

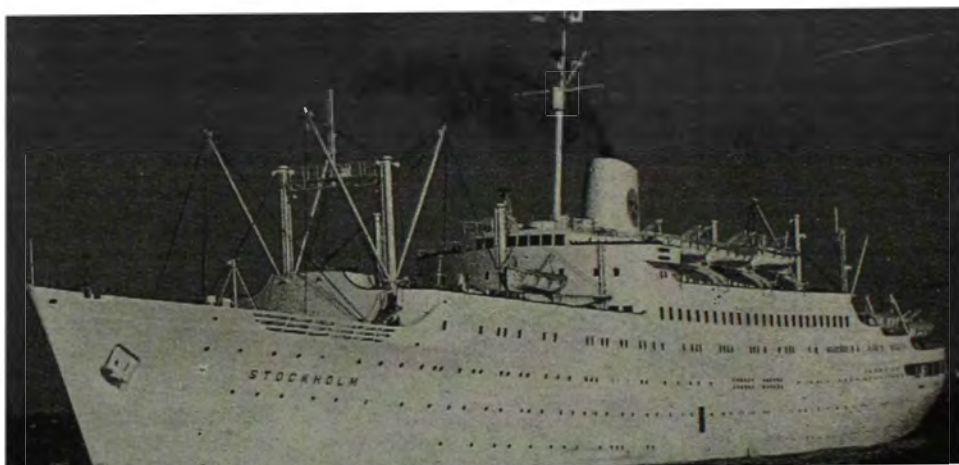
The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

(Founded in 1938)

THE BULLETIN

Volume 50, No 1, June, 2006

Editor : John Shepherd



The Andrea Doria / Stockholm Collision (<i>The Editor</i>)	page 2
White Star Relics : the Nomadic and the Oceanic's Bell	page 16
George's Landing Stage, Liverpool (<i>T.B. Maund</i>)	page 18
The Suez Crisis of 1956	page 23
The Empire Windrush – an Icon of England (<i>John Shepherd</i>)	page 25
The Pioneer Inman Liner City of Glasgow (<i>Frank C. Bowen</i>)	page 30
The Manxman – Past, Present and Future (<i>Bill Ogle</i>)	page 32
McTay Marine (<i>Antony J. Barratt</i>)	page 35
The National Line : A Liverpool Promoted Enterprise of 1863	page 37
Readers' Letters / Book Reviews	page 42

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

President:

Mr A.S. Davidson

Vice-Presidents:

Captain Graeme Cubbin, Mr H.M. Hignett



Chairman:

Mr J.R. Chambers

Vice-Chairman:

Mr W. Ogle

Council:

A.J.Barratt, D.Eccles, R.Dennis (*Meetings Secretary*), D.Littler,
J.Lingwood, M.D.R.Jones, A.H.McClelland, J.Shepherd (*Editor*), G.F.Wright

Honorary Officers:

Secretary: J.Stokoe *Treasurer:* J.Coates

Membership and General Correspondence:

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

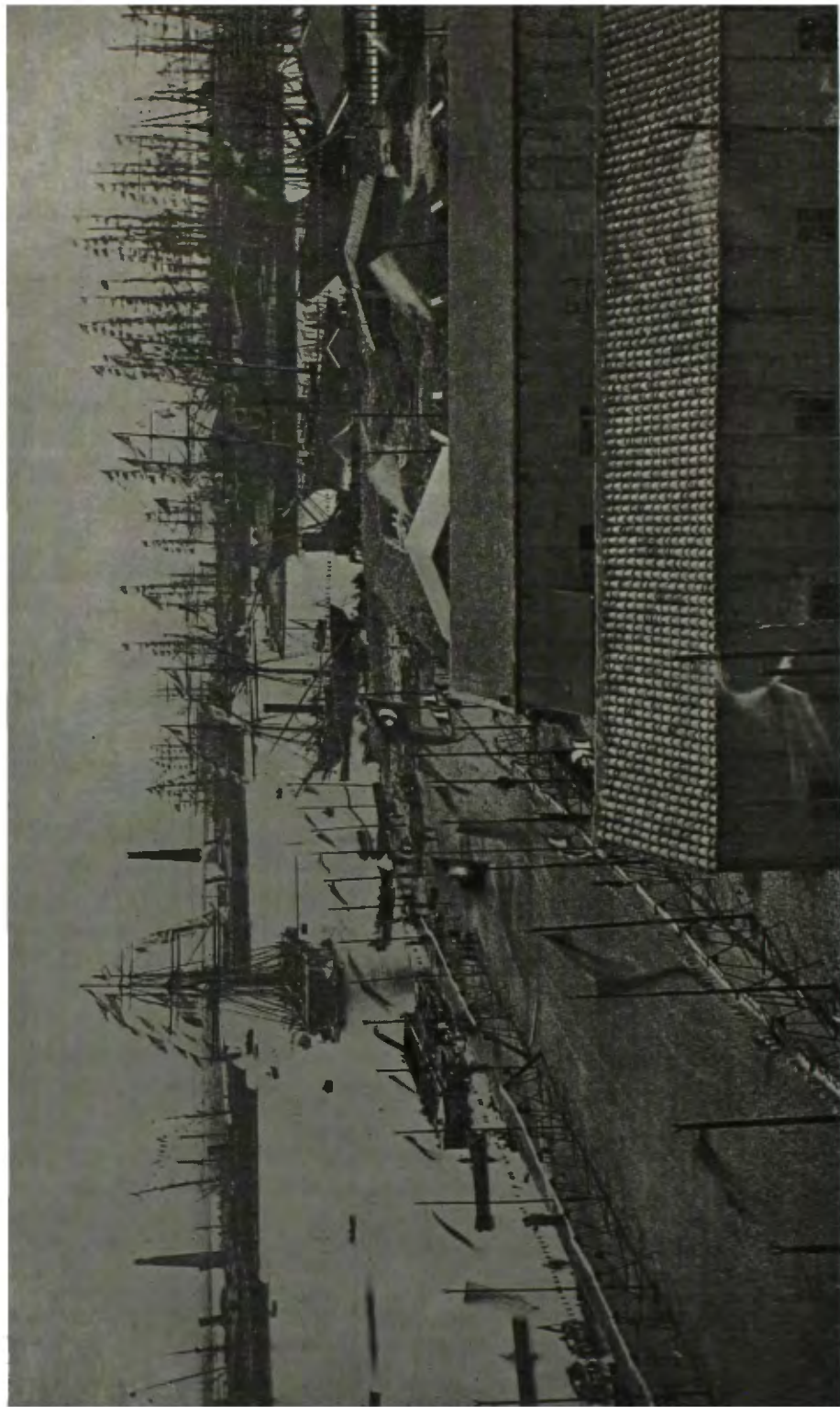
'Bulletin' related matters:

John Shepherd,
3b, Cliff Drive, Mariners' Park,
WALLASEY, CH44 0EX, U.K.

Front Cover:

The Swedish American Liner **Stockholm** with her rebuilt bows, following her
collision with the **Andrea Doria** on 25th July, 1956.

THE OPENING OF THE SUEZ CANAL



The scene at Port Said at the opening of the Suez Canal on November 17, 1869

THE “ANDREA DORIA” / “STOCKHOLM” COLLISION

by the Editor

*Two large Atlantic passenger liners collided off Nantucket Island, Massachusetts, at 11.11pm on the evening of Thursday 25th July, 1956. They were the Italian liner **Andrea Doria** (29,083 tons) which was sunk and the Swedish American liner **Stockholm** (12,644 tons) which limped back to New York with her bows stove in and her No.1 hold flooded.*

*The **Andrea Doria**, in her distress call, asked for lifeboats as she was unable to use most of her own because of a severe list. The first ship on the scene was the United Fruit Company vessel **Cape Ann** and she was followed by the French liner **Ile de France** and a number of US Coast Guard vessels. Within five hours all the survivors had been taken from the **Andrea Doria** which sank some hours later.*

The Italian ship, with 1,134 passengers on board, was bound from Genoa to New York and the Swedish ship was outward bound from New York to Gothenburg.

From Lloyd's Register, 1954-55:

ANDREA DORIA Gross Tonnage: 29,083; Nett: 15,788.
Length: 656.5ft; Breadth: 90.2ft; Depth: 45.4ft.
Built at Genoa, 1953. Owners: “Italia” Soc. per Azioni di Nav.
Call Sign : I C E H Engines: 6 steam turbines geared to two shafts.

STOCKHOLM Gross Tonnage: 12,644; Nett: 6,450.
Length: 510.4ft; Breadth: 69.1ft; Depth: 32.7ft.
Built at Gothenburg, 1948. Owners: A/B Svenska Amerika Linien
Call Sign: S E J T 2 Oil Engines by A/B Götaverken.

PETITION TO U.S. COURT

A petition filed in the New York Federal Court on 16th August 1956 by the Swedish America Line claimed that the company should not be held liable for any loss, damage, injury or destruction arising from the collision between the **Stockholm** and the **Andrea Doria** on 25th July.

In this petition the Swedish company said that the **Stockholm** sighted the **Andrea Doria** about two miles off the Nantucket Light, and it added:

“The **Andrea Doria** was well on the port bow of the **Stockholm** and in the position anticipated from the observations and plottings on the radar. The **Andrea Doria** was showing her red (port-side) light, and her white masthead lights were open so as to pass at a safe distance to the port of the **Stockholm**. Although the vessels were in a position to pass safely port to port, red to red, the **Stockholm** went to starboard to give even greater passing distance.

“The **Andrea Doria**, however, suddenly closed out her red light, showed her green light, and veered sharply to her own left or port at undiminished speed, turning across the bow of the **Stockholm**. The **Stockholm** immediately went hard to starboard and full astern but it was impossible to avoid collision, and shortly thereafter the starboard side of the **Andrea Doria** and the bow of the **Stockholm** came into collision, causing physical damage to each vessel, loss of life, and personal injuries. Those on the **Stockholm** heard no signal from the **Andrea Doria** until after the **Andrea Doria** veered to port and just before the collision contact, when the **Andrea Doria** blew a signal.”

The **Stockholm** owners further claimed that the sinking of the Italian liner was not due to any neglect or fault by the **Stockholm**, but was caused “solely by the fault and neglect of the **Andrea Doria**.” The allegation was made that the radar equipment on board the Italian ship was ‘faultily maintained and/or operated’, and that the Italian ship ‘failed to take any proper or adequate measures to avoid collision with the **Stockholm**’.

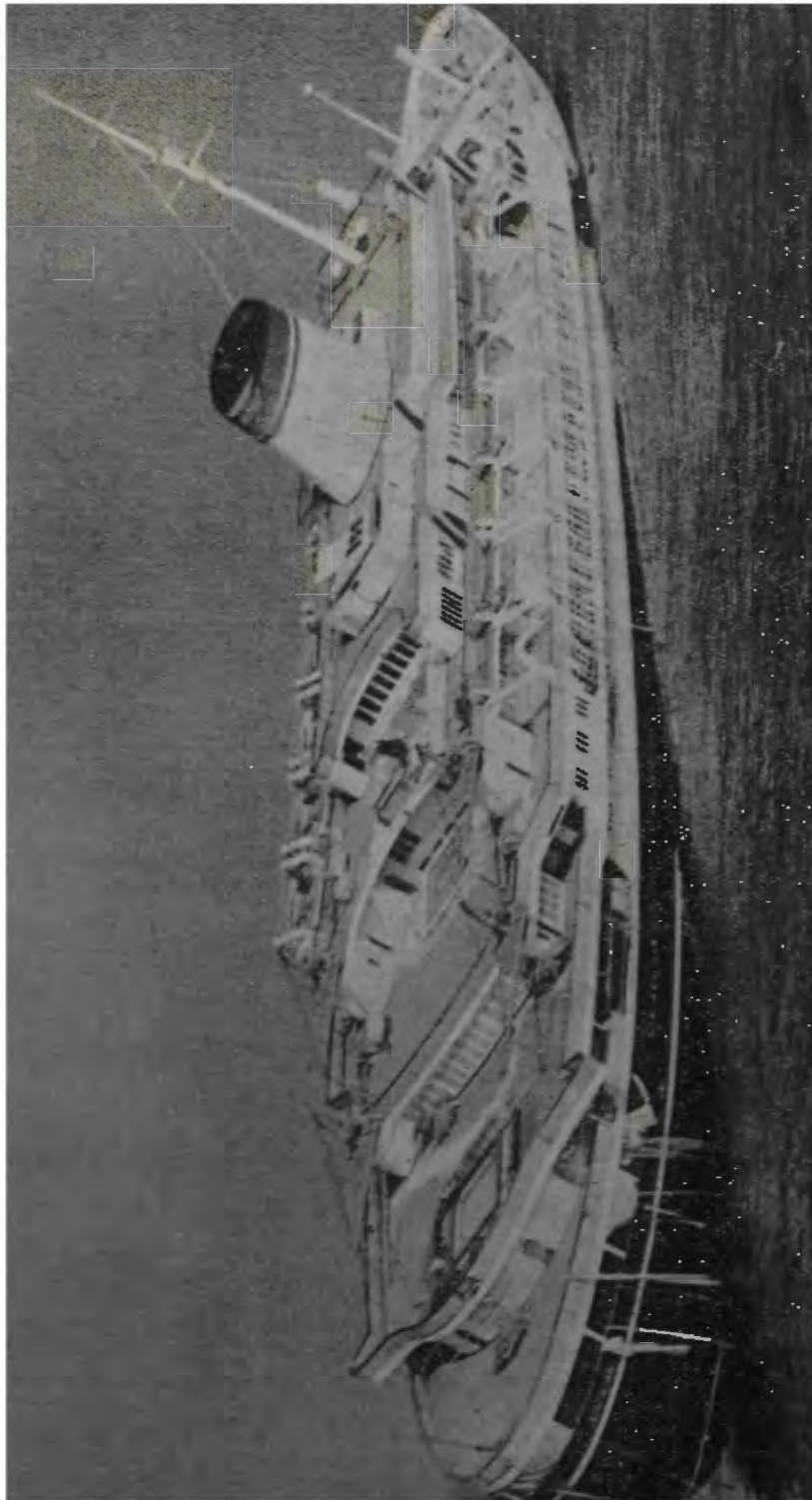
Mr Giuseppe Ali, general manager of the Italian Line in the United States and Canada, issued a statement in which he made the allegation that the **Stockholm** made a right turn without sounding the required whistle signal, which action, he claimed, actually brought about the collision. The Swedish American Line, he added, did not deny that the **Stockholm** was far off the usual and agreed track for eastbound vessels. He alleged that the **Stockholm** was proceeding at high speed (18 knots) and that she was not blowing fog signals although there was considerable fog in the area at the time. The Swedish charges, Mr Ali went on, were filed in court, obviously in anticipation of a suit by the Italian Line to recover damages resulting from the sinking of the **Andrea Doria**.

Italian consular officials in New York prepared a summarized report on the sinking of the **Andrea Doria**. This indicated that the watertight bulkheads were closed as soon as the liner entered the fog area off Nantucket Island. Her acoustic and electric fog signals were operating long before her radar screens picked up the **Stockholm**. This information was gathered from the master, Captain Piero Calami, other members of the crew, and passengers.

PRELIMINARY INQUIRY AT NEW YORK

A preliminary inquiry into the collision opened in New York on 19th September 1956. It was established that the radar equipment on the **Stockholm** was working when her third officer, Mr E. Carstens-Johansen, aged 26, went on watch at 8.30pm on 25th July. When he took over the watch there were a quartermaster, a look-out and a standby man on the bridge and the **Stockholm** was making full speed on a course of 90 degrees. At 9.40pm the master altered the course to 87 degrees. The sky was overcast, but the visibility was five to six miles.

Mr Carstens-Johansen was the first witness called in a pre-trial hearing which was taking depositions from the officers and men of both ships. He said that he first got an echo of the **Andrea Doria** on the **Stockholm**’s radar at a distance of 12 miles. At 11pm the radar located the **Andrew Doria** some 10 miles away and about two degrees from the port side of the **Stockholm**. When the **Andrea Doria** was about six



The Andrea Doria listing to starboard before she sank

miles distant, according to the radar, a plot indicated that she would pass the **Stockholm** about three-quarters of a mile to port. He saw the **Andrea Doria's** lights at a distance of 1.9 miles on the port bow at about 20 degrees: he could see two masthead lights and a weak red light.

At this point he gave the helmsman the order: '*Starboard, midships, steady as you go*'. He did this because Captain Nordensen, master of the **Stockholm**, had ordered him not to let any ship come within a mile of the **Stockholm**. The helmsman turned the ship about two points to starboard.

Mr Carstens-Johansen said that he had sole responsibility for the **Stockholm** for about 80 minutes before the collision. He did not remember seeing Captain Nordensen on the bridge after 10.p.m. The **Stockholm** rammed the **Andrea Doria** at 11.11p.m. The third officer went on to state that he had attempted to avoid the collision by reversing the **Stockholm's** engines and by turning sharply to starboard, seconds before the two ships came into contact in clear moonlight.

Mr Carstens-Johansen said that he checked on the helmsman, Peter Larsen, at intervals of two, five or ten minutes during his watch. He was asked why he did this so often and replied: '*Larsen is more interested in surrounding things than in the compass. But he is a good helmsman when he wants to be.*' The third officer denied that the **Stockholm** had been yawing considerably with Larsen at the helm. He insisted that he would have called Captain Nordensen to the bridge if it had been foggy – as it was, it was a clear moonlit night.

On the third day of the Inquiry, Mr Carstens-Johansen admitted that the **Stockholm** was three miles north of her planned course and suggested that strong currents were responsible for the deviation. He also said that a record of the orders given on the **Stockholm** on the night of 25th July had disappeared sometime between the collision and the time the **Stockholm** returned to New York.

Mr Carstens-Johansen admitted that he failed to make a radar calculation of the Italian liner's speed as she approached the **Stockholm**. He was aware that the instruction book for the use of radar aboard the Swedish American liner required a time notation for each charting of position of an approaching vessel, but that he had relied on 'visual calculation' to get the **Andrea Doria's** approximate speed.

The **Stockholm's** third officer said that the **Andrea Doria** turned to port across his course while he was answering a telephone call from the crow's nest lookout. He suddenly saw the lighted side of the **Andrea Doria** 'swing up' with such suddenness that he did not have time to check the position of her masthead lights. The **Andrea Doria's** red light was still visible when he left the bridge to take the call from the lookout and this indicated that the two ships would pass port to port without danger of collision. The telephone, it was established, faced aft. '*Then I looked and saw the whole side of the Andrea Doria swing up and then I saw her green light*', said Mr Carstens-Johansen. He then realized that the Italian liner had changed course and that collision was imminent. He immediately gave orders to reverse the engines and make a hard-to-starboard turn in an attempt to avoid a collision.

Following the collision, Mr Carstens-Johansen conceded that the **Andrea Doria** partially vanished 'in a haze'. He was not aware of the identity of the **Andrea Doria** until told by a wireless operator after the collision. The degree of fog was becoming an increasingly important factor in the case.

Later the lawyer for the Italian Line sought to show that the **Stockholm** was 19½ miles north of the 'recommended' eastbound shipping lane when the collision occurred. Mr Carstens-Johansen agreed, but stressed that he was following his master's orders.

The third officer was asked if he really thought he could depend on a radar calculation of the **Andrea Doria's** position and course at a distance of less than 10 miles in order to compute probable passage of the two ships. Mr Carstens-Johansen said he thought he could. He went on to say that if he had heard a whistle signal, it would have helped him to avoid collision. He did not hear any signal until after the **Andrea Doria** had turned across the **Stockholm's** bow and then it was drowned by the noise of the engine telegraph or the collision. The third officer said he himself had given no whistle signals indicating several turns which the **Stockholm** had made to starboard, asserting that such a signal was not necessary in clear weather.

It was alleged that the **Stockholm** customarily travelled at full speed in fog, contrary to international navigation rules. A careful search of the **Stockholm's** log indicated that the liner had travelled at full speed of 18 – 19 knots in fog during sixty 4-hour watches over a seven-week period beginning on 6th June, 1956. Mr Carstens-Johansen, in seven days of testimony, repeatedly denied that the **Stockholm** was in fog before or at the time of the collision. He had admitted that he did not sight the Italian liner until she was 1.9 miles away, but insisted that in no way was she enveloped in fog.

A reading of the **Stockholm's** course recorder graph by a Sperry gyroscope expert was used to support the contention that Mr Carstens-Johansen could not have seen the Italian liner at a distance of 10 or more miles on radar. The third officer adhered to his story that he first sighted the Italian liner's radar 'blip' at about 11.pm at a distance of about 10 miles. He said that he then ordered a two degree change of course to starboard to put more distance between the two vessels. According to the Sperry analysis, the change of course was made at 11.07pm. An irregularity of the recorder course track indicated that the collision took place at 11.11pm. Counsel said that, assuming the two ships had a combined speed of 40 knots, they could have only been about 2.8 miles apart at 11.07pm in order to collide at 11.11pm.

Concluding his evidence, Mr Carstens-Johansen said that the **Andrea Doria** could have avoided a collision by remaining on her course or by turning to starboard, but she turned to port.

THE ITALIAN SIDE OF THE CASE

The **Andrea Doria's** master, Captain Piero Calamai, testified that he was on the bridge at the time of the collision. He had been on the bridge since 3.pm when his ship entered a fog area. Captain Calamai said that as a result of fog his ship had been on emergency orders for eleven hours before she was in collision with the **Stockholm**. The **Stockholm** was first spotted on the radar at a distance of 17 miles. She was to the starboard of the **Andrea Doria** and remained to starboard until the time of the collision shortly after 11.pm.

Captain Calamai testified that the **Stockholm** made a starboard swing directly into his ship. He had been observing every rule of the road to avoid a collision.



*The smashed bows of the **Stockholm** after the collision. The whole of the plating, with frames and bulkheads, was crushed in as far as the forward derrick posts between Nos. 1 and 2 holds.*

The **Andrea Doria** had entered fog at 3.pm on the afternoon of 25th July and Captain Calamai immediately reduced the speed of his ship to 21.8 knots, reinforced the engine room watch and put them on 'stand-by' orders, and ordered the ship's watertight doors to be closed. He also posted three look-outs – two on the bridge and one on the prow – and ordered the ship's whistle to be blown at 1 minute, 40 second intervals.

As the evening wore on the fog became less dense, said Captain Calamai. When the **Stockholm** appeared to be about two miles distant on the radar he went to the starboard side of the bridge where the chief officer, Captain Eugenio Giannini was standing watch. "*Giannini said to me: 'Why don't we hear him? Why doesn't he whistle?'*" Captain Calamai said.

Captain Calamai said he continued looking to starboard and 'saw a glow'. He said the **Stockholm** was approximately 1.1 miles off and some 20 to 25 degrees to starboard when he first sighted her. He realized a collision was inevitable unless he could get out of the **Stockholm's** way as quickly as possible. '*I gave orders to swing to port to the wheelsman*', Captain Calamai told the court hearing. When asked if he had considered giving an order to reduce the speed of the engines, Captain Calamai said he had not because he thought at his present speed a collision could be avoided.

Captain Calamai said the **Andrea Doria** had turned 10 to 15 degrees to port before the moment of impact. His ship rapidly listed 18 degrees to starboard and this made it impossible to lower the port side lifeboats. The starboard side lifeboats swung out too far to make it possible to embark the passengers. Orders were given to the passengers in both English and Italian to proceed to their assigned stations to abandon ship

It was customary, stated Captain Calamai, for vessels bound for Europe to steer a course twenty miles south of the Nantucket lightship and for vessels bound for America to pass one or two miles to the south of it. When asked if he ever remembered seeing a freight or passenger vessel coming eastbound in the westbound track from Nantucket to New York, Captain Calamai replied: '*No, never before.*' He did not give the 'abandon ship' signal on the ship's whistle in order to avoid panic amongst the passengers, but gave the order through his officers.

The **Andrea Doria's** rough deck log, together with the engine room log and the cargo log, went down with the ship. One of the officers managed to save part of the course recorder graph.

Captain Calamai told the hearing that he did not know and could not remember the technical details of the stability of the **Andrea Doria** under flooding conditions that would follow a collision. Under cross-examination he professed his ignorance of data regarding the ship's centre of gravity, her draught under certain conditions, and the dangers of unsymmetrical flooding. The Italian Line issued a statement to the effect that the staff captain, Captain Osvaldo Magagnini, had special charge of all stability problems on the **Andrea Doria**, and not the master. He was expected to give evidence later.

A relief helmsman was at the wheel of the **Andrea Doria** at the time of the collision. Under questioning Captain Calamai said that the regular helmsman left the wheel at 11.p.m when the **Stockholm** appeared to be about eight miles away on the radar. He '*left for a smoke*'.

When he was able to sight the **Stockholm** Captain Calamai said that her white masthead lights came into a position that clearly indicated that the Swedish ship would not clear his course. It was then, he said, that he gave a hard-to-port helm order in a futile attempt to out-turn and out-race the **Stockholm**. Captain Calamai said that he might have been able to save his ship by heading into shallow waters after the collision, but that it would have meant jeopardizing the safety of his passengers.

The command to abandon ship included an order to give preference to women and children. Captain Calamai said that he knew nothing about reports that some babies were dropped from the deck of the listing ship to rescuers in lifeboats below, or that some passengers were left to their own devices by the crew. Every accessible cabin on the sinking vessel had been checked for survivors before he and his officers abandoned the ship. Captain Calamai admitted he did not make a personal inspection of the collision area where 45 passengers were believed to have lost their lives in a tangle of steel.

Captain Calamai testified that the course the **Andrea Doria** was taking was not her customary course to New York, and was not the usual summer course. The Italian Line gave him a free choice of Atlantic routes. According to the International Safety Convention signed in London in 1948 by both Italy and Sweden, the 'contracting Governments undertake to impose on the companies to give public notice of regular routes which they propose their ships should follow, and of any changes made in these routes'.

The accuracy of the radar equipment on board the **Andrea Doria** was defended by Captain Calamai. The radar had operated with a maximum error of only one degree throughout the voyage. He admitted that there was no way to check the accuracy of the radar from the time the liner had entered the fog eight hours before the collision, but he maintained that hourly 'fixes' by Loran equipment established that the ship was on course and that the radar was working with precision. Captain Calamai said that the only alteration in his course had been a six degree turn to port about an hour before the collision in order to pass one mile south of the Nantucket light vessel. The third officer of the **Stockholm** had testified previously that currents in the area had swept his ship off course and that his 'fixes' of position were possibly not accurate because of this.

Counsel questioned Captain Calamai on the wisdom of his practice of proceeding in fog at 21.8 knots while relying on radar. He denied a suggestion that he was intent on bringing his ship into New York on time in spite of fog. He had often been late because of fog, he said. The **Andrea Doria** had a maximum speed of 23 knots and was proceeding at 21.8 knots at the time of the collision. Captain Calamai said he was proceeding at that speed because his ship was not in crowded waters, although he was aware that the area around the Nantucket light vessel was referred to as 'The Times Square of the Atlantic'.

Without radar, said Captain Calamai, he would have maintained a speed of about 14 knots. When it was pointed out to Captain Calamai that international marine rules for the prevention of collisions at sea require ships to reduce to a 'moderate speed' in fog, he replied: "*There were no ships around us*".

The Counsel for the Italian Line said that the examination of Captain Calamai had turned into a trial by ordeal and must be stopped. Vehemently protesting against 'needless and senseless' repetition of questions by five lawyers, Counsel said that the obviously exhausted captain had answered questions fully and frankly to the best of his ability during ten days on the witness stand.

Captain Gunnar Nordensen, master of the **Stockholm**, testified on 22nd October that for 36 years he had sailed the course his liner was taking the night she was in collision with the **Andrea Doria**. He knew of no law, agreement or

recommendation against it. Captain Nordensen said that he had crossed the Atlantic 423 times and had used a route passing about two miles south of the Nantucket light vessel, except when there was ice. He usually met several Europe-bound vessels on relatively the same route which he used. Among the companies that used this route, said Captain Nordensen, were the Norwegian American Line, the Swedish Transatlantic Line and the Moore-McCormack Line.

The Italian Line contended that the collision would never have occurred if the **Stockholm** had stuck to a sea lane recommended by the U.S. Geodetic Survey. This lane takes a Europe-bound ship about 25 miles south of inbound ships, which pass fairly close to the Nantucket Light.

Captain Nordensen said that he still had full confidence in his third officer Mr Carstens-Johansen. He stated that on the night of the collision the **Stockholm** was proceeding eastbound towards Europe on exactly the recommended course for westbound vessels as described in the *U.S. Coastal Pilot*. He noted, however, that the recommended courses are neither compulsory nor mandatory.

In the event of poor visibility Captain Nordensen said that his standing instructions to the officer of the watch were to call him to the bridge, put the engines on standby, blow the whistle at regulation intervals and never to get closer than one mile to another vessel. He said that he would prefer to be called too much rather than too little. The third officer maintained that he had had no reason to call the master as there was good visibility until just prior to the collision.

After five hours of cross-examination Captain Nordensen collapsed and was taken to hospital and his place at the witness stand was taken by the **Stockholm's** second officer, Mr Lars Henrik Enestrom. He told the Inquiry that the first of the **Stockholm's** lifeboats to reach the **Andrea Doria** picked up mostly men. He had been in command of the boat. He said the men scrambled down the liner's side hand-over-hand by rope as if they had some experience. His boat picked up 45 – 50 survivors on the first trip. The group included a few women who had difficulty sliding down the rope after the men were already crowded in the lifeboat.

Mr Enestrom told the Inquiry that there was no fog in the area when he made his first trip to the **Andrea Doria** in a lifeboat, about one hour after the collision. Visibility was at least three miles. However he admitted that a bank of fog could have been one of the many reasons why the **Stockholm's** third officer was able to plot the **Andrea Doria's** echo on radar from ten miles distant down to two miles without seeing her lights.

Mr Jostra Svensson, the second engineer of the **Stockholm**, testified that one of the vessel's two engines was going full astern before the collision. He said that on the night of the collision he was on duty from 8.p.m to midnight, along with four other engineers. When he received the order, he stopped both engines and then re-started the starboard engine 'full astern'. He went to the port engine but before he could re-start it the collision occurred and he was thrown off his feet. Mr Svensson stated that he made entries in the engine room log book which showed that he had stopped the engines twice, once just before the collision and the second time when the captain ordered that the engines be stopped for good.

On 1st November the chief counsel for the Italian Line demanded that the **Stockholm's** master be recalled to the witness stand. "*If he is not produced, I will seek*

a court order," he threatened. The attorney for the Swedish-American Line retorted: *"I will produce the master only when the doctor says he can come."*

The **Stockholm's** chief engineer, Mr Gustav Assargren, said that he raised the smashed bow of his ship by releasing about 230 tons of fresh water into the sea. As a result the **Stockholm** steadied and returned to New York with her bow only about six inches beneath its normal water line.

Mr Assargren went on to testify that he did not alter the speed of the **Stockholm** unless he received orders from the bridge, and said that it was not usual for speed to be reduced in fog.

Under cross-examination, the **Stockholm's** helmsman, Peter Larsen, admitted that he allowed his attention to wander away from the compass and that this caused the vessel to yaw maybe one or two degrees. The **Stockholm's** crow's nest lookout, Sten Johansson, told the hearing that after he had telephoned the bridge to warn of the oncoming lights, he noticed that the lower light he had seen came to the right of the higher, indicating that the **Andrea Doria** had made a turn, and that by looking at the moon he realized that the **Stockholm** was also turning.

The chief officer, Mr Gustav Kallback, was asked if he remembered seeing vessels pass the **Stockholm** between the Ambrose Channel Light Vessel (off New York) and the Nantucket lightship. He replied: *"Yes, we saw several including the **Liberté**, the **Ile de France**, the **Oslofjord**, the **United States**, and the **Queen Mary**."* When asked if he was familiar with the recommended track for vessels sailing eastbound from New York, Mr Kallback said that he was familiar with the track of the ships he had sailed on, and that he was aware of the track of the U.S. Hydrographic Office. When asked: *"Is it not a fact that it was not the practice of the **Stockholm** to reduce speed in fog?"*, Mr Kallback replied: *"I must say yes"*.

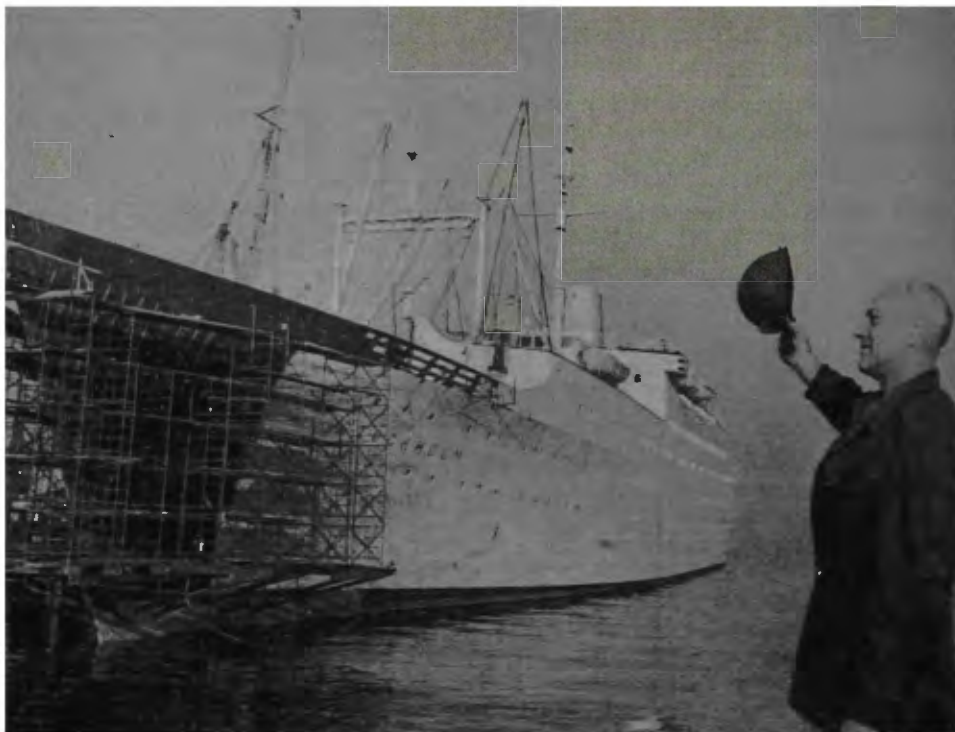
Captain Nordensen of the **Stockholm** resumed his evidence on 3rd December after a six-week illness. Apart from backing his third officer, Captain Nordensen had little to add to the hearing. He maintained that his third officer was correct in attempting to pass the **Andrea Doria** at a distance of six-tenths of a mile.

It was not until 4th December that the second Italian witness to give evidence, the **Andrea Doria's** second officer Mr Curzio Franchini, went into the witness box. He was the officer on duty standing at the **Andrea Doria's** radar on the night of the collision. He said that he saw an object on the radar when it was 17 miles away. Following the radar closely he notified Captain Calamai and they both calculated the passing distance between the two vessels at that time at about one mile. The **Andrea Doria's** course was 267 degrees, but after passing the Nantucket lightship it was altered to 261 degrees and then later to 268 degrees, heading towards the Ambrose Channel Light Vessel.

When the **Stockholm** was two miles away on the radar, Mr Franchini said that he could not see her lights because of very thick fog. As the approaching **Stockholm** came within the one-and-a-half mile range, Mr Franchini said he heard Captain Calamai call out: *"I saw a red light."* Moments later Captain Calamai ordered a full port turn. Mr Franchini said he turned off the automatic fog signal and gave two short blasts, indicating a turn to port, and maintained that he had heard no signal whatsoever from the **Stockholm**.

Mr Franchini went on to tell the hearing that he had never seen another ship sailing eastbound in the lane in which the **Stockholm** was travelling. He also said that there was no lookout in the **Andrea Doria's** crow's nest on the night of the collision, maintaining that: "*It's better to have a look out in the bow.*"

"STOCKHOLM" REFLOATED WITH NEW BOW



A Bethlehem Steel Company's drydock craftsman waves as the Swedish liner "Stockholm" leaves the company's dry dock in Brooklyn, N.Y., with scaffolding still on her bow. The ship's bow was practically destroyed in the collision that resulted in the sinking of the Italian liner "Andrea Doria" in July. After refloating in dry dock, the "Stockholm" was towed to another pier for removal of the staging and repainting before resuming her New York-Europe service

The pre-trial hearing, which had commenced on 19th September, was suspended on 14th December until 7th January 1957 over the Christmas and New Year holiday period. On the resumption of the hearing the Federal Judge Irving Kaufman ordered that the pre-trial hearing must be concluded by the end of February 1957. If no settlement could be reached by that time, then the formal trial was scheduled to commence on the first Monday in April, 1957.

Following the resumption of the pre-trial hearing, Captain Nordensen of the **Stockholm** was the first witness to be called. He admitted that he had left his youngest and most inexperienced officer in charge of the bridge. Captain Nordensen was not sure if his third officer had read the U.S. Coast Guard book with references to Nantucket weather in which it was stated that in July the average number of hours

during which the Nantucket lightship sounds its fog signal is 290, or one-third of the month. Captain Nordensen admitted that a vessel's lights were required by law to be visible for five miles and that it was possible that fog had prevented the **Andrea Doria's** lights from being seen. He objected to the suggestion that his third officer, Mr Carstens-Johannsen was too young (age 26) for the responsibilities involved. Counsel suggested to Captain Nordensen that there should have been two officers on the **Stockholm's** bridge on the night of the collision, and that the collision might have been avoided if he, the master, had been on the bridge.

On 24th January 1957 the Federal Judge postponed indefinitely the pre-trial hearings into the sinking of the **Andrea Doria** in view of an out-of-court settlement of the case by the Italian Line and the Swedish American Line. Counsel for the two lines told the judge that they were satisfied with the results of negotiations for a settlement recently completed in London under the auspices of underwriters. It was reported that the two shipping lines had agreed to drop their suits against each other and to share the claims of all third-party litigants. The lines were planning a joint £2¼million fund out of which third-party claims would be settled.

The Judge told the two lines that members of the crews of the two ships, who had been held in New York as pre-trial witnesses, could return to their homes without a formal court order.

A point to which reference had been made on more than one occasion during the interminable U.S. preliminary hearing into the loss of the **Andrea Doria** was the use of shipping lanes. The House of Representatives Committee report pointed out that while the 1948 Safety Convention recommended the use of recognized routes across the North Atlantic, the North Atlantic Track Agreement, which provides for these lanes was not mandatory upon all signatories of the international convention. Thus while Sweden and Italy were signatories to the convention, neither the Swedish American Line nor the Italian Line was a party to the North Atlantic Track Agreement. If the ships had been following the recommended sea lanes in the area east of the Ambrose Channel Light Vessel in the approaches to New York, the collision would not have happened, for the **Stockholm** was nearly on the westbound track and some 20 miles north of the recommended track for vessels eastbound to Europe.

Preliminary work on the settlement of third party claims arising from the sinking of the **Andrea Doria** progressed sufficiently fast to warrant the further postponement of the pre-trial hearing. The claims against the owners of the **Andrea Doria** and the **Stockholm** were well over \$100 million, (£35,700,000 at 1957 rates of exchange.)

From the Editor: I sent a draft copy of this article to LNRS Vice-President Captain Graeme Cubbin and asked for his comments. Graeme replied:

"I was struck by the anomaly that, in the aftermath of the collision, there seems to have been no attempt by the Court to apportion blame. The parties eventually settled out of Court, but I doubt if such a luxury would have been permitted by a British Admiralty Court, especially in a case involving loss of life. A judge and assessors would sift the evidence, and apportion blame accordingly, and probably

endorse the Certificates of some officers. Perhaps the respective masters and officers would face similar Inquiries in their own countries?

"In this case it would seem that some person or persons were being economical with the truth. The inconsistencies are too blatant to be ignored:

- One party claims to be in fog, the other in clear weather. (Different Rules apply, according to the conditions.)
- Both ships are proceeding at full speed, even the one claiming to be in fog. (A reduction from 23 to 21.8 knots is irrelevant and risible. It would certainly not comply with the 'moderate speed' required by the Rules.)
- Neither vessel was bound by the recommended traffic lanes, and would be considered by the Court to be on the high seas.
- The Swede claimed to have seen (albeit at a distance of *less than two miles*) the red side-light of the other passing to port – close, but safe. The Italian saw the red light of the other on his *starboard* bow. Yet suicidally altered course to port.
- Serious radar plotting before the days of True-motion radar would require the presence of at least two officers on the bridge.
- In my view, regardless of what he saw, by eye or by radar, it was the Italian master's precipitate alteration to port which brought about the collision. It was not the Swedish master's fault for being in the 'wrong' lane, or being in or out of fog. Both ships, however, were culpable for proceeding at full speed in or near fog banks." ■

THE CONFIDENT APPRENTICE

During the morning watch, whilst the **Urmston Grange** was steaming northward about two days distant from St Vincent on a homeward passage from Buenos Aires to the United Kingdom, Apprentice H. Webb decided to indulge in a spell of sunbathing. He noticed a condemned hatchboard and decided to move this from the poop so that he could stretch himself out in comfort. Unfortunately, while standing on the rail and endeavouring to pass the board upwards, both hatchboard and Apprentice Webb went overboard.

This happened at 6.30am and, until he failed to appear at breakfast, his absence remained unnoticed. A thorough search was made of the ship and when no sign of Apprentice Webb could be found it could only be assumed that he had gone overboard.

Captain A. McEwan ordered the vessel to retrace her course and, just before 10.am an object was sighted which proved to be the hatchboard with Apprentice Webb comfortably reclining on it. A lifeboat was launched and he was picked up, little worse for his adventure.

Apprentice Webb had a belated breakfast in the captain's room. Asked about his thoughts when, from his tiny raft in the middle of the vast expanse of sea and sky he saw the **Urmston Grange** receding into the distance, he said he was not unduly worried and was absolutely confident that Captain McEwan would return as soon as it was discovered that he was missing.

Thanks to LNRS Member John Hill for submitting this item which appeared in the Furness Withy house magazine 'The Log' in September 1956.

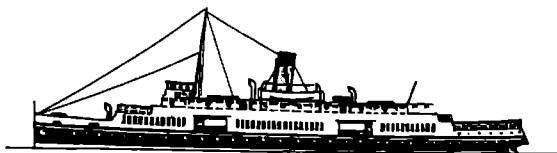
WHITE STAR RELICS

1. A TENDER RE-UNION

It has recently been announced that the White Star Line tender **Nomadic** has been saved from the scrapyard and is to return to her birthplace at Belfast.

The **Nomadic** was built by Harland & Wolff at Belfast in 1911 to act as a tender at Cherbourg to the White Star liners **Olympic**, **Titanic** and **Britannic**. The **Nomadic** had a gross tonnage of 1,273, and was 220.7 feet in length with a 37.1 ft beam. Twin screws gave her a speed of 12 knots. She could carry 1,200 passengers plus baggage and mails.

The **Nomadic** was launched on 25th April 1911 and was completed by 20th May. A week later she attended the sea trials of the **Olympic** and sailed down to Southampton. In June 1911 she commenced her tender duties at Cherbourg, replacing the former White Star Line tender **Gallic**.¹ For operating and crewing purposes the **Nomadic** was registered in the name of the White Star agents at Cherbourg, G.A. Lanière.



The *Nomadic* in her original form

On 12th April 1912 the **Nomadic** conveyed the passengers out to the **Titanic**, anchored in Cherbourg harbour on her ill-fated maiden voyage.

During the First World War the **Nomadic** served as a naval tender at Brest, returning to Cherbourg in 1919. By 1927 there was not enough work at Cherbourg for the **Nomadic** servicing only International Mercantile Marine Company (John Pierpoint Morgan's IMMC) vessels and so she was sold to the Soc. Cherbourgeoise de Transbordment of Paris. She retained her name and continued in her tender duties. In 1934, following the Cunard – White Star merger, the **Nomadic's** name was changed to **Ingenieur Minard** and she was employed on general towing and salvage work.

For the duration of the Second World War the tender saw service in England, mainly along the south coast, but in 1945 she returned to Cherbourg. One of her final duties at Cherbourg was to act as tender to the **Queen Elizabeth** on her final Atlantic crossing in October 1968. Shortly after this she was sold to Somairec for demolition at Le Havre, but she was saved from the shipbreakers and became a floating restaurant on the Seine at Paris. In this role she reverted to her old name of **Nomadic** and was berthed in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower.

¹. The **Gallic** was built by John Scott & Co of Kinghorn, Fife in 1894 for Birkenhead Corporation as the paddle ferry **Birkenhead**. The White Star Line acquired her in March 1907 for use at Cherbourg following the transfer of its principal services from Liverpool.

The **Nomadic** changed hands several times and her condition was seriously deteriorating. She again seemed destined for the scrapyards but fortunately the Association Française du Titanic took her to Le Havre in 2005 and launched a £3.2million appeal to restore the ship to her former state. Christian Gorree, AFT President, said: '*The **Nomadic** is built of the same steel as the **Titanic** and was designed by the same team, led by Thomas Andrews*'. Paul Loudon-Brown, maritime author and vice-president of the Titanic Historical Society commented: '*The **Nomadic** remains the last floating link with the once-mighty White Star Line.*'



The Ingenieur Minard (ex Nomadic) at Cherbourg

The **Nomadic** was put up for auction in Paris at the end of January 2006 and was bought by the Northern Ireland Office for £171,320. It is intended to set up a charitable trust to co-ordinate fund raising and oversee the restoration. The Belfast Harbour Commissioners have agreed to provide a berth. Belfast City Council has made a contribution of £110,000. Belfast Industrial Heritage has launched an international appeal to save the **Nomadic** and to fully restore her, which it is estimated could cost up to £10 million. Once she is back at Belfast, the **Nomadic** will be put on the Historic Ships Register and this will mean that she will be eligible for grant aid from the Lottery Heritage Fund.

Time will tell █

2. RECOVERY OF THE 'OCEANIC'S' BELL

The Shetland Museum has recently acquired the bell from the White Star liner **Oceanic**. This rare artifact was spotted on the Ocean Liners Auction internet site by a local diver who quickly alerted the curator, Mr T. Watt, of its presence. The museum already has a number of other important **Oceanic** artifacts in its collection.

The **Oceanic** is one of Shetland's most famous wrecks and lies on the Hoevdi Grund off Foula. The wreck is almost undiveable because of fierce tides but a number of dives were attempted in the 1970s and some artifacts recovered.

The story of the loss of the **Oceanic** makes interesting reading. She was built by Harland & Wolff at Belfast for the White Star Line in 1899. In 1900, whilst at anchor in the Mersey, the **Oceanic** was struck by lightning and lost her main topmast. She was transferred from Liverpool to Southampton in May 1907. On 8th August 1914 the **Oceanic** was commissioned as an armed merchant cruiser and assigned to the 10th Cruiser Squadron on the Northern Patrol. She was commanded by a Royal Navy Captain (W.F. Slaytor), who had no experience of handling so large a ship, and with her White Star master, Captain Henry Smith, also present on board.

On 8th September 1914 she was wrecked in flat calm and clear weather three miles south-east of Foula Island, some 20 miles west of Shetland. The **Oceanic** was attempting at high water to pass to the west of Foula but due to a navigational error, compounded by dual responsibility (Captain Smith was overruled when he said the ship was too close in), the fast current carried her off course and she grounded on Hoevdi Grund. The trawler **Glenogil** quickly transferred some 400 men to the **Alsatian** and other ships now standing by.

Salvage attempts on 11th September failed. The battleship **Hannibal** put a 6-inch steel hawser aboard, but the **Oceanic** was impaled on the rocks. Subsequent gales and the working of the ship stove in her bottom. Courts Martial followed. The **Oceanic's** navigator (D. Blair) was blamed and (surprisingly) the two captains were absolved. However the Royal Navy quickly changed procedures so that these large cumbersome passenger liners, larger than all but the biggest battleships, were under control of their regular captains and staff. The Navy also ruled that there should not be two captains in future.

In March 1924 much of the **Oceanic** still remained on Hoevdi Grund and it was cut down to water level. Further salvage work took place in 1973 and the last worthwhile remnants were removed in 1979.

And so, back to the present. The Receiver of Wrecks was contacted to see if the **Oceanic's** bell had been declared and it was found that it had not been. Next, Shetland company Hay & Co. was contacted to see if they still held the rights to the wreck, which was indeed the case. At the same time enquiries were made to the National Fund for Acquisitions regarding the Shetland Museum being allocated grant aid towards the purchase of the bell. Funding would be available if legal title to the object could be verified.

A complicated round of discussions between all parties followed resulting in the bell being withdrawn from the auction process so that a private sale could be negotiated. The Shetland Museum acquired the bell in December 2005.

The **Oceanic's** bell first came to light when it was discovered amongst the effects of a retired landlady who had it in her possession for a number of years, using it as a doorstop in her guest house on the Isle of Skye. It has since passed through the hands of several antique dealers. However Mr Watt, Curator of the Shetland Museum, pointed out: *'the bell's recovery from the wreck remains a mystery and we would be grateful if we could find out more.'* ■

GEORGE'S LANDING STAGE, LIVERPOOL

by T.B. Maund

On Thursday 2nd March 2006 the portion of the Liverpool Landing Stage known as George's Stage and used by the Mersey ferries, sank in what were described as 'freak conditions'. A 10.4 metre tide, combined with a strong northerly breeze and a heavy swell, was blamed. Dating from 1975, the landing stage was built of concrete sections, and replaced the century-old wooden stage. It is perhaps an appropriate time to look at the story behind the George's Landing Stage.

Just as the introduction of steam power was the first major turning point in the development of the Mersey ferries, so the adoption of floating landing stages was the second. Before they were brought into use, embarkation and landing could be extremely hazardous to the extent that a river crossing was only to be undertaken as a matter of dire necessity. The ferry boats departed from various stone steps and slips in the vicinity of what was to become Liverpool Pier Head.

The seventh Liverpool Dock Act of 1811 authorised the construction of an L-shaped basin to the west of George's Dock. This was specifically designed for ferry purposes, but not all the boats moved there.

Although floating landing stages had been suggested as early as 1811, it was not until December 1842 that the first permanent structure connected to the land by a proper bridge was installed. Its obvious superiority convinced Liverpool Corporation of the need to improve landing facilities generally. One William Cubitt was engaged by the Corporation to design a structure which he did with great success. This attracted the attention of the eminent engineer Sir John Rennie. In the course of his Presidential address to the Institute of Mechanical Engineers in 1846, Rennie said:

"Cubitt has proposed to adopt wrought iron on a great scale for constructing landing platforms at Liverpool where the difficulty of building docks or quays which large steam vessels can approach at all times of the tide render works of this kind necessary to accommodate the immense traffic frequenting Liverpool. The landing platform designed by Cubitt, and now in the course of construction, consists of a wooden frame, 500ft. long by 80ft. wide, floated upon a number of wrought iron pontoons, each 80ft. long, 10ft. wide and 6ft. deep; it is connected with the shore by two bridges, each formed of two hollow wrought iron beams, 150ft. long, carrying the platform of the bridge; the attachment with the shore and the stage is made so as to admit of motion both vertically and horizontally to accommodate itself to the rising, ebbing and flowing of the tide, which there rises about 30ft."

Cubitt's George's Landing Stage was brought into use on 1st June 1847. A contemporary report suggested that 40,000 people could find standing room. The cost was £50,000, an enormous sum by 1847 standards. To reduce resistance to the tides, the deck was tapered at each end like the prow of a ship. Whilst the stage was a great improvement, its mixed use by passengers, goods, horses and cattle soon resulted in intolerable conditions both on the approaches and upon the landing stage itself. Ferries jostled other craft for berths and the steep roads down from the town were narrow and congested with direct access to the waterfront being obstructed by George's Dock.

In 1855 Cubitt was commissioned to design a second platform of somewhat similar construction to be placed to the north of George's Basin. Built at Birkenhead by Thomas Vernon & Sons at a cost of £130,000, the new stage (known as the Prince's Landing Stage) measured 1,002ft. by 81 ft. and was opened on 1st September 1857. The goods steamers left George's Stage for the new stage and congestion at the ferry berths was temporarily eased.

The formation of the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board in 1858 created one authority responsible for port installations on both sides of the river and the Mersey Docks (Ferry Accommodation) Act of 1860 conferred powers to erect floating bridges and other works at Liverpool and Birkenhead.

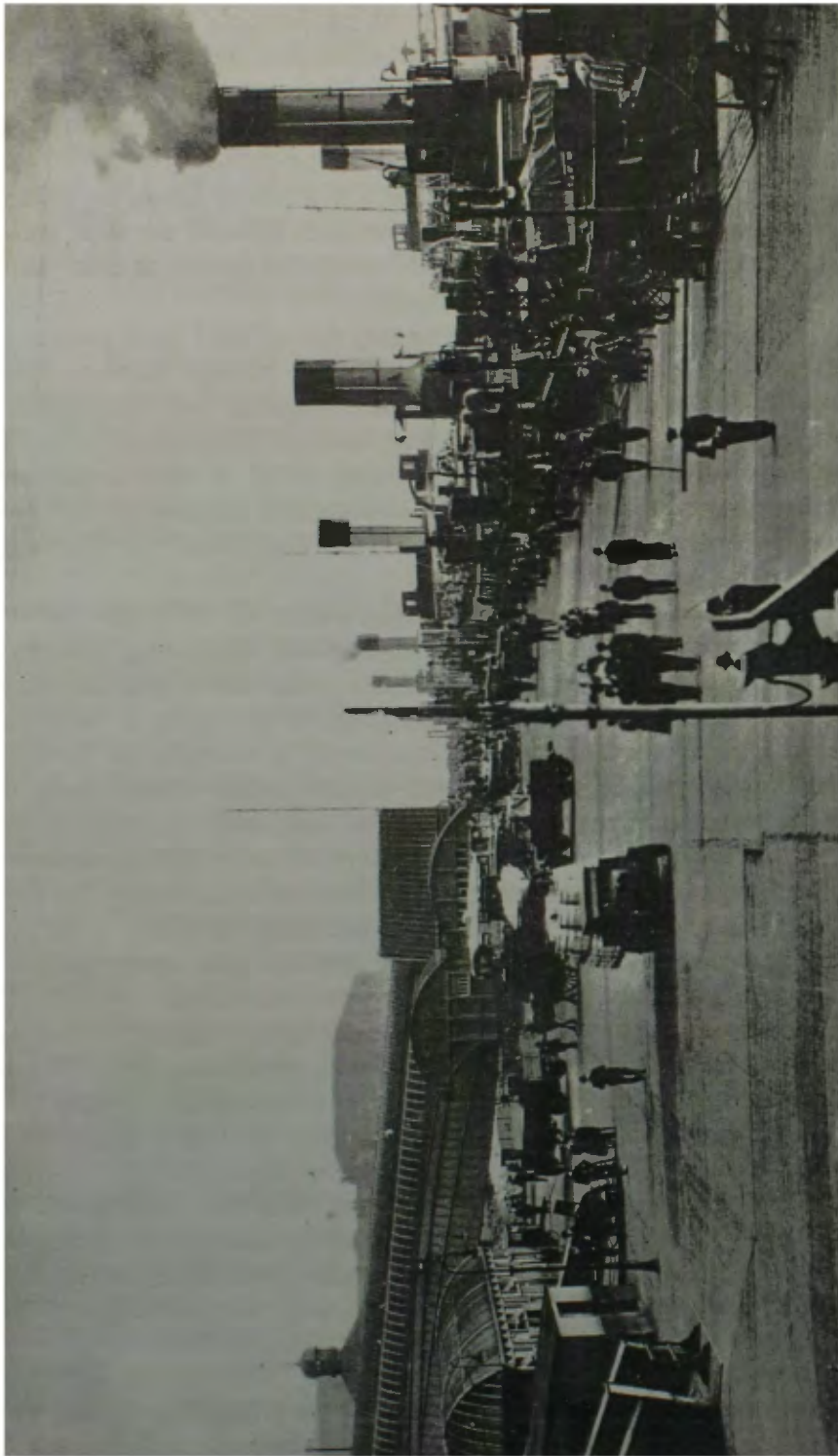
The Mersey Docks (Various Powers) Act of 1867 gave powers to close and fill up the whole or part of George's Basin and the passage between George's Basin and Prince's Dock and to construct a floating roadway and ferry goods stage. The joining of George's Stage and Prince's Stage and the provision of a floating roadway was approved by the Dock Board on 9th May 1872. A new, lengthened George's Landing Stage was also sanctioned. The old stage was removed on 23rd July 1874 and its replacement, built at the Canada Works on the West Float, was floated into position on the following day.

The new stage was opened to the public on 27th July 1874 but on the following afternoon it caught fire whilst adjustments were being made by a gas fitter under the decking. The structure was highly inflammable and the flames quickly spread from end to end; all efforts to extinguish the fire being in vain. The burnt out structure with its booms and bridges was towed to the head of the Great Float at Birkenhead where repairs were entrusted to the Canada Works. Long disused pier steps were brought back into use for the ferries, with some old steamers being moored to serve as temporary stages. Within a few days, all ferry departures were transferred to a small portion of the northern stage which had survived. During this time boats had to load alongside one another and it became necessary for orders to be given that the connecting gangplanks must not be uplifted until the main shore gangway had been raised to prevent passengers being stranded on the wrong boat.

During reconstruction, iron beams were substituted for the original wooden ones, and pine deck planking was replaced with greenheart. On 27th July 1875 the rebuilt stage was towed across the river and the following day, exactly one year after the fire, it was secured in position. However it was April 1876 before the repair work was finally complete.

A new Prince's Landing Stage was built by Pearson & Knowles of Warrington in 1895 – 96. When it was joined to the George's Stage the full structure measured 2,478ft., almost half a mile. The goods berths were moved slightly to the north, with a curved road being laid out on the stage to guide traffic to and from the floating roadway.

The Mersey Docks Consolidation Act of 1858 required the Dock Board to maintain a depth of 6ft of water at George's Landing Stage but during the 1880s and 1890s there were many occasions when ferry steamers were unable to use the southern berths at low tide because of the northward advance of the Pluckington Bank. There was a continuous running battle of words between the Corporation and the Dock Board who steadfastly refused to take action for several years despite the severe



George's Landing Stage in the early 1930s. In the foreground are two Birkenhead 'luggage' boats, with the New Brighton, Seacombe and Woodside steamers behind.

disruption to ferry services on many occasions. A series of sluices was eventually built in the quay wall behind George's Stage through which water was discharged at low tide, the theory being that sufficient depth would be maintained by a scouring action, unassisted by dredging. In practice the sand was driven from under the stage only to deposit itself 30ft to 50ft westward, right in the track of the Woodside passenger boats. Later the Dock Board, having improved access to the port by dredging the Bar, turned its attention to dredging in the river, particularly in the region of the landing stage.

The passenger bridges connecting the George's stage with the Pier Head were eventually covered by curved glazed roofs and embellished with advertisements. But they were soon too narrow to handle the enormous volume of ferry traffic. Relatively few people used the outside footwalks which were added, mounted on outriggers. By 1910 the congestion was so serious that people trying to make their way against the main passenger flow at peak times had difficulty in doing so. As a result of a tripartite agreement between the Dock Board and Birkenhead and Wallasey Corporations, a new 25ft. wide passenger bridge was provided, and an existing bridge moved 90ft. to the south. In consideration of this Wallasey was to pay £300 and Birkenhead £200 per annum for 20 years.

In 1921 George's Stage was extended by 55ft. to the south and a second goods berth for the Birkenhead Woodside service provided. The ferry landing stage had now reached the form which became familiar to millions of ferry passengers for five decades. The ferry berths were well established with the luggage boats occupying the section between Prince's and George's stages and then, from north to south, the berths for New Brighton/Egremont, Seacombe, Woodside, Rock Ferry/New Ferry and Eastham.

A wooden tower on George's Stage, between the Seacombe and Woodside berths, housed a fog bell. The complete tower and bell is preserved at the Maritime Museum.

In November 1970 the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board notified the Merseyside Passenger Transport Executive, which had inherited the Birkenhead and Wallasey Ferries eleven months earlier, that a Parliamentary Bill would repeal MD&HB obligations to provide and maintain George's Landing Stage for the use of the ferries and it was proposed to make a charge of £77,000 per year for the right to use the stage. The stage was in a dilapidated state as lack of funds had resulted in minimum maintenance for several years. Three berths were still in use, two (Woodside and Seacombe) regularly and one (New Brighton) only casually: the New Brighton service ceased on 26th September 1971.

Discussions in 1971 concluded with an agreement that the Passenger Transport Executive would pay 25% of the capital cost of a new landing stage and a monthly sum for maintenance. Work started on 16th July 1973 with the demolition of the old stage. The ferries were temporarily transferred to Prince's Landing Stage and a pedestrian bridge was placed across the floating roadway to give easier access to and from the Pier Head bus station. The new stage comprised thin-walled reinforced concrete pontoons, 197ft long by 59ft. wide, divided by concrete walls into watertight compartments. The pontoons were assembled in Dublin and towed to Liverpool. The ferries section comprised the southern two pontoons and services resumed from

George's Landing Stage on 13th July 1975. The three Pier Head bridges were replaced by just one.

The year 1976 opened with storms of unusual violence with the high tides at Liverpool reaching 35ft., some six feet above the predicted level. During the afternoon of Saturday 3rd January a tilt was noticed in the northern pontoon. It was found to be partially flooded and attempts by the fire brigade to pump it dry were unsuccessful. At low water the northern pontoon lay on the river bed and the southern pontoon, now three quarters full of water, was tilting at about 30 degrees. The bridge walkway had been twisted and one of the booms securing the stage to the river wall had been dislodged. The southern pontoon was then deliberately fully flooded to avoid it breaking its back as it rose with the tide.

Ferry services were cancelled until 12th January 1976 when they resumed from the Isle of Man berth on the northern section of the new stage, but eight days later, in further severe storms, the connecting booms to this section of the new landing stage also carried away. Ferry services were again suspended until temporary berths were brought into use on the northern (Isle of Man) section on 11th February.

The concrete pontoons were salvaged and the booms connecting George's Stage with the river wall were replaced. Ferry services resumed from George's Stage on 13th April 1976. The landing stage was aground in January 1978 due to insufficient dredging, which did nothing to restore public confidence.

The builders of the new landing stage had stated that it had a 'guaranteed' life of twenty-five years. This would have expired in 2001, so George's Landing Stage has been living on 'borrowed time' for the past five years.

On Friday 3rd March 2006 the *Liverpool Daily Post* reported that Merseytravel director-general Neil Scales was drawing up plans to fast-track a multi-million pound ferry terminal plan in the wake of the storm damage. Just whether a replacement George's Landing Stage is ever built at today's prices remains to be seen.

This article is a précis of Chapter 12 of '*Mersey Ferries*', Volume 1 – Woodside to Eastham by T.B. Maund, published in 1991.



The wreck of George's Landing Stage at low water on 4th March, 2006. (photo: John Shepherd)

THE SUEZ CRISIS OF 1956

Fifty years ago, on Friday 26th July 1956, Colonel Nasser, President of Egypt, announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company, with the transfer to the Egyptian Republic of all its assets and commitments.

Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser said that shareholders would be paid compensation in accordance with the last closing prices on the Paris Bourse. All the Company's funds in Egypt were declared 'frozen'.

President Nasser stated that the Canal revenue would be used to finance the projected high dam at Aswan. The previous week Great Britain and the United States had withdrawn their offer of grants of £25million towards the cost of starting the work which would increase Egyptian cultivation by more than half. It was estimated that the total cost of the dam would be about £460million (at 1956 values). This change of policy was a result of Egypt's growing affinity with the Soviet bloc.

The Suez Canal Company was Egyptian with its administrative headquarters in Paris. The Board of Directors comprised sixteen of French nationality, nine British, five Egyptian, one American and one Dutch.

Suez Canal capital consisted of 399,134 capital shares, each of French Francs 250; 400,866 *actions de jouissance*¹ and 100,000 founders' shares. On 1st July 1955 the British Government held 179,586 capital shares and 173,918 *actions de jouissance*.

Under a convention of 1949, Egypt was made a privileged partner in the concern and the Company undertook to train Egyptians in operating the canal. Egypt's share in the profits of the canal was increased to seven per cent, with a guaranteed minimum of £350,000 a year.

The Suez Canal concession was not due to be terminated until 16th November 1968. Increases in traffic through the canal had increased remarkably in the years prior to 1956. In 1955 the number of vessels passing through the canal rose by 11 per cent and their tonnage, at over 115 million tons, by 12.9 per cent.

In the classification of tonnage according to flag, British vessels still held first place, but now only represented 28 per cent of the total. The Norwegian flag kept its second place with 13 per cent. Liberian vessels, mostly tankers, had shown a marked increase in 1955, which had brought their contribution to 12 per cent of the traffic, while French vessels, having for the first time topped the 10 million ton mark, accounted for 9 per cent.

There were two distinct issues in the Suez Canal affair. Firstly there was the act of expropriation itself, the simple theft of property. Secondly there was the vital importance of keeping open an international highway. Even before Colonel Nasser's latest knavery, shipowners had good reason to be dismayed by Egypt's attitude towards the canal. There was interference with shipping destined for Israel and, at a time when traffic was increasing rapidly, there was the insistence on the employment of inefficient Egyptian pilots, with consequential losses and delays in transit. During the first four months of 1956 over 130 vessels were delayed for an average of twelve hours each, due to the unavailability of a pilot.

¹ *actions de jouissance*: redeemed shares that continue to participate in dividends.

In 1956 the future of the Suez Canal as a genuine international waterway was in the balance, despite any assurances from the Egyptian Government. Even the most optimistic shipowner had felt that this position would be reached before 1968, but few had expected that the blow (call it nationalization, expropriation or what you will) would have fallen so suddenly or so soon.

Shipbuilding & Shipping Record, in its issue for 2nd August 1956, commented: "The fact is, however, that Colonel Nasser's behaviour – which was, to express it in the mildest terms, definitely not cricket – took most of the world by surprise. The immediate response was one of bewilderment. The 'Daily Express' trumpeted for action, but did not suggest what form this action should take; 'The Times' stated that it was much too soon to work out all the implications and the Prime Minister spoke of the need for 'firmness and care'. In summer, particularly, the British are apt to take their politics lightly. Drake may have been able to finish his game of bowls, but we cannot afford to wait until the final Test is played."

As diplomatic efforts continued to try to solve the crisis, the UK and France prepared secret plans for the military retrieval of the canal zone and the overthrow of Nasser, who was perceived by Anthony Eden, the British Prime Minister, as a new Hitler. They found ready allies in Israel, which had been in an almost continuous state of conflict with Egypt since its foundation in 1948.

The Israelis invaded Egypt on 29th October 1956. British and French forces then landed at Port Said and Port Faud, on the pretext of supporting the United Nations call for a ceasefire and moved to occupy the canal zone. The duplicity of the Anglo-French action distressed the Americans who threatened to support the UN's call for the imposition of economic sanctions. The British and French were therefore forced to withdraw on 22nd December 1956 and the Israelis withdrew in March 1957.

The whole sorry mess served to underline the UK's postwar decline as an imperial power and the dependence of British foreign policy on the United States. It also raised Nasser to the status of an Arab nationalist hero, ensuring that British and French influence in the Middle East was deeply compromised. Egypt retained control of the Suez Canal and Anthony Eden was so widely criticized that he resigned shortly after the debacle. ■



The Suez Canal Company's offices at Port Said

THE 'EMPIRE WINDRUSH' – AN ICON OF ENGLAND

by John Shepherd

A merchant ship has been honoured as an 'Icon of England' in a new government scheme to record and celebrate the country's culture.

*The **Empire Windrush** is in the first wave of icons – joining such national institutions as the FA Cup, Stonehenge and a cup of tea. All the icons appear on a website – www.icons.org.uk – which aims to 'gradually paint a virtual portrait of the country through an exploration of everything we cherish'. The icons project has been commissioned by Culture Online, part of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.*

*As the icon website explains, the **Empire Windrush** brought the first generation of migrant workers from the Caribbean to England, and therefore played an integral part in the origins of multicultural England. "We are delighted that the **Empire Windrush** has been chosen as an icon of England," said Sam Walker, director of the national Black Cultural Archives Museum, "there could not be a more powerful icon in the lives of Caribbean people in this country, as so many families can trace themselves back to those early passengers."*

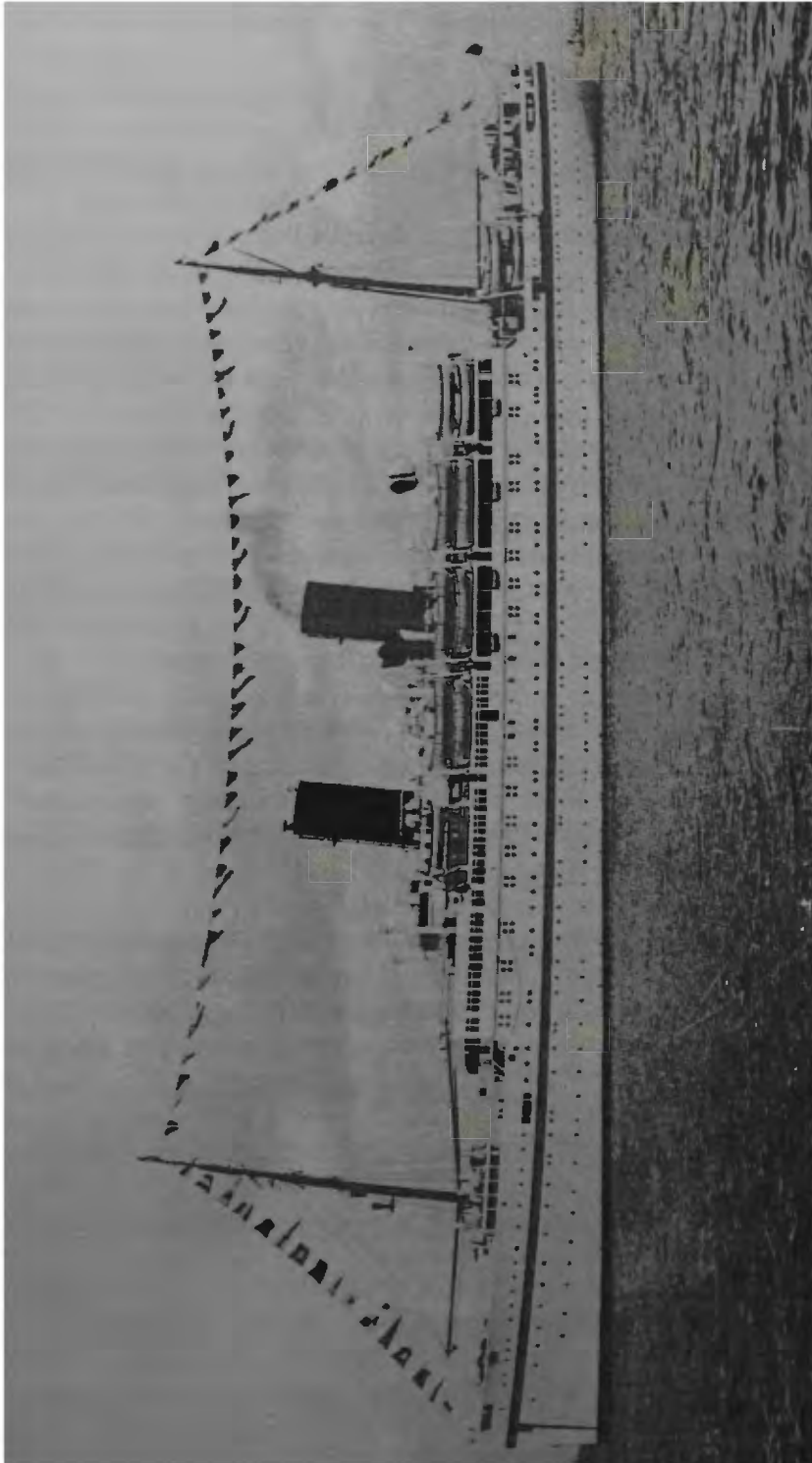
In 1931-32 the Hamburg-South America Line added a pair of one-class motor passenger ships to a class of three already operating on the River Plate service. These ships were the **Monte Rosa**, 13,882 gross tons, later to become HMT **Empire Windrush**, and the **Monte Pascoal**, enabling the company to compete with rival European operators.

The **Monte Rosa** was completed in May 1932 by Blohm & Voss at Hamburg. She had a length of 523 feet and a beam of 65 feet. The new ship had two funnels, the forward one being a dummy. The after funnel contained the exhaust pipes from the main and auxiliary engines together with the uptakes from the boilers. Accommodation was provided for a total of 2,460 passengers when sailing as a one-class ship, but the **Monte Rosa** was capable of carrying 1,500 steerage passengers.

A singular feature of the **Monte Rosa** was the amount of bulwark plating and almost complete absence of rails. The vessel also had ample space for cargo and was intended as a dual-purpose ship, and made short cruises in European waters as an 'economy-class' liner.

In June 1932 the **Monte Rosa** began her trials in the Baltic, sailing directly from Blohm & Voss's fitting out basin at Hamburg. In July her maiden voyage was a complete success, the vessel achieving 15 knots and making the passage from Hamburg to Rio de Janeiro in 17 days and to Buenos Aires in 20 days. In the mid-1930s the **Monte Rosa** became a familiar sight in the Thames when operating weekly cruises from Hamburg to Greenwich.

The **Monte Rosa** survived the war. In August 1945 the Tripartite Merchant Marine Commission agreed that she should be taken over by the Allies, and having been passed over to the British Government as a prize she was renamed **Empire Windrush**. The ship was then allocated to the management of the New Zealand



The **Empire Windrush** at anchor off Spithead in June 1953 at the Coronation Review

Shipping Co.Ltd., having been requisitioned by the Ministry of Transport (Sea Transport Division) for post-war service as one of His Majesty's troopships.

The ship was sent to Alexander Stephen & Sons Ltd at their Linthouse shipyard on the Clyde for repairs and refit to bring the vessel up to post-war troopship standards. This work took until March 1947. Her lower decks were gutted to provide sleeping quarters for troops, while the cabins above were refurbished for officers and families.

The career of HMT **Empire Windrush** began in April 1947 with round voyages from Southampton or Liverpool to the Far East (13 voyages) calling at Gibraltar, Aden, Colombo and Singapore. She also made four round voyages to India and ten to the Mediterranean. Leaving Karachi on 1st January 1948, the **Empire Windrush** carried the last British regiments from the Punjab.

In June 1948 the **Empire Windrush** made a single voyage to the West Indies to embark approximately 400 immigrant men and bring them to the U.K. Many of these were skilled ex-servicemen, British passport holders, some with work permits. The vessel docked at Tilbury on 20th June to be met by welcoming Government officials.

In March 1954 the **Empire Windrush** was homeward bound from Hong Kong. She had been delayed at Suez for twelve hours due to engine repairs, and had then sailed through the canal. There were 1,498 persons on board. Four days out from Port Said and thirty miles off the Algerian coast on the morning of 28th March 1954, at 06.17 hrs the master and chief officer on the bridge heard a 'whoof' of air and turning round saw a burst of black smoke followed by tongues of flame pouring out of the funnel.

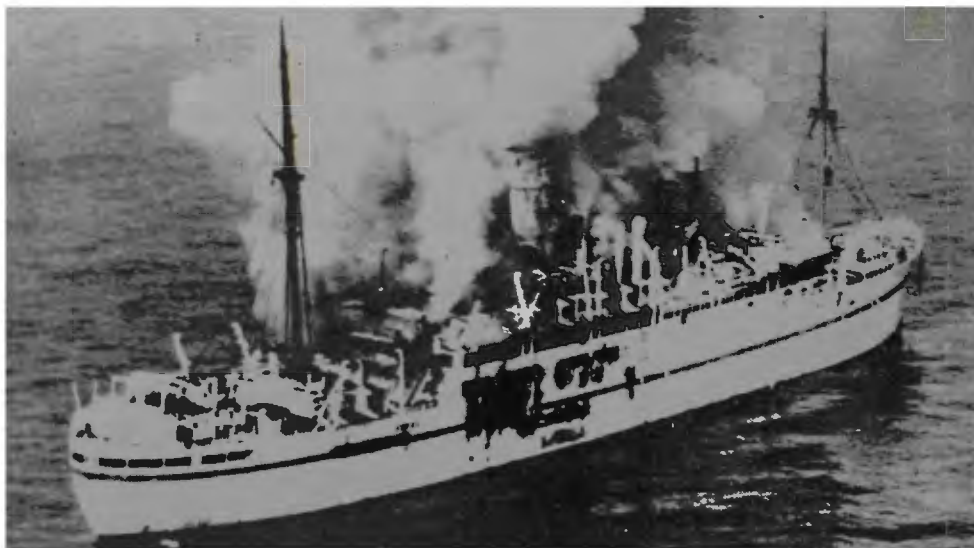
The engine room telegraph was rung to 'stop', but the order was not acknowledged from the engine room. The chief officer then went to the after deck and formed a fire-fighting party of experienced men. They immediately went down to the engine room alleyway on 'E' deck and discovered that the double doors to the engine room were already hot and bright orange flame could be seen around the sides of the doors. Hoses were played here at once but after a few minutes the supply of water stopped.

The chief and second engineers managed to get inside the engine room by way of the port tunnel, but smoke then drove them back. The second engineer, wearing breathing apparatus, went inside and saw, after a few feet, fireglow between the two main engines. All controls supplying the oil systems were turned off. An attempt was made to close the watertight door leading to the engine room from the port tunnel but there was no power.

There were three junior engineers and two others in the engine room at the time of the incident, all of whom perished immediately, overcome by gaseous oily fumes and by the fire. A sole greaser in the boiler room escaped unscathed.

The **Empire Windrush** ceased to steer and the master, realizing that he had an engine room disaster of the first magnitude on his hands, and with all power and control lost, ordered an SOS to be sent at 06.23. With the rapid spread of fire in the central part of the ship the order to abandon ship was given at 06.45 and passengers took to the lifeboats.

Difficulty was experienced in launching the lifeboats as there was no power to recover the falls after the first tier boats had been lowered. The first tier boats carried two-thirds of the complement, including the women and children. The remaining boats were tumbled off by the combined efforts of the servicemen and crew. There was no panic and the evacuation was very orderly up to this time. Later it was every man for himself as flames and smoke poured from doors and portholes in the hull.



The **Empire Windrush** ablaze off the Algerian coast on the morning of 28th March, 1954.
(photo: Imperial War Museum)

Four vessels in the area responded to the SOS, including the P & O cargo liner **Socotra**, and all the survivors were picked up. HMS **Saintes** arrived from Gibraltar and put a towline on the **Empire Windrush** at about 11.00 on 29th March and later reported that she was towing the stricken vessel at 3½ knots. At 00.30 on 30th March the **Empire Windrush** settled and sank in position 37°00'N, 2°11'E. The survivors were landed at Algiers.

A Court of Inquiry opened in London on 21st June 1954 and continued until 6th July. Recommendations were tabled by the presiding judge, Mr J.V. Naisby, QC, suggesting strict implementation or reinforcement of existing fire prevention and fire-fighting standards not only in troopships then in Government service or on charter, but in all seagoing vessels.

The Court found that within a very short time a fire of great intensity had occurred on the starboard side in the forward end of the engine room in the **Empire Windrush**. There was no doubt that the rapidity with which it spread was due to the fact that it was oil fed. Within a few minutes the fire had affected the electric lighting, communication and power systems, and the hydraulic-pneumatic system for closing

the watertight doors in the engine room as well as the main and auxiliary machinery, thus reducing and almost eliminating any chance of fighting or confining the fire.

Smoking, sabotage and electrical fault were all ruled out as causes of the fire, but as the ship had not been salvaged the Court could not pontificate with certainty. The Court found that the two most probable causes of the fire were:

- The collapse of a plate in the main uptake causing incandescent material at a high temperature to be deposited at the forward end of the engine room. Most of this material probably fell on the platform just inside the entrance to the engine room at 'E' deck level. Under this platform were fuel and lubricating oil pipes. The incandescent material would have caused a pipe to give way and vaporise and ignite the oil therefrom.
- An oil drip, leak or splash on to a hot exhaust pipe, of which there were many in the engine room, may have ignited an oil fire in surrounding tanks and supply pipes.

The Court also found that 'there was no evidence given at the inquiry as to whether the upper part of the main uptake had even been renewed or repaired since the vessel was built. Even if it had been renewed, there was **no record** of the inside of the funnel above the level of the top of the economisers having even been seen since 1947. To reduce heat radiation the exterior of the uptake was completely covered with asbestos mats making external examination of the plate, which must have been liable to corrosion, impossible..

'The accident occurred with extreme suddenness and the fact that there were no survivors in the engine room would support the theory that burning material fell without warning and absorbed all the available oxygen in the engine room and also released large quantities of noxious gasses.

'The characteristic 'whoof' of the domestic chimney fire was noted, whilst there were several clear statements as to the absence of an explosion.'

The **Empire Windrush's** master was praised for his part in the orderly evacuation and no blame was apportioned here at all.

The Court recommended that fire-fighting appliances and protective suits be increased, and that proper examination of uptakes and funnels in all vessels should be made mandatory. Finally the Court recommended better siting of emergency controls and switches. ■

THE MONDAY FACILITY

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

JUNE, 2006 : 5th, 12th, 19th and 26th
JULY, 2006 : 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th and 31st
AUGUST, 2006 : 7th, 14th and 21st
SEPTEMBER, 2006 : 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th

SHIPS THAT MADE HISTORY

THE PIONEER INMAN LINER 'CITY OF GLASGOW'

by Frank C. Bowen

Although a vessel of very considerable merit in design, the **City of Glasgow** of 1850 was a ship which had publicity thrust upon her because she was bought as the pioneer steamer of the Inman Line which introduced the transport of emigrants under steam and revolutionized the business.

The ship was not intended for such work, but was built by David Tod and John McGregor to operate a low-fare service of their own between Glasgow and New York and also, perhaps primarily, to draw the attention of the shipping world to their design and construction of iron screw steamers.

The **City of Glasgow** had a clipper stem and bowsprit after the fashion of her day, and was barque rigged with a single funnel. The machinery, designed and built by Tod & McGregor was curious, consisting of a pair of lever beam engines driving a single screw. The engines were on one side of the ship and the beams crossed the keel line to the gearing on the other side. The two cylinders were 66 in. in diameter by 5 ft. stroke and with the three flue boilers with a working pressure of 10 lbs/sq.in., the machinery weighed 428 tons. The screw, 13 ft in diameter by 18 ft pitch, was of the builders' design.



The City of Glasgow, built on the Clyde in 1850 by Tod & McGregor

The **City of Glasgow** had accommodation for 52 first-class and 85 second-class passengers on the main deck, which had a height of seven feet. Only two of the

first-class cabins were four-berth, all the rest having two berths only, while the second class were either four or eight-berth rooms. The vessel was also designed to carry 400 in steerage. Cargo capacity was 1,200 tons.

The ship was launched on 28th February 1850 and put under the command of Captain E.B. Matthews, formerly of the **Great Western**. She left the Broomielaw at Glasgow on her maiden voyage in May, running down the Clyde at rather more than 10 knots. She carried 52 first-class passengers at a fare of £20, and 58 in second class at a fare of £12. A good deal of ice was encountered in the Atlantic, but the **City of Glasgow** made the passage in 16 days and 21 hours. Her timings improved to an average of 14 days and the ship became popular with passengers and shippers.

The progress of the new ship had been carefully watched by William Inman, 25 years old, who had recently been made a partner in the firm of Richardson Brothers of Liverpool in which he had started as a clerk. Inman had dreamed about carrying emigrants across the Atlantic in steamships and after examining the **City of Glasgow** and studying her performance, he persuaded his partners to buy her for a service between Liverpool and Philadelphia.

The ship was advertised to inaugurate the new Inman Line owned by a partnership between William Inman and Richardson Brothers, with Patrick Henderson & Company being the Glasgow agents. The correct title for the company was the Liverpool & Philadelphia Steam Ship Company but it was popularly known as the Inman Line, as a compliment to William Inman, without whose enthusiasm it would never have seen the light of day.

The **City of Glasgow** took her maiden Inman sailing on 11th December 1850 with Captain Matthews retaining command. Owing to rough weather she took 22 days to reach Philadelphia, but only 13 days and 16 hours on the eastbound passage which was only 1 day 16 hours longer than the Cunard wooden paddle steamer **Niagara** on the appreciably shorter run from Boston. The fare was 22 guineas first class and 13 guineas second class from Liverpool to Philadelphia, 100 dollars and 60 dollars eastbound. These fares included provisions and stewards' tips but not wines or other liquors. After a very few voyages the 'tween decks were fitted for the carriage of emigrants and Inman's dream was realized.

The **City of Glasgow** sailed from Liverpool on 1st March 1854 with 111 saloon and 293 steerage passengers, as well as a crew of 76 and a valuable cargo. Ice was beginning to be reported in large quantities in the Western Atlantic and as she became overdue there was great anxiety.

After the **City of Glasgow** had sailed her owners received a telegram that a crippled vessel answering her description had been sighted making for the Azores, but this proved to be a foolish hoax. Later in 1854 a burnt out iron ship was sighted at sea and for a time was believed to be the **City of Glasgow**, but proved to be the sailing ship **Shandon**.

The false rumours naturally intensified the pain of those intimately connected with the disappearance of the **City of Glasgow**, but as the weeks went by it was realized that the ship had disappeared without trace. No clue to her fate was ever discovered but the general opinion was that she had collided with an iceberg. The loss of the **City of Glasgow** was one of the worst tragedies on the Atlantic up to 1854 involving the loss of 480 passengers and crew. ■

THE 'MANXMAN' – PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

A précis of a presentation by LNRS Vice-Chairman Bill Ogle

Following my retirement I began to wonder why the Mersey did not have a preserved sea-going ship. There are fine examples of tugs, also the pilot cutter **Edmund Gardner**. Four years ago I discovered that the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's **Manxman** still existed and was lying on the north-east coast at the Pallion Yard at Sunderland. I joined a small group which had been working for several years in an attempt to save and preserve the old turbine steamer.

In 1936 the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company built two turbine steamers – the **Fenella** and the **Tynwald**. The Second World War then intervened and the building programme restarted in 1945 with the launch of the **King Orry** (4), a modified version of the 1936 sisters. Five more generally similar steamers were built over the next ten years, the final one being the **Manxman** of 1955.



*The **Manxman** in her heyday, making 21 knots on passage from Liverpool to Douglas*

As a candidate for preservation, the **Manxman** certainly looks the part. She is the last surviving example of a 'mini-liner', the class of once ubiquitous short-sea turbine steamers to be found in many ports around the British Isles. She was designed to carry up to 2,300 passengers and there were no special facilities for the carriage of motor vehicles.

As a start to preserving the **Manxman**, a limited company was formed and charitable status obtained. Support and regular help have been forthcoming from three prominent Patrons: Lord Alton, Frank Field and Air Marshal MacFadyen, a former Lieutenant-Governor of the Isle of Man. Key trustees are involved: Bryan Johnson (former Superintendent Engineer of the IOMSPCo.); Nigel Hughes, with a marketing background, and Peter Elson of the *Liverpool Daily Post*.

It is essential that a suitable berth be identified for the **Manxman's** use on her return to the Mersey. The use of Tower Quays at Birkenhead was offered, but in recent weeks this was withdrawn due to planned redevelopment of warehouses and issues

relating to the Historic Warships. Wirral Council has agreed to assist in seeking a new agreement with Peel Holdings, owners of the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company.

Many people are under the illusion that the **Manxman** is gutted, vandalized and virtually destroyed by fire. Much of the old ship really does remain, and some areas are still 'as built'.



*The **Manxman** leaving Liverpool under tow for Hull on 16th April, 1994. She had spent the previous four years at Liverpool in an unsuccessful nightclub venture.*

The **Manxman** did sink at her moorings, allegedly as a result of vandalism. In 2003 she was moved into the covered drydock at the Pallion yard and some hull repair work was carried out. About five tons of mussels were scraped from her hull. After twelve months the **Manxman** had to be returned to her river berth.

In March 2005 hopes were raised. A telephone call was received from IWC Media, a mainstream television production company, much of whose output is taken by Channel 4. The company proposed a series of programmes based on the restoration of a Glasgow built ship, but it couldn't find anything other than a 'puffer' or tug. The **Manxman** then came to the company's attention and Channel 4 planned a series of ten one-hour episodes showing the restoration project under way with the title of '*The Big Boat*'.

Some time was spent re-examining the practicality of restoring steaming capacity! This would have the effect of doubling the estimated costs of restoration, but Heritage Lottery and the main funders thought that this would be worthwhile and the increased costs wouldn't be a problem because of the perceived benefits. A boiler survey was commissioned from Babcocks (now Mitsui Babcock) who concluded that stripping and cleaning with some re-tubing would be sufficient.

Internal examination of the condenser and reduction gearing showed a small amount of pitting and corrosion. The turbines appear satisfactory, as do the propellers, but the rudder is jammed hard over.

Hopes were high for much of 2005, but towards the end of the year IWC said that it thought the programme could not be ready for 2008, even without the steaming option. It stopped further development work on the project.

The North West Development Agency has withdrawn support from the **Manxman** project on the basis that it does not wish to get involved with ships. In Glasgow the equivalent agency has been a major contributor to the sailing ship **Glenlee** preservation, and its Belfast counterpart has just paid £174,000 for the White Star Line tender **Nomadic**.

Wirral Council is considering its position following the financial problems connected with the Historic Warships. The Heritage Lottery Fund is still supportive, providing the local councils will contribute.

Over 2,000 signatures have been obtained on a petition to '*Preserve the Manxman*', and the Friends' Association has over 200 loyal members. The end of the road has not been reached and recently Barrow in Furness has shown an interest and has asked just what needs to be done to take over the project. Time will tell

THE LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY AWARD, 2005

The Society's Annual Award was presented to Charles Jocelyn on 16th February 2006 for his work : **"A Critical Examination of Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (1978), and factors that have a detrimental effect on shipboard watch keeping"**.



Left to Right : Dr Steve Bonsall, Liverpool John Moores University; John Chambers, LNRS Chairman; Award Winner Charles Jocelyn; LNRS Award Co-Ordinator Captain M.D.R. Jones, and Mr H. Hignett , LNRS Vice-President.

McTAY MARINE

*A synopsis of a talk given to the Society in January 2006
by LNRS Member Antony J. Barratt*

The Bromborough based shipyard of McTay Marine Limited closed in September 2004 after just over 30 years of building steadily more sophisticated vessels.

In 1963 two former Cammell Laird employees decided to set out on their own and to set up as metal fabricators at Hooton on the Wirral. The trading name of McTay Engineering was adopted, which was based on combining the names of the two founders James McBurney and Jim Taylor.

After ten years the pair decided that they would like to build small craft. To achieve this aim a new subsidiary of McTay Marine Limited was established. Building initially involved constructing the craft in sections at either Hooton or at alternative premises in Bromborough. The completed hulls were then taken, by road, for launching at Bromborough Dock. It soon became clear that if the shipbuilding activities were to be developed further a more practical method of launching was required. To this end a lease was taken on the former Magazine Village site at Bromborough in 1974 where a slipway and 75m x 25m building hall were constructed. Early vessels built at the new yard were launched down the slipway on a cradle, but as hulls got larger this method became less suitable and a 'Water Skate' system was adopted. This device can best be described as a water hovercraft. As well as launching, the skate could also be used to move part-completed vessels around the yard.

Early builds were mainly of launches and workboats, but increasingly the emphasis moved to building fishing vessels, some on behalf of James N. Miller of St Monans, Fife. This yard was later taken over by McTay but unfortunately had to be closed in 1992, due to the decline in the British fishing industry.

McTay also obtained orders from local clients. Notable amongst these was the order from Bulk Cargo Handling Services for the cargo vessel **Mersey Trader** (496/1977). The successful completion of this vessel led to an order from the Alexandra Towing Company (owners of BCHS). This was for the tug **Canada** (282/1980).

As well as being McTay's first tug, the **Canada** was also the first Voith tug to be built in the UK. Currently the Adsteam fleet, (the successors to Alexandra Towing) contains 18 tugs built by McTay. These include the five tugs ordered by Howard Smith UK Ltd in 1990. At the time this was the largest order ever placed in the UK for harbour tugs. The Liverpool based Ocean Group also ordered a total of 16 tugs from the yard for three of the Group's subsidiaries.

As well as these large orders other tugs were built for operators in the Orkney Islands and the Firth of Forth. Ferries were also built for use in the Orkney Islands, the Shetland Islands, the Western Isles and for Caledonian MacBrayne. The construction of a further ferry for the West of Ireland was transferred from Millers.

Overseas orders included pilot boats for Pakistan and Guyana, along with tugs for the Yemen and Abu Dhabi. As orders began to get scarcer the Company responded by building ever more complex vessels. These included a launch for the

Greek Customs service and a research vessel for NATO. Complex vessels for civilian customers included survey launches, and the **Afon Dyfrdwy** (230/2004), the barge to carry the wings of the new super jumbo airliner from Chester to Mostyn on the first stage of their voyage to Toulouse. (See *The Bulletin*, March 2004). A vessel type unique to McTay was the Oxygenation Barge, three of which were built. Two were for service on the Thames and one for Cardiff Bay. These craft were designed to pump up to thirty tons of oxygen per day into the river or bay to improve water quality.

In an effort to widen the range of vessels produced, very serious consideration was given to the production of fast ferries and preliminary designs were prepared in the onsite drawing office, but no orders followed.

In the early days vessels were fitted out at the Bromborough dock wall once they had been launched, but from about 1980 fitting out was done in Birkenhead Docks, initially in the Vittoria Dock and then in the East Float.

With the closure of the yard about 70 workers lost their jobs. Over the life of the yard the workforce varied from 15 to 200, depending on the workload. During the thirty years of the existence of the yard, 119 vessels were built at Bromborough and a further 41 were built by Millers following the takeover of that yard in 1976.

The other McTay companies were not affected by the closure of McTay Marine and are still trading. ■

Tony Barratt's book on McTay Marine is available from Wirral bookshops or by post from Bernard McCall, 400 Nore Road, Portishead, Bristol BS20 8EZ at £11.50 including internal UK postage, £12 overseas.



*The inter-island ferry **Loch Portain** was built by McTay Marine for Caledonian MacBrayne. She is seen here fitting out on the Vittoria Wharf 'cross-berth'.*

FORGOTTEN SHIPOWNERS

THE NATIONAL LINE, A LIVERPOOL PROMOTED ENTERPRISE OF 1863

A trans-Atlantic company which attracted much attention in its early days and enjoyed great popular success, suffered a long decline before its final extinction. This was the National Line of Liverpool. It was promoted in 1863 by a number of Liverpool merchants and shipowners, of whom the principal was the sailing shipowning firm of Fernie Brothers.

At that time there seemed to be every chance of the Confederates winning the American Civil War and the new venture was to be called the British & American Southern Steamship Company and it was intended to operate between Liverpool and the Gulf of Mexico and other Confederate ports as soon as the war was over. The capital was £700,000.

Very soon after registration the war began to take a different aspect and the promoters changed the name to the National Steamship Company Limited, and the proposed service to New York, instead of to the Southern States. The head office was at 23 Water Street, Liverpool and London business, not very great in the early days, was carried on through the agency of Mosses & Mitchell of Gracechurch Street.

The first steamers were ordered from Palmers of Jarrow; the **Pennsylvania** and the **Virginia**, each of about 2,880 tons gross on a length of 341 feet with simple engines – designed mainly for economy and therefore giving the ships very poor speed. The vessels were barque rigged.

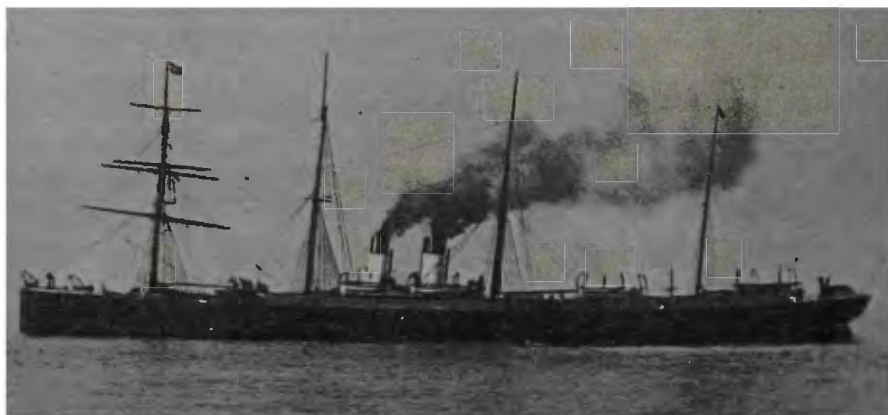
A third vessel had been built in 1858 as the **Hudson**, one of the pioneers of the North German Lloyd Line. She had been burned out in 1859 and bought back by Palmers who completely rebuilt her. The National Line purchased her and renamed her **Louisiana**.

These three ships were later renamed **Canada**, **Greece** and **Holland** respectively. They carried a number of first-class passengers but were mainly designed for emigrants and cargo. Funnels were white with a black top, and the house flag broke the heraldic rules for the division of colours and metals. It had a red field on which was a blue-edged white cross with the Union flag in the centre.

While the Civil War was in progress the National Line did very well on the cargo side, particularly supplying the Federal Army with munitions from Britain. Although there was not much movement of passengers, Williams & Guion, the owners of the Black Ball Line of Western Ocean sailing packets, entered into a three-year agreement with the National Line and the Cunard Line to supply them with emigrants instead of carrying them under sail themselves. The risk of Confederate corsairs was the main reason for that agreement, but the real profit which it yielded to the National Line came immediately after peace was concluded when there was a great rush of emigrants to the United States.

This traffic had been anticipated by the board of directors of the National Line who had ordered three more screw barques from Palmers, similar to the pioneers in all respects but considerably bigger. The **Ontario** was wrecked while being delivered from her builders, but the **Erin** and the **Helvetia** survived to become very

well known. In 1865 Palmers built the **England** and **Scotland**, while **The Queen** came from Laird's yard at Birkenhead. These three additions to the fleet were enlarged versions of the preceding ships.



*The **Spain**, built and engined by Lairds of Birkenhead in 1871.*

Bad luck continued to pursue the ships in their early days. The **Scotland** was still new in 1866 when she sank the American barque **Cape Dyer** off Sandy Hook. The sailing ship foundered at once and the **Scotland** was so badly damaged that she had to be beached and almost immediately afterwards broke up in bad weather. The court of inquiry found the **Scotland** entirely to blame, having no lookouts posted and being improperly manned and navigated. The litigation over the case went on for over 20 years and the **Scotland** lightship took its name from the accident. After these losses the National Line established a policy of giving its masters and officers an annual bonus for freedom from accident which produced excellent results.

In 1866 the Pacific Steam Navigation Company's steamer **Chilian** of 1865 was purchased and became the **Denmark**, and in the following year the **France** was built at Liverpool. With nine steamers in commission and one under construction in 1870 the company was particularly busy, landing 34,000 emigrants in New York which was more than any other company. However the agreement with Williams and Guion had expired, and the latter had started his own shipping company and was beginning to threaten formidable competition.

The National Line ships sailed from Liverpool every Wednesday, calling at Queenstown the next day; and from New York every Saturday. There was accommodation for a few saloon passengers, the fares varying between 12 and 15 guineas according to the sleeping cabins, but the emigrants in the 'tween decks generated most profit. Business was so good that it was decided to lengthen the existing ships to the limit of what their hulls could stand and to give them more economical engines. The alterations started with the **Holland** in 1870 which was lengthened from 307 feet to 395 feet, increasing her gross tonnage from 2,150 to 3,847. New compound engines by Jack of Liverpool gave her the distinction of being the first Atlantic liner with compound engines.

The first ship of a new building programme was only a few months behind her. The **Italy** was built and engined by John Elder and had a gross tonnage of 4,169. In 1871 the **Egypt**, built by the Liverpool Shipbuilding Company, and the **Spain**, built and engined by Lairds at Birkenhead were similar vessels but not sister ships. When they appeared they were regarded as particularly fine vessels, carrying 120 first-class passengers and 1,400 emigrants. Their nominal full speed was 13¼ knots, but they were both fast vessels and the **Spain** made a westbound passage at an average 13.6 knots. The **Egypt** was never noted for good luck; when she was launched she took charge and collided with the Mersey training ship **Clarence** and during her career she had many minor mishaps. With this extra tonnage the National Line commenced a fortnightly service from London to New York and as this had to face far less competition than on the Liverpool route, it soon became the more important of the two.



*The **Denmark**, formerly the Pacific Steam Navigation Company's **Chilian** of 1865, was purchased by the National Line in 1866*

Throughout the early 1870s the work of lengthening the early ships and giving them compound engines went on. The first to be treated had a boiler pressure of 60 lbs per square inch, but the later ones had larger cylinder dimensions with a pressure of 75 lbs. The lengthening did not improve the ships' appearance, but it was fully justified by their increased cargo and emigrant capacity and better speed and economy. At that time the National Line was still carrying more emigrants to New York than any other company and had its full share of the cargo business.

In 1874 the **Egypt** encountered the French liner **Europe** in sinking condition. The **Egypt** rescued all hands from the **Europe** and made a gallant attempt to salvage the French ship. In the same year the National Line was caught out by a rumour circulating that the Cunard Line intended to abandon its Boston service. The directors immediately made plans to cover this route but it eventually transpired that the rumour was without foundation and the National Line lost a good deal of money by its mistake.

In 1877 the **Egypt** encountered the Inman liner **City of Berlin** with a broken propeller shaft and towed her into Cork, and in 1879 she and the **Spain** were

requisitioned as troopships for the Zulu War, the first occasion on which the government had employed large emigrant steamers for the purpose.

The National Line began to remove the first-class accommodation from its older ships in the early 1880s, leaving them to carry cargo, cattle and emigrants only. It then decided to follow the example of its old rival the Guion Line by building a potential record-breaker. The **America**, built by Thomson at Clydebank, was a beautiful clipper-stemmed ship of 5,528 tons, with a three-cylinder compound engine and excellent accommodation. She was much smaller than the Fairfield-built Guion and Cunard express steamers, but she was also very much more economical in coal.



*The **America**, built in 1883, was designed as a trans-Atlantic record breaker.*

The new **America** broke both the **Alaska's** records and held them for a short time, but she suffered the losses which were inevitable in a single-ship trans-Atlantic service. The financial trouble of the Guion Line with its three express steamers was a warning that this particular market was overstocked.

In the Russian scare of 1885 the **America** was chartered for six months as an auxiliary cruiser, but although over £36,000 was spent on her in addition to the charter money, she did not leave Liverpool.

Following some stormy shareholders' meetings, a new board of directors was appointed which sold the unprofitable **America** to the Italian Government for £131,600, although she had cost £180,000 to build. Some of the older ships were placed on the sale list, but others made good profits out of cattle transport as the board did not consider that they were worth the heavy expense of modernisation.

The years from 1889 were a very unfortunate period for the National Line. Its piers at New York were destroyed by fire at a loss of £40,000 to the company. The **Holland** had just arrived to discharge, but her mooring ropes were cut and she was towed out of danger. At the end of 1889 the **Erin** was posted as missing whilst on an eastbound crossing; she was said to be seriously overloaded and the National Line was accused of having moved up the load line without authority, although this was not proved at the inquiry.

In 1890 the **Egypt's** cargo of cotton caught fire and she had to be abandoned. Terrified cattle, also part of the cargo, endangered the passengers and crew in the

lifeboats with their horns, but fortunately all hands were picked up by a German sailing ship. Both the **Erin** and the **Egypt** were largely uninsured and so the loss to the company was very heavy. After the **Egypt** case there was a public outcry against carrying cotton and passengers together and in April 1892 the National Line announced that it would not carry any more passengers in any class except for those whose passages had already been booked.

Before this change of policy the company had ordered two cargo-only ships which were conspicuous by their size. The 5,158 ton **America** was built by Gourlay of Dundee and the 5,302 ton **Europe** by Palmers of Jarrow; they both had a deadweight capacity of about 7,000 tons. As soon as the new ships were commissioned the **Canada**, **Holland**, **Italy** and **Helvetia** were laid up in the Medway, thus cutting down the London – New York service by half and a year later the Liverpool sailings were abandoned altogether. It was a very difficult period for cargo services on the Western Ocean. Whilst she was laid up the bunkers of the **Canada** caught fire and she was sold as not worth repairing. The other three laid up vessels were sold shortly afterwards, the **Helvetia** foundering on her way to her purchasers.

Losses were mounting up so heavily that in 1895 there were suggestions that the company should be wound up, but many shareholders opposed it. Later in the same year, when steps were being taken to establish the Wilson-Furness-Leyland Line, an offer was made to buy out the National Line, but after a violent quarrel between the preference and ordinary shareholders as to how the purchase price should be distributed, the offer was turned down. Some of the opponents of the sale invited the Allan Line to take over the management, but the terms were considered too high. Within a few months the Atlantic Transport Line had bought about two-thirds of the preference and nearly five-sevenths of the ordinary shares of the National line and secured control.

Early in 1896 two managers from the Atlantic Transport Line had joined the board of the National Line, and before the end of the year all the old National Line directors had retired or been replaced. The last of the old National ships were sold and the Atlantic Transport Line's **Michigan** and **Mississippi** were transferred.

In 1898 both the **Michigan** and the **Mississippi** were included in the Atlantic Transport Line's sale of ships to the U.S. Government for use as transports following the Spanish War, and tonnage had to be chartered to maintain the National Line services. South African War contracts generated better results for a time, but when Pierpont Morgan formed the International Mercantile Marine, the Atlantic Transport Company was one of his first purchases. He bought the remaining shares in the National Line which in due course lost its identity, although the old company did not go into voluntary liquidation until the end of 1914.

Such is the outline story of a company which met with no little success during its early years, built a series of steamers that succeeded one another as the largest on the North Atlantic, was among the first to introduce the compound engine to that trade, and even if its steamer **America** never actually gained the 'Blue Riband', she did for a few weeks hold the record for the fastest eastbound passage. The National Line was worthy of a better fate. ■

This article originally appeared in Shipbuilding & Shipping Record on 16th July, 1953.

READERS' LETTERS

From LNRS Member Mr J. Cowden:

I should like to place on record that having just read the March, 2006 'Bulletin', I feel that the editor and those who contributed the various articles certainly do the LNRS proud. More or less in the same postal delivery I received a shipping journal which I've subscribed to since 1946. Sadly over the years the price of that particular magazine has increased seventy-fold, and the actual content – educational wise – has fallen badly.

'The Bulletin' editor has also managed to incorporate a little humour alongside the historical element. By that remark I refer to the photograph on page 7 under the title 'Just Fancy That!' For my part, having spent my working career connected with the West African trade, and having visited the majority of the open roadstead / surf ports along the West African coastline, this photograph carried just the right title.

I would draw members' attention to an article published in *Transactions and Research (A Second Merseyside Maritime History)* published by the Society in 1990 entitled 'Surfboats of the Gold Coast / Ghana'. This article contains a photograph of surf boats alongside a discharging ship, together with a sketch drawing of the method used when loads above the norm are transported ashore.

I also noticed the letter from Alan McClelland 'More About the *Lancastria*' in which he makes mention of the ss **John Holt** (Captain Harry Fuller). I would add that Captain Fuller sailed on twenty-two occasions as convoy commodore during the Second World War and was later awarded an O.B.E. In addition, he had been promoted commodore master of the John Holt fleet. He retired in July 1946. ■

BOOK REVIEWS

'WITH A PINCH OF SALT'

by Captain Nick Bates

Collections of trivia have been doing good business in the book world recently. There have been books on food facts, sporting trivia and the like, and now there's a nautical collection, courtesy of cruise ship master Captain Nick Bates.

With a Pinch of Salt is an attractive paperback filled with intriguing nuggets of nautical information. The author explains famous seafaring expressions and traditions, and explains the maritime origins of common terms such as 'slush fund' and 'on the fiddle'. The definitions are clear and well-written, and many are also illustrated with cartoons.

Interspersed with the nautical expressions are anecdotes from Captain Bates' own career at sea, as well as yarns picked up from colleagues. The author has a large store of silly questions asked by cruise ship passengers over the years, and includes a few tales of daft seafarers, too.

Some of the material will doubtless be familiar to readers, but it's none the worse for that – we can all enjoy a good story re-told in a lively way. Here's one that has been doing the rounds for a while, as featured in the book:

"The following is an actual radio conversation released by the US Chief of Naval Operations on 10th October 1995. I have heard similar versions attributed to various navies:

Navy: Please divert your course 15 degrees to the north to avoid a collision.

Civilian: Recommend you divert YOUR course 15 degrees to south to avoid a collision.

Navy: This is the Captain of a US Navy ship. I say again, divert YOUR course.

Civilian: No, I say again, you divert YOUR course.

*Navy: This is the aircraft carrier **Enterprise**. We are a large warship of the US Navy. Divert your course now!*

Civilian: This is a lighthouse. Your call."

Whether this really is a true story or not doesn't matter too much. It's a good yarn, and as the title suggests, the author would be happy for readers to take the book's contents 'With a Pinch of Salt'.

The definitions of nautical expressions do have an air of authority about them, and the book has a good index, so for any reader wondering just what 'splice the main brace' or 'toe the line' actually means, it's easy to find the answer.

All in all, **With a Pinch of Salt** is a nice piece of work by Captain Bates and his publisher.

WITH A PINCH OF SALT : Captain Nick Bates : ISBN 0 9547062 3 4 : £7.95p.
Published by Seafarer Books, 102 Redwald Road, Rendlesham, Suffolk IP12 2TE

ALSO JUST PUBLISHED

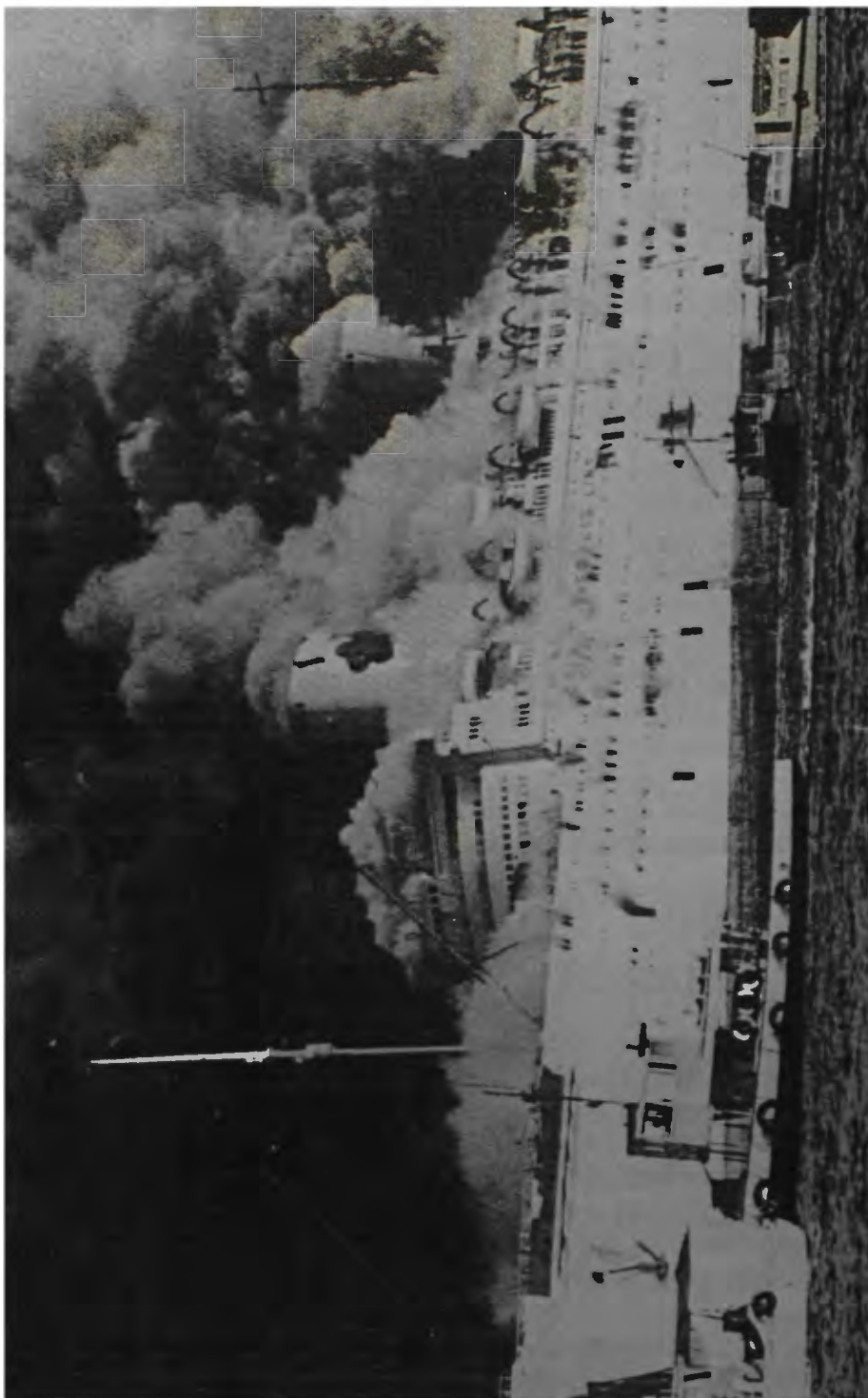
'THE ATLANTIC TELEGRAPH' by W.H. Russell

One hundred and forty years ago, the Brunel-designed **Great Eastern** completed the successful laying of the first trans-Atlantic telegraph cable and in doing so, paved the way for today's world of instantaneous global communications.

A marvellous contemporary account has just been re-published and makes a great read. Written by William Howard Russell, a 'Times' journalist who was the only reporter allowed on the **Great Eastern** during the mission, 'The Atlantic Telegraph' is full of the under-statement and restraint of the time – but all the better for that.

The book explains the many technical challenges facing the Atlantic Cable project and captures the sense of public wonder it generated. When so much of our contemporary communications are taken for granted, it is particularly interesting to read of the way in which the progress of the **Great Eastern** '*excited the utmost interest over all the civilised world*'.

THE ATLANTIC TELEGRAPH by W.H. Russell (ISBN 1 84588 074 9), price £16.
Nonsuch Publishing, The Mill, Brimscombe Port, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 2QG



The **Seawise University** (*ex Queen Elizabeth*) on fire
in Hong Kong harbour on 9th January, 1972

THE DISPOSAL OF THE HULK OF THE “QUEEN ELIZABETH”

by M.J. Anderson

Whilst on fire the **Seawise University** (the former R.M.S. **Queen Elizabeth**) capsized and sank on 9th January 1972 on the edge of the main fairway leading to the Kwai Chung Container Terminal in Hong Kong and, since she immediately became a hazard to navigation, it was essential to remove her.

Marine salvage consultants explored every possible avenue to attempt to find some means by which she could be refloated but, unfortunately, the only feasible method by which she could be removed was by dismembering her piecemeal.

Since the cost of this operation exceeded by very many times the proceeds from the sale of the recovered scrap metal, it was carried out solely with the object of removing a navigational hazard, and certainly with no idea of salving (or ‘body-snatching’) scrap metal for purely financial gain.

Complete records of the salvage operation were kept which, in effect, was a fairly conventional type of wreck removal operation although on a somewhat larger scale than normal. The **Queen Elizabeth** was unique to the extent that many parts of her hull were ‘one-off jobs’; the like of which had never previously been fabricated, and certainly will never be again produced in the future.

The salvage operation entailed in excess of 43,000 diving man hours, mostly in total darkness and to depths of 100 feet and, at times, up to 60 feet under mud level. It was completed without incident and without any fatalities or even serious injury to the divers employed on the project.

Finally, for those of us who have a feeling of affection for those truly beautiful ships of a bygone age, the fact that her remains have been buried, and will remain so for all time, may possibly seem to be a slightly better fate than ultimately being totally butchered in some ship breaker’s yard. ■



The **Great Eastern** at Heart's Content Bay, Newfoundland, having just arrived with the Atlantic Telegraph Cable on 27th July 1866. She has only four funnels, having had her fifth removed so that more cable could be carried. (see book review on page 43).

LOST OPPORTUNITIES

(from 'Shipbuilding & Shipping Record', 5th July, 1956)

It is not very long since the Shaw Savill Line announced that in the Autumn of 1956 it would cease trading between South and East Africa and Australia and New Zealand because, although the trade was profitable in itself, it was not worth chartering ships to carry it on. The company already has trade enough in its traditional business from Europe to the Antipodes. Now the Orient Line – 'One of the biggest operators of summer cruises' to use the description applied to the company by *The Times* shipping correspondent – has announced that it is not going to organize any cruises during 1957, and again the reason given is the heavy demand for travel on the Line's Australia, New Zealand and North America services. In each case the company concerned has decided to concentrate on its bread-and-butter business, but each admits, in doing so, that business is going begging.

How much other trade is British shipping giving away to foreign competitors, and why? How many fresh opportunities are being missed? Recently the ocean travel manager for Thos. Cook & Son showed how the Italians were making money – '*the return load represents very probably almost clear profit*' – out of bringing West Indians to Europe, to the United Kingdom *via* Genoa! Is it possible that there are other untapped sources of shipping business? In New Zealand it is the 'done' thing to make the pilgrimage to Europe. If fares could be still further reduced by 'austerity' voyages, is it not at least on the cards that the existing passenger traffic could be still further increased? Travel is in the blood of the young people of today, but the student, the nurse and the shorthand-typist want to travel on the cheap. And, as the decision made by the Shaw Savill Line indicates, it is not only passenger transport for which there is an unsatisfied demand. World trade is still growing and there is freight on offer.

All this is so – and much of the prospective trade is inter-Commonwealth trade, and yet British shipping merely keeps its overall tonnage at levels which it has achieved in the past, while world shipping as a whole grows apace. Once the proud owners of half the world's ships, the British have seen their proportion fall from over 40 per cent to barely 20 per cent in the space of 40 years, and the prospect is that it will be 15 or even 10 per cent within a few years from now, with Liberia and Panama not only waiving the rules, but ruling the waves; for there can be no possible doubt that unless something is done, and done quickly, it is the ships under the tax-free flags which will snap up the opportunities which are being missed by British shipowners.

British shipowners have yet to make their case with the man in the street. "*What is all this about Panama and Liberia?*" the intelligent layman will ask. "*Is British shipping really hard pressed, or is the shipowner merely crying 'Wolf'?*" He is not really convinced that this time the wolf is really at the door, but it is to be hoped that he will be, and, through him, a lethargic Government. ■

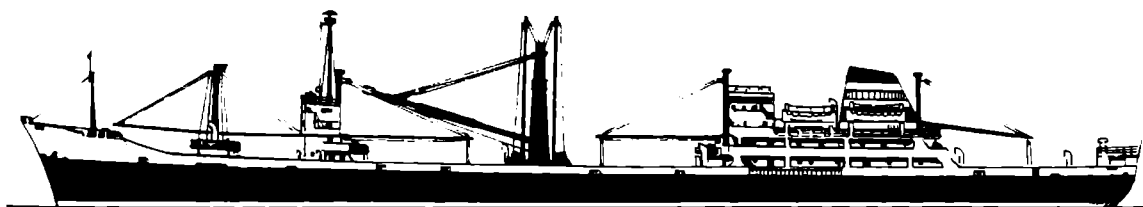
The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

(Founded in 1938)

THE BULLETIN

Volume 50, No 2, September, 2006

Editor : John Shepherd



The Tactician and Hurricane 'Hattie' (<i>Capt. Graeme Cubbin</i>)	page 2
The Ortega and the Difficulties she Surmounted (<i>T.E. Edwardes</i>)	page 8
A Mild Case of Tankeritis (<i>Captain Brian Scott</i>)	page 14
South Africa, Suez and Sphinxes (<i>Ron Hunter</i>)	page 16
Donald McKay (1810-1880) - Shipbuilder (<i>F.C. Bowen</i>)	page 24
Memorable Days on the Java – New York Run (<i>James Barron</i>)	page 28
The LNRS Award – Winning Entry 2005 (<i>Charles Jocelyn</i>)	page 34
More About: The Suez Canal / The Empire Windrush Fire	page 37
The Case for Barging (<i>Alan McClelland</i>)	page 41
The Royal Voyage on the Empress of Scotland	page 42

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

President:

Mr A.S. Davidson

Vice-Presidents:

Captain Graeme Cubbin, Mr H.M. Hignett



Chairman:

Mr J.R. Chambers

Vice-Chairman:

Mr W. Ogle

Council:

A.J.Barratt, D.Eccles, R.Dennis (*Meetings Secretary*), D.Littler,
J.Lingwood, M.D.R.Jones, A.H.McClelland, J.Shepherd (*Editor*), G.F.Wright

Honorary Officers:

Secretary: J.Stokoe *Treasurer:* J.Coates

Membership and General Correspondence:

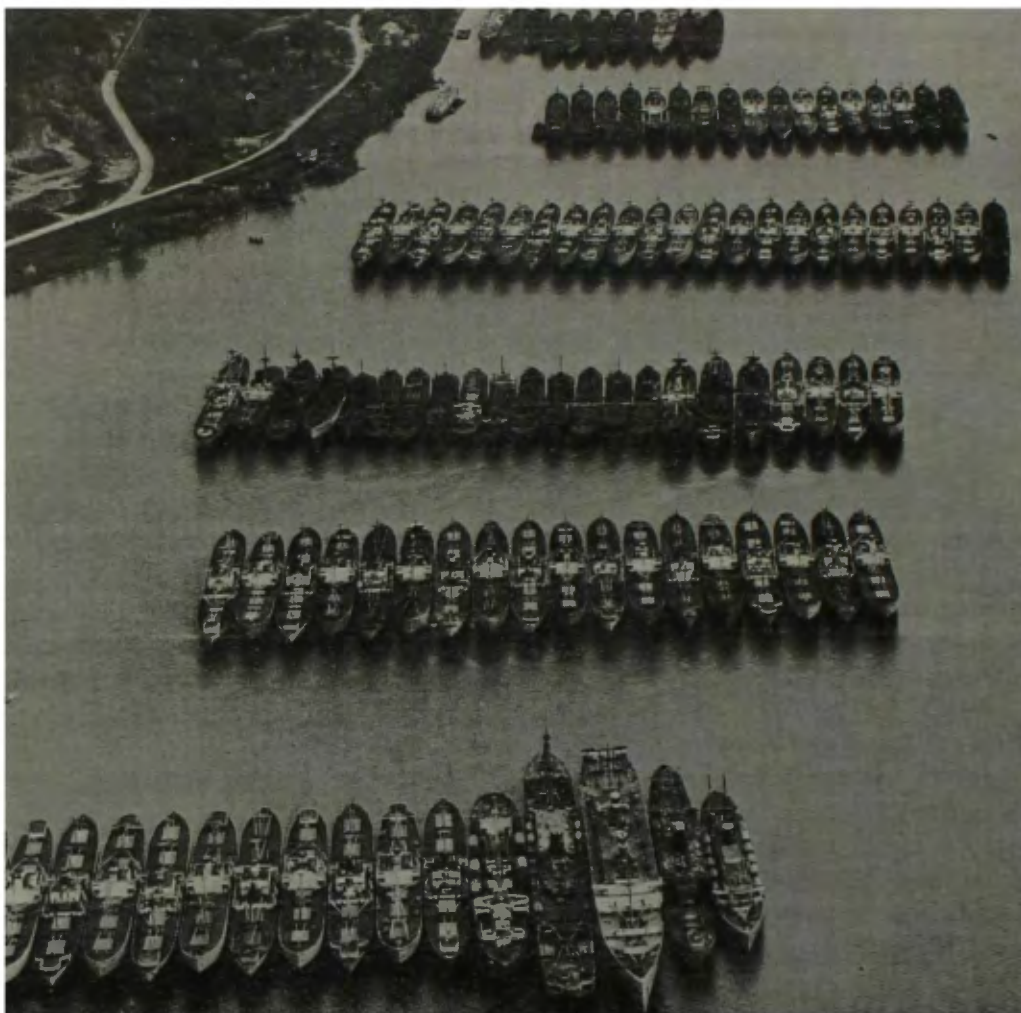
The Liverpool Nautical Research Society,
Maritime Archives and Library,
Merseyside Maritime Museum,
Albert Dock,
LIVERPOOL, L3 4AA, U.K.

'Bulletin' related matters:

John Shepherd,
3b, Cliff Drive, Mariners' Park,
WALLASEY, CH44 0EX, U.K.

Front Cover:

Harrison Line's motor vessel **Tactician** was equipped with a
110-ton Stülcken heavy-lift derrick, serving Nos 3 and 4 holds.
Launched in February 1961, the **Tactician** remained in the
Harrison fleet until July, 1979.



'Mothballed' Liberty ships laid up at Stony Point, New York, in May 1953

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS, 2006 – 2007

Your Membership Card and the Programme of Meetings for the next session is enclosed with this '*Bulletin*'. The monthly meetings commence on *Thursday, 21st September*, when the subject of the talk will be:

HISTORY OF SHIPS IN BOTTLES by Des Newton

Meetings commence at 12.30pm at the Maritime Museum.

Coffee and biscuits available from 12 noon.

THE 'TACTICIAN' AND HURRICANE 'HATTIE'

by LNRS Vice-President Captain Graeme Cubbin

*compiled from Captain Eustance's letters and reports, with
additional material from Chief Steward S.T.Pim, and 3rd Engineer W. Ledgard*

The hurricane season in the West Indies – July to October – is a period of subdued tension for seamen, ship operators and, of course, local residents. The tension is subdued because ample warnings of the approach of a hurricane are a regular feature of domestic as well as official weather broadcasts. So long as the disturbance is far away at sea, and not heading in our direction, it can be tacitly ignored – until, as so often happens, it changes course. Thus tension is seldom fully relaxed.

Despite constantly predicted movements, hurricanes cannot be expected to run on tramlines, and idiosyncratic track variations are the rule rather than the exception. A prime example was the West Indian hurricane of October 1961, designated 'Hattie'.

On 29th October 1961 Harrison Line's **Tactician** was anchored at Stann Creek, a port in what was then British Honduras about 30 miles south of Belize City, quietly loading citrus products. The weather was fine and clear with a light breeze and a blue sky. However, weather bulletins from Miami were full of information regarding another hurricane, already christened 'Hattie', which was located some 400 miles east of Belize, moving north, obviously on the point of recurving, and likely to strike Grand Cayman and Cuba.

Later that afternoon the **Tactician** weighed anchor and moved northwards to Belize to begin loading a cargo of lumber. Frequent weather reports still placed 'Hattie' far to the east, still moving northwards and well clear of the colony. Belizeans retired to bed that night with a certain sense of relief.

How different was the scene the next day! The morning bulletin reported that 'Hattie' had changed course in the night and was advancing rapidly, likely to cross the coast near the border with Yucatan in 24 hours. If this were true, Belize would escape the full force of the hurricane winds, but severe gales and the storm tide would be sure to disrupt the port area. Two red flags – the recognized storm signal – fluttered from the flagstaff at Government House, and over the signal station at Fort George. The Civil Defence Force was put on alert, schools closed, and residents who were free to leave town moved to the high ground in the hinterland.

By noon on 30th October, a heavy swell was slamming against the outer reefs, and the fishermen's families on the Cays were evacuated. All cargo work came to a halt; barges were towed away up river to find shelter inland and on board the **Tactician** the hatches were closed and secured, and derricks lowered.

A veteran able seaman, known to his mates as 'Old Charlie', was horrified at the careless and cavalier attitude of some of the younger sailors, to whom the extra-curricular labour seemed an unnecessary chore for just another 'blow'. "You wait," he said, "I've been through a hurricane. Years ago, when I was in the Navy back in the 'twenties." His eyes widened with fear at the recollection. "I've never forgotten it. You young lads don't know what you are in for!"

Captain Bill Eustance realized that his ship was in an invidious position. It was too late to think of putting to sea and working the **Tactician** away from the track of the storm. His only option was to seek a more secure anchorage and ride out the

storm in whatever shelter the outer reefs might provide. At 14.30, amid reports that the hurricane now packed winds of up to 175 knots (200 mph), and was heading for the coast just north of Belize, the **Tactician** weighed anchor and proceeded south to a more secure anchorage off Grennells Cay with a Mr Locke, an experienced local pilot, on board.

W. Ledgerd, at that time Third Engineer of the **Tactician**, remembers Mr Locke well. *"I have always admired the courage of that man,"* he said. *"Knowing full well how devastating a hurricane can be, he was prepared to leave his family and take his chance aboard ship in the course of duty, just to place his local knowledge at the Captain's disposal. After the storm, when Captain Eustance called for volunteers to take the lifeboat ashore, he referred to Pilot Locke's selfless conduct and the boat was promptly manned, as if the men were eager to return him safely to his family."*

At 16.00 when the ship was brought up in her chosen anchorage, the wind was west-north-west force 5, but increasing steadily as the barometer fell. Ominously, as the evening progressed, the wind continued to blow from a west-north-west direction with a constancy which foretold that the storm centre was not going to pass somewhere north of Belize, but directly over the **Tactician's** precarious anchorage.

When midnight passed it was blowing a full gale, and although the sea was very rough the **Tactician** was maintaining her position, lying comfortably to six shackles of cable on the starboard anchor. All her deck lights were ablaze and all her systems were functioning. Between rain squalls the loom of the lights of Belize could be seen reflecting against the dark masses of cloud. Nothing as yet had happened to prepare the crew for what was to come, or shake their confidence in the ability of their splendid ship to ride it out. But Captain Eustance was well aware that the storm was only just beginning.

At about 01.00 on 31st October the ship began sheering unpleasantly, jerking like a fractious horse jouncing at its tether. A second anchor was dropped and the cables veered to five shackles on the port, eight on the starboard anchor. By this time the wind was piping to a pitch of incredible violence. The carpenter and Chief Officer Roy Simmons, who were on the forecastle head tending the anchors, were ordered aft to the shelter of the bridge house accommodation, for they were in considerable danger of being lifted off their feet to be whisked away downwind into oblivion.

To ease the strain on the cables, the engines were run ahead from time to time, but the real battle had only just started. By 02.00, the wind was raging with greater force than ever, roaring and shrieking like an express train. But within the next half hour it was to double in fury, reaching a peak of violence far beyond the experience of anyone on board. The **Tactician** inevitably began dragging her anchors, swinging broadside on to the scouring wind. Over to starboard she heeled, the engine room clinometer swinging to 20 degrees as she yielded to that remorseless pressure. Leading away to windward, and fading rapidly into the drenched darkness, the anchor cables stretched like twin bars, as tenacious and as fragile as the fingers of a rock-climber who loses his foothold. For that was the situation – a veritable cliffhanger. The **Tactician** was hanging on by the links of her wrought iron cables, literally by a thread. If they had parted, nothing, not even her 8,000 horse-power engines, could have saved the ship from lurching to leeward, and driving ashore onto the reefs a mile or two away.

Visibility was down to a few yards, vision obliterated by torrential rain mingled with spray whipped from the wave tops, laden with sand and debris from the coral shores, driving in horizontal sheets, and blasting the paintwork from the **Tactician's** exposed flank. The radar was no longer functioning since the scanner refused to revolve in such conditions and pointed fixedly in the wind's eye, like some sort of weathercock. Nor did the echo sounder function. The aeration caused by the extreme turbulence ensured that no echoes from the sea bed ever returned to the transponder in the ship's keel.

The deck officers, cut off from their companions in the after part of the ship, kept anxious watch on the bridge, nursing the ship as best they could through her unprecedented ordeal. Down below, in the engine room, engineers and electricians were fully occupied clearing weed and sand from vital injections, or tracing earths on the switchboard caused by water seeping into places where no water had ever penetrated before. At the main controls, Third Engineer Bill Ledgard, drenched by spray streaming from the vents overhead, braced himself against the list and fought the controls at the urgent behest of the bridge telegraph. At least three times the ship's propeller surged out of the water, causing the emergency governor to cut in. Each time it had to be reset manually under considerable difficulties, and the main engine restarted.

The rest of the crew, with little to do but hang on and wait, huddled together in the saloon or mess decks. They played cards, sang snatches of songs, or prayed silently for deliverance. At this stage Chief Steward Tom Pim recalls seeing " *dimly discerned through a streaming window, an apparition approaching the accommodation where most of the crew were sheltering. With considerable difficulty we eased open the steel door to admit this spectral figure which now stood before us in the shape of Second Officer Gordon Oxley. He had fought his way aft along the main deck, lurching into coamings and ventilators, clutching whatever solid fittings came to hand, and disregarding the flapping clothing torn from his back by the wind. He stood there, streaming with water, in nothing but his underpants, bleeding copiously from gashes to his legs and forehead, trying to muster all his dignity to deliver a verbal message of hope and confidence from the Captain. His mission accomplished, Gordon Oxley allowed us to dress his wounds, then he fought his way back to the bridge.* "

At some time between 03.00 and 04.00 the barometer went into free fall until it reached its nadir of 27.3 inches of mercury (924.5 millibars) at 05.00. Shortly afterwards, with startling suddenness, the wind dropped to an uneasy calm, the seas subsided leaving only a sullen grey swell rolling in from the south-east, lit by a debilitated moon shining weakly through a gap in the clouds. The sudden silence was uncanny. Men emerged on deck to look about them and marvel at the flocks of seabirds weaving and whirling overhead, some of them falling exhausted to the deck. For this was the legendary 'eye of the hurricane', a phenomenon which only a select number of seamen have seen and lived to tell of it.

The opportunities presented by the eerie lull were not wasted. The cables were hove in and examined and the **Tactician** re-moored. A suddenly restored radar system helped the navigators to plot their position despite the storm induced clutter which blotched the screen. While it was still calm, Captain Eustance took the opportunity to make his way aft to see for himself how the crew were facing up to

their ordeal. He found the men in good heart, but scared – and with good reason. The nightmarish conditions were quite outside their experience, something they would remember and talk about for the rest of their lives. After a few well-chosen words of encouragement, Captain Eustance returned to the bridge. He was back just in time, for, with a roar like a train passing at speed through an underground station, the storm pounced once more upon the gallant ship and her defiant crew; the wind, as expected, blasting from the opposite direction. But it was 06.15. Though unseen, the sun was up, and things always look better in daylight, even that gloomy travesty of daylight which filters through the black maelstrom of a hurricane.

The terrors of the night were behind them; the glass was rising steadily; they felt that they and their ship had been through the crucible together and nothing more could ever daunt them. Even when the ship again dragged her anchors and listed over to leeward like an old square-rigger on a close-hauled tack, they knew the drill and nursed the ship through the worst repeated excesses of the storm, until, in Captain Eustance's immortal words, "*by 09.00 the wind had eased to hurricane force*", in other words from its pinnacle of 175 knots the wind had dropped to something just over 64 knots on the Beaufort Scale, and the **Tactician** lay easily to her anchors, head to wind. All hands breathed again, and the old familiar world began to drop into place when a young steward appeared on the bridge with a tray of toasted bacon-and-egg sandwiches and hot coffee.

But there was still much that was unfamiliar. As the visibility improved the first signs of destruction came into view. The lordly palms which had crowned the cays and the mainland shore had all been decapitated, shorn of their foliage, leaving only bare poles, and many of these had been flattened. The sea was the colour of diluted milk, the normally clear waters holding in suspension thousands of tons of fine sand and coral particles, its surface strewn with debris and dead fish. The thoughts of all on board reverted to the town of Belize and its people. According to the forecasts, the storm tide was expected to top 15 feet, enough to inundate the entire city, creating unimaginable havoc.

At 13.00 the trusty anchors were hove home and the **Tactician** made her way back to Belize, her crew fearful of what they might find. For the air was silent; the normally vociferous local broadcasting station was mute, and no response was received from the Radio Officer's repeated calls to the shore station. And so the ship came to an anchor in her usual berth off the port, and the motor-lifeboat was lowered into the still choppy sea of milk. Second Officer Gordon Oxley and a volunteer crew manned the boat, swarming down the lifelines since the rope ladder was useless in the high seas which were still running. Their instructions were to contact the authorities and to offer whatever assistance the **Tactician** was in a position to give.

As they drew cautiously into the shattered landing they were confounded by the scenes of devastation which confronted them. Sunken wrecks littered the little harbour at the mouth of the river; buildings, their roofs torn away, leaned over at crazy angles; small boats and coasting schooners lay high and dry in the city streets among wrecked vehicles and uprooted trees, while a sea of mud lay everywhere.

Fort George still stood, but the signal mast which the previous day had bravely displayed the storm warnings, had been felled. Even Government House was in ruins, its communications centre destroyed.

When the boat returned later in the day the sea was still high, but Captain Eustance made a lee, enabling the boat's crew to board the **Tactician** by means of a rope ladder. Bill Ledgard, one of the boat's crew, recalls: *"I will always remember the excellent meal provided for us by Tom Pim when we returned, looking and feeling like so many drowned rats. The hot toddy to which the Captain treated us all was especially welcome."*

Apparently, communication was the first priority, and Gordon Oxley had returned to the ship bearing a sheaf of messages from the Governor, Sir Colin Thornley, for transmission to the outside world appealing for aid. Food and medical supplies were next on the agenda, and on the following day, 1st November, the **Tactician's** lifeboat again headed for the shore laden to the gunnels with cooking utensils, supplies of meat, rice, flour, tea, canned goods and antibiotics, enough to set up a small field kitchen and clinic in the makeshift Red Cross centre. This operation was left in the capable hands of Chief Steward Tom Pim, ably assisted by Second Steward Ken Clapham, Pursers Coppell and Hartley, Cadet Hughes and Third Engineer Bill Ledgard.

Suddenly, as if from nowhere, a troop of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, somehow immaculately attired in smart uniforms, presented themselves for duty at the hard-pressed centre, the only local volunteers to offer help to the **Tactician's** relief team. Meanwhile, aboard the ship, Chief Cook 'Taffy' Rowlands, working round the clock, baked scores of loaves for distribution next day.

In the ruined Port Office, Chief Officer Roy Simmons and Second Officer Oxley were in consultation with the Harbour Master and Pilots, planning to lay temporary marks in the intricate channels leading from the sea to the stricken city, using empty oil drums as buoys to guide the relief ships in. Two US destroyers, **Corry** and **Bristol**, were standing off English Cay, 15 miles away, anxious to help but unable to proceed because all navigation marks had been destroyed. Instead they sent a pair of helicopters carrying medical supplies, a team of medics and a TV camera crew. Thus Purser Hartley and Second Steward Ken Clapham found themselves starring on US television as they related their part in the emergency.

Lack of navigation marks did not deter the British frigate HMS **Troubridge**, however. Her navigator pressed on, feeling his way in, performing a feat of navigation inspired only by the urgency of the situation and perhaps that Belize was primarily a British responsibility. Packed with medical supplies from Kingston, several medical teams, and a contingent of Jamaican troops to help maintain order, she dropped anchor off Belize at 08.30 on 2nd November.

That day the **Tactician's** relief team resumed its labours, though supplies were running low. Out in the approaches Third Officer Gwilym Jones, guided by Pilot Locke, continued the work of marking the channels and returned that afternoon, closely followed by the US warships. All available help was badly needed for 15,000 people, nearly half the population and many of them injured, were roaming the ruined streets seeking food, and not too particular as to how they obtained it. Only the presence of a detachment from the security forces prevented the Red Cross Centre from being overwhelmed and looted.

According to the Governor's Office, 70% of Belize had been destroyed, and 90% of Stann Creek. The season's citrus and banana crops had been wiped out, and

hopes of recovery were dim. It was estimated that 340 people had lost their lives in the disaster.

The **Tactician**, her duty done, and virtually stripped of supplies, was released by the Governor and naval command to continue her voyage, and at 15.30 on 2nd November she sailed for Corpus Christi followed by the heartfelt good wishes of the Governor and the people she had served. Her departure was followed the next day by the arrival of the aircraft carrier **Antietam**, which anchored off Stann Creek to land her substantial complement of relief and medical teams, thus bringing the international rescue effort to a peak, slowly but surely coaxing the country back to a state of something like normality.

The **Tactician's** worthy efforts did not go unnoticed. When she called at New Orleans she was given the marine equivalent of a ticker-tape reception. As she approached the city, ships on the river and lining the wharves sounded their whistles and sirens in welcome; tugs and firetenders charged their hoses and directed them skywards to form iridescent sprays of fountain arcs; while representatives of press and radio gathered on the wharf to meet the ship as she docked – sure indications that the enthusiasm for public relations which sometimes motivated Alfred Le Blanc, the Harrison Line agent, had been at work. Then, some months later, recognition of the **Tactician's** achievements was acknowledged publicly in the Queen's Honours List with the award of the O.B.E. to her commander, Captain W.S. Eustance.



The **Tactician** passing under the Erskine Bridge, outward bound from Glasgow.

Photo: J. Prentice

TACTICIAN: Built by Wm. Doxford & Sons (Shipbuilders) at Sunderland.

Launched: 16th Feb. '61. 8,844 grt., 4,844nrt., 10,900 dwt.

Official No: 303169 Length: 467.35ft, Breadth: 62.3ft. Speed: 16 knots.

Remained in Harrison fleet until July 1979 when sold to Petralia Nav. Co., of Cyprus and renamed **Sea Luck**. Sold to Naviera Neptuno SA of Callao, Peru in October 1980 and renamed **Kero**. Arrived at San Martin, Peru in May 1987 for breaking up.

THE STORY OF THE 'ORTEGA' AND THE DIFFICULTIES SHE SURMOUNTED

by Thomas Edwin Edwardes

This article, written by the late Thomas Edwin Edwardes, the first editor of 'Sea Breezes' appeared in the first issue of the magazine in December 1919, when it was the house organ of the Pacific Steam Navigation Company.

On the morning of 12th July 1914 the **Ortega** was at Rio de Janeiro, outward bound to Callao, when the commander of a British Cruiser, which was also at anchor, informed the **Ortega's** master, Captain Douglas Kinnier, that there was the possibility of war with Germany. From that moment, and for the rest of the voyage, the officers kept themselves very much awake.

On 2nd August the **Ortega** lay at Montevideo and the British Consul confirmed the statement that war was imminent. Receiving this news Captain Kinnier handed in the names of all the R.N.R. men among his crew, but there was no call made for their services and they all duly completed the voyage back to Liverpool.

At the time there were five German merchantmen lying in Montevideo, none of which was prepared to put to sea on account of the presence of the British cruiser. British steamers were already refusing to carry German passengers to Europe but not to the Pacific coast of South America. Accordingly some Germans and Austrians embarked on the **Ortega** for Chile, their idea evidently being to get as far away from their native land as possible. They were described as 'a rather glum and scared lot', the more so when news came that the first battle of the war had resulted in a French victory.

Captain Kinnier, suspicious of this hostile element, had guards placed over the engine room and steering gear, but nothing untoward happened. One of the **Ortega's** stewards was a Frenchman, a member of the French Army's First Reserve. He applied for his discharge, which was granted, and he left at Punta Arenas, going home, along with other French reservists, in the steamer **Ville du Havre**, to enter the fighting lines.

The **Ortega** then proceeded on her voyage. At Talcahuano (36°40'S, 73°10'W) Captain Kinnier was advised that a German warship was in the vicinity but she was not sighted. On arrival at Valparaiso the Germans and Austrians seemed very pleased to disembark, for they knew quite well that they would be unable to get back to Germany. The crew of the **Ortega** was, also, glad to be rid of them, and even more satisfied still when she landed £117,000 in specie, which would have been a nice fat prize for an enemy cruiser.

At Valparaiso the wild news and gossip, with which the **Ortega** had been literally bombarded at Punta Arenas, was found to be nearly all incorrect, but a fair idea of how matters really stood was obtained. One certain point was that the Chilean Government had forbidden the export of foodstuffs, and the crew saw a German

steamer detained in Valparaiso harbour and compelled to discharge her cargo of flour which had been loaded at Talcahuano.

The **Ortega** then proceeded north. Two days afterwards they sighted a very suspicious looking vessel some 25 miles N.N.W. of Angamos Point (23°00'S, 70°27'W). As the **Ortega's** officers were unable to ascertain either her name or nationality, and as she continued until dusk to doggedly maintain the same distance between herself and the **Ortega**, the latter, the moment it was dark enough, turned round and ran for Mejillones Bay (23°03'S, 70°25'W), and anchored there until daylight. The officials at Mejillones were unable to solve the mystery.

On 26th August 1914, just before the **Ortega** departed from Mollendo, the Marconi operator intercepted a very odd message in the act of being transmitted to a land station from a vessel at sea. It purported to come from a battleship; indeed the signal letters given were those of an Argentine man-of-war. This made the **Ortega's** officers extremely watchful, for they knew that fictitious signal letters from some ship had already caused the **Orduña** to return to Callao. The nearest P.S.N.C. agents could throw no light on the matter and the **Ortega** proceeded with caution and reached Callao in safety.

Anchored near to them in Callao Bay was the German steamer **Amasis**, which had been detained by the Peruvian authorities, who charged her with having violated neutrality. She had endeavoured to obtain materials for mounting guns and had supplies on board vastly in excess of her requirements. The **Amasis** defied her detention order and slipped away at dusk. Those on board the **Ortega** suspected that her destination was a snug bay, near False Cape Horn, which they knew the German cruisers **Dresden** and **Bremen** had surveyed and inspected.

The **Ortega** arrived back at Valparaiso on 12th September. There they learned that a German steamer, whilst at anchor, had been detected communicating with a German ship at sea – probably a man-of-war, for all enemy mercantile vessels had run for safety into neutral ports. This made them still more guarded. They took on board 300 French reservists, some bringing wives and children, and began to prepare for the voyage home.

At Coronel they stayed a few days in order to coal, the authorities giving them enough to steam to Liverpool, but no more, according to the regulations. Near to the **Ortega** were the German Kosmos Line steamers **Luxor** and **Nitokris**, seeking coal 'to supply the company's other steamers in various ports', an ominously elastic order which nobody quite believed.

On the night of 14th September the sailors on the **Luxor** were heard loudly singing, in chorus, songs disparaging of the British. On hearing this the 300 Frenchmen on the **Ortega** responded with 'La Marseillaise'. The **Ortega** sailed on the night of 16th September with 50 women and children on board.

At 11.am on Saturday 19th September, third officer Armstrong of the **Ortega** observed a cargo steamer steering in a north-easterly direction towards them. He could also just make out a warship following at full speed. At about this time the Marconi operator, who luckily had a knowledge of German, was surprised to detect two ships communicating with one another in that language.

The cargo steamer resembled a collier of the 'Prussia' class, and the warship a high-speed cruiser of the 'Town' class. She had three funnels of the same length and



The plain line shows the ordinary track of Pacific Steam Navigation Company liners, and the dotted line represents the track the *Ortega* was forced to take when she was chased by the German cruiser *Dresden*.

The Smyth Channel is a known waterway, but the Nelson Strait is not.

rake, two masts with a gaff on the main and fighting tops on each – painted a light, dull grey. Captain Kinnier of the **Ortega** made up his mind in a moment, and altered his course towards Cape George. On seeing this, the cruiser opened fire and signaled the **Ortega** to stop. Instead of doing this, chief engineer Alles of the **Ortega**, who was a man of singular coolness and resource, got up a more powerful head of steam than ever before, for his firemen were British stalwarts, as enthusiastic as anyone at the game of beating Germans, and the old liner worked up to 18 knots.

When the **Ortega** was two miles south of Cape George, the position being fixed by cross bearings with West Cliff and Rugged Head, the cruiser fired twice more, now within the three mile limit, but both shots were ineffectual. As the **Ortega** entered the Nelson Strait, under Cape George, the cruiser stopped, turned round, and began to steam slowly towards the north.

The Nelson Strait, nearly 100 miles long, was uncharted. No steamer drawing twenty-six feet had ever given its possibilities a thought. Captain Kinnier was in a grave dilemma, as grave as ever fell to the lot of a sailorman. If he took the **Ortega** back into the open sea the cruiser would almost certainly be waiting for him, or if he faced the terrors of the unknown strait, submerged rocks might just as easily wreck his ship.

Captain Kinnier decided on the latter course. The **Ortega** was at anchor, just inside the entrance to the unknown strait, *"amidst the wildest and most dangerous of the Chilean channels, with thickly snow-clad peaks and mountains on either side"*, according to Captain Kinnier's account of the incident. If this desperate remedy had to be attempted, then hard work and not idle speculation was the order of the moment. Third officer Armstrong, with four sailors and the bosun's mate, at once manned a boat and away they rowed ahead, taking soundings, the results being signaled to the **Ortega** by semaphore.

As darkness fell the **Ortega**, lying at her desolate anchorage, kept the sharpest lookout for a hostile raid. If the German cruiser – they did not know then that she was the **Dresden** – attempted to enter the Nelson Strait, she might send an armed boat with a cargo of bombs. The **Ortega** kept sending out wireless messages. Those to the nearest land station at Talcahuano elicited no response, from which they concluded that the more powerful apparatus on the German cruiser had 'jammed' their messages. Then they tried, and tried again and again, to get in touch with Punta Arenas. Finally a message was received from the British Consul there. He told them that news had been received that the **Ortega** had been sunk with all hands. As in the case of premature reports of Mark Twain's death, the reports had been greatly exaggerated!

It was at 5 am in the early morning on 20th September 1914 that the **Ortega**'s passage through the Nelson Strait commenced. She crept along, with just steerage way, foot by foot, warily taking soundings. *"The passage through those wild fjords impressed itself very vividly on the minds of those who saw it"*, recalled an eyewitness. *"The scenery was superb. It was a truly magnificent sight to see the sun rise majestically behind the high mountains of snow, with the black water of the strait at their base, for sheer mountains rose precipitately on either side of the ship. Not a vestige of human life was to be seen. It was the most awesome form of desolate grandeur. So it continued as the crew worked willingly, doggedly, patiently, hour by hour."*

In this way, therefore, did the **Ortega** reach Isthmus Bay, which brought them into a charted, yet almost as dangerous a waterway – the Smyth Channel. It had taken them two days. So rare, indeed, is it for a ship to get there, that several boards, fixed up between the short scrubby trees, were found recording the names of previous visitors. On discovering this, the **Ortega's** ever active and enthusiastic third officer had a board made on which was painted the feat of the **Ortega** and he, and a few passengers, rowed ashore and securely posted it up.



*The Pacific Steam Navigation Company's **Ortega***

On they went, now through the narrow and tortuous Smyth Channel, where they saw the wreck of the **Hazel Branch**, and the remains of an old broken-up steamer. As the sun rose the mountains of Tierra del Fuego began to take a misty shape, and by noon the old familiar Strait of Magellan, the known waterway, was at last reached. Here they received a fine reception from the Chilean battleship **Almirante Lynch** which had been dispatched to search for the survivors of the **Ortega**, working on the basis of the German claims that she had been sunk.

The **Almirante Lynch** escorted the **Oretega** as far as Punta Arenas, after which the **Oretega** was on her own again. There was speculation as to what would happen when she reached the Atlantic. Would the German cruiser have sailed round Cape Horn and be waiting to intercept her when she left the Strait of Magellan?

Fortunately this was not the case and nothing untoward occurred until 4.30am on 25th September when they were startled to hear a gun fired quite near to them. A moment later two powerful searchlights were turned on to the **Ortega** and she was ordered to stop. All on board were heartily relieved when HMS **Glasgow** identified herself. Soon a seaboat was sent across to the **Ortega**. From the point of view of the officers on HMS **Glasgow**, the **Ortega** might easily enough have been a German cruiser; besides, according to reports, the **Ortega** had been sunk some days before!

The lieutenant from HMS **Glasgow** told Captain Kinnier that it was most likely the **Leipzig** which had fired on the **Ortega**. This cruiser had recently sunk the Liverpool steamers **Bankfield** and **Elsinore**. Failing that, it was probably the **Nürnberg** which was known to be in the vicinity. The correct one, the **Dresden**, had not been identified.

The **Ortega** proceeded to Rio de Janeiro and Mr O'Sullivan-Beare, the British Consul came aboard and patiently extracted the **Ortega's** story from the reticent, modest lips of Captain Kinnier, and officially reported it to the Foreign Office. At Montevideo the **Ortega's** story had leaked out and her crew were fêted at receptions held in their honour. Up to then they had not thought that there was anything very exceptional about the affair, which they looked upon as merely an incident in the daily routine of life at sea, but now they began to be informed by the public that they were heroes.

The **Ortega** continued her passage to Liverpool and off the Cape Verde Islands she encountered the Russian barque **Favell** of Helsingfors. The barque signaled the **Ortega** and requested her correct latitude and longitude and for information to set her chronometers by. The **Favell** had been at sea for many months and her master had not the slightest idea that his country was at war and that the Baltic was closed to them.

On the **Ortega's** safe arrival at Liverpool it was found that the news of her adventures was completely unknown. It was not until the dispatch from O'Sullivan-Beare was published by the Admiralty that the story became widely known.

On receipt of the news, M. Delcasse, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, requested Sir Francis Bertie, the British Ambassador in Paris, to present Captain Kinnier with the thanks of the French Government and a gold watch. The presentation was a public one at Liverpool Town Hall. Monsieur R. Boeufre, the French Consul, said that on behalf on his Government he desired to express admiration for the pluck and skilful seamanship of Captain Kinnier. Throughout France the gallant deed was highly appreciated and in many French homes his name would be long and gratefully remembered. The Lord Mayor of Liverpool added a tribute of his own.

The Admiralty, in a letter to the Pacific Steam Navigation Company, said: *"My Lords desire to place on record their appreciation of the courageous conduct of Captain Douglas R. Kinnier in throwing off his pursuer by successfully navigating the uncharted and dangerous passage of Nelson's Strait."* The Liverpool and London War Risks' Association voted one hundred guineas to Captain Kinnier and this was presented at a function on board the **Ortega** on the morning on which she commenced her next voyage to South America. In the meantime the Government conferred the D.S.C. Order upon Captain Kinnier and this was presented at Buckingham Palace when it was reported 'the King and he talked just as one sailorman would to another'.

The **Ortega** came through the war unscathed and in 1919 took the PSNC's first sailing to Valparaiso via the Panama Canal. She lasted until 1927 when she was broken up at Briton Ferry.

ORTEGA (1) : built in 1906 by Harland & Wolff at Belfast.

Gross Tonnage: 7,970; Nett: 4,519. Length: 482ft; Breadth: 56.5ft.

Twin-screw; quadruple expansion, 2 x 4cyl. engines. 15½ knots. 120 tons coal/day.

Passengers: 160 first class; 128 second; 300 third plus 500 emigrants in dormitories.

Launched 22nd March 1906. Maiden voyage to Callao 19th July 1906.

The **Ortega** introduced the system of Bibby 'tandem' cabins to the route, giving all passengers a porthole. ■

A MILD CASE OF TANKERITIS

by Captain Brian Scott

In the early 1960s I was in the UK and planning to return to New Zealand permanently. I was still sorting out family affairs and so decided to make a passage booking two and a half months ahead. As I was not too flush with money, and it was already September, I decided that a short-term relieving job in the home trade would be the best option.

Quite by chance I saw an advertisement by ESSO for relief Second Mates in their coastal tankers. I contacted their London office and was told to visit the Furness Withy office in Liverpool, the local agents. This I did and found myself on the night train to London, and then on a slow train to Southampton. On arrival I telephoned the ESSO marine dispatcher who told me to get a taxi to Marchwood power station where my ship, the **Esso Woolston**, was discharging fuel oil, and where a completely new style of seafaring awaited me.

I reported on board to the master, a very small man by the name of Captain J. Bligh, DSC, who introduced me to the first mate, who was an ex-master in Everard's coastal tankers.

The **Esso Woolston** (1,300 tons) was pumping heavy bunker oil ashore to the power station. This would take about six hours so I signed on, had breakfast and then turned in for a few hours sleep. Little did I realize how little 'bunk time' I would get in the ensuing two months. After completion of discharge we returned to Fawley for another load.

This was my introduction to loading a tanker, the cargo calculation and paper work. Twelve copies of every document were required plus updating the 'cargo book' as we operated under Customs General Transire for the UK and Ireland Home Trade. I rapidly filled in the pages in my working notebook, but the mate was very reassuring, saying it was best to get to grips with the paperwork as we could then be interchangeable for loading and discharging operations.

For the next week life was a bit of a blur as we refueled large passenger liners at Southampton, foreign warships in Portsmouth and outward bound ESSO supertankers anchored in Cowes Roads.

The master then went on overdue leave, the mate took command and I was promoted to mate. We made two trips without a second mate, to the power stations at Poole and Plymouth. A new second mate joined us on our return to Fawley. He was a CALTEX officer who had been studying at Southampton and was biding his time before sitting his mate's oral examination, and having spent all his time in tankers he was good value. His arrival eased the strain a lot and we worked watch and watch while the master did most of his own pilotage and kindly did any anchor watches required. We then went further afield with loads of marine diesel oil to Ipswich and over to Ireland to the CALTEX depot at Whitegate, situated in Cork harbour.

By this time the fine weather was giving way to November fogs and gales. We also had to contend with strong tides at many of our ports of call. Loading took three hours, discharging took six hours and then an hour to ballast. The main engine drove the cargo pump by means of a clutching arrangement. As we carried only two

grades of oil, heavy bunker oil and marine diesel, we did not have to clean between grades. To keep the figures correct for HM Customs we always referred to the 'Stop Dips' in the cargo book for the last cargo of the grade we were about to load.

As my two months agreed relief period drew to a close, I was beginning to feel more at ease with the duties of mate of a small tanker, and the routine of loading, trimming, discharging and ballasting. It was always a problem to fit in the B.O.T. boat and fire drills, but we did so, usually at daytime anchorage.

While at sea in a loaded condition the ship was like a half-tide rock. I was reprimanded by the ESSO port captain at Fawley for not implementing a minor colour change to the forecastle bulkhead. My facetious remark about using underwater paint was met with dire prophesies regarding my lack of career prospects, especially as he had noted that I had loaded the ship three inches down by the head on our previous delivery to Marchwood power station. (In fact I had allowed for us bunkering prior to that sailing, but that was postponed until a pipeline was available on our return later that day.)

At the end of November the master returned, the mate resumed his normal berth, and I paid off at Southampton and went home. There I collected my ticket for New Zealand, packed my bags and in passing called at the Liverpool Mercantile Marine Office to get my discharge from the British Merchant Navy.

The shipping master made a few caustic comments as he put the final entry in my discharge book to effect that *"You young fellows should be staying in the industry now that there is a shortage of officers, and pay and conditions might improve!"* I think I replied: *"If British shipowners paid their officers overtime for the long hours worked, there would be an incentive to remain at sea!"* ■

For the rest of his career, Captain Brian Scott worked in port operations and harbour administration in the Auckland and Manukau harbours in New Zealand. This included service as mate and relief master of the seagoing salvage tug **Aucklander**. Captain Scott retired in July 1995.

This article concludes the series commenced in the December 2004 'Bulletin' in which Captain Scott has described various aspects of his varied time at sea.

It is with regret that I have to advise readers that Captain Brian Scott died at his home in New Zealand on 20th March, 2006. This article has been included in this issue of 'The Bulletin' by kind permission of Mrs Anne Scott.

Anne Scott tells me that Brian was very proud of the fact that in his later years he became a 'published author', and the magazines in which his articles appeared gave him great pleasure. Brian's articles have certainly brought back a host of memories to members of the Liverpool Nautical Research Society. j.s. ■



SOUTH AFRICA, SUEZ AND SPHINXES

by Ron Hunter

*On the outbreak of the Second World War the Pacific Steam Navigation Company's **Orbita** was converted into a troopship. The end of 1940 found her lying in the harbour at Port Elizabeth. Ron Hunter takes up the story:*

Prior to the **Orbita**'s arrival at Port Elizabeth, the convoy had already split into two 'halves'; one half going into Cape Town and the other into Durban. Both these ports were, of course equally important watering, refuelling and storing bases for the great troop convoys now being despatched to the Middle East round the Cape of Good Hope. To facilitate handling and minimise congestion as far as possible, it had become customary to divide the convoys up between the two ports. A sensible and logical arrangement. After departure from Cape Town and Durban the two halves of the convoy would regroup, usually off Durban, to resume passage northwards to Suez. There may have been occasional variations, but this was the general pattern.



The fact that the **Orbita** had put into Port Elizabeth to land an RAF contingent there had caused us to become 'detached' from both halves of our original convoy. This diversion was, however, a brief one and departure from Port Elizabeth on 24th January 1941 enabled us to arrive in Durban two days later where we met up with most of the ships of the original convoy.

After a three day stay at Durban we departed on 29th January. Most of the convoy was bound for Suez, but we were routed for Mombasa in Kenya to disembark our remaining services personnel who, by now, were mostly army. Our naval escort now consisted of a county class cruiser HMS **Shropshire**, plus a smaller cruiser HMS **Ceres**. When the time came for us to enter Mombasa, **Ceres** broke away to escort us into the port where we arrived on 5th February 1941.

Whilst the **Orbita** was at Mombasa I received a surprise visit from a former PSNC colleague who had gone into the RNR shortly after the outbreak of war and whom I had not seen since. He now appeared resplendent as a Sub-Lieutenant Paymaster from HMS **Ranchi**, now berthed close to us in Kilindini harbour. I was invited, and duly went, to drinks and dinner aboard her where I was made very welcome. Going aboard an Armed Merchant Cruiser (AMC) was a rather novel experience for me for, although we had met up briefly or sailed in convoy with a number of them, this was the first time I had actually set foot on one. The **Ranchi** was, of course, one of the same class as the **Rawalpindi** of heroic memory. On 23rd November 1939 the **Rawalpindi** engaged the German battleships **Scharnhorst** and **Gneisenau** for forty minutes off Iceland before she broke in two with shell damage. She lost 265 of her crew in the encounter, but her convoy managed to scatter safely.

There were altogether four of these former P&O 'R'-class, 19,000 ton passenger vessels (the others were the **Rajputana** and the **Ranpura**), and all four had been requisitioned as AMCs at the beginning of the war. Of the four, two were lost quite early on, but the other two survived to serve in different capacities well into the post-war period. Such is the lottery of war and indeed of life itself. I found it very interesting to see, at close quarters, the six-inch guns of the **Ranchi**, all spick and span and highly polished and they certainly looked very impressive. Unfortunately those guns were of little more use than peashooters against the fire power of their most likely adversaries and, although the courage of the men who manned them was of the highest order, the dice were always heavily loaded against these former passenger liners-cum-improvised warships.

The AMCs performed incredible feats and many of them endured cruel punishment during the first two years or so of the war. However, with the advent of specially built and altogether more suitable warships for convoy escort and other duties as Britain's war effort gradually accelerated, they outlived their usefulness and, by about the end of 1941 or early 1942 the AMCs were nearly all phased out. Most of them then became troopships, in which role they continued to give valiant and sterling service.

After disembarking the remaining troops at Mombasa, the **Orbita** made a quick turn-round, sailing from there on 6th February, southwards back to Durban. The **Ranchi** escorted us for the passage and we were back in Durban on 11th February. Our return to Durban coincided exactly with the arrival there of another large outward bound troopship convoy from the UK. Half of this convoy had gone into Cape Town in accordance with normal practice, but the 'half' now arriving in Durban was in itself an impressive gathering of passenger liners, a number of them well-known and famous. We had modestly thought that our own convoy had added up to quite a sizeable troop movement – as indeed it had – but this new and splendid array of troopships entering Durban looked like part of an even larger movement.

The arrival of this latest convoy effectively dashed any hopes which we might have entertained on board the **Orbita** of continuing our voyage beyond Durban in the direction of the UK and home. We were told, in double-quick time, that in order to release one of the newly-arrived troopships for 'other duties', her troops would be transferred to us and that we were to take its place in the convoy on its continuing passage northwards to Suez.

The main body of the troops embarked on the **Orbita** came from the Union-Castle liner **Windsor Castle** and to facilitate the transfer, she tied up alongside us. This went off quite smoothly and with no major hitches. I recall that the rather abrupt shattering of the relative peace and quiet which we had enjoyed on the **Orbita** during the past five or six days by the sudden arrival of a new, large batch of boisterous services personnel (accompanied by their hobnailed boots) was not to everybody's liking! Still, that was what we were here for. We embarked additional troops from one of the Royal Mail's *Highland* vessels which, in those early days of war, only took their troops as far as South Africa. After that the *Highlands* were usually diverted across the South Atlantic to the River Plate where they loaded refrigerated meat and other vital cargoes for the United Kingdom.

With our newly embarked troops safely on board and after a few short days in which to sample again the delights of Durban, the time came to be on our way once more and we accordingly bade a fond farewell to that fair city on 15th February. On the following day we made a rendezvous at sea with the other portion of the convoy now coming up from Cape Town.

It took quite a while to get sorted out but after some hours of manoeuvring – a most magnificent spectacle – we were eventually all formed up into one main convoy again. Aboard the **Orbita** we now had the opportunity to take in and appreciate the size and majesty of this convoy which, clearly, was considerably larger than the one in which we had originally left the UK. We did not realize nor, I suppose, even think of it at the time but we were probably participating in a little bit of maritime history. This particular convoy must, almost certainly, have constituted the biggest single seaborne troop movement ever made to the Middle East.

Just for 'starters' there were at least three, possibly four, modern Union-Castle mailships including the almost brand-new **Capetown Castle**, and either the **Athlone** or the **Stirling Castle** (two sister ships which looked exactly alike). Those 'Castle' liners of the late 1930s, with their single fat funnels and streamlined, though rather bulky, hulls (which looked even bulkier in their grey wartime paint) were distinguishable anywhere. Then there were two Canadian Pacific 'Empresses', the still fairly modern **Empress of Japan** (later to be renamed **Empress of Scotland** on the entry of Japan into the war) and the much older **Empress of Australia**. These two, each with their three stately funnels, were not hard to pick out even in a crowd. Canadian Pacific was still further represented by a couple of its 'Duchesses' – the **Bedford** and the **Richmond**.

Not to be outdone, Cunard-White Star had contributed handsomely with three of its famous names: the **Britannic**, the 27,000 ton motorship, and the **Franconia** and the **Samaria**. The outline of one of the two Furness Withy 'Bermuda' class liners from the peacetime so-called 'millionaires' New York – Bermuda run, either the **Monarch**

of **Bermuda** or the **Queen of Bermuda**, could be seen on the far column or 'wing' of this vast convoy.

A slightly less distinguished member of this rather smart gathering of predominantly 'crack' liners was a Greek owned passenger vessel called the **Nea Hellas** (formerly the old Anchor liner **Tuscania**), now operated by the British Ministry of War Transport as a troopship. In point of fact she was still not a bad looking ship – at least when seen from a distance – but I believe that some of the troops who sailed in her were, understandably, more concerned with her interior than her exterior, and parodied **Nea Hellas**, rather irreverently, into 'Near Hell'. Besides being unpopular with the troops she was also, I regret to say (and with the greatest respect to our gallant Greek allies) slightly *persona non grata* with the rest of the ships in the convoy. This was due to the rather nasty habit which she had of belching huge clouds of thick, black smoke, doubtless visible miles away, from her single tall funnel – a trait which could hardly be expected to endear her to her traveling companions!

Our main naval escort now consisted of just a couple of cruisers. Not very impressive for a troop convoy of this size and obvious importance, but these were desperate days for Britain and her Allies, with naval resources stretched practically to breaking point. You therefore considered yourself lucky, in early 1941, to get any kind of escort whatsoever – especially in such a relatively remote area as the Indian Ocean.

As it happened, and although we did not know it at the time, the German pocket battleship **Admiral Scheer** and the German commerce raider **Atlantis** (commanded by the legendary Bernhard Rogge), together with several German supply ships, were operating in the Indian Ocean at about this period. The *Scheer* had sunk several British or allied ships not far from the route our convoy was following. However, nothing happened to us whilst we were in the area and our voyage to Suez proved to be entirely uneventful.

Five or six days out from Durban some of the ships of our convoy, plus one of the escorting cruisers, broke away to go into Mombasa – reportedly to land troops as reinforcements for an advance then being made by our forces in Kenya into Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland. The rest of us pushed on northwards with, by now, just one cruiser as our main escort.

On 28th February we dropped anchor in Suez Bay. We spent a long, rather weary three weeks at Suez, first of all disembarking our troops by tenders and lighters from our anchorage in the roadstead and later berthed alongside at Port Tewfik where we discharged military equipment, ammunition, stores and all the paraphernalia of a British army engaged in a desert campaign.

It was during this period at Suez that most of us learned for the first time of the existence of a hitherto little known German General – one Erwin Rommel. During the latter part of 1940, things had appeared to be going rather well for our forces in the western desert, with General Wavell's relatively small armies pushing back numerically superior Italian forces in quite spectacular fashion and prospects in this particular theatre of the war, if in no other, had looked bright. But by the second half of March 1941, the presence in North Africa of the German Afrika Korps under Rommel, to stiffen crumbling Italian resistance, was beginning to transform the situation and matters no longer looked so bright there. On the contrary they now looked ominous.

A small highlight of our long stay at Suez was that it afforded all hands an opportunity to visit the Pyramids and the inscrutable Sphinx. I had passed through the Suez Canal several times before the war but in 1941, so far as passenger vessels were concerned, these were usually rapid affairs with no undue hanging about and little or no time for sightseeing. This, therefore, was an opportunity which might never come again.

An odd, slightly comical, incident from what, by any standards, was a memorable and quite wonderful day, still sticks in my memory. This is of boarding an ancient and very rickety tram in Cairo bound for Gizeh and, whilst still fumbling in my pockets for the few piastres fare, having my shoes blacked and polished all over by a little Egyptian shoeshine boy who had jumped on to the tram at the same time as my companion and me. Any slight irritation which I might otherwise have felt at having to fork out for this unexpected and unsolicited shoeshine was fairly ameliorated by my rapid promotion (on the part of the boy) to the exalted rank of "*Captain, Sah*"!

During our lengthy sojourn at Suez, conjecture as to our future possible movements became a popular pastime. Would we, for instance, now turn round and head for South Africa and – hopefully – home? Would we, alternatively, remain indefinitely on the South Africa – Suez 'shuttle service' or would we perhaps, as had been darkly hinted, be bundled off unceremoniously to some dreary, mosquito-ridden spot in the Far East? This range of possibilities, laced by other bright, imaginative ideas from our ever loquacious 'galley-wireless' did much, if nothing else, to stimulate chit-chat over pre-meal G&Ts and at other times. It became a veritable daily guessing competition until, in due course, the long-awaited answer was provided. We were going to embark Italian POWs from General Wavell's successful 1940 desert campaign (together with their appropriate guards) plus sundry 'other personnel' for transport to South Africa. After that ? – well, we would find out when we got there!

The Italian POWs turned out to be a rather scruffy, unkempt lot, very docile and, on the whole, looking as though they were glad to be out of the war. They gave their guards very little trouble on the passage to South Africa. The 'other personnel' were mainly sundry British and Allied servicemen and Merchant seamen and included two parties of survivors from ships which had both had a very rough time on the Malta run, now entering its most perilous stage. The largest party, numbering perhaps forty or more officers and men, was from HMS *Illustrious*, the escorting aircraft carrier of a very important and vital convoy which had battled its way through to Malta in January 1941. That convoy had received the close attention of the German Luftwaffe, by now based in Sicily. The *Illustrious* had been picked out for special punishment by the Stuka dive bombers. I would not presume to describe that punishment here – even though we received many graphic and horrifying accounts of it from various crew members during our voyage south. I shall, instead, leave that to the eloquence of Nicholas Monsarrat who, in his fine book '*The Kappellan of Malta*' wrote, as only he could, of the fearful pounding which that poor ship took before (and even after) she limped painfully, and practically at her last gasp, into Valletta's Grand Harbour.

The other, smaller party of survivors came from a large cargo vessel, the 13,000 ton *Essex* of the Federal Line which had been one of the merchantmen in that same convoy. She had been full of ammunition and high explosives and had, after getting through safely to Malta and whilst berthing alongside, received a direct hit

during one of the many concentrated bombing attacks made on Valletta by the Luftwaffe. Had the bomb found its mark in one of the holds containing the high explosives, the **Essex** herself, together with a considerable part of the Malta dockyard, would surely have been blown sky high. As chance had it, however, the bomb missed the holds and landed amidships, devastating the engine room and crew accommodation and killing or injuring a high proportion of the ship's company.

I have an idea that the fatal bomb actually went down the funnel though I would hesitate, so many years afterwards, to state this as absolute fact. The party of survivors from the **Essex** included their Captain, at least one other deck officer, a couple of cadets, several engineers – about ten in all. I remember that we managed to put them all together at one large table in the first-class dining saloon and that from then onwards, until the time they left us, they seemed to cling together in a tight little band with their Captain, rather like a father figure, usually leading his little flock down to the saloon at meal times. All very understandable considering the harrowing experiences they had gone through at Malta – and of which, incidentally, they rarely spoke.

The **Orbita** sailed from Suez on 25th March. It remained for us to plod on southwards as best we could – which we duly did. It was a small convoy with a correspondingly small naval escort. Our passage was again uneventful and we arrived back at Durban on 11th April where we anchored outside the port for the night, going alongside at the Point docks the next day. Once alongside, we disembarked our Italian POWs and a few days afterwards the **Orbita** underwent a periodical fumigation which, by now, was well overdue. Normally these routine fumigations were carried out in a home port whilst most of the crew was away on leave but normal conditions had now rather gone overboard. The fumigation was really necessary and could not be avoided, so arrangements were hastily made for the ship's company to be accommodated elsewhere in Durban for twenty-four hours. A few of us spent the night on board the **Franconia**, berthed nearby to us, and were duly regaled the following morning with a hearty Cunard Line breakfast served in a still very elegant dining saloon, before returning to the **Orbita** later in the day.

We spent a week in Durban, during which time we learnt that we would, at last, be returning to the UK with our two parties of survivors from the **Illustrious** and the **Essex**. So, after embarking other personnel, we sailed from Durban on 19th April 1941 for Cape Town where we arrived and anchored in Table Bay for two days. On 23rd April we berthed at Cape Town and embarked more 'other personnel' and left for the UK the next day, with, by now, probably something like three to four hundred assorted passengers made up of a wide range of servicemen, torpedoed or otherwise stranded merchant seamen and various others. A really mixed bag. The voyage back to the UK was another long haul taking exactly four weeks, with just a brief call at Freetown to break the monotony.

During the run home, with little else but home-made entertainment for general diversion, the lads from the **Illustrious** really let their hair down and fairly showed their paces in the way of concerts, comic sketches, monologues and musical turns etc. Extra spice was added, paradoxical though this might sound, by the complete absence of females on board since this enabled the lads to give full reign to some quite wonderful vocabularies in their various renderings. The lyrics of some of these (RN)

versions were quite hair-raising, putting the full, unabridged services version of '*Bless 'em all*' (by comparison) almost into the category of a delicate, Victorian drawing-room ballad.

During the last week of the voyage, excitement steadily mounted at the prospect of arriving back in the UK after our long absence. However, amongst our ship's company, this was tempered by increasing anxiety for the safety and well-being of wives and families on Merseyside. May 1941 was the time of the great Liverpool 'Blitz' (for ever after known on Merseyside as 'The May Blitz'). Night after night, for over a week, the whole of the area was subjected to some of the fiercest bombing of the war in the Luftwaffe's attempt to knock out the port once and for all. Most of the **Orbita's** ship's company were Liverpool men and the fear and worry etched on their faces as news of fresh raids came through on the ship's radio with each successive bulletin, impressed me very much at the time. This anxiety was not alleviated, nor sweetened, by a signal which we received a few days before our arrival informing us that our UK destination this time was to be the 'Clyde for orders', and not our usual home port, Liverpool. We duly arrived in the Clyde on 22nd May and quietly anchored in the Holy Loch.

The following day we commenced paying off the crew and at the same time, signing-on new sets of Articles all those who were re-joining for the next voyage (for which there was no perceptible rush of applicants at that precise moment). This all took place on board the **Orbita** at anchor and the process went on through the night until the following morning, fortified by relays of coffee, sandwiches and an occasional 'medical comfort'.

We had already learned that the **Orbita** was earmarked to make a specially rapid and hasty turn-round in order to join another outward-bound troopship convoy very urgently needed in the Middle East and which, even now, was being assembled for departure from the Clyde. This highly unpopular news meant that leave for our crew, most notably those who were coming back for the next voyage, had now become a burning question and a matter of top priority. Accordingly, the greater part of the ship's company were sent off bright and early on the morning of 24th May, either for the briefest of leaves (if rejoining for the forthcoming voyage) or perhaps longer ones (if not rejoining). I had the great 'honour' bestowed on me of remaining on board to help 'hold the fort', such as it was, pending my own forty-eight hours leave which, hopefully, would come (it did) later that week.

Thus it was that aboard a travel-stained and slightly tatty-looking **Orbita** anchored in a lonely Scottish loch on a day in May 1941, chilling news came to a handful of crew members and an assorted bunch of electricians, plumbers, carpenters and others – the shore gang – working round the clock to push us out to sea again. That news was the summary destruction of the mighty **Hood** by the **Bismarck** and the appalling loss of her entire crew, save for three solitary survivors. This, the first act in one of the most sombre dramas of the whole war at sea and the terrifying prospect of the **Bismarck** at large in the Atlantic, rampant and unassailable, was too much to take in at one gulp. Hearts undoubtedly contracted at that awful moment but I don't think that many of us, with our next departure from the Clyde set for the immediate future and staring us in the face, were yet able to comprehend to the full the stark implications of this disaster. Mercifully for us, however, and for a lot of others as well,

the final act of the drama would be played out to its terrible end within the next seventy-two hours. █

This article originally appeared in the Furness Withy house journal 'The Log' in 1988 and was submitted by LNRS Member John Hill.

ORBITA : built 1914 by Harland & Wolff, Belfast.

15,945grt, 10,140nrt, 12,370dwt. Length: 570ft, breadth 67.5ft.

Launched on 7th July, 1914. Passengers: 190 – first; 221 – second; 476 – third.

Entered service in 1915 as an auxiliary cruiser.

1921: chartered to Royal Mail for the Hamburg-Southampton-New York service.

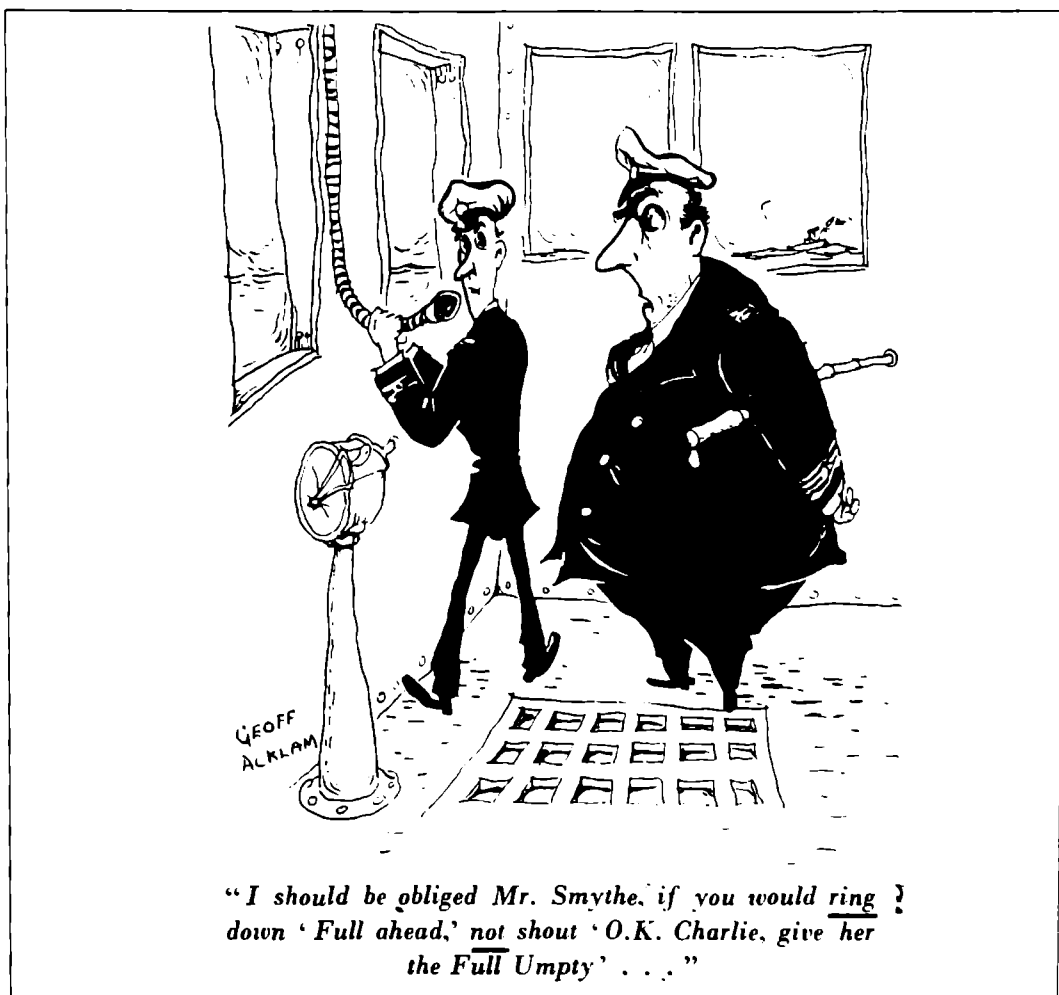
1926: returned to PSNC, and fitted to burn oil fuel.

Sailed 4th November 1926 from Liverpool to Callao and Valparaíso via Panama Canal.

Served as a troopship for the duration of the Second World War.

1946: Employed on emigrant service to the Antipodes.

1950: broken up by Thos. W. Ward at Newport, Monmouthshire.



DONALD McKay (1810 – 1880)
SHIPBUILDER OF NEWBURYPORT AND BOSTON.

A Specialist in Western Ocean packets and extreme clippers.

by Frank C. Bowen

Donald McKay shares with John Roach the popular name of 'The Father of American Shipbuilding', but, great as his achievements were, it is to be feared that the title was given to him rather on account of his striking personality than for his actual position in the shipbuilding world. Even in his heyday he had several rivals, notably William H. Webb of New York, and the principles on which he worked were based on the ideas of his friend John Willis Griffiths, although McKay was constantly improving on them and practically all his ships were built to individual design.

Donald McKay was born at Shelburne, Nova Scotia, on 4th September 1810, the son of a farmer and the grandson of a loyalist officer who had left the United States after the War of American Independence. Ships interested him much more than farming and at the age of 16 he went down to New York by coaster seeking work.

He had no particular ideas but wanted something to do with ships if it were available, and as New York shipbuilding was enjoying a boom at that time, McKay soon picked up casual work. This was in Isaac Webb's yard, who was so impressed with the young man that he gave him his indentures. There McKay was joined by his younger brother Lauchlan, later a famous clipper ship master.

Finishing his apprenticeship at the age of 21, Donald became a shipwright in the yard at a dollar and a quarter per 12-hour day, which was soon reduced to 10 hours, and although he had greatly impressed Isaac Webb, who was very anxious to keep his services, he received better pay from Jacob Bell. At 22 he became a freelance shipwright, going from yard to yard on special jobs but being particularly interested in the Western Ocean packets which were then the aristocrats of the American Merchant Service. Donald married Albenia Boole, a shipbuilder's daughter who was not only able to help him financially but, having learned ship design and draughtsmanship through assisting her father, was soon of immense help in putting his ideas of design into practical form.

About the same time McKay came into contact with John Willis Griffiths, draughtsman in Smith & Diamond's yard and generally regarded as being the inventor of the large American clipper, although the Baltimore clippers had been built on somewhat the same lines for many years before his day. Donald learnt a lot from him about designing for speed, combined with seaworthiness and carrying capacity. For a time he served in the Brooklyn naval dockyard but lost that job due to his being a British subject, and went back to Jacob Bell, who sent him up to his Maine yard to draft designs and superintend the building of ships.

Young McKay made a great impression there and in Massachusetts shipping circles and started a number of friendships which proved invaluable. In 1841 he joined William Currier in establishing the shipbuilding firm of Currier and McKay at Newburyport, Massachusetts. The first ship they built to McKay's design was the

Courier of 380 tons, designed for the Brazilian coffee trade. She was successful and very fast for her type, but she bore little resemblance to McKay's later designs.

The partnership with Currier lasted only two years and in 1843 it was dissolved and McKay started the firm of McKay and Pickett of Newburyport, their first ship being the 845-ton Western Ocean packet **St George** for the Red Cross Line. She was followed in 1844 by the packet ship **John R. Skiddy**, 930 tons, which was sold before completion to the Swallow Tail Line of New York. In the same year McKay became acquainted with Enoch Train of Boston who ran the White Diamond Line between Boston and Liverpool, and built for him the 620-ton packet **Joshua Bates**. Thus commenced an invaluable friendship. Train, who was then one of the most influential men in American shipping, persuaded McKay that he would have far better prospects in Boston with the result that the firm of McKay and Pickett was ended amicably.



The Western Ocean packet "Joshua Bates" of 1844, which began McKay's friendly association with Enoch Train on which his prosperity was founded

McKay established a new yard in East Boston. He aimed at specializing in the Western Ocean packets which then not only had the monopoly of the emigrant trade but were preferred by many passengers, including Charles Dickens, to the contemporary steamers. Unfortunately the Boston yard was started during a serious shipping slump but Train proved a loyal friend and gave him the order for the packet **Washington Irving** in 1845, followed by the **Anglo-Saxon** in 1846. In strength of construction they could compete with any contemporary ships and McKay went to great pains to improve the comfort of the emigrants' accommodation. The **Anglo-Saxon** was unfortunately lost on her second voyage.

In 1846 Donald McKay built the packet **New World** for his old clients W. & F. Skiddy, a giant three-decker of 1,404 tons and the largest sailing ship to be built in the United States up to that time which operated on both the Liverpool and London services. Train countered her with the **Ocean Monarch** in 1847 – whose tonnage of 1,301 was generally regarded as being too large for the Boston – Liverpool service. This vessel was burned out with heavy loss of life in 1848.

Other packet owners were taking notice of McKay's ships and a connection with August Zerega, a picturesque self-made man, was started which was to prove nearly as valuable as that with Enoch Train.

In 1848 McKay's luck changed when he lost his beloved wife and helpmate, leaving him with a young family. At about the same time the steamers began to carry emigrants, hitting the packets' business hard, so that he was unable to confine himself to first-class ships at high prices and had to build a number of ordinary cargo carriers. A few packet orders came in and most of them made fine names for themselves. Conspicuous was the **North America**, 1,464 tons, for the Boston – Liverpool service which was an extreme clipper with far finer lines than any of her rivals.

Donald McKay built his first extreme clipper for the Californian Gold Rush in 1851. The ship was the **Flying Cloud** and started Boston's rivalry with the New York shipbuilders in vessels of this type. With a tonnage of 1,782 the **Flying Cloud** had concave bow lines, very sharp but not as long as McKay's later ships, and in spite of the fact that she was partially dismasted on her maiden voyage she made San Francisco in 89 days 21 hours, her best day's run being 374 miles in 24 hours.

In 1853 McKay laid down on speculation the **Great Republic**, a four-masted barque of 4,555 tons which was too large to find a purchaser, so that he proposed to run her himself with his brother Lauchlan as captain. The vessel had a deadweight capacity of 6,000 tons and was designed for general trading. She was fitted with a 60HP steam engine to handle the sails and cargo. With a crew of 100 men and 30 boys her running costs were estimated at £2,000 a month, so perhaps it was fortunate that she burned out while loading her first cargo in New York and was scuttled and sold as a constructive total loss.

The **Great Republic** was rebuilt and cut down a deck, making her 3,357 tons, and with a much smaller spread of canvas she could be run by a crew of 50. During the Crimean War she was chartered as a storeship by the French army and she made a number of fast passages, although never up to McKay's original expectations, before she was abandoned in a sinking condition in 1872.

The year 1854 saw a disastrous slump for the Californian clippers but McKay was saved by the first orders placed with him by James Baines of Liverpool for his Black Ball Line to carry emigrants to Australia. The **Lightning** was followed by the **Champion of the Seas**, **James Baines** and **Donald McKay**; while the **Commodore Perry** and **Great Tasmania**, built on speculation, were later purchased by James Baines.

McKay carried on building medium clippers instead of the more extreme type, capable of making fast passages but carrying much more cargo, and, incidentally, giving the emigrants much more comfort. When the Cunarders were withdrawn for Crimean War service in 1854, McKay was the leading light in the suggestion to found the Boston and European Steamship Company and produced a model of a clipper-lined screw steamer which he considered would be capable of making six-day passages across the Atlantic.

There is no doubt that McKay was a far better shipbuilder than he was a business man. In 1856 he failed but his numerous friends persuaded his creditors to delay. The yard remained idle for a time during the great slump of 1856-57. Immediately after McKay's misfortunes Enoch Train also failed and his business and

many of his ships were bought by Warren, his Liverpool agent, to be transferred to the British flag and to be the foundation of the Johnson-Warren Line of the Furness Withy Group.

McKay recommenced building in 1858 but in four years he built only two sizeable ships and four Grand Banks schooners. Rather than be idle he spent his spare time preparing a book on naval architecture, particularly American, but it never got published.

During the American Civil War part of McKay's yard was adapted for iron construction for the US Navy, a new firm of McKay & Aldus being formed. While the main yard was building wooden steamers on speculation, which were eagerly snapped up during the war boom, the naval section built the monitor **Nausett**, only in commission for two weeks at the end of the war, and the paddle gunboat **Ashuelot**, while two wooden screw gunboats were built on speculation and bought by the Navy department.

This business resulted in the US Navy owing McKay and his partner £300,000, but when the debt was finally settled some 30 years later his widow – he had married again – and children got practically nothing after the lawyers and politicians had taken their toll. After the war McKay built only four new ships, of which the only one to be noteworthy was the medium clipper **Glory of the Seas** in 1869 – the last to be built in his yard.

In 1874 and 1875 McKay superintended the building of the US screw sloop **Adams** at the Boston Navy Yard and her sister the **Essex** at the Kittery Navy Yard, and also refitted the famous racing yacht **America**.

Donald McKay bought a farm at Hamilton, Massachusetts in 1875 where he vainly tried to make a living. He still retained his old energy in spite of tubercular trouble, but he overstrained himself and on 20th September 1880 he died and was buried at Newburyport. ■



*The 2,525 ton **James Baines**, the third of four emigrant ships built for the Liverpool to Australia run.*

MEMORABLE DAYS ON THE JAVA – NEW YORK RUN

by James Barron

The 'Victory' ships were the logical successors to the 'Liberty'. They were faster and more sophisticated, but still part of the wartime emergency building programme, and yet so well designed were their hulls and engines, not to mention their comfortable accommodation, that they compared favourably with most of the custom-built British cargo ships being built well into the 1950s.

I always remember the comment an old chief engineer made when someone was going on about how they churned out a 'Victory' every ten days or so. "*Just think what great ships they would have been,*" he said, "*if they had only taken their time and built them right.*" A 'Victory', however, would not be the same without her rough edges and I've always had a liking for them.

The first I ever saw was the **Tusculum Victory**, lying in the North Basin of Glasgow's Princes Dock in the autumn of 1946. I had just come down from the Highlands to the School of Navigation at Glasgow for the ten-month cadet course and on Saturdays a crowd of us would wander round the docks to see the ships.

The **Tusculum Victory** looked like no ship I had ever seen although, to be honest, it was only some weeks before that I had seen my first deep-sea ship at all. With her odd name, all-over grey paint, gun tubs and guns and all hung about with liferafts she looked very warlike indeed. "*What kind of ship is that?*" I asked, intrigued. "*That's a gunship – for the invasion y'know,*" replied one of the Glasgow cadets confidently – the Glasgow boys knew everything!

"*A gunship, right,*" I said (after all, who was I to argue?) and a gunship is what I have thought of her ever since. I liked the look of her, though, upright and businesslike with a big flare on her high bows, and I stood and gazed as my companions wandered on chattering and pointing; there was plenty to see in Glasgow docks in those days.

My first ship was nothing like the **Tusculum Victory**. Donaldson's **Norwegian** was elderly and slow and her regular route from Glasgow and the Bristol Channel to Canada and back, summer and winter, was mostly cold, a lot of hard work, and not much of the adventure I had expected. However, she did introduce me to my next 'Victory'.

In September 1947 the Donaldson Line bought the **Medina Victory** which it had been managing as a troopship for the Ministry of War Transport. Donaldsons converted her to a cargo ship carrying twelve passengers, renamed her **Laurentia**, placed her on the Glasgow – Quebec – Montreal run, and it was at Montreal that I visited her in the summer of 1948. The cadets had a two-berth cabin down on the main deck and I can still remember the hot Montreal night made even hotter by the big electric cargo winch belching baking air into the forward-facing port as it howled and clacked only a few feet away. I was vastly impressed by the hand basin with running hot and cold water, however, even more so when one of my hosts brought in a tray on which there were glasses, ice and bottles of Coca Cola from the bar. A bar! On a ship! This was really living it up!

Two years later it was my turn. I was senior cadet on the **Salacia** by then, on permanent daywork, mostly as carpenter's mate. We had just docked in Glasgow and I was on deck with 'chippy' opening up her primitive MacGregor hatches when I was summoned by the marine superintendent and informed that I was being appointed to the **Laurentia** which, by the spring of 1950, had been converted again. She now carried 55 first-class passengers in very comfortable accommodation. The **Taos Victory** was purchased from Furness Withy at this time, similarly converted, and renamed **Lismoria**. These two ships were running mates on the Glasgow to Canada service until 1966, but somehow the **Laurentia** was always the more popular ship with both passengers and crew and is still remembered with affection.

When I finished my time in the **Laurentia**, seven trips in seven months, I had had nearly four years of North Atlantic weather and decided that it was time to pour the water out of my seaboots and to move on. Sun and flying fish beckoned!

I only had a brief encounter with my next 'Victory'. By 1953 I was third mate in the Blue Funnel Line and a dull November day found me tramping from Plaistow underground station to the Royal Albert Dock to join the **Myrmidon** (*ex* – **Ripon Victory**) for a coasting voyage.

It was a bitter, smoggy night as we backed light-ship down the long dock with PLA tugs fore and aft. Just before the 'New Cut' there was a dull boom from aft as we met a cluster of free floating Thames lighters. The dock pilot made little of it, collisions with lighters being commonplace, but the master sent the second mate over the stern on a pilot ladder to inspect the propeller. I was sent aft to assist and I can still remember his cheery face coming up over the gunwhale shouting: "*Tell the old so-and-so I can see all three blades and they're OK*", and the answer from the bridge, "*Get back down that ladder and don't come up until you've seen four.*"

The blades finally tallied and being found all correct we set off into the foggy North Sea, groping our way across to the Elbe light vessel. There we picked up the Elbe pilot – how I envied him his long leather coat – who took us up to Brunsbüttel. From there we went through the Kiel Canal, the fields on either bank being carpeted with millions of ducks, and on to Malmo where we loaded a part cargo of cement for Djakarta. From Malmo a Baltic pilot took us back down through the minefields to Kiel again and then it was on to Hamburg, Bremen and Amsterdam to complete loading for the Far East, but in Amsterdam we paid off and the deep sea crew took over. It had been a nice little trip on foreign articles which was good for sea time, and how we had enjoyed the comfort of the 'Victory' ship's heated wheelhouse in the Baltic. Traditional Blue Funnel ships had no heaters on the bridge, and their varnished wooden wheelhouses and canvas dodgers, though fine in the tropics, were distinctly chilly in more northern climes.

In those days when one moved up a rank in Blue Funnel it was customary to undertake a long voyage, that is, longer than the normal three or four months to the Far East or Australia. This was known as 'doing your long jag' and was not too popular with young married men like myself.

There were plenty of long voyages available – the much sought after run between West Australia and Singapore in the **Gorgon** or the **Charon**; the east coast of Australia to Malaya in the **Orestes** or **Idomeneus**; and the east coast of the USA to Malaya and Indonesia, commonly known as the 'Java – New York'. The **Mentor** (*ex*

Carthage Victory) was on this last run when I joined her in New York as her second mate in October 1954.

My journey out from Liverpool was a leisurely ten-day crossing in the Cunard Line's **Britannic**. She was a comfortable old ship and averaged 13 knots for the passage with scarcely any movement in what her master described as 'appalling winter weather'. I never went out on the open deck to find out for myself: the food, drink and entertainment were far too good. It would have taken me five weeks to earn the single first-class fare of £109.

The second mate I was relieving met me at the top of the **Mentor's** gangway and gave me a suspiciously warm welcome. *"Am I glad to see you," he said, "I thought the old Britannic was never going to get here and I would have to sail in this bucket and miss my passage home in the Queen Mary. I'm all packed, have been for days, and I can't get off her fast enough. Let's get handed over and I'm away, I wish you joy of her!"*

He did not seem much like a 'Victory' enthusiast, and I wondered what I was getting into. I need not have worried, however: he had only been too long in her. I soon settled down in the **Mentor** and the next day we were off down the coast to discharge at Baltimore, Norfolk, Charleston and New Orleans where we drydocked.

This was my first time in the United States and so it was all new and wonderful. *"The further south you go, the better it gets,"* I was told and I found this to be true as we started loading in the Gulf ports. Brownsville, Orange, Port Sulphur, Port Arthur, Beaumont – places I had never heard of before but they all had three things in common: plenty of friendly folk, country music and jumbo-sized mosquitoes. We finished our tour of the Gulf in Galveston and Houston and then we worked our way up the east coast again.

When we sailed from New York for Alexandria the **Mentor** was down to her marks and every inch of deck space was covered with bulldozers, graders and heavy construction machinery, all welded down to the steel deck, American fashion. There were no wires and bottle screws to check and tighten up once we were diving about in the Western Ocean, and dive about we did for the first three or four days as we battled through snow-laden December gales. In heavy weather in an American-built, all-welded ship the conversation would always come round to cracks and hulls splitting open, but our 'Victory' did us proud and soon we were back in the familiar waters of the Mediterranean.

Christmas Eve found us moored stern on to the rocks in Ras Malab, a dusty little bay somewhere down the Gulf of Suez, loading gypsum rock from a transporter. No buildings of any sort were visible and a weary Frenchman from the mine seemed to be the only human being. Loading finished in the late evening but we had to wait for daylight before picking our way out through the reefs. It was a sparkling starry night, almost frosty, and as the accommodation ladder was being taken in the cluster revealed a boiling shoal of tiny fish. Back down went the ladder and soon we were scooping them up by the bucketful. The cook had had enough for one day but tossed us the galley keys and soon a deep fry was going. That was the first time I ever tasted whitebait and with cold Budweiser and a sing-song with all hands on No.4 hatch, it has to be said I have had much worse Christmases.

The **Mentor** was a friendly ship like that. The crew – sailors, firemen and stewards were all from Liverpool and North Wales; most of them were very young and all the time I was there nobody got into serious bother or was logged. Captain Norman Willis, a tall, quiet gentleman from Inverness, set the tone. Nobody gave anybody any hassle and the job went on without any fuss, but there may have been a lot of truth in the old saying that '*the longer away from India Buildings* [the Liverpool head office of the Blue Funnel Line], *the happier the ship!*'

Soon it was the familiar routine of the Far East again, discharging and then loading for the United States. A lot of time was spent at anchor off green jungle shores at places like Semarang, Cilacap and Banyuwangi, waiting for rusty, cockroach infested lighters to bring us cargo in dribs and drabs. Rubber, logs, tin ore, cigar tobacco, rattan canes, pepper and nutmegs, it all slowly added up but it was a relief to get back to the hectic six-on, six-off deck watches in the Malayan ports with two gangs in every hatch and the cargo pouring in. Soon we were westbound again but, alas, not homeward bound.

Going up the Malabar coast to Cochin to load cashew nuts, I got the shock of my life. We were ghosting along at reduced speed for a daylight arrival and the night was overcast, calm and black as sin. Earlier in the day I had been reading in the *West Coast of India Pilot* about floating islands, mud volcanoes, up-welling currents and other odd happenings on this rather unpleasant coast. Now I was yawning my way through the middle watch with a mug of tea to break the monotony.

Suddenly the night was split by the most appalling bloodthirsty screams and howls that went on and on. I felt my back hair rise and my heart thump, and the young AB at the wheel clung to me in alarm. I expected to hear opening doors and pounding feet as the whole ship awoke, but there was nothing, just silence.

"What was that?" I faltered.

"I dunno, Sec," said the AB, "*but it sounded like bloody murder to me.*"

I blew for the stand-by man and when his bulky figure blocked the wheelhouse door I was glad to see him. 'Ginger' Pollit did not frighten easily.

"What's going on down there, Ginge?" I asked. "*What the hell's happening?*"

"Aw, nothing much, Sec," he replied nonchalantly, "*just a big boatload of people going down the starboard side.*"

"Were they close?" I asked.

"Yeah, close enough I suppose, *banging on the plates and screaming they were.*"

I shot out on to the bridge wing to keep a belated lookout and there in the murky darkness tiny pinpoints of light appeared as candles were lit in jamjars. We had wakened up the Malabar fishing fleet and were right in among them.

On we went westward and the worst part was passing Gibraltar and carrying straight on instead of turning right for home.

The tail end of a hurricane caught us as we approached New York and we spent one nasty night off Long Island steaming to make an offing in vicious seas and a welter of spray that blotted out our radar and echo-sounder as well as all the shore lights. Morning found us closer inshore than we would have liked, but safe enough.

Next day, back in our former berth in Brooklyn, I sat in the chartroom drinking coffee with the man from Blutworth's who was repairing our salt-encrusted

electronic equipment. *"You guys are lucky to have all this good American gear and me to fix it,"* he said. *"You Limeys were lucky to get these boats at all!"* I didn't argue with him.

From New York we went north to Halifax and Boston, then down the east coast and up again, a repeat of the previous voyage but with everything rather better the second time around, and now it was summer. All too soon we were loaded and ready to go, back to the mystic East again.

On our return westbound passage and again not far from the Malabar coast, I had the good fortune to witness the phenomenon of the great rotating bioluminescent wheel. On the second night out from Cochin bound for Djibouti we were steaming through the glassy calm Arabian Sea under a starlit sky. It was one of those tropical nights that are like warm black velvet. Suddenly, all around us, great globules of luminescence appeared to shoot up from the depths and burst on the surface in spreading circular patches about 30 feet across. They began close to as if triggered by our forefoot but spread rapidly outwards until the sea was a shifting blaze of light from horizon to horizon.

As we watched the whole surface of the sea seemed to dip and sway and the luminescence formed itself into spokes which, with the **Mentor** as the hub of the wheel, began to revolve slowly round in a clockwise direction. There were anything from 12 to 20 spokes (it was dizzying and hard to count), but the eeriest thing was the feeling that just beyond the rim of the wheel, just out of sight, there was something going on, some activity that we would never know about.

After a few minutes I realized that there was another body on the bridge, the forecastle lookout man. *"What are you up here for?"* I asked, not very forcefully. He shrugged and said, *"I'm not staying up there on my own with this lot going on."* So he stayed.

I called the captain on the assumption that he wouldn't want to miss what was going on. He came up quietly, unperturbed as usual at being called in the middle of the night, and took in the scene without a word. We all watched together until slowly the spokes ceased to revolve and the whole system melted into the dark sea.

By now my days in the **Mentor** were running out as word came that I was to be relieved in Algiers. After ten months I could hardly wait to get off her and got such a bad dose of 'the channels' that I was all packed by Port Said. Now it was my turn to worry about my relief.

At last the great day came. Willie Murray, the fifth engineer, was to travel home with me and so we sat in a pavement café by the harbour in Algiers, watching as the **Mentor** began to heave up her anchors and get under way without us. *"She was a great job,"* said Willie, *"a real treat to steam. A pity all those welded pipes in the engine room kept bursting. Apart from that she was great."*

"Yes," I agreed, *"she was awfully hot with those bare steel decks and we never did get to grips with the cockroaches, but apart from that she was a beauty. A fine, handy ship and we certainly had some fun in her."* So, with that epitaph, the **Mentor** steamed off westwards into the sunset.

That night we took the ferry from Algiers to Marseille, and the next day *Le Train Bleu* to Paris and Calais. We crossed the Channel in the **Lord Warden** and at

long last made it to Euston Station. "*The best bit of England is where you get the train for Scotland,*" said Willie.

I never sailed in another 'Victory' but after I became a Clyde pilot in 1962 I did come across the **Mentor** again when she had a rather spectacular mishap. On her way up to Glasgow she suffered a steering gear failure while passing Greenock at a fair speed and with her rudder hard to starboard she piled up on the bank at the Garvel Bend. Fortunately she was almost light ship for at low water she was high and dry with a lot of her hull unsupported. She came off almost undamaged at high water, I am glad to report. A tough ship, indeed!

Postscript

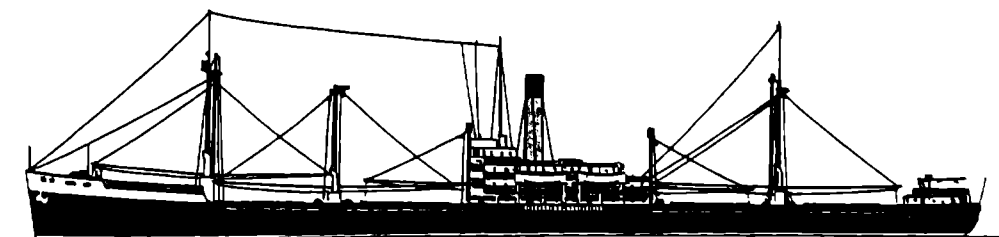
When the American submarine base was established at the Holy Loch in 1961, the US Navy converted four 'Victory' ships to become Fleet Ballistic Missile Re-supply Cargo Ships, to give them their full title. They were frequent and well-liked visitors to the Clyde and for nearly twenty five years they were piloted to and from the Holy Loch, Coulport, Fairlie Pier, James Watt Dock (a tight fit, that!) and latterly the Clydeport Container Terminal.

By 1987 only the USNS **Marshfield** (*ex Marshfield Victory*) was left. I happened to be walking on the Esplanade at Greenock with a granddaughter on either hand as she crossed the Firth of Clyde from the Holy Loch. With a Cory tug ahead and another lying up alongside she came astern with a belch of black smoke and a flurry of white water as she started to cant off the Fairway Buoy before backing into the container terminal. The sun was shining on her smart grey paint, her white pennant number was gleaming and a large new 'stars and stripes' fluttered at her stern.

"*Funny old boat,*" said my younger granddaughter. Certainly old, I thought, 43 years old in fact, but looking good for a few more years yet.

"*What kind of ship is that?*" asked my elder granddaughter, more used to the likes of the big Hapag container ships. I paused and my mind went back to another grey ship from a long ago war with guns instead of missiles. "*She's a gunship, love,*" I replied, "*My last 'Victory'.*" ■

MENTOR : built Permanente Metals Corp., Richmond, California in 1945
7,642 grt, 4,547 nrt. Length: 441.5 feet, Breadth: 62.1 feet
Single screw, 2 x double reduction geared turbines by Westinghouse. Speed: 15 knots.
Constructed as the **Carthage Victory**, renamed **Mentor** when acquired by Ocean SS Co. in 1947. Sold in 1967 for £80,000 to Seawave Nav. Corp of Greece, renamed **Vita**. Broken up at Split in 1971.



**“A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL
CONVENTION ON STANDARDS OF TRAINING,
CERTIFICATION AND WATCHKEEPING FOR SEAFARERS,
AND THE FACTORS THAT HAVE A DETRIMENTAL EFFECT
ON SHIPBOARD WATCHKEEPING”**

by Charles Jocelyn

Modern shipping, with the help of technical innovation, should be safer and more efficient with the whole vessel being a result of research and development. This can justify the reduction in the number of crew members on a vessel, but often in the eyes of less reputable ship owners, it also reduces the need for the crew to be as well trained. It has been widely quoted that over 80% of the world's shipping accidents are attributable to human errors, and the shipping world's regulatory voices have now moved from traditionally seeking technical solutions to safety related matters to focusing on the role of the human element in safety matters.

The market responsible for the vast majority of shipping that fails to meet safety expectations falls on the sloping shoulders of the ship owners who use 'Flags of Convenience' (FOC) and employ 'Crews of Convenience' – seafarers from cheap labour countries who often have poor standards of education, maritime training and experience. These foreign seafarers are employed on FOC ships rather than the ship owners' own higher paid nationals for obvious cost-cutting reasons. This has short and long-term consequences. In the short term this leads to very low standards of training on board, incompetent officers and crew members, as well as fraudulently certificated crew (although even when these Certificates of Competency are not fraudulently obtained, they give very little guarantee that the holder is in any way competent). In the long term this has the consequence of ageing-out well-trained and experienced officers and crew from OECD countries and with them, the previously high standards that could be expected. Currently, the vast majority of shipping accidents involve vessels flying flags of convenience.

To address this problem in particular and the general problem of shipping's multi-national crews, standards are required. The organization responsible for producing the majority of the current international regulations is the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and it is this body, a specialist section of the United Nations, which in 1978 (and then amended in 1995) held a conference of parties to adopt 'the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers', and then the 'Seafarers' Training, Certification and Watchkeeping Code' (STCW 95 Code). Therefore the success of the STCW convention (or indeed any code or convention) undoubtedly relies on the standing and power of its maker, i.e. the political position of the IMO). Nearly all the world's

maritime countries are signatories to the convention and these countries make up the STCW 'White List'.

It is around STCW that this dissertation researched, with particular focus on poor training and competency, and the stress and fatigue suffered by seafarers on board. The convention gives a mix of some mandatory rules and some guidance, which if followed should apparently lead to safer watchkeeping and therefore safer shipping. However, it appears that these rules are not satisfactorily enforced either on shore or on board, with inadequate measures in place to prevent pressure being put on individuals to non-comply with the rules whilst on watch. It is the purpose of this dissertation to show these pressures and gaps in enforcement, and the problems that this leads to.

To write the dissertation and to make an accurate evaluation of the STCW convention, the convention itself was studied in depth and a wide cross-section of professionals and authorities from throughout the shipping industry were approached to give feedback, gained by means of a questionnaire. This led to some fairly clear results as to the failings of STCW, as well as some interesting further comments added by those people questioned.

STCW is extensive in its requirements but it is not always prescriptive or specific and leaves much to the discretion of the flag state administration, frequently using phrases such as 'to the satisfaction of the administration'. It is a very different case when 'laying down the law' and unambiguously telling the seafarer about how the navigational watch should be carried out. Having 'hours of rest' and 'safe manning' rules are great steps forward but useless if the seafarer is then under pressure to lie about his actual hours of rest in the official records that he keeps in order to retain his job or ensure that he is re-hired. It should be the safe manning requirements, approved ashore, which ensure that seafarers are satisfactorily rested. This is just one example of seafarers being let down by those persons ashore responsible for shipping safety.

This dissertation has established that although STCW has gone a long way to addressing problems with sound guidance for watchkeeping, without doubt there are still issues that are not satisfactorily dealt with by the Convention. These relate directly to shipboard operations but are controlled ashore, such as:

- Fatigue and minimum manning (as already mentioned)
- Competency (related to shore-side training)
- The differing standards of training in interpretation of STCW worldwide
- Language and cultural barriers
- The mounting load of paperwork for the ship's officers
- The poor judgement and ethics of some shipping administrators, i.e. Flags of Convenience.

It is clear that much responsibility for any failings of STCW 95 must fall on the shoulders of the IMO but throughout the industry it is also clear that it is not directly all the Organisation's fault. Although it can be slow to respond to needs of safety, when it does produce codes and conventions such as STCW, they are generally considered to be accurate and, if not, any areas missed are usually noticed and eventually corrected (with the emphasis on the word 'eventually' in this context!)

Unfortunately, where the IMO does fail is on ensuring compliance; its inability to successfully govern the shipping world, and the ease with which it is 'pushed around' by flag administrations. The IMO lacks the political punch to demand flag states to enforce the rules it makes and this stems mostly from its somewhat delicate position in shipping. The IMO's very being relies on the world's maritime countries acknowledging its existence and the existence of the codes and conventions that it brings about. Being too heavy-handed could lead to commercial pressures prompting some flag states to refuse to sign, or even to pull out altogether. This could effectively spell the end of the IMO. However, placing too few demands on non-performing flags leaves other nations unhappy (not to mention the safety aspects). These other nations, which are generally recognized as having a long history of taking shipping safety seriously and are seen to abide with the stricter of the IMO's rules, will take matters into their own hands and this again will have the effect of marginalizing the position of the IMO. Some would say that this has already started with the introduction of 'Memorandums of Understanding'.

STCW really has two roles: one is to promote a unified standard of training and watchkeeping, the second is to legitimize and cover the use of cheap crew, something the shipping industry wants in its bid to cut costs.

The main factors which have detrimental effects on improving the quality and safety of watchkeeping lie ashore, and seafarers are made scapegoats when accidents occur. The shipping companies undoubtedly have the upper hand and until a firmer approach is taken by the IMO (or another organization) to control international ship manning and crew training, this cannot change.

I should like to thank the Liverpool Nautical Research Society for its appreciation of my work. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting everybody at the Award Ceremony and feel honoured at the recognition that I was given. I look forward to attending meetings in the future and learning about other people's research.

Many thanks, Charles Jocelyn



*The IOM steamer **Mona's Isle** and Cunard's **Lancastria** at Princes Stage, October, 1938.*

THE SUEZ CANAL

(see also 'The Suez Crisis of 1956' on page 23 of the June 'Bulletin')

On 29th October 1888 the Suez Canal Convention was signed at Constantinople, as the capital of Turkey was then named. The first Article read: 'The Suez Maritime Canal shall always be free and open, in time of war and in time of peace, to every vessel of commerce or of war, without distinction of flag. Consequently, the High Contracting Parties agree not in any way to interfere with the free use of the Canal, in time of war as in time of peace. The Canal never shall be subjected to the exercise of the right of blockade'. The Convention was signed by representatives of Great Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy, Russia, Spain, Turkey and the Netherlands, and subsequently ratified by their respective governments.

From 1882 Great Britain occupied the Canal zone and was tacitly recognized as the custodian of the Canal. In March 1956 there was to be a complete withdrawal of British troops under the terms of an agreement negotiated with Egypt. [In 1968 the lease of the Suez Canal Company would revert to the Egyptian government, had Colonel Nasser not dictated otherwise when he announced the nationalization of the Company on 26th July, 1956. – j.s.]

De Lesseps' own dream was one of permanent internationalization of the Canal. It was a dream shared by British ministers, too, but they were actuated by a dislike of this 'great highway of nations' as Lord Farrer described it, remaining in the hands of a private company.

Mr Attlee pointed out in the early 1950s that Egypt had been in default of the Convention for a number of years and that nothing had been done about it. There had recently been a number of instances of interference with 'freedom of navigation', some of them due to labour troubles, but most of them political in origin, such as the blockading of ships trading to Israel, attempts to impose irksome customs restrictions, and so on. International action to resolve the matter failed and Egypt ignored a resolution passed by the United Nations. Russia effectively vetoed further action.

For any country in south-east Asia the free and safe passage of the Suez Canal is well-nigh indispensable. During the Korean War 355 warships and military transports of over two million net tons passed through the Canal in 1951, and a further 350 in 1952 – over 700 ships in two years. Lord Hankey made this striking comment: 'Neither the military authorities nor the British Government ever seem to remember the object for which the Canal was constructed, and the reason why it has been protected during nearly the whole of its life – namely, the peaceful passage of ships.' It is a point which cannot be too often or too emphatically stressed.

In 1953 over 93 million tons of shipping, one third of it British, passed through the Suez Canal. That enormous volume of tonnage could only have gone through the Canal in conditions of security and up to 1954 the security had been provided by Great Britain.

In the case of the Suez Canal, strategy and commerce are inextricably, if unfortunately, mixed. In the 1950s British shipowners were the largest users of the Canal, but the free and unfettered passage of the waterway was of equal importance to all maritime nations. It had been natural that they should fear that the commercial use of the Canal might, in the discussions which took place with the Egyptian Government, be subordinated to other and purely strategic considerations.

The position was well and forcibly put in the 1954 annual report of the Chamber of Shipping. 'A strategic base in the Canal Zone,' it was pointed out, 'might well be vital in the event of war; but undisputed and efficient passage for merchant ships through a carefully maintained and properly managed Suez Canal is vital now and always in peacetime to British shipping and to the economy of this country.'

There was one other striking passage which will bear quotation. 'From the course of their daily business, British shipowners can see, more clearly than most perhaps, how much world trade would lose in freedom unless agreement with Egypt provides not only paper safeguards, but real ones for the effective continuance of the Canal as an international waterway at the service of international trade. This, even more than the engineering project, was the great conception of de Lesseps; it was on this basis that the Canal was built and has been administered by the Company. The deliberate distortion of this international conception into a plaything of national prestige would be a severe blow both to shipping and to world trade.'

(A précis of an article in Shipbuilding and Shipping Record, 12th August, 1954)



*De Lesseps' worst nightmare was realized on 6th June 1967 when fifteen merchant ships were trapped in the Great Bitter Lake following the 'Six Days War' between Israel and her Arab neighbours. These included Blue Funnel's **Agapenor** and **Melampus**. In January 1971 the trapped ships were abandoned to the underwriters. After the clearance of the Canal the **Melampus** was towed to Trieste in May 1975, followed shortly afterwards by the **Agapenor**.*

THE LOSS BY FIRE OF THE 'EMPIRE WINDRUSH'

See also 'The Empire Windrush – an Icon of England) – page 25, June, 2006 'Bulletin'

Rumour and heroism lightened the disaster of the burning **Empire Windrush**. A ship on fire at sea stirs the imagination and tugs at the heartstrings. The thought of the sudden wireless silence which falls over the whole area as the SOS calls go out, of the people on board waiting, almost helplessly, with no escape open to them save the boats, for aid that may fail to arrive in time, becomes almost oppressively sombre. Every scrap of news about such a stricken vessel is awaited with tense eagerness. The newspapers and the wireless gave to the world graphic accounts of the blazing ship, and pictures taken from the air showed all too clearly the nature and extent of the fire. The world, too, was told of the exemplary behaviour of all on board – even the little children, most of whom mercifully unaware of the dangers in which they were enveloped.

The first reflection is one almost of astonishment that the casualty list should have been so small. Brave men were killed in the engine room at the post of duty, but otherwise there was no loss of life and only comparatively minor injuries were suffered. Next comes the realisation of the wonderful discipline throughout the ship – not a sign of panic and not an instant's departure from that rigid code of conduct in the face of peril. But there was just a little more than that – and it was so typically British. Those manning the foreign ships which raced to the rescue were puzzled by the mock courtesies of "*After you, Claude*" – "*No, after you Cecil!*" of men in the water waiting to be hauled out. It was something beyond their experience; another example of the madness of the Englishmen, whether in the mid-day sun or in mid-Mediterranean. Nobody but the British, said one foreign observer in despairing admiration, could have acted so calmly.

The quiet efficiency of the officers and crew was matched by the conduct of the troops and their wives. The officer commanding the soldiers spoke of the 'calm control exercised by the master and his officers, and the energy and devotion to duty of the crew, especially those labouring to lower boats in stifling smoke'. Others paid tribute to the rock-like stability of the troops themselves, grumbling, as is the soldier's birthright, at what was thought at first to be just another boat drill. They shuffled in discomfort as the decks grew hot, but no man left the ship until told to do so. Well may Captain Wilson, master of the **Empire Windrush**, and Lt. Col. Scott, commanding the troops, feel proud of their respective charges.

Thankfulness at the happy outcome of this tragic affair should, however, be tempered by the thought that everything favoured the rescue operations – a ship on an even keel, a calm sea, good weather, and ships within wireless hail. It is better, perhaps, not to conjure up visions of a ship on fire in the North Atlantic, in bad weather and battered by mountainous waves. What is pertinent is to reflect on the number of ships which have in recent years caught fire and burnt out, and the apparent ease with which a fire can spread once it has started is disturbing.

No doubt there will be a thorough searching inquiry into the possible cause of the outbreak and, of equal importance, into the reasons why the flames were able to get such a grip on the whole ship. As the **Empire Windrush** is owned by the Ministry of Transport, the intriguing circumstance emerges that the Ministry will be conducting an inquiry into the loss of one of its own ships. There need be no fear that the investigation will be any less thorough for that.

The Court of Inquiry into the loss of the **Empire Windrush** published its findings on 5th August 1954 and Mr J.V. Naisby Q.C., wreck commissioner, stated that no wrongful act or default on the part of any person was established by the evidence. The Court had been unable to determine the actual or probable cause of the fire, but one of the assessors, Mr H.A. Lyndsay, in an annexe to the report, gave his opinion that the most probable cause of the fire was a failure of a portion of the main uptake, which released a quantity of burning material into the engine room, with the consequent fracture of oil fuel piping due to intense heat.

It was improbable that the origin of the fire was due to a crank-case explosion either in the main engines or the generators. Smoking, electrical fault and sabotage were also considered improbable.

The **Empire Windrush** (it was stated in the annexe to the report) was by no means a new ship, and there was considerable criticism of her engines and auxiliary machinery, but the Court saw no reason to doubt that she was, as far as could be ascertained, fit to proceed and be at sea. While employed as a troopship she had been surveyed by the Ministry's surveyors on several occasions and received a passenger and safety certificate for numbers in excess of those carried on the voyage in question.

Two more probable causes were (1) the collapse of a plate in the main uptake, causing incandescent material at a high temperature to be deposited at the forward end of the engine room, probably towards the starboard side; and (2) the spraying, dripping or splashing of oil on to a hot exhaust 'Y' piece, or pipe.

"Having carefully considered the above causes," Mr Naisby went on, "I have come to the conclusion that on the evidence given there is no such balance of probability in favour of any one as to justify me in finding that it was the probable cause of the fire."

The Court recommended that consideration should be given to:

- An alteration in the requirements for fire-fighting appliances by a considerable increase in the number of smoke helmets provided and for their distribution
- The question of making it imperative that there should be a proper periodical examination and inspection of uptakes and funnels in all vessels.
- The question as to the dispersal of emergency controls and connections. ■

(The above is a précis of articles in *Shipbuilding and Shipping Record* on 8th April and 5th August, 1954).

THE CASE FOR BARGING

by LNRs Member Alan McClelland

Ever growing concern about environmental issues and the efficient use of fossil fuels has increased attention to the means of moving freight in and around Europe, including the UK. Doubts continue to be raised over the shifting of so much by road. In Britain some work has been done in recent years on the real costs of this situation, but it has received scant publicity and no sustained political attention.

The case for transporting more freight by ship and barge in and around the UK has been reported from time to time in *'The Bulletin'* (e.g. *'And Finally'* in December 2000), and has been pressed vigorously by individuals such as Dr Merv. Rowlinson of London Metropolitan University. Since 1998 some efforts have been made to increase usage of water transport, but it is obvious to even the casual observer that much more needs to be done. Large scale investment in the necessary infrastructure and further developments is lacking. It is no consolation that the European Community has proposed a Euro 48 million budget to support 'barging'.

Our member John Hill recently drew my attention to a piece entitled "*E.C. 'discovers' barging and budgets \$4.8 billion*" which appeared in *'Fairplay'* of 26th January 2006. The programme has the title 'Navigation and Inland Waterway Action and Development in Europe' (NAIADES)*.

Unsurprisingly Holland has been involved in the project from the beginning. It has a fleet of 1,500 barges; France has 1,200 and Germany 1,150. Jacques Barrot, the E.C.'s Transport Commissioner, has stated that Europe cannot leave its inland waterway potential untapped. Commissioner Barrot has made it clear that barges and ships have a significant role in easing congestion as the flows of freight continue to grow.

It must also be emphasized that the new programme intends to promote short sea services including the 'Motorways of the Sea' concept arising from the Marco Polo initiative. Just how much effective notice of this matter will be taken here?

NAIADES : fresh water nymphs in Greek mythology. |

"PASSED TO YOU, PLEASE"

In the early 1950s regular visual signalling exercises took place between Royal Naval vessels and merchant ships. An Admiralty report dated 1953 states that 'the standard of signalling generally continues to be very good.' During the year there were some 1,575 exercises in the Mediterranean and home waters and the merchant ships included liners, tankers, tramps and coasters. The Admiralty report states that: *'the Strathnaver was extremely prompt in answering'* and had *'excellent morse'*. The Anglo-Saxon tanker **Bela** was *'a pleasure to work with'*; the Heyn Line cargo vessel **Dunmore Head** was *'very good indeed, a most valuable exercise.'* The General Steam Navigation Company's **Woodlark** was *'worthy of special mention'*, and the **Sugar Transporter** had her *'Aldis lamp well trained, with vessel rolling heavily'*. The Report concluded that the Royal Navy would always be able to make signals faster than merchant ships could receive them, but that the merchantmen could always think up suitable replies faster and ruder than they could return them!' |

THE ROYAL VOYAGE ON THE 'EMPRESS OF SCOTLAND'

by a 'fellow – passenger'

It was said of the late King George V that he was 'the Sailor King', and the national press and many public speakers have referred to the Duke of Edinburgh as 'the Sailor Prince'. Princess Elizabeth was not so keen on the sea and confided to an intimate friend when she was visiting the Channel Islands on board HMS *Anson* in 1950 that "*I must not be ill; Philip would not like it!*"

In November 1951 Prince Philip and Princess Elizabeth joined the Canadian Pacific liner **Empress of Scotland** for passage to Liverpool. The '*Empress*' arrived off Portugal Cove in Conception Bay, Newfoundland, at 07.30 on 12th November to embark the Royal passengers.

Princess Elizabeth certainly had a rough passage in HMCS **Ontario** from Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island to Sydney, Nova Scotia towards the end of the royal tour, for the warship was steaming at 26 knots in a beam sea. There was a shorter, but much more hazardous passage in the 140-ton ferry **Maneco** from Portugal Cove, Newfoundland out to the **Empress of Scotland**, which was manoeuvring in Conception Bay in a north-easterly gale, unable to anchor, and continually being driven inshore.

The master of the **Empress of Scotland**, Captain C.E. Duggan, could be seen looking anxiously for his royal passengers, whose small craft was frequently lost to sight as veteran Captain Martin Saunders of the **Maneco** made a skilful approach to the '*Empress*'. It took the **Maneco** some 45 minutes to make the mile-and-a-half trip out to the '*Empress*', with two fishing trawlers doing their best to provide protection from the wind which was lashing the sea to a fury and soaking photographers and officials with clouds of spray.

The two trawlers had intended to remain and give the liner a traditional farewell, but rather than hazard their craft even more, these sturdy mariners decided to make for shelter and once the **Maneco** was alongside the '*Empress*' at 13.10 and the royal party had boarded, they returned to the relative shelter of Portugal Cove. For half an hour the Princess and the Duke remained on the bridge watching their baggage come aboard and waving goodbye to the officials, correspondents and camera men who had accompanied them since their arrival by air at Montreal some three weeks earlier, out West, and back to the Maritimes and Newfoundland.

The accommodation for the royal couple was the main suite on 'A' deck which had been partitioned off with a constant 'guard' of selected stewards to ensure privacy. It was hardly necessary, however, for word had been passed round tactfully among the other passengers during the two-day passage down the St Lawrence and round to Conception Bay that the Princess and the Duke would like to relax and enjoy themselves as ordinary transatlantic passengers. And it was so.

On the second morning the Princess was out early, and for the remainder of the voyage she spent many hours on deck. On many occasions she was to be seen strolling along the open tourist deck. Throughout the voyage, a boisterous one as the abstract of log shows, those passengers who were not confined to their cabins (and there were many!) remembered the plea for privacy, but in the tourist class particularly

the Princess spoke to passengers about the trip. Many of them failed to recognize the slim girl in a light blue hooded mackintosh and yellow scarf who frequently stood sheltering in the corner of two bulkheads, watching the Atlantic rollers and dodging the spray.

CANADIAN PACIFIC STEAMSHIPS LIMITED

"EMPRESS OF SCOTLAND"

Captain C. E. DUGGAN, R.D., R.N.R.

Staff Commander N. W. DUCK, D.S.C., R.D., R.N.R.

- ABSTRACT OF LOG -

QUEBEC TO LIVERPOOL, VIA CONCEPTION BAY — SAILED NOVEMBER 9, 1951.

Distance—Quebec to Liverpool—2,922 miles.

Date	Latitude NORTH	Longitude WEST	Dist.	Wind	Force	Weather Remarks, Etc.
Nov. 9						4.13 p.m. left Berth, Wolfe Cove.
" 10	49.05	64.13	345	SW	4	0.36 a.m. Departure Father Point. Moderate sea, overcast and clear.
" 11	46.47	56.49	328	SW	3	Slight sea, fine and clear. 11.13 p.m. Passed C. Race.
" 12	Arr. Portugal Cove		265	S	3	7.30 a.m. Arrived at Conception Bay. Slight sea.
" 12	At Portugal Cove		27	N x W	7	7.30 a.m. - 1.46 p.m. Manoeuvring off Portugal Cove. misty patches. 1.10 p.m. T.R.H. Princess Elizabeth and Duke of Edinburgh boarded. 1.46 p.m. proceeded. 2.12 p.m. Departure Portugal Cove.
" 13	50.54	44.21	390	NNW	7	Very rough sea, heavy NNW swell, cloudy and clear, fierce squalls.
" 14	53.33	33.27	430	WNW	9-4	High to moderate sea and swell, cloudy and clear, squalls.
" 15	55.02	21.33	425	ENE	8-3	High to moderate sea, heavy swell, overcast, clear.
" 16	55.28	7.47	471	S	4	Slight to rough sea, heavy swell, cloudy and clear.
" 16	Arrival Pt. Lynas		190	S	5	1.00 p.m. passed Inishtrahull. Due Lynas Point 10.00 p.m.
" 17	To	Liverpool	51			Prince's Landing Stage, Liverpool.

BEAUFORT WIND SCALE.—0 Calm. 1 Light Air. 2 Light Breeze. 3 Gentle Breeze. 4 Moderate Breeze. 5 Fresh Breeze. 6 Strong Breeze. 7 Moderate Gale. 8 Fresh Gale. 9 Strong Gale. 10 Whole Gale. 11 Storm. 12 Hurricane.

W. S. W. Main, R.D., R.N.R., Chief Officer J. N. Thomson, O.B.E., Chief Engineer A. W. M. Stark, Purser
J. Prendergast, M.B., Ch.B., B.A.O., B.Sc., B.A., B. Litt., Surgeon W. Parr, Chief Steward

As the Princess told Captain Duggan, it was her first voyage in a merchant ship, apart from the very short trip she made in the **Empress of Britain** in 1939 when, with Princess Margaret, she was taken out to meet the King and Queen in the Solent when the latter returned from their Canadian tour.

The only formality of a restful voyage came when Staff Commander H.W. Duck paraded about 250 of the ship's crew on the promenade deck. A presentation of gifts for Prince Charles and Princess Anne was made by George Newcombe, the senior bellboy on the **Empress of Scotland**. For half an hour after the presentation the Princess and the Duke walked along the lines of men and women drawn up. Captain

Duggan introduced his heads of departments and the latter then escorted their distinguished passengers among their own personnel.

For about forty miles out from Conception Bay the **Empress of Scotland** was escorted by HMCS **Ontario** and the destroyer **Micmac** and it had been planned that they would man ship to give the traditional naval farewell, but in the prevailing heavy seas this was abandoned as being too dangerous. The Princess sent signals of thanks and her ready acquiescence to their breaking station without this formality. Only flashes and the distant boom of the cruiser's saluting gun indicated that the warships were leaving and returning to base.



Mr. Biggart, first officer; Staff Commander Duck; Captain Duggan and Mr. W. S. Main, chief officer

The destroyers **Zambesi** and **Creole** met the 'Empress' off the Ulster coast to escort her into the Mersey, but they too were forced to break station because of bad weather in the confined shipping lanes of the Irish Sea.

The royal couple took their meals in their suite apart from the last night of the voyage when they ate in the dining saloon. It had been hoped that the Duke would visit the 'Pig and Whistle' (the crew bar) but in the event this did not materialize. The Princess and the Duke left the **Empress of Scotland** at Princes Landing Stage to the accompaniment of three cheers from the crew. ■

*The Princess and the Duke should have sailed to Canada at the start of their tour on the **Empress of France**, but the King's illness caused these arrangements to be cancelled. However, Captain Ben Grant, master of the **Empress of France**, was not forgotten and was invited to a reception at London's Guildhall where he met the royal couple on their return from Canada.*

A CASE FOR STARTING THE No.1 SCHOOL FOR LADY LAUNCHERS ?

The presence of pipers at the St Patrick's Day (1954) launch of the Clan liner **Clan Robertson** by the Greenock Dockyard Company, adding a topical and picturesque touch to the ceremony, calls to mind other incidents of a more startling nature that have occurred at these traditional ceremonies; the aim of the ladies wielding the launching bottle having been characteristically capricious on certain occasions.

Some of these were referred to in a light-hearted article in the *Sunday Times*, under the heading '*Misses in the slips*'. To quote the article:

'As if the Clyde shipbuilders had not enough to worry them, a new kind of production problem is creating anxiety.

'They cannot find a supply of ladies able to throw the bottle fairly and truly at the launching ceremonies. This drop in feminine skills is worrying the planners.

'It is believed that a school for lady bottle-throwers is being planned, with moving targets in the shape of ships. High time, too!

'Not long since, one got away, and the ship had to be named and the bottle finally broken after the hull was afloat.

'A celebrated case happened at Harland's yard when the lady naming the ship took her swing and let fly. The bottle missed, and she caught it smartly on the return. Threw it again, missed again actually caught it and threw a third time. By this time the ship was slipping fast down the ways and Freddy Trueman himself couldn't have scored a hit. But the hour found the man. A youth among the crowds sprang on to the dais, tore the bottle from its ribbon mooring, dropped again to the yard level and, sprinting after the sliding hull, hammered the bottle to froth and fragments on the steel plates at the very brink of the Clyde.

'Discussing the problem of throwing the bottle when exposed on a temporary wooden platform, the article adds that there is a case on record of the bottle throwing the lady!

'Some yards make the business easy by setting the whole thing off on the mere cutting of a ribbon and by the use of a mechanical device, but it is generally agreed that this spoils the ploy!' ■

THE MONDAY FACILITY

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



SEPTEMBER: 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th.
OCTOBER: 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th.
NOVEMBER: 6th, 13th, 20th and 27th.
DECEMBER: 4th, 11th and 18th.

AND FINALLY

A CUNARD CANARD

Of all the arguments used in the United States to support the demand for subsidies for American merchant shipping following the Second World War, none has been advanced with greater potency than that America had to rely on foreign ships during the War, and cannot afford to do so again should there be another. The argument was buttressed by the statement that the British Government charged the U.S.A. for transporting troops in the Liners **Queen Mary** and **Queen Elizabeth**. Sums amounting to \$100 million were freely bandied about in the columns of newspapers as the cost of carrying these troops to and from theatres of war. Denials made by British shipping representatives of the assertion were not accepted.

At the end of March 1954 an authoritative statement was issued by the British Embassy in Washington (in a memorandum to the U.S. Department of State) which read: "*At no time was any payment made by the U.S. Government for the use of these vessels, nor was there any debit, having the equivalent of a charge, made during the whole of this period.*" The period referred to was that covering 1942 – 1945, when Lend-Lease ended. After this there was an interim agreement which lasted less than two months, and involved only 70,000 troops, for the use of the two '*Queens*'. So much for the legend.

It can be appreciated that the jibe that Great Britain charged \$100 a head to take soldiers to the battlefields of Europe was calculated not only to be hurtful to Anglo-American friendship, but to be a powerful pressure point in the advocacy of big ships for the United States merchant fleet.

It may be recalled that much bitterness was engendered in the UK during the First World War when the malicious rumour was circulated that France was charging rent for the very trenches in which British soldiers fought and died. The thought that springs to mind is why the official denial of the American canard should have been so long delayed. It is a British weakness to let a case go by default, but here surely was a mis-statement, however honestly it may have been made and believed, which called for instant correction.

It is difficult to trace the first publication of the allegation, but in the *Bulletin* of the American Merchant Marine Institute of 14th August 1953 appeared the following: "*Did you know that during the Second World War the U.S. Government paid \$100,292,300 for the use of the two Cunard Line 'Queens' to carry American troops abroad? This was at the rate of \$100 a man. Did you know that this represented twice the total construction cost of the two vessels (\$25million each)? Did you know that in addition to paying their construction cost, the United States supplied all the fuel and supplies and fed our troops in the bargain for the 30 odd voyages on each ship?*"

It was added that these facts were brought to light by a recent investigation by Senator Potter of Michigan who was the chairman of a special Senate sub-committee on maritime subsidies. Another Senator, John M. Butler, of Maryland, quoted this statement in a speech to the Senate and it was this that drew the *dementi* from the British Embassy. Senator Butler took immediate steps to correct the mischief. Thus the British denial is on record for all time and can be produced and quoted as necessary.

America is a big country and the greater the lie the more likely it is to be believed, and the greater the difficulty of overtaking it with a correction. In lighter vein, it should be remembered that it was a G.I. being transported (not for \$100) in the **Queen Elizabeth** who, in a burst of enthusiasm, said to one of the ship's officers: "*Why can't you British build a ship like this?*" ■

From 'Shipbuilding and Shipping Record', 1st April, 1954.

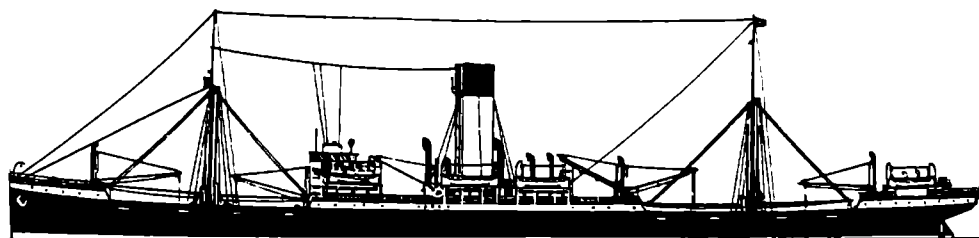
The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

(Founded in 1938)

THE BULLETIN

Volume 50, No 3, December, 2006

Editor : John Shepherd



Christmas on a Cape Horner (<i>Captain Fred Klebingat</i>)	page 2
The Delivery Voyage of the Alabama (<i>Captain M.J. Butcher</i>)	page 6
The Foundering of mv Derbyshire (<i>Charles Dawson</i>)	page 14
Saving the ' Planet ' (<i>Peter Elson</i>)	page 18
Blue Funnel : The Fleet, 1865-1914 (<i>Prof. F.E. Hyde</i>)	page 22
The Container Revolution (<i>James A. Pottinger</i>)	page 30
A Drink Problem on the Royal Iris (<i>John Shepherd</i>)	page 36
From Cunard Liner to Seaplane Carrier : The Campania of 1892	page 38

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

President:

Mr A.S. Davidson

Vice-Presidents:

Captain Graeme Cubbin, Mr H.M. Hignett



Chairman:

Mr J.R. Chambers

Vice-Chairman:

Mr W. Ogle

Council:

A.J.Barratt, D.Eccles, R.Dennis (*Meetings Secretary*), D.Littler,
J.Lingwood, M.D.R.Jones, A.H.McClelland, J.Shepherd (*Editor*), G.F.Wright

Honorary Officers:

Secretary: J.Stokoe *Treasurer:* J.Coates

Membership and General Correspondence:

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

'Bulletin' related matters:

John Shepherd,
3b, Cliff Drive, Mariners' Park,
WALLASEY, CH44 0EX, U.K.

Front Cover:

The *Perseus* of 1908 was built by Workman Clark at Belfast..
She lasted until 21st February 1917 when she struck a mine off Colombo.
See: Blue Funnel, The Fleet 1865 – 1914 by Professor Francis E. Hyde on page 22



'The ss Alabama leaving the Mersey'

by E.D. Walker

The painting depicts the Confederate Navy's commerce raider **Alabama** leaving Laird Brothers' Dock No.4 on 28th July 1862, although at this time she was known as the **Enrica**, or more simply, by her yard number '290'.

**THE CHAIRMAN AND COUNCIL OF THE LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL
RESEARCH SOCIETY WISH ALL MEMBERS A VERY HAPPY
CHRISTMAS AND A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR**

CHRISTMAS ON A CAPE HORNER

by Captain Fred Klebingat

As Captain Söderlund took the sun's meridian altitude on Christmas Day, 1936, the great windjammer staggered under a heavy press of canvas. With the sun at its zenith it was noon, yet it was only 11.33am by the chartroom clock. We were '*running the easting down*'!

The ship was the Finnish four-masted barque **Lawhill** bound from the U.K. to Australia to load a cargo of grain. Like all of Eriksen's squareriggers, the **Lawhill** was manned by young men. I was nineteen and my shipmates were in their teens and early twenties. The three deck officers were also in their twenties, while the captain, the oldest man on board, was thirty-eight.

We were now in the southern part of the Indian Ocean, '*The Roaring Forties*', and for the past week had been racing before strong westerlies at speeds of over ten, and on one day over twelve knots.

The previous day, Christmas Eve, the watch on deck ceased work at 3pm and was on standby to shorten sail or brace the yards if and when required. Only three had a routine task to perform: the helmsman, the lookout (at night), and the man detailed to keep alert for any signal by whistle from the officer of the watch.

All square sails, topmast staysails, jib, the spanker and the gaff topsail were set and drawing to a strong wind about two points abaft the beam, driving the ship along at fourteen knots. The wind, however, remained steady in direction and no bracing was necessary, and no sail was taken in.

Christmas Eve was spent in the traditional Scandinavian style. The captain, officers, steward and cook dined in the saloon aft, and the sailors of the port and starboard watches in the two large cabins in the forward part of the deckhouse amidships. The carpenter, sailmaker and donkeyman invited the three apprentices; an American from California, an Englishman and a Frenchman, to dine with them in their messroom adjoining the sail-locker.

The last of the three pigs had been killed the day before, providing fresh pork for all hands. We had fresh bread, and there was also a considerable variety of tinned food on the table – much more than we could stuff inside us, young though we were. On each table stood a welcome bottle of good Scotch whisky.

After the meal the next two hours sped by rapidly as we were entertained by Andersen playing his accordion, often singing in unison some of the well-known songs he played. And all the time the ship sailed on, frequently making fourteen, sometimes fifteen, knots.

Later many of us went out on deck to stretch our legs, smoke, and yarn. A night to be remembered with the moon high in a cloudless sky, and Canopus to the southward nearing its meridian. The wind was now blowing a moderate gale from the nor'nor'west, and the tremendous pressure on such an area of canvas was making the ship heel much more heavily to starboard. However, there was no need to shorten sail, the ship being amply ballasted by 1,500 tons of rubble in the main hold.

With a great smother of foam creaming out from the bows, the barque raced through the water like a destroyer, while through the weather shrouds, taut as a bowstring, the wind swept in an incessant, eerie thrum.

So we sped on through the night, with only four men on active duty: the officer of the watch, helmsman, lookout and standby man. No brace nor halliard was touched, and no sail was taken in.

Dawn on Christmas morning at last crept wearily through an angry mottled red sky ahead, with the wind now blowing at gale force. The ship was ploughing through heavy seas with lurching, drunken movements, spume and spindrift driving over the weather side, the wash-port doors monotonously clanging as each new sea rolled up on the quarter.

Breakfast was over and not a single sail had yet been taken in. Captain Söderland was driving his ship; there was no doubt about that. He had a lifetime of square-rigger experience behind him, and had been master of the *Lawhill* for many voyages round the world. He knew the strength of her masts, spars and rigging – he knew her every whim. He was driving her, but he knew he was not driving his ship beyond her limits.

A single blast of the whistle summoned the standby man to the poop deck, and on his return to the fo’c’sle a couple of minutes later, he said, “*We’re taking in some sail soon – I’ll call the watch below now.*” At 10.30am three piercing blasts on the mate’s whistle had all hands tumbling on deck. The first mate and his watch went forward, the second mate and his watch aft.

“*The flying jib – man the downhaul,*” the mate sang out. The tall, burly third mate let go the halliards, and with a noisy clatter – the iron hanks on the stay – the jib came down with a rush. The sheet was eased off, the downhaul hauled tight and belayed. Junior crew members were always given the job of stowing the lighter sails, and being ordered by the mate, I was out on the weather side of the bowsprit furling the flying jib. Looking aft from this position gives a fore-and-aft view of the deck with the great mass of cordage, canvas and spars aloft. Underneath the bowsprit the stem is seen cutting through the water, throwing out on each side a mass of snow-white, foaming turbulent water. Just under the heel of the bowsprit, and sometimes bathed in the foam-flecked water surging up is the figurehead, a stately lady looking proudly ahead.

The first mate and his watch now moved to the foremast; the second mate and his watch to the mizzenmast. The fore and mizzen upper t’gallants were the next to come in. The halliards were slacked out, and with the buntlines and clewlines manned, the yards came down rapidly. The sheets were then let go and a few moments later both sails were clewed up, ready to be furled. The yards were then trimmed and the braces belayed.

While shortening sail, Captain Söderland stood abaft the standard compass, silent and impassive. We, the crew, knew that he was well satisfied. We knew the skipper and his moods perhaps more than he himself realised.

Now that the two of the upper t’gallants were in, the first mate glanced up inquiringly at the captain who promptly barked out “*the lower t’gallants now*”. While they were being clewed up, Captain Söderland, debating with himself, gave a long searching glance to windward. Must the cross-jack come in? That sail had great

driving power; without it our speed would be still further reduced. However, the weather was deteriorating – his glance to windward had confirmed that – and loth as he was to do so, his mind was now made up, and in his guttural Aland accent he barked out the order "*Clew up the cross-jack!*"

The cross-jack was a huge sail – the same size as the mainsail and foresail. The great size and driving power of those sails can perhaps be visualised when it is realised that the great steel yards supporting them were 90 feet long – each weighing four tons.

Leaving a few hands to finish clewing up the fore and mizzen lower t'gallants, the remainder gathered in the waist preparing to hoist the cross-jack, two senior A.B.'s being detailed off to handle the heavy wire sheets. The weather clewline and buntlines were manned, the sheet eased off, and slowly at first – to the accompaniment of much 'yo-hoing' – the weather side was hauled up, then the lee side, until at last the whole sail was clewed up to the yard.

Taking in sail was hard work, but we needed it and enjoyed it. We hadn't taken in any sail for more than a week, and consequently were a bit out of condition. An hour of this strenuous exercise, however, had us fighting fit again. Our next task was to go aloft and furl the sails.

How good it was to be young, fit and bursting with energy! We swarmed into the weather rigging racing one another, up and over the futtock shrouds, up and up to the t'gallant mast. Then my mate and I were on the footrope on the weather side of the fore upper t'gallant yard, loosing the gaskets. We then started rolling the sail up and securing it with the gaskets.

The trickiest part was rolling up the clew of the sail, way out at the extremity of the yardarm, where the end of the footrope was secured. Here, where there is little 'depth' in the footrope, a sailor often uses a brace as a support for his outer foot. However, we were used to it, and the clew secured, we moved into the mast again, rolling the sail up as tightly as possible on the yard, and tightening up the gaskets on the way. Then we were out on the lee yardarm, with the white-capped seas 150 feet below, and the smell of salt air, canvas and Stockholm tar in our nostrils.

Shortening sail had of course reduced the ship's speed, but the **Lawhill** was still making over twelve knots as she raced through the heavy seas, driven by a gale force wind on the great area of canvas still set.

Now we were really impatient for our Christmas dinner. That day, especially, we were the lucky watch, for not long afterwards, at 11.33am, eight bells was struck, curtailing our watch on deck by nearly half an hour! We wolfed down our Christmas dinner of thick pea soup, fresh pork, and duff. With full bellies we then lit our pipes and cigarettes. We all had that pleasant feeling of accomplishment, of achievement. Why? We now knew that from noon on the twenty-fourth to noon on Christmas Day – twenty-three hours and thirty-three minutes – the **Lawhill** had sailed 306 miles, without losing a stitch of canvas, nor a single ropeyarn.

What about the ship herself? She came from Thompson's Caledon shipyard at Dundee in 1892. The hull, lowermasts, topmasts and lower yards were steel, and she was unique as far as sailing ships go, by having the t'gallant masts stepped abaft the topmasts. She was a 'bald headed' barque, i.e. she carried no royals. She was also one

of the first large sailing ships equipped with the labour saving brace winches, invented by Captain J.C.B. Jarvis, a Scottish shipmaster.

The **Lawhill's** statistics were:

Gross Tonnage:	2,816
Deadweight Tonnage:	4,600
Length:	317 feet
Beam:	45 feet
Loaded draft:	22 feet, 9 inches.

In her long lifetime, the **Lawhill** had several owners. The first was Captain Barrie of Dundee, for whom she completed many passages to Calcutta to bring back jute for the Dundee factories, and she was mostly under the command of Capt. Thomas Coss.

From 1901 to 1911 she was a kerosene clipper owned by the Anglo-American Oil Company, carrying full cargoes of case oil. In 1904 the **Lawhill** was dismasted in a typhoon but eventually reached port.

In 1911 the **Lawhill** flew the Finnish flag and was owned by Gustav Eriksen and registered in Mariehamn, the main port in the Åland Islands at the mouth of the Gulf of Bothnia in the Baltic. About 1918 Captain Eriksen became the **Lawhill's** sole owner while she was held by the Allied Naval Authorities at Brest. During the period 1919-1939 the **Lawhill** was mainly engaged in the grain trade with Australia, and although she was no record breaker, she frequently made the passage in creditable time. In 1932 she was in collision in the Baltic with the Polish steamer **Neimen** which sank with some loss of life. Her last voyage before the outbreak of the Second World War was from Port Victoria to Falmouth in 140 days. From Falmouth the **Lawhill** was ordered to Glasgow and after completing discharge was laid up in Rothesay Bay.

Captain Artur Söderland rejoined the vessel in 1940 and she sailed for Australia. In May 1941 she left Port Victoria for East London. On arrival the **Lawhill** was seized as a war prize by the South African government. Captain Söderland, retained his command, and his officers and a large number of the crew also remained with the **Lawhill**. Now flying the South African flag, she carried coal and grain regularly between South Africa, South America and Australia. Even during the war years Captain Söderland was accompanied by his wife and daughter. In 1946 the **Lawhill** arrived at Bahia Blanca from Cape Town with 'fire down below', but this was got under control and only little damage was done.

The **Lawhill** was laid up at Cape Town in 1947 and on being put up for auction was bought by a Mr G.V. Webb. At this point Captain Söderland left the vessel to set up house with his family in Cape Town and to command a coastal steamer for Sturrock and Company. The first mate, Mr M. Lindholm, became master of the **Lawhill**.

The **Lawhill** was reported at Durban in May 1948 and later that year was bought by a Portuguese firm in Lourenço Marques. She lay at anchor for a decade in Delagoa Bay, Portuguese East Africa. She was broken up and sold for scrap in 1959.

This article is a précis of the original which appeared in 'The Compass' in December 1965.
Many thanks to LNRS Member John Hill for submitting it.

THE DELIVERY VOYAGE OF THE 'ALABAMA'

by Captain M.J. Butcher

*The following account of how the **Alabama** was delivered from her builders at Birkenhead to a Confederate officer in the Azores was written by Captain M.J. Butcher in December, 1880. To whom the account was addressed is not known, but on 20th June 1923 it was posted in Edinburgh to Mr Dan Crawford, of Lamlash, Isle of Arran.*

I have much pleasure in complying with your request to give you in writing as circumstantial account as my memory will allow me to do of the escape of the Confederate cruiser **Alabama**, or '290' as she was called at the time, her intended name not having been made public. I must premise my relation by asking you to excuse the absence of dates, but I do not have my journal of that period with me and I cannot trust my memory to give them accurately.

It was in the month of May 1862 that while occupying the position of chief officer in one of the Cunard Company's steamers, then lying in Liverpool, I was sent for by a friend who said that he wished to see me on business of a special nature. On going to his office he told me that a steamer which might be adapted for war purposes was being built for a foreign government and that the agents of that government were desirous of obtaining the services of an English officer, who might be relied upon for prudence and good faith, to take command and, having fitted her out according to instructions which would be given by the accredited agents of the government for whom she was intended, to procure a crew and proceed to whatever place he might be ordered to; that a very liberal remuneration would be given and a commission in their navy also, if desired.

I at once felt quite sure that the government alluded to was the Confederate and I said that I would gladly take charge of the vessel but that I should not think of serving under a foreign flag. After some further conversation my friend said that if I would call on the following morning he would introduce me to those who had full authority in the matter and then a final decision could be arrived at. I accordingly went the next day and was introduced to the Confederate agent who had contracted for the building of the ship and after some half-hour's conversation with him we went to the builder's yard and there I saw '290' which had just been launched. I was introduced to the builder as the commander. I at once took charge and hastened the outfit as much as possible for even at that time we were aware that danger might arise from delay and a careful watch was kept on the course of events.

It was some six weeks after first taking charge and when I had just reached home on a Saturday afternoon, that a note was brought to me from the builder requesting my immediate attendance at the office. I lost no time in getting there as I felt sure that some intimation must have been received from London of intended action on the part of the government, and on arriving I found the Confederate commissioner and the superintending engineer of the builders. I was informed that a telegram had been received from London warning us that no time should be lost in getting the vessel away from Birkenhead as the American Minister, Mr Adams, had laid such evidence

of the ship being intended for war purposes before the officials of our government as had decided them upon taking immediate steps to prevent her departure.

A consultation then took place and it was determined to work night and day, by which means everything essential could be finished in 48 hours. Accordingly, on the Monday evening following we steamed out of the Birkenhead dock and anchored in the river, no one having yet molested us. On Tuesday morning we were to go outside the river for a trial of the engines and return during the afternoon to complete our outfit. After receiving a small party of ladies and gentlemen on board, and with a steam tug in attendance, we left the Mersey about 10am and spent a very pleasant day in the bay, the trials of the engines being very satisfactory and the speed of the vessel also. It was during this time and when some of the party were suggesting that it was getting time to turn homewards that it occurred to me that as the machinery was in good working order, and the work still remaining to be done was not absolutely essential, and as there was increasing danger in every hour of delay, that it would be the wisest to keep her out of port and remain at one of the numerous anchorages along the Welsh coast between the River Dee and Holyhead. As I had become as anxious as anyone for the success of the enterprise I made this suggestion to the Confederate commissioner who was on board, viz: that under the advice of the pilot we should fix upon an anchorage as unfrequented as possible, and that having done so we should induce the ladies and gentlemen on board to proceed home by the tug by telling them that we wished further trials of the engines which would delay our return until 8 or 9pm; that I would give the commissioner a list of all I required to complete the outfit of stores, and also the address of a man whom I had employed to engage a crew, and that he could procure the tug steamer to bring them out, not telling the master of the tug where he was going until he was out of the Mersey and it was quite out of his power to communicate with anyone.

The commissioner fell in with the idea at once and thought it would be decidedly the best thing if it could be done, if the pilot were reliable. I assured him that he need not fear on that account, and then calling the pilot we settled that Moelfre Bay, about thirty miles from the entrance to the Mersey, would be the best place. It was then intimated to the visitors that the ship would not return until late and that they had better take advantage of the tug, which was going back at once, which they all did, and I at once steamed away with the '290' to Moelfre, where we came to anchor at 8pm.

Now having placed the '290' in safety, I must relate to you what happened to the tug and how the commissioner prospered. On arriving in the Mersey they found a man-of-war's boat awaiting the return of the '290', with a warrant for her seizure, and as the ship did not return the tug was closely watched. The next morning the tug came to the landing stage, in obedience to instructions received from the Confederate commissioner, and proceeded to take on a small cargo of barrels, cases, bags etc, and also a number of sailors. The officer in charge of the man-of-war's boat boarded the tug and asked the master what it all meant and where he was going to. He replied that he neither knew or cared where he was going to, that he was engaged by the hour and knew that he would be paid and that was all he concerned himself about. Finding that no information could be extracted from the people connected with the tug, the officer made his boat fast to the stern of the tug, resolving to go wherever she went. Shortly afterwards the commissioner came on board and seeing that all the things ordered were

on board, he instructed the master of the tug to proceed out of the river. When the tugmaster told the commissioner of the inquiries made by the officer in charge of the man-of-war's boat, and of this boat having been made fast to the tug's stern, the commissioner suggested to him that he might oblige them to let go by setting on full speed, which he did, and those in the boat were glad enough to let go soon enough to save themselves from sinking. After leaving the Mersey the commissioner told the tugmaster to proceed as rapidly as he could to Moelfre Bay, where they arrived and came alongside '290' at about 10pm. The work of transferring the cargo commenced immediately.

Not having been able to engage a crew in the legitimate manner we next had to draw up a written agreement, giving it as much of the legal form as we could, and then assembling the whole crew read it over to them, in which the voyage was described as proceeding to Havana, and offering the usual advance wages and allotments to wives and mothers, and then called upon them to come forward and sign. Most of them did join but some 20 or 30 refused; however, I managed to get a crew of 97 all told. Seventeen of them had never been to sea before and many of those who had were a decidedly 'bad lot'. We did not get this matter finally settled until 2pm the following day when we left Moelfre Bay. We knew that the American frigate **Tuscarora** had been cruising in the St George's Channel for the last three days with the special intention of intercepting us if we succeeded in getting out of Liverpool, and so we sailed north. Again we had a very narrow escape as at 8pm, six hours after we left Moelfre Bay, the **Tuscarora** arrived looking for us.

Although the weather was bad we made rapid progress northwards through the night steaming at 13 knots, but the following morning the weather changed and became very fine and you may be sure that we felt much pleased with having got away so successfully. At 5pm we hailed a fishing boat off the entrance to the port of Londonderry, into which we put the Liverpool pilot and the Confederate commissioner who had accompanied us so far, and then steamed out into the Atlantic bound for Praia Bay and the island of Terceira, one of the Azores.

On the second day after leaving the Irish coast the weather became very bad, but the '290' proved herself to be an excellent sea boat and very comfortable. During our nine day passage we were employed into getting things into their proper places and finding out the character and capabilities of our crew. Although we had among our large number many that were worthless, yet we had many very good men and soon succeeded in getting something like order and discipline on board. Among the best and most reliable of the men were eight Savannah pilots who had formed part of the crew of a barque which had run the blockade of Savannah and arrived safely in Liverpool.

I must now tell you that the armament and ammunition for the '290', together with about 300 tons of coal, had been despatched about a month previously from London in a barque which had been purchased for the purpose, the master having orders to proceed as quickly as he could to Praia Bay and cruise about in the neighbourhood, if he found that we had not arrived. A code of private signals had been previously arranged so that each might recognise the other. As it happened I got there first and during the week that elapsed before the barque came in we were fully occupied in getting everything on board into good working order. Praia Bay is on the east side of Terceira, and as may be supposed a quite unfrequented locality, the

settlement being nothing more than a fishing village, having about 1,000 inhabitants. Of course, a Portuguese official boarded us immediately after anchoring and desired to know who we were and why we came there instead of proceeding to the proper port on the other side of the island. I asked him into the cabin and after setting wine and cigars before him, I informed him that she was a gunboat built in England for the Spaniards and that we were taking her to Havana for delivery. He evidently did not believe much of what I told him, excepting that she was a gunboat, and quietly remarked that she had a larger crew than seemed necessary just to navigate the vessel to Havana; to this I replied that the vessel had to be delivered within a certain time and that most of the men he saw were tradesmen who were there to complete work that was unfinished when we left.

The official told me that he hoped I would not allow any of my men to go ashore, and I assured him that I did not intend to allow such a thing; that I had only anchored there because the machinery was a little out of order and that after the engineers had made everything right we should proceed on our voyage. I also told him that I would be very pleased if he would arrange for the townspeople to sell me fresh meat, vegetables, fruit and fish, for which I would pay him or them in English gold as they were brought on board each day. This at once put him into good humour and seeing a stroke of profitable business to be done he became quite friendly and asked me if he could bring a few of his friends on board. I at once assented to this and accordingly, in the afternoon, entertained about a dozen of the inhabitants with champagne and cakes and sent them all back in a high good humour.

We had no official papers on board, not even a port clearance or register, and we could have been seized by a man-of-war of any nation and consequently a good lookout was kept night and day and steam always ready, and always prepared to slip the cable and be off for I had determined that if any attempt was made to seize us, and especially by a Federal cruiser, I would do my best to run into Lisbon and give the ship up to the senior English officer there. Happily, however, we were not disturbed and the only demonstration made against us was by the Portuguese authorities who, we observed on the second day, mounted three guns on a small and partly ruinous fort close to the town and within a quarter of a mile of where we lay, and for the rest of the time we observed that a sailor was always stationed there.

We lay at anchor for six days and on the morning of the seventh a sailing vessel was observed in the offing and you may be sure that she was anxiously watched and every preparation made for running away if anything looked suspicious. At last we could see that she was a barque steering in for the bay and having a signal flying. This, of course, raised our expectations greatly, for not only was I extremely anxious with regard to the final success of the enterprise but many of my crew were showing symptoms of discontent and some among them I knew were ready for any treachery, having been heard to wish that a Yankee man-of-war might come and capture us, and so I was greatly pleased to see at last that the signal was the one hoped for and that if the weather kept fine another important step towards success would be made by having arms, ammunition and coal on board.

As soon as the barque came in I went on board and arranged with the master to haul alongside at once and commence taking on board the guns. The Portuguese officials, seeing the barque come in and communications taking place between us,

became very excited, and came out to us and warned us that we were acting illegally and that they would lose no time in sending a messenger to the Governor regarding our illegal practices. This of course only made me more anxious than ever to complete the work and the fact that the weather was becoming unsettled and the wind, which had been westerly ever since our arrival, showed signs of veering round to the eastward, which would make it impossible to keep the barque alongside; so we worked with a will.

The first gun we got on board was the heaviest, weighing five tons, and while it was suspended in the tackles both ships began to roll a little and, as luck would have it, in opposite ways which, as the gun at this time was between the two ships and held by tackles from both vessels, put a very severe strain upon the gear and at one moment I thought certainly we should lose it. However we managed to land it safely on our decks and the rest came on board with comparative ease.

Each gun, carriage and implement was in a separate case, marked and numbered according to a list that I possessed and consequently I knew the contents of each case as it came on board. As the two vessels lay very uneasily together it was well into the second day before we got everything on board, and there still remained the coal. I was now getting very anxious to sight a steamer with Captain Semmes and his staff of officers to take over '290' and to commission her as a Confederate man-of-war. We had commenced coaling when the lookout reported a steamer's smoke on the horizon and you will understand just how anxious and excited we felt. At last, to my immense joy, I could make out the well-known signal to which, in answer, I hoisted the new Confederate ensign with which we had supplied ourselves in Liverpool and I went out in the boat and met the steamship **Bahama** as she came into the anchorage, and you can judge how pleased Captain Semmes and his officers all were when I told them how successful we had been in getting everything ready for them.

Captain Semmes returned with me to the '290' and inspected the vessel and armament which, I may as well say here, consisted of a 95 cwt or solid 68 lbs shot gun aft, a Blakely 100 lbs shot gun amidships and three 32-pounders on each side as broadside guns, making eight in all.

The wind had now come in from the east and though light caused sufficient swell in the bay to make it hardly possible for the vessels to lie any longer side by side and Captain Semmes proposed going round to the other side of the island to get smoother water. I should tell you that on asking Captain Semmes if he would take charge at once he said that he would rather that I should keep charge until I had completed the transfer of coal and then, when all was on board, he would relieve me of my responsibility.

We took the barque in tow and proceeded at about 6pm for the lee side of the island with a view to going into Angra do Heroismo, the proper port, for by this time I had found out that there was not even a Portuguese gunboat in the port, but there was a rumour that an American ship-of-war was due shortly. We were steaming slowly into the bay at about 8pm with the barque in tow, when without any previous warning, a gun was fired with the shot passing close to the foremast. Captain Semmes was standing not far from me on the bridge and I asked him if he would advise me to continue going into port, and he replied that he thought I might as well do so, until they showed further hostility. As soon as the gun had been fired, the barque let go her

ropes and sailed out to sea, and the steamship **Bahama**, which was following us, also turned round. Once more the gun was fired but we were not struck and afterwards all remained quiet. At daylight the following morning the barque returned to us, and the harbourmaster came out to ask what our business was. When we told him that we had purchased the barque's cargo of coal and only wanted to transfer the remaining part of it, he told us that it was against the port regulations and could not be done. As there was no object in setting the authorities at defiance, we made up our minds to tow the barque out of the harbour and finish our work under the lee of the island in the smoothest water we could find.

Before getting under way, however, a boat came off with three official-looking envelopes bearing the inscription 'On Her Majesty's Service' and addressed to the masters of the three vessels flying the British ensign, and calling upon us to bring our ship's papers to the British Consulate, and there to explain our conduct. I thought it would be as well to call and see the Consul, even though I could not offer any satisfactory explanation to him. This I did and had a very pleasant interview for, as it was out of his power to detain us, he accepted the situation very calmly. I then called upon the Portuguese Governor and complained that on the previous evening a shotted gun had been fired from the fort at a peaceful merchant ship under my command when entering port. The Governor was a very pleasant young man and was profuse in his apologies, declaring that the commander of the fort could not have been aware that the gun was loaded or he would never have ordered it to be fired, and that it was only intended to remind us that we should not enter the port after sunset.

When all the coal had been transferred from the barque to the '290' and the decks had been washed down, the hands were piped aft and Captain Semmes and his officers appeared in Confederate naval uniform. Then, mounting on the breech of one of the broadside guns, Captain Semmes made a very stirring speech, telling the men of the purpose for which the ship was fitted out and how well adapted she was for that purpose, and that he now took her over and commissioned her by the authority of his government as a Confederate man-of-war. At this time the Confederate ensign was hoisted and after three ringing cheers for the ship and the cause, Captain Semmes invited the men to come forward and enter the service by signing the articles which were laid out for that purpose by the paymaster's clerk; at the same time telling those who did not wish to join that they would be paid for the time they had served, and sent home to Liverpool in the steamship **Bahama**.

A very lively scene then took place and several of the officers went about among the men painting the nature of the service in glowing colours and recommending them to join, but in no case was there the least approach to compulsion or intimidation. At length a total crew of 84 was entered on the articles and as several of these had wives or mothers in Liverpool, allotments of half-pay had to be given to them and these enclosed in letters from the men for transmission by the **Bahama**. All this occupied some time and it was quite dark when we bade Captain Semmes and his officers 'goodbye' and heartily wished them success.

I should have said ere this that the Confederate commissioner met the **Bahama** on her arrival in the Mersey and accompanied Captain Semmes to Terceira. When all was finished, the mail bag made up and all our goodbyes said, the commissioner and myself left the now-called **Alabama** and took passage back to

Liverpool by the steamship **Bahama**, where we arrived in all safety after an uneventful passage of seven days. Thus began and ended my connection with the now celebrated **Alabama**.

Postscript

Ship No 290, named **Enrica** when she was launched by Laird Brothers at Birkenhead on 14th May 1862, sailed on trials from the River Mersey on 28th July; 29th July according to some accounts. She met the supply ship **Agrippina** at Terceira on 18th August and was commissioned by Captain Raphael Semmes as the Confederate warship **Alabama** on Sunday 24th August.

Although Britain officially took a neutral stance during the American Civil War, there was much sympathy in Liverpool for the Southern States which were the source of the cotton which arrived in the port for weaving in the mills of Lancashire.

During the next 666 days the **Alabama** roamed the world attacking and in most cases sinking some 64 vessels of the Union Merchant Fleet. On 11th June 1864 she put into Cherbourg for repair and was intercepted on sailing on 19th June by the Union warship **Kearsage**. In the ensuing engagement, which lasted just over an hour, the **Alabama** was sunk with the loss of 21 lives.

Britain's involvement in the affair was further compounded when a small English yacht, the **Deerhound**, which had sailed out from Cherbourg to watch the battle, picked up the **Alabama's** commanding officer, Captain Semmes, and 41 members of his crew, before the **Kearsage** could get to them.

The law suit which followed lasted from 1866 to 1871 and the outcome was that the United States was awarded \$15½million as compensation for the British Government's 'failure to use diligence in the performance of its neutral obligations'.

The wreck of the ship has now been found and the possibility of it being raised has provoked controversy between France, in whose waters it lies; the USA, who claim ownership through the state of Alabama; and Britain, through Wirral Borough Council within whose jurisdiction the ship was built. ■

For notes on Liverpool and the Confederacy, see Alan McClelland, *'The Bulletin'*,
Volume 44, No.4, March 2001, pp 12-14.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

*All meetings commence at 12.30pm and are held in the Education Suite
at the Merseyside Maritime Museum.*



Thursday, 21st December, 2006
HELICOPTER SEARCH AND RESCUE
Ft. Lt. Ian Griffith

Thursday, 18th January, 2007
MARINE ARCHAEOLOGY AT 400 FATHOMS
Tony Martin

Thursday 15th February, 2007
THE HISTORIC SEASCAPES OF LIVERPOOL BAY
Deanna Groom

ATLANTIC CROSSING SHORTENED BY A DAY !

From Lloyd's List, 7th August, 1903:

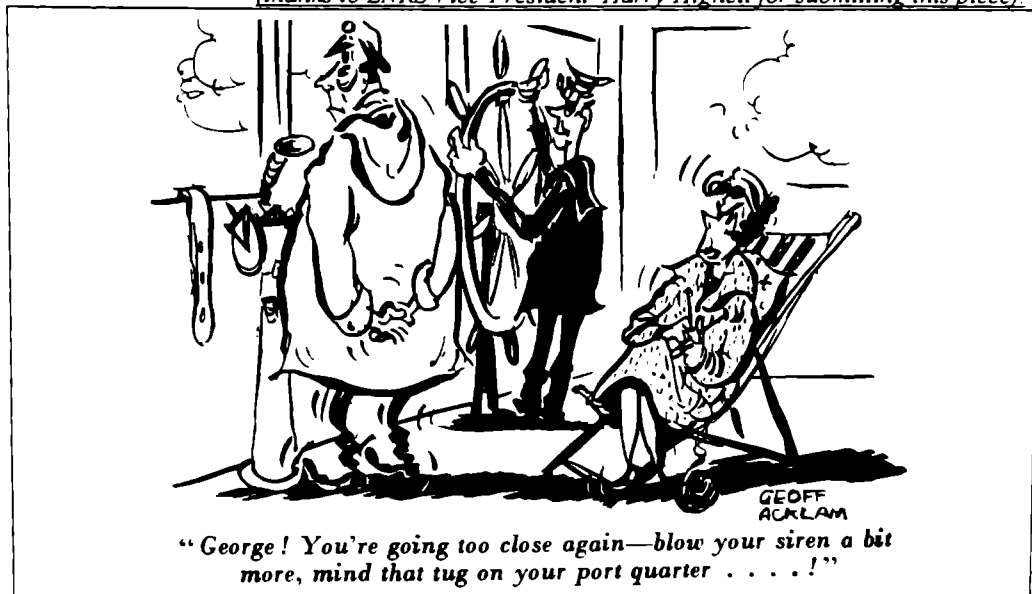
"By the establishment of the *New York Herald's* wireless telegraph station on the Nantucket Lightship, the trans-Atlantic voyage is virtually shortened by almost a day. That is to say, passengers on incoming vessels equipped with the Marconi instruments will enter into communication with the American continent, and through it with the whole world, from 14 to 16 hours earlier than is the case at present.

"The installation of the station is rapidly approaching completion. By the end of the current week everything will be in readiness for the reception and dispatch of telegrams. It will be the *Lucania*, sailing from Liverpool on Saturday 10th August 1903 that will be the first transatlantic liner to greet the New World with a wireless message sent from a ship in mid-ocean.

"It is by the merest accidental combination of circumstances that this is the case, the *Lucania* being the first ship to sail for these shores after the completion of arrangements on the Nantucket Lightship, but it is singularly appropriate that the old Cunard Company, the pioneer line of transatlantic steamships should inaugurate this magnificent achievement of Latin science, genius and inventive skill; one that is destined to rob a long ocean voyage of the sense of isolation that for many is one of its greatest terrors.

"The captain of the *Lucania* has been informed already that he will be signalled through the Nantucket station on his next westward trip, say about Friday 16th August. A correspondent of the *New York Herald*, Mr Milton V. Snyder, will accompany the *Lucania* upon this occasion. People therefore, in America and in Europe will be informed of all noteworthy incidents of the voyage by means of the *Herald* several hours before the arrival of the vessel in New York. It is certain, moreover, that the Cunard Company will make all the arrangements that may be practicable to enable passengers to telegraph greetings, tidings or instructions to awaiting friends on land."

(thanks to LNRS Vice-President Harry Hignett for submitting this piece).



THE FOUNDERING OF mv 'DERBYSHIRE' ON 9th / 10th SEPTEMBER, 1980.

by LNRS Member Charles Dawson

Modern bulk carriers can be traced back to the 1950s when shipyards began building ships designed specifically for carrying large quantities of non-packed commodities such as grain, coal or ores. Another combination type of bulk carrier that could also carry oil was designated OBO (Ore-Bulk-Oil). It was not before 1959, when it met for the first time, that the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) – the United Nations' specialised agency concerned with the safety of shipping and the prevention of marine pollution by ships – began to be concerned with the safety of this type of ship.

The 1960 IMO Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), later replaced by SOLAS 1974, included a chapter devoted to the carriage of grain, while a Code of Safe Practice for Solid Bulk Cargo Carriers was adopted in 1965. Over the years the IMO has amended sections of the SOLAS Convention applicable to bulk carriers to keep it up to date; revised the bulk carrier code, and adopted the International Code for the Safe Carriage of Grain in Bulk (International Grain Code), which was subsequently made mandatory under SOLAS. From what has happened to bulk carriers, it would appear that insufficient had been done to avoid problems which culminated in the foundering of the **Derbyshire**.

mv **DERBYSHIRE**, Official Number 364425, Bibby Line
Length: 294.2 metres (965 feet). Breadth: 44.3 metres (145 feet)
91,655 gross tons, 169,080 tons deadweight

Launched by Swan Hunter, Haverton Hill, Teeside in November 1976 as the **Liverpool Bridge**, the last of a series of six OBOs, all with 'Bridge' in their names.

The **Derbyshire** was on passage from Seven Islands, Canada with a cargo of some 157,000 tons of iron ore concentrate for Japan when she foundered in Typhoon Orchid in the South China Sea. This occurred on the night of 9th/10th September 1980. All the 42 crew members and 2 wives on board were lost. The **Derbyshire** disappeared so suddenly that no SOS was received from her. She was not sailing under a flag of convenience. She was British built, British flagged, British classed and British crewed. The loss of the **Derbyshire** was the most tragic disaster in the Bibby Line's peacetime history, and she was the largest, in tonnage, British ship ever to founder. An oil slick was observed by a patrol boat on 15th September 1980, but otherwise no trace of the ship was ever found. The search was terminated on 20th September, but one of her lifeboats was sighted on 24th October by the Japanese tanker **Taiei Maru** near the Luzon Strait, some 700 miles WSW of the search area, but it could not be recovered. It showed clear signs of having been wrenched violently from its davits, further suggesting that the sinking was rapid.

In stark contrast to what transpires following an aircraft accident, no immediate official enquiry was held into the disappearance of the **Derbyshire**.

Relatives and dependants faced the challenge of emotional and financial hardship. Together, and in the face of substantial obstacles, they doggedly continued to demand an answer to the question: what caused the disaster and the loss of their loved ones? Together with others believing in their cause, they set up the Derbyshire Families Association with the aim of collecting enough financial support to arrange an investigation into the disaster. Paul Lambert, who was elected chairman, had lost a brother in the disaster.

On 11th March 1982, on passage from Hamburg to Brazil, the **Tyne Bridge**, a very similar vessel to the **Derbyshire**, encountered a North Sea storm and started to split badly, reputedly at frame 65. This was a feature which came mistakenly to be reported as one of the main causes of the failure of bulk carriers. The master arranged for the **Tyne Bridge**'s crew to be airlifted to safety and had his ship towed to Hamburg with a skeleton crew on board. At the inspection in dry dock it was claimed that she had not been built to design. This feature, i.e. changes in detail from 'as-designed', without any apparent subsequent documentation, is another aspect which appeared in many of the strictures regarding the way the problems with bulk carriers had been handled. The damage to the **Tyne Bridge** was attributed by many to the change in the method of connecting the cargo section to the aft-end engine-room section, thereby, once again, affecting frame 65. The surveyors were so alarmed at this near disaster that they sent out warnings to the owners of similarly built sister ships.

In November 1986, yet another bulk carrier of the series, the **Kowloon Bridge**, went aground off the Irish coast and subsequently broke up. By this time the Derbyshire Families Association had produced evidence of structural problems with all the six sister ships, sufficient to force the U.K. Government to undertake a formal investigation. The order for this was given on 11th June 1987 and the investigation was opened the following October in London into the disappearance of the **Derbyshire**. The inquiry rejected suggestions of structural failure in the absence of physical evidence, concluding that the **Derbyshire** was probably overwhelmed by the forces of nature in Typhoon Orchid. Following this, the Maritime Safety Committee initiated a further review of bulk carrier safety involving the use of Formal Safety Assessment studies to help assess what further changes in the regulations might be needed.

A dramatic increase in bulk carrier losses in 1990-91 raised more concern as bulk carriers were being lost in circumstances where structural failure may have been a factor, as reported by Lloyd's Register. Many of the vessels involved suffered severe structural damage and sometimes literally broke in two, often with heavy loss of life. In 1990, twenty bulk carriers were lost with 94 fatalities, and in 1991 the figure rose to twenty-four ships involving the loss of 154 lives. As a result, the Assembly of the International Marine Organisation in 1991 adopted an interim resolution to improve bulk carrier safety, concentrating on paying attention to the structural integrity and seaworthiness of ships, and ensuring that the loading and the carrying of the cargo would not cause undue stress. The casualty rate improved after this, but three years later in 1994 was again causing concern. The IMO therefore established a correspondence group to consider the whole issue of bulk carrier safety, and to make proposals for changes in existing conventions regarding the structure and operation of bulk carriers.

According to a British Government report, between 1980 and 1994 world-wide, 149 bulk or combination carriers were lost at sea with the loss of 1,144 lives.

Between 1988 and 1994 the Derbyshire Families Association mustered help from the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (formerly the National Union of Seamen), and the International Transport Workers Federation. The latter undertook to fund research that could lead to finding the **Derbyshire**. After eight days of searching, the wreck was found in 1994 in water two-and-a-half miles deep, some 500 miles south of Japan.

In 1996 it was reported that since 1971, over 2,000 persons had died in bulk carrier losses. Even when the dangers had at last been admitted bulk carriers still sank and 143 deaths had been reported in 1994. Bulk carriers constituted 7% of the total world fleet, but suffered 57% of the casualties.

Concern about the continued loss of ships carrying solid bulk cargoes, sometimes without trace and with heavy loss of life, led the IMO Sub-Committee on dangerous goods, solid cargoes and containers, at its first session in February 1996, to develop a draft code of practice for the safe loading and unloading of bulk carriers. The resulting code of practice was approved by the Maritime Safety Committee at its 68th session in June 1997 and adopted in November 1997.

At the request of the British Government and the European Commission, the renowned Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (which found the wreck of the **Titanic** in 1985, and the **Bismarck** in 1989) was consulted. The result was that a survey was carried out by the Institution from 9th March to 29th April 1997. The wreckage of the **Derbyshire** was found disintegrated on the seabed. This disintegration was considered to have probably taken place on her way to the bottom, and not before she sank. Since the survey was completed, an analysis has been carried out of the more than 137,000 digital still images of the wreckage and debris field covering an area 20 kilometers by 10 kilometers; and more than 500 hours of black & white, colour and h.d. video imagery. The principal conclusion is that the vent covers in the forward storage hold had given way under the impact of the waves, allowing the hold to slowly fill with water. Since the **Derbyshire** had been in the typhoon for 36 hours the crew would have been unaware that this was happening as it was obviously too dangerous to be on deck. The bow became lower and lower in the water until huge waves broke the foremost No.1 hatch cover letting in thousands of tons of sea water, followed by the next hatch, until she went down.

Studies into bulk carrier survivability carried out by the International Association of Classification Societies at the request of the IMO found that if a ship is flooded in the forward hold, the bulkhead between the two foremost holds might not be able to withstand the pressure that results from the sloshing mixture of cargo and water. This would apply especially if the ship was loaded in alternate holds with high-density cargo such as iron ore. If the bulkhead between one hold and the next collapses, progressive flooding will rapidly occur throughout the length of the ship and the vessel will sink in a matter of minutes. This is apparently what happened to the **Derbyshire**.

On 17th December 1998 John Prescott, the British Transport Minister, ordered a new enquiry – a ‘re-opened formal enquiry’ - which sat for sixty days in the spring and summer of 1999. The comments from Lloyd’s Register were the most incredible:

it seems they were sticking resolutely to the conclusions of the first formal investigation when it commented: "*there is no evidence that the **Derbyshire** was anything but seaworthy, and that she was desperately unlucky. It is highly improbable that such a combination of worst-cases will ever occur again. It will never be possible to say for certain exactly what happened.*" News from the enquiry was released in March and May 2000 and gave a far more disturbing picture than this complacency does.

The International Association of Classification Societies at last took the bull by the horns (which country's Society had ever over-ruled Lloyd's ?) and in 2002 announced new requirements to enhance the safety of bulk carriers. Some 3,484 bulk carriers with a capacity of 173 million deadweight tons were to be targeted by the new requirements, which were divided into two phases, to become effective on 1st January, 2003.

Phase 1 contained measures to reinforce the corrugated transverse bulkhead between No.1 and No.2 holds. A new requirement was for the installation of water ingress detection alarms in all cargo holds. That this was never standard is alarming when one considers that the master of a bulk carrier requires binoculars to inspect the bow of his vessel from the bridge in heavy weather

Amongst the measures in Phase 2 was the requirement for an improved bulwark or breakwater to be fitted on existing bulk carriers without a forecastle, and a requirement that the hatch covers be improved along the forward quarter length of the vessel.

In December 2004 it was made mandatory for all bulk carriers to carry free-fall lifeboats.

On 12th July 2004, nearly a quarter of century after the **Derbyshire** disaster, the Derbyshire Families Association and its chairman Paul Lambert, were awarded the Thomas Gray Medal of the Marine Society "*in honour of their tireless campaign to improve the safety of bulk carriers following the loss of mv **Derbyshire** in 1980*".

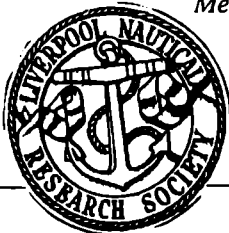
A sad sequel was that at a meeting of the Maritime Safety Committee, the proposal that all new bulk carriers should be built with double side skins (as are all new oil tankers now) was dropped by a vote of 32 to 22, with 15 abstentions.

If it has been the cost of making improvements that has held back action to improve the safety of bulk carriers all these years, it is surprising to hear that the Swedish Institute of Shipping Analysis estimates that the measures now proposed to increase safety will add only one per cent to the total cost of new bulk carriers.

Were all those lives lost not worth that ? ■

THE MONDAY FACILITY

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



DECEMBER, 2006: 4th, 11th and 18th.
JANUARY, 2007: 22nd and 29th
FEBRUARY, 2007: 5th, 12th, 19th and 26th
MARCH, 2007: 5th, 12th, 19th and 26th

SAVING THE 'PLANET'

by Peter Elson of the 'Liverpool Daily Post'

*The lightship **Planet** was built by Philip & Son at Dartmouth and was stationed at the Mersey Bar from 1961 until her withdrawal on 4th September, 1972. She was subsequently purchased by Trinity House and became the final manned lightship around the British coast on the Channel station until her withdrawal from service on 10th June 1989. At this point the **Planet** was sold to Harry Pound's scrapyard at Portsmouth. She was rescued from demolition by Keith Ganes and Mike Critchley.*

*Three years later the **Planet** was towed back to Liverpool and lay alongside the historic warships in the East Float at Birkenhead for many years. Following the closure of the historic warships the **Planet** was berthed on the Vittoria Wharf crossberth in the East Float, where she was purchased by Manchester-based Gary McClarnan. The **Planet** was towed across the Mersey and berthed in the Albert Dock in September, 2006.*

*The marine radio museum, which was housed in the **Planet**, has now been relocated to Fort Perch Rock at New Brighton.*

Visit the website at < www.barlightvessel.org.uk >

Peter Elson, well-known features writer of the 'Liverpool Daily Post' takes up the story:

The lightship **Planet**, anchored at the Mersey Bar, was the first and last sight of home for millions of seafarers and passengers for many years. The little red lightship, along with her predecessors, symbolises this world famous port's history. Without doubt the **Planet** is the most iconic Mersey vessel still afloat.

The story that follows, of the **Planet's** astonishing survival, triumphant return to Liverpool, restoration and now rejection, will cause anybody who cares about the city, its history and its soul to put their head in their hands and weep. In spite of the **Planet** being one of the Mersey's most important maritime survivors, the lightship's presence in the Albert Dock is deemed 'inappropriate in scale'.

The **Planet's** owner, Manchester-based Gary McClarnan has been told to 'consider his options', a move described as "despicable" by the Mersey Lightvessel Preservation Trust. A suitable berth, other than the Albert Dock, for a vessel such as the **Planet** at Liverpool will be difficult to find. The only feasible alternative Gary McClarnan has been offered is the adjacent Canning half-tide dock but the depth of water there is limited and the **Planet's** 12ft draught means she could sustain damage to her hull if she took the ground. There are also security problems with this exposed berth. Gary's alternative is to remove the **Planet** from Liverpool and take her to Manchester where the authorities at both Salford and Trafford are ready to welcome her. Gary says: "I feel I'm being harassed and hounded out like some gypsy who has nowhere to go. The **Planet's** water supply was cut off for three days recently, and access to the ship was barricaded at one point. I'm told that some of the Albert Dock tenants worry that the **Planet** may become a bar, which is not the aim, and would in

*any case require planning and licensing permission. Others apparently don't like the **Planet's** colour and think that be ship could break away from her moorings.*

*"I've not asked for any money from anyone, but I'd like a bit of a welcome for coming here. The Tate Gallery love the ship and Tony Tibbles, Keeper of the Merseyside Maritime Museum, told me how much he appreciates the **Planet** being here. I've approached other Albert Dock tenants to introduce myself and to ask if they have any concerns about the ship. Everyone I spoke to is happy to see the **Planet** in the Albert Dock."*

Merseyside almost lost the **Planet** in 2004 when her previous owners wanted to sell her. It was rumoured that the lightship would be going to either Holland or Scandinavia until Gary McClarnan, aged 44, a Salford-based music and property entrepreneur, stepped in. He bought the **Planet** for 'under £100,000', and has since spent a further £100,000 of his own money on continuing restoration. The Mersey Lightvessel Preservation Trust persuaded Gary not to relocate the **Planet** to his property at Salford Quays.

At the heart of the dispute is the situation caused by the three main bodies responsible for the Albert Dock. British Waterways owns the water and gave permission for the **Planet's** six-month temporary berthing, with negotiations to take place for a longer period. The Albert Dock Company owns the buildings (including leasing) and Gower Street Estates operates the Dock's public spaces and walkways on behalf of the tenants. The latter is especially unimpressed by the lightship's historical credentials. Sue Grindrod, the chairperson of Gower Street Estates, says: *"The lightship came in without consultation. We're working with British Waterways reviewing the strategy of the Albert and all the south docks."*

Grindrod continued: *"The lightship occupies the sunny side of the dock, blocking out light, and has a negative impact on the business. Scale is our main concern, which our board deemed inappropriate for the Albert Dock. As the public can't access the lightship, I fail to see how it benefits our visitors."* However she did agree that none of the Albert Dock's resident vessels – the tug **Brocklebank**, the coaster **Wincham**, the barquentine **Zebu** or the **Indefatigable's** launches – were accessible by the public. Grindrod continued: *"It's British Waterways' problem to find a solution. The Blue Bar expressed operational issues about gaining access to the **Planet**. There are health and safety concerns here!"*

Pam Brown, the President of the Mersey Lightvessel Preservation Society, which fought for years to save the **Planet**, says: *"This appears to be an infight between the operators of the Albert Dock complex. It is despicable that Bill Broadbent, British Waterways' harbourmaster, who has jurisdiction on bringing vessels into the Albert Dock, is now having to rescind his permission. I believe that the **Planet's** berth was offered a year ago and this has all been done correctly and legally with the right insurance. If the **Planet** is now criticised as being too big for the Albert Dock, how come that this was not spotted earlier on?"*

Jim Gill, chief executive of regeneration agency Liverpool Vision says: *"The south docks do need animation, and bringing back ships is a good thing. With a bit more sensitivity between the individuals involved, this problem could have been sorted out. Clearly all the people involved have to get on with each other and should behave in a manner for the greater good."*



The Mersey Bar Light Vessel "Planet" weathering the abating gale, with the Blue Funnel liner "Neleus" outward bound towards Holyhead in the evening light. From an original painting by Keith A. Griffin. The light vessel was withdrawn on September 4, 1972 and replaced by an automatic Lanby buoy

Leading Merseyside maritime preservationist Susan Hanley-Place, chairman of the Mersey Heritage Trust points out that from the start of the Albert Dock's regeneration, there were plans – as depicted on artists' impressions of the finished scheme – to include a lightship. Susan says: *"Redevelopment plans always envisaged the Planet would find her final retirement home in the Albert Dock, and here she is, berthed next to Liverpool's square-rigger Zebu. The Planet deserves a warm Liverpool welcome after all those years heaving at anchor at the Mersey Bar. I would point out that Bill Broadbent of British Waterways has a remit to develop the ship presence in the Albert Dock as he sees fit. I have the original promotional brochure for the 'Albert Dock Village' and it clearly shows the lightship Planet berthed in the dock. Basil Bean, Merseyside Development Corporation's first chief executive, recognised the importance of smaller historic vessels and British Waterways is now carrying forward this vision and should be supported to the hilt."*

Bill Broadbent, British Waterways' harbourmaster commented: *"Nobody ever suggested we wouldn't speak to Gower Street Estates. We've agreed to move the Planet to another location, although all three possible options have problems regarding water, power and security."*

Representatives of CB Richard Ellis, which manages the Albert Dock on behalf of Gower Street Estates could find nothing positive to say about the Planet. John Sloan commented: *"We must ensure all procedures for public health and safety are in place, and that the general activity connected with the vessel causes no interference."* Sloan's colleague, Justine McGuinn, said that in her opinion: *"the Planet is too big and quite intrusive."*

Pam Brown, of the Mersey Lightvessel Preservation Society, reiterates: *"We've a great deal to thank Gary McClarnan for. Thanks to him the Planet is back in her original home."* ■

So, the situation is this. The Planet, the last Bar Lightship and undoubtedly the most iconic Mersey vessel still afloat has been saved from demolition by Gary McClarnan. Using his own money, Gary has commenced restoration work on the Planet and has been persuaded by the Mersey Lightvessel Preservation Trust to berth the ship in Liverpool, rather than take her to Salford Quays where his home is, and where the old ship would be welcomed with open arms. Unlike the Manxman and the Royal Iris, the Planet does not need millions of pounds spending on her. She will be maintained by her enthusiastic young owner.

The attitude of Gower Street Estates, apparently the principal operator of the Albert Dock, if it is possible to disentangle the numerous layers of bureaucracy which appear to exist, seems to be that they want an expanse of water totally devoid of any ships. The idea of any ships actually afloat in the dock seems totally abhorrent to them.

So, once again Liverpool looks like losing out on retaining one of its historic vessels. The port had its chance with the Manxman (which was here from 1990 to 1994 before being towed to Hull), and the Royal Iris, which was berthed in the port following her retirement from Wallasey Ferries until she was taken to the Thames.

Petty bureaucracy coupled with raging apathy and lethargy on the part of the Albert Dock operating companies, look like winning again. One thing is certain, once the Planet leaves the Canning Entrance and heads for Eastham Locks and Salford Quays, the whinging and regrets about another lost opportunity will start. A fine sorry mess indeed.

John Shepherd, Editor, December, 2006

BLUE FUNNEL

THE FLEET, 1865 – 1914

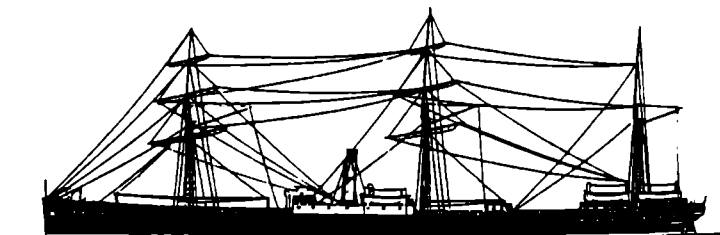
by Professor Francis E. Hyde, sometime President of the LNRS

This article is a précis of the last chapter of Professor Hyde's book 'Blue Funnel, a history of Alfred Holt and Company 1865 – 1914'

The initial success of Alfred and Philip Holt as ship designers was achieved because they always insisted on the highest possible level of efficiency in every detail of a ship's construction. In their ships they always had something better, stronger and safer than was needed to comply with current official standards and, in consequence, the standards to which their ships were built became known in shipping circles as 'Holt's Standard' and the ships themselves as 'Holt's Class'. The ships were not built to the requirements of Lloyds or any other classification authority, but were designed by Alfred Holt and his brother Philip in association with notable shipbuilders, in particular Scott of Greenock and Leslie of Newcastle.

Improvements in the design of hull construction and machinery were continually being sought, and as ship succeeded ship, many departures from normal standards were introduced, usually with striking success. Yet along with the originality of mind and foresight displayed by the company's founders, there sometimes emerged a curious conservatism. They were probably among the last shipowners to abandon the hand steering gear and to adopt the bridge telegraph. The speaking tube from bridge to engine room remained until the reliability of the telegraph had been established beyond doubt.

The three ships which inaugurated the service to China were the **Agamemnon**, **Ajax** and **Achilles**, which entered service in 1865 and 1866. These were each 309 feet in length, 38 feet in breadth and with a hold depth of 28 feet; dimensions which were at the time deemed too great for the China trade, but in the light of experience proved to be very satisfactory.



The sister ships **Agamemnon**, **Ajax** and **Achilles** of 1865 / 1866.

Marine engines at this period were still in the experimental stage, and Alfred Holt was obliged to cut down the machinery space in order to carry sufficient coal to enable the ships to reach suitable bunkering ports. To meet this necessity an entirely

new arrangement of machinery was evolved. This was made possible by the use of a compound engine, consisting of a high pressure cylinder 30 inches in diameter and a low pressure cylinder 62 inches in diameter, with 4 feet 4 inches stroke, arranged vertically in tandem fashion with the low pressure cylinder on top. There were two connecting rods, but a common cross-head for the tandem cylinders and a common crank pin. The crankshaft had a bearing 30 inches long at the after end of the bedplate which took the propeller thrust. To ensure smooth working with the single crank, a heavy flywheel was fitted and the pump levers carried a massive weight to help balance the weight of the piston and rods. The two boilers were double ended of the locomotive type. Working pressure was 70 lbs per square inch, as against the 10 lbs customary in most ships of the period.

Alfred Holt was the first to apply this type of machinery in ships designed for long voyages, and the three pioneer vessels proved most economical. The *Agamemnon* returned home on her maiden voyage from China in 57 days 18 hours net steaming, or, including stoppages at ports, 61 days 3 hours. A distance of 12,350 nautical miles was covered on a coal consumption of 20 tons a day for all purposes. In 1866 the non-stop outward passage, fully laden, between Liverpool and Mauritius, a distance of 8,500 miles was made in 37 days, equal to 10 knots, a feat until then considered impossible. The greatly reduced fuel consumption of the compound engine enabled steamers for the first time to compete with sailing ships on long voyages.

One special feature of the three original ships was the unusual position of the propeller. The traditional position of the rudder and the propeller was reversed. The propeller shaft was extended through the rudder, which was bowframed, and the propeller worked abaft the rudder. The theory behind this seemingly curious provision was that the propeller, now in more open water, would be able to operate with increased efficiency. Those were the days, however, when knowledge had to wait on experience. The experiment did not prove successful and the ships did not steer well and were sluggish. In later ships the rudder was again put abaft the propeller.

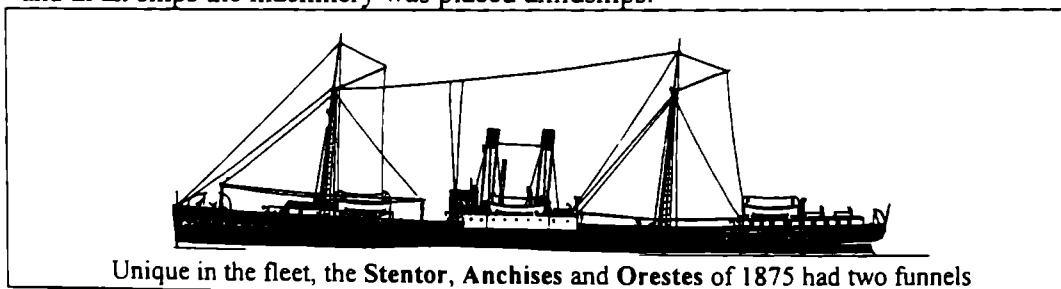
Alfred Holt persevered with modifications of the compound engine for ten years after the advent of the triple expansion engine and succeeded in obtaining higher efficiency by increasing the weight of the flywheel to improve the turning moment of the engine. It was, however, impracticable to fit heavier and heavier flywheels to match increased boiler pressures and horse-powers and, after a trial run with the *Ulysses* in 1888, all his ships from 1892 onwards were fitted with triple expansion engines. From then until 1914 engines of increasingly larger size and power with correspondingly larger boilers were built for the steadily growing fleet, and the new installations reached an extraordinarily high level of reliability. Quadruple expansion engines came into favour elsewhere, but although they used slightly less coal, the triple expansion engine was a better proposition for Alfred Holt's business as it had lower running expenses, lighter weight and occupied a smaller space.

One of Alfred Holt's guiding principles was that the engine room should be as small as possible. Machinery was essential, but unnecessary space in the engine room cut down on cargo capacity. He had such confidence in his machinery that, for the first thirty years of the company's existence, he built all his ships with single screws in spite of the then not infrequent breakage of tail shafts and the loss of propellers. This was before the days of wireless, but he dealt with this problem

successfully by instructing masters to follow narrowly defined tracks across the ocean, and to signal all Blue Funnel ships they met whether by night or day. Twin screws were only adopted in 1906, commencing with the **Bellerophon**, a vessel carrying passengers on the Pacific and Australian routes.

The tall funnel became an outstanding feature of all Blue Funnel ships. Besides adding to the cleanliness on deck, this provided natural draught to the boilers without mechanical aids and in addition, greatly assisted ventilation in the boiler room. There was an inner and outer funnel with an annular space between through which the air passed down the supply ventilators and into the boiler room, causing a good draught both for steaming and for the benefit of the men at the boilers.

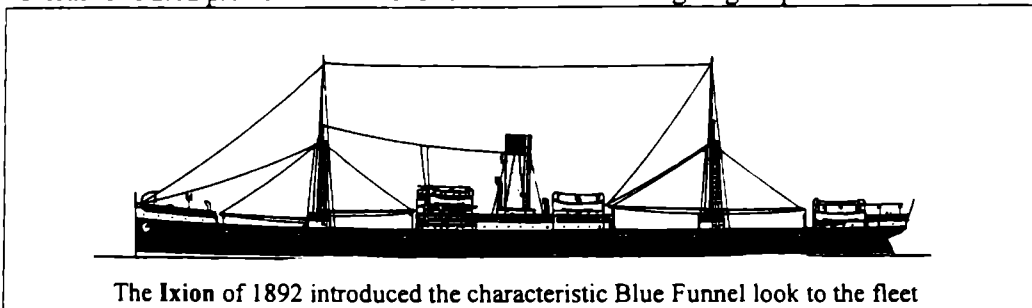
During the reign of the compound engine, the general design of the ships underwent little change and generally followed a standard pattern. They were all flush deck type with open rails and accommodation for the crew and passengers in deckhouses. The ships all carried sail to some degree, the three original ships all having three masts with yards on the fore and main, and the later ships with yards on the fore only. When the Suez Canal route was adopted in 1869 it was found that the square sails fitted on the **Agamemnon**, **Ajax** and **Achilles** were of little use, and the ships which followed, up to 1880, were converted to barquentine rig. After 1880 sails were abandoned and two pole masts became the standard rig for all succeeding ships. A single funnel was the general rule, except on the **Stentor**, **Anchises** and **Orestes** of 1875, each of which had two funnels. The masts and funnels were raked rather heavily and in all ships the machinery was placed amidships.



An important change in the hull design took place in 1892 when the triple expansion engine was introduced. Beginning with the **Ixion** the hulls acquired a new look. The former flush deck type gave way to the three island type with the addition of a poop, centrecastle and forecastle, a design which permitted relatively large deadweights to be carried in proportion to the dimensions of the ship. The crew was berthed in the poop and the forecastle, while the centrecastle space was reserved for passengers and special cargo. The two masts and tall single funnel were set upright without rake, and derrick posts were added to speed up the loading and discharge of cargo. Another distinctive feature of the new design was the provision of an auxiliary donkey boiler of sufficient capacity to serve all the deck machinery. The funnel from this boiler was led up close to the main funnel on the ship's centre line and, as both funnels were tall and of equal height, the ships assumed a characteristic appearance. This design became basic for all later ships.

In 1895 Alfred Holt was joined by Henry Bell Wortley as Naval Architect and together they initiated a number of far reaching improvements in the structural design of ships. They took nothing for granted, and although many of the changes

disturbed the equanimity of the experts at the time, the ships were built and voyaged in all weathers with conspicuous success. Other shipowners followed the Holt practice and introduced many of these improvements into their new ships, so that they soon became standard practice in the construction of all ocean going ships.



The earlier Blue Funnel ships were fitted with three rows of pillars in each hold, which meant that the hold was like a 'forest of trees' with the great disadvantage that there was extreme difficulty in stowing heavy and cumbersome cargo such as machinery and boilers. Often the pillars had to be removed to get the cargo in, and then replaced afterwards if possible. When they could not be replaced the 'tween decks had to be shored up and the stowing and discharging of the cargo were time-consuming and difficult operations.

All this, however, was changed in 1896 when Alfred Holt and Wortley introduced what was known as the girder system. The decks were supported by heavy girders and widely spaced pillars. Just two pillars on each side were placed in a 99-foot hold, and one on each side in a 75-foot hold, enabling heavy cargo to be handled with ease. Naturally these changes caused quite a stir amongst people so long accustomed to precedent – and pillars! There were suggestions that the new pillars would buckle under the concentrated weight. However no calamities occurred and what was at first derided became standard practice on all ships.

Damage reports from ships in service were regularly studied for any indication of structural failure of material or weakness of design. In this way it was found that when a ship was damaged by striking the ground or bumping in a narrow channel, the damage was generally at the bilge, frequently resulting in damaged cargo. The remedy was found in 1905 by extending the tank top horizontally to the ship's side instead of sloping it down to the turn of the bilge. The extension gave additional space for ballast of fresh water, but its chief advantage was in increased safety. It was at first thought that drainage would be a difficulty, but this was overcome by placing the drainage wells on the centre line of the ship.

Another unusual departure from current practice concerned the sheer given to Blue Funnel ships. Sheer is given to a ship to provide increased reserve buoyancy towards the ends – the increased lifting power ensuring a drier deck and affording greater protection. Standard sheer is laid down by law and when it is not followed an adjustment of freeboard is necessary. Ships with less sheer than the standard are required to have an increased freeboard, while ships with sheer in excess of the standard have a reduction in freeboard.

Holt's ships from 1899, beginning with the *Idomeneus*, were built with a minimum of sheer as a means of strengthening the longitudinal structure. The

increased depth which standard sheer provides was added uniformly to the normal depth of the ship throughout her length. The total amount of reserve buoyancy above the deck was maintained and at the same time the longitudinal strength of the ship was effectively increased. An addition to the reserve buoyancy at the ends was also provided by the poop and forecastle which were of reasonable length and above normal height. Although successful in service, the almost 'sheerless' ship was not too sea-kindly and was soon followed by ships with larger sheer and ultimately with full standard sheer.

A novel and startling breakaway from the orthodox design of the stern was made in 1899. The usual form of the stern frame for single screw ships at the time consisted of a forging or a casting completely framing the aperture in which the propeller was housed, with provision made on its after post to carry the rudder. In the **Idomeneus** the aperture was dispensed with and in its place a propeller arch of prefabricated steel construction was introduced, having a small cast-steel boss for the propeller shaft. What is known as the dead-wood in wooden ships (the portion of hull below the propeller boss) was cut away with a consequent saving in weight. The after post of the arch consisted of a wrought iron tube 21 inches in diameter and 1 inch thick in the form of a cantilever, and from this the rudder was hung.

The rudder was also of unusual design and contained no forgings or castings except at the coupling. It was streamlined to offer minimum resistance to propulsion and was constructed of riveted plates and angles. Being watertight it had buoyancy, which to some extent relieved the load on its supports. It was often referred to as the 'displacement rudder' on this account. The rudder was partially balanced and was supported by a pintle on the upper stock.

This unique arrangement of stern-frame and rudder was applied to the series of ships designed and built between 1899 and 1902 beginning with the **Idomeneus** and ending with the **Jason**. These ships had a most enviable reputation for easy handling, and experience proved them to be remarkably free from vibration and trouble with loose rivets, so prevalent in ordinary stern-frames and rudders.

In the very early screw steamers the propelling shaft between the engine and the propeller was enclosed in what was known as the shaft alley. This alley was simply a passage with sides built of steel and on top, and projecting into the cargo holds, it was sheathed with wood. It was not watertight, and events soon proved its vulnerability. It was in Holt ships that the passage was first converted to a shaft tunnel constructed wholly of steel and made watertight. An additional precaution was introduced in the form of a watertight division which was built in the tunnel near its after end, forming an after watertight compartment within the tunnel itself.

These extreme precautions against flooding were perhaps influenced to some degree by a mishap which occurred to the **Ajax** at Shanghai in September, 1868. In this ship the propeller was fitted abaft the rudder. The engineers working on the shafting had the after-most coupling adrift and left it like that for the night, but the strong tide during the night watches made the propeller shaft revolve slowly until it ran out and dropped down, thus allowing water to enter the ship and flood the after holds and the engine room until the **Ajax** rested on the bottom. At all events, from then onwards, a watertight shaft tunnel and after watertight compartment became a standard requirement in all succeeding Holt ships. The only access permitted to the

after compartment was by means of a trunkway from the deck. Alongside this trunkway was another from the shaft tunnel and it was by these two trunkways that the watch engineer obtained the access to inspect the vital after gland and bearing.

Holt ships were designed and built essentially for the proper carriage of cargo and, accordingly, great attention was always paid to the detailed arrangement of all cargo working gear. The standard equipment from about 1892 onwards was designed to provide the ships with ample gear to load and discharge their own cargoes and to make them independent of shore assistance. Two masts carried the heavier cargo derricks and the lighter derricks were mounted on a number of tubular posts, which also served as ventilators to the cargo holds.

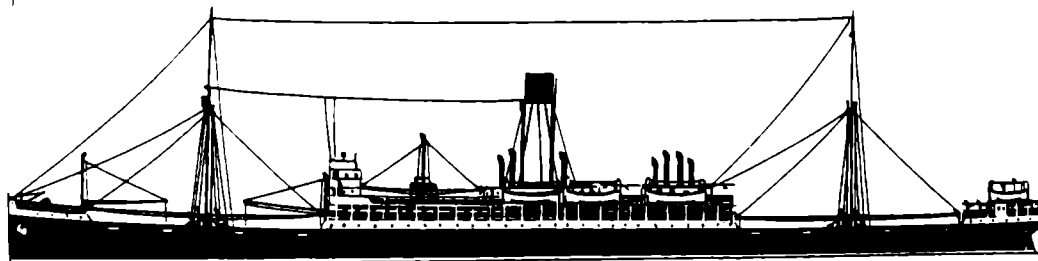
A notable departure from standard practice took place in 1906 in the **Bellerophon** when twin masts were first introduced. They were commonly known as 'goal posts'. They were really derrick posts, bridged across at the top and fitted in pairs at the main hatches fore and aft. Their main purpose was to enable the derricks to work at a maximum outreach over the side. This was particularly desirable in the **Bellerophon** class, to handle heavy logs on the Pacific service for which these ships were designed.

Although the carriage of passengers in the Holt ships was not considered a matter of first importance, provision was made in the early ships for 12 to 24 saloon passengers in deckhouse cabins. This, however, was given up in the early 1890s and the larger ships subsequently built were for cargo only apart from a few extra cabins for staff use. The change did not affect the high standards to which the ships were designed and built. The practice of building to passenger certificate standard was continued and each ship possessed a certificate enabling it to carry passengers if the need arose. In this connection, it is interesting to recall that up to 1914 Holt ships held nearly one fifth of the total number of British foreign-going passenger certificates.

When the Suez Canal was opened in November 1869, Holt ships were amongst the first to pass through it, the **Diomed** making the passage in March 1870. This caused quite a revolution in the Company's sailing schedules, as from then on the Cape route to China was abandoned. The pilgrim trade to Jeddah had previously been carried on by native craft and the extent of the trade was largely governed by the facilities available for sea transport. The answer was found in Holt ships, which armed with passenger certificates, were admirably suited for the carriage of the growing number of pilgrims to Mecca. The trade was seasonal and the passengers were carried in the 'tween deck compartments and, in the later ships, also in the centre-castle with full provision made for their comfort and health. They were carried as deck passengers, no built accommodation being provided, and during a full season each ship carried upwards of 1,000 pilgrims per voyage, outwards and homewards.

The large centre-castle which appeared in the Holt design in 1892 was regarded as having been associated in some way with the pilgrim trade. Admittedly, the introduction of a centre-castle and the formation of the three-island type of ship made an ideal arrangement for the segregation of the pilgrims and the crew, but it was also a natural development of the Holt design of hull, which was concerned with obtaining the maximum strength of structure. By adding a centre-castle to the former flush deck type of ship, the designers achieved a hull of maximum strength for the comparatively large deadweight to be carried.

In 1910 the Company entered the Australian passenger service with three ships designed to carry about 150 saloon passengers in one class only, and constructed to fulfill the requirements of the trade in frozen meat and fruit. These were the **Aeneas**, **Ascanius** and **Anchises**; twin-screw ships of 493 feet registered length, and just over

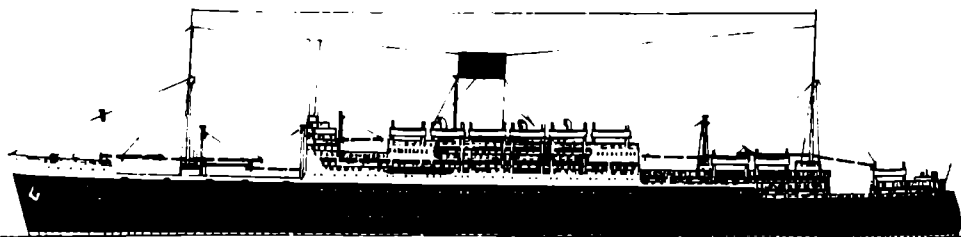


The **Aeneas**, **Ascanius** and **Anchises** were built in 1910 / 1911

10,000 gross tons each. They were followed three years later by the **Nestor** and the **Ulysses**, twin-screw ships of 563 feet length and 14,000 gross tons, each having accommodation for about 240 passengers. All five ships followed the same pattern in design and no departure was made from the three-island standard which, by this time, had proved its worth in the Company's service. They provided a monthly service outwards and homewards by the Cape, and their good seagoing qualities and comfortable accommodation earned them a high reputation in the service. ■

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

In 1924, against a background of reduced passenger trading on the Australian service, Holt's five passenger ships were entered into a joint service with the White Star Line, the aim being to eliminate and control surplus capacity. Fifteen years later, in 1939, Shaw Savill & Albion took over the White Star Line's ships and services on this route and continued the joint service with Blue Funnel. The advent of the **Dominion Monarch** so unbalanced this arrangement that Holts withdrew and thereafter their ships sailed independently. However, Holts considered building a 20,000 ton answer to the **Dominion Monarch**, which would have been named **Jason**, if the Second World War had not intervened.



The profile of the proposed 20,000 ton liner was unmistakably 'Blue Funnel'

JUST FANCY THAT !

PELORUS JACK

Pelorus Jack, the only fish in the world to be protected by a special Act of Parliament made his last public appearance in 1912. His home ground was between D'Urville Island and New Zealand's south island.

Zoologists classed him as a dolphin so that 'Jack', as sailors knew him, was not really a fish but a mammal. He was some 15 feet in length, and of an unusual colour, being almost white, mixed with grey and yellow, and being further adorned with brown stripes. He was named after Pelorus Sound, the northern extremity of Central New Zealand.

Long before the advent of the white man, the Maoris claimed to have known of a certain fish which had inhabited the Cook Strait, and safely guided their war canoes through those narrow waters. For more than forty years, 'Jack' was a centre of attraction. By some extraordinary instinct he met the passenger steamers, whether by day or by night, accompanying them for several miles.

Pelorus Jack had his likes and dislikes, for he paid no attention to sailing vessels or oil launches. He also remembered his enemies. One steamer, from which a thoughtless fellow had aimed a harpoon at him, he avoided like the plague. A foolish passenger fired at him from the deck of the **Penguin** and after this incident 'Jack' disappeared for a week or two. On reappearing he never escorted that ship again. On the other hand, he had his favourite, namely the **Wainui**.

'Jack' found a friend in the Rev'd D.C. Bates, who on becoming an official of the tourist department in 1904, proposed to the New Zealand Government that the killing or capture of this 'fish' should be prohibited. Under Act of Parliament, the Cabinet of New Zealand made an order in Council imposing the fine of £100 upon anyone guilty of trying to interfere with him. ■

FIFTY YEARS AGO

RECORD PASSENGER CARRYINGS ACROSS THE NORTH ATLANTIC

The Cunard Line announced that it had carried a total of 275,500 passengers across the Atlantic in 1956, a greater number than any other Line, and an increase of 16,500 over its 1955 carryings.

The **Carinthia** joined the fleet in the summer of 1956 and since the commissioning of the **Saxonia** in 1954, she and her later sister ships **Ivernia** and **Carinthia** have carried 98,538 passengers.

Cunard operated the largest passenger fleet on the North Atlantic consisting of 11 ships with a total gross tonnage of 374,000.

Post-war passenger records for Canadian Pacific Steamships to and from the St. Lawrence were established in 1956. The three *Empress* liners carried 44,289 passengers to and from Montreal on 66 North Atlantic crossings. The previous record, established in 1953, was 34,787 passengers, also on 66 crossings. ■

THE CONTAINER REVOLUTION

by LNRS Member James A. Pottinger

The container revolution of the last fifty years has heralded one of the most revolutionary changes in sea transport since the advent of steam power. The impact of containerisation has been felt both afloat and ashore with the introduction of ships of immense size and speed with one vessel doing the work of four or five conventional break-bulk ships, necessitating enormous shore side infrastructure to service these new ships.

The impetus for the introduction of container ships can best be attributed to the fact that conventional break-bulk carriers were spending from 50% to 60% of the year in port, either waiting for a berth or actually working cargo. Examples of the ratio of time at sea / time in port can be seen from the following examples:

GLENLYON Class, 21 knot cargo liner, built 1962 : 191 days at sea, 174 days in port.

PRIAM Class, 21 knot cargo liner built 1966 : 216 days at sea, 149 days in port.

LIVERPOOL BAY, 25 knot container ship, 1972 : 300 days at sea, 65 in port

Whilst small containers or boxes had been used on the railways prior to the Second World War, and during this conflict extensive use of pre-packaged stores had been made by the US Army, all these were handled by conventional ships using traditional loading methods including a ship's derricks or shore-based cranes.

A number of operators had dabbled with the containerisation concept in the early 1950s, but it was left to a shore based operator of trucks to initiate the beginnings of the door-to-door service. Malcolm McLean, a U.S. truck operator, realised that the use of coastal shipping could avoid the high costs and congestion of road transport, as it was much less costly per ton / mile than trucking. McLean was aware of the delays and losses caused by the piecemeal handling of goods and freight.

McLean purchased the Waterman Steamship Company, although he had no previous interest or connection with seaborne trade. However, this acquisition provided the final link in his transport chain, enabling loaded trucks to be shipped from New York to Houston. This innovation was to lead to the innovation of the Sea-Land Service, and in 1956 McLean instigated the conversion of two T-2 tankers, the **Ideal X** and the **Almena** (built in 1945 as the **Potrero Hills** and the **Whittier Hills**) by the Bethlehem Steel Company at Baltimore. Elevated platforms were erected above deck suitable for carrying up to sixty 35 foot trailer vans (after being detached from their chassis) between New York and Houston. This detachable van concept led to the 'lift-on, lift-off' principle.

The prosaically named **Ideal X** sailed from Port Newark, NJ to Houston on 26th April 1956 carrying 58 x 35ft trailers plus her normal oil cargo, and this proved to be a precursor to the roll-on, roll-off true container ship. Following on from this came the roll-on, roll-off trailer ships, carrying complete road trailers on wheels.

Following conversion, the **Gateway City**, a former C-2 vessel, laid claim to being the world's first cellular container ship. McLean sold his interest in Sea-Land for 160 million dollars in 1969. In 1999 he was the recipient of an award from *Lloyd's*

List as being one of 'three men of the 20th century' who had changed the face of shipping.

Another five sister ships of the **Gateway City** class were converted and entered service in 1958 between New York and the Gulf ports, later extended to Puerto Rico. Their success was noted by the Matson Navigation Company and Grace Lines. Matson entered the Hawaii container trade in 1958, and Grace the South America service in 1960. Matson opted for 8ft x 8ft x 34ft containers, whilst Grace went for 17ft boxes. This revolution was not universally welcomed and in South America the stevedores refused to unload the Grace ships on their maiden voyage. At this time the Port of New York Authority had the foresight to build the first dedicated container terminal at Port Newark.

With the proliferation of types and sizes of containers being used, some degree of harmonisation of design and connections was obviously required. In 1965 the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) opted for 10ft, 20ft and 40ft units as standard. The 17ft and 24ft sizes, popular in the United States, were omitted, as were the 35ft boxes pioneered by Sea-Land. The ISO definition of a container was stated as '*an article of transport equipment intended to facilitate the carriage of goods by one or more modes of transport, without intermediate loading*'. The term TEU is used to define the measure of comparison and capacity of a ship and denotes 'Twenty Foot Equivalent Unit'.

Any doubts about the seriousness posed by the threat of this new development on traditional sea routes were realized when Sea-Land and US Lines announced their intentions of entering the trans-Atlantic service in 1966. In 1969 Sea-Land ordered eight of the SL-7 class of fast container ships from three European shipbuilders: three each from Rotterdam Drydock and A.G.Weser, and two from Rheinstahl. Swan Hunter was the only British shipyard asked to bid, but it declined. It was somewhat ironic that in the United States, where the initial concept of the container ship evolved, none of the shipyards were able or willing to undertake the construction of these ships.

These new vessels were just over 921 feet long and propelled by steam turbines developing 120,000shp on twin screws to give a sea speed of 33 knots. They had a capacity for a mix of 1,100 35ft and 40ft boxes. Only the passenger liner **United States** bettered the speed of the **Sea-Land Exchange** when she crossed from the Bishop Rock to the Ambrose Channel Light Vessel in 3 days, 11.4 hours at an average speed of 34.92 knots. Unfortunately rising oil prices rendered these ships uneconomic as cargo carriers, and in 1981 and 1982 all eight were bought by the US Navy for conversion to fast sealift ships of the *Algol* class, designated T-AKR. The conversion work included providing roll-on, roll-off facilities, and retained the ships' original high power and speed.

The seaborne movement of containers was only part of the exercise, and enormous investment was required to provide suitable berths, handling cranes, transport, and the vast numbers of containers themselves. In recognition of these factors, groupings of well-known and hitherto competing shipping companies were established. In August 1965 the UK shipowners Blue Funnel, P & O, Furness Withy and British & Commonwealth set up what was to become known as Overseas Containers Limited (OCL); a move which was partially initiated by the concern that

US shipowners would make incursions into the traditional British routes. This was no false alarm as the first European call by a container ship operated by US Lines had docked at Rotterdam on 26th March 1966.

As an example of the costs involved, it should be noted that within six years of the decision to proceed, OCL invested £200 million and was operating a fleet of 13 container ships with a capacity equivalent to 70 conventional ships. Another grouping of Cunard (UK), CGT (France), Wallenius (Sweden) and Holland-America (Netherlands) was formed in August 1967 to establish the Atlantic Container Line.

It was inevitable that the advent of the container revolution would result in the truncated service of a number of large, fast and sophisticated general cargo liners which were entering service at the time. Many of these fine new vessels struggled to operate with a mix of break-bulk cargo and containers.

The first true, large, fast cellular deep-sea container ships designed from first principles were probably the 26,876 grt **Encounter Bay** class designed by Blue Funnel naval architects under the leadership of Marshall Meek. As pioneers, their novel design and construction was the subject of much agonizing and concern to 'get it right first time'. The fact that the whole upper strength deck was effectively open to allow for the handling of the boxes was a major concern, and sufficient strength had to be provided in other ways to compensate for this omission. Some additional strengthening was added later which had the unexpected bonus of allowing the container capacity to be increased from the designed load of 1,100 to 1,572.

Happily this class of six ships, one built in the UK and the remainder in Germany, which entered service from March 1969 onwards, was eminently successful and led to the next generation of much larger vessels starting with the five 58,889grt **Liverpool Bay** class in March 1972. These were capable of carrying at least 2,300 20ft units. This was not a gradual progression but a quantum leap destined to beat off the competition. The requirement to meet the breadth limitations imposed by the locks on the Panama Canal resulted in the width of these ships being small in relation to other dimensions. Any stability concerns were addressed by special ballasting arrangements, and by stowing the heaviest of the containers low down in the ship. The increase in oil prices in the 1970s led to these steamers being re-engined with diesel engines in Japan. ■

IT'S ALL IN THE BOX

When people today seem unaware just how much of their daily life relies upon shipping, it was perhaps not surprising that the 50th anniversary of the birth of containerisation passed by with virtually no public acknowledgement in April, 2006. But there can be little doubt about the way in which 'the box' has transformed not just the lives of seafarers, but also the nature of shipping services and transport systems.

From its modest beginnings – the first 'official' container voyage left New York on 26th April 1956 – the container system has expanded to undreamt-of levels, fuelling the development of globalisation.

When Malcolm McLean launched his first container service in 1956, it cost USD\$5-86 per US ton to load cargo onto an average ship. Using containers, the costs were cut to just 16 cents per ton. Today, container shipping is so cheap that the cost of

moving products across the world accounts for barely 1% of the retail price of consumer goods – about USD\$10 to ship a television set from China to the UK, or ten cents to bring a bottle of wine from Australia to the UK. It now costs about the same to ship a container from Singapore to Southampton as it does to take it on the road from Southampton to Leeds!

STATISTICS SHOW THE SCALE OF CONTAINERS' GLOBAL REACH

- The world cellular fleet grew from 1,164 ships of 1.5million TEU capacity in 1988, to 3,359 ships of 7.3million TEU capacity in 2005, and is set to reach 12.3million TEU in 2009.
- Around 1.3 million TEU-worth of new buildings is to be delivered in 2006.
- No cellular ships were scrapped in 2005.
- There are presently just 86 ships of 7,500TEU and above. By 2010 there will be around 250 containerships of 9,000TEU and above.
- The proportion of general cargo carried in containers rose from 12% in 1990 to 27% in 1999. Container traffic volumes grew by 11% last year.
- The five largest container shipping companies have a total market share of 42%. AP Moller-Maersk's share amounts to 18% alone.
- The typical cost of transporting a 20ft container from Asia to Europe with 20 tonnes of cargo is about the same as an economy class airfare for a single passenger on the same journey.
- Bulk shipping costs have increased by just 70% in the last 50 years. US retail prices rose by almost 700% over the same period.
- In 1970 the average general cargo ship spent 150.37 hours in port on each call. In 1998 a container ship spent just 11.23 hours in port per call.
- At the start of 2006 there were 144 fully cellular container ships (100gt and over) on the UK register.
- Rotterdam was Europe's busiest container port in 2005 handling some 9.3 million TEU.

(source : NUMAST 'Telegraph', June, 2006)

Container shipping continues to grow at spectacular rates – up by 60% between 1997 and 2005, and it is forecast to rise by a further 46% over the next five years. The latest 9,000TEU vessels carry containers that would stretch for some 35 miles laid end to end. Such growth is raising questions about the adequacy of port capacity in many parts of the world. It is also raising questions about the potential for a rates crash caused by a surplus of tonnage – particularly in the event of a slowdown in world trade.

The story of the container is far from over

Further Reading:

THE BOX

How the Shipping Container Made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger

A new book by economist Marc Levinson, billed as the first comprehensive history of the shipping container. Without containerisation, says Levinson, there would have been no globalisation.

ISBN 0691123241 : Price £15.95p : Princeton University Press

EARLY MEMORIES OF CONTAINERISATION

"The first time I saw a container ship at close range was around 1969. My initial reaction was 'Oh, it's just a flash in the pan – it will not last'" (Capt. Craig Thomson)

Henry Topping, chief engineer with Furness Withy in the 1950s, recalls:

"When containerisation started to come in about 1956, I was sailing on Furness Withy's Pacific-class ships, carrying general cargo and 12 passengers. There were some containers on the quay for us to load, but the dockers didn't like it because it prevented them getting some of what they regarded as their 'legitimate' perks – pilferage. If I remember correctly, it was cases of whisky which had been loaded into the containers. We carried four on the forward deck, two on each side, and eight on the after deck alongside Nos 4 and 5 holds, two-high.

"The dockers went on strike demanding that the containers must be unpacked and then repacked by them. The owners and shippers said 'no way' – because they had been packed at the warehouses where the cargo originated.

"There were no real difficulties for the crew as a result of this nascent containerisation. Calculations had to be made for stability and windage. The mate wasn't too happy because he couldn't get the deck painted when he wanted to. In general it seemed to work quite well, but we were carrying only half a dozen containers. Compare that with what the box boats carry today."

In the early 1970s, when it was all starting to get more sophisticated, Mike Watts began working on container ships, but he didn't envisage where it was all heading:

"I first went to sea as a deck apprentice with Watts, Watts & Co in 1965, serving on tankers, cargo ships and bulk carriers. My favourite was general cargo ships as these called at and had prolonged stays in different ports, frequently exotic.

"On qualifying as third officer in 1969 I joined Overseas Container Lines (OCL) as even at my tender age I felt that containers were the future for dry cargoes. My first ship was the **Encounter Bay**.

"Dockworkers were still resistant to containers in the 1970s. Decades-old practices were greatly affected by the introduction of containerisation. This showed itself in many instances of industrial action, especially in Australia and New Zealand, which meant that we had many longer than planned stays in port. For a seafarer's social life, this was a good thing, as one of the downsides to sailing on container ships is the short stays in port.

"Container ships can, and generally will, carry anything. But knowledge of container contents is on a need-to-know basis. Once we carried a container full of travellers' cheques which was worth many millions of pounds. It was discharged without incident.

"Carrying cargoes in containers has many advantages. The cargo can get to and from the ports and on and off the ships very quickly. As cargo is only handled at depots and warehouses, pilferage has been reduced to about 10% of what it used to be in break-

bulk general cargo ships. I could not have envisaged, in 1971, containerisation developing the way it has done, becoming totally global and with 10,000TEU ships entering service.”

Captain Duncan Craig Thomson writes:

“I started with British & Commonwealth Shipping, sailing on the Union Castle passenger liners and on Clan Line vessels until I became chief officer. The first time I saw a container ship at close range was when I was at Durban in 1969 and one of the **Encounter Bay** class came in for bunkers. My reaction was *‘It’s just a flash in the pan, it will not last’*.

“In 1978 I transferred to the then Overseas Container Line. My first ship, as second officer, was the **Remuera Bay**, a large reefer container ship on the Europe / Australia / New Zealand trade. I wasn’t very impressed but decided to stick it out for a while.

“Another change from traditional shipping was that the planning of the loading / discharging was done by ship planners. The company had a central planning office with local planners in the various ports supervising the operations. In earlier times, with general cargo, the chief officer was given a list of the cargo to be loaded and the ports of discharge and he had to stow the ship so that one port’s cargo was not in front of another’s. As the ships were in port for a good few days this was not a problem and was, if it all turned out OK, a very satisfying job.

“With containers, the local planner brought a container plan on board and the chief officer put the containers, hatch by hatch, into the ship’s loading computer. He then had to check that the stability was satisfactory and that hazardous cargo was separated as per the regulations – this was time consuming but a lot easier than the old general cargo break-bulk methods of stowage.

“Latterly, with new computer systems, the discs supplied by the planners contained all the cargo to be discharged and loaded, and went straight into the ship’s computer.

“To give you an idea of speed of loading, it would take a gang of stevedores all morning to load about 20 tonnes of, say, frozen lamb; loading a container, with the same amount, would take about four minutes.

“Because there are no derricks, wires and other paraphernalia of conventional shipping on container ships, the seafarer’s job has become very different. A lot of the traditional skills of working on ships have disappeared.

“That is not to say that the seamen or officers are not as good. We still take a pride in the ships. Container ships are bigger and faster than most conventional cargo ships, but the ship handling part of the job has not really changed.

“The ports, now are pretty much the same as they always were, but much bigger. New and larger terminals are being constructed all the time and these are usually further away from civilization. As container ships are not in port for very long, shore leave is not often an option.” ■

These memories of containerisation first appeared in the NUMAST ‘Telegraph’, June, 2006.

A DRINK PROBLEM ON THE 'ROYAL IRIS'

by John Shepherd

*In these days of 24-hour opening for licensed premises, it seems incredible just how stringent were the 'permitted hours' of half a century ago. This short article recalls how Wallasey Ferries' new **Royal Iris** fell foul of the licensing laws in May 1951.*

Ever since vessels were provided for pleasure excursions, beginning with the horse-drawn passenger vessels on the canals, the provision of refreshments has been a very important part of their business. In the early excursion steamers, both on the Clyde and the Thames, there were frequent complaints that most of the passengers patronised the ships for the sake of unlimited opportunities for drinking, particularly on Sundays. Nowadays [1951] there is very little complaint of this nature and drunkenness on board is rare. The passengers take their refreshment in moderation, but provision for their comfort in doing so is a very important part in the design of the ships. Until now the legality of their established practice has never been questioned: the bars have been open all the time the ship is under way and closed whenever she was made fast to a landing stage or pier.

The action of the Liverpool police in bringing an action against the Wallasey Corporation's new combined ferry and excursion vessel **Royal Iris** has opened the question. Witnesses in the Liverpool court gave evidence of the custom, in one case dating back to 1824. Evidence was also given that the traditional custom was followed in the Government's own steamers run by British Railways. The case was adjourned *sine die* and the magistrate agreed to state a case to go before the High Court, where it will certainly arouse the greatest attention as so much depends on the outcome.

(Shipbuilding & Shipping Record, 16th August, 1951).

Pleasure cruise steamers are not exempt from normal licensing hours permitted ashore, according to the judgement given by the Liverpool Stipendiary Magistrate Mr A. McFarland in the Wallasey Ferries case, in which two stewards were charged in connection with the sale of intoxicating liquor between 3.10pm and 5.20pm aboard the cruise vessel **Royal Iris**.

Police evidence that drinks were sold from bars on Wallasey Ferries' new £250,000 pleasure cruiser (known popularly as the 'floating fish and chip shop') was given at a case in Liverpool in April 1952, and was described by counsel as being 'one of widespread importance to the whole country'.

The evidence for the prosecution was that on 2nd May 1951, when the **Royal Iris** was on her maiden cruise voyage, there were sales of intoxicating liquor on board from 3.10pm to 3.25pm when the vessel was at Liverpool landing stage embarking passengers, and from 3.25pm to 5.05pm whilst the ship was cruising in the Mersey. Also there were sales at 5.10pm when the vessel was on the last stage of her cruise from New Brighton to Liverpool, having at that time ordinary ferry passengers on board.

Police witnesses said that they boarded the **Royal Iris** with half-crown (12½p) tickets on 2nd May 1951 and, during a two-hour afternoon cruise in the River

Mersey, drinks were sold from three bars on board outside the permitted licensing hours. Just before the ship returned to Liverpool, the bars were closed.

Mr A.E. Baucher, prosecuting, alleged that police officers who went to see the captain at 4.05pm were detained either by the captain or on his instructions. Stipendiary Magistrate Mr. A. McFarland asked: "*Are you saying they were detained by the captain?*" Mr Baucher replied: "*Yes, sir, either by the captain or on his instructions.*"

Mr Glynn Blackledge, defending, called three witnesses from shipping concerns operating on the Thames and other places who gave evidence that it was common practice to open bars when voyages began and to close them when vessels tied up. They did not close the bars during non-permitted hours when the vessels were under way.

Percy Bell, the chief steward on board the **Royal Iris** was fined £20, with 30 guineas costs, for selling liquor outside the hours permitted by the Licensing Acts, and James Innes, a steward, was fined £20 with similar costs for aiding and abetting.

Lieut-Commander L.D. Price, general manager of Wallasey Ferries, said: "*We are definitely going to appeal, and it would not be proper to comment at present on the Stipendiary's decision.*"

The defendants had denied selling intoxicants while the **Royal Iris** was moored to the landing stage, and that liquor was sold to anyone other than a cruise passenger. They agreed, however, that liquor had been sold during the cruise itself. The real issue, it had been stated, was whether the Licensing Act, 1921, applied to passenger ships.

Mr McFarland said that it was important to observe that the witnesses for the prosecution had boarded the **Royal Iris** in the execution of their duty as police officers. It was obvious that their purpose was to see and to note what was taking place with regard to the sale and consumption of liquor. There were 900 passengers on board.

Having reviewed the evidence, Mr McFarland said that he had come to the conclusion that the evidence given by the prosecution witnesses was to be preferred to the defence witnesses. He was of the opinion that 'these eminently responsible witnesses for the defence' were not concerned really with what was happening at the bar, but with the general operating and performance of the vessel which was making her maiden cruise.

Mr McFarland went on: "*I am not concerned with what may happen in the future with regard to this service, but what in fact happened on the Mersey on 2nd May 1951, so far as the **Royal Iris** was concerned. The right to sell intoxicating liquors outside permitted hours has been challenged.*" He did not think any distinction could be drawn between sales of intoxicants in a theatre and similar sales in a passenger vessel. The **Royal Iris** was a place to which the public had access and resorted to for the purpose of pleasure cruises and the Act of 1921 applied 'to any premises or place'.

Mr McFarland said he found the charges proved. ■

What a lot of fuss to make about a little thing like that !!! j.s.

FROM CUNARD LINER TO SEAPLANE CARRIER

*The story of the Cunard liner **Campania** of 1892*

by the Editor

The **Campania** was launched from the yard of the Fairfield Shipbuilding Company at Glasgow on 8th September 1892. With her overall length of 620 feet the actual launch presented problems as the Clyde is very narrow at Govan, and so the new **Campania** was sent down the ways obliquely, with her stern facing downstream. At the time of her launch the **Campania** was the largest vessel ever built, with the one exception of the **Great Eastern**.

The **Campania**'s trials took place on the Arran mile on 30th March 1893 when 23.18 knots was achieved. The new ship was Cunard's answer to the **City of New York** and the **Teutonic**, and she was designed to capture the Blue Riband. The Cunard directors had been severely criticized for their slowness in providing a tangible reply to the new and fast ships of the Inman Line and the White Star Line.

Five months later, from the same shipyard, the **Campania**'s sister ship, **Lucania**, was launched and the Cunard Line was set to take delivery of two record-breaking new liners.

Both ships had accommodation for 600 first-class, 400 second-class and between 700 and 1,000 third-class passengers. They were twin-screw ships powered by triple expansion reciprocating engines giving a service speed of 21 knots. Both were coal-burning vessels, equipped with twelve double-ended boilers.

Cunard's official brochure enthused: '*The **Campania**, the most magnificently appointed passenger vessel in the world, has been fitted up with a view to the greatest possible luxury combined with comfort, strength, durability and perfect sanitary arrangements. It is worthy of special notice that comfort has been supplied in every detail and perhaps nothing exemplifies this more than the fact in all the principal rooms there are coal fire grates, the first that have ever been used in steamships.*' The **Campania**'s second class accommodation was described as '*equal to the saloon accommodation in many other ships*' and the steerage accommodation was summarily described as being '*in every respect excellent and far in advance of that usually provided*'.

The **Campania** left Liverpool on her maiden voyage to New York on Saturday 22nd April 1893. She called at Queenstown (Cobh) and arrived off Sandy Hook at 5.24pm on Saturday 29th April, after an ocean passage of 6 days, 8 hours and 34 minutes for the 2,865 nautical miles. This in itself was not a record but was the fastest maiden voyage for any trans-Atlantic steamer to date. The **Campania** gained the Blue Riband on her second eastbound passage from Sandy Hook to Queenstown.

The **Campania**'s fastest crossing was made in August 1894 when the voyage was completed in 5 days, 9 hours and 21 minutes at an average speed of 21.59 knots. On this occasion she gained the Blue Riband for the fastest westbound crossing.

The **Lucania** was not commissioned until the autumn of 1893 and experience gained with the **Campania** enabled the Cunard company to effect improvements in the second ship which proved to be the faster of the two sisters. For four years, until the

commissioning of the Norddeutscher Loyd liner **Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse** in 1897, the **Campania** and the **Lucania** between them held all the Atlantic records.



*The **Campania** alongside Princes Landing Stage at Liverpool*

Two years after the **Campania** was commissioned, in 1895, she figured in an event of considerable importance to liner companies operating services from Liverpool. The growing importance of Southampton as a passenger port – particularly in relation to the North Atlantic trade – had drawn attention to the urgent need at Liverpool for improved facilities for the embarkation and disembarkation of passengers and the handling of baggage. This was still done by means of tenders – the liners lying in mid-stream – a system which had been in operation since the first steamships had sailed from the port over half a century previously. Accordingly, arrangements were made for the liners to berth alongside Princes Landing Stage, (dating from 1871) adjoining which new Customs sheds for the examination of baggage were built. But what was perhaps of greatest benefit was the construction of the Riverside Railway Station on the Princes Parade which was linked by way of the new Waterloo tunnel to the main Liverpool and London railway line.

By the middle of 1895 everything had been completed and on 12th June the first liners berthed alongside the stage. They were the **Catalonia**, inward from Boston, and the **Germanic**, outward for New York. Three days later, on 15th June, the **Campania** berthed alongside the stage to embark her passengers. In 'Gore's Annals of Liverpool' the event is recorded as follows:

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

On 26th July 1897 the **Campania** was present at the Diamond Jubilee Spithead Review when she had a party of Members of Parliament on board. She was classed as an Armed Merchant Cruiser on this occasion.

Three years later, on 21st July 1900, the **Campania** was involved in a collision some 30 miles north-east of the Tuskar Rock light, whilst steaming in thick fog. The **Campania** rammed and sank the **Embleton**, a barque, killing eleven of the barque's crew. The liner suffered some damage to her stern but was able to complete her passage to Liverpool and sailed again a week later on her next scheduled voyage to New York.

Marconi Wireless was fitted in 1901, but it had a range of only 30 miles. In October of that year the **Campania** and the **Lucania** passed each other in mid-Atlantic and 'for the space of five hours' the two ships were in wireless communication, with some 75 messages reportedly being exchanged.

In October 1905, whilst on passage from Liverpool to New York, the **Campania** encountered a freak wave in mid-Atlantic. She lurched heavily to port as the wave swept over the steerage open deck space forward, washing away the guard rails. Five passengers were swept overboard and thirty others seriously injured.

In August 1909 the **Campania**'s sister ship **Lucania** was gutted by fire as she lay in the Huskisson Dock at Liverpool, and the damage was so extensive that Cunard sold her to shipbreakers in Wales.

By early 1914, and after just twenty-one years of service, the **Campania** was totally outdated and in May of that year she made two voyages to New York for the Anchor Line, sailing from Glasgow and calling at Londonderry. On her return to Glasgow in late July 1914 she was laid up at Stobcross Quay and it was generally thought that her career was over. However with the outbreak of war on 4th August 1914, and with the Admiralty having requisitioned some of Cunard's most recent liners, including the brand new **Aquitania**, the **Campania** made three more voyages flying the Cunard house flag. Although she could still make 21 knots, the old Victorian Cunarder was, from the company's point of view, outdated and she was sold to the shipbreakers T.W. Ward.

At this time Admiral Earl Jellicoe, the Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet, was looking for a reasonably fast passenger liner which could be converted to a seaplane carrier to accompany the Grand Fleet to sea. What Admiral Jellicoe required was a vessel which could carry up to twelve seaplanes, could be used for reconnaissance, and was fast enough to keep station with the battleships and battle cruisers. Under a 1902 agreement the Admiralty could have purchased the **Campania** from Cunard for £180,000, but when the elderly liner was sold to T.W. Ward, the opportunity presented itself to buy her for just £32,500. On 27th November 1914 the old **Campania** became the property of the Admiralty.

The ship was sent to Cammell Lairds at Birkenhead where major structural alterations were carried out. The upper deck above the first class dining saloon was removed and large hatches were cut in the boat and promenade decks, with a 160 foot long flying-off deck being constructed forward of the funnels. Four derricks were fitted, two forward of the bridge and two abaft the forward funnel so that the seaplanes could be hoisted in and out of the water, and from the two seaplane holds. This work was complete by April 1915.

After undergoing trials in the Irish Sea, the **Campania** joined the Grand Fleet at Scapa Flow in early May 1915 and shortly afterwards she was inspected by Admiral Jellicoe. It soon became apparent that the flight deck was not long enough to launch

the seaplanes satisfactorily. If the plane could not obtain sufficient 'lift', then it was likely to fall into the sea, only to be rammed by the **Campania** herself a few moments later.

As a result of this the **Campania** was sent back to Cammell Lairds in early December 1915 to be completely rebuilt. The flight deck was lengthened to 245 feet and more steeply inclined. To achieve this, the forward funnel was removed and twin funnels substituted. The navigating bridge was moved right back against the twin funnels and raised to a height which would allow a seaplane, with its wings folded, to be manoeuvred underneath. In the after section, space was provided for a kite balloon which was used for the observation of enemy movements. This second refit was complete by 6th April 1916 and the **Campania** once again sailed for Scapa Flow where she rejoined the Grand Fleet, just seven weeks before the Battle of Jutland.



*The seaplane carrier **Campania** after her conversion by Cammell Laird in 1916*

On 30th May 1916, HMS **Lion** led the Battle Cruiser Fleet from Scapa Flow into the North Sea for the long-awaited clash with the German High Seas Fleet. The encounter was not the decisive victory which had been predicted and the Admiralty's official statement, which was released on 2nd June 1916, told the British public very little, as it read: '*On the afternoon of Wednesday 31st May a naval engagement took place off the coast of Jutland. The British ships on which the brunt of the fighting fell were the Battle Cruiser Fleet supported by four fast battleships*'.

Unfortunately Admiral Jellicoe's plans for his new aircraft carrier **Campania** were frustrated by an engine defect and she was unable to leave Scapa Flow until 2am on 31st May. Once at sea she attempted to catch up with the Fleet, but with the threat from U-boats, which were known to be at sea in strength, and given the **Campania**'s age and the fact that she had few watertight bulkheads, she was ordered to return to Scapa Flow. She had missed her opportunity to become the 'eyes' of the Grand Fleet.

During the rest of 1916 and for most of 1917 the **Campania** remained with the Grand Fleet at Scapa Flow, and she was at her anchorage on 9th July 1917 when



*The seaplane carrier **Campania** sinking in Burntisland Roads in the Firth of Forth on the morning of 5th November, 1918.*

the Dreadnought battleship HMS **Vanguard** was destroyed by an explosion caused by unstable cordite.

On 1st October 1918, with the end of the war in sight, the **Campania**, along with other units of the Grand Fleet, sailed south to Burntisland Roads in the Firth of Forth. From there she sailed on daily exercises with HMS **Furious**, the aircraft carrier which had originally been designed as a large battle cruiser.



*On board the **Campania** at Scapa Flow with an aircraft being prepared for take-off*

During the evening of 4th November 1918 the fleet anchored in Burntisland Roads and at 3.40am the following morning, during a particularly severe squall which blew in suddenly from the west, those on watch on the battleship **Revenge** saw that the **Campania** was dragging her anchor, and five minutes later her port side struck the battleship's ram bow. The **Campania** continued to drift, pulling the **Revenge** with her, and the two ships then collided with HMS **Glorious**. It was a full hour before the three vessels were cleared and tugs from Rosyth could assist the **Campania**, but she was seriously damaged and was sinking. At 8.35am on the morning of 5th November the officer of the watch on board the **Revenge** heard a loud explosion on board the former Cunarder which he presumed to be a boiler blowing up. The old **Campania** began to sink by the stern just one mile off Burntisland Pier.

So ended the career of a famous Blue Riband holder which had helped to transform the Royal Navy Air Service from a dream to reality. ■

CAMPANIA built by the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Co.Ltd at Govan.

Length: 620ft overall, 65.2 ft beam. Tonnage: 12,950 gross, 4,974 nett.

Launched: 8th September 1892, maiden voyage Liverpool - New York 22nd April, 1893

Twin-screw; triple expansion engines, service speed 21 knots. Cost: £650,000.

READERS' LETTERS

From LNRS Member Professor Thom Gorst:

I have just finished reading the June issue of *'The Bulletin'* and I should like to record how very impressed I have been: the **Andrea Doria / Stockholm** article was well timed at this, the 50th anniversary of the collision, and made even more significant for me as I saw the **Athena (ex Stockholm)** only last month in Falmouth. I also appreciated the additional weight given to the piece by the comments from Captain Cubbin.

The next article, on the **Nomadic**, was equally as timely, given her recent removal to Belfast. I visited her just before this in Le Havre, and I think her case provokes some very interesting discussions on what makes an old vessel historically significant – in other words, is her 'value' only vicariously derived from the **Titanic** connection, or does she have her own intrinsic value? (I think she does).

Your own piece on the **Empire Windrush** is once again of the moment, and follows on only a short time after a colleague and I were discussing how that story had been forgotten – or at best glossed over – by maritime historians.

And for me the **Manxman** article was also timely – I went aboard that sorry ship to photograph her in July, and her guardians left me in no doubt that they believe she is bound for the scrapyard.

All this is deeply relevant to me as I pursue my own research into 'Maritime Ruins' – the study of 20th century ships that currently lie unused around our coast, like the **Manxman**, or the **Royal Iris** (which latter in my view presents a far more persuasive case for preservation, being technically, and aesthetically, highly innovative).

Can I heartily agree with your correspondent Mr J. Cowden in saying that *'The Bulletin'* sets a high standard in comparison with some of our established commercial monthlies in terms of quality and relevance of content? Although I am based in Bath, and unable to participate on a regular basis, I would like to join the Society and support its most excellent work.

From LNRS Member Alan McClelland:

More about 'Saving the "Planet"':

Those of us who are concerned about the treatment of evidence of the Port of Liverpool's former pre-eminence are deeply indebted to Peter Elson for his well-informed articles on the subject. The conduct of business relating to the preservation of historic vessels has been lamentable – to put it mildly. Almost daily the columns of the *Liverpool Daily Post* contain reports of lackadaisical treatment of significant issues of Merseyside's heritage. Short-sightedness and indecisiveness have become the defining features of the approach of allegedly responsible bodies to various important matters.

There is also the disturbing failure of some folk who should know better to place evidence of events of the past in the contexts of their times, e.g. slavery and slave trade issues; Liverpool's relationship with the Confederacy in the American Civil War; failure to realise the truly international significance of the Port of Liverpool in shipping and port development in the nineteenth century

Re the **Alabama** piece in the current '*Bulletin*', "*The Secret Service of the Confederate States in Europe*" by James D. Bulloch makes an interesting read. The book was published in paperback in 2001 by the Modern Library Division of Random House, N.Y.

From LNRS Vice-President, Captain Graeme Cubbin:

The September, 2006 issue of '*The Bulletin*' was, as usual, replete with fascinating copy. Long dormant memories were vigorously stirred within me by Ron Hunter's article '*South Africa, Suez and Sphinxes*', and there must have been occasions in 1941 when he was close enough to take a heaving-line from me! He seems to have spent much of that year steaming up and down the coasts of East and South Africa, and he mentions many ships which had been a familiar sight to my eyes in those distant days – **Shropshire**, **Ceres**, **Ranchi**, **Nea Hellas**, and, yes, **Atlantis** (the German raider of that name). In February 1941, whilst he was heading north in the **Orbita** with troops for the Middle East theatre of war, I was languishing in a POW camp at Merca, Italian Somaliland (as it was then) awaiting with mounting excitement the imminent, but as yet only rumoured, arrival of British troops advancing from Kenya. Sure enough, on 25th February, a South African patrol arrived at the gates of our Camp, (by now abandoned by the Italians) to the great joy of the inmates! Next day we were embarked on HMS **Ceres**, detached from Mr Hunter's convoy for the purpose, and ferried at great speed down to Mombasa.

Mr Hunter writes rather disparagingly about the **Nea Hellas**, formerly **Tuscania**. True, her embarrassing tendency to emit dense clouds of black smoke was justly notorious, but in all other respects I would defend her virtues and reputation. For the **Nea Hellas**, no longer Greek owned, was operated by Anchor Line of Glasgow, her crew was almost wholly Glaswegian, and she was commanded by Capt. David W. Bone, the legendary "Brassbounder". He should have retired in 1939, aged 65, but with the tacit connivance of his employers, had carried on, '*to do his bit*'. Returning south from Suez, the **Nea Hellas** put into Mombasa to embark a large number of merchant seamen, former prisoners-of-war, of which I was one. Hence my warm feelings of affection for that gallant old lady, the enchanted ship destined to carry us home, after many months in limbo.

BOOK REVIEW

THE IRISH BOATS

Volume 2 : LIVERPOOL TO CORK AND WATERFORD

by Malcolm McDonald

This is the second in a series of three books covering Irish Sea ferry services from Liverpool to Ireland. As with the first of the series – the Dublin Boats – the book has been meticulously researched and is extremely well written. Malcolm McDonald's narrative is a joy to read. A selection of black and white photographs throughout the

book illustrate points made in the narrative. So many new shipping books these days depend exclusively on photographs accompanied by a few statistics usually culled from Lloyd's Register – and that is their entire content. The strength of Malcolm McDonald's new book is in the writing.

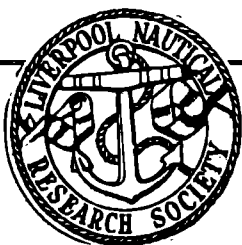
Comprehensive fleet lists cover 80 pages out of the book's total of 256. These are amazingly detailed and well laid out. The book is well indexed and this is split into three sections: the ships, the companies and the 'people', making it very easy to use.

It has been a real pleasure for me to read and review Malcolm McDonald's new book and I very much look forward to seeing the final volume in the series covering the Belfast boats. This trilogy will, I am certain, prove to be the definitive work on the Liverpool-based passenger ferries on the Irish run.

VERY HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

j.s.

Price: 19.99p. ISBN 0-07524-3884-0 Paperback, 248mm x 172mm, 256 pages
Tempus Publishing Ltd., 'The Mill', Brimscombe Port, Stroud, Glos. GL5 2QG



AND FINALLY

VOYAGE NOT COMPLETED

The ill-fated voyage of the **Astyanax** began on 16th October 1975 when she sailed from Gdynia, Poland, with a full cargo of cement for Nigeria. This was at a time when the Nigerian authorities were ordering cement as if it was going out of fashion, and ships loaded with it were queuing outside Apapa/Lagos waiting for a berth to discharge.

The **Astyanax** arrived off Apapa/Lagos on 5th November 1975 and twelve months later she was still there, riding to her anchor off the port, and apparently still no nearer to getting a discharging berth. In December, 1976, over fourteen months after she left Poland, it was decided to move the **Astyanax** to Abidjan, on the Ivory Coast, and she arrived there on 21st December.

Whilst there she was involved in a collision and a fire broke out in the engine room. The move to Abidjan had been made to enable the ship to take on bunkers, and it was the intention to return to the Lagos anchorage. But this never occurred.

Thereafter the owners, the Asian Shipping Corporation of Syros, Greece, seemed to abandon the vessel. A report in Lloyd's casualties said that all valuable parts were removed from the accommodation and the wheelhouse, and that Nos 1, 2 and 3 holds were flooded. Presumably the cement cargo became a solid, rock-hard mass, which would defy a shiprepairer, ship-breaker or anyone else!

The Abidjan authorities decided that the **Astyanax** should be towed out to sea and sunk in deep water. So ended a bizarre story of a 'voyage not completed', for the vessel never actually arrived at her destination.

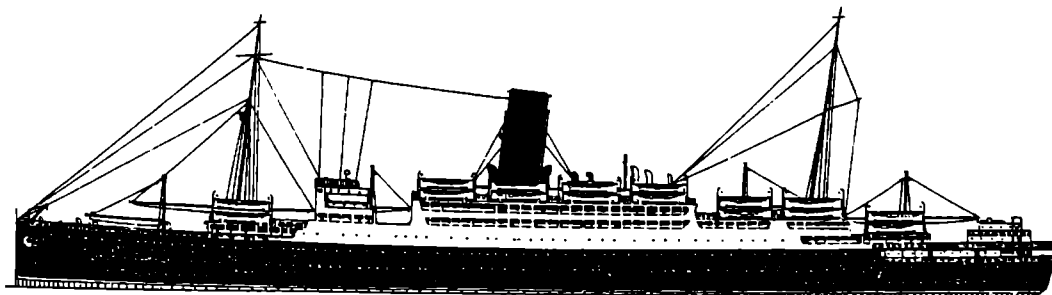
The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

(Founded in 1938)

THE BULLETIN

Volume 50, No 4, March, 2007

Editor : John Shepherd



Big Ships in the Mersey (<i>Peter Clowes</i>)	page 2
The Cunard liner Sylvania of 1957 (<i>John Shepherd</i>)	page 4
The Dragon and the Liver Bird : Chinese Seamen in World War II (<i>Charles Foley</i>)	page 15
A Geordie Tramp (<i>William C. Reeves</i>)	page 20
Memories of the Tuscania	page 25
Two Dinghies for the Calchas (<i>John Fletcher</i>)	page 28
The Windsor Castle Remembered (<i>Peter Elson</i>)	page 32
Captain R. Minto and Charles Lightoller (<i>J.E.Cowden</i>)	page 35
Liverpool and the Atlantic Passenger Trade (<i>H. Hignett</i>)	page 41

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

President:

Mr A.S. Davidson

Vice-Presidents:

Captain Graeme Cubbin, Mr H.M. Hignett



Chairman:

Mr J.R. Chambers

Vice-Chairman:

Mr W. Ogle

Council:

A.J.Barratt, D.Eccles, R.Dennis (*Meetings Secretary*), D.Littler,
J.Lingwood, M.D.R.Jones, A.H.McClelland, J.Shepherd (*Editor*), G.F.Wright

Honorary Officers:

Secretary: J.Stokoe *Treasurer:* J.Coates

Membership and General Correspondence:

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

'Bulletin' related matters:

John Shepherd,
3b, Cliff Drive, Mariners' Park,
WALLASEY, CH44 0EX, U.K.

Front Cover:

The Anchor liner **Tuscania**
She became the Greek Line's **Nea Hellas** in 1939,
and was renamed **New York** in 1955.



The **Calchas** of 1947 in the East Float, Birkenhead
See '*Two Dinghies for the Calchas*' by John Fletcher on page 28

ADVANCE ADVICE OF PROBABLE SUBSCRIPTION INCREASE

Subject to confirmation at the AGM in May, the annual subscription to the Society will be increased to £15 per annum. The subscription has been held at £12 for the past four years, but as a hedge against possible printing cost and postage increases, it is felt necessary to make the increase. The old 'family membership' rate is to be discontinued and there will be a single rate of £15. Guests will, of course, be made most welcome at our monthly meetings.

BIG SHIPS IN THE MERSEY

by LNRS Member Peter Clowes

Whenever I walk across the cobblestones on Liverpool's Pier Head and look across at the buildings of Birkenhead and Wallasey, I am immediately struck by the absence of ships on the swift-flowing, khaki-coloured River Mersey.

Apart from the ferry boats shuttling to-and-fro I seldom see a merchant vessel steaming up the river or heading out to sea. It is a sad state of affairs, particularly when one remembers the volume of shipping that used the port in years gone by.

I have great affection for the twin ports of Liverpool and Birkenhead. My memories go back to pre-war days when as a boy I was taken on a double-decker bus (the first one I had ever travelled on) from the holiday resort of Southport to Liverpool for a special treat.

The Liverpool Overhead Railway, a bizarre high-level viaduct of Meccano-like iron girders that crossed the busy dockland streets and was known affectionately as 'the dockers' umbrella', ran for thirteen miles along the waterfront, calling at seventeen stations and giving passengers a marvellous bird's-eye view of scores of ships moored in the docks. I was thrilled beyond measure as our train rattled along on a warm summer's day in 1937.

Tug boats with shrieking sirens fussed about on the river; large cargo liners with the sun catching their gleaming white superstructures, were entering the docks with grey smoke belching from their funnels, and sturdy little green locomotives steamed below our track with bells clanging. A helpful man in our carriage pointed out the boys' training ship **Conway**, a three-masted wooden hulk with two rows of gunports, lying off Rock Ferry. It could just be glimpsed beyond a forest of masts separating the warehouses of Canada and Huskisson Docks.

The main treat of the day was a visit to the Canadian Pacific liner **Duchess of York**, a luxury vessel lying in Gladstone Dock. Her light-grey hull loomed over the dock and steam was drifting from one of two slender yellow-painted funnels. We went aboard along a sloping gangway and were soon marvelling at the ship's opulent interior. "*It was just like a magnificent hotel,*" I later told a friend at school.

Regrettably the **Duchess of York**, which in those days sailed regularly between Liverpool and Montreal, did not survive the forthcoming war. Whilst carrying troops from Glasgow to Freetown she was hit and set on fire by German long range bombers on 11th July, 1943. The fire could not be brought under control and the troops were taken off by the escorting destroyers.

My parents and I walked off the *Duchess* and returned to the Pier Head on the Overhead Railway, and among several large ships in Canada Dock I caught sight of quayside cranes swinging over the deck of a white-hulled liner with two squat yellow funnels. This was the 17,700-ton **Reina del Pacifico** of the Pacific Steam Navigation Company, a 20-knot liner that frequently sailed to South America. She led a charmed existence throughout the war and came through virtually unscathed.

Little did I know, at the age of 10 on that summer's day in 1937, that eight years later I would come to know the **Reina del Pacifico** rather better. In 1945 I was serving in the Royal Navy and arrived in Liverpool with 2,500 other sailors after an

all-night train journey from Devonport. When I dragged my blue kitbag out of the carriage at Riverside Station I looked up at the great rust-stained side of a ship. It was the *Reina del Pacifico*, now painted a dull grey and with guns bristling on her fore-castle and poop. I was to spend a month on board before leaving her in Colombo, Ceylon.

The Mersey was now bustling with war traffic and several ships that had been struck by bombs or mines lay in the river, their masts and funnels protruding forlornly above the swirling water. When the *Reina* left the stage and anchored in the stream – we were awaiting escorts for our convoy – I noticed that the old training ship *Conway* was no longer off Rock Ferry. She had been towed to the Menai Strait for safety.

After the war, air travel became much more available and the days of luxury liners were running out. The shape of ships began to change and container ships looking like large slabs of concrete began to dominate ocean trade, and fewer and fewer vessels appeared in the Mersey docks.

The *Reina del Pacifico* made her last round voyage from Liverpool to South America in 1958 and was then sent to the scrapyard. The last trans-Atlantic passenger liner to leave the Mersey before the airliners took over sailed as late as November 1971 when Canadian Pacific's *Empress of Canada*, a handsome 25,585 gross ton liner built only eleven years previously, steamed gracefully from the Prince's Landing Stage and headed out into the Irish Sea.

When I took my small daughter to 'see the ships' in 1960 the docks were still busy and I did not realise how swiftly things were to change. We wandered along the waterfront at Birkenhead and watched tugs belching black smoke haul the 8,922-ton Bibby cargo liner *Leicestershire* through the Alfred Locks at high tide and into the East Float. Cranes swung crazily over other vessels moored alongside the warehouses and dockside sheds. All was bustle and noise.

The *Reina del Pacifico* is one ship that I shall never forget. In fact, on my desk as I write, stands a model of the vessel in a 'dimple' whisky bottle that I obtained some years ago from Des Newton. It looks much like the real thing, the funnels resembling the ends of two filter-tip cigarettes. Sadly the *Reina* was broken up almost fifty years ago and the River Mersey no longer offers views of such magnificent ships. Memories, however, never fade █

THE MONDAY FACILITY

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

All Members of the Society are invited to make use of this unique facility.



MARCH : Mondays 5th, 12th, 19th and 26th.

APRIL : Mondays 2nd, 16th, 23rd and 30th.

MAY : Mondays 14th and 21st.

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

THE CUNARD LINER 'SYLVANIA' OF 1957

by John Shepherd

*For a brief ten year period between 1957 and 1967 the **Sylvania** was one of the most well-known and best loved ships to be seen in the Mersey. Until January, 1966, she was exclusively a Liverpool ship, docking in her home port at the end of every voyage. I sailed on her as Crew Purser in 1966 and 1967 and was well aware of the immense pride and fierce loyalty her crew, 90% of them from Merseyside, had in her.*

She was designed as an emigrant carrier for the Canadian service but was quickly outdated by the advent of trans-Atlantic air services.

*This is the story of the Cunard liner **Sylvania** and her later career as Sitmar Cruises' **Fairwind**, then P&O Princess Cruises **Dawn Princess**, and finally as the German cruise ship **Albatros**. She was demolished at Alang, India, just before the 47th anniversary of her maiden voyage.*

In the final weeks of 1951 the Cunard Line announced that it had decided to build a completely new class of ship for the service between Liverpool and Montreal. This initial announcement only mentioned two ships, but the programme was extended to three and then four vessels. Whilst the first two, the **Saxonia** and the **Ivernia** were being built, there were plans being prepared by some airlines for the introduction of trans-Atlantic services. Nevertheless, the Cunard directors remained convinced that for another decade at least there would always be sufficient passengers who would wish to travel in a certain degree of luxury and style which would keep the new liners viable.

In March 1955 the Cunard Line gave John Brown at Clydebank the confirmation of its order for the final ship in what the shipping press was describing as a 'brilliant quartet'. This was to be the **Sylvania**. She was launched by Mrs Norman Robertson, the wife of the Canadian High Commissioner in London, on 22nd November 1956, despite the loss of three weeks' work the previous September due to industrial trouble. More disputes at John Brown's yard in March 1957 threatened to cause the postponement of the maiden voyage set for 5th June – the date announced even before she was launched. However, the new ship was ready for her trials on 27th May and on the following day she made speed runs over the Admiralty's measured course off the Isle of Arran at 5.am and 9.30am.

The Cunard Line took the opportunity to announce that following the successful completion of its building programme for the Canadian service, a berth had been reserved at Clydebank for the construction of a further passenger liner to replace the ageing **Britannic**. The proposed new ship would be designed for the Liverpool – Cobh – New York service and it was planned to lay the keel in the autumn of 1958. Sadly nothing came of this venture and as far as I am aware, no plans of the new liner have ever been made public.

The **Sylvania** left Greenock on 5th June 1957 on her maiden voyage to Quebec and Montreal. Industrial troubles at Liverpool prevented the new ship visiting her home port prior to the maiden voyage. Speaking at Greenock on board the **Sylvania** on the eve of her maiden voyage, Mr Frank H. Dawson, director and general

manager of the Cunard Line, revealed that the *Saxonia*, the first of the quartet which had entered service in September 1954, had already carried 58,500 passengers. The *Ivernia*, which had followed her into service in July 1955, had carried 43,200, and the *Carinthia*, whose maiden voyage had begun in June 1956, had carried 18,600. There was, said Mr Dawson, every indication of long and profitable careers for the four ships which had been built to meet the requirements of Canada's rapidly growing population and increasing volume of overseas trade.

The *Sylvania* and her three sisters were all built as moderate-speed ships, fitted with stabilizers, intended to carry about 900 passengers (mainly in the tourist class). The four ships would carry out the work previously done by the six 14,000-ton ships of the *Ascania* class which had operated between the two wars.

The *Sylvania*'s profile was compact and harmonious, being based on a raked bow with slight clipper tendencies, a cruiser stern, and a bridge with a rounded front. The general impression of the ship was that she was 'neat but not gaudy'. Decoration of the public rooms took the form of a pastiche of the 18th century, the aim having been to reproduce several different styles of that period in modern materials.

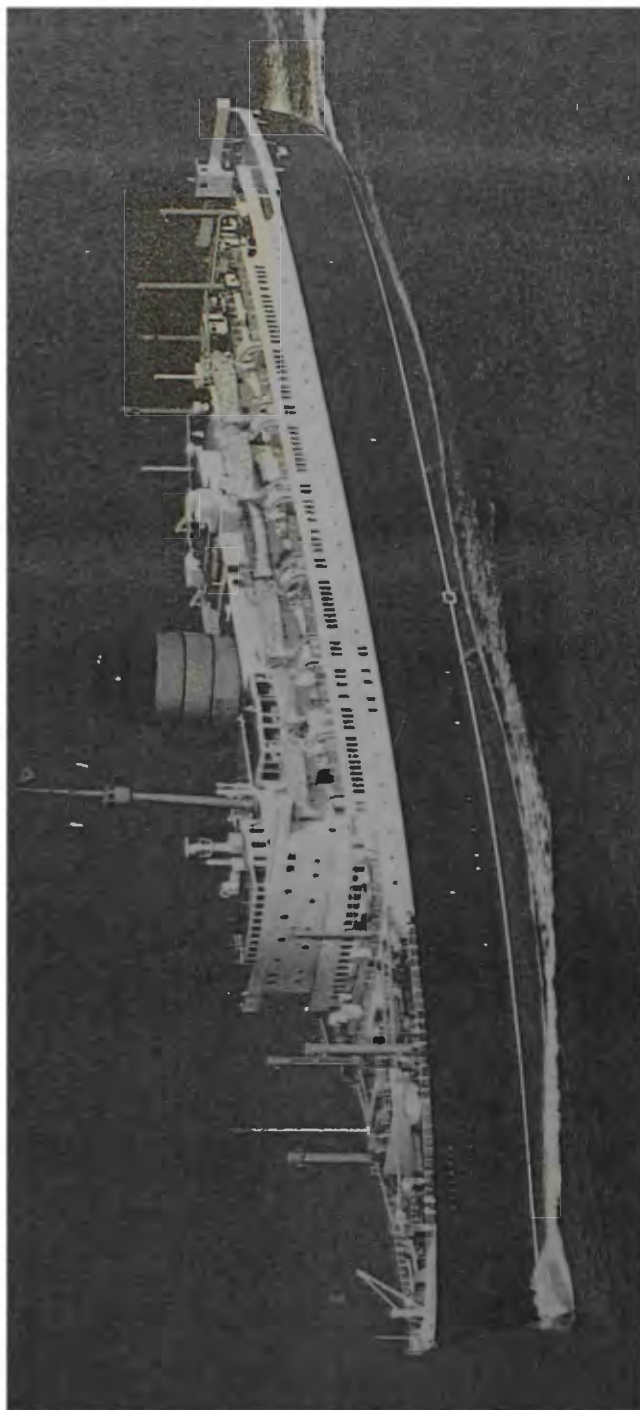
The main propelling machinery and the boilers were constructed by the builders. They consisted of a twin-screw turbine installation designed for steam at 550 lb. per sq. in. gauge and 850°F. The high pressure turbine speed was 4,025 rpm, and the low pressure turbine speed 3,700 rpm. Double-reduction, double-helical gearing was used to obtain the propeller speed of 135rpm.

As with her sisters, the *Sylvania* had a cargo capacity of 300,000 cubic feet, a figure which included 15,000 cubic feet of insulated space for the carriage of perishable goods. There were six hatches which served five holds, two forward and three aft. Carrying such large amounts of cargo on essentially passenger liners was never successful as it resulted in lengthy turn-round times (up to nine days in port in New York on some winter voyages). This meant that the majority of the catering department, representing some 280 crew members out of a ship's complement of 420, had little or nothing to do during the stay in port, but were still on full pay.

The vast majority of the *Sylvania*'s passengers (some 800 out of a full passenger list of 900) travelled tourist class. Whilst all the first-class cabins had private bathrooms, the majority of the tourist-class passengers had to make use of shared facilities. For a brand-new ship, in 1957, this showed a remarkable lack of forward thinking on the part of the Cunard directors. Out of a total of 330 passenger cabins on the *Sylvania*, less than a third had the convenience of private bathrooms.

In the *Sylvania*'s first full year of service, 1958, some 1,036,000 passengers crossed the Atlantic by sea. However this was also the year when the first commercial jet service was introduced between Europe and New York and there was an immediate effect, in 1959, on the number of passengers who chose to cross by sea. For the *Sylvania* and her sisters, built without any real thought toward even occasional use as cruise ships, this was bad news indeed.

The *Sylvania* operated the Canadian service from Liverpool in company with her sister the *Carinthia* during the summer and autumn of 1957 until the end of the St Lawrence season. Her maiden arrival in New York was on 17th December 1957 and four days later she sailed on a West Indies cruise. This was purely a token gesture and



The Sylvania running her trials over the Arran mile on 27th May, 1957

on 10th January 1958 she resumed her trans-Atlantic service, and on 5th April returned to the Canadian run.

The *Sylvania* served the Canadian run for only a relatively short time. In November 1960 it was announced that she would replace the *Britannic* on the Liverpool – New York service. Any thoughts of building the proposed replacement for the *Britannic* had been abandoned due to increasingly poor results from Cunard's passenger liners. The general manager's 'gung-ho' comments on the eve of the *Sylvania*'s maiden voyage just three years earlier now sounded rather hollow.

At the Cunard Line's Annual General Meeting held in June 1962, the chairman Sir John Brocklebank had the task of explaining losses of £1,700,000 for the previous financial year. He announced that the *Saxonia* and the *Ivernia* would be taken out of service at the end of the year and given an extensive rebuild and restyling that would make them more suitable for cruising.

During her annual overhaul in January 1964, eighty of the *Sylvania*'s tourist class cabins were refitted and equipped with private bathrooms. Whilst this was a welcome move, it was far from enough to make her competitive with other liners then in service or being built. It was a token gesture – after all there were in total 250 tourist-class cabins.

The *Sylvania*'s principal shortcoming was her cargo capacity – it was far too large for a liner designed to carry so many passengers, but on the other hand it was too small for her to be viable solely as a cargo carrier. The time it took to complete each round voyage was far longer than if the ship had operated purely as a passenger carrier, and cargo operations were very disruptive for a vessel that was also trying to maintain a strict passenger liner schedule.

Having transformed the *Saxonia* and the *Ivernia* into the more cruise-orientated *Carmania* and *Franconia*, the Cunard Line was unwilling to give the *Carinthia* and the *Sylvania* the complete rebuild they both so urgently required.

It was becoming clear to the Cunard Line directors that the demand for trans-Atlantic passages during mid-winter was in terminal and rapid decline and on 10th February 1965 the *Sylvania* made a 27-day cruise from Liverpool to the Mediterranean – the first Cunard cruise to be operated from Liverpool since 1939. There followed a Christmas cruise from Liverpool in December 1965 and the *Sylvania* then sailed to Southampton, making her maiden arrival at the Hampshire port on 26th January 1966. The *Sylvania* continued her cruise programme until returning to Liverpool and resuming the New York service on 20th April.

The six-week seamen's strike from mid-May to 1st July 1966 had a devastating effect on the Cunard Line's finances. The *Sylvania* arrived in Liverpool shortly after the start of the dispute and discharged her passengers in Huskisson Dock, rather than the landing stage. Cunard was taking no chances about the crew walking off and refusing to take the ship from the landing stage to the dock.

Three weeks after the end of the strike, Cunard's chairman Sir Basil Smallpiece informed the company's employees, both afloat and ashore, just how serious the financial situation had become. The seamen's strike had cost Cunard £3million. Sir Basil said: *"This is the bottom of the barrel. There is enough left in the kitty for eighteen months, perhaps a couple of years, and that's it. In the past five*



A view of the Sylvania's first-class restaurant



The tourist-class lounge on the Sylvania

years the passenger liners have bled Cunard to the extent of £14.1 million in total losses."

The Cunard Line closed the Liverpool-New York service at the end of 1966 and the **Sylvania** made the final crossings on the historic route in November.

The **Sylvania** had her hull painted white during her winter overhaul and on 13th January 1967 she sailed from Southampton on a 36-day cruise to the Caribbean. Only the public rooms had air-conditioning; the passenger cabins had to make do with forced draught and fans, and it became intolerably hot at times resulting in some passengers abandoning the cruise and flying back to the UK.

Following the Caribbean cruise the **Sylvania** sailed from Southampton on 23rd February 1967 for a series of Mediterranean cruises. She was based at Gibraltar and the passengers were flown from Gatwick to join the ship, thus introducing the concept of 'Fly-Cruise' which became increasingly popular. During these cruises the **Sylvania** carried a SRN-6 hovercraft on her foredeck. The British Hovercraft Corporation was trying to interest the governments of various countries bordering the Mediterranean in purchasing hovercraft, and to give government officials a practical demonstration of the hovercraft's capabilities it was put into the water, using the ship's gear, at various ports and sent on demonstration runs. The hovercraft was not there to provide 'sight-seeing' trips for cruise passengers, although an occasional short trip for the passengers was made 'around the bay' between official trips. Lowering and recovering the hovercraft was a time-consuming business for the deck crew involving considerable overtime but fortunately British Hovercraft was 'picking up the tab' for this.

Following the completion of the Gibraltar-based cruise programme, the **Sylvania** returned to the Canadian service, alternating between Liverpool and Southampton as her U.K. port. It was 'Expo '67' (the World Fair) at Montreal and Cunard hoped to attract passengers who wished to visit the fair. After leaving Montreal on 15th June 1967 the **Sylvania** ran aground just below Trois Rivières and all efforts to refloat her failed. She had on board almost a full complement of passengers and two days later they were taken ashore by tender and offered an air passage or a berth on the next Canadian Pacific sailing.

The **Sylvania** stubbornly refused to be refloated and it was only when her bunkers and fresh water ballast had been pumped out, and the crew sent away in the lifeboats, that she reluctantly came off the St Lawrence mud. She was towed back to Montreal and entered Canadian Vickers' floating dock on 26th June and remained there for three days while damage to her propellers was made good. Her entire crew was living aboard her during this time which was extremely trying for all concerned as the ship was virtually shut down with no forced draught in the heat of a Canadian summer. Fortunately it had been possible to link the ship's sanitation system into the shore-side sewers.

The **Sylvania** remained at Montreal until her next scheduled sailing on 4th July. To kill time many of her crew obtained temporary jobs at 'Expo '67'. The rest of the summer of 1967 passed off uneventfully until in October Sir Basil Smallpiece announced that the **Caronia**, **Carinthia** and **Sylvania** were to be sold. The Company did not have the common courtesy to inform the ships' masters in advance: the news was first picked up on a BBC World Service news broadcast. I know – I was Crew

ABSTRACT OF THE LOG OF THE Cunard R.M.S. "SYLVANIA"

Captain L. K. Goodler

NEW YORK TO LIVERPOOL (via BOSTON, Mass. & COBH)

Date (1966)	Dist.	Lat. N.	Long. W.	Weather, etc.
April 29				At 1057 EDST (1457 GMT) left Pier 92, New York
" 29				At 1248 EDST (1648 GMT) Ambrose Ch. L.V. DEPARTURE
" 30	349			At 0630 EDST (1030 GMT) Boston L.V. abeam. ARRIVAL
" 30				At 1231 EDST (1631 GMT) alongside C'wealth Pier No. 5, Boston
" 30				At 1500 EDST (1900 GMT) left C'wealth Pier No. 5, Boston
" 30				At 1624 EDST (2024 GMT) Boston L.V. abeam DEPARTURE
May 1	392	44.07	62.12	Slight sea and low S'y swell, overcast and clear, continuous rain
" 2	463	46.54	51.58	Mod sea and low S'y swell, overcast with misty patches
" 3	452	49.36	41.25	Rough sea and mod confused swell, overcast and clear, drizzle
" 4	463	51.52	29.48	Rough sea and mod variable swell, overcast and clear, showers
" 5	466	51.36	17.14	Very rough sea, heavy WNW'y swell, cloudy and clear, showers
" 6	346	To Daunt	L.V.	At 0630 BST (0530 GMT) Roche Pt. abeam ARRIVAL
Total	2582	Miles		
" 6				At 0707 BST (0607 GMT) Anchored Cobh
" 6				At 1400 BST (1300 GMT) left Anchorage Cobh
" 7				At 1415 BST (1315 GMT) Roche Point abeam DEPARTURE
" 7	229	TO LIVERPOOL		At 0136 BST (0036 GMT) Bar Light Vessel abeam ARRIVAL
				At 0545 BST (0445 GMT) alongside Princes L'ding Stage, Liverpool

OCEAN PASSAGE : 5 days, 9 hours, 6 minutes

Reduced Speed : 0 hr. 9 mins.

Average Speed : 20.00 knots

Detention : Nil

Purser of the **Sylvania** at the time! In a masterstroke of public relations Sir Basil said that the **Sylvania** was unsuitable for cruising, and then wondered why passenger numbers were so low on the programme of Mediterranean cruises she was scheduled to undertake in the spring of 1968.

The **Sylvania** returned to Southampton from her final cruise on 7th May 1968 and her Cunard service ended almost eleven years to the day since she had left Greenock on her maiden voyage on 5th June 1957.

She was laid up at berth 101 Southampton alongside her sister the **Carinthia** (withdrawn December 1967). They were redundant and outmoded, yet, ironically their most successful years were still to come.

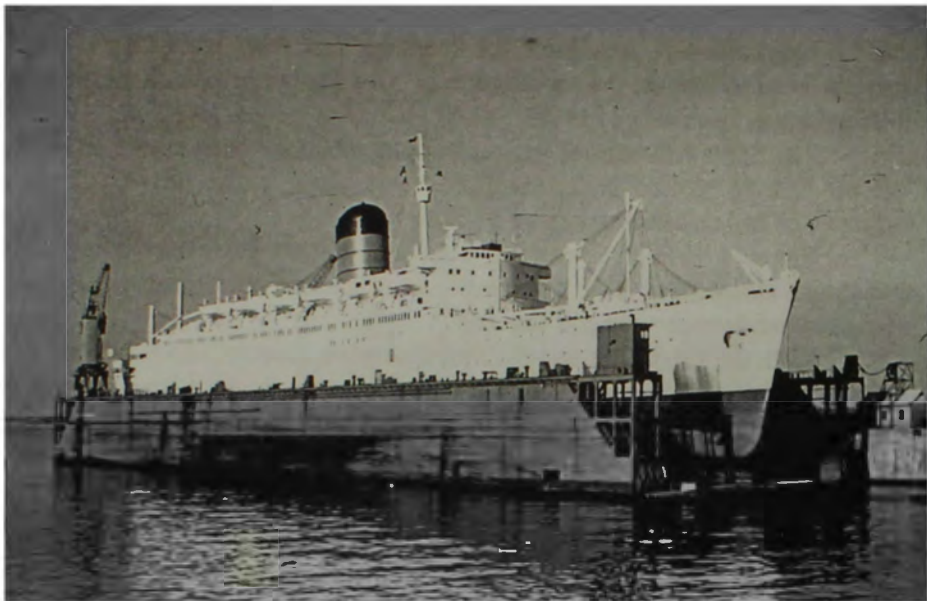
Both the **Carinthia** and the **Sylvania** were quickly sold for £1 million each to the Società Italiana Trasporti Marittimi SpA (known as the Sitmar Line) which had been formed in 1938 by the Russian Alexandre Vlasov. Conditions of the sale prevented the two ships from operating on any of Cunard's regular routes, or from sailing on cruises from British ports. Sitmar, however, had very different ideas for the pair – the line held the Australian government contract for carrying migrants from Southampton to Australia and the two redundant Cunarders fitted the requirements exactly for this employment.

Almost as soon as the sale was complete the Australian government awarded the immigrant contract to Chandris Lines. The result was that the two ex-Cunarders spent the next two years lying idle at Southampton. The **Carinthia** was renamed **Fairland**, and the **Sylvania** became the **Fairwind**. Their funnels were both painted buff with a blue 'V' (for Vlasov).

On 6th January 1970 the **Fairwind** (ex **Sylvania**) left Southampton under tow and arrived at Trieste on 18th January. The ship was completely rebuilt and on completion was totally unrecognizable as the former **Sylvania**. Every one of her passenger cabins had been redesigned and all of them had private bathrooms. It was not until 14th June 1972 that work was complete and the **Fairwind** left Trieste on her initial voyage out to Los Angeles. It had been more than four years since she had last carried passengers as Cunard's **Sylvania**. Sitmar advertised the **Fairwind** as '*the most luxurious cruise ship ever seen in most parts of the world*'.

The reputation of Sitmar Cruises continued to grow. The **Fairwind** and her sister **Fairsea** (ex **Fairland**, ex **Carinthia**) were staffed by dedicated crews and superbly maintained. The two sisters with their sturdy North Atlantic hulls and strong bows built to withstand any seas ensured their passengers a far more comfortable voyage than the new purpose-built cruise ships could offer.

After twelve years successful cruising, the **Fairwind** was completely refurbished in 1984 and then she returned to her usual itineraries – trans-Panama Canal cruises between San Juan and Acapulco, and Los Angeles to Mexico. In early 1988 she made two cruises up the Amazon as far as Manaus. Later in the year one of the **Fairwind**'s propeller shafts broke and she had to be towed to a San Francisco shipyard for repairs. When she re-appeared it was with the extended name **Sitmar Fairwind**. As if to show her disapproval for this new name, the ship broke down again a few weeks later in late August off Nassau and had to be towed to New York for lengthy repairs.



The Sylvania in Canadian Vickers' floating dock at Montreal in June, 1967

Photo: John Shepherd



The Albatros (ex Sylvania) at anchor off Liverpool on 13th May, 1997

Photo : John Shepherd

On 28th July 1988 the Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Company announced that it had reached an agreement to acquire the entire share capital of Sitmar Cruises. The price paid was \$210 million. The acquisition meant that the P&O fleet was immediately increased to ten ships, making it the largest cruise fleet in the world at that time. It also meant that the **Fairsea** (*ex Carinthia*) and the **Sitmar Fairwind** (*ex Sylvania*) were returned to British ownership.

When the **Sitmar Fairwind** left the Brooklyn drydock in September 1988, she carried a new name on her bows – the **Dawn Princess**. In New York she embarked passengers for a series of cruises to New England and Canada with calls at Halifax, NS, Sydney, Quebec and Montreal. It was indeed ironic that her first cruise back under British ownership should return her to the old familiar waters of her Cunard days as the **Sylvania**.

The **Dawn Princess** continued to sail in company with her old running-mate, the **Carinthia**, which was renamed **Fair Princess** in P&O's Princess Cruises fleet. The truth was that few were happy about the P&O Princess Cruises take-over of Sitmar, other than perhaps the senior management at P&O. The Sitmar crews were dismayed at the dissolution of the special Sitmar-Italian family ambience and loyal Sitmar passengers were certainly unhappy and claimed that '*it all went downhill after P&O got its hands on the line*'. On the other hand, regular P&O passengers who had only ever sailed on the modern Princess cruise ships were less than enchanted by the older **Dawn Princess** and **Fair Princess**, and P&O crew members who were assigned to these two ships considered such a posting as some sort of punishment. Working conditions were regarded as sub-standard and few changes had been made since the ships entered service in the 1950s. There were still six-berth crew cabins. However, with the passage of time, both ships gained popularity with passengers and crew.

Both ships began to experience mechanical problems and in 1991 they were sent to Portland, Oregon for drydocking and repairs. Asbestos was discovered and had to be removed, with the result that the vessels remained at Portland for over three months. Many of the planned cruises had to be cancelled and speculation began as to just how much longer they would be retained by Princess Cruises.

In 1992 P&O Princess Cruises stated that the **Dawn Princess** (*ex Sylvania*) '*no longer fits into the Company's modern fleet*' and in 1993 she was withdrawn. She was purchased by Happy Days Shipping and on 18th August 1993 she was renamed **Albatros**, on charter to the German tour operator Phoenix Reisen.

This then, was the 'parting of the ways' for the two sisters **Carinthia** and **Sylvania** after 36 years of sailing together. For some reason the **Fair Princess** (*ex Carinthia*) was retained and lavish praise was bestowed upon her by P&O: '*The intimate Fair Princess boasts a charming, private-club atmosphere that makes it easy to meet and mingle and make lasting friends, She is an uncommon delight*'. Well, just fancy that !

The passenger accommodation on the **Albatros** was reduced to 720 – in her P&O days it had been 890. An ambitious programme was planned which included an annual 100-day world cruise. On 30th May 1995, just eight days from the end of her world cruise, a near-disaster struck. The **Albatros** was 60 miles off Yanbu in the Red Sea (24°N, 38°E) when a flash fire broke out in the engine room. The blaze was quickly extinguished but the boilers were shut down as a precaution. Her 565

passengers were sent to their muster stations. However, their treatment on arrival at Jeddah was nothing short of remarkable. King Fahd of Saudi Arabia treated the passengers as though they were his personal guests and accommodated them in luxurious hotels until they were flown home on two chartered flights, also paid for by the King. The **Albatros** was towed to Marseilles for repairs which took until 26th July 1995.

A couple of years later the **Albatros** sailed from Bremerhaven on a two-week cruise around the British Isles. On 13th May 1997 the **Albatros** called at Liverpool, her old home port in her Cunard days as the **Sylvania**. The Princes landing stage had long since been demolished, so she anchored in mid-Mersey between Liverpool and Birkenhead, with the Mersey Ferries acting as tenders.

Three days later, on 16th May 1997 the **Albatros** was at anchor off St Mary's in the Scilly Isles. In deteriorating weather she sailed at 14.45 and at 15.05 she struck the well-charted North Bartholomew Rock in St Mary's Sound. The **Albatros's** bow-thruster compartments flooded, but she was able to return to the anchorage. Her 504 passengers remained on board until a chartered ferry took them to Penzance a day later.

The **Albatros** sailed to Southampton on 25th May under her own steam, but with the tug **Anglian Earl** in attendance, for repairs by the A&P Group. She was dry docked and repairs took until 12th July. It had been the most serious incident of her long life. What saved her from being a total loss was the extra strength built into the ship to help her withstand the ice of the St Lawrence on her designed route in her Cunard days.

By this time the German tour operator Phoenix Reisen had bought the **Albatros** outright from Happy Days Shipping. The old ship was chartered out to many UK tour operators for short periods. On 7th November 1999 the **Albatros** left Genoa on a 100-day world cruise to see in the 21st century, and just over a year later she was off again round the world, this time on an amazing 130-day odyssey. She was sailing literally a world away from her designed Liverpool – Montreal service of the late 1950s.

In November 2000 Phoenix Reisen announced a further ambitious schedule for the **Albatros** which would take her through to 2003. The end came in November 2003 when the 46-year old former **Sylvania** was taken out of service allegedly due to technical problems and a planned world cruise was cancelled.

She was laid up at Genoa for several weeks, but then sailed for Alang where she arrived on 19th January 2004 to meet her end at the hands of shipbreakers. Demolition was complete just as she reached the 47th anniversary of her maiden voyage. By any standards, the former Cunard liner **Sylvania** had had an amazing career! ■

Further Reading:

THE SAXONIA SISTERS by Clive Harvey

The full story of Cunard's 'brilliant quartet' and their subsequent careers.

ISBN 0 9534291 9 9 Published by Carmania Press at £13.95p.

THE DRAGON AND THE LIVER BIRD: CHINESE SEAMEN IN WORLD WAR II

by LNRS Member Charles Foley

In the Second World War both Alfred Holt and Anglo-Saxon Petroleum based their Chinese Seamen's Reserve Pools in Liverpool. This meant that at the start of the War there were some 20,000 Chinese seamen based in the city. These men earned little more than a third of the pay of a British rating and had no entitlement to the War Risk Bonus given to the British. Increasing discontent with their situation led to a growing militancy amongst the Chinese. This culminated in a long strike in 1942 and for the rest of the conflict they were branded as troublemakers by the shipowners and by the Government. With the end of hostilities they determined to get rid of those they saw as a problem. The Chinese were forced out. But many left behind them their partners and their children. Few were ever to see their husbands and fathers again.

A recipe for trouble

At the beginning of the War, Holts recruited its men mainly from Hong Kong and Shanghai. Anglo-Saxon obtained its seamen predominantly from Singapore. Both companies offered two-year contracts, with Holts paying a basic £4.13s.9d (£4.69) and Anglo-Saxon £5.15s.0d (£5.75) per month. In contrast the basic pay under National Maritime Board rates for a British seaman was £12.12s.6d (£12.62) per month.

As the War went on, casualties mounted in the merchant fleet. By September 1940 about 100 Chinese seamen had been killed in British ships. But although the War Risk Bonus paid to British seamen had steadily increased from the earliest days of the War, Chinese seamen had no such entitlement. What they received was at the discretion of the shipowners and highly variable.

Poor pay was not the only cause of grievance amongst Chinese crews on British ships. Violence against Chinese seamen by their white officers seemed to have been growing. In 1942 the Chinese Ambassador, Wellington Koo, in a letter to the Minister of War Transport, Lord Leathers, felt compelled to protest at the number of deaths amongst Chinese seamen on British ships. Relations with the Chinese were poor and getting worse.

The Government's own actions were also adding to the sense of grievance and frustration amongst the men. Routinely, disputes were being settled by force. A long running disagreement that began in September 1940 was brought to an end in April 1941 with men being imprisoned and then deported.

A sense of mutual antipathy had been established. The Chinese were regarded as troublemakers and they, in turn, were growing ever more embittered at their treatment.

Strike

With the entry of Japan into the War in December 1941 and the invasion of both Hong Kong and Singapore, the option of simply deporting the Chinese had gone. It also meant that they were now firmly based in the UK and faced with UK costs. And this on a wage that was only a fraction of the pay received by European seamen.

Soon men who were paid off after completing their contract were refusing to re-engage. Their ships could not be sailed without them. The men were in a strong position. And they were getting organised. By this stage they had two unions representing them.

The strike stayed solid from February to April 1942 as the employers and the UK Government refused to negotiate with either union. They would only talk to the Chinese Government officials in whom the men were said to have little confidence.

For the men the key issue was equality of treatment. The focus was the War Risk Bonus. The bitterness of the dispute was not helped when the Liverpool police broke up a Union meeting; violence broke out and several Chinese were imprisoned.

The strike only came to an end when, under the London Agreement of April 1942, the men were given the same War Risk Bonus as the British - £10 per month. They also got a £2 per month flat increase in their pay. However, at the end of 1942 British seamen were awarded a further increase in pay. The Chinese would not be offered anything else until 1944 when they got a further £1.2s.0d. (£1.10) per month.

Almost inevitably 1943 saw desertions by Chinese seamen from British ships in New York increase significantly. British officials in New York reported that low pay and bad treatment was exacerbating the situation. Men were refusing to sail and they were walking off ships.

Their reputation as being difficult to deal with was now firmly established.

The War ends: Chinese pay is slashed

From the early years of the War, British shipowners had become ever more concerned about their likely competitive position when peace came. They were worried about the new vessels which the neutral Swedes possessed. But their main cause for anxiety was the Americans. They would not recognise the restrictions on competition that the British shipowners' cartel had enjoyed before the War.

Faced with this situation, Holts wanted to cut costs and deal with the militancy of their Chinese crews. They wanted to get rid of the men who had sailed with them during the War and, one imagines, most especially all those who had caused them the problems.

At the end of the conflict wages for Chinese seamen were cut. The War Risk money was removed from the Chinese but it was, however, kept for the British seamen.

Butterfield & Swire, Holts' agents in China, wrote to tell them that trouble was inevitable. That trouble began when Chinese crews in Sydney, Australia, went on strike at the end of 1946. Rates were now so low that it became impossible to recruit skilled men and quartermasters in Shanghai. Men in Shanghai could not support their families, neither could seamen in Hong Kong.

Back in the UK, the Government was taking action to remove the Chinese.

Government action

At a meeting at the Home Office on 19th October 1945 the Government decided to remove the Chinese seamen from Britain. They were said to be an undesirable element in Liverpool. Perhaps of more relevance, the city authorities wanted the accommodation which was occupied by the Chinese.

Deportation was not a legal option. Simply, the men's landing conditions were altered so that they would be required to leave by a certain specified date. Those who did not leave could then be rounded up by the police.

The Home Office files show that 800 men had been repatriated by 23rd March 1946 of whom 231 had been 'rounded up'. By 11th July 1946 a total of 1,362 men (including the 800), had been repatriated. Fifteen had been 'rounded up' in a two-day search at the end of this period. It seems that by the middle of 1946 the men had gone.

The men go back

The men from Hong Kong and Singapore went back to the devastation caused by the Japanese. Unemployment was high and pay was low. But just getting back was a problem for those from the mainland. At the beginning of 1946 Shanghai men were being held in Singapore and Hong Kong because of the shortage of ships going to that city. We have verbal evidence that some men jumped ship in both Singapore and Hong Kong.

When the men did get back to Shanghai they were faced with unemployment rates of 25% or more and by rampant inflation. By the end of 1947, given Holts' low pay rates, Shanghai men were flocking to the China Merchants Line. Although Holts had increased pay by 50% earlier that year, their rates still remained uncompetitive.

Shanghai men were also joining such Shanghai-owned lines as Y.P.Pao and H.H. Tung. Between 1946 and 1949 many moved to Hong Kong with these shipping magnates. High unemployment amongst seamen in Hong Kong in 1948 would surely have meant that men who had jobs with Shanghai lines would have remained with them.

The Chinese Seamen's Union, the 'Kuomintang', apparently communist infiltrated, also transferred to Hong Kong. Its officials resurfaced in 1947 as representatives of the Hong Kong Seamen's Union. A sign painted on the wall of a building in Jordan Road, Kowloon, still shows where those offices used to be.

Married men – forced repatriation.

Many of the seamen who left Liverpool were undoubtedly happy to go home. But for hundreds of Chinese seamen it meant leaving their wives and their children. This presented the Government with a problem that it never fully solved. The consequent muddle and confusion led to the break-up of hundreds of families.

Initially the Home Office instructed that deportation orders were not to be made against men with British-born wives. They were not to be included in the first list of those to go. They were to be reported on individually. Then it was decided that those men were still to be told that they must leave by a specified date, but that their cases would be investigated. However, they were not to be given any indication that a man married to a British-born woman had the right to remain in the UK.

The only concession afforded to the married couples at this stage was that the men were not to be made to leave on the first ship due out after the 10th December 1945. However, Crew Agreements now in the National Archives show that ships were leaving before this date carrying men being repatriated.

Nevertheless pressure was being exerted on the married men to force them out of the country. Memos in the Home Office files of 1945 show that they were to be

discouraged from taking up shore employment and were not to be allowed 'to land for discharge for that purpose'.

If the men could not get jobs ashore, could they get seagoing jobs that would enable them to keep their families? Holts were exerting pressure to prevent this. The company remained determined to keep its labour costs as low as it could. Chinese seamen could not get jobs at British pay rates.

By now British officials were becoming disturbed at what was happening. J.R. Garstang, the Immigration Officer at Liverpool, protested that men were being forced to sign-on ships under a new Chinese Agreement or be paid nothing. Men could not support their families on these pay rates and it was forcing the wives to go to China with their families. There, as we have already seen, rates of pay offered were not sufficient for them to live on either.

This was, as S.E. Dudley of the Home Office stated, 'enforced repatriation'. By this stage, the Chinese pool managers were placing off-pay all Chinese seamen married to British-born women who refused to be repatriated or to sign-on vessels for discharge in the Far East.

Government officials were arguing that no Chinese seaman married to a British-born woman had at any time been forcibly repatriated. But it seems that the effect of official action and inaction, combined with the behaviour of the Shipping Federation, had achieved the same result.

The problem of the men and their wives began to get lost in bureaucracy and further confusion. In a note to file, C. Parkinson of the Home Office wrote that 'satisfactory' Chinese seamen married to British-born women should be allowed to take shore employment. However, the matter was not seen as being worth action at other than the lower levels of the system. Parkinson suggested that the decision should be left to the Immigration Officer at Liverpool. But no action was taken on this and the file was archived. The issue was consigned to official oblivion.

The women and their children

In August 1945 an article appeared in the national newspaper the *News Chronicle* reporting on a meeting led by a Mrs Lee protesting that 150 women married to Chinese men had been left destitute in Liverpool. This article stated that each of the women had an average of three children. An article in the *Liverpool Echo* of 19th August 1945 reported on the same meeting. This article mentioned 300 women, some of whom were said to have six or seven children. This indicated long-term relationships with up to 1,000 children involved.

So far we have found no further official information on the women, but we have gleaned some facts from interviews with some of their now somewhat elderly children. Their stories show that many of the women thought that they had been deserted. Some arranged to have their children adopted or placed in children's homes. Others worked at two or more jobs in an attempt to keep their families together.

It seems that some of the men did return in the early 1950s. It is probable they were then working for Hong Kong-based shipping lines. But by then it was too late. Their wives had remarried.

Why did it happen?

Racism was evident in the merchant navy from the early years of the twentieth century. Approximately 6,000 Chinese seamen had served in the British merchant fleet in World War I. They had faced demands from the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union that they be dismissed, and after the War they too had been forced out of the UK.

Social class was also a factor. In the Government papers there are several references to the social class of the seamen's wives. There are clear indications that this was of relevance to the decision being taken. The British shipowners' fear of competition and Holts' desire to maintain its cheap source of labour were also factors.

A number of the Chinese seamen were union men and, moreover, members of a communist union. Increased tension with the Soviet Union at the end of the War would not have helped their case. Chinese publications show that men with union connections were 'blackballed' when they got back to their home ports. They could not get a ship back to the UK.

Officials and politicians may have been afraid of high unemployment after the War. This had occurred after the First World War as large numbers of discharged servicemen came on to the labour market. We know that the City of Liverpool wanted the housing which was being occupied by the men.

The women and their husbands had little political influence. In relatively small numbers and in a devastated Britain they were never going to be seen as a priority.

Today

After over 60 years Liverpool now has a memorial to the men and to their wives. It is situated, along with other memorials to the Merchant Navy, at the Pier Head. In English and in Chinese, it informs those who read it of the contribution made by the Chinese seamen in both World Wars. It also tells of an incident which, until now, has remained only in the memories of those who were affected by it.

Postscript

Mr Foley's wife, Yvonne, is one of the now 'rather mature' children mentioned in this article. Yvonne was one of those who was instrumental in setting up the memorial at Liverpool Pier Head. There is also a website which is part of the ongoing attempt to assist with further research:

< www.halfandhalf.org.uk >

Sources

The Ocean Archive
The Public Records Office, Kew
The Modern Records Centre, Warwick University
Liverpool Central Library

A GEORDIE TRAMP

by William C. Reeves

In 1898 a struggling author named Morgan Robertson concocted a novel about a fabulous Atlantic liner, far larger than any that had ever been built. Robertson loaded his ship with rich and complacent people and then wrecked it one cold April night in collision with an iceberg. This somehow showed the futility of everything, and the book was titled '*Futility*' when it was published that year by the firm of M.F. Mansfield.

Fourteen years later a British shipping company named the White Star Line built a steamer remarkably like the one in Robertson's novel. The new liner was 66,000 tons displacement; Robertson's was 70,000. The real ship was 882.5 feet long; the fictional one was 800 feet. Both vessels were triple screw and could make 24-25 knots. Both could carry about 3,000 people, and both had lifeboats for only a fraction of this number. But, then, this didn't seem to matter because both were labelled 'unsinkable'.

Robertson called his ship the *Titan*; the White Star Line called its ship the *Titanic*.

(From the Foreword of 'A Night to Remember' by Walter Lord)

*Twenty three years after the **Titanic** sank on the night of 14th/15th April 1912 the Geordie tramp **Titanian** left the Tyne. William C. Reeves recalls the voyage:*

The big Geordie cargo vessel had tramped the world's shipping lanes and had taken everything the sea could offer without a scratch of misfortune. To every maritime part of the world, but for one exception, the big, yellow-funnelled ship had traded, and the exception was a rendezvous of tragedy; a place of peril that the fates had decided for an early meeting.

She lay in readiness for sailing when I joined her at the Tyneside shipyard of Swan, Hunter on what should have been just another voyage. The yard of her birth had prepared their ship again for all the hazards of the sea excepting one – she was indeed a ship to be proud of. From the docks of the repair yard she moved into the river, as bonny and as much of Tyneside as the crew that had mustered in their readiness to sign on at the Mill Dam.

It fell as part of my duty to be in the wheelhouse as we headed down river towards the sea and passing close to the North Pier, I glanced apprehensively shorewards as we sailed by. A few people, braving the weather to watch a departing product of Tyneside, waved fervently as we took up with the southerly wind and headed north for the Skerries.

Captain Taylor was proud of his full Geordie crew and I was just out of my apprenticeship along with the other young ABs. The ship had started another long voyage, fully prepared to meet the normal good and the normal bad that accompanies the seven winds of Neptune.

"Set your watch when you leave the bridge, Reevey," said the chief mate, "and keep your eyes off Whitley Bay, you'll not see it again for a long time." The mate

followed up his advice with a whistle blast that meant I was being relieved from the wheel. St. Mary's was abeam, its flashing light beginning to pierce the gloom of 16th April, 1935. The Pentland Firth, the Skerries and then the Butt of Lewis saw us into the Western Ocean and steering North 85 degrees West into a heavy sea.

The Atlantic passage was uneventful apart from heavy seas until 23rd April when at 11pm I ascended the foc'sle head, appropriately dressed and ready to relieve the lookout.

"How she go?" I greeted my watchmate who had just struck six bells and reported the navigation lights in good trim. The sea had calmed down to a sullen flatness by the time my watchmate took his leave and I contemplated the limitless confines of a dark moonless scene. I searched the inky blackness stretching beyond the loneliness that seemed to envelop our ship.

No friendly lights appeared from other vessels and the feeling grew upon me that this area was more like a hunting ground for demons than a seaway for navigation. Neither porpoise nor dolphin came near to break the monotony about the dark waters that showed no horizon.

I thought of a book in my cabin about a ship called the **Titan** which had reached the very area we were now traversing. I remembered something in the story that explained how that vessel's lookout man, and as it happened my counterpart, had focused his attention towards the curling bow wave as though he had sensed something wrong, something sinister, and yet something that kept his mind riveted to that spot.

His presentiment of apparent danger was well founded but never acted upon until it was too late, and now it was my turn. I had to act but with what logical reason? I had to be quick, quicker than the lookout man in the **Titan**, and sharper than the mythical god whom I had some reason to believe was also responsible for the fate of the **Titanic**.

The name of my ship was gleaming white below me as I looked over the bow – **Titanian**. Quickly I realised the connection, the trap was set for any vessel daring to bear the name of that mighty mythical god – **Titan**. The god's destructive fury would come without warning as it had done twice before, and right above the place where thousands of white, bleached bones lay in the darkened depths.

The position we were in geographically was exactly the same as the **Titanic** - 41°46' North, 50°14' West, approximately 320 miles south-south-east of Cape Race. What logical reason could I give by sounding the alarm and having a ship hove to for what might be, after all, a fanciful reason? The **Titanic**, the **Titan**, and here in the same month of the year, the **Titanian**.

Both lookouts on the previous ill-fated ships had waited for something more tangible than mere fancy to halt a giant vessel. I paced the foc'sle head and eyed the ship's bell that swayed nearby. A few steps away hung the knell of salvation or death, or even the ridicule of false alarm.

My right hand reached and grasped the bell rope. I searched my mind for one good, earthly reason why I should use it. Just one reason to upset the balance in favour of a general alarm. I would have gladly accepted anything tangible in the way of visual danger, but the chain of events had strengthened my conviction that danger lay in our path.

I had the solution now. Just one more coincidence, small as it was to upset the balance in favour of instant action. I was born on the day of the month and in the year of the **Titanic** disaster. Now I felt I was favoured to deliver the **Titanian** from the same destruction. I rang the bell loud and clear, warning a sleeping crew and pealing disappointment to the gods, hungry for a Geordie ship.

The bridge officer, alerted for action, looked towards my station of duty and promptly obeyed my warning cry: "*Stop engines quickly – iceberg ahead!*" The **Titanian** of Newcastle lay above the fated graveyard. The bridge telegraph signalled 'stop' and I felt the spasmodic shudder as the engines halted giving complete silence excepting for the lessening swish of the bow wave. The bow wave that lowered in the nick of time as the small icebergs and growlers collided and tore at our now twisted and broken stem.

The **Titanian** came to a stop in a moving, crunching ice-field. A gigantic iceberg, even on such a dark night, became visible within minutes of the engines being stopped. It loomed high, wide and menacing within yards of our course.

The master, mates and engineers now joined me in assessing the damage with the help of a strong searchlight. The towering iceberg, denied for the time being of a natural victim, looked more spectacular as we peered inquisitively at it with the beam of our searchlight. Our radio officer transmitted an 'S.O.S' giving our name and position which was received at Cape Race and St. John's, Newfoundland, during the early hours of that April morning. The **Titanian** lay in the agonizing grip of ice growlers that heaved and rolled towards the seemingly magnetic suction attending the waiting, impatient iceberg. The situation resolved itself into a game of strategy, a battle of wits, fought with the guile and tenacity that accompanies a hard-fought game of chess. We retreated, advanced and moved as any opening presented itself in the formidable ice-field.

The **Titanian's** propeller, once free and unfettered, kept at bay for a time our drift to destruction, but it churned and it tore just once too often, breaking its blades on the enveloping ice. The towering iceberg, now looming up so near, would soon destroy our ship and the drift towards it began in earnest. In readiness we shored the bulkhead in No.1 hold and contemplated with dread the buckled hull and bent ribs along the full length of our ship. We knew that nothing more could be done unless help arrived within hours. "*How would you all like to be walking along Ocean Road now?*" asked a Shields lad as we watched and considered the drift, thinking of the untimely end to an expected long voyage. I replied that it looked a bit too cold for shore leave and suggested the warm galley as a venue for further conversation. We huddled together and waited with that helpless, hopeless feeling as the **Titanian** shook and shivered from every blow delivered by the rolling ice growlers.

Captain Taylor joined us and explained the position regarding rescue. It was useless putting boats over the side, he explained, as the ice was packed solidly about the ship. A lifeboat would be crunched to matchwood within seconds of launching. On the other hand, he said, it would still be possible for an icebreaker to reach the ship if she came on the scene now. We knew our drill, and it was only a matter of being ready to perform it quickly, if and when help reached us. The look-out men were posted at vantage points and these were joined by others who dismissed the extreme cold as just a minor problem.

The **Titanian** took on a heavy list to starboard as the pack ice lifted that side in defiance of her weight and bulk. Nearer, and yet nearer, the imprisoned ship drifted towards the iceberg. We reckoned we had about two hours before complete oblivion overcame the ship.

"Light abaft the starboard beam, sir." The welcome cry was taken up and passed on by the other look-out men until we were all aware that a rescue ship was fighting her way towards our stricken vessel. Nearer came the gallant icebreaker as she ploughed through the ice making her own difficult passage towards us. An hour passed and then we were within hailing distance, her strong searchlight playing along the **Titanian's** damaged hull. Her brave crew of Newfoundlanders, anxious for our safety, were risking everything to join us in the superhuman task of robbing this graveyard of another victim.

Closer and closer the icebreaker moved in, until the galaxy of lights between both vessels revealed her name, the **Caribou**. Her master, leaning over the side of the bridge, issued directives, first to his own crew and then to ours, until the team work of both ships moved in unison. A line was fired onto our deck and attached to it was a huge hawser for towing. We began to haul in the line and then took the heavier strain as the main stronger wire followed across the narrow channel of ice.

"Sharp as you can, lads," shouted the **Caribou's** master, *"Bend your backs to that tow line or we'll have to leave your ship."* It was touch and go whether he took us off the **Titanian** or risked everything in a double rescue.

The tow line was ready but hanging limp until the **Caribou** took up the challenge and pitted her strength against ice and sea. She strained and manoeuvred where the iceberg towered. The **Titanian** had barely moved after several agonising minutes. She was powerless to help the **Caribou** in her task.

The icebreaker's master hailed Captain Taylor again. *"Your vessel is in a bad way now, captain; will you make arrangements for abandoning ship if she doesn't move. I'll try to keep you clear until more help comes."* Captain Taylor became more anxious as the amplified remarks ominously re-echoed over the white jungle. *"Please do your best, Captain,"* he hailed back, *"We are ready and standing by for your instructions."*

The **Caribou** veered to port and then to starboard, the tow rope taut and cracking under the strain. Suddenly her engines stopped and we were hailed again with the report that the spring coupling attached to the towing gear had broken. We still had an hour's grace due to our rescuers' intervention, but the work of repairs required some precious time. A light appeared again in the region of our starboard quarter, and this proved to be the sealing steamer **Imogene**.

She drew up to the **Caribou**, her crew preparing to join forces in regaining the **Titanian's** freedom. Another tow rope, this time from the **Imogene**, was hauled in and made fast to our ship. The **Caribou**, in the meantime, was ready again for resuming her task. Both vessels heaved in unison on their respective lines, smoke belching from their funnels, and their powerful engines reverberating metallic clanking sounds over the icy wastes.

The **Titanian** moved slowly from her frozen cradle, and we all cheered on the valiant Newfoundlanders ahead of us. The **Caribou** and the **Imogene** were now

cutting a clear passage for the **Titanian** to sail through. Our redemption from an obvious fate was hard to believe, yet the giant iceberg was now receding.

Postscript

"*Funny thing about this rescue,*" the shore pilot said to me as I stood at the **Titanian's** wheel, "*the position you were in when we got your S.O.S. is a very historic one: the **Titan** and the **Titanic** were lost there, and this ship is the **Titanian** – I think I might have anticipated danger if I had been you.*"

A report in *Lloyd's List*, casualties, dated St John's, Newfoundland, 30th April, 1935 stated: 'Motor vessel **Titanian**, with her stem broken after having been jammed in heavy ice, has been brought into port by the sealing steamer **Imogene**.'

From: Lloyd's Register, 1935

TITANIAN Official Number: 147657, Signal Letters: G D Z W
4,867 gross tons, 2,991 nett. Length: 400·8 feet, Breadth: 53·5 feet.
Built 1924 by Swan Hunter and Wigham Richardson at Newcastle.
Managers: W.A. Souter & Co. Ltd. Registered at Newcastle.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

*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 March, 2007

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE 'KING ORRY', 1945 – 1975

John Shepherd

Thursday, 19th April, 2007

SMALL SHIPS, DEEP WATERS : 1950 – 1960

Alan McClelland

Thursday, 17th May, 2007

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

followed by

EXPLOSION ON THE 'REINA DEL PACIFICO' IN BELFAST

By J. Lingwood

MEMORIES OF THE “*TUSCANIA*”

by ‘*Helmsman*’

The Anchor Liner Tuscania of 1922 has attracted some comment in recent editions of ‘The Bulletin’. This short article appeared in ‘Sea Breezes’ in April, 1969.

For many reasons I always had a great admiration for the **Tuscania**. She had been built by Fairfields in 1922 and was one of many intermediate Atlantic passenger liners constructed for the leading companies after the First World War.

I had been accustomed to working on coasters, Scandinavian timber ships, Greek tramps and the like. I had travelled in both steerage and saloon on the cross-channel packets, the passenger and cattle ships which were scorned by real deep-water men. I had even passed Canadian Pacific’s **Metagama** and White Star’s **Megantic** as I arrived in the Mersey in the old **Heroic** from Belfast. To me the **Heroic** herself looked like a liner as she lay at the landing stage. She really was a fine looking ship.

My big moment came one morning in 1931 when I boarded the **Tuscania** as she lay at anchor off Moville, Lough Foyle. I had come out from Londonderry in the old Anchor Line tender **Seamore**. As we came alongside the **Tuscania**, she really looked immense. Her saloon was a palace of soft lights and the shop window displayed costly souvenirs, but her steerage accommodation was still noticeably spartan.

Years passed and I saw the **Tuscania** often in Lough Foyle, and sometimes at her Yorkhill berth on the Clyde. Occasionally she missed a trip or two when she did a relief voyage on the Indian service.

Then came the sad news that the **Tuscania** was being sold. In 1939, still handsome and beautifully proportioned, she passed to the Greek flag and was renamed **Nea Hellas**. She immediately became the pride of the Greek merchant navy and entered the Piraeus – New York express service.

When the Second World War broke out, Greece was soon in the forefront of the fighting. Many Greek ships were taken over by the Allies and notable among them was the **Nea Hellas**. She was placed under Anchor Line management and served throughout the war as a troopship. Few of her companions in convoy shared my respect for the old ship, for she emitted such clouds of black smoke that she was a menace to the rest of the convoy. Following a refit, this dangerous nuisance stopped.

The **Nea Hellas** did sterling work throughout the war and in 1947 she was returned to the Greek flag and re-entered the Piraeus – New York service. In 1955 she was renamed **New York**. I asked many of her crew why the name had been changed and from the answers I received I gathered that **Nea Hellas** (‘*New Greece*’) had taken on a political significance that was distasteful to some passengers.

Following the name change, the old ship was transferred to the Bremerhaven – New York service, with calls at Le Havre, Southampton and Cobh. One day I happened to be in Cobh and my shipping friends advised me that the **New York** was due shortly. So once again I stood on the deck of the tender **Blarney** watching eagerly as we steamed down Cork harbour. The **Blarney** herself was another interesting relic, being none other than the former **Royal Iris**, the ex-Mersey ferry of Zeebrugge fame.

At anchor inside Roches Point lay the **New York**. She was in Goulandris colours with the yellow, blue and black funnel and the trident. In recent years I had become accustomed to the 'new-look' ships. Smart, streamlined motorships with their bridges and wheelhouses crammed with radar, Decca and so on, had taken the place of an open bridge. And so my first impression on re-encountering the **New York** was one of immense age.

As the **Blarney** drew alongside, the **New York's** orchestra was vigorously playing *MacNamara's Band*, while from the foremast yard flew the Irish courtesy flag. I travelled saloon in her and she was a perfect credit to her owners. I examined her as thoroughly as I could. The passenger accommodation had been completely refurbished; the cabins were spacious and bathrooms abounded. The old Anchor liner had become a real Mediterranean ship internally, and the old steerage had largely been transformed into crew accommodation. The orchestra was German, as were many of the waiters and stewards. The master, officers and deckhands were all Greek.

In common with all Greek Line ships the cuisine was excellent, far superior to many more famous liners. The service was impeccable. Two areas of the ship had not changed – the fo'c'sle and the bridge and wheelhouse. The wheelhouse was still the spartan structure of the old days. There was radar of course and R.T. and so on, but the actual structure had changed little from Anchor Line days.

New ships or second-hand vessels were joining the Greek Line in the late 1950s and I knew that the days of the **New York** were numbered. I took the chance of saying a last brief 'farewell' to her when I joined her in Le Havre for the run across to Southampton. She was outward bound from Bremerhaven to New York. It was almost her last voyage.

The old **Tuscania** / **Nea Hellas** / **New York** returned to Piraeus after her final trans-Atlantic crossings, and after a spell of lay-up she was sold to Japanese breakers. She made the passage to the Far East under her own steam, a gallant ship and a credit to her builders and owners. So passed the **Tuscania**, the first liner I ever boarded. I still remember her with deep affection and respect. ■

TUSCANIA : built by the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Co., Govan in 1922.
Gross Tonnage : 16,991 gross, 12,201 nett, 10,400 deadweight. Yard No:595.
Length: 573 feet; Breadth: 70 feet.

Twin-screw; Brown-Curtis dbl. reduction geared turbines.

Passengers (when built) : 196 first-class, 377 second-class, 1,818 third-class.

Launched: 4th October 1921, maiden voyage Glasgow-Moville-New York 16.9.22.

1926: chartered to Cunard for its new London-Southampton-New York service.

1926/31: some winter cruising from New York; also occasional sailings to Bombay.

April, 1929: 40 cases of cholera on board on passage Bombay-U.K.; two died.

1930: laid up at Glasgow. 1931: re-entered service as a 'maid of all work'

1935: taken over by Anchor Line (1935) Ltd and managed by Runciman.

1936: repatriated British troops from Palestine.

1938: laid up.

19th April, 1939: sold to the General Steam Navigation Co. of Greece (the 'Greek Line'). Renamed **NEA HELLAS**. Passengers: 200 cabin-class, 400 tourist, 500 third.

19th May, 1939: first sailing for the Greek Line, Piraeus – New York.

November 1940: Following Italy's invasion of Greece, the **Nea Hellas** was returned to Anchor Line management, but retained her name. Commenced trooping service.

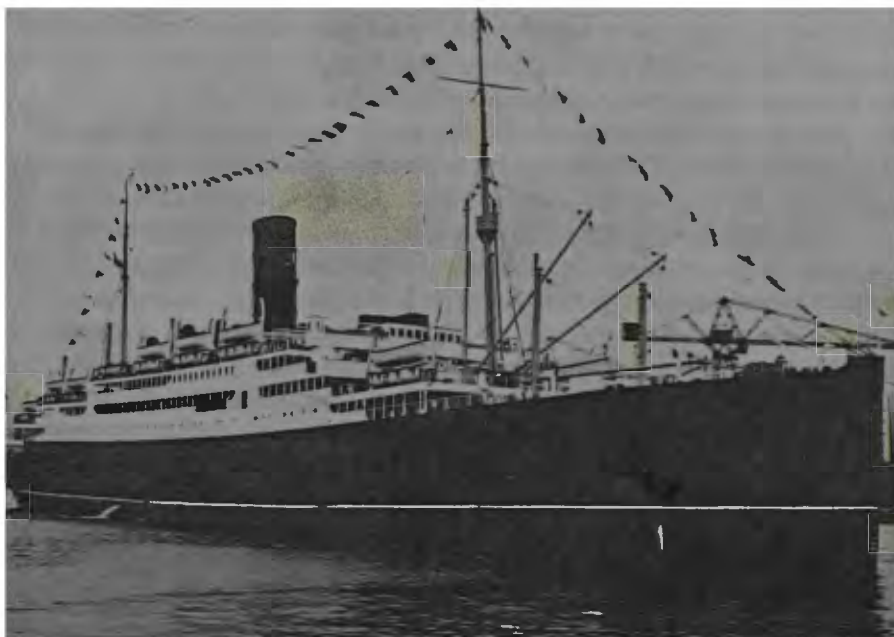
January, 1947: returned to the Greek Line and refitted at Genoa.

September, 1947: entered Piraeus-Malta-Naples-Genoa-Lisbon-New York service.

1955: Overhauled and renamed **NEW YORK**. Placed on Bremerhaven – New York or Halifax, NS route.

14th November 1959: Laid up at Perama, Piraeus.

1961: Sold for £312,000 for demolition in Japan. Arrived at Onomichi, under her own steam, on 12th October.



The Tuscania, shortly after her completion by the Fairfield yard

*I have a personal memory of the **Tuscania**. On a June evening in 1958 I was returning from Llandudno on board the **St Tudno**. We would be arriving at Liverpool just before high water and so the **St Tudno** took the Rock Channel. Almost as soon as we left Llandudno we could see this old-fashioned looking passenger liner with an immensely tall funnel heading for Liverpool, and just as the **St Tudno** arrived off New Brighton, there was the **New York** (ex **Tuscania**) dead ahead of us. I'm not certain why she was calling at Liverpool – can any member shed any light on the reason for her visit? The old ship was certainly a magnificent sight in the evening sunshine. j.s.*

TWO DINGHIES FOR THE “*CALCHAS*”

by John Fletcher

My first sight of Lawrence Holt, the senior manager of the Blue Funnel Line, came as I was led along the corridors of India Buildings, Liverpool, by Brian Heathcote, the head of the midshipmen's department. Pausing for a moment, for the great man could obviously see that I was a very new midshipman, he asked Mr Heathcote who I was. Later I came to know that this was characteristic of Mr Holt, even to the extent of him walking unannounced aboard a Blue Funnel ship and talking to the crew.

Mr Heathcote told him my name and this must have rung a bell somewhere because when he went on to explain that I was being sent to the *Neleus*, one of the coal-burning steamers. Mr Holt suggested that I might like to sail in the four-masted barque *Pamir* in which the company had a place.

I would have jumped at the chance but in the event it never came and instead I was appointed to the *Calchas*, a new motorship which was just about to start her second voyage.

I knew from listening to other midshipmen that the *Calchas* was a difficult ship to crew for she was a cadet ship, the first of her kind since the Federal Line's *Durham* in pre-war years but differing from that ship in that she carried no sailors at all, being manned on deck entirely by 24 midshipmen, a bosun, a bosun's mate, a carpenter and a carpenter's mate.

There had been trouble with the seamen's union at first; the union claiming that we were no more than cheap labour for indeed the only pay we received was the £80 premium our parents had to pay to Alfred Holt & Company before we could sign indentures as apprentices, a sum which was paid back to us in wages over our four-year apprenticeship. However, a compromise had been reached whereby the difference in wages between a regular crew of ABs and ordinary seamen and what we received as midshipmen went into the '*Calchas Fund*' to enable ratings who had served more than twelve months in the company to sit for their second mate's certificate.

As the new crew, we were to join the *Calchas* in Plymouth and we travelled down overnight in a coach, leaving India Buildings at 10 o'clock on the Saturday night. It was a long and weary journey and we arrived at the seamen's mission in time to enjoy a good breakfast. The second mate, who was in charge of the party, contacted the agent who told him that the ship was due in about three o'clock that afternoon, so we were left free to explore Plymouth but we had to be back at the mission by two o'clock when the coach would take us to a tender which would carry us and our gear out to the *Calchas* lying at anchor in Plymouth Sound.

I found it ironic to be back in Plymouth, a place I knew well as it was only two months before that I had left the town after serving two years in the heavy cruiser *Devonshire*, never thinking as I marched out of HMS *Drake*, the RN barracks, that I would be back there so soon.

We were soon aboard the tender and steaming out to the *Calchas* which was lying at anchor just off Drake's Island and my first impression was that she was a blaze of colour. This was inevitable, I suppose, after RN ships with their unrelieved

dark battleship-grey, but nevertheless the **Calchas** was a mass of contrasting colours with her red anti-fouling showing well above the water, for she was making a ballast passage across to Montreal; her china-pink boot topping; the white superstructure and dominating all, her great blue funnel.

It didn't take long to get aboard and stow our gear, see the other lads on to the tender and then the first job was to turn-in the gangway and secure it, and in no time at all the anchor was aweigh and we were off to Montreal. I was berthed in the half-deck with three other midshipmen and it seemed spacious indeed after the crowded and cramped messdecks of HMS **Devonshire**. There were bunks, too, instead of hammocks although undoubtedly a hammock is one of the most comfortable things I have ever slept in.

It all took a bit of getting used to but sitting in the messroom later that evening I found out a little more about what was to be my new home for the next six months. The master was Captain Frank Wilkes who was not to be confused with another master of the same name but with a different nickname. Our Captain Wilkes was 'Gentleman' Wilkes and had been the company's first ever midshipman.

Most of this was explained to me by the bosun's mate when he saw me later in the evening and explained my duties for the first week. I was to be the messroom 'peggy' which actually wasn't much different from being 'cook of the mess' in a naval ship. He went on to tell me that inspection was held every forenoon at 10.45 when the master and his senior officers would visit the accommodation, at which time I should have to stand by the messroom and then the crew's quarters and woe betide me if everything wasn't immaculate.

At seven bells I had to collect the food for the 12-to-four watchkeepers and the same at 12 noon for the crowd, and then the same again at five o'clock. As for the voyage itself, according to the bosun's mate, we were to load at Montreal, Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York for Malaya, Borneo and Indonesia and then it was a 'double New Yorker', which meant back to the USA; or alternatively back to Liverpool or the Continent. It all seemed interesting enough and certainly gave me enough to think about as I turned in after what had proved to be a most eventful day.

The rest of the crew spent their time cleaning holds most of the way across the Atlantic and it didn't take long to get into a daily routine. I found that the main difference between service under a grey funnel and a blue funnel was in the discipline, for whereas in the former it was rigidly imposed from above, here it was more in the form of self-discipline and far less formal. There was no saluting on board the **Calchas**, although the officers were treated every bit as respectfully as in the RN.

The hands were called at 05.30 each morning and work began at 06.00, with lunch from 12.00 to 13.00 and 'knock-off' at 17.00, apart from the watchkeepers. 'Field Days' were a regular thing; that is, each man did his share of day work and then maintained his watches during the dark hours. Here, perhaps, we were taken advantage of to a certain extent for, as I soon learned, on a ship manned by sailors, any hours worked over eight a day counted for overtime, as did all weekend work. By and large, though, none of the lads seemed to mind 'Field Days' although there were plenty of grumbles when one was announced.

The **Calchas** maintained a steady 16 knots and soon we were approaching Father Point to pick up the St Lawrence pilot. It was a fascinating passage up the river

and once we were under the lee of the land all hands turned to in topping the derricks ready for cargo work. The ship was secure alongside at Montreal by early evening and shore leave was granted and I think we were all struck by the same thing – the abundance and variety of food in the shops. After the shortage and rationing in the UK it was almost unbelievable.

Three days later we were off again and Philadelphia, Baltimore and New York followed in quick succession with no more than three or four days in each port and loading going on around the clock. We midshipmen were kept pretty busy on deck and cargo watching, but most of us managed to get ashore to see the sights of the New World and for all of us it was indeed a very new world!

In no time at all it seemed that the *Calchas* was fully loaded and we slipped away from the pier in Brooklyn and headed east across the Atlantic. I had long since finished my spell as ‘peggy’ and turned to on deck with the rest of the crowd. Work followed the usual routine. Wash down before breakfast and then it was overhauling the cargo gear, sending down the topping tackles and re-splicing new eyes in the cargo runners.

Day followed day and once we had Malta astern it was all new to me and I was able to wonder at the Suez Canal, endure the heat of the Red Sea and the barrenness of Aden. Then it was off across the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal until we entered the Malacca Strait where the deep blue of the ocean gave way to the greener hues of shoal water.

Our first port, Penang, was followed by Port Swettenham and then Singapore, which seemed more like an eastern version of Liverpool with rarely less than four Blue Funnel ships alongside in the Keppel Harbour. Then it was out through the Eastern Roads and a right turn down the Rhio Strait to lose ourselves for seemingly endless weeks round Java, to ports with magical sounding names such as Tanjung Priok, full of graceful Dutch passenger liners, Semarang, Surabaya and Cirebon. We made a brief call at Balikpapan in Borneo for bunkers and then it was back to Singapore, Port Swettenham and Penang before, almost down to our marks with all the cargoes of the East – rubber, timber, tin and spices – we headed for Colombo to top up with tea.

A ‘double New Yorker’ was out. We were bound for Liverpool and not unnaturally our thoughts turned to home and a short spell of leave. The work never let up, though, and additionally we each had to make sure that our office work was done, and there was the voyage report to complete. This was something new to me but each of us had to make a comprehensive report of the voyage. On the day before we sailed again there would be a gathering on the ship of all the officers and midshipmen, presided over by Lawrence Holt, and all the reports would be gone over and any complaints and requests dealt with.

This gathering duly took place and the reports were dealt with at length, all save mine which I felt was being retained until the end. It had caused quite a lot of controversy among the lads and most of them, while keen on what I had requested, were confident that it would be thrown out, for what I had requested was no less than two 14ft sailing dinghies.

This stemmed partly from my time in HMS *Devonshire* which carried eight such dinghies in addition to the usual whalers and cutters and as I had pointed out, not

unreasonably I felt, if a Royal Navy cadet training ship could have such a collection of sailing craft, surely the only Merchant Navy training ship, especially a Blue Funnel ship, could manage two. The moment finally came and as Lawrence Holt took up my report I could feel the eyes of all the other midshipmen upon me.

He read through it, dealt with the minor points, and then came to the question of the dinghies. It was, he said, a most unusual request but no less valid for that and after consultation with the other managers he had decided to place two such dinghies on board. In fact, Mr Holt went on to say, they had already been shipped in one of the Glen boats sailing from London and would be waiting for us in Singapore. I felt elated and as the meeting was dismissed and we went about our duties I could only reflect on the old adage, "*those that don't ask don't get*".

I stayed in the **Calchas** for three more voyages and then transferred to a ship which was right at the other end of the scale, one built in 1922. This was the old coal-burning steamer **Machaon** which, with good Welsh coal, could make 10 knots and I stayed aboard her until I had finished my apprenticeship. It was in the **Machaon** that I met Ordinary Seaman David Macaffrey who became the first rating to benefit from the **Calchas** Fund and who, many years later, was master of one of the first tankers to be hit by the Iranians in the Gulf War. ■

CALCHAS (3)

Built by Harland & Wolff Ltd at Belfast, 1947.

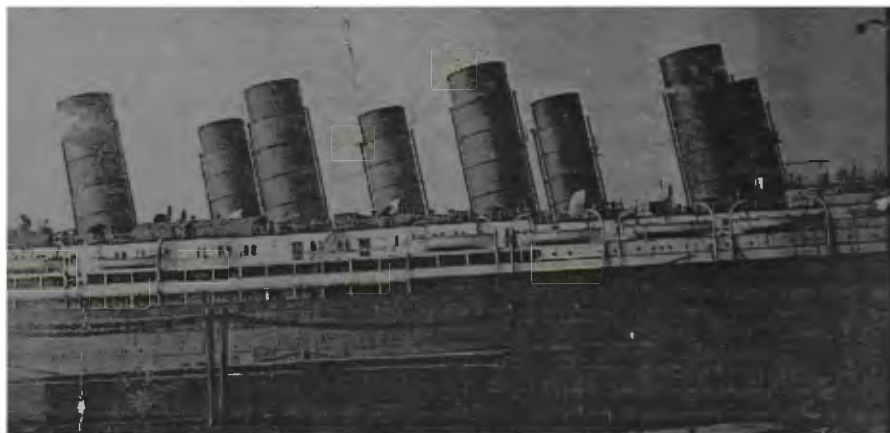
7,639 gross tons, 4,526 nett. Length: 487ft, Breadth: 62ft.

Delays at Dundee in building the **Anchises** meant that the **Calchas** became the first 'A' class ship to enter service. She was launched by the wife of Lawrence Holt.

In September 1957 the **Calchas** was transferred to the Glen Line as the **Glenfinlas**, and in October 1962 she returned to the Blue Funnel Line under her original name.

On 22nd July 1973 the **Calchas** was gutted by fire at Port Kelang and became a total loss. She was towed to Singapore for demolition.

JUST FANCY THAT !!!



*The **Mauretania** and the **Lusitania** together in Canada Dock Basin, 14th Oct., 1909*

THE 'WINDSOR CASTLE' REMEMBERED

by Peter Elson, Senior Features Writer, 'Liverpool Daily Post'

When the **Windsor Castle** sailed on her maiden voyage in 1960, it was said that every passenger travelling in first class was titled. Costing £10 million, the Royal Mail Steamer was the last great South African mail ship and the finest vessel that Cammell Laird's Birkenhead workforce could turn out. As the new flagship of the Union-Castle Line, she slashed two days off the schedule of the 7,000 mile voyage to Cape Town from the previous 13½ days.



The Windsor Castle in Liverpool Bay on 13th July 1960 on passage to Southampton

The Queen Mother launched the **Windsor Castle** in brilliant sunshine on 23rd June 1959 before a crowd of 50,000 and watched by millions more on television. What should have been an unadulterated celebration of the country's maritime supremacy was marred by a nine-week dispute which had started on the ship. Dubbed by the press as the '*who twangs the twine war*', striking boilermiths argued with shipwrights about who should draw chalk lines on the ship's plates. As a result thousands of workers were laid off, the launch postponed and the lavish ceremonial luncheon cancelled.

Yet the launch proved so popular that the traffic grid-locked in Birkenhead and police shut the shipyard gates 30 minutes before the launch, fearing a crush. This caused uproar amongst the crowd, with hundreds of ticket-holders excluded from the yard. Whether through stress or atmospherics, the Queen Mother suffered a severe nose bleed which jeopardized the event, timed for the vital high tide. Fortunately she recomposed herself and christened the ship just one minute after its scheduled time of 1.30pm. She alluded to the shipyard row in her speech later, saying: "*I am so glad to be here and to launch the Windsor Castle in spite of the difficulties which I know you have had to contend with.*"

Bob Hunt, from Prenton, Birkenhead was a charge-hand supervisor on the launch day, working in a 5-ft high space beneath the ship. He recalls: *"Using a seven pound hammer I had to split out the supporting keel blocks so the Windsor Castle would settle on to the heavily greased launching ways. When we had finished the foreman alerted the launch platform and the Queen Mother smashed the bottle on the bows. Simultaneously a bell was rung telling the men to trigger the release on the hydraulic rams which were holding the ship in place."*

"Immediately the ship's weight started carrying her down the slipway. It was a fantastic sight seeing this massive ship sliding into the water. It wasn't noisy, just the sound of grease cracking under the hull and a few crashes and bangs."

"With so much water displaced, there was a big backwash onto the slipway, so the shipyard stewards had to keep the surging crowds well back." Mr Hunt retired from Cammell Lairds in 1993 as steel construction manager.

Bob Jones, another Prenton man, says: *"I remember the day we laid the first keel plate. Cammell Laird was delighted to have won such a prestigious contract. This was in the days before prefabrication and the workforce could adapt to building anything, having completed the aircraft carrier Ark Royal a few years earlier. We could build tankers or tugs, in fact anything that was required of us."*

Mr Jones, who started as a shipwright, later becoming manager for accuracy control on steel welding, and in charge of the mould loft, went on: *"The Windsor Castle is a beautiful ship and the fact that she has lasted so long is a great tribute to Lairds."*

David Smith from Birkenhead was indentured as an apprentice shipfitter at Cammell Lairds in 1957 when he was 16. He said: *"The 11,000-man workforce built outstanding ships in the harshest of conditions. Labour relations were appalling and there were genuine grievances that highly-skilled craftsmen weren't respected by management or paid appropriately. Yet out of this chaos came the Windsor Castle. It was amazing to see the way that things went together and the beauty of the craftsmanship in the lounges, bars, cinema and ballroom. Wonderful woodwork, no expense spared. There had been nothing like this since the building of the Mauretania before the war."*

On completion of fitting out at Birkenhead, Union-Castle cancelled the Windsor Castle's shakedown cruise from Liverpool to the Western Isles, and the new liner sailed early for Southampton on 13th July 1960. The fear of further industrial action in which the new liner might be caught up, prompted this decision. The Windsor Castle's maiden voyage was from Southampton on 18th August 1960 when she sailed for Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London and Durban with a full passenger list of 250 in first class, 600 in tourist class and 470 crew. Just over seven years later she celebrated her 50th UK-Cape round voyage, having steamed 700,000 miles carrying 35,000 passengers with no breakdowns or delays. After just seventeen years in service the Windsor Castle was withdrawn following rocketing fuel prices and the impact of Boeing 747 'jumbo jets'. Her 124th and final voyage for Union-Castle ended at Southampton on 19th September 1977. The ship was sold to the Greek construction tycoon John Latsis and was renamed Margarita L, after one of his daughters. She was used as mobile offices and was based in the Arabian Gulf as Latsis oversaw various desalination

projects. Following his death the liner was converted into an accommodation ship and berthed at Jeddah from January 1979 until June 1991, after which she was laid up at Perama, near Piraeus.

In 2003 a Merseyside group was established with the aim of bringing the **Windsor Castle** back to Birkenhead as a hotel and conference centre. Under the direction of Mr Alex Naughton, the '*RMS Windsor Castle Trust*' hoped to berth the ship in Cammell Lairds fitting-out basin. A Dutch company was set to operate her as a hotel.

In the event it was discovered that the ship had deteriorated more during her lay up than had at first been thought, and her DC electric system would have been very costly to change. The low price of steel had extended the **Windsor Castle's** life, but the death-knell sounded with rising scrap values and the cheap, unregulated labour available in the shipbreaking industry at Alang, south west India. Mr Naughton acknowledged that the attempt to bring the **Windsor Castle** home to Birkenhead had been '*an honourable failure*'. At the end of April 2005 the old ship sailed from Piraeus, via Suez, for demolition at Alang. "*She sailed under her own steam to India, making her last voyage with dignity and elegance,*" commented Mr Naughton.

There are a couple of stories about the **Windsor Castle** which are worthy of recording before they are lost for ever. One concerns a 64-year old passenger Mrs Margaret Fuller who fell overboard in November 1976 as the liner was some 250 miles off the Angolan coast, and some 1,400 miles from Cape Town. Mrs Fuller's husband alerted the crew at 9.am that his wife was missing and after a brief search it was assumed that she might have fallen overboard. Captain Patrick Beadon turned the **Windsor Castle** round and retraced his course, making allowances for currents and wind direction. Three hours later Mrs Fuller was sighted, still treading water. The ship came to a stop just fifty yards from Mrs Fuller and a lifeboat was launched. Her rescue quickly became a race against time as onlookers claimed that they saw a shark circling her.

Another forgotten story concerns the race between the Birkenhead-built **Windsor Castle** and a Halewood (Liverpool) built Ford Corsair 2000E between Cape Town and Southampton in May 1967. It came about when Union-Castle claimed that after air travel, its mail boat service provided the fastest form of travel between South Africa and the UK. The Ford Motor Company disputed this and the Ford Corsair, driven by rally drivers Ken Chambers and Eric Chapman left the dockside at Cape Town at the same time as the **Windsor Castle** departed for Southampton. The liner's 7,000 sea voyage was pitched against the 9,700 mile road route. Chambers and Chapman contended with pot holes, petrol shortages and armed Congolese soldiers and reckoned they had to deal with 24 tyre changes and 37 puncture repairs. Their support team was locked up for several hours and held at gun point on one occasion. It was of course necessary to fly the Corsair across the Strait of Gibraltar and the Strait of Dover, and taking this into account, the race was declared a draw, although the Corsair actually arrived on the dockside at Southampton the evening before the **Windsor Castle** was due. ■

CAPTAIN R. MINTO AND CHARLES HERBERT LIGHTOLLER

Or How One Thing Leads To Another

by L.N.R.S. Member J.E.Cowden

'Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc'

A little while back I was chatting with Mike Cooper, a retired member of Elder Dempster's staff. Mike is a very keen medal collector in addition to having compiled 'Honours and Awards to Elder Dempster Personnel'. He had recently acquired medals awarded to one Captain R. Minto. I could not immediately recall Captain Minto but my memory went back to a conversation I had with the late Captain Ellery Whitehead when on a visit to Napier, New Zealand. Ellery was not a time-served Elder Dempster cadet and after an interview with the steamship manager in Colonial House, Water Street, Liverpool, he was appointed third officer and told to report to Captain Minto, the company's marine superintendent in Hull. Could this be the same Captain Minto whose medals had now come to light? J.E.C.

I decided to look further into Captain Minto's service with Elder Dempster. I managed to trace that a Captain Richard R. Minto, residing at 24 Kimberley Drive, Great Crosby, Liverpool, had joined Elder Dempster as third officer of the **Benin** (1884) in December 1900. He already had his master's certificate and within two years had sailed as second and chief officer of the **Nigeria** (1901). In May 1904 Captain Minto was appointed master of the **Boulama** (1901) and for the following nine years served in this capacity on a variety of cargo and passenger units of the Elder Dempster fleet until 14th April 1913 when he was in command of the **Dakar** (1899). After a period of home leave Captain Minto was interviewed by the Elder Dempster directors and on 2nd December 1913 he was transferred to the company's West African coast staff and appointed superintendent in charge of all timber exports from the Gold Coast colony (now Ghana).

It was during this period based on the Gold Coast through which British troops passed when travelling to and from Togoland that Captain Minto became involved in military matters. At the time of the award of the medals to Captain Minto (August, 1914), Togoland was German mandated territory which was acquired by France during the First World War. It was during the transition from German protection to French control that a number of German nationals were duly deported from their former colony aboard Elder Dempster vessels through the neighbouring British colony of the Gold Coast.

Later in his career with Elder Dempster, Captain Minto was appointed marine superintendent at Hull, a port used regularly by the company on the homeward schedules. I suppose I could say: *'well, that clears up Mike Cooper's enquiry about Captain Minto's medals'*

However, it is worth mentioning Ellery Whitehead's first impressions on coming from a tramping line to a liner company. Presenting himself to Captain Minto he was immediately taken by the joviality and friendliness of the welcome. He was duly briefed and informed that he would be 'stand-by officer' of the **Sansu** (1939),

berthed in the King George V Dock where she was discharging bagged palm kernels being bled overside to waiting barges. The deep sea personnel would not be joining until completion of discharge. This resulted in Captain Minto making a daily call to the *Sansu* and other Elder Dempster ships in port at the time, on occasion taking his lunch with Ellery.

It was during one of these lunch meetings that the names of Charles Herbert Lightoller and the motor yacht *Sundowner* were mentioned. The yacht was, in fact, berthed adjacent to the *Sansu*. Ellery was rather taken aback on hearing the name Lightoller mentioned and immediately asked: "*Is that the Lightoller of Titanic fame?*" "Yes," was Captain Minto's reply, followed by, "*You may care to know that Lightoller is an ex Elder Dempster man.*"

During 1988 I entered into correspondence with Patrick Stenson who was in the process of writing a book to be titled '*Titanic Voyager – The Odyssey of C.H. Lightoller*'. Patrick asked me to examine the Elder Dempster archives for any background information relating to Lightoller's service with the company. The majority of the archives were lost in the May 'Blitz' and I soon confirmed that the name of Lightoller did not appear in any of those which survived. However in the course of his research into the Lightoller family papers and the White Star Line archives, Patrick came up with fascinating details of Lightoller's short period spent with Elder Dempster.

The following is an extract from chapter 11 of Patrick Stenson's book '*Titanic Voyager – The Odyssey of C.H. Lightoller*':

The passage home from Iquique to Liverpool in the **Knight of St Michael** had been a long and gruelling one lasting 165 days, almost double the average time for the run. By the end of it Lightoller was totally exhausted and came to the reluctant conclusion that no matter how much he had been in love with sailing ships – and that took into account all the hard times as well as the good – steamships perhaps had something to be said in their favour! He went up for his mate's ticket and passed with ease and decided that Elder Dempster was the company offering the best prospects for a young man going into steam. Things were looking up these days on the West African coast which was Elder Dempster's main trading territory.

The British Government had been granting a lot of aid to its colonies in West Africa, with a corresponding upsurge in trade. Elder Dempster was reaping the full benefit of it. The company was building more ships and more officers were needed. The marine superintendent of Elder Dempster's African Royal Mail service was Captain John Rattray who rejoiced in the dubious sobriquet of 'three fingered Jack', having had two of his fingers bitten off by a native in some lurid incident on the West Coast. Captain Rattray liked the look of Lightoller – the young 21 year old 'hard-case' he was interviewing who reeled off his experience – and experiences – with such a nonchalant air that even a hardened old salt like Captain Rattray had to be impressed.

Voyages with Elder Dempster would be much shorter than Lightoller had been accustomed to and would last a matter of weeks rather than months. He also joined the Royal Naval Reserve as that was a requirement for all officers employed by Elder Dempster. Lightoller's first appointment was to the *Niagara*, built in 1883. She

was acquired by the City of Liverpool Steam Navigation Company in 1892 and the following year was taken over by Elder Dempsters. The *Niagara* had undoubtedly seen better days when Lightoller joined her, but this did not bother him as much as her master – Captain William Waters – who was better known in Liverpool as ‘Bully’ Waters.

Waters was a notorious tyrant hated by all who had ever been under his command. So much so that he could not walk the streets of Liverpool in safety. Two men serving under him had in fact committed suicide, driven to it by his constant brow-beating and bullying. Lightoller was determined to stand up to this portly little martinet with the hysterical high-pitched whine and puffed up crimson face with matching nose that glistened persistently under the heat of the West African sun.

It was a mystery to Lightoller why nobody had put paid to Waters once and for all, and even more mystifying how he had kept his command. But then he was an old sparring partner of ‘Three fingered Jack’, having been Rattray’s mate once upon a time and they were old pals. So far in his sea career Lightoller had been fortunate in the masters he had sailed with – even ‘Jock’ Sutherland who, for all his reckless ways, was at least a likeable man. But the only emotion Waters ever seemed able to stir up in people was loathing.

Eventually Lightoller hit upon a very good way of dealing with Waters. One morning early, severely hungover as usual, Waters lurched along the deck shouting his criticisms and complaints about the progress of the cargo work and the way it was being done. “*Stop everything, stop,*” Lightoller commanded. All work stopped and Lightoller stood there, arms folded, glaring at Waters with the clear message that the captain was going to get everyone’s undivided attention to all he had to say. Waters was, for once, lost for words. He muttered something about ‘slowness’ and stalked off back to his cabin.

The *Niagara* arrived off Grand Bassam on the Ivory Coast to take on a cargo of mahogany logs. There had been a storm out in the Atlantic and as a result the sea had banked up along the coast and the surf was too high for the boats to work in. Waters had to make up his mind whether to wait for the swell to subside or to forget the cargo and head for home, this being the last port of the voyage. He ordered the chief officer to take the ship’s surf boat, go in as far as possible and try to make contact with the beach to see if they intended to send out any logs. Once he had got in as close as he dared the chief officer tried to signal the beach. Waters was not satisfied and complained that if the boat got nearer in, then there might be a better chance of attracting some attention. He called Lightoller to the bridge and said he thought that the chief officer was too far out. Lightoller suggested that it was difficult to tell from the ship but agreed that it did look as though he might get a little nearer in.

Lightoller had fallen for it. Waters leered at him and instructed him to take the gig and see what he could do. The whole idea was madness. The conditions were risky enough for a surf boat that was double-ended and designed for the job, but for a rowing boat with a square stern it could not have been more dangerous. Lightoller, however, was too intent on picking up Waters’ gauntlet to consider the risks involved.

With three boys and a rather apprehensive quartermaster Lightoller rowed away in the boat to take soundings with the lead line, as ordered by Waters, and then to head on further in to make contact with the other boat. As the two boats came

together they were rising and falling like corks in the heaving swell right on the edge of the breakers. The chief officer could not possibly have approached any closer.

Lightoller decided to move a little further up the coast to see if he might have a better chance. With much energetic flag waving the quartermaster tried as best he could to attract attention on shore but it was hopeless in that kind of sea as the boat was hidden in a trough for at least half the time. And then it happened. Whether it was because they had been paying too much attention to the shore instead of handling the boat, or that one sea broke further out than the rest, Lightoller would never be sure. A great overhanging wall of green water higher than all the rest came tumbling down on top of them, driving them under. Lightoller felt the keel of the boat hit the sand and then, remarkably, the boat returned to the surface. But another huge curler was coming in and this time there would be no second chance. They were now beyond the edge of the surf and beyond the point of no return.

As Lightoller was thrown out and went under he realised that the lead line they had been using to take soundings was wrapped round his feet. There now followed a desperate underwater struggle to untangle himself. While he fought with the line he was being rolled over and over by the force of the water but after much tugging he managed to get free of it. When he came gasping to the surface the boat was upside down and there was no sign of anyone. Then he saw the quartermaster's arms waving limply above the water. He was drowning. Lightoller did all he could for the other man, grabbing some gratings and oars that were floating in the surf and shoved these under his arms, but by now Lightoller was in serious trouble himself. As each comber rose and broke it came smashing down on top of him, tons of water forcing him under and bowling him along the seabed. He threw himself head on at the next breaker which came roaring in and this picked him up and swept him up the beach. Lightoller's lungs were full of water and he was only half-conscious. Then with the next comber which came in he was swept further up the beach.

Lightoller could see figures running along the beach towards him and felt a hand grab his wrist. Then he passed out. When he came round he was lying there alone and his lungs felt as though they were weighed down with lead weights. As the sea water came up, his breathing got easier. The Negroes who had hauled him out evidently assumed that he was dead, and it being their taboo not to touch a dead white man, they ran off to inform the authorities. However there would be no sign of a body when they arrived as Lightoller found his way to a nearby sawmill and was soon knocking back a few stiff whiskies.

The quartermaster and the three boys had not lived and for once in his life 'Bully' Waters was sorry. He realised that he had been wrong to goad Lightoller into going on that suicide mission – even if Lightoller had been over impulsive in rising to the challenge. Waters had been taught a lesson and there would be hell to pay when he got back to Liverpool and Rattray learned the news.

Lightoller's trials were not yet over. On the passage home he went down with a severe dose of malaria. His temperature soared to 106°F and once again it looked as though his life was hanging in the balance. In one last 'kill or cure' effort his fellow officers rolled him up tightly like a 'mummy' with hot bottles and blankets, loaded him with quinine, and succeeded in breaking the fever. In time he recovered. After that Lightoller was left in no doubt at all that he had definitely had enough of the West

African coast – in fact he was beginning to wonder if he had not had enough of the sea!

Notes

- Second Officer Charles Herbert Lightoller was the most senior officer to survive the sinking of the **Titanic**. He was the principal witness at the British Inquiry into the sinking and was called upon to answer some 1,600 questions. Add to that the comprehensive cross-examination he underwent in America, and with court proceedings this figure doubled. He spent more than 50 hours over 36 days on the witness stand.
- At the outbreak of the First World War, Lightoller was serving as first officer on the White Star Line's **Oceanic** when his ship was requisitioned for government service and became HMS **Oceanic** with Lightoller taking the rank of Lieutenant. Later he was attached to the Dover Patrol where he took command of HMS **Falcon**. He survived the conflict by which time he had been promoted to a full Commander and had also been awarded the DSC and Bar. On the cessation of hostilities Lightoller returned to the White Star Line. He was serving as chief officer on the **Celtic** when for family reasons he resigned his post and took up shore-side employment.
- On 28th June 1930 Lightoller took delivery of his motor yacht, the **Sundowner**. On 1st June 1940 the **Sundowner**, under the command of Lightoller, and accompanied by his eldest son Lieutenant Roger Lightoller, RNVR, and assisted by Sea Scout Gerald Ashcroft, was one of the 'Little Ships' which sailed from the UK to Dunkirk. The **Sundowner** survives to this day and is owned by the East Kent Maritime Trust, Ramsgate. The **Sundowner** appeared on BBC television on 10th July 2005 during the celebrations to mark the 60th anniversary of VE Day and VJ Day.
- Lightoller was finally 'demobbed' in 1946 at the age of 72. On 8th December 1952 Charles Herbert Lightoller passed away peacefully in his sleep. ■



*Charles Lightoller's motor yacht **Sundowner** on trials in the Swale*

LIVERPOOL AND THE ATLANTIC PASSENGER TRADE

from 'Lloyd's List', 20th January, 1895

submitted by LNRS Vice-President H. Hignett

Mr John Brancker presided at the weekly meeting of the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board, held yesterday at Liverpool, when the Committee of Works reported that having considered the question of providing accommodation at the Princes Landing Stage for passengers by trans-Atlantic steamers, and letters from the London & North Western Railway Company, together with reports and plans submitted, they had resolved to recommend that the engineer be instructed to proceed with all practical celerity with the undermentioned works:

1. To provide a railway passenger station at the west side of the south end of the Princes Dock, with railway lines connected to the main line of the dock railway, and to transfer one of the baggage conveyors from its present position, at a total estimated cost of £29,000.
2. To lay down on the east side of the Waterloo Grain Warehouses suitable crossings in order to form communication between the main dock line and those of the London & North Western Company at the Waterloo Goods Station, at the cost of £800.
3. To strengthen the shore and stage connections of Nos 4, 5 and 6 bridges at the Princes Landing Stage, so as to allow the Atlantic passenger and other large steamers to come alongside; and also to deepen the water approaches outside the landing stage as may be necessary by dredging, at an estimated cost of £7,000.

It was also resolved to obtain the consent of the Board of Trade and the Corporation of Liverpool, so far as they might be concerned, to that portion of the scheme which included the laying down and working of certain lines of railway, and the proposed crossing over Waterloo Road when laid to be maintained and safeguarded by the Board.

Mr Glynn, in moving the adoption of the minutes of the Works Committee, said that with regard to the work at the Princes Landing Stage, it would appear to be rather a large order for a comparatively small sum of money. The outside public seemed to think that the Board was a very easy and not a hard-working Board, but if any of the gentlemen who talked so much would take the place of any one of the members and do two hours' work a day at the Board for a week, then they would have a very different idea of what was being done. The outside public tended to forget – and he was making a statement that no one could contradict – that the Board had to be the pioneer of all work in the shape of docks, not only for this country but for the whole world. Large ships could be built in a very short space of time, but docks, and especially tidal works, required many more months. This was a matter well within the knowledge of the Board. Mr Glynn went on to say that he would like to go a little outside the matter in hand and remind the Board of the position a fortnight ago, when they had a very serious gale of wind. Supposing the Board had at any time been tempted to do its work in a way he had heard people describe as 'good enough for the

time', what would have been the position of the Board in the face of such a gale? When there was a tide that did not go down until something like two hours after high water, it gave them an idea of the position if the slightest thing had gone wrong. It would have meant millions, not thousands, of pounds worth of damage to the docks and ships, and the produce under its charge.

Therefore the Board must not be carried away by criticism, but go on working steadily in its work of improving the port and making it everything that was necessary; but, above all, it must never do anything in a hurry. He offered these few words of explanation because it might appear that the proposals of that day had been hurriedly thought over and hurriedly done.

The matter had been thought over unofficially some time in 1888, when the engineer had plans drawn out, and from that time to the present hardly a month had passed without the matter coming before the Works Committee. They had brought forward plans on the last occasion they had gone to Parliament and after considerable thought the present scheme was launched.

Mr Glynn continued that a much greater depth of water had been obtained at the Bar due to dredging, and this had exceeded the Board's expectations. The Bar had been so much improved that ships were now hardly detained at all at low water, and he had no doubt that in time ships would be able to cross the Bar at dead low water. They were now going to deepen the water at the landing stages so that when passengers from America did not care to use tenders, they could bring ships alongside the stage and there land passengers. They had heard that the City Council proposed to assist them in every possible way, and he said that on all occasions the Council had backed the Board. For this they were much obliged, because it was to the advantage of both that these schemes should be pursued. They had also perfected the baggage arrangements. He hoped that when the proposed work had been carried out it would be all that was required for the style of ships that now crossed the Atlantic.

Mr Glynn sounded a warning that the Board should not think that when the current work was completed they had finished with the question. They would soon have to adopt a far more ambitious scheme for landing American passengers. He did not pretend to be a prophet but he did think that the passenger trade between this country and America would go on increasing to an extent that people of the present day could not imagine. His opinion was that within a relatively short space of time ships would be nearer 1,000ft long rather than 600ft, and would be crossing the Atlantic in three and a half days, rather than the present six days.

Passengers would appreciate, concluded Mr Glynn, the convenience of transferring directly from the steamers to the trains, instead of being rattled up in cabs to Lime Street Station. In fact, he was surprised that they had put up with it for so long. It should not be forgotten that nowadays nearly all the trams and buses went from the landing stage instead of from Castle Street.

Mr J. Barrow, in seconding the motion, said that the new Riverside Railway Station would alter the whole system of conveying passengers as far as London and New York were concerned, and would enable Liverpool to rival Southampton. The great advantage at Southampton was that passengers stepped from the steamer into the baggage room, and were then conveyed by train across the streets of that town, right through to London. There was no reason that Liverpool should lag behind

Southampton, except that at the latter place there was a tidal rise and fall of 15 to 16 feet, whereas at Liverpool there was a 30ft range which was the basis of all their difficulties.

The first disadvantage – that of depth of water on the Bar – had been overcome. The next was the question of disembarking passengers by tender as against landing them directly on to a specially designed stage. That disadvantage was soon to be removed. When the new station opened a further disadvantage – that of transferring by cab to a mainline station – would also disappear, for passengers would step directly from the steamer into a railway carriage and be taken through the Waterloo Tunnel to the main line at Edge Hill without any inconvenience. After some discussion the motion was carried.

A 'Lloyd's List' correspondent commented: "The London and North Western Railway Company has decided to deepen the tunnel which runs from Edge Hill station to its Waterloo goods station, so that it may be used for passenger trains in connection with the new arrangements of the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board. The line reaches the same level as the dock railway, and very little expense will be involved in carrying the metals to the Princes Landing Stage. Local railway managers do not view the alternative proposal of carrying passengers by way of Garston and Brunswick stations, and thence along the dock railway, as feasible on account of the great cross-traffic at numerous points along the route."



A passenger train crossing the bridge over the passage between Princes Dock and Princes Half-Tide Dock after leaving Riverside Railway Station on 6th April 1968. The station was officially 'abandoned' by the MD&HB at the end of February 1971. Records for the station reveal that during the Second World War 4,648 trains carried 1,747,505 troops in and out of Riverside Railway Station.

READERS' LETTERS

From LNRS Member Geoffrey Holmes, M.N.I.

Two items in recent editions of *'The Bulletin'* have caught my eye:

September 2006: 'Passed to You, Please'

My recollection is that the practice went on until about 1958 and the favourable reports were featured in the M.N.A.O.A. *'Telegraph'*. However, after complaints from merchant ships about their O.O.W. being distracted from his navigation and collision avoidance duties, a three letter morse signal was circulated to British Merchant ships and to the Royal Navy. This, when sent, meant: *'Sorry, I am too busy with my navigational duties to answer your signals. If the matter is important, please contact me by radio.'* This must be the most polite way of saying *'b%\$\$£r off'* that I have ever heard! Within six months warships had ceased to call up merchant ships for signalling practice.

*December 2006: 'A Drink Problem on the **Royal Iris**'*

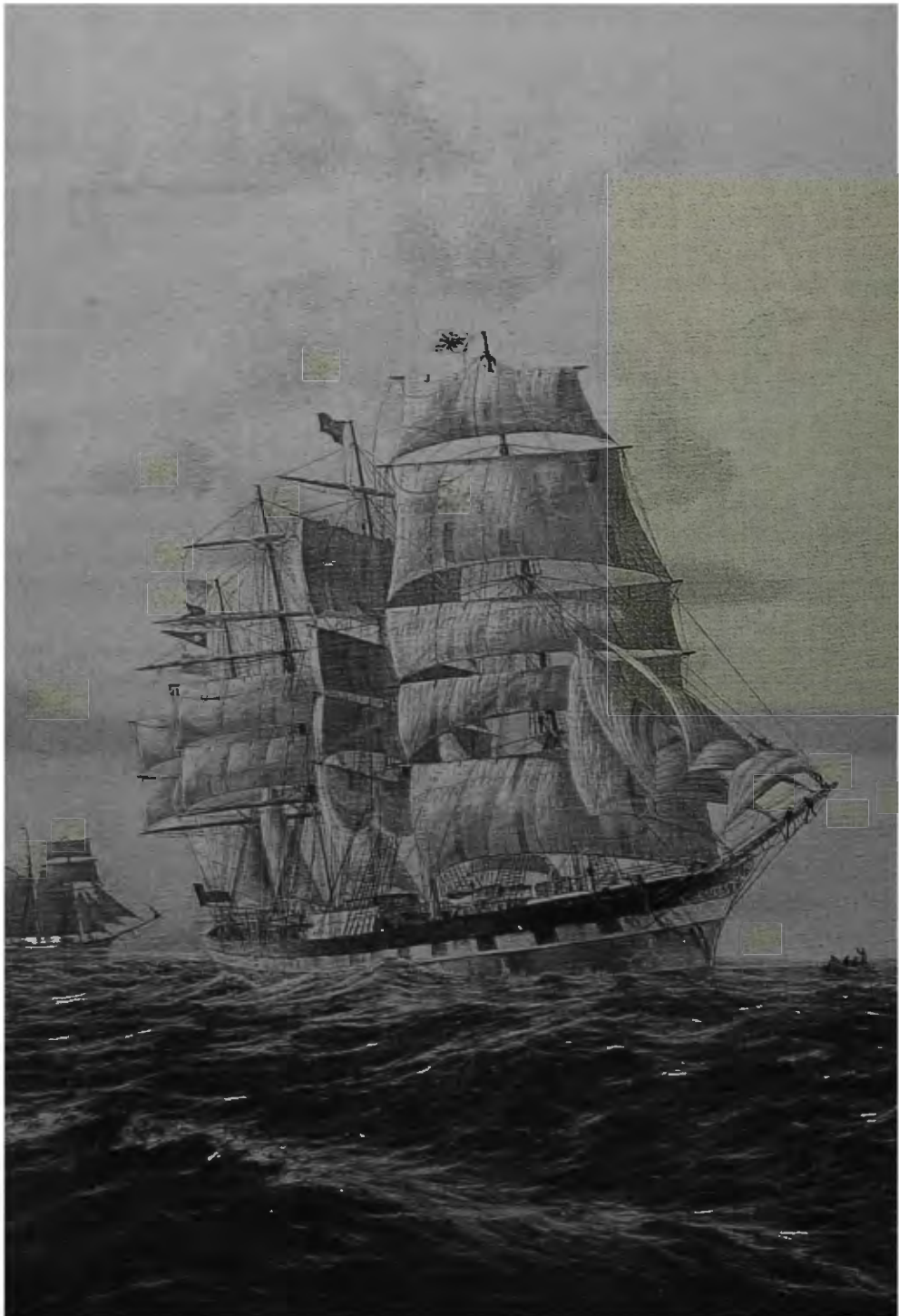
Wallasey Corporation appealed against the conviction and the case was eventually decided in its favour in the House of Lords.

So, there was a lot more fuss than you described!



LNRS Chairman John Chambers; Flight Lieutenant Ian Griffiths, B.Eng RAF, of RAF Valley 22 Squadron, and LNRS Member Captain M.D.R. Jones at the Society's December meeting when Flt.Lt Griffiths spoke on 'Helicopter Search and Rescue'.

photo: John Stokoe



The Liverpool off Point Lynas, a painting by Ted Walker included in 'Sea Liverpool'

BOOK REVIEW

SEA LIVERPOOL

The Maritime Art of Edward D Walker

Reviewed by LNRS President, Mr S. Davidson

As suggested by the sub-title, the heart of this publication is a selection from the paintings of Merseyside's well known marine artist 'Ted' Walker.

Chosen to illustrate Liverpool's many close connections with the sea, the inclusion of a biographical appreciation of the artist by Peter Elson¹, along with a thumbnail sketch of the Port of Liverpool and explanatory notes of each individual illustration by Dr Adrian Jarvis², has resulted in a rare and well-balanced blend of marine art and maritime narrative.

Subjects range from the famous Mersey ferries, the cross-channel Irish Sea ferries and mammoth trans-Atlantic liners, to visiting Royal Naval vessels. Historically, the account covers the era of sail, early steam assisted sail, through the heyday of the highly sophisticated steam engine, up to modern times represented by the **Queen Mary 2** with her four electric propulsion pods. Apart from depicting in-service scenes and backgrounds, some compositions portray the less common aspects of seafaring life. These include rescue at sea and loss by storm, stranding, foundering or naval engagement.

Well researched and authentically presented, this attractive volume represents extremely good value and can be recommended for both the general reader and those with a professional maritime interest.

Price £14.99, A4 size, hardback, 92 page, landscape format, 40 full-colour illustrations

Publishers: Ron Jones Associates, telephone: 0151 650 6975, < ron@rja-mpl.com >

ISBN 0 – 9511703 – 6 – 8

¹ Senior Features Writer, *Liverpool Daily Post*

² former Keeper of Port History, Merseyside Maritime Museum

Opposite page:

The **Liverpool** off Point Lynas. She was built in 1889 by Russell & Company of Port Glasgow and was a four-masted full-rigged ship of 3,400 gross tons. She was managed by R.W. Leyland & Co. The **Liverpool** was built primarily for the jute trade and could carry about 26,000 bales.

On 25th February 1902 the **Liverpool** was wrecked off Alderney in the Channel Islands whilst on passage from Antwerp to San Francisco. She had grounded quite gently and there was every prospect of a successful salvage attempt. However she began to break up and soon became a total loss.

AND FINALLY

CAPTAIN KENNETH ALFRED HUGO CUMMINS

Born 3rd March, 1900; died 3rd December 2006

Captain Kenneth Cummins, who died recently at the age of 106, had much to remember. He was one of the last surviving British seafarers to have served in both world wars.

Captain Cummins was educated at Merchant Taylors' School, Crosby, and one of his earliest recollections was holding a rope on the beach at Blundellsands for the aviator Claude Grahame-White as he set off in a single-engined biplane.

Whilst at Merchant Taylors, Kenneth Cummins had joined the O.T.C. and on the outbreak of hostilities in August 1914, he was among 420 teenage cadets at Dartmouth Royal Naval College. They were sent to join the Fleet to complete their training and compensate for a chronic shortage of junior officers. Captain Cummins came through the war unscathed and in November 1918 he was a midshipman on an ocean escort vessel.

After the War, Captain Cummins joined the Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Company. His interview included dinner waited on by liveried servants to test his table manners. He served as a junior officer on various P. & O. ships in the Far East service before passing the examination for his master's certificate in 1929. Six years earlier he had been an officer on board the **Macedonia** which brought home the body of Egyptologist Lord Caernarvon, following his discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb.

In 1930 Captain Cummins joined the **Viceroy of India** as first and then chief officer. He was on board when the ship was ferrying troops to North Africa for 'Operation Torch', the Allied landings in November 1942. When the **Viceroy of India** was returning to the UK she was attacked by U.407 some 40 miles north of the Algerian coast and a torpedo penetrated the engine room. The ship took four hours to sink, and apart from four men caught in the engine room explosion, her entire crew took to the lifeboats and were rescued by HMS **Boadicea**.

After the end of the War, Captain Cummins gained his first command and remained a master with P. & O. for the next 25 years until the passenger liners were phased out following the introduction of air travel.

Captain Cummins always maintained that the role of the Merchant Navy in the Second World War was never fully acknowledged.

Captain Cummins enjoyed a long retirement, living in the village of Great Bedwyn, Wiltshire. Eyebrows were raised in disbelief when he joined a local fitness club at the age of 97, after a successful hip replacement operation!!!

