

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

(Founded in 1938)

THE BULLETIN

Volume 53, No. 1, June, 2009



The Empress of Australia as a troopship

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The Empress of Australia alongside Princes Landing Stage after her final voyage

THE 'EMPRESS OF AUSTRALIA' OF 1920

EMPRESS OF AUSTRALIA (ex TIRPITZ)

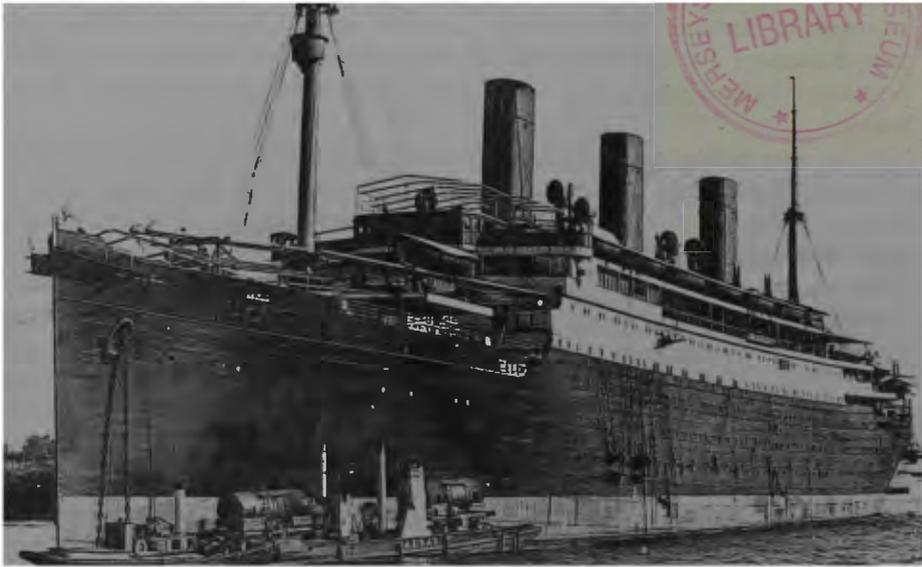
Built by Vulkan Werke A.G. at Stettin, Yard No. 333.

Launched 20.Dec.1913, completed Nov, 1920.

Gross Tonnage: 21,498. Nett: 11,749. Length: 615ft, Breadth: 75.1ft.

Two steam turbines, twin screws. Service speed: 16.5 knots.

Albert Ballin, the architect of the Hamburg Atlantic Line's great resurgence during the early years of the 20th century had a grand plan to establish the company as the world's leading shipping line. Whilst the three giants of the *Imperator* class were designed to conquer the North Atlantic, a smaller trio was planned to overtake the competitors on the South American run and one of these ships – the *Tirpitz* – was designed to become the sole survivor of Ballin's fleet.



The Tirpitz prior to her completion at the Vulkan shipyard in 1920

The first ship designed for Hapag's (Hamburg-Amerikanische-Packetfahrt-Actien-Gesellschaft) South American service was launched at the end of 1913 as the *Admiral von Tirpitz* but three months later this was shortened to *Tirpitz*. The new ship was specially designed to operate to the west coast of South America via the Panama Canal which was due to be opened in August 1914.

Work on the *Tirpitz* was suspended on the outbreak of the First World War and recommenced after hostilities ceased. Completed in November 1920 the *Tirpitz* was allocated to Britain as a war reparation the following month. After a brief period

as a troopship under P&O management, the Shipping Controller sold the new ship to Canadian Pacific Steamships in 1921 and she was renamed **Empress of China**. Her new owners intended to use her as a running-mate for the Fairfield-built trio **Empress of Russia**, **Empress of Asia** and **Empress of Canada** on the fortnightly service between Vancouver and the Orient. In August the *ex-Tirpitz* returned to Stettin for conversion from a coal to an oil-burner, and on completion of this work the ship sailed to Clydebank where John Brown & Company refitted her passenger accommodation to provide for 400 first-class, 165 second-class, 360 third-class, along with space for 670 Asiatic steerage passengers. The ship was once again renamed, this time as the **Empress of Australia**, and on 16th June 1922 she left the Clyde with a skeleton crew bound for Vancouver (via the Panama Canal) where she arrived on 19th July, the day after the **Empress of Japan** had completed her Canadian Pacific service. Many of the **Empress of Japan's** crew were transferred to the new **Empress**.

The **Empress of Australia** sailed for Hong Kong and Yokohama on 28th July 1922, and it was immediately found that her boilers were inefficient with the result that her service speed was well below expectation and she was soon behind her planned schedule. At the start of her second voyage in September, one of her turbines was disabled and she had to return to port. Following repairs, which included new oil-burners as an attempt to reduce her high fuel consumption, the **Empress of Australia** returned to service in November. Despite these changes the ship remained a disappointment for Canadian Pacific who also had to contend with 1,500 tons of permanent ballast installed by her builders because she was considered to be too top-heavy.

Just before noon on 1st September 1923 the **Empress of Australia** was preparing to sail from Yokohama and had embarked 2,000 passengers, when the Great Tokyo Earthquake struck. This eventually claimed 300,000 lives and made over 2.5 million people homeless. Buildings ashore collapsed and the *Empress* swayed violently from side to side as a result of tsunami waves. Burning oil drifted into the harbour and ships nearby were torn from their moorings, and the cable from one of these fouled the **Empress of Australia's** port propeller and prevented her extricating herself from an increasingly dangerous position. The Dutch tanker *Iris* was able to tow the *Empress's* bow around and she managed to reach the relative safety of the bay where a Japanese Navy diver removed the tangled cable. The *Empress* then sailed back into the harbour to pick up survivors and remained in the area for a week until the arrival of other ships with emergency supplies. Her master, Captain Robinson, was awarded the C.B.E.

In May 1926 the **Empress of Australia** was withdrawn from Canadian Pacific's trans-Pacific service and sent to Govan for the replacement of her engines and boilers by the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Co. Ltd. at a cost of almost £500,000. Canadian Pacific did not wish to spoil the *Empress's* public rooms and so the German boilers were cut up *in situ*, and the new boilers were lowered into the forward hold and the bulkheads opened so that they could be hauled into position on skids. Parsons turbines with single reduction gearing replaced the original German-built experimental machinery. Diesel engines were also installed to drive the generators and auxiliaries and the end result was an exceptional improvement in

performance. Shaft horsepower increased from just under 15,000 to 20,000, whilst the service speed increased by three knots to over nineteen knots.

With greater speed, superb passenger accommodation and fuel consumption now reduced by almost a third, Canadian Pacific decided that the **Empress of Australia** would make an ideal trans-Atlantic liner and cruise ship. The passenger accommodation was reduced to 400 in first class, 144 in second class and 632 in tourist class, and the ship was placed on the Southampton – Quebec service. On her first voyage to Canada in June 1927, the **Empress of Australia** carried the Prince of Wales (Edward VIII), Prince George (George VI) and the British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin for the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the Canadian Federation. Between 1927 and 1931 the *Empress* operated the Quebec service from Southampton from April to October, whilst in December she left New York on a four-month world cruise via the Suez and Panama Canals.



The Empress of Australia on Canadian Pacific passenger service

With the entry into service of the new **Empress of Britain** in 1931, the **Empress of Australia's** schedule was changed to include summer cruises slotted in between her Canadian sailings; to Norway from Immingham and to the Mediterranean from Southampton. Following a three-month winter lay up the *Empress* operated a season of Caribbean or Mediterranean cruises out of New York, with a return to the Canadian run in the spring.

When she first entered Canadian Pacific service, the **Empress of Australia** had a black hull with a white band. In 1929 she was painted white with a blue hull band. Ten years later, in May 1939, the *Empress* was chartered to act as a royal yacht

to carry King George VI and Queen Elizabeth to Canada. Some of her cabins were transformed into royal apartments whilst the smoking room was converted into a private dining room, with the dining table and chairs transferred from the Royal Yacht **Victoria and Albert**. With the King and Queen on board, accompanied by a party of sixty-nine, the **Empress of Australia** left Portsmouth on 6th May 1939 escorted by three cruisers. The scheduled arrival in Canada was delayed by two days due to problems with ice. Such was the extravagance of those times that the 42,000-ton **Empress of Britain** was chartered to carry the royal party home.

After her brief stint on royal duty, the **Empress of Australia** spent the next three months on the Southampton – Quebec service. On 3rd September 1939 the *Empress* left Quebec for Southampton where she was painted grey and fitted out as a troopship with a capacity for 5,000. Armed with a three-inch gun, she sailed on her first wartime voyage to Bombay and Ceylon on 28th September. On her return in November 1939 she crossed the Atlantic to Halifax where she joined a large convoy carrying Canadian troops to Europe. In 1940 she was involved with the Norwegian campaign and while transferring food to two ships in a fjord she was heavily bombed but got away safely. Empty carton and crate wreckage found floating in the water afterwards convinced the Germans that she had been sunk and Goebbels officially announced her loss. Unlike some of her Canadian Pacific running mates, the **Empress of Australia** was a lucky ship and despite coming under heavy attack she suffered relatively little damage apart from being holed by the Orient Line's **Ormonde** at Oran during the North Africa campaign in January 1943. Following the collision a fire broke out in the *Empress's* ammunition room, and then she drifted from her berth towards a flotilla of destroyers and the sunken French battleship **Bretagne** when a sudden squall swept her berth, snapped her mooring lines, and set her adrift in the congested harbour.

In September 1945 the **Empress of Australia** left Hong Kong with ex-prisoners of war and internees on her final wartime voyage. In active service she had carried 140,000 personnel and steamed more than 250,000 miles. On her return to Liverpool, Canadian Pacific announced that it no longer required the ship as a passenger liner, and the old *Empress* continued to be chartered as a troop carrier.

In May 1946, whilst manoeuvring in the Mersey, the **Empress of Australia** fouled her anchor with the anchor cable of Lamport & Holt's **Debrett**. In the confusion a number of tugs came to the rescue and later claimed salvage money. The matter was settled in court and the seven tugs involved were each awarded a fee for services rendered. At the end of 1946 the *Empress* was sent to Harland & Wolff at Belfast for a refit for her new role as a full time troopship and as such she operated mainly between Liverpool and Bombay, and from Liverpool to Port Said. She also carried military staff to Pusan in November 1950 during the Korean War. She was due to be retired in January 1951 but continuing problems in the Middle East provided further employment. By a strange quirk of fate, in her final year of service, the **Empress of Australia** visited two of the ports which had played a key role in her earlier days: Quebec on 8th October 1951 and Hong Kong on 17th March 1952.

On 29th April 1952 the **Empress of Australia** arrived at Liverpool for the last time at the end of voyage No. 234. She was immediately sold to the British Iron & Steel Corporation for scrap, and on 8th May the last of Albert Ballin's liners sailed for

Rosyth and the shipbreakers' yard at Inverkeithing. And so another 'Grand Dowager' of ocean passenger liners, the ship of which it is said Kaiser Wilhelm had prepared in the early days of the First World War to carry him and his staff to receive the surrender of the British Grand Fleet following an early collapse of the country, sailed north to Scotland to become razor blades, tank parts and a score of other steel products.

Of the skeleton crew who took the liner round to her last berth were two who had been with her for more than twenty years. One of them, Cyrus Stanistreet, deck storekeeper, 58 years at sea, had been with Canadian Pacific Steamships for 46 years, 22 of them in the **Empress of Australia**. Reginald Blake, the officers' steward, had been aboard for 24 years and never missed a trip. Both made the *Empress* their home and had special permission to remain aboard when the liner was in her home port.



Storekeeper Cyrus Stanistreet shows off one of his ships in bottles to the expert eyes of the Empress of Australia's master, Captain L.C. Hautville-Bell

The only woman to make the coastal voyage from Liverpool to Inverkeithing was Margaret Knox, 'Peggy' to thousands of Atlantic and cruising passengers, who had been at sea for more than twenty years, and was one of Canadian Pacific's first sea-going stenographers.

Canadian Pacific found a sea-going position for Cyrus Stanistreet to enable him to complete his Diamond Jubilee at sea. Cyrus first went to sea in a sailing ship

when he was twelve, and by 1952 he had received the M.B.E., the Queen's South Africa Medal, the Polar Medal and three World War 1 and five World War 2 medals. He lost a son in the **Rawalpindi**, sunk by enemy action. Cyrus's deck storeroom was always 'spick and span', and partitioned off from it was his own cabin where he had a work bench for making ship models. When King George VI travelled in the liner to Canada in 1939 he sent for Cyrus to show him his work.

It was fitting that one of the **Empress of Australia's** former masters should pass his old ship off the Mersey Bar on the occasion of her final arrival at Liverpool. From the bridge of the **Empress of France** Captain Dobson signalled "*My ship's company join me in saluting you all on the final voyage of a very gallant and famous ship.*"

Replied Captain L.C. Hautville-Bell, who had been in command of the **Empress of Australia** for only a few months: "*Many thanks for your kind message. The day has come at last.*" ■

TROOPING ON THE 'EMPRESS OF AUSTRALIA'

by Captain John C. Moffat

*Captain John C. Moffat describes a voyage to Port Said made in 1950 on the **Empress of Australia**, then Britain's largest and oldest troop ship*

I joined the **Empress of Australia** as Fifth Officer in the Gladstone Dock at Liverpool on Monday 1st May 1950. When I joined the ship she was under the command of Captain C.E. Duggan, DSC, RD, RNR, one of Canadian Pacific's most distinguished captains and a very fine commander to serve under. The Troop Deck Officer was Commander Billot, DSO, RD, RNR, a Canadian Pacific first officer, and he was the Liaison Officer between the Captain and the Military. The relationship between the permanent military staff and the ship's officers was excellent.

The **Empress of Australia** had been on trooping duties since 1939, carrying up to 5,000 troops on a number of voyages during the war. Late in 1944 her carrying capacity was reduced to 3,000. During the spring of 1946 the ship was reconditioned, after which she continued as a transport with her troop decks re-converted to provide comfortable lounges for 700 officers and service families, and 1,000 other ranks.

Forty-eight hours before sailing advance parties (Army, Navy and Air Force) joined. They were required to familiarise themselves with the layout of the ship, the feeding arrangements, the ship's regulations and the cabin accommodation allocated for families. The day before sailing, fire and lifeboat drills were carried out under the eagle eye of the Board of Trade Surveyor. A full inspection of the ship was undertaken by both the port military staff and Canadian Pacific's marine superintendent and his entourage.

At 7.am on the 5th May the **Empress of Australia** moved out of the Gladstone Dock and secured alongside Princes Landing Stage to embark passengers and troops. This commenced at 11.am and was complete by 4.pm. There were now 2,200 persons on board, including the ship's company.

At 4.30pm we left the landing stage bound for Gibraltar, Malta and Port Said. Emergency drill was carried out on the passage from the Bar Lightship to Point Lynas. After this had been completed the first order was *'Boots off – plimsolls on, make as little noise as possible.'*

The Liverpool pilot disembarked at Point Lynas and the **Empress of Australia** started to work up to full speed. In the St George's Channel the weather was fine but hazy, although a south-westerly gale was forecast for the English Channel and Fastnet. The ship was well battened down for sea, and with a gale warning in force, everyone on board was advised to secure all moveable items.

When I went on watch at midnight with the second officer, we were steaming at a steady 16 knots, the visibility was good and the watch passed quickly. The Master at Arms and the Orderly Officer visited the bridge every two hours and reported that all was well below decks – no problems on the first night out. Reveille was at 5.30am for the troops. The washing facilities were sparse and fresh water was rationed. Breakfast was served from 6.30am until 8.30am. The troops had cafeteria-style messing and the passengers ate in an allocated dining room. All accommodation had to be cleaned and ready for the Captain's inspection at 11.am.

The first morning at sea was a bit chaotic with people being seasick and unable to find their cabins. There was a large sick parade at the ship's military hospital. By noon the **Empress of Australia** was crossing the English Channel and, although rolling slightly, the sun was shining. The forecast gale had not materialised.

The tannoy from the ship's orderly office never stopped from 8.am until 1.pm, but the following two-and-a-half hours was declared a 'silent period'. At 3.30pm boat and fire drills were carried out. Lifeboats were swung out and lowered to the embarkation deck, and then rehousing and secured. The emergency boat was left in the outboard position and under the supervision of the fourth officer the boat's crew was mustered and exercised every day at noon. At the end of the first day at sea everything was under control; working parties had been allocated for various duties and a number of troops detailed off for messroom and galley duties.

During daylight hours junior naval officers and midshipmen were allowed to stand bridge watches with the deck officers. The midshipmen received instruction in seamanship, signalling and other duties. They appeared to enjoy this – good basic training for embryo officers. From 9.30am until noon all the children over six years of age attended school. There was a number of schoolteachers going to Malta and Port Said and they were requested to organise lessons and to keep the children occupied.

The ship's canteen kept the troops stocked up with sweets, chocolate and cigarettes. At 4.pm every afternoon there was an issue of two cans of beer to each soldier, or as an alternative, soft drinks could be obtained. Troops were not allowed spirits at any time and the naval draft was not too happy about missing their daily tot of rum.

The boat deck was out-of-bounds to all ranks except the ship's officers and senior military personnel, but there appeared to be ample deck space and troops were able to carry out physical training and military drills on the fore and after decks. After 1.pm sunbathing and recreation was permitted.

A 'sweepstake' on the day's run was organised, the result being announced each day at 3.30pm. The winner usually received his winnings from the Orderly

Room. Deck tennis and other games were arranged for all on board. In the evening there were concerts (a number of National Service men had a theatrical background and enjoyed practising their talents on a captive audience). Bingo, horse racing (using dice and wooden horses) and cinema shows helped to pass the time, and there was something different each evening.

A number of the officers and their ladies played bridge in the small lounge after dinner.

On Sunday, 7th May, the day prior to arrival at Gibraltar, Divine Service was held at 11.am and all who were not on duty attended.

At 8.am on 8th May we steamed into Gibraltar Bay and anchored. Our stay was a brief one and at 11.am we were rounding Europa Point on our way to Malta.

Life as a deck officer on the '*Empress*' was very pleasant and during off-duty hours it was the usual thing to do a bit of socialising with the passengers. The food was very good and well presented. As Fifth Officer, in addition to being junior officer of the 12 - 4 watch, I was also responsible for ensuring that the ship's signalling equipment was always kept up to the required standard. Another task of mine was checking lifeboat stores and equipment (we did not carry cadets), and completing a list of defects which would be submitted to the Chief Officer. Any defects relating to Safety at Sea equipment were rectified immediately.

Twenty-four hours after leaving Gibraltar the temperature was up to 22 degrees centigrade and the order was given for tropical rig to be worn. The ship did not have air-conditioning and it became hot on 'C', 'D' and 'F' decks. A number of troops were allowed to sleep on deck. A small canvas swimming pool was rigged on deck for the children, and salt water showers provided for the troops.

Though warnings had been issued about sunbathing, a few decided not to heed the advice given and required treatment from the medical staff. Troops with sunburn received no sympathy from the RSM.

On 11th May we arrived at Malta, entered Grand Harbour and secured to buoys in Bighi Bay. The usual port formalities were soon completed and disembarkation commenced. Sadly, we had to say 'goodbye' to our Naval 'watchkeepers'. They had been a good team and had adapted to life on board a troopship very quickly. Three hundred troops and a small number of families left the ship at Malta. Shore leave was granted to certain personnel; however the Fourth Officer and myself were on gangway duty and did not get ashore.

Again, our stay was brief and at 2.pm we had passed the fairway buoy, secured for sea and set course towards Egypt, to pass 20 miles north of Damietta Lighthouse.

For the remainder of the troops and passengers on board we were on the last leg of the outward voyage. Below decks it was very hot and more personnel started to sleep on deck.

Dress during the day was shorts and shirts, stockings and shoes, white for the ship's officers and khaki for military personnel. Officers dressed for dinner in the evening and this entailed wearing No.10s for ship's officers, with badges of rank worn on the shoulder.

The ship's laundry had been quite busy since leaving Liverpool; however now that clean uniforms were required each day, the staff were working a fourteen-

hour day. Despite this, everyone had clean starched whites and prices were very reasonable.

The passage to Port Said was very pleasant with normal routine and a bit more recreation. A special concert for the entire complement on board was arranged. Prior to arrival in Port Said, a children's sports day and party was organised. One or two of the young ladies decided to come on deck with bikinis, but this was quickly discouraged by the ship's adjutant. The girls thought him to be rather prudish! For officers and their ladies a gala dinner and dance was held on Friday 12th.

On this particular evening, certain regulations were relaxed. The privilege was not abused, although a few couples were 'chased' off the boat deck by the Orderly Officer (with a smile on his face). We secured in Port Said Harbour at 8.am on 14th May. The Egyptian authorities were quickly on board and an hour later the ship had been cleared. The second group to board included the agent with mail for the ship's company, followed by the Army postal staff with the troops' mail. The officer in charge reported to the ship's Second Officer to arrange immediate discharge of the large number of bags containing mail for the Canal Zone Forces.

Disembarkation commenced at 10.am with pontoons at the two gangways. Barges and launches were used to ferry troops, passengers and baggage ashore. Guards were doubled at the gangway and all entrances to the accommodation. The ship's chandler; the official ship's bumboat man, George Robey, an Egyptian well-known to most seamen; representatives from the Port Said Engineering Company who would arrange for any engine-room and deck repairs, and last, but not least, the waterman, all came on board. All our fresh water tanks were topped to capacity for the voyage home. Water barges were alongside throughout our stay in harbour. Tanks, once filled, were continually topped up, until thirty minutes before departure.

Senior deck officers were on day duty and available for call out at night if necessary, and the junior deck officers were on six-hour watches (six-on, twelve-off). Disembarkation was completed at 9.30pm. The *Empress* was to be in Port Said for two days and shore leave was granted. A trip to Cairo was arranged through the agent and the port military commandant. The weather in Port Said was hot in the daytime and reasonably cool at night.

The harbour was full of ships, sixty per cent of them flying the Red Ensign. At 9.am on Monday 15th May we carried out a full-scale fire drill and abandon ship exercise, tested motor lifeboat engines and towed a few lifeboats around the ship. Embarkation was to begin at 7.am on the morning of 16th May and we were scheduled to sail at 6.pm.

Egyptian labour continued working on the ship's hull, caulking rivets and scaling and painting where necessary. Throughout our stay in Port Said strict security was maintained, and loading of baggage and military stores was in operation from dawn till dusk. In addition to our military guards, two Egyptian policemen with rifles were stationed at the gangway on twelve-hour watches. This was a port regulation which was strictly enforced by the harbour authorities.

The military accommodation was thoroughly cleaned by a fatigue party. Civilian passenger accommodation was the responsibility of the catering department.

Those of us who did not go to Cairo had to remain on board as it was not considered advisable to go ashore in Port Said at this time. Our recreation was a film show after dinner on the two evenings we spent in port.

Embarkation commenced at 8.am on 16th May. Wives and children were the first to arrive. The main body of troops commenced embarking at 11.am and, again, the galley staff were very busy as about 2,000 people required feeding from 12 noon onwards. Embarkation, bunkering, loading of baggage and fresh water was completed by 3.pm. At 4.pm navigation and bridge equipment was tested, embarkation was complete and the ship had been thoroughly searched for stowaways. All the crew were on board and Mr Ewing, the Chief Officer, reported to the Captain that we were in all respects ready for sea.

The pilot boarded at 5.30pm and tugs (belching black smoke on to our clean paintwork) were securing alongside. By 6.pm we were steaming out towards the fairway buoy. The harbour was full of ships secured to buoys, all fitted with their searchlights, ready for the midnight southbound convoy to Suez.

Troops were lining the rails on both port and starboard sides, and a small army band was playing soft music on the promenade deck. There was a euphoric atmosphere as many of the troops were going home to be demobbed, having completed their two years' National Service. Regular soldiers and families were returning home after two years service in the Canal Zone.

By 10.pm everyone had settled in, had been fed, and 'lights out' was piped at 10.30pm. I went on watch at midnight and we were passing Damietta light. The *Empress* was making 16½ knots. A quiet watch followed, and I was glad to turn in again at 4.am. Later that morning we had a full-scale fire and boat drill.

The passage through the Mediterranean was uneventful and after rounding Cape St Vincent, the temperature started to drop. At 9.pm on 22nd May the order was given that, as from 8.am the next morning, UK uniforms would be 'rig of the day'.

At 2.am on the morning of 25th May we embarked our pilot at Point Lynas. The Canadian Pacific choice pilot had kindly collected the ship's mail from the Liverpool office, but the bulk of the mail would be delivered at the landing stage. Disembarkation at Princes Landing Stage commenced at 7.30am and was completed by 12.30pm. The *Empress of Australia* moved into the Gladstone Dock at 1.pm on 25th May to complete the discharge of cargo and commence voyage maintenance.

I was promoted to Fourth Officer during the turnaround in Liverpool and made one more voyage in the old *Empress*, almost identical to the previous one. On completion of that voyage I was instructed to transfer to the *Empress of France*, sailing for Quebec and Montreal in a couple of days time. I was delighted to be returning to the Company's North Atlantic service, but at the same time I was very sorry to be leaving the *Empress of Australia*.

Although she was up for sale, the *Empress of Australia* made her 70th and final voyage as a troopship on 17th February 1952, when she sailed from Liverpool with servicemen and their families to the Far East. She finally arrived home in Liverpool on 30th April of that year. Sold to the British Iron and Steel Corporation for scrap, she left the Mersey for Inverkeithing on 8th May 1952. The ship was now almost forty years old. There were many sad faces on Merseyside when she sailed on her final voyage to the breaker's yard. ■

CAPTAIN CHARLES CARRIES MOLASSES

by John Fletcher

John Fletcher's real name was John Pilling, and he died over twelve years ago on 14th November, 1996. His articles about life in the Merchant Navy were published regularly in 'The Nautical Magazine' and 'Sea Breezes' over the years. John was a member of the Liverpool Nautical Research Society for several years. John Pilling joined the Royal Navy at an early age, but in 1948 at the age of twenty he left to join the Blue Funnel Line, where he remained until 1971, sailing as chief officer for over twelve years. After being made redundant along with many others, John sailed as master with Kuwait Shipping, the Bangladesh Shipping Corporation and Everards until 1983 when ill-health forced his retirement.

Captain Charles's ship, though old-fashioned by modern standards, was what is known as a 'comfortable' ship. Owned by a long established Liverpool company and bearing the name of one of its earliest vessels, she had served as a minelayer through the war years.

After the war she was refitted and sent on foreign service on the American run, and then on the company's three-ship service between the Malay Archipelago and the east coast of Australia.

On this particular voyage the ship had loaded in Singapore and Java, topped up with bunkers at Balikpapan (Borneo), and then steamed through the placid waters of the Flores and Arafura Seas to pick up the Barrier Reef pilot at Thursday Island in the Torres Strait. Usually she was fully loaded with Sydney as her first port of call, but in Singapore Captain Charles had heard that a parcel of 1,000 tons of bulk molasses was on offer from Cairns to Melbourne; a short haul with good freight. With this in mind the big deep tank in No.3 hold had been left empty, and a few days after sailing his agents had cabled to say that the cargo was booked.

Sending for the mate, Captain Charles told him the news and added that it was a good job that the tank had been pressure tested in Singapore. The mate checked that the tank only needed a rough clean, and Captain Charles confirmed that there was no Lloyd's survey required for molasses. Steam coils would be required as it would be a heated cargo.

The mate got the bo'sun and his men organised on the cleaning. As the captain had said, only a rough clean was necessary, unlike the very high standard required for palm oil, latex and most of the other bulk liquids which were carried, but even so, all loose scale, rust, dirt or residue of former cargoes had to be removed from the tank.

During the many years that Captain Charles's company's ships had been trading to the Far East and Australia, they had gained a wealth of experience in the carriage of bulk liquids, and as with other types of cargo, all this knowledge had been collated to form a standard instruction book. Captain Charles knew the basic elements well enough from his own experience. Briefly stated, they covered two classes of liquid cargo: that which required heating and that which did not. In the latter case the

tank was simply prepared and filled, the main point to watch being that it was full, with no possibility of a free surface which could endanger the stability of the ship.

With heated liquids there was more to it, some of them having the loading, carrying and discharging temperatures differing by as much as 45°F. The consequent change in volume in a big tank presented certain problems. A nice balance was called for, by which the liquid at its lowest temperature on the voyage did not fall below the level of the tank top, nor when it was heated to discharge temperature did it expand so as to strain or overflow the tank.

Of course, the company wanted all the freight it could obtain and had taken practical means to ensure that it got it. The coaming of the tank was raised about six inches above the tank top, and at each corner of the tank were expansion trunks leading up to ventilators on deck. Thus the liquid could, if necessary, expand considerably without causing serious stress on the tank lid or the manhole joints. In the case of molasses, the temperature was not to exceed 90°F, not to fall below 75°F, and at a point somewhere between 80°F and 85°F fermentation might occur and asphyxiating gases could be given off.

To the seaward of Cairns lies the Grafton Passage, the only way through the Barrier Reef except for the channels at the north and south extremities. The entrance to the harbour itself is almost hidden in a fold of steep green-clad hills. By the time the ship was secured alongside it was early evening and when the mate got back to his room there were three shore-side men waiting for him. They were the agent, the shipper and the engineer in charge of pumping. The only real problem the mate had was in slaking the seemingly perpetual thirst of the pumping engineer and his boys, and ensuring that one of them would be available to stop the pump when he gave the order. All through the night the molasses flowed, with the same sense of inevitability as a volcanic lava flow. There was almost a hypnotic fascination in watching the heavy, sweet-smelling liquid pour from the pipe and spread itself so slowly that it seemed as if the tank would never be full, but by early morning the level was nearly up to the mark which the mate had made. By seven o'clock he was able to report to Captain Charles that the cargo was loaded to his satisfaction and shortly afterwards they were on their way, leaving the sub-tropical warmth of Northern Queensland for winter in the southern ports. Three-and-a-half days later the ship passed under the Sydney Harbour Bridge and docked at Central Wharf where she would spend a further three days discharging.

Captain Charles's idea on leaving was to proceed first to the oil berth at Melbourne, half way up the Yarra River, to discharge the molasses, and then to carry on to the Victoria Dock to the general cargo berth.

A day before arrival in Sydney, however, with a noticeable drop in both air and sea temperatures, the mate had sent one of the cadets to check the temperature of the molasses. Thermometers secured to light chain had been left hanging in the tank so it was a simple matter of hauling them out to take a reading. Half an hour passed before the cadet returned and reported that he couldn't pull up the chain. The combined efforts of the mate and two middies eventually brought the thermometer to view. It read 76°F, and the mate reckoned that the molasses must be as thick as a Lake Maracaibo oil well and advised Captain Charles that the steam should be cracked open.

After leaving Sydney they had a quiet forty hour run round the coast and first light saw them through Port Phillip Heads and by eight o'clock the ship was moored in the Victoria Dock, Melbourne, ready for the waiting day gangs. The agent was on board and confirmed that twilight and night gangs had been ordered so that all being well the discharging of the general cargo would be completed by the next morning. A tanker was on the oil berth at present, but she was due to sail soon after midnight.

Checking the temperature of the molasses, the mate saw that it was 89°F, one degree less than the required pumping temperature, and just into the expansion trunk. During the morning inspection he mentioned this to Captain Charles, who appeared to be very pleased with the way things were working out.

The gangs worked well, and on his final look round the hatches with the third mate, the mate saw that the ship would easily be finished for the morning. It was a clear, cold night with a touch of frost on the air. He thought how thick the molasses would have been at this temperature without the heating coils and then, one thought leading to another, he walked over to one of the deep tank ventilators and shone his torch down. The beam didn't have far to travel before being reflected from the darkly glinting surface of the molasses, which he saw with some consternation was only about six feet below deck level.

At five o'clock the mate was called and the second mate told him that the cargo would all be finished for six, and that the molasses had risen further up the ventilator, and that the surface was now only an inch or so below the lip of the ventilator cowl. At half past six the agent came on board and told Captain Charles that there was some sort of trouble down on the oil berth. The tanker occupying the berth wouldn't be ready to sail for another twenty-four hours. Captain Charles immediately ordered tugs and a pilot and decided to proceed to Adelaide, despite the mate's misgivings about the molasses. It would, said Captain Charles, be pretty cold in Adelaide and in Burnie, and if the steam was shut off, then the molasses would settle. Furthermore, with the extra thousand tons down below, there would be no stability worries on the run across to Tasmania.

They left the berth shortly afterwards and were well down the river before the mate was relieved on the fo'c'sle head by the second mate. He went to have a look at the deep tank and what he saw sent him up to the bridge in a hurry. The molasses was over the lip of the vents and running into the scuppers in a steady stream of thick dark liquid. Captain Charles decided that if the flow hadn't stopped by the time the pilot was ready to go, then he would anchor off Gellibrand Pile and get the agent out.

An hour later the flow continued and at an increased rate, so Captain Charles brought the ship to anchor and sent off a note with the pilot asking the agent to bring with him a chemist or someone who knew about molasses. He duly arrived, accompanied by two men who he introduced as an industrial chemist and the manager of a Brisbane molasses plant. They all went to No.3 hatch where they were joined by the mate and the chief engineer. In silence they all stared at the unique spectacle presented by the four ventilators spewing molasses in a steady remorseless flow which ran down the scuppers and finally dissolved in the grey waters of Port Phillip Bay.

The chemist told Captain Charles that the molasses was 'growing'. At a certain temperature under certain conditions it could happen. The captain asked if they had any idea when this 'growing' might stop. All the steam heat was off the tank now.

He was told that a chemical reaction had started – it could stop that evening or maybe the next day.

Captain Charles gave the agent his amended E.T.A. at Adelaide and sailed through the Backstairs Passage, hoping to make the pilot before dark. He was over optimistic, however, and it was after nightfall when they arrived and anchored until morning. The mate reported that the molasses was coming out faster now than when they had left Melbourne. The sailors had been washing it over the side, but once they were alongside that couldn't go on.

The mate reckoned that there was three days' cargo work at Adelaide. As soon as they were tied up he contacted the chandler and ordered fifty 40-gallon drums. The bo'sun, meanwhile, with typical Chinese ingenuity, had made four lots of chutes to funnel the molasses into the drums and the wharfies derived no end of amusement from the whole fiasco. It was a messy business; inevitably some of the molasses spilt and each drum had to be washed before being slung below and stowed. During the afternoon, as well as 'growing', the molasses began to erupt. A loud popping noise was heard, followed by a nauseous gas wave which permeated the whole ship.

Captain Charles started to worry about the possibility of the molasses ceasing to 'grow' and starting to contract. The mate had managed to save about 100 tons in the drums, but a lot had gone over the side as well. There was now less than 900 tons in a 1,000 ton tank. If the molasses contracted, then they would be left with a mighty slack tank. If it had been water it would have been bad enough, but a free surface of molasses in a big 'thwartship tank a winter passage across the Bass Strait and Tasman Sea in that condition didn't bear thinking about.

When the ship sailed from Adelaide two days later, a total of 250 drums had been filled with molasses and 20 more empty drums stood on deck for use in their next port, Burnie. When the pilot had gone, the mate took over the watch and checked the course which would take them clear of the Troubridge Shoals and on down the Gulf of St Vincent. He decided to let the molasses go over the side now that they were back at sea.

Next morning the molasses was still flowing and erupting, but just before noon the mate thought it had slowed down a little although he had become so mesmerized by it over the last few days that it was difficult to really tell.

At three o'clock that afternoon, the molasses stopped. The mate followed Captain Charles down on to the deck and together they stood by one of the ventilators, looking at it with a certain degree of incredulity. The situation was watched carefully for the remaining fifteen hours of the passage and during the two days the ship lay alongside at Burnie. The level dropped about three feet in the ventilators and remained there, with no eruptions either. At sailing time, and with a fair weather report, Captain Charles decided that they were going to be lucky. He told the mate that they would not start heating the molasses again until they were inside Port Phillip Heads. If it started to grow again then, it was just too bad! Their luck held and forty hours after leaving Burnie they were tied up alongside the Melbourne oil wharf.

The molasses consignee and the pumping manager boarded right away along with the agent; the consignee going straight up to see Captain Charles while the other two made for the mate's room. The consignee explained that the tanks ashore were completely dry, and also that he was being hard pressed by some of his customers who

only bought in 50 or 60 drum lots. The molasses apparently had to settle in the tanks ashore before it could be drummed, and that would take another couple of days.

Captain Charles suggested that he could make 250 drums available, explaining that there had been a slight excess of molasses which the deep tank couldn't hold. If the consignee wanted it, then he was welcome to it, provided he covered the cost of the drums. The captain said that he would arrange for the discharge of the molasses on to the consignee's lorries.

Some three hours later Captain Charles was disturbed by the mate knocking on his door. He explained that the pump had been rigged, but that it would not draw. The pumping manager said that the molasses was too thick, even though there was full steam on the heating coils. The mate's solution was to get the pump running and then lift it clear of the tank lid with one of the derricks; they would then take off the manhole door and lower the pump with the end of the pipe through the manhole. Captain Charles pointed out that with the head on the tank, the 'tween deck would soon be full of molasses. The mate said that there was no cargo in the 'tween deck, and the deck crew had swept it clean. The carpenter had built a makeshift cofferdam around the tank coaming so that any spillage could be contained. Captain Charles agreed with the plan and accompanied the mate to the tank top. When they got there the pump hung poised above the manhole door and the third mate, second engineer and the carpenter were down in the 'tween deck. The bo'sun was standing by the winch and two sailors waited in readiness to handle the pipe. Carefully they slackened off the nuts on the manhole door.

There was a hissing noise as the door rose from its seating and thick molasses began to ooze out all around its edges. The carpenter quickly took off the nuts until only four remained. They worked on these until the second engineer shouted a warning. They jumped back just in time as the steel door flew into the air, completely stripping the remaining threads of the holding nuts, and landed in a corner of the 'tween deck. Molasses poured out from the opening and spread over the tank lid. The pump was then lowered and the pipe guided into the manhole. By now the mate and his men were ankle deep in molasses, but the idea had worked and the cargo which had caused so much trouble was finally on its way ashore. Leaving the third mate in charge and setting the sailors to work shovelling the spilt molasses back into the tank, the mate and second engineer climbed up on deck and got rid of their stained and sodden gear.

Ten days later the old ship was heading north through the reefs. A good cargo had been loaded in Sydney and there remained a brief call at Port Alma in Northern Queensland before she left the Australian coast and steamed westwards to Java and Singapore. Captain Charles and the mate were having a drink together and discussing the events of the preceding weeks. There was a knock on the door and the radio officer arrived with a message from the Sydney agents:

"Molasses out-turn excellent. Stop. On this basis endeavouring book you 1,000 tons Cairns to Melbourne next southbound voyage" ! ■

ss “MARKLYN”–A BRIEF HISTORY AND HER WARTIME SALVAGE

by LNRS Member Gordon Bodey

Introduction

The combined British, Allied and Neutral World War 1 merchant shipping losses of all types for the year 1915 due to U-boats, mines and other enemy actions amounted to 772 vessels of some 1,323,114grt; an average monthly loss of 110,259 tons. Of the total tonnage lost that year, 68.4% was British. For the period January – November 1916, the figures had climbed to 1,203 vessels lost with a combined tonnage of 2,009,951grt; an average monthly loss of 182,723 tons. Of this lost tonnage, 55% was British. In total, 80% of the losses were due to U-boat activity.*

It was now apparent to Government that these rapidly escalating losses were not sustainable with the existing shipbuilding programmes and the Board of Trade, with the backing of the Admiralty, came to the conclusion that a rapid increase in the rate at which replacement tonnage was built was required.

As a result, in December 1916, legislation enacted in 1914 was quickly invoked and amended to include the ‘New Ministries and Secretaries Act’ that allowed for control and emergency action to be taken in specified sectors, one of which was merchant shipping. The Act provided for the appointment of a Shipping Controller who would oversee the implementation of a shipbuilding programme designed to replace lost tonnage at a faster rate than hitherto and, hopefully, at a faster rate than the enemy’s attrition by ‘*Such steps as he best thinks ...*’. A Merchant Shipbuilding Advisory Committee was formed at once and held its first meeting on 19th December 1916 at which it was decided that:

- An additional and extensive building programme be started immediately
- Standard ship types as regards hull and engine design be built
- The types to be as few and as simple as possible

Ultimately the number of types built probably exceeded the number originally envisaged: there were eleven deep-sea, dry cargo types – some of which were modified versions of the main types – all of which were single-screw vessels (except for fourteen of the type ‘G’, which were twin-screw vessels) that varied from each other only in size and tonnage. The main types, and numbers built in British yards, were as follows:

- A & B types-almost identical to each other-of which a total of 206 were built.
- C type – 23 built by the war’s end; but 86 in total. They were primarily intended as coal and ore carriers.
- D type – 27 vessels built expressly as colliers
- G type – 22 built.

Toward the end of the war thirty-seven straight-sided vessels, whose frames were without curves, were built from prefabricated sections (National or N-type).

*This information has been compiled from Lloyd’s World War 1 War Losses

In addition to the dry-cargo types, some A & B-type vessels were adapted to carry oil by building cylindrical tanks in their holds and designated AO and BO types; thirty-eight and one respectively were built. Also, near the war's end, thirty-four standard-type tankers (Z type) were built to carry heavy fuel oil, and served mainly as Fleet oilers.

Besides the deep-sea vessels, a fleet of seventy-eight coasters ranging in size from 300 to 3,000grt was built under the programme, as were twelve powerful, single-screw sea-going tugs and fifty-two 1,000dwt dumb barges. The tugs and the dumb barges were built of concrete because, in addition to conserving steel, it was thought that the use of concrete would be cheaper and only require unskilled labour – both the latter assumptions were found to be incorrect.

All the standard vessels' names carried the prefix 'War'; whilst the concrete-built vessels' names carried the prefix 'Crete'.

For all the deep-sea hull types there were only two main engine types built, which ranged in horsepower from 1400 to 3650, except for the fourteen twin-screw 'G' vessels, which were steam turbine driven and rated at 5500hp.

Sixty-two shipyards and thirty-six engine builders in the UK were involved in the programme, as well as yards as far afield as Japan and Canada. In all, some 650 vessels were completed in British yards (but many were not completed until after the war had ended). In addition, American yards were contracted to build some 700,000 tons, but as America was not then involved in the war, the ships were ordered mainly through the Cunard Steamship Company. However, on America entering the war in 1917 most of the vessels being built in US yards, or ready for delivery, were requisitioned by the U.S. Government.

The subject of this article is one ship of the 'C' class, and the one major drama in her otherwise trouble-free and long working life.

'C'-class ships' specification

Overall length: 342ft, breadth: 46ft 5in, depth: 25ft 6in, and load draft 21ft 8in.

Gross registered tonnage: 3,019, Deadweight tonnage: 5,050

They were coal-fired, single-screw vessels driven by a three-cylinder steam engine

Generating 2200hp, giving them a notional sea speed of 11½ knots.

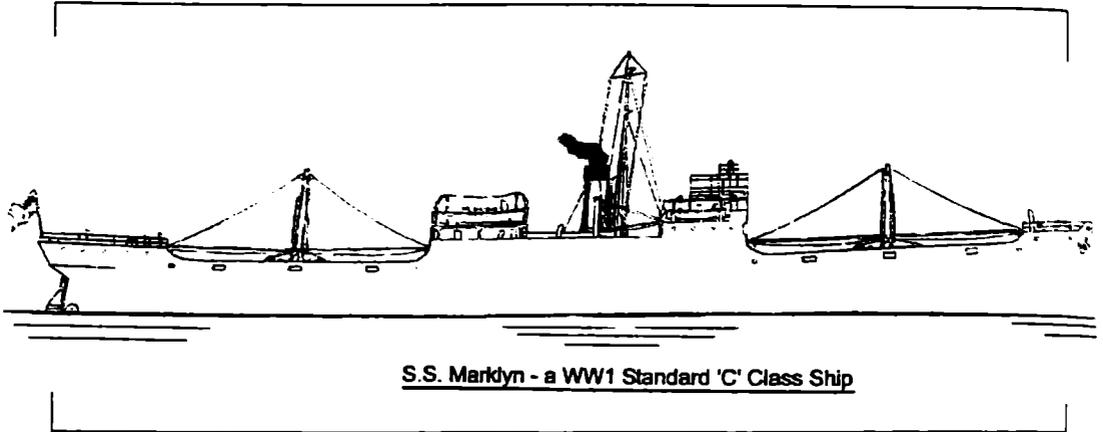
October 1918 – January 1942

At the time of her fall from grace in 1942, this particular 'C' class vessel was named **Marklyn**, but when completed in October 1918 at the yard of the Tyne Iron Shipbuilding Co. Ltd., Willington Quay-on-Tyne, she was named **War Combe**. She was officially transferred to post-war private registration on 18th August 1919, becoming the **Watsness** in the ownership of Letricheux, David Ltd., Swansea, and entered their service under the command of Captain H.B. Henricksen.

By the start of the Second World War, she had been the **Marklyn** for some twelve years under the ownership of the Mervyn Steam Shipping Co., (Martyn,

Martyn & Co.Ltd.) of Newport, Mon., one of whose partners was the master. The company operated three ships in 1939, but by 1941 had only the **Marklyn**.

The **Marklyn**'s eventful voyage started when she sailed for Freetown, Sierra Leone, on 21st October 1941, carrying a cargo of coal.



Freetown was the main assembly point for the formation of convoys of merchant ships travelling through the area from the UK to Cape Town and vice versa. It was not a port in the accepted sense of having the cargo-handling facilities that would normally be expected of a port; nor was it able to provide of itself the supplies needed by vessels calling there. In fact, at that time, Freetown was totally dependent on the outside world for supplies of every description – even fresh water. Despite the area's high rainfall there were neither reservoirs nor suitable areas for the building of such. In addition, medical facilities had to be provided on board an old passenger vessel anchored some miles offshore because of the enervating effect of the climate, and also the prevalence of endemic insect-borne, and potentially fatal, diseases on shore.

The fuel oil and coal needed to provide bunkers for passing ships and convoy escort vessels was sent there from the West Indies and Britain respectively. However, for the first three years of the war, off-loaded cargoes had to be stored in a few old vessels anchored there for that purpose, and ships were often subject to very lengthy delays as a result.

Freetown's strategic value lay in its geographical location as the nearest West African port to the UK under the political control of the UK, and that it provided a safe, defended anchorage. It was, therefore, a suitable (albeit dire place for Europeans to linger in) intermediate location for the organisation of convoys and their naval escorts. Its one great economic resource, particularly in wartime, was the iron ore extracted from the Marampa mine some 40 miles to the N.N.E. The iron ore output (about 3 million tons per annum) was brought by a rail link to the nearby port of Pepel on Pepel Island. It was this commodity – some 4,500 tons – that the **Marklyn** loaded for her return to the UK.

The **Marklyn** arrived at Freetown on 18th November 1941, and having eventually unloaded there, moved across to Pepel to load her iron ore cargo for the

UK. On 26th December she sailed from Freetown as part of Convoy SL 96, comprised of thirty-five ships of various types, but all having in common their low speed.

Prior to 1941, end-to-end convoy escort was not possible, and UK-bound SL convoys would proceed under escort to a location well to the west of Gibraltar, and about 2,000 miles from Freetown. From there the convoy would disperse with the ships going their separate ways, whilst the escorts returned to Freetown with a southbound convoy that had formed from vessels proceeding to the location independently.

From mid-1941 ships bound for Freetown from the UK went in an escorted convoy to the mid-Atlantic location where its escorts picked up a UK-bound convoy, whilst the Freetown-based escorts returned there with the southbound convoy.

For some unknown reason (possibly due to a southbound escorted convoy not being available to make a rendezvous, or maybe a lack of escorts) convoy SL 96 followed the earlier procedure and dispersed when far enough out into the Atlantic. Oddly, no losses appeared to have occurred as a result.

After detaching from the convoy, the **Marklyn** made her way towards her destination port, Barrow, by the north-about route via the west coast of Ireland. Having rounded the Northern Ireland coast she headed approximately south-east between Rathlin Island and the Mull of Kintyre in order to pass, some seventy miles further on, a few miles to the west of the Mull of Galloway. Once past this land she would have changed course to east-south-east to pass well clear of Point of Ayre (the northern tip of the Isle of Man) and its offshore banks, and then resumed an approximately south-easterly course directly to Barrow.

Grounding and Salvage

At 9pm GMT on Sunday 20th January 1942 a wireless message sent from the ship was received at Lloyd's in London. It said: '*Ashore at Mull of Galloway; require assistance*'. At 1.22am on 21st January another message was received simply stating '*Crammag Head*'; and at 3.18am a third message saying '*Water gaining, require pump*', and finally at 7.28am, '*Impossible to state rate but leakage gaining slowly on maximum pumping capacity at low water.*' The **Marklyn** had taken the ground at about 8.50pm on the Sunday night. There is no record in the Portpatrick Coastguard log book of a distress call being sent from the **Marklyn**.

Although the second message said '*Crammag Head*', the shoreline at that location [a headland that juts into the sea for some 400 yards] is completely guarded by rock outcrops, and the ship's total destruction would have occurred had she struck there, and in a tense situation, whoever had the message radioed, having run the ship ashore, was not then able to know her exact location, but should by then have realised that she was not ashore on Crammag Head.

As shown in the message below, the **Marklyn** was ashore on sand and the location of the grounding was, in fact, Port Logan (otherwise called Nessock) Bay, 4½ miles north of Crammag Head. This location has a half-mile long beach, whose middle section has, at the low-water mark, underlying rocks near the surface. She was actually aground in relatively shallow water, at the low water mark, with a tidal range of some 10 – 12 feet. Over a distance of approximately three-quarters of a mile from seaward

to the low water mark the depth of water reduces from five fathoms over shelving sand. The time of the grounding was about half-an-hour after dead low water.

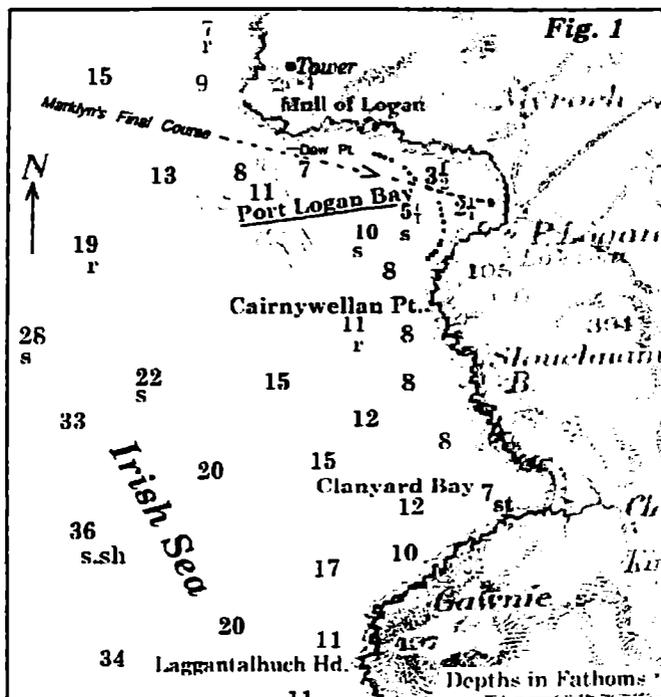


Fig. 1- Marklyn's Course Prior to Grounding

That the vessel had been set on an ESE course prematurely can be seen from the chart details (Figs. 1 & 1A). To strike the beach at Port Logan the ship would have passed very close to the outcrops off Daw Point [1¼ miles WNW from Port Logan beach] at the southern tip of the Mull of Logan – possibly within a hundred yards of them – prior to grounding. Had she been on her earlier south-easterly course, she would have struck on the extremely rocky coastline about half-a-mile south of Port Logan. Although steaming on a correct heading had she already cleared the Mull of Galloway the **Marklyn**, when passing Daw Point, was still some ten miles NNW of the area she should have been, in order to clear the southern end of the Galloway peninsula. It seems most probable that the Mull of Logan had been sighted earlier in the failing light and had been mistaken for the Mull of Galloway, thus precipitating the premature change of course, and hence the assumption in the first radio message that she was ashore on the Mull of Galloway. Whether she had approached the land to try to obtain a bearing or whether an earlier navigational error had been made is not known.

The same day, the Lloyd's agent at Stranraer said that the position was hopeful and that the acting senior naval officer had ordered four pumping sets to control the water entering Nos.2 and 4 holds. The engine-room was still dry but water was entering the tunnel. On the following day, 23rd January, the Lloyd's agent visited the **Marklyn** and found no evidence of Admiralty action, or of pumps on hand to test the extent of the leakage in Nos.2 and 4 holds, and in No.2 tank. He also found that the position had worsened during the night, and that only a working crew was on board (she had carried a crew of thirty-nine but no lives were lost or injuries reported). He thought that a salvage vessel and a diver should be considered, but that the weather conditions would be vital.

On the morning of 25th January, the surveyor found the **Marklyn** badly ashore at the mean low water mark (some 150 yards below the mean high water mark) in a broadside position, and now on a heading of S.S.E., and exposed to south-west and north-west winds. Nos. 1 and 2 holds were now flooding with the tide, and the leakage was more than the ship's pumps could deal with, but he was able to say that two 5-inch and two 7-inch Admiralty motor pumps had previously been got on board ready for coupling up. A strong north-westerly gale was blowing that day with seas breaking over the ship and he was unable to get on board. All hands had now been evacuated to Drummore, three miles away.

He noted that an extra two-feet depth of water at high tide would be required to enable the vessel to float when the holds were pumped out, and he thought that about 1,000 tons of cargo needed to be discharged, and that a diver would be needed to plug the leakages.

The owners received a telegram dated 24th January from the Naval Authorities at Stranraer stating '*Salvage craft arriving, position favourable*', and one from Lloyd's agent, Stranraer, timed 1.15pm, 25th January stating '*Position worse due to westerly gale. No work possible. Four 7-inch pumps on board not yet connected. Salvage Association and Liverpool and Glasgow Salvage Association Officers attending.*' On the following day the weather was still too rough for anyone to set foot on board.

The next day the salvage officer reported the ship's position unchanged, but due to her broadside-on position to the sea, and her lying on sand, there was a risk of scouring under both ends. This would have made salvage even more difficult, and he said that he would be making immediate arrangements to heave the vessel end-on to the sea, and that a salvage vessel was being dispatched from the Clyde with all necessary equipment.

By that afternoon the weather had moderated considerably, and the salvors were able to board the ship during the afternoon. They found Nos.1 and 2 holds, the engine-room starboard side tanks, and No.4 double bottom tanks full of water, also 4 inches of water in the engine-room port side tank. The thrust shaft forward bearing was badly fractured on the starboard side, and the shaft bent. The tank top plating on the starboard side of the engine-room was badly set up, and stanchions and dynamo seating badly buckled. The tank top plating in way of the cross bunker, and the stokehold bulkhead were badly buckled. The main drainage pipe [from condenser to overboard carrying waste water from the main engine] was fractured, which would make it impossible to start the main engine

Captain Hall of the Liverpool & Glasgow Salvage Association also arrived that day and said that he had arranged for four extra pumps and divers etc., and a craft for laying out anchors to pull the bows to seaward, and that they were expected to arrive the following day. However, the tug arrived the same night and succeeded in laying out the starboard anchor. But the following day, 27th January, brought a strong south-westerly gale obliging the tug to seek shelter at Stranraer.

There was relief from the gale twenty-four hours later, and news that night that the tug **Zeebond** had arrived at Stranraer from Rothesay with the necessary pumps, divers and shipwrights, and as the weather had moderated would proceed to the **Marklyn** and commence work. This duly transpired, with the **Zeebond** at the scene the whole of the next day with two 3-inch and two 6-inch onboard pumps operating. Another set of similar pumps was delivered the following day and transferred on board, enabling No.1 hold to be brought under control. With this success an endeavour was to be made in the following few days to refloat and transfer the ship to a more sheltered position.

A report of 2nd February said that in addition to the forward hold being under control, the water in the engine-room was now below the plates, and they were again hoping to turn her end-on to the sea. Enough water had now been pumped out to give the vessel, at high water, some buoyancy and she was rolling easily in a slight swell. The salvors suggested pumping her out completely and heaving her off for examination by the divers and, if found seaworthy, towing her to a sheltered anchorage at the Mull lighthouse [on the north side (lee side) of the Mull of Galloway] to effect further tightening (sealing) to enable the vessel to be towed to Barrow, her port of discharge, and dry-docking her there. But the subsequent high tide proved insufficient to float her and the plan was abandoned.

Again the following day there was not sufficient water to float her, even though the holds and engine-room had been pumped dry, and it was decided to engage a coaster to offload some of the cargo. This proved less than successful as the coaster could only lie alongside for short periods as the tide permitted, and it was decided to jettison some of the iron ore if necessary. The salvors were duly instructed to discharge or jettison some 500 tons of it as the weather permitted.

On 5th February the small steamer **Ardachy** (194grt, J&A Gardner & Co., Glasgow) arrived alongside and began offloading some of the **Marklyn's** cargo, but four days later only some 120 tons had been removed, and by the 14th only about 300 tons; but in addition, some 270 tons had been jettisoned. At this point in the operation it was hoped to swing the vessel's head to sea by Monday, 16th February, but two days later the two tugs ordered had still not arrived. In the meantime the salvage officer was to try to shore up the tank tops from the inside ready for the tugs to take her to Loch Ryan for further tightening to make her safe for an open sea passage.

The tugs eventually arrived and **Marklyn's** head was successfully pulled to face the sea, but in so doing she was noticed to pivot amidships. Nos. 1 and 4 holds had been discharged, and No.2 hold partly discharged. But on the 22nd it was found that the engine-room and stokehold had flooded due to the shaft tunnel door bursting, and the bulkhead of the gland tunnel recess [the working-space compartment at the after end of the shaft tunnel and forward of the after bulkhead] giving out; there was also extensive leakage in way of the boilers and stokehold bulkhead.

The Liverpool & Glasgow Salvage Association steamer **Ranger** (already then 62 years old) was now to be dispatched to the scene with additional pumps, and it was still hoped to refloat the **Marklyn** and take her to Loch Ryan by 25th February. However, she was thoroughly surveyed at high water on the evening of Monday 24th, and again at low water the following morning by the Salvage Association Surveyor in conjunction with the Lloyd's Agent from Stranraer. Their findings were shattering to the salvage prospects.

New damage was found in engine-room and stokehold, which was both extensive and serious. The engine-room leakage was tidal and not controllable even with four 6-inch pumps and three 3-inch pumps on the rising tide. The main areas of damage were:

- Boilers set up aft hard against the engine-room screen bulkhead [the bulkhead between the boilers and the main engine compartment]
- The main engine badly set up and also canted over to port
- Aft engine room gratings all badly buckled
- Steps of ladders broken
- Engine room aft bulkheads badly buckled
- Shell plating of stokehold badly buckled outward on port and starboard sides from first strake [line of horizontal plates of the hull] below main sheer strake [the topmost strake] to turn of bilge [where the hull plating curves under towards the keel]
- Rivets in strong beam [the main structural support beam of the engine-room] sheared
- Main deck grating at aft deck saddleback [trunking that carried coal from the upper deck down to the engine-room side bunkers] badly buckled upwards for four strakes.
- Saddleback side plating badly fractured and rivets sheared on port and starboard side
- Funnel set up and set forward
- Bridge deck plating port and starboard side badly strained
- Waste steam pipe broken
- Fan engine [forced draught fan for boilers] casings and storeroom stanchions [pillars giving support to deck] badly buckled
- All stokeholds and engine-room floor plates badly set up
- Main steam pipe badly set up against athwartships strong beam in engine-room
- Forepeak and all double bottom tanks [usually used for water ballast purpose] full

The holds and cross bunker were apparently flooded deliberately for unstated reasons. The surveyor was unable to account for the extraordinary additional damage that occurred virtually overnight. He surmised that the vessel was sitting on boulders or a reef amidships (but some inkling of this was noted by him when she was turned head-to-sea the previous week, and local knowledge would have been expected to have acquainted him with the possibility), and that when the holds were flooded by the

salvors on the previous Thursday night she started to break at low water that night, causing the additional damage.

The **Ranger** arrived on the evening of 24th February with extra pumps but was unable to achieve much owing to a deterioration in the weather, which developed into a full south-westerly gale over the following two days. It was the 28th before the gale had moderated sufficiently for the salvors to again board the vessel. Additional damage to that above was found in the engine-room, and to decks amidships due to straining. It was decided that only the master, the chief engineer, second officer, bo'sun, and one seaman should remain with the vessel to safeguard her. The rest of the crew was discharged.

It was now decided that the rest of her cargo needed to be offloaded, but as there was no steam power to drive her winches to operate the grabs the operation was suspended awaiting the arrival of a portable steam boiler.

Although the vessel was in a fairly sheltered position she was to suffer further damage in recurring south-westerly gales, as on 2nd March when the damage to the shell plating and the saddleback casing was further extended. By 4th March more damage had occurred to the main and bridge deck plating, and to the saddleback casing, as well as the damage to the shell plating now extending above the main sheer strake. Also, the shell plating on the starboard side in way of the engine-room was badly buckled from the main sheer downward. On a slightly more positive note the main engines appeared less listed to port. On this day an easterly gale was blowing but she had the benefit of the slightly rising ground to eastward to shield her to some degree.

It was at high water on 9th March before she could again be boarded, when her condition was found largely unchanged. Three days later, the weather having continued favourable, no extra damage or straining had occurred. But by the time the salvage operation was ready to proceed on 8th April the weather was again too severe to start, and it was 20th April before the now-arrived portable boilers were coupled up, and the winches and other cargo-handling gear overhauled ready to remove the cargo. The salvors now awaited two coasters, expected the following day.

The coasters **Beaconia** (266grt) and **Cumbria** (271grt), both belonging to J. Wilson & Co. of Whitehaven, arrived as expected the following afternoon in favourable weather conditions and set to work immediately; and working through until 7p.m. discharged 60 tons from No.2 hold and 25 tons from No.3 hold. The **Cumbria** was dispatched to Workington the following night with 200 tons of the ore; the **Beaconia** had gone before her and was back for loading again on the 24th. The discharge of cargo continued uninterrupted and by the 28th the balance was approximately 2000 tons.

On 1st May a thorough examination of the shell plating at dead low water revealed that the original buckling was extended considerably, and there was new and extensive buckling in the third and fourth strakes below the main sheer on port and starboard sides.

A westerly swell on 7th May brought a temporary halt to unloading when the **Beaconia** was forced to cast off in mid-afternoon with only 20 tons aboard and proceed to Stranraer for shelter. However, the weather soon moderated and she was back within hours to continue loading, setting off for Workington just after noon the

next day with 130 tons on board. The shortfall in her load was due to the breakdown of No.3 winch, and to the breaking of a grab chain causing damage to the grab. The balance of cargo remaining was now approximately 105 tons in No.3 hold, and 810 tons in No.2 hold.

On 19th May it was reported that the discharge of cargo would be complete when the **Beaconia** had taken its next load, and a 12-inch and four 6-inch pumps would then be put on board to gain control of the leakage and tighten the holds. **Marklyn** could then be taken the thirty-five miles round the coast into Loch Ryan to be further secured. The last of the cargo was discharged by the afternoon of Thursday, 21st May, but the salvage operation had to be suspended on Saturday night due to bad weather, which did not abate until 29th May.

On that day the cross bunker was pumped out, as were holds 1, 2, 3 and 4; and such good progress was now being made that it was hoped now to move her to directly to Rothesay on Friday 5th June. Some slight additional cementing [as in building cement] was still required to seal some apertures in the plating, and the salvors were awaiting timber to shore the stokehold bulkhead, and another 8-inch pump for the engine-room. These items arrived on 4th June and shoring was quickly carried out, but more cementing was needed in No.2 hold where more leakage had developed, and the engine-room still needed pumping out before floating her into deeper water for examination by the divers.

By the following morning, the pumping was proceeding so successfully that it was thought likely that she could be refloated that evening and made ready for towing to Port Bannantyne above Rothesay on Bute. At 8p.m. **Marklyn** was successfully refloated and towed to deeper water where the divers set to work under the hull. Two tugs were standing by ready to tow her away, and on being given a certificate of seaworthiness by the British Corporation of Shipping surveyor she moved out to sea from Port Logan, and arrived in Kames Bay off Port Bannantyne the following morning.

Over the following three weeks further necessary temporary repairs were made, and she set off under tow on 2nd July and was taken to an anchorage at Tail of Bank the same day. Ten days later she was taken up the Clyde to Glasgow (yard unknown) where she arrived on 13th July to undergo an extensive re-build, which was completed by 28th October.

In the interim it had been decided that **Marklyn** be taken into the charge of the Ministry of War Transport when repairs were completed and renamed **Empire Usk**. This was formally done on 29th October 1942. She was now 3239grt.

Back to sea

On 31st October **Empire Usk** commenced loading cargo at Glasgow, reportedly for north Africa but actually for Portugal and Spain. She sailed, still under the command of Captain Martyn, on 17th December 1942 but had to put back two days later, for reasons unknown, and went to an anchorage in the Clyde waiting to be allocated to a Gibraltar-bound convoy. It was 7th January 1943 when, as **Empire Usk**, she sailed outward as part of Convoy KMS7G comprised of 49 ships. The designation of the convoy indicates that it was bound from the UK to the Mediterranean, and that it

was attached to another southbound convoy, detaching from the latter in the vicinity of Gibraltar.

Her first reported port of call was Lisbon, arriving there on 20th January 1943. From there she sailed to Almeria in southern Spain, arriving 2nd February, and sailing from there 14th February for Gibraltar, where she arrived the following day. She remained at Gibraltar until 22nd February, then sailed as an attachment to convoy MKS8 (Mediterranean to UK, Slow) which had left Bône, Algeria on 17th February. After an uneventful week's voyage she arrived at Barrow on 1st March to unload a cargo of iron ore.

Subsequently she sailed for Huelva in south-west Spain to load copper ore, which she took to Middlesboro via Loch Ewe after joining convoy MKS11 at Gibraltar. This was followed by two trips to Montreal between 18th May and mid-August; a period on Government contract that saw her routed to Malta followed.

Empire Usk sailed from Malta 15th September 1943 for Augusta in Sicily where she arrived the following day, and where she remained until 2nd November. Here she was possibly acting as a supply vessel in the wake of the Allied invasion of Sicily, 'Operation Husky', which began on 10th July. Augusta had been captured on 13th July and quickly got into working order by the naval forces.

Sailing from Augusta on 2nd November for Gibraltar, she arrived on November 7th, and from there was routed to Huelva. Arriving there on November 11th she loaded another cargo of copper ore, this time for Garston on the Mersey, but via Gibraltar to join a convoy that sailed 23rd November. However it was 11th December before she made the Mersey having been hit by an extremely severe and prolonged storm during which one of her lifeboats was completely destroyed.

Between 1st February and 12th July 1944, she was reported shuttling between Sicilian and nearby north African ports, probably transferring matériel from the latter ports for use in the fighting zone. Thereafter, her movements went unreported until mid-June 1945 (again possibly indicating a period under Government service) when she resumed normal post-war commercial voyages.

By the time of **Marklyn's** resurrection as **Empire Usk** the company was managing two relatively new ships on behalf of the Ministry of War Transport: **Empire Caxton** and **Empire Newcomen**.

Postscript

Had the grounding occurred in peacetime, or even at the latter end of the war, it is almost certain that **Marklyn** would have been declared a constructive total loss, so extensively and badly was she damaged; and so protracted and exacting was the salvage operation. However, at that stage of the war, and with shipping losses so numerous, her salvage was considered worthwhile, and she went on to justify the effort expended on it. It was also fortunate that she took the ground at low water; had it been high water her run up the beach would have taken her to the sea wall and beyond recall.

On release by the Ministry of War Transport in 1946 she went into the ownership of Constant (South Wales) Shipping Co., retaining the name **Empire Usk**, until 1947. **Empire Usk** then became the **Heminge**, still in Constant's ownership, until

1949. Then acquired by the Crete Shipping Co. of London and renamed **Bluestone**, she traded as such until 1953, still mainly carrying ore cargoes. In that year she was sold to the Moller Line (UK), and registered in Hong Kong as the **Grosvenor Mariner**. Laid up at Hong Kong in June 1955, she went to the breakers there in September 1955, aged thirty-seven.

The particular drama at Port Logan in 1942 has apparently gone largely unrecorded and unremembered; only one person, Mr James Ritchie of Port Logan, has been found who knows of it and recalls the events that took place there. As a ten year old he watched the salvage operation either from the beach or from a bedroom window of the house that he has lived in for seventy-seven years.

Selwyn Rawlings Martyn, born September 23rd 1892, was the eldest son of Samuel Thomas Martyn (of Dyer and Martyn) of Bilbao, Spain. Having excelled at school, he also became a very good marksman as a result of joining the OTC. He fought in France during WWI in the British Army, and afterwards worked in the family shipping business (probably commencing before the war started) based in Cardiff. He was a particularly fluent speaker of French, Spanish and Portuguese.

Captain Martyn died as a result of a car accident on 8th July 1956, aged 63.

The family business ceased trading in the late 1950s or early 1960s. ■

Acknowledgements and sources consulted:

David Eccles, LNRS member

Mr A. McIlwrick of Moffat

Ms J. Moore, Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory, Liverpool

Admiralty Charts

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THE MONDAY FACILITY

The dates for the next period are :-

	June	1 st	8 th	15 th	22 nd	29 th
	July	6 th	13 th	20 th	27 th	
	August	3 rd	10 th	17 th	24 th	
and	September	7 th	14 th	21 st	28 th	

Power and Authority in the Eighteenth-Century Wooden World Represented through Space and Material Culture.

*Synopsis of the award winning dissertation submitted by Mark Grimshaw
for the LNRS Award*

**"The only traditions of the Navy are those of rum, sodomy and the lash"
Winston Churchill**

Seamen have always dwelt on the fringes of society. The Greeks hesitated whether to count them among the living or the dead, eighteenth-century Englishmen were no better informed and it appears that Churchill himself still did not understand the men that lived at sea. They have always remained different with their curious clothes and eccentric behaviour yet people have only known them on land, out of their element. It seems this lack of clarity on the whims, behaviour and power relations of these pioneers of the modern age has not escaped the historiography either. Historians who have previously taken an interest in the social relations onboard the eighteenth-century ship have reduced it to a basic dichotomy in which power relations are viewed as black and white. Ergo, those who have authority control it absolutely and those who are without it are completely powerless. It is the attempt of this essay to uncover a reality that shows how the company of every ship was divided in many overlapping, ambiguous and untidy ways. The 'wooden world' was a complex society in which each person's place was defined by many invisible and subtle distinctions and where power and authority structures were continually negotiated. In order to illustrate this point, this paper is placed within the framework of the influential anthropologist James C Scott in his work *'Domination and the Arts of Resistance'*. Scott uses the term 'public transcript' to describe the open, public interactions between dominators and oppressed and the term 'hidden transcript' for the critique of power that goes on offstage, which power holders do not see or hear. In order to study the systems of domination, careful attention is paid to what lies beneath the surface of evident, public behaviour. In public, those that are oppressed accept their domination, but they always question their domination offstage. The 'hidden transcript' that has been constructed and articulated off-stage, is then used as a bargaining tool with the dominating class to compose an acceptable 'public transcript'. It is this flux and negotiation that Scott's model allows between the 'public transcript' and the 'hidden transcript' that holds the key to understanding power relations onboard. The rigid structures imposed in the historiography on this subject cannot accurately reflect the complicated processes that occurred in such a unique society.

In order to impose such a model, the mechanisms that were used to construct the 'public' and 'hidden' transcripts need to be located. Journal and diary extracts can be very helpful for this. They cannot just only serve as a window and voice to the past; a voyeur's look into the murky world of shipboard life and relations but can also give specific examples of interactions between members of the authority hierarchy. While these journal extracts will be vital in understanding what constituted the 'hidden' and 'public' transcripts they only offer limited and specific glimpses from one persons perspective. This evidence will therefore be supplemented by an analysis of space and material culture. This justification of using such sources is influenced heavily from Doreen Massey's idea that "spatial form is an important

element in the constitution of power itself." Massey along with fellow social scientist Erving Goffman, argue that it is not only the physical boundaries of space that are important but also how the space is actually used and "what is performed in that space." The performance in what Goffman terms the 'front-stage' and 'back-stage' regions fits well with my application of Scott's model of the 'public' and 'hidden' transcript. How space is constructed and used therefore is vital for understanding how power and authority was negotiated onboard ship.

Quarterdeck Performance

In order to discover the 'public transcript' onboard the eighteenth-century ship, it is instructive to look at how space was used and how it was constructed. In general, space was becoming increasingly important during the eighteenth-century. In a domestic sense, the period can be characterised by a distinct separation of home and work, a reassessment of the value of privatisation and an emphasis on individualism rather than collectivism. In the main, therefore, society was becoming increasingly concerned with how space represented the person or persons who owned it and also with how people represented themselves within that space. This phenomenon was only magnified within the context of the ship, as space was a limited and precious commodity. Indeed, it is clear that a naval vessel assumed an inexorable logic in her spaces of power simply by being rated.

The area in which space was at a premium was at the lower deck. The lower deck was a poorly ventilated, damp, foul smelling and disease-ridden place that held not only the guns but also it was the area in which the majority of the ship's company would spend their leisure time. The number of men living there was dependent on the size and type of ship but it could range from a body of ten to about six or seven hundred. The journal of Samuel Leech describes how he is assigned a berth when he arrives onboard and then how space was prescribed, "They (the crew) slung their hammocks from the beams of the deckhead, which is to say that they lay fore and aft, each hammock with fourteen inches width, according to regulation." The men would also eat their meals on the gun deck with "each mess of six with a table either hinged from the side or slung from the deckhead between the guns." It is clear from Leech's description that space was a rare luxury for the men from the lower deck. It was a permanently crowded area that afforded no instance of privacy.

Leech goes on to comment :-

"The vessel is a little community of human beings, isolated from the rest of mankind. This community is governed by law peculiar (sic) to itself; it is arranged and divided in a manner in which each task has its man and each man his place."

What is interesting from this comment is that it appears to Leech that space was allocated accordingly to what task and therefore what rank a man held. Therefore, even before discussing the officers and captain, it is clear that even within the lower deck itself there was an explicit rather than tacit knowledge that space was allocated to hierarchy. This is reinforced by the common practice of the petty officers, such as the boatswain and the gunner, who would live and mess in the lower deck and yet would be afforded the luxury of "*partitioning (sic) their space with strips of curtain*". The allocation of space therefore appears already to be an important mechanism for the promotion of the 'public transcript'. Space was certainly considered a luxury as it followed that you would be afforded some extent of privacy. The higher up the hierarchy you were the more space and privacy was attributed to you. It cannot be underestimated therefore just how important a public signifier of power space could be.

Of course, the allocation of space according to rank became more extreme the further up the official hierarchy you went. The Captain's cabin for example would often be made up of four or five rooms with its own galley and lavatory and would also be adorned with a menagerie of expensive

up of four or five rooms with its own galley and lavatory and would also be adorned with a menagerie of expensive furniture. The allocation of such a precious commodity as space would be a very active reminder of who was in control and would also play a major part in the formation of the 'public transcript'.

The question must be asked however to whether this increase in space and privacy had any real impact on notions of power and authority. It is clear that a predetermined hierarchy and levels of authority were allocated to space and privacy yet it is difficult to say for certain whether the real and actual situation ran parallel to the one which had been so carefully planned out. It will be more instructive to analyze how space was used onboard rather than making assumptions from the actual physical boundaries. The one area in which the 'public transcript' was performed within a space was that of the quarterdeck. The quarterdeck was a place that was located on the upper deck just behind the main mast. To the casual observer or visitor to the ship, it was just another deck in which it appeared that the captain spent most of his time. To the sailor, officer and captain however, it was sacred to the presence of sovereign power in displays of etiquette and privilege. It was the Captain's territory, his to walk on alone from his adjacent quarters, his to speak from but not to be spoken to unless he wished it. The quarterdeck was more than just a physical space; it was a social group that was constructed through rank. It was also the space in which the very public act of discipline was carried out which served to reinforce authority even further.

It would seem natural that there would have been a fair amount of resentment towards the lack of space they had, the restriction to certain areas and the public displays of discipline. It was surprising to find therefore evidence of criticism from the lower deck when these mechanisms of the 'public transcript' were not enforced. It is difficult to ascertain why this is so but I believe that it is linked to the fact that the men had no physical boundaries in their lives onboard ship. Therefore, in an environment in which it was rare for men to be physically separated they sought out privacy through the plays and gestures that marked status and privilege. The 'public transcript' therefore, while being a tool of the dominating forces onboard ship in order to cement their authority it was also something that was very important for the subordinated to make sense of the very strange world and situation around them.

Only Space in Their Stomachs

If we accept the assertion that the 'public transcript' was not only beneficial for the consolidation of power and authority for the ruling class but it was also a useful tool for the lower orders to construct meaning to their surroundings this does not mean that there was a lack of rebellion or negotiation onboard ship. Rather there were numerous instances and methods of resistance that were vital for building up a detailed and accurate picture of power and authority relations on the eighteenth-century ship. It is these methods of resistance to negotiation that can be grouped together under the term 'hidden transcript'. One of the most important areas where this was formed was in the lower deck. As previously noted, this was a space that was densely crowded and afforded very little privacy. It was in the lower deck however, that the practice of eating and drinking together was carried out and this formed extremely close bonds. Additionally, it was over a meal or a drink in the evening that stories would be told, music would be played and dances would be performed. Everyone who took part in these processes would be made to feel part of a wider community and as everyone collectively had the same amount of food and drink they could complain and grumble together about its poor quality, or in the case of drink, its insufficient quantity. Therefore in some of the worst working conditions there has ever been, block of humanity managed to forge a common society that was as powerful as any strike of the cat o' nine tails.

What is interesting about the wooden world in contrast to any other society that might be studied is that it was difficult to maintain distinct on-stage and off-stage spaces. The fact that a lot of men lived in a small and finite space meant that often the 'hidden transcript' was constructed in areas that were public. This is most prevalent in the spaces in which work was carried out. The work onboard was characterised by its milieu of action which made it both universal and *sui generis* and provided a setting in which large numbers of workers co-operated on complex and synchronised tasks. Work onboard ship was highly dangerous and hazardous. Not only were there dangers on the ship itself, with the opportunity of accidents very prevalent but also the ship was in constant battle with the elements. Shipwreck was always something that was in the back of a sailor's mind. Often it would not lead to death but it would mean that their sea chests and consequently all of their belongings could be lost. This could take up to twelve months to compensate, and was therefore an occurrence that could be disastrous. As a result, the need to stop this from happening was paramount. The communal and collective world that was forged in the lower decks was also vital to maintaining and running the ship. Every task had a man assigned to it and they would be expected to carry out their duty for the good and the well being of the ship. In such a dangerous environment, authority was accrued to those who had extensive practical knowledge. This could be anything from an understanding of the workplace, knowledge of trade routes, language of the sea, number of shipwrecks survived and physical strength, among others. Onboard ship therefore, skill and expertise was inextricably tied up with the formation of the 'hidden transcript'. It was an informal mode of authority and was consequently part of the 'hidden transcript' and yet interestingly it was constructed and presented during the very public performance of work.

It is this aspect that makes the 'hidden transcript' so powerful compared to the 'public transcript' onboard the eighteenth-century ship and one that makes it unique out of any society. The 'public transcript' is rooted in performance, ritual and ceremony. The captain's and the officer's authority is directed through performance in space and the actual allocation of physical space. This is illustrated through the restriction of access to certain parts of the ship such as the quarterdeck, the rituals performed there and the objects, which are displayed both on the quarterdeck and in similar areas such as the captain's cabin. On the other hand, the 'hidden transcript' while having important ceremonial and ritual aspects is rooted in actuality. Of course, it is very difficult to determine what was most important to a certain group of people and to try and ascertain what meanings people placed on events and objects. However, the conditions of service and the danger of working onboard meant that real and definite displays of skill and expertise held much more importance in terms of authority and power than any performance. Therefore, a fine balance needed to be struck. There was a tension between the officers, captain and the rest of the ship's body as there was a tacit knowledge that the ship could be sailed without the ruling elite and this is what made instances of mutiny possible. However, what is most telling is that mutiny was in fact very rare and I would argue that this was not due to any fear of the consequences if caught or indeed any loyalty to the crown. Rather, in a limited space such as the eighteenth-century ship, in order to make sense of their environment, the ritual importance of spatial definition that the ruling elite provided was absolutely vital to the smooth operation of the vessel. It was the recognition of this balance between the 'hidden' and 'public transcript' that made the British Navy so successful and one that allowed the first footsteps to be made in forging the largest Empire the world has ever seen.

Extended version and recommended further reading available on request by email

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PAST PRESIDENT IS HONOURED

By LNRS Secretary John Stokoe

Chairman Bill Ogle welcomed Members to the March meeting and added that the day's proceedings would be enhanced through a very special event relating to one of our Members. Readers will probably recall from last September's issue of *The Bulletin* the enthralling article penned by John Shepherd paying a richly deserved tribute to Canon Bob Evans who at that time had just received word of his M.B.E. Award in the Queen's Birthday Honours. Prior to his retirement Canon Bob had spent over 27 years as Chaplain Superintendent to the Mersey Mission to Seafarers and much of the article had been compiled courtesy of Bob's autobiographical account of those days in his book entitled "*A Dog Collar In The Docks*".



Canon Bob is seen receiving his framed certificate from Chairman Bill Ogle

Fortunately for us Bob's writing continued and reflecting his own journey from suburban Cardiff to settling in Liverpool is well described in "*The Way To Liverpool*". His attention then turned to examining the compelling saga of seafarers' welfare organisations in and around Merseyside in "*Mersey Mariners*". Bob's gift for putting it into words is clearly apparent when he documents "*HMS Eagle*", then "*The Indefatigable*" and also "*The Training Ships of Liverpool*". The organisation closest to Bob's heart, The Mersey Mission to Seamen recently celebrated its 150th. Anniversary. It was an opportunity too good for Bob to miss in delving into a story of support, laughter and tears relating to Merseyside's care for the seafarer. More recently, Bob has handed over the pen as it were to seafarers themselves to tell their own tales, the result of which has been the publication of three volumes of "*A Lantern In The Stern*". And now we hear that a further publication entitled "*Conway Heroes*" is currently in the pipeline.

All of these publications show an unselfish, or perhaps we should say a very generous style of leadership which, when linked to personal qualities incorporating a sincerity and genuine desire to help and support others, make Bob a unique and trusted confident and friend to so many as well as being one of life's rich characters. We are truly fortunate that Bob has such strong links with our own Society which started from his early Chaplaincy and also becoming a very active President through most of the 1980's.

The Society's highest honour offered for only the second time in our 70 year history is Honorary Life Membership to Canon Bob Evans. We are extremely proud of his membership and association with the Society and we salute him for his prolific contribution to Merseyside's maritime literary heritage.

THE BRITISH & AMERICAN STEAM NAVIGATION COMPANY

by *Frank C. Bowen*

(This article first appeared in *Shipbuilding and Shipping Record*, 11th June, 1953)

The British & American Steam Navigation Company, sometimes confused with the British & North American Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, which was the original name of the Cunard Line, did not deserve the oblivion into which it faded and the neglect that it has received at the hands of many historians of the present day.

But for misfortune it would have been the first company to establish a regular steam service across the Atlantic and it was certainly the first to plan one, for a single-ship service can scarcely be described as '*regular*'.

The original idea behind the enterprise was that of an American named Junius Smith, working in conjunction in Britain with MacGregor Laird of the Birkenhead family, and Henry Bainbridge. These three far-sighted men planned to establish a regular fortnightly service between London and New York with four ships, two under the British flag belonging to the British & American Steam Navigation Company, and the other two by a company to be formed in the United States. Their bad luck began when the Americans, proud of the performance of their wooden sailing ships, would not give the necessary financial backing to the American company.

The British & American Company was accordingly registered in London in 1835 with a capital of £1 million in £100 shares. The first office was in Fen Court, Fenchurch Street, where MacGregor Laird acted as secretary. The first call on the shares was £25 each on allotment, followed by a second call of £5 in 1837, and a third of the same amount in the following year. In that year the directors proposed a Liverpool – New York service and tried to raise capital in Lancashire to acquire the necessary tonnage. They placed a contract with Laird of Birkenhead to build an iron steamer of 1,200 tons to be named the *Atalanta*, but without the necessary capital she was never laid down.

Tenders were next invited for the hull of the first steamer 'according to the draft specification furnished by the Company', and a little later another invitation was issued for the machinery. Curling & Young, of Limehouse, secured the contract for the hull and made a thoroughly good job of it. The contract for the engines went to Girdwood & Company of London, who embodied various novel ideas into the design. These included two slide valves to each cylinder, one on either side, but only one was to be used in starting or reversing. The engine was to be lifted higher than usual to allow the condensers to be placed immediately under the cylinders.

Unfortunately, Girdwood & Company went through the bankruptcy court before the engines were completed, which caused a most inopportune delay, but Robert Napier & Company, of Port Glasgow, were awarded the second contract and, increasing the nominal horse power from 460 to 500, they adopted a number of the original ideas, including Hall's surface condensers with tanks for 200 tons of fresh boiler feed, and a 'patent still' to make up for wastage. Napier also increased the

bunker capacity from 600 to 800 tons, reckoned to be sufficient for 20 days steaming, although even that was cutting things rather fine.

Meanwhile, Curling & Young were getting on with the construction of the ship in drydock at Limehouse, although there was further delay when the British & American Company learned the details of Brunel's plans to build the **Great Western**, and the new ship was made slightly larger than had been planned for the added prestige.

These delays not only upset the programme but also added to the cost. The ship was to have been called the **Royal Victoria**, but before she was ready for launching and naming Queen Victoria had come to the throne and the ship was named the **British Queen**, with a very fine figurehead carved in a likeness of the new Queen. As soon as the new ship was floated out of the building dock, she was taken in tow by the excursion paddle steamer **Fame**, as no London tug of the day was considered powerful enough to hold her, and taken to the East India Dock to be rigged.

As a full-rigged ship the **British Queen** left London under tow, but cast off near Plymouth and made the rest of the passage to the Clyde under sail. She was towed into Port Glasgow to receive her engines which comprised a two-cylinder set of side-levers, designed to drive paddles 31 feet 6 inches in diameter, with floats 9 feet 6 inches long, at 16 r.p.m. Four primitive boilers supplied the steam and it was reckoned that the **British Queen** could make about 8 knots at sea, although her best 24 hours recorded on service averaged 10.2 knots.

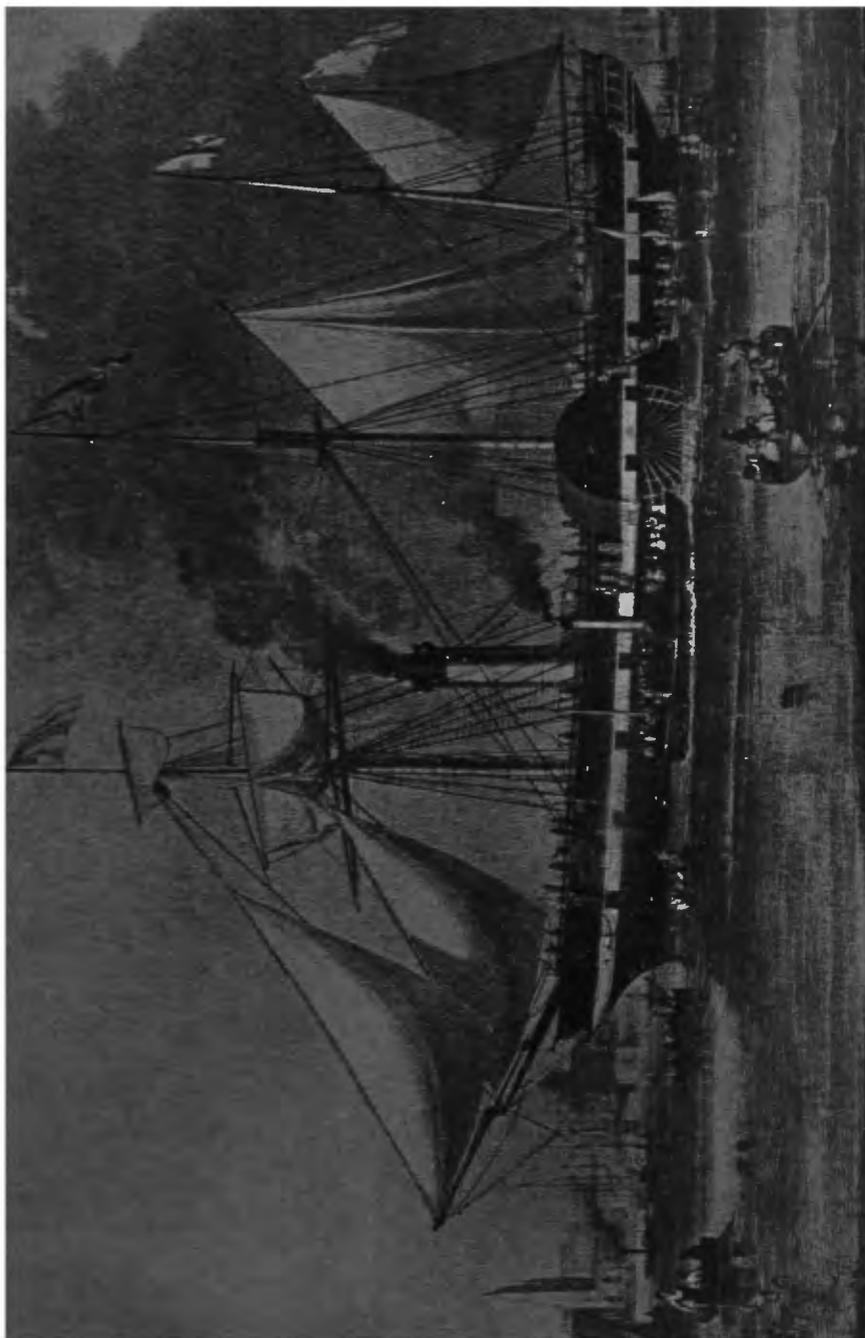
The **British Queen** was a wooden ship, 245 feet by 40 feet, with a tonnage by the rule then in force of 1,850. The accommodation was particularly fine, and the permanent first-class quarters had berths for 103 passengers forward of the machinery, and 104 aft. There were facilities for accommodating an additional 73 passengers in the 'tween decks if required. The crew numbered 85. The new ship was fitted with hot and cold shower baths which were regarded as quite a luxury. It would be another ten years before a properly fitted bathroom was installed in a steamer.

The main saloon measured 50 feet by 20 feet, and the dining saloon 60 feet by 30 feet, while, in deference to American taste, a small smokeroom known as the 'cigar room' was given a deckhouse to itself.

As the delays with the hull and machinery made it quite impossible to get the **British Queen** away before the **Great Western**, her owners chartered the Irish Sea paddle packet **Sirius**, a wooden vessel of 700 tons built by Menzies of Leith, for two round voyages. She was far too small to cross the Atlantic under steam with a reasonable reserve in her bunkers, but she was the only vessel available, and the directors of the St George Steam Packet Company, to which the **Sirius** belonged, were very sympathetically interested in the transatlantic venture.

Although the **Sirius** sailed from London, just as the **British Queen** was intended to do, passengers who wanted to delay until the last minute could leave three days later by the Bristol mail coach, and then join the steamer **Victory** for the crossing from Bristol to Cork, where they could join the **Sirius**. Similar arrangements were made for intending passengers from the Clyde, Mersey and Dublin. It was a very convenient arrangement as the **Sirius** needed to top up her bunkers at Cork.

The **Sirius** left Cork on 4th April 1838 with 11 after-cabin passengers each paying a fare of 35 guineas, eight fore-cabin passengers at 20 guineas, and 21 steerage



The President, built by Curling & Young of Limehouse, and engined by Fawcett & Co. of Liverpool.

passengers at 8 guineas. The ship was grossly overloaded with 435 tons of coal, and 45 barrels of resin in increase the intensity of the fires, but even so had to burn her spare spars and all other available wood in the ship, before reaching New York with only 22 tons of coal left in the bunkers. The **Sirius** used fresh feed water in her boilers and the evaporator probably contributed considerably to her high fuel consumption.

Although advertised to make a 15-day run to New York, the **Sirius** actually took 18 days and 10 hours at an average speed of 6.7 knots. The **Great Western** arrived on the same tide after a passage of 15 days 5 hours at 8.8 knots. The **Sirius** returned to Falmouth via Cork in 18 days, and her second and last voyage across the Atlantic was 19 days westbound, and 15 days eastbound to Plymouth. The **Sirius** attracted a lot of attention in Cork, and the company raised a good deal of capital in and around the district, where an independent committee of shareholders was appointed.

The sailing schedule of the **British Queen** was the first day of each alternate month from London and New York, calling at Portsmouth to land and embark passengers. Her maiden voyage carried a full complement of passengers and she reached New York in 15½ days. A report on her performance states that she was very fast when light and in calm water, but that she lost speed rapidly when she encountered any kind of heavy weather. In three round voyages in 1839 the **British Queen** earned sufficient profit to pay a dividend of 5½%, but her owners needed all the ready cash they could secure to pay for the second ship, the **President**.

Like the **British Queen**, the **President** was built by Curling & Young, and was launched on 9th December 1839. She was slightly shorter and with a little more beam than the **British Queen** but was given an extra deck which spoiled both her appearance and stability. The ship rolled all three masts out of herself whilst on passage from the Thames to the Mersey for her machinery, and was towed into Plymouth by the steamer **Royal William** for docking and repairs. Fawcett & Company of Liverpool had secured the contract for the machinery, apparently at a cut price in order to secure the publicity. The engines were of practically the same power as those of the **British Queen**, and as the new ship was 2,350 tons against the 1,850 tons of the older vessel, this made her considerably under-powered if bad weather was met. The **President** cost just over £80,000.

In 1840 the **British Queen** made five round voyages, of which only one was eventful. The owners had decided to fit both her and the **President** with Hall's patent reefing paddles in which the floats could be adjusted to suit the draught of the ship as coal was consumed. Unfortunately the company did not consult the patentee or pay him any royalties, and when he found out what had been done, he insisted that the paddles should be altered back. The **President** was not yet ready for sea, but the work was done so hurriedly in the **British Queen** that all the floats were lost from one of her paddles on a westbound passage, and after transferring some of the floats from the other paddle, the ship had to crawl into Halifax, N.S., 19 days out from Plymouth.

When the Cunard Line commenced operations, the British & American Company had to reduce its fares by 20% to meet the competition, but even then the average number of passengers carried in the **British Queen** fell from 240 to 165 per voyage.

The **President** made Liverpool her U.K. terminal port and sailed on her maiden voyage on 1st August 1840 almost empty as both the **Great Western** and **Cunard's Acadia** had recently sailed. Both outward and homeward passages took 16½ days and she proved herself most uncomfortable in bad weather. There was no improvement on the second round voyage, and on the eastbound passage the vessel had to turn back to New York after covering only 300 miles in six days, and then start afresh after re-bunkering. That incident threw out the timetable, and the **President** was unable to take her December sailing.

The **President's** third eastbound voyage started from New York on 11th March 1841. She had a poor passenger list, but to make up for it she had a very large cargo, and there is no doubt that the ship was grossly overloaded. In those pre load-line days that was, of course, nothing unusual, and the practice was certainly not confined to ships on the American run. The **President** had 136 passengers and crew on board, and within 24 hours of sailing the ship was sighted in bad weather shipping much water and labouring heavily. Nothing else was seen of the **President**. Some considered that she had struck an iceberg, but she was scarcely far enough out for that. The inquiry before the British Consul at New York found that the ship was not overloaded, but it must be remembered that there was no definition for that phrase at the time. It was quite possible that the overstrained engines broke down and left the **President** at the mercy of the seas. The underwriters paid £70,000, but it was reported in shipping circles that the cost to the British & American Steam Navigation Company was nearly £100,000.

The nine transatlantic voyages of the **British Queen** had made a very reasonable profit, although not much had been allowed for depreciation, and overhead expenses had to be considered, while the **President's** three voyages only earned a profit of just over £4,000.

At the end of April 1841, the **British Queen** finished her ninth voyage at Liverpool and it was advertised that she would sail from that port in future, but the accounts revealed that the company had lost in the region of £100,000. As it possessed only one ship against the four **Cunard** ships which could maintain a regular service, the **British Queen** was sold to the Belgian Government for £60,000 and she left Liverpool for Antwerp early in 1841.

The **British Queen** made three voyages under the Belgian flag with very few passengers, and initially retained her British navigating officers and engineers. On all passages from Antwerp to New York she made a call at Southampton. After the first voyage the British captain was replaced by a Belgian naval officer.

The 'last straw' was at the end of the third voyage when the ship was delayed by bad weather and had to put in to the Azores and pay 100 francs per ton for coal – an unheard-of price. The Belgian Government decided that it had lost quite enough money, and after offering the vessel for sale twice without getting a reasonable offer, it broke up the **British Queen** and used the material for building gunboats.

The unlucky British & American Company decided to wind up and the accounts were not encouraging. MacGregor Laird had seen the red light and had retired from the company, devoting himself to his work in the West African trade. However, the company should always be remembered for its pioneering efforts and for building what was undoubtedly the finest Atlantic liner of her day. ■

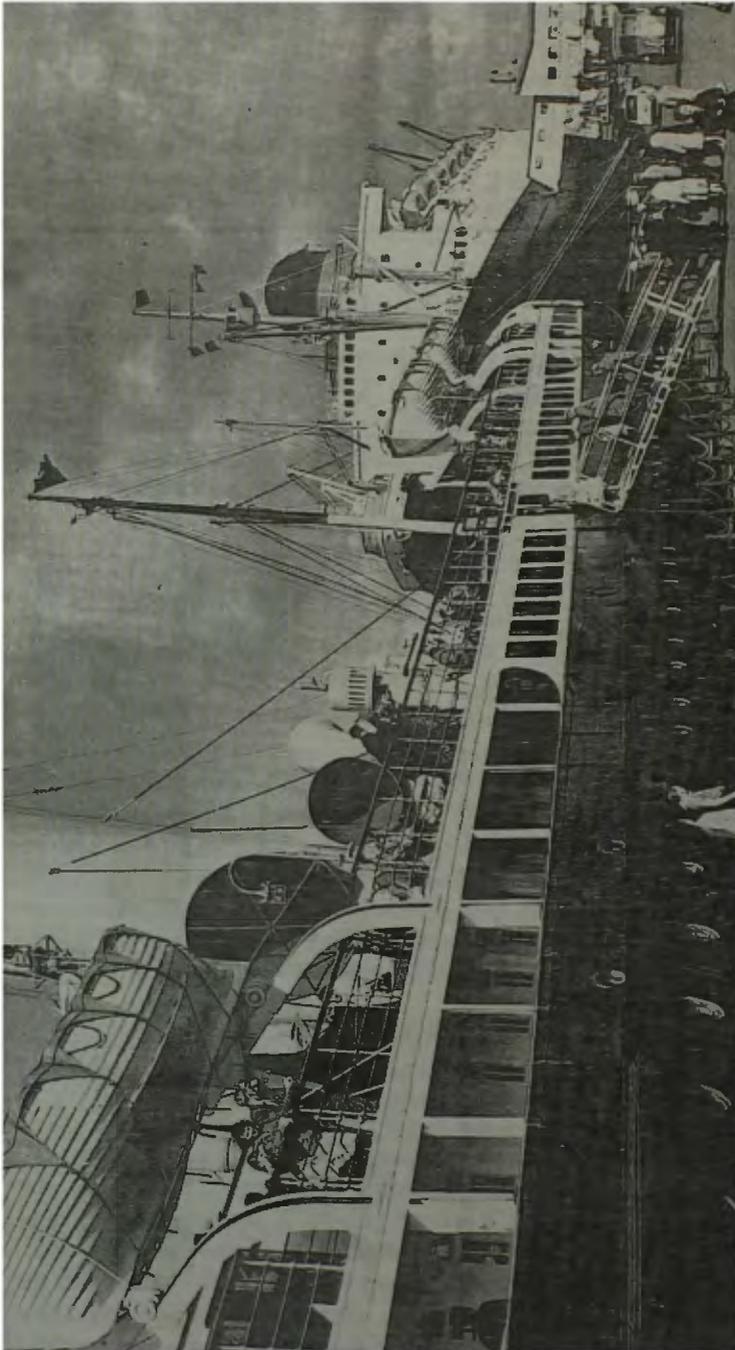


Photo reproduced by kind permission of Peter Elson, Senior Features Writer at the *Liverpool Daily Post*
Very many thanks to Peter for all his help and enthusiasm for '*The Bulletin*' over my years as Editor. *J.S.*

Summer 1962 at Liverpool's Princes Landing Stage. The **St. Tudno** is preparing to sail for Llandudno and Menai Bridge, and in the background the **Carinthia** has arrived from Canada

THE NAME GAME

By LNRS Member J.B. Hill

(From the House Journal of the Furness Withy Group, 'The Log', Summer 1981)

Amongst British shipowners and those of Northern European countries, a certain amount of formality and dignity has usually been the custom when choosing names for ships.

Such is not always the case with ships of other nations, particularly those of Greek and Far Eastern origin and a rather astonishing case in point occurred when a 120,000-ton bulk carrier was transferred from Norwegian to Liberian registry and renamed **You are my sunshine**.

In times when many shipowners are finding it difficult to survive, perhaps it is a relief to see a note of frivolity introduced into the naming of ships, but it must surely be tempting providence to operate ships with names such as **Ever Lucky**, **Great Splendour** or **Unique Mariner**.

Sentiment also seems to play its part to the extent that one currently finds bulk carriers with such unlikely names as **Angelic Wings**, **Golden Bliss**, **Summer Dream**, **Universal Beauty** and **Splendid Hope**.

Wishful thinking could have given rise to the naming of other ships like the **Good Friend**, **My Charm**, **Midas Touch** or **Family Unity**, and one cannot speculate upon whether those vessels really live up to the titles which have been bestowed upon them!

It is rare to find peculiar names amongst the fleets of other maritime nations, but a few examples might be of interest. United States owners, for instance, frequently name their ships after people, but two exceptions come to mind, the **Stage Door Canteen** and **Minute Man**, both war-built vessels which carried these names for some time after the end of hostilities.

Even the Norwegians have upon rare occasions introduced rather amusing names, such as the small refrigerated ship **Cool Girl**, the LPG carrier **Sunny Baby** and the bulk carrier **Happy Dragon**.

Amongst British tonnage it is hard to find any equivalents, and one has to look back quite a number of years to unearth the appropriately named collier **Mr Therm**, or the coasters from Mistle, **Jolly Girls** and **Jolly Nights**.

Having given Greek shipowners credit for originality in choosing ships' names, one cannot refrain from mentioning the unfortunate tendency of certain purchasers to employ the utmost economy in changing names by the dab of a paintbrush. For example, several Ellerman vessels have emerged under new ownership with the 'City of' part of their name painted out, and another often used method of renaming is to paint out the first or last letter of the previous name; thus the *ex* British Rail ferry **Caesarea** became the **Aesarea**. But full marks for originality go to the Maltese buyers of the CEGB collier **Sir Archibald Page** who renamed her **Sir Archibald Rage**!

Last, but not least, are the owners who made a practice of not changing the names of ships at all when they purchased them, - could it be that they regard it as unlucky?

Gustaf Erikson, the last of the windjammer owners, always retained the names of the ships he purchased, or on occasion he restored original names to his ships.

Another Finnish owner, Lundqvist Redevierna, ran some ships for many years retaining their original names. Two vessels of particular interest were the *ex* Alexander Shipping Company vessels **Thornbury** and **Newbury**. The former was sold by Capper Alexander in 1928 and remained as the **Thornbury** under the Finnish flag for 30 years, whilst the **Newbury**, sold in 1963, retained the same name until broken up in 1973.

In conclusion, perhaps one should acknowledge the uninhibited approach of the owner who has been operating at 16,000-ton cargo ship under the Panamanian flag for a number of years, simply called **The Daisy**. ■

From: Sea Breezes, June 1975:

ODD NAMES FOR BLUE FUNNEL LINERS

Odd things seem to be happening in the Blue Funnel Line these days. The two oldest ships in the fleet, the motorships **Rhexenor** (9,845grt) and **Stentor** (9,833grt), built by the Caledon Shipbuilding and Engineering Co. Ltd., Dundee in 1945 and 1946 respectively, are coming to the end of their days.

For many years they have been operating between the Far East and Australia, but now they are being replaced by more modern vessels. The two replacement ships are being renamed **Rhexenor** (*ex* **Maron**) and **Stentor** (*ex* **Memnon**). So that this can be done, the two older ships are also being renamed. Normally when Blue Funnel vessels are renamed, other names from Homer's *Odyssey* or *Iliad* are chosen, but this time a more simple expedient is being used.

The first and last letters of the old ships' names are being removed, so that the **Rhexenor** becomes the **Hexeno**, and the **Stentor** becomes the **Tento**. Presumably they will carry these names for a short period before being withdrawn and sold for scrap.

It seems a pity that contrived names such as these, which mean nothing, should mar the long list of 'Classic' Greek mythological names in the Blue Funnel fleet. There is little merit in adopting such a practice, even if it only a temporary measure before disposing of vessels.

TOM - THE KROO BOY

Submitted by LNRS Vice-President Harry Hignett, from Lloyd's List, 1903

These interesting particulars have been furnished by Mr B.A. Forrow, RNR, the well-known superintendent at the Board of Trade offices at Southampton:

"Among the seventy-odd shipwrecked and distressed seamen sent home by the Consuls at various ports on the South American coast, and landed here [Southampton] by the s.s. **Magdalena**, about two weeks ago, was a native of Sierra Leone, and though I was able to send all but one to their homes, how to dispose of Tom — a Kroo boy — taxed my resources.

"To send him to the Union (?) meant a permanent resident there on the rates, unless the guardians paid his passage home, and as I believe a relieving officer and two guardians must by law accompany the pauper and hand him over to the authorities of his own country, I thought what a pretty penny it would cost this town; so, being myself a ratepayer, I spoiled three persons taking a long and expensive holiday, partly at my expense, and sent Toni to live at the Sailors' Home for the present, as he could not speak English. There he seemed very happy. He rapidly learned to speak and understand English, and so a day or so back I spoke to him and he told me he was a native of Freetown, Sierra Leone, and had sailed on a ship bound for South America, and then left at Pernambuco in hospital with rheumatism. He assured me he was a 'British Englishman' now and wanted to get back home.

"I had ascertained that the **Albertville**, one of Elder Dempster's ships would call here [Southampton] on Friday for passengers for Freetown, and so I instructed the master of the Sailors' Home to have Toni in readiness, in case I wanted him.

"About noon that day I was invited by Sir Alfred Jones to have lunch with him at the South Western Hotel, just prior to the **Albertville's** departure. I asked Sir Alfred if he would give Tom a passage out. When I explained the case, he said

'Certainly I will take him, I'm always glad to oblige the Board of Trade and the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society. Get him sent to the tender at once, and he can go on board with us.'

"I did as instructed, and Tom sailed away, looking over the side smiling, and as happy as a king."

The Kroo are a tribe from the Kroo area of Sierra Leone who were regularly employed on board British merchant ships.

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

(Founded in 1938)

THE BULLETIN

Volume 53, No. 2, September, 2009



This issue of 'The Bulletin' marks the 70th Anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War on 3rd September, 1939

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Front Cover: The Liverpool No.4 Pilot Cutter **William M. Clarke** served throughout the Second World War – *see article on page 37*



The Athenia was the first British merchant ship to be lost in the Second World War

THE MERCHANT NAVY CHARTERED BY THE NATION

3rd September 1939 – 7th April 1940

This article is a précis of chapter 1 of 'A Merchant Fleet in War'
by Captain S.W. Roskill, R.N.

'My crew behaved splendidly, and I give them all credit'

(Report by Captain A.H.D. Shand on the loss of the *Protesilaus*, 21st January, 1940)

As the skies darkened over Europe in August 1939, the Admiralty quietly began to institute the measures planned to meet a second German challenge to Britain's maritime supremacy. We here are not concerned with the mobilisation of the Royal Navy, the calling up of Naval Reserves, the commissioning of the warships of the Reserve Fleet, and all the other steps taken to bring the instruments of the nation's sea power to a state of readiness for war; but, because the Admiralty orders concerning the British Merchant Navy profoundly affected the Alfred Holt fleet, a brief outline of them is essential to the reader's understanding of what follows.

On 26th August 1939 there was issued in Whitehall an order which established the pattern under which the whole of the British Merchant Navy was to work for the next six years. It stated that the Cabinet Committee responsible for 'Defence Preparedness' had, in consultation with the Foreign Office and the Board of Trade, authorised the Admiralty 'to adopt compulsory control of movements of merchant shipping which should extend to Baltic, Dutch, Danish or Mediterranean ports, and should include the routeing of ships in the Atlantic.'¹ Parallel with this assumption of operational control by the Admiralty, other government directives transferred the responsibility for the loading and unloading of all merchant ships from their owners to the Ministry of Shipping.

Thus, in the words of a manager of Alfred Holt & Co., was 'the British mercantile marine chartered by the nation, and on firm contract rates' for the second time in the twentieth century. At 4.38pm on 29th August 1939 the Admiralty signalled to all naval authorities to 'mobilise in accordance with Mobilisation Instructions for war with a European power'; on 1st September the 'warning telegram' followed, and at 11.am on 3rd September the message to 'commence hostilities at once against Germany' passed through the ether to all British warships.

As the lights went out that night in the darkened India Building in Liverpool every man or woman in the Holt organisation, from the Senior Manager down to the youngest office boy and the most junior typist, knew that control of their great fleet

¹ Admiralty, Special Secret Branch Acquaint No. 39. The powers conferred on the Admiralty were promulgated on the same day in the historic 'Navigation Order No.1, 1939'. This stated that 'British merchant vessels at all times and Dominion vessels, when in British territorial waters, shall comply with any sailing or routeing instructions which may from time to time be issued to them by the Admiralty or by any person authorised by the Admiralty to act under this order'.

had been taken out of their hands for an indefinite period; and that their ships, though remaining in the company's theoretical ownership, thenceforth formed a part of a greater organisation – comprising the whole British Merchant Navy mobilised for war.

In fact the government's orders quoted marked the climax of many months, even years, of planning between the Admiralty, the Board of Trade, the Ministry of Shipping (after it was formed in 1939), the shipowners and many other authorities concerned with sea-borne trade and with the protection of the nation's shipping in war. It was the care devoted to that planning that made possible a smooth and rapid changeover from the traditional peacetime methods of ship management to a system which, with few variations, was to stand the test of nearly six years of war. Here we can only mention a few of the measures for which plans and preparations were already in the files of the government departments.

Firstly, the owners had been told which of their ships the Admiralty intended to requisition for naval service, and weapons and equipment – most of them obsolete relics of the previous struggle against Germany, which were all that the Admiralty could spare – had been assembled for them in major ports at home and overseas. Requisitioning actually began on 26th August, the day that the Admiralty assumed control of merchant shipping; and on that day the China Mutual Steam Navigation Company's **Antenor**, which was one of the fifty British passenger or cargo-passenger liners earmarked for conversion to Armed Merchant Cruiser, was ordered to Calcutta. The Ocean Steamship Company's **Automedon** was taken as a frozen meat ship and store carrier for the Red Sea and ordered to Colombo, and other requisitioning orders quickly followed.

Secondly, all the nation's larger merchant ships had already been 'stiffened' at Admiralty expense to take defensive armaments, and again the weapons and ammunition (generally of even more ancient vintage than those allocated to the Armed Merchant Cruisers) had been collected in many ports. The order to arm all those merchant ships which were already stiffened to take guns also went out on 26th August, and with the weapons came the gun crews of the Admiralty's 'Defensively Equipped Merchant Ship' (DEMS) organisation – who were in general naval reservists. Only the key members of the gun crews were, however, supplied by the Navy: all the rest had to be found from among the ships' normal complement – to whom the working of a gun was of course at that time a closed mystery.

The Admiralty had, however, issued two invaluable books, called 'Defence of Merchant Shipping, Parts 1 and 2', setting out the principles and practice of defence against attack by surface raiders, aircraft and submarines; and those publications, together with coding and signalling instructions, were the first ripple in the tide of printed material which was to arrive in an ever-increasing flood in the cabins and safes of ship masters. In modern times it has apparently become quite impossible to fight a war without the unrelaxing aid of the nation's printing presses.

The most important of the naval decisions taken before the outbreak of war was, however, that convoy should be adopted. In spite of the fact that it had been the tardy introduction of convoy which had saved the nation at the time when the first U-boat campaign rose to a climax in April 1917, there were considerable hesitations over following that precedent. These arose partly from our disbelief in the likelihood of the Germans again unrestricted submarine warfare, which had brought the United States in

against them in the previous struggle, and partly from the insistence of the Air Staff that ships in convoy would be more vulnerable to bombing attacks. However, at the end of 1937 the latter objections were overruled, and the Admiralty then set about creating the necessary world-wide shipping control organisation. Naval Control Service Officers (N.C.S.Os) were sent to all major ports at home and overseas, and it was their duty to issue orders to ships sailing from their ports – whether in convoy or independently; while the Naval Officer-in-Charge of the port would arrange for escorts. The first mercantile convoy actually sailed from Gibraltar on 2nd September 1939 – the day before war was declared. Here we may note that, although the distaste with which virtually all Masters of merchant ships regarded convoy varied only in its intensity, there is no doubt all that it proved, as in all previous wars, by far the most effective way both of defending their ships.

Unfortunately the years of governmental parsimony had left the Royal Navy with such an inadequate number of escort vessels, and losses in the inshore operations off Norway, off western Europe and in the Mediterranean in 1940-41 were so heavy, that it was a very long time before mercantile convoys could be given adequate escorts. Although even weakly escorted convoys generally fared better than ships routed independently, some of the former suffered heavily during the early months – which added fuel to the flames of the Merchant Navy's dislike of convoy. Nor was it possible at once to direct all shipping as the naval authorities would have wished: for in August 1939 the Merchant Navy of the British Empire, which comprised 9,488 ships of all types, was scattered all over the world on its normal employment. Some voyages had to be completed, cargoes which had been loaded had to be discharged, and release from the hundreds of contractual obligations which form an integral part of the day-to-day management of commercial shipping could not be arranged as at the wave of a magic wand. Thus some weeks inevitably elapsed before every ship was freed and able to sail on government service – let alone take advantage of the embryo convoy organisation which was gradually being built up, and it was among the independently-routed ships, many of which were completing their last peacetime voyages, that the enemy at first found easy targets. We must now look briefly at the German plans and preparations to renew the onslaught on British merchant shipping.

Well before the outbreak of war the Germans dispatched the pocket-battleships **Graf Spee** and **Deutschland** (later renamed **Lützow**) and their attendant supply ships to 'waiting positions' in the Atlantic, and by the end of August 1939 no less than 39 of their 57 U-boats had also taken up preparatory stations around our coasts. The U-boats had actually been ordered to wage war in accordance with International Law, but the sinking of the Donaldson liner **Athenia** by U-30 on the day war was declared, though done in error, had the fortunate effect of convincing the Admiralty that the enemy had no intention of abiding by the rules to which they had agreed. This eliminated the last doubts regarding the need to introduce convoy. In September 1939 convoys began to sail homeward from Gibraltar and Sierra Leone, outward and homeward to and from Bergen, and outward into the Atlantic either by the North Channel or around the south of Ireland, or passing down the English Channel. In addition coastal convoys at once began to sail in both directions between Southend and Methil on the Firth of Forth on which route our shipping was very

vulnerable to attack by surface vessels, aircraft and submarines, and to mines laid in the shallow offshore waters.

Unfortunately none of the Atlantic convoys could be escorted to a greater distance than about 12½° West (some 200 miles west of our nearest base at Londonderry), for in 1938 we had, incredibly, agreed to abandon the bases at Berehaven and Lough Swilly in Eire, and that meant that the escorts had to leave their convoys with enough fuel in their tanks to reach a British port. It was to the west of Ireland, among the unescorted ships or weakly escorted convoys, and off the east coast that we suffered the heaviest losses in the first phase, but the U-boats did not by any means have things their own way. Three were destroyed in the Dover mine barrage during the first few weeks, and between 3rd September 1939 and 1st April 1940 no less than 18 were destroyed by one means or another – not at all an unsatisfactory recompense for the losses we had suffered.

Among the most important tasks which fell to the Royal and Merchant Navies on the outbreak of war was to carry the British Expeditionary Force to France in safety. On 9th September the first troop convoys sailed from Southampton and Bristol Channel ports, and they were quickly followed by a steady flow of troopships and store carriers, included in which were many ships of the Holt fleet.

By 7th October 161,000 men, 24,000 vehicles and about 140,000 tons of stores had been landed in France without a tin of biscuits, let alone a soldier, being lost. Little did we know that this was to be the only occasion on which we were allowed to transport large numbers of soldiers overseas – or bring them home again – with virtually no hindrance from the enemy.

While the B.E.F. was being safely carried to Cherbourg and other ports in north-west France, a serious threat had arisen in the shallow waters off the east coast – and especially in the Thames estuary. On 16th September we obtained proof that the Germans were laying 'influence-type' magnetic mines, as well as the moored contact variety. And against the former we had no means of defence. For a time the situation was anxious and only one channel in the Thames was open, but before the end of October 1939 we had developed a 'sweep' and measures had been put in hand to demagnetise all ships, and thereafter we gradually gained the upper hand. Nevertheless, 78 merchant ships comprising a total of over 250,000 tons were lost to mines in 1939, and in November and December of that year losses from that cause substantially exceeded the tonnage sunk by U-boats. It is not therefore surprising that the first loss suffered by the Holt fleet was caused by a mine.

Early on 21st January 1940, the *Protesilaus* (9,577 tons, Captain A.H.D. Shand), which was on passage from Liverpool to Swansea, struck a mine off the Mumbles Lighthouse. *'A terrific explosion was experienced,'* wrote her master, *'and it appeared to me that the vessel was lifted considerably, dropped back again to normal and shifted terribly as though passing over a solid object. The vessel developed a slight list to port and then began to settle down aft. I was of the opinion that her prospects of remaining afloat were remote, so gave orders to abandon the vessel at sea.'*

Captain Shand then boarded a tanker which had been close ahead of him, got away a message for assistance, and then reboarded his own ship with the mate (Mr L. Eccles) and a volunteer crew. Shortly after noon a tug was successfully secured, and

half an hour later the **Protesilaus** took the ground one mile off the Mumbles Lighthouse. She was at that time drawing 38 feet aft. Captain Shand then went ashore and saw to the comfort of his men in the Sailors' Home at Swansea, made his report to the N.C.S.O. and the company's agent, and then went to a hotel for a rest. Not a man was lost or seriously injured. Unhappily, all efforts to save the **Protesilaus** failed, and she became a total loss. It is almost certain that she was destroyed by one of the magnetic mines laid off Swansea by U.28 on 5th December 1939, one of four which Dönitz had sent to infest the approaches to our harbours at that time. Another of them (U.31) was responsible for damaging the Home Fleet flagship, the **Nelson**, off Loch Ewe on 4th December. It was the insecurity of the main base at Scapa Flow against air and submarine attacks that had caused the Fleet to move to Loch Ewe. For all our trouble to keep it secret (Loch Ewe was only referred to as Port 'Z'), the Germans quickly found out about the move; and as the temporary base was even less well defended than Scapa, it is not surprising that they were successful in exacting a price for our failure to provide the Fleet with a secure base. The almost complete lack of shore installations in Loch Ewe made it necessary to provide floating support for the Home Fleet and among the ships which were requisitioned for such service was the **Neleus**, a veteran of the 1914-18 war.

Only a few days after the loss of the **Protesilaus** – to be precise on 3rd February 1940 – the **Laertes** (Dutch flag - N.S.M.Ocean – 5,825 tons) struck a mine in the English Channel off the Royal Sovereign lightship, but she suffered no significant damage. As enemy surface ships and aircraft, as well as U-boats, were at the time infesting the waters of the Channel with mines, it is impossible to attribute this incident to any particular enemy.

In December 1939, while the magnetic mines were still causing us a good deal of damage and substantial losses, the Luftwaffe started widespread attacks on shipping off the east coast. The German pilots took as their targets anything that floated – lightships and fishing craft, tugs and barges, as well as merchantmen and warships, and all except the warships were at the time virtually defenceless against them. This danger had been foreseen before the war, and the Admiralty had taken steps to provide some sort of A-A gun to merchantmen. However it takes time to produce large numbers of efficient weapons and on the outbreak of war we still had nothing except a few converted 12-pounders and a quantity of light machine guns available.

The first order of five hundred 20mm Oerlikon guns – a splendid little weapon, which was in due time to become the standard close-range defence in ships of all types and classes – had, however, been ordered from Switzerland especially for merchant ships, and had been paid for in gold. It was to be a very long time before a merchantman saw an Oerlikon, since only a very few had been delivered when the overrunning of France cut us off from the source of supply. Later they were manufactured in large numbers in Britain and, still more, in America. Meanwhile the whole country was being combed for any sort of automatic gun which could be used to shoot at enemy aircraft; warships were called on to surrender many of their own machine guns, and others were borrowed from the Army – which itself was none too well supplied. The Admiralty also produced a number of makeshift substitutes for the guns we did not possess, such as rockets that carried a wire up into the path of an

attacking aircraft; and compressed-air or steam-operated mortars which lobbed Mills hand grenades at the Luftwaffe. Totally innocuous fireworks were even supplied by Brock's in the hope that their detonations would scare away the Stukas – as indeed they sometimes did!

Such emergency measures, if today seem as ludicrous as the need to adopt them was regrettable, did at least do something to relieve the justifiable fury of merchant seamen who could do nothing to reply to the aircraft which bombed and machine-gunned them – except to swear and shake their fists at them. Another measure which had to be hastily improvised was some form of bullet-proof protection for ships' bridges. The lucky ones received steel plates, but steel was another commodity of which we were woefully short, and the great majority at first received only sand bags, concrete slabs or 'plastic armour' – an ingeniously contrived material which at least gave better protection than the canvas dodgers which were all that the bridge watch-keepers previously had between them and the Luftwaffe's bullets.

No less serious than the lack of weapons with which to defend our merchantmen against air attacks was the difficulty experienced in arranging for their protection by shore-based fighters. The Navy and the R.A.F. had made no arrangements for a co-ordinated system of defence, and Fighter Command was at first unwilling to extend its protecting shield beyond our coasts. Not until the spring of 1940 did the two services produce a reasonably efficient joint system whereby fighter aircraft were sent out in response to a call for help, and it was a long time before communications were improved to a point at which the fighters arrived before the enemy had gone home again. Once again we can understand the feelings of a Merchant Navy crew who, having been subjected to heavy bombing and machine-gunning, saw a couple of Hurricanes arrive overhead well after it was all over. And, to make matters worse, they probably did not recognise them as Hurricanes and opened fire on them – if they were lucky enough to possess a gun, which unfriendly action understandably annoyed the airmen!

All these problems were, of course, endemic in the unprepared state in which we found ourselves in 1939, and as so often before, it was our merchant seamen who were called to pay a considerable share of the price for our unpreparedness. Luckily the early attacks by the Luftwaffe were rarely very accurate, and the tonnage actually sunk during the first seven months of the war was no more than some 30,000. We thus gained a breathing space in which to organise and improve our defences against the day when air attacks became a really serious menace – as they did in the middle of 1940.

It was at the time when we seemed to be gaining a reasonable mastery over the U-boats, bombers and mines that the Holt fleet suffered its first loss from submarine attack. The *Pyrrhus* (Ocean Steamship Co., 7,417 tons, Captain W.T. Spencer) left Liverpool on 12th February 1940 in convoy OG 18 (Outward – Gibraltar) bound for the Far East by way of the Suez Canal with a general cargo. As was the normal practice at the time, the main Liverpool section was joined on the way south by other ships from the Bristol Channel and from east coast ports, and when formed up the convoy totalled 44 ships. The Commodore protested later about the mixing of slow and fast vessels in the same convoy. The Admiralty pointed out that there was no

alternative – unless we were prepared to reduce our imports, or were able to allocate more escort vessels to trade defence.

Included in this convoy were three other Holt ships besides the **Pyrrhus**, namely the **Agapenor**, **Prometheus** and **Gleniffer**, but the only escorts were a French destroyer and an auxiliary war vessel which was also French – a striking example of the very slender defences we were able to produce at this stage of the war.

It may help readers unfamiliar with the ocean convoy system as organised throughout the Second World War to mention here that they always steamed in columns comprising approximately equal numbers of ships, and that the columns were numbered consecutively from the port to the starboard wing. To every ship in the convoy a two figure number was allocated. The first figure signified the column in which she would sail, and the second her place in that column. Thus No. 63 would be the third ship in the sixth column counting from the port wing. In mercantile convoys the normal distance apart of columns was five cables (1,000 yards), while ships in columns kept station at two cables (400 yards). The Convoy Commodore, generally an Admiral on the Retired List, and his small signal staff sailed on one of the larger ships, and almost always led one of the centre columns. Vice- and Rear-Commodores were also appointed and would take charge if the Commodore's ship came to grief. The Vice- and Rear-Commodores were not, however, given any extra signal staff, and as Masters of merchant ships were quite often ordered to act in those capacities, they might suddenly find themselves required to shoulder a heavy extra responsibility. We may here also remark that Holt ships were very often chosen to embark one or other of the Commodores, and also to take station at the head of the convoy columns. This was without doubt a compliment to the skill and steadiness of the Masters and officers of the Company; but the positions of honour were also the positions of greatest danger.

A conference was always held at the port of departure before any convoy sailed, and was attended by all Masters, the Senior Officer of the escort and by the Naval Control Service Officer. Often the Flag Officer in charge of the port would take the chair, and would first explain the broad plan of the operation. The escort's Senior Officer would then describe his strength and intentions; the Commodore would draw attention to special orders, such as the emergency turns to be made in the event of attack, and finally the chairman would call for questions. These conferences, which were always entirely informal, contributed much to the mutual understanding between the Royal and Merchant Navies on which the success of any convoy operation greatly depended.

Convoy OG 18 sailed in five columns, with the **Pyrrhus**, which was the Vice-Commodore's ship, leading column 5. The speed of advance was, however, only 8 knots, since the convoy included many ships which were far slower than the 14-knot Holt ship. Captain Spencer thus suffered the not uncommon irritation of having to steam at a speed far below his ship's capability. But the speed of a convoy can never be more than that of its slowest ships, and in fact it was no unusual event for some ships to find it difficult to maintain station even at 8 knots – especially if heavy weather was encountered. It was among such ships that a tendency to 'straggle' would occur, and the busy little escorts spent much time and effort in urging them back into station – for the U-boats were merciless in picking off defenceless ships which dropped astern of their consorts. Less common, but perhaps more reprehensible than

straggling, was the tendency of some Masters of fast ships to 'romp' ahead of the convoy in sublime but misplaced confidence that they would be safer on their own. Often a torpedo would be the first indication that their action was misjudged.

All went well with convoy OG 18 until the evening of 15th February 1940 when the weather deteriorated, and a gale began to blow from the west-south-west, causing the merchantmen to lose formation. By daylight on 17th February many ships were missing. Captain Spencer, in answer to a request for his views from the Commodore, suggested, understandably, an increase of speed 'to contact ships which we knew had gone ahead during the night.' But the Commodore chose instead to reduce speed in order to give the laggards a chance to catch up. However, early that afternoon, he ordered the **Pyrrhus** to proceed ahead, and Captain Spencer (no doubt thankfully) increased speed to 11½ knots. An hour later his judgement was justified by the sighting of 17 of the ships which were missing. Fourteen of them obeyed his order to turn back and rejoin the main convoy; the other three showed a marked reluctance to do so, and the **Pyrrhus** spent much of the afternoon rounding up the errant ships like a sheep dog. That task had just been successfully completed, and Captain Spencer had reduced speed and set course to rejoin the convoy when, at 3.58pm, 'a dull, roaring explosion occurred in the vicinity of No.5 hatch'. The position at the time was about 100 miles north-west of Cape Finisterre. Debris and cases of cargo were flung into the air, and the ship was enveloped in a cloud of brown smoke. Captain Spencer at once realised that the **Pyrrhus** was seriously damaged, and in fact it seems that the whole ship abaft No.5 hatch disappeared within a few seconds of the explosion. He at once threw his confidential books over the side in their weighted bag, ordered the engine room staff on deck, and had the boats manned. The loss of the mainmast, and the consequent entanglement of the main and emergency wireless aerials, made it impossible to send a submarine attack signal ¹, but the lifeboats were quickly and efficiently lowered in spite of the heavy sea and swell which were running. Having ascertained that no-one was left on board, Captain Spencer and the Mate left in the same boat. Seventy-seven of the **Pyrrhus**' crew were picked up by the **Uskside** and the **Sinnington Court**, two other ships in the convoy, but eight men were missing – all of them Chinese members of the engine room staff. They were the first fatal casualties suffered by the Holt Fleet in the Second World War.

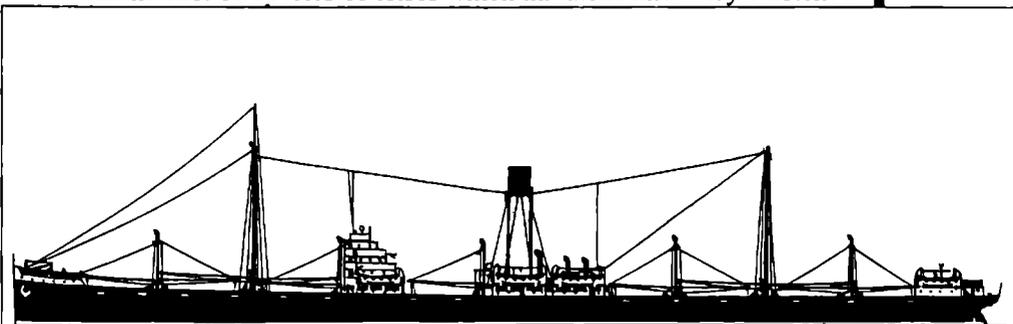
In his report, Captain Spencer was critical of the Commodore's decision to reduce speed on the morning of the 17th February, and of his action in sending the **Pyrrhus** ahead to locate the missing ships, and it must be admitted that such a duty should have been carried out by an escort vessel rather than by a merchant ship. But the trouble was that neither of the two French escorts was with the Commodore's section of the convoy on that morning, and it was not until early the next day that one of them, a destroyer, rejoined. She then stayed with the convoy until it reached Gibraltar. In his report the Commodore protested, very reasonably, that the escort was totally inadequate, and he described the convoy (somewhat ungrammatically) as "*the worst from the point of view of signalling and station-keeping that I have yet been Commodore of*" – which only shows that there are always two sides to a story.

¹ In the Merchant Navy Code 'SSSS' was the signal to report an enemy submarine. 'RRRR' indicated an enemy warship, 'AAAA' an air attack, and 'QQQQ' that an armed merchantman was endeavouring to stop the sender's ship.

The **Pyrrhus** was the only loss suffered by Convoy OG 18, and she without doubt fell victim to U.37, a large (Type IX) 'Atlantic' class boat built in 1938-39, which had sailed on 1st February to take up a patrol position in the Bay of Biscay. This was her third cruise, and she not only survived the attack on OG 18 unscathed but went on to carry out eight more cruises later in the war. The attack which sank the **Pyrrhus** was certainly carried out with skill for no-one in the ship gained a glimpse either of U.37's periscope or of the torpedo track. The rough sea probably aided concealment, and chance must surely have played a part in placing so fast a ship exactly in the way of a submerged submarine, which could only have been capable of 6 – 7 knots. If there was any error on the part of the **Pyrrhus** it lay, perhaps, in the fact that she was not zig-zagging at the time, since to steer a steady course is bound to make an attack by a submerged submarine easier.

The events recounted in this article will make plain that the so-called 'phoney war', which may be said to have lasted from 3rd September 1939 until 7th April 1940 was anything but 'phoney' to the officers and men of the Royal and Merchant Navies, who constantly had to deal with intensive submarine attacks in the sea approaches to these islands, and with bombing and minelaying in our coastal waters. Yet, for all that our troubles were very real, there was another side to the picture, and we can now see that, viewed in historical perspective – and compared with what was to come later – the period was by no means one of unmitigated success to the enemy. Thus by March 1940 losses caused by submarines and mines had dropped sharply; we had sunk a very satisfactory number of U-boats, and our sweepers were getting well on top of the several varieties of mine being used; our convoy system was being steadily extended, and our counter-measures to air attacks were at last gaining in effectiveness. It seemed that, given time, we would be able to defeat the triple threat to our seaborne traffic.

Time, however, is an element which in war a dictator can seize by the forelock far more effectively than a democratic government. Hitler was not the man to allow us the time needed to undo the full effects of our unpreparedness. By striking secretly, suddenly and simultaneously at Denmark and Norway on 7th April 1940 he completely reversed all the favourable trends which had seemed to be slowly gathering headway during the preceding seven months, and Britain at once found herself face to face with the first of a series of crises which threatened her very existence. █



The **Protesilaus** of 1910 was mined in the Bristol Channel in January, 1940

THE SCARWEATHER LIGHTSHIP AND MAGNETIC MINES

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

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

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

At about 9pm on the evening of 2nd October 1939 a signal was received from the Port War Signal Station to the effect that the Scarweather Lightship had reported a submarine in her vicinity motoring about seemingly at random on the surface. The **Kennett** and the **Blackwater** saw nothing. However, almost immediately ships were in distress in the area and nobody appeared to have the slightest idea what the trouble was. Suggestions of sabotage at Cardiff and Avonmouth circulated, presumably under the impression that explosives were being placed in cargoes whilst loading, for strangely enough it seemed that only deep drafted ships were suffering – the reason of course being obvious once the cause had been ascertained.

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

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

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

THESE MEN WENT THROUGH HELL for YOU



FOR 21 DAYS THESE MEN WERE ADrift IN AN OPEN BOAT . . .
 THEN THEY WERE RESCUED BY A GERMAN U-BOAT IN THE
 ATLANTIC . . . THESE MEN WERE FORGOTTEN BY A GREAT
 MANY OF THE BOATS FINALLY REACHED
 THE BEACH . . .

GIVE US
THE SHIPS
 WE'LL DELIVER
THE GOODS!

The men of the Royal Navy and Merchant Navy ask you to give every ounce of effort to speed up production. Give them the weapons to fight back at the Germans and protect the women and children of Britain from what has happened in the countries now occupied by the enemy.



WHEN THESE SHIPS ARE THE ONLY THING YOU
 HAVE THE NAVY AND THE MERCHANT NAVY

From America and our Dominions we are obtaining raw materials and vital foods. The Merchant Navy, supported by the Royal Navy, are maintaining our life line and with your help they will continue to keep this country supplied with the necessities of life and the weapons to beat Hitler and his gang. Every worker engaged on producing even the smallest nut or bolt needed to complete a ship is doing his bit to win this war. The Navy is depending on you to replace the ships which are being lost. Production must be increased. There is no time to be lost. Every hour wasted is an hour gained by the Germans in their attempt to sweep us off the high seas and thus pave the way for an invasion of this island.



Warwork News

ISSUED BY THE ADMIRALTY

THE LOSS OF THE 'ATHENIA'

The first British merchant ship sunk by a U-boat in the Second World War

*The sinking of the **Athenia** at 7.30pm on the evening on Sunday 3rd September 1939, just seven hours and thirty minutes into the Second World War, made it immediately and abundantly clear to the Admiralty that, regardless of the fact that a vessel might have non-combatant passengers or citizens from neutral countries on board, merchant ships were going to be sunk without warning, leaving their passengers and crews to the mercy of the seas.*

The **Athenia** was a ship of some 13,581 gross tons built in 1923 by the Fairfield Shipbuilding and Engineering Company of Glasgow for the Anchor-Donaldson Line. She was launched on 28th January 1923 and sailed on her maiden voyage from Glasgow via Liverpool to Quebec and Montreal. The **Athenia** had accommodation for 400 cabin-class and 1,000 third-class passengers, and carried a crew of just over 300. She was an oil-fired ship with twin screws powered by double-reduction geared steam turbines, giving a speed of 15 knots.



In the sixteen years prior to the outbreak of the Second World War the **Athenia**, together with her sister the **Letitia**, sailed regularly on their owners' Glasgow to Canada service. In the summer months they proceeded up the St Lawrence to Quebec and Montreal, and Halifax, Nova Scotia was the winter Canadian terminal port.

The **Athenia** left Montreal for the Clyde as usual on Friday 18th August 1939, arriving in Glasgow nine days later where she spent four days preparing for her next voyage. During her eastbound passage the political situation in Europe had rapidly reached crisis point, and the signing of the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact left the way open for Hitler to invade Poland and risk war with Britain and France. On 1st September 1939, some 52 German Army divisions of 1,500,000 men poured across the Polish border from Silesia, East Prussia and Slovakia as Germany demonstrated her 'blitzkrieg' tactics against a Polish army just one third of the size. In Britain and France total mobilisation was ordered and, at noon the same day, the **Athenia** left Glasgow for Belfast and Liverpool, before crossing the Atlantic to Quebec and Montreal.

The **Athenia** was commanded by Captain James Cook, OBE. On the morning of Saturday 2nd September the **Athenia** reached Liverpool and Captain Cook went ashore to receive the latest sailing instructions from the Admiralty. More passengers were embarked and at 4.30pm on 2nd September the **Athenia** left Liverpool bound for Canada by way of the north coast of Ireland. On board she had 1,105 passengers, of whom 316 were US citizens, and 639 were British subjects. The remaining 150 were mainly refugees from Europe and they included 28 German Jews and 77 Polish citizens. Many of the European refugees had left their homes with virtually only what they stood up in, for they were desperate to get away from the holocaust in Europe which they could clearly foresee.

As darkness fell on 2nd September the **Athenia** was just south of the Chicken Rock off the south of the Isle of Man, and Captain Cook ordered that all external lights be extinguished in accordance with the Admiralty instructions to all merchant ships. As the ship steamed into the North Channel the weather deteriorated with heavy rain squalls and a rough sea. The **Athenia** steamed north-west at her best speed of 15 knots and at 3.30am on Sunday 3rd September 1939 she passed Inishtrahull off the north-western coast of Ireland.

At 11am the announcement came that Britain and Germany were at war for the second time in twenty-five years and the news was received on board the **Athenia** a few minutes later from Valentia radio station. Captain Cook immediately ensured that all the ship's boats were readied and the firefighting equipment was prepared for instant use.

Directly in the **Athenia's** course was the German submarine U.30, commanded by Oberleutnant Fritz Julius Lemp. The U-boat had left Wilhelmshaven on 22nd August, and was one of eighteen boats which had positioned themselves across the Atlantic shipping routes. Oberleutnant Lemp received a signal at 2pm confirming the British declaration of war, and an hour later commenced his patrol and was soon spotted on the surface and moving at speed by the Norwegian ship **Knute Nelson**.

Following the unrestricted submarine warfare during the Great War of 1914-18, the London Naval Treaty of 1930, of which the German government was a signatory, provided that submarines could sink without warning any vessel identified as a troopship, or one carrying war material. Submarines were also entitled to attack any merchant ship which was being escorted by warships or aircraft. However, for merchant vessels which were not thought to be in those categories, even though they were showing hostile intentions such as uncovering guns, the submarine commander

was supposed to give a warning to the ship and to ensure that her passengers and crew were safe before sinking her. The **Athenia** was clearly such a ship for she was carrying innocent non-combatants and bound for Canada, which was still a neutral country and would remain so for another five days.

At about 7 pm on the evening of 3rd September, the **Athenia's** passengers were going down to the second sitting for dinner. At 7.30 pm the ship was in position 56°44' North, 14°05' West, some 250 miles west of Inishtrahull. Both Captain Cook and the Chief Officer, Barnet M. Copeland, were in the cabin-class saloon on 'B' deck, and it appeared that the **Athenia** had safely passed through the danger zone.

The U.30 was still on the surface and Oberleutnant Lemp had manoeuvred his boat into a perfect firing position off the port bow of the **Athenia**. It is said that he had wrongly identified the liner as an armed merchant cruiser, which would make her a perfectly legitimate target, and it was mainly the fact that she was showing no lights which led him to this conclusion. Whatever was in the minds of the submarine's crew, what is known for a fact is that, at a range of 1,600 yards, four torpedoes were fired at the **Athenia**.

The third torpedo of the salvo struck the **Athenia** squarely against the port side in a space between No.5 main hatch and No.5 hold, which had been utilised for passenger accommodation. In the dining saloon both the captain and the chief officer felt a heavy bump and heard a muffled explosion. However, a passenger named Miss Roper, who was in her cabin only yards away from the point where the torpedo hit, recalls: *"there was a terrible crash in the side of the ship only a few yards from me. The ship was in darkness and I put on my lifebelt and ran upstairs in the dark, hardly able to see where I was going. Wood and glass were strewn about the deck and there were some people lying about bleeding badly."* The ship took a list to port of about six degrees. Chief Officer Copeland went to the bridge where the 'abandon ship' signal was sounded and the lifeboats were ordered to be cleared for lowering.

There were rumours afterwards that U.30 shelled the crippled **Athenia**, but there were no eye-witnesses to this and it has remained a matter of controversy. Apart from some initial panic amongst the passengers, the evacuation of the ship went smoothly and in a little less than an hour the 26 lifeboats had been lowered from seven sets of davits. On each side the two foremost davits had one boat each, and the remainder two. The crew had to lower the top lifeboat first, recover the falls, haul in the davits, hook on the lower boat, get the davits out once again and then lower the second boats. Much trouble was experienced with the second boats on the starboard side as by then the **Athenia** was listing twelve degrees to port. All the boats were got away safely and Chief Officer Copeland likened it to an 'abandon ship exercise'. Once the passengers were away, the chief officer and other crew members were able to make a search for more survivors. He went into the passenger space between the No.5 main hatches, where the torpedo had hit the ship and this is how he described the scene which confronted him: *"On the low, port side, there was a lot of water and the bulkheads, woodwork etc in the vicinity were all blackened and splintered, and, although we carried no explosives, there was a very strong acrid smell, rather like fireworks, which made it very difficult to breathe. There were many bodies lying about here, they were all completely blackened – clothes, faces, everything. I made sure that they were all dead."*

By 11pm, with all the passengers away, Captain Cook ordered the officers and remaining crew members off the ship. As he left his ship, Captain Cook saw the **Knute Nelson** coming to the rescue, which must have been a great relief to everyone. Miss Roper, after trying several lifeboats which were full, finally got away. She described her experience: *"After waiting for some time I got into a boat, but whilst it was being lowered into the sea, it stuck halfway down and it seemed ages before we pulled away from the ship. We were already crowded in the boat, but we picked up some more people who were floating in the sea. I was lying in the bottom of the boat with people all over me. It was terribly cold and we seemed to be doing nothing but drifting."* Eventually Miss Roper was picked up by the Swedish steam yacht **Southern Cross**, which was the second rescue vessel on the scene. Tragically, lifeboat 5A ran on to the **Knute Nelson's** moving propeller when the occupants were within minutes of being rescued, and very few of the occupants survived the ordeal with some being caught by the propeller, and others drowned.



A survivor's photograph of the Athenia sinking by the stern on the morning of Monday 4th September, 1939

By 10.am on the morning of Monday 4th September 1939, all the survivors had been picked up from the boats, and HM Ships **Electra** and **Escort** had arrived. The **Athenia** was still afloat, although she was listing to port and her stern was under water. As Chief Officer Copeland was going through the lists of survivors on board HMS **Electra**, he realised that one woman was missing and in his own words described how: *"Earlier in the day [3rd September] she had fallen down a ladder and was suffering from concussion, and I had personally taken to the sick bay unconscious. Whilst we were clearing the boats away, the nurse had come to me and said that she was unable to get this woman out by herself, so I had sent two men to help her – which apparently they had failed to do. I immediately went to the Captain of the destroyer and informed him that there was a woman still in the Athenia's sick bay and asked to be put aboard at once. I was given a boat and we went off to the Athenia and went on board with the bosun and one A.B. The time was now about 10.30am. The bosun and*

*the A.B. went to the sick bay. The door was burst open and the woman was found inside, still unconscious. Whilst on board I looked down No.5 hatch and noticed the bulkheads were in a dangerous condition and would not hold much longer, so we immediately got back into the boat and returned to HMS **Electra** with the woman. As soon as I got back, the **Athenia** sank by the stern. The time was about 11.am." What the chief officer did not mention in his report was that he and the other two gallant seamen had waded through water knee deep to effect the rescue.*

Altogether 112 people lost their lives, and this included 69 women and 16 children. For Britain the war was less than twenty-four hours old and the Merchant Navy had been involved with the first action with the enemy. It was patently clear that little notice was going to be taken of either the Hague Convention, or the Naval Treaty of 1930, and for the Merchant Navy it was a portent of things to come.

The survivors of the **Athenia** were landed at Galway and Greenock and, in those early days of the war before the censors got to work, their stories filled the newspapers for days. The Germans initially denied that they were responsible for the sinking, but the evidence was overwhelming, and the horror which spread throughout the world did nothing for the Axis cause. ■

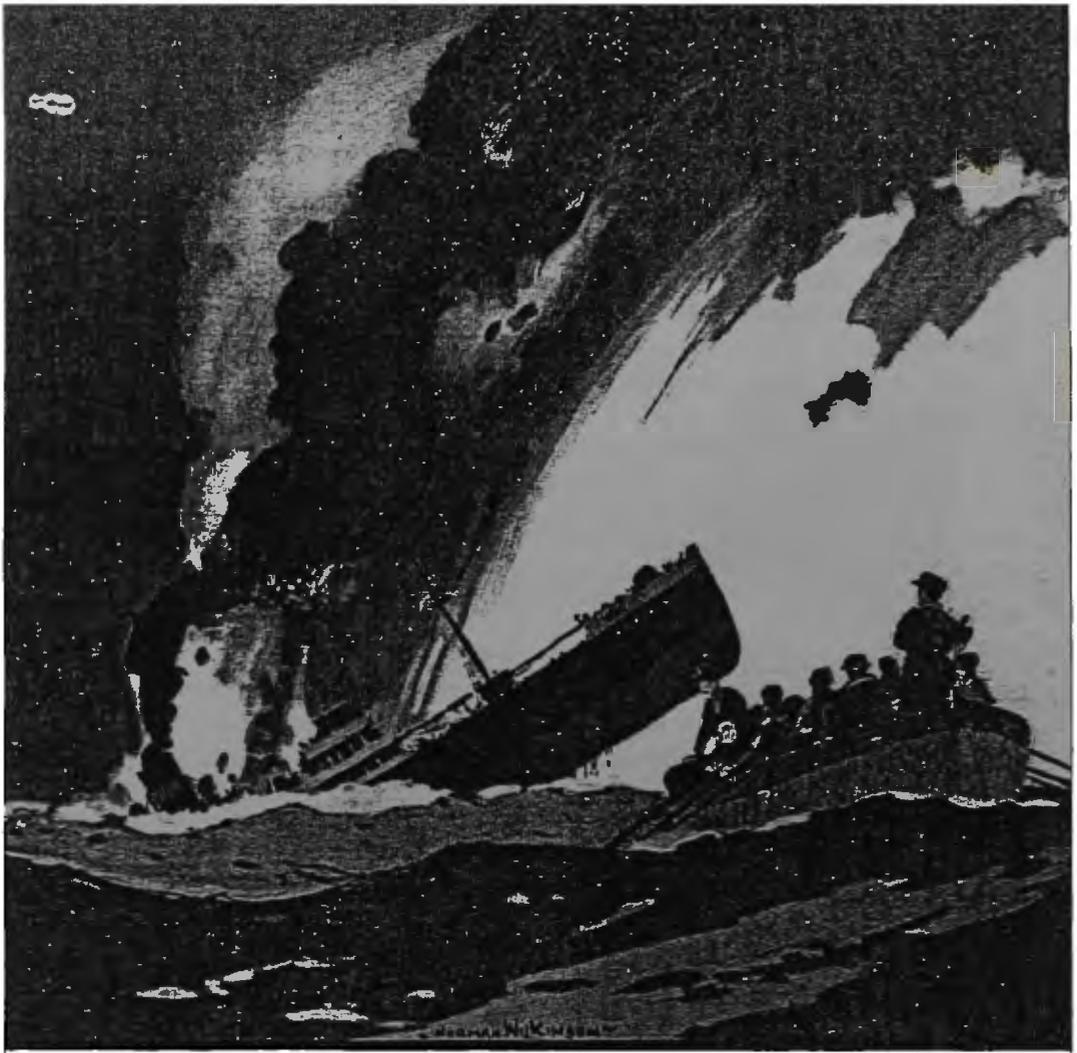
Postscript

It is ironical to note that in May 1941 Kapitanleutnant Lemp, by then in command of U.110, was tracked by HM ships **Bulldog**, **Aubretia** and **Broadway**. In the ensuing action the U-boat was captured and Lemp lost his life, and the U-boat's cypher equipment was captured in what has been described as the 'greatest intelligence coup of the whole war'.

A few miles away in convoy OB 318, on board the ss **Esmond**, was Chief Officer Barnet M. Copeland.



*The **King Orry** of 1913 was one of three IOMSPCo vessels lost at Dunkirk on 29th May, 1940*



A FEW CARELESS WORDS MAY END IN THIS—

Many lives were lost in the last war through careless talk
Be on your guard! Don't discuss movements of ships or troops

THE ISLE OF MAN STEAM PACKET COMPANY AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

On the outbreak of war on 3rd September 1939, the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company had a fleet of sixteen steamers. The three cargo vessels **Peveril** (2), [b.1929-798grt] **Conister** [acq.1932-411grt] and **Cushag** [acq.1920-223grt] were retained by the Company, and initially the **Rushen Castle** [acq.1928-1,724grt] and the **Victoria** [acq.1928-1,641grt] were left to maintain the wartime passenger sailings.

The **King Orry** [b.1913-1877grt] entered Sandon Dock, Liverpool, along with the North Wales excursion vessel **St Tudno** for conversion to an Armed Boarding Vessel. She was assigned to the Dover Command with effect from 27th September. The **Manx Maid** [acq.1923-1,540grt] and the **Mona's Isle** [acq.1920-1,691grt] also became Armed Boarding Vessels.

The remaining eight passenger steamers all became personnel carriers and assisted in conveying the British Expeditionary Force to France.

The old **Tynwald** (3) [1891-937grt] (now the **Western Isles**) was moved from Glasgow to the Wallasey Dock, Birkenhead, where she became the accommodation/supply ship **HMS Eastern Isles**.



*The 1930 built 'centenary steamer' **Lady of Mann** survived the Second World War*

1940

The principal event of 1940 was Operation Dynamo, the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk, which lasted from 26th May until 4th June. The total number of troops landed in England from Dunkirk is given as 338,226, and of these 24,669 were brought out on the eight steamers of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company which took part in the operation.

The 29th May 1940 was perhaps the blackest day in the long history of the Steam Packet Company. At 05.30 the **Mona's Queen** [b.1934-2,756grt] was approaching Dunkirk and when one mile off the port she detonated a magnetic mine which caused her to break in two and sink. Twenty-four of her crew were lost, seventeen of them from the Isle of Man.



*The **Mona's Queen** after striking the mine in the Dunkirk approaches on 29th May, 1940*

Later that same day, the **Fenella** [b.1936-2,376grt] was berthed starboard side to the east mole stone jetty at Dunkirk, astern of the General Steam Navigation Company's paddle steamer **Crested Eagle**, and with the North Wales steamer **St Seiriol** standing off. The **Fenella** had 650 troops on board when a force of German aircraft bombed the pier at 17.00 with such effect that heavy stone portions crashed into the side of the **Fenella** and her engine room was flooded, causing her to settle on an even keel. The **Crested Eagle** was destroyed with heavy loss of life, whilst the **St Seiriol** rendered all possible assistance.

The 29th May also claimed the **King Orry** which was bombed in the approaches to Dunkirk and was severely damaged. She was ordered to clear the harbour and the approach channel before she sank. Shortly after 02.00 on the morning of 30th May the **Orry** sank after her engine room flooded

The Company had lost three of its steamers in just twenty-one hours.

The **Mona's Isle** was the first ship to leave Dover when Operation Dynamo started. She brought out a total of 2,634 troops in two round trips and was badly damaged, causing her name to be erroneously broadcast in the first list of Dunkirk losses.

The **Manxman** [acq.1920-2,030grt] made two trips, and actually grounded on Cap Gris Nez, near Calais, but got off safely. On the night of 2nd June, after completing three round trips, the **Ben-my-Chree** [b.1927-2,586grt] was in collision with another vessel soon after leaving Folkestone for Dunkirk, and this finished her involvement in the operation. The **Lady of Mann** (b.1930-3,104grt) took 4,262 men back to Dover on four crossings from Dunkirk. The **Tynwald** (b.1936-2,376tons) is recorded as making a total of five round trips and bringing out 8,953 troops.

A fortnight after Dunkirk, the **Lady of Mann** was assigned to Operation Ariel, the evacuation of troops from Le Havre, Cherbourg and Brest. On one sailing from Le Havre, the *Lady* had 5,000 troops on board. The **Manxman**, **Tynwald** and **Manx Maid** were also involved in the operation, and on one trip the **Manx Maid** brought out 3,000 troops from Brest – double her normal complement.

The **Manxman** was the final troop ship to escape from Cherbourg, steaming away to safety as the Germans were entering the port area. Rommel described her as the 'cheeky, two-funnel steamer'. She was also the last ship out of St Malo.

Just before the invasion of the Channel Islands on 1st July 1940, the **Viking** [b.1905-1,957grt] steamed into St Peter Port, Guernsey and took 1,800 children to the safety of Weymouth.



The Viking evacuated 1,800 children from Guernsey before the Germans invaded.

The **Manx Maid** and the **Viking** had taken no part in the Dunkirk evacuation as they were both undergoing repairs at the time. The **Snaefell** [acq.1920-1,713grt] had been returned to the Steam Packet Company at Easter 1940, and was operating the Island's passenger services, along with the **Rushen Castle** and the **Victoria**.

From August 1940 until April 1944 the **Lady of Mann** was assigned to troop transport duties, often based at Lerwick in the Shetland Isle. On occasions she tendered the liner **Queen Mary** at the Tail of the Bank in the Firth of Clyde. In the second half of 1940 the **Tynwald** was based at Liverpool from where she made trips to the Clyde anchorage with German prisoners-of-war for transport to Canada.

Whilst on passage from Douglas to Liverpool on 20th December 1940, the **Victoria** exploded two mines in her wake, but reached port unscathed. When outward bound to Douglas on 27th December, and about eight miles north-west of the Bar Lightship, she detonated another mine which severely disabled her. Fortunately it was flat calm and HMY **Evadne** stood by, and a number of the 200 passengers were taken off by the trawler **Michael Griffiths** and the Bar pilot cutter. The **Victoria** remained afloat and was towed back to Liverpool by the minesweeping trawlers **Doon** and **Hornbeam**.

After this incident the Steam Packet Company's passenger operations were transferred to Fleetwood from 28th December 1940.

There was a popular myth at one time that the **Fenella** was raised when the mess of Dunkirk was being cleared, and that the ship was brought into harbour and eventually towed away. The myth continued that the **Fenella** was repaired, renamed **Reval**, and that the Germans used her as a troopship between Baltic ports and Norway. Research in the German naval archive, however, shows that the **Fenella** was broken up where she lay.



*The **Mona's Isle** was the first ship to arrive at Dunkirk in Operation Dynamo*

To conclude the events of 1940, the following is of interest on a lighter note. On Saturday 27th January, the **Rushen Castle** [acq.1928-1,724grt] sailed from Liverpool for Douglas at 10.45. An easterly gale blew up which made Douglas unapproachable, and the Master was sent a message by radio which instructed him to "Go to the east", namely Douglas. The message should have read "Go to the west", or Peel, on the west coast of the Isle of Man. Captain Bridson duly arrived off Douglas, and was then signalled to proceed to Peel. By the time the **Rushen Castle** had arrived off Peel the gale had backed, and berthing was not possible. Eventually the steamer did get into Peel – at 10.00 on Tuesday 30th January – after being at sea for 71 hours. The Lieutenant-Governor of the Isle of Man – the Earl of Granville – was one of the passengers. His comments are not recorded.

1941

The **Tynwald** was converted to an auxiliary anti-aircraft cruiser and most of her superstructure was removed, leaving virtually only the hull, funnel and machinery. She was commissioned on 1st October 1941, and took up convoy work in the Western Approaches.

The **Mona's Isle** joined the Rosyth Command after refit, becoming the A.A. guardship at Methil in the Firth of Forth, but was decommissioned on the Tyne in November 1943 and came under the control of Sea Transport, Newcastle. The following year she steamed to Scapa Flow and then on to the Clyde, via Stornoway. On being handed back to the Steam Packet Company she had circumnavigated the British Isles.

After her mine damage had been repaired, the **Victoria** did not return to the Company, but was requisitioned and fitted out as an LSI (Landing Ship Infantry), and then worked out of the Firth of Forth as a target vessel.

From 1941 until the beginning of 1944 the **Ben-my-Chree** was a troop transport, operating between north British ports and Iceland.

In October 1941 the **Manxman** was again purchased by the Admiralty, and was commissioned in the Royal Navy as HMS **Caduceus**. She was attached to the Navy RDF training establishment HMS **Valkyrie**, which had been set up in hotels on the Loch Promenade, Douglas. The **Manxman** (HMS **Caduceus**) was fitted out as an RDF (Radar) training ship at Birkenhead, and provided sea training for HMS **Valkyrie**. Two collisions with the **Victoria Pier** at Douglas resulted in Steam Packet officers being given temporary commissions to handle ships in Douglas harbour, and the Admiralty stated that, in its opinion, the ship was far too large to be used in the port of Douglas at all! The **Manxman** was moved to the Clyde in 1943 and was not decommissioned until 1945 when she took on the role of troopship.

1942

HMS **Tynwald** took part in the North Africa campaign and was assigned to Operation Torch. She bunkered at Algiers before becoming part of a task force sent to capture an airfield at Bougie, 100 miles to the east. After surviving a severe enemy bombing attack, she anchored in Bougie Bay on the night of 11th November 1942. In the early hours of 12th November the Italian submarine **Argo** attacked her with two torpedoes and the **Tynwald** sank with the loss of three officers and seven ratings. This was the Steam Packet Company's fourth and final war loss.

The **Viking** served as a Fleet Air Arm target vessel based at Crail, Fife, during the latter half of 1942. In December the **Manx Maid's** name was changed to HMS **Bruce**. Among her special duties was that of acting as target ship for the aircraft training for the destruction of the German battleship **Tirpitz**. She continued as a Fleet Air Arm target until March 1946.

1943

In the summer of 1943 the **Victoria** (as an LSI) transferred from the Firth of Forth to Southampton where she was employed in training infantry for the invasion of Europe. From 1943 until 1945 the **Viking** was a personnel ship: she was a coal burner and suitable bunkering arrangements always presented problems.

1944

In January 1944 the **Ben-my-Chree** went to North Shields to be fitted out as an LSI, carrying six landing craft. After this conversion she was in the English Channel, working up for D-Day. On 6th June the '**Ben**' was at Omaha Beach as headquarters ship for the 514th Assault Flotilla.

Like the **Ben**, the **Lady of Mann** had been converted to an LSI and also carried six landing assault craft. The **Lady** was headquarters ship for the 512th Assault Flotilla, responsible for landings at Juno Beach near Courselles.

On D-Day the **Victoria** landed assault forces at Arromanches, and for some days after landed American forces at Utah Beach.

Considerable damage was caused to the **Viking** on 28th June when a V1 flying bomb exploded nearby as she was lying at Rotherhithe on the Thames



*The **Ben-my-Chree** was headquarters ship of the 514th Assault Flotilla at Omaha Beach*

1945

With the impending end of the war in Europe, the **Viking** was derequisitioned in May 1945 and left Tilbury on 17th May, arriving at Barrow on 23rd May. She was overhauled at Barrow and at Birkenhead, and she returned to the Fleetwood-Douglas service on 18th June, still with her hull grey, but with her Steam Packet funnel colours restored. It will be remembered that the Company's passenger services had been transferred to Fleetwood on 28th December 1940 following the **Victoria's** mining, and there was no Liverpool service until it resumed on 8th April 1946.

The **Mona's Isle** was returned to the Company in May 1945, re-entering service in July. Her mainmast, removed during the war, was not replaced.

The **Snaefell** completed her sailings for the Company in July 1945 on account of her deteriorating condition, and in October the tug **Thames** towed her from Douglas to Port Glasgow where she lay at Smith & Houston's yard for three years before demolition. Her main companionway was installed in the Master Mariners' headquarters ship **Wellington**, moored in the Thames.

The **Manx Maid** was returned to the Steam Packet Company on 21st March 1945 at Ardrossan. On 27th May she arrived at Barrow and was laid up until the 1946 summer season.

HMS **Caduceus** was derequisitioned in 1945 and reverted to her original name of **Manxman**. She was refitted for use as a troopship and during 1946 operated from Tilbury to Ostend; Harwich to the Hook of Holland and later still from Dover to Calais.

The Steam Packet Company's policy of the post-1918 period of buying in second-hand tonnage was not repeated, and when it became reasonable to expect an Allied victory an order was placed with Cammell Laird for two passenger steamers, and the keel of the first was laid on 1st February 1945. With the coming of peace on 8th May 1945, construction was speeded up, and the ship was launched on 22nd November to become the **King Orry** (4). The design was a development of the **Fenella** and **Tynwald** of 1936, and the new ship and her later five sisters were designed for service throughout the year.

In 1945, prior to the launch of the new **King Orry**, the Steam Packet Company had a fleet of eleven vessels with a total age of 353 years, giving an amazing average age of 32 years. Only four of the fleet had been built to the Company's specifications; the majority of the fleet consisted of second-hand tonnage purchased in the 1920s. The Company's three newest purpose-built steamers had been war losses: the **Mona's Queen** of 1934 and the 1936 twin-sisters **Tynwald** and **Fenella**. Within a decade the situation would be transformed as the Company embarked on a rapid new building programme.

Postscript

The **Lady of Mann** returned to Douglas on 9th March 1946 at the end of her war service and was given a civic reception. After a partial reconditioning by Cammell Laird carried out by Cammell Laird in Morpeth Dock, Birkenhead, she re-entered Steam Packet service on 14th June.



The Lady of Mann returning to Douglas after the War on 9th March, 1946

The **Ben-my-Chree** arrived in Morpeth Dock at 17.30 on 11th May 1946 after derequisitioning. She was in an appalling state, but Cammell Laird had her ready to enter service on Sunday 6th July.

The **Manx Maid** re-entered passenger service at Whitsun 1946 after being laid up at Barrow for a year, and the **Viking** was in service for the summer season on 21st June.

On 14th September 1946 the **Rushen Castle**, a mainstay of the Isle of Man's lifeline throughout the war, made her final crossings.

The **Victoria** completed her trooping duties between Dover and Calais in February 1947 and returned to Birkenhead on 7th March. Her first passenger sailings back on Steam Packet serviced took place on 11th June.

The **Manxman's** contract with the British Government finished in 1949 and she left Harwich on 25th February to steam north. After arriving in Barrow she was surveyed with a view to further service, but the costs far outweighed her life expectancy and the old ship was broken up at Preston.

The **Viking** lasted until August 1954 when she made her final passages on the Fleetwood run. The old coal-burning steamer was 49 years old and had seen service in two World Wars. ■

THE 'TYNWALD' AT DUNKIRK

by Geoffrey Kinley

The **Tynwald** (Captain Wilfred Qualtrough), together with her sister ship **Fenella** (Captain Walter Cubbin), unarmed and with their normal peacetime crews, were first sent across to Dunkirk on the evening of Tuesday 28th May 1940. The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company vessels had been chosen on account of their large passenger accommodation and pressed into service as personnel carriers to assist in the evacuation.



The Tynwald evacuated a total of 8,953 troops from Dunkirk on five round-trips

Dunkirk was already coming under heavy air attack as the advancing German army closed in. The **Fenella** was bombed and effectively sunk while berthed alongside the East Mole at Dunkirk on 29th May with the loss of sixteen of her crew.

The **Tynwald**, however, successfully carried some 1,500 evacuated personnel to Folkestone on 29th May and completed two more return voyages to Dunkirk on Thursday 30th May and Friday 31st May, bringing 5,000 more evacuees. On each

occasion she came under heavy and sustained enemy air attack. The Junkers 87 dive-bombers were a particularly serious threat.

By the evening of Friday 31st May / Saturday 1st June, the severity of the German air attacks on the evacuation fleet had compelled the British authorities to confine their efforts to the hours of darkness.

The **Tynwald** was ordered to sail from Folkestone. However, the members of her crew, like those of other personnel vessels, some of them cross-channel steamers, all of which had been engaged in non-stop sailings, were in a very poor physical and mental state. They had heroically undergone, without relief, several days of constant enemy air attack, conscious of the fact that large passenger vessels like theirs were conspicuous and obvious targets on which the German dive-bombers concentrated. The **Tynwald** did not sail.

In his authoritative book The Nine Days of Dunkirk (1959), David Devine, who was there, perhaps sums up the situation at Folkestone that Friday night / Saturday morning:

"Even endurance has its inevitable limits. The personnel ships had been working now, some of them, for a full week. They were civilian ships – before everything this must be remembered. They were not trained to the necessities of war, nor were they moulded to its disciplines.

*"Now, as their weariness grew, there were failures. The **Tynwald** should have sailed from Folkestone at this time. She had completed three hard voyages, bringing away 4,500 men, but on this evening she failed to sail.*

"Her master stated that his men had been constantly on their feet for a week, that his officers were completely exhausted, and that he himself had had only four hours' rest in the whole course of the week and was unfit for further duty.

*"The **Ben-my-Chree** was in the same condition. Exhaustion was beginning to show amongst the naval vessels as well. It was found possible, in certain circumstances, to put fresh captains aboard.*

*"With the personnel ships, Admiral Ramsay now took the necessary step of putting a naval commander on board with a party of ten seamen. Relief crews were ordered for the **Ben-my-Chree** and the **Tynwald**."*

Thereafter Admiral Ramsey, who was in overall charge of the evacuation, known as Operation Dynamo, decided on a desperate massed descent on Dunkirk on the evening of Sunday 2nd June 1940, using all large and small evacuation craft.

The **Tynwald** took part in the evening sortie, having embarked a relief crew and naval officer (one Commander Nicholson) and ten ratings. The veteran Captain Qualtrough had stood down.

However, significantly, several key members of the original Steam Packet crew, who had already endured so much, volunteered to continue. They included John Henry Whiteway, the chief officer, who became acting master; the second officer Alan Watterson, who became chief officer; the radio officer Charles Mason; purser Will Lister; John Gawne, the carpenter and Arthur Allen the donkeyman.

The **Tynwald** left Folkestone at 9.15pm on 2nd June and made a fourth passage to Dunkirk, once again coming under heavy air attack. Nonetheless, the next day she safely brought back a further 1,200 service personnel.

The **Tynwald** made a final fifth voyage to Dunkirk on the evening of Monday 3rd June, with a relief crew, and brought back a further passenger load. In all the **Tynwald** evacuated a total of 8,953 personnel from the Dunkirk beaches, the largest of any personnel vessel engaged in Operation Dynamo.

The Steam Packet officers on the fourth voyage were rightly honoured for their bravery. Messrs Whiteway, Watterson and Mason were each awarded the DSC.

The full story of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's contribution to the evacuation of Dunkirk, north-west France and the Channel Islands remains to be told, if for no other reason than to rebut the oft-repeated, ill-informed slur that Steam Packet crews failed in their duty at a difficult time. ■



The **Queen Elizabeth** could carry up to 15,000 troops on a single crossing of the Atlantic. The maximum number of persons ever carried on the *Elizabeth* on a single voyage was 15,932, but the record goes to the **Queen Mary** with 16,683 persons on board – the highest number ever on one ship.

THE WAR SERVICE OF THE 'QUEEN ELIZABETH'

Undoubtedly the incomplete **Queen Elizabeth** was the greatest dilemma facing John Brown's shipyard on the Clyde on the outbreak of the Second World War on 3rd September 1939. The new Cunard-White Star liner had been launched almost a year earlier on 27th September 1938 and with her fitting-out almost completed, the **Queen Elizabeth** lay like a giant beacon in the middle of Clydebank, visible for miles around.

There was now no hope of her entering service as the jewel in the crown of the British merchant service. During the first weekend of the war her newly erected forward funnel, resplendent in Cunard red and black, was hastily overpainted in grey. At first it was proposed that work on the *Elizabeth* would gradually be brought to a standstill as men transferred to warship work. Sir Percy Bates, dismayed at this prospect, wrote to the Chief of Naval Staff, Rear Admiral Burrough, for a decision on the ship's future.

Questions were soon asked in Parliament as to what possible use the two Cunard leviathans could be in wartime. Suggestions ranged from laying up the *Elizabeth* in a sheltered Scottish loch to selling her to the Americans. The two ships' real potential had yet to be appreciated. Churchill, as First Lord of the Admiralty, expressed his fears for the safety of the **Queen Elizabeth** and felt that she would fall victim to Nazi bombers in her exposed site at Clydebank. On 6th February 1940 he ordered that the liner should leave the Clyde at the earliest possible date and '*remain away from the British Isles for as long as this order remains in force*'. This would also free the fitting-out basin which was urgently required for the **Duke of York**.

The **Queen Mary** had left Southampton on 30th August 1939 on a liner voyage to New York with 2,328 passengers and remained there after her safe arrival, lying alongside Cunard's Pier 90 on the North River.



The Queen Elizabeth leaves John Brown's yard on 26th February, 1940

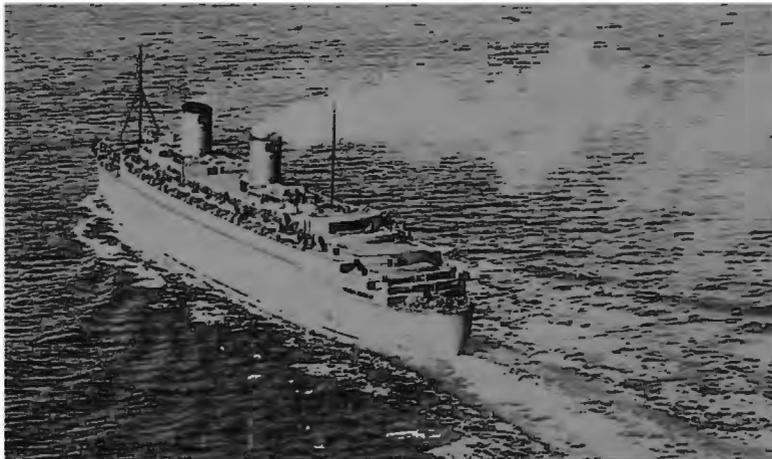
The Clyde Navigation Trust indicated that the dredged channel in the Clyde would not be ready before the end of February 1940. In that year there would only be two days on which a high enough tide would be available to move the **Queen Elizabeth**. The first day was Monday 26th February and just after noon, escorted by

six tugs, the new ship left the fitting-out basin at Clydebank and proceeded down the River Clyde to an anchorage at the Tail of the Bank. It took about an hour for the tugs to manoeuvre the liner's head downstream towards the sea, and gradually a crowd of several hundred gathered to watch the **Queen Elizabeth** slip quietly, almost furtively, by. To many, her appearance must have come as a bit of a surprise, for no longer was she in pristine Cunard paintwork of black hull and white superstructure, but she had been completely repainted in dull uniform Admiralty grey.

The **Queen Elizabeth** had also been fitted with four miles of rubber coated copper cable would round her enormous hull. This was known as a 'degaussing' coil. It was named after Dr Gauss, a nineteenth century expert of magnetism, whose theories had enabled the Germans to produce their new lethal magnetic mines. The object of fitting the coil (one of the first to be so fitted) was hopefully to render the ship immune from magnetic mines by neutralising the ship's magnetic field.

The following afternoon, Tuesday 27th February, the **Queen Elizabeth** was officially handed over to Cunard-White Star at 3.pm as she lay at anchor at the Tail of the Bank – untested and untried. Over the next three days the ship took on eighteen of her twenty-six lifeboats. These had been floated down the Clyde in order to help reduce the liner's weight and thus reduce her draft during that short critical journey.

Just over 400 crew (mostly from the **Aquitania**) had joined the **Queen Elizabeth** at Clydebank, under the command of Captain Jack Townley, signing articles for a short coastwise passage which would ostensibly terminate at Southampton where a hurriedly prepared dry-docking plan had been received by the port authority.



*The **Queen Elizabeth** leaving the Clyde on her 'secret' maiden crossing to New York*

At a boat drill on 27th February the assembled crew was told of Churchill's order that the ship was to leave British waters. This meant that the crew had to re-sign on foreign-going articles. They demanded £50 per man danger money-cum-bonus, but were given £30 plus £5 per month extra pay. Those crew members who, for family or other reasons, declined to sign the new articles were taken off the **Queen Elizabeth**, sworn to secrecy and subsequently spent many hours, virtually interned, on board the

Southampton tender **Romsey** in a nearby loch. Not until the *Elizabeth* had sailed on 2nd March 1940 was it considered safe to release them.

Steam was raised on all boilers on 1st March. The King's Messenger was awaited as he would bring the order to sail. He arrived at seven in the morning on Saturday 2nd March with sealed orders which were only to be opened when the **Queen Elizabeth** was out at sea. The new ship weighed her bower anchor half an hour later and with a mean draft of 37 feet 9 inches slipped through the anti-submarine boom that stretched across the Clyde between the Gantock Rocks and the Cloch Lighthouse at 8.15am. Over a two-hour period engine revolutions were increased from 100 (17 knots) to 154 (26 knots). When a speed of 25 knots had been reached and maintained for one hour, the escorting warships were informed that the 'engine trials' had been satisfactory and that there was no objection to their standing down. At eleven o'clock that evening Captain Townley opened his sealed orders and the **Queen Elizabeth's** destination was at last known – New York.

Captain Duncan Cameron, the Southampton pilot, was still on board. Cunard had insisted that he sail with the ship on her supposed coastal voyage as part of a ruse to throw enemy agents off the scent as to her actual destination.



The Queen Elizabeth arriving at New York on 7th March, 1940

Five days, nine hours and 3,127 nautical miles after leaving the Tail of the Bank, the **Queen Elizabeth** passed the Ambrose Channel Light Vessel off New York and picked up her pilot. The new ship docked on the north side of Pier 90 at 5pm on the afternoon of Thursday 7th March 1940. Both Queen Elizabeth and Churchill sent messages of congratulations to Captain Townley. The **Queen Mary** was berthed on the south side of Pier 90, and on the north side of Pier 88 lay the French Line's **Normandie**. The world's three largest liners were together for the first and, as events were to prove, the last time.

A fortnight later, on 21st March 1940, the **Queen Mary** slipped quietly away: her work as a troop transport was about to begin.

The majority of the **Queen Elizabeth's** crew left for home on Cunard's **Scythia**, leaving just 143 men to form a skeleton crew. On the orders of the neutral American government (in accordance with the Geneva Convention) only maintenance

or construction work of a non-belligerent nature could be carried out on the liners moored alongside the New York waterfront. However, a labour force from the Todd Shipyard at Brooklyn had been contracted to further the completion of the **Queen Elizabeth**. Wooden decks had to be caulked and electric cables connected.



*The **Queen Elizabeth**, **Queen Mary** and **Normandie** together at New York in March, 1940*

Towards the end of 1940 additional crewmen arrived on board the **Queen Elizabeth**, having travelled from Halifax, NS. The ship's company was brought up to 465 and at 3.30pm on 13th November 1940 the *Elizabeth*, heavily laden with fuel and water, slipped away from New York and headed south.

The **Queen Elizabeth** had now been in the water for over two years since her launch on 27th September 1938. She urgently needed to be drydocked to have the remains of her launch gear removed from her bottom plates which would then have to be cleaned and painted. There were only five dry docks in the world which could accommodate the **Queen Elizabeth**. The King George V dock at Southampton, specially built for the '*Queens*' was unusable because it was within range of Nazi bombers; the use of the American dock at Bayonne, New Jersey, was denied because of US neutrality; the Esquimalt Dock on the west coast of Canada was too far away, and the French dock at St Nazaire (built for the **Normandie**) was out of the question.

This left only Singapore and the **Queen Elizabeth** would have to make two stops to take on fuel and water on her voyage from New York. She had been designed for five-day transatlantic passages, not for long voyages. The first stop was at Trinidad where she rendezvoused with an oil tanker five miles off Port of Spain. After that she sailed to the British naval base at Simonstown, to the south of Cape Town.

The **Queen Elizabeth** arrived in Singapore three weeks after leaving New York for a seven-week conversion into a troopship with accommodation for 5,000 men. Whilst in Singapore many of the crew frequented a pub called the 'Pig and Whistle'. The name of this establishment so caught their fancy that the crew bars on all Cunard liners were subsequently named in its honour!

After leaving Singapore the **Queen Elizabeth** headed for Sydney. More than a year after the two *Queens* had last met in New York, they sailed in company for the

very first time in April 1941. The *Elizabeth* carried 5,600 Australian troops to bolster the defences of Egypt against the enemy's incursions into North Africa. Although the *Queens* could easily manage 27 or 28 knots, they were reduced to the convoy's common speed of around 20 knots. On the return southbound voyage the ships carried Allied wounded, internees or enemy prisoners-of-war, stopping off at Ceylon.

Security was paramount at all times, but one particular breach was recalled by Dr Maguire, the surgeon on the **Queen Elizabeth**. It occurred one day out of Ceylon and Dr Maguire remembered waking suddenly because the engines were slowing down. He went on deck and saw three great ships – the two *Queens* and the *Ile de France* – stationary. They were huge sitting targets in a hostile ocean. The cruiser HMAS *Canberra* had lowered a pinnace which was cruising calmly around collecting bags of mail from each. Dr Maguire recalled that the cruiser HMAS *Sydney* had been sunk by the German *Kormoran* without a single survivor a few days before, not far from the present position. Dr Maguire says he never did find out just who was responsible for that risky mid-ocean mail collecting. It was certainly the last time that the *Queens* ever stopped at sea in wartime.

With Japan and the United States entering the war after the debacle of Pearl Harbour on 7th December 1941, the **Queen Elizabeth** was laid up at Sydney for seven weeks. The Pacific was too dangerous for her with both German and Japanese submarines on the prowl. The Australians also needed what was left of their depleted army for their country's own defence in case of a Japanese invasion.

It was eventually decided to send the **Queen Elizabeth** to Canada for drydocking at Esquimalt. (The Singapore facility was no longer available). A large amount of tropical growth that was fouling the liner's bottom plates needed to be removed; it was estimated that the growth reduced her speed by two knots or more. Two stops would be required for refueling and watering. The first was New Zealand and the second was Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas Group of islands.

After Esquimalt the **Queen Elizabeth** sailed for San Francisco and, on arrival, briefly ran aground near the Golden Gate Bridge. During a conference held on board, the U.S. military was told how many men had been transported on each *Sydney* to Suez voyage. The Americans were characteristically amazed and within five days had removed the Australian hammocks and bunks and in their place had fitted fold-down 'Standee' beds, made of tubular steel and easy-to-clean canvas webbing. These were installed two, three or five to a tier in every available space and the **Queen Elizabeth** left San Francisco in a small convoy bound for Sydney with eight thousand troops on board which were needed to bolster Australia's depleted defences until some of her own troops could be recalled from the Middle East.

After disembarking the U.S. troops at Sydney on 6th April 1942, the **Queen Elizabeth** remained in port for thirteen days before sailing for Fremantle on 19th April. From there she sailed to Simonstown (Cape Town) where German prisoners-of-war boarded, heading for internment in the United States. After a call at Rio de Janeiro the *Elizabeth* finally arrived in New York to begin what was to become known as the 'G.I. Shuttle', her first such voyage leaving New York for the Clyde on 5th June 1942.

A week after her arrival at Gourock, the **Queen Elizabeth** sailed for Suez on 17th June (via Freetown and Simonstown) with reinforcements for the British Eighth

Army to help stem Rommel's advance towards the Canal. She was back in New York on 19th August to begin her regular G.I. Shuttle work in earnest.

The **Queen Elizabeth** was by now equipped to carry 15,000 troops although the numbers were reduced to 12,000 in the winter months. The troops would board the *Elizabeth* at Pier 90 at New York during the late evening hours under cover of darkness after being transported to the pier by either ferry or bus. On boarding each G.I. was given a coloured disc or card (red, white or blue) and this indicated the section of the ship in which he must remain during the voyage. Another essential rule was that each man, regardless of rank, should wear his lifebelt when outside his cabin at all times.



*Cramped conditions aboard the **Queen Elizabeth** with 15,000 troops on board*

The safety of the troops during those high-speed dashes across the Atlantic was not considered to be paramount in the minds of those at the top. Some 10,000 men could, perhaps, be carried in safety according to the lifeboat and liferaft capacity of the ship, but it was considered that the extra 5,000 men who were carried in summer and not provided for in the life saving equipment were worth the risk, based on the *Elizabeth's* existing records for speed and reliability.

For the two meals a day that were provided there were six sittings, each of forty-five minutes. Breakfast was from 6.30am to 11.am, and dinner from 3.pm to 7.30pm. Sir James Bisset was in command of the **Queen Elizabeth** for many of these 'shuttle' voyages. Following his retirement, Sir James was in great demand as a lecturer and one day was telling some schoolchildren of the days when 2,000 lbs of bacon and 32,000 eggs were cooked for breakfast every day. When he asked for questions, one boy shot up his arm and inquired: "*How big were the frying pans?*" !

In November 1942, the **Queen Elizabeth** was involved in an incident that still remains the subject of much speculation. The U.704, under the command of Kapitän Horst Kessler, was wallowing in a Force 8 gale off the west coast of Ireland before returning south to base in France. Early in the afternoon of 9th November a large, two-funnelled steamer was sighted, some six to seven miles away. The submarine dived and the captain identified the ship as the **Queen Elizabeth**. Four torpedoes were fired and the U-boat followed their course. One detonation was heard. Apparently the torpedo had exploded well away from the ship. Captain Bissett said, after the war, that an explosion was heard "*and we increased speed to 31 knots without any trouble*".

The steamer observed by Kessler had been travelling at speed. She then stopped for a few minutes before proceeding on her way. Kessler always maintained that the ship was the **Queen Elizabeth**. All the Cunard records from that period have apparently been lost.

However, to stop the **Queen Elizabeth** would take a considerable time. The superheated steam would need to be cooled to normal working temperatures before slowing the ship could even be considered. This would take at least an hour plus many miles, and would not have allowed her to stop within Kessler's observation.



*The **Queen Elizabeth** at anchor at the Tail of the Bank, off Gourock in the Clyde*

Altogether the **Queen Elizabeth** made 35 round voyages on the North Atlantic on the 'G.I. Shuttle'. During this time, and for a while after, she was under American control through a lend-lease agreement. She did, however, remain all the while under Cunard management with British officers and crew. Throughout the 'G.I. Shuttle' the two *Queens* were never in the same port at the same time, and the schedules avoided either ship lying at anchor at Gourock during the period of full moon.

Of all the arguments used in the United States to support the demand for subsidies for American merchant shipping, none has been advanced with greater potency than that America had to rely on foreign ships in the Second World War, and could not afford to do so again. This argument was buttressed by the statement that the

British Government charged the United States for transporting American troops in the **Queen Mary** and the **Queen Elizabeth**. Sums amounting to \$100 million were freely bandied about in the columns of newspapers as the cost of carrying G.I.s to and from the theatres of war. Denials of this speculation made by British shipping representatives were not accepted. It can be appreciated that the jibe that Great Britain charged \$100 a head to take soldiers to the battlefields of Europe was calculated to be extremely hurtful to Anglo-American friendship.

In a lighter vein, it should not be forgotten that it was a G.I. being transported (not for \$100) in the **Queen Elizabeth** who, in a burst of enthusiasm, said to one of the officers: "*Why can't you British build a ship like this?*"

Between April 1941 and March 1945 the **Queen Elizabeth** steamed 492,635 miles and carried 811,324 'passengers'. The highest number that she had carried on any one voyage was 15,932 passengers and crew, but the record for the highest number ever carried on one ship goes to the **Queen Mary** with 16,683.

After V.E. Day it fell to the *Queens* to transport back to the United States many of the hundreds of thousands of the G.I.s they had brought to Europe and, in the case of the **Queen Mary**, to transport 25,000 American servicemen's 'War Brides' and their children to their new home country. And so, on 24th June 1945, the **Queen Elizabeth** left Gourock with her first load of returning G.I.s. Their welcome in New York was, to say the least, tumultuous. The **Queen Elizabeth** left Gourock for the last time as a troopship on 7th August 1945 flying flags which spelled out '*Many thanks, Gourock farewell*'.



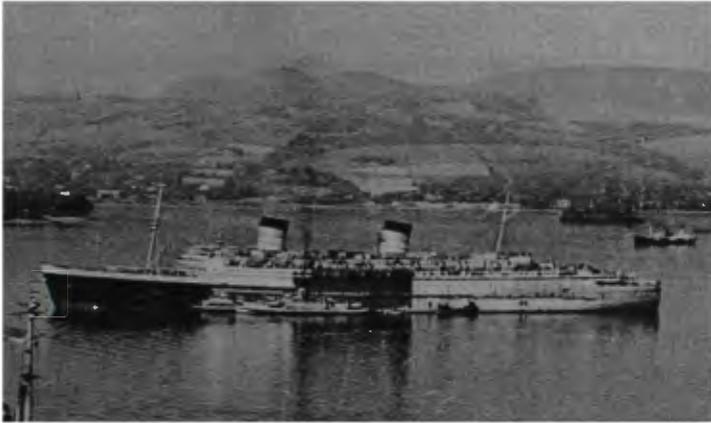
*Embarking homeward-bound G.I.s on the **Queen Elizabeth** at Southampton*

A fortnight later, on Monday 20th August 1945, the **Queen Elizabeth** arrived in Southampton for the first time – four and a half years late. During the turn-round in New York on her second G.I. Shuttle voyage from Southampton, Commodore James Bisset had the *Elizabeth's* wartime grey funnels repainted in Cunard's red and black. The result brightened up the ship considerably after the years of drabness. From 22nd October 1945 it was the **Queen Elizabeth's** job to repatriate thousands of Canadian

soldiers. Four days later she arrived at Halifax, N.S. with 12,517 passengers and 864 crew. However, Commodore Bisset was not happy with the location of the quay alongside which the *Elizabeth* was berthed and considered it to be too exposed should a strong south-east wind spring up causing a swell, which could possibly break the moorings. In spite of the understandable Canadian protestations that they wanted their soldiers to step directly on to Canadian soil, Commodore Bisset recommended that future repatriations should be to either New York or Boston.

On 6th March 1946, when the **Queen Elizabeth** arrived back in Southampton, the Ministry of War Transport announced that the ship would be the first ocean-going passenger steamer to be released from His Majesty's Government's service. To a post-war Britain she was to become what the *Mary* had represented to the country after the Great Depression of the early 1930s. For the **Queen Elizabeth**, the war was over. ■

Postscript



The Queen Elizabeth back at her old anchorage at the Tail of the Bank for refurbishment after the completion of her war service.

The **Queen Elizabeth** returned to Gourock on 31st March 1946 for the first phase of refitting her for transatlantic passenger service. The ship was too large to return to her birthplace at John Brown's Yard, so she lay at anchor off the Tail of the Bank and the workforce was ferried out to her. The *Elizabeth* returned to Southampton for drydocking in the King George V drydock in early August.

The **Queen Elizabeth** was ready for her trials in early October 1946 and her maiden voyage departed from Southampton on 16th October with a full complement of 2,228 passengers on board.

PORT AT WAR – THE LIVERPOOL PILOTAGE SERVICE

In 1946 the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board published a booklet entitled 'Port at War' which described the work and achievements of everybody concerned with the operation of the Port of Liverpool during the Second World War. The section dealing with the Liverpool Pilotage Service is reproduced as follows:

Some of the most arduous and dangerous tasks which any had to carry out fell to members of the Pilotage Service whose job, onerous and responsible enough at all times, was made infinitely more difficult by war conditions. The complete blackout of the river front and the drastic reduction of lighting on ships would have been handicap enough by itself. It was aggravated by the fact that the river was frequently crowded beyond all normal experience with ships cleared of the docks and lying at anchor awaiting an outward convoy. The added strain which this put on a pilot bringing in a ship, in complete darkness, and especially in thick weather, can be imagined and it is an achievement that collisions were not frequent. Towards the end of the war, early in 1944, pilots were supplied with portable radio transmitters which they took on board with them and which kept them in constant touch, from the Bar to the dock, with seven radio stations situated at dock entrances.

The Pilotage Service started the war under the shadow of a disaster, for on 26th November 1939, Number 1 pilot-boat, the **Charles Livingston**¹, ran aground on Ainsdale beach in a storm, and twenty-three of the thirty-three men aboard her lost their lives, including eight pilots. The pilotage strength was made up by granting additional licences, power to do which had been acquired early in the war.

Normally there was a pilot station at Point Lynas, on Anglesey, as well as at the Mersey Bar, but the Anglesey station was given up on Admiralty orders immediately war broke out. As the Bar is a much more exposed station, difficulty was often experienced in bad weather in boarding and dropping pilots, and in some cases outward bound ships were obliged to carry them on to Point Lynas or to the Isle of Man to disembark them. The same situation applied to arrivals. On one occasion three troopships sailing under escort arrived at the Bar in a gale so heavy that they were instructed to make for Douglas Bay and three pilots were flown to the Isle of Man and boarded the ships there.

Pilots were generally aboard those ships which had the misfortune to detonate a mine and some of them had narrow escapes from death. One such incident was that of a pilot who was on board the **Ullapool** lying off the Landing Stage when at 8 pm on 13th March 1941 the ship detonated a mine and blew up amidships. The **Ullapool** sank immediately and Pilot George Abernethy found himself clinging to the rigging of the topmast, with a ship's boy hanging on to him. The strong spring tide was doing its best to wash them away and, to make matters worse, an air raid had started and all the ships in the river had extinguished what diminished lighting they carried.

After half an hour of this, during which the pilot refused rescue by a ferry steamer owing to the danger of being killed by her propellers – a decision which must have required a cool head in the circumstances – he saw a punt in the water and made for it, taking the boy with him. But his ordeal was not yet over. "As I was passing a hatchboard with a man on it," recalled Pilot Abernethy, "he appeared to lose his head

and jumped on top of me and grabbed me by the neck.” Of course they all sank, and Pilot Abernethy had almost drowned when he managed to free himself and was dragged aboard the punt which was manned by three of the apprentices from No.4 pilot boat, the **William M. Clarke**. The punt also managed to save the chief officer and three other men from the **Ullapool**. (The boy was also saved by another ship). It adds to the chain of coincidence that when the pilot was landed at Princes Landing Stage, the driver of the ambulance which rushed him to hospital was Mrs Charles Dean, the wife of another Liverpool pilot.

Other pilots survived shipwreck on a number of occasions. When the **Tacoma City** detonated a mine and sank almost instantly, her master and pilot A.B. Williams, found themselves the only occupants of a small raft sailing down the river, and there are many other incidents which could be told. The Liverpool Pilotage Service is proud of the fact, as well it may be, that it saved between two hundred and three hundred lives from ships which had been mined or wrecked.

A notable instance was the mining and sinking of the tanker **Dosinia** at the Bar in 1940. The Bar station pilot cutter was half a mile away when this happened and the master, Captain W.L. Leitch, at once steamed towards her. The **Dosinia** was settling rapidly when he arrived and, deciding there was no time to take off survivors by punts, he put his vessel alongside the sinking tanker. Pilots and apprentices boarded her to speed the rescue of injured persons and the entire crew of fifty-seven was taken on board the cutter. After all the crew had been declared safe and the **Dosinia** was near her end, two pilots, F.F. Clarke and J.A. Snowball, thinking that they heard someone groaning, re-boarded the ship and found a seriously injured man in the engine room. In spite of the difficulty of their task, which needs no stressing to anyone familiar with the construction of a ship's engine room, they managed to get the man up to the main deck and on to the pilot cutter before the **Dosinia** finally went under. In several cases pilots, by their skill and courage, managed to beach badly damaged vessels in such a way that they were subsequently salvaged.

An addition to the work of the pilots arose from the large number of naval craft using the port. Although the commander of a naval craft may disregard compulsory pilotage, in practice they availed themselves of the facility; and Liverpool pilots found themselves bringing in anything from great capital ships to landing craft. By way of contrast, it may be noted that while aircraft carriers, because of their construction with the bridge at the starboard side, required a pilot at each side of the ship (they were in telephonic communication), when landing craft arrived at the Bar, the pilot would normally board one and lead in a string of six or more.

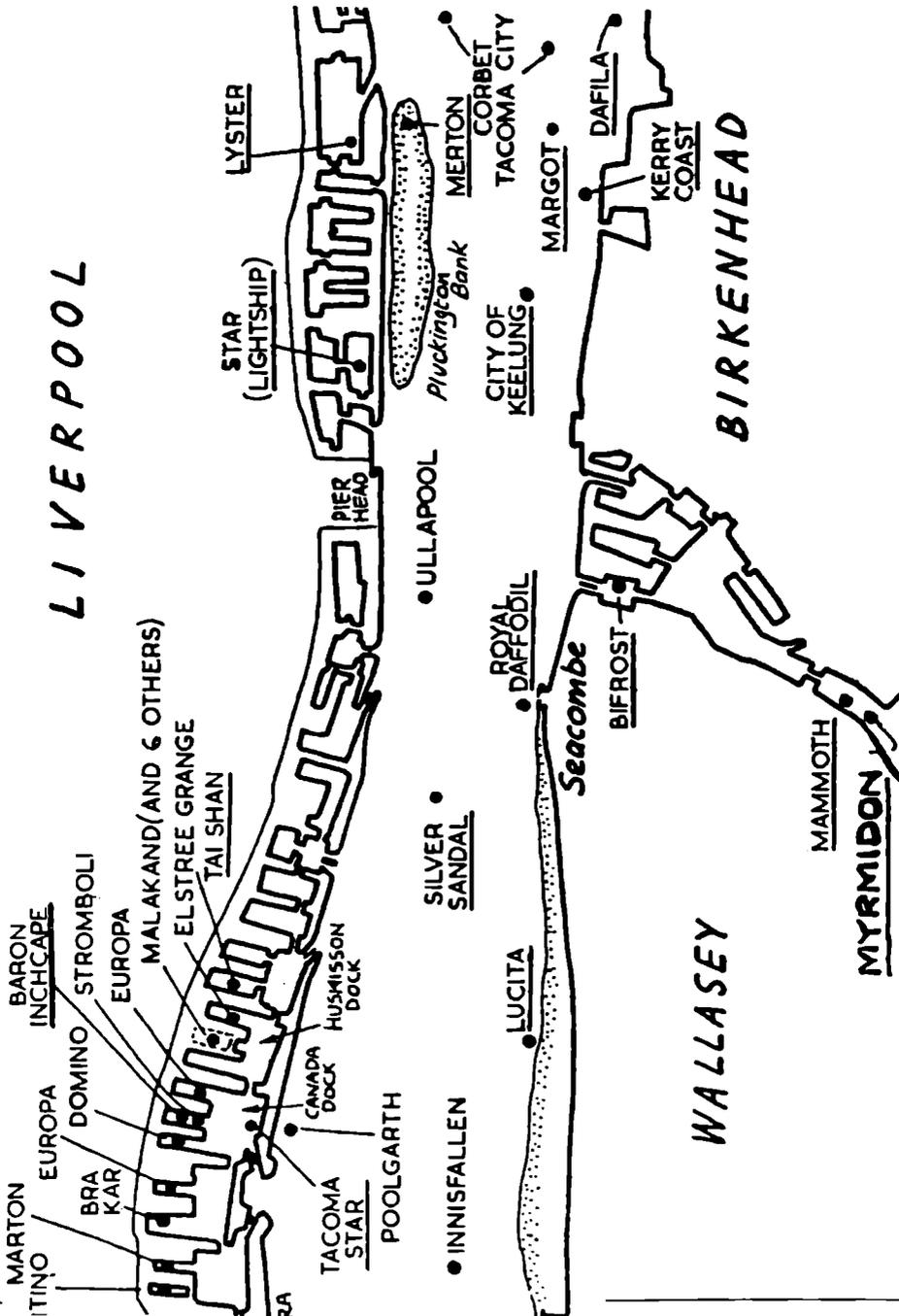
Finally, it may be added, that no matter how severe a raid might be taking place, the pilot engaged in docking a ship, quite possibly loaded with ammunition or other high explosives, could not endanger it by leaving the bridge and taking shelter. ■

Shortly after the outbreak of the War, the entire Liverpool Pilotage Service was declared to be a reserved occupation, and no transfers were permitted into the armed services.

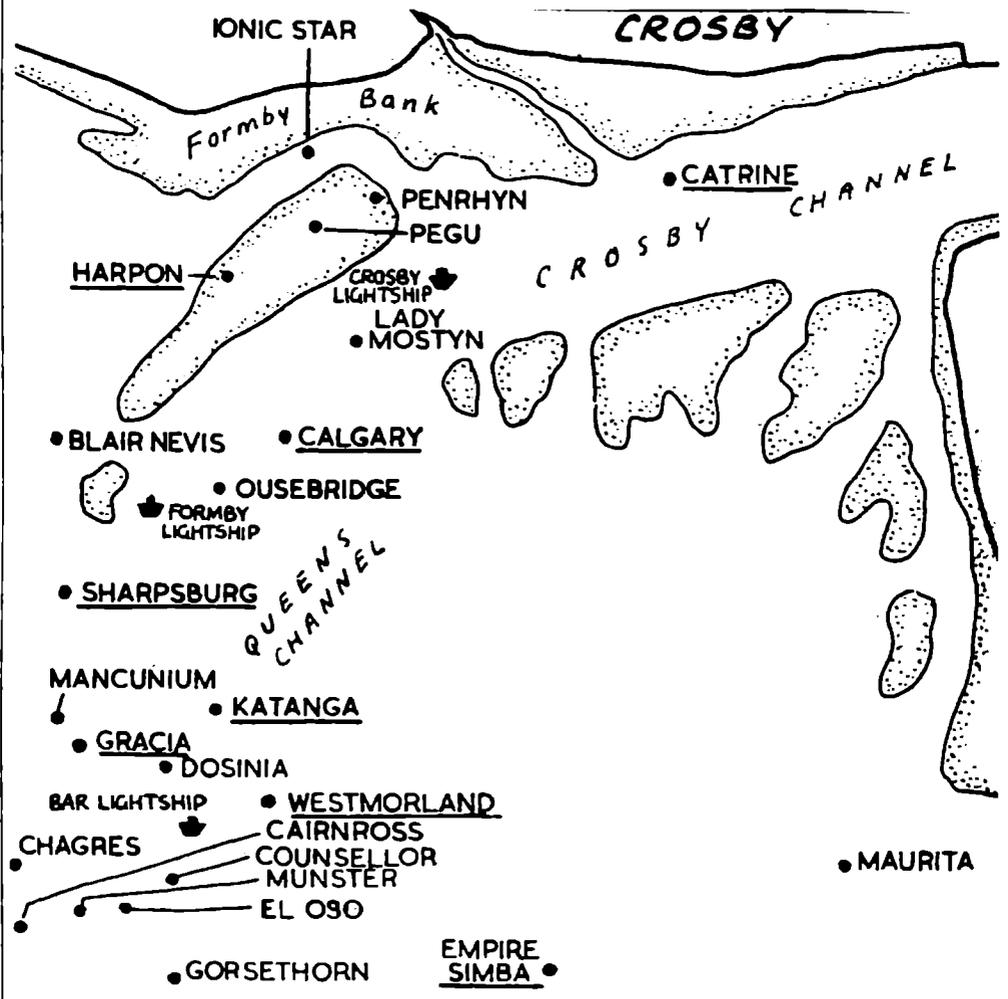
¹ See 'The Stranding of Liverpool No.1 Pilot Boat **Charles Livingston** at Ainsdale on Sunday, 26th November 1939' - '*The Bulletin*', Volume 43, No.3, October 1999.

CHART SHOWING THE MAJOR SHIPPING INCIDENTS IN THE MERSEY AND LIVERPOOL DOCKS DURING WORLD WAR 2

All the ships whose names are shown were mined, bombed, wrecked or burned in the locations indicated. The ships which have their names underlined were salvaged by the Marine Department of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board



**CHART SHOWING THE MAJOR SHIPPING INCIDENTS OF THE WAR
IN THE MERSEY APPROACHES AND THE AREA AROUND THE BAR**



FOG AT THE BAR

An extract from 'The Cruel Sea' by Nicholas Monsarrat

They were returning to Liverpool with convoy BK.108 consisting of thirty-eight ships. The Bar Light Vessel was some nine miles ahead and **Viperous** had instructed **Compass Rose** to move to the head of the convoy to lead it in. The convoy was forming into single line, ready for the narrow passage up the sea channels, and **Compass Rose** had at least six miles to make up before she was on station at the head of the column. **Compass Rose** could not rival **Viperous's** swift get-away, but she did her best: the hull throbbed as the revolutions crept upwards, and presently they were passing ship after ship on their way to the front of the convoy. Lockhart noticed, without paying much attention to it, that the sun had gone in and that it had turned suddenly colder, but he was not prepared for what followed after. They were just drawing level with the fourth ship in the convoy, and he had sighted the Bar Light Vessel about two miles ahead of them when it disappeared; and as he stared round him, unwilling to believe that visibility could have deteriorated so swiftly, the convoy disappeared also, sponged out like chalk from a slate. It was fog, fog coming down from the north, fog blowing across their path as thick as a blanket and blotting out everything on the instant.

Lockhart leaned over the front of the bridge, momentarily appalled. The fog enveloped them in great wafts of vapour, cold and acrid; he could see the tip of their gun barrel, twenty feet in front of him, and nothing more at all – no sea, no ships, not even **Compass Rose's** own stem. It was like moving inside a colourless sack, isolated and sightless – and then suddenly he heard the other occupants of the sack, a wild chorus of sirens as the convoy plunged into the fog bank. It had taken them by surprise, when they had just crowded into a single compact line: many ships that were less than their own length from the next one ahead of them, and the convoy was telescoping like a goods train when the brakes are applied. Now, unsighted, moving in the raw and luminous air, they were doing the only thing left to them – making as much noise as possible, and praying for the fog to lift.

Lockhart's moment of panic did not last. **Compass Rose** had been in fog before, and he had admired Ericson's calmness and sure control of the situation; now he had to simply follow that example. There was a temptation to sheer away from the convoy, and take an independent line altogether, but that had to be resisted: in a fog one had to trust other ships to hold their course, and to do the same oneself, otherwise it was impossible to retain a clear picture of what was going on. One single ship, losing its nerve, and trying to get out of trouble in a hurry, could destroy that picture, and with it the whole tenuous fabric of their safety, and bring about disaster.

At the moment all the ships were comfortably to starboard, and he set to work to plot, inside his head, the varying notes of their sirens. The nearest one, with a deep note, was a big tanker they had been passing when the fog came down: the ship ahead of her made a curious wheezing sound, as if some water had got into her siren. The commodore's ship, at the head of the column, had another distinguishable note; and above them all the authoritative voice of the fog horn on the Bar Light Vessel, two miles ahead, supplied as it were the forward edge of the pattern. Beyond that fog horn they could hardly go in safety, for there the channel narrowed to a bare hundred yards in places: if the fog did not lift, and the convoy had to anchor, it must be done within a time limit of not more than twenty minutes.

Lockhart had the picture in his head, for what it was worth; and beside him in the raw air of the bridge the others – Morell, Baker, Leading-Signalman Wells, the two look-outs – tried

to contribute their own quota of watchfulness and interpretation. For the sounds were deceptive – they all knew that well: it was possible that a siren which seemed to be coming clearly from one side was being reflected off the fog-bank, and came in fact from some unknown area of danger. **Compass Rose** ran on, over the oily water, with the ghostly company beside her keeping a distance and a formation which could only be guessed at: the rest of the convoy seemed to recede, while the four sounds that Lockhart was specially alert for – the big tanker, the ship ahead of her, the commodore and the Bar Light Vessel – succeeded in even rotation, with **Compass Rose** as the fifth element in the pattern. As long as that pattern held, and the fog blew over and dispersed, they were safe.

Suddenly he raised his head, and was conscious of Wells jerking to attention at the same time. A new siren had sounded, an intruder in the pattern, and it seemed to be coming from their port bow – the side away from the convoy, the side that had been clear. “*Ship to port, sir?*” said Wells tentatively, and they waited in silence for the sound to come again. One – that was the tanker: two – the ship ahead of her: three – the commodore: four – a prolonged wail from the Bar Light Vessel. Then *five* – a wavering blast, coming from that safe place to port which had suddenly assumed an imminent danger. Lockhart felt his scalp lifting and prickling as he heard it. It might be anything – a ship coming out, a stray from the convoy, an independent ship creeping along their own track; but it was *there*, somewhere in the fog, somewhere ahead of them and to port, steaming along on an unknown course, and getting nearer with every second that passed.

Lockhart gripped the front of the bridge rail and stared ahead of him. He knew without turning round that the others were watching him: he was the focus now, **Compass Rose** was in his grip, and her safety and perhaps all their lives depended on what he did next. Their own siren sounded, tremendously near and loud, and then the safe four in succession, and then the unidentified fifth - nearer still, dead ahead or a little to port. He said: “*Slow Ahead!*”, surprised at the calmness of his voice: the telegraph clanged, the revolutions purred downwards to a dull throbbing, the slop and thresh of their bow-wave died to a gently forward rustling. But the tension did not die: Lockhart felt himself taut as **Compass Rose** ran on, nearing the edge of the known pattern and nearing also the fifth ship, the doubtful element that could wreck them all. If the commodore did not give the signal for anchoring, then he *must* do something – either stop dead, or take a wide sheer to port, away from the crowd and the danger: they could not simply run on, swallowing up the safety margin, surrendering foot by foot their only security. Lockhart had a quick vision of what might lie a few seconds ahead – the crash, the grinding of wood and metal, the wrecked bows, the cries of men trapped or hurt in the mess-decks: he felt all the others watching him, trusting and yet not trusting, hoping that he could meet this inexorable crisis – and then suddenly the port look-out called: “*Ship to port, sir!*” and forty yards away, in the fog that suddenly cleared and the sunshine that broke through, a small coaster slid past them and down the side of the convoy. He felt a great surge of relief as the last wisps of fog blew away, showing him the lines of ships still intact and the Bar Light Vessel riding clear on the smooth water. As suddenly as the danger had come, it had been taken away again.

An hour later they were in the thick of the Mersey traffic, leading the slow and stately progress up river to the convoy anchorage. The long line of ships stretched behind them, deep-laden, travel stained, proud and yet matter-of-fact: ships they had guarded for many days, ships they knew well by sight from this and earlier convoys, ships they had cursed for straggling or admired for skilful handling. Wells said suddenly “*Commodore calling up, sir!*”. Then Wells turned from the signal lamp: “*From the Commodore, sir. Message reads: Nice to see those Liver birds again. Thanks and goodbye.*” Lockhart looked up river, towards the great gilded birds that topped the Liver Building in the heart of Liverpool. █

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

(Founded in 1938)

THE BULLETIN

Volume 53 No.3, December 2009

The quarterly journal of society interests



Black Watch of Fred Olsen Cruise Line at the Pier Head, Liverpool, 7th August 2009

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the latest issue of "The Bulletin". I was asked by the Council a few months ago whether I would be interested in taking over the Editor's chair from John Shepherd who had decided to step down after many years of developing "The Bulletin" and making it into the august and learned journal that it has now become. I am sure all members of the Society will join me in thanking John for his gargantuan efforts over the years and I only hope that following in his footsteps will be a little less daunting than it first appears!

It may be appropriate for members of the Society to know a little of the background of the new editor. Professionally I am from an Education background, but as far as maritime affairs are concerned I was in the Royal Naval Reserve (HMS Eaglet) many years ago, I have owned and sailed two small boats of my own, I have sailed extensively on passenger ships large and small and have been a keen enthusiast and researcher on many aspects of shipping both local and not so local for many years. I have edited "Ships of Mann" magazine since its inception in 2000 and have also edited, until last year, the World Ship Society Merseyside Branch magazine "Mersey Log". I have also been heavily involved, as a trustee, of the Manxman Steamship Company, the charity which tried to save and restore the ex Isle of Man Steam Packet steamer Manxman and bring her back to her birthplace on the Mersey and for a time edited "The Triple Bell", the journal of the Manxman Steamship Company.

Members might well be wondering how I see the future of "The Bulletin". Perhaps my thoughts might be summed up with the phrase "evolution rather than revolution". I hope to develop the magazine and move it forward without it losing in any way its character and feel. A couple of small innovations might be observed in this issue. For example there will be a regular feature of "Mersey Shipping News" which will briefly document significant shipping movements and events on the Mersey at the present time and this might well be supplemented by photographs of some of the more significant events and ships on the Mersey to accompany this news feature.

However the core of "The Bulletin" will remain publication of member's research for the enjoyment of the rest of the members. It may be stating the obvious but this core function depends completely on members submitting their research to me for publication, so may I ask that research intended for publication is sent to me at the editorial address or sent to me via e mail to my e mail address, both on the inside front cover. It is far easier if research intended for publication, in this I.T. world of ours, is submitted in Microsoft Word Format and this should, from now on, be the primary means of submission, either by e mail, memory stick or CD Rom.

I hope you enjoy this issue of "The Bulletin" and will join me in taking it on to its next stage of development.

MERSEY MARITIME NEWS

June 2009

On the 2nd the **Seven Seas Voyager** of Radisson Seven Seas Cruises berthed at the cruise terminal for the second time this year. Built in 2003 and of 41,500 grt this vessel has a service speed of 19 knots.

From the 4th to the 9th of the month the German Frigates **Lubeck** and **Sachsen** and the supply/replenishment vessel **Frankfurt Am Main** were on an official visit to Liverpool. The frigates berthed in No.1 Huskisson while the supply ship was on the liner stage.

Meanwhile on the 8th the Royal Fleet Auxiliary **Black Rover**, built in 1974, entered Cammell Laird for a major refit.

The three masted barque **Tenacious** visited the Mersey on the 12th and 13th, berthing in the West Float, Birkenhead. She left on the 15th.

Another R.F.A. vessel, the **Mounts Bay**, made an appearance on the Mersey on the 12th. She berthed at the Liner Stage and was open to the public, departing on the 14th.

The **Spirit of Adventure** of Saga Holidays departed from Langton Dock on the 18th, taking passengers on a cruise to Iceland. She returned to Portsmouth on the 2nd July. On the 22nd another Saga vessel, the **Saga Rose** also departed Langton Dock for a 15 day cruise to Norway. The **Saga Rose** is in her last season of service before her withdrawal due to the new SOLAS regulations. This beautiful ship was built as the **Sagafjord** in 1965 and is of 24,528 grt.

On the 25th a Royal Naval visitor in the form of the minehunter H.M.S. **Ramsey** visited the Mersey and berthed in the Albert Dock.

A large visitor berthed at the Liner Stage on the 19th the **Crown Princess**, 113,651 grt. She paid a second visit on the 23rd July.

July 2009

On the 1st the Trinity House tender **Patricia** paid her first ever visit to the Liner Stage on the Mersey.

On the 12th the **European Mariner** of P&O Ferries, usually on the routes between Scotland and Larne, entered the Cammell Laird drydocks for refit.

On the 29th it is announced by Peel Ports that because of the economic situation the development of the post panamax river berths at Seaforth were being put on the back burner. However it was also announced by Peel Ports that there would be major investment and development in the port of Salford.

August 2009

On the 2nd, the very last Mersey dredger, the **Mersey Mariner** departed the river for the last time en route for further service off the coast of Brazil. All dredging on the Mersey is now done by contractors such as Westminster Dredging, rather than by the Docks Company itself.

On the 5th it is announced by long established Liverpool shipping company, Bibby Line, that they have taken delivery of a new dry bulker, the **Shropshire**, 57,000 grt

built by Yangzhou Guoyu Shipbuilding in China. She is 180 metres long with a beam of 32 metres and will be contracted out on charter in the Pacific region for 12 months. On the 7th the **Black Watch**, of Fred Olsen Cruise Line, berths at the Liner Stage for the first time. At the same time, her consort, the much smaller soon to be withdrawn **Black Prince** was at the Langton Cruise terminal. **Black Prince** of course has been the most regular cruise vessel to operate from Liverpool for a number of years. Another cruise liner, the **Maasdam** of Holland America Line, visited the Liner Stage on the 14th and two days later the **Crown Princess** returned for her second visit of the year. On the 24th the **Saga Rose** made her final departure from the Mersey and the **Crown Princess** once again graced the stage on the 27th. On the 29th the **Crystal Symphony** (1995) of 51,044 grt was on the Liner Stage followed two days later by another Holland America liner the **Prinsendam**.

September 2009

On the 6th the tanker **Bunga Kasturi Empat** berthed at Tranmere on the afternoon tide, helped by the tugs **Svitzer Stanlow** and **Ashgarth**. At 300,325 DWT, length 330 metres and with a beam of 60 metres, she is the second largest tanker ever to berth on the Mersey.

On the 18th the liner **Deutschland** berths at the liner terminal at Liverpool. This 1998 built cruise liner is owned and operated by Peter Deilmann of Germany. She is of 175 metres long 23 metres in the beam and has a service speed of 20 knots. Of a very traditional and pleasing design, she is an all too infrequent visitor to Merseyside.

On the 19th the Fred Olsen cruise liner **Black Prince** departs Liverpool for the final time. She had been sold to Venezuelan interests and once handed over is to be renamed **Ola Esmeralda** and will undertake short three or four night cruises off the Venezuelan coast. As the **Black Prince** she had served Fred Olsen since 1966, firstly as a car ferry on the North Sea and latterly as a cruise liner, the first of the new Fred Olsen cruise fleet. She has served Liverpool for over ten years and has certainly come to be regarded as a familiar sight in our waters.

October 2009

The Merseyside ship breaking industry received its second victim on the 18th when the RFA **Grey Rover** was towed into Canada dry dock for scrapping by Leavesleys.

On the 20th however a much happier occasion as the **Queen Mary 2**, flagship of the Cunard Line, paid her first visit to the Mersey. Large crowds greeted the ship in the morning in less than favourable weather and Mersey Ferries ran special cruises to accompany her in. She left at 23.00 to the colour and spectacle of a huge firework display.

Another major ship visited the liner stage on the 22nd. The aircraft carrier H.M.S. **Illustrious** was guest of honour for a five day visit which included a fly past of historic aircraft to celebrate 100 years of naval aviation. H.R.H The Duke of York took the salute.



The **Black Prince** in the Mersey for the last time, 19th September 2009. (Adrian Sweeney)

The Monday Workshop Facility

Please note that the Maritime Museum Archive Library will be closed for annual stocktaking at the end of the year. It means our last Monday for 2009 will be on the 14th December. Our first Monday for 2010 will be on the 25th January.

CAPTAIN TOM GORST

Captain Tom Gorst MBE RD RNR and Member of the LNRS passed away on 8th June. Tom, who was born in Wallasey in 1922, served his entire seagoing career with Athel Line Limited. He served with distinction at the Battle of the Atlantic and was awarded the MBE for bravery. He became a Master in the company and was also a commissioned Captain in the RNR. Tom helped to establish the Athelian Apprentices Association, and in his last years worked actively with LNRS Council Member David Eccles on the history of the Athel Line. (The above notice has recently been received from Tom Gorst's son Prof. Thom Gorst)

THE VOYAGES OF JOHN WILLIAMS 1842-69 by Rosalind Person

(This was the subject of a talk to the Society on 16th April, 2009)

John Williams was born in 1814, the third of eight children of a shipwright, in Rotherhithe on the Thames - he also had two older half brothers who became shipwrights. He went to sea at the age of 13. All of his family and his wife's worked in occupations relating to the world of sailing ships.

No records have been found of his career before 1842, but for his last voyage as Mate and for his years in command until he retired from the sea in 1869, it has been possible to discover a surprising amount about his voyages and his world. Recently I have looked in more detail at a sample of 10 of the 22 voyages John Williams made in this period, the peak of his career. The voyages have not been chosen at random, but because they span his career as a master mariner, and they illustrate the variety of his experience at sea, or because more information is available for them, such as a passenger diary written on-board. This article summarises his voyages, outlining chronologically the routes sailed and the cargoes carried, but it does not cover what was learnt about the crews, the emigrants, the captain and life on board.

The first of John Williams' known voyages was on the **Candahar** (642 t.). She sailed from London in March 1842 and he was first officer under the Master, John Prest Ridley. She did not return to England for two and a half years. She had a government contract to deliver 250 male convicts, 60 troops, some of their families and stores to Hobart, Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania), and take troops to Sydney and India.

After completing her contracted work in Australia, the **Candahar** under Captain Ridley spent the next year and a half in the Indian Ocean. She sailed from Bombay to Ceylon and back, then to Calcutta, from there to Mauritius and back to India - Madras and then Calcutta - before setting off for London calling in at the Cape of Good Hope and St. Helena on the way. We do not know what she carried when she criss-crossed the Indian Ocean. Sugar plantations in Mauritius used indentured coolies from India who went for a term of several years, often five. The **Candahar** eventually returned to England in October 1844 with a cargo of indigo for dying, silk, linseed, rice, hides and wine - the last two perhaps taken on at the Cape of Good Hope.

Over the next ten years and the next five ships, John Williams sailed as Master to a wide range of places in the Far East, Australia and New Zealand, North and South America. Although both passengers and cargoes were carried throughout his years as a Captain, in these early years the cargo was of key importance to the route and the profit, while in later years the passengers were key. Only the outward cargo was determined in advance and the Master, working with agents, was responsible for finding profitable onward and return routes, which could be many and varied.

Each ship was larger than the previous one, and only the first, the **Hoogly** (466 t.), was old when he took command - 26 years old and in need of a lot of repairs before setting out. All five in this early period of John Williams' command were barque rigged wooden sailing ships, except for the last, which was ship rigged, and all sailed with crews of 23-24 men. He took two of these early ships on their maiden voyages - the

Lady Peel and the **Blackfriar**, both built on the Wear at Sunderland. He may have had a watching or advisory role for the owners during construction.

The **Hoogly's** 1845-6 voyage was more typical of those in John Williams' later years. She sailed from London to Sydney with passengers and cargo. The Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List noted a wide range of imports by the **Hoogly** for the young colony - mainly manufactures, food and drink, but also including saddlery, rock salt, currants, stucco cement, brandy, silk lace and medicines.

She returned to London with a cargo of animal products - wool, tallow, calf skins, hides, horns - as well as kauri gum and 'curiosities', 14 casks of sperm oil and 3000 tree nails. The kauri gum came from New Zealand and was used in Europe in making varnish, and the tree nails (wooden dowels used in building ships) may have done too. Perhaps the curiosities were Maori or aborigine. The whalers brought oil into Sydney from hunting the Pacific and the southern oceans.

John Williams only took his next command, the **Lady Peel** (541 t.), on one voyage, her first, in 1847-8. The crew all signed on in Shields, and they left via Deal for Calcutta, arriving 4 and a half months later. We do not know who or what she took to India or brought away. She left Saugor, the port for Calcutta, nearly three months later in March 1847, heading for the Isle of France, as Mauritius was then known. From there she went on to call at St Helena in the southern Atlantic and then on to Berbice or Demerara in Guyana, South America, for two weeks. The **Lady Peel** reached London in late August. She brought a cargo of rice, presumably from India, sugar from Mauritius and/or Guyana, and rum from Guyana.

The **Blackfriar** (574 t.) was also new, launched in 1848 from the same yard in Sunderland, but had an unfortunate start – she got caught in a gale in the Channel and had to put back to London for repairs. After a four month voyage she arrived in Bombay, and stayed two months before sailing for China. She called briefly at Singapore, and arrived in Whampoa, China, in late November.

From the eighteenth century the British traders, initially the East India Company, had become firmly established at Canton, but the Chinese strictly regulated all the European trading agencies there, permitting them to conduct business only in the six winter months. In addition, all business communications were through mandarins or monopolistic merchants, and ships coming to trade at Canton had to anchor about thirteen miles downstream at Whampoa for loading and unloading by Chinese junks.

After spending the winter off China, the **Blackfriar** set off for London in February 1849. Lloyd's List notes calls at Hong Kong and Anjer in Indonesia, and then St Helena in the Atlantic, perhaps for fresh water, and she arrived back at Gravesend at the end of July.

The Customs Bill of Entry for the next day shows that she unloaded her cargo, mainly of tea, but also silks, treasures, merchandise and 'sundries', at the London Docks. What was in the 50 packets of treasures for the Oriental Bank?

The **Blackfriar** under John Williams set off again after only a month ashore – this time to Hong Kong, Manilla, New York, and Quebec, presumably going east round the world and round Cape Horn. They returned in October 1850. I have not looked at this voyage, or the next in the **Cresswell**, in detail, so do not have the cargoes.

John Williams made two voyages in the **Cresswell** (574 t.), both of them to New Zealand. On the first he left Gravesend in November 1850 and arrived in Auckland in

March 1851. They then sailed south to New Plymouth and Wellington, and then to Otago (for Dunedin) in South Island in May. They returned via Shanghai and Batavia (Jakarta). The second voyage in 1852 was to Auckland and then on to New Plymouth. As well as welcome new settlers and cargo, the ship brought news. In early July the New Zealand papers were able to report that the government in London had changed four months ago. The shop advertisements in the next few days list all sorts of attractive and useful items 'On Sale Ex **Cresswell**' – fabric and dresses, stays and umbrellas, sugar and tea, oatmeal and spices, tobacco and soap, canvas and boots, sherry and rum.

She returned to London via Auckland. The Auckland paper, the Southern Cross reported on her departure 'she carries a valuable cargo with her; consisting, in addition to the cargo of Admiralty spars landed from the **William Hyde**, of 90 tons of copper ore, 60 tons of kauri gum, and a quantity of New Zealand flax. May we have many more such nobly freighted ships from the port of Auckland.'

On the **Marchioness of Londonderry** (808 t. and a crew of 37) John Williams took his last voyage to ports in the Far East in 1853-4 and the following year the first of what became his routine for the next fourteen years of annual return journeys direct to Sydney. He set sail in early May 1853 from Gravesend on the last of his wide ranging voyages for Melbourne, from there he went on to Sydney and after a few weeks sailed for Singapore, Guam, and Shanghai. He returned via Singapore arriving back at Gravesend on 6th May 1854 almost exactly a year after leaving.

From then on the ships he commanded took emigrants from London to Australia. No doubt the cargoes both out and back were an important part of the financial equation, but they were known primarily as passenger ships. John Williams worked for three ship owners who offered a regular passenger service – first George Marshall, then Duncan Dunbar, and, when he died, the firm of Devitt & Moore, who took over many of his ships. Duncan Dunbar encouraged his captains to take shares in the ships they commanded, and John Williams built a portfolio of shares over the years until at his death in 1883 he had shares in at least 6 vessels.

The **Light of the Age** (1,287 t.) sailed between London and Sydney under John Williams from 1855-7, the **La Hogue** (1,331 t.) from 1857 to 1865 and the **Parramatta** (1,521 t.) from her launch in 1866 to 1869 when he retired from the sea. They were ship rigged, and the last two, which were built by James Laing in Sunderland, were of composite construction – wood, trussed with iron bars running at an angle in opposite directions inside and outside the hull, joined with copper bolts – an innovative technique when the **La Hogue** was launched in 1855.

They took emigrants and other passengers in cabin class, intermediate and steerage accommodation, and needed larger crews – 52-62 men - to work the ship and serve the passengers. Six surviving diaries of passengers in all three classes give vivid impressions of the experience of the voyage. They set out from London in late July or early August and usually called at Plymouth, where some passengers joined the ship, travelling by train to avoid the often uncomfortable sail down the Channel. They arrived in Sydney towards the end of the year with the passage out taking a minimum of 85 and a maximum of 116 days.

Each voyage had its significant events – gales and calms, entertainments and perhaps a birth. Time could pass slowly, especially for the first class passengers, who

did not have to do their own cooking and cleaning. Seeing another vessel was an event, 'speaking' to one using signals was of great interest, and stopping to exchange letters a big excitement. Occasionally there was a death from sickness or even suicide, an accident or incidence of madness, and in 1856, as reported in detail in the Illustrated London News, a hurricane during which two seamen were washed overboard.

The journey back started in mid January or early February arriving in London in April or early May – passages varied from 80 to 108 days. This timing enabled the ships to take the newly sheared wool crop to the London markets. Copper ore or ingots were another major cargo on these ships, and other items carried included gum (presumably kauri gum from New Zealand), animal products such as tallow and skins, and treenails for those who were still building wooden or composite ships. Although most of the early ships returned to London sailing back west south of the Cape of Good Hope, the homeward voyages of the **Parramatta** were eastwards round the world past the Cape Horn, not at calling at any port before Plymouth. John Williams' year was in this way broken into blocks of approximately three months, alternately on land and at sea. He had late spring and early summer at home in Stepney with his family, and to conduct business in London and perhaps Sunderland.

Some of the records of the merchant navy in the early and mid nineteenth century have not survived. The key documents that would provide clues to the first twelve years of my great, great grandfather's career at sea (e.g. his application for his master's certificate and the crew agreement for the **Candahar**) cannot be found. But a remarkable amount can be learnt from Crew Agreements and ships' Log Books, Lloyd's List and Index, Lloyd's Register and Captain's Register, Cargo Bills of Entry, the census and street directories, the Illustrated London News and other contemporary newspapers (particularly from Australia and New Zealand), passenger diaries, and from contemporary and modern books and the Internet. These can be used to build a picture of an individual, such as Captain John Williams, and his world.

THE KING ORRY OF 1913 (Part One) by Adrian Sweeney.

The King Orry of 1913 was built by Cammell Laird of Birkenhead. Her importance in the development of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company lies in the fact that she was the first vessel delivered to the Company with geared turbines as opposed to the direct drive turbines of the earlier Viking and Ben My Chree.

The vital statistics of the King Orry of 1913 were;

Length; 300 feet.

Breadth; 43.1 feet.

Depth; 15.9 feet.

Gross Tonnage; 1887.

Machinery; 4 steam turbines, single reduction gearing driving twin screws.

N.H.P. 1114.

B.H.P. 9400.

Service Speed; 21.5 knots

Launching of the King Orry.

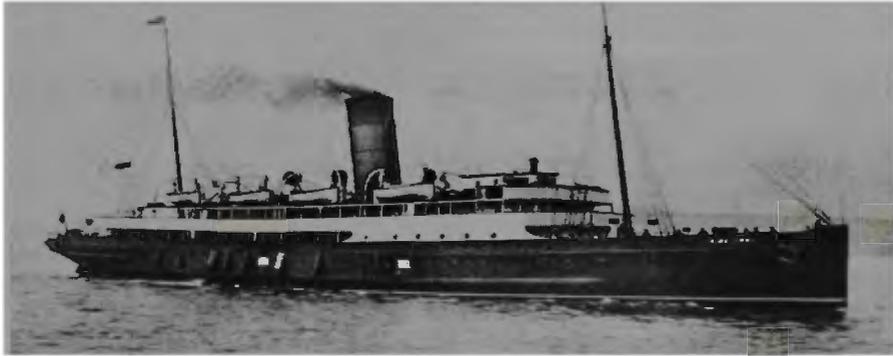
The King Orry was launched from the Birkenhead yard of Cammell Laird on Tuesday 11th March 1913. The officials of the Company and their guests had sailed over from Douglas the previous day on the **Snaefell**, which had also been built by Cammell Laird in 1910. The Steam Packet entourage was led by the Chairman of the day, Mr. D. Maitland. The weather was cloudy and damp; the previous day had been blustery which if it had continued could have delayed the launch.

The **King Orry** had been built on the Number 6 slipway but 1913 was a very busy time for the Birkenhead shipyard. Four large passenger vessels were under construction; two were for the Norske- America Line and two were for P&O line which were being built for the trade to the Far East. A Royal Mail Line ship was also under construction, the **Doon**, which was to carry frozen meat from Argentina. There was also naval construction under way including the ill fated dreadnought battleship H.M.S. **Audacious** as well as a smaller destroyer. The wife of the deputy chairman of the Company, Mr. W. A. Waid was to launch the ship. Mrs. Waid and the rest of the large gathering were invited to take their places for the launch at about noon. They would have noticed that the paintwork of the new ship was complete and that the name of the ship had been covered by colourful bunting. The launch was to be at the peak of high tide at about 12.30 p.m. and just before the launch the sun broke through bathing the happy scene in warm sunlight. Once the ship had entered her natural element her progress was halted by the drag chains and two tugs brought her under control and she was taken into the fitting out basin.

Fitting out of the new steamer took about three months and she was ready for her sea trials by mid June. It was on the 27th June 1913 that her trials took place and she achieved a speed of 20.94 knots. When compared to the speeds of the **Viking** and **Ben My Chree** this might have seemed a little disappointing although the **King Orry** was not meant to rival those two for speed as her new geared turbines were designed more for economy of operation. The gearing of the turbines gave the King Orry a propeller speed of about 270 r.p.m. and it was the gearing that made it possible for a high turbine speed to be maintained. A direct drive turbine steamer such as **Viking** could have a propeller speed of as much as 600r.p.m. and this meant a much poorer thermal efficiency. On her way back from her trials she called into Douglas Bay for the first time and was given a rousing welcome by the **Viking**, **Ben My Chree** and the **Ramsey**.

As built the **King Orry** presented a pleasing appearance. She had a straight stem and an elegant counter stern. She had a long forecastle, aft of which the shelter deck had six small porthole type windows and then the rest of the deck was open along both sides to the stern. The promenade deck was also open along both sides above which hung four large white lifeboats on each side. The large single funnel was surrounded by large air vents pointing in various directions. The whole design was both pleasing and symmetrical.

The **King Orry** entered service for the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company on the 8th July 1913 on the Liverpool to Douglas service and until the outbreak of the Great War served the Company and the island quietly and without fuss proving to be a popular vessel with the travelling public. She did have an early mishap however when in the September she hit the Victoria Pier and was taken out of service and replaced by the **Peel Castle**



The Great War.

The **King Orry** returned to her builder in November 1914 to be fitted out as an armed boarding vessel. She left for Scapa Flow on the 27th November but in the first few weeks of operation the wide rubbing strake around the hull of the ship was a danger to the boarding boats so she soon returned to Birkenhead for further alterations. Once she returned to the north she began her tasks of long patrols, often in very rough weather, searching for and stopping merchant vessels which might have been trying to break the naval blockade of Germany. On many occasions if the suspect vessel failed to stop, a few shots were put across the bows. The danger from enemy U boats was also a further hazard. All through 1915 and the first half of 1916 the **King Orry** took part in hundreds of patrols and sweeps, searched innumerable vessels, sometimes taking a prize and sometimes taking part in raids with other vessels and navy destroyers on contraband carriers often right up to the German minefields off Heligoland.

On the 9th June 1915 the **King Orry** suffered serious damage, not at the hands of the German navy but as a result of a collision with a submerged reef. The ship was proceeding south through the Sound of Islay, the narrow stretch of water which separates the famous whisky producing island of Islay from the Isle of Jura, where a few years later George Orwell was to write 1984. The ship was steaming at 19 knots when she hit a submerged reef at the southern extremity of the Sound. The vessel suffered heavy damage including damage to several bottom plates, the engine room was damaged rendering the starboard turbines inoperable and the steering gear was wrecked. The port turbines were however in working order and the emergency hand steering equipment was brought into operation so the ship managed to make 15 knots and set a course for Liverpool. Apart from the double bottom tank the ship was not taking on water and she arrived safely in Liverpool and she was drydocked at Lairds and was repaired. She once more returned to her patrolling duties. She was at sea during the battle of Jutland in 1916. Apparently she was cruising off the coast of Norway in the company of the old armoured County class cruiser **Donegal**. It seems that their task was to intercept any escaping units of the High Seas Fleet! It makes

one shudder to think of the disaster that would have overcome them if they had bumped into any of the Kaiser's powerful battleships or battlecruisers. The **King Orry** would certainly never have seen Douglas Bay again. It was after the Battle of Jutland that for a time the **King Orry** became a target towing ship because of her speed. She was actually hit by a six inch shell on one occasion but it failed to explode. She was also employed on occasion as a "repeating" ship to the 4th Battle Squadron which in 1916 consisted of the Bellerophon class battleships. This duty was to transmit signals from the flagship to vessels astern. It was about this time that she was very often used as a gunnery training ship.

It was in the autumn of 1916 that the **King Orry** took on a new identity and became the **Viking Orry**. This disguise was to enable her to pose as a peaceful neutral merchant ship and thus be able to have the element of surprise when intercepting contraband ships off the coast of Norway. The **King Orry** remained an armed boarding vessel right up to the conclusion of hostilities in 1918 and was duly honoured by Admiral Beatty at the surrender of the enemy fleet.

Between the Wars.

The **King Orry** was returned to the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company after a short period of trooping in the channel in early 1919 and was back in service by July. She was the most modern ship in the fleet and remained so until the advent of the **Ben My Chree** in 1927. During the inter war period the ship served the Company well. She did go aground on the 19th August 1921, due to fog, near the Rock at New Brighton. She was approaching Liverpool with a very full load of passengers but she was refloated on the next flood tide. No damage occurred. From then until 1939 she served the island without drama or mishap and in 1938 she even had a mini rebuild! She was converted to burn oil fuel, her funnel was shortened and she gained a glass screen on the previously open shelter deck.

The final week of the **King Orry's** service to the Isle of Man started on Monday the 21st of August. She departed Douglas at 8.34 a.m. heading for Belfast. The wind was moderate that day, north easterly in direction, the sea was moderate and there was a haze. She called at Ramsey at 9.40. On board were 571 passengers who consisted of;

53 day saloon and 178 day steerage,

1 weekend steerage,

4 Fifteen day saloon and 3 Fifteen day steerage,

2 and a half saloon singles and 9 steerage singles,

108 saloon returns and 212 and a half steerage returns.

She took the return sailing back to Douglas at 5.05 p.m. The weather was similar though the sea became calmer later. On board were 522 passengers and she past the Point of Ayre at 8.50 p.m., called at Ramsey at 9.24 p.m. and berthed at Douglas at 10.18 p.m.

On Tuesday the 22nd of August the **King Orry** was rostered to take the 9a.m. sailing to Ardrossan. She left Victoria Pier at 9.07, the sea was slight, the visibility was good and there was a moderate N.N.W. breeze. On board were 481 passengers the vast majority being either steerage or saloon returns. She called at Ramsey at 10.11a.m., passed Aisla at 2.13 p.m. and arrived at Ardrossan at 3.44 p.m.

The return sailing was an overnight sailing back to Douglas. The Way book reports a

smooth sea as the ship left Ardrossan at 12.06 a.m. with 85 and a half passengers on board. The child was one of the twenty four 15 day saloon passengers- I wonder if he or she got much sleep that night? The ship passed Aisla at 1.38. She does not appear to have called at Ramsey and she docked in Douglas at 6.00a.m. The ship was at rest for the remainder of Wednesday.

Thursday the 24th of August was another busy day and involved another overnight sailing, this time to Liverpool. She left Douglas at 12.32 a.m. in a calm, smooth sea although the Way book does say she met dense fog coming up the river Mersey. She passed the Bar at 3.55 a.m. the Rock at 5.30 and berthed at the landing stage at 6.00a.m. On board there had been 944 passengers who consisted of;

2 day saloon and 1 day steerage,

3 Fifteen day saloon passengers,

3 single saloon and 4 single steerage,

294 saloon returns and 637 steerage returns.

The ship took the return sailing to Douglas later in the day at 3.30p.m. although she left five minutes late. The sea was still smooth but it was hazy as the ship passed the Rock at 3.52 and the Bar at 4.39. She arrived at Douglas at 7.50 p.m. with 207 passengers.

Friday the 25th of August saw the ship return to Ireland, but this time to Dublin. She left Douglas at 8.37 a.m. in a light to moderate easterly wind, the sea was smooth but there was a haze. She had on board 890 passengers who consisted of;

37 day saloon and 146 day steerage,

13 single saloon and 27 single steerage,

364 saloon returns and 303 steerage returns.

She passed the Bailey at 12.42 p.m. and berthed at Dublin at 1.37 p.m. The return sailing to Douglas departed at 5.38 p.m. The weather had not changed from the morning and she arrived back in Douglas at 10.27 p.m. She had carried 399 and a half passengers over from Ireland. In all five children had travelled on the **King Orry** on that crossing.

Saturday the 26th of August was the final day of the King Orry's regular service for the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company. She took the 9.00a.m. sailing to Heysham, leaving 4 minutes late; the sea was smooth, the wind light but the visibility was poor. She had on board 1384 passengers who consisted of;

4 day saloons and 1 day steerage,

1 weekend steerage,

2 and a half fifteen day saloons and 2 and a half fifteen day steerage,

2 single saloons and 4 single steerage,

615 saloon returns and 752 steerage returns.

A crowded sailing indeed! The Lune buoy was passed at 11.54 a. m. and she berthed at Heysham at 1.44p.m. This entry in the Way Book would suggest that she had been delayed in entering the port but no reason is given.

Her final passenger sailing was the return sailing to Douglas at 3.30 p.m. but she left 7 minutes late. The visibility had improved since the morning as she passed the Lune Buoy at 4.07 p.m. with 117 passengers on board. Little did these people realise that they would be the last fare paying passengers ever to sail on the old ship as she berthed at Douglas at 6.58 p.m.

(Part Two will appear in the next issue of The Bulletin)

JACK BINNS. THE FIRST WIRELESS HERO

by David Barlow and W. G. Williamson

One hundred years ago an inspiring bit of wireless operating created the first wireless hero Jack Binns. He was heavily involved in an incident that was probably more influential in the history of the role of wireless in the safety of life at sea than any other episode including that of the **Titanic**. The fact that over 2000 lives were saved because one ship was fitted with wireless at least three years before the **Titanic** was built seems to be forgotten by the historians. Concentrating on the use of SOS with scant regard to its predecessor CQD, the tragedy of the **Titanic** disaster is for some reason more newsworthy than the triumph of saving thousands of lives. The Berlin Wireless Telegraph Convention of 1906 acknowledged that there was a need for a universal distress signal, for at that time the Marconi Company used CQD, German operators used DDD while the Italians favoured DDDSSS. The new signal SOS was designated by the Berlin convention to come into operation on June 1908 or such date thereafter when ratified by national signatory governments.

In the spring of 1909 SOS was reported as being used by Cunard's **Slavonia** after going aground on Flores in the Azores. A confirmed use of SOS came in August 1909 when the ss **Arapahoe** lost a propeller off Diamond Shoal. Wireless operator T. D. Haubner sent an SOS that was heard by the coast station at Cape Hatteras but two-way wireless communication proved impossible. Therefore the **Titanic** was not the first ship to send SOS and Marconi operators continued to use both SOS and CQD until the London convention of 1914. In the event of an emergency, a wireless operator would probably have used either call to draw attention to the ship's plight.

The **Titanic** has been the subject of many books and films, probably because of the fact that the ship was advertised as unsinkable and it had famous people on board. It seems to act like a magnet to the general public however wireless had already saved thousands of lives before the **Titanic** disaster. The most noteworthy incident took place three years earlier on 23rd January 1909 and is an integral part of the life story of John Binns.

John Robinson Binns (but known as "Jack") was born on 6th September 1884 in Glanford Brigg, Lincolnshire, in the Brigg Union Workhouse. He was raised in Peterborough by his maternal grandmother and uncle. At the age of 13 he got his first job as a messenger with the Great Eastern Railway telegraph department, and studied this new science at every opportunity he got. An accident that nearly cost him his legs laid him up in hospital for over a year but ironically the accident gave him the opportunity to further his studies. When he returned to work it was as a junior telegraph operator. In those days telegraphy comprised the use of Morse code, Morse inkers and telegraph wires and often associated with the railway companies. In April 1900 The Marconi International Marine Communications Company was formed and by the end of 1901 it had coast stations set up on the Isle of Wight and at the Lizard, North Foreland, Caister, Withernsea, Holyhead; and Rosslare and Crookhaven in Ireland.

By 1901 Binns was promoted to senior operator, second in charge, in the Colchester office. One of his obligations was to test and repair lines, an obligation that stood him in good stead when he had to repair the broken telegraphy equipment on the **Republic**. In 1903, he joined the British Post Office as a telegraphist and was working at Newmarket

and it is quite possible that about this time he met a wireless operator, probably from the station at Caister. It is interesting that many young men became interested in wireless telegraphy at this time through visiting or knowing wireless operators at the early Marconi coast stations. Binns recognised wireless as the future and finding life at telegraphy stations fairly dull sent an inquiry to the Marconi Company.

Towards the end of 1904 20-year-old Binns travelled to the Marconi Training School at Seaforth, Liverpool. Having completed his twelve-week training course in the unusually short time of five weeks in April 1905, he joined his first ship, the luxury liner **Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse** (the first merchant/passenger ship to be fitted with wireless equipment with tests taking place on 28th February 1900). It was the first of four German ships on which Binns sailed the others being the **Grosser Kuerfuerst**, the **Bluecher** and **Kaiserin Augusta Viktoria**. His time on German ships came to an end in 1908, when the Reichstag passed an act requiring that all wireless operators aboard ships be German.

Not knowing what to do with him, the Marconi Company assigned him to their Brussels office to test new equipment. The company obviously observed that it not only had a brilliant wireless operator but also a competent wireless engineer. In those days it was essential that the operator could adjust the Vz kilowatt spark transmitter and magnetic detector receiver. He then served on a series of vessels between Dover and Ostende testing out new systems for the Marconi Company. This experience would prove vital on board his next ship the **RMS Republic**. When this work was completed he was assigned to the station at Crookhaven where he remained for six months. The chief at that station abruptly terminated his stay. Binns was the twenty-third person that this chief fired within months of their arrival at Crookhaven.

"On arrival at Liverpool I reported to Hobbs, the manager of that port for the Marconi system. He told me the head office was pretty sore at me, but not too sure where the blame should be placed. Under the circumstances I was being placed aboard the White Star liner **Republic** as the only operator. He carefully explained this was to be considered as a reprimand, because the ship was generally considered an assignment for a junior operator." This was probably the 14th of November as information taken from Lloyds List for 1908/09 shows the **Republic** in Liverpool that day.

The 1906 Berlin Conference laid down the first international training requirements for wireless operators and in the UK this was a PMG Certificate. Binns sat this exam on the 5th November 1908 at the Marconi depot at Seaforth. (It is interesting to note that both operators on the **Baltic** "Jack" Tattersall and Gilbert Balfour would have known Binns for they sat for their certificates at Seaforth the following day).

Rescue at sea

In early 1909 Jack joined the **RMS Republic**, the largest and most luxurious liner in the White Star fleet as her only wireless operator. In these days the wireless room and wireless operator's sleeping quarters (one could hardly call them cabins) were often timber built and placed on board the ship in a convenient place, on the **Republic** it was on the aft port side of the liner.

On January 22nd 1909 **RMS Republic** left New York Harbour bound for Gibraltar and the Mediterranean with Captain Inman Sealby in command. The ship's complement was three hundred crew and four hundred and forty-one passengers. Many passengers were no doubt fascinated by the fact that the ship carried the new fangled wireless

equipment. Binns spent the first hours on board handling private messages and sending them through station MSC Siasconsett on Nantucket Island, Massachusetts until well after midnight. As the only wireless operator on board he would have been well aware that the range of his ten-inch spark coil was limited and Siasconsett would soon be unable to receive his traffic.

Wireless operators were used to sleeping with the foghorns sounding and, like all experienced seamen, would sense the frequency of the blasts from the foghorn and the vibrations of the engines. At about 5.40 am Binns became aware that the foghorn was sounding more frequently and felt the judder of the engines as they were stopped. The immediate thought was "is there another ship nearby?" No sooner had the thought of a possible collision gone through his mind when he heard a loud crash and the ship heeled over. He quickly left his bunk and was horrified by what he saw - the port bulkhead of the wireless room was smashed and virtually nonexistent and the smashed deckhead hanging as if it would collapse at any moment. He looked out of the vacant space and could see a grey object that he took to be a rock. His first thought was that the ship had run aground but came to realise that the object he could see through the fog was another vessel.

At some point he must have realised that the damage to the wireless room extended close to the spot where just a few minutes earlier he had been asleep. However, his first thoughts were for his wireless equipment and in particular, the aerial. There was a quick way to test this. If the aerial was intact and not earthed then a spark could be obtained across the points of his ten-inch spark generator if not then no spark would be produced. Fortunately, this first test proved positive the aerial was undamaged.

The other vessel was the ss **Florida**. Her forepeak had rammed the **Republic** on the aft port side and made a massive hole in the ship's side. The extent of the damage was such that the hull adjacent to the engine room was breached and water started rushing in. The engineers did what they could to draw the fires under the boilers and get out of the engine room. The boilers would have exploded had the seawater reached them but fourth engineer J.D.Legg opened the injector valves and flooded the boilers thereby preventing an explosion. His actions saved the ship and the lives of those on board.

Soon after testing the aerial the ship's generators failed and Binns was forced to switch on his bank of emergency batteries (a requirement on board ships to this day). He was aware that this would reduce the effective range of his apparatus to 60 miles at most. At this stage he had no idea how badly damaged the ship was or even if she would survive the collision. As he knew he had to work in a wrecked wireless room, he went back to his cabin and put on warm clothes and an overcoat.

The telephone line to the bridge had been destroyed when the cabin wall was torn away. Realising that the engines had stopped and the generators were down, he went to his Morse key and sent CQD CQD CQD de MKD MKD MKD (MKD was the call sign of the **Republic**). A reply was quickly received from station MSC at Siasconsett on Nantucket Island, Massachusetts. He told the operator at MSC that he did not know the ship's position or the actual extent of the damage, but to stand by for further information and ensure that the airwaves were clear.

The coast station at Siasconsett (among the first coast stations set up in the USA) was known affectionately to wireless operators as "old SC". The explanation is that call signs

were changed at the start of 1909 and all Marconi stations now had the letter 'M' on the front. The operator at MSC was Jack Irwin, an Australian who, in October 1910, was the wireless operator involved in the first air-sea rescue when the crew of Walter Weilman's airship **America** was rescued in the Atlantic by RMS Trent. This was after the airship had achieved the distance record for powered flight. On this occasion Irwin was on the graveyard watch and, having dozed off by the stove, he suddenly realised that it had run out of fuel. He was just about to put more coal in the stove when he heard the CQD call and acted swiftly on it.

Almost as soon as the CQD had been sent a steward arrived with a message from Captain Sealby to enquire if everything was all right. Binns decided to report in person and made his way through the debris on deck to the bridge. This was not an easy task in the dark and with fog still swirling about. He assured the Captain that his wireless equipment was working and returned to the shattered wireless cabin. He called MSC again and, as instructed by the captain, requested Irwin to get in touch with other ships.

Irwin then sent CQD CQD CQD and repeated the above message and, at his own initiative added "DO UTMOST TO REACH HER". He was soon in contact with both the ss **La Lorraine** (one of the first three French ships to be fitted with Marconi equipment in 1902) and the ss **Baltic**. Irwin then advised Binns that the **Baltic** and a revenue cutter from Woods Hole, Massachusetts were on their way to assist. This information was passed to the Captain and passengers who greeted this news with delight.

As the spark transmitter would quickly drain the emergency batteries Binns now realised that he would have to conserve electrical power. He therefore let MSC do the operating and would probably have only sent MKC R (**R**epublic acknowledge) to let them know that he had received signals.

It is very fortunate that at the time of the first CQD the **Baltic** was only 64 miles from the **Republic**. However because of the **Republic's** low power output the **Baltic's** 1st wireless operator, H.J.Tattersall could only hear signals from MSC. Another fortunate coincidence was that the **Baltic** and **La Lorraine** both carried two wireless operators. The **Baltic**, having received the relayed CQD, was intent on finding the stricken vessel. However despite being only 60 miles from the incident, the thick fog entailed her searching at slow speed for 12 hours and steaming over 200 miles. It was over six hours before Binns was in direct contact with the **Baltic**.

By now Binns had ascertained that his ship had not gone aground but had been rammed by the ss **Florida**, which was not fitted with wireless. The **Florida** was carrying 830 immigrants, most of them refugees from the Messina earthquake, a number of first class passengers and one hundred crew. The **Florida** had a shattered bow but her collision bulkhead was undamaged and her engines were working, moreover the ship was manoeuvrable and unlikely to sink. Captain Sealby decided that it was in the best interests of his passengers if they were transferred to the **Florida** as a precautionary measure. Captain Sealby, Binns and forty-four of the crew remained on the **Republic** even though she was sinking lower by the head and drifting.

As the **Republic** was the only one of the two ships fitted with wireless, Binns as her sole operator had to remain on board. The thick fog persisted throughout the day and it was vital that communication be maintained with the **Baltic** if she was to save the passengers and crew of both ships. By noon the **Baltic** was within ten miles and her foghorn could be

heard on the **Republic**. Although capable of 22 knots her engines were at dead slow in order to avoid a further collision with either of the stricken ships. The **Baltic** sighted neither ship and disappeared into the fog.

It is worth mentioning at this point that in the early days of wireless, operators used spark transmitters and in this instance, a magnetic detector receiver. This worked using clockwork mechanism that had to be wound up regularly about every half hour. There was a coherer receiver on board the **Republic** but it would have used more battery power and only worked in conjunction with a Morse inker. Consequently, it was impracticable given the circumstances. When initially testing the aerial Binns had accidentally knocked and broken a lever used to move the aerial from the spark transmitter to the magnetic detector receiver and back again. It was obviously insulated but he would have had to hold it in place both when transmitting and receiving with one hand while operating the Morse key, or writing the received messages with the other. All this made his task incredibly difficult, especially as his fingers were numb from the cold.

The afternoon dragged on and there was still no sight of the **Baltic**. A steward arrived with much needed food and coffee and later in the afternoon Binns decided that he would report to the bridge himself, thinking that the walk and climb would help revive his circulation. He was so cold that his teeth were chattering, something that the Captain interpreted as being a show of fear. Binns soon put him right and said that it was the cold, as a result the Captain instructed a steward to take blankets and woollen overshoes to the wireless room.

The situation continued throughout the afternoon with foghorns and location bombs being used by all three ships albeit to no avail. The **Baltic** was down to her last bomb and it was arranged by wireless that the crew on the **Republic** would form a circle on deck. The last bomb would be detonated at a specific time and the **Republic's** crew would listen and report if they heard anything. For some seconds after the appointed time nothing was heard but then Binns and the Third Mate thought that they heard a faint boom. The direction was sent by wireless to the **Baltic** and fifteen minutes later, she hove into sight, much to everyone's relief. In a great feat of seamanship it had taken the **Baltic** 15 difficult hours to reach the **Republic**.

Soon after the **Baltic** came into sight the weather began to change, the wind increased, the fog cleared and a driving rainstorm developed. Awful conditions for Binns in his wireless room as the bitter cold persisted and the damp threatened the operation of the spark transmitter. The lights on the **Florida** could now be seen and the decision was made to abandon the **Republic** and transfer the passengers on the overloaded **Florida** to the **Baltic**.

Having spent 18 hours at his station working in highly difficult circumstances Binns transferred to the **Baltic** and spent a few hours on board. Captain Sealby with First Mate Grassland stayed on board the **Republic** as it was thought that the ship could be saved. The following morning a skeleton crew including Binns joined them. He immediately set about nailing blankets over the gaping hole in his wireless cabin and was again in touch with the operators on the **Baltic**, although by this time his batteries must have been running low. At 10 am the **Baltic** departed and the ss **Furnessia** took over rescue duties. The **Florida** had also sailed for New York. Revenue Cutter **Gresham** and a U.S. Derelict Destroyer, (destroyer of derelict ships), called **Seneca** had been instructed by wireless to come to assist now attempted to act as tugs for the 15,000 ton **Republic**. The **Furnessia**

was made fast astern to act as a rudder but regrettably progress was painfully slow. By the following morning Binns had with the exception of a few hours on the **Baltic**, been at his post for 36 hours. He was tired, cold and soaked through to the skin. By mid afternoon it was clear that the **Republic** would not survive and, at about 5 pm, Captain Sealby decided that the ship should be abandoned. The Third Mate came to the wreck of a wireless cabin to tell him that the time had come to leave. With barely any power left in his batteries he sent his last message from the **Republic**: "Current going, wireless now closed."

The remaining crew of the **Republic** were transferred to the **Gresham** and thence to the **Seneca**, where Binns watched with sadness as his ship went down. He was so tired that he didn't undress he simply found a bunk and "crashed out" for hours.

The Aftermath

On arrival at the White Star pier in New York Captain Sealby and his rescued crew were greeted by a crowd of 3,000 people. Sealby and Binns were carried shoulder high to the White Star offices where the Captain had to give a speech and several female clerks forcibly kissed Binns. His embarrassment did not end there because he was persuaded to go to a vaudeville theatre where it was announced that, "CQD Binns was in the audience". He had to make a speech (albeit brief), was kissed by the female performers and was later chased down the street by adoring admirers.

To his considerable displeasure, he ended the day covered with powder and rouge.

The adulation continued on his arrival back in Liverpool, and he was honoured in his hometown of Peterborough with a civic reception and the presentation of an illuminated scroll. He continued working for the Marconi International Marine Communications Company Ltd until 1912, serving on the White Star **Adriatic** for two years under Captain E. J. Smith (of **Titanic** fame), as well as RMS **Caronia**/MRA and the American Transport Company vessel **Minnewaska**/MMW.

Although Captain Smith had requested Binns be assigned to him on the then new **Olympic**/MKC Bruce Ismay, head of the White Star Line, refused to let Binns sign on fearing that his presence might curse the ship. He was assigned to the **Caronia** instead. This incident coupled with the fact he had met his future wife led him to tender his resignation after a round trip on the **Caronia**. Despite being named as the first travelling inspector for Marconi, Binns chose to resign and sail on board the **Minnewaska** in order to make a new life in New York. His alternative was the **Titanic** but the **Minnewaska** was due to arrive a few days earlier. In a tragic coincidence, his first job was reporting on the loss of the **Titanic**. An astute editor of a New York evening journal engaged Binns as a journalist, hired a tug, the **Mary F. Scully** and bought a complete wireless outfit. This was put on the tug Binns was told to get busy as the tug was about to sail. He rigged up the radio equipment and received the messages from the **Olympic** listing **Titanic's** survivors and sent them to his editor. This was all quite legitimate as at that time no privacy laws regarding secrecy of wireless correspondence existed in the States.

Life Ashore

Binns continued working as a journalist until the outbreak of war when he moved to Canada and joined the Canadian Flying Corps as an instructor in aviation and wireless. Following the end of the war he returned to New York and continued in journalism, with a

special emphasis on the first attempts to fly across the Atlantic. He was a founder member of the New York Newspaper Club and served as radio editor of the New York Tribune before leaving journalism in 1924. Subsequently he became chairman of the Hazeltine Corporation, an electronic research and engineering company based in New York. He joined the company as treasurer on its formation in 1924 with the aim of developing and licensing radio patents. He was a director by the following year, before rising to the positions of Vice President (1935), President (1952), and Chairman of the Board (1952). The post of Honorary Chairman was created for him in 1957. Among the accomplishments of this firm together with the British was the perfection of Asdic and Sonar during World War II. His granddaughter recalls learning that engineers from Great Britain arrived with countless blueprints, all memorized in their heads rather than on paper, in case they would be caught en route! John Robinson Binns died in New York City on 8th December 1959, at age 75, predeceasing his wife, Mrs. Alice MacNiff Binns, and two daughters, Mrs Howard Fraser and Mrs. Paul. Utermohlen Lovelace. It is clear that the young wireless operators involved in this incident played a significant part in popularising the image and status of the Wireless Operator. Certainly their employer thought so for at some point after the rescue, the great Mr. Marconi himself hosted a dinner for Binns and Tattersall in appreciation for all their efforts in saving so many lives while working under very trying conditions. The Marconi Company had been going through a difficult time financially and the publicity from the Republic incident helped to restore the company's position.

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Have you seen our new web site yet? Please do so at:

www.liverpoolnauticalresearchsociety.org

THE STATE OF THE MERSEY 1870

Admiral Evans, the Acting Conservator of the River Mersey, has just presented to the Dock Board his annual report upon the present state of the navigation. Referring to the re-survey of the Liverpool Bay during the year, 1870, which was rendered necessary by the constant fluctuations which occur amongst the quicksands and channels of the river, he states that the changes discovered have not injured the main course of navigation. The survey showed a progressive northward extension of the Little Burbo bank, which had made necessary further changes in the buoys in order to preserve a correct leading line through the Queen's Channel. The Victoria Channel, reported last year as fast closing up, is now no longer safe for the general purposes of navigation, but as it may occasionally be found convenient, with a rising tide, to run over the bank on its Eastern side into the Crosby Channel, a few of the leading buoys have been so adjusted as to guide vessels clear on the South side of the shoalest part of Little Burbo. The further extension Northward into the Crosby Channel of the North-cast elbow of the Great Burbo bank has driven the ebb current with such force against the Taylor and Jordan banks as to form a spit projecting from the Jordan flat into the margin of the Queen's Channel. On the Southern side of the Crosby Channel a detached bank has been growing up for several years. In 1868 the shoalest part of the bank had thirteen feet over it at low water, but the depth is now reduced to ten feet. In the Horse Channel the elbow of the East Hoyle bank has advanced to the Westward, rendering caution necessary in its navigation.

There were 69 wrecks and casualties in the year 1870, and, as an evidence of the efficiency of the Liverpool pilots, Admiral Evans remarks that out of this number only three of the vessels wrecked were in charge of pilots, The Admiral reports strongly upon the necessity for continuing the present system of pilotage in Liverpool.

The navigation of the upper estuary of the Mersey from Liverpool to Warrington and Frodsham continues in a very satisfactory state. The returns show that during the year 1870, 45,595 vessels, of 9,878,657 tons, have passed in and out of Liverpool, showing, as compared with 1869, an increase of 460 vessels and 386,571 tons. In reporting upon the Liverpool- dock works in 1870, the admiral states that the engagement of the Canada Half-Tide Dock by an addition of about seven and a quarter acres to its original area of four acres, and the construction of a branch dock of about eight acres on the East side of the Huskisson Dock, parallel to and similar in form to the branch already projected out of that dock, are making good progress, and, not being subject to tidal influence, are uninterruptedly advancing towards completion. The counter wall in front of the river wall of the Canada Dock has been completed for a length of 1,030 feet, being the extent to which it is considered necessary to carry it for the present. The Admiral concludes his report by bearing testimony to the judicious and excellent arrangements of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board in everything relative to the safety and prosperity of the port, and the efficiency of their officers in conducting the surveying service, and in the removal of wrecks and obstacles to the navigation.

FRIGATE SACHSEN

The German Navy frigate Sachsen berthed in Huskisson No.1 Dock from the 4th to the 9th June 2009. She is pictured below, by the editor, on the 5th June.

She was built by the Blohm and Voss shipyard in Hamburg in 2001 although work had started on the ship as long ago as 1993. She was commissioned into the German Navy on the 4th November 2004. Her main role is anti aircraft defence although she has more general capabilities if required. Her main gun armament is the standard navy 76mm gun but she is also equipped with Harpoon surface attack missiles and Seasparrow anti aircraft missiles. The ship is equipped with several state of the art radar systems and the hull is designed and built using the latest "stealth" technology systems.

The ship is powered by a combination of diesel and gas turbine propulsion systems which give a top speed of 29 knots. She carries a total crew of 255. Her displacement tonnage is 5,600, she has a length of 435 feet, a beam of 53 feet and a draught of 20 feet.



FRIGATE LUBECK

Once again a photograph of Huskisson No.1 on the 5th June 2009, this time of the other German frigate visitor to Liverpool, the Lubeck. Older than her consort the Sachsen, she is rated as an advanced guided missile frigate. She was commissioned on the 19th March 1990, the last of a total of eight Bremen class frigates. Together with all her sister ships the Lubeck belongs to the 4th Frigate Squadron and her home port is Wilhelmshaven.

The hull of the Lubeck was built by Thyssen-Nordseewerke in Emden and she was fitted out by Bremer Vulkan AG in Bremen- Vegesack. She has a length of 426.5 feet a beam of 47.6 feet and a draught of 21.3 feet. Her displacement tonnage is 3,800 and she has a crew of 222.

Her armament consists of one 76mm gun, Seasparrow anti –aircraft missiles, eight Harpoon anti-ship missiles, two launchers for close-in anti aircraft missiles, four torpedo tubes and two Lynx helicopters. She has the full panoply of modern radars for search and fire control. Her engines are a combination of diesels and gas turbines which give her a maximum speed of 30 knots, 21 knots using the diesels alone.



SEA POST OFFICES.

An Extract from Lloyd's List 23rd October 1905

From a special correspondent

Owing to the withdrawal of the **Majestic** by the White Star Line for annual overhaul, and the substitution of the **Cedric**, the Wednesday transatlantic mails were sent this week, via Southampton, in the Norddeutscher Lloyd steamer **Kaiser Wilhelm II**. The directors of this latter company evince some pride at the fact that their steamer **Havel** (in 1891) was the first to carry a regular sea post, with rooms specially fitted for the sorting of the mails during the passage. Although this date is now in the dim past, and other transatlantic lines are similarly equipped, no one of them appears to have regarded the innovation as of sufficient importance to be made the subject of a special invitation. The directors of the Norddeutscher Lloyd therefore seized the opportunity offered by this week's mail being sent in their steamer, to issue invitations to a number of Press representatives to inspect the arrangements on board for handling the mail. Unfortunately, the original programme was upset by the steamer being delayed a whole 24 hours in the Weser by fog, so that she sailed from Southampton at the same hour on Thursday as she should have departed on Wednesday; and the mails, which had been sent down early on Wednesday morning, were already transferred on board when the guests arrived on the steamer. Captain Hogemann received the party and escorted them to the mail rooms, where the chief of the German officials explained the working of the system.

There seems to be a notion that the only mail bags dealt with during the passage are those containing letters destined for "New York," "New York distribution," and "New York Brooklyn," but as a fact the whole of the mail is sorted, unless by chance it happens to be so heavy as to be beyond the powers of the staff on board. The arrangements are of course somewhat different to those of an Ordinary Post Office sorting-room, and the geography represented by the names pasted in the square metal mouths of the sorting sacks represents a much larger area. The postal staff consists of four German and two American officials, all working together as one body, but on the outward passage to New York the chief German official is in command, and on the return journey to Europe it is the chief American official who takes charge. The mail on board when the ship left Southampton on Thursday consisted of 2,350 bags, and 400 more were expected to be received at Cherbourg. These mails put on board at Cherbourg consist largely of bags from South Germany, and were recently put on board at Southampton, arriving via Flushing. Owing, however, to repeated failures on the part of the Flushing service to deliver bags in time, either owing to fog or other causes, it has now become the rule to send this mail via Cherbourg.

It would seem a simple matter to establish a sea post, but there were apparently many difficulties to be overcome. There is a tradition or a dim recollection at the G.P.O. that sea post used to be carried in the transatlantic liners in olden times, but that it had to be discontinued. If such was the case it is not surprising that the plan had to be discontinued, for a reason to be explained. Anyhow, the credit for the present sea post appears to be due to the German Postmaster-General, Herr Stephan, who submitted a proposal to the American postal authorities, which was readily accepted, both countries contributing towards the cost. Since then similar arrangements have been made affecting the American Line and the White Star Line. In the Postmaster-General's latest report it is

stated that negotiations are in progress with the Cunard Line. As a fact these negotiations must have come to a satisfactory conclusion, seeing that the **Caronia** has a fully-equipped sea post on board, and that the **Carmania** is being similarly fitted. One of the difficulties to be overcome is that the mail rooms occupy an amount of valuable space, for the loss of which the steamship companies naturally look to be recouped.

Referring to what has been said as to it having been necessary to abandon a sea post in the older ships, it is on board the big liners of the present day the work is sufficiently trying to demand men of exceptionally tough fibre as well as exceptional competence. It was mentioned on the **Kaiser Wilhelm II** on Thursday that the sorting staff has to work eleven hours a day throughout the passage, and when it is remembered that this severe work has to be performed in all sorts of weather it will be easily understood that a sea post on board one of the old liners must have been somewhat more than average human nature could stand. Among various interesting items related by the postal officials was one to the effect that the correspondence from the various parts of Europe has marked local characteristics. That from Denmark, Norway, and Sweden is invariably perfectly addressed in neat and extremely legible, handwriting. That from Franco and Austria less so, while that from Italy and Russia mostly imperfectly written and addressed, and a large number of the packages are found unsealed.

The ship had a full passenger list, including the German Ambassador to Washington, Baron Speck von Sternburg, and Mr. O. M. Bosworth, vice-president of the Canadian Pacific Railway, who was accompanied as far as Southampton by Mr. Arthur Baker, European manager of the company.

RAISING THE S.S. LADY LANSDOWNE

By James Scannell

Lying submerged at Ballina's Derg Marina on the River Shannon is the wreckage of one of the world's oldest iron steamers, the S.S. Lady Lansdowne, built by Cammell Laird of Liverpool in 1833 and launched at Killaloe, Co. Clare a year later. The largest steamer to operate on the River Shannon, it carried passengers and goods from Portumna, Co. Galway to Killaloe, Co. Clare and remained in service until about 1865 /1866.

The marina is currently the subject of a planning application for a new £55Million / €60M marina, residential and retail development by Eclipse Developments which has been asked by North Tipperary County Council to consider raising the remains of this vessel following submission received from several local groups and the International Commission for Maritime History. The county council has informed the developers that their marina proposal may seriously compromise the integrity of this historic wreck, which is protected under the National Monuments Act, and has asked them to submit a full method of construction plan to ensure that the wreck's remains will be adequately protected. The county council has also suggested to the developers the possibility of raising this historic vessel and preserving as a 'feature ' on the development and has asked them to consult with the National Monuments Service to investigate proposals for such an undertaking.

TWENTY SEVEN DAYS IN AN OPEN BOAT- The last voyage of the **San Rafael**

Captain James Richard's own account of his Shipwreck. Initially published in World Wide Magazine, 1898, and edited by his great-grandson, Richard Wise.

James Richards was born in 1854 and left Liverpool in the "fully rigged" **San Rafael** (955 gross tons) owned by Balfour, Williamson & Co. (originally the **Mary Warren** built by Chas Currier & co Newbury, Mass, in 1862), and commanded by Captain McAdams, with a cargo of coal bound for Valparaiso by way of Cape Horn, in October 1874. The crew numbered 23 plus McAdam's wife. James Richards was the 3rd Officer.



CAPTAIN RICHARDS AS THIRD OFFICER
OF THE "SAN RAFAEL"

From a photo by Vandyke & Brown, Liverpool

On mid-day of December 28th "the ship being somewhat to the south-west of Cape Horn, we were met by a terrific gale-such a gale as only old Cape Homers can ever have experienced or are able to comprehend.... We were buffeted about for three days and nights, unable to show anything but a mere rag of canvas to keep the ship to wind".

On New Year's Day, the gale moderated and advantage was taken of this lull to go into the forepeak for some spare gear to repair damage and re-lash the spars, which had been washed adrift during the past three days. On taking off the hatches "we became aware of the fact that smoke was issuing from the cargo, accompanied by sulphurous fumes". They decided to make for the Falkland Islands some 1200 miles distant, reckoning on a 41 days run before the wind. They calked every vent, however the next day the smoke began to force its way through the seams in the ship's sides and deck. The ship was at this time running under her topgallant sails before a fresh gale, the sea still very high. "We were driving the old ship to her utmost. Under normal circumstances it would have been extremely risky to carry

so much canvas in such a wind, but on our vessel's speed we felt our lives depended. At ten-o'clock that night we were all startled to hear a loud report and seeing a large volume of flame shoot up from the main hatch to a height of some 60 feet, it was like a square solid pillar of blue flame".

For about four hours they pumped water on the flames, but to no effect. "Reduce sail!" was the order issued at about two o'clock in the morning, and everything was taken in except the storm staysails and the topsails, under which the ship at length hove to. They carried three boats, a longboat, a pinnace and a 17foot dingy and abandoning ship at five in the morning they watched the **San Rafael** "a huge mass of glowing, crackling fire, the burning sparks and spars blowing about and falling in every direction".

In the longboat was the Captain, his wife and nine men. In the pinnace, the First Mate and six men; in the dinghy, the Second Mate, two men, a boy and James Richards. They made for the coast of Terra-del-Fuego which lay some 150 miles to the north- east,

hoping to make their way overland to the Straights of Magellan, and there attract attention of some passing steamer. They were without sails, but by each using an oar for a mast, a boathook for a yard, and rigging up a blanket as a substitute for a sail, ran at between four and five knots in the good breeze then blowing. About one o'clock in the afternoon a heavy snow squall was working up astern, and soon the heavy flakes fell thicker and faster, until it was impossible to see a boat's length ahead. For over an hour the storm continued, and when at last it cleared, those in the dingy looked anxiously around for their companions. At last they discovered the pinnace some three-quarters of a mile distant on the starboard bow, but the Captain's long-boat was nowhere to be seen. As they came up to the pinnace- "Seen the Captain?" were the first words shouted simultaneously from each boat. "No!" "No!" came back the reply. The wind, which had lulled during the afternoon, afterwards freshened, and by ten at night was blowing a moderate gale. They then heaved -to for a while and put out the sea-anchor. This was constructed by lashing securely together the boat's gear, such as oars and boat-hooks, with spars, blankets, etc., and fastening this to the painter of the pinnace, a line some 15 fathoms, or 30 yards long and then the dinghy was secured astern of the pinnace. Twice that night they were nearly swamped. Although they were experienced sailors, none had been placed before in anything like such a predicament. Richards describes the full terror of moving around as they must in that dingy.

In the morning the gale moderated, and they had their first food for nearly 36 hours -a biscuit. The blankets were again set, and they stood towards land running before the wind, and drifting in the night. They made considerable progress, and at noon - the word went round: "Land ahead!" about 50 miles distant, They ran on till about nine at night decided to stand in until within two or three miles of it and then hove-to till morning. There was no spot to land. "Nothing but vast unbroken cliffs, towering sheer up from the sea".

Presently, the mate saw a small inlet. Inside they found still water but searched in vain for a place to land, and at length, as the afternoon wore on, discovered a spot where the rocks shelved. They landed and hauled up the boats. It was a small ledge and on either side were towering mountains covered with snow down to within a couple of hundred feet of the water's edge even though this was mid-summer. The first thought was to make a fire and supper was by-and-bye served out, and between the twelve of them they divided a 4 lb. tin of Australian mutton, with half a biscuit to each. A little water was by each in turn put into the tin and heated over the fire. It was now Thursday evening, and this was the first warm food they had tasted since Monday's tea. Exhausted they lay down on the ground and slept soundly in spite of a biting wind which blew down from the snow-clad mountains.

The next morning they decided it was clearly no use staying where they were. It was quite impossible to scale the mountains. They now took stock of their provisions, two 50 lbs ships biscuits.; twelve 4 lb. tins of Australian mutton; two casks of water totalling about 4 gallons; a 28 lb. case of tobacco. In the way of gear they had between the two boats 11 oars, two boat-hooks, two bolts of canvas, one coil of small line, and half-a dozen buckets for bailing. Among the crew was the sailmaker, who fortunately had with him his small bag, containing needles, twine, etc. and was able to make sails for both boats from the canvas. They constructed a permanent sea anchor, by cutting an oar in two, and using the two parts and a boat-hook to form a triangle, filling it with a sort of

netting, made by small line. The whole was then lashed and re-lashed and firmly secured.

All day Friday they worked but had but to spend another night ashore. When they stopped work for the day they had supper. It had been decided in the morning that day's rations should be, for each man, one biscuit and a small portion of Australian meat. Supper done, they sat around for a smoke. This was a slow business as they had only one pipe amongst them and one box of vestas. The tobacco had been equally divided in the morning; so, too, had been the wax vestas. Each man took his share of these, carefully wrapped them in a few bits of oilskin, and stowed them away inside his shirt.

That night was miserable - the cold rain extinguished the fire and sleep impossible. In the early morning they launched the boats and as the bright sun rose "we felt vigorous with renewed life and hope. Although all was calm and smooth within, outside it was blowing a fresh breeze, and there was a considerable sea. Here our first bit of toil commenced, and we perceived that a long pull was before us, the wind blowing dead on shore". They laboured at the oars steadily all that day, and by nightfall had made about 15 miles. Fortunately the wind then shifted two or three points, enabling them to make use of the sails and all night to stood-off obliquely from the shore. Regular watch was set - the same as on board ship - four hours on and four hours off, an officer at all times at the steering oar and a man on the look-out. Nothing particular happened during the night and the morning dawned on Sunday, January 8th, just a week since the first discovery that the ship was on fire. They continued to stand out from land about 150 miles, and then "judging ourselves fairly in the track of homeward-bound ships, either from the Colonies or the west coast of South America, we put out our sea-anchor and allowed the boats to drift, thinking we had as good a chance of being picked up there as by running anymore to eastward".

Three or four days passed with little indeed to vary the miserable monotony. But on Thursday night the sun set with a ruby-red, fierce and angry glare. Everything indicated a coming storm. A long, heavy swell commenced from the west, and until four in the morning the wind blew steadily. Then at daybreak the wind increased, until by 8 o'clock it was blowing a hard gale. "It was now we found how much we owed to our sea-anchor, and many a time during the ensuing hours we had reason to bless our stars for our forethought in this instance. A hundred times during the gale, that sea-anchor was our salvation". The seas were mountainous high, but, fortunately, regular. At times, as an enormous roller came along, "combing over its foam-crested head, it seemed as if our small boat must inevitably have been knocked over end. At it was, we had continually to get on our knees and touch the thwarts to prevent ourselves from being thrown over the stem. Each huge wave as it broke partly over us, left our boat two-thirds full of water, and then it was bale for dear life before the next one came along. The extreme regularity of the waves was, fortunately, never broken, or we should have been swamped".

The storm continued for about 36 hours - no rest, no sleep, no warmth, no food, wet through the whole time, cold, numb, and with every bone aching. By mid-day on Saturday the wind had decreased to a moderate gale. Neither boats nor the sea-anchor had suffered much. However by far the most serious problem was the loss of bread as shipped water had reduced most of it to a pulp, and it had washed out.

There after the daily allowance was half a ship biscuit and between two and three ounces of meat. The next three days were fine and clear, but boringly wretched. On

Wednesday, the 18th of January, just after a bit of food had been served out, they were startled by a cry from the mate's boat, "Sail ho!" There on the port bow, was a large barque, probably, from her rig, American, about five miles distant, standing towards the land, close hauled on the port tack. They reckoned she would pass some five miles ahead of them took to the oars in the hope of cutting her off! After about 40 minutes, they realised the vessel would pass a considerable distance ahead of them, but on they pulled. They were near enough to see the man at the wheel. "We would see him look alternately at the compass and then at the sails, they could distinguish copper sheathing on the ship's side as her bow rose and fell, they could see smoke curling up from the galley, telling of warm food and comfort". They were, at most, not more than half a mile from her. But despite shouting, on she sailed. "Blank despair was plainly writ in each man's face. Strong men sat down, hid their faces in their hands, and sobbed like little children. I hope I may never see the like again".

The last scrap of our food was divided on the morning of Saturday, the 21st. This was their last meal - "aye and everyone knew it. I cannot tell you each man's feelings as his last mouthful was handed round. I cannot even tell my own". On Sunday each man smoked one pipe of tobacco and had a drink of water of which they had plenty. The Monday morning was beautifully fine, wonderfully clear, not a cloud in the sky, but no speck on the horizon. But this fine weather brought no comfort" We all knew that a spell of such unusual length of good weather in these latitudes was the sure precursor of very bad weather". Towards afternoon the wind freshened. By midnight it was upon them and although the sea was not as high as on the last occasion, the cold was intense. Hail squalls followed each other in quick succession, which, although increasing their suffering "did us good service by beating down the sea". By the next afternoon the wind had moderated to a fresh breeze and the squalls became less frequent.

Over the past few days the cook, Henry Hill, a man of about 35, had been very low and ill and was evidently now sinking fast. About six o'clock "he was at last released from his sufferings". He was buried the next morning. His bit of tobacco and four or five wax vestas were too valuable to be uselessly wasted, and these were taken from their place of security within his shirt. "Wednesday morning was fine and clear. About six o'clock the boats were drawn up close together. We had no Prayer Book, and only one bible, but we tried to do our best for a burial service. All the men uncovered their heads; those that could stand, stood up, and our first mate read the 39th Psalm. Then we all repeated the Lord's Prayer together and our shipmate's body was then dropped over the side of the boat. As we said the words "Give us this day our daily bread," there was a pause before any man went on to the next line."

As the day wore on, the wind freshened, this time from the North-west, followed by foul weather. "Most of us had by this time almost lost the use of the lower part of the body.. For some days past our legs had been gradually swelling, and were now almost twice the normal size, and totally devoid of sensation. We had little moving about to do, and that little had to be done by dragging our bodies along with what little strength was still left in our arms.. We rather welcomed the numbness in our legs as a relief from the suffering we endured from the cold". Little did they know that this numbness was the forerunner of something terrible. To add to their misery, all those parts of their bodies which were liable to be chafed broke out into great sea-water boils, very weakening and extremely painful. They became totally incapacitated The wind again freshened, attained

considerable strength, but it blew from the land and the sea did not rise to any great height. "Had it done so, I am afraid we should have been swamped, for I don't think we had a man left with sufficient strength remaining to handle the steering properly and keep the boat's nose to the sea". Baling was constantly necessary. The men needed encouraging continually persevering and fighting. Fortunately as "all hands were British, and it is but common justice to say that from first to last, they all behaved remarkably well. Throughout the whole of our terrible ordeal every order was obeyed up to the very last to the best of their ability". Four more days passed in semi-comatose state of discomfort and agony.

At 6 o'clock on Monday morning, the look-out sang "Sail -ho". "We heard it for the second time since we had been adrift, and this time we heard it as though in a dream. But there was no mistake. Men feebly rubbed their eyes and raised their heads, roused from their lethargy by the most welcome sound that could ring in their ears". A fine, full-rigged ship, under all sail, bearing down upon them. They immediately took in the sea-anchor and put out the oars, determining to get as nearly direct in her track as possible. Then came 20 minutes of the most intense anxiety. "On she came, rushing through the water at about the rate of 12 knots. Nearer and nearer she came, and as yet no sign to indicate that she had yet seen us". At last she was within half a mile of them "we saw that they were clewing up their royals,.. The top gallant sails were immediately lowered away and also clewed up, and at the same time we saw that they were hauling up their courses. Beyond a doubt we were seen, for, although it was blowing a moderate gale at the time, there was nothing to cause so hurried a reduction of canvas on a ship running before the wind".

She rushed past at about 100 yards ahead. "A crowd of people on her decks sent up a hearty and welcome cheer and as she passed lowered her topsails and came to the wind. That cheer was the most welcome sound I ever heard - either before or since and as we began to realise that we were saved, there wasn't a dry eye among the lot of us". As the ship was now to leeward, a good deal of care had to be exercised, however, as to how they approached, for the waves ran pretty high, and a small boat is very easily stove in or swamped alongside a big ship. Very cautiously they got to leeward of her, and watching for a smooth patch, finally got alongside. Two men, secured by life-lines, lifted them out one by one. When the eleven were safely aboard, the old boats were cast adrift.

It was 30 days since they had found out the fire on the **San Rafael**, and of these, 27 had been spent in an open boat and the last eight of these had been totally without food. They found that we had been picked up by one of Money Wigram and Co.'s ships, the **Yorkshire**, homeward bound from Melbourne, with passengers. The midshipmen kindly gave the three rescued officers a share of their berth, and the men were carefully carried to the forecabin.

Now comes one of the more distressing episodes. The ship's doctor ordered each man a cup of warm coffee with a glass of rum in it. "This delicious but frugal meal over, we were, by the doctor's orders, now stripped. It was found necessary to cut away our long sea boots and trousers, owing to the dreadfully swollen condition of our legs. The boy was attended to first, and hearing an exclamation of horror from the doctor, I looked and saw that the greater part of the poor lad's feet had come away with his boots. Mortification had apparently been at work for some days. Each man knew at once that

the boy, George Hind, would have to suffer amputation, and we became alive to a new horror"

Richards was stripped next after the boy, "and as the knife was run down my boots I looked with terrible anxiety at my feet. Thank God, they were quite sound, although in bad enough condition. Some of the others were less fortunate, for 5 out of 11 were found to be more or less maimed, and underwent surgical operations". In spite of the doctor's unceasing care, it was over three weeks before they could leave their berths. "Perhaps the greatest agony we suffered was caused by the returning circulation in our extremities. It was truly dreadful, beyond description. For days my legs felt as if scores of red hot wires were running through them".

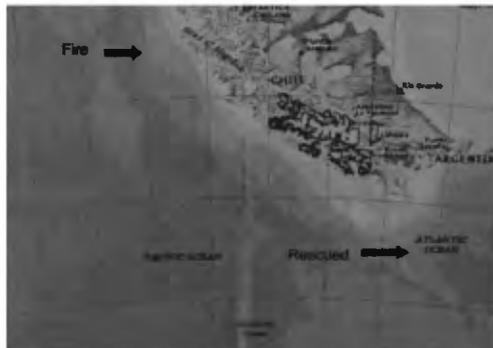
"Although we got about at last, we were invalids the whole trip, and after a fine but somewhat lengthy passage we arrived safely in London. Everybody was most kind to us, and the passengers collected a purse to send the sailors to their homes. We were still much enfeebled when we landed, and every man seemed to have aged by ten or twenty years".

"When I reached home, it was over seven months since I had sailed on the **San Rafael** from Liverpool. My family had entirely given me up for lost, and I was welcomed home as one who had returned from the dead. Many events have occurred since then, but none yet has happened, nor likely to happen, to obliterate from my mind this terrible tale of the sea, in which was I one of the actors"

Postscript by Richard Wise.

The site of the death of the captain, his wife and members of the longboat is in dispute. James Richards stated it to be New Year's Island which is at the eastern side of Tierra del Fuego. However the Argentinean records suggest another site. They state that they were indeed found by natives on an island between Waterman and Henderson Islands to the west of Tiera del Fuego. The natives found the bodies and reported this to an American Mission who sent a yawl, the **Allen Gardner**. A note written by McAdam suggests they died of starvation after some 40 or more days. They were given a Christian burial.

James Richards spent all his life at sea, mainly in the service of the PSNC. His final command was SS **Oruba**, later to be rebuilt as HMS **Orion**, which ended its days scuttled as a breakwater in Greece in 1915. I should like to acknowledge the untiring support, advice and assistance given to me by John Stokoe. Also Charlie Mey at Historia y Arqueologia Maritima, Buenos Aires



"The Fiddler on the Roof"
1900 TRANSATLANTIC RATE WARS & EMIGRATION
By Harry Hignett

At the very start of the 20th century a rate-war existed around the trans -Atlantic passenger traffic. J.P. Morgan had decided that he could monopolise the trade and eliminate Cunard and a couple of other steamship lines. Forming the International Mercantile Marine Trust he gained control of a number of major steamship companies including the White Star Line. The Trust also approached the two major German Lines, Hamburg-Amerika Packetfahrt Actien Gesellschaft - HAPAG, and the Norddeutscher Lloyd Company - NDL with a view to controlling their operations. In this he was unsuccessful; they had their own ideas, plans to acquire all the emigrant traffic from Eastern Europe.

From the 1880's there had been waves of emigration from Russia, Austria, Hungary and Romania. Russian laws restricted emigration without official permission. In particular Russian landowners instituted pogroms against peasants albeit mostly against Jews, driving them off dubiously-owned estates thus depriving them of income and thereby have them work on confiscated land — cheap labour. This had minimal effect on people movement. But the health of the emigrants was not good and they often carried disease with them.

The emigrants travelled through Germany often to take passage across the North Sea to Hull thence by train to Liverpool and board New York steamers. By 1890 there was considerable activity through Germany and in 1892 a large number of emigrants arrived in New York suffering from Cholera. The American health authorities demanded that all the emigrants of one vessel *Normannia* be returned to Hamburg and there detained until declared free from infection.

The German authorities empowered both HAPAG and NDL to establish control stations on the north-eastern and eastern frontiers of Germany on the railway lines before the passengers crossed Germany toward the ports of embarkation. The object of the control stations was to examine all emigrants passing through Germany to make sure: —

- 1) That they were not suffering from infectious disease and
- 2) That in other respects they were entitled to enter the countries to which they were bound.

These stations, beginning on the borders of the Baltic Sea, control every railway entering Prussia. At the control stations all were examined and if necessary disinfected before being allowed to cross the frontier. Each was issued with a certificate of examination to allow continuance of the journey.

However the lines' agents refused to disinfect the passenger unless he or she had a valid ticket for a passage on either HAPAG or NDL vessels. Those that did not were forced to return home. Some passengers chose the longer and costlier route via Saxony to avoid the controls until in 1903 the Saxony authorities also placed the same conditions on those passing over their railways.

It seems that the diversion of emigrants to German lines was semi-official: the local offices began to stop all passengers whether immigrants or not, even British nationals travelling from Russia to Britain, Commenting on the practical effect of the

police order, the (Berlin socialist newspaper) Vorwärts observed :

"Naturally enough, the two German shipping companies have accepted the obligations transferred to them by the Government, with the intention of gaining new customers. Now it so happens that the greater number of poor Russian emigrants who desire to travel to America are provided in Russia with tickets enabling them to make the passage on British lines. The agents of the German companies, however, endeavour to persuade the poor creatures that they can easily dispose of their British tickets in America, and that they would do well to purchase German tickets without delay. The agents, moreover, have the power to compel the acceptance of their offers, for if the emigrants are refused admission to the control stations they must return to their Russian homes. "

This situation damaged Cunard and White Star lines. They were each been required to deposit £1,500 with the local authorities in Hamburg to cover any cost that might arise from holding infected emigrants. In 1904 Cunard announced that they were withdrawing from all agreements re passenger and freight rates and dates of sailing. The Manager of HAPAG was incensed and complained bitterly that Cunard were taking unfair actions. The Cunard Line therefore were delighted when one of the intended passengers related his experiences and asked him to swear a document in the office of the firm's solicitor:

I, Josef Garczynski, hereby affirm that I come from Krakau in Galicia. I had a Cunard prepaid ticket sent me by my brother-in-law in Avoca, Pa. I left Krakau with this ticket in my possession, and I bought a rail ticket from Krakau to Bremen. I got so far as Ratibor, in Germany, just over the border from Galicia (Austria), at which point all the passengers had to get out of the train. An agent of Missler's came to me and in the presence of a gendarme asked me where I was going. I did not properly understand him, as he only spoke in German, so I showed him my Cunard ticket. He said this ticket was no good and I must buy a ticket from him. I answered I knew the ticket was good, as my brother-in-law sent it, and that I had a passport properly signed. I would not take another ticket, but they could take me to the Consul. They then told me that if I would not buy another ship's ticket from Missler I would have to go home. I could then send my Cunard ticket back to America and get my brother-in-law to change it for one by a German line. They made me buy a rail ticket back to Krakau, and saw me off in the train. On my return to Krakau I bought a rail ticket to Prague, and then from Prague to Leipzig. On arrival at Leipzig I had to get out off the train, and another agent of Missler's and a gendarme asked me where I was going. I told them to Bremen. They asked me if I had got a ship's ticket, I answered, Yes, they wanted me to show it. As I had been sent back from Ratibor I did not wish to show it them, and told them there was no need to do so. They compelled me to produce it, and, on seeing it was a Cunard ticket, exactly the same action was taken as at Ratibor. They made me buy a rail ticket to Prague and Krakau. When I got back to Krakau the second time I took a rail ticket to Chozonow, near the Austro-German frontier.

From Choznow I went by cart to Myalowitz, as I did not want to be sent back on the arrival of a train at Myalowitz. From Myalowitz I went by electric tram to Beuthen. At Beuthen I bought a rail ticket to Breslau and from Breslau to Berlin. At Alexandria-platz station, Berlin, I was along with a number of emigrants, taken to a room in the station set apart for emigrants. There an agent of Missler's and a police-inspector asked me where I was going. I answered Bremen. Everyone had to show their

ship's tickets, so I produced mine. They kept me on one side, and, fearing they would send me back again, I told the inspector I had been sent twice back from Germany, and if they intended to do so again I demanded to be taken before my Consul, so that all my expenses might be paid. The police officer telephoned somewhere, and eventually let me through. I was at Berlin from the early morning until between 3 and 4 in the afternoon, (signed) JOSEF GARCZYNSKI

Sworn at 10, Water-street, in the city of Liverpool, this 29th day of April 1904, through the interpretation of Mathias Josef Vandepoel, of 31, Upper Pitt-street, Liverpool, and David Hefter, of 18, Nelson street, Liverpool, the said Mathias Josef Vandepoel having first sworn that he would faithfully interpret the oath about to be administered unto the deponent, Joseph Garczynski unto the said David Hefter in the German language, and the said David Hefter having sworn through the interpretation of the said Mathias Joseph Vandepoel that he was faithfully interpret the oath unto the said Joseph Garczynski in the Polish language.

Before me (signed) Geo. Dickinson, Not. Public

- Note 1) Missler, the general emigration agent of the Norddeutscher Lloyd, arranged all their emigration business.
- 2) Geo Dickinson was one of the founders of the well-known firm Hill, Dickinson specialising in shipping law

HAPAG and NDL at this time arranged with the railway companies with lines from Hungary and Romania, passing through Austria to contract their passengers to hold tickets for German ships and at rates not at all favourable in connection with exclusive arrangements. The Hungarian Government objected and turned to its own shipping line Adria to handle the emigrant traffic. Adria did not have the capacity to handle the traffic and suggested that Cunard could do so. The Hungarian authorities asked Cunard to carry emigrants from Fiume (Rijeka) to New York and agreed favourable terms.

Budapest, July 25 Count Tisza, the Hungarian Premier, yesterday laid before the Lower House of the Hungarian Diet the convention between the Hungarian Government and the Cunard Company, the terms of which are, to a great extent, known.

By the convention, which contains 31 clauses, the Cunard Company undertakes to organise a line for passengers, mail, and freight traffic between Fiume and New York, with fortnightly sailings. In the intervening periods passengers may be forwarded to New York via Antwerp and Liverpool.

The Hungarian Government agrees that in case of Great Britain being at war, or of British State interests requiring it, the ships of the Cunard Company may be claimed for such interests, and that the passages between New York and Fiume may, in such a case, be temporarily suspended,

On the other hand the company undertakes to carry Hungarian citizens coming home from the United States and Canada to Fiume at a modified fare, and to make an annual payment of 3,000 kronen (£120) to the Emigration Fund. There is no guarantee in the convention for a minimum number of passengers. The steerage fare is fixed at 150 kronen (£7. 5s.).

- Reuter.

Hamburg, July 23. Steps are being taken by the German shipping companies to prosecute the rate war against the Cunard Company with all the resources at their command. The Hamburg-American Company will immediately put on competitive line of vessels between Fiume and England to oppose the Hungarian Adria Company. It has also concluded contracts at long date with the more important shippers in return for reduction in freight charges.

The "Italia" Company, a branch of the Hamburg-American, will at the same time commence an active competition with the Adria in the Genoa traffic in the Mediterranean and Adriatic seas.

Finally, negotiations are in progress for the establishment of a new service to compete with the Cunard between Scotland and Ireland. The conference between the German lines and the Cunard will, however, be resumed on the return of Herr Ballin, managing director of the Hamburg-American Line, from his holidays at the end of August.

Albert Ballin was enraged with the Hungarian Government pointing out that it was breaking treaty in not working with the Austrians and threatened to establish a company to run in competition with Adria and Cunard around the Mediterranean and, in fact, chartered four British vessels for the operation.

In October 1904 Lloyds List reported:

"The rush of Hungarian emigrants has become so great that the Cunard Line has become compelled to add hastily another liner to its Fiume - New York service, viz., the steamer Carpathia, of 14,000 tons. Up to the present the service has been carried on by three steamers. Last Friday Slavonic left Fiume with 2,018 steerage passengers and 44 saloon passengers on board. The applications for this sailing were so numerous that no less than 1,000 were unable to find accommodation, and they had to be sent overland to Liverpool, whence sailing to their destination per the Umbria and Campania, both belonging to the Cunard Line.

Six months or so later the rate war seems to have dissolved. The members of the IMM Trust and the German Lines decided that they were losing too much income.



The famous Cunard Liner Carpathia.

"FOSSETS" by Charles Dawson

The firm known in its heyday as Fawcett, Preston, or familiarly as "Fossets", had its roots that go back as far as to 1758, in the history of the Coalbrookdale Ironworks at Ironbridge in Shropshire. This was when the company sent their man George Perry, a draughtsman, born in Scotland in 1719, to set up and manage a branch in Liverpool in a small warehouse for the cast iron kettles and pots produced by the company. This was situated at 17 Great George Street in the city, later renamed York Street.* The demand for their products increased to such an extent that the company decided, mainly to save transport, to add a modest foundry to the warehouse.*Their address is sometimes referred to as Lydia Anne Street, called after George Perry's wife, since part of the premises also skirted it.

Perry was a man of broad interests; he advocated the wider use of canals, published a map of Liverpool's city, praised for its 'accuracy and elegance', and helped to found the Liverpool Library. To the iron products produced by the foundry, which came to be called the Phoenix Foundry, inaugural date unknown, he added sugar boiling pans for the West Indies, foreshadowing Fosset's later eminence as the leading sugar machinery manufacturers in the world. Perry died in 1771 at only 52 years of age and his successor Joseph Rathbone renamed the foundry Joseph Rathbone & Company. Financial problems at Coalbrookdale led to hard times for the newly-named company, from which it was rescued in 1784 by a new recruit to the management, William Fawcett, the 23-year old son of Rathbone's sister Elizabeth, who had served his apprenticeship in the foundry. In 1790 Fawcett, 33 years old, was granted a seven-year lease on the foundry and in February 1794, Joseph Rathbone having died, Fawcett was able to purchase it for £2,300, renaming the company Fawcett & Co and to begin to plan an expansion of activities.

In December 1797 Fawcett decided to continue with gun manufacture and was consequently disowned by his Quaker brethren. By the end of the Peninsular War, he had five or six gun-boring lathes in operation earning him some £10,000 per year. Despite this, he had constant problems to finance the company. In 1801 he bought the freehold lease of land on which the Phoenix Foundry stood for £683. In 1808 he was again in financial difficulties and was forced to mortgage it to a firm of Lombard Street bankers. In 1810 the business was made bankrupt, with debts exceeding £10,000. In 1813 Phoenix Foundry was sold to George and Henry Littledale for £18,000, Fawcett being retained as Manager, the firm becoming Fawcett & Littledales.

About 1800, Fawcett asked Coalbrookdale to send an engineer to design steam engines; they sent Joseph Venables, but his contribution has not been traced. In 1817 Fawcett was able to buy back from the Littledales, for £6,000, a third share in the business. In the 1820s - probably in mid 1823 - the Littledales sold two thirds of their shares to the Preston family and the firm became Fawcett, Preston & Co. The first windmill in Liverpool to be converted from sail to steam was engined by the company. On 7 March 1843 the Phoenix Foundry was partially destroyed by fire, but it was rebuilt and expanded. In 1844 Fawcett died. In 1888 the company became a limited liability company (perhaps it also became & Co. Ltd?).

1897 the Fawcett Fowler steam car was produced.

1935, September the Phoenix Foundry closed, the company moving from its Liverpool site to new premises at Bromborough, on the opposite side of the River Mersey.

1948 Metal Industries Group acquired the company which became part of the Thorn Group.

1958 bi-centenary history "Fosset" written by Horace White.

The sugar machinery business was sold. The company became Fawcett Engineering Ltd some time after 1968.

1977-1982 the Archives were deposited with Merseyside County Archives (part of Merseyside County Museums). The Engine books were microfilmed and repaired. All drawings were repaired.

1986 Expamet International PLC acquired the company.

APPENDIX

Steamships engined by Fossets up to 1900. Expanded from Horace Wright's list, with acknowledgement to Fred Hawks, Billingshurst.

The company was Fawcett & Co until 1813, then Fawcett & Liddleales and after c. 1823, Fawcett Preston & Co.

1817 ETNA wood p.s. launched 7 March by Dawson & Pearson, Liverpool, 75 tons, 63' x 28' with 22 HP F&L engine. She had twin hulls, with a single paddle-wheel between the hulls. She was the first steamer to be built on Merseyside.

1818 LA GARONNE sailing from Bordeaux with F&L engine.

1819 COLUMBIA sailing from New Orleans with F&L engine.

1819 MERSEY wood p.s. with twin hulls Liverpool-Tranmere ferry, 80 tons, built by Dawson & Pearson, Liverpool with 24 HP F&L engine.

1820 CONDE DE PAMELLA wood p.s., the first steamship built in the U.K. to a foreign order, for service on the River Tagus, built by Mottershead & Hayes, Liverpool in 1820, with 20 HP F&L engine. She was owned by João Baptista Ângelo of Costa & Company. First trip in Portugal was between Lisbon and Santarém 27 January, 1821.

1821 DUCHESSE de BERRY steamboat sailing from Le Havre with F&L engine.

1821 CAMBRIA wood p.s. launched 17 May by Mottershead & Hayes, Liverpool, 86 tons net, 91' 2" x 17' 6" x 8' 6", with 48 HP F&L engine for River Dee service, sold in 1826 to London owners to ply to Norfolk ports and then, in 1827 to the Demerary & Essequibo Steam Boat Association, Demerary, (Demerara). Broken up there by 1832.

1821 ECLIPSE wood p.s. built at Liverpool, 69 tons, with two cylinder 24 HP F&L engine for L'pool-Runcorn ferry. Sank in storm 7 January 1839.

1822 LUSITANO wood p.s. built by Humble & Hurry, Liverpool with 90 HP F&L engine to ply Lisbon-Oporto. It seems she was lost quickly and ST.PATRICK was bought to replace her, hence her Portuguese name, which translated means "the restored USITANO".

1822 ST. PATRICK wood p.s. launched 22 April by Mottershead & Hayes, Liverpool, 130' x 22' 1" x 13' 8", 173 tons net with 2 cyl 110 HP F&L engine. Bristol/Tenby/Dublin/L'pool service April 1824, register closed, "Sold to foreign owners" in Portugal, for Lisbon/Oporto service, renamed RESTAURADOR LUSITANO, later hired by the Portuguese Navy as transport. Foundered off Aveiro 11th September 1832 while towing the gun-brig AUDAZ.

1822 ST. GEORGE wood.p.s. launched 23 April by Dawson & Pearson, Liverpool, 133' 9" x 22' 4" x 13' 8", 183 tons net, with 2 cyl 110 HP F&L

engine for L'pool/Douglas/Glasgow service, then 23/7/1822, Bristol/ Ilfracombe/ Dublin, 10/1822, L'pool/ Glasgow, 9/1830 L'pool/ Douglas. Vessel anchored 20 November 1830 in Douglas Bay in gale, anchor cables parted, driven on to Conister Rock.

1822 PRINCE LLEWELLYN wood p.s. built by Wilson & Gladstone, Liverpool, registered 29 July, 111' 5" x 18' 1" x 11' 4", 94 tons net, with 2 cyl 70 HP F&L engine for the Liverpool & North Wales Steam Packet Co. 1835 to Saint George Steam Packet Co. 1843 Converted to sailing schooner. 1847 lost off Gibraltar.

1822 DUKE OF LANCASTER wood p.s. built by Mottershead & Hayes, Liverpool, registered 6 March, 103' x 17' x 9' 6", 95 tons net, with 24 HP F&L engine for L'pool/Lancaster service, but changed hands and service routes many times. L'pool-Hoylake-Bagillt service on River Dee, then Cork then Chepstow, Sept. 1822, then War Office S.P.Co, Bristol-Waterford Sept. 1823. 1827, 28 Feb. Campbeltown & Glasgow Steam Packet Co. Sold for breaking up 30 May 1845.

1822 ALBION wood p.s. built by Mottershead & Hayes, Liverpool, 102 tons net, 103' 6" x 18' 1" x 9' 5", with 2 cyl. 60 HP F&L engine, registered 24 May, for Liverpool owners for Liverpool-Menai Straits service. Sold in 1827 to the London, Yarmouth & Norwich Steam Packet Co, London. Register closed Jan 1829 "sold to Polish owners", renamed XSIAZE XAVERY.

1823 HENRY BELL wood p.s. built by Wilson & Gladstone, Liverpool registered 1 August, 112 tons, 111'9" x 18'1" x 11'4", with 30 HP F&L engine to ply Mersey-Clyde. Greenock 1832, Newry 1833.

1823 LADY RODNEY wood p.s. built by Mottershead & Hayes, Liverpool, registered 17 May, 80' 2" x 15' 9" x 7' 7", 58 tons net, with 2 cyl, 28 HP F&L engine for Newport owners' Newport-Bristol service, begun 2 June. 1836 to Bristol General S. N. Co, Bristol. Broken up 1864.

1823 ALADDIN wood p.s. built by Symons, Falmouth, 230 tons, 126' x 21' with 80 HP FP engine for the postal packet service Holyhead/Howth. Transferred to the R.N. April 1837, renamed JASPER. Burnt 15 May 1854 after an explosion off Beachy Head.

1823 EMERALD ISLE wood p.s. built by Mottershead & Hayes, Liverpool, registered 5 July, 145' 9" x 23' 2" x 14', 251 tons net with 140 HP FP engine by for ST.Patrick S.P.Co Liverpool.

1823 CITY OF DUBLIN wood p.s. built by Dawson & Pearson, Liverpool, registered 7 November, 132' 10" x 22' 4" x 13', 207 tons net, with 120 HP F&L engine for City of Dublin S.P.Co. Register closed, "sold to the Mexican Government", renamed REGENERADO in April 1842.

1823 WILLIAM TELL wood p.s. with 10 HP F&L engine, Switzerland's first steamship, to run on Lake Geneva.

1824 JAMES WATT wood p.s. built by Humble & Hurry, Liverpool, registered 14 May, 110' x 19' 6" x 11' 7", 116 tons net, with 80 HP FP engine. Sold 1831 to Stockton, sold 1836 to N.S.W. Australia. Converted 4 Oct. 1836 to sailing schooner. 6 July 1840 re-converted to steam. Broken up 1850.

1824 MERSEY, O.N. 8780 wood p.s. built by Grayson & Leadley, Liverpool, registered 21 August, 129' 3" x 22' 1" x 12' 4", 166 tons net with 120 HP FP engine for City of Dublin Steam Packet Co. Dublin, for L'pool-Dublin service, lengthened 1835 to 143' 9" x 21' 2" x 12' 2". Broken up 1859, register closed 13/10/1863.

1824 TOWN OF LIVERPOOL wood p.s. built by J.Wilson, Liverpool, 136' 5" x 22' 2" x 13' 3", 205 tons net, registered 18 Sept. with 126 HP FP engine for C W Williams & others for L'pool-Dublin service. Wrecked 25/3/1828 near Hook Tower Light, Waterford, on way from Waterford to Liverpool.

1824 WILHELM for Lake Constance, with 20 HP FP engine.

1824 TELICA oak p.s. built by Humble & Hurry, Liverpool, 92'10" x 17'6", 81 tons with 50 HP FP engine for service on the West coast of South America. Not profitable, so sent 1827 under sail to Calcutta, arriving in April. Tug on the Hooghly for a spell then sold to Bombay Govt. Ended her life as the governor's sailing yacht. Items on her appeared in the LNRS Bulletin of Winter 1989 and Spring 1998.

1825 LEE wood p.s. built by W. Mulvey, Chester, 131' x 22' 2" x 19' 6", 201 tons net with 2 cyl. 120 HP FP engine for Cork & L'pool S.N.Co, L'pool. Lengthened 1833 to 142'5". 22 May 1835 bought by St. George S.P.Co, Dublin. 20 Jan 1844 bought by Cork S.S.Co, Cork. Changed 1845 to owners in London, last being W. Bulkeley (the broker?), London in 1847. Register closed 9 April 1851 "Broken up".

1825 VENICE with 40 HP FP engine sailing from Trieste.

1825 HIBERNIA wood p.s. built by Dawson & Pearson, Liverpool, 133' x 22'7" x 14', with 130 HP FP engine. Early records missing; first registered to the City of Dublin S.P.Co, Dublin 28 Oct. 1843. Register closed 12 July 1849 "broken up at Liverpool."

1825 BRITANNIA wood p.s. built by W R Haseldon, Chester, 123' x 23' x 16", 300 tons with 120 HP FP engine. Sold at Rio de Janeiro to foreign owners, renamed CORREIO BRAZILERO.

1825 SEVERN wood p.s. built by John Wilson, Liverpool, registered 26 Nov., 130' 11" x 22' 1" x 13' 6", 201 tons net, with 2 cyl. 120 HP FP engine for the Cork & Bristol Steam Navigation Co. Dublin. Lengthened 1833 to 143' x 22' 1" x 13' 6". Various changes of owners and routes: Waterford-Liverpool, Cork-Bristol, Dublin-Bristol. Hull-Hamburg. 1843 to Cork Steamship Co, Cork. 1/4/1849, register closed – "Broken up".

1826 LEEDS wood p.s. built by J.Wilson, L'pool, 141'3" x 25' x 14'8", 243 tons net, registered 17 August with 140 HP FP engine for City of Dublin S.P.Co, Dublin. Chartered for two months in 1828 by General S.P.Co, Bristol to ply Bristol-Dublin. 1833 chartered as transport for Portuguese Royalist forces in Civil War. Vessel sunk at Holyhead 6 Nov. 1834, but raised. 24 Jan. 1852 abandoned in sinking condition off Point Lynas.

1826 TRIESTE with FP engine to ply Venice-Trieste.

1826 ETNA wood p.s. built by Humble & Hurry, Liverpool, 127' x 23', not registered, with 140 H.P. FP engine for Postmaster-General for L'pool-Dublin service. 1837 became HMS KITE.

1826 LARIO with 12 HP FP engine to ply on Lake Como.

1827 SYBIL wood p.s. 233 tons post packet built by Humble & Hurry, Liverpool, 114'6" x 20'10" x 12', with 80 HP FP engine for Milford/ Waterford route, replacing METEOR. Became HMS PIGMY 1837.

1828 GIPSY wood p.s. built by Mottershead & Hayes, Liverpool, 139'4" x 22'7" x 16'2", 204g. registered 8 May with 130 HP FP engine, sailing for Waterford commercial S.N.Co L'pool-Waterford. Register closed 1845 – "Broken up".

1828 WILLIAM FAWCETT wood p.s. built by C. & J. Smith, Liverpool, registered 24 July, 130'8" x 22'2" x 14'9", 185 tons net with 130 HP FP engine for L'pool owners. April 1832 lengthened to 145'8", 209 tons. December 1832 new owners in Dublin. Chartered by Wilcox & Anderson in 1835 for the Iberian service of their Peninsular S.N.Co. 6 July 1838 re-registered in London, and mortgaged to C A Nicholson, London four days later. Register closed 17 April 1845 "broken up".

1829 SPHINX with 160 HP FP engine cost £10,100 for French Colonies.

1830 2-50 HP FP engines shipped to Toulon for post steamers to Corsica.

1832 QUORRA built by Seddon & Co, Birkenhead, 103'8" x 16'1" x 7'2", 83 tons net registered 25 June, with 40 HP FP engine, took part in Macgregor Laird's Niger expedition of 1832.

1833 VAR 50 HP FP engine for French post office post Calais-Dover.

1833 ESTAFETTE 50 HP FP engine for French post office post Calais-Dover.

1835 MERMAID wood p.s. built at Bridgend, Cheshire, 149'3" x 24'2" x 16', 258 tons net, registered 27 Jan. 1835 for the Waterford S.N.Co, Waterford with 2 cyl. 180 HP FP engine. Register closed 1845 – "lost" (struck the West Hoyle Bank and lost with two lives).

1837 ROYAL WILLIAM wood p.s. built by W & T Wilson, Liverpool for the City of Dublin S.P.Co with 250 HP FP engine, first steamer, (under charter to the Transatlantic S.S Co) to go into service between Liverpool, left 15 Dec. 1858, and New York, arrived 7 Jan. 1839. Scrapped 1888 after serving for some years as a coal hulk.

1834 JOHN RANDOLPH iron p.s. built by Lairds, Birkenhead, 110' x 22' x 7'6", 249 tons with 60 HP FP engine for Savannah, USA.

1834 GARRYOWEN built by Laird, Birkenhead, 130' x 21'6", 263 tons, with 2 cyl. 80 HP FP engine.

1834 EUPHRATES built by Laird, Birkenhead, 105' x 19' x 7'6", 179 tons with 50 HP FP engine for Middle East.

1834 TIGRIS built by Laird, Birkenhead, 90' x 16' x 6'6", 109 tons, with 20 HP FP engine for Middle East.

1834 HAMBURG both with FP engine trading between the ports.

1834 HAVRE)

1835 WINDERMERE wood p.s. built by J.Mottershead, L'pool, 101'6" x 16' x 7'9", 79 tons for the Winder family Liverpool, registered 12 June, with 50 HP FP engine, claimed in an FP advertisement to have been the first ship fitted with Samuel Hall's surface condenser. Register closed 17 Dec. 1857 – "broken up".

1835 VELOCE Two 110 HP FP engines for France, cost £12,280.

1835 ESPECULADOR with FP engine.

1838 DUCHESS OF KENT with FP engine L'pool-Dublin.

1839 PRINCE 250 HP FP L'pool-Dublin.

1839 PRINCESS with 250 HP FP engine L'pool-Dublin.

1838 MERLIN wood p.s. HMS launched 18 Sept. Pembroke dockyard, 153'6" x 33' x 16'5", 889 tons BM with 312 NHP FP engine cost £14,510. Survey ship 1854, Gun vessel in 1856. Sold to Williams & Co 18 May 1863. The three M's were built as steam post packets for the L'pool Station, but were fitted as Mediterranean packets in 1848.

1838 MEDUSA wood p.s. HMS launched 31 Oct. Pembroke dockyard, 153'6" x 33' x 16'5", 889 tons BM with 312 NHP FP engine cost £14,510. Tug 1861/2. Sold 17 Feb. 1872 to Charlton for breaking up.

1839 PRESIDENT 243' x 41', 2,366 gross tons, launched 7 Dec. by Curling & Young, London. 540 HP FP Engine cost £24,000. Sailed 11 March 1841 from New York, went missing.

1840 MEDINA wood paddle packet HMS launched 18 March Pembroke Dockyard, 153'6" x 33'2" x 16'5", 889 tons BM, with 312 NHP FP engine, cost £14,767. Broken up March 1864.

1840 UNITED STATES later ORIENTAL (P&O), 1787 tons with FP engine.

1840 ASSAM with 100 HP FP engine for Calcutta.

1840 45 HP FP engine for Govt tender.

1840 60 Hp FP engine for Australia.

1840 50 HP Fp engine for France.

1840 50 HP FP engine for Calcutta steam tug.

1840 ORIENTAL P&O steamer with 420 HP FP engine for Alexandria service.

1842 HINDOSTAN wood p.s. with iron watertight bulkheads for P&O, c. 240' long, 1,800 tons with 520 HP FP engine. Sister of BENTINCK.

1842 LEEDS Hanseatic Steam P.Co's steamer with 160 HP FP engine for Hull-Hamburg.

1842 LADY MARY WOOD wooden Paddle Steamer (1842-1858) with one funnel, 2 masts. Tonnages: 553 gross, 296 net; Dimensions: Length 168.8, beam 25.5, depth 16.6 feet. Machinery: Two cylinder side-lever FP engine, 260 i.h.p. Speed 12 knots. Passengers: 60 1st class; 50 3rd class. Cost £ 21,700. Launched 16.9.1841 by Thomas Wilson and Co, Liverpool, for the P&O far Eastern monthly mail service.** Registered 19.1.1842. 12. 8.58: Sold 12 August 1858 to E. C. Wermuth, C.S. Van Heekeren & Co., Samarang, and sailed from Hong Kong 3.2.1859 for Samarang where she was renamed OENARANG. Sold 1862 to W. C. de Vries, Batavia. Feb.1866 her engines were removed at Soerabaya and she was reduced to a hulk. 1867: Broken up at Batavia. ** (Her Calcutta-Singapore service may have been preceded by that of the Eastern Steam Company's s.s. FIRE QUEEN).

1843 BENTINCK wood p.s. with iron watertight bulkheads for P&O, c. 240" long, 1,800 tons with 520 HP FP engine. Sister of HINDOSTAN.

1844 IRON DUKE wood p.s. built by T.Wilson, Liverpool, for the City of Dublin .P.Co, with 320 FP HP engine.

1845 MALTA for P&O, with 450 HP FP engine.

1845 NAUTILUS with FP engine wrecked.

1845, iron screw barque ANTELOPE, renamed CORAL QUEEN 1864. Registered 25 June by her builder J.Hodgson & Co., Liverpool, 459 tons net, engine room 139 tons, 185.7' x 24.7' x 16.7'.

1846 INFLEXIBLE HMS built Pembroke Dockyard 186'03/4" x 36' x 21', 1124 tons BM, with 378 NHP, 680 IHP FP engine cost £14,458.

1846 NILE Steam frigate. No such vessel has been located around this date.

1847 PRINCESS LEOPOLDINA with FP engine sailing from Rio de Janeiro.

1849 CATO B'head ferry boat with FP engine.

1849 VERNON ditto.

c. 1850 COUNTESS OF ELLESMERE built on the Mersey with FP engine.

1851 CLARENCE sailing from Sydney, Australia with FP engine.

1852 FORERUNNER for African Steamship Co wqith FP engine.

1852 FAITH for African Steamship Co with FP engine.

1852 NUBIA for P& O's Indian service with FP engine.

1853 BRAZILEIRA iron steamer launched 23 April by John Laird, Birkenhead, for Lisbon-River Plate service of the S.American & General S.N.Co with FP engine. Sold 1854 to Messageries Imperiales for Crimean War transport.

1853 ALMA 450 HP iron screw steamer 2,164 tons for P&O with FP engine.

1858 TAPAJOZ sailing on the Amazon wwith FP engine.

1858 dredger for River Mersey with FP engine.

1862 FLORIDA (II) Confederate raider built by by William C Miller & Sons, Liverpool, as ORETO, iron screw barque launched Jan. with 200 HP FP engine. Captured off Brazil by USS WACHUSETT 7 Oct. 1864. Sank in collision with transport ALLIANCE off Newport News 29 Nov. 1864.

1863 ALEXANDRA teak screw steamer, ("auxiliary schooner gunboat"), launched on 7 March by William C Miller & Sons, Liverpool, 145' x 20' x 10.6', 124 tons, with 60 HP FP engine. Her story appeared in the LNRS Bulletin in September 2004.

1864 CHICORA steel p.s. ex LET HER BE (some say LETTER B) Confederate blockade runner built by William C Miller & Sons, Liverpool, 365 gross tons, 221' x 26' x 10' with FP engine. Served as excursion boat on the Great Lakes until 1919. Hull survived as a barge until 1938.

1864 PTOLOMY iron steamer launched 21 July by A.Leslie & Co, Hebburn-on-Tyne for Lamport & Holt, with FP compound engine. 1874 new engine by G.Forrester & Co, Liverpool. 1899 scrapped.

1865 LELIA Confederate blockade runner built by William C Miller & Sons, Liverpool 252' x 30' x 12.6', 640 gross tons, with FP engine; foundered 14 Jan. 1865 at the mouth of the River Mersey off Liverpool.

1865 IRON DUKE built by Thomas Wilson, Liverpool for CITY of Dublin S.P.Co with FP engine.

1867 DONATI iron steamer for Lamport & Holt's Line to S. America, built by A.Leslie & Co, Hebburn-on-Tyne. 257.4' x 31.2', 1392 gross tons with FP engine. Sailed 10 Dec. 1892 New York-Oporto, went missing.

1868 THAMES L&NWR ferry steamer with FP engine.

1868 COUNTESS OF ERNE iron p.s. built by Walpole, Webb & Bewley, Dublin, 825 gross tons with FP oscillating engine, for Holyhead-Dublin route. May 1873 to Holyhead-Greenore route. 1883 in serious collision in the Liffey with the Dublin collier CAPTAIN PARRY. 1889 the Bristol S.N.Co used her as a storage hulk at their Brandon yard, Bristol. August 1890 sold to John Hurley, Bristol shipbreaker, bare hulk used as coal and ice depot on the Thames. Bought during the war, reconditioned and sent to Invergordon as a coal depot for trawlers. After the war she was bought by the Channel Coaling Co and stationed at Portland until 17 Sept 1935 she was wrecked on the breakwater in a gale.

1874 LEITRIM iron p.s. built by Laird Bros, Birkenhead, 249.4' x 27.2' x 14.7', 796 tons gross, 454 tons net, for City of Dublin S.P.Co with builder's compound engines.

Became cattle-carrier. 20 Dec.1896 struck by NICOSIAN and laid up until June 1899 then dismantled and rebuilt as self-propelling t.s.s. grain elevator with FP engine. Re-registered March 1901 717 tons gross to Severn Ports Warehousing Co Ltd, Bristol at Sharpness. 30 Sept. 1959 left for Hull in tow of Grimsby tug LADY CECILIA, arriving 3 October. 18 June 1963 towed to Tyne for breaking up at Dunston.

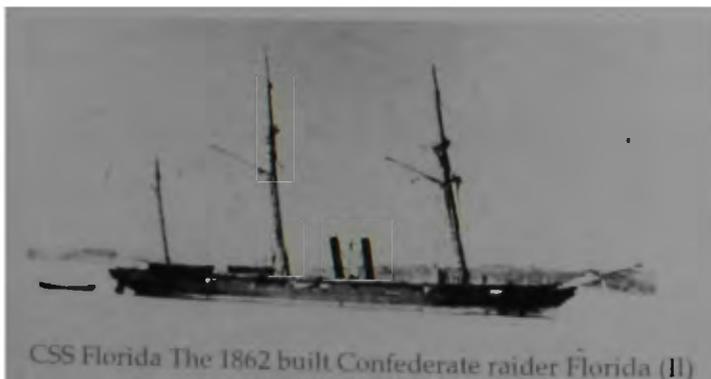
1876 FP engine for tugboat launched by W H Potter & Co, Liverpool.

1878 POWHATAN iron steamer for the Mediterranean & New York S.S.Co launched in Jan. by T.Royden & Sons, Liverpool with FP engine. Bought 1881 by Compagnie des Chargeurs Réunis renamed COMTE D'EU. 1887 IBO Portuguese, 1889 NICTHEROY (Brazilian). Apr. 1906 wrecked near Para.

1887 INDRA with first triple expansion engine by FP.

1898 HMS BRAMBLE sheathed steel gunboat launched 26 Nov. by W H Potter, Liverpool, Yard No 176, with 1300 IHP FP engine. Sold at Bombay 26 Jan.1920.

1899 HMS BRITOMART sheathed steel gunboat launched 28 March by W H Potter, Liverpool, Yard No. 177 with 1300 IHP FP engine. Sold at Bombay 10 June 1920 renamed SAKUNTALA.



The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

(Founded in 1938)

THE BULLETIN

Volume 53 No.4, March 2010

The Quarterly Journal of Society Interests



The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company flagship, **Ben-My-Chree**, in the Mersey on November 28, 2009. (Adrian Sweeney)

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MERSEY MARITIME NEWS

November 2009

On the 7th **H.M.S. Roebuck** arrived at the Liner Stage on a courtesy visit to Liverpool. The Coastal Hydrographic Survey Vessel was built in 1986 but was extensively modernised in 2005. She is the only one of her type left in the Royal Navy and as well as surveying the coasts of the U.K. she has seen service in the Gulf.

On the 30th it is reported that Mersey Ferries increased passenger numbers by 30% over the last two years to over 700,000. The visit by the **Queen Mary 2** in October saw 7200 passengers on the decks of the ferries. The U534 has exceeded its projected visitor numbers and the Manchester Ship Canal Cruises operated at 92% capacity. Leisure travel now accounts for 65% of the business.

December 2009

On the 3rd a memorial service was held on the ferry **Snowdrop** to mark the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the **Ellan Vannin**.

Bad news was received on the 16th in the form of a rejection by the Government to Liverpool's proposals to make the Cruise Liner facility a fully equipped terminal for the start and end of cruises, not as it is at the moment which is just a calling point for cruises which start elsewhere. The Government says, as the E.U. provided much of the funding, it would be a breach of their regulations.

On the 17th the former naval landing ship the **Sir Percival** arrived on the Mersey under tow by the tug **Braveheart**, for scrapping in Canada Dock.

On the 24th it was announced by Cammell Laird that they had won a lucrative contract to lengthen the laying vessel **Skagerrak** which, once extended, will begin cable laying operations in the North Sea. The vessel herself arrived on the 23rd January. Let's hope it goes a little better than the last time Lairds won a contract to lengthen a vessel!

January 2010

On the 4th the **Ulysses**, of Irish Ferries arrived on the Mersey for refit at Cammell Laird. She is the first of three of the Company's vessels for refit during January. The **Isle of Inishmore** arrived on the 13th and their fastcraft **Jonathan Swift** on the 14th.

The 13th was the 50th anniversary of the sinking of the tug **Applegarth** by Clan Line's **Perthshire** while attempting to take a bow line prior to docking in Birkenhead. All 7 of the crew were lost. The tug herself was later raised and returned to service.

On the 25th it was announced that Cammell Laird have won the contract to build the flight decks of the new Royal Navy Carriers, **Queen Elizabeth** and **Prince of Wales**.

THE ELLAN VANNIN REMEMBERED

by LNRS Member Dick Clague

At 01.13 on 3rd December 1909 the IOM Steam Packet Company's *Ellan Vannin* left Ramsey for the last time, bound for Salisbury Dock, Liverpool under the command of Captain James Teare. She had been built as the paddle steamer *Mona's Isle II* in 1860 but had been lengthened and converted to twin screw propulsion in 1892, at which time she was re-named. In 1909 she was the oldest mail steamer in the world. That night there were 14 passengers and 24 crew on board, none of whom were to reach their destination. It was a stormy night but Captain Teare was a cautious master. The subsequent Board of Trade enquiry did not criticise his decision to sail.

The weather turned out to be a good deal worse than anticipated with winds up to force 11 recorded between 04.15 and 08.00 and there was much damage both ashore and to ships at sea. The Board of Trade enquiry reported that *the vessel passed the Bar lightship about 06.45, the weather at the time being very bad; the wind was of hurricane force, the sea of a height of about 24 feet, and generally the weather was the worst ever experienced in that vicinity. The wind and sea were slightly on the starboard quarter. Before reaching Q1 buoy she broached to and was probably swept by heavy seas which washed away the after companionway, filling the after part of the vessel and causing her to sink by the stern leaving the bows out of the water.*

Although initial divers' reports had suggested evidence of a collision, the Court concluded *The catastrophe by which the vessel was overtaken must have been so sudden that there was probably no time for those on board to put on life belts or to take any other steps to save life, which accounts for the unfortunate loss of all on board.* Three bodies were found in the wreck and 13 were found washed ashore between Waterloo and Blackpool by 16th February 1910. One was washed ashore at Wallasey at the end of January. An *Ellan Vannin* disaster fund was established with local committees not only on the Island but also in the main towns in NW England. The Daily Telegraph set up its own fund, concerts and whist drives were held, football matches organised and donations came from as far afield as South Africa and USA. Within 6 months almost £13,000 had been raised – probably worth £700,000 today. The fund initially supported 23 widows and widowers, 58 children and 10 other dependents. It was wound up in 1959 by which time there were three beneficiaries still living and the final balance held was £700. This was then handed over to the Steam Packet Company to administer and the last beneficiary, Annie Benson, daughter of Seaman John Benson, died in 1974 at the age of 85.

One hundred years later, on a wild and wet December morning, the first of several commemorations of the centenary of the loss of the *Ellan Vannin* took place. The Mersey Ferry *Snowdrop*, with the Manx flag flying on her jack staff set out from the Pier Head at 10.00. As she sailed down river Hughie Jones (from *The Spinners*) sang his own composition "The Ellan Vannin Tragedy". This was followed by a memorial service conducted by Canon Bob Evans MBE, BA, RNR. After a Sea Cadet bugler played the Last Post there was a one minute silence, then the Reveille, before the act of remembrance after which wreaths were cast onto the waters by The Hon Tony Brown, MHK, Chief Minister of the Isle of Man and Mr Robert Quayle, Chairman of the

Isle of Man Steam Packet Company. The plan had been for the wreaths to be cast from the lee side of the vessel but just as the ceremony started the **Snowdrop** turned for more sheltered waters, leaving Canon Evans and those taking part exposed to the wind and rain. Floral tributes were also cast by Captain Steve Gallimore (Harbour Master, Mersey Docks and Harbour Company), Davy Thompson (MCA Area Operations Manger), John Curry (Hoylelake RNLi Operations Manager) and Charles Guard from Manx Heritage Foundation. The names of each of the 21 crew members who perished were called and for each a member of TS Starling Sea Cadets cast a rose into the river. Finally 14 pupils from St John's CE Primary School in Waterloo each cast a rose as the names of the passengers were read out by Canon Evans. After a toast drunk in Navy Rum in the Ship's Lounge, proposed by SCC Commanding Officer Kenneth Griffiths, the Chief Minister of the Isle of Man responded. The same afternoon at 15.00 another ceremony was held on the East Quay at Ramsey, attended by The Lieutenant Governor of the Isle of Man, Vice Admiral Sir Paul Haddacks and the Chief Executive and personnel from IOMSPCo. The following Saturday, wreaths were cast from the **Ben-my-Chree** as she passed the position where the **Ellan Vannin** foundered, and on the Sunday a church service was held in Douglas. Richard Stafford's book "The Ellan Vannin Story – an account of the loss of the SS Ellan Vannin" has recently been updated and re-published by the Manx Heritage Foundation. Much of the information used in this article is taken from this book.



Mr Charles Guard, Mr Robert Quayle and The Hon. Tony Brown

"BRITANNIC", LIVERPOOL'S JEWEL IN THE CROWN

by LNRS Member Norman S. Swindells

One of Liverpool's most famous Atlantic liners, White Star Line's, **Britannic**, was in many peoples' eyes the most revered of the large number of charismatic liners that used the port. She was built at Harland & Wolff, Belfast and made her maiden voyage from Liverpool to New York on June 28th 1930. With a gross tonnage of 26,943, and a speed of 17.5 knots she was the first motorship built for White Star's transatlantic trade and at that time the largest and most powerful motorship in the United Kingdom. The main reason for the choice of diesel engines for this vessel and her soon to be constructed sister, **Georgic**, was that in 1927 White Star Line having been part of the American, J Pierpoint Morgan's, giant International Mercantile Marine since 1902 was sold to Lord Kysant's even bigger shipping group, Royal Mail Steam Packet. This conglomerate operated a large number of motor passenger liners through such group members as Elder Dempster, Pacific Steam Navigation and Union Castle and thus had proven experience of the economics of the more fuel efficient diesel engines, with their much lower running costs than equivalent steamships. In addition Lord Kysant was also Chairman of Harland & Wolff, another group member and the largest builder of diesel engines in the world, which would welcome the prestige and publicity that a new motor driven White Star ship would bring.

Needless to say **Britannic**, designed as a niche medium sized transatlantic ship was a huge success and met all her owners objectives, her size and economy being exactly right for the tough trading conditions of the early 1930's. As is well known Lord Kysant became a casualty of the 1930's worldwide slump which followed the 1929 Wall Street crash, overstretching himself to the extent that in 1931 he was sent to gaol for issuing a false prospectus. This necessitated a complete reorganisation of Royal Mail's huge fleet including in 1934, an arrangement whereby the British Government pressed Cunard to merge with White Star in return for the granting of a low cost loan to complete Ship 534 (**Queen Mary**), which had lain dormant in John Brown's shipyard since 1931, plus a possible sistership. This resulted in **Britannic** becoming a part of the newly formed company, Cunard White Star Line.

My special interest in **Britannic**, is that at the end of 1948 as a soon to be first trip junior engineer with Cunard I was incredibly lucky to be assigned to her. She was then completing an extensive refit in Liverpool, after which in January 1949 she would make a routine, Liverpool to New York crossing, to be followed by the first post war cruise of any Cunard ship. This would be for an eight week trip from New York to the West Indies and South America carrying American passengers only. How lucky can one get?

The first thing I found out was that **Britannic** had not really forgotten she was a White Star ship for although Cunard took over in 1934, most of the senior people throughout the ship were originally White Star personnel, this was certainly true of the engine staff as the Chief, Staff Chief and all the Second's were ex White Star. There were two main reasons for this, firstly, when the companies merged Cunard staff were given preferential seniority, thus to avoid problems Cunard senior staff were seldom assigned to an ex White Star ship and vice versa. The other reason was that the only diesel engine expertise within the new group was on this ship and her sister **Georgic**. I have to say that

with the ship still bearing White Star livery, the White Star burgee flying over the Cunard Lion on the house flag and all the senior people being White Star, that I found myself feeling far more White Star than Cunard. Another indication that she was a White Star ship was that one of the seamen in charge of the deck games, tennis, shuffleboard, etc., had been on **Titanic** and whilst he was the only one I knew to be a survivor of that famous sinking there could well have been others onboard, especially in the catering department. Strangely, for some reason, **Titanic** didn't have the cachet it has today and nobody seemed to be in the least bit concerned that survivors might still be around.

The ship herself was an absolute dream. The accommodation for all deck and engine officers was situated on the boat deck, just about the best place to be on any ship and in addition, housed within the forward false funnel, was a quite luxurious well used engineer's wardroom. Another big change for me was the unusual foods for we were living off the first class menu which after my shore fare took some getting used to, as was picking out the right cutlery to use on some of the more exotic dishes.

As my furthest journey from Liverpool previously had been to a Surrey farm to pick potatoes for the war effort, the ports we visited, some 21 in all, were magical, many of them filled with my favourite subject, history. Highlights were Cuba (pre Castro), the Buenos Aires of the Perons' and a four days stay in Rio de Janeiro for the famous Carnival. I do not believe many first trippers were so blessed. Despite all these fantastic places my favourite was and remains New York, which made an instant and favourable impression on me. I have been many times since, both during my comparatively short sea career and subsequent shore appointments and it still holds the same fascination. As you will guess from the foregoing I was too young to sail to New York during wartime, during which troubled times the Merchant Navy Officers Club, based in the Hotel Astor on Broadway was introduced. Fortunately it was still going when I was with Cunard, regulars of course being the Cunard and Furness Bermuda officers but doubtless many others made a visit, including perhaps some of our members. The main hosts, Mrs Muir a piano playing Scot and Mac an American barman, I believe had kept the club going throughout the war and if they didn't receive some sort of recognition from our government for their endeavours, they certainly should have.



Britannic in the Mersey, photographed on the 21st August 1959
by H.B. Christiansen. (Ships of Mann Collection)

Most of my time, **Britannic**, sailed serenely over the oceans (apart from the occasional stormy weather on the North Atlantic of course) but there was one major incident when we collided with the U S Lines cargo ship, **Pioneer Land**, in June 1950 whilst leaving New York. Fortunately there was little damage to us and we were able to proceed on our way. From an engineering point of view she was quite hard work compared with the turbine and reciprocating steamers I was to sail on later. One voyage in particular comes to mind, during, I think, 1952, when cracks were revealed in some eight pistons (oil cooled), when the engine temperatures dropped as we slowed down to enter New York. The noise was quite horrendous and sounded like we were in a war zone. There was little shore leave on that occasion as we never broke watches whilst we carried out repairs. About four years later, by which time I was ashore, the Institute of Marine Engineers held a technical discussion, chaired by Harland & Wolff on the subject of cracked pistons to which I was able to add a little practical experience. My stint on **Britannic** ended after close on three happy years and I doubt whether any first tripper ever received such a favourable appointment or whether a better ship ever existed.

LIFEBOATS

*Summary of a presentation to the Society on 17th September, 2009
by Audrey Farr of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution*

Formed in 1824 by Sir William Hilary the RNLI has been saving lives at sea for over 185 years, and some 137,000 lives have been saved by our volunteer crew members.

There are over 4,500 volunteer men and women who when the call comes, are willing to leave their homes, families, workplace to save those in danger on the seas; and 233 lifeboat stations including 4 lifeboat stations on the River Thames. The active fleet comprises more than 300 lifeboats ranging from inshore 'D' class boats, Atlantic 75 rigid inflatable and all weather lifeboats. Hovercraft are located at Morecambe and New Brighton where they are able to 'fly' across the mudflats.

With less than 1 in 10 crew members having a maritime background, training is essential. It costs on average £1,000 per year to train each crew member – a cost which we must meet to ensure our lifesaving service in the best money can buy.

RNLI has a training college located in Poole, Dorset where lifeboat crews, fundraisers and volunteers can receive the highest quality training. Lifeboat Services from overseas also benefit from the expertise available.

In 2008 over 8,200 calls were made for assistance to the RNLI. Lifeguards responded to over 11,000 calls for assistance and over 12,000 people were saved. On average 22 launches are made every day by the RNLI lifeboats, a service which we must maintain.

The RNLI is a charity relying entirely on voluntary donations to maintain the service. 6 out of 10 launches take place thanks to a legacy – we need to ensure the service continues. Please help us keep our lifeboats afloat.

Motto of the RNLI – "With courage nothing is impossible".

TRAIN FERRIES

by Geoff. Holmes

(A paper presented to the Society on 19th November, 2009)

The Edinburgh and Northern Railway had no direct land link to Dundee and Aberdeen. Passengers and goods had to be ferried from Granton over the Firth of Forth to Burntisland and loaded on to trains only for the process to be repeated at Tayport for the passage across the Firth of Tay to Broughty Ferry. Apart from being time consuming, the frequent handling of goods led to excessive damage claims. The result was that the railway began to lose traffic to competitors that took the longer route from Edinburgh via Stirling and Perth. As early as 1846 the railway had tried to get permission to build a bridge across the Tay but this had been vetoed by the Admiralty. In 1849 the Railway appointed Thomas Bouch as its Engineer and Operating Manager. He already had a reputation as a successful railway engineer having been involved in the building of the line from Preston to Carlisle at a cost that compared favourably with that incurred in the construction of more southerly sections of what is now known as the West Coast Main Line; a resourceful engineer who was not above adapting others' ideas.

Vehicle ferries had been operating for some years across the Tyne and on the River Tamar between Devonport and Torpoint. This latter still exists and is a Chain Ferry. Bouch soon persuaded his Directors that a "Floating Railway" was the answer to the formidable water barriers. The two Firths are open to the North Sea and have a tidal range of 16ft. Both are susceptible to severe winter gales. An order was placed with Robert Napier & Sons of Govan for the world's first self-propelled train ferry (It appears that rail cars had already been carried across Lake Michigan on towed barges).

In the meantime, Bouch designed the terminals at Granton and Burntisland. These were masonry ramps with a 1:6 gradient. Space at the terminals precluded a less steep slope although Bouch's preference was 1:15. His design of the world's first link span bears a striking resemblance to those in use today.

The **Leviathan** entered service in February 1850. She was double – ended having a beam of 54.2ft and a working breadth between the paddle sponsons of 34ft. Her length was 172ft and loaded draught 6.5ft. Rail wagons were winched on board – using steam capstans and rope gantlines. Locomotives were not carried. Passengers were expected to use separate ferries although it was not an uncommon sight to see them huddled under the lee of the railway wagons.

Apparently there was little or no securing of the wagons. This resulted in buffers to prevent them rolling overboard being placed at one end and the rudder at the other end being removed with the result that the **Leviathan** became single ended (I assume that the vessel was trimmed slightly towards this "Stem end"). Each of the two paddles was driven by its own Steeple Engine. There was a funnel on either side and the bridge was a true bridge above the rail deck between the sponsons. The steering wheel was mounted centrally on this bridge. Up to 34 x 4 wheeled wagons could be carried on three parallel tracks converging at each end to two tracks over the link span.

She appears to have been a very reliable vessel, making four or five 4-mile crossings

daily. After 30 years in service **Leviathan** sank after striking the pier at Burntisland. She was raised and refitted to serve for a further nine years. In 1851 **Leviathan** inaugurated the Tay ferry, a distance of $\frac{3}{4}$ mile. Five further ferries were built for the two links: **Robert Napier** 1851, **Carrier** 1858, **Balbirnie** 1861, **Kinloch** 1865 & **Midlothian** in 1881. The first two were smaller than the **Leviathan** and appear to have been intended for the Tay. The remaining three were progressively larger. The last ship, **Midlothian**, was 262.5ft. long with a loaded draught of 10 ft. The E. & N. Railway was taken over by the North British Railway in 1862.

In May 1878 the first Tay Railway Bridge was opened. This had been designed by Bouch (now Sir Thomas) who had left the Railway to become a consulting engineer. With the opening of the bridge the ferry service was, of course, withdrawn and the two ferries – **Robert Napier** & **Carrier** were laid up at Granton. **Carrier** was sold to the Marine Transit Co. for service from Hayling Island to St. Helens in Brading harbour on the Isle of Wight. This service lasted for less than three years as it was found that the sea and swell conditions in the outer Solent exceeded the **Carrier's** capabilities.

After the collapse of the bridge in December 1878 the **Robert Napier** returned to the Tay for a further seven and a half years. Both this vessel and the **Carrier** were broken up in 1888 having combined service of 67 years. The completion of the second Tay Bridge in June 1887 followed by that of the Forth Bridge in March 1890 made the remaining ferries redundant and all were sold for breaking up, **Leviathan** having been in service for 40 years, **Balbirnie** 29, **Kinloch** 25 whereas **Midlothian** had only served for 9 years.

A "Stop gap" pending the construction of the bridges across the two Firths became a very successful operation lasting for 40 years. With the exception of the **Leviathan's** mishap in 1881 the service seems to have been remarkably accident free. It linked Edinburgh to the North and enabled coal from the Fife Coalfield to be brought in to Edinburgh on a competitive basis. The average time in service of the six ferries was over 28 years. After 1890 no Train Ferries operated in Britain. It was to be another twenty seven years before Train Ferries again operated from the U.K.

In January 1915, when it had become apparent the war was not "Going to be all over by Christmas", the British Army was faced with the problem of supplying the B.E.F. in France. The French Canal system – accessed through Dunkerque and Calais - was the obvious solution. However Dover, the only substantial commercial port between Southampton and the Thames, was under the control of the Royal Navy and working near to capacity.

In 1912 the St. Augustine Harbour plan had been promoted. This plan was for the River Stour below Sandwich to be impounded and a floating harbour capable of accommodating ocean going ships created. The idea was that the head of water would be used at low tide to wash silt out of the approach. An empowering bill had been submitted to Parliament in the early summer of 1914 but was lost as a result of the outbreak of war. In 1915 the Royal Engineers adopted much of this plan and barge construction yards were established on the Stour at Richborough together with facilities for loading the barges. Extensive railway sidings were built.

At the beginning of 1917 it was decided to supplement this operation using Train

Ferries. Three ships were laid down – two by Armstrong Whitworth on the Tyne and the third by Fairfield at Govan. Within twelve months the three ferries were ready and services started from Richborough to Calais in February 1918. A service from Southampton to Dieppe had commenced in November 1917. Calais was initially chosen as the French terminal as Dunkerque was considered to be too close to the front line. The choice of Southampton & Dieppe was due to two major factors: Distance from the front line and – certainly in the case of Southampton – there was no requirement for dredging as anticipated at Richborough. The berth at Southampton was 100 yards west of the Royal Pier. The link spans were all of the same basic design – differing only in length to allow for the different tidal ranges. Dunkerque's was the shortest being within the penned dock system. The silting problem at Richborough was found to have been exaggerated and the ferries proved, in service, to be very manoeuvrable.

The three ferries were very utilitarian. They were oil fired twin screw ships with steam reciprocating engines and had twin rudders. Service speed was 12 knots and up to 54 x 4 wheeled wagons could be carried with a total deadweight of 850 tons. Dimensions were: 363.5 ft. x 58.5 ft. and draught was 10ft., grt. 2,672. Loading was over the stern. Tanks and heavy guns were also important freight. Previously these had had to use special craneage or be partially dismantled before shipment. Of the three ships: **Train Ferry 3** usually maintained a service every two days from Southampton to Dieppe (113 miles). **Train Ferry 1 & Train Ferry 2** usually operated a daily service each way from Richborough to Calais (31.5 nautical miles). A service to Dunkerque (46.8 miles) commenced towards the end of the war (the route passed to the north of the Goodwin Sands). The ship's names were usually abbreviated to T.F.1 etc. They were manned by military personnel.

In service the three ferries proved to be an unqualified success. It was claimed that they released at least six 8,000 ton general cargo ships for other purposes. After the end of the war the War Office released figures claiming that between December 1916 and November 1919 1.8 million tons were shipped by barge from Richborough and from February 1918 to November 1919 the train ferries carried almost 650,000 tons (it is not clear if this latter figure includes Southampton). One creditable statistic is that there were over 20,000 barge trips and not one barge was lost through enemy action – of course a similar claim can be made for the train ferry operation.

There was a fourth train ferry – **T.F.4**. This ship had been built in 1914 by Cammell, Laird & Co. Ltd., Birkenhead, as the **Leonard** for the Canadian National Railway for service across the St. Lawrence from Quebec to Levis. It seems curious that such a modern ferry should have been replaced by a bridge after only three years. However, this was the case and the redundant ship was purchased by the British Government. It was intended that she would be used between Southampton and Cherbourg. A new berth was constructed at Southampton adjacent to the train ferry berth. **T.F.4** however did not enter service until November 1918 and, therefore, played a very insignificant role.

T.F.4. differed from the other three ferries in that the height of the train deck above the waterline could be adjusted up and down through 18 ft and she carried her own link spans. Therefore the train deck was level with the quay when loading or discharging.

A level bridge was necessary as North American freight wagons were much longer than British ones and could not be run over a steep bridge. Virtually no shore installations were required. Laid up after the Armistice she was sold to the Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company in 1921 and was converted to an oil tanker being finally broken up in 1932. There is a model of the **Leonard** in the Williamson Art Gallery in Birkenhead.

After the Armistice the services continued but sources differ as to the final closing date – one claims that the ferries were still in service from Richborough in 1922. The 1922-23 Lloyd's Register shows T.F.2 as being owned by the Port of Queenborough Development Co. Queenborough is on the Medway about two miles south of Sheerness. The pier there had railway access and was used for many years as the terminal of the Zeeland S.M. service from Flushing. In 1923 the Belgian State Railway approached the newly formed London and North Eastern Railway with a proposal to set up a train ferry service from Harwich to Zeebrugge. The Great Eastern Train Ferry Co. was founded and the L.N.E.R. provided a link from Harwich Town to the berth adjacent to Trinity Pier. The Zeebrugge facilities which were inside the Brugge Canal were provided by a company set up by the Belgian Railway. The Southampton Link Span was taken to Harwich on barges –which sank outside Harwich, the link span was salvaged – also parts of the Richborough link were used at Zeebrugge and at Harwich.

The three Richborough ferries were purchased and entered service without any change of name after an extensive refit during which they were converted to coal firing. The first sailing of the new service was on April 24th 1924 and for the next fifteen years they maintained the link – seemingly without major incident. The schedule had two ships operating a total of six sailings per week in each direction. In November 1931 a service from Harwich to Calais commenced. This utilised the third ship which made three round trips each week. This service lasted until October 1936. The service operated at a small profit until 1931. However in 1932 there was a loss and, as a result, the Great Eastern Train Ferry Co. went into liquidation and in 1933 and was bought out by the L.N.E.R. who then took over the full management of the ships.

All three ships were requisitioned by the Royal Navy in 1939. T.F. 2 was sunk by gunfire from the land in June 1940 when trying to evacuate elements of the Highland Division from St. Valery en Caux. Here again there is some doubt as the official report says she was beached near to Le Havre some 35 miles away. I think that the gunfire probably came from German field artillery. T.F.1 and T.F.3 played a major role in the evacuation of the Channel Islands. The two surviving ships were purchased by the Admiralty in September 1941. T.F. 1 had been renamed H.M.S. **Iris** in September 1940 and was again renamed H.M.S. **Princess Iris** in 1942. T.F. 3 became H.M.S. **Daffodil**. It seems that somebody made the connection between the ships and Zeebrugge! The ships were used as amphibious support ships. During conversion for this they had their twin funnels combined into a single central funnel. This improved their looks somewhat. Both ships had large gantries fitted at the stern in 1944 in preparation for "D Day" so that they could be used as train ferries and unload rolling stock at quays without the need for special bridges. T.F. 3 was mined and sunk when on passage from Dieppe to Southampton in March 1945. After the end of the war T.F. 1 was purchased back from the Admiralty & refitted by John Brown before re-

entering service in August 1946 as **Essex Ferry**.

In 1945 the L.N.E.R. ordered a diesel propelled ferry from John Brown & Co., Clydebank, for the service. This was the **Suffolk Ferry** (1947). Of course by the time that she entered service the railways had been nationalised. Her dimensions were: 405 ft x 61.6 ft., with a capacity of 38 rail wagons. After only a few days in service she was returned to the builders for modification. As built, she had a single rudder amidships. This made her very difficult to manoeuvre. The fitting of twin rudders solved the problem. One wonders why such a major design fault had not come to light during trials. A near sister the **Norfolk Ferry** followed in 1951. These two ships were destined to remain in service for over thirty years. After the **Norfolk Ferry** entered service the **Essex Ferry** (ex T.F.1) was usually kept as a reserve ship. In 1953 a new linkspan was opened in the outer harbour at Zeebrugge

In 1956 the old **Essex Ferry** was given the suffix II to free the name for a new ship. She was broken up the following year at Grays in Essex. The new **Essex Ferry** entered service in January 1957 having similar dimensions to her two immediate predecessors. A fourth ship was built in 1963 by Hawthorn Leslie. This was the **Cambridge Ferry**. Her cargo deck was flush with the rails recessed to allow the carriage of motor vehicles. She also had a hinged ramp to allow cars to be carried on her upper deck. Her capacity was 34 rail wagons. All four of the post-war ships had accommodation for 12 passengers. In 1967 with four ships available a service to Dunkerque commenced. Three of the ferries were modified to fit the berth at Dunkerque. The exception was the **Suffolk Ferry**. This service lasted until 1981 with occasional further sailings until 1986.

The threat of a Channel Tunnel and competition from Ro-Ro services led to the decline of the service. Capital expenditure was minimal and the **Stena Shipper** (1973) was chartered for the service in 1980. Converted to a Train Ferry and renamed **Speedlink Vanguard** she was able to carry 56 new type wagons. The **Suffolk Ferry** was broken up in 1981 whilst the **Essex Ferry** was sold to a Norwegian company. She was cut down and the hull was used as two pontoons by the oil industry before being scrapped in 1983. The **Norfolk Ferry** was retained as a stand-by ship being sold in 1983 and was also cut down to a pontoon.

The service had operated throughout without a major accident so it was unfortunate that the last ferry on the route was involved in a collision outside Harwich in 1982. On December 19th the inward bound **Speedlink Vanguard** collided with the **European Gateway** which was outward bound from Felixstowe. Although other Ferries and local harbour craft rushed to the scene just outside Landguard Point, six people were drowned when the **European Gateway** capsized and sank twenty minutes after the collision. Forty seven survivors were picked up. The decline of the service continued until its closure in January 1987 after which the **Speedlink Vanguard** was returned to Stena. The **Cambridge Ferry** was for several years a multi-purpose vessel being used from Dover to Dunkerque as well as a Ro-Ro on several of the Cross Channel and Irish Sea services with intermittent periods of lay up in the River Fal and at Milford. She was finally sold in 1992 and was broken up in 2003.

A Channel Tunnel was first proposed by a French mining engineer, Albert Mattieu, in

1802. His scheme was for a tunnel lit by oil lamps with horse drawn coaches with an artificial island in mid-channel where the horses could be changed. The vision of Napoleon's Cavalry emerging and galloping across the Kentish Weald was too much for the War Office and the press to consider! Another Frenchman, Aime Thome de Garmond, carried out geological & hydrographic surveys between Calais and Dover. In 1856 he proposed to Napoleon 111 the construction of a tunnel from Cap Gris Nez to Eastwater point with an airshaft on the Varne Bank. Over the next twenty years several schemes were put forward. However in 1876 an official protocol was established for a railway tunnel. In 1881 the Chairman of the South Eastern Railway, Sir William Watkin, and the French contractor, Alexandre Lavalley were partners in the Anglo-French Submarine Railway Company. Watkin had interests in several British Railway Companies also being the Chairman of the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway. His vision was for through trains from Manchester and Sheffield to Paris & beyond. Lavalley had been the contractor during the construction of the Suez Canal. Test borings were made from Shakespeare Cliff and Sangatte. The project was abandoned the following year when the vision of the French Cavalry was raised again. Over the next thirty years several schemes for train ferries were put forward but none got past the initial planning stage.

In 1911 a proposal was made for a cross channel train ferry to run from Newhaven to Dieppe. The London, Brighton & South Coast Railway in partnership with the French Western Railway formed the Channel Tunnel Ferry Co. Ltd. Like that of the St. Augustine scheme the enabling bill was lost in Parliament after the outbreak of war in August 1914. In 1930 a Royal Commission report to Parliament favoured a Channel Tunnel. This was immediately vetoed by the War Office and the Admiralty and rejected on a free vote in Parliament – those French Cavalrymen again!

Both the South Eastern Railway and the Brighton Company had been merged into the Southern Railway in 1923. It was this new company that proposed, in partnership with the French Company, S.A.G.A., the establishment of a rail ferry. Dunkerque was the obvious choice for the French terminal as the war time link span was still in place. Richborough was considered for the English terminal but was rejected on the grounds that frequent dredging would be necessary. In the end Dover was selected. The tidal range at Richborough is 15 feet whilst Dover's is almost 24ft. A special dock was built next to Admiralty Pier. This was, in effect, a lock or drydock and had two flap gates. This was, apparently the first use of this type of gate in Britain. The outer gate was a safeguard because in bad weather a swell can roll in to Dover Harbour through the Western entrance. It seems that it was rarely necessary for both gates to be used. During construction of this dock a fault was found in the stratum and this delayed completion for eighteen months. The levelling dock at Dover and the Dunkerque terminal being within the dock system meant that the ferries were virtually level to the quay when loading or discharging.

Three ships were ordered from Swan, Hunter & Wigham Richardson Ltd., Newcastle. These were 2,990 grt and were 360 feet overall with a beam of 63ft. Draught was 12.5ft. The **Twickenham Ferry** was delivered in July 1934 followed by the **Hampton Ferry** in November and the **Shepperton Ferry** in the following March. Because of the delay in building the dock the ships spent their first eighteen months laid up in

Southampton. All were coal fired twin screw turbines. Once the service commenced, the decision not to use Richborough proved to be correct as it was found that the ships needed tug assistance when berthing. A terminal at Richborough would have meant a tug being stationed there.

The service finally opened in October 1936. Unlike previous British Train Ferries these three ships were designed to carry passenger traffic. 12 sleeping cars or 40 goods wagons could be carried and side ramps were provided to allow the carriage of up to 25 cars on the upper deck (these three ships were in fact the first British "Drive on-Drive off" vessels). The passenger certificate was for 500. The train deck at the stern was partly wood sheathed between the rails to allow the carriage of heavier road vehicles. The service was an instant success. A "Night Ferry" sleeper train from Victoria arrived in Paris the following morning without the passengers needing to leave their berth. There were also single and double Cabins on board and "Couchettes".

The **Twickenham Ferry** was transferred to the associated French Company – Societe Angleterre-Lorraine-Alsace – towards the end of 1936. This was to give the French an equal share in the service. All passenger rolling stock was French built.

It is now appropriate to discuss the ships propulsion. As I previously mentioned, the first Harwich – Zeebrugge ferries were built with oil fired boilers and were converted to coal firing before entering commercial service. The three new Dover ships were coal fired when built being converted to oil firing during their post war refits.

During the construction of the Canterbury to Dover Railway in 1858 a seam of coal was discovered. This was developed as the Kent Coalfield. A cable way ran to the Eastern Docks at Dover so that coal was readily available. I assume that the Railway Company had an interest in this coalfield. Also a high proportion of Britain's Railway bulk freight traffic was coal. I would assume that all the Railway companies were able to obtain coal at discounted prices. As late as 1939 the Southern Railway commissioned their new flagship ferry **Invicta** as a coal burner. This ship was also converted to oil before entering service after the war. It was not until 1969 that a diesel engined ferry entered service at Dover for British Rail.

The two British flag ships were requisitioned towards the end of August 1939 leaving the **Twickenham Ferry** to maintain a skeleton service until May 1940. She was finally requisitioned the following month and returned to the British Flag for the duration of hostilities. **Hampton Ferry** served until July 1940 as a Minelayer whilst **Shepperton Ferry**, after brief service as a Minelayer, was used to transport military vehicles to France.

For the next three years or so all three ships were running between Stranraer and Larne for the military. During the winter and spring of 1944 the ships were all fitted with stern gantries to allow the carriage of heavy equipment, including railway vehicles, and, after the success of the Normandy landings they began train ferry services from Southampton to France. The terminal ports changed as the armies liberated ports up channel. Eventually the ships were running from Dover to Antwerp.

It was not until the December 1947 that the Dover to Dunkerque train ferry service resumed, although the three train ferries were running a commercial service to Calais

from February 1946. All three ships had been refitted and the **Twickenham Ferry** returned to the French flag. During the refits the ships were converted to oil firing.

In 1951 the French Company, S.A.G.A. was taken over by the French Railway S.N.C.F. and a new French flag train ferry entered service. The diesel engined **Saint-Germain** was destined to remain in service for 37 years! Her grt was 3,094 and at just under 380 ft she was 20 feet longer than the previous ferries although the beam was virtually the same. Draught was 13.5ft. – one foot more than the pre-war ferries.

The availability of four ferries became a godsend in February 1953 as both the **Shepperton Ferry** and the **Hampton Ferry** were used between Stranraer and Larne after the tragic loss of the **Princess Victoria** on January 31st. From 1953 until 1961 the **Hampton Ferry** was sent north each summer and **Shepperton Ferry** was used as a relief vessel from 1962 until 1966.

By the end of the 1960s the three pre-war ships were becoming long in the tooth. New ships were needed but again the threat of a Channel Tunnel precluded major investment. A new ship had been proposed as early as 1958 but had repeatedly been put on the back burner and some 15 designs were drawn up before an order was placed with Swan Hunter.

Eventually three new multipurpose ferries were built and these were able to serve as train ferries. The British contribution was the **Vortigern** which entered service in 1969. She was the first diesel ferry to be based at Dover for British Rail. Although fitted with a bow door this was not used when the vessel was on train ferry service. Gross tonnage was 4,371 and she was 3 ft shorter than **Saint-Germain** but had 2ft more beam. The French ordered two similar ferries (hull dimensions were the same). The **Chartres** entered service in 1974 for S.N.C.F. The third ship was delivered over three years late. Ordered by A.L.A. in Italy she was seized by creditors when the shipyard went bankrupt. The **St. Eloi** finally entered service in March 1975.

A multi-purpose ferry was purchased from Stena in May 1972. This was the **Anderida** which arrived at Dover in August. At 1,600 grt. she was smaller than the other train ferries and was just under 350 ft long and 53 ft beam. Her owners were Carpass (Shipping) Co. Ltd. and she was chartered to the British Railways Board - I assume this company was a subsidiary of B.R.B. as they became her owners in 1976. The delivery of these four ships meant that the pre-war ferries could be taken out of service. **Hampton Ferry** was withdrawn in 1969 followed by the **Shepperton Ferry** in 1972 and finally the **Twickenham Ferry** in 1974 at the ripe old age of 40.

In the early seventies yet another Channel Tunnel scheme was proposed and work started in 1974. However the M.O.D. did not like the idea and the scheme was abandoned in 1975 – the ghosts of the French cavalry rode again! In 1976 the French terminal was moved to Dunkerque Ouest. This new terminal at Gravelines – twelve miles west of Dunkerque - was outside the penned dock system and it meant that the reduced distance and shorter turn round made the service more viable.

The British Railways Board had set up Sealink as a separate division in 1970 and the ships' livery was changed to the double arrow symbol. In July 1984 Sealink (U.K.) was sold to Sea-Containers of Bermuda and in April 1990 the company was split up with Stena buying the greater portion.

The overnight sleeper service ended on October 31st 1980. The **Anderida** was sold in 1981. The venerable **Saint-Germain** became a freight ferry in 1985 and was finally sold for breaking up in 1988. The **Cambridge Ferry** from Harwich spent some time on the service. The **Chartres** was transferred to Dieppe – Newhaven in 1982 and was finally withdrawn in September 1993 and sold to Greek owners. At Dover the train ferry dock was closed in 1988 and a new linkspan was built on Admiralty Pier. In the same year the **Vortigern** was sold for further trading in Greece and the **Saint Eloi** was moved to a rail passenger service from Calais to Dover. In 1989 she was renamed **Channel Entente** and the following year she was sold to the Isle of Man Steam Packet Co. serving them for 8 years as **King Orry** before being sold to an Italian company and renamed **Moby Love**.

In May 1988 the last train ferry entered service. The **Nord Pas-de-Calais** had been completed at Dunkerque in December 1987 and had been used as a vehicle ferry between Calais and Dover. At 13,727 gross tons she was by far the biggest Train Ferry to serve a British Port. This vessel is still in service and her owners have changed their name twice. She now bears the rather cumbersome name of **Seafrance Nord Pas-de-Calais**. This ship took the final Train Ferry sailing from a British port on December 22nd 1995.

The French cavalry were finally laid to rest in February 1986 when the Treaty of Canterbury was signed (I don't remember hearing of the French worrying about the Household Cavalry galloping through France!). This allowed the construction of a Channel Tunnel to go ahead. Tunnelling commenced in June 1988 and the "Chunnel" finally opened in May 1994. One noticeable feature of the train ferries is their length in service. Two managed 40 years and several others exceeded 30 years. I never travelled on one but many thousand passengers did.



The **Shepperton Ferry** from the Collection of Geoff Holmes

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THE LOSS OF THE STEAMER ORION - JUNE 18th 1850

by LNRS Member Gordon Bodey

The paddle steamer **Orion** of the Glasgow & Liverpool Steamship Co. (owners G & J Burns, Glasgow) was primarily a passenger vessel running between Glasgow and Liverpool, and had been engaged on the route since her delivery in 1847. Officially she had accommodation for 115 cabin-class passengers, divided between fore and main cabins, and some 50 steerage passengers, who travelled on deck during her summer sailings.

On this voyage she had a crew of thirty-eight comprised of: Master, first mate and second mate, eight seamen and three apprentice boys, plus two seamen who also acted as pilots, a First and 2nd engineer, eight firemen and four coal trimmers, a principal and three other stewards, a stewardess, a cook and a cook's boy. She also carried a carpenter.

As well as passengers, **Orion** had hold capacity for about twenty tons of general cargo, which was usually separated into light and heavy goods. Heavy goods were carried in the after hold that ran back to the stern underneath the saloon and the steering position aft. On this passage she was carrying some eight tons of sheet iron, iron rods, and bags of iron nails, as well as machinery, which had been stowed by men called lumpers. Supervision of cargo loading was the province of the shipping clerk at Liverpool, Daniel McKellar, and outside the responsibility of the ship's officers. The nature of her cargo and its location was later to be claimed as having a direct bearing on the ship's subsequent fate.

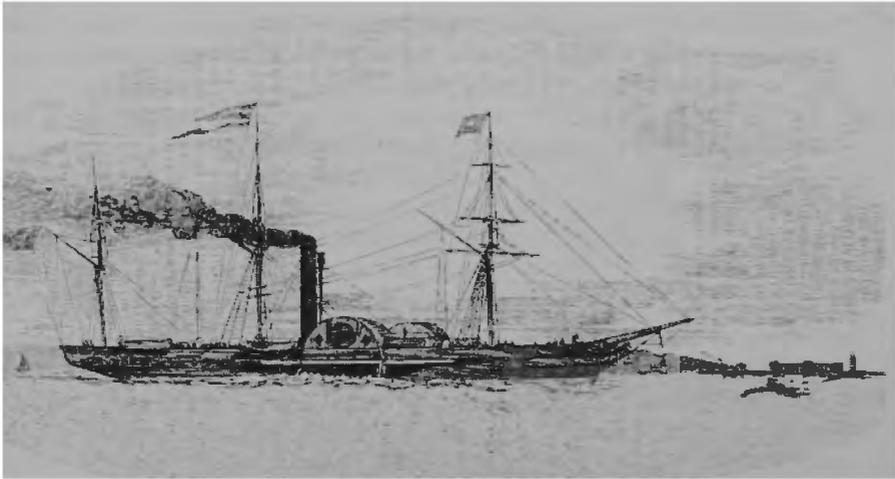
Orion was built by Messrs. Caird & Co. at Crawfordsdyke, Greenock (Yard No.14), and launched on 19th December 1846. She was an iron-built vessel of 899 tons burthen, with a length of 200ft on the keel and 210ft 6in. overall. Her breadth on the beam was 27ft 1in., depth of hold 18ft 6in., and her draught 11ft 6in. Propulsion was provided by a two-cylinder, side-lever engine of 460 nhp (1120 ihp), supplied by the builder, giving her a reported speed of up to fourteen knots. There is no evidence of her having utilised sails.

Orion's master at the time of her loss, Captain Thomas Henderson, was a man of considerable experience, although not in steamers. He had been appointed by the company's Marine Superintendent, Captain Walter Douglas, from a number of applicants, and took command of her in August 1849 in succession to Captain Hugh Main who had commanded her from when she commenced service. Captain Henderson had previously been master of the East Indiaman **Glenswilly** (Honeyman of Glasgow) since Spring 1844. The first mate was Mr. George Langlands and the second mate was Mr. John Williams, of Edmond Street, Liverpool, who had served on the **Orion** for eleven months, and who had served as a second mate for two and a half years in all. In addition he had several years experience in other capacities on this particular stretch of coast.

Although the number of passengers on board was said to have been 160 it is possible that there may have been somewhat more. On this voyage the cabin-class berths were overbooked, and a number of last-minute un-booked passengers were seen to board the vessel immediately prior to her sailing, but this informal passage taking was not uncommon at that time; indeed, the Rev. George Thomson and his wife were due to travel to Glasgow by rail that day, but finding that the **Orion** (then considered one of the finest vessels afloat) was scheduled to sail that afternoon, and the weather set fair, decided to sail with her. Second steward John McHaffie later said that there were 115 passengers [cabin-class] on board, but that the number of steerage passengers could vary between forty and sixty, and he did not know how many were on board that night but thought there were perhaps forty, although he had not made a list.

The fateful voyage of **Orion** occurred on the run from Liverpool, from where she sailed at 4.20 p.m. on Monday, 17th June 1850. She had been due to leave the Clarence dock at 3 p.m. but her sailing was delayed, due to precedence being given to three incoming ships entering the dock. On clearing the dock she sailed out into a very tranquil Mersey under clear skies - conditions that were to remain so for the duration of the voyage. Her passage to Glasgow under reasonable conditions usually took about fifteen hours, and she made three round trips per fortnight.

Orion passed Point of Ayre, I.O.M., at 10.25 p.m. that night, and at 11p.m., before the Galloway coast was sighted, the captain told the helmsman to, '*go nothing to the north*', which was taken as a hint to keep to the westward. At ten minutes before midnight **Orion** was abreast the point of the Mull of Galloway which was clearly visible, at about a mile distant, although the light on the head was not as distinct as the land. This was due to the altitude of the light, which was considered to be set too high at that point. [The light, set at an altitude of 325ft, presents the same problem to modern-day navigators when mist or low-lying cloud prevails, and as a result is often not visible, let alone brilliant, but when clear it is visible at some twenty-eight miles distant.]



Orion leaving the Mersey bound for Glasgow

The seaman who had the helm from 10 p.m. to ten minutes past midnight, David Walker of Glasgow, thought the vessel too close to the land - unusually so. Although the depth of water there is adequate his concern may have been due to knowing the danger presented by the very strong tidal race off the point; present-day advice is to give the point a three-mile offing. This concern was shared by a seaman, Donald McKinnon, on his way back to Glasgow as a steerage passenger having travelled down from Fort William on the sailing vessel **Commodore** as pilot as far as Mull of Kintyre, then as seaman from there to Liverpool. He was on the foredeck of the **Orion** when off the Mull of Galloway and said that she was '*almost shaving the rocks*'.

Seaman John Kelly took over the helm from Walker at 12.10 a.m. as the **Orion** was just to the south of Dunman Head, some four miles NW of the Mull of Galloway. He also thought the ship to be too close to the land, as close as 200 yards, and he remarked that he had not seen her so close as that on previous voyages. She was then steering NNW, a course that was running her even closer to the shore. But abreast Dunman Head he was given a course of NW½W to steer, which took the ship the land and past the twin headland of Crammag Head (then, and still locally, variously called Cromart or Cromack Point) about a mile farther on, which she was off abreast of at about 12.15 a.m. and some 200 yards off. McKinnon, now standing in the bow, thought the vessel in danger of striking the outlying rocks off the point

From Crammag Head the course had been progressively brought round to N½W by the time the ship was nearing Dunskey Point, some 12 nautical miles farther on, and a half-mile south of Portpatrick. In charge of the deck on the midnight to 4 a.m. watch was the second mate, John Williams. This watch was known as the Captain's watch, but the Company did not delegate any watch to its masters. Captain Henderson had, however, been about the deck for almost the whole of the 8 p.m. to midnight watch. On

this watch there were two look-outs on the paddle bridge forward of the paddle-wheel boxes: James Stewart on the port side (larboard as then called), and Robert Wilson on the starboard side, which was looking to landward. No look-out had been placed in the bow, although the paddle bridge look-outs reportedly had an unimpeded view over the bow.

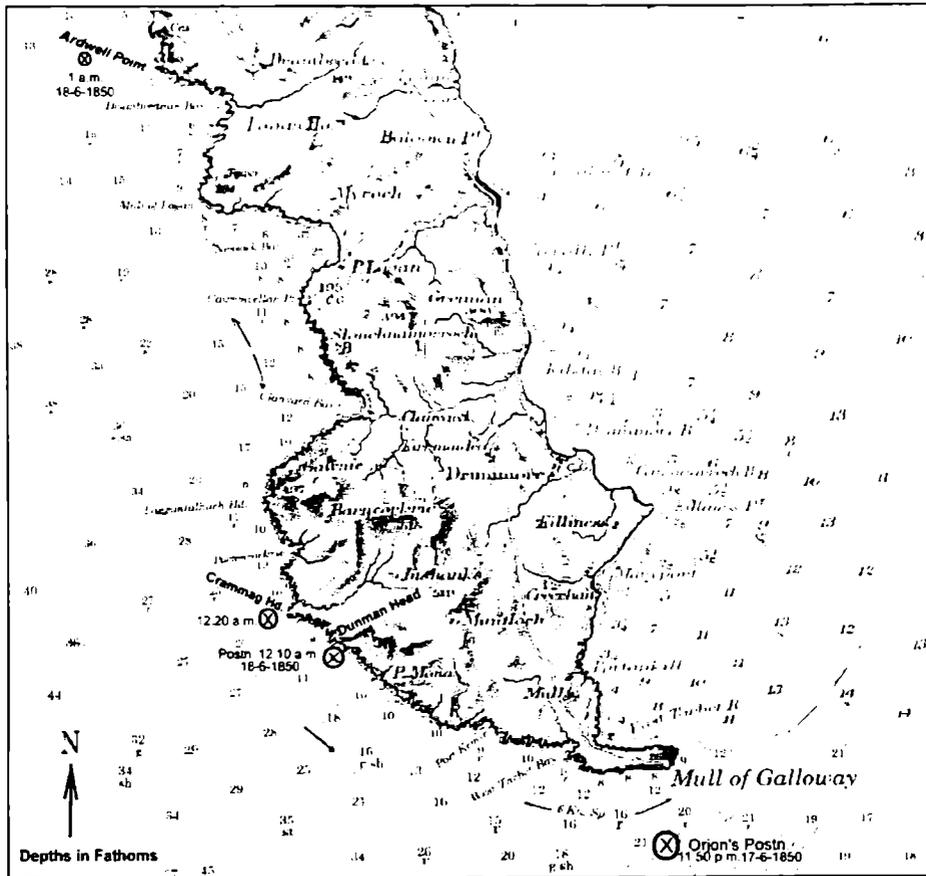


Fig. 1: Mull of Galloway to Ardwell Point

Robert Wilson, the starboard look-out, was in fact the Clyde pilot (and had been one for eleven years) and had travelled with the Orion each trip for the previous two and a half years. When clear of the Clyde he acted as a seaman on board the ship until she returned to the approaches to the Clyde, when he took over her pilotage. In this capacity he was paid thirty shillings per week, the same as the second mate. Likewise, seaman George Williams was the Mersey pilot and employed on the same basis as Robert Wilson. When the second mate took over the watch at midnight the ship had passed the western end of the Mull at about a mile distant. Thereafter he had changed the course briefly to NNW½W (another half point off the shore), but soon afterwards

told the helmsman to go half a point more inshore i.e back to NNW. Then he changed it again saying, '*Keep her north by west, Jack*' - still more inshore. But when Kelly took the wheel, as she was approaching Dunman Head, he was given the course NNW as above. Captain Henderson came back on deck just after 12.10 a.m. and went aft and looked at the compass. He remained there for five minutes, but did not give any alteration of course to the helmsman. He said to the second mate, '*John, if it becomes any way thick or hazy, mind to give me a call*', and then went forward and below and Kelly did not see the captain on deck again. After the captain had gone forward the second mate told the helmsman to go N $\frac{1}{4}$ W. By then **Orion** must have rounded Laggantalluch Head and would have had plenty of sea-room until falling in with the land again, about four miles farther on, at Mull of Logan.

However, the captain had come on deck again briefly about 1a.m. and told the look-out men on the paddle bridge to keep a bright look out - presumably for other vessels they believed as the land could be clearly seen (the land about Ardwell Point) - before going below again. The **Orion** was now about halfway between Dunman Head and Portpatrick. As the vessel approached Dunskey Point (about half-a-mile south of Portpatrick), steering N $\frac{1}{2}$ W, Wilson called out, '*A light on the starboard bow*'. It was Portpatrick light. This old light¹ was situated 429ft to landward of the end of the south pier, and though sited thirty-eight feet above high water mark it was a poor that could only be seen at about four miles distant, but it was adequate in most circumstances for a vessel approaching Portpatrick to enable it to steer off the shore in good time as there is deep water up to the pier.

Wilson, thinking that they were perhaps only about 200 yards off the point, left his lookout station and went aft to where the second mate was standing by the helmsman and said to him, '*John, do you see no land there?*' The mate simply replied, '*Yes*', and Wilson returned to his station. However, she must then have been about 250 yards off the point for the light to have been seen sighted round the headland immediately to the south of Portpatrick, which distance is also consistent with her course and where she struck. Although an immediate alteration of course could have averted the disaster no action was taken to change it from N $\frac{1}{2}$ W. Soon afterwards a sudden and startled call was heard from amidships, '*Hard-a-starboard*'. Then, '*Land right ahead*'. The calls were from Duncan Campbell, a seaman, who saw land a little on the port bow and perhaps a quarter-mile off. At this the second mate ran toward the skylight in the vicinity of the captain's cabin (situated under the starboard lookout's station), but then ran back to help the helmsman, Kelly, put the wheel hard-a-starboard.

As this occurred Wilson shouted to the port-side lookout, James Stewart, that '*she was never as near the land since she was a boat*'. Stewart shouted him to go aft again and tell them to keep her off. Wilson ran to the helm where he found the second mate and the helmsman frantically trying to starboard the helm. He threw his weight to the wheel to assist them in putting the helm hard-a-starboard [i.e. to starboard the helm, which would have the effect of turning the ship's head to port, and away from the land], but just as she began to answer the helm she struck on her starboard bow bilge.

It was at about 1.30 a.m. on the Tuesday morning that **Orion** was passing the south pier of Portpatrick harbour at about 80 yards off, and making about thirteen knots.

Momentarily a thin mist came down and the second mate, according to his own recollection, was about to call the master when **Orion** struck. She had run on to the top of Outer Ward Rock (always submerged, even at low water), part of the underwater extremity of Ward Head some 380 yards to the north of the then end of the south pier of Portpatrick harbour entrance, and 150 yards from the shore cliff. This was at 1.35 a.m., and when she struck the hull beneath the engine compartment was ripped open. She sank in five fathoms within fifteen minutes despite being fitted with four watertight bulkheads. The land that had been sighted on the port bow as the ship neared the south pier was in fact the Barnoch Rock - 270 yards NNW from the Outer Ward Rock.

Prior to the striking, the imminent disaster was first observed from the shore by David Adair, a fisherman whose house was on the seafront facing the harbour entrance. He was in an upstairs room baiting his lines for an early start that morning. He heard the steamer's approach and looking out was surprised at how near the end of the pier she was. He immediately ran down to raise the alarm knowing that she must strike on the Outer Ward Rock, but once in the street he saw that she had done so. Adair got into his boat, which was lying ready for the day's fishing, and was joined by John Oke, a neighbour, who had been sitting up reading when he also saw the **Orion's** proximity to the end of the pier and rushed out. They rowed out to pick up whoever might be in the water. It took them five minutes to reach her, by which time she was well down by the head, and rescued fifteen of the swimmers.

Another onshore witness was David Armstrong, a fisherman who also lived opposite the harbour entrance, and was walking about his room unwell. Startled by **Orion's** closeness and had his daughter run immediately to rouse Commander Edward Hawes R.N., the General Superintendent of Portpatrick harbour, three doors away, whilst he roused Alexander Hannay, the foreman of the harbour works. Between them they had eight more boats manned and turned out within ten minutes, but by the time they put off **Orion** had sunk.

When she struck the majority of the passengers, as well as the crew not on watch, were asleep below and not immediately aware of the disaster; many were not even awoken by the initial impact which was, reportedly, heard by some simply as a loud scraping sound. Some of the steerage passengers carried on the deck were, however, still wandering about, and probably helped to rouse those below.

According to Wilson's account, Captain Henderson appeared at his side soon after she struck and asked him where they were, and on being told immediately gave the order to clear away the boats. The other lookout, Stewart, also stated that the order to clear the boats was given immediately, but this version of Captain Henderson's response was to be found at variance with that recollected by a number of responsible and reputable passengers. Immediately after she struck, many on board were not unduly troubled, thinking that she had simply grounded and they would only have to wait for the tide to go out (in fact, low water had been $1\frac{3}{4}$ hours before, at 11.53 p.m.) then walk ashore. It was soon realised that was not the case and pandemonium broke out, which increased as the vessel began to dip by the head and list badly to starboard quite rapidly. Their fears were not quieted by the actions of Captain Henderson as reported by a number of passengers.

He had been asleep below rather than on deck during most of the passage along the Galloway peninsula (which, on its west side, is for almost its whole length bounded by very precipitous cliffs and jagged rocky outcrops) after Ardwell Point, and when roused came on deck in his 'shirt and drawers' by the account of the Rev. George Thomson. Climbing onto a seat he shouted to the passengers, '*Keep to the ship - you are all safe if you keep to the ship*'. To a man who said to him that the ship was quite near the shore, Captain Henderson said, '*We are too near the shore, that has been the cause of it*'. He told the ladies to compose themselves, whereupon one of them pointed out to him that the ship was already listing badly and that the main cabin deck was awash. Shortly afterwards he was observed near the engine-house shouting that there was no danger and to keep calm, apparently under the impression that the ship would settle on the rock she had struck and remain above water. However, this was not to be as the vessel had rebounded after the impact and slid off the rock, probably helped by the southward flow of the tide (which commences its southward flow two hours before low water), and soon heeled over so badly that it was not possible to stand upright without a handhold.

A steerage passenger, Mr Adam Forbes of Stirling, later stated that he also saw the captain in his shirt and drawers standing near the engine-house shouting out that there was no danger, and to keep calm. He also said that a large number of passengers at first agreed with the captain's initial opposition to the launch of the lifeboats - the captain calling on all to remain with the ship saying that there was no danger and threatening to, '*cut the hands off the first man that should touch the boats*'. A cabin passenger, Peter Townsend, an accountant of Sherwood St., Liverpool, also attested to the master's state of undress and his appearance of having just got out of bed, and to his reluctance to have the boats launched. Mr. Townsend was ordered out of a boat that he was helping to clear by the master. The previously mentioned Donald McKinnon also attested (two weeks later at Fort William) that he heard the master calling on everyone to stand by the ship and that he had delayed ordering the boats to be lowered.

Orion carried two full-sized lifeboats (approximately 25ft 6in x 7ft 6in x 2ft 11in deep), one behind each paddle-wheel box, in davits swung inboard. These were each capable, according to their builder, John MacDonald of Greenock, of carrying between seventy and eighty people. She also carried two smaller boats, one aft of each lifeboat, referred to as quarter boats (approximately 22ft x 6ft x 2ft 11in. deep), which could each carry up to thirty people. There was also a small boat hung over the stern, referred to as the captain's pinnace. The latter was, reportedly, the first boat to be released. As it was being lowered, filled with passengers, the gearing on one fall jammed whilst the other end continued its descent to the water. Its occupants were thrown into the water and were swept away by the southward-flowing current.

However, as attempts were being made to lower the two boats on the starboard side in the early-morning light amid scenes of panic, grave problems were soon apparent. The first was that the boats were sheeted over with tied-down stout canvas covers to keep out the water. Initially, none of the crew went to the boats to remove the covers (possibly awaiting the master's order to do so), nor were knives to hand to effect their removal. Passengers themselves were the first to try to release the covers, which

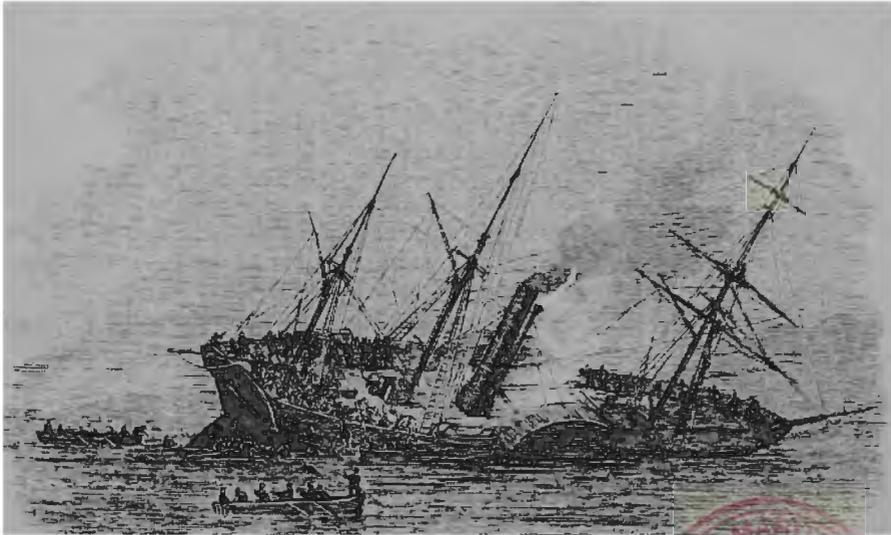
added to the panic that had now taken hold.

When the covers were removed another deficiency became apparent: there were no plugs to be found for the drainage holes in the bottom of the boats, which were normally left open to allow any ingress of water to drain away; these should have been on lanyards attached to the boat in the vicinity of the drainage holes - they were, unbeknown to those trying to escape, stored in the stern lockers of the boats. Also, there were neither rowlocks nor thowls attached on the gunwales for the oars, most of which were missing - apparently as a result of being taken out at Liverpool for cleaning and then left lying in the ship's gangway. It also emerged that each boat had a ring-bolt attached to the middle of its keel, which was fastened to the deck as an extra securing device, even though the keels rested in inch-deep notches in each of three chocks secured to the deck. The ring-bolt device had been Captain Henderson's idea and, supposedly, it would be wrenched out if the boat was hauled out of its chocks in an emergency. Kelly, who had sailed in the ship for twenty months, had only seen the boats swung out twice in that time - for cleaning.

Those trying to get the two starboard-side boats away now found that the davits and tackle were seized up, and also that the keel of the forward of the boats was wedged in the chock grooves. This boat was already filled with passengers who were ordered out while the carpenter, Andrew Walker, tried to free the keel from the grooves. When this failed he resorted to smashing the chocks with an axe, but doing so probably cost him his life: he injured himself so badly that he was unable to save himself when the time came, but the boat was now able to be swung out without passengers in it. As the boat's after end reached the water its bow caught on the platform at the after end of the paddle box, which by then was almost at water level, and people scrambled into it. However, as the ship's head dipped and heeled over to starboard the boat (already filling through the plug-hole) was completely swamped by the turbulence caused, and its occupants swept away. The quarter boat on the starboard side was then lowered, but so hurriedly that it too was completely swamped leaving all its occupants floundering in the water.

On the port side similar scenes of pandemonium and confusion prevailed with passengers crowding into the boats before they were freed and being ordered out. The quarter boat's stern fell into the water with its bow still suspended as a result of the after davit breaking off but was eventually freed and, with as many in it as could be safely held, reached the shore having had to be baled with the men's hats. The forward boat was got into the water at the second attempt and then only when the forward fall was eventually cut having failed to lower leaving the stern almost in the water and the bow in the air. The boat fortunately did not swamp when it fell, and about thirty people scrambled into it, including some of the crew - no 'women and children first' ethic was observed.

In a deposition seaman David Walker said that the sheaves of the blocks had shrunk and the ropes would not run. He also said that each of the boats was fastened to the bulwarks by two belts, and that none of them had been uncovered let alone lowered in four months. The abysmal state of the boats and their tackle was confirmed by Lt. Maurice Jones R.N., a passenger, who helped to get the port quarter boat into the water.



Orion Sinking off Portpatrick

Patrick Homer, a labourer at Portpatrick, was at the rock-strewn bay² to the east of where she struck when the quarter boat came in. He said that it was occupied by about eighteen passengers (mainly men) and at least four crew members. The drainage hole had been plugged with handkerchiefs, and despite the baling with hats the water in it was almost knee-deep. On putting a proper plug in, and baling it out to send the boat out again, it was found that something was snagged on the bottom of the boat. This turned out to be a length of rope with the snapped-off davit still attached. It was this davit that 52-year old Captain Archibald McKecknie a passenger, and a shipmaster of some 20 years, noted as being rusted through when he tried to assist in the boat's launching. Of those saved the majority were rescued by the small flotilla of boats from the shore, although some managed to swim ashore. Not all of those who swam ashore survived the ordeal. In particular Alexander Graham, the principal steward who, on the point of leaving the ship, went below to retrieve the passage monies that he had collected on board from the last-minute passage-takers, then swam ashore. These amounted to £100 (an indication of how many un-booked passengers were on board) and were found on him when he died soon after making the shore. He had been with the company over twenty-four years. The captain, the mate, and a boy remained clinging to the top of the rigging, which was still above water (as was the funnel) long after everyone else had either been swept away or rescued; the captain being the last to let go because, he said, he was directing the rescue operations!

A notable casualty was Dr John Burns, Professor of Surgery at Glasgow University, a brother of the ship's owners. Other casualties included passengers from all parts of the country, but many from Merseyside, including Thomas Gladstone, the ten-year old nephew of William Gladstone, the future Prime Minister. Although every life lost that

day was a tragedy, one of the most poignant stories of the disaster was that of Mr John Splatt, a farmer from Kenton, Devon. He and his wife, Betsy, aged 68, and their four unmarried daughters aged between 38 and 22 were to join a ship at Glasgow to take them to settle in Australia. It seems that he believed that his daughters might have greater prospects of marriage there than at home. His wife and all four daughters perished. He also lost his life savings of £700 in the wreck. In addition to the principal steward and the carpenter (who had joined the ship only two weeks previously), two other members of the crew were lost: the stewardess, Mrs McBain, and an apprentice, James Dunn. The total number of lives lost was not actually known but was eventually thought to be fifty-four, and for some days after the tragedy boatmen went out to search for bodies down the whole western coastline of the peninsula, from Corsewall in the north to the Mull of Galloway in the south. Eleven of the victims are interred in Portpatrick old kirkyard.

As is usual in such disasters there were unsung heroes, and some whose conduct was less than worthy. Among the latter, as noted above, many of those in the two boats that reached the shore were either crew members or male passengers. Most praiseworthy was the unflinching and prolonged rescue efforts of the eighteen men who crewed the nine shore boats and rescued some one hundred of the passengers and crew, and many of the bodies of those who perished - as was the great care and hospitality shown to the survivors by the people of Portpatrick.

At 5.30 a.m. on the morning of the disaster Captain J.J. Wheeler of the steamer **Fenella**³ on route from Fleetwood to Troon, when passing Portpatrick, learnt of the disaster and took her into the harbour to see what assistance he could render. Captain Henderson of the **Orion** went on board the **Fenella** at six a.m. where he wrote a short note to **Orion**'s owners informing them of the loss as follows:

'Portpatrick, June 18th, 1850.

Messrs. J. & G. Burns

Gentlemen, - It has become my painful duty to announce to you that the Orion struck the rocks a little to the northward of this place this morning at about a quarter past one, and immediately filled, and sunk in seven fathoms water. From the moment she first struck, the engines became useless, and I found it impossible to run her on shore to save the lives of the passengers. I very much fear the loss of life is great, but at present I cannot ascertain the particulars.

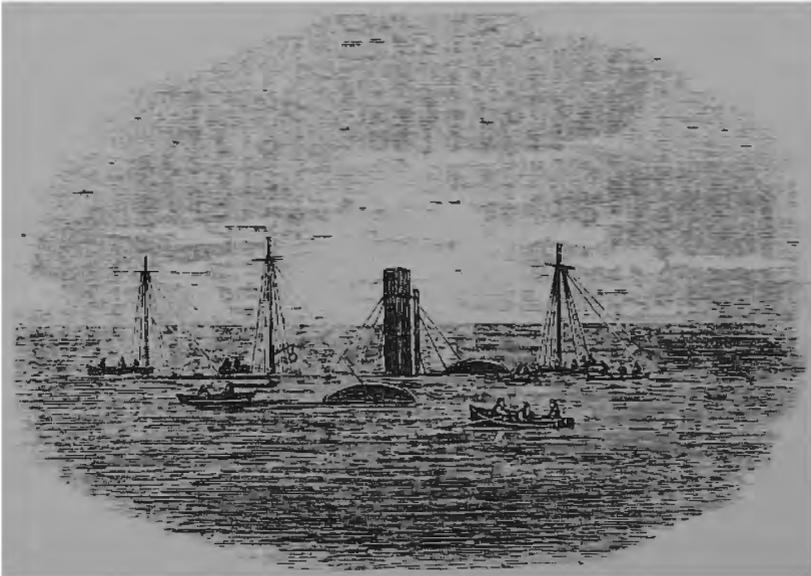
I have forwarded those passengers who are in a fit state to be removed, via Troon to Glasgow. I am exceedingly sorry to state that Dr. Burns is among the drowned. His body is now in safekeeping till I know your wishes, I send this to you by Mr. Langlands, my chief officer, to whom I beg to refer you for particulars. Captain Dalzell [agent for the underwriters] is on the spot, and has written to the underwriters, ...'

This he sent by the chief officer, Mr G. Langlands, who left on the **Fenella**, along with nineteen of the survivors, before mid-day.

Of course, Captain Henderson had neither the time nor the means to try to run his ship on shore; nor would such a feat have been possible at that location; nor is there any testimony that he tried to despite implying in his note that he had. Indeed, the Rev. J. Clarke, a passenger of Stretford, Manchester, was to publish a somewhat discursive

account of the tragedy in 1851, in which he noted Captain Henderson's lack of presence, let alone control and leadership, at the time, and which he had voiced the day following the event, as did many others. The only recorded level-headed attempt to avert a greater catastrophe was that made by the engineer on watch, 2nd engineer James Pattison, who immediately stopped the engines and released the steam pressure from the boiler, thus possibly preventing it exploding. Before she sank what was thought to be an explosion was heard, but this was the air that had been compressed by the rising water blowing out the saloon skylight.

On the morning that **Orion** sank, William Ross, superintendent of police at Stranraer went to Portpatrick to supervise accommodation for the recovered bodies. Later in the day he borrowed diving gear and went onto the wreck site to determine the exact location where she struck. First he examined the Outer Ward Rock and found many pieces of iron and fractured rock. He then went out to the Barnoch Rock but found that undamaged. This was confirmed some days later by William Knott, a seaman and diver from Portsmouth, who found an estimated ton of newly fractured rock at the Outer Ward Rock location. On 25th June, a diver from Liverpool, William Carter, was sent down to examine the vessel's starboard bilge. He found a rent some four feet wide and twenty feet long, six feet above the keel, and the iron plating '*hanging over like a flap*'. He also found and brought up three bodies from the cabin.



The sunken **Orion** at low water on the day of the disaster

On 19th June, the day following the ship's loss, declarations were taken from Captain Henderson and second mate Williams before the procurator-fiscal of Stranraer, A. M'Neel Caird, at Portpatrick. Due to the nature and the scale of the disaster, the Government immediately had Captain Henry Mangles Denham R.N. dispatched to the

scene to collect as much evidence as possible from the survivors and crew members before they dispersed (many had already left, and how many were still there when he arrived is not known as Captain Denham's report has not been located), and from witnesses on shore, and to prepare a report regarding the conduct of the officers in control of the vessel at the time of the accident. Captain Denham, a representative of the world's arbitrating authority at that time (and acting under the auspices of the Board of Trade), arrived at Portpatrick on Sunday, 23rd June 1850 and started work immediately by going out to the scene of the wreck and examining the immediate area. On 25th June Captain Denham took depositions from the two lookout men, Wilson and Stewart, and Walker the helmsman who was at the wheel between 10 p.m. and ten minutes past midnight. His report was apparently completed and delivered to Whitehall by 26th June, as a result of which a decision was taken on 28th June by the Lord Advocate for Scotland to institute prosecutions against all three of the *Orion's* officers. For the following six weeks many steamship captains, mates, and pilots navigating that coast and the estuary of the Clyde (none of whom were on the ship at the time of the disaster) were questioned by the procurator-fiscal's office to determine where culpability for the disaster might lie.

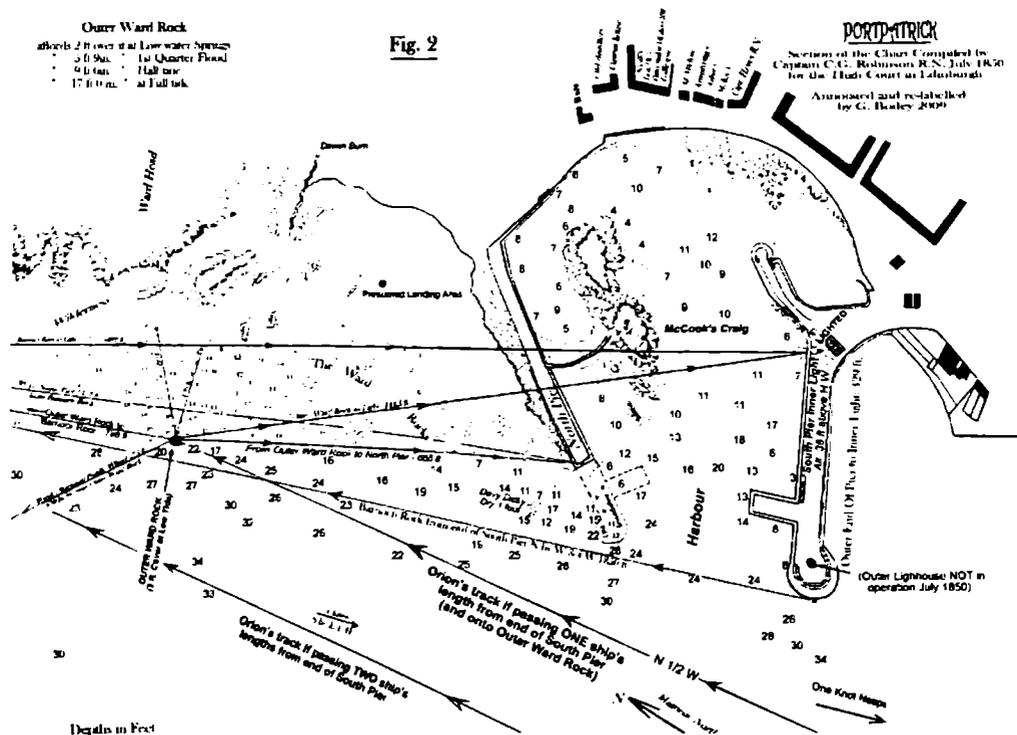


Fig. 2

For the guidance and understanding of the Court, Captain C.G. Robinson R.N senior Admiralty hydro-grapher who had made extensive surveys of the Wigtownshire coast, took accurate measurements of the approaches to the disaster scene; the sizes of Outer Ward Rock and Barnoch Rock and their coverage at various states of the tide; also the behaviour of the tidal flow and its effects on vessels close in to the land. He found the wreck with its bow pointing north, lying in 30ft at the bow and 36ft at the stern, with the starboard paddle 475ft NWbyW of the Outer Ward Rock [Fig.2], having apparently been moved by successive tides. He also prepared large-scale charts, with courses marked to show the safe and proper navigation of that coast. [It is not known if such accurately detailed information was generally available in chart form to masters at that time, although by 1857 it was.] He was to elucidate further in court, and be questioned by both sides. Also, a model of the *Orion* was made at Greenock for illustration in court. Meanwhile Captain Henderson and second mate Williams had been arrested and lodged in Stranraer jail, but were later to be freed on bail. On Thursday, 29th August 1850 all three officers were arraigned at the High Court in Edinburgh before the Lord Justice-Clerk and Lords Wood and Ivory, and a jury, and each charged with culpable homicide and culpable and reckless neglect of duty. All three pleaded "Not Guilty". The trial was to take three full days, including Saturday, each lasting from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Some fifty witnesses were called in court to give evidence, explanations and opinions, and to be questioned by the prosecution, the defence lawyers, and by the Court. Only one of the passengers was called to testify to the events that took place after the ship struck, which was later a cause of great dissatisfaction to many of those not called. However, as the main, and more serious, charges on which the prosecution hoped to secure conviction only concerned events leading up to the grounding, those occurring in the aftermath, not being of an indictable nature, were of less relevance to the prosecution's case. George Langlands, the first mate, was early dismissed from the bar because he had gone off watch before the event. The Solicitor-General had sought to implicate him in the charges as one who had independent responsibility for the good order of the lifeboats, the lack of which contributed greatly to the loss of life, but the Crown was unable to find this to be so, and withdrew the charges. However, on the morning of the disaster, and before he left for Troon, Langlands, possibly believing that he might eventually have to face a charge with respect to the unseaworthiness of the lifeboats, had the entire remains of the boats carted away to Glasgow.

According to Captain Henderson's declaration of 19th June, which was read to the Court, he was asleep on a sofa in his cabin when the *Orion* struck. He had not considered it his duty, in the state of the weather and position of the ship, to be on deck at the time. He said that he had been in a state of fatigue and had required rest. Also, he was aroused by the shock when the ship struck and rushed on deck. At the end of his declaration, however, he said that his state of undress on deck was due to having stripped himself [in his cabin] when the ship struck in order to swim ashore! He also said that he thought the accident happened by the miscalculation of the second officer of the distance of the ship from the land, and that he exerted himself as much as possible to save the lives of the passengers.

The second mate's declaration was also read to the Court. In it he said that the fog had come down thick off Portpatrick and he was going to call the master, as he was earlier instructed, when she struck. He could not understand how the accident had occurred, unless the current had swept the vessel inshore against the helm. He also said that he kept the vessel near the shore to shun the tide. It would seem that it is this item of his statement that indicates the reason for the disaster.

Captain Robinson had told the Court that the tide was flowing southward at about two knots near the shore off Portpatrick at the time of the disaster, and its effect there would be to take the vessel inshore; also, said Lt. A. Parks R.N., commander of H.M. steam vessel *Dasher*, advantage could only be gained keeping close to shore if a strong spring tide was running which, at 1½ miles off the shore in that area, is indicated on the chart as 4½ knots, but no advantage would ensue at neap tide. The moon having been full on June 10th it was, in fact, a neap tide at the time of the disaster: spring tides occur 36 hours after the full moon or a new moon. Not only were they mistakenly trying to shun the tide but were also trying to 'run the tide'. This was confirmed by the helmsman, John Kelly, who said that they had had a good run and were alongside Portpatrick sooner than their usual run, and would have made Greenock by 8 a.m. This would have enabled the vessel to be there before the tide to take her to Glasgow, which would otherwise have been missed. Running the coast close was successful until near Dunskey Point when, for reasons unknown, recklessness got the better of second mate Williams.

With regard to the above practise the Lord Justice-Clerk made the following observation:

"It was much to be feared that captains often ran close to the shore to avoid currents and tides, in order to save time; and having escaped disasters on repeated occasions by such courses, they become over confident, and at length adopt a course which at first they would have thought it insane to attempt. That was the great occasion of accidents of all kinds; but the leading principle to be adopted in judging of such cases, was not how near the coast a captain might venture without danger, but how far off he ought to keep in order to avoid all risks..."

Exculpatory evidence was given by a dozen or more highly experienced mariners who testified to the practises, courses steered, and onus of responsibility etc. when travelling that coast, some of whom were questioned on their evidence by the defence, the prosecution, and by the Court. Williams' counsel, Mr Penney, contended that the accident was occasioned by a deflection of the compass by which the ship was steered, caused by the location of the iron in her cargo (and not known about by Williams), and which was sufficient to account for the orders given by Williams. The steering compass was otherwise reading correctly, as testified by John Gray, nautical instrument maker of Strand St., Liverpool, who had supplied it in July 1847, and had tested it on May 20th 1850, at the behest of the master, and found that all the compasses⁴ 'were quite right'. In his summing-up to the jury on behalf of Williams Mr Penney attributed the whole cause of the accident to such compass deflection, although no such concern had been raised prior to the disaster.

The validity of Penney's contention was scorned by the Lord Justice-Clerk who pronounced as follows:

"As regarded the case of the mate [Williams], the case that had been principally made for him, as to the deflection of the binnacle compass, entirely failed. It was proved beyond doubt that the land was visible the whole way from the Mull of Galloway northwards. It was in vain, therefore, to talk of a deflection of the compass on a coast so well known as that of Wigtownshire; and the jury would consider whether or not it was consistent with innocence that he did not keep further out at sea, when the land within sight was a rocky shore, more especially after receiving warnings from the seamen who were on watch, and who admonished him of the fact; and more especially after passing so close to Portpatrick harbour, the light of which was seen and recognised".

Mr Crawford, counsel for Captain Henderson, in his summing-up to the jury contended that the master's sojourn below on his sofa whilst the ship was heading for disaster was perfectly legitimate in view of the fact that the 2nd mate was considered sufficiently experienced to run the coast without the master's presence. With regard to the captain's fatigue, and his delegation of duty to a junior officer, the Lord Justice-Clerk observed that:

"This took place in a voyage which, on ordinary occasions, did not exceed 15 hours, and which, on the occasion in question, commenced at Liverpool, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon of a beautiful summer day, when the vessel was steered down the Mersey by the river pilot, thus, for that portion of the voyage, lessening the captain's responsibility. Could it be said, then, that the captain was not bound to have started fresh from Liverpool, so as to have enabled him to remain on watch during so short and easy a voyage ...? It was not pretended that the captain's duties required him to superintend the loading of the vessel, and this still further left him without excuse on the score of physical inability to maintain the watch throughout the night".

His Lordship also issued a stern warning to masters and owners with reference to lifeboats:

"... from the state in which the boats were at the time of the accident, and their original construction, was most important, as shewing the consequence of inefficient boats in the case of accidents. Should it be found, on any future occasion, that life was lost in consequence of inability to launch or navigate the boats, arising from such impediments as the coverings which had been spoken to in this case, or any other devices resorted to for the purpose of economy, either of the boats themselves or the vessel to which they belonged, grave criminal responsibility would arise, as well as to the captain who neglected to use all appliances in his power to keep them in proper order, or the proprietor who should fail to have supplied sufficient boats in the first instance, or refused proper allowance to have them maintained".

His Lordship charged the jury and then recapitulated and explained the relevant details of the evidence to it over a period of some four hours. After retiring for half-an-hour the jury, by a majority verdict, found Captain Henderson guilty of culpable, but not reckless, neglect of duty. Williams, by unanimous verdict, was found guilty of culpable and reckless neglect of duty as charged. Both were unanimously found not guilty of culpable homicide.

Lord Wood, in proposing sentence on Williams, said that any other sentence than that proposed would be inadequate. He said Williams would be transported for seven

years. Because Henderson's guilt had not been adjudged reckless, a lesser sentence, but '*one that would bear severely on him*' was proposed - eighteen months' imprisonment. Lord Ivory concurred, and the Lord Justice-Clerk pronounced sentence accordingly.

As to the **Orion** herself, her remains lie more or less where she came to rest. Two days after the disaster William Finlay Johnston, clerk to the Messrs. Burns, arrived at Portpatrick to supervise the recovery of the heavy cargo. Within the week the wreck was purchased by the local salvage firm of M^cClure which proceeded to recover the sheet iron (some 12ft x 4ft in size), and whatever fittings could be removed. How much of the carcass was able to be salvaged is not known, but sufficient still remains for amateur divers to explore from time to time.

Notes:

- ¹ In evidence given by the Admiralty hydrographer, Captain Robinson (and recorded by him on a specially prepared chart of one inch to one hundred feet), he stated '*...the South Pier on which [at the seaward end] is a lighthouse unfinished and unlighted...*' However, Captain Robinson was in error with regard to the lighthouse being unfinished. The lighthouse at the seaward end of the south pier was completed and lit in 1836. In 1839 a violent hurricane that affected the whole country undermined the pier at the base of the pier head lighthouse. The Commissioners of Northern Lights would not then use it and it was unlit thereafter, hence the use of the old landward light which, fortunately, had been left standing. The now unused end-of-pier lighthouse was taken down in 1869 and eventually shipped out to Colombo where it was re-erected on the breakwater there and was, until recently, still in use. The old unused lighthouse now standing at Portpatrick was commissioned in 1883 and stands almost on the site of the 1850 landward light. When in use it was lit by acetylene gas generated in a small adjacent building. It was superseded in 1900 by the electrically-lit Killantringan lighthouse built some two miles to the northward.
- ² The landing area denoted in Fig. 2 now lies under the stepped concrete sea defence at the north end of the village.
- ³ This **Fenella** was an iron-built paddle steamer built in 1850 by Tod & McGregor of Meadowside, Glasgow for the Fleetwood & Glasgow Steam Packet Co. to run from Fleetwood to Troon. In 1851 she was transferred to Kemp's to operate on their Londonderry service.
- ⁴ Reliably accurate magnetic compasses did not come into use until after Sir W. Thomson's patent (No.1339) of 29th March 1876. A modified version was patented (No. 679) on February 20th 1879.

Acknowledgements and Sources consulted:

LNRS member H. Hignett	who suggested the Orion's loss worthy of investigation
Iain MacKenzie,	Curatorial Officer, The Admiralty Library, Portsmouth
Accounts by passengers	John Archibald and Rev. George Thomson, National Archives of Scotland, Ref. AD58/236

Admiralty charts

Illustrated London News, June 22nd & 29th 1850 issues of the

Original attestations sworn by some of eighty-nine witnesses prior to the trial; Captain C.G. Robinson's original charts; and the full reports of the trial published by the *North British Mail*, and the *Caledonian Mercury* at Edinburgh; all kindly made available at the Ewart Library, by the Dumfries Libraries, Information & Archives Centre.

Portpatrick Through the Ages, R.R. Cunningham

Reports of Cases before the High Court in Scotland, 1848-1852, compiled by John Shaw, advocate, published 1853, made available by courtesy of Google, A copy of the original Court transcript of the trial of the Orion's officers from the book

Southampton, The Local History Library at

Tidal data from the Proudman Oceanography Laboratory, University of Liverpool

Astronomical data by Texas A&M University Physics Observatory

Wreck of the Orion a personal account by Rev. J. Clarke, published by Longman's, February 1851.



Manxman at Pallion Yard, Sunderland Sunderland, 29th July 2008, by the Editor.

THE KING ORRY OF 1913 (Part Two)

by Adrian Sweeney

On Sunday the 27th of August, 1939 the **King Orry** sailed light to Liverpool in a calm, smooth sea. Visibility was good but it rained later. She left Douglas for the last time at 12.18 a.m., passed the Rock at 4.15 am. and berthed at the Pier Head at 4.25 a.m. She was to prepare for Admiralty charters. So ended her final season which had begun on Saturday the 15th of April when she had left Barrow at 7.15 in the morning for speed trials and compass adjustment, arriving at Liverpool at 11.55 a.m. Her first commercial sailing had been from Liverpool to Douglas on Monday 17th April at 10.56 a.m.

Her total sailings for that final 1939 season were as follows;

Liverpool to Douglas	– 39 sailings,
Douglas to Liverpool	– 38 sailings,
Heysham to Douglas	– 6 sailings,
Douglas to Heysham	– 5 sailings,
Fleetwood to Douglas	– 2 sailings,
Douglas to Fleetwood	– 3 sailings,
Belfast to Douglas	– 4 sailings,
Douglas to Belfast	– 4 sailings,
Dublin to Douglas	– 6 sailings,
Douglas to Dublin	– 6 sailings.
Ardrossan to Douglas	– 12 sailings,
Douglas to Ardrossan	– 11 sailings.

She did 14 light sailings and had 4 days of private charters. These consisted of;

Saturday 3rd of June she was chartered by Armstrong Whitworth for a Barrow to Douglas and back to Barrow day excursions. She carried over 990 passengers on both sailings.

On Wednesday the 14th of June she was chartered by McCartneys of Belfast for a single Belfast to Douglas sailing. She had 560 passengers on board but it is not clear how they got back to Belfast. Perhaps another vessel took the return sailing.

On Wednesday the 12th of July she was chartered from Belfast again to do the round trip by McClures and she had over 1300 passengers on board for both sailings. The next day was another Belfast charter, this time by York L of L and this time nearly 1600 people were on board for both crossings.

In total the number of fare paying passengers on the **King Orry** in her final 1939 season was 66,632 which included the charters.

Second World War.

The **King Orry** started her second spell in the service of King and Country at midnight on Tuesday the 26th of August and she was initially chartered for a three month period until midnight on the 26th of November. Her gross tonnage was 1,877 tons which at 10

shillings per ton per month cost the Admiralty £2815-10s. She was then chartered on a more or less monthly basis as follows;

26 th Nov. to 26 th of Dec.	£938-10s.
26 th Dec. to 31 st of Dec.	£154-5s.
26 th Dec. to 26 th of Jan. 1940	£938-10s. minus the £154-5s. which came to £784-5s.
February charter cost	£938-10s.
March charter cost	£1092-5s.
April charter cost	£784-15s.
May charter cost	£1063-12s-8d.

The last entry on the page detailing the May charter is particularly poignant; "Sunk at Dunkirk on Thursday 30th May 1940-by bombs".

The **King Orry** had in fact been fitted out as an armed boarding vessel and she flew the white ensign so she was crewed by the Royal Navy. Chappell (1980) states that there were four Steam Packet men aboard who had joined up for war service. She served at Dover until the 22nd of May 1940 when she was put on standby for the Dunkirk evacuation. The old ship joined the other Steam Packet vessels taking part in Operation Dynamo; the **Lady of Mann, Mona's Queen, Ben My Chree, Tynwald, Fenella, Mona's Isle** and the **Manxman**.

The **King Orry** was under the command of Commander J. Elliot, RNR. On the 26th of May she embarked 1,131 soldiers from the harbour and in the early hours of the next day she cast off and made for Dover. She was damaged by German shore batteries and took some casualties off Calais but she got to Dover safely.

In the late afternoon of the 29th of May the **King Orry** left Dover for her meeting with destiny. As she approached Dunkirk she was bombed without mercy but managed to berth at the East Pier despite having her steering gear shattered and much of the bridge and it's instruments destroyed. She had been holed in several places but such was the desperate situation that she was ordered to leave the harbour. Her commander managed to get her clear of the harbour entrance but her engine room began to flood badly and she took on a list to starboard. She was clear of the main approach channel to the port and just after 2.00a.m. on the 30th May she sank. The four Manxmen on board were picked up alive. The **King Orry** was one of three Steam Packet casualties at Dunkirk, the **Fenella** and the **Mona's Queen** also being lost during that tragic few days. The final entry in the Way book of the **King Orry** however was made a few months later, in December 1940. It was entitled;

Arrears of Hire

T98 Allowance for Depreciation and Return on Capital.
 10% on war risk value £60,000
 from midnight 26th August 1939 to 30th May 1940
 9 months 4/30 at £500 per month; £4566-13s-4d.

Less appropriated to 31 st December 1939	£3908-5s.
=	£658-8s-4d.
Appropriated to 30 th June 1940	£4663-7s-8d.
Over Appropriated deducted S.S. Tynwald	£4004-19s-4d

This is not the final entry in the Way book. On the next page the book has been transferred to the **Rushen Castle**. No room for sentiment if you can save the expense of a new Way book!

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Way Books of the King Orry;

by kind permission of Manx Museums.

Minute Books of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company:

by kind permission of Manx Museums.

IRON STEAMERS ON THE RIVER SHANNON

by LNRS Member Charles Dawson

Mention in Bulletin Vol. 53 No 3, December 2009, page 24, of the remains of the paddle steamer **Lady Lansdowne** of 1833 reminds us of an interesting pioneering epoch in the history of iron steamships, during which a number of these were built for service on the River Shannon in Ireland. For the sake of comparison, the contemporary Irish wooden steamers are also included here.

The first of the iron steamers in Ireland was the iron, double-hulled paddle steamer **Marquess Wellesley** constructed on the "knock-down" principle in 1824 by the Horseley Ironworks, Tipton, Staffs. She had a 10 (or 20) HP engine by Aaron Manby¹, who is famous for the first iron steamboat of substance named after him. **Marquess Wellesley** was apparently the idea of Sir John Grantham Sr., one of the pioneers in iron construction of ships, who arranged the transport of the parts to Lough Derg, Ireland for her launch there in 1825 for the Shannon Steam Packet Co.

Next came the wooden p.s. **Mountaineer** of 1826, of the Shannon Steam Navigation Company (SSNC), builder unknown.

P.S. **Marquess Wellesley** was transferred to the Irish Inland Steam Navigation Company (IISNC) in March 1829, a company created in 1829 by the enterprising Charles Wye Williams (1779/80 – 1866). Williams in fact had already in 1827 bought out Grantham's interest in her. She was transferred later in 1829 to the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company of Dublin, another company Williams was closely connected with. She was still afloat in 1857, but not at work although her hull was said by Williams to be still in good condition. She was finally disposed of in 1860.

In March 1829 Williams came to an agreement with the Grand Canal Company (GCC) giving his IISNC special advantages for their trade on the Shannon. Two new steamships which came into the fleet in the first year 1829 were:

1. The wooden p.s. **Lady Clanricarde**, builder unknown, with Fawcett, Preston & Co.² 26 h.p. engine which cost £1,650 and
2. The iron p.s. **Lady Dunally**, with twin hulls and paddles between them, built also by Fawcett, Preston & Co., Liverpool 1829, with their 18 h.p. engine, total cost £2,400

Their construction, wrote *The Liverpool Albion* on 14th September, was said to eliminate the previous problem of their injuring the canal banks. If only the Scottish pioneers of steamboats had been aware of that!

The GCC had been founded as far back as 1772, but it has been difficult to locate information on which steamers this company operated. It seems that their first may originally have been an iron lighter built in October 1829 by Laird, Birkenhead, 60' x 13'4" x 6', 50 tons and listed as **A** or **Wye** on various Laird Lists; this was the first vessel they built. John Laird wrote to James Watt about a small steamer on 21 October 1837 saying that she had been working successfully for seven years, although of only 1/8" thick iron. She was described as an iron boat in *The Liverpool Albion* on 12 October 1829, but not steamboat, so just when she was converted to steam is vague.

From this time onwards vessels run by the City of Dublin Steam Packet Co were:

Lady Lansdowne, iron p.s. ordered by Williams in April 1833 to be built by William Laird & Son, Birkenhead, 133' x 17' x 9'6", 148 tons, with 2 x 45 HP Fawcett, Preston engines, 38" dia. X 42" stroke, cost £4,200, ex p.s. **Mersey** of 1824, built by Grayson & Leadley, Liverpool, another of the City of Dublin Steam Packet Co's steamers, which had been re-engined. At the end of September, 20 men and six boys were sent over to Killaloe to construct her in a dry dock and she was launched from there on 4 March 1834. Total cost of hull £2,926 12s. 2d. In 1834 experiments were made in using peat instead of coal as steamer fuel. This enabled a savings to be made, for example **Lady Lansdowne's** monthly fuel cost was thereby reduced from £108 to £42. It is believed that Williams even experimented in producing a compressed form of peat.

Avonmore, iron p.s. of June 1835 with twin stern paddle wheels. Hull and 2-12 HP engines by Fawcett, Preston & Co, Liverpool, total cost £2,100.

Lady Burgoyne, iron p.s. built 1842 by Ringsend Iron Works, Dublin, 130' x 17'6" x 8'6", 2 x 40 HP engines. Her hull was built in sections and re-assembled on Lough Derg.

Gazelle, iron p.s. of 1842 with twin hulls, builder of hull and engine unknown.

Duchess of Argyle³ was ex iron p.s. **Jenny Lind**, built by Denny's of Dumbarton, with a pair of oscillating engines by Penn & Son, Greenwich of 70 h.p.⁴ She was actually begun as **Sprite** on 31st December 1846 for delivery on 15th June 1847. John Napier, Robert's second son had designed her with one funnel, but she finished up with two as shown on her second rigging plan, an illustration of which appears in the Denny List, Fig. 6. She was bought on the stocks by Robert Napier, who renamed her **Jenny Lind**, after the Swedish soprano (1820-1887), who was at the height of her European career at the time. Thomas Assheton Smith, the doyen of steam yacht owners bought her, but appears to have owned her for only a short time, due to the typically complicated ownership pattern that he and Napier seem to have arranged. She measured 133.5ft x 14.5ft x 7.5ft, 93 gross tons, 54 net tons. (Denny List, 13 DB, 10 WDB.) She was later renamed **Duchess of Argyle** by Robert Napier. He had, by the end of April 1849, put her on the Glasgow-Gareloch run. The renaming was obviously an act of courtesy, since it was at Rosneath village, a stopping-place on the Gareloch, that the Duke and Duchess had one of their castles; a stylisation of it features in a number of 19th century marine paintings of Clyde steamships. **Duchess of Argyle** had been lengthened by the end of April 1849, presumably before taking up her new name, since she then appeared as 146.9ft long. Williamson shows her as a separate vessel 150.9ft long, built by Napier in 1848; that Robert Napier did not actually build a vessel of this name indicates the unreliability of Williamson's information⁵. Duckworth & Langmuir⁶, who also give her length as 150.9ft, confirm that she plied first on the West Coast of Scotland, the first steamer owned by the Campbells of Kilmun⁷, who bought her in 1854, by that time with only one funnel, and next, on the Shannon in Ireland, from 1857 to 1860 for the Midland & Great Western Railway Company (M & G WRC) and finally for the Great Southern & Western Railway Company. When she arrived in Ireland, she was broken down

into three sections in Limerick which were transported by canal to Athlone, where reassembly took place; part of the process included reducing her length to fit the lock at Meelick. She was recorded as launched on 15 October 1857 at Athlone as rebuilt. She finally sank in the Upper Shannon and her register was closed on 1 July 1886 annotated "vessel condemned; engines and boiler removed".

Artizan, iron p.s. of the M&GWRC built by T B Seath, Partick, Glasgow, Jan. 1856 113.3' x 12.1' x 6.5' with 2 x 20 HP engines. Sold "knocked down" by her builders on 31 March 1857. She was re-assembled at Athlone and started to ply between Killaloe and Athlone in August 1857. She was condemned in 1886, when her register was closed on 1 July annotated "vessel condemned; engines & boiler removed".

Shannon, iron s.s. of the Grand Canal Co built in 1845 by T & W Pim, Hull for £3,580, 72' x 15' x 9', 100 tons. Sold in 1869 for £174.

Brian Boru built c.1862 for the Grand Canal Co, 90' x 14' x 7'. Other details unknown.

Midland of the MGWR, details unknown.

Lord Lorton of the MGWR built 1855, Greenwich, 67' x 14'. Sold Waterford S.S. Co.

Notes:

- ¹ The first iron steamship ever was p.s. **Aaron Manby** of 1821 constructed on the "knock-down" principle by the Horseley Iron Works of Tipton, Staffs with engine by Aaron Manby and re-assembled on the Thames for export to France.
- ² All details on Fawcett, Preston & Co's engines are from their Engine Book, listing some 700 vessels.
- ³ Details on p.s. **Duchess of Argyle ex Jenny Lind** are from this author's "Thomas Assheton Smith's Steam Yachts" in the same *Mariner's Mirror*, page 336.
- ⁴ THE ARTIZAN, (Vol. 7, 1849), 201
- ⁵ J.Williamson, *The Clyde Passenger Steamer* (Glasgow, 1904), 360
- ⁶ Duckworth & Langmuir, *Railway & Other Steamers*, (Prescot, 1966, 211/2, & 395/6),
- ⁷ Iain Hope, *The Campbells of Kilmun*, (Johnstone, 1981), 6

TRAVELLER

Owned by J.R. Haws & Co Liverpool with yellow fever raging aboard
wrecked on Rodrigues Island

From *Lloyds List* 10th July 1897

Rodrigues Island about 8 miles across lies about 350 nautical miles east of Mauritius.

Probably one of the most remarkable tales of shipwreck and adventure narrated within recent years was told yesterday to *Reuter's* Liverpool representative by Mrs Andrew Christie, widow of Captain Christie, of the wrecked ship **Traveller**. Mrs. Christie, who belonged to Liverpool, has just arrived here after undergoing perils and hardships in company with the other survivors of the crew that were almost beyond human endurance. From Mrs. Christie's statement it appears that the ship **Traveller** with a cargo of sugar was going from Java to Delaware Breakwater, and almost as soon as the vessel left, river fever of the usual Java type broke out, and this spread day after day until everyone on board the ship was affected with the malady, including Mrs. Christie herself and even her baby boy about 11 months old. Death after death took place, and the victims were one after another buried at sea. One of the men, a Dutchman, while delirious with the fever, jumped into the sea and ended his life. The chief officer of the ship died on Dec. 14, and on the 28th Mrs. Christie's husband, Captain Christie, also succumbed. This cast a terrible gloom over the ship. Some of the men gained a little strength, but others died until the death roll at last amounted to 11. This left 10 men to man the ship, with the second mate, Mr. Ritch, a Liverpool man, in charge.

Mr. Ritch decided to make for Mauritius to obtain assistance. Later on, at a time when he had but two men and himself to work the ship he approached Rodrigues Island. With wonderful skill they brought up their ship off the Island, and then dropped anchor. They thought that they could get assistance and medicine here, and that all danger was passed, The treatment they received, however, Mrs. Christie described as the most remarkable and inhuman, and was rendered doubly so in view of the prostrate condition of the survivors.

Rodrigues Island is inhabited mostly by French Creoles. The Governor and doctor, however, are white, and although French, could speak English, the pilot of the place came off in his boat, but when he heard of the sickness, which was explained to him as the usual Java kind, he would not board the **Traveller**, but returned to the shore, and the report was spread that the vessel had yellow fever on board. The helpless people waited hour after hour for assistance, but none came, and, fearing that their vessel would go ashore any minute, Mr. Ritch decided to take his crew on shore. A boat was launched, and Mr. Ritch and the two convalescent seamen lowered Mrs. Christie, her baby, and the other sick members of the crew into it. As they approached the shore the Governor and a number of other rushed down to the water's edge and threatened to shoot the shipwrecked people if they landed. Mr. Ritch asked if they were Christians to treat people in such a manner. His men had not the strength to pull back to the ship, and if they got there they would all very likely be drowned. Mr. Ritch asked them to give him assistance to take the vessel out of its dangerous position, and to give

succour and medicine for his sick crew. These appeals met with no response and, for fear of being fired on, the poor people had to row back to their ship. They arrived more dead than alive, and only got on board the **Traveller** again with the utmost difficulty.

The last of their number had scarcely quitted the small boat when it was carried away and lost. No assistance was sent to the ship either in the shape of a doctor or of hands to man the vessel, and that night the **Traveller** was carried on to the reefs and wrecked. Fortunately she did not go to pieces then, or every soul on board would have been in all probability lost. Finding that something must now be done, the Rodrigues people sent a boat next morning with the pilot, and this boat took off Mrs. Christie and her child. Mr. Ritch launched the ship's lifeboat, but as his crew had not strength to man it some blacks were sent from the shore, All of the shipwrecked people were taken to a sand island where there were no inhabitants, and were kept there for 22 days. They lived in huts made of leaves, and for about three weeks had nothing but leaves to lie down on, So fearful were the Rodrigues people of contact with the shipwrecked crew that the food they sent was conveyed from one small boat to another and then put on the beach. Some blacks, however, were sent to the Island to cook for the unfortunate people. The doctor came off in about a fortnight, but remained in the small boat many yards from the wreck, and examined the shipwrecked crew through a pair of binocular glasses.

The morning after the wreck, when Mr. Ritch and his companions were being conveyed to the island, one of them, a Scotchman, died, and the authorities made the blacks take him back to where the ship was ashore to bury him in the sea. Another sailor, named Pilgrim, died on the Sand Island, and Mr. Ritch had himself to dig a hole and bury the body. On the twenty-second day it became patent to those at Rodrigues Island that, as the monsoon was setting in, and it was likely that the Island would be covered by the sea, its occupants were in great danger. They were therefore moved to Rodrigues, but their number had now been reduced to eight of the crew and Mrs. Christie and her child. On Rodrigues Island they remained two months, and during that time were well treated. After this they went to Mauritius and there met with all possible attention and kindness. Six of the crew were brought from Mauritius in the **Warwick Castle**, as well as Mrs Christie and her baby. The Rodrigues Islanders allowed the cargo salvaged to be landed and therefore their aversion to the shipwrecked people could not be explained.

Members' Notice:

Please note that, due to business commitments, Dr Eric Long's presentation entitled Submarine "Resurgam" and scheduled for Thursday March 18th will be re-scheduled for a later date.

Mr A. J. Barratt has agreed to present his planned talk on this earlier date, the subject will be 'Cheshire Goes To Sea.'



Royal Iris of the Mersey – 50 years old and historic vessel in her own right! (Adrian S