

**The Liverpool
Nautical Research Society**

TRANSACTIONS

VOLUME VII



1952-53

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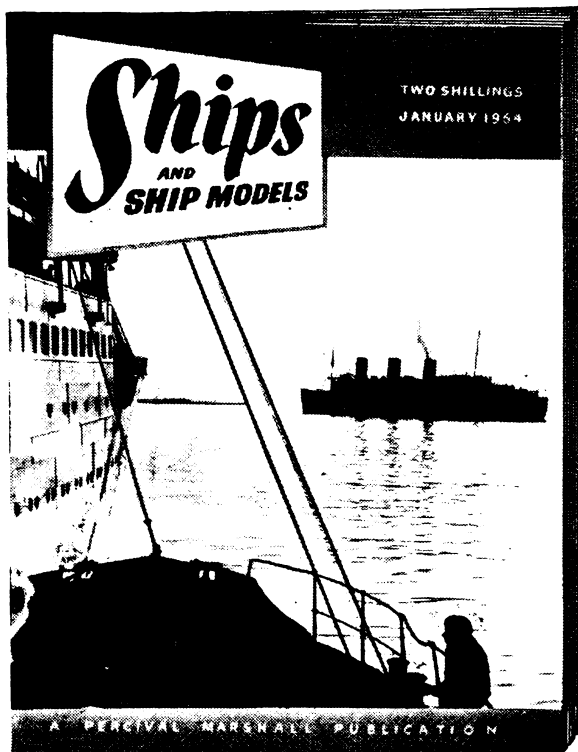
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For further particulars apply to the Hon. Treasurer.

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28 Exchange Street East
Liverpool 2

GILL'S CHANNEL

The alleged discovery of a channel into the Mersey by Captain Gill in 1836

by JOHN S. REES

The discovery of a new channel into the Mersey would be no mean achievement, particularly by a layman. Captain William Gill was not a marine surveyor and could have little knowledge or equipment to undertake such a specialized task. However, he was believed by some, people of importance among them, to have distinguished himself by discovering a new channel into the Mersey in 1836.

Captain Gill was born in 1795 and was brought up in Ramsey to the trade of a ship carpenter, but soon took to the sea. He rose in his profession to be master of the sloops *Duchess of Athol* and *Douglas*, which plied between Liverpool and Douglas. His next command was the paddle steamer *Mona's Isle*, 200 tons gross, belonging to the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company. According to the Company's centenary history, 1830-1930: "Early in 1832, £100 was presented to Captain Gill by the shareholders in testimony of their high regard for his services in the command of the *Mona's Isle*, and particularly for his unprecedented perseverance in effecting a passage on the memorable 19th of August during a gale of wind from the N.N.W. which prevented their opponent the *William the Fourth* from leaving the port of Douglas".

Gill thus demonstrated that he was a determined and intrepid seaman. Whether he was prudent some may question. But all's well that ends well! The centenary history also reveals that in September 1835, when in command of the *Queen of the Isle*, 350 tons gross, he was dismissed from the company for, it is said, declining to go to sea when his brother was dying. However, the shareholders considered that Gill's dismissal was not justified and he was reinstated. Although it is evident that his devotion to duty was outstanding, his emotional sensibilities were even stronger. Captain Gill died in 1858 and was buried at Kirk Braddan, Isle of Man.

Little information about the alleged discovery is available. Gill, true to tradition, was a very modest sailor and was strangely silent about his achievement; all that is known has been said by others.

The late T. E. Edwards, the well-known Liverpool journalist and maritime historian, writing in 1918 on Gill's channel, said:

"Many people have rather sceptically imbibed the legend that Captain William Gill discovered the present entrance into the port of Liverpool, but no one seems to know how he did it and there are, besides, a good few who doubt whether he did it at all."

At a later date the same historian wrote:

"Some years ago there died in Douglas an old man who kept the half-penny 'ferry' across the tongue in Douglas harbour. In 1836 he worked as a boy under Captain Gill on the steamer *Queen of the Isle*, so I went and asked him how they discovered the channel. It appears

that Gill would draw little pencil charts, using Wallasey Church, Bidston Hill and Leasowe Castle as bearings. He would lower anchors about a foot below the depth of his ship and by this means soon knew when they got on a bank. He had a man port and starboard taking soundings while he stood and recorded them on the chart. He would spend all the time he could afford in this manner and then go back, till on another day he would recommence from where he had previously left off Gill finally got the whole thing written down in ship-shape order. He christened his new waterway Victoria Channel, after the Queen (1837), and then handed over the particulars to the town of Liverpool."

Gill was lionized and then forgotten. Years later, on his retirement, the *Liverpool Mercury*, on February 17th 1852, proposed a public testimonial in these words:

"Captain Gill, as the discoverer of the Victoria Channel, has rendered essential services to the port of Liverpool and has a claim on our merchants and shipowners."

Subscriptions rolled in and many well-known names appeared in the list. At a banquet held at Castle Mona, Douglas, on 17th June 1852, Gill was presented with a service of plate and one hundred guineas by the Speaker of the House of Keys.

The service of plate bore the following inscription:

"To William Gill, the discoverer of the Victoria Channel into Liverpool and for thirty years the commander of sailing and steam vessels between the Isle of Man and Liverpool, whose service for the last twenty-one years in command of the steam packets was singularly distinguished, no life ever being lost from them"

In his reply to the Speaker, Gill did not allude to his discovery of the channel. He said: for thirty-seven years he had been a worker but now he was a talker, and he found that his tongue would not answer its helm so he was left to float about on an unknown track. They would no doubt understand him when he stated that he never before felt so completely at sea in all his life, but their many kindnesses to him in years gone by and their liberality on that occasion convinced him that they would look with a lenient eye on all his defects, he hoped they would believe him when he said that he, with a sailor's heart, deeply felt a sailor's gratitude. More he could not say.

At this stage it would be well for us to consider what was the condition of the channels into the Mersey in 1833.

There were then four entrances: the Rock Channel, closed for four hours out of every twelve; the Old Formby Channel, with only three feet of water; the Half-tide Swatch Channel, running in from a N. Wly direction, carrying six feet of water, and an entrance from the westward into a channel which for some years had been designated the NEW CHANNEL. This channel will be referred to as the 1834 entrance. The Old Formby and the Half-tide channels were seldom used for lack of water. In short, at that time there was not a low-water entrance into the Mersey, which meant that inward bound vessels arriving during the time when the port was closed had either to come to an anchor or stand out to sea again.

The Liverpool Dock Committee were most anxious and concerned at this state of the channels and the uncertainty of the future. The urgency of

the case was such that in 1833, by an order of the Right Honourable Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, Lieut. Henry Mangles Denham, R.N., who had just completed the survey of the Bristol Channel, proceeded to Liverpool without attending to the intervening range of coast. Denham, assisted by Lieut. Robinson, made an intensive survey of the NEW CHANNEL area. "The result of the first six months of my survey", says Denham, "set every speculation at rest. The New Channel was forthwith lighted and beacons and the local intercourse of 13,000 sail of vessels was thus provided for at all hours of the tide, *night or day*, hitherto shut out for four hours of every twelve".

He converted the Old Formby S.E. landmark to a lighthouse and, at the same time, established the first Formby lightship. A *Notice to Mariners* dated 9th July 1834, issued by the Dock Trustees, stated that these lights brought into line lead direct from seaward upon a course E.½S. to the entrance of and through the New Channel (which carries twelve feet at low water spring tides over its outer and shoalest part) up to the floating light. It would therefore appear that Denham's channel of 1834 met all requirements at that time. Nevertheless, Denham was not unaware that owing to the trend of the entrance there was a possibility that it might deteriorate.

We now come to the period during which Gill was alleged to have discovered a new channel (1836). Between 1834 and 1838 quite a number of *Notices to Mariners* were issued, dealing with alterations and additions in general that had taken place for the better guidance of the mariner into and out of the port, but no mention was made in any of them that a new channel had been discovered, nor has any reference to one been found in official records of the Pilot Committee, who obviously would have been particularly interested in the matter.

But the time was approaching, although not fully appreciated, when the necessity for a new channel or entrance was to become imperative. In the latter part of 1838 Denham was faced with a serious problem, the sanding-up of the 1834 passage-way over the bar into the New Channel. The situation had developed very rapidly, in a few months. During the four years 1834 to 1838 the New Channel had been navigated with valuable success, and even up to the August of the latter year 1,400 passages per month were effected through it, and tidal detentions of Her Majesty's mail-boats reduced from 261 cases in a year to 10.

In his report of October 4th 1838, Denham stated: "The marine surveyor submits to the Dock Committee a plan of the New Channel region, comprising the channels, banks and shallows for five miles upon every point of the compass from the bar of the New Channel, lateral and transverse sections of that bar; and a chart exhibiting at one view the amount of changes which have taken place in an interval of four years, viz:—between the autumn of 1834 and the present autumn. The object and import of these documents is to show that, unless artificial means are forthwith resorted to, the port cannot continue accessible at low-water periods". Denham also stated that: "the changes which from time to time had taken place had led to a close and simultaneous scrutiny of the whole tidal range in Liverpool Bay in order to detect any opening which MIGHT be taking place. Every square yard of the region was therefore surveyed and gauged by the marine surveyor last

June (1838), when so far from discovering even a PROMISE of a compensating clearance through the swatches of Burbo or Formby Flats, even the Rock Channel evidences a progressive choking up”.

In view of these circumstances the question inevitably arises, where was Gill's channel? If it existed, although of course not buoyed or lighted, and was in any way comparable with the original 1834 entrance, there would have been no fear of the access to the port being seriously affected and therefore no cause for any anxiety and alarm.

However, the marine surveyor proposed an immediate dredging or harrowing process to force a passage-way which would be assisted by the natural and direct set of the tide, and where an inner pool of water of ample depth was waiting to be united with an outer sea of great and constant depth when the intervening ridge of sand, about two-thirds of a mile from IN to OUT and 600 yards wide, was cut. The ridge of sand was four feet to six feet in height between the twelve feet draught line of navigable waters. In November of 1838 he set to work with such means as were at his disposal to force and open another line of entrance into the body of the New Channel. Although progress was slower than he had hoped for, in view of the difficulties he had had to contend with he considered it was not altogether unsatisfactory, but the opening of the new entrance was delayed. Eventually, the NEW CUT, with eleven feet of water, was buoyed and lighted and opened for navigation on the 10th October 1839.

As the Old Formby lighthouse was no longer applicable, the first Crosby lighthouse had, in the meantime, been erected on the shore.

In Denham's outline sketch of the relative position of the New Channel entrance of 1833 and that of 1839, he says of the latter: “locally designated Victoria Channel”. That it was locally designated Victoria Channel may possibly have had some hidden significance, otherwise why say *locally* designated. It would seem to suggest that an entrance of a sort with that name had, before 1839, been acknowledged by some local navigators and that the adoption of this appellation was really a confirmation of the one that Captain Gill had, in 1837, bestowed on his entrance.

The purpose of this dissertation is not to attempt to prove that Gill's alleged discovery was a complete fantasy but rather to suggest circumstances which might, rightly or wrongly, have earned him the distinction of having discovered a new entrance into the Mersey. That he had made some contribution to this end would appear to have been accepted by some folk, those prominent personalities who subscribed to his belated testimonial, Napier, Tobin and Vernon, to mention a few, being among them. Gill, with his unquestionable local knowledge and experience, probably knew of what may be called the two deep-water areas subsequently united by Denham, and realised that to be able to enter the New Channel at a point further to the northward would be more direct and therefore a shorter route to the Mersey. Being an enterprising and determined man he may conceivably have decided that, when circumstances permitted, he would explore the possibilities of crossing the bank. Although, maybe unknown to him, this bank or bar carried as much as six feet of water. At one and a half hour's flood the *Queen of the Isle*, drawing ten feet of water, could pass over it. Having once crossed the bank on his soundings and selected suitable objects

on the land as leading marks he could, in daylight, have repeated the performance when no pilot was on board. When sounding he had one advantage over Denham, who had to be content with a sailing or rowing boat, and he (Denham) complained that sometimes the sailing boat was not under proper control and, from a rowing boat, the flat-land objects of Formby and Crosby at seven and eight miles distant could rarely be discerned. On board the *Queen of the Isle* Gill was spared these drawbacks.

It is reasonably certain that the only opportunity he would have of taking experimental soundings would be when inward bound, waiting on a flood tide for sufficient water to enter the Mersey via the Rock Channel. The Isle of Man Company's history says he used only that channel, but there is no obvious reason why he should not have used the 1834 entrance, as was done by H.M. mail packets to Dublin. Under certain circumstances the *Queen of the Isle* would have been liable to compulsory pilotage and, when a pilot was on board, Gill would have to postpone his sounding operations, as a pilot would certainly not risk his reputation and his licence or jeopardize the safety of the ship for such a purpose. But it is not unlikely that at times, when inward bound, the packet boat carried only passengers and no cargo, in which case she would not be compelled to employ a pilot; the Act which now requires all vessels carrying passengers and navigating in a pilotage district to have on board a qualified pilot, unless the master or mate holds a pilotage certificate for the district, had not then come into force.

Outward bound, Gill's vessel would probably have cargo on board and would therefore have to employ a pilot, who would not take the vessel out of the river Mersey until such time as he could, without delay, proceed direct to sea and, in any case, would not consent to the vessel being held up and exposed to danger while unauthorised and unnecessary soundings were being taken.

If the theory expounded approaches the truth, it was a personal triumph for Captain Gill without adding to the facilities of the port; hence it was that he was highly praised and then forgotten.

It would be futile to harbour for one moment the thought that Denham was not fully aware of the existence of the two deep-water areas before Gill's alleged discovery, and of the advantages that would be secured if they could be united by artificially forcing a passage-way through the intervening sandbank. But his aim had been to keep open as long as possible his 1834 entrance, hoping that in the meantime a new natural opening would break through the bank. He conceded nothing to Gill and, in evidence given in 1852 in connection with the Liverpool and Birkenhead Dock Bills, he said: "For six years I was marine surveyor of the port of Liverpool. I discovered and buoyed the Victoria Channel".

FOOTNOTE

1845. In 1845 Victoria Channel was the principal channel into the Mersey.

1858. In 1858 there were two channels, the Queens and the Victoria, but the latter could only be used in daylight as it was not lighted. The Queens Channel was about one mile to the northward of the Victoria Channel.

1866. In 1866 the Victoria Channel was still used in the day time, but it was less direct than the Queens and, at its eastern end, it had less water, only ten and a half feet against the least water of twelve feet in the Queens Channel.

“THREE LIVERPOOL WORTHIES”

by JOSEPH W. FOLEY

If you were asked to name three Liverpool people whose fame was widespread, what would you reply? Probably the first name to come to mind would be Gladstone; then Roscoe; and—not to be discourteous to the ladies—Mrs. Hemans. Of course there are others.

Gladstone, certainly, was well-known in both hemispheres; Roscoe's reputation was great, but only with those who are styled to-day “the intelligentsia”—(I wonder how many people read his works to-day!) and, although the poems of Mrs. Hemans were recited wherever English was spoken, it is probable that many of those who recited them did not know the author of the poems or her birthplace.

Now I claim for my Three Liverpool Worthies a fame more widespread than that of these Liverpool celebrities. From China to Peru; “From Greenland's Icy Mountains to India's Coral Strand”, they were well-known. All over the Seven Seas their names were carried in story and song; from Callao to Calcutta, from San Francisco to Shanghai, their exploits were related. Many men to whom even Gladstone was not known had met, known, and perhaps suffered at the hands of these “Worthies”.

Now, one hundred years ago, in the great days of sail, Liverpool's docks were crowded with ships; and wherever there are ships there will be sailors; a floating population in more senses than one. How many of these sailormen had their homes in or near Liverpool it is impossible to say, but very many were from other parts and, when paid off at this port, would have to seek lodgings. And so a business or profession grew up: that of Sailors Boarding-house Keepers. A rough estimate from *Gore's Directory* for 1861 gives between five and six hundred boarding- or lodging-houses in the dockside area. It is only a rough estimate for it is difficult to say what streets should be included in the dockside area. But one or two samples may be of interest. Denison Street—which as you may know—runs from opposite the Northern Hospital to Regent Road—had forty-four premises, of which seventeen were boarding-houses and nine public-houses. In Regent Street, a little to the south, with the same number of premises, were sixteen boarding-houses and five public-houses. Strange to say there are only four boarding-houses shown in Great Howard Street.

Now, like many other things, there were good, bad and indifferent boarding-houses. Some would have their regular clientele, as they have to this day; but many of them, perhaps the majority, were refuges for the down-and-out sailormen.

Now let us follow a son of the sea who has just been paid off after a long voyage.

Beer he wants first, and fresh company, female for preference. He has not far to seek for both; and he has money in his pocket—bright sovereigns. He is the Jolly Jack Tar, a hail-fellow-well-met; and his money does not last

very long. Sometimes he would find himself in the gutter, thrown out of a gin-palace after a night's debauch, robbed of everything he possessed. There were plenty of lodging-houses which would take him in. Not as Good Samaritans, but rather as birds of prey.

It may seem absurd to think that any money could be made out of a penniless down-and-out, but his "vile body" was valuable.

Jack's one desire after having his fling was to get away to sea again and, strange to say, to get him away was also the desire of his host. It was part of that host's business to know what ships were signing on a crew; and Jack was marched down to the shipping office and, if possible, signed on, and drew his advance note for one, or perhaps two, months' wages, which was promptly annexed by mine host.

Now the advance note was only payable after the ship had sailed with the man on board, so he was carefully watched till that time, when the boarding-house keeper collected the cash. It was the custom, supposing the sailor to have been destitute, for his host to furnish him with a "donkey's breakfast" (a straw mattress), oilskins, a mug and pannikin, and a knife, fork and spoon; the whole outfit costing, in those days, perhaps ten shillings; or they may have been come by dishonestly. But adding to this his board and lodging, the host stood to make a handsome profit; so you see his motive in wishing to get rid of his visitor as quickly as possible.

The most notorious of the land-sharks and harpies was one Paddy West. He is one of the few of his tribe whose names have been handed down to us. An old sailor's song says:

"As I was a-walking down Great Howard Street
I went into Paddy West's boarding-house;
He gave me a plate of American hash,
And swore it was good English scouse.
Says he: 'Come here, young fellow,
For now you're just in time,
To sail away in a clipper ship,
And very soon you'll sign,
Put on your tarpaulin jacket, and give the boys a rest,
And think of the cold nor'easter you got down at Paddy West'."

Now there is something of a mystery about the situation of Paddy West's boarding-house.

Many years ago it was pointed out to me at 50 Great Howard Street, which was then a barber's shop. But *Gore's Directory* for 1851 gives "Thomas West, Hairdresser, 2 Stewart Street"; in 1853 the name is Charles West; in 1859 Francis West; 1862 Patrick West, all at 2 Stewart Street. This street no longer exists except as a name, for it is included in a railway goods yard, but it was off Great Howard Street, close to No. 50. Now, how may we account for these different Christian names? Were they related to the same man? Or relations of the man Francis West who appears in the *Directory* for 1851?

You know that many an Irishman is called "Paddy" even if his name is Denis, Michael, Cornelius or Bartholomew, so *the* Paddy West may be the Patrick West of 1862. This seems most likely, for *Kelly's Directory* for 1881 gives Patrick West at 50 Great Howard Street. As for No. 2 Stewart Street,

this may have been an overflow from Great Howard Street, as by 1881 Stewart Street had disappeared from the *Directory*, which lists only about 500 boarding-houses for the whole city and suburbs; which seems to indicate that the demand for sailors lodgings had fallen off, and Paddy West could accommodate all his clients at Great Howard Street.

But there was another side to Paddy's activities; adventurous youths running away to sea; debtors flying from creditors; husbands escaping from termagant wives, sought Paddy's assistance, and they were turned into able-bodied seamen by a process quicker than any bucko mate could have devised.

The story goes that Paddy had in his backyard a table on which was a large cow's horn; and that these aspirants after nautical knowledge were dressed up in oilskins and sou'wester and marched three times round the table, while seven buckets of water were flung over them; so that they could say they had been three times round the Horn and been wet by the Seven Seas. (He was a stickler for the truth, was Paddy). Whether this bluff ever deceived a hard-case mate is not related, but when crews were hard to get, anything with two hands and feet would be signed-on, leaving their education to be completed by belaying pin, soup and knuckledusters. But Paddy added two words to the English language; for any sailorman who did not know the ropes was called a "Paddy West" sailorman, or a "Paddy Wester", and many a man in the second dog watch would tell of his experiences "down at Paddy West's".

-:- -:- -:- -:- -:-

In the North Atlantic, as you know, the prevailing winds are from the westward; head-winds for ships bound for New York or Boston. The average passage from Liverpool to New York took six weeks, while that from New York to Liverpool averaged a fortnight; and a skipper bound west would take advantage of every wind that allowed him to lay his course. He would hang on to his canvas to the utmost limit of safety—and sometimes beyond.

Picture such a skipper in mid Atlantic in winter time; he can just hold his course close-hauled. It is coming on for night and the wind is breezing up. The ship is over-canvassed, and he knows it. He is making good his westing, and if he hauls off he loses ground; if he reduces sail he is losing time; if he does neither he may lose his sails, or even his masts, what is he to do? He watches the glass, which is very low; his gaze is constantly to windward, but there is no sign of a break in the clouds. What shall he do?

The mate, under his breath, is cursing the "old man" for carrying on so long, and the watch on deck are using even stronger language, for they know that the longer this goes on the harder it will be when they have to shorten sail.

At last the skipper makes up his mind and, crossing over to the mate, shouts: "Get the t'gans'les off her, mister". Blowing his whistle, the mate jumps to the main-deck and, almost before he can give the order, some of the men are in the rigging, fighting their way up the reeling-masts and out on to the foot-ropes. And there, a hundred feet above the deck, fighting with the flogging sail, they sing a song. And this is the song they sing:

"Yo, ho, hi! and we'll haul hi!

To pay Paddy Doyle for his boots.

We'll taughten the bunt, and we'll furl, hi!
And we'll pay Paddy Doyle for his boots".

Now, who was Paddy Doyle; and why should they want to pay him for his boots?

There is no need for me to remind you that this was a sailor's "chanty". We occasionally hear over the wireless a programme of "sailors chanties", and several old shellbacks have told me that when this is on the air they always switch-off. Why? Because the picture they see in their minds is a dozen or so elegant young gentlemen in evening dress, standing round a grand piano, singing drawing-room ballads; instead of a bunch of rough sailormen, up to the waist in water, hauling on the lee-braces; or walking round the capstan in the early hours of a winter's morning, breaking out the anchor; or spending hours of back-breaking work at the pumps to keep the ship from sinking; for the chanty was essentially a working song.

Now in the great days of sail a sailor's work was mostly hauling on ropes, sheets and braces, halyards and lifts, bunt-lines and clew-lines; out-hauls and down-hauls were continually in his hands, and as it was always "pull together, boys", chanties were a great help. They had chanties for a long drag, others for a short pull, anchor raising, some when outward bound and others when bound for home, and one especially when furling sail: "Paddy Doyle's Boots".

But who was Paddy Doyle? It is evident that he was a boarding-house keeper who had foisted a leaky pair of sea-boots on some unfortunate sailorman who had the bad luck to pass through his hands; and which had been paid for out of his advance note. The first month on a long voyage was called: "Working off the dead horse", for the men felt that they were working for nothing. Now I can picture some man helping to furl a sail, thinking of the rotten boots he was wearing, joining his mates at "Yo-ho-ing"; having a sudden inspiration and bursting in with "To pay Paddy Doyle for his boots"; and so the chanty would be born.

For as long as I can remember I have said to myself "I wonder who Paddy Doyle was".

There were no tales about him as there were about Paddy West; nor could I learn when the chanty was first sung. Was he, like Paddy West, a Liverpool man? Was he an American? For several chanties were of American origin. I tried searching old directories, but having no idea of the year, the work was hopeless. There have been published several collections of chanties, and the compiler of one—I think it was Sir Richard Terry—confesses that he did not know who Paddy Doyle was. Some years ago the *Liverpool Express* had a weekly column of seafaring notes, somewhat on the lines of the "Slop-chest" in *Sea Breezes*. So I wrote asking if any reader could tell me who Paddy Doyle was. Nobody could—or at any rate—nobody did.

Some years later I knew an old sailor named Jim Turner—and his name is worthy of being recorded. One day as he was yarning about old times I said to him: "Jim, do you know who Paddy Doyle was?" "Yes", he said, "Paddy Doyle kept a boarding-house in Denison Street; he married a daughter of Squash McCormick". Beautiful name!

Here was a clue: Denison Street; and within the memory of Jim Turner! So back again to *Gore's Directory*, and there I found in 1867: "26 Denison

Street, Michael Doyle, boarding-house keeper", and "37 Denison Street, Michael McCormick, boarding-house keeper".

Now the Christian name "Michael" does not rule this man out, as we saw in the case of Paddy West, and seeing that there is no other claimant for the honour I think I am safe in saying that here we have the original Paddy Doyle.

I have said that my Liverpool Worthies were famed in song and story, and here we have Paddy Doyle's name carried round the world. Wherever British ships furled sail, whether in the Old Pagoda Anchorage or the Circular Quay at Sydney, Paddy Doyle's name would come floating over the waters, heard by hundreds who knew not Gladstone, or Roscoe, or Mrs. Hemans.

And as for his fame, Rudyard Kipling has made him immortal in his poem *The Merchantmen*:

"King Solomon drew merchantmen, because of his desire
For peacocks, apes and ivory, from Tharsish unto Tyre;
And cedars out of Lebanon that Hiram rafted down;
But we be only sailormen that use in London Town.
Coast-wise, cross seas, round the world and back again,
Where the flow shall head us, or the full trade suits.
Plain-sail, storm-sail, lay your board and tack again,
And that's the way we'll pay Paddy Doyle for his boots."

And there you have the Paddy Doyle who kept a boarding-house in Denison Street, and married a daughter of Squash McCormick.

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Now, unlike the elusive Paddy Doyle, there is no mystery about the third of my Liverpool Worthies; Captain James Nicol Forbes; better known as "Bully Forbes". In those days the word "bully" denoted "fine fellow", we have it in this sense in several chanties: "Heave away my bully boys"; and we have also Bully Brag, Bully Hayes, Bully Waterman.

Now, though there is no mystery about the birth and parentage of Bully Forbes, accounts differ about his career. He was born in 1821 in Aberdeen, his father being an advocate. At school he learned navigation, and perhaps this early study was a great factor in his subsequent record-breaking. He went to sea early in life and very soon attained command, and a fast passage from Quebec brought him to the notice of James Baines, of the Black Ball Line, who invited him to Liverpool in 1839, when he was only eighteen years of age!

This information is from a paper read to the Liverpool Nautical Research Society in 1943 by the late Captain E. A. Woods; but Basil Lubbock in his *Colonial Clippers* says that he came from Glasgow to Liverpool in 1839 without a shilling in his pocket. Now, of the two accounts, I prefer that of Captain Woods, though I am inclined to question the date. Certainly men in their early twenties were in command of ships, but if James Baines gave him a ship in 1839, then we must believe that he was Master at the age of sixteen or at least seventeen!

But without going into details of the confused story of the next few years, let me continue from the time when he became famous.

In 1852 Baines gave him command of the *Marco Polo*, which up to then

had done nothing out of the ordinary. He sailed for Melbourne on the 4th July 1852 and arrived out in sixty-eight days, beating the mail steamer *Australia* by a week; and returned to Liverpool in seventy-six days, doing the round trip in five months twenty-one days, an astonishing performance.

Before leaving Liverpool Forbes had boasted that he would be back within six months; and he had kept his word! It is said that he came up the river with a tarpaulin in the rigging, between the foremast and the main mast, with the words "The fastest ship in the world!"

Another tale is that a water-man, meeting James Baines in the street, said: "Mr. Baines, the *Marco Polo* is coming up the river". "Nonsense", was the reply, "she hasn't arrived out yet". An hour later he was face to face with Forbes himself. When the news spread hundreds of people flocked to the dock to see this wonderful ship, and Forbes was the hero of the hour, people coming from all over England to see his ship. On his next voyage to Melbourne, Forbes found there between fifty and sixty ships deserted by their crews, for this was the time of the great Australian gold fever, and all sorts and conditions of men were throwing up their jobs to join the gold rush. But Forbes was equal to the occasion and had the entire crew locked up on a charge of insubordination and only released an hour before sailing.

Then Baines sent him across to America to supervise another ship he had building, the *Lightning*, and again he sailed for Melbourne.

At a banquet on board before she sailed, Forbes is said to have boasted: "Hell or Melbourne in sixty days". While running his easting down, it is said that a deputation from the passengers begged him not to go so fast! "Gentlemen", he said, "On my last voyage I astonished the world; this voyage I intend to astonish God Almighty Himself".

He did not make Melbourne in sixty days, but he broke his own record by arriving in sixty-four days, again creating a furore.

As the emigrant trade was still booming, James Baines had ordered another ship—this time from Hall, of Aberdeen. She was to combine the best qualities of the Aberdeen clippers with those of American ships. The outcome was the *Schomberg*, and great things were expected of her. At the usual banquet before sailing she was hailed as the Wonder Ship. With Forbes in command she sailed for Melbourne on the 6th October 1855, and made Cape Bridgewater, the south-west point of Victoria, on Christmas Day, eighty-one days out. For the next two days she met head winds, and you can imagine the state of mind of the man who had boasted of sixty days and was tacking under light winds about 150 miles from his destination, eighty-three days out. At 10-30 that night, with the ship on the inshore tack, the mate sent to inform Forbes that land was in sight. Forbes, who was playing cards, took no notice and stayed to finish the rubber. When he came on deck he ordered the ship to be tacked. But the wind was too light and the ship refused to come about. Then he tried wearing ship, but it was too late, and the current gently nudged her on to a sandbank thirty-five miles west of Cape Otway. Report has it that Forbes said in disgust: "Let her go to hell, and tell me when she is high and dry".

The mate then took charge and dropped the anchor to try and haul her off, but she drifted further and further ashore. Fortunately, it was a calm moonlight night and there was no panic.

Next morning a steamer came along and took the passengers and some of their luggage to Melbourne, where the steerage passengers held an indignation meeting, making serious charges against the captain. The saloon passengers, however, sided with Forbes, and at a Court of Inquiry he was cleared of all blame as the sandbank was uncharted. After this, according to one report, Forbes was "on the beach", out of work; but we have reason to believe that he was back in Liverpool in March, when he sent a long letter to a Liverpool paper, justifying his conduct. But, though acquitted by the Courts, the idol was broken; Baines never employed him again, and public opinion seems to have turned against him. One account says that he fell into abject poverty and died in a single room in Eastbourne Street, Everton. But this is lurid fiction. In the *Directory* for 1859 his address is given as 46 Upper Parliament Street as "Dixon and Forbes, ship chandlers", and the same in 1862. I have a note that in 1857 he was appointed by Baines (?) to the *Hastings*, and appears in the register as her sole owner. He was in her till she was lost in 1859. Again, in 1863, he is said to have shown some of his old form by bringing the *General Windham* from Charleston to the Mersey in eighteen days.

In 1869 he was again in the *Marco Polo*, but both ship and captain were growing old; he did nothing spectacular, and the ship was sold in 1871, the captain retiring to 78 Eastbourne Street, where he died 14th June 1874. His funeral is reported in the Liverpool *Courier* of 20th June 1874 as taking place at Smithdown Road Cemetery, near the Nonconformist Chapel; the grave number being twenty-seven and close to that of James Baines. On his tombstone are the words: "The late Commander of the celebrated clipper ship *Marco Polo*".

In the days of wood and hemp the captains of celebrated ships held their place among the noted men of the world. They ranked with other great leaders of men as heads of a great profession—that of the sea. Their names were as familiar to the man in the street as those of great politicians, great admirals and great generals. And of such was Captain James Nicol Forbes.

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Like many another popular figure, legends grew up about Bully Forbes, which in the course of time became distorted, and he was given credit—or discredit—which belonged to others.

There is a tale, however, which might have had Forbes as its principal actor, and as it throws a lurid light on life in Liverpool 100 years ago, the period when my "Three Liverpool Worthies" graced the scene, I make no apology for relating it.

You will not have forgotten the notorious "Kelly" gang which infested the city not so long ago. This was not by any means the first; there was the "Peanut" gang of about ten years ago, and in the 70's and 80's of the last century the "High Rip" gang, which Mr. Justice Day wiped out by means of the "cat".

But about 100 years ago the north end of the town lived under a reign of terror from a gang known as the "Bloody Forty". This was made up of the class of sailormen known as 'packetarrans' or 'packet rats', for they did not

like long voyages, preferring the shorter run to the States, where they deserted their ship (like rats) and signed on another for the run home. Their headquarters was a boarding-house in Great Howard Street kept by a notorious Mother Riley. Now you may be acquainted with a slang word in Liverpool for a swindler or trickster. "Don't trust that chap, he is a forty"; and if you ask how did the word get that meaning you will most likely be told: "Oh, I suppose it came from *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*". But I am inclined to think it came from this gang, since the expression sometimes is: "Oh, he is a bloody forty", and I have never heard the word outside Liverpool.

Now this gang, or some of them, had a score to settle with Captain Samuel Samuels of the American ship *Dreadnought*, and determined to ship with him and make it hot for him. Mansfield, the Liverpool magistrate, heard of this from his detectives and informed Samuels, who was a friend of his, of what was in store for him. But Samuels was not perturbed.

On the 11th of July 1859, the *Dreadnought* left the Waterloo Dock for New York with thirty of the "Bloody Forty" on board. When off New Brighton, Samuels anchored in order to take his steerage passengers on board. At the last moment the crew were mustered and inspected by Captain Schomberg, the emigration officer, at the same time a gig pulled hurriedly alongside and a messenger from the magistrate jumped aboard and besought the captain not to put to sea with this gang of cut-throats in his fo'cs'le.

Schomberg also recognised the leaders of the gang, Finnegan, Sweeney and Casey, and urged Samuels to put them ashore.

The old man's reply came in his downright fashion: "I'll see them in hades and pumping thunder before I'll sail without them. Never fear; I'll draw their teeth". He then turned to the men and roared: "Here you men, line up there and step lively! You have all got pointed knives. Don't deny it. The carpenter will break the points. That's the rule in this ship. Go to the carpenter's shop". Only Sweeney dared to ask "What for?" "You, Sweeney, another word and I'll have you against the shrouds". This was greeted by hisses, but apparently the men went forward and had the points broken off their knives. But their grumblings were plainly audible aft, and the fierce old skipper immediately sang out in his reef-topsails voice: "Lay aft, all hands". Then, while Samuels lectured the "Bloody Forty", his officers searched the fo'cs'le for weapons. According to Samuels, both Finnegan and Casey had sailed with him before, and Sweeney had been in Mobile jail with the skipper when Samuels was a boy.

As soon as the mates had finished their search the windlass was manned. The tug cast off at Point Lynas, and the *Dreadnought* was tacked across the Irish Sea against a moderate south-west wind. Next day, at noon, while the crew were at their dinner, the old man noticed that the helmsman was constantly off his course. "Steer steady", came his order. The man at the wheel made no reply. "I spoke to you", roared the old man, showing temper. At this the helmsman took his hands off the wheel and, facing the old man, replied sullenly: "You're wrong, I am steering steady". This was too much for the old man's rising irritation. He sprang at the helmsman, who grabbed his sheath knife, but it was too late. Out went the captain's fist and the man dropped senseless alongside the wheel. Then, while the captain's dog, a magnificent Newfoundland, stood guard over the fallen man with his paws

on the man's chest, Samuels dashed down for the handcuffs, bellowing for the second mate. When they reached the deck they found the struggling helmsman being held down by the dog, and after a brief struggle the handcuffs were slipped on and the man locked up in the after-house.

As his sheath knife was found to be pointed, Samuels concluded that the crew intended to clip his wings and make him swim. He thereupon called his officers, together with the carpenter and the cook, into the cabin. Parker, the first officer, had lately been in command of a packet, but was sailing with Samuels for the first time. "Men, it's a case of the fo'c'sle against the cabin. There are forty of them against six of us. How do you stand?" "Seeing I'm the senior officer, I'll speak first", began Parker excitedly—"I'll do no fighting". "Then, you dirty cur, you are no officer of mine, I am tempted to disrate you". "So be it", he replied meekly, and started to leave the cabin. "One minute there, you Parker: I want you to see what a coward you are. Back up into that corner and maybe you'll learn something".

Whitehorn was the next. Although but a small man his face showed what he was made of. He took a step forward, saluted and extending his hand, said: "You know me, captain".

The third mate, a middle-aged man named Hooker, was the next. "Well?" said Samuels. "I'm afraid I'm a little old——". Never mind, you and Parker can report to the galley. Git! Now you two shellbacks, what can I expect?" The cook, a big fat fellow, slapped his hands on his stomach as much as to say: "This would be in the way". The carpenter said he did not sign on to fight and fight he would not. So they were ordered not to show their faces above deck. When they had gone the second mate turned to the old man and said: "Captain, I'm willing, but I haven't a weapon except an old pepper-box pistol". "Never mind, fill her up, pull the trigger and trust to God".

By this time, with Samuels holding a council-of-war aft and Finnegan and Sweeney preparing their forces for battle forward, the unhappy emigrants, as usual with non-combatants, were in a pretty state of panic. According to Samuels, the Norwegians were praying one kind of prayer, the Germans another, while the Hungarians were singing theirs.

As soon as the cabin conference was over, the captain gave the order: "Haul taut the weather main brace". The men trooped aft, but instead of tailing on to the brace, scowled fiercely up at the old man. "Why don't you obey the order, you blundering murderers?" roared the irate skipper. "Let Mike out of irons first", spoke Finnegan, whom Samuels describes as one of the toughest men he ever met. "Not if I had 1,000 of you in irons", yelled the old man, shaking his fist at the crew. "Then you'll holystone hell", retorted Finnegan, amid a torrent of curses. What happened next is not quite clear, but as Samuels appeared at the break of the poop with a revolver in each hand, the crew were just starting up the ladders. "Move another inch, one of you, and we'll have the burial service in short order". "The devil you will", sneered Finnegan, flourishing his knife; "You're too much of a coward, you damned psalm-singing hypocrite". "Move back there", interrupted the old man. Not a man stirred. "Shoot!" jeered Finnegan, defiantly ripping open his shirt and baring his chest. "Shoot now, you dirty low-livered coward". The captain levelled his weapon on the leader of the

"Bloody Forty", but the man never moved an eyelid. This roused the old man to fury. "I could kill you now, Finnegan, you cur, but I'm going to starve every one of you into submission instead. Do you hear? I'll make you get down on your knees and beg for mercy". Howls and jeers greeted this outburst, and Casey broke in with: "Kill the old fool". But the weaker members of the crew had had enough of this bluff and began to sneak away. Finally, Finnegan, Sweeney and Casey were left standing alone. Then with many a curse they swung on their heels and returned to the fo'c'sle.

All that night the old man paced the quarter deck with his faithful dog at his side, while the second mate and the boys attended to any sail trimming that was needed. At day-break a report spread through the ship that the crew had barricaded themselves in the fo'c'sle. At noon the order: "Take in the royals", was roared from aft; but beyond a muffled "Go to hell" from the interior of the fo'c'sle, no notice was taken. As the wind was freshening, the sails were furled by the officers and the boys, and the ship headed off to the nor-nor-west. By midnight it was blowing hard with a nasty sea making, into which the *Dreadnought* was pitching fo'c'sle under, while a roaring flood frothed in the lee scuppers. The ship was going a good twelve knots, and never had she had such a dusting. The top-gallant sails were lowered to the caps, but Samuels dare not touch his topsails for want of man power. Luckily the wind began to moderate at four a.m. and by eight a.m. it was nearly calm. As soon as the top-gallant sails were set again, Samuels went forward in an attempt to turn the men to. The reply to his demand was a request for something to eat before turning to. But the old man was of a different mind. "You work before you eat", he yelled through the bulkhead. At this there were howls of execration and sounds of the barricade being removed, whereupon the old man thought it wise to beat a retreat.

At 11-30 that morning a committee of the passengers came aft and demanded that the crew should be fed. According to Samuels they were under the delusion that he was maltreating the crew. Every hair on the old man's head bristled up at this interference and, he started to read the committee a lecture on the subject of mutiny. But he was interrupted by one of his listeners who, greatly daring, broke in with: "If you don't feed the crew we will". "If you do, I'll put you in irons". "You can't do that" retorted the other, hotly. Roaring for the second mate to go for the handcuffs, Samuels grappled with his defiant passenger. The latter struck out and missed. In a moment the captain had him by the throat, and after a sharp scuffle, the handcuffs were again called into use. This was the end of any interference by the passengers.

At sunset the sea was smooth with a nice breeze from the nor'west with the ship logging eight knots close-hauled. Once more the old man went forward to parley with the crew and offered to forget their mutinous conduct if they would throw overboard their knives and go to work. But he was careful to except Finnegan, Sweeney and Casey from this amnesty. Once more his offer was refused with yells of derision. The crew had now been fifty-six hours without food, and Samuels realized that the crisis was not far off. So at eight bells, eight p.m., he left the second mate in charge of the deck, with orders to shoot the first man who came abaft the main mast, while he descended to the after steerage to enlist the help of the German emigrants.

Addressing them in their own language he was soon able to recruit seventeen sturdy "Dutchies", whom he armed with iron bars taken from the cargo. These men he ordered to remain below ready to jump at the first call. Towards midnight, while the captain and Whitehorn were pacing the quarter-deck with Wallace the dog in their wake, the dog began to growl. Two men were then discovered crawling aft, and the captain thought he saw the gleam of knives in their hands. "Shall I shoot?" asked the second mate anxiously. "No", hissed the captain. "Shall I slip down and call up the Germans?" "No, wait", ordered the old man. They waited till the men were about twenty feet away, then the old man's cyclonic voice broke the peace of the calm night—"Halt! Stand up and let me see who you are, or I'll put a bullet through you". Then to the mate: "These fellows are up to some trick; keep a watch down the gangway". "No, we're not, captain", replied one of the men; "We're ready to surrender if you'll take us back". "Throw your knives overboard" came the command. The men did so, and after the second mate had searched them and found nothing, Samuels proceeded to cross-examine them. Ever since the crew had retired to the fo'c'sle they had kept a watch on the proceedings aft, four men going on duty at a time. These two men formed half of the watch that was then on duty and, according to them, the other pair were willing to give in.

They told Samuels that every man forward had taken an oath to kill him if he dared to come forward of the midship house during the night. That it was planned to burst the galley at eight bells (four a.m.) to get food. Further, that one of the men had been knocked senseless by Sweeney with a serving mallet for suggesting surrender.

The captain now made final preparations for victory. The Germans were brought up and stationed round the deckhouse. The port ladder to the poop was barricaded with the pigsty, while the steerage ladders were hauled up and the hatches closed, thus making prisoners of the emigrants below.

With all his preparations completed, the old man, backed by his second officer and his invaluable dog, started forward to investigate. It was a little after seven bells in the middle watch (three-thirty a.m.), and at eight bells the four men who had offered to surrender were to be relieved by Casey, Sweeney and two others, who meant to attack the storeroom.

When abreast of the midship house the dog warned his master by a deep growl. Then out sprang Casey and Sweeney with lifted knives. Apparently, both Samuels and Whitehorn thought discretion the better part of valour; in the words of the old man: "I ran back for some distance till I got Sweeney where I wanted him—at the point of my revolver". The mate ran to prepare the Germans. But the dog sprang at Sweeney and knocked him down. Sweeney was up in an instant, yelling: "Come on, boys! We've got him". With wild shouts the "Bloody Forty" hurled themselves to the attack, and in a moment the ship was a pandemonium. The emigrants, battered down below, and terrified at the noise on deck, shrieked and howled in a manner to raise the dead. On the port side of the house an outburst of cursing and the sound of blows told of the Germans who were holding back Finnegan and some half-dozen men. Others came clambering over the top of the house. But the iron bars of the Germans and the captain's pistols soon

brought the struggle to a halt. As the "Forty" drew back, Samuels roared out: "I'll give you one minute to throw your knives overboard".

Finnegan, who had escaped the bars of the Germans, now wormed his way to the front and, defiant as ever, sang out: "You shall be the first to go". "I'll settle with you later, Finnegan", returned the old man. Then a man stepped forward and asked: "If we throw our knives overboard what guarantee have we that you won't shoot us?" "I'll make no bargain till you throw away your knives". "Here goes mine", said a man standing just behind Finnegan, whereupon the latter turned quickly and struck him full in the face. But Finnegan's authority was fast waning, and one by one the knives went over the side. And when Sweeney and Casey had parted with theirs only Finnegan's remained. At last, with bad grace, Finnegan's also went overboard. "Now", said the greatly relieved skipper, sternly: "I've got a score to settle with you, Finnegan. You are the first man to call me a coward, and you've got to take it back". "Not on your life", returned the undaunted Finnegan. But he was rash. Before the words were out of his mouth the old man struck at him and knocked him head first down the fo'c'sle ladder. At this the men flew up again; Sweeney stooped to draw a knife from the top of his boot, but Samuels was too quick for him: "Up with your hands, all of you", he roared, and ordered the second mate to search them again. Knives were found on Sweeney and Casey. Then Finnegan was hauled senseless out of the fo's'cle, and a knife was found on him. Samuels now turned on the thoroughly cowed "Bloody Forty" and repeated the order given two days before and never carried out: "Haul taut the weather main-brace". The men tailed on as if they would spring the yard. The day was now breaking and the mutiny over, so Samuels sent an order to the cook to get the men's coffee ready and told the mate to set them holystoning the deck when they had had it. Meanwhile, Finnegan was brought round by the ship's doctor. As soon as he could sit up the old man ordered him to apologise, but Finnegan remained silent; it is possible that he was too dazed to speak. So he was put into the sweat-box. In less than half-an-hour he cried for mercy and was ready to say or do anything to be let out of irons. The unrelenting old man led him up to where all hands were holystoning the deck: "Now men, listen to what your leader and bully has to say". "Captain", said Finnegan, "I've had enough. To say that does not make a coward of a man who has found a master". "That won't do", objected Samuels, "You must take back your insulting words". "Well then, captain, any man that says you are a coward is a liar". This apparently satisfied the relentless old man; the handcuffs were taken off and Finnegan set to work with the rest. They were kept at this pleasant task the whole day—as the captain said—to make up for lost time.

For the rest of the passage these suddenly reformed villains were as meek as so many lambs, and appeased their captain most effectively by attending Divine Service on the Sundays.

Before the voyage was over that hard nut of a man behaved more like a Methodist preacher than the captain of a notorious Yankee packet, while the "Bloody Forty" were not only eating out of his hand, but even Finnegan was attempting to play the part of a reformed bad man.

And so I claim, ladies and gentlemen, that more widespread than the fame of Gladstone, Roscoe or Mrs. Hemans was the fame (or notoriety) of my “Three Liverpool Worthies”—Paddy West, Paddy Doyle and Bully Forbes.

(The Council record with regret the death of Mr. Joseph W. Foley on 31st December 1953).

SOME LESSER-KNOWN LIVERPOOL SHIPPING COMPANIES

by GUY R. SLOMAN

A great deal has been written about the great liner companies which have done so much to make Liverpool the world famed port that it now is. The histories of these firms have in some cases been written many times over and it is seldom difficult to obtain access to them. I do not pretend that no openings remain for research into the early days of these companies; on the contrary many of the accounts are so conflicting and erroneous that there is still much to be done before a really accurate history can be compiled. A large amount of meticulous work along these lines was undertaken by the founder members of this Society, notably the late Captain E. A. Woods, the late Mr. W. Stewart Rees and the late Mr. A. C. Wardle, and some of it has been published in the *Transactions* and elsewhere.

I intend to ignore these major companies and to concentrate upon some of the lesser-known firms, all of which have long since ceased to own ships and some of which are almost entirely forgotten. I have accordingly selected five companies whose offices were in Liverpool and whose ships were registered at this port. In choosing them I have been guided by the amount of information available rather than by similarities of trade or make-up. They do, however, represent a fair cross-section of Liverpool's deep sea steamer fleets during that important period when the steamship was ousting the sailing vessel from every ocean trade route.

All the companies concerned commenced or first went into steam in the sixties and seventies of the last century. They were the days when any man possessed of courage, foresight and a little capital could buy a ship and, with luck, make a fortune almost overnight. Liverpool was the Monte Carlo of those days and to the town flocked would-be merchant adventurers from all parts of Britain and, indeed, from the Continent and even America. Many placed their stakes, some succeeded and provided material for this paper, the majority never got beyond their first ship and when that was lost they too were lost.

I do not claim that the histories of these companies are exhaustive, some of them would readily fill a whole paper if the details were forthcoming. I have attempted rather to give as accurate and as complete an outline history of each firm as possible and to go into slightly more detail regarding the vessels owned. In doing so I have been conscious of the lack of interest occasioned by frequent reference to dimensions, and have therefore quoted only the gross tonnage, which I feel to be essential in a paper of this nature. I have in my possession fairly comprehensive fleet lists of all the companies described and I shall be willing to provide further details if anyone is interested.

R. P. Houston & Co.

Robert Paterson Houston was the son of a seagoing engineer and at an early age was apprenticed to a firm of engineers in Liverpool. He showed considerable aptitude for his work and whilst still in his twenties he became superintendent engineer of an Atlantic steamship company. He soon decided, however, to go into shipowning on his own account and purchased the iron screw schooner *Athlete* from Mr. A. B. Fraser, of Liverpool. She was a small vessel of only 363 gross tons and had been built by Hyde of Bristol in 1855 for F. H. Powell & Co., the forerunners of the present Coast Lines. I have been unable to trace the exact date of the purchase of the *Athlete*, but it was almost certainly in 1881. Later in that year the Whitehaven Shipbuilding Co. built the 1155 ton *Hercules* to Houston's specification, and she formed the nucleus from which sprang the Houston Line. Both vessels were engaged in general trading, chiefly to the East. A third vessel followed in 1882, the *Hermes*, of 2175 tons, built at Glasgow by Aitken and Mansel. Houston had by now obtained valuable contracts for the conveyance of materials to the Panama Canal Co. and to the West Africa Co., but nevertheless his interest was centred upon the lucrative River Plate trade and, in 1884, he dispatched the *Hermes* from Liverpool for River Plate ports and thus established the service which was to engage him for the rest of his active life.

From the first, opposition was strenuous, but Houston put all he had into the business and within a few years was firmly established in the trade. Two more vessels were added to the fleet in 1884; they were the 2400 ton *Hesperides*, built by R. & J. Evans & Co. at Liverpool, and the 1980 ton *Hellenes*, built by W. Pickersgill & Sons at Sunderland. In 1885, Richardson, Duck & Co. of Stockton-on-Tees, built the *Heliades*, of 1965 tons, and she was followed in 1886 by the slightly larger *Heraclides* from the short-lived yard of Boulds, Sharer & Co. at Sunderland.

The pioneer steamer *Athlete* was soon disposed of, and in September 1885 the *Hermes* was wrecked at Castillo. There remained a fleet of five modern vessels, however, and with these a weekly service to the River Plate was maintained, with sailings from Liverpool every Saturday. The *Hercules* was sold to Danzig owners in 1888, and in 1889 three 2750 ton steel vessels, powered by three cylinder triple expansion engines, were added to the fleet. Two of them, the *Hellopes* and *Hydarnes*, were built by J. Reid & Co. of Port Glasgow and the third, the *Hippomenes*, by Workman, Clarke & Co. at Belfast. The fleet remained static from then until 1898, when a large building programme was embarked upon. In that year Russell & Co. of Port Glasgow, built the 3550 ton ships *Herminius* and *Horatius*, and in 1899 there followed seven more vessels, six of them of 3450 tons, of which two, the *Hermes* and *Hyades* were built by J. Blumer & Co. of Sunderland, two, the *Hesperides* and *Hyanthes* by Bartram & Son, also of Sunderland, and two, the *Honorius* and *Hortensius* by A. McMillan & Sons of Dumbarton. The seventh vessel was also built by McMillan's, the 4233 ton *Hylas*. The building programme was completed by the delivery in 1900 of the sister ships *Hellenes*, *Horus* and *Hostilius* from McMillan's yard.

In February 1897 the *Hydarnes* went missing whilst on a voyage from Liverpool to Buenos Ayres, forty-three lives being lost. Later the same year

the *Hesperides* was wrecked off Cape Hatteras and the *Hellenes* was sold to become the Norwegian *Fram*.

In the early days of the company all the ships were owned by single ship companies, but in 1898 Mr. Houston formed the British & South American Steam Navigation Co. Ltd., under the management of R. P. Houston & Co. On the outbreak of the Boer War in 1899, Houston immediately put at the disposal of the Government a large proportion of his fleet for the shipment of men, horses and equipment to South Africa, an area to which he had not previously traded. His services were gladly accepted by the Government and, in order to fulfil his many commitments, he purchased four steamers and chartered others. The steamers purchased were Lund's Blue Anchor liners *Woolloomooloo* of 1891 and *Warrnambool* of 1892, renamed *Harmonides* and *Harmodius* respectively, the Prince liner *Afghan Prince* of 1894, renamed *Hilarius*, and the Furness Withy liner *Manchester Port* of 1899, renamed *Hydaspes*.

Mr. Houston's efforts during the war were warmly commended by those in charge of operations. When the war was over the *Times* praised what it called the extraordinary energy of Mr. Houston, who took the keenest personal interest in the war, carrying out the work with his own men and without a contractor. "Different men work in different ways", wrote the *Times*. "Mr. Houston may be likened to a human dynamo revolving at a fabulous rate and generating an irresistible amount of energy".

In 1902 three more vessels were built, the 5700 tons four masted *Hyacinthus* and *Hypatia* by Palmer's at Jarrow, and the 5090 ton *Halizones* by Robert Duncan & Co. at Port Glasgow. Meanwhile, during the war, on the 13th May 1901, the *Hermes* of 1899 had been wrecked in Table Bay.

Houston's war-time experiences in the South African trade, not only from the United Kingdom to the Cape but also from the River Plate, an important source of horses and stores, made him determine to enter the peace-time South African trade, and accordingly in July 1902 he dispatched the *Hostilius* for Cape Town. Thus commenced a battle against the established shipping lines even more fierce than that he had waged against the powerful South American lines nearly twenty years earlier. The opposition had formed themselves into a conference and were very well prepared to meet an attack, but Houston persevered and was to some extent successful. Towards the end of 1903 he had the temerity to enter the passenger trade as well, and for this purpose he purchased the Shaw Savill liner *Mamari* of 1889 and renamed her *Hesione*; she was followed by the Blue Anchor liner *Yarrowonga* of 1891, renamed *Hermione*. These vessels were primarily cargo carriers and consequently rather slow. Houston therefore chartered the new *Manuka*, just completed for the Union Steamship Co. of New Zealand, and purchased the Norddeutscher Lloyd liner *Dresden* of 1888, which he renamed *Helius*.

The new service, with its cut price fares, was quite well patronised, but the odds against which it had to fight were enormous and the battle came to a dramatic close in January 1904, when it was announced that the Houston line had capitulated and joined the Conference. The passenger service was immediately withdrawn, but the cargo service continued to operate within the Conference, so that Houston had not entirely lost. The

Helius was laid up and then sold to the Turks in 1906, but the other vessels acquired for the service remained in the fleet for a number of years.

In 1904 two cargo vessels were purchased, the *Pinnars Point* of 3908 tons built by J. L. Thompson at Sunderland in 1895 and renamed *Hyperia*, and the *Storm King* of 3279 tons, built by Raylton Dixon of Middlesbrough in 1890 and renamed *Homereus*. Also in 1904 Houston purchased two small vessels from the Cork Steamship Co. to act as feeders from the Continent to Liverpool. They were the *Dotterel* of 1422 tons, built by W. H. Potter at Liverpool in 1878, and the *Ptarmigan* of 1234 tons, built by Thompson of Dundee in 1890. They were given the names of *Fearless* and *Dauntless* respectively, but did not remain on the service for very long, the *Fearless* being sunk in collision near the Bar Lightship in February 1906, and the *Dauntless* being sold to the Liverpool and Hamburg Steamship Co. and renamed *Lapland*. These were the last additions to the fleet before it was sold, fourteen years later.

During the next few years some of the older vessels were sold, including the *Heliades* of 1885, sold in 1910 to Ward's for breaking up, and the *Hippomenes*, sold to Italian owners in 1912. In October 1907 the *Heraclides* was wrecked, and in December 1911 the *Hellopes* foundered in Mounts Bay, Cornwall.

At the outbreak of the first world war the fleet consisted of twenty-one vessels, but not one of them was less than twelve years old. On the 15th August 1914 the *Hyades* was captured by the German raider *Dresden*, and thus acquired the unenviable reputation of being the first vessel lost in that war. In 1915 the *Halizones* and *Hesione*, ex *Mamari*, were sunk by submarines, and the same fate overtook the *Hesperides* and *Hylas* in 1917. In July 1918 the *Hyperia* also fell a victim to the U-boat, but she was the last of the company's vessels to be lost.

In 1918 Houston, faced with the task of rebuilding and modernising his fleet with shipbuilding prices at their peak, accepted an offer from Messrs. Cayzer Irvine & Co. of the Clan Line to purchase the British and South American Steam Navigation Co. Houston himself retired to the Channel Islands, where he died in 1926 in his 74th year.

The Bedouin Steam Navigation Company

The brothers William and Robert Thomson were, in 1875, managers of Couplands, well known sailing ship owners in the last century. A few years later they decided to go into business on their own account and ordered a steamer from the Tyneside shipyard of C. Mitchell & Co. She was delivered in mid-1879 and was named *Bedouin*. Her hull was of iron and she was rigged as a two masted schooner, it being the usual practice for steamers to carry sail in those days. Her gross tonnage was 1911 and she was propelled by two cylinder compound engines.

The brothers appear to have been satisfied with their venture into steam, for in 1880 the Bedouin Steam Navigation Company was registered under the management of W. and R. Thomson, with offices at 12 Tower Chambers. During that year a further four steamers were delivered from Mitchell's yard. They were the *Sahara*, *Sheikh*, *Simoom* and *Sirocco*, and were almost identical with the *Bedouin*. Like their successors, their names all had associa-

tions with North Africa, but I have been unable to find any reason for their being so named. There is no evidence to show that they traded, or were intended to trade, principally with North African ports, though this may have been so during the early days of the company.

In 1881 Mitchell's delivered the slightly larger *Khalif*, and in the following year the *Mameluke*, an iron two-masted schooner of 2619 tons gross. A sister ship followed in 1883; she was named *Nedjed*, but by this time the builders had assumed the more impressive title of Sir William Armstrong Whitworth & Co.

At about this period the Bedouin Steam Navigation Company moved to new offices in Mersey Chambers, which were to be its headquarters for the remainder of its existence.

The next two vessels, both of which were delivered in 1885 by Armstrong Mitchell's, marked a radical departure from the earlier vessels in that they were constructed of steel and powered by three cylinder triple expansion engines. They were given the names *Hajeen* and *Dragoman* and were each of 2790 gross tons.

By this time the fleet had reached a total of ten ships, and it remained at this figure until 1888, when the *Sahara* of 1880 was sold to Cardiff owners and renamed *Ravenshoe*. In the following year the remaining three vessels of 1880, *Sheikh*, *Simoom* and *Sirocco* were sold to the African Steamship Company and renamed *Gambia*, *Eboe* and *Yoruba* respectively. These sales were to a large extent offset by the delivery in 1889 of the *Emir*, and in 1890 of the *Arab*, vessels of 4200 gross tons. They were built by Palmer's of Jarrow, thus breaking the link with Mitchell's on the opposite bank of the Tyne. Shortly afterwards the *Khalif* was sold to become the *Farncliffe*, retaining her Liverpool registry until wrecked off Cuba on the 27th November 1894.

Late in 1892 Palmer's delivered the second *Sheikh*, a vessel of 4169 tons. She was a lone ship, without sisters, and was destined to remain the largest vessel in the fleet for the next sixteen years. A builder's model of her was displayed in the Shipping Gallery of the Museum prior to the last war. If it survived the bombing it is probable the only model of the vessels of this company still in existence.

In 1894 the *Bedouin*, pioneer steamer of the fleet, was sold after fifteen years' service and renamed *Pentland*. Her name was revived in the following year, however, and bestowed upon a 3533 ton vessel built by Palmer's. Two more vessels of this class were built in 1898, the *Khalif* and the *Dragoman*.

In the last years of the century several of the older vessels were disposed of. The *Mameluke* and *Nedjed* became the *Confidenza* and *Costante* respectively under the Italian flag, but both were subsequently sold to Russian owners and regained their former names. The *Hajeen* went to Newcastle owners in 1897 and subsequently became James Knott's *Belgian Prince*. The *Dragoman* also went to Newcastle owners in 1897 as the *Ivydene*.

By 1900 the fleet consisted of six vessels, but this figure was soon reduced to four by the sale of the *Emir* in 1901 and of the *Arab* in 1902. Two replacements were, however, ordered from the Sunderland yard of William Pickersgill & Sons and were delivered in 1903. They were the *Simoom* and the *Sirocco*, sister ships of 3740 tons.

During the next five years no further additions were made to the fleet, but the second *Bedouin* of 1895 was sold, to become the *Blythswood* of Glasgow. A third *Bedouin* was built in 1908, this time by J. L. Thompson & Sons, at Sunderland. She was a vessel of 4732 tons, the largest vessel to be built since the *Sheikh* of 1892. The latter vessel was still in service with the company, but two years later she was sold to Norwegian owners and, as the *Solstreif*, survived until September 1934, when she was sold for breaking up after an active life of 42 years.

In 1911 the *Khalif* of 1898 was sold and became the *Fratelli Bianchi* of Genoa, and in the same year the *Simoom* of 1903 became the *Claudius Aulagnon* of Mariupol. With only three vessels remaining the Company carried on until 1912, when a new vessel, the *Arab*, almost identical with the *Dragoman* of four years earlier, was delivered by J. L. Thompson of Sunderland.

The *Arab* was destined to be the last vessel to be built for the Company, for on the 17th of May 1912, the senior partner of the managers, Mr. William Thomson, died at his home in Livingstone Drive, Liverpool, at the age of 73. Shortly afterwards the Bedouin Steam Navigation Company went into liquidation and the four remaining ships were disposed of. Two of them went to other Liverpool owners, the *Sirocco* to James Chamber's Lancashire Shipping Company as the *Sizergh Castle*, and the new *Arab* to Rankin Gilmour & Company as the *Saint Veronica*; she was resold to T. & J. Harrison in 1918 and became the *Matador*. A third vessel, the *Bedouin*, was sold to Strick's and renamed *Kohistan*, but I have been unable to ascertain the fate of the fourth, the *Dragoman* of 1898, which was the oldest surviving vessel. She was no longer listed in Lloyd's Register of 1913 and may therefore have been broken up, but this seems unlikely as she was only fourteen years old at the time.

Robert Thomson, the surviving partner, died in December 1916, at the age of 70.

During its thirty-two years of existence the Bedouin Steam Navigation Company owned, in all, twenty vessels, all of which were built specially for the Company and all, incidentally, on the north-east coast. It is remarkable to be able to record that not one of these ships was lost whilst in the Company's service; there can be but few contemporary shipowners of which the same can be said. During its early years the Company's vessels traded chiefly in the east and Far East, but subsequently they visited ports all over the world, being particularly engaged in the Transatlantic grain trade. There is no record of any regular service having ever been maintained by the Company.

Strong, Reid and Page

Although one report speaks of the firm of Strong, Reid and Page as having been founded in the latter part of the eighteenth century there seems to be little doubt that it commenced in about 1835 when John Strong went into business as a shipbroker, with offices at 30 Chapel Walks. At some time during the forties he was joined by William Reid, and the firm became Strong and Reid. In 1848 George Page entered the business, but it was not until some years later that he became a partner. In 1867 the firm was styled Strong, Reid & Company, and its offices were at 4 Chapel Walks. The

directory of that year still describes them as shipbrokers, but there is reason to believe that they owned or had owned a number of sailing vessels.

In 1870, by which time the full title of Strong, Reid and Page had been adopted, two steamships were constructed for the Company. They were named *Winsloe* and *Leeming*, and were iron vessels of 820 gross tons, rigged as three masted barques and propelled by two cylinder compound engines. They were built on the Mersey by Bowdler Chaffer and Company at their Seacombe yard. The *Leeming* did not remain with the Company for very long, but the *Winsloe* survived until the late eighties, when she was sold to the London and Rotterdam Steamship Company.

Two more vessels followed from the same yard in 1871, the *Amelia* and the *Tinto*. They were slightly larger than their predecessors, but their engines and rigging were identical. The *Amelia* was unfortunately wrecked at Milford Haven in October 1874, but the *Tinto* remained in the Company's service for twenty-four years. Bowdler Chaffer built a further two iron steamers in 1872, the *Juan Cunningham* of 744 gross tons and the *Mino* of 705 gross tons, both of which were rigged as three-masted schooners. The *Juan Cunningham* subsequently became the *Rioja* of Seville, but the *Mino* went missing in 1880.

In 1874 the *Prado* was delivered by Bowdler Chaffer, and in 1876 the *Corso*. They were brig rigged and larger than any of the previous vessels, being of 1058 and 1106 tons respectively. Both survived until the close of the century; the *Prado* was then sold to Palgrave Murphy of Dublin and renamed *City of Berlin*. She was still in existence as late as 1928, being by that time fifty-four years old; a good age for an iron vessel!

For their next vessel the Company turned to Messrs. Oswald Mordaunt & Company of Southampton who, in 1878, built the iron brig *Alfonso* of 1325 tons. A slightly larger vessel, the *Volo*, followed from the yard of R. Duncan & Company of Port Glasgow in 1880.

In 1882 Mr. Alexander Reid, son of William Reid, was admitted into the partnership after spending nine years learning the business, which was now conducted from 45 Castle Street.

A further iron brig, the *Neto* of 1700 tons, was added in 1882. She was built by Dobie & Company of Glasgow and lasted until about 1909, when she was sold to Whimster & Co. of Glasgow. During the next six years the fleet remained static, but in 1888 delivery was taken of the *Orbo*, a vessel of 1820 tons. She marked a big advance upon the earlier vessels, being constructed of steel and propelled by three cylinder triple expansion engines. W. Hamilton & Co. of Port Glasgow were her builders. She was eventually sold in January 1911 and became the *Kassiani*.

The *Orbo* was destined to be the last vessel built for the Company. From 1888 onwards vessels were gradually disposed of, until by 1907 only the *Orbo* and *Neto* remained in the fleet. In that year, however, the 2430 ton steamer *Saxony* was purchased from Messrs. McIver Sons & Co. and renamed *Prado*. She had been built in 1894 by Raylton Dixon & Co. of Middlesbrough.

With the sale of the *Orbo* in 1911, the *Prado* became the only vessel remaining in the fleet. In 1912 she too was sold and the firm of Strong, Reid and Page retired from the shipping business. George Page had died in December 1897, and since then the partners had been his eldest son, George

Strong Page, and Alexander Reid. The offices of the Company during its latter years were at 28 Chapel Street.

The ships of the Company were employed chiefly in the Mediterranean and had limited accommodation for first-class passengers. During the latter years the ships were owned by single ship companies and managed by Strong, Reid and Page.

Joseph Hoult

In the early eighteen-sixties Strong, Reid and Page took on as an apprentice a young man by the name of Joseph Hoult. He had been born in Old Swan in 1847 of middle-class parents. His brothers were sent away to school, but Joseph, at his own request, was educated locally. His father had decided that he should become a chemist and accordingly apprenticed him to a pharmacist in Old Swan. He remained there a month, decided the life did not suit him, and left to enter Strong, Reid and Page's office. He was quick to learn and possessed of boundless energy, inherited from his mother, which soon put him ahead of his fellow apprentices. He lost no opportunity to learn every branch of shipping and commercial practice and in 1868, at the age of twenty-one, he went into business on his own account as Joseph Hoult, Ship and Insurance Broker.

Hoult spent the next few years in building up connections in all parts of the world. It is probable that he had shares in some sailing vessels during this period, but in or shortly before 1876 he purchased the iron three-masted schooner *Bentinck* of 892 gross tons, built in 1873 by the Whitehaven Shipbuilding Company and fitted with two cylinder compound engines. In 1887 he took delivery of the *Bendigo* of 1414 tons from the Barrow Shipbuilding Company, and in the same year ordered another vessel from Whitehaven. The designs of this vessel were prepared by Hoult himself and it is said that the builders refused all responsibility for the seaworthiness of the craft. She was completed in 1878 and named *Benan*, and was an iron two-masted schooner of 1273 gross tons. Her chief peculiarity was her very shallow draught compared with the large cargo capacity. She proved to be a great success, however, being able to carry cargoes of 1600 tons over bars where steamers of similar size were forced to lighten to 700 tons. She long outlived her builders, who had doubted her ability even to float, and was still in service under the Norwegian flag in 1910 as the *Fredheim*.

In 1878 Hoult purchased the small collier *Lancaster*, built by Bowdler Chaffer at Seacombe in 1867, and renamed her *Bengore*, but she foundered in January 1880. Whitehaven built the *Benona*, a sister to the *Benan*, in 1879 and in the same year the *Bellona* of 1944 tons, one of T. & J. Harrison's pioneer steamers, built by Smith and Rodger at Glasgow in 1862, was purchased and renamed *Benbrack*. W. H. Potter and Sons of Liverpool built four steamers in 1880, two, the *Benedict* and *Benefactor*, being of 1030 tons and the other two, the *Benayo* and *Benalla*, of 1230 tons. The latter was sunk in collision in October 1880, but was subsequently salvaged and became the *Acoriana* of Lisbon. Four more vessels followed in 1882, the *Benacre* and *Benhope* of 1600 tons from the yard of Caird Purdie and Co. at Barrow, and the *Bengeo* and *Beny* of 1220 tons from Whitehaven. The *Benevolent* and *Berbice* were slightly larger vessels, built at Whitehaven in 1883. The *Berbice*

is notable in that she was the only ship ever owned by Hoult whose name did not begin with the prefix *Ben*. A further ship from Caird Purdie's yard in 1883, the *Benison* of 1736 tons, completed a large building programme, and Hoult settled down to a period of consolidation. He now had a modern fleet of steamers engaged in tramping in all parts of the globe. He commenced a regular line to the West Indies, but this appears to have been short-lived. He was largely responsible for the design of all his ships and is credited with having been the first steamship owner to house his crews amidships. In the absence of proof, however, I prefer to treat this claim with reserve.

Losses during the 1880's were heavy. Between 1882 and 1889 the *Bengeo*, *Benedict* and *Benbrack* were wrecked, the *Bendigo* and the *Bentinck* foundered and the *Benhope* was gutted by fire. Many of the older ships were sold, and in 1887 delivery of new vessels began again. Three, the *Bencroy*, *Bengar* and *Benholm*, appeared in that year, two more, the *Bentala* and *Benwick*, in 1889 and the *Bendi* and *Bendo* in 1890. They were of varying sizes and delivered by various builders. There followed another pause, but in 1895 the *Benhead* and *Benshaw* of 1725 tons were built, followed by the *Benrath* and *Benridge* of 3450 tons. After this no new ships were built for fourteen years, but in the period between 1901 and 1906 a miscellaneous selection of vessels was purchased. They totalled eight in all and were given the names of ships no longer in the fleet. They were all tramps, the only really interesting one being the Rankin Gilmour steamer *Saint Mary* of 1896, which was purchased in February 1906 and renamed *Benrath*, the previous vessel of that name having been sold to Spanish owners a few years earlier.

At about this period Hoult formed the Steam Transport Company Limited and transferred most of his vessels to it, but the management remained in the hands of Joseph Hoult and Company. Prior to this the fleet had been owned by single ship companies.

New building was commenced again in 1909 with the *Bendew* of 3681 tons, and four similar vessels followed in 1910, the *Benbrook*, *Bengrove*, *Benpark* and *Benwood*. Furness Withy's new *Feliciana* was purchased about this time and became the *Benbridge*. Hoult built his last steamer in 1913; she was the *Benheather* of 4740 tons, the largest he ever owned, and came from the yard of W. Pickersgill and Sons at Sunderland.

Hoult had always been quick to foresee an impending rise or drop in freight rates. He sold his vessels at the height of a boom and bought them at the bottom of the market. In the early months of the first world war he sold almost all of his remaining vessels at a good price, and by 1917 only the *Benheather* of 1913 remained in his possession. In April of that year she was torpedoed and he was no longer a shipowner. Whether or not Joseph Hoult would have rebuilt his fleet in more propitious times we shall never know, for, on the 18th of October 1917, he died at his country home at Penrith, in his 71st year.

Today the name of Joseph Hoult is almost forgotten, though in his day he was a prominent figure in the public life of Liverpool. He was elected to the City Council in 1893 and made a Justice of the Peace in 1897. For many years he was chairman of the Watch Committee, but he declined the office of Mayor when offered it. In 1900 he was elected Member of Parliament for the Wirral Division, which he represented until he was defeated by Sir

William Lever in 1906. For many years prior to his death he had lived in Thornton Hough.

During his lifetime he gave very generously to local charities. For example, on his 70th birthday he gave £70,000 to be divided amongst a number of charities, £1,000 for each year of his life. It came as somewhat of a surprise, therefore, that when his will was read it was found that not a penny of the £250,000 he left was to go to charity. Included in the will was a note to the effect that as he had indulged freely in charitable works during his lifetime he did not feel obliged to do so now.

West India and Pacific Steamship Company

Many pioneer Liverpool steamship owners were responsible in one way or another for the formation of the West India and Pacific Steamship Company. Chief amongst them was Alfred Holt, of Blue Funnel fame, who, in 1856, entered the West Indian trade by despatching his new steamer, the *Saladin* of 510 gross tons, for Panama. This small iron screw brig was built by Cato and Miller of Liverpool, and her ownership was divided amongst several members of the Holt family together with Captain Middleton and Thomas Ainsworth of Cleator. No doubt Alfred Holt had had a share in her design, as he was thoroughly versed in the science of shipbuilding, having ten years previously supervised the construction of the *Great Britain*.

The *Saladin*, despite her size, was successful and in 1859 she was joined by the iron screw schooner *Plantagenet* of 695 tons, built in that year by Scott & Company of Greenock. The new steamer enabled a monthly service to be maintained between the Mersey and Panama and other Central American and West Indian ports. Through bills of lading, including the overland journey from Panama to the Pacific Coast became available. Goods were shipped from thence by the coastal steamers of the Pacific Steam Navigation Company to ports on the West Coast of South America.

As trade increased further vessels became necessary, and accordingly Scott's built the *Talisman* of 738 tons in 1860, the *Askalon* of 875 tons in 1861 and in 1862 the *Crusader* of 901 tons. The opening of the Panama Railroad about this time provided a great stimulant to the trade and, with goods piling up on quaysides in Liverpool and Central American ports, it is not surprising that other shipowners began to be interested in the potentialities of the service. Early in 1863 a group of merchants formed the Liverpool, West Indian and Central American Steam Navigation Company and placed it under the management of Leech, Harrison and Forwood, shipowners not entirely new to the West Indian trade. The first sailing of this Company was made by the *Darien* in April 1863. She was a new ship, completed only a few weeks earlier by Pile Spence of West Hartlepool, and was of 1180 gross tons, brigantine rigged and equipped with four cylinder compound engines. A smaller steamer of 836 tons named *Normanby* and built by Pile Spence in 1859 was purchased and renamed *Venezuelan*. Shortly afterwards Marshall's of Newcastle delivered a third vessel, the barque rigged iron steamer *Mexican* of 1315 tons. With these vessels, a monthly service was maintained between Liverpool and Central America.

A second rival appeared on the scene early in 1863 with the formation of the Liverpool and Spanish America Steam Packet Company under the

management of Imrie and Tomlinson and A. Duranty and Company. This Company placed a number of vessels in the service, but it is impossible to ascertain now which was actually owned and which were merely chartered. Four are definitely known to have been owned; they were the *Cristobal Colon* of 1600 gross tons, built by John Laird at Birkenhead in 1854 and which inaugurated the Company's sailings in May 1863, the *Hayti*, a screw schooner of 1120 tons, built by Smith and Rodger at Glasgow in 1854 for John Bibby as the *Euphrates*, the *Montezuma* of 911 tons, built in 1858 also by Smith and Rodger as the *Asteroid*, and a new steamer, the *Bolivar* of 2064 tons, completed in 1863 by Richardson Duck and Company at Stockton-on-Tees. Two vessels probably owned by the Company were the *St. Thomas* of 1274 tons, built by T. R. Oswald at Sunderland in 1863, and the *Sir William Peel* of 1535 tons, built at Northfleet in 1854.

By mid 1863 it is apparent that there were three competing against each other for the West Indian trade. Messrs. Leech, Harrison and Forwood, managers of one of the companies concerned, perceived that such a state of affairs was not in the best interests of commerce and called a meeting in Liverpool of interested merchants to discuss the position. The outcome of this meeting was the formation in November 1863 of the West India and Pacific Steamship Company Limited with a capital of £1,000,000, a very considerable sum in those days. The directors of the new Company were Messrs. A. B. Forwood, of Leech, Harrison & Forwood, Thomas Harrison, of T. & J. Harrison and James Anderson, Thomas Blythe, P. Bernard, F. A. Clint, John Flemming, George Kendall, George Kerford, F. Lyon, Joshua Radcliffe, John Ravenscroft and Samuel Stitt. The steamers of the Liverpool, West Indian and Central American Company were taken over at a valuation, and in December the *Mexico* made the first voyage for the new Company. In the same month the five steamers of Alfred Holt's West Indian fleet were purchased and he withdrew from the service. Also included in the purchase were two vessels then under construction—the *Colombian* of 1056 tons at Greenock and the *Chilean* of 1340 tons at Cork. Later in December the vessels of the Liverpool and Spanish America fleet were also purchased, thus uniting the three rivals into one company.

Of the miscellaneous selection of ships inherited by the new Company no two were alike. Some were quite unfit for the trade and others were well past their prime. Accordingly, the new Company almost immediately entered into contracts with various shipbuilders for a number of new vessels specially designed for the service. Whilst delivery was awaited, the *Boetia* of 950 tons, built at South Shields in 1856, was purchased from John Bibby and renamed *Barbadian*. She did not last long, however, for on 6th December 1865 she was wrecked on Blackwater Shoal off the Wexford coast. At about this period the small iron screw steamer *Robert Todd* was listed in the Company's fleet. She was of only 314 gross tons and had been built by John Laird a short time earlier for Leech, Harrison and Forwood, who intended using her as a blockade runner in the American Civil War.

The first of the new vessels, the *Granadian* of 1750 tons, was delivered by Pile Spence of West Hartlepool in 1864. In 1865 a further seven vessels followed. They were the sister ships *American* and *Californian* of 1840 tons by Scott and Co, of Greenock, the *European* and *Venezuelan* of 1690 tons by

Jones, Quiggin and Co. of Liverpool, the 1800 ton *West Indian* by Pile Spence, the 1330 ton *Cuban* by A. Leslie and Co. of Newcastle, and the larger *Chilian* of 3119 tons by M. Pearse and Co. of Stockton. This latter vessel was sold in the following year to the National Line and is much better known in their fleet as the *Denmark*. Two further ships followed from Pile Spence's yard in 1866, the *Caribbean* of 1850 tons and the *Colombian* of 1990 tons. The initial building programme was completed in the following year by the delivery of the *Australian* of 2499 tons, also from Pile Spence.

During the early years of the Company casualties were heavy. In addition to the *Barbadian* already mentioned, seven other vessels had been lost by 1870. In January 1865 the *Colombian* foundered off Brest with the loss of 31 lives before she was a year old. In the same month the *Askalon* was abandoned sinking whilst on a voyage from Liverpool to Port au Prince. In February 1866 the *Granadian* was abandoned at sea, whilst later in the same year the *European* of 1865 was destroyed by fire and explosion at Colon. The new *Colombian* of 1866 was wrecked in St. Thomas harbour during a hurricane in October 1867. She was subsequently salvaged but sold out of the fleet. In August 1869 the *Plantagenet* left Malta for Liverpool and was never heard of again. She was presumably not engaged in the West Indian service at the time, though she was still owned by the Company. The *Chilean* of 1864, which was wrecked on Brazil Bank at the mouth of the Mersey in July 1870, was also salvaged and sold, but she went missing three years later. Finally, in December 1870, the *Crusader* was wrecked at Carthage whilst outward bound from Liverpool.

Most of the vessels acquired from the constituent companies were soon disposed of. Of the Liverpool, West Indian and Central American S.N. Co's ships, the *Venezuelan* was sold in 1866 to become the *Sea Queen*, but the *Mexican* lasted until September 1877, when she went missing homeward bound from Port Royal, and the *Darien* until 1878, when she was sold to Paris buyers. The Liverpool and Spanish America vessels were disposed of as follows:—The *St. Thomas* went to Leech, Harrison and Forwood's Atlas S.S. Co., as the *Etna*, the *Hayti* went to Hull owners as the *Bengo*, and the *Bolivar* was rebuilt in 1869 and survived until December 1882, when she stranded on Cobbler's Reef in the Barbadoes whilst outward bound from Portsmouth. The *Christobal Colon* was rebuilt in 1867 and subsequently became the French *Savoie*, but there is no record of the subsequent history of the *Montezuma*. Three of the five Holt vessels were early casualties and a fourth, the *Talisman*, foundered in January 1873. The remaining vessel, the pioneer *Saladin*, was sold to Messrs. Lamport and Holt in 1865.

During the 1870's only three new vessels were added to the fleet. They were the *Jamaican* of 2010 tons, built in 1871 by Aitken and Mansel of Glasgow, the *Andean* of 2147 tons, built in 1872 by Royden's of Liverpool and the *Haytian* of 2336 tons, built by J. Laing of Sunderland in 1875. In about 1873, however, the *Rydal Hall*, a vessel of 2154 tons, built by the London and Glasgow Shipbuilding Company in 1871, was purchased from the Sun Shipping Company and renamed *Chilian*.

In 1880 J. Laing of Sunderland built the *Bernard Hall*, named, I believe, after one of the directors of the Company. She was an iron brig of 2678 tons, powered by two cylinder compound engines, as were most of her predecessors.

Her design was not repeated and the next ship, the *Yucatan* of 1882, was of 2817 tons and is notable in that she was the first West India and Pacific vessel to be built by Harland and Wolff, the famous Belfast shipbuilders who built many of the Company's subsequent vessels. The next three ships, the *Texan* of 1883, the *Floridian* of 1884 and the *Costa Rican* of 1885, were also from that yard. They were sister ships of 3260 tons, but there was one important difference between the *Costa Rican* and her two sisters; she was constructed of steel. The next two vessels marked an even greater advance, in that they were fitted with three cylinder triple expansion engines in place of the hitherto universal compound engine. They were built in 1888 at the Whiteinch yard of Messrs. Barclay Curle and Company, and were sister ships of 3360 tons named *Darien* and *William Cliff* respectively, the latter after another of the Company's directors.

The only vessel lost during the 1880's was the *Bolivar* already mentioned, and only one vessel was disposed of during this decade. This was the *Chilian*, ex *Rydal Hall*, which in 1885 was acquired by Harland and Wolff, probably in part exchange for one of the new ships building by them. This was quite a common practice in those days; the shipbuilders usually refitted the vessel acquired and sold her, but in this case they do not appear to have done so.

At the commencement of the last decade of the nineteenth century the West India and Pacific Company was firmly established and possessed a fleet of seventeen ships. Many of these were, however, over twenty years old and badly in need of replacement, and accordingly this period was marked by much new building and by the disposal of a large number of the earlier ships. Five of the new vessels were delivered in 1891. Three of them were built by the Naval Construction and Armament Company at Barrow, namely, the sisters *Mexican* and *Cuban* of 4200 tons and the *West Indian* of 2704 tons. The other two were also sisters, the *Nicaraguan* and *Louisianian* of 3643 tons, built by Barclay Curle and Company. Lloyd's Register for 1891 lists a third vessel, the *Granadian*, as being built by Barclay Curle in that year, but as she was omitted from subsequent Registers and is not mentioned by contemporary shipping journals it is very doubtful if she ever existed.

A further two ships were built at Barrow in 1893, the *Jamacian* and *Barbadian*, both of 4502 tons. They were the largest vessels so far built for the Company, but in 1895 a vessel almost twice as large, the *American* of 8195 tons was delivered by Harland and Wolff, and followed in the next year by a very similiar ship, the *European*. They were four masted, twin screw cargo vessels, having accommodation for passengers and propelled by six cylinder triple expansion engines. In 1896 the White Star liner *Runic* was purchased and renamed *Tampican*; she had been built at Belfast in 1880 and was of 4833 tons. Two more ships followed from the Greenock yard of Caird and Company in 1898, the *Antillian* and *Colombian* of 5600 tons. Finally, late in 1899, the last and also the largest, vessel to be built for the Company was delivered. She was the 9355 ton *Atlantian* and was built by Sir W. G. Armstrong Whitworth and Company on the Tyne.

In 1891 the old *Californian* of 1865 was wrecked at Aruba, but apart from this the decade was as free from major disasters as the previous one had been. Many of the older vessels were sold, three, the *American* of 1865,

the *Caribbean* and the *Jamacian* going to shipbreakers in 1892, and the *Andean* following in 1893. The *Australian* was sold to a Dutch firm in that year; they were probably also shipbreakers as she was no longer listed by 1894. The *Cuban*, *Haytian* and *Venezuelan* were also sold, but saw further service, the *Venezuelan* still being in commission as the Turkish *Sahadet* as late as 1910. In 1899 the comparatively new *West Indian* of 1891 was sold to Robert Singlehurst for his Red Cross Line to Brazil and renamed *Cearense*.

At the close of the nineteenth century the Company appeared to be in a strong position; they had built up an excellent trade with the West Indies, Central America and the southern United States and had a large and, for the most part, modern fleet of first-class steamers. It was, therefore, with some surprise that the shipping community learned that as from the 31st December 1899, the West India and Pacific Steamship Company Limited was to be merged with the Leyland Line and to lose its identity. The shareholders can have had no cause for complaint, however, as it is reported that they received £62 for every £20 paid up share! Shortly afterwards, of course, the Leyland Line itself was absorbed by the International Merchantile Marine Company and their shareholders received even better treatment.

Nineteen ships were taken over by the Leyland Line; they were not renamed, since, by a coincidence, the nomenclature followed that of the Leyland steamers. An exception was made in the case of the *Colombian*, however, and she was renamed *Asian* to avoid confusion with the Leyland liner *Columbian*. The two big sisters *American* and *European* went to the White Star Line in 1904 and were renamed *Cufic* and *Tropic* respectively. In 1907 the *Nicaraguan* went missing and the *Darien* was wrecked near Barranquilla. Between 1900 and 1914 all the other vessels were either sold or broken up with two exceptions, the large *Atlantian*, which lasted until 25th June 1918, when she was torpedoed and sunk 110 miles off Eagle Island on the Northern Irish coast, and the *Antillian*, which survived the war and ended her days in a shipbreaker's yard in about 1930.

In conclusion, I should like to express my thanks to the staffs of the Picton and Commercial Reference Libraries for much help in the compilation of this paper, and also to Mr. Keith Lewis for allowing me access to his not inconsiderable shipping records and for many helpful suggestions.

SOME ASPECTS OF THE LIVERPOOL SLAVE TRADE

**Letter Book of Robert Bostock, a merchant in the Liverpool Slave Trade,
1787-1792**

by J. H. HODSON

To condemn to-day the slave trade of two centuries ago is to criticize, not the particular persons or places that engaged in it, but the general attitude of mind that accepted it; even then to prove our superiority to our forebears, we should need to recognise and remove our evils more quickly than they did theirs; as it is, the main credit for condemning the trade belongs not to the generations which inherited its abolition but to the few reformers who changed the ideas of their contemporaries.

Considering the interest of the subject too much has not been written about the Liverpool slave trade, and in particular its significance for Liverpool's prosperity in the eighteenth century is still not certain. A recent writer goes so far as to say that: "it was the capital accumulation of Liverpool which called the population of Lancashire into existence and stimulated the manufactures of Manchester. That capital accumulation came from the slave trade . . . ". But this is rather speculative. A convincing judgment would require more evidence than is likely to be available. Indeed, in cases where the information is obtained from merchants' account books the counterbalancing facts from the records of firms which did not prosper and survive are lacking. Nevertheless, a truer estimate of the part played by the slave trade in Liverpool's commercial history might be formed if more original sources could be studied.

A few such sources—account books, ships' log books, and correspondence—are in the Liverpool Public Library. The present article does not attempt the economic assessment which might well be made of these and other Liverpool records, but merely reproduces a general picture of the late Liverpool slave trade, revealed in a letter book of correspondence written from May 1789 to November 1792 by Robert Bostock, a Liverpool merchant in the slave trade, to the captains of his ships, his slave dealers in Africa and the merchants with whom he traded in the West Indies and at home.

In 1789 the British slave trade was within twenty years of its end. Begun in 1562, it had remained desultory until the establishment of the British colonies in the Caribbean and the introduction of the sugar industry. Liverpool entered the trade about 1700 and quickly ousted London and Bristol. With free trade and the rising demands of the sugar plantations the volume of the British slave trade increased enormously. Between 1680 and 1786 over two million slaves were imported into British colonies; and at the end of the period two-thirds of the slaves transported by British ships were being

disposed of to foreign colonies. Liverpool's proportion of the British ships engaged in the trade rose from one in a hundred in 1709 to one in eleven in 1730, a quarter in 1763 and a third in 1771. In 1795 she held five-eighths of the British slave trade and three-sevenths of the European trade.

In its heyday the slave trade was supported by all classes in British society: the monarchy, the government, the church, and public opinion generally. But in the last quarter of the eighteenth century it was increasingly challenged. From 1770 its abolition was advocated by the Quakers; in 1772 an escaped slave was judged free by Mansfield. Wilberforce was active from 1783 and from 1788 an act restrained overcrowding on slave ships. In Liverpool, Thomas Clarkson, who came to collect data against the trade from the Custom House, was nearly thrown into the river and a pamphlet war broke out between supporters and opponents. It is against this background of continuing prosperity but threatening abolition that the picture of a small part of Liverpool's slave trade, provided by the letter book of Robert Bostock, is to be viewed.

When the correspondence of the letter book opens, on 4th May 1789, Bostock had four ships: a sloop, the *Kite*; a schooner, the *Little Ben*; a "new ship", the *Jemmy*; and an undescribed vessel, the *Bess*. The size of the *Kite* is not known, but of the others the *Bess* was easily the largest with capacity for 200 slaves; the *Jemmy* could take 138 slaves and the *Little Ben* 75. The *Kite* had left Liverpool the earliest of the four, sometime the previous year, and Bostock expected her to get away from the coast of Africa during February. One of his letters of 4th May was to her commander, Captain Stephen Bowers, telling him to get away from Africa as quickly as he could because winter would be coming on, and to be careful in carrying sail home; suggestions, later confirmed, that the ship was not in good condition. The *Little Ben*, whose captain was James Fryer, had also left Liverpool the previous year, on 8th October, bound for the Windward Coast, but afterwards she disappears for some time from the correspondence. The third ship, the *Jemmy*, had sailed also for the Windward Coast three months before the correspondence begins, on 28th February. A second letter from Bostock on 4th May was directed to her commander Captain Edward Williams; after mentioning the position of his other ships, Bostock continued: "I have Wrote you to Barbadoes to the care of Messrs. Griffith & Applewhaite if your Cargo is Healthfull & they will not give you £36, £37 or £38 per Head all round for your Slaves you are to proceed to Kingston in Jamaica . . . and deliver your Cargo to the Gent. that will give you the best Price and shortest Sighted Bills and Quickest dispatch . . . I hope you will be very careful about your Slaves and take none on Board but what is Healthy & Young & not make the same excuse you did last Voyage & take care to settle all your accounts before you leave the Coast".

The last of Bostock's ships, the *Bess*, had sailed most recently, on 4th March, bound for New Calabar. Her captain was William Doyle, and on 4th May Bostock wrote telling him to try the Spanish islands in the West Indies first, but if the markets there were unsuitable to make for Jamaica. However, he added: "if your Cargo is Sickly you must make the best Hand you can of them; for going from Island to Island might make them Worse".

Two further letters written by Bostock on 4th May 1789 were to a James Cleveland and a Mr. Wilkinson. These were agents on the coast of Africa from whom Bostock, as well as other merchants, purchased slaves. He wrote many letters to them during these three years and his present one to Cleveland is typical of the correspondence: "I Wrote you by the Kite Little Ben & Jemmy and have not had the pleasure of a Line from you, I hope you have not lost the use of your Hands as you are confident nothing wou'd give me more pleasure then hearing from you all Opportunities & of your Health and Welfare". He then reviewed the general position of his ships and told him the prices being fetched in England by camwood, gum, ivory and other products of the African coast which ships either brought directly home or took along with them on their voyage to the West Indies. He continued: "Bowers wrote me that you was much in want of Muggs Chests &c. and that if I wou'd send you four Vessels every Year you wou'd Confine your trade to me; I shou'd be only happy to do it if they do not Abolish trade"; and he repeated his wish to hear from him. In later letters to Cleveland Bostock uses more querulous language. His commercial feelings towards him varied with Cleveland's communicativeness and readiness to pay his debts. Nevertheless, there was a bond of sympathy between them, for Bostock had known Cleveland in his own trading days and on one occasion wrote: "I often wish I was with you clear of these Philistines (his creditors)". At this moment Bostock's son was staying with Cleveland and a little later he was honoured to hear that Cleveland had named his own son after him. So his present letter finishes with good wishes and the hope that he may have the pleasure of seeing him again some time.

Wilkinson, the second of Bostock's dealers in Africa, was a minor figure compared with Cleveland but he took some of Bostock's cargoes. He was just as bad a payer as Cleveland but not quite as bad a correspondent. He seems to have been a Liverpool man who had just gone out to Africa, perhaps after a holiday. When Cleveland was too impossible Bostock toyed with the idea of transferring more of his trade to Wilkinson.

The picture of Bostock's commerce, partly shown in his relations with captains and agents, is completed by his correspondence with the merchants he dealt with at home and in the West Indies. As all his ships were at this moment out of port, we are not now concerned with the cloths and muskets, pots and beads which he bought from Lancashire and London merchants to exchange in Africa for slaves. But we get a glimpse of one of the final products of the trade in a letter of 14th May to a Mr. Potts: "Sir, According to your kind order have sent you Twelve Gallons of the best old Antigua Spirit, hope it will please & I think you may challenge the city of Chester". As regards the dealers in the West Indies who were to buy his slaves, Bostock did not have a fixed arrangement with any one firm but chose, according to circumstances which included prevailing prices and the condition of his slaves, from several companies which he knew. These firms, such as Griffith and Applethwaite of Barbados and Munro, McFarlane and Co. of Grenada, usually had their headquarters in Liverpool and agents in the West Indies. From them, as well as from returning ships, Bostock got information about the state of the various West Indian markets. Thus on 9th May 1789 he wrote to Munro, McFarlane and Co. that he had heard from their partner,

Mr. McDowell of Liverpool, of the good prices being fetched in Grenada; his captains had at present instructions to go first to Barbados, but he asked Munro's to write to them there "giving them a state of your Marketts then they wou'd better Judge how to act". Other considerations which influenced Bostock's choice of firm were the West Indian products which could be bought, how quickly they could be loaded, and the prices they were fetching at home. In the last resort, as Bostock frequently insisted, the final decision often lay with his captains, confronted with all the conditions on the spot. But this did not prevent him from maintaining a heavy correspondence with the West Indian merchants nor from pursuing his captains with letter after letter of lengthy instructions.

Several weeks, or even months, necessarily elapsed between actual events abroad and Bostock's knowledge of them at home. But in May 1789 he was expecting his four ships to be either on the African coast or just leaving it. From subsequent correspondence we find that the *Bess* had reached the Banana Islands on 2nd April and the *Kite* on 7th April. Bowers of the *Kite* reported, however, that times were bad and slaves scarce, and that he would not, therefore, be able to leave Africa before the end of May. Fryer of the *Little Ben* (the date of whose arrival in Africa is not mentioned) had, on the other hand, decided to sail down to the Leeward Coast; this met with Bostock's approval; "lying at the Bananoes doing nothing", he wrote, "was not for my Interest". Williams of the *Jemmy*, meanwhile, was spending a lot of time in the islands off the coast.

Bostock's response to this situation was a complaint to Cleveland for detaining Bowers and not sending the *Kite*, whose insurance was shortly due to run out, with part of her cargo down to the Leeward. He hoped that at any rate he had dispatched the *Little Ben* by the time his letter arrived. On the same day, 4th July, Bostock wrote to Fryer telling him to hand over his slaves, gum and ivory to Williams and wait to collect Cleveland's debts: "I am surprised you shou'd let him have the whole Cargo as you seem offended at me last Voyage tighing you to him". A week later he instructed Fryer, should Griffith and Applethwaite of Barbados prove unsatisfactory, to make for Montego Bay on the north coast of Jamaica and deal there with Parkinson and Barratt, agents to Watt and Walker of Liverpool. The average price of slaves in Jamaica was now between £41 and £46. If he had any ivory, etc., he was to send it home from Barbados. "I hope", he concluded, "you will exert yourself when you dispose of your Cargo on Acct. of Winter coming on, I expect you'll not forget a few necessities for House use as well as a turtle".

By 27th July he was considerably worried by the absence of news about his ships and he wrote to a fellow Liverpool merchant whose ship had just arrived at the West Indies to ask whether anything had been seen of them at the Banana Islands: "please to excuse my freedom but owners of Vessels are Anxious to hear of their property". Although he did not then know it, the *Bess* had left the African coast on 10th June, the first of his ships to do so though she had sailed from Liverpool last. She arrived in the West Indies in September after a voyage of six weeks, during which she lost sixty-four slaves: so, as Bostock said, "she must lose money". She arrived back in Liverpool shortly after 24th November after a round trip of only eight months and was soon being prepared for her next voyage.

The *Little Ben*, which had left Liverpool five months before the *Bess*, presumably sailed the middle passage with her, for they arrived in the West Indies simultaneously. There at Barbados, her cargo of seventy slaves was sold at £36/10/- per head and, according to plan, she too was sold and Fryer made his own way home.

Meanwhile, misfortune had befallen Bostock's two other ships. On 10th August, when he was still very much in the dark about the position of his ships, he expressed surprise that the *Kite* had not yet reached Barbados. But before long he had decided that she must have proved unseaworthy; on 6th September he wrote to Williams that he heard the *Kite* had not yet left the Coast: "I begin to think that she never will come off if it shou'd be so that she is condemn'd I hope you will take care to dispose of her and Cargo for the benefit of the Underwriters (except Ivory, &c. & Ship that Home) by Publick auction", and on the same day he wrote to Cleveland asking him to superintend the auction "and get her property condemned for fear of any dispute". But the sale of the ship and cargo proved an involved business: "I wish Bowers Had put to Sea two Days" he wrote when it was all over, "& then return'd, if the Vessell was not sea Worthy & run upon Cape Shilling & the Slaves had all gone into the Bush, the palaver wou'd have easily been settled, the underwriters are such a set of people they never thank any one for taking care for their interest, so the less care is took for them & the better". Bostock blamed Cleveland for his bad management and said he would send him a book about insurance law as a guide on future occasions. The whole affair rankled with him for some time and an altercation developed out of it with Bowers, the captain. When Bowers came home Bostock said he could not make head or tail of his accounts; Bowers on his side said Bostock owed him £200. A month later, therefore, Bostock was writing of Bowers: "I believe him to be a damn'd Scoundrel and it is a great loss to me I ever knew him, but I think he may Walk Liverpool Streets sometime before he gets another Vessel or birth". Bostock did not, indeed, give Bowers another captaincy but, as will be seen, did eventually patch up the quarrel.

Williams of the *Jemmy* was another captain who irritated Bostock. On 6th September he was being criticised for slackness: "I hope you will exert yourself in getting of the Coast", Bostock wrote, "you see Fryer has made a great purchase of Ivory & has not been Playing with his Fingers on the Coast. I expect to hear a good account of you everyday . . . and that you will make Hay while the Sun shines". By 18th October Bostock was exasperated; among other criticisms he expressed his surprise that Williams had not been to the northward where tobacco was in demand and where slaves were plentiful, and he finished by telling him to put all excuses aside and sail immediately to Kingston, Jamaica. A week later, however, he wrote to John Bushby, surgeon of the *Jemmy*, saying that he had heard that Williams was ill, that he assumed he was now dead and that he appointed Bushby commander until he could send out another captain: "for your care and attention to my interest" he added "shall take care to prefer you, if you get Seamanship". Shortly afterwards Captain Samuel Gamble was appointed the new captain of the *Jemmy* and received lengthy instructions from Bostock.

If Williams had in fact not died and the *Jemmy* had left Africa before he arrived he was to make the best of his way home or wait for the *Bess* and

sail with her if her captain was agreeable. But if Williams was dead he must make a careful check of the stores and goods, which Bostock believed to have been seriously embezzled, and deal appropriately with the culprits. He was to buy no small slaves and must take on plenty of provisions: "I never recommend much medicine but you have an excellent Doctor". When he started his voyage he should get well to the northward before striking west (this was a common instruction to his captains from Bostock): "and then there is not the least doubt of a short passage—short passages seldom meet with much mortality". Williams had bartered to take gum though Bostock would have preferred ivory and wax as the gum market was overstocked. Gamble must not, in any case, take any unscraped gum and on arrival in the West Indies and England must call it Gum Guaiacum and not Gum Copal, which was fetching less. Finally, Bostock agreed to pay Gamble £5 per month and one average slave but £5 and no slave if he had to come home.

In the meantime Bostock had written to Cleveland thanking him for looking after the *Jemmy* and asking him to dispatch Gamble from the coast as quickly as possible. The *Jemmy*, with Gamble now in command, at last left Africa on 26th February 1790, four months behind schedule, with Bostock expecting an indifferent voyage as a result of uncollected debts and the expense of a second captain. She arrived in the West Indies on 8th April, having lost six slaves. The rest were sold at an average of £45 per head and she arrived in Liverpool on 15th July, bringing from Jamaica thirty puncheons of rum and twenty hogsheads of sugar, which Bostock thought would sell at a good price.

Bostock's original four ships of May 1789 had thus been reduced to two, the *Bess* and the *Jemmy*. For two years—from October 1789 to October 1791—these remained his only ships and during that time they each made one complete trip. When his second ship came home in July 1790 it was the end of the first three periods into which his enterprizes during the three years 1789-1792 can be divided, and is a convenient point to consider some general aspects of Robert Bostock and his business.

Bostock himself emerges from his correspondence as slightly irritable (he was occasionally laid up with gout), extremely conscientious—one of his captains got as many as ten lots of instructions from him during one voyage—and continually worried by his finances: "I have been very unhappy in my Mind these several Months back" he wrote on one occasion to Cleveland, "neither rest Night nor day in being so situated having nothing coming round"; and he often reminded his debtors that he had no partner to share his troubles and his losses. His letters, perhaps, helped him to ease his anxieties; he seems to have enjoyed writing and not to have understood why others did not.

Bostock's relations with his captains were brisk but also familiar and even friendly. Though his instructions to them were meticulous he often allowed them considerable initiative: "I shall leave the Whole of the Management to you" he wrote, or: "you must make every calculation". The captains were, indeed, intimately concerned with the success of the voyages; part of their payment was in commission on the sales of slaves and they sometimes held shares in the enterprize: "I hope you will exert yourself for my Interest

as well as your Own" he wrote once to Williams—which perhaps also indicates that his captains took opportunities of engaging in business of their own. But he criticized them freely for laxness or wrong judgment and quickly drew an adverse moral: a ship had arrived having "buried only two" he pursued Williams once again, "Chuse how you come to bury so many last Voyage I hope not for want of Care on your part". Sometimes he could be scathing: in his outburst against Bowers, for instance, or about the dead Williams for having trusted Wilkinson too much. Only Gamble, a commander of "excellent character", is generously drawn.

But Bostock's criticisms seem to have arisen more from a sense of hurt than anything else and he was likely to accompany them with one of the presents—onions, a cheese, or especially a cask of potatoes—which he was fond of sending to his friends. Even with Bowers he became reconciled in the end: two months after calling him a scoundrel he wrote: "I suppose you will be surprized when I inform you that Bowers has been at my House several times and wishes to settle amicably and sorry for what he has said, but says it was not his fault". Two months later still he wrote to Cleveland: "I suppose you hear Fryer sware & Curse Bowers about me paying the Commissions on the 47 Slaves took out of the Kite before stranded, but was obliged to do it or else his Household Goods wou'd have been . . . sold"—though the account of the incident he gave Fryer makes his behaviour appear less charitable: "I never paid Money with greater ill will in all my Life, but . . . Council advised me to pay it". In almost his last mention of Bowers a month afterwards Bostock sounds fairly composed: "I apprehend he repents as he is walking about stretching like a Vagabond".

Bostock, in fact, knew his Liverpool captains personally and kept them in touch with their families and what was happening at home. "I saw your Father today", he wrote to Williams, ". . . he said he had nothing particular to communicate they was all well & desired to be remembered". Or, to Fryer he wrote: "Mrs. Bostock gives her Compliments Mrs. Fryer drank tea with us yesterday was well and Anxious for your return". Once, he is found supervising Mrs. Fryer's budget: she "has contracted no Debt in Pool Lane and she Promises she will not"; he was, nevertheless, financing her at this time to the tune of four guineas a month.

Something of the characters of Bostock's captains emerges too, at second hand; especially of Fryer who seems to have shared his wife's fecklessness: "I hope your Mate turns out better than you expected", Bostock wrote to him, ". . . but you must behave to him like a father and not like a Brute and then think there is no fear of his doing well . . . Your friend Greetham whom you sent to, to make your insurance declared he wou'd have nothing to say to you nor any such a drunken Man, but for particulars I suppose Mrs. Fryer will inform you". A little is also heard about the mates: Bostock was sorry, when writing to the surgeon of the *Jemmy*, to learn of trouble with the mates but supposed it was drunkenness, "which is the first step to any man's ruin", and advised him to appoint the better as senior mate. No mention is made, however, of the quality of the crews or the behaviour of the slaves.

Lastly, there is the question of commercial profit and loss. In the absence of his accounts it is not possible to get a proper idea of what Bostock was

making or losing. According to himself he was in financial difficulties during most of the three years; and in this first period the *Kite* was condemned, the voyage of the *Jemmy* was costly, and the *Bess* lost sixty-four slaves. On top of that, a lot of Bostock's money, the profits he should have been making on the first part of the triangular trade, was getting locked up in Africa. This was his weakest financial spot: he hardly ever complains about his money relations with the West Indian merchants and rarely with those at home. But there was a brighter side to the picture. On 19th October 1789 he sent a letter to Thomas Daniel and Son, merchants, Bristol, which, after his hectoring and badgering correspondence with Cleveland and Wilkinson, is written with laconic satisfaction: "Gentlemen, Inclosed have sent you Messrs. Griffith & Applethwaite, of Barbadoes drafts in my favor on you Amounting to 2345/16/4½ which please to accept at leisure & return which will oblige—Gentlemen Your most obedient Servant Robert Bostock". This appears to have been the proceeds of the sale of the slaves of the *Little Ben*. Less than a month later he was presenting drafts for an even larger sum, £3,876, the sale price, perhaps, of the slaves of the *Jemmy*. Whatever Bostock's losses may have been, £6,221 was a healthy gross income for eighteen months' work.

The end of the first period of Bostock's activities then, is thus marked by the return of the *Jemmy* in July 1790. His other ship, the *Bess*, had returned eight months before, about 24th November 1789. Bostock could turn his ships round with amazing speed. Between 24th November 1789 and 12th January 1790 he wrote seven letters to merchants for cargo and stores, and by 2nd December 1789 the *Bess* was being fitted out. Bostock gave her command to Fryer who did most of the buying. "This will be handed you by Captain Fryer", he wrote to Mr. Jonathan Beever, who was probably a Manchester merchant, "who I have order'd to call on you for a few pieces of Check & hope you will let him have them on the lowest terms as it is not convenient for myself to come over, and I desire you will forward them by the first carrier". The orders for this voyage were nearly all for cloths of exotic name: fourteen yards of Turkey plods, eight yards of mixed niccanees, eight yards of best superfine cushtaes, four yards of brawls and Guinea stuffs. The addresses of the merchants are not usually given, but one supposes them to have been mainly Manchester cotton firms. Bostock's beads, however, came from London.

The *Bess* was ready on 10th January 1790 and set sail on her second voyage shortly after 13th January. Bostock had meanwhile given Fryer particularly detailed instructions. He was to make for the African coast at the Banana Islands, or wherever he thought best. His cargo was a valuable one and as he was limited by act of parliament to 220 slaves he must take the rest of his barter in ivory, tortoise shell, wax, etc. If he was unable to dispose of all his cargo at Windward he was to continue down the coast. Then followed details of wages, the captain to get £5 per month and a rather complicated commission on the African cargo, debts collected, and the sale price of the slaves. Fryer was to go to Barbados first, and if not satisfied there, on to Grenada. There he was to take on sugar, cotton and wood at the market price. He was to treat his slaves well and see that his officers did so, on pain of losing his privileges and commissions, "As you are one Eighth

concern'd", Bostock finished, "I hope you will take care that the Agents in the West Indies do not impose on you as they have done in the last voyage".

The *Bess* reached the Los Islands on 2nd March and on 13th March was at the Banana Islands. On 12th March Bostock followed up with further instructions, much the same as his previous ones, but stressing rather more the need for collecting his debts with Wilkinson and Cleveland. He anticipated Fryer's having a good voyage as no other vessel had left Liverpool since he sailed.

Bostock's next letter to Fryer was on 6th May. He was now becoming preoccupied with the problem of his debts and he hoped Fryer had been careful whom he traded with and not put too much in one hand. However, he emphasized that Fryer was to keep on the right side of Cleveland and Wilkinson and accept anything by way of payment except old slaves. On the whole he did not expect either of them to be backward in paying since they had had his property in their hands for some time. He then went on to other matters, among other things urging Fryer to get his slaves on board as quickly as possible: "the Expense of the Provisions is not much, and as you have Room enough"; and advising him to beat the slaves' rice clean before boiling it.

Bostock's anxiety about his debts had increased still further by 9th June, by which time he had heard from the *Jemmy* that Wilkinson had given him only 600 lbs. of poor ivory, a small part of what he owed. On the same date he wrote to Cleveland hoping that he would pay him everything he owed. "Dear Sir", he concluded his letter, "I hope you will take it into consideration and consider my situation, 5 Small Children and another a coming, and release me from these difficulties as I hope you are not without feeling". By the same post Bostock told Fryer not to "spare any of them that is indebted to me". In particular he must press Wilkinson from whom, if he died, he would probably get nothing.

This monotony of worry was broken by the arrival of the *Jemmy* on 15th April and Bostock now set about arranging a new voyage for her. This task took a little longer than in the case of the *Bess* because he took the opportunity of having her lengthened, and also selling half his interest in the ship. But between 29th August and 4th September he was busy ordering her cargo: cloths in "good & clear Colours", "Clear Glass Agates", Guinea knives and Bonny muskets, grapeshot, pots, jars, and lead and copper bars; and at the same time he was offering for sale excellent French brandy, hollands, geneva, and rum. Bostock was proud of the new *Jemmy*, "a Complete Vessel for her size as any out of the Port". He gave her command to a new captain, Captain Flint, who held 74 of her 250 slaves, and she set sail on 26th October 1790, bound for New Calabar, as Bostock thought Cleveland's part of the Coast was "overstretched".

Meanwhile Bostock's money remained uncollected. He began to suspect Wilkinson of being "longwinded" and on 25th July he wrote to Fryer: "We have an Increase in our family Mrs. Bostock has presented me this Week with a fine Girl, I had rather been presented with Mr. Wilkinson's debt". By September, however, he was a little less concerned with his debts and was busying himself with further instructions to Fryer for his transactions in the

West Indies, telling him the latest gossip ("Mrs. Roscoe is got Married to a person that keeps a Livery Stable no great Match I am affraid") and sending him his well known presents of cheese and potatoes. He was pleased, too, with the progress of the *Jemmy* and with the prospect of an excellent market at Grenada. Further, on 13th October he announced that he was building a schooner for 130 slaves which should be a very fast sailor; he was not sure, however, when she would be ready because of the war scare, and in December he was saying he would not send her to Africa till the following April as he understood Cleveland already had several vessels on the coast. He was, moreover, pleased by a new order from Cleveland; though he naturally could not forget what Cleveland still owed him: "times are so precarious at present", he wrote on 14th September, "and my Hands tied fast on my back on Account of having so much Money lock'd up on your part, I hope you will loose them as you must naturally think it is very Hard upon me, I have many an unhappy Hour and loose many Nights rest on that account and another thing I have been so ill used by a parcell of Rascally Captains". But though the thought of his debts quickly put him in low spirits again he was beginning to think of his hardships as slightly more in the past: "I never underwent such hardships before", he wrote to Cleveland in December, "never hope I shall not Again I am Sure you (have) it in your power any day to pay the whole of my Debt and mak no doubt but will not forget the Friendship subsisting so long between us". In the meantime Bostock had been continuously bombarding Fryer with requests and further instructions: telling him to get away from Africa as quickly as possible, leaving no slaves or stores behind; advising him to make for Dominica first in one letter, then for Jamaica first in another; ordering him to stay in the West Indies no longer than three weeks, and suggesting what produce he should load on there: coffee: but not too much of it, cotton, and carefully sorted sugar; as for rum, since there was a duty of eight pence a gallon on it, he did not want him to bring more than thirty puncheons, but as an afterthought suggested that it would probably pay him to fill his lockers. Finally, he was not to forget a turtle, and if he could get two, was to buy them on the ship's account.

Although Fryer had expected to be away by Christmas he was clearly detained in Africa some considerable time into the new year. We do not, however, learn exactly when he at last managed to leave because of two gaps in the correspondence. The first takes us to April 1791 when Bostock is found complaining to Cleveland that he has still not heard of the arrival of the *Bess* in the West Indies. And in the second gap we lose sight of the ship altogether until 14th August when she has arrived back in Liverpool, and Bostock is already thinking about her next voyage. We then also discover that Fryer has failed to get anything like the whole of Cleveland's and Wilkinson's debts paid. Indeed, James Cleveland has died, owing Bostock £1,237/3/-. But Bostock was sanguine for the *next* time: "I intend the *Bess* to Sail from here about the 15th September", he wrote to William Cleveland, a relative, presumably, who had taken over from James, "and make no doubt but you will exert yourself in paying Fryer the whole, or greatest part of the above Sum as you well know that Debt is due Sum time and of the Oldest Standing, and on that Account it must be my turn". He went on to grieve the loss of a worthy friend: "but is what we must all Expect, so Must Submit".

He finished by offering to send a gravestone if one had not already been ordered.

The *Jemmy* had meanwhile had a much quicker and apparently more successful voyage. Having sailed on 26th October 1790 she was expected by Bostock a fortnight later to be then on the African coast, and to have made the largest part of her purchase of slaves—but none, he hoped, of “Old Spider Leged Quality”. Her commander, Flint, was evidently a more substantial man than his fellow captains, “a large Owner and well Acquainted with the disposal of a Guinea Cargo”. Bostock wrote to him again in December 1790 and a third time in March 1791, giving him the latest news of the West Indian markets, instructing him what produce to take on board there, and letting him know how his wife was getting on. But thereafter he disappears from view until his arrival back in Liverpool in October 1791, with no comment at all made on his voyage. But he had taken only twelve months for the round trip compared with the twenty of the *Bess*.

With both of Bostock's ships back in port in October 1791 we reach the end of the second period in his enterprizes during these three years. Its value for Bostock is not clear. We have seen that in the first period he had four ships and earned more than £6,000. In the second we hear plenty about uncollected debts and know that he had to sell half of one of his ships. On the other hand we learn nothing at all of what he made from the sales of his slaves. The outcome of the third and last period which now begins is also not known because the correspondence ends a year later, in November 1792, with the voyages of his ships uncompleted. But we hear enough to know that the worst of his worries are over and that when we leave him Bostock is well on the return to his former prosperity.

The first indication of better times is the acquisition of a new ship. The fast schooner which he said he was building the previous October has unaccountably disappeared; he seems instead to have bought a small schooner of only twenty-six tons with room for forty-three slaves. This he called *Little Ben* and gave to a Captain Irwin. Like the first *Little Ben* Bostock meant her to sail only as far as the West Indies, where she was to be sold along with her slaves. She set sail on 14th October 1791 in the company of the *Bess*, now on her third voyage and again under the command of Captain Fryer, who was equipped by Bostock with letters to his African debtors. Fryer was in charge of the expedition and had orders to dispatch Irwin from the coast as soon as possible. The two ships got separated, however, at the beginning of the voyage because Irwin had to put into Cork. We lose sight of him after that but presumably he had an uneventful passage, for he arrived in the West Indies on 7th March 1792, sold his slaves, of whom none had been lost, for £40 per head, and his ship for £170, and arrived back in Liverpool in May 1792 after a trip of only six and a half months.

Bostock acquired two more new ships during this period. One, a large vessel with capacity for 210 slaves, he began building in December 1791 and intended for Captain Irwin. In the letter book there is an interesting “Estimate of Joiners work of a New Ship in Quirk's Yard” which must refer to her : “to finish all Rice Rooms in the Hold & Bulkheads to Dress all the main

deck beams & Bulkheads between decks & Lockers in Store room To Work in the Cabin & to finish lockers and Sashes & two bulkheads Under the Quarter deck & to plane the Cabin Sides & to plane the Quarter deck Under Sides to make turnup beads if Requires & to do all out side Work & two hencoops if Requires & Binicle & Cabin Table & two boats. For the sum of 18 Guineas". In May 1792 Bostock was expecting the ship to be launched in July but we hear no more of it by the time the correspondence ends.

The other ship which Bostock acquired was a small brig, the *Friendship*, which he mentions having bought in April 1792. He had heard from Captain Irwin of famine on the Cape Verde Islands and his intention was to send her there with relief provisions; the captain was a James Makin and Bostock's son went with him for the experience. Except that the ship set sail about 24th April we hear nothing further, however, about this voyage.

A full account is not given, either, of the third voyages of the *Bess* and the *Jemmy*. The *Jemmy* had set sail again in February 1792 after being delayed for two months by contrary winds. Bostock wrote in April to Flint, who was again in charge of her, hoping that he had a good cargo of slaves. But after 22nd May, when Bostock was expecting her to be in the West Indies in August, we hear no more of her.

The *Bess* and Fryer, who had arrived on the African coast about November 1791, we leave, characteristically enough, still there a year later. Bostock had expected him to be detained somewhat and Fryer had won his commendation for getting the *Little Ben* away speedily. But in September 1792 Fryer was still on the coast, whereas Bostock had hoped he would have left by June. So on 28th November 1792 Bostock wrote him a letter which ends the whole correspondence on a typical note: "Sir/I Expect this will not meet you but if it does it is to inform you that yours of 5th September came to hand and was much surprized it was not from the West Indies; if you receive these few lines all Excuses Set Apart you are to Proceed to Montago Bay and Put your Cargo of Slaves into the Hands of Messrs. Barrat & Parkinson of that Place as the Average as been so high it is the only chance to save your Voyage, and if you can have your ship fill'd with Produce on my Acct. you must Purchase Such as Sugar rum &c. and be dispatch'd as soon as possible I make no doubt your Slaves will be All Sailers as you have had nothing to do but learn them Yr Friends all well and am yr. well Wisher Rt. Bostock".

Bostock probably died within a few years of the end of his letter book as his name having appeared in the Liverpool directory of 1790, does not occur in the next one of 1796. His wife, Elizabeth, survived him until 1803, trading as a liquor merchant at 29 Union Street, Bostock's last address, and later in York Street. It would be interesting to be able to compare details of Bostock's enterprizes with those of other Liverpool merchants. In the early days of the trade many small vessels are said to have been fitted out by petty tradesmen, but at this late stage Bostock's was probably a small concern. Also the typical Guineaman of the mid-18th century is said to have been 250 tons and apart from the *Bess* all Bostock's ships were well below that. During three years he had seven ships. One was merely launched in the period. Two, the *Kite* and the *Friendship*, did only one-third of the normal

trip. Another two, the *Little Ben's*, each did two-thirds of the normal trip, being sold in the West Indies after visiting Africa. Only the remaining two, the *Bess* and the *Jemmy*, made several trips; when the correspondence closes the *Bess* had made two and a third and the *Jemmy* two and a half; their four complete trips took ten, twelve, seventeen and nineteen months. Altogether, Bostock's six effective ships made nearly seven trips between them in three years; or only slightly more than a third of a trip each, each year.

The British slave trade was abolished in 1807. The opponents of abolition maintained the trade was a nursery of British seamen; Clarkson's investigations showed it was more likely to be their cemetery. Many Liverpool merchants thought the end of the trade would mean the end of Liverpool's prosperity. But, in fact, her dependence on the slave trade was declining before abolition: in 1792 one-twelfth of her ships were engaged in it, in 1807 only one twenty-fourth. Throughout Bostock's correspondence we are aware of the threat of abolition and of his opposition to it. In his first letter to Cleveland he wrote that he would be pleased to fulfil his orders "if they do not Abolish trade, it comes on Tuesday next in the House of Commons it is the general Opinion it will not be abolish'd". And a few letters from the end he wrote to Fryer: "we are in Hopes the Africa Trade will NOT be abolish'd as the Duke of Clarence has taken Up the Cudgills Against Abolition". He was, however, careful to observe the limitation on crowding imposed by the act of 1788—though he was also quick to take advantage of an emergency which allowed him to load on additional slaves.

Bostock told his captains to treat their slaves well, prompted no doubt by humane as well as commercial considerations. But he was unaffected by the new anti-slave trade principles. His leisurely comment: "the *Bess* had a passage of 10 Weeks buried 64 so she must lose money", arose from older ways of thought. A generation earlier one writer had contended "Tho' to traffic in human creatures, may at first sight appear barbarous, inhuman, and unnatural; yet the traders herein have as much to plead in their own excuse, as can be said for some other branches of trade, namely, the *advantage* of it In a word, from this trade proceed benefits, far outwaying all, either real or pretended mischiefs and inconveniences". We no longer believe that those kinds of means are justified by that kind of end. But we may still, even while seeking to understand people like Bostock, who could take part in the trade—as well as the stature of those who stood out against it—be profitably reminded of the sort of means that is adopted when the dignity of human freedom is invaded.

SOME NORTH LANCASHIRE SEAPORTS

by D. B. COCHRANE

Ulverston

Commencing in the north is Ulverston, once a port of considerable importance, the only outlet to the sea of the Furness district until the rise of Barrow-in-Furness in the 1860's. Ulverston as a town dates from about the 13th century, but as a port from about the last quarter of the 18th century. By 1790 its trade was so great that it was decided to dig a canal from Morecambe Bay to the town, as the latter was about a mile from the sea.

After obtaining the necessary Act of Parliament (Chap. 105, 33 George III), the first sod was cut by Colonel Thomas Sunderland on September 4th 1793 (the second sod was cut by Edward Banks, then a labourer but later an eminent engineer). In December 1796 the canal was finally completed, not without some difficulty as to finance, and also by default of one of the contractors.

On 8th August 1791 it was resolved to construct a canal from Hammer-side Hill to the Weint end and the first estimate of cost was £2,000. Mr. John Rennie, of Lancaster, was employed to make a survey and estimate of the cost, which he stated would be £3,083/16/2 including the lock. The subscription was therefore raised to £4,000 in 80 shares of £50 each. Thirty-six persons subscribed for the shares to the value of £3,800. The largest shareholder was Daniel Backhouse, of Liverpool, who subscribed for eight shares of £400 and several others to the extent of £200.

The company advertised for tenders for cutting, puddling, banking and masonry, etc. in June 1793 and the contract was let to John Pinkerton of Brookhouse and John Murray of Lancaster. The masonry contract was let to John Lancaster and James Duckworth.

Pinkerton and Murray failed to complete their contract owing to shortage of capital and in August 1795 abandoned the work. The company then accepted the offer of Mr. H. Baird to complete the work for £1,510.

The above contracts called for the completion of the works by September 1794, but water was not let into the canal until 18th November 1796.

The length of the canal was $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles, water depth 15 feet, width at water level 66 feet and at bottom 30 feet, and a towing path was provided on the north bank. It could take a vessel of about 300 tons burthen and a contemporary described the canal as the deepest, shortest and straightest canal in England. It originally had basins at Canal Foot and Canal Head.

The main imports were coal and general goods and its exports iron and copper ore, coppice wood, props, slates and gunpowder. In 1820, 10,000 tons of slates and 20,000 tons of iron ore were shipped.

Ulverston was never a port for custom purposes but merely a creek under Lancaster.

The first ships to enter the canal, in December 1796, were the London trader *Sally*, a brig; the *Valentine*, a brig; and the sloop *Content*, with coal.

The latter, the smallest vessel, was the first to berth in the upper basin at Canal Head.

In 1797 a warehouse and canal office were built and the first slate and coal wharves were let. In the following year the first iron ore floor at Cow Park was let to Thomas Sunderland. In 1815 a pier was built out into the bay at Canal Foot and in 1829 a further warehouse was built.

In 1798 94 vessels of 4,704 tons entered the canal and from 1802 to 1814 inclusive, the average annual number was 132 vessels of 6,000 tons. Trade further increased during the period 1821-24, when the annual average of imports was 380 vessels of 21,500 tons, and exports 563 vessels of 33,500 tons. Trade continued to increase, with the usual fluctuations, until the record year of 1846, when 944 vessels of 61,300 tons entered the canal.

The first dividend was paid on the shares on 15th June 1836 and the last on the 4th December 1846, and soon afterwards, in 1850, an offer of £18,000 was made for the canal by John Brogden, junior, acting on behalf of the Furness Railway Co., and on 2nd December 1850 this offer was accepted by the proprietors of the canal.

This was the beginning of the end of the canal, for in 1857 a bridge carrying the railway line was erected about a quarter of a mile below Canal Head basin and this effectively cut off the upper basin to all traffic. To compensate for this a further basin was cut immediately to seaward of the bridge and this was used until the canal fell into disuse about 1916. In 1945 the canal was finally closed, but it had for many years before that been merely a weedy and silent sheet of water.

Shipbuilding was at one time a considerable industry in the Furness district and the following is a list of the Furness shipbuilders:

Hart & Ashburner, Canal Foot, (c) 1796, later Ephraim Swainson, of Saltcoats.

Christopher Hart, of Low Yard, Canal Side.

Hart & Ashburner, of Saltcoats.

Christopher Ashburner, Canal Head, who was succeeded by John Wilson, his foreman.

Petty & Postlethwaite, Canal Head, (c) 1820-1863.

Richard Ashburner, of Greenodd.

William Ashburner, of Barrow-in-Furness.

Samuel Schollich, of Canal Foot.

E. J. Schollich, of Canal Foot.

John and William White, Low Yard.

Brocklebank Brothers, at Petty & Postlethwaite's yard.

John Rhodes, Canal Head.

Richard and William Charnley, Canal Foot, and John Peet, who completed Charnley's last vessel.

It is almost impossible now to sort out these builders, as some firms changed their title upon taking in a partner but were really the same yard, and others sold or let their yard to their foreman, who perhaps only built, or completed, one vessel—for example, John Rhodes built but one vessel—*Anne McLister*.

The largest vessels built at Ulverston were *Ulverstone*, 800 tons burthen,

built at Saltcoats in 1811, and *Hutchinson*, 600 tons burthen, built by Petty & Postlethwaite in 1825.

The usual run of vessels were however wooden schooners of about 90 to 120 tons register, 80—90 feet in length. Many had local names such as *Hodbarrow Mine* and *Coniston* and no doubt a number bore the names of local women. *Bee*, built in 1841, a wooden schooner, is said to have been named after a swarm of bees found in her framing while building.

That they were staunch ships we can prove from the following: *Mary Ann Mandall*, a wooden schooner built at Ulverston in 1868, was broken up at Glasson Dock in December 1930—62 years old. *Bee*, before mentioned as built in 1841, was afloat at Bristol in 1907—66 years; *Hannah Crossdell*, built at Ulverston in 1866, was sunk by mine off St. Albans Head on 26/2/1917 with the loss of four lives—53 years.

I do not think that there are now any Ulverston built vessels afloat. The last vessel to be built there was the *Ellen Harrison*, launched 1/8/1878.

In passing it is of interest to note that William Ashburner, a member of the Ulverston family of Ashburner, eventually laid down a slipway at Barrow and launched in 1852 the *Jane Roper*, the first ship to be built there. Wm. Ashburner's last ship built at Barrow was the *Isabelle* in 1878, and the last of the wooden schooners built at Barrow was lost on 11th November 1947, when the *Ellie Park* foundered in the Irish Sea on passage from Castletown, I.O.M. to Connah's Quay with a cargo of scrap iron. Of her crew of four, two were saved by the *King Orry*. *Ellie Park*, a vessel of 99 tons gross, was built in 1879. Earlier in the same year, on 19th January, the Barrow built schooner *Useful* (1879) had been wrecked off Stanton Head, I.O.M., while bound from Mostyn to Belfast.

The Barrow Shipbuilding Co., later to become Vickers, Armstrong Ltd., was established in 1873 and their first launch was the 145 ton steam yacht *Aries* for Sir James Ramsden on 12th May 1873, not, as is often stated, the Eastern S.S. Co's *Duke of Devonshire*, which did not take the water until 25th June 1873.

Greenodd

Associated with Ulverston is the small port of Greenodd on the Leven estuary. The first quay, known as the Newlands Quay, was erected in 1781. Other quays, called the Low Quay—from here copper ore was loaded—Balcarras Quay and Roper Quay were later built and some extensive warehouses are still to be seen there both from the railway and the main road. The quays are now hopelessly silted up and there is no trade whatsoever.

Shipbuilding was also carried out at Greenodd and here the first two steam vessels to ply on Lake Windermere were built—the *Lady of the Lake* and *Lord of the Isles*.

Leaving shipping for the moment we will remember two famous men of the district, one, John Barrow, who was born at Dragley Beck near Ulverston on 19th June 1764 of humble parentage.

He was educated at Town Bank School, later the Grammar School, and he eventually entered an iron master's office in Liverpool. Later still he became secretary to Sir George Staunton on Lord Macartney's expedition to China, and from 1804 to 1845 he was second secretary to the Admiralty. He planned several Arctic expeditions including the ill-fated Franklin's. His name is

commemorated in Point Barrow, Alaska. He wrote quite a number of travel and naval books and died in London on 23rd November 1848.

A monument to Sir John Barrow in the form of a lighthouse is a prominent feature on Hoad Hill, Ulverston. Erected in 1850 at a cost of £1,250, it stands 100 feet high at the top of the 417 foot hill. The inscription over the doorway of the lighthouse reads: "In honour of Sir John Barrow, Baronet, A.D. 1850", with the Barrow arms above.

By the roadside at Lindale-in-Cartmel stands an iron obelisk to the memory of John Wilkinson, ironmaster, of Castle Head, Grange-over-Sands, the man who first made iron float, for it was he who in 1787 built the first iron vessel and tried her on the tiny river Winster nearby.

His epitaph, written in the flowery language of that time, appears at the base of the monument and reads as follows:

"**John Wilkinson.** Iron master, who died 14th July 1808, aged 80 years. His different works in the various parts of the kingdom are lasting testimonies of his unceasing labours; his life was spent in action for the benefit of man, and, as he humbly presumed to hope, to the Glory of God.—*Labore et Honore.*"

Working southwards we come to Milnthorpe and Arnside, both on the Kent estuary and formerly small ports, but as neither are in Lancashire they do not come into our review.

Poulton-le-Sands

The next port of call is Morecambe, formerly called Poulton-le-Sands, which as a port dates back to about 1840. Here, Little's of Barrow founded a passenger service to Ireland which was later taken over by the Midland Railway Co., and for some time there was a service to Barrow. Morecambe had, at one time, a considerable coasting trade in pig-iron, slates, iron-ore, etc., which in 1853 amounted to 49,200 tons and exports 8,700 tons for the same year. The harbour was finally closed in 1904 upon the completion of Heysham harbour.

Here again it had proved impossible, except at great cost, to keep open the channel, hence the move to Heysham.

The old harbour, as it was then called, was not however abandoned, for in 1905 it was leased to T. W. Ward Ltd., the Sheffield steel merchants, for use as a shipbreaking yard, and here many famous ships have ended their days. It may be a surprise that as late as 1932, when the yard was finally closed, it was possible to take a vessel of 24 feet draught on spring tides into Morecambe.

Heysham

Heysham is of no historic interest and so we pass south to the entrance of the Lune and the old port of Lancaster.

Sunderland

On the north bank of the Lune at the entrance lies the tiny hamlet of Sunderland. Here no attempt whatever was made to build a dock or quay, vessels just sailed under the shelter of the land, grounding at low tide and

discharged their cargo into carts. The disadvantage of this place was soon felt as there was little shelter from the south-west wind and obviously only very small ships could be discharged by such primitive means as carts. Even in those days shipowners were not keen in allowing their vessels to lie and strain on the sand and shingle. So a change was made and, in 1737, suitable accommodation was found at Glasson on the south bank of the Lune about a mile nearer Lancaster.

Before leaving Sunderland I will mention a couple of interesting objects to be seen there, one, Sambo's grave, the resting place of an unknown negro who died upon arrival at Sunderland about 1735-6, the other, the so-called "cotton tree", really a species of poplar, probably from Maryland.

The first cotton ever shipped to this country arrived at Sunderland early in the 17th century. It was brought in by one Robert Lawson.

Upon completion of the dock at Glasson, Sunderland fell into disuse and was known to sailors as "Cape Famine".

Glasson Dock

In 1737 an Act was passed for erecting a mole on the eastside of the present dock at Glasson and about 1785 the dock was built. Opened in May 1787 it is now the oldest dock in existence in Lancashire and still in use. It is quite a small affair, only $2\frac{1}{4}$ acres in water area, but could in its time take quite a fair sized vessel, that is up to 20 feet draught. The entrance gate, there is no lock, is, viewed by modern standards, very narrow, only 35 feet and is still operated by hand capstans.

Soon after the opening of the dock, trade began to flourish and for many years it had a large coasting trade, being well provided with discharging and storage facilities. The chief imports were iron-ore, timber, china clay and cement, and the exports, coal and iron.

Shipbuilding also flourished here in the 1840's, there being two shipyards, owned by Simpson; and Nicholson & Marsh. The latter firm, now known as Nicholson & Co. Ltd., is still engaged in ship-repairing, but now builds no ships although the dry dock is still in daily use.

A contemporary states: "The first ship ever to be launched at Glasson took the water on 8th March 1838 and was named *Acorn*. She is a superior sort of canal barge!"

The largest vessel to enter the dock was the s.s. *Ardancorrach*, 1488 tons gross, which discharged 1,600 tons of manufactured wooden goods.

A host of fine wooden schooners were built and one recalls to mind the *Gauntlet* (1857), *Carrie Bell* (1862), *Dairymaid* (1867), *Englishman* (1864), *Livingstone* (1877), *Red Rose* (1879) and *Ryelands* (1887). The latter is still afloat in Scarborough Harbour as an aquarium and took the part of *Hispaniola* in the film "Treasure Island". She is the last of the Glasson built vessels, but several had long lives, for example—*Gauntlet*, built 1857, sprang a leak and sank in the North Sea, 21/11/1927, while bound from Charlestown to Kirkcaldy with china clay. She was then 70 years old; *Englishman*, built 1864, foundered in Musselwich Bay, Pembrokeshire, 7/5/1933, while bound from Charlestown to Runcorn with china clay.

Leading inward from the dock is a spacious timber pond 13 acres in area and from this, in 1825-26, a cut was made to connect with the Kendal-

Lancaster-Preston canal to enable passengers and goods to pass to Preston. This cut fell into disuse about 1848 owing to the deepening of the Lune.

This dock is still in use, chiefly by small coasters, the timber pond is a favourite laying-up berth for small yachts. During the last war there was talk of using the timber pond as a mooring base for flying boats but the project fell through.

Lancaster

The last port is Lancaster, which dates from very ancient times. It is mentioned as a port of importance in 1297, and in 1398 corn and provisions were imported into Lancaster free from duty. In 1431 it was the main port for shipment to Ireland.

In spite of all this Lancaster never aspired to build a dock, but was content with extensive quays and a number of substantial warehouses. The Customs House, a very handsome building, was erected in 1762-64 to the design of Richard Gillow, the founder of the cabinet-making firm.

Lancaster had, in the past, a large trade with the Baltic and the West Indies and received from the latter large shipments of sugar, mahogany and rum. The port was also prominent in the slave trade.

The quays, which were first built in 1749, have a length of 1,360 feet and can take vessels up to a draught of 12 feet at H.W.O.S.T. but only 6 feet on neaps. Thus only very small vessels can use the port and there is little trade at the present time.

A terrible blow befell the port in 1799 when five of the main shipping firms were forced to wind up their affairs and from that date began the decline of the port.

In 1845 an effort was made to improve the navigation of the river when Captain Washington, R.N. and Mr. T. M. Rendel, C.E., made a survey concerning the laying out of £10,000 to be expended in deepening and straightening the channel.

In 1863 the improvement of the channel bore fruit, for in this year the Lune Shipbuilding Co. was established on the Marsh to build iron sailing vessels up to 1,400 tons. This company collapsed a few years later after building a number of fine sailing vessels several of which were named after local halls and mansions—*Wennington* and *Dallam Towers*.

There still remain in Lancaster relics of the town's greatness as a seaport in the names of streets like Bridge Lane, China Lane (now China Street) and River Street. In these streets congregated the shipping firms, owners and sailors. It is surprising that no traces of the formerly numerous shipbuilding firms are to be found, nor is it now possible to glean much information from any of the published Histories of Lancaster, which all seem to neglect this aspect of their town's greatness.

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