

Merseyside Maritime Research



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Liverpool Nautical Research Society
 to celebrate the Society's seventieth anniversary
 1938 - 2008*

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Editor LNRS Member Antony J Barratt
Editorial Committee
JR Chambers, D Eccles AH McClelland plus the Editor



Front cover

RYS **Clementina** the personal yacht of Frederick James Harrison (see page 3)
& MV **Britannic** of the White Star line (see page 14)
From the Graeme Cubbin Collection & Editor's Collection, respectively

Back cover

Scaforth Radio Station (see page 39) *the Author's collection*

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FORWARD

Recent decades have wrought revolutionary changes in global transport and the world-wide shipping industry, which have profoundly altered the face of the Port of Liverpool and its former vast maritime related community. When so many of Liverpool's prestigious commercial maritime enterprises have disappeared, the survival of an amateur, academic appendage invites comment.

This special publication, marking the seventh decade since the foundation of the Liverpool Nautical Research Society helps provide a clue. Its contents typify the freely shared fund of knowledge derived from an unusual blend of specialised research interests and the wide range of practical and professional experience possessed by its individual members.

Equally important, it also indicates the close working relationship that has evolved between the LNRS and the Archives Department of the Maritime Museum Liverpool. This rapport has proved of mutual benefit. As well as pursuing their own personal research interests, members have served as volunteer assistants to museum staff in generating computerised versions of early manuscript shipping records, constituting new and invaluable tools for future research.

Building on past experience, and conscious of the wealth of archival and other material yet to be researched and evaluated in the various collections of the Merseyside Maritime Museum, the Liverpool Nautical Research Society seems assured of an active and productive future.

It is hoped that succeeding Presidents will enjoy the privilege of introducing similar commemorative publications, in the decades that lie ahead.

A.S.Davidson

**President
Liverpool Nautical Research Society**

PORTRAIT OF A LIVERPOOL SHIPOWNER

FREDERICK JAMES HARRISON

By Graeme Cubbin



Frederick James Harrison (1853-1915) was the eldest son of James Harrison, co-founder with his brother, Thomas, of the Harrison Line of Liverpool. His mother was Jane Heath Harrison, daughter of Joseph Heath of Tunstall, Staffordshire. Frederick James came into the world at his parents' home in Wallasey on 27th February 1853. He was educated at Rugby School, where, doubtless, he was sent to board at a tender age. Nothing is known of his schooldays, nor is there any mention of a course at university, and it appears that, at the age of 17, he was apprenticed to his father's shipping business, just as James himself had been apprenticed to Samuel Brown & Son some thirty-five years before. Ten years later, on 2nd July 1880, Frederick James married Emily Margaret Watson, daughter of Robert Watson, of Sudworth House, Mount Road, Wallasey; they had four daughters.

Shipowner

On 27th October 1879, James Harrison transferred to his son a 20/64th share in the informal and rudimentary Charente Steam Ship Company, half of which was to be passed on to his brother, Heath, on his 25th birthday, due on 1st October 1882. The family business was evidently doing well, for in 1883 Frederick bought his father's house. The Laund, for £5,000 (James Harrison had built this house in Claremount Road, Wallasey, in 1857, and lived there until 1879). A year later, Frederick James, along with his associate, John William Hughes, was heavily engaged in the intricacies of reorganising the firm, and registering it as a limited liability company. Thus the Charente Steam Ship Company Limited (Thos & Jas. Harrison, Managers) was established on 16th December 1884 with a capital of £512,000. All holders of shares in Harrison steam-ships were obliged to transfer their shares to the new company, and new shares were issued to family members and close friends on an equitable basis. Frederick James was allotted 80 of the 512 shares.

Country Gentleman

By 1887 Frederick James whilst still firmly wedded to shipping, came to see himself also as a landowner, buying up property, mainly tenanted farms, in the Lancaster area, farms with names like Know Hill, Little Brow Top, and Hare Appletree. For he was, of course, of farming stock: more generations of Harrisons had farmed the land than had ever dealt in shipping. His father and uncles had been bred and brought



Batty Hill Farm

up on Batty Hill Farm near Cockerham in north Lancashire, then owned by his grandfather, James Harrison (1781-1862), and latterly by his Uncle John (1819-1867) and his sons. It is not unreasonable to suppose that Frederick James spent many summer holidays on the farm as a child.

In 1889, he and his family moved to Arrowe Hall, Wirral, which he rented for the next four years, much to his father's disapproval. Mr James felt his son had removed himself too far from the parochial affairs of his beloved Wallasey. (Old Mr James, in poor health, was then living in retirement on his estate at Domden, in Kent.)

But Frederick James had his eyes on a much more ambitious project, one which, in deference to his father, he refrained from implementing during his father's lifetime, namely the purchase of Maer Hall in Staffordshire, a 17 Century stately home standing in 3,000 acres of prime land, and notably even further away from the environs of Wallasey! Old Mr James died in January 1891, and Frederick James completed the purchase of Maer Hall for the agreed sum of £90,000 around April 1892, but he did not move in until the summer of 1893, when the lease on Arrowe Hall expired. Thus Maer Hall became the family seat for the next seventy years, until 1963, when the last surviving daughter died, and the property was sold. In the early part of the 19th Century, Maer Hall had been owned by the Wedgwood family. A favourite nephew by the name of Charles Darwin was a frequent visitor, and in 1839 he married Josiah Wedgwood's daughter, Emma, in Maer Parish Church. Generations of Harrison Line employees will still remember with nostalgia the Grand Annual Cricket Match which took place every summer before and after the Second World War between the Office and a Maer Village team. The Harrison sisters were generous hostesses, and fierce was the competition to be selected for the Office side in those days.

Despite his fascination for rural affairs, it is doubtful that Frederick James ever followed the Hunt with any enthusiasm. Whilst occupying Arrowe Hall in March 1890 he had occasion to write to a local Hunt official, offering:

"...no objection to the beagles hunting around Arrowe, but I should not like them to cross the Park, or go into the covert as there are a few pheasants about and it is most desirable at this season to keep them as quiet as possible".

He goes on to apologise for his

"absence on Wednesday, owing to trouble with the dock labourers... If it had been a Saturday I should have liked to show you some hospitality".

So it would seem that he was prepared to tolerate huntsmen within reasonable bounds. However, at least two of his daughters were keen followers of the Hunt, and in 1930 Rosamund Mary (died September 1948) became Master of the North Staffordshire Hounds.

During his time at Maer, Frederick James became a greatly respected figure in a locality where most of the populace had never seen a vessel more seaworthy than a canal barge. He was a Justice of the Peace for the Counties of Cheshire and Staffordshire, and in 1894 he was appointed High Sheriff of Cheshire. Professionally, he was still a partner of T. & J. Harrison, a major shareholder and Chairman of Directors of the Charente Steam Ship Company Limited, and Chairman of the Liverpool Steamship Owners Association.

RYS Clementina

Despite his foray into the field of landed gentry, Frederick James's love of ships, shipping, and the sea was still unquenched. Thus in 1903 he purchased the steam yacht **Clementina**, a vessel of elegant proportions and luxurious appointments. She had been launched as the **Rondine** from the yard of Ramage & Ferguson, Leith, in January 1887, and delivered to the Principe di Sirignano di Napoli. In 1893, following a change of ownership, her name was changed to **Sultana**, but in 1898 she came into British ownership, and her name became **Clementina**. By 1900 she was owned by a Mr Darison Dalziel, who sold her to Mr Harrison three years later.

In 1909, Frederick James doubtless felt he had 'arrived', for in that year he was elected to membership of the Royal Yacht Squadron, of Cowes. In those days the sailing master of the **Clementina** was a Captain Phillips, her First Mate Mr Ernest S G Clark. It is to the latter that we are indebted for the details of her many cruises, for he kept a log of arrivals and departures between March 1905 and May 1913. Sadly, however, the log is sadly deficient in details of life on board, a typical entry being:

"Left Tichnabruaich 9.30am Saturday 18 (July 1908). Stopped for fishing. Arrived Campbellton (sic) 4.00pm Saturday 18."

Mr Harrison made good use of his yacht, and many and varied were her cruises. Apparently cruising took place mainly between March and September, the vessel being laid-up in the winter months (the winter cruise of 1912-13 to the West Indies was the exception). Cruises in the **Clementina** extended far and wide, from North Cape to Jamaica and from the Hebrides to the Bosphorus, calling at numerous ports in the Mediterranean, Adriatic, Baltic, and Caribbean Seas. It is not suggested that Mr Harrison and his family spent the whole of every summer cruising. Sometimes they crossed the Channel by ferry and travelled overland to join the yacht at a Mediterranean port, spent a few weeks on board, and returned overland to their home at Maer, (and to his office in Liverpool) leaving guests (or charterers?) to continue enjoying themselves. It is recorded that the **Clementina** occasionally found herself in port with a Company vessel,

and one can imagine the consternation aboard the cargo ship when the trim shape of the Owner's yacht was sighted gliding into harbour! For example, on 29th December 1912 the **Senator** (Capt J Richards) dropped anchor in Carlisle Bay, Barbados, alongside **Clementina**; on 4th February 1913 Capt R H Pugh of the **Student** had a similar experience, also in Carlisle Bay; while on 18th March Capt Griffith Jones of the **Engineer** was in Kingston to welcome **Clementina** on her arrival.

There is, however, no personal record of these encounters, and one is left to speculate upon their outcome. Nevertheless, one is inclined to assume that Mr Harrison would take the opportunity to invite Master and officers on board his yacht to be entertained, if not lavishly then at least hospitably. March 12th 1913 found the vessel in Colon, Panama, during her three-day visit, a party was organised to go and inspect the workings of the Panama Canal, then nearing completion. Mr Harrison invited Captain Phillips and Chief Officer Clark to join the party, which, incidentally, included a contingent of Royal Navy Cadets and Midshipmen. Among these young men was Prince 'Bertie', Duke of York, who, nearly a quarter of a century later was to become the future King George VI. Home and near-continental ports were not excluded from the itinerary, and Mr Harrison seemed particularly keen on cruises to the Scottish Lochs and Islands. There is a hiatus in the log for the year 1907, when Mr Clark moved temporarily to another vessel. However, he was back on board **Clementina** in March 1908 to resume his duties.

Born in 1872, Ernest Clark went to sea at an early age and travelled the world in merchant ships before settling down to work in vessels of the Royal Yacht Squadron. He married his first wife, Eliza Harries, daughter of a fellow Yacht Officer, in 1896. She died in 1908, and three years later he married Katherine Hellwig, lady's maid to Mrs Emily Harrison. It was said that Eliza gave him two daughters, but Katherine '*gave him a dog's life!*'

Mr F J Harrison seems to have been a complex character. Autocratically inclined, he was a strict disciplinarian, but with a keen sense of justice. He was a staunch upholder of what he deemed to be "*principles*", sometimes to the brink of absurdity. Nevertheless, he appears to have been sociable, loyal to his friends and associates, a committed patriot, and a man of compassion and great integrity. The following anecdotes may be quoted as examples.

Slow boat to New Orleans

In 1886, on the recommendation of Harrison's Agents at New Orleans, the **Warrior** was sent out to infiltrate the lucrative trade carrying fruit from Belize to New Orleans. Unfortunately, **Warrior** was not up to the task, and the initiative was a dismal failure. However, Frederick James did not seek to lay blame upon his New Orleans Agents. In June 1887 he wrote to Alfred Le Blanc:

"It does not look like business to fight keen competition with an unsuitable tool so far from home."

Warrior was too slow to compete with the established lines in that trade.

Mr Harrison wrote again on 19th October 1887, by which time the plan had been abandoned:

"We all regret the result of the venture much more for your sake than for our own, as we feel you have spared yourself no pain or trouble..... For ourselves, the loss is simply one a businessman who tries anything new perpetually faces."

Damsel in Distress

In June 1888, Mr Harrison felt obliged to write to the British Consul in Lisbon, seeking his help in the repatriation from Portugal of a former servant of his who found herself in dire circumstances in that country. Apparently, the lady in question had *"...fallen into the hands of a disreputable Portuguese"* called Caestino. The couple had gone through a form of marriage in New York which was unacceptable in Portugal. However they lived together in Lisbon for three years until her savings were exhausted, and that was when her 'husband' began physically to abuse her. Finally, in fear for her life, she left Caestino and sought refuge with friends, writing to her sister to inform her of her predicament.

Whether her sister was a member of Mr Harrison's household we do not know, but it was she who sought his help. Mr Harrison expressed concern, and in addition to writing to HM Consul, he also instructed his Agents in Lisbon, Messrs Garland, Laidly, & Co., to render all assistance in getting the unhappy lady out of the country, pledging that he would *"be responsible for the passage money"*. The lady in question must have been a good and faithful servant to inspire such solicitude, but woe betide the lackey who flouted the rules, and behaved outrageously!

The Unfortunate Coachman

Before the First World War, life at Maer Hall was very like what it had been in Victorian times - almost feudal. One evening, Mr Harrison arranged for his four daughters to attend a Ball in Newcastle-under-Lyme, seven miles away. They would travel in the family coach-and-pair accompanied by two trusted footmen as escorts. The coach duly arrived at the premises where the Ball was to be held; the girls (or young women, as they were at that time) mounted the steps to the ballroom, while the two footmen, accompanied by the coachman, disappeared below stairs to while away the time until their charges were ready to return home. No doubt the ladies had a great time, and towards midnight sent for their faithful retainers. Well, the process of whiling away the time had inevitably involved the consumption of potent liquor to a considerable degree. The footmen were still ambulatory but alas, the coachman was legless! With some difficulty, the sturdy footmen hoisted him up into the driving-seat, coaxed the horses to move decorously to the entrance, and then went to fetch the young ladies. They were handed deferentially into the coach, and amply provided with rugs. The footmen then climbed aloft to rescue the coachman who was listing perilously over the edge of his seat.

The journey home was uneventful; the horses, familiar with the route, needed no urging from their somnolent driver to trot smartly towards their comfortable stable, hauling their load with a will. Eventually they drew up at the

entrance to Maer Hall, and the footmen gently lowered the driver to the ground, propping him up between the bemused horses before handing out their charges. The ladies graciously expressed their thanks to the servants, and turned to thank the coachman - just in time to see him sink slowly to the ground!

"Oh, dear", said the eldest sister. "I do believe he's drunk!"

"It's a wonder we weren't all killed!" exclaimed the youngest.

Inevitably there was quite a commotion which disturbed Mr Harrison, who came out to see what the fuss was about. He was incensed, that a servant of his should be so indifferent to his duty as to put the lives of his daughters at risk, it was unforgivable!

Next morning, a hung-over and remorseful coachman was summoned before his employer who gave him a furious dressing-down in a tirade of well-chosen words:

"I will not tolerate such behaviour in a member of my household",
he stormed. *"Consider yourself dismissed!"*

In vain the man pleaded that he had a wife and four children to support, but Mr Harrison was not to be moved. At least, not until the young ladies interceded on his behalf, saying that at no time did they feel themselves to be in any danger. Which was true enough. Ignorance, as they say, can be bliss. And eventually their father partially relented. He again summoned the culprit, and said he would contact his friends in the shipping industry and see if they could offer him a job – especially one where he could not endanger the lives of others. The coachman was profuse in his expressions of gratitude, and a week or two later was pleased and relieved to receive a note from Mr Harrison containing a Third Class railway ticket to Southampton, and instructions to take up a steward's berth on board the **Titanic** in White Star Dock, sailing on 10th April 1912.

The rest of this story is history, but, alas, our bibulous coach-driver was not among the survivors from that ill-fated ocean liner.

Problems with the Railways

When Frederick James moved to Maer Hall in 1893 he was most concerned about the inadequacy of the rail service. Trains stopped at the nearby station of Whitmore only once or twice a day. And Mr Harrison felt compelled to write to the Manager of the London & North West Railway Company at Liverpool's Lime Street Station to complain in a letter dated 23rd September 1893:

"... On looking over your time-tables I find the service very inadequate. As I and my friends... will probably come into Liverpool at least three times a week, I shall deem it a favour if you can arrange for the train due at Crewe at 9.05am to be stopped by signal [at Whitmore].. Is it too much to ask that the train due at Crewe at 4.10pm may also be stopped when required?"

Did it happen? We do not know, but it probably did, despite the acrimony generated nine years earlier between Mr Harrison and the same Railway executive, a Mr J Shaw.

As we have seen Mr Harrison was always prepared to make a stand on

matters of principle, even though they sometimes led from the sublime to the – well; here's the story, a tale of principled parsimony:

Apparently, an excursion train on which Mr Harrison and staff had travelled to Lancaster was very late returning to Lime Street. Now, part of the package had included transport from the station to the patron's residence. At this time, Mr Harrison lived at The Laund in Wallasey, and when he learned that the omnibus which was to convey him and his staff to Wallasey had been cancelled he became very indignant, especially as revised transport arrangements left him out of pocket by 5s.10d.(29p). He set out his case to the railway management in a letter dated 15th September 1884:

"...kindly remit me at your early convenience 5s.10d being the extra expense I was put to by the late arrival on Saturday from Lancaster of the train due at Liverpool at 4.55pm."

Apparently the Railway Company had advertised in its circulars that, as part of the package:

"an omnibus would meet the train to convey any servants and luggage to Wallasey"

However, the late arrival of the train made it impossible for the omnibus to complete its journey and return to the terminal in time to catch the last luggage boat from the Wirral to Liverpool. So it was cancelled, and Mr Harrison was left to transport his retinue and baggage by passenger ferry and cab. A further cause for complaint arose when, *"applying for assistance to your deputy, I was met with scant civility..."* His account was presented as follows:

Memo of Expenses:

Omnibus to Pier Head	3s.0d	(15p)
Porterage to Ferry	4s.4d	(21.5p.)
Two Cabs to House	5s.0d	(25p)
	<u>12s.4d</u>	(61.5p.)
Cost of Omnibus according to your letter	6s.6d	(32.5p.).
(Overpaid)	5s.10d.	(29p.)

Mr Shaw, the Stationmaster, on behalf of his Company, rejected the claim, thus provoking a further exchange of vituperative letters. Eventually, Frederick James capitulated, conceding, in a letter dated 24th September, 1884, that:

"... The amount at stake is too trifling to trouble myself further. I have no wish to resort to legal means to recover [my loss]. I regret, however, that I shall have to alter the high opinion I held of the LNWR for civility and fair dealing."
And there, as far as we know, the matter rested.

Nevertheless, throughout his business life, Frederick James was a generous benefactor, contributing too many national charities, and many worthy works and projects of local interest to his family. In Wallasey, he and his brother, Heath financed the building of St Nicholas' Church and Vicarage to the memory of their father. The Church was consecrated in 1911. Together

they were instrumental in laying out Wallasey Golf Course, and constructing the Clubhouse. Land which was owned by the family near the new Church was transformed into gardens to become Harrison Park, bounded on the south side by Harrison Drive. In December 1914, he it was who arranged for each and every man on board all ships in the Royal Navy to receive a book for Christmas – over 275,000 books, about 60 tons in weight!

In 1888 he established scholarships at Wallasey Grammar School to enable two boys each year to further their education at Liverpool University. Two years later, in April, 1890, Frederick James donated £1,000 to the Lord Bishop of Liverpool to relieve the poverty of poor clergy within the diocese, to be distributed at his Lordship's discretion

“...in substantial amounts, say, of not less than £25 each... .. I make one absolute stipulation and that is that my name shall in no way transpire...”

In the same year, he contributed £9,000 towards the building of Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral, and, early in the next century, unspecified sums toward the erection of the Memorial to Queen Victoria, in Derby Square. Strangely enough there is no record of any benefactions bestowed on the village of Maer where he spent the last twenty years of his life. We can be sure he contributed generously towards the upkeep of the Parish Church of St Peter, at Maer, but otherwise it would seem that his earlier injunction that *“my name shall in no way transpire”* may have been only too strictly obeyed at Maer.

Conclusion

Without doubt under the guidance of Frederick James Harrison, ably supported by the brothers Hughes, the twin firms of Thos. & Jas. Harrison and the Charente Steamship Company Ltd. prospered during the latter quarter of the 19th Century, and into the 20th. When War engulfed Europe in 1914, the Harrison fleet had contained a total of 53 ships, with an aggregate gross tonnage of 269,464 tons, and a book value of over £3 million. It was not long before the Admiralty began casting covetous eyes upon the trim yachts of the Royal Yacht Squadron, including **Clementina**. They would make excellent auxiliaries as tenders to the battle fleets. Mr Harrison handed over his yacht willingly, with a request that he might be allowed to sail in her on some of her missions. Despite his age, permission was granted, and Frederick James was given the honorary rank of Lieutenant, RNR. Her first role was as an auxiliary boarding vessel, patrolling northern waters, for which task she was equipped with two 6-pounders, but her role soon changed and her luxurious accommodation was replaced with hospital beds and those facilities necessary to equip her as a hospital tender, ferrying battle casualties from ships and shore bases to ports and hospitals in Britain.

During a particularly arduous period of duty in the North Sea early in 1915, the wintry conditions proved too much for Mr Harrison, and he caught a severe chill from which he never recovered. The chill turned to pneumonia, causing his death on 7th April 1915, aged 62. That his devotion to duty was appreciated by the authorities is proven by the fact that, although simply an honorary member of the armed forces, his name is inscribed on the War Memorial

in the village of Maer, and appears on the Roll of Honour in St Peter's Church.

Alas, **Clementina** did not outlive her late owner by many months. On 5th August 1915 she was involved in a collision in Plymouth Sound which left her in a sinking condition with decks awash. The Captain's efforts to beach her off Torpoint on the Cornish side of the estuary, succeeded only too well, for she was never re-floated, and became a total loss.



Maer Hall in North Staffordshire

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(See also picture of RYS Clementina on the front cover)

A GREAT UNION

The Cunard White Star Merger and the Decline of North Atlantic shipping in the Post-War Period,

*Richard Williams, of Liverpool University, was the Joint winner of the 2004 LNRS Award
(See page 74 for details of the Society's Award Scheme)*

The North Atlantic trade has long been the most important for the many of the world's major shipping companies, linking New York and Canada with Europe. The world's largest passenger vessels were regularly built for, and competed against each other to attract, the lucrative business generated by the extensive migrant traffic. However, recurring and interlinked problems had greatly changed the character of the shipping industry by the mid-1930s. Many of these problems contributed significantly to the eventual decision to effect a merger between the Cunard and White Star Lines, which can only be understood within the general context of the overall decline in the North Atlantic trade in the inter-war period.

The major lines that were to dominate the North Atlantic trade were formed in the nineteenth century. One of the earliest of these was the Cunard Line, or the British and North American Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, founded by Samuel Cunard and others in response to the need of the British Government for a regular transatlantic mail service and a concern about American sailing ship superiority. The Cunard Line was formally established in 1839. The White Star Line, or Oceanic Steam Navigation Company was formed in 1869, a relative latecomer to the trade, but almost immediately made its impact felt.

For all of the lines concerned in the North Atlantic business it proved to be lucrative, though open to fluctuations. Times of high profit were accompanied with periods when competing companies had to engage in costly rate wars to gain business. Nonetheless until the First World War the overall trend was one of growth, a growth fuelled by an all time high in the number of migrants (1,200,000 in 1907) and reflected by the building of huge vessels to accommodate them - **Mauretania** and **Lusitania** for Cunard, and **Olympic**, **Titanic** and **Britannic** for White Star. Thus on the eve of war in 1914 the North Atlantic trade was represented by the world's largest, fastest and most well known vessels, projecting an outward image of success and wealth, fuelled by a trade which in numbers alone would never again be equalled.

However the First World War was to mark the beginning of a decline in the fortunes of the North Atlantic trade. The war, despite providing shipping companies with valuable technical experience in the fields of high tensile steel and the use of oil as fuel, was detrimental to the fleets of the leading companies of the North Atlantic. Cunard suffered significant disruption in the course of the war, losing valuable skilled personnel to national service, and a total of 22 ships. Even though the company emerged in 1918 with more tonnage than before the war, this largely the result of the addition of shipping lines during the course of the conflict, the vessels lost during the war were the most modern and efficient

ships of the fleet, including the **Lusitania**. White Star suffered similar losses of both skills and ships, with a total of 13 vessels being lost, including the sister ship of the **Titanic**, the **Britannic**. Both Cunard and White Star did receive war reparations in the form of German ships, but the First World War caused tremendous disruption to the fleet.

It was the period after the First World War that laid the long term troubles for the shipping industry however, and these years became known as the "troubled years". Part of the reason for this lay with increased government legislation, particularly from the United States, which severely restricted the flow of migrants across the North Atlantic. As this trade was the main source of income for many of the key North Atlantic steamship companies these restrictions had a detrimental impact on overall income. The extent of the impact was highlighted by Lord Weir, who produced a report for the British Government on the state of North Atlantic shipping in the winter 1932/1933. This report noted that the lines of the North Atlantic Conference experienced a drop of just under £7 million in overall earnings from emigrant traffic to the US and Canada in the period 1913-1931.

In addition to a severe restriction in passenger numbers, the North Atlantic trade was also hit by an oversupply of liner tonnage, as allied shipping sought to buy up surrendered German tonnage to replace wartime losses and the Germans in turn set about their own large scale rebuilding programmes. The collective result was an inevitable oversupply of tonnage for a restricted market. There was some indication of hope in an increasing tourist trade from the United States, but this was but a fraction of the former migrant business. Ultimately, the introduction of restrictive legislation on immigration into the United States, and the substantial oversupply of tonnage that came about in the scramble to restore order after the destruction of the First World War, was to have significant long-term ramifications for the eventual merger of Cunard and White Star.

However these effects were to be exacerbated by two later developments, one linked to the world economy and one in regards to shipping. The Great Depression of 1929 acted to accentuate the existing problems of an oversupply of tonnage and a distinct lack of trade. The result was that many of the shipping companies on the North Atlantic were forced to make drastic cutbacks to their fleets and to restructure whatever services remained in place, often increasing the number of tourist cruises. It also forced changes in future shipbuilding, as in the case of White Star, who cancelled construction on a new 60,000 ton flagship liner then under construction at Harland and Wolff in Belfast. The situation is well summarised by S.G. Sturmeay,

"After 1929 world trade fell heavily and in 1932 was at about the same level as in 1913 while the volume of tonnage available was 48 per cent greater"

The problems revealed by the Great Depression were already evident within the trade but the Depression massively accentuated them. The period of the Great Depression roughly coincided with that of the laying down, construction and eventual introduction of the great super-liners: vessels often

twice the size of their predecessors and regarded as showcases of national pride, demonstrated through record breaking size and speed. These vessels, introduced by France, Germany and Italy, represented a threat to British shipping, based on the lucrative business they could attract as a result of their unique attractions of speed, size and innovative technology. These attractions had long been the preserve of Cunard and White Star and had enabled both companies to command a higher proportion of the business available on the North Atlantic than their competitors. It was therefore in both companies interest to build their own super-liners.

However this was problematic given the huge expense of these vessels in a world struck by economic depression. Many of the ships introduced by European competitors were supported by ever growing and more direct forms of government subsidy from their respective governments. This was a form of economic nationalism that had developed in the inter-war period, and was often linked with the merger of shipping lines to enable the most effective use of the subsidy, as was seen in Italy. Though these subsidies did not entirely account for the shipping lines concerned being able to build the huge vessels, nor was British shipping entirely without its own subsidy, they made the threat of competition to British shipping all the more severe.

Quite simply the context in which the Cunard-White Star merger took place was a peculiar one; a period which was characterised by the harsh economic reality of the Great Depression and yet also of increasingly expensive competition as a result of the introduction of ever larger, more sophisticated and technologically advanced liners, financed by ever increasing foreign subsidies.

This was a fact well understood by the eventual participants in the Cunard-White Star merger, the companies themselves and the British Government, who were all concerned with the issue as early as 1930. However that the merger agreement only took place in the winter of 1933 and 1934 highlights that it was the product of circumstance unique to both companies within the general shipping context. Cunard had long understood the need to build its own super-liners to ensure its ability to compete in the market and had already begun construction on hull number 534, which would later be known to many as the **Queen Mary**. The economic depression ensured that the unfinished hull could not be completed without recourse to government aid. It became clear that this aid would only be forthcoming in the light of a merger with the White Star Company.

White Star at the time of the merger was in a financial crisis that though heavily influenced by the general economic crisis of the Great Depression, had its origin in a long-term history of financial mismanagement. From being one of the most successful of the North Atlantic lines at the turn of the century, the fortunes of the White Star Line had shifted for the worse with its incorporation into the vast International Mercantile Marine Company, an American shipping combine which soon fell into economic trouble. Even though the White Star Line continued to make a profit, to resolve its own economic crisis the I.M.M.C.

sold the White Star Line to the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, itself a huge concern then under the chairmanship of Lord Kylsant. However this group too was beset by financial problems that were a result of long-term mismanagement. These financial difficulties were increased by the purchase of White Star, and as a result though White Star continued to make a profit, these profits were siphoned off into clearing the R.M.S.P.C. debt. As the Great Depression took affect the Line made its first recorded loss in history in 1930, this continuing in the years 1931, 1932, 1933. With its resources already drained by the R.M.S.P.C, White Star filed for bankruptcy at the end of 1933.

Thus as the Cunard-White Star merger was becoming a reality in the winter of 1933/1934, the two main British shipping companies on the North Atlantic were both facing severe financial difficulties that could only be resolved by assistance from the British Government, in the form of the negotiations and legislation of 1933 and 1934, which created the merger company of Cunard-White Star Limited.

Under the new agreement Cunard-White Star Limited, which was capitalised at £10,000,000, was to split its shares by 62 per cent to 38 per cent in favour of Cunard. In terms of material assets, the new company would assume the North Atlantic goodwill, flags and fleets of both Cunard and White Star. In addition some £9,500,000 would be awarded to Cunard-White Star Limited in the form of a government loan to pay for the completion of the **Queen Mary** and the construction of her sister ship the **Queen Elizabeth**, as well as £1,500,000 to be used as capital.



*The **Queen Mary** at Long Beach, California, in 2001 where she has been serving as a Conference Centre and hotel since retirement in 1967*

In conclusion this was a merger that had its beginnings in the problems that had greatly affected British and world shipping since the First World War, namely the decline in emigration and the corresponding increase in tonnage employed on the North Atlantic route. These problems were accentuated by the Great Depression which massively reduced the North Atlantic trade and the available capital for new shipbuilding. At this time too, the competition within the trade became greatly intensified as super-liners backed by state subsidy were introduced by France, Germany and Italy. This was to prove a major problem for largely independent companies such as Cunard which could not compete without government aid. The Cunard-White Star merger was also in keeping with mergers elsewhere, such as Italy, and many in the British Government looked favourably on a similar move to amalgamate the two leading British lines from an early point in 1930. However the two key factors that resulted in the merger were specific to the circumstances of each company, namely Cunard's need to build two super-liners of its own and White Star's dire financial position following its Royal Mail ownership.

The success of the merger was very much in the eye of the beholder. For White Star the merger can be said to have been a failure to preserve its long history. Though the White Star flag continued to be flown within the Cunard-White Star fleet, and the White Star motor-vessels **Britannic** and **Georgic** continued to operate a service, as a shipping concern White Star was very much the junior partner of Cunard-White Star Limited and in 1949 as a company and infrastructure it vanished, the Cunard Steam-Ship Company Ltd having bought out the remaining 38 per cent share in 1947. Cunard on the other hand could regard the merger a success. It was able to build its own twin super-liners, remove the threat posed by British competition and modernise its existing fleet. However, this success was limited. Aviation would soon make North Atlantic liner services all but redundant, forcing Cunard and the trade as a whole into the cruising and cargo business. Despite this the merger had enabled Cunard to build its own super-ships and maintain company and national prestige on the North Atlantic, even when trade diminished in the 1950s and 1960s. The merger also ensured the survival of the debt ridden White Star Line for another 13 years and therefore it could be said that the Cunard-White Star merger of 1934 was a success for all involved.

*(See also picture of the White Star Line's **Britannic** on the front cover)*

STUART & DOUGLAS of LIVERPOOL

By David K C Eccles

The painted name “*QUEEN’S STORES COMPANY*” on the front wall of an old warehouse in Bridgewater Street, Liverpool is the final reminder of a successful family business that traded for ninety-seven years. The son of a Genoese mariner who settled in Liverpool after service in the Royal Navy, Peter Stuart was born at 31 Crosbie Street, Liverpool in 1814. After serving his apprenticeship as a cooper with John Topin & Co, followed by two years partnership with William Taylor, he established his own cooperage in Bronte Street in 1837 and was living there in 1840 when he married pawnbroker’s daughter Ellen Moss on December 10th, but a short time later moved his home to 26, Slater Street.

Peter Stuart was a skilled craftsman, and soon gained a reputation for his workmanship and business integrity. His clients included palm-oil merchants trading to the Guinea Gulf who were willing to pay top price for strong, good quality casks. The palm-oil trade was a very lucrative business to enter, and at the age of thirty, Peter decided to enter it himself.

Brought up to believe, “*to be in debt was to be in danger*” Peter Stuart used his own savings to purchase the Liverpool barque **Ambassador** (236 tons) in May 1844, and sent her out with ballast to Ichaboa Island (26 S-15 E) to load guano. Discovered the previous year, this 1½ mile circumference uninhabited island off South-West Africa soon attracted ships from Britain, Europe and the U.S.A. as there was no charge for the penguin droppings which covered the island and could be shovelled up by the crew. When the **Ambassador** arrived she joined over one hundred other vessels (thirty from Liverpool) loading at anchor off the island, identified only by their house-flags. Peter Stuart had chosen the red, white and green horizontal colours used by Garibaldi, the Italian patriot for his house-flag, and it was December 30th before the **Ambassador** returned to Liverpool fully laden with 400 tons. *(It was estimated Ichaboa Island was covered by one-hundred foot deep penguin droppings when discovered in 1843, but was stripped bare five years later.)*



Peter Stuart in his later years

After the sale of the guano the **Ambassador** entered the palm-oil trade, sailing in May 1845 to Benin in the Guinea Gulf with cargo to trade, but two months later exploded after the vessel caught fire. Un-deterred by this, Peter Stuart purchased a similar vessel named **Adriana** (282 tons) the following December and sent her out to Benin to continue his trading.

Located on the east bank at the mouth of the Benin River, the township of Benin was founded as a ‘collective’ by the local King for the export of slaves. Before an oil-vessel was allowed to trade, the King demanded commission equal to the value of goods required to purchase two puncheons of palm-oil multiplied

by the number of the vessel's masts. (*A puncheon was a 72 gallon-capacity cask 3'6" x 3'-0" diameter*). After "*Commie*" was paid a vessel was allowed to anchor off the town with space to swing, the topmasts were lowered, the yards used to support a palm-thatched roof over the main deck. For comfort and ventilation, springs were attached to the anchor cables to enable the vessel to warp broadside to the sea breeze. Trading was carried out on board the vessel between the agent and village chiefs who bartered palm-oil for the ships cargo which included, salt, soap, cowries, cotton goods, hardware, ironware, copper & iron bars, gunpowder, gunshot, muskets, and spirits (gin, whiskey and rum). Though palm-oil was the most important commodity, teak, ebony, redwood and ivory were also traded. The palm-oil was produced by village women who skimmed it from the surface of boiling palm-nut pulp into gourds for transport by canoe to the trading vessel. There the thick oil was heated in a copper vat located on deck to enable it to gravitate to the oil-casks stowed in the hold. These casks were carried on board in 'kit' form called 'shooks' to be re-assembled by the ship's carpenter, who was a time served cooper and paid 16/- (80p) a month for this extra work. It was fifteen-months later (March 1847) before the **Adriana** returned to Liverpool where the 500 casks of palm-oil were sold to purchase cargo for the vessel to re-enter trade at Benin. Before she sailed however, a half-share in the vessel was transferred to Peter Douglas.

It was while his ship was trading at Benin that Peter Stuart was introduced to Peter Douglas, a merchant living with his wife and baby son at 2 West Seacombe Terrace. Peter Douglas was a Scotsman with wide experience of the palm-oil trade having worked in the Guinea Gulf as agent for the Liverpool firm of W A & G Maxwell and Company. Both the Peters were men of integrity with high moral standards, they were the same age, and shared an interest in medicine, as Douglas had practiced as a 'palm-oil doctor' in the Niger Delta using the Seaman's Medical Guide for reference, and Stuart had studied homeopathy in London. In 1847 both men agreed it would be to their mutual advantage to enter a 50/50 partnership to trade as coopers and palm-oil merchants, using the name Stuart & Douglas. Financed by their own means, thus began a thirty-six year partnership between the cooper and merchant, which led to the eighty-six year history of the firm 'Stuart & Douglas'.

The partner's first action was to purchase the twelve-year old ship **Rothschild** (647 tons) in August 1847 and send her out with cargo to continue trade at Benin. Benin was a very unhealthy place to trade however, so Stuart & Douglas decided to move from there and establish trade in the Niger Delta, in a region known as the 'Oil-rivers'. To accomplish this they purchased the barque **Commerce** (445 tons) in June 1848, and engaged Mr C Jackson an experienced palm-oil trader, who sailed out with the vessel to the Rio Bento to act as their agent. A trading firm's agent usually signed a three-year contract which paid him £300 per annum plus a percentage of the profit, but the three-year contract Peter Stuart agreed with Jackson paid him 33% commission on ALL the profit he earned for the firm. A trading-vessel's crew also signed a three-

year agreement, but because of high mortality rate on the West-African coast, a clause in it allowed transfer to any ship of any company when required, which resulted in a shorter voyage. Because fresh fruit was available, the crew were not issued with lime-juice, but a daily dose of 2 grains of Quinine mixed with bitters in weak spirit was issued as protection against fever. No grog was allowed to be drunk on board.

To meet expanding trade the ship **Jemina** (816 tons) was purchased in October 1848 and sent out to Old Calabar on the Cross River. Each river was ruled by its own King who demanded "*Commie*" before a vessel was given permission to enter the river to anchor opposite the "collective". The King of Brass demanded the value of two puncheons of oil per number of masts, the Kings of Bonny and New Calabar each required five iron bars and the King of Calabar twenty copper rods per registered ton. For trading in the native market, early Portuguese traders had introduced a Horse-shoe shaped brass "*Manilla*" for use as barter, and these were used by trading companies who produced their own.. Those made exclusively for Stuart & Douglas by Thomas Horne in Birmingham, valued between $\frac{1}{4}$ d and $2\frac{1}{2}$ d according to size, were known as the "*LNT*".

Mr Jackson proved to be an excellent agent, earning himself nearly £10,000 commission during his first eighteen months service by expanding trade eastward from Brass on the Rio Bento to Old Calabar on the Cross River. In May 1849 the **Commerce** returned to Liverpool from Rio Bento with ebony, ivory, and 750 casks of palm-oil, and the following May, the **Jemina** returned from Old Calabar with redwood, ebony and 1,800 casks of palm oil.

A tremendous amount of palm-oil was lost due to shipwreck. Stuart & Douglas suffered their first in 1850 when the snow **Woodpecker** (216 tons) sank off Lands End in March leaving 395 casks of the firm's oil floating off the Scilly Islands. This Bristol owned and registered vessel was chartered to J Longton & Company, Liverpool. The following month a full cargo of oil was lost when the **Commerce** was abandoned off Southwest Ireland before becoming a total wreck on the Blaskets. At that time palm-oil was valued at £10 per cask. To replace the **Commerce** the ten-year old Liverpool barque **Mars** (357 tons) was purchased in September to continue trading at Bonny.

By now a wealthy man, when Mr Jackson returned to Liverpool in 1851 after completing his three-year contract, he refused a repeat contract, instead purchased property in the South of England to live as a gentleman. He had also been a great financial asset to the partners, as Peter Stuart was able to purchase Ditton Lodge, Farnworth (ten miles from Liverpool) to live there for health reasons, and Peter Douglas to purchase a large residence in Grosvenor Road, Cloughton. The extra trade Jackson had created required extra ships to carry the cargo. The timber-laden vessels arriving from the Maritimes to be sold were found to be most suitable. These vessels were built under Special Survey by Lloyd's Register of Shipping and classed for four years, and to maintain this classification required to be surveyed every four years by a Lloyd's surveyor.

Eleven of these were purchased between 1851 and 1855. They were the

ships, **Pomona** (788 tons), **Mermaid** (461 tons), **Saint Andrew** (514 tons), **Earl Derby** (499 tons), **Sarah** (904 tons), **Roderick Dhu** (1,164 tons), **Parramatta** (1,107 tons) and **Sea** (817 tons), and the barques, **Heroine** (389 tons), **Fanny** (950 tons) and **Express** (396 tons). All were registered at Liverpool with their hulls coated white to reflect the tropical sunlight, before sailing with cargo to the Niger Delta. During this period the **Adriana** and **Rothschild** were sold by the firm of their age, and the **Heroine** was lost by explosion at New Calabar in April 1855. The firm had purchased all its vessels from shipbrokers until it had sufficient funds in 1854, to order the iron ship **Ellen Stuart** (1,388 tons) from Liverpool shipbuilder Josiah Jones. Peter Stuart was delighted with the new vessel, and when he learnt the builder had lost £700 on the agreed price, he invited Josiah Jones to the firm's office to hand him a cheque for £700 with the remark "*no one loses money dealing with Stuart & Douglas*".

The firm's fleet was confined to the Guinea Gulf trade until 1856 when two vessels were placed on sailing packet services to Australia and India. The first was in May when the **Sea** sailed with cargo for Geelong and Melbourne after discharging 1,600 casks of palm-oil from Bonny. The second in August, when the **Ellen Stuart** sailed to Calcutta after returning with 2,300 casks of palm-oil, 5 tons of ebony and 2 tons of redwood from her fifteen month maiden voyage to New Calabar. Sadly the **Sea** never returned to Liverpool, having sunk 100 miles south of Port Elizabeth on June 12th 1857 laden with rice from Burma, as there was no return cargo from Australia. Fortunately her crew were rescued that day by the Liverpool barque **Perekop** and later landed at St Helena.

Though Stuart & Douglas never borrowed money from the Borough Bank of Liverpool in Water Street, using it only for deposit, they were able to continue trading when the bank stopped payment on October 27th 1857, due to a steady flow of income from their cooperage and palm-oil sales. With this they were able to purchase the barque **Royal Arch** (398 tons) the following March for the palm-oil trade. The only occasion the firm ever mortgaged an asset was when the barque **Mars** was mortgaged to Waterhouse & Bouch for £2,000 with 5% pa interest in November 1858. This was redeemed nine months later when the **Mars** caught fire with 1,200 barrels of gunpowder on board and exploded at Bonny on August 9th.

The partners must have found general trading to be profitable. In December 1859 they purchased the twenty-three year old ship **Orixa** (543 tons) to sail in company with the **Sarah** to Aden laden with 1,870 tons of coal for H E Moss. Both ships then proceeded to Rangoon to load rice, but sadly the fully laden **Sarah** ran aground on the River Irrawaddy Bar, and was condemned at Rangoon in October 1860.

The partnership between the two Peters proved to be a financial success. By 1860 they had purchased land to re-locate their cooperage from Bronte Street to Kitchen Street, where the adjoining warehouse in Bridgewater Street was used as an office and store for their merchandise. Peter Stuart was also able to purchase Elm House, Crosby Road South where he lived with his wife, six sons, two

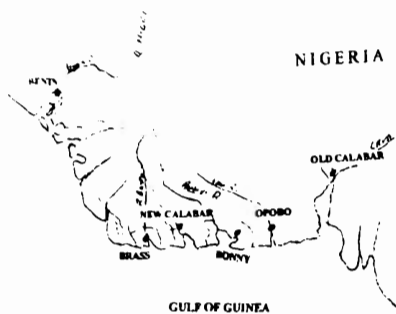
daughters and six servants. He had studied homeopathy under Dr John Epps, a friend who practiced in London, and whilst living at Ditton Lodge, became known locally as the "*Ditton Doctor*" for his practice of dispensing homeopathic treatment to poor people. As he had no recognized qualifications, he gave this treatment free to escape prosecution. During the year Stuart & Douglas decided to re-establish trade at Benin by using a schooner to act as a transport to vessels anchored outside the bar. For this purpose the barque **Fanny** was sold to finance the building at Liverpool of the iron schooner **Belzona** (93 tons), which sailed in February 1861 to Benin to be manned by native crew.

Between 1860 and 1863 the ships **Pomona**, **Roderick Dhu**, **Parramatta** and **Mermaid** were sold to be replaced on the palm-oil trade by the barques **Phrenologist** (506 tons), **Hannah Salkeld** (503 ton) and **Irene** (406 ton) purchased from shipbrokers, who also supplied the ships **Clara** (623 tons), **Helvellyn** (1,077 tons), **Lock-Na-Gar** (1,318 ton), **Hahnemann** (1,328 ton) and the iron ships **Dowthorpe** (528 ton), and **Tythonus** (1,152 ton) for general trading.

At the end of 1862 Stuart & Douglas was granted permission by the King of Brass to station a trading hulk in the Rio Bento. For this purpose the iron paddle-steamer **Ben my Chree** (256 tons) was purchased in January 1863, converted to a sailing vessel, then sailed with cargo to Brass, where she was securely moored opposite a cleared patch of land to be used for filling and storing oil-casks. Two vessels were lost in June that year. The **Dowthorpe** on the 6th was wrecked at Pooree (India) homeward bound from Calcutta, and the **Saint Andrew** on the 28th wrecked on the Andoni River bar, laden with palm-oil from Old Calabar. These losses were compensated for by the entry into service in August of the iron ship **John Bellamy** (1,270 tons) built for the firm at West Hartlepool for general trading. By the end of 1863 the firm had seven vessels on the palm-oil trade and eight on services to India or Australia.

Between 1864-68 eleven vessels joined the fleet, two were sold and five others were lost. Those purchased were the brigantine **St George** (329 tons), the barques **Alumina** (699 tons), **Annie & Ellie** (328 tons), **Athelstan** (541 tons), **Courier** (569 tons), **George Washington** (414 tons), **Phrenologist** (609 tons) and **Sepia** (686 tons) also the ships **Kingston** (1,208 tons), **Jeanie Douglas** (1,284 tons) and **Peter Stuart** (1,490 tons), the later two built for the firm. The two sold were **Helvellin** and **Orixa**. Four of the vessels lost, all fully laden with palm oil, were the **Express** wrecked on Rio Bento Bar on October 27th 1864, the **St George** disappeared on passage Brass to Liverpool during 1865, and the **Irene** wrecked on Bonny Bar on June 22nd 1867. The fourth was the schooner **Belzona** sunk inside the Benin Bar on June 26th 1865 carrying the last 35 tons of palm-oil cargo out to the barque **Athelstan**. This schooner had provided a very efficient service at Benin, but the service was not resumed until October 1867 when the new Canadian built **Mary Ann** (68 tons) arrived from Liverpool after purchase there. The other loss was the ship **Loch-Na-Gar** that had sailed from Cardiff with coal for Hong Kong in February 1867, and was returning to the U.K.

1,000 tons of Guano from Baker Island (Marshall Islands) when wrecked on Apia Upolo Island (Samoa) on May 25th 1868. Her crew were rescued and died at Sydney (NSW) two months later.



Map of the Gulf of Guinea

Three years after the **Ben my Chree** was hulked at Brass, the Kings of Bonny and New Calabar gave the firm permission to station hulks in their rivers. For this purpose the iron paddle-steamers **Garyowen** (241 ton) and **Erin-go-Bragh** (288 ton) were purchased from the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company for conversion into trading hulks, the **Garyowen** sailing out to Bonny in June 1866, followed by the **Erin-go-Bragh** to New Calabar in August 1867. The risk

of fire was reduced by using the hulk as a floating shop, with oil-cask assembly and filling performed on the patch of land opposite, which was surrounded by a stockade for security.

Following a serious fire at Bonny Town in 1868, trading was frequently disrupted by tribal fighting for control of the palm-oil trade between Chief Oko-Jumbo and Chief Ja-Ja. Because of this Stuart & Douglas decided to appoint an agent at Kinsembo to establish trade in the Congo region, which proved to be a wise decision.

Peter Stuart's interest in phrenology was demonstrated in August 1868 when the iron barque **Nieman** (609 tons) was renamed **Phrenologist** two months after her namesake was wrecked with a full cargo of palm-oil on the Calabar River Bar. This was the only occasion the firm ever renamed a vessel after purchase. Another loss occurred the following April when the sailing packet **John Bellamy** was wrecked near Pagoda Point, (Burma) whilst on passage from Calcutta to London, all her crew landing safely on the beach.

Bonny Town was the centre of the Guinea Gulf palm-oil trade in 1869 when Peter Stuart sent his second son Cromwell there to gain experience, tragically his body was returned to Liverpool for burial after he died of sunstroke aged 22 on February 2nd 1870. Whilst Cromwell was stationed at Bonny Town, delay due to tribal feuding caused the **Royal Arch** to be sent to trade in the Congo region, to be joined later by the twenty-year old barque **Harold** (674 tons) sent direct from Liverpool after purchase in April 1869.

After loading cargo the **Royal Arch** had an eventful voyage back to Liverpool, calling at Barbados on January 19th with the mate in command and the master clamped in irons after he went berserk a week earlier, and threatened to shoot the crew. At Barbados the Chief Magistrate jailed the captain for misconduct, appointed a new master and gave the vessel clearance to proceed to Liverpool. When Captain J Jones the new master arrived on board, he was told by the Agent part of the ship's cargo of ivory, coffee, peanuts and kernels would

be sold by auction to pay-off his debt. The captain objected to this, and when the lighter came alongside, locked the hatches and threatened anyone who came on board. To prevent the vessel from being seized, he sailed immediately from the port leaving the ships papers and his certificate with the agent, who was later recompensed. When the **Royal Arch** arrived at Liverpool twenty-seven days later Captain Jones was given a new appointment.

The **Harold** traded at four ports during her thirteen-month voyage to the Congo, three men including the steward died of fever, but only thirty tons of palm oil was purchased, the rest of the cargo comprised ground-nuts, palm-kernels, India-rubber, copper-ore, ivory and coffee. Before the vessel sailed the tribal-chief at Ambrizette sent a slave boy aged about twelve on board to replace the steward, after it was agreed the boy would be returned from Liverpool. When the ship arrived at Liverpool, however, the master was reprimanded for not entering the boy on the Crew-List, even though the boy was nameless and could not understand English. At Liverpool the boy was cared-for by Peter Stuart, who named him Stonewall Jackson and employed him as a member of his household staff. *(Mr Jackson became a British subject and was later employed as the butler. He married and was living at 7 Doric Street, Seaforth at the time of his death in 1926).*

The tribal war at Bonny between Chiefs Oko-Jumbo and Ja-Ja was finally settled when Chief Ja-Ja moved his tribe thirty miles eastward to settle on an island near the mouth of the Imo River, which he later called Opobo Town. There Chief Ja-Ja signed treaties with local Chiefs giving them 75% of the “Commie” he collected before proclaiming himself King of Opobo over all land between the Qua Eboe River and the Andoni River which he declared independent from Bonny on February 15th 1870. At first all the palm-oil traders placed a boycott on trade with Chief Ja-Ja, but this was broken in September 1870 when Stuart & Douglas sent the **Royal Arch** to trade at Opobo, and two months later the **Hannah Salkeld** became the first trading hulk there after the firm sold her for £121 to Miller Brothers of Glasgow.

By 1869 the firm's vessels were returning to Queens Dock with cargo from all over the world, the **Alumina** with wheat and copper-ore from San Francisco, the **Tythonus**, rice from Rangoon, the **Jeannie Douglas** and **Peter Stuart** with cotton, wool, jute, linseed and spices from Calcutta, and three others with palm oil (valued at £10 per ton) from Benin, Bonny and New Calabar. The fleet size reached its zenith in January 1870 with ten vessels employed on the palm-oil trade, and five on the other services, but these numbers soon declined. In March the **Annie & Ellie** was condemned after running ashore at Brass, then the **Athelstan** was condemned in July, to be converted to a trading hulk at Old Calabar manned by a native crew. In February 1871 the Liverpool registered ship **Mimosa** (447 ton) was purchased for the African trade, but two months later the **Courier** was wrecked, homeward bound from Bonny with a cargo of palm oil. Fleet decline continued with the sale of the **Hahnemann** in August. The **Alumina** was condemned at St John N.B. in May 1872 then the **Royal Arch** was

wrecked on the river bar at New Calabar in December.

A year after the firm commenced trading at Opobo it decided to relocate its trading hulks to establish one there. For this purpose the **Erin-go-Bragh** was moved from New Calabar to the Opobo River, the **Garyowen** moved from Bonny to New Calabar, but during her move from Brass to Bonny the **Benny-Chree** was totally wrecked on Bonny beach. With a trading hulk located at Opobo, the firm ceased trading in the Congo region due to the lack of palm-oil, but did not locate a hulk at Bonny until July 1874, when the forty year-old Cardiff registered ship **Victoria** (358 tons) was purchased for that purpose.

The decline in fleet numbers continued. In May 1874 the **George Washington** was condemned at Shanghai after catching fire, and the **Sepia** was sold to London owners in October. The iron ship **Stuart Hahnemann** (2,056 ton) which sailed on her maiden voyage to Bombay in September, was capsized by a sudden squall in the Indian Ocean returning with 176 tons of stone ballast in April 1875. The master, his wife, with thirty-six others were lost with the ship, but the boatswain and eight men were rescued from a lifeboat and landed at St Helena by the Austrian barque **Blandina**.

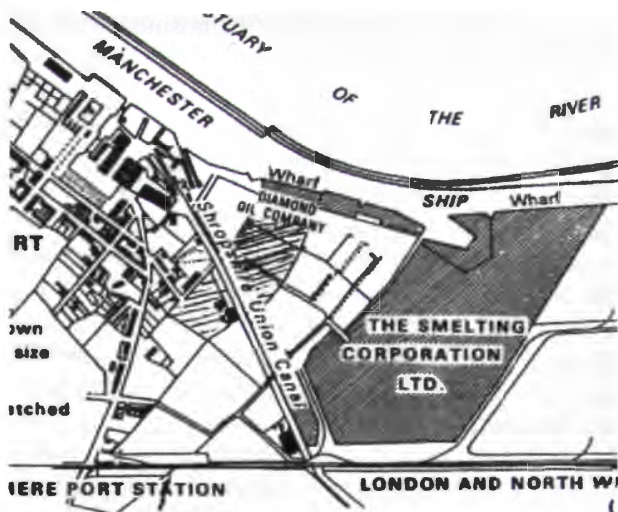
The fleet was reduced to nine in January 1875 when its management was split between the elder sons of the owners, Milton Stuart taking charge of the packets, and Peter Douglas (Jnr) the oil-traders. Since the opening of the Suez Canal, Stuart & Douglas could see no future, at Liverpool, for the general services, so they sent Milton Stuart to London to seek employment for his vessels with the Baltic Exchange, purchasing the London registered **Northbrook** (1,846 tons) for trade with San Francisco.

Peter Douglas took control of the four palm-oil traders, increasing his fleet to five in June when the Liverpool iron brig **Robert Anderson** (221 tons) was purchased. An attempt had been made by the **Harold** to trade for palm-oil westward from Lagos, but it was unsuccessful and the vessel was sold in February 1876. However, the firm did have success in extending its trade from the oil-rivers to France and Holland using the **Clara** and **Robert Anderson**. By 1878 the ship **Earl Derby** was permanently moored at Opobo with the hulk **Erin-go-Bragh**, the ship **Mimosa** at New Calabar with the hulk **Garyowen**, and the hulk **Victoria** permanently moored at Bonny, with trading at Benin carried out aboard the schooner **Mary Ann** until October, when she was replaced by the schooner **Dolphin**. Cargo transport for these was by the monthly British & African Steamship service. Only the **Clara** and **Robert Anderson** were transporting the firm's cargo by sail.

During the year the fleet was reduced further by the loss of the **Jeanie Douglas**. She was last sighted 200 miles East of Durban laden with rice from Burma to London, when she reported "*all's well*" on October 2nd but was never heard of again.

Heeding their father's warning that, "*to be in debt was to be in danger*", Peter Stuart's five sons invested £2,000 each of their own money to register the Diamond Oil Company on November 21st 1879. The head office of the

company was in Queen's Building, Dale Street, Liverpool which was shared with Stuart & Douglas, and it was founded to manufacture vegetable oils using a method invented by Mr Walter Saunders, a seed crusher from Rock Ferry who they had met earlier that year. With the £10,000 capital they acquired a vacant soap factory on the west bank of the Shropshire Union Canal at Ellesmere Port.



The Diamond Oil Co adjacent to the Ship Canal at Ellesmere Port

They also purchased the necessary plant required to extract oil and grease from seed imported from West Africa. The brothers appointed Walter Saunders general manager of the company on contract for ten-years, paying £300 pa plus 10% profit. He also received shares valued at £500 for the use of his patent (Pat No 3141/79), which were re-purchased in December 1880 when the first one-hundred tons of oil was produced, leaving the brothers the sole shareholders.

The fleet continued its decline. The **Kingston** was abandoned ashore near Roumania Point, Singapore in June 1879, the **Robert Anderson** was sold to Dutch owners in August 1880, and the **Ellen Stuart** was destroyed by fire whilst loading jute at Calcutta in December 1881, whilst the **Phrenologist** was sold to German owners in June 1882. On the 22nd of that month the **Clara** was lost with a cargo of palm-oil on the Opobo River bar, bringing to an end thirty-seven years use of sail to transport the firm's palm-oil.

By 1882 the firm's trading in the oil-rivers was carried out ashore, as the six hulks had been beached, surrounded by a stockade and renamed Fort Bellamy at Begema (New Calabar River), Fort Douglas at Benin, Fort Mazzini at Brass, Fort Cromwell at Bonny, Fort Stuart at Old Calabar and Fort Hahnemann at Opobo. To protect the firm's trading interest, when the iron ship **The Hahnemann** (1,996 tons) was built at Woolston for them in May that year, she was registered by The Hahnemann Ship Co Ltd at Liverpool.

The following year the firm's co-founder, Peter Douglas died a widower aged 68 at his home in Grosvenor Road, Claughton on December 17th 1883. Buried at Flaybrick cemetery, Birkenhead, he left assets valued at £160,357 to two sons Peter and Murray, and six daughters Jeanie, Grace, Ann, Elizabeth, Margaret and Jessie. As the Douglas family was not interested in the firm's business, they sold their shares in the firm to Peter Stuart, to enable the Douglas sons to become farmers. In acknowledgment of the great contribution his partner

and made, Peter Stuart decreed the business would always continue to trade as Stuart & Douglas.

There was concern for the future of the firm's palm-oil business in 1885, after Britain claimed the Niger Basin Territory at the Berlin Conference, and granted a Royal Charter to the Royal Niger Company to monopolize all its trade. The Stuart brothers however showed confidence in the future of the Diamond Oil Company, by increasing its capital to £20,000 to purchase the land between their factory and the River Mersey bank, which became Stuart Wharf when the Manchester Ship Canal was built.

The fleet continued its decline. The schooner **Dolphin** was broken up on the Opobo River and the **Tythonus** was sold to Liverpool owners in 1885, and three years later Stuart & Douglas ceased to be a registered shipowner when the **Peter Stuart** was sold to London owners and the **Northbrook** was transferred to H & M Stuart in January 1888.

On September 21st 1888 the firm's founder, Peter Stuart died at his home Elm House, Seaforth aged 73. A man known for honesty and integrity, he was nicknamed, "*Garibaldi Stuart*" by some for his support for Italian Independence as well as "*The Ditton Doctor*" by others for his practice of homeopathy. A widower with six sons and two daughters, he left a personal estate of £46,364 to daughters Selina and Rachel, and sons Hahnemann, Milton, Dr Peter, Bellamy, Orsini and Mazzini. Also among his bequests was £100 to Mr Stonewall Jackson.

Tragically son Bellamy died aged 33 at Elm House seventeen days after his father. The firm's business now passed under control of elder son Hahnemann assisted by his brothers Milton (in London), Orsini, and Mazzini.

From the day it was founded, the Royal Niger Company met fierce opposition from the established oil-river firms trading east of the Brass River. Seven of these, including Stuart & Douglas amalgamated to form The African Association Limited, which they registered on May 25th 1889, with Hahnemann, Milton, Mazzini and Orsini Stuart named as directors. This did not affect the independence of the firm to trade in Liverpool.

In 1892 two large sailing vessels the Stuart brothers had ordered entered service, the steel ship **Fort Stuart** (2,433 tons) in February and steel four-masted barque **Milton Stuart** (3,177 tons) in August, both registered at Liverpool each owned by a single-ship limited liability company. Between the introduction of these ships the fleet manager, Milton Stuart, died aged 44 during a business trip to Montreal on June 27th leaving assets valued at £11,800 to his wife and nine children. Milton Stuart had been a very experienced and competent ship manager, but his enthusiasm for managing sailing-ships was not shared by his brother Hahnemann who transferred their management to C W Kellock in 1896 selling the **Milton Stuart** and the **Northbrook** to German owners two years later. The following year the **Fort Stuart** sank off the Cape of Good Hope without loss of life on October 4th 1899, and three years later **The Hahnemann** was wrecked on Tongoy Point (Chile) on June 21st 1902 bringing to its end a fifty-eight year period of family ship-owning.

Hahnemann Stuart registered Stuart & Douglas as a limited-liability company in 1905, and when he voluntarily liquidated the Diamond Oil Company on September 12th all its assets were transferred to Stuart & Douglas Company Limited. It continued to refine oil. By then Stuart & Douglas had expanded its business to include boat-building and West-African timber importing. Among the wooden boats built, were surf-boats for handling cargo on the West-African coast. Four years later the firm's operation at 66 Bridgewater Street was renamed Queen's Stores Company, and commenced trading as a ship-chandlery and as sail-makers. On the Manchester Ship Canal, Stuart Wharf at Ellesmere Port was advertised as available for berthing the largest cattle and cargo steamers.

During the 1914-18 War Stuart Wharf was taken over by the government to store war material, and it was there that Hahnemann Stuart died of a heart attack aged 72 on August 22nd 1917. Named after the founder of homeopathy, he was a member of the Liverpool Hahnemann Hospital Committee and died a bachelor leaving assets worth £24,600. During the twenty-nine years he was in charge of the firm he had expanded its business into vegetable oil-refining and boat-building, established the Queen's Stores Company, and opened offices at 14 St Mary Axe, London and 41 Castle Street, Liverpool. Following Hahnemann's death, his brother Orsini took control of Stuart & Douglas.

In 1919 Orsini sold the firm's property at Ellesmere Port (including the wharf) to Ellesmere Port Estates. With the proceeds he purchased four-acres of land in Horsefall Street, Liverpool, to build the largest machine Cooperage in Europe with a palm-oil cask clearing house adjoining, fronting Caryl Street. By this time the Queen's Stores Company in Bridgewater Street was manufacturing its patent "Turbine" ash-bags, "B.Q.S" soft soap and "Black-pan Watch" a soft-soap substitute for supply to shipowners.

Ten years after he took control of the firm, Orsini Stuart died aged 72 at Elm House, Seaforth on May 31st 1929. An engineer by profession he left £10,700 to his wife, son and daughter. By now he had become a director of the United Africa Company. (*See Note 1*) He was also a member of the Liverpool Hahnemann Hospital Committee. Orsini left Stuart & Douglas in a strong trading position, instructing his executors not to sell his shares in the firm until five years after his death.

Sadly when 68 year-old Mazzini, a bachelor, took control of the firm it was at the start of the great trade depression, but, as his brother wished, he continued trading for five years before liquidating the firm in 1934. For ninety-seven years the name of Stuart & Douglas was synonymous with quality and integrity; today their names are remembered in oil-rivers of Nigeria by Stuart Creek which leads off the Escravos River near the village of Opuraja, and Douglas Creek, which leads off the Calabar River between Venour Point and Jamestown. Three years after he liquidated the firm, Mazzini Stuart died aged 76 on November 10th 1937 at 23 Queens Road, Southport.

Back in 1840 Peter Stuart had founded his business to give financial security to his family - He had been very successful.

NOTE 1: The African Association became African & Eastern Trading Co in 1919, and then merged with the Niger Company in 1928 to become the United Africa Co.

NOTE 2: The warehouse at 66 Bridgewater Street was put to further use. In 1934 it was purchased to manufacture sacks, bags, lifebelts, soaps and disinfectant by S R Manufacturing Co which continues to trade the Queen's Stores Company as ship's-chandler and later owned by Mr & Mrs John Knowles.

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'Trading In West Africa' by Peter Davies

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Customhouse Bill's of Lading.

Ship's Logbook **HAROLD** (1869)

Ship's Logbook **BEN MY CHREE** (1863)



The Company's letterhead from the 1970s showing the extent the Bridgewater Street premises achieved



The much reduced premise in Bridgewater Street in 2006

THE PORT OF ULVERSTON

By Charles Dawson

“The Policy and Development Directorate is leading on the development of the Shipbuilding Communities Campaign.

The Shipbuilding Communities Campaign is a national campaign that aims to raise awareness throughout the UK of the needs and opportunities of the industry, and to work with a range of partners to develop a strategic and positive response to secure a sustainable future for the industry and its communities.

The Campaign is rapidly developing through the formation of a Steering Group, and a number of successful meetings with the Department of Trade & Industry, Ministry of Defence, European Commission, English Regions and the Scottish Executive. This activity was celebrated at the launch conference of the Campaign held at the Laird Foundation in April 2002”

The writer was fascinated when he read the above announcement, but inevitably his thoughts turned back once again to those more out-of-the-way places where ships were once built in the North West; his story of Barrow has already appeared in the Society's ***Bulletin*** (Summer 1993). With this in mind, it was interesting to discover that William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898) who completed four terms as British Prime Minister between 1868 and 1894 once remarked that

“...some day Barrow will become a Liverpool. Let it become a Liverpool if it will and can; the old Liverpool will be none the worse, but better for it”.

Barrow may have willed it, but it never could; we know now that the great hopes envisaged for Barrow-in-Furness never did materialise fully, an inevitable outcome due to its somewhat odd position.

One of the even more out-of-the-way places in the Furness district worthy of study for its maritime history is Ulverston, which earlier was spelt with a final “e”. Nowadays it tends to make its greatest claim to fame as the birthplace of Stan Laurel the film comedian. That he maintained his Lancashire accent on the screen reminds us that Ulverston was once in the separate part of that county which lay in the Lake District. It may be a surprise to many to hear that ships were built here and traded from here too, but second thoughts will confirm that this was normal round much of Britain's coast. Before the building of better roads, not to mention the railways, coastal vessels were the normal means of the carriage of goods and they often penetrated quite far inland up navigable rivers to deliver them.

In the early 18th century, the Leven estuary provided an impressive maritime scene with vessels at anchor on its west bank. Already by 1774, Ulverston had 70 registered ships moving mainly iron ore, pig iron, cattle, oats and barley, but few facilities existed for cargo-handling and storage, so the loading and unloading of cargoes would have been laborious to carry out. Coasting vessels were often therefore built to the highest quality under Lloyds Special Survey, so that they could be relied upon to withstand repeated spells of beaching, where

This was possible. The villages on the west bank of the Leven Estuary, Bardsea, Baycliff, Aldingham, Newbiggin, Roosebeck and Rampside, nowadays served by the coast road, were perhaps busier places then than now; tourism now probably accounts for most of the activity.

This being a time when Britain had been gripped by canal mania, a number of ambitious men from Ulverston proposed a canal that would provide access direct to the sea. The aim was to increase prosperity by providing facilities for building more substantial vessels, with workshop and warehousing facilities to be added along the canal-side later. One extra improvement that would come out of the scheme, they reckoned, was that to the south of the town was some undeveloped marshland that would be drained at the same time.

In 1791 a subscription was opened and permission to take water for an eventual feeder to the canal from a local stream was granted by the Duke of Buccleuch, Lord of the Manor, who held the rights. Early in 1793 a Bill was presented before Parliament and in August of that year Colonel Thomas Sunderland, the Chairman and a director of the Canal Company - and incidentally an amateur painter who made charming watercolours of the Lake District - cut the first sod. Sunderland Terrace in the town was called after him.

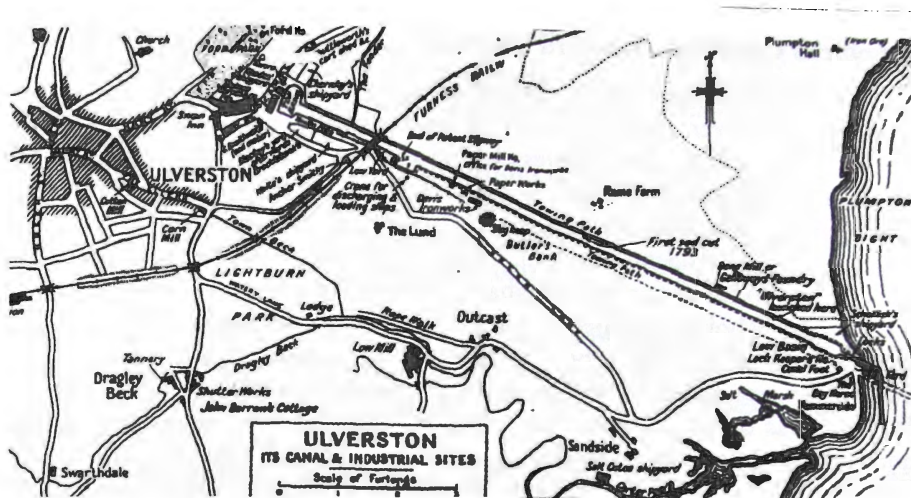
The engineer chosen for the project was none other than the renowned John Rennie, a leading engineer of the time. Under him, carrying out the day-to-day work on both the Ulverston and Lancaster Canals was the young Edward Banks (1770-1835), later to become Sir Edward. It was here that he established himself - he later became a principal contractor of public works.

The excavation work on the Ulverston Canal was carried out by Pinkerton & Murray, who were experienced canal builders. A back drain running parallel to the canal and a feeder from Newland were dug to ensure that correct water levels existed at all times. Much of the limestone came from a quarry on Hoad Hill.

The canal was hailed as the shortest ($1\frac{1}{3}$ miles) broadest (66' top, 30' bottom) and deepest (15') canal in Britain when it was opened to traffic on 18th November 1796. It certainly differed from the usual canal built for the traditional barge; here the locks were of a size that could accommodate ships of up to 350 tons capacity. Naturally, as seems inevitable with all such projects, it had exceeded the estimated cost, finishing up at £9,000, twice that anticipated.

The first vessel to be honoured passing through the lock gates was the brig **Sally**. Iron exports, were expected to bring in the greatest business for the town, but did not live up to expectations. Fortunately other commodities did, often because of the development on the canal banks of new industries as well as those linked to shipbuilding.

The first vessels were built by the well known yard of Hart and Ashburner. They were the **Hope** and **Argo** for Dodgson of Lancaster, who was involved in the West Indies trade. A street in the town was called after Hart. Other yards and some of the ships that they built are dealt with below: -



Ulverston Canal and environs (Courtesy of Ulverston Heritage Centre)

Charnley

The Charnley's were a highly-respected Barrow maritime family, who built the schooner **S & EA Charnley**, 101 gross tons, in 1872 for Richard P Fisher. She was commanded by Capt. Stephen Charnley and was wrecked on the South Stack, Anglesey, in July 1881, carrying guano from Liverpool to London; all members of the crew were saved.

Mackay, later Petty & Postlethwaite and then Brocklebank

The schooner **William Brocklebank**, 131 gross tons, also built in 1872, was one of two sailing ships built by William Brocklebank after he took over the Petty and Postlethwaite shipyard at Ulverston - who had specialised in ships for the Brazil trade - the other being **Ella Mary**. (The map of the canal refers to the yard as "Mackay's" later taken over by Brocklebank, so more research is required to establish the dates when Mackay and Postlethwaite were in respective occupation).

It would also be interesting to know more about this other activity of the Brocklebank family, who had their main shipbuilding yard further north along the North West coast, at Whitehaven. The two-masted schooner **William Brocklebank** was the second to be launched, in April 1872. Like her sister ship, she was part of the Duddon fleet of William Postlethwaite. He owned the **William Brocklebank** from 1874 until she went missing in the Irish Sea on the 14th October 1881, on a voyage from Millom with iron ore. The **William Brocklebank** had been berthed at St. George's Dock, London, at the time of the Census in April 1881. Her crew was shown as follows:

Thomas Leadbetter	48	Banks, Lancashire	Master
Griffiths Rees	34	St Dogmaels, Pembroke, Wales	Mate
William Fortune	26	Wexford Church Town	AB/Seaman
Thomas Charles Webb	24	Greenwich, Kent, England	Cook
Thomas Kirkup	28	Newcastle, Northumberland	AB/Seaman

Schollick's Canal Foot Shipyard later Wilson

Samuel Schollick started shipbuilding in February 1851 at Greenodd further up the Leven estuary, at a shipyard previously owned by the Ashburners. The first and perhaps the only vessel from the yard was the 90 tons schooner **Edward & Margaret**, delivered to Edward Jones Schollick (1825-1908) later the same year; Margaret was presumably his wife's name. It is not known what relationship the two Schollicks had. Edward Jones Schollick began his working life as butler to the rector of Aldingham, the Rev. John Stonard, who produced a portrait of Schollick, painted in oils. The rector was a wealthy man, who was building Aldingham Hall when he died and the estate, which included land and a limestone quarry as well as the Hall, passed to Schollick, then aged 24. With surplus capital to invest, he embarked upon a partnership with Samuel and together they opened another yard at Canal Foot, Ulverston, from where they launched the 45-ton schooner **Thrifty** on 3rd August 1854. Her master was William Tyson; the vessel was lost with all hands on the Liverpool Banks in November 1861.

The partners fell out in 1855, Edward paying Samuel £200 and advertising that the Canal Foot shipyard was now under his sole control; bills signed by Samuel Schollick would not be paid, and the yard was to be sold, along with an unfinished schooner. However, that did not happen. Instead, Edward Schollick employed John Wilson as foreman shipbuilder and set about building his own small fleet. Schollick had eleven children. They all had the middle name of Stonard, presumably in honour of the rector, and the first six had ships named after them. The yard turned out eight vessels, schooners and brigantines under Schollick's ownership. **Ulverston** a 61 tons schooner launched August 1862 was the only vessel he built for other owners up until then. She survived until 1926. **Margaret**, a 124-ton schooner launched in November 1862, was named after Wilson's wife. John Wilson, now the yard manager, was about to buy the yard. After the **Margaret**, the yard was sold, and remained in use until 1870. Edward Stonard bought 16 shares in the next vessel, **Annie Ripley**, a 205-ton brigantine and that holding continued after 1875 when James Fisher became managing owner. **Annie Ripley** was wrecked in 1881.

E J Schollick was not only concerned with shipowing during this period the services of his pedigree bull *Cambridge Barrington 1st* were advertised at a guinea a time but he backed the wrong horse in the iron industry. The Low Furness Iron & Steel Co Ltd was set up in 1857 to expand and modernise James Davies's ironworks at Canal Head. Edward Schollick was a director, but the company was short-lived. They stopped advertising their iron and brass castings the following year. After shipbuilding, shipowning, and ironworking, Edward turned to mining. This was indeed diversification! He emigrated to Australia about 1876 and died there at the age of 83. It would be interesting to know if he built any vessels while he was there.

J&W White

John and William White operated one of the several shipyards at the head of the Ulverston canal. They built the following twelve vessels at Ulverston:

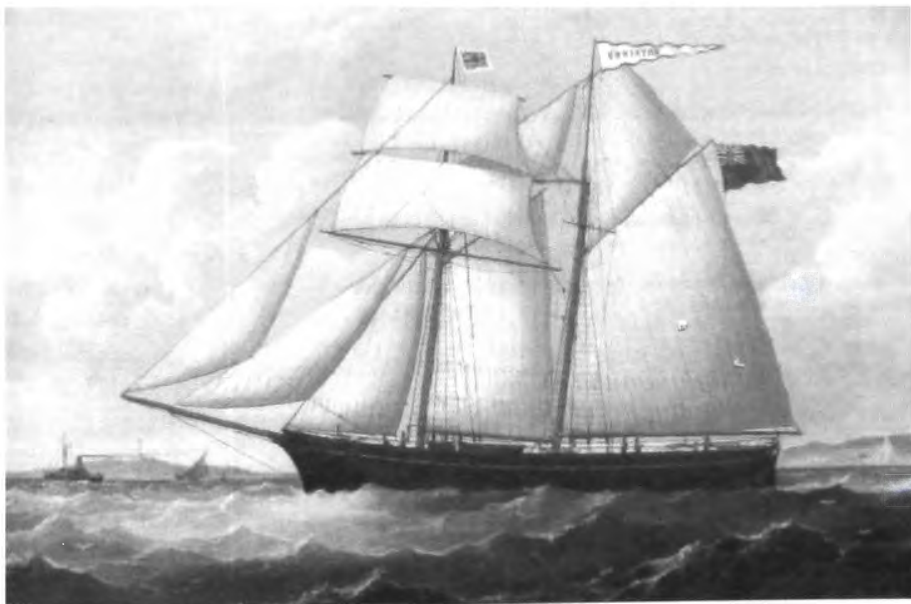
1865 Mary Goldsworthy	1870 Millom Castle	1875 Kate
1866 Elizabeth Worthington	1871 T & EF	1876 Mabel
1868 Mary Atkinson	1873 George 4th	1876 Edith
1869 Warsash	1874 Coniston	1878 Ellen Harrison

The Whites were the last of the Ulverston shipbuilders; after the launch of the **Ellen Harrison** in 1878 no more merchant vessels were ever built there. She was among a number of local ships sunk by U-boats in World War I.

Ancillary trades

Ancillary trades alongside the canal included sailmaking and there was an anchor smithy. Trade on the canal peaked in 1846 when 994 vessels with a total cargo of 61,000 tons entered its lockgates. All this economic activity certainly did create prosperity for the town and out of this there developed a maritime community at Canal Head and Quay Street.

That the local schooners not only traded coastwise, but also across the Irish Sea, we know from a portrait of one of the White shipyard's ships, the topsail schooner **Coniston**, 98 gross tons, 84.9' x 20.7' x 9.3'. The portrait, "*one of the artist's more mature paintings*" was painted in 1875 by Joseph Joshua Semple (1830-1877). She is depicted on her way into Belfast.



*The schooner **Coniston***

'Strongly constructed like all Furness vessels, she had a long life, but tragically was lost on her own doorstep, foundering when crossing the Duddon Estuary Bar in September 1917'. (A Sam Davidson).

The opening of the Ulverstone & Lancaster Railway in 1857 finally sealed the canal's fate by providing cheaper transportation of iron ore now re-routed to Barrow, which could be served by larger ships. Authorised by an Act of Parliament, the Furness Railway purchased the canal in 1862 for £22,000. Commercial trade finally ceased in 1916 and in 1949 the lock gates were sealed after the departure of the last vessel to use the canal, the fishing smack **Nahula**. Today you can sit at the Bay Horse pub, look out across Morecambe Bay and imagine the hive of activity that this part of the Furness coast once was and eastwards across Morecambe Bay to Lancaster on the River Lune and Glasson Dock here there were also busy shipbuilding places, but that is another story.

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Barrow Times

100 YEARS OF MARINE INSURANCE IN LIVERPOOL

By Antony J Barratt

There is evidence of marine insurance being transacted in Liverpool as early as 1750, which ultimately led in 1802 to the formation of the Liverpool Underwriters' Association. By 1851 there were at least 51 underwriters doing business in the City. There may even have been two marine insurance companies in Liverpool in the early 19th Century, but they appear to have been short lived.

In the main the underwriters operated on an individual and modest basis gradually forming themselves into partnerships as the financial risks to be insured got larger. By 1860 the business in Liverpool was being transacted by three groups:-

- | | |
|------------|---|
| Private | - merchants, as a subsidiary business to their main trade and by individuals on a full time basis, |
| Syndicates | - seemed to provide the bulk of the insurance cover, thus allowing the risk to be spread over a greater number of underwriters. Each syndicate usually consisted of between 20 and 30 members. There were eleven such syndicates composed of 192 local underwriters plus 92 other "non resident" undertakers. |
| Brokers | - and underwriters who had formed themselves in to private firms, who often placed part of the risk in the London Market. |

These private firms included:-

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| Barr, Hope & Co | <i>Became the Alliance Ins. Co, with Charles Roberts & Co</i> |
| Barry, Higham & Co | |
| Burn & Ainley | <i>Became the Empire Marine Ins. Co in 1863</i> |
| Campbell, Cross & Co | |
| Dale & Ryrie | <i>Incorporated as the British & Foreign Marine Ins. Co in 1863</i> |
| Fell, Trueman & Co | |
| Jones, Palmer & Co | <i>Became the Sea Ins. Co in 1876</i> |
| Charles Langton & Co | <i>Became the Union Marine Ins. Co in 1863 with Rawson, Aikin & Co</i> |
| Thos.Morris & Co | |
| North, Ewing & Co | |
| Price & Case | <i>Became the Maritime Ins. Co in 1864</i> |
| Rathbone Martin & Co | <i>Went out of business in 1883, being the last of the private firms</i> |
| Rawson, Aikin & Co | <i>Became the Union Marine Ins. Co in 1863 with Charles Langton & Co</i> |

Wm Rotherham & Co
Sutton Bros & Kirkby
Woodfall, Willis & Co

Became the Albion Marine Ins. Co in 1863

The fate of the other firms listed has not been determined.

Nationally the five companies writing marine insurance in 1860 were joined by over 30 others in the next twenty years, but two thirds of these failed within 10 years of establishment, the winding up of these twenty companies causing great losses to the shareholders. Twelve survived which with the original five formed the basis for the marine insurance industry for at least the next 80 years. The last Liverpool syndicate ceased trading in 1908

In December 1859 a private, twelve page pamphlet was circulated in Liverpool entitled, "*Reasons for establishing a Marine Insurance Company in Liverpool*" written by John Towne Danson a Liverpool Barrister. He claimed that although Liverpool handled 50%, in value, of Britain's trade it only handled a fraction of the total insurance of that trade. He claimed that such an imbalance could only be rectified by establishing a joint stock company to undertake the work. On the 7th December 1859 a meeting took place to discuss the establishment of a "Mersey Marine Insurance Co". After two more meetings it was decided to form such a company, and four visits, to London, were made to head- hunt an underwriter with experience of handling transactions in a joint stock environment. To achieve this, an underwriter called Jacob Reynolds was approached but his request for a guaranteed salary of £4,000 pa was considered too high for the new company to pay, at least in the early years. However, information was received that a London group were trying to establish a "Thames & Mersey Marine Insurance Company", to be based in the Capital and perhaps surprisingly in Manchester. This new concern appeared to have identified the same Liverpool need but did not propose to be Liverpool based. Meetings between the two promoters ensued and on 26th March 1860 it was reported that agreement had been reached that a company called the Thames & Mersey Marine Insurance Company should be formed with three autonomous Boards located in London, Manchester and Liverpool with equal status and exclusive rights in their own locality. Each local Board was to have the right to appoint its own officers and Liverpool was to have the right to pay a higher salary to enable them attract the right underwriter for their operation. The capital was to be £2 million in £20 shares. The shares were to be allocated on the basis of 45,000 to London, 30,000 to Liverpool and 25,000 to Manchester. Initially only £2 per share was called up and the initial subscription offer was over subscribed three fold.

The autonomous Boards would appoint representatives to a General Board, which was to meet two or three times per year, the first meeting of which took place on the 10th May 1860. The 33 seats on the General Board were allocated on the basis of 12 Directors from Liverpool, 11 from London and 10 from Manchester. This was changed in 1888 to 10, 8 and 6 respectively.

Using the discretion given to the Local Board Liverpool was able to obtain the services of Jacob Reynolds, on what was described as “*his own terms*” and Mr Danson became Secretary to the Liverpool Board at a salary of £500 pa. In the first decade the Liverpool Office produced over 60% of the profits for the Company.

The first “time-risk” insured by the Company, in Liverpool, was taken on 6th July 1860; being £200 on the hull of the **Belle** at six guineas per cent for 12 months. Reinsurance of a risk was illegal until 1864 but in the meantime the Thames and Mersey could offset this restriction by placing part of a risk with each of the boards.



No 1 Dale Street

The Company's first Liverpool office was at 1 Exchange Street West, moving to No 1 Dale Street, in July 1860.

Although the Thames & Mersey handled both the insurance of the hull and cargo it was still felt in Liverpool that the insurance of none hull risks needed further expansion. This was particularly so with regard to insuring cargo to and from America, then in the depths of the Civil War. This war also affected the availability of material such as cotton and as a result the value of such cargos rose causing an increase in premiums both to cover the

increased values and risks to the ships due to the war. As well as loss there were also increased risks of delays in handling and timely delivery of cargo which could also give rise to claims. In December 1862 another meeting of Liverpool business men and ship owners took place to consider setting up another limited liability company, in the main to insure cargo and associated risks. The meeting was advised by Mr RN Dale, a junior partner in Dale & Ryrie. The result was the registration of The British & Foreign Marine Insurance Company on 8th January 1863. An office was established in Water Street and Mr RN Dale was appointed Underwriter & Manager.

Like the Thames & Mersey the British & Foreign had a geographically divided management structure, with 18 Directors from Liverpool and 5 from London.

The new concern also wished to address the problem of gaining insurance for cargoes to be shipped to the UK from foreign ports. In 1862 this could be a protracted business forcing ships to remain in port whilst insurance was being negotiated. Within a fortnight of being established the Company introduced a scheme of appointing reputable agents at various places throughout the world. It was decided that each agency was “*to stand on its own merits*” they were also given Power of Attorney to act on behalf of the Liverpool company. It was agreed that they were not be judged by the amount of premiums collected, but on the quality of the business transacted. This opened the way for agencies to be

set up in smaller as well as larger ports. Within the year agencies were established in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Singapore, Honolulu, Montreal, Victoria, Cape of Good Hope, Valparaiso, Melbourne, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Foochowfoo, Gibraltar and Smyrna. By 1885 a total of 100 agencies existed outside the UK. In the UK agencies were eventually established at; Bristol, Hull, Leith, Manchester, Grangemouth, Greenock, Glasgow, Dundee, Belfast, Holyhead and Birmingham. An agency was also established in Dublin.

The Company's self imposed restriction on dealing only with cargo matters presented some problems as some ship owners wished to insure the hull and cargo with one company. Some of the shareholders did not want to meet this request so eventually the Board set up a subsidiary specifically to deal with such business; this was The Mercantile Marine Insurance Company Ltd of London. For a couple of years all went well but with the claims received as a result of the Calcutta Cyclone of October 1864, (60,000 deaths, 162 ships sunk or damaged and 17 ships "disappeared") meant the Mercantile Co had to be wound up and the remaining debts of £3,800 transferred to the parent company.

To enable the British & Foreign to transact "hull" business a new company called, The United British & Foreign Marine Insurance Company Ltd was formed and the affairs of the British & Foreign were transferred to it after which the old company was liquidated and the new company dropped the word "United" from its title thus assuming its old name.

The cyclone also precipitated the demise of numerous individual underwriters and the liquidation of Albion Marine and the Empire Marine companies of Liverpool.

As well as the cyclone the year 1864 saw a major casualty in the Mersey. Early in the year the small sailing vessel the **Lottie Sleigh** preparing to sail to West Africa caught fire. After the crew had lost the battle to put out the fire and they had abandoned ship, the flames reached the eleven tons of gunpowder in her hold causing a massive explosion and damaging buildings on both sides of the river, as well as other vessels nearby. Fortunately for the Thames & Mersey and the British & Foreign most of the shore based damage was insured with non marine insurers.

Like other insurers both the Thames & Mersey and the British & Foreign were affected by the opening of the Suez Canal which led to a massive growth in the number of tramp steamers, many of which had been hastily and cheaply built, with consequent affects on premiums which trebled in two years and caused the Thames & Mersey to make losses in two out of three years. Insurance payments, nationally, on the Suez route alone exceeded £3m. In 1872 Lloyds reported that, in total, there had been a 25% increase in steamer losses and a 10% in sailing ship losses. Significant losses from other parts of the world for the British & Foreign included two large vessels, the **Tacora** and the **Dover Castle**, lost on the Pacific Coast of America. Other problems were caused by changes in operating practices. Many total losses arose after the lifting of the ban on carrying deck timber after the 1st September each year.

The financial position of British marine insurers had not been helped by increased competition from continental firms who had transferred their offices to the UK as a result of the Franco - Prussian War. Initially they provided services to their own nationals but gradually moved into insuring vessels and cargoes of other countries.

This period was not all negative for whilst the winter of 1884 was particularly severe, Liverpool based ships had been particularly fortunate. Although in total 3,500 lives had been lost, as had one in every sixty ships leaving the UK, not a single vessel in the Liverpool to North America trade had been affected.

Times were however changing. In 1883 the Thames and Mersey had installed a telephone link, a private line between the Liverpool and Manchester offices at an annual rental of £89. The following year the Company began delivering policies before payment was handed over. The British & Foreign started building their new headquarters in Castle Street in 1887. However it was to be 1900 before the Thames & Mersey employed their first female employee. She was Miss Margaret Isaac who was joined by a second lady typist in 1902.



The British & Foreign office completed in 1889, in Castle Street

Trades were also changing and shippers were innovating and insurance companies had to respond. The introduction of refrigerated cargoes meant agents had to understand the practices and risks that such cargoes might produce. For several years the British & Foreign had been developing strongly in the US market and this led it to being favourably placed when increasingly large exports of American canned meat developed.

Throughout the 1890s there was much discussion between marine insurers about possible mergers. Many discussions came to nought. However in 1908 the British & Foreign were taken over by the Liverpool based Royal Insurance Company who formed their first marine department the following year.

In 1911 the Thames & Mersey was taken over by the Liverpool & London Globe Insurance Company who likewise wished to expand into main insurance and making the headquarters of the Thames & Mersey now firmly based in Liverpool.

Consolidation continued when in 1919 the Royal Insurance Company took over the Liverpool & London Globe Insurance Company so that the Thames & Mersey and the British & Foreign now had the same parent company. In 1941 the administration of both concerns was co-ordinated and fully integrated in 1962.

What had been the return for the shareholders in these concerns?

On takeover in 1908 it was claimed that the dividends alone paid to British & Foreign investors totalled £2.2m for their £100,000 outlay. The Thames & Mersey investors received £2.27 million for their initially outlay of £200,000.

What of the ships? Some have been mentioned already; other notable claims included £7,200 of the £1.8m for the loss of the **Titanic**, and this was reduced to £5,200 as some of the risk had been reinsured. Unusually details of this claim were released to the press because of the speculation being created about the effects of the loss on the marine insurance industry. However, a larger claim was received for the **Empress of Ireland** in 1914. The loss of the **Lusitania**, in 1915, was covered by the Government's War Risks Scheme. After takeover by the Royal several more claims were received in respect of passenger vessels. The loss of the **Vestris**, in 1928, impacted on the Thames & Mersey. After the Second World War the loss of the Royal Mail Lines liner **Magdalena** on her maiden voyage produced the highest claim to date for the Thames & Mersey and also impacted, but less severely on the British & Foreign. But this was soon surpassed by the joint claim for hull and cargo of the loss of the **Klipfontein** off East Africa. Another large claim, of that period, arose from the collision between the **Stockholm** and the **Andrea Doria**, including the loss of the latter, in 1956. Both concerns had part insured the hulls and cargoes of both vessels.

Some earlier policies had also incurred claims. The loss of the Liverpool owned Booth Line vessel the **Cyril** off Brazil, in September 1905 led to the deployment of the Liverpool & Glasgow Salvage Association's salvage vessel to Brazil where 92% of the cargo was recovered from the wreck, then lying in 10 fathoms of water. A substantial claim was received for the loss of the P&O Liner **Egypt** in 1922. For the next eight years salvage attempts recovered half the £1m of gold which went down with the ship, the rest fell to the insurers. The losses of the Furness Liner **Bermuda** of 1931 and of her replacement, the **Monarch of Bermuda** in 1947, were also part covered. An unusual claim arose from the loss of the submarine **Thetis** for although a warship she had not been handed over to the Royal Navy and so was insured by on behalf of the builders, Cammell Laird.

The scope of these claims gives an indication as to how extensive the Liverpool involvement in the global marine insurance business had become.

Principal Sources

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THE WIRELESS COLLEGES OF LIVERPOOL

By W G Williamson

It is not generally known that Liverpool is unique in being the site of the world's first proper radio school. This school, established in 1903 by the Marconi Company, was located at their Seaforth Sands radio station. This station was one of the 20 coastal stations and 70 ships then under contract to the Company. ^[1]
and Note 1/

Although many telegraphy schools and colleges existed to train land and cable telegraphists for the Post Office and railway signallers, the Seaforth station was the first school to teach the new subject of wireless. The training facilities were primitive by today's standards and the nickname of "*The Tin Tabernacle*" leaves nothing to the imagination.

The main teaching room measured about 40 feet by 20 feet and was fitted with fifteen transmitters and receivers. The transmitter was a ship-type buzzer with a couple of 'Q' type cells and a six to eight foot bare copper wire aerial hanging from the roof. Receiving stations were early with a Morse inker, and the speed of transmission was six to eight words per minute. This could prove difficult for those old hands who had cable experience and thus were used to landline working at 25 to 30 wpm. ^[2]

It seems odd by today's standards that the Seaforth Sands Station was not connected to the Post Office telegraph system by permanent landlines. Any traffic received from ships had to be retained until the local Post Office opened for business. Inward traffic was delivered to the station by Post Office telegram boys and then transmitted to the ship. Students at the Marconi school took great delight in taking the messages to the Post Office seeing it as an opportunity to skive in the park on the way back. It was also noted that the Post Office was close to the Doric public house another temptation. ^[3]

In the very early days (1904) students would be in the school for six months, for the Marconi Company had relatively few ships on which to place the trained men. Thus they would be employed on watch-keeping duties at the Seaforth Sands station. Fridays and Saturdays were important, for Cunard liners and ships of the Allan Line would arrive and ships of both lines also sailed on these days. With five people on duty, competition was intense amongst the new recruits to work the ships on air.

In 1953 at the age of 75, Mr. Henry Phare recollected applying to the Marconi Company for employment in 1903. He was called for an interview at the Finch Lane office in London conducted by a Mr. Andrew Gray. He was then instructed to proceed to the Seaforth School in Liverpool. His pay was to be 20s a week with a lodging allowance of 17s. 6d. Arriving in Liverpool he found, in his own words,

"a very mixed lot, some of German, Italian and Belgian nationalities, six Shetlanders, two Irishmen, and three Lloyds' Signalmen, and about a dozen fellows from a wireless college near London."

Staff at the school included Mr. Hobbs who was in charge of the station

and school while Mr. Hepworth supervised the training. There were several coherer-receivers in the school and practice messages were produced from a buzzer. Mr. Blinkhorn was responsible for the repair and maintenance of the apparatus in use.



Empress Queen

Mr Phare recalls that the **Empress Queen**, a 24-knot paddle steamer running to the Isle of Man and fully equipped with a Marconi installation, gave the learners at the school opportunity of practical experience.

Much later new wireless operators fresh from college gained this experience by spending six months at sea as a junior WO under supervision of a senior operator.

After seven weeks tuition at the school and answering hundreds of written questions Henry Phare was appointed to the steamship **Tunisian** belonging to the Allan Line. He recalls two fellow students known as '*The Rebels*' who, following a breach of regulations were suspended from duty and feeling resentful decided to exact revenge. They got hold of a small spark-coil and rigged an aerial outside their bedroom window to effectively jam the radio station. ⁽⁴⁾

From existing examination records it appears that relatively few students per year were being taught at the school in the early years. However numbers increased later. Typically newly recruited Wireless Operators had to be between 21-25 years of age, although in 1915 due to the demands of war this limit had fallen to 16 -18. These young men were looked after by a superintendent, '*Teddy*' Hobbs having responsibilities for the watch-keeping, stores and schools departments. Hobbs had a fearsome reputation and it was his custom to visit ships leaving port on sailing day to test communications with the Seaforth Station just four miles away. He expected high standards from his men and woe betide anyone who was deficient in their duties. The Morse and technical instructor was a Mr. Lindsay.

The training period was flexible depending on the trainee's previous experience. For example Mr C T Sanders joined the company in March 1909 with the status of '*learner*', as he already had qualified in Cable and Wireless Telegraphy. He was sent for a short period of specialist tuition to the Seaforth

station before being appointed to seagoing duties as a telegraphist on the Cunard Line's **Carmania** on the 13th April 1909. The exam records for 1908 also refer to some candidates for the Postmaster General's certificate as Marconi Apprentices. A more realistic time period to acquire the necessary skills before taking the PMG examination was just under a year.



Operating Room at Seaforth circa 1903



The School Room at Seaforth also circa 1903

The course outlined above followed the requirements laid down for operator training in the 1906 Berlin Radiotelegraphic Convention and the Service Regulations. Part VI, 3 and 4 of which are as follows; -

"3. The service of the station on shipboard shall be carried on by a telegraph operator holding a certificate issued by the Government to which the vessel is subject. Such certificate shall attest the professional efficiency of the operator in regards:

(a) Adjustment of the apparatus;

(b) Transmission and acoustic reception at the rate of not less than twenty words per minute;

(c) Knowledge of the regulations governing the exchange of wireless telegraph correspondence.

4. The certificate shall furthermore state that the Government has bound the operator to secrecy with regard to correspondence."

Despite the formidable curriculum of instruction and training to be undertaken, Marconi students were told that they could complete their studies within six months. Each student had to pay an unspecified weekly fee, although on successfully completing examination and entering company employment this fee would be refunded in full.

In September 1909, the General Post Office ^[Note 2] purchased nine coastal stations from Marconi at a cost of £15,000. They also purchased three Lloyds coastal stations for the same price. ^[5] As Seaforth was one of the stations bought by the GPO, new premises had to be found for Marconi's depot and school. The company relocated to Beaconsfield House at 217 Crosby Road South.

The depot remained there for some years before the volume of work increased which necessitated relocation to bigger premises. The move was made to Oriel Chambers, Water Street, Liverpool, within the centre of the shipping district and remained there until 1923. It has not been ascertained exactly when Beaconsfield House ceased to function as a school but it is likely to have been shortly after the First World War and before the move to Oriel Chambers.

The equipment then available in the Instrument Room of the Liverpool School as it was known within the company consisted of a complete 1.5 kW and 10-inch coil transmitting set, with attendant power supplies and batteries etc. and three separate receivers. ^[6]

The lecture room had five long desks with two students per desk. Here Morse practice could be carried out and theoretical instruction given. Old photographs show a blackboard mounted on a tripod stand, with a circuit diagram drawn on the board in chalk. The students at Beaconsfield House were looked after and instructed by experienced men. Mr. Pereira was the manager and former wireless operator, F Jones was the officer in charge of the school. He had spent many months as the chief wireless operator on the **Lusitania**, and had also served on other vessels. Judging by his photograph, he was not a man who would stand any nonsense from the students in his charge. It is worth noting that the two **Titanic** wireless operators Jack Phillips and Harold Bride both did their training in Liverpool. Phillips would have been at the original Seaforth School and Bride at Beaconsfield House.

There were other radio colleges in the city, although information is limited. There definitely was a radio college, called the Liverpool School of Wireless Telegraphy located at 12A Colquitt Street, near Bold Street in 1923. Messrs. J.C. Thomas Reginald Woodland and Francis R Yeo were the principals. ^[7] Conclusive proof about this college was obtained from the Radio Officers Examination Records of 1923/24. This lists results from the Liverpool School of Wireless Telegraphy and Technical Training Centre with the address given as 5 Bold Street, Liverpool. This school was equipped with a standard 1.5 kW Marconi transmitter. Elsewhere in the same record, mention is made of an Edward Thompson Sunley taking an exam after six months tuition at Leece Street School and three months tuition at Bold Street. He failed the exam on technical subjects but passed Morse. Whether these two establishments were independent colleges or the one establishment located on two sites is the subject of ongoing research.

It is known that another wireless school called The Universal School of Wireless Telegraphy was established in 1912 at 97 Renshaw Street, Liverpool. Who established this college is currently unknown but there is definite proof that in 1935/6 the Principal of this college was Mr W E Wells ^[8] In addition to the Principal, George Quilliam, Jimmy Halton and a Mr. Jones are known to have been teaching at the college. Morse instructor Eddy Webster could well have begun teaching at this site around this time.

To meet the increasing training demand from Radio Officers, the Liverpool Universal School of Wireless Telegraphy moved to new, bigger and better premises at 10 Sefton Park Road. This move must have occurred in late 1937 but certainly no later than April 1938. With this relocation came a name change, its title officially becoming The Wireless College, Liverpool, but it was generally known as the Liverpool Wireless College (LWC). Whether the Colquitt St and the Bold St sites also amalgamated and relocated to this site is at present unknown. The college remained at this location until November 1940 when it was totally destroyed by enemy bombing.

It was equipped with the latest apparatus of the period and included, a Marconi $1\frac{1}{2}$ kW CW/ICW transmitter (a Type 381, MF only), a Siemens $1\frac{1}{2}$ kW Quenched Spark transmitter plus a $1\frac{1}{2}$ kW. Quenched Spark transmitter also by Siemens. A ship's emergency transmitter was available but the manufacturer of this unit is unknown. A Siemens direction finder and a Marconi valve receiver completed the list of installed equipment, which of course included battery charging facilities, switchboards and generators etc. The call sign of the station was G7SF. Examples of a transmitter and receiver used by civilian aircraft were fitted under the authority of the Air Ministry and used for technical training.

Frank Kelly was a student at The Wireless College, Liverpool in 1940. He lived in Huyton and worked during the day so was unable to attend college except in the evenings. He would cycle to the college with another student called John Hanford. On the 18th November 1940 he had been attending Morse lessons in the basement of the building when it was bombed.

A heavy air raid began, so the instructor, George Quilliam told the students to pack up for the night. Shortly after leaving they heard a terrific crash and were temporarily dazed. A land mine had destroyed the college at about 9.30 pm and the building collapsed into the cellar. Mr. Quilliam was killed outright. ⁽⁹⁾

The Liverpool Wireless College site at Sefton Park Road had been designated as a standby transmitting station in the event that Seaforth Radio in the north end of the City was damaged or destroyed by enemy action. Thus, following the total loss of the Sefton Park premises, the government commandeered the premises of the Liverpool Zionist Central Council so that a standby station would still be available for Seaforth. This move also meant that training for vitally needed Radio Officers could continue in the Liverpool area. The 1940s trade directory shows the Zionist Council at No 6 Princes Road, near Stanhope Street. Here the LWC continued at this venue until 1957 when the lease expired. The Zionist Society required their premises back, so Mr Wells then relocated the college to the ground floor of the Conservative Club in Aigburth Road.

In January 1948 the college was fully re-equipped with modern radio communication equipment which more realistically reflected the type of installations that successful students would encounter on board ships of the period. This information was extracted from a letter to Mr Wells at the wireless college in Princes Road, from John S. Smith, the North Western Manager of The Marconi International Marine Co. Ltd. dated 13th February 1948. This letter states formally that the re-fitting of the college's Instrument Room equipment was successfully completed on the 28th January 1948. Items specifically named included an Oceanspan MF/HF transmitter, a Yeoman receiver, a Vigilant auto alarm and a Type 579 direction finder.

Tuition fees were payable and in 1948 the fees charged were £15 guineas a quarter irrespective of whether the student was taking a 1st or 2nd Class PMG course. By 1956 college fees had increased to £16 per quarter. It is worth noting here that a newly qualified Radio Officer joining his first ship would be earning £20 per month at this time.

John Garner, a student of the period recalled:-

"In 1948 when I was 15, mother and dad visited the Liverpool Wireless College, paid over the fee, and so started my 'sparks' career. The College was situated in a dilapidated Victorian house at 6 Princes Road Liverpool 8. This was a row of large houses next door to a cinema, but the rest of the row seemed to be occupied by people from the Caribbean. The 'grand' entrance was up about six steps to the front door, which opened onto a very dingy corridor, at the bottom of which was the administrative dept, actually an old pantry about 4 ft x 6 ft with a desk and tatty chair. Above the door was 'The Oscillator', a breadboard contraption with many valves that glowed a dull red all day and the first person in each day switched it on. On the left was the Morse room, consisting of ten tables set athwartships with a bench at each side that held five or six bottoms with a key at one end each side. In the centre was a row of 2 amp two pin plugs into which you inserted your headphones, so twelve

people sat at the table, two sending and ten receiving, with places changed over about every ten minutes.

In order to break the monotony someone would short out the phones, and the whole room would erupt with the shout, 'Short!' There was then total confusion as the offender was tracked down, which usually wasted about ten minutes, accompanied by shouts from the First Class Wallahs of 'Juvenile idiots!' etc.

Fore and aft on one side were the traffic tables, consisting of four receiving places at one end of the room and four sending at the other, so we played ships and coast stations. Opposite these, also fore and aft, were the R/T tables where again we played ships and coast stations. As one progressed in speed so you moved up the room, the top table being the First Class Wallahs at 25 wpm. The whole proceeding was overseen by Mr Webster, known as 'The Web', an ex-Marconi radio operator with a large ruler in hand which was used with the command 'Use the wrist, laddie!' as it crashed down on your fingers. The second floor had the 'Gear Room', with the usual collection of Oceanspan Mk1, CR300 etc. Every day someone was sent up there to relay the Portishead traffic list down to the Morse room, which was a good skive as you could have a smoke.

Also on this floor was the lecture room, which was dominated by a circuit diagram of the Oceanspan Mk 1. This was never rubbed out, although alterations were made and we were supposed to figure it out.

Twice a day 'smoko' was declared and we were all sent into the cellar and back garden, areas that could only be described as possible landfill sites, there was so much rubbish. Eventually we took the Second Class ticket and I passed after a Morse re-test, much to 'The Web's' disgust, and so to sea".

With the return of the premises to the Zionist Central Council Mr. Wells, who had some involvement with the local Conservative party in Aigburth, arranged to take over the lower floor of the Conservative Club and run the college from there. A colleague, Bill Harrison vividly remembers this move for he was a student at that time. He and another student stripped out the equipment at Princes Road and refitted it at the Conservative Club.

Bill Harrison thinks that Mr. Wells died in about 1957 after which Mrs. Wells and Stan Ellis (the only instructor) tried to continue running the college for a time. This proved unsuccessful as Riversdale College had opened in 1952 and was a major competitor. About 1960 Mrs. Wells decided to close her college down and attempted to sell the business. However she was anxious that her existing students be kept unaware she was on the point of selling and would only let prospective buyers look round during Sundays when the college was closed. When accountants inspected the books they were found to be in such a muddle that no opinion as to the viability of the business could be formed. Sadly this was the end of a wireless college that had been in existence for 48 years and produced thousands of Radio Officers since it was established in 1912.

Sources.

- [1] Info from pages 14 and 221 of *100 Years of Marine Radio*.
- [2] *Experiences of an old hand* (Marconi Mariner 1948).
- [3] *Western Ocean Days* (Marconi Mariner 1948).
- [4] Article in *Marconi Mariner* of Nov/Dec 1953 page 74 by Mr. Henry Phare
- [5] *An Elite and Individual Service* by Rick Edmondson and *100 Years of Maritime Radio*, W'D Goodwin (p23&35).
- [6] From exam records ROE 19 for 1917/18 *Liverpool School* (Beaconsfield House)
- [7] *Trade Directories in the Central Library*.
- [8] *Trade Directories in the Central Library*.
- [9] Letter from Frank Kelly, Radio Officers' Association member to the author
- [10] Article in QSO, in December 2002 John Garner the Membership Secretary of the Radio Officers' Association and is reproduced with his permission

Note 1 - From *Watchers of the Waves* by Brian Faulkener:-

By the middle of 1907, 139 ships were fitted with Marconi equipment. The first companies to see the advantage of wireless were those employing passenger ships. Anchor Line, Canadian Pacific, Royal Mail and Booth Line all fitted wireless to their ships in 1906. They had tight schedules to adhere to and early news of late arrival was of great importance. The number of ships fitted had grown to 150 by 1st January 1909 and there were orders for a further 52. By 1910, 286 ships were fitted

Note 2 – The stations taken over in 1909 by the GPO were:-

Lizard, Niton, North Foreland, Rosslare, Crookhaven, Malin Head, Caister, Seaforth and Withernsea.

See the back cover for a picture of the "Tin Tabernacle" at Seaforth Sands in about 1903)

Characters I Have Sailed With

By James A. Pottinger

Most Merchant Navy sailors will I am sure have come across a number of characters during their time at sea. I was fortunate to have been in the company of a number of those with Brocklebank who livened up and otherwise broke the monotony of a trip, and could usually take in good part any "send-ups", events which were naturally embellished and exaggerated greatly in any following beer session.

These peccadilloes and individual quirks of character should not be lightly dismissed as faults, but instead often had the effect of bonding together an already close knit community, who were greatly reliant on the professionalism, reliability, and co-operation of their fellow officers.

Hopefully the following will be accepted as a tribute to a great band of brothers, who with few exceptions would stand by you in time of crisis, and could be relied on to pull you out of a hole in time of need, give support when required, and at same time be a great source of merriment and jollity when the occasion demanded.

During one trip our Scouse Third Engineer Officer seemingly had a cargo stowage plan in his head, and knew where all the goodies were stowed, and as was wont some cases of goodies were inevitably damaged during loading, their whereabouts being duly noted. Subsequently during the sea voyage he could apparently gain access to the cargo spaces during the 12-4 watch without leaving any trace, being relied on to provide a supply of fruit juice, the best malt whisky, left shoes, heavy overcoats and umbrellas during the outward voyage.

On a voyage to the Indian continent via the Red Sea in the monsoon season the umbrellas, fruit juice and a dram could be useful and most welcome, but heavy raincoats, and left shoes only were a little superfluous. The reason for left shoes only being shipped on one ship was ostensibly to discourage pilfering; the right shoe would follow on next ship!

He was also very adept at being able to avoid the nasty jobs in the engine room which were normally the responsibility of the 3rd. However he was a source of exceedingly tall tales as well, a welcome quality to have on an often otherwise tedious voyage, but he excelled himself on one trip.

His otherwise happy marriage had not been blessed with any family, and his wife had unfortunately suffered a number of miscarriages. During this particular trip outward bound he was hopeful of hearing some good news, however, sadly the result was as before, and on hearing the unwelcome news during our stay at Calcutta the 2nd Engineer Officer in deference to the 3rd engineer's upset frame of mind granted him a respite from a turn-to on the day he had received the message.

Leaving India, through the Mediterranean and crossing the Atlantic to the States routine was as normal, and after calling at ports in the northern USA we then made our way down to the Mexican Gulf ports. It was here in New Orleans that one morning in port at the start of the day work routine that the

2nd came to me and asked if I would carry out some task normally allotted to the 3rd. After agreeing I then made the enquiry as to why he was not able to carry out his normal duties; my suspicions being immediately aroused as this was a particularly onerous task, his response was that the 3rd had received the bad news from home that his wife had again miscarried and he felt that some leniency was appropriate in the circumstances,

"Hold on a minute, twice in the same trip"

I said, but by then the 2nd was rapidly retreating out the door of my cabin in the direction of the Third's cabin, muttering

"That lying b-----r, he nearly had me!"

Being an entertaining raconteur, good shipmate, and all round good sport, he was able to get away with most pranks.

On a coasting trip on the **Matheran** we had a Chief Engineer who always dressed in a long khaki dustcoat, and came daily into the Engineers' Duty Mess at lunch time to check the menu. It went something like this:

"Mess boy, let me see the menu"

"Acha Burra Sahib"

Cut to all us engineers mouthing silently in unison behind his back as after perusal he responded thus:

"No there is nothing I fancy on it, bring me some rolls with cheese to my cabin"

This same routine was performed each day. This same Chief had bought a



Matheran

minute Chihuahua dog when in Brownsville near the Mexican border in the US Gulf, and kept it in a bird cage in his cabin.

We had a 2nd Electrician on the **Manipur** who traditionally liked his lie in on a Saturday afternoon after a few beers at lunch time, and thus regarded lifeboat drill as

an unwelcome intrusion. As such he was naturally fair game for a prank carried out by the more unfortunate watchkeepers. The golden opportunity occurred one afternoon mid Indian Ocean during "Board of Trade Sports and Lifeboat Drill" when his absence was duly noted.

When the alarm bell rang for all hands on deck someone threw a bucket of water in through the open porthole of his cabin onto his prone figure snoozing on the settee and then ran into the alleyway fully clad in lifejacket and survival gear before bursting open his door and shouting

"Abandon Ship!"

In his still fuddled state he broke all records to get queued on the boat deck by his lifeboat!

This same lad had extreme difficulty in remembering the difference in

the Malim Sahibs Hindustani vernacular between “*Avis*” for lift or hoist, and “*Arria*” for lower. This omission was to be unfortunate when on the completion of the overhaul of an electric cargo winch motor was being lowered gingerly down on its seat. He had his fingers on top of the seating to ensure that the thin brass packing shims did not move when the motor was lowered on to the securing bolts, and as such was very much in harms way as the motor was being duly lowered by his helper.

The motor was then slowly lowered as directed, until the inevitable happened when it trapped his fingers, upon which he exclaimed

“Arrai, more B---Arria”,

A command which naturally had the inevitable result of even more pain.

Sensing that his ever increasing agony and frustration was not having the desired effect on his helper his next command will ever live in the annals of Brocklebank; he then screamed:

“Never mind Arria, take the B---- thing up and Burra Juldi!”

Many of the Brocklebank ships built after the end of World War II had a Cochran fire-tube donkey boiler to supply steam to the various auxiliary services when the main water-tube steaming boilers were shut down in port. This boiler operated at only 100 psi and as such only served to give steam to water heaters and other minor items of machinery, all the winches were electrically powered and received their current from the diesel generators,

Thus on the **Manipur** when all the major propelling machinery and water-tube boilers were shut down in port, with the Engineer Officers on day work, and off duty in the evening, native donkeymen looked after this boiler on a twelve on - twelve off rota.

One of the unfortunate features of this boiler on our ship was that the oil fuel used to fire the burners had a habit of leaking out of the furnace nozzle and dripping down to spread along the fire brick at the base, and given sufficient concentration this residue periodically went on fire, causing a fairly spectacular, if not dangerous, conflagration.

It so happened that one night in Calcutta this disconcerting, but thankfully not dangerous, event occurred, and given that there could be three or four of the company's ships in port at the same time, this unfortunately and inconveniently coincided with a beery reunion in one of the Engineer's cabin. We were all in someone's cabin late in the evening savouring a few beers when the donkeyman came up from the engine room in a lather to say that there was a fire in the donkey boiler, and he wanted

“Panch number sahib to come down to the engine room, Juldi”

The duty man on the night in question was indeed the 5th Engineer Officer, and his initial response was to tell the donkeyman not to worry, and that he would come down and have a look later. It should be said that in deference to his many other admirable and personable qualities such as being good company and guitar player our 5th sometimes had his attention fixed at a point about three feet above ones head when given an instruction.

In fact he never got over our displeasure in having to forgo any meaningful duties for most of the voyage due to his broken thumb and wrist, caused by having been trying to start the lifeboat engine with his thumb around the starting handle, the inevitable result of a backfire and kick-back was a broken digit.

In common with company practice our ship was equipped with numerous fire extinguisher canisters positioned strategically around the machinery spaces, plus a large capacity cylindrical canister mounted on a wheeled trolley for easy movement, and handily positioned on the starting platform near the donkey boiler, fitted with a long hose extension which could be used to reach in any major fire in the engine room.

Part of the routine duty of any 4th Engineer Officer in the company was to set off a different canister each week, re-charge with fresh chemicals, and attach a label with refill date and put relevant details in a fire log book. This duty was especially reinforced on the **Maihar**, by our Chief Engineer Officer, ever cognisant of the fact that a former chief in the company had been sacked when in response to a fire in the engine room none of the extinguishers in the engine room could operate, and all were past the refill date.

From personal experience it was known that all the portable extinguishers were ready for use in case of need on the **Maihar**.

Notwithstanding the conviviality of the gathering in the cabin the Fifth's laudable dedication to duty however overrode any annoyance at being disturbed, and he duly went down in the engine room after an interval to check on the situation. Half an hour later he appeared, dishevelled, dirty and sweaty, with the comment that:

"It was one H--- of a fire, and I had to use every portable canister extinguisher in the engine room to quell the blaze"

The common query from all us present was that if the fire was so extensive why he had not used the large wheeled extinguisher with its long hose instead of setting off all the portable canisters. His response was a classic:

"How do you expect me to carry that b--- great thing across the platform?"

In a lighter vein one 2nd Engineer Officer had a special routine when ordering his cooked eggs, his answer to the mess boy's query as how he wanted them done was:

"Not too hard, but not too soft", but (after a long pause) *"just right"*
To which he always got the same answer:

"Acha Sahib, just right"

Once when preparing for a dry-docking and overhaul at Smiths Dock at Middlesbrough on the **Manipur** we were tied up alongside with shore staff chipping loose paint from the outside of the ship abreast the Engineers duty messroom such that during our smoko at 10.00 hrs the din was unbearable from the hammering of the chipping hammers.

"Sod this" said our hero, *"now watch this"*,
and going out to the open deck he hailed the workmen thus:

"Any of you guys like a cup of coffee?"

This had the not unexpected result of the shore gang immediately downing hammers and crowding into the messroom for a welcome break, upon which, and thus ensuring peace and quiet, their benefactor quietly went out on the deck, and gathering up all their hammers, threw them all into the dock! The repercussions of this mischievousness naturally found their way up the chain of command.

The **Matra**, which had an engine room which almost could look after itself given a reasonable amount of tender loving care, but was however unfortunately blessed with a temperamental type of vacuum operated evaporator, with a display board which had an array of flashing lights and buttons.

When discharging the correct and pristine quality of fresh water to the storage tanks this board was ablaze in green, but scarlet red, denoting an unacceptable residue of salt, was the most common hue during one trip to the U.S. and back.

Our 2nd Engineer Officer, normally a fairly amiable character, had a seemingly morbid fear of this beast at the corner of the engine room, and left specific instructions to me as Senior 3rd Engineer Officer on the 12-4 midnight watch to make sure that that this monster was on line and fully functioning with all green lights glowing before calling him at 0400. This got to be an almost obsession with him, as he especially dreaded having to try and fathom out the intricacies of this evaporator, such that the routine at one bell when I called him was:

"One bell 2nd, are you awake?"

"Uh"

"Are you awake OK"

"Yes awake, is the evap. on and working OK?"

"Yes OK",

cue to him sitting up with a satisfied smirk. Otherwise:

"Is the evap on"

"No, sorry 2nd we cannot get it working"

"Ohhhh Aaaah Ohhh"

and did a dying swan act before flopping back in his bunk.

On the **Manipur** we had a Polish Senior 3rd Engineer Officer, who I will call Ted, and being his thirties also seemed very senior to us in our twenties. He had a number of quirks which were only explained during the course of the voyage, being the Junior 3rd on 8-12 watch, and calling him for the 12-4, I had a fair amount of contact with him then and during hand over.

To our puzzlement one of his personal habits was always sleeping on his settee and never ever in his bunk. Also he had the loose floor carpet rolled up and stowed away, leaving the bare composition deck exposed. He was a well respected and capable member of our staff, and it was only bit by bit that his background was revealed.

He had in fact been a young boy in Poland during the German invasion



Manipur at Aden

of that country, and as such had been exposed to all the horrors of that campaign, and as a youth had somehow made his way across Europe in the following years, surviving many dangerous and life or death escapades in enemy occupied countries until reaching Britain at the end of the conflict, sadly never

learning of the fate of his parents.

The reason for his rather strange berthing habits was a legacy of his haunting experiences, and was explained thus: - He could only comfortably sleep where he could instantly jump and run, and not be restricted in any way climbing out of his bunk, and with a loose carpet on the deck there would be a danger of him slipping as he sprung off the settee.

Our friendship had been cemented early at the start of the voyage in somewhat strange circumstances. Whilst on our coasting voyage we were docked ahead of the British India **Nyanza**, on which I spent part of my engineering apprenticeship during her construction by Scotts of Greenock, and on passing the ship when returning with him from a run ashore I had an impulse to go aboard the **Nyanza**, to boast to him about the superior workmanship etc. on this vessel.

We duly made our way aboard, noting a good going party in one of the Engineers's cabin, and after explaining the reason for our intrusion were kindly shown around below, capping it with a few beers in his cabin.

This lad could strum a guitar, and came from near Arbroath, so we invited him and any of his mates across to the **Manipur** to return their hospitality. This they duly did, and we made ourselves home in Ted's cabin, where sometime later in the evening when the guitar was getting pelted and things were going with a swing the British India lad started singing something which to us was obviously in a foreign tongue as no one could join in, even he did not know what it meant.

To our amazement Ted then jumped up and grabbed the soloist around the neck displaying considerable emotion. Apparently the lad had picked up some well known Polish folk song or lament from his days as a boy near a displacement camp near his home in Angus where many refugees and displaced Poles had been based, and not even knowing Ted's background had by pure coincidence chanced to sing this song. As you can very well imagine the party then got even livelier!

Ted recounted this occasion many times during the subsequent voyage, and was visibly moved each time he brought it up, we were all just glad for him.

MASSEY'S PATENT ELECTRIC LOG: - A REVOLUTION IN RECORDING A SHIP'S PROGRESS AT SEA

By Gordon Boddy

The traditional method of recording a ship's running speed was by means of the log-ship or common log, the first printed description of which is believed to have appeared in *'A Regiment for the Sea'* by William Bourne, published in 1574. About a century prior to this publication the concept of a sea mile was adopted, but at that time was erroneously fixed as a length of five thousand feet. Some 150 years later Richard Norwood, after measuring a meridian arc from London to York between 1633 and 1635 in order to determine the dimensions of the earth, advised seamen in his *'The Seaman's Practise'*, published in 1637, that their loglines should be re-marked on the basis that a nautical mile was, in fact, 6,120 ft - remarkably close to the now accepted (British) value of 6,080 ft. There were, of course, many variations of the common log over the years to try to achieve some degree of accuracy, but it had become virtually obsolete by the beginning of the 20th Century. ⁽¹⁾

By the beginning of the 17th Century it was patently obvious to those with an interest in the sea trade that not only was a more accurate measuring device required for determining, by dead reckoning, a vessel's distance run, but that it should preferably be an automatic mechanical device. Among early pioneers Robert Hooke, the great practical physicist, engineer, and a friend and colleague of Christopher Wren, who demonstrated some such device, which he called a *'Way-Wiser'* (claiming to have devised it about 1660), to the Royal Society in 1683. No record is known of its being tested at sea.

Between 1715 and 1729 a device, the *'Marine Surveyor'*, devised by Henry de Saumarez, was tested at sea on British (including the royal yacht **William & Mary**), French and Dutch ships. It comprised a simple Y-shaped iron rotator (with a skewed palm on the end of each arm to induce rotation) towed astern. The rotations were transferred through the towing rope to wooden wheel-work (whose rotations were registered on three separate dials) on deck at the stern. The weight of the towing rope, the cumbersome parts - and the friction generated in them - made the device worthless.

Many others were to tread the same fruitless path with variants of the above including William Foxon (Pat 1028, December 1772). In 1792 Richard Gower achieved partial success with an entirely new idea: he combined a rotator with a registering device within a wooden cylinder. This did away with the need to haul a long length of heavy wet line to transfer the rotator's motion to a register on deck and with it the large degree of inaccuracy due to friction caused by drag. However, apart from other possible deficiencies, the whole apparatus still had to be hauled on board to be read whenever a ship changed course or when the watch changed. Gower did not develop the idea further.

The man who finally devised (and perfected over a period of almost 45 years) the first effective, reliable and largely accurate, self-contained log whose readings could be read on board was Edward Massey.

Edward Massey was born in 1768 at Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs. When he was not yet a year old his father, also Edward and then aged 28 and by profession a clock and watchmaker, moved to Liverpool and on February 18th 1769 signed a 21-year lease on a house in Crooked Lane (on the north side of the Old Dock).^[2] However, by 1773 he was no longer listed as living there, apparently having returned to Newcastle-under-Lyme, where he is noted in 1775 as carrying out a great variety of engineering tasks from routine implement and machinery repairs to the highly skilled task of making specialised cutters for the machines in Josiah Wedgwood's newly-established pottery factories.

Edward, the younger, was the eldest child of the family. In due course he was apprenticed to his father to learn the art of watch and clock making and in 1790, having reached his majority, he was admitted a freeman of the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs. He appears to have worked in his father's business until setting up on his own account in 1802, but it is not known how or when he decided to tackle the age-old problem of perfecting a device which could automatically, and reliably, indicate a ship's speed and its distance run in a given time. Although his talent as an inventor was also turned to perfecting numerous other mechanical devices ^[3] he was to have a lifelong active interest in developing and improving the automatic patent log.

Massey's first patent application (No. 2601) for an automatic log device was in March 1802, the year he went into business on his own account. This, however, was mainly concerned with using the principle to determine soundings at sea; an adaptation for recording a ship's speed being included as a secondary part of the application. In June 1806 a second patent (No 2938) for an improved version of these devices was applied for; again, the speed-measuring part was a secondary consideration.

The sounding device was moderately successful, although Massey's financial backers, including Egerton Smith his agent in Liverpool (who also was inventive and in 1809 had patented an illuminated ship's binnacle and compass), had to make great efforts early on to promote its acceptance. However, the Navy Board up until 1811 reportedly purchased it in fairly large numbers until a competitor's simpler device; Burt's '*Buoy and Nipper*' displaced it from favour.^[4] It would be the 1830s (and after much modification, promotion and lobbying) before Massey's device re-established itself as the sounding instrument of choice. The speed-measuring device, however, was not a success, having a tendency to move through and out of the water like a dolphin.

In 1802, the year of his prototype patent log, he was working independently of his father in Hanley and Burslem, describing himself as Edward Massey the Younger [*his father was in business in the same area until his death in 1813*], nautical instrument maker. By 1812 he was working at premises at Cross Heath adjacent to the privately-owned canal of Sir Nigel Gresley. [*This was a*

short unconnected level canal only three miles long which was built (1775/76) to carry coal from Gresley's coal pits at Apedale to Newcastle-under-Lyme for domestic consumption.]

That work continued to develop and improve the mechanical log device is shown in a note by Joseph Mayer *[who was born (1803) in Newcastle-under-Lyme]*, jeweller, goldsmith and, ultimately, celebrated Liverpool antiquary and benefactor, recalling that he and his school fellows on Saturday afternoons would run Massey's log machines for him along Gresley's canal opposite Thomson's cotton factory - and considered themselves privileged to be allowed to do so.

Between 1819 and 1830 Massey was living and working at Scholes, Prescott, in Lancashire. Prescott at that time being a leading centre for the manufacture of high quality watch and clock parts which were supplied to watchmakers all over the country. He may have moved to that area to concentrate his efforts on the clock and watch making side of his business whilst his nautical instrument business was in the doldrums.

He is noted as having patented an improved version of his 1806 devices in 1834, and in 1836 by which time he was working at King St, Clerkenwell, Middlesex. He applied for yet another patent (No 7113) based on further improvements to the 1806 device. Now, however, the patent log was as important a consideration as his sounding device, also recently improved and again taken up by the Admiralty.

In the same year (1836), John Daniell ⁽⁵⁾ perfected an electrical cell that could deliver a reliably steady electric current and Massey must have soon realised that this device might be used to bring about a major improvement to his patent log apparatus. However, a great deal of ingenuity and skill was to be needed before he finally perfected the device for which a patent application (No. 10210) was made in 1844.

The device consisted of two separate connected cylinders which trailed continuously in line astern of the vessel; both running in an even plane and on a steady line some five feet below the surface (and clear of the wake), which could be used, in conjunction with an automatic registering device to compute the vessel's speed, and the distance run in a given time, with a good degree of accuracy *[It could also be used to determine the flow of water in a river.]* Four years later, in 1848 at the age of 80, he patented another improved version (No 12071).

It is the 1844 version which is described here

The device comprised three separate main operating components:-

The Rotator and the Contact Chamber (the cylinders which ran beneath the water), the Register, and a means of supplying a constant source of electric current - a Daniell cell, which was interposed between the Contact Chamber and the Register.

Both the Register and the Daniell cell were located on board the vessel.

The Rotator (*Fig. 1*) was the aftermost section of the apparatus and consisted of a sealed copper tube (about 18 inches long and 6 inches in diameter)

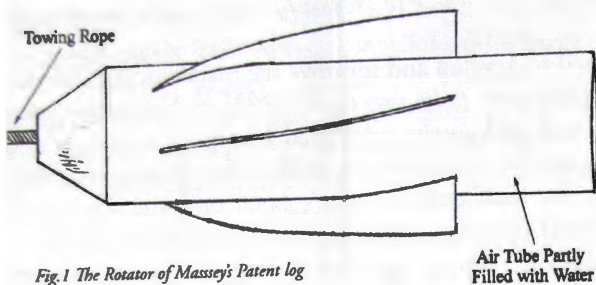
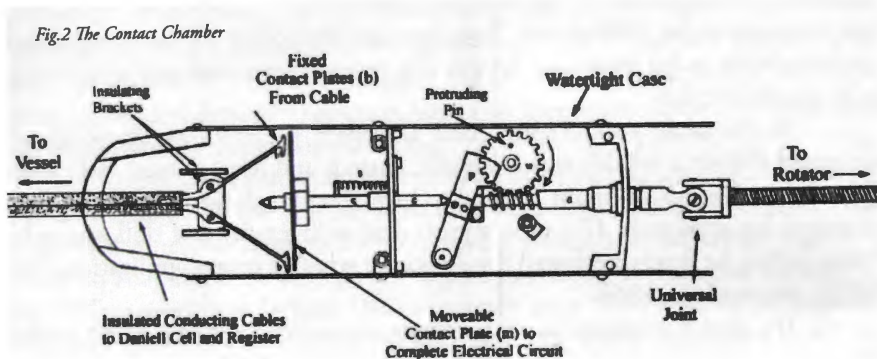


Fig. 1 The Rotator of Massey's Patent log

partly filled with water; the amount being adjusted so that the rotator just displaced its own weight of water, so allowing it to run smoothly in an even plane. Set equidistantly around the main fore-body of the tube were

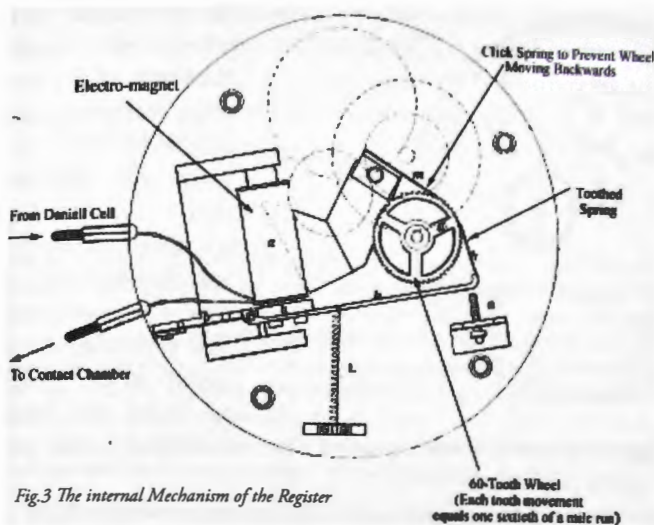
four vertically set vanes running fore and aft and shaped to form a helix, which produced a smooth uniform rotation of the tube when being towed through the water. Attached to the nose of the rotator was a towing rope (some 6ft. long) which also transferred the Rotator's motion to a universal rotating joint at the rear end of the contact chamber.

The Contact Chamber (Fig. 2) was a watertight brass cylinder similar in



dimensions to the rotator cylinder. Three triangular brass plates (not shown, in Fig. 2) running the length of the cylinder were set at right angles to the case: one on the top and one on each side of the case, and were there to prevent rotation of the chamber and ensure its smooth passage through the water on an even plane. Within the chamber was the means of using the mechanical motion of the rotator to cause electrical impulses to flow to the mechanism within the register.

The device worked as follows: the Rotator transmitted its motion, via the universal joint, to a worm-ended shaft, *a*, the teeth of the cogwheel *w*, which had a pin protruding from its face at right angles, engaged with the worm. The cogwheel turned once for each sixtieth of a mile run by the vessel and, in doing so, the protruding pin momentarily engaged the top of the rocker arm, *p*, moving it forward against the spindle, *c*. Spindle *c*, fixed within an insulating collar, moved a thin brass contact plate, *m*, forward, bringing it against the two small fixed brass contact plates, *b* & *b* and thus momentarily completed an electrical circuit. As



the cogwheel pin passed it, the arm *p* fell back, thus allowing the spring *s* to withdraw the spindle and the moveable contact plate *m* and break the circuit. All the parts forward of plate *m* were insulated against contact with the outer casing by pieces of ivory. The current was carried by twin cables

(which also acted as a towing cable from the vessel) bound together, and which passed through the nose of the cylinder and whose terminals were the contact plates *b&b*. Each of the twin cables was made of copper wire covered in cotton; this in turn was coated with a waterproof varnish. The cables, attached to the plates of the ship's quarter down to the operating level, and lying side by side, were woven over with string up to where they came inboard, and thereafter separated.

The internal mechanism of the Register is shown in (Fig.3) and again shows an unusual degree of ingenuity in its design and functionality. One of the cables was attached directly to one of the electrodes of the Daniell cell, and from whose other electrode a connection was made to one end of an insulated copper wire coiled around a soft iron core (the electro-magnet) within the Register. The other end of this wire was connected to the second of the cables going back to the Contact Chamber. Thus when the circuit was completed the current flowed through the insulated wire surrounding the iron core - inducing a magnetic field in the core - and then back round to the cell via the second cable to the Contact Chamber.

Each time the circuit was completed in the Contact Chamber, a current passed through the circuit, inducing magnetism in *a*. This caused a piece of soft iron, *k*, fixed to the lever *b* to be attracted upward against the pull of the light spring, *L*, causing the tooth-tipped spring, *h* to slide upward over one tooth of the 60-toothed wheel *d* and engage with it. When the circuit was broken, the lever *b* was released and pulled down by spring *L*; the tooth on the tip of *h* then pulled the wheel forward one tooth. Wheel *d* was prevented from moving in reverse by a click spring, *m*. The amount of traverse by *h* could be regulated by a screw, *n*. Each complete turn of wheel *d* represented one mile run.

By means of six other pinions and ratchet wheels (not shown) connecting

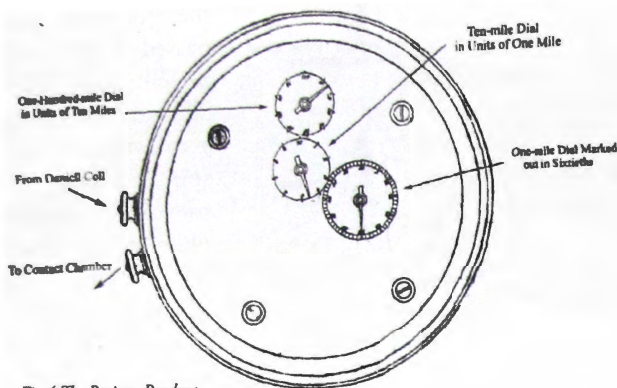


Fig.4 The Register Readout

m in series with wheel *d*, direct readings for any given length of time could be obtained from the readout dials (Fig.4). The number of divisions traversed in a minute on the one-mile dial represented the speed of the vessel in miles per hour

e.g. nine divisions traversed in one minute equalled nine sixtieths of a mile per minute, therefore nine miles per hour.

The imagination behind the concept and the ingenuity with which it was realised through the design of the individual components, their assembly in relation to each other, and the effectiveness and accuracy of the completed apparatus, not only reflects Edward Massey's skill and training as a watch and nautical instrument maker but shows us a man of genius in his own particular field.

As with many innovations it would have taken some time before its adoption became universal. This was not only because of traditionalist thinking, which would have been slow to accept and trust to such mechanical technology [*q.v. Captain Hosken of the **Great Britain** who refused to use it – and paid the price*] but also because a master-owner, merchant-owner, or a group of small investors, owning a small ship would not have seen fit to justify the cost of this new unproven technology.^[6]

Also the accurate use of this sophisticated device was still subject to the limitations imposed by the inaccuracy of the timing device used. But as accurate timekeeping devices became more widely available and affordable, the Electric Patent Log's ease and speed of use, and superior accuracy over the logline would rapidly have become obvious and its use more widespread.

Early use of Massey's logs by the Admiralty in its vessels would not only have been due to their vessels being already equipped with superior timekeeping devices thus making the accuracy and reliability of the patent log soon apparent, but also because the Admiralty had already proved in numerous trials that the common log was grossly unreliable.

Eventually improvements to Edward Massey's device were effected by his nephew, Thomas F. Walker: in 1861, the 'Harpoon' (No 3130) and, in 1884, the 'Cherub' (No 6369); however, both were marketed as Massey's Patent Logs. Indeed, it was to Edward Massey that the greatest credit belonged for this most significant aid to marine navigation which enabled the seas to be accurately paced at that most opportune of times - the advent of the ocean-going steam

nip. The consequent increase in the size of vessels as steam propulsion became the norm, and changes in their form of ownership due to the rise of ship-owning companies, would have greatly hastened the universal adoption of a device that was to serve its purpose for the next hundred years or more.

Edward Massey died 1852, aged 84, at 17 Chadwell St., Bentonville, London.

End Notes

Note 1 - By the time of its impending demise some three hundred or so years later this consisted of a triangular board-float whose leading edge was semi-circular and weighted, and to which was attached, at three points, a rope line. The float was hove over the side and was assumed to stay put where it hit the water while the ship sped past it. Knots of leather were tied at set intervals along the line (at either 23ft 8in. or 47ft 4 in. apart). The number of knots passing through the heaver's hands in a set time gave the ship's speed in knots. The running time used was 14 seconds if the knots were 23ft 8in. apart and 28 seconds if 47ft 4in. apart. The time was taken using a sandglass. Masters usually used the 14-second glass if the vessel was making over 5 nautical miles per hour as this time interval meant that a shorter amount of line was needed to be paid out: e.g using this time interval at 236¹/₂ feet a length of line would be paid out from a vessel moving at almost 10 nautical miles per hour i.e.

$$\frac{3600 \text{ (secs.)} \times 236\frac{1}{2} \text{ (ft)}}{14 \text{ (secs.)} \times 6080 \text{ (ft)}} \quad \text{hence 10 knots.}$$

Note 2 - Noted by an insurance policy taken out on the property with Sun Life on February 28th 1769.

Note 3 - Between 1812 and 1814 he was involved in devising an innovative form of lever escapement for watches which he patented in 1814. It guaranteed a good degree of accurate timekeeping and could be mass produced, making watches affordable for the less affluent. This invention was to be a dominant feature in British-made watches for nearly 40 years.

Note 4 - A buoy beneath which a block was slung, was thrown over the side while the ship was in motion. The lead line ran freely and vertically through the block. When the lead touched bottom the line slacked and was nipped at the buoy and held, then the marks were read off as the buoy was hauled back on board.

Note 5 - Professor of Chemistry at King's College, London. This cell has a constant E.M.F. of 1.1 volts and because it is not subject to polarisation, that is a build up of an insulating layer of hydrogen bubbles on the anode surface, it provides a uniform flow of current provided that it is operated regularly and given periodic basic maintenance.

Note 6 - Merchant ships of that time were very small: Of 286 ships registered in the Liverpool Customs' Register between 1-2-1844 and 31-1-1845 only seven were over 800 tons burthen, and 118 of them were less than 200 tons burthen.

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THE INTRODUCTION OF STEAM ENGINE POWERED SHIPS

By Norman S Swindells

Whilst the main means for driving the very early historical waterborne craft were oars, we know from various archaeological sources that reasonable sized papyrus hulled, keel-less sailing ships, with a single square sail, on a bipod mast and with oar support, were a familiar sight on the Nile as early as 3,500 BC and on the Tigris and Euphrates a little while later. Also well known is that from around 2000 BC those talented sailors, the Phoenicians, operating from their Eastern Mediterranean bases in Sidon and Tyre sailed throughout the Mediterranean and as far as Britain. The Phoenicians continued to improve their ships and were soon constructing wooden sailing ships with keels, which at the behest of the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho in 600 BC; they used to sail from their Red Sea base at Ezion-Geber to circumnavigate the whole of Africa, staying for a time near Cape Town before returning to their Mediterranean base at Tyre.

The foregoing indicates that from very early days sailing ships were well established and maritime trade using such ships was in operation over a wide geographical area, with most of the larger ships backed up with oars. A third major form of ancient propulsion although not as widely used as oars and sails was the paddle wheel. For example, it is indicated in medieval manuscripts that the invasion of Sicily by the Roman General, Claudius Caudex, before the birth of Christ, was accomplished with the help of craft which had two sets of side paddle wheels turned by oxen. It is also known that manual, or animal, driven side and stern paddle wheels were in use in China from 800 AD onwards.

Despite this early recognition that ships could be propelled other than by oars or sails and despite detailed drawings by Leonardo da Vinci and others in the early 16th Century on moving ships by other means, progress was slow. The big problem was that the animal, or man power being used to operate the main alternative, paddles, was inefficient and unless some more effective power source could be found there would be no progress. Nevertheless, the seeds had been sown and Salomon de Caus (1576-1635) a Frenchman and designer of steam driven fountains indicated in his writings:

"that steam with its tremendous power is a force that should be able to move vehicles on land and ships at sea",

Although he himself did nothing to further, David Ramsey an Englishman took the steam idea further when in 1630 he took out a patent for,

"diverse new waies and invencons by him found out and perfected, to raise water from lowe pitts by fire, and to make boats, shippes and barges to goe against stronge winde and tyde".

Again the matter was taken no further.

A more concrete proposal in the form of an actual design came from the Frenchman Denis Papin who in 1690 put forward a ship propulsion system whereby a boiler fed steam to three or four steam cylinders and pistons, each connected by

jack and pinion to an athwart ship shaft to which side paddle wheels were attached. It does not appear that anything was actually constructed. Ideas were now developing fast and in 1729, Dr John Allen, of Britain, took out a patent for a powered ship which would be driven by two Thomas Newcomen atmospheric steam engines (originally designed in 1712 to pump out water from mine shafts) which would draw in water from the forward end of the ship and pump it out from the stern, in effect a water jet craft. The theory was that this vessel could pull a warship at three knots against the tide but again no vessel was constructed. As will have been gathered the steam engine was now deemed to be the correct way forward and in 1736, again in the United Kingdom, Jonathan Hulls, who had been giving thought to ways of moving Royal and Merchant Navy ships out of harbour when wind was non-existent or unfavourable, took out a patent for a harbour tug. The proposed engine would again be to a Thomas Newcomen design and be connected by ropes and pulleys to a sternwheel. It is said that a boat was built and that trials were carried out on the River Avon at Evesham but unfortunately no records remain either of the construction, or the trial. If it could be proven that this trial did take place Jonathan Hulls would be the first to put an experimental steam boat on the water. Of interest is that a portrait of Jonathan Hulls was and may still be, in one of the staterooms of the 1936 built **Queen Mary**.

The last quarter of the 18th century saw a virtual explosion in the construction of experimental steam boats with France taking an early lead. In 1775 Jaques Perler constructed a paddle steamer with a 1 HP engine which had insufficient power to drive the vessel upstream against the current on the River Seine, causing Perler to lose interest. His attempt inspired the French aristocrat Le Marquis Claude de Jouffroy D'Abbans to construct a more powerful boat which he tried out on the River Doubs in June 1778. This vessel weighing some nine tons had twin inclined cylinders based on the Newcomen atmospheric system with chains connected to side hinged flaps (paddles). This proved unsuccessful and he constructed a second boat the engine of which incorporated some of the improvements of James Watt who from 1765 onwards had devised various improvements to the Newcomen atmospheric system including the provision of a condenser. On 15th July 1783, this steamer, named **Pyroscaphe** steamed upstream on the River Saone for 15 minutes, the first steamer to move against a current by engine power. In 1784 he built a 1:24 scale model of this vessel which can be seen at the Musee de la Marine in Paris.

Whilst credit for the first successful experimental steamship must go to France the British and Americans were close behind. In 1786 the American John Fitch tried out his first steamboat on the River Delaware which performed at a rate of three knots. In 1788 he constructed a similar vessel some 60 feet long and took 30 passengers a distance of about 20 miles in three hours and ten minutes. These vessels were driven by a single cylinder engine driving two overhead beams to which were attached six oars or paddles each side of the vessel. It is thought the inspiration for this form of propulsion came from the Red Indian war canoes. Despite its unusual method of propulsion the rate achieved of almost 6 knots was quite outstanding. Fitch was very much the U.S.A. pioneer of steamship propulsion and in 1796 continuing his experimentation he constructed a small steamboat driven by a screw propeller.

In 1787 another American James Rumsey built the first experimental steamer to use the water jet system. This 3 ton, 18 feet long, vessel sailed on the Potomac against the current at a rate of approximately four knots. Rumsey came to London in 1789 and secured patents for his water jet system. In collaboration with James Watt he constructed at Dover the 101 ton vessel **Columbian Maid** which was to be tried on the Thames in 1792. Unfortunately Rumsey died shortly before the trial was to take place. The trial was eventually undertaken early in 1793 and the vessel achieved a rate of 4 knots. James Watt was disappointed in its performance and stated that too much power was dissipated in the water outlet trunk.

In Scotland, Patrick Miller, an advocate of multi hulled vessels, built in 1787 the triple hulled vessel **Edinburgh** which was propelled by manual paddle wheels. Miller then joined with engine designer William Symington to produce in 1788 a double hulled vessel with the engine in one hull and the boiler in the other. This was the first engine specifically designed for marine use and can be seen in the London Science Museum. .

William Symington continued the development of marine engines and in 1801 his engine was installed in the **Charlotte Dundas** which was constructed to tow barges on the Forth and Clyde Canal. The power plant consisted of a single 22 inch diameter cylinder and piston, with a 4 ft stroke, developing 10 HP and driving a stern paddle. Her towing performance was entirely successful but the canal owners felt the wash from the paddle would damage the canal banks and she was laid up.

The use of a screw propeller to drive a boat had been put forward and experimented with a great number of times over the previous years, notably by Daniel Bernoulli 1753 with the shaft being turned by horses or men, James Watt 1770, Joseph Bramah 1785, John Fitch 1796, Charles Dallery 1803, and the American, Colonel John Stevens, from 1802 onwards. Dissatisfied with his first screw propelled ship, Stevens took out a second patent in 1803 from which he built his experimental steamboat **Little Julianna**. A water tube boiler supplied steam to a single cylinder engine with an overhead cross beam. From this beam two connecting rods were attached to twin propellers. The propellers were 18 inches in diameter and drove the vessel at some 6 knots. The twin screw engine and boiler are available for inspection at the United States National Museum. Colonel John Stevens is said to be the pioneer of practical screw propulsion but much of the real development came in the late 1830's and is usually attributed to two men, the Swede, John Ericsson and the Briton, Francis Petit Smith.

Numerous other experimental steamships were built in this period but none proved commercially successful, the nearest to such success being the laid up **Charlotte Dundas**.

We now come to the American marine engineer, Robert Fulton, the man responsible for giving the steamship the final push needed to take it from the experimental to the practical. Fulton was born in Pennsylvania in 1765 and at the age of 21 came to Europe, spending time in London, Glasgow and Paris, working with many of the other steamboat pioneers. Whilst in Paris in 1797 he offered the French Navy a design proposal for a submarine which was refused but, not deterred he built his own submarine, the **Nautilus**. In 1798, also in Paris, he made a number

of experiments with a four bladed screw propeller and in 1803 he designed a 64.5 foot long paddle steamer, displacing 25 tons, which traversed the Seine four times in each direction attaining 3.5 knots against the current.

Returning to the U.S.A. in 1807 he constructed the steam packet **Clermont**, for service on the Hudson River between New York and the State Capital, Albany. Some 133 feet long, displacing 100 tons and with 15 feet diameter side paddle wheels, she was by far the largest steamer built to date. She was 100 percent American except for the 20 HP engine, which was imported from the Boulton & Watt Co of Birmingham. On her trial trip she averaged 5 knots which with minor modifications and greater experience soon improved to over 6 knots. Noted as the first commercially successful steamer she stayed on the Hudson River service for seven years.

After this breakthrough steamships made rapid strides, the first commercially successful European steamer was Henry Bell's **Comet**. Built by John Wood at Port Glasgow in 1812, she was a side paddler, 51 feet long, displaced 28 tons and was driven by a 4 HP John Robertson engine. Her service was on the Clyde between Glasgow and Helensburgh. This engine can be viewed at the London Science Museum.

A number of other firsts were:-

1808, Colonel Stevens's **Phoenix** became the first steamer to venture out into the open sea sailing from New York's Hudson River to Philadelphia.

1814 the first steam warship **Demologos** was built in New York to the design of Robert Fulton. At 300 feet long, displacing 2,475 tons and with a 120 HP engine, she was a veritable giant. However, she only made one trip of 53 miles to Sandy Hook after which she was laid up.

1816 Marjery, 73 feet long, displacing 38 tons with a 10 HP engine was the first steamer to cross the Channel.

1818, the Italians built the first Mediterranean steamer, **Ferdinando Primo**, 125 feet long, 247 tons displacement with a 32 HP engine.

As will be gathered from the foregoing most of the steamers were operating either on rivers, keeping close to the coast line, or making short sea journeys with almost all of them still rigged with sails for additional speed and as a safeguard against engine breakdown. The most rapidly growing service at this time, for both passengers and cargo, was that across the North Atlantic between Europe and the New World. The fast sailing packets of the Black Ball or Dramatic Line, from Liverpool to New York would take around 33 days to cross the some 3,000 miles of open sea with the return journey averaging 23 days. This huge difference was a matter of winds and currents. Other sailing ships especially some of the run down emigrant carriers could take up to two months. Shipowners on both sides of the Atlantic recognised that being less dependent on the elements a steamship should in theory be able to make a faster passage than a sailing ship and bring the crossing times closer together. Nevertheless a big worry was that the possible, indeed probable ferocious weather which might be encountered could damage the engines or paddles. This made it even more essential that any proposed steamers on this route be also fully rigged sailing ships. It is noteworthy that sails continued to be fitted to North Atlantic steamers until twin screw ships were introduced in the 1880's.

The first attempt at a steamship crossing of the North Atlantic came in 1819

and was brought about by a group of Savannah, Georgia based shipowners. It was not surprising that the first try came from the U.S.A. for by this date the Americans had built over 100 good sized steamers whereas in the whole of the British Empire there were only 43, the average tonnage and horse power of the British ships being only half that of the US built craft. The vessel chosen was a 300 ton sailing packet. **Savannah** originally destined for the New York, Le Havre service. For the voyage the ship was fitted with a 90 HP single cylinder engine constructed by Stephen Vail of New Jersey. She left Savannah on the 24th May 1819 and after re-coaling at Kinsale, Ireland arrived in Liverpool on the 20th June. The crossing took 27 days 11 hours, slower than a fast sailing packet. Because of high fuel consumption and the requirement for excessive boiler cleaning (the salt water jet condenser quickly led to a salt encrusted boiler) the engine was only used for 85 hours; thus **Savannah** is regarded as a sailing ship with an auxiliary steam engine and not the first ship to make a sustained powered crossing. Completed in 1962, the United States first nuclear powered merchant ship was aptly named **Savannah**.

In the following years a number of other sailing ships with auxiliary steam engines crossed the Atlantic, the most notable being the Canadian built vessel **Royal William** one of whose beneficial owners was Samuel Cunard.

The British Empire, with the most powerful Navy in the world and the largest number of merchant ships, had by this time the shipbuilders and engineers to build steamships to equal and better the USA. Nevertheless it was not until 1838 that two British steamships were to race each other across the Atlantic for the accolade of being the first steamer to make a sustained engine crossing of this mighty ocean.

The first of these was a chartered vessel the 700 ton, 320 HP side lever engined, **Sirius**, which was fitted with an early surface condenser. She had been built for the London to Cork service, not the most tranquil of crossings, so was just about suitable to make the Atlantic crossing. The other competitor was the Great Western Company's **Great Western** built by the famous Isambard Kingdom Brunel. At 1,320 tons and with a 750 HP engine the **Great Western** was immeasurably superior to the **Sirius** and although scheduled to leave 3 days later she should still have comfortably reached New York first. However, she was delayed by a day and now it was anybody's race, which was won by **Sirius**. She arrived in New York late on the 22nd April 1838 with **Great Western** arriving 5 hours later. **Sirius** took 18 days 10 hours about 15 days quicker than a fast sailing packet with an average of 6.7 knots. The **Great Western** made the journey in 15 days 5 hours with an average speed of 8.8 knots. The famous Blue Riband race for the fastest time across the Atlantic starts with **Sirius** although she only held it for a few hours.

The steamship had now conquered every obstacle and all that remained was the gradual improvement of the ships and engines themselves. This was marked by the introduction of the screw propeller, iron, then steel hulls, compound, triple and quadruple expansion engines and the turbine. A great contributor to this advance in technology was Isambard Kingdom Brunel whose third ship, the 1860 iron built 693 feet long **Great Eastern** was the only five funnelled steamer ever built and the only one driven by both paddles and screw.

THE SINKING OF THE WESTERN PRINCE

By Tony & Sandy Felton

Britain came very close to her knees in 1940 due to the success of Karl Donitz and his U-boat captains. Between January and December 1940 over two million tons of allied and neutral merchant shipping was lost due to U-boat activities. The last three months of 1940 were particularly successful for U-boat commanders and it was during this period that the **Western Prince** was sunk.

At first glance the **Western Prince** might appear just another statistic and of no particular significance until you look at her passenger list, for she carried several important British and Canadian figures, who had they been lost, might not only have affected the war effort but also the future well being of the Canadian nation.

The 496 feet long **Western Prince** (10,926 tons) was built in 1929, for the Furness Withy Line at Port Glasgow to trade between the UK, New York and South America. Along with three other "Compass Class" Prince Line ships she was withdrawn from service in 1939. At the outbreak of war she was brought back into service, armed with two defensive guns aft and placed in transatlantic service where she frequently carried refugees from Britain to New York, through Liverpool.



Western Prince

(Courtesy of the Newall Dunn Collection)

In December 1940 she left New York bound for the UK. In command was Captain John Reed, well known on the New York/South America run. He had joined the Prince Line in 1907 as 3rd Officer being promoted to Master in 1919.

On board were four men on a mission to try and convince the British

that they should utilise the substantial unused industrial capacity of Canada to produce ships, arms and aircraft for the war effort. The mission was led by the Honourable C D Howe, Canada's Minister of Munitions and Supply and he took with him E P Taylor, President of Canadian Breweries and a highly successful businessman, who was Howe's Director of Munitions Production, Colonel William C. Woodward, President of Woodward Stores Ltd of Vancouver, Howe's executive assistant, and Gordon W. Scott of Montreal, Howe's financial adviser. Also on board were Sir George Catlin (father of Shirley Williams – now Baroness Williams of Crosby) and the renowned London Editor of the Manchester Guardian, James Bone. There was also a British Vice-Admiral, who Catlin noted was in charge of something “*no more dashing than stores*” and Sir Cecil Carr, a constitutional lawyer of some distinction.

R. Cyril Thompson was another very important passenger. He was joint managing director of Joseph L. Thompson, Shipbuilders, who was returning to the UK after heading a British shipbuilding mission to the United States. The object of the mission was to order 60 vessels from American builders and he had with him copies of the plans and designs of his Company's own standard ships. It was from these, with some modifications, that Henry Kaiser built the Liberty ships and engines at such a record pace.

The Henderson family were travelling from Brazil with their baby. One passenger, from South America but not named, later recalled having her fortune told and that the teller foresaw a great explosion and fire but that all would be alright. This was very likely Mrs Henderson. My father, Frederick C. Felton, was also on board, having signed-on as a steward in July 1940.

The **Western Prince** left New York on 6th December the sailing having been delayed by one day – a fact noted by Lord Haw Haw in one of his broadcasts, who announced that the Germans were fully aware of C D Howe's mission and that the German Navy would therefore torpedo the ship in mid-Atlantic.

As a result of these threats several of the passengers decided to wait for another ship but Howe was anxious to get across the Atlantic and did not want to go by air. He was looking forward to the rest that the few days crossing would afford him and was not prepared to be put off. The ship sailed with a passenger list of 61 and a total complement of 169. The first few days were uneventful, quite rough and cold. Friday the 13th December passed by in nervous anticipation of impending doom – both Catlin and E P Taylor later noted that passengers had tried to spend the day on all manner of activities to take their mind off both the date and Haw Haw's threats.

For the Howe party, time was best spent playing bridge which they did until it was quite late. After midnight on the 13th there was a general sigh of relief and many went to bed including the bridge players. Howe records in his diary for Friday 13th December:

“Everyone is rather nervous having regard to the day and date! It is generally felt that if we are to be torpedoed this will be the day. Practically all the passengers

finished the day in the smoking room and at 12 midnight everyone breathed a sigh of relief and left to go to bed."

The Master, Captain Reed, had ordered that passengers remained clothed in case they had to take to the lifeboats but several of the passengers ignored this advice, one being E P Taylor, whose wife had obtained for him a "survival suit". (In fact the four Canadian companions had each been kitted out in "survival" clothing by their respective wives.) He decided it was reasonable enough to leave the suit near his bed in case he needed it. What he didn't count on was the fact that the trousers of this suit didn't fit, necessitating him taking take to the lifeboat in his survival suit top but pyjama bottoms consequently "*causing him much distress*". There are several contradictions as to the time that the **Western Prince** was actually hit – some survivors in their autobiographies merely state that it was the early hours of the morning of 14th December. E P Taylor gives the time as 6.10am. At first some of the passengers had not realised that they had been hit. Catlin stated that he didn't hear any alarms but Taylor mentions the ship's bells ringing. The order to abandon ship was given by Captain Reed. In his book "*The Woodward's*", Harker notes that the time the ship was struck was 5.30 am on 14th December. It was pitch dark and raining and a 70 mph gale was blowing. The lifeboats, when launched, crashed against the side of the ship making evacuation difficult.

A distress message was picked up by the Mackay Radio Station at Amagansett, New York at 7.02 am (GMT) 2.02 am New York time.

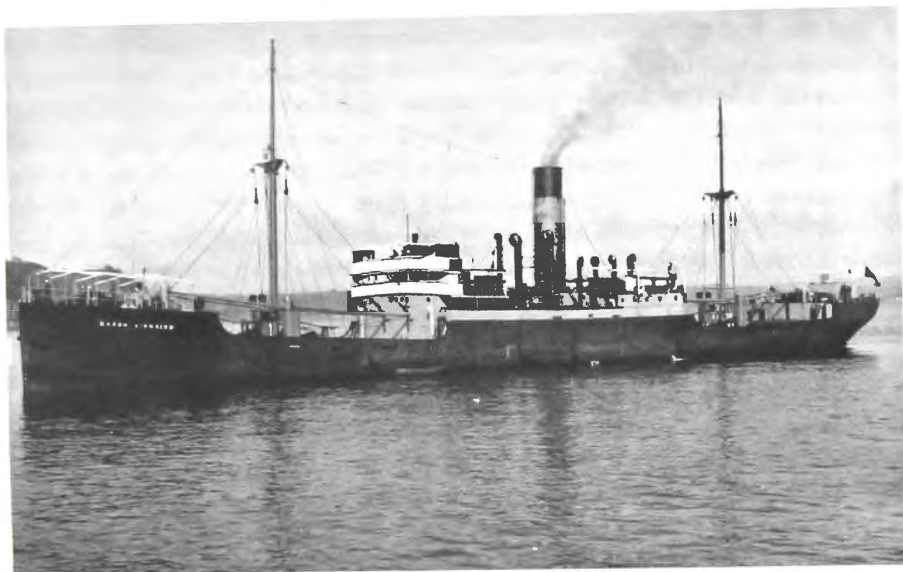
*"From Port Patrick Radio, position 59.32 North, 17.47 West
– Western Prince torpedoed 0702 GMT 14th."*

The **Western Prince** had been hit towards the bow and Captain Reed refused to leave the bridge (he in fact died with his ship). As the lifeboats got under way blasts on the ship's whistle appeared to sound defiance of the U-boat. After the first torpedo had hit the ship it was some 40 minutes before the second was fired which finished her off. Six lifeboats left the **Western Prince** with Howe's boat being the last to leave the scene. The submarine surfaced and her crew took photographs of the wreck, "*then she passed by leaving the lifeboats to the grey dawn and fury of the mounting gale.*"

The survivors were to endure several hours in mountainous seas and freezing conditions while the crews of the lifeboats ensured that regular flares were fired. One of these was seen by Captain Lachlan Dewar of the Hogarth freighter **Baron Kinnaird**.

The **Baron Kinnaird** had sailed from the Tyne on December 4th bound for Tampa, Florida, via the North of Scotland, to join an Ocean Convoy (OB256) from Liverpool which dispersed approximately 450 miles west of the Orkney Islands on December 12th. Aware of Admiralty instructions not to stop to pick up survivors if it was known that U-boats were in the area the **Baron Kinnaird** altered course to rescue the occupants of the lifeboat. During the rescue she was joined by the destroyer HMS **Active**, which picked up one man from floating wreckage and another from a lifeboat which had overturned and drifted away.

After the rescue the **Baron Kinnaird** made for the Clyde arriving on December 18th to land 99 crew and 55 passengers at Gourock.



***Baron Kinnaird**, built in 1927 for Hogarth Shipping was herself torpedoed in 1943 with the loss of all her crew*

Captain Lachlan Dewar was later awarded the OBE in the 1942 King's Birthday Honours List when he was master of the **Baron Elgin**.

Woodward praised the conduct of both passengers and crew who showed no sign of hysteria or fright. Nine crew and six passengers were lost, among them a young honeymoon couple, named Allan, who returned to their cabin to get some of their wedding presents and were never seen again. Also lost was a crew member named Thomas Franks, who went back down into the ship to get the crew's Spitfire Fund of nearly £100 which they had been collecting.

The rescue was executed in hurricane conditions and it was very difficult to get the survivors on board. A group of nuns and babies was hauled aboard the **Baron Kinnaird** in coal baskets while other survivors scrambled up rope ladders. Captain Dewar is described as a '*cheerful dauntless Scot*' who turned over his cabin to Howe and his companions. He did not sleep until the ship's arrival with the survivors at Gourock.

There is some disparity as to how Scott lost his life. In 'The Life and Times of C D Howe' by Leslie Roberts, it is stated that Scott lost his footing when getting into the lifeboat and was crushed between the lifeboat and the ship. In Taylor's biography it is stated that Scott's lifeboat capsized, spewing its passengers into the ocean. However, another passenger, a Mr A B Butler, who worked for the Philippine Refining Company, gave a clear account of the sinking

in Unilever's Port Sunlight News of January 1941. Butler quips that he had taken bets on the ship being hit on the King's birthday (14th) rather than the 13th although another passenger persisted that it was still Friday 13th in San Francisco! He explains that the evacuation was rather leisurely and that Captain Reed put his big overcoat into one of the lifeboats and asked them to hang around as near to **Western Prince** as possible in case he might get away later. This supports the view of Second Officer White, who stated that in his opinion Captain Reed never intended to go down with the ship. White was thrown overboard when the ship made its final journey to the bottom and was left astride a wooden hatch for some nine hours before he was luckily picked up by the destroyer. Butler, a skilled sailing man, describes conditions as they pulled away from the sinking ship. "*There was quite a sea running with waves about twenty feet high and a wind of about Force 5.*" He describes the first sight of the **Baron Kinnaird** coming to their rescue and how hazardous it was to get aboard given the conditions. His account then relates the fate of Scott's boat which came alongside the ship instead of heading straight for the ladders. Apparently as she neared the sea water outlet a number of occupants jumped to the other side to escape the fall of water causing the lifeboat to upset with the result that some of the passengers were lost.

On their arrival in Scotland Howe and the other passengers took up a collection for the crew.

A letter sent to my father from Hearnings Farm, Windermere on 26th December, 1940, by R. Henderson, states:

Dear Felton,

I enclose a small cheque and wish to thank you for your services to my wife, son and self during our voyage across the Atlantic. My wife joins me in best wishes for the future and we trust that you have now fully recovered from the effects of the experiences of the 14th and that you escaped injury in the 'blitzes' of last weekend.

Yours sincerely,

R. Henderson

When told of the news that Howe's ship had gone down, McKenzie King wrote in his diary that he had spoken to Howe of the risks involved but had reluctantly agreed with him that the trip to Britain was absolutely essential.

A close friend of Winston Churchill was later to declare that "*but for him the war would have been lost*" when describing Howe's part in the desperate struggle to save Britain from annihilation by Hitler's juggernaut. There can be no doubt, however, that Howe's subsequent twenty-two years involvement in Canadian government certainly changed the course of that country's history and affected the life of every Canadian in the second half of the twentieth century.

If Captain Dewar had not taken the decision to ignore Admiralty Orders and the destroyer captain had not agreed to go and escort him the survivors of the **Western Prince** would have had little chance of rescue and would probably have all been lost. Thompson was saved and so were his precious blueprints and

documents.

On his return Sir George Catlin wrote a report to the Admiralty that, with skilled men scarce, it should be an Admiralty instruction that ship's captains must leave sinking ships, not go down with them. He also noted the 'chivalry' of the U-boat captain, who, again contrary to orders, allowed some 40 minutes between the first and final torpedo so that crew and passengers could abandon ship. For his part the U-boat captain later told Sir George that he was "*glad so many of the passengers and crew were saved*" and sorry indeed for the loss of Captain Reed.

Sources:

- 1 *For God's Sake Go* - (1972) *Autobiography of Sir George Catlin*.
- 2 *The Life & Times of C.D.Howe* - by Leslie Roberts, Toronto, 1957.
- 3 *TheWoodwards* – Harker
- 4 *The Fourth Service* - by John Slader
- 5 *E.P.Taylor* - by Richard Rhomer
- 6 *Port Sunlight News*, January 1941
- 7 *Crew and Passenger Lists*
- 8 *The Allied Convoy System* – Arnold Hague
- 9 *Lloyds Weekly Index*
- 10 SEEDIE'S Merchant Navy List
- 11 PRO – ADM 199/2135

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

AJ Barratt

A member for eight years Tony's great interest is in local shipbuilding and shipping companies. He has had two books and numerous articles published as well as giving talks on maritime topics.

G Bodey

Having spent a few years at sea Gordon has developed a general interest in matters maritime. He particularly likes to research the largely unknown and now forgotten characters, who to quote him, "merit a measure of modern-day recognition".

G Cubbin

After a lifetime sea going career with T&J Harrison, culminating in Graeme becoming the Company's Marine Superintendent in 1973. He was the Chairman of the Society from 1996 to 1999. In 2003 he wrote the definitive history of his former employers.

C Dawson

Merseyside born, but now living in Sweden, Charles has a deep interest in shipping matters and he is a regular contributor to the Society's journal *The Bulletin*.

DKC Eccles

After a career at sea with Monarch SS Co, the Guinea Gulf Line and Ellerman City Lines David having gained his Steam & Motor Certificate later worked for the Eagle Star Insurance Co as a Boiler Surveyor. He too has been Chairman of the Society, from 2002 to 2005 the year in which his history of the Larrinaga Steamship Company was published.

T & S Felton

Tony Felton has spent several years researching his father's ships and in particular the fate of the Western Prince which was sunk during World War II. He also collects ships postcards and memorabilia. Sandy Felton has a general interest in maritime history and in particular the ships of the Pacific Steam Navigation Company and the New Zealand Shipping Company, on whose ships her father served.

J Pottinger

Born in a fishing village in Shetland, he served a marine engineering apprenticeship with Scotts of Greenock and then service with T. & J. Brocklebank. Coming ashore he was a manager in the offshore industry in UK and abroad. Now retired his interests are: drawing ship and plans for ship models, as well as oil painting and writing.

N Swindells

Having served at sea for Cunard, Canadian Pacific and of the Harrison Line Norman came ashore to work for Elder Dempster and then Texaco. Being a Chartered Marine Engineer he later set up a marine consultancy. He is particularly interested in researching topics related to either the North Atlantic trades or marine propulsion

WG Williamson

Born in Glasgow Willie was a Radio Officer with Marconi Marine between 1960 and 1967, becoming a Marine Electronic Engineer until 1980 when he then joined the staff of Riversdale Technical College. He is Co-author of *Handbook for Radiocommunication*. Now retired he still maintains his interests in the development of radio training in Merseyside

R Williams

See page 10

THE LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

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J Coates

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About the Society

Founded in 1938, the Society has the specific aim of encouraging interest in Maritime History particularly in relation to Merseyside and the North West. Close links are maintained with Merseyside Maritime Museum and Members produce books and write articles both for publication in the Society's quarterly journal the '*The Bulletin*' and more widely in the maritime press. Members also endeavour to advise and guide enquirers both locally and from across the globe who are conducting their own maritime research. Members also provide talks within our own lecture programme and occasionally to other organisations and academic institutions.

The Society's quarterly publication "*The Bulletin*" will appeal to anyone who wishes to read about ships, shipbuilders and life at sea in former times. It covers a vast range of subjects with a tendency towards Merseyside and in some instances relives those halcyon days of the British Merchant Navy during the 1950s and 1960s. Many of the articles are written by Members and where possible the principal aim being to bring ships to life through inclusion of stories from people who actually sailed on them.

Meetings are held at the Merseyside Maritime Museum on the third Thursday of each month normally between September and May commencing at 12.30p.m. with opportunity for informal chat between Members both before and after each meeting. Speakers are drawn from the Society's membership and outside sources.

With the special agreement of the Museum a small group of Members regularly attend the Archive Library on most Mondays. With an informal and friendly atmosphere there is much exchange of information relating either to personal research quests or specific projects being undertaken in conjunction with Museum staff.

The Society sponsors an Award Scheme for Universities in the area on an annual basis. Students in higher education who have an interest in maritime research are encouraged to submit original written work which has a nautical theme.

The annual subscription at the time of this publication is £12. For any further information about membership and Society services and a complimentary copy of the "*The Bulletin*" please send an A5 stamped addressed envelope to:-

The Hon Secretary,
Liverpool Nautical Research Society
Maritime Archives and Library
Merseyside Maritime Museum
Albert Dock
LIVERPOOL L3 4AQ

SOCIETY PROJECTS

The Society and some of its members have carried out a number of research projects. Recently completed projects include:-

- 1 A database of early steamships registered at Liverpool
- 2 A Fleet list of the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board fleet
- 3 Indexing of the Subsidiary Register Books of Non Liverpool Registered Vessels 1788 -1818

Other projects are on going

The completed projects are available at the Maritime Museum Archives where the results of the ongoing projects will also be lodged, as completed.



*Mersey Pilot Vessel **Arnet Robinson**. Built at Dartmouth in 1958 and sold in 1982. After service as a ferry she was broken up in 2004*

SOCIETY AWARD SCHEME

The activities of the Society have developed during its 70 years and close links with Merseyside Maritime Museum lead to the concept of an Annual Awards Scheme, which was introduced in 2002.

The Scheme is offered to the universities in the region, and seeks to encourage students in higher education who have an interest in maritime affairs, to submit original written work on nautical subjects of between 1,000 and 2,000 words in length. Dissertations completed in the previous twelve months are also eligible for consideration for the Award

All entries are carefully judged by a Panel of Society Members The entry which demonstrates the greatest originality of research and depth of interest will be awarded a framed Society Certificate and a cash prize.

Awards so far made include

- 2002 *The Development and Role of the Organisations concerned with the Welfare of Seamen on the Mersey 1820-1970*
By Sidney David Wilson - Liverpool Hope University
- 2003 *Ro-Ro Tugmasters an Economic Dissertation*
By Sarah Kennedy – John Moores University
- 2004 *Joint winners*
A Great Union (see Page 10 of this publication)
By Richard Williams – Liverpool University
The Role of the Merchant Navy and Liverpool in the Battle of the Atlantic
By Lynn Jackson – Liverpool Hope University
- 2005 *A Critical Examination of the International Conventions on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers and the Factors that have a detrimental effect on shipboard watch keeping.*
By Charles Jocelyn – John Moores University
- 2006 *The Liverpool Slavetrade in the Late Eighteenth Century*
by Denise M Jones - Liverpool Hope University

Any intention to participate should be preceded by a short introductory letter (or e-mail to mersey.maritime@hotmail.com) nominating the individual and the likely subject no later than 30th November each year. The address for correspondence and completed projects is;

The LNRS Awards Secretary
Maritime Archives and Library
Merseyside Maritime Museum
Albert Dock, Liverpool L3 4AQ.

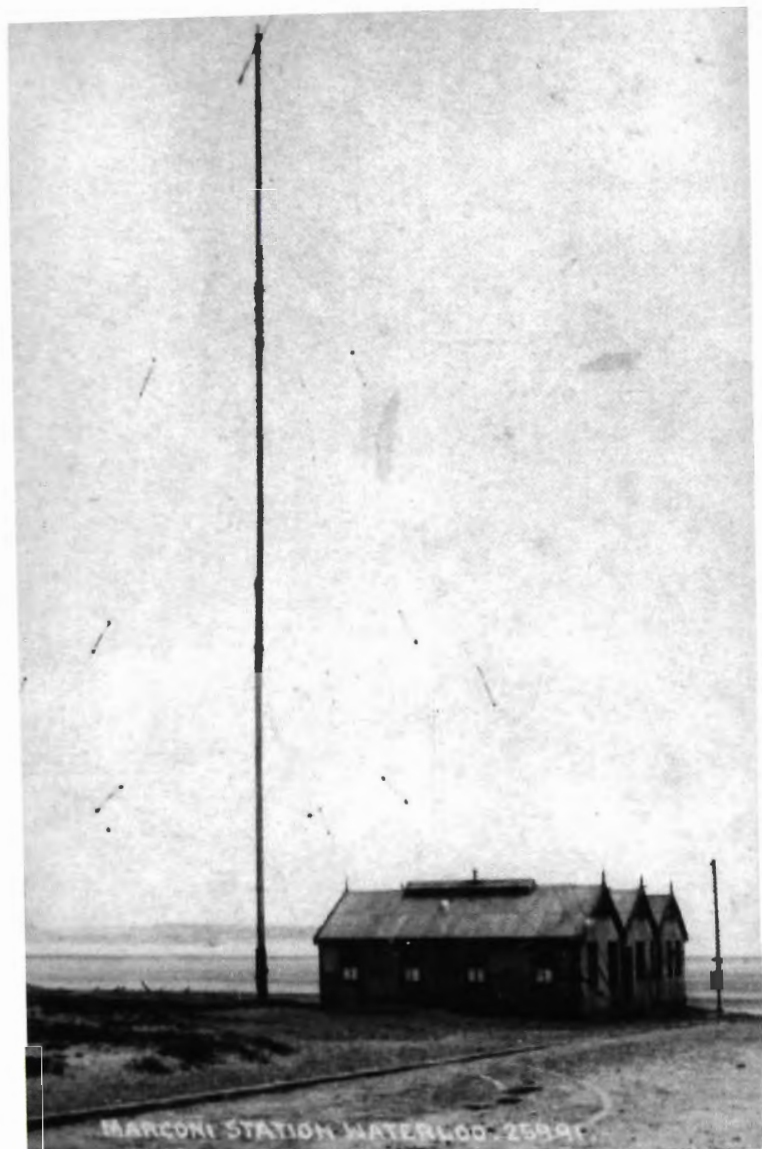
THE SOCIETY AT WORK



The monthly meeting



A research session in the archives



Liverpool Nautical Research Society 1938 - 2008