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Front Cover: The **Empress of Scotland** in the St Lawrence River photographed whilst on passage from Quebec to Montreal. Note the shortened masts allowing her to pass under the Quebec Bridge (about four miles upstream from Quebec City), and the Jacques Cartier Bridge on the approach to Montreal.

THE *"EMPRESS OF SCOTLAND"* (ex *"EMPRESS OF JAPAN"*)

by the Editor

One of my childhood memories is that of my father taking me down to the Gladstone Dock in December 1957 to see the ***Empress of Scotland*** *laid up on the West Wall. Even at the age of thirteen, I was aware that the* ***Empress of Scotland*** *was a) the most beautiful ship that I would ever set eyes on, and b) that I should never see the likes of her again. On both counts, I think I was right.* *j.s.*

Of all the passenger liners that have ever operated across the North Pacific, the **Empress of Japan** of 1930, the second vessel to carry this name in the Canadian Pacific fleet, was undoubtedly the finest, the largest and the fastest.

She was built by the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Company of Govan at a cost of about £1.5million. The **Empress of Japan** was a vessel of 26,033grt, 15,725nrt and 10,200dwt. With an overall length of 660ft, her beam was 83ft 6in. For cargo she had 21,200 cu.ft. for general, 33,000 cu.ft. for insulated, and 59,000 cu.ft. for her silk rooms.

The ship's twin screws were driven by Parsons' single-reduction geared turbines. Six Yarrow oil-fired water tube boilers supplied steam at 425lb psi and 725° superheat. The main engines developed 30,000shp on five boilers (leaving one in reserve) for a normal 21 knots; 33,000shp was maximum for 23 knots.

The third funnel was a dummy but served as a ventilator for the engine room and the first and second-class galleys.

When the **Empress of Japan** entered service she could carry 268 first-class passengers; 131 interchangeable; 164 second-class; 100 third-class and 510 steerage.

The **Empress of Japan** was launched on 17th December 1929 and was completed in June 1930. She ran her trials in the Firth of Clyde and achieved a maximum speed of 23 knots on the Skelmorlie mile. On 8th June she was delivered to Canadian Pacific, a truly magnificent ship, beautifully proportioned, graceful, and yet with a look of tremendous power.

On 14th June 1930 the **Empress of Japan** left Liverpool on her maiden voyage to Quebec, returning to Southampton. On her return run she averaged 21 knots on 26,100shp. Her fuel consumption was 168.8 tons per day. On 12th July she left Southampton for Hong Kong via Suez, and from Hong Kong she commenced her trans-Pacific service to Vancouver via Shanghai, Kobe and Yokohama, joining her running mates the **Empress of Canada**, **Empress of Asia** and **Empress of Russia**.

Normally there would have been a balancing pair of sister ships, but the world depression was affecting thinking, and with the advent of its new trans-Atlantic flagship, the **Empress of Britain** of 1931, Canadian Pacific Steamships had enough on its plate.

The **Empress of Australia** had left the Pacific route in August 1927, returning to the Fairfield yard to be re-engined. She had not been a success on the

Pacific service due to her slow speed of about 17 knots maximum, but she had made a great name for herself by her rescue work following the Yokohama earthquake. Following re-engining she was transferred to the Atlantic.

Along with the **Empress of Canada** of 1922, the **Empress of Japan** had sufficient speed to include a call en route at Honolulu, lengthening the passage by a considerable amount and bringing them into direct competition with the American and Japanese liners on the Pacific.

*The **Empress of Japan** as she appeared on her Pacific service in the 1930s. Note the open promenade deck which was glassed-in when she transferred to the North Atlantic.*

The **Empress of Japan** lost little time in capturing the speed record for the trans-Pacific passage in both directions. In October 1930 she averaged 21·02 knots from Yokohama to Race Rocks, Vancouver, completing the passage in 8 days, 6 hours and 27 minutes, beating the **Empress of Canada's** previous record by 4½ hours. In 1931 she reduced this time to 7 days 8 hours and 27 minutes at 22·57 knots. The largest and fastest ship on the Pacific, the **Empress of Japan** was for eight years extremely popular and before the end of 1939 she had completed 58 round voyages.

On 26th November 1939 the **Empress of Japan** was requisitioned for service as a troopship. She had been in Shanghai when war was declared, and after a crossing to Honolulu and Vancouver she sailed to Esquimalt where a certain amount of work was carried out to fit her for trooping. Her hull and superstructure were painted grey and she then left for Sydney, arriving on 22nd December.

Shortly afterwards she sailed for Suez with a contingent of Australian troops. Returning to Melbourne, she sailed again with troops to Suez in the company of the **Queen Mary**, **Aquitania**, **Mauretania**, **Empress of Britain** and the **Empress of Canada**. In 1941 the **Empress of Japan** completed trooping voyages from Glasgow to the Cape and Singapore, returning to the UK via Panama; 35,000 miles in 141 days.

Following the entry of Japan into the Second World War, the **Empress of Japan** was renamed **Empress of Scotland,** ten months after the attack on Pearl Harbor. At this time, changes of ships' names were prohibited, but Winston Churchill said that in the case of the **Empress of Japan** "*it is a nonsense*" and so on 16th October, 1942 she became the **Empress of Scotland**, second of that name in the Canadian Pacific fleet, the first having been the ex-**Kaiserin Auguste Victoria** in 1921.

In 1942, under heavy air attack, the **Empress of Scotland** took 1,700 women and children away from Singapore to Colombo. During 1943-44 she was on a trooping service from Halifax,NS, New York and Newport News to Liverpool and to Casablanca, carrying a total of 30,000 American troops.

On 9th November 1944 the **Empress of Scotland** was subject to an air attack off Northern Ireland, three bombs being such near misses that they actually glanced off the ship's rail and a lifeboat, exploding in the sea. Captain J.W. Thomas had given evasive-action orders to the quartermaster who swung the wheel whilst lying on his stomach to avoid machine gun bullets which were raking the bridge! Both men were later decorated for their bravery.

Following the cessation of hostilities she continued trooping, repatriating troops and their families until she was released on 3rd May 1948 at Liverpool. During the years 1939-48, the **Empress of Scotland** had steamed three time round the world, twice westbound and once eastbound, had sailed five times to South Africa and Singapore, and visited Australia and New Zealand five times. She had called at Canadian and US ports on twelve occasions, eight times to India and post-war twice to Japan. In all the **Empress of Scotland** had steamed 713,000 miles on war service and had carried 292,000 troops as well as other passengers.

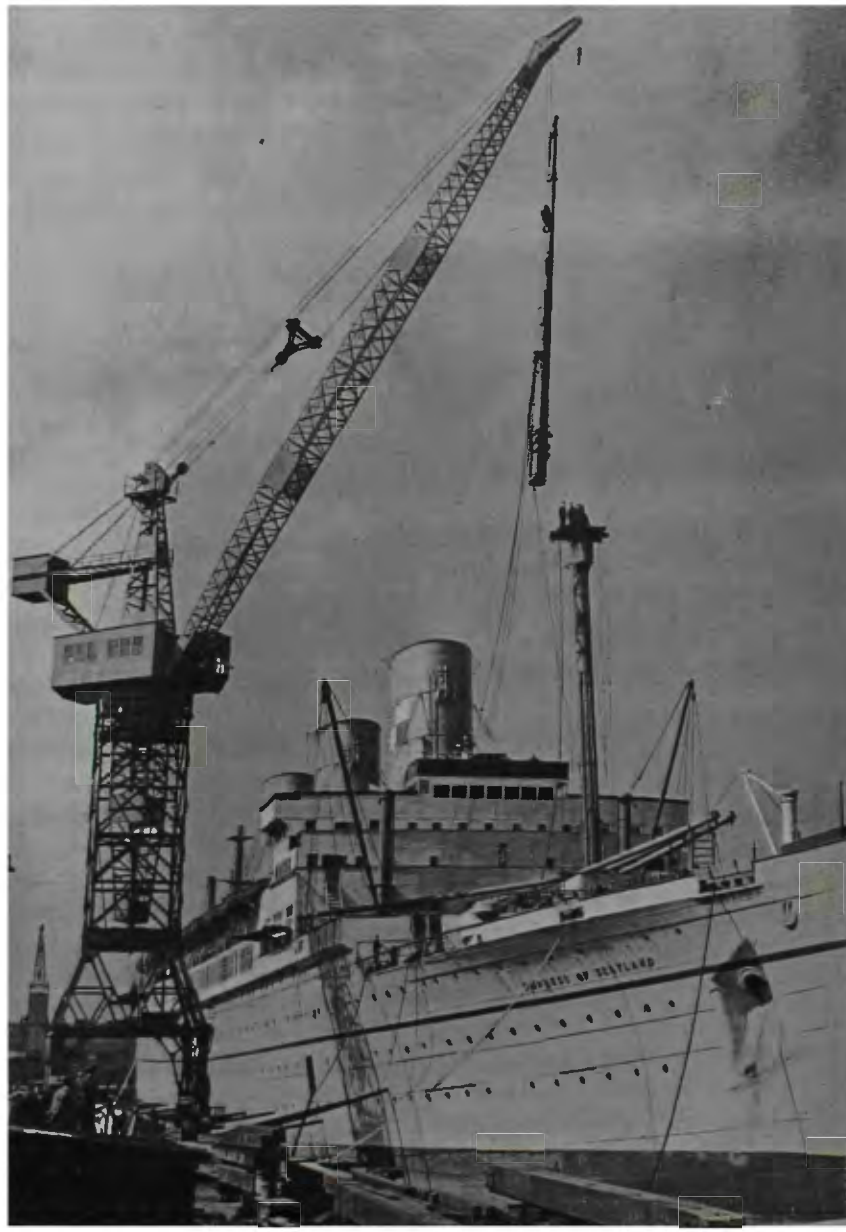
When released, the **Empress of Scotland** was the only '*Empress*' left in the Canadian Pacific fleet. The **Empress of Russia** had been burnt out at Barrow in Furness in 1945 whilst refitting. **The Empress of Asia** was sunk in 1942 off Singapore by Japanese aircraft. The **Empress of Canada** had been torpedoed and sunk in the South Atlantic when homeward bound from Durban and the **Empress of Britain**, completed in 1931, had been set on fire by air attack in October 1940, and subsequently torpedoed whilst under tow. The **Empress of Australia** remained a troopship until sold to breakers in 1952 and was never returned to Canadian Pacific.

Of the four '*Duchesses*' completed in 1928-29 only two remained, the **Duchess of Bedford** and the **Duchess of Richmond**. In 1947 these two ships were elevated to '*Empresses*' with white hulls and green ribands and renamed respectively **Empress of France** and **Empress of Canada**. Given this state of affairs, Canadian Pacific abandoned its Far East-Vancouver service and accordingly the **Empress of Scotland** was refitted for the North Atlantic.

The **Empress of Scotland** was sent back to her builders, the Fairfield Yard at Govan for a full refit for the Liverpool - Quebec mail service and also for winter cruising. After eight years as a troopship, this was a job that took from June 1948 until May 1950.

The passenger accommodation was completely transformed. No space was now needed for Asiatic steerage passengers and this enabled very great improvements to the crew accommodation to be made. The ship was refitted for 458 first-class passengers and 205 tourist-class. All deck coverings had to be renewed and the promenade deck was 'glassed in' for its whole length, this being more appropriate for typical North Atlantic conditions.

Externally the **Empress of Scotland** was repainted with a white hull and yellow funnels, but the previous blue riband of the 1930s was changed to green, and the company's red and white chequered house flag was painted on all three funnels.



*The **Empress of Scotland** in the Canada Dry Dock, Liverpool, in January 1952 having her 68ft topmast shortened. In its place a tapering section, 24ft long, was fitted, reducing the height of the mast by 44ft. The mainmast was, naturally, shortened correspondingly.*

The propelling machinery remained the same but was given a complete overhaul and new propellers were fitted. On trials on the Arran mile after completion of the refit she reached a very creditable 22½ knots.

The **Empress of Scotland** left Liverpool on 9th May 1950 on her first post-war commercial voyage from Liverpool to Quebec, with a call at Greenock. On her second eastbound crossing she broke the record for the St Lawrence - Clyde passage by seven hours, with a time from the pilot station at Father Point in the Gulf of St Lawrence to the Clyde pilot station off Little Cumbrae of 5 days and 42 minutes at an average speed of 21.03 knots.

Later in the summer of 1950 the **Empress of Scotland** bettered these passage times by using the Belle Isle Strait (between the northern tip of Newfoundland and the south of Labrador), rather than by sailing south-about Newfoundland via Cape Race. This route cut the distance from 2,728 miles to 2,558 miles, and she sailed from the Clyde Pilot to Father Point in 4 days, 14 hours and 43 minutes at an average speed of 21.3 knots.

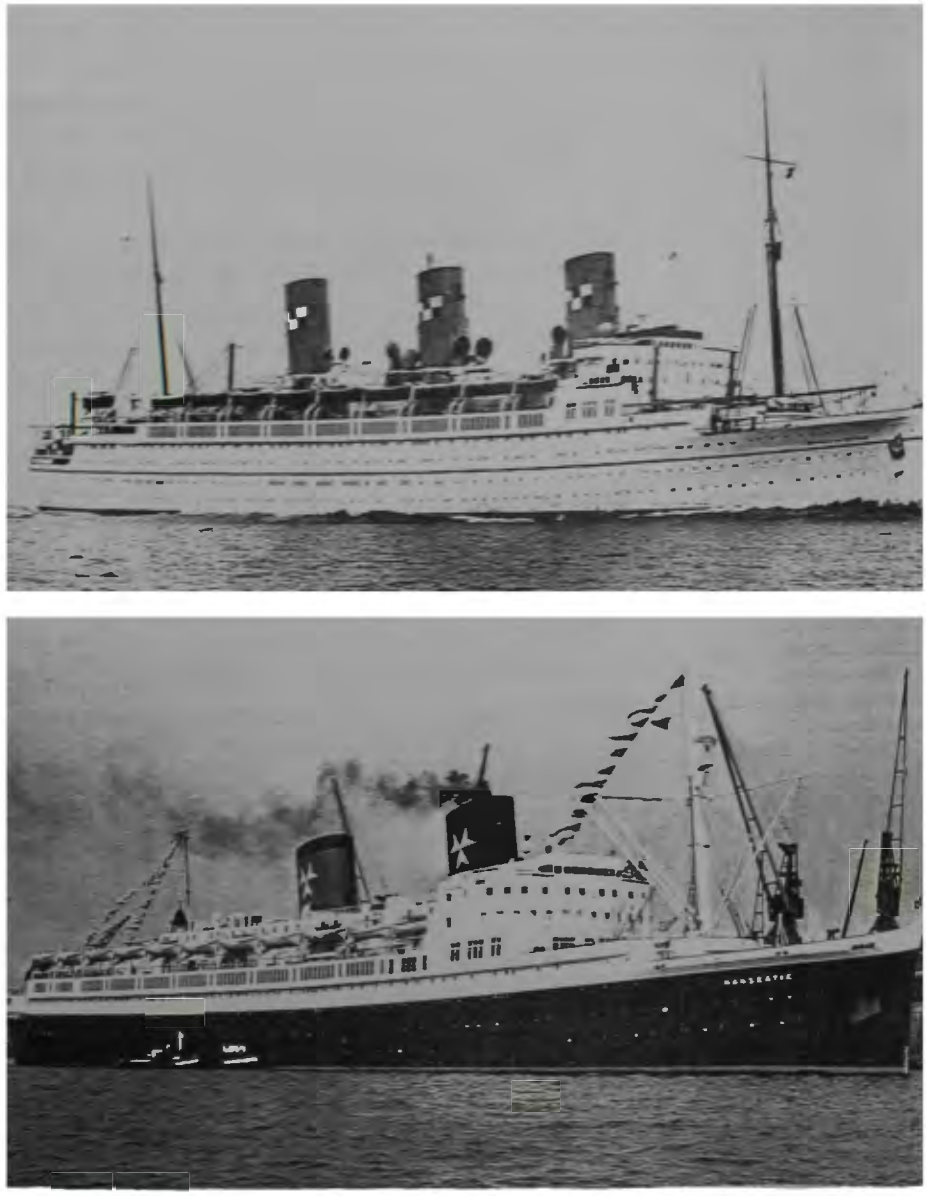
In November 1951 Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh returned from their Canadian tour on the **Empress of Scotland**. In April 1952 the *'Empress's'* masts were shortened by 44 feet to allow her to proceed up the St Lawrence to Montreal, necessitating passing under both the Quebec Bridge and the Jacques Cartier Bridge. The channel between Quebec City and Montreal had by this time been deepened and the **Empress of Scotland** became by far the largest vessel ever to dock in Montreal.

Cruising in the winter months became a regular part of her service and in December 1950 the **Empress of Scotland** made her first cruise from New York to the West Indies, resuming Canadian Pacific's pre-war cruising programme. A 17-ton swimming pool was hoisted on board for the benefit of cruise passengers.

In April 1956 the new **Empress of Britain** entered service, followed a year later by the **Empress of England**. With the **Empress of Scotland** and the **Empress of France**, there were again four *'Empresses'* on the North Atlantic service. With a new **Empress of Canada** due to join the fleet, these newcomers spelt the end for the older two ships. The **Empress of Scotland** was sold first and the **Empress of France** went to the breakers in 1960. On 8th November 1957 the **Empress of Scotland** left Liverpool on her final voyage for Canadian Pacific. She arrived back at Liverpool for the last time in a chill wintry mist on 26th November 1957 under the command of Captain S.W. Keay and after disembarking her passengers at Princes Landing Stage, she was laid up in the Gladstone Dock. Just before the New Year she was sold to the Hamburg Atlantic Line and left Liverpool on 31st December 1957 for Belfast where she arrived on New Year's Day, 1958. Following a drydocking and survey she was accepted by her new owners and was handed over to them at Belfast on 17th January, 1958.

On 19th January the old ship left Belfast under the German flag and with the temporary name of **Scotland**. Two days later she arrived at the Howaldtswerke Company's yard at Hamburg. Here she was renamed **Hanseatic** and reconstructed and 'modernised' during a six-month overhaul which cost 43 million Deutschmarks.

The Hamburg -Atlantic Line was a final attempt to run a trans-Atlantic



Top: *The* ***Empress of Scotland*** *as she appeared on the North Atlantic before her masts were shortened in 1952.* Bottom: *As the* ***Hanseatic*** *in 1958.*

passenger service from Hamburg after HAPAG had given up passenger carrying. With the growth of the post-war German merchant fleet it was strongly felt during the mid 1950s that the time was ripe for Hamburg to re-enter the traditional trans-Atlantic passenger service with a Hamburg-owned liner. In 1957 the Hamburg-Atlantic Linie G.m.b.H. was formed. A decision was made to start with a second-hand vessel, and shortly afterwards the **Empress of Scotland** appeared on the market for sale.

The funnel colours of the **Hanseatic** were red with a black top and a white 'logo' in the red sector. The hull was painted black. The passenger accommodation was rebuilt to carry 85 first-class and 1,165 tourist class passengers. The third funnel was removed and replaced by two shorter and more 'modern' ones. For some reason it was thought worthwhile to alter the bow, giving it a slightly raked curve at the top, which increased the vessel's overall length by about 6 feet. The tourist-class accommodation was intended to be the finest ever fitted in a German ship.

The rebuilding took about six months and on 21st July 1958 the **Hanseatic** left Cuxhaven for New York via Le Havre, Southampton and Cobh. In 1959 the ship made 12 round trans-Atlantic voyages and went cruising in the winter months. By 1965 competition from the airlines meant that the New York voyages were reduced to eight and the **Hanseatic** spent most of her time cruising.

On 7th September 1966, whilst lying at New York, fire broke out in the **Hanseatic's** generator room, caused by oil leaking from a fractured pipe line. It took 200 firemen to bring the blaze under control, by which time great damage had been done. Not only had the generators been ruined, but the engine room had suffered considerably from the intense heat and the water; while smoke and water had caused great damage to much of the accommodation.

The **Hanseatic's** passengers were transferred to the **Queen Mary**, whose sailing time was delayed by some four hours whilst they were embarked.

The **Hanseatic** was towed to the Todd shipyard at Brooklyn for survey, and as a result Hamburg Atlantic decided to have her towed back to the Howaldtswerke yard at Hamburg for possible repair. On 3rd October 1966 she left New York under tow by two of Bugsier's largest tugs, the **Atlantic** and the **Pacific**, for the 17-day tow. In Hamburg the damage was found to be too severe to be worth having repaired and she was sold for scrap to Elkhart & Company on 2nd December for 15 million Deutschmarks. Eisen & Metall A.G. of Hamburg broke her up in early 1967. With the loss of the **Hanseatic**, the Hamburg-Atlantic Line ceased to exist.

Such then was the sad end of the last of the Pacific '*Empresses*', 36 years old. She had served her country and her company supremely well. The **Empress of Scotland** was an utterly magnificent vessel, perhaps the finest ship ever to grace the Mersey.

Sources:

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WESTERN OCEAN INTERLUDE

by Captain Brian Scott

At the end of my four-year cadetship with the Clan Line in 1956 (see 'The Bulletin', March, 2005) I used my accumulated leave to attend lifeboatman, A.B. and radar observer courses. I wanted to complete these courses prior to attending Liverpool Technical College for my first certificate. My timing was wrong - the College was by then due to close for the summer holidays. Remembering what a third mate had told me about his experience of being seconded to Canadian Pacific Steamships as an uncertificated junior officer, I decided to follow suit.

Both the Clan Line and the Canadian Pacific offices were in the Royal Liver Building on Liverpool's Pier Head, so I called on the personnel officer in the Canadian Pacific office and was promptly offered a couple of voyages as relief 5th Officer at £35.10/- per month, compared with my £12.10/- per month as a fourth year cadet. I wondered if life would be more demanding for such a princely sum of money!

I need not have worried. I joined the RMS **Empress of Scotland**, put on my boiler suit and as junior cargo officer on six-hour port watches did exactly the same as when I was a cadet.

On arriving and sailing my station was on the bridge with the Captain, Staff Captain and Second Officer, who was my senior on the 12 to 4 watch at sea. This was not a problem for me as for part of my cadetship I had been bridge cadet for arrivals/departures. And when no fourth officer had been carried on my Clan Line voyages, I was frequently on watch with the Chief Officer on his 4 to 8 watch.

At this time (1956) Canadian Pacific Steamships operated a passenger and cargo service from Liverpool, and a cargo service from London and the Continent. Montreal was the terminal port in the summer and St John, New Brunswick, in winter. The Liverpool service was maintained by three 'Empress' liners, whilst on the London and Antwerp to Canada service, 10,000 ton cargo/passenger vessels were employed. The **Beaverglen**, **Beaverlake**, **Beavercove** and **Beaverdell** were post-war turbo-electric vessels with large freezer capacity and with a service speed of 16 knots. The **Beaverburn**, **Beaverford** and **Beaverlodge** were ex-Empire ships each carrying 12 passengers.

Cargo work on the **Empress of Scotland** was hectic due to quick turnrounds. There was tank cleaning after discharging tallow, hold cleaning after grain, plus the requirement to work out the vessel's stability a.m. and p.m. due to ballasting / deballasting, refuelling and taking on fresh water. Outward cargo was high value goods such as mails, crockery, textiles, woollen goods, motor cars and machinery.

When sailing day arrived it was no watch below and no rest as the Second Officer and myself had amended the crew boat and fire station lists during the previous night and then the M.O.T. Surveyor was present for the crew boat drill. We next moved from Gladstone Dock to Liverpool Landing Stage with the company pilot and five tugs. Gangway duty was tourist class for the fifth officer and first class for the fourth officer. Then we were on our way, calling at Greenock where we disembarked

the Liverpool pilot, embarked more passengers, lowered all lifeboats into the water and took some of them for a run round the anchored ship.

We then departed for Quebec and settled into our watch keeping routine. The First (navigator) and Fourth officers on the 4 to 8, the Second and Fifth on the 12 to 4, and the Third officer (who held a Master's Certificate) on the 8 to 12, with the day worker Chief Officer on stand-by to go on the bridge if the weather or visibility became poor. The Captain and Staff Captain always appeared to be busy with heads of other departments, and the four radio officers laboured away with high speed morse messages for the ship's daily newspaper, ice reports and six-hourly met. reports to shore stations.

My days and nights were busy. Before each bridge watch I mustered my deck watch at the emergency boat (No.1 or No.2). After each watch we held fire drill and each day I went along a different deck with my plug-in fire telephone testing the fire alarms. This ensured that junior officers knew every nook and cranny on board. The Fourth Officer was the Met. Officer and had plenty to keep him busy as well as the boat drills. Life was well ordered.

The watch-keeping officers dined in an alcove in the first-class dining saloon. However, being on the 12 to 4, I had 'brunch' brought to my cabin at 10.00, skipped lunch and had dinner at 18.30. In between times, there was always plenty of tea, coffee and sandwiches available on the bridge. Sometimes the Scouse quartermasters got the lion's share of the sandwiches!

On my two voyages the weather was fine, a little ice but quite a lot of cargo ship traffic. (Passenger ships stuck to the Atlantic routing / separation lanes of longstanding to avoid head-on situations with each other, as at 22 knots the closing speed was quite intimidating, especially for me being used to 16 knot ships). As a safety measure, at the start of each watch, a note book with the vessel's dead-reckoning positions for the next four hours, complete with local and GMT, was handed to the duty Radio Officer.

We stopped at Quebec to disembark some passengers and then proceeded to Montreal where the remainder left. We discharged cargo, had more boat drills, and then loaded grain, sawn timber, apples, bulk tallow, mail and gold and silver bullion for Liverpool. The passengers boarded and we sailed for Quebec and Liverpool.

On completion of my two relief voyages, the regular Fifth Officer returned from leave, bemoaning that being the junior of the watch didn't count in full for First Mate's Examination, and he wanted to get back to one of the 'Beaver' ships.

For my part, I had learned a lot with regard to shipboard organisation, the routine of ocean navigation on fast ships, the use of Loran, ice and weather reports, plotting of such information on special charts, and practical ship's stability. The experience paid dividends for some years later I wanted a summer fill-in job prior to attending nautical school, and was fortunate enough to be appointed as relief Fourth Officer on both of the new sister ships, the **Empress of Britain** and the **Empress of England**.

The sad part of my service with Canadian Pacific Steamships was that the nearest I got to marrying an heiress was to play table tennis with the daughter of a London Greek ship owner ! □

DE LESSEPS' BUBBLE THAT NEVER BURST: THE SUEZ CANAL

by T.E. Hughes

The Suez Canal, after an eight year closure because of the Arab-Israeli wars of 196[illegible] and 1973, reopened to traffic on 5th June, 1975. By an odd coincidence, the re-opening of the canal took place exactly one hundred years following the historic decision by a British government to reverse all previous policy and to take a large financial stake in the once derided project which Ferdinand de Lesseps had brought to a triumphant conclusion in November 1869.

In November 1875 Britain's Prime Minister, Benjamin D'Israeli and his cabinet colleagues decided almost overnight, and without recourse to Parliament, to purchase for £4million the 177,642 shares in the Suez Canal Company held by the Viceroy of Egypt, Mohammed Said Pasha.

At one stroke D'Israeli swept under the carpet the anti-canal campaign waged by previous governments led by Lord Palmerston who had venomously derided de Lesseps' project as *'an undertaking which I believe, as regards its commercial character, may be deemed to rank among the many bubble schemes which have been palmed off upon gullible capitalists.'*

Long before de Lesseps had appeared on the scene, Palmerston had opposed any embryo schemes for a canal across the Isthmus of Suez. It was his firm belief, shared by many British and commercial interests - that such a waterway would constitute a major threat to Britain's possessions in India and the Far East and our supremacy on the high seas.

It was this conviction which in 1843 had led Palmerston to ignore detailed proposals put forward by Arthur Anderson, a leading ship owner and co-founder with B.M.Willcox of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company for the building of a canal linking the Mediterranean with the Red Sea. As a result, what might well have been a British enterprise was to go by default to the French who, ten years later, supported and encouraged de Lesseps in his project which ultimately became the Suez Canal.

What Anderson had in mind was what he called 'a great oriental canal' which, internationally protected, would benefit all nations and particularly Britain and her political and commercial interests in India and the East. The canal, said Anderson, should be financed chiefly, if not almost exclusively, by British capital. He anticipated that it would yield and ample return to investors.

Palmerston was fanatically opposed to the idea of constructing such a canal and considered that it would serve no practical purpose. As an alternative he supported the idea of a railway between Alexandria, Cairo and Suez, financed by British capital. In his opinion if a ship canal were to be built, it would change the geographical status of Egypt and raise major international issues. On the other hand, a railway built and operated by Britain could be classed as a purely domestic enterprise, free from any

widespread political complications. On 20th November 1854 Count Ferdinand de Lesseps secured from his friend Mohammed Said Pasha, Viceroy of Egypt, the long sought after concession which paved the way for preparatory work to begin on the canal scheme. Many British shipping and commercial interests, particularly those trading to India and the Far East, realised the practical and economic importance of the de Lesseps project. They included Arthur Anderson, despite the diplomatic shelving of his project in 1843, and the Liverpool ship owners Thomas and James Harrison. Endowed with keen commercial acumen and a spirit of enterprise, James Harrison had for many years held to the belief that a prosperous future would lie in store for a waterway across the Isthmus of Suez. When he learned that de Lesseps was working on such a project he made several visits to Paris to discuss the scheme and exchange ideas with the French engineer.

Encouraged by such support, de Lesseps decided in 1857 to visit England for the express purpose of promoting his canal. He met with Mr W.E. Gladstone, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who did not share the anti-canal views expressed by Palmerston. Stimulated by his reception in London, de Lesseps next set out on a crusade of Britain's principal cities and ports seeking support for the project. Despite evidence of growing commercial support for de Lesseps, there was no change in government policy. Replying to a question in Parliament on 7th July 1857, Lord Palmerston said: *"It is an undertaking which I believe, as regards its commercial character, may be deemed to rank among the many bubble schemes which have been palmed off upon gullible capitalists. I can only express surprise that M. de Lesseps should have reckoned so much on the credulity of British capitalists that by his progress through the different counties he would succeed in obtaining English money for a scheme which in every way is adverse to British interests."*

Six weeks later, on 23rd August, Palmerston declaimed: *"This Suez Canal company, as I have so often said, is one of the most remarkable attempts at deception which have been seen in recent times. It is a complete hoax from beginning to end."*

De Lesseps approached international banker James de Rothschild who expressed his willingness to provide financial backing but on terms which de Lesseps considered 'outrageously exorbitant' and which he brusquely rejected. *"One can't reach an understanding with bankers,"* de Lesseps wrote, *"they are not reasonable. I'll manage the business myself and make my appeal to the public direct."* And that is what he did.

In August 1858 de Lesseps opened a small office in the Place Vendome, Paris, and with the help of three associates, formed his own company. At the same time he issued a prospectus in which it was stated that the capital of the proposed company would be 200million francs (£8 million), divided into 400,000 shares of 500 francs (£20) each. Each fully paid up share would attract interest at 5% per annum.

To ensure the international character of the company, the number of shares available to French nationals was limited to 220,000; the remainder, excluding those already allotted to founder members and the Viceroy of Egypt, were available to overseas purchasers. In Britain he found that his supporters had developed 'cold feet' and were not prepared to invest in the company. A similar negative response came from Austria, Russia and the United States.

Notwithstanding, de Lesseps left for Egypt in February 1859 to begin work on the project. An immediate setback awaited him. On arrival in Cairo he found his friend the Viceroy very uncooperative. The anti-canal campaigners had done their work well. The Viceroy was in acute financial difficulties and was afraid that if he allowed de Lesseps to go ahead, the British, French and Turkish governments would be upset.

De Lesseps, undaunted by his cool reception, carried on with his preliminary survey work. This included an inspection of the harbour at Pelusium. Selected as the site for the northern entrance to the canal, this harbour was transformed into a major port and officially opened on 20th April 1869 when it was given the name Port Said in honour of the Viceroy.

On 25th April 1859 there came the historic moment in world transport history when de Lesseps turned the first sod of his canal. Sadly no Egyptian ministers nor consular officials bothered to attend. Ten years beset by labour problems and political harrassment were to elapse before the gigantic task was finished.

By the beginning of 1869 construction had reached a stage when it was possible to make preliminary plans for an official opening. Now acclaimed as one of the wonders of the world the canal, although uncompleted, was a mecca for hundreds of distinguished visitors. They included the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) who is said to have commented to de Lesseps that the late Lord Palmerston (he had died in 1862) had been guilty of a lamentable lack of foresight.

The Prince was to reiterate those views in 1875 after sailing through the canal on his way to India. *"The Suez Canal is certainly an outstanding work,"* he said, *"and it is an everlasting pity that it was not built by an English company and kept in our hands."*

But in 1869 the glory belonged to de Lesseps who in September of that year enjoyed a moment of personal triumph when he embarked in a ship at Port Said and sailed the entire length of his canal in fifteen hours. The way had been prepared for the ceremonial opening on 17th November by the Empress Eugenie of France who had befriended de Lesseps and had been an ardent supporter of his project.

On the evening of 16th November 1869 the French Imperial Yacht Aigle, carrying the Empress Eugenie, steamed into Port Said harbour where she joined an armada of 80 ships, including 50 naval vessels. The next morning, at 08.30, the Aigle leading a convoy of 40 ships, each 100 metres apart, began the historic first major transit of the canal. The convoy stopped at Ismailia for a banquet and festivities, and the passage was resumed on 19th November first to the Bitter Lakes and so on down the final stretch of the canal to Suez.

Reaction amongst British ship owners whose services were likely to be affected by the opening of the canal varied according to the composition of their respective fleets. Understandably owners maintaining sailing ship fleets saw no reason to rejoice; the canal would be of little use to them. On the other hand, owners busily developing steamship services saw in the canal a golden opportunity for expansion.

It was the general opinion that there would be sufficient cargo available for sailing ships to afford fair remuneration for ships making the long haul round the Cape. This 'comforting' argument had been based largely on the ruling freight rates when the canal became operational. On the basis of statistics assembled by the Liverpool

Chamber of Commerce it was assumed that a sailing ship carrying 1,000 tons of cargo could complete a voyage from Liverpool to Bombay via the Cape in 95 days at an average freight rate of 38s (£1-90p) per ton. In contrast, by using the Suez Canal, a steamship could complete the voyage in less than half that time, but it could not operate profitably on a freight rate of less than 80s (£4.) per ton. Alas for high hopes and paper work. By December 1869 - a month after the canal opened - steamship rates had fallen to 30s (£1-50p) per ton. The battle had truly begun.

In December 1869, within a month of the opening of the canal, there appeared in the pages of the *Liverpool Shipping Telegraph* (forerunner of the *Journal of Commerce*) an advertisement that the Harrison steamer **Fire Queen** was loading in Liverpool for India via the Suez Canal and would sail on 13th January 1870.

Thomas and James Harrison were soon to receive rewarding evidence of their enterprise in routing their ships through the canal. On her outward voyage from Liverpool to Colombo and Calcutta via Suez in August 1870, the **Historian** completed the passage to Colombo in the record time of 27 days - a historic event enthusiastically praised by the Colombo newspapers.

The economic advantages to be gained from making the fullest possible use of the new Suez Canal were also recognised by Alfred Holt who in 1865 had inaugurated a service between Liverpool and the Far East. For this purpose three new steamers were added to the fleet - the **Agamemnon**, the **Ajax** and the **Achilles**, each of 2,280 tons.

The Peninsular and Oriental directors were in no position to take immediate advantage of the Suez Canal. In fact the opening of the canal, and consequent increasing competition, far from benefiting the company, threatened at one period to bring it to the brink of ruin.

Up to 1869 the P. & O. Company had virtually monopolised fast passenger and mail services on the Far East route. Regular sailings were maintained from Southampton to Malta and Alexandria. Here passengers disembarked and cargoes were unloaded and transported by rail to Suez. There they transferred to another steamer to complete the voyage to India or Singapore or Australia or Hong Kong. Over the years the P. & O. Company had expended vast sums of money in perfecting the 'overland' route, as it was called, providing luxurious hotels for passengers and warehouses for cargoes in transit. The opening of the canal foreshadowed the end of this vast enterprise.

Fortunately for the P. & O., Thomas Sutherland had been appointed assistant manager in 1868. Sutherland had particularly impressed Arthur Anderson, by now chairman of the company. In 1866 Anderson had recalled Sutherland to London from Hong Kong when it was realised that the Suez Canal was, in fact, going to be completed. It was an unenviable task which confronted the young assistant manager. In later years, when himself chairman of the company, Sutherland was to record what had been involved and how the crisis had been resolved:

"The far reaching consequences of the opening of the Suez Canal were enhanced by the fact that it synchronised with the practical adoption of the compound engine as the motive power of the mercantile marine. The effect of these two events was to annihilate the overland traffic.

"For 30 years the company had built up and depended for existence on the only traffic which was possible in connection with the transit through Egypt; namely the conveyance of passengers and goods at rates which were necessarily high, owing to the conditions under which the work had to be carried on. These conditions, and the rates depending on them, were swept away by the opening of the canal, and the financial consequences were such that for some time the future of the company appeared to hang doubtfully in the balance.

"Apart from the inherent internal difficulties in changing the actual foundation of a large and complicated business and building a new fleet, the Post Office obstructed progress by objecting to the adoption of the canal route for the conveyance of mails, on the grounds of its inadequacy in comparison with the Egyptian Railway. It was not until 1888, when the company had reduced its charge for the conveyance of mails by nearly £100,000 per annum, that the accelerated mails sent via Brindisi were transferred to the Canal route. At that point the company's connection with the Overland Route through Egypt which had existed for half a century finally ceased."

Meanwhile, confronted by a *fait accompli*, the British Government made a rapid U-turn. From deriding the canal project it went to the other extreme and pompously declared that neither France nor Egypt could be trusted to control what was becoming a main artery of British trade as evidenced by the fact that British shipping made up two-thirds of the canal's total traffic.

In 1870, the first fully operational year, 489 ships totalling 486,000 registered tons passed through the waterway. Of this total 324 ships (291,000 tons) were of British registry. To the British Government it was becoming increasingly galling to realise that while Britain ostensibly 'ruled the waves', it had no say at all in the operation of de Lesseps' 'ditch'. De Lesseps rejected the idea of sharing control of the canal with Britain - or for that matter any other nation.

Lack of capital was in fact impeding development of canal facilities. In an attempt to bring in money, de Lesseps put forward a scheme under which the principal maritime nations would join together to buy the waterway for 12 million francs, plus annual payments of 10 million francs over a period of 50 years. Control of the canal would remain with de Lesseps. The plan was never realised because the Sultan of Turkey protested that the canal and its zone was on Egyptian territory and could not be offered for sale to other countries.

By the beginning of 1872 the financial position was so desperate that in March the Suez Canal Company announced that future tolls would be based on gross rather than net tonnage which meant that rates would increase by about 30 per cent. The British Government sent a formal complaint. De Lesseps' retort was brusque: "*As far as we are concerned we can only suggest to those who are not satisfied that they either avail themselves of the Egyptian Railway, or they may prefer to go round the Cape of Good Hope as before. Those who do not pay the new dues in advance will not be permitted to pass their ships through the canal.*"

The Sultan of Turkey appointed an independent commission which found that as constituted, the canal company was not authorised to increase the original dues of 10 francs per ton unilaterally - findings which were ignored by de Lesseps.

At the end of 1873 an international conference recommended that canal tolls

should be based on net tonnage as originally, but taking into account the canal company's financial difficulties a temporary surcharge of four francs per ton should be imposed, decreasing as traffic expanded, and to be cancelled when shipping using the canal totalled 2.6 million tons a year. De Lesseps rejected the proposal and threatened to close the canal if the company's rate structure could not be applied. This arrogance was too much for the Sultan of Turkey who instructed the Viceroy of Egypt to send troops to occupy the Isthmus of Suez. It was not until de Lesseps learned that 10,000 soldiers were on their way that he climbed down and agreed to the conference plan.

It was now 1875. The Suez Canal Company had been rescued from its immediate financial crisis. On the other hand, Egypt was in monetary difficulties, her national debt having increased over 13 years from £300 million to £1,000 million. The Viceroy was himself on the verge of bankruptcy.

In urgent need of £4 million, the Viceroy decided to sell his shareholding in the Suez Canal Company and approached French financiers who offered him a paltry £2 million which he promptly rejected. Word of the Viceroy's dilemma reached Lord Derby, the British Foreign Secretary, who immediately informed D'Israeli, then Prime Minister. This was the opening D'Israeli had long awaited. By purchasing these shares Britain would obtain a dominant financial interest in the canal. He cabled Major-General Stanton, the Consul General in Egypt, advising him to inform the Viceroy that the British Government was keenly interested in buying the shares if suitable terms could be agreed.

In a letter to Queen Victoria, D'Israeli wrote: *"It is vital to your Majesty's authority and power at this critical moment that the canal should belong to England and I was so decided and absolute with Lord Derby on this matter that he ultimately adopted my views and brought the matter before Cabinet. The Cabinet was unanimous in its decision that the interest of the Khedive* [the Viceroy of Egypt under Ottoman suzerainty, 1867-1914] *should if possible be obtained and we telegraphed accordingly."*

On 17th November 1875 D'Israeli presided over a Cabinet meeting at which ways and means were discussed of raising £4 million without the authority of Parliament which was not then sitting. This was considered a good thing as secrecy was essential and a debate in the House was the last thing D'Israeli wanted. He had in fact made arrangements with his private secretary, W. Corry, for him to wait outside the Cabinet room door. If the Cabinet agreed that the international banker Baron Rothschild should be approached, D'Israeli would open the door and say *'Yes!'* The secretary would then immediately go to Rothschild. Within ten minutes of Corry receiving the 'yes' signal he was closeted with Baron Rothschild and giving him the Prime Minister's message.

Rothschild agreed to the loan and no time was lost in signing the necessary contract. The international banker granted himself 2½% commission plus interest on the loan. By 24th November the money was in the hands of the Treasury. In Cairo Major-General Stanton called upon the Viceroy and later cabled D'Israeli: *'Agreement for sale of canal shares is signed. The shares are to be deposited with me tomorrow morning. The number being only 176,602. I have stipulated that the value of the 1,040 shares short will be deducted from the sum to be paid by Her Majesty's Government."*

In London, a triumphant D'Israeli wrote to Queen Victoria: *"It is settled. You have it, Madam. Four million pounds sterling. There was only one firm that could do it - Rothschilds. They behaved admirably, advanced the money at a low rate, and the entire interest of the Khedive is now yours Madam."*

One month later the troopship **Malabar** inward bound from Alexandria berthed at Portsmouth. In one of her holds were stored seven large cases containing the Suez Canal shares once held by the Khedive of Egypt and now the property of Britain.□

THE MONDAY FACILITY

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

JUNE : 6th, 13th, 20th and 27th
JULY: 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th
AUGUST: 1st, 8th, 15th and 22nd
SEPTEMBER: 5th, 12th, 19th and 26th

THE 'MENESTHEUS' – THE FLOATING BREWERY!

Reference was made to the Blue Funnel liner **Menestheus** as an 'amenity ship' on page 20 of the March *'Bulletin'*. A naval detachment and a Royal Marines Band joined the ship at Vancouver in December 1945 and the **Menestheus** arrived at Yokohama in January, 1946 to join the 'Fleet Train'. She was the only floating brewery in the world and was capable of brewing 1,800 gallons of beer daily from distilled sea water. Lt. Commander George Brown, a professional brew master from Burton-on-Trent, was in charge of this operation and over half a million pints were sold to men of the Royal Navy. The **Menestheus** was also equipped with a theatre and cinema, and a revue company of sailor artists gave a two-hour show called 'Pacific Showboat'. The atomic bomb and an earlier than expected end to the war made the **Menestheus** redundant as a floating Fleet Club, and she returned to the UK in July 1946 and was returned to the Blue Funnel Line in 1948. |||

AGROUND AT NEW BRIGHTON

by David Handscombe

The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's ***King Orry*** *left Douglas for Liverpool at 09.00 on Saturday 19th August, 1921 with 1,300 passengers on board. Dense fog was encountered for most of the passage, and at 13.30 she was proceeding up the Crosby Channel at slow speed.*

Visibility was only a few yards in front of the **King Orry's** bow and the risk of hitting another vessel or colliding with one of the channel buoys was very high. At 13.45 a white lighthouse suddenly became visible through the pall of the mist. At the same time a strange vibration followed by a jerking motion ran through the ship and the **King Orry** came to an abrupt halt. It didn't take long for Captain Quine to realise that his ship had run aground and that the lighthouse was almost certainly the Perch Rock light at New Brighton.

The watertight doors were immediately closed and Chief Engineer John Keig was ordered to put the **King Orry's** engines astern, but this had no effect other than to churn up clouds of mud and sand. Distress flares and a signal gun were fired, accompanied by long blasts on the ship's whistle as attempts to summon assistance were made.

Whilst all this was going on the fog suddenly began to clear and within a few minutes the sun was shining on the **King Orry** as she lay like a beached whale on New Brighton beach. The distress flares and the whistle blasts had attracted many craft, and they could now be seen hurrying to the **King Orry's** assistance; amongst these was the Wallasey ferry **Royal Daffodil** and the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board's buoy tenders **Salvor** and **Vigilant**. The New Brighton steam lifeboat had also been launched.

The tide was on the ebb and dropping rapidly and none of these vessels could approach the **King Orry** for fear of grounding themselves, although a few small rowing boats did manage to take some passengers off before they too had to retire. Within an hour the **King Orry** was high and dry and now that the fog had cleared it was possible to assess her predicament. Some 10 to 12 yards away on the port side lay the Perch Rocks and it became apparent just how close to disaster the **King Orry** had come.

As the **King Orry** had crawled up the Mersey, the beach at New Brighton had been crowded with holidaymakers, despite the fog. Many of them later reported that they had heard the whistle of a large steamer mingling with the mournful note of the lighthouse fog bell. Many people were standing on the New Brighton Battery - Fort Perch Rock - and to their surprise the bow of a large steamer suddenly loomed out of the fog in front of them and as the mist lifted they could clearly read her name. As the news got around thousands of people swarmed on to the beach or lined the promenade to gaze at the spectacle.

Captain Quine ordered one of his Engineers and the ship's carpenter to climb

down on to the sand and walk around the ship to ascertain if there was any damage t the hull plating. It didn't take more than a few minutes to establish that the hu appeared to be sound.

*The **King Orry** aground at New Brighton. The Rock Lighthouse is on the left.*

The next priority was what to do about the 1,300 passengers. A few had left the **King Orry** via the small rowing boats which came alongside before the tide receded. It was not until 16.25 that a towering ladder was put against the ship's side Then another ladder was placed against one of the gangway doors. Only the most agile and fittest of the passengers could attempt to leave the ship this way.

The Wallasey fire brigade arrived on the scene about 18.00 and placed their wheeled escape ladder against a set of gangway doors. As the passengers slowly began to descend to the beach, their luggage was attached to ropes and lowered down by members of the crew. One passenger caused a scare by throwing his overcoat down in front of him and for a few seconds all the onlookers gasped in horror as the wind filled the coat and flung the arms out, giving the impression that someone was falling to his death. Children were carried down the ladder in the arms of the crew, while the womenfolk who were nervous had a secure rope tied around their waist before they started to descend.

The incident soon attracted the attention of the press, and reporters and photographers from *The Times* and the *Daily Sketch*, plus many of the local papers arrived on the scene. Many passengers were interviewed and a Mr W.J. Duffle from Macclesfield commented that he had been talking to one of the crew at the precise moment of the grounding. He had seen the Rock Lighthouse loom out of the fog and commented: *'By George, we are cutting it a bit fine!'* Mr A. Brown of Castlestour who was returning from a holiday on the Isle of Man with his six year old daughter was of the opinion that if the lighthouse bell had been louder and the officers on the bridge more observant, then they would have been alerted to the danger and taken evasive action.

As the passengers waited for their turn to descend to the beach, many of them found ways of amusing themselves on board. Mr J. Bradshaw, from Bolton, an accomplished violinist passed the time by playing his instrument in the first-class saloon. Somebody joked that providing he didn't play *Nearer My God To Thee*, at least they would know that the ship wasn't about to founder. (There was still a belief that the orchestra on the **Titanic** had played this as the liner slipped below the waves).

About one thousand passengers descended to the New Brighton sands and struggled up the beach with their luggage to the waiting taxis which had been summoned by the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company to convey people to the railway and bus stations. Some 300 passengers elected to remain on board the **King Orry** and proceed to the landing stage with the ship once she had been refloated. These were mainly people who lived far away from Merseyside and had missed their train connections, and so had no hope of arriving home that night.

The **King Orry** was refloated on the rising tide at about 11pm. It was just after midnight when she secured to Princes Landing Stage, having been towed up the river by four tugs. As soon as she was alongside, the remaining passengers were disembarked. For those who intended to spend the rest of the night in a hotel, the company provided them with a taxi to take them to their accommodation.

The **King Orry** was taken into dry dock at Cammell Lairds the next morning for a thorough inspection of her hull plates. Little or no damage was found: she had indeed had a very lucky escape. It took a couple of days to check that her hull was watertight and that there was no damage to her turbines or gearing. She returned to service on 24th August when she took the 10.30am Liverpool to Douglas sailing. □

*David Handscombe's book **KING ORRY (III)** is to be published in June 2005 by Ferry Publications. Size A4, 192 pages, price £27 inc p&p.*

THE LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY
70th ANNIVERSARY PUBLICATION

It is proposed to produce a 70th Anniversary publication in 2008 to mark seventy years of the Society. Members of the Society are invited to submit articles on their research or nautical experiences for consideration for inclusion.

The articles should be of about 3,000 words in length and if possible supported by pictures or other illustrations suitable for reproduction in black-and-white. The articles should not have previously appeared elsewhere.

Articles should be sent to Antony J. Barratt at 24 Cross Green, Upton-by-Chester, CH2 1QR. (e-mail: < tony.barratt@btopenworld.com >)

CORRECTION

*I'm afraid the gremlins made an appearance in the March 'Bulletin'. On the inside front cover the details for the **Clan MacInnes** were incorrect. The **Clan MacInnes** was launched on 9th April 1952. After 26 years with the Clan Line she was sold in 1978 to the Ali Khalifa Mirchandani Shipping Co. of Beirut and renamed **Athoub**. On 15th October 1979 she arrived at Kaohsiung for demolition. Thanks to everyone who pointed out this error. Apologies - as Editor I should at least be capable of getting my ship details correct !* j.s.

THE NAVY LEAGUE AND THE LANCASHIRE SEA TRAINING HOME FOR BOYS AT WALLASEY (Part 4)

by LNRS Member Gordon Bodey

After the initial enthusiasm for the merger of the Liverpool and Manchester Branches of the Navy League, it was decided that the amalgamation should be delayed until the outcome of Captain Thomas's action was known (and even then it was to prove to be a tedious, protracted and incomplete process).

Captain Thomas's action commenced at the start of March, 1905 before Mr Justice Walton and a special jury at Liverpool Assizes. The local committee of the League (as the defendants) contended that the dismissal was justified on the basis of Captain Thomas having repeatedly acted without instructions in the matter of expenditure. During a cross-examination that lasted six hours (and caused much mirth in the Court), the plaintiff admitted acting without instructions but contended that his actions had been justified, and condoned by the committee.

When members of the committee gave evidence it emerged that Sir Alfred Jones had, indeed, wanted to dismiss Captain Thomas a long time before the event occurred. He had only desisted from doing so in deference to Sir John Gray Hill who had allowed Captain Thomas more of the benefit of the doubt than was justified. Sir Alfred also said that Thomas was quite impossible to work with and that his word - even in writing - was not to be trusted. It also emerged that calendar monies belonging to the Home had been paid into Thomas's private account.

In the event Captain Thomas's action failed, but almost three years later he was to write to the Committee requesting employment. Not unnaturally, his request was refused!

Nine months after Captain Thomas's action, a similar situation was nipped in the bud when the Assistant Secretary was asked to resign because of accounting irregularities and 'unbusiness-like methods'. He was offered £10 to go quietly, and to the committee's relief did so.

The Home's band soon earned a reputation for excellence (which it was to retain throughout the life of the Home) and was much sought after to play at local functions and at events further afield. The fee per performance was two guineas (£2.10p), plus travelling expenses and refreshments. At the beginning of December 1905 Sir Alfred Jones engaged the band at the above fee to play on the Landing Stage each Saturday morning at the sailing time of his express ships. This, however, was vetoed by the Dock Board, so he had the band play on board until just before sailing time.

In addition to band performances the boys frequently gave gymnastic displays, rifle-drill displays and firing displays at tournaments and military shows. At the military tournament held at Edge Lane, Liverpool, in March 1906, the boys gave a display of field-gun drill and were inspected by the distinguished General Sir L Rundle, O/C Northern Command, who expressed himself 'astonished' at their drill and

expertise. They were asked to repeat the performance twice more during the tournament.

They were also called upon on many occasions to supply Guards of Honour to the many notable people who frequently visited Merseyside and the surrounding areas in those days. They were always inspected by the visiting gentry and their turnout, conduct and, if giving a display, their performance attracted high praise.

Notable among such occasions was that of 13th July 1905 when the Home had been asked to provide a Guard of Honour for King Edward VII at the opening of Salford Docks. One hundred boys and six officers from the Home attended and were inspected by the King who *'passed high encomiums on their smartness and worth'*. Also, on 29th January 1906 the boys and the band attended St George's Hall, Liverpool in the afternoon to act as Guard of Honour to Field Marshal Lord Roberts, who afterwards said that *'he had never seen better'*.

Official inspections of the Home were frequent and thorough and carried out on behalf of the Admiralty by an Admiral and his staff, by local authorities, education authorities and other official organisations, and those who subscribed funds or put lads into the Home's care.

Between times, the Home and its occupants were visited and inspected unofficially on many occasions by admirals, captains and other influential people who could, and did, publicise the work of the Home in the appropriate quarters, and materially assisted it in various ways. A notable civilian visitor was the publisher and naval lobbyist Lord Brassey[2] whose efforts helped to have the 'Two-Power' Standard of Viscount Castlereagh incorporated into the 1889 Naval Defence Act.

Many who could not visit were happy to have the Home's then President, Lord Lathom, Chairman Sir John Gray Hill or Sir A.L.Jones to discuss the Home's requirements - most notably Sir John A. Fisher (the First Sea Lord), at whose instigation Admiral Sir Charles Drury (Second Sea Lord and responsible for RN recruitment and training) visited the Home on 3rd February 1906.

It was the latter visit that finally achieved full Admiralty recognition of the suitability of the Home's training methods and standards of competency and discipline for the Navy's service. Admiral Drury reported that he could not suggest any improvement on the institution and that he would recommend that the boys, after receiving one year's instruction there, would be eligible to go to the training ship **Ganges** at Shotley (Harwich) to take the examination to pass as 'first class' for the Navy. Any boy so passing would obtain a grant of £25 for the Home. Boys who passed at a lower grade would still be accepted into the Navy but would not earn the grant. As a result the Home started extra classes for those boys being tutored especially for the Royal Navy. These were of two hours per night, four nights per week, given by two schoolmasters at a cost of three shillings (15p) per boy per annum.

[2]. *BRASSEY, Thomas (1836-1918), the first Earl Brassey, was a man of great integrity and patriotic zeal. He interested himself (and worked tirelessly) in all things pertaining to naval and maritime matters; particularly with regard to wages, conditions of work and employers' liability, producing a number of volumes on the subjects in which he was most active. He was the founder in 1886 of the excellent 'Naval Annual' - for many years the most authoritative survey of world naval affairs. He had published in the 1910 edition an article on the Home Fleet which brought widespread publicity and support.*

At this time the greatest number of lads passed as fit for the sea went into the Mercantile Marine: of 465 lads who had been found employment by 31st December 1910, 286 (61·5%) had been given their first job by the Booth Steamship Company (which provided separate accommodation on board its ships for them) and the Royal Navy had provided 68 berths (14·6%).

Lamport & Holt, notably, employed few of the Home's boys on its ships. This was due to a lack of separate accommodation on board its ships for boy ratings, and the company would not put them in the fo'c'sle. However, members of the families contributed most generously in various other ways to the Home's viability: Miss E Melly was a consistent supporter and fund raiser and Colonel Melly supervised the rifle and ordnance activities at the Home, provided a cup for markmanship and arranged for the Home to be affiliated to the National Rifle Club.

Once the rifle range was completed the Home formed a rifle club, which was open to the public. In addition, a badminton club was formed, which members of the public were also allowed to join. Both ventures were meant to bring the lads into contact with the public and both proved to be very popular. Eventually, use of the rifle club facilities was extended to the Shipping Staffs' Association, through whose members it was hoped the Home's work would become more widely known to potential employers.

However, the public's access to the Home did not run to neighbours' fowls roaming the grounds freely as one requested. Yet another was given short shrift when he requested to be allowed to entertain 3,000 children of the Wallasey Temperance Band of Hope in the drill shed! And, a sign of things to come, a Miss Dunn of Wallasey requested to use the drill shed and the rifle range for her Corps of Girls, but was refused.

Another recreational activity started at this time, which was to become - more or less - an annual event, was a fortnight's summer camp for those boys who were homeless - 70 or so at this time. The first was to Ramsey on the Isle of Man on 21st June 1906. Apart from food the recorded costs incurred for this trip were as follows: Site hire:£4; tent hire:£3/15/-; steamer fares £9; Captain £10; Total: £26/15/- (£26.75).

As noted previously, the finances of the Home were (and would be throughout its life) of constant concern, and numerous sources of potential trainees and income were constantly pursued. Among the many initiatives taken were:

- An application for a Local Government Board Certificate, *i.e.* a license to take in boys from the Local Boards of Guardians' Union workhouses and other similar institutions.
- Public appeals to other Navy League Branches and individuals.
- Collecting boxes placed on board as many ships as would allow them.
- A Hammock Scheme[3] whereby a donor endowed a hammock for £25 p.a. (or, for £500 in perpetuity in a name of the donor's choosing, at the Home, was instituted in 1906.

[3] *Hammocks Scheme: A Scheme for providing for the Outfit, Maintenance, Training and Start in Life of a British Boy. In 1920 there were 92 endowed hammocks in total - 38 by donation in perpetuity.*

Notable among those responding positively, Captain Coram's Foundling Hospital in London sent a letter in May 1906 saying that it was considering sending some of its boys to the Home rather than to **Warspite**. Mr Amphlett, Steward of the Foundling Hospital, then visited the Home which he found most satisfactory. Two boys were quickly sent and the Home received £25 p.a., plus £3/10/- for outfitting each boy. Others were to be sent later, and by 1910 all the Foundling Hospital's boys who were to go to sea were sent to Wallasey for training.

Not all those approached were supportive. Notably the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company would not allow collecting boxes on its vessels at this time; and Andrew Carnegie said that the Home was 'outside his sphere of influence', and in response to a second appeal said that he would definitely not give anything to the Home.

A valuable source of income down the years was to come from legacies willed to the Home, though in many cases receipt was protracted, and sometimes notably so. Miss Harriette Clarke, who died in 1906, left the Home £9,000, but it was to be June 1937 before the final sum was paid into the Home's account.

The year 1907 was to be one of much achievement. In addition to an improvement in the Home's finances, Princess Louise was to become Patroness of the Home (her husband, the Duke of Argyll, was to become an Honorary Vice-President, as was Lord Brassey and David Lloyd George, then Chancellor of the Exchequer). The Home was receiving free publicity and advertisements in notable journals, from which extra countrywide support was to ensue; many visitors to Merseyside made a point of including a visit to the Home as part of their itinerary; and the Admiralty became very supportive of the Home.

In August a Channel Fleet squadron visited the Mersey and the C-in-C, Admiral Charles Beresford, inspected the Home and was given demonstrations of its activities and the in-depth skills of the boys. He was afterwards to depute one of his officers to send the following message of approbation to the Home:

"I consider that the system of training and organisation is very satisfactory, every detail being well thought out. The boys are well taught and answer very intelligently and reflect great credit on the Officer Instructors who teach them. The appearance of the boys is very good, they are clean and well dressed. The physical drill and marching was very creditable, and I can see that strict discipline is maintained under the Superintendent's management. The Establishment is capable of supplying valuable recruits to both the Mercantile Marine and the Navy".

The year was crowned by a visit from the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Tweedmouth, on 14th December (as part of a visit to Merseyside to present the prizes at the training ship **Conway's** annual prize-giving day), who also recorded his approval of the Home's affairs.

In addition, a great range of activities was now undertaken by the boys outside the confines of the Home: local fêtes were attended and competitions entered (with much success). Theatre and concert performances were attended; marksmanship matches against outside teams took place on a regular basis; boat-pulling matches were competed in (sailing the Home's boats on the Great Float, Birkenhead, was a regular pastime, as were other sporting activities); and on public holidays the boys were given

leave from duties, during which they were free to wander as and where they pleased and were trusted to be back by the appointed time - very few transgressed.

A particularly pleasing piece of news for Sir Alfred Jones in May 1909 was that a former trainee, Mr Williams, had passed his examination for second mate. Sir Alfred had him appointed as 4th Officer on his ship **Mendi**. Over the years ahead some 27 others were to achieve officer status - some in the armed forces. [One boy who had left the Home in 1914 wrote to it in 1932 - he was now Captain S. Myers, Assistant Marine Superintendent of the Standard Oil Company of New York].

It was shortly after this, in December 1909, that Sir Alfred Jones, who had worked tirelessly for the Home's benefit, died. With his passing the Home lost its most influential ambassador and advocate in the world of commerce and shipping. Just three months later the death of Lord Lathom occurred. His influence in the social circles in which he moved had brought the Home to the attention of many people of influence and this had reaped many benefits for the Home.

At this time two notable developments (one directly as a consequence of Sir Alfred's death) occurred in the Institution's affairs that were to enlarge and carry its work forward.

In October 1909 the Hertfordshire branch of the Navy League had asked Liscard for information in order to set up a similar training home of its own. This had been supplied to them within a month, whereupon they suggested that their new Home should be built on the Liscard site, with Hertfordshire finding the necessary finance. In addition, Hertfordshire would supply 100 boys and a grant of £30 p.a. for each of them. Two months later the Local Government Board Inspector (Mr Grant Duff) said that Liscard's facilities were already adequate for 140 trainees; a bonus in view of the fact that demand from shipowners for trained lads was now greater than the supply - the best indication that the Home's work was worthwhile and valued. When all the details of the proposal had been agreed upon, an agreement was signed in July 1911 on behalf of both committees to put the plan into effect.

Work on the Hertfordshire Home went ahead rapidly, and it was officially opened on 12th June 1912 by Lady Salisbury, who had travelled with a party from London at the Home's expense; but this was hardly a junket - the lunch cost per guest was 1s.2d (7p).

A second such development followed rapidly as a result of a legacy to the Home in the late Sir Alfred Jones' will. A sum of £5,000 was to be used to build and endow a Home to house 100 boys as a memorial to Sir Alfred in his name; the contract for its building being agreed a month after the Hertfordshire Home was opened.

However, concomitant with these developments, Superintendent Captain Williams decided to retire, effective from 30th June 1912 [but he was to stay on until 1st September to assist the new superintendent, Commander Agnew]. No doubt the proposed increase in the number of trainees from some 120 to over 200 by the end of 1913 influenced his decision as much as other factors. His work in developing the standards of the Home, its range of training and activities, its status, and the many innovations in the eight years of his tenure of the post, was of the highest order.

Additional to the many developments already cited, Captain Williams had in January 1911 introduced wireless telegraphy training - himself installing equipment

obtained from the Marconi Company - and subsequently had five lads obtain the Post Office's certificate and obtain berths as wireless operators on ships. This was remarkably prescient in view of the fact that, until the Titanic disaster of 1912, ship owners as a body were very slow to embrace the new technology. It would be 1914 before an Act of Parliament made it compulsory for British ships carrying over 50 passengers to install radio. In all, 34 lads were to leave the Home as 'Marconi boys', or assistant wireless operators on their first appointment.

Also, rightly believing that the days of sail were nearing their end and that berths for trained engine room ratings would become more widely available, Captain Williams had set up a 'mechanical' workshop (an idea apparently first suggested by Lady Salisbury), complete with a skilled instructor to give the lads an increased range of skills. This initiative was soon to reap a large and totally unexpected bonus: in September 1912 Mr Heath Harrison (a partner in the great Liverpool ship owning company of T. & J. Harrison, and already a generous contributor to the Home's funds, and who was to remain a vice-president until his death in May 1934 at the age of 76) donated £2,500 to build and equip a wing to house classes in technical instruction. Six months later the new wing had been completed. Fortuitously, at that time, an engine and a boiler in good condition came up for sale at Portsmouth Dockyard for £13 and was bought for the Heath Harrison wing of the Home.

In June 1914 the Institution lost another of its founding fathers when Sir John Gray Hill died. His benevolence and unceasing effort on behalf of the Institution since its inception had been a mainstay and his passing was greatly mourned by everyone at the Home.

On the outbreak of World War 1, the superintendent, the secretary and some of the instructors were called up for military service. During hostilities the work of the Home carried on more or less as usual with Mr Buzzo, the Chief Instructor, becoming acting superintendent. In addition Lord Derby accepted the Presidency of the Home in 1915, whilst the chairman, Mr Alfred Read, financed the building and equipping of a new gymnasium in 1917.

During the war a total of 419 boys were sent to the Merchant Navy and 232 to the Royal Navy. The conflict claimed the lives of 53 of the Home's former trainees.

On restoration of peace, the superintendent, now Captain Agnew, returned to his post. Mr Alfred Read was knighted in 1919 (Mr Heath Harrison had also been so honoured in 1917), and the Booth Line instituted an additional benefit to those it employed from the Home by giving them paid stand-by shore work whilst they waited for their ships to sail again.

Despite continuing donations, including a great increase in those received from collecting boxes on ships - particularly those on board Canadian Pacific, Elder Dempster and White Star vessels, sponsorships, legacies, grants and income from a multitude of other sources (allied with stringent housekeeping), the shortage of funds was never less than acute. By November 1920 it was decided that drastic measures had to be taken to ensure survival:

- The number of trainees was limited to 175. (The maximum reached had been 240 in September,1917). This was to prove a timely move as berths became scarcer. Many Royal Navy ships had been taken out of service and, coincident with the

move, a recession (that was to prove severe and protracted) occurred in the merchant shipping industry thereafter.

- The victualling cost was brought down from the 1/- (5p) per head per day in March 1920 to an average of 7.5d (3p) per head.
- Boys going to sea were asked to reimburse the cost of their kit in instalments, and also to pay one shilling per day for their keep when on leave at the Home.

In addition, an appeal was made to shipping and other firms to donate £10 each to the Home's Debt Relief Fund (this was to bring in £1,100 from the Liverpool Steamship Owners' Association). However, a Bazaar was again to prove the lifesaver. This was held at Wallasey in October 1921 and realised some £3,500 by March, 1922. It was also in this year that the Marconi Company presented a modern set of its apparatus *gratis* to the Home in recognition of its work in training Marconi operators.

The 1930s were to be particularly successful years for the Home (despite some 40,000 Merchant Naval officers and men being unemployed by the autumn of 1933) with a record number of its trainees being recruited both for the Royal and Merchant Navies. In addition, the Liverpool Pilotage Service also started recruiting from the Home in this period. However, by 1933, the cost of maintaining and training each lad had risen to £55 per annum.

It was in 1931 that the suggestion that the Home should consider amalgamation with the training ship **Indefatigable** was first mooted. This came from the King George Fund for Sailors which had been making a grant to the Home each year since January 1918 (and was to continue to do so until December 1944, giving an average of £1,140 per annum in that period). The **Indefatigable** was also supported by a similar amount and the Fund wished to reduce its total outlay in this area. Not unnaturally, neither institution viewed the suggestion favourably. Meetings, negotiations, surveys and canvassing of opinions were to continue throughout the decade, and it was to be 10th December 1942 before a Memorandum of Articles, acceptable to both institutions, was approved prior to being forwarded to the Charity Commissioners.

By this time, however, the Home's trainees numbered only 40 and they had been evacuated to a camp at Ulverston, in the Furness district of Lancashire, while the **Indefatigable's** trainees had been evacuated to temporary premises at Clawddnewydd near Ruthin, North Wales. Both moves had taken place in 1941 to escape the German bombing of Merseyside. It was envisaged that on amalgamation the combined institution would be housed in a similar rural location.

Amalgamation, as the 'Indefatigable and National Sea Training Home for Boys' was housed at Plas Llanfair, Anglesey, in a mansion that had been purchased by the **Indefatigable's** managing committee a year before from the Marquis of Anglesey, was finally achieved in April, 1945, bringing to an end the Wallasey Home's forty-two year existence. In all, some 3,260 trainees had passed through the Home. Of these, 928 (28.5%) were initially employed by the Booth Steamship Company, and largely due to two world wars, 968 (29.7%) trainees entered Royal Naval service.

Those who had worked at the Home during its forty-two years of operation were generally loyal, dedicated and long-serving. Special mention must be made of instructors Mr Buzzo and Mr Jago, both of whom contributed greatly during their 30-

year service until retiring aged 70; the honorary physicians Drs. Stevenson and McDonald who gave their services for 32 and 23 years respectively; Monsignor Pinnington on the Board for 27 years; bandmaster Wilmer, almost 21 years; Mr Smith, cook for 30 years; and the longest serving of the superintendents, Captain Agnew RN, 23.5 years.

Not least worthy of note were the ladies and gentlemen, too numerous to name individually, who worked tirelessly down the years raising money and helping in various capacities to ensure that the Home's work continued as smoothly and effectively as possible - often in very difficult circumstances.

In conclusion it can be said with certainty that the Home not only provided a refuge for its residents (many of whom would otherwise have been on the streets) but also provided for their welfare, education and training in a way that the majority of lads from similar backgrounds could not even have dreamt of.

Whilst the regime was strict - but, by and large, compassionate - it was full of interest and variety, and opened windows on life that few, if any, of its trainees would otherwise have been aware of. To the majority who passed through its doors it really did represent home and they would have had a belief and a confidence in themselves on leaving that would have enabled them to fulfil a useful role in society on their own merits. Very few of them would have regretted the time spent there; many were to excel as a result of their training; all would have been grateful for its care. |||

Acknowledgements and Sources consulted:

Staff of the Archive and Library at the Merseyside Maritime Museum

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The Society's stand at the Local History Exhibition held at St George's Hall, Liverpool, in February 2005. On the left is past-Chairman Alan McClelland, and on the right LNRS Vice-President Harry Hignett.
photo: Joan McClelland

REPORTS ON MEETINGS

'A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF NORTHWESTERN SHIPREPAIRERS'

by Linton Roberts

(Thursday, 17th February, 2005)

Linton Roberts is no stranger to the Liverpool Nautical Research Society as he has spoken at meetings on several occasions over the past few years. Mr Roberts introduced himself as Project Manager of Northwestern Shiprepairers which was formed following the failure of Cammell Laird in 2001. The company's 'home' is at Bidston Dry Dock in Birkenhead's West Float, the former Wright & Beyer yard. The Mersey Docks & Harbour Company own 50% of Northwestern Shiprepairers.

The Company is the second largest ship repairer in the UK and has outgrown the facilities available on the Mersey. It is set to expand to the Clyde as Scott Lithgow Shiprepairers.

Northwestern Shiprepairers specialises in ship repair and conversion work. It is the shipyard of choice for the Ministry of Defence who recently sent the RFA **Black Rover** to Bidston for a seven month survey. Mr Roberts said that the company has the capability to build ships on the Mersey again, and mentioned six patrol vessels for the Quatar Navy and small specialist ferries for Caledonian MacBrayne which would be coming up for tender shortly.

The Company employs between 150 and 450 employees depending on the amount of work in hand, and has six apprentices, although it is intended to increase this number. The facilities used on the Mersey include the Bidston Dry Dock, the Canada Dry Dock in Liverpool's north docks, the Monk's Ferry Dry Dock (the old Cammell Laird No.4 dock, popularly known as the '**Alabama**' dock) and the Clarence Dry Dock, again on the Liverpool side of the Mersey where tugs and small coasters are repaired.

The base for Scott Lithgow Shiprepairers will be at the Inch Green Dry Dock. This is the dock which accommodated Cunard's **Queen Elizabeth** in 1966 when a notch had to be cut at the head of the dock to accommodate the liner's bow. As a reminder of that visit, the notch is still there. Inverclyde Council have welcomed the news of the regeneration of the dock with open arms. Linton Roberts said that the Inch Green Dock has already been used by the company for large Ministry of Defence projects such as when in 2003 the RFA **Fort George** was overhauled and surveyed. This vessel is of comparable size to the aircraft carriers **Illustrious** and **Ark Royal**, and could not be accommodated on the Mersey. On this occasion the Inch Green dock was hired and 150 men from Merseyside went north to work on the **Fort George**, and some 200 local men were employed.

Northwestern Shiprepairers has many loyal customers on the Irish Sea. The company maintains the eight pilot launches operated by the Liverpool Pilotage Service and has a contract for overhauling Dock Company vessels such as the **Mersey Mammoth** and the dredgers. When the Norse-Merchant vessels are alongside the Twelve Quays terminal, there are likely to be four or five Northwestern men on board at any one time carrying out maintenance. Other loyal customers include the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company and increasingly, Caledonian MacBrayne who sent three

of its larger vessels, the **Lord of the Isles**, the **Clansman** and the **Hebridean Isles** to the Canada Dry Dock in rapid succession in early 2005.

Mr Roberts instanced the building of a new passenger accommodation block on the Isle of Man ferry **Ben-my-Chree** in 2004 as a typical, but very intensive, project. In typical Steam Packet fashion, a phone call was received from the Douglas head office in the middle of December 2003 wanting the job to be done, literally, next week!

It was decided that the project could be done and the accommodation block was built in two halves - one at Bidston and the other across the Mersey in Liverpool. This involved the **Mersey Mammoth** transporting the Liverpool-built section across the Mersey to Birkenhead on Christmas Day, 2003. The **Ben-my-Chree** arrived at Bidston Dry Dock on 10th January 2004 and the contract was due to be completed by 9th February 2004, otherwise a £40,000 per day penalty would be charged for any over-run. In the event the job was completed on time, with Northwestern men sailing on the *Ben* for a month or so after she was back in service, putting the final touches to the new block.

Linton Roberts described the week so far, prior to his talking to the Society. On Monday 14th February Bibby's **Aquamarine** had left the yard. The following day the **SuperSeaCat Two** arrived for her annual overhaul. The same day (Tuesday) the **Lord of the Isles** left the Canada Dry Dock and was immediately replaced by the **Clansman**. There was an urgent request from the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company to repair the Gladstone lock gates which had been damaged in the previous weekend's severe northerly storms. Also as a result of the storms, the Twelve Quays terminal needed attention. And so it went on - twenty-four hours a day.

It was good to hear such a very positive talk about the state of ship repairing on the Mersey. Northwestern Shiprepairers is undoubtedly a great success story and has a very bright future. Mr Roberts said that he would be moving north to the Clyde in the near future to oversee the establishment of Scott Lithgow Shiprepairers at Inch Green.

After a brisk question and answer session, LNRS Member John Chambers thanked Linton Roberts for what had been a very memorable presentation. □

j.s.

NO SNAKES FOR THE ROYAL NAVY

When word got around in 1955 that the United States Navy might name a new cruiser **Python**, the Royal Navy shuddered and some members of the U.S.N. wondered why. They no doubt had forgotten just why no ships in the Royal Navy bear reptiles' names. The **Cobra** and the **Viper** are to blame for that. The **Cobra**, a destroyer, was on passage from her builder's yard to Portsmouth on 18th September 1901 when she sank in the North Sea with the loss of 67 lives.

As a result of this tragedy a fund was set up which laid the foundation for the Naval Disasters Fund. It was also as a result of the sinking of the **Cobra** that the Admiralty started keeping shore addresses and the names of next-of-kin of sailors. Another Royal Naval vessel, the **Viper** was also lost with many casualties.

Sailors firmly believed that reptiles' names were unlucky and when the R.N. in later years decided to name a new destroyer the **Python**, the Admiralty was firmly given to understand that it would not get an officer or rating to serve in her. The name was dropped ! □

SALT AND COAL, STEAM AND IRON

THE RISE OF THE MERSEY ROVERS

by LNRS Member Roy Fenton

(Thursday, 17th March, 2005)

In the 1990s, I completed a book about the steam and motor coaster owners of Liverpool and the Mersey entitled *Mersey Rovers*. Writing it opened my eyes to at least two aspects of the maritime history of Merseyside.

Firstly, just how did Liverpool and the Mersey ports become so important? And, secondly, how did steam take over the bulk trades which employed these Mersey rovers, as I have called the small tramps.

When I was at school in Ellesmere Port, I learnt that Chester had been the major port in the area in Roman times, but as the Dee had silted, the Mersey and Liverpool had taken over. I was well aware, from seeing vast dredgers like the **Leviathan** laid up at Birkenhead awaiting demolition, that the Mersey was constantly dredged.

There had been major efforts to 'improve' the Dee at various times, including canalising the section just below Chester in the 18th century. This had worked for a while, but had the unwanted and unforeseen side effect of killing off Parkgate as a port when the main channel of the Dee deserted it. But what had stimulated development of the Mersey?

I found what I think was the answer from reading Charles Hadfield's books on canals in the north-west of England. The area's first navigable waterways were the River Weaver and the Sankey Canal. Getting salt out of Cheshire was important enough to stimulate long-term effects to improve the Weaver. And getting coal from the coalfield around St Helens down to the Mersey, so that it could be taken up the Weaver to the salt ports, was so important that it led to the building of what is generally recognised as Britain's first industrial canal, the Sankey Brook Navigation.

So, there was salt in major quantities coming out of the Cheshire salt works, far too much for it all to be used domestically; after all, the chip shop had yet to be invented! It must, therefore, have been exported. If we look at the map, just how does one get salt out of Cheshire? Not, I would suggest, by Chester. The salt had to go out down the Weaver, and then down the Mersey. Ports were established, or grew, to handle the transhipment of this salt from smallish Weaver craft to the seagoing and coastal craft of the time. These ports were originally Frodsham and later Runcorn and Liverpool.

Trade figures for the latter part of the 18th century have salt right at the top. I also had posthumous support from shipowner John Holt who described salt as 'the nursing mother' of the port of Liverpool. Salt provided an export cargo for those merchants who were importing sugar from the West Indies, timber from the Baltic or North America or cotton from the Gulf.

So, we've covered the salt and coal from the title of my presentation; what

about the steam and the iron? When researching *Mersey Rovers* I went through the Liverpool Customs Registers for the latter half of the 19th century. I had already identified many of my candidate ships from Lloyd's Register by looking up the owners whose names I knew. What greatly surprised me was that there were very few small bulk-carrying steamers appearing as registered at Liverpool. By 1870 the bulk-carrying steam coaster was very well established elsewhere.

After a number of false starts in the 1840s, the first successful steam colliers arrived on the east coast in 1852, the first being the **John Bowes**. By 1870 there were over 120 screw colliers in service on the east coat. In contrast, I could identify only about 20 steamers working in bulk trades on the west coast. The west coast steamers were far smaller than those of the east coast.

It wasn't as if west coast builders were not capable of building steam coasters. Thomas Vernon and Son of Liverpool completed the **Haggerston** in August 1852, just two months after the **John Bowes**. However the **Haggerston** foundered off Flamborough Head after only a few months in service.

One of the prerequisites for a successful steam bulk carrier was to avoid the time-consuming process of queuing to load solid ballast before the voyage north from the Thames to the Tyne or Wear. This ballast had, of course, to be discharged before a coal cargo could be loaded, and that required more expense and more queuing. The screw collier just couldn't afford the wait. To earn its living it had to make many more voyages than the sailing collier. The answer to this problem, water ballast, was fairly obvious and ship owners had been trying it for some time.

The method adopted most widely was seriously flawed. This was to have canvas bags in the bottom of the hold. These were filled with water for the ballast voyage; then emptied and the coal or other bulk cargo was loaded on top of the bags. Not surprisingly, the bags got damaged during loading, and often even more so during discharging. Although the **John Bowes** is widely regarded as the pioneer steam collier, there is no evidence that she had any water ballast facility when she was launched. It took a while to work out a suitable system and eventually the **John Bowes** was fitted with ballast tanks at the side of the hold. However, the **Haggerston** was built with a double bottom for water ballast.

Annual statistics were prepared for Parliament detailing the tonnages of coal shipped coastwise out of even the smallest ports. According to these figures, in 1870 the total tonnage of coal shipped coastwise out of east coast ports was 5.8million tons. The tonnage shipped coastwise on the west coast was 4.6million tons. If in 1870 the east coast trade could sustain 110 steamers, why could the west coast trade support only 20? What I think was happening was that the east coast steam colliers were built, not because they were more economic than sailing colliers, but because they had certain advantages for coal owners. Steam colliers allowed the big coal owners to win large contracts with the London gas companies. These were the major users of gas coal from Durham and Northumberland.

In the 1840s and 1850s, the London gas companies were placing large coal contracts of up to 100,000 tons a year, and were imposing severe penalties for non-compliance. Non-delivery was often a problem for those relying on sailing colliers as the fleets could often be windbound making coal deliveries impossible for weeks on

end. The gas companies did not have room for stockpiles around their gasworks. S disruption to coal supplies could mean disruption to gas supplies which wa commercially disastrous and physically dangerous.

The answer to dependability of supply was the screw collier. It could sa almost regardless of the weather and meant that deliveries could be more or les guaranteed.

The second difference between the steam colliers on the east coast and those few on the west coast was their size. The west coast vessels were noticeably smalle and shallower-drafted and had well under half the cargo capacity of an east coas steamer. The answer was that the geography of the east and west coast coal trades wa very different. The Tyne and the Wear were shipping coal to the Thames, all deep rivers which could accommodate relatively large vessels.

On the west coast there were many more coal shipping ports: in south-wes Scotland, Cumbria, Lancashire and the Mersey. Two of the important Irish coal receiving ports could take only relatively small ships: Newry was at the end of a canal with small locks and at Dublin the main coal berths were inside the Grand Canal Dock which limited ships to 140 feet in length. Other ports with restricted access could accept only smaller, and especially shallower, ships.

A significant increase in the efficiency of the screw bulk carrier was needed and this came principally from improvements to the marine steam engine in the 1860s and 1870s, in particular from large increases in boiler pressure from around 12psi in 1852 to 70psi by the late 1870s. Estimates are that the efficiency of the marine steam engine improved about fourfold from about 1850 to 1880. It was not just a case of the steamers burning less coal. Fewer firemen were required, and smaller bunkers meant that there was more room for cargo.

West coast owners began to invest seriously in steamers in the early 1880s. There was a large surge in building, led by owners such as Richard Hughes in Liverpool, the Macks at Belfast, and Glasgow owners such as the Hay family and most impressive of all William Robertson: in the 1880s his Gem Line fleet was taking two or three new steamers every year.

From 1880 the west coast fleet grew spectacularly. In terms of numbers, the west coast ships eventually outstripped the east coast ships. This suggests that there was potential employment for steam bulk carriers on the west coast, but it had been a matter of perfecting the vessel. As soon as an efficient, relatively small steam bulk carrier could be built, it displaced sail on the west coast as quickly as the screw collier had penetrated the east coast trade some twenty to thirty years earlier. It was not until the late 1870s that the coastal bulk-carrying steamer was truly economic in that it could support itself and its owner.

In this presentation I have described how, in my view, the Mersey ports became important. Secondly, I have traced how I think owners on Merseyside waited until steam had proved itself in the bulk trades on the east coast, and until steam technology had been refined by shipbuilders and marine engine builders, and a steamer smaller than the east coast collier could be built and run economically. Then they exploited the technology and took a dominant position in the coastal bulk trades. □

READERS' LETTERS

From LNRS Member Sean Kennedy of Hightown, Liverpool:

Two articles in the March *'Bulletin'* have provided welcome background to my family 'archive'.

The informative history of *The Irish Mail* included a reference to the tragic sinking of the **Leinster** on 10th October 1918; my mother was to have been a passenger on that trip but the train from Cork to Dublin missed the connection.

She always claimed that this fortunate occurrence was due to the train running on God's time, while the steamships followed Lloyd George's time: perhaps she was adding a bit of blarney to soften the sadness.

The un-named vessel on page 8 of the March *'Bulletin'* certainly looks like the photograph of the **Professor** which I bought from the Maritime Museum. It was a ship my father made three trips on in the early 1920s, after the submarine attack but before the fire.

In February 1917, just twelve months after the **Professor** had been attacked, and also on the Liverpool - Alexandria run, he was aboard the **Asturian** which too fought off a similar attempt. The 'Med' was clearly not a healthy place in those days of constant conflict.

Roy Fenton (*left*) and LNRS Vice-President Graeme Cubbin discuss one of the finer points from Roy's book '*Mersey Rovers*' at the meeting on 17th March

Photo: John Stokoe

OBITUARY

SIR GEOFFREY VOLELIN BATES, MC, Bt.

by LNRS Member Captain B.S. McManus

Sir Geoffrey Volelin Bates of Gyrn Castle, Llanasa, near Prestatyn died in hospital on Sunday 13th February 2005, aged 83. His cremation was a private family affair and there was a request for donations to Llanasa Parish Church and the Normandy Veterans Association instead of flowers.

Sir Geoffrey was born on 2nd October 1921, the son of Major Cecil Roberts Bates DSO, MC, the third son of the 2nd Baronet, and Hylda the daughter of Sir James Heath, 1st Baronet. His childhood was spent in Oxenden, a village three miles south of Market Harborough, Leicestershire, which was his mother's home where his father had retired after leaving the Indian Army. Geoffrey was educated at Radley College in Berkshire, and commissioned in the 8th King's Royal Hussars in 1941, a regiment that had been formed in 1693. After service in Palestine in 1938, the 8th King's Royal Hussars became one of the original regiments of the 7th Armoured Division, known as the Desert Rats. It was sent to Greece in March 1941 and saw action briefly before being evacuated. The regiment's Commanding Officer/ Colonel-in-Chief, Brigadier Van der Byl, who had been awarded the DSO in France during the First World War, was one of Geoffrey's mother's cousins. Sir Geoffrey soon earned the reputation as being a fearless leader and was awarded the Military Cross in the Western desert in 1942. After El Alamein, the regiment was sent to Cyprus for re-organisation before returning to Britain with the 7th Armoured Division and training for the Second Front. It landed in Normandy on 'D+2' (8th June 1944) and fought its way through to Hamburg. After being demobbed at the end of 1945, Sir Geoffrey joined the family business, Edward Bates & Sons, in which he was a partner.

Sir Geoffrey inherited the title of 5th Baronet Bates of Bellefield, Lancaster, from his uncle Sir Percy Bates. In shipping circles the name Bates translates into Cunard, in which company the family were the majority shareholders. Sir Percy is remembered for the complicated merger with the White Star Line, and for persuading the Government to grant assistance for the building of the two *'Queens'*. Sir Percy died suddenly at the age of sixty-seven in his office on 15th October 1946 which was the eve of the maiden voyage of the **Queen Elizabeth**. His baggage was already on board the ship.

After Sir Percy's death, the deputy chairman of Cunard, Frederick Bates, was appointed chairman, and when he retired in 1953 his brother Denis became chairman. Under the chairmanship of the three brothers, Cunard thrived as did the Group's Brocklebank and Port Lines. Brocklebank had added ten ships to its fleet by 1950, and the Port Line thirteen refrigerated ships. Following the death of Frederick Bates in 1957 aged seventy-three, Sir Geoffrey inherited Gyrn Castle and its estate, but no money, and he moved there from his home in Mollington.

The founder of the family business, Edward Bates, had traded successfully as a merchant in Bombay. On returning to Britain he set up Edward Bates & Company, merchant bankers, shipbrokers and ship owners. He became the Liberal MP for Plymouth, and the baronetcy was created in 1880. The iron sailing ship **Ellen Bates**, which was over 1,000 tons, was built in 1853. By March 1858 he owned seven sailing ships, four of which were over 1,000 tons, and these were joined in 1859 by the **Bates Family** at 2,154 tons.

Gyrn Castle originally belonged to John Douglas, a partner in the Holywell cotton manufacturers Douglas, Smiley & Company. He built the castle in 1853 but the family needed

to sell and in 1856 Edward Bates bought it for use as a summer residence. When he died in1899 his estates totalled 57,000 acres, but over the years death duties have diminished the size of the estate.

During the nineteenth century, shipowning was a gentlemanly business, but the Bates family were formidable and aggressive entrepreneurs. In 1911 Sir Edward Bates' grandsons, the brothers Percy, Frederick and Denis who were all major Cunard shareholders, 'raided' T. & J. Brocklebank and obtained half the holding. In March 1919 Cunard purchased 150,000 Brocklebank ordinary shares and also bought out the Bates' shares. In April 1921 Cunard bought 100,000 Brocklebank preference shares which gave them 80% ownership of Brocklebank with the Anchor Line holding the remaining 20%. In the same year Cunard acquired the Anchor Line, but allowed it to retain its independence. The Bates brothers strengthened the business and after Brocklebank's chairman, Sir Aubrey Brocklebank, died in 1929, Dennis Bates became chairman. In 1940 Cunard acquired the Anchor Line's remaining 20% stake in Brocklebank.

Sir Geoffrey was chairman of the family business of Edward Bates & Company. He was also a director of the Thames and Mersey Marine Insurance Company, and the British and Foreign Insurance Company, both subsidiaries of Royal Insurance. He became chairman of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, which had cured him of malaria after one of his business trips to Nigeria. Subsequently Sir Geoffrey farmed the Gyrn Estate and for something completely different he bought the Tudor Café in Rhyl High Street!

Sir Geoffrey was married three times with all his wives predeceasing him. In 1979 he lost his seventeen year old daughter Sarah when she was killed in a road accident and yet another tragedy was the death of his younger son Richard in 2002.

In 1969 Sir Geoffrey was High Sheriff of Flintshire, and from 1969 to 1992 he was secretary of the Flint and Denbigh Hunt. He was also president of the Normandy Veterans (North Wales Branch).

In the reception room at Gyrn Castle (known as the 'big room') there is a larger than life-size oil painting of Sir Geoffrey's great grandfather, Sir Edward Bates. No doubt Sir Edward could look out towards the Bar and see his ships arriving and sailing. There is an unsubstantiated story that he kept a steam yacht at Mostyn Dock. When he sighted one of his ships approaching the Bar, Sir Edward would board his yacht and be taken to the Bar to watch his ship sail round to Liverpool. The telescope is still at Gyrn.

When it was suggested to Sir Geoffrey that he should have been Chairman of Cunard, he replied "*they never asked me*!"

Despite the tragedies of losing three wives, a teenage daughter and son, Sir Geoffrey never complained. Besides possessing an agreeable personality he was a generous, tolerant man. He is survived by his unmarried son Edward (59) and his married daughter Celina (42).

A memorial service for Sir Geoffrey Volelin Bates was held at Llanasa Parish Church on Friday 4th March.

There is an unfounded story that Sir Geoffrey's great grandfather, Sir Edward, had married one of Samuel Cunard's daughters, insinuating that this was the commencement of the Bates involvement with Cunard. It's a good story as Samuel Cunard had nine children, two sons and seven daughters, but none of them married Sir Edward Bates.

However, I am intrigued as to how the Bates family first became involved with the Cunard Line, and I should be extremely grateful if any members of the LNRS could assist me with this. □

Captain Brian McManus.

COMPANY LOYALTY

By LNRS Member James A. Pottinger

Given the present day situation where much of the manning of ships is provided by employment agencies, it is perhaps understandable that there is not the same degree of loyalty to the shipowner as in the past.

Whilst there were exceptions, normally there was a strong sense of identity with the company, and a feeling that provided one acted responsibly and carried out one's duties in a conscientious manner, then the owners would look after you.

From my own experience I would commend the well-known Liverpool shipowners T. & J. Brocklebank as being in this category. This concern first manifested itself when homeward bound on the ss **Maihar** towards the end of May, 1958. As was company practice the ship radioed home after leaving Port Said giving her ETA and advised who was opting to leave on arrival, and those who would prefer to rejoin for the next voyage so that reliefs and manning around the coast could be arranged.

I was planning to get married on arrival, but hoped to return to the **Maihar** for a third voyage. As my home was in Shetland but my fiancée lived in Greenock, it fell to her to make all the necessary arrangements for our wedding there.

Unfortunately my radio message to her went awry in the ether, or was wrongly sent, and instead of confirming my arrival on 30th May and instructions to arrange the wedding for as soon as possible thereafter, it was received indicating that we were not docking until almost two weeks later!

On docking at Tilbury on 29th May I received a telegram informing me that the wedding had been arranged for 10th June. Reading this, I realised that most of my leave would be over by then, and after spending a period on honeymoon and travelling to Shetland to visit my parents, there would be no chance of returning to the **Maihar**. I contacted the Engineer Superintendent and appraised him of the dilemma, and to his credit he replied immediately by telegram: *'Get married, have your honeymoon, and let us know when you are ready to come back'*. A reply that I shall always cherish.

The next example of Brocklebank's concern for their staff occurred when I was returning to the UK in February 1961 on the ss **Matra** from the United States. I was due to be relieved on arrival as our first born was then due.

Unfortunately our arrival at Tilbury coincided with the end of National Service, and many officers just bailed out as soon as we had docked and did not even wait until their reliefs had arrived. I recall a Ben Line chief engineer coming aboard and pleading with us to give him a watch keeper as most of his staff had disappeared and he could not even arrange a shore watch. We were not quite as badly off as that, but to their discredit some of our Engineer Officers walked off and left in taxis for the nearest station.

I was naturally keen to go on leave as promised, but an added complication was that the **Matra** was due to be put through a comprehensive Lloyd's Survey of main and auxiliary engines and boilers at Middlesbrough, and it looked as though there would be few of us on board who had any experience of operating the machinery.

I did agree to stay on the ship as far as Middlesbrough, on the condition that I would be relieved at that port. My dilemma was then compounded further when senior marine and engineering superintendents boarded to plead with me to stay with the **Matra** for the duration of the survey.

I explained the situation about the imminent arrival our first born - twins at that! Their

response could well typify my opinion of T. & J. Brocklebank in that they proposed to bring my wife to Middlesbrough and to install her in a private ward for the confinement.

To their credit they accepted that at this time my wife would prefer to be near her mother, but in view of their very generous and considerate offer I agreed to go home for a weekend and, depending on the circumstances, I would return to the ship. Unfortunately I contracted a severe dose of influenza and was not able to return to the **Matra** as planned.

So readers will not be surprised to learn if I take great exception to anyone knocking T. & J. Brocklebank in my earshot! □

THE LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

ANNUAL AWARD

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society was founded in 1938 to promote interest in Merseyside maritime affairs, with particular emphasis on their history.

The Society, with over two hundred members worldwide, meets each month between September and April to hear papers and publishes a quarterly journal *'The Bulletin'*. As an essential part of its activities the Society maintains a close link with the Merseyside Maritime Museum and has exclusive access to the library and archive facilities on most Mondays of the year.

At the beginning of each year the Liverpool Nautical Research Society makes an Award, the purpose of which is to encourage students in higher education and vocational training who have interest in maritime affairs. The Society invites the submission of original written work on nautical subjects. Original essays submitted to the Society for the Award should be between 1,000 and 2,000 words in length. Dissertations completed in the previous twelve months are also eligible for consideration for the Award.

Work submitted for the Award may cover a wide range of topics provided the essential concern is with nautical matters. The following list gives some indication of subjects which may be deemed suitable:

Maritime History; Contemporary maritime issues; The Port of Liverpool - its shipping, past and present; Navigation of Seaways and Waterways adjacent to the Mersey; the development of ships, their operation and management; National and international maritime policies and operations; Maritime Britain at war; Marine engineering; Naval history,

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society Award comprises a cash sum and an award certificate. In return the Society will request a synopsis of the winner's work for publication in its journal. The competition for the 2005 LNRS Award is now open and all entries must be submitted by 1st September.

Further details are available from the Award Secretary:

Captain M.D.R. Jones, 33 Sunbury Drive, Ainsdale, Southport, Merseyside PR8 3PU

THE LAST VOYAGE OF THE *'AQUITANIA'*

THE 443rd AND LAST VOYAGE TO THE SHIPBREAKER'S YARD AT FASLANE, THUS ENDING A CAREER OF THIRTY-FIVE YEARS CONTINUOUS SERVICE

by 'J.P.', Special Correspondent of *Shipbuilding and Shipping Record*

This is Saturday, 18th February, 1950: At short notice by telephone from Liverpool we, a handful of journalists, have been invited to make the historic last voyage of the **Aquitania** from Southampton to the Clyde.

A letter of confirmation follows: *'Firstly, you will no doubt appreciate that the accommodation in the ship is somewhat austere but everything possible will be done to provide reasonable comfort. As a formality it will be necessary for you to sign the ship's coastwise articles as a member of the crew ..... It is important that everyone should be aboard the ship by 10 p.m. at which time the formality of signing on will take place before a Ministry of Transport official who will be in attendance specially for the purpose. Will you please have with you your National Registration Identity Card for production to this official. Saturday night will then be spent on board. The **Aquitania** will leave her berth at Southampton on Sunday 19th February at 9 a.m. prompt.'*

The red glow of the watchman's brazier at the foot of the gangway gave the only suffused light through the eerie mist in the most desolate spot in Southampton Docks as we stepped out of our charabanc as the time came to sign on. Our credentials were closely examined before we were allowed on board for it is no light responsibility to let a stranger adrift in a liner in these circumstances.

The **Aquitania** was no longer a Cunard liner. Ten hours previously, at midday, the ceremony of hauling down the house flags of Cunard White Star in the presence of the Mayor and Admiral of the Port had played the final act of passing the ownership to the British Iron and Steel Corporation. She is no longer a passenger ship. Her new owners have no house flag. They even had to borrow a ship's bell, for the **Aquitania's** bells - one of which is going to Canada to be hung in Halifax Cathedral - have, like the furnishings and the cats - for I have seen none - left the ship. Presumably the officers, crew and the supernumerary crew are running the ship by grace and courtesy of her former owners.

So far as the supernumeraries are concerned, we are a wonderful crowd. Included in this unique ship's company is that doyen of shipping journalists, Cuthbert Maughan of *The Times* and that irrepressible and buoyant shipping correspondent of *The Daily Telegraph*, Jack Frost. There is Will Irvin, who is carving out such a brilliant career on *The Glasgow Herald* and the shock headed, ebullient and encyclopaedic B.P. Hubbart of the *Liverpool Daily Post*. In all there are some thirty or forty of us, including George Champion, the Cunard publicity manager.

There is a strange coldness as we step aboard. A notice tells us that the lifts are not working. Another says that the crew must not smoke except in a few authorised

places. The purser's office lacks warmth and welcome. There are no plants, flowers, rich carpets or furnishings. The illumination has been stripped to a few 40-watt lamps; only enough to see our way about and the hoses are all laid out in readiness for the most dreaded mishap which can happen to a liner bereft of her full complement.

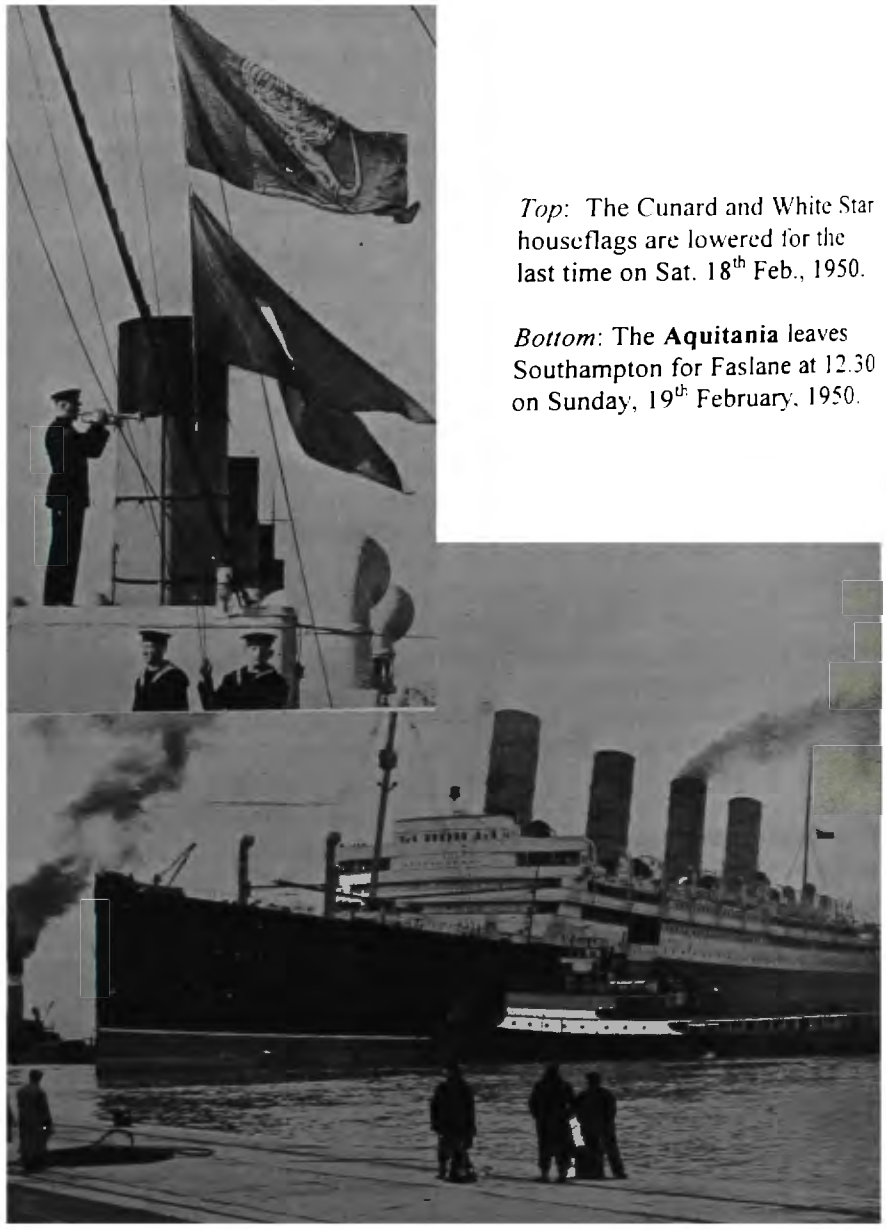
The doors of the dining room are open and in the fitful light we see in the distance a few odd tables and chairs brought hurriedly back for our convenience. There is a blackboard at the entrance on which our meal times have been chalked. A quarter-master is asked whether as the **Aquitania** has run east and west so long she will really turn north off Land's End and whether in fact the compass has not run itself into a groove that it cannot respond. The master-at-arms menacingly tells us that once we sign on we come under him and he has got us where he wanted us all his life. We sign on with forebodings and turning away from the sad ceremony which required the revelation in a loud voice of our ages, birthplaces and other lurid details and, parting with signatures in duplicate, we witness a much more heartening sight.

A steward is chalking up a notice that the bar will be open in the Lounge at hours which seem adequate and for tomorrow (Sunday) even generous. Someone asks me where the Lounge is, and as I believed I knew the **Aquitania** inside out I volunteered to show him. We climb all the decks peering in the dimly lit corridors, or alleyways, on the way only to see cabins stripped, bereft of doors, fittings and wall tapestries, baffling all attempts at reconstructing the ship in the heyday of her career. Where, in this conglomeration of stripped furnishings and steel bulkheads were those luxury suites of the **Aquitania** which thrilled the world of 1914 - the Reynolds Suite, the Gainsborough Suite, the Vandyke, Holbein, Romney, Velasquez, Rembrandt and others whose names betokened the motifs of their decorative schemes?

We reach the Palladian Lounge on 'A' deck. It used to be called the Georgian Lounge when I first knew it. A few of the mural and ceiling paintings remain. Otherwise it is stripped. The fireplace has gone, there are holes where the clocks and ornaments stood, the floor is bare and, dismayed, we look at one another. We can see no future in this for the promised Bar. So we descend, leaving further exploration until the morrow and, as it is long past the closing time chalked on the board, we decide to turn in for the night.

Mine is a single-berth inside cabin on D deck - a series of cabins, I am told, much prized when the **Aquitania** was on the Canadian run. The wall tapestries have gone and the deck is bare. To my surprise the hand basin still gives one the luxury of hot and cold water for which I am grateful even if the first flush gives a musty odour; the ship has been laid up since last December. The ventilation is not working or, if it is, it is contributing to the heat and stuffiness. This was quite a luxury cabin in its day and commanded a good price. I make no complaint to Cunard. I was told and warned that this was an austerity cruise and I am deeply grateful to them for fitting me up with a camp bed, for putting the door back and even bringing from somewhere and screwing it up on the wall, a hook on which I can hang a few of my clothes with the aid of two coat hangers stencilled with the appropriate reminder that they are for the use of the crew. In place of the large plate mirror is a small one scrounged hurriedly from some recess of the old emigrants' quarters.

The electric bell does not work. I have no bed light, only another of those 40-



Top: The Cunard and White Star houseflags are lowered for the last time on Sat. 18th Feb., 1950.

Bottom: The **Aquitania** leaves Southampton for Faslane at 12.30 on Sunday, 19th February, 1950.

watt lamps which is in the wrong place for everything. The steward does not have to knock to see whether it is convenient for him to come in; all he has to do is to look through the gaping holes where the locks were to see everything that is going on. Nevertheless I am content and pleased with my hosts; for who could not be in the great adventure which is before us?

As we are due to sail tomorrow (Sunday) morning at 9.00 we are told that breakfast will be served at 7.30 and that tea will be brought to us at 7.00.

This is Sunday, 19th February, 1950:

We have been roused and have shaved and dressed. Most of us, to our credit, sat down to breakfast at 7.30. There is a heavier mist than there was last night and we are told that there is little chance of sailing for some hours with, however, the heartening news that, thanks to the double tides at Southampton, we have enough water until about 3 o'clock. We stroll around the ship. The barrenness of the cabins, the loss of all the amenities which throb the pulses of a liner in the heyday of her life, and the thought that in some of these empty spaces the millionaires of Western civilisation vied with one another in the lavishness of their hospitality would be depressing but for the fact, apparent everywhere throughout the ship, that right up to the last she has been a ship well cared for by the ship's company. The paintwork is impeccable, the decks are clean.

Outside on the quay, looking through the windows which once enclosed the garden lounge, there is a handful of Southamptonians to bid us farewell. It is cold and the tedium of waiting must be disheartening to them. The ship's whistle blows many long and confusing blasts with a surfeit of replies from the tugs, none of which conforms with the international rules nor, in fact, with any local harbour rules. The expenditure of steam was for the special 'noises off' for the BBC recordings.

It is cold and someone suggests that it is time to resume our exploration of the ship to find the Lounge. This is because we have now been hanging about for two hours and look like being tied to the quay for ever. Most of the shore sightseers, with less to look forward to than we have, have decided to go home. The quay is nearly desolate. Our search for the Lounge is quickened by the sight on D deck of some chalked arrows which, like boy scouts we follow, until they end in the petty officers' mess of trooping days with the chalked letters 'The Lounge'. Again, the scene is desolation and this time depressingly so until at the far end we see some deck chairs and tables - empty because we are a little ahead of opening time.

The fog lifts and then, tantalisingly, sweeps over the marshes again and blots out the opposite shore. The tugs hang around more persistently than do the dispirited natives. Then, at 12.15, comes a message from the bridge that we sail at 12.30. We cast off and almost in total silence head downstream to be greeted by the ships alongside, passing the deserted Ocean Dock where not one of her sisters is there to bid farewell. For the last time the **Aquitania** steams down Southampton Water on her way to the ship breaking yard of Metal Industries at Faslane.

We adjust compasses off the Nab Tower and at about 14 knots head down Channel. Boat drill follows and we see the lifeboat specially brought aboard for us. We are told our stations and warned against the fire risk. The weather deteriorates and in the evening I stroll around the promenade deck. It is wet and very dark. We seem to

have scarcely more illumination than a passing collier. The bridge reports a rapidly falling barometer and a possible gale off Land's End or the Scillies. Anyway, it will be about the middle of the morning watch, so why should we worry? Four members of our crew are caught playing 'solo' in the lounge after midnight and are warned that gambling by the crew is prohibited. The next time they will be logged and fined ten shillings each.

This is now Monday, 20th February:

The night was uneventful - a little labouring by the old lady at times, but the wind is moderating and after breakfast we are abeam the Bristol Channel. The weather is improving and the sun is shining. At midday we are invited to meet Captain Woollatt for cocktails and a short speech of welcome which the BBC relayed on its General Overseas Service [now the World Service]. In the evening we are invited to the purser's cabin after dinner. Here is where Pierpoint Morgan, Charlie Schwab and all the magnates and stars have foregathered. It is a pleasant and hospitable interlude interrupted by a message from the bridge that there is a brilliant display of Northern Lights ahead. We see the spectacle and return to prolong the session. There are doubts just when we turned in.

This is Tuesday, 21st February:

We are all well, and some of us went on deck early to see Ailsa Craig. It is a brilliant and perfect morning. There is snow on the mountains of Arran, the sun is shining, and as the day advances we are too hot on one side of the boat deck and too cold on the other. There is a strange emptiness of merchant shipping and greetings are few. The river steamers do not seem interested in us. We drop anchor off the Tail of the Bank to await the tide which will enable us to pass the Rosneath Narrows, the most tricky operation of our voyage, for the **Aquitania** is the longest ship ever to go up to Garelochhead. The formality of signing off and being paid off has been postponed an hour so that we may see this superb act of pilotage. This done we go below, receive our discharge certificates, all with a 'V.G.', and the sum of three halfpence, being worked out at four days pay at one shilling a month. There are no deductions on my 'Account of Wages F' form, but one member of our party, Jack Frost, having been seen unscrewing the number of his cabin as a souvenir, is solemnly deducted one penny under 'Fines' for 'Vandalism and numerous offences'. On the back of our pay sheet we are enjoined: *'Look after your money. When you are paid off take from the table only enough cash for your immediate expenses'*, and then urged to invest what we can spare in National Savings Certificates, with the tempting bait informing us what our investment will be worth in five or ten years' time. We are thrilled.

As a finale, the senior officers of the **Aquitania** and the senior officials of the British Iron & Steel Corporation are to be entertained by Metal Industries to dinner at Belmore House, Faslane. Sir Donald Pollock presides and Captain Woollatt is the principal guest. So the **Aquitania** comes to rest. Her last voyage was her 443rd, and in 35 years of continuous service she has steamed some 3,000,000 miles in peacetime and in two world wars, and carried nearly 1,200,000 passengers and troops. Crossing the Atlantic 582 times between the wars, she carried 530,749 passengers. The **Aquitania** is the last of the four-funnelled Atlantic liners and with her passing from the seas an era of Atlantic travel comes to an end. |||

SAILING DAY

by John Fletcher

John Fletcher describes sailing day from Birkenhead when he was Chief Officer of the Blue Funnel Line's ***Automedon*** *in 1955.*

As mate, my first intimation of approaching sailing day was the 'crew pick', an occasion which in most instances was a routine formality as opposed to the old established practice of selecting a 'crowd' from a motley selection of potential sailor men. The 'Blueys' virtually kept their own crews, especially since the advent of the 'P' boats, which rarely deviated more than a day from the advertised departure and arrival dates, and in the case of the **Peleus** almost guaranteed Christmas and New Year at home. There were inevitably a couple of lads on stand-by to cope with unavoidable cancellations but the days of the pier-head jump were long a thing of the past.

Promotions usually entailed one or two junior hands who were now looking for an E.D.H. berth in another company ship, but the 'China boats' weren't known as the Welsh Navy for nothing and any replacements would have been brought along to the Odyssey Works, Birkenhead, by the bosun who was like as not a village elder and had kept an eye open for such likely lads since their early 'teens. The Blue Funnel Line's Mr Greenwood and Captain Simon held undisputed sway in the unique establishment of the Odyssey Works and there on the day appointed I would present myself to pick the crew.

Signing-on time would be arranged when the agreement between owners and crew would be transformed into a tangible reality. This was dependent on the shipping master and his staff and in this instance was fixed for eleven o'clock the following forenoon at which time the whole crew came together. The master opened the Articles of Agreement but for the officers and ratings alike there was a plethora of form filling. Next of kin forms, allotment notes and advance notes all had to be completed.

When all had signed, the shipping master read out aloud the Agreement which set out the contract between the master and each individual who had in effect signed away several months of his life, two years in actual fact. The shipping master intoned the details of the 1894 Shipping Act which still governed the Articles in the late 1950s; the parallels of latitude beyond which the vessel could not proceed; the two year period for which each seaman had agreed to serve and finally, harking back to the mundane reality, the fact that 'inspection' would take place at 14.00 the next day and all hands were to report on board at 09.00 the following day.

This done, there was a rapid dispersal of all present, some for a last-minute call at Holt's Mutual Benefit Store at the top of Duke Street to equip themselves with final items of voyage gear, and others to the 'Pier', the 'Pen & Wig' or some other favoured tavern to take up the threads of coming together again over a few convivial jars before the earnest essentials of the voyage proper established them in the familiar routines which were their way of life.

Prior to the inspection, there was for both the captain and myself, the outward interview which was generally guaranteed to take the whole forenoon. It was in a way a

balance sheet of the previous voyage, and not merely in financial terms, as all aspects of the voyage itself were reviewed by the management. Accordingly, we were in India Buildings in Water Street, Liverpool, for nine o'clock sharp and set out on the familiar rounds of the various departments. Inward and outward freight, the purchasing department, construction and naval architect, claims, possibly the legal department and finally the office of the nautical adviser where Captain Elder and his staff of chief and second officers seconded for a spell ashore, would have had the deck logbook and abstracts under close scrutiny to ensure that all the company regulations concerning inspections, boat and fire drills and sundry other voyage commitments had been strictly adhered to.

With this done, the actual interview itself soon followed, held in the board room and usually taken by the ship's husband himself, Mr George Holt, in company with the head of the personnel department and, if the occasion warranted same, the cargo superintendent responsible for the vessel's loading.

Laid out before Mr Holt would be the outward cargo plan, a summary of the previous voyage's disbursements and subsequent earnings, and the personal record books of each officer appointed for the forthcoming voyage. If all had gone well these would be dealt with in a more or less routine manner but anything untoward would most certainly be examined and gone into most thoroughly indeed. Finally, I would be dismissed and sent on my way with a handshake which took the nature of an official blessing for the voyage ahead. One of the day's main events was over and done with and I was free to rid myself of the India Buildings atmosphere for a further three or four months and take myself round the corner to the more relaxing environment of the 'Corn Market' to await the captain.

There was inevitably a good atmosphere in this and the adjacent taverns. Situated virtually in the centre of shipping company head offices, it was a natural gathering place for seamen and shore-side administrators and as such always had the air of sailing or docking occasions; the coming together and setting out on yet another adventure or the successful completion of same. Dalliance was not the order of the day however with inspection in the offing, and so it wasn't too long before the captain and myself were back on the Birkenhead side of the Mersey and picking our way amongst the final odds and ends of cargo beneath the still shattered roof of the Cathcart Street loading berth; a hurried change into uniform and we were ready to be numbered with the inspection party mustering on the bridge.

Resplendent in official bowler hat, Captain D.T.M. Williams, one of the senior marine superintendents was in charge, with Mr George Holt representing the management. The former, whose apparent forbidding manner and colourful language made him a feared figure amongst junior officers, was beneath this grim exterior a highly respected superintendent who took the interests of all who served under him very much to heart. He looked an imposing character as he set about the familiar and searching routine which foreshadowed the departure of any of the company's ships, be it foreign or merely round the coast. Whatever the various charges which from time to time were levelled against the Mersey shipowners, it could never be said that they sent their vessels to sea other than well-found in every respect.

Each navigational item was examined and tested, from the megaphones stood

on either bridge wing, the long glass in its rack, the canvas dodgers, the morse signalling lamps, the navigation lights, the whistles and Kent clear view screens and the steering gear. For this the second mate was despatched to the steering flat with the electrical superintendent and the wheel was put hard over both ways and then left for five minutes at some indeterminate point, the second mate reporting the quadrant position at each point.

When each and every item had passed muster and each departmental head had been absolved of responsibility for matters under his control, Captain Williams would draw himself up and in a manner befitting his position, announce to Mr Holt his satisfaction that the vessel was from a navigational viewpoint fit in all respects to proceed to sea and that the accommodation was now open for his inspection.

Whilst there was no safety factor involved here, the inspection was no less searching. Each room was thrown open and the steward responsible for each alleyway was in attendance. The galley and storerooms were gone over as assiduously as if they were to cope with the comfort and well-being of 100 passengers, rather than the dozen who would soon be boarding and with this over, and the catering superintendent complimented or otherwise, I would be sent along to the foc'sle with the carpenter and the superintendent shipwright to walk out both anchors. Boat and fire drill followed half-an-hour later with the offshore boats swung and lowered to the boat deck coaming.

I was left in charge of this operation while the captain, along with Capt. Williams and the ship's husband were waited on with suitable refreshment. Thus the working day drew to a close and the **Automedon** that much nearer to setting out on her voyage, courtesy of the shore gang who had been about their tasks as surely as we had been about ours, for until the crew finally went to 'stations', they had the onus of seeing the vessel battened down, squared up and ready for whatever might lie in wait for her once she had slipped the last mooring line and exchanged the comparative safety of the Vittoria Dock for the rigours of the Irish Sea and beyond.

The shore gang dealt with last minute stores, lowering of derricks as each hatch completed loading, was battened down and locking bars rigged, guys and preventers stretched, shore wires singled up and the inevitable odd job which was bound to materialise. At last all was complete and the **Automedon** waited for tugs, pilot and tide.

Shore leave was curtailed. Inevitably there were a few of the ABs who came to me seeking permission to slip up to the 'Duke' or the 'King Alfred' for a quick jar or a lingering last farewell and being dependable lads they were allowed to go. Then it was time to blow the whistle for 'stand-by'.

The company pilot and the captain were on the bridge, tugs nudged their way to bow and stern and were secured. Lines were let go. Slowly the **Automedon** was canted off the berth and made her way stern first towards the Alfred Lock. The shore gang's mooring boats ran the lines in the traditional 'scissors' tie up and the ship was soon fast in the lock. A few wives and sweethearts still kept a vigil on the dockside, and a marine superintendent checked the tide with the lockmaster and eventually the lock gates swung open. The tugs took the strain, the engine shuddered and turned astern, three short blasts from the whistle sounded on the night air as the **Automedon** swung into the dark waters of the Mersey and with the final order of *'Let go the tug'*, the voyage had truly begun. □

AND FINALLY .....

THE ONE O'CLOCK GUN

One of the many institutions which set Liverpool apart from other ports was the 'One O'Clock Gun', fired from the Morpeth Dock Wall at Birkenhead. This short article provides the background:

In 1844 it was decided by Liverpool Town Council to construct an observatory on the Waterloo Dock Pier Head at Liverpool, which was a location judged suitable on account of its central position for shipping lying in the port. The main function of the observatory would be the keeping of accurate time for the testing of nautical instruments, mainly chronometers, and for providing weather information to mariners.

In those early days the time signal was made by the dropping of a 'time ball' each day at one o'clock. This system was also in operation at Greenwich and Portsmouth. Then in 1860 a remotely operated time ball was installed at the top of the Victoria Tower (the six-sided clock tower on the river wall adjacent to the now disused Salisbury River Entrance at Bramley-Moore Dock). The time ball was mechanically linked to a large clock in the tower which in turn was controlled from the observatory. Chronometer makers and mariners could be seen assembling just before one o'clock to check their instruments accurately as the time ball fell precisely on the hour.

The observatory was moved to Bidston Hill at Birkenhead in 1867 and its director, John Hartnup, had the idea of firing off a time signal to provide the precise time at one o'clock each day. An ancient cannon from the Crimean War was obtained and installed on the river wall at Morpeth Dock, Birkenhead, and was fired electrically from the new observatory at Bidston each day, with the exception of Sundays and Bank Holidays, up to 1932. In that year it was felt that the maintenance of the gun (about £100 a year) was not justified as radio time signals were now the order of the day. The public, however, was not impressed by the cessation of the gun, and it was quickly re-instated. The War Office stepped in and offered to supply a new gun and on 26th April 1933 a 32-pounder arrived from Woolwich Arsenal and the old cannon was retired to a quiet lawn at Bidston Observatory.

The second gun continued operating up to September 1939 when it was silenced for the duration of World War 2. In October 1945 a proposal was put forward to resume the time signal and a third gun, a six-pounder naval anti-aircraft gun was set up on the Morpeth dock wall. On 17th June 1946 it was fired for the first time at one o'clock.

The Mersey Docks & Harbour Board employed a 'gun man', usually one of the stagemen at Woodside. At 12.30pm each day he walked along to the gun and cleaned and prepared it for firing by remote control from Bidston Observatory. The Dock Board provided the gun man with an excellent pocket watch, and if the gun failed to fire at one o'clock, then he was to fire it manually himself.

Sadly the 'One O'Clock Gun' is no more and it was fired for the last time on 19th July, 1969. □

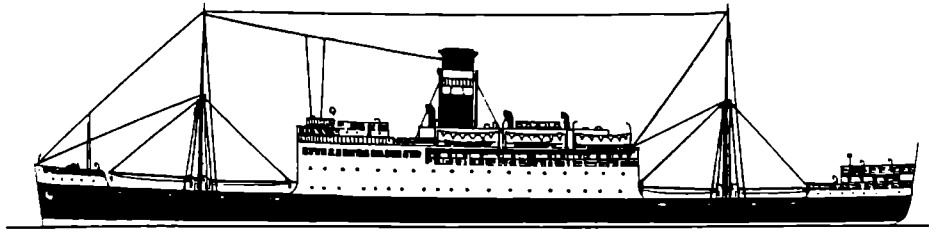
The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

(Founded in 1938)

THE BULLETIN

Volume 49, Number 2, September, 2005

Editor : John Shepherd



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Front Cover: Harrison Line's **Inkosi** of 1937

The LNRS 70th Anniversary Publication - 2008
Articles for possible inclusion in the above commemorative book are invited from members. Articles should be about 3,000 words in length and should be sent to:
Antony J. Barratt, 24 Cross Green, Upton-by-Chester, CH2 1QR
e-mail: < tony.barratt@btopenworld.com >

THE LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS, 2005 - 2006

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

Thursday, 15th September, 2005
SELF UNLOADERS
Mr H.M. Hignett and Mr D. Eccles

Thursday, 20th October, 2005
THE 'CITY OF BENARES' - THE CHILDREN'S SHIP
Mrs Beth Williams

Thursday, 17th November, 2005
DRIFT CARD EXPERIMENT
A. Jennion

Thursday, 15th December, 2005
THE WRECK OF THE 'PRIMROSE HILL'
David Eccles

Thursday, 19th January, 2006
McTAY MARINE OF BROMBOROUGH
Mr A.J. Barratt

Thursday, 16th February, 2006
THE 'MANXMAN' - THE FUTURE
Mr W. Ogle

Thursday, 16th March, 2006
THE POST WAR PASSENGER LINERS OF LIVERPOOL
John Shepherd

Thursday, 20th April, 2006
MARINE ART AND ULSTER
Mr A.S. Davidson

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

ELDER DEMPSTER AND THE ST LAWRENCE RIVER TRADE

by LNRS Member J.E. Cowden

Elder Dempster, as we knew it, can be traced back to 1852 and was formed by a group of six businessmen of the day, one of whom was Mr MacGregor Laird.

It was, however, some twenty years earlier that the first seeds were sown to establish the greatest shipping line ever to link the West Coast of Africa with the United Kingdom. Laird had been talking with the Lander brothers who had previously made an expedition to the West African coast. As a result of these talks Laird felt that there was real scope for legitimate and regular trade to the Niger River. With the backing of a well known Liverpool merchant named Thomas Stirling, Laird sent his own expedition with the steamers **Quorra** and **Alburkkah**, and a 200-ton brig which left Liverpool in July 1832.

As soon as they touched the West African coast, sickness began and continued unabated to the end of the expedition. Richard Lander perished and the venture was a commercial failure. Laird himself returned to Liverpool in 1834 broken, disheartened and a very sick man, and turned his back on West Africa.

Three years later in 1837 Laird formed a company to operate steamers from Liverpool to New York and in 1843 he moved to Birkenhead where he was actively engaged in ship development and ship building.

It would seem, however, that MacGregor Laird had been bitten by the bug of Africa in more ways than one. In 1848 he moved to London and devoted the remainder of his life, until his death in 1861, assisting in the development of the West African trade. Following talks with the British Government, Laird set up the African Steamship Company, incorporated by Royal Charter in 1852, with its offices at 3 Mincing Lane, London. Initially the fleet consisted of five vessels with sail and steam propulsion, ranging in size from 250 tons to 1,000 tons deadweight. The inaugural sailing was taken by the **Forerunner**, soon to be followed by the **Faith**, **Hope** and **Charity**. The fifth vessel, the **Northern Lights**, was sold whilst fitting out to the Canadian Steamship Lines.

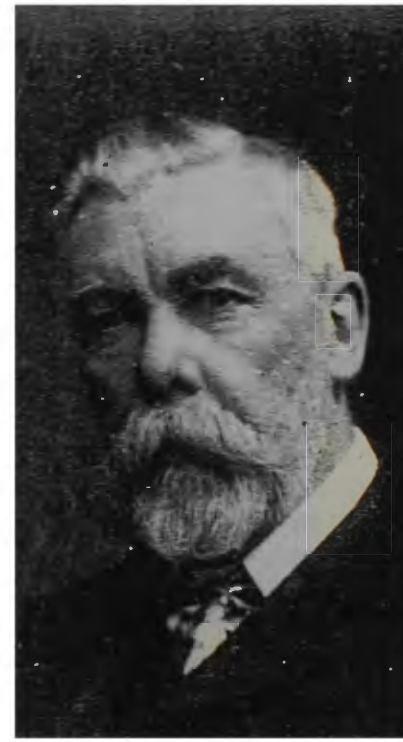
All five vessels were constructed at the Birkenhead shipbuilding yard of John Laird & Company (MacGregor's brother). The Liverpool agency to look after the affairs of the African Steamship Company was placed in the hands of MacGregor's two other brothers, William and Hamilton Laird. On the staff of the Liverpool agency were two Scots – Alexander Elder, who was the superintendent engineer, and John Dempster. Both these men were fired by MacGregor Laird's enthusiasm.

From the outset trade from London was not proving very profitable for the African Steamship Company and its base was transferred to Liverpool. From 1875 Liverpool became the company's home port, although its ships remained under London registry.

At the end of 1868 a number of Glasgow businessmen had noted the growing trade to the West African coast and announced their intention of setting up a new company to be known as the British and African Steam Navigation Company. John Dempster was approached to act as Liverpool agent for the new venture, which he accepted. Dempster realized that he would require an active partner in his agency and

thought of his old colleague Alexander Elder who was now working as a surveyor with the Board of Trade. Following talks, Elder resigned from the Board of Trade and the firm of Elder Dempster & Company was born on Merseyside, it being appointed as agents for the newly formed British & African Steamship Company.

Mr John Dempster



Mr Alexander Elder

It is interesting to note here that Laird initially ordered his first three ships from the family shipyards. A similar deal was concluded when three ships, the ss **Bonny**, the ss **Roquelle** and the ss **Congo** (each of about 1,300 gross tons) were built to maintain a monthly service from Glasgow, Liverpool and London to the West African coast, and delivered from the Glasgow yard of John Elder (brother of Alexander).

The British & African Steam Navigation Company met with almost immediate success and ordered three additional and much larger ships – the **Loanda**, the **Liberia** and the **Volta**, and the company then centralised its business on Merseyside.

Twelve months passed with fierce competition between the African Steamship Company and the British & African S.N. Company before they both got together and eventually came to terms and arrangements whereby all their future sailings to West Africa would be on a divided basis.

At this point another former employee of the African Steamship Company's

Liverpool agency came into the picture. The young man's name was Alfred Lewis Jones (later Sir Alfred). Born in Carmarthen, Wales in 1845, Jones came to Liverpool with his parents at the age of twelve and had completed his education by the time he was fourteen. Jones then realized that the time had come to strike out for himself and so he walked the Liverpool docks endeavouring to obtain a berth as a cabin boy. Finally he managed to persuade the master of one of the African Steamship Company's vessels to accept him. At this point, young Jones' interest in West Africa was born. After the voyage, the ship's master persuaded the Liverpool agents to give Jones a job in their office. They did, and for the following fifteen years Jones worked industriously and conscientiously, all the time absorbing knowledge of shipbroking and general ship management.

At the age of 30, Jones decided to go into business on his own account and set up a shipping and insurance broking office. Later, he chartered a number of small sailing vessels, placing them on the lucrative UK – West Africa market. Jones had plans for chartering his first steamer and the established British & African S.N Company (Elder-Dempster, Managers) became quite alarmed, fearing competition from this efficient young man. A meeting was convened at which Jones was induced to give up his proposed plans in exchange for his appointment as a junior partner in Elder Dempster & Company. This was indeed a significant milestone in the firm's history.

Five years later in 1884, both Mr Elder and Mr Dempster retired from the Board of Elder Dempster, although they retained their directorships of the British & African Steam Navigation Company. Their retirement from the Board brought about the appointment of Alfred Jones as the controlling partner in Elder Dempster. Jones set his sights high and commenced obtaining virtual control of the whole of the West African shipping market. To this end, he started to purchase shares in the rival African Steamship Company until he had gained virtual control. Two years later he gained total control and placed the company under Elder Dempster management.

Not content with the West African market, Jones branched out into other parts of the world. Firstly, he turned his attention to the North Atlantic, where Elder Dempster took over the Dominion Line's extensive cargo and cattle trade which had been operating out of the Bristol Channel to Canada. A little while after this acquisition, the Canadian Beaver Line (Canada Shipping Co. Ltd.) fell on hard times and was acquired as a going concern by Elder Dempster in 1898, operating regular services from Merseyside to Canada. The Beaver Line was soon back on a sound footing with newer and larger vessels added to its fleet.

As a result of the acquisition of the Beaver Line there was a tussle with Messrs D. & C. MacIver who had been connected with the Beaver line. The MacIvers operated a fleet of chartered ships, under the title of Beaver Line Associated Steamers Limited, for their own account on the UK / Canada trade. After a struggle, Jones won the day when D. & C. MacIver went into voluntary liquidation which left the way open to Elder Dempster to consolidate their Canadian interests.

It was in 1903 that the Canadian Pacific Railway Company took a major step forward when it approached and successfully purchased from Alfred Jones the Beaver Line name and its fleet consisting of 14 ships (95,716 gross tons). The last ship to take a Beaver Line sailing for Elder Dempster was the **Lake Manitoba** on 31st March

1903. The Beaver Line was handed over to C.P.R. on board the **Lake Champlain** at Liverpool on 6th April, 1903. This change, however, did not signal the disappearance of the name of Elder Dempster from North American waters.

Elder Dempster's main area of business was, of course, its West African services. In the early days it was found uneconomical to operate a direct service from North America to and from the West Coast of Africa. A trans-Atlantic feeder service was provided from New York with transhipment facilities being offered at Liverpool for on-carriage by main line ships. This arrangement effectively blocked any development of the direct route as freight rates could be adjusted to stop the entry of any would-be competitors into the trade.

The feeder service operated quite successfully. However, as trade and development in West Africa was expanding greatly, it was felt that a direct service from North America was necessary. With this in mind, Alfred Jones instructed Mr C.W. Cook, who had earlier set up the direct London – West Africa services, to proceed to New York to supervise the plans for the inauguration of a New York – West Africa service in conjunction with the Woermann Line of Hamburg. On 18th March 1911 the **Benin** departed from New York. She was a product of the Swan Hunter & Wigham Richardson yard at Newcastle with a speed on 12 knots. Her name was derived from the ancient city of the Bini Tribe, Nigeria.

The **Benin** sailing was one of a number of Elder Dempster 'firsts' in connection with the North American trade. In the early 1920s, an order was placed with the John Brown yard at Clydebank for four steam turbine ships for service from Canada to Cape Town and East African ports. Given the names **Cariboo**, **Cochrane**, **Calumet** and **Calgary**, these ships were quite large for their day, being of approximately 7,300 gross tons. Regretfully the **Cariboo** (Captain A. Mitchell) was to have a very short life, as she sank after striking a submerged rock off the South African coast whilst on passage from Beira to North America with a cargo of copper on 24th November 1928.

*The **Calgary** was built by John Brown & Company at Clydebank in 1921*

Initially, trade between Canada and South Africa was, in the main, a one-way affair. Ships left Canada 'down to their marks' but the return voyage to Canada was not very profitable. What could be done to correct this imbalance? Elder Dempster soon chalked up another 'first' when they pioneered a regular service carrying Natal sugar to Montreal and Saint John, N.B. using their 'C' class turbine steamers, together with the motor ship **Mattawin**. Despite the sugar being loaded in bags, there were some remarkable loading rates achieved, even without mechanization. It is on record that on one occasion, more than 2,000 tons of bagged sugar was loaded in a normal working day – without night work.

A few years later, another 'first' was chalked up. An Elder Dempster ship, the **New Columbia**, had the distinction of pioneering the trade of bulk palm oil from West Africa to North America. The **New Columbia** could burn either coal or oil fuel, and, when coal was used, the two fuel oil bunker tanks were filled with palm oil at Calabar, Nigeria. At the time this was considered more as an experiment than as a serious proposition and considerable difficulty was experienced during discharge, mainly due to the absence of heating coils. The necessary heating coils were later fitted and the history of the carriage of West African palm oil in bulk had begun.

In the 1930s, Elder Dempster maintained their own offices at:

- Board of Trade Buildings, Montreal
- 82 Doulhousie Street, Quebec
- 42 Princess Street, Saint John, New Brunswick

Elder Dempster was always on the lookout for additional, profitable trading routes to complement its existing services. To this end a 'Round Africa' service, from Montreal back to Montreal, was inaugurated on 27th September 1930 when the motor ship **David Livingstone** (Captain A.H. Crapper) loaded at Montreal for the Mediterranean, East Africa, South Africa, West Africa and thence the St Lawrence River.

*The **David Livingstone** inaugurated the Round-Africa service in 1930*

CANADA, WEST, SOUTH AND EAST AFRICAN SERVICE.

Ports.						
MONTREAL	25 Apl.	25 May	25 June	25 July	25 Aug.	25 Sep
Freetown	9 May	8 June	9 July	8 Aug.	8 Sep.	9 Oct.
*Walvis Bay	21 ,,	20 ,,	21 ,,	20 ,,	20 ,,	21 ,,
Cape Town	23 ,,	22 ,,	23 ,,	22 ,,	23 ,,	23 ,,
Port Elizabeth ...	28 ,,	27 ,,	28 ,,	27 ,,	27 ,,	28 ,,
East London	31 ,,	30 ,,	31 ,,	30 ,,	30 ,,	31 ,,
Durban	2 June	2 July	2 Aug.	1 Sep.	2 Oct.	2 Nov.
Lourenco Marques ...	6 ,,	6 ,,	6 ,,	5 ,,	6 ,,	6 ,,
BEIRA	12 June	12 July	12 Aug.	11 Sep.	12 Oct.	12 Nov.

*If inducement offers.

Vessels on the above Service will take cargo for :—

TAKORADI, ACCRA, LAGOS and other West African Ports as may be arranged.

RATES OF PASSAGE FARES FOR SINGLE TICKETS FROM OR TO MONTREAL OR ST. JOHN N.B.

To or From	Cabin Class per passenger.
CAPE TOWN ...	... £40
PORT ELIZABETH ...	... £43
EAST LONDON ...	... £44
DURBAN	... £45

★ All passage fares are exclusive of taxes, harbour and/or port dues where such are levied on passengers.

★ Through bookings for ports beyond Durban (East African Ports) may only be accepted by special arrangement.

★ Fares to or from East African ports are arrived at by adding the applicable East African inter-coastal fare to the Canada/Durban rate (£45). *See pages 5 and 6 for the East African inter-coastal fares.*

Sailing schedule and passenger fares in the 1930s

The Company's regular services to and from Canada were badly disrupted as a result of the Second World War. The fleet was severely depleted with the loss of 2- vessels, totalling 144,000 gross tons. At the end of the war Elder Dempster wished t re-establish its once regular trading routes to and from Canada and Africa. The agenc arrangements were re-activated, orders were placed for new ships and a number of second-hand ships purchased from the Ministry of War Transport.

At this time, however, Canadian opinion was in favour of the establishment of a Canadian Merchant Navy. This would require vessels to be registered in Canada and for the crews to be composed of Canadian nationals. However, Elder Dempster fully intended to re-enter the Canadian trade and established a new company under the title of Elder Dempster Lines (Canada) Limited, incorporated in Canada with a registered office at the Board of Trade Buildings, Montreal, under the Presidency of Mr Kenneth Sharrock. An agreement was concluded with the Canadian Government for the purchase of five of its standard 'Park'-type steamers. These were registered at Montreal under the Canadian flag and manned by local personnel and placed on the Canada to South and East Africa services.

Despite the fact that Elder Dempster had formed a Canadian company, it still operated as a 'cross trader' with a number of its British flagged vessels loading at West African ports (timber, cocoa, coffee etc.) for United States ports with the voyage terminating at Montreal where, on occasions, the ships would enter the Vickers dry-dock for annual overhaul.

By mid 1949 the South and East African carryings had shown a marked decline. In an effort to counter this, the Elder Dempster Canadian fleet, in addition to loading at Montreal and Saint John, would also load at United States ports. Such a move simply stemmed the inevitable.

In May 1950 Elder Dempster announced that it had become impracticable to continue with this segment of its business. There were many reasons for this announcement. The restrictions on imports into South Africa was one, the dollar shortage was another. The volume of cargo from Canada to the Cape had seriously declined. The dream of establishing a Canadian Merchant Navy had produced problems of its own for Elder Dempster as the general high levels of wages in Canada made competition with other nations extremely difficult. Finally, a protracted seamen's strike settled the matter.

Elder Dempster concluded arrangements whereby the five steamers it had purchased from the Canadian Government were transferred to the British flag. The **Cottrell** was the last Elder Dempster ship to operate on the Canada / Cape service.

A typical round voyage of Elder Dempster's **Chandler** in the late 1940s was near 150 days' duration with an itinerary as follows:

1. Montreal
2. Saint John, N.B.
3. Sydney, C.B.
4. Tenerife
5. Freetown
6. Minoka Bay
7. Cape Town
8. Port Elizabeth
9. East London
10. Durban
11. Lourenço Marques
12. Beira
13. Durban
14. Cape Town
15. Walvis Bay
16. Accra
17. Takoradi
18. Monrovia
19. Dakar
20. Norfolk, Va.
21. Montreal

Such a long itinerary, coupled with a shortfall of cargo, made the **Chandler's** voyage most uneconomical.

The closing down of Elder Dempster Lines (Canada) Limited and the transfer of the Canada / Cape Town trade to the Union Castle Line did not mean for one moment that Elder Dempster's buff coloured funnel or its white burgee, bearing the cross of St. George and Gold Crown in the centre, would not be seen in Canadian waters again.

The company had by now taken delivery of newer and more sophisticated tonnage and thus concentrated its services, loading first within the Great Lakes system, then the St Lawrence River and the United States for the West Coast of Africa, with the voyages terminating at Angola.

With the passing of time many of the British, French and Belgian colonies in West Africa attained their independence. Soon ships flying the flags of the national shipping lines of Nigeria, Ghana, the Ivory Coast and Zaire became commonplace. Not only did Elder Dempster have to face competition from these newly formed State lines, but also from newly formed private companies which creamed off trade and concentrated on trouble-free ports in West Africa.

In the past Elder Dempster had accepted competition in the knowledge that it had the expertise to combat it. However the United Nations Committee on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) introduced a new 'Code of Practice'. This document had been a talking point within Governments and the shipping industry for many years and contained a clause commonly referred to as "40-40-20".

Briefly, the signatories to this code agreed that their exports would be carried 40% by ships operated by the importing country, 40% by the exporting country and the balance of 20% by 'cross traders'. Elder Dempster came under the category of 'cross-trader'.

Elder Dempster took due note of all this newfound competition and legislation. To keep abreast of such change necessitated an agreement being reached during 1965 for a coordinated service with the French shipping company Compagnie Maritime des Chargeurs Réunis, and the Belgian shipping company Compagnie Maritime Belge. Elder Dempster would operate a joint service with these two companies. Such an association was logical as it combined the strengths of three major shipping companies who, over the years, had developed an expert knowledge not only of the West African shipping scene, but world shipping as a whole. In addition, they also had their own agency network along a coast line of some 3,500 miles, from Senegal to Zaire.

The 'Joint Service' arrangement consisted of five conventional ships and worked very satisfactorily for over ten years. Competition was intense. The 'cargo mix' had changed radically. The once familiar Caterpillar Tractors and bulldozers etc were now being shipped by the new roll-on, roll-off concept. By the end of 1979 the French and Belgian companies withdrew from the 'joint service' agreement and from the North American trade completely. Elder Dempster still offered shippers a service from the St Lawrence, albeit very spasmodically. The **Kaduna** sailed from Montreal on 1st June 1981, but it was not until 2nd October 1982 that the **Pampero** took the next sailing.

This was certainly a far cry from the days when Elder Dempster offered a six-monthly forward itinerary. ||||

THE LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

AWARD PRESENTATION : 17th FEBRUARY, 2005

Photo: John Stokoe

Left to Right: Professor P.N. Davies and Professor W.R. Lee from Liverpool University; Richard Williams (Joint Award Winner) from Liverpool University; David Eccles, LNRS Chairman; Lynn Jackson (Joint Award Winner) and Dr S. Schwarz from Liverpool Hope University College; and Captain M.D.R. Jones (LNRS Award Coordinator).

CORRECTION

Mr G. Bodey writes : 'Having read the concluding part of my article on the Wallasey Sea Training Homes in the June 'Bulletin', I should like to point out that some errors and discrepancies have crept into the published version. In addition to some word changes and omissions, there are a couple of factual changes that are incorrect:'

1 Footnote [2] on page 21 should read *'an article on the Home ....'*, but does in fact say *' .... the Home Fleet ...'*

2 At the end of paragraph 1, page 22, *'.... 58 berths (12.5%)'* has become *'.... 68 berths (14.6%).'*

Mr Bodey points out that had he been sent a rough draft for proof reading, these errors would have been eradicated. I entirely agree. My apologies. *j.s*

THE L.N.R.S. AWARD, 2004
PRÉCIS OF JOINT AWARD WINNING ENTRY

THE ROLE OF THE MERCHANT NAVY AND LIVERPOOL IN THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC, CIRCA 1939 – 1945.

by Lynn Jackson

Introduction

Prior to the start of the Second World War, British naval staff were privy to a steady stream of reliable intelligence. As such they were aware that Germany intended to launch an aggressive air-sea offensive against Britain. As an island state, Britain relied on its unimpeded access to the sea. Indeed, British greatness was founded on the supremacy of the sea. Her merchant fleet, unrivalled through the centuries, had dominated the seas and traded freely with the widely dispersed Empire territories and the markets of the world. As an island Britain could only feasibly be conquered or starved into surrender by sea invasion, or the cutting of its sea routes. In 1917, German U-boats had come close to achieving this.

Early historical studies concerning the Battle of the Atlantic have focused on the assumption that Britain was in an inferior position in the war. It was argued that the Royal Navy not only failed to prepare for the German offensive at sea, but the Admiralty greatly underestimated the danger posed by a renewal of U-boat attacks on merchant ships and did not react to the German naval challenge. In contrast, modern historians suggest that by 1939, the British Admiralty's appreciation of German strategy at sea was far more sophisticated, prudent and informed than historians had previously acknowledged.

A joint British Admiralty / Air Ministry report in June 1939 expected a rapid all out air strike against the import system. In anticipation of this the diversion of shipping to the west coast ports was introduced as a precautionary measure, two days before the outbreak of war. This was followed by the transfer of Western Approaches Command from Plymouth to Derby House, Liverpool.

The key issues of this dissertation are two-fold. Firstly, the importance of the port of Liverpool to the war effort, and secondly, the crucial and largely ignored role of the Merchant Navy in keeping the supply lines to Britain open.

The role that Liverpool played in the nation's survival was kept under wraps during the war, for reasons of national security. The Merchant Navy operated as Britain's lifeline, bringing in foodstuffs and raw materials that were vital in maintaining the nation's very existence as well as morale. This was accomplished mainly by means of a convoy system that was constantly hunted and beset by groups of U-boats, commonly known as wolfpacks. These packs were said by Winston Churchill to be the only weapon with the potential to defeat Britain.

The contribution of Liverpool during World War II

Prior to 1940, England's eastern and southern ports handled almost 60% of dry cargo imports. In September 1940, London's docks were particularly badly hit in the blitz. Winston Churchill, the First Sea Lord, recognized the need to switch

operations to the west coast and this proved to be a fortunate move as over two days in March 1941 the port of London was laid waste by 370 enemy aircraft.

Prior to the war, Liverpool was not a naval port. Historically, its main industries and commercial enterprises were built up around the docks and the merchant shipping companies. Liverpool's success was based on the worldwide trade of goods and on the ability to store, handle and transport vast amounts of cargo. The Admiralty was aware of this potential: here were vast dockyards, supporting infrastructure, a tradition of shipbuilding and a large number of merchant ships and seamen using the port. Liverpool had a fine strategic position allowing easy access to the Atlantic and Britain's allies. All of these factors combined to ensure that Liverpool became an essential part of the war effort.

In 1939 Liverpool handled 21·7 million tons of import cargo. Already a main gateway, by 1940 Liverpool became Britain's premier port. There was a need to establish a substantial naval presence at Liverpool and the Dock Board responded by allocating berths for the navy flotilla which was sent. The importance of Liverpool and other west coast ports did not escape German intelligence. The German Naval commander Admiral Raeder sent a memo to Hitler advising *'An early concentrated attack on Britain is necessary, on Liverpool for example, so that the whole nation will feel the effect.'*

It had become apparent by 1940 that submarine warfare alone would not close the port of Liverpool. So the Luftwaffe, the German air force, decided to concentrate its efforts in an attempt to paralyse Liverpool and starve Britain of vital imports.

Air attacks on Merseyside started in July 1940, but the bombs only fell in outlying fields. On the 8th August it was reported that large fires were caused in the Liverpool docks. From then on the raids were continuous. In March 1941 ten ships were damaged and Seaforth Wireless Station was hit.

The May blitz started on Thursday 1st May 1941 and was the beginning of the worst week that Merseyside would ever experience. For eight nights running, German bombers dropped enough high explosive and incendiary devices to effectively close the port. Some 91 merchant ships were either sunk or seriously damaged; only 12 of the normal 130 deep-sea berths were usable, but by the end of May, out of 144 berths of all types, 96 were once again operational. Jesse Hartley's works withstood much of the aerial bombardment and the port was kept open. During the whole period of the war the Liverpool docks handled 70 million tons of cargo and maintained vital coastwise traffic to the extent of 2·5 million tons annually. It would seem that the tenacity, endurance and sheer hard work of the Merseyside people were such that the port and the river quickly recovered, even though there was a high cost in lives, property and capital resources. Liverpool's recovery from the May blitz was a milestone in the Battle of the Atlantic without which it is hard to see how Britain would have ever overcome the terrible times ahead.

The Germans were aware of Liverpool's central location and good communications to all parts of Britain. They knew that they had to disable the supporting infrastructure and civilian facilities, as well as the docks. The roads, railways, power stations, telephone exchanges and the like were all situated in

residential areas, and a total of 10,000 houses were destroyed and 184,000 damaged. In addition, the cost in lives was tremendous. Because of its strategic importance, reporting restrictions were such that the plight of Liverpool people was not made known.

Ships in port were usually double and triple berthed, and the area consequently became the base for a large number of sailors. Apart from the merchant seamen, the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve was based at Salthouse Dock, and Gladstone Dock was the main base for Royal Navy escort ships. In 1940 the Albert Dock became an important base for the Flower-class corvettes.

Some 20,000 people on Merseyside were involved in ship repair work. Repairing ships and keeping them afloat soon took priority over building new vessels. Britain never had naval repair bases in the north-west, and until the collapse of France, they were never considered necessary. Consequently, only makeshift repair facilities were available. Many Liverpool men became dockers, vital for the handling of cargoes. The average age of these men was 50 as the younger men fought in the services or the merchant marine.

Throughout the Second World War, Liverpool carried on her great maritime tradition of business in great waters. The port sustained the nation with merchant ships and merchant seamen who more than rose to the occasion. Liverpool, always regarded as the home of the Merchant Navy, became the most important naval operations centre of World War Two.

Western Approaches Command, Derby House, Liverpool

At the beginning of the war, command of the Western Approaches was set up in Plymouth. After the fall of France the south coast ports were in a vulnerable position, and the job of keeping the supply lines open on the Western Ocean became much more crucial and complex. In early August of 1940 Churchill asked the Admiralty to move the control centre from Plymouth to the Clyde, but Liverpool was chosen as a better option.

Derby House was under construction when the war started and Churchill had the foresight to order concrete bunkers to be incorporated into the basement for use as a command centre. On 17th February 1941, Admiral Sir Percy Noble was appointed commander-in-chief of the Western Approaches and was duly installed in the bomb-proof, gas-proof basement of Derby House, the world's first combined operations command centre. It became the prototype for many others around the world and soon led to a significant difference in Britain's struggle at sea. Escort commanders, convoy commodores, and ships' masters were all based in the same port, not only increasing co-operation and efficiency between them, but also morale. This distinguished the British, for it was not so with the Germans where the force of individual personalities took over and controlled each service independently of the others.

Derby House is situated in Water Street Liverpool, just three or four minutes' walk from the Pier Head. Western Approaches headquarters occupied 100 rooms of over 50,000 square feet. Some 1,000 people were employed on four floors, two of which were underground. The nerve centre was the main operations room where two glass-fronted rooms were built side by side, one for naval command and one for air force command, so positioned as to give officers an excellent view over the plotting wall. This wall consisted of a huge map, 32 feet by 16 feet; so high that the Wrens

plotting ships' positions were strapped into harnesses in case they fell off the ladders. Here, on this huge map of the Atlantic Ocean, the convoy routes and the progress of all shipping was constantly logged, monitored and updated. It was of utmost importance that the position of the enemy should also, whenever intelligence made this possible, be ascertained and plotted. The successful routeing, and in many cases re-routeing of convoys, depended on the speed and accuracy with which intelligence from the Admiralty reached the Western Approaches officers, and was acted upon.

The Operations Room at Derby House, Liverpool

The actual formation of the convoys was not the responsibility of those at Derby House. However the provision of escort ships came under the mandate of the commander-in-chief. He was also responsible for the mapping of routes and creating diversionary tactics in the event of submarine attack. The tactical difficulty of trying to control the anti-submarine forces from Derby House was understood, and decisions which in the thick of attack could result in life or death, were left to the men in command of the ships themselves. Another problem was the lack of any sort of military or defensive training which the crews of the merchant ships had undertaken. In 1941 Admiral Sir Percy Noble wrote: *" these brave men of the Merchant Navy lacking the training and organization that adapts their brothers in the Royal Navy so readily to the rigours of war, have, nonetheless, fashioned their own magnificent tradition. Day in, day out, night in, night out, they face unflinchingly the dangers of the deep – the prowling U-boats. They know, these men, that the Battle of the Atlantic means wind and weather, cold and strain and fatigue, all in the face of a host of enemy craft above and below, awaiting the specific moment to send them to their death."*

The defence of the convoys was an ever-pressing problem due to a desperate shortage of ships. Most of the men who manned the destroyers and corvettes came from the Royal Naval Reserve of former merchant service officers and regulars. The routine of convoy work did not attract the top talent in the Royal Navy. As the Battle of the Atlantic wore on, convoy defence strategies were devised and action by the enemy studied and analysed for future escort manoeuvres.

By the end of October 1940 a total 1,026 British, Allied and neutral ships of nearly four million tons had been lost since the beginning of the war. Of these, 568 ships of more than two million tons were British. The U-boats alone had accounted for 471 ships, 250 of which were British. Fewer than fifty per cent of merchant crews survived the sinking of their ships.

The main job for the escort vessels was to ensure the safe arrival of ships and their precious cargoes. The sinking of enemy submarines was secondary, although an added and much welcome bonus.

In 1942 Admiral Sir Percy Noble was moved to Washington and the position of commander-in-chief, Western Approaches Command at Derby House was taken by World War I veteran submariner, Admiral Sir Max Horton. Within his first year the Battle of the Atlantic reached crisis point, but his vast knowledge of submarine warfare was to stand him in good stead.

Perhaps the most famous of all escort leaders was Commander F.J. Walker, RN, whose group sank five U-boats in the defence of convoy HG76, which was a turning point in the Battle of the Atlantic. In February 1944 Commander Walker's group sank a further six U-boats. He was so revered by the people of Merseyside that after his death on 9th July 1944, his body was taken out to sea on board HMS **Hesperus** and committed to the deep off the Mersey Bar.

The success of the convoys depended entirely on the Western Approaches Command. This was achieved not only by the routes they devised, but also by the speed with which they reacted to intelligence passed to them by the Admiralty. The operations room at Derby House was without doubt the nerve centre of the Atlantic campaign. From its Liverpool base, the Western Approaches Command took control of the largest collection of vessels ever known, and fought the most crucial battle of World War Two. They out-manoeuvred the U-boats and were ultimately responsible for the very thing that sustained the nation, the safe passage of vital supplies, ships and men that fought their way across the Western Ocean under the convoy system.

The Formation and Implementation of the Convoy System

The convoy system had served Britain well in the First World War. In May 1941 the Civilian Ministry of Shipping, later the Ministry of War Transport (MOWT), was given the necessary authority to requisition British merchant ships for national use. The MOWT had the authority to decide what cargo would be carried on each voyage, but the management of these merchant ships remained in the hands of their owners and agents. It was obvious to both British and German intelligence that before any plans could be put into full operation, the many merchant ships that were scattered all around the world would have to be regrouped, organized and escorted to safety. The U-boats, making the most of this dilemma, and Britain's decision to use distant rather than close blockade of German ports, took up predatory positions off the English Channel, the Scottish and North East coasts, and Ireland. From here they were

able to target unescorted ships and almost managed to blockade the British Isles.

The convoy system was based on cold logic and mathematical calculation. The word convoy, as understood by the Admiralty, was 'one or more merchant ships or naval auxiliaries sailing under the protection of one or more warships'. It was recognized that sailing as part of a convoy did not make efficient use of all merchant ships as it could slow them down considerably. The sinking of the Donaldson Line's **Athenia** on 3rd September 1939 confirmed that the battle at sea had begun, and outward convoys from the Thames sailed on 6th September and from Liverpool on 8th September, despite the fact that adequate escorts were not yet available.

Although suitable escort vessels were in short supply, in the first four months of the war the convoy system proved to be highly effective as just 14 vessels were lost out of a total of 5,756 merchant ships. In contrast, 109 unescorted vessels were sunk by U-boats over the same period. The fall of France in June 1940 had a catastrophic effect on Britain as it meant that the enemy was now able to use French ports to base its submarines. Very soon vessels were being sunk in the North Atlantic at a faster rate than shipyards could replace them.

Despite some Allied victories in the early months of 1942, the U-boats had the upper hand and between January and August of 1942 were responsible for the sinking of 623 vessels off the Eastern seaboard of the United States.

Newly developed technologies such as Radar allowed for the detection of vessels and aircraft above the surface, and High Frequency Radio Direction Finding ('Huff-Duff'), which could be used to locate the sources of enemy radio transmissions, were vital in tracking down enemy submarines. German signals operators used the 'Spruchschlusselmaschine-M', better known to the Allies as 'Enigma', to encrypt radio messages. Eventually code-breakers at Bletchley Park broke this code and the highly sensitive intelligence was passed on to Derby House as quickly as possible. From here it was used to safeguard convoys by re-routeing them around waiting U-boat packs, and also as a means of tracking the enemy with precision.

Merchant shipping losses in the Atlantic reached a climax in the opening months of 1943. Roy Fenton described March of that year as 'the nadir of the Battle of the Atlantic for the Allies, with 108 ships totaling 627,000 gross tons lost to enemy submarines'. However, to counter these losses, a collective total of seven million tons of new ships was completed by British, American and Canadian shipyards in 1942.

During 1943, Allied technology had developed to such an extent that submarines could be more easily detected. Another decisive element was the Allied air power which closed the gap over the Atlantic. The tide turned in 1943, so much so that the U-boats, rather than the merchant ships, became the prey. In contrast to the first three years of the war, the Allies were now able to defend the convoys whilst at the same time hunting the U-boats to virtual extinction. In May 1943 Germany withdrew its U-boats to an area that was not so heavily covered by aircraft. All U-boats with sufficient fuel were ordered to an area south-west of the Azores. Other boats headed for the Eastern Atlantic where they were within easy reach of their French bases.

The cost of the Battle of the Atlantic was enormous for both sides. German submarine casualties were high. Of the 830 U-boats that saw action, 420 were destroyed. Fifty per cent of the U-boat crews, some 20,000 men, died in the Atlantic.

The British Merchant Navy seamen, technically non-combatants, made a

huge sacrifice. These men, a fiercely independent body of civilians who sailed under the Red Ensign of the Merchant Navy, experienced some of the worst pay and conditions of the War. In spite of this they never faltered and continued to hold the front line in Britain's struggle for survival from 1939 to 1945.

The Role Played by the Men of the Merchant Navy

Merchant seafarers found themselves engaged in a war at sea in which they were technically regarded as ordinary civilian men and boys. Many sailed on ships that had become old and dilapidated. Captain Bernard Edwards, author of *Attack and Sink*, suggests: 'theirs was not a well-ordered round of decks scrubbed white, and pink gins when the sun crossed the yardarm, but a harsh drab existence dictated by the constraints of commerce and the whims of penny-pinching shipowners.' They were tough practical men who never hesitated to join the front line in Britain's struggle for survival. In doing so, they suffered casualties on a military scale. The number of fatalities recorded varies considerably between historians. Recent research estimates that some 30,248 seamen and women on British merchant ships were killed by enemy action in World War Two. A total of 4,654 were listed as missing, 4,707 were wounded and 5,720 became prisoners of war. Equally serious was the number of merchant ships lost. A total of 2,524 were sunk and 912 damaged. Of that total 1,359 were sunk by U-boats, 118 by surface raiders, 477 by enemy aircraft, 76 by E-boats, 291 by mines and 29 foundered from other causes. Just over half (55%) of these ships were lost in the North Atlantic.

The men of the Merchant Navy received no paid leave on returning to port. If a man wished to spend a few days at home he had to sign off his ship and take unpaid leave. The worst indignity relating to pay was sanctioned by British law; shipowners were allowed to stop paying their crews the minute a ship was sunk. In the event of a sailor's death, his family would receive no money from the day he died. It was to the disgrace of the government and the shipowners that this was allowed to go on. These were the men upon whom Britain called for a lifeline during the years of war, and these were the men whose contract ended when the torpedo struck. The owners protected their profits to the very end: a seaman's wages ended when his ship went down, no matter where, how, or in what horror. This was in direct contravention of Section 158 of the Merchant Shipping Act of 1894, but to their everlasting shame, it was an attitude adopted by numbers of British shipowners. Protests by seamen and trade unions were paid no heed.

British ships were predominantly crewed by British sailors, but a significant number of merchant seamen from all over the world, particularly from the countries of the Empire, responded to Britain's cry for help. Sailing with the Atlantic convoys was a terrible ordeal. If the extremes of weather and the appalling conditions were not enough, then the severe psychological strain induced by the constant U-boat threat was traumatic indeed. One seaman, F. Curry serving on the escort vessels of the Royal Canadian Navy, wrote: *'What a miserable, rotten, hopeless life. An Atlantic so rough it seems impossible that we can continue to take this unending pounding and still remain in one piece. Hanging on the convoy is a full time job – the crew in almost a stupor from the nightmarishness of it all, and still we go on, hour after hour.'*

During the War no merchant ship was ever kept in port for want of a crew. It took a very particular sort of courage: these men were at risk for weeks at a time, almost powerless to influence their own fate. Some were torpedoed twice or even three

times and yet chose to return to the sea.

Conclusion

This dissertation has analysed the role of the Merchant Navy and the Port of Liverpool in the Battle of The Atlantic, circa 1939 – 1945. The research methods involved have resulted in an in-depth analysis of Liverpool and the Merchant Navy during the Second World War, and their combined contribution to the Allied victory in the Battle of the Atlantic.

Access to government papers, only recently made available due to the Official Secrets Act, suggests that the Battle of the Atlantic was not as perilous for Britain as was previously thought. These papers also support arguments which contend that although vessel and crew losses were extremely heavy in the Atlantic, even in the darkest days of 1942 and 1943, Dönitz's submarine wolfpacks never came close to severing the Allies' vital Atlantic lifeline. Undoubtedly, a major contribution to British success was the fact that British Intelligence had managed to break the 'Enigma' code, and information could be rapidly passed to Derby House so that convoys could be evasively routed away from known concentrations of U-boats.

Although the U-boats caused persistent problems for British merchant shipping, recently compiled figures suggest that in the first 28 months of the War, 900 convoys comprising of 12,000 ships, loaded with food and war materials, reached Britain safely. Just 2%, less than 300 ships, were sunk by U-boats, proving the convoy system's worth.

The importance of the Port of Liverpool to the war effort was crucial. Indeed, it may be said to have been 'the pivot on which the Allies' whole European war effort turned'. Because of the large seafaring population, the impact of deaths at sea fell heavily on the community, where extended family networks meant that the loss of a ship and death of the crew often affected the lives of an entire area. One of the most glowing tributes concerning the people of Merseyside came from Sir Max Horton, who, when given the Freedom of the City of Liverpool in September 1946, said: *'whilst for nearly six years the swaying Battle of the Atlantic went on, the whole population of this city and port of Liverpool was working for victory at the docks, at the shipyards or in the factories, warehouses and shops. The unceasing efforts of its inhabitants with their stern resolve to keep going in every adversity was admirable to observe.'* Evidence found during the research of this study would support such sentiments.

The Battle of the Atlantic was the longest armed struggle of World War Two. It was immensely costly in terms of the supplies and vessels lost. But more importantly, maintaining maritime supply links with the United States and Canada incurred a terrible cost in lives. Although recent historical analysis challenges the assumption that this battle at sea was a close call for the Allies, for the men of the Merchant Navy this was not clear during the struggle itself: they had an image of sinking ships and exploding depth charges.

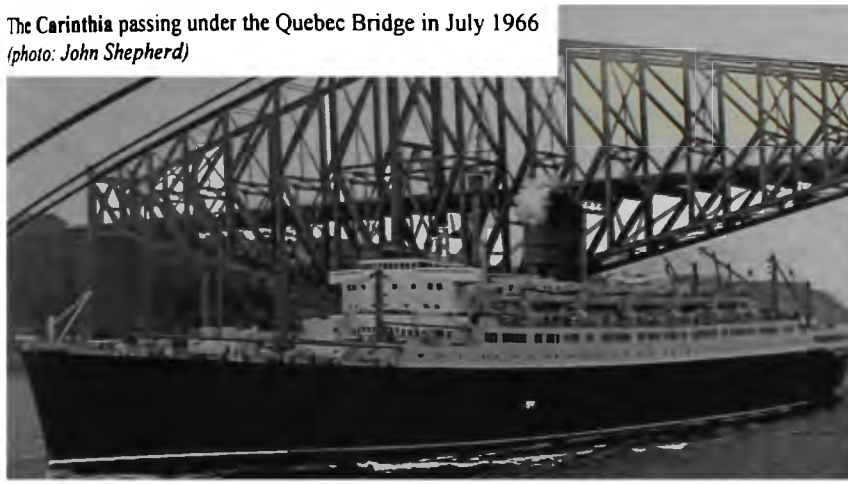
Historians have never questioned the profound importance of the Battle of the Atlantic. It was certainly the most crucial battle of the war, and the overall victory of the Allies was dependent on it. The evidence in this study suggests that the port of Liverpool made a significant contribution to this. It also maintains that without the efforts, perseverance, and for the most part unrecognized acts of bravery carried out by the men of the Merchant Navy, the Battle of the Atlantic would never have been won.

A YEAR WITH THE "CARINTHIA"

By John Shepherd

Part 1 : Winter North Atlantic

The **Carinthia** passing under the Quebec Bridge in July 1966
(photo: John Shepherd)



The Cunard liner **Carinthia** was the third of a class of four ships built during the mid 1950s for services to Canadian ports from the UK. All four were tourist-class ships with a small first-class section for up to 120 passengers. Some 800 tourist-class passengers could be carried and the cabin accommodation was basic - two or four berth cabins, many inboard rooms, and, when the ships first entered service, no private toilet or bathroom facilities.

The **Carinthia** was launched by Princess Margaret on 14th December 1955 at the Clydebank yard of John Brown & Company. The new ship had a gross tonnage of 21,947, nett 11,630. Her length was 608 feet overall, and she had a beam of 80 feet. The **Carinthia** had a relatively shallow draft and her single mast was short enough to enable her to pass under the Quebec Bridge and the Jacques Cartier Bridge on her way up the St Lawrence River from Quebec City to Montreal.

The **Carinthia** remained on her designed route from Liverpool and Greenock to Quebec and Montreal all her working life in the Cunard fleet. In the winter months, from December to March, the terminal ports were Halifax N.S. and New York. She very rarely called at Southampton - just very occasionally in the winter months. The **Carinthia** was the workhorse of the Cunard fleet in the early 1960s - when the other seven units of Cunard's passenger fleet went cruising, the **Carinthia** alone remained on the North Atlantic, operating a skeleton service with, it has to be admitted, very few passengers.

The **Carinthia** was very much a Liverpool ship, with over 95% of her crew

living in the Merseyside area. The earlier two ships of the class - the **Saxonia** and the **Ivernia** - transferred from Liverpool to Southampton as the **Carinthia** and **Sylvania** entered service. The **Carinthia** retained her black hull throughout her career unlike her sisters who carried 'cruising green' or white hulls at later stages in their Cunard service. The last of the quartette, the **Sylvania** of 1957, spent only a short time on her designed Canadian route as she took over the Liverpool - New York service after the **Britannic** was sold out of the fleet at the end of 1960.

The **Carinthia** left Liverpool on her maiden voyage to Quebec and Montreal on 27th June 1956. She had perhaps more than her fair share of problems in her early years. In 1961 she was in Liverpool's Canada Dry Dock for her annual overhaul when ship repair workers commenced a sixteen-week strike. Being stranded in a dry dock for this length of time caused doors to warp and jam, and joiners were hard-pressed to get her serviceable again. Then, in August 1961, she was in collision with the 7,000 ton Canadian cargo ship **Tadoussac** in a foggy St Lawrence. Fortunately both vessels sustained only minor damage.

After ten months on the **Queen Elizabeth**, I joined the **Carinthia** as a Junior Assistant Purser in November, 1963. I was promoted to Crew Purser (which carried the rank of Second Assistant Purser) in March 1964 and remained in that capacity for the next fifteen months before moving to the Tourist Purser's Office in July 1965, still as a Second Assistant Purser, but in effect the deputy Tourist Purser. The year I am going to describe in this article is 1965. The **Carinthia** carried a Purser's staff of nine. There was the Chief Purser, Peter Dawes. Then came the Tourist Purser and his deputy, the Crew Purser, three male junior assistant pursers and two lady assistant pursers. The ladies carried this rather grand title, rather than 'Purserette' as preferred by the Union-Castle and P. & O. The Purser's department encompassed the three printers, a baggage master, an interpreter (who spoke four or five European languages) and the ship's orchestra, and the Purser was responsible for the 'entertainers' - of which more later.

The assistant pursers' accommodation was good on the **Carinthia**. Our cabins were on the boat deck, port side, forward, so we had fresh air and daylight. There was one two-berth cabin for the two junior lads, and the rest of us enjoyed single cabins which were very comfortably furnished with settees and easy chairs. The lady pursers' cabins were rather more cramped down on 'A' deck. All the purser's staff took their meals in the first-class dining saloon at their own table on the port side aft. The clever and effective use of mirrors made this saloon seem deceptively spacious, and the chairs had all been transferred from the **Aquitania**, having been made for that liner in 1913. We were allowed to choose anything we liked from the first-class menu, but the novelty of this wore off very rapidly, and we longed for some basic plain cooking. Fortunately help was at hand, and first-class pantryman Stan Everett always produced a 'special' on each crossing for the purser's staff - either a pan of 'Scouse' or a steak and kidney pie. We always ate these 'specials' in the Crew Purser's office as it was handy for the galley and avoided the embarrassment of passengers wanting a portion!

As I have mentioned, the **Carinthia** was Cunard's winter workhorse on the North Atlantic. We sailed from Liverpool on Saturday 19th December 1964 on a voyage to Halifax, Nova Scotia and New York. This would entail spending Christmas Day at sea, and arriving at Halifax on Boxing Day morning. After a short stay of three

hours we sailed for New York where we berthed at Pier 92 on the evening of Sunday 27th December. Passenger numbers were low, the weather was foul and there was not a lot for the purser's staff to do. Perhaps the most hard-worked member of the staff was the Crew Purser who had to deal with crew immigration procedures at New York. Before leaving Liverpool a complete manifest of the entire crew had to be lodged with the U.S. Consul who would grant a visa. This visaed manifest was airmailed to New York where U.S. Immigration checked every crew member's name against their 'black book'. Remember, McCarthyism and communist witch-hunts were still very recent back in 1964.

On arrival at New York the **Carinthia** would slow down at the quarantine anchorage off Staten Island, just beyond the newly completed Verrazzano Narrows Bridge. Here the port officials would board by tender: these included the Port Health, U.S. Immigration and U.S. Customs. Overseeing all this was Cunard's New York representative, one Tom Luby, who had the endearing habit of addressing everyone as 'Cuz', presumably short for 'cousin', or at least that's what I thought as a naïve twenty-year-old. Everything was done to 'oil the wheels' and fillet steaks, salads and coffee were available for all the officials on their arrival on board. This gave about ninety minutes of 'leeway' whilst the **Carinthia** sailed across New York Bay, up the North River, and berthed at Cunard's time-honoured Pier 92. Passenger immigration procedures were generally just about complete as the **Carinthia** berthed alongside, and it only remained for the hold baggage to be discharged and cleared through Customs before the passengers could proceed on their way.

Not so the crew. U.S. Immigration insisted on a complete muster and all officers and crew were required to present themselves at the Crew Purser's office with their Seaman's Identity Card and an identity document which had been typed by the Crew Purser on the voyage from Liverpool. I remember one young lad who appeared at the office with his documents being asked by the Immigration Officer: *"Are you a commy?" "Yes"*, replied the lad, *"for the last two years"*. It took some explaining to get it through to the Officer that the lad in question was a commis waiter, and not a communist! A sense of humour was in very short supply amongst the members of the US Immigration staff, or at least the ones I came into contact with. Eventually all the crew had been mustered, shore leave permits issued, and it was time to go off duty.

The **Carinthia** lay at New York from Sunday evening 27th December 1964 until Saturday afternoon 2nd January 1965. As far as ship's business went, there was very little to do apart from making a token appearance in the office for a couple of hours each morning. A boat drill was held, but as the dock was full of pack ice there was no chance of lowering the boats into the water. So, for six days, the 400+ members of the **Carinthia's** crew were on full pay with virtually nothing to do. Our time was our own and with Broadway and 42nd Street just a five minute, 25 cent bus ride away, we made the most of it. A visit to the world-famous Radio City Music Hall to see the Christmas Show was a 'must', and there was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be in Times Square to see in the New Year. The main problem was lack of money - as Crew Purser in 1965 I was paid just £45 a month. Although there were basic meals provided on board, many of us preferred to cross the dock road, which ran underneath the West Side Elevated Highway, to the Market Diner, that world-famous haunt of Cunard crews

whilst in New York. Excellent hamburgers, French fries and salads could be obtained at very reasonable prices.

As the **Carinthia** had been at sea on Christmas Day on her passage from Liverpool, another Cunard tradition took place whilst we were in New York, namely Crew Christmas Dinner. The galley staff prepared roast turkey with all the trimmings and this was served to the crew in the Tourist Restaurant by the ship's officers, who were also required, at their own expense, to provide seemingly endless pints of beer to the crew members they were serving. We also had a Crew Concert one evening in the Tourist Lounge when various crew members displayed their previously unseen and unheard talents. From a host of applicants, I was selected, as Crew Purser, to compere this event which was attended by most officers and crew, including the Captain. We were indeed a happy crowd.

The return voyage to Liverpool left New York on Saturday 2nd January 1965 and following a call at Halifax the next day, we were back in Liverpool on Sunday 10th January. Once again the passenger numbers were very low, particularly in first class where just twenty-two were carried.

After five days in our home port we were off to New York again on Friday 15th January, but this time Cobh was substituted for Greenock. The **Carinthia** was at anchor in Cobh Harbour by ten o'clock the following morning and here again another Cunard 'tradition' was played out. After boarding us from the pilot launch and bringing us to a safe anchorage, the Cobh Pilot had a chat with the **Carinthia's** master and it was decided that it would not be safe, due to a rising sea, for him to disembark to the launch after taking the **Carinthia** to sea. The pilot would therefore remain on board and make the round voyage to New York. After this decision had been taken, and it seemed to be taken on a very regular basis whether the seas were rising or not, the Pilot would go ashore in his launch, collect a suitcase with clothes for the voyage and presents for all his friends and relations in the United States, and return on board in time to pilot the **Carinthia** out of the harbour. The Pilot was assigned a first-class cabin and was signed on the Ship's Articles as a Supernumerary at one shilling a month.

The **Carinthia** was back in New York on Friday 22nd January, after a call at Halifax the previous day. Once again there was a full week in port - we were not scheduled to sail again for a full seven days. Just what the accountants of the 21st century who insist on six-hour turnrounds of liners four times the size of the **Carinthia** would make of this leisurely approach, I don't know. Once again the entire crew was on board for a week on full pay with little or nothing to do. Without the New Year festivities the prospect of another week in New York had lost something of its attraction, and we were all a bit hard up after perhaps overspending three weeks earlier. Our week was broken up by the coming and going of other Cunard liners: the **Caronia** setting out on her annual world cruise; the **Queen Elizabeth** on her series of five day cruises to Nassau in the Bahamas, and the **Carmania** on her programme of West Indies cruises from New York. It was an opportunity for ship visiting and meeting old friends whom we saw only very rarely.

I think we were all pleased when sailing day arrived and we embarked passengers for Cobh and Liverpool on Friday 29th January. We called at Halifax the

following day and were back in Cobh on 5th February. After piloting us in, our Pilot left the **Carinthia** following his round voyage as a guest of the Company.

The one deviation which took the **Carinthia** to the sun occurred the following voyage. Every year the Cunard Line arranged for one of its liners to call at Bermuda in early January on an outward sailing from the UK, and about six weeks later there would be another call by a homeward bound vessel. The purpose of these calls was allow wealthy Brits to spend the worst of the winter in Bermuda and to travel out and home by Cunard. In 1965 the **Carinthia** was scheduled to make a call at Bermuda on Wednesday 24th February. We left New York on Monday 22nd February and sailed into truly atrocious weather which delayed us by at least eighteen hours.

It was the practice for the transit passengers to be given six hours shore leave on these Bermuda calls, but as the **Carinthia** was running a full twenty-four hours late, Cunard decided to abandon this arrangement and to anchor just long enough to embark the Liverpool passengers by tender, and then to sail immediately in an attempt to make up some lost time. Our transit passengers were told, and it was not well received. I happened to be in the Tourist Purser's Office about midnight before we were due to arrive and a scrap of paper was pushed under the door. On it was written: *"We the Tourist passengers expect shore leave, or there will be a riot."* I immediately took this to Chief Purser Peter Dawes who in turn took it up to the master. The situation was taken very seriously and the arrangements were hastily revised to grant the shore leave to the passengers.

The approach to Bermuda is tricky and can only be attempted in daylight. The **Carinthia** arrived at the pilot station at the Five Fathom Hole at first light on Thursday 25th February and commenced the twenty mile passage to the anchorage at Grassy Bay in the Great Sound. Here we were met by the ancient tender the **Chauncy M. Depew** which took our Liverpool passengers to the quay at the capital Hamilton, where they enjoyed a few hours ashore in the sun. The lady assistant pursers accompanied the tender and were on hand to greet our new passengers who would be joining us for passage to Liverpool.

The ***Chauncy*** was back alongside the **Carinthia** by 3.30pm and we sailed immediately so as to be clear of the approach channel before nightfall. Our new passengers settled down and I remember some of the regulars amongst them who made this voyage every year. There was Sir Humphrey de Trafford and his wife. Sir Humphrey was a well known race horse owner in the early 1960s and regularly named his horses after Cunard liners - such as **Media** and **Parthia**. Wilfrid Brambell, the star of Steptoe & Son was on board, as were the Graesser-Thomas family. Mr Graesser-Thomas was the chairman of the company which brewed Wrexham lager, the beer which was supplied to the **Carinthia** and the **Sylvania**. He always bought the entire crew a pint whenever he travelled. The crew were, in fact, not overly impressed with Wrexham lager, and the story goes that just before sailing from Liverpool one voyage they sent a sample ashore for analysis. On arrival back in Liverpool the analyst's report was waiting. It read *'This horse is unfit for further work!'* Well, it's a good story.

After a final round voyage to New York, the **Carinthia** arrived back in Liverpool on 23rd March 1965, ready to commence her regular run to Quebec and Montreal, via Greenock. *(to be concluded)*

THE EARLY HISTORY OF WATER-JET PROPULSION

by LNRS Member Charles Dawson

The basic principle of *"forceing water through the bottome or sides of ship below the surface or toppe of the water"* was patented for the first time as far back as 1661 by two Englishmen, Thomas Toogood and James Hayes *(1)*. The said "forceing" of the water was to be done by a bellows. The English physician/inventor and author of a successful medical book, John Allen (1660?-1741) of Bridgewater, Somerset, seems to have been the next to patent the principle in 1729 *(2)*, with the definite intention of using steam power. This was to be in the form of two Newcomen atmospheric steam engines pumping out water every five seconds, with the aim of driving a warship of 1,500 tons at three knots. Although Allen apparently carried out trials on a canal boat, using manpower on the pumps, there is no evidence that he ever used steam or any other power.

In a competition run by the French Academy of Science for the best alternative method of propulsion for boats, Daniel Bernoulli (1700-1782) the Swiss pioneer of hydrodynamics, the second son of the mathematician Johann (a brother of the perhaps more famous Jakob) made a proposal in 1753. *(3)* This was to use a vertical tube with a funnel at the top, into which buckets of water, dipped or pumped from the side, could be poured. The water issuing from the bottom end of the tube at the stern was to push the boat forward. Incidentally, Bernoulli also proposed the use of paddle wheels. *(4)*

Some years passed before the idea was taken up in America. In 1776, Arthur Donaldson submitted a proposal to the Council of Pennsylvania. *(5)* In 1785, Benjamin Franklin presented a dissertation 'on maritime affairs' to the American Philosophical Society, *(6)* in which he proposed to pump in water at the bow of a small boat and to force it out at the stern under the surface of the water, and so push it forward.

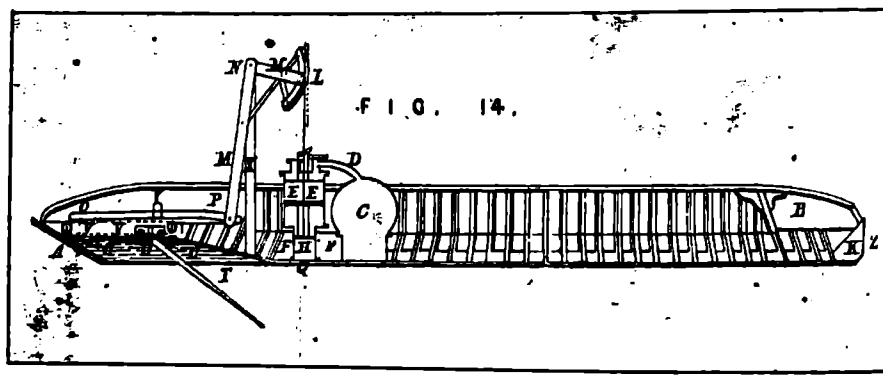


Fig. 1 Rumsey's boat

James Rumsey (1743-1792) went beyond the stage of merely proposing the idea, and made diligent efforts to put it into practice. *(7)* The first mention that appears

of Rumsey in an historical document was in George Washington's diary. The entry for 6th September 1784 reads: *'was shown the model of a boat constructed by the ingenious Mr Rumsey for ascending rapid currents by mechanism'*. Rumsey was at that time the proprietor of an establishment at Bath Springs Spa, Virginia; now Berkeley Springs, Morgan County, West Virginia. It was there that he built houses for Washington so it is evident that he did not lack contacts in higher places. The boat referred to by Washington was possibly the *'boat propelled by mechanism operated by manual power'*, mentioned as Rumsey's first by David Bell. *(8)* This mechanism apparently imitated punting, i.e. propelling by a pole thrust against the bottom of the river etc.

In 1785 Rumsey began experimenting with a steam-driven wooden boat which his brother-in-law, Joseph Barnes, built for him. On completion of the hull it was floated down the winding Potomac River from Bath to Shepherdstown, Jefferson County, where the boiler and engine were fitted. The boat had none of the usual mechanical means of propulsion, being the first practical example of hydraulic propulsion. The engine consisted of two cylinders placed one above the other with two pistons connected by a common rod. The lower cylinder acted as a pump, connected to a series of valves fitted in the bottom of the boat. Through these, steam from the boiler was admitted intermittently to enter under the piston of the upper cylinder. This forced the piston to move up and down and at the same time caused the pump piston to rise, which drew in water from the river. Rumsey was obviously aware of Watt's achievements because a separate condenser was fitted. In fact he and his colleagues later approached Boulton & Watt in England with the aim of co-operation.

When the steam in the upper cylinder was discharged to the condenser, atmospheric pressure on the top of the piston forced it down together with the pump piston below. The water in the lower cylinder was pumped out through a trunk (*QK*) at the stern of the boat, *(Figure 1)* which is a reproduction of Rumsey's second British patent No. 1738 of 24th March 1790. The reaction of the pulsating stream of water propelled the boat forward. Rumsey was careful enough to include the punting mechanism in this patent, the punt-pole being marked '*T*'.

Rumsey's steam engine operated on the Newcomen 'atmospheric' principle, except for the separate condenser. Even had he wished to use the steam expansively, it is probable that the cylinders could not have been bored to the required degree of accuracy in America at that time. The foundry originally entrusted with casting the cylinders proved unequal to the task, and Rumsey finally ordered the cylinders to be fabricated from sheet copper from Messrs Zimmers & Tombough at Frederickstown. A wood turner supplied patterns round which a coppersmith worked the metal into the required shape and the seams were riveted and soldered to ensure pressure-tightness.

Despite his use of a separate condenser and air-pump, it seems that Rumsey only partially appreciated their advantages which Watt had demonstrated. He attempted to keep his piston steam-tight by ejecting a stream of water on top of it during every stroke, contrary to Watt's basic principle of maintaining the temperature of the steam cylinder at boiling point. The first boiler used by Rumsey was a simple iron pot with a lid riveted and soldered on. Fearing that this would be too heavy, he next tried a pipe boiler. It was a model of compactness, standing only 3½ feet high, yet

it had a heating surface of 62 square feet. Inside the boiler was single coiled iron pipe of 2 inches diameter, through which the water circulated. The Rumseian Society claim that he developed the first water-tube boiler, but the French organ builder and inventor Charles Dallery (1754-1835), perhaps naturally with pipes in his thoughts, is said to have fitted a steam engine to a tubular boiler in 1780. *(9)*

Construction of Rumsey's pipe boiler presented a number of problems which were never satisfactorily solved by Rumsey or any of the craftsmen who assisted him. Initially it leaked so much that he reverted to his original pot boiler, but when the trials were held on the Potomac River in the spring of 1786, the vessel failed to move upstream against the current. Rumsey decided to repair his pipe boiler but it was not until September 1787 that a further trial was held. This time he was partially successful; the vessel, carrying a burden of two tons, moved upstream for a short distance at some two miles per hour.

The pipe boiler again leaked, but Rumsey began to feel that success was imminent. He announced that he would carry out a public trial and this duly took place at Shepherdstown on 3rd December 1787. The boat, with a load of two tons in addition to the weight of the machinery, moved against the current at a speed of three miles per hour. Affidavits regarding the trial were signed by the English-born General Horatio Gate, a hero of the recent War of Independence, together with the Rev'd Robert Stubbs and other leading citizens of Shepherdstown. A second trial was held on 11th December during which a speed of four miles per hour was achieved with the load increased to three tons. A letter published afterwards in a local newspaper said: *'It is thought that if some of the pipes of the machine had not been ruptured by the freezing of the water... which ruptures were only secured by rags tied round them... the boat's way would have been at the rate of 7 or 8 miles an hour'*. This letter may well be the first account of some of the hurried improvisations that have been a feature of many ships' trials since Rumsey's day!

The impressive affidavits that Rumsey prudently secured had their effect; he was granted the right to navigate the streams of Maryland and Virginia and in 1788 a group of backers formed the Rumseian Society in Philadelphia. This included many influential men such as Benjamin Franklin, who were committed to assist Rumsey to develop his invention. Thus, only three years after he had begun his experiments with steam, Rumsey appeared to be on the way to success.

The members of the Society agreed that better chances of patent protection would be forthcoming in England as US Patent Law had still not been drafted. Rumsey was accordingly sent by the Society to England in 1788 with a letter of introduction from Franklin to a London merchant of his acquaintance, Benjamin Vaughan. On 3rd July 1788, Rumsey visited the Boulton & Watt Soho Works in Birmingham. At first everything went smoothly; agreement was reached that Rumsey would build and eventually patent the Watt engine on a profit-sharing basis in the USA. In return, the British engineers would back Rumsey in securing a British steamboat patent as well as placing their skill as engine builders at his disposal. This was a considerable concession and presumably was backed more by Boulton than Watt, who was normally sceptical of any application of steam to boat propulsion due to his fear of high pressures. The agreement was afterwards put in writing and a copy sent to Rumsey for

his approval. He rather over-enthusiastically showed the agreement to Vaughan who suggested adding the condition that if it were not accepted, Rumsey would patent his pipe-boiler without assistance, and this move dashed all hope of co-operation.

On 6th November 1788 Rumsey was granted his first British patent No.1673 covering several versions of his pipe boiler; three slightly different applications of jet propulsion, and the engine and pump as previously described. An interesting coincidence is that Fourness & Ashworth, for their mechanically-propelled steamboat, which was probably England's earliest steamboat, were granted British Patent No.1674 on the very same day. (The ps **Comet** of 1812 was Britain's and Europe's first commercially successful steamboat).

Ever resourceful and persuasive, Rumsey soon found a wealthy English backer named Whiting, and on the strength of his support ordered a vessel of 100 tons to be built at Dover for the sum of 600 guineas. The name of the builder has still not been discovered. Rumsey then went across to France, but when he returned in April 1789 he found that Whiting's other business ventures had failed and that he had been cast into a debtors' prison.

Vaughan and the Rumseian Society came to Rumsey's aid with the result that the vessel was completed and named **Columbian Maid**. She was towed to the Thames near Greenwich where the engine and boiler were installed. Trials were carried out between November 1789 and February 1790 without very great success. The engine worked at a rate of 20-22 stokes per minute but was so unreliable that the vessel had to remain tied up at the wharf. Rumsey, by now in financial difficulties himself, seemed likely to follow Whiting to a debtors' prison. Since he had by this time been granted his second British Patent, No.1738, on 24th March 1790, he sold part of his patent rights to two fellow Americans, Daniel Parker and Samuel Rogers. They agreed to advance Ramsey £2,000 immediately, one half in cash and the rest in goods. They also promised a further sum when the boat was operating successfully. Rumsey was perhaps a poor judge of business partners which was perhaps not unusual for an inventor concentrating more on the technical problems. Misfortune struck again as Parker and Rogers went bankrupt, but worse still, even the previously loyal Rumseian Society began to grow apprehensive. It is reported that Rumsey, in desperation, accepted the position of engineer in charge of a canal being built in Ireland.

After a while Rumsey recouped his fortunes and a further series of trials was carried out on the **Columbian Maid**. She remained tethered to the wharf but went forward against the tide and pulled hard to get away from her moorings. It was clear that Rumsey was nearer to succeeding, but the achievement of operating the first steamboat on the Thames was to be denied him. Another 25 years was to pass before this became a reality: the p.s. **Marjorie** or **Margery**, built at Dumbarton, became the first in January 1815.

Whilst Rumsey was giving a lecture to the Society of Arts on 18th December 1792, he collapsed and died shortly afterwards. Early in 1793 his co-workers ventured to take the **Columbian Maid** on the Thames under its own power. The *Gentleman's Magazine (10)* reported that she reached a speed of four knots but no distance was given and nothing more was heard of the vessel. Rumsey undoubtedly missed a golden opportunity by not concluding an agreement with Boulton & Watt. His still inefficient

jet propulsion system compared even with the primitive paddle systems of the day and would no doubt have benefited from such co-operation. His pipe boiler, because of its low weight, was an improvement on the standard tank boiler introduced by Watt and it really did represent a tentative step forward in marine boiler design.

James Linacre of Portsmouth had begun experiments similar to Rumsey's in 1793, but using manpower to operate the piston. Using eight men making thirty strokes per minute, a heavy boat, fitted with a water trunk of inside size 5 inches x 15 inches, attained a speed of four miles per hour; with six men at 25 strokes per minute, three miles per hour was attained. *(11)* Linacre later obtained British Patent Specification No.3152 of 14th July 1808, 'Propelling Vessels', for a jet system powered by a steam engine, the drawings for which exhibit exquisite draughtsmanship. *(Figure 2)* Although Linacre built a boat of 30 tons displacement, 55' x 12½' x 6', in this case with twin steam-driven stern water-jet propulsion produced by means of horizontal wheels, the experiment was abandoned as unsuccessful. *(12)*

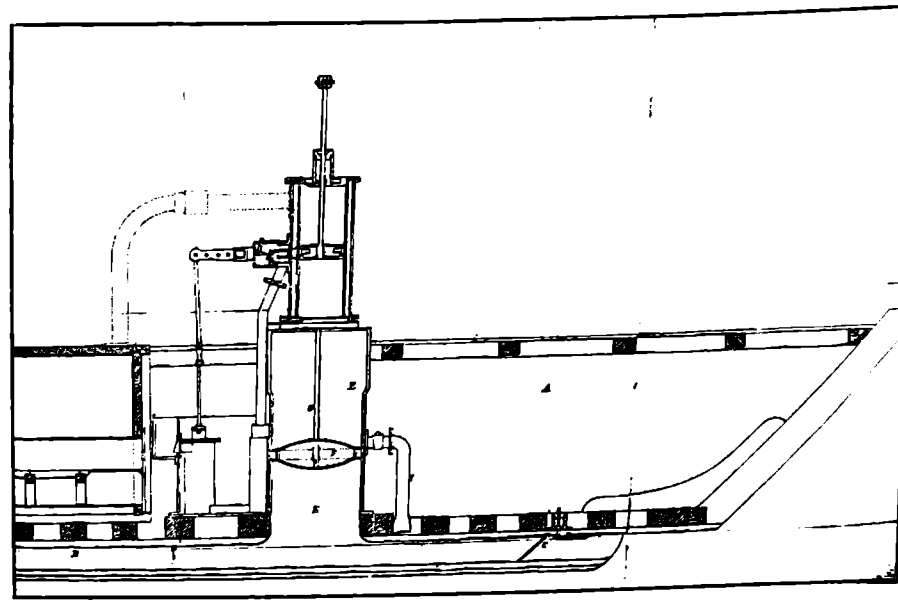


Fig. 2 Linacre's Jet System

The French Niépce brothers, Joseph-Claude (1763-1828) and Joseph-Necéphore (1765-1833), of whom the latter is famous as a pioneer of photography, were convinced that steam was not the best means of propulsion for a boat. They decided to search for a physical force that could equal that of steam without requiring such a bulky apparatus of auxiliaries and length of time to be ready for use. Basically what they aimed at was to use *'expanded air produced by combustible matter in a receiver, and by pressing upon the surface of the water this would move a great number of machines, and even repel the water with great force.'* Searching for a combustible material as flammable as possible, they first thought of lycopodium, the

spores of the plant club-moss used in making stage lightning. Having rejected this as too expensive, they finally chose pulverised coal mixed with a fourth part of pulverised resin, surely a fuel far ahead of its time. They carried out experiments to determine the relationship between the amount of fuel injected, the volume of the combustion chamber and the pressure attained.

In 1806/07 the brothers devised and patented *(13)* their ingenious 'fire engine' which they named 'Pyréolophore', from the Greek words for 'wind', 'fire' and 'carry'. Combustion was effected in the following sequence:

- Raising a piston in a cylinder, which drew air into the combustion chamber through an inward-opening, controlled valve in the inlet port on the side of the combustion chamber.
- Injecting the fuel, here in the form of a mixture of coal dust and resin, in controlled amounts into the combustion chamber from another, smaller cylinder and through a valve at the back end of the combustion chamber.
- Closing the valve to protect the air pump and the fuel-metering device.
- Igniting the fuel by a glowing asbestos wick introduced into the combustion chamber by means of a slide-valve for each operating cycle.
- Removing the wick immediately.
- Restoring it to glowing by a lamp outside the combustion chamber.
- Exhausting the hot gasses through a controlled, inward-opening, valve located in the exhaust port

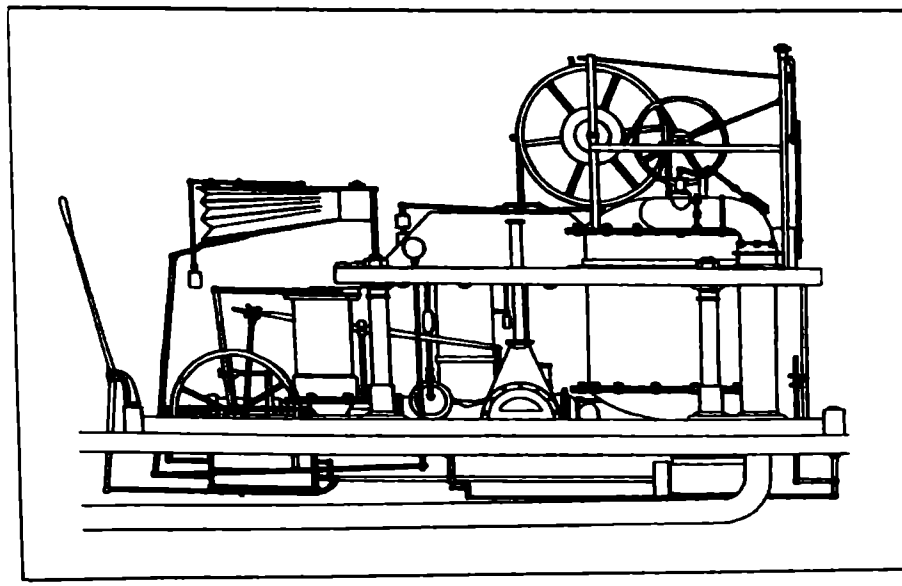


Fig. 3 Side view of the Niépce engine

The complex system of weights, valves, cranks, levers, rods, chains and wheels which controlled the sequence of these individual steps of the combustion process and succession of the cycles can be seen in Figure 3, a side view of the engine.

This engine was undoubtedly the earliest internal combustion engine devised for use in a boat. The propulsion was effected by the periodic alternating expulsion and induction of water by means of the pipe exiting at the stern. In short, the engine combined a number of systems to produce the water-jet that propelled their 8 feet long boat *(Figure 4)* up the River Saône.

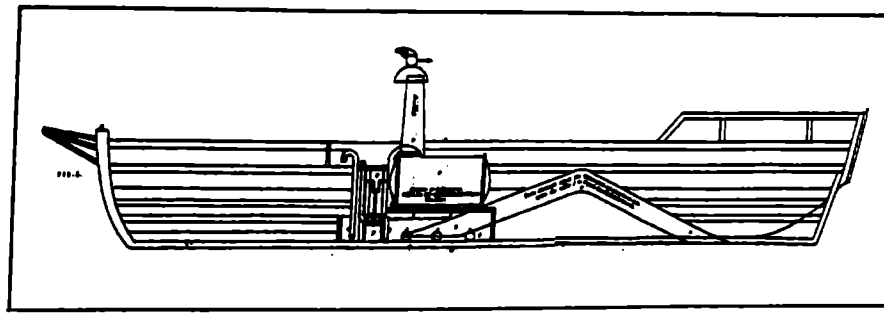


Fig. 4 Niépce boat

Although the basic idea of this propulsion method had been advocated earlier by previous inventors, the Niépce brothers' system was one of the rare practical applications of it until the 1950s when it appeared again in a toy boat. For unknown reasons, possibly because if Claude's propensity to jump from one invention to the next, work was discontinued on the boat in 1807 and was not resumed until the spring of 1816, when the patents were due to lapse within a year.

After the Niépce brothers' application for an extension of their French patent had been rejected, Claude - hoping for more favourable patent protection and technical support in England - emigrated to London in the autumn of 1817, and on 25th November was granted British Patent No.4179. *(14)* Although inventive priority existed in a number of the systems they used, their reluctance to divulge details until the conclusion of their work meant, sadly, that they went unrecognised in their field. It is a staggering fact that they were aware as early as 1816 of time-controlled petroleum injection under pressure. This did not appear in practice until the diesel engine of about 80 years later.

Another French inventor, Alexandre-Francois Selligue, a civil engineer and head of a gas-production plant appears to have been the first to systematically carry out experiments on the direct action of the combustion pressure of an internal combustion engine on the water. He first worked on his idea in 1840 but kept it secret "hoping it would be useful to France in time of war", which seemed likely at that time. He therefore waited three years before he patented it. *(15)* After Selligue's death in 1846 the French Société d'Encouragement, which assessed patent ideas, gave the verdict that *'the propulsion system has never been applied to a boat, since death did not leave M. Selligue the time to execute his idea'.*

In 1844, the English engineer John William Buckle Reynolds of Lympston, Devon, was granted a British Patent *(16)* for a propelling system for various modes of

transport that was *'essentially similar, but far superior to Selligue's'. (17)* However, Reynolds never took his idea to the experimental stage and it remained a paper invention. Similarly unsuccessful was another British inventor, James (or John ?) Harvey who in 1864 patented a similar scheme. *(18)*

In 1879, the Swedish Navy fitted its small minelayer No.7, one of five such craft of 21.4 tons displacement, with a water-jet propulsion system, using steam driven centrifugal pumps. She was the only one of the group so fitted and her speed was only 7 knots against the 9½ of her sisters. No.7 was later fitted with the same machinery and propellers as her sisters. She remained in service until 14th December 1923. *(19)* □

Acknowledgement

This article is dedicated to the memory of the late Dr Horst O. Hardenberg, whose book on the internal combustion engine (Reference 17 below) inspired this article.

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* The apparent discrepancies between the numbers of the last two British Patent Specifications listed above is due to patents not being numbered before the 1852 Patent Amendment Act, (15 & 16 Victoria, c 57). This established the Patent Office, which was to administer the newly proposed system. Its first task was to number the existing patents, back to the year 1617, in a running sequence. The number of them reached 14,360 in 1852, after which numbering was recommenced. *c.d.*

THE WHITE STAR LINER '*CELTIC*' OF 1901

The White Star liner **Celtic**, built by Harland & Wolff at Belfast in 1901, had a very important place in the history of Western Ocean ship design. Her owners had been in keen competition with the Cunard, Guion and Inman Lines for the Atlantic Blue Riband for a number of years, but when the German liner **Kaiser Wilhelm Der Grosse** secured it in 1897, the White Star Line directors decided that the contest was no longer worth while and their next ship, the **Oceanic** of 1899, was of more moderate speed.

The **Oceanic** was fast enough to run alongside the record-breakers of the late 1880s, but otherwise she was built rather for solid comfort and proved very popular. The **Celtic** of 1901 took this policy still further and established a new type of what would become known as second-line ships, providing great comfort and even luxury, combined with large tonnage, but at the expense of speed.

When the **Oceanic** was built she was the first ship to be longer than the **Great Eastern**; 685 ft. 7 in. against 679 ft. 6 in., although her gross tonnage was 17,274 against the 18,915 of Brunel's ship. The **Celtic**, the first of the White Star Line's famous 'Big Four' [1], was only just longer than the **Great Eastern** at 680 ft. 9 in., but her gross tonnage was nearly 2,000 tons more at 20,904.

There is no doubt that the principles that Harland & Wolff laid before her owners were quite sound economically. As the largest ship in the world the Celtic when new attracted nearly as much attention as the fastest. She could carry a large number of passengers and had a big cargo capacity, so that she was capable of earning considerably more than several steamers which were more celebrated for their speed.

The principles of the **Celtic's** design were not only copied in the other three ships of the White Star 'Big Four', but also in a number of vessels either ordered by foreign owners from Harland & Wolff, or else copied from them. When the **Celtic** was first ordered there was great jubilation in the German press that the British lines were falling behind the German ones, but the new trend was quickly followed in subsequent German ships.

The conception of such a ship was enterprising on the part of Harland & Wolff and the White Star Line, for there were occasions when the **Celtic** could not reach Liverpool docks without lightening, and the approach channel at New York had to be deepened for her.

The **Celtic** was built at a time when American immigration was booming, and her passenger accommodation was very large. In the first class 347 passengers were accommodated on the upper, bridge, upper bridge and boat decks, the number of single-berth cabins being unusually large. In the second class 160 were berthed in the upper and bridge decks, whilst the third-class accommodation for 2,352 was on the upper, middle and lower decks; some in small rooms and others in dormitories.

[1] *The White Star Line's 'Big Four' were the* ***Celtic*** *(1901 - 20,904grt);* ***Cedric*** *(1902 - 21,035grt);* ***Baltic*** *(1903 - 23,884grt) and the* ***Adriatic*** *(1906 - 24,541grt).*

The first-class accommodation was not as luxurious as in the express ships, but the steerage accommodation was well ahead of current standards with a smoke room, dining room and lounge. The **Celtic** could carry 17,450 tons deadweight, and there was cargo stowage totalling 677,820 cu. ft. With this large passenger and cargo capacity, a week was allowed for turn round at both Liverpool and New York.

The twin screws were driven by two quadruple expansion engines by Harland & Wolff, giving a speed of 17 knots. Steam was supplied by eight double-ended Scotch boilers, with a working pressure of 210 lb. p.s.i. By accepting a lower service speed instead of the more usual 19 knots (which her design but not her engine permitted), she could operate on an economical 280 tons of coal per day.

The **Celtic** was launched at Belfast on 4th April 1901, the launch attracting great attention at the time as she was the largest ship in the world by a considerable margin. She sailed from Liverpool on her maiden voyage on 26th July 1901, arriving at New York on 4th August. As the engines were run in she improved her speed slightly, but her solid comfort made her a great favourite with regular travellers.

In February 1902 the **Celtic** left New York on a special cruise to the Mediterranean with 800 wealthy Americans on board. The 72-day cruise terminated at Liverpool in April. On one westbound passage in September 1904 the **Celtic** had 2,957 passengers on board, the largest number yet carried on a White Star Line ship.

In 1907 the **Celtic** was transferred to Southampton for two voyages to New York via Cherbourg. The **Adriatic** then became the permanent White Star liner on this new route.

On 4th August 1914 the **Celtic** was taken over at Liverpool for war service and on 20th October she was commissioned as an armed merchant cruiser and assigned to the 10th Cruiser Squadron. She proved to be far too large for this purpose and was soon paid off.

The **Celtic** was converted for troop carrying in 1916 and from March was employed in this capacity on the Liverpool - New York route. On 15th February 1917 she struck a mine off the Isle of Man and 17 of her complement were killed in the explosion. The **Slieve Bawn** of the London & North Western Railway Company took the passengers to Holyhead and the **Celtic** was towed to Peel Bay. The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's **Tynwald** took divers and equipment out to her from Liverpool. The **Celtic** was repaired at Belfast and recomissioned at Liverpool.

Just over a year after the previous incident, the **Celtic** was torpedoed in the Irish Sea by UB-77 on 31st March, 1918. Six members of her crew were killed and she was towed back to Liverpool to be repaired by Harland & Wolff.

In January 1920 the **Celtic** returned to her designed route from Liverpool to New York. She continued on this service until 10th December 1928. On this fateful day she was stopped, in gale conditions, awaiting her pilot before entering Cobh Harbour. The **Celtic** was driven towards the rocks by the gale and grounded on Roches Point adjacent to the harbour entrance. Full astern was immediately ordered and she came off, but almost immediately grounded again on the Calf Rocks. Despite salvage attempts she remained ashore and became a total loss.

Within days the **Celtic's** funnels were cut down to deck level because they

were obstructing the beam from Roches Point lighthouse. To unload the vessel, a bridge was constructed from shore to ship.

The wreck was later sold to Petersen & Albeck of Copenhagen who broke her up where she lay.

It took until 1933 for the demolition to be completed, and in its final stages some iron was found: this was the remains of the Guion Line's **Chicago** lost on the same rocks in January 1898. ❑

The "Celtic" ashore at the entrance to Cork Harbour, where she met her end in 1928

THE CUNARD ARCHIVE

Cunard dominated Liverpool for many decades, not only physically with its ostentatious headquarters, based on the Farnese Palace in Rome, but also in terms of the sheer number of people it employed and transported across the Atlantic.

In 1972 the Cunard Archive was deposited at the University of Liverpool for secure storage and to provide a research resource. The collection contains a vast amount of material dating mainly from 1878-1945, but, as Dr Maureen Watry, Head of the University's Special Collections and Archives, explains the archive was nearly lost forever: *'When Cunard left Liverpool there was no provision for archiving the many thousands of documents and artefacts accumulated by the company over the decades. Fortunately the Liverpool Museum launched a rescue mission and saved what remains from destruction or sale to foreign collectors.'*

The collection is now housed in the basement of the Sydney Jones Library. The five long, lonely corridors of storage appear gloomy and lifeless, but open any one of the hundreds of boxes lining the shelves and you are immediately transported back to the golden age of the great ocean liners. Dr Maureen Watry believes the Cunard collection is an unrivalled source for research: *'As a dynamic corporate memory the archive gives rich insight into Cunard's history and the social history of thousands of people on whose lives Cunard had an impact.'* ❑

A scene from the past: Queenstown (Cobh) in the early morning of August 1, 1926, with the White Star liners "Cedric" (left) outbound for New York and "Baltic", at anchor, having arrived from New York

HARRISON LINE'S *'INKOSI'* OF 1937

This article originally appeared in 1991 from research contributed by Captain G Cubbin, Mr N.J. Hollebone and Miss E.J. Warburton, all of Harrison Line. Additional material from Graeme Cubbin's book 'Harrisons of Liverpool' has been added to complete the story of the ***Inkosi****.*

By the early 1900s Harrison Line ships were a familiar sight on the oceans of the world as they traded between UK ports, South America, the Mediterranean, India, Africa and the West Indies. In 1911 the Charente Steamship Company (T.& J.Harrison - Managers) acquired John T. Rennie & Sons and their seven ships. This small company had plied the UK to Durban route and its ships had always borne names of Zulu origin with an *'In'* prefix. 'Inkosi' means a chief, or leader.

The Harrison Line London-West Indies passenger service was inaugurated by the **Intaba** and **Ingoma** in 1921. By 1936 the **Ingoma**, built in 1913, was still on this service, along with the **Inanda** of 1925. A replacement for the **Ingoma** was urgently required and the contract went to Swan Hunter & Wigham Richardson of Wallsend on Tyne who launched the **Inkosi** in early 1937. She was the second vessel to carry the name, the first having been acquired from J.T. Rennie & Sons, but torpedoed in March 1918. By 1st June 1937 the new **Inkosi** was almost complete and undertook her trials off the Tyne two days later.

Harrison Line's **Inkosi** of 1937

The **Inkosi** was a vessel of 6,618 gross tons, with an overall length of 429ft 6in, a breadth of 56ft 0in and a draft of 28ft 5in. Her profile was rather unusual in the Harrison Line fleet, with a poop and high midship superstructure, which comprised

boat, promenade, bridge and saloon decks. The **Inkosi** had a raked stem, a single funnel amidships with an Admiralty cowl top, two masts and a cruiser stern. She was finished in the traditional Harrison Line livery of black hull, white superstructure and a tall black funnel carrying a thick red band between two white bands. Her cargo was carried in four holds. She was a single screw ship driven by a quadruple-expansion reciprocating engine and had a speed of 14 to 15 knots. She had cost £200,000 to build.

The new **Inkosi** had accommodation for 81 first-class passengers in exceptionally spacious and luxurious quarters which were situated amidships on the boat, promenade, bridge and saloon decks. There was a dining saloon, lounge, verandah and cocktail bar, library and writing room, and even a children's playroom.

The accommodation for the master and deck officers was arranged at the forward end of the boat deck, with the engineers' cabins being aft on the same deck. The quarters for the European crew were in the poop deckhouse, and those for the Asian crew were two decks lower in the poop. For a ship of her size the **Inkosi** carried a large crew of around 90 men and women. With passenger fares for the round voyage starting at just £64, it seems unlikely that the passenger operation made a large profit.

The **Inkosi** arrived at London's West India docks on Friday 4th June 1937 with a number of workmen on board who were putting the final touches to her passenger accommodation. Two weeks later, on 18th June, under the command of Captain J.T. Ling, she left for the 9,000 mile, six week round voyage to the Caribbean and British Guiana. She was carrying a full complement of passengers and her holds were loaded with cargo as she set out on her maiden voyage on a service which had only two years to run before the Second World War would end what was, in effect, a 'way of life'.

The life on board passenger vessels of the Harrison Line which served the West Indies during the 1930s is best told by one of the Company's former masters, Captain H.G. Skelly, who recalled the formal yet leisurely pace of life in those pre-war days:

"Leaving London, we always made for the south of Santa Maria in the Azores. So many children could be ill with seasickness we needed the fine weather quickly, and that was the best route to find it. Food and conditions on board were excellent. Meals contained many courses of well cooked and enjoyable dishes. The junior officers had their own table in the dining saloon. Senior officers had tables of their own, scattered amongst the passengers. On the ocean passage, senior officers and passengers dressed for dinner at 7pm every night except Sunday. The Sunday morning church service was held in the music room at 10am and the quartermaster tolled the bell on the forecastle head to call out the faithful. The ladies wore hats, the captain read the service and the piano accompanied the hymn singing. The plate was passed round for the Seamen's Orphanage. All officers were expected to go to church, and did. It was all very well done. The usual deck games, sweeps, treasure hunts, fancy dress dances and amusements were well organised, and bridge and little gambling games were run at night. If anybody wanted more for their £64, then they were peculiar. But they seldom did and were mostly happy and frequently said so. In fact, many passengers were regular customers.

"After leaving the Azores we made for Antigua to land the northern islan passengers and cargo, then proceeded to St Kitts, Barbados, St Vincent, Grena Trinidad and Demerara. When in the Caribbean there were no harbours of any kin and it was all open anchorage work except for the wharves on the Demerara River. A each island cargo work continued day and night and with the last sling out we were off to the next port."

For two years the **Inkosi** and her older sister **Inanda** maintained month sailings to the Caribbean with each ship sailing every other month from the West Ind Dock. In September 1939 this unique service was ended for ever as Europe wa plunged into the Second World War and both ships were taken over by the Shippin Controller for the Ministry of War Transport, with Thos & Jas Harrison acting as managers. The **Inkosi** was in the West Indies on the homeward leg of her voyage whe war was declared and she returned home under wartime blackout conditions.

In August 1940 both ships were taken over by the Admiralty for use as ocea boarding vessels and they were moved to the Royal Albert Dock to be fitted out. In the summer and autumn of 1940 a number of medium sized ships with a better than average turn of speed were requisitioned for this purpose and their duties consisted of intercepting neutral and suspected enemy merchant vessels in order to enforce the contraband control. These were desperate times with the French Army having capitulated and an invasion of Britain by Nazi forces considered to be imminent During August 1940 the Luftwaffe concentrated its attacks against RAF airfields, bu in September the blitz on London commenced.

Shortly before 5pm on Saturday 7th September 1940, some 300 Germa bombers, escorted by nearly 600 fighters, arrived in two waves over London's docks During that afternoon and evening nearly 340 tons of bombs were dropped on the docks. At just after 8pm that evening, with the air bombardment at its height, the code word 'Cromwell' was signalled to military units throughout the country which meant that the invasion of Britain was about to begin. British Intelligence sources had received reports of large scale movements of barges at the Channel ports and this together with the interrogation reports of some German spies had led to this signal being given. Fortunately it was a false alarm, but it illustrates the desperation of those days in the autumn of 1940.

During the raid eighteen ships had been seriously damaged and these included both the **Inkosi** and the **Inanda**. The two ships were hit again on both 8th and 9th September when they were finally sunk.

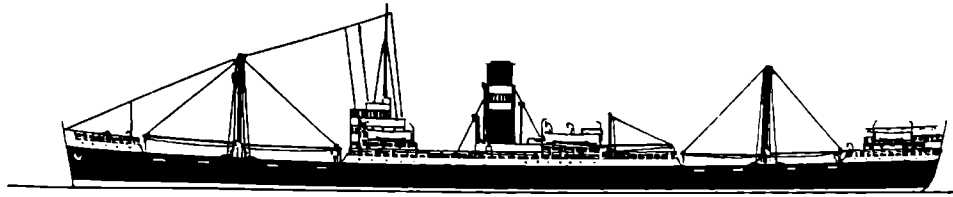
Two bombs burst in the **Inkosi's** engine room and although they did not rupture the hull, the after bulkhead and the ship's engines suffered severe damage. Another bomb penetrated the poop deck, ripping open the after peak bulkhead, the tunnel recess and the ship's side under the quarter below the waterline. Consequently water flooded forward into No.4 hold and into the engine room via the shaft tunnel. Efforts to close the tunnel watertight doors using the remote controls proved impossible owing to distortions caused by the blast. The **Inkosi** ended up with her stern resting on the mud in 32 feet of water, whilst her bow still floated at a draft of 14 feet.

However, the story of the **Inkosi** does not end there. Both she and the **Inanda** were salvaged and refitted for further service, although they were to be very different

looking ships with their passenger accommodation cut away. In 1941 both vessels re-appeared as typical British cargo steamers. Perhaps the only recognizable feature from the **Inkosi's** former appearance was the cowl top on her funnel. The **Inkosi** became the **Empire Chivalry** and the **Inanda** became the **Empire Explorer**. The old **Inanda** was torpedoed and sunk off Trinidad in position 11°40'N, 60°55'W on 9th July 1942 but the **Empire Chivalry** (ex **Inkosi**) survived the war and on 26th April 1946 she was returned to Thos & Jas Harrison and renamed **Planter**.

The **Planter** was to remain in Harrison Line service for a further twelve years with only one serious incident. She was outward bound from London for the West Indies on 6th February 1954 and was rounding Blackwall Point when she encountered the collier **Brixton** inward bound from the Tyne. The **Planter** overran the bend and the tow ropes on both tugs parted. With the tide on her bow the **Planter** took a sheer and fell into the path of the **Brixton**. One of the tugs, the **Sun XVI** was in grave danger of being crushed between the two ships and took avoiding action, and in so doing collided with the **Sun III**, inflicting damage on both. Meanwhile, the **Planter** and the **Brixton** collided and both were seriously damaged. The **Brixton** was beached on Blackwall Point and refloated three days later and the **Planter** returned to South West India Dock. Eighteen months later, on 2nd August 1955, in the Admiralty Division of the High Court, the **Planter** was found wholly to blame for attempting to round Blackwall Point at too great a speed.

The **Planter** was sold for £42,000 on 24th September 1958 to Van Heyghen Frères of Ghent for demolition, by which time her original role in the Harrison Line passenger service to the West Indies was just a distant memory. □



*The **Inkosi** re-entered the Harrison Line fleet in April, 1946 as the **Planter**.*

READERS' LETTERS, NOTES AND QUERIES

From Captain Graeme Cubbin:

I was interested to hear from LNRS Member Sean Kennedy that his father had served in Harrisons' **Professor** in the 1920s (LNRS 'Bulletin', June 2005), and earlier during the First World War in Ellermans' **Asturian**. It may interest Mr Kennedy to know that the **Asturian** was formerly the Harrison ship **Capella**, bought by Harrisons whilst 'on the stocks', along with the rest of Rathbones' Star Line fleet in 1889. The 'Star' names were retained. In 1910, Harrisons sold the **Capella** to Ellermans, who renamed her **Asturian**. Twelve years later she was sold to Oliviers of London, and finally ended up in a German ship-breaker's yard in 1923.

From Mr J.E. Cowden:

The June 'Bulletin' was a joy to read. How could one dispute your thoughts on how majestic the **Empress of Scotland** looked. As the old saying goes: *'she looks like a ship'*. How can one compare the present day passenger / cruise liners to her.

The mention of the one o'clock gun took me back to my youth when I would be leaving the front entrance to India Buildings for my luncheon break just as the gun sounded. What memories of the halcyon days of the River Mersey.

More about the One O'Clock Gun:

Writing to 'Sea Breezes' in August 1969, former LNRS Vice-President Ray Pugh lamented the passing of the gun:

At 12 noon Greenwich Mean Time on Monday 22nd July 1969, regular strollers at Liverpool's Pier Head with watches in hand, or wrists raised, waited for the usual time check. There was no puff of smoke from Morpeth Dock wall and the pigeons did not take flight, for the gun was not fired and the 102-year old tradition was broken without a word of warning.

The reason was a 'productivity deal' and for those who are baffled by this modern jargon, here is what has happened. Dock Board men employed at Woodside Landing Stage have been so reduced in number that as from the above date, none is available to load the charge in the Naval Hotchkiss gun.

Mariners may now have other means of checking their chronometers, but Liverpudlians have come to rely on, and indeed anticipate, the unique bang, even though for some time the gun has been on a five-day week.

Now the gun points in black muzzle across the swirling tide in the direction of Liverpool, silent and forlorn.

From Mr Charles Dawson:

Edinburgh still fires a one o'clock gun! The firing of a gun from the battlements of Edinburgh Castle at 1.pm from Monday to Saturday was not introduced as a tourist attraction (though it has become one), or to alarm pedestrians in Princes Street below (which it does, even regular shoppers). It started as a means of giving an accurate time check to the ships in Leith Harbour - two miles away.

More about the Bates family and Gyrn Castle

From Mr H.M. Hignett:

Sir Geoffrey Bates (*see LNRS 'Bulletin, June 2005, page 34*) invited eleven LNRS Members to visit him at Gyrn Castle in May 1990. At that time LNRS Archivist Alan Rowson was researching Edward Bates and his shipping company. He learned that there were about twenty paintings of Bates' ships at Gyrn Castle and he arranged with Sir Geoffrey for LNRS President Sam Davidson and other members to have a look at the paintings. It was a very memorable visit and Sir Geoffrey gave us several important books for our archives which are now in the Museum Archives.

We were allowed free rein in the main hall of the castle. Family portraits revealed that the Bates family had married into the MacIver clan, and this initiated the Cunard connection.

After we left Gyrn Castle, the pub owner at Llanasa was startled to have eleven people suddenly demanding pub lunches! Later we climbed to the signal station above Gronant.

Alan Rowson completed his study of Edward Bates and it formed a dissertation which is now the History Department at Liverpool University.

Chadburns (Ship) Telegraph Co.Ltd.

From LNRS Member Dick Midhage:

On 7th May 1941 Chadburn's factory was totally destroyed in a blitz attack. Can any Members assist with stories, recollections or items relating to the factory? If you can help please contact Mr Midhage by e-mail at < dickmidhage@aol.com >.

BOOK REVIEWS

APPRENTICE TO THE RED ENSIGN

by Mike Holmes

Pangbourne trained Cadet, Captain Mike Holmes became an exception to the rule when he chose the Ellerman and Bucknall Steamship Company to join as a deck cadet at the conclusion of World War Two. This tale of six voyages in the post-war British Merchant Navy of the late 1940s is quite remarkable in that it has been compiled some sixty years later without the aid of any diaries. Holmes presents the reader with part personal recollection, part travelogue of the world as it then was, and part random glossary of nautical miscellany of the time. Whilst this latter ingredient may seem somewhat tedious to the initiated, it still generates interest and calls for acceptance as a vital aspect of detail 'for the record'.

Those who have been fortunate to have followed a similar career path will undoubtedly see themselves in some of the personal experiences which are related. Holmes effectively paints a nostalgic picture of this era sharing vivid experiences of being excessively 'kitted out' at Gieves, the well known marine tailor, and then joining his first ship to sail with a handful of characters who were about to indelibly influence

the shape of his nautical induction and associated values. Such cringe-generating episodes in the life of a first tripper cannot be easily extinguished, and many an ex-seafarer will readily spring to mind with little effort when prompted by Holmes' well observed reminiscences. The stories which unfold during the course of these half dozen voyages are accompanied by treasured photographs of crew and vessels involved.

However, during his travels there were periodic encounters with various aircraft and these natured a much greater yearning to fly. So Holmes concluded his seagoing career rather prematurely, before completing his apprenticeship in fact. Within six months he had embarked on a training course that would lead to more substantive service as a pilot in the RAF. Yet despite a total sea service of under three years, Holmes had been extremely fortunate in visiting a fair proportion of the globe including one circumnavigation courtesy of a link with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary at a time when vessels lingered far longer in port than is present day practice.

Whereas the occasional slip of the pen is noted in this publication which may either amuse or irritate the reader, or quite possibly both, it remains important that ex-seafarers continue to be encouraged to record their memories whilst opportunity exists. As well as a source of fascination, such recollections provide a worthwhile and invaluable record, and Mike Holmes has ably demonstrated what can be achieved to this end.

j.p.s.

APPRENTICE TO THE RED ENSIGN by Mike Holmes.
Woodfield Publishing, ISBN 1-903953-85-5 Price £9.95.

THE MONDAY FACILITY

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

SEPTEMBER : 5th, 12th, 19th and 26th
OCTOBER : 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th and 31st
NOVEMBER : 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th
DECEMBER : 5th, 12th and 19th

High water at Herculaneum Dock, Liverpool in the 1950s. From an original wash drawing by Alan Davies of Liverpool

THE LOSS OF THE *'BEN-MY-CHREE'* (3) in 1917

In 1907 the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company ordered a turbine steamer from the Barrow yard of Vickers, Sons & Maxim Ltd. She was launched on 23rd March 1908 and named **Ben-my-Chree** (3). She was the fastest steamer ever owned by the Manx Company and recorded 26.64 knots on one run of the Skelmorlie Mile on her trials on 8th August 1908. The *Ben's* career on her designed route was short; from late August 1908 until early August 1914. Her large passenger capacity was only required at the peak of the summer season and she was laid up for nine months each winter.

In January 1915 the **Ben-my-Chree** was converted to a seaplane carrier by Cammell Laird at Birkenhead. A hangar was built, aft of the second funnel, to house six seaplanes which would be lifted in and out of the water by a crane. There was a flying-off platform forward, of about 60ft in length. The *Ben* would head up into the wind and work up to full speed. A plane would rev-up whilst a hook held it steady until it was released down the sloping 60ft long runway over the bows. If the pilot could not gain sufficient lift, his plane would fall into the sea and was likely to be rammed by the *Ben* just seconds later! The runway quickly proved to be inadequate with the result that the *Ben* had to stop and lower the seaplanes into the water for take-off. This was a serious problem in action.

The **Ben-my-Chree's** place in aviation history was secured on 12th August 1915. One of the Short 184 aircraft from the **Ben** spotted a 5,000 ton Turkish supply ship and attacked it from the air. The aircraft launched a torpedo which struck the vessel amidships and sank her. This was the first ever successful attack against a ship with a torpedo dropped from the air.

The **Ben-my-Chree** carried a complement of 250, including flying crew and mechanics.

The Officers of the seaplane carrier **Ben-my-Chree** during the First World War

Photo supplied by LNRS Member John Hill

On 11th January 1917 the **Ben-my-Chree** was lying in a supposedly safe bay off the island of Castellorizo, two miles from the south-west Mediterranean coast of

Turkey, (36°08'N, 29°35'E). Unknown to the *Ben*, a Turkish battery had taken up position on the coast of mainland Turkey.

An account of what followed recently came to light whilst researching IOMSPCo material. It was written by Lt. Comdr. A.L. Braithwaite, RNVR, who was one of the deck officers on the **Ben-my-Chree** at the time:

'Our orders were to send up our seaplanes to try and locate a battery supposed to be somewhere near a point on the mainland. We were acting under the orders of a French Admiral whose name I forget.

'It was blowing a gale and quite impossible to launch the seaplanes so we went into the tiny harbour of Castellorizo accompanied by the French admiral in his yacht and with a destroyer escort. The harbour was so small that between us we practically filled the place up and when we were all in a boom was put across the entrance as there were reports of a submarine in the vicinity looking for us.

'The *Ben* took a lot of holding in the gale with her large hangar, so we had two anchors down and various wires out as well. It was about noon when we were finally secured and leave was given to one watch to go ashore. There was nothing ashore except a monastery and a small French garrison; the island [Castellorizo] was only a mile or so across and just barren rock.

'I had the middle watch, so turned in for a spot of 'shut-eye', but partially dressed as I always was when the ship was away from our base. When everyone had comfortably settled down the battery we had come to find opened fire; it clearly had the place registered as the first shot only just missed the ship and the second set the hangar on fire. The French admiral's yacht slipped her cable, rammed the boom and escaped.

'I rushed out on deck and we went to fire stations, rather sketchy as half the crew were ashore. It was hopeless from the first as the hangar was a blazing furnace and fires had been started all over the ship. The captain, Comdr. Sampson, did the only thing possible and gave orders to abandon ship. My job was to lower the whaler and we had just got her hoisted clear of the chocks when she literally disappeared into thin air and we were left with just the bit hooked on to the falls at each end.. Our whaler had received a direct hit but fortunately no one was hurt.

'No one was killed in the attack and very few injured, but it must be remembered that half the ship's company were ashore. The *Ben* continued to burn for a couple of days.

'Practically all the officers and crew were taken off from the far side of the island by French trawlers but the captain kept back myself, a midshipman and several ratings to dismantle the guns, collect confidential books and attempt to recover a large sum of money from the ship's safe. It was several days before it was possible to get aboard and the Turkish battery amused itself by taking pot shots at us. There was no cover and we were driven from pillar to post.

'The crew who had been rescued were taken to Imbros and when they arrived the British Intelligence staff told them that the French had known for months past that the Turkish battery was there. The French admiral had slipped up pretty badly and the *Ben* had been lost for no reason whatsoever.

'Comdr. Sampson was, of course, court-martialled for losing his ship, but he was exonerated and awarded the DSO. There was no suggestion that the French were to blame.

'To return to the little party still on Castellorizo, we dismantled the guns and then bad weather set in and it was impossible to take us off for about three weeks. A trawler eventually rescued us and we were taken to Port Said.

*The wreck of the **Ben-my-Chree** (3) in the harbour at Castellorizo*

'One little episode will round off this yarn. Some years after the war I met Comdr. Sampson again, and he told me that he had been to a dinner and found himself seated next to an Austrian colonel who had recounted, as a great joke, how he had watched the **Ben-my-Chree** go into Castellorizo and make all fast, and how he had great fun sinking her. Imagine his consternation when Comdr. Sampson told him that he had been the captain of the *Ben* !'

The wreck of the **Ben-my-Chree** lay off Castellorizo until it was raised by the salvage steamer **Vallette** in 1920. It was then towed to Piraeus where, following examination, repairs were not considered possible. The story finally ended three years later when the hulk was towed to Venice in 1923 and demolished. □

AND FINALLY .....

Her Majesty's cruiser nosed into her Grand Harbour berth at Malta. It was a manoeuvre well carried out. In a very few minutes a chain cable led to the forward buoy; heavy wires to the stern buoy. Responsibility nearly over, the captain gave last instructions: '*Tell them aft to 'middle' the stern wires, secure them on the bitts, stow away spare gear, 'square off' the quarterdeck and finish.*'

The telephone rating, only newly recruited but very keen, digested his captain's order. Picking up his instrument, he passed the message after no more than a moment's hesitation: '*Wrap up, lads*', he said concisely, authoritatively !

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

(Founded in 1938)

THE BULLETIN

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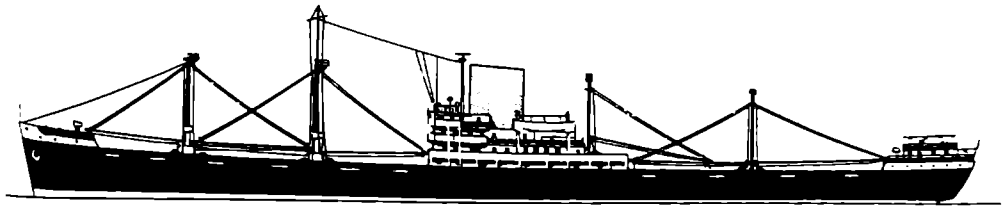
Editor : John Shepherd



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Front Cover: Elder Dempster's **Dunkwa** of 1960

The LNRS 70th Anniversary Publication - 2008
Articles for possible inclusion in the above commemorative book are invited from members. Articles should be about 3,000 words in length and should be sent to:
Antony J. Barratt, 24 Cross Green, Upton-by-Chester, CH2 1QR
e-mail: < tony.barratt@btopenworld.com >

CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

by John D. Rogers

To most sailors, Christmas at home is something that happens once or twice in a lifetime. Generally he is at sea or working cargo in some far-flung port. This is not to say that the occasion loses its character or inherent meaning - far from it. No matter what the temperature, the state of the sea, or the scenery, Christmas still manages to cast its mantle of brotherhood and goodwill over everyone. Each person 'feels' Christmas in a personal way, and this pervasive spirit seems to draw all closer together, to strengthen the already present bond between seafarers.

It manifests itself in small ways: the second mate relieves the third at midnight in a more wakeful and comradely fashion, lingering for some time behind the dodger as they exchange conventional yet sincere greetings. The lookout on the fo'c'sle, in lonely communion with the living sea and eternal galaxy of stars, feels their presence more than usual; each glittering and distant world forges a thread of contact with his far-off loved ones.

I remember one Christmas in mid-Indian Ocean. I was alone on the fo'c'sle head; all was silent but for the steady hiss of the bow wave below, while above a million pin-pricks of brilliance punctured the velvet. And yet I was not quite alone. Ahead, on the same route, laboured a slow moving 'Liberty' ship. We overtook her at midnight, barely a quarter of a mile separating us; her faithful masthead lights hovered over her in the blackness, and her green sidelight indicated the bridge wing.

I tugged the lanyard to ring eight bells in answer to the distant tinkle from the wheelhouse. Then, across the dark gulf to port, came eight clear strokes of another bell. The notes were wavering, shaken by the breeze, and yet somehow they were intensely and strangely comforting, forging a tenuous and almost physical link between the two vessels. Such was the disparity between our speeds that it did not take long for the other ship to become a diminishing glow, like a dying star falling to the horizon and dropping over the brink for ever. For just a brief instant, just when Christmas arrived, two passing worlds were in communion in the emptiness of an ocean.

Those four double strokes of the bell said all that needed to be said. An anonymous bulk, a shadow lit by a few small lights, became a friend, engaged in the same business as ourselves, undergoing the same trials, and feeling the same emotions. We were no longer alone - there, just across a few yards of water, were other men like ourselves, wishing each other the compliments of the season, thinking of families far away, be it in Greece, Spain or Brazil.

And yet it is not always possible to feel the magic of the occasion. My first Christmas away from home illustrates the point. We had arrived in Shanghai on 21st December, 1950 and to the people of the People's Republic, Christmas just did not exist. The only bright lights were the arc lamps on the quayside; the shops pathetically bare and apologetic; the churches converted into factories to help the 'Great Leap Forward'; the women dressed in the same dull blue padded uniform as the men. You will understand our eagerness to have sailed before 'The Day'. And, as usual, it looked as though we would be delayed.

Christmas Day began for me at 03.40 when I was called for the 4 to 8 cargo watch. Twenty minutes and many layers of clothing later, I breasted the icy blasts and stumbled out of the fug of my cabin on to the freezing deck, littered with grimy wires, heaps of hatchboards, ponderous steel beams and curling electric cables for the 'clusters'. Only those who have stood on the after docking bridge for two hours on a ship going up the Yangtze at 2.am know what sort of rapier-steel wind and chill exists there.

I clambered stiffly down No.3 hatch to, of all places, the fridge locker where we were loading frozen fish. Up above, the staccato clicks of the winches could be heard over the incessant and jarring Chinese opera that blared from loudspeakers on the quay. This 'encouragement' to work was punctuated spasmodically by tinny exhortations as, so I was told, such and such a gang was praised for its quota success and held up as a shining example. Every now and again, the eerie moan of locomotive whistles drifted from clusters of lights reflected on the dark, icy and menacingly swirling waters of the river.

It was just possible, we knew, that all work would be finished in time to sail by noon. At least the men were working with a will, though in that temperature there was no encouragement to linger.

Such reflections were cut short as I heard in the distance the sharp and jarring barks of a klaxon. Surely they're not going to knock off, I wondered? Nothing happened, the klaxon continued, so I climbed laboriously up the steel ladders to the deck. Dodging the curling and snaking 'runners', I went over to the ship's side where I was joined by the 4th Officer. Together we peered along the wharf, wondering where the sound was coming from. Thinking suddenly that it sounded vaguely familiar, I was jolted to hear my companion exclaim: *"It's the fire alarm! Ours!"* Engine room fire! Of course!

My brain was in a ferment instantly, sleep and lethargy vanished. *"I'll call the captain!"* I shouted. Leaping up the ladders to the boat deck, I raced along to his room and hammered breathlessly on the door. *"Engine room fire, sir!"* A muffled voice called out an acknowledgement. I hurtled off to my fire station, thankful for our weekly Friday afternoon practices. Hurling myself up steel ladders to the fiddley, I slammed shut the engine room vents. Below me I could see and hear signs of feverish activity with white hoses uncurling rapidly over the debris littering the rust-blotched steel decks.

Vague images swirled chaotically in my mind but vanished suddenly as a voice from below shouted *"All over!"* Rather bewildered as to how an engine room fire could be all over in so short a time, I pulled up the heavy ventilator levers and screwed tight the wing nuts. A growing band of grey light in the east was eating away the blackness, sapping the brilliance of the glittering lamps. Shivering as an icy blast clutched at me round the towering bulk of the funnel, I backed down the steel ladder to the boat deck. *"Only a flash-back in the donkey boiler!"* panted the 4th Officer. *"Back to the fish!"*

In the end, we did make it. Somehow, all the cargo was on board and the bewildering mountain of quintuplicate forms filled in and stamped. By 18.00 we were clear of the quay and nosing our way down the murky waters. A quick wash and brush-

up, a change into a clean starched shirt and best blues, and into the saloon for dinner. Admittedly our links with the People's Republic were still not completely broken - we were on stand-by, with two pilots on the bridge, the binoculars and telescope securely locked away, and the two armed guards eating alone and awkwardly in the saloon -but this did not prevent anyone from attacking the menu in true nautical style. To us 'middies' it was a point of honour not to leave a course untouched. Not all the overpowering ideological depression of Red China would stop us.

That Christmas Day was rounded off by breaking open our carefully hidden supply of beer and spirits; we were, officially, still bound by the commandment *'and shall not frequent taverns nor alehouses, nor play at unlawful games'*. Those up above however did not clamp down too strictly as long as we were not too flagrant in our quaffing.

My next Christmas, on the other hand, was in complete contrast - at least as regards the circumstance and the temperature. Instead of heavy blues and duffle coats, we were bronzed in our tropical whites. Instead of a stifling communistic atmosphere, we had the memories of a fun loving commercial Hong Kong and thoughts of the approaching Philippines.

We had sailed from Hong Kong on Christmas Eve and were due at Manila on Boxing Day, thus leaving 'The Day' unfettered by stand-bys and cargo watches. The sky was a horizon-stretching expanse of pure blue dominated by an unchallenged sun; the sea, a plain of rippled deep blue, furrowed by our single streak of creaming wake. Nothing to do except rest, recuperate from the rigours of doing justice to Hong Kong life, stuff ourselves with Christmas cheer, and lick our lips at the prospect of Manila, San Fernando, Masinloc and its glorious, palm-fringed beaches.

A late breakfast, light lunch, a few beers whilst stretched out on No.2 hatch, a cooling breeze blowing over the well-deck bulwarks, a couple of games of deck tennis, then an invigorating shower before changing into white uniform, starched and dazzling thanks to the dhobi women in Hong Kong. Then dinner! The usual culinary masterpieces were carried in from the galley and by courtesy of the captain the 4th officer was able to leave the bridge and eat with us.

Despite the heat, the holly and the mistletoe gleamed. After dinner, we middies had the privilege (and truly it was one!) of being invited into the passengers' lounge for cocktails with the hierarchy, which, on that voyage, included the captain's wife and a supernumerary from head office.

After a pleasant enough but necessarily formal hour, we retired to the half-deck: yarning, singing, corks and bottle-tops flying. We finally took to our bunks at about 1.am. □

The Chairman and Council of the Liverpool Nautical Research Society would like to wish all Members a very Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

ICE COLD IN LENINGRAD

by Assistant Purser Martin Mitchell and Captain F. (Sam) Weller

In late 1962 Elder Dempster's Superintendent Purser Roy Williamson found himself with a shortage of ships and a glut of Pursers and Assistant Pursers. Some of the latter, including myself, had sailed for some time 'in charge'. Suddenly we found ourselves assigned to vessels under a full Purser. Such was my fate when I was appointed to the **Dunkwa** with John Edge as 'boss man', and Captain 'Sam' Weller commanding. Apart from the personal disappointment of temporary demotion it was a most unusual voyage, never to be repeated as far as I am aware.

Whilst in Apapa our homeward loading orders arrived: it was to be a full cargo of cocoa from Takoradi to the unusual destination of Leningrad, topped off with logs on deck for Amsterdam. A number of Elder Dempster vessels had loaded cocoa for the Baltic region, but always during the summer months; in fact I had been to Riga in Latvia two summers previously. But Leningrad in winter !!! The Russian cold had beaten Napoleon and Hitler, but, as you will see, it didn't get the better of the gallant band on board the **Dunkwa**.

During discharge of the logs in Amsterdam it was cold and snowing and I observed the dock workers wearing earmuffs. Not the fluffy type worn by Victorian children on Christmas cards - these had an envelope of blue serge which you folded over your ears. I figured that if it was this cold in Holland, it was bound to be a lot colder in Russia. So I invested in a pair for a couple of guilders. Needless to say I took some stick when returning on board wearing my new accessories - but I was to have the last laugh.

Captain Weller, a veteran of wartime Arctic convoys, lectured us all on the dangers of extreme cold, frostbite etc. Chief Mate Don Howe was of the hard school: *"I never wear gloves in any weather."* As a result when going on ice-breaker standby in the Gulf of Finland, he left a chunk of his right palm on the steel handrail of the foc'sle ladder. Our doctor, Dick Unsworth, who had been around a bit, did wonders to fix him up as he did with others who suffered. Those who had sniggered at my earmuffs were now begging to borrow them as they went on standby to follow the ice-breaker up the Gulf. By now the ship was a mass of ice that had to be constantly chipped away and walkways laid and sanded along the decks.

The coldest temperature recorded whilst in Leningrad was 24 degrees Fahrenheait below zero. That's 56 degrees of frost. A simple experiment showed that a glass of water poured on the deck would freeze in three seconds. Someone, who shall remain nameless, carried out, at the risk of unimaginable frostbite, the ultimate experiment into the scuppers: it froze solid within ten seconds! Also, remember that we had been in Takoradi two weeks earlier where it had been around 90°F. Nobody had cold weather gear beyond that normally worn in an English winter.

And now to a report on the Russian Odyssey, word for word, as written by Captain Weller and typed out by myself. Yes, I kept a copy!

*Martin Mitchell, Asst. Purser, mv **Dunkwa***

ELDER DEMPSTER LINES LIMITED

m.v. "DUNKWA"
16th January, 1963

The Management,
Elder Dempster Lines Ltd.,
LIVERPOOL

Gentlemen,

I submit below, for your guidance, my report on the vessel's voyage to the port of Leningrad.

The passage from Kiel to the Gulf of Finland was uneventful, no ice encountered and all conditions favourable. First ice contacts were light off Seskar, but around 29°20'E we ran into thick pack ice. The vessel steered towards the waiting icebreaker but penetrated only four hundred yards before coming to a complete halt. We then lay for about an hour before the icebreaker got underway and began breaking towards us.

Pack ice extended in a belt one to two miles broad and gave us considerable trouble, but once we were through better progress was made in an area of field ice. Five miles further on we again encountered pack ice and were forced to come to a stop. The breaker once more cleared around us and from that point on broke a channel leading up to Knalstad. From this island we proceeded alone making good progress until off our berth. Here we encountered real trouble, taking six hours to get alongside. There was a build up of large pieces of ice between the ship's side and the quay. Small harbour ice-breakers continually ran up and down this area in an endeavour to get the ship close to the wall. The total time taken from ice edge to berth was fourteen hours.

Fortunately the temperature did not fall below +10°F during this period, but it was necessary to keep our West African deck crew under cover whenever possible. These boys behaved extremely well although they suffered considerably from the cold and also from lack of experience in these extreme conditions. Four days later they were working in conditions of -8°F and managing to remain cheerful.

Whilst off the berth the pilot requested the dropping of the port anchor. What particular benefit we would gain from this I could not see. However we complied with the request and so far as I can ascertain, the inboard Gypsy keep fractured just as soon as the weight came on the cable. The temperature at this time was about zero.

With the exception of two guards whose slow scrutiny of passes we found irksome, the port officials were courteous and helpful. No officious nonsense, room to room customs or military searches of the ship and even more pleasing, no restrictions of movement around the city were imposed on any members of the crew.

The sub-zero conditions did not lend themselves to rapid work but the cargo was discharged quite smoothly and to my surprise the cocoa was in excellent condition. The benefits of mechanical ventilation have really been proved on this voyage. A temperature of 56°F on 30th December and minus 15°F on 2nd January gave a range

which could have set up extremely serious sweat conditions. We had scarcely a mark on any bag in any section of the ship.

Keeping essential services aboard the ship ice free has proved to be extremely difficult, but by careful checking of pipes etc., we managed to keep things moving, but when -10°F finally closed down our sanitary lines we were able to take such steps as to prevent the pipes fracturing.

At 15.00hrs on 12th January the situation was:

- All sanitary tanks frozen and pipes to these tanks disjointed to prevent fracture. The Pilot's, 2nd Engineer's, Chief Steward's and Chief Officer's spoil pipes were frozen in No.3 'tween deck. Endeavouring to free.
- Fire lines both fore and aft drained and still available for fire fighting, but completely closed down.
- Tarpaulins were solid and unworkable but efforts to thaw them out were commenced.

On the 11th January temporary repairs to the windlass had been effected and it was decided to endeavour to heave home the port anchor with the aid of Nos 1 and 2 winches. Unfortunately a temporary stop around the cable carried away and the end of the runner fell down No.1 hatch and inflicted a severe bruise on one of the worker's arms. I do not think that the injury in itself is serious, but in sub-zero temperatures a bruise becomes a congealed area of flesh in a matter of minutes. Russian dock regulations require a Banker's Guarantee to cover such accidents and so far as I can gather, this is intended for the worker's wages during his period off work. The first estimate was 300 roubles, but this was later reduced to 100 roubles. Apparently there were no broken bones.

Temperatures remained below zero and No.1 fresh water tank froze up; No.8 also froze but apparently this was only at the valve in the tunnel. We were later able to free this. It was impossible to sound the water tanks but this caused no real concern as we had left a minimum of 6 inches in every tank for such emergencies.

On the morning of the 13th the 4-inch waste pipes from the sailors' and stewards' toilets in No.5 hold froze up, together with the spoil pipes for all scuppers and wash basins aft. Fortunately the firemen's toilets remained free.

We completed cargo on the 12th January and expected to sail at 20.00hrs. Unfortunately the ice conditions were very severe and the breakers were many hours behind their estimates. The **Kapitan Voronin** got through late p.m. with a convoy of two ships but required repairs and bunkers. She then broke us out as far as the roads and we then stayed in ice for about 24 hours.

To add to our tale of pipe woes, the spoil pipes of the hospital wash basin and scuppers froze solid during our stay at the roads. Also the P.O.'s wash basin and scuppers and galley scuppers froze during that day. All deckhands, mates, electrician and myself turned out on the pipes. The sewerage line in No.5 hold was completely stripped and cleared, followed by the midship spoil pipes. Fortunately only one short section of the latter was split and the former was found intact.

At the time of writing, 18.00hrs on 16th January with a temperature of 26°F, we are clearing the last of the spoil pipes in No.5, but have been unable to free deck service and sanitary lines which appear to be frozen at every valve and in several of the

bends. Tomorrow should bring some success on these lines if the temperature does not drop to the zero level again.

From this letter you will gather that although these 'D' ships' pipelines are well protected and little exposed, at 10° below zero anything can happen and invariably does.

The ice conditions were severe and the vessel took very bad punishment. The Chief Engineer reports that the seawater connections require additional stiffening on the ship's side plates as during the passage outwards they caused him great concern.

The ice-breaker which left us at about 29°30'East reported only light ice out to Seskar. In fact field ice and new ice extended well beyond this island, and severe ice conditions were encountered from 29°25' East and westwards. Twice the ship completely stopped and on one occasion we were forced to go astern and, when free, run into the ice to break through again. This is a hazardous manoeuvre in a light ship.

It was in the field ice that the ship took most punishment, but behind the ice-breaker we felt very few shocks and unless ice pressure has done some harm amidships when we jammed in the channel, all plate damage was done forcing our way through field ice.

My own conclusions:

- Leningrad in January is definitely hard on men who lack experience and, even more importantly, lack proper clothing. Lined gloves, boots and headgear are absolutely essential for deck personnel.
- Crew should be warned that it is practically impossible to protect piping and that services will freeze up. However, it is possible to carry on without spoil pipes or sanitary lines working. In the 'D' class, slight weakness develops where framing ceases in the extreme bows of the ship. (Our indentations are situated almost entirely at these points.)
- Some slight additional stiffening is required around engine room sea connections. Ice set up severe panting in the ship's side plates. At least three large blow lamps should be available to enable thawing of pipelines in reasonably quick time. (A shortage of these severely hampered our work.)
- I am convinced that the 'K' or 'P' class could not have navigated in the ice fields existing in the Gulf of Leningrad. We just made it thanks to our high engine power. (This is in ice fields outside the range worked by the breakers.)

A correct manifested total of 80,000 bags of cocoa was landed. No sweat damage observed and none reported. This was due, I am sure, to the mechanical ventilation. The correct out-turn at this port is my first experience of complete agreement.

During our stay at Leningrad, three members of the crew sustained frostbite but were only minor cases.

Trusting you will find my report on Leningrad conditions in January useful to pass on to future vessels bound there at this time of year.

I remain, Your Obedient Servant, F. Weller, MASTER. □

This article originally appeared in 'The Elders of Elders', No.32, Autumn 2004 and is reproduced by kind permission of the Editor and Mr J.E. Cowden.

THE CHICKEN ROCK LIGHTHOUSE

by Christopher Nicholson

Keen ornithologists will doubtless be aware of the sea bird which breeds along the western shores of the UK known as the storm petrel. A close relative of the rather more well known fulmar and shearwater, it is a black, swallow-like bird with a patch of white in front of its tail. They nest in burrows or rock clefts and their diet is normally small surface animals but they are also known to follow, and alight upon, ships to pick up scraps. The relevance of this piece of natural history in *'The Bulletin'* may not be immediately obvious, but when one learns that the other common name for the storm petrel is 'Mother Carey's Chicken', then its inclusion in this article will perhaps be a little clearer. Along its extensive breeding area a favourite perch for this bird is a couple of low, rocky crags which break surface a mile to the south of the Calf of Man - a small island off the southern tip of the Isle of Man. So popular is this spot with the storm petrel that the crags became known as the Chicken Rock.

At low water over 8,000 square feet of bare rock appear as two rugged islets connected by a low isthmus, all of which cover to a depth of 5 to 6 feet at high tide. A reef which disappears regularly with every tide is menace enough, but there are two further evils which beset this malevolent outlier. Firstly, it rises from comparatively deep water into the middle of a rapid tidal race which sweeps around this southern extremity of the Isle of Man and secondly, the vicinity is notorious for the thick, blanketing sea fogs which descend with alarming frequency to blot the reassuring landforms from view.

The frequency with which ships bound to or from Liverpool ended their days on the Chicken Rock drew the attention of the Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses (whose jurisdiction had been extended in 1815 to cover the Isle of Man). The site quickly became an obvious candidate for some kind of warning apparatus.

Shortly after the Commissioners had inherited the responsibility for Manx lighthouses, an experienced shipmaster was stationed on the Calf of Man to make detailed observations of the weather. As a result of this exercise it was decided to erect two stone lighthouses on the Calf which would warn, not only of the island, but also of Chicken Rock by a rather ingenious system. The two towers were built by Robert Stevenson 560 feet apart and in a direct line with Chicken Rock. One tower was 55 feet high and the other 70 feet high, so that when the two lights were directly one above the other, as seen from the sea, then the observing vessel was in a direct line with the rock. It was a novel attempt to mark the reef but its shortcomings were obvious - it was impossible to give an accurate position for the rock; only the bearing on which it lay could be identified and not its exact position. In heavy seas or poor visibility this could be fatal. Nevertheless, any clue to the whereabouts of Chicken Rock was a vast improvement, and the two towers came into service in February 1818.

Sea mists continued to plague the area, and under such conditions the protection afforded was completely inadequate. This led to a resolution being passed by the Mercantile Marine Service Association of Liverpool and forwarded to the Board of Trade on 13th November 1866. It suggested that: 'The night light on the Calf

of Man, now so often enveloped in fogs and thus rendered useless, to be removed to the Chicken Rock which is one mile and a half out, and is a rock of considerable size and great danger.'

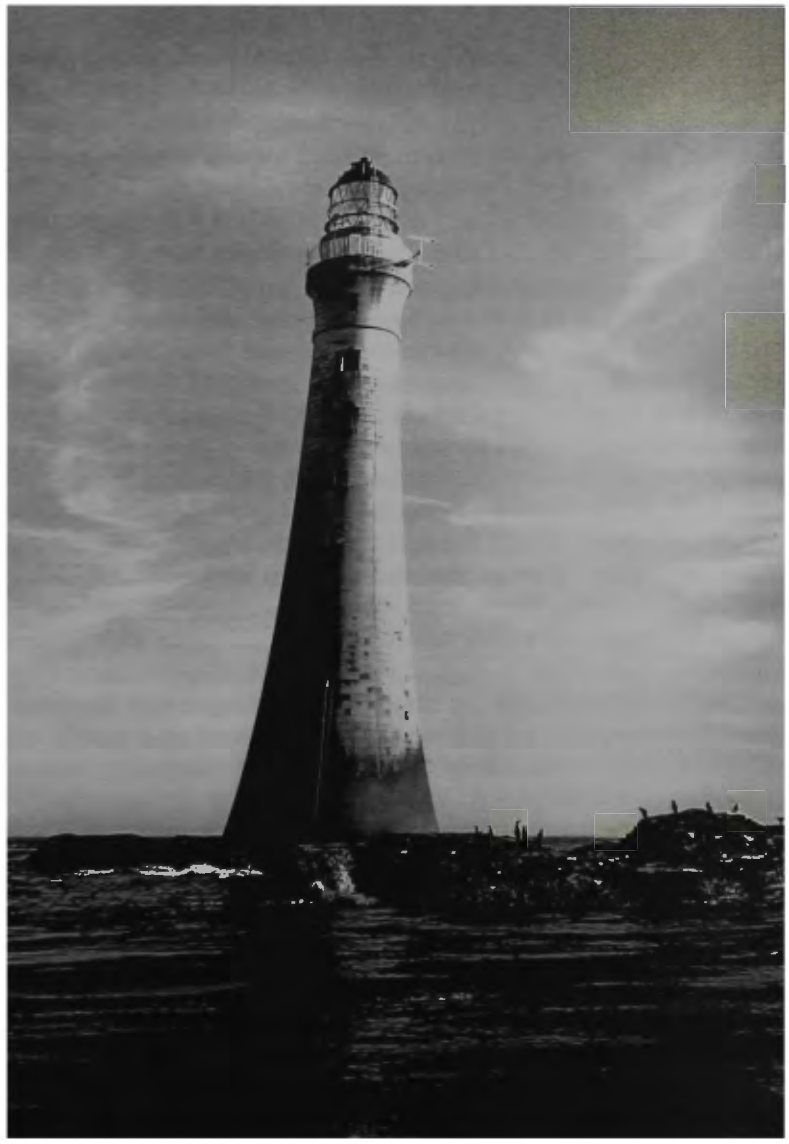
This report was presented to both David and Thomas Stevenson, Engineers to the Commissioners, and also to Trinity House. Both parties were in full agreement with the proposal, Trinity House pointing out in a letter to the Board of Trade on 21st November 1867 that " ... *the Calf of Man lights were not to be depended upon from the well known prevalence of fog on the Calf even when other high lands are clear* .. " On 6th April in the following year sanction to proceed with the erection of a lighthouse on Chicken Rock was granted by the Board of Trade. David and Thomas Stevenson prepared plans for an appropriate tower, but at this point it should be remembered that they were already occupied with building the tower at Dubh Artach, 160 miles to the north, which was only half completed. It was a unique situation, for never before had any lighthouse engineer been involved with building two rock towers at the same time while commuting between the two to maintain and observe progress.

As the Chicken Rock site was so close to the Manx coast, a base was established at Port St Mary, a small fishing village 4½ miles from the Rock, where over one hundred masons, blacksmiths and labourers busied themselves with the many details of the project. A tramway was laid between the workyard and pier for the speedy movement of stone. Granite was again the choice of the engineers, quarried at Dalbeattie in Dumfriesshire. It was brought to Port St Mary by sea, cut and shaped from templates, and numbered in the yard, before being loaded into two lighters towed behind the ex Clyde steam tug **Terrible** for the short journey to the reef.

As can be imagined, a rock which is immersed twice daily gives precious little time to get an appreciable amount of work completed, particularly if heavy seas cause a premature abandonment of the site. With a working season that extended only from April to September, David and Thomas Stevenson worked doggedly to complete the foundations of their tower during the first summer. Thirty-five men toiled and sweated on Chicken Rock for periods which might last only for a couple of hours at a time. Every precious minute was seized in an attempt to complete this crucial work before the winter's gales made all work impossible. It was dangerous, unnerving work; swinging heavy tools and trying to remain upright on a seaweed covered rock, while at the same time watching for the largest breakers that crept in to wash over the rock. Great dexterity and co-ordination were required. Each man was issued with a cork life jacket which it was compulsory to wear. Happily, throughout the whole five seasons of the project, no lives were lost. Thanks to the enthusiasm instilled in the men by David and Thomas, the circular pit of the foundations was completed before work stopped for the winter of 1869.

Shaping and drilling of the blocks continued throughout the winter when the workyard at Port St Mary echoed to the sound of metal striking metal and crumbling stone. During 1870 nine complete courses of the solid base were laid, using just about every possible method yet devised for securing the blocks to one another. A contemporary report speaks of " .... *dovetailing, joggles, clamps, bolts, ribbon-band joints, and the most tenacious cement*" being used.

A further 14 courses of masonry were completed in 1871, thus completing



The Chicken Rock Lighthouse photographed by Graeme Cubbin in June, 2005.

the solid trunk of masonry, which rose 32 feet 8 inches out of the Chicken Rock and incorporated 1,073 blocks. Above this mark, eight rooms were enclosed by walls making the progress of construction more rapid. Forty-two courses were added during 1872 - a good omen for the following season.

It was 6th June 1873 when the very last stone was fitted into position on the parapet of the tower, completing a further memorial to the expertise of the Stevenson brothers. Dubh Artach had been brought into service less than a year previously and now a second column of masonry, a mirror image of the Scottish tower, was almost ready to be lit. The interior fittings and furnishings took most of 1874, together with the installation of the lantern which was fitted with the best plate glass, " ... *thick enough to resist the heedless wing of any seabird attracted by the illuminated pane.*" Fresnel lighting apparatus was installed and two giant fog bells were suspended from the gallery to complete the warning apparatus. The total cost was calculated at £64,559.

Towards the end of 1874 the Chicken Rock lighthouse was almost complete. However there had recently been much correspondence between the Stevenson brothers and Trinity House as to the exact character the light would exhibit. David and Thomas were distinctly unhappy about incorporating a red sector (to mark the course around Langness Point), pointing out that it would be of little use in hazy conditions. Trinity House was not to be overruled so easily and the Stevensons complied under protest. The red sector proved to be worthless and an embarrassed Trinity House conceded defeat. The Chicken Rock lighthouse came into service on 1st January 1875 and its light had a range of 18 miles with one flash every thirty seconds. The lights from the two towers on the Calf of Man were extinguished at the same time.

The light from the Chicken Rock tower continued to radiate across the turbulent waters around the Isle of Man for the next 85 years without undue incident.

It was almost Christmas 1960 and the weather around the Isle of Man was typical for the time of year producing a crisp, cold winter's day with reasonably clear visibility and a rough sea. At about 11.am on 23rd December the coastguard on Spanish Head, a promontory overlooking the Calf of Man and Chicken Rock, viewed with alarm a pall of smoke rising from the lighthouse. Immediately, the lifeboat station at Port St Mary was contacted and within half an hour Coxswain Gawne and his crew were ploughing their way through the choppy seas on board the **Colby Cubbin No. 2** to investigate the disturbing report. When the lifeboat reached the reef it was plain that there was indeed cause for alarm. Thick black smoke was issuing from the windows of the lighthouse and billowing upwards while the glass of the lantern was blackened. More horrifying was the sight of the three keepers standing on the reef at the base of the tower underneath a rope dangling from the lantern gallery. They were dressed as if on duty within the warm, dry confines of the lighthouse and not in the waterproofs which were so obviously needed in their present predicament.

Coxswain Gawne was quick to sum up the desperate situation. The tide was rising rapidly and soon the rock on which the three keepers stood would be completely submerged. Not only this, but the men, one of whom was clearly in greater distress than the other two, were being subjected to a biting wind which quickly chilled the body to its marrow while their clothing was saturated by the continual assault of waves

and spray. As the tide rose the waves would soon be sweeping across the rock to which the three men were desperately clinging with the risk that all would be swept away by the swift currents. Adding even further to their peril, above them the interior of the lighthouse was a raging inferno. One room contained the large fuel tanks which threatened to explode without warning as a result of exposure to intense heat.

The coxswain had to act with all swiftness if the three men were not to perish under his gaze. He could not approach the reef close enough to enable the men to jump aboard as the rising tide and jagged rocks made such an act impossible. One hundred yards was the closest he could approach. Through a loudhailer he told the men to tie a length of rope around a piece of wood and to fling this into the current between the rock and the lifeboat, while holding the other end. The wood was immediately swept away from the reef trailing the rope behind it. He then fired a line from the lifeboat which landed across the rope trailing from the reef. By pulling in their rope with the wood attached, the keepers were able to grasp the line from the lifeboat to which a pulley block was attached. This was fastened to the rungs of the iron ladder that led from the reef to the lighthouse door, and a continuous rope passed through it. The coxswain was going to attempt a rescue by breeches buoy.

The breeches buoy was sent across and the keeper who was suffering the most was helped into the seat by his companions. On the short journey to the lifeboat a huge wave caught the suspended man, toppling him from his seat into the icy waters. Fortunately the lifeboat crew was able to pluck him from the sea and haul him aboard. He was taken below to be nearer the warmth of the engines and wrapped in blankets. It was obvious to all concerned that medical attention was urgently required for this man. He was suffering from shock, hypothermia and terrible burns to his hands sustained while sliding down over 100 feet of rope from the lantern gallery.

Coxswain Gawne now made a difficult decision. In view of the keeper's serious condition, and that further rescue by breeches buoy now seemed impossible, he decided to land the injured keeper. He told the two remaining keepers of his intentions over the loudhailer, and that he was requesting the Port Erin lifeboat to stand off the lighthouse in his place. This done he manoeuvred out of the tricky currents around the rock and made all speed for Port St Mary. The two stranded keepers were left to ponder their fate. The rising tide was creeping perilously close to their feet, curtains of spray rained down on them soaking every last stitch of clothing and the lighthouse was threatening to explode above their heads. With the Port St Mary lifeboat rapidly disappearing into the distance, these men must have indeed wondered if they would spend Christmas 1960 with their families.

However, unbeknown to the two keepers, a great deal was being done to rescue them. The Port Erin lifeboat was on its way and an Air-Sea Rescue helicopter had arrived from RAF Valley on Anglesey and was circling the smoking lighthouse. It was obvious to the two keepers that rescue by this method was impossible as the helicopter could not approach sufficiently close for the men to be winched aboard for fear of the rotor blades touching the tower. Only a rescue from the lantern gallery was feasible by this method but the men could clearly not be expected to climb back up the rope. This being the situation, the helicopter returned to base and left the keepers alone once more.

It was not long before the Port Erin lifeboat **Matthew Simpson** arrived to stand off the reef. By three o'clock in the afternoon the Port St Mary boat had landed its casualty and was returning to Chicken Rock. The two boats stood by in the hope of attempting a rescue. As the daylight began to fade, the seas began to moderate and the tide turned. If a rescue was to be attempted now was the time as the fast approaching darkness would prevent any further action until the morning. Darkness was no time to be manoeuvring a small craft around the jagged rocks of Chicken Rock.

The calmer sea and receding tide made an impossible situation slightly easier. Coxswain Gawne edged his craft, inch by inch, towards the desperate men. The rocks that were previously covered were slowly appearing so that he could gingerly pick his way through them. Eventually he was close enough for the two exhausted keepers to leap aboard and so end an eight-hour ordeal. They were burnt, shocked and weak from their experience but they were alive.

Later that day the Admiralty issued an exceptional notice to shipping. It read: *'the Chicken Rock light has been extinguished and the fog warning is not, repeat not, operating'*. When the three keepers were sufficiently recovered to tell of the day's events it was discovered that at about half past ten on the morning of 23rd December the Chicken Rock lighthouse was rocked by an explosion in one of the lower rooms. This started a fire which quickly spread, fuelled by the interior wooden fittings, and drove the keepers upwards on to the lantern gallery with no time to protect themselves against the elements. The fire continued to rage ever upwards through the tower, but for the men on the gallery there was no further upward retreat from the advancing flames. If they were to survive there was only one course of action. They made use of a rope which was tied to the balcony railings thus effecting a slow, painful but only temporary escape. Having evaded the flames they were now at the mercy of wind and wave.

Two days later the Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses fixed a flashing buoy some distance off the reef from their relief vessel **Hesperus** which had steamed from Oban. By 29th December a further improvement was made by installing an unwatched light in the tower of the old lighthouse on the Calf of Man while they considered what to do about their unserviceable lighthouse. The winter weather prevented a detailed examination from being made until several weeks later. Only after a complete survey could any permanent repair scheme be considered. Here it will be remembered that a similar situation occurred at Skerryvore lighthouse when it was damaged by fire in 1955. The success of this repair, using gunite, a type of sprayed concrete, led the Northern Lighthouse Board to adopt a similar method at Chicken Rock, although it was realised that the repair to Chicken Rock would present greater difficulties for several reasons.

Firstly, the extent of the damage was far greater than at Skerryvore. Secondly, unlike Skerryvore, there was no room outside the lighthouse on which the extensive and bulky equipment required for the process could be sited. The reef at Chicken Rock is completely covered at high tide so every piece of machinery would have to be of such a size that it could fit through the lighthouse door to be stored inside. This led to pieces of equipment being specially designed for the purpose. Lastly, to overcome the problems of landing men, materials and food etc, it was

decided to construct a 100 sq.ft. aluminium helicopter landing platform on the reef, a decision prompted by the uncertainty and difficulties of landing on Chicken Rock from a boat. The vagaries of the weather, difficult approach and swift currents made landing men a hazardous undertaking but with heavy equipment such difficulties would be magnified.

The amount of detailed pre-planning was enormous. The same contractors who repaired Skerryvore were engaged - a Liverpool firm, Whitley, Moran & Co. Ltd, experts in the use of gunite. A Bell 47 helicopter was chartered and fitted with floats as required by the Ministry of Civil Aviation, and a local fishing boat was also engaged as back-up vessel.

It was May 1962 before attempts were made to land keepers on the lighthouse to clear the interior debris, establish a radio telephone link with the base at Port St Mary, and erect the helicopter landing platform. This took two weeks and the contractors then took over, with one keeper remaining as cook and radio operator. Internal repairs were tackled first. It was found that some of the cracks in the stonework were up to 9 inches deep. The damaged granite was cut out by pneumatic chisels and replaced by gunite, sprayed from a compressed air gun. Stainless steel reinforcement was used in some areas but not where the danger of corrosion was likely. Once the internal rooms were completed, two steeplejacks inspected the exterior walls from a cradle suspended from the lantern gallery. Any damaged joints were repointed under pressure although this part of the work was halted several times by high winds making work on the cradle impossible.

The use of a helicopter proved invaluable. Three tons of plant and equipment, 25 tons of sand and cement, as well as regular supplies of food and drinking water all arrived promptly. Landings were made in the two hours either side of low water unless high winds or spray washing over the landing platform made it dangerous to do so. Even so, there were very few days when flying was impossible and the helicopter was able to keep the men in the lighthouse continually supplied with all their requirements. Supervising engineers from the Lighthouse Board were able to visit regularly and on several occasions urgently required spare parts from Liverpool were able to reach the lighthouse within 24 hours of being requested. All this was in great contrast to the work on Skerryvore where prolonged delays in getting materials and food were experienced because of all transport being by boat. The helicopter was in fact able to supply Chicken Rock at a faster rate than the men could hoist the goods into the tower. Only 12 minutes were required for a round trip from the Port St Mary base to the Chicken Rock, including unloading time.

It was estimated that six weeks would be required to complete the work. It took exactly that time. On 10th September 1962 a notice was issued to mariners stating that on or about 20th September a permanent unwatched light would be established at Chicken Rock, 125 feet above Mean High Water Springs, and that also a temporary unwatched electric foghorn would be operative from the same date. The Chicken Rock Lighthouse would never again have keepers on a regular basis. □

A new lighthouse was constructed on the Calf of Man in 1968, some 300 yards to the north-west of the original 1818 towers. The new light was automated in 1995. Today the Calf of Man light exhibits one flash every 15 seconds, visible for 28 miles, and the Chicken Rock shows one flash every five seconds, visible for 13 miles. j.s.

OBITUARY

ELIZABETH OLIVE WILLIAMSON

1922 - 2005

Olive was a woman of many parts, remarkable for her warm-heartedness and generosity, as many members of the Society can testify. A graduate in Engineering of the University of Liverpool (where she met her husband to be, Sandy), she worked in the aircraft industry in the Second World War, and subsequently lectured at what are now John Moores and Hope Universities. Olive had many talents, a wide-ranging knowledge and a down to earth, commonsensical approach to life, enlivened by a sense of humour.

Of particular significance in the affairs of the Society was Olive's very active involvement in research, and the encouragement she gave to others who were similarly engaged. Her painstaking work on the early Liverpool ship registers will provide a considerable resource for researchers - she continued tracing and recording material up to the last week of her life.

A woman of great integrity whose approach to others was always friendly and direct, Olive will be mourned not only by her family but by all who came in contact with her. Here indeed was Renaissance woman !

a.h.m.

THE MONDAY FACILITY

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

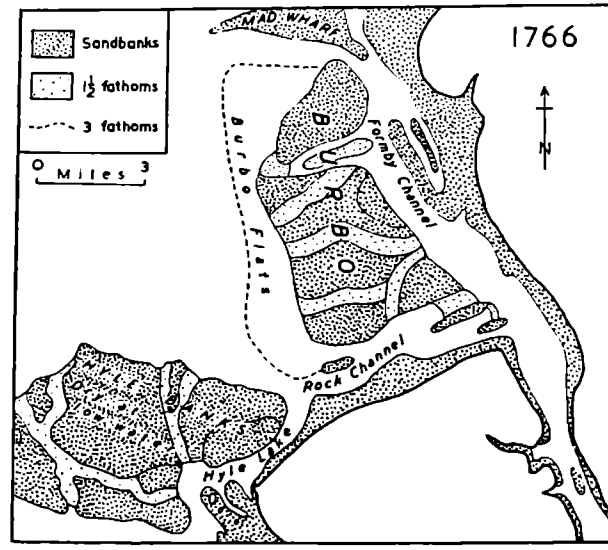
December, 2005 : 5th, 12th and 19th
No access in January, 2006
February, 2006 : 6th, 13th, 20th and 27th
March,2006 : 6th, 13th, 20th and 27th

THE PROBLEM OF THE MERSEY BAR

by the Editor

"Liverpoole," wrote Daniel Defoe in about 1724, *"is one of the wonders of Britain"*, and he went on *"What it may grow in time, I know not."*

There never was a time, it may be assumed, when the outer estuary of the River Mersey was not a source of danger to shipping. Charts of this area have been completed at intervals since 1689. While they indicate a general arrangement of bank and channel which has remained essentially the same since that date, the successive surveys also show great numbers of minor variations in these features. Many changes in channel, shoal and littoral must have taken place before any permanent record of them was made. In the Middle Ages, for example, Meols and Formby, which up to the 1920s showed the remains of submerged forests on their foreshores, extended much further out to sea.

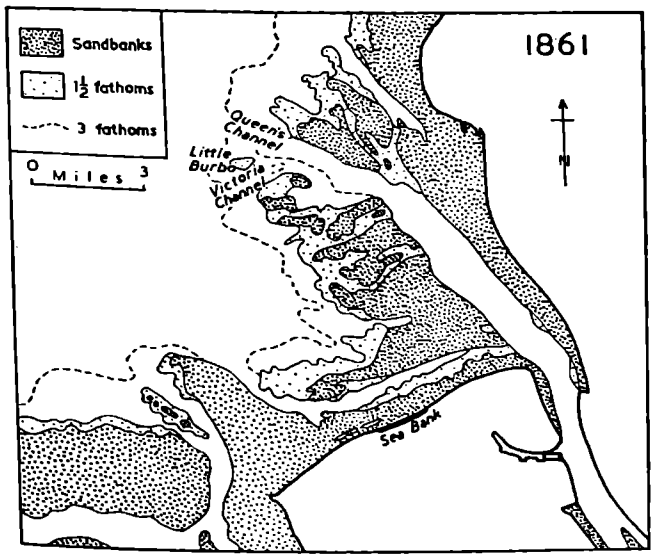


THE OUTER ESTUARY, 1766—a portion of Williamson's Chart. The depth of 1½ fathoms at low water ordinary springs is approximate. By 1766 the Hoyle Lake Anchorage, used since Roman times, had begun to silt up in consequence of reclamation schemes begun in the Dee estuary earlier in the century. The main way into the Port of Liverpool was via Rock Channel. (Re-drawn by permission of the Committee of the Athenaeum, Liverpool, the owners of the only known copy of the chart.)

Hoylake, not as a settlement but as a sheltered roadstead, is first mentioned under the name 'Heye Pol' (High Pool) in the reign of King John. The Hoyle Lake Anchorage, of which no trace now remains, lay between Hilbre Island and Meols. It was protected from north-west winds by Hoyle Bank, and was large and deep enough to accommodate the fleet of William III which set out for Ireland in 1690. Originally

the main way into Liverpool was via this roadstead and the Rock Channel. *'Keep close along Hyle Sand'*, instructed Captain Grenville Collins in 1693, *'and so into High Lake and anchor. Here the great ships that belong to Liverpool put out one part of their lading till the ships are light enough to sail to Liverpool.'*

Much of the northern sea front of the Wirral Peninsula has been washed away at different times. In 1754, in correspondence between the Bishop of Chester and the Mayor of Liverpool, fears were expressed that the sea might burst into the Leasowe Marshes, whose only protection was a line of low dunes. In the 1820s a series of rapid encroachments on the Wirral coast gave ground for apprehension that an unusually heavy storm might inundate the flats of northern Wirral and create a new but unsatisfactory way into the port of Liverpool via Leasowe and Wallasey Pool, and so promote the silting of the Rock Channel by dividing or diverting its waters. To deal with this menace, the Wallasey Embankment Act, passed in 1829, provided powers to construct an embankment on the threatened part of the coast. Thus the Wallasey Embankment, built primarily to preserve the sea rather than the land, is intimately related to the past conservancy of the port, including the present Birkenhead docks system.



THE OUTER ESTUARY, 1861—a portion of Murray Park's revision of an earlier survey by Denham. The depths are those of low water *ordinary* spring tides. Hoyle Lake had by this time disappeared and the Rock Channel had narrowed, but new entrances had opened up further north. (Re-drawn by permission of the Committee of the Athenaeum, Liverpool.)

The history of the outer estuary during the first part of the 19th century is largely a confused record of shifting sandbanks, wayward channels, uncharted dangers, and of grave anxiety about them. In the 1830s, Lieutenant (later Admiral) H.M. Denham was commissioned to make a survey of the estuaries of the Mersey and the Dee. One important result of this survey was the surprising discovery, or perhaps re-

discovery, in 1833, of a new channel - the Victoria Channel - which lay south of the present Queens Channel and which for 20 years or so served as the main entrance to the port. Denham was concerned about the growth of a sandbar at the seaward end of the Victoria Channel, and in 1838 began the experiment of harrowing the sand and removing it by means of bucket dredgers. The effect of these operations on the bar was so slight that a single storm was more than enough to nullify the effects of months of dredging, and as a result, after some years of trial, the experiment was abandoned. This was the only means of mechanical dredging used in the estuary up to 1890.

The increasing size of the passenger liners, the rivalry between the liner companies and the ever more insistent demand for speed led Mr Ismay and others to urge more and more vigorously for the deepening of the Bar. The Mersey Docks and Harbour Board (MD&HB) hesitated on this and considered two essential factors. The first was the effect on Nature on tampering with an essential feature, the Bar which forms where the ebb meets the currents of the Irish Sea. The Admiralty Sailing Directions for 1891state that the approach to the Queens Channel is 'barred' by a narrow ridge connecting the Little Burbo Bank and the Zebra Flats, over which there is a depth of 11 to 12 feet at low water of spring tides.

The second hesitation of the MD&HB was on the ground of costs. It was under ceaseless pressure from traders for a reduction of charges. However, in 1890, a very important decision was taken. This was to fit up two hopper barges with sand pump dredging equipment to work on the Bar. These barges were of 500 tons capacity and self-propelled. The first one commenced work on 15th September 1890 and the second in April 1891. In July 1891 the engineer-in-chief reported that the quantity of sand removed up to 1st July as being 350,000 tons.

The original estimate was that the removal of 800,000 tons of material would, provided that there was no re-deposit, effect a deepening of 6 feet 6 inches below the shallowest depth then found, which was 11 feet below low water spring tides, for a length of channel of 3,000 feet with a width of 1,000 feet.

So satisfactory were the results that the MD&HB decided to build a sand pump dredger of 3,000 tons capacity. Mr A.G. Lyster pointed out to the Board that there would be no end to the costs of maintaining a deep water approach given the particular physical situation of Liverpool.

By 1893, when the dredger **Brancker** was commissioned, over 2,400,000 tons of material had been dredged. The **Brancker** was followed by the **G. B. Crow** of the same tonnage in 1895.The **Coronation** of 3,500 tons capacity appeared in 1906, followed by the **Leviathan** of 10,000 tons capacity in 1909. The last named remained in service until 1961.

The dredging of the Bar gave great satisfaction to the shipping community. Coupled with it were extensive improvements including dredging at the Princes Landing Stage, and the scheme for the provision of Riverside Station (opened in 1895). Liverpool was being placed in a strong position to maintain its grip on the passenger liner traffic.

It was realised that the scour of a deepened main shipping channel would also help to remove the bar and in 1894 dredging began in the Queens Channel followed in 1896 in the Crosby Channel. By 1900 the problem of the Mersey Bar had been almost

solved. By 1906 many millions of tons of materials had been dredged away and a fairway with a least depth of 28 feet at low water of ordinary spring tides existed from the Irish Sea all the way to the Landing Stage.

However, there was a complication: the dredging of the main shipping channel was followed by an increased rate of flow in it. As the ebb from the Crosby Channel swung seawards around Askew's Spit into the Queens Channel it impinged with increased force upon the concavity on the south side of Taylor's Bank. It thus quickened the rate of erosion at this point; it also made it highly probable that here the river would cut Taylor's Bank in two and find a more direct northerly way out to sea. Should that happen, the dredged fairway of the Queen's Channel, upon which so much time and money had been expended, would have to be abandoned; and this without any compensating certainty that the new channel would be anything like as useful as the old.

To meet this new threat there was evolved in 1908 a bold and imaginative counter-measure, no less than the building of a strengthening wall along the southern side of Taylor's Bank. The wall would be 2½ miles long and made up of small lumps of hard stone, placed in such a way as to 'revet' or clothe its slope, and so protect the underlying sand from erosion. As the 'revetment' took shape, Askew's Spit, growing in the slack water at the north-east corner of the Great Burbo Bank, had to be continuously dredged.

The threatened break through of Taylor's Bank did not take place. The success of the revetment and the close study of estuarine models suggested another possibility. If a training wall could revet Taylor's Bank, then training walls of similar material could be created to line the main navigable channel. By confining the scour of the river in this way its effectiveness could be increased and the heavy cost of dredging thus reduced.

It was increasingly felt, by Liverpool pilots and others, that the deposit of spoil by the sand pump dredgers in the gut across the Burbo Bank was aggravating the build up of Askew's Spit. It seemed an obvious reason for this growing menace. On 3rd November 1905 Mr A.G. Lyster reported that, in his judgement, *'The growth of Askew's Spit has nothing whatever to do with the deposit of sand by the various suction dredgers. It is in fact the normal and simple phenomenon which appears in and is inseparable from all cases of bends in rivers; the concave side being invariably deep, and the opposite or convex side being shallow.'*

Mr Lyster continued: *'Successive surveys of the Bar and the sea channels of the Mersey have shown that in the last few years the extent of the improvement in depth did not correspond with the increased amount of the dredging done, and in fact that in quite recent periods very little if any progress has been made and this in spite of very large and costly additions to the dredging plant ..... It has become obvious that the limits of improvement by dredging means are being approached and that, therefore, some other method of deepening the channels will have to be considered.'*

Sir John Griffith, in a report to the MD&HB in 1922, referred to the enormous dredging carried out on the Bar and in the sea channels since 1890. Over 302 million tons of material had been dredged (nearly half between 1911 and 1921), yet the channels had deteriorated. *'It is evident'*, wrote Sir John, *'that these operations*

are opposed and neutralised by some great natural forces' and he went on to stress the importance of enlisting these forces to aid man's efforts. Work began on the Crosby West Training Bank in 1923, using a core of clay from the Gladstone Dock works. By 1935 a wall had been constructed all the way from the Rock Channel to the west of Askew's Spit.

In 1928 Sir John Griffith produced another report in which he stressed the value of the scouring action of the tidal flow between estuary and sea and recommended the *'jealous guardianship of the Upper Mersey Estuary against reduction of its tidal capacity either by reclamation, accretion of the sand and mud banks, or by the interference with the full inflow of tidal water consequent on badly designed training banks.'*

Early in 1929 it was decided to continue the Crosby West Training Bank seawards towards the Bar and to construct a training wall on the east side of the Crosby Channel. The original Taylors Bank revetment would be continued seawards as the North Queens Training Wall, and the tip of the troublesome Askew's Spit would be dredged away.

. These training walls rise up to 40 feet above their foundations: the wall on the Burbo side is eight miles long and on the eastern (Crosby) side six miles long. In general the base is 200 feet across, and the tops 15 feet across. Askew's Spit lies within these training walls. To build these walls, millions of tons of stone were required. This material was brought by hoppers from the MD&HB's own quarries at Penmaenmawr and Llanddulas in North Wales.

The high sandbanks on either side of the main channel rise to over 15 feet above the level of low water spring tides and are of clean sand which a dredger can, if need be, suck up rapidly. The first dredgings on the Bar and in the channels removed the same kind of sand, but below this was a muddy sand similar to that found widely over the bed of the Irish Sea. This mixture tended to clog the dredger's suction tubes and has slowed down dredging somewhat, making it more expensive.

It has been estimated that since 1891 enough sand and other material has been removed from the Bar and the sea channels to cover the whole of the 70 square miles of Liverpool Bay to a depth of three feet. In addition, vast quantities of silt have been removed from the dock entrances and from the approach to the Landing Stage. The over deepening of the channel is carefully avoided, for if too much material were removed the increase in the speed of the current, especially near the critical Crosby Bend, might well imperil the training walls. □

From the West Coasts of England & Wales Pilot:

Queens Channel and Crosby Channel form a continuous channel through which the River Mersey discharges.

Training Banks, which cover, have been constructed on each side of the channel. Their levels above chart datum vary between 7 and 10 feet.

The depth in the channels is maintained at or near 28 feet; a channel 5 cables wide has been dredged through the Bar at the outer end of Queens Channel. With this depth, vessels with a draft of 44 feet can enter the port at any high water.

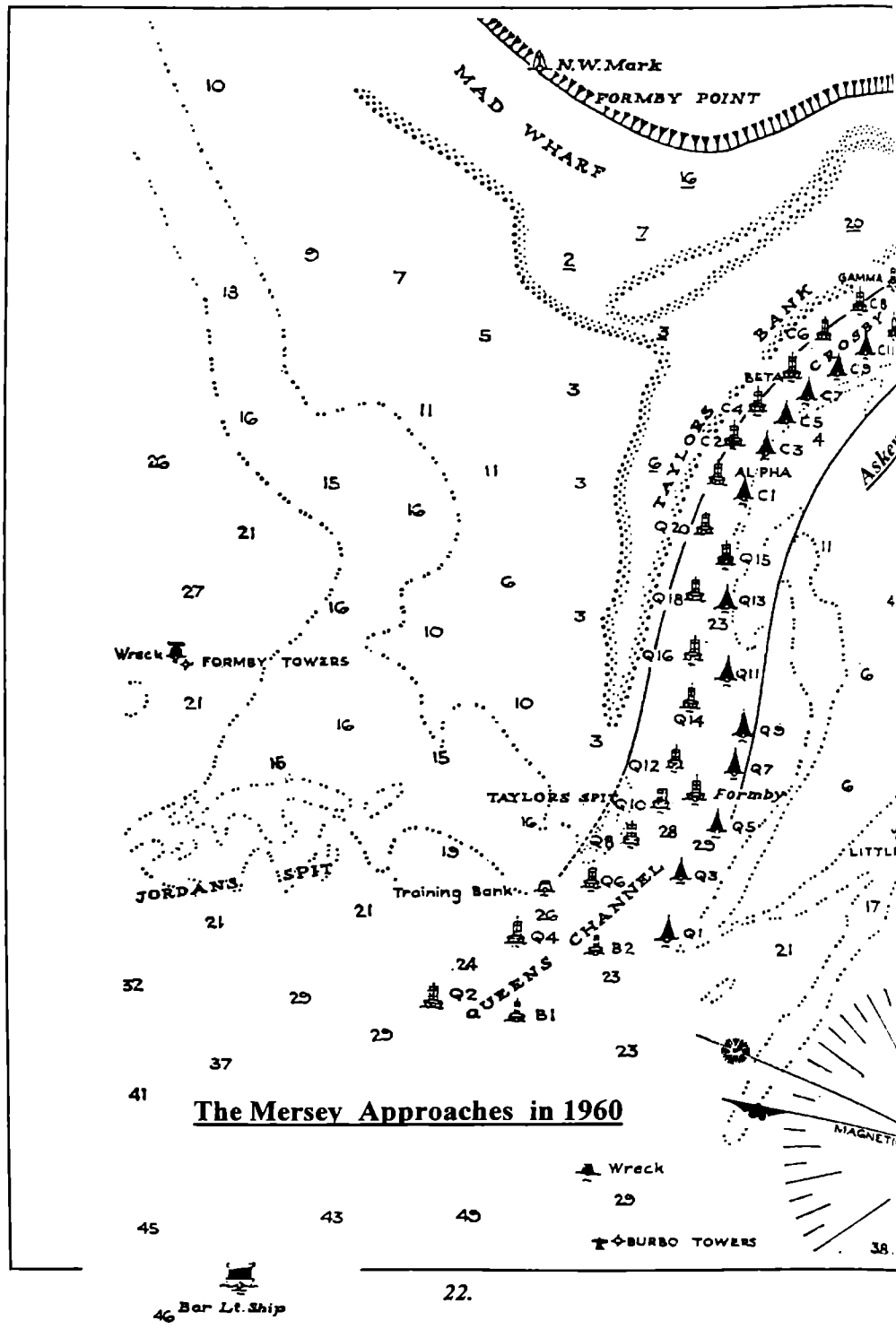
The **Great Burbo Bank**, with the **Brazil Bank** at its SE end, both of which dry, extend 4½ miles NW from the Rock Channel and form the W side of Crosby Channel.
Askew's Spit extends N from the Great Burbo Bank and forms the S side of the Queens Channel.
The **Little Burbo Bank** forms the NW portion of Great Burbo Bank.
The **Taylor's Bank**, which dries, extends W from the N end of Formby Bank; **Taylor's Spit** extends 1 mile W from Taylor's Bank and has a least depth of approx. 2 feet; together they form the N side of the Queens Channel.

Sources:

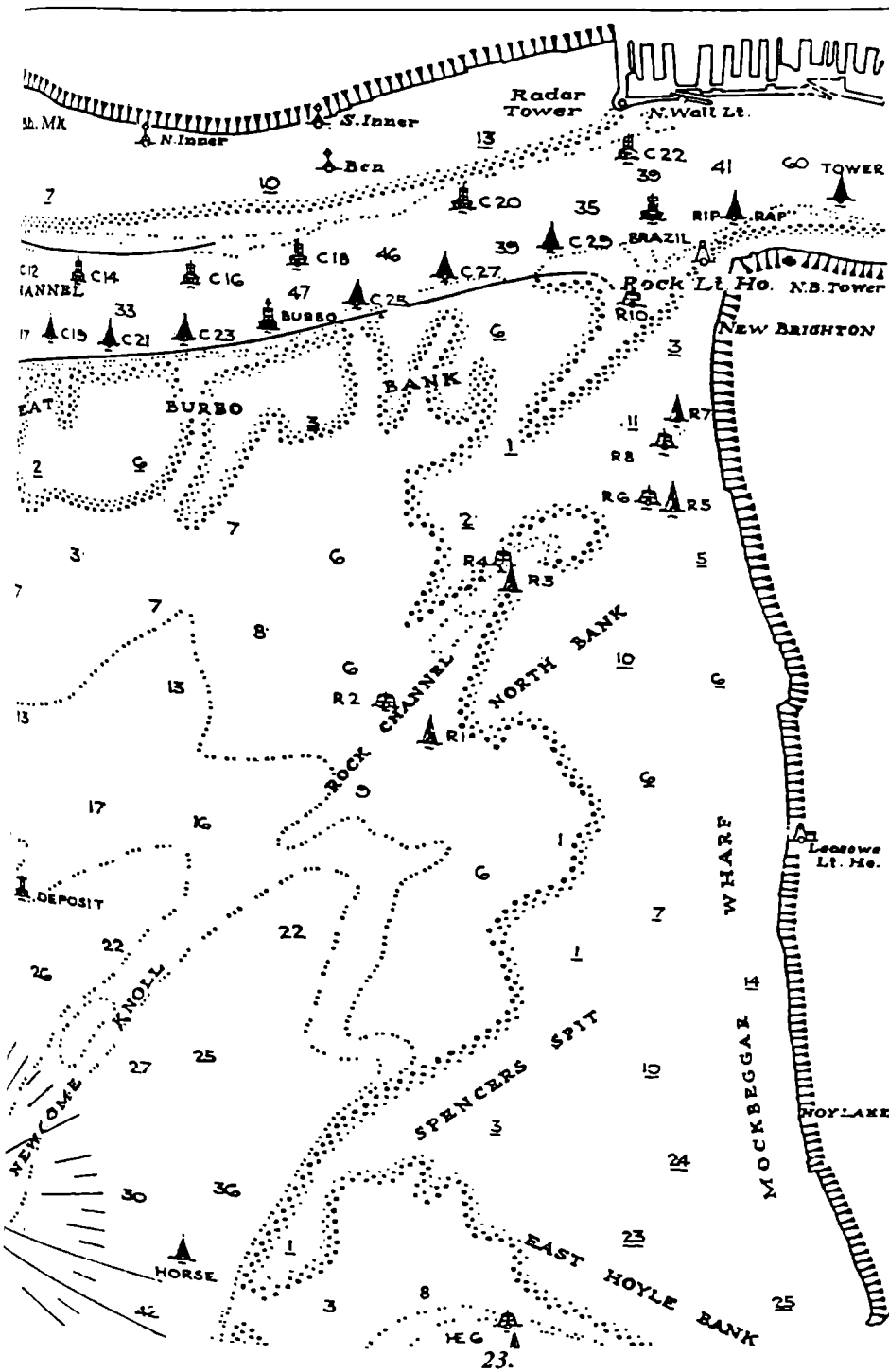
The Mersey Estuary : *J.E. Allison*, University Press of Liverpool, 1949
Western Gateway : *Stuart Mountfield*, University Press of Liverpool, 1965
West Coasts of England and Wales Pilot : Eleventh Edition, 1974

FINISHED WITH ENGINES

Chief Engineer John Parkes and Second Engineer Leslie McGowan in the engine room of the **Empress of France** after her final voyage on 29th October 1960.
Photograph reproduced by kind permission of Peter Elson of the 'Liverpool Daily Post'



The Mersey Approaches in 1960


Radar Tower
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NEWCOME
SPENCERS SPIT
MOCKBEGGAR
NOYLAKE
HORSE
EAST HOYLE BANK
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A YEAR WITH THE '*CARINTHIA*'

by John Shepherd

Part 2: Summer on the St Lawrence

The **Carinthia's** berth at Liverpool was in the Huskisson Branch Dock. After disembarking passengers at the Landing Stage, she would anchor in the Mersey awaiting the tide to enter the Sandon Half-Tide Dock, and from there she would be towed to her berth. The schedule involved arriving at Liverpool on Fridays. The weekend in dock was a quiet time with the ship shut down - there was no catering on board and any officers and crew required to 'stand-by' were paid a subsistence allowance to obtain their own meals.

The best point at which to start to describe a typical voyage is probably a Monday morning with the **Carinthia** alongside the Canadian berth on the south side of Huskisson Branch Dock. After a quiet Saturday and Sunday the ship came to life for paying off the crew members who, for one reason or another, were leaving the ship at the end of the previous voyage. With the Shipping Master from Cornhill Mercantile Marine Office, the Cunard paymaster Arnie Williams (who went on to become Fleet Personnel Manager in the 1970s) and the Crew Purser in attendance, the forty or so crew members who were leaving the ship were signed off the Articles of Agreement and their balances of wages paid over to them. The **Carinthia** operated on a six-monthly 'Running Agreement' which meant that the Articles were closed only every six months - this avoided having to pay off and then to re-sign the entire crew of 420 every three weeks.

All was usually complete by noon and then it was off to Cunard Building to visit various departments - Fred Waiting in the Crew Manning Department in the basement who looked after the **Carinthia** (Les Ridyard was his opposite number who dealt with the **Sylvania**), and then upstairs to see Harry Roden or Blair Thornton, the Superintendent Pursers. With all the ship's business completed the Purser's staff retired to their favourite watering hole - the Corn Market - for a lengthy lunch.

The following day, a Tuesday, was busier. Normally there would be a crew boat drill with the lifeboats lowered to embarkation level. As much work as could be completed in preparation for the forthcoming voyage was done.

Sailing day on the Canadian service was always a Wednesday, with sailing time set for 8.00pm. Dependent on the time of high water, the **Carinthia** was moved from her berth into the Sandon Half-Tide Dock by four Alexandra tugs. This was indeed an antiquated arrangement. The **Carinthia** was required to be in the Half-Tide Dock about three hours before high tide. Lock gates were then closed behind her and the level of the Half-Tide Dock was run down to the level of the Mersey. With the aid of the four tugs she was then manoeuvred through the Sandon River Entrance which was a very tight fit indeed, given the **Carinthia's** 80-foot beam. Once in the river the

Carinthia would anchor until about 3.30pm as she was required to be alongside the Landing Stage at 4.00pm to commence loading passengers' hold baggage - *'Not Wanted On Voyage'*.

We were a happy group in the Purser's Department on board the **Carinthia**. Chief Purser was Peter Dawes, a very much respected Cunard Line senior officer. In charge of the Tourist Purser's Office was John Williams or John Lecoustre, with Steve Gregson his deputy. I was Crew Purser. The two lady assistant pursers were Shirley Thomas in first class, and Mavis Burns in tourist class, both of whom had been with the **Carinthia** for some considerable time. We carried three junior assistant pursers, but they tended to move around the fleet as required, and were not 'attached' to the ship.

As soon as the gangways were in place, things really got busy. In the crew purser's office the Shipping Master, the official from the Shipping Federation and the Union representative arrived to sign on thirty or forty new crew. There were allotment notes and pool forms to deal with. The Senior First Officer would be a frequent visitor, checking up on the number of Certificated Lifeboatmen there were on board.

Passenger embarkation would commence at 5.00pm. There were separate gangways for each class of passenger, and in tourist class there would be up to 800 passengers to embark - about two-thirds of them being emigrants to Canada.

All this came to a head just before sailing time at 8.00pm and the shore officials all made for the last shore gangway.

The regular master of the **Carinthia** in 1965 was Captain R.J.N. Nicholas, who lived in Wallasey. One of his chief delights in life was blowing the ship's whistle. Promptly at eight o'clock the last shore gangway was lowered and the tugs assisted the **Carinthia** away from the landing stage. As soon as the last tug had been let go, Captain Nicholas blew three prolonged blasts on the **Carinthia's** steam whistle, which had a particularly majestic tone. This was followed by three long blasts from the tugs, and then one short blast from the **Carinthia**. It was a very moving farewell and its effect was never lost on our emigrant passengers or on their families waving from the Landing Stage.

The **Carinthia** moved slowly down the Mersey towards New Brighton and here again there were three mighty blasts on the whistle - this time for the benefit of Mrs Nicholas, who lived in Elmpark Road, Wallasey.

After a twelve-hour passage, the **Carinthia** would be at anchor at the Tail of the Bank off Greenock by nine o'clock the next morning. The Greenock call made no economic sense as it added twelve hours to the passage to Quebec, just for the convenience of a few passengers. We also embarked mail, and I was once told that it was the mail contract that made it worthwhile. As soon as our anchor was down, a Clyde 'Puffer' came alongside with the mails. About noon one of the Caledonian Steam Packet Company's fleet of Clyde steamers left the quay at Greenock and brought out the passengers and their baggage. As soon as all was on board, the **Carinthia** sailed for Quebec at about 2.pm. Once again Captain Nicholas blew three long blasts of farewell on the whistle.

The sail down the Firth of Clyde to the Pilot Station at Little Cumbrae Island is a delight and I was usually despatched to the monkey island with a microphone

connected to the ship's public address system to give a running commentary on the places of interest as we passed them. After disembarking the Clyde Pilot at Little Cumbrae and following three more blasts on the whistle, the announcement was made that all passengers were required to muster at their boat stations for boat drill.

Each member of the Purser's staff was responsible for a boat station and was required to muster the passengers assigned to his station in two lines, with the women and children to the fore. He then checked that their lifejackets were properly donned and secured at the front with a reef knot. An inspection by the Chief Officer followed, and that in turn was followed by the safety announcement over the 'Tannoy' system advising the passengers just what to do in the event of an emergency. I am still 'word-perfect' in that announcement although it is now almost forty years since I last heard it!

As the **Carinthia** rounded the Mull of Kintyre, about four hours after leaving Greenock, she began to feel the effects of the swell rolling in from the Western Ocean. The **Carinthia** and her sisters were good, if a trifle lively, seaboats. The Denny-Brown stabilisers were extremely effective in reducing the ship's roll, but nothing could be done about the pitching. If the swell was particularly heavy, then the **Carinthia** quickly became a battleground of human misery before dinner time. One of the most common sights on the first evening at sea was to catch a glimpse of the ship's Nursing Sisters Joan Corfe and Ann Barbour scurrying around the passenger accommodation with trays of hypodermic needles containing a miracle injection to stave off seasickness. I never did find out what was in those needles, but it certainly worked and a seasick passenger at death's door at 6.pm could be seen tucking into a fine buffet supper by 10.pm. It was, in the words of a popular song of the period: 'most efficacious in every case'!

The ship soon settled into a sea routine. The first-class and tourist-class Purser's offices were open each day at sea from 09.00 - 12.00 and from 14.00 - 18.00. It was necessary to see all the passengers and obtain details for the passenger manifests to be ready for arrival at Montreal, the port of entry into Canada. The purser's office also dealt with currency exchange, onward travel arrangements, in fact almost everything that a passenger might need during the voyage.

Down in the Crew Purser's office on 'R' deck forward, I worked my own hours. There were crew manifests and customs declarations to be prepared for arrival in Quebec. A running total of each crew member's wages had to be calculated in readiness for cash issues. Queries about income tax codes, allotment notes and overtime all came my way. The **Carinthia** carried a fiercely loyal crew and there were not many problems - it made my job quite easy. Occasionally someone stepped out of line, usually as a result of too much Wrexham lager, and I was called to the chart room where the 'logging match' took place. The offender was brought before Captain Nicholas and the charge read out. He was then fined a day's pay and maybe forfeited a day's pay - whatever punishment the master thought appropriate. It was my job to record the 'logging match' in the Ship's Official Log Book and to make the necessary deductions from the man's wages.

On the Canadian service the main weather problems were caused by fog and ice, not gales. We certainly had gales in plenty, but they had high nuisance value only,

unless they were particularly severe. The **Carinthia** and her sisters were well found, sturdy ships built for anything that the North Atlantic could throw at them.

The **Carinthia** proceeded to the south of Newfoundland around Cape Race for her first four Canadian round-voyages of 1965. By mid-June the Belle Isle Strait between the northern tip of Newfoundland and southern Labrador was clear of ice, and using the strait as a 'short cut' to the Gulf of St Lawrence, we saved about eight hours on the passage from Greenock to Quebec. We endured plenty of fog - whole days of it in fact. During fog the ship's whistle was sounded according to the Collision Regulations, *i.e.* one prolonged blast every two minutes - day and night. The ship's whistle was about forty feet above my cabin, and I developed a knack of sleeping through these intrusive blasts. If, on the other hand, the fog cleared and the whistle stopped sounding during the night, then I woke immediately!

We carried three Radio Officers on board the **Carinthia**. A continuous radio watch was kept, with the radio officers working a three watch system. One of their main tasks was 'taking press' - sometimes hours of high speed morse detailing world news which would be included in the **Carinthia's** daily newspaper - the *Ocean Times*. The front page of the *Ocean Times* was laboriously hand set by chief printer Jack Newman from the news supplied from the radio office, and the first job each morning at sea for the junior purser in the first-class office was to proof-read the front page. After advising Jack of any errors, about 900 copies of the newspaper would be run off, depending on the number of passengers on board. Other than the front page, the remaining seven pages of the *Ocean Times* were prepared on shore before sailing and contained topical articles and advertisements.

Official messages from Cunard to the **Carinthia** at sea were sent in Company Code - groups of five letters. On receipt of one of these messages, and they could be received at any time of the day or night, one of the Purser's staff was detailed to decode the message using the Company's Code Book, and to type the message in plain language at the bottom of the message. This use of code was a nightmare for the radio officers as just one incorrectly received letter in any one of the code groups could change the meaning of the message entirely.

Similarly, all official messages from the **Carinthia** had to be coded by one of the Purser's staff, and then checked for accuracy by one of his colleagues. It was a laborious and time-consuming process.

The Second Radio Officer on the **Carinthia** in 1965 was Terry Maddrell, the son of the coxswain of the Port Erin, Isle of Man, lifeboat. One of Terry's jobs was to go down to the Tourist Purser's office for an hour each morning and collect any radio messages that passengers might wish to send. He recalls one old Irish lady who was upset that the **Carinthia** was running late due to persistent gales, and wanted to let her relations know that they need not meet her at Cobh until the following day. Terry explained to her at great length that she could, if she so wished, make a radio telephone call, but the old lady looked at him quizzically and said: *"Well, I better not do that, they might not be listening to the radio!"*

The **Carinthia** spent Sunday at sea on every voyage. The Blue Ensign was flown on Sundays which the crew were delighted to see, not because of any particular religious sentiment, but because it meant an extra day's pay for working on a Sunday.

A ship's divine service was organised in the tourist-class lounge for the passengers and any crew members who might wish to attend. There was usually a good turn out. The Chief Officer took the service, assisted by the Senior First Officer. Arthur Plant and the **Carinthia** Orchestra provided music for the hymns. Their knowledge of hymn tunes was rather limited (to about five, in fact) so the same hymns turned up every voyage without fail. We never sang that sailors' hymn which has, at the end of each verse, the words: *'O hear us when we cry to thee, for those in peril on the sea.'* I think perhaps there was a Cunard management directive for it not be used. *'The Waves and Storms of this Uncertain World'* were always mentioned at one point in the service.

The purser's staff were responsible for all passenger entertainment. This was pretty basic with a few games of 'bingo' or a few 'horse races' in the lounge after dinner. Bingo needs no explanation, but the horse racing involved moving wooden horses along a canvas track stretched across the dance floor. The horses were moved according to the throw of the dice, and one of the passengers was asked to shake the dice. The lounge steward actually moved the horses. All great fun!

In the early 1960s the Cunard Line was experimenting with professional entertainers on board to provide a cabaret show three times a voyage. We carried some 'past their sell-by date' cabaret artists to provide a song and dance routine to the music of Arthur Plant and the Orchestra. Names such as 'Boyer and Ravel', 'Flack and Lamar', the 'Trio Vitalites' and Brett Stevens spring to mind. In all fairness, I have to say that I never knew how the dancers kept their feet when the weather was bad and the dance floor was heaving around. The one exception to this rather motley collection was Adelaide Hall, who sailed with us regularly to entertain the passengers. She was magnificent.

There were many 'characters' amongst the **Carinthia's** crew. One was the chief barber Bill McAuliffe. Bill looked after the first-class passengers and had his small shop on 'A' Deck amidships. All the officers had their hair trimmed by Bill and his barber's chair became something of a 'confessional'. I'm certain Bill knew more about the **Carinthia's** problems than anyone else on board ! Then there was the ship's plumber John Kelly, known as 'Flush' Kelly because, after a few beers, he would regale anyone within earshot with the intimate workings of a flush valve. There were many other great characters on board, but with the passage of time their names have slipped my memory.

As the voyage wore on the **Carinthia** entered the calm waters of the Gulf of St Lawrence and proceeded to the pilot station at Father Point. The shipping channel hugged the north shore of the Gulf and it was a highly scenic passage, close in to the Laurentian Mountains. We passed the spectacular Montmorency Falls (higher than Niagara) and shortly afterwards berthed at Quebec City. Here the port officials boarded us and the normal procedure was for them to join the **Carinthia** for the passage to Montreal and clear the passengers through immigration on the way. Passengers were not allowed to leave the ship at Quebec: Montreal was the port of entry into Canada.

However much they had enjoyed the ocean crossing, the passengers were always anxious to get ashore at Montreal and as soon as the hold baggage had been discharged they were allowed ashore. Some of the passengers were not even half-way

into their journey - those bound for Western Canada had another five days on the train to get through.

The **Carinthia** always had a full day in Montreal (a Thursday) before embarkation for the eastbound crossing on Friday. A full crew boat drill was held with lifeboats manned and sent away round the dock. It should be remembered that apart from two motor lifeboats, the remainder were fitted with 'Fleming Gear'. This gear consisted of a series of handles which the occupants of the boat pushed and pulled in order to turn the propeller.

Passenger numbers for the eastbound crossing were usually low in the early part of the St Lawrence season, but picked up in June, July and August with tourists wishing to visit Europe. Sailing time from Montreal was twelve noon and the **Carinthia** would be off Quebec by seven in the evening, helped along by the river current. Here, a tender came out to meet us, bringing perhaps another dozen or so passengers.

The routine for the eastbound crossing was similar to the westbound with the exception that instead of stopping the ship's clocks for an hour each evening, they were advanced one hour at two o'clock in the morning - in effect a 23-hour day.

There was the usual call at Greenock where the Liverpool Pilot and the British Immigration Officer boarded us. After clearing the Greenock passengers, he would 'screen' the Liverpool passengers on the passage from the Clyde to the Mersey, in order to save time on arrival at Liverpool. Having the Liverpool Pilot on board meant that we did not have to stop at Liverpool Bar, but proceeded directly up the Mersey where we would berth at the Landing Stage at 06.00.

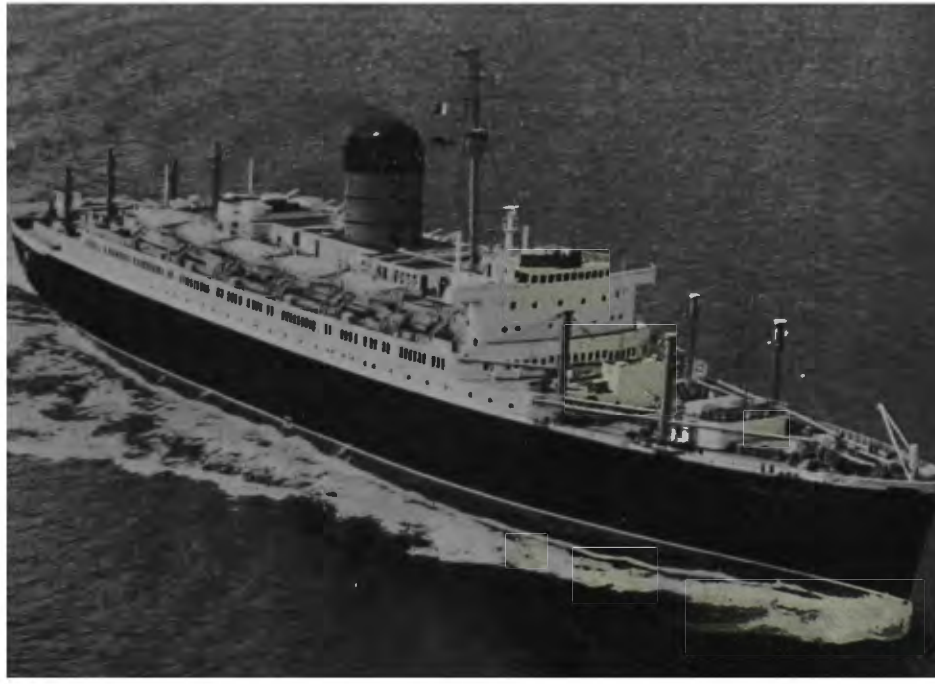
The hold baggage was immediately discharged and most passengers were ashore by 09.00. A special train for London would be waiting at the Riverside Railway Station if numbers warranted it, but more often than not passengers were conveyed by bus to Liverpool's Lime Street Station.

There was then the rigmarole of docking. The **Carinthia** moved to an anchorage in the Mersey to await the tide at Sandon River Entrance. She was then manoeuvred into the half-tide dock, and finally through to her berth in Huskisson Dock.

The years 1964 and 1965 had been poor for the Cunard Line and its passenger operations had all lost money. Economies were effected but it was all too little, too late. The age of the jet aircraft had arrived. I remember going on the boat deck one morning in 1965 and seeing one of the **Carinthia's** sailors painting the brasswork (of which there was plenty) with white paint. The time-consuming and therefore expensive routine of polishing the ship's brass was to be abandoned. It was very sad and the writing was on the wall.

The **Carinthia's** schedule in 1966 was badly disrupted by the 42-day seamen's strike from 23rd May until 2nd July. This was the catalyst, but by no means the only reason, for the **Carinthia's** early withdrawal from service in 1967. The Cunard Line had a new Chairman - Sir Basil Smallpiece - and it was he who grasped the nettle and ordered the withdrawal of both the *Queens*, the **Mauretania**, the **Caronia**, the **Carinthia** and the **Sylvania**. The once mighty Cunard fleet was down to just three ships: the **Carmania** and **Franconia**, and the new **QE2**.

For the record the **Carinthia's** last voyage on the Canadian service left Liverpool on 13th October 1967. She returned to Southampton on 9th December and was laid up, awaiting sale. The Sitmar Line purchased her on 31st January 1968, but she remained laid up at Southampton for two more years. In January 1970 the ship, renamed **Fairland**, sailed to Trieste for conversion into a cruise ship. In November 1971 she was again renamed: this time to **Fairsea**. In 1988, P.& O. acquired the Sitmar Line and with it the **Fairsea**, and another change of name took place to **Fair Princess** The old **Carinthia's** last spell of service was as the **China Sea Discovery**, operating cruises out of Hong Kong as a floating casino. I understand she has recently been sold for breaking up after a career spanning 48 years. □



*The '**Carinthia**' running her trials on the Arran Mile in May, 1956.*

Abstract of Log **R.M.S. "CARINTHIA"** **Westbound**

Captain H. L. de Legh, R.D., R.N.R.

LIVERPOOL to MONTREAL (via Greenock & Quebec) Wednesday, June 2, 1965

Date (1965)	Dist.	Lat. N.	Long. W.	Weather
June 2				At 20.08 B.S.T. (19.08 G.M.T.) left Princes Landing Stage, Liverpool
,, 2				At 23.03 B.S.T. (22.03 G.M.T.) Bar Light Vessel abeam—Departure
,, 3	188	To Kempock	Point	At 08.29 B.S.T. (07.29 G.M.T.) Kempock Point abeam—Arrival
,, 3				At 08.48 B.S.T. (07.48 G.M.T.) at Greenock Anchored
,, 3				At 14.12 B.S.T. (13.12 G.M.T.) Anchor Aweigh
,, 3				At 14.30 B.S.T. (13.30 G.M.T.) Kempock Point abeam—Departure
,, 4	457	55.19	17.10	Slight to moderate sea, low swell, partly cloudy and clear
,, 5	445	53.47	29.39	Mod. WNW'ly gale, rough sea, heavy swell, partly cloudy & clear
,, 6	494	50.41	42.09	Strong to light W'ly breeze, mod. sea and swell, cloudy, occ'l rain
,, 7	520	46.33	53.18	Strong NW'ly breeze, mod. sea and mod. swell, cloudy and clear
,, 8	510	49.15	64.57	Str'g W to mod. SE breeze, mod./slight sea & swell, cl'dy, occ'l rain
,, 8	187	To Escoumains		At 22.00 E.D.S.T. (02.00 G.M.T. 9th) Escoumains abeam—Arrival
Total Distance	2613			
June 8				At 22.12 E.D.S.T. (02.12 G.M.T. 9th) Escoumains abeam—Depar.
,, 9				At 05.30 E.D.S.T. (09.30 G.M.T.) West Point abeam—Arrival
,, 9	118	To	Quebec	Alongside Wolfe's Cove Q'bec, 06.12 E.D.S.T. (10.12 G.M.T.)
,, 9				Depart Wolfe's Cove, Quebec, 14.31 E.D.S.T.,(18.31 G.M.T.)
,, 9				At 14.51 E.D.S.T. (18.51 G.M.T.) Sillery Point abeam—Dep.
,, 10	133	Quebec to	Montreal	At 06.27 E.D.S.T. (10.27 G.M.T.) Tarte Pier abeam—Arr.
,, 10				At 07.11 E.D.S.T. (11.11 G.M.T.) alongside Shed No.3, MONTREAL

OCEAN PASSAGE: 5 days, 12 hours, 30 minutes *AVERAGE SPEED: 19.72 knots*

Reduced Speed: 27 hours 41 minutes *Detention: Nil*

SELF-UNLOADING VESSELS OF THE GREAT LAKES

by H.M. Hignett

The movement of shipping around the Great Lakes is easily understood. The ships are carrying bulk cargoes and their routes are based on the origins and destinations of the cargoes. The cargoes are iron ore, coal, limestone, salt, gypsum, aggregates for building and road construction, and grain. There are well-defined regular routes over which the bulk cargo is carried.

The majority of the iron ore comes from Minnesota via the twin ports of Duluth and Superior. In the 19th and first half of the 20th century iron ore was usually destined for ports nearer to the coalfields of Pennsylvania (via Buffalo) and Detroit to feed the automobile demand for steel. The Pennsylvania coal for steel manufacturers was carried from Lake ports such as Buffalo and Erie. Limestone was used for chemicals and as a flux in steel making. Gypsum was used for building material, and the aggregates were carried to Chicago in large amounts for building and elsewhere for roads etc. Grain was exported through Duluth and Superior and carried down the Lakes, not only to large US population centres, but for trans-shipment through the relatively narrow canals bypassing the Niagara escarpment to Montreal and thence to transatlantic ships.

The only self-unloading ships I had seen were liquid carriers. There was one exception, though, a ship calling at the Bowaters Wharf, Ellesmere Port, on the Manchester Ship Canal. This vessel did not use the hatches when discharging. There were two steel deck-houses on the landward side and from these the bales of newsprint and coarse paper were stacked in heaps to be lifted by crane to the high wharf side bank. Apparently the normal discharge of this vessel was at low-lying quays with portable conveying ways allowing the bales to be slid down to the shore conveyor and into the factory or warehouse. Below decks the cargo was taken to the lifts in the deck-houses by forklift trucks which had been specially modified to handle the paper.

In 1972, when working on the St Lawrence Seaway, I saw a couple of self-unloaders. With the short catwalk along the deck I thought them to be a type of tanker. But the catwalk was in fact a boom carrying a conveyor belt. I have since learned that they are most numerous around the Great Lakes and that until about a decade ago very uncommon in other parts of the world.

About 1900 the Wyandotte Chemical Company required large quantities of limestone for processing and also large amounts of coal for the factory. The large bulkers of those days were discharged by grabs of gantry cranes and the discharge rate was little more than 100 tons/hour. These cranes were in use for only ten days of each month during the season and idle during the winter freeze-up. The labour for the grabs was casual and relatively inexperienced. A conveyor system was used at the factory to move the material from stacks to the processing tanks. Wyandotte's engineer had the idea of using a conveyor belt system on the ship for discharge and thought that a deeper double-bottom on a suitable vessel would allow for the conveyor belt to be laid under holds which had been fitted with a door at the bottom. A ship that was about to be launched (with the name **Wyandotte**) was modified and the double 'V' hold was built into the hull. The launch date was 1908.

The two conveyor belts were led to a compartment near the engine room and

the material was then deposited on a lifting conveyor belt and so to a boom on deck. The boom, about 90ft long, was hinged on the deck and could be raised, lowered and swung either side of the ship at will.

The apparatus was extremely successful and proved very economical. The loaded ship arrived at the factory wharf where it discharged its cargo with very little assistance from the shore in a quarter of the time taken by using grabs, a tremendous saving of time and labour. The ship could then collect a cargo of coal with similar savings.

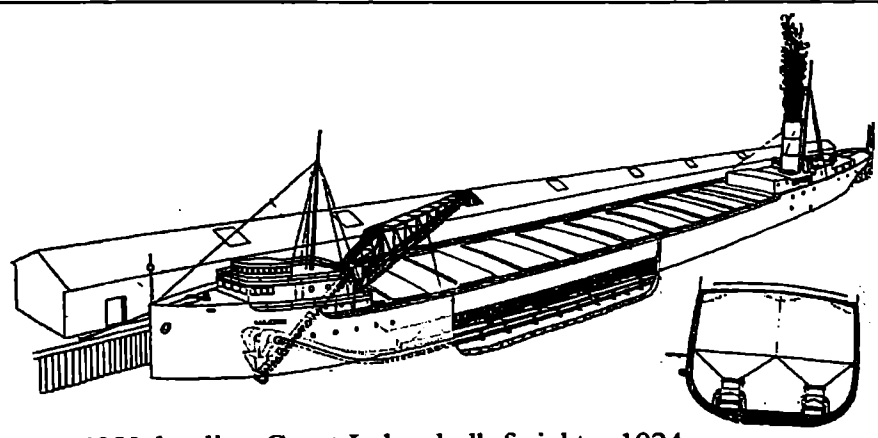
The free time allowed the owners to carry cargoes for other manufacturers and distributors of coal, iron ore, aggregates etc. The new ship was rapidly copied by other firms interested in the economies of the design. By 1910 there were three such vessels; two years later there were seven.

After the First World War the design was vastly improved and in the 1930s when the Welland Canal was opened there was a steady increase in the number of self-unloaders. The design came into its own with the opening of the St Lawrence Seaway in 1959. Many former straight deck Lakes bulkers were converted to self-unloaders between 1960 and 1975 and new ships were built with the equipment.

Today, many of the large 45,000-tonners are carrying iron ore and/or grain for trans-shipment to ocean going 100,000+ ton vessels in the lower St Lawrence River below Montreal, and perhaps as far as Three Rivers, using the self-discharging booms to tranship their cargoes.

In March of this year, an LNRS member heard David Eccles and myself discussing self-unloading ships and advised us that, at regular intervals, one such vessel discharges cargoes of granite chippings to an installation in the Royal Seaforth Dock. This is one unit of the Foster-Yeoman organisation - a company operating three such vessels carrying aggregates from its quarries at Glensanda, Scotland. David Eccles (then LNRS Chairman) and myself were enabled, with the assistance of member Alec Hampson, to visit the **Yeoman Bank** during the discharge.

Much of the material in this article was supplied by LNRS member Dan C. McCormick of Massena, New York, USA. □



Self-Unloading Great Lakes bulk freighter 1924

CLARKE'S AUTOMATIC BUNKERING BARGES

by David Eccles

Coaling ship was a dirty and labour-intensive operation, and for many years inventors had been seeking a rapid, economic and clean method of doing it. One such method used at Liverpool was Clarke's Patent Bunkering Barge.

An advertisement appeared in *Lloyd's List* in 1911 as follows:

CLARKE'S PATENT AUTOMATIC BUNKERING BARGES AND COAL HANDLING SYSTEM

Clarke's Barges are Bunkering in Liverpool for the Alan Line, China Mutual, Cunard, Dominion, Federal, Holt's, Houlder's, Leyland, Nelson, Pacific Steam Navigation, Warren, White Star and other large Steamship Companies.

All particulars from Liverpool Barge & Coaling Co. Ltd., Royal Liver Building (7th Floor)
Telegrams: 'Coalship, Liverpool'.

The system was invented by Peter Basil Clarke, an American, and was registered as British Patent No.3504 on 18th February 1901. Wheatley & Mackenzie of London were the British Agents, and Clarke's Patents Ltd was registered to market the system which became known world-wide as 'the American Coal Elevator'.

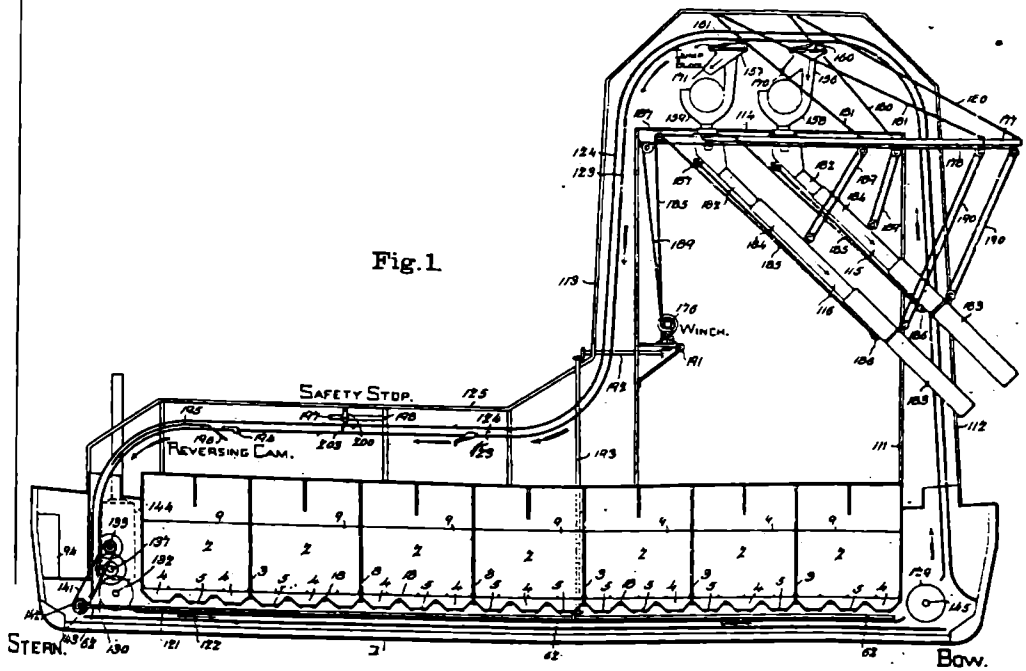
Rotterdam was the first European port to use this system. There the Coal Trading Association was using it in 1904 to load between 100 and 140 tons of coal per hour. It was fitted with electric light for working day and night, and a feature of the system was the absence of flying dust, and the ability to handle coal of different sizes.

Early the following year an agreement was reached between Peter Clarke and Cammell Lairds to build five of his patent bunkering barges for use on the Mersey. To operate them, a week before the first barge was completed, the Liverpool Barge and Coaling Company was registered on 16th September 1905 with a capital of £100,000 in £10 shares. The shareholders of the company were Peter B. Clarke (inventor), James Boyle (US Consul), Ralph E.R. Brocklebank (a Bebington coal-merchant), Sir Alfred Jones and Thomas Royden (both shipowners), Restel R. Bevis (civil engineer) and Thomas Brocklebank (banker). The directors of the company were James Boyle and Ralph Brocklebank.

The registered office of the company was at Colonial House, 20 Water Street, Liverpool, which it shared with Clarke's Patents Limited, and to service the barges a depot was established at Huskisson Dock North.

The hold of each barge was divided into sections, each having a false floor, which could be raised to an angle of 45 degrees to tilt coal into the centre. Running from stem to stern in the bottom of the barge was a continuous belt of buckets which passed under the false floor of each section and was filled with coal as it travelled along. When the buckets reached the forward part of the vessel they were taken in an upright position to a tower where the coal was tipped into a hopper, and the load counted before it dropped through long chutes into the steamer's bunkers. There were

two hoppers and chutes through which the coal passed alternately, and these were raised or lowered to suit the steamer being bunkered or loaded. Each bucket carried 5cwt of coal.



Clarke's Automatic Bunkering Barge, 1901

On 23rd September 1905 the first Clarke's barge entered service on the Mersey. It was the **Stanley** with a capacity of 1,000 tons, and it soon found favour with Liverpool shipowners, including the Cunard Steamship Company.

Four other barges entered service in 1906. These were slightly larger with a capacity of 1,300 tons and could discharge at a rate of 180 tons per hour. The first was the **Alexandra**, in April 1906, followed by the **Nelson** in August and the **Canada** and the **Sandon** in October.

Manned by a master with a crew of six (including the cook), these dumb barges were assisted by two tugs named **Knight Errant** and **Knight Templar** which were chartered from J. Prendiville & Co. The barges loaded under the coal tip at Bramley-Moore Dock or at Birkenhead, and were used to carry coal to steamers in Liverpool's North Docks or at anchor in the Mersey.

There were two types of barges. The **Alexandra** and the **Nelson** each had a 'Low Tower, 30ft high, designed for bunkering those large passenger liners with doors in their sides. The **Stanley**, **Canada** and **Sandon** had a 'High Tower', 60ft high, suitable for feeding coal into deck openings or through the ship's side. All five barges

were owned by Cammell Laird & Co. Ltd., Sheffield, and managed by Roy MacGregor Laird of the Birkenhead Iron Works.

In 1906 the battleships HMS **Vengeance** (12,950tons) and HMS **Cornwallis** (14,000tons) arrived in the Mersey to test the bunkering facilities. They both arrived on the morning tide of Wednesday 28th November to load 1,000 tons of coal each. Coaling facilities in the past had not been very efficient, but as soon as the warships had anchored in the Sloyne, the coaling apparatus drew alongside. HMS **Vengeance** was coaled by Clarke's Patent Automatic Barges, with one 'Low Tower' barge on each side and was completed in 4¾ hours at a rate of 121 tons per hour per barge, but only 904 tons of coal had arrived at Birkenhead for this ship. The operation of each barge was practically continuous, with control of operation by one man. If trimmers had been available the bunkers would probably have been trans-shipped in 3½ hours. These automatic coaling barges fulfilled two of the most important Admiralty conditions - readiness and prompt discharge.

Rea supplied the bunkers for HMS **Cornwallis**, delivered by lighters to each side of the ship. One side was loaded by the Rea Patent Elevator (known as the 'Grabber'), and the other side by the warship's own deck apparatus. Both lifted coal from lighters up to an Admiralty Patent device in the form of a large receiver with chutes on runners for carrying coal in baskets to the bunkers. Both vessels sailed to rejoin the Channel Fleet on the following morning tide after an impressive bunkering operation.

Clarke's barges proved successful and by 1908 the Liverpool Barge and Coaling Company Ltd. was jointly owned by Bebington coal merchant Ralph Brocklebank and Rea Limited. The company purchased all five of Clarke's barges on 4th March 1908 at a price of £15,000 each.

On 11th December 1908 the **Stanley**, laden with 800 tons of coal, was crossing the Mersey from Birkenhead to Canada Dock, secured between two tugs, when she suddenly 'turned turtle' and sank in mid river, opposite Salisbury Dock. The barge had been rolling heavily in stormy conditions when it was struck by a large wave, and three men were thrown into the water before the vessel turned over. Fortunately the tugs were able to cut their lines before they were dragged under and were able to rescue the three men in the water, who were landed at Princes Stage. The barge-master, Captain Edger, was clinging to the wreckage for over an hour before he was picked up. Sadly four men sheltering in the engine room were trapped and went down with the vessel. They were deck hands Henry Bent and William Benson, the cook Alfred Gist and the fireman John Jackson. Later the owners stated that the barge had been in commission for three years and had crossed and re-crossed the Mersey over 1,000 times in all kinds of weather. The wreck of the **Stanley** was later blown up.

The **Stanley** was replaced by a sixth Clarke's barge built by Cammell Laird. The new barge was named **Salisbury** and entered service on 6th June 1910. It was 23 feet longer and 2 feet, 6 inches wider than the **Stanley** and had a taller tower. The **Salisbury** was managed by Mr Restel Bevis for Cammell Laird, and chartered to the Liverpool Barge & Coaling Company.

In 1913 Ralph Brocklebank sold his share in the Liverpool Barge & Coaling Company to Rea Limited and the company was renamed Mersey Coal Elevators Ltd.

Its first task was to purchase the **Salisbury** from Cammell Laird on 13th March and to build two 600hp tugs named **Yewgarth** and **Cairngarth** to handle the barges.

All five barges were kept very busy during the First World War, but when the large Liverpool passenger liners were converted to oil-fuel after war service, the business slumped and the 'low-tower' **Nelson** was sold to R. & J.H. Rea Ltd of London in February 1921, and was sent to serve at Southampton.

On 10th September 1922 the **Nelson** was left unmanned and laden with coal overnight alongside the Union Castle liner **Saxon**, when her after mooring rope parted and the **Nelson** swung outward to be struck by the port propeller of the passing **Empress of Scotland**. The barge sank with her tower blocking 230ft of the main shipping channel and lay there for two weeks before she could be lifted and beached on the opposite shore. A month later the **Nelson** was uprighted and after repairs it continued in service at Southampton until scrapped in March 1937.

Mersey Coal Elevators was badly affected during the Great Depression of the early 1930s. In October 1933 the 'low tower' **Alexandra** was sold for scrap, and on 12th July 1934 the firm went into liquidation with all its assets sold to Rea Limited.

The Second World War was a very busy period for the remaining three barges with great demand for bunker coal. To increase a ship's draught for a westbound Atlantic ballast passage, extra coal was carried. War-built standard steamers usually sailed with 2,000 tons. The use of the coaling barges prevented delay and congestion awaiting a bunkering berth.

After the War there was a drop in demand for coal and the largest barge, the **Salisbury**, was scrapped at Garston in February, 1947. The need for bunker coal fell sharply as steamers converted to oil-fuel, and both the **Canada** and the **Sandon** were broken up at Garston in September, 1959, bringing to an end 53 years of service of the little known Clarke's Patent Automatic Bunkering Barge. □

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Please note changes of venue as detailed below:

to be held in the Waterfront Room, the Museum of Liverpool Life at 12.30pm

Thursday, 15th December, 2005

THE WRECK OF THE 'PRIMROSE HILL'

David Eccles

to be held in the Long Room, Merseyside Maritime Museum at 12.30pm

Thursday, 19th January, 2006

McTAY MARINE OF BROMBOROUGH

Mr A.J. Barratt

to be held in the Education Suite, Merseyside Maritime Museum at 12.30pm

Thursday, 16th February, 2006

THE 'MANXMAN' - THE FUTURE

Mr W. Ogle

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF THE LIVERPOOL BARQUE 'DRYAD' (1874 - 1891)

by Henry G.L. Alexander, ISBN: 0 9549022 - 0 - 3
published by Aunemouth Books, price £12.95p.

Whilst swimming in the neighbourhood of Start Point and looking for caves, Henry Alexander stumbled upon the remains of a hitherto unknown and unidentified wreck. This is the story of the painstaking investigation over many years and the ultimate identification of the vessel - the barque **Dryad**.

The book is written in a narrative form, which takes the reader with the author in his researches and explores the vessel and its trades, along with the artefacts which have been recovered. The book is most profusely illustrated and runs to some 140 pages of A4 card-back format. It is divided into 11 chapters which are in logical sections covering the discovery; the lengthy research to identify the vessel, and researching those remains discovered on the often-shifting sea bed. This book brings alive the building of the **Dryad** by Roydens of Liverpool for John Bankes Walmsley and details her various voyages until her loss in 1891. There are details of the crew and the various cargoes carried. The author goes on to examine the area in which the **Dryad** came to her untimely end - Start Point and Hallsands - before turning to the events which resulted in her loss. The **Dryad** sailed from Shields on 3rd March 1891 with coal bound for Valparaiso. She passed Beachy Head on 9th March in a moderate easterly gale which increased to hurricane force. She was wrecked, unseen, on Tuesday 10th March 1891, at the height of the ferocious storm and blizzard which blanketed the south-west peninsula for over two days.

That this book has been a labour of love is readily apparent. It is the story of just one of the hundreds of humble cargo carriers which operated towards the end of the era of square-rigged sail. □

d.b.c.

THE SINKING OF THE 'LANCASTRIA'

by Jonathan Fenby, ISBN 0 7432 5930 0
published by Simon & Shuster, price £14.99p.

A fortnight after Dunkirk, some 150,000 British troops were still trapped in France, and plans were under way for a second evacuation as the stranded servicemen hurried to the coast. Among the vessels pressed into service was the 16,000 ton liner **Lancastria**, whose crew of merchant seamen were urgently recalled from leave to join the vessel in Liverpool. The **Lancastria** was sent to the French port of St Nazaire, where thousands of troops and refugees crowded on to the ship, thinking that they would now have a safe passage home on this large, sturdy vessel.

It was not to be. As the **Lancastria** waited in the harbour to depart, she took a direct hit from German bombers and started to sink. There were not enough life jackets for all on board, and matters were made worse for those in the water by a huge oil

slick. A rescue operation was mounted by other vessels in the harbour, but the death toll was at least 3,000 - more than double the number who died on the **Titanic**.

The **Lancastria** is therefore Britain's worst ever maritime disaster, but the events of 17th June 1940 are not very well known amongst the general public. Two years ago, veteran journalist Jonathan Fenby decided this had to change and immersed himself in research on the **Lancastria**, interviewing survivors and scouring the archives of maritime museums and the Public Records Office. The result of this work is *The Sinking of the Lancastria*.

One striking feature of the story is the 'cover-up' ordered by Winston Churchill. He placed a ban on the reporting of the **Lancastria** disaster, which was never officially lifted. It is generally agreed that Churchill did this because he felt the news would be a blow to morale at a difficult time in the war. Jonathan Fenby commented: *"I think it was the contrast with Dunkirk which was the problem. Churchill and the War Cabinet had somehow managed to portray the Dunkirk evacuation as a victory, not an embarrassing retreat. The **Lancastria** disaster could have eclipsed the relief and pride people felt in the way everyone had rallied round to get the troops out in the earlier evacuation."*

The other problematic aspect of the **Lancastria** story for Churchill was the way the ship appeared to be a 'sitting-duck' for the German bombers - staying at anchor instead of actively trying to escape under fire.

For a long time it was a mystery as to why the ship's master, Captain Rudolph Sharp, had not sailed as soon his ship was full of passengers. But now Jonathan Fenby has uncovered a previously unpublished diary by Royal Navy Captain Barry Stevens which sheds some light on Captain Sharp's decision.

According to Captain Stevens, the **Lancastria** had disobeyed an order to sail because Captain Sharp was concerned that there was not enough drinking water on board. The memoirs of the **Lancastria's** chief officer, Harry Grattidge, also made interesting reading - he believed that Captain Sharp had held back because he was hoping for protection from a warship.

Whatever Captain Sharp's reasoning, it was not long before the **Lancastria** would never move again. Thanks to the rescue effort, many of those on board did survive, but, as *The Sinking of the **Lancastria*** explains, they did not receive the heroes' welcome afforded to those returning from Dunkirk. The survivors were forbidden to talk about the disaster, and some were even reprimanded for losing their identity discs or wearing 'incorrect' uniforms which they had been given when they lost all their clothes in the waters of St Nazaire harbour.

These are painful memories, but the overwhelming impression Jonathan Fenby received is that the survivors wanted to be heard before it was too late. Mr Fenby is now closely involved with the Lancastria Survivors Association, and attended a ceremony in St Nazaire on 17th June this year to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the sinking. □

This is a précis of the review published in the NUMAST 'Telegraph', August, 2005.

From LNRS Member Sean Kennedy of Hightown, Merseyside:

I am most grateful to Captain Graeme Cubbin for his additional information about the **Asturian** ('*The Bulletin*', September, 2005). Such details help the past to come alive for the amateur historian.

It is always tempting for many people to talk of the great liners when Liverpool and its ships are the topic of conversation, but every cargo ship has its own tale to tell. A full, but rather formal, description of the encounter of the **Asturian** with the U-Boat on 18th February 1917, may be found on page 7 of *The Journal of Commerce* of 8th October 1921.

Lynn Jackson's splendid dissertation on the Battle of the Atlantic (in the same '*Bulletin*') made me turn to the history of another Liverpool ship, the **Estrellano**. She was attacked by a U-Boat on 9th February 1941 and the youngest victim was the sixteen-year-old cabin boy. Although he was picked up, he died of his injuries whilst aboard the escort vessel and his body was returned to the sea from which he had been rescued only that morning.

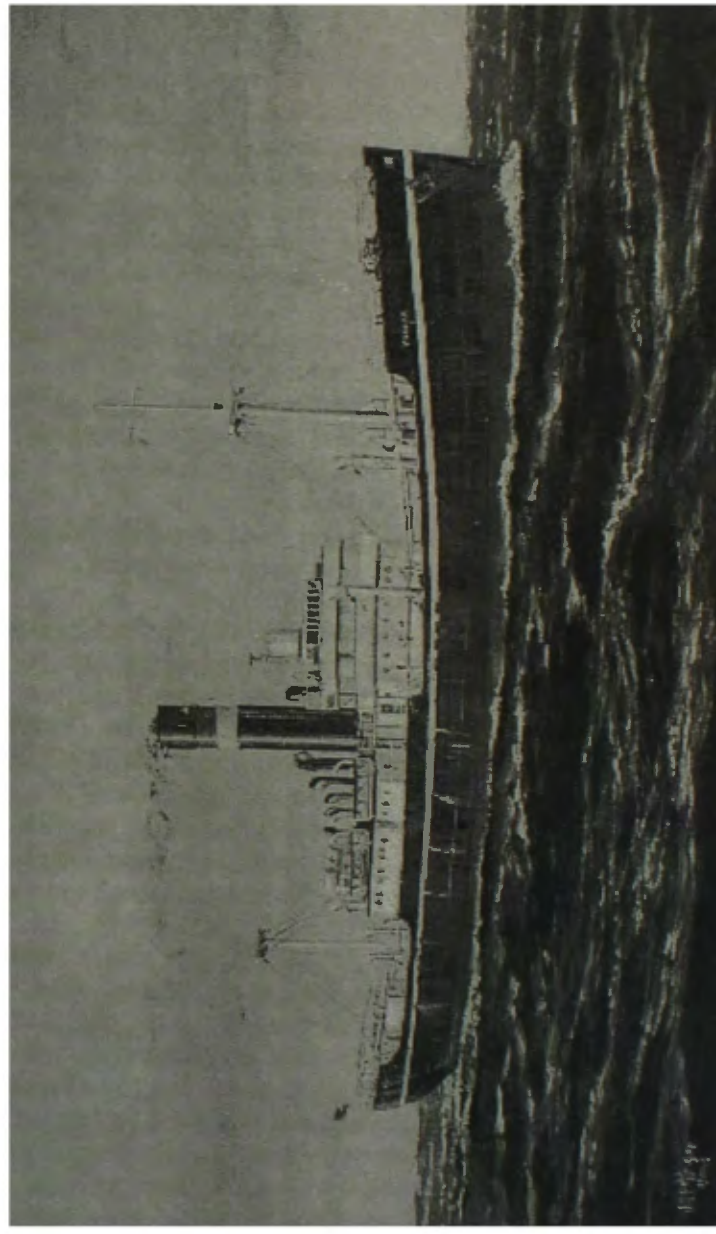
Sadly for Liverpool, this was far from being an isolated story.

From LNRS Member James A. Pottinger:

Reading the most enjoyable and informative account of the Larrinaga Line by David Eccles, I was interested to note on page 51 that Messrs Goodwin, Hamilton & Adamson had acted as consultants for the company. They also acted in the same capacity to T.& J. Brocklebank, and in fact on joining my first Brocklebank ship, I recall (I am pretty sure it was he) Mr Goodwin visiting the ss **Maihar** (1) in May 1957 at the completion of her extensive refurbishment by Alexander Stephen of Glasgow.

Given this link between the two companies, and whilst acknowledging the different trades served, I note that only the **Niceto de Larrinaga** (2) and the **Richard de Larrinaga** (1) of 1916, the first with cruiser sterns, bear a superficial resemblance in profile to Brocklebank ships.

So, possibly their responsibility was directed more to overseeing the construction rather than design.



Brocklebanks' **Maihar** (1) from an original painting by LNRS Member James A. Pottinger
*The **Maihar** was built by Russell & Co at Port Glasgow in 1917 and lasted until 1962.*

A VOYAGE TO SOUTH AMERICA

by Captain Brian Scott

In September 1957 I had been sailing with the Lamport & Holt Line as Third Mate for nearly a year and was interested in learning some of the Company's early history. Enquiries revealed that the Company had been formed in 1845 with a partnership between Mr W.L. Lamport and Mr George Holt. The Company pioneered the trade between England, Brazil and the River Plate using sailing clipper ships and later extended its interest into a shipping line trading between Liverpool and Egypt.

Lamport & Holt bought its first steamer, the **Nile**, (347 tons) from James Moss & Company of Liverpool and then built more steamers for the South American trade, naming them after famous scientists, poets and writers.

Because of the positive aspect on the commercial prosperity of Liverpool, the Company was granted the right to fly the Liverpool Corporation flag on the jackstaff of its vessels.

In 1865 Lamport & Holt commenced regular steamer services from London, Antwerp, Glasgow, Liverpool and New York to South America and in 1886 pioneered the frozen meat trade from the Argentine to the UK.

The Company subsequently experienced mixed fortunes as it expanded and contracted, due to war losses and the Great Depression of the 1930s.

During the Second World War, Lamport & Holt lost fourteen of its twenty ships, including the passenger vessels **Vandyke** and **Voltaire**. During this time it managed and manned a number of troopships for the Ministry of War Transport.

In 1944 Lamport & Holt came under the control of the Vestey Group and in 1946 the Booth Line was similarly acquired. Combined with the Blue Star Line and the Austasia Line of Singapore, this constituted a large fleet. Ships were also bareboat chartered from time to time from the Panama Shipping Corporation and the Salient Shipping Co. (Bermuda) Ltd.

Priority for new buildings was given to Blue Star and to Booth Line with some new Booth ships being transferred to inaugurate Austasia Line services from Australia to Eastern ports. However, from 1952 onwards Lamport & Holt began taking delivery of new 'R' class ships, starting with the TSS **Romney**, which remained the Company's flagship for 26 years. The second of this class was MV **Raeburn**.

In early September 1957 I had completed a coastal voyage on mv **Boswell**, one of Lamport & Holt's small banana carriers, which was berthed at Liverpool. The company was still replacing temporary tonnage used to replace wartime losses. Career prospects looked good and the company-trained men had an excellent promotion system in place. By volunteering to sail on the South Africa - New York - Montreal services aboard smaller ships for twelve months, these officers sailed on their certificates of rank and as a result were gaining command in their late twenties and early thirties as the fleet expanded. Promotion on the UK based vessels was slower, but the regular three-month voyages appealed to the married men.

With the return of the permanently employed officers from leave, my time on MV **Boswell** was completed. The Marine Superintendent found me on deck in my boiler suit and gumboots helping the shore gang to clean up a minor lubricating oil spill on deck. He said that he was glad I was keeping my uniform clean as he wanted me to go across the dock and join the MV **Raeburn** as Third Mate; and thus commenced a typical voyage for that period.

It was a Friday when I joined the **Raeburn**. Discharging had been completed and the shore gangs were busy painting the hull and cleaning out the hatches over the weekend. Loading commenced on the following Monday.

Over the weekend a number of self-propelled barges owned by ICI arrived alongside from Widnes and Runcorn, further up the Mersey. They were loaded with drums of caustic soda. In addition a large coaster loaded with railway lines from Workington in Cumberland had berthed astern of us. The rails were for discharge at Rio.

Loading began first thing on Monday morning and soon the **Raeburn** had a good bottom weight in the lower holds. There was lamp black in No.5 dirty hatch, railway wheels, rolls of barbed wire, textile machinery for Recife, and a lot of furniture and grocery supplies for transhipment to the Falkland Islands at Montevideo. Whisky and mail went into special lockers. As the radio officer was a company employee and we carried three cadets, the second mate and myself always had assistants on cargo watch.

Loading at Liverpool was completed by the following Friday and on that night's tide we shifted across the Mersey to lie under the sheerlegs in Birkenhead Docks where we loaded two railway passenger carriages for Rio on the after deck.

We sailed for Swansea on the Saturday night tide and berthed late Monday morning. Here we loaded tin plate in our shelter and 'tween decks and the remaining space in the holds was filled with CKD Morris cars. However, the crates were marked 'Siam di Tella', the name of the Argentine motor assembly firm. By fitting an Argentine grille and nameplate, they became a truly local product!

Departing Swansea on the Wednesday the **Raeburn** headed off down the Bristol Channel bound for Las Palmas in the Canaries where we took on fuel and fresh water.

Life on board settled into a pleasant routine, steaming at 16 knots in fine weather and calm seas. We had ten passengers on board and like most Lamport & Holt ships I had sailed on, we had a Chinese cook and we fed very well, despite seamen's tales about L & H = 'lousy and hungry'! All accommodation was amidships and most of the ratings had been in the ship for a number of voyages.

On passage from Las Palmas to Recife (Pernambuco), the second mate and myself made out cargo books for each hatch and each port. This simplified the tally clerks' job so that on completing discharge in a port we knew what missing items of cargo to search for. From our supervision of the loading we were already aware of any overstows.

Our discharging ports were Recife (Pernambuco), then 382 miles south to Bahia (Salvadore), then 732 miles to Rio de Janeiro, followed by 208 miles to Santos (the port for the industrial city of Sao Paulo), and finally the 880 miles to Montevideo

in Uruguay. From there it was a slow river pilot age up the River Plate to Buenos Aires.

Owing to port congestion our coastal voyage was quite leisurely. We had one diversion from our planned route. No.1 hatch and No.2 shelter and ' tween decks were emptied in Recife and we were diverted to the anchorage port of Ilheus, south of Bahia, to load cocoa cake. Apparently there was a Nestlé factory ashore that processed coffee and cocoa beans. The residual cocoa cake was bagged and shipped for further processing and final conversion into cattle cake by British Oil and Cake Mills in the UK, a Unilever subsidiary. Normally Lamport & Holt ships in the Brazil trade loaded homewards at southern Brazilian timber ports and then worked their way north. It seemed that due to the demand for shipping space and the lack of shore side covered storage, we were to take the shipment the long way home.

The main South American ports on the East Coast were quite appealing and due to delays we were able to organise beach parties, sailing, and local bus tours. The prevailing high inflation meant that our British money went a long way.

The company's shoreside organisation of offices and stevedores was long established and efficient and we had a Blue Star Line marine superintendent in Santos and a Lamport & Holt superintendent in Buenos Aires, both of whom carried out inspections of the ships in port as well as providing forward planning for homeward cargoes.

On completion of discharge in Buenos Aires the shore gang cleaned out the holds and we loaded drums of tallow and linseed oil, bales of wool and cotton, bagged sunflower seed and soya beans, hides and tobacco. (We had no refrigerated holds).

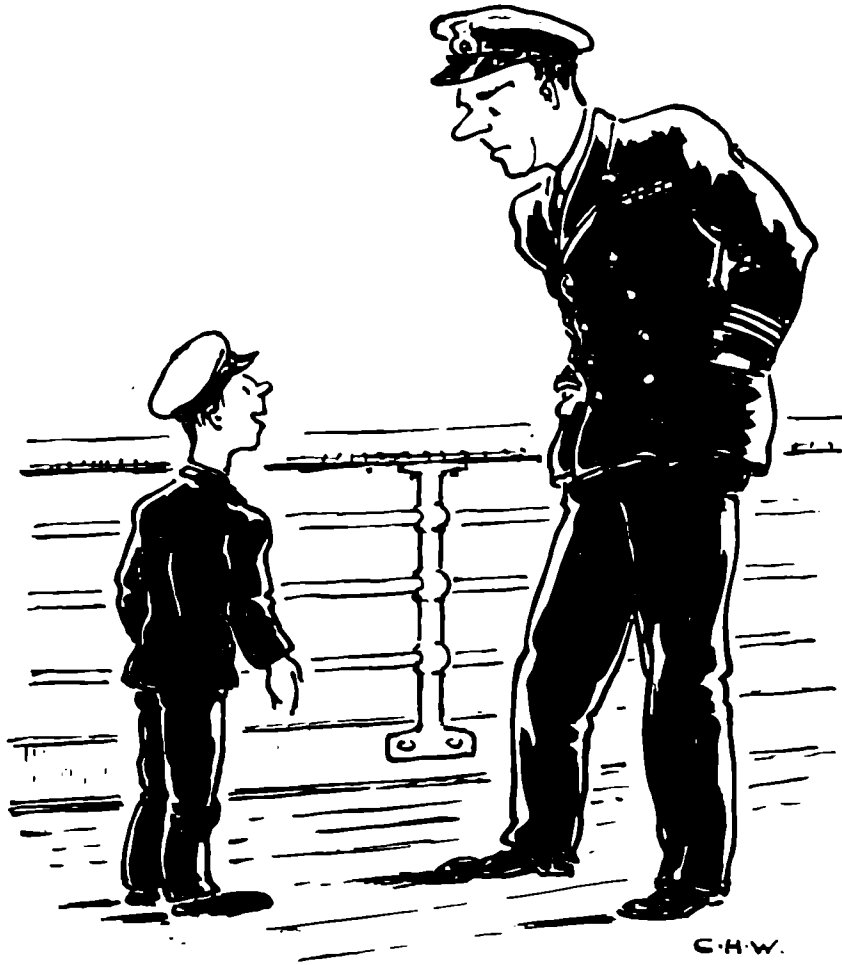
The **Raeburn** then shifted down river to La Plata where we loaded canned meats. By this time the ship was almost full and we sailed across to Montevideo again to top off with wool, some of it from the Falkland Islands.

We sailed from Montevideo on 29th November 1957. There was a sea passage ahead of us of some 6,400 miles to Liverpool, an estimated 23 days steaming. We called at Las Palmas to take on bunkers and fresh water and loaded crates of tomatoes on top of Nos. 2 and 3 hatches. The **Raeburn** arrived back at Liverpool on 22nd December 1957 and for once I was to have Christmas at home.

This was a fairly typical voyage of the 1950s. I made only three voyages to the Argentine; my other voyages were to Brazil and New York and thence to the West Indies and the River Amazon.

The **Raeburn** had been built in 1952 by Harland & Wolff at Belfast and had a few name changes in subsequent years.

In 1958 she was bareboat chartered to the Blue Star Line and renamed **Colorado Star**. In 1972 she was bareboat chartered to the Austasia Line of Singapore and renamed **Mahsuri**. The charter ended in 1977 and she returned to Lamport & Holt as the **Roland**. On 5th October 1978 the old ship arrived at Faslane, Scotland, for breaking up by Shipbreaking Industries Ltd. □



"Huh! Fool of the family sent to sea I suppose?"
"Oh! no, sir. That's all changed since your day"

JUST FANCY THAT !!!

An amusing incident arising from prefabrication in shipbuilding was recounted by Captain A.H. Wallis at a luncheon following the launch of HMS ***Hickleton****, a coastal minesweeper, from John I. Thornycroft & Company's Southampton yard in June 1954.*

Recalling the speed with which Liberty ships were built in the United States to replace war losses, Captain Wallis said that a friend of his was invited to lunch by the management of one of the firms assembling these ships. Plans had been made to hold the lunch in the captain's cabin, a prefabricated section which stood on the quay waiting to be assembled.

All went well, said Captain Wallis, until about half-way through the luncheon when, without warning, a crane was connected to the structure and the guests found themselves being swung through the air and lowered unceremoniously on to the ship!

AND FINALLY .....

CHRISTMAS DINNER ON THE '*FLORISTAN*', 1956 STYLE

By Tony Sedman

Having recently qualified as a junior radio officer and completed my six months' sea experience on board Atlantic liners, I found myself as the single operator on board the mv **Floristan**. No great ocean liner, but a cargo ship, in fact one of F.C. Strick's fleet of cargo and cargo-passenger ships.

It was October 1956 and the **Floristan** was bound for the Persian Gulf - bunkering at Aden - and then on an M.o.D. (RAF) charter to some interesting ports in the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea.

Captain Quick preferred his officers to dress in uniform when in the dining saloon. Certainly no long hair, no boiler suits or khaki dungarees to be seen here. The captain shared a table with the chief engineer and the chief officer. I was seated at a table with the second and third officers and the two cadets. The engineer officers had their own table.

The chief steward and cooks were all from the Portuguese colony of Goa - always immaculately dressed in white mess jackets.

The **Floristan** left Liverpool and headed down the Irish Sea and on towards the Strait of Gibraltar. After a passage along the length of the Mediterranean, we passed through the Suez Canal and out into the Red Sea - all at 12 knots!

By this time I was getting used to the Indian curries served in the most elegant way to our table almost on a daily basis. On occasions I would peer into the galley where the cooks flavoured the evening meal with all kinds of herbs, ginger, coriander, garlic, chilli and mustard seeds. Complemented with side dishes of 'Bombay Duck', desiccated coconut, olives, raisins, mango chutney, all presented on a silver platter. I almost expected the *vinho verde*, but no, iced lime juice was always served. On occasions, for lunch we would have chowder, a kind of stew containing fish and scallops, flavoured with tomatoes and sometimes spiced with turmeric.

A few days before Christmas we sailed up the Shatt-al-Arab on the border between Iran and Iraq to a port called Khorramshahr in Iran. What a dismal, uninspiring place it was!

Christmas Day arrived and all the ship's company assembled in the saloon. What an instant change in our morale: spirits soared, speeches were made, toasts were drunk and then came the Christmas Day dinner. The obligatory hors d'oeuvre with diced slices of ham and asparagus, two choices of soup, three choices of main course - then, if that wasn't enough, there was Christmas pud soaked in brandy and set alight. Following that came the mince pies, various cheeses and assorted biscuits. And there was yet more: Christmas cake, and a selection of fruits for dessert and ground coffee from Macao.

Just to make sure I wasn't dreaming all this I managed to keep the menu card, on the back of which are the autographs of all the officers who were still able to stand up! Our Goanese chief steward C.P. Fernandes had truly excelled himself. □

This article originally appeared in the NUMAST Telegraph for September, 2005, and is reproduced by kind permission of the Editor, Andrew Linington

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(Founded in 1938)

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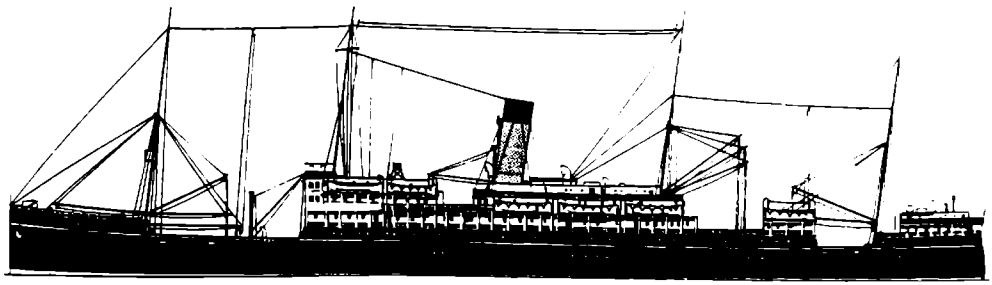

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Front Cover: The Bibby liner **Cheshire** of 1927

The LNRS 70th Anniversary Publication - 2008
Articles for possible inclusion in the above commemorative book are invited from members. Articles should be about 3,000 words in length and should be sent to:
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ICE ON THE MERSEY, JANUARY, 1963

Despite stern warnings from the Meteorological Office that Britain is set to endure its worst winter for many years, possibly since 1962-1963, it seems unlikely that scenes such as the one reproduced below will ever become a reality again.
The photograph shows the Birkenhead Corporation ferry ***Mountwood*** *ploughing through thick pack ice on passage between Woodside and Liverpool.*

photo : John Shepherd

For full details of an additional talk on Thursday 18th May 2006, please see page 13.

From the Editor:
I have recently re-typed the address labels used when despatching Members' copies of 'The Bulletin'. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, I should be grateful if Members would check their address label and advise me of any errors. Thank you. j.s.

Peter Elson of the 'Liverpool Daily Post' has requested the Society's help in tracking down anyone who might have sailed with the Booth Line. If you have any experience of sailing on Booth Line vessels, or know anyone who has, could you please contact the Editor. Many thanks.

THE LOSS OF THE "*PRIMROSE HILL*"

by LNRS Member David Eccles

The **Primrose Hill** was a four-masted iron barque registered at Liverpool by William Price & Company of 58 South Castle Street. Built at Liverpool in 1886 by Thomas Royden & Sons, the **Primrose Hill** had a length of 301.5 feet, a beam of 42.1 feet and she could carry about 4,000 tons of cargo when fully laden. From 1888 her master was Joseph Wilson of Altrincham, with Hugh Hughes of Liverpool as mate. Mr Hughes held a master's certificate and had served on board the ship since her maiden voyage.

After completing discharge of a cargo of wheat at the Wallasey Dock, Birkenhead, the **Primrose Hill** moved across the Mersey to Liverpool on 14th November 1900 to commence loading general cargo for Vancouver. As it was anticipated that the ship would be ready to sail on Christmas Eve, Captain Wilson informed the Mercantile Marine Office on 19th December that he wished to engage a full crew, preferably Scandinavian, the following day. Liverpool was a steamship port and it was very difficult to obtain experienced sailing-ship crew, and so it was not until 24th December that the complete crew was signed on.

Before the **Primrose Hill** sailed from Liverpool, Captain Wilson wrote a letter to the *Journal of Commerce* complaining that Board of Trade officials had not allowed him to use a man he knew off Castle Street who could supply experienced Scandinavian crew. He was told he had to abide by the Merchant Shipping Act, even though there were no suitably experienced men available at the Shipping Office. (The man Captain Wilson knew off Castle Street was probably the Scandinavian Shipping Master, who worked for Vogt & Company of 17 Chapel Walk.)

On Sunday morning, 23rd December 1900, the **Primrose Hill** left her berth laden with 3,500 tons of cargo and anchored in the Mersey to sign on three men from the Liverpool Sailors' Home as replacements for three who had failed to join. The **Primrose Hill** then awaited the arrival of the tug **William Jolliffe** which had been contracted to tow her towards the Tuskar Light.

The **Primrose Hill** left the Mersey for the last time on Christmas Eve 1900, towed by the two-funnelled ocean-going tug **William Jolliffe**. The Liverpool pilot left near the Bar Lightship at 5.30pm and shortly afterwards the wind began to blow hard from the south and by 3.am the next morning, Christmas Day, it was blowing a full gale from the south-west. Seeking shelter from this adverse weather, both ship and tug anchored in Moelfre Roads at 10.am and remained there for two days.

Captain Wilson decided to proceed on the voyage at 7.30am on 27th December when only a light wind was blowing from the south-east. At 2.pm, when the tow was off Holyhead, Captain Wilson signalled the **William Jolliffe** to ask her master's opinion about the probable weather ahead, to which the reply was 'moderate weather'. The sea state at this time was described as moderate with a S.S.W'ly breeze, but Mr William Owen, coxswain of the Holyhead lifeboat, who saw the **Primrose Hill** pass, later stated that the barometer was falling fast below 29 inches and he was surprised that the ship did not seek to anchor in the roads.

During the afternoon the wind gradually increased until it was blowing a fresh gale from the south-east. Although no sails were set, the yards of the **Primrose Hill** were braced-up sharp on the port tack to aid the tug. At 6.30pm Bardsey Island light was sighted and at 9.pm Bardsey Island was approximately 11 miles east by south from the **Primrose Hill**. Fifteen minutes later the gale force wind suddenly shifted from the south-east to the south-west, setting up a heavy cross sea. With the barque's yards now aback to the wind, the extra strain on the towing hawser caused it to part some 12 – 14 fathoms astern of the tug.

After the hawser parted the tug approached to within hailing distance of the **Primrose Hill** to advise the master to heave-to until daylight as it was impossible to re-connect the tow in the weather conditions and darkness. The tug master gave his vessel's position with the Stack bearing NE x E, and Bardsey Light bearing ESE, and agreed to Captain Wilson's request to remain close until daylight.

The events which followed on board the **Primrose Hill** are taken from statements made at the Board of Trade Enquiry by the Swedish survivor, Mr Johan Pettersen.

When the hawser parted all hands were called on deck to square the yards, and the **Primrose Hill** was headed before the wind until some staysails were set. After this had been done the ship was headed west with yards braced sharp on the port tack with fore, main and mizzen topmast staysails and the jigger staysail set. An attempt was made to haul in the towing hawser but this was abandoned after a while and it was left trailing in the sea. Mr Pettersen, who was look-out from midnight until 2.am, reported that the visibility was about three to four miles, but he lost sight of the tug at 1.30am. He remained on deck until his watch finished at 4.am, but he never sighted the tug again. Overnight the **Primrose Hill** made little progress in a nasty sea and south-westerly wind with about 600ft of hawser trailing from her bow.

Mr Pettersen went on watch again at 8.am when the ship was still sailing close to the wind on the port tack with the staysails set; heading N.E. but drifting to leeward. During the night the wind had strengthened and shifted to the WNW and the sea had risen. There was no sign of the tug and the **Primrose Hill's** crew had just completed getting the towing hawser on board.

About 11.am on 28th December the jigger staysail was carried away and five minutes later the fore topmast staysail was blown into ribbons when the wind shifted to the north-west with increased ferocity. The fore lower topsail and foresail were loosened (by releasing the gaskets and pushing the sail from above the yard to be suspended by its clew-lines and bunt-lines), and the helm was put hard to port to wear the ship round on to the starboard tack. Shortly after the fore lower topsail was set, its port clew carried away and orders were given to set the reefed foresail, but the **Primrose Hill's** heading would not turn away from the south-east due to the lack of a head sail.

Towards noon the South Stack lighthouse (197ft) was sighted two miles away, four points on the starboard bow. The ship was now in a very perilous position and the signal of distress (N C) was hoisted as the **Primrose Hill** was trapped in a flood tide carrying her towards the Skerries.

At 1.pm the barque was sighted by the South Stack telegraph station which sent a message to Holyhead lifeboat station requesting the **William Jolliffe**, which lay

in the outer harbour, to sail at once to the **Primrose Hill's** assistance. The lifeboat coxswain delivered the message himself by shouting across to the **William Jolliffe** by megaphone., but the tug's master made no attempt to leave Holyhead. The 975HP **William Jolliffe** was a powerful tug with two boilers, but the smaller and less powerful **Hannah Jolliffe** did make an attempt to leave the harbour but was unable to pass the breakwater entrance.

Some fifty minutes later the London and North Western Railway Co's steamer **Hibernia**, on passage to Holyhead from Dublin with passengers and mail, sighted the **Primrose Hill** flying the distress signal. Though the barque was only one mile WNW from the Stack in hurricane force winds, the **Hibernia** steamed up to within 400 yards on her weather side to render assistance, but found it impossible to launch a lifeboat due to the exceptionally heavy weather, and being so close to a lee shore.

At 2.pm the South Stack telegraph station again sent an urgent cable to the Holyhead coastguard reporting the barque lying-to without canvas one mile north-west and instructing the **William Jolliffe** to be sent out to her at once. This was followed by several urgent signals to send both the lifeboat and the rocket apparatus. The steam lifeboat made three attempts to leave Holyhead harbour but was unable to get outside the breakwater, but the Holyhead Rocket Brigade responded promptly.

At 2.15pm the **Primrose Hill** was about 300 – 400 yards west of the South Stack lighthouse when she dropped both anchors in five fathoms of water and swung head to wind. An attempt was made to take in sail, but without success, and in about five minutes the starboard cable carried away and the vessel commenced to drive towards the shore in a bay known as Abraham's Bosom. As the vessel dragged towards the rocky shore the captain called all hands on to the poop, issued them with lifebelts and ordered them to climb into the rigging. Although there were plenty of lifebelts on board, the captain and mate did not wear theirs, and both were standing by the helm when the ship struck the rocks.

The Holyhead Rocket Brigade had arrived near the South Stack before the vessel dropped her anchors. They followed the track of the barque and were within 100 yards of the **Primrose Hill** when she struck, but they were unable to use the rocket apparatus against the hurricane force wind.

At 2.45pm the **Primrose Hill** struck the rocks beneath a slanting rocky cliff, some one and a half miles south-east of South Stack. As the barque broke in two, she heeled over to seaward and the men clinging to the rigging were washed away when the masts fell into the sea, and within fifteen minutes there was no sign of the vessel in the pounding sea.

There was only one survivor – able-seaman Johan Pettersen who had been at the wheel when the **Primrose Hill** let go her anchors. He was clinging to the poop rail when the ship struck the rocks and was submerged by the following wave which tore him from the rail and deposited him on the cliff face some fifteen feet above the wreck. From there he was rescued by a member of the rocket brigade, John Owen. For his act of bravery John Owen was awarded a vote of thanks and the sum of twenty shillings by the Liverpool Shipwreck and Humane Society. After his rescue Johan Pettersen was taken to Stanley's Hospital at Holyhead to be treated for bruising.

Three hours after the **Primrose Hill** was wrecked, the Lloyd's agent at Holyhead reported to London that wreckage and cargo were being washed ashore at Porth-y-Gwyddel beach and that the Custom Wreck Officers at Liverpool, and the Liverpool Salvage Association had been informed.

At low tide the following morning (29th December 1900) nothing was visible of the **Primrose Hill** except for two spars floating on the water which were still attached to the wreck. Over the following days cargo, including cases and casks of spirit, was washed ashore on Porth-y-Gwyddel beach, but very little cargo was salved as the customs officers had a difficult time preventing pilferage from the beach.

A formal investigation into the loss of the **Primrose Hill** with thirty-three lives was held at Liverpool County Court on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th April, 1901. There were fifteen questions the Court had to answer.

The Court was told that the **Primrose Hill** was classed 100A1 by Lloyd's and was in good seaworthy condition regarding her hull and equipment when she left Liverpool on 24th December 1900. The vessel was equipped with double topsails and double topgallants on three masts and carried a complete spare set of sails. Her labour-saving equipment included a donkey boiler, steam capstans and winches, and patent blocks were used throughout the rigging. She carried all the required lifesaving appliances: two lifeboats, six lifebuoys and forty lifejackets for the 34 men on board. She also carried a pinnace, a gig and a dinghy.

It was noted by the Court that the sails had remained bent during the seven weeks spent in Liverpool, due to wet weather. The Court considered that when proceeding on a long voyage, especially a winter voyage, the sails should always be unbent and overhauled irrespective of the weather, but this did not cause the loss of the vessel.

Concerning the manning of the vessel, Mr William Price, the managing owner told the Court that he appointed the master and supplied the apprentices, but he left it to the master to appoint his officers and to engage the crew.

When the superintendent of the Mercantile Marine Office was questioned about the letter which had appeared in the *Journal of Commerce,* he told the Court that his staff had given Captain Wilson every assistance to engage a Scandinavian crew, but there was not a sufficient number available on the first day to complete the crew. When the **Primrose Hill** sailed she carried a first officer, third officer, boatswain, carpenter, thirteen able-seamen, two ordinary seaman, twelve apprentices, cook and steward; making a total of thirty-four including Captain Wilson.

Questioned about the towing hawser, the tug master told the Court that 120 fathoms of 16-inch coir-rope from the **William Jolliffe** was shackled to 25 fathoms of the barque's steel towing wire. The hawser was in good condition and had been on board the tug for only four months. The Court agreed that the hawser was sufficient for the intended purpose and was satisfied that it parted due to the extra strain caused by the sudden squall and the shift of wind from south-east to south-west. When questioned about his action after the tow rope parted, the tug's master told the Court that he had agreed to stand-by the **Primrose Hill** until daylight. At midnight he observed the barque heading NWxW with some sail set, but he lost sight of her in a squall at about 1.am. (This was disputed.) He estimated his position to be twenty miles north-west of Bardsey Island. Thinking the **Primrose Hill** had made sail and was well

to westward, he returned to Holyhead to berth at daylight. The Court considered that the tug master had made a hasty conclusion and should have remained close until daylight. However, this was not the cause of the vessel's loss.

When questioned about the action taken aboard the **Primrose Hill** immediately after the towing hawser had parted, the sole survivor Johan Pettersen told the Court that all hands were called on deck; the yards were squared and the vessel ran before the wind for a time whilst the towing wire was hauled in and some staysails set. At about 10.pm the vessel was put on the port tack and was heading on a westerly course while an unsuccessful attempt was made to haul the towing hawser on board. By 11.pm four staysails were set and the **Primrose Hill** was heading NWxW with the towing hawser trailing in the water.

The Court could not understand, given the threatening weather and the position of the vessel, why the towing hawser was not immediately slipped and more sail set. The Court considered that after 8.am it was doubtful if the barque could have carried any additional sail.

When asked to give an opinion as to whether it was the proper action for the **Primrose Hill** to let go her anchors after clearing the South Stack, the Court could not give any answer due to conflicting evidence. The lighthouse keeper stated that he thought the vessel would have drifted clear of Penrhos Point, but Johan Pettersen, the survivor, who was at the wheel, stated that he was confident that the vessel was making too much leeway and would not clear the point. Any attempt at taking in sail after anchoring was unsuccessful due to the power of the wind.

The Court was asked to explain the circumstances as to why no assistance was given in rescuing the **Primrose Hill's** crew by the mail steamer **Hibernia**, the tug **William Jolliffe**, the Holyhead steam lifeboat and the Holyhead Rocket Brigade.

After hearing evidence the Court stated it desired to put on record its opinion that the master of the mail steamer **Hibernia** had done everything in his power to render assistance, and did in fact take his vessel as close as was prudent in the atrocious weather. With regard to the tug **William Jolliffe**, the Court was of the opinion that the tug should have remained close to the **Primrose Hill** until daylight, but acknowledged that the tug was not responsible for the loss of the vessel. The Court heard that the Holyhead steam lifeboat had made three attempts to leave the harbour, but was prevented from doing so by the heavy seas breaking outside the breakwater. The Court acknowledged that the Holyhead Rocket Brigade responded quickly to the call for assistance and arrived within 100 yards of the barque just before her masts went over the side. Tragically the **Primrose Hill** broke up so rapidly that nothing could be done to rescue the crew.

In answer to the question as to whether the crew of the **Primrose Hill** was numerous enough, strong enough and capable enough to prevent the ship from drifting ashore, the Court answered 'No'. By referring to the Articles of Agreement, the Court established that the master and mate were the only certificated men on board. There was no second mate, but a Norwegian, Kristian Ness, who signed on as boatswain was intended to act as second mate, but without a British certificate. The third mate, John Lloyd, was aged 21 and held no certificate.

In 1896 an Act of Parliament recommended that three quarters of the crew of every sailing vessel should be 'individually effective', i.e. should have had a minimum

of four years experience before the mast. A vessel of 2,300 tons should carry 24 effective hands as a minimum, of which 21 should be 'individually effective'. The **Primrose Hill** did carry this number, but five of the apprentices and one ordinary seaman had never been to sea before and the other ordinary seaman had no sail experience. Four of the remaining apprentices had served less than fourteen months at sea. The Court noted that all the able-seamen had 'NP' after their names which indicated that 'no proof' of service to be rated A.B. was produced when they signed on, as required by the Merchant Shipping Act. The Court was advised that this frequently happened at Liverpool. However there was no evidence to satisfy the Court that the ship's loss was caused by an inexperienced crew.

The Court found that no blame should be attached to the ship's manager, Mr William Price, but it considered that he should have insisted on signing-on a more adequate crew, having regard to the fact that twelve apprentices were carried, of whom five had never been to sea before.

Mr Price told the Court that the value of the vessel to the owners was £17,000. The insurances were £14,000 on the hull, (£2,000 of which was subscribed by the owner), and £2,500 on the freight.

The Court announced its conclusion on 10th April, 1901. The verdict of the Court was that the loss of the **Primrose Hill** was due to the vessel not having set sufficient sail to carry her clear of the land after the towrope parted. The loss of life was due to the ship breaking up so rapidly after she struck the rocks.

The bodies of the captain and most of the crew are buried in a mass grave at Maes-Hyfryd Cemetery, Holyhead; but the bodies of the third mate, one of the ordinary seamen and four of the apprentices were never found. ▌

JUST FANCY THAT !!!

DISCHARGING CONTAINERS ON THE WEST AFRICAN COAST – 2005 STYLE

Nothing much changes on the West African Coast. Discharging containers to 'lightering' vessels in 2005. *Photo : Aubrey Bowles*

CAPTAIN JACK GOES SHOPPING

by John Fletcher

The trade between the West Coast of Africa and the U.K. – Continent is not the easiest of runs, as many who have served in it will know. But Captain Jack was a man of long experience and he was determined to take his ship home fully laden .....

Captain Jack stood on the busy wharf at Apapa quays, the centre of a small group of men: his agent, the cargo supervisor and his assistant and the operations manager. With an angry gesture he indicated the scene around them.

"Look at it", he said, *"just take a good look. Confusion and congestion everywhere and I'm supposed to be running my ship to a schedule. We're a cargo liner company you know, not a tramp outfit."*

He had a point there. Cargoes of all descriptions filled the sheds and overflowed to cover nearly all the space between and around them. Covered or part-covered with tarpaulins, most of it had lain there for months.

"Well, there is a war on, you know, captain," the agent ventured.

"Of course I know. It's been the standard excuse for every delay we've had over the last week and there's been enough of them. Now then, I want to sail in the morning so we'll work the ship through the night. What you can't get out we'll take with us and discharge when we come back here, unless, gentlemen, you have any better suggestions."

None being offered, Captain Jack instructed them to make the necessary sailing arrangements for the morning tide, bade them good day, and stumped back on board. A sturdily built Yorkshireman with a dominant personality, Captain Jack had been mate and master on the West African run for many years and knew the trade inside out, a fact which was not lost on the disgruntled group he had just left. Faced with the problems he foresaw before he had his ship fully loaded, he had fumed and complained at the delays, frustrations and slow rate of discharge during the last few days until his temper was worn to a very fine edge.

Seeking out the mate, whose knowledge of the West African trade was limited to what he had picked up in the last few weeks, he told him the new sailing time and then went on: *"You see what's going to happen if we don't get away. There's only the one berth at Tiko and I happen to know there's a banana boat due there in a day or two. If she gets there first we're stuck for a couple of days at least, and if we go on to Douala instead, by the time we come back, we'll fall foul of the Independence Day holiday. Anyway, get everything laid on for the morning and we'll see how it turns out."*

Captain Jack duly sailed his ship the next morning and first light of the following day saw him edging slowly into Victoria Bay, the prettiest and also the wettest place in the Camerouns, to pick up the Tiko pilot.

"No sign of any pilot boat," said the mate, *"but I think that's a company ship anchored inshore there."*

"Right, try and get her on the V.H.F. and see if they know where the pilot is; somebody should be on the bridge."

While the mate did this, Captain Jack was peering intently through his glasses, and a sudden roar followed by a string of invective told the mate that whatever he had seen was not to his liking. Following his gaze, the mate discerned a sleek white ship rounding the point and disappearing in the direction of Tiko.

"There's your damned banana boat, mister. She's got the pilot and beaten us." For a moment Captain Jack stood as if indecisive, then made up his mind. *"Hard-a-starboard,"* he yelled at the quartermaster. *"Mate, full ahead, then 'phone down and tell the chief we're going on to Douala. It's no damn use staying here."*

The ship was steadied on her new course and for the next hour the two of them stood watch, peering through the driving rain which had now set in with full daylight. The chart room door suddenly opened and Sparks appeared with a message pad in his hand.

"Captain, sir, just had a call from the other ship in Victoria. They say the agents have been trying to contact us. They want us back there right away to load 300 tons of palm oil."

This unexpected bit of news was received in silence for a moment or two and then Captain Jack erupted. *"Here mate, turn her round and put her on course for Victoria and then let the chief know what's happening, will you. Sparks, try and raise those clowns in the agent's office on R/T. I'll be down in a minute and see if I can talk to someone with some sense."*

By mid-morning the ship lay quietly at anchor in Victoria Bay and had started to load her palm oil. The agent was on board and he and Captain Jack had been trying to work out some sort of schedule. It was finally decided, as amicably as possible, to carry on to Douala when the palm oil was finished, discharge there and then load a deck cargo of logs along with some fifty or so deck passengers, return to Victoria to pick up 300 tons of produce and then go off to Tiko. The agent promised 100 tons of rubber there and he had booked 3,000 tons of cocoa at Fernando Po.

A week later, with part of this programme accomplished, Captain Jack was on his way to Tiko and as the creeks were a new experience for the mate he had tried to give him some idea of what to expect. *"There's just the one berth there,"* he had explained, *"and it's a bit tricky getting on to it. You cant the ship before you reach the wharf and then run the stem into the bank. It's only soft mud but it holds her while the tide swings her round and then you can drop down to the berth stern first. You'll soon get the hang of it, but you've got to watch that the tide's right. Oh, and when we start work, watch your cargo. These labourers will pinch anything they can get hold of."*

Watching the work in progress the next day and knowing that there was an apprentice down each hatch watching for pilferage, the mate was thinking of the curious demands of trade which sent a big modern ship to outlandish places like Tiko. For two hours they had steamed up the narrow twisting creek, so close to the banks at times that the bridge wings almost brushed the trees. Dense impenetrable jungle and mangrove swamp on each side and not a sound except for the birds and animals living there. Even the wharf with its office and two sheds was isolated except for the tenuous link of the narrow, single-track railroad which cut through the trees to Tiko village a few miles away. Along this a wheezy little engine hauled a string of small bogeys which carried all the cargo to and from the ship, together with a few workers who managed to cadge a lift.

Four days later the Tiko cargo had been discharged, the rubber loaded and the mate had the crew busy in getting the hatches ready for the 3,000 tons of cocoa. On the way to Fernando Po that booking was cancelled, so off they went to Lagos to see what was offering there. On passage a cable was received from the agents giving the latest cargo bookings, with a post-script helpfully stating that it was appreciated that the ship was having stowage problems. *"Very considerate of them,"* Captain Jack had said at the time, but his thoughts were far from charitable as he strode into the Lagos office a couple of days later. Arriving off the port he had been informed that no loading berth was available at present, but would he bring the ship in to the buoys where the agent's launch would take him ashore to their office. They had cargo problems they wished to discuss. *"I'll bet they have,"* he had remarked feelingly to the mate, *"and they want me to take the ship to the most awkward berth in the port, pay extra tug and pilotage charges and then go and sort out their problems. Anyway, while I'm gone you can get No. 1 hatch ready for those bagged groundnuts we were talking about. They said that was a definite booking and would be ready as soon as we got alongside."*

He was back later that afternoon and one look at his face told the mate why he was sometimes referred to as Black Jack along the coast. His shoulders seemed to sag a little as he came up the gangway and wearily said, *"That No.1 hatch ....."*

"It's all ready," interrupted the mate. *"In fact we finished half an hour ago."*

"Well, you better get the bosun and his crowd down there again to lift all the dunnage and get it ready for bulk."

"Bulk," the mate echoed, *"I thought you said it was a bagged cargo?"*

"That's right," Captain Jack replied, *"it was till an hour ago. Now they want the whole 500 tons in bulk. Yes, I know how you feel, but get it organized and then come up top. Bring your papers and I'll tell you what's going on."*

Once he'd seen the crew started on the job, the mate went up to the captain's room feeling fed up and frustrated, but Black Jack had been replaced by the familiar Captain Jack and two cold beers stood on the low table.

"Come on in and get one of these supped before you say anything," the captain greeted him. *"You've either got to laugh or cry in this damn game. Look, I know that you're fed up, but this is typical of what I've been telling you about West Africa and don't tell me it doesn't happen in the Far East trade sometimes. Now let's get down to it. Oh, that Hamburg palm oil we loaded in Victoria."*

"What about it?" the mate asked.

"Nothing, except that it's for Rotterdam," Captain Jack replied, *"so you'll have to find another home for the Hamburg cargo you had planned for over the tanks. Now the groundnuts you know about; here's the rest of the changes."* They worked rapidly together until the mate put down his pencil and sat back.

"Well, I've got that little lot, but what's the prospect after we leave here?"

"Now you're asking. It looks like we'll have to do a bit of shopping."

Seeing the puzzled look on the mate's face, Captain Jack went on. *"The Monrovia and Freetown bookings are pretty firm, but they'll nowhere near fill us. The agent thinks there are logs offering at Takoradi and Cape Palmas, but the communications between here and Ghana broke down a couple of days ago and he can't raise Cape Palmas anyway."*

"So, what do we do about it?" queried the mate.

"Well, I'll be honest with you; he virtually said we're on our own from here. There's a couple of tanks of oil we should get in Cotonou, but after that he gave me a free hand to pick up anything that's offering for the Continent between here and Monrovia, so that's just what we'll do. Pull another two beers out and then get your Lagos loading organized. I reckon we'll be on the loading berth tomorrow and I want all hooks working."

Sure enough the ship berthed and began loading the next day. The second and third mates worked 12-hour shifts and three days later she sailed, having lifted just over 2,000 tons. Berthing in Cotonou on a Sunday afternoon she took 600 tons of oil and was away before midnight, homeward bound, but with a bit of shopping to do first.

On the bridge the next morning, Captain Jack studied the chart and then told the third mate to alter course to pass closer to Takoradi. *"We'll close the port and then call up and see what's offering,"* he said. At 11.am and with the harbour just visible he tried the V.H.F. and within a few minutes had the local agent answering.

"That you, Harry," began Captain Jack, *"Yes, I'm fine, thanks. Now then; we're off the port and part loaded for the Continent. Yes, the usual ports, but I've decided to call at Amsterdam first this time. What have you got for us? Yes, I'll hang on."* Then, turning to the third mate, *"Just get the mate up here, will you?"* The V.H.F. was silent for a while and then crackled into life again.

"Receiving you loud and clear, Harry, carry on," the captain answered. *"Right, you have 200 tons of Hamburg logs, cleared for shipment but they aren't in the port yet. A further 300 tons of logs for Rotterdam and they're in the port but, what's that again, Harry, there's no papers for them? Yes, I got that, but there's no berth available if we do come in? Two days delay, you say? Right, I get the picture; thanks, I'll call you back in a moment."*

Turning to the mate with a shrug he said: *"Well, there's not much future in that, is there, mister? I think we'll give it a miss. Third Mate, put her back on course."* Captain Jack picked up the V.H.F. again: *"Hello, Harry, still there? Well thanks a lot but we won't bother. No, we'll carry on and see if there's anything at Cape Palmas. Goodbye, be seeing you."* Down went the phone with a gesture expressive of how he felt about life in general and West Africa in particular.

Twenty hours steaming brought them to Cape Palmas and here they had better luck. The agent had been contacted but his phone went dead half way through the conversation. What little was said however induced Captain Jack to take his ship into an anchorage where the agent could board. The mate meanwhile was trying to equate what he saw as he stood on the bridge with his pre-conceived ideas of the place.

Right on the southern tip of the West African coast, the harbour as such, was big enough to take a small coaster. It was fringed with reefs you could see, while the anchorage for ocean-going ships lay between rocks you couldn't. The palm-lined beach was but eight cables away and prominent on it, the broken hull of an old iron steamer which had given her name to one of the submerged rocks. Even at anchor the ship had a steady roll as the swell surged round her.

In due course the agent came out in a powerful fibre-glass surf boat and scrambled up the pilot ladder. The mate took him to Captain Jack who had three cold

beers waiting, and after the usual pleasantries they got down to business. *"Now then what have you got?"* enquired Captain Jack. The agent was equally blunt. *"200 tons of logs for Rotterdam, 100 for Hamburg and 50 tons of cocoa for Amsterdam, ready to start in the morning,"* he said, *"and I reckon I can finish you for tomorrow night. How does that suit?"*

The captain thought awhile. *"Yes, that's a fair load for a day and if we can leave before 10.pm we'll get to Monrovia at a reasonable hour. Right, we'll stay and take it."*

"You don't mind taking the ship out in the dark, captain, do you?" Captain Jack merely looked at the agent, but it sufficed to resolve whatever doubts he had on that score.

After the agent had left the captain explained to the mate how the cargo would arrive; the cocoa rowed out in boats about as big as one of their life-boats; the logs towed out as rafts with two water boys to each, who would sling each individual log and slip it from its raft, a tricky job under any conditions but with the swell that was running and the fact that a single log could weigh anything up to 12 tons, a highly dangerous one. This was recognized however, as a water boy was paid 6d. a day over and above the going rate for an ordinary labourer.

The next morning was wild and wet with a nasty swell. Through the spray which partly obscured the small harbour, the boats and log rafts were seen struggling out towards the ship. They eventually arrived and were secured alongside while a very wet stevedore climbed aboard and sought out the mate. Rather apologetically he said. *"I'm sorry but there's been a bit of a change. There are no Rotterdam logs; the whole 300 tons are for Hamburg and there's some piassava as well. The shipper of this has been waiting weeks to get it on a ship to the Continent. Will it affect your stow much?"*

"Of course it ruddy well will," the mate almost shouted, *"but I suppose we'll sort it out somehow. You go up top and tell the captain while I see what can be done."*

The stowage difficulty was settled and the loading began and through the day the heavy logs were hauled from the water and heaved aboard, some down the hatches and others adding to the considerable load already on deck. The boats plied between ship and shore with their loads of cocoa and piassava and by nightfall there were but a dozen or so logs floating alongside. As the wind and swell increased the water boys became more wary as they jumped from log to log and occasionally took a header into the sea to avoid being crushed, but finally the last one was stowed and the ship was ready to leave.

The two final ports were comparatively easy, requiring no more of Captain Jack's shopping ability. Shortly before midnight a few days later he was able to wave the Freetown pilot over the side, take one last look at the receding shore lights and set a course for home, his hatches full and the decks piled high with logs.

The homeward run was uneventful until the third mate sent down one morning for the captain and the others to come on the bridge and witness the passing of a strange new type of vessel which was rapidly approaching. She was a big ship with a fine turn of speed; bulky yet sleek with it. And what appeared to be huge boxes or crates were stacked three high the length of her deck.

"Well, she's something new to me," commented the young third mate. *"Looks like a great sea-going barge with a block of flats on the stern."*

"Barge nothing," snorted Captain Jack, *"that's one of your new container ships. Take a good look at her, lads, there's your future."*

The other officers were silent with their thoughts as they viewed this ship of the future which had suddenly projected itself very much into the present. Since their conception some years ago, each container ship was to replace seven conventional ships and the threat of redundancy was of serious concern to the officers and men of the company. With six such ships operating successfully on the Australian run and plans for more to enter the Far Eastern trade, many of them, with an eye on the future, had already begun to look elsewhere for jobs.

"Well, mate," said Captain Jack, *"what do you think?"*

"Oh, they're a great innovation," replied his mate, *"but somehow you know, I think our jobs will be with us for quite some time on this coast."* ▌

This article first appeared in *'The Elders of Elders'* and has been reproduced in *'The Bulletin'* with the kind permission of the Editor and Mr J.E. Cowden.

NOTIFICATION OF AN ADDITIONAL TALK FOLLOWING THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON THURSDAY 18th MAY, 2006:

"A CANADIAN TIMBER AND SHIPPING EMPIRE AND A LIVERPOOL CONNECTION"

by Maurice D. Smith

We are very pleased to advise that at the conclusion of our Annual General Meting, Society Member Maurice D. Smith will present the above illustrated talk.

Maurice served as the Executive Director of the Maritime Museum of the Great Lakes. As a Curator he helped to develop one of the largest integrated marine history collections in Canada. In his early career he was a professional sailor. He has served as President of the Ontario Museums Association; on the Council of the International Congress of Maritime Museums, and is currently on the Council of the Canadian Nautical Research Society. Now retired, Maurice spends his days writing, consulting and serving the Museum as Curator Emeritus.

We are extremely privileged to announce this extra special event and trust that our members will give the support that Maurice's visit justly deserves.

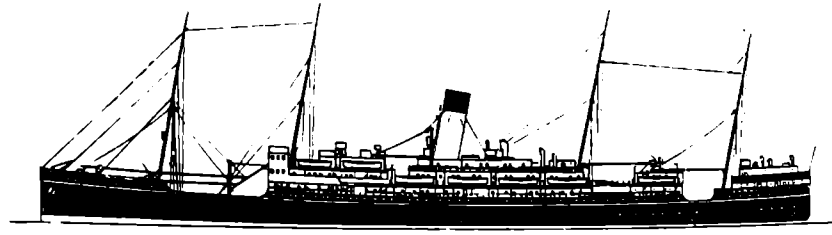
THE BIBBY LINER *"CHESHIRE"* OF 1927

By the end of 1918 the Bibby fleet numbered seven ships, the oldest being the **Derbyshire** of 1897 and the latest the **Lancashire** of 1917. The **Yorkshire**, already ordered, was put in hand at once and completed in 1920, while in the same year two ships of an entirely different type and a complete innovation for this company were also fitted out. These were the **Dorsetshire** and the **Somersetshire**, purely cargo liners and with diesel engines. This pair was built primarily to gain experience with diesels and spent many of their early voyages on charter. In 1927 they were both converted into passenger vessels primarily for trooping service.

It was not until 1924 that two new passenger liners for the main Rangoon service were ordered. Somewhat unusually Bibbys forsook Harland and Wolff and went to the Fairfield Company instead. They also settled for diesel propulsion so that the new ships, the **Cheshire** and the **Shropshire**, were the first Bibby passenger liners to be motorships. The **Shropshire** was completed first and the two were to all intents and purposes identical twins.

The **Cheshire** had a gross tonnage of 10,552, net 6,608 and a large deadweight capacity of 10,192 tons. She had a length of 483.6 ft., breadth 60.3 ft. and a depth of 31.8 ft. The new ship had a service speed of 15 knots with a bunker capacity of 1,040 tons and a consumption of 22 tons per day.

First-class passengers only were carried and there was accommodation for 265 in the 'Bibby tandem cabin' system. The one-class system in Bibby ships was extremely popular with passengers having the run of the entire ships without any irritating segregation.



The Cheshire as she appeared from 1927 - 1939

Bibbys adhered to their traditional build for their new motorships with a tall funnel and four lofty masts with the result that they were beautiful and highly distinctive ships. This lofty structure was, of course, quite unnecessary and also expensive both in construction and maintenance, but there was no better propaganda and advertisement than to continue in the old tradition, admired throughout the whole

course of the ships' voyages. A million pities that so much less thought and care is given to the appearance of today's ships.

The **Cheshire** was launched on 20th April 1927 and commenced her maiden voyage in July of that year from Liverpool to Rangoon, via Gibraltar, Marseilles, Port Said, Port Sudan and Colombo. From then on for the next twelve years she helped to maintain this well-known service and seems to have led a fairly uneventful and hence highly successful life. By 1934 the **Cheshire's** log recorded that she had steamed 447,361 miles without ever having to stop due to engine trouble.

The **Cheshire** and the **Shropshire** proved so successful that a third ship, the **Staffordshire** was ordered from Fairfields with the same length, general design and machinery but with the beam increased by two feet. She was completed in 1929 and was followed two years later by a fourth ship, the **Worcestershire**, also from the Fairfield yard, but with the beam increased by a further two feet. All this was without any loss of speed and in fact the **Worcestershire** attained 17 knots on her trials. By 1939 the Rangoon service was at its peak.

In September 1939, when homeward bound, the **Cheshire** was ordered to Calcutta to be converted into an armed merchant cruiser. Here she was armed with six 6-inch guns and six smaller guns. Her passenger fittings were removed and she was given an overall coat of grey paint. Leaving Calcutta on 30th October, the **Cheshire** sailed for the UK where she was immediately employed on Atlantic patrols. On 14th October, 1940, she was struck by a torpedo from U.137 in No.2 hold which contained a magazine. The following day rescue tugs arrived and attempted to tow her into port but this proved impossible and the **Cheshire** had to be beached near Carrickfergus.

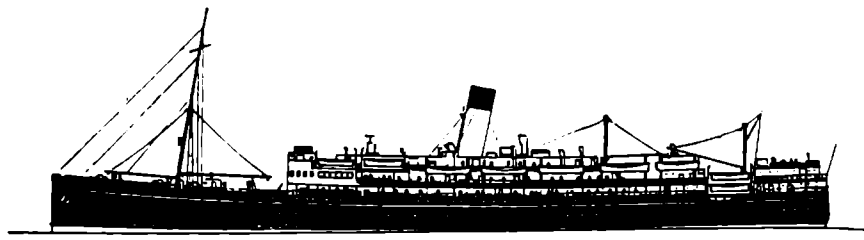
The salvage steamer **Ranger** of the Liverpool and Glasgow Salvage Association, with pumps and air-compressors, was sent to meet her and on arrival laid out moorings astern to hold the **Cheshire** in position. Then began a long drawn out effort to give the ship sufficient buoyancy to get her into port. No.1 hold had been stowed with empty barrels to provide her with additional buoyancy and No.2 hold was partly filled with bundles of bamboo for the same purpose. These measures had in fact saved the **Cheshire** from sinking after the torpedo had struck. However, in her flooded condition, these preventative measures rendered the job of getting at the hole and patching it extraordinarily difficult. It was eventually done and she was pumped out. On 1st December 1940 the **Cheshire** arrived at Liverpool under tow and was put into the Gladstone Graving Dock where permanent repairs, which took six months, were carried out.

The **Cheshire** returned to her duties in the Atlantic. On 14th March 1942 she stopped the German raider **Doggerbank** off Cape Town. This vessel was in fact the captured **Speybank** of the Bank Line. However the raider identified herself as the **Levenbank** and was allowed to proceed. On 24th July the **Cheshire** took in tow Lambert's **Temple Inn** which had shed her propeller and took her to Point Noire, West Africa. Back in the North Atlantic the **Cheshire** was once again torpedoed, this time by U 214, on 18th August, but managed to reach port.

Following more repairs, the Cheshire was converted into a troopship in 1943 and played a notable part in the Normandy landings in which she and three other Bibby liners, the **Devonshire**, **Lancashire** and Worcestershire landed 10,000 troops on the 'Juno' beachhead on 7th June 1944.

From then on until 1948 the **Cheshire** was continuously occupied with trooping and repatriation work to all parts of the world. On 25th September 1946 she arrived at Gibraltar with residents returning home after being evacuated to Northern Ireland in late 1940. On 5th October 1948 the **Cheshire** arrived at Liverpool from Port Said and was released for civil employment.

By this time she looked a very different ship from the smart **Cheshire** of 1927. Her main, mizzen and jigger masts had all been removed. A radar tower was fitted abaft the bridge, and the derrick posts in the fore well deck had gone. Before release from government service she had already been earmarked for emigrant service to Australia, carrying both fare-paying and assisted-passage emigrants, together with the **Orontes** and the **Dominion Monarch**.



*The **Cheshire** as an emigrant carrier in 1949*

The **Cheshire** was refitted to carry a total of 650 passengers, of whom 434 would be assisted-passage emigrants. She was repainted in Bibby colours and once again looked a fine ship, but in a very different style and with her once lofty and beautifully proportioned profile sadly changed. She left Liverpool for Sydney on 9th August 1949 via Suez, with calls at Fremantle and Melbourne. By the end of that year there were nine ships on the emigrant run, including the **Somersetshire** and the **Dorsetshire**.

In February 1953 the **Cheshire** was chartered by the Ministry of Transport and reverted to trooping during the height of the Korean war. She left Liverpool on 5th February for Singapore and continued on this trooping service for the next four years. One of her more unusual jobs during this period was to take stores and personnel to Christmas Island for the British nuclear tests taking place there.

On 10th February 1957 the **Cheshire** arrived back at Liverpool at the end of her last voyage and was laid up in Langton Dock. She was sold to the British Iron & Steel Corporation and left the Mersey on 10th July 1957 for Newport, Mon., where she was broken up by John Cashmore Ltd.

Thirty years old, the **Cheshire** had certainly done remarkably well during her long career. For the first twelve years, on her scheduled route, she had been a highly popular ship. The last 18 years could hardly have been more different from those anticipated. ▌

SAGA OF A MERSEY PILOT CUTTER

by Captain J.P. Thomson, OBE

This year marks the 240th anniversary of the inauguration of the Liverpool Pilotage Service. During that time immense changes have taken place in the maritime scene, not least in the pilot vessels themselves. Sail gave way to steam, and steam in its turn to diesel-electric pilot cutters. Today the Service is operated using high-speed launches. Many are the seamen who received their early training in Mersey pilot cutters and throughout the 240 years of service to the port of Liverpool the highest standard of seamanship has been maintained.

In this article, written in 1966, Captain J.P. Thomson recalls the sailing pilot cutter **Mersey**, *built in 1847, and in which he himself served in during 1907, the old cutter's last year. Captain Thomson endeavoured to trace the career of the* **Mersey** *and the following extract from 'The History of the Liverpool Pilotage Service', written by the late John S. Rees, tallied so well with the story that he remembered hearing as a boy, that he quoted it in full in his article:*

'The story of the ex-Mersey pilot boats is, in most instances, enveloped in obscurity, and in cases where something of their activities has been revealed it is generally of a very scanty and unsatisfying nature. That being so, it would seem of special interest to tell the story of the **Mersey**, which, thanks to the kindness and courtesy of Mr Thomas Henderson, of Scousburgh, Shetland Islands, has been made available.

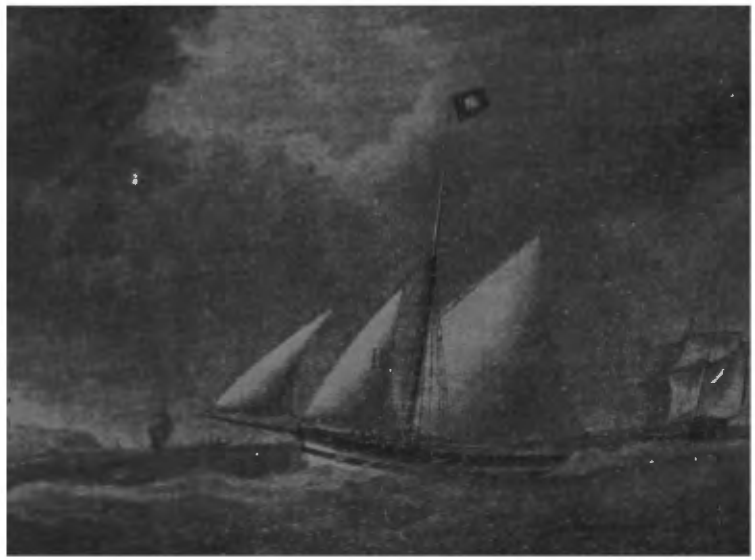
'The cutter **Mersey**, the second of the name that the Pilotage Service had owned, of 47 tons, was built by Thomas Royden at Liverpool in 1847 of English oak and copper-fastened throughout, at a cost of £2,000. In 1875, after 28 years' employment, she was replaced and sold to Peter Tait, of Scalloway, Shetland Islands. Tait was a retired master mariner, then owning vessels in the Shetland / Faroe cod-fishing trade, which industry was booming at the time.

'The **Mersey** went on her first Faroe voyage in July 1875. She was not a pretty craft, stem slightly raked, very short overhang to her square stern, bluff in the bows, but what she lacked in beauty she more than made up for in other ways. She was a fine sea-boat, dry-working and kindly, and these qualities went a long way with seamen in the wild weather on the Faroe Bank and Iceland grounds.

'Therefore the **Mersey** was always popular with her crew; also she was a lucky vessel and brought home many good catches of cod. For many years she made two, sometimes three voyages every season, the first to Faroe or Rockall, and the last to Iceland, beginning the season in March and finishing about the end of September. During the winter months the **Mersey** went coasting.

'Sometime in the 1880s she was switched to 'home' cod-fishing, that is, on the Shetland banks. Thereafter she made only an occasional voyage to Faroe and did more coasting than formerly. But as the years went by, the cod-fishing began to fail and many of the firms engaged in it, including Tait, fell on hard times. In 1894 the **Mersey** was sold to William S. Smith, a well-known Shetland smack-owner, and Peter Tait went to sea again, skippering the vessel he had formerly owned.

'With two of his sons he ran the **Mersey** in the coasting trade between Shetland and the south. On Saturday 4th July 1903, the **Mersey** left Scalloway bound for Sunderland in ballast. On this occasion Captain Tait had three of his sons on board. Young Robert, by this time a chief officer in the merchant service and at home for a spell, had chosen to make a trip with his father and brothers in the old smack in which he had served his time.



*The pilot cutter **Mersey** of 1847, from a painting in the possession of the Mersey Docks & Harbour Co.*

'It was blowing hard from the northward when they sailed, and they ran before it all night with the wind steadily increasing and a vicious sea tumbling up astern. All went well until they were off Buchanness, when an attempt to heave-to almost brought disaster. A terrific sea struck the vessel, laying her flat-down on her beam ends with her cross-trees almost in the water. A less staunch craft would have perished then. The **Mersey's** ballast shifted, but somehow they managed to pay her off, and the stout old pilot boat brought her spars up with a heave which cleared her flooded decks.

'At 6.am on the morning of 7th July they made Soutar Point, only to find Wearmouth Bar breaking in smoke. There was nothing for it but to run to Bridlington, that haven of many a distressed coasting mariner. Six miles north of Flamborough Head, with Captain Tait himself steering, an immense wave swept the **Mersey** fore and aft, and in the wash of it the horrified sons saw their father's head in the water astern. He was oil-skinned and sea-booted. One of the young men grabbed the wildly swinging helm and jammed it hard down, but as she rounded to the wind a mighty sea almost buried her, and the sons heard the old man's voice clearly: *"Keep her away boys, oh, keep her away."*

'They knew what he meant: another sea like that which had taken him overboard would mean the end of them all. Probably never before had these lads,

brought up on board the smack where their father's word was law, failed to obey his least command. But that last terrible order they did disregard. Reckless of consequence, they wore the **Mersey** short round, and handling the vessel superbly, would have reached their father on that first tack, but he sank when they were less than a hundred yards away.

'It was a noble ending for a very gallant gentleman, accepting death with equanimity rather than endangering his ship and the lives of his crew. Such courage as was displayed by Captain Tait is heroism indeed. But they were three sorrowful young men who brought the old **Mersey** safely to Bridlington without her skipper.

'The **Mersey** had one other change of ownership. Her last owner was L. Daglish, a partner of Nicholson and Company, the long established smack owners at Scalloway, Shetland. She was broken up at Scalloway, and on 5th February 1909 her register was cancelled.'

Captain Thomson now takes up the story:

It was my pleasure to serve in the **Mersey** during her last year and I joined her in March 1907. The vessel had been at anchor during the winter months and during that period her decks had been caulked, rigging and running gear overhauled and sails repaired and renewed as found necessary.

The crew consisted of:

W. Goudie	Master
A. Leask	Mate
A. Moar	Ordinary Seaman
J.P. Thomson	Ordinary Seaman

The vessel was quite heavily equipped for such manning and it was necessary to see that all the running gear was in good, easy working order. The master and mate had served for many years as masters in the fishing smacks and schooners. The ordinary seaman A. Moar had been a beach boy and had I think some service in sail drift fishing vessels, and I had had two seasons in sail drifters and six months' training at sailmaking under that great sailmaker and sailor Magnus Frasmuson, who managed Nicholson and Company's sail loft.

In the course of rigging out and bending sails the master and mate gave the tasks their careful attention and at the same time instructed us boys. Additional ballast from a road quarry outside the town was carried and carted to the jetty where we transferred it to the hold.

The wind had been blowing into the harbour, but, eventually it was possible to heave short, set sail and beat out of the harbour. After clearing the islands, a course was set to the southward of Foula, close hauled on the port tack until a position was reached which would enable the **Mersey** to weather Fitful Head and it was well into the night before this was achieved. The master and mate were very soon aware that their crew had much to learn, and, in consequence, they lost no time in initiating us into the art of reefing, shortening and setting sail.

By daylight on the next day we were to the south-west of Fitful Head and we made more sail, continuing on the starboard tack to the south-east, tacking ship twice

during the day and shortening sail again before darkness set in. In this manner we continued to beat to windward for a whole week having been on many tacks, and one evening the **Mersey** was in a position to the eastward of Peterhead, with a falling barometer and every indication which forebodes a south-east gale.

I was at the helm and heard the deliberations between the master and mate, the latter suggesting entering Peterhead harbour and sheltering until the wind changed. The master felt that the gale might only be of short duration, and to use his own words, *"We will lay her off on a reach to the eastward"*, which was done at once. This would be the starboard tack and so there was no need to bear up for other vessels.

Later the wind and sea increased and we hauled up the main tack, made fast the foresail, saw all secure on deck and lashed the helm down. Being on deck was dangerous to both life and limb, and one man kept a look-out in the cabin companion-way, hauling the scuttle over as a big sea swept by. For seven days the gale continued, yet the **Mersey** rode well, seas towering over us as high as the eyes of the rigging, but she took only light water forward and, as the wave rolled along she would dip her Nova Scotian stern under. All the gear stood, having been well secured and there was no hull leakage. The master feared being set on to the Orkneys but one or two soundings were found possible which assured him we were quite safe.

When the weather improved we were able to make sail but we had no opportunity for a meridian altitude or fix, other than soundings which showed that we had made easting. Finding the gear all sound and the bilges dry, we stood to the westward and some time later picked up the Noss of Bressay, showing that we had drifted 150 miles in the seven days. Being anxious to report 'all well' and to replenish our lamp oil and water, we put into Lerwick. We resumed our voyage, having gained valuable experience and confidence in our ship.

The wind was easterly and we made good progress arriving off the mouth of the Wear, where the tug **Kate** met us, towing us to Carney's wharf where we discharged our gravel ballast. Later we were towed into the South Dock where we loaded a full cargo of coal, about 70 tons.

The hatch was battened down using three tarpaulins, each coated with Stockholm tar, the corners neatly tucked in and tacked down before shipping the battens and wedging. The **Mersey** was towed out to sea and the routine of the voyage north began, making all sail at dawn and shortening down before dark. We made good progress and four days later found us close to the south-west of Fitful Head, under a reefed mainsail, foresail and jib.

The weather was squally with hail showers. Just before dawn the wind shifted to the westward and increased to storm force. Before we could shorten sail the **Mersey** was on her beam ends and heading for Fitful Head. We succeeded in getting the foresail down and the jib blew out of the ropes. She then came up and we attempted to get the mainsail down but the halliards would not run.

Fitful Head loomed nearer with its heavy breakers. The master put the helm down and wore round under the cliff, clearing the breakers by a very narrow margin, and in so doing we split the mainsail and badly damaged the gaff. We were then heading off shore and managed to haul the damaged mainsail down, hoist a jib as trysail and set the foresail to make what way we could. It was a relief to watch the dangers recede as we saw how the master skillfully handled the ship as she slowly

clawed off Fitful Head. When clear we steered to the southward of Sumbro Head, and the next day we were able to reach Levenwick where J.R. Jameson effected repairs to the gaff and we resumed our voyage to Scalloway. The mate's action in so well securing the hatch after completing the loading saved the **Mersey** when she went on her beam ends. Although half the hatch was under water for some time, nothing leaked into the hold.

Assisted by two men we soon discharged our cargo; as always the windlass served as a dolly winch. In the meantime Magnus Erasmuson repaired our sails and a new gaff was made. Ballast was quarried in the usual way, stowed in the hold and well secured and we sailed on another voyage.

To my opposite number, the other ordinary seaman Arthur Moar, such adventures were the spice of life. He was indeed an apt pupil, acquiring the art of good seamanship, and picking up and identifying land at long distances. Several years later we met again in a crowded street in a north-east port. He said: *"Let's go and have a drink and talk about the **Mersey**."* It was indeed a most happy occasion as we each related incidents from our **Mersey** days.

I continued to serve in the **Mersey** for a further six voyages. I loved the old ship and learned her peculiarities and the seamanship I learned has been a guide to many problems since those early days. I have served and had experience of many ships trading to all parts of the world, but the skill of the master and mate of the **Mersey** stands out in my memory. They knew the weakness of every situation and in an emergency had the courage to take the correct decision without a moment's hesitation. ▌

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Until further notice , Meetings are held in the 'Long Room' on the second floor of the Merseyside Maritime Museum and commence at 12.30pm. Coffee and biscuits are available from 12.noon.

Thursday, 16th March, 2006
THE POST WAR PASSENGER LINERS OF LIVERPOOL
John Shepherd

Thursday, 20th April, 2006
MARINE ART AND ULSTER
Mr A.S. Davidson

Thursday, 18th May, 2006
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
To be followed by an additional talk : full details on page 13

THE MONDAY FACILITY

Members' access to the Archives and Library at the Merseyside Maritime Museum continues as follows:
MARCH, 2006 : 6th, 13th, 20th and 27th
APRIL, 2006 : 3rd, 10th and 24th
MAY, 2006 : 8th, 15th and 22nd.
JUNE, 2006 : 5th, 12th, 19th and 26th

MARCONI MARINE, 1900 – 1950

April 1950 witnessed the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Marconi International Marine Communication Company, which on 25th April, 1900 (the 26th birthday of Guglielmo Marconi) was incorporated with offices in London and Brussels. A special exhibition at the Baltic Exchange, St Mary Axe, London was opened on 24th March, 1950 by Sir George H. Nelson, chairman of the Marconi companies. Speaking at the opening, Sir George said that the jubilee was, of course, an occasion of great importance in the Company's history. But it was an occasion of equal importance in the history of the sea, for it was at the same time the 50th anniversary of a tremendous revolution in marine communication, brought about by the inventive genius of Marconi.

Marconi's demonstrations of wireless, at the end of the nineteenth century, met with incredulity, but experiment followed experiment until in November 1899 a message was sent from the Isle of Wight to the ss **St Paul**, 66 miles out at sea. Long distance communication at sea, by wireless telegraphy, had become a fact.

The first wireless equipment aboard ship in 1900. This set in the "St. Paul" received news of the progress of the South African war for "The Transatlantic Times," the first wireless newspaper published at sea

In 1900 the Marconi International Marine Communication Company was formed for the purpose of developing, for the safety and convenience of all those who used the sea, the discoveries of Marconi. Soon after the incorporation of the Company,

an enormous stride was made in the development of wireless communication when Marconi, at St John's in Newfoundland, received wireless signals from the Company's transmitting station at Poldhu, Cornwall, a distance of more than 2,170 miles across the sea. That was in December, 1901.

The wireless cabin of the **St Paul** in 1900 was fitted with a battery-operated spark transmitter using an induction coil and a Leyden jar condenser bank, together with a receiver consisting, essentially, of a Marconi coherer. The receiver operated either a call bell or a morse inker, which recorded incoming messages in morse characters on paper tape.

The first British merchant ship to be equipped with Marconi wireless apparatus was the ss **Lake Champlain** of the Beaver Line in 1901, and by 1903 more than forty ships were regularly using Marconi's system, whilst 54 land stations were either working or being built. By 1907 this had increased to 139 ships, and the following year this figure had risen to more than 170.

It was in connection with the saving of life at sea that Marconi's proudest achievements were numbered. The first time that this aspect of wireless caught the imagination of the entire world was in 1909 when the **Republic**, of some 15,000 tons, was in collision with the Italian steamer **Florida**. While the **Republic** sank beneath his feet, the radio officer guided the rescuers to the darkened ship through the thick fog which had come up. In all, he sent out more than 200 messages.

Among the other names which come to mind is the **Titanic** disaster, when the radio officer died at his post sending out the messages for help to which 705 survivors owed their lives.

The **Empress of Ireland** was another classic case. Mr Ronald Ferguson, the general manager of the Marconi Company in 1950, was the senior radio officer on board at the time of the tragedy. The *Empress* was involved in a collision in the St Lawrence and sank almost immediately. In all there were only eight minutes between the time of collision and the time the dynamos were out of action, during which Mr Ferguson was able to send messages. In spite of this, contact was made with the shore station at Father Point and just before the **Empress of Ireland** foundered it was learned that assistance was being sent. It was due entirely to the promptness with which the SOS was sent out, and the speed with which the assistance arrived, that the 444 who were saved owed their lives.

By 1910 a more powerful and efficient fixed spark transmitter, obtaining its power from the ship's mains instead of from a battery, was in general use. A new type of receiving equipment had been developed, utilizing a magnetic detector and multiple tuner, which tuned from 90 to 2,300 metres. The magnetic detector gave an aural signal in headphones, and the paper tape recording was no longer used. The normal daylight range of this installation was about 300 miles, as against the 120 miles of the 1900 equipment.

Enormous strides in scientific developments were always made in time of war, and it was during the 1914-1918 war that direction-finding, the first experiments with which had been carried out on the old **Mauretania** in 1912, was energetically developed by a Marconi Wireless Company's engineer, who was temporarily serving in the army. Direction-finding equipment became available to merchant ships from 1920.

One of the greatest aids to navigation was introduced in 1930 with the newly developed Echometer, which enabled a ship constantly and immediately to know the exact depth of water underneath its keel. Also by 1930 the equipment included a main transmitter in which the spark had been replaced by valves. The first Marconi auto-alarm was also introduced at this time.

Short-wave equipment was generally available by 1940 which greatly extended the range of marine radio communication.

Marconi instruments developed since the end of the second world war were given names descriptive of the duties they performed. The 'Worldspan' transmitter covered both short and medium waves, and the spark was superseded for emergency purposes by the 'Reliance' battery operated valve receiver. The 'Lodestone', a greatly improved direction finder, was capable of taking accurate radio bearings over longer distances than any of its predecessors. ▌

(This is a précis of an article which first appeared in Shipbuilding & Shipping Record, 23rd March, 1950)

MEMORY CALLS

A wireless operator or radio officer in the earlier days of radio at sea was often a man of many parts, according to the ship he was in. In this article written in 1970, Fred. G. Shaw recalls some memories of his time at sea in this capacity.

The era of the electronics officer is upon us. The radio officer will be a forgotten title before long. Oh, the names I have been called in my discharge book! Marconi Operator, Marconi Officer, First Marconi, Second Marconi, Assistant Marconi, Wireless Operator, Wireless Officer, Wireless Telegraphist, Telegraph Operator, Radio Operator, Radio Telegraphist, Radio Officer. I'm sure I could find another half dozen names. It all seems so very long ago.

In some ships I wore a bowler hat and a Gladstone collar – on others a funny little uniform cap with a letter 'M' on a plush background inside crossed oak leaves. In some ships of the White Star Line out of Liverpool one was an honoured guest (at 25s. per week); on other ships a description of one's reception could not be printed here.

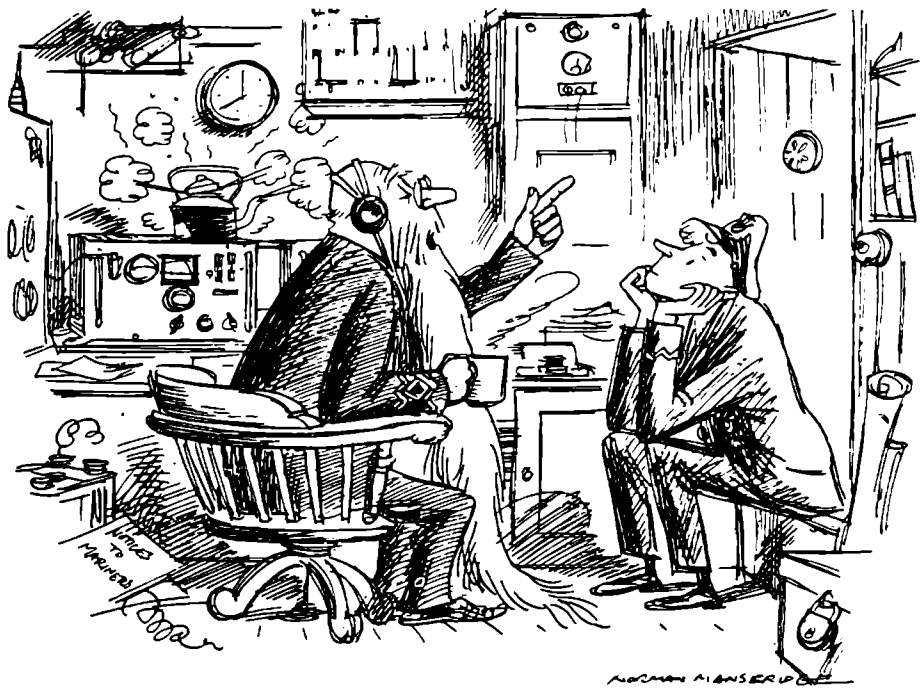
Oh for the days of the clockwork magnetic detector (the dear old 'Maggie'); the multiple tuner, a precision engineering job if ever there was one, and the fixed spark gap with its mysterious smell. Then came the 31A crystal and the rotary gap.

Who now remembers Oriel Chambers, Water Street, Liverpool, the first floor, up those dirty stairs, the offices of the Marconi International Marine Communications Co. Ltd. and of course Mr Pereira and sometimes Mr W.R. Cross?

The offices weren't up to much, wooden tables and benches, but by some arrangement the staff clerk's office had been wired to a buzzer at one end of the Oriel Bar downstairs, and when an operator on standby was wanted, his name was tapped out in morse code and he would be up the stairs and at the staff clerk's window within a minute or so. The junior operators were taken down to the Oriel Bar with the seniors, but their chief job was to sit at the end of the bar nearest to the buzzer.

On arrival at the staff clerk's window one would be handed a large sheet of official looking paper on which it might have said: *"Proceed to Huskisson Dock tomorrow morning at 10am and sign on* ***Cedric*** *....."*

It all seems so long ago – Freddie Bradley in the **Adriatic**, Freddie James in the **Baltic**, Brewster Walsh in the **Cedric**. I've forgotten where that real old timer Billy Davies was then. We always understood he was holder of PMG Ticket No. 1. I wonder if it were true?



. . . . it was some fifty years ago we were sitting together—just as you and I might be—when I said, "Marconi, I said, Why don't you invent wireless?" "Good idea, Bob," he said, "I'll invent wireless and you'll go to sea and operate it for me"'

[By courtesy of the "Marconi Mariner"

Wireless ranges in the 1920s were small. A few days out from home the familiar buzz of 'MPD' from Poldhu in Cornwall and the piping note of 'FL', the Eiffel Tower, soon faded away.

Dark schemes were planned in the Oriel Bar in Liverpool. Operators used to work six hours on, six hours off in those days. The senior usually took the 8.pm to 2.am watch and the junior 2.am to 8.am watch. But in one of my White Star boats this was reversed as the senior was fond of poker and there were great opportunities, but not if he had been on watch from 8.pm to 2.am; hence the switch.

Perhaps some old timers remember the White Star liners **Cretic** and **Canopic** on the Mediterranean run with about 2,000 immigrants each voyage to Boston or New York. Somebody thought up a bright scheme. The Italian immigrants wanted to let their relatives know they were coming and the ships were both fitted with wireless. However messages to America via Cape Race were 35 cents a word, but if they were held for a couple of days they could be routed through an American coast station at about 18 cents a word. Profit 17 cents a word!

Official Marconi receipts couldn't be issued, but the ship's printer did a good job in providing alternatives. Messages were handed in at the purser's office and not the wireless office. Two of the purser's clerks overstepped the mark and decided that some of the messages need not be sent at all, thereby giving a profit of 35 cents a word. It couldn't last, of course. Some of the immigrants were really annoyed when they found that their messages had not arrived, and they produced their 'receipts' at the Marconi office in New York. As a result of an inquiry there was an immediate 'redeployment' of some of the radio officers and purser's staff from the **Cretic** and the **Canopic**!

It must be almost impossible for the present generation to realize what the old days were like. On the old White Star Australia and New Zealand service you could leave Panama and not hear another wireless sound for 21 days in spite of winding up 'Maggie', the magnetic detector, every six hours. What a thrill it was when you eventually called up Awanui, North Island and got a reply. ▌

WIRELESS MEMORIES OF THE "*MAURETAINIA*"

by Bill Haynes

The author of this article served as a wireless operator in the ***Mauretania*** *in the 1930s. He recalls some of his memories of the ship and her equipment, which by that time was becoming somewhat dated.*

In early 1930 I climbed up the gangway of the **Mauretania** at Southampton to join the ship as third Wireless Telegraphist. In those days the Cunard Company ran its own radio service and I had completed three trips in the **Lancastria** before joining the larger ship. True, seven years of sea service lay behind me, but they were on cargo liners and tramps – the **Mauretania** was in a class of her own.

By 1930 the **Mauretania** was a floating museum piece of Edwardiana, and her wireless equipment did its best to keep in that style. The 5 kilowatt spark transmitter installed about 1911 was still used for medium frequency transmission. Incidentally, this was identical to the transmitter which had been installed in the **Titanic**.

The big motor generator also supplied power for the low-frequency continuous wave transmitter installed about 1920. This was the transmitter most used for clearing traffic, having been modified into something peculiar to the *'Maure'*. The receiver was also early 1920 vintage, having what was known as a piano-tuner. This meant that the operator selected his frequency range by depressing something like piano keys, and after a trip or two one reached virtuoso standard!

Beside the receiver was the old 11B direction finder with its attendant switchboards and Sperry compass repeater. On one bulkhead hung a telephone definitely going back to the maiden voyage. A knob swung a brass arm around a circle of tagged studs. It was wonderfully ornate and completely useless.

There was an operating bench with morse-keys and a typewriter, and a smaller bench for calculating accounts. In addition there were enormous generator controls, a large waste paper basket and two office chairs, so there was not even room

left to change your mind! The door to the radio room opened straight from the deck – the cause of much bad language in an Atlantic gale.

Behind a heavy soundproof door, held shut by two great iron clamps, lurked the big motor generator which converted the **Mauretania's** d.c. supply to a.c. for radio purposes. The remainder of this room contained all the ponderous equipment of the spark transmitter. To change frequency it was necessary to use a 4-inch spanner and also a hammer to loosen and drive home the great plugs on the tuning inductances. There was also a handle turning a coarsely threaded brass rod to give the final fine (!) tuning adjustment. Stowed in one corner of this lethal chamber was the ¼-kilowatt emergency spark transmitter. This was so neatly concealed in a teak box mounting a vice and sundry tools that many newcomers failed to find it at all. The batteries powering this little transmitter were in a box on the deck outside and right under the porthole. This formed a convenient seat for couples sufficiently interested in each other to brave darkness and the smuts from the funnels. The bridge officers derived much innocent amusement from watching the effect on young love of the spark transmitter howling into life, and sometimes they telephoned the wireless room asking if this diversion could be arranged!

The wireless room was placed as near to Heaven as possible between the second and third funnels. True to her museum claim the *'Maure'* had the Bellini-Tosi direction-finder loops suspended from a jumper stay. Other ships had discarded this practice years before. The swinging of the enormous ventilators (a feature of the ship) strangely enough seemed to have no effect on the accuracy of the wireless bearings. Similarly the wireless room's one ventilator had no effect either, the reason being that over twenty years of paint had made it immovable, but helped to keep it together. We kept a rag stuffed up this ventilator to prevent a draught whistling down the operator's neck, and hoping to keep out the heavy spray which the *'Maure'* shipped in bad weather.

The chief and first wireless operators had their cabins alongside the wireless room, whereas the two juniors shared a small inside cabin next door to the chief steward's office. As this place kept going feverishly until eleven every night, the noise ensured that the junior wireless staff had uneasy sleep. Not that one had a surplus of that commodity at sea. What with eight hours watch-keeping, meal reliefs, covering the second and third-class passenger accommodation to accept wireless traffic, and keeping up-to-date the complicated accountancy of heavy transmitted and received wireless traffic, a junior operator did not earn much of his £10 a month by lying on his bunk.

Every few voyages the junior operators had to vacate their stuffy little bolt-hole and shift to a first-class cabin. This was not done to give us a change of air. The reason was bed bugs. They lived around there somewhere and liked an occasional change of diet. However, after a day or two of fumigation, back we went to live in a heady atmosphere of concentrated insecticide.

While all her contemporaries had high frequency transmitters to make life easier, the **Mauretania** was denied this amenity. This meant that for the first couple of days out of Southampton, the wireless operators had to get all the American traffic relayed. This sometimes consumed a lot of time and earned much abuse from impatient customers. Fog was the worst thing, for if the ship was near the coast there

was the everlasting cry from the bridge for D/F bearings. Coupled with this, the passenger radio traffic would be at its peak as the *'Maure'* closed the land.

Once clear of the coast fog was not so much of a problem. There were the usual broadcasts of position and requests for 'ships in the vicinity to indicate position and course'. Sometimes these broadcasts included a little fiction about 'reduced speed'. Presumably this referred to the increased friction of fog as against clear air!

The first-class passengers filed their radio messages at a neat little office near the head of the main staircase. This was a sort of Piccadilly Circus of the ship. Two lifts discharged passengers there for all the sumptuous public rooms, as well as the Midland Bank and the first-class shop. The wireless office made its own small contribution to an eccentric world. It was surrounded by a very handsome brass grille. To enter or leave the office you had to dive through a trap-door under the mahogany counter. Apart from some loss of dignity, entering presented no great difficulty. But emerging, especially in a hurry, was decidedly dangerous. I don't think that any wireless operator was not, at some time, placed in an embarrassing position. There were some passengers who objected to playing bears with ship's officers!

I am proud of having served on the **Mauretania** but I have to say that she was not the best of sea boats. Her rolling could be capriciously malignant. I once assisted in rescuing a pair of silk-stockinged legs flailing the air from a bank of hydrangeas! When the *'Maure'* was rolling you typed with one hand and steadied the typewriter with the other if you were to take down an intelligible message. In a good head sea she leaped like a Grand National runner. Just abaft the wireless room was the midship expansion joint sliding under 2-inch bolts. I have known those bolt-heads to shear off and to hit the third funnel like cannon shells.

By 1931 the depression really began to bite. Instead of our long weekend in New York we were sent out on a short cruise before commencing our eastbound passage. Those were the days of prohibition and so the bars never closed. At the end of the cruise the melodious clinking of the amateur smugglers almost drowned the efforts of the ship's orchestra playing them ashore.

At the end of 1931 I was transferred to the plodding little **Antonia**. I was sorry to leave the old *'Maure'*. Some time elapsed before I saw her again, and as it turned out, for the last time. The sleek black hull had been painted white. It did not suit her. She looked what she was – a tired old lady gallantly but pathetically trying to cope with a newer and brasher age. ▌

A ship of the desert ! The Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Company's **Strathmore** on passage through the Suez Canal

THE BAR LIGHTSHIP

The last manned lightship on the Liverpool Bar station was the **Planet**, built by Philip & Son at Dartmouth in 1960. She had a relatively short career with the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board as she was replaced by a 'LANBY' (large automatic navigation buoy) in September 1972.

The MD&HB sold the **Planet** to Trinity House and the lightship was eventually placed on the Channel station. This lies in a position 55 miles south-east of Start Point and 45 miles north-west of Guernsey. The station was established in 1979 to mark the western end of the Channel Traffic Separation Scheme.

On 10th June 1989 the **Planet** was withdrawn from the Channel light vessel station and replaced with an automatic vessel. The **Planet** was the last manned light vessel operated by Trinity House.

The **Planet** subsequently returned to the Mersey and now lies alongside the preserved warships in the East Float at Birkenhead. Her future is 'uncertain'.

A dramatic and tempestuous view of the old Liverpool Bar Lightship ***Planet*** *taken when she was in service for Trinity House on the Channel Light Vessel station.*

ROBERT NAPIER – A CLYDE SHIPBULDER, 1815 - 1900

Among the many giants in Clydeside shipbuilding in the nineteenth century, the name of Robert Napier takes a prominent place. Born at Dumbarton in 1791, he was the son of a well-to-do blacksmith in that town, and was educated at the local grammar school. His parents wished him to enter the church, but his own bent being always towards the practical, they soon gave way, and in 1807 he was bound apprentice to his father for the usual term of five years.

When he was out of his time in 1812, young Robert went to Edinburgh where he experienced very hard times before getting a job with Robert Stevenson, the famous lighthouse engineer. That did not last for long – he made a bad mistake in making a boiler and was promptly dismissed and returned to work for his father.

In the summer of 1815, with a capital of £50, Robert bought a small smithy in Greyfriars Wynd, in Glasgow, where he worked with two apprentices and he was soon making a reputation as a craftsman. At the age of 24 he was admitted into the Incorporation of Hammermen, one of the bodies which maintained high standards of skill and demanded proof of craftsmanship before admitting an applicant. In 1818 Robert married his cousin, Isabella Napier.

Orders increased both in volume and variety, and Napier was soon employing David Elder, an established millwright and the father of the John Elder of the Fairfield Yard.

Robert Napier's connection with ships started in 1823 when his neighbour, William Denny, secured the order to build the 54-ton wooden steamer **Leven** for a service between Glasgow and Dumbarton and gave the sub-contract for her machinery to Napier. It was a side-lever engine of 33 N.H.P., but Napier introduced several improvements into the fittings and built it so carefully that it was put into another steamer when the **Leven's** hull was worn out.

The quality of the **Leven's** machinery produced many more orders for Napier, but real success started in 1827 when the Royal Northern Yacht Club included in its regatta a race for Clyde steamers. Napier engines won the first two places with the **Clarence** and the **Helensburgh**; in both cases Denny had built the hulls.

This success not only brought Robert Napier into great prominence in Clyde shipping where there were many orders to be obtained, but also introduced him to T. Asheton Smith, one of the most prominent yachtsmen of the day. Smith had the idea of building a *steam* yacht, which horrified his fellow sportsmen and caused his removal from the Royal Yacht Squadron for several years, but it gave Napier a great opportunity.

The first steam yacht, the **Menai**, was followed by many others for Smith and a steadily increasing circle of enthusiasts for the new type, while his patron's intimate friendship with the Duke of Wellington and others in high places was of great service to Napier, particularly when he tried to win government contracts.

In 1827 he further improved his reputation by supplying the two side-lever engines for his cousin David's steamer **Eclipse**, a vessel of 104 tons running on the Glasgow – Belfast service, which was regarded as the finest cross-channel steamer of her day.

In 1828 Robert Napier acquired the Vulcan Foundry in Washington Street and, more importantly, brought James Thomson from Manchester to act as his leading smith, finisher and turner. James's brother George was made foreman at the Lancefield Works, then run by David Napier.

George came into Robert Napier's employ in due course, but the two brothers left him in 1847 to start the firm of J. & G. Thomson, which became John Brown of Clydebank.

Robert Napier was still principally interested in the machinery side, but his reputation was so high that he obtained a large number of contracts for complete ships, sub-contracting the hulls to various shipbuilders. His favoured associate in this work was John Wood, and the partnership proved excellent. One of the first ships they built was the **Mona's Isle**, the pioneer steamer of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's fleet. She made such a reputation for herself that Napier in later years often said that his prosperity was largely due to the ship.

In 1835 Robert Napier leased from his cousin David the Lancefield Works. The terms were £500 a year on a 12-year lease, with the option of purchasing at any time within the first seven years for £20,000. In the same year he purchased the Parkhead Forge to supply the castings and forgings.

In 1838 the steamer **British Queen**, whose tonnage of 1,862 made her the largest steamer of her day, was ordered by the British and North American Steam Navigation Company for a trans-Atlantic service. The hull was built by Curling & Young, of Limehouse, and contract for the machinery went to Girdwood & Company of London, but when they failed the contract was transferred to Napier and added to his reputation. The engines were two side-levers which gave the **British Queen** a speed of about eight knots, but she was regarded as the **Queen Mary** of her day !

There is no doubt that Napier's success with the **British Queen** influenced Mr Melvill, the secretary of the East India Company, when Samuel Cunard came across from Halifax, Nova Scotia, and asked him for an introduction to a British shipbuilder who would be able and willing to construct four steamers for trans-Atlantic service. Melvill gave Cunard a letter to Napier who was immediately struck with the idea and introduced Cunard to George Burns and David McIver, Scottish shipowners who were later his partners in the Cunard Line.

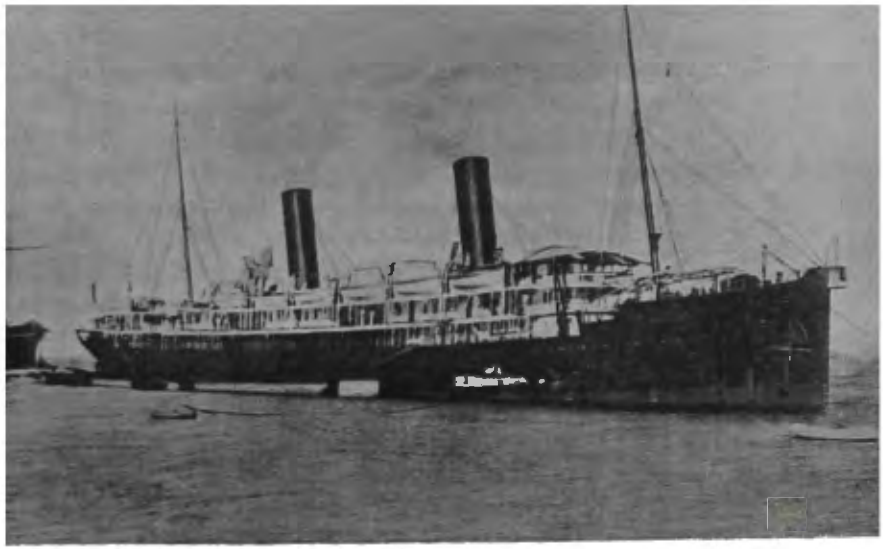
The three of them planned the new service over breakfast at Napier's house, and he accepted the contracts for the original Cunard quartette- the **Acadia**, **Britannia**, **Caledonia** and **Columbia** – building the machinery himself and placing the contracts for the hulls with different Clyde yards. The success of these four ships put Napier's reputation as an engineer, already very high, on to a much wider basis.

Robert Napier purchased the Lancefield premises from his cousin David in 1841 and at the same time bought a piece of land at Dumbarton with the idea of establishing a shipyard when conditions were promising. He sold that to the Denny Brothers and in its place bought land at Govan, which eventually became Harland & Wolffs. The Govan site opened as a shipyard in 1841 after which Napier was able to turn out complete ships, hulls and engines.

Just about that time Napier's manager John McIntyre had died and he persuaded his cousin James to take his place. James Napier was noteworthy for his part in the development of the tubular boiler. Other notable men who were in Robert

Napier's employ at various times were John Elder, Sir William Pearce, Dr A.C. Kirk, and Sir Alexander Gracie; all of them men who later made great names for themselves in shipbuilding and marine engineering.

In 1853 Napier's two sons, James Robert and John, were taken into partnership and the name of the firm was changed to R. Napier & Sons. There was plenty of work for all of them to do for the business was increasing very rapidly. When the Admiralty at last agreed that sailing battleships were out of date, Napiers had the job of supplying screw machinery for several of these vessels. Napiers won the contract for building the ironclad **Black Prince** for the Admiralty and gained the credit for building the first seagoing ironclad in the world.



The Orient liner "Ophir" of 1891 was the first twin-screw steamer on the Australian trade. She was taken up as royal yacht for the Duke and Duchess of York's tour round the Empire, and her last active service was as an auxiliary cruiser in the first world war

Robert transferred his interest in the Parkhead Forge to his son-in-law William Rigby, who took as a partner William Beardmore.

The firm of R. Napier & Sons was at the height of its prosperity, and working to capacity, when Robert died in 1876, and the business was transferred to a new concern of which Dr A.C. Kirk, who had been connected with the yard for years, was the principal partner. They continued to show the same enterprise and in 1881 built the Allan liner **Parisian**, one of the first large steamers built of mild steel, and the Aberdeen Line steamer **Aberdeen** whose triple expansion engines designed by Kirk revolutionized the Australia run.

The late 1880s were conspicuous for the contracts for four liners of entirely novel design for the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company – the **Atrato**, **Magdalena**, **Thames** and the **Clyde**. In 1891 the twin-screw steamer **Ophir** attracted great attention as being the first twin-screw ship on the Australasian service with a record breaking speed of 18 knots.

In 1895 the firm was made into a limited liability concern, but the life of the historic company was drawing to a close. The last ship it built was the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company's **Tyne**, No.470 on its list of hulls, but the numbering of the engines built over the years has unfortunately been lost.

In 1900 William Beardmore, whose father had been a partner in the Parkhead Forge when Robert Napier transferred it to his son-in-law, purchased the shipyard as well, and it immediately started a new phase as William Beardmore & Company. ▌

This is a précis of an article by Frank C. Bowen which originally appeared in 'Shipbuilding and Shipping Record', 26th January, 1950.

READERS' LETTERS

MORE ABOUT THE '**LANCASTRIA**':

Alan McClelland writes:

Further to the book review on '*The Sinking of the Lancastria*' on pages 38 and 39 of the December '*Bulletin*'. Another interesting feature of this event is the part played by the ss **John Holt** of Liverpool under the command of Captain Fuller. Over 1,000 survivors were taken on board. Many were severely wounded and Captain Fuller decided to make for England alone by the most direct route, through minefields, and reached his destination safely.

From a letter to 'Sea Breezes' in June 1967 from Major C.V. Petit:

After the Dunkirk evacuation something like 98,000 British service personnel made their way by devious means to the area of St Nazaire, closely followed by still larger forces of enemy troops. During the day of 17th June, 1940, the following totals were embarked:

LANCASTRIA	: embarked over 9,000.
ORONSAY	: reached UK with over 10,000
ULSTER PRINCE	: reached UK with over 3,000
GLENAFFRIC	: reached UK with over 4,500
DUNDRUM CASTLE	: reached UK with about 650
FABIAN	: reached UK with over 1,000
BAHARISTAN	: reached UK with over 2,500
CLAN FERGUSON	: reached UK with over 1,000
ROBERT L. HOLT	: reached UK with over 1,000
CITY OF LANCASTER	: reached UK with over 2,500
FLORISTAN	: reached UK with over 3,000
JOHN HOLT	: reached UK with over 1,000

Finally, LNRS Member John Partington reminds me that it was the **Franconia** which was based at New York in the winter of 1963/64, and not the **Carmania** as I stated in my article '*A Year with the Carinthia*' in the September '*Bulletin*'. j.s.

DON'T MISS THE TIDE, MISTER

by Captain Brian Scott

I was at home in the UK during a cold January in 1959 and after sailing in the tropics during the major part of my sea service since 1952, I felt that I needed to spend more time in a temperate climate. I received a telephone call from an uncle who worked for the British and Continental Steamship Company in Liverpool. He told me that he had been speaking to the marine superintendent and I was offered a position as temporary third mate on the ss ***Ardetta****. I accepted this and joined the ship in Manchester on the following day.*

Unlike most home-trade ships, which usually carried a master and two mates, the British and Continental ships carried three mates due to the canal work and hard running to a tight schedule governed by tides. Four of the ships were steamers and the newest was a smart motor vessel. The steamers were preferred for canal transits which were made without the aid of tugs. The ships were named after sea birds.

The origins of the British and Continental Steamship Company (B & C) went back to 1821. After a number of mergers, acquisitions and restructuring the B & C emerged as a separate entity in 1922 and continued its previous services from Irish Sea ports to France, Belgium and Holland. However the company was always referred to on Merseyside as 'The Cork Boats', due to the company having its origins as The City of Cork Steam Packet Company.

In the inter-war years the inward cargoes were bulk commodities such as steel bars, flax, cotton waste, silver sand for glass making, starch, cardboard and Belgian carpets. During this period the ports serviced were Manchester, Garston, Ellesmere Port, Glasgow, Belfast, Barrow and Southampton to Dunkirk, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Antwerp, Ghent and Terneuzen.

The company survived the depression and following the outbreak of the Second World War its twelve ships were transferred to the Mediterranean for service as ammunition carriers. Four ships were sunk and one was captured by Vichy French naval forces.

After the war the B & C resumed its continental services but gradually reduced UK loading ports to just Manchester and Liverpool. The fleet was restored to twelve ships until 1954/55 when six ships were sold, and one was sunk when run down by a tanker whilst at anchor in fog in the Mersey.

When I joined B & C the company was operating five ships and its standard design steamers had been copied by Manchester Liners for its ships on the Canadian Great Lakes trade, being named **Manchester Explorer** and **Manchester Pioneer**. The rotation of calls at Liverpool and Manchester could be varied. B & C also chartered small Dutch flag coasters to augment services as required.

My first voyage as third mate on the **Ardetta** was most interesting. The ship was fitted with radar, D/F, R/T, Decca Navigator, magnetic compass and a basic VHF radio for river and canal communications.

We made a fairly routine voyage. After discharging at Manchester during Tuesday and Wednesday morning, loading commenced on Wednesday afternoon and was completed on Thursday followed by a night-time transit of the Manchester Ship

Canal, arriving at our loading berth in south Liverpool docks early Friday. We completed loading and sailed on the Friday night tide. For the canal transit we took a pilot and a helmsman (apprentice pilot) but on the Mersey the master performed his own pilotage for the 17 miles to the Bar Light Vessel. We used quarter points of the compass for steering, not 360° notation.

Steaming at 12 knots it took us two and a half days to reach the continent, arriving at Antwerp p.m. on Monday. We took sea, river and canal pilots. The **Ardetta** discharged and loaded on Tuesday, Wednesday and early Thursday before proceeding down the River Scheldt to the lock at Terneuzen where we entered the Ghent canal. This was an easy stretch as there were no locks or bridges to slow the ship's transit.

Loading was completed at Ghent on Friday and then it was back down the canal and out to sea on Friday night. Monday afternoon saw us back in the Mersey and entering the Manchester Ship Canal for a night transit of the 35 miles to Manchester. The master was always under pressure to catch the tide at Eastham locks.

On arrival back in Manchester at the end of my first trip I had a pleasant surprise. Our second mate (ex Manchester Liners) had been waiting for a vacancy as a Ship Canal helmsman, and was the 'man on the spot' for a vacancy which had occurred. As a result I was promoted to second mate of the **Ardetta** and settled into the routine of 'a weekly boat', so called because we paid the cook £1.5s.6d (£1.27p) per week for our food.

Prior to 1964 the B & C ships were the largest to transit the Manchester Ship Canal at night and never used tugs. The canal pilot and helmsman used the top steering position on the bridge and were exposed to the weather throughout the transit. Life was always interesting and sometimes tiring. The winter weather alternated between westerly gales and calm seas with thick fog, very often all the way from Liverpool to Antwerp. The coming of Spring raised our spirits and summertime was most enjoyable.

When October arrived the company re-allocated positions to most of the deck officers. Some senior officers had returned after extended sick leave, others from annual leave. As a result relief masters reverted to first mate, with subsequent demotions for some deck officers. I was demoted to third officer of a sister ship, ss **Clangula** trading to Rotterdam and Amsterdam for one voyage, after which I signed off, thus ending an enjoyable period as a temporary employee.

I calculated that in the ten months I had completed twenty round trips to the continent; helped to supervise the loading and discharge of forty full cargoes; spent 100 days at sea and 80 days on river and canal transits, and approximately 120 days in port working cargo.

In 1961 the Dutch van Ommeren shipping group, already a long standing shareholder in B & C, bought out the remaining British, Belgian and Dutch shareholders and by 1967 the four steamers **Ardetta** (1,542grt), **Bittern** (1,527grt), **Clangula** (1,550grt) and **Dotterel** (1,522grt) had been sold. This left the newer mv **Egret** (1,186grt) to carry on the service in conjunction with chartered Dutch tonnage.

The **Egret** was chartered out in 1967 and finally sold in 1972. So, after 50 years, British and Continental ceased being shipowners when the services were handed over to the Holland Steamship Company, with whom B & C had operated a joint service for many years. ▌

THE ATLANTIC DRIFT CARD EXPERIMENT

by LNRS Member Arthur Jennion

James Rennell, the founder of oceanography, was born in 1742 in the village of Chudleigh near Exeter. His skill as a schoolboy cartographer created his interest in things nautical and at the age of fourteen he joined the Royal Navy as a midshipman. The next seven years saw him in active service, sailing the world and learning his trade as a surveyor, mapping coasts and harbours. He carried on this work even in the midst of battle! In 1763 when Rennell was only 21 he was discharged from the Navy and such was his talent that he was appointed Surveyor-General of Bengal. He spent thirteen years in India serving under Clive and other Governors.

In February 1778 Rennell arrived in Portsmouth via the Cape of Good Hope, and during this journey he mapped the banks and currents of the Lagullas. Rennell published the very first contribution to oceanography by writing a memoir on the Agulhas current (as it is known today). For the next fifty years he was considered to be the leading geographer in England. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1781. In 1795 he declined a post as First Hydrographer of the Admiralty, (a post subsequently taken by his friend Alexander Dalrymple), so as to be able to continue his research. However, at the age of 68 Rennell returned to his hydrographic work.

Rennell's final work was entitled '*Currents of the Atlantic Ocean*' and in this he likened the Gulf Stream to an enormous river descending from a higher level to a plain. This work was published by his daughter following his death in 1832. It was 1936 before any scientific hydrographic work was to overtake that of Rennell.

Rennell's greatest service to geography and hydrography was his introduction of all things scientific relevant to his study. All data and theories were carefully examined and inaccuracies discarded and as a consequence his data was accurate. Rennell's methods were logical resulting in his conclusions being right in almost every instance. The opening statement in his final book remains unchallenged to this day: *"The winds are to be regarded as the prime movers of the currents of the ocean."*

It was 1936 before any real further progress was made in the study of the oceans, although the government had set up earlier 'discovery expeditions'. The Admiralty, deciding that it would be a good thing to know something about the oceans, set up 'Group W', based at Teddington, in an effort to try and predict waves for the D-Day landings.

The National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) was finally formed under the leadership of George Deacon. When asked where this institute should be located, he is reported to have replied *'as far from the sea as possible'*. The site finally chosen was at Wormley in Surrey, which actually made for easy access to meetings in London. In 1965 the NIO became part of the Natural Environment Research Council. A few years later, in 1973, it was merged with the Institute of Coastal Oceanography and Tides (Bidston, Birkenhead) and the Unit for Coastal Sedimentation (Taunton). The Wormley site, which included the Marine Physics Group, was known as the IOS Deacon Laboratory from 1987.

By 1990 plans were well advanced to merge with the University of Southampton's Departments of Oceanography and Geology. The merger finally took

place in 1995 creating the Southampton Oceanography Centre, a division of which is known as the James Rennell Division for Ocean Circulation, and more recently the words 'and Climate' have been added.

In 1954 the British National Institute of Oceanography carried out an experiment in the North Atlantic to assist with oil pollution and its effects on the environment. A simple 'Business Reply Paid Card' was produced. On the reverse was a serial number and instructions in eight languages informing the finder how to return the card to the Institute. The card had a red band diagonally printed across the reverse, presumably for easy sighting in the water. The first experiment was a failure, but a further three more experiments were successful.

The Royal Air Force carried out the drop using a Shackleton flying out of Ballykelly, Northern Ireland. The cards were dropped in bundles of ten, at ten mile intervals, over a dropping track 2,100 miles long. Logged in pencil on the reverse (bottom right) was the date and position of each bundle dropped, and the date and position of the recovery was recorded by the finder in the same manner in the bottom centre of each card. The finder then posted the card back to the Institute.

For the repeat experiments double envelopes were used made from polyvinylchloride, and two pieces of cork were included to enhance buoyancy. The bundles of ten were bound with gummed tape, designed to disintegrate on contact with the sea, and the individual cards could then float free.

The landfall recovery positions as recorded appear to be very accurate. Of all the cards I have seen, the Faroese have been the most meticulous in recording their finds.

There was no provision for free return posting (except for those cards found in UK waters). Some cards were posted back to the Institute without a stamp but do not appear to have incurred a charge. For instance card No.6335 passed through the system without a stamp or surcharge, whilst card No.6244 posted at Lervík was put through a Danish Post Office franking machine on its arrival at Copenhagen. There was almost total cooperation with the experiment by the postal authorities.

The drift card experiments were considered a success, but the weather and conditions undoubtedly took their toll.

The number of cards recovered from the Faroes totaled 98. Iceland recovered 48, all from the May drop. In Arctic Russia just one card was found on the Rybachi Peninsula. The Low Countries, Denmark and Germany returned 44 cards, whilst just one was received from Belgium. France returned 507; Portugal 3; Northern Spain 115; the UK 1,023 and Peel, on the Isle of Man, 1 card. No cards were found on the north-west coast of England, and none between the Firth of Forth and the Thames Estuary. ▌

From *'The Bulletin'*, December 2004, page 17:

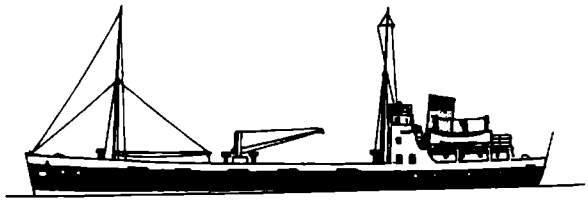
By the end of July 1954 no drift cards had been returned from any part of the U.K. following the May drop. The National Institute of Oceanography say, cautiously, that it is not unreasonable to suppose that some of the cards are by now very close to these shores, or have already stranded and lie waiting to be found. It could even be that the promised half-crown reward to a person returning a drift card as directed was not a sufficiently large bait, although it was not unreasonable to suppose that children, particularly, would be eager to get a little extra pocket money. However, school holidays would be starting soon, said a spokesman from the NIO, and the harvest may yet be fruitful! j.s.

MEMORIES OF MACBRAYNES FROM THE 1960s

by Gordon Hossack

I went to sea in the early 1960s as an engineer and spent six years with the Lyle Shipping Company, Moss Hutchison and the Port Line. I liked the life in New Zealand and in the spring of 1966 I paid off from the **Port Wyndham** and was waiting for a run job on the ss **Wahine** to take me out to New Zealand.

I went along to the Glasgow shipping office on the north side of the River Clyde at the Broomielaw to see what was available and from there I was directed to a wharf on the south side of the river with instructions to report to the chief engineer of the **Lochdunvegan**.



I soon found my way to the ship and in those pre-container days the work was being done with winches, cargo nets, fork lift trucks and pallets, I wouldn't describe the scene as 'busy' or 'bustling', but the loading routine moved with a slow smooth efficiency borne of long practice.

The **Lochdunvegan** carried three engineers of which I signed on as 'third', and two greasers. Incidentally, this was the only British ship I ever sailed on to have a Highlander in the engine room. One of the greasers was from Stornoway and the other lived in Glasgow, and as the ship had two nights in Stornoway and two nights in Glasgow each week, this suited both of them!

We sailed from Glasgow on a Tuesday afternoon. The captain was Alex Mathieson, and we carried a mate and second mate and probably four to six deckhands. In the galley the cook was assisted by a galley boy who also served the meals in the officers' saloon. On my trip as third engineer we carried two passengers who enjoyed getting away with MacBraynes for a 'wee cruise' whenever there was passenger space available.

As third engineer I had the 12-4 watch in the engine room. The main engine was an Atlas diesel which gave a top speed of 12 knots. When my watch was over I stood on deck and enjoyed the scenery of the Firth of Clyde and by this time we were well past my home town of Greenock. Overnight the sea was a bit lumpy as we rounded the Mull of Kintyre and into more exposed waters as we made our way to Tobermory on the island of Mull.

We arrived at Tobermory on Wednesday morning and sailed two or three hours later. The next quick call was at Armadale, at the southern tip of the Isle of Skye, and from there we had a comparatively long sail up the Sound of Sleat, through the Kyle of Lochalsh and across the Minch to Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis, arriving there on Thursday morning.

After two nights in Stornoway we sailed on Saturday morning for Tarbert on Harris. We next called at Portree on the Isle of Skye and then at the Isle of Raasay for about an hour. It was a glorious spring afternoon as we retraced our track through the Kyle of Lochalsh and set course for Glasgow.

It had been a good trip with no major drama in the engine room, and plenty of good food, the cook's speciality being plain Scottish cooking. The scenery was marvelous, and the weather was pleasantly cool after long trips through the tropics on my previous ships.

I left the **Lochdunvegan** on her return to Glasgow and shortly after joined the ss **Wahine** at Fairfield's shipyard at Govan and sailed on her maiden voyage to New Zealand.

*The **Lochdunvegan** was the second vessel to carry the name on the MacBrayne fleet. The first **Lochdunvegan** was built by Caird & Company at Glasgow in 1891 as the **Grouse** for G. & J. Burns' Irish Sea services. In 1922 she was sold to the Grahamstown Shipping Company and renamed **Kelvindale** for the Glasgow to Stranraer service. In 1924 Coast Lines bought the ship and renamed her **Denbigh Coast** before she was acquired by David MacBrayne (1928) Ltd in 1929 who renamed her **Lochdunvegan**. She served on the Glasgow – Stornoway cargo service until withdrawn in 1948.*

*The second **Lochdunvegan**, the subject of Gordon Hossack's article, was built in 1946 at Gothenburg as the **Örnen**. She had a gross tonnage of 528, nett 222. Her dimensions were length 180.1 feet, breadth 30.6 feet, depth 9.6 feet. The engine was built by Atlas Diesel at Stockholm and gave a service speed of 10 knots.*
*The ship was acquired by David MacBrayne in November 1950 and her first voyage was from Rotterdam to Dublin and Glasgow. On arrival in Glasgow the vessel was renamed **Lochdunvegan** and took her place on the Glasgow – Stornoway cargo service in place of the **Lochgorm**.*
*The **Lochdunvegan** is unique in the MacBrayne fleet in being strengthened to withstand ice. In the Spring of 1951 she had a hold fitted with refrigerating apparatus for fish traffic from Stornoway, and she was fitted with accommodation for four passengers in deck cabins.*
She sailed with MacBraynes until September 1973, latterly on the Glasgow – Tobermory – Lochalsh cargo service.
*In 1974 the **Lochdunvegan** was sold to George Stavrou of Piraeus and renamed **Fanis**. She became the **Vassilis** of Sklevenitis Bros. of Piraeus in 1977 and was renamed the **Maggy** by Chara S.A. of Panama in 1987. The old ship was reported to be still trading as late as 1994.*

j.s.

SPEED UP !!!

A firm of shipowners radioed one of their masters: *"Move heaven and earth to arrive Tilbury on Friday."* Just as they were becoming anxious they got the reply: *"Raised hell and arriving Thursday".*

MY FIRST AND LAST BROCKLEBANK SHIPS

by LNRS Member James A. Pottinger

My first ship on joining T. & J. Brocklebank was the **Maihar** (1) which was completed in June 1917 by Russell & Company at Port Glasgow. She was a veteran and a survivor of two world wars. The **Maihar** had three sisters, the **Mahsud** (1), the **Malakand** (2) and the **Matheran** (2); the latter two being built at the adjacent shipyard of Lithgows Ltd., but both of these did not survive the second conflict. The spectacular loss of the **Malakand** after an air raid is especially remembered at Liverpool.

Some authors have the **Malancha** (1) as introducing the cruiser stern to the Brocklebank fleet, but the actual building dates refute this suggestion. The **Malancha** was completed by Russells in 1918 after the **Maihar**, and the graceful cruiser stern of the latter ship stood comparison with all the later ships.

The **Maihar's** triple expansion reciprocating engine was built by J. & G. Kincaid of Greenock, and had cylinder diameters of 80ins, 47.5ins and 28ins, with a stroke of 54ins, and a large beast it was too!

Having been hard worked in the Second World War and used on many routes alien to her original trades, the **Maihar** was greatly in need of upgrading and refurbishment at the end of hostilities, and it was to her credit that the owners considered it worthwhile to expend a considerable sum on what was literally a rebuild, which was completed in May 1957 by Alexander Stephens of Glasgow, where I joined her as 4th Engineer Officer.

The upgrade included refurbished accommodation, and the *pièce de résistance* was a proper built-in swimming pool aft of the funnel; no lash up of canvas and planks for the **Maihar**! Included in the overhaul were new pumps and the engine was rebuilt by the original manufacturers, with four new Scotch boilers supplied by David Rowan. The original boilers had been converted to burn oil fuel in March, 1938.

Happily the result fully deserved the oft repeated description that *"she ran like a sewing machine"*.

The **Maihar** arrived at Middlesbrough on 3rd June 1957 at what was the start of voyage number 94, and it was the beginning for me of two very happy trips in the ship. She plied the usual routes to Ceylon, India and Pakistan for another four years, eventually being replaced by more modern tonnage built by her owners' favoured company, William Hamilton of Port Glasgow.

The **Maihar** was sold to Eastbound Tankers Corporation of Monrovia in 1961 and renamed **Capella**. She arrived at Hirao for scrapping on 24th May 1962 after a creditable 45 years in service.

The last Brocklebank ship I sailed on was the **Matra** (3), completed in May 1949 by Wm. Hamilton at Port Glasgow. Reverting to three low-pressure single reduction turbines and the three Scotch boilers, the **Matra** could be described as a welcome change from the high pressure turbines and water tube boilers of the **Manipur** (3) of 1945, one of the so called 'black four'; the other three being the **Magdapur** (2), the **Mahronda** (3) and the **Maidan** (3). Possibly somewhat unfairly

*The **Matra** from an original painting by James Pottinger*

they attracted this epithet, although my otherwise happy experience of three trips on the **Manipur** was mainly blighted by our heavy consumption of distilled boiler feed water caused by frequently leaking economizer tubes and the associated nasty job of trying to cure these leaks in the hot and fume-laden hell behind the boilers.

The more leisurely routine of watches on the **Matra** was in contrast to the more fraught experiences on the **Manipur**, especially as one large quiet-running steam reciprocating generator on the **Matra** took the entire electrical load at sea instead of noisy diesel-powered generators.

I joined the **Matra** at Liverpool in December 1960 as 3rd Engineer Officer with the ink still not quite dry on my 2nd Engineer's Certificate. We crossed the Atlantic to New York on a Cunard charter prior to the introduction of the new **Alaunia** and **Andania** which were then being completed by Wm. Hamilton for this route. We were effectively 'light ship' with a few crates of the very best malt whisky and a number of Silver Wraith Rolls-Royce limousines. Unfortunately we ran into a severe gale when rounding the northern tip of Ireland and we battled our way across the Atlantic, the passage taking ten days. A memorable event for those lucky enough to witness it was the sight of meeting the mighty **Queen Elizabeth** storming east on her Atlantic passage.

On opening the hatches at New York we were confronted with the sad sight of many of the cars having been damaged due to the severe weather on the way across. The whisky cargo had also suffered some diminution, but this was (say I, with tongue in cheek) solely due to 'evaporation', for want of a better description!

On our passage across the Atlantic we had been continually puzzled by the fact that no matter how much fresh water we took from the fore peak; on being sounded it always gave a full reading. It was only after drydocking at the end of the voyage that it was revealed that some of the rivets had sprung and one of the plates under the forefoot had worked loose and left a gap in the shell.

Our arrival at New York was subject to the usual customs and immigration interrogation, but this was soon forgotten when we found out that we were to berth in the heart of Manhattan on the Cunard *Queens'* berth; in fact the French Line **Liberté** was across the dock from us. The remainder of the voyage followed the usual pattern of calling at various southern ports, the last being Panama City where we loaded large bales of paper.

We docked back in London just as the call-up for National Service had ended with the unfortunate result that many of our officers and crew literally jumped ship without waiting for reliefs, a pattern repeated on many ships.

I coasted the **Matra** and finally paid off in February 1961. Due to family commitments I only coasted with the Company subsequently, before finally swallowing the anchor.

The **Matra** was transferred to Cunard-Brocklebank in 1968 and was sold in 1971 to Kanaris Shipping Enterprises S.A. of Panama and renamed **Aegis Save I**. In common with her contemporaries her steam machinery was becoming increasingly uneconomic, and the old ship arrived at Gandia in Spain on 19th February 1972 for scrapping. ▌

THE UNLUCKY SISTERS '*DAKOTA*' AND '*MONTANA*'

by Dennis Branigan

*The Guion liners **Dakota** and **Montana** were notable in that both were lost off the coast of Anglesey within three years of each other.*

The Guion Line, or to give its official title, the Liverpool and Great Western Steamship Company Limited, was certainly unlucky. During the course of its existence, from 1866 – 1894, the company suffered the loss of five of its passenger steamers. Among these casualties were two which were rather unusual, these being the sister vessels **Dakota** and **Montana**, both being lost on Anglesey only a few miles apart. A legend was established that both vessels were lost at exactly the same spot, but this was not the case.

At the beginning of the 1870s the Guion Line took the first step towards operating fast liners and placed orders for the curious **Dakota** and **Montana**. These ships were remarkable for their peculiarities of construction and their continual record of failure.

The **Montana** was launched by Palmers at Jarrow-on-Tyne on 14th November 1872, with her maiden voyage scheduled for 23rd July 1873. She and her sister, the **Dakota**, had a number of unusual features, one of which was a pronounced 'tumble-home', that is to say, the hull receded inwards to the extent of eight feet from the waterline upwards. The **Montana** had ten water tube boilers with a working pressure of 100 lbs/sq.in. On the trip from the Tyne to Liverpool five of these boilers were put out of action by tube blow-outs, with resulting injury to some of the firemen, and the ship put into Portsmouth for temporary repairs. Upon arrival at Liverpool the Board of Trade inspector refused to pass her until she had undergone a six-day trial during which further trouble was experienced, and so it was decided to replace the boilers by ordinary tubular ones working at 80 pounds pressure.

The outcome of these difficulties was that the **Montana** did not sail on her maiden voyage from Liverpool until 17th June 1874, nearly a year later than intended. Fortunately for the Guion Line, both her departure on that date and her return to Liverpool with engine trouble only four days later received very little publicity. Eventually the **Montana** sailed again on 7th July 1875, almost two years behind schedule, and reached New York ten days later with a disappointing complement of only 106 passengers.

The **Dakota** was launched at Jarrow on 12th June 1873 and ordinary type boilers were substituted before she put to sea. She experienced some engine trouble on the passage round to Liverpool and eventually sailed for New York on 21st July 1875, a fortnight after the **Montana**.

The **Dakota** had the shorter life of the two sisters, being lost in May 1877. The circumstances surrounding her loss have never been satisfactorily cleared up. She sailed from Liverpool Landing Stage with 218 passengers and 1,800 tons of general cargo for New York at 5.45pm on 9th May 1877. The weather was slightly hazy with a fresh ESE wind. By 9.50pm the **Dakota** was two miles abeam Point Lynas and

making about 14 knots. It was at this time that the officer of the watch gave the fateful order for a change of course to NW½N.

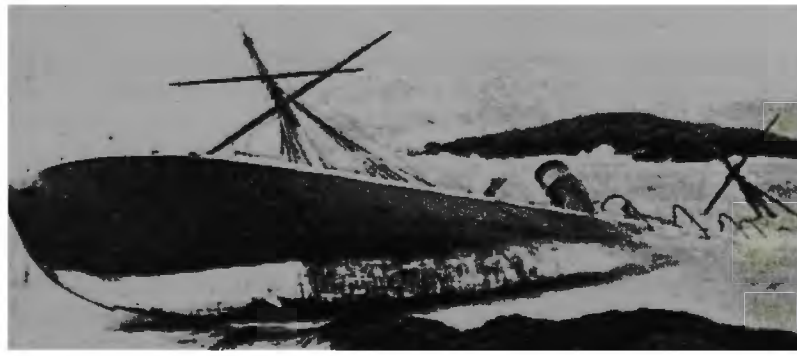
The steering arrangements on the **Dakota** were rather cumbersome with the officer being on the bridge amidships whilst the quartermaster, who was steering, was on the poop. To signal his helm orders the officer used a steering telegraph but this meant that the helmsman was not under his immediate observation.

The officer of the watch rang the telegraph for the appropriate port helm. (It should be remembered that at this time, and until 1934, opposite helm orders were used.) After a short lapse he noticed that instead of turning to starboard, the vessel's head was going to port. He re-signalled his orders on the telegraph, but the port swing still continued. The fourth officer was sent aft to find out what the problem was and to get the **Dakota** back on to her correct course.

At this point the master, who had been on deck up forward, returned to the bridge. As there was still no indication of matters being put right, and as the shore was getting dangerously close, the master ordered the engines to 'stop', and then to 'full astern'. This action had come too late and the **Dakota** slid up on to the rocks some 450 feet inside the East Mouse and close to the little harbour of Amlwch.

In response to the **Dakota's** distress calls, the Bull Bay lifeboat was soon alongside and the task of disembarking the passengers began. Arrangements were made to send them, along with the mail, to Holyhead for return to Liverpool. As the ship was in no immediate danger, the crew remained on board.

On the following day the work of salving passengers' luggage and the cargo began. The vessel was nearly dry at low water and it was decided that salvage would be too difficult and the **Dakota** was abandoned as a total loss.



*The **Dakota** wrecked on the Anglesey coast*

At the subsequent inquiry at Liverpool the chief point of discussion was why the vessel turned to port. The three quartermasters who were on the poop were adamant that the **Dakota** refused to turn to starboard although the wheel had been correctly applied. When the fourth officer came aft they said that they had understood him to say that if the vessel would not go to starboard, then let her go to port and circle round. When the Court gave its findings it considered that the quartermasters were lying in a fit of misguided loyalty to cover up for the man at the wheel who must have

put the wheel the wrong way. There was no direct blame on the master, but he was criticized for being too close inshore. The steering arrangements also came in for some critical comments.

It may well be that the helmsman had made a mistake. But it is certainly odd that the quartermasters stuck doggedly to what, on the face of things, seemed an improbable story. There are recorded instances of 'freak' steering behaviour arising in power-driven vessels. Whether the **Dakota** had a record of erratic steering behaviour is not known, so just what went wrong will never be satisfactorily established.

Although at the time of the disaster the **Dakota** was left well up out of the water, with the passage of time she slipped back and eventually lay in some 30 feet of water. For many years the wreck lay undisturbed below the sea off Amlwch, but with the growing popularity of skin diving she was re-discovered and became a popular dive with many artifacts being removed from her.

The **Montana** survived her sister for three years until she too came to grief off the Anglesey coast in March 1880.

On passage from New York to Liverpool with passengers, mail and a cargo of grain, the **Montana** passed Tuskar light on 12th March 1880. Fog began to form around midnight. The master reduced speed and proceeded at 'dead slow' through the fog, listening for the sound signals from the South Stack.

At 2.30am on 13th March 1880 the **Montana** struck suddenly. She had in fact run aground on Clygr Point, in Church Bay, roughly midway between Holyhead and the Skerries. The vessel was hard aground for almost half her length, although her stern was in deep water. No.2 hold was flooded almost immediately.

Despite distress signals from the **Montana**, there was no sign of the local lifeboat or rescue services, a matter which was to give rise to some acrimonious correspondence in the newspapers at a later date. Eventually the **Montana** began to land the passengers using her own boats. The tug **Sea King**, which happened to be in the vicinity, came alongside and took the mail and some passengers to Holyhead, a service for which the Court subsequently awarded her £300 salvage.

After the passengers' baggage and the ship's stores had been removed from the ship, an attempt was made to refloat her. This was unsuccessful and it was clear that the grain cargo would have to be discharged. This was achieved by pumping, and the water-soaked grain after being separated by a system of sieves, was sent for treatment. The lightened **Montana** was finally floated off a fortnight later on 27th March 1880 and beached near Holyhead for patching. She was then towed round to Liverpool, arriving on 14th April.

The Court of Inquiry suspended the master's certificate for six months.

The **Montana** entered No.3 graving dock at Birkenhead and her hull was given a thorough survey. The result of this, as far as the Guion Line was concerned, showed that it would be too costly to repair the vessel for further service. The hull was made watertight and the **Montana** was laid up in the West Float. She was advertised for sale as she lay, without reserve price, and on 24th June she was auctioned for £7,800 to Lambe and Clapper, metal merchants, of Sunderland. The **Montana** arrived at Sunderland for demolition on 10th July 1880. ▌

AND FINALLY ....

IT'S A WONDERFUL DAY OUT !

This was the slogan used to advertise the daily summer excursion service from Liverpool to Llandudno and Menai Bridge operated by the ***St Tudno*** *and the* ***St Seiriol****. On Sunday 12th August 1955 the Liverpool Echo sent its reporter and his family along to join in the fun. This was his report:*

Not even the writer who sings Llandudno's praises in the resort's lavish guide book dared to call it the Promised Land. I will. Because to me, my wife and two-year-old son Mark, and scores of others, Llandudno became as attractive as a cool well-watered oasis in the burning desert, or as desirable as firm ground at the end of a mile-long cake walk.

I will explain that for my trip to Llandudno I decided to go as an average tripper, taking wife, infant, thermos flask and bucket and spade for a day out on and by the sea. On the sea ...? Yes, we decided to go from Liverpool by boat, on the stout ship **St Tudno**. At 10.45 we set off down the Mersey for the open sea. As we left the estuary and followed the shipping lane, we noticed that the Irish Sea was pretty choppy.

By the time we were well out the rising swell was occasionally tossing fairly solid spray over the lower decks. *'It makes the trip more interesting,'* I told my wife. A seasoned traveller chimed in: *'Wait until we turn along the Welsh coast and take the waves from the side. We'll roll like a drum. You'll see!'*

We did see - and feel - exactly what this gloomy know-all meant. No sooner had the course alteration been made than those standing by the weatherside rails retreated from the spray and the poor sailors on board began to look a trifle seedy.

Soon I saw the first cardboard carton being passed around, and then heaved out to sea, well clear of the rails. I discovered, too, that it was unwise to tarry too close to the rail on the lower deck because some poor soul by the rail above had discovered that what comes up must come down! One by one passengers succumbed, and it seemed only right and proper that people who had earlier laughed at other people's upsets should later take their own turn at rail or carton, or else disappear from public view.

My wife went below decks and stayed there so long that I asked the stewardess to go down and see if she were still among the pitiful living. My son Mark, in my arms, went yellow and then went to sleep. And I want to say here that the entire crew, who probably were feeling none too much like running away to sea themselves, did all they could to help us. But nothing, nothing in this wide world, would have been so welcome as the firm deck of Llandudno Pier. Soon we could see it coming, like a ray of hope at an undertakers' convention.

Then we were very near ....

Then we were past it and heaving our way across Conway Bay. A red flag at the pier head signalled 'Do Not Land' - too windy we presumed - and sent us packing to Menai Bridge. Paradise Postponed !

As the news went round, hardy types who had clung to their dignity gave in and made for the rail. And one young man who added sound effects set off a chain reaction.

I might have been an average tripper, but this trip was far from average. Centuries later, it seemed, we entered soothing calm water and finally reached Menai Bridge. Here we entrusted ourselves to a bus which took us to Llandudno - the Promised Land ! □

On checking the ***St Tudno's*** *log for this stormy day, some 1,200 passengers are recorded as leaving Liverpool. Just 700 returned from Menai Bridge. The remaining 500 had had quite enough of the 'wonderful day out' and elected to return to Merseyside from Menai Bridge by train or bus !* j.s.