

30th November 1937Liverpool Pilots and Pilot Boats from early times.

Gentlemen,

I purpose giving a talk on Liverpool Pilots and Pilot Boats from early times, and I am only able to do this owing to the kindness of Sir Lionel Warner, General Manager of the Dock Board, who allowed me to search the records in the possession of the Board, I am also indebted to my brother who picked up much information on this subject.

The story of the Mersey Pilotage Service has never been written or told, but so far as shipping has been responsible for the advancement of the Port, the Mersey Pilots may justly claim to have contributed a fair share.

It is not unreasonable to assume, that the earliest pilotage was carried out by local fishermen, who combined their fishing activities with that of conducting vessels, when their services were required, into and out of the Port. The experience they gained relative to tides, currents, shoals and deeps, as they pursued their calling as fishermen, would fit them for their part-time occupation as pilots.

That they were interested in the fishing industry in the year 1755, is borne out by the reference made to them in connection with a scheme, which was proposed in that year, whereby the oyster beds situated in the Eyle Lake, were to be developed, with a view to supplying the surrounding districts with oysters at a reasonable price. The scheme was opposed by the Mayor of Liverpool, merchant traders, masters of ships of the Port of Liverpool, and the Pilots, on the grounds that it was the only anchorage in the neighbourhood, fit for His Majesty's Navy, and if for that reason only, it was undesirable to extend the oyster beds.

It was further pointed out that the pilot boats when not engaged attending to vessels, dredged for oysters in the Lake, efforts in that direction contributing very largely to the Pilots livelihood, and if they were deprived of the means of supplementing their earnings in that way, pilotage rates would have to be increased, but happily the scheme did not materialise.

It requires but little imagination to understand how anxiously the master of a vessel, who was a stranger to the Port, would seek advice and assistance from someone with local knowledge, as he approached the harbour, which was hemmed in by dangerous sandbanks, and it would be necessary to pick up his guide before the danger was reached, some ten to fifteen miles outside the Port.

In rough weather, when assistance would be most needed, the chances of obtaining it would be doubtful, as the fishing-pilot boats were only small, and for their own safety would have to seek shelter.

Liverpool was by no means the first Port to have a system of regularised pilotage. It is believed that the Trinity House of Hull was established in 1369, and incorporated in the reign of Henry VIII (1541), and a number of other ports had organised pilotage before a system was adopted on the Mersey.

It appears, that during the year 1764, 18 vessels stranded at the entrance to the Mersey, and more than 75 persons perished, including a number of Pilots.

The casualties were due either to a ship being without a Pilot, or if she had one on board, to his ignorance, and the loss sustained by the Port, in consequence of the strandings amounted to over £18,000, a very considerable sum in those days. Although shipping was of a not inconsiderable volume the pilots were unlicensed and not responsible to any authority. Competition amongst them was characterised by its keenness, the most enterprising and venturesome securing the greater part of the work. On occasions their boats sailed west of the Skerries Light, to intercept vessels and there board them, each boat acting independently of the others for its own gain.

In the same year (1764) seventy-four vessels left the Mersey for Africa, the slave trade then being in full swing, and no less than one hundred and forty-one vessels sailed for America. Liverpool had become the second port in the United Kingdom.

The serious loss of life and property just referred to, may have been the culminating factors which led to the passing of the first Liverpool Pilotage Act, in the year of the reign of George III, 1766, for the better regulation of Pilots for the conducting of vessels into and out of the Port of Liverpool.

The preamble to the Act stated that "the Entrance into the Port of Liverpool is very dangerous without a skilful pilot, and many ships and lives have of late years been lost owing to the negligence and ignorance of persons taking upon them to conduct ships and vessels into and out of the said Port", it further stated "a proper Regulation of the Pilots at the said Port and the ascertaining of their rates or prices would tend greatly to promote and encourage trade and navigation and be a publick utility".

Under the provisions of the Act, the Mayor, Aldermen, Bailiffs and Common Council Men of the Borough and Corporation of Liverpool for the time being, together with twenty-nine Merchants, eighteen Mariners and late Commanders of vessels were appointed Commissioners for carrying the Act into execution.

The Commissioners were empowered to appoint thirteen of their number, residing within the Borough of Liverpool, to be a Committee, and also to choose and appoint a Clerk of the Committee.

Every person appointed to the Committee was required to acknowledge his acceptance of the trust and to take a formal oath, that he would impartially examine and enquire into the capacity and skill of every person who should offer himself to be admitted as a pilot within the Port of Liverpool before him, and without fear or favour perform all the duties devolving upon him by his appointment.

With regard to the taking of oaths, it was a common practice in olden times for functions of a public or official character to be performed under oath, but whether as time went on the custom lost its significance and an oath was taken more or less as a mere matter of form, is uncertain.

In view of the primary object of the Act, it was but natural that the first duty imposed upon the members of the Committee, was to ensure themselves that only competent persons were authorised to act as pilots.

The Committee were to grant licenses, and it was enacted that any person acting as a pilot, not duly licensed, from and after the 25th day of July, 1766, would be fined the sum of Ten Pounds, and particular attention of pilots, ferrymen and seamen was drawn by public notice to this enactment.

The Act laid down the rates of pilotage for different services rendered, the bases of the charge being the vessel's draught of water.

To obtain the maximum rate, a pilot had to render his services from the Great Ormeshead, the pilot boat on duty cruising to the westward of the Head, in the vicinity of Beaumaris Bay, an old practice of cruising to the westward of Point Lynas, or even as far as Point Lynas, being at this time discountenanced by the Committee.

Prior to this Act it is unlikely that there was any uniformity of rates, the sum that a master of a vessel would be asked to pay no doubt depending upon the exigencies of the moment, and the competition between the pilots themselves, the master of the vessel being of course at liberty to please himself as to whether or not he accepted the services of a pilot.

Under the Act, a master or other person having command of a vessel in the coasting trade, was permitted to pilot his own vessel, but no other inward-bound vessel was exempt, if a pilot offered his services.

To exclude coasting vessels from the obligation to employ a pilot was expedient. They were very numerous and the number of pilots who had been licensed would be inadequate to deal with all vessels using the Port. Alien vessels and vessels trading foreign had first to be provided for, masters of coasting vessels, no doubt, being well qualified to perform their own pilotage by reason of their frequent visits to the Port.

The Act provided for a greater pilotage rate to be levied in the winter than in the summer, and Alien vessels a higher rate than British vessels, inasmuch as the draught of water of foreign vessels was usually little in proportion to their tonnage, possibly there were other reasons as well.

Offences by pilots, punishable by pecuniary penalties levied by this Act, were to be heard by a Justice of the Peace, and if the accused was convicted of the offence and the pecuniary penalty imposed was not forthcoming, he was committed to the house of correction or common goal of the Town of Liverpool, there to be kept to hard labour, until the pecuniary penalty was paid, but for not longer than three months.

If the fine was paid the informer received one moiety of the same, and the Pilot Committee the other half, to be applied to the relief of poor pilots.

Half the cost of obtaining this first Liverpool Pilotage Act was defrayed by the Corporation and the other half was charged to the Trade Duty.

The task the first Pilot Committee had before them, was of a most onerous nature, and the attendant responsibilities could not be over estimated.

As has already been stated, the primary duty which confronted them, was to licence competent and only competent persons to pilot vessels using the Port of Liverpool, and also to establish a system of law and order where previously a haphazard state of affairs had existed, and above all, to use every endeavour to prevent a repetition of the disasters of the year 1764.

It is not recorded how many of the former unlicensed pilots failed to satisfy the Committee in 1766, that they were competent to carry out their duties efficiently, but over fifty licenses were granted, some to journeymen and others to apprentices.

The number of instances of pilots being reprimanded or deprived of their licenses, provides ample evidence of the difficulties which the Committee had to face.

Each pilot boat had its own company of pilots attached to it, and every boat's company participated in the earnings of their particular boat to the exclusion of other pilots.

Under the regularised system the boats were to take the various stations in proper turn, and to board only vessels requiring pilots within the limits of the station on which a boat was for the time being

engaged, but nevertheless the arrangement was not always observed, nor did the masters refrain from sailing their boats west of the Skerries Lighthouse to board ships, with the result that the Committee had to take disciplinary action and impose heavy penalties on the offenders in order to restrain them.

In the year 1766, there were nine pilot boats, small craft, of about 30 tons burthen, and some 36 feet in length, with a beam more than a third of the length. They were painted a light yellow with a white boot-top. These boats had not been constructed to any particular design or with any special regard to suitability, the masters, who were the owners, building to suit themselves, some boats being more efficient than others.

The attention of the Committee was drawn to the varying type of craft employed and it was suggested that models or drawings of proposed new boats should be approved by the Committee before they were built.

In the year 1767, the number of boats was increased to ten.

It is not until the year 1770 that the actual names of any of the pilot boats are disclosed, when No. 4. proved to be the "Two Brothers", and No 10. the "Prudence"

The year 1770, was a most disastrous one for this newly established Service, three pilot boats being wrecked, resulting in the loss of twenty-eight persons, the greater number being pilots.

No.4. pilot boat the "Two Brothers", was lost at eight o'clock at night on the 7th November, on Hoyle Bank, near the Swash Buoy, eleven pilots, ten passengers - two of whom were women - and a boy being drowned, two pilots and a male passenger were the only survivors, being saved in the punt.

The passengers were returning from outward bound vessels, it being quite customary for the pilot boats to bring back to Liverpool, friends of the passengers or crews, of ships outward bound.

On the same day, No 1. pilot boat (name unknown), with five pilots on board, was reported "Missing", and was not heard of again, and on the 7th of December of that unfortunate year, the "Prudence", No. 10 boat, the most recently acquired, was wrecked off Conway, with the loss of the master. The master was one of the three survivors from the "Two Brothers", when she was lost the previous month.

Amongst the names which have been found of the early pilot boats, are the "Polly", "Betty", "Alice", "Nelly", "Kitty", "Happy Return", "William", "Isaac" and "Friends Goodwill".

The "Happy Return", No 4. 33 tons burthen, was built in 1771 to replace the "Two Brothers", the others are all mentioned during the ten years 1771-1781. It is surmised that the "Nelly" was built or acquired to replace the boat of the corresponding number (No 1) which was lost at the end of the year 1770.

The "Polly", "Alice", "William" and "Friends Goodwill", may possibly have been in the Service in the year 1766. In 1789 another "Friends Goodwill" was built.

The "Polly" (No 7), drifted on the rocks on the East Mouse, about November 1787, and was wrecked, and was replaced by the "Liver" the following year.

The "Kitty" (No 2), appears in 1786, and the "Nancy" (No.1), in 1789, these particular boats were not in the Pilotage Service before the year 1781 and 1786 respectively, but the "Nancy" was built in 1768, and was therefore by no means a new boat when she became a pilot boat.

The "Betty" (No.3), built in 1773, was sunk on the 3rd December, 1773, when boarding a brig from Bristol, the crew being saved by the brig, she appears to have been raised, and she was lost on the 31st December, 1778, in Hoyle Lake, when six persons were drowned.

The accident was caused by a vessel named the "Neptune" driving from her anchorage and fouling the pilot boat, damaging her to such an extent that she sank. There is no evidence of another No 3. boat until the early part of 1788, when another "Betty" appears. In 1789, the second "Happy Return", 46 tons, was built.

In addition to those already mentioned, there were the "Prince of Wales" (No. 8), built in 1788, the "Earl of Liverpool" (No.3), in 1798, and the "Good Intent" (No.1), in 1800.

At the end of 1821, another "Happy Return" was building, and on the 5th December 1822, she was driven ashore on Salisbury Bank, River Dee, the second master and two boys being drowned. One of the boys clung to the rigging for some hours before he perished. The pilot boat appears to have been salved, and was in the Service until 1849.

It is worthy of note that, from 1771 until 1849, the Pilotage Service possessed a "Happy Return", the last one being 53 tons burthen. The next No 4. was called the "Auspicious", of 49 tons burthen, and she was new in the Service in 1849.

In May 1799, an additional boat No 9. named the "Liver", 42 tons, built in 1796, entered the Service, and in the following year, 1800, the pilot boat fleet consisted of the undermentioned sloops:-

- No. 1. "Good Intent"
- No. 2. "Kitty"
- No. 3. "Earl of Liverpool"
- No. 4. "Happy Return"
- No. 5. "Isaac"
- No. 7. "Friends Goodwill"
- No. 8. "Prince of Wales"
- No. 9. "Liver"

It will be noticed that both "No. 7" and "No.9" boats were called "Liver" the latter was bought secondhand probably with that name.

It will be obvious that these small pilot boats had in rough weather to find shelter as soon as possible, and it was customary for those cruising in the vicinity of the Ormeshead, to do so in Beaumaris Bay, but the lack of a suitable rendezvous or depot, where they could refit and store in this locality, when necessary, gave rise to much concern.

With a view to a remedy, in the year 1766, the Pilot Committee approached Sir Hugh Williams, of Baron Hill, Beaumaris, the owner of Priestholm Island (Puffin Island) with the hope that this Island might be leased to them for the use of the Liverpool Pilot boats, but difficulties at once presented themselves, for at the time the Island could not be leased.

During the negotiations the owner pointed out that, the rights regarding the rabbits and puffins on the Island were reserved for separate tenants, and in the event of the pilots occupying the Island the Pilot Committee would be required to make themselves responsible for any damage which might be done to the tenants interests.

As the scheme submitted to Sir Hugh provided for extensive improvements at the Committee's expense, the absence of a lease negatived such expenditure, so the matter seems to have been postponed.

Twenty years before there was any authorised pilotage, it was the custom for pilot boats to lie in Amlwch Harbour, waiting to board vessels when they approached, and the practice was to some extent but for another reason, indulged in after a regularised system was inaugurated. The pilot boat waiting in the vicinity of Point Lynas, preparatory to taking the boarding station, when the boat on turn immediately in front of her had boarded all her pilots, was at times, beached there, when wind, tide and other circumstances permitted, which action afforded the crew a rest, from what would otherwise have been constant vigilance and activity manoeuvring the boat in the open sea, but what was a relief to the pilots, proved to be an annoyance to a certain cleric residing in Amlwch, who regarded the presence of the pilot boats in the harbour as a trespass, and who wrote informing the Pilot Committee that the pilot boats were being moored above high water mark, and requested that he should be paid the sum of half a guinea per annum as compensation, to which the Committee, in a facetious frame of mind replied that, although they were conversant in maritime affairs, they were at a loss to understand how boats of a great draught of water, could be run up above high water mark, and with regard to his claim for recompence, it would be necessary for him to produce evidence that he was entitled to collect tonnage rates from vessels using Amlwch Creek, which they very much doubted he would be able to do, adding that had the harbour been one from which the pilot boats could get to sea with northerly winds, steps would have been taken, when the Liverpool Pilotage Act of 1766, was under consideration, to empower the Pilot Committee to develop the harbour so that the pilot boats could remain there afloat at low water.

In the year 1772, further representations were made by a deputation which waited upon Sir Hugh Williams, concerning Priestholm Island.

The Committee intimated that with a lease for a number of years, they were prepared to erect buildings for the use of the pilots, or alternatively, to pay six per cent, per annum, upon any sum that Sir Hugh would expend on the required buildings if he were so disposed, and the Committee would undertake to build a pier for the use of the pilot boats, and to maintain a light on the Island every night, which they claimed would be useful to the trade of Beaumaris and to all ships that passed that way. (As far back as 1748, a suggestion had been made that the tower on Priestholm Island the ruins of St. Seriol Chapel, should be converted into a Lighthouse.)

In support of the request they went on to say "When Sir, you consider that this application divested of any private selfish motive is for public good, and that we in our present capacity are supplicants for a body of men, truly valueable, (though faulty), that many of them have large families, entirely dependent upon their industry and preservation, which another fatal year as that of 1770, would make truly deplorable, which in some degree (with due respect to the Divine Being) is in your power to prevent", but the difficulties seem to have been insuperable, and the negotiations failed.

Some years later the possibilities of finding a suitable rendezvous in some other locality were explored, for on the 14th April, 1779, four gentlemen, two of whom were members of the Pilot Committee, started on horseback from Liverpool with this object before them.

Briefly, they inspected the coast of Anglesea from Moelfra Bay to Bull Bay, and decided that the south side of the first bay on the east side of Point Lynas, about 400 yards from the Point was the best suited for the purpose in view, and there and then it was designated "Pilots Harbour" and ale was procured and they drank to its success. Subsequently a notice to mariners was issued, stating that "Pilots will be stationed at the Point of Linas, the N.E. point of the Island of Anglesea, and the N.W. point of Beaumaris Bay.

A house painted white is built on the Point for the pilots, with a flagstaff, and two small reflecting lamp lights, lighted in the upper windows by night, one facing N.W. and the other East, also two mooring buoys in the Bay for the pilots sailing boats to ride.

Turning back to the year 1767, the Pilot Committee at this time held their Board Meetings once a month, in Litherland Alley, (off South Castle Street).

In 1775, the Pilot Office was situated in anything but salubrious environments, being under the same roof as the Tower Gaol (Prison Weint) in Water Street, and it is not unlikely that it was in the same premises in 1766.

In view of the fact that the Gaol and the Pilot Office shared the same building, there can be no question that all the pilots were familiar with the external appearance of the "house of correction", and records show that some of them were in possession of what may be described as "inside information" having been detained therein. The first official chart of the Mersey, came into existence in the year 1693, but it was not until the year 1738 that the first comprehensive chart of the River Mersey and Liverpool Bay was printed. Samuel Fearon a Liverpool mariner and shipwright, and John Eyes a surveyor, produced the chart, assisted by commanders of vessels and three of the best pilots.

Fearon and Eyes, impressed by the serious losses of ships, which had occurred, owing to the charts and sailing directions to the Mersey being so false and defective, made an actual survey of the river and channels in 1736-37.

Samuel Fearon pays a high tribute to the three pilots who were employed in the work, Edward Sedden, Edmund Sumner and Samuel Alcock, in the following terms:-

"They have been pilots for this Port for many years: Whose fortune ever it be to take any of these three, will find them sober, skilful and industrious, and that no imposition or exorbitant demands are required by them from strangers and others."

That these three pilots of two centuries ago were associated with this important survey, and bore characters worthy of special praise, has been the means of recording the names of three of the pilots of that early period, which otherwise would have remained unknown.

In the year 1767, John Eyes again surveyed Liverpool Bay.

At this time there were four Lighthouses, the upper and lower Leasowe, (sometimes referred to as the Mockbeggar or Morton Lights) and the upper and lower Hoylake, all designated "Lamplights" in the chart.

All these Lighthouses were established in the year 1763, and a Lightman appointed to each.

The upper Leasowe Lighthouse, 300 yards above high water mark was very superior to the others, it was a round stone tower, 118 ft. high, the light being visible at a distance of 14 miles, it was the first Lighthouse to have reflectors fitted. The idea of fixing reflectors was conceived by Captain William Hutchinson, who was one of the first Liverpool Pilotage Commissioners, and continued in that capacity for about 33 years. He died in February, 1801.

The Lower Leasowe Lighthouse was a wooden structure, and in 1770 was undermined by the sea and became unservicable.

The Hoylake Light was 55ft. above high water, and was visible 13 miles, and the Lower Light, 1200 ft seaward of it, was, like the lower Leasowe Light, also constructed of wood.

In 1771, the Bidston Lighthouse, on Bidston Hill, was erected, it was a stone tower, 55ft. high, 300 ft. above sea level, and the light was visible 23 miles.

From the instances which have been given of disasters to the Pilot Boats, attended by serious loss of life, we gather that the calling of a Pilot in those early days was of a most hazardous character, but in spite of this fact, there were some of those hardy "salts" who sought adventure further afield, for on the 2nd November 1779, one of them was deprived of his licence for deserting the Service and joining the privateer "Enterprise", and on the 12th December, 1780, three other Pilots were similarly dealt with for becoming members of the crew of the privateer "Hypocrite".

In 1797, when the first Liverpool Pilotage Act had been in operation for thirty-one years, it was repealed, and in the light of experience and to keep pace with the growing demands of progress, the second Liverpool Pilotage Act was passed.

Some of the provisions of the former Act had become obsolete and others were incompetent.

The system whereby the pilotage earnings of each boat were reserved exclusively for the benefit of the particular pilots attached to the boat, tended to the boarding of unlicensed persons, when all her licensed pilots had been boarded, with the object of swelling the particular boat's earnings, which was of course reflected in a loss to another boat. The system was also conducive to great indifference, even neglect, on the part of the masters of the boats to board coasting or small vessels, these vessels being less attractive from an earnings point of view than the larger or foreign trading vessels, and these offences had become so prevalent that heavy fines had to be imposed as a deterrent.

It was customary for any fine imposed on the master of a pilot boat or other person to be paid by the crew rateably, such a practice resulted in the innocent being punished and the guilty escaping the full penalty which it was the intention of the Committee to inflict, however in December, 1828, the Committee put a stop to this anomaly.

The 1797 Act made it lawful, after a majority of the licensed pilots had agreed, to have a joint stock of all their earnings for the benefit of the whole, and in view of the probable good which might arise from it, particularly to vessels in the coasting trade, the system was established, but after it had been in operation for less than five months, owing to complaints from a number of merchants and masters of ships that the public service was less well performed than under the former system the joint stock arrangement was discontinued, and the old system reverted to. Between the years 1766 and 1800 more than fifty pilots and apprentices were drowned or killed whilst carrying out their duties.

In February, 1821, No 9. Pilot Boat ("Liver") had the misfortune to collide with and carry away the Rock Perch. The pilot boat had been obliged to slip her cable in Hoylake owing to a heavy gale of wind and was running round the Rock for shelter in the Mersey when the accident happened. The night was extremely dark and although all on board were anxiously looking out for the Perch they failed to observe it. The cost of replacing it was considerable and the master of the pilot boat was held liable for this expense, however the Dock Trustees (who were responsible for the maintenance of the Perch) did not press for payment.

The Perch had on numerous occasions been knocked down by vessels on dark nights or in misty weather, but it would seem that it was only after it had been overrun by those who were best able to know its exact position that the Pilot Committee were moved to take action, for after the incident just referred to they at once made an appeal to the Dock Trustees to erect a Lighthouse on a small scale and do away with the Perch, but it was not until 1827 that the actual construction of this Lighthouse was commenced. The light was first exhibited on the 1st. March, 1830.

Liverpool Pilotage Act 1824.

On the 24th May, 1824, the Liverpool Pilotage Act of 1797 was repealed and the third and last local Pilotage Act came into operation.

The constitution of the Commissioners and Pilot Committee remained the same as it was in the first Act of 1766.

In 1830, the Committee considered that the employment of a steam pilot boat would be advantageous to the public and a benefit to the pilots generally, and recommended that she should be held as a Joint Stock Company by all the pilots.

The proposal was to hire a steam boat in the first instance, as an experiment.

The matter was still under consideration in 1831, but the majority of the pilots were opposed to the idea and the scheme was not proceeded with.

On Friday the 29th November, 1833, during a most destructive storm, No 1 pilot boat, the "Good Intent", 52 tons burthen, was wrecked off Formby.

During the height of the gale on the previous evening the pilot boat took a heavy lurch and shipped a sea which washed her punt off the back and thrust it into the belly of the sail tearing a hole in the canvas, the sail thus damaged was soon blown to rags by the wind, rendering the vessel unmanageable. Several of the crew lashed themselves to the rigging, whilst others endeavoured to keep a footing on the deck. Being entirely at the mercy of the wind and waves she was driven on the Formy beach, when out of a crew of 22 only 13 were saved, the master being one of those who perished.

After the loss of the "Good Intent", the proposal to build a steam pilot boat was renewed, and it was recommended that 10% of the gross receipts from pilotage should be set aside for the building or purchase of such a boat, and a percentage annually contributed for her maintenance. The pilots were invited to apply for shares but only a minority responded. The Committee then signified their willingness to grant a licence to those pilots who were in favour of the scheme, the steam pilot boat to be for their exclusive benefit. The majority of the pilots then supported the proposal, but the master pilots, who owned the pilot boats opposed the idea.

In the meantime the owners of the wrecked pilot boat proceeded to build a new sailing boat, and in the early part of 1835, the idea of a steam pilot boat was abandoned.

In the year 1832, great indignation was aroused, when a clause was introduced into an Act to amend the laws relating to Customs then before Parliament, which clause was designed to make it obligatory for pilot boats and fishing boats employed on the coasts of Great Britain, to be painted black.

The Committee pointed out that, for over fifty years the Liverpool pilot boats had been distinguished from other vessels, by being painted light yellow with white bottoms, and great advantage had been derived from this arrangement, for no vessel could mistake them, nor could any vessel imitate them for a sinister purpose, without detection, and they viewed with alarm the destroying of the long established distinguishing characteristics of the pilot boats, and foresaw mistakes arising with serious consequences, and the likelihood of the new measure acting as a cloak to smugglers who would no doubt adopt the paint proposed to be made general.

The Government however, looked at the matter from a different angle, and had another view. The new measure was the sequel to reports of smuggling, and black was considered to be the most easily discernible at sea, and pilot boats not being excluded from those ships which might be guilty of carrying contraband goods, were to come within the scope of the Act.

However, it is pleasing to record, that having regard to the fact that there were no imputations against the Liverpool Pilots, the Mersey pilot boats were allowed to retain their usual appearance, which practice was continued for another thirty years without alteration.

A singular coincidence occurred in 1836, the pilot of the brig "Euphemia", which sailed from Liverpool was unable to be taken on board the pilot boat, and he was carried away. After being at sea some time the brig fell in with His Majesty's Ship "Thunderer" in the Atlantic, who took the pilot on board on the 28th December.

Shortly afterwards the "Thunderer" fell in with the barque "Greenbow" also from Liverpool, and she had her pilot still on board, he was transferred to the "Thunderer".

His Majesty's Ship was bound to Plymouth where the pilots were landed on the 7th January, 1837.

On the 6th January, 1839 a dreadful hurricane visited Liverpool and took toll of both large and small vessels. No 8 Pilot Boat, the "Irlam", lost her master who was steering the boat, when he was washed overboard, the remainder of the crew being below for safety. The pilot boat lost her mainboom, bowsprit and one side of her bulwarks.

During the same storm the tug "Victoria" succeeded in saving the lives of the passengers and crews from several vessels, wrecked off the Port, a number of pilots being rewarded for meritorious conduct assisting on board the tug.

From 1766 to 1854, the powers of the Liverpool Pilotage Commissioners, were prescribed by successive local Acts of Parliament, but in the latter year the Merchant Shipping Act superseded the last local Act of 1824, and laid down the general principles governing all pilotage in the United Kingdom.

This Act empowered each local Authority to frame bye-laws, subject to confirmation by Parliament, to deal with the particular needs of the district.

Under the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act, the master or mate of any ship could apply to any Pilotage Authority to be examined to pilot the ship of which he was master or mate, or any one or more ships belonging to the same owner.

The Pilot Committee looked upon this part of the Act with disfavour and resentment and were very averse to the granting of licenses to persons who had not in accordance with a long-standing practice, served in a pilot boat. The Committee were very stubborn, and none of these certificates were issued by the Liverpool Pilotage Authority until after 1858.

Coming events cast their shadows before, and the mental disturbance caused to the Pilot Committee by the Merchant Shipping Act, had hardly subsided, when the shadow of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Act, 1857, was plainly discernible.

This Act was designed, as well as for other purposes, to transfer the powers of the Liverpool Pilotage Commissioners to the Dock Board. The Pilot Committee made arrangements for a vigorous protest to Parliament, against that part of the Bill which concerned pilotage, which they regarded as a most unjust attempt to deprive them of a responsibility which time had proved they were fully capable of undertaking.

They contended that for over 90 years the constitution of the Committee had not materially altered. Since 1766, under their guidance and administration, the Service had developed from a very humble commencement, to one, they considered, second to none, however, on second thoughts, with great reluctance, they refrained from carrying out their intentions.

On the 1st January, 1858, the powers previously vested in the Pilotage Commissioners, were vested in the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board, but as heretofore the pilot boats belonged to the pilot boat-owners, no change having been made in this respect.

On the 9th January, 1866, during a very heavy gale from W.N.W. Nos 3. and 8. pilot boats were on the Inner Stations. A disabled vessel hove in sight, with all her yards on her foremast carried away, and she was running before the wind under her main topsails.

Seeing the crippled state of the vessel, and that it was impossible to put a pilot on board, No 3. boat signalled to her to follow and then led the way over the Bar, bringing the ship into Port in safety. After No 3 boat, "The Duke", had left the Station as just described, a crowd of vessels appeared running for the Port, all displaying the signal for a pilot.

No. 8 boat the "Pride of Liverpool", immediately hoisted the signal for them to heave to, and spoke them all to direct them as to the order in which they were to proceed, when there was sufficient water for them. No 8. hoisted the signal "Follow me" and ran before them over the Bar, leading them up the Crosby Channel, into Port in safety. The number thus led in by No 8. boat was 12. Their value is over half a million, the pilotage paid to the boat being only £68. One of the vessels had lost her foretopmast, another had her topsails blown away. The latter fell in with a steam tug just before they saw the pilot boat. The tug asked £500 to tow her into Port, which was afterwards reduced to £100, but the captain of the ship finding he could follow the pilot boat, declined the tug's services.

Some of the vessels concerned were:-

s.s. "Athenian"	Barque "Harriot"
Bk. "Richard Cobden" (foretopmast gone)	Ship "Transit"
Ship "Maud"	Ship "West Riding"
Bktne "Persia"	Ship "Zoroaster"
Ship "Lord Dufferin" (Topsails blown away)	

This incident was the subject of a picture painted by Samuel Walters. It was presented by the Liverpool Pilots Association to Samuel R Graves, M.P., and in January, 1931 by his Executors to the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board.

This picture must not be confused with the one painted by Witham depicting No.2 Pilot Boat, the "Leader", leading vessels over the Bar on the 8th February, 1881.

In 1881, the Dock Board by an Act of Parliament obtained powers to purchase the entire fleet of the Liverpool Pilot Boats. They were still chiefly owned by master-pilots and superannuated master-pilots. For more than half a century trouble had existed between the owners and the other pilots who were not so fortunate. The purchase of the boats was a concession reluctantly made by the Dock Board, after repeated efforts to get the owners and the non-owners to settle their disputes amicably.

During the days of the Cutters, particularly the early days, stormy weather was their greatest enemy and accounted for a number of them, but as ship construction developed and pilot boats, in common with other craft, became more seaworthy, the danger of collision was most to be feared, as the following accidents illustrate:-

On the 10th March, 1881, No.3 Pilot Boat, "The Duke", was sunk in the Mersey after colliding with the London & North Western Railway Co's. Mud Hopper "A", she was raised and reconditioned and carried on as a Pilot Boat until 1885, when she was withdrawn from the Service and the "Mersey", No.11 boat was re-numbered "3" and she was sunk by the s.s. "Landana", belonging to the African Steam Ship Co, on the 2nd. December, 1885, 2 miles S.W. by S. from the Bar Ship, one Pilot being

The old "Duke" was then commissioned again, and remained in the Service until 1894.

On the 25th February, 1882, the "Guide" No.9 Pilot Boat, which was built at Ramsey in 1862, was sunk after being in collision with the s.s. "Mariner" a Harrison Liner, about 2 miles, W.N.W. from the Bar Lightship, with the loss of one Pilot.

On the 13th May, 1888, at 2.30 a.m. No. 5. Pilot Boat, the "Victoria & Albert" was run down by the barque "Governor" and sunk about 3½ miles W.N.W. from the Bar Lightship, one Pilot losing his life.

On the 26th February, 1890, at 2.30 a.m. No.8. Pilot Boat, the "Pride of Liverpool" when in the act of supplying the s.s. "Rydal Water" with a Pilot, was run into by her and sunk 6 miles east of Point Lynas, fortunately without any loss of life.

The replacement of this boat had to be considered and once again the advisability of introducing a steam Pilot Boat was examined.

It was considered by some of the Pilots that the advantages derived by vessels driven by steam when proceeding on a voyage, would be negatived in the case of a steam Pilot Boat, when she had to remain in a limited area, particularly during a north-west gale in Liverpool Bay, and they apprehended that the discomforts and difficulties experienced in the sailing boats under such conditions, would with a steam Pilot Boat be multiplied.

However, the idea of a steam Pilot Boat was turned down as it was in 1830 and 1835, and as a temporary measure the schooner-yacht "Gloriana", built at West Cowes in 1852 was purchased.

In 1891, of the 9 boats in the Service 5 of them were over 30 years old, and the Board decided to build another sailing boat, she was named the "George Holt", a composite vessel, built at Dartmouth, in 1892, 78 tons, 109 ft in length, overall, 21½ft beam, and she proved herself to be a very superior vessel.

On the 10th November, 1891, when in the Crosby Channel, No 1. Pilot Boat, the "Queen", sank after being in collision with the s. s. "Sailor Prince", no lives being lost. She was raised on the 14th November, and resumed her duties until 1897, when with other sailing Pilot Boats she was withdrawn from the Service.

On the 17th March, 1895, No 4. Pilot Boat, the "Auspicious", when lying to an anchor in a fog at the Bar, was sunk by the s.s. "Dynamic" without any loss of life.

In the same year on the 7th December, No.5 Pilot Boat, the "Criterion", collided with the s.s. "Cambroman" off Point Lynas, and the Pilots and the crew fearing that she would founder, abandoned her in one of her punts. This punt with 16 persons in her was adrift for seven hours before she was picked up. The Pilot Boat did not sink and was picked up by the tug "Challenger" and towed to Liverpool.

The following year, on the 26th January, No. 6 Pilot Boat, the "S.R.Graves" was sunk by the s.s. "Moorhen" in the vicinity of the N.W.Lightship, without loss of life.

In the early months of 1896, it was decided to build two steam Pilot Boats, and to work a combined steam and sail boat Service.

Two steam Pilot Boats were constructed at Port Glasgow, the "Francis Henderson" and the "Leonard Spear", each was of 275 tons, gross, 24ft beam and 128ft in length.

On the 26th October, 1896, the first Liverpool Steam Pilot Boat sailed for the Point Lynas Station, and the first vessel that she boarded was the sailing ship "Holt Hill", 2259 tons, from San Francisco.

The Service was then maintained with two steam and three sailing Pilot Boats. In 1898, two more steam Pilot Boats were built, and with the exception of the "George Holt", No.10. which was retained for making the surveys of adjacent Ports, all the sailing Pilot Boats were withdrawn.

In 1904, the "George Holt", the last of 61 sailing pilot boats was sold. She was purchased by the Falkland Island Co. and re-named "Lafonia", trading round those Islands until she became a general goods lighter, and in 1933 she was a hulk in Stanley Harbour, Falkland Islands.

The passing of this schooner out of the Pilotage Service was another milestone in the history of the Service. For one hundred and thirty years the Pilot Service had been maintained with sailing boats, which had been of two types.

The earliest boats were 30 to 40 tons burthen, sloop rigged, some with square sterns, they were without bulwarks, just open decked with a cockpit aft, from where they were navigated, and for protection they had quarter cloths, which were painted red with a white border. The entrance to the living accommodation was from the cockpit and was under the foredeck. About 1835, they commenced to build these sloops with bulwarks.

The next type were schooners, introduced in the year 1852, they were over 50 tons burthen, considerably longer with much superior accommodation, and fifty years ago these trim schooners with the number of the boat painted conspicuously on their white sails, were objects of general interest as they sailed into and out of the Mersey.

Great as were the traditions of the Liverpool Pilotage Service before the European War, this War enhanced them. When the "Call to Arms" was sounded in 1914, the Liverpool Pilots and Apprentices alike were soon represented in the Air, Land and Sea Forces, and the decorations which were won by some of these men testify to the excellent manner in which they acquitted themselves.

In 1913, the s.s. "Alfred H. Read", a much improved type of steam Pilot Boat was built, followed at intervals by three other steam Pilot Boats of more or less similar design.

During the Great War, heavy responsibilities rested upon the shoulders of the Pilots of this Port. The work they were called on to perform, was in a danger zone, but at all times they were ready and willing to render their services.

In the early hours of the morning of the 28th December, 1917, the Service suffered one of the greatest disasters that has ever befallen it, when No.1 Pilot Boat, the "Alfred H. Read" (one of the last new boats) struck a mine on the Bar Station, and sank in a few minutes, and out of 41 souls on board, only two were saved, 19 Pilots and 8 apprentices making the supreme sacrifice. The Service accepted this terrible loss with that stoicism which has been one of its characteristics from earliest times.

It only remains for me to mention the last new Pilot Boat, built in 1936. She is named the "William M. Clarke", 579 tons gross, 170 ft. in length and 30 ft. beam.

She is the last word in pilot boat construction, and is the largest and best equipped pilot boat in the United Kingdom, if not in the world, and the Service to which she belongs, second to none in organisation and efficiency, is justly proud of her

From early times the names of prominent Liverpool Shipowners had been associated with the Pilotage Service of the Port. Two of the best known were Thomas Brocklebank and John Bibby, who as far back as 1824, were Pilotage Commissioners and became members of the Pilotage Committee.

Thomas Brocklebank resigned in 1832, but in 1838 he was again serving on the committee, and it seemed appropriate that 100 years later a descendant of his - Sir Thomas A. L. Brocklebank, Bart. - should be chairman of the Pilotage Committee.

JOHN S. REES.
