LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

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U.S. sailors examine the after deck gun ***of I-400*** *after her capture****. I-14*** *and* ***I-401*** *are alongside.*
See page 11 *Picture Wikimedia Commons.*

mv ***Keren*** *in her original guise as* ***St.Edmund****. Pictured alongside at Parkeston Quay, Harwich.*
See page 36 *Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.*

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m.v. **Glenorchy**

A short but valuable period of War Service 1939 – 1942

By L.N.R.S. Member Ian Duckett

My interest in this particular ship is that my father stood by her whilst she was being built in Hong Kong and then served on her as Extra Second Engineer until December 1941.

*This is one of the few pictures of the **Glenorchy** that exist. It was taken in Capetown in November 1940 and she is seen in her wartime livery.*

Picture Glen and Shire Lines

Glenorchy was one of eight 'Glenearn' class ships delivered between 1938 and 1940. They were designed to allow the Glen Line, a subsidiary of Alfred Holt & Co., to operate a fortnightly UK/Europe service to the Far East. Twin-screw ships, of 9,000 GRT and powered by B & W engines totalling a combined 12,000 bhp, which made them capable of speeds in excess of 18 knots, and they would become ideal for service as naval auxiliaries. They had a length of 483ft and beam 66ft.

Unusually for the time their building was scheduled across the world, and a comparison of rounded building costs is interesting:

Hong Kong built	£366k		
Danish built	£385k	excess over Hong Kong	£19k
Dutch built	£428k	"	£62k
UK built	£440k	"	£74k

*This post war shot of the **Glenearn** shows her powerful outline to advantage.*
Copyright is held by CombinedOps web site, and published with their approval.

Details of the year and location of their build, an outline of their war service and eventual demise are summarised on the following table:

Year into service	Name	Built at	War Service	
December, 1938	Glenearn	Caledon, Dundee	Requisitioned as Fleet Supply Ship, then Landing Ship Infantry, HMS **Glenearn**	Returned to fleet, scrapped 1970
December, 1938	Glenroy	Scotts, Greenock	Requisitioned as Fleet Supply Ship, then Landing Ship Infantry,, HMS **Glenroy**	Returned to fleet, scrapped 1966
July, 1939	Denbighshire	NSM, Amsterdam	Owner's account, and/or Special War Service	1967 transferred to Blue Funnel, as **Sarpedon**. Scrapped 1969
July, 1939	Breconshire	Taikoo, Hong Kong	Requisitioned as Fast Supply Ship, HMS **Breconshire**	1942 bombed and sunk at Malta.
December, 1939	Glenorchy	Taikoo, Hong Kong	Owner's account, and/or Special War Service	1942 torpedoed & sunk off Tunisia in Malta convoy
April, 1940	Glengyle	Caledon, Dundee	Requisitioned as Fleet Supply Ship, then Landing Ship Infantry,, HMS **Glengyle**	1970 transferred to Blue Funnel, as **Deucalion**. Scrapped 1971
April, 1940	Glengarry	B & W, Copenhagen	Seized by Germany, renamed **Meersburg**, 1942 converted to minelayed & renamed **Hansa**. 1946 returned to Glen Line and reverted to **Glengarry**	1970 transferred to Blue Funnel Line renamed **Dardanus**, 1971 reverted to **Glengarry** for voyage to breakers
September, 1940	Glenartney	Caledon, Dundee	Owner's account, and/or Special War Service	1967 scrapped.

Effectively four of the class were taken over directly by the Royal Navy, the **Glenearn, Glengyle** and **Glenroy** were commissioned into the Royal Navy and all survived the war. **Breconshire** was taken over by the Royal Navy as a fast transport and after fifteen successful Malta convoys/voyages she was lost in March 1942, sunk by bombing just off Malta.

The three other ships **Glenorchy, Glenartney** and **Denbighshire** remained in their owner's service although they all served in several special military convoys.

*mv **Breconshire,** another member of the Glenearn Class arriving Malta in 1942.*
Courtesy 'Times of Malta'

The **Glenorchy** was launched in August 1939 and sailed on her maiden voyage on the 3rd January 1940 to her home port of London, via Shanghai, Suez, Port Said and Gibraltar, arriving in London on the 21st February 1940.

Her second voyage was an independent voyage to the Far East and back to London via Port Said, Suez, Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Penang, Colombo, Capetown, St Vincent WI, arriving in London on the 1st July 1940.

The next voyage started by sailing from London on the 11th August, up the east coast of the UK in convoy FW50, then in an East – West Atlantic convoy OA199. She then sailed independently to Shanghai via the West Indies and South Africa. Again, she returned home via Capetown, when the above picture of her in war time livery was taken in November 1940.

She arrived back in Liverpool early in December 1940 and was still there in late December when she was caught up in one of the worst air raids on the Liverpool Docks since the outbreak of war.

Over 3 nights, 20th, 21st and 22nd December, some 200 aircraft bombed the docks and industrial areas of Liverpool and Bootle. At 0200 on the Saturday, a bomb landed on a large 3-story shed at SW Gladstone Dock. This shed contained paint, sugar, hemp and rubber and, with a bitumastic roof, the resulting fire spread rapidly. **Glenorchy** and **Eurybates**, both owned by Alfred Holt & Co., were moored alongside and both were threatened by the fire.

With help from a party of naval ratings from escort vessels moored nearby, both ships were saved by being towed and warped to berths across the dock. Reports of the events are contradictory in terms of the actions of the crews of both ships and their interaction with the navy personnel but, importantly, both ships were saved on an appalling, chaotic, night.

Sadly, over the three nights in question, fifteen firemen died. More can be read about the incidents in the book 'Port in a Storm' by John Hughes.

Voyage 4 was a very fast independent trip across the Atlantic to Halifax, Nova Scotia, with **Glenorchy** sailing from Liverpool on the 8th January and arriving back on the 5th February 1941. **Glenorchy** then undertook repairs in Glasgow prior to joining her next convoy, a so called 'Winston Special', Convoy WS7 or, for her, Voyage 5/6.

It is clear from the company archives held at the Merseyside Maritime Museum that when a voyage was initially undertaken on government service but then, at some point, if the ship was released back to the company's service, the two phases of the voyage were numbered separately albeit that they were essentially the same trip.

WS7 was a major troop convoy consisting of 19 passenger liners and just two fast cargo liners, **Glenorchy** and her sister ship, **Denbighshire**.

The twenty-one ships had a combined gross tonnage of 412, 580, the largest WS convoy of the war in terms of tonnage.

The importance of the convoy is obvious when you look at the names of the liners involved, they included some of the most modern passenger vessels available:

Duchess of York	Duchess of Atholl	Stratheden
Viceroy of India	Orion	Pasteur
Andes	Johan Van Oldenbarnevelt	Warwick Castle
Georgic	Strathallan	Strathnaver
Stirling Castle	Orontes	Strathmore
Dempo	Empress of Canada	Otranto
		Orcades

The naval escort for this convoy was equally impressive including, at various times. the battleships HMS **Nelson** and HMS **Revenge**, the cruisers **Cairo, Hawkins, Colombo, Glasgow** and **Edinburgh** plus a total of eighteen destroyers accompanied the convoy at different times.

Sailing from Glasgow on the 24th March 1941, WS7 was largely uneventful and, after rounding South Africa in two sections, it combined again to arrive in Suez on the 6th May.

Glenorchy arrived back in Birkenhead in August 1941 after calling at Port Said, Haifa, Durban and Trinidad.

Her next voyage was another Winston Special, WS11. This convoy is interesting because the Commodore of the convoy was Commodore (Rear Admiral Rtd.) Hugh Hext Rogers RNR. Hext-Rogers was an artist and regularly sketched the ships in his convoys and sixteen of his convoy drawings are held at the Merseyside Maritime Museum. *(See Bulletin 58.2.2014 September 2014).*

This convoy was more a mix of liners and cargo vessels than WS7 although it still contained some important liners such as **Empress of Australia, Orantes, Scythia, Viceroy of India, Otranto** and **Duchess of York.**

Again, although not as large as WS7, the naval escort was still very impressive and included the battle-cruiser **Repulse**, sadly to be lost with the **Prince of Wales** early in December 1941.

Cdr. Rogers recorded the convoy's voyage as 'Uneventful despite several aircraft alarms taking place on the 1st and 2nd of September'. On the 4th September the convoy split into two sections 'Fast' and 'Slow'. **Glenorchy,** as part of the fast section, arrived at Freetown on the 13th September, sailing again on the 18th. The ships went to either Capetown or Durban with **Glenorchy** being part of the Capetown section.

The convoy was reorganised in South Africa with some ships leaving and eight others joining. Twenty-one ships then proceeded up the east coast of Africa with **Glenorchy**'s ultimate destination being Basra.

The voyage then continued (as Voyage 7/8) and **Glenorchy** left Basra for the Far East and arrived at Surabaya, Java on the 2nd December, 1941.

This was only 3 days before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour and 8 days before the tragic loss of the **Repulse** and **Prince of Wales**.

My father left **Glenorchy** here to relieve the second engineer of the Blue Funnel ship **Peisander**; which, on her way home to the UK, was torpedoed off Nantucket on the 17th May 1942 but, fortunately, especially for me, no lives were lost.

Glenorchy sailed on to Australia and New Zealand before returning to Liverpool in February 1942.

She then completed another independent voyage to Australia (Voyage 9) before returning to the Clyde in early July 1942, and after undertaking repairs, she was then allocated to another Winston Special WS21, better known as 'Operation Pedestal' (Voyage 10).

In mid-1942 the situation in Malta was dire but, with the summer suspension of Arctic convoys, there were enough Home Fleet warships available to support a 'last ditch' supply run to the island. The decision to run the fast convoy was taken at the highest level by Churchill and the combined Chiefs of Staff.

Roosevelt personally agreed to the US tanker **Ohio** and 2 US cargo ships, **Santa Elisa** and **Almeria Lykes** joining the convoy.

There were fourteen fast merchant ships in Pedestal, **Glenorchy** and **Deucalion** (both Alfred Holt & Co.), **Empire Hope, Waimarama, Wairangi, Melbourne Star, Brisbane Star, Clan Ferguson, Dorset, Rochester Castle, Port Chalmers** plus, as mentioned above, **Ohio, Santa Elisa** and **Almeria Lykes**.

All the ships, apart from **Ohio**, were loaded with even spread of cargo, thus the loss of any one ship would not mean a total lack of any particular commodity arriving in Malta. The cargoes consisted of petrol and kerosene (both carried in flimsy 4 gallon cans, some stowed on deck), bombs, ammunition, flour, coal, vehicles plus other foodstuffs and animal fodder. The convoy sailed from Glasgow on the 1st August 1942.

The naval escort was formidable and it was organised into two sections:

Force Z (Heavy Cover) - Under Vice Admiral Syfret included HMS **Nelson** (battleship) and three fleet carriers **Victorious, Indomitable** and **Eagle**

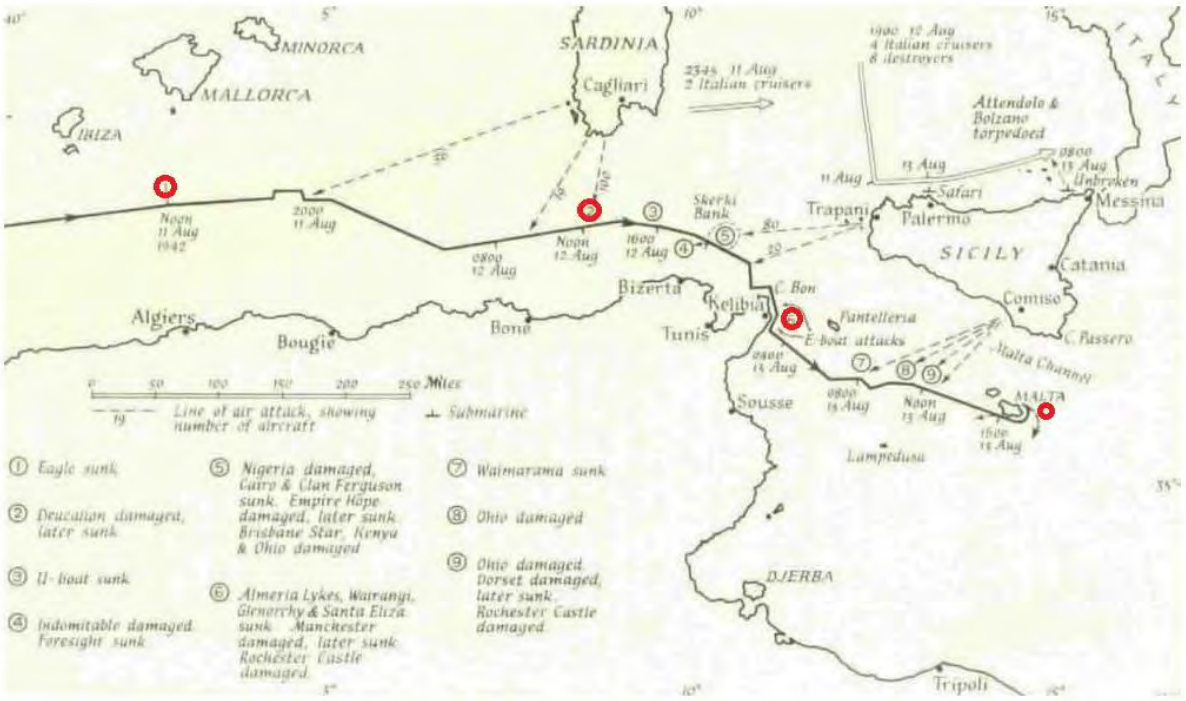
Force X (Through Escort) – Under Rear Admiral Burroughs in HMS **Nigeria** included several other cruisers and a large number of destroyers.

In addition to the two groups above, defensive patrol lines of submarines were set up along the convoy track.

The convoy passed through the Straits of Gibraltar on the 10th August and at the same time two empty ships left Malta for Gibraltar (**OrarI** and **Troilus**) and diversionary convoys left Port Said (MG3) and Haifa (MW12A) both ostensibly bound for Malta although neither reached the island.

The enemy located the convoy early on the 11th August and, from then on, air reconnaissance was continuous and the first torpedo attacks occurred in the late morning.

Around noon on the 11th, forty Spitfires were flown off to Malta but, at 1315, the carrier HMS **Eagle** was torpedoed and sunk. There followed continuous probing attacks by U Boats and at 2100 further air attacks but there were no further losses.



1 HMS **Eagle** sunk; 2 **Deucalion** sunk; 3 **Glenorchy** hit, later sunk; 4 Malta

Early on the 12th there were high level bombing attacks but no losses then, at lunch time, thirty-seven JU88s attacked and **Deucalion** was hit. In the afternoon **Indomitable** was damaged and left under escort for Gibraltar. **Deucalion** was hit again and finally exploded and sank.

12 August 1942: evening air and submarine attacks, a bomb falls astern of mv **Glenorchy**. Courtesy I.W.M.

Late in the evening of the 12th Force Z turned back to Gibraltar and two columns were formed to pass through the Skerki Channel. The port line was led by HMS **Nigeria** and the starboard line by HMS **Kenya**.

A submarine attack hit HMS **Nigeria** and HMS **Cairo** and, significantly, **Ohio** who, after being re-boarded started to crawl towards Malta.

Brisbane Star, Empire Star and **Clan Ferguson** were all hit and the close escort started to try and reform the convoy to round Cap Bon.

Lying beyond Cap Bon was a mixed force of German and Italian fast torpedo boats which posed a serious threat. The merchant ships were reasonably well armed against aircraft but, at night, in confined waters, as their guns could not be trained low enough to bear on the attackers; these fast craft posed a real threat.

The convoy twisted and turned for over 4 hours trying to avoid the torpedo boats. HMS **Manchester** was hit in the engine room and slewed across the **Almeria Lykes**. **Glenorchy** had to go full astern to avoid the **Almeria Lykes** then full ahead to keep up with HMS **Kenya**.

At 0200 on the 13th August, **Glenorchy** was illuminated by a searchlight from **MS31**, an Italian MAS boat, which then fired two torpedoes at her.

Captain Leslie of the **Glenorchy** turned to port to reduce the target but the torpedoes hit the port side of the engine room with the blast destroying the port side lifeboats.

Chief Engineer Threlfall and 5 men were killed instantly. Second Engineer, Tommy Brunskill, a great friend of my father, was trapped under a grating, his eyes blinded by oil. Eventually, he struggled free and, using his knowledge of the ship gained from standing by her during her build, he made it up to the main deck, managing to release the 4th Engineer en-route.

Abandon Ship was ordered and Brunskill was thrown into a lifeboat, some gunners threw a Carley Float over the stern and jumped overboard.

2nd Mate Skilling began to lower No 3 Starboard boat and 3rd Mate Simon reported to Captain Leslie that, apart from the 6 engineers lost, all remaining 124 people on board, including 25 passengers, were accounted for. Simon was ordered to destroy the confidential books and then join a lifeboat.

Simon asked Capt. Leslie if he was going to get into a lifeboat, but Leslie replied ‘you are a young man Mr Simon, life is just beginning for you but I am remaining as mine is finished’.

Skilling’s boat came alongside and Simon descended into it, looking back he saw Capt. Leslie climb down 3 or 4 steps but then turn back on board.

Skilling put No 3 boat alongside No 1 and the doctor was transferred to attend to some injured men. Skilling then came across Chief Officer Hannay on a float with 5 other men.

Hannay, on hearing the story about Capt Leslie, started to try and work the float back to the ship but he never got there, **MS31** loomed up and its CO, Calvani, thinking Hannay was the Master of the **Glenorchy**, captured him and the five men.

The air was filled with a pungent, flammable stench and Skilling was unable to get the men to go back to the ship in an attempt to persuade Leslie to leave and, after being overflown by a bomber, they headed west and made landfall at 0800. He then again called for volunteers to go back and two Engineer Officers, three Midshipmen, three Greasers, an AB and a naval rating agreed to man the boat but, just as they launched it, the oil around **Glenorchy** erupted in flames.

They pulled a mile or so out but with **MS31** and enemy aircraft still in the area they finally gave up hope and pulled back to shore.

Ultimately the survivors were interned in Bon Fuchu Camp until they escaped in November 1942, just after the North African landings. Hannay and his men were made prisoners of war and were not released until the war ended.

The convoy continued to lose ships: HMS **Manchester** was scuttled in controversial circumstances and **Wairangi, Almeria Lykes, Santa Elisa, Waimarama** and **Dorset** were all sunk.

However, despite the severe losses, as we all know five ships, **Rochester Castle, Melbourne Star, Brisbane Star, Port Chalmers** plus, most critically, **Ohio**, decks awash and the destroyers **Bramham** and **Ledbury** lashed to her sides for support and to provide a means of steering, made it through and saved Malta.

It was some months before the full story of **Glenorchy**'s loss reached the Alfred Holt HQ in Liverpool. The senior partner, Lawrence Holt, was deeply moved when he heard about Capt. Leslie's refusal to leave the ship and he believed that Capt. Leslie was unwilling to save himself knowing that his Chief Engineer and friend was missing.

Mersey Flat **Oakdale**

A Unique Survivor of a Bygone Age and a Key Piece of North West Maritime History

By LNRS Member Bob Ratcliffe

Mersey Flats were a very localised style of vessel and were once built across the region; along the Mersey, Weaver, and other local rivers and canals, and along the North West coast from Anglesey to southern Scotland. Only two now survive. **Mossdale**, built in Chester and later bought and refitted by Abel's of Runcorn is in the hands of the Boat Museum at Ellesmere Port; and **Oakdale**, beached at Askam-in-Furness which was once used as a house boat by her owner and restorer, David Keenan. The last remaining Composite Mersey Flat, **Oakdale** is also the last-known surviving commercial sea-going vessel built in Runcorn. Mr. Keenan is a man with vast experience and knowledge of local maritime affairs (having worked in the coastal trade for many years) and clearly loves the **Oakdale**, realising her unique status.

This has warranted her inclusion on the National Historic Ships Register (https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/register/2024/oakdale).

However, the work is beyond David's ability to achieve on his own and a new group has been set-up to ensure the vessel can be fully restored. The *Oakdale Mersey Flat Trust* has been set-up by Roger Murray, Martin Dewhurst and others. They aim to fully restore her and then, once safe to be towed, to return her to the Mersey, hopefully to her birthplace of Runcorn. Ultimately, they hope to found a heritage boatyard at the site of **Oakdale's** launch at Castlerock or further along Runcorn Waterfront at the site of the former Town Slip, beside the new housing development and where Old Quay Yard once maintained the vessels of the Manchester Ship Canal.

Bob Ratcliffe, who founded the original *Mersey Oakdale Refit Society* (MORS) some years ago, to establish interest in, and support for the Flat is a LNRS member and has been asked to join the new team.

The most modern Flats were composite-built, so therefore had steel frames and wooden planking. Later developments led to the invention of motor-engined "Weaver Packets". In much the same way that we can consider the Weaver Packet as the most modern development of a Mersey Flat, the design being taken to its natural conclusion in those motor vessels, **Oakdale** represents the very same level of development along the traditional sailing line and is therefore a vessel of great historical importance. Furthermore, she is one of only five surviving composite vessels in the world (alongside the **City of Adelaide** in Sydney, the **Cutty Sark** in London, HMS **Gannet** in Chatham, and the beached remains of the **Ambassador** in Chile), making her a craft of *international* significance.

She was the second-to-last Flat ever constructed and was launched at the Castlerock Yard of Richard Abel & Sons, having been built to the same designs that the firm used back into the 1850s for the many vessels they created for themselves and for other concerns. She is a sister-ship of the last ever flat, the **Ruth Bate**, which has already, sadly, been scrapped. **Oakdale** has a rudder that appears to be from an older vessel, as evidenced by it having a rounded top with a decorative notch carved into it which they stopped doing after the 1890s.

According to Michael Stammers, in his "*Building Flats at Runcorn*" from Waterways Journal Vol. 5, this and the **Ruth Bate** were built "to the same design which is considerably different in shape to the traditional form" being for example, "almost as square in the bow as the Humber Keels". They were designed by Mr. Albert Andrews, the manager of the yard, and he "incorporated a great deal of steel into the framing". There were 3 steel keelsons, instead of the usual one on the centreline, as this reduced the amount of the hold taken up by large timber pieces used traditionally. Straight side frames were rolled from steel and the framing timbers at the bow and stern were "fashioned in the traditional way" (iron frames running the length of her parallel body and wood frames from the forward and aft bulkheads). Additionally, the hatch coamings were of steel, instead of the traditional timber. There is a greenheart bottom and from the turn of the bilges to deck level she is of oak, with her decks of Oregon pine. All of this gave this vessel great strength.

In 1929 materials were bought by Abel's to build five Flats, but then came the Great Depression and such plans were shelved for the time being. They built **Fred Abel** in 1936 (named after Frederica Abel, mother of the owner) and then World War II interrupted expansion plans again. By the end of the war a steel shortage delayed the next vessel and hence **Oakdale** was not started until 1949 and eventually launched on 15th September 1951 after an 18-month build (with 1930s-built frames). The remaining vessels were **Heathdale** and **Ruth Bate**, with the fate of the last set of frames being a mystery.

Oakdale was built for the company's own use and worked for Abel's until 1963 when they ceased trading. She was sold to Rea's who later sold her on in 1966. She was then sold to a man who wished to make her into a floating restaurant, but the plans fell through, and Dave Keenan bought her when she was lying in deep mud at Burscough near the pub whose landlord was trying to open her as an eatery. Dave took her to Brunswick Dock in Liverpool and went about the surviving barge companies to buy the necessary spares before refitting her at the Bootle Barge Company.

<u>Vital Statistics</u>

Launched on 15th September 1951 after an 18-month build, she is a 63T Mersey Flat.

72' 6" X 15' 9" X Depth 3' (6' 6" moulded depth); Lister HA3 Diesel Engine (fitted 1957).

66 Reg Tons Gross, 63 Reg Tons Net, 52 Tons Displacement in working order, Cargo Capacity 120 Tons.

Her current owner has converted her hold and fitted an engine and a small mast capable of carrying a Gaff Mainsail and Jib. The mast was a topmast from a Dutch

ship de-masted at Eastham for her onward voyage to Manchester (as is customary for vessels with high masts) during W.W. II. The ship for some reason never left that port and the topmast was left beside a Lockmaster's building (at Walton Lock possibly). It was later rescued by a friend and given to Dave. The tabernacle comes from a trawler. The anchor comes from an old Bates' boat and the windlass was recovered from an old yacht.

This vessel is **critically in need of volunteers** to help maintain her. Any help in preserving this vessel would be an aid to keeping alive a very important facet of national and international shipping heritage.

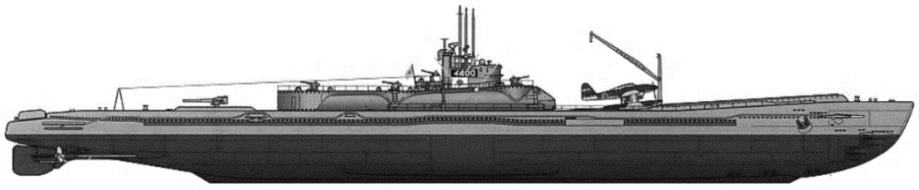
Once we get this done, and consider the move back to Mersey, volunteers will be needed to operate the heritage yard, and to act as hosts for visitors. We also need people to come forward with stories and reminiscences of the old yards and their working craft.

Anyone interested in helping, or learning more, please contact Bob at bobratcliffeis@hotmail.co.uk.

-Japanese Super Submarine

By L.N.R.S. Member Bill Ogle

Built by the Japanese Navy these huge vessels evolved from the idea of taking the war to the United States mainland by making aerial attacks against cities along the U.S. western and eastern seaboards using submarine-launched naval aircraft.



***I-401**, with plane on forward catapult. From the-blueprints.com*

The resulting proposal called for 18 large submarines capable of making three round-trips to the west coast of the United States without refuelling or one round-trip to any point on the globe. The plan was scaled back to nine, then five and finally three. They also had to be able to store and launch at least two attack aircraft armed with one torpedo or 800 kg (1,800 lb) bomb. Eventually only three were completed.

This class were by far the largest used in the war and their dimensions only exceeded with construction of nuclear ballistic missile submarines in the 1960s.

Class overview: Displacement, 6570 long tons; Length, 400ft; beam 39ft; draft,23ft; Propulsion – surface 4 diesels of 2,250hp each, submerged 2 x electric motors, 2100 hp each; Complement 144 offices and men; Armament – 3 x Aichi M6AI Seiran sea-

planes, 8 x 533mm forward torpedo tubes, 1 x 14cm naval gun, 3 x 25mm triple-mounted autocannon (9 barrels total), 1 x single mounted 25mm autocannon.

Located approximately amidships on the top deck was a cylindrical watertight aircraft hangar, 102 ft. long and 11 ft. in diameter. The outer access door could be opened hydraulically from within or manually from the outside by turning a large hand-wheel connected to a rack and spur gear. The door was made waterproof with a 2-inch-thick rubber gasket. Situated atop the hangar were three waterproofed autocannon for AA defence, two aft and one forward of the conning tower (which was offset to port). A single 25 mm autocannon on a pedestal mount was also located just aft the bridge. One 140 mm (5.5 in) deck gun was positioned aft of the hangar, with a range of 9.3 miles. Eight torpedo tubes were mounted in the bow, four above and four below. There were no aft tubes. Stowed in an open recessed compartment on the forward port side, just below top deck, was a collapsible crane used to retrieve the submarine's Seiran seaplanes.

A special trim system was fitted to the boats, allowing them to loiter submerged and stationary while awaiting the return of their aircraft. However, operation of this system was noisy and its usefulness was in doubt.

Electronics on board the I-400s included an air search radar equipped with two separate antennas. This unit was capable of detecting aircraft out to a range of 80 km (43 nm). The boats were also equipped with air/surface radar sets with distinctive horn-shaped antennas. Each boat carried a radar warning receiver, connected to both a trainable dipole antenna and a fixed non-directional antenna.

The submarines were equipped with two periscopes of German manufacture, about 40 ft long, one for use during daylight and the other at night.

A special anechoic coating made from a mixture of gum, asbestos, and adhesives was applied to the hulls from the waterline to the bilge keel. This coating was apparently based on German research, and was intended to absorb or diffuse enemy sonar pulses and dampen reverberations from the boat's internal machinery, theoretically making detection while submerged more difficult, though its effectiveness was never conclusively established.

These large subs were unwieldy and relatively difficult to manoeuvre while surfaced owing to their small rudders, and the large superstructure also caused them to veer off course during any strong wind. Because of their large aircraft hangars and conning tower, the boats had significant visual and radar signatures on the surface, and could be detected by aircraft relatively easily. Dive time was 56 seconds, nearly double that of U.S. fleet subs, which made the boats easier to destroy from the air when caught on the surface. When submerged and traveling at a slow speed, the offset superstructure forced the helmsman to steer seven degrees starboard in order to steer a straight course.

The Seiran was specifically designed for use aboard the submarines and could carry an 1,800 lb bomb 620 miles at 295 mph. To fit inside the narrow confines of the hangar, the floats were removed and stowed, the wings rotated 90 degrees

and folded backward hydraulically against the fuselage, the horizontal stabilizers folded down and the top of the vertical stabilizer folded over so the overall forward profile of the aircraft was within the diameter of its propeller. When deployed for flight, the aircraft had a wingspan of 39 ft and a length of 38 ft. A crew of four could prepare and launch all three in 30 minutes and as the Seiran would normally be launched at night, parts and areas of the plane were coated with luminescent paint to ease assembly in the dark.

The Seirans were launched from a compressed-air catapult on the forward deck of the submarine. Underneath the catapult track were four high-pressure air flasks connected in parallel to a piston. The aircraft, mounted atop collapsible carriages via attachment points along their fuselages, would be slung 70–75 feet along the track. Two sets of pontoons for the Seirans were stored in special watertight compartments located just below the main deck on either side of the catapult track. From there they could be quickly slid forward on ramps and attached to the plane's wings. A third set of pontoons and additional spares were kept inside the hangar.

After launching the aircraft to fly their missions, the submarine would submerge and stay in place to allow the aircraft to navigate back to the area by dead reckoning, where it would land on the water with its floats, and be hoisted back aboard by crane.

Although this was the typical mode of operation, in cases where fast launching and recovery was essential for escape (see below), the floatplanes could be launched without their floats, and ditched upon landing, saving the time spent recovering and re-hangaring the aircraft, which was a complex and lengthy procedure. This had the added benefit of eliminating the weight and considerable drag of the large and bulky floats, which in turn increased the speed and range of the aircraft, but made any recovery of the aircraft after completing the mission impossible In extreme circumstances, theoretically the aircraft could be launched and abandoned altogether while the submarine beat a hasty retreat, leaving the crews to fly their missions with no hope of return, perhaps as a kamikaze mission.The existence of the *Seiran* was not known to Allied intelligence during the war.

Towards the end of 1943 the Japanese Navy Command conceived the idea of using a submarine attack to destroy the locks of the Panama Canal in an attempt to cut American supply lines to the Pacific Ocean and hamper the transfer of U.S. ships. Intelligence gathering on the proposed target began later that year.

The Japanese were well aware that American fortifications existed on both sides of the Canal. On the Atlantic, the large coastal artillery batteries of Fort Sherman had a range of 17 miles, preventing enemy ships from getting near enough to shell the locks. In the months following the attack on Pearl Harbour, air and sea patrols had been strengthened around both entrances, and barrage balloons and anti-submarine nets erected. In August 1942, the 88th Coast (Anti-Aircraft) Artillery unit was added to help defend against aerial attacks.

A Japanese engineer who had worked on the Canal during its construction handed over many blueprints of the Canal structures and construction methods to a

team of engineers who studied the documents and concluded that the locks at Miraflores on the Pacific side were the most vulnerable to aerial bombing, but the Gatun locks on the Atlantic side offered a chance of causing greater damage, since it would be harder to halt any outflow of water. They estimated the Canal would be unusable for at least six months following a successful attack on the locks.

To increase the size of the airborne attack force, Commander Fujimori requested that two additional fleet submarines still under construction at Kobe, **I-13** and **I-14**, be modified to house two Seirans each, bringing the total number of planes available to ten.

The Panama Canal strike plan called for four aircraft-carrying submarines (**I-400, I-401, I-13** and **I-14**) to sail eastward across the Pacific to the Gulf of Panama, a journey expected to take two months. At a point 100 nm. off the coast of Ecuador, the submarines would launch their Seiran aircraft at 0300hrs on a moonlit night. The Seirans, without floats, would fly at an altitude of 13,000 ft. across the northern coast of Colombia to the vicinity of Colón. Now on the Caribbean side of the isthmus, they would turn westward on a heading of 270 degrees, then angle south-west and make their final approach to the Canal locks at dawn. After completing their bombing runs, the Seirans were to return to a designated rendezvous point and ditch alongside the waiting submarines where the aircrews would be picked up.

Around April 1945, Captain Ariizumi, the man appointed to carry out the attack, decided the Seiran pilots would make *kamikaze* ramming attacks against the gates, rather than conventional bombing runs, a tactic becoming increasingly common as the war went against the Japanese. The Seiran squadron leader had already suggested as much to Ariizumi earlier that month, though for a time this was kept secret from the other pilots. At the end of May, however, one pilot happened to observe a Seiran having its bomb-release mechanism removed and replaced with a fixed mount. Realizing the implications of this change, he angrily confronted the executive officer of the squadron, who explained that the decision to withhold this intention from the other men was made to "avoid mental pressures on the aircrews."

By 5 June 1945, all four aircraft-carrying submarines had arrived at Nanao Wan where a full-scale wooden model of the Gatun Locks gate had been built, placed on a raft and towed into the bay. The following night, formal training commenced with the Seiran flight crews practising rapid assembly, catapult launch and recovery of their aircraft. There was also rudimentary formation flying. From 15 June the Seiran pilots made practice daylight bombing runs against the wooden gate mock-up. By 20 June, all training ended and the operation was set to proceed.

Before the Panama attack could commence, Okinawa fell, and word reached Japan that the Allies were preparing an assault on the Japanese home islands. The Japanese Naval General Staff concluded the Panama Canal attack would have little impact on the war's outcome, and more direct and immediate action was necessary to stem the American advance.

Fifteen American aircraft carriers had assembled at the Ulithi atoll, preparatory to making a series of raids against the home islands, and the Japanese mission was changed to an attack on the Ulithi base.

Japan surrendered before the Ulithi attack was launched, and on 22 August 1945, the crews of the submarines were ordered to destroy all their weapons. The torpedoes were fired without arming and the aircraft were launched without unfolding the wings and stabilizers. When **I-400** surrendered to the American destroyer USS **Blue**, the U.S. crew was astounded at her size, nearly 24 ft longer than the **Blue** and just as wide.

The U.S. Navy boarded and recovered 24 submarines, including the three 400s, taking them to Sasebo Bay to evaluate. A message was received that the Soviets were sending an inspection team to examine the submarines. To prevent this Operation Road's End was instituted. Most of the submarines were taken to a position designated as Point Deep Six, about 19 nm southeast of Fukue Island, packed with charges of C-3 explosive and destroyed; they sank to a depth of 660 ft.

The four remaining submarines, **I-400, I-401, I-201** and **I-203**, were sailed to Hawaii by U.S. Navy technicians for further inspection. They were then scuttled in the waters near Oahu in Hawaii by torpedoes from US submarine USS **Trumpetfish** on June 4, 1946, to prevent the technology from being made available to the Soviets. The official government position that the exact location of the sinking was unknown has been confirmed by declassified US Navy documents.

The wreckage of **I-401** was discovered by the *Pisces* deep-sea submarines of the Hawaii Undersea Research Laboratory in March 2005 at a depth of 2,690 ft. It was reported that **I-400** was later found by the same team off the southwest coast of the Hawaiian island of Oahu in August 2013 at a depth of 2,300 ft. N.O.A.A. researcher Jim Delgado, working aboard **Pisces V**, reported "It was torpedoed, partially collapsed and had sunk at a steep angle."

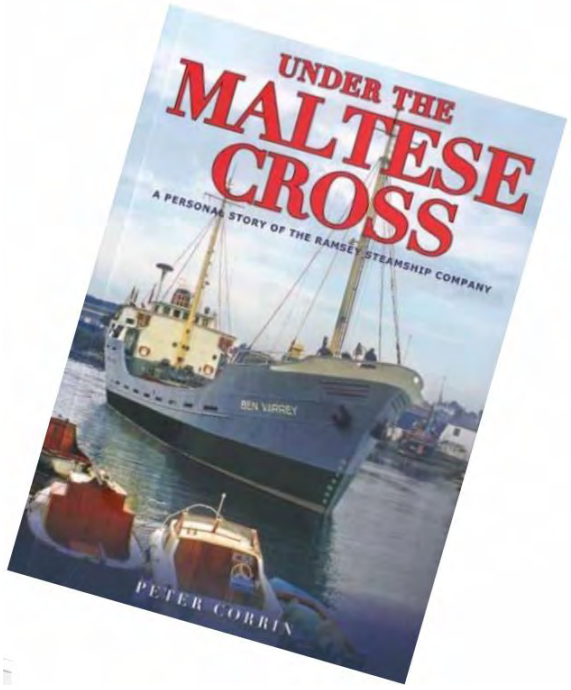
The following table indicates the significance of the I class boats, particularly their immense size for the time:

Country	Nato Name	In Service		Number built	Displacement Surface	Submerged	Dimensions (ft) Length	Beam	Draft	Test depth ft.	Power	Complement
Russia	Typhoon	1981	1989	6	24,000	47,000	574	76	39	3,000	Nuclear	160
Russia	Borei	2013	date	10	14,720	24,000	558	44	33	3,120	Nuclear	107
USA	Ohio	1981	date	18	16,764	18,750	550	42	36	800	Nuclear	155
Russia	Delta III	1978	date	14	10,600	13,700	509	38	29	1,300	Nuclear	130
UK	Vanguard	1993	date	4	15,900	17,500	492	42	39	1,640	Nuclear	135
USA	Nautilus	1954	1980	1	3,533	4,092	320	28	26	700	Nuclear	110
Typical WW2 submarines												
USA	Gato	1941	1969	77	1,525	2,424	312	27	17	300	D/Elec	60
UK	Triton	1938	1969	53	1,290	1,560	277	26	13	300	D/Elec	48
Germany	V II	1936	1970	703	770	870	220	20	16	750	D/Elec	50
Japan	Kaichū	1943	1945	18	720	1,000	230	20	12	150	D/Elec	45
Japan	I - 400	1944	1945	3	5,223	6,560	400	40	23	330	D/Elec	144

Book Review

'Under the Maltese Cross'
by Captain Peter Corrin

Publishers: Sea Breezes Publications Ltd
ISBN 978-1-5272-5987-4
Available from Manx National Heritage
Cost £9.99
184 pages and extensively illustrated with both black and white and coloured plates.



This is a somewhat unusual history of an Isle of Man shipping company in that it is a highly personal account of a short sea shipping company, the Ramsey Steamship Company, or RSSC. This is because the author, Captain Peter Corrin, had a close association with the company and their ships from a very early age. His father had been with the RSSC and their "Ben boats" for many years and this allowed him to sail on short voyages to and from the island during his school holidays. Later he joined the company as a deckhand and left it as an EDH. The pleasure of this book is in the accounts of the wealth of experience the writer got sailing on these small and hard working ships.

Ben Ain *(1924) in her home port of Ramsey*

RSSC was, from its inception, firmly based in the Isle of Man and traded to and from small ports around the island to the UK and Ireland. It took pride in providing good, steady seafaring jobs for the Manx community. In turn the men manning these ships were loyal and remained in the company's employment for many years.

The Ramsey Steamship Company was formed in 1913 and it traded for a hundred years until 2013 when it's last two motorships, the **Ben Varrey** and the **Ben Maye** were sold. The author makes it obvious

that, by the very nature of the trade in which these ships operated, life was tough and demanding for their crews.

The book is very well researched, giving details of the various ships owned by the company over the years and aspects of their cargoes and voyages. The author also looks at the bigger picture, for example the movement away from steamships to motor vessels. In the later chapters he discusses how changes in power generation reduced the need for the importation coal for the Manx power stations and its consequential effect on the company's trading position. Competition and containerisation finally led to the sad demise of the company.

What is delightful about this book is the chapters in which the author reminisces about his early interest in shipping and his intense desire to have a career at sea. It was a different world seventy years ago. Pre-containerisation, cargos of coal were off-loaded by a gang of coal heavers, shovelling for all they were worth during a long shift. At the tender age of seven or eight the author had the thrill of actually sailing on the **Ben Ain** with his father. His excitement at being “one of the crew” for a few days knew no bounds. In those more casual days this would have been easy to arrange. Today, bureaucracy would kill any teenager's desire of going to sea stone cold dead at the first hurdle.

However in the 1950s it was altogether a different story, as the author explains for example when he was offered a full time job at sea, no formal interview or form filling was required. On the other hand, in the close knit community of the island and being a small local company, the management would no doubt have had a good idea of a local man's abilities.

Life on board was not all plain sailing and the author's account of how a combination of a minor list and some heavy weather led to a potentially dangerous incident while sailing on the **Ben Varrey** (3) makes for some sober reflection.

This book has a certain charm, a nostalgic air of times long since gone and methods of working and living that will never to repeated. Captain Corrin went on to have a distinguished career as master with the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company.

In his book, Captain Corrin commenting on a Ben boat skipper, states, “he was one of the most talented and finest ship handlers.” The writer of this review had the occasion to watch Captain Corrin con a ferry up the Mersey on a ship simulator. Another participant in the simulator was a rather loud and excitable seafarer. Peter Corrin with a calm and quiet dignity ignored the babble and skillfully greased the ferry alongside the Liverpool landing stage with consummate ease. A fine piece of ship handling indeed, but of course he had all the advantages of having sailed on the Ben boats as a young man.

A Full Life – Part 2 of 4

Submitted by LNRS Member Michael G. Brocklebank

In the early 1990s my late father wrote his memoirs of a not uneventful life primarily for passing on to his family. His sources were his memory, and sundry documents. As his son I have had access to the Internet and a considerable collection of relevant books, and have amplified, in the third person, what he wrote, in the first person.

Imperial Censorship Department No 2053

Obeying the summons mailed to me one Saturday, I presented myself at the admin door of the former Littlewoods Pools building on Monday morning, feeling somewhat of a new boy in a 'big school' and eventually satisfied the very efficient guards at the door that I was no henchman of Hitler. Accredited employees are given passes which they must show whenever they enter the building.

The tall military looking man who received me did not appear to be the type to whom to tell a lie or cock and bull story, and the questions to be asked were all to the point……. Can you read French...German...? Spanish? Have you ever been abroad? Where? What business experience? Would you be prepared to go abroad at short notice? All right then, thank you, you will report here Monday morning next at 9am. I wonder if everyone was as lucky. I heard later that many were called and few were chosen,

Imagine a large room, 75 yards long and 25 yards wide, literally oozing people, parallel rows of long trestle tables, littered with ink pots, gum, rolls of adhesive paper, dictionaries, atlases and every kind of office paraphernalia, seated at intervals of 3 feet were men or women poring over letters, thumbing dictionaries, showing papers or documents to a next-door neighbour and generally looking industrious.

Mr B. this is Mr P.L. you will work under his orders at his table and please will you sit down here, here is your number, you will be Number 2053 and I was handed a large packet of labels, "opened by examiner No. 2053" sticky on the reverse side, a box file, pens, pencils, blotting paper and 3 square feet of table all to myself.

Mr P.L. I found was a mysterious official known as a D.A.C., which in plain English means "Deputy Assistant Censor" who is in charge of a table of 10-15 lesser fry, like myself, who "were examiners" and soon designated themselves to O.B.E's which, being interpreted means "ordinary examiners".

Over every table in Liverpool hung large printed labels, Furs, Textiles, Cotton, Grain, making the office resemble a huge department store of the world's commodities. But there was more to it than that, because somewhere underneath each poster sat a person or persons who were right of long experience, experts in whatever subject, the name of which hung on an indicator above them, and they could be consulted at will with the certain knowledge that whatever information they imparted was up to date and correct.

Broadly speaking, the duties of postal censorship examiners are to read letters. This mail may be written in any language of the world, and, for that reason, it is considered essential for censors to have a good knowledge of one more foreign

language, although of course, a shipping expert may have no language except his own, but his knowledge of shipping is worth his place in the organisation of censorship and any other special experience merits employment likewise.

The organisation of censorship was not by any means a male prerogative. Many of the fairer sex were persons of vast experience. One lady for example, was a mine of information on Morocco, another knew quite a little about Turkey and Persia, as she had been a professional dancer there and what she did not know about the Golden Horn was not worth knowing.

Every letter or postcard, every postal package passed through censorship. A mass of useful information, useful to Britain and her allies and usually harmful to the Axis was collated and passed on to the source to which it would be most useful.

A casual remark in a letter about the building of a new bridge over a canal in Germany, on which Karl is working might be the reason for sending a squadron of bombers over in order to give him a good cause to work overtime on repairs… a few words in a letter from Max, who is Chief Officer of a German ship in Bahia, Brazil…. "The Captain says that I will be seeing you soon" gives just that little grain of information that may culminate in the capture of a valuable ship or its scuttling, after the German custom.

And thus did censorship work during the first months of the war. The enemy within the gates was likewise the subject of strict attention. Instances came to light of obscure financial and business deals which, on fuller scrutiny, revealed that British firms, British in name only were carrying on trade with the enemy. Their reward was swift, and invariably expensive.

There was, and rightly so, no criterion about the number of letters that should be dealt with per day by each individual. Some letters required the attention of experts in two or three different subjects of the most diverse nature, but generally speaking, all mail that bore a censorship label could be stated to have been thoroughly scrutinised and to have had every scrap of information it contained utilised to further the effort. Days there were when nothing of interest could be found, the majority of letters were as harmless as they looked, but there was always the odd few that made Censorship more than pay its way.

Then there was the little item of comedy, some tit bit in a letter that went the rounds. The little girl who wrote to her Mummy from her Convent school in Italy "The other day a Bishop came to make one of our sisters into a mother, and we were allowed to watch", Bless the child! Or the Officer on some Scandinavian ship who had written a batch of six different letters to six different lady friends, each more torrid than the last. All would have been well had he not failed to put Carmen's letter in that intended for Maria. One wonders just what happened in the end.

And so did Examiner Number 2053 ex War Reserve Police Constable Number 483 pass a not too unpleasant period during the first months of the war. Then came the big thrill, the voice over the loud speaker, "Would any volunteers wishing to serve in Gibraltar" please give in their names to Captain T. at 11pm…….

Would they?

Gibraltar

The happy band of pilgrims set of from Lime Street station, Liverpool on January 4th 1940 with the usual peculiar assortment of luggage beloved of the Britisher abroad, and the usual display of clothing that makes the average foreigner turn round and stare in due course.

In those days there was still a little Scotch whisky to be bought and although the luncheon served aboard the train was quite passable there were many who seemed to prefer an entirely liquid diet.

After all the injunctions from on high about secrecy, it may have been a little disappointing to the critical eye to see St. Pancras station with its usual air of sombre mourning, enlivened by a large number of cases and boxes all labelled "Gibraltar" in letters inches high with ourselves standing by them trying to look as if we were really going to the Casino at Dieppe or any other place than Gibraltar; some cynics were born that day. "Careless talk throws away lives and all that...."

*Father travelled out to Gibraltar on the P & O liner **Viceroy of India** which, sadly, was torpedoed and sunk by U407 on 11th November 1942 off Oran, during the North African landings.*

At meals, I had the honour of sitting next to Sir Shenton Thomas, who was sailing to resume his post as Governor of Singapore. We had some pleasant times together and I was truly flattered by this modest, distinguished officer. Two rather mysterious characters aroused my suspicions and, I gathered, had plans to involve Sir Shenton in a card game. As soon as we arrived in Gibraltar a police launch arrived and appeared to take off these bright boys. I never saw them again.

Gibraltar days and nights

When it was realised by censorship authorities that it was essential for a censorship to be set up at Gibraltar, an advance party of 12 officers was sent out to pave the way pending the arrival of reinforcements, but it was only fitting that these 12 should become known as the Twelve Apostles. There is no record of the name applied to the officer in charge.

The twelve performed miracles of work before the main body arrived on the **Viceroy**. They had been able to arrange with the Gibraltar authorities for the use of premises known as the "Consulate" by reason of the fact that the building was formerly occupied by the Consul, a large four storey former dwelling house and equipped with a staircase specially designed to tire ill conditioned bodies and reduce all superfluous fat.

The Apostles had a wonderful time… obviously it was not possible for them to do more that scratch the surface of the mail that came into their hands, but their efforts were well rewarded…… Large wads of currency and bonds belonging to the enemy were impounded, industrial diamonds bound for enemy machine tools reached more salubrious hands, and a wealth of priceless information of every description was gleaned from the mail examined…..although the Apostles do not run into any danger of canonization, their work made itself felt as a big thorn in the axis

sides…… it is not to be doubted but that they were more than glad of the arrival of some 250 colleagues to help them out.

With its numbers swollen, censorship took over the new Hospital building which occupied a commanding position overlooking the bay and Algeciras beyond. This hospital, a long low, two storied building had not yet been commissioned for the use intended and was well adapted for the purpose of censorship premises. Although entirely unintentional, the Gibraltar Lunatic Asylum was immediately beneath the office of Censorship, and there were those who remarked how easy it was to throw oneself or one another over the wall to more fitting surroundings.

Captain Hugh Cotton-Minchin was second in charge and it was in large measure due to his cheery personality that things ran as well as they did. It is only natural that any organisations should suffer from growing pains. Imperial Censorship was no exception to this rule, but a vast amount of work was done. The usual Censorship hierarchy of alphabetical ranks was appointed and there was a general feeling of "there's lots to do, let's get on with it".

There were always interludes, one of the more interesting of which occurred with unusual regularity. Vessels entering harbour at Gibraltar were obliged to stop for control at the entrance, but a good many vessels, particularly small neutral tramps continued merrily on their way.

A gun thundered out from somewhere on the rock, and all eyes would promptly turn towards the harbour entrance; sure enough a ship would be coming in, and a column of water would shoot 100ft. a short distance in front of the bows of the vessel, occasionally to drench her forecastle head in a torrent.

One shot was usually enough and the offender would promptly heave to. It was reported that the Captain was presented, on these occasions, not only with a stiff warning to be more careful in future to observe the regulations of the port, but also with a healthy bill to cover the expenditure of His Majesty's ammunition, Mark whatever it was, gun for the use of.

The departure of a convoy was always of interest, not only to censors and all residents of the Rock, but also to axis eyes telephoning details of vessels sailing, to the local Nazi headquarters. One had the impression that Algeciras was riddled with German spies, each with his own particular observation point on the adjacent hills. One of the great drawbacks to Gibraltar as a maritime port was that it was far too near Spain to be pleasant.

Steaming slowly from the bay, like a well-rehearsed Vaudeville routine, the ships would steam out in one or two great arcs to the assembly point a few miles away; meanwhile the sleek grey destroyers would wait till the convoy was well down the harbour, and then, like scratch men in a long distance handicap, they would cram on speed and search the waters ahead of the ships. Commonplace events in wartime, but a reminder of why there will always be an England.

One of the first things that struck a visitor to Spain was the existence of a line of concrete pill boxes, complete with machine guns, barbed wire, and all the usual trimmings, in the no man's land between the Gibraltar boundary and the Spanish

Frontier post; this latter was quite an elaborate affair, with a room specially reserved for the searching of the fair sex and an array of files and dockets rivalling Scotland Yard, in number if not efficiency.

Gibraltar was a haven of refuge to many loyalists or "Reds", who had been fortunate enough to reach there when Franco assumed control. These people dared not re-enter Spain, although their presence in Gibraltar was somewhat of an embarrassment to our own authorities as it was difficult to tell who might be, or might not be a Franco spy. The Spanish officials at the post searched meticulously through their files, in the hope of catching some "Red" on his way back; they also seemed to think that all other visitors to their country were Von Rintelens or Mata Haris' in the best of Oppenheim traditions.

Algeciras could be made into quite a good port, the wharf there was in fair condition, and there was a single-track railway line running along its length and there the effects of bombing and shelling could be seen, houses half ruined, walls tottering, yet no attempt to pull them down.

Even for Spain the activities of Germany were worse than blatant; a large Mercedes car emblazoned with the Nazi coat of arms and containing 4 men in olive green pea jackets flashed by - the local Consul and his staff. Out for an airing no doubt.

Returning to Censorship business:-

How interesting to open a letter one morning, to read that a German naval Captain was travelling aboard a neutral ship as second mate on his way back to the Fatherland, and had his radio set with him. As the unwary writer had given the name of the vessel, what a minor thrill to discover that the very ship was in harbour at the moment. A swift telephone call and an armed guard collected the gentleman and deposited him in a place of safety before he could say "Heil Hitler".

And then the fortunate Censor whose duty it was to board Italian Liners and pick out likely mail bags for examination; the first bag that he selected contained diamonds, enemy owned, to the value of ½ million sterling and the poor censor did not even get a tie pin.

Just after Dunkirk I was sailing with the Chief Pilot in his dinghy; the place was full of ships, mainly Italian. It was a brilliant day when suddenly, by arrangement all the Italian vessels began to settle in the water and most disappeared. We made for the dockyard and watched what was going on. Evidently Mussolini's declaration of intention as he declared War on 10th June 1940.

On fall of France there was the utmost gloom in Gibraltar. The censorship unit was ordered home; so we packed our boxes and embarked on a pathetic old tub called the **Al Rawdah**. This vessel had been taken over from the French, having previously been used to carry pilgrims to Mecca from Mediterranean ports. This ocean greyhound had British Officers and a Lascar crew; was a coal burner and would not have looked out of date 40 years ago.

*The **Al Rawdah** had a long career being built in 1911 as the **Chenab**, renamed **Ville de Beyrou**th in 1931, and then **Al Rawdah** in 1939 when she was taken over by*

the MOWT. She was subsequently used as an internment ship for Irish Republican sympathisers, who have an 'Old Boys Association on the internet, and then did time as a submarine depot ship. After a refit she returned to civilian service and was broken up in the 1950s.

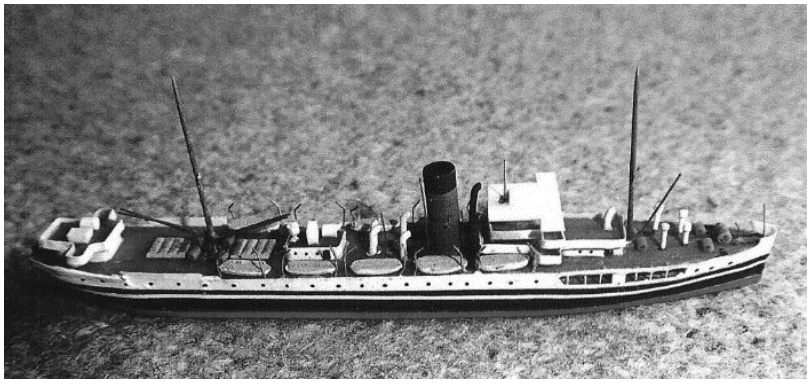
Our convoy, HGF34, had 20 ships, escorted by H.M.S. **Scarborough**, and left Gibraltar on 13th June 1940. Around midnight on June 19th the convoy, was attacked by a number of U-boats. Their marksmanship was first class and three ships were sunk on the 19th followed by one more on the 20th. There was a profusion of life saving buoyancy rafts aboard but when we tried to launch them, found that they had been secured with stout wire which was impossible to quickly remove.

When a convoy was attacked the surviving ships broke away and made for a pre-arranged rendezvous. We got information that the first two ships so to do were sunk, so we made for home. I suspect that the order of sinking of the ships was:

On 19/06/1940, all by **U48** commanded by Hans Cohausz: **British Monarch,** 5661 GRT 9185 DWT - 40 died 0 survivors; **Baron Loudon**, 3164 GRT 5575 DWT - 3 died 30 survivors and **Tudor**, 6607 GRT 10260 DWT - 1 died 38 survivors.

On 20/06/1940 by **U30** commanded by Rudolf Rosing: **Otterpool,** 4876 GRT 8760 DWT -23 died 15 survivors.

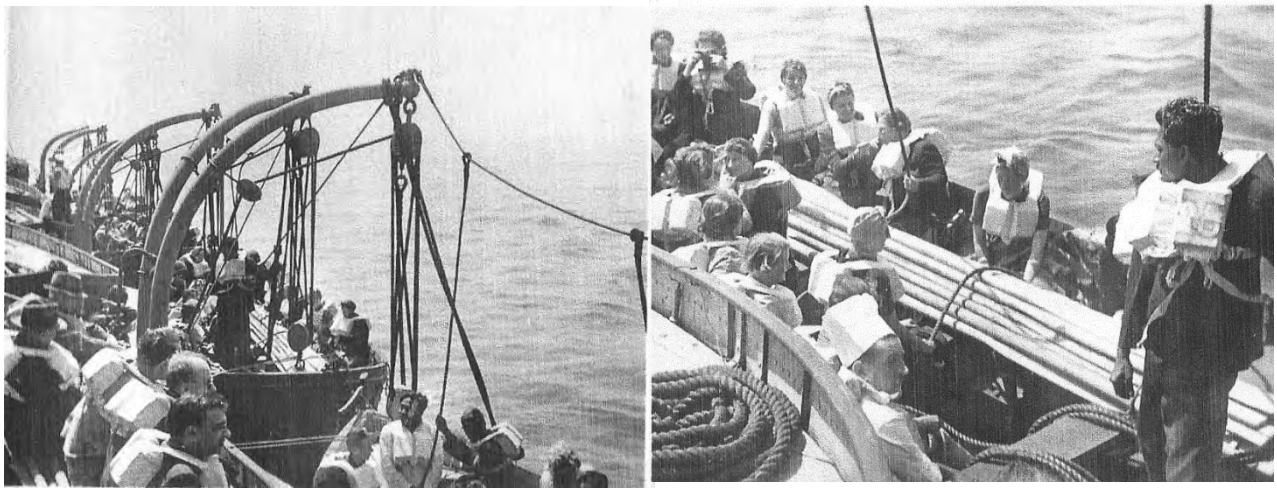
It would be right to add a footnote to the foregoing, to mention that the **Al Rawdah** and the passengers were saved by the magnificent way the vessel, and her limited capacity in every way, was handled by Captain Harvey and his crew, particularly the Lascan stokers, who managed to build-up the speed, not known since her balmy days, to a respectable 12 knots. When breaking away from the convoy, we described two figures of eight amid the flurry of ships without mishap; I know this much, that torpedoes, of which I saw two go by only yards away, looked to be a dull, golden colour and, when they made contact, a click, seconds before the ensuing loud WHOOMPH. I lost touch with Captain Harvey but so many of us owe our lives to this brave, dedicated man.



*This small waterline scale model of the **Al Rawdah** is in the author's collection*

When our ship was almost in sight of South Wales I was talking to one of our Censorship girls, looking over her shoulder at the starboard after quarter I saw a flash of light which could have been nothing else but a periscope, so I gave a stentorian alarm to the bridge and we showed the sub our stern. The fact that we had two massive wooden outhouses on the poop (from the time when the ship carried pilgrims to Mecca), which were lavatories, may have made the U-boat believe we were a mystery ship and thus could conceivably have saved us from attack.

Two hours later we limped, safely, into Milford Haven**.**



No boat drill here. These pictures taken whilst under attack on 23 June 1940

To be continued.

Care of Horses at Sea

Thomas Brocklebank notebook entry - For Feeding Horses

From King Baillie & Co

- 5 to 7 lbs oats and bran mixed and about 10lbs hay per horse daily, in two feeds, one at night and morning.
- 1 pt of linseed per horse every third day, scalded first and then mixed in the night feed.
- Bran mash twice a week at nights and no oats.
- Oatmeal in the drinking water in hot weather, also a light feed of hay and bran in the middle of the day.
- A small dose of Epsom salts not exceeding a dessertspoonful for a horse in the morning feed twice a week.
- If they cough mix a table spoonful of mustard for a horse and put it on the glands.
- Light clothing in hot weather. Horse capes in heavy weather and loosely fitted

Liverpool Shipwreck & Humane Society

By LNRS Member Glyn L Evans

As early as 1783 the Royal Humane Society of London gave credit in its Report to the philanthropic efforts of the Mayor and Corporation of Liverpool towards the preservation of life. A "Receiving House" existed for resuscitation purposes and a surgeon had been appointed. By 1822 the Liverpool Dock Committee had established receiving houses at eight Liverpool docks and arrangements were made for doctors to attend (gratis) at each.

The inadequacies of the system were highlighted by the disastrous hurricane which swept the Irish Channel and the River Mersey on 7th and 8th January, 1839 resulting in many wrecks and the loss of over 100 lives. No funds apart from Parish Relief existed at that time to assist sufferers and there was no provision for awards to rescuers. Public feeling was brought to the highest pitch by the sad events of the storm and the exertions of the brave men who were so eminently successful in saving life. A public meeting was held in the Rooms of the Liverpool Underwriters Association on 9th January, at which the Mayor, Hugh Hornby Esq., presided, for the purpose of raising emergency funds to meet the pressing need of the occasion and to form a permanent fund. Within a few days £5,000 was subscribed and after ample relief had been given to sufferers, and appropriate rewards to those who risked their lives in saving others, a substantial balance of £3,291 6s. 3d remained.

At a meeting of subscribers, many of whom were local merchants and shipowners, on 28thApril 1839, the application of the surplus of the emergency funds to the formation of the permanent Society ensued. Subsequently, in 1888, application was made for the Society to become a limited company with dispensation from using the word 'limited' in its title. In May 1963 the Society's name was entered in the Central Register of Charities.

In a recent clearing of archive material of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners aboard their headquarters ship, HQS **Wellington** in London, there surfaced a copy of the 105th Annual Report of the Liverpool Shipwreck & Humane Society, dated July, 1944, and from this the following information has been taken.

As stated on the front of the Report, the objects of the Society are: -

FIRST – To save human life, particularly in the neighbourhood of Liverpool.

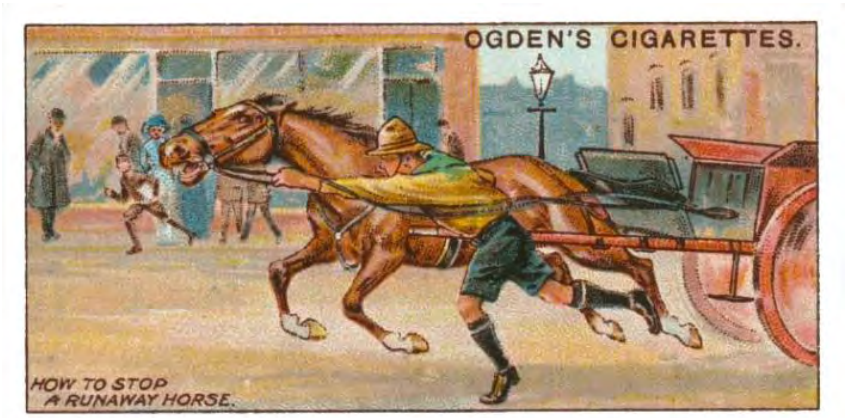
SECOND – To reward persons instrumental in rescuing human life from danger, and to relieve the widows and families who may perish in the attempt to save others.

THIRD – To relieve the immediate necessities of those saved, and assist them in getting to their destination.

FOURTH - Generally to grant rewards and relief in deserving cases.

NOTE – The Society is enabled by a special endowment to grant Medals and rewards for rescue from Fire and all other dangers.

The 105th Report was submitted to Members at a meeting held in the Society's Office, 5, Chapel Street, Liverpool on the 26th day of July 1944. During the year under review one hundred and thirty-one cases were dealt with arising from the rescue of one hundred and two persons. Of these rescues, ninety-one were from drowning, nine from fire and two of persons trying to commit suicide. In seven of the cases referred to, the efforts were unavailing and seventeen persons lost their lives. In two of the cases the rescuers nobly gave their lives when attempting to save the lives of others. They were Constable Eric Leslie Valentine, Wallasey Borough Police, and Arthur Stanley Williams, Naval Rating of 53 Walton Road, Liverpool. Thirty-eight cases of runaway horses were also dealt with, and awards made to forty-three persons for having, at great personal risk, stopped and brought under control these frenzied animals. The risk in doing so is often very great as they are liable to be knocked down and run over or to be crushed in the crowded traffic. The danger of these animals to human life is great as they usually bolt in crowded thoroughfares through fright.



An example of the latter, in February 1944 resulted in the award of a Silver Medal and Certificate to PC 305 'A' Frank Foster, Liverpool City Police, for having stopped a runaway horse attached to an unladen wagon in Waterloo Road on 28th December. At about 11.50 am, a horse attached to an unladen lorry was left standing in East Prince's Dock Avenue, without a bit and a nosebag on. It became frightened by a shunting engine and bolted at a gallop towards the North Dock Gate. Constable Foster, who was on duty at the gate, ran into the

roadway and caught the animal's bridle. He managed to guide the horse through the gate and into Waterloo Road. While doing so he was swept off his feet but retained his hold on the bridle and, after being dragged along for a considerable distance, brought the horse to a standstill.

One particularly difficult rescue resulted in the award of a Silver Medal and Certificate to David Rothwell Herbert, Apprentice Liverpool Pilot Service. This was for having rescued a man who was in grave danger of drowning in the River Mersey at Canning Pier Head on 31st December 1943. At about 2 pm on that day, Army pensioner Alexander Wilday, aged 59, who has a wooden leg, was feeding the pigeons at George's Pier Head, when his artificial limb slipped on the wet pavement and he fell into the river from a height of about 20 feet, and was carried upstream by the flood tide.

Apprentice Herbert and another Apprentice, Johns were on Canning Pier Head and saw the man about 25 feet from the wall being carried past on the tide. Herbert immediately dived in fully clothed from a height of 20 feet, swam to Wilday and, with great difficulty, brought him to the quay wall where he supported him till ropes were brought which he fastened to him and by which he was pulled on to the quay. Wilday was taken to the Royal Infirmary and detained for treatment, suffering from shock and the effects of immersion. Herbert went to the Pilot office and had his clothes dried.

When this rescue was effected, there was a strong flood tide running and a strong west wind which caused a choppy sea. The difficulties of the rescuer were increased by Wilday's wooden leg which was buoyant and tended to depress his head thus making it difficult to keep his head above water.

Over the years the Society has created several types of awards – some are no longer used and new or revised awards have replaced them. During its first thirty-three years the Society had only one medal at its disposal, the Society's Medal, available in gold or in silver. In the first hundred years from 1839 to 1939, the Society awarded 6,589 medals and bars and by 2016 that number had risen to 9,283. There has also been a large number of framed Parchments, Certificates, Resuscitation Certificates, In Memoriam Certificates and Swimming Proficiency Certificates awarded. The Society's awards in the 19th century also included medallions, bars of various types, a cup, sextants, barometers, binoculars, watches and clocks.

Permission to quote from the Society's History is gratefully acknowledged. Subsequent to the discovery of the 1944 Report, this has now been handed back to the Secretary of the Society who has been grateful to receive it for their archive records.

Wages, Costs and Technical Details of Yesteryear.

By LNRS Member M. Brocklebank

My grandfather Thomas Brocklebank, was born in Liverpool on 25th February 1870, died in North Wales on 31st January 1945 and went to sea as an apprentice in 1888 at the age of eighteen. His apprenticeship was interrupted when he had a fall from the rigging on his first vessel, the barque **Allonby** belonging to Peter Iredale and Sons Ltd. breaking both legs, in November 1889 when the ship was two days out from Newcastle NSW. He resumed his apprenticeship eighteen months later with Lowden and Co. in their ship **Mitredale** and served on various sailing vessels over a thirteen-year period, including his interrupted apprenticeship, before taking his Master's Ticket in Sail Foreign Going and joining the Clan Line in 1901. Working his way up the ladder to gain his first command at the end of WW1. He would have retired just before WW2.

I thought it would be interesting to see what wages and costs were over the period of my grandfather's career and have tried to update them to present day (2021) values. (These figures are in parentheses)

Apprenticeship with Iredales and Lowdens

He signed a 4-year apprenticeship with Peter Iredale & Sons on 1 March 1888, shortly after he turned eighteen. The pay scale was: -

1st year	£5	(equivalent to 2021 value	£667)
2nd year	£6	("	£800)
3rd year	£7	("	£933)
4th year	£10	("	£1,333)

When Thomas resumed his apprenticeship, this time with Lowden's on their ship **Mitredale** the terms of engagement were £13 (£1,733) in cash on expiration of his apprenticeship plus ten shillings (£67) per annum for washing.

Bear in mind that in relatively modern times intelligent degree-qualified people in, for example, the legal or consulting engineering professions would pay for their first few years of training. The premium going to the organisations employing them.

The **WW Lloyd**

Towards the end of my grandfather's time in sail he served as First Mate, on a Portmadog built brig, the **WW Lloyd -** Voyage: - Liverpool, Newfoundland, Bahia(Brazil) Plymouth.

The Record Office in Caernarvon holds the Wages and Accounts book for the **WW Lloyd** covering the voyage immediately prior to that undertaken by my grandfather. As a snapshot of the financial side of seafaring life in 1898 it makes interesting reading.

Brig **WW Lloyd** details

Official Number:- 70304 Code Letters:- NRVT
Owners :- David Lloyd, ship-broker (1839 – 1928)
Builders:- Ebenezer Roberts, Portmadoc Year 1875
Tonnage:- Registered:- 261 Under Deck:- 253 Net:- 231
Length:- 116.0 ft. Breadth:- 24.5 ft. Depth:- 14.4 ft.
Port of Registry:- Caernarvon
Master 1898 – 1900 Captain O.Parry

The crew for the voyage covered by the Wages and Accounts Book, with the appropriate rates of monthly pay was as follows: -

Lauchlan Nicol	Mate	£5- 0-0 (equivalent to 2021 value £667)
Robert Buckley	Bosun	£3-15-0 (" £500)
H.R.Lewis	2nd Mate	£3- 5-0 (" £433)
William Blackman	Cook & AB	£3-12-6 (" £483)
Antonio Ferrie	AB	£2-15-0 (" £367)
James Smith	AB	£2-15-0 (" £367)
Carl Johnson	AB	£2-15-0 (" £367)
Samuel Smith	AB	Deserted at Holyhead – He had received an advance of £2-15-0 and slops of 2/6d
Albert Georkie	OS	£2-10-0 (" £333)

The Mate's account read as follows:	Debit	Credit
To advance	£5-0-0	
To allotment months 4 month	£10-0-0	
Shipping Office fees: Engagement		
Discharge		£27-3-4 By wages viz. 5 months 13 days from April 1st 1898 to Sept 13th 1898 at £5-0-0 per month
Fines and Forfeitures		
Cash advanced during voyage		
Supplies made during voyage	£0-16-8	
Total *(*Wages earned*)*		£27-3-4
Per contra Deductions	£15-16-8	
Amount due		£11- 6-8 (£1,511)

Thomas bought a little notebook in Sydney N.S.W. which is now in my possession and is a mine of fascinating information. I believe he gained his first command in 1919

Clan Line Master's Salaries, 1920

Years of service	£ pm	£pa	2021 equiv. rounded	Years of service	£ pm	£pa	2021 equiv. rounded
1	42	504	23,108	12	60	720	33,012
2	43	516	23,659	13	61	732	33,562
3	45	540	24,759	14, 15	62	744	34,112
4	47	564	25,859	16, 17	63	756	34,663
5	49	588	26,960	18, 19	64	768	35,213
6	51	612	28,060	20, 21	65	780	35,763
7	53	636	29,161	22, 23	66	792	36,313
8	56	672	30,811	24, 25	67	804	36,863
9	57	684	31,361	26, 27	68	816	37,414
10	58	696	31,912	28, 29	69	828	37,964
11	59	708	32,462	30	70	840	38,514

Hooghly Pilots

1923 One Indian Rupee was worth about fifteen to the Pound, but the 1923 Pound sterling would be worth £62.03 in today's money.

In or around 1923 the notebook has the rates charged by Hooghly pilots. The notebook entry was made long before Partition. The pilots belonged to the Royal Indian Marine, formerly the HM Indian Marine which was formed by the amalgamation of the Bombay Marine and Bengal Marine in 1877. The Bengal Pilot Service was conceived in 1669 when orders were received from home to institute a pilot establishment at Hooghly, to build a pinnace to be manned by intelligent seamen from the (East) Indiamen, to take charge of the shipping up and down.

In 1853 the Hooghly Pilot Service comprised :-

Senior Branch Pilot 1; Branch Pilot 11; Senior Master 23; Master 7; Mate 30; Senior Second Mate 12; Junior Second Mate 12 and Volunteer 46

Total compliment 142

The writer does not have the figures for 1923

For c.1923 the notebook has the rates charged by Hooghly pilots, shown in Rupees (here converted to rates in Sterling at 2021 prices)

Branch	4,300 & upwards	(£17,782 equivalent)	Entry in ink	1
Master	2,800 to 4,300	(£11,579 to £17,782 equiv.)	Entry in ink	2 Blasts
B. Pilot	5,150 & upwards	(£21,297 equivalent)	Entry in pencil	
Master	4,000 to 5,150	(£16,542 to £21,297 equiv.)	Entry in pencil	

The notebook records these as rate per m, but they seem inordinately high and one suspects these are the rates p.a., £255,564 for a Branch Pilot in 1923 is not credible.

Hooghly Passage Notes

Best time to arrive Eastern Channel low water at Saugar *(Island)* in a 10 knot ship or an hour after in a 12 knot ship.

Boating (if numerous) will only be done on the flood, outside 10 fms. But safe only for 1 or 2 ships may probably board any time. Keep other ships on port side when jockeying for position and edge down gently. Report to Pilot Boat first opportunity because your arrival at Sandheads counts for berth.

Sandheads is further South into the Bay of Bengal and is the anchorage for the Hooghly.

Suez Canal Passage Notes

Relating to the passage by the ss **Clan Ogilvy** in March 1933

Allowance for Ballast Trim - Take 75% of Engine Room as measured & multiply that space (from Canal Cert) by 125% present allowance, & divide by 75. Multiply the result by 100 and divide by 42 for coal and 38 for oil, which will give tonnage allowed.
75% of E.R.as measured 536.93 *say 537*
125% of 537 = 671.25. 671.25 divided by 75 = 8.95
(multiply by 100 to convert to tons = 895)
For coal - 895 x 100 /42 = 2130.9 total allowance for coal *(T.B figure 2130)*
Capacity of fresh water tank multiplied by S.G. *(Specific Gravity)* gives oil capacity
For oil - 895 X 100/38 = 2355.3 total allowance for oil *(T.B figure 2355)*

On this occasion with 1480 tons of coal which meant ship could have another 650.9 tons *(T.B figure 650)* of coal or 650.9 x 42/38 = 719.4 tons *(T.B figure 718)* of oil.

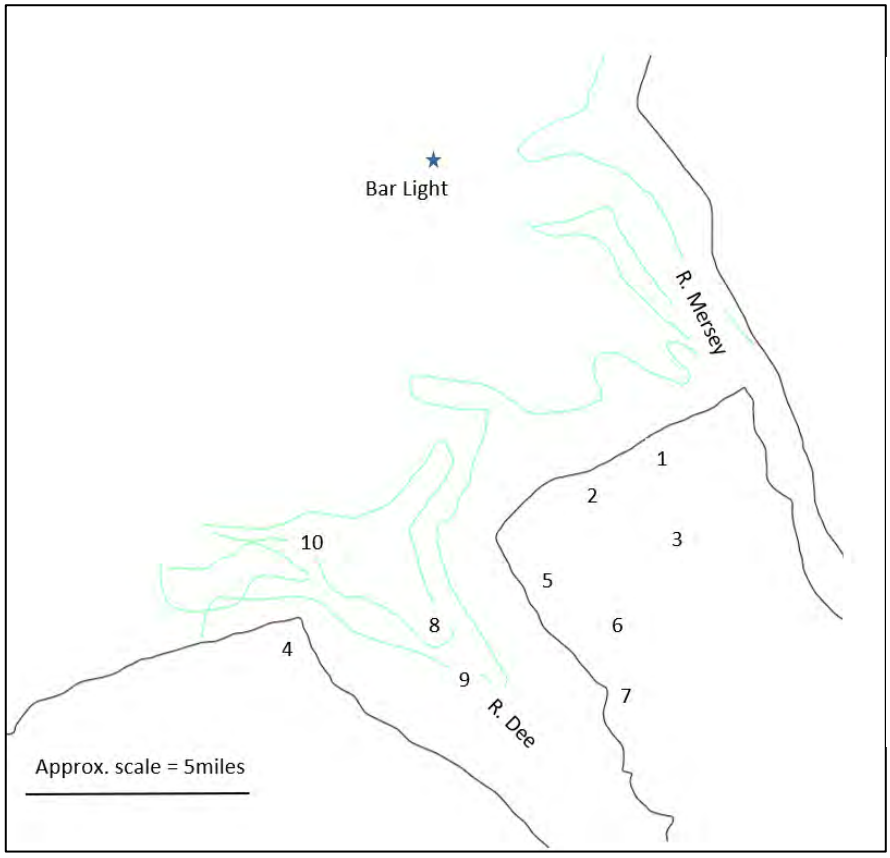
Total weight of fuel 719.4 tons oil + 1480 tons of coal = 2199.4 *(T.B. figure 2198)*

Wirral Lighthouses in the 18th Century

Extract from the Minute Book of the Point of Ayr Lighthouse Trust
First published in the Bulletin Vol 36. No 4 Spring 1993
By the then Editor H.M. Hignett

The Trust was established to provide safe navigation into and out of the Dee. It not only maintained and improved the navigation marks, but established a pilotage service in December 1775.

This simplified chart of the area shows the approximate position of most of the locations mentioned:



Key

1 Mockbeggar Light
2 Hoylake Light
3 Bidston Light
4 Point of Air
5 Caldy
6 Thurstington (Thurstaston?)
7 Dawpoole
8 Middle Patch
9 Salisbury Bank
10 West Hoyle Spit

Queries which were made by a Mr. Hamilton when he went to survey the Hoylake Lighthouse which he thought necessary to be answered:

1) How far Mockbeggar Light is seen at sea; how far Hoylake Light?
   Answer: The Mockbeggar Light 5 Leagues, and the Hoylake four, when the weather is moderately clear, exceedingly so, they may possibly be seen a League or two further

2) How much the diameter of each reflector?
   Answer: Mockbeggar six foot & the Hoylake three

3) Why they prefer Oil to Coals, and which is seen the furthest ?

Answer: As the Hoylake Light is to lead in one direction it could not properly be an open Coal fire, but was covered in, and Mr. Hutchinson could not contrive to get the Smoak draw up to any Funnell without smoaking, and it sully'd the Glass so much as to destroy the good effect of the light, besides the Blaze was so often out and in, and wink'd and blink'd so much as to be a very unsteady Light, and could not be seen near so far as the oil

4) How many lamps are used in the Hoylake light at one time, & how many threads in each light?

Answer: Only one Lamp 588 threads agreeable to the sample br't by W. Hamilton

5) How many Quarts of oil used in one night for the Hoylake Light and what kind of Oil?

Answer: Three Quarts & a Pint for the Light and the House use, there being generally two small lamps in the kitchen, and the Oil is called Sparmacetty, and contracted for in London.

6) How much Cotton used in one week, & how much Hurds ?

Answer: Hoylake Light uses about three quarters of a pound of Cotton, and a pound of common hurds in one week, but the Mock beggar uses near double that Quantity.

7) How much Coal it took to light it in one night when a coal fire ?

Answer: About 500^{d} Weight of Coal in one night, or rather more including the kitchen fire

8) How the Coal Light was secured from the weather?

Answer: By a Wood roof with a Funnel thro' the Roof leaded

9) What difference in Trouble between attendg a Coal fire & a Lamp?

Answer: The Coals are carried up such a height & requires such due attendance to store, blow and feed the Fire, that one man unless he has a very active wife or a son cannot attend it as it ought to be.

10) What salary & what other allowances for attending the Hoylake light ?

Answer: Nicholas Seed at the Hoylake Light, receives 16 p Ann in cash, £3.10.0 for coals for the house use, and Guinea to his wife every Christmas if no complaint, Apartments to live in, and a stable and shippen for cow & horse; If it be lighted with coals, the £3.10:0 is struck off, and the man takes coals out of the common stock for house use.

11) Whether the Mockbeggar Lighthouse be of the same construction as the Hoylake one, or how different?

Answer: The same construction except about 15 yards higher. The Diameter of the Reflector 3 foot wider. The Cotton in the Lamp double the thickess, and consequently take double the Quantity of oil

12) How is it possible the whole annual Expence of y' can be £165?
Answer: The Mockbeggar and Bidston taking double the Quantity of Cotton and oil to the Hoylake. All the four taken together may possibly be £660 expence annually, but one of the Hoylake lights cannot take near £165 pr annum.

13) How deep the foundation of the Hoylake Lighthouse & whether Clay or Sand?
Answer: Hoylake Lighthouse is set just below the Green Sword upon Oak Stubbs, and stands exceeding well, having not the least settling in the Walls from Top to Bottom, if the Foundation was deeper, it would be in the Quick sands

14) What ground rent paid to Sir John Stanley for Hoylake Lighthouse or whether a consideration given at first?
Answer: No consideration given at first, but an annual rent of 2g for the Hoylake Lighthouse.

15) How much Land granted round the Lighthouse at Hoylake?
Answer: No Land was granted round the Lighthouse at Hoylake, except for the outbuildings, but Bidston took in a Garden and paid a Consideration of £40 at first and pays no annual Rent.

16) Where the Bricks were made & where the Lime & Timber came from?
Answer: The Bricks were made about 2 miles off. The Timber all Deal, except Roof, Stairs, Window frames, was had from Liverpoole; the Lime was burn'd at Bidston Mills, and the Limestone brought from Wales.

17) Whether the leading light must be fix'd in Thurstington or Caldy?
Answer: W Hamilton got some sailors with a spying Glass, and examin'd as well as they could, where the leading light would fall, and it appears to be in Thurstington Liberty, but uncertain as the weather was heavy. WH made enquiry from a number of Masters of Vessels and pilots, and they all say That as Chester River lies as much between two hills, it generally draws a Fogg down in the Night, so that the Light will be impossible to be seen, and consequently of no use. They all agreed that one Light upon the Point of Air, one Nun black Buoy at each end of the middle patch, and one do at each end of Salisbury Bank, and a Land mark at Dawpoole Hill, lineable with the white house under the hill, to be a leading Mark between Salisbury and Bugg, will answer every purpose wanted. That there is no Necessity to fix a Buoy on the west Spit of Hoyle, there being 9 foot a low water, nor is there any occasion to fix a Buoy on the Bugg as the Vessels will always keep the Salisbury Buoys close on Board, and take the leading Marks at Dawpoole, for the best of the deep between Salisbury and Bugg.

18) To ask the Liverpool pilot whether a light on the Point of Air could mislead him?
Answer: John Edwards, a Master Pilot, says he never can be misled by the Air Light, for the Bearings between that and the Hoylake Lights vary a little more than a point, yet the Soundings are very different, for going for Chester Bar you have 5, 6 & 7 fathom Water with Sandy Bottom; and going thro' the Horse Channel you have

from 12 to 15 Mud bottom. He says that when the wind has blown hard at NNW and he has been in Danger of running upon Hoyle Sands; He has kept the Welch Shore on board and ran over Chester Bar, in which Case if he could have had the Benefit of the Air Light, it would have been of great Service to him.

Estimate of the annual Expence of the Hoylake Lighthouse with Oil made by W. Hamilton.

		£	s	d
320 Gall of Oil supposing it to be bought at the best Hand in London 3/5 pr Gall		56..	0..	0
40lb of Spun Cotton at 2/3		4..	10..	0
½ a hundred of Common Hurds		0..	7..	6
Wages including Coals for the house use		20..	0..	0
Expences if lighted with Coal fire	£	80..	17..	6
Supposing 6 qtrs Coal p Night at 5^{d}		45..	12..	6
Candles to the Kitchen Use		1..	10..	0
Wages and Coals for the Kitchen Use		17..	0..	0
	£	64..	2..	6

A Moveable Feast!

An amusing incident arising from prefabrication in shipbuilding was recounted by Captain A.H.Wallis at a luncheon following the launch of HMS **Hickleton**, a coastal minesweeper, from John I. Thorneycroft's Southampton yard in June, 1954.

Recalling the speed at which Liberty ships were built in the United States to replace war losses, Captain Wallis said that a friend of his was invited to lunch by the management of one of the firms assembling these ships. Plans had been made to hold the lunch in the captain's cabin, a prefabricated section which stood on the quay waiting to be assembled.

All went well, said Captain Wallis, until about half-way through the luncheon when, without warning, a crane was connected to the structure and the guests found themselves being swung through the air and lowered unceremoniously on to the ship.

Troopship **Keren**

First published in Blue Star 'Gangway'
By Captain A.W. Kinghorn

The K**eren**, a Ministry of Defence vessel which has been operated as a troopship for the past two years under Blue Star Line management, recently completed her last tour of duty and returned to Britain. Her master, Captain A W Kinghorn, has supplied the following reminiscences of some memorable times.

Since becoming the **Keren**, the former Sealink ferry **St Edmund** has made 27 voyages north and south between the Falklands and Ascension, covering over 90,000 miles and carrying almost 18,000 passengers, mostly military but including many Falkland Islanders and merchant navy crews. Her only break from this service was a return to the Tyne in May 1984 for a rapid refit at Smith's Ship Repairers, North Shields.

Golf Uniform Kilo Bravo, as her signal letters and call-sign have it, was built at Cammell Laird's, Birkenhead, in 1974 and has a gross tonnage of 8,987 and length of 427 feet. As **St Edmund** she operated the six-hour run across the southern North Sea, carrying in her time thousands of civilian passengers and also many British troops on furlough (not a few soldiers now in the Falklands recall crossing the North Sea in the **St Edmund**).

Thus she plied her lawful occasions, a typical short sea ferry with two car decks and bow and stern ramp doors until the Falklands conflict when she became STUFT- a ship taken up from trade. She was one of 66, which included passenger liners, tugs, trawlers, tankers, repair ships, a cable vessel, general and refrigerated cargo vessels - and car ferries. At that time she was still owned by Sealink and chartered by the Ministry of Defence - which later acquired her outright.

She carried British troops south and, after the surrender, returned defeated troops to Argentina. She then returned to the Falklands where she took up a static role as an accommodation ship for troops - one of three, the others being **Rangatira** (Union Steamship Co of New Zealand) and **Baltic Ferry** (Townsend Thoresen).

When the accommodation ships began their task there were at any one time up to six quite large ships anchored in Port Stanley - which surprised many of the inhabitants who had not supposed their harbour was deep enough. Outside The Narrows, in Port William, were more ships, mostly too deep of draft to enter Port Stanley where the maximum depth is around 22 feet -tankers and supply vessels with an unfortunate ammunition ship lying furthest east of all, rolling at anchor in the ceaseless swell.

Now that the Falklands have returned almost to normal, most of these ships have gone whilst the three accommodation ships were gradually replaced during 1983-84 by three coastels - accommodation blocks floating barge-like, moored by chains

close to the shore with which they are connected by road ramps. All three are situated at the far eastern end of Stanley Harbour.

When first 'taken up from trade' **St Edmund** was fitted with a large helicopter deck big enough to take Chinooks. Her bow visor was welded shut before she sailed south in 1982 and has never been used since, but her stern door is used all the time. When she entered the post-conflict trooping service with **Uganda** she would anchor in her old spot in Port Stanley and lower the stern door, enabling troops to embark and disembark by mexefloat, ubiquitous flat multi-section barges with twin out-boards aft-so useful for such work if not the height of comfort for passengers on a cold, wet and blustery day!

But early in 1984 yet another marvel came to the Falklands - the floating port. Falklands Intermediate Port and Storage System (FIPASS for short) came out in sections and was assembled west of the coastels and connected to the shore by a road bridge able to take heavy lorries. A road was constructed to link these new establishments with Stanley and also to the new Mount Pleasant Airport almost 30 miles away over the hills.

FIPASS came complete with roll-on-off section at its easterly end, plus ware-houses, offices and machinery spaces and does in fact prove that the concept of the Mulberry Harbour (used in the 1944 Normandy invasion) lives on. When one stands on its steel quayside surrounded by containers recently offloaded from several ships alongside it is difficult to believe that this whole structure is afloat, capable of being taken elsewhere when no longer required here. Once FIPASS was opened in April 1984 **Keren** was able to berth alongside making operations much simpler.

Keren has played her part in various military exercises, but mostly her voyages have been straight trooping runs taking about a month per round trip. Her crew averages 80 - mostly catering department - and she also carries permanent military staff with an army major as ship's commandant in charge. Being a North Sea ferry her amenities are limited, but at least she provides every passenger with a cabin, mostly two-berth or single, which is appreciated by the troops who had to live in dormitories in 'the other ship'. Nine days at sea (the average voyage) is no hardship for anyone and the stabilisers certainly reduce seasickness.

In heavy weather interested passengers were escorted to the bridge in small parties and were able to watch open-mouthed from the wheelhouse the whole wild panorama of the South Atlantic in savage mood.

At Ascension there is no port. Ships lie off at anchor when the weather permits and passengers come and go by helicopter. Ascension is a fascinating clump of rugged rock in the South Atlantic almost mid-way between Brazil and West Africa: an old volcanic heap of brown clinker first discovered by the Portuguese navigator Joao de Nova Gallego on 20 May 1501 - Ascension Day.

The British established a garrison of Royal Marines here in 1821 when it was thought that the French might be about to mount a rescue attempt to release the exiled Napoleon Bonaparte from that other South Atlantic rock of St Helena. The marines remained until 1922, building Georgetown with its church and barrack square, its houses and, interestingly, its concrete rain catchments up Green Mountain where the drizzly damp climate makes the scenery a pleasant oasis above the parched brown rocks below where asses run wild eating the sparsest of grass.

In Georgetown are many relics of the old sailing navy such as rope walks and rigging lofts, and there are turtle ponds concreted to hold water, for turtles are another of Ascension's delights and mysteries. Why would a turtle want to swim 1,200 miles from the coast of Brazil to Ascension just to lay eggs?

Wideawake Airport, named after the wideawake tern which nests in large numbers, became the world's busiest for a few days in 1982, coping with traffic of an almost exclusively military nature. Another spot well worth seeing, even if it only fills one with pity, is the Bonetta Cemetery, a tiny 20-grave plot in the most inhospitable brown cinder-like terrain, where lie the mortal remains of those who died of fever a century ago.

When a ship came in with yellow fever aboard (usually from West Africa) the sufferers were appointed desolate habitation at the aptly named Comfortless Cove, one mile from Georgetown. Food was left at an appointed spot, the carrier firing a gun as dinner gong before retiring quickly in case he too became a victim. Even those who recovered were not allowed back in town but eked out the remainder of their lives caring for the sick.

After a break on this interesting island it is time once again to head south for the Falklands. **Uganda** was somewhat slower than **Keren** and as the speed of a service, like the speed of a convoy, is governed by the speed of the slowest ship, **Keren** usually had a a day or two in hand each voyage which enabled her to slow down and save fuel.

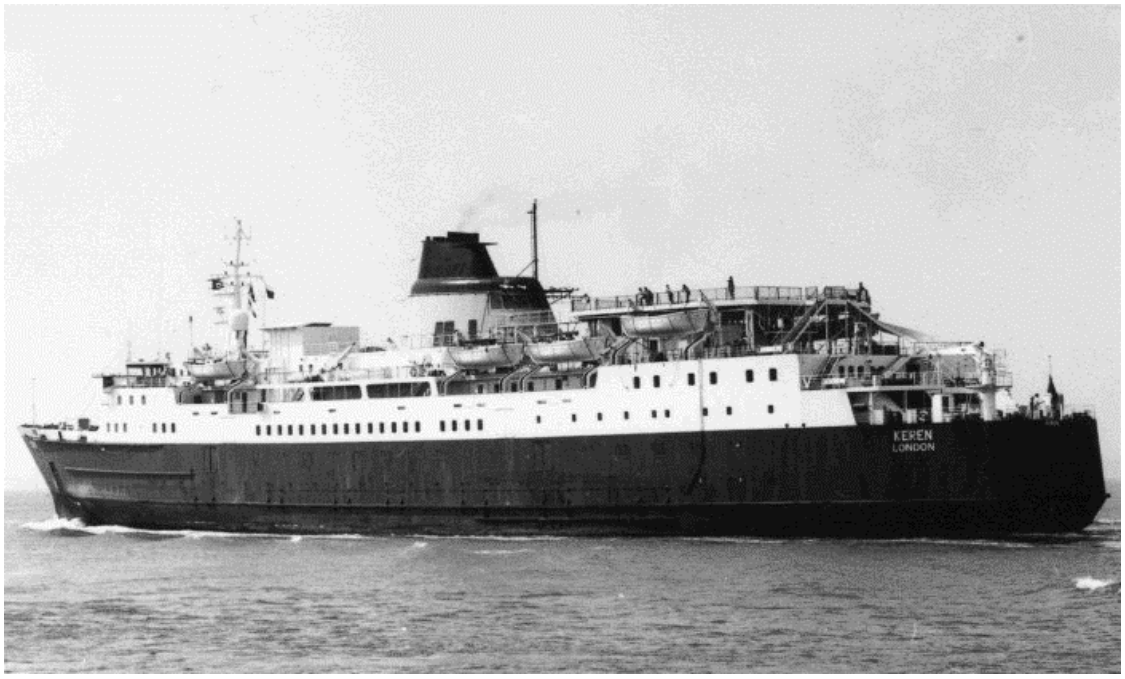
It could be that she is directed, first, to San Carlos Water, just 100 miles by sea from Stanley, at the north western corner of East Falkland, where the returning British landed. We go alongside an anchored tanker to take fuel (still called bunkers) in the now silent inlet, so like the English Lakes.

Our ship has anchored near the buoys marking HMS Antelope's grave. Blue Beach cemetery is close by, where Colonel H Jones VC and his comrades sleep in peace, a touchingly beautiful cemetery maintained by those who manage the nearby farm.

Up anchor and down Falkland Sound then, where fabled wrecks containing hoards of Chilean copper ingots lure the brave and hardy to fit out salvage

expeditions back in Stanley, and to Fox Bay, where our Gemini rubber boat takes us to visit the gentoo penguins.

To Stanley next, that now familiar little town with its neat houses, brightly painted corrugated iron roofs, red-roofed brick-decorated grey-stone cathedral, and the little white catholic chapel of St Mary. The new Mount Pleasant Airport, a truly remarkable feat of British enterprise and civil engineering has now been opened by Prince Andrew and the wide-bodied jetliners have, at a stroke, rendered yet another troopship redundant. So where next?



Keren became an accommodation ship for a while, alongside FIPASS, providing bed and breakfast and evening meal for news reporters sent out to cover the great opening of Mount Pleasant Airport. She also played ‘Mother Keren' to one of our submarines at a buoy in Port Stanley and the submariners were delighted to savour her space and comfort, for even a modern submarine is cramped by comparison. But where next?

The answer came soon: 'You are going to South Georgia!' I should mention here that many of us had been wanting to go to South Georgia for the past two years, ever since we had heard that there might be a chance. At the conflict's beginning many went there, not least the **Queen Elizabeth 2** although because of her size she only anchored on the submerged ridge outside King Edward Cove in Cumberland Bay. Now **Keren** was to go there, alongside if possible, to deliver the much needed stores to the British garrison.

Having borrowed a line-throwing gun **Keren** sailed from Stanley for the last time, after a lap of honour round the harbour attended by many who had helped to make our time there so pleasant. Out through The Narrows for the last time, appropriately enough in a blizzard.

Keren's first appointed task was to go to Bird Island, South Georgia, and take off a scientist of the British Antarctic Survey who had broken a collarbone. But when we arrived off the island rags of cloud tore at the snowy mountain peaks and such a SW swell ran into Bird Sound that launching our boat would have been disastrous.

Instead our doctor was able to talk to the scientists in the hut on the radio telephone and found that the patient's fracture had been correctly set and was healing. So **Keren** turned out of Bird Sound (NW South Georgia) and headed for Grytviken, in King Edward Cove off Cumberland Bay, where we arrived next day break, through broken ice in the form of small bergs which are called, meteorologically, growlers and bergy bits.

These growlers are old, almost transparent ice calved from glaciers and awash they make poor targets for radar. Indeed, when day dawned calm, fine and clear, bathing the snow clad mountains in a rosy glow, we discovered that although our two radars had picked out the larger bergs and bergy bits, the growlers had escaped notice and could have caused damage had we struck one. Extra lookouts had to be posted all night.

Although South Georgia is not that far south of the Falklands, which enjoy a temperate climate not unlike that experienced on the north east coast of England, the 726 miles on a course of 100 degrees true (East by South) from Stanley to South Georgia take a ship through the Antarctic convergence barrier and into, effectively, the Antarctic where temperatures plunged below zero, for this was winter.

The vessel slowly entered King Edward Cove, a tiny, almost circular inlet surrounded by 2,000-feet-high snow covered mountains. At the far end lies Grytviken (Pot Cove in Norwegian, from the try pots of the early sealers) now a ghost town and complete with white wooden church, 'kinema', and the whale factories which flourished and then died in the early 1960s when the market for whale products disappeared.

Modern ecologists may like to claim a victory here, but the stark facts are that whaling in the south ended when it did because it ceased to be profitable. The whalers left, expecting to return, but they never did. Grytviken is like a shore-based Marie Celeste with jobs waiting to be completed, stores waiting to be unpacked. On this strange little scene of man's folly the awesome snowclad mountains look down with what appears to be immense disdain.

Opposite Grytviken, on King Edward Point, is Discovery House, a green three-storey red-roofed building housing troops and scientists with a few scattered buildings and a wooden wharf, at which I intended to moor **Keren** Mediterranean-fashion and discharge in a couple of hours a consignment of provisions.

The line-throwing gun was used successfully to get our first mooring rope ashore and in pleasant weather our pre-arranged plan went as smoothly as could be

desired. Too smoothly, for no sooner had our stern door been lowered to the quay than all hell seemed to be let loose!

It was as if the elements were outraged at this mere North Sea ferry having the temerity to enter their domain, for Katabatic winds of hurricane force screamed at us from all angles. Our stern door was immediately raised and secured and after five more attempts at berthing, all unsuccessful, **Keren** clawed out into the centre of the cove and re-anchored.

She then meekly worked her cargo ashore via the ship's motorboat, her crew pitching in with a will that cheered one to see. A force ten blizzard blew all that night but the anchors held and it was almost as if the elements considered we had passed the test for the next day dawned with an unearthly calm and beauty which lasted until we sailed the following morning.

Everything, including the ship, lay under a thick snow mantle and next night every detail of every mountain was mirrored to perfection in the glassy, moonlit waters of the cove. By the time we sailed, the morning after. King Edward Cove had frozen over and sea-birds slipped and skidded on the ice like tipsy sailors. Fortunately our anchors came up without trouble and we moved out, marvelling at the brilliant green colour of the glacier's edge and headed north towards Ascension and Portsmouth.

*Editor's note: On completion of her military service in January 1986 she was sold, renamed **Scirocco** and operated the ro/ro ferry service between southern Spain and Nador in Morocco. Sold again in 1989 she operated between Poole and Guernsey as the **Rozel** for British Channel Island Ferries. Five years later she was sold to El Salam Maritime, Cairo for delivery in May 2004 to United Pacific Navigation, Panama and renamed Santa Catherine 1. Then in 2006 she was sold to Maritime Company for Navigation (Jeddah) and renamed **Sara 3** to operate the Jeddah to Sawakin (Sudan) pilgrimage service. Finally she was sold to Indian interests for scrapping in 2009.*

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