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The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

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Front Cover

The Liverpool Pilot Cutter ***Edmund Gardner***
Built in 1953 by Philip & Son at Dartmouth for the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board
Preserved in Canning Dry Dock at the Merseyside Maritime Museum

The Sitmar Liner **Fairsea** (*ex* Cunard's **Carinthia**)
entering the Gatun Lock on the Panama Canal in 1982

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION NOW DUE !!!

The annual subscription to the Society is now due and a reminder form has been enclosed with this '*Bulletin*'. Please send your cheque, made payable to 'The Liverpool Nautical Research Society' to the Society's Treasurer, using the enclosed addressed envelope. *Thank you.*

SEVENTY YEARS AGO

21st JULY, 1937

RADIO FALLS SILENT FOR DEATH OF MARCONI

(from the 'Manchester Guardian')

The news of the death of Senator Marconi, aged 63, was announced in Rome. His illness began only three days ago, but his condition became serious early yesterday morning, and he died within a few hours of paralysis of the heart. The Marchesa Marconi and her daughter were away from Rome, and the Marchesa was not able to return to Rome until three hours after her husband's death.

Rome had many flags at half-mast, and the shops in the Via Condotti, the street in which Senator Marconi lived, were nearly all closed and bore the sign 'Closed for national mourning'. A State funeral was arranged at the Church of St Mary of the Angels. Senator Marconi's remains would be taken to Bologna, his birthplace, for burial.

At six o'clock on the evening of 21st July 1937, the hour fixed for the funeral, all B.B.C. transmitters and all the Post Office wireless telephone stations in the British Isles, closed down for two minutes.

The Post Office sent the following message to all ships: "*As a token to the late Marchese Marconi, all stations are asked to stop transmitting between 17.00 and 17.02 G.M.T., July 21st, except in cases of extreme urgency*".

The Postmaster General's announcement of this tribute to Marconi adds: "*Rugby, the most powerful wireless station in the world, which links the British Empire by radio telephone, will pay this mark of respect as well as Post Office coast wireless stations which maintain communication with ships on the seven seas*".

'*Manchester Guardian*' Leader Comment:

"Throughout the ages men have been inspired by the vision of a world without barriers, a federation of mankind. No man has done more to give reality and substance to that dream that Guglielmo Marconi, the father of wireless communication.

"The principle on which his discoveries were based was already known when he was still a child but it was he who realised its commercial possibilities, applied it to the service of society, and transformed a laboratory curiosity into a world force of incalculable power.

"We may well be proud that he came to England to carry out the researches which enabled him, forty years ago, to send the first telegraphic messages through the ether for a few hundred yards and, five years later, across the Atlantic. Within ten years radio distress signals had saved the lives of many shipwrecked seamen, and a thousand passengers rescued from the foundering **Titanic** impressively acknowledged that they owed their lives to him." ▌

MARCONI'S 'SPANS'

by LNRS Member David White

There was an interesting article about Marconi's 50th anniversary celebrations in '*The Bulletin*', Volume 49, Number 4. I thought it might be helpful to briefly clarify Marconi's post-war technical developments, especially the use of the 'Span' nomenclature.

The OCEANSPAN was essentially the standard main transmitter of its day. Though generally extremely reliable, its modest power output of about 100 watts meant that it was very much a poor relation in international terms. However, because of the 'Area Scheme', which enabled traffic to and from British ships to be routed free of charge via naval stations located in the various Commonwealth countries, we were rarely required to be global communicators.

An early floor mounted OCEANSPAN, possibly a Mk II, behind the Radio Officer, with a WORLDSPAN on the right

The WORLDSPAN was a much more exclusive animal, generally being fitted only to passenger vessels. An RF amplifier, rather than a general stand-alone transmitter, it took the output from an OCEANSPAN and boosted it to a very useful 400 watts. A WORLDSPAN was fitted to the **Gothic** specifically for her Royal Yacht role, and was standard fitting on Union Castle's Cape Mail vessels in the 1950s and 1960s.

The next major development was the introduction of the GLOBESPAN in the early 1960s. With an output of some 500 – 850 watts, it was a useful improvement on the OCEANSPAN, especially with the demise of the Area Scheme later in the decade. However its radiotelephone facility was Double Sideband (DSB) only and the international adoption of Single Sideband (SSB) relegated the GLOBESPAN to the telegraphy-only role at a relatively early age.

The subsequent generation of Marconi transmitters (CRUSADER, COMMANDANT and CONQUEROR, and for the lower end of the market the COMMANDER) saw the 'Span' label disappear.

If the WORLDSPAN was rather exclusive, the SEASPAN was a rarity. It does exist. I have recently inspected one in a museum store and have a photograph to prove it. An HF-transmitter only, its role was to enable MF-only vessels to be economically upgraded when the change in regulations prevented deep-sea vessels from sailing with MF equipment only.

The Radio Officer with his back to a GLOBESPAN.

On the subject of the RELIANCE, it was not a receiver, but rather an emergency transmitter. Capable of similar power outputs to that of the OCEANSPAN, it was much simpler, being capable of MF only. As befits emergency equipment, it was powered by the Radio Room emergency batteries and contained its own DC to HT rotary converter, i.e. a motor generator. Additionally a number were mains-powered and fitted to MF-only ships as the main transmitter. Certainly some of the Isle of Man Steam Packet vessels were equipped with a mains-powered RELIANCE.

Finally, a substantial number of OCEANSPAN transmitters are known to have survived. These survivors are, in the main, later models such as the bench-mounted Mark VII currently on display at Fort Perch Rock, New Brighton. ▌

WIRELESS IN 1898

From the inception of the idea of wireless telegraphy, Lloyd's had been keenly interested in its possibilities. The Secretary of Lloyd's from 1874 to 1906 was Colonel Sir Henry Crozier, who was himself a keen experimenter. It was to him that Signor Marconi came for assistance. The encouragement given to him in those early days caused Marconi to become a frequent visitor to Lloyd's.

It was in 1898 that Marconi apparatus was experimentally installed by Lloyd's for communication between Ballycastle, Co. Antrim, and the lighthouse on Rathlin Island, a distance of some seven miles partly over land and partly over sea. The success of this experiment was shown on the first day when the movements of ten ships were reported by wireless to the mainland and thence by cable to Lloyd's. This was under foggy conditions when the ordinary means of visual signalling would have been impossible.

Lloyd's Log

MORSE IN THE AIR

by LNRS Member William Williamson

For the first trip wireless operator in 1960, the cacophony of dots and dashes coming over the air was far removed from the practice oscillator in college . . . and it took some nerve to join in the conversation

It seemed unbelievable, but this gigantic wall of steel was my very first ship, the 21,000-ton Shell tanker **Varicella**. She towered over me as I stood on the oil jetty at Rotterdam on Christmas Day, 1960. My shiny PMG second-class certificate with its stiff cover was now nestling in my inside pocket as I climbed the gangway to the main deck, my passport to a life at sea and a career as a Radio Officer.

After meeting my senior I was shown to my cabin and invited to the recreation room for belated Christmas drinks. I was bursting with pride as I put on my new uniform for the first time, and feeling very self-conscious went off to meet the other officers. Like all Merchant Navy people they were very friendly and in no time at all I was accepted into their company and felt very much at home. Lying in my bunk that night, recalling the exciting events of the last few days, I thought that the world was an exciting place. Such is the optimism of youth!

We sailed for the Persian Gulf early the following morning and I had my first experience of watchkeeping. The receiver blasted out a cacophony of dots and dashes which I had difficulty in deciphering. As we sailed towards the English Channel it sounded as though every ship and coast station in the world was using 500khz at the same time. The only respite from this babel was during the three-minute silence period every half-hour.

"I've only ever heard morse from an oscillator in college where there was never any noise, interference or static. I can't read this morse at all!" I wailed to John Playford, the senior radio officer on the **Varicella**.

"Don't worry," he said, *"you'll soon get used to it. You have to tune in to a particular signal and ignore all others. It's a bit like listening to one conversation at a party, it's only practice."*

He was quite right, of course, and it is indeed just this very ability that makes trained radio officers so valuable in poor conditions. By the end of the voyage I had perfected the art but in the meantime receiving weather reports from Land's End Radio restored my confidence.

As we steamed south I soon got into the routine of the eight-hour working day, split into four two-hour radio watches. A communication system devised during the Second World War was still in operation at this time. The world was divided into eight areas each with a controlling coast station working on the high frequency bands. A ship would contact the appropriate coast station and send her traffic there; the message would then be routed to its destination on the point-to-point network. It was a good system but its retention delayed the introduction of the high-power, high-quality single side band transmitters.

Another hurdle for the aspiring 'Sparks' to overcome is his first transmission on the air. You approach this task with nervousness tinged with excitement and pride. An overpowering feeling that every ship and coast station within range is listening to your morse with super-critical ears has to be put aside. This strange feeling soon wears off with practice and you become very blasé about the whole business.

The radio station on the **Varicella** was run by Marconi Marine, my employer, and being a comparatively new ship it had the most modern equipment then in use. The main transmitter was a 450w Globespan which covered MF and HF telegraphy, and high-frequency radiotelephony using either simplex or duplex was also available. To put through a HF R/T call to the UK, however, you first had to book the call with Portishead using morse. This seems a very quaint way of doing things in today's push-button age of telex and satellite communications.

A 14-valve receiver called the Atalanta had a frequency range of 15khz - 28khz. I liked it for it had built-in metering facilities that made servicing easy and it had few vices. The auto-alarm was a Seaguard valve receiver feeding into an electro-mechanical selector. It had to be started by hand by spinning the starting knob and this could be difficult at times.

I did myself a bit of good one day when a fault developed on the alarm. I located the trouble and repaired it with a bit of soldering, the first piece of 'real' fault-finding I had tackled. We also had an emergency transmitter plus a Lodestone direction finder. A Mark IV Radiolocator radar was fitted in the wheelhouse, but my boss looked after that himself for at that time I knew virtually nothing about radar.

Everything on that first voyage was new and exciting . . . passing Gibraltar and seeing the famous rock . . . the slow passage through the Suez Canal. We kept a long monitoring watch on Ismailia Radio/SUQ, for this station controlled all radio communication for the canal transit. It was interesting for me because SUQ worked in a particular manner. A numbered list of ships in the convoy would be sent in a blind broadcast, then each ship would be invited to reply on the working frequency. Being a tanker with a good turn of speed we were near the head of the convoy so we had to be alert to give our acknowledgement.

One dark night on the voyage down the Red Sea I was intrigued to see phosphorescent tracks homing in on our ship. I made my way forward and there in the green phosphorescent glow of the bow wave six or seven sleek porpoises rode the pressure wave with fluent grace. Occasionally one would leap out of the water with carefree abandon, then slap back in, tossing up a shower of glowing green droplets. A very beautiful sight.

We loaded a full cargo of crude at a port on the Shatt al Arab. The oil jetties were modern but pretty basic and hot, dry and smelly for the reek of crude oil was everywhere. I was glad to get back to sea. Various changes of orders came through on our way back to the Gulf and this led to much speculation and anticipation by the crew. Eventually the uncertainty was over and we headed for Singapore. I celebrated my eighteenth birthday somewhere in the Indian Ocean.

After a short bunkering stop, the **Varicella** settled down for the long haul across the Pacific to Long Beach, California. During the next three weeks everyone settled down to a routine that will be familiar to seafarers. In the radio room we kept watch on Area VIII (Singapore/Hong Kong) and then transferred to Area VI (Vancouver). I dutifully polished the desks in the radio room once a week and learned how to keep the radio accounts for messages sent and received. The accounts had to be abstracted into daily and monthly records which, of course, all had to balance at the end of the voyage.

We discharged our cargo in the USA, passed through the Panama Canal and loaded crude in Venezuela for Europe. We returned to Rotterdam and I was delighted to have circled the globe on my first voyage.

I had two weeks leave before being recalled to Leith, but having only three months experience as a junior I fully expected to have a senior operator with me in my next ship. Difficult though it is to imagine now, there was at that time a shortage of radio officers and I was granted a dispensation to sail on my own, a decision which delighted me.

The ship I joined was the **Uskmouth**, 2,908grt, a general cargo vessel and a complete contrast to the **Varicella**. Wartime built, she looked her twenty or so years and certainly could not be described as elegant! My initial reaction on seeing her was one of disappointment, but this soon disappeared. After a large tanker, though, I found the accommodation decidedly cramped.

The radio room was a small cupboard-like compartment off the bridge and was packed with equipment from deck to deckhead. Once you had settled into your chair, there you remained until the end of the watch, something which irked me a great deal. However, I had trained on equipment of similar vintage, so the **Uskmouth's** gear was familiar to me – a Mercury and Electra receiver powered from batteries and a 100w Oceanspan II transmitter with manual frequency selection on MF. The autokey was a clockwork model from the Belgian SAIT company, and the auto-alarm was made by Redifon. The emergency equipment comprised an 'Alert' receiver with a 'Reliance' transmitter and a 'Salvita' portable lifeboat set which looked like a yellow dustbin.

We sailed for Rotterdam and I encountered my first problem. I wanted to send details of our passage (a 'TR') to Stonehaven Radio, but the transmitter continually tripped out each time I pressed the key. It was a disastrous start to the

voyage and my morale was at a low ebb when a cheery face pushed aside the curtain and the bosun said: *"Want your aerial up, Sparks?"*

"Yes please, I was just going to ask you to do that," I lied, as only a very relieved 18-year-old can. On the tanker we never had to bother about such things and I had learned a valuable lesson about cargo ships.

Other lessons had to be learned too. Smaller ships have a more violent motion and I succumbed to the miseries of seasickness as I listened to the dots and dashes on the airwaves. Many operating errors were made in those first few weeks and I wished fervently that I had paid more attention to my senior during my first trip on the **Varicella**. Gradually I gained experience and learned to pick just the right time to call a coast station bearing in mind the limited capabilities of the transmitter.

Generally I found other operators very helpful and courteous on the air, and despite static and the heavy volume of signalling which produced much interference, everyone seemed able to clear their traffic to the coast stations.

The powerful transmitters of the major North European coast stations ruled the air-waves of the English Channel and the North Sea, especially GLD (Land's End Radio) with 5kw of power which cut a swathe through the constant buzz and chatter on 500khz. I admired the style of the operators of these stations when they were on the air. Their fast accurate morse had a fluent elegance which was a delight to listen to.

Off the Iberian coast there was an altogether different sound, that of the Spanish fishing fleets. The modulation on their transmitters had a rough coarse quality that made them very distinctive on the medium frequency band. As we steamed south I took weather reports from Monsanto Radio (CUL) in Portugal. These were usually treated with scepticism by the navigating officers due to their frequent repetition of 'slight seas and gentle breezes'!

We sailed into the Mediterranean and discharged our cargo of coal in Nemours, Algeria, and then headed for Oran. Just before our arrival French paratroops seized power and everything was put under military control, including the Oran coast radio station which promptly shut down for the day. It was impossible to send or receive any traffic and so we arrived more or less unexpectedly.

I had been asked to tally cargo during our stay in Oran and I readily agreed. Each morning the shore tallyman would arrive on board, shake my hand and present his bottle of wine to me. I took a swig, pronounced it excellent, and after this display of Gallic ritual my friend deemed that work could start for the day. We loaded bales of esparto grass which we took back to Leith.

I remained with the **Uskmouth** for two more voyages and it was there that I learned my trade and gained experience. Communicating with the UK from long distance was done through Portishead Radio on the high frequency bands, but choosing which frequency to use definitely required experience. Propagation of radio waves on HF depends on ionized layers in the upper atmosphere which, in turn, depend on the amount of sunlight available. Thus the choice of frequency at 10.am would be different from the choice at 5.pm. The practical reality, however, was to tune in to the band that gave the strongest received signal, working on the principle that if you could hear Portishead, then he would be able to hear you.

The calling frequency in the selected band was used to give Portishead an indication of traffic on hand and what working frequency you intended to use. At the

coast station the search point operator (he only listened to calls) received your call, noted the details and replied to the ship. You then retuned your transmitter to the working frequency and called again. This time the operator on the working point replied, received your message and gave an acknowledgement.

With luck this whole process might only take a few minutes, but this was not always the case. The sheer number of ships signalling to Portishead meant that very often you would be heard, your call answered and you would be told to wait your turn. This might involve a delay of twenty minutes or so, but near Christmas Day, say, the wait could be hours.

The number of telegrams to be sent from the **Uskmouth** was not great but sufficient to keep me interested, gain experience and have confidence in using the system. At the start of each of the two-hour radio watches I would tune to Portishead Radio and listen to the traffic list for the area. This was an alphabetical list of call signs and the telegrams would be transmitted 'blind'. If there was one for the **Uskmouth** I would receive it and then send an acknowledgement.

Traffic lists from other coast stations of interest would also be monitored and relevant weather reports and navigation warnings were received from appropriate coast stations. Each day a time signal had to be received from one of the special service stations which provided this facility, and it would be passed through to the chartroom so that the chronometer could be checked. For the rest of the watch the international distress and calling frequency of 500khz was monitored . . . just in case.

Radar was still a fairly exotic navigational aid in 1960, but the direction finder was used extensively. I could be called out at all hours of the day or night to take DF bearings and I became quite proficient in its use. This was especially so in fog and I developed a great trust in DF which is still with me. DF could be an excellent aid, if calibrated properly, and was especially useful for locating vessels in distress.

Gradually, by the daily repetition of such duties, my inexperience was replaced by proficiency. When I paid off the **Uskmouth** after five months I knew that I had gained the necessary experience and was, perhaps, a real radio officer at last. Maybe a few rough edges still had to be knocked off, but the basic material was there. But that was over 45 years ago and I remember it now as an exciting, interesting, happy period; a time of colourful incidents, colourful characters, interesting ports and above all, a time of optimism. Could it really have been that good? ▌

THE OVERWORKED RADIO OFFICER

Complaints are being heard in Germany that the radio officers employed in the German merchant fleet are grossly overworked. In the ordinary course of duty the radio officer has to be on watch for two hours out of every four continuously from 8.am until 10.pm, and this listening-in frequently coincides with meal times so that the radio officer is unable to eat regularly. In addition, he has to listen in for special messages, weather reports, and so on, at hours when his presence is not demanded by safety watch times and other routine duties; and similarly he has to send special messages on occasion outside his eight-hour day.

All this he would probably take in his stride, but it is the practice in Germany, as it is in some British ships, to heap on to his work as radio officer the extra jobs which might otherwise be performed by a purser or captain's clerk.

In the British Merchant Navy, bridge and engine-room watchkeepers have tended to look with envy upon the radio officer's programme in port for, unlike the other officers, he has often appeared to have practically nothing to do as soon as the ship has tied up alongside. In Germany, however, it is said that the paperwork keeps him busier in port than other officers, and he is particularly hard-worked for the two or three days before a ship docks in a home port when he is calculating the wage sheets, drawing up documents for the customs, and working on a host of other end-of-voyage jobs. For performing these extraneous duties he receives an extra £9 a month, but often they take up three-quarters of his time. This problem is, of course, not unique to Germany. In the Blue Funnel Line, radio officers carry out purser's duties, but two radio officers are carried where in similar vessels there might be just one. That the work of a ship's radio officer is trying is evidenced, according to the *International Transport Workers' Journal*, by statistics which have shown that this work has the highest incidence of sickness and absence through ill health. ▌

Shipbuilding and Shipping Record, 3rd December, 1959.

MARCONI'S

Marconi's Wireless Telegraph Company became the title of the world's first radio company at the beginning of the twentieth century, although it was not, in fact, the original name of the company founded by Guglielmo Marconi to exploit the invention of wireless communication, with which his name has ever since been synonymous.

The original company was proposed in 1897 and the draft prospectus bears the name Marconi's Patent Telegraphs Limited. This title is amended on the draft however, apparently in Marconi's hand, to The Wireless Telegraph and Signal Company Limited, and this became the first official title of the company, registered on 20th July, 1897.

In the annual report of 1899, it was recommended by the directors that the name of the company should be changed to Marconi's Wireless Telegraph Company Limited, and a resolution to this effect was passed at the annual general meeting of shareholders on 23rd February 1900; the new name being registered on 14th March of that year. Marconi made it clear at the time that this change of name was not at his suggestion.

From 1900 the name of the company remained unchanged, and it grew from one making the first tentative forays with the "patents granted to Mr Marconi" in respect of "an improved method of transmission of electrical impulse and signals and the apparatus therefore" into an international organization selling equipment to practically every country in the world. ▌

A SHIP THAT LEFT THE SEA

On the night of 31st October 1960 the coastal areas and offshore islands of East Pakistan (Bangladesh) were devastated by a cyclone of unusual severity. The anemometer of the Chittagong Meteorological Station parted company with its mountings whilst registering a wind speed of 120 knots, the highest in 70 years. A storm wave accompanied the centre of the storm which was travelling at 30 knots and this mountain of water left a wake of death and destruction and, for those spared to see it, a tide mark 35 feet above sea level on the tower of Kutubua Island lighthouse.

The Clan Line steamer **Clan Alpine** was anchored at the mouth of the Karnaphuli River awaiting a berth in the port. Unfortunately she never occupied this berth, for the fight she put up proved unequal to the violence of her opponent, which plucked her up from her anchorage and drove her eight miles before casting her up on a paddy field to the north of the port.

The ***Clan Alpine*** in the paddy fields

At daylight next morning, which coincided with low water, the **Clan Alpine's** officers were considerably disconcerted when they noticed the distance between ship and sea – at least five cables. Later in the day, at high water (a good spring tide), there was a mere 4ft. of water around the ship.

The **Clan Alpine** (*ex*-**Empire Barrie**), of 10,170 tons deadweight, was built by J.L. Thompson & Sons, Sunderland in 1942. Following her stranding she was sold to local shipbeakers for £60,000. Some 2,500 tons of general cargo were discharged prior to the sale. The old ship was actually on her way to a Japanese scrapyard when disaster overtook her. ▌

THE BOOTH LINER *"HILDEBRAND"* OF 1911

HILDEBRAND : Built by Scott's Shipbuilding & Engineering Co., Greenock.
Gross Tonnage: 6,995; Nett: 4,205. Length: 440·3ft; Breadth: 54·1ft.
Deadweight: 5,400tons on a draught of 26ft 4in.
Twin-screw : 2 x 4cyl. quadruple-expansion engines. Speed: 14knots
Launched: 14th February, 1911.

The brothers Alfred and Charles Booth started steamship services from Liverpool to North Brazil and the mouth of the River Amazon in 1866. Their ships sailed to Para (later Belem) where passengers and cargo were transferred to smaller vessels for up-river destinations.

The business thrived sufficiently for the Booths to commence a service from New York to Para via West Indian ports. By 1890 a direct service was run from Liverpool to Manaus, 1,000 miles up the Amazon.

In 1901 the Booth Line became a limited company (Booth Steamship Company [1901] Limited) and amalgamated with the Red Cross Line, enabling an extensive passenger and cargo business with Spain and Portugal to be built up. At this time also there was a boom in Amazon rubber which boosted cargo carryings.

In 1903 the Booth Steamship Company acquired the Maranham Steamship Company, strengthening its North Brazilian connection, and finally in 1913 it took over the Iquitos Steamship Company, enabling it to extend its own services to Iquitos, in Peru, some 2,300 miles up river. Transhipment into smaller vessels for onward passage to Iquitos took place at Manaus.

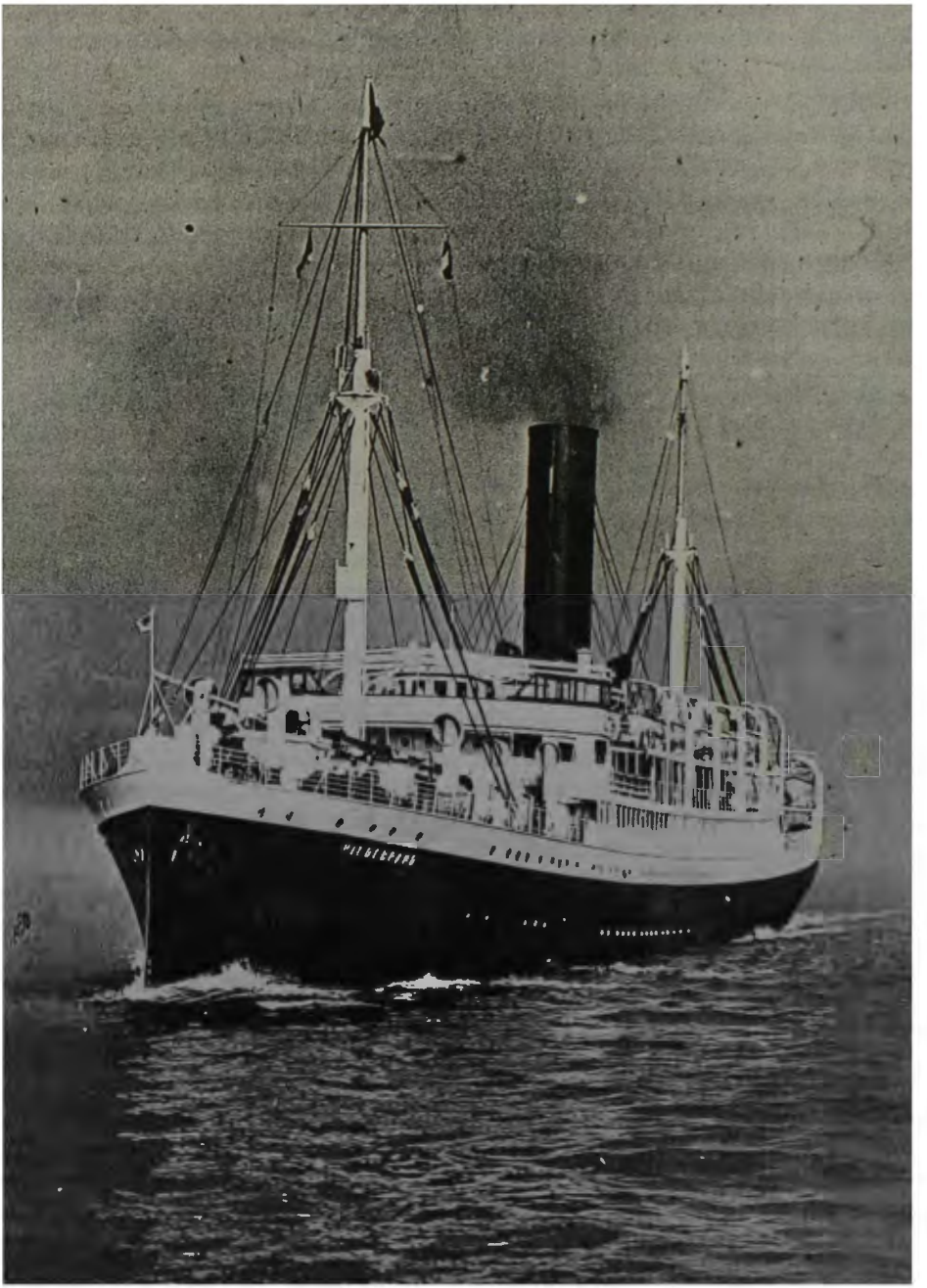
At Iquitos the Amazon is over a mile wide and over 70ft deep in places, with a current approaching six knots. Exports from this area included timber, bauxite, tin, manganese, Brazil nuts, cotton, sisal and rubber and by 1914 the Booth Steamship Company controlled almost the whole of the navigable waters of the Amazon and hence the trade to Europe and America.

There was a considerable demand for passenger accommodation and the 4,600-ton **Ambrose** was built in 1903. Two years later she was followed by the 5,400-ton **Anselm** and in 1907-08 the trio of 6,300-ton liners **Antony**, **Lanfranc** and **Hilary** appeared on the Liverpool – Amazon route.

In 1911 the largest and finest passenger liner in the Booth fleet entered service. She was the **Hildebrand**. The first **Hildebrand**, of 1893 was renamed **Huayana** to release the name for the new ship.

The new **Hildebrand** was built by Scott's Shipbuilding & Engineering Company of Greenock, the same company that had built the **Manco** in 1908 for the Iquitos Steamship Company for passenger services as far as Iquitos.

The **Hildebrand** was an enlargement and improvement on the **Antony**-class and was designed specifically for service in the tropics for both commercial and pleasure operation, for the Booth Line ran a tourist system whereby passengers could sail to either Spain, Portugal or Madeira in one ship, have a stay there in a hotel, and then return home in another Booth ship. The principal tourist attraction was the cruise from Liverpool taking passengers '1,000 miles up the Amazon'. Both operations proved extremely popular, and of course the Amazon cruise passengers enjoyed the



*The Booth liner **Hildebrand** of 1911*

double benefit of a good run ashore in Spain, Portugal and Madeira as well as a long spell of shipboard life through tropical seas.

The **Hildebrand** sailed on her maiden voyage from Liverpool on 16th April 1911. She was a really beautiful ship with a graceful sheer, fine stern, and a neat and uncluttered superstructure and by the time that war broke out in August 1914 she had made herself a most popular liner on Merseyside. The **Hildebrand** had a pronounced 'sag' amidships and looking aft or forward from the maindeck amidships, both the bow and the stern appeared 'uphill' and out of sight. The skills of shipbuilders are rarely commented on in *'The Bulletin'*, but when one realises that every deck also has a camber, the result was that there was not a single plate or beam which was square, and every piece of fitted furniture sloped in two concurrent directions.

By 1911 the Booth Steamship Company had reached the peak of its existence with six liners on its principal Liverpool – Manaus service, and numerous other cargo vessels on the New York run and services to north Brazil ports.

Shortly after the First World War broke out on 4th August 1914, the **Hildebrand** was taken over by the Admiralty and converted into an armed merchant cruiser. She had a naval captain, but her peacetime master remained as navigating officer. The **Hildebrand** was assigned to 'B'-group of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron on the Northern Patrol from Iceland to St Kilda, and 20 degrees East to the coast of Norway. Duties of these ships included boarding all intercepted vessels, taking neutrals into a British port under armed guard, ensuring the blockade of Germany and engaging any disguised German raider. This was a tough assignment for a tropical passenger ship which, in her peacetime role, looked anything but warlike.

However HMS **Hildebrand**, in grey and black paint, with most of her lifeboats removed and with two guns in strengthened positions amidships, plus additional guns fore and aft, and with her upperworks largely blanked off, looked a real warrior, and actually proved herself to be one of the best armed merchant cruisers on patrol. She was a kindly sea boat, her accommodation was good and the **Hildebrand** was easier to handle than the large Atlantic liners. With her lower freeboard it was much easier work for her boarding boat crews than on the larger ships where there was often 60ft from davit head to waterline.

In 1916 the **Hildebrand** was taken off patrol duty and put on convoy escort work. On 2nd October 1917, whilst escorting a convoy to the Clyde in company with HMS **Drake**, she came safely through a severe submarine attack. HMS **Drake** was torpedoed but managed to reach Rathlin Sound, only to capsize when at anchor there.

When the war was over the **Hildebrand** was paid off on the Clyde on 17th January 1919 and handed back to her owners. She was overhauled and returned, outwardly, to exactly her pre-war appearance, except that her hull was now a dove-grey instead of black. Internally the passenger accommodation was refurbished but she could still carry almost the same number as in pre-war days, namely 208 in first class, and 454 in third class.

The **Hildebrand** was the only one of Booth's large passenger ships to return to the Amazon. The **Ambrose** had been sold to the Admiralty for use as a submarine depot ship; the **Lanfranc** had been sunk as a hospital ship in April 1917; the **Antony** had been torpedoed in March 1917 and the **Hilary**, as an armed cruiser, had been torpedoed in the North Sea on 25th May 1917. The **Anselm** was sold in 1922.

So, the **Hildebrand** returned to her old routes alone. On one voyage, shortly after re-entering service, she rescued 23 crew and passengers from the American schooner **Ernest T. Lee** whilst on passage between Para and Madeira. In 1927 the passenger accommodation was modernised and the complement reduced to 160 in first class, and 306 in third class.

Then, in 1931, the new **Hilary** joined the fleet, slightly larger than the **Hildebrand** and very different in appearance. In 1932 the **Hildebrand** made her last voyage to the Amazon and was retired and laid up at Milford Haven. In early 1934 the old ship was sold to John Cashmore of Newport, Mon., for £11,000 and broken up.

Cammell Laird built a new **Hildebrand** in 1951, a ship of 7,735 gross tons with limited passenger accommodation and a large cargo capacity. Her time with the Booth Steamship Company was very short for on 25th September 1957, whilst approaching Lisbon in thick fog, she ran aground on rocks off Cascais and it proved impossible to salvage her. She was abandoned where she lay.

The Booth Line lost its individuality after the Second World War when it was sold to the huge Vestey combine and joined Blue Star, Lamport & Holt and Austasia Lines. The old days had certainly gone forever.

By way of conclusion, it is interesting to note the fares charged in 1926: from Liverpool to Oporto was £6; to Lisbon £8; Madeira £10; Para £21 and to Manaus £24 – all in first-class! I wonder what the air fares are today? ▌

"1,000 Miles up the Amazon in an Ocean Liner"

From a letter to a prospective passenger in 1923:

"This cruise on the Amazon River has now been made by many who have not only enjoyed their New World experience, but have benefited from a health point of view. The tropics of today are not the same tropics of a few years ago, thanks to modern medical science.

"The Amazon cruise can be enjoyed with impunity by all who are in normal health and by those who need change and rest for tired and jaded nerves etc. The cruise fare, first-class, is from £90 to £100."

From a passenger's letter of appreciation:

"I can truthfully say that I have never travelled on a more comfortable ship, or on one on which the passengers received such considerate treatment.

"The **Hildebrand** is maintained in a style that equals any first class liner in the world, and I have sailed in a good many during the past thirty years. The cabins are large and airy and well-furnished . . . and the food is as good as one gets in the best hotels in London, with excellent table wines and service.

"The cruise is so nicely apportioned between sightseeing, ocean sailing and river sailing that it possesses an attractiveness which I do not think could be found on any other six week trip.

"This is a cruise made under the easiest and most comfortable conditions with all the rough edges of ocean travel smoothed away. From start to finish the Company set themselves out to make it a restful, peaceful holiday."

Extracts from the Booth Line brochure for 1923:

If a tramcar started from London or Liverpool and made a circle of 11,800 miles at a charge of twopence a mile, the travelling public would be amazed at both the achievement and the price. Yet this is exactly what has been accomplished, only a magnificent liner takes the place of the tramcar, and the charge of about twopence a mile includes not only transport but the services and cuisine of a first-class hotel.

A cruise in an ocean liner is not only an innovation, but when 2,000 of these miles are accomplished in a luxuriously fitted 7,000 ton vessel on the great Amazon - the river of mystery – and the heart of the South American continent is penetrated through the equatorial forests of Brazil without a change of cabin from the time of leaving Liverpool to the day of the return to the Mersey, then it becomes not only unique as a cruise, but also an historic achievement in maritime transport and luxurious travel.

*A section of the abundant deck space on the **Hildebrand***

Days are spent in quaint cities. Curious natives in the palm thatch dwellings of their jungle homes are passed at many points. Hours speed by swiftly in gliding on tropical rivers through forests of vivid colouring alive with bright plumed birds and gorgeous butterflies.

However, before this wonderland of Amazonia is entered there are scenes of beauty and enjoyment under the blue skies of Portugal, amid the romantic mountains of Madeira and on tropical seas where gales are almost unknown and the broad sunlit ocean is ruffled only by the fresh trade wind and the shoals of flying fish.

These distant lands, seas and rivers of beauty, warmth and mystery can be reached and enjoyed on the comfortably seated, broad decks, or in the palatial staterooms of a 7,000-ton liner – the specially equipped Royal Mail Steamer **Hildebrand**.

When the island of Madeira disappears in the deep blues of the sea and sky, muslin dresses and white drill suits make their first appearance on the decks. Delightful days of rest and pleasure, deck sports and reading, are spent; interspersed with moonlit nights of concerts, dances and lectures. New friendships, new scenes, new thoughts – away from the bustle, hum and smoke of great cities.

The New World

From out of the tropical haze has appeared a low shore. It is the first glimpse of the mysterious Amazon which has already changed, with its outflow, the colour of the sea around from deep blue to pale yellow-green.

The Dining Saloon on board the ***Hildebrand***

Soon we are in the Para River, one of the mouths of the mighty Amazon, here nearly 200 miles broad but filled with forest-clad islands. Then the great ship, which has brought us across the Equator into the Southern Hemisphere, comes to a momentary rest for official visits from the authorities of the Port of Para – the gateway to the Amazon.

The **Hildebrand** penetrates further into the heartland of Brazil. The immense tropical forest is all around and natives in their dugout canoes cease paddling to gaze in awe at the huge vessel towering above their frail craft.

There is a great mystery in the Amazonian night. Scarcely has the sun disappeared in golden glory behind the interminable walls of the forest, before all around is plunged into darkness. Troops of howling monkeys hold a conversation before retiring. Sometimes the indigo vault is ablaze with the lightning from soundless electric storms.

The town of Obidos is passed during the night. Somewhere in this comparatively narrow section of the river the **Hildebrand** often passes a sister ship coming downstream. The occasion is one for saluting the house flag.

Two Giants

Some nine miles from Manaus the steamer leaves the main stream of the Amazon and enters the Rio Negro. The meeting of the waters of these two giants provides a scene of extraordinary interest. As its name implies, the Negro is comprised of blue-black water, and this forms huge dark patches and miniature whirlpools in the middle of the Amazonian flood. So distinct is the cleavage that the bows of the ship are floating in the dark water whilst the stern is still supported by the yellow of the Amazon proper.

There appears to be a certain rivalry between Para and Manaus as to which town shall give the more hearty welcome to those who cruise on the **Hildebrand**. For whereas Para welcomes the ship with rockets and shots fired in the air, Manaus sends a band onto the quay and residents appear *en masse* with cheers, spotlessly clean white suits, straw hats and immense bouquets of flowers.

It is easy to write lightly of this hearty welcome, but when one grips the hands of Englishmen in this isolated town, a thousand miles from civilisation – and yet, like an oasis in a desert, possessed of all modern conveniences such as electric light, trams, theatres, cafes and daily newspapers – there is a feeling of pride because English, Scots and Irishmen have had no small share in the achievement.

Manaus is a clean town and one is not afraid to eat its food or drink its water. No one could remain long on the ship, or be lonely in hospitable Manaus.

The leave-takings from this remote town are mingled with regret. There is a feeling of sadness as the end of the outward cruise is reached, at a distance of over 5,000 miles from Liverpool, and the **Hildebrand** turns her bows downstream.

The same course is followed on the homeward journey and time ashore is usually available at Para, Madeira, Lisbon and Oporto for completing the work of sightseeing. Fancy dress balls on the decorated decks, concerts in the music room and open-air dances lend enchantment to tropical nights.

When the **Hildebrand** returns to the broad and busy River Mersey, and this unique cruise is drawing to a close, the traveller will feel that he has been away in fairyland, so many and so unusual have been the sights, sounds and sensations. The Amazon is a river of mystery and provides food for thought and romance long after trips to other lands have faded from memory. ▌

THE CAPTURE OF THE 'ELSINORE' BY THE 'LEIPZIG'

compiled by LNRS Member P.Dunbavand

I read with interest the article about the ***Ortega*** *in 1914 by the late T.E. Edwardes which appeared in the September, 2006, 'Bulletin'. I have been researching into the local history of the 1914-1918 War through back copies of the 'Runcorn Weekly News'. I have come across the story of the capture of the* ***Elsinore****, whose captain was a local Widnes man, by the German cruiser* ***Leipzig****. This account complements the* ***Ortega*** *article.* p.d.

From Lloyd's Register, 1913:

ELSINORE Official Number: 135530 Signal Letters: J D Q H
Gross Tonnage: 6,542; Nett; 5,769 Length: 420·5ft, Breadth: 54·6ft.
Built by Swan Hunter & Wigham Richardson at Newcastle in 1913
Owned by The Bear Creek Oil and Shipping Co. Ltd. (Managers: C.T. Bowring & Co)

From the 'Runcorn Weekly News', Friday 29th May, 1914.

CAPTAIN STITCHES MAN'S THROAT

Mr W. Roberts, of 64 Frederick Street, Widnes, has just received news of a remarkable experience which befell his brother, Captain John Roberts, who is well known in Widnes. Captain Roberts was recently placed in command of the steamship **Elsinore**, which was built for the North Pacific coast trade. While the vessel was on her maiden voyage from Amsterdam to Seattle (Washington), a donkeyman named William Scott told the Captain that he believed he was going out of his mind. He was placed under supervision, but despite all precautions he eluded his guards and with a sharp instrument cut his throat from ear to ear.

The **Elsinore** did not carry a doctor, and although having only an elementary knowledge of surgery, Captain Roberts obtained the necessary materials and succeeded in sewing up the wound. The man was in a dangerous condition for some days, but eventually showed signs of recovery. On arrival at Seattle he was placed under the care of the British Consul for deportation.

From the 'Runcorn Weekly News', Friday, 5th June, 1914.

MORE ABOUT CAPTAIN JOHN ROBERTS

Captain John Roberts, master of the **Elsinore**, was born in West Bank, Widnes in 1874. At the age of 13 he was apprenticed to the Beaver Line of Liverpool, on the ss **Lake Erie**, and soon after made his first voyage.

In 1889 he passed his Mate's certificate at the Liverpool Nautical School, and joined the ss **Hermione**. Five years later he obtained his Master's certificate and joined the ss **Rosalind** as first mate for a three year cruise.

On his return he accepted the position of captain on Messrs Bowrings' ss **Comadre** for service between Hull and the Continent. Owing to some difficulty which arose when the boat sailed from Liverpool for Hull, Captain Roberts did not go with her. The **Comadre** put to sea and was never seen again.

Captain Roberts' present ship is the **Elsinore**, 6,542 gross tons, 435 feet in length and 55 feet beam, and is engaged on a three year oil-carrying charter in the North Pacific.

From the 'Runcorn Weekly News', Friday, 9th October, 1914

WIDNES CAPTAIN'S SHIP SUNK

TWENTY OF THE VESSEL'S CREW ABANDONED ON SMALL ISLAND

On Monday (5th October) the news was received in Widnes that the British steamer **Elsinore**, commanded by Captain John Roberts of Widnes, had been sunk in the Pacific by the German cruiser **Leipzig**.

The affair occurred on 11th September in the Gulf of California. Twenty of the **Elsinore's** crew were abandoned on a Galapagos island.

Mr W. Roberts of 64 Frederick Street, Widnes, brother of Captain Roberts, at once proceeded to Liverpool with the object of ascertaining if fuller details had been received at the shipping office. Here he received the pleasing news that Captain Roberts was among the rescued.

From the 'Runcorn Weekly News', Friday, 27th October, 1914

WIDNES CAPTAIN'S ADVENTURES

THE SINKING OF ss '**ELSINORE**'

The experiences of Captain John Roberts of Widnes, whose vessel the ss **Elsinore** was captured and sunk by the German cruiser **Leipzig**, provide interesting reading.

In an account of his adventures, as chronicled in the ship's log, Captain Roberts states that he left England on 10th December 1913, and loaded a cargo of creosote in Emden and Amsterdam for Seattle and Portland, Oregon, a distance between ports of 14,800 miles. The **Elsinore** had been converted from coal to oil fuel, which was to prove a great disappointment to her captors. At San Francisco the **Elsinore** was chartered by the Union Oil Company of California to trade to Chile, Peru and Central American ports.

The Capture

"On 11th September 1914," reports Captain Roberts, "at 2.15am, the second officer reported to me that he saw smoke on the port bow, and I at once went to the bridge. At 2.30am the other ship had a searchlight full on us. The weather was fresh, with south-west wind and heavy rain. I put the engines on 'stand-by'. Then the other vessel sent a Morse message in a foreign language which I failed to understand. He immediately fired across my bows and I stopped my ship and hove her to. At 3.15am a boat came alongside with 25 officers and men, all fully armed. The other ship proved to be the fast German cruiser **Leipzig**.

"I may mention that I had been navigating with reduced light, my stern light and main head light being out, and a careful look-out had been kept. The officers and half the boat's crew from the **Leipzig** came on board, well armed. The senior officer informed me that his commander had sent him on board to inform me that my steamer was seized and that I was a prisoner.

"He then demanded all my ship's papers, including the Register, the crew agreement, the official log book and the officer's log book. He asked me for a full

statement regarding all my stores and bunker coal, and seemed very disappointed when I told him that I was burning oil fuel, and had only 35 tons of coal for cooking purposes.

German Orders

"I was next ordered into the boat and proceeded on board the **Leipzig** at 3.30am, and on arrival on board the commander informed me that I was his prisoner, and that I was to steer N 62° E for sixty miles and to have all my boats provisioned. When he gave the signal we all had to leave the ship. He informed me that after we had left the ship he would destroy her. I asked him for what reason he was going to destroy a fine new steamer that had no contraband on board, but only water ballast. He replied that the British were doing the same in the Atlantic. He then sent me back on board the **Elsinore**.

"At 5.30am the **Leipzig** signalled by Morse lamp that I should alter course to S 15° E, and again at 9.25am he instructed me to steer S 45° E. Then I began to get very anxious, wondering when we had to leave, as I was at this time fifty miles from land. At 10.30am a cargo steamer was sighted ahead, which I mistook for a poor unfortunate like myself, for after a short time the ship turned round and appeared to be 'running away', but in fact, as I later found out, he was only manoeuvring and obeying orders from the **Leipzig**.

How the cruiser coaled

"This ship (the **Marie**) turned out to be a German ship supplying the **Leipzig** with coal and the meeting had been pre-arranged. At 11.15am the cruiser signalled me to heave-to. Shortly afterwards I was again signalled and ordered to proceed, with my crew, on board the **Marie**. We were given two hours to leave the **Elsinore** and instructed to take eight days' provisions with us.

As we were preparing to leave, several of the officers and crew from the **Leipzig**, all armed, came on board my ship and commenced to ransack her and take away all the stores they could get for their own use.

We transferred to the **Marie** in our lifeboats and afterwards these were hoisted into the **Marie's** own davits. At 1.10pm the **Leipzig**, at about a mile distant, commenced firing on the **Elsinore**. The sight was too heartbreaking for me to watch and so I kept to my room. My officers informed me that they put twelve shots into her which set her on fire and she went down stern first. Before this happened, the **Marie** was ordered to proceed at full speed."

Captain Roberts then related how the **Marie**, closely guarded by the **Leipzig**, proceeded with lights out at night. Several hundred bags of coal were transferred to the cruiser, with the **Elsinore's** crew assisting on board the **Marie**.

On 17th September the two ships anchored off Albemarle Island, and the cruiser's commander told Captain Roberts that he would land them at Callao and expressed regret, as a sailor, for having to destroy the **Elsinore**. On the 19th September they arrived at Hood Island (Isla Española) in the Galapagos group. Here the cruiser left them and proceeded to Chatham Island, some 30 miles to the north. On his return the **Leipzig's** commander sent for Captain Roberts and informed him that he would not be able to land him and his crew at Callao, but had made arrangements at Chatham Island for their accommodation. The cruiser seemed anxious to be on her way.

On learning of these plans the **Elsinore's** crew expressed their dissatisfaction and their armed guard, which had been present since they had boarded the **Marie**, was doubled. On 21st September all the crew were landed on Chatham Island and lodged in a disused store shed.

In Search of Provisions

"Chatham Island," continues Captain Roberts' report, "belongs to Ecuador and is used as a convict settlement. I arranged with the two officers and the engineers to remain with the crew and to keep them in order. The chief officer, chief engineer and second engineer rode on horseback to a settlement some six miles inland which turned out to be a sugar and coffee plantation. Even here we had great difficulty in procuring food and beds, and the crew fared very badly as provisions were scarce and had to be carefully watched. After much difficulty over the inadequacy of the sleeping accommodation my crew seemed to be getting very disgruntled, for they had up to the present borne the hardships bravely.

"On 26th September I made arrangements with the Governor of the island (Mr Aray) to take me and half my crew to Ecuador in a small sloop of 50 tons burden, as this proved to be the only means of getting away.

"The distance to Guayaquil is about 650 miles, so Mr Aray provisioned the sloop accordingly. At the time she had half a cargo of hides and dried fish and ordinarily would not have sailed for ten days, having only just arrived at Chatham from the other islands. The German cruiser never figured on my being assisted in this way, as it had been the intention to keep me from cabling the loss of the **Elsinore** for as long as possible. So after no small trouble I picked out the half of my crew that was to accompany me on what turned out to be one of the most monotonous and hardest few days at sea that I have ever experienced. The accommodation for the crew was in the hold, to sleep on top of the hides and fish. The smell at times was something terrible."

On 1st October, Captain Roberts and half of his crew, arrived at Guayaquil and made their way to Panama. At Colon they secured a passage in one of Messrs Elders & Fyffes fruit boats and arrived in Bristol on Monday 23rd November, 1914.

LNRS Vice-President Captain Graeme Cubbin comments:

"Had the capture of the **Elsinore** taken place in the Gulf of California, the courses the captain was ordered to steer would have soon had the ship ashore on the coast of Mexico! '*British Vessels Lost at Sea 1914-1918*' gives the position as 80 miles SW by W (236°) from Cape Corrientes, which is a good way south of the Gulf."

THE MONDAY FACILITY

Members' access to the Archives and Library on Mondays at the Merseyside Maritime Museum continues as follows.

All Members of the Society are invited to make use of this unique facility.

JUNE : Mondays 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th.
JULY : Mondays 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th.
AUGUST : Mondays 6th, 13th and 20th.
SEPTEMBER : Mondays 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th.

OBITUARY

CAPTAIN JOHN TEMPLE

The death of the former Liverpool pilot, Captain John Temple, after a six-month battle with cancer, robs not only the North West, but the entire country of a dynamic force in ship preservation who led from the front.

John was one of the dwindling but dedicated band of volunteer ex-seamen determined to keep the Mersey's unsurpassed maritime heritage active and relevant. 'JT' was instrumental in the preservation of three key local vessels: the Liverpool No.2 pilot cutter **Edmund Gardner**, the tug **Brocklebank** and the coaster **Wincham**.

Not content with merely restoring the **Brocklebank**, Captain Temple sailed this robust Mersey tug around the UK and Ireland. With his dedicated volunteer crew, they were fantastic ambassadors for the Merseyside Maritime Museum and this much-maligned area. John was hugely proud that the **Brocklebank**, under his command, represented Liverpool at the last Spithead Royal Review, following in the wake of the hallowed ghosts of Liverpool's great liners.

If ever salt water ran in anyone's veins, it was John Temple. The son of a Liverpool police inspector, he was brought up in Knotty Ash and educated at Holt High School, Wavertree. Recalling 'messing about in boats' on the River Dee whilst a youngster, John was a member of West Derby Sea Cadets, and an Able Seaman by the age of 16, winning the Liverpool Whaler Cup for rowing in 1956.

In that year he began his sea-going career with the Federal Steam Navigation Company on the New Zealand run. He subsequently joined the Liverpool Pilotage Service and qualified in 1964, finally becoming a senior first-class pilot in 1973. As appropriated Pilot to the Atlantic Container Line from 1988, he piloted some 1,000 movements of these giant vessels.

One of his finest duties was piloting the **Queen Elizabeth 2** (commanded by his friend Captain Robin Woodall of Hoylake) on her inaugural visit to the Mersey, commemorating the Cunard Line's 150th anniversary in 1990

With a matchless maritime knowledge, John Temple advised not only organisations like British Waterways, but also embryonic preservation projects such as HMS **Whimbrel** and TSS **Manxman**. He will be sorely missed.

CAPTAIN JOHN TEMPLE – Liverpool Pilot and ship preservationist

born 26th March, 1940, died 22nd January, 2007

p.e.

MEMORIES OF THE '*EDMUND GARDNER*'

by Alun Pari Huws

Mike Stammer's interesting article in *Ships Monthly* (March 2004) about the 50th birthday of the Liverpool Pilot cutter **Edmund Gardner** reminded me that it was exactly thirty years since I had the privilege of spending two weeks aboard the vessel in 1974. I did not appreciate that it was a privilege at the time nor that I was, albeit very briefly, to be witness to a way of life that would disappear within a very short space of time.

I had just completed my 'O' Levels and turned 16. My father, Captain Gwyn Pari Huws, was at that time the Marine Operations Manager with Ocean Transport and Trading, and a member of the Liverpool Pilotage Authority as a shipowner's representative. He enquired about vacational work, and secured two weeks' employment for me as a relief mess boy aboard the pilot cutters prior to our annual family holiday in Anglesey.

The passage of time has erased names and exact dates, but not the experience, and whilst the posting was very much of a temporary nature and a working holiday, I hope that the recollections which follow may be of some interest to readers.

Joining

I joined the **Edmund Gardner** on a Friday, which was 'change day', having spent the previous day with the ship's bosun checking stores at the rear of the Pilotage Service's headquarters in Salthouse Dock, now part of the Maritime Museum where the **Edmund Gardner** is permanently exhibited. I had little idea of what was expected of me, and cannot recall how I made my way to Collingwood Dock along with my kit, where the ship was moored. I do recall that I somewhat presumptuously took a cap! This had been a gift from an old family friend, Captain R.L. Jones, then very recently retired as a master with the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board.

In 1974 there were three working cutters: the **Edmund Gardner**, the Sir **Thomas Brocklebank** and the **Arnet Robinson**. They worked two weeks on duty and one week off, with one cutter being stationed at the Bar, and one off Point Lynas, Anglesey. I think that my father had hoped that I would experience at least one of my two weeks' posting at Point Lynas, but it was not to be for the **Edmund Gardner** was to spend that particular two weeks on Liverpool Bar.

Getting my bearings

To me, at the age of 16, and despite my experience aboard ocean-going ships in the company of my father whilst they were in Liverpool docks, the **Edmund Gardner** seemed large and it took a little while for me to get my bearings. It seemed that the ship was in two halves, with the pantry creating a divide. Forward were the pilots' dining room and television lounge. Above this were the masters' cabins and the pilots' ante room, and above this again, the bridge. Below the main deck forward were the pilots' cabins.

Adjacent to the pantry was a short alleyway across the ship connecting the two companionways which ran down the length of the after part of the ship, separated for the most part by the engine room space. The crew and the apprentices were berthed aft. Either side of the main deck were the boarding stations from where the pilots would board the working boats or 'punts' that would take them to vessels requiring a pilot. On the starboard side were the cabins for the engineers and greasers, along with their 'heads' and a drying room. There was also a small messroom for the greasers. On the port side was the pantry and cold store, abaft this the galley and then cabins for the mess boys, cook and steward. There was also a small messroom for the catering staff. Behind the engine room space the companionways joined up and there were two shower cubicles, although I seem to recall that one was always full of vegetables!

Aft of the mess boys' cabins was a doorway leading to the apprentices' 'heads' and washroom and two ladders leading to the lower deck, one to the apprentices' accommodation and the other to their messroom, which included an oven to keep food hot. The apprentices' accommodation was immediately above the steering gear and the propeller shaft, so that when the ship was underway, the whole area vibrated noisily.

I saw little of the pilots' accommodation, although I do recall one occasion when the mate secured agreement for the apprentices to watch television. This was then a rare treat!

Manning

The **Edmund Gardner** had two functions. First and foremost she was a working pilot cutter to provide pilots to ships entering the port of Liverpool and approaching from the north, and also to pick up the pilots from outward bound vessels. Launches from Liverpool supplied pilots to the cutter stationed at the Bar, and it was the success of these launches with their significantly reduced running expenses and ability to cope with heavy weather which ultimately led to the demise of the cutters.

The second function of the cutters was as training ships for apprentice pilots. I believe that the apprenticeship lasted seven years, two or three of which were spent at sea in foreign-going vessels, enabling the apprentices to obtain their second mate's certificate of competency, which was a requirement of the pilotage authority. The rest of their time was spent aboard the cutters, working the punts and learning the intricacies of passages in and out of Liverpool in all states of tide and weather.

The **Edmund Gardner** carried two masters, both senior pilots. The two most senior apprentices or 'senior hands' acted as first and second mates, working four hours on and four hours off. A third hand acted as bosun and it was his responsibility to maintain the ship in good working order and to supervise the remaining apprentices (or 'boat hands') under the direction of the mates. The bosun probably had the heaviest job on the ship. He was also part of a team of three apprentices working four hours on, and four hours off, which was responsible, when required, for collecting pilots from outward bound ships, or taking pilots to arriving ships. One apprentice would man the punt davit winch and two apprentices the punt itself, one acting as coxswain and the other as bowman. During my two-week stint, the ship was one apprentice short, so the five most junior apprentices took it in turns to spend 24 hours working eight hours on and four hours off.

The catering department consisted principally of a cook and a steward and they both had 'boy' assistants. Additionally there were two messboys, one for the apprentices and one for the engineers and greasers. I was the apprentices' messboy and my duties were to take prepared food down to the apprentices' quarters, keep it hot and to serve it when directed by the senior hand present. Watch changes meant that there was always one late arrival. I would then clear up, wash the dishes and empty the gash bucket of waste. It was also incumbent on me to keep the mess room clean and tidy. Apart from this I helped the cook's boy with meal preparation and many hours were spent peeling potatoes!

When I sailed on the **Edmund Gardner**, I don't think there was an engineers' mess boy. One joined during my second week, but he jumped aboard the launch after two days, despite the protestations of the master, and advised that he was going home!

The engineering department consisted of two certificated engineers and two greasers. I think they worked six hours on and six hours off.

There was no shortage of food with at least two square meals a day, albeit of plain fare by today's standards, and with a full English breakfast every day. I was fascinated by the cook's ability to cook almost anything on top of his range without the need for any pans. The evening fare occasionally included a savoury cake known by the apprentices as a 'gut rotter'!

Working

There was an opportunity for me to spend time with the apprentices because I took an interest in the working of the ship. I was fortunate enough to be allowed to spend time on the bridge, including night watches, and observe the mate's duties. These were mainly to listen to and attend to the radio, keep the log and a lookout, correct charts and keep the ship in position on her station at the Bar. This would involve using the engines for a short while periodically to move the ship back into her correct position. This action was taken by the mates using their own initiative. I spent many short spells at the wheel. Only at the end my two weeks did one of the mates realise that I had accumulated enough time, had it been recorded, to grant me a Helmsman's Certificate of Competency!

Some deck work involved all hands and I recall most of the contents of the steering gear compartment being emptied of rope and assorted odds and ends of accumulated gear being sorted out. I also recall that the bulb in the floodlight halfway up the mainmast had blown and I rashly volunteered to change it under the watchful eye of one of the senior pilots.

Working the punt or making a rendezvous with one of the launches would bring the duty master to the bridge. On one occasion I was allowed on the wheel when a launch was coming alongside and was given the order 'hard a port'. After a few minutes I thought he had forgotten to correct the order and so started easing the wheel back towards 'midships'. The master came in from the bridge wing demanding to know just what was going on. The mate was given a dressing down at not having noticed my action and the launch's coxswain was puzzled by the **Edmund Gardner's** slow down in turn. The master made me look at the ship's foremast. *"What's that"*, he said, pointing to the top of the mast. *"The cross-trees"*, I said meekly. *"Yardarm,"*

said the master, *"that's where we do our hangings."* He eventually disappeared down the ladder from the bridge at which point I said to the mate *"is he really that mad with me?" "Is he what?"* came a curt voice from the bottom of the ladder!

Weather

My two weeks on the **Edmund Gardner** had contrasting weather. For the whole of the first week it was miserable, wet and uncomfortable with a near gale blowing much of the time – at least that is my recollection – in reality it was probably no more than a force 4, but it made the carrying of food-laden trays aft from the galley, through doors and down ladders a challenge for a novice mess boy.

The second week was fine and clear and it was uncomfortably hot below deck at times especially, of course, around the galley. The apprentices and other crew members took up fishing. Mackerel was the catch of the day and the bait consisted of pieces cut from the pint-sized cartons of UHT milk. These were silver inside and served their purpose well.

Time spent on the bridge during this week was most pleasurable, particularly during the late evening when the whole coastline from Llandudno to Cumbria would be lit by the setting sun, with the Liverpool skyline visible from the Bar. The good weather brought an opportunity for the apprentices to go swimming – under the watchful eye of one of the masters. Having declined the chance to swim, I was thrown in fully clothed anyway!

At the end of my two weeks we returned to Liverpool on another beautiful day. I asked the mate if there was anything I could do. I was told that all the fire valves on deck needed to be emptied. Talk about naïve! There were a number of these valves to which hoses would be attached in the event of fire. I complied with the order. Water was running all over the boat deck and main deck aft. One of the greasers, his face defining his job, appeared on deck blinking in the bright sunshine – I don't think I had seen the man on deck before. He asked me what I was doing, prompted, presumably, by the noise. I explained to him at some length, although his apparent yet unsurprising deafness meant that I thought him to be lip-reading. He shook his head in disbelief and looked up at the mate, once again standing on the bridge wing laughing. Somewhat sheepishly, I turned off the valves.

Discharge

After I had signed off the **Edmund Gardner** at the end of my two weeks, I went to the pay office at the Dock Board building at the Pier Head. My payslips have, regrettably, long gone, but I think I was paid £36 for my two weeks. This included holiday pay granted by a generous pay clerk, a small fortune to me at the time, and my first proper pay of any kind.

It was some years before I realised that my brief experience on board the **Edmund Gardner** was worth far more than £36. ▌

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THE '*LUSITANIA*' TAKES THE 'BLUE RIBAND'

from contemporary newspaper reports

Exactly one hundred years ago the new Cunard liner **Lusitania** left the Clydebank yard of John Brown & Co., and sailed on her trials on 29th June, 1907. She left Liverpool on her maiden voyage on 7th September 1907 for New York under the command of Captain James Watt. Three weeks later, on her second westbound crossing, she took the Atlantic record from Norddeutcher Lloyd's **Kaiser Wilhelm II**, with a passage from Queenstown (Cobh) to Sandy Hook of 4 days, 19 hours and 52 minutes at an average speed of 23·99 knots. Great Britain was to hold on to the record for the next 22 years. The following accounts are extracted from contemporary newspaper reports:

from the 'Liverpool Mercury', 5th July 1907:

A brief reference was made in these columns last week to the trial trip of the new **Lusitania**. The results obtained on the official trials have now been made public. The vessel made a mean speed of 26·45 knots during two runs over a course 59 miles long between the Wigtownshire coast and the Isle of Man, the 25 boilers being under normal pressure.

A 48-hour run was then made at full speed with a mean draught of water of 32ft 9in, at which the displacement was 37,000 tons. The first run between Wigtownshire and Land's End, a distance of 303 miles, was begun almost exactly at midnight and was completed before noon the next day. On the return the mean speed was 24·3 knots, or an average for the 25 hours steaming of 25·35 knots.

The following day the **Lusitania** covered the same course within two minutes of the previous day's trial, the outward and returning speeds being 26·3 and 24·6 knots respectively.

The results of all the trials were considered eminently satisfactory, and, with the exception of a certain amount of vibration, no criticisms whatever could be made of the vessel or her machinery. The improved engine room conditions resulting from the adoption of turbines on such a large scale were especially noteworthy.

from the 'Liverpool Echo' of 2nd August 1907:

NEW YORK HARBOUR APPROACHES
Opening of the New Ambrose Channel

Doubt has been expressed as to the present suitability of the harbour approaches to New York for the navigation of either of the new Cunard turbine steamers, with a draft of water unequalled by any other steamers afloat, but all misgivings have been set at rest by cable advices from New York. A message just received states that the Cunard liner **Caronia**, which left New York yesterday for Liverpool, was the first vessel of her size to use the new Ambrose Channel, which has been especially prepared and deepened in view of the approaching voyage of the Cunard turbine steamer **Lusitania**. The passage of the **Caronia** demonstrates the

navigability of the new Channel by vessels of the very largest type. At its narrowest point this Channel is 1,000 feet wide, and has a least depth of 40 feet. It provides a straight course through New York Bay, instead of the older and more circuitous and shallower channel formerly in use.

The old channel will still be used by the smaller classes of vessel, while the new Channel will be reserved for Atlantic liners of the very largest class, including the **Lusitania** and **Mauretania**.

The new channel was named after John Wolf Ambrose. He was an immigrant whose success as a contractor in Brooklyn was coupled with a vital concern for New York's waterfront. At the seaward end of the new channel there is a red-painted lightship with 'Ambrose' in white lettering on both sides. j.s.

from the 'Liverpool Mercury' of Monday 4th November, 1907:

THE SAILING OF THE 'LUSITANIA'
Third round voyage - over 2,000 passengers
Record Gold Shipment of £2,500,000

The Cunard Royal Mail Steamer **Lusitania** left the Princes Landing Stage shortly after seven o'clock on Saturday evening (*2nd November*) for New York amid the best wishes of numbers of people who congregated on the Stage and the Pier Head. The vessel presented a magnificent appearance, her electric lights beautifully illuminating the great vessel, and adding splendour to the scene.

The **Lusitania** was opposite the Princes Landing Stage in the morning, and attracted considerable attention. The third-class passengers went on board by tender, and the scene when they embarked was very animated. There were hundreds of British emigrants of the industrial and artisan classes. They were mostly young men and women and those in the prime of life. Numerous friends were present for the purpose of seeing them off.

Late in the afternoon the leviathan came alongside the Stage to embark cabin passengers. Special trains from London to Riverside Station brought about 300, and also 1,000 boxes or packages of luggage which were very expeditiously got on board.

The **Lusitania** also took out £2,500,000 worth if bullion to relieve the present scarcity of gold in New York. This is one of the largest cargoes of specie ever sent out of this country, and exceeds the previous record by a quarter of a million. The specie mainly consisted of gold coinage – sovereigns and dollars – and there were also gold bars. The bulk of it, in about 256 boxes, arrived at Lime Street Station, but at Riverside Station seventy-eight boxes of gold came by one of the special passenger trains. The total consignment placed on board in the specie room weighed about twenty tons. There were very few people aware when the boxes were on the landing stage prior to being taken on board that they contained gold of such enormous value.

THE *'LUSITANIA'* AT QUEENSTOWN : *Sunday, 3rd November, 1907*

The **Lusitania** had an uneventful trip from Liverpool, the sea being a bit lumpy and the atmosphere rather misty. Owing to these conditions no effort was made

to push her speed in any way, but at intervals during the passage, when the weather was somewhat clearer, her steaming was fully up to twenty-four knots. The **Lusitania** arrived off Roche's Point at 7.16am when she was promptly boarded by Mr Thomas Martin, the Cunard pilot, who for a quarter of a century has piloted the Cunard steamers in and out of the harbour without accident of any kind. Although it was within an hour of dead low water, Pilot Martin brought the vessel safely into the inner harbour. The **Lusitania** embarked mails and 250 passengers. A considerable number had to be left over for the next Cunard ship as the **Lusitania** was full in all departments. The **Lusitania** sailed for New York at 11.05am, the mails having been sixty-five minutes late.

from the 'Liverpool Echo' of Friday, 8th November, 1907:

THE 'LUSITANIA' – ARRIVAL AT NEW YORK
All Records Broken
Splendid Steaming in a Gale

A Reuter's telegram from New York received this morning states that the new Cunard liner **Lusitania**, which left Liverpool last Saturday evening on her third westward voyage across the Atlantic passed Sandy Hook lightship at 1.40am today, Friday 8th November. (American time).

The telegram goes on to say that the liner did the last lap in the teeth of a south-westerly gale. It is estimated that she has broken her own previous record by somewhat less than an hour. The last day's run was 610 nautical miles.

An earlier message states that the **Lusitania** passed Fire Island at 11.30pm last night. Fire Island is thirty miles from the Sandy Hook lightship, which in turn is twenty-four miles from New York.

According to a Central News New York correspondent, the time occupied by the **Lusitania** on this voyage is given unofficially as 4 days, 19 hours, 10 minutes.

However, the Cunard company issued the following from its Liverpool office this morning: *'The **Lusitania** has made the passage from Daunt's Rock* (off Queenstown) *to Sandy Hook in 4 days, 18 hours and 40 minutes. The average speed was 24·25* knots, which is a new record for the passage'.

Previous Voyages

On her previous (second) westbound voyage the liner reached Sandy Hook Lightship at 1.17am on the Friday morning, and the time of the ocean passage as given in her own log was 4 days, 19 hours and 52 minutes.

On her first (maiden) voyage, the Sandy Hook Lightship was not reached until 8.05am on the Friday morning, the passage taking 5 days and 54 minutes.

Delayed by hurricane

The New York correspondent of the *'Morning Leader'*, in a message yesterday, Thursday 7th November, said: 'In spite of the confident prediction that the **Lusitania** would lower her own record by arriving at Sandy Hook tonight, the hurricane now blowing along the whole length of the Atlantic Coast is making such a performance virtually impossible. On Wednesday afternoon she was two hours ahead of the figures established on her last westward voyage, but up to five o'clock on

Thursday no further wireless messages had been received from the liner. Signor Marconi sent a telegram from Glace Bay saying that the storm had partly wrecked his apparatus.

'The comment is being made here that it seems futile to make herculean efforts to rush a liner across the ocean in order to arrive at midnight, and then have to anchor outside the Bar until daylight. If a vessel is to make a practice of landing her passengers on Thursday evening, then she must alter the hour of her departure and leave Liverpool on the Saturday forenoon.'

Liner's Precious Cargo

Cabling on Thursday 7th November, the New York correspondent of the '*Daily Telegraph*' said: 'According to wireless messages yesterday there was a good chance of the **Lusitania** establishing yet another westbound record, but since then the weather has been disappointing. Mrs Patrick Campbell, according to one Marconigram, is on board and she has promised to distribute £100 amongst the stokers if the Cunarder reaches New York before midnight.

'At a concert on Wednesday night, presided over by the Austro-Hungarian minister to the United States, Mrs Patrick Campbell and Miss Julia Marlowe gave their services!

'The **Lusitania** brings £2,500,000 in gold to relieve our money crisis, and her arrival, like other gold-bearing liners, is eagerly awaited here. In the absence of money, last Saturday, many working people received their wages in cheques, and the tradesmen just now don't like cheques.'.

The '*Daily Telegraph*' correspondent went on to say that he had boarded the White Star liner **Teutonic** on the morning of 7th November on her arrival at New York after a passage from Queenstown of 6 days and 10 hours. The **Teutonic** reported the Atlantic weather for the crossing as moderate, with north-westerly gales and rough head seas on Sunday and Monday. Her officers thought the conditions decidedly against the **Lusitania** making another record passage. The **Teutonic**, which is reckoned to be a fast ship, made a maximum day's run of 450 miles on Tuesday, as compared with the **Lusitania's** 618 on the same day, which established another world record for a day's steaming.

Owing to the large number of applications to view the **Lusitania** at New York, the Cunard Line commenced charging two shillings a head for admission. All proceeds were to be devoted to seamen's charities.

Cunard issued the following statement, giving the details of the **Lusitania's** third westbound run:

Departure Daunt's Rock on Sun.3rd November to noon:	21 nautical miles
Noon Sunday to noon on Monday 4th November	606 nautical miles
Noon Monday to noon on Tuesday 5th November	616 nautical miles
Noon Tuesday to noon on Wednesday 6th November	618 nautical miles
Noon Wednesday to noon on Thursday 7th November	610 nautical miles
Noon Thursday to arrival Sandy Hook Lightship	310 nautical miles

Average speed for the entire passage : 24·25 knots

Time occupied on passage : 4 days, 18 hours, 40 minutes

This constitutes a new record for average speed and for the time in crossing

MASTER OF THE '*PERSEUS*'

by John Fletcher

In the March 'Bulletin' John Fletcher described his first voyage as a midshipman with the Blue Funnel Line on board the ***Calchas****. In this article John describes how he unexpectedly had to take charge of the* ***Perseus****.*

Once you have set your sights on achieving command in a regular cargo liner company like Blue Funnel, it is usually a long haul getting there. Five years or so as second mate are followed by 12 or 13 years as mate and then the day finally arrives when you are invited to lunch with the managers in head office, given a glass of sherry and addressed by your new title.

Dreams of this sort sustain you through the years and for me it was just coming within reach, although when it happened the circumstances were slightly different.

I had been mate for 12 years and was serving in the **Perseus**, a ship in which I had had previous spells as third mate and second mate. She sailed along with the 'H'-class ships on the Australia run and was considered a prestigious appointment.

I can well recall being given a 'pep' talk by Brian Heathcote, head of the midshipmen's department, when I was appointed senior midshipman in the old coal-burning **Machaon**. He told us that of the many young lads who joined the company as apprentices, only one in a hundred ever achieved command and while I thought he was inclined to exaggerate, over the years I had seen his words come true.

There was a pretty standard pattern. Apart from the odd few who, after four years, decided that a life at sea was not for them, most finished their time and sat for their second mate's certificate. The ultimate goal, foreign-going master, was still a long way ahead and before achieving that pinnacle most of them got married and began to think of shore jobs.

Lloyd's List and *The Journal of Commerce* were avidly perused for advertisements for jobs as dockmasters, pilots, harbourmasters and wharfingers. My own avowed intention of reaching the goal I had set myself from my earliest years had cost me a broken marriage. Now that my goal was in sight and having settled into the **Perseus**, I felt happy to stay there until taken out for promotion. She was indeed a happy ship with most of the crowd signing on for voyage after voyage. The bosun, a Welshman, had been with her from the builder's yard and was a third generation Blue Funnel petty officer. The master, Captain Claude Goodman, was that rarity in itself, a living legend in his own lifetime. Florid-faced with white bushy eyebrows and silver hair, he was beloved by all on board.

We were at Hong Kong outward, and on the run up from Singapore he hadn't seemed his usual self – still as affable as ever but somewhat withdrawn as if he had something on his mind. However, shortly after we berthed he received a visit from an old friend and appeared to put aside whatever it was that was bothering him. After breakfast on our second morning in port I went to see him to make my usual report on the ship and the discharging, and then asked if it would be all right for me to go ashore to have lunch with an old shipmate.

This was a lad who had been third mate in the **Glenorchy** when I was second mate there. He had sat successfully for his extra-master's certificate and following this had joined a firm of nautical surveyors and had a promising future ahead of him. Thus a little after 11.am, having put the second mate fully in the picture as to the cargo work, I left the **Perseus** to keep my appointment.

It was a most enjoyable session and it was a little later than I had anticipated when I returned aboard and found the second mate waiting for me at the head of the gangway. He looked unusually serious and my immediate thought was that something had gone wrong with the discharging. *"No, nothing wrong there,"* he assured me, *"but the Captain wants to see you. Told me to be sure to catch you as soon as you came aboard."*

I hurried to the master's accommodation, was bidden to enter and received my first shock when I stepped inside for Captain Goodman was dressed in his shore-going clothes and was surrounded by suitcases. *"I'm going to hospital, John,"* he said. *"The agent has been on to India Buildings, and they've agreed verbally to your assuming command. I expect he'll have a telex confirming this when he comes down to take me to hospital."* Gradually he told me the whole story. How he had felt off colour in Singapore and worse during the passage to Hong Kong, and had finally decided to see a doctor. In fact he had done so shortly after I had left the ship earlier in the day. Now it seemed an operation was imperative.

To say that I was shocked is an understatement and I was still trying to come to grips with the situation when the agent arrived, bringing with him a telex from the owners confirming my appointment as acting master. News of Captain Goodman's sudden departure quickly spread round the ship and all hands were milling about the gangway to see him off and wish him luck. In all my years at sea I'd never seen anything quite like it. It seemed as if an era had ended, as indeed in some ways it had.

Shipboard routine had to continue, however, and cargo work being completed shortly after six the next morning, the ship was secured for sea. The pilot boarded a little before eight o'clock and we cast off and steamed clear of the wharf. The pilot disembarked once we were through Lei Mun Pass and soon we were clear of the harbour with Wanglan dead astern and set a course along the South China coast for the southern end of the Formosa Strait.

Normally our next port would have been Kobe but on this trip we were to make a call at Keelung. We only had a small parcel of cargo to discharge there and it would be more of a nuisance call than anything else, but freight paid our wages and no cargo, however small, could be overlooked.

A little after noon saw us altering course to pass through the strait itself and with no more shipping about other than the odd junk inshore, we looked set for a fair passage as we shaped a NNE'ly course. After lunch I decided to get my head down for a couple of hours but my anticipation of a fair passage proved to be all too premature and a whistle down the voice pipe had me back up on the bridge to find the ship in thick fog.

The radar screen showed us to be clear of shipping but it didn't stay that way for long and by four o'clock the radar was so thick with echoes that they looked like confetti, and they were not ships like ourselves steaming on a mid-channel course. For the most part they appeared to be trawlers; single junks working from the China coast

on the port side and steam trawlers working in pairs from the Formosan side, a fact which was confirmed a little later when the fog cleared to give a visual sighting. It was a brief clearance, however, and before long it was as thick as ever with junks and trawlers crowding in on both sides.

I was still huddled over the radar screen at midnight and while there was no sign of the fog letting up, we now had another problem. The west coast of Formosa has but few lighthouses and there had been no sign of the main light we expected to see. There was nothing for it but to head inshore and look for the land, which is just what we did. Fortunately, our radar was a good one, the coast we were looking for was steep and there were no intervening shoals.

It was a gamble, decidedly, but better than going on dead reckoning which, with several hours spent dodging trawlers, was quite likely to be in error, and it was a gamble which paid off with the coast showing up on the radar as a faint echo at first and hardening until we were able to get a definite fix. A minor adjustment was necessary for the course and once that had been done I was able to work out some sort of amended ETA for Keelung.

I drafted a signal to the agency at Keelung telling them that we were in thick fog, gave out ETA as 18.00hrs the next day and asked if the pilots worked all night. It was so long since I or anyone else on board had been to Keelung that no one had any definite information and the pilot book wasn't much help either. Formosa was still very much on a war footing and while with each passing year Chiang Kai Shek's chance of invading Communist China seemed less and less viable, his nationalist army was still claiming that it would do so.

Morning brought no lifting of the fog but it did bring a response from the Keelung agents to say that the pilotage service ceased at 18.00hrs, but if we could arrive by then, the pilot would take us in. So, we went on as before, the air echoing to the regular blasts on our fog horn, and trawlers slipping quietly down each side as we wended our way through them, but at least we had few navigational problems as the coastline was well defined and showed up sharply on our radar screen.

We were making steady progress and unless something unforeseen occurred we should be well within our ETA. It was tiring work, though, constantly focusing on the radar screen and my eyes were becoming increasingly weary. By 17.45 we were no more than three miles from the entrance to Keelung harbour, and proceeding at slow speed through fog which seemed, and indeed was, thicker than ever. The deadline time for the pilot was getting nearer and although I reckoned we would be all right up to 18.30 it was becoming chancier with each passing minute as we crept towards the entrance.

A large bluff point seemed to form the main part of the harbour entrance, it was very solid and apparently steep-to and the echo sounder was showing no signs of shoals. All therefore seemed safe on that score and yet I longed for a glimpse of the harbour entrance. By 18.15 the bluff was looming larger on the radar and was no more than a mile away. It was looking increasingly likely that we should have to anchor for the night when we located the harbour entrance right ahead and the most welcome sight of a pilot cutter just easing round the breakwater. Far more ominous was the sight of two ships piled up on the beach on either side of the entrance, and they didn't appear to have been there long either! Whatever forbidding thoughts such a scene

might have aroused, however, were pushed aside by the far more welcome knowledge that the **Perseus** had come safely through thirty hours of thick fog and was about to enter harbour where everyone could sleep for the night without let or hindrance.

The pilot was soon aboard and manoeuvred us through the outer harbour which seemed to be full of vintage warships and an odd assortment of landing craft. I asked him if this was the Nationalist invasion force and he assured me that it was, and was both ready and raring to go! By 19.00 the ship was secured alongside and shortly after, in the traditional manner of ships the world over, cargo was being swung out of the hatches and on to the wharf.

The ship was battened down and ready for sea again next morning and the pilot was aboard at eight. The wind had freshened considerably during the night and was now blowing a gale. It didn't affect us much in the harbour but it was evident that as soon as she was out in the open sea, the **Perseus** would be shipping water, so with this in mind I passed the word to the fo'c'sle to stow the mooring ropes as soon as we had cast off. This was soon done and we were moving slowly down the inner harbour when the pilot asked to use the toilet.

"Just keep her going as she is, captain," he said as he left the bridge with a midshipman to show him the way. We were nearing the end of the inner harbour and he still hadn't returned so I took the **Perseus**, into the outer harbour, the one full of warships, and put the engines to 'dead slow'. There was no point in moving through all those warships at a rate of knots. As I looked at them I pondered again whether they would ever fire a shot in anger.

The harbour entrance was within sight as the pilot came back with profuse apologies for taking so long and with his re-appearance the pilot cutter began to edge alongside. *"A bit early to have your boat alongside, isn't it?"* I commented to the pilot, and was rather startled when he told me that he would be departing as soon as possible. *"Too rough outside, captain,"* he said briefly and looking at the heavy sea running beyond the breakwater, I had to agree with him.

True to his word, he was away as soon as his boat drew alongside and looking at the narrow entrance ahead and the state of the sea beyond it, I decided there was only one way to get out to sea safely, and was doubly thankful that I had ordered the mooring ropes to be stowed. I told the fourth mate to phone the fo'c'sle and tell the mate to get all his men off as quickly as he could while I kept the ship moving dead slow. By the time he had done so the bows were beginning to lift to the swell, and when I rang down for full speed the ship surged ahead and was out beyond the breakwater in five minutes flat.

I took one final look astern and then put Keelung from my mind and concentrated on Japan, a country with which we were all more familiar. The run to Kobe was uneventful and after three days there we went on to Nagoya where we had our first sight of one of the new ships built in Japan for the Glen Line, an associate company of Blue Funnel. There were eight of this new 'P'-class, four for Glen Line built in Japan and four for Blue Funnel built in the UK, and they were the last word in conventional cargo ship design as well as being partly fitted for the carriage of containers.

A few days later Captain McKinnon arrived, having been flown out from the UK to take over the **Perseus** for the passage back to Liverpool. My brief period in

command was over, but no one could say that it had been uneventful. Few of us at sea at that time realised what a drastic revolution was taking place in the shipping world and that the new 'P'-class would be scrapped as obsolete in less than a decade. The advent of the container was as drastic as the change from sail to steam and meant that a whole way of life was to disappear. ▌

PERSEUS (3) : built 1950 by Vickers, Armstrong & Co. at Newcastle
Gross Tonnage: 10,109; nett: 5,923. Length: 515·5ft, Breadth: 68·3ft.
Single screw, three steam turbines by Vickers Armstrong at Barrow.
Accommodation for 35 passengers.
Launched: 22nd October 1949; maiden voyage 21st April 1950.
Arrived at Kaohsiung for demolition: 5th January, 1973.

THE LADY LEFT HER COFFIN BEHIND !

by Lt.-Col. Frank Bustard, O.B.E.

(This short article originally appeared in *Shipbuilding and Shipping Record*, 7th May, 1959)

When I was the White Star Line passenger traffic manager, my duties covered the control and supervision of the vast European office and agency organisation, including the sumptuous Paris office at 9 Rue Scribe. On one of my visits – it must have been around 1924 – I also called at the nearby freight office and adjoining this was a large baggage store containing trunks and cases – left for the greater part by American passengers touring Europe.

Included in these impedimenta was an impressive wooden case that looked as though it might contain a sarcophagus, and sure enough that is what was inside, but my colleague – Eustace Smythe – assured me that there was no body! My natural curiosity was aroused and explanations asked for.

It appeared that one of the White Star Line's most regular first-class passengers, who came over from America each year to spend the summer in Europe, was a wealthy widow named Mrs Ravenal. This lady had a phobia that she might die and be buried at sea and to guard against this possibility she brought over each year a magnificent walnut coffin with silver furnishings, stowed in a heavy lead container and all packed in a strongly timbered case. Mrs Ravenal's wish was that if she should unfortunately die while crossing the Atlantic, her remains would be embalmed by the ship's surgeon and returned to America in her 'casket'.

This precaution went on for years and one can only imagine what it must have cost the lady, as the whole contraption weighed two tons and was shipped and paid for each time, not as freight but as excess baggage. On arrival at Cherbourg it had to be slung overside into the baggage tender, lifted ashore and then conveyed by passenger train to Paris.

Well, Mrs Ravenal was over in Europe in the summer of 1914, despite the threat of war. When war did break out in August there was a most unholy – but understandable – rush on the part of Americans touring Europe to cut short their stay and return home. Mrs Ravenal was among them and she was found accommodation on the **Olympic** which left Cherbourg on 23rd August 1914. So far so good. But it was absolutely impossible for the Paris office to ship Mrs Ravenal's 'casket' as the French railways refused to carry such impedimenta in time of war, and the **Olympic** sailed without the coffin.

Whether its absence preyed on Mrs Ravenal's mind, I do not know, but the lady unfortunately died on the **Olympic** whilst the ship was at sea. However her known wishes were carried out and her remains encased in one of the coffins always carried on the ship. In due course they were safely landed at New York, while the sarcophagus remained in Paris, the spiritual home of Americans in Europe ! ▌

MEMORIES OF THE '*JERVIS BAY*'

H.M.S. ***Jervis Bay****, formerly the Aberdeen and Commonwealth liner of the same name, made history during the Second World War, when as an armed merchant cruiser, she fought the German pocket-battleship* ***Admiral Scheer*** *until sunk with the loss of 190 of her crew. In this article dating from 1968,* *ADRIAN THORPE* *recalls memories of his service in her.*

JERVIS BAY : Built by Vickers at Barrow in 1922 for the Aberdeen Line.
Gross Tonnage: 13,839, Nett: 8,432. Length: 530.6ft, Breadth: 68.3ft
Twin-screw; 4 x Parsons double-reduction turbines, 15 knots.
Passengers: 12 first-class; 712 third-class.
Launched: 17th January, 1922; maiden voyage London-Brisbane, 26th September,1922.
Transferred to the White Star Line in May 1928; and then to Aberdeen & Commonwealth Line in April, 1933.

The **Jervis Bay**, built in 1922 for the emigrant traffic to Australia, was said to have been designed with a view to rapid conversion into an armed merchant cruiser, should the need arise. In 1939 the need did arise, but her conversion at Woolwich was so rapid that when she sailed in October, the only hope of sinking an enemy would be to ram it, and to do that we would have needed far more speed than we were ever likely to attain! We nearly sank a ship once, but then she hardly had a sporting chance for she was lying at anchor; in any case she wasn't enemy at all, but one of ours.

The Admiralty's aim was clearly to get us to sea as soon as possible, so just before dawn on the morning of 20th October 1939, as the rising sun was gilding, one by one, the noses of the barrage balloons, the tugs towed the **Jervis Bay** out of the dock and we set off down the Thames.

On reaching the open sea we headed north, into what the newspapers described as 'the worst storm for 20 years' (almost every year they find weather worthy of this description). I was reduced to nibbling pieces of dry bread for the next two days, and was too preoccupied with keeping even this meagre diet down to worry about our fighting efficiency. But as my stomach settled down I began to take an

intelligent interest in life once more. I realised that the first lieutenant had not exaggerated in saying that to send us to sea in our present condition was 'suicidal'.

He was wrong, of course: the worst only happens when you are least expecting it. Nevertheless, we felt a lot happier when we were inside the boom at Scapa Flow, and it was with a new appreciation of the value of the good things of life that I watched the sun shining through the gaps in the clouds on the green hills of the Orkneys and on the crofters' white cottages.

We anchored near four other armed merchant cruisers (the **Aurania**, **Rawalpindi**, **Scotstoun** and **Montclare**) with whom we were to share the job of patrolling that dismal expanse of ocean where there is little daylight in winter, and in summer there is hardly any night – the Northern Patrol – as it was called.

But the fates – luckily for us – decided otherwise, for four days later, during a gale, our starboard anchor cable parted with a crack like a clap of thunder and we swung round, missing the **Aurania** by a matter of yards. With only one anchor remaining to hold us against the winds and tides of the Flow, we were looked on as a menace to the entire Home Fleet, and it was decided to send us down to Rosyth to collect a new anchor and cable.

One of the ships we passed as we threaded our way out of Scapa through the Fleet was the **Royal Oak**. The next day she was lying on the bottom, torpedoed by a U-boat that contrived not only to enter the 'impregnable' Scapa Flow, but also to get away safely again.

We reached the approaches to the Firth of Forth at dusk, and creeping up the estuary in the blackest of blackouts we rammed, and nearly sank, a destroyer HMS **Sabre**. Immediately everyone went to the other extreme (dimmed navigation lights on either ship would have saved all the trouble) and searchlights were switched on from all directions and we saw HMS **Sabre** drifting away like a stage set-piece with sparks pouring from her funnel and steam hissing from her safety valves. As she looked like sinking, we took most of her crew on board; but in the end her watertight bulkheads held fast; she stayed afloat and was towed into a drydock.

The **Jervis Bay** was now a drydock job as well and we were ordered to proceed to the nearest available dock at Hebburn-on-Tyne. We didn't get very far the first time we set off, as before the Island of May had dropped many miles astern we were radioed to return to Rosyth as a U-boat was suspected to be in the area. Back we fled, at what must have been the fastest speed which the **Jervis Bay** ever logged, and waited inside the boom until the destroyer HMS **Mohawk** came in a few hours later, claiming a kill. Off we set again, this time without incident.

We got away only just in time: next morning some Dorniers swooped down out of the sun on the ships anchored in the shadow of the Forth Bridge, dropping bombs that landed unpleasantly close to some of them (fourteen of the **Mohawk's** crew, including her captain, were killed). One of the bombers was shot down by the cruiser HMS **Edinburgh** and its pilot, when he was picked up, at first stubbornly refused to eat anything as he had been warned that the English invariably poisoned their prisoners' food (and that was before dried eggs had ever been heard of).

In the Tyne we were surrounded by evidence of Britain's determination to keep control of the sea, even if nowhere else. An orgy of shipbuilding was going on all around us and we were deafened by the drumming of pneumatic riveters and blinded

by the flickering violet-white glare of electric welders. Within five hundred yards of where we lay there were, in various stages of construction, a battleship, four cruisers, a destroyer and two corvettes. No one understood why Goering never sent his bombers over so valuable a target.

We had not been long in dock before we started covering the **Jervis Bay's** sombre grey hull and upper decks with the ship's pre-war colours of green and white; then sunhelmet racks were fitted on the messdecks and we guessed (rightly, for once) that we wouldn't be returning to Scapa Flow. That broken anchor cable may possibly have saved us from the fate of the unlucky **Rawalpindi**, which ship we had been sent up to Scapa to relieve.

*When, in the gathering dusk of the afternoon of 23rd November 1939, the **Rawalpindi**, set ablaze from stem to stern by the 11-inch shells of the **Scharnhorst** and the **Gneisenau**, capsized and sank with 265 of her crew beneath the icy waters of the Northern Ocean off Iceland, there was much talk in Parliament and in the press about "a glorious action, true to the traditions of the British Navy". No-one ever questioned whether it was traditional to send so ill-equipped a ship to sea.*

*Equally inevitable, but less spectacular, were the ends of most of the other Armed Merchant Cruisers on the Northern Patrol. One or two even managed to brighten their swansongs with touches of comedy. The **Carinthia**, for instance, was torpedoed by U-46 on 6th June 1940 when she was west of Ireland. This happened when her crew were indulging in a ship's concert, so they had to dash up on deck to man the guns dressed as dervishes, pirates and ballerinas. The U-boat, evidently shaken by the sudden appearance of this fantastic crew, made off at speed before firing a single shot at the **Carinthia**, which eventually sank 35 hours later after all her crew had been taken off by escort vessels.*

By the middle of December 1939 the **Jervis Bay** was ready for sea once more, so off we set again, gingerly threading our way through the swept channel, for German minelaying aircraft had recently been busy off the mouth of the Tyne: a ship not far astern of us bore witness to this by blowing up and sinking, while shortly afterwards we passed a large patch of burning oil on the water, marking the grave of a Norwegian oiler that had been mined a few hours previously.

Once more we headed north and that evening, while I was look-out in the crow's nest, I had occasion to consider that A.M.C.'s weren't such bad ships to be in after all. Dusk was spreading over the grey, spray-swept sea when two of our destroyers appeared from out of the indistinguishable line where sea and sky met, and as they passed close under our stern, running head-on into the heavy sea, one saw first their bows rising clean out of the water, so that you could see the keel beneath; then they would plunge deep into the trough of the sea like diving birds, the entire hull disappearing in a cloud of spray. Life in destroyers could be tough, as I later learnt from personal experience.

I was relieved at eight and clambered down the rigging in the dark, and when I arrived on the messdeck I peeled off my balaclava, scarf, oilskin, overcoat and one of two sweaters, and went round to the steam oven where my supper was being kept hot, on a plate covered by another plate, on which my initials were inscribed by fingertip in

a dusting of pepper. I poured out a cup of already milk-and-sugared and nearly cold tea and sat down to eat.

At the other end of the messdeck a gramophone was grinding out Bing Crosby (a few weeks later, to my great relief, this gramophone, as though tired of so much crooning, suddenly gave a great sigh and stopped: the mainspring had broken). Over my head the middle watchmen were clambering into their hammocks, which rocked gently to and fro in unison. A sailor was stretched out on the next mess-table, his cap for a pillow, and from the other end of the mess drifted the monotonous intonations of a tombola – 'five and three, fifty-three, six and eight, sixty-eight', occasionally brightened by novel modifications such as 'seven and six, was she worth it?'

At night the lights on the messdeck (which had to be kept burning) were usually shielded by the simple method of pulling discarded socks over the iron safety grids; the result was soothing but hardly decorative. I finished washing up the supper plates, then slung my hammock and turned in, comforted by the thought that with any luck I wouldn't have to turn out again until a quarter-to-four.

We were escorted north by a destroyer, and through a stormy Pentland Firth by an ancient Anson, which appeared to be having as uncomfortable a passage through the air as we were through the water. Then we turned south, past the purple Hebrides, silhouetted like cardboard cut-outs against the evening sky.

The next morning we were in the Irish Channel and on the evening of 23rd December 1939 we were steaming slowly past the Isle of Wight, hauling in our paravanes and congratulating ourselves on arriving at Portsmouth in time for Christmas leave, when suddenly a heavy sea mist rolled in and fell on us like a shroud, first obscuring the stars, then the moon and finally our own mastheads, and effectively cancelling any possibility of our reaching harbour.

We had to drop anchor off St Catherine's Point and there we stayed – for 36 hours – closed up round the guns in case any E-boats should appear. Christmas Eve found us dining off the usual fish and chips and the usual semi-cold tea ..... after all our high-born hopes of Christmas at home.

The **Jervis Bay** finally reached Portsmouth on Christmas Day and during our five days' stay there I was able to make two quick dashes home. Then we sailed to Weymouth, where we stayed for two days, and then, in the chill misty twilight of dawn we started our voyage south. Twenty-four hours later the clatter of broken crockery on the messdeck heralded the Bay of Biscay; and then, as each day the sun grew warmer and the sea bluer, we began to think that life wasn't so bad after all.

On the morning of the tenth day out from Weymouth we saw the green hills of Africa looming out of the heat haze and an hour later we were at anchor in Freetown Bay. Hardly had the cable finished rattling out of its locker before the ship was surrounded by a fleet of canoes of all shapes and sizes, ranging from delicate and graceful single-seaters to ones that carried three or four men and a load of multi-coloured baskets, leather slippers, oranges, bananas and green limes, and sometimes canaries in little wooden cages and even monkeys, who sat disconsolately in a canoe where everything was very wet.

Buying was an exciting and frequently lengthy business, involving much haggling and bluffing and finally parting with a pair of old bellbottoms or a packet of

'Players'; in return for which you hoisted up in triumph a stem of green bananas or a gaudy wicker basket.

Freetown could hardly be considered a credit to the Empire. There were no docks, no fine buildings, no wide avenues. No railway, not even a cinema and only one hotel which could boast glass panes in its bedroom windows. Such shops as existed were run by Indians, and the bars by Cypriots and Maltese, and the beer was luke warm.

Three days later we sailed north with our first convoy, modestly comprised of just four ships. Two more joined us from Dakar two days later. Each morning, as the first faint light of dawn began to creep across the sky, we religiously counted those six dim silhouettes. One dark night a lookout caused much consternation on the bridge by saying that he could see seven ships instead of six. Frantic signals were flashed in the direction of the supposed intruder, to which there came no response. Thus we waited in suspense until dawn arrived, proving to weary eyes that the mystery ship had been a figment of the imagination.

The slower half of the convoy had left Freetown two days ahead of us, shepherded by the **Dunvegan Castle**. We caught up with them off Cape Finisterre, upon which the 'Castle' ship hurried off and left us with the grand and (as we then thought) impressive total of 17 ships.

Next day, after handing over our convoy and its 100,000 tons of cargo to two destroyers from Plymouth, we turned and headed south once more. Only twice on the return passage did we sight another ship. The first was a merchant ship, which when she spotted us lumbering towards her, set about lowering her boats and sending out an SOS (which we intercepted) saying '*Am being pursued by a mysterious armed raider*'!

We began to think of ourselves as quite formidable but soon changed our ideas when the second ship, a destroyer, hove into view and altered course towards us, obstinately refusing to reply to our signalled requests to identify herself. We were on the point of opening fire when she condescended to inform us that she was French.

There was always a lot of excitement about going into action (even if it was only a false alarm). Suddenly the tranquility of the ship was shattered by the deafening, insistent ringing of the alarm bells. You rushed for your gas mask (which regulations compelled you to have with you whenever you went into action), and as you slung it over your shoulder you thought to yourself: *'What the hell's the use of a thing like this to a sailor? What I need now is a cork overcoat!'* You hurried on to the upper deck, past the cheering sight of the medical party bringing out the stretchers, and then you could feel the deck vibrating under your feet as full steam surged into the turbines.

On this particular occasion the excitement took place just in time to give us an unusual appetite for the usually unappetizing lunch, but generally the alarm bells sounded at the most inconvenient times, such as on our next convoy when one of the merchant vessels, the **Turakina**, caused a panic one dark night by firing her 12-pounder at 'a dark object on the water' and the alarms brought us tumbling out of our hammocks and up to the guns.

No more dark objects were sighted, even by the **Turakina**, and so finally we turned in again for the little that remained of our night's sleep.

How beautifully comfortable our hammocks seemed , on such occasions!

to be concluded in the September 'Bulletin'

SIR IVAN TELLS QE2's CAPTAIN ALL ABOUT IT !

*The fortieth anniversary of the launch of the **Queen Elizabeth 2** will occur on 20th September 2007. Back in 1964 the Government had agreed to loan the Cunard Line a substantial portion of the building cost of the new Atlantic liner, and in the 'Journal of Commerce', **Sir Ivan Thompson**, a former Commodore of the Cunard Line, wrote an amusing letter to the future master of the new ship, wishing him luck with his new command with its many responsibilities.*

*Sir Ivan Thompson waves a greeting from the bridge of the **Queen Elizabeth***

Dear Captain,

Congratulations !!! You will be very happy at taking command of this the newest and I hope the grandest liner ever built. It's a long time now since Britain last built a super-liner for the Atlantic service.

In my fifty years at sea, we produced the **Lusitania** and the **Mauretania**. The old *'Mauri'* was a world beater for a long, long time. The **Olympic**, the **Titanic**, the **Britannic**, the **Aquitania** (that lovely old lady) and then, after years of depression, came the two *'Queens'* and we were right back at the top with the **Queen Mary** holding the record from 1937 until 1952. With the advent of the **United States** and the new **France** we have slipped back again to third place – at least in speed – and I hope your new command will put us back where we belong.

You will have spent most of your life on the Atlantic and you will know all there is to know about the world's worst weather and the world's longest fogs, and you will know a lot about passengers, too. I found that about 95 per cent of passengers were very nice people, very appreciative of all that was done for them, but, of course, like everywhere else in the world, there were the odd screwballs. The other day I

talked to the master of a cargo liner which carried 12 passengers and he said: *"If you have 2,000 passengers, then you have no trouble. I have only 12 and they are on board for over a month. If you have one stinker amongst twelve, then it's heaven help everybody on board. You, with 2,000, can bury them for five days!"* And there is some truth in this.

You are, as they used to say in my youth, "Master under God" and you will be blamed for everything that happens. So don't let anybody influence you. I have never thought that Bruce Ismay ever in any way influenced Captain Smith of the **Titanic**, but a lot of people did think that, and throughout my life I have always remembered that, and perhaps I have erred a little on the side of just doing what *I* thought was right. If you do this, people may say that you are not nice – but there is an axiom in American baseball which says "Nice guys never win" – so you can console yourself with that!

One day Winston Churchill came up on the bridge in dense fog. I asked him to go down and he did. On another occasion the Duke of Windsor came up and I asked him to go down, but he didn't.

On one voyage, a **Mauretania** cruise, one engine broke down badly just after we had left Nassau for Havana. I realised that we couldn't enter Havana and do all the necessary manoeuvring on one engine. There were no tugs there and in the cruising season it is a pretty jam-packed harbour, and, of course, we wouldn't have been able to get the repairs done. So, with some 850 cruise passengers on board I decided the only thing to do was to get back to New York as quickly as possible. I put the *'Mauri'* on the axis of the Gulf Stream and let her go – she did about 17½ knots on the one good engine. The weather was bad and we were walloping along with the wheel hard over and the 'Not Under Command' signals flying!

Off Cape Hatteras the weather got even worse. The Staff Captain came up to the bridge and told me I was wanted on the 'phone by New York office. At that time in the **Mauretania** the radio telephone was in the wireless room two decks down. I'll admit I was very cross and when I was told on the'phone by an official *"This is what you must do"*, I really hit the deck. By this time the 850 passengers wanted to lynch the captain for ruining their cruise. We arrived at New York safely and going up the Hudson the passengers were told that their passage money would be refunded. When I came down off the bridge I was met by forty ladies outside my cabin, all wanting to kiss the Captain!

You will know all the regular passengers. The tycoons who can't stand the sight of each other – you never ask them to the same party. The Captain's cocktail parties can be sparkling affairs – I remember Lady Beveridge saying to David Niven: *"and now, young man, what do you do for a living?"* I remember the day the Queen Mother, with a lady in waiting, came up to my cabin as we were crossing the Channel. I was in my duffel coat with my feet up reading a newspaper. Her Majesty said: *"Let's see what the Commodore reads"* – it was the *News of the World*!

As I sit at home in my retirement and listen to the shipping weather forecasts and read about strike after strike, I realise how much harder it gets every year for a master. Crew trouble. I had none. Perhaps I was lucky, but we never had a strike on any ship I sailed on. Fifty years ago the crews had real justification for striking but they just had to take it and now, as in most other walks of life, the pendulum has

swung too far. Tug boat strikes in New York to be faced, as the Captain of the **Queen Mary** was the other month, with a situation when the tugs had made fast and, after the docking manoeuvre had started, with the tugs suddenly letting go and leaving him to do the best he could – and he did his best and made a grand job of it, too. But what a thing to happen!

On one very bad westbound passage on the **Queen Elizabeth** we were diverted to Halifax, NS, because New York was strikebound. We had four days of continuous Force 11 and 12 storms, and both radars were knocked out. On arrival at Halifax there was heavy snow and no visibility. We had been told the tugs were 'doubtful' and about mile from the berth we were told that our stevedores were on strike and would not take our lines. But the **Queen Elizabeth** went majestically alongside (Halifax is much easier, of course, than New York for a 'do it yourself' job). A group of students from the University, floundering up to their knees in snow, took the lines and made the ship secure.

We had a full passenger list and now we had the passengers to contend with. They didn't want Halifax. Nobody really does. As the old sailors used to say: *"From Hull, Hell and Halifax, Good Lord deliver us"*. It's a horrible single line railway journey from Halifax to New York and there never seems to be enough rolling stock. However, we got them off. Lord Beaverbrook was with us that trip and I expected a blast from him, though as the years went by the *Beaver* got mellower and mellower and he never said a word (afterwards I heard that Halifax suited him fine; he was only going to New Brunswick!)

A couple of days later we sailed from Halifax with another heavy passenger list, and the passengers all arrived from New York feeling fed up to the teeth after their long, cold and tiresome journey. At dinner the first night out I had on my right an elderly lady who was a very old friend and regular traveller. On my left was a continental film star – a nice girl but she always looked rather exotic. The elderly lady was still very peeved over her journey to Halifax. She looked across at the other lady and then in a stage whisper which carried right across the restaurant said: *"Who's the untidy looking bitch on the other side?"*

You will have plenty of troubles of your own but I'm sure the pleasure of commanding Britain's greatest ship will far outweigh the few cantankerous passengers, the long days of fog, and the great gales of the Winter North Atlantic. On the other side of the picture, you will have that wonderful feeling when you get out of the taxi at Southampton Station to go home on leave.

I wish you all the luck in the world. Ivan Thompson

STABILISERS FOR ALL !

From a letter received at the Cunard Line passenger department in 1959:

"I would prefer to sail in the **Carinthia**, and if you will be good enough to let me know if stabilisers apply to the whole of the vessel (tourist accommodation as well as first class), and if I can take my cat on this vessel, then I shall be very pleased to make a firm booking".

THE *'ST TUDNO'* JOINS THE UNITED STATES' NAVY

by Roy Fenton

*The **St Tudno** was launched in 1891 for the newly-formed Liverpool & North Wales Steamship Company. She remained with the Company until 1912, after which she became a tender for the Hamburg-America Line at Southampton. The **St Tudno** was requisitioned by the Admiralty in 1914 and became a troop transport. She was loaned to the United States Navy towards the end of the War.*

Known only as the **Tudno**, the old North Wales excursion steamer served under the 'Stars and Stripes' from about the time of the Armistice until 21st August 1919. As of 1st December 1918, her commanding officer was Lieutenant (junior grade) William J. Brown of the United States Naval Reserve. There is no record of any commissioning; nor is the ship carried on any contemporary listings of United States naval vessels.

In any event, the little-documented **Tudno** performed valuable service at Brest in the gigantic effort involved in bringing U.S. troops to the U.K. for onward repatriation. She ferried troops from the docks of Brest to the waiting transports which ranged from the liner **Leviathan** to the battleship **New Jersey**, and from the Cunard liner **Aquitania** to the U.S. armoured cruisers **Frederick** and **Huntington**.

During the course of the **Tudno's** service at Brest, some important people trod her decks – even if only for a brief time. President Woodrow Wilson and his party came ashore from the **George Washington** on 13th December 1918 as the president prepared to take part in the Paris Peace Conference. The **Tudno** later transported the Chief Executive and his party back to the **George Washington** on 15th February 1919.

The **Tudno** continued her troop-ferrying duties into the spring and summer months of 1919 and, on 23rd June, 'received word of Germany's signature of the Peace Treaty', and 'great rejoicing throughout the harbour' was reported. Six days later, the **Tudno** dressed ship and moved out into the harbour, mooring alongside the **George Washington**. Soon the French yacht **Dolmer** drew alongside and President Wilson crossed the **Tudno's** deck to the waiting transport, having achieved what he fervently hoped would be a lasting peace.

On 19th July 1919 the **Tudno** took a party of 200 West Point cadets and 300 sailors from the **Leviathan** to the shore at the start of a visit to Paris. The **Tudno's** last troop-ferrying duty came on 12th August when she took 1,400 men out to the transport **Powhatan**. On 16th August 1919 the **Tudno** left Brest at 17.55 and arrived at Southampton early the following morning. On the morning of 21st August the **Tudno** was handed back to the British Admiralty and her crew was transferred to the U.S. destroyer **Laub**.

Two years later, in 1921 the Admiralty sold the **St Tudno** to T.C. Pas of Holland for demolition. This was complete by the end of May, 1922. ▌

AND FINALLY .....

A PROUD FAREWELL

THE DEPARTURE OF THE LAST 'CLAN' FROM MANCHESTER

The quay at Manchester was wet and dirty on the evening of 11th November 1981. There was a skip full of rubbish and pieces of wet cardboard, flapping in the breeze, lay alongside.

The last 'Clan Boat' was about to leave Manchester. The **Clan MacGregor** was also the last Clan Boat of the line as she had been sold and was in the process of being prepared for handing over to her new owners at Barry, South Wales.

"*We won't be doing this again,*" said the berthing master, sadly. There were two tugs to assist the **Clan MacGregor** – the **MSC Sabre** and the **MSC Sceptre**, both of which had not been up the Canal for six months.

It was a subdued farewell – the last trip from Manchester for the ship, the crew, and very likely the canal pilot. The pilot and the helmsman arrived, the boatmen too, and all were anxious to get the gangway up and be under way. The gangway was raised and secured and after what seemed a trying wait, whilst arrangements on board were finalised, a hail from the bridge that the 'O.K.' had been received from Barton Locks.

The boatmen were ready to cast off the ropes. The two tugs already had their towing wires attached: then came the order and the boatmen moved swiftly to release the stern rope.

The forward tug moved and the **Clan MacGregor** inched along the dock, aided by a quick kick from the propeller to take the tension from the stern spring, and this rope was let go. Now she was free and started to move stern-first out of the dock, with the **MSC Sceptre** guiding her. "*Stop*", rang out the voice of the pilot, and at the end of the dock the **Clan MacGregor** 'swung on the knuckle'; the pilot skillfully manoeuvring the ship through 45 degrees, so that her bows faced down the canal.

There was time to remember all the men who had sailed in the **Clan MacGregor** through fierce storms and biting cold and stifling heat. Memories of parties – meeting shippers – captains and their wives – officers – very new cadets – Indian seamen, and cooks waiting to have their curries praised.

The brightly lit tugs seemed dwarfed with the **Clan MacGregor** looming over them, her bridge in darkness to give the pilot and captain the necessary night vision, but beneath the ship's accommodation lights reflected in the still water as the cortege set off. A last wave from the bridge.

Just then three mighty blasts sounded forth. The berthing master said, matter of factly, "*probably just the signal to Mode Wheel Locks*".

But the small crowd watching the last Clan Boat leave Manchester knew better – she was saying a proud '*Farewell*'. ▌

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

(Founded in 1938)

THE BULLETIN

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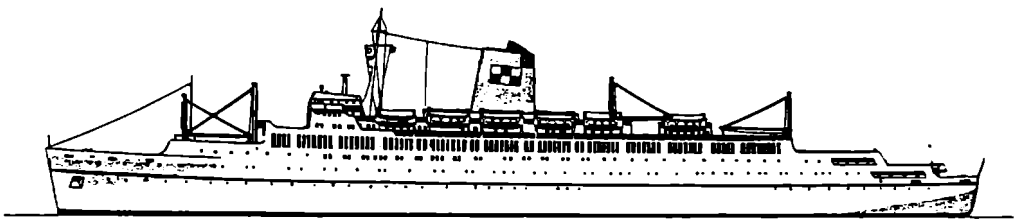

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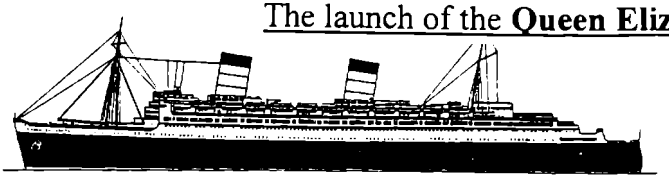
THE CHRISTMAS LUNCH

The Society's Christmas Lunch is always a popular, well-attended and highly successful event. This year the lunch will be held on Thursday 6th December, and the venue is likely to be, as usual, the Hollins Hey Hotel at New Brighton, just 100 yards from New Brighton railway station. All Members wishing to attend the lunch should contact our Treasurer, John Coates, who will be organising the event.

Front Cover:
The **Empress of Britain** of 1956

The launch of the **Queen Elizabeth**



1938

THE LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

HAPPY 70th ANNIVERSARY!

The Society will be marking the 70th anniversary of its foundation in 2008 by bringing out a special commemorative book which will be sent to all members in early December, 2007.
Accordingly, there will not be a '*Bulletin*' this coming December – the '*Bulletin*' will resume in March, 2008

From the April, 1938 edition of 'Sea Breezes':

"Only a few months ago an article appeared in *Sea Breezes* entitled 'Preserving a Great Maritime Epoch'. This article contained suggestions for setting down for all time records and facts surrounding ships and seamen of the 19th and 20th centuries. The response was not long delayed, for one immediate effect of that article was to bring men with kindred interests into close association, and in Liverpool they formed themselves into a Marine Research Society. A subscription of five shillings makes it open to anyone interested in the sea, and the lists already show how popular the Society is likely to become. The Society proposes to read a paper once a quarter or more frequently. The first paper will be given on the earliest Liverpool shipping records, and will be delivered at the School of Commerce, Tithebarn Street, on 9th May 1938 at 7.30pm. It is hoped that Liverpool's venture will be followed by other shipping ports around the coast. The value of such research work cannot be overestimated, and for purely historical purposes alone the opportunity should be seized of permanently placing on record the oral traditions of sailing ships while they are still available."

HERE'S TO THE NEXT SEVENTY YEARS !!!

2008

The last voyage of the **Queen Elizabeth 2**

THE '*EMPRESS OF BRITAIN*' OF 1956

51 years old and still sailing on !

by John Shepherd

EMPRESS OF BRITAIN Official Number: 187376 Signal Letters: G V C N
Built by the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Co. Ltd., Govan. Yard No. 731
Gross Tonnage: 25,516, Nett: 13,681. Length: 640ft, Breadth: 85·2ft.
Owned by the Canadian Pacific Railway Co.; Managers: Canadian Pacific Steamships
6 steam turbines, double reduction gearing to twin screws

At the end of the Second World War, Canadian Pacific was left with just three passenger liners – the 1928-built **Duchess of Bedford**; the **Duchess of Richmond** of 1929 and the **Empress of Scotland**, dating from 1930. After the War, the *Duchesses* were refurbished and had their accommodation improved. They were both 'upgraded' to *Empress* status and the **Duchess of Bedford** was renamed **Empress of France** in 1948, and the **Duchess of Richmond** became the **Empress of Canada** in 1947.

Replacements were needed for this ageing passenger fleet, and the situation became more serious in 1953 following the loss by fire of the **Empress of Canada**. In 1951 the Cunard Line, Canadian Pacific's great rival on the Liverpool to Montreal service, had announced its intention to build a new class of passenger liner for the Canadian service. Canadian Pacific was faced with the very real need to meet the Cunard challenge in order to maintain a viable presence on the route.

Canadian Pacific waited until the first of the new Cunarders, the **Saxonia**, had entered service before placing an order for a new ship which would become the **Empress of Britain**. There is no doubt that Canadian Pacific paid very close attention to the new Cunard liner before placing an order with the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Company at Govan for the new *Empress* which was launched by the Queen on 22nd June 1955. The **Empress of Britain** had the distinction of being the first Canadian Pacific liner, and the first Fairfield-built vessel, to be named by a reigning monarch.

On 28th October 1955, just four months after the launching of the **Empress of Britain**, Canadian Pacific Airlines ordered three Bristol Britannia 300LR airscrew-turbine air liners, with an option for a further five. The age of the trans-ocean airliner was dawning!

The new *Empress* left the Clyde on 1st March 1956 and entered the Gladstone Graving Dock at Liverpool the following day, before returning to the Clyde on 8th March to carry out her speed trials. These were run over the Arran Mile over the next two days, following which the **Empress of Britain** was berthed in Glasgow's King George V Dock for almost three weeks. At noon on 29th March 1956 the new ship underwent further trials in the Firth of Clyde before being handed over to Canadian Pacific Steamships at a ceremony held that evening whilst the vessel was at anchor at the Tail of the Bank.

The **Empress of Britain** sailed to Southampton on a 'shake-down' cruise, leaving Liverpool on 9th April with 400 guests of the Company on board. On her way down the Mersey she passed the new **Reina del Mar**, arriving from her sea trials. After arriving at the southern port on 10th April, the *Empress* disembarked her passengers and took on another 400 guests for the return passage to Liverpool, arriving back in the Mersey on 12th April to prepare for her maiden voyage which left Liverpool on 20th April.

One shipping journalist who had been on board the for cruise described the **Empress of Britain** as *'Britain's most interesting ship of the decade'*. She was in fact the first completely air-conditioned passenger liner to have been built in Britain. *'Lloyd's List'* enthused: *"For comfort and real quality in ship decoration and furnishing – indeed, luxury in many respects – Canadian Pacific's new flagship sets the highest possible standard in North Atlantic travel. This applies particularly to tourist class and the* ***Empress of Britain*** *is primarily a tourist class ship. The distinction between the two classes is virtually negligible, and the generous tourist public rooms, to say nothing of most of the cabins, are in literal truth of first-class standard."*

Although essentially a passenger liner, the new *Empress* could also carry 3,000 tons of cargo with a large provision of refrigerated space for fruit and other Canadian produce. Bearing in mind that, for at least part of the year, the ship would encounter ice conditions in the St Lawrence, the hull was suitably strengthened.

The **Empress of Britain** embarked a full complement of 150 first-class passengers and 900 tourist-class passengers and left Liverpool on her maiden voyage on 20th April 1956, arriving at Quebec on 25th April and at Montreal on 26th April. The call at Greenock, traditionally part of the Canadian schedule, was omitted.

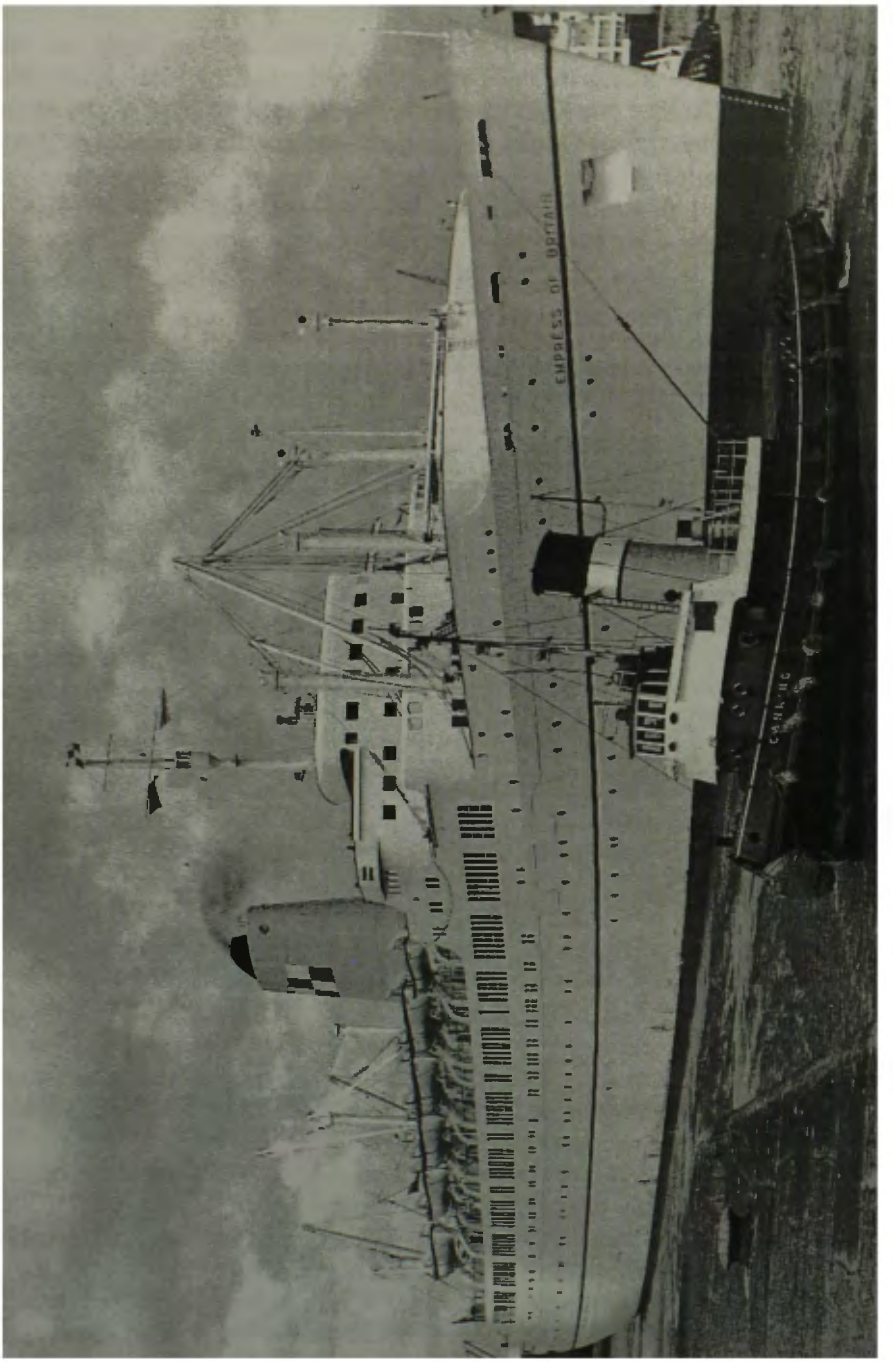
There were some minor machinery problems in June and July, but generally all went well, and the new liner settled down into her trans-Atlantic schedule. On 11th September 1956, Canadian Pacific announced that the **Empress of Britain** had broken both the eastbound and westbound records between Liverpool Bar and the St Lawrence pilot station at Father Point with an average speed of 21·43 knots.

St John, New Brunswick, was the winter terminal port between November and March when the St Lawrence was impassable due to ice.

The new **Empress of England**, the slightly younger sister of the **Empress of Britain** entered service in April 1957. The new ship was to become Canadian Pacific's cruise liner during the winter months, leaving the **Empress of Britain** to maintain the winter trans-Atlantic schedule. In 1958 the call at the Tail of the Bank, off Greenock, was introduced to the **Empress of Britain's** schedule.

An ice jam in the St Lawrence in mid-April 1959 caused problems. The **Empress of Britain** was damaged in trying to force her way through ice at Sorel, some thirty miles from Montreal. The *Empress*, along with Cunard's **Carinthia**, was trapped at Montreal for some days until the jam broke up.

The **Empress of England's** winter cruising programme had been such a success that Canadian Pacific decided it would be far more profitable to send the **Empress of Britain** cruising as well, rather than to keep one of them on a winter trans-Atlantic service. Cunard was having similar difficulties in profitably employing its four Canadian ships in the winter months, and the Canadian Pacific ships lent



*The **Empress of Britain** in Liverpool's Gladstone Dock in the late 1950s*

themselves far more readily to cruising than the Cunarders which were primarily emigrant carriers with only very partial air-conditioning.

Both the *Empresses* were overhauled at Liverpool in December 1959 and sailed for New York, where they arrived in mid-January 1960 for three months of cruising to the Caribbean.

The year 1960 was severely disrupted by industrial action at the height of the passenger season. When the **Empress of Britain** arrived at Liverpool on 19th July, most of her crew joined the unofficial strike over pay and hours. However efforts to recruit a full crew for her departure scheduled for 22nd July succeeded and she left Princes Landing Stage at noon and anchored in mid-Mersey to await the Greenock passengers who were on a special train to Riverside Station, and who were taken out to join the liner by tender. The crew situation could not be resolved for the 12th August departure from Liverpool, and the **Empress of Britain's** sailing was cancelled and her 600 passengers travelled with Canadian Pacific Airlines. The unofficial strike action dragged on into September, and over 1,000 passengers booked to sail on the **Empress of Britain's** 2nd September sailing had to accept alternative ways of reaching Canada. It was not until 10th September that the **Empress of England** was able to resume the sailing schedule, and it was 24th September before the **Empress of Britain** sailed, having lost two round voyages at the peak of the season.

More unofficial industrial action dogged the **Empress of Britain** in 1961. Her 18th April departure was delayed for 24 hours by members of the National Seamen's Reform Movement. Engine trouble delayed her sailing from Montreal on 19th May, and her 14th November departure from Liverpool was set back for 36 hours by renewed unofficial strike action.

The **Empress of Britain** continued to operate a trans-Atlantic schedule until 13th January 1962, after which time Canadian Pacific abandoned all attempts at operating such sailings which had become unprofitable due to low passenger numbers. After completing her annual overhaul the *Empress* went cruising from the UK until returning to her designed route from Liverpool to Montreal for the 1962 summer.

The three Canadian Pacific *Empresses* made thirty-three round voyages between Liverpool and Canada in 1962 – never again would such an extensive schedule be operated. From January to April 1963 the **Empress of Britain** was employed on a cruising programme from the UK and it was not until 30th April that she returned to her Liverpool to Montreal route. Passenger numbers on the North Atlantic began an accelerated terminal decline in 1963, and the **Empress of Britain** made her 108th and final round voyage to Canada, leaving Liverpool on 24th September.

South African entrepreneur Max Wilson had set up the Travel Savings Association in (TSA) in 1963, promoting cheap 'no frills' cruises. Potential passengers paid instalments into TSA's savings scheme, eventually using the money to buy inexpensive cruises. Initially the scheme seemed to meet with great success. Canadian Pacific acquired a 51% controlling interest in the new company and both the **Empress of Britain** and the **Empress of England** went on charter to TSA.

On 25th October 1963 the **Empress of Britain** sailed from Liverpool on her first TSA cruise. On 4th December she left for South Africa, carrying 570 emigrants travelling under the South African Government's assisted passage scheme. The

Empress arrived at Cape Town on 19th December and two days later sailed on her first cruise across the South Atlantic to South American ports.

TSA's original charter of the **Empress of Britain** had been for five years, but early in 1964 it exercised its option to terminate the charter as from 5th January 1965. Shortly afterwards it was announced that the TSA would cease trading at the end of 1964 as it had not developed into the success that had been envisaged. On 13th February 1964 the **Empress of Britain** left Cape Town for Liverpool, where she arrived on 28th February.

Canadian Pacific stated that '*the economics of passenger operations are not what they should be*', and by the time the **Empress of Britain** had arrived back in the Mersey she had been sold to the Goulandris-owned Greek Line for $8 million. The *Empress* spent the next six months undertaking cruises under her TSA charter and arrived back at Liverpool on 22nd August 1964. She was temporarily laid up, awaiting her delivery to the Greek Line. For the ship herself, this was a new beginning – she had more than proved her versatility both as an Atlantic liner and as a cruise ship.

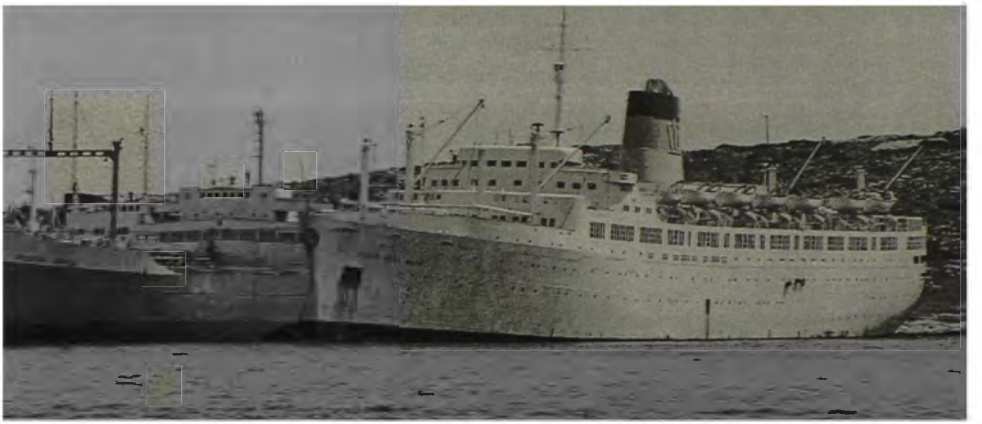
The **Empress of Britain** was renamed **Queen Anna Maria** and left Liverpool under this name on 18th November 1964, bound for Genoa where she arrived on 22nd November. She spent three months in the Mariotti shipyard where the cabin accommodation was increased and the ship made more suitable for a Mediterranean/Atlantic service, rather than the North Atlantic. The total passenger complement increased to 1,313 on the Atlantic run, and 742 whilst cruising. The original steam turbines were retained. The outward appearance was little changed, except at the stern, where a large night-club and lido deck were constructed. The overall character remained the same and the essentially British-styled North Atlantic liner décor remained intact.

The **Queen Anna Maria's** refit was completed by 6th March 1965 and she arrived at Piraeus three days later. Her first Atlantic crossing for the Greek Line left Piraeus on 23rd March and she called at Naples, Palermo and Lisbon. A call was made at Halifax, NS and the **Queen Anna Maria** arrived at New York on 5th April. She settled into a routine of spending the summer on the Atlantic, and cruising in the winter. On 19th February 1967, whilst arriving at Kingston, Jamaica, the **Queen Anna Maria** ran aground and she was not refloated until a week later. Towards the end of 1967 three-night 'cruises to nowhere' from New York were slotted in between Atlantic crossings.

The Greek Line worked the **Queen Anna Maria** hard. Her summer seasons on the Atlantic run became increasingly short and cruising became her principal occupation. In the early 1970s the Greek Line was struggling to remain viable in the face of ever escalating operating costs, but following the death of its owner and chairman, Basil Goulandris, the company seemed to lose its vigour and momentum. The four-fold increase in the price of fuel oil over the winter of 1973/74 was the final blow. The **Queen Anna Maria** sailed on in 1974 amid mounting debts, but in January 1975 the Greek Line issued a statement to the effect that 'financial difficulties have made it impossible for the company to continue with the cruise programme'.

As one of the Greek Line's only two assets, (the other was the **Olympia**), the **Queen Anna Maria** was tied up at New York and the creditors made arrangements to seize her. However, forewarned that this was about to happen, her crew prepared for a

quick and unannounced departure on 11th January 1975. It was a particularly ignominious farewell. On 22nd January the **Queen Anna Maria** arrived at Piraeus and was laid up, along with many other redundant liners, at Perama.



*The **Queen Anna Maria** (ex **Empress of Britain**) laid up at Piraeus in 1975*

With the Greek Line in receivership, the Chase Manhattan Bank which held the mortgage on the **Queen Anna Maria**, was anxious to dispose of her and made her available for sale at a very low price.

In January 1972 Ted Arison had completed arrangements for purchasing the **Empress of Britain's** younger sister, the **Empress of Canada**, then laid up at Tilbury. On 21st February the **Empress of Canada** was renamed **Mardi Gras** and five days later she sailed for Miami to be operated by the newly formed Carnival Cruise Lines. Three years later Ted Arison was looking for a 'running-mate' for the **Mardi Gras** and inspected the **Queen Anna Maria**. The Sitmar Line (purchaser of Cunard's **Carinthia** and **Sylvania**) was also interested and Arison had to move fast: in the event he bought her for $3 million. The ship was immediately prepared for sea and arrived at Miami on New Year's Day, 1976, and was renamed **Carnivale**. In mid February 1976, the **Carnivale** entered service for Carnival Cruise Lines, sailing in company with her younger sister, the **Mardi Gras**, *ex* **Empress of Canada**. Of the two ships, the **Carnivale** was better suited to cruising, given the extensive rebuilding carried out by the Greek Line.

The **Carnivale** was still an Atlantic liner at heart and during her first months with Carnival Cruise Lines she underwent upgrading and refitting. Both the **Carnivale** and the **Mardi Gras** were marketed as 'fun ships' and became phenomenally successful on the seven-day circuit from Miami, calling at San Juan, St Maarten and St Thomas. The two ships had enjoyed some measure of success with Canadian Pacific, but this had been rather short-lived due to the changing patterns of trans-Atlantic travel, but under the guiding hand of Ted Arison the two former *Empresses* achieved undreamed-of success.

The **Carnivale** sailed on as part of the Carnival Cruise Lines ever expanding fleet until October 1993 when she was renamed **FiestaMarina** and transferred to a Carnival subsidiary, FiestaMarina Cruises. The former **Empress of Britain** was now 38 years old, and after eighteen years of popularity and success with Carnival, she could not compete with the newer and much larger purpose-built cruise ships. The **FiestaMarina** was based at San Juan for three months but this proved a costly failure, after which she returned to her more familiar Miami base. In September 1994 the old ship sailed on her final cruise after which FiestaMarina Cruises was wound up and the ship laid up.

The former *Empress* was quickly purchased by the Greek Epirotiki Lines and left Miami for the Mediterranean on 14th September 1994 where she was renamed **Olympic**. She was in impeccable condition, having been flawlessly maintained by Carnival over the years. A correspondent sailed on her in August 1997 and reported that *"the **Olympic's** public rooms are a mix of vintage Canadian Pacific and 1990 Carnival glitz. The cinema remains untouched from the ship's Canadian Pacific days, with its polished wood and leather-trimmed bulkheads, plastic acoustic ceiling and vivid red seating"*.

The **Olympic** was based at Piraeus and operated three and four-day cruises in the Aegean. Such was her success that there was speculation that her younger sister, the former **Empress of Canada**, which was at this time languishing in lay up at Perama Bay, near Piraeus, might join her. However, at the end of the 1997 cruising season, Epirotiki Lines announced the disposal of the **Olympic** and she was sold to a Panamanian-registered company, Topaz International.

On 19th January 1998 the 43-year old ship was taken to the Skaramanga shipyard for a refit. She was renamed **The Topaz** and was chartered to Thomson Holidays. **The Topaz's** first cruise was a trans-Atlantic crossing to Port Everglades, but unfortunately her entry into service was marred by bad publicity generated by passenger complaints. It would appear that the final stages of the refit had been hurried, and that the crew had not had sufficient time to familarise themselves with the ship. As a result, by the time that **The Topaz** arrived at Malta, Thomson had received many complaints about problems with meals, poor service and run-down facilities, and the 756 passengers were taken off the ship.

Fortunately this proved to be a 'temporary blip' and **The Topaz** quickly became one of the most popular cruise ships. During the summer of 1999 Thomson's based **The Topaz** at Palma, but on 28th October she sailed for the Caribbean for a six-month cruising season. She returned to Palma in April 2000 for a further programme of Mediterranean cruising for Thomsons.

In May 2002 it was announced that Thomson's five-year charter of **The Topaz** would come to an end in May 2003 and would not be renewed. With the best will in the world, **The Topaz**, one of the oldest operational cruise ships, could just no longer compete, and Thomson's had negotiated a charter of the former Holland-America cruise ship **Nieuw Amsterdam** to replace her. It seemed that the writing was on the wall for the former **Empress of Britain**.

In early November 2002 came the news that **The Topaz** was to be chartered by the Japanese educational organization Peace Boat. She was scheduled to make four

round-the-world cruises for them, the first to commence on 14th June 2003, and the Peace Boat charter would extend until 2006.

The Topaz arrived in Tokyo on 10th June 2003 and shortly afterwards sailed on her first cruise for Peace Boat. This involved revisiting some of her old haunts: for instance she sailed into New York on 8th August for a three-day stay, after an absence of 28 years. On 31st August 2003 **The Topaz** entered the harbour at Vancouver, the first time that an *Empress* liner had been in the port for over sixty years.

*Now 51 years old, the **Empress of Britain** sails on as **The Topaz***

In 2004 **The Topaz** called at Piraeus on 13th August, the first day of the Athens Olympic Games, and a couple of weeks later she made a call at Tilbury.

The Topaz sails on for the Peace Boat Organisation and in theory she can cruise on right up until 2010, when new SOLAS regulations will certainly spell the end for her. However, whether she can remain profitable is another matter given the amount of competition in the cruise market worldwide.

When the Queen launched the **Empress of Britain** back in 1955, nobody could possibly have envisaged the way things would turn out. The trans-Atlantic market entered rapid and terminal decline within five years of her maiden voyage, but the **Empress of Britain** has sailed on, and apart from eleven months of inactivity following the collapse of the Greek Line, the ship has been in almost continuous operation from the day of her maiden voyage in April 1956 – an incredible 51 years – with the prospect of more to come. As Conrad's Nostromo said, *"I am not dead yet"*!

***The Topaz**, the former **Empress of Britain** was back in the Irish Sea on 31st July 2007 when she called at Dublin on a voyage from Bergen to New York.* ▌

THE DAY THE MANCHESTER SHIP CANAL RAN DRY

by LNRS Vice-President, Captain Graeme Cubbin

The Harrison Line motor ship ***Governor*** *was launched by William Doxford & Sons Ltd on 8th May, 1952. The* ***Governor*** *underwent a routine dry docking at Manchester in February 1969 and on 16th March she was ready to proceed down the Ship Canal to Liverpool to load for her next voyage. However this was not to be, for the vessel ahead of her in the Canal, the* ***Manchester Courage****, demolished the lock gate at Irlam and the* ***Governor*** *was trapped at Manchester. It would be almost five weeks, on 18th April 1969, before the Canal was re-opened and the* ***Governor*** *was able to proceed to sea. Captain Graeme Cubbin was master of the* ***Governor*** *at the time of the incident.*

We watched the Liner back out of No.9 Dock with detached interest. Incidentally, reference to a 'Liner' within the Port of Manchester, i.e. from Eastham Locks to Trafford Park, can have only one meaning – one of Manchester Liners Ltd., part of the Furness Withy Group, and the city's pride and joy. Inevitably, it seemed, Liners were privileged to take precedence on the Canal, at any time. Which was why the **Governor** was still lying at the dry dock jetty, waiting, although ready to sail for some time, for the **Manchester Courage** to enter and clear Mode Wheel Lock, the lock which led from the dock system to the Ship Canal itself.

It was 6.50pm on 16th March 1969, and I was watching the manoeuvre from my dayroom window, while Pilot Bill Walker was keeping a professional eye on things from the wheelhouse above. The breeze was fresh from the east and the two Canal Company tugs, **MSC Sabre** and **MSC Sceptre**, seemed to be having difficulty holding the Liner up to windward as she headed towards the lock. In fact she was clearly in danger of hitting the bullnose, that end of the lock wall which jutted out into the basin. One would have expected to see the screw churning astern at this crisis, but the dark, polluted water under her stern remained still. The silence of the evening was rudely broken by a harsh duet on air and pea-whistles as the pilot urged his tugs to push or pull the ship out of danger, but there was still no movement of the ship's own propeller. It would appear that she had some sort of engine trouble.

At last the tugs had her moving astern, but the ship still continued to fall down to leeward. Professional curiosity turned to alarm as it became apparent that the **Manchester Courage** was in grave danger of falling against the **Governor**! I made a hurried exit from my cabin to rouse officers and men to have fenders on hand, ready to cushion the anticipated blow. But they were already on their way, and in the wheelhouse I conferred with Pilot Walker, who was also showing signs of perturbation. Gradually the tugs began to win their battle and the ship began to draw away. As her bridge drew level with ours, the two pilots engaged in a lively and colourful conversation, expressing a mutual sense of grievance in pithy terms, and establishing the cause of the delay, which was indeed due to engine trouble. The Liner's pilot intended to place the ship alongside Salford Quay, opposite the berth at which the **Governor** was lying, while the problem was sorted out. Any notions we may have entertained of slipping into the lock in the meantime were effectively snookered by the Liner's baulky position on Salford Quay. There was nothing for it

but to wait patiently for an hour or so until the ship's engineers had completed their task.

When the time came there were no hitches and the Liner passed easily through the lock and into the Barton stretch. The **Governor** followed shortly afterwards, entering Mode Wheel Lock at 9.15pm. However, when the ship was secured in the lock, Pilot Walker advised against immediate departure. *"We'll wait until we know whether the sonofabitch has cleared the next lock,"* he growled, his natural Lancastrian caution amplified by recollection of the Liner's antics earlier in the evening. So we stayed in the lock until the telephone shrilled in the Lockmaster's office, and he emerged to tell us that, yes, Barton was all clear.

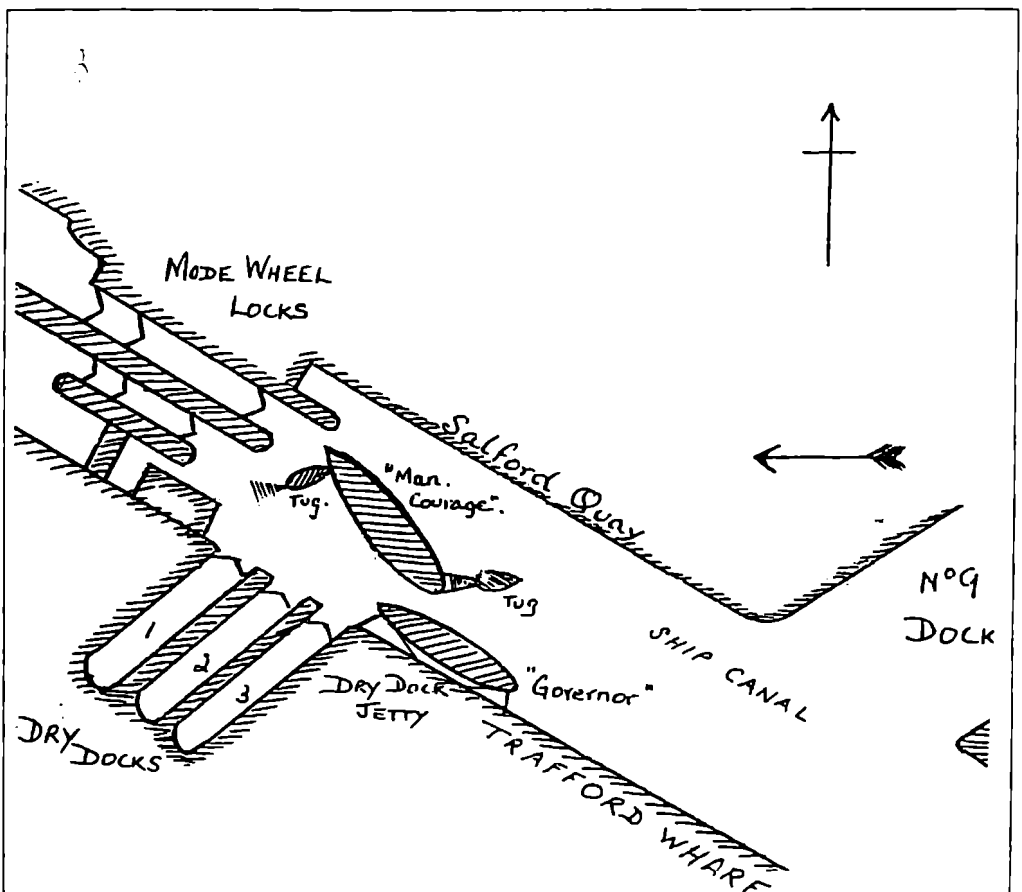
Our lock was lowered, and we pressed on through the next section, securing in Barton lock about 40 minutes later. Pilot Walker's wariness was not yet mollified, however, and the fact that the **Manchester Courage** had not yet cleared the much shorter Barton/Irlam section was in itself a sign that all was not well. So we played the waiting game again, determined to stay in high-level lock until Irlam was reportedly clear. The Lockmaster was not as co-operative as he might have been, but Pilot Walker could be very obstinate.

It was as well he was; and it must be said that, despite his instinctive fears, no-one was more surprised than he to hear some time later that Irlam Lock was far from clear, and unlikely to be so for many weeks to come. For the unthinkable had happened. A major disaster had overtaken the **Manchester Courage**. Briefly, she had charged through the lower lock gates, emptied the lock, and was now perched across the sill, wedged in by fallen masonry and other debris. The upper gates had not been closed – there had not been time – and they had been swept away in the rush of water, as the level of the two-mile Barton/Irlam section of the Canal fell 16 feet, and rapidly drained off into the Latchford section. Two Manchester Corporation sludge vessels, the **Mancunium** and the **Percy Dawson**, both lying at the Corporation's berth serving the Davyhulme Sewage Works, were stranded in the mud, the former sustaining some damage.

If the **Governor** had moved into the next stretch of water on cue, she too would have been lying high and dry, listing drunkenly on a noisome bed of Ship Canal mud and slime. Pilot Walker's instincts had been vindicated. Although the ship was now marooned in the upper reaches of the Canal, along with sixteen other large vessels, she was still, at least, afloat. It was fortunate that the Barton lower gates still held firm, in spite of the extra pressure.

We learned the cause of the accident later. The **Manchester Courage** was equipped with a variable-pitch propeller, a fairly recent innovation at the time. On going astern, the main engine continued to drive in the same direction, while the pitch of the propeller blades (i.e. the angle at which they were set on the boss) was hydraulically reversed, thus reversing the thrust. On this occasion, as the ship eased into Irlam Lock, the pilot ordered 'slow astern' to take the way off the ship. The response was not forthcoming, so he ordered 'half astern', then 'full astern', thus compounding the fault, for he had no way of knowing that a valve in the hydraulic system had failed, and the propeller blades remained stubbornly in the 'ahead' position.

It was not until 21st March 1969 that tugs were able to tow the **Manchester Courage** clear of the shattered lock, and proceed to Gladstone Dock in Liverpool to discharge her export cargo. On 27th March she sailed to Middlesborough to make good the damage to her hull, and thoroughly overhaul her hydraulic systems. On the same day the debris in the lock was cleared and the small adjacent lock opened for coastal and barge traffic. Meanwhile, work on the main lock went ahead. New gates were installed, and on 18th April 1969, nearly five weeks after the disaster, the Manchester Ship Canal was fully operational once more. ▌



MANCHESTER COURAGE has difficulty approaching Mode Wheel Locks while GOVERNOR looks on.

- Author's contemporaneous sketch.

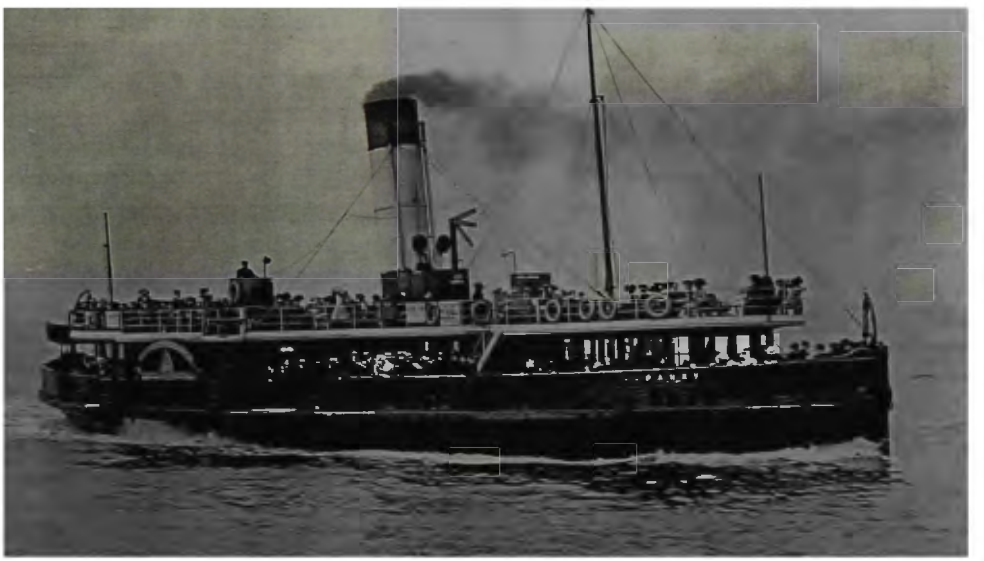
100 YEARS AGO

THE WALLASEY FERRIES IN 1907

Facts and Figures compiled from the 'Wallasey News' by the Editor

From a pounds, shillings and pence point of view, the Wallasey ferries did not appear to have made any money until 1896, the accumulated loss up to that date amounting to £140,000 from the time that Wallasey Corporation took over the running of the services in 1862. For five or six years afterwards a small profit was recorded, but from 1903 to 1907 there were annual losses. Professor Dawson, in his budget speech in the Council Chamber, said that in 1907 it was expected that the concern would just pay its way.

Comparing the traffic receipts of 1897 with 1907, in the former year the amount was £74,358, and in the latter year £81,657. Owing to a very great change in the use of the ferries, a considerably larger number of passengers was carried in 1907. In 1889 the total number was approximately 1,500,000 but eighteen years later this had risen to 18 million in 1907. The reason for this massive increase was because the ferries came to be used as an ordinary means of transport, rather than a means of pleasure.



*The **Pansy**, built in 1896, was the final paddle steamer in the Wallasey fleet*

Although the total annual receipts increased by £7,000 in the ten years from 1897 to 1907, New Brighton recorded a decrease of nearly £10,000, whilst at

Seacombe the receipts advanced by the extent of £20,000 per annum over the period.

The ever-growing number of contractors was a drain upon the revenue because they were conveyed at such a cheap rate. The 2s 3d (11p) 'monthly ticket' was a great concession

There were three principal reasons why the Wallasey Ferries were not more profitable:

Firstly, the ever-growing number of contractors was conveyed at rates, on an average, of less than those of a decade previously.

Secondly, the introduction of electric cars, and the facility for reaching Egremont and New Brighton via the new promenade, had both tended to transfer traffic from New Brighton and Egremont to Seacombe, thus reducing the income which would otherwise have accrued if the longer journeys had been taken.

Thirdly, owing to congestion at Seacombe, a ten-minute frequency was established and this involved running the steamers at a faster rate with a consequent increase in coal consumption. Additionally the ferries in use in 1907 had running costs of between £20,000 and £22,000 per annum, compared with only £11,000 or £12,000 a decade previously.

It was felt that all the money which had been lost on the ferries had contributed to making Wallasey what it had become by 1907. The invariable objection to living in Wallasey used to be the uncomfortable transit across the Mersey, but this had been mitigated by the improvement of the ferry service, regardless of what it had meant to the rates.

The statistics of the ferry traffic present some interesting details. The record traffic for an Easter weekend (four days) appears to have been that of 1906, when 124,447 passengers patronised the New Brighton ferry. The record Whitsuntide for the same ferry was that of 1901 when the number of passengers for the weekend (three days) was 103,404. The August Bank Holiday weekend record was also registered in 1901 when 129,227 persons were conducted over the water via the ferries.

Notwithstanding that the New Brighton ferry was not used so much as it was before the days of the electric cars and the new promenade, it was interesting to note that in the past decade no less than 100,000 passengers used this ferry during a Whitsuntide weekend. The change in the mode of traffic to which reference has been made can be strikingly illustrated in the Bank Holiday returns for Seacombe. In 1901, during the four days of Easter, 86,919 persons passed through Seacombe; during the same period of Easter in 1907 the number of passengers was 188,850! The Whitsuntide traffic increased from 85,260 in 1901 to 167,407 in 1907, and the August Bank Holiday traffic from 88,689 to 163,541. By 1907 the Bank Holiday traffic at Seacombe had roughly doubled from the figures of just six years previously.

Referring to single day traffic we find that a record for Easter on the three ferries (Seacombe, Egremont and New Brighton) was in 1906 when 185,470 passengers were carried within twenty-four hours. The Whit Monday record was broken in 1907 when 202,145 passengers were carried and the record Bank Holiday Monday traffic was also 1907 when the number registered for the day was 208,757.

Combining the three Bank Holiday weekends (ten days) the record year was 1906 with 889,439 passengers. Striking an average over the past seven years (good seasons with bad) the turnstile returns showed that 777,500 passengers went to New

Brighton direct by boat; 75,000 by way of Egremont ferry, and 550,000 via Seacombe, so that a total of nearly one and a half million passengers made their way to New Brighton by the ferry steamers during the seven months of the summer season.

*The **Daffodil** was built in 1906. She received the prefix 'Royal' in 1919*

In 1907 the total number of passengers conveyed on the Wallasey ferries was twenty and a half million. This broke down as sixteen million landing and or departing from Seacombe, four million at New Brighton, and half a million at Egremont. The year was the first occasion when over twenty million passengers were carried and it showed by far the greatest increase over any preceding year on record. The popularity of the monthly contract tickets was evidenced by the fact that 120,000 were issued during 1907 – equivalent to 10,000 people taking out monthly contracts all year round.

There were approximately 350 men employed in the ferries service and this number was made up as follows: 4 chief officials, 7 storemen, 12 captains, 12 mates, 12 first-hands, 24 second hands, 6 boys, 12 engineers, 12 first firemen, 24 second firemen and 12 trimmers. There were in the yards, employed as watchmen and the like, about 30 hands. At Egremont landing stage there were 12 stagehands, 10 at New Brighton and 7 at Liverpool. There were 62 mechanics in the repair shops, 20 labourers and maybe 20 boys. In addition there were ticket collectors and inspectors, the number of which varied according to the time of year. The total wages paid to ferry employees annually was just short of £19,000.

The total working expenditure in 1907 for the Wallasey Ferries undertaking was £57,000 (including the wages); loan charges of £30,000 and a reserve fund of £2,000, making a total of £89,000. This amount had to be received in tolls before the ferries could be said to be paying their way.

The vast numbers of passengers carried during the summer season fell away drastically in the winter months, especially on the New Brighton and Egremont services. During the week 9th / 16th October 1907 the number of people passing through the turnstiles at New Brighton and paying threepence was 20,957 which gave a return of £262, and in the same week just 6,739 people, each paying twopence, passed through the turnstiles at Egremont producing a return of £56.

During the week commencing 6th November, just 6,276 passengers boarded at New Brighton, producing £78, and the Egremont figure was down to 3,751, which gave a return of £31, a combined weekly return of £109.

In addition contract tickets were available for regular passengers at both New Brighton and Egremont. In the month ended 31st March 1907, New Brighton had 358 first-class contract ticket holders, and 381 second-class, a total of 739. At Egremont the number of first-class contracts was 1,058, and 942 second-class.

Four ferry steamers were required to run the New Brighton and Egremeont services. These were the **John Herron** (which cost £62 per week to run); the **John Joyce** (£75 per week); the **Rose** (£90 per week) and the **Iris** (£98 per week).

For the week commencing 9th October 1907 it had cost £325 to run the steamers and the receipts were £318, showing a loss of £7. The week commencing 6th November had produced receipts of only £109, showing a combined loss of £216 on the New Brighton and Egremont services. It was estimated that these losses could be eradicated by reducing the number of steamers in service to three, which could offer a half-hourly service to New Brighton, and a fifteen minute on the Egremont route.

Excluding the contract ticket holders, the Egremont steamers conveyed on average just 14 passengers on each trip for the week of 9th October, whilst the New Brighton average for the week was 38. By the week of 6th November, the Egremont average was down to 4 passengers per trip, and the New Brighton average had fallen to 7 passengers. At a Council Meeting the general feeling was that it was ridiculous to run four steamers on the winter services to Egremont and New Brighton taking into account the heavy expense and low passenger numbers, and one ferry should be laid up with immediate effect. Feelings ran high and Councillor Yeoman said that it seemed to him that boats were being run for the convenience of a small number of New Brighton residents. It was 'monstrous', he said, that they should run a boat for seven or eight passengers. Councillor Ashmole felt that a full timetable should be maintained if the ferries were going to compete successfully with the railway company and went on to say that during the summer months the contractors from New Brighton were put to considerable inconvenience by the overcrowding on the steamers, and he thought these contractors were entitled to some consideration during the winter months. Councillor Parkinson went so far as to recommend the complete closure of the 'northern' (Egremont and New Brighton) services during the winter months.

Feelings began to run high and it was suggested that the matter had been dealt with 'after a fashion' and 'very unsatisfactorily'. Alderman Scott said that the Mayor had pre-conceived notions and theories about the New Brighton winter service which really warped his judgement. He was not able to take a perspective of the position as a man of his ability should. Alderman Scott went on to suggest that the increasing congestion at Seacombe was due to the poor service from the northern ferries, and that good services from both Egremont and New Brighton were vital in keeping the

Seacombe overcrowding to within manageable levels. The Mayor, Major Nesbitt, was of the persuasion that not only should the ferries be conducted along business lines, but that every boat should carry a sufficient number of passengers to pay for the journey, or failing that, it should be taken off.

The operation of the ferries took up a large proportion of the time at meetings of the Wallasey Town Council. In December 1907 there was concern about a large amount of coal, intended for the ferries, 'going missing'. In fact, it was stated that the coal 'unaccounted for' was in excess of 1,500 tons in 1907. There were two alternatives, suggested the Ferries' Committee, either the coal was never delivered, or else it was misappropriated. Mr J.P. Crawford, engineer with the ferries, said that he had made full allowance in respect of (a) the class of boats used in 1907, and (b) the alterations to the sailing schedules. Neither of these, went on Mr Crawford, have any bearing on the 1,500 tons which are unaccounted for. He continued: *"Nothing in the condition of the boats themselves, machinery etc., could account for these 1,500 tons. Nothing in the character and practice of stoking can account for them. I remain absolutely convinced that the coal was never burnt."*

Alderman Dawson said that to him there could be but few explanations of this excessive consumption. First and foremost was the suggestion of larceny. Personally, without any fear, Alderman Dawson told the Council that to his mind the question of larceny *"could be instantly dismissed"*. Secondly, there was the question of the quality of the coal. This could not so easily be dismissed as anyone who knew about coal would be aware that within a single shipment there would be significant differences in the burning quality.

Then there was the question of short weight. However Alderman Dawson said that from his personal experience he was aware that instead of shortage they might reasonably expect to receive generosity from the collieries, and with every wagon they might expect to receive 2cwt or 3cwt over, rather than a ton short. The Alderman then said that he did not think due allowance had been made for the possibility of stoking affecting the consumption.

He was aware of a case where two firemen were working on the same boilers but working different shifts. One fireman burned four tons more coal a week than the other fireman, yet it could not be said there was any real wastage. Then there was the question of foul boilers. Engineers the world over, said Councillor Dawson, had admitted that an increase of one-sixteenth of an inch in scale in the boilers would increase coal consumption almost unbelievably. Boilers ought to be attended to not every twelve months or month by month, but day by day.

Another prolific source of loss was increasing the speed of the boats. He had been told by one engineer that a steamer using ten tons per day, by trying to increase its speed by two knots, would not only add one-fifth to the consumption, but would actually square it.

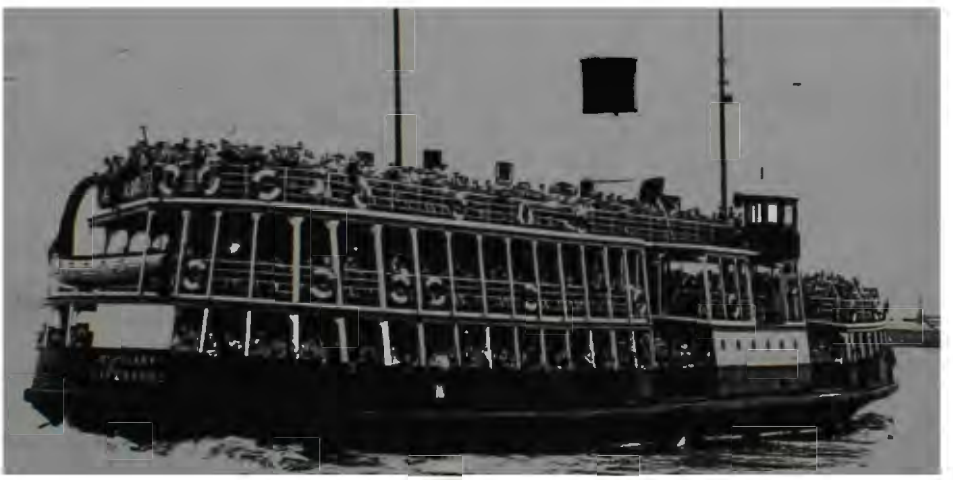
The conclusion reached was that the apparent loss of 1,500 tons of coal could be attributed to 'wastage in stoking'. This could be explained in two ways: the frequency of the sailings on the Egremont and New Brighton services, and the substitution of steamers which were more expensive to run on these two routes.

Comparing the coal consumption figures of 1901 with 1907 it was found that the increase was 4,000 tons per year over the period. Wallasey's consumption over

1907 would be roughly 28,000 tons, whereas it was understood that Birkenhead ferries' coal consumption for the year was estimated at 14,000 tons. The number of boats was the same in each case, yet the Wallasey services consumed double the amount of coal than did the Birkenhead services. Alderman Dawson said that he had been informed that the Birkenhead boats were never driven to their full capacity, but he was also informed, by those competent to judge, that if Birkenhead ran its ferry services on 14,000 tons of coal a year, then Wallasey certainly ought not to reach double that amount.

In order to reduce consumption, it was suggested that a system that was in vogue among large shipping companies should be adopted, namely that bonuses should be paid to stokers who had been the most economical with the coal. The Council ought to buy its coal on analysis and make perfectly sure that it contained 80% of carbon, as did best Welsh steaming coal. It was patently obvious if one watched the funnel of a Wallasey steamer that there was too much 'volatile matter' being consumed! The Ferries Committee should be instructed to report to the Council each month in respect of each steamer in service: (a) hours under steam, (b) mileage covered, (c) coal consumed; and it should purchase all coal in future based on analysis. The policy as regards the purchase of coal had recently been changed and instead of hard Welsh coal, it was soft Lancashire coal that was being used with the result that extra stokers were being employed to assist the regular men in their well-nigh hopeless task of keeping up steam. On one occasion, it was asserted, 47 bags of ashes had been taken out of the **Iris** in less than four hours.

Councillor Farley moved an amendment that the whole matter be 'dropped forthwith'. They were not going to recover the 1,500 tons of coal alleged to have been wasted and which, in his opinion, was 'all figures, not real'. There had even been suggestions, said Councillor Farley, that 'some of us poor councillors have had the coal!'



*The New Brighton service still carried vast numbers of passengers into the mid 1950s. In this photograph the **St Hilary** (ex **Royal Daffodil II**) leaves with a full complement*

BOOK REVIEW

LIGHTHOUSES OF LIVERPOOL BAY

by LNRS Members John and Diane Robinson

There can be a tendency to understate the strategic importance of lighthouse structures which were so vital to the safe navigation of vessels in coastal waters right up to the introduction of radar systems at the time of the Second World War and thereafter. Mariners had therefore to place total and absolute reliance on the continuous and efficient operation of lighthouses and floating lights to ensure safe passage in and out of port. Whereas from the turn of the 17th century, Trinity House held almost exclusive control of the lighthouses of England and Wales, those erected to safeguard the waters around Liverpool Bay, including the development of light-vessels, were run by Liverpool Dock Trust and its successor the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board.

John and Diane Robinson's passion for this subject is quickly and clearly apparent as they trace its history in and around the approaches to Liverpool Bay. Incredible as it might seem, back in the mid 17th century, Liverpool Town Councillors rejected an initial business proposal to erect a lighthouse on grounds that mariners could become exposed to greater dangers if wreckers' fires misled them into running aground with intent to plunder. A hundred years would pass before attitudes changed as shipping trade increased and the channels between sandbanks were marked with beacons, perches and buoys.

The Robinsons pursue their subject vigorously, posing many questions along the way, and finding answers to most of these. They offer a fascinating insight into some of the keepers' secondary occupations, legitimate or otherwise. However, the undoubted stars of this book are the lighthouses themselves – Leasowe, Bidston, Hoylake, New Brighton, Formby and Crosby, and as far afield as Point Lynas and Great Orme's Head. A myriad of tales associated with each is uncovered, incorporating a rich historical tapestry of the area. For instance, at Crosby we are told about the beginnings of forensic science in determining how a destructive fire was started, and then having to identify the number of casualties involved.

One by one each lighthouse becomes affected by change and in more recent years has been given a new purpose in life or converted to unattended status. Their stories are further enhanced by well in excess of a hundred photographs and illustrations which have been carefully selected and married into the lively text.

'Lighthouses of Liverpool Bay' is an altogether well-presented publication well worthy of recommendation for its enthralling read.

j.p.s.

LIGHTHOUSES OF LIVERPOOL BAY : John and Diane Robinson : Softback 192pp
ISBN 13 978-07524-4209-0 Tempus Publishing Limited : £15.99

SMALL SHIPS – DEEP WATERS, 1950 – 1960

by Alan McClelland

A paper presented to the Society on 19th April, 2007.

Small merchant ships have always exercised a particular fascination for observers, especially those employed in trades which took them beyond the traditional Elbe – Brest limits. In the years after the First World War the development of relatively small, reliable oil engines made rapid strides, and in their application to smaller categories of tonnage the Dutch often led the way. At the same time attention was paid to the refinement of hull forms, most noticeable at bows and sterns, producing effective and attractive flares and cruiser sterns to promote sea kindliness. The inflexibility of British tonnage and manning regulations inhibited this country's participation in small ship deep water trading for many years. Matters improved after the Second World War, *eg* with the 1967 revision of relevant rules.

In defining the limits of this paper an arbitrary decision had to be made in answer to the question: *What is a small ship?* A visit to the Calgary Grain Academy in 1997 revealed that so far as grain shipments out of Vancouver were concerned vessels of about 50,000tons deadweight were considered small! After much consideration, it was decided to settle on the pre-Seaway length limit imposed on international traders, namely that of the original Welland Locks – 259 feet.

1950 saw a burgeoning of interest in both increasingly large oil tankers and combination carriers and at the same time in small ships. At first British commentators tended to identify the latter in and around the 300 – 2,500dwt category. However changes in regulations governing the measurement of enclosed spaces (including engine rooms) and shelter decks, and developments such as those involving the heightening of hatch coamings rendered both gross and deadweight tonnages inappropriate guides.

Small vessels capable of long distance voyages were important elements in the provision of a number of services in the decade under consideration. They offered direct collection and delivery of cargoes from and to waterside locations such as factories often with restricted depths of water, thereby avoiding the congestion so often encountered at that time in large ports. In addition small motor ships could provide opportunities for regular movements of conveniently sized consignments with a further advantage in terms of cargo security. It is interesting to note a voyage made by the Dutch owned **Hondsrug** of 350 tons deadweight which delivered a cargo of bentonite clay from Italy direct to Winsford in November 1949. She was the first ship from the deep sea to penetrate so far along the Weaver since the Weaver Navigation Act of 1727.

Vessels with the same general arrangement as the **Hondsrug** are illustrated by Figure 1. She represented the smallest of the type at 135 feet length overall; larger versions ranged in size up to 190 feet in length. An alternative arrangement was for the mainmast to be stepped in the centre of the foredeck – between the cargo hatches. Derricks of 3 to 5 tons lifting capacity were fitted at such heights as to permit the handling of deck cargoes. In 1954 the Lamport and Holt Line purchased the Dutch **Hermes** of the type illustrated for its direct service between Liverpool and other UK ports and Asuncion in Paraguay via the Parana and Paraguay rivers. The **Verdi**, as she was renamed, was joined in 1956 by the **Virgil** from a German shipyard (A. Pahl,

SMALL SHIPS – DEEP WATERS, 1950-60

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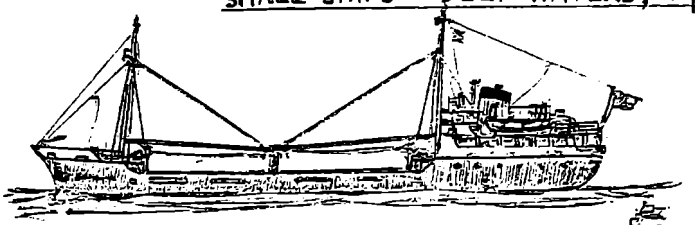

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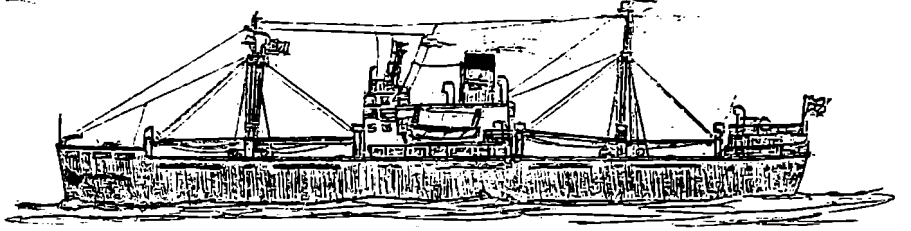

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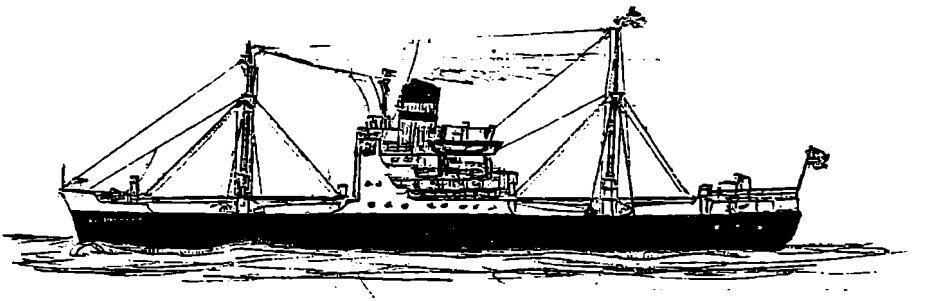

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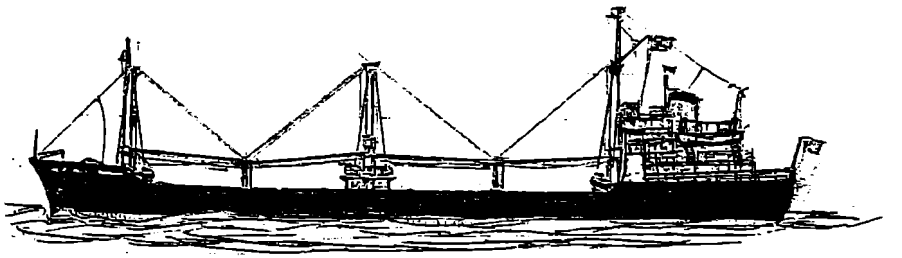

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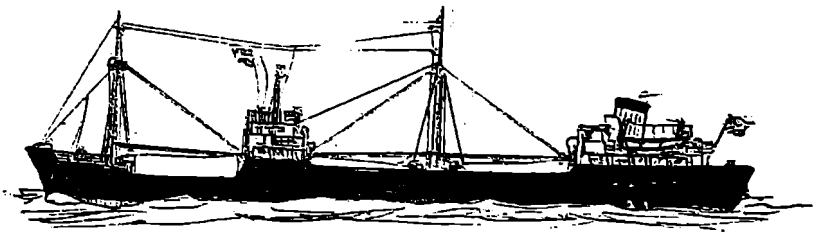

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Hamburg). The **Virgil** was flush decked, and taken on a bare boat charter. In 1962 her main engine bearing failed and she was adrift for some time until taken in tow by the **Verdi** and brought into Dakar. Other versions of the classic Dutch small ship were built with raised quarterdecks on which the second hatch was located and with raised poop decks aft.

The other North Western shipping company which employed small ships in regular ocean trading was Manchester Liners which developed a Great Lakes service. Scandinavian owners had pioneered this trade before the Second World War. For some years steamers with engines amidships were employed and to conserve hull space most of them were given their boilers 'on deck' – in fact on a half deck above and slightly abaft of their engines. This arrangement was patented in 1932 by a Dane, K.G. Meldahl, and the first ships were built at the Frederikstad yard in Norway. [For further details see A.H. McClelland : Boilers on Deck in '*A Merseyside Maritime History*', LNRS, 1988]. An impression of the vessels is given in Figure 2.

In 1952 Manchester Liners took delivery of two ships specially designed for the Great Lakes service. Built at the Cammell Laird yard, Birkenhead, the sister ships **Manchester Pioneer** and **Manchester Explorer** were of the open shelter deck type with forecastles and bridge decks. Given the conditions likely to be met with in the Atlantic they were sturdy in appearance (see Figure 3). Weather deck hatches were placed on a continuous trunk, which provided elevated winch platforms between the cargo hatches. Surprisingly to some commentators these steamers were equipped with double reduction geared turbines to provide a service speed of 11½ - 12 knots. On her maiden voyage the **Manchester Pioneer** transported an 'electronic brain' manufactured by Ferranti for the National Research Council of Canada at Toronto University. It was hailed as *"... a triumph for British industry"*. The **Manchester Pioneer** was lengthened in 1960, but remained too small following the opening of the St Lawrence Seaway. In 1953 Manchester Liners bought the Norwegian **Vigor** and renamed her **Manchester Prospector**. Of much the same dimensions as the Laird sisters she had been completed in 1948 by Langesunds, was powered by a compound engine with an exhaust turbine and her masts were located at the break of a 'sunken' or half height forecastle, in front of the bridge, at the after end of the superstructure and on the aftermost deckhouse – a Frederikstad arrangement. The machinery was of a type favoured up to post war years by Norwegian owners of small cargo ships. Manchester Liners' last small vessels were the **Manchester Vanguard** and the **Manchester Venture** of 1956. They were products of AG Weser, Bremerhaven, had bipod masts, three hatches and their engines, bridge and all accommodation were all located aft. Power for 12½ knots was supplied by twin oil engines geared to single screws. The **Manchester Vanguard** is reported to have made the first inbound voyage from Europe through the Seaway. Both ships proved too small for the new conditions and were sold to the General Steam Navigation Company in the early 1960s.

Earlier attention was drawn to the acquisition of two Dutch small ships by Lamport and Holt for their Ascuncion service. The first sailing was undertaken in December 1953 when the British flagged, Dutch built **Rampart** was chartered from the Ary Shipping Company of London. She left Liverpool on 24th December, arriving at her destination on 22nd January 1954 after negotiating all sorts of navigational hazards. In appearance the **Rampart** was similar to the vessel displayed in Figure 4,

although smaller at 235 feet length overall and with her superstructure built out to her sides to give a very solid mass. She had been built by Duivendijk, Lekkerkerk in 1952. In spite of the difficulties encountered in the Parana and Paraguay rivers, the **Rampart's** voyage was judged so successful that a regular service was instituted and maintained for many years – latterly with chartered tonnage. [For detailed accounts see *Sea Breezes*, Volume XVII, 1954, page 326, and P.M. Keaton's 'Lamport & Holt', page 91]. It may be added that in spite of her size, the **Rampart** was built with what was considered at the time to be very good accommodation for her crew.

The manning of British small ships in deep water trades presented problems for many years, especially in the matter of officer certification. By regulation relevant areas of trading were laid down in three categories: Home Trade from the Elbe to Brest; Middle Trade from Bergen to Santander and Foreign Going. Details of requirements may be found in Board of Trade publications of the time. Some compromises were effected during the period under discussion. For example, under some circumstances Home Trade qualified men could take ships of less than 1,600 tons gross on voyages in the Middle Trade. Britain lagged behind continental and Scandinavian countries in these matters; differences were accentuated by developments in marine engineering and communications technology. Note may be made of the practice of Lamport and Holt in one aspect of the Foreign Going situation. Captain Brian Scott reported in the LNRS '*Bulletin*' in December 2005: *'By volunteering to sail ..... aboard smaller ships for 12 months, officers sailed on their certificates of rank and as a result were obtaining command in their late 20s and early 30s as the fleet expanded'.*

Although not strictly a subject for this paper, vessels of the raised quarterdeck type depicted in Figure 5 are of interest. British built examples, later versions with bridges aft, featured in the Middle Trade, longer hauls to and from the Baltic and the Mediterranean and in the summer months on the coastal routes of the North American seaboard. For example the Constantine Shipping Company of Middlesborough took delivery of the **Teeswood** in 1952 from the Burntisland shipyard. She was placed on a general cargo service between the Great Lakes and Newfoundland. She was 236 feet in length overall and fitted with a 'tween deck in the main hold. She was of course also suitable for the carriage of bulk cargoes. Service in this sort of trade was arduous and some of the materials shipped caused considerable damage to cargo holds. As with other types of small ships susceptibility to heavy weather damage could have major effects on operations and vessel availability.

Major improvements at principal ports throughout the world, changes in trading patterns brought about for instance by containerisation, and emphasis on economics of scale brought much small ship activity in deep waters to an end. When modern short sea vessels are considered, including those capable of long distance inland waterway navigation, the question has to be asked once again: '*What is small*?'

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THE GREEK LINE AND LIVERPOOL

by Malcolm McRonald

An article in the March, 2007 '*Bulletin*' asked why the Greek liner **New York** had called at Liverpool. The precise date was 27th May 1958, and the surprising answer is that, at the time, the Greek Line was operating two semi-regular, primarily tourist-class, transatlantic services from Liverpool. Its sailings to New York normally started from Bremerhaven with a westbound-only call at Liverpool in off-peak periods. In contrast, its Canadian sailings developed into a full service, based on Liverpool, with the ships turning round there. The most regular caller was the veteran **Columbia**, on the Canadian service, but there were several calls by the founder member of the fleet, the **New York**, which mainly served her namesake port. Four other Greek Line vessels, including one chartered ship, each made a single visit.

The Greek Line (General Steam Navigation Co. Ltd. of Greece) was founded in 1938 by the Goulandris shipping family. Its first ship was the former Anchor liner **Tuscania** (1922), which was bought in 1939 and renamed **Nea Hellas** (New Greece). She was registered at the Greek island of Andros, which was customary for the Greek-flag ships owned by the Greek Line. Her service was from Piraeus and other Mediterranean ports to New York. During the war, she came under British control and was managed as a troopship by her former owners. She was nicknamed "Nellie Wallace" (a popular contemporary entertainer) by the troops, who apparently found her Greek name too challenging. She was released from trooping service in 1947 and, after a refit, resumed her service between Piraeus and New York.

Before the **Nea Hellas** returned from her wartime service, the Greek Line purchased a second ship, the former Australian (McIlwraith, McEacharn) coastal liner **Katoomba** (1913), which had sailed between Sydney and Perth. She was registered under the Panamanian flag, owned by Cia. Maritima del Este S.A., and made one round trip between Piraeus and New York, starting in December 1946. She was then chartered to the French Line (C.G.T.) until 1949. A second Australian ship, the former Howard Smith coastal liner **Canberra** (1912), was bought soon afterwards, and was also registered at Panama in the name of Cia. Maritima del Este. She had served the east coast of Australia, between Melbourne and Queensland. The Greek Line used her on sailings from the Mediterranean to Australia and Central America.

In 1949 the Greek Line bought a fourth passenger ship, the former "Nederland" liner **Johan de Witt** (1919), yet again registered at Panama in the name of Cia. Maritima del Este. She was rebuilt at Genoa, when her two thin funnels were replaced by a single broader funnel. She entered service as the **Neptunia** in May, running between Piraeus and New York. In the same year the **Katoomba's** charter came to an end. She was also refitted at Genoa, where she was renamed **Columbia**, in preparation for service from the Mediterranean to Central America.

The **Columbia's** new route does not appear to have been very successful, as she was switched in 1950 to another route, between the Mediterranean and Canada. While on this service, she undertook an experimental voyage from Montreal and Quebec to Cherbourg and Southampton. This was the Greek Line's first foray into

Northern European waters. In July 1950, she was joined by the **Canberra**, which made three further voyages from the Saint Lawrence to Cherbourg and Southampton.

In the early 1950s, large numbers of people were seeking to emigrate from Germany to North America, but there were no large German liners to meet the demand. The four round trips in 1950 convinced the Greek Line of the potential for North American services from Northern Europe. In April 1951, the **Neptunia** was switched to a new service from Bremerhaven, Southampton and Cherbourg to Boston and New York. Both the **Columbia** and the **Canberra** were switched in May 1951 and June 1951 respectively to a fortnightly service from the same three Northern European ports to Canada.

*The **Columbia** alongside Princes Landing Stage, Liverpool*
Photo: John Shepherd collection

In apparent anticipation of these new services, the Greek Line placed an order in February 1951 with the Clyde shipbuilder Alexander Stephen & Sons for a new ship, which was delivered in October 1953 as the **Olympia**. The builder did not normally build transatlantic liners, but had built the Greek Line's **Canberra** in 1913, and Elder Dempster Lines' flagship **Aureol** in 1951. After problems over Greek registration, caused by the existence of a foreign mortgage, the **Olympia** was placed under another flag of convenience, that of Liberia, in the ownership of the Transatlantic Shipping Corporation. This registry problem was not solved until 1968, when the **Olympia** was transferred to the Greek flag, but without any change of owner. The **Olympia's** maiden voyage departed from Glasgow on 15th October 1953, calling at Belfast, Liverpool (17th October), Southampton, Cherbourg and Cobh,

before crossing to New York. This was the Greek Line's first call at Liverpool, and the **Olympia's** only visit to the port.

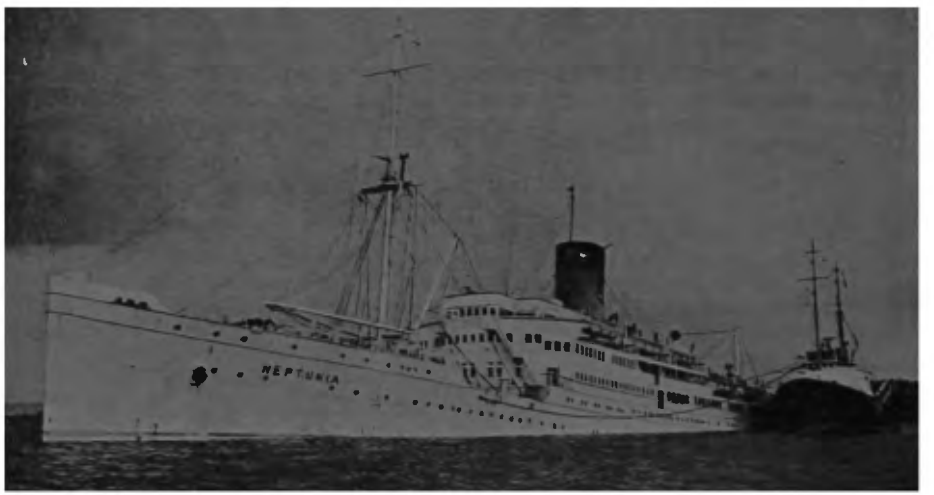
In 1954 the **Columbia** made an experimental voyage from Liverpool to Canada, departing on 16th April (she had sailed from Piraeus to Liverpool for the start of the Northern European season). Thereafter she spent the remainder of the season on the Canadian service from Bremerhaven and Southampton, partnered by the **Canberra**. The **Neptunia** remained on the New York service from Bremerhaven and Southampton in 1954, as a partner for the **Olympia**, but called at Liverpool on 20th April during a sailing to Halifax and New York. At the time, her hull was black, but it was painted white in the following year. The **Canberra** made her final Greek Line voyage in September 1954, but was then sold to the Government of the Dominican Republic, which renamed her **España**. Unlike the other Greek Line vessels on the transatlantic run from Northern Europe, she never called at Liverpool. In the same year, both the **Columbia** and the **Neptunia** were transferred to the Neptunia Shipping Co. S.A., but still under the Panamanian flag.

*The **Olympia** at Liverpool on her maiden voyage on 17th October 1953*
Photo: Keith P. Lewis

In 1955 the **Olympia** changed places with the **Nea Hellas**, which was renamed **New York** before entering service from Northern Europe to New York. After the advent of the **New York**, the **Neptunia** was transferred to the Canadian service. There were no calls at Liverpool by ships of the Greek Line in 1955. The **New York** was scheduled to call at Liverpool for the first time on 6th December 1955 during a westbound sailing, but the call was cancelled. This tended to be a feature of the Greek Line's service, with many scheduled autumn sailings being changed or cancelled, although the spring and summer programme was rather more reliable.

Both of the Greek Line's Liverpool services got under way in earnest in 1956. The **New York's** first call at Liverpool was on 9th April, with a second on 7th May and a third on 4th June. All of these sailings had started from Bremerhaven and called at Southampton before calling at Liverpool. On one of these arrivals at Liverpool, probably the first, there was a degree of embarrassment, with a report in the local press of difficulties in mooring the ship at the landing stage and in attaching the stage's extending gangways. This appears to have been due to the crew's unfamiliarity with the port and to language problems. The **Columbia** started her 1956 season with a sailing from Piraeus to Montreal. She then made two round voyages to Liverpool and was in port between 23rd and 26th April, and again between 17th and 20th May. She then reverted to Continental sailings for the remainder of her season.

The spring timetable for 1957 showed three visits to Liverpool by the **New York** in April (24th-27th, from and to both New York and Quebec), 28th May and 26th June. However, the last of these calls did not take place. The **Columbia** was scheduled to make five visits between April and July (5th April – outwards only at the start of the season, 26th-29th April, 20th-24th May, 13th-15th June and 5th-8th July), all with Liverpool as the terminal. In fact, the first outward sailing was preceded by an inbound sailing from Halifax, which arrived on 2nd April. To augment its Canadian service and to allow the **Neptunia** to make two summer cruises, the Greek Line chartered the Norwegian emigrant ship **Skaubryn** (1951) for four round sailings in the summer peak period. In July/August, the **Skaubryn** called at Liverpool (31st July / 2nd August) in place of the **Columbia**, which made a Continental sailing. The **Skaubryn** normally carried emigrants to Australia and, while on that service, was burned out in the Indian Ocean in March/April 1958.



*The **Neptunia** sinking by the stern after striking Daunt's Rock, off Cobh, on 2nd November 1957. The tug alongside is the **Turmoil**.*

Photo: Shipbuilding & Shipping Record

The **Columbia** was scheduled to make four further calls at Liverpool between August and October (23rd-26th August, 13th-16th September, 4th-8th October and 26th-30th October), followed by the **Neptunia** on 23rd-25th November, and again on 14th December. All these sailings turned round at Liverpool, giving the port a three/four-weekly service to Canada, its best ever by the Greek Line. Many of these sailings also called westbound at Belfast, and the **Skaubryn** was scheduled to call at Greenock on her one visit to Liverpool. However the Canadian service departed from its schedule in late September. The **Neptunia** was chartered by the Canadian Government to carry Canadian troops between Quebec and Rotterdam. She then made a round voyage from Boston to Bermuda, before setting out from there on her return to Europe. In her place, the **Columbia** was switched from Liverpool, so her last two scheduled Liverpool calls did not take place. After making one round sailing from Canada to Southampton and Northern Europe, the **Columbia's** next sailing was cut short, ending at Southampton on 30th October, whence she sailed immediately to Piraeus to be laid up for the winter. Unfortunately, while returning from Boston, the **Neptunia** struck Daunt's Rock, Cobh, on 2nd November and became a constructive total loss, so her only scheduled Liverpool calls in 1957, which had become doubtful as she was by then well off her advertised schedule, never took place. Despite the cancellations, the number of sailings to and from Liverpool in 1957 reached 19.

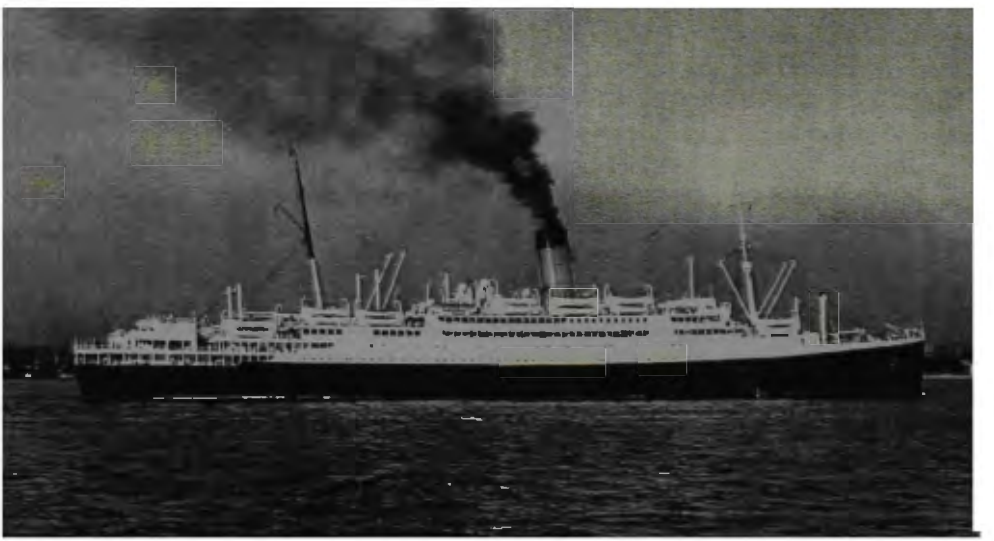
It is clear that these sailings were aimed principally at the budget and emigrant market, with fares undercutting those of Canadian Pacific and Cunard. The **Columbia** was the ship most frequently used from Liverpool. She carried 724 tourist class, but only 52 first class passengers The following table shows the **Columbia's** minimum fares for 1957, in £sd with a decimal equivalent, compared with the minimum fares for Canadian Pacific and Cunard:

	Low Season	High Season	Ship(s)
Tourist Class:			
Greek Line	£53-10-0. (£53.50)	£59-0-0. (£59.00)	**Columbia**
Canadian Pacific	£58-0-0. (£58.00)	£63-0-0. (£63.00)	**Empress of France**
Cunard	£62-10-0. (£62.50)	£68-0-0. (£68.00)	**Saxonia** class (4 ships)
Canadian Pacific	£63-0-0. (£63.00)	£68-10-0 (£68.50)	**Empress of Britain/England**
First Class:			
Greek Line	£69-10-0. (£69.50)	£78-10-0 (£78.50)	**Columbia**
Canadian Pacific	£84-0-0. (£84.00)	£93-0-0. (£93.00)	**Empress of France**
Cunard	£96-10-0. (£96.50)	£105-10-0.(£105.50)	**Saxonia** class (4 ships)
Canadian Pacific	£98-0-0. (£98.00)	£107-0-0. (£107.00)	**Empress of Britain/England**

The original timetable for 1958 saw a continuation of the extensive programme of Greek Line sailings between Liverpool and Canada. The **Columbia** was due to continue her three/four weekly Canadian sailings, with the **Neptunia** making an additional sailing at the end of May and replacing the **Columbia** for one round trip at the end of October. The **New York** was due to make two spring sailings to New York, the first starting from Liverpool on 26th April, and the second calling at Liverpool on 27th May, on a sailing from Bremerhaven, Le Havre and Southampton. The **Neptunia** was due to make one New York sailing from Liverpool on 11th April, having started from Southampton and Cherbourg after a winter cruise programme. In total, the Greek

Line scheduled 23 or 24 sailings to and/or from Liverpool, which would have exceeded the 1957 figure if all the sailings had taken place.

These plans were, of course thrown into disarray by the loss of the **Neptunia**. The Greek Line was fortunate in finding a replacement, the former British emigrant carrier **New Australia** (1931, *ex* **Monarch of Bermuda** 1949). Originally she had been built for Furness, Withy's luxury cruise service between New York and Bermuda, but she was burned out during her post-war refit and was then re-built to carry emigrants to Australia under the £10 assisted-passage scheme. During that refit, her top superstructure was cut off, and her three funnels were replaced by a single funnel with a Thorneycroft top, supplemented by a unique bipod funnel/mast immediately aft of her bridge. She had a single stump mast forward, which did nothing to improve her appearance. Her new owners placed her under the Greek flag, the first Greek Line ship to be so registered since 1939. She was refitted, which improved her bizarre appearance by giving her a slightly tapered funnel and a raked bow, and replacing her stump mast with a pair of better proportioned kingposts. She was given the name **Arkadia** (*sic*), with ownership by the Arcadia (*sic*) Steamship Corporation. (The distinction between Arkadia and Arcadia was used consistently in English transliterations; it probably arose because both 'c' and 'k' are denoted by the Greek letter 'kappa', but may also have been a means of distinguishing the name of the ship from that of the P&O liner **Arcadia**). The **Arkadia's** passenger capacity (50 first class, and 1,337 tourist class) was such that the Greek Line was able to withdraw the **Columbia**, which continued in lay-up at Piraeus until 1959, when she was sold to Japanese shipbreakers. Her withdrawal left the Greek Line's Northern European service in the hands of two ships, the **New York** and the **Arkadia**.



*The **New York** (ex **Nea Hellas**, ex **Tuscania**) made the last ever scheduled Greek Line call at Liverpool on 27th May 1958.* Photo: Malcolm McRonald

As a result of these changes, the Greek Line's 1958 timetable was re-cast, especially on its Canadian route. The **Arkadia's** maiden voyage started from Bremerhaven on 22nd May, with calls at Southampton, Cherbourg, Liverpool (25th May) and Greenock, before crossing to Quebec and Montreal. She was then scheduled to sail to Quebec and Montreal from Bremerhaven, Southampton and Cherbourg during the summer, with a further scheduled call at Liverpool westbound on 3rd November, and with London replacing Southampton on 20th November, her penultimate westbound sailing. In a later change to the scheduled programme, her calls at Southampton on 8th October (westbound) and 25th October (eastbound) were replaced by calls at London. The significance of these calls became apparent in 1959. Her arrival at Bremerhaven on 26th October marked the end of her transatlantic season, with the rest of the year's sailings being cancelled, so her scheduled call at Liverpool on 3rd November did not take place.

The **New York** was due to operate a similar schedule to that originally envisaged, but was to put in an additional Liverpool call on 28th June on an unusual routing, London – Bremerhaven – Greenock – Liverpool – Cobh – New York, which would have involved a sailing round the north of Scotland. However, a further revised timetable substituted Cherbourg for Greenock and Liverpool on that sailing (the time saved allowed her to call at Quebec before going on to New York), so the **New York's** final call at Liverpool was on 27th May 1958. That was the Greek Line's last sailing from Liverpool.

Liverpool failed to appear in the Greek Line's 1959 timetable, with London substituting for both Southampton and Liverpool in the **Arkadia's** programme, although the **New York** continued to use Southampton. The **New York** was withdrawn in 1959, so ending the Greek Line's service from Northern Europe to New York.

The Greek Line had two further associations with Liverpool. On 18th November 1964 the **Arkadia**, which had been operating cruises from Southampton, arrived in the Mersey for her overhaul, which was to be carried out by Grayson, Rollo & Clover in Birkenhead. The writer remembers seeing her at Rock Ferry Pier, presumably having her fuel tanks cleaned before entering dock. She was on the Mersey until 16th December, when she left for Southampton to resume her cruise service to Madeira. By a strange coincidence, her former sister, the **Queen of Bermuda** (1933), by then also single-funnelled, arrived at Cammell Laird's Birkenhead yard on 8th December 1964 for her annual overhaul, so the two ships spent a week in close proximity. The **Arkadia**, by that time nearing the end of her career, remained on a gradually diminishing Canadian service, with the gaps filled by cruises, only until 1966, when she was laid up and then sold to Spanish shipbreakers. In a further coincidence, the **Queen of Bermuda** was broken up at the same time, but in Scotland.

The other association with Liverpool was in the Greek Line's purchase of Canadian Pacific's **Empress of Britain** (1956) in 1964. She was bought as a partner for the **Olympia**, and sailed on the Greek Line's Mediterranean to New York service as the **Queen Anna Maria**.

This article has so far not referred to another member of the Greek Line fleet, which never made a transatlantic sailing or called at Liverpool. In 1963, the Greek

Line returned to the Nederland Line for a second purchase, the **Johan van Oldenbarnevelt** (1930), which was renamed **Lakonia**. The Greek Line had developed a cruise programme for some of its transatlantic ships, and intended to use the **Lakonia** as its first permanent cruise ship. Unfortunately she was burned out on 22nd December 1963, during a cruise from Southampton, and her remains sank off Gibraltar while under tow. Many of the survivors, both passengers and crew, were landed at Madeira and the Greek Line sent the **Arkadia** there to collect them and return them to Britain. This event, in which 128 passengers and crew lost their lives, damaged the Greek Line's reputation and possibly marked the start of its decline.

The **Olympia** and the **Queen Anna Maria** continued in service together on a gradually diminishing transatlantic service from the Mediterranean, interspersed with an increasing number of cruises. The partnership ended in March 1974, when the **Olympia** was laid up at Perama, in Greece. The Greek Line was facing bankruptcy at the start of 1975 and the **Queen Anna Maria** made a hasty departure from New York, without passengers, on 11th January, to join the **Olympia** at Perama. Both ships survived the Greek Line's bankruptcy and are still in service today. The **Olympia** now sails on, greatly rebuilt and with new engines, as the **Regal Express**. The **Queen Anna Maria**, renamed **Carnivale**, joined her former fleetmate **Empress of Canada** (**Mardi Gras**) in the Carnival fleet in 1975. After two further sales and renamings, she was chartered to Thomson Cruises between 1998 and 2003 as **The Topaz**. She now sails under charter to the Japanese 'Peaceboat' educational organisation.

In retrospect, it appears that the Greek Line's Canadian service from Liverpool was a serious attempt to fill a gap in the market by providing a lower fare alternative to the two established British companies. In contrast, its Liverpool – New York service, which only operated outside the summer peak period, seems to have been an attempt to fill low-season berths which would otherwise have remained empty.

This article started by answering one question. It finishes by asking another. The Greek Line was one of only two foreign companies to operate a 'regular' passenger service from Liverpool in post-war years. The other company was the Spanish Aznar Line, which served the Canary Islands, in succession to Liverpool's Yeoward Line. In addition, the author is aware of the following calls at Liverpool by foreign passenger ships:

- The Italian liner **Sydney** (1943) ex USS **Croatan**, ex HMS **Fencer**, a converted escort carrier owned by Flotta Lauro, made three voyages to Quebec and one to Halifax in the summer of 1953.
- The Norwegian car ferry **Viking II** (1964), owned by Thoresen Car Ferries, visited on 27th and 28th October 1964 on a 'show the flag' tour around Britain.
- The Swedish American liner **Kungsholm** (1966) called on 7th May 1968, to pick up passengers stranded by the breakdown of her tender at Llandudno, **St Trillo**.
- The Bergen line ship **Meteor** (1955) called on 12th May 1968 at the start of a charter to the National Trust of Scotland.
- There have also been several calls in recent years by foreign cruise ships.

The question is whether any readers can add additional names (and dates) to this post-war list ? ▌

THE BOND OF THE SEA

by LNRS Member Leslie Leigh

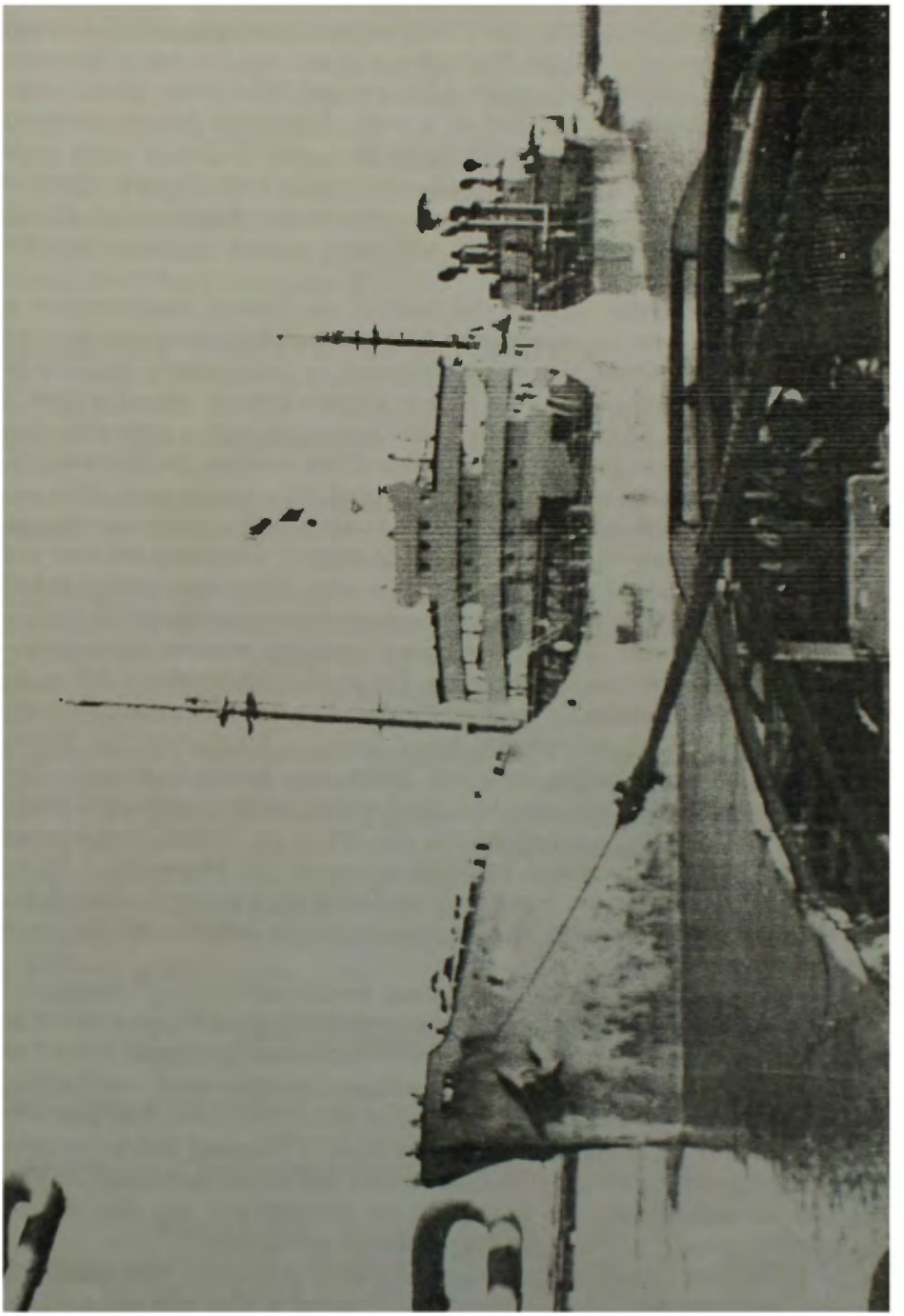
Royal and Merchant Navy fortunes are very closely linked in wartime, so a happy, if gruelling, peacetime example may serve as a reminder that the spirit of our common calling never dies.

On 16th December 1952 the **Esso Fawley** (Captain L. Mitchell), on passage from Mina al Ahmadi (Kuwait) to the UK carrying around four million gallons of crude oil, arrived at Suez. She was preparing to tie up in the Farouk Channel to allow the transit of a southbound convoy when, following a 'full astern' manoeuvre to take the way off, she grounded heavily. Attempts to get the **Esso Fawley** under way again failed, and a subsequent inspection which was completed by 18.00hrs on 19th December, confirmed that the rudder was missing, having apparently broken off just below the rudder post coupling, and that the foot of the stern frame was fractured and partly missing. As the **Esso Fawley** was a single screw vessel, she was unable to help herself and two tugs were required to assist her through the Canal to Port Said with her recovered rudder stowed on deck. The Esso Transportation Company arranged for her oil cargo to be discharged at Bari and for drydocking and repair at Palermo.

The largest towing vessels immediately available for these two voyage stages were the Admiralty's powerful ocean-going Fleet tugs HMS **Marauder** and HMS **Brigand**, both based at Malta. Their relatively mundane duties largely comprised towing Battle Practice Targets (BPTs), some 140ft long and 30ft high, for either full or sub-calibre gunnery practice by the Royal Navy or other NATO navies. Occasional excitement resulted from one of the latter (which shall not be named!) not fully appreciating that the drill was for the towing vessel to mark and radio back the splash positions, 'short' or 'over', and *not* to hit the target itself or the tug (a sub-calibre direct hit on the **Marauder's** empty galley had once been experienced!) HMS **Marauder**, commanded by the late Lt. Cdr. F.C. Hard was chosen for the **Esso Fawley** job.

After curtailed Christmas celebrations, the **Marauder** slipped from Parlatorio North, on French Creek, Grand Harbour, at 11.49 on Boxing Day, and set course towards Port Said on 106° at 120rpm (normal full speed). A pilot was embarked at 08.10 on Tuesday 30th December and the **Marauder** went alongside No.3 berth, Naval Jetty. A defect on No.1 boiler room fan was repaired with the aid of a local machine shop; the **Marauder's** workshop comprised a bench, vice and vertical bench drill! Preparation for the forthcoming tow precluded shore leave but the cruiser HMS **Kenya** provided some entertainment for the **Marauder's** crew with her cinema.

Unfortunately the **Marauder's** Deck Log for the month of January 1953 has failed to make it through to the National Archives, Kew (lost in the sea of evidence needed to assess the hire cost to Esso?), so the events of January rely largely on memory recall. There is a similar gap in the **Esso Fawley's** Official Log Book (Memorial University of Newfoundland's Maritime History Archive) between 19th December 1952 at Port Said and 15th February 1953 at Palermo (other than a footnote:



*HMS **Marauder** leaving Port Said with the **Esso Fawley** in tow on 8th January, 1953*

'*vessel towed to Palermo*'). However, enthusiastic help came from the Special Collections Library, Civic Centre, Southampton and from Exxon Mobil, Leatherhead.

On 8th January 1953 the **Marauder** with the **Esso Fawley** on short tow eased out of Port Said towards Bari, some 1,200 nautical miles away which, under good conditions, might take the best part of a week. Apart from learning to control this rudderless tow and consequent tendency to yaw, care had to be taken paying out something like 600ft of tow wire in shallow waters for some distance, combined with an agreeable tow speed. Every combination was considered and/or tried, including the use of the **Esso Fawley's** engine and, with some success, rigging a temporary sail forward to steady her head.

Weather at that time of the year in the Eastern Mediterranean can be unpredictable and with the standards of forecasting of fifty years ago, even more so. The heavens opened and high winds followed by deteriorating visibility brought serious concerns, particularly at one time in a brief clearance when the **Esso Fawley** found herself almost on the **Marauder's** starboard beam with a grave risk of girding. After regaining control and with some easing of the weather, the **Marauder's** steam reciprocating port main circulating pump stopped with a loud bang. With no cross-connecting system and insufficient 'way' to scoop a little cooling sea water into the port condenser, the port main engine had to be stopped. The pump had been resleeved during a recent dockyard refit, but the poor quality of the liner casting had allowed rapid and excessive wear on one side to the point where the edge of the piston caught the lip above the wear. The 'spares aboard' had the required components which required some modification by machining. The weather kindly abated further allowing the **Marauder** to go alongside the **Esso Fawley**. This brief opportunity was seized to take on some fuel oil and freshly baked bread, a luxury that the **Marauder's** provisions and tiny primitive coal-fired galley was unable to provide. The **Esso Fawley's** well-equipped workshop and many willing hands helped to put together the piston rod assembly and close up the job just before the weather took a turn for the worse again. It was considered expedient to 'nurse' the **Marauder** a little, so an additional tug was called for. Fortunately the Dutch tug **Hudson** (L. Smit & Co.) was able to respond in good time to ease the passage into the Adriatic, and the tow reached Bari on 14th January.

Provisioned and refreshed, the three vessels sailed on 17th January with the **Marauder** taking the **Esso Fawley** in tow, and the **Hudson** hanging on her stern to help 'steer', and for two days the weather was fair. Then a prolonged Force 8 gale out of the north tested seamanship to the limit with the operation being vitally aided by the **Hudson's** modern and accurate DF equipment which confirmed their positions. This 800 nautical mile leg to Palermo (*not* via the Strait of Messina) took seven exhausting days, arriving on 24th January. The **Esso Fawley** had somehow managed to clean and ventilate her tanks during this battle with the elements and was thus able to enter harbour immediately, releasing the **Marauder** and the **Hudson**.

The **Esso Fawley's** drydocking and repairs at Palermo were slightly delayed by the ss **World Unity** breaking her moorings during a fresh gale and colliding with the **Esso Fawley's** port side, buckling some shell plating. By 17th March all repairs had been completed and passed by the Lloyd's Surveyor, and the **Esso Fawley** sailed for Liverpool where she arrived and discharged her crew on 21st April.

Meanwhile, the **Marauder** had returned to Malta and after her crew had resumed their interrupted Christmas and New Year leave, she resumed normal duties. By now Battle Practice Target towing had lost any of the excitement it may once have held, so when, on 28th February the **Marauder** slipped at 09.56 towards Gibraltar on course 295° at 120rpm, spirits ran high. The prospect for the **Marauder's** crew in the short-term future was the mundane, but different, task of berthing and unberthing HM ships **Forth, Vanguard, Gambia, Implacable, Eagle, Theseus, Indomitable, Euryalas** and the **Indefatigable** for Home and Mediterranean Fleet exercises.

But that was in another, almost forgotten, age which our now sadly depleted Navy would find it hard to imagine. ▌

HMS MARAUDER Ocean-going Fleet tug, Brigand class.
Built by Fleming & Ferguson at Paisley; launched 9th November 1938.
840 tons displacement. Length: 165ft bp, 174ft oa. x 32ft x 10ft 8in.
2 reciprocating triple-expansion engines. 1,500 IHP each, 2 shafts. 15½ knots.
2 Admiralty 3-drum boilers. Bunkers: 390 tons oil fuel
Clark-Chapman, Gateshead, Automatic self-rendering winch for BPT towing.
Complement: 43 Officers and key ratings – UK, remainder Maltese RN.

ESSO FAWLEY - Oil Tanker (ex TURKEY ISLAND)
Sun Shipbuilding & DryDock Co., Chester, Pennsylvania. Launched Sept., 1944.
10,712 tons gross. Length: 506.5ft x 68.2ft x 39.2ft.
Registered : (Esso Transportation Co.) London, 1947
Official Number : 181600, Signal Letters G Y M M
Steam turbo-electric (Westinghouse Elec. & Mfg. Co., Pittsburg, Pa.)
The Esso Fawley was the first tanker to use the new Marine Terminal, Fawley, on 15th August 1951 (discharged 4 million gallons of Arabian crude).
In 1955 she was converted to a bulk carrier by Sasebo Heavy Industries, 'stretched' to 564.5ft and renamed ATTICUS (Cia.Nav. Lorca – Liberian flag)
1957 – renamed ANDROS SATURN (Cia.Nav. Lorca – Liberia)
1960 – renamed SKIATHOS (Cia.Nav. Vivalvaro – Greece)
1963 – scrapped at Aioi (Japan).

THE MONDAY FACILITY

Members' access to the Archives and Library on Mondays at the Merseyside Maritime Museum continues as follows.
All Members of the Society are invited to make use of this unique facility.

SEPTEMBER : Mondays 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th.
OCTOBER : Mondays 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th.
NOVEMBER : Mondays: 5th, 12th, 19th and 26th.
DECEMBER : 3rd, 10th and 17th.

MEMORIES OF THE '*JERVIS BAY*'

by Adrian Thorpe

Part 2 (continued from the June '*Bulletin*')

After this second convoy we had two day's 'rest' in Freetown (during which we painted the ship's sides), and then for a change we were given a salvage job, towing the 5,500 ton **Hartismere**, which had broken down off Pernambuco while on her way home from Buenos Aires. On our way south we crossed the Line and celebrated the event in the traditional manner. Even Blackout, one of the ship's two cats, did not escape his ducking, although the other cat, Lookout, was wiser and contrived to remain hidden all the afternoon. Lookout was in fact a far wiser cat than Blackout, for he used to take his meals in the wardroom and consequently had grown at least double the size of Blackout, who was more proletarian and used to eat with us on the messdeck.

Our next assignment was to scour the South Atlantic for the **Strombus**, a 10,000 ton Norwegian whale 'factory' which was overdue on her return from South Georgia. The rigid enforcement of wireless silence on all ships at sea, so as to prevent the enemy from 'homing' on a ship's signals, made the failure of our quest a foregone conclusion. The largest object sighted during the whole trip was a whale. Day after day the sea was so calm that it was like a sheet of pale blue glass, and so still that you could hear the splash of the flying fish as they hit the water. They looked like squadrons of miniature silver Spitfires as they skimmed the surface.

There was one great drawback to all this. The **Jervis Bay** had been fitted out for the Northern Patrol, so no provision had been made for ventilating the messdeck, whose steel sides had by mid-day grown too hot to touch, and remained so until long after sunset. The opening of portholes whilst at sea was forbidden, so we were treated to a Turkish bath every time we ventured below. We used to keep bath towels by our side to mop up the sweat that poured off us when we ate, and every morning when we drew our butter ration we dumped the pat into a jug, and thereby saved ourselves the trouble of having to spread the stuff on our bread: we simply poured it on!

Driven off the messdeck by the heat, we used to sling our hammocks on the upper deck and were lulled to sleep watching the Southern Cross swinging gently to and fro behind the masts. Sometimes, however, even this arrangement had its disadvantages and one night I awoke from a dream that I was swimming to find that it was pouring with rain and that I and my bedding were soaked. After ten days fruitless search looking for the **Strombus** we returned to Freetown where we refueled and then sailed north to Dakar.

On leaving Dakar, instead of escorting a convoy back to the UK, we were ordered to Bermuda. On our way across the Atlantic we ran into the tail end of a hurricane. Streamers of white spray, whipped high by the great wind from the ice-blue, translucent crests of the great waves, enveloped the whole ship. After two days of this we came under the lee of Bermuda and the sea grew calm. These islands seemed like some paradise after the weary months of convoy work. During my afternoons ashore, when cycling past white fields of Bermuda lilies and between walls of scarlet hibiscus

and pink and white oleanders, I had ample opportunity to ruminate on the folly of war. After seven days at anchor in the Great Sound, the **Jervis Bay** moved out to Bailey's Bay where our convoy awaited us.

Most of the 27 ships were tankers. From Galveston, Curaçao and Port of Spain they had come, laden with oil from Texas, Venezuela and Trinidad. A surprising proportion of them were sailing under the Panamanian flag; indeed it seemed as if this miniature republic was the possessor of one of the world's most flourishing merchant navies. The ships were in fact American, and were registered in Panama to evade the Neutrality Act which forbade U.S. ships from carrying goods to belligerent countries.

We weighed anchor at dawn the following morning, but so vast was the convoy that half the day was spent in shepherding the ships into their correct positions and it was afternoon before the frail silhouette of Bermuda finally dropped astern. On this, as on all our succeeding convoys from Bermuda, we were escorted for the first few miles of our journey by HMS **Penzance**. Fitted with the latest Asdic submarine detecting gear, she was reputedly an infallible protection against U-boats, and we always felt secure when she was anywhere in the vicinity. Consequently, it came as a shock to us when we learned, a few months later, that HMS **Penzance** had herself been torpedoed – with the loss of all but eight of her crew. The luxury of having Bermuda as our base was to be short-lived: one morning we sailed without a convoy and headed north alone.

At dawn two days later, an ice-cold pine-scented wind cut like broken glass into our faces and when the morning watch finished at eight o'clock, we couldn't get below quick enough to the longed-for warmth of the messdeck. Five months in and around the tropics had made our blood thin! When we came up on deck again after breakfast we were passing Chebucto Head with the grain elevators of Halifax dead ahead.

Extraordinary rumours were current in Halifax at that time. One was that American bombers were being flown across the Atlantic to England at the rate of one a minute. But like the rumours that the **Jervis Bay** herself would soon be going home for a refit, it was just more wishful thinking.

Three days later the **Jervis Bay** headed eastward escorting a convoy of twenty ships. The passage was uneventful and off the north-west coast of Ireland we streamed our bag of mail, packed in a watertight barrel tied to a long line, to a ship astern, and turned about and headed back to Canada.

Once more our hopes of shortly returning home proved to be in vain. The fall of France was followed by the Battle of Britain, and England became far too preoccupied with the impending blitz to pay attention to the **Jervis Bay's** refit. Yet after more than 50,000 miles since leaving Woolwich the old ship was beginning to show signs of wear, so we were dispatched up the Bay of Fundy and into the drydock at St John, New Brunswick. During the five weeks we spent in the drydock we were granted just forty-eight hours leave.

We returned with less zest than ever to the Battle of the Atlantic. The **Jervis Bay** was an anachronism and her crew was heartily sick of washing paintwork and holystoning decks, and gaping at a lot of merchant vessels, knowing there was precious little we could do for them if anything went wrong. I decided that I had had enough of armed merchant cruisers and so on our return to Halifax I volunteered for

the job of ferrying lend-lease American destroyers to Britain. On our next eastbound convoy several of the ships showed evidence of American assistance in the shape of light bombers stowed on their upper decks, and several of the ships were rumoured to be carrying ammunition. The **Jervis Bay** had more than forty ships to look after, and as usual, she was the sole escort. One night, a tanker, the **Frederick Fales** gave six blasts on her whistle, the signal that she had sighted a submarine. We trained our guns on the only suspicious-looking object in sight, only to find that it was one of the ships in the convoy that had strayed out of formation in the dark. The next morning the master of the tanker explained that he had sighted what looked like the wake either of a submarine or of a torpedo pass just ahead of him.

A gale was blowing up. Steadily the wind increased as we laboriously pitched and rolled our way eastwards, and steadily the smaller ships in the convoy began to stray off in all directions. In consequence the **Jervis Bay** spent the next two days and nights wandering around the ocean signalling to stragglers, and every now and then the bosun's mate would go round the messdecks piping, as they did in destroyers in heavy weather, '*the ship will turn in five minutes time*': the signal to hang on for dear life to everything moveable in the mess.

Finally the storm abated and one by one the ships which had fallen behind reappeared over the western horizon, until at last our numbers were complete once more. Several ships reported of having had their lifeboats swept away by the high seas, so the news that the U-boats were extra busy just ahead was not exactly encouraging. That night, following orders we had no choice but to obey, we left the convoy on its own, right in the middle of the U-boats' hunting ground. The shortage of escort vessels at this time was pitiful. Yet I can well imagine the feelings of the men in our convoy when they saw us turn away at this time and leave them to their own resources. Within four hours two of the ships (the **Elmbank** and the **Blairangus**) had been sunk.

On our arrival back in Halifax my draft chit to one of the newly handed over, 25 year-old American destroyers was awaiting me and I was left behind when the **Jervis Bay** sailed three days later with Convoy HX 84.

Unlucky **Jervis Bay**. She was a part of the peaceful world that has vanished for ever, and she deserved a better end than the tragic, if noble one, that befell her on her final convoy. I was sad to leave her and sadder still to say goodbye to the many men whose lives had become a part of mine, whose friendship had done so much to brighten my long days on the lower deck. They were the men of whom it was said by the captain of one of the ships in Convoy HX 84 that the **Jervis Bay** sacrificed herself to save: *"While we have such men as these guarding our seaways, we shall never go hungry."* ▌

Kapitän zur See T. Kranke took the **Admiral Scheer** to sea on 23rd October 1940, two days before the departure of Convoy HX 84 from Halifax. The November of 1940 was a cold, miserable month in the North Atlantic with a series of depressions sweeping across the bleak, grey seas, providing cover for the escape of the **Admiral Scheer**. Kranke avoided all contact with other vessels using radar to warn him of their proximity.

At about 09.00 on 5th November 1940 Kranke ordered his Arado seaplane to be catapulted into the air and its pilot, Leutnant Pietsch, was ordered to locate convoys, keep out of sight and maintain radio silence. Pietsch returned at noon to report that he had located a large convoy (HX 84) and that no enemy warships were in sight. Since the weather was reasonable, Kranke decided to attack that afternoon.

Convoy HX 84 ploughed its way doggedly eastwards. It consisted of 38 ships in nine columns commanded by Commodore R.H. Maltby aboard the Cardiff-registered tramp **Cornish City**. Indistinguishable from the other members of the convoy was its escort, the Armed Merchant Cruiser **Jervis Bay**, steaming in the centre of the convoy. The **Jervis Bay** was commanded by Captain E.S. Fogarty Fegen.

The **Admiral Scheer** was first spotted by the **Rangitiki** which signalled the **Cornish City**. Captain Fegen on the **Jervis Bay** saw his enemy at about 16.35 and immediately ordered action stations, full speed and smoke. Commodore Maltby signalled the entire convoy to execute an immediate forty-degree turn to starboard, whilst the **Jervis Bay** hauled out towards the 'grey smudge' which was the Admiral **Scheer**. The two vessels were about ten miles apart, and Krancke now swung the **Admiral Scheer** to open all gun arcs, and fired on the convoy. Captain Fegen ordered the **Jervis Bay's** forward 6-inch guns to open fire but their shells fell short of the **Admiral Scheer**. He then ordered red rockets and signalled the merchant ships in the convoy to set off smoke flares to confuse the German gun-laying. At 17.10 Commodore Maltby ordered Convoy HX 84 to scatter.

Captain Fegen's efforts to draw the **Admiral Scheer's** fire were successful, and Krancke ordered his own gunners to shift their target, confident that they would make short work of the **Jervis Bay**. The Admiral Scheer's third salvo struck the **Jervis Bay's** bridge and fires were started throughout the ship, and, as in the case of the **Rawalpindi**, her wooden interior fittings, boats and decks quickly ignited. With his telemotor destroyed, Captain Fegen strove to steer using the **Jervis Bay's** twin screws. He himself was severely wounded, but after some crude bandaging, he made his way aft to the docking bridge where hand steering was engaged.

One by one the **Jervis Bay's** ancient guns were knocked out. The ship was riddled with shells and her engines stopped. It had taken twenty-two minutes for the **Admiral Scheer** to destroy the **Jervis Bay**. Two hours later she rolled over and sank by the stern, her white ensigns still flying but obscured by the darkness, only the sudden extinguishing of the fires signalling her passing. While 68 men escaped by jumping into the sea, Captain Fegen and 186 of his crew perished with the **Jervis Bay**.

As the **Admiral Scheer** chased the merchantmen of Convoy HX 84 scattering to the south, Krancke was aware that Captain Fegen's sacrifice had cost him the success of his own attack.

Aboard the Swedish **Stureholm** that night, Captain Sven Olander mustered his crew, and proposed to unanimous agreement that they should return to search for survivors. The next morning the **Stureholm** located one lifeboat and some rafts containing the remnants of the **Jervis Bay's** crew. Of the 68 men who had escaped from the burning vessel, three had died of their wounds in the night.

Thirty-one ships of Convoy HX 84 reached port safely, including the tanker **San Demetrio**. Captain Fogarty Fegen of the **Jervis Bay** was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross. ▌

THE INTRODUCTION OF HEAVY OIL IN DIESELS

by LNRS Member James A. Pottinger

The following notes relate to a certain development in Marine Engineering in Britain in an earlier era which had a considerable effect on the economy and operation of machinery afloat. Sadly such innovations and advances have passed to other nations with the demise of heavy marine engineering in this country.

Currently the most powerful marine engine in service is the Wartsila 14-cylinder two stroke diesel engine of 960mm bore producing 80,080kW (108,920bhp) at 102 rpm to ensure a service speed of at least 24·5 knots in the 11,000 TEU; 157,000 ton deadweight container ship **Emma Maersk**. This behemoth is 397metres long by 56·4 metres beam, with a depth of 30 metres. (1,302ft x 186.5ft x 99.2ft). It will be noted that each cylinder is developing no less than 7,780bhp!

Given the truly astronomical horsepower generated by ships' diesel engines today, it may be of interest to recall the dilemma confronting shipowners in 1950 as noted in the August,1950 issue of the *Motor Ship* monthly journal. Figures quoted indicated that 1,100bhp per cylinder of 720mm bore was the maximum achieved; thus the power developed in one cylinder in the **Emma Maersk** compares with that of the main engine installed in a medium sized cargo ship of the 1950s.

Incredible as it now seems, in the 1950s it was generally accepted that for anything above 5,000bhp, the choice would be for a steam turbine installation; the advances in geared turbine efficiency and the wide differential in cost between the heavy fuel used in boilers and that of the more refined diesel fuels commonly used in oil engines being the decisive contributory factors, even given the fact that averaged over the life of a ship the fuel consumption of a steam ship was at least 50% greater than that of a comparable motor ship. Comparisons of associated maintenance and other running costs between the two prime movers tended to vary depending on the technical competence and manning arrangements of the different shipowners.

Prominent in the development of a system to use heavy fuel in the marine diesel engine was John Lamb, chief superintendent engineer of the Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company, who carried out two years of trials at Newcastle with an 8-cylinder 4-stroke Werkspoor diesel engine built by Hawthorn-Leslie, before installing it in the Shell tanker **Auricula** in August 1946. This 4,000ihp engine went into service using boiler oil having a viscosity not exceeding 1,500 seconds Redwood No.1 at 100 degrees Fahrenheit. (The viscosity of oil [Fluidity] is measured in a Redwood Viscometer by timing the flow of a 50ml sample through a standard orifice). At that time the marine diesel engine used a distillate fuel with viscosity between 45 and 60 seconds Redwood No.1, whereas steamships used one of the final fractions of crude oil known as 'boiler-oil'.

In 1946 the cost differential was approximately £2.10s per ton, and for a ship such as the **Auricula**, the annual saving was in the region of £7,700 per annum.

Concerns were raised in respect of potential increased cylinder liner wear and deposits on critical parts of the fuel injection items etc; but with experience gained in the running of machinery on heavy oils, the maintenance costs overall were little more

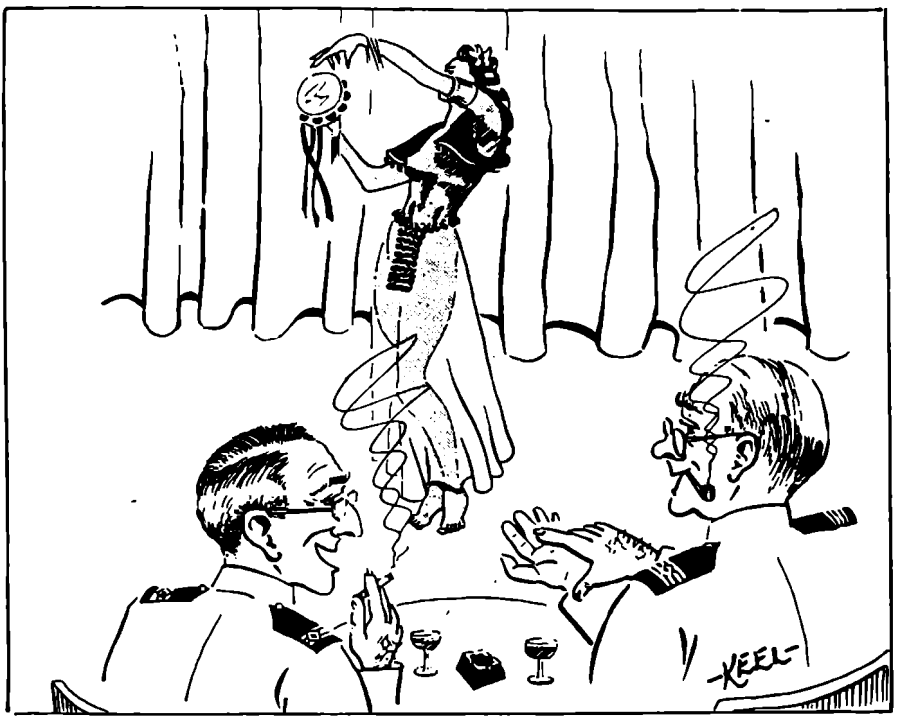
than when using lighter fuels and well within acceptable limits. Results had shown that the sulphur content, in either diesel or boiler oils, was unimportant in its effect on liner wear.

The cost differential was obviously greater in higher powered installations; for example the 14,000shp Doxford machinery installed in the New Zealand Shipping Company's **Hinakuru** and **Suffolk** using some 50 tons daily, resulted in a saving of over £120 per day. It was estimated that taking as an example a 10,000 ton 15-knot cargo liner using 25 tons of fuel daily, or 5,000 tons yearly operation, using boiler fuel instead of diesel could save £12,000 per annum.

The cost of installing suitable processing purifiers, clarifiers and heating equipment to enable boiler fuel to be used in diesel operations in new construction varied between £5,000 and £10,000 depending on the preferred layout; thus it can be seen that the initial capital cost could soon be recovered.

Eleven years after the **Auricula's** pioneering voyage, all the motor ships in the Shell fleet had been converted to use boiler oil as fuel.

The next obvious aim was to prove the suitability of heavy boiler fuel for use in auxiliary diesel engines, thus avoiding the need to carry two grades of bunker fuel.



"*. . . at a pressure of* 50 *lbs. p.s.i. or* 3·5 *kG/cm² and temp.* 930° *F. . . .*"

Forty Years Ago .....

THE LAST VOYAGE OF THE '*QUEEN MARY*'

Forty years ago, on 16th September 1967, the ***Queen Mary*** *left Southampton on her final trans-Atlantic crossings. Just over six weeks later, on 31st October she sailed for Long Beach, via Cape Horn, where she remains to this day.*

The emergence of the long distance jet air liner in the late 1950s effectively sounded the death knell for the trans-Atlantic passenger liner. Few had more to lose than the Cunard company. It would appear that Cunard Line management and others, notably the French Line, had been lulled into a sense of false security by the unfailing profitability of their superliners. The concept of the behemoth Atlantic ferry, brain-child of Sir Percy Bates, Lord Royden and others in the late 1920s had been proven beyond doubt, but the Cunard Line directors were finding it difficult in the late 1950s to accept that an era had ended, and that the travelling public would increasingly abandon '*Gracious Living Afloat*' (Cunard's time-honoured slogan) in favour of packing themselves into a winged tube which would cross the Atlantic in a little over seven hours instead of 4½ days. The concept of '*Getting There Is Half The Fun*' was no longer applicable.

By 1962 the Cunard Line had tacitly accepted that the writing was on the wall when it abandoned any thought of building a conventional 'Q3' design as a replacement for the **Queen Mary**. Yet for a further five years the Company persevered grimly with the operation of two ageing ladies to the decimation of both cash flow and profits. In 1966 '*The Times*' described the two '*Queens*' as "limping Leviathans" and Cunard's annual report disclosed that they were losing between them about £3 million annually. Both the '*Queens*' were caught up in the six-week seamen's strike of May and June 1966, and on her arrival at Southampton on 24th May 1966 the **Queen Mary's** 850 National Union of Seamen members joined the strike. The cost to Cunard of the **Queen Mary** being strikebound amounted to £165,000 a week.

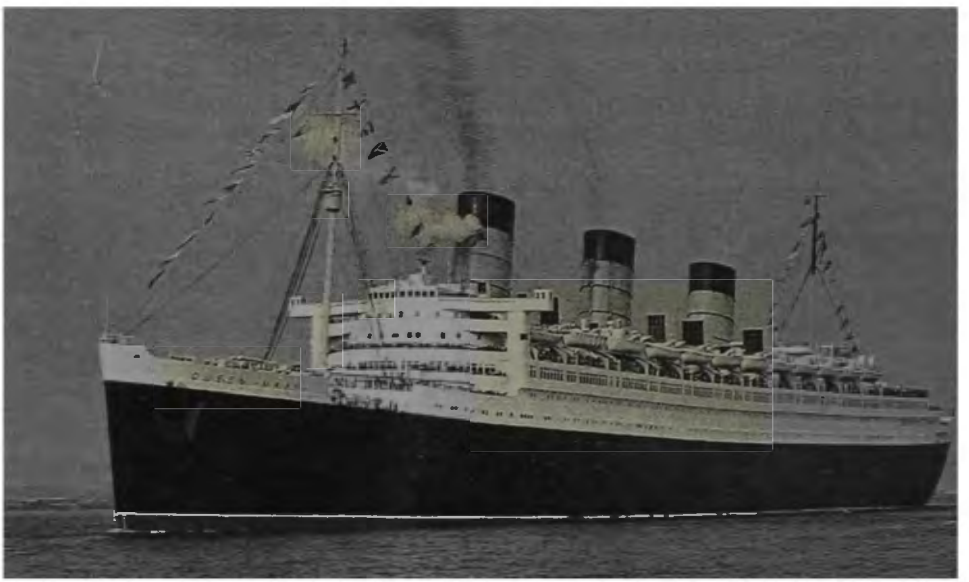
In 1967 the recently appointed Cunard Chairman, Sir Basil Smallpiece, found himself facing a daunting situation. On the one hand mounting losses had to be stemmed without delay if the company was to survive. On the other, cash to finance the building of the more flexible Q4, which became the **Queen Elizabeth 2**, had to be generated. It took Sir Basil and his Board little time to face the undeniable fact that both the '*Queens*' must be phased out and disposed of.

Inevitably it fell to the older of the two '*Queens*', the much loved **Queen Mary**, to be the first to go. For thirty-one years she had symbolised all that had been the best of Britain afloat, having wrested the coveted Blue Riband of the Atlantic from her arch rival the **Normandie** in 1936, and retaining it until the arrival of the **United States** in 1952. The '*Mary*' became the favourite of many discerning passengers, not to mention the many thousands of servicemen she had carried throughout the war years. To many the **Queen Mary** had herself become '*The Only Way To Cross*'.

Captain William Law was master of the **Queen Mary** in early May 1967. Before the '*Mary*' left Southampton he had been handed a sealed envelope with instructions to place it in his safe and to open it only when instructed to do so. On the

morning of 8th May 1967 Captain Law was told by radio to open the envelope. He did so and at once read its contents to his heads of departments. The letter revealed that the end of the **Queen Mary** was scheduled for the Autumn of 1967 and that the **Queen Elizabeth** would follow a year later. The newer ship had been expected to stay in service for another five or ten years and so the shock was far greater. The '*Elizabeth's*' failure to attract cruise passengers, in spite of a refit in 1966 costing over £1 million, was in fact the deciding reason for ending the careers of both ships.

The **Queen Mary** arrived back in Southampton in mid-May 1967 with gloom everywhere but passengers almost nowhere – she was, in fact, less than one third full.



*The **Queen Mary** leaving Southampton for Long Beach on 31st October 1967.*

Dozens of plans and offers on the future of the ship came to Cunard from many parts of the world, and as the spring of 1967 turned into summer the public tide of praise and sentiment for the **Queen Mary** continued to flow. Nothing that was not good was said of her, or almost nothing. One of the tiny minority on either side of the Atlantic who could see plain uncomfortable fact in the thickest of pink haze was Mr H.F. Kearney of Washington, D.C., who wrote: *"I cannot think many of her tourist passengers will lament the passing of the **Queen Mary**. The architecture was a nautical allegory of the pre-war English social structure. The cramped quarters above the propellers kept the depressed majority quiet, while the rest of the ship provided spacious, if tasteless, comfort for the first class few".*

Those who wanted the ship for something other than scrap were not put off by such irrelevant truth. The cities of New York, Philadelphia and Long Beach, California put in bids for the ship. Cunard accepted the bid of $3.45 million from Long Beach and the deal was signed on 24th July 1967.

The **Queen Mary** left Southampton on her final westbound trans-Atlantic crossing on Saturday 16th September 1967 with Captain J. Treasure Jones in

command. Four days later, on Wednesday 20th September, the **Queen Elizabeth 2** was launched at Clydebank.

The **Queen Mary's** 1,001st and final crossing of the North Atlantic Ocean left New York at 12noon on Friday 22nd September, bound for Cherbourg and Southampton. The '*Mary*' was back alongside Southampton's Ocean Terminal at 17.30 on Wednesday 27th September. There was a passenger list of 1,200 for that final crossing. It was a lively passage – in terms of both weather and parties – but here and there the account of the general gaiety was interrupted by the more experienced passengers with disapproving comments. The new regime at Cunard was criticised for the petty and irritating extraction of small sums for things hitherto always free – *"Charging for a postcard – can you imagine!"* More serious was the depression among some of the crew. The younger seamen in particular felt that the sea had little future for them, and there was no enthusiasm for the 'Q4', the recently launched **QE2**.

Southampton gave the **Queen Mary** a typical welcome with crowds, a band and an unofficial strike of crane men which necessitated passengers carrying their own luggage ashore. New York's 'farewell' had been much warmer, with coloured paper streamers between ship and pier, and a large escort of tugs and other craft that was reminiscent of her maiden arrival back in June 1936 and for which no precedent at the departure of a ship could be remembered.

The **Queen Mary** left Southampton for a two-week cruise to Las Palmas in early October. Then came the last voyage. Part of the agreement for the sale of the ship to Long Beach was that passengers should be carried on her long delivery voyage which would be regarded as a cruise. For very good reasons Cunard had refused to book the trip. Previous passages across the equator during the war had resulted in extreme discomfort and many medical emergencies. The **Queen Mary** was too large to pass through the Panama Canal, which meant rounding Cape Horn. She would have to cross the equator twice and steam long stretches through the tropics without air-conditioning. Nevertheless, the new owners decided to have their cruise and made the booking arrangements through the Fugazy Travel Agency of New York. The minimum fare was £395.

On the morning of Tuesday 31st October 1967, with 1,040 American passengers on board, the **Queen Mary**, with Captain John Treasure Jones in command, left Southampton for the last time. She sailed not from the Ocean Terminal, but 107 berth in the Western Docks. Fourteen Royal Naval helicopters flew over her in anchor formation, while a Royal Marine Band played *'Auld Lang Syne'*. It should have been *'California, Here I Come'* quipped one of the spectators. Inevitably, many of the passengers were elderly, and one of them told a newspaper columnist: *"I feel like a Pilgrim Father!"*

The 14,500-mile voyage was much longer than that of the **Mayflower**, incomparably less uncomfortable and as free from danger as any sea voyage can be. As an economy measure the **Queen Mary** made the voyage on just two propellers in order to save fuel, restricting speed to a maximum of 20 knots.

Cunard's forebodings were justified. The tropical heat over long glaring days and sweating nights made life unpleasant for the passengers, and worse than that for some of the crew in their marine equivalent Edwardian servants' quarters. An assistant chef collapsed from the heat in his cabin, died and was buried at sea. There were

complaints about the service. Only 860 crew out of the usual 1,100 had signed-on and so the ship was understaffed.

Ports of call were Lisbon, Las Palmas, Rio de Janeiro, Valparaiso, Callao, Balboa and Acapulco. One couple left the **Queen Mary** at Rio de Janeiro and flew home to Long Beach, telling the press that the ship was a 'nightmare of rats and cockroaches'. However, the U.S. health officials who inspected the '*Mary*' on arrival passed her as clean.

Long Beach unquestionably gave the **Queen Mary** a more fantastic welcome than she had received anywhere at any time during her 31 years of service. She arrived on Saturday 9th December, 40 days and 14,559 miles out of Southampton. From one hundred miles off shore she was welcomed by an aircraft dropping flowers, and then from 65 miles out the first of the small craft greeted her, to be joined by yachts, cabin cruisers, barges, U.S. Coast Guard cutters amounting, it was estimated, to upwards of 10,000 small craft. The '*Mary*' was alongside at Long Beach at 12.07pm when the final order was given to the engine room from the bridge: '*Finished with Engines*'.

Two days later, on 11th December, Captain Treasure Jones formally handed over the **Queen Mary** to Long Beach. Her Register was given to the British Consul General to return to England and the famous name removed from Lloyd's Register of Ships. The propellers were disconnected from the engines and the **Queen Mary** was classed as a 'building'. The Blue Ensign and the Cunard house flag were hauled down and the stars and stripes hoisted at both mastheads. ▌

IN PRAISE OF THE QE2

When the **Queen Elizabeth 2** sails in November 2008 to what may be her final berth – as a luxury hotel off a man-made island in Dubai – she will take with her part of Britain's industrial history. The **QE2** was the last liner to be built on the Clyde (which once constructed 20% of the world's ships). She was redesigned and downsized before her launch to underline the change to a cruise ship from the original concept of a trans-Atlantic liner, a market which had been undermined by the arrival of jetplanes able to cross the Atlantic in hours.

The **QE2** spawned a host of imitators but none achieved the status that the vessel, like Concorde, achieved, both loved even by people unable to travel in them. The ship has not been without controversy, suffering engine problems soon after her launch (a fact explained away by an operations manager named Cocup). The **QE2** has sailed on through freak Atlantic storms and was requisitioned for war service in the Falklands' conflict. There was uproar when a major refit was outsourced to Germany in 1986. That, too, was a sign of changing times.

Now the ship is being sold to Dubai World by her American owner Carnival Corporation, the latest in a list of owners which has included a Norwegian company and the UK Trafalgar House Group, which had taken over from Cunard. The **QE2** will leave these shores for the final time with her flag flying high after 40 years of service. Only one other QE2 can beat that record – the person after whom the ship was named. She is still going strong and showing no need for a refit. ▌

AND FINALLY .....

LATE FOR HIS OWN FUNERAL – LITERALLY !

by LNRS Member Ted Morris

The article reproduced in the June issue of '*The Bulletin*', regarding the American lady whose habit it was to regularly ship her personal coffin when travelling by sea, prompts my memory of the Christmas voyage in 1948 (I think!), when I was serving as Fourth Officer in R.M.S. **Empress of France**.

Shipment of mail that year was particularly heavy and stowage in the secure lockers became problematical as the time for sailing from Liverpool approached. The safe carriage of mails and any 'special' parcels and items was my responsibility, and I had already accepted a crated coffin, containing the remains of a gentleman and destined for discharge at Quebec, and which was now resting in the specials locker.

Within the limits of practicability we always afforded such situations the utmost reverence but on this particular occasion, a late arrival of mail for Montreal left me no choice of stowage space other than the said locker. The mail was duly loaded but because of the excessive number of bags, the crate in question was very unfortunately overstowed.

I was sometimes fascinated by various remarks made and questions asked by relatives of deceased persons whose remains were travelling with us. They seemed to have the impression that the casket would be serenely mounted on a catafalque with the traditional candles at head and foot or, perhaps, armed guards at the four corners, resting on their reversed arms! Not so, I fear, but I had to be happy with the existing situation and console myself that there was no real breach of ethics.

A turbulent westbound passage caused a late arrival at Wolfe's Cove, Quebec and an ultra-fast disembarkation of passengers and discharge of ancillaries. Air temperatures were falling fast and this was definitely the last voyage of the Season and everything was hurry, hurry, hurry.

In quick time we were off the berth and heading up river at best speed on our way to Montreal, more than satisfied with our endeavours, but imagine the scene as my particular complacency was shattered when the Staff Captain informed me (in dulcet tones – of course!) that a message had been received from Quebec that a BODY had gone missing and that funeral directors had called for collection – in vain!

The situation was awesome and now ethics were fighting economics in my mind! All sorts of reasons and excuses relative to our quick stay at Quebec could be given, but the facts could neither be denied nor forgiven. The remains of the deceased must now stay with us to Montreal, and then be transported back to Quebec by some means or other.

Distress to relatives would be inevitable, not to mention the obvious enormous expense involved and the awful fact that, as mentioned in the title of this anecdote, the gentleman in question really had missed his own funeral!

This must be the nearest I ever came to a '*Decline to Report*' – I think! ▌

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

(Founded in 1938)

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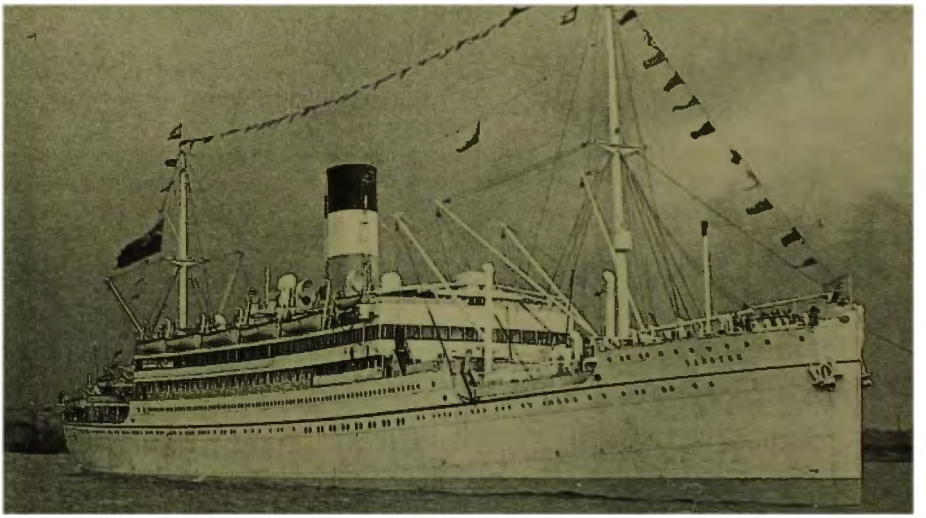

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Front Cover:
Lamport & Holt's **Vandyck** of 1921
(see '*Cruising the Med for 15 Guineas*' on page 15)
The **Vandyck** was built by Workman, Clark at Belfast in 1921. She was launched for the Liverpool, Brazil and River Plate Steam Navigation Co, and entered service on 27th September 1921 on the New York – River Plate service.

A Huddle Of Tugs At Princes Stage

The scene at Princes Landing Stage at 8am on 4th April 1958, photographed from the bridge of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's **Mona's Queen**. A total of nine Mersey tugs await their orders for the day (6 – Alexandra Towing; 2 – 'Cock'-tugs and one Rea Towing), whilst the **Britannic** lies on the stage, having just arrived from New York. *Those were the days !!!*

ATTENTION ALL SHIPPING

An appreciation of the Shipping Forecast

by John Shepherd

"…. and now, attention all shipping, especially in sea areas German Bight and Humber. The Met Office issued the following gale warning to shipping at 22.06 today. German Bight, west or north-west gale 8 to storm 10, imminent. Humber, west gale 8 or severe gale 9, expected soon. That completes the gale warning."

The solemn, rhythmic intonation of the shipping forecast is as familiar to us as the sound of Big Ben chiming the hour. Since its first broadcast in the 1920s it has inspired poems and songs in addition to its intended objective of warning generations of seafarers of impending storms and gales.

The shipping forecast has accompanied most of our lives from childhood, a constant cultural reference point. It's always there, and hopefully always will be, lodged inexplicably in our subconscious. Stop anyone in the street and ask them to name as many of the areas as possible and the chances are that they'll get through half-a-dozen before even pausing for breath.

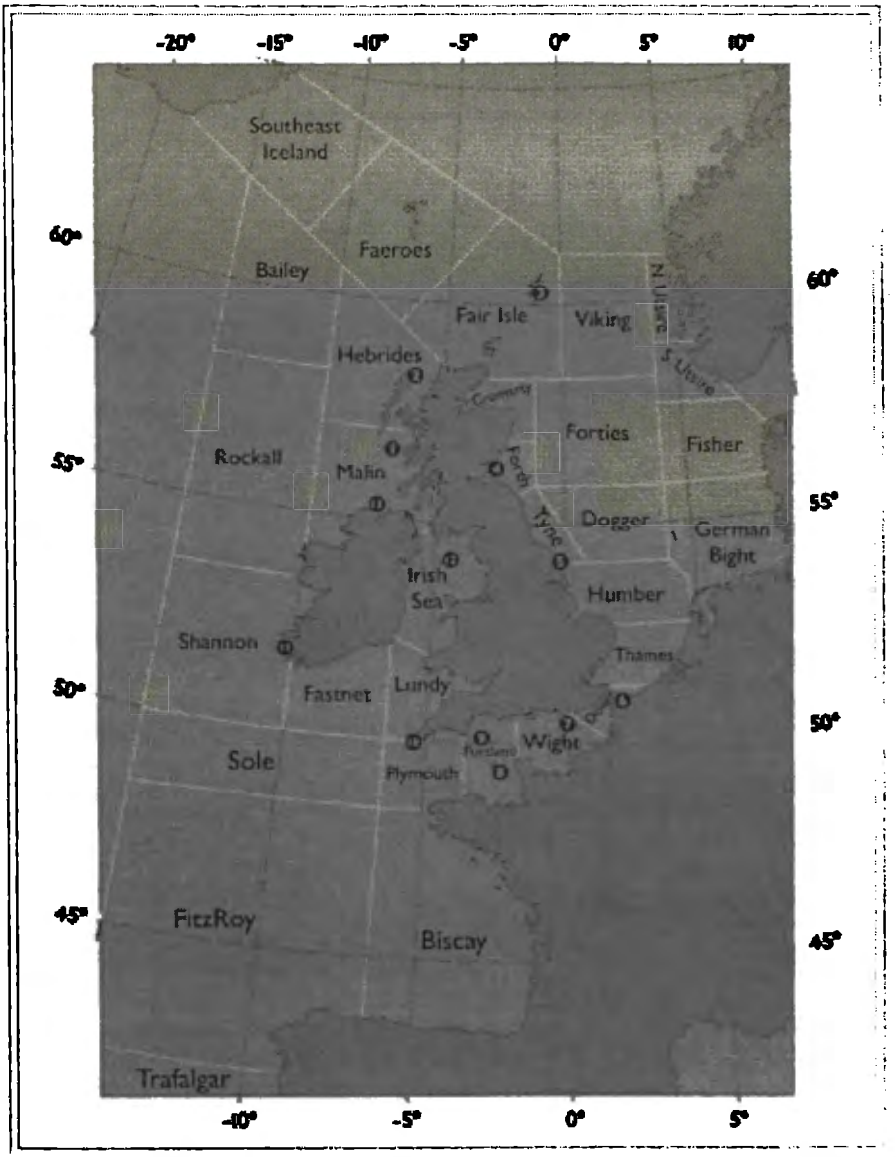
For me, growing up as a small boy in the late 1940s and 1950s, when the shipping forecast came on the BBC Home Service at just before six o'clock in the evening, it meant that my tea was almost ready. It didn't mean any more than that to me at that time of my life; just a hotchpotch of incomprehensible words that acted as a Pavlovian bell to my tastebuds.

No matter how bad things became in later life, no matter how dubious any career or personal issues became, not to mention global events, the knowledge that the shipping forecast was still going out four times a day, as regular as clockwork, meant that everything would be fine.

For those wanting relief from the 'trash and meaningless noise' of contemporary life, there is one corner of the BBC Radio 4 schedule that surpasses all others in the pleasure it gives. This is the fifteen minutes or so set aside each day for that poetic marriage of the functional and the sublime, the Shipping Forecast. Here is a programme with an identity and a history all of its own, for it emerged originally not from the BBC but a government agency, the Meteorological Office, and it belonged not to any one radio network but to long wave, which alone among frequencies could be heard across the entirety of the British Isles and the adjacent sea areas. The shipping forecast roused subliminal notions of home and family and national identity.

It was in 1911 that gale warnings were first transmitted to ships in the North Atlantic, but it was not until 1st January 1924 that the shipping forecast was first broadcast in something approximating its current format. The forecasters of the day divided the waters around the British Isles into thirteen regions: these were Shetland,

Tay, Forties, Humber, Dogger, Thames, Wight, Channel, Severn, Shannon, Mersey, Clyde and Hebrides. In today's forecasts there are 31 regions.



The original bulletin, called 'Weather Shipping', was broadcast twice-daily at 9am and 8pm from the Air Ministry in London, with a range of some 2,000 miles. After some minor tinkering with the regions in the early 1930s, the service was disrupted for the duration of the Second World War.

The massive increase in shipping traffic in the immediate post-war years necessitated a wider and more detailed forecast, and in 1949 the shipping forecast took the form with which we are familiar today. Indeed the only changes to the sea areas

since then have been the re-naming of area Heligoland as German Bight in 1955, the introduction of North and South Utsire in 1984, and the re-naming of Finisterre as FitzRoy in 2002. In 1983 sea area Minches was merged with Hebrides.

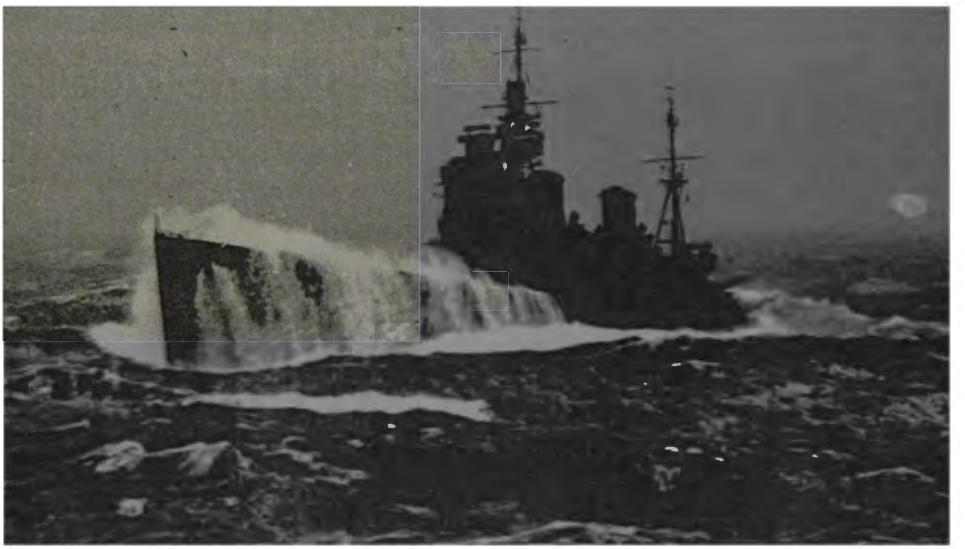
In these days of internet and satellite transmissions, it may be wondered if there is really a future for the shipping forecast on mainstream British radio. Does anyone actually listen to it for the reason it's intended? The BBC may well wish to remove the forecast from its schedules; for instance it interrupts the test match cricket commentaries. But there are seafarers who still depend on it, and even the best satellite systems can 'crash', so it remains vital that the information is freely available, albeit just as back-up.

South-east Iceland : Northerly gale 8 to storm 10; snow showers, moderate but poor in snow, severe icing.

In the heady days of the late 1960s there were indications that the BBC would like to see the shipping forecast removed from the schedules altogether – it had become an 'unwelcome intrusion'. Listeners could sometimes sense this lack of commitment. Every now and then dark suspicions were aired that the reading of the forecast was speeded up; sailors placed in peril by a race against the clock. Indeed, when fifteen lives were lost as a freak storm hit the Fastnet yacht race in 1979, some alleged that it was BBC Radio's failure to provide adequate forecasts that was largely to blame for the tragedy.

In truth, both the BBC and its critics had got it wrong. Advances in technology were gradually making it easier for vessels around the British coast to receive their weather information automatically, and a shipping forecast over the

airwaves was becoming less important for sailors by the 1990s. Members of the landlocked general public, on the other hand, felt more and more as if *they* could not do without one. Hence, when Radio 4 controller Michael Green announced in 1995 that the midnight forecast was to move by a mere twelve minutes, there was a rash of leading articles in the newspapers, angry parliamentary debate, and a shot across the bows from veterans of the 'Save Radio Four Long Wave Campaign' aghast at a BBC that had, they maintained *"totally lost sight of the concept of public service broadcasting"*. Moving the timing of the shipping forecast by just twelve minutes, was, so it seemed, little short of treasonable. Getting rid of it was unthinkable. Michael Green assured his critics that it would survive as long as regular Radio 4 listeners wanted it. As a source of hard information, he acknowledged, it was largely redundant. Its value now was as an icon, a soothing, intangible, but somehow necessary pleasure.



Viking: North-west storm 10 to violent storm 11. Rain or showers, poor.
*The battleship **Duke of York** in heavy weather in an Arctic convoy*

At the heart of the appeal of the shipping forecast has always been the aesthetic quality of the language itself, unfolding as it does in a mesmerizing incantation at once familiar and mystifying. Every six hours, as night follows day, gale warnings are followed in orderly succession by the general synopsis and thirty-one area forecasts. It is condensed into a mere 350 or so carefully chosen, solemnly recited words, shorn of all unnecessary repetition. We are left with the mere bullet points of wind speed and visibility: *"Southeast backing easterly 4 or 5, increasing 6 in the south. Mainly fair. Moderate or good."*

It is the language of the sea and of meteorological science – alien to most of us, a precise meaning always just out of reach. Poets have an ear for this kind of thing, and consequently are among those most easily caught in its spell. Seamus Heaney wrote in his Glanmore Sonnet VII of:

'Dogger, Rockall, Malin, Irish Sea:
Green, swift upsurges, North Atlantic flux
Conjured by that strong gale-warning voice,
Collapse into a sibilant penumbra'

For each of us then, the precise aesthetic effect of listening to the shipping forecast will be different. But among writers and artists who have tried to articulate its intangible qualities on our behalf, the recurring theme is its power to evoke feelings of belonging, order and security.

For James Fenton, pleasure is given in daily doses at dawn by the contrast of the forecast's 'cool, non-invasive poetry' set against the relentless 'get-on-with-it' flow of most breakfast radio, the *Today* programme included. The early morning forecast never feels the need to explain itself, never cracks jokes and always maintains its mystery. Above all, comments Fenton, it *"proceeds at its stately pace and one has time to adjust to the hours of wakefulness"*.

Matthew Arnold's poem 'Dover Beach' perfectly encapsulates the spirit in which many Radio 4 listeners embrace the shipping forecast: gazing into the depths of the night, a seascape of indigo swept by a distant lighthouse beam ..... Sandettie Light Vessel automatic ..... Machrihanish automatic:

'The sea is calm tonight.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits: - on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.'

Indeed, many listeners find that the very last edition of the day, at forty-eight minutes past midnight, brings the greatest reward. They can enjoy the 'promise' of a gale at sea with the bed-clothes pulled high and the radio turned low! Minds are set at rest by the reassuring recital of the familiar words, preceded by '*Sailing By*', written by Ronald Binge. For a few, the dreamy cadence of the music is enough in itself to induce sleep. For those who make it to the forecast proper, there is the pleasure of hearing the longest and most unhurried script of the day, since of all the four bulletins it alone includes sea area Trafalgar. In these hours of darkness it is revealed as nothing less than the sleeping draught of the age! Ambridge sleeps!

And so to bed. But not quite. Those melodic ships have 'sailed by'; the deep low south-east Iceland has filled a little, and well known Radio 4 announcer and newsreader Charlotte Green is alone in the studio. The National Anthem, still transmitted at closedown on Radio 4, is poised to roll and the time is ticking towards 1am when the rather different sound of World Service will take over the Radio 4 wavelength, announcing itself with a rendition of '*Lilliburlero*'. Charlotte Green recalls that Frank Phillips, senior announcer in the 1950s and 1960s always 'signed off' with *"Goodnight gentlemen, and good sailing."* Charlotte herself always makes a point of finishing with a personal message, hoping that listeners have enjoyed the evening's programmes, and that they will have a peaceful night. She comments: *"The shipping forecast is the nearest thing to poetry that I ever get to read on the radio. Without exception everyone at the BBC who reads the forecast loves reading it. I think we all feel quite privileged to do so. I must admit that I have a special affinity with the shipping forecast. I love it and it seems to touch a chord with people because many*

listeners write in and say that they particularly like me reading it and the way I read it."

Things just occasionally go wrong. On Friday 17th August 2007, the 05.20 forecast, as read by BBC weather presenter Philip Avery, was in fact that for the previous day, and the flagship '*Today*' programme was interrupted at 07.00 for a reading of the correct day's Bulletin.

The shipping forecast has found its way into numerous films and books. For instance Terence Davies' film '*Distant Voices, Still Lives*' a largely autobiographical account of growing up in Liverpool during the 1940s and 1950s, opens with a shipping forecast from this period. In the book *'A Kestrel for a Knave'* and its film *'Kes'*, the shipping forecast is featured in the classroom register roll call when lead character Billy Casper calls out 'German Bight' after the teacher reads out the name of a pupil called Fisher.

This article concludes half a world away in the harbour at Hobart, Tasmania where the time is just coming up to ten o'clock. In a sunlit, north facing room PhD student Tony Mellick is working at his computer. He's never been to Europe, let alone to the UK. This morning Tony's been surfing <bbc.co.uk> and he's stumbled across Radio 4. A click on 'Listen Live' and the strains of Ronald Binge's '*Sailing By*' modulate into the litany of the Shipping Forecast. Outside the window, in the curiously Scottish-looking harbour, boats tilt and ride tranquilly at anchor in the summer heat under the watchful bulk of Mount Wellington.

'Lands End to St David's Head, including the Bristol Channel: North, five to seven, occasionally gale eight; backing west, four or five later. Rain or showers. Moderate or poor, becoming good.....'

And somewhere, deep in Tony's imagination, a picture dimly takes shape...

There are four broadcasts of the Shipping Forecast each day:

- 00.48 - transmitted on FM and LW. Includes weather reports from an extended list of coastal stations at 00.52, and an inshore waters forecast at 00.55. Broadcast finishes at approx. 00.58, followed by Radio 4 'closedown'.
- 05.20 - transmitted on FM and LW. Includes weather reports from coastal stations at 05.25, and an inshore waters forecast at 05.27
- 12.01 – normally transmitted on longwave (1502 metres) only.
- 17.54 – transmitted on longwave only Monday – Friday; but at weekends also broadcast on FM.

Sources:

Life on Air – A History of Radio Four by David Hendy ISBN 978-0-19-924881-0
And Now on Radio 4 by Simon Elmes ISBN 9781905211531
Attention All Shipping by Charlie Connelly ISBN 978-0-349-11603-7

MERSEYSIDE MARITIME RESEARCH

The Society's 70th Anniversary Publication

It would appear that it is not generally appreciated that it is TONY BARRATT who is the Editor of the Society's Anniversary Publication

THE OVERLAND ROUTE

by the Editor

The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company bears a name redolent of Victorian and Imperial grandeur. Its initials are amongst the most familiar in the world.

In 1823 Brodie McGhie Willcox and Arthur Anderson were London shipbrokers and agents, concentrating on trade to and from Spain and Portugal. The partners actively supported the legitimist parties in the Portuguese and Spanish civil wars of the early 1830s. Their involvement on the successful sides in both conflicts brought them increased commercial influence and political favour. This was marked by the right to fly both sets of Royal colours, initially combined in the form of a pennant. To this day P&O's houseflag, which soon took on a more conventional rectangular shape and is one of the oldest still in use, quarters the blue and white of the Portuguese House of Braganza with the red and gold of the Spanish Bourbons.

On 25th August 1834 a prospectus was published for a new concern to be called 'The Peninsular Steam Navigation Co', backed by a number of businessmen with Iberian interests and with Willcox as chief agent. In March 1835 a regular service commenced with the 206-ton **William Fawcett**. In August 1835 the route was extended to Gibraltar. Orders were placed for 'splendid new vessels' to work a more frequent schedule, and the southern end of the route was extended eastward to Malaga in June 1836.

In 1836 responsibility for sea mail was transferred from the Post Office to the Admiralty. On 3rd July 1837 the two companies on the UK/Peninsula route (The Peninsular Steam Navigation Co. and the Commercial Steam Navigation Co.) submitted tenders to carry the mails, and the contract was awarded to Peninsular Steam on 22nd August at a rate of £29,600 a year. The first of the weekly sailings under the terms of the mail contract left London on 1st September 1837 and the mails were collected at Falmouth on the 4th. This sailing has traditionally been taken as the founding of what became P&O. The mail contract demanded regularity but bestowed financial stability.

The Eastern mails that were taken to Gibraltar each week went on to Alexandria aboard HM steam packets until 1839 when an arrangement was reached with the French government to take letters and dispatches for Egypt and beyond overland to Marseilles; east of Suez they were in the hands of the Honourable East India Company. When Lord William Bentinck, a former Governor-General of India, first proposed extending commercial mail contracts to cover the Mediterranean he consulted Willcox and Anderson at length. The Admiralty was not entirely happy with the French arrangement and invited tenders for sailings between Falmouth and Alexandria, calling at Gibraltar and Malta. The Peninsular Steam tender at £34,200 per annum for a monthly service, was the lowest of four and the company was awarded the contract.

Capital was to be raised by setting up a company incorporated by a Royal Charter and on 31st December 1840 The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation

Company formally came into being with a capital of £1 million in £50 shares. The enlarged operation was to include a run from Suez to Calcutta, for the Egyptian mail contract stipulated that such a service should commence within two years, although not initially with a mail subsidy. The Honourable East India Company was already running steamers between Suez and Bombay, but there were also two other groups in the subcontinent involved in steamer projects, and these were invited to join forces with P&O. These were the East Indian Steam Navigation Company and the Eastern Steam Navigation Company.

Falmouth remained the port for mails until 1843, but had inadequate coaling and repair facilities. From 1841 P&O sailings were based on Southampton. On 24th September 1842, two years after the opening of the Egyptian route, the 2,018 ton **Hindostan** sailed from Southampton round the Cape of Good Hope to commence Calcutta/Suez sailings early in 1843. She was followed eleven months later by a sister ship – the **Bentinck**. P&O obtained a Suez/Calcutta mail contract in 1845, even though few passengers were willing to travel to or from India during the monsoon. As late as 1875 it was reported that Bombay ships between May and September were only half full of cargo and carried no more than ten or twelve passengers, but *had* to sail because of the mails.

The first Charter limited P&O's operations to routes on which Her Majesty's Government might see fit to establish a mail service. Although this proviso was changed in 1846, to its customers the Company's *raison d'être* was the carriage of mail as efficiently and rapidly as possibly. In 1852 P&O was granted a mail contract for a service from Singapore to Sydney. By 1853, therefore, P&O was running mails weekly to the Peninsula; twice-monthly Southampton/Calcutta; twice monthly India/China, and every other month from Singapore to Sydney.

Egyptian Overland

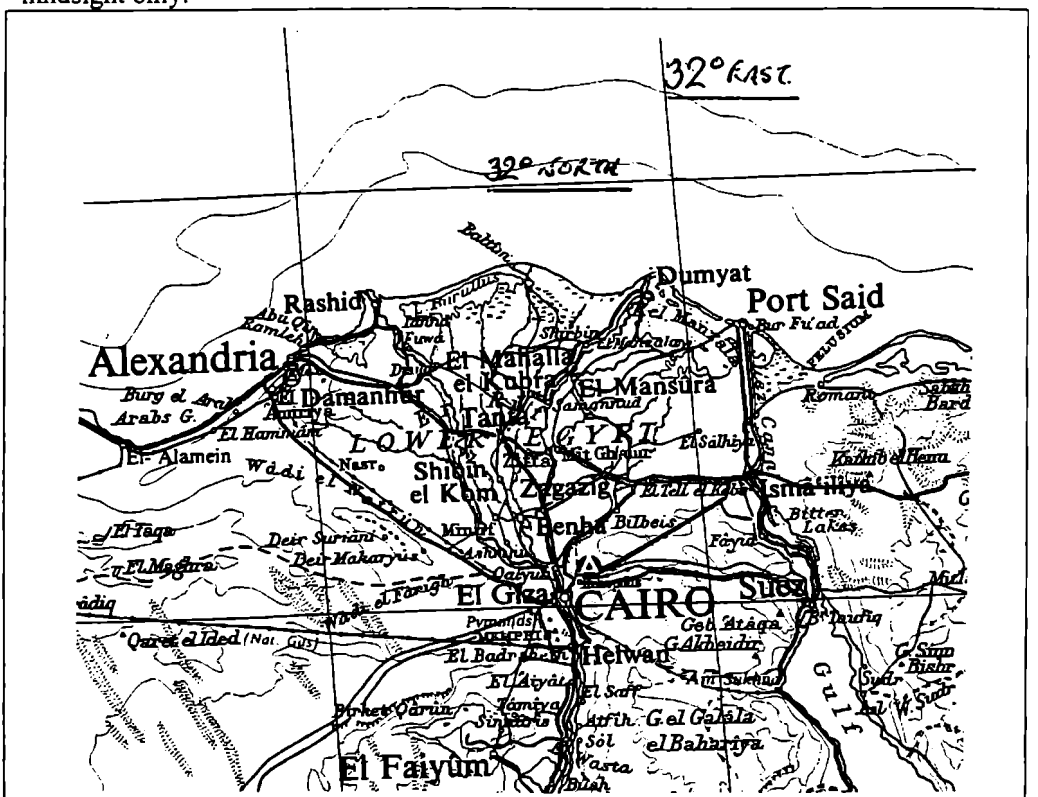
Until the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, all P&O routes to the East involved transit across Egypt by the celebrated – some would say notorious – Overland Route.

The passage around the Cape of Good Hope could not compete with the Suez route because it was so much longer. The P&O steamers **Great Liverpool** and **Oriental** conveyed passengers from Southampton to Alexandria, and the journey continued in the **Hindostan** or the **Bentinck** from Suez to Calcutta. But between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea there was still that single gap: the 150 miles of sand from Alexandria to Suez.

Passengers arriving at Alexandria transferred to a small track boat on the Mahmoudieh Canal which had been built by forced labour in the years 1819-21 and ran from the city to join the Nile at Atfeh. The track boat was in the pre-P&O days towed by horses and the 48-mile run took some twelve hours. On reaching the Nile passengers boarded a small steamer which took them up river to Boulac, the port of Cairo, a journey of a further ten to fifteen hours. From there they travelled in horse-drawn buggies, likened by some to bathing machines, canvas-roofed with open sides, in which they sat three abreast with their knees touching those of the person opposite.

Travelling partners were chosen by drawing lots on the voyage between Malta and Alexandria.

On the 84-mile desert journey from Cairo to Suez, passengers stopped at 'rest houses' which provided food of a sort, though it was generally reckoned to be unfit for any European to eat. Even allowing for the greater tolerance and hardiness displayed by the average Victorian traveller when compared with his or her 20th century counterpart, the glamour of the Overland Route (if any) must have been seen by hindsight only.



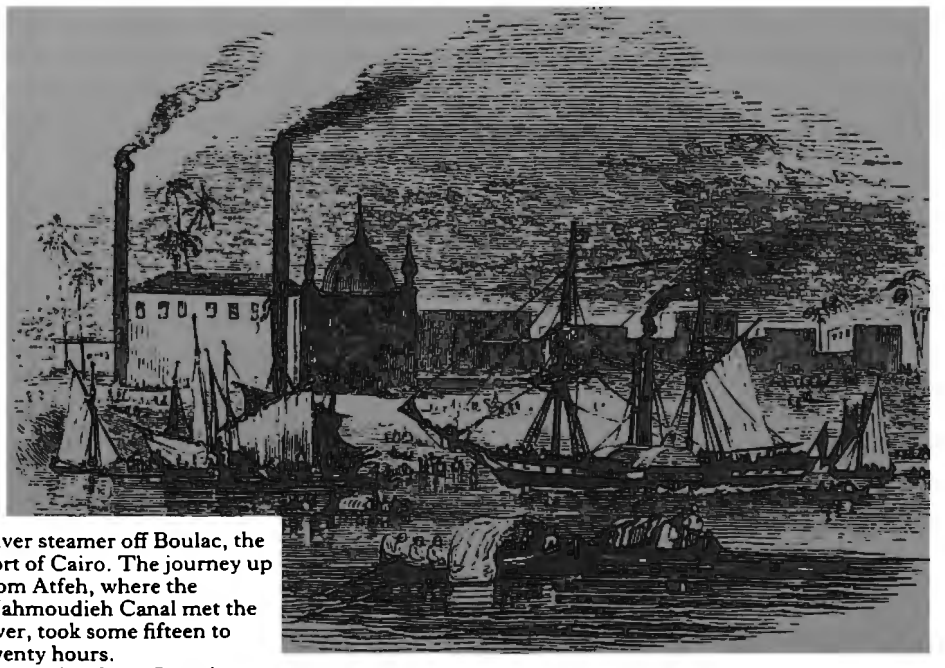
The Overland Route from Alexandria to Suez

In the meantime up to 4,000 camels carried the mails, luggage and what cargo there was across the desert to Suez. In the very early days of the service the baggage train usually crossed Egypt so much faster than did the passengers that P&O had to plead for the connecting Honourable East India Company ships to be held at Suez to await their human cargo.

Thomas Waghorn, the earliest and greatest enthusiast for the Overland Route, began providing hotel accommodation, river passage by the steamer **Jack o'Lantern** and desert crossings by carriage from 1835, but it was his competitor J.R. Hill who first set up the desert rest houses with the aid of a grant from the Bombay Steam Committee. However, each concern was reckoned to be as bad as the other. P&O did its best to improve matters, backing a merger of the Hill and Waghorn interests into a new Transit Company in 1842. Between 1840 and 1845 P&O sent out its own steamers (**Lotus**, **Cairo** and **Delta**) for use on the Nile portion of the route, as well as

the steam tug **Atfeh** for use on the Mahmoudieh Canal. Under the terms of its charter, P&O could not operate the complete transit service, and even those parts which it did run were 'nationalised', together with the Transit Company, by the Pasha (the provincial governor) in 1846.

Northbound passengers were requested to write months in advance to either Waghorn or Hill to say what ship they were coming on. There were warnings. Every passenger must bring four or five dozen bottles of drinking water, and a supply of wines and spirits. As the native bread was not edible, they should also bring biscuits or rusks. Both the couriers offered accommodation at Suez, which travellers said was a desert slum. Perhaps the depth of discomfort was when the northbound passengers arrived outside Alexandria after the town gates had been shut for the night. In this case there was nothing for it but to resort to one of the low and villainous cafés and resorts outside the city walls, resolutely refuse to sit, much less lie down, and watch the locals lounge and scratch nonchalantly, but non-stop.



BOULAC.

River steamer off Boulac, the port of Cairo. The journey up from Atfeh, where the Mahmoudieh Canal met the river, took some fifteen to twenty hours.
(Engraving from Captain James Barber's *Overland Guide Book*, 1845)

Waghorn always seems to have been surprised that travellers did not like his route. P&O was less surprised but it knew it would have to do something drastic to improve it as most passengers assumed that P&O was in charge of the Overland Route, and complaints poured in to the shipping company's head office. There was a danger that if the reputation of Suez grew too bad, a substantial number of passengers would choose to go back to the slow but comfortable East Indiamen around the Cape.

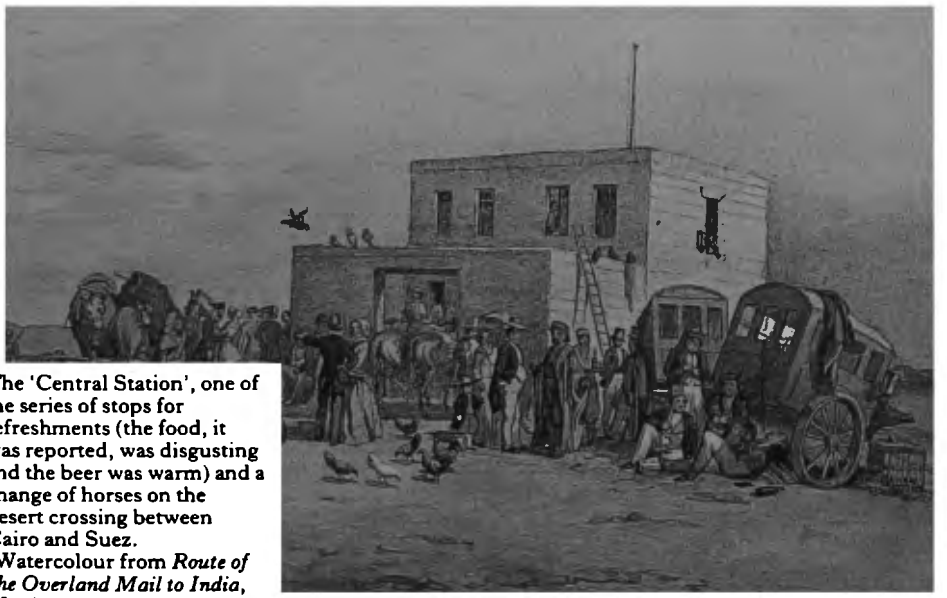
P&O threatened to abandon Suez altogether and return to the ancient Sumerian route down the Persian Gulf. It had been feasible in biblical and pre-biblical

times, and the British Government thought it could be done again. A Select Committee voted £30,000 to explore and survey a road to join the Mediterranean to the upper waters of the Euphrates, only 100 miles away. It might almost have worked, but the border lands of Syria and Turkey were dangerous country, and the scheme was abandoned when one of the surveyors was murdered.

In the end, P&O had to intervene in Egypt and Arthur Anderson was sent to sort things out. First he persuaded Waghorn and Hill to pool their resources, and then he had many meetings with the Pasha, who was obliging and proposed to charge P&O one half of one per cent of the value of goods that passed along the Overland Route, and agreed to improve the desert tracks.

Where the Mahmoudieh Canal joined the Nile at Atfeh there was a difference in level. All the passengers' baggage had to be lifted on to camels, carried 200 yards by them, and then lifted off into the river steamers. This double handling caused complaints of damage, so Anderson built a lock which raised the canal boats to the level of the Nile and cut out the camels.

Anderson could not do much to improve the desert crossing from Cairo to Suez. The Pasha did what he could to improve the track and it was partly macadamized by 1849. Anderson also did what he could with the horse-drawn carriages and the rest houses along the way. Between them, they cut down the time for that part of the journey to 36 hours, including twelve hours for rest and refreshment.



The 'Central Station', one of the series of stops for refreshments (the food, it was reported, was disgusting and the beer was warm) and a change of horses on the desert crossing between Cairo and Suez. (Watercolour from *Route of the Overland Mail to India*, 1850)

Indeed, the overall impression is that the dangers and discomforts of the crossing were exaggerated. The passengers were terrified of plague, although there is no record of anyone catching it. From their stories, one would have supposed that they were exploring or pioneering, but the route was well-known and well-trodden. Apart from passengers, thousands of tons of cargo were always on the move from one sea to another. By 1846 it was estimated that 2,500 camels, 450 horses and countless

donkeys were in regular use. A dump of 6,000 tons of coal had to be maintained at Suez and it was reckoned that such a quantity of coal required 18,000 round trips by camel from Alexandria to Suez, a total of five million camel miles! As much coaling as possible was carried out at Aden, or further east.

The most perceptive account of the desert crossing from Cairo to Suez was made by a young man in about 1856. He was only 20 and had recently joined the P&O, which was sending him to Hong Kong. His name was Thomas Sutherland – years later he became Chairman of P&O. He wrote:

'The road was merely a cutting in the sand, which in the night-time was not distinguishable from the desert itself. Indeed it was a very frequent occurrence for the horses to stray into the desert when the driver supposed he was in the middle of the road.

'A journey of some 18 hours under these circumstances could hardly be called enjoyable, even when the tedium was relieved by drinking innumerable cups of coffee at the various stations where horses were changed. Still the experience was one which impressed the imagination in no ordinary degree. A moonlight journey was most striking. The seemingly boundless expanse, the silence only broken by the voice of the driver and the muffled sound of the horses' feet (which seemed somehow to accentuate the sense of stillness); the caravans loaded with mails and baggage passing with silent and stealthy tread; the whitened bones of countless troops of camels, which had died in harness, glistening in the moonlight; then the sudden daybreak, the solitary Bedouin family mounted aloft on their desert ship, the mirage so wonderful when first seen – these and other impressions remain indelible in the minds of people who knew the Overland Route as it once was.

'Nor is it, perhaps, the least vivid recollection that hardly more than a teacupful of water could be obtained at Suez for the purpose of ablution after this weary journey; there was only unfiltered Nile water, which not the most ardent teetotaller would have cared to drink had he been ever so thirsty. Needless to say that in those days ice was unknown, and the draught of bottled beer which was usually what the thirsty man fell back upon, tasted as if it had been three-fourths mulled, and was followed by unrefreshing sleep, too frequently disturbed by the stab of the mosquito or the furious assaults of all-pervading and insatiate fleas.'

However, there was one more snag that even Anderson could not entirely overcome. Wherever a mail contract had been made with a commercial firm, the Admiralty insisted that it was still nominally in charge of the mails and it sent a retired naval officer to look after them. On the Atlantic run this was merely an annoyance to the ships' officers as while they did the work, the Admiralty officer had nothing to do whatsoever except eat and drink, and some did too much of that. However on the passages to the East the presence of the Admiralty mail officer proved more troublesome as he had the authority to overrule the Master and order the ship to sail the moment the mails were on board.

It was possible for the mails to cross from Suez to Alexandria, or vice versa, in 64 hours using relays of donkeys and camels, and the Admiralty officer could order the ship to sail whether the passengers had arrived or not. Hence it was conceivable that passengers could be stranded at Alexandria, or worse at Suez, until the next ship came in, and in the early days of the mail contract, that might mean a month.

It took P&O a while to overcome this absurd anomaly and to persuade its passengers that it had done so, and that there was no risk of their being left behind in Egypt. Quite apart from the veto in the Charter, the running and organization of the Overland Route was not a job for a shipping company.

Looking to the future, Anderson advised the Pasha to build a railway, and P&O offered to lend him most of the cost. The railway was commenced at Alexandria in 1851, but the tracks did not reach Cairo until early in 1856, reducing the journey time from Alexandria to some eight hours. The railway reached Suez in 1859. For those wishing to stay overnight in Cairo, P&O established a Transit Hotel.

Looking still further ahead, Anderson also talked of a canal. The idea had been in abeyance for some 50 years since the Emperor Napoleon's surveyors had reported that there was a difference of 30 feet in the levels of the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. Anderson checked their measurements and reported to Palmerston, the British Foreign Secretary, that they were wrong. There was no difference in level and a canal was perfectly feasible. But, as events turned out, a canal was still many years ahead.

The end of the Overland Route came with the opening of the Suez Canal on 17th November 1869. However, the two halves of the P&O fleet were out of date, having been designed for specific trading and climatic conditions: one half trading from Southampton to Alexandria, whilst the other half maintained the services from Suez out to the East. A whole new fleet would have to be built suitable for through voyages and taking into account developments in marine technology, increased competition and severely slashed passage and freight rates.

However, one anomaly from the days of the Overland Route remained. Even when P&O started sending its ships through the Canal, under the terms of the contract, the mails still had to be unloaded and sent across Egypt by train. This was due to the conservatism of the Post Office, which had taken over responsibility for the mail contracts in 1861. The Overland Route was quicker on paper, but passengers were anxious to avoid having to break their journey for the desert crossing. When P&O's **Simla** was homeward bound from Calcutta in August 1871, she had to discharge her mails at Suez, only to pick them up again at Alexandria four days later!

In 1873 P&O first asked permission to carry mail through the Canal, and this was granted a year later for the heavy element which had come out from the UK by ship; however the 'accelerated mails' travelling via Brindisi did not go through the Canal on a regular basis until 1886, still being discharged to travel by the Overland Route. ▌

Sources:

The Story of P&O: *David and Stephen Howarth* : Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1986
P&O : A Fleet History : *The World Ship Society*, 1988

THE LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 70th Annual General Meeting of the Liverpool Nautical Research Society will be held at 12.30pm on Thursday, 15th May, 2008 in the Education Suite at the Merseyside Maritime Museum

CRUISING THE MED FOR 15 GUINEAS

by A.H. Joyce

The day-to-day operating costs of a ship are of prime importance to the shipowner, so it is interesting to see what the operating costs of Lamport & Holt's **Vandyck** and **Voltaire** were seventy-five years ago when they were running short cruises. Specifically I shall look at 1932-1933. By today's standards, even allowing for the considerable inflation in prices since, the costs seem ludicrously low.

In the early 1930s, shipping the world over was in the throes of a severe depression and many well-known shipowners had suffered such severe losses that they had to cease trading. In Great Britain hundreds of ships were laid up in various ports and backwaters. Lamport & Holt suffered badly and on 27th August 1930 the company was placed in the hands of a receiver and manager, Sir William McLintock.

The **Vandyck**, built at a cost of £1,317,410 in 1921, and the **Voltaire**, which had cost £1,151,250 in 1923, were virtually sister ships, with gross tonnages of 13,233 and 13,248 respectively. Their speed, however, was rather on the slow side at only 15 knots maximum.

In July 1930 they were both withdrawn from the Company's New York, Brazil and River Plate passenger service as they had made a loss of £35,000 for the first six months of that year. The **Vandyck** was laid up at Southampton and the **Voltaire** in the River Blackwater.

Owing to the abnormal conditions prevailing in the shipping industry such ships were worth only a fraction of their original cost. The **Vandyck** and the **Voltaire** were valued at only £150,000 each – and then only if a willing buyer could have been found for them.

Conversion

In the Spring of 1932, thanks to a slight improvement in the shipping situation, it was decided to convert the **Voltaire** into a first class cruising ship and this was carried out for the comparatively small outlay of £8,132.

Starting with a series of cruises from Liverpool, the first departing on 2nd July 1932, the **Voltaire** continued with these until 7th October. During this period she completed seven 13-day cruises. Gross earnings amounted to £61,603, and after taking costs into account, the voyages produced a profit of £12,718. This enabled Lamport and Holt to write off the whole of the £8,132 of her conversion cost to a cruise liner and left a surplus of £4,586. The operating costs from 2nd July until 7th October averaged out at only £504 per day.

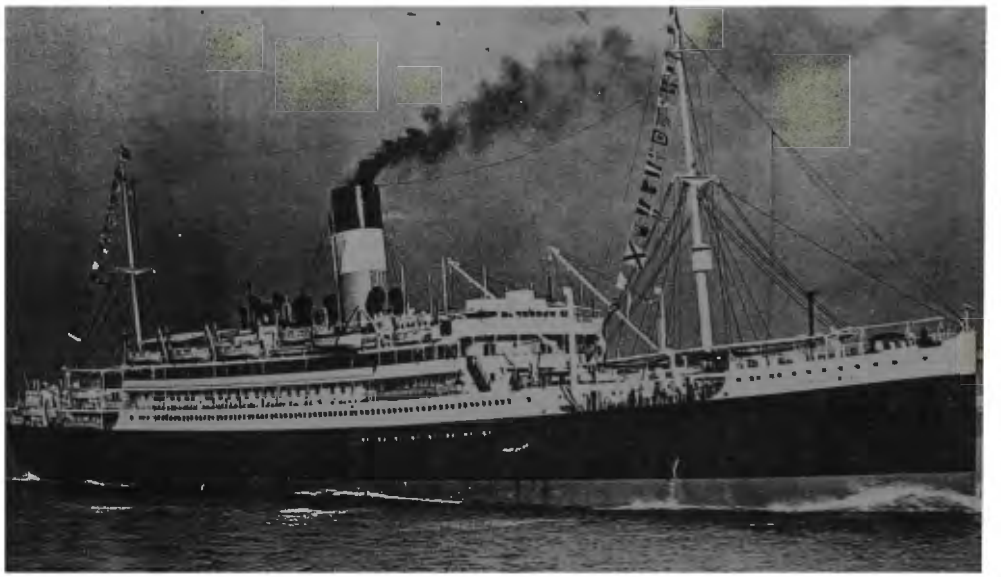
Because of the popularity and financial success of those cruises it was decided to make a similar modification to the **Vandyck**, but the cost of her conversion for cruising purposes was considerably higher at £26,500. She began her first cruising voyage on 2nd June 1933.

The **Vandyck** nearly missed this first cruise because when she was undocking at Southampton on 26th May she collided with the dock wall, sustaining damage to her stem which was set to port; several plates both port and starboard being buckled. A contemporary report stated:

'The repair consisted of bending a large piece of plate directly over the stem and extending it aft on either side sufficiently to cover the damaged plates. This plate in effect gave the ship a bulbous bow, which extended some distance above the water line. The Board of Trade expressed itself so favourably upon this piece of work that a 12-month certificate was granted. Great credit is due to the owners and ship repairers alike for what is really a very smart repair job'.

These same repairs enabled the **Vandyck** to leave Southampton in time to arrive at Liverpool on Thursday 1st June 1933 in order to sail on her Whitsuntide cruise the next day. The ship made a further six cruises in 1933 with gross earnings of £63,498, yielding a profit of £6,410. Operating costs were £508 per day.

The **Voltaire** was similarly employed during 1933 making in all 13 cruises and producing a profit of £16,695. Operating costs were £507 per day.



The Voltaire

Keen Competition

Fares for passengers on these cruises were very low by today's standards, but they needed to be in order to attract the customers in the face of keen competition from other companies using their spare capacity of surplus liners for cruise purposes. The charge for a 13-day cruise on either ship was 20 guineas (£21), with 15 guineas (£15.75) buying a 7-day cruise.

A report dated 20th October 1933 stated that the converted ships had proved to be most admirably suited to the cruising trade, being of a handy size for manoeuvring in the smaller ports of destination, yet with generous passenger accommodation. The report deemed the vessels equally satisfactory regarding operation, being highly efficient in fuel consumption. The **Voltaire's** requirement under full power amounted to 9½ tons of fuel oil a day for all purposes, with the **Vandyck** needing slightly more.

The report concluded: 'We have in the short period of less than two years not only built up a most valuable good will in a trade which will undoubtedly continue to be profitable for many years, but have made aggregate voyage profits of £25,822.'

In order to operate a cruise liner carrying several hundred passengers and crew at costs of around only £500 per day, the closest scrutiny must have been given to all expenditure. The costs of operating a cruise liner in 2008 are probably more like £500 a minute !!!

Postscript

The **Vandyck** was taken over by the Admiralty shortly after the outbreak of war in September 1939 and converted into an 'Armed Boarding Vessel'. She was bombed and sunk on 10th June 1940 whilst en route to Norway to take part in the evacuation. Just 160 of her crew survived the bombing and were landed in Norway, but eventually ended up in a prisoner-of-war camp.

The **Voltaire** was also requisitioned by the Admiralty, but was converted into an 'Armed Merchant Cruiser'. These vessels were sometimes referred to as 'Admiralty Made Coffins', and so it proved to be when the **Voltaire** encountered the German raider **Thor** in mid-Atlantic and after putting up a brave fight for ninety minutes, was sunk by the **Thor** on 4th April 1941.

The **Voltaire** could make only 14 knots, and with her high superstructure was no match for the smaller, faster and more manoeuvrable German ship whose shells quickly set the **Voltaire** on fire and at the same time damaged her steering so that she was going round in circles. After the **Voltaire** sank the **Thor** spent several hours picking up 197 survivors, and they also eventually ended up in a prisoner-of-war camp in Germany. Sadly, 75 members of the Voltaire's crew died in the encounter.

Who would have thought, back in those halcyon days of pleasure cruising in the 1930s, that in a few years time both the **Vandyck** and the **Voltaire** would suffer tragic ends and that their surviving crew members, many of whom were Merchant Navy men who had signed T124 Articles, would end up as prisoners in Germany?

The 'garden lounge' on the **Voltaire**. *Photo: A.H.Joyce*

The lounge on the **Voltaire**. *Photo: A.H.Joyce*

The smokeroom on the **Voltaire**. *Photo: A.H.Joyce*

VOYAGE TO THE WEST COAST ON THE '*DEIDO*'

by LNRS Member J. E. Cowden

I was recently reading an account of the launch of Elder Dempster's **Deido** *at Ardrossan in 1928. This brought to mind my one and only voyage in this ship in 1950, giving an insight into cargo operations on the West African Coast almost sixty years ago. But first, the launch.....*

The Launch of the *Deido*

What was probably one of the most incredible launchings in the annals of shipbuilding took place at Ardrossan on the Firth of Clyde in January 1928. A squad of experienced shipbuilders was on hand to make sure that all went smoothly and, as usual, the men were looking forward to the jovial company in the 'local' afterwards, for it was then customary to drink the ship's health and perhaps a drop more.

The routine preparatory work progressed. All the complex network of staging was removed and the **Deido** was at last in full view. The tide was at its height, the sea calm, there was no wind and everything was perfect. A series of orders rang out and the carpenters worked furiously with their large hammers, removing all the wedges and the keel blocks so that the **Deido** could be free. The launching party was gathered on the gaily decorated platform especially erected below the **Deido's** bow. As with the workmen, the party expected a beautiful launch, but all these expectations were about to suffer an alarming setback.

The ship was named, the bottle broke on the bow and then: *'She's stuck!'* and *'It's the frost!'* Those in close proximity could see that the **Deido** had in fact started to move, although ever so slowly. The launching squad was unconcerned, knowing as they did that all ships start off slowly.

The tide was gradually receding and inevitably there would soon be no water left. Something would have to be done, but what? The **Deido** would have to be coaxed, cajoled, pushed or even rammed into the water. Unbelievably, her speed down the slipways was estimated at only one eighth of an inch every minute. The launchway declivity was five-eighths of an inch to one foot and it was quite astonishing that a ship could rest on such a slope with no means of support.

Push the ship!

At last came a suggestion and all the shipyard workers were asked to push the ship. The **Deido**, however, proved herself as stubborn as the proverbial mule and still only inched downhill. Her telescopic mast was dropped in a bid to cause vibration. Workmen danced on her decks and a strong wire was fastened between her and a travelling crane.

There was now the need for some quick thinking. It was no longer a matter of getting the ship into the water, but of keeping her out of it. If the **Deido** suddenly took off down the slipway she would land on a hard concrete berth which had previously been covered by a good spring tide.

The previously discarded keel and bilge blocks were hastily gathered up for re-insertion under the ship, but these tumbled like ninepins as the ship was still moving. In the clear light of the following day the next attempt was planned. Experts from larger shipyards in the upper reaches of the Clyde were invited to visit the Ardrossan yard and examine the launchways to check whether they were fault-free. Maybe the **Deido** had been lying in a hollow or perhaps the declivity was wrong? On the other hand, could it be that the tallow had frozen? No one really knew.

Launch No. 2

It was decided that the tallow had indeed frozen and instructions were given to light flares up and down both sides of the slipway the next morning. Oil was liberally applied to the existing grease and all was made ready for launch number two. The various shoring materials were again removed and the men were jokingly told not to throw them too far away. No one appreciated the humour for they were sure that this time the **Deido** would go.

In spite of all the hard work the tallow stayed frozen and the **Deido** remained motionless and defiant. She had adamantly refused to stir even an inch this time and seemed glued to her launchways. The ice-cold atmosphere which prevailed over the Ayrshire coast was blamed and the term 'an act of God' was generally used to sum up the event. There was nothing for it but to start all over again. The talking point in Ardossan pubs was whether or not the **Deido** would be broken up where she stood!

Third Attempt!

The news soon spread that the Deido was still high and dry. The following day was comparable to a football cup final. The ship was making history and it became a case of '*do or die Deido*'! For this third attempt the augmented crowd would at least be of greater assistance if pushing was again required.

On the third day the huge crowd stood quietly in anticipation. They didn't have long to wait. The by now familiar commands rang out and sure enough the **Deido** set off, but very, very slowly. Two powerful hydraulic rams had been securely bolted to the standing ways at the bow of the ship. They were switched into life and their sudden impact upon the once hesitant ship caused her to almost leap down the slipway and into the sea. The **Deido** had become waterborne at long last. People sighed, smiled and cheered tumultuously at the end of this unprecedented marathon. ▌

DEIDO Official Number: 160370 Signal Letters: G N Q Y
Built by the Ardrossan Dockyard Co.Ltd. in 1928. Yard No. 337
Gross Tonnage: 3,894, Nett: 2,143. Length: 356·6ft, Breadth: 49·2ft
B & W oil engine by J.G.Kincaid & Co.Ltd. of Greenock. Speed: 10 knots
Accommodation for 8 first-class passengers
Built for the African Steamship Company, transferred to Elder Dempster in April,1933
Sold in 1958 (after voy. 95) for £27,200 to Eckhardt & Co., Hamburg, for demolition.

*The **Deido** survived for thirty years and was employed by Elder Dempster Lines on their West African services. The launching drama enacted at Ardrossan lives on in memory. However, my one and only voyage on the **Deido** took place in 1950:* j.c.

The **Deido** as launched with a short funnel

It was Elder Dempster policy for the ship's cargo manifests to be typed and reproduced on board whilst the ship was on passage to West Africa. It should be borne in mind that we did not, in those long ago days, carry any sophisticated printing equipment. Cargo manifests are a summarised edition of bills of lading – in the West African trade at the majority of ports of call as many as eighteen copies of each manifest were required for Customs, Elder Dempster and shipboard use.

I joined the **Deido** in 1950 to strengthen the purser's staff to undertake what I considered then, and still do now, to be a mammoth task. The vessel sailed from south-west Harrington Dock, Liverpool on 12th February 1950, passing through the Herculaneum Dock system into the River Mersey with a full general cargo consisting of everything from kaffir pots (three-legged cooking pots) to the kitchen sink, a total of 6,500 freight tons. The ship anchored at the powder grounds stituated between Egremont and New Brighton to load a small quantity of explosives and, in addition, passengers who joined by the tender **Flying Breeze**.

The manifests were typed on board using hectograph type ribbons; by this method you ended up with one typed page copy of the manifest which was then transferred – page by page – to what was known as a 'plex board'. This ingenious piece of equipment could be described as a monumental masterpiece and surely must have originated from the Ark!

The plex board consisted of a timber frame measuring about 18 inches x 24 inches with a depth of ¾ inch, backed by a piece of cardboard. It was filled with a putty-like substance, and the art here was to achieve a perfectly smooth surface, slightly damp to absorb the print. You then laid face downwards a typed manifest page and pressed gently, thereby reproducing your typescript on to the plex (clay).

You next had to press blank manifest pages on to the clay and obtain as many copies as possible – if it started to smudge or the clay had a slight bump in it, the page would have to be retyped and the whole procedure repeated. The same printing method was used for items such as passenger and crew lists, and bonded stores lists. To enter a vessel at the various ports, some 20 copies of each would be required.

For the princely sum of £18 per month one worked hard as an assistant purser with Elder Dempsters in 1950. During daylight hours in port cargo work went on from 6am until 6pm; and whilst on passage between ports (and it was well worked out that the ship steamed overnight between ports in readiness to resume work at daybreak) the 'ringing-off' of cargo discharged as shown on the tally sheets was carried out. Short-landed / overlanded cargo lists were prepared and the necessary port papers prepared for the next port of call.

Calling at all these ports entailed hard and conscientious work, but how we enjoyed it. It was expected of the deck officers that they did all their own stevedoring, stowage of cargo and indeed, on occasions, work winches. All documentation was done by the purser's staff, even to the completion of and issuing underwriters' certificates for cargo which was lost overboard during discharge.

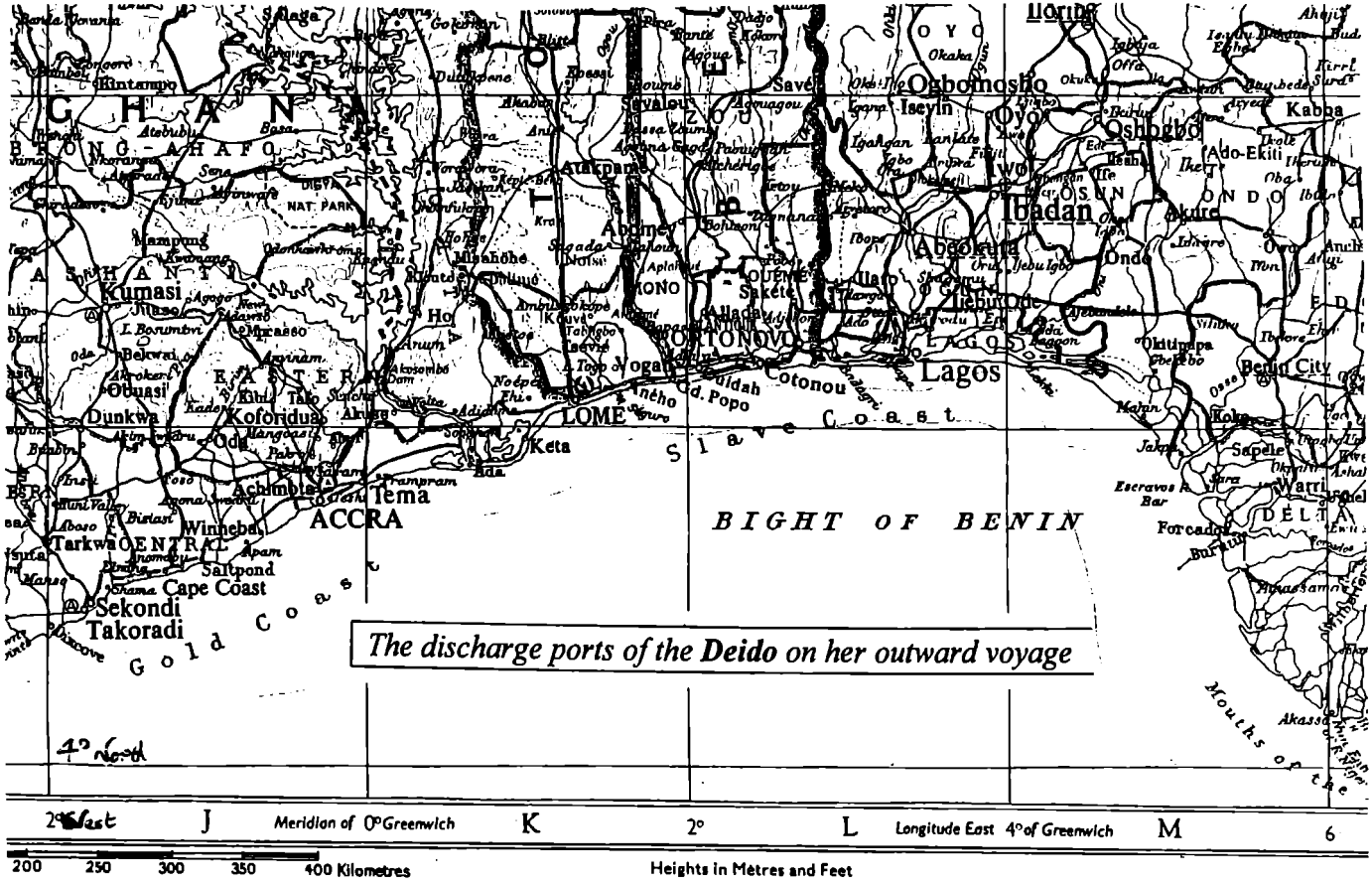
The swell at times caused vessels to roll excessively, which resulted in slings of cargo striking the ship's side; a case, carton or bag would fall from the sling into the water and would be lost. Discrepancy or underwriters' certificates were issued on board and head office was advised in writing from the next port.

The **Deido** after the War with her lengthened funnel

On the voyage that I made on the **Deido**, she had been nominated to what was known as a Gold Coast (Ghana) Creek sailing. Approaching the Cape Verde Islands the **Deido** passed the familiar sight of one or two of the old familiar yellow-funnel fleet sailing North. There was the 'Explorer'-class **David Livingstone**, full and down, closely followed by the company's new mail ship **Accra**. Greetings were exchanged.

We called first at Freetown to embark Kroo labour (headman, some 50/60 boys, three washmen, four tally clerks and three engine room boys) who were responsible for working cargo throughout the voyage and assisting in general.

Calling at the Gold Coast usually entailed discharging cargo at Takoradi, Cape Coast, Winnebah, Accra and Keta; normally five ports within six to seven days. Apart from Takoradi where the ship went alongside, all other Gold Coast ports were known as 'surf ports' where vessels anchored some two to three miles off the beach, the distance depending on the draft. Crews for the boats were recruited from a local village; a contract was entered into between Elder's local agent and the village



*The discharge ports of the **Deido** on her outward voyage*

headman to supply labour, as required. Boat crews numbered twelve persons; 11 manned the boat on passage – one at the tiller, five either side paddling and one remaining ashore to assist with loading / discharging. Once a boat's crew had completed its designated number of trips it would fly a flag on its final return to the beach and the boys would return to their village for 'de rest'. Surf boats carried approximately 2½ tons of cargo and even vehicles were discharged with two boats being strapped together for the purpose.

On the completion of discharge it was 'hands to stations' with both the **Deido's** crew and Kroo labour swinging in derricks, fitting hatch beams, cleaning and washing down decks. It was more than a full day's work but oh, indeed, what a sense of satisfaction was felt as we steamed out of port, the fresh Atlantic air greeting us as we turned to port and headed south for Winnebah.

After Winnebah there were two more surf ports to visit; Accra (the capital city) and thence Keta. It was at Accra that the customs and other port officials had their own surf boat, a smart white affair with the boat crew dressed in shorts and blue woollen jerseys inscribed 'H.M.Customs'. The port officials would sit in the afterthwarts in khaki uniform, pith helmet and looking very proud indeed.

To complete the southbound leg of our voyage the **Deido** departed from Keta and steamed eastxsouth and approached the sand bar at the entrance to the Escravos River, beyond which lay the narrow and tortuous network of channels where the ports of Burutu, Warri and Sapele were situated. The **Deido** anchored to await daylight and high water (14ft. 6in.) before crossing the sand bar at 6.am. There was a seaman in the chains, but 'no bottom' recorded throughout. With our 'G' flag aloft, a canoe approached from Ogdibe village, situated about one mile off our starboard side.

The men who piloted the various ships through these very difficult waterways were all members of local families who normally started as 'runner' (making the coffee), then progressed to helmsman, with their father as pilot, and so on. I do not know where we would have ended up without them, for many of the small inlets looked alike and it wouldn't have been the first time that a ship had started to steam up the wrong creek!

The pilot boat was a dug-out canoe carrying father and son. Number two starboard derrick was swung outboard in readiness to embark the pilot and his canoe. On occasions the pilot would take the opportunity to bring along his family who would travel with us up river to trade. Masters in command of deep sea ships calling at the river ports had their own preference as to which family of pilots they would use. In the case of the **Deido's** master, he had a leaning to Pilot Friday Kalaroo who boarded wearing sandals, toga and old reefer jacket complete with master's braid, a dearly-loved relic given to him by some far distant ship's captain. The creek voyage usually lasted two to three weeks and our pilot crew more or less lived on the bridge.

Our first port of call within the creeks was Burutu, situated on an island fifteen miles inside Escravos Bar in the River Benue. During 1918 the port had been destroyed by fire, but it was rebuilt so that it could accommodate two ocean-going vessels simultaneously, plus numerous barges and river steamers, all of which were manned and operated by a fairly large expatriate community, backed up by locally recruited personnel.

In addition to the very good wharf frontage which had shed space for 33,000 tons of local produce and tank space for the storage of bulk palm oil, Burutu boasted a shipyard and engineering works. Salt was one of the main products imported, plus the best Lancashire cotton prints. These goods were exported up country to the various United Africa Company trading stations as far off as Garva, some 1,000 miles up the intricate network of tributaries forming the Niger River. On the return journey, the river craft carried groundnuts and cottonseed for eventual export to all parts of the world.

Discharging cargo from the **Deido** at Accra in 1950. *Photo: Jim Cowden*

The **Deido's** berth was within shouting distance of the neatly laid out compound surrounded by the trim white bungalows which housed the expatriate staff.

An opportunity was always taken to give a shipboard party for the expatriates who normally did an eighteen month – two year tour of duty at Burutu.

The steaming distance from Burutu to Warri was about 45 miles. The **Deido** stayed within the confines of the Niger Delta, completing a 'dog's leg' type movement down from Burutu and then into the River Warri. The port of Warri itself was situated on the mainland and therefore limited road transport was available. Dotted amongst the palm trees were the most beautiful colonial type houses with splendidly laid out gardens.

John Holt & Company of Liverpool created, built up and made Warri into a viable and very profitable trading station. As with Burutu, it had built up a river fleet which travelled far up country to serve Holt's trading stations deep within the hinterland. The fleet consisted of steam-driven stern wheelers, tugs and barges, burning coal from the mine situated close to Port Harcourt. The fine fixed wharfage at Warri could accommodate one deep sea vessel and a buoy berth was also available in mid-stream.

Laundry was done by washmen who formed part of the Kroo labour taken on board at Freetown. It was practice for the laundry to be strung up to dry on a line stretching from the top of the mast to the forecastle head.

The Nigerian Marine Department orders stipulated that vessels were to slow down to 'dead slow' when passing villages; this was not always obeyed resulting in the wash from vessels sweeping through the local villages much to the dismay of the inhabitants.

Approaching Young Town Cross, the **Deido** was very close to the fork which resulted in the ship having to more or less stop, go astern, and then turn sharply to port. To complete this manoeuvre the ship was run on to the soft mud. There was a full line of washing out and the mate was standing on the forecastle head in readiness to drop anchor to cant / swing around the fork. The **Deido** surged ahead, running her bow into the dense undergrowth causing the washing line to snap. The mate and the carpenter beat a hasty retreat as pieces of trees, brush and laundry fell around them. All this within the tranquility of the African bush!

Without scenes such as this, life at times could be rather dull. The **Deido** was put slow astern, slow ahead and then full ahead as the river fork was again successfully navigated. Our destination was Sapele, our final discharging port. Our orders were to 'berth the vessel to number two bush berth', port side to. This meant we approached the river bank on the opposite side to Sapele township and let go the starboard anchor to hold the bow off the beach and then sent stern lines to the beach to be tied to bollards or tree trunks situated in the bush. To complete the operation we lowered overside a small motor launch taken on board at Takoradi for use when towing logs within the rivers. This was used to take away the kedge anchor to hold the stern off the beach.

So ended the **Deido's** southbound voyage which had started at Liverpool a month earlier and was completed tied up to tree trunks in the West African bush. It was a way of life that has disappeared for ever – but it was great fun while it lasted – including the plex boards! ▌

Deido is a district of Douala on the Wuri River, Cameroon.

LIFE ABOARD TWO LATTER DAY CHESTER RIVER COASTERS

by Ken Davies PhD, BA, A.B.

part 1 : the Hawarden Bridge

Two companies had ships registered at Chester[1] in the late 1950s and early 1960s, each having very different needs. I was privileged to sail for both, and this article offers a flavour of those early experiences.

As documented in Roy Fenton's *Cambrian Coasters*[2], the two ships owned by Summers in the 1950s, the mv **Staley Bridge** and the mv **Hawarden Bridge**, were the remainder of a fair fleet of small motor coasters (with the exception of the ss **Maurita**). In his book *A Lifetime with Ships*[3], Tom Coppack tells us that Summers needed to ship large quantities of ore and pig-iron to their works on the banks of the Dee, opposite Connah's Quay and Shotton. Unable to rely on independent shipowners in uncertain times, they built this sizeable fleet, most of which they sold off after World War II. The two 'bridge boats' remained. I commenced my sea-going career as deck boy aboard the **Hawarden Bridge** late on the evening of 1st October 1956 at Mostyn. It was a memorable evening and my good friend Brian Luke, then an apprentice with the Moss Hutchison Line, and later to become master, helped me carry my gear aboard.[4]

Crew

The **Hawarden Bridge** carried a crew of 'seven and a boy' as the parlance of the day had it, and at that time my shipmates were as follows:

The master was Captain Joseph Peers, who had been master of the **Staley Bridge** when both ships had been deployed on the Normandy Landings during World War II. Both ships had a brass plaque in the saloon acknowledging this service. Captain Peers had started his sea service in the Chester River schooners and was noted for quite a direct manner in his dealings with people. He suffered neither fools not incompetents gladly, and his straightforward treatment of novices was an important part of my own personal development. His first command had been the mv **Inishowen** and he told many hair-raising stories about bad weather in that little craft.

The mate, James Hopwood, was a humorous and doughty character who had served in the Cheshire Yeomanry (it was actually the Cavalry when he joined) during the First World War. He sailed for Summers for many years and had been master of the **Eldorita** and the **Warita**. When the latter was sold to Messrs Duff, Herbert and Mitchell, who also owned the Dinorwic Quarries, he had gone with her where she

[1] The port of Chester extended from Chester itself to Llandulas. Most ships registered there belonged to the Welsh port of Connah's Quay in the upper reaches of the Dee Estuary.

[2] R.S.Fenton (1989) *Cambrian Coasters*, World Ship Society.

[3] Tom Coppack (1973) *A Lifetime with Ships* (C.V. and M.E. Waine, Eds.) T.Stephenson & Sons, Ltd.

[4] I am grateful to Captain Luke for his help in reading several drafts of this article.

sailed as the **Alfred Mason**. He had subsequently commanded their ss **Veronica Tennant**, the Enid Shipping Company's ss **Enid Mary** (later Monks' **Riverville**, and Eyton's ss **Saint Kenneth** (which became Craigs' **Craig Avad**.)

The chief engineer on the **Hawarden Bridge** was Ken Griffiths, who had sailed for Everards and Coppacks, and risen quickly to be chief. The second engineer was Bill Dowell, who I had known since my childhood. Brought up at the Point of Ayr lighthouse cottages, he sailed with my father in the Point of Ayr colliers. There was also an earlier family connection, for his grandfather had sailed with my father's uncle in schooners which carried coal to the Baltic and pit props home. The Point of Ayr colliery once produced a calendar with an old photograph of a schooner at the quay and pit props stacked everywhere. I often wondered if that was the schooner concerned.

To return to the **Hawarden Bridge**, the two able-seamen were Bob Owen, who had been on the ship for many years, and Bill Jones. Both hailed from Moelfre Bay and carried impeccable coasting credentials including service with Kennaughs, Monroes, Richard Hughes, R.& D. Jones and Monks.

The ordinary seaman was a young man from Bagillt, Graham Wellings, who later died from a fall on a Blue Funnel liner. I was the 'boy', hardly worthy to be considered a crew member!

From: Lloyd's Register, 1954-55

HAWARDEN BRIDGE Official Number: 162047 Signal Letters: M S R N
Built by Scott & Sons at Bowling in 1940
Length: 131·4ft, Breadth: 24·6ft. Gross Tonnage: 297, Nett: 122
Owned by John Summers & Sons, Ltd. Registered at Chester
Oil engine built by Newbury Diesel Co. Ltd., Newbury

Machinery

The main engine was a four cylindered Sirron engine built by Newbury Diesels, and electric lights came from a dynamo run from the shaft and which also charged batteries sufficiently to keep us in lights when in port. This was useful, as we were spared the usual shutting down of the 'jenny' when evening came. If the stay in port was lengthy, the lights would fade and a small generator (the builders of which I cannot remember) would be activated to charge the batteries. The deck gear consisted of two winches and a windlass which were hydraulically powered and very efficient but noisy. The capstan aft was hand-powered by two handles. Fortunately the skipper was a competent handler of his ship and we seldom had to use the capstan.

Cargoes and Trades

The main work of the ships was to bring pig-iron from Workington, Millom and Barrow-in-Furness to Summers' jetty, adjacent to the steelworks which consumed the cargoes. This meant a cargo roughly every fortnight when the tides were big enough to accommodate the fully laden vessels, which each carried around 320 tons when down to their summer marks.

Berthing at the jetty was an interesting experience. The ordinary seaman and myself would have an early start, as Summers were quite justifiably proud of the high

standard of ship maintenance which they set. We would ensure that any wayward bits of rust breaking through the paintwork were scoured away, and the grease would be cleaned off the brasswork around all ports and scuttles, and especially the bell on the forecastle head. All the brasswork would then be cleaned with vinegar and polished to a high shine. Up would go the house-flag and a clean 'duster' hung at the stern ready for the approach to our home port.

On our way up the Dee estuary, we would strip the hatches before getting ready to berth. We would be riding the flood and somewhere, just off the berth, the port anchor would be dropped. The vessel would swing to stem the tide and then drop gently on to the jetty. She would be securely moored with additional large coir ropes which the ordinary seamen and I had to secure around the jetty timbers with large shackles. We would climb down to sit, facing the jetty, on the transverse timbers. As both hands were needed to secure the shackles, we would hold on to the next longitudinal by tucking our toecaps under it.

We would next top the derricks and lift out the crossbeams, hurried along by the shore gang anxious to start discharging the cargo on a 'job-and-finish' basis. These were hefty individuals whose preference was for Barrow, Millom and Workington cargoes in that order. Every pig had to be lifted and thrown into a skip which reached almost chest-high. The Workington pigs were huge and heavy. The Millom pigs were small, so that the men had to bend almost twice as often as they did for the medium-sized Barrow pigs which, like the little bear's porridge, were '*just right*'!

As the Dee channel could only be worked in daylight, a night alongside Summers' jetty was guaranteed. When sailing, the ordinary seaman and I would be sent ashore to release the bigger ropes and single up to a couple of lines shortly before the flood was due. The ship lay on the ground and the flood tide came up in a bore several feet high. It could be seen rolling up from just above Flint, sometimes with fishing boats riding its crest – an exciting sight. It would sweep around the ship, which would rise rapidly as if in a lock chamber. The order to let go and heave away would be given, and the windlass would heave the **Hawarden Bridge** out into the stream by the anchor. Of course the night tide had lifted the ship in the same way, and to moor a vessel inadequately on the Chester River was to court disaster. As Tom Coppack points out in his book, even local men used a pilot on the Chester River as the channel is constantly on the move and requires full-time monitoring.

Other Cargoes

In between the pig-iron cargoes, we saw little of the Chester River. We once took a load of bricks from Connah's Quay to Drogheda. There was also one occasion when we went up the Manchester Ship Canal to Ellesmere Port to load wood-pulp from a Scandinavian vessel for Mostyn, from where it was shipped to the Courtaulds works at Greenfield. The same Scandinavian vessel that had discharged it in Ellesmere port docked in Mostyn as we left. She was around 2,000 tons, with her machinery amidships. As the tides were cutting, she was too heavily draughted to bring a full load into Mostyn, but managed with a part load. Occasionally we would load a cargo of Courtaulds' baled 'fibro' (rayon staples) at Mostyn for the York Dock at Belfast, and

in season we might get a load of potatoes back to one of the south-end Liverpool docks.

'Outside' work was quite varied and supplied by J.S.Jones of Rumford Street, Liverpool. There would be grain to be loaded overside by elevator, often from an *Empress* liner berthed in Liverpool, which we took to Barrow-in-Furness, or else there was flax seed for Greenock. These cargoes were detested for their dust, but the flax seed was the worst. The tiny seeds would find their way everywhere, even into our bunks, for all the world like little black bugs.

Sometimes there would be a load of wire coils from Garston to Dublin. This was unpopular, being both loaded and discharged in a couple of hours, with little chance of a night in port at either end. One consolation was that we might pick up some reject bananas which would be left on the quay where Fyffe's ships discharged at Garston. I well remember my first visit to the port. There was a large number of coasters waiting for Stalbridge Lock to admit them, and they were berthed alongside each other with the first arrivals lying on the wall. There were steamers from the Kelly and Craig fleets, the pretty little steamer **J.B.Kee** from the Isle of Man and the mv **Halronnell** belonging to Tyrell of Arklow. When the lock gate opened, they all surged forward like so many children's toys in a bath.

An interesting experience was the occasional load of sand/gravel aggregate from Piel Island (Walney, near Barrow-in-Furness) to Liverpool. Piel, owned by the aggregate suppliers Summerfield, was a lonely place and the cargo arrived at the jetty in wooden wagons drawn by a 'haystack' steam engine. It was chuted aboard, and I seem to remember that the harbourmaster was a woman.

A frequent cargo was flour and cattle-feed from Birkenhead to Belfast, Derry or Glasgow. The flour was loaded at Spillers' Creek on the Birkenhead side, and then we would cross the dock to the UVECO mill on the Wallasey side for the cattle-feed. There was usually a night in Birkenhead.

Coal was a very occasional cargo, usually from Liverpool's Bramley Moore Dock to Dublin, or else from Acton Grange or Partington, on the Manchester Ship Canal, to Drogheda, Waterford, Dundalk or, one one occasion, Portaferry.

One interesting diversion was a cargo of limestone dust from Maryport to Garlieston, on the Scottish side of the Solway Firth. The Isle of Man 'Ben Boats' had been doing quite a bit of this work, and one of their skippers warned us that it was a foul cargo which encroached everywhere. He advised us to batten everything down and only to remove sufficient hatch boards to allow entry for the pipe through which the cargo was pumped aboard. It was only a couple of hours run across the Solway to Garlieston where we found a lonely jetty with a crane, a grab and a caravan. The crane driver lived in the caravan and would turn out at whatever hour a ship arrived to berth, discharge the cargo, and then let her go. The **Hawarden Bridge's** hatches were wide open for discharging, and not only did the cargo encroach everywhere, but it seemed to consume our paintwork. As this cargo was incompatible with Summers' pride in the appearance of their ships, it was our only trip! More pleasant was the run up the River Weaver to Winnington where we loaded caustic soda in drums for Carrickfergus.

An unforgettable experience was the annual survey at Scotts' slipway at Bowling on the Clyde. The exercise lasted about a month, and we would eat in a canteen ashore which was remarkable for the preponderance of minced meat, and a

nondescript soup which was healthily constituted on a Monday, but made a gradual metamorphosis to a near transparent liquid by Friday. There was a very warm, family atmosphere both in the shipyard and the village, where we were encouraged to join in the frequent celebrations of this, that and the other. On one occasion, the local pub won the darts championship and every table was given a free bottle of Scotch.

The chief rigger at Bowling was named Donald, a very large gentleman with snow-white hair, who was a true connoisseur of his national beverage. Each week a liner bound for America would depart from Glasgow with, if I remember rightly, a full cargo of the beautiful golden liquid. Donald would go down to a jetty as the ship passed and stand to attention, removing his white cap out of respect for the departure from the country of so much good drink!

The gatehouse was occupied by a small man who also had the responsibility of maintaining the exceptional tidiness of the Bowling yard. On a Friday, the men would call at his gatehouse for their pay, which they received in a small round tin with a screw lid. Each man would remove his money and payslip, check it, replace the lid on the tin and drop-kick it as far as possible down the yard. Once they had all departed, the gatehouse man would stoically walk around the yard, picking up the tins. When I asked him why they performed this ritual, he replied: "*they dinna ge' enough, ye noo*!"

It is worth mentioning that the 'bridge boats' were noted for their lack of comfort at sea. The wheelhouse was perched above the captain's flat, and they rolled terribly, particularly when crossing Morecambe Bay with a load of pig-iron. They had a low forecastle head about three feet high surrounded by bulwarks, and, in any head wind stronger than a force 4, they would scoop up water with the foredeck being almost permanently awash. They also slammed badly when light. Being somewhat underpowered, they frequently failed to make headway in anything above a force 6, and in winter we quite often found ourselves anchored in Moelfre Bay or Ramsey Bay waiting for the wind to abate.

One difference between the two sisters was that the **Staley Bridge** had an oil-fired galley stove, whilst that on the **Hawarden Bridge** was a pleasantly mottled range fired with anthracite coal. When reading '*Old Time Steam Coasting*' by Owen Spargo and Thomas Thomason, I was reminded of the experience of self-catering, as the **Hawarden Bridge** carried no cook. As cooking at sea in winter was an uncomfortable (and sometimes dangerous) business, the ordinary seaman and I would prepare a large pan of 'scouse' or lentil soup with a lump of ham boiled in it. The pan was lashed on to the range and brought onto heat as required. In port we would do ourselves proud with a full roast dinner, followed by apple duff and custard. Of course, we were better off financially than Spargo and Thomason and the economy was buoyant during the late 1950s. In fact the older men thought we were crazy to actually *choose* to go to sea.

It was the attraction of having a cook on board to prepare my meals that led to my leaving the **Hawarden Bridge** and taking the ordinary seamen's berth on Coppacks' flagship, the mv **Normanby Hall**. ▌

Ken Davies will continue his account of life on board the Chester River coasters in the June 'Bulletin'

A STERN WARNING

WARNING TO MERSEYSIDE DOCKERS

from Shipbuilding and Shipping Record, 10th May, 1951

Requirements to be enforced by Dock Labour Joint Committee – Employers' attitude hardens – Demand for end of restrictive practices – Need for a war plan

Some 17,000 Merseyside dockers received a shock on the last working week in April, 1951. In each pay envelope was a warning issued by the local Dock Labour Joint Committee threatening penalties on dock workers who continue to carry out the restrictive and other industrial practices which have resulted in driving ships away from the ports of Liverpool and Birkenhead. The full text of the notice is given on page 34.

The immediate reaction to the warning portends further trouble, the men believing that some attempt is being made to withdraw from them customs and privileges which they have taken for granted during the Second War and subsequent years. As the malpractices have been in vogue since 1939, the new men who have come into the local dock industry since that time have no basis for comparison. Consequently the warning to them may smack of an imposition which is likely to be opposed by strikes or the introduction of a go-slow technique very difficult to eradicate.

Who is to report offenders?

In the pep talk by employers and supervisory staffs, the question of who is to time and sack the delinquent dockers has angered the foremen. These permanent foremen, who have borne the brunt of insults and threats, and in several instances, of assaults, maintain that they have not been supported by the port employers at any time; in fact, they assert that they have been asked to close their eyes to many abuses in order to avoid stoppages and strikes.

The findings of the Sir John Foster Inquiry of 1942 revealed a situation in wartime without parallel in the history of the port.

The unpleasant but necessary task of reporting offenders will fall on either the supervisors or timekeepers if the foremen refuse to do it. At large berths and at ships where many gangs totalling several hundred men are engaged, it will be impossible to catch every offender unless the casual gang foremen co-operate, which is unlikely to be the case. Although the local official policy has been to hide at all costs the serious dock labour situation, the true position has been revealed from time to time by private investigators. Several reliable estimates of the actual time worked have been supplied. In the eight-hour working day, taking into account the total time lost in late starts, early finishes, absences, the 'welt' and other numerous tricks, it has been estimated that each docker spends three-and-a-half hours away from his place of work.

The 'welt' is an extension to all ships of a privilege permitted only to men working in refrigerated holds. When dealing with frozen cargoes, the holdsmen are

NOTICE TO DOCKWORKERS

Late Starts, Early Finishes and Unauthorised Absence

THE National Docks Agreement of February, 1951, provided for a wage increase to dock workers of 2s. per day and in addition placed upon local Joint Committees the responsibility of taking steps which would ensure that the Industry works smoothly and efficiently. Among other things the Agreement says they shall—

> " give serious attention to the question of late starts, early finishes, the extension of recognised breaks beyond the agreed time, and unauthorised absences generally, and shall take measures to deal promptly and effectively with them, in consultation, as necessary, with the Local Dock Labour Boards."

The Liverpool Dock Labour Joint Committee has given very careful consideration to the fact that serious malpractices are prevalent in Liverpool and Birkenhead. In many instances work is being started at 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. and is not being continued right up to the proper ceasing time. Moreover, " welting " and other unauthorised absences during working periods can no longer be tolerated. All this means that the employer does not get the eight full hours of work per day to which he is entitled under the agreements, work is lost to the port and the turn round of ships takes far longer than it should.

The Joint Committee recognise that some workers are willing to give, and do give, a square deal whilst others do not.

The Joint Committee, therefore, have agreed unanimously that on and after Monday, May 7, 1951, all dock workers shall be required to carry out the following :—

(i) Mornings : Weekdays. Men returning to the employment to which they are allocated shall muster promptly at 7.55 a.m. so as to secure that at 8 a.m. their work shall commence forthwith. (This does not affect the requirement that men must be in the Control at 7.45 a.m. when not allocated.)

From 8 a.m. to 8.30 a.m. and from 10 a.m. to 12 noon every man shall be at work.

Between the hours of 8.30 a.m. and 10 a.m. employers may, and if there is no abuse of the privilege will, grant reasonable time to men to go for a cup of tea in relays.

NOTE.—This concession must not be regarded or demanded as a right. No man must leave his work without permission nor must the period of absence exceed the time allowed, which will not normally be greater than 20 minutes.

(ii) Afternoons : Week-days. Every man shall be ready to resume work promptly at 1 p.m.

From 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. every man shall be at work except that those men who are working overtime will be permitted to go for refreshment, in relays as directed by the employer, between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m.

(iii) Sunday mornings and night shifts. Men will continue to be given an opportunity to obtain a cup of tea, providing there is no abuse of the privilege.

(iv) All Engagements. " Welting " and all other forms of unauthorised absence will not be permitted and men shall in all cases cease work at the proper time.

Every consideration has been given in the above to the point of dock workers and they are not being called upon to do anything which is not fair and reasonable. IT MUST THEREFORE BE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD THAT THE ABOVE REQUIREMENTS WILL BE STRICTLY ENFORCED AS FROM THE DATE MENTIONED and that men who fail to comply will render themselves liable to loss of pay under the existing agreement.

Issued by the Dock Labour Joint Committee. *April*, 1951.

allowed to work an hour on and an hour off. This practice has spread to all cargoes, both imports and exports, and in many cases the time has been extended, by unofficial agreement to two hours on and two hours off. Dockers transferred to Liverpool from outside the area have taken the malpractices back to their home ports and in this way the corruption has spread. On the other hand, transferred Liverpool men have earned themselves a bad reputation elsewhere. The discharging rate at Liverpool in April 1951 is less than half that of pre-war times, and the loading rate varies from three to seven tons per hour, whereas pre-war it was between 20 and 25 tons.

from 'The Guardian', 7th December, 1964

From behind the lines of lorries waiting to go into Sandon Dock to unload, waves of dockers flow across the dock road and disappear into public houses, betting offices, dockside cafes and side streets. It is 1.30pm – half an hour after the end of the lunch break – and the afternoon 'welt' is setting in. Similar scenes were repeated at other places along the dock road where ships were working cargoes.

Ships were being manned by gangs under full strength. In many cases just four men were in each of the ships' five holds, instead of the normal eight for a deep-sea vessel. Dockers look upon the 'welt' as a practice which they have won over the years, justified by the insecurity of their work and wages. One commented: *'With good overtime at the weekends I can gross £17 a week, but it is the insecurity which is the trouble. I'm sure the men would be prepared to give up most of these practices if they could be guaranteed a good wage each week.'* Most of the 12,000 Liverpool dockers belong to the Transport and General Workers' Union, which does not condone 'welting', but regards it as the responsibility of the employers. ▌

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

All Meetings are held in the Education Suite at the Merseyside Maritime Museum and commence at 12.30pm. Coffee and biscuits are available from 12.noon.

Thursday, 20th March, 2008
LIFE AND TIMES OF A 19th CENTURY MASTER MARINER
(Mr S. Williams)

Thursday, 17th April, 2008
CONSERVATION OF SHIP MODELS
(Mr C. Mosely)

Thursday, 15th May, 2008
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
followed by
INDUSTRIAL HISTORY OF AMLWCH PORT
(Mr P. Williams)

ICELANDIC INTERLUDE

by Ron Hunter

In the September 2006 'Bulletin' Ron Hunter described the time he spent on the Pacific Steam Navigation Company's ***Orbita*** *when the ship was on convoy duty between South Africa and Suez. In this article Ror recalls an 'Icelandic Interlude' on the* ***Orbita*** *in 1942.*

The **Orbita** sailed from Durban on 19th July 1941 bound for the United Kingdom, with bright expectations all round of making a landfall there within, perhaps, a month or so. A call at Cape Town on 22nd July where we picked up a 'mixed bag' of homeward bound services, Merchant Navy and civilian passengers, did nothing to dampen or allay these expectations.

However, a slight change of programme was lurking around the corner, for we learned on sailing day from Cape Town that instead of the usual homeward trek via Freetown in Sierra Leone, the **Orbita** was to be routed via Port of Spain, Trinidad. This was a major deviation which would obviously entail a wide sweep westwards across the Atlantic with a consequent substantial lengthening of the voyage. We never discovered the exact reason for this deviation even through our 'galley wireless' – that most durable shipboard institution of those days – was as active as ever and did not fail to regale us almost daily with a wide variety of ideas and suggestions on the subject.

It took us seventeen days to reach Port of Spain where we arrived on 10th August. No shore leave was allowed and we sailed on the following day bound for Halifax, Nova Scotia, where hopefully we would be joining a UK bound North Atlantic convoy. We arrived at Halifax on 18th August where we lay for a further eleven days prior to our departure, as hoped, for the UK.

This was the one and only time that I ever had the good fortune to be in Halifax during a Nova Scotian summer. A sharp, though very welcome, contrast to my other wartime calls there, all of which were made in winter time, usually in freezing conditions. During the last few days of our stay at Halifax we embarked Canadian troops for the UK, sailing from Halifax on 29th August in a UK-bound convoy. Our passage across the North Atlantic was uneventful and we arrived at Liverpool on 12th September. It had taken us the best part of two months to get there from South Africa!

The **Orbita** berthed at the Princes Landing Stage to disembark our troops and other passengers and docked on the tide shortly afterwards. This was my first visit to Liverpool since the Luftwaffe's ferocious 'blitz' on Merseyside the previous May and it was sobering and saddening to walk amidst the broken and scarred buildings, and shattered, familiar streets of this great city. A far cry indeed – seemingly an age away from the last time I had walked along these same streets intact as they were then, in December 1940. But the stoical and courageous way in which the good citizens of Liverpool – a tough, hardy yet homely breed at all times – were still going about their business almost as though nothing had happened, was heartening to see and 'feel' – and spelt hope for the future despite the dark clouds hovering over Britain in that crucial and most testing year of 1941.

After paying-off our crew and clearing up various odds and ends of ship's business, I was given the 'luxury' of two whole weeks' leave and I lost no time in attaching myself to the earliest possible LMS train departure from Lime Street for London Euston. My leave over, I returned to Liverpool on 30th September to rejoin the **Orbita** for her next voyage.

On rejoining the ship, I found that the troop-carrying capacity had been increased quite considerably by the Sea Transport authorities. There were improvements and better amenities in the troop decks' accommodation, and drastic alterations had taken place to the former first and second-class cabins and suites occupied by Services officers and NCOs. Single-berth cabins were now two-berth and three-berth cabins now accommodated six persons. This was in line with all troopships as the war dragged on and the need to transport large numbers of personnel to more and more parts of the world became increasingly necessary and urgent.

The PSNC's **Orbita** was launched in July, 1914

The **Orbita** sailed from Liverpool on 7th October 1941 with a full crew but no troops or passengers. Our immediate destination was the Clyde – 'for orders'. We dropped anchor at the Tail of the Bank off Gourock some twenty-four hours later, but our orders were an interminable time in materialising. It became apparent that the **Orbita** had temporarily joined the ranks of the 'unemployed' as days of swinging at anchor turned into weeks. It was unlikely, of course, that this state of affairs would last for long. Ships of virtually every description were far too precious and in far too short supply in 1941. This proved to be the case for, at the end of October, we were ordered to proceed to Inveraray near the head of Loch Fyne.

We sailed from Gourock on 28th October, arriving off Inveraray the same afternoon. Anchoring a short distance from the pier we were treated to a grandstand view of Inveraray Castle, the seat of the Duke of Argyll, Chief of the Clan Campbell, with his standard flying proudly from the flagstaff over the castle. Initial curiosity as to why a ship the size of the **Orbita** had been sent to such a relatively remote spot as Loch Fyne at this stage of the war was quickly dispelled when we learned that we were to function for a while as an accommodation or 'mother' ship for the crews of LCTs (landing craft), then carrying out invasion exercises along the banks of Loch Fyne.

These craft were amongst the earliest units of the amphibious forces now operating under the recently formed Combined Operations Command which was to develop and gradually grow into an unstoppable factor in the ultimate defeat of Germany; agonizingly far off as it seemed in 1941!

The LCTs and their crews would set off early in the morning for their exercises and practice landings, and then tie-up alongside us in the late afternoons; weary, hungry (and thirsty) to be fed, housed and generally sustained. Although this was not exactly the most scintillating or exciting period in the trooping career of the **Orbita**, it was interesting to mingle and yarn with the young officers, mostly RNVR volunteers, who manned the landing craft. There were some great characters amongst them, many of whom must have lost their lives in the great amphibious operations which took place in later years.

The **Orbita's** spell of duty as 'mother' ship at Inveraray terminated almost as suddenly as it had started for we were ordered to return to Gourock on 11th November where we reverted to swinging aimlessly at anchor as before. On 15th November, however, we were on the move again, this time with orders to proceed to Rothesay on the Isle of Bute where we spent the next twenty-five days once more swinging at anchor in the bay. I don't exactly remember why we were sent to Rothesay (possibly the 'powers that be' didn't know either!), but our long spell of being shunted around the Clyde area finally came to an end on 10th December when we were instructed to return to Gourock once again.

At Gourock we received orders for the **Orbita** to do a stint on the Iceland run. Iceland had been occupied by Canadian and British troops since the German invasion of Denmark the previous year and its importance as a bastion in the long drawn-out Battle of the Atlantic was obvious. American troops had begun to occupy Iceland even before Pearl Harbour so by now, just a few days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour and with the United States at last fully in the war, a very large garrison of Allied forces was well-established in Iceland. One or more troopships operated a shuttle service between the Clyde anchorages and Iceland's main port at Reykjavik.

Thus it was that the **Orbita**, together with the 14,400-ton Polish liner **Batory** (Gdynia America Line) became the latest recruits to be involved on this service. Until the end of February 1942 the **Orbita** and her Polish travelling companion, with usually a couple of destroyers as escort, maintained the Iceland run. It was bleak and dreary and the passage from the Clyde to Reykjavik usually averaged three days at our best speed of 14 or maybe 14½ knots. Outward bound from the Clyde we embarked our troops at anchor from tenders, whilst our 'turn-rounds' at Reykjavik were usually made alongside the quay there. These were always rapid, hectic affairs with

disembarking troops going ashore via gangways and our own accommodation ladders on one side of the ship, and embarking troops being taken on by similar means – often simultaneously – on the other side. All this was usually completed within the space of a few hours – always in bitterly cold weather.

All hands on the **Orbita** were usually only too glad to wave goodbye to Reykjavik and arrive back at the Clyde anchorage as soon as possible. This is not to say that languishing off Gourock in winter was anyone's idea of 'Paradise'. However, it was an improvement on lying alongside the quay at Reykjavik as we received welcome mail; there would be up-to-date newspapers to read and it 'smelt' of home. The **Orbita** and the **Batory** made five round trips on the Iceland run and although they were all made through perilous waters, with just one exception they were entirely uneventful.

The single exception was short and sharp and occurred on a grey morning in late December. We were inward bound to Iceland, not many hours from arrival at Reykjavik when, shortly before midday an enemy long-range plane appeared suddenly from behind a mass of clouds and neatly dropped a stick of bombs. Luckily, they missed us and fell harmlessly into the sea. Anti-aircraft fire from the escorting destroyers, with commendable support from the **Batory** and ourselves, put up a fair old barrage and the plane promptly made off without dropping any more bombs.

It so happened that only seconds before this little 'mini-attack' took place, a very serious and weighty matter was being pondered over and deliberated upon in the Purser's office. Namely, some intricacy of a future crew 'pay-off' centred around the subject of leave pay entitlement for rank-and-file crew members. This latter was almost unheard of prior to 1941 and had only recently been introduced by the Ministry of War Transport in co-operation with the National Maritime Board. It was an innovation brought about no doubt – or at least accelerated by – the demands and pressures of war and the resultant elevation of us all from whatever we may have been called before to 'our gallant lads in the Merchant Navy'.

I still remember standing, or half-sitting, against a desk in the Purser's Office and listening with rapt attention to Purser Mosley holding forth on this subject when suddenly the air was rent with various thuds, bangs and rat-a-tat-tats from outside. Whereupon, the weighty matter of leave pay was instantly dropped in just about the fastest scatter I have ever witnessed, or participated in, during my whole life! It really was – not at the time perhaps but certainly in retrospect – enough to make a cat laugh and for weeks afterwards we sniggered at the recollection of this incident until, inevitably, we found something new to snigger at.

The **Orbita** completed her tour of duty on the Iceland run towards the end of February 1942 and then made another trip across the North Atlantic to Halifax, returning to Glasgow with a further consignment of Canadian troops on 23rd March 1942. A welcome week's leave followed after which I rejoined the **Orbita** in Glasgow on 7th April for another trooping voyage which was destined to be memorable in more ways than one. But that is all part of another story ..... ▌

This article first appeared in the Furness Withy house magazine 'The Log' and was kindly submitted by LNRS Member John Hill.

LIVERPOOL PILOTS' WORKING ROUTINES, 1897

from the 'Liverpool Courier' of 1898

by LNRS Vice-President Harry Hignett

This is an account of a test action brought to try the right of the Liverpool pilots to certain remuneration for piloting outward bound vessels to the Princes Landing Stage for the purpose of embarking passengers, and for piloting inward bound cattle steamers to the Wallasey and Woodside stages before taking them into dock. Pilotage is compulsory in the port of Liverpool for the vessels in question, and the point in the case is whether the said services are covered by the compulsory pilotage rates or are to be paid for in addition to such rates. The pilotage of the said port is regulated by the Mersey Docks Consolidation Act of 1858 under which the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board is constituted the pilotage authority, with power to license pilots. The Board is merely a formal party to these proceedings. The other plaintiffs are pilots licensed by the Board. One of them, Mr Gore, was in charge of the defendant's ship ***Servia*** *on her outward voyage recently, and the other, Mr Durrant, was in charge of the defendant's ship* ***Carinthia*** *on her inward voyage.*

The following facts are taken from the evidence and admissions made at the hearing before Mr Justice Barnes:

Firstly, and with regard to outward bound passenger steamers. Prior to the year 1895 large passenger steamers sailing from the port of Liverpool for foreign ports loaded their cargoes in one of the wet docks of the port, and embarked their passengers in the dock or from tenders after the steamers left dock and whilst they were lying in the River Mersey, but in the year mentioned the approach to the Princes Landing Stage was improved so as to enable steamers, after leaving dock, to come alongside the stage and there to embark their passengers.

At the same time a railway station was erected on the quay adjoining the stage and connected by a line of rails with the London and North Western Railway system, and special trains have since that time conveyed passengers direct to the Riverside Station. The practice of the defendants since 1895 with their steamers carrying passengers outwards is typical of that of most lines with their outward-bound passenger steamers, although some lines do not use the landing stage. This practice, stated as accurately as possible, is as follows:

The defendants load their steamers in the Canada Dock some distance to the north of the Princes Landing Stage, and after the steamer's loading is complete she is usually taken out of the dock on the high water preceding the afternoon of the day fixed for her departure, and, according to the state of the tide, proceeds to an anchor, and thence to the landing stage; or direct to the stage. Sometimes, on account of neap tides, it is necessary for the vessel to leave the dock earlier and to moor at the defendants' buoy in the Sloyne, to the south of the stage, before proceeding to the

stage. The defendants are the only company possessing a mooring buoy in the Sloyne. The vessel berths at the stage shortly before the hour fixed for her departure, usually about 4pm. She is assisted alongside by a tug or tugs, and after making fast to the stage she embarks her saloon passengers and their baggage. The mails are loaded and sometimes some fine goods are received on board. From the stage the vessel proceeds to sea.

The time occupied at the stage is sometimes as long as four hours, sometimes not more than half an hour to an hour, and on the average about two hours. The steerage passengers usually embark by tender whilst the vessel is at anchor in the river or at the buoy, but sometimes in dock if the vessel is to proceed directly to the stage. About seven steamers per week belonging to different lines use the stage for the purpose of embarking their passengers, and about the same number use the stage for disembarkation of passengers on inward voyages.

This case does not raise directly the question as to the pilot's remuneration for bringing inward bound vessels to the landing stage. It is always a difficult operation to bring these large steamers alongside the stage owing to other vessels entering and leaving docks, along with the other traffic on the river, and especially so on strong flood or ebb tides.

The steamers must always leave the dock system at high water, but they come alongside the stage at all states of the tide. In the particular case of the **Servia**, she left the Canada Dock on 10th August 1897 on the morning tide, in charge of the plaintiff pilot Gore, and anchored abreast of the Princes Stage. Shortly before 4.30pm her anchor was weighed and she was brought alongside the stage under Mr Gore's charge. There she embarked her saloon passengers, their baggage and the mails and thence proceeded to sea on the same evening through the Queen's Channel, bound for New York. Mr Gore piloted the vessel to the outward compulsory pilotage limit at the North West Buoy. The defendants have paid the outward compulsory pilotage rate for Mr Gore's services, and contend that such payment covers his services for taking the **Servia** to the landing stage. On the other hand, Mr Gore claims £1 for extra remuneration for the last-mentioned service. This sum has been fixed by the Pilotage Board as a regular charge to be made by pilots for bringing vessels to the stage for the purpose of embarking and disembarking passengers on the grounds that their services in so doing are not covered by the compulsory pilotage rate. The charge has been paid in respect of all steamers using the landing stage in the manner aforesaid in and since 1895. It is now disputed.

Secondly, with regard to inward bound cattle steamers. For a number of years a very large trade has been carried on in the importation of live cattle and sheep into the port of Liverpool. The cattle and sheep are landed from the steamers by which they arrive at the Wallasey and Woodside landing stages on the Birkenhead side of the Mersey, under the provisions of the Diseases of Animals Act, 1894, and the orders made in pursuance thereof. There are rules made by the Pilotage Board for regulating the time, order and manner for berthing vessels at the stages. These stages and a part of the Alfred Dock, Birkenhead, near the Wallasey stage, are the only places in the port where the landing of livestock imported from abroad is permitted.

The practice of the defendants, which is similar to that of other lines with regard to cattle steamers, is as follows: a pilot is taken off the port and when the

steamer enters the river, orders are sent to her as to berthing at one of the stages or the Alfred Dock. If the tide suits, and there are no steamers in the way at the stages, the vessel proceeds direct to the stage. If the tide does not suit, or there is no available berth at the stage, the vessel anchors. If the vessel has both sheep and cattle she generally goes both to Wallasey and Woodside stages, landing sheep at the former and cattle at the latter, although on occasion both are discharged at Wallasey. If the vessel has only cattle she goes to Woodside or Wallasey stage, or in some cases to the Alfred Dock where there is accommodation for both sheep and cattle. The arrangement depends on the space available in the lairages. After landing the livestock the vessel is taken direct into a dock if the tide serves, or to an anchorage, and then docked as soon as possible in order to discharge the rest of her cargo.

About fourteen steamers a week belonging to different companies arrive with sheep and cattle. It is difficult to manoeuvre the vessels alongside the stages, owing both to the traffic and the tide. The assistance of a tug or tugs is required and once a vessel is made fast to the stage it ordinarily takes an hour or maybe an hour and a half to land the cattle, and one to three hours to land the sheep. Occasionally cattle ships had been three tides at the stage and then completed discharge in the Alfred Dock.

In the case of the **Carinthia**,[1] she was inward bound with cattle, sheep and other cargo from America, and at about 8.30pm on 21st August 1897 the plaintiff, pilot Durrant, boarded her off Point Lynas, took charge, and brought her up the Mersey at about 2am on 22nd August. She then proceeded in the usual way, first to the Wallasey stage where she discharged her sheep, and then to the Woodside stage where the cattle were landed. At 5am the **Carinthia** was taken to Canada Dock entrance, but owing to her draught was not permitted to enter, and was therefore anchored and lightened. She did not get into dock until the evening tide on 23rd August. Mr Durrant was in charge throughout. The defendants have paid the inward compulsory pilot rate for Mr Durrant's services, plus ten shillings for two days' detention at anchor at the rate of five shillings per day. They contend that such payment covers all his services, but he claims £2 as extra remuneration for taking the vessel to and from two landing stages. This charge, which is now disputed, has been paid in respect of all cattle steamers using the stages for the last fifteen years or so.

The questions raised turn upon the construction to be placed upon certain sections of the Mersey Docks Acts (Consolidation Act) of 1858, which render pilotage compulsory for outward and inward bound vessels, except coasting vessels in ballast or under the burthen of 100 tons. The 1858 Act, so far as the sections relating to pilotage are concerned is loosely drawn, and these sections are somewhat confused. They appear to have been framed in relation to the known course of business at the port of Liverpool, which is for vessels to load and discharge their cargoes in the wet docks of that port.

[1] CARINTHIA Launched 24th May 1895 at Glasgow. 5,598 gross tons. Length 445 ft; breadth: 49 ft. Liverpool to Boston service, maiden voyage 24th October 1895. In 1899 she was requisitioned for the carriage of mules to South Africa for Boer War service. On 30th July 1900 she stranded off Cape Gravois, Haiti, on her way to load a cargo of mules in Mexico and became a total loss.

Mr Justice Barnes summed up: "My review of the 1858 Act has led me to the conclusion that the principle which underlies the decisions is that if an outward bound vessel is loaded, equipped, and prepared ready for sea, and in that condition makes such progress to sea as tide and weather permit from her point of starting her voyage, then she is proceeding to sea within the meaning of the Act; but that a vessel is not so proceeding to sea if after leaving her dock she remains waiting in the port for the purpose of performing operations which are necessary in order to complete her loading or other preparations required in order to render her ready for sea. In the present case, the outward bound vessel **Servia**, although her equipment was complete, was not ready for sea until she had taken on board her mails and passengers and their baggage, and in my opinion, the compulsory rate paid by the defendants for Pilot Gore's services did not cover the service rendered by him in taking the vessel to the Princes Stage.

"Similarly, the compulsory rate paid by the defendants in respect of the **Carinthia** did not, in my opinion, cover Pilot Durrant's services in taking the vessel to and from the Wallasey and Woodside stages.

"The importance of the case to the shipowners is that, if the plaintiffs are correct in their contention, vessels proceeding to the stages are not under compulsory pilotage. My decision is only asked upon the question as to whether or not the pilots are to be paid extra if they are required to take vessels to the stages.

"An inward bound cattle steamer is compelled to go to the cattle stages – or one of them – to land her cattle and sheep before going into dock. Unless she lands them in the Alfred Dock the pilot cannot take the vessel into a wet dock direct and must, therefore, take her to the stage or stages in order to earn his compulsory fee, except when she goes to the Alfred Dock; but the answer to this is that the compulsory fee is paid for bringing the vessel in and anchoring her, if necessary, and then docking her, and that he is not responsible for the vessel having cattle or sheep on board, and that if he has to perform duties in consequence which are not provided for in the compulsory rate, then he must be paid for his extra services.

"This case only requires a decision upon the question of payment, and not a final determination of the question of compulsory employment of a pilot to take a vessel to the stages. It is sufficient for me on this claim to decide that if an inward-bound ship is taken to one or more stages, then her owners will have to pay the extra charge for each stage." ▌

THE MONDAY FACILITY

Members' access to the Archives and Library at the Merseyside Maritime Museum on Mondays continues as follows:

MARCH: Mondays 3rd, 10th, 17th and 31st
APRIL: Mondays 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th
MAY: Mondays 12th and 19th
JUNE: Mondays 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th

THE LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

ANNUAL AWARD, 2007

"The business organisation and practice of the Liverpool slave trade in the late eighteenth century: A case study of Robert Bostock"

Précis of a dissertation by Denise M.Jones of Liverpool Hope University

From 1776 to 1800, Liverpool accounted for 73% of the British slave trade and 36·5% of the total Atlantic trade. Through a case study of Robert Bostock that is largely based on his surviving records which are available at Liverpool Record Office (387 MD54 and 387 MD55), this dissertation seeks to determine some of the reasons for Liverpool's dominance in the slave trade by analysing the business organisation and practices of a late eighteenth century slave trader.

Bostock was a slave ship captain who became an independent slave trader. While the letterbooks do not make entirely clear how Bostock raised the capital to make the transition from ship's captain to sole trader, the dissertation examines the available evidence of employment remuneration and incentives, along with the slaving investments made by him prior to his becoming a sole-owner in 1786. From his first captaincy in the slave trade in 1769 at the age of 26, Bostock was a co-owner in all the slaving voyages he commanded. It is proposed that part-ownership may have been offered as an employment incentive to slaving captains more frequently in Liverpool than in other slaving ports, and that enhanced employment incentives may have attracted a greater pool of captains to the port, which assisted in creating Liverpool's dominant position in the slave trade.

By 1786 Bostock had accumulated sufficient capital to launch two vessels under his sole ownership. From then until his death in 1793, Bostock was the sole or primary owner in a further fifteen slaving ventures. Whilst profit was his goal, the overarching theme of Bostock's management of the slave trade was that it relied upon information. This need for information was central to the creation and content of the letterbooks. Bostock corresponded with merchants, traders and suppliers around the Atlantic system so that he could gather the information he needed to attempt to maximise profitability. The dissertation argues that by being in the largest slaving port, Bostock and other slaving merchants had access to the fastest streams of slave trade information that the late eighteenth century could provide, which assisted in the port's hegemony over the trade.

The effect of the abolition movement on the Liverpool slave trade is assessed in this dissertation. In the eighteen years from 1790 until 1807, when the abolition movement was gaining momentum, Liverpool increased slaving clearances by nearly 70%. The dissertation argues that Bostock provides evidence that Liverpool merchants anticipated a windfall profit in the event of abolition and so, rather than being deterred by the prospect of abolition, they were encouraged to invest in new slaving ventures in the hope of high profits.

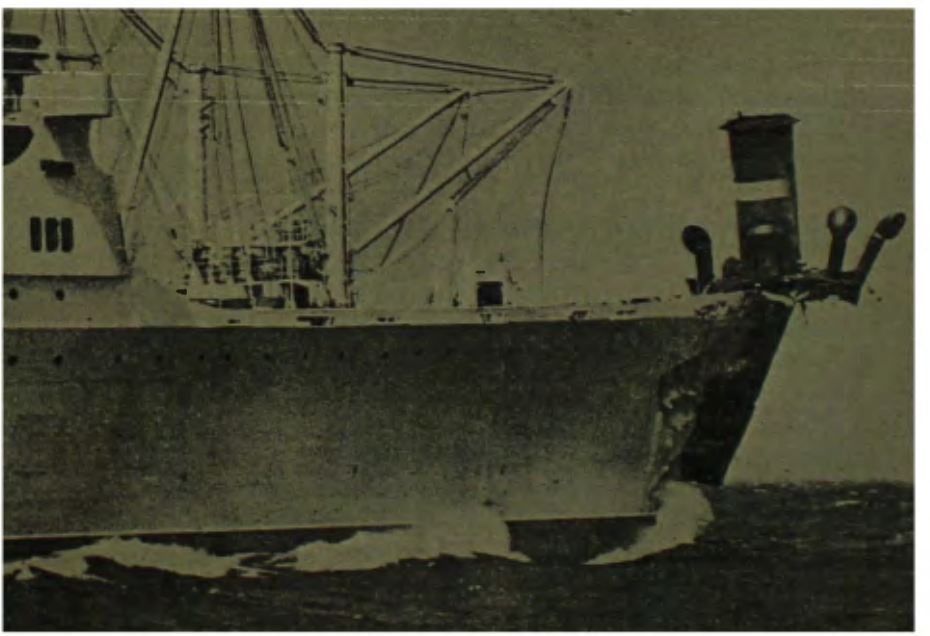
The dissertation also examines the relationship between Bostock and his primary African slave supplier, James Cleveland, resident of the Windward Coast of West Africa. It is argued that Bostock was the supplicant in their business relationship and was reliant upon Cleveland to honour promises and undertakings that were made on the African coast. While his vessels and trade goods were there, he was in the hands of his African slave supplier and was effectively powerless to enforce his will on the African coast.

Examination of the letterbooks of Robert Bostock demonstrates the complexity of the organisation of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and offers some evidence for a few of the reasons for Liverpool's dominance in the slave trade in the late eighteenth century. However, more research is needed to corroborate whether the conclusions offered by this case study can be applied more broadly to other merchants involved in the Liverpool slave trade. ▌

JUST FANCY THAT !!!

GRACE LINER COLLIDES WITH TANKER

In a collision with the turbo-electric tanker **Valchem**, 10,416 gross tons, 22 miles east of Atlantic City, New Jersey, on 26th March 1959, the Grace liner **Santa Rosa**, 15,271 gross tons, returning to New York from a Caribbean cruise with 247 passengers, broke away with the funnel and ventilators of the tanker still perched on her damaged bows. The **Valchem**, which sustained heavy stern damage, was towed to New York by the tug **Cynthia Moran**, and the Santa Rosa continued her passage to New York.

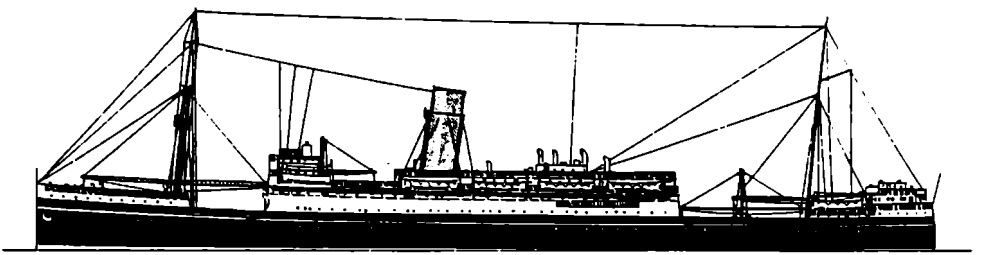


The " Santa Rosa " with the " Valchem's " funnel and ventilators perched on her bows

AND FINALLY .....

PITCAIRN LIFELINE – THE '*TAMAROA*'

In the nature of things, a time comes when even the staunchest of ships must be withdrawn from service. A time when age, perhaps unperceived except by her owners, creeps up on a ship to render her obsolete, and sentiment, which has but little place in the business of shipping, must give way to practical economics. In early 1957 the **Tamaroa** was homeward bound on the final stages of her last voyage.



The **Tamaroa** was built as the **Sophocles** for the Aberdeen Line by Harland & Wolff at Belfast, and was launched on 22nd September 1921, commencing her maiden voyage to Brisbane on 1st March of the following year. In June 1926 the **Sophocles** was bare-boat chartered to Shaw Savill and Albion and was renamed **Tamaroa**. She was overhauled and converted to burn oil fuel at a cost of £70,000. Her steaming range was 10,000 miles at 14½ knots and on 10th September 1926 the **Tamaroa** made her first sailing on her new route from Southampton to Wellington, New Zealand via the Panama Canal. In 1932 the **Tamaroa** was bought by Shaw Savill from the Receiver of the Aberdeen Line. After war service, the **Tamaroa** returned to her regular route in August 1948, with accommodation for 372 tourist-class passengers.

Statisticians who like to remember their ships by their factual accomplishments may care to record that in this service she made 92 voyages, steamed over two million miles, transported 750,000 tons of cargo and carried some 30,000 passengers. She more than earned her keep and owed her employers little.

To the **Tamaroa** came a distinction which few merchant ships have been able to claim. This was the spontaneous tribute from the lonely island of Pitcairn, where in the course of her twenty-six years of peacetime voyaging, the **Tamaroa** was wont to call. The tribute took the form of an official letter from Mr Parkins Christian, the chief magistrate of the island and himself a direct descendant of Fletcher Christian. In his letter the chief magistrate recalled the services rendered to the island by the **Tamaroa**, and voiced the grief of the islanders at the passing of a ship which *'is regarded by us all, every many, woman and child, as a close friend – a part of us and a part of the history of this island.'*

This is a tribute which may well be unique in the history of the Merchant Navy. ▌