and crew adrift in a wild sea, the master probably made the only possible decision in the circumstances which was to wait until help arrived or until the last possible moment before the ship foundered.

Mr Topping said the Court would learn which vessels were alerted and how they arrived at the scene. No vessel arrived before the **Princess Victoria** sank at 1.58 p.m., although it was known that she was in difficulties at 9.45 a.m. and had sent out an SOS at 10.32 a.m. *"I would assume that the Court will be at pains to ascertain how it was possible that no vessel was able to see or contact visually the **Princess Victoria**,"* he continued. It would be for the Court to decide whether if ships and lifeboats on the Irish coast had been alerted earlier, then the outcome might have been different.

There would be technical evidence suggesting that the **Princess Victoria** could have survived, no matter what quantity of water was shipped on to the car deck, if the water had not got through the fireproof door from the car deck into the passenger accommodation. It would be for consideration whether the door was damaged or was left open.



31st January, 1953. 12.00 G.M.T.

The weather chart for 12 noon on 31st January 1953.
Reproduced by kind permission of the National
Meteorological Archive at Bracknell.

Securing the cargo

Thomas Boyd M'Quiston of Stranraer, a cargoman on the **Princess Victoria**, said that, when the ship sailed, the cargo was stacked on flat trays along both sides of the car deck. There were no vehicles on board. The cargo (43 tons) was well secured and was still being lashed on the passage up Loch Ryan. The stern doors had not been used at Stranraer because the berth the **Princess Victoria** had occupied had no ramp. The doors were, however, properly secured and were checked before sailing by Mr Duckels, the chief officer.

The flooded car deck

M'Quiston said that after two waves of water had swept along the car deck where he was working, he discovered that the stern doors were open and twisted as if something heavy had struck them. All the parts and fittings were still there but had been buckled.

Seven crew members then worked for about half an hour to close the doors using a crowbar, but they were unsuccessful and were then ordered by Mr Duckels to leave the car deck as they were in danger of being swept overboard. By this time the ship had developed a list to starboard.

M'Quiston then went on to explain that the stern doors opened from the centre, and each half folded in half. The port and starboard halves of the door were both open. Referring to the spray door (the guillotine door) which could be lowered down on top of the stern doors, he said that when the **Princess Victoria** left Stranraer that morning the guillotine door was in the 'up' position. He had not seen this door lowered since taking up duty on the ship on 6th January.

Insufficient scuppers on the car deck

Angus McKay Nelson, a seaman on the **Princess Victoria**, was asked whether he knew the ship to be slow in clearing water from the car deck through the scuppers. He replied: *"Definitely."* Counsel for the National Union of Seamen suggested that the scuppers were not fit for the purpose and Nelson replied: *"Certainly"*. He recalled that on one occasion the car deck was washed down and was under about a foot of water and it took about an hour for this water to drain through the scuppers.

Nelson recalled an incident during the 'milk run' in November 1951 when the **Princess Victoria** had shipped water over her stern whilst attempting to approach Larne stern-first. There was a depth of about two feet of water on the car deck and this did not fully clear until she entered Loch Ryan almost six hours later.

He then told the Court that at one stage Captain Ferguson sent him and two other men forward to release the bow rudder pin. The heavy seas were washing over the forecastle and as they were in danger of being washed overboard the master called them back. The pin was not released.

Choked by lifejackets

Mr David Brewster, skipper of the trawler **Eastcotes** which was sheltering in Belfast Lough said that he did not pick up any radio signals directly from the **Princess Victoria**. All the messages he heard were from Portpatrick Radio Station. They came quite frequently and the situation was very complicated because each message gave different positions. He was under the impression that the **Princess Victoria** was under command.

It was only when, at about 1.30 p.m., he heard that the **Princess Victoria's** position was five miles north-east of Copeland Island, and learned of the decision to abandon ship, that he decided to go to the rescue. He was able to pick up seven people, but only one was alive. Asked by Mr Campbell if the people in the water were wearing lifejackets, Mr Brewster replied: *"Quite a lot of them were, and many of them had been choked when they jumped into the water. I am sure that if anybody had jumped from any height at all into the water, these things would have come up and choked them right away."*

John Blair, a smokeroom steward, said that lifejackets had been issued to all the passengers and they were instructed to get as near to the boat deck as possible. The Captain's last announcement had told everyone to obtain warm clothing. After the **Princess Victoria** capsized Blair said that he had been able to run along the hull to the stern and was able to jump into a boat.

Water on "C" Deck

Charles Edward Thompson, a steward in the first-class accommodation, said that at about 10.30 a.m. he was told to go down to the lounge on "C" Deck (the forward end of the car deck) and to bale out the water which had accumulated there. There was about eighteen inches to two feet of water in the lounge and it was coming in from the direction of the fireproof door leading to the car deck. Thompson said that there was nothing that could be done about the water in the lounge. All members of the crew had their instructions about what to do and where to go in the ship in an emergency. His job was to assist passengers up to the boat stations on "B" Deck (the promenade deck) and to the boat deck. He did that to the best of his ability on the day of the disaster and saw women and children on the boat deck. A lifeline was rigged to enable passengers to pull themselves to the boat deck.

When the order was given to abandon ship the boats on the starboard side were nearly in the water because of the list. Referring to lifejacket distribution, Thompson said that the crew were instructed about possible injury which might be received by the wearer of a lifejacket when jumping into the water. Passengers were told to hold their lifejackets down with their hands when entering the water.

The engines were flooded

Captain James Kerr, master of the ss **Ballyhaft**, was a passenger on the **Princess Victoria** and said that they were in sight of Copeland Island when he heard Captain Ferguson say to the Chief Engineer: *"Can you give her a jag? After all, we're quite close to the land."* The Chief Engineer replied that he was sorry but the engines were flooded and he could do nothing. Under cross-examination Captain Kerr gave his opinion that he would have taken the **Princess Victoria** to sea. There was a moderate gale of wind but it was quite in order to go on. At no time did he see any of the crew neglecting their duty in any way. It was an utter impossibility to launch the boats successfully, or to get into them, owing to the list.

Wireless Communications

Regarding the wireless communications with the **Princess Victoria**, Mr Donald McGregor, the officer in charge of Portpatrick Radio, said that there was difficulty in securing an accurate radio fix of the ship as the cross-bearings were unreliable, having been deflected by intervening land. Three wireless stations were using the **Princess Victoria**'s signal to fix her position: Portpatrick, Malin Head in the Irish Republic and Seaforth Radio on the Mersey. If the **Princess Victoria** had carried the equipment to determine her own position, she could have relayed this to the rescue vessels.

Two tugs, the **Warrior** and the **Brigadier**, were sheltering off the Isle of Man and at 11.23 a.m. Portpatrick Radio passed them a message from their owners: *"British Railways Executive expect you both, repeat both, at **Princess Victoria** very soonest weather permits"*.

District Officer W.C. Spreadborough, H.M. Coastguard, Portpatrick said that when the SOS was received it was not considered that an aircraft was required as they were relying on the positions given to them. An aircraft was eventually called out at 1.29 p.m. but he was doubtful whether the ship could be seen from the air due to the poor visibility.

Dealing with the calling out of the lifeboats, the District Officer said that at the time of informing Portpatrick and two other Scottish stations he did not consider that assistance could be rendered from the Irish coast. When he eventually received a message from the

Princess Victoria to the effect that her engines had stopped, some time after 1 p.m., he then realised that she had been under her own power and was not being driven at the mercy of the wind and sea. His directions to the Portpatrick lifeboat were on the assumption that the ship was drifting, in which case she would have been near the Scottish coast. The message calling out the Donaghadee lifeboat was sent at 1.21 p.m.

Radar not used

Mr Topping, QC, (for the Ministry of Transport) said that as the **Princess Victoria** was equipped with radar, it was a pity that this was not in use before 12.11 p.m., by which time the vessel had developed a considerable list and rendered the radar more or less useless. Earlier use of radar should have made it possible for the master to obtain a direct and accurate position.

Captain Iles' Evidence

Evidence of the behaviour of the **Princess Victoria** was given by Captain Samuel Iles, master of the **Princess Margaret**, another steamer employed on the Larne-Stranraer route. Captain Iles was relief master of the **Princess Victoria** and had commanded her for a total of six weeks. During that time the vessel behaved normally and did not ship any water on to the car deck. Captain Iles said that he had never seen the guillotine door on the **Princess Victoria** lowered down in position on top of the stern doors and he had never considered the advisability of lowering it for any purpose. The greatest difficulty in entering and leaving Loch Ryan was experienced when there was a north-west gale because that seemed to set up a confused sea and there was a rebound of the sea near Corsewall Point that he always tried to avoid.

Asked what was the position of the master of a ship in regard to a decision as to whether or not to sail, Captain Iles said that it was entirely the master's own responsibility. He was left perfectly free to use his judgement and there was no restriction or interference whatsoever.

Water in the engine room

William McDonald Miller, who had served on the **Princess Victoria** as second engineer and for a short period as chief engineer, agreed that it would be a serious matter if water got into the engine room in any quantity. The first occasion he was aware of water getting on to the car deck was in November 1951 when it was between one and two feet deep on the starboard side. At that level it would have been below the level of the sill of the engine room door so that any water entering the engine room would have lapped over the sill as the ship rolled.

Miller added that the engine room pumps could clear between one and two feet of water in half an hour. The engines were encased 16 inches above the level of the floor plates and if the water was higher than that it might get into the engines but they would not stop. The water would have to reach the level of the scavenging pump which was 6 feet 6 inches above the floor plates before the engines would stop.

Asked how water could get through the engine room doors, Miller said it would seep through but not in sufficient quantity to flood the engine room. He could not say how the great volume of water that eventually flooded the engine room got in. Mr Campbell, the Chairman of the Court, pondered: *"Is this going to be one of the unsolved mysteries of this Inquiry?"*

Evidence from the builders

Mr Elmer W. Cotton, chief ship draughtsman of William Denny & Brothers of Dumbarton, the builders of the **Princess Victoria**, said that the vessel had the approval of the Ministry of Transport and Lloyd's Register, and this included the stern doors. It had been considered that design of these doors to bulwark strength would be sufficient. There were eighteen scuppers on the car deck: four of 3 inches wide, ten of 2½ inches wide and four of 4 inches wide, but it was not contemplated that they would have to free large quantities of water

There were no freeing ports in the ship. The car deck on the **Princess Victoria** had an area of 6,500 square feet and the scuppers had an area of 89 square inches.

It is important to differentiate between 'scuppers' and 'freeing ports'. The *'Oxford Companion to the Ships and the Sea'* defines each as follows:
Scuppers: Drainage holes cut through the bulwarks of a ship on the waterways to allow any water on deck to drain away down the ship's side.
Freeing Ports: Square ports cut in the bulwarks of a ship to allow seawater which has been shipped to run away over the ship's side. The doors on these ports are normally hinged on the top edge and situated outboard so that they can be forced open by the pressure of water on deck, but held tightly closed against the bulwarks by the pressure of the sea if the ship rolls to an extent where they are under water.

Questioned about who was responsible for the design of the ship, Mr Cotton said that the builder was closely guided by law. The arrangement plans for a ship had to be approved by the Ministry of Transport and the classification society, and if either was not satisfied then the builder was obliged to alter the plans to conform to the requirements of both bodies.

The Lifeboats

Describing the **Princess Victoria's** lifeboats, Mr Cotton said that the two forward boats were hung under gravity-type davits so that they were launched solely by their own weight. The four aft boats had 'Mills' disengaging gear. It would have been impossible when the list developed (say, to more than 20 degrees) for the two forward lifeboats to be launched.

Inadequate scuppers, weak stern doors

Counsel suggested to Mr Cotton that the scuppers that existed were entirely inadequate for their purpose. He agreed that they could not clear the car deck of large quantities of water in a short time. In further cross-examination, Mr Cotton said that the **Princess Victoria's** stern doors could have been fitted with a crossbar to strengthen them but this was not considered necessary. If such a bar had been a heavy piece of metal it would have required a crane or much manhandling to lift it in and out of position.

Mr Campbell, the Chairman, suggested that the stern doors were sufficient in theory, but in practice insufficient. Mr Cotton agreed that solid doors instead of folding doors would have made them very much stronger and said: *"there is no doubt that they would have withstood the seas."* Speaking on the question of the provision of clearance pumps for the car deck, Mr Cotton said that it was never anticipated that large quantities of water would have come aboard.

Captain John Reed, manager of the Irish shipping services of British Railways since January 1952 said that he had not the least concern in relation to the stern doors. In his opinion the only reason that the stern doors were stove in on 31st January was that the **Princess Victoria** got into an abnormal sea of some type, possibly a pyramidal sea, which nobody could have anticipated.

Referring to the occasion in November 1951 when the stern doors were buckled by a heavy sea off Larne, the Chairman of the Court asked Captain William Morrow, the assistant manager of British Railways' Irish shipping services: *"Did it ever occur to any of the higher executives that such a state of affairs might arise again and that the stern might have to be turned into heavy, turbulent seas?"* Captain Morrow: *"It did."* Mr Campbell went on: *"Why, then, was something not done to render her, as far as was humanly possible, invulnerable? After the stern doors were buckled did it not occur to the owners of the ship that anything was necessary other than repairs to the doors?"* Captain Morrow: *"That is correct."*

Radio Telephony

Asked about the installation of radio telephony in the **Princess Victoria**, Captain Morrow said that when she was being built the owners specified that it should be installed. But the government licence stipulated that the vessel should be constructed to a degree of austerity and radio telephony was not an essential requirement at that time (1947). It was not fitted.

Assistance from the "Duke of Argyll"

Mr Campbell referred to the Heysham-Belfast steamer **Duke of Argyll** which was lying at Belfast on Saturday 31st January. Why had she not been called upon to assist? Captain Reed replied that she would have needed two to three hours to raise steam and then there would be four hours' steaming to Corsewall Point where the **Princess Victoria** was reported to be. He could not say that the vessel would have been of significant use in such heavy seas.

Captain A.E. Willmott, the master of the **Duke or Argyll**, confirmed to the Court that it would have taken four hours for his ship to reach Corsewall from Belfast.

Strength of guillotine door

Mr Gilbert Kelly, the senior engineer surveyor with the Ministry of Transport at Liverpool, stated that he surveyed the **Princess Victoria** annually with a view to the issue of her passenger safety certificate. At the 1952 survey it was not reported to him that the ship had taken water on the car deck, nor was he aware that the stern doors had been damaged by the action of the sea.

When cross-examined by Mr James McSparran, QC, (for the trade unions), about the spray or guillotine door, Mr Kelly said that when lowered it might increase the strength of the stern doors by 25%, or might even double it.

Mr James R. Clarke, of Lloyd's Register of Shipping, said that the **Princess Victoria** was given an "A" classification, with freeboard for service in the Irish Sea.

Stern doors 'satisfactory'

Mr Alexander Aitken, a retired senior ship surveyor at Lloyd's Register, who supervised the construction of the **Princess Victoria**, said that he considered the stern doors satisfactory. He was satisfied that they were strong enough for their intended purpose. He agreed that the scuppers on the car deck were designed to cope with small quantities of water and he had not anticipated that seas would come over or through the stern doors. Mr A. McGonigal,QC, (also for the trade unions) said: *"I suggest that this ship, from a common sense point of view, should have been fitted with freeing ports."* Mr Aitken replied: *"We go by the rules and regulations."* Mr McGonigal queried: *"Common sense does not enter into it?"*

Mr Aitken then quoted Lloyd's rule: 'Where weather decks are enclosed by bulwarks, provision is to be made for rapidly freeing the deck from water'. Mr McGonigal responded: *"I would suggest that from those regulations, freeing ports should have been provided in the **Princess Victoria**."* Mr Aitken replied: *"No, Sir."* When asked if the **Princess Victoria's** scuppers were sufficient for clearing 70 tons of water, Mr Aitken replied: *"I did not conceive that amount of water ever being there."*

The "Princess Victoria's" stability

Mr Herbert W Terry, a senior ship surveyor, gave evidence on the stability of the ship. He said that if the 22 tons of cargo that had been stowed on the port side of the car deck had shifted to the starboard side, it would have required 105 tons of water in the forward passenger lounge and 700 tons of water on the car deck to capsize the vessel.

With a list of 35 degrees, it would have taken about 500 tons of water in the engine room in addition to 700 tons on the car deck to cause capsizing. Water on the car deck and the forward "C" deck lounge alone could, however, have caused capsizing.

Mr Terry estimated that when the ship's list was 35 degrees there were some 510 tons of water on the car deck, 50 tons in the engine room and 50 tons in the lounge forward of the car space. At that angle the **Princess Victoria** would still have had a righting moment. To bring about capsizing some other heeling agency would have been needed - another 50 tons forward of the car space and another 200 tons on the car deck. Mr Terry said that the **Princess Victoria** had capsized because the free water in her eliminated the reserve stability.

Previous incidents not reported

The final witness to address the Court of Inquiry was Mr Henry C. Steel, chief ship surveyor to the Ministry of Transport, who said he was quite satisfied with the ship's stability. He said that when a cross-Channel vessel shipped a sea at the stern sufficient to do damage affecting the seaworthiness of the ship, the law required that the Ministry of Transport be made aware of the incident. He had never been told that in shipping a sea at her stern on a previous occasion the **Princess Victoria** had fractured her stern doors, or that she had shipped a sea into the car deck and developed a list of 10 degrees.

Calculating that one six-inch scupper could have cleared the water from the car deck at a rate of between 100 and 200 tons per hour, Mr Steel said that he considered six such scuppers would have been adequate to clear the water on the day of the disaster.

Wise after the event

Mr James McSparran,QC, later called to the witness box Mr T.C. Rolland, consulting engineer and naval architect, who said that after examining plans of the **Princess Victoria** and listening to the evidence presented to the Court of Inquiry, he considered the ship was unseaworthy from the beginning and he would not have passed the plans for her. With the **Princess Victoria** having a draft of 11 feet 6 inches, the level of the car deck at the stern was 7 feet 7 inches above the water line. The stern doors were 5 feet 6 inches high, so that the top of them was 13 feet 1 inch above the water.

Mr Rolland thought that the stern doors were weak. All that kept them in position when they were closed were three stays secured at the top by three drophead pins, and at the bottom by six sliding bolts going into sockets in the deck. If the stay pins were sheared and the sliding bolts were bent, there was nothing at all to keep the stern doors in position. Mr Rolland continued that if the guillotine (or spray door) had been lowered down into position on top of the stern doors, it would have added very much to the strength of the stern doors. At the bottom of the guillotine door there was a channel that overlapped on both sides of the stern doors to a depth of three inches, so that the top of the stern doors was sunk into the channel.

When Mr L.G. Moody (for Lloyd's Register of Shipping) suggested that there was nothing in this world easier than being wise after the event, Mr Rolland said: *"Yes, and I would suggest that the owners should have been wise after the incidents of 1949 and 1951."* Mr Topping,QC, (for the Ministry of Transport) asked Mr Rolland: *"If you are correct and it is not a case of being wise after the event, every single person who designed, built or certified the **Princess Victoria** is really negligent?"* Mr Rolland: *"Yes, because they did not consider that a sea could get over the top of those doors and therefore they ignored any question of getting rid of that water."*

Mr C.A. Nicholson,QC, (for the British Transport Commission) said that Mr Rolland had made a most irresponsible statement, and his evidence should be treated with the greatest possible reserve.

The hearing of evidence was concluded on 2nd May 1953. The Court then adjourned until 26th May when it met in private to consider its findings.

THE FINDINGS OF THE COURT OF INQUIRY INTO THE LOSS OF THE *"PRINCESS VICTORIA"*

The findings were delivered by the Chairman of the Court, Mr J.H. Campbell, QC, in Belfast on 11th June 1953.

The Report of the Court appointed by the Ministry of Transport to investigate the loss of the British Transport Commission's ship **Princess Victoria** on 31st January with the loss of 133 lives states that the casualty was due to her unseaworthy condition arising from two circumstances:

1. The inadequacy of the stern doors, which yielded to the stress of the seas, thus permitting the influx of water into the car space; and
2. The inadequacy of the clearing arrangements for the water which accumulated on the freeboard deck causing an increasing list to starboard, culminating in the ship capsizing and foundering.

What was the cause of the loss? The loss was caused by the failure of the stern doors, permitting the influx of water into the car space from which there was no adequate provision for clearance. The accumulation of water in the car space, and the extension of the flooding beyond it, destroyed the stability of the ship which ultimately capsized and foundered.
Were the freeing arrangements adequate? No.
Were the stern doors of adequate strength for the Larne-Stranraer passage? No.
Was the loss caused or contributed to by the wrongful act or default of the Owners, Managers, Master or any other person ? The loss was caused by the Owners and Managers in the following respects: a] in that they failed to provide stern doors sufficiently strong to withstand the onslaught of the heavy seas which may reasonably be expected to occur from time to time in the North Channel; b] in that they failed to provide adequate freeing arrangements for seas which might enter the car space from any source; c] in failing to take precautionary steps after the incident of November 1951 (when the stern doors were stove in as the ship was going astern into heavy seas); and d] in failing to comply with the conditions of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1894, in so far as they did not report the incident mentioned.
Was the loss of life consequent on the sinking caused or contributed to by any wrongful act or default of the Owners, Managers, Master or any other person ? By the default of the Owners and Managers as set out.

In reply to other questions the Court found that the cargo was well stowed and secured, and that the stern doors were properly closed and secured when the ship sailed. The vertically sliding stern door (the spray or guillotine door) was not closed. All other doors leading from the car deck were also properly closed. The ship was not seaworthy on sailing but in other respects was fully equipped and had been properly maintained.

The master, Captain James Ferguson, was justified in sailing having regard to the forecasts and gale warnings received. He had no reason to anticipate anything in the nature of exceptionally severe weather. There was also no evidence that there was any exceptional sea running.

The stern doors were too weak and in their design undue reliance appeared to have been placed upon theoretical calculations to the detriment of practical application and possibilities with the result that doors were provided which were of too light a construction and therefore failed in the hour of trial. The guiding principle in their design seemed to have been

the fact that none of the parties concerned was able to visualise the possibility of water being shipped aft.

The freeing arrangements should have been another line of defence, but it was almost an abuse of language to term the eighteen scuppers 'a second line of defence' for the admitted reason that they were intended solely for the clearance of superficial water. Why were they intended for this purpose alone? The answer was that it was beyond the comprehension of the designers, Owners and Managers that sea water could ever be shipped aft in appreciable quantity. The crux of the whole situation was the **Princess Victoria's** inability to drain the car deck of shipped water.

Dealing with the November 1951 incident, the report says that there was an attempt to minimise its importance. The Court failed to understand why, after this incident, the need for stronger doors had not become a matter of urgency.

On management and superintendence the Court stated the opinion 'that the evils of remote control' were apparent in this case. The superintendence of the vessel left much to be desired, for if and when she got into any trouble it was necessary for the master to get into telephonic communication with the head office at London Euston, some 400 miles away.

The Court was of the opinion that the Coastguard be instructed to request aircraft assistance be made available immediately on the report of a casualty. On the availability of rescue ships, the Court appreciated that the lack of seagoing rescue or salvage craft around the coast was a matter involving difficult problems of economics and of national policy.

The Court was of the opinion that the builders (William Denny & Brothers) and Lloyd's Register of Shipping should be absolved from any responsibility for the loss of the ship. No information on any of the incidents in the life of the ship was passed to either the builders or the classification authority.

Finally, the Court concluded: *"If the **Princess Victoria** had been as staunch as the men who manned her, then all would have been well and this disaster averted."*

The Report of the Court of Inquiry investigating the loss of the **Princess Victoria** was published on 5th July 1953 by H.M. Stationery Office. The Report has an 'addendum' from Dr A.M. Robb, one of the assessors. Dr Robb states that in his opinion the list could have been reduced if the sliding doors in the sides of the ship had been opened. This action would have permitted the sea to wash freely over the main deck, but it would have prevented the accumulation of water which was the cause of the disaster; it would have been a choice of the lesser of two evils. No steps were taken to reduce the list, and it does not appear that any steps other than the opening of the side doors could have been taken.

THE APPEAL BY THE BRITISH TRANSPORT COMMISSION AND CAPTAIN J.D. REED AGAINST THE FINDINGS OF THE M.O.T. INQUIRY

*Four grounds were put forward by the British Transport Commission in its appeal to the Northern Ireland High Court, which opened in Belfast on 28th September 1953, against the findings of default made by the Ministry of Transport Court of Inquiry into the sinking of the **Princess Victoria** with the loss of 133 lives.*

The four headings under which the Commission's appeal was made were as follows:

1. The Court of Inquiry should have found that the loss of the ship was caused by an exceptional sea condition, which could not reasonably have been foreseen.

2. The Court erroneously found default against the owners and managers in respect of the design of the ship in its alleged unsuitability for the Larne-Stranraer passage. The Court should have found that the owners had reasonable grounds for believing that the ship was of suitable design for the Larne-Stranraer passage at all times.
3. The Court was erroneous in that it found that an incident in 1951, or one in 1949, established, or tended to establish, default causing or contributing to the disaster, or that the ship was unseaworthy at any time.
4. The findings of default against the owners and managers were against the evidence and the weight of evidence, and are *'ambiguous, unjust, unsatisfactory and bad in law.'*

The Appeal was heard by the Lord Chief Justice (Lord MacDermott), who sat with three assessors: Professor L.C. Burrill, Professor of Naval Architecture at Durham University; Captain P.S. Robinson, retired master mariner; and Mr J. Wallace, retired marine chief engineer. After the opening speech by Mr C.A. Nicholson, QC, for the British Transport Commission, several days were occupied with the reading of the evidence given to the Court of Inquiry.

Mr Nicholson submitted that the matter came down to the question: *'Was an error made in assessing the potential dangers of the Larne-Stranraer crossing?'* Not so much whether the ship had a good pair of stern doors or whether the freeing arrangements were satisfactory, but whether it was right to place that ship on the sea to face the perils which might have been expected on that crossing.

Mr James McSparran, QC, said that a ship with a bow rudder, which turned daily at Larne and Stranraer, was bound, apart even from untoward incidents, to present her stern to the sea. There was ample evidence that the stern doors would have to face green seas breaking directly on to them. If Lloyd's Register had approved the design, they had done so on the assumption that the doors would have to meet nothing but spray.

LORD MacDERMOTT'S JUDGEMENT

The Lord Chief Justice, Lord MacDermott, in a reserved judgement delivered in the High Court at Belfast on 26th November 1953 dismissed (with a modification in the findings of default) the appeal of the British Transport Commission against the findings of default made in the report of the Court of Inquiry. The appeal of the registered manager, Captain J.D. Reed, was allowed but default was found against his predecessor, Captain H.J.B. Perry, who was marine superintendent, British Railways, Scottish Region, from 1948 to 1952.

Lord MacDermott said he could find no sufficient ground for disbelieving Captain Reed's testimony that he had no knowledge of the 1951 incident.

In his judgement the Lord Chief Justice said that *'the loss was caused or contributed to by the default of the owners and the manager, Captain Perry, in that they were negligent before the disaster* [a] *in failing to appreciate that the vessel was unfit to encounter the full range of foreseeable weather conditions on the Larne and Stranraer route by reason of the inability of the stern doors to withstand heavy seas and the inadequacy of the freeing arrangements on the car deck; and* [b] *in not taking appropriate steps to provide adequate freeing arrangements on the said car deck or else to make the stern doors sufficiently strong and adequate to prevent heavy seas from flooding that deck.'*

No evidence of an exceptional sea

In his judgement Lord MacDermott held that the Court of Inquiry was correct in finding that there was no evidence of an exceptional sea at the time of the disaster. The weight

of evidence went to show that the damage was caused not by something in the nature of a freak sea but by conditions which, despite their severity, could not be regarded as exceptional or surprising for the area.

Three main causes for the loss

In the High Court's opinion there were three main causes for the loss: the inadequacy of the stern doors; the inadequacy of the freeing arrangements for the water which accumulated on the freeboard deck; and the shifting of the cargo. Another factor contributing to the disaster was that a considerable quantity of water entered the lounge and other accommodation forward of the car space and this influx ultimately destroyed the ship's stability.

The Court therefore concluded that the **Princess Victoria** was unseaworthy in her construction on the occasion of her last journey. As regards default, the next question was whether the owners, conforming to the proper standard of care, ought to have anticipated that some day in weather such as that of the morning of 31st January, the vulnerable stern of the vessel might be subjected to the stress of green or heavy seas. If the answer was 'yes' they were guilty of default, for on that basis they were negligent in not providing either stronger doors or adequate freeing arrangements; and if the answer was 'no' then they should be exonerated.

The Court was not satisfied, the Lord Chief Justice continued, that the owners were guilty of default at the commencement of the **Princess Victoria's** service. They might have been too sanguine, they might have placed too much reliance on the high freeboard and buoyancy of the vessel, and they might have had the shortness of the crossing too much in mind. But in the absence of further experience it would be going too far to tax them with more than error of judgement at that time.

Review of design

The duty on the owners did not evaporate once the new service had been started. The very fact that the vessel was, to some degree, experimental made it all the more incumbent upon the owners to keep her design and construction under constant and expert review as experience was gained. Lord MacDermott said that all the relevant material had been reviewed and that it was the opinion of the Court that the owners' failure in this respect contributed to the disaster.

Referring to the 1951 incident when the **Princess Victoria** shipped water on to the car deck, the Lord Chief Justice said that this did not seem to have excited any concern in the owners' mind. They should have ascertained the facts as closely as possible; they should have realised then that the shipping of a heavy sea through the stern opening could no longer be regarded as being beyond the bounds of possibility; and they should have been at pains to see what could be done to counter the defect in design which was thus revealed.

No importance attached to 1951 incident

Captain Perry was made aware of the 1951 incident by a report in writing to him by Captain Duckels, but his reaction to the matter was quite clear. He attached no importance to the incident; he made no inquiry to find out exactly what happened; he did not inspect the ship; he did not consider that anything had occurred which could have any bearing on her seaworthiness; and he did not report the matter to his superiors or to Lloyd's Register or to the Ministry of Transport. It was most unfortunate, Lord MacDermott commented, that Captain Perry made little of this occurrence. His conduct amounted to default.

Conclusion

In conclusion the Lord Chief Justice stated that the appeal of Captain Reed would be allowed and the appeal of the British Transport Commission would be dismissed. Lord MacDermott said that the three assessors had authorised him to say that they concurred in the views and conclusion of the Court as stated.

POSTSCRIPT

Bravery Recognised

The bravery displayed during the operations on 31st January 1953 did not go unrecognised. The radio officer on the **Princess Victoria**, David Broadfoot, was posthumously awarded the George Medal in recognition of his selfless conduct. He must have known that by staying in his radio cabin he was ruling out any chance of escape for himself.

William McConnell, coxswain of the Portpatrick lifeboat, and Hugh Nelson, coxswain of the Donaghadee lifeboat, were each awarded the British Empire Medal, while Lt.Commander Stanley McArdle and Chief Petty Officer Wilfred Warren, of the destroyer **Contest**, were awarded the George Medal. The masters of the four other ships involved in the rescue: Alexander Bell of the **Lairdsmoor**; David Brewster of the **Eastcotes**; James Kelly of the **Pass of Drumochter**; and Hugh Angus of the **Orchy** were each created Members of the British Empire.

Almost another disaster

The inadequacy of the scuppers and the lack of freeing ports on the car deck of the **Princess Victoria** were highlighted as basic design faults. The attention of the British Transport Commission quickly turned to the **Lord Warden**, a near relation of the **Princess Victoria**, on the Straits of Dover services.

By a strange coincidence the stern doors of the **Lord Warden** (very similar to those on the **Princess Victoria**) gave way in heavy seas only ten days after the loss of the **Princess Victoria**.

Longest passage of the century

The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's **King Orry** (4) left Liverpool for Douglas at 11a.m. on Saturday 31st January 1953. After battling with the Irish Sea for eleven hours, she eventually reached Douglas Harbour at 10 p.m. that evening, the longest recorded Liverpool-Douglas passage of the century. The IOMSPCo steam turbines normally took three-and-a-half hours for the Liverpool-Douglas passage.

Sources and References

The Short Sea Route - Fraser G. MacHaffie (Stephenson, Prescot - 1975)
*The Loss of the **Princess Victoria*** - Jack Hunter (Stranraer Local History Trust, 1998)
*The Report of the Court of Inquiry investigating the loss of the **Princess Victoria***
Shipbuilding & Shipping Record - numerous articles throughout 1953

The IOMSPCo's **King Orry** at Liverpool Bar, outward bound to Douglas, on 31st January 1953. Photographed by Leslie Stephenson from the inward bound **Mona's Queen**.

THE CUNARD-WHITE STAR LINER *"QUEEN ELIZABETH"* 1938-1972

An extended narrative of the presentation given to the Society by John Shepherd on 16th January, 2003

Thirty years ago the world's largest liner, the RMS **"Queen Elizabeth"** was lying on her side in Hong Kong harbour, a burnt out hulk. This is the story of the ship from the planning stages of the late 1920s, her war operations, her amazingly successful passenger service of the late 1940s and 1950s and her demise in the mid 1960s.

"The great solid block that is the headquarters of the Cunard Steamship Company stands on the Liverpool waterfront, beaten by the wind and the rain, bleached by the sun facing the grey-brown waters of the River Mersey. This is, indeed, the very heart of a shipping city, where, standing in the windows of that building, one can see the ships of all nations passing by in procession at tide-time, almost as mundanely as the trams whose terminus is at the water's edge. Ferry boats fuss across the river, dodging between these ships, almost like children running across a busy road"

When the above lines were written in the mid 1920s the Cunard Line was operating its Southampton - New York express service with the **Mauretania** (1907), the **Aquitania** (1914) and the **Berengaria** (1913). The company had replaced a number of its smaller ships, but there were no large replacements for the express service at the planning stage.

It was not until 1926 that Cunard began thinking about replacements for the express steamers. The C.G.T. (the French Line) brought out the **Ile de France** in that year and it was known that it was planning to build a super liner (which would be the **Normandie**). The Italians put the largest motor ship in the world, the **Augustus**, into service, and the White Star Line laid down a new liner at Belfast. This was to have been the **Oceanic**, whose keel was laid at Harland & Wolff's yard in 1928. Because of the world depression, construction work had not gone very far before it was suspended.

Following the First World War, Germany was building up her passenger fleet from 'scratch' in an era of new developments. In 1928 the Germans launched the **Bremen** and the **Europa**. On her maiden voyage the **Bremen** crossed from Cherbourg to the Ambrose Channel Light Vessel off New York at an average speed of 27·91 knots, smashing completely the **Mauretania's** proud record of twenty years standing.

It was against this background that the Cunard Company began the design stage for two new ships. They would follow the natural progression of developments then taking place in marine engineering and in naval architecture. Great steps forward were being made in both these fields. For the first time, it seemed possible that two ships could be built which would maintain a weekly express service between Southampton and New York, doing the work previously done by three ships.

The trend of development in the design of Atlantic liners since the coming of steam had been towards larger and faster ships; the larger ships being more comfortable as they were less affected by the elements, while the increased speed shortened the trip.

Experience had shown that once converted to oil burning these ships could turn round in port in eighteen hours when necessary. It was reasoned, therefore, that if the passage time could be reduced to five days it would be possible for two ships on a fortnightly service to do the work of three.

The distance to be covered in a year would be about 145,000 nautical miles. So it was clear that the ships must be fast, strongly built to face North Atlantic weather, and have a sufficient reserve of power to make up any time lost through bad weather. The ships would have to run without any major repairs for eleven months of the year. Reliable boilers would have to be chosen as there would be no opportunity for boiler cleaning in port.

The speed required for the 112-hour passage on the various tracks used across the Atlantic according to the season would be between 27·61 and 28·94 knots.

If oil were adopted as the best type of fuel, Cunard would always have to bear in mind the possibility of oil shortages, and back in 1926 it had been seriously suggested that the new ships might be generally arranged so that in the case of such an emergency arising it would be possible to convert them to coal burning.

The original design for the engines was for single-reduction geared turbines, the brainchild of Sir Charles Parsons, in which a reduction gear box is placed between the turbine and the propeller shaft for the purpose of allowing both the turbines and the propeller to run at speeds of revolution suitable for maximum efficiency; high speeds of revolution are required for turbine efficiency and low speeds for propeller efficiency.

The size of the two proposed super liners was not dictated in any way by a desire on the part of Cunard to have *'Big Ships'* for their own sake. It was controlled simply by the necessity to provide sufficient passenger accommodation and propulsion to operate a two-ship weekly express service across the North Atlantic. Within that context, as Sir Percy Bates, the chairman of the Cunard Steamship Company, never tired of explaining: *"The two new vessels represent the smallest and slowest ships which can fulfil these conditions and accomplish such a regular service."*

On 28th May 1930, the Cunard Company told John Brown & Company of Clydebank that they had been selected as the builders of the first of the two new ships. The keel of Yard No. 534 was laid on 27th December 1930.

A major problem to be settled concerned the insurance of the liner while she was being built, together with the future full sea risks when she was operational. The normal insurance market would not be able to provide cover for anything like the whole cost. Therefore Cunard approached the Government and asked them if they would help to bear the additional burden.

The outcome was the Cunard (Insurance) Act, passed in December 1930. This was designed so that the Government would assume responsibilty for the risk of

the ship's insurance value over and above the amount which the market could absorb. The value of '534' for insurance purposes during building was fixed at the full price payable by Cunard, namely £4 million. The market could only assume £2,700,000 of the risk.

In May 1930 Cunard began to make tentative enquiries about the possibility of dry-docking facilities at Southampton for its two new super liners. It was pointed out to the Southern Railway Company, the owners of Southampton Docks, that by 1933 a dry dock capable of taking a vessel 1,075 feet in length would be needed. The dock would have to be 124 feet wide at its entrance and have a minimum depth of 40 feet. The railway company expressed the view that the projected dry dock could not be started for some eight to ten years and that it would take between four and five years to complete. Sir Percy Bates told the Southern Railway Board that it was a question of *'no dry dock, no ship'*.

Following this ultimatum the Southern Railway decided to go ahead with the construction of a dry dock 1,200 feet in length, 135 feet wide and 48 feet deep, with a wide area outside the entrance for the ship to swing. The dock could be emptied of its 180,000 tons of water in four hours. On 26th July 1933, King George V and Queen Mary sailed into the new dock in the royal yacht **Victoria and Albert** to perform the opening ceremony.

Across the Channel at Cherbourg the French authorities had proved much more amenable. They went ahead with plans for new quay accommodation and worked amicably with Cunard officials. Cherbourg was chosen as the French port for the new ships as it had deeper water and a larger harbour than Le Havre. From the passengers' point of view it had the disadvantage of being 100 miles further away from Paris than Le Havre.

In January 1931 agreement was reached with the New York Port Authority for a thousand-foot long pier at a rent of £48,000 a year.

On Thursday 10th December 1931 the Directors of the Cunard Steamship Company gathered to look at the provisional figures for the year's trading. For the first time for very many years the Company would not have a net profit. The Directors were faced with the almost unbelievable fact that the gross revenue of the Company for the year was calculated to be nearly £2·5 million down on 1930.

The Directors decided that work must stop on No.534 - the **Queen Mary** - at noon on Friday 11th December 1931.

Neville Chamberlain, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was convinced that faced with the growing competition from foreign liner companies there was not room for two big British companies acting in opposition to each other in the North Atlantic trade. He wrote in his private diary: *"My own aim has always been to use the '534' as a lever for bringing about a merger between the Cunard and White Star Lines, thus establishing one strong British company in the North Atlantic trade."*

It was Chamberlain's firm belief that the British Government should guarantee a building loan to the Cunard Company on the condition that the two companies merged into one united front against the foreign competition. The Cunard

policy of the two-ship express service was thoroughly sound and at the same time economic. Cunard's finances were in a very strong state whilst those of White Star were very poor. Chamberlain was also convinced of the tremendous importance from a prestige point of view of new large British ships steaming into New York harbour.

It was proposed that the Cunard Steamship Company and the Oceanic Steamship Company (the White Star Line) would both sell their North Atlantic fleets and assets, including '534', to a new company to be called Cunard-White Star Limited. The Government then proposed to lend the new company £9½ million which would be divided into three portions:

- £3 million to complete '534'.
- £1½ million working capital.
- £5 million for a future sister ship.

Neville Chamberlain now had the difficult task of steering the North Atlantic Shipping (Advances) Bill through the tortuous channels of Parliament. Eventually both the House of Commons and the House of Lords voted and the Bill was passed on 27th March 1934. One week later work began again on '534'. The **Queen Mary** (as '534' became after all the secrecy) was launched nearly six months later on 26th September 1934.

Under the terms of the Cunard Insurance Act, Cunard was obliged to start work on the second ship before the Act expired in 1936. From the outset the intention had been to operate a two-ship service on the North Atlantic. On 25th November 1935 Sir Percy Bates wrote to Swan Hunter, Vickers Armstrong, John Brown and Cammell Laird advising them that, although his Board had not reached any final decision, they might decide to build a vessel to run alongside the **Queen Mary**. With White Star now under Cunard's wing, Harland & Wolff at Belfast were also invited to tender, a position not previously open to them.

In writing to Cammell Laird, Sir Percy said that he was not entirely confident that they could deal with such a large ship and that in particular they might not be able to move the ship into their fitting-out basin. Harland & Wolff found itself in a peculiar situation. The wording of the Cunard Insurance Act provided for the construction of two vessels in Great Britain which precluded the Belfast yard from tendering as Belfast, although in the U.K., was not in Great Britain.

The construction and launch of No.552 - the *Queen Elizabeth*

In May 1936 tenders were opened from John Brown, Cammell Laird, Vickers Armstrong and Swan Hunter. The Clydebank yard was awarded the contract with a tender of £4,293,000. The Cammell Laird tender had been £4,863,000. On 27th May the Clydebank men were told they had the order.

Towards the end of June 1936, in reply to a question in the House of Commons, the Chancellor Neville Chamberlain said: *"I have received a request from the Cunard-White Star Company for authority to use the sum available under the*

North Atlantic Shipping (Advances) Act for the construction of a second ship ..... I have agreed in principle." The £5 million was released on 28th July.

Early in July 1936 Stephen Pigott (the managing director of John Brown) wrote to Sir Percy Bates saying that Yard No.535 had been reserved for the new ship. (The **Queen Mary** had been ship number 534). On 11th July Bates replied, asking Pigott to *'think of another good number'*. The reason was the Chancellor of the Exchequer's apprehension at what might be asked of him by his critics when making the announcement of the order in the House, namely *'that this tender business was all a farce and that the order was in Brown's pocket from the start'*.

The contract was signed on 6th October 1936 and the keel of ship number 552 was laid on 4th December. Work on the **Queen Elizabeth** proceeded rapidly and by February 1937 Colvilles Limited were supplying steel to Clydebank for this ship at the rate of 500 tons per week.

Cunard was determined that the new ship would be based on the latest revolutionary developments that had taken place in naval architecture and marine engineering. Sir Percy Bates stressed that *"she would be no slavish copy of her sister."* The **Queen Mary's** arch rival on the North Atlantic - the French Line's superb **Normandie** - was studied in detail.

The **Normandie** had one edge on the **Queen Mary** in being aesthetically more pleasing through her revolutionary streamlining and lack of visible deck 'clutter'. Costing almost twice as much as the *'Mary'*, the French liner was also that more lavish in her first-class apartments.

Sir Percy Bates had wisely waited for anticipated developments in boiler design to occur. As a result only twelve boilers were needed for the **Queen Elizabeth**, rather than the twenty-four in the *'Mary'*. Just two funnels were needed on the new ship instead of the three on the *'Mary'* and these were self-supporting, having their stays on the inside of the stack. The prominent square ventilation cowls on the *'Mary'* were also dispensed with on the new ship: fans of a newer design were installed inside the ship.

Another obvious difference between the two ships was the lack of a forward well deck on the new **Queen Elizabeth**. This had been included on the *'Mary'* to spend the force of any heavy sea that might break over the bow before the water could damage the superstructure. This anticipated event had never occurred and was considered very unlikely to occur, so the well space was plated in and used for additional accommodation.

The **Queen Elizabeth's** bow, unlike that of the *'Mary'*, was heavily raked. This enabled a third anchor, the bower, to be carried allowing the anchor to fall well clear of the stem. This rake also gave the *'Elizabeth'* a longer overall length: 1,031 feet as against the 1,019 feet of the **Queen Mary**.

The new ship was constructed on No.4 slipway by using 5-ton derrick cranes and a 10-ton tower crane. Heavy castings were erected by using derrick poles or sheer legs. Steam locomotives delivered the steel plates, but lighter items were brought by horse-drawn lorries.

To ensure that good progress was maintained during construction the General and Shipyard managers met all the departmental head foremen at the gangway every Friday. This 'Glee Party', as it was known, then toured the vessel deck by deck. Any problems that were encountered were resolved by the foremen concerned by sending in extra men to assist temporarily with the work that had fallen behind and to bring the construction plan back to its timetable. A skilled craftsman working on the **Queen Elizabeth** earned £3.2s.0d for a 47-hour week.

As an indication of the worsening European situation, the keel of the Royal Navy's newest battleship, HMS **Duke of York**, was laid on 5th May 1937 on the slipway adjoining the **Queen Elizabeth**.

As a triumphant fanfare to the launch of the **Queen Elizabeth**, the *'Mary'* captured the Blue Riband in August 1938 with a speed of 31·69 knots, a record that would stand for fourteen years. Cunard always refused to acknowledge the recently introduced Hales Trophy as a tangible symbol of the achievement.

Four years and one day after the launch of the **Queen Mary**, on Tuesday 27th September 1938, Queen Elizabeth, who was Queen Mary's daughter-in-law, consort of her son King George VI, stood at the head of the same slipway on which the **Queen Mary** had been built. She was there to launch the second of Cunard's superliners - the **Queen Elizabeth.**

King George VI had remained in London at the request of the Prime Minister. War seemed to be very much a likelihood on that September day, but the King had sent a message which Queen Elizabeth incorporated into her speech. However, the launching ceremony, which was being broadcast to the nation by radio, did not go without incident.

As the moment arrived for the launch the **Queen Elizabeth** was delicately balanced on her slipway and for many hours previously, because of the removal of most of the supporting timbers, an almost imperceptible movement had already taken place. The new liner had a weight on the slipway of 39,400 tons. After the formal speeches had been completed there was a pause as high tide and slack water were awaited. Suddenly there was a crash of breaking timbers and No.552, on her own volition, started on her un-named journey towards the Clyde.

At around this time the Queen's microphone failed but, with great presence of mind, Her Majesty quietly and almost unheard by those around her said: *"I name this ship **Queen Elizabeth** and wish success to all who sail in her."* Then, with the same pair of gold scissors that Queen Mary had used to perform the launching ceremony of her namesake, she cut the red, white and blue ribbon which released the bottle of Empire wine to break, just in time, against the liner's accelerating bow.

The **Queen Elizabeth** was the culmination of Sir Percy Bates' own initiative; the fulfilment of a long cherished dream held by many shipowners: that a weekly transatlantic ferry service should be maintained by two ships rather than by three, or even four (sometimes mismatched) vessels that had previously - and expensively - been required.

After her launch the **Queen Elizabeth** was towed round to her fitting out berth where she would remain for the next 16½ months. A barrier was then constructed around the hull to shut her off from the river and to prevent the Clyde-borne silt building up around and under the hull. For almost five years John Brown & Company had carried on a correspondence with the Clyde Navigation Trust dealing with the safe navigation of the liner on her one and only journey to the open sea. This would involve a great deal of dredging and the removal of rock outcrops that might hazard the ship's safe progress. The river was also widened in places, especially at Dalmuir where the **Queen Mary** had grounded for many anxious seconds as she proceeded to the Tail of the Bank.

As 1939 wore on, men and materials were taken away from the liner as Admiralty work took priority and the pace of work on board slowed down.

When considering the comfort of those on board, Cunard had decided against the installation of stabilisers. *'The Times'* in its special Cunard-White Star Supplement of 27th September 1938 (the date of the *'Elizabeth's'* launch) said that: *"no practicable installation of this type* [gyro-stabilizers] *could possibly be of the slightest use in vessels the size of the **Queen Mary** and **Queen Elizabeth** ..... to date the safest and easiest crossings are secured by sheer size, coupled with a good form design, bilge keels of practicable dimensions and careful experienced seamanship. The stability of the **Queen Mary** has proved ample at all times to make the ship as safe and comfortable as it is possible for any vessel to be when passing through an Atlantic storm."* The truth was rather different, as the **Queen Mary** had a long ponderous roll in a heavy beam sea which was only cured by the installation of two sets of stabilizers in the late 1950s.

On 22nd August 1939 it was announced that the maiden voyage of the **Queen Elizabeth** was scheduled to leave Southampton on 24th April 1940. However war was declared just twelve days later.

The 'secret' maiden voyage from the Clyde to New York

Undoubtedly the incomplete **Queen Elizabeth** was the greatest dilemma facing John Brown's on the outbreak of war. The ship sat like a giant beacon in the middle of Clydebank, visible for miles around. There was now no hope of her entering service as the jewel of the British merchant marine. During the first weekend of the war her newly erected forward funnel, resplendent in Cunard red and black, was hastily overpainted in grey. At first it was proposed that work on the *'Elizabeth'* would gradually be brought to a standstill as men transferred to warship work. Sir Percy Bates, dismayed at this prospect, wrote to the Chief of Naval Staff, Rear Admiral Burrough, for a decision on the ship's future.

Questions were soon asked in Parliament as to what possible use the two Cunard leviathans could be in wartime. Suggestions ranged from laying up the *'Elizabeth'* in a sheltered Scottish loch to selling her to the Americans. The two ships' real potential had yet to be appreciated. Churchill, as First Lord of the Admiralty, expressed his fears for the safety of the **Queen Elizabeth** and felt that she would fall

victim to Nazi bombers in her exposed site at Clydebank. On 6th February 1940 he ordered that the liner should leave the Clyde at the earliest possible date and *'remain away from the British Isles for as long as this order remains in force.'* This would also free the fitting out berth which was urgently required for the **Duke of York.**

The **Queen Mary** had left Southampton on 30th August 1939 on a liner voyage to New York with 2,328 passengers and remained there after her safe arrival, lying alongside Cunard's Pier 90.

The Clyde Navigation Trust indicated that the dredged channel in the Clyde would not be ready before the end of February 1940. In that year there would only be two days on which a high enough tide would be available to move the **Queen Elizabeth.** The first day was Monday 26th February and just after noon, escorted by six tugs, the new ship left the fitting out basin at Clydebank and proceeded down the River Clyde to an anchorage at the Tail of the Bank. It took about an hour for the tugs to manoeuvre the liner's head downstream towards the sea and gradually a crowd of several hundred gathered to watch the **Queen Elizabeth** slip quietly, almost furtively, by. To many, her appearance must have come as a bit of a surprise for no longer was she in pristine Cunard paintwork of black hull and white superstructure, but she had been completely repainted in dull uniform Admiralty grey.

The **Queen Elizabeth** had also been fitted with four miles of rubber coated copper cable wound around her enormous hull. This was known as a 'degaussing' coil. It was named after Dr Gauss, a nineteenth century expert on magnetism, whose theories had enabled the Germans to produce their new lethal magnetic mines. The object of fitting the coil (one of the first to be so fitted) was hopefully to render the ship immune from magnetic mines by neutralising the ship's magnetic field.

The following afternoon, Tuesday 27th February, the **Queen Elizabeth** was officially handed over to Cunard-White Star at 3 p.m. as she lay at anchor at the Tail of the Bank - untested and untried. Over the next three days the ship took on eighteen of her twenty-six lifeboats. These had been floated down the Clyde in order to help reduce the liner's weight and thus reduce her draught during that short critical journey.

Just over 400 crew (mostly from the **Aquitania**) had joined the **Queen Elizabeth** at Clydebank, under the command of Captain Jack Townley, signing articles for a short coastwise voyage which would ostensibly terminate at Southampton where a hurriedly prepared dry-docking plan had been received by the port authority.

At a boat drill on 27th February the assembled crew was told of Churchill's order that the ship was to leave British waters. This meant that the crew had to re-sign on foreign articles. They demanded £50 per man danger money-cum-bonus but were given £30 plus £5 per month extra pay. Those crew members who, for family or other reasons, declined to sign the new articles were taken off the **Queen Elizabeth,** sworn to secrecy and subsequently spent many hours, virtually interned, on board the Southampton tender **Romsey** in a nearby loch. Not until the *'Elizabeth'* had sailed on 2nd March 1940 was it considered safe to release them.

Steam was raised on all boilers on 1st March. The King's Messenger was awaited as he would bring the order to sail. He arrived at seven in the morning on

Saturday 2nd March with sealed orders which were only to be opened when the **Queen Elizabeth** was out at sea. The new ship weighed her bower anchor half an hour later and with a mean draught of 37 feet 9 inches slipped through the anti-submarine boom that stretched across the Clyde between the Gantock Rocks and the Cloch Lighthouse at 8.15 a.m. Over a two-hour period engine revolutions were increased from 100 (17 knots) to 154 (26 knots). When a speed of 25 knots had been reached and maintained for one hour, the escorting warships were informed that the 'engine trials' had been satisfactory and that there was no objection to their standing down. At eleven o'clock that evening Captain Townley opened his sealed orders and the *'Elizabeth's'* destination was at last known - New York.

Captain Duncan Cameron, the Southampton pilot, was still on board. Cunard had insisted that he sail with the ship on her supposed coastal voyage as part of a ruse to throw enemy agents off the scent as to her actual destination.

Five days, nine hours and 3,127 nautical miles after leaving the Tail of the Bank the **Queen Elizabeth** passed the Ambrose Channel Light Vessel off New York and picked up her New York pilot. She docked on the north side of Pier 90 at 5 p.m. on the afternoon of Thursday 7th March 1940. Both Queen Elizabeth and Churchill sent messages of congratulation to Captain Townley. The **Queen Mary** was berthed on the south side of Pier 90, and on the north side of Pier 88 lay the French Line's **Normandie**. The world's three largest liners were together for the first and, as events were to prove, the last time.

A fortnight later, on 21st March 1940, the **Queen Mary** slipped quietly away: her work as a troop transport was about to begin.

The majority of the **Queen Elizabeth's** crew left for home on Cunard's **Scythia**, leaving just 143 men to form a skeleton crew. On the orders of the neutral American government (in accordance with the Geneva Convention) only maintenance or construction work of a non-belligerent nature could be carried out on the liners moored along the New York waterfront. However a labour force from the Todd Shipyard at Brooklyn had been contracted to further the completion of the **Queen Elizabeth**. Wooden decks had to be caulked and electric cables connected.

The new *Queen Elizabeth* goes to war

Towards the end of 1940 additional crewmen arrived on board the **Queen Elizabeth**, having travelled by Halifax, N.S. The ship's company was brought up to 465 and at 3.30 p.m. on 13th November 1940 the *'Elizabeth'*, heavily laden with fuel and water, slipped away from New York and headed south.

The **Queen Elizabeth** had now been in the water for over two years since her launch on 27th September 1938. She urgently needed to be drydocked to have the remains of her launch gear removed from her bottom plates which would then have to be cleaned and painted. There were only five dry docks in the world which could accommodate the *'Elizabeth'*. The King George V dock at Southampton, specially built for the *'Queens'* was unusable because it was within range of Nazi bombers; the use of the American dock at Bayonne, New Jersey, 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 left only Singapore and the **Queen Elizabeth** would have to make two stops to take on fuel and water on her voyage from New York. She had been designed for five-day transatlantic passages, not for long voyages. The first stop was at Trinidad where she rendezvoused with an oil tanker five miles off Port of Spain. After that she sailed to the British naval base at Simonstown, to the south of Cape Town.

The **Queen Elizabeth** arrived in Singapore three weeks after leaving New York for a seven-week conversion into a troopship with accommodation for 5,000 men. Whilst in Singapore many of the crew frequented a pub called the *'Pig and Whistle'*. The name of this establishment so caught their fancy that the crew bars on all Cunard liners were subsequently named in its honour.

After leaving Singapore the **Queen Elizabeth** headed for Sydney. More than a year after the two *'Queens'* had last met in New York, they sailed in company for the very first time in April 1941. The *'Elizabeth'* carried 5,600 Australian troops to bolster the defences of Egypt against the enemy's incursions into North Africa. Although the *'Queens'* could easily manage 27 or 28 knots they were reduced to the convoy's common speed of around 20 knots. On the return southbound voyage the ships carried Allied wounded, internees or enemy prisoners-of-war; stopping off at Ceylon.

Security was paramount at all times, but one particular breach was recalled by Dr Maguire, the surgeon on the **Queen Elizabeth.** It occurred one day out of Ceylon and Dr Maguire remembered waking suddenly because the engines were slowing down. He went on deck and saw three great ships - the two *'Queens'* and the **Ile de France** - stationary. They were huge sitting targets in a hostile ocean. The cruiser HMAS **Canberra** had lowered a pinnace which was cruising calmly around collecting bags of mail from each. Dr Maguire recalled that the cruiser HMAS **Sydney** had been sunk by the German **Kormoran** without a single survivor a few days before, not far from the present position. Dr Maguire says he never did find out just who was responsible for that risky mid-ocean mail collecting. It was certainly the last time that the *'Queens'* ever stopped at sea in war time.

With Japan and the United States entering the war after the debacle of Pearl Harbour on 7th December 1941, the **Queen Elizabeth** was laid up at Sydney for seven weeks. The Pacific was too dangerous for her with both German and Japanese submarines on the prowl. The Australians also needed what was left of their depleted army for their country's own defence in case of Japanese invasion.

It was eventually decided to send the **Queen Elizabeth** to Canada for drydocking at Esquimalt. (The Singapore facility was no longer available). A large amount of tropical growth that was fouling the liner's bottom plates needed to be removed; it was estimated that the growth reduced her speed by two knots or more. Two stops would be required for refuelling and watering. The first was New Zealand and the second was at Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas Group of islands.

After Esquimalt the **Queen Elizabeth** sailed for San Francisco and, on arrival, briefly ran aground near the Golden Gate Bridge. During a conference on

board, the U.S. military was told how many men had been transported on each Sydney-to-Suez voyage. The Americans were characteristically amazed and within five days had removed the Australian hammocks and bunks and in their place has fitted fold-down 'Standee' beds, made of tubular steel and easy to clean canvas webbing. These were installed two, three or five to a tier in every available space and the **Queen Elizabeth** left San Francisco in a small convoy bound for Sydney with eight thousand troops on board which were needed to bolster Australia's depleted defences until some of her own troops could be recalled from the Middle East.

After disembarking the U.S. troops at Sydney on 6th April 1942, the **Queen Elizabeth** remained in port for thirteen days before sailing for Fremantle on 19th April. From there she sailed to Simonstown (Cape Town) where German prisoners of war boarded, heading for internment in the United States. After a call at Rio de Janeiro the *'Elizabeth'* finally arrived in New York to begin what became known as the 'G.I. Shuttle', her first such voyage leaving New York for the Clyde on 5th June 1942.

A week after her arrival at Gourock, the **Queen Elizabeth** sailed for Suez on 17th June (via Freetown and Simonstown)with reinforcements for the British Eighth Army to help stem Rommel's advance towards the Canal. She was back in New York on 19th August to begin her regular G.I. Shuttle work in earnest.

The **Queen Elizabeth** was by now equipped to carry 15,000 troops although the numbers were reduced to 12,000 in the winter months. The troops would board the *'Elizabeth'* at Pier 90 at New York during the late evening hours under cover of darkness after being transported to the pier by either ferry or bus. On boarding each G.I. was given a coloured disc or card (red, white or blue) and this indicated the section of the ship in which he must remain during the voyage. Another essential rule was that each man, regardless of rank, should wear or carry his lifebelt when outside his cabin at all times.

The safety of the troops during these solo high-speed dashes across the Atlantic was not considered to be paramount in the minds of those at the top. Some 10,000 men could, perhaps, be carried in safety according to the lifeboat and liferaft capacity of the ship but it was considered that the extra 5,000 men who were carried in summer and not provided for in the life saving equipment were worth the risk, based on the *'Elizabeth's'* existing records of speed and reliability.

For the two meals a day that were provided there were six sittings, each of forty-five minutes. Breakfast was from 6.30 a.m. to 11 a.m. and dinner from 3 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. Sir James Bisset was in command of the **Queen Elizabeth** for many of these 'shuttle' voyages. Following his retirement, Sir James was in great demand as a lecturer and one day was telling some schoolchildren of the days when 2,000 lbs of bacon and 32,000 eggs were cooked for breakfast every day. When he was asked for questions, one boy shot up his arm and said: *"How big were the frying pans?"*

In November 1942, the **Queen Elizabeth** was involved in an incident that still remains the subject of much speculation. The U 704, under the command of Kapitan Horst Kessler, was wallowing in a Force 8 gale off the west coast of Ireland before returning south to base in France. Early in the afternoon of 9th November a

large, two-funnelled steamer was sighted, some six to seven miles away. The submarine dived and the captain identified the ship as the **Queen Elizabeth**. Four torpedoes were fired and the U boat followed their course. One detonation was heard. Apparently the torpedo had exploded well away from the ship. Captain Bissett said, after the war, that an explosion was heard *"and we increased speed to 31 knots without any trouble."*

The steamer observed by Kessler had been travelling at speed. She then stopped for a few minutes before proceeding on her way. Kessler has always maintaind that the ship was the **Queen Elizabeth**. All the Cunard records from that period have apparently been lost.

However, to stop the **Queen Elizabeth** would take a considerable time. The superheated steam needed to be cooled to normal working temperature before slowing the ship could even be considered. This would take at least an hour plus many miles and this would not have allowed her to stop within Kessler's observation.

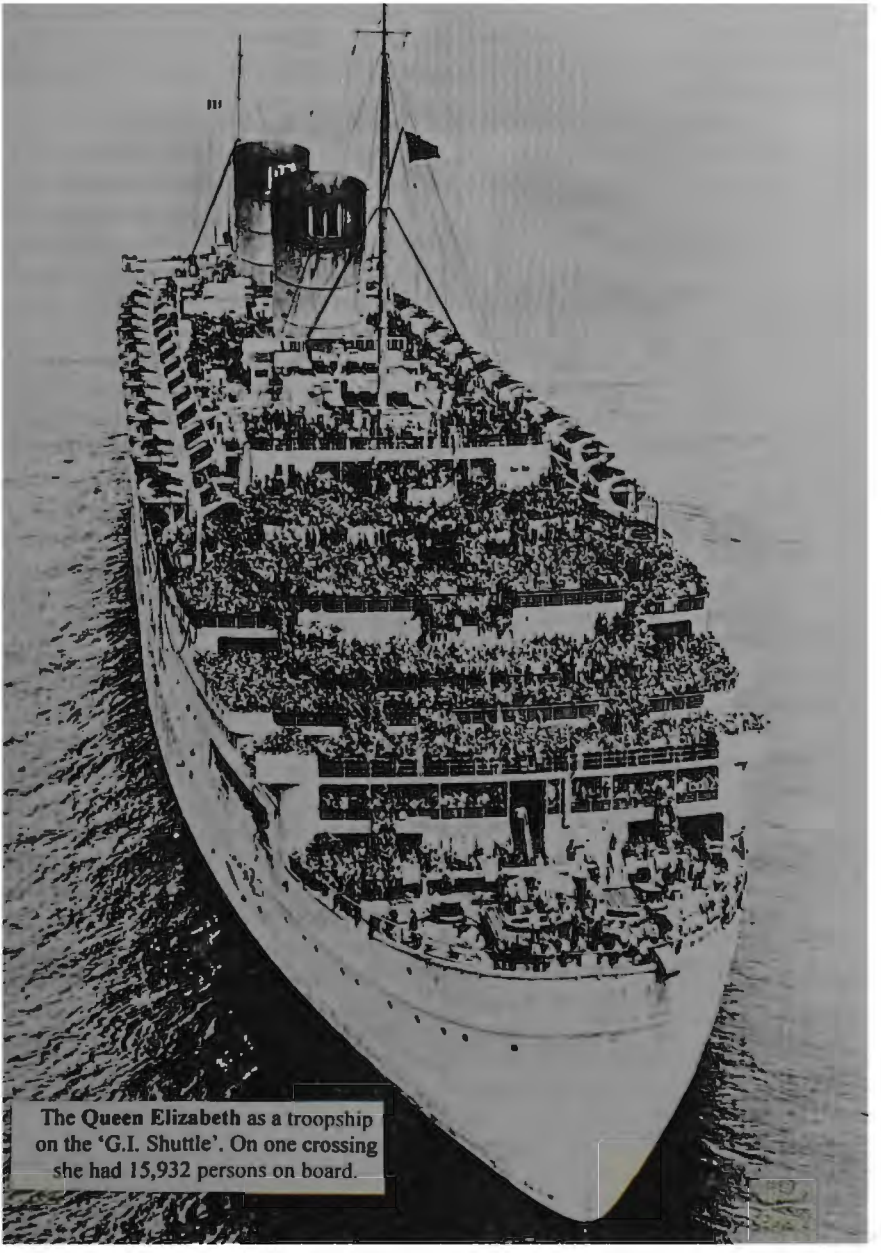
Altogether the **Queen Elizabeth** made 35 round voyages on the North Atlantic on the 'G.I. Shuttle'. During this time, and for a while after, she was under American control through a lend-lease agreement. She did, however, remain all the while under Cunard management with British officers and crew. Throughout the 'G.I. Shuttle' the two *'Queens'* were never in the same port at the same time, and the schedules avoided either ship lying at anchor at Gourock during the period of full moon.

Of all the arguments used in the United States to support the demand for subsidies for American merchant shipping, none has been advanced with greater potency than that America had to rely on foreign ships in the Second World War, and could not afford to do so again. This argument was buttressed by the statement that the British Government charged the United States for transporting American troops in the **Queen Mary** and the **Queen Elizabeth**. Sums amounting to $100 million were freely bandied about in the columns of newspapers as the cost of carrying G.I.s to and from the theatres of war. Denials of this speculation made by British shipping representatives were not accepted. It can be appreciated that the jibe that Great Britain charged $100 a head to take soldiers to the battlefields of Europe was calculated to be extremely hurtful to Anglo-American friendship.

In a lighter vein, it should not be forgotten that it was a G.I. being transported (not for $100) in the **Queen Elizabeth** who, in a burst of enthusiasm, said to one of the officers: *"Why can't you British build a ship like this?"*

Between April 1941 and March 1945 the **Queen Elizabeth** steamed 492,635 miles and carried 811,324 'passengers'. The highest number that she had carried on any one voyage was 15,932 passengers and crew, but the record for the highest number ever carried in one ship goes to the **Queen Mary** with 16,683.

After V.E. Day it fell to the *'Queens'* to transport back to the United States many of the hundreds of thousands of the G.I.s they had brought to Europe and, in the case of the **Queen Mary**, to transport 25,000 American servicemen's 'War Brides' and their children to their new home country. And so, on 24th June 1945, the **Queen**



The Queen Elizabeth as a troopship on the 'G.I. Shuttle'. On one crossing she had 15,932 persons on board.

Elizabeth left Gourock with her first load of returning G.I.s. Their welcome in New York was, to say the least, tumultuous. The **Queen Elizabeth** left Gourock for the last time as a troopship on 7th August 1945, flying flags which spelled out: *'Many thanks. Gourock farewell'*.

A fortnight later, on Monday 20th August 1945, the **Queen Elizabeth** arrived in Southampton for the first time - four and a half years late. During the turn-round in New York on her second G.I. Shuttle voyage from Southampton, Commodore James Bisset had the *'Elizabeth's'* wartime grey funnels repainted in Cunard's red and black. The result brightened up the ship considerably after the years of drabness. From 22nd October 1945 it was the **Queen Elizabeth's** job to repatriate thousands of Canadian soldiers. Four days later she arrived at Halifax, N.S. with 12,517 passengers and 864 crew. However, Commodore Bisset was not happy with the location of the quay alongside which the *'Elizabeth'* was berthed and considered it too exposed should a strong south-east wind spring up; the resulting swell would cause the ship to range back and forth, possibly breaking her moorings. In spite of the understandable Canadian protestations that they wanted their soldiers to step directly on to Canadian soil, Commodore Bisset recommended that future repatriations should be to either New York or Boston.

On 6th March 1946, when the **Queen Elizabeth** arrived back in Southampton, the Ministry of War Transport announced that the ship would be the first ocean-going passenger steamer to be released from His Majesty's Government's service. To a post-war Britain she was to become what the *'Mary'* had represented to the country after the Great Depression - a national symbol of recovery from adversity. For the **Queen Elizabeth**, the war was over. Sir Percy Bates said that he liked to think that the *'Queens'* had, by their troop carrying capacities, shortened the war by a whole year. So much for the cynics who, in the early days of the war, had prophesied that the *'Queens'* would lie uselessly alongside their safe pier in New York for the duration of the war!

It was agreed that the **Queen Elizabeth** should spend twelve weeks on the Clyde (at her old wartime anchorage off Gourock) plus ten weeks at Berth 101 in Southampton and in the King George V dry dock. Half her crew was paid off and went on leave whilst around four hundred remained with the ship for maintenance, fire watch and to sail the ship on the coastwise voyage to the Clyde.

The **Queen Elizabeth** left Southampton on 30th March 1946 and arrived and anchored off Gourock the following day. It was out of the question for the *'Elizabeth'* to sail up to John Brown's shipyard at Clydebank, so it was planned to ferry men and equipment out to the liner as she lay at anchor at the Tail of the Bank. At the end of her time at Gourock one thousand Clydebankers ('Bankies') sailed south with the ship to alleviate the acute shortage of local skilled labour at Southampton.

Many of the **Queen Elizabeth's** fittings had been placed ashore in New York, Sydney and Singapore when she was converted into a troopship and all these globally scattered items had to be returned to Southampton for refurbishment, assembly, sorting and fitting. Works of art were also renovated by the original artists.

On 7th August 1946 the **Queen Elizabeth** entered the King George V dry dock where her 140-ton rudder was inspected. Her propellers were removed and cleaned and the underwater hull cleaned and painted. The anchors were examined and each link of her anchor chains painted. In total the reconversion work cost £1 million.

Sea trials and the start of passenger service

The **Queen Elizabeth** was ready for her trials in early October and sailed for the Clyde on the sixth of the month. The maiden voyage had been arranged to depart from Southampton on 16th October. Sir Percy Bates told Commodore Bisset: *"We do not expect you to attempt to make speed records either on the trials or on the maiden voyage. The **Queen Mary** still holds the Blue Riband with her 1938 eastbound crossing at 31·69 knots, and that is quite good enough."*

Queen Elizabeth and her daughters Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret joined the **Queen Elizabeth** for the trials on 7th October. They were ferried out to the liner on the Clyde steamer **Queen Mary II**. At 11.15 a.m. the **Queen Elizabeth** weighed anchor and was abeam the Cumbraes an hour later. At 3 p.m. the liner commenced her northward run on the Arran measured mile and covered the course in 2 minutes 1·3 seconds which gave a speed of 29·71 knots. A southbound run produced a speed of 29·75 knots. At 3.50 p.m. the Cumbraes were once again abeam and the **Queen Elizabeth** anchored at the Tail of the Bank at 5 p.m.

The following day, 8th October, four hundred guests of the company boarded the **Queen Elizabeth** for the return passage to Southampton. The *'Elizabeth'* sailed at 8 p.m. The following morning a small coastal collier was seen in the Irish Sea wallowing along at 6 knots. The small vessel's skipper hoisted a flag signal: *"What ship is that?"* As required by law, Commodore Bisset obligingly raised the Cunarder's recognition flags 'G B S S'. The **Queen Elizabeth** docked at Southampton at 11 a.m. on 10th October.

In all 2,228 passengers had booked passage on the **Queen Elizabeth's** maiden voyage. Sailing day, Wednesday 16th October 1946 was marred by the death of the Cunard-White Star chairman Sir Percy Bates on the previous afternoon. Promptly at 2 p.m. the liner pulled away from the quayside. There was no call at Cherbourg: the ship was fully booked from Southampton and much work still needed to be done to make the harbour at the French port safe again.

The **Queen Elizabeth** encountered a severe storm on 18th October, the day on which Commodore Bisset had arranged a memorial service for Sir Percy Bates.

Because of a strike by New York tugboat men there was a possibility that the **Queen Elizabeth** would be diverted to Halifax. However, because of the prestigious nature of the *'Elizabeth's'* maiden arrival at New York as a commercial passenger liner, Commodore Bisset decided to press on and dock the ship at Pier 90 without the aid of tugs if need be. The **Queen Elizabeth** passed the Ambrose Channel Light Vessel off New York just before dawn on 21st October after a passage of 4 days, 16 hours and 18 minutes at an average speed of 27·99 knots.

On 14th April 1947 the **Queen Elizabeth** was homeward bound and after leaving Cherbourg encountered thick fog in the Channel. Cunard's appropriated pilot, Captain Bowyer, was not available as he was 'fogbound' on another vessel. And so rota pilot F.G. Dawson boarded the *'Elizabeth'* off the Nab Tower. He had no experience of handling ships as large at the *'Queens'* and off Calshot at the entrance to Southampton Water the **Queen Elizabeth** ran aground. Her master, Captain Ford, had attempted to avert the incident by ordering half astern on the starboard engines, but it was too late. Her propellers thrashed the shallow water into billowing clouds of yellow and black as sand and mud were churned up from the sea bed. On the bridge there was the faint sensation of a slight, lurching jolt which some on board never even felt. Captain Ford then stopped the engines to avoid sucking silt into the underwater inlets. The **Queen Elizabeth** was embedded in mud to a point just below the bridge. By coincidence she had grounded in almost the same geographical spot as the **Aquitania**, ten years previously almost to the day.

A signal for assistance was sent and - within the hour - company, port and salvage officials were on board and in conference with Captain Ford. The tender **Romsey** which had brought the officials out to the stricken ship made a solo attempt at pulling the liner off the mud, but the towline parted under the unequal strain. By six o'clock the next morning thirteen tugs had arrived from Southampton, Portsmouth Dockyard and Poole. Only a little fuel remained after the transatlantic crossing but a barge moved alongside to take it off if necessary. The salvage attempt at the first suitable high tide failed and the *'Elizabeth'* had to wait until 17th April when at 8.40 p.m. she was finally pulled off the mud. There was still thick fog in Southampton Water and the **Queen Elizabeth** returned to Cowes Roads to anchor overnight. The following morning, 18th April 1947, she steamed into Southampton - fifty hours late!

Other than silt found in some inlets, there was very little evidence of the grounding. Internally the condensers and oil cooler inlets were cleared of shells and gravel.

The **Queen Mary's** post-war refit was completed in the summer of 1947 and on 1st August she joined her larger sister to commence the long-delayed two-ship Atlantic express ferry service for which they had both been built.

During almost two decades following the end of the war, young men in Britain were 'called up' for two years of National Service in the armed forces. An alternative was the option of serving in the Merchant Navy, and the prospect of earning £2 a week in the forces or being well paid in the merchant service proved to be a one-sided choice for many youngsters.

The **Queen Elizabeth** never enjoyed the same affection that the Cunard men held for the **Queen Mary**, being described as the 'colder' of the two ships. She was nonetheless a popular ship. The loyalty that she was given by her crew, the lifeblood of any ship, was reflected in the service given to her passengers who patronised the ship in vast numbers time and time again. The popularity of the two *'Queens'* meant enormous profits for the Cunard Line and the two ships repaid their original investments many times over. They became an establishment, a familiar sight to those

who saw them arriving and departing, and a way of life to the crew who sailed them. All this seemingly had no end, but this complacency would be destroyed completely during the 1960s.

On 28th July 1948 King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, accompanied by their younger daughter Princess Margaret Rose, were received on board the **Queen Elizabeth**, the flagship of Great Britain's merchant fleet. The purpose of the visit was to enable Queen Elizabeth to present the ship with her personal standard, to be framed and hung in the first-class restaurant. But the prime reason for the day's visit was for the Queen to unveil a portrait of herself. Originally vetoing the idea of allowing her portrait to be hung in the ship when the liner was launched, Queen Elizabeth had now relented. Her brother, the Hon. David Bowes-Lyon, had recently been appointed to the Board of Cunard and had arranged for Sir Oswald Birley to paint the portrait which was hung in the first-class main lounge.

On 1st January 1950 the Cunard Steamship Company took over its wholly-owned subsidiary, Cunard-White Star. This cumbersome organisation had involved double accounting and separate staffing. The only signs of White Star which remained were the buff funnels of the **Britannic** and the **Georgic**.

The *'Queens'* experienced many difficulties when navigating the Solent due to yacht manoeuvres. On August Bank Holiday, 1950, a yacht cruised across the fairway in the track of the **Queen Elizabeth**. There was no one on deck, but when the yacht was hailed an old lady appeared from below. On being told that she should not leave the yacht's helm unattended she shouted back that she had gone below to boil some milk! The lady then tied her yacht up to a buoy (a forbidden practice carrying a heavy fine), and two days later Southampton Harbour Board received a letter from the lady alleging that her yacht had been 'interfered with' by the **Queen Elizabeth**.

On another occasion the *'Elizabeth'* had to go full astern because a yacht crossed her path, and as a result the liner's stern touched a mud bank. There was a great rumpus and the yacht concerned was traced. The offender turned out to be a retired rear-admiral with a D.S.O.

Some interesting forecasts concerning the type of machinery likely to be installed in ships of the future were given by Mr F.A. Crowe of John Brown & Company in June 1951. In considering the possibilities of nuclear energy for ship propulsion, Mr Crowe stated that an output of 1,000 kW could be obtained with a consumption of about one gramme of uranium a day. On this basis the consumption of uranium required to propel the **Queen Elizabeth** from Southampton to New York would be 1·25 lbs. But when it was remembered that the cost of uranium was about £125,000 per pound, the picture was not so bright.

On 8th September 1951 the **Queen Elizabeth** left Southampton on her 100th round voyage to New York since she had entered passenger service in October 1946. During the five years she had carried some 300,000 passengers.

The first hint of competition from the airlines came in October 1951 and this resulted in speeding up the turn-round of the *'Queens'* in 1952. Additional competition in the form of the new **United States** would also be a factor from mid 1952. In 1951

the *'Queens'* sailed from Southampton every 15 or 17 days, but the 1952 schedules show each liner sailing every fourteen days, enabling fifteen round voyages to be made between May and October compared with just eleven in 1951. This limited the turn-round at both Southampton and New York to just 36 hours which by current standards sounds very leisurely indeed!

In June 1952 the **Queen Elizabeth** was recording some very fast passages, just prior to the entry into service of the **United States** on 4th July. In mid Atlantic on 6th June she steamed 700 miles at an average speed of 30·43 knots, her fastest day's run since entering passenger service after the war. The crossing from New York to Cherbourg - 3,195 miles - was made in 4 days 13 hours and 6 minutes at an average speed of 29·29 knots. On her next voyage, the week before the maiden voyage of the **United States**, the **Queen Elizabeth** averaged 31·09 knots for one day's run. This should be seen in the context of the **Queen Mary's** record of 31·69 knots when she took the Blue Riband of the Atlantic in September 1938.

From the mid 1940s until the mid 1950s both the 'Queens' were given a short summer overhaul at Southampton. For instance the **Queen Elizabeth** was out of service from 21st July to 30th July 1952 and this included six days in the King George V dry dock. The summer overhauls were routine and no special work was done.

The Hales Trophy, awarded for the Atlantic speed record, left Southampton on 8th November 1952 on board the new holder, the **United States**, which crossed from New York to Bishop Rock at 35·59 knots on her maiden voyage. The **Queen Mary** gained the Blue Riband for the fastest crossing of the Atlantic from the **Normandie** in 1938, but the Cunard Line always refused to accept the trophy. It remained in the **Normandie** until the outbreak of war,after which it was returned to the Hanley jewellers who made it.

It is said that ship repairers always complain that shipowners never give them long enough to complete annual overhauls. Be that as it may, John Thorneycroft's staff at Southampton were set a formidable task with the **Queen Elizabeth's** overhaul in January 1953. In addition to the normal painting, scaling, underwater inspection, removal of propellers, drawing of tailshafts and so forth; 157 tourist-class cabins were given air conditioning and provision was also made to carry more fuel.

By converting water tanks, an additional 1,000 tons of fuel, or about one day's consumption, could be carried. Contrary to newspaper reports, this additional oil would not enable the world's largest liner to make the round trip without refuelling, but Cunard would be able to save some money if the current price of fuel oil was cheaper in England than the United States, or vice versa. The tourist-class cabins on D-deck were always very warm despite every effort to provide adequate ventilation and air conditioning was urgently required. Perhaps the advent of the fully air conditioned **United States** prompted Cunard to take this measure.

During her 1953 overhaul, two fires broke out on board the **Queen Elizabeth** in dry dock. The first, on 28th January in cabin main-deck 93, was extinguished by Southampton Fire Brigade and the second fire, just twenty-four hours later, was discovered in a C-deck cabin. Both fires were considered suspicious and detectives

questioned 2,000 Thorneycroft workmen and some 400 crew. Coincidentally, just one week later, the **Empress of Canada** was burnt out in Gladstone Dock, Liverpool.

Queen Elizabeth's 'cherished wish' that she might someday sail in the liner was fulfilled in October 1954 when, by now Queen Mother, she embarked at the beginning of a tour to the United States and Canada.

In early 1955 the **Queen Elizabeth** was taken out of service for an extended overhaul from 20th January until the end of March. She was to be fitted with Denny-Brown stabilisers whilst in the King George V dry dock. The installation would be the largest of its kind in a passenger liner and consisted of two sets of stabilising machinery situated in separate compartments. There were four fins, two on either side of the ship. Each fin had an outreach of 12 feet 6 inches and was 7 feet 3 inches wide. The two sets operated independently so that for a moderate roll only one set needed to be used.

On 27th March 1955 the **Queen Elizabeth** sailed down the Channel as far as the Lizard to test the new stabilisers. The weather was moderate and only slight natural rolling occurred so the liner was force-rolled and the stabilisers immediately became effective.

The unreliability of statistics - or should it be said the ability to interpret them in several ways - unless related to a comparable factor, is illustrated in the case of the **United States** and the **Queen Elizabeth**. The American liner made 44 Atlantic crossings and carried 70,104 passengers in 1955. This, it is stated, is the largest number carried in any transatlantic ship during the year and gives an average of 1,593 passengers on each sailing. These are undeniable facts. But the **Queen Elizabeth** made only 38 crossings and yet carried 66,000 passengers, giving an average of 1,752. The fewer crossings were due to the *'Elizabeth's'* extended overhaul during which stabilisers were fitted, and if she had made her usual 44 crossings then the results might have been very different.

On a particularly rough crossing in April 1955, during which there were gusts of wind to 70 mph and a heavy swell of up to 50 feet, nearly 100 passengers and members of the **Queen Elizabeth's** crew were hurt. Despite the effectiveness of the new stabilisers to minimise rolling, nothing could be done to reduce the pitching.

In January 1957 the Cunard Line announced that it had carried 275,500 passengers across the Atlantic in 1956, an increase of 16,500 over its 1955 carryings. However the year 1957 proved to be the irreversible turning point when an equal number of people were transported by air as were carried by sea.

On 26th October 1958 the first American commercial jet took off for Paris and a whole new era was born. With flight time cut from twelve to less than seven hours, the lure was irresistibile. By 1960 the jets had seventy percent of the transatlantic business.

At the Cunard Steamship Company's Annual General Meeting held on 28th May 1959, the Chairman Colonel Denis Bates speculated on how the world would be travelling in the future. The route between America and Europe had characteristics very different from others, said Colonel Bates. It is comparably short - a long weekend

by the express steamers or 6½ hours by air. Some two thirds of Cunard's passengers crossed the Atlantic on holiday: hence the company's slogan *'Getting there is half the fun.'* The next largest category comprised business travel and if current medical opinion was correct there was a danger that modern airspeed had outstepped the capacity of man to adapt himself to its stress. Air travel increased across the Atlantic by 26% in 1958, whilst sea carryings reduced by just 4½%. Colonel Bates declared that Cunard philosophy had always been that air and sea travel are complementary rather than competitive on the North Atlantic. There was great complacency in the Cunard boardroom: people would always prefer to cross the ocean by liner and preferably by Cunard!

Cunard's attempt to introduce economies on the **Queen Elizabeth** in the late 1950s met with fierce opposition from passengers. Artificial flowers were tried with the result that the company was inundated with complaints and Cunard rapidly re-introduced fresh flowers at a cost (in the late 1950s) of £850 per voyage.

In September 1959 an announcement was made to the effect that an independent committee of three, headed by Lord Chandos, had been set up to examine the Cunard Company's proposals for replacing the *'Queens'*.

The **Queen Elizabeth** had an unexpected stowaway in 1959. A parakeet flew in through an open porthole at New York and quickly became the mascot of the ship's officers who bought him a fancy cage and named him Joey. After several crossings with Joey on board, the crew began to grumble that the weather seemed to have taken a turn for the worse. They blamed it all on Joey and reports finally got back to the Commodore who ruled that Joey must go!

The year 1960 proved to be another good one for Cunard. The Company's liners carried 207,563 passengers or 23·95% of the combined total of passengers carried by all the transatlantic shipping lines in 1960. The continuing popularity of the *'Queens'* was shown by the fact that they carried 110,800 passengers between them in 1960. In 1961 Cunard liners were to make 207 sailings to and from New York.

The general assumption that the replacements for the *'Queens'* would be built at Clydebank touched a nerve with Dr Dennis Rebbeck, deputy managing director of Harland & Wolff, Belfast. He said that it had become a source of irritation to him and his colleagues on the board. *"Public memory is notoriously short,"* said Dr Rebbeck, *"It has apparently been forgotten that in 1927 we laid the keel of a 1,000 foot passenger liner for the White Star Line. Though it was started it was never finished, due to the economic blizzard in the late 1920s."*

In late 1961 Cunard installed fruit machines (popularly known as one-armed bandits) on the **Queen Elizabeth** and was immediately criticised for resorting to such a revenue-producing device on a luxury liner of this class. The experiment lasted three voyages before the bandits were given a dishonourable discharge.

The 'Cassandra' column of the *'Daily Mirror'* on 29th November 1961 was uncharacteristically enthusiastic about the **Queen Elizabeth**. It read *"She is the last agency of truly comfortable and agreeable travel the world will ever know, since she will never be replaced on any comparable scale of sumptuousness."*

The Cunard Line carried 177,547passengers across the North Atlantic in 1961, 30,000 below the previous year's total. During the year there were 24 fewer westbound sailings and 22 fewer eastbound sailings than in 1960. The passenger carrying business was now losing money: £1·9 million in 1962, £1·6million in 1963 and £3 million in 1965. However the **Queen Elizabeth** still on occasions carried a full complement: over 2,000 passengers were on board on one eastbound sailing in June 1963.

The summer overhauls for the *'Queens'* were abandoned in 1962 which meant that the two liners would both be available at the height of the tourist season, instead of being 'off duty' for a week to ten days. The **Queen Elizabeth** was reported as being in excellent shape with her engines in tip-top condition. Cunard faced formidable competition in the shape of the brand new liner **France** and the **United States** operating a weekly integrated transatlantic service.

In May 1962 the Cunard Line announced that, for the first time ever, the **Queen Elizabeth** would be going cruising. Three five-day cruises between New York and Nassau, Bahamas were planned for February and early March 1963, after which the liner would return to Atlantic service. The minimum rate for each cruise would be $185 or £66. The passage time to Nassau would be 39 hours each way, giving passengers almost two full days there. Although the **Queen Elizabeth** could carry 2,200 passengers, the number would be limited to about 1,200 whilst cruising.

In July 1962 Sir John Brocklebank, the chairman of the Cunard Steamship Company, said that the **Queen Elizabeth** still had many years to go and mechanically could be kept competitive for the foreseeable future. The Cunard Board had decided, therefore, in view of the changing pattern of the passenger business, much of which could be attributed to political anxiety, that it would be foolish to embark at this juncture on a new capital ship. Sir John went on to say that he believed 1962 would show an improvement over 1961, but it was impossible to say how much at that stage.

Three years later it was announced that the **Queen Elizabeth** would return to the Clyde in December 1965 for extensive improvements by her builders, John Brown & Company. The work would include the installation of full air conditioning, the fitting of private showers and toilets in much of the cabin and tourist-class accommodation and the creation of a lido at the after end of the promenade deck, incorporating an outdoor heated swimming pool. The **Queen Elizabeth** arrived back in the Clyde on 4th December 1965 and entered the Firth of Clyde dry dock at Greenock on 9th December. She remained there until 11th March 1966 undergoing the £1·75 million refit and returned to Southampton with about 400 workmen on board who were completing the modernisation of cabins. The **Queen Elizabeth** was back in service on the North Atlantic on 26th March 1966, but with 150 cabins still not completed, she carried Harland & Wolff workmen with her to finish the job.

It was not only the declining fortunes of Cunard's passenger business which threatened the fleet of which the **Queen Elizabeth** was still the flagship. Labour disputes at sea and ashore also menaced the liner's schedule and on such occasions she was used as a massive pawn in various disputes involving tugmen, dockers,

longshoremen or the crew. In November 1948 a series of strikes dragged on for sixteen days and on 2nd December the **Queen Elizabeth** had sailed on the same tide as the **Queen Mary** and the **Aquitania**, a unique event in the history of all three vessels.

Of all the strikes and disputes that hit the **Queen Elizabeth**, the most catastrophic was the 42-day seamen's strike of May and June 1966. This was the catalyst, but not the only cause, of the withdrawal of the two *'Queens'*. On 16th May 1966, just six weeks after completing her overhaul on the Clyde, the **Queen Elizabeth** became the first major casualty of the strike and was laid up at Southampton. The 1966 strike cost Cunard an estimated £3·75 million in lost revenue and brought the total operating loss for the year to over £6 million. Sir Basil Smallpiece (Cunard's chairman since November 1965 when he succeeded Sir John Brocklebank) decided that the time had finally come for the drastic, long-delayed surgery on the Cunard passenger fleet. Not only that, but the company headquarters was transferred from Liverpool to Southampton.

The **Queen Elizabeth** was not successful as a cruise ship. Winter cruises from New York to the West Indies were poorly patronised and one was cancelled and replaced with an unscheduled Atlantic crossing. This also suffered from low bookings and became known as the *'Ghost Ship Voyage'*. A thirty-seven day cruise from New York to the Mediterranean sailed on 21st February 1967 and was plagued by bad weather and many ports had to be omitted from the itinerary.

Cunard withdraws the *Queen Elizabeth*

On 8th May 1967, the axe finally fell and it was anounced that the **Queen Elizabeth** would be withdrawn a year earlier than originally planned - in the Autumn of 1968 after a final summer on the Western Ocean. Sir Basil Smallpiece said: *"Although the **Queen Mary's** retirement at the end of 1967 had long been forecast, it had been hoped that the results of the **Queen Elizabeth's** cruise programme last winter would confirm the viability of the company's plan to keep her in service when the 'Q.4' comes along in 1969. In the event the results have been very far from satisfactory. The board's decision to withdraw the **Queen Elizabeth** is part of the unrelenting process of facing realities in its determination to put the company on to a paying basis."*

Like a Greek tragedy the tale of woe gathered force. Recently introduced legislation by the International Marine Commission also influenced the board's decision. The Americans demanded that the **Queen Elizabeth** be brought up to the new standards of fire protection which would have to include the fitting of additional fire sprinklers and the boxing-in of stairways that could otherwise act as deadly draught tunnels in the event of fire. The work, Cunard estimated, would cost £750,000. However, the U.S. legislators had another surprise up their sleeve. When Cunard requested that the Americans send over an inspector to approve the improvement work as it progressed, the authorities declined. The Americans wanted the work to be completed and then for the *'Elizabeth'* to sail over to New York for inspection prior to approval and certification. This would mean an expensive 'light' voyage to New York

and, if the inspection failed, an equally expensive 'light' return trip back to the U.K. The prospect to Cunard was just too daunting and contributed greatly to the decision to dispose of the **Queen Elizabeth.**

As soon as the decision to retire the *'Elizabeth'* was made public, her cruises and Western Ocean crossings became popular with those who had travelled on and had loved the ship over the length of her career. For the first time in several years the **Queen Elizabeth** began to show a profit.

The **Queen Mary** and the **Queen Elizabeth** met for the last time when they were both at sea. Just after midnight on 25th September 1967 the two *'Queens'* passed each other in mid-Atlantic, the **Queen Mary** making her final eastbound transatlantic crossing. Within a few short minutes the plans, hopes and successes of three decades came to an end as syrens boomed out across the water; the whole poignant scene witnessed by just a few passengers braving the night wind.

The **Queen Mary** found a buyer in the form of the City of Long Beach, California and she left Southampton on 31st October 1967 carrying 1,000 passengers on what was billed as 'The Last Great Cruise' involving a passage around Cape Horn. The whole affair turned into a spectacular fiasco as the *'Mary'* was undercrewed and had to cross the equator twice without the benefit of air conditioning. To economise on fuel, the **Queen Mary** was using just two of her four propellers. Cunard had warned the new buyers against carrying passengers and would have nothing to do with the bookings, but nevertheless carried the blame in the eyes of the disgruntled passengers.

Scrapping seemed to provide the obvious, almost humane, answer to dealing with the problem of the **Queen Elizabeth**. However, over the winter of 1967/68, Cunard received several serious enquiries from potential buyers. The Japanese wanted her for a marine science museum in time for the 1970 Tokyo World Fair. Honolulu was interested as were the Australians. Evangelist Billy Graham offered £2·1 million for her to become a floating bible school, and the United States Institute of Technology wanted her to become a floating university. On 5th April 1968 Cunard announced its decision. For $7·75 million the **Queen Elizabeth** was sold to a group of Philadelphia businessmen.

The original intention was to moor the **Queen Elizabeth** off Hog Island in the Delaware River. Two months later the purchasers realised that the river was not deep enough. Additionally, the proposed site was adjacent to Philadelphia International Airport with its deafening aircraft noise every few minutes, and finally a nearby oil refinery would waft odours over the ship. An alternative site was found at Fort Lauderdale in Florida.

The **Queen Elizabeth's** final season on the Atlantic was uneventful other than for the enthusiasm expressed by her regular passengers who wanted to sail in her just one last time. The *'Elizabeth's'* final round voyage to New York left Southampton on 23rd October 1968.

The liner's new owners were by now in financial difficulty and Cunard stepped in to moderate a worsening situation by more or less taking over the new venture. The company injected $1 million into a new company called 'The Elizabeth

(Cunard) Corporation' and held an 85% share. Cunard hoped that its continuing involvement with the **Queen Elizabeth** would reap worthwhile benefits in the years to come. The Philadelphia businessmen still held a small interest in the new company and would lease the ship from Cunard for $2 million a year.

Following her arrival at New York on 28th October, the **Queen Elizabeth** was fêted and honoured with both private and official functions being held on board. New York Mayor John Lindsay boarded the **Queen Elizabeth** on sailing day 30th October to bid an official farewell. He presented the ship with a plaque from the Department of Defence to commemorate the liner's remarkable war service.

A 'Farewell Dinner' was held at sea on Sunday 3rd November and the following day the **Queen Elizabeth** arrived back at Southampton for the last time, coming to the end of the career for which she had been designed. She had crossed the North Atlantic 896 times in peacetime and had carried 2,300,000 passengers, steaming 3,472,675 nautical miles in the process. On 6th November 1968 Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother visited the ship for the very last time. It was just over thirty years since she had launched the liner at Clydebank.

On 8th November 1968 the **Queen Elizabeth** sailed on a 'Farewell Cruise' to Las Palmas and Gibraltar and was back in Southampton on 15th November. That evening the crew was paid off and just 193 were retained to take the *'Elizabeth'* on her delivery voyage to Fort Lauderdale.

In the early morning fog of 28th November, the **Queen Elizabeth** left Southampton for the last time. Other than for Southampton's Albion Band, the quayside was almost bereft of well-wishers. Commodore Geoffrey Marr compared the departure to the farewell given to the *'Elizabeth'* at New York. He described it as *'...a British understatement with a vengeance, as though the British world of ships and shiplovers looked the other way until she had gone.'*

The other ships that were in Southampton that unhappy morning saluted the **Queen Elizabeth** as she passed by but received no acknowledgement to their respectful signals. A temporary electrical fault had developed with the *'Elizabeth's'* whistle control gear and she left Southampton in a silence that only added to the almost furtive feeling of the departure.

Postscript

As a postscript, the last years of the world's largest liner were far from the honourable time that many had hoped for, but they must be related in order to complete the saga.

After a ghost-like voyage across the Atlantic the **Queen Elizabeth** arrived off the Florida coast on Saturday 7th December 1968. Dredging had not been completed at Port Everglades so Commodore Marr was instructed to cruise the *'Elizabeth'* slowly down the coast to 'show the flag'. At 11.15 a.m. the following day the **Queen Elizabeth** was safely berthed at Port Everglades and the final, often fatal, order on the bridge telegraph was rung to the engine room: 'Finished with Engines'.

The **Elizabeth** (the prefix 'Queen' was dropped at Cunard's request) was opened to the public on 14th February 1969. Some 30 Cunard staff had been retained, mostly engineers to assist in running the boilers and generators.

Public interest in the **Elizabeth** quickly waned and by June 1969 the liner was again up for sale. In July the ship was sold for $8·64 million to a company called Queen Inc. In September 1969 a hurricane warning caused the then almost deserted ship to be partially scuttled to prevent her tearing away from her berth. By the end of the year Queen Inc. was bankrupt with debts of $12 million.

A bid of $3·2 million (£1·3 million at 1969 rates of exchange) was made by the Island Navigation Company of Hong Kong. This was a subsidiary of the giant Orient Overseas Line which would be the ship's actual owner and operator. This shipping empire was owned by a Mr C.Y. Tung and contained much well looked after second hand tonnage within its fleet. Mr Tung's plan (he liked to be called 'C.Y.') was based on an idea first proposed by U. Thant, the Secretary General of the United Nations, that a ship be used for educational purposes whilst spreading goodwill and understanding amongst nations and between different cultures.

Mr Tung proposed to name his ship the **Seawise University**. She would carry 1,800 students plus 800 cruise passengers on world-wide voyages. But first the old ship had to be moved from Port Everglades to Hong Kong. It was decided to steam her all the way and a Chinese crew was flown to Florida, along with workers from Mr Tung's own shipyard. In addition the **Queen Elizabeth's** last master (Commodore Geoffrey Marr) and Chief Engineer (Mr Ted Philip) received invitations to come out of retirement and rejoin their old ship for the voyage.

Engines were checked and boilers tested, but only six of the twelve boilers were considered functional for the long passage. During two years of near neglect, deterioration had rapidly set in, especially in the fragile boiler tubes. In the event 600 tubes had to be changed and approval obtained from classification societies. It was on 3rd February 1971 that the first engine trials were carried out and sailing day was set for Wednesday 10th February. The **Seawise University** was comparatively underpowered and manned by an inexperienced crew. Before the ship had even left her berth one of the six operational boilers developed leaks in its tubes and was declared inoperable. In the entrance channel to the harbour at Port Everglades a second boiler blew and the **Seawise University** now had just four boilers functioning out of a possible twelve. The liner did not now have enough power to manoeuvre, should the need arise, but she did have enough momentum - plus the aid of tugs - to carry her through the harbour entrance.

A serious fire broke out in No.4 boiler room on 13th February and was fortunately brought under control. However another of the still operational boilers was badly damaged: she was now down to just three. Captain Marr decided to signal for tugs. The salvage tug **Rescue** arrived on 16th February as the **Seawise University** continued her southward drift through the Windward Passage into the Caribbean. Plans to tow the liner to Jamaica or Curaçao were abandoned and the small Dutch island of Aruba, off the northern Venezuelan coast, was chosen. The **Rescue** could not handle

the ship on her own and so a second tug was summoned. After anchoring off Aruba the **Seawise University** drifted, dragging her anchor, out to deep water. With the aid of two local tugs the liner finally put down two anchors six miles of Oranjestad, Aruba.

Mr C.Y. Tung personally visited his ship. More men, boiler tubes and other equipment were flown to Aruba and after satisfactory repairs the **Seawise University** sailed to Curaçao for fresh water and fuel oil. Speed varied between 7 and 11 knots, with the higher speed using 300 tons of oil per day. On 14th June 1971 the liner reached Cape Town and on 7th July called at Singapore. Eight days later the 'slow boat to China' arrived at Hong Kong.

Over the next few months Mr C.Y. Tung's great ship was reconditioned and converted into the ship of his dreams. The new fire regulations (that Cunard had not been able to afford) were incorporated bringing the ship into line with the stringent standards required by the United States. Two thousand men were ferried out daily to work on the **Seawise University** as she lay at anchor off Hong Kong. By New Year's Day 1972 the liner floated resplendent in her new livery of white hull and orange funnels, with the legend 'Orient Overseas Line' emblazoned along each side of her hull. All twelve boilers had been reconditioned and her four engines thoroughly overhauled. All that required to be done was drydocking in Japan.

On Sunday 9th January 1972 three fires started simultaneously on board. All these quickly spread, fanned and carried by the ample supply of air coming into the ship through the open shell doors. It was an hour before fire fighting tugs arrived at the scene, and after four hours of futile effort the liner was left to burn herself out. By midnight on 9th January the fire had burnt through five decks and the **Seawise University** had developed a starboard list of 17 degrees, the start of a slow and unstoppable capsize.

A Court of Inquiry found that arson was the cause of the fires.

A year later, in January 1973, the old **Queen Elizabeth** still lay in the harbour at Hong Kong, a burnt out hulk lying on her starboard side. Oil was gradually seeping from her ruptured fuel tanks and an inflated boom was floated round the hulk to contain it. Over 3,000 tons had to be pumped out eventually at a cost of £140,000 to Mr Tung. In December 1974 the decision was taken to scrap the remains of the **Queen Elizabeth**. The hull was cut into sections of up to 250 tons each and, in all, some 45,000 tons of metal were lifted from the wreck. The remainder, lying on the harbour bed, was blown up as the wreck was a hazard to navigation.

With the passage of time the area of Hong Kong harbour where the **Queen Elizabeth** lay has been filled in and a new airport built on the reclaimed land.

This, then, is the story of the **Queen Elizabeth**, the world's largest liner. How much more dignified it would have been to have broken the ship up in 1968. She would then have been remembered as the fine working ship that she undoubtedly was.

Sources:

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The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

(Founded in 1938)

THE BULLETIN

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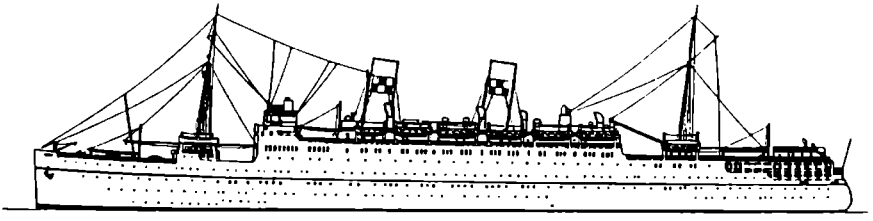
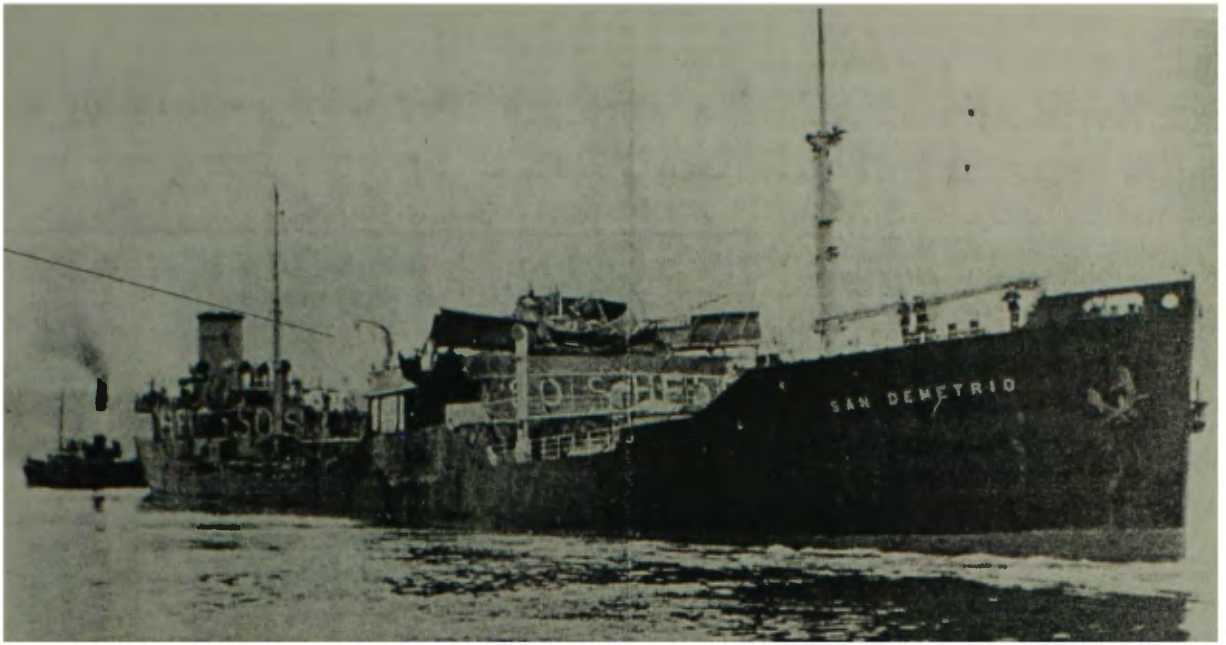
Editor : John Shepherd





The **San Demetrio** was built in 1938 for the Eagle Oil & Shipping Company of London by the Blytheswood Shipbuilding Company at Glasgow. The story of her shelling in Convoy HX 84 on 5th November 1940, and of her being re-boarded by her crew and safely brought into port under her own steam has become a legend of the Second World War. This photograph (from the Gordon Bodey collection) shows her arriving at Bowling, Glasgow on Tuesday 19th November, 1940.

The full story of the **San Demetrio** (written by Gordon Bodey) appeared in *'The Bulletin'*, June 2001, pp 2-13.

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

Membership and General Correspondence:
The Liverpool Nautical Research Society.
Maritime Archives and Library,
Merseyside Maritime Museum,
Albert Dock,
LIVERPOOL, L3 4AA, U.K.

'Bulletin' related matters:
John Shepherd,
Flat 7, "Mount Court",
Mount Road,
WALLASEY, CH45 9JS, U.K.

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

Front Cover: The Canadian Pacific liner **Empress of Canada** which was burnt out in Gladstone Dock, Liverpool, on Sunday 25th January 1953. (see *'Notes and Queries'*). The vessel was built by Wm. Beardmore & Company at Dalmuir and was launched on 18th June 1928 as the **Duchess of Richmond**. After the war she was refurbished at the Fairfield Yard at Govan and re-entered service as the **Empress of Canada**.

WEMYSS BAY EXILES IN LANCASHIRE

Former Clyde Pleasure Steamers sailing from Southport and Liverpool in 1890

An article by David W. Docherty

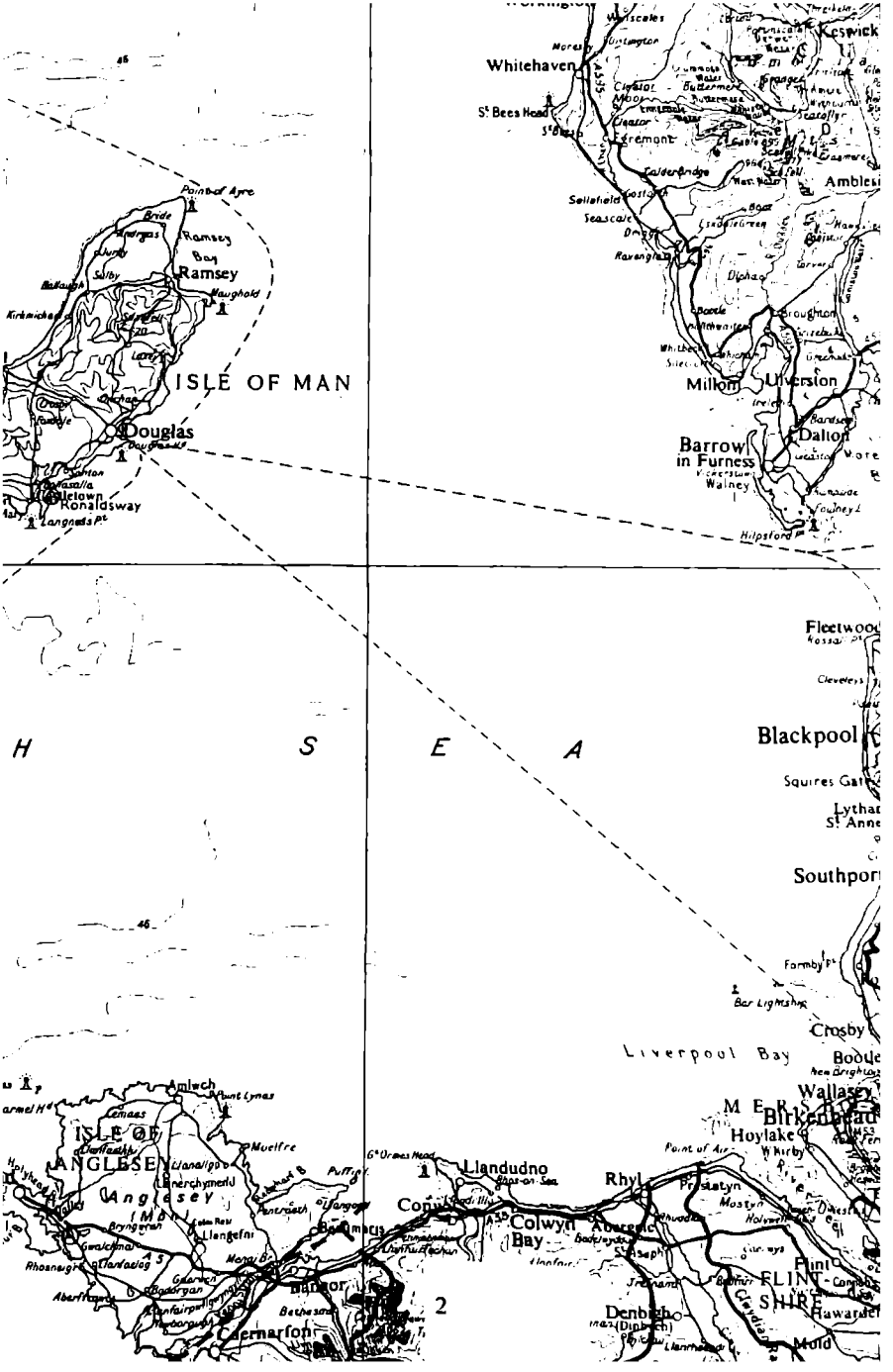
part 1

But Why Can't Southport Have a Boat of its Own ?

"But why can't Southport have a boat of its own?" It was with these words that a contributor to the *Southport Visitor*, writing in 1880, concluded an article describing a sea trip he had made to Llandudno. He had enjoyed himself. The weather had been kind; his steamer, the **Nelson**, had been involved in a race for Llandudno pier with the **Great Emperor** from Blackpool and he had visited places of interest in the Llandudno area. The one blot on an otherwise perfect day was the fact that the **Nelson** was owned in Blackpool - Southport's main rival as a holiday resort. Ten years later the same writer might have been tempted to exclaim, *"But why are there so many boats at Southport!"*

In 1890 Southport was a popular holiday resort with a population of between 40,000 and 50,000. A contemporary account described it as a *'fashionable bathing place, with good sands, and a new iron pier nearly a mile in length, winter gardens and aquarium. This delightful spot has of late years considerably risen in the estimation of the health seeking population of the kingdom. It is especially valuable as a healthy winter seaside residence'*. As is hinted in this description Southport was more than a resort. Good railway links with places such as Liverpool and Manchester meant that it was practical for the more affluent to live in Southport and commute to their place of work.

Having said this it seems that Southport saw itself, first and foremost, as a pleasure resort and consequently it was natural to look with concern, and perhaps envy, across the Ribble estuary to Blackpool. Without question Blackpool was one of England's premier holiday resorts, often described as the "Brighton of the North", and claiming to welcome over one million visitors annually. This achievement had not come about by accident. Blackpool had benefited from significant investment in the provision of facilities and attractions ensuring that it retained its popularity both with the day tripper from Lancashire's industrial towns as well as the more wealthy visitor who stayed for a longer period. During the 1880s the emphasis had shifted from the creation of a middle class watering place to the provision of entertainments aimed firmly at the working classes. While this trend was to prove irreversible, in 1890 Blackpool still managed to bridge the two cultures providing select musical entertainments on its North Pier which contrasted with the hurly burly of open air dancing on the South Pier.


ISLE OF MAN
Point of Ayre
Bride
Ramsey Bay
Ramsey
Maughold
Ballaugh
Kirkmichael
Sulby
Laxey
Douglas
Douglas Hd
Castletown
Ronaldsway
Langness Pt
46
Whitehaven
St Bees Head
Egremont
Keswick
Calder Bridge
Sellafield
Seascale
Ravenglass
Bootle
Millom
Ulverston
Dalton
Barrow in Furness
Walney
Hilpsford Pt
Broughton
Ambleside
Fleetwood
Cleveleys
Blackpool
Squires Gate
Lytham St Annes
Southport
Formby Pt
Bar Lightship
Crosby
Liverpool Bay
Bootle
Wallasey
Birkenhead
Hoylake
W Kirby
Point of Air
Rhyl
Prestatyn
Mostyn
Holywell
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(Dinbych)
St Asaph
Abergele
Colwyn Bay
Llandudno
Rhos-on-Sea
Gt Ormes Head
Conway
Bangor
Beaumaris
Bethesda
Caernarfon
Penmon
Moelfre
Point Lynas
Amlwch
Cemaes
ISLE OF ANGLESEY
Anglesey (Môn)
Llangefni
Holyhead
Rhosneigr
Aberffraw
Menai Br
Llanfairpwllgwyngyll
H S E A
2

To some extent the Ribble estuary provided a curtain which prevented Southport residents from being reminded of Blackpool's greater success as a holiday resort. This curtain was, however, drawn back every time part of Blackpool's pleasure industry came across the estuary to land or take up passengers from Southport pier. While there had been attempts, from time to time, on the part of local entrepreneurs to operate pleasure steamers from Southport, these ventures had not proved successful. As a result the steamer service from Southport was firmly in the control of two Blackpool based concerns and Southport had, in the opinion of an observer writing in 1890, *"been at a disadvantage through Blackpool having a monopoly of the steamboat service"*. The common view in Southport was that steamers were run from Southport on the basis of what was good for Blackpool rather than what was good for Southport. The promise of a change for the better was, however, at hand for the writer went on to speak of Southport's own *"tradesmen having combined and chartered steamers to work for Southport's advantage."*

Shortly after nine o'clock on Thursday 8th May 1890 the first of three locally controlled pleasure steamers arrived at Southport pierhead to take up service for the coming summer season. This was the **Adela**, which having been displaced from her normal area of service on the Clyde following a dispute between her owner, Captain Alexander Campbell and the Caledonian Railway had been chartered by a recently formed company called the Birkdale, Southport and Preston Steamship Co. Ltd.

Difficult decisions at Wemyss Bay and Southport

The dispute between Captain Campbell and the Caledonian Railway has been well documented. At the start of 1890 Captain Campbell owned a fleet of five steamers. Of these four (the **Adela**, **Argyle**, **Lancelot** and **Victoria**) ran from the railhead at Wemyss Bay to the islands of Bute and Cumbrae in connection with trains operated by the Caledonian Railway. (Captain Campbell's other steamer - the **Arran** - had been chartered to a Thames operator from about 1888 onwards and was sold in April 1890.)

Captain Campbell faced several problems. Firstly, he had been unable to negotiate what he considered to be a satisfactory agreement with the railway company regarding the proportion of through fares paid to him in respect of rail and sea journeys via Wemyss Bay. Of more immediate concern however, was the formation by the Caledonian Railway of an associate company, the Caledonian Steam Packet, to run steamers on the Clyde from the more northerly railhead at Gourock. The success of this venture in 1889 must have led Captain Campbell to wonder when the railway company would want to place its own steamers on services from Wemyss Bay in place of his fleet. An additional point of pressure was that the entire fleet was mortgaged to secure loans. These concerns were doubtless the motivating factors which led Captain Campbell to announce, during the latter half of April 1890, that he would withdraw the services operated by his fleet from Wemyss Bay after 30th April.

Whatever precise motives and strategy lay behind Captain Campbell's actions (and we can only speculate about these) there can be no doubt that his decision to withdraw from the Wemyss Bay trade (probably made some time before it was announced) posed him with the serious problem of finding either willing purchasers or remunerative occupation for his fleet. As Captain Campbell must have pondered this issue during the early months of 1890, the directors of the Birkdale, Southport and Preston Steamship Co. Ltd. also found themselves facing a problem.

The Birkdale, Southport and Preston Steamship Co. Ltd. had been incorporated as a limited company on 5th December 1889 with a nominal capital of £15,000 in £1 shares. The prospectus of the company had been issued during November and stated that the object of the company was to have built *"a first class express passenger steamer to trade from and to Southport, Preston, Blackpool, Llandudno, the Isle of Man, Morecambe ..... and various other watering places."* It went on to state that the directors were *"now negotiating ..... for the production of a first class passenger twin-screw steamer, capable of steaming at 17 miles per hour, guaranteed. The probable builders, Messrs T.B. Seath & Company, Rutherglen, have stated that such a steamer ..... can be built for a sum of £11,500 or not exceeding £12,000."*

The prospectus went on to list reasons why investors could be confident of success which included the involvement of a Mr Joseph Wilcock as traffic manager. (Mr Wilcock had acted in this capacity for other pleasure steamer concerns in previous seasons and was clearly regarded as a major asset to the venture). It concluded by stating that *"the directors would impress upon intending shareholders and the public at large that they are in no way connected with any other steamship company that exists or has existed in Southport or Preston; this is an entirely new company and new boat."* This last comment is a reminder that the company was formed at a time when there was a great deal of interest in the formation of steamship companies in the north west of England, and that the Birkdale, Southport and Preston Company was not alone in seeking capital or business.

The choice of a twin-screw steamer rather than a paddle steamer for pleasure sailings from Southport, whilst unusual, was not without precedent. A number of twin-screw pleasure steamers had been built for service in the Morecambe Bay area during the previous ten years, the most recent of which being the **Britannia** built in 1888 at Grangemouth. T.B. Seath & Company had built some of the Morecambe Bay steamers as well as a twin-screw steamer called the **Manx Fairy** (built 1887) for pleasure sailings between Douglas and Ramsey. Having said this, it must be open to question as to just how practical such a vessel would have been when operating from Southport. Over the last hundred years the pattern of channels and sandbanks in the Ribble estuary has changed considerably due to attempts to improve navigation in the River Ribble. In 1890 Southport pierhead lay in what was known as the south channel and was considered to be relatively well sheltered. Tides ran through the channel with considerable force, however, and in unfavourable conditions berthing a twin-screw steamer would not have been easy.

The search for capital proved to be a difficult task and when the shareholders met for their first Annual General Meeting on 11th April 1890 it must have been clear that the building of a twin-screw passenger steamer - or anything else - was unrealistic. The summary of capital and shares submitted to the Registrar of Companies reveals that only 558 shares had been taken up by a total of twenty persons, and that less than half the money due on the shares taken up had actually been received. In view of what was to happen later it might have been wise to call a halt. Mr Wilcock certainly seems to have thought so for in February 1890 he was reported as being involved with a rival Southport concern. Also in February the company acquired a new secretary in the person of Mr E. Doward. It seems that Mr Doward was connected with the firm of Doward, Dickson & Company, a firm of Liverpool shipbrokers and agents who acted for the company during the season.

The directors, however, took a more optimistic view and decided that if they could not afford to build a steamer, then they would have to charter. Their choice was Captain Campbell's steamer **Adela** which they chartered, with an option to purchase, for the 1890 season.

The **Adela** had been built in 1877 for Captain Campbell as an indirect replacement for an earlier member of his fleet named **Lady Gertrude**. This vessel had been built in 1872 but was wrecked in January 1877 when her engine failed to reverse whilst she was aproaching Toward Pier on the Clyde. Whilst the **Lady Gertrude's** hull was a total loss it proved possible to salvage her engine which, being comparatively new, was installed in the **Adela**.

As built the **Adela** was a flush decked steamer. Vessels of this type lacked the deck saloons placed on the main deck which feature in the popular image of a pleasure steamer. Covered accommodation for passengers was to be found below the main deck and offered little natural light or view of the outside world. By 1877 steamers of this type were old fashioned, and the **Adela** had the doubtful distinction of being the last vessel built to this design for service on the Clyde. During the 1880s, however, her passenger accommodation was updated and short narrow deck saloons built at main deck level fore and aft of her machinery space. The saloons were surmounted by a promenade deck which meant that facilities for those who wished to view the passing scene from an open deck as well as those who wished to do from the comfort of a saloon were improved. Employed by Captain Campbell on all-the-year-round services from Wemyss Bay, the **Adela** was never regarded, even after these improvements, as one of the 'crack' Clyde steamers. If anything the reverse was true. Andrew McQueen, an early chronicler of the Clyde fleet, described her as *'a commonplace boat ... just a plain substantial steamer, of very moderate speed, suited for all the year round work in all sorts of weather'.*

The Inaugural Trip

The **Adela's** new master, Captain John G. Sims RNR, took up command on 26th April 1890. She was reported as having sailed from the Clyde on 29th April and

arrived at Birkenhead's West Float on the following day. She remained there for about a week - presumably while final preparations were made for service from Southport. The **Adela** arrived at Southport pierhead for the first time shortly after 9 p.m. on 8th May to commence her service.

*The **Adela** was built in 1877 for Captain Alexander Campbell's fleet, operating from Wemyss Bay on the Clyde.*

The inaugural sailing was advertised as leaving Southport at 10.30 a.m. on 9th May for a day excursion to Llandudno, allowing four hours ashore. The return voyage from Llandudno was to depart at 4.30 p.m., arriving back at Southport at about 7 p.m It received a very full and favourable coverage in all of Southport's three newspapers This was no doubt inspired - at least in part - by the fact that the company directors treated the reporters to lunch at the Prince of Wales Hotel at Llandudno during the course of the day's activities, and drank their health during the return passage.

The departure from **Southport** was a little delayed and it was not until 10.50 a.m. that the 200 or so people who had gathered on the pierhead witnessed the **Adela**'s departure with about 150 passengers, the majority of whom were guests of the company. Throughout the day the weather was hazy and it was not possible to see the coastline for much of the time. The sea was calm and there was plenty of shipping to view as the steamer crossed the shipping lanes at the approaches to the Mersey. The **Adela** arrived at Llandudno at 1.45 p.m. and commenced her return journey at 4.20 p.m., arriving back at Southport at around half past seven.

The **Adela** had been described in the local Southport press as being 'fast' and the reports of the inaugural trip went to great lengths to put these journey time into context. It was explained that the initial part of her outward sailing was mad

against an adverse tide running at six knots, and that she was running into a head wind. The **Adela's** return journey was also made against an adverse tide, and speed was reduced as the ship approached sandbanks at the entrance to the Southport channel, in view of the haze which had persisted throughout the day.

Whilst the **Adela's** speed might not have been everything that people had been led to expect, the general view was that the passage times were 'most creditable'. The same applied to the ship's accommodation and all three local papers spoke of the provision made for the comfort of passengers on board, and of the steamer's suitability for service from Southport. The **Adela** was described as being 'about ten years old', and it was noted that she had recently been reboilered and refurbished. It was also pointed out that as she drew only five feet of water she would be at an advantage, given that several potential destinations were affected by tidal considerations. The crew was listed as consisting of Captain Sims, two mates, four seamen, two engineers, three firemen, a boy, several stewards and a stewardess.

In two of the newspaper reports the **Adela's** passenger capacity was stated as being 518 passengers on journeys as far north as Barrow-in-Furness, and as far west as Caernarfon or Holyhead. Such long distance voyages would have required a class 3 passenger certificate and here we have an example of the local press, either by accident or design, exaggerating the capabilities of Southport's acquisition. The **Adela's** class 3 certificate at this period in her career was for only 372 passengers, and the figure of 518 referred to her passenger capacity in summer when sailing within the significantly more limited area covered by a class 4 certificate. Even though the **Adela's** passenger capacity was somewhat less than the public had been led to believe, her capacity of 372 on a class 3 certificate still gave her the largest complement of any of the pleasure steamers sailing from Southport in 1890. Her nearest rival in terms of capacity, the **Cygnus**, could only carry 355 on a class 3 certificate.

Opinions about the prospects for Southport's new steamer, whilst universally favourable, varied in emphasis given that the **Adela** would be only one of several pleasure steamers trading from the resort. The *Southport Standard* took an optimistic line commenting that *"competition is the soul of trade ... and the steamboat competition from our pier promises to prove the old adage and at the same time provide the extra traffic required to make competition profitable for the promoters and enjoyable to our townspeople."* By contrast the *Southport Visitor* took a more realistic view: *"The town ... is likely to be well catered for ... as several companies have engaged to ply their vessels from here, and in the competition which is likely to ensue there is no doubt that the fastest and best-appointed steamers will be the most liberally patronised by the public. In this respect, and without wishing to draw any unnecessary comparisons, it may be said that the **Adela** is of a very high standard of merit."* This was the closest that any of the Southport papers came to making any kind of critical comment on the facilities that would be provided by steamer operators during the coming season.

The "Victoria" Interlude

The most intriguing point to emerge from the reports of the **Adela's** inaugural trip referred, however, not to the **Adela** herself but to one of her companions in Captain Campbell's fleet. The *Southport Guardian's* report, having stated that the **Adela** had been chartered from Captain Campbell, went on to note that he also owned the **Victoria** which it described as *"a magnificent boat ... which is likely to be seen in this neighbourhood shortly."*

Evidence that this was not a flight of fancy or misunderstanding on the part of the reporter is to be found in the columns of Liverpool newspapers. The **Victoria** was advertised as commencing sailings from Liverpool to North Wales on Saturday 17th May 1890 with an afternoon trip to Llandudno. Day excursions to Llandudno and the Anglesey coast were advertised for the following Sunday and Monday. Regular sailings to North Wales were to commence on Wednesday 21st May, although this was later put back to Saturday 24th May (the Whitsun weekend).

During the following week the proposed regular programme of sailings was announced. This consisted of an afternoon trip to Llandudno on Saturdays and full day excursions to Llandudno, Beaumaris and Menai Bridge on other days. In addition, two-hour evening cruises were to be operated from Liverpool on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The advertisements were placed by Doward, Dickson & Company. This firm was reported to be acting on behalf of Captain Campbell who was said to be operating the **Victoria** from Liverpool on his own account.

In placing the **Victoria** on the North Wales service, Captain Campbell was entering into competition with the Liverpool, Llandudno and Welsh Coast Steam Boat Company. This company's two steamers (the **Bonnie Princess** and the **Prince Arthur**) were well established on the route from Liverpool to Llandudno and the Menai Straits. Whilst well established they were not necessarily well loved and the time was ripe for someone to mount effective competition against them. The **Prince Arthur** was almost forty years old and the **Bonnie Princess**, a relative youngster of only eight years, was not considered to be a first class steamer in terms of either comfort or speed. In early May, 'Shareholder' writing to the *Liverpool Echo* had asked: *"What is more magnificent than a sail from Liverpool down the Welsh Coast on a fine summer day, provided the service is a quick one, and the accommodation is adequate?"* He went on to comment: *"This is more than we can say of the present boats."*

This assessment seems to have been shared by Mr Lewis Lloyd, the chairman of the Liverpool, Llandudno and Welsh Coast Steam Boat Company. During April he had proposed that his company purchase the cross-channel steamer **Cobra**. This vessel, built in 1889, was considerably larger and faster than the **Bonnie Princess** and during the 1889 season had been run by G. & J. Burns on a daylight service between Greenock and Belfast. Mr Lloyd's proposal was put to a meeting of the company's shareholders on 30th April 1890, but was opposed by a Captain Bell acting on behalf of the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company which held 2,000 of the company's 7,008

shares. Whilst Mr Lloyd's proposal won a majority of the votes cast it did not, therefore, gain the 75% majority that was needed to pass the resolution.

Against this background the prospects for the **Victoria** on the North Wales coast must have looked promising. The Liverpool, Llandudno and Welsh Coast Company had faced competition before but the steamers employed had not been of a particularly high standard. During previous summer seasons Messrs R. & D. Jones had run the **Alexandra** to Llandudno, but this ship, having been built in 1863, doubtless made the **Bonnie Princess** appear modern! The **Victoria** was a different proposition. Built in 1886 she was a vastly superior ship to the **Adela**. Some fifteen feet longer and three feet broader than the **Adela**, the **Victoria** had been built to the highest standards then current on the Clyde. Fitted with full width deck saloons and an electric light installation - the latter being something of a novelty - she was thoroughly up to date.

*Another member of Captain Campbell's Wemyss Bay fleet to find her way to the Mersey in 1890 was the **Victoria**, built in 1886.*

Throughout the four years during which Captain Campbell had operated her on the Clyde, the **Victoria** had proved a fast and popular steamer, not only on the passenger service from Wemyss Bay but also on special cruises and excursions. A journalist, writing in the *Journal of Commerce*, was most impressed and his comments provide an interesting insight of the shortcomings perceived in the other steamers sailing to North Wales at the time. He wrote: *"If it is a wet day we can sit in the smoking room and see the sea and the coast just as well as if we were out of it. If we take our 'guid lady' she can retire to oblivion at the convenient moment without going above or below. If we want a good dinner it has not to be dragged all along the deck with only the wide canopy of heaven to cover it, for there is the protection of alleyways from stem to stern"*

In addition to being a comfortable and popular vessel, the **Victoria's** fares were set at a lower level than those charged by the established company and there is every reason to believe that, with good management, the **Victoria** would have offered effective competition.

The **Victoria** arrived in Liverpool on Thursday 15th May, berthing in the Queen's Half Tide Dock. There she was briefly re-united with the **Adela** which was off service for the day. The inaugural sailing to Llandudno was made, as advertised, on 17th May with a party of invited guests and was reported in the *Journal of Commerce*. In a review of the planned services to North Wales this paper had warned of the dangers of too many operators chasing too little traffic, but felt that the prospects for the **Victoria** were promising. It commented: *"The **Victoria** is well adapted for the service, the arrangements for passengers being complete and comfortable."*

It was not to be. On 23rd May 1890 the *Liverpool Echo* carried the brief announcement: *"The excursion steamer **Victoria**, advertised to ply between Liverpool and North Wales during the Whitsuntide holidays, will not run for the present."* The reason for the cancellation cannot be stated with certainty, but it seems probable that the arrival of a further competitor on the Liverpool and North Wales route led Captain Campbell to conclude that the prospects for a successful season were doubtful.

Meanwhile, Mr Lewis Lloyd, the chairman of the Liverpool, Llandudno and Welsh Coast Company, had not been idle. He, and two of his fellow directors, resigned from the Board in early May and became involved in the formation of a rival concern, styling itself the New North Wales Steamship Company. This would operate the **Cobra** (which was renamed **St Tudno**) in competition with the established company's **Bonnie Princess** and **Prince Arthur**. The first sailing from Liverpool by the **St Tudno** took place on Thursday 22nd May 1890.

Whilst Mr Lloyd and his colleagues seem to have played some part in what followed, maybe only as local figureheads, the dominant force in getting the operation under way was the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Company of Glasgow. The New North Wales Steamship Company management team was drawn from the same group of people that had been responsible for managing an earlier Fairfield sponsored attempt to operate a service between Liverpool and the Isle of Man in competition with the established Isle of Man Steam Packet Company. Although the economic realities of running two all-the-year-round services to the Isle of Man led to the amalgamation of the two companies, the Fairfield backed service had proved very successful during the peak summer months.

Faced with the prospect of competition from an up to date steamer in the **St Tudno** (*ex* **Cobra**); a powerful backer in the form of the Fairfield company; and a proven management team, it is easy to understand why Captain Campbell must have concluded that discretion was the better part of valour.

Whilst there is no definite evidence, the suspicion is that an opportunity to charter the **Victoria** for service on Belfast Lough arose at short notice. Whatever the reasons for the change of plan, Captain Campbell decided to exchange the risks of running the **Victoria** on his own account for the certainty of chartering her to a

syndicate of Belfast businessmen. This syndicate intended to operate the **Victoria** between Belfast and Bangor in competition with the Belfast, Bangor and Larne Steamboat Company. Her first sailing from Belfast, with an invited party on board, took place on Sunday 24th May and her public sailings commenced the following day. Captain Campbell subsquently disposed of the **Victoria**, selling her to a Morris Carswell of Glasgow on 31st October 1890.

What, if any, was the relationship between the operation of the **Victoria** from Liverpool, and the Birkdale, Southport & Preston Company's charter of the **Adela** ? One link was clearly the firm of Doward, Dickson and Company who were involved in the management of both ships. This link is underlined by the fact that elements of the **Victoria's** intended schedule were included within the **Adela's** programme of sailings from the beginning of June onwards. A more intriguing question, however, is whether the Birkdale, Southport & Preston Company, through its charter of the **Adela**, was the factor which alerted Captain Campbell to Liverpool's possibilities as a new sphere of operation. It is unlikely that we shall ever discover the answer to this question.

Early Days

While the **Victoria** was making her brief abortive appearance at Liverpool, the **Adela** was settling into her position at Southport. During May 1890 the **Adela's** sailings followed no clear pattern but did, with one exception, focus on the routes and destinations that were to figure in her schedule for the remainder of the season.

After the **Adela's** inaugural sailing to Llandudno, she made a further eight day excursions to the Welsh resort during May, two of these being extended to Menai Bridge. Her destination was Liverpool and/or New Brighton on six occasions, and she sailed to Blackpool on six excursions from Southport. The Liverpool and Blackpool trips were usually, although not exclusively, afternoon excursions and during the latter half of May it was usual for the **Adela** to offer a non-landing excursion, usually to Liverpool Bar Lightship, in the mornings of the days when afternoon sailings were advertised.

Little out of the ordinary appears to have occurred to break the routine of the **Adela's** comings and goings during this period. The only incident to attract the attention of the local press was an accident which befell a local tradesman on 18th May. It seems that he, along with others, had decided to leap from the **Adela** on to the pierhead as the ship approached and before she was made fast. Unfortunately he lost his footing, fell into the water and was drawn under the paddle wheel. It was possible to stop the **Adela's** engine and the traffic manager Mr J. Carr and a member of the crew named McNiel were able to rescue the man who was found to have suffered several injuries to the head and face and was in a semi-conscious state. As one of the reports of the incident stated: *"this gentleman ... was indeed fortunate that the tide did not carry him or that the engines had not stopped when it did* (sic) *or the results might well have been fatal."* Doubtless the directors were relieved that the opening days of the **Adela's** service from Southport had not been marred by tragedy.

The main events during May were the introduction by various owners of other steamers intended to sail from Southport. During 1890 five separate concerns operated pleasure steamers from Southport pier. Apart from the Birkdale, Southport & Preston Steamship Company there were two established Blackpool companies and two Southport based one-ship operators which had been formed in the hope of breaking the Blackpool monopoly.

Southport Hopefuls

The older of the two Southport concerns was the Southport Steamship Company Limited which owned the **Cambria**. This company had been formed at the end of May 1889 and in the following month had purchased the paddle steamer **Cambria** from Thomas Redhead, a Birkenhead shipowner, for £3,500. As the Birkdale, Southport & Preston Company was to discover, the promoters found that there was little enthusiasm on the part of investors for Southport-based pleasure steamers and little more than £1,300 was subscribed by the public. Consequently the purchase of the **Cambria** had been financed by £1,000 in cash; the transfer to Thomas Redhead and his son William of 1,000 shares in the company; and a mortgage of £1,500 secured on the **Cambria**. While the Redheads did not control a majority of the company's shares they must have been the dominant force in the company's management.

The Southport Steamship Company was the original *"Why can't Southport have a boat of its own?"* company. During the **Cambria's** inaugural sailing in June 1889 Mr Peter Scarlett, the company secretary and a prime mover in its formation, had stated that *"they had not started in any spirit of hostility towards their neighbours in Blackpool or elsewhere, but felt that Southport had now attained that position where she should have a boat of her own."* Unfortunately the owners of Blackpool's North Pier did not view the **Cambria's** arrival in the same light and placed a prohibitively high toll on the landing of passengers from the **Cambria** at their pier. Whilst the other pier at Blackpool, the South Pier, did not adopt similar tactics, the fact remained that the North Pier was the only pier at Blackpool which could be approached at all states of the tide. This placed the **Cambria** at a serious disadvantage when sailing to what must have been one of her more popular destinations.

The **Cambria** had been built at Preston in 1879 and was essentially a paddle tug. At only 118 feet in length she was somewhat smaller than the other vessels operating from Southport. Thomas Redhead had purchased her from a Gibraltar owner in 1884 and the following year had equipped her with a deck saloon to improve her suitability for pleasure sailings. Whilst the **Cambria** probably reverted to tug work during the winter months, Redhead used her for pleasure trips from Rhyl along the North Wales coast in the summer. During the 1889 season the **Cambria's** programme of sailings from Southport had concentrated on the short-distance excursions to Blackpool (when tidal conditions at the South Pier allowed) and non-landing cruises to Liverpool Bar Lightship. In addition she made a regular weekly trip to Llandudno on

Wednesdays and occasional trips to Barrow-in-Furness. During the first part of the 1889 season excursions to New Brighton and Liverpool had been offered once or twice each week, but these became infrequent from mid July.

At the end of September 1889 Mr Scarlett announced that the Southport Steamship Company had had a successful season, promised a dividend and intimated that the directors had ambitious plans for an expansion of the company's operations in 1890. The comment about ambitious plans was accurate enough but the promise of a dividend seems to have been optimistic. During July 1890 the shareholders were complaining, in the pages of the *Southport Visitor*, that they had yet to see a set of accounts, let alone a dividend.

An outline of the plans for the 1890 summer season was revealed in November 1889 when the Southport Steamship Company invited applications for the unsubscribed capital. The proposal was that the company would take over pleasure steamer operations at Rhyl and Dublin which the Redheads were said to own, transfer the **Cambria** to Rhyl and acquire a new steamer for Southport. The invitation fell on deaf ears for little, if any, new capital was subscribed. Consequently it was the **Cambria** which arrived back at Southport pier for the 1890 season.

The **Cambria's** opening trip of the summer on Thursday 22nd May 1890 was a trip from Liverpool to Southport with a party of invited guests. During the passage Mr Scarlett again spoke of his company's hopes and plans. If he felt some resentment of the fact that others had jumped on the bandwagon that he had started, he was careful to hide his feelings. Whilst expressing his confidence in the ability of the **Cambria** to 'hold her own' against the opposition arrayed against her, Mr Scarlett expressed the view *"that all steamer companies had a right to be at Southport and it was the duty of all to do the utmost in their power to provide comfort and safety."* He went on to say that he hoped all the companies would succeed and that there would be no bickering or unpleasant incidents. In the event the **Cambria's** 1890 programme was less adventurous than that of 1889. She only sailed to Llandudno on one occasion and concentrated on Blackpool, short cruises to the Bar Lightship, and, by way of innovation, sailings to and from Lytham. This latter port was doubtless an attempt to tap a market which was underprovided with steamer excursions.

The other Southport-based competitor for the **Adela** in the 1890 season made her first public sailing on Sunday 25th May. This was the **Cygnus** which had been purchased by Thomas Holden three months previously and was operated by him under the title of the Southport, Preston and Blackpool Steam Packet Company. The **Cygnus** (which was eventually to find her way into David MacBrayne's fleet) was an elderly vessel, having been built in 1854 along with a sister ship named the **Aquila** for a service between Harwich and Antwerp. This service was unsuccessful and in 1857 both ships were acquired (initially on charter) by the Weymouth and Channel Islands Steam Packet Co. Ltd. In 1889 the Great Western Railway took over the Channel Islands service and the **Cygnus** and the **Aquila** were both purchased in July 1889 by Alfred Tolhurst, a Gravesend tug owner. On 1st February 1890 Mr Tolhurst sold the **Cygnus** to Mr Holden. This purchase was partly funded by Mr Tolhurst who lent Mr

Holden £2,000 secured by a mortgage on the **Cygnus**. In May 1890 Mr Holden borrowed a further £1,250 from Edward Beardsworth of Blackburn, again secured by a mortgage on the ship.

Mr Holden arranged for the **Cygnus** to be sailed round from London and, after paying a brief visit to Southport on 11th February, she was laid up until the start of the season. During her call at Southport the **Cygnus** was visited by reporters from the Southport papers. They were struck by her 'beauty', the completeness of her accommodation and the provision of berths for 90 passengers. This last point doubtless led the *Southport Guardian* to comment that *'she seems better adapted for long rather than short journeys'*. The comment on her 'beauty' was probably due to the fact that she possessed a clipper bow - a feature that in the 1890s would have given her a romantic air. Apart from this her appearance might more accurately have been described as 'odd', being dominated by two very thin funnels placed far too close to one another to be attractive.

From the accounts that appeared of her proposed sailings over the next few months the impression can be formed that, having purchased the **Cygnus**, Mr Holden lacked any clear idea as to how to employ her. In February it was announced that the **Cygnus** would be one of three ships providing excursions as well as regular passenger and cargo services between Southport and a wide variety of destinations including the Isle of Man, North Wales, other Lancashire resorts and Scotland. It was also announced that Joseph Wilcock, whom we have already met, would act as traffic manager. Mr Wilcock proved to be no more faithful to the **Cygnus** than he had been to the **Adela** and by the start of the summer sailings he was acting as the Blackpool Pier Company's agent in Southport.

Needless to say the other members of Mr Holden's proposed fleet never materialised and in May 1890 a Blackpool paper reported a *'novel proposal'*. This was the operation of 'marine circular tours' by the **Cygnus**. The idea was that the **Cygnus** would call at several resorts along the Lancashire coast and then head for the Isle of Man and the Clyde before returning her passengers to their starting point. No more was heard of this idea either and later in the month it was reported in Preston that 'a second company' was planning to introduce a steamer between Preston and Douglas. (The first company intended to operate the **Great Western** which had been advertised as sailing between Preston, Douglas and Glasgow.) This 'second company' turned out to be none other than Thomas Holden and the **Cygnus**. As the time of her first sailing approached, the impression was given that the **Cygnus** would concentrate on sailings to Douglas from Southport and Preston with occasional trips to other places.

The first public sailing of the **Cygnus** took place on Sunday 25th May 1890 and was advertised as a day excursion from Southport to Douglas leaving at 8 a.m. and returning from Douglas at 3.30 p.m. This trip was repeated on the following day and the *Blackpool Gazette* took unneighbourly delight in comparing this trip with one made two days earlier by a Manx steamer from Fleetwood. The paper reported: *"The **Mona's Queen** made a splendid run from Fleetwood to Douglas on Saturday, her time being three hours and one minute. The **Cygnus**, the steamer acquired recently by*

a Southport company, took six and a half hours on Monday to steam from Southport to Douglas with 60 passengers on board."

Sailings made by the **Cygnus** were not advertised consistently and so we do not have a full picture of what the ship did during the 1890 season. The idea of sailing to the Isle of Man however, seems to have been quickly abandoned and only one run was made to Douglas from Preston (7th June), and perhaps two or three from Southport. Thereafter the **Cygnus** seems to have offered trips to Llandudno from Southport and Preston as well as shorter trips. On 19th July, for instance, she was advertised to run from Southport to Blackpool in the morning and to the Bar Lightship in the afternoon - hardly suitable employment for a vessel of her type.

Blackpool Establishment

There were two well established fleets based on the two piers at Blackpool which were ranged against Southport's three pleasure steamers - the **Adela**, **Cambria** and **Cygnus**.

The larger of these fleets was linked with Blackpool's North Pier. As this had been Blackpool's first pier it was owned by a company called the Blackpool Pier Company which, in 1890, was considered to be one of the most successful and profitable pier companies in the country. As the more fashionable of Blackpool's two piers it was famous for the range of entertainments and diversions provided - this being reflected in the toll of one (old) penny charged for admission. As a steamer pier it had a further advantage over its rival in that it could, at least in theory, be used for landing passengers at all states of the tide. In practice, however, it was not unknown for steamers to run aground whilst trying to berth at very low tides.

Unusually for pier companies the Blackpool Pier Company owned two pleasure steamers - the **Clifton** and the **Queen of the Bay**. The **Clifton** had been built in 1871 whilst the **Queen of the Bay**, a slightly larger steamer, was some three years younger. Illustrations show that both steamers were flush decked and there is reason to suspect that they had been built as dual purpose ships which could serve as tugs during the winter and pleasure steamers in the summer.

The pier company also had arrangements with certain steamer owners permitting their vessels to sail from the North Pier at special rates. In 1890 it seems that arrangements of this nature had been made with the Morecambe Steamboat Company in respect of its vessel **Roses**, and with the Liverpool firm of W. & T. Jolliffe. The Jolliffes were tug owners and their fleet included three ocean-going tugs named **Great Britain, Great Emperor** and **Great Western**. It seems that throughout the 1880s one or other of these ships found fairly regular summer employment sailing from the North Pier. The exclusiveness of these arrangaments was protected, as we have seen in the case of the **Cambria**, by placing prohibitive tolls on the landing of passengers by other steamers.

The service from Southport offered by the Blackpool Pier Company was limited. Prior to 1890 it had concentrated on the Southport to Blackpool run and short

non-landing cruises, with only an occasional long distance excursion. For the 1890 season the company restricted itself almost exclusively to Blackpool sailings. One of its steamers, usually the **Clifton**, was based at Southport and provided a daily service to Blackpool leaving at nine in the morning and returning at four in the afternoon. An afternoon cruise landing at Blackpool was offered on most Sundays and non-landing cruises to view the Blackpool seafront were often run on weekdays, presumably whilst the trippers who had been brought across from Blackpool were ashore at Southport. The **Queen of the Bay** tended to be associated with these excursions. There is no record of the **Roses** having sailed to or from Southport during 1890 - presumably she concentrated on sailings between Blackpool and Morecambe. The only exceptions to this pattern were a Blackpool sailing which was extended to Barrow on 15th June and an excursion to Douglas taken by the **Great Emperor** on 7th September.

During the course of the season the Blackpool Pier Company came in for some criticism. On 20th September the *Temperance Chronicle* ran an item on Southport in its 'Holiday Jottings' column. While the writer found Southport to be a pleasant town for a holiday, he was far from impressed by a visit to the pier. He complained that: *"the pier is not to be compared with that at Blackpool. The company charge the maximum amount of money and give the minimum of comfort, and tea or coffee cannot be obtained for love or money; it is not surprising, therefore, that very few, apart from the steamboat traffic, avail themselves of the advantages (?)* (sic) *offered by the pier company. The steamboats appear to be similarly managed: on the one we patronised only intoxicants or gaseous waters could be obtained, and they started and returned with a glorious disregard of their own advertisements which called forth strong remonstrances from many visitors."* Whilst the writer did not identify the steamer on which he sailed, it is almost certain that he was referring to one of the Blackpool Pier Company's vessels.

(to be concluded in the June issue of *'The Bulletin'*)

This article originally appeared some years ago (in an abbreviated form) in ***Clyde Steamers****, the journal of the Clyde River Steamer Club, whose Editor kindly gave permission for it to be reprinted in 'The Bulletin'.*

JUST FANCY THAT!

In 1877, one Katherine Ledoux published a slim volume called *'Ocean Notes for Ladies'*. Readers were advised to dress sensibly and respectably:

"Accidents, too, and loss of life are possible at sea, and I have always felt that a body washed ashore in good clothes would receive more respect and kinder care than if dressed in those fit only for the rag bag" !

FIFTY YEARS AGO

January, February and March, 1953

compiled by The Editor

The *"Empress of Canada"* Fire

In January 1953 the name **Empress of Canada** was added to the long list of disastrous fires in passenger liners in port or during reconditioning or construction. The vessel was discovered ablaze in the late afternoon of Sunday 25th January whilst lying in the Gladstone Dock, Liverpool. By 10 p.m. that evening she had developed a heavy list and it was decided to stop pumping water on board. Firemen were withdrawn and at 1.38 a.m. the following morning she heeled over on to her port side, having completed the all too familiar cycle from which not even the **Normandie** escaped.

The presence of some 1,200 tons of fuel oil on board the **Empress of Canada** presented problems and to minimise the spread from fractured tanks, booms were laid around the ship. An early start - while the ship was still burning - was made on clearing away loose gear, lifeboats and floating timber etc. A considerable portion of the Gladstone Dock could not be used by other shipping.

Salvage experts said that it would be at least two weeks before they made up their minds as to how to right the burnt-out ship. When the **Empress of Canada**, despite the call off of firemen, slid from the quay and sank on her port side she left the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board with its greatest salvage problem to date. The only comparable job had been the raising of the liner **Matrona**, the former hospital ship **Aba**, at Bidston Dock, Birkenhead. This was achieved by parbuckling after months of preliminary work. It was a salvage feat that brought distinction to the whole of the Dock Board's salvage department whose chief, Captain W.R. Colbeck, played a major role in the planning and execution.

Whilst the **Empress of Canada** was still burning, Captain Colbeck said that salvage would take at least a year and cost about £100,000. The Dock Board's team of divers made a thorough inspection of the liner's submerged port side. One difficulty was her position. She was almost hard up against the quay, having 'flopped' rather than 'slid' when her two funnels and masts gave way at their base as they struck the two-storey shed.

The insurance arrangements were a little complicated. The sum which decided whether the ship was a constructive total loss or not was £1,200,000. Following a survey carried out by representatives of the owners, the underwriters and the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board, it was agreed that the cost of repairing the *'Empress'* after she had been raised would exceed this amount. Canadian Pacific claimed for a constructive total loss and the sum of £1,300,000 was promptly paid by the insurance companies and Lloyd's syndicates directly concerned. This left

*The **Empress of Canada** lying on her port side in Gladstone Branch Dock on Monday 26th January, 1953. The **Empress of France** is astern, with the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board's floating crane **Mammoth** alongside. The Board's tender **Salvor** can be seen pumping water on to the **Empress of Canada's** still smouldering hull.*

£200,000 to be borne by Canadian Pacific, which amount it had elected to retain as its own liability.

The responsibility for raising the ship was now that of the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board which would be able to recoup the expenditure for the salvage operation, as far as was possible, by the proceeds of the sale of the ship after she had been raised.

C.I.D. reports on the fire and summaries of interviews with scores of ship workers were quickly completed and were sent to the Home Office for consideration. Two marine surveyors, appointed by the Ministry of Transport, also took statements on oath from workmen, fire patrols and ship's officers. Following their preliminary enquiries a decision would be made as to whether a public enquiry was needed. The Ministry of Transport required an inspection of the interior of the liner, but it would be a year before she could be righted and dried out.

The loss of the **Empress of Canada** was a serious one to Canadian Pacific which was already short of tonnage and with no new ships expected for delivery until 1956. The Company had heavy Coronation bookings to cope with and re-organisation would be complicated and difficult. On 19th February Canadian Pacific Steamships announced that it had purchased the C.G.T. (French Line) liner **De Grasse** (19,665 tons). This ship was built in 1924 by Cammell Laird at Birkenhead, and extensively modernised in 1947 in the Penhöet yard at St Nazaire. She had a first-class and tourist-class passenger capacity of over 700.

Plans for raising the **Empress of Canada** were approved by the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board at its meeting on 19th March 1953. Devised by Captain W.R. Colbeck, marine surveyor and water bailiff to the Board, the plans were to right the ship by joint means - parbuckling and buoyancy. The job would take about a year and cost more than £200,000. The alternative was to cut the *'Empress'* up where she lay, but after a full consideration of all the factors involved, it had been decided that the quickest and most economical method would be to upright and refloat.

The McCarran-Walter Act

It is not often that United States' legislation finds its way into the pages of *'The Bulletin'*, but readers who called at United States ports in the 1950s and 1960s will no doubt recall the fiasco of 'Crew Immigration muster' on arrival. As Crew Purser of Cunard's **Carinthia** for three years in the early 1960s and responsible for the smooth running of the crew inspection, I have more reason than most to remember the Act.

The United States Immigration and Nationality Act, which under its better known name of the McCarran-Walter Act, became effective on 24th December 1952. It rapidly achieved notoriety and provided that ships' crews must meet the same requirements for inspection and admission to the U.S.A. as must be met by passengers. The Act, which was largely an anti-Communist measure applied on a heroic scale, provided for a general crew muster on the arrival of a ship at a U.S. port.

The delays, curtailment of shore leave and other inconveniences to the owners and crews of ships trading to U.S. ports which were brought about by the enforcement of this law aroused considerable criticism on both sides of the Artlantic.

In a lighter vein, aboard the Cunard liner **Britannic** arriving at New York, an American immigration inspector 'screening' the crew asked a member of the catering department: *"Are you a 'Commi'?" "Not now,"* was the reply, *"but I was for seven years."* The lad had been a Commis Waiter in the liner before being promoted to a more senior post. He got his landing permit!

The new *"Vigilant"*

Sir Rex Hodges, general manager of the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board, referred to the **Empress of Canada** fire when he spoke at a luncheon which followed the launching of the Board's new 600-ton steam tender **Vigilant** from John I. Thornycroft's Woolston yard on 8th February 1953.

Sir Rex expressed the hope that before the **Vigilant** was much older some method would be found of dealing with fires other than by pumping water through the affected ship. On the Mersey during and since the war the Board had had a great deal of experience in fighting ship fires. Sir Rex was confident that one day scientists would find a form of chemical, gas or foam for dowsing a fire and avoiding scuttling.

The new **Vigilant**, which was launched by Lady Hodges, was expected to be ready for service in July. She was to succeed another **Vigilant** in Liverpool Bay, and the older ship had been renamed **Steadfast** to end her 42 years' career.

The new ship would be used for buoyage supervision, salvage work, surveying, fire fighting and other duties. Her heavy bow casting was capable of taking a load of 100 tons. She provided accommodation for 50 officers, engineers, surveyors and crew.

Docking at New York without tugs

A ten-day strike of the 3,500 men who operated the 450 tugs in New York harbour ended on 15th February, 1953. Although the strike caused great inconvenience to the port and the city, it was responsible for some spectacular docking feats by large passenger liners which were normally brought alongside the piers with the aid of up to twelve tugs.

Among the ships which docked under their own power were the **Queen Mary** (81,237 tons gross), the **Caronia** (34,183 tons), the **Ile de France** (44,356 tons) and the **Constitution** (23,719 tons). These great vessels had to be eased into their narow berths against currents and against winds of up to 35mph. That this delicate and difficult operation was not without its risks was demonstrated by the **Caronia** which, returning from a West Indies cruise, rammed Pier 88 - as she came alongside she tore a 30ft gash in its concrete balcony. The vessel herself suffered no damage.

Incidents such as these caused some concern to the city authorities and there was talk of using the Staten Island ferry to take passengers off Atlantic liners. However, the **Queen Mary**, under the command of Captain D.W. Sorrell, gave a great

*The **Queen Mary** docking at Pier 90, New York, without the aid of tugs in February, 1953.*

crowd of riverside spectators an impressive demonstration of controlled power when she was safely docked, at a second attempt, at Pier 90.

The space between Piers 88 and 90 is about 350 feet and the **Queen Mary** had an overall length of 1,019 feet and a beam of 118 feet. The weather was poor with gusty winds. On the first attempt, veering in from the middle of the North River, she had progressed some 200 feet into her berth when it seemed possible that her stern might foul the end of the pier. Captain Sorrell backed her out into the river again for a better angle of approach. The 90-minute manoeuvre was eventually acomplished with the help of a ship's boat from the **Caronia** which carried land lines to the **Queen Mary**.

The *"Skirmisher's"* Bell

For more than sixty years the Cunard passenger tender **Skirmisher** was a familiar sight on the River Mersey and when her long career came to an end in 1945 many salutes and farewells came from those who had known her along the Liverpool waterfront. In January 1953 her bell found a permanent resting place in the Merchant Navy Chapel in the recently re-consecrated Church of Nicholas, the 'Sailors' Church', within sight of which the **Skirmisher** went about her daily duties on the Mersey.

The Cunard Line's passenger tender ***Skirmisher***

Built at Clydebank in 1884 by J. & G. Thomson, forerunners of John Brown & Company, the **Skirmisher** attended many famous Cunarders during her long life. Although she never made a voyage to New York, in her work as a passenger tender she probably carried more 'Atlantic' passengers than any vessel afloat. She was present at two memorable events in the 1890s. In 1894 she acted as escort to Queen Victoria's yacht at the opening of the Manchester Ship Canal, and three years later attended the **Campania** at the naval review at Spithead.

Perhaps the **Skirmisher's** most noteworthy exploit might have had a fatal ending. During the First World War, 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. The idea 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.

(see also *"Salute to the Skirmisher"*, *The Bulletin*, June 2001, page 48)

An Ellerman veteran

The remarkable features of the post Second World War Ellerman cargo liners, in particular their high speed, naturally had their effects on the slower units of the fleet, particularly if they were too old to compare with the new ships for economy. So the veteran **City of Norwich** was sold in March 1953 to Italian-Panamanian buyers who considered that she was still good for further service. The **City of Norwich** was built by Grays of West Hartlepool as long ago as 1913 and at that time was regarded as something like the ideal cargo liner. Her gross tonnage was 6,726 and her deadweight capacity over 10,500 tons. A triple expansion engine by the Central Marine Engine Works gave her a speed of 13 knots and was fed by three boilers which were fitted with dual-firing after the First World War. The year 1913 saw cruiser sterns introduced to all the Ellerman companies with the **City of Norwich** having the first in the Hall Line's fleet.

During the 1914-18 war the **City of Norwich** was left in her owners' service until she came under the Liner Requisition Scheme. She was a lucky as well as an efficient ship and kept out of trouble admirably. Even when she stranded on Fire Island Beach, New York, in 1926, she came off the same day with Coastguard assistance. In the summer of 1930 the **City of Norwich** was laid up for a time in the Tyne, but was hard at work again long before the outbreak of the Second World War.

In that war she was soon taken up by the Department of Sea Transport and carried troops and munitions under Captain Griffiths Roberts who was decorated for his work. The **City of Norwich** sustained many air attacks and between Greece and Crete in 1941 she brought down a Junkers **88** and another in the French North African operations in 1942. A year later she had a very near miss which was probably the cause of a fractured shaft soon afterwards, although she reached Madras in safety.

Her new owners renamed the **City of Norwich** as the **Marinucci** and she sailed under the flag of Panama for six years before finally being broken up at Yokohama in 1959.

Parliament and the Coronation Review

At every Royal Naval Review for many years passenger liners have been chartered for the accommodation of Members of Parliament, generally one ship for the House of Lords and another one for the House of Commons. In 1953, however, the shortage of British passenger tonnage was making itself felt and it was announced in March that the Government had only been able to charter ships for a proportion of the Lords and Commons, and it was hoped to accommodate the balance in warships. In more than one warship employed to carry Government guests in recent reviews the victualling had been none too good, and complaints were anticipated from the honourable and noble members of the two Houses if they were offered the somewhat spartan fare with which the naval officer of the 1950s had to be satisfied. However, even a few hours' experience of the internal economy of a warship and the views and functions of her officers might have been of great advantage to our legislators.

TWO NOTABLE NAVAL VISITS TO THE MERSEY

by L.N.R.S. Vice-Chairman Gordon Bodey

At about 10 a.m. on Thursday 12th April 1906 there arrived in the Mersey the Japanese battleship **Katori**, with the tug **Blazer** in attendance. To the amusement of the many interested and knowledgeable spectators gathered at the Liverpool landing stage and on Seacombe promenade to view the arrival, it was observed that the **Katori's** spacious decks were strung across with lines, pegged to which was a wide variety of the crew's laundry fluttering in the breeze.

The **Katori** was one of two sister ships (although varying slightly from each other in dimensions, displacement and bunker capacity) then completing in this country for the Imperial Japanese Navy, the other being the **Kashima**. Whereas the **Kashima** was completing at Elswick on the Tyne, the **Katori** had been built by Vickers at Barrow and had left there the day before her arrival in the Mersey. Her forty mile passage from Barrow to the Mersey Bar had taken only three hours or so but on arrival at the Bar at about five p.m. on 11th April the area was found to be quite foggy. The pilot decided that with a combination of fog and a spring tide occurring an hour or so after midnight, the **Katori** would be safer at anchor at the Bar until the following day.

The **Katori's** displacement was 15,950 tons and her main armament consisted of four twelve-inch and four ten-inch guns. Twelve six-inch guns comprised her secondary armament. She was also equipped with sundry smaller calibre guns, and five eighteen-inch submerged torpedo tubes. Although variously listed as 'battle-cruisers', these ships were only on a par with the two British pre-Dreadnought 'Lord Nelson'-class battleships delivered at this time (and soon to be superseded). Their designed speed was a modest 18½ knots. They were in no way comparable with the true battle cruisers that were to come into service with the Royal Navy just two years later, much less the Japanese Navy's **Kongo** [1] of seven years later.

When fully commissioned, the **Katori's** complement was to be 946, but at this time she was manned by a total of 150 officers and key crew members (part of a contingent of 600 that had arrived in London on 25th March). Her commander was Captain Sakamoto who spoke excellent English.

Because it was deemed necessary to have her hull cleaned prior to her sea trials, the **Katori** had been sent from her builders to be dry-docked at Birkenhead. Having been brought up the Mersey the **Katori** arrived off the Alfred Lock at 10 a.m. and was held in the tideway by the tug **Blazer** until 12.30 (the afternoon tide was at 1.30 p.m.), when she was taken into the West Float and thence into No.3 graving dock.

A full programme of events had been pre-arranged for her crew's enlightenment and entertainment - though whether some of them were comprehensible.

[1] *The **Kongo** was built and engined by Vickers at Barrow (completed August 1913). As built she had a displacement of 27,500 tons and a service speed of 27½ knots.*

let alone entertaining, is debatable. This programme commenced as soon as the **Katori** was in dry dock; the crew being taken off to Port Sunlight to be shown the process of soap manufacture. The same evening, eight officers and 137 men were taken to Birkenhead's Hamilton Square Station, and thence by electric train to Central Station, Liverpool. From there they marched in strict naval order to the Mersey Mission to Seamen in Hanover Street for a lantern slide show and lecture on the life of Nelson. The main show was followed by some slides of Japanese scenes at which the gathering, until then impassively attentive, became visibly animated. On arrival at the Mission, gifts of apples, oranges and cigarettes were distributed to the men, with tea and cakes being provided after the show.

The following day, Friday 13th April 1906, the **Katori** was open to the public between 12.30 and 4.30 p.m. Visitors were allowed free access to the whole ship and, curiously, the only restriction was against taking cameras on board. These had to be deposited in a shed on the quay. It seems that this may have been due to superstition as the reason given was that people who had been on board should not carry away *'counterfeit presentments'* made on the ship.

A few of the crew were said to have a smattering of English, but they all had a small English/Japanese phrase book with which they were expected to answer a barrage of visitors' questions. It was soon realised that this method of trying to foster goodwill was hopeless and was abandoned; instead the crew opted to stand about smoking and looking affable. In all, some 5,400 people flooded aboard the **Katori** at one shilling per head - the proceeds going to the Protestant and Catholic Police Court Aid Societies. The only sour note was struck by advertisements on the Birkenhead trams which implied that the vessel would be open to the public for some days: thousands turned up over the weekend - on the trams - but were turned away.

On Saturday morning almost the entire crew went for an hour's ride on the Liverpool Overhead Railway after which they immediately departed for Southport. Having spent the afternoon enjoying the run of the town, the petty officers and ratings had tea at the zoological gardens, while the officers dined with the Mayor, Mr Bibby Hesketh.

Sunday, of course, constituted a rest day, if only because places of public entertainment and other diversions would not have been open, and the crew were free to explore the very pleasant and still largely rural surrounding area of Bidston.

Two excursions were arranged for the crew for Monday 16th April - both of which may well have proved incomprehensible to them: some were taken to the Eisteddfod then being held at Chester (it must be assumed that a sight-seeing tour of the city also took place); the rest were taken in the afternoon to Goodison Park, the home of Everton, to watch a football match. [2]

[2] Everton, half way in the table (and with other events on their minds) were playing Manchester City in the last league game of the season and were soundly beaten. Liverpool, leading the table, lost away to Bolton Wanderers. The one team that could have deprived Liverpool of the title of Champions was Preston North End - they lost! Everton's preoccupation that week was with the F.A. Cup Final - having beaten Liverpool in the semi-final - in which they were to play Newcastle on the following Saturday at Crystal Palace, London. They won!

Also on Monday, whilst the crew were engaged elsewhere, Captain Sakamoto and his officers (in uniform) attended a reception given by the Japanese Consul, Mr Paul Hemelryk and his wife at their home, Woolton Heys, between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. A large number of influential guests and their wives were also present. During the reception a musical entertainment was given by Chieftain Ranginia (a Maori Chief) in full native costume who sang Maori songs, and also English and Scottish ballads as if reared on them!

Those of the crew (75) who had had the dubious pleasure of the football match were joined at 6.30 p.m. by some of their officers at the Hippodrome in West Derby Road for the evening performance. The first attraction was a bioscope film (early silent moving pictures) showing naval drill on a Japanese ship, which brought the Japanese to their feet cheering. However, the main part of the show was given over to a farce entitled *'The Importance of Being Another Man's Wife'* [?] - but there was a clog dancer on later!

On Tuesday 17th April the **Katori's** captain and officers were given an official luncheon by the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Liverpool at the Town Hall at 1.30 p.m. Later, starting from the Pier Head at 3.30 p.m., the crew were given a tramcar tour of the city. Arriving back at the Town Hall at 5.45 p.m. they also dined with the Lord Mayor, and afterwards were conducted to the Empire Theatre for the evening performance of another variety show.

Both the Lord Mayor's luncheon and the Consul's reception were reciprocated on Wednesday 18th April when the Mayor and Mayoress, and Mr and Mrs Hemelryk, visited the **Katori** at 11 a.m. as guests of Captain Sakamoto and his officers. They were given a tour of the ship and afterwards took luncheon in the wardroom. That evening the Japanese Consul gave a farewell banquet to Captain Sakamoto and his officers (and their guests) at the [old] Adelphi Hotel, which was then renowned throughout the country for its cuisine.

Also on the Wednesday evening the crew marched from the ship in full naval order, led by the band and boys of the Wallasey Sea Training Home, to Birkenhead's Argyll Theatre Music Hall where they were entertained to a performance of *"Jail Birds"* by Fred Karno's comedians. As they were almost entirely non-English speaking, their reaction to the performance may well have been one of utter bewilderment.

At 2 p.m. on the afternoon of Wednesday 18th April the **Katori** left the dry dock and tied up in the Alfred Basin preparatory to moving into the Mersey the following morning. This she did at 8 a.m. and without further ado sailed for the Clyde and her sea trials. Here she was to remain for almost a month before sailing for Japan, which she reached in early August.

The following year, on Tuesday 6th August 1907, one of the most stirring sights ever seen on the Mersey was witnessed by many thousands of people lining both banks of the river; the promenade from Seacombe to beyond New Brighton, which offered the

best vantage, was a solid mass of people. The morning had started in glorious sunshine and the day being warm, few had coats or umbrellas. Most had been at their viewing points for some time to ensure getting a place and making certain that they would see the coming spectacle should it arrive prematurely. Shortly after 9 a.m. an ominous large cloud loomed over the Mersey and rain started to spatter down before increasing to a torrent which persisted for some fifteen minutes. Even then the majority were reluctant to move but were to be justly rewarded for their soaking.

Just after 9.20 a.m. the rain eased off and through the thin mist hanging over the river entrance emerged the awaited spectacle like a grey thunder cloud looming over the horizon. The approaching cloud was, in fact, the main body of heavy ships of the Channel Fleet under the command of Admiral Lord Charles Beresford. A total of fourteen battleships and three light cruisers swung round in an arc in line astern as they approached the Crosby Channel, and then into a straight line as they proceeded up the channel, forming a column some five miles long. As the naval squadron hove into sight on the flood tide, the sun came out and the waiting crowds were at first awestruck and then ecstatic at the sight of the approaching vessels.

As was the custom in the Royal Navy at the time, ships manoeuvred with great precision when moving en masse, and these 'evolutions' were practised constantly to achieve perfection. This occasion was no exception: each ship was equidistant from its next in line; each ship proceeded at exactly the same speed; and each ship kept its precise course in the wake of the ship ahead.

This progress, steaming easy, continued until the leading vessel, the battleship **Illustrious** (Rear-Admiral R.S. Lowry) was abreast the training ship **Conway** (anchored just above Rock Ferry), and the rearmost ship, the battleship **Vengeance**, was abreast New Brighton pier. This was at precisely 10.15 a.m. and the tide had just begun to ebb (thus avoiding the necessity of turning the vessels in the tideway). Simultaneously, every ship dropped anchor. Seven battleships lay from the Sloyne (off Cammell Lairds) to the Wallasey cattle stage (the flagship of Admiral Lord Charles - **King Edward VII** - was opposite the cattle stage), followed by the three cruisers and then the other battleships; the one immediately astern of the cruisers was the **Hibernia** [3] (Vice-Admiral Sir R. Custance).

The Mersey Docks and Harbour Board's tender **Galatea** had left the landing stage at 9 a.m. carrying the Lord Mayor and Mr Robert Gladstone (Chairman of the Dock Board), and a party of dignitaries out past New Brighton to get a grandstand view of the squadron's approach and, after it had anchored, to board the flagship to welcome the visitors.

[3] *The line of ships was in the order: battleships - **Illustrious, Triumph, Swiftsure, New Zealand, Britannia, Hindustan, King Edward VII**; the cruisers - **Talbot, Juno** and **Topaze**; battleships - **Hibernia, Dominion, Commonwealth, Africa, Ocean, Jupiter** and **Vengeance**. Some of the vessels' funnels carried white rings (up to three), which was an idea recently borrowed from the Japanese Navy and used to denote the division to which the ship belonged.*

In addition to the naval arrivals, normal mercantile shipping activity proceeded as usual with a profusion of vessels making up and down the river on the tide. Adding to this activity were the frenetic comings and goings of many small craft ferrying members of the public around the anchored ships, as well as the ferry boats weaving their way round them. Also, the naval vessels' own boats were soon in use to ferry officers and crew ashore.

On shore it was no less frenzied: the streets of Liverpool had been decorated not only for the arrival of the Channel Fleet Squadron but also for a great pageant which was about to take place. The streets leading down to the landing stage were thronged with a mass of people either determined to go aboard one of the ships or just viewing the welter of activity on the river.

The Naval visit was to last for three days. It had been arranged to coincide with the commencement of Liverpool's celebrations to mark the 700th anniversary of the granting of its charter by King John.

The Dock Board would not allow the ships to be illuminated with coloured lights, nor would it permit searchlight displays by the ships, which in those days would have been a novelty attraction for the crowds that thronged both sides of the river. In view of the vast volume of traffic navigating the river on each tide this was, perhaps, understandable.

Formal receptions and entertainments were given by the civic authorities which were reciprocated by the Naval staff, and during these functions speeches were made and responded to in the customary manner. Many of these referred to the sabre rattling then being heard from across the North Sea and Britain's determination to maintain her strong defensive shield to counter the threat posed from that quarter. In addition, much informal entertainment also took place and the crew members (there were some eleven thousand in total) were ferried ashore one thousand at a time on a rota basis and, by and large, although hectic, the whole visit was well ordered.

At the start of the visit the Commander in Chief had said that every precaution had been taken to prevent anyone from falling overboard. (It appears that on a previous Naval visit to the Mersey when Admiral Lord Charles Beresford had been present, some visitors had indeed fallen overboard, but with what effect is not known). In the event, many thousands of the public visited the anchored ships without mishap.

On the morning of departure the Squadron was dressed overall and was ready to sail by 11 a.m. - thirty-nine minutes before high tide. As another vast concourse of spectators watched eagerly, all the ships weighed anchor simultaneously on the stroke of eleven. At 11.10 a.m. a signal gun boomed out from the flagship and all the ships dipped their ensigns in unison. Twelve minutes later the squadron was seen to be gathering way at slack water; each vessel being reportedly exactly 400 yards from the next in line. By 11.35 a.m. the foremost vessel, **Vengeance**, had passed from sight and the rearmost, the **Illustrious**, was passing the landing stage. Trailing in the squadron's wake was the steam yacht **Surprise** carrying Lady Beresford and her party.

Two hours later the Squadron arrived at its next port of call - Blackpool. |||||

Sources: 'Jaynes Fighting Ships of World War I', Liverpool Echo, Liverpool Daily Post & Mercury.

THE L.N.R.S. AWARD, 2002

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society Award was launched in 2002 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 to provide for an award of £200 to be competed for by students at any level in higher education.

Competitors are required to submit papers of not less than 1,500 words and not more than 2,000 words on historical or contemporary topics in the maritime industries. Particular consideration is given to work dealing with maritime Merseyside: its past, present or possible future.

The 2002 Award has been won by Sid Wilson, a student at Liverpool Hope University College. There now follows a synopsis of his winning paper:

THE DEVELOPMENT AND ROLE OF THE ORGANIZATIONS CONCERNED WITH THE WELFARE OF SEAMEN ON THE MERSEY, 1820 - 1970

by Sidney David Wilson

By the middle of the 19th century Liverpool had grown from a tiny fishing village, so insignificant that it was not mentioned in the Domesday Book, to one of the world's greatest ports. In 1825 the vessels discharging in Liverpool averaged 4·2 ships per day, with a total of 56 crewmen. By 1865 this had increased to 34·4 vessels, with a total of 513 seamen being 'paid-off' per day. To accommodate these seafarers, lodging houses, most of them disreputable, sprang up in Liverpool's docklands, along with brothels, gin shops and alehouses.

The vice, extortion, drunkenness and lawlessness on the waterfront was becoming of increasing concern to the Police, City Fathers, Churches and the 'Polite Society' that was emerging in the early 1800s and, not surprisingly, it was the religious institutions that took the first steps in improving the lot of the seafarer, and it was the Liverpool Non-Conformists who initiated the first concerted attempt to address the problems which seafarers encountered.

A Baptist minister, the Reverend George Smith, and other Liverpool Non-Conformists founded the Liverpool Seamen's and Migrants' Friend Society in 1820. Smith had already established a floating chapel on the Thames in 1819, and in 1821 the Society obtained a Liverpool-built whaler, **The William**, and had her converted into a floating chapel capable of accommodating up to one thousand worshippers.

Although the Society had a primary function of 'mission', it became more concerned about the general welfare of sailors, and agents worked from 'Bethels' in Bath Street, Wapping and Wellington Street.

John Finch, a prominent social worker wrote to his friend, the pioneering co-operative worker Robert Owen, proposing: *"to rent or purchase a large building to be*

converted into proper apartments for store rooms, ... and other conveniences for board and lodging for at least 500 sailors." Little became of these proposals, and the Society continued working out of the Bethels until 1900 when it opened the Gordon Smith Institute in Paradise Street.

The Mariners' Church Society had been founded in 1826 with the Reverend William Scoresby being the prime mover, and in 1827 the Admiralty presented the Society with an old ship of the line, HMS **Tees**, which Scoresby converted into a floating chapel and this was to serve as a place of worship until 1872.

A major step forward into providing spiritual, moral and practical welfare to mariners came in 1856, when the Mersey Mission to Seamen was established. Mr W.G.H. Kingston had been instrumental in establishing the Society for Promoting Missions to Seamen the previous year, and the Society tasked him with investigating the possibility of forming a mission on Merseyside.

On 22nd November 1856 Kingston made a trip on the Mersey, writing a pamphlet entitled *'A Cruise on the Mersey'* in which he described the conditions that the mariners faced. Two days later a Provisional Committee, which included the Liverpool MP T. Horsfall and the chaplains of the Sailors' Home and the Mariners' Church, proposed that a Mission to Seamen in the Mersey be formed at once.

Kingston stated that the religious principles *"are entirely Church of England"*. However the work undertaken by the Mission was far less doctrinaire in practice; seamen of any race or creed were cared for equally. Kingston chose as his banner for the Mission the 'Flying Angel'; a familiar sight now to seamen worldwide. It was some time before the Mission acquired a permanent home until Liverpool Corporation demolished a number of pubs and houses near the Sailors' Home and advertised the site for sale by auction.

Alexander Balfour, a ship owner and philanthropist, was determined to secure the site for the Mission, contributing £500 himself and his company matched the donation. Public subscriptions raised the £7,050 needed to secure the site and to cover the building costs. The Mission was opened on 10th December 1885 and the building still stands at the corner of Paradise Street and Hanover Street. The Mission moved to the bottom of James Street in 1957 and then out to Crosby in 1982. The Reverend Bob Evans in his delightful book *Mersey Mariners* comprehensively records the work of the Mission.

The Roman Catholic Church had no official centre for seamen until 1924 when a Catholic Seamen's Club was opened in the Sailors' Home. As far back as 1892 a Jesuit priest told a meeting of the Catholic Truth Society in Liverpool that the Catholic seamen *'had a choice between vice and the Protestant Sailors' Home.'*

Peter Anson was instrumental in establishing the Apostleship of the Sea. Anson owned a small boat, the **Stella Maris**; applied the name to the Club, and the name is now known and recognised world-wide. The premises at the Sailors' Home proved to be inadequate and in 1937 new premises were acquired in Bootle and named Atlantic House. This building was requisitioned by the War Office in 1939 and the Stella Maris moved to Great Howard Street.

Both the Flying Angel and the Stella Maris moved from providing pastoral care to more general welfare work, opening holiday homes, arranging social and sporting events and providing retirement homes for seafarers.

The Victorian concept of improving conditions by a mixture of self-help, charity and official intervention manifested itself in Liverpool to a remarkable degree, and the Liverpool Mercantile Marine Service Association (MMSA) was instrumental in establishing a number of initiatives, one of them being the building of the Sailors' Home in Canning Place. Completed in 1845, it was almost completely destroyed by fire in 1860. It was rebuilt and finally closed in 1971. The Trustees formed the Liverpool Sailors' Home Trust which now cares for retired mariners and their families.

The response to the needs of practical help to seamen took two forms. In the first instance there was a feeling that institutions should be established for the general welfare of mariners. Secondly, some societies were established as a result of a specific incident, such as a disaster at sea. One of the latter organisations was the Liverpool Humane Society for the Preservation of Life from Shipwreck. The Society was founded as a direct result arising from the loss of four vessels in the approaches to the Mersey during a great storm in December 1838.

Prior to 1869 there were no institutions caring for the orphans and fatherless of British seamen. The MMSA, chaired by James Beazley, along with Ralph Brocklebank and Bryce Alan, resolved that an institution, the Liverpool Seamen's Orphanage Institution, should be established. The first orphanage opened in Duke Street in 1869, moving to rather grand premises in 1874, and gained Royal patronage. The year book of the Orphanage shows that in 1890 there were 225 boys and 122 girls in residence, with a further 351 children on the Outdoor List. The children were schooled at the Orphanage, with the girls attending Wavertree Technical School on reaching the age of fourteen.

Captain John Clint of the MMSA proposed in 1858 that a training ship be used for the purpose of training boys for a career at sea, and the Admiralty offered the 24-gun frigate HMS **Conway**, followed in 1863 by HMS **Indefatigable**. Preference was given to sons of seamen connected with the Port of Liverpool when vacancies arose.

The health of seamen was causing some concern in the late 19th century. 'West Coast Fever' was common in Liverpool. As a consequence the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine was founded in November 1889, two days before a similar institute in London.

A Sanitary Act of 1825 empowered Liverpool Corporation to quarantine any vessel suspected of carrying infected seamen, and ships were placed in quarantine off Rock Ferry, with piquet boats in position to prevent sailors from slipping ashore.

The local press played its part in campaigning for better conditions for seamen. Hugh Shimmin, proprietor of the *Porcupine* magazine ran a series entitled *'Keeping Watch for The Life of Poor Jack'*. On one occasion Shimmin insinuated that the Liverpool Seamen's Mutual Friend Society, which had been established in 1866, was guilty of rather shady practice. The Society sued Shimmin for libel and despite a

petition from Liverpool MPs and prominent businessmen, Sinnamin was [illegible] guilty and sentenced to thirty days in Kirkdale Jail.

The Victorians introduced a plethora of regulations regarding health, education and schooling, but the churches and charities of Liverpool had the task of administering to a transient population, with all the attendant difficulties. The Church Missions moved on from providing pastoral care to more practical ways of improving the lot of the seaman but in the final analysis there was little they could do if, as in Herman Melville's *Redburn* (1849), the sailor was *"content to lie in Prince's Dock until he hove up anchor for the world to come."* |||||

The presentation of the 2002 Liverpool Nautical Research Society Award to Sid Wilson of Liverpool Hope University College on 20th February, 2003.
Left to Right: Captain M.D.R. Jones (L.N.R.S.); Chairman of the Society David Eccles presenting the Award; Liverpool Hope University College Student Sid Wilson - the 2002 winner; Dr Suzanne Schwarz (Liverpool Hope University College); and Alan McClelland (L.N.R.S.)

photo: John Stokoe

THE MONDAY FACILITY

Members' access to the Archives and Library at the Merseyside Maritime Museum on Mondays continues in 2003 as follows:

MARCH : Mondays 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th and 31st
APRIL : Mondays 7th, 14th and 28th
MAY : Mondays 12th and 19th
JUNE : Mondays 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th

NOTES AND QUERIES

CAPTAIN A. KIDD OF ALFRED HOLT & COMPANY

L.N.R.S. Member John Cook writes:
In the second volume of his *Pioneer Shipowners*, published c.1937, Sir Clement Jones quotes (pp.116 & 117) from the autobiography of Captain Kidd entitled *Jottings from a Sailor's Life*. Unfortunately I have not been able to trace a copy of it as none of the following have one: British Museum Library, National Maritime Museum, Liverpool Central Library, and the Maritime Records Centre at the Albert Dock.

My suspicion is that it was either a manuscript in private hands or an article in a newspaper magazine. Can any reader shed any light on this mystery? My interest in Kidd is that he was an early master in Alfred Holt's steamers in the Bordeaux trade, a trade which he eventually allowed to fall into the hands of William Miles Moss.

If any reader can help Mr Cook, will they kindly get in touch with the 'Bulletin' Editor who will forward the information.

MORE ABOUT THE *'FLYING ENTERPRISE'*:

L.N.R.S. Member Geoff Holmes writes:
On receiving the December *'Bulletin'*, I was immediately intrigued by the **Flying Enterprise** story.

First, the bad news: the **Flying Enterprise** was bound from Rotterdam and Hamburg to New York, and NOT the other way!

Now for the good news. I enclose a photograph of the **Flying Enterprise** (*see below*) taken when she was in service. Photographs of her before the epic are few and far between.

When the epic took place I had an interest in ships and I avidly followed the story in the newspapers. This was the first time, with the possible exception of the **Morro Castle** disaster, that the world's press 'got their teeth' into a shipping story as it happened. A reporter on one of the Fleet Street tabloids - either the *Daily Graphic* or the *Daily Express* - realised that the **Flying Enterprise** was within aircraft range of Cornwall and chartered a plane to fly out and a photographer took the graphic (sorry for the pun!) pictures which featured in the national press. A letter to Isbrandtsen resulted in my receiving the **Flying Enterprise** photograph.

One aspect of the **Flying Enterprise** saga that you did not mention is the rumour that the U.S. Government did not want her salvaged because of sensitive cargo on board. However it must be remembered that in December 1951 the Armistice in Korea was only five months old and the Cold War was at its height. Therefore such rumours were prevalent at that time.

*The "**Flying Enterprise**"* *Photo: Geoff Holmes Collection*

During my sea-going career I sailed with a number of deep-sea tugmen. One story I have heard from several different sources is that Kenneth Dancy had no intention of joining Captain Carlsen on board the **Flying Enterprise**, but he missed his footing on the stern grating ('fantail') of the **Turmoil** and grabbed the **Flying Enterprise's** rail in preference to going overboard!

L.N.R.S. Member Captain Brian Luke writes:

Upon her departure from Hamburg, the **Flying Enterprise's** cargo was largely made up of some 1,300 tons of pig-iron, antique furniture, automobiles, several hundred Swiss typewriters, Swiss watches and some 900 tons of coffee, plus a quantity of mails. The coffee had been transhipped in the German port. There were also ten passengers, including both women and children, on board. Some $3 million in American and British currency was also being carried.

The weather into which the **Flying Enterprise** sailed during those last days of 1951 was as bad as anything experienced on the North Atlantic for a quarter of a century or more. Captain Harry Grattidge, bringing the 81,000 ton **Queen Mary** into Southampton 72 hours late on 29th December described the seas as 'terrific' and indicated that he had had the worst double crossing for more than 30 years.

The first incident in the saga of the **Flying Enterprise** took place on Christmas night when structural damage to the hull was seemingly suffered. One of the crew members, describing what happened, said: *"There was a tremendous noise and I was told the hull had cracked."*

Captain Carlsen decided to heave-to and this situation continued for two days when the vessel was struck by a large sea which rolled her over to port. When she failed to right herself, Captain Carlsen realised that the cargo had shifted and there was little hope of bringing the vessel upright again. An ingress of water had also apparently taken place through the fractures in the hull, situated just forward of amidships.

Around the time of the incident a wind speed of 97mph was registered in the Scilly Isles. On the North Devon coast sea spray reached a Coastguard station situated on cliffs some 315 feet above sea level.

Other vessels on the scene during the initial stages of the saga included the U.S. Navy transport **Golden Eagle** which stood by for some 27 hours; also the **Westfal Larsen** which pumped oil to prevent seas from breaking near to the **Flying Enterprise** during the evacuation of the passengers and crew to the **Sherbourne** and the **Southland**. The U.S. military transport **General Greely** also took part in the difficult rescue operation and one of her lifeboats was damaged in a collision with a boat from the **Southland**.

The U.S. destroyers **John W. Weeks** and **Willard Keith**, together with the French tug **Abeille** and the British tugs **Dexterous**, **Englishman** and **Merchantman** all played some part in the days before the sinking.

Captain Carlsen is reported to have said the following when it was suggested, early on in the drama, that he should leave his vessel: *"We Captains, when entrusted with a large amount of dollars' worth of cargo and mails should look after them as being our responsibility. We cannot go away and leave it. We must live up to that responsibility, and so I stay with my ship."*

After the sinking of the **Flying Enterprise** both Captain Carlsen and Kenneth Dancy received a hero's welcome when they eventually landed at Falmouth. Captain Carlsen eventually flew home to New York and a ticker-tape welcome down Broadway where some 450,000 New Yorkers turned out to welcome him. He was embarrassed by all the fuss, especially on his return to New York. He indicated that he was only a seaman who had done his job, and in his own estimation had failed somewhat because he had lost his ship. In contrast, Kenneth Dancy was driven home to Kent from Falmouth in the sidecar of his brother's motorcycle!

MORE ABOUT THE *'QUEEN ELIZABETH'*

L.N.R.S. Chairman David Eccles writes:

Normally the engine room required one hour's notice to reduce power slowly from voyage speed to manoeuvring speed. However, the turbines would shut down automatically if the lubricating oil pump stopped. (The turbine steam valve is kept open by lubricating oil pressure, and would re-open automatically when pressure returned).

L.N.R.S. Member John Huxley writes:

I noted with interest the photograph of the Esso tankers refuelling the **Queen Elizabeth** which appeared in the March 2002 edition of *'The Bulletin'*. I was one of three watch-keeping Engineers, known as the 'oil-men', responsible for bunkering and the subsequent distribution of fuel from the tanks to the boiler rooms' ready service systems.

The *'Queens'* each burnt about 1,200 tons of fuel per day, some 12,000 tons a round trip. Normally, 7,000 tons were taken on board in New York during the 24-hour turnround, with 5,000 tons being supplied by Esso via Fawley Refinery in various coastal vessels at Southampton. Total bunker capacity was in excess of 9,000 tons.

The New York stay was always a hectic affair due to the tight timings required to complete on schedule, while the Southampton time span allowed for a more leisurely pace. Often the first refuelling vessel would return to Fawley to reload.

There were over fifty oil tanks to fill but the bunkering programme was a well tried and trusted system. Only one Engineer, assisted by a fireman, was assigned to the task on each watch.

In the early 1960s the engine room complement was made up of some 50 Engineers, 20 Electricians and various grades of plumbers, greasers and firemen, with two writers in the Engineers' office. There was a Chief Engineer, a Staff Chief, three Senior Second Engineers in charge of the watch, three Inter Seconds and three Junior Seconds on watch in the two engine rooms. Three Senior Third Engineers were in the generator room with the Junior Thirds on the oil.

Each of the four boiler rooms had a Fourth Engineer in charge. There was a 'water man', looking after boiler water testing; a 'floater' carrying out general maintenance work; and two juniors in each engine room. There was also a Hotel Services group responsible for air conditioning, refrigeration etc.

The leave pattern for the Engineers was six weeks 'on' and two weeks 'off', but a considerable amount of extra hours were worked for 'stand-bys' etc. However, the food was good and a decent pint of beer was available in reasonable quantities at only a shilling (5p) a pint.

All the Engineers down to the rank of Junior Third had First Class Certificates, mostly steam, but some 'motor' certificates were held by men getting eighteen months 'steam time' in. However, it was becoming increasingly difficult to recruit certificated Engineers for what were routine watch keeping duties even though salaries were comparable, and in some cases exceeded, those offered by similar companies. It must be stated, however, that for people living in the Southampton area it would have been difficult to have found a better trip pattern.

MORE ABOUT THE *'PRINCESS VICTORIA'*

L.N.R.S. Member Captain Graeme Cubbin writes:

I was surprised at the lack of concern shown by the Court of Inquiry for the Rescue Services' unwarranted assumption that the **Princess Victoria** was not making headway because she was "*not under command*". The Rules for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea accept that such a ship may or may not be 'making way through the water', and even prescribe appropriate lights to be carried in either circumstance. The object is to warn other ships that the vessel, for whatever reason, is 'not under command and cannot therefore get out of the way'. However, the **Princess Victioria** might have

been more explicit as to course and speed, though it is notoriously easy to criticise from the comfort of one's armchair.

THE STRANDING OF THE *"PRINCESS MAY"*

The **Princess May** was launched at Hawthorn, Leslie & Company's Newcastle yard in 1888. After a chequered career with the Formosa Trading Company and the Government of China, carrying the names **Cass, Arthur, Ningchow** and **Hating**, she was acquired by the Canadian Pacific Railway in March 1901. She was the first of the CPR coastal vessels to carry the prefix *'Princess'*. The **Princess May** was employed on the route from Vancouver to south-east Alaska. On 5th August 1910 she grounded on Sentinel Island on passage from Skagway to Vancouver.

The former Mersey tug **William Jolliffe** (purchased by the British Columbia Salvage Company in 1907) was sent to assist the **Princess May**.

(see 'The Bulletin', September 2002, page 42)

*The **Princess May** aground on Sentinel Rock, 5th August, 1910.*

OBITUARY : L.N.R.S. MEMBER CYRIL EVANS

It is with much regret that we record the death of L.N.R.S. Member Cyril Evans on 5th November 2002. Cyril died at Douglas, Isle of Man at the age of 87.

Cyril served in the Navy as a Wireless Telegraphist during the War and served in many ships including HMS **Eaglet** from 1940-41. From 1941 to 1943 he was on HMS **Armeria**, serving in the South and North Atlantic, and the North African landings. Cyril's other war service was on board HMS **Ceres** (cruiser), HMS Centurion (block ship, invasion of Normandy) HMS **Versatile** (destroyer) and HMS **Antigua** (colonies class frigate). After the war Cyril became well known for his miniature ship models of vessels of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company.

VICTORY IN THE ATLANTIC, 1943

by Captain S.W. Roskill, RN

The destruction of our shipping was, in both the world wars, the first objective of our enemies. Once this had been achieved starvation and defeat were certain. Small wonder then that the longest, grimmest and hardest-fought battle of the Second World War was that which raged along the great ocean supply routes from the Arctic to the tropics.

In this life-and-death struggle the story of Alfred Holt & Company may stand for that of the whole British Merchant Navy. At the outbreak of war the Holt fleet consisted of 87 ships totalling 700,000 tons. When peace returned, 52 ships - almost two thirds of the great fleet of 1939 - had been lost.

This article is a précis of chapter 12 of Captain Roskill's book 'A Merchant Fleet in War 1939:1945' *which was published in 1962.*

The fourth new year of the Second World War opened with a series of storms which, even for the normally tempestuous North Atlantic, were quite exceptionally violent. They were accompanied by such severe cold that the spray constantly froze as it swept over the labouring merchantmen and escorts, so endangering their stability. The ex-French ship **Ville de Tamatave** (Captain G. Dault, 6,276 tons) was being managed by Alfred Holt & Company on behalf of the Ministry of War Transport, and except for two Radio Officers her crew was entirely French. On 12th January 1943 she sailed outward bound in convoy ONS 160, in which she was serving as Commodore's ship. On 24th January the senior officer of the escort reported that the convoy had been badly scattered by gales, and that the **Ville de Tamatave** had been sighted on her beam ends in a position about 500 miles east of Cape Race. Many other ships were disabled or damaged, and in the prevailing conditions rescue work was quite impossible. Later in the day the tragic news that the **Ville de Tamatave** was lost with all hands, including the Commodore and his staff, was confirmed by another ship in the convoy. This disaster, as regards loss of life, was one of the worst to strike the Holt fleet during the war: and the enemy played no part in it. [1]

Apart from the casualties caused by the storms of January 1943, the month marked the beginning of the crisis in the long Atlantic battle; for the U-boats' strength was still rising much faster than we were sinking them and there was as yet little sign that we had mastered their 'wolf pack' tactics.At the end of January over 100 of these enemies were at sea in the central and north Atlantic, and no less than 37 of them were lying in wait in the 'air gap' to the south of Greenland.

The **Rhexenor** (Captain L. Eccles, 7,957 tons) left Freetown, Sierra Leone, for Saint John, New Brunswick, on 26th January with a full cargo of cocoa, three pass-

[1] *The only occasion on which a heavier loss of life occurred to a Holt ship was the sinking of the* ***Centaur****, when she was serving as a hospital ship, by a Japanese submarine on 14th May 1943.*

engers and a crew of 67. For the first four days she was escorted by the sloop HMS **Bridgewater**, but after midnight on 30th January she proceeded independently. All went well until 6.45 a.m. on 3rd February when the **Rhexenor** was torpedoed on the port side abreast the bridge and quickly began to settle by the head. Captain Eccles at once ordered the alarms to be rung and the boats to be manned. A quick survey of the damage made it plain that the ship was doomed and, having learnt from the wireless office that his submarine attack message had been picked up, he ordered the boats to be lowered. No.2 had been destroyed by the explosion and No.1 was held back to take the last of the crew to leave the ship, but Nos. 3, 5 and 6 got away safely. The Mate, Mr M.J. Case had far-sightedly arranged for all boats to be supplied with a chart and with data from the Nautical Almanac for the current month and he and Captain Eccles both took their sextants with them. Thus the **Rhexenor's** boats were singularly well equipped for a long voyage.

While the boats were being got ready and lowered the submarine surfaced about half a mile away on the port bow and Captain Eccles sensed that it was about to shell his ship. He ordered No.1 boat to be lowered and it was barely clear when the submarine opened fire and after about 20 rounds the **Rhexenor** was ablaze forward and aft. She turned over on her port side and sank at about 8.35 a.m.

The submarine ordered No.5 boat, in charge of Fourth Mate Mr C.W.G. Allen, to come alongside. He was asked where the master was and Mr Allen replied that he couldn't see him in any of the boats and he supposed that he had gone down with his ship. Mr Allen was ordered on board the submarine and told to go up to the conning tower where the captain said he would cruise round all the lifeboats, and if Mr Allen pointed out the master then he (Mr Allen) would be allowed back into his boat. Otherwise Mr Allen must remain on the submarine. And so, with a machine gun trained on him, Mr Allen was taken round all the lifeboats and at each one answered *'no'*. Horrified at the thought of going to Germany, particularly in a U-boat, he was then ordered below.

After the submarine had sailed away Captain Eccles assembled the boats, the numbers were approximately equalised and the third mate was transferred into No. 5 boat to replace Mr Allen. The whole of the crew and the three passengers had got away safely from the **Rhexenor**; each boat now had a navigator; and all were well supplied with food and water. Captain Eccles recommended that, as they were in the zone of the North-East trade winds, they should make for Antigua in the Leeward Islands, which lay about 1,200 miles away to the south-west. The officers agreed to try and keep in touch with each other during the voyage but this proved impossible.

In spite of encountering bad weather at the start, Captain Eccles, who had 19 men in No.1 boat, made excellent progress in the desired direction. When his observations proved that he was making good about 70 miles a day he estimated that he would reach the West Indies in 20 days, and arranged rations of food and water on that basis. At noon on 20th February he made his landfall on Guadeloupe.

Mr M.J. Case, the **Rhexenor's** mate, was in No.4 boat whose complement was 17 men. On the fifth day the wind got up and he had to heave-to, riding by the sea

anchor. The heavy sea and swell caused the rudder to come unshipped, breaking the top gudgeon pin, but repairs were effected with the boat's resources. On 9th February (the seventh day) violent rain storms enabled the water supply to be replenished. On 20th February land was sighted right ahead: it proved to be Antigua, exactly as intended.

No.3 boat which, like Mr Case's boat, had 17 men in it was in charge of Mr W.M. Thomas, second mate of the **Rhexenor**. On 23rd February, the twenty-first day at sea, two aircraft flew overhead and dropped water containers (which were not needed) and cigarettes (which were very welcome). At 9.30 p.m. HMS Commerce found them and escorted them into St Thomas in the Virgin Island group. The boat had made good 1,236 miles - an average run of just under 60 miles per day - which was remarkably good sailing.

The third mate, Mr S.A.G. Covell, who had transferred from No.1 to No.5 boat when Mr Allen was taken prisoner, also had 17 men in his crew. Having his sextant with him and his watch set by the chronometer in the mate's boat he was fairly confident of his navigation, though the accuracy of his longitudes was bound to be rather doubtful. The weather seems to have treated No.5 boat more harshly than the others and during the early days Mr Covell had to heave-to for considerable periods. At 2 a.m. on 23rd February the boat came to anchor in two fathoms off the rocky shore of Jost van Dyke island in the Tobago group.

While the **Rhexenor's** lifeboats were making such good passages westwards Mr Allen, on board U.217, was being taken in the opposite direction. U.217 arrived at Brest on 23rd February 1943.

In the North Atlantic the months of February and March 1943 went very badly for the Allies; for Dönitz was able to concentrate as many as forty U-boats against some convoys and our losses were extremely heavy. However March saw the introduction of two measures which the Admiralty had long planned but which they had repeatedly been forced to postpone when other pressing commitments - in particular the launching of operation 'Torch' - arose. These were the allocation of 'Support Groups' to reinforce the escorts of threatened convoys and the arrival of the first escort carriers to enter the Atlantic battle since the prototype of that class had been sunk in December 1941. The Support Groups, of which there were initially five, consisted of experienced destroyers, sloops and frigates from the Home Fleet and the Western Approaches Command. They were controlled directly by the Commander-in-Chief, Western Approaches, from his headquarters in Derby House, Liverpool and were switched from convoy to convoy as each threat arose.

Convoy ONS 5, originally of 43 ships, started on its westbound voyage on 22nd April 1943 and the **Dolius** (Captain G.R. Cheetham, 5,506 tons) was leading the second column from the port wing. The mid-ocean escort was the very experienced group (known as B 7) commanded by Commander P.W. Gretton, who had his own ship the destroyer HMS **Duncan**, one frigate, five corvettes and two rescue trawlers under his orders. The convoy was sent out by the far north route, which took it near to our naval and air bases in Iceland. But on this occasion the weather was so stormy that

acute difficulties arose over refuelling the escorts from the tanker in the convoy. Thus the Escort Commander was already anxious about the endurance of his ships when, on 28th April, the enemy gained contact and a group of U-boats closed in. The first attack took place on the following morning: one ship was sunk, and Mr G. McMechan, the mate of the **Dolius**, sighted a torpedo approaching his ship. The alarm was sounded and action stations ordered but luckily the torpedo passed about thirty yards astern. The enemy then lost touch and the convoy slowly plodded to the west in atrocious weather. The heavy sea which was running made progress very slow, while snow storms periodically reduced the visibility to zero. However, as one of the air escorts had sunk a U-boat far astern of the convoy and another had been severely damaged by the surface ships' counter attacks, the first round may be said to have been a drawn fight.

The Admiralty was keeping a close watch on the convoy's progress and when the first attacks took place it ordered the 3rd Support Group of five destroyers out from St John's, Newfoundland, to reinforce the escort. But the gales had scattered the merchantmen and forced the convoy virtually to heave to, and it was the evening of 2nd May before the reinforcements made contact. That day the **Dolius's** steering gear gave trouble and she had to fall out of the convoy in order to carry out repairs. Whilst the Master steered with the engines the engineers worked in most difficult conditions owing to the violent motion on the ship. None the less by 6 p.m. the repairs were completed and speed was increased to regain her position in the convoy.

Meanwhile the enemy was also concentrating his forces and had succeeded in placing two groups, totalling no less than 30 U-boats, across the track of the convoy, which was by now some 300 miles to the south of Cape Farewell, the southern tip of Greenland. But gale was still succeeding to gale, icebergs and pack ice were being encountered, and refuelling the escorts was quite impossible.On 3rd May HMS **Duncan** had to leave the convoy and proceed to St. John's. Next day two of the Support Group's destroyers had to follow her; but another Support Group, the 1st, consisting of a sloop, three frigates and an ex-American cutter had been ordered out from St John's to replace them. These, however, had not arrived when the main battle was joined on the evening of 4th May.

Attack and counter-attack followed in quick succession and at 10.40 a.m. on 5th May the **Dolius** was torpedoed on the starboard side amidships. (The very large number of U-boats engaged in this battle makes it impossible to state with any confidence which one sank the **Dolius**). The engine room quickly flooded and she quickly began to settle by the stern. After inspecting the damage Captain Cheetham realised that there was no hope of saving his ship and he ordered the boats to be lowered. As soon as the **Dolius** was hit the corvette HMS **Sunflower** left the convoy and came across to stand by her. The **Sunflower** picked up all the **Dolius's** crew all of whom except three, who had undoubtedly been killed instantaneously in the engine room, were safe.

Captain Cheetham and his officers wrote very warmly about their experiences on board the **Sunflower**, which made *'magnificent efforts for our comfort during our*

enforced stay'. But what interested them most of all was to watch the progress of the battle from an angle which was wholly unfamiliar to them.

"I shall not forget," wrote Captain Cheetham, *"one very anxious hour when the attack was at its height. We could hear the orders being given on the bridge, and the Asdic operator reporting his various contacts. We felt a little shaky when we heard him say that a torpedo was approaching, and then that it had passed under the ship. Five minutes later the guns were firing, then there was a crashing noise and the ship gave a lurch. But we were very much relieved to learn that the* ***Sunflower*** *had rammed a U-boot ..... Needless to say we all felt we had received satisfaction for the loss of our ship by sinking one of the eight or nine enemies destroyed in what was at that time the biggest convoy battle fought in the Atlantic.* [1] *The* ***Sunflower's*** *captain said that it seemed as if all of Germany's submarines were concentrated against this convoy. and estimated that there were at least thirty involved."*

The estimate that eight or nine U-boats were sunk was in fact slightly optimistic, but in other respects the corvette captain's judgement was very near the mark. Though thirteen of the convoy went down (several of them while straggling far astern of the main body, due no doubt to the heavy weather), the escorts had hit back hard and successfully. Seven U-boats were destroyed and at least four more were badly damaged. On 6th May, Dönitz, who was gravely perturbed by the losses he had suffered, called off the attack; and although it was not realised at the time, the battle of Convoy ONS 5 was the last occasion on which a U-boat pack pressed home its attacks with determination.

Mr G. McMechan, the **Dollus's** mate, and several others of her officers re-embarked in the **Sunflower** and other ships of the B 7 Group for the passage home. They were able to see at first hand the successful defence of slow convoy SC 130. In that battle no merchantman was lost and five more U-boats were sunk.

On 23rd May, two days before the B 7 escort group steamed into Londonderry, silence suddenly fell on the Atlantic battle ground. Though it was some days before we realised what had happened, Dönitz had actually withdrawn all his forces. We now know that in the preceeding three weeks his losses had amounted to no less than 33 U-boats and that the toll taken during the whole month of May 1943 was 41. Such losses simply could not be sustained and the enemy had no option but to admit defeat and withdraw.

Such was the first and greatest victory in the long Atlantic struggle, and although it was tragic for another Blue Funnel ship to be lost in the winning of it, one may feel glad that so many of the Company's officers and men should have witnessed the critical fights around convoys ONS 5 and SC 130. Today there is not the slightest

[1] *The* ***Sunflower*** *did in fact engage and then ram U.533 during the battle. But we now know that the U-boat got back to port safely. This was one of the many instances in which ramming by a small boat failed to sink the enemy. (The displacement of our corvettes was only about 900 tons, as against the 1,150 tons of a Type IX boat such as U.533). In fact a submarine's pressure hull was so very tough that the ramming ship herself was often seriously injured. Luckily on this occasion the Sunflower did herself no great harm.*

doubt that the victory of May 1943 was won by our hard-driven escort and support groups, by the few escort carriers then in service, by Coastal Command's tiny force of 'very long-range' reconnaissance bombers and perhaps, above all, by the fortitude and endurance of our merchant seamen.

As the fate of the Holt ships was so intimately bound up with the ebb and flow of the long struggle against the U-boats, it should be mentioned here that in the summer of 1943 Coastal Command's air patrols gained significant successes in the Bay of Biscay, across which those enemies had to pass when leaving or returning to their bases in western France. On 1st May Dönitz ordered the U-boats to stay on the surface by day when crossing the Bay and use their strengthened A-A armaments to fight it out with our air patrols. Though many Coastal Command aircraft were shot down while making low-level attacks, during the 94 days (1st May - 2nd August) that Dönitz's order remained in force they sank no less than 28 U-boats and damaged a great many more. Then in September, by which time the U-boats had received the new acoustic torpedoes and other improved equipment, Dönitz sent strong wolf packs back to the Atlantic convoy routes. His orders were now to attack the escort vessels first, in order to break up our screening forces and enable later arrivals to get in among the merchant ships. But we were ready for the struggle and were prepared to deal with the new devices. Though we lost a number of escort vessels and their crews the new strategy was a failure and the U-boats themselves suffered heavy losses.

Dönitz next began to send more boats to distant waters, hoping to find easy targets off the coast of Brazil, the Cape of Good Hope and in the Indian Ocean. For a time this paid him quite a good dividend, since it was impossible for us to be strong everywhere and all the time. But the success of the distant campaigns depended on the enemy being able to refuel his boats at a secret rendezvous. The Admiralty adopted the same policy that had defeated the surface raiders - namely, to find those rendezvous and then strike at the supply vessels. The few Holt ships that fell victim to the U-boats after the middle of 1943 were all sunk in remote waters.

In November 1943 another ship 'manned and managed' by Holts for the Ministry of War Transport, the **Ocean Verity** (Captain W.H. Simmonds, 7,174 tons) sailed for North Russia, loaded with war stores. Her convoy was known as JW 54A, and was the first to be sent since the crisis in the Atlantic in the previous March and the very heavy calls falling on our maritime forces in connection with the combined operations in the Mediterranean had forced us to suspend them - to the considerable disgruntlement of Stalin.

As always in those protracted, exacting and hazardous convoys, which lasted from ten to fourteen days or more, depending on the route ordered and the weather encountered, a strong escort and covering force was provided to cope with the U-boats, bombers and surface warships stationed in northern Norway. This convoy was, however, fortunate and all its 18 ships steamed safely into Kola Inlet on 26th November.

On 22nd December the **Ocean Verity** left Murmansk in the homeward convoy RA 55A which was due to pass the corresponding northbound convoy to the south-

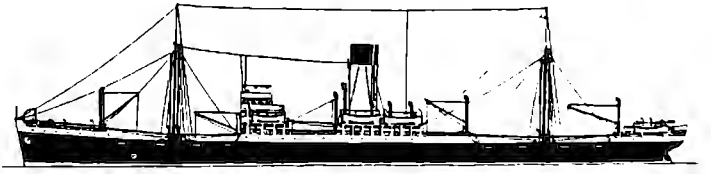
west of Bear Island early on 26th December. The Home Fleet was at sea to cover the double movement, and when the Admiralty reported that the battle cruiser **Scharnhorst** had left Altenfiord, obviously with the intention of attacking one or both of the convoys, Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser in the battleship **Duke of York** [illegible] course to cut the enemy off from his base.

The first contact was made by our cruisers early on 26th December, in the dim twilight of an Arctic mid-winter day, and after a chase the **Scharnhorst** was trapped and surrounded. After a heavy pounding by the **Duke of York's** guns she was sent to the bottom by torpedoes fired from our destroyers in the evening. Meanwhile both convoys, quite unaware of the action being fought far to the south of their course proceeded towards their destinations totally unharmed.

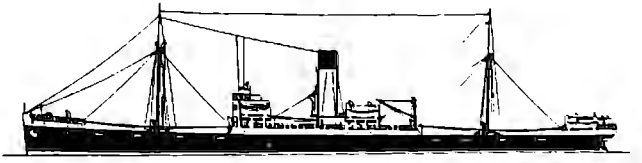
As the battleship **Tirpitz** had been damaged and immobilised when our midget submarines penetrated into Altenfiord on the previous 22nd September, the sinking of the **Scharnhorst** so reduced the strength of the German Norway squadron that it could no longer threaten the passage of our convoys to and from Murmansk and Archangel.

The strategic situation in the far north was thus greatly changed in our favour just six months after the victory of the escorts in the Atlantic had turned the tide in that vital theatre. |||

Graeme Cubbin writes: Graham Allen (*page 39*) was incarcerated in Milag Nord until hostilities ceased. After the War, he joined the Aden Pilotage Service. Then in 1968 he joined Harrison Line and worked as a Dock Superintendent until overtaken by redundancy in 1982.



*The **Rhexenor** (1) was built by the Taikoo Dockyard & Engineering Company at Hong Kong in 1922.*



*The **Dolius** (1) was built by Scotts Shipbuilding & Engineering Company at Greenock in 1924.*

BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC, 2003

The Royal Navy, the Merchant Navy and the City of Liverpool will be commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic in May 2003. To mark this historic anniversary there will be a series of events, and visits to the Port of Liverpool by ships of the Royal Navy.

The principal events are:

Friday, 2nd May, 2003

BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC DINNER
Principal Guests: Vice Admiral M. Gretton and Captain P. Walker RN
Venue: Merseyside Maritime Museum: 7 p.m. for 7.30 p.m.

BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC DINNER
Venue: Adelphi Hotel: 7 p.m. for 7.30 p.m.

Saturday, 3rd May, 2003

CAPTAIN WALKER'S OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION SERVICE
Venue: Bootle War Memorial at 10.30 a.m.

KING GEORGE'S FUND FOR SAILORS COFFEE MORNING
Venue: Bootle Town Hall at 11.30 a.m.

PRESENTATION ON THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC
Venue: Western Approaches Museum, Derby House - p.m.

ROYAL MARINES BAND CONCERT
Venue: Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Hall at 7.30 p.m.

Sunday, 4th May, 2003

60th ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION SERVICE AND MARCH PAST
Venue: Liverpool Anglican Cathedral. (*Admission by ticket only*).

UNVEILING OF THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE : Venue: The Cenotaph, St George's Hall at 2 p.m.

There will be additional presentations on the Battle of the Atlantic at the Western Approaches Museum on the afternoons of 4th and 5th May.

Ships will be open to visitors and there will be military displays from Saturday 3rd May until Monday 5th May.

LORD ALTON LEADING FIGHT TO SAVE THE *"MANXMAN"*

Lord Alton and L.N.R.S. Member Bill Ogle admire a model of the ***Manxman***.

Lord Alton of Liverpool recently launched a new association, the Friends of the **Manxman**, to help save Britain's last traditional steam turbine short sea vessel. Built by Cammell Laird at Birkenhead in 1955, the **Manxman** is currently laid up at Sunderland. Lord Alton is co-patron of the Manxman Steamship Co. Ltd., and company secretary is L.N.R.S. Member Bill Ogle.

and then home, we were on a Cunard charter from Glasgow and Liverpool direct to New York, and then down the east coast and finally to the U.S. Gulf ports. Cunard was awaiting the delivery of two new cargo ships for this route, and as it was the parent company of T. & Jno. Brocklebank, it fell to us to fill the gap. A bonus on reaching New York, however, was that we were berthed at the *'Queens'* pier right in the centre of Manhattan instead of being stuck on one of the outlying piers.

Leaving Liverpool at the end of December we encountered hurricane force winds as soon as we rounded the north coast of Ireland and this continued all the way across, and we took no less than ten and a half days to reach New York. On this occasion I have to say that there were a lot of cracker biscuits consumed all round, and the dining saloon was fairly lightly utilised for most of the voyage. In fact most meals were taken on the lap as it was impossible to stay upright in a chair or to keep a plate on the table despite table fiddleys being rigged and wetted tablecloths.

The discomfort was exacerbated by the fact that we were fairly lightly loaded; the majority of the cargo consisted of about thirty Rolls Royce Silver Wraith cars stowed in the centre of the holds, and two thousand tons of the very best Scotch Malt export whisky stacked in cases along the sides of the ship. When the hatches were opened at New York we found that many of the cases of whisky had fallen down on top of the cars, with dire results to the bodies and paintwork. I can still recall the shocked expressions on the New York stevedors, but even greater was the anguish shown by the Chief Officer.

A minor scare occurred half way across when we found that the fore peak double bottom tank was being continually pressed up, even after transferring out; the reason being that one of the hull shell plates had come loose with the continual pounding in the head winds. We monitored the water level for the rest of the trip and the loose rivets were replaced in drydock at Middlesbrough at the end of the voyage when it was found that a plate right forward under the bow was almost hanging off.

Whatever progress and advances are made in science and medicine, I am afraid that seasickness, like the midges, also no respector of persons, will be with us for a long time to come ! |||||

AND FINALLY .....

MORE INSPIRED LUNACY FROM BRUSSELS : SKYE ISN'T AN ISLAND !

The bureaucrats of Brussels have recently come up with an European proposal which will deny Scottish islands millions in Euro aid by declaring them invalid under criteria to claim island status. The four 'island' conditions are 1) An island mass must have more than 50 residents; 2) it must not be connected to the mainland by a fixed link; 3) it must be more than a kilometre away from the mainland and 4) it must not contain the capital of an E.U. state. The fact that you're surrounded by water has little to do with it! The Isle of Skye becomes a peninsula because it has a bridge; Rum and Muck in the Small Isles Group will no longer be islands because their population accounts for less than 50 persons, whilst the Isle of Bute is just too close to the rest of Argyll for its own good.