

SIXTY YEARS OF THE LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

1938 - 1998



A NAUTICAL MISCELLANY

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The front cover illustration is a typical Mersey scene in the late 1950s, with the Cunard liner **Carinthia** (21,947 tons, built 1956) and Alexandra Towing Company's tender **Flying Breeze** (387 tons, built 1913).
(from the Raymond Brandreth collection)

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FOREWORD

by L.N.R.S. Vice-President Ray Pugh

As a Vice-President of the Liverpool Nautical Research Society, I should like to offer congratulations on the occasion of its Diamond Jubilee. Times have changed, especially in shipping, and this is well shown by the articles in this commemorative book.

In 1968, our President, Sir Arnet Robinson, in welcoming Members to the opening of the new season, said : *"The Society performs a worthwhile task in recording the interesting historical aspects of Merseyside shipping. Over the last few years there have been profound changes in the types of ships coming to the Port, and the patterns of trade they are involved in. This makes the work of the Society all the more important. I trust continuing support will be forthcoming which the Society so well deserves"*.

Thirty years have gone by since those words were spoken, and the support has been maintained. I myself relish the club atmosphere which has provided me with so many friends - though unfortunately, through age, I am unable to attend the meetings these days.



Britain became great through its seafaring. The role of the Royal Navy and the Merchant Marine played a great part in ensuring the peace which we now enjoy.

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society will, I feel sure, have enthusiastic support well into the next millennium.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

(in the order in which the articles appear in this book)

GRAEME CUBBIN began a career at sea with the Charente Steamship Company (Thos. & Jas. Harrison Ltd., Managers) in February 1940. He achieved P.o.W. status on his first voyage when the ss **Scientist** was sunk by the German raider **Atlantis**. Ten months later he was liberated from an Italian P.o.W. camp in Somalia. Graeme Cubbin was appointed Master in August 1964, and Assistant Marine Superintendent in February 1973. He retired in April 1986. In 1987 he joined the Liverpool Nautical Research Society and was elected Chairman in May 1996. He is the author of a Fleet History of the Harrison Line which is to be published at some future date by the World Ship Society.

JOHN MOORE was born in Liverpool in 1961. He is Assistant Curator of Maritime Archives at the Merseyside Maritime Museum. John studied modern British and European history at John Moore's University and is now a Sessional Lecturer for the History Department. He graduated from Lancaster University in 1997 with an M.A. in European Union Studies.

DAVID ECCLES served a five year apprenticeship with Bootle ship-repairer C. & H. Crichton (1921) Ltd and joined the Merchant Navy in 1952, sailing with the Monarch Steamship Co. and the Guinea Gulf Line, before studying at the College of Marine Engineering (Elsby & Taggart) for Steam certificates with Motor endorsement. David served with Ellerman City Liners from 1956 - 1979, and then as Boiler Surveyor with Eagle Star Insurance until 1991. He has been a member of the Liverpool Nautical Research Society since 1992, and research has included the Larrinaga Steamship Co.

KEN TINKLER was born in Liverpool in 1928. He joined the family-owned mechanical engineering business - manufacturers of road trailer and fork lift truck axle units, plus design and manufacture of special purpose machines for nuclear reactors. The business was eventually sold giving Ken the opportunity for early retirement and the pursuit of hobbies such as research into local history.

ROY FENTON was born on Merseyside in 1946 where he developed an interest in ships at an early age. Roy is a member of the Liverpool Nautical Research Society and a Committee Member of the World Ship Society. His main research interest is coastal shipping, particularly under steam. He presently lives in Wimbledon, works as a freelance technical writer, and is a partner in a small maritime publishing company.

RON EVANS was born in Douglas, Isle of Man, in 1928. The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company has long been a part of his life, and building waterline models of ships of all kinds, including those of the Steam Packet Company, has always been his favourite form of modelling. As an Architect and Surveyor, Ron left the Island in 1960, but has maintained his interest in the Steam Packet Company and model making, and in his retirement has devoted much of his time to researching shipbuilders' models and plans of Steam Packet ships. Ron is a member of the Liverpool Nautical Research Society.

ALAN McCLELLAND was a member of the staff of the General Manager & Secretary of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board before he went up to University. Alan joined the Liverpool Nautical Research Society in the mid 1950s, and was Chairman from 1993 to 1996. His particular research interests lie in tramp shipping and cargo ship development.

TERRY KAVANAGH worked in the road haulage industry in the north-west before attending University as a mature student. Terry is a well-known local historian living in Chester and is currently researching the history of commercial salmon fishing in the River Dee. Terry is a member of the Liverpool Nautical Research Society and is a regular contributor to the Society's quarterly "*Bulletin*".

Acknowledgement

The Editorial Committee would like to thank L.N.R.S. Member and computer expert Olive Williamson for her help in transferring the Editor's word-processor files into a format that could be read by the printers' computer.

STRUGGLE AND SURVIVAL

THE STORY OF THOS. & JAS. HARRISON LIMITED SINCE 1938

by Captain Graeme Cubbin

In September 1938, at a time when the nation was still recovering from the ravages of the Great Depression, when shipowners were re-commissioning and re-building their fleets, and when the concept of a Nautical Research Society based on Liverpool was coming into fruition, the fleet of the Charente Steamship Company Ltd. (Thos. & Jas. Harrison Ltd., Managers) comprised 45 ships, aggregate gross tonnage 275,625. The Company then employed about 2,000 seafarers, and perhaps another 1,000 men and women who, working on docks and in offices at home and abroad, relied for their livelihood on the regular services which the Company provided. It was a time of optimism and expansion despite the unmistakable sound of sabre-rattling emanating from the Continent. That eager sense of expectancy was confirmed by Mr Neville Chamberlain himself on his return from his meeting with Hitler in Munich in September 1938, waving a piece of paper, and proclaiming, "*peace in our time!*"

The reality, of course, was to be quite different. A year later, Hitler's armies swept through Poland, and then six months later, after a strange lull in the fighting, he turned his attention to Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium and France. Meanwhile, at sea, formidable units of the German High Seas Fleet had long been in place.

Harrison's first casualty of the War was the **Huntsman** (8,196/21), a comparatively large four-masted steamer on the U.K. - India service. On the 3rd September 1939, the day Britain and France declared war on Germany, the **Huntsman**, homeward bound from Calcutta, entered the Red Sea. She called at Port Sudan, but then, instead of heading north for the Suez Canal, a peremptory signal from the Admiralty despatched her south to return home via the Cape of Good Hope.

It was whilst she was on the Durban/Freetown leg of this extended voyage that, on 10th October, she ran across the German pocket-battleship **Admiral Graf Spee** (12,100/31)¹. She was duly captured, looted, and sunk a week later, her crew taken prisoner. Thus the **Huntsman** became the first of 31 Harrison vessels to become victims of war and associated marine peril during the next five years.

One victim falling within the latter category of "marine peril" was the **Politician** (7,940/23) (of blessed memory, if one happens to be an Islander!) Lost in poor visibility in the Minches, where all shore based nav aids and beacons were either shut down or on reduced power, the **Politician** ran on to rocks off the Island of Eriskay, Outer Hebrides, on the morning of 5th February,

VESSELS LOST AND CASUALTIES SUFFERED
DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR
1939 - 1945

VESSELS SUNK BY ENEMY ACTION		GROSS TONNAGE	ATTACK		SAVED		TAKEN PRISONER		KILLED/ MISSING		TOTAL	REMARKS
			DATE	TYPE	UNINJURED	INJURED	EARLY RELEASE	FOR DURATION	DIED IN ACTION	DIED LATER		
1	HUNTSMAN	8196	10.10.39	R	-	-	82	-	-	-	82	4 Released from GRAF. SPEE 78 " ALTMARK
2	COUNSELLOR	5068	8. 3.40	M	58	9	-	-	-	-	67	
3	SCIENTIST	6199	3. 5.40	R	-	-	47	24	1	4	76	47 Released from Mogadishu
4	ASTRONOMER	8681	2. 6.40	S	39	11	-	-	4	-	54	
5	DAVISTIAN	6433	10. 7.40	R	-	-	40	8	1	1	50	40 Released in Lifeboat
6	INANDA	5985	7. 9.40	B	33	4	-	-	5	-	42	Stand-By Crew
7	INKOSI	6618	7. 9.40	B	26	1	-	-	-	-	27	
8	SCHOLAR	3940	21. 9.40	S	41	4	-	-	-	-	45	
9	PLANTER	5887	16.11.40	S	15	-	-	-	13	44	72	43 Lascars lost in JUMNA on repatriation voyage
10	DIPLOMAT	8240	27.11.40	S	43	-	-	-	14	-	57	
11	TRIBESMAN	6242	1.12.40	R	-	-	-	76	59	-	135	54 Lascars on board ex- EXPLORER, Repatriation
12	CRAFTSMAN	7896	9. 4.41	R	-	-	1	42	5	1	49	
13	STATESMAN	7939	17. 5.41	B	50	1	-	-	1	-	52	
14	LOGICIAN	5993	25. 5.41	B	27	-	-	21	5	-	53	9 POWs injured
15	COLONIAL	5108	26. 5.41	S	73	3	-	-	-	-	76	
16	DALESMAN	6343	14. 5.41	B	24	1	-	31	-	1	57	
17	AUDITOR	5444	4. 7.41	S	69	-	-	-	1	1	71	
18	DESIGNER	5945	9. 7.41	S	11	-	-	-	66	3	79	
19	MERCHANT	4572	24.12.41	M	42	2	-	-	1	-	45	
20	TRAVELLER	3963	26. 1.42	S	-	-	-	-	52	-	52	
21	DAYTONIAN	6434	13. 3.42	S	57	-	-	-	1	-	58	
22	EMP. EXPLORER	5345	9. 7.42	S	68	-	-	-	3	-	71	
23	ARICA	5379	6.11.42	S	52	1	-	-	12	-	65	
24	OBSERVER	5881	16.12.42	S	15	-	-	-	66	-	81	
25	CONTRACTOR	6004	7. 8.43	S	76	-	-	-	5	2	83	
26	DIRECTOR	5107	14. 7.44	S	57	-	-	-	1	-	58	
27	WAYFARER	5068	19. 8.44	S	10	-	-	-	51	-	61	
TOTAL		163910			886	37	170	202	366	57	1718	
					923		372		423			
LOST BY MARINE PERIL												
28	POLITICIAN	7940	5. 2.41	W	50	-	-	-	-	-	50	
29	CHANCELLOR	4607	2.12.39	C	42	-	-	-	-	-	42	
30	BARRISTER	6348	4. 1.43	W	74	-	-	-	-	-	74	
31	MAGICIAN	5105	22. 5.44	W	80	-	-	-	-	-	80	
TOTAL		24000			246	-	-	-	-	-	246	
GRAND TOTAL		187910			1169		372		423		1964	
					59.5%		19%		21.5%			

KEY:-

B = Bombed by Aircraft
R = Raider
S = Submarine
C = Sunk in Collision
M = Mine
W = Wrecked

1941, and immediately established a legend. In her holds were 22,000 cases of Scotch whisky destined for the United States; to the Islanders in this remote and impoverished outpost of the Kingdom it was manna from heaven, a divine gift allegedly vouched for by local Clergy. The cargo, of course, was plundered with the application and dedication expected of true believers. Official attempts to salvage the ship and protect the cargo were only partially successful. Eventually the **Politician** broke up and sank, but the legend of *Whisky Galore!* lives on.

The casualties exemplified above were incurred without loss of life. Many other losses, however, exacted a grievous toll in human suffering. The **Traveller** (3,963/22), for example, was sunk with all fifty-two hands in January 1942, a significant entry in the final accounting of 423 lives lost in Harrison ships during the War.

Sir T. Harrison Hughes, Chairman of Thos. & Jas. Harrison Ltd., was appointed Director of the Liner Division of the Ministry of War Transport, a new department of Government set up to co-ordinate the carriage of goods by sea and by land. Meanwhile, the Government exercised its emergency powers by requisitioning the entire British Merchant Fleet.

Sir Harry Hughes was also Vice-President of the Suez Canal Company, and when France collapsed in the summer of 1940, the French President of the Canal Company sided with Vichy. Thus, in the eyes of the British Government, Sir Harry was now, *ipso facto*, the new President! However, the stress of trying to do two key wartime jobs and run a shipping company was too much of a good thing, and Sir Harry resigned as Director of the Liner Division in favour of the Chairman of P. & O., Sir William Currie.²

Meanwhile, that six-month lull - dubbed by the press '*the phoney war*' - had been at sea a grim business from the start. Between 3rd September 1939 and 9th April 1940, when Hitler invaded Norway and Denmark, 154 British Merchant ships of 673,711 gross tons had been destroyed, along with 14 Royal Navy ships.³ The rate of attrition was clearly greater than the rate at which losses could be replaced from the shipyards. Nevertheless, the effort was made by building standard ships of the Empire and Fort types, and later the American Liberty ships surged down the ways in such numbers as to swing the balance conclusively. After the War, sixteen of these standard ships were acquired by Harrisons to form the backbone of the post-war Fleet while new ships were building.

The story of the War years is a history in itself. Space, or the lack of it, does not permit even a brief resumé. However, the toll of war casualties, both ships and men, listed in Table II, should adequately demonstrate the losses sustained during that conflict.

Post-war recovery in Europe would not have been nearly so swift and dramatic without the so-called Marshall Plan which was launched in June 1947.⁴ This generous American initiative to finance the restoration of the

THOS. & JAS. HARRISON LTD

FLEET DATA

CONSTITUTION OF THE FLEET

SEPTEMBER 1938

NO.	SHIP'S NAME	OFF. NO.	GROSS TONS	RIG	BUILT BY	BUILT AT	BUILT YEAR	MACHINERY MANUFACTURER	TYPE	YEAR AND MONTH OF PURCHASE	YEAR OF DISPOSAL	FATE
167	DEFENDER	1	137450	8078	SS	Connell	Glasgow	1915 D & J	SE 4C 720	1915 08	1952 06	S SOLD B I & S. CO. 00. TO BE SCRAPPED IN BARROW
173	ASTRONOMER	3	140531	8881	SS	Henderson	Glasgow	1917	SE 4C 696	1917 06	1940 06	H SUNK b.e.a. 45° SE S FROM DUNCANSBY HD. 2/9/40
174	FACTOR	2	140541	8982	SS	Henderson	Glasgow	1917	SE 3C 536	1917 10	1939 05	S SOLD NALSEA. CARDIFF. SUNK b.e.a. 1940
187	GOVERNOR	3	140587	8152	SS	Henderson	Glasgow	1918	SE 3C 536	1918 07	1950 01	S SOLD B I S. CO. 91. AND SCRAPPED AT ROSYTH
189	CHANCELLOR	4	137822	4807	SS	Russell & Co	Port Glasgow	1916	SE 3C 501	1920 04	1938 12	F L SUNK IN COLLISION W/ CONVOY. 212
201	DRAMATIST	2	143695	5806	SS	Connell	Glasgow	1920	J. B. & Co. STS 3T 603	1920 12	1949 07	S SOLD B I S. CO. AND SCRAPPED AT BRITON FERRY
202	DIPLOMAT	2	145876	8240	SS	Connell	Glasgow	1921	D. & J. STS 3T 871	1921 09	1940 11	H SUNK b.e.a. (U104) 27/1 WEST OF TORY ID.
203	HUNTSMAN	2	145895	8196	SS	Connell	Glasgow	1921	D. & J. STS 3T 871	1921 11	1939 10	H SUNK b.e.a. (GRAF SPEE) IN S. ATLANTIC 17/10
204	TRAVELLER	2	145916	3963	SS	Connell	Glasgow	1922	D. & J. SE 3C 391	1922 03	1942 01	H SUNK b.e.a. (U106) N. ATLANTIC 26/1
205	SCHOLAR	2	145931	3940	SS	Connell	Glasgow	1922	D. & J. SE 3C 390	1922 05	1940 09	H SUNK b.e.a. (U100) N. ATLANTIC 21/1
206	AUDITOR	2	147290	5444	SS	Connell	Glasgow	1924	D. & J. SE 3C 538	1924 08	1941 07	H SUNK b.e.a. (U123) N. ATLANTIC 4/7
207	HISTORIAN	3	147290	5074	SS	Connell	Glasgow	1924	D. R. & Co. SE 3C 485	1924 12	1948 03	S SOLD G.A. CONTOMACHALOS. LONDON SCRAPPE 1950 @ TAWAN
208	WANDERER	2	147294	5079	SS	Connell	Glasgow	1925	D. R. & Co. SE 3C 485	1925 02	1949 02	S SOLD B I S. CO. AND SCRAPPED AT MILFORD HAVEN
210	INANDA	2	147310	5965	SS	S.H. & W.R.	Wallsend	1925	W.S. & E. SE 4C 805	1925 05	1940 09	H SUNK b.e.a. (BOMBED) SALVAGED (SEE 254)
211	MAGICIAN	2	147314	5105	SS	N.W.S. Corp.	Schiedam	1925	N.W.S. Corp. SE 3C 485	1925 08	1944 04	W WRECKED OFF PETERHEAD 14/4
212	WAYFARER	2	147324	5088	SS	Connell	Glasgow	1925	D. R. & Co. SE 3C 485	1925 08	1944 08	H SUNK b.e.a. (U862) OFF MOZAMBIQUE. 19/8
213	COLONIAL	2	147355	5108	SS	Henderson	Glasgow	1926	Henderson SE 3C 485	1926 02	1941 05	H SUNK b.e.a. (U107) OFF FREETOWN. 26/5
214	DIRECTOR	2	147392	5107	SS	Henderson	Glasgow	1926	Henderson SE 3C 485	1926 03	1944 07	H SUNK b.e.a. (U186) OFF ZAVORA PT. P.E.A.
215	COUNSELLOR	4	149596	5068	SS	Connell	Glasgow	1926	D. R. & Co. SE 3C 485	1926 08	1940 03	H SUNK b.e.a. (MINED) OFF MERSEY BAR. 8/3
216	PLANTER	1	149645	5887	SS	Connell	Glasgow	1927	D. R. & Co. SE 3C 524	1927 10	1940 11	H SUNK b.e.a. (U137) OFF TORY ID. 18/11
217	RANCHER	1	149653	5882	SS	Connell	Glasgow	1927	D. R. & Co. SE 3C 524	1927 12	1949 08	S SOLD B I S. CO. AND SCRAPPED AT MILFORD HAVEN
218	OBSERVER	1	149695	5861	SS	Connell	Glasgow	1928	D. R. & Co. SE 3C 524	1928 02	1942 12	H SUNK b.e.a. (U176) OFF BRAZIL 18/2
219	LOGICIAN	2	149678	5893	SS	C. L. & Co.	Birkenhead	1928	C. L. & Co. SE 3C 524	1928 06	1941 05	H SUNK b.e.a. (BOMBED) AT CRETE. 25/5
220	CUSTODIAN	2	149692	5881	SS	Connell	Glasgow	1928	D. R. & Co. SE 3C 524	1928 07	1950 09	S SOLD IN S.S. CO. CALCUTTA SCRAPPED 1950
221	TACTICIAN	2	149693	5998	SS	C. L. & Co.	Birkenhead	1928	C. L. & Co. SE 3C 524	1928 07	1950 09	S SOLD HANSA LINE. BOMBAY. SCRAPPED 1950 @ OSAKA
222	DESIGNER	1	161002	5045	SS	Henderson	Glasgow	1928	Henderson SE 3C 524	1928 08	1941 07	H SUNK b.e.a. (U98) N. OF THE AZORES. 8/07
223	COMEDIAN	3	191119	5122	SS	Connell	Glasgow	1928	D. R. & Co. SE 3C 485	1928 10	1950 10	S SOLD IN S.S. CO. CALCUTTA SCRAPPED 1950 @ HONG KONG
224	CONTRACTOR	2	162220	8004	SS	C. L. & Co.	Birkenhead	1930	C. L. & Co. SE 3C 524	1930 07	1943 08	H SUNK b.e.a. (U371) OFF BONE. 7/8
225	RECORDER	1	162225	5982	SS	C. L. & Co.	Birkenhead	1930	C. L. & Co. SE 3C 524	1930 08	1950 05	S SOLD F.M.T. HONG KONG. SCRAPPED TAWAN 1971
226	DAKARIN	3	145891	8426	SS	Henderson	Glasgow	1921	Henderson SE 4C 825	1933 12	1939 05	S F.L. SOLD BEN LINE. LEITH. SCRAPPED JAPAN 1956
227	DARIAN	1	145975	6434	SS	Henderson	Glasgow	1922	Henderson SE 4C 825	1934 01	1939 05	S F.L. SOLD BEN LINE. LEITH. SUNK b.e.a. (U105) 13/5/41
228	DAYTONIAN	1	145984	6434	SS	Henderson	Glasgow	1922	Henderson SE 4C 825	1934 02	1942 03	H F.L. SUNK b.e.a. (ITALIAN SUB.) ENRICO TAZZOLI 13/3
229	DAVISIAN	1	147200	6433	SS	Henderson	Glasgow	1923	Henderson SE 4C 825	1934 01	1940 07	H F.L. SUNK b.e.a. (WIDDER) 10/7
232	ATLANTIAN	1	149696	8549	SS	Caledon	Dundee	1928	Caledon SE 4C 515	1934 04	1951 08	S F.L. SOLD MIKKO KOBE. SCRAPPED 1964
233	MERCHANT	3	162411	4572	SS	Lithgow's	Port Glasgow	1934	R. & B. SE 3C 477	1934 09	1941 12	H SUNK b.e.a. (MINED) OFF YARMOUTH. 24/2
234	EXPLORER	3	164257	6236	SS	S.H. & W.R.	Wallsend	1935	W.S. & E. SE 3C 588	1935 05	1957 12	S SOLD PAN O. HONG KONG. 9/12. SCRAPPED 1959
235	CRAFTSMAN	3	146553	7896	SS	Furness	Haverford	1922	J. B. & Co. STS 2T 977	1935 05	1941 04	H F.W. SUNK b.e.a. (KORMORANT). ATLANTIC. 8/4
236	COLLEGIAN	3	146693	7886	SS	Furness	Haverford	1923	R. W. & Co. STS 2T 1012	1935 05	1947 12	S F.W. SOLD B I S. CO. SCRAPPED AT MILFORD HAVEN
237	STATESMAN	4	147743	7939	SS	Furness	Haverford	1923	J. B. & Co. STS 2T 1012	1935 05	1941 05	H F.W. SUNK b.e.a. (BOMBED) AT ATLANTIC 17/5
238	POLITICIAN	2	147482	7940	SS	Furness	Haverford	1923	J. B. & Co. STS 2T 1012	1935 05	1941 02	W F.W. WRECKED ON ERISKAY. 5/2
239	INVENTOR	3	164267	6210	SS	Henderson	Glasgow	1935	Henderson SE 3C 587	1935 09	1960 08	S SOLD TO V.H.F. GHEENT. TO BE SCRAPPED
240	INKKSI	2	164325	6818	SS	S.H. & W.R.	Wallsend	1937	W.S. & E. SE 4C 835	1937 06	1940 09	H SUNK b.e.a. (BOMBED) AND SALVAGED (SEE 253, 264)
241	TRIBESMAN	1	164341	6242	SS	Lithgow's	Port Glasgow	1937	D. R. & Co. SE 3C 582	1937 09	1940 12	H SUNK b.e.a. (ADMIRAL SCHEER). N. ATLANTIC 17/2
242	STRATEGIST	1	164348	6255	SS	Lithgow's	Port Glasgow	1937	D. R. & Co. SE 3C 582	1937 11	1950 07	S SOLD HANSA LINE. BREMEN. SCRAPPED 1963
243	SCIENTIST	2	168247	6199	SS	Lithgow's	Port Glasgow	1938	D. R. & Co. SE 3C 886	1938 08	1940 05	H SUNK b.e.a. (ATLANTIS) S. ATLANTIC. 3/5

TOTAL: 45 SHIPS

275,625 G.T

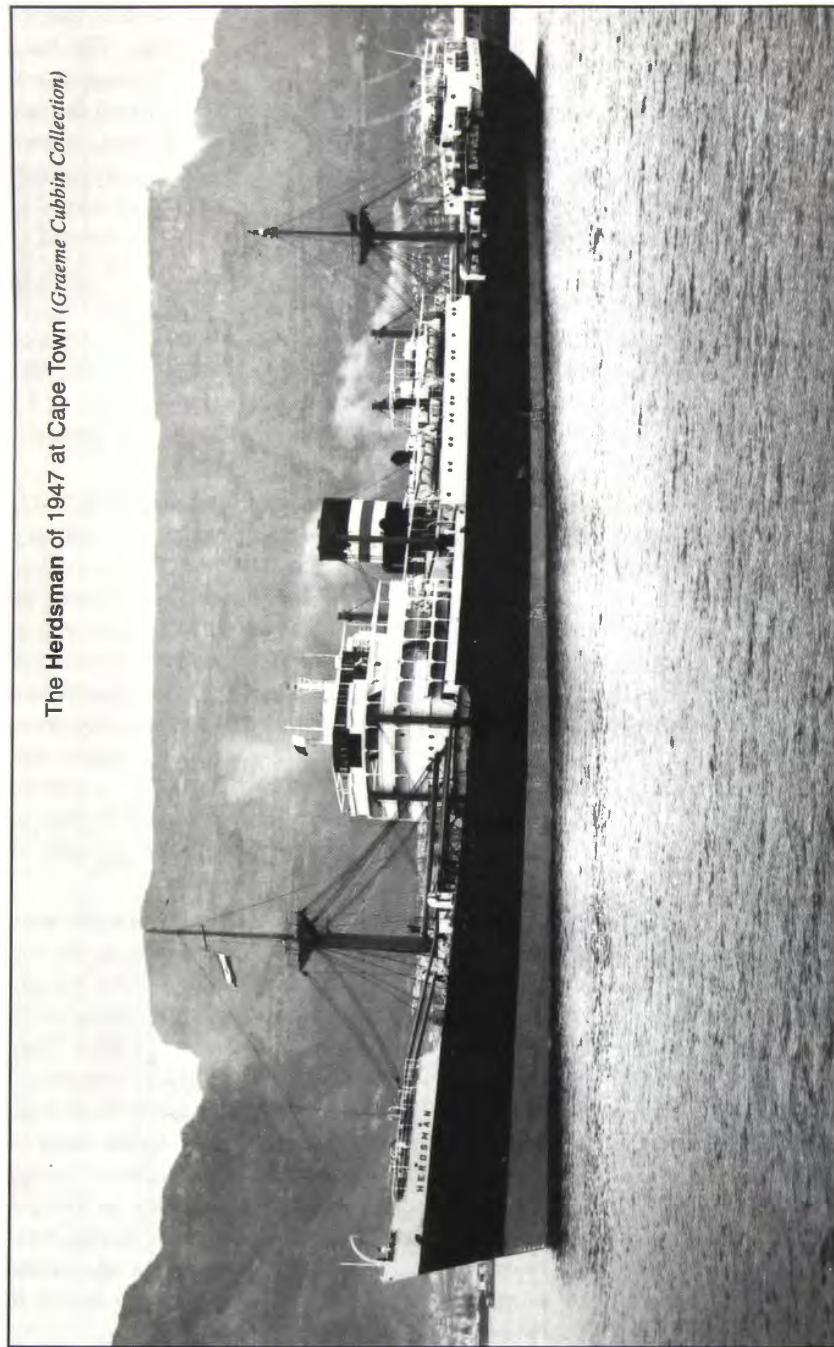
shattered cities and infrastructure of a war-torn Europe, bestowed on former allies and enemies alike, seldom receives the acclaim it is due. The fund amounted to \$13,140 million, of which Britain received a generous share. Without such funding, the nations of Europe could not have purchased the raw materials needed for re-building, or new machinery for ruined factories, or even food for their starving peoples. Of course, some 70% of the desperately needed goods and material would be purchased in the United States, and this served to boost the American economy as well. Naturally, ships were in great demand to shift these commodities around the world, and Harrisons were not slow in bidding for a share in these cargoes.

Meanwhile, by late 1949, six fine modern vessels had slid down the ways of the Clyde and Wear to join the Harrison fleet, swelling it to 40 ships of 266,600 gross tons, but it would be 1955 before the fleet reached a post-war peak of 43 ships (307,498 gross tons). Thereafter it reduced slowly, but gathered momentum in the 1970s.

Harrison's first new-building after the War was the **Herdsmen** (6,822/47) launched from Doxford's yard on the Wear, and delivered on 16th January 1947. She was also Harrison's first motor-ship, her 5-cylinder Doxford diesel engine giving a service speed of 14 knots. The **Herdsmen** was soon joined by her sisters, the **Interpreter** (6,815/48) and the **Factor** (6,532/48), the latter built by Connells of Glasgow, and her Doxford engines being installed under licence by Barclay Curle. But steamers were not yet discarded, for the **Craftsman** (6,726/47) and the **Linguist** (6,736/47), launched on the Clyde, appeared about the same time; and the **Biographer** (6,915/49) represented a final flirtation with steam turbines. Harrison's last two steamers, the **Crofter** (8,377/51) and the **Forester** (8,377/52) were built four years later by John Readhead & Sons of South Shields. Thereafter the oil engine was king, mainly on grounds of economy.

However, most of the new ships (the **Crofter** and the **Forester** were exceptions) were similar in design and outward appearance to their pre-war sisters. But big changes were on the way, largely inspired by Mr Pat Wilson, who later became Chairman of the Company. A new class of four motor-ships was launched by Doxfords in 1951, the **Astronomer** (8,150/51) class. They were designed with three holds forward, two aft, and all accommodation amidships. Heavy derricks lifting 50/70 tons were sited permanently at the main hatches, dispensing with the challenging *do it yourself* heavy derrick dumped on the foredeck just before the ship sailed. Eight more ships followed during the next seven years, each one incorporating improvements in design, equipment and accommodation. However, ships *which had everything* were becoming more and more expensive, and the £1 million price-tag was passed with the delivery of the **Administrator** (8,714/58) and her two sisters in 1958/59, each of which cost almost £1.2 million.

The Herdsman of 1947 at Cape Town (Graeme Cubbin Collection)



Nevertheless, the thirst for innovation and testing new concepts was not yet quenched, and in 1960 Harrisons emerged into the specialist heavy-lift sector with the delivery of the **Adventurer** (8,971/60), the first British vessel to be equipped with the German patented Stulcken derrick, capable of lifting 180 tons, ingeniously designed to serve either of the two main hatches.

Mr Wilson next turned his attention to the field of modern communications. For the first time, short-wave radio was installed in the ships; VHF radio telephones appeared in the wheelhouse; and an initiative culminating in the 70s and 80s with the introduction of telex machines and the INMARSAT satellite telecommunications system, which brought each ship "*only a phone call away*" of Head Office - was perhaps not an unmixed blessing!

New navigation systems were not ignored. DECCA positioning, auto-steering, and ultimately satellite navigators became essential aids. Only over the introduction of Radar did the Company seem to hesitate. After the War, Radar, which had hitherto been the exclusive preserve of H.M. ships, was swiftly developed for commercial use. Shipowners and ships' officers took to the new device with universal enthusiasam as the ultimate aid in collision avoidance and safe navigation. Harrisons, however, were most reluctant to invest too soon in this new panacea, being convinced that it would tend to lull the navigator into a false sense of security. Their doubts were soon vindicated when Courts throughout the land began hearing evidence of "radar-assisted collisions", a phenomenon induced by overconfidence in the medium, and misapprehension as to how to use the undoubtedly useful information it provided. Not until 1959 did Radar begin to appear in Harrison ships, and only then after all masters and navigating officers had had a thorough training in its use.

One of the most difficult tasks faced by the Company in the post-war world was regaining a foothold in the old trading patterns and opening up new ones in the face of fierce competition - not only from old established maritime nations and companies, but from newly established national lines, usually subsidised by the U.N. and the World Bank. For example, Harrisons had been a member of the Calcutta Conference since its inception in 1875, but by the 1950s several factors had arisen which persuaded the Board that it was time to leave.⁵ Long delays became endemic and it soon became clear (though hardly surprising) that Indian National Lines, newly inducted into the Conference, were receiving preferential treatment in the allocation of ships, berths and cargoes. Meanwhile, various dubious practices arose with which Harrisons could not agree. Thus, in 1955, Harrisons decided to leave Calcutta, selling their berthing rights, goodwill, and other interests to Brocklebanks for £250,000.⁶ The final Harrison sailing from Vittoria Wharf, Birkenhead, to Calcutta was taken by the **Inventor** (6,210/35) on 25th May 1957, and the Calcutta run ceased to be a way of life to many.

Another traditional link was broken in 1955 when Harrisons relinquished their berthing rights in the Charente brandy trade to Moss Hutchison & Co.Ltd. For twenty years, ever since the last brandy boat, the **Cognac** (814/02) went to the breaker's yard in 1935, Harrison cargoes from the region had been carried in chartered tonnage.

Meanwhile, other trades, mainly to the west, were booming. Development of new oil-fields in Venezuela and modern refineries in Trinidad led to the export of pipes and heavy equipment in vast quantities from British factories. Demand for cotton for the mills of Lancashire stimulated trade from the United States Gulf ports. South and East Africa, rich in minerals and raw materials, needed imports of machinery and manufactured goods. Competition would eventually become savage, especially from newly established National Shipping Companies and the Soviet *bloc*. But at this period there were plenty of trading opportunities for all.

Facilities at Liverpool's Brunswick Dock, Harrison's citadel in the South End for nearly 80 years, were becoming increasingly inadequate for the new generation of ships, and the need for a move north became urgent. Permission to develop a site at South Canada 2 Branch Dock was granted by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board⁷, and on 2nd December 1963 the **Adventurer** (8,971/60) became the first vessel to occupy the new berth.

This period was not without incidents involving damage and tragedy. The loss of the **Geologist** (6,202/44) off Trinidad, sunk in a collision with the Liberian-registered **Sunprincess** (5,221/43) on 13th July 1955 was certainly the most traumatic, with the loss of twenty lives out of a crew of forty-two. The subsequent inquiry found the improper navigation of the **Sunprincess** entirely to blame - a blatant case, as it turned out, of maritime drink driving - if ever there was one.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the Board of Harrison Directors could see virtue in diverting capital, not only into shipping related concerns such as Prentice, Service & Henderson of Glasgow in 1959⁸, Thomas Tweddle & Co. Ltd., Consular Agents of Liverpool, in 1970⁹, and S.C. Chambers & Co.Ltd., Sale & Purchase Brokers of Liverpool, in 1983¹⁰; but also in such diverse enterprises as Insurance, Home Furnishing, and North Sea Oil.

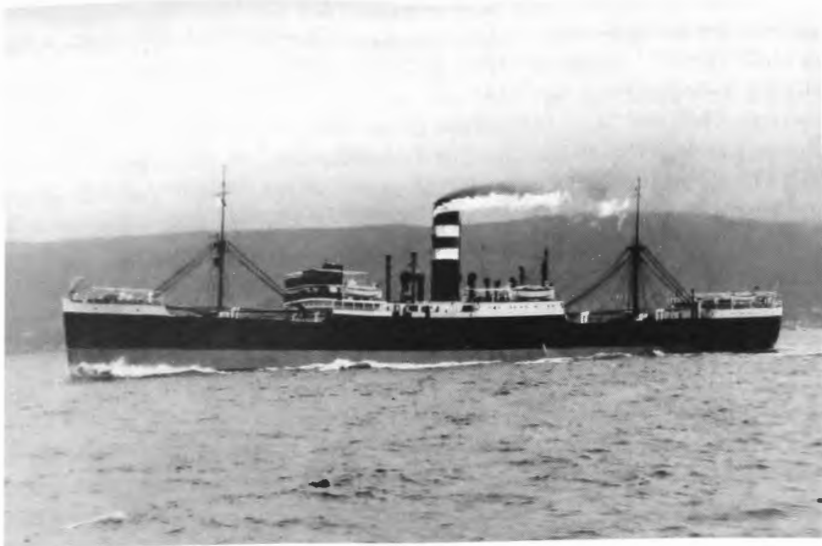
In an effort to reduce taxation liabilities, Harrisons even ventured into the flags of convenience controversy of the 1950s. The splendid new motor- ships, **Administrator** and **Author** were assigned to a new company, the Ruthin Steamship Co. Ltd., with offices registered in Hamilton, Bermuda. However the ships were immediately bare-boat chartered to Harrisons, continued to fly the red ensign, and were registered in Liverpool. This expedient was short-lived, however, and after a few years the ships reverted to the Charente Steamship Co. Ltd.

An important shift of policy in the 1970s led to a carefully premeditated venture into the bulk-carrying business, to offset anticipated difficulties in the old Liner trades. Cargoes anywhere in the world would be accepted, wherever a charter was on offer at the Baltic Exchange. In 1973 three handy-sized bulk-carriers, each one at 27,000 tonnes deadweight, were launched at Shimizu, Japan, and delivered to the Charente Steamship Co. Ltd. These were followed in 1975 by two Panamax bulk-carriers at 61,000 deadweight tonnes from the yards of Burmeister & Wain, Copenhagen.

Meanwhile, the container revolution had long been in motion, and purpose-built cellular container ships were steadily infiltrating the traditional trades and services developed by conventional shipping. Harrisons and others countered this competition at first by unitisation and palletisation; the technique of loading bags, drums or cases *etc* onto pallets at the point of origin, and transporting them, often ready slung, to the docks and on to foreign ports. This was effective for a time, but eventually, in 1963, Harrisons were compelled to adopt a form of containerisation by shipping containers into their conventional ships. This was not always a success, since the problems attendant on winging out boxes into the tween-decks, with no adequate means of securing them, often led to damage and delays.

The only answer was to meet the competition head-on by acquiring outrageously expensive, purpose-built, cellular container ships. And that was just the beginning for terminals had to be built to accommodate them, and if that was impossible, then the ship had to carry a sophisticated 40-tonne gantry-crane to handle the containers. All this involved a tremendous outlay of capital, and Harrisons were obliged to do as others had done before them: develop a working relationship with former rivals in an attempt to reduce costs, yet still maintaining an element of competition in marketing. Thus, in the mid-1970s, Caribbean Overseas Lines (CAROL), an international consortium of four former antagonists in the West Indies trades - Hapag Lloyd of Germany, KNSM of Holland, CGM of France and Harrisons UK - was established. Six identical container ships, each costing almost £10 million, were ordered from the Polish state shipbuilders, Stocznia Gdansk, of which two, the **Astronomer** and **Adviser** (27,868/77), would be operated and manned by Harrisons, two by the Germans, and one each by the French and the Dutch. Since most West Indian ports were ill-adapted for container handling, each ship would carry its own mobile gantry-crane, capable of lifting 40 tonnes, built by Liebherr of Germany. The first CAROL sailing fell to Hapag Lloyd's **Caribia Express** in December 1976, followed by Harrison's **Astronomer** in February 1977.

A similar process was adopted in the South African trade, but here Harrison's share was more restricted. However, in 1975, they joined forces with Ellerman Lines, investing in a single container ship, the **City of Durban** (53,790/78), in which Harrisons held about one third of the equity and Ellermans about two-thirds. Manning would be provided by both companies on



The **Scientist** of 1938 (*Graeme Cubbin Collection*)



The heavy-lift vessel **Adventurer** of 1960 (*Harrison Line*)

a rota system. Thus the Ellerman-Harrison Container Line (EHCL) was born, destined to operate in the wider consortium of ten international companies which comprised the South Africa Europe Container Service (SAECS). Since 1983, Ellerman's share of the equity had passed through several hands, and eventually rested with P. & O. Ltd. Harrisons retained their 22/64ths share in the ageing vessel until 31st July, 1998, when it was sold to P. & O. Nedlloyd Ltd., thus severing the Company's last link with South Africa after almost a century of regular trading.

By the beginning of 1977, Harrison's fleet, which had been declining slowly since 1955, had been reduced to 27 ships of 294,000 gross tons, viz: 7 heavy-lift ships, 5 bulkers and 15 dry cargo ships of conventional type. These were soon to be joined by the new container ships, but the attrition within the conventional fleet was soon to accelerate. That year, five of the Swedish-built ships were sold to the People's Republic of China, and the remaining two were sold to Singapore in 1980. Thereafter, the run-down in conventional and even the heavy-lift class, gathered momentum. The **Benefactor** (11,299/72), the last of the tween-deck tonnage, was sold to Wallems of Panama in April 1982, while the specialist heavy-lift ship **Craftsman** soldiered on until February 1987 when she was sold to Cyprus. Naturally, this wholesale disposal of ships led to a spate of redundancies among anxiety-ridden employees. Ironically, the early 1970s had been notable for an acute shortage of deck and engineer officers. Many instances arose of senior cadets shipping away as uncertificated third mates; ships often left the dock only to anchor in the river while superintendents scoured the countryside for officers who were perhaps on holiday, almost begging them to return to Liverpool to complete the manning requirements and enable a ship to sail!

Many and varied were the incentives dreamed up at that time by employers, goaded by the unions, to stem the drift from a career at sea. The cost of training a navigating or engineer officer was estimated at £10,000. When the trainee qualified and a year or two later left the industry (usually at the insistence of a new young wife), it was just so much money down the scuppers.¹¹ In addition to the obvious incentives of improved salary scales and extra leave, more imaginative inducements were on offer. For instance, the post-war concession of "*two beers per man per day*" was superseded by the installation of fully equipped bars; film projectors were installed and a film library organised at a cost to the Company of £60,000 per year¹², until supplanted by video-recorders. The strict injunction against the presence of women on board was swept aside, and masters and senior officers found that they could take their wives away to sea with them with the Company's blessing. This welcome concession was later extended to include all officers' and petty officers' wives, and even small children were permitted to accompany their parents.

However, the bubble was about to burst and a series of strikes in 1978/79 culminating in the so-called winter of discontent precipitated the sale of more

ships, prompting redundancies on a large scale. To their credit, Harrisons had held out longer than most shipping companies before laying off staff, but in the summer of 1979 the axe fell, and 118 sea-going staff received notices of redundancy.

The shore-based labour force - stevedores, fitters and office staff - were also hit and to alleviate the consequences, an organisation funded by the Company and known as Harrison Care, was established to provide work mainly for those with engineering skills in yards and workshops at home and abroad¹³. In September 1980, Harrisons closed down the Company's stevedoring operation at Canada Dock, and the dock office was abandoned. The seamen's strike of 1981, when ships in home ports and abroad were halted for many weeks, only made an intolerable situation worse. In the Spring of that year, Harrisons sold the **Inventor** (9,171/64), **Magician** (8,454/68) and **Historian** (8,454/68) as a direct result of the losses inflicted by this ill-considered action¹⁴. In December 1983, Harrisons arranged for most of their remaining sea-staff to sign off-shore contracts with Denholm's Shipping and Ship Management Group (though an exception was made in the case of those manning the container ships). Those who declined were reluctantly made redundant. Thereafter, Harrison vessels requiring crews would apply to Denholm's. Although salaries were enhanced, individuals would become responsible for their own pension, insurance and tax arrangements. They became, in fact, virtually self-employed.

These changes were necessary in order to try and redress the fiscal burden which was a severe handicap to many British shipping companies. It would appear that the then Chancellor, Nigel Lawson, regarded national market forces as an acceptable stimulus to the conduct of business, so therefore he and the Government chose also to disregard international forces weighted against British competition. These included the tax advantages offered to shipping companies by other European Governments, and the significantly lower operating costs enjoyed by the emerging Companies in the Far East.

In the midst of all this turmoil, the Falklands War of 1982 was fought and won. Harrison's contribution was the container-ship **Astronomer**, a ship taken up from trade (or STUFT, as the M.o.D. elegantly described it) in May, to replace the ill-fated **Atlantic Conveyor**, sunk by the Argentine Air Force. The **Astronomer's** valuable contribution to Operation Corporate, and the warm-hearted tributes made on her behalf by the servicemen who took full advantage of the facilities she offered, is a story in itself, shedding a ray of bright sunshine upon an otherwise difficult and anxious shipping scene.

It has already been noted how shipping companies had taken to operating within international consortia to reduce costs. Another expedient was to hire space in ships chartered by the organisations. SAGUMEX (South Atlantic Gulf and Mexico Line), inaugurated in 1980, was an example of one such arrangement involving Harrisons, but not their ships. A victim of this and

similar ventures was Harrison's conventional liner service to U.S. Gulf ports. This now came to a close after 120 years of regular trading, and close personal links were regretfully broken. Meanwhile, a new service known as Euro-Caribe had been inaugurated in 1982, with sailings from north-west Europe to the Spanish Main and Central America, operated by ships chartered in by the CAROL partners, each partner being allocated a number of slots.

Around this time, the Company, like many others, began to look once again at the advantages of 'flagging-out'. An early venture into this realm with the Ruthin Steamship Company of Bermuda had long been abandoned, but now matters were more pressing. The British Government's reluctance to grant reasonable tax concessions to beleaguered shipowners made 'flagging-out' an attractive proposition. In 1973, when the three bulk-carriers were delivered to the Charente Steamship Company Ltd., they joined a consortium trading under the style of Atlantic Bulk. This consisted of a fleet of twelve bulkers belonging to different owners, the whole managed by Denholm Coates. In 1982, Harrisons purchased the Blairdale Shipping Co. Ltd., Hong Kong, from Charles Connell. It comprised two bulk-carriers, the **Lamma Forest** (18,604/77) and the **Lantau Trader** (17,396/78). These were sold in 1990 and 1995 respectively, and the name Blairdale virtually disappeared. This was a rather covert enterprise, and in the interests of anonymity Harrison's familiar livery was abandoned in favour of a green hull surmounted by a *funnel vert emblazoned with an escutcheon gules bearing a device "B" blanc*, (with apologies to the College of Arms!)

In 1984, in what seemed a more confident mood, Harrisons took delivery of two new bulk-carriers of 35,000 tonnes deadweight from the NKKK yard at Shimizu, Japan, the **Pisces Pioneer** and the **Pisces Planter** (21,309/84). They formed the nucleus of yet another Hong Kong company, Crossfish Ltd. Here, also, a new guise was considered appropriate. The zodiacal name Pisces preceded the traditional Harrison name; and the black funnel was emblazoned with a white circle on which was painted in red, back to back, a pair of cetacean mammals of indeterminate species. By 1988 only two out of seven Harrison ships sailed under the red ensign, the **Author** and the **Adviser**. In December 1988, both these ships were transferred to the Douglas, Isle of Man, Register, and their crews to Denholm's Off-Shore Agency. The final break with tradition occurred in January 1989 when, for the first time in its long history, the Charente Steamship Co. Ltd. was reduced to two vessels registered in the Isle of Man, and no sea-going staff whatsoever.

Meanwhile, the Company continued to diversify its investments. In 1985, Harrisons acquired the Liverpool chart specialists Dubois, Phillips & McCallum Ltd., and in 1988 they purchased a quarter of the shares in a chemical tanker, the **Multitank Catania** (1,599/83) and a liquefied gas carrier, the **Elbegas** (5,958/83); both operated and managed by C.F. Ahrenkiel of Germany.

In June 1989, shipowners and port operators derived some relief when a Bill to abolish the National Dock Labour Scheme, which had done so much to foster restrictive practices and frustrate the efforts of port managers and ship operators to provide an efficient service, became law. But much of the damage had already been done and was compounded by a spate of strikes within those ports to which the old scheme had applied. But there were other ports where the writ of the NDLS had never applied, and to these ports cargoes and ships were diverted at considerable financial cost, but said to be *well worth it*.¹⁵

Something like the revival of the old passenger service to the West Indies occurred in 1990 when the container ships **Author** (23,032/81) and **Adviser** were fitted out to carry six passengers, each in luxurious style. The fare was in the region of £3,000 for the round voyage, and proved extremely popular with berths fully subscribed for twelve months ahead.

Throughout the many turbulent years of their existence, Harrisons' home port had always been Liverpool. However, nothing is permanent in a changing world and at 0125hrs on 11th May 1993 a melancholy fact was recorded when the **Author** cleared Gladstone Lock for the last time, bound for Puerto Rico, becoming the last Harrison ship in a regular Liner service to use the Port of Liverpool. Henceforth, the rapidly developing port of Felixstowe would be CAROL's main container-base in the United Kingdom. However, certain bulk-carriers have visited Liverpool on occasion, but with a rarity reminiscent of a comet from outer space, though less predictably!

On 1st October 1995, Harrisons became general agents in the U.K. and the Irish Republic for the French Line's (CGM) Western services. Known affectionately as CLARA (Caribbean & Latin American Rationalisation Agency), the new organisation moved into Harrison's ground-floor office in Mersey Chambers amid great upheaval and a leavening of French personnel. The arrangement ran for just over two years until C.G.M. was privatised. But an important liaison with CGM still remains, and Harrisons continue to be their general agents in the U.K. and Ireland. In 1996, with the Chinese take-over of Hong Kong becoming imminent, Harrison's remaining four bulk-carriers were transferred to the Isle of Man Register.

Another joint initiative was launched by Harrisons and the Bibby Line on 1st October 1997; two old traditional Liverpool firms in harness together. A new company was formed in equal partnership, Bibby-Harrison Management Services Ltd., aiming to manage ships and marine installations of all types, from gas-carriers to off-shore oil platforms. Both Companies have been awarded the coveted International Safety Management (ISM) Code, and it is towards those companies which have been less fortunate in this respect that their activities will be directed with a view to obtaining the essential Safety Management Certificate for their assigned vessels. The headquarters of the new Company is located at Bibby's head office in Duke Street, Liverpool, and the

unexpected evacuation of all personnel from Harrison's Fleet Management, Marine and Engineering Departments to Duke Street has left a void which will not easily be filled.

Harrisons most recent initiative took place in mid-July of this year (1998). A deal was concluded in which Harrisons took over the Martin Bencher Companies from Alpha Forwarding Limited. This is a significant development in the Group's forwarding activities, and represents another diversification to offset the weak profits prevalent at present in Liner shipping. The Charente Steamship Co. has now established a first class forwarding operation in the South East, which will complement Tweddles' activities in the North and the Midlands, and those of Prentice, Fraser Ltd., the Group's Scottish subsidiary, which recently acquired from Currie Line the large warehousing and distribution facilities at Grangemouth, thus weaving a network which extends nation-wide.¹⁶

Today, although much leaner (some would say almost to the point of emaciation), the independent Company which bears the Victorian style of "Thos. & Jas. Harrison, Ltd", a bright gleam glowing amid the welter of acronymic insignia which litter so many industries to the confusion of the public, still owns a small fleet of bulk-carriers, and operates in benign partnership with a number of national and international consortia. The present Chairman of the Group, Sir Thomas Pilkington, is the great-great-grandson of Thomas Harrison, the originator and founder, while various Harrisons, Hugheses and Williamsons, whose ancestors built up the Company, still feature in the list of shareholders. Daunting challenges arise on an almost daily basis, but like their stoutly built ships in a heavy seaway, the Company rises to meet them in its own inimitable fashion, maintaining the struggle until a safe haven is reached - wherever that may be. ■

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The bulk-carrier **Wanderer** of 1973 (*Harrison Line*)

THE PORT OF LIVERPOOL AND THE SINGLE EUROPEAN MARKET

A RE-ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF BRITAIN'S MEMBERSHIP OF THE EUROPEAN UNION UPON THE FORTUNES OF THE PORT OF LIVERPOOL

by John Moore

This article is a shortened version of a postgraduate thesis submitted to Lancaster University in 1997 for a Master of Arts Degree in European Union Studies.

The Port of Liverpool, the largest seaport of the 19th and early 20th centuries and second city of the Empire, had, despite the loss of Britain's status as a leading industrial nation and the ravages of two World Wars, still managed to retain its position as a major world port in an era of conventional cargo shipping. By the 1960s however, even Liverpool's position amongst other British ports had begun to decline. Although second only to the Port of London in 1970, by 1984 the South and East coast ports of Dover and Felixstowe had surpassed Liverpool in terms of overall tonnage. Traditionally the consensus of opinion regarding Liverpool's decline during this period has centred around two main developments.

Firstly, technological change in the form of containerisation which rendered large parts of the port's enclosed finger dock system effectively obsolete and, secondly, Britain's decision to join the European Economic Community in 1973 which produced a massive reorientation of trade towards Continental Europe. Other factors, such as the financial collapse of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board in the early 1970s, and the poor state of labour relations throughout this period, also contributed to the port's decline. Economists such as P.J.M. Stoney, writing in the early 1980s, concluded that Liverpool had lost trade "*to other ports both in Britain and Europe, and particularly to the latter, as a result of entry into the European Economic Community by the United Kingdom in the early 1970s*".¹ However, by 1991, overall tonnage through the port had doubled, "*with E.E.C. traffic quadrupling in value to almost 40% of Liverpool's total and nearly trebling in volume*".²

What is perhaps remarkable about the latter statistic is that it was recorded at least three years before the opening of the Channel Tunnel and the subsequent development of Liverpool's Euro Rail Terminal at the Royal Seaforth Dock. By 1996, Liverpool was handling more than 30 million tonnes of cargo for the first time in its entire history. During 1997 the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company's turnover rose to £168.5 million (from £149.7 million the previous year), recording a pre-tax profit of £48 million. Given, therefore,

the many economic variants impacting on any given industry in a particular geographical area, it is inevitably an enormous task to confidently identify a correlation between the growth and recovery of the Port of Liverpool, and the advent of the Single European Market.

However, there may now be a strong case to argue that the Single European Act, in the form of the Structural Funds, (along with a plethora of further E.U. initiatives) has greatly boosted the port's ability to capitalise upon its share of Irish Sea trade and has, once and for all, provided the port with an opportunity to become a large and important European hub port. There is now growing evidence to suggest that the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company has greatly benefited from being at the epicentre of three regions which are all in receipt of major European structural funding initiatives, namely the Irish Republic, Northern Ireland and Merseyside itself. With regard to the European Single Market, all of these regions are suffering from the adverse economic effects of peripherality. One of the priorities of this type of funding is to therefore reduce the peripherality of any given region by *"the improvement of freight and passenger transport links by land, sea and air."*³

The new influx of predominantly Irish Sea trade has, for example, been greatly stimulated by E.U. funding in the Republic of Ireland. In terms of structural assistance to certain regions, Europe's poor four (Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Greece) together account for over one third of the total annual E.U. budget of £71 billion. Ireland (Europe's Celtic Tiger) now has the fastest growing economy in Europe. *"A strong plank of this economic growth has been the inflow of European Union Funds which have been used to improve the country's infrastructure."*⁴

One such partly funded E.U. infrastructure project involved the development of a twelve acre site in the Port of Dublin into a major container facility for the Coastal Container Line (a subsidiary of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company). This project, in collaboration with the Department of Marine, Dublin Port and the E.U. provides a new container stacking area, refurbished gantry cranes and the expansion of quayside facilities. The project was primarily designed for the future expansion of Irish/U.K. trade. Similarly, Coastal's position on the Irish Sea corridor was strengthened by the establishment in June 1997 of a half-mile long direct rail link between the Company's Dublin terminal and the Irish National Rail Network. Developed at a cost of £1.7 million (by Dublin Port, Irish Rail and the E.U.), the rail link provides nightly container services from Cork and the West Coast of Ireland to mainland Europe via Liverpool's Euro Rail Terminal and the Channel Tunnel.

Likewise, in Belfast, during the early part of 1994 Coastal's Victoria 3 Container Terminal was officially opened at an overall cost of £30 million. The project was developed with the assistance of E.U. Objective One funding and the financial backing of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company. Hence, the

Mersey Docks and Harbour Company now operates "*the most modern container terminals on either side of the Irish Sea.*"⁵ By 1996, the number of containers moved between Coastal's three terminals (Dublin, Belfast and Liverpool's Seaforth Dock) had hit a record level of 135,000 units. These developments have also stimulated further initiatives designed to boost this new triangular trade. A vessel-sharing agreement with the Irish Continental Group resulted in the transfer of its EUCON Container Shipping Division to Seaforth from Ellesmere Port, and Railfreight Distribution's Southern Irish Service now operates from Liverpool instead of Holyhead.

During 1996, Coastal also acquired the B.G. Freight Line to enhance its European dimension. This acquisition, combined with the vessel-sharing agreement with Irish Continental, has allowed the M.D. & H.C. to dovetail its operations and to increase the level of Continental trade into Liverpool. Complementary services such as these provide circular routing of containers, and this is seen as an essential pre-requisite for the development of Liverpool into a major hub port. For these reasons, Coastal now operates Liverpool's Euro Rail Terminal.

With annual cross-Channel freight figures expected to rise to over seven million tonnes, Seaforth's Euro Rail Terminal was designed to capitalise on Channel Tunnel freight traffic. Due to this facility, developed with the assistance of a £5 million grant from the European Regional Development Fund, Liverpool now has the potential to establish itself as a load centre port with containers being transhipped to Liverpool from feeder vessels. In this sense, "*Liverpool's historical rôle and geographical position is being rekindled by the development of the Single Market which has the potential to turn Liverpool into a major European gateway.*"⁶ Another partly funded E.U. project lying within the Liverpool dock system, and perhaps one of the most important, was the £4.6 million project to replace one of the three Langton Lock gates. The new caisson reduces the time it takes for the largest ships to enter or leave the enclosed dock estate from one hour to just seventeen minutes.

An integral part of the growth of the Port of Liverpool has been the success of its Freeport Zone. Officially opened on 29th November 1984, it handled over £21 million worth of goods in its first year. By 1997 this had risen to £2 billion, making the Liverpool Freeport by far the most successful of the five freeport zones established by the U.K. Government. The success of the scheme lies in the fact that cargo stored in the zone is exempt from duty and V.A.T., and that on-site cargo is not at the mercy of levies and quota restrictions. However, following talks with the European Commission, an extra statutory class concession was introduced which eliminated the need for a purchasing company to pay supply V.A.T. charges. This latest concession "*added to the flexibility offered to international companies using the Freeport to supply U.K. and European markets.*"⁷ The success of Liverpool's Freeport Zone was consolidated by the decision to site the Channel Tunnel Rail Terminal at

Seaforth, at the expense of the established Freightliner Terminal at Garston. This decision has helped to establish Liverpool as a centre of international distribution as well as attracting an influx of new shipping services into the port.

During 1992, Liverpool's Freeport Zone was extended by 120 acres to include part of Birkenhead docks between Bidston and Wallasey. The project centred around the construction of three large industrial units which expanded the Freeport Zone project to over 800 acres overall. This development was partly funded by the Department of Trade and Industry, the Merseyside Task Force and the M.D. & H.C. which matched the £1.746 million grant from the European Regional Development Fund. Overall, the Freeport Zone has been highly successful in attracting some of the most important port-related industries currently involved in Irish Sea trade. During 1995, Irish Express Cargo Ltd (the country's largest freight forwarding and distribution company), established its European base in a 20,000 sq.ft. commercial unit at the Freeport complex.

The strength of the Irish economy and the beneficial attractions provided by a direct rail link to the Channel Tunnel has led to the proposed development of two roll-on/roll-off river berth container terminals at Trafalgar Dock, Liverpool, and the Twelve Quays site at Birkenhead at a combined cost of £35 million. These two new ferry terminals will allow two vessels to berth simultaneously in the Mersey without having to enter the port's enclosed dock system. Although not requiring E.U. funding, these projects nevertheless highlight the extent of the growth in Irish Sea trade, with both of these developments stemming from demands from shipping companies and the road haulage industry. In this sense, the Trafalgar Dock terminal is ideally placed for road freight traffic to access the M57, M58 and M62 motorways via Regent Road. Likewise, further improvements to this road network are planned under the Eurogateway project which is funded with £11 million of Merseyside Objective One European funding. This four year programme centres around improving access to Liverpool Docks by revamping the A5036 between Seaforth and the motorway network at Switch Island at Maghull.

Equally, as shipping companies using the country's congested road system have always been eager to reduce their overall road haulage costs, Liverpool's central geographical location has always been a key advantage over other ports. However, two pieces of European transport legislation in particular have greatly enhanced Liverpool's geographical position, so much so that the M.D. & H.C. regularly highlights the effects of these transport directives in its promotional literature. In the first instance, the introduction of E.U. tachograph legislation effectively means that *"more destinations can be reached from Liverpool in a truck driver's eight hour tachograph controlled working day than from any other port in the country."*⁸ Similarly, the introduction in 1994 of E.U. regulations designed to restrict the speed of commercial vehicles to 56mph has

also increased the significance of Liverpool's central geographical location. Similar initiatives designed to regulate the workings of the Single Market have also had a "*beneficial effect on trade passing through the Port of Liverpool.*"⁹ During 1995, the Mersey Port Health Authority was officially approved as a European Union Veterinary Checks Regime Border Post. The Port Health Authority, based at Pacific Chambers at Canada No.1 Dock, has traditionally been responsible for public health, conditions on ships and rodent control. Now, however, any projects of animal origin, from dairy produce, meat and egg products to items containing fish or honey, can only enter the Single Market through a designated E.U. Border Inspection Post. Its responsibilities also include the testing of local seafood through to the collection of seawater samples in order to comply with E.U. directives on water quality.

In the wider sphere, any re-assessment of the impact of British membership of the E.U. on the fortunes of the Port of Liverpool must inevitably take into account general trading patterns. In this sense, Liverpool (as a West Coast U.K. port) has undoubtedly lost trade to East Coast U.K. ports which directly face Northern Europe. However, "*For trades to the Iberian Peninsula and the Mediterranean, Liverpool is quite well placed.*"¹⁰ Therefore, due to Liverpool's close proximity to Europa Point, it has managed to retain substantial trading links with Southern E.U. countries. Spain, the largest recipient of European Regional Aid, now has a far better than average E.U. growth rate. There may be more than a good chance that the steady growth of the Spanish economy will soon be reflected (as is the case with Ireland) in more E.U. trade through Liverpool.

In deep sea trades, Liverpool (as the major port for trade with the Eastern Seaboard of America) has managed to retain and increase its trans- Atlantic trade. Indicative of the port's domination of this route and the pull of the Single Market was the decision of the R.H. Freight Group to establish its Atlantic Terminal at the Liverpool Intermodal Freeport Terminal (L.I.F.T.) This development forms part of the larger £20 million scheme to extend the total area of Liverpool's dock estate (by the closure of a section of the dock road) by 70 acres, and represents the largest private sector warehousing development in Europe. Similarly, the extension of the Dock Estate, coupled with the provision of in-river ferry berths and the scheme to increase Seaforth's container handling capacity by 30%, will allow for the future expansion of Irish Sea trade. These developments and their fusion with E.U. Regional Aid programmes taking place on the other side of the Irish Sea and on Merseyside will inevitably increase the three million tonnes of Irish Sea generated trade already passing through Liverpool.

The port's current healthy trading figures, its growing trade with E.U. member states and the increasing number of large firms attracted to the Freeport complex (through a desire to be closer to the Single Market) are beginning to provide the first pieces of tangible evidence to suggest that the

preconceptions of Britain's membership of the Community are beginning to change. In this sense, the status of E.U. membership as one of the two major factors in the port's decline during the 1970s may have to be downgraded to become a smaller ancillary factor, temporary in nature and being steadily reversed. As the Single Market grows, there are emerging the first real indications that the Port of Liverpool may yet emerge as the new "Gateway to Europe." ■

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LIVERPOOL UNDERWRITERS' SHIP-REGISTER BOOKS

1815 / 1835, 1842 / 1845, 1862/ 1885

by David Eccles

After the old Exchange Building which housed Liverpool Town Hall was destroyed by fire in 1795, Liverpool Underwriters transferred their meetings to the Exchange Coffee-house close by in Exchange Alley, where they formed Liverpool's first Commercial Association on 8th January 1802. Named The Liverpool Underwriters' Association (LUA), it rented office space at No.9 Exchange Alley (owned by Liverpool Corporation) until it moved into the East Wing of the new Exchange Building when it opened in 1809.

The Liverpool Underwriters' first ship-register was produced in 1815 when David Marshall (retained at £20 per annum to survey damaged goods) was paid an extra £50 to maintain a register of foreign vessels after they were surveyed by John Cummins, the Association's surveyor of damaged ships. Similar to the Green ship-register used in London by Lloyd's underwriters, it was available for members only until replaced by the publication of Lloyd's Register.

A British ship-register book was first introduced in London by a group of customers at Lloyd's Coffee House in 1760 with the publication of a green-backed register for underwriters' use, and it was followed in 1798 by a red-backed register compiled by London shipowners for their own use. In 1834 these two registers were amalgamated to form The Society of Lloyd's Register of British and Foreign Shipping, aimed at establishing rules of construction and to classify vessels A, E and I, according to their underwriting risk. A fee was charged for a vessel to be entered into the Lloyd's Register book after its survey by a master shipwright or mariner, who was employed to ensure that rules concerning size and type of timber were followed during the construction of new vessels. Machinery was not inspected, but an Act of Parliament decreed that steam boilers required survey every six months by a master engineer. The Lloyd's Register book, which contained information concerning a vessel's classification, name of master, owner and voyage description, was made available to subscribers throughout the country, including the Liverpool Underwriters' Association, from 1835.

Local concern was raised in 1841 when Lloyd's Register refused to classify Canadian built vessels purchased by Liverpool shipowners. This led an elected committee of Liverpool underwriters, shipowners and shipbuilders to establish **The Society of the Liverpool Registry Book of Shipping**, with Francis Littlejohn as secretary and William Perkins as ship surveyor. Using Lloyd's Rules as their standard, Canadian and other new vessels were surveyed for class

before entry into **The Liverpool Registry Book of Shipping**, which started publication in 1842. The Society surveyed ships for Liverpool owners until agreement was reached between the LUA and Lloyd's Register on 30th April 1845 to cease publication of the Liverpool Registry Book of Shipping, and to form a Liverpool Committee of Lloyd's Register. This Liverpool Committee consisted of six underwriters and six shipowners and was made responsible for all survey and business in the port, but it had to send copies of its reports and recommendations to London for consideration by a sub-committee before confirmation by the General Committee of Lloyd's Register. The apparently subordinate position accepted was due to the relative status of Liverpool and London with regard to **wooden vessels classed by Lloyd's**, as the Liverpool-owned North Atlantic passenger-mail steamers were built and surveyed to Board of Trade standard. In effect the Committee of the Society of the Liverpool Registry Book of Shipping never dissolved itself but continued to meet twice a week at No.7 Old Church Yard, with its secretary and surveyor employed by Lloyd's Register.

Iron vessels had been in service for over thirty years before Lloyd's Register established Lloyd's Rules for Iron Built Vessels' in 1855. Based on ships in service which had thick floors and shell plating, they allowed its highest class Aa1 to remain for twelve years, providing intermediate surveys proved 3/4 original plate thickness. The Liverpool Committee recommended that the Register Book should be altered to contain extra information concerning iron vessels, but this was ignored by the London Committee.

Lacking information in Lloyd's Register Book, the LUA engaged John Jordan, a Liverpool consulting engineer, to obtain extra information which was recorded in a private **Iron Vessel Book**, published in 1856. They later engaged him to survey vessels under construction before the issue of a Certificate of Ship Construction, after the Liverpool Shipowners' Association complained that Lloyd's Rules had not been suitably adapted for change from wood to iron ship construction. To appease Liverpool shipowners, Lloyd's Register obtained the assistance of John Jordan to modify its Rules for Iron Vessels' in 1857, but refused any alteration in its Register Book.

This did not satisfy the LUA which formed the **Liverpool Iron Register** in 1858. Managed by three underwriters, three shipowners, and the chairmen of the Liverpool Underwriters, the Liverpool Shipowners and the Liverpool Steamship Owners' Association, and with John Jordan as ship surveyor, its aim was to establish fresh rules for the construction of iron vessels based on dimensions. Lloyd's Rules had been inherited from wooden vessels and were based on cubic capacity.

In 1862 the Liverpool Iron Register committee was reformed to include half underwriters and the other half shipowners and shipbuilders to become the **Liverpool Underwriters' Registry for Iron Vessels** with shipbuilder Thomas

B. Royden appointed as chairman, and John Jordan as senior surveyor. It classed iron vessels (A+1) for twenty years, (A1) for eighteen years and (A) for sixteen years, with two years added if an extra bulkhead was fitted. The rules allowed a 10% reduction in weight of frames and shell plating, with an increase of 10% in the weight of the stringers and keelson over Lloyd's Register rules. By using wider shell plates, riveting was reduced, and a reduction of 2% in total weight of iron was claimed for a vessel built to the Liverpool rules.

Two registers were maintained - **Red** for ships built under survey which required a four-year periodic survey to maintain class, and **Black** for vessels already in service which required biennial survey. The cost of survey for a vessel on the Red register was sixpence a ton, and for the Black register it ranged from two guineas for a 200 ton vessel to a maximum of ten guineas for those above 1,500 tons. With surveyors located at Liverpool, Glasgow and Sunderland, the periodic survey undertaken in drydock cost one guinea. The first issue of the **Underwriters' List of Iron Vessels** which only included vessels classed Red and Black at Liverpool was published in 1862. Its format was designed by underwriters and included the vessel's dimensions. Due to easy communication between surveyors and Liverpool management, the Underwriters' Registry soon gained the confidence of shipowners from other ports, with the result that 138 vessels were classed in the first year, with many others building Liverpool Red.

By 1870, the Iron Registry, as it was known, was well established with four surveyors at Liverpool, four on the North East coast, two on the Clyde and one in London. The senior surveyor at each location possessed wide experience, and the Registry had attained a good reputation as its rules were more elastic than those of Lloyd's, the Committee favouring continuous as opposed to an expensive extensive survey. The Underwriters List of Iron Vessels was enlarged in 1870 by publishing information on all iron and composite vessels above 50 gross for which trustworthy information could be obtained, and information on unclassified vessels was being collected by the Committee for future inclusion.

After consultation with its Liverpool Committee, Lloyd's Register again modified its Rules for Iron Ships early in 1870 and amended its symbols to notate 100.A1 as the highest class. During a Spring tour of shipyards in the North East of England and Scotland, a Lloyd's visiting committee was told that if Lloyd's rules had not been modified earlier in the year, then very few ships would be building for them, as many Liverpool Red vessels were also constructed to Lloyd's rules for entry in both Registers.

At the request of the London Committee of Lloyd's Register, a meeting took place in Liverpool on 16th June 1870 between representatives of Lloyd's Register and the Iron Registry to discuss a merger. Agreement was formerly reached between them, but when representatives of the Liverpool Steamship Owners failed to turn up for a meeting in London the following day, it led to the

merger being rejected five months later at a full Lloyd's Committee meeting held in London on 3rd November. This meeting did, however, agree to the formation of a new Lloyd's Liverpool Committee consisting of four members each of the Liverpool Underwriters, Liverpool Shipowners and the Liverpool Steamship Owners Association, who with the chairman of the Shipbuilders' Association would all sit on the London Committee. Formed on 30th June 1871 it was given a £300 annual allowance to form a sub-committee to assign vessels for class after survey in the Liverpool district (which covered all ports from Chester to Lancaster, including the River Dee and the Isle of Man), before submitting its reports to London for confirmation.

The heavy loss in seamen's lives was first brought to the attention of Derby M.P. Samuel Plimsoll by Newcastle shipowner James Hall in 1868. Questions raised in Parliament by Samuel Plimsoll concerning this loss of life led to the formation of a Royal Commission on Unseaworthy Ships which sat in 1873. Giving his evidence to the Royal Commission in June of that year concerning iron shipbuilding in Liverpool, Samuel Plimsoll stated :

"Concerning one ship, the plates were so warped that they could not bring the edges close up with the rivets, so they just nobble them and make them a little larger than the hole, and the cement covers it all up."

After this statement was heard, a telegram was sent to 26 Russell Street, Liverpool, addressed to Mr R. Knight, the General Secretary of the Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders Society of the United Kingdom, demanding his presence in London so that he could be questioned by the Royal Commission. Mr Knight was met on his arrival at London by Samuel Plimsoll's solicitor, and was shown the M.P.'s statement and asked to confirm this when he gave his evidence. He replied that he could not do so, but that he was very anxious to be questioned by the commissioners to enable the truth to be heard.

The vessel concerned was the London registered iron screw steamer **Brighton** classed 100.A1 by Lloyd's Register when built at Sunderland in 1872 by J. Blumer & Company. This steamer made her maiden voyage to Gibraltar with coal before loading 1,000 tons of sulphur ore at Pomaron for Liverpool, where she arrived leaking badly on 27th January, 1873. After discharging her cargo at Garston, she spent seven weeks in Herculaneum drydock under repair.

Mr Knight told Samuel Plimsoll's solicitor that he had personally examined the vessel in drydock and that he considered her badly built as he could pass a mechanic's steel rule between the frames and side plating in many places. During construction the plates had not been properly formed and it soon became obvious to the shipbuilder that the vessel would require re-riveting if the plates were forced up to the frames using 5lb riveting hammers. Instructions were given to the men to use 2lb hammers to *nobble* the rivets in their holes and not to bother to close the plate to the frame. Although the completed hull was made watertight, the foremen and inspectors knew that the rivets would soon

loosen when the vessel began to strain at sea.

After voicing these facts, Mr Knight was not asked to appear before the Royal Commission. He did, however, write a letter to the editor of the *Liverpool Daily Courier* on 23rd October 1873 which stated *"I have some experience in iron shipbuilding in this port and many others in the U.K., and I have no hesitation in saying that the vessels built on the Mersey are not surpassed for workmanship by any built elsewhere. I know that in some places men are engaged as iron shipbuilders who were never trained to it, because they will work for a little less wages than the skilled mechanic and the result is so much bad work. This would be prevented if all vessels were built under inspection and practical men engaged as inspectors."*

In November 1873 the Royal Commission called on Mr Weymouth, Secretary of Lloyd's Register of Shipping, to give statistics concerning ocean-going steamships lost between 1st January 1872 and 30th September 1873. He presented four tables, including:

<i>Total of Ships</i>	<i>Abandoned</i>	<i>Foundered</i>	<i>Missing</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%Loss</i>
3,000 Unclassed	5	5	4	14	0.47
1,500 Lloyd's Register	2	7	7	16	1.14
700 Liverpool Register	3	2	9	14	2.00
Total :	10	14	20	44	

This table gave the impression that Liverpool Iron Registry vessels were unsafe. Mr Weymouth said about the Lloyd's Register losses *"Some of our finest ships were lost last winter coming from America. The loss was not from unseaworthiness of the ship, but very likely from the cargo shifting; the vessels being pretty deeply laden with wheat."*

After this was reported in *The Times*, the Secretary to the Underwriters' Registry for Iron Vessels, Mr W.W. Rundell, wrote to the editor on 20th November 1873 enclosing the following table :

TYPE OF CARGO CARRIED

Losses	Grain	Iron-Ore	Coal	General	Total
Unclassed	5	1	1	7	14
Lloyd's Register	4	2	5	5	16
Liverpool Registr.	11	1	2	0	14
Total:	20	4	8	12	44

This showed that eleven Liverpool Registry vessels were lost carrying grain and only four from Lloyd's Register. Mr Rundell agreed with Mr Weymouth's statement concerning these, adding: "*It is recorded that rather than comply with the regulations of the Port Warden, the shipmasters paid the penalty of £40. Some very soon paid as penalty for this neglect their own lives and the lives of their crew.*"

After the Royal Commission hearing, opinions expressed by the Liverpool Committee of Lloyd's Register were given careful consideration in London, and the reason for the Iron Registry almost ceased. Representatives of the Board of Trade, Lloyd's Register of Shipping and the Underwriters' Registry for Iron vessels met in 1875 to agree freeboard calculations based on the rule of "*three inches per foot depth of hold*" used by Lloyds, and "*three tenths hull displacement*" derived by John Jordan in use in the Iron Registry.

The result of the Royal Commission on Unseaworthy Ships was the 1876 Merchant Shipping Act which made the cutting of the Freeboard Line into a ship's hull compulsory. Known as the "*Plimsoll Mark*" it is cut at mid-length to indicate the minimum distance permitted between loaded water level and the main deck to provide the vessel with sufficient reserve buoyancy.

Although the three Liverpool Associations which had representatives serving on both Lloyd's and the Iron Registry committees were having difficulty finding members with time to manage the Iron Registry, talk of merging the two did not re-occur until a shipbuilding slump in 1884. Fear was raised that competition might entice surveyors to relax standards to retain business, and an approach was made by the Iron Registry to discuss merger with Lloyd's Register which resulted in a number of meetings in London in early 1885 between the deputy chairman of the Iron Registry and the secretary of Lloyd's Register.

Having the welfare of its three clerks and seventeen surveyors as its main priority, agreement was finally reached by which the Iron Registry staff would be enrolled into Lloyd's Register Pension Fund (which had been established the previous year), and re-employed at their same salaries. In addition, the surveyors received a sum of money which ranged from £60 to £340 to compensate them for loss of pension whilst serving on the Iron Registry. These sums were paid from the Iron Registry's £19,000 fund before it was transferred to Lloyd's Register.

The terms of amalgamation were signed on 6th August 1885 by Mr B. Weymouth for Lloyd's Register and Mr W.W. Rundell for the Underwriters' Registry of Iron Vessels. In accordance with these terms, the Underwriters' List of Iron Vessels, which was supplied to over 1,000 subscribers throughout Europe, the British Empire and the United States, ceased publication, and all Iron Registry funds were transferred to Lloyd's Register.

To protect the interest of the owners of the 1,066 vessels classed by the Iron

Registry, its chairman Mr Alfred Holt and his deputy Mr R.N. Dale became members of Lloyd's General Committee and Sub-committee for Surveys which met in London. They were also both members of the Liverpool Committee which sat twice a week at Oriel Chambers, Liverpool. The chief surveyor, Mr West, remained in charge of Iron Registry surveyors, and all Iron Registry vessels were awarded Lloyd's highest class free of charge.

Since its amalgamation with the Underwriters' Registry for Iron Vessels in 1885, Lloyd's Register has become one of the world's most respected classification societies, and today the term *AI at Lloyd's* is synonymous with top quality. *That was not always true* ■

A DATABASE OF EARLY STEAM VESSELS REGISTERED AT LIVERPOOL

by E.O. Williamson

This Database is compiled from the Customs Registers for the port of Liverpool. The search was started with the 1812 Registers, and in mid-1998 had reached 1863. It is intended to cover all the Liverpool registrations up to the end of 1865, and should be completed by the end of 1998. I have recorded all the technical details of the steam-driven vessels that I could find.

Much of this information is already available on microfilm, but it is a long task to identify a particular ship. The Database, however, is recorded in the ACCESS format and can be filtered by any standard method, giving a speedy answer to an inquiry. The file will be deposited in the archives of the Merseyside Maritime Museum and a printed list, in alphabetical order of ship's name, will be available there.

EARLY STEAMSHIP VOYAGES BETWEEN LIVERPOOL AND THE MEDITERRANEAN,

1845 - 1849

by John Cook

The founding of the British & North American Royal Mail Steam Packet Company and its successful establishment of a regular service across the North Atlantic has, understandably, dominated the published literature on the early years of Liverpool's deep water steamships. The founding of the Pacific Steam Navigation Company and the epoch-making introduction of steamships by Alfred Holt to the Far Eastern trades have also been well documented, so much so that an important series of events in the Mediterranean has received but scant coverage. Liverpool's trade with the countries of the Mediterranean¹ and the Black Sea may not have been as important as that across the North Atlantic, but it was substantial and, in 1845, no fewer than 400 vessels² were cleared to destinations around the two seas. Well over 80% of these vessels were British and a significant proportion of the 200 masters and nearly 2,500 seamen employed³ will have been from Liverpool. In addition there were hundreds of dockers, shipwrights, sail makers, insurance brokers, shipping agents, clerks etc., employed in the town itself for the servicing of these ships and their cargoes.

Early steamships were notoriously profligate in their consumption of coal and it was no coincidence that the successful operators of these vessels in the foreign trades were all joint-stock companies in receipt of mail subsidies. These not only ensured the companies viability but gave their steamers that particular *cachet* which came from flying a Post Office pendant and concentrating on speed and reliability of service. This advantage was denied to the Liverpool shipowners who specialised in the Mediterranean trades: it was the Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Company which had obtained the Mediterranean mail contracts. It was not just the loss of the mail subsidy which must have galled the Liverpudlians: mail steamers invariably carried the high value-low weight consignments, such as bullion, silk, medicines etc., which earned the highest rates of freight. It is surprising therefore that a screw steamship was despatched to the Mediterranean from Liverpool as early as 1845, and iron screw steamships the following year. Some of the basic facts regarding these early voyages were published as early as 1865 but no detailed study has ever appeared and some later authors have clouded the picture rather than clarified it. This paper attempts to set the facts within the framework of the period and to show how the failure of the first steamship operator allowed a free-for-all to develop in 1849 when companies from London and Glasgow invaded the trade and all but captured it from the established Liverpool houses.

The 1840s did not start well for the merchants of Liverpool. Lord Melbourne's government had accumulated debt of over £7 million and trade was generally depressed with many Lancashire cotton mills closed; however, the election of 1841 brought Peel to office in the September and his bold financial reforms turned the country's economy around so fast that by the end of 1844 exports had increased by 28% in the previous two years. An era of commercial expansion was beginning, the like of which the country had never seen before and which would bring to the port and town of Liverpool a prosperity that was undreamt of. The sailing ship still reigned supreme over the foreign trade of the port but paddle-steamers had captured the high-class North Atlantic business since their introduction on a regular basis by Messrs. Cunard, Burns and MacIver in 1840. Paddle-steamers also dominated the coastal passenger routes and the Irish Sea, but that was the limit of steam's expansion: it required short-distance, high-volume routes for steamships to show a profit, or substantial mail contracts such as that for £60,000 p.a. obtained by Samuel Cunard. Unfortunately for Liverpool, the P. & O. decided, after some experimental voyages from the Mersey in 1840, to use Southampton as the terminal for its Indian mail service to Alexandria, and, in 1843, to do the same with its Constantinople route.

The Mediterranean trade from Liverpool was, in fact, a number of disparate trades with regular services by packets and occasional sailings by tramping ships going to specific areas rather than trading between a number of ports. The most important destination for Liverpool shipping was Constantinople which received 17% of total tonnage, followed by Leghorn with 12% and Trieste with 10%, whilst such well-known ports as Smyrna⁴, Venice and Marseille were relatively unimportant for outward trade with just 4%, 3% and 2% respectively. The trade with these three major ports was divided between a number of firms with Bahr, Behrend & Stewart loading the largest number of ships, followed by Vianna, Jones & Co., Wilkin & Preston, and M'Nair & Dutton. John Bibby & Sons did load some but, having substantial metal and chemical interests, were more interested in the cargoes than the agency work. Such notable concerns as George Louthean, James Moss & Co., and G.L. Jackson & Sons specialized in trades with some of the smaller ports such as Palermo, Messina and Marseille. The operation of the packets was invariably shared with only those services to the lesser ports such as Galatz or Odessa being in the hands of a single agent. The service to Constantinople, for example, was operated by Bahr, Behrend & Stewart, Wilkin & Preston, Dean & Mills, and H.M. Stone, all working together. This type of co-operation was necessary when individual firms were small and unable, on their own, to load a vessel, even one under 150 tons as many of the packets were.

The first screw steamship voyage to the Mediterranean was not, however, arranged by one of these established shipping agents: it was a former London merchant, Augustus Mongrédien, who took the initiative, albeit with a certain

amount of collaboration from Wilkin & Preston. Born in London in 1807, he was the son of a French émigré who had fled to England after Napoleon's *coup d'état* in 1799⁵. A born linguist, Mongrédien could evidently speak Greek like a native so it must have been the increasing dominance of Liverpool over trade with the Levant⁶ which had attracted him to the port. He chartered the 200-ton, auxiliary screw steamer **Novelty** from her builder and owner, Henry Wimshurst, for a voyage to Constantinople, probably with an option to extend the charter for further voyages. She arrived in Liverpool on 11th August 1845 and the local press lost no time in reporting:

*"A new line of steamers is about to be established between this port and Constantinople..... Three large and handsome steamers are building or about to be built, one of which ... will be ready in about two months, and until they are completed the line will be worked by steamers temporarily engaged for the purpose. The first vessel which is to be despatched is the **Novelty**, at present lying in Clarence Dock. This vessel well deserves the name it bears, being not only propelled by the screw, but being worked by a newly invented rotary engine, which promises to make a complete change in steam navigation. In point of size, this engine is not more than two-thirds the dimensions of an ordinary engine of equal power, and its consumption of coal is small in the same proportion. This is the first successful attempt to construct a marine engine on this principal ... the whole weight of the machinery, boilers and propelling apparatus is only 24 tons ... The other steamers of the line are all to be constructed on the same principle..."*⁷

Wimshurst was a member of the Ship Propeller Company which purchased Francis Pettit Smith's marine screw patents. He had built the **Archimedes** for the syndicate in 1838, but the **Novelty** was constructed for his own account and built of wood with a removable, twin-bladed propeller. The absence of any reference to her in Lloyd's List, prior to her voyage for Mongrédien, signifies that she had never made a foreign-going voyage so his action in ordering not just one but three steamships to be fitted with a new and largely untried type of engine casts considerable doubt on his judgement and commercial prudence. Marine engineering was still undergoing constant development and it was no doubt difficult for him to discern which of the numerous types of engines and propellers were technically viable. It is easy from the distance of a century and a half to see that both Wimshurst and Peter Borrie, the inventor of the rotary engine, have been disregarded by the engineering establishment of the day, but at the time their arguments would have had all the power of enthusiastic inventors.

By the standards of the time, there was no great delay with the despatch of the **Novelty** which means that most of her cargo must have been waiting to be loaded. She was entered at the Custom House on 11th August 1845, when she arrived at Liverpool, and cleared on the 27th, sailing for Constantinople the following day.⁸ Her progress was quite respectable and she arrived at Malta on

16th September and Constantinople on the 28th where she remained for almost three weeks before sailing for London, via Smyrna, Malta and Gibraltar, on 18th October. She arrived at Gravesend on 16th December having taken 59 days homeward against 31 days outward. Given that she was essentially an auxiliary powered vessel, this was not an exceptionally long voyage, in fact it was very much better than many made by contemporary sailing ships, even the famed fruit schooners in the trade with the Ionian islands, but it was obviously not what Mongrédien had expected as her charter was not extended, nor did any of the other temporary steamers appear. The first specially constructed vessel due in about two months failed to materialise, so one is forced to conclude that part of the information given to the newspaper in August was bluster to make any likely competitor look for other routes, or, and this is probably the most likely, that it was ill-judged optimism based on a lack of understanding of the problems involved in building and operating steamships.

Another steamship to clear Liverpool that year for Constantinople was the former coastal paddle-steamer **Achilles** which had been built for G. & J. Burns Glasgow & Liverpool Steam Ship Company, but had been purchased by P. & O. She sailed on 17th October 1845 for Smyrna, Constantinople, Sinope and Trebizonde, and returned to Southampton, arriving on 11th December, a voyage of 55 days against the 90 taken by the **Novelty** on a shorter route. It provides an illuminating comparison of the relative efficiency of contemporary paddle and screw vessels.

Trade between Liverpool and the Mediterranean expanded considerably in 1846, especially to Italian and Austrian ports whose hinterlands included the most sophisticated markets. Clearances to Constantinople and to Malta and North Africa fell, but otherwise the picture was buoyant. Overall tonnage was up from 70,652 to 82,635, an increase of almost 17%. Either because of his reluctance, or because of his inability to charter vessels on a rising market, this was an expansion Mongrédien was unable to share. It would be interesting to know how he traded in the interim but the Bills of Entry give few clues. The only items which he imported during this period were 23 tons of valonia from Smyrna in January, 850 quarters of wheat from Ancona in February, 976 bags of grass seed from Trieste in March, and a case of cigars from Antwerp in April. He may have been much more involved in the export trade, but, whatever the state of his business which he conducted on his own, never having a partner, he must have been living in high expectation of future income as he moved, in the early part of 1846, from the respectable neighbourhood of Grove Street to the almost palatial surroundings of Fairfield Hall, a minor country house conveniently situated just East of the then built-up area.

Mongrédien's big moment of the year was on 9th September when his new steamship, the **Levantine** (190 tons register), arrived from Greenock where her engine had been installed, having been completed by Ditchburn & Mare at Blackwall in mid-June. She was nothing like as large as the 620-ton Cunarders

which also berthed in Coburg Dock but they were all paddle-steamers; she was at the cutting-edge of marine technology with her new rotary engine. It must have been a busy time for him as numerous people will have wanted to look over his new ship, but her cargo was loaded in ten days and she sailed on 19th September for Constantinople, Trebizonde and Smyrna. It is not possible to discover all that she carried because export entries in the Liverpool *Bills of Entry* were not allocated to individual vessels and there were six others loading for Constantinople when she cleared; what we do know, however, is that she took 225 tierces (casks of 42 gallons capacity) and 23 bales of cottons, plus 3 bales of cotton twist, to Trebizonde as no other vessels cleared for that port. There was a large amount of cotton goods and cotton twist exported to Constantinople between the 1st and the 18th, together with bar, rod, sheet and hoop iron, tin and tinplate, hardware and nails, copperas (sulphate of iron, after which Copperas Hill, Liverpool, is named), woollens and worsteds, even a basket of vices and three cases of umbrellas. The only re-export of any significance was 320 cases of refined sugar.

The first half of the **Levantine's** voyage went well enough; she reached Constantinople around the 15th October, having called at Malta for coal. Whilst 26 days was respectable, it was certainly not remarkable; in the Spring of 1846, the West Country schooner **Flirt** had completed a voyage from Plymouth Sound in 23 days. The section of the **Levantine's** voyage to Trebizonde, almost 700 miles to the East, was completed quickly however and she was back in the Bosphorus on 1st November, *en route* for Smyrna where she loaded a substantial cargo of fruit, leaving there on the 7th, Malta on the 16th and Gibraltar on the 25th, but she did not reach the Mersey until 19th December, undoubtedly due to difficulties with her engine. When she did arrive, however, her problems were not over. As was not infrequently the case with ships from the Levant, she had a foul bill-of-health and had to spend a week swinging at anchor in the river. Her crew and passengers can hardly have been in the best of spirits having to spend Christmas Day afloat, within sight of their destination! She was allowed to dock on Boxing Day, and the next ten days were spent in unloading her cargo which consisted of wool and yellow berries from Constantinople, and a very large consignment of figs and raisins from Smyrna. Whatever merchants in other ports thought about the mixing of fruit and iron, those of the Levant were obviously prepared to pay a premium for the speedy delivery of their perishable merchandise. As soon as unloading was over, the **Levantine** was returned to Greenock for the replacement of her obviously inadequate machinery: 25 days from Gibraltar to the Mersey must have caused a certain amount of ribald comment from the sailing ship men in the waterside public houses of Liverpool. It was not something for which Mongrédien had budgeted however, and at the end of December 1846, he had to mortgage his 59 shares in the vessel to Arnold, Leete, Roscoe & Co., the Liverpool brokers.¹⁰ It was a mortgage that he was never going to be able to redeem.

By the end of 1846, Mongrédien was no doubt thinking that substantial profits were almost within his grasp as his other two steamships were nearing completion at Alexander Denny's yard on the Clyde, but the year did not end as well as it began. Peel had resigned at the end of June, just three days after his reforming Corn Law Bill passed its third reading in the House of Lords, and speculation in railway stock had been at a high level for most of the year. Calls by railway companies had absorbed much of the country's surplus capital, but the major problem was the failure of the Irish potato crop. Apart from the untold human suffering this caused, it resulted in a heavy demand for grain; a demand which lifted the price from a low of 49/- to 69/- per quarter by the year end, and which would lift it substantially higher during the next few months so fuelling speculation. Whilst this demand may have lifted rates from the major grain ports such as Galatz and Alexandria, the worsening economic climate in Great Britain and much of the rest of Europe held rates back and there was much spare capacity as well as a substantial increase in outward ballast voyages. In 1845 there had been just 4, in 1846 they increased to 19 as a result of the repeal of the Corn Laws, but in 1847 they escalated to 77. Whilst Mongrédien was undoubtedly able to obtain a premium from many shippers for the fast delivery of their goods, the fall in freight volume, and in freight rates, will have substantially affected his nett income as his overheads were largely fixed. His second vessel, the **Osmanli** of 210 tons register, started to load for her first voyage at the beginning of February 1847, and his third one, the **Aram** of 208 tons register, on 23rd March, but this trebling of capacity in a falling freight market will have been a doubtful blessing and there is reason to believe, from the type of cargoes that his ships carried, that he had to accept sailing ship rates for some of the consignments. For example, on her return voyage, the **Osmanli** carried 25 tons of nuts from Trebizonde, but the 500 quarters of Indian corn from Samsoun will not have earned a premium. From Constantinople, she brought 76 bales of sheep's wool, 16 bales of goats wool, and 27 bags of yellow berries, plus, for himself, a jar of olives and a couple of jars of caviar. From Smyrna, she brought 8 cases of opium, 100 cases of liquorice, 33 sacks of yellow berries and 20 cases of sponges; in all a not very impressive cargo for a brand new steamship which faced no steam competition. It points to a lack of an effective agency network in Turkey.

The first voyage of the **Aram** was no better than that of her consort, although at 79 days it was one of the shorter ones by a Mongrédien steamer. She brought 825 quarters of Indian corn from Constantinople together with a case of silk cushions for her owner. From Smyrna she brought 393 drums of raisins, 21 cases of sponges, 100 cases of liquorice paste, 37 bales of sheep's wool and 13 bales of carpets, again not an impressive loading. It is important to note the cumulative effect that these voyages will have had on Mongrédien's finances. Whilst not disasters in themselves, they will not have produced the nett profits needed to repay his mortgage. The talk in the taverns frequented by

Liverpool merchants must have been about not whether he would be able to remain solvent, but for how long he could remain trading. Matters did not improve towards the end of 1847. The **Levantine** returned from Constantinople at the end of November with just 750 quarters of Indian corn, 259 bales of sheeps skins and 202 bales of goats wool. There were none of those high-value items which would earn good rates of freight. Given the high cost of coal at Malta and Gibraltar, and the fact that the steamships each carried ten more crew than comparably sized sailing vessels, it is not unreasonable to speculate that such a voyage may even have made a loss.

The real problems of 1847 started to make themselves apparent in August. The dramatic rise, and equally dramatic fall, in the price of corn caused huge losses amongst some of the merchants who had been speculating and over a dozen houses failed in that month, including three in Liverpool and the respected London house of W.R. Robinson & Co., whose senior partner was none other than the governor of the Bank of England.¹¹ The concern caused by these failures was nothing compared to the panic caused by the disasters in September when over twenty firms of high standing failed with aggregate liabilities of between £9 and £10 million. London was the worst affected during the first two months of the crisis, but Liverpool's turn came in October when a major business failed every working day. The worst moment was when the Royal Bank of Liverpool closed its doors, followed soon afterwards by the Liverpool Banking Company, and the North & South Wales Bank. This placed many respectable houses in jeopardy and the consequent failures included Barton, Irlam & Higginson; M'tear, Hadfield & Co.; M.S. Synnot, and Mocatta & Son, all directly or closely associated with the port. Some of them were able to resume trading after a few months, but the immediate effect was to create a considerable disruption of trade. The panic soon spread to the continent with reports arriving from Constantinople in September of serious disruption to local markets¹² and although France and the northern countries suffered the largest number of failures or suspensions, there were significant ones around the Mediterranean, especially in the Italian ports.¹³

Although he had three steamships in commission during most of 1847, Mongrédien was only able to obtain a total of six voyages from them. The **Levantine** was at Caird's of Greenock for the first three months, and the other two also went there in October. Even when working, their voyage times were not impressive: the **Levantine** took 109 and 103 days for her two; the **Osmanli** 108 and 94; and the **Aram** 79 and 91. That the fault lay with the engines is borne out by the next voyage of the **Osmanli** after she returned from Greenock just before Christmas. She did the round trip in a very reasonable 66 days, although the extra leg to Trebizonde was not included. One can almost sense the frustration and bitter disappointment which Mongrédien must have suffered during that difficult year when success should have been within his grasp.

If 1847 was a year of thwarted ambitions for Mongrédien, 1848 was to be a

year of unexpected disasters. The **Aram** returned from Caird's during the middle of January and was on her berth for just four days, sailing on the 22nd of the month. The following morning tragedy struck when she was run down and sunk, forty miles south of the Tuskar, by the American ship **Susquehanna**, inward bound from Philadelphia. Six of the crew of twenty-six were drowned. Fate was to deal a double blow however. Hardly a month had gone by when the **Levantine**, outward bound under a new master, went ashore near Greenore Point, Wexford, on 27th February. None of the crew was lost but early reports implied that only the cargo would be saved. Although local attempts at refloating were unsuccessful the ship was not lost; however, she was out of commission for seven-and-a-half months whilst being first salvaged and then repaired by Denny Brothers of Dumbarton, at a cost of £3,500.¹⁴ Amongst many other items, the **Levantine** had to have a 100 foot length of keel replaced and a new stern post. This is when Mongrédien's problems started to escalate. He must have been under-insured for one or both of these losses because he had to go back to Cunliffe, Brooks & Co., for a further £5,000 which was secured on 11th April against his shares in the **Osmanli**.¹⁵ Also, with just one vessel left, he had to charter quickly and that, of course, meant money up-front. He managed to find a brand new steamer, the **Secret**, which Alexander Denny had just completed for Daniel McArthur of Greenock, but he was not quick enough. J.K. Rounthwaite, the Liverpool agent for the powerful City of Dublin Steam Packet Company, switched the **Nautilus**, one of the steamers he had sent to Alexandria the previous year, to the Turkish trade and despatched her on 17th April. The **Secret** sailed soon afterwards but Rounthwaite loaded another vessel in July, even before the **Nautilus** had returned. Mongrédien countered by chartering another Denny-built ship, the **Dumbarton Youth**, which was later to become the first vessel to carry Alfred Holt's famous blue funnel colour.

The next event in this sorry saga may, or may not, be of significance, but on 2nd August 1848 Cunliffe, Brooks & Co. transferred the mortgages they held to the Liverpool merchants Arnold, Leete, Roscoe & Co. It is not known if there was any connection between Cunliffe, Brooks & Co., and Brooks, Balfour & Laming, a London firm of ship and insurance brokers, who were the managing agents for the General Screw Steam Shipping Company, but if there was not, it was a remarkable coincidence that the latter firm established a Liverpool office the following month and despatched the **Sir Robert Peel**, one of General Screw's steamers, to Constantinople in October. Conjecture may not be the cement of history, but it is not unreasonable to imagine that Cunliffe Brooks felt that they should not continue as mortgagees while an associated business entered into competition with the mortgagor.

The one ray of hope for Mongrédien was the continuing improvement in the speed and reliability of the **Osmanli** since her return from Caird's. Her fourth voyage took 54 days. Like the third, it did not include a call at Trebizonde, but it was still a considerable improvement and serves to emphasise the poor

performance of the original engine. The return cargo, however, was not a substantial one, and that brought by the **Secret** in August was, if anything, even smaller, but the start of the fruit season helped the **Dumbarton Youth** to have full holds when she arrived at the end of October. The **Levantine** had returned to service earlier that month, so the **Dumbarton Youth** was handed back to her owners who promptly chartered her to the Glasgow merchants M'Kean, M'Larty and Lamont. They had recently opened a Liverpool office to handle their Portuguese wine and fruit trade. She sailed for Oporto the following month, as did another of the General Screw Company's steamers, the **Earl of Auckland**, which was jointly loaded by M'Kean and Brooks, Balfour & Laming.

Unfortunately no records survive which describe the reliability of the steamers whilst in Mongrédien's ownership, but between 1851 and 1853 the **Levantine** was operated by Samuel Cunard on the Halifax to Bermuda mail service. Records do survive for this period and show just how unreliable she was; so bad in fact that the Commander-in-Chief of the West Indies station joined with the merchants of Bermuda to complain about the quality of her service. In 17 months she broke her propeller shaft no fewer than three times. Cunard had so little faith in her that she was replaced by sailing vessels until another steamship was available. This all tends to make one suspect that the damage received at Greenore Point was worse than originally thought or that the repairs had been done too hastily. Mongrédien was obviously anxious to get her back into service as soon as possible but it is interesting to discover that, when she did return to the Mersey, he loaded her for Rotterdam, in conjunction with Bahr, Behrend & Co. (as that firm had become in 1847), possibly because he did not trust her machinery and hull repairs sufficiently to send her on the long voyage to the Levant. She did however clear for Constantinople in early December, but it was not a voyage she would complete for her unfortunate owner.

1849 did not start well in the Mediterranean trade. The first report of the year from Lloyd's agent at Constantinople described a dearth of cargoes due to early ice in the Black Sea and a large number of ships bottled-up in the port. This over supply of tonnage brought rates tumbling down and one British master had accepted under 14/- a ton in order to get away.¹⁶ Mongrédien must have felt that the fates were conspiring against him, for, to add insult to injury, the long-forgotten **Novelty**, like a bird of ill omen, sailed into the Mersey on 2nd January. She was completing a voyage from Alexandria, having been sold by Wimshurst the previous Spring. Her new owners, realizing her limitations, stripped her of her machinery and ran her as a simple sailing vessel. Commercial confidence, however, had well and truly returned by the beginning of 1849 which was to see a 23% increase in the tonnage cleared for Mediterranean ports, but for Augustus Mongrédien, it came too late. His liquid capital, and more importantly, the patience of his creditors, were exhausted. In

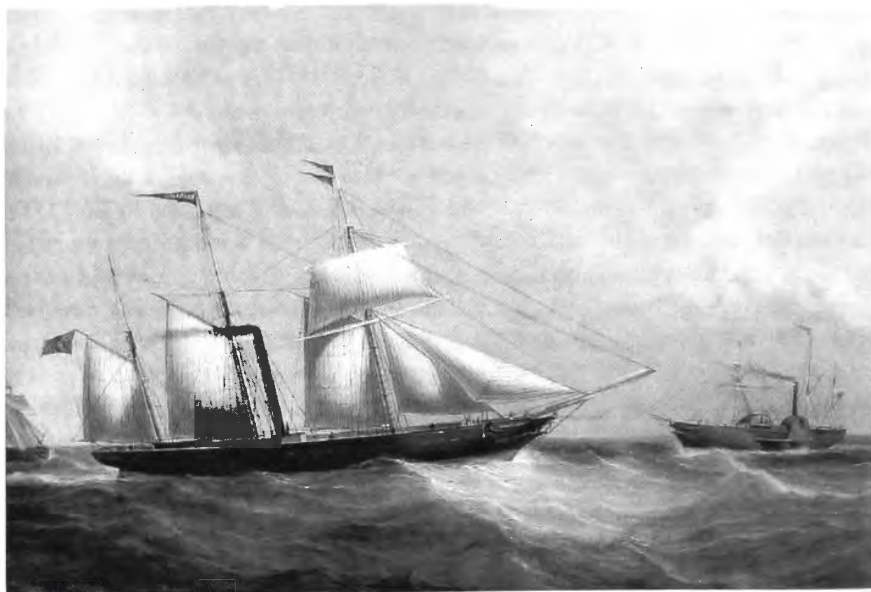
mid-February he suspended payments and closed his doors, but he was optimistic to the last, advertising the **Levantine**, even before she returned to Liverpool, to load for Genoa, Leghorn and Civita Vecchia. This would have been a new route for steamships and one where, for a while perhaps, he could have escaped from too much competition. But it was not to be: his creditors foreclosed on him and their first meeting was held on 26th February. A further meeting was held in March 1849, but it took until early July to sort out his financial affairs to the extent that the steamers could be sold for the benefit of the mortgagees. In the meantime, they lay in Coburg Dock, accumulating dock dues.

Mongrédien's withdrawal from the trade prompted an armada of steamships to invade the Mediterranean, all taking trade from the established merchants. It certainly proved the old maxim that *it is better to support a weak competitor than to allow him to go-under thereby giving a stronger one an opportunity to take his place*. No sooner had Mongrédien advertised his new service to Ligurian ports than M'Kean, M'Larty & Co. took the **Dumbarton Youth** off the Portuguese run and loaded her for Genoa and Leghorn. They also took over the charter of the **Secret** and sent her there as well. They must have learned something from Captain Rodger of the **Dumbarton Youth** because they chartered the **Pirate** from the Glasgow & Liverpool Shipping Co. in February and despatched her to Constantinople in competition to the General Screw steamers. This was by no means the extent of the fray because the noted Canadian agents, G. & A. Herring, loaded the 435-ton **Vectis** for Gibraltar and Malta, whilst Brooks, Balfour & Laming added the **Earl of Auckland** to their Levant service in July and the specially built **Bosphorus** (330 tons) in September, followed by the **Hellespont** in December. Yet another serious competitor appeared when Henry Dixon, the local agent for the Glasgow & Liverpool Shipping Co., took over the **Pirate** when she returned in June. She and the **Brigand** were the first screw steamships to have been built for the trade between the Mersey and the Clyde, but competition from the newly opened railway proved too strong, hence their voyages to foreign waters. The **Brigand** appeared in late July and, like the **Pirate**, managed a voyage every three months, double what Mongrédien's steamers had achieved. Finally, M'Kean, M'Larty & Co. introduced the **Doris** (223 tons) as a stop-gap on their Ligurian route whilst they awaited two new vessels from Alexander Denny's yard at Dumbarton.¹⁷ As Mongrédien watched these hectic developments, he must have thought himself well out of it all!

There is a sad little postscript to Mongrédien's failure. When the **Levantine** returned to the Mersey in late February 1849, he could not handle her so George Louthean did so. They both had offices in Fenwick Chambers so this was, no doubt, a personal favour, but the problems which Louthean had to resolve must have been much greater than he had anticipated because, when the **Osmanli** arrived a month later, he did not offer his services again: Captain

Mara had to act as his own agent. Mara was the longest serving of the masters and it is interesting to note that Mongrédien employed no fewer than seven for his vessel's sixteen voyages. Two of them lasted for just a single voyage whilst two others only lasted for a couple of voyages. The conclusion must be that there was a lack of man-management skill in Fenwick Chambers which, in that pre-telegraph age, was vital for the success of ship management.

Without any financial records it is impossible to be certain what brought about the failure of this first attempt to operate a Mediterranean steamship service from Liverpool, but Mongrédien's turnover of masters gives more than a clue. He was undoubtedly impetuous and this caused his over-hasty decision to install the rotary engines, the replacements for which cost him so dear. His ability as a linguist should have given him an advantage in trading with the Levant but the *Bill of Entry* records leave a suspicion that his agency arrangements there left much to be desired. Finally, he was simply unfortunate that the economic climate became stormy just as his second and third ships had been completed. Every innovator needs a little bit of luck and Augustus Mongrédien certainly did not get his share. He certainly paid the price for being the first in the trade, but his brave, if foolhardy, enterprise deserves a niche in our history books. ■



The **Brigand** entered the Mediterranean trade from Liverpool in July, 1849
(John Cook Collection)

Notes and References

- 1 For the purposes of this paper, the ports of Gibraltar and the Mediterranean coast of Spain have been excluded, more properly being part of the Iberian trade.
- 2 All data has been derived from the Liverpool Bills of Entry, 1845-49, copies of which are held by the Liverpool Record Office, William Brown Street
- 3 Most vessels regularly employed managed a round voyage every six months.
- 4 This discrepancy between the two Turkish ports results from the lack of return cargoes from Constantinople. Vessels carried export cargoes there but then had to sail to Smyrna in ballast to load a return cargo for Great Britain.
- 5 *Dictionary of National Biography* (1894), page 621.
- 6 *Report from the Select Committee on the present state of Manufactures, Commerce and Shipping in the United Kingdom*, 1833 (690) VI,q.5871
- 7 *Liverpool Times*, 12th August, 1845
- 8 Sailing and arrival dates are taken from the movement columns in *Lloyd's List*.
- 9 *Gore's Directory of Liverpool*, 1845 and 1846.
- 10 London Shipping Register no. 236 of 1846.
- 11 D. Morier Evans, *The Commercial Crisis, 1847-1848* (revised edition, 1851).
- 12 *The Times*, 25th September, 1847, p. 6a.
- 13 Evans, *Ibid*.
- 14 Quotation from Messrs Denny Brothers to Augustus Mongrédien, dated 10th June, 1848. I am grateful to Mr David Moore for a copy of this item.
- 15 Liverpool statutory registers of merchant ships, 1846
- 16 *Lloyd's List*
- 17 D.J.Lyon (comp.) *The Denny List* (Greenwich, 1975) appendix ii.

THOMAS UTLEY (1854 - 1927) AND HIS SUCCESSORS

by Ken Tinkler

Thomas Utley was born near Middleham, North Yorkshire, on 15th August 1854, the son of William Utley, a cattle dealer, and one of the first to import foreign cattle into Liverpool.

Thomas was only a few weeks old when the family left Yorkshire to settle in Liverpool where his father traded in livestock and as a wholesale butcher. Educated at Bedford Street Collegiate School, Liverpool, and later in Hamburg where he qualified as a naval architect and engineer.

Thomas Utley began his working life along with his brother William in his father's business in Liverpool, looking after its day-to-day management while his father was engaged on the continent of Europe buying cattle.

In time Thomas became involved in buying, and shipped American cattle into this country, becoming aware of the problem of loss of livestock aboard ship due to inadequate ventilation and insecure accommodation for each animal, especially during stormy weather in the Atlantic. He turned his attention to inventing improvements to shipboard ventilation and cattle stalls. This became his vocation and in 1881, while in America on family business, Thomas despatched a patent application in his own name and that of John Fawcett, to agents in London, instructing them to draw up and register an invention described as :

“An Improvement in Stalls and Ventilation Apparatus for facilitating the transport of Cattle in sea-going Vessels”.

Much difficulty has been experienced in transporting cattle and other animals, especially in sea-going steamships, by reason of imperfect ventilation, particularly during stormy weather, when passages for admission of air require to be closed to prevent the inflow of water. The object of the first part of this Invention is to provide a strong, simple apparatus which affords a passage of air, and yet is so constructed that no water can flow through into the ship. It has been found also that the listing of the vessel often subjects livestock to severe and fatal injuries. All animals can readily adapt themselves to the ordinary motions of the ship if they stand on a level, or with their fore shoulders slightly higher than their buttocks, but when their buttocks are higher than their fore shoulders (as cattle on the starboard side will be when the ship lists to port) they are unable long to suit themselves to the motion of the vessel, and are in danger of serious or fatal injuries.

The second part of this invention is designed to remedy this difficulty.

“Necessity is the mother of all invention” and, perhaps, never more so than in this instance, for the loss of livestock on board ships on passage to Liverpool proved to be a most unpleasant and costly business.

From small beginnings, the business of Thomas Utley & Co., as Patent Ventilator Manufacturers established in cramped experimental workshop premises in Sutton Street, Stoneycroft, Liverpool, blossomed into a substantial full time enterprise. In 1886 the company moved to larger purpose-built premises in nearby Silverdale Avenue, eventually employing a workforce of about one hundred at its peak. Between 1881 and 1886, Thomas Utley sub-contracted the manufacture of his patent ships’ ventilators to A.B. Fraser & Company of Bootle.

In 1891 the Silverdale Avenue Works of Thomas Utley & Co. was extended to accommodate a large order for the North German Lloyd Line.

Combined with the manufacture of the ventilator devices, ships sidelights and windows were made. Patents for these began to be registered in 1888, and patents continued to be taken out covering design improvements to the ventilators, increasing the range of their uses, and combining with them sidelights and windows.

Few details are known about the early years of the business up to about 1930 because Company papers have not survived, largely as a result of air-raids during World War II when its city centre offices in Lord Street were severely damaged.

However, it has been noted from Utley family personal papers that in 1899 Thomas Utley received an order for lights for the Royal Yacht **Victoria and Albert**, while in 1907 he supplied sidelights for the **Lusitania** and **Mauretania**, and in 1911 for the **Olympic**. A novel range of Gothic patterned windows was designed by Thomas for the bars and dining-room of the **Titanic**. In fact he and his wife Jane were invited to sail on the **Titanic’s** maiden voyage, but Jane refused to allow him to board the ship following a premonition that the ship would meet with disaster.

During the First World War, the Silverdale Avenue factory was given over to making munitions.

In 1918 Thomas Utley’s brother James died at the age of 62. He had shared in the development of the 1881 patent ventilator and its manufacture.

Nine years later in 1927, Thomas Utley himself died at his home at Sefton House, Crosby Green, West Derby, Liverpool, bringing to a close a full and distinguished career in commerce, industry and public affairs. He was an engineer, Member of the Institute of Naval Architects, the Royal Society of Arts, American Institute of Inventors and the Paris Institute of Inventors. Elected to Liverpool City Council as a Liberal, Utley represented the West

Derby Ward from 1900 - 1905. He was succeeded by his eldest son Thomas as Chairman of the Company. Like his father before him, he was an engineer and naval architect, specialising in side scuttles.

Under Thomas's leadership an agreement dated 1st February 1928 was made between Thomas Utley & Co. Ltd. and John Roby Ltd., brass founders, of Rainhill, Lancashire, whereby it was agreed that, subject to mutually agreed prices, all orders for casting work required by Utleys in connection with every class of ships' lights, would be placed with John Roby Ltd. It was also agreed to pass on to John Roby all enquiries received by Utleys for ships' lights in order that they might quote a price for their manufacture. In August of 1928 it was proposed by Thomas Utley that Thomas Roby (Director of John Roby Ltd) be elected a Director of Thomas Utley & Co. Ltd. It was also agreed that in return for payment of £500, Thomas Roby was to receive 500 shares in Thomas Utley & Co. Ltd. on the understanding that if he (Thomas Roby) so wished, at any time, any part of his holding could be transferred to Mr Wallace Roby. It was an unusual move since it would appear that since the founding of the Company, the Directors and Shareholders had been members of the Utley family, with, perhaps, the exception of the family solicitor.

In Thomas Utley & Company's Directors' Report to the Annual General Meeting in June 1929, mention was made of the agreement entered into with John Roby, noting that it had resulted in far reaching benefits and recording that close co-operation between the two companies would result in financial benefits. However, warnings were given that the Company was passing through most difficult times.

It is not clear when John Roby Ltd first began supplying brass castings to Thomas Utley & Company, but it is thought to be either before the First World War or during it. Sight of an early Roby letterhead indicates that they displayed a variety of ships' brassware, including sidelights and ships' bells at the May 1886 Liverpool Exhibition of Navigation, Travelling, Commerce and Manufactures. They listed their specialities as ships' sidelights, ships' bells, ships' signal guns and castings. The firm had been established in 1842.

In 1930 tenders were submitted for the construction of a revolutionary new Cunard luxury Atlantic liner, and the order was placed with John Brown & Company on 1st December 1930. This news provided Thomas Utley & Co. with the opportunity to tender successfully for the manufacture and supply of the sidelight and window requirements for the vessel. This was a large, prestigious and highly valued order. "*All hands to the pumps*" saw work at the Silverdale Avenue Works proceed apace with batches of sidelights being despatched by Utley's lorry to Clydebank for fitting to the hull.

However, by the end of 1931 the optimism that surrounded the building of Yard No. 534 had waned due to the depression which brought work to a halt, leaving the partly finished vessel lying idle on the stocks for 27 months.

Negotiations went on between Cunard, the Government and other interests in a search for funds to keep the project alive. It was a serious setback for the many suppliers of parts and services for the vessel, including Thomas Utley & Company. The Company learned of the shock news from its lorry driver over the telephone from Clydebank. He and other drivers of contractors' vehicles delivering goods to the John Brown Yard were refused entry and turned away. It was said that Thomas Utley was the first to alert the press to the news.

For Thomas Utley & Company the suspension of work on Yard No.534 meant a serious loss of income, eventually leading to a Receiver being called in. In May 1932 John Roby Limited expressed interest in taking over some of the plant and machinery at Silverdale Avenue and resuming production of Utley Patent Sidelights at their foundry premises at Rainhill. Before the end of 1932 negotiations with the Receiver were complete and the name Thomas Utley was purchased by John Roby Limited. A new company with the title Thomas Utley (Rainhill) Limited was formed, with a nominal capital of £50 wholly owned by the directors of John Roby Ltd. This was to carry on the manufacture and supply of Thomas Utley products.

Thomas Utley became an Agent with offices in Lord Street, Liverpool with sole and exclusive rights for the design, sale and approval of ships' side scuttles and windows manufactured by Thomas Utley (Rainhill) Ltd, and Utley patent products made by John Roby Ltd under licence. Utley also traded separately under the title Shipbuilding & Engineering Supply Company from the same address.

Machinery was purchased from the Receiver and transferred from the Silverdale Avenue Works to the John Roby Foundry premises at Rainhill, where a workshop had been set aside to receive it. Production slowly got started under the workshop management of Francis Utley, son of James Utley (1856- 1918) and a cousin of Thomas Utley. Francis had been employed in the same capacity at the Silverdale Avenue Works, thus bringing a fund of invaluable knowledge to a task familiar to him and ensuring as smooth a transition as possible.

In time the outstanding balance of the Cunard order was completed, as was a later one for windows. Thomas Utley (Rainhill) Ltd marked the occasion by publishing a catalogue giving details of the Utley Patent Sidelights and Windows fitted to the **Queen Mary**.

There followed a similar order for the supply of Utley Patent Lights for the **Queen Elizabeth**, and yet another for the **Mauretania** being built by Cammell Laird at Birkenhead.

During the Second World War, Thomas Utley was engaged in work for the Admiralty and shared his Lord Street office, free of charge, with the Maritime Belge Shipping Company in exile from occupied Europe. The Lord Street office was badly damaged in the May 1941 *blitz* on Liverpool and its contents largely destroyed. Thomas quickly found other office accommodation at 41

North John Street. After the war he was joined by his son Arthur Douglas Utley and work resumed on new designs and updating older ones. Five new patents were registered between 1945 and 1951, including a new design for a sliding window which was named TUDAH, a name derived from the initials of those involved in the design, manufacture, testing, proving and marketing : Tinkler, Almond; Utley, Thomas; Douglas Utley; Alfred Holt & Company.

As in years past, orders for products manufactured to the exacting standards of the Utley tradition continued to be awarded to Thomas Utley (Rainhill) Ltd. Customers included the Admiralty, Cunard - White Star, Canadian Pacific, Ellerman, Alfred Holt, Elder Dempster, Blue Star and Shaw Savill.

Mr Arthur Douglas Utley died in January 1949 while still a young man. Thomas Utley was joined by his daughter, Jane, at 41 North John Street, and later by her younger brother Thomas. Francis Utley retired from Thomas Utley (Rainhill) Ltd in 1962 and died in 1968 after a lifetime of service to the manufacture of Utley Patent Sidelights and Windows.

John Roby Limited and Thomas Utley (Rainhill) Ltd closed down in 1973 and the foundry site was cleared and given over to housing.

Thomas Utley died in 1975, aged 85 years, after a long and distinguished career. The third generation Thomas Utley set up in business in St. Helens, supplying parts for offshore oil rigs.

The Silverdale Avenue factory survived and in September 1997 it could be seen empty and surrounded by high security fencing. It was largely unaltered in appearance from the the date it was built in 1886. ■

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ROGERS AND BRIGHT

by Roy Fenton

The Liverpool shipowners Rogers and Bright Ltd. were acquired by Coast Lines Ltd. in 1917¹ and their ships sold, lost or renamed². The Volana Shipping Company Ltd. which Rogers and Bright managed was soon wound up.³ Perhaps because of the way all traces of the company vanished, it has been dismissed equally quickly in histories of Coast Lines.⁴⁻⁶ But with a total of 17 ships, this was by no means an insubstantial fleet, and it participated in a trade between South Wales and Liverpool which is of interest in its own right. Furthermore, one of its assets has shown a remarkable ability to survive. This is believed to be the first attempt to write a history of Rogers and Bright and their ships.

The players in this story are not just Allan H. Bright and John K. Rogers who gave their names to the managing company, but also Arthur and Ernest Cook - presumably father and son. Ships were owned and managed by a changing combination of these people, and their exact relationship is not fully apparent from surviving documentation. Rogers and Bright described themselves as merchants in 1888,⁷ and surviving letterheads from a later period list metal merchants as a subsidiary activity to steamer operation.⁸ It seems likely that Rogers and Bright traded in iron and tinplate which was manufactured in South Wales and brought to Liverpool, predominantly for transhipment.

Beginnings

Arthur Cook is first noticed in 1879, acquiring the iron steamer **Salisbury** in partnership with a William Townshend. From 1881, when Cook had become sole owner of the **Salisbury**, he started taking delivery of new coasters. The **Clyde** was initially registered in the ownership of John Jones, the Liverpool shipbuilder and engineer who built her engines, but soon passed to Cook, and the **Mersey** (1) and **Severn** were delivered to his ownership in 1882 and 1883 respectively. In 1886 came the new **Thames**, probably as a replacement for the **Salisbury**, which was sold. In 1890 Ernest Cook became manager of the ships.

The names Rogers and Bright are first recorded as shipowners in 1886. In that year they bought the second-hand steamer **Volana** and registered the Steamship Volana Co. Ltd. of which they became managers.⁷ The **Volana** was sold to the new company in return for seventy shares of £50 each. Rogers and Bright's flag - white with the letters R+B in black - was used on the seal of the new company. The five other subscribers to the Steamship Volana Co. Ltd. all described themselves as merchants.

Amalgamation

The Steamship Volana Co. Ltd. had a short existence, and in February 1888 the subscribers decided to wind it up. Almost immediately, Rogers and Bright set up another company, with a subtly different name, the Volana Shipping Co. Ltd.⁸ This took over the liabilities of the old company, and shares in it were exchanged for shares in the new company, so that the list of subscribers was virtually identical. Winding up one company and starting another involved money, time and effort; so why was it done? The new company was much more highly capitalised, with a nominal capital of £50,000 compared with just £4,000 for the old; and this seems to have anticipated a larger fleet of ships. However, it was quite possible to increase a company's capital, and it seems more likely that the reason for winding up the Steamship Volana Co. Ltd. was its bad debts, which were satisfied by the new company. It is easy to imagine Rogers and Bright, newcomers to shipowning and management, having problems running the **Volana**. Perhaps this is why the Cooks, as established shipowners, became involved. They would have been known to Rogers and Bright, as they were almost neighbours, Cooks having an office at 21 Water Street and Rogers and Bright at 17 Water Street. Neither of the Cooks was listed as an initial subscriber to the Volana Shipping Co. Ltd., but in 1890 the **Mersey** was transferred from Arthur Cook's ownership to the new company. By 1891 Rogers and Bright had taken shares in Cook's **Clyde**, and from that year the **Clyde**, **Thames** and **Severn** - in which the Cooks maintained a larger shareholding - are listed in Lloyd's Register as being under Rogers and Bright's management, and their letterhead lists these ships as being part of their fleet. Cooks also moved into Rogers and Bright's offices at 17 Water Street. This all points to an amalgamation of interests in 1890, with Cooks contributing management expertise and Rogers and Bright their interests in the metal trade from South Wales.

The death of original partner John Rogers on 17th July 1891 resulted in Ernest Cook becoming even more important to the company. Rogers' widow, Georgiana, quickly disposed of her shares in the ships to Allan Bright and to Ernest Cook, and in 1892 these two took over formal management of all the steamers.⁹ Ernest Cook also began to build up a modest holding in the Volana Shipping Co. Ltd., holding ten of the £50 shares by 1893, although Allan Bright was to continue to be the largest investor, with ninety shares.

Between 1888 and 1892, the fleet under Rogers and Bright's control expanded dramatically. The **Volga** and **Volante** were bought second-hand in 1888 and, beginning with the **Voltaire** in 1890, new ships were added so that after the incorporation of Cooks' steamers the fleet stood at eight in 1891. That year saw the organisation's only peacetime loss when the first **Mersey** collided with the **Lestris** of the Cork Steamship Co. Ltd. when arriving in the **Mersey** from Burry Port with a cargo comprising tinplate and rails.¹⁰ Both the **Mersey** and the **Lestris** sank. A new **Mersey** was quickly ordered and delivered early in

1892, the company being clearly anxious to retain the name, although it was carried by three other vessels, including a Birkenhead ferry. The **Mersey** (2) was part of an order for three ships from Harveys of Hayle, the others being the **Avon** for a single ship company and the **Volney** for the Volana Shipping Co. Ltd.

Trading Patterns

A letterhead of Rogers and Bright from around 1908 records them as having port offices at Cardiff, Llanelli and Burryport, and refers to Liverpool and Glasgow and South Wales steamers.⁸ To examine the trading patterns of the ships, two colleagues in the Liverpool Nautical Research Society kindly examined the Liverpool Customs Bills of Entry for three sample years: 1890, 1905 and 1919.¹¹

During 1890, there were 40 sailings by Rogers and Bright vessels from Liverpool to South Wales, all but two direct to Llanelli. On average, this represented a sailing once every nine days, but actual departures were not as regular as this; there was but one sailing in May and July, for instance, and six in November. Rather than have a regular timetable, the ships seemed to sail as required. Exactly half of the 40 sailings were taken by the **Volana**, ten by the **Volga**, and four by the **Volante**.

The year 1890 saw the amalgamation with Cooks' interests, and it is interesting that the former Cooks' ships made just four of the South Wales sailings, three of which were to Llanelli in June or July (although in 1891 the **Mersey** was to be lost on a South Wales to Liverpool voyage). The **Clyde**, **Mersey** and **Severn** seldom visited Liverpool, and when they did usually sailed for Dublin. Eight sailings to Irish ports, all between September and December, suggests that these were made on charter to another company, or were tramp voyages, probably with coal.

Of the Glasgow sailings advertised on letterheads, there is but one out of Liverpool in 1890, taken by the **Clyde** on 31st October. The least time between voyages out of Liverpool is six days, although a week is a more frequent interval. Thus, the **Volana** had the ability to make around 50 voyages a year, but actually made only 20 out of Liverpool. The recorded voyages out of Liverpool by the four ships owned by the Volana Shipping Co. Ltd. during 1890 (the **Voltaire** was delivered in August of that year) represent only a minority of the possible voyages, so the ships were clearly trading elsewhere. Direct sailings from South Wales to Glasgow are a possibility but, in view of the importance of the Liverpool trade, it seems likely that many such voyages would have been interrupted by calls into the Mersey, and so more than one would have shown up as a Glasgow sailing. It can be assumed, therefore, that the Glasgow steamers were something of a myth. So where were the Volana ships employed when not running between the Mersey and South Wales? It is only a guess but,

with the Company's strong South Wales connections, were they taking coal from there to Ireland? Even allowing for the fact that amalgamation took place during 1890, the former Cook ships played little part in the regular services, and probably continued tramping.

In 1905, the second year sampled, the importance of the Liverpool to Llanelli trade had increased considerably, but again the company's ships were by no means exclusively engaged in the South Wales trades. The sailings from Liverpool to Bristol Channel ports had greatly increased in frequency, from 40 to 114, representing more than two per week, 86% of which were direct to Llanelli. Indeed, on 14 days, two ships sailed from Liverpool for Llanelli, and on one notable day, 18th March 1905, three ships left Liverpool for the Bristol Channel; the **Volga** and **Volney** for Llanelli, and the **Mersey** for Bristol. The **Volga** and **Voltaire** took 91 of the 114 sailings, and this represented virtually total employment for these two ships. They achieved a regularity of sailing not seen in 1890, and each made a departure at intervals usually of between six and eight days. The **Volante** and **Volney** helped out, making eight and twelve sailings respectively, but it should be noted that several of these were to ports other than Llanelli, including Sharpness, Barry, Burry Port and Bristol. The three other ships owned in 1905 - the **Volana**, **Volscian** and **Mersey** - were seen just once at Liverpool. As in 1890, the majority of Rogers and Bright's trade clearly did not touch their home port.

The third sample year, 1919, was an atypical one as the Coast Lines take over and subsequent absorption of the company distorted trading patterns. Just nine departures from Liverpool are recorded, all for Bristol Channel ports, seven by the **Volpone** (which was sold in June), and two by the **Volhynia**. Interestingly, only two of the departures were for Llanelli.

This analysis of the trading patterns of Rogers and Bright's ships is interesting in revealing that a company which is best known for trading between South Wales and Liverpool employed only a minority of its ships in this trade. This provokes questions as to the pattern of employment of the ships of other coastal liner companies.

The South Wales Trade

At this point it is appropriate to look at why the relatively short- distance South Wales to Liverpool trade was important to the company. One of the major products carried by the ships in this trade was tinplate; iron or steel sheets coated with a wash of tin. This was manufactured first in Britain at Pontypool in the seventeenth century, and in succeeding centuries the industry expanded greatly in South Wales, especially around Llanelli and Swansea.¹² Factors in this growth were the local iron and steel industries, ample supplies of coal and water, and the pool of metal working skills which was built up by the smelting industry. The tin had to be imported but, initially at least, supplies had to come

only across the Bristol Channel from Cornish mines. The stimulus for this growth came not only from domestic demand for plated implements and cans for preserved goods, but increasingly from an export trade to North America. Tinplate was a relatively cheap and durable material which would be used for many items from implements to a house roof. The meat packing industry of Chicago used tin cans, as did the nascent oil industry. Much of the South Wales tinplate was shipped to North America via Liverpool, which had the regular cargo liner services which South Wales ports lacked. And what better way to move it to Liverpool than in small steamers which could deliver it right to the docks, and if convenient even load it overside into the ocean-going steamer? Tinplate was not the only product carried, as rails and South Wales coal were also moved to Liverpool, and general cargo - again probably transhipped from ocean-going steamers - was carried southbound.

Around 1893, the company is said to have entered the Liverpool to Cork trade.¹³ This attempt, which was presumably beaten off by established companies such as the City of Cork Steam Packet Co. Ltd., may have been a response to the decline in the exports of South Wales tinplate to the USA which followed an import tariff imposed in 1891, designed to protect the domestic US tinplate industry. Such a reduction in trade would have come at a bad time for the company, which had taken delivery of the Hayle-built **Mersey**, **Avon** and **Volney** in 1892. Although new markets were eventually found for South Wales tinplate, the industry suffered a serious decline. It is noteworthy that by 1905, Rogers and Bright were offering more sailings between Llanelli, centre of the tinplate industry, and Liverpool than in 1890. Clearly, the tinplate trade had re-established itself, or Rogers and Bright had fended off competition to take more of the available business.

Builders and Ownership

The company's choice of shipbuilders is noteworthy. After ordering from Whitehaven and Preston yards, Arthur Cook went to Liverpool builders, the Liverpool Forge Co., and John Jones and Co. The choice of Harveys of Hayle for the next three new steamers was unusual, as the Cornish company, better known for its mining equipment, built few steamers, and several of these were for its own account. From 1898, Rogers and Bright ordered ships exclusively from Williamsons of Workington, a company which had successfully changed from building large iron and steel sailing ships to constructing coastal steamers. The yard's reputation for building fine coasters paralleled that of Fullerton's of Paisley, although ironically the depression of the 1920s saw both concerns close, never adapting themselves to motor coaster construction.¹⁴

Although the Volana Shipping Co. Ltd. remained Rogers and Bright's major shipowning company, three new single ship companies were formed, the Liverpool Avon Steamship Co. Ltd. in 1892; and in late 1898 and early 1899

the Liverpool Steamship Mersey Co. Ltd. and the Liverpool Steamship Clyde Co. Ltd. Each acquired a ship which was new in the case of the **Avon** or, in the case of the second **Mersey** and the **Clyde**, had previously been in Rogers and Bright ownership. Allan Bright and Ernest Cook took four of the 64 shares of £120 each in the Liverpool Steamship Mersey Co. Ltd.¹⁵ As was often the case with single-ship companies, both Mersey and Clyde companies were liquidated as the ships were sold; in the case of the Clyde this happening in a little over a year after formation. Management of the **Avon** was transferred to John Esplen in 1894, and she was running in the general cargo trade to Antwerp when lost in 1897. The continued existence of two separate fleets, the ships with river names owned by single ship companies or by individual shareholders on the 64th system, and the **Vol** ships owned by the Volana Shipping Co. Ltd. indicates that the trading interests of Rogers and Bright and Cook were kept largely separate, and this is confirmed by the trading patterns revealed by the Customs Bills of Entry. Allan Bright relinquished some of his control in 1905 when Ernest Cook was appointed sole manager of all steamers, a job previously shared by Cook and Bright. Nevertheless, Bright remained the major shareholder of the Volana Shipping Co. Ltd. and a director almost until the end.

Finale : enter Coast Lines

The next major event in the company's history was the delivery of two ships in 1913, the **Volturnus** and the second **Volana**, both from Workington. Repeats of the **Volhynia** of 1911, these were to be the last ships bought. As with so many shipping companies, the First World War brought losses of ships and men, and potential profits which, in various combinations, encouraged many owners to quit the business. Rogers and Bright's loss was the **Voltaire**, sunk by a U-boat near the Bishop Rock in February 1917.¹⁶ Around this time, and possibly sparked off by the loss, Ernest Cook seems to have begun negotiations aimed at selling off the company and its ships. The next meeting of the company was held at the offices of the Royal Mail Steamship Company in London.⁸ Only Ernest Cook of the Liverpool directors remained. Amongst the new directors was Alfred Read who had masterminded the amalgamation of three Liverpool coastal liner companies to form Bacon, Powell and Hough Lines Ltd. Another was Owen Cosby-Philipps, who had recently bought this new company and set it, as Coast Lines Ltd., on a megalomaniac path of expansion which saw it acquire and sometimes swallow many small and not so small liner companies. The Volana Shipping Co. Ltd., with just four ships, was one of the smaller companies acquired, bought for £130,000.¹ It became a subsidiary of Coast Lines Ltd. in 1917, but in April 1919 it was resolved to wind it up,⁷ the decision meriting no more than a brief announcement at the next Coast Lines' board meeting.³ Of the company's ships, the **Volhynia** was renamed **Gower Coast** and the second **Volana** became the **Cornish Coast**. Almost a year after the ending of the war, the **Volturnus** was mined in the



Photographs of Rogers and Bright ships in their original funnel colours of black with a very broad white band are rare. The vessel in this Bristol view is unidentified, but is either the **Volga** of 1881 or **Volante** of 1884. Both were bought from a Belfast coal importer in 1888 and were the only ships which had just two masts. (*Roy Fenton collection*)

North Sea. and the **Volpone** was sold for £21,750.¹⁷ Little trace now remained of the company, presumably because its new owners found the inconvenience of administering it as a separate entity outweighed any goodwill which the Volana Shipping Co. Ltd. retained.

Survivor

One relic of the company has long outlived its liquidator. The **Volana**(2) is, against the odds, still afloat under the Turkish flag. Although fitted with an oil engine since 1961, the hull of the **Aksel 1** is still recognisable as a classic British steam coaster, after 85 years suffering the hard knocks of the coasting trade in the Irish and Black Seas.¹⁸

Coast Lines, which absorbed Rogers and Bright, experienced a decline in the 1960s as precipitate as their rise fifty years earlier, and disappeared in the early 1970s. It is somewhat ironic that a ship built for a subsidiary which Coast Lines considered of little account should have survived them.

Notes and References

- 1 Minute Book of Coast Lines Ltd., National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, CST/1/1; meeting 5.12.1917.
- 2 Details of ships' careers come from a variety of sources. Initial research was carried out in *Lloyd's Register and Mercantile Navy Lists*. This was supplemented by information from Liverpool registers held in the Merseyside Maritime Museum, and closed registers held as classes BT108 and BT110 in the Public Records Office, Kew, which give intimate details of share transactions and management changes. Casualty details are from *Lloyd's Register Casualty Returns*, *Lloyd's Lists* and *Wreck Books* held in the offices of Lloyd's Register of Shipping. Details of ownership of ships which left UK registry are from *Lloyd's Register*; and in these cases sale dates without a change of name should be regarded as accurate to plus or minus one year.
- 3 Minute Book of Coast Lines Ltd., National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, CST/1/1; meeting 22.5.1919.
- 4 Duckworth, C.D.L. and Langmuir, G.E. : *Clyde and other Coastal Steamers*. Glasgow, Brown, Son & Ferguson Ltd. 1939 (a monumental work, extensively mined by later authors).
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- 7 Returns of the Steamship Volana Co. Ltd., Public Records Office, Kew, BT31/3731/23234.
- 8 Returns of the Volana Shipping Co. Ltd., Public Records Office, Kew, BT31/14909/26068. Amongst these papers are occasional letters from the company to the Registrar of Companies, written or typed on headed notepaper.
- 9 The Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen, operating under the authority of the various Merchant Shipping Acts, demanded a named person or persons as manager of a vessel. *Lloyd's Register* contents itself with listing a company, and gives Rogers and Bright as managers from 1891 onwards.
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Acknowledgement

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The Volscian of 1898 was the first of five steamers ordered by Rogers and Bright from Williamsons of Workington *(Roy Fenton Collection)*

1. SALISBURY 1879-1886 Iron
 O.N. 76204 187g 114n 110.2 x 19.1 x 10.3 feet
 C. 2-cyl. by Carr, Fowles & Co., Sunderland.
12.1876: Launched by Robert Fell & Co., Newcastle for their own account.
11.2.1879: To William Townshend & Arthur Cook, Liverpool. *7.2.1881:* To Arthur Cook, Liverpool. *1886:* To George, Michael H. & John Williams, Scorer. *6.3.1899:* To John Fletcher, Kinghorn, Fife. *21.12.1901:* Sank in river whilst arriving at Montrose with coal from Sunderland.

2. CLYDE 1881-1900 Iron
 O.N. 84072 296g 133n 133.2 x 20.7 x 11.5 feet
 C. 2-cyl. by John Jones & Sons, Liverpool
12.1880: Launched by Whitehaven Shipbuilding Co. Ltd., Whitehaven (46) for John Jones & Sons, Liverpool. *1881:* To Arthur Cook, Liverpool. *1890:* To Rogers & Bright, Liverpool. *13.1.1899:* To the Liverpool Steamship Clyde Ltd., Liverpool. *4.7.1900:* To James Crichton, London. *25.5.1902:* Struck breakwater leaving Portland and sank near St. Catherines Point; Aberystwyth to Antwerp.

3. MERSEY (1) 1882-1891 Iron
 O.N. 86206 311g 198n 141.0 x 20.7 x 11.6 feet
 C. 2-cyl. by William Allsup & Sons, Preston
5.1882: Launched by William Allsup & Sons, Preston for Arthur Cook, Liverpool. *1890:* To the Volana Shipping Co. Ltd., Liverpool. *23.5.1891:* Sunk in collision with LESTRIS (1,065/1872) in the Mersey; Burry Port to Liverpool, rails and tinplate.

4. SEVERN 1883-1896 Iron
 O.N. 87918 374g 233n 145.0 x 22.2 x 10.7 feet
 C. 2-cyl. by John Jones & Sons, Liverpool.
11.1883: Launched by the Liverpool Forge Co., (45) for Arthur Cook, Liverpool. *8.4.1896:* To Alexander Noble & Charles M. MacLellan, Londonderry. *11.10.1898:* To Charles R. Davidson, Aberdeen. *2.1899:* To Compania de Carbones Asturianos, Portugalete, Spain and renamed VIZCAYA. *19.11.1900:* Abandoned in the Bay of Biscay; Gijon to Bilbao, coal.

5. THAMES 1886-1897
 O.N. 93668 431g 235n 151.0 x 23.1 x 12.8 feet
 C. 2-cyl. by John Jones & Sons, Liverpool
5.1886: Launched by John Jones & Sons, Lpl. (48) for Arthur Cook, Liverpool. *31.3.1897:* To William Pemberton, Liverpool. *11.1898:* To Almeida, Lobato & Co., Para, Brazil. *27.12.1898:* Stranded at Madeira, Brazil, sank in deep water.

6. VOLANA (1) 1886-1906 Iron
 O.N. 84680 245g 154n 120.7 x 23.2 x 9.7 feet
 C. 2-cyl. by Plenty & Son, Newbury.
 6.1882: Launched by Charles Hill & Sons, Bristol (2) for Cuthbert, Hancock & Lamb, Cardiff. 1886: To the Steamship Volana Co.Ltd., Liverpool. 3.1888: To the Volana Shipping Co. Ltd., Liverpool. 20.4.1906: To Isaac W. Laing, Sunderland. 30.11.1907: To Charles Matcham, London (W. Pugh Williams, Bristol, manager). 26.5.1909: To Maynard W.C. Wemyss (William Bryant, manager), Bristol. 5.5.1910: To United Stone Firms Ltd., Bristol. 12.1911: To Companhia Paulista de Madeiras, Santos, Brazil and renamed VISTA ALEGRE. 26.1.1912: Left Cardiff for Santos with coal and disappeared.

7. VOLGA 1888-1917 Iron
 O.N. 83929 248g 135n 155.3 x 21.7 x 10.5 feet
 C. 2-cyl. by McIlwaine & Lewis, Belfast.
 2.1881: Launched by McIlwaine & Lewis, Belfast, (11) for William A. Grainger, Belfast as TOPIC. 1888: Acquired and renamed VOLGA. 5.2.1917: To James F. Price, Bangor, Co. Down. 29.9.1917: To W.H.Bowater Ltd., Birmingham (Percy F. Eckles, Hull, manager). 8.11.1922: To the Bennett Steamship Co. Ltd., Goole 24.11.1932: To the General Steam Navigation Co.Ltd., London. 29.5.1937: Register closed after breaking up by Thomson & McGregor at Bo'ness.

8. VOLANTE 1888-1912 Iron
 O.N. 86550 315g 132n 159.2 x 23.1 x 11.3 feet
 C. 2-cyl. by McIlwaine & Lewis, Belfast.
 3.1884: Launched by McIlwaine & Lewis, Belfast (21) for William A. Grainger, Belfast as THEME. 1888: Acquired. 31.10.1889: Renamed VOLANTE. 30.10.1912: To John Kelly Ltd., Belfast. 31.10.1912: Renamed CULTRA. 29.5.1914: To William A. Grainger, Belfast. 17.6.1914: Renamed THEME. 14.10.1915: To the Antrim Iron Ore Co. Ltd., Belfast. 10.11.1915: Renamed GLENAAN. 21.1.1932: Wrecked on Torlinn Point, South Arran, Belfast to Glasgow in ballast.

9. VOLTAIRE 1890-1917
 O.N. 97807 418g 207n 150.0 x 24.0 x 10.6 feet
 T. 3-cyl. by Ross & Duncan, Govan; 11 knots
 8.1890: Completed by the Grangemouth Dockyard Co., Grangemouth (131) for the company. 11.2.1917: Sunk by the German submarine UC 65, 25miles NNE of the Bishops; Llanelli to Liverpool, general cargo.

10. MERSEY(2)**1892-1910**

O.N. 99363 537g 249n 173.0 x 25.2 x 11.9 feet

T. 3-cyl. by Harvey & Co. Ltd., Hayle; 10½ knots.

30.11.1891: Launched by Harvey & Co. Ltd., Hayle (153) for Rogers & Bright, Liverpool. 23.11.1898: To the Liverpool Steamship Mersey Ltd., Liverpool. 23.9.1910: To Richard Hughes & Co., Liverpool. 11.3.1920: To Owen H. Donnelly, Dublin & Robert Leeson, Liverpool. 28.7.1921: To Richard Hughes & Co., Liverpool. 18.7.1930: Renamed MERSEY ROSE. 12.10.1930: Sunk in collision with GLENEDEN (4,761/1909) in the English Channel (50°00' N, 02°04'W); Goole to Brest, coal.

11. AVON**1892-1894**

O.N. 99398 534g 225n 173.0 x 25.3 x 11.9 feet

T. 3-cyl. by Harvey & Co. Ltd., Hayle; 10½ knots.

4.1892: Completed by Harvey & Co.Ltd., Hayle (154) for the Liverpool Avon Steamship Co. Ltd., Liverpool. 15.9.1894: Manager John Esplen, Liverpool. 1.10.1897: Sank in collision with SPRIGHTLY (823/1894) off the Lizard; Antwerp to Liverpool, general cargo.

12. VOLNEY**1892-1912**

O.N. 99443 361g 111n 140.0 x 22.1 x 10.4 feet

T. 3-cyl. by Harvey & Co. Ltd., Hayle; 10½ knots.

8.1892: Completed by Harvey & Co. Ltd., Hayle (155) for the company. 17.9.1912: To John Kelly Ltd., Belfast. 16.10.1912: renamed CRAIGAVAD. 13.11.1915: To Cullen, Allen & Co. Ltd., Belfast. 15.3.1917: Wrecked at the mouth of the River Bann; Liverpool to Coleraine, coal.

13. VOLSCIAN**1898-1913**

O.N.109452 616g 181n 179.7 x 27.9 x 12.1 feet

T. 3-cyl. by Ross & Duncan, Govan.

8.1898: Completed by R. Williamson & Son, Workington (152) for the company. 23.10.1913: To Harold S. Greenacre, Goole. 28.1.1914: To the Volscian Steamship Co. Ltd. (Charles D. Moore, manager), Goole. 4.1925: To A. Coterillo, Havana, Cuba and renamed ORIENTE. 1926: To Compania Naviera de Cuba S.A., Havana. 1942: To Compania Naviera del Caribe, Havana. 1950: To Compania Naviera Oriente S.A., Havana. 20.10.1950: Wrecked and abandoned during a cyclone near Manzanilla, Cape Cruz, Cuba; Puerto Cortez and Cienfuegos to Caimanera, Guantanamo, lumber.

14. VOLPONE**1907-1919**

O.N. 124058 531g 187n 164.8 x 26.6 x 11.0 feet

T. 3-cyl. by Ross & Duncan, Govan; 9½ knots.

3.1907: Completed by R. Williamson & Son, Workington (206) for the

company. 8.4.1919: To Coast Lines Ltd., Liverpool. 17.6.1919: To Regis Shipping Co. Ltd., (Harrison, Sons & Co. Ltd., managers), Cardiff. 10.2.1920: Renamed LYME REGIS. 16.3.1925: To British Lines Ltd. (Stuart H. Biscoe, manager), London. 16.10.1925: To Continental Lines Ltd. (Albert V. Sawkins, manager), London. 11.11.1925: renamed CONTINENTAL COASTER. 18.2.1928: To William A. Wilson, Southampton. 2.4.1936: To James S. Hooper, Hove. 7.4.1936: To the Don David Coastal Shipping Co. Ltd., London. 14.9.1939: To British Isles Coasters Ltd., Cardigan. 24.9.1940: Torpedoed by German E-boat off Cromer; London to the Tyne, scrap iron.

15. VOLHYNIA 1911-1919

O.N. 131370 617g 255n 175.0 x 25.1 x 11.1 feet

T. 3-cyl. by Ross & Duncan, Govan; 10½ knots

8.1911: Completed by R. Williamson & Son, Workington (207) for the company. 8.4.1919: To Coast Lines Ltd., Liverpool. 27.1.1920: Renamed GOWER COAST. 5.5.1932: To John Kelly Ltd., Belfast. 29.6.1932: Renamed MILLISLE. 21.3.1941: Sunk by air attack, 2 miles East of Helwick Lightvessel, Cardiff to Cork, coal.

16. VOLTURNUS 1913-1919

O.N. 135434 615g 252n 175.0 x 27.1 x 11.1 feet

T. 3-cyl. by Ross & Duncan, Govan; 10½ knots.

1.1913: Completed by R. Williamson & Son, Workington (215) for the company. 8.4.1919: To Coast Lines Ltd., Liverpool. 1.11.1919: Mined about 5 miles south-east of Skaw Lightvessel; London to Copenhagen, general.

17. VOLANA (2) 1913-1919

.N. 135527 616g 256n 175.0 x 27.1 x 11.1 feet

T. 3-cyl. by Ross & Duncan, Govan; 10½ knots.

11.1913: Completed by R. Williamson & Son, Workington (223) for the company. 8.4.1919: To Coast Lines Ltd., Liverpool. 9.1.1920: Renamed CORNISH COAST. 17.6.1935: To Monroe Brothers Ltd., Liverpool. 14.8.1935: Renamed KYLE QUEEN. 1.12.1936: To the Kyle Shipping Co. Ltd. (Monroe Brothers, managers), Liverpool. 12.10.1937: To the Walton Steamship Co. Ltd. (F.L.Dawson & Co. Ltd., managers), Newcastle. 9.1951: To Sultan Muhanli ve Kardesleri Bayrum ve Maksut, Istanbul, Turkey and renamed KARDESLER. 1955: to Meso Vapur Isletmesi, Istanbul, and renamed MESO. 1956: To Zeki ve Ziya Sonmez, Izzet Kirtil, Istanbul and renamed EMEL. 1961: Rebuilt at Istanbul with a 6-cyl. 2SCSA oil engine by Ansaldo S.A., Italy. 1982: To Sonmez Denizcilik ve Ticaret A.S., Istanbul. 1982: To Gazanfer Akar, Istanbul and renamed AKSEL 1. **Still in service (1997).**

WHAT'S IN A NAME . . . ? THE "BEN-MY-CHREE"

by Ron Evans

It has been a consistent policy of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company, since its formation in 1830, to name its ships with traditional Manx names. **Ben-my-Chree** (literally *Woman of my Heart*, popularly translated from the Manx Gaelic as *Girl of my Heart*) has been used five times in the past 168 years, and the new vessel is the sixth to carry this famous name.

In this sixtieth anniversary year of The Liverpool Nautical Research Society, it seems appropriate to celebrate all five vessels of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company which have carried the name **Ben-my-Chree**. This has been a household name not only to the Manx people, but also to the people of Liverpool and Merseyside and particulars and a brief history of each vessel will rekindle many memories. Two vessels, the **Ben-my-Chree** (4) of 1927 and (5) of 1966 were built by Cammell Laird & Company at Birkenhead. All of the ships to carry the name have been specially built for the Company's services including the Liverpool and Douglas route. Many of the ships have carried crew members from Liverpool and Merseyside, and many are the holiday- makers who have taken passage in them.

Ben-my-Chree has long been part of the Mersey scene. To close this introduction to these famous ships, an extract from Robert Napier's Trials Log and Technical Specification for the **Ben-my-Chree** (1) is reproduced below, courtesy of Glasgow University:

BEN-MY-CHREE left Lancefield dock Saturday 13 June 1845 for Douglas. Strokes per min.			BEN-MY-CHREE left Douglas for Liverpool the first trip with passengers Wednesday 17 June 1845. Strokes per min.		
Lancefield dock dep.	6.12am.		Douglas quay dep.	8.56am.	Steam not up.
Renfrew	6.45 about 8lbs on boiler	31	Douglas Head	8.58	27.5
Greenock	8.05	30		9.15	28.5
Gourock	8.20 stopped about 5 mins. to land			9.30	29
	G.Thompson & Co.			9.45-2.30	31av.
Cumbræ	9.50	30	Bell Buoy	2.37	31
Ailsa Craig	12.25 about 10lbs on boiler	32	Light Ship	2.59	30
Corsewall Point	1.40 all sail set, light quarterly breeze.	32	Rock Light	3.37	30
	2.10 took in all sail, no wind.	32	Clarence dock	3.50pm	
Port Patrick	2.40	31.5	High water about 1hr.30mins. after leaving Douglas. The shaking of furnaces for 1hr30mins. after starting caused the compass to revolve and find no resting place. Very hazy, on nearing the land did not see <i>King Orry</i> which left Liverpool at 11.0am. Must have been a good bit too far to the westward as we had to haul up about 2.5 points about an hour before making the Bell Buoy.		
Mull of Galloway	3.55	31.5			
Point of Ayr	5.48	31.5			
Maughold Head	6.32	31.5			
Douglas Bay	7.30pm.	31.5			
High water passing Culzean, carried the tides past the Mull.					
Tide against from Point of Ayr to Maughold.					

"BEN-MY-CHREE" (1) : Iron paddle steamer, side lever engines

Official Number: 21922 *Signal Letters:* N J H L

Builders: Robert Napier, Glasgow, Yard No: 13

Launched: 3rd May, 1845 *Tonnage:* 399 *Cost:* £11,500

Dimensions: Loa: 165' . Lbp: 151' 9". Breadth: 23' 0" Depth: 12' 5"

Machinery: Engines were transferred from earlier Isle of Man steamer **Queen of the Isle**. 2/side lever paddle engines, 140nhp., 20psi., 9½ knots. 2/boilers, 6 furnaces each 7' 7" x 2' 4". 54 tubes, each 10' x 8' dia, furnace bars 106 sq.ft.

1845 June 13th: Delivery voyage from Lancefield Dock, Glasgow to Douglas.

1845 June 17th: Maiden voyage with passengers, Douglas to Liverpool, Clarence Dock, 6hrs 54mins.

1860: Sold for further trading in West Africa for £1,200; lying as a hulk in the Bonny River in 1930.

Model Notes: First steamer built of iron, three masted schooner.

Plans: Reconstructed by the author from Samuel Walters paintings. As the engines were ex **Queen of the Isle**, it has been assumed the engine room layout could have been similar, therefore these plans have been developed from the plans of the **Queen of the Isle**.

Dimensions: There are discrepancies in lengths overall and between perpendiculars in many references. Robert Napier's yard book gives the proposed length between perpendiculars as 150', whereas *Island Lifeline* (1980), Connery Chappell, quotes the length between perpendiculars as 151' 9". There may of course have been a difference in definition of registered dimensions at this time.

BEN-MY-CHREE (2) : Iron paddle steamer, simple oscillating engines

Official Number: 67288 *Signal Letters:* P K F Q

Builders: Barrow Shipbuilding Company, Barrow-in-Furness, Yard No: 25

Launched: 6th May, 1875 *Passengers:* 1,030

Gross Tonnage: 1,030 (later inc. to 1,192) *Cost:* £38,000.

Dimensions : Loa: 318'. Lbp: 310'. Breadth: 31'. Depth: 13'

Machinery: Simple oscillating, 2/cyl. 65ins.dia.90ins.stroke, 420nhp, 2300ihp. 14 knots. 8/cylindrical boilers. Re-boilered in 1884 by James Jack & Co. with 2/steel double ended boilers 17' 8" x 19' 6" dia. 8/furnaces 4' dia. to each boiler.

Firegrate area 406.4sq.ft. Heating surface 10,000 sq.ft. Coal 100 tons.

1875: May 6th: Launched by Lady Ramsden at the yard of the Barrow Shipbuilding Company.

1883: Aug. 31st: When alongside Prince's Landing Stage at Liverpool, the flat **Sarah** collided with her on a strong ebb tide. The tug **Fiery Cross** tried to tow the flat clear, without success. Slight damage.

1884: Reboilered, four funnels provided in pairs forward and aft of the paddle boxes. This made her the only four funnelled vessel in the history of the company. At the same time the accommodation was refitted and a promenade deck was added from just forward of the paddles to the stern.

1901: August: Collided with the Powell steamer **West Coast** in the Crosby Channel, River Mersey.

1906: Broken up at Morecambe by T.W.Ward & Co.

Model Notes: Originally built with two funnels, forward and aft of the paddle boxes, as portrayed in a painting by Samuel Walters. The reconstruction with four funnels gave her the unique appearance for which she was famous. The paddle boxes were highly decorated, and the following particulars from the Company's records provide some interesting details of the paddle wheels and sponsons:

Paddle Wheels: Effective diameter:- 19'1". Overall diameter: 24' 0".

Floats: Each wheel was fitted with ten floats 9' 6" long x 3' 9" wide. Dip 14".

Sponsons: Beam overall sponson rubbers 56' 8". Height above water 5' 0". Mean draught: 9' 10".

BEN-MY-CHREE (3) Steel, triple screw, direct drive turbine steamer.

Official Number: 118605 *Signal Letters:* H R C Q

Launched: 13th March, 1908

Builders: Vickers, Sons & Maxim, Barrow-in-Furness, Yard No: 363

Gross Tonnage: 2,550 *Cost:* £112,100 *Passengers:* 2,549 *Crew:* 119

Dimensions: Loa: 389'. Lbp: 375'. Breadth: 46'. Depth: 18' 6"

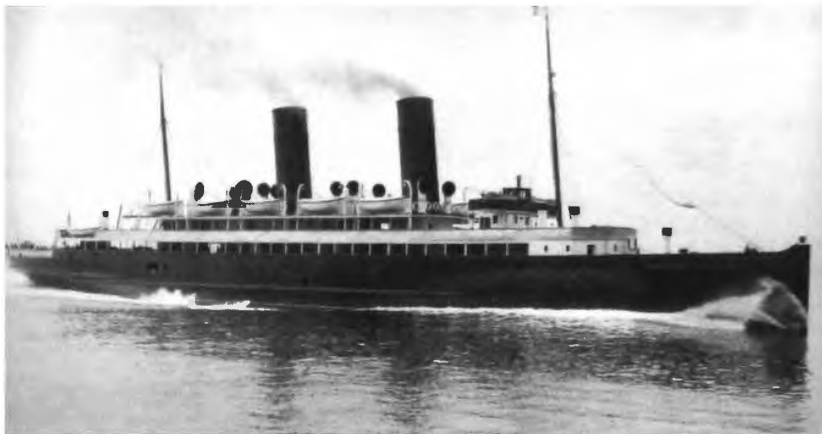
Machinery: Triple Screws, 3/ direct drive turbines, 170psi, 14,000ihp, 2,000nhp. *Speed:* 24.5 knots. *Coal:* 210 tons.

1908, August 8th: Trial Speed: 26.64 knots. The second turbine driven ship ordered by the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company, she was faster than the **Viking** (1905), and was the largest and fastest cross-channel ship of her day.

1909, July 9th: Record passage, Mersey Bar Lightship/Douglas Head 2hrs 16mins, and from berth to berth 2hrs 53mins., an average speed of 24.12 knots. This record stood until 29th June, 1994 when **SeaCat Isle of Man** crossed in 2hrs 20mins, berth to berth.

1911, June: Douglas Jubilee Celebrations. The *Ben* took part in a Round the Island challenge race with an early aircraft (pilot Graham White), but the tiny aircraft had to land frequently to make adjustments, and the **Ben-my- Chree** emerged the victor!

1915: Requisitioned by the Admiralty for conversion to seaplane carrier, large hangar aft. Made aviation history when an aircraft launched from her decks torpedoed and sank a 5,000 ton Turkish supply ship.



The **Ben-my-Chree** (3) of 1908 (*John Shepherd collection*)



The **Ben-my-Chree** (4) of 1927 (*John Shepherd collection*)

1917, Jan. 11th: Sunk by Turkish gunfire at Castellorizo, Turkey.

1920: Salvage steamer **Vallette** raised the wreck, and towed the hulk to Piraeus. In 1923 the hulk was towed to Venice for demolition.

Model Notes: Flush decked, promenade deck 270ft long. Fine counter stern. With her two large funnels, red with black tops, she resembled a miniature Cunard liner, and was the longest vessel ever built for the company. A shipbuilders model is located at the Company's offices at Douglas.

BEN-MY-CHREE (4) : Steel, twin-screw steamer, geared turbines.

Official Number : 145304 *Signal Letters:* L C F G (G N D B from 1934)

Builders: Cammell Laird & Co. Ltd., Birkenhead, Yard No: 926.

Launched: 5th April, 1927 *Gross Tonnage:* 2,586 *Cost:* £200,000

Dimensions: Loa: 366' 0" Lbp: 355' 0" Breadth: 46' 0 Depth: 18' 6"

Machinery: Twin screw, 4/single reduction geared turbines, 2/double, 2/single ended oil-fired boilers, first oil-fired vessel built for Company. Boiler pressure 220psi., 12,400ihp., 1,317nhp., *Speed:* 22.5 knots

Passengers: 2,586 *Crew:* 82

1927, June 27th: Trials, attained an average speed of 22.8 knots over nine runs of the measured mile.

1927, June 29th: Maiden voyage, Liverpool to Douglas; Mersey Bar Lightship to Douglas Head, 2hrs 27mins, average 22.4 knots.

1927, August: In collision with the **Snaefell** approaching Victoria Pier, Douglas. Both vessels damaged, requiring repairs at Birkenhead.

1932, April: Hull painted white with green boot topping and narrow black dividing band, instead of the Company's standard livery since launch.

1939, Sept: Requisitioned a few days after outbreak of war and served as a troopship.

1940, June 2nd: Damaged in collision with another troopship, Folkestone/Dunkirk, whilst taking part in Operation Dynamo..

1940-1944: Troop transport duties, Iceland/ North British ports. D-Day landings

1946, May: Released from war service, required extensive refitting at Birkenhead.

1946, July 6th: Commenced Liverpool/Douglas service. Temporary shortened mainmast fitted, restored to its former height and funnel considerably shortened in major refit at end of year.

1950: Cravat cowl removed from funnel. *1957/58 Winter:* Major refit.

1965, Sept. 13th: Final sailing Douglas/Liverpool and laid up in Morpeth Dock

1965, Dec. 18th: Left Birkenhead under tow of tug **Fairplay XI** for ship-breakers at Ghent.



The **Ben-my-Chree** (5) of 1966 (*John Shepherd collection*)



The **Ben-my-Chree** (6) of 1998 (*Ron Evans*)

Model Notes: Changes in appearance during 38 years of service are described above. Length of boat deck 186' . Length of promenade deck 255'. Tumble home 21". Beam overall belting 49' 2". Promenade and shelter decks were partially enclosed with glass screening, and her original massive funnel with its triple chime whistle were distinctive features. The vertical height of the funnel above the boat deck was 39' 0".

BEN-MY-CHREE (5) : Steel welded, twin screw steamer, geared turbines.

Official Number: 186355 *Signal Letters:* G R X Y

Builders: Cammell Laird & Co.Ltd., Birkenhead. *Yard No:* 1320

Launched: 10th December, 1965

Gross Tonnage: 2,762. *Cost:* £1,400,000. *Passengers:* 1,400 *Crew:* 60 *Cars:* 90

Dimensions: Loa: 344' 0" Lbp: 325' 0" Breadth: 50' 0" Depth: 18' 0"

Machinery: Twin screw Pametrada steam turbines, double reduction gearing,

Babcock & Wilcox integral furnace oil-fired boilers, 1,696nhp., 9,500ihp.

Speed: 21.5 knots *Stabilisers:* Denny Brown R Type.

1966, May 10th: Trials on the Clyde. Speed on trials 22.086 knots.

1966, May 12th: Maiden voyage, Liverpool / Douglas.

1966, May 15th: Round the Island excursion.

1966, May 16th: Sailed light for Barrow to lay-up during seamen's strike.

1966, July 2nd: Scheduled sailings resumed at end of seamen's strike.

1966, Sept. 9th: Record passage, Douglas / Ardrossan, 4hrs 50mins.

1967: Converted to one-class passenger accommodation. Last Steam Packet vessel designed for two-tier system.

1973, Sept 2nd: Excursion sailing Liverpool / Llandudno for first and last time, also cruise along Anglesey coast.

1978: Fitted with steam powered bow thrust unit (500hp). Fitted with triple-chime whistle from **Tynwald** (5).

1984, Sept 18th: Final voyage to Liverpool. Laid up at Vittoria Dock, Birkenhead, with **Manx Maid** (2). Both vessels offered for sale.

1985, Feb 5th: Sold to American interests for static use, but this did not materialise. Chartered back to IOMSPCo 25th May - 9th June, registered at Liverpool, for T.T. Race Fortnight services on Heysham / Douglas service.

1985, June 10th: Heysham / Birkenhead (light). Passed the Rock Light, New Brighton at 14.30hrs - the last steam powered sailing of all after 155 years.

1989, Aug. 16th: Left Birkenhead under tow of tug **Hollygarth** for ship-breakers at Santander, Spain.

Model Notes: Second ship designed for the Company as a car ferry with patent ramps for side loading at any state of the tide. Sister ship, **Manx Maid** (2) 1962, was also built by Cammell Laird & Co. Ltd., Yard No. 1302, to the same

design, but the bridge structures were different. The **Ben-my-Chree** also carried 16 patent inflatable liferafts stowed on quick-release elevated trackways on the boat deck. Both vessels had small *Three Legs of Mann* rondels in red and gold on both sides of the bows. Starboard side window arrangement differs to the port side.

BEN-MY-CHREE (6) : Roll On / Roll Off Passenger Ferry

Builders: van der Giessen-de Noord, Rotterdam, Yard No: 971

Dimensions : Loa: 124.90m Lbp: 115.10m Breadth (moulded): 23.40m

Deadweight at design draught: 2,220 tonnes *Service Speed:* 19 knots

Passengers: 500 *Total trailer lane length:* 1,235m

Launched: Saturday, 4th April, 1998

1998, July 6th: Arrived at Douglas from builders to provide, according to Sea Containers, *A First-Class Service to Mann.*

1998, July 9th: Arrived in the Mersey for berthing trials. It was found that the stern doors (weighing 38 tonnes) are too heavy for the pontoon link-span at Liverpool landing stage, and consequently the new ship will not be able to use Liverpool when in service, unless she enters the enclosed dock system.

1998, July 10th: Arrived at Heysham for berthing trials. The *Ben* will not fit on to Heysham 1 and 2 Linkspans; consequently she must use Heysham 3 which ironically is the old Steam Packet linkspan from the South Edward Pier. A motor coach is required to load and off-load foot passengers.

1998, August: Commenced passenger service amid a storm of protest concerning her cramped open-plan accommodation. The **King Orry** is retained to assist the new vessel. Sea Containers (as parent company) official line is amended, and the new ship is now "*a cargo vessel with limited passenger accommodation, and is back-up for the SeaCat*"

1998, September 29th: **The King Orry** is withdrawn and offered for sale, leaving the **Ben-my-Chree** to maintain the Heysham - Douglas service alone.

1998, October: Questions tabled at the Manx Parliament, Tynwald, regarding the unsuitability of the new vessel. Sea Containers announce plans to improve the *Ben's* passenger facilities following 'customer comments'. ■

1938

by Alan McClelland

During the year in which the Liverpool Nautical Research Society was founded, the British shipping industry demonstrated significant evidence of its emergence from the long slump which had afflicted it between 1930 and 1935. However uncertainties remained, including the increasing threat of war and misgivings, particularly in the tramp sector, that an improvement in trade in 1936-37 might not be sustained. Reports, such as that into the state of deep sea tramp shipping from the Chamber of Shipping of the UK in 1938, expressed concern at the decline of British Shipping since the First World War. Amongst the contributory causes to that situation was the lack of sustained, active encouragement on the part of successive governments, compounded by failure to realise the extent to which the free trade in shipping activities was endangered by the growth of economic nationalism. Matters were made worse by the conservative attitudes adopted by some shipping companies, though this judgement needs careful qualification which it has not always received.

In 1938 Merseyside and especially the Port of Liverpool remained one of the world's most important maritime centres. Well known shipping companies and financial institutions such as Martins Bank and the Royal Insurance Company had their headquarters or very substantial presences in the city. Liverpool shipowners continued to exercise much influence on developments in technology and trade, particularly in the liner sector. Across the Mersey the Cammell Laird yard launched a wide selection of vessels for commercial and naval service, some with advanced features. Of its merchant ship output the second **Mauretania** laid down for the Cunard White Star Line in 1937 and launched in July 1938 inevitably had the greatest impact on the general public. At the time of her completion she was the largest merchant vessel to have been built in England, as opposed to Scotland and Northern Ireland. Details of her construction and fitting out were widely publicised at the time, and are readily accessible in contemporary technical journals and the lay press.

Lairds produced other significant merchant ships in 1938, including the **City of Edinburgh** for Ellerman Lines, propelled by single reduction geared turbines and exhibiting a fairly complicated yet functional silhouette. In the same year John Holt & Company of Liverpool took delivery from the yard of the **John Holt** and **Jonathan Holt** for their own West African trade. These steamers were given oil-fired triple expansion engines with Bauer Wach exhaust turbines. The first British-built machinery of this particular type had been installed aboard the Booth Steamship Company's **Boniface** of Liverpool, completed ten years earlier by R. & W. Hawthorn Leslie & Company. The Holt

ships were finished to very high standards, and were elegant in appearance, featuring raked stems and elliptical sterns. [Under the command of Captain Fuller the **John Holt** took on board over 1,000 survivors from the stricken Cunard White Star liner **Lancastria** off St. Nazaire in June 1940. Many of the men were severely wounded and Captain Fuller decided to make for England alone by the most direct route, through minefields - reaching his destination safely.]

In November 1938 the motor ship **Seaforth** was launched by the Caledon Shipbuilding & Engineering Company for Liverpool's Elder Dempster Line. Like the Holt sister ships, the **Seaforth** was designed for services to and from West Africa. As one of the numerous Kysant group of companies, the Elder Dempster Line was amongst the first to take advantage of oil engine developments. By 1938 it was under the control of Alfred Holt & Company, and the use of oil engines was continued. Given the shallow waters off the West African coast and its numerous creeks, considerable commercial benefits were derived from the increased cargo capacities on light draughts conveyed by the employment of motor ships. John Holt & Company operating a small fleet in the same waters felt they could not risk breakdowns which were more frequent with oil engines than well-trying steam machinery. They sought to increase both efficiency and fuel economy by the addition of the exhaust turbines in their new ships.

A much larger Liverpool liner concern which continued to make use of steam reciprocating engines was that managed by Thos. & Jas. Harrison & Company. There were sound economic reasons for their policy in the inter-war era, the principal of these being their access to supplies of good quality local Haydock, South Yorkshire and Brymbo coal on favourable long term contract terms, and the fact that their ships' boiler furnaces were specially designed to burn a variety of grades of coal, including the cheapest Indian fuel. In August 1938 Harrisons took delivery of the **Scientist** from Lithgows Ltd., fitted with a triple expansion engine and a Bauer Wach exhaust turbine. Designed to operate at up to 14½ knots, at least one, if not more of the **Scientist's** powerful looking sister ships achieved 17 knots on trials, taking super-heated steam from coal-fired double-ended Scotch boilers.

The Brocklebank Line was a local enterprise which consistently devoted attention to technological developments. It experimented unsuccessfully with oil engine propulsion in the 1920s and also collaborated with the Cammell Laird shipyard in the production of the first all-welded ship, the coaster **Fullagar**. Responding to changes in trading conditions in the early 1930s it reduced the capacities of four ships built in 1920-21 after tank tests, having them shortened by Smith's Dock Company. In 1935 Brocklebanks responded to signs of improvement in world trade by assessing the effects of increased foreign competition and the latest developments in ship design and propulsion. This activity led to an order for Wm. Hamilton & Company to deliver the

single reduction geared turbine steamer **Malancha** in 1937, to be followed by the **Macharda** and **Malabar** the following year. The **Malancha** featured in a post war exhibition to illustrate the Brocklebank approach to ship development. She was some 6 per cent faster and used 12 per cent less fuel than the line's pioneer turbine propelled **Mahanda** of 1914, under the same operating conditions. That the **Malancha** was delayed for just two hours at sea during six years of arduous war service highlights the dependability of her machinery and the skill of those who ran it.

Two Liverpool cargo liners of most unusual appearance which appeared in 1938 were the motor ships **Devis** and **Delane** of the Lamport & Holt Line. The lead ship of their class, the **Delius** of 1937, was widely held to be one of the most notable vessels of that year built in Britain or any other country. The designer of these ships set out to make the several elements of the midships superstructure, together with the funnel, appear as one piece of architecture. The funnel proper was located at the after end of the erection, with a bridge wing emerging on each side from the forward part. Views continue to differ as to the aesthetic merits of the "D boats", but all parts of their appearance were considered in relation to that of the whole and they stimulated much favourable publicity for their owner - this in spite of criticism of the decision to equip such high class units with steam auxiliary machinery.

Two Liverpool companies commissioned steamers for deep sea tramping in the year before the Liverpool Nautical Research Society came into existence. There were the Lancashire Shipping Company (James Chambers & Company) and the Chas. G. Dunn Shipping Company. The general cargo cross trades, and in particular a round the world service for which James Chambers & Company had catered with motor ships, were very badly affected by the slump of the early 1930s. In the light of this experience the firm decided to take advantage of government assistance under stringent conditions to order the **Lowther Castle** and the **Lancaster Castle** from Sir James Laing & Sons, Ltd. Their triple expansion engines were fitted with the N.E. Marine Engineering Company's reheater system, which it was claimed would confer significant economies in fuel consumption. The **Lowther Castle** was the first ship to be so equipped. Chas. G. Dunn & Company received the **Haughton Hall** from the Laing yard in 1937, and she was followed by the **Charlton Hall** in 1940. Many British tramp shipowners failed to adapt to changes in trading conditions in the inter-war years, and in particular to the decline in the export of coal from this country and the growth in the trade of oil of one sort or another. [In 1914 the United Kingdom owned more than half of the world's tankers; by 1938 the proportion had fallen to one quarter]. One Liverpool firm which had embarked on tanker ownership as far back as 1889 was H.E. Moss & Company, and in 1938 they added the **Lucellum** from the Odense Steel Shipyard to their fleet. No companies sought to enter the fast reefer tramp market exploited by the Scandinavians.

Coastal shipping based in Liverpool displayed chalk and cheese characteristics. On the one hand the Coast Lines Group was well advanced in the replacement of steam tonnage with motor ships on all its regular services. On the other, local companies in the tramp sector displayed great conservatism in the face of admittedly difficult trading conditions (by the end of July 1938, 43 per cent of British coasting tramps were laid up and there was much complaint about the high cost of coal bunkers). In 1938 the advanced motor vessel **Munster** was delivered to the Coast Lines subsidiary British & Irish Steam Packet Company from Harland & Wolff, to join her sister ship **Leinster** on the Liverpool - Dublin overnight passenger service. These two ships were somewhat larger refinements of a concept for Irish Sea routes which first appeared in the form of the **Ulster Monarch** of 1929. They were sometimes described as cross-channel liners because of the quality of their first-class accommodation. Also completed in 1938 was the tramp **Rowanfield** for the Zillah Shipping & Carrying Company. A product of the Lytham Shipbuilding & Engineering Company, she was a steamer, and this at a time when the motor coaster with its light draught had so far demonstrated versatility, fuel economy and reliability that owners in other British ports were placing numerous orders in both British and Dutch shipyards in expectation of an upturn in business. For example in October 1938 Koster's Gideon yard at Groningen had in hand orders for 14 motor coasters for British accounts, and since 1934 the Goole Shipbuilding & Engineering Company had been further improving its 'Proficient' designs, as well as completing other motor vessels to owners' specific requirements.

Difficulties existed for British merchant shipping in 1938, and the recent slump had encouraged tendencies towards both caution and conservatism. The threat of war, shortages of skilled personnel, especially engineers (attributed at least in part to the demands of industries involved in re-armament), and the intensity of foreign competition (some of it government controlled) made decision-making difficult. Attitudes of those in government in this country were not always helpful, and were not infrequently tinged with suspicion of the motivation of shipowners. The strength of the coal lobby in some measure inhibited progressive thinking in matters of propulsion, though it was clear by 1930 that steamers, even when converted to oil burning, had difficulty in competing with motor ships in several of the long distance liner and tramp trades. However, in view of the losses to be sustained during the forthcoming Battle of the Atlantic it was as well that Britain had to hand up to date designs for relatively straightforward steamers which, after modification, readily lent themselves to mass production. ■

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The Lamport & Holt Line motorship **Debrett** of 1940 was a continuation of the **Devis** and **Delane** class of 1938

EARLY MERSEY PASSENGER STEAMERS UP TO c.1840

by Terry Kavanagh

The early Mersey passenger steamers were a great improvement on the old sailing ferries, but the hazards of landing and embarkation remained undiminished, as at very low water the steamboats stood off the slipways or steps, and passengers were put into small boats. Worse, there was much competition on the river and little control over passenger safety. As early as 1824, a Liverpool pilot warned steamboat passengers, "*that as matters stand at present, their lives are at the mercy of a careless, or a mercenary, or a tipping fellow, in the shape of a captain or an engineer.*"¹ Small wonder, then, that some individuals preferred to stay at home rather than risk taking a passage in one of these smoke boats

The ferry-boat engineers "*generally [regarded as] a drunken and often ignorant set*"² - had a well-deserved reputation for overloading their safety valves, which were invariably placed on deck. Research suggests that only one of these early paddle steamers, the **Union** (ex **Ancient Briton**) had a second valve locked up. In 1819 she was said to be:

*"the swiftest packet on the River Mersey, and her Engine [of 16hp, by I. & T. Sherratt of Manchester] is so constructed that it cannot possibly be forced past its usual speed. The only communication with the safety valve is a chain instead of a rod of iron; therefore no weight can be placed upon it to prevent the overplus of steam escaping."*³

True, many of the early ferry-boat engines were constructed by Fawcett & Company of Liverpool, and they always fitted two safety valves, the second one made inaccessible, and loaded only to 4lb p.s.i. But William Fawcett himself knew - and the vessels' owners themselves "*must necessarily know*" - that a number of these valves had "*been afterwards altered by some blacksmith, so as to give the engineer power to load them as he pleased, and believes they have often done so to twenty pounds to the inch.*"⁴ And this was confirmed:

*"by a gentleman acquainted with the steam-engine, and with the Liverpool ferry-boats, in which he frequently sailed, [who said] that he has observed the mercury to have been blown out of a steam-gauge which he knew was capable of indicating 15 to 20 pounds per square inch pressure."*⁵

This (relatively) great pressure was added before starting from the quays, and when racing another vessel, in order to satisfy what our Liverpool pilot, above, called "*the mercenary desire to increase the number of passengers.*"⁶ In fact the Harbour Master and Water Bailiff at the Port of Liverpool, John Askew, and others, had often "*seen an engineer, when all his weights were on, place himself on the safety valve, to add weight, to try to beat a boat he was running with.*"⁷ Now the ferry-boat captains must have been aware of this; indeed, they

probably followed suit. A partner in G. Forrester & Co. of Liverpool, "*sailed in a sea-steamer when the captain not only put all the weight he could find on the valve, but sat upon it; he remonstrated to no purpose and got out of her as soon as he could.*"⁸

Be that as it may, the steam-packet **Earl of Bridgewater's** boiler exploded from excessive pressure at the George's Pierhead in August 1824, killing the 12-year-old fireman John Almond, a woman passenger, and seriously injuring many more. An 'Eye-Witness' wrote to the *Liverpool Mercury* a week later, complaining about two newspaper accounts of this awful catastrophe:

*"which are evidently drawn up, in the first, as a most trifling accident; in the second, to take off all blame from the managers of the vessel. As it is stated that the persons 'leaped' overboard through fright, I should like to be informed, if the deck planking and one of the knees 'leaped' overboard through fright and next, if the vessel had not been without an engineer for some days? It is a case, I conceive, that the public should have a strict investigation into, and that the sufferers should be recompensed, if gross blame attaches to the managers."*⁹

But the *Mercury* itself, with one eye on its advertising revenue perhaps, adopted a more conciliatory approach. It reported that the deceased fireboy

*"was in the act of exhibiting some parts of the engine to strangers when the catastrophe took place. He was, we learn, ignorant of the nature of the engine; and a boy (aged 17) who, it appears, was the only engineer of the ship, was, at the time, on shore. If such youths are to be trusted with engines, of which they can have but little experience, we know not how the proprietors can expect the encouragement of the public."*¹⁰

The paper also quoted a group of scientific men, who had witnessed the explosion from on board the **Lady Stanley** Eastham packet, as stating that a defective angle iron in the boiler was the sole cause of the disaster.

*"We examined the safety valve, and found it in very excellent condition, and not weighing more than four or five pounds upon the square inch, and we were informed that no extra load had been put on."*¹¹

But it was fully proved at the inquest that the safety valve, which should have been loaded to only 3½lb psi, "*had weights upon it to the extent of 49 pounds!*" [Chester Courant, 24 August 1824]. Furthermore, the young engineer had, some time prior to the accident, informed both the agent and the master of the vessel of "*the dangerous state of the boiler, and its unfitness for use.*"¹²

The **Earl of Bridgewater** - registering 68 gross or 37 net tons, and measuring 77'9" x 17'10" x 7'2" was launched from James & Seddon's yard, South Shore, Liverpool, in May 1823.¹³ After spending the next six months on the Runcorn station, she was placed on the Ellesmere Port run. A newspaper advertisement announced that:

*"Her accommodations are of a superior class, having three Cabins elegantly fitted up with every convenience suited to the taste and comfort of passengers; which, together with her superior power of Engine [22nhp], and **unequalled speed**, it is hoped will merit the patronage of the public. The sailing of the Canal Packet and Luggage Boat will be arranged to make the passage in as short a time as possible."*¹⁴

Unfortunately, however, the **Earl of Bridgewater**, Captain Radley master, didn't keep to that arrangement on the first day of Chester Races in May 1824. She was advertised to sail from Liverpool at 5.00am; but the captain, wanting to take on as many race-goers as possible, did not start until 5.45am, when he had 200 on board. This delay meant that Captain Radley would be too late for the canal packet at Whitby Locks, so he made all his passengers disembark one and a half miles away at Pool Rocks, *in a small boat crowded with 15 or 16 people at a time*, and left them without any means of transport to Chester. One of the passengers, a Liverpool merchant named Gardiner, was subsequently awarded one shilling [5p] damages - the canal packet fare - and costs at the Cheshire Assizes, in a case brought against Captain Radley for breach of contract. The court heard that:

*"the passengers were highly indignant at this treatment; and the misconduct of the master was considerably aggravated by landing them in a most inconvenient place, where they had to wade knee-deep through dirt and mud for a considerable distance in order that he might be back in time in Liverpool to take a second cargo of passengers to Chester at half-a-crown [12½] a head, and put more money in his pocket".*¹⁵

Those passengers who did travel on the canal packet to Chester received no better treatment, judging by this interesting (and amusing) letter which 'A Timid Traveller' sent to a local newspaper editor in September 1824:

"Sir. - It is much to be regretted, that in travelling either for business or pleasure, we are exposed to so many accidents. Having been upset in a hired chaise from one of the ferries to Chester, drawn by two blind horses, I chose to travel the next journey altogether by water. I took my passage in a canal packet, which was so badly moored, that in getting into the cabin, I had the misfortune to be plunged into the basin; but being an expert swimmer, I saved my life, but entirely spoiled some valuable jewellery. When arrived the day following at the other end of the passage, myself and other passengers of both sexes were deserted by the crew, and had to leap three or four feet to reach the quay. It seems that stepping stones had very properly been placed to accelerate the entrance and exit; but the packet was moored without any reference to these conveniences. Upon these considerations, Sir, I do not mean to stir from home again, until either the balloon convenience becomes practicable, or the projected rail-roads are extended in the course of my peregrinations. If you can give me any information when either of these means of conveyance, especially the former, is likely to be established, I promise the projectors I will be one of

the first to take a fare.”¹⁶

History doesn't relate whether any such information was sent to him, but the following year the Public were respectfully informed (once again) that the canal packet would meet the steam packets **Duke** and **Earl of Bridgewater** from Liverpool during the Chester Race Week; and that “*the Proprietors can with confidence recommend it as an extremely pleasant, cheap and expeditious conveyance.*”¹⁷

The **Duke of Bridgewater** began her career in the summer of 1822, making her first trip “*against a strong head wind, from Runcorn to Liverpool, a distance computed at twenty miles, in the short space of one hour and a quarter.*”¹⁸ And nervous passengers were given the assurance that the owners had “*spared no expense to render her a safe, comfortable and expeditious mode of travelling.*”¹⁹ Yet that vessel, which usually had between two and three hundred persons crammed on board, was “*actually unprovided with a single boat, in case of any accident or unforeseen emergency!*”²⁰ This, despite having been stranded in the Mersey more than once, and forced to lie there until the next tide, with all her passengers - the lucky ones faced “*with the prospect of snoring away the night, hungry and chagrined, in the suffocating cabin.*”²¹

By the end of 1824, so many complaints had been made about the overloading of river steamers, that even the *Liverpool Mercury* thought “*some restriction should be put on the number of passengers which each should respectively carry.*”²² At peak times, the steam ferry-boats were so full:

“that their decks exhibit one condensed mass of individuals, so closely packed, that, were a female to turn ill, she could scarcely fall. On arrival at this side of the river, the consequent confusion and delay of landing, particularly if the tide be low, is beyond description; and, though the fares are paid in advance for a passage to Liverpool, unless a penny (and sometimes more) be paid by each passenger for a passage in a casual boat, for the use of a plank, or to a man to carry them ashore through the shallow water, the passengers may wait for an hour before the vessels' boats or men, by any present arrangement, can place them on terra firma.”²³

The newspaper went on to say that:

“should an accident happen on one of these crowded vessels, or a false alarm be given, which should induce a rush to any particular part of the vessel for safety, we shudder to contemplate the fatal consequences which would inevitably ensue, where there is not even a boat or lifebuoy to bear up a single individual who might be precipitated in the water.”²⁴

Fourteen years later, in 1838, Captain Denham, RN, Marine Surveyor at Liverpool, showed how nothing had changed, when he stated that the river steamers were:

“frequently without a boat at all, or have such a one as would not swim, or are without gear for her; whilst as to sails, cordage, headlines, compasses,

lanterns, adequate ground-tackle or number of hands, they are miserably and disgracefully deficient. And yet river boats undertake to tow ships out of port, and risk being benighted with inward-bound passengers, mails and vessels. The steam ferry-boats on the Mersey have actually been four hours in a fog in trying to cross the river not a mile wide, so unprepared and ignorant are they for any thing out of the usual course.”²⁵

Perhaps smog - a mixture of fog and smoke - would better describe such weather conditions, given the dense smoke emitted by the vast number of steam vessels on the Mersey in the 1840s.

*“The smoke boats on our river excite the scorn of all strangers, who are well aware that the clouds of unconsumed coal flying about, at the cost of the offenders, are no longer a necessary concomitant to the scenery around, nor at all desirable to the dresses or the lungs of the human race.”*²⁶

It is true that the directors of the Woodside Ferry steamers had managed to eradicate the smoke nuisance.²⁷ *“Very rarely is a single particle of smoke seen at the Woodside or Monks’ Ferries”*, stated the *Liverpool Mail*. *“At all the other places [though] dense smoke is seen and felt from morning to night.”*²⁸ What about the Liverpool side of the river?

*“At certain periods of the tide, but more or less at all hours, the smoke is almost intolerable, so much so, that it is painful to breathe on the pier-head; and that once healthy spot is now as insalubrious as the dirtiest street in Birmingham. To inhale wholesome air is impossible; and the consequence is that invalids are deterred from approaching the river. But there is another part of the nuisance, viz. the soot, which falls in showers, that it is a heavy tax upon every well-dressed lady who crosses by the ferries. In the Woodside boats there is none of this filth produced by themselves, but what is unfortunate, they and their passengers are exposed to the black vomitings of their neighbours, and such is the wretched condition of the landing places, that they cannot avoid it No person with his eyes open, or well dressed, would go into the Rock, Birkenhead, Seacombe, Eastham or Egremont boats for pleasure, if he or she could find a steamer free from this filth.”*²⁹

Captain Denham could hardly have been unaware of this smoke nuisance, but he was evidently more concerned about the fires caused through carelessness in these wood-built steamers. Such accidents, he believed, were mainly caused by the proximity of the boilers to the ceiling or inner planking of the vessel’s sides, and the small space between being often filled up with fire wood and lumps of coal which ignited when the water supply to the boiler was neglected, and the boiler became red hot. And there was another cause of fire arising from the proverbial neglect of small and jobbing steamers, namely the extra heat produced under the deck where the funnel unites with the flues, when, for lack of cleaning, the soot was burning out.³⁰

Even worse, the hull sea-worthiness of these small steamers was neglected

by their masters and crews, just “as they habitually neglect all the usual or stand-by equipments which seamen in sailing vessels look to; they indolently, and often vexatiously, repose on the engine as if infallible.”³¹ Indeed, it seemed to Captain Denham, a sailor of the old school:

*“that as men are required to know little more than merely steering, they belong to a class so unlike regular seamen, that so long as the vessel will go at all, and does not make water beyond what the engine-pumps can keep under, they think it no crime to conceal from the owners the having been beating on a shoal, or been subject to a violent concussion.”*³²

So, Captain Denham suggested that all steam vessels, from the smallest to the largest, be governed by rules and regulations, and subjected to accredited inspection. Under his proposals, the owners of river steamers would face suspension of registry and fine for non-compliance. And further, he

*“would require that those [steamboats] of single engine, or having false deck-breadths upon sponsons [overhanging sides], be not registered for going outside the high-water confines of the river or harbour, as the cross sea of the offing constantly endangers such construction of engine or vessel.”*³³

In addition, the masters and mates of steamers should not only have served in those capacities in sailing vessels of similar tonnage, but also have a practical knowledge of marine engines. “For” - and here Captain Denham spoke for many of his contemporaries on Merseyside - *“it is a fact and a frightful one, that in nine cases out of ten the whole mass of life and property entirely depends on the existence, health, sobriety, or indeed honesty of purpose of one man, the engineer!”*³⁴ ■

Notes and References

- 1 *Chester Courant*, 7th September 1824
- 2 *Parliamentary Papers*, Report on accidents to steam vessels, made to the Committee of Privy Council for Trade, 1839 (273) XLVII, p.66.
- 3 A.C. Wardle, *Early Steamships on the Mersey, 1815-1820*, Trans. Hist. Soc. of Lancs & Chesh., 92 (1940), p.95, quoting *Gore's Advertiser*; *Chester Chronicle*, 14th February 1823
- 4 1838 report, cit p.66. Emphasis added.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 *Chester Courant*, 7th September 1824
- 7 1838 report, cit p.62.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p.65
- 9 Quoted in *Chester Courant*, 10th August, 1824
- 10 Quoted in *Chester Chronicle*, 6th August, 1824
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 *Liverpool Mercury*, 27th August, 1824. These iron boilers lasted about four years in the Mersey. According to Thomas Wilson, the Liverpool shipbuilder, *they are frequently worked till wholly worthless, and thin as paper, and are neither renewed nor repaired as frequently as they should be. And John Laird, of Birkenhead, stated that he has seen them taken out of vessels in so worn a state, that the hand could be pushed through them, consisting of little else than scales and rust.*-1838 report cit, pp. 61, 64.

- 13 *Chester Courant*, 8th May 1823, MMM. Liverpool Shipping Register (Item 181/1826).
14 *Chester Chronicle*, 3rd October, 1824.
15 *Chester Chronicle*, 17th September, 1824.
16 *Chester Courant*, 24th September, 1824.
17 *Chester Chronicle*, 29th April, 1824.
18 *Chester Chronicle*, 9th August, 1822.
19 *Liverpool Mercury*, 26th July, 1822.
20 *Chester Courant*, 7th September, 1824.
21 *Ibid.*
22 *Liverpool Mercury*, 3rd December, 1824.
23 *Ibid.*
24 *Ibid.*
25 1838 report cit, p. 73.
26 *Chester Courant*, 24th September, 1844.
27 *Chester Chronicle*, 19th June, 1840.
28 Quoted in *Chester Courant*, 4th July, 1843.
29 *Ibid.*
30 1838 report cit, p. 73. His concern is understandable, given the menace of fire on board ship. One day in January, 1825, for instance, the passengers on board the Liverpool-bound Eastham Steam Packet were: *thrown into some alarm, by part of the frame work, adjoining the boiler, taking fire. The vessel, however, was run ashore, the passengers landed, the fire was extinguished; and the Packet and its [human] cargo arrived safely at Liverpool.- Chester Chronicle*, 28th January, 1825.
31 1838 report cit, p. 73
32 *Ibid*
33 *Ibid*, p.74.
34 *Ibid.*

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