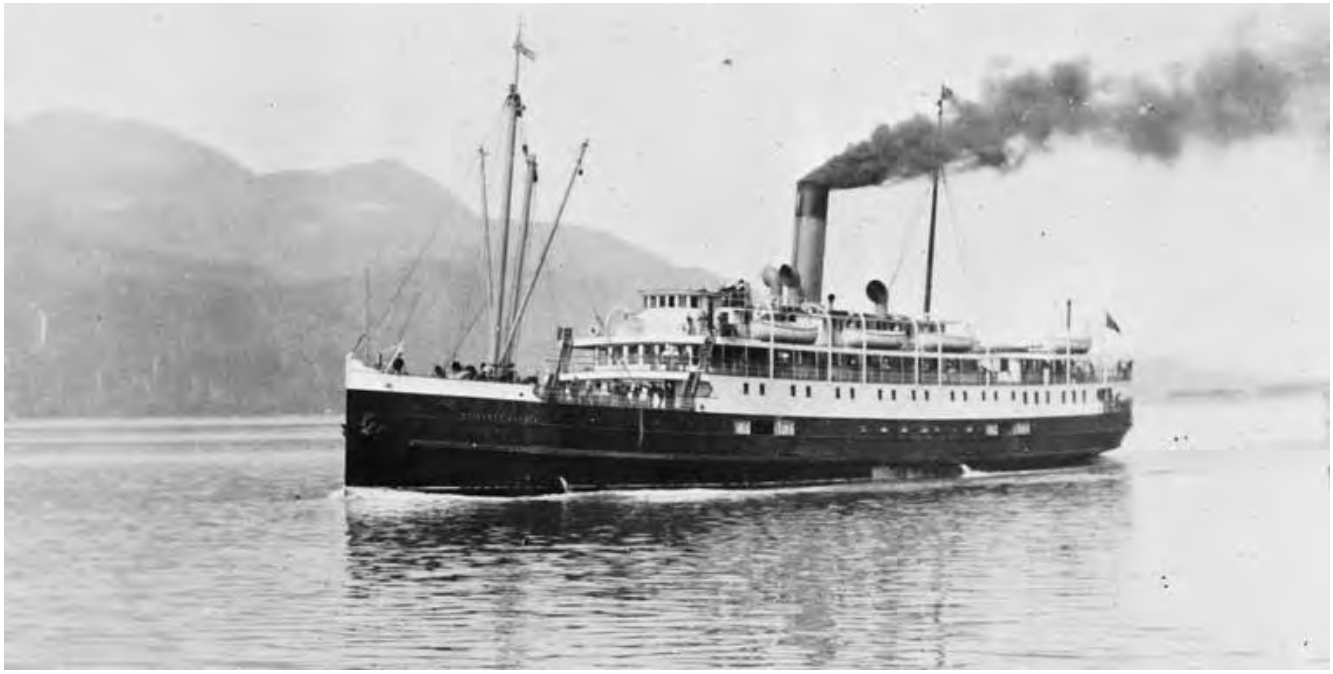
LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

The Bulletin Volume 65, No. 1, June 2021

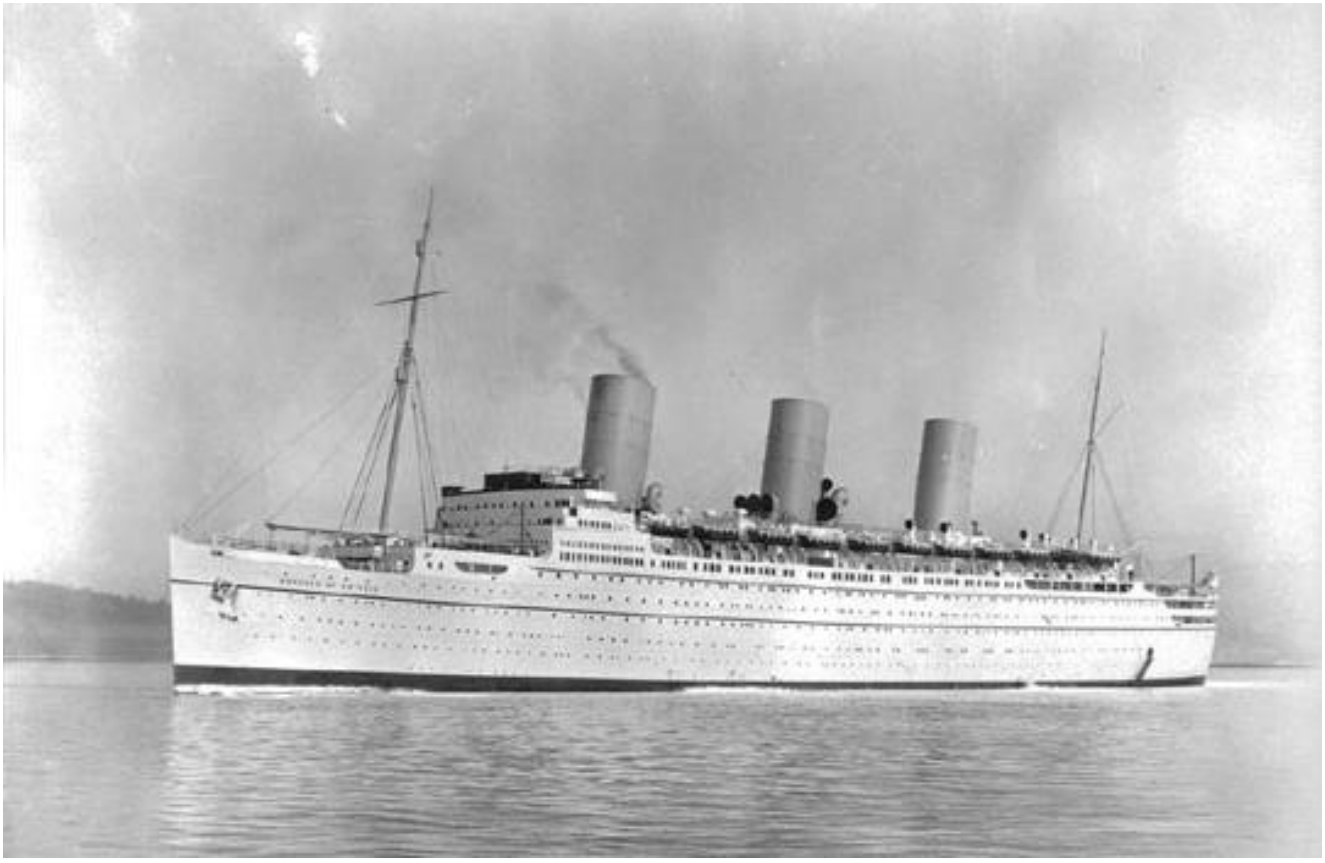


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The ss ***Princess Sophia*** *pictured in 1912* *From Wikimedia Commons* *See page 6*



*R.M.S.****Empress of Britain*** *Canadian Pacific Archives* *Courtesy Wikimedia* *See page 31*

Liverpool Nautical Research Society

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Honorary Officers:
Secretary: Mr. E.J. Scaplehorn Treasurer: Mr. A. Melling

Web site: www.liverpoolnauticalresearchsociety.org

For all enquiries our contact details are: contactlnrs@gmail.com

Or via our website at
www.liverpoolnauticalresearchsociety.org

If mail is required our address is:
Hon. Secretary, L.N.R.S.,
The Archives Centre, Merseyside Maritime Museum,
Royal Albert Dock, Liverpool, L3 4A

Video recordings of Athenaeum Presentations.

The Society is building a permanent library of current and future presentations which is now available to members on our web site. To access them you should first login to the site with your username and password. Once you have logged in, select 'Activity' on the main menu and then 'Video Presentations'. You can then pick your video and follow the on-screen instructions. (Unsure how to Register or forgotten your Password? Simply ask the webmaster via contactlnrs@gmail.com or from the web site).

The Liverpool Nautical Research Society

Chair's Annual Report 2019 – 2020

A little over three years ago I was invited by Council to become Vice Chair, and eventually Chair of the Society. I was, of course, flattered and, I must admit, a trifle overwhelmed but having been a member for some time, regular attendee at the monthly talks and having seen how smoothly everything was run, I was looking forward to being a part of the organisation.

The last fifteen months have been anything but smooth running – to quote that well know authority, the average British seaman – I didn't sign on for this!

Little did we know that when we "temporarily" suspended the programme of talks in March last year that we would still be in the same position now as we were then. We thought we would be able to resume the programme before May 2020 and hold the AGM as usual; that wasn't possible, then we were confident that the programme would resume in September – that hope was postponed until after Christmas but that wasn't possible either and the restrictions and lockdowns seemed to go on forever, although now there is light at the end of the tunnel.

As a result of the restrictions placed on us all we have been unable to meet in the Athenaeum since February 2020 although we were able to conduct some activity there during the brief spell in the summer when some restrictions were lifted. However, despite or maybe because of the pandemic situation, the Society has taken some significant steps forward to providing you, the members, with a better service and a wider choice. I would like to briefly cover the activities of the last few months.

Membership currently stands at 194, although that number does include five honorary members: so, despite the problems of the last year, membership is bearing up well. Sadly, we have lost 7 good friends since the AGM last November: John Huxley, Sean Kennedy, Alan McClelland, Angela Oates, William Walker, Gordon Wright and Eric Grove. Some will be known to you personally and some you will have only heard of – they will all be missed by families and friends.

The Treasurer, Tony Melling, will be presenting the annual financial report shortly and I am glad to say that thanks to his prudent management the society's financial position is healthy. I would like to thank Tony for the way he manages the role of treasurer and for the very clear and succinct manner in which income, expenditure and the budget is presented to Council.

The programme of monthly talks had to be suspended from March 2020 until now but the hope is that the programme will re-start in September this year. The programme for 2021/22 will be presented shortly. The Talks Secretary, Ian Duckett, has done a tremendous job over the last year in contacting speakers, finding new ones, rearranging the programme and generally tearing his hair out. He was heard to

mis-quote Eric Morecambe at one point “the talks are all there but not necessarily in the same order”.

Thanks to the editor, Bill Ogle, the Bulletin has been published regularly, and as usual has been full of material of interest to all of us. The Bulletin is, and will remain to be, our publication of record; not only is it of interest as a quarterly publication but is also a vast repository of research material because all the Bulletins produced by the Society are available on the Website – all the way back to Volume 1, No 1 of the Transactions of the Liverpool Nautical Research Society, a paper on *Liverpool Ships and Trade* presented by Mr. Arthur C. Wardle on 11th May 1938.

I made brief mention earlier of the activities that have taken place and the initiatives that have been developed during the lockdowns and restrictions. Some of these were already under discussion but had to be brought forward and have enabled the Society to deliver a service that is almost ‘as usual’ and in some cases better than ‘as usual’.

Council have been meeting regularly using the Zoom system, the same system that was used for the 2020 AGM held in November last year.

A programme of talks has been presented on the dates previously announced although they have been in video format on the website. That this was possible is due to a significant effort by members of Council who, in a very short time, developed and instigated a system of recording, editing and uploading the talks on to the website. The technical problems associated with this initiative were overcome by your secretary, Ted Scaplehorn. This will become a permanent feature, making the presentations available to all members of the society, something that was previously only available to those who were able to attend the Athenaeum. I also have to say the staff of the Athenaeum have been unfailingly helpful within the bounds that restrictions placed upon them and has made it possible for some of the video talks to be recorded in the library.

The Treasurer expressed concern at one of the meetings that a great deal of knowledge and experience was in danger of being lost to posterity and to a future generation of researchers; he suggested that an Oral History project be embarked upon to preserve this knowledge. Such a project was not quite as easy as we thought but thanks to advice from Sarah Starkey of Mersey Maritime Museum (a member of Council) and the hard work and determination of Tony, it was quickly under way and has been enthusiastically embraced by Tony and Willie Williamson, your incoming Chair, as well as the other members of Council. The results so far have already been added to the Website and will also in due course be lodged in the archives of MMM for future generations to use.

The website, under the stewardship of the Secretary, has been enhanced and I would once again urge members to make use of it, not only out of interest, but as a

valuable research tool. Usage of the site has been gradually increasing but it is still an under-utilised resource. It has a powerful search facility and it is easy to drill down to a particular piece of information.

I am also pleased to inform you that our Vice President, John Stokoe, has been elected to the Board of the Centre for Port and Maritime History.

Presenting this annual report is my last task as Chair of the Society as my term of office comes to an end as soon as I finish! Many people have been introduced as 'someone who needs no introduction' and that is certainly true of your incoming Chair, Willie Williamson. He is well known to you, both as a speaker and as past Chair.

However, before I go, I would like to close by thanking all the members of Council who have responded magnificently to the challenges of the past year. The guiding principle all along has been to provide you, the members, with a service as close as possible to normal. The Bulletin, a series of talks and presentations, the website, these have all continued as usual thanks to the dedication, the ingenuity and sheer hard work of your Council. Most organisations would have considered that to be enough of an achievement but your Council has embarked on new projects such as the Oral History project, the production of video presentations and the development of an approach to appropriate organisations to raise awareness of the Society and its activities.

Finally, I would like to thank you, the members, who have shown your confidence in the Society by continuing your membership – without you, there is no Society, so thank you.

It has been an honour, a privilege and a pleasure to serve as Chair of the Liverpool Nautical Research Society for the past two years. Thank you for giving me the opportunity.

Members who have **not yet renewed their subscription** should please note that the due date was 1st April. Rates now in use are:

Ordinary Member, single	£20	Equivalent, digital Bulletin only	£15
Ordinary Member, couple	£25	"	£20
Overseas Member	£25	"	£15
Student Member	n/a	"	£10

Talks Programme – 2020 to 2021

Ian Duckett

2021

Sept 16th: ‘Alfred Holt and the Ocean Steamship Company’
By Tony Melling

This talk charts the life and career of Liverpool engineer and shipowner Alfred Holt, who was responsible for significant advances in marine engineering. This enabled him and his brother to create one of the most successful shipping lines in Britain.

Oct 21st: ‘The forgotten saga of the Marine Society’
By Caroline Withall.

The Marine Society is known for supplying the Navy during its manpower crises in the 18th century but this talk, by a former Senior Research Fellow at the NMM Greenwich, is focused on the recruitment of poor boys into merchant vessels with a focus on Liverpool boys and the Port of Liverpool.

Nov 18th: ‘175 Years of the Cunard Line’
By David Hearn

This talk looks at the first 175 years of the Cunard Line, its triumphs and disasters.

Dec 16th: ‘Inshore Minesweepers’
By David White

After WW2, with an increasing threat from the USSR, the UK implemented a major increase in the RN’s ability to deal with the threat of mine-laying in home waters. The inshore threat was countered by building 243 inshore sweepers that proved so useful that their roles developed well beyond that envisaged with some serving the nation for over four decades.

2022

Jan 20th: 'Sir William White and HMS **Powerful'**
By Dr Scott Lindgren

The launching of the Russian armoured cruiser **Rurik** in 1890 presented a new threat to British global trade. In response William White designed two Powerful class cruisers. Often derided as 'white elephants', this talk illustrates that they were actually formidable vessels based on sound strategic thinking and design practice.

Feb 17th: 'Dancy's Leap – The story of the **Flying Enterprise's** sinking in January 1952'
By Keith Hick

En-route from Germany to the USA, the **Flying Enterprise's** dramatic plight and the bravery of her Master Capt. Carlsen and the 1st. Mate of the rescue tug Turmoil, Kenneth Dancy, gripped the British nation which was unaware of the top-secret cargo the vessel was carrying

Mar 17th 'The 1918 raids by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines on Zeebrugge and Ostend'

By Tom Cunningham
In April 1918 the Western Front was in stalemate. News from the front was unremittingly bad and thus came about the daring naval raids on St Georges Day 1918. Designed to stop the submarine menace operating from Belgium and allow unfettered reinforcements to cross the Channel, this talk will highlight the key role played in the operations by the Mersey ferries, **Iris** and **Daffodil**.

Apl 21st 'Robert Gladstone's voyage to Demerara in 1828'
By Willie Williamson

A fascinating and informal account of William Gladstone's brother's voyage in 1828 to visit his father's plantations in the West Indies on the Liverpool sailing ship **Roscoe**.

May 19th 'Gibbs Bright and the SS **Great Britain** in Liverpool'
By Richard Martin

'The SS **Great Britain** was conceived and born in Bristol but lived her life operating out of Liverpool for thirty years. This talk is about her owner's Liverpool business and their service to Australia'

The Ill-fated Last Voyage of the **Princess Sophia**

By LNRS member Gordon Bodey

Princess Sophia (yard No. 272) was built for Canadian Pacific Railways, Victoria, B.C. by Bow McLachlan at its Thistle yard, Paisley, and was launched on 8 November 1911. Her dimensions were 245ft x 44ft x 24ft deep. grt 2320. She had a triple expansion engine of 366 nhp supplied by her builder, and was capable of 14½ knots. (In 1913 she was converted from coal to oil-burning).

On 19 February 1912 she sailed from the Clyde for Victoria, BC, arriving there 20 May 1912. On 7 June she entered Canadian Pacific's Victoria-Vancouver-Alaska Coastal service, which operated during the summer season, calling at numerous ports on route; during the winter season she operated the Victoria-Vancouver night service.

She had arrived at Skagway on the morning of 23 October 1918, and sailed for Victoria and intermediate ports at 10.10 p.m. Alaska time (critically, three hours behind schedule) that night under the command of Captain Lawrence Pye Locke (aged 66), a man with some 19 years experience of these waters, and was on her last scheduled voyage of the season on that run. Her late departure was partly due to the slow embarkation of her passengers, many of whom were at end-of-season parties in Skagway, the first contact most of them had had for some months with a community with a semblance of civilisation, albeit a then very isolated and small-town one.

When she got underway, she was carrying (according to the company) 268 passengers and 75 crew members (later stated by the Court of Inquiry to be 289 passengers and 61 crew). Among the passengers were 17 children (10 of whom were infants) travelling with one or both of their parents. Some of the passengers were business men, some had been to the Yukon on holiday or hunting trips; many were employees of Alaskan and Yukon mining companies, traders and support staff who were returning southward from Dawson City for the winter, and some were soldiers.

Eighty-seven passengers were employees of the White Pass & Yukon Railway Co. Practically all the company's stewards, pursers and engineers, and a dozen or more deckhands from the company's steamers laid up for the winter, including the entire crew of the company's stern-wheel paddle steamer **Casca**, which operated up and down the Yukon River, were aboard. Its chief engineer was Richard Calvert Haws, a great uncle of the author of books on shipping companies' fleets.

Some four hours and 54 nautical miles after leaving Skagway and travelling down the Lynn Canal (the approximately 90-mile long northern reach of a 260-mile long branched inlet from the ocean), **Princess Sophia**, running in a severe snowstorm, slewed off course and almost immediately ran aground on the, then, unlighted Vanderbilt Reef[1] (1¼ miles off her course line), which is located in the middle of the 7-mile wide Lynn Canal at that position, and is the topmost point of the crest of a 750ft-high undersea mountain. The only indication of its presence was a black can

buoy. The CPR Marine Superintendent, Captain C.D. Neroutsos, later said that CPR had petitioned the U.S. authorities on previous occasions for the placement of a light on the reef[2], but the requests were ignored.

The records of Eldred Rock lighthouse 24 miles NNW of Vanderbilt Reef show that it was snowing there from 11.10 a.m. on the 23rd to 6 a.m. on the 24th of October, and those of Sentinel Island lighthouse, 4 miles south of the reef, that it was snowing there from 8.15 a.m. on the 23rd to 6.50 a.m. on the 24th. Captain H.G. Bayers of the gas boat[3] **Electro**, cannery tender, said that the wind and snow was so severe that night that they had to shelter in Berners Bay (nine miles north of Vanderbilt Reef), and were unable to leave until daylight of 26 October when the storm had abated.

The highest part of the reef is some twelve feet above water at very low tide, but is more generally submerged, as it must have been when the grounding occurred as the **Princess Sophia** was carried some distance onto the reef due to her speed.

The first news of the grounding was received at 2.15 a.m. Alaska time[4] (3.15 a.m. on ship) from an S.O.S. sent by Captain Locke "*Sophia ashore on Vanderbilt Reef. Send all possible help*." A following telegram message said "*Princess Sophia ran on Vanderbilt Reef, Lynn Canal, 3 o'clock* (3 a.m.) [2 a.m. Alaska time]. *Unable to back off at high water. Fresh northerly wind. Ship pounded. Assistance on way from Juneau*."

At 8.30 a.m. the S.S. **Cedar** (U.S. Government lighthouse tender), which apparently sighted the **Princess Sophia** just prior to her grounding, reported that a fierce gale in the night had driven the ship across the reef. At 9.00 a.m. F.W. Lowle, CPR's agent at Juneau, sent a telegram to Captain Locke saying that the S.S. **Petersen** (U.S. Government harbour steamer), **Amy** (gold mining Co. ferryboat), **Estebeth** (Skagway mail boat) and **Lone Fisherman** (Juneau ferry boat) had been sent, and that the S.S. **King & Wing** (fishing boat) was to leave Juneau at 11 a.m., later to be joined by cannery vessels **Excursion** and **Elsinore**. Also present were the gas boats **Sitka** and **Atlas**. All were small boats except the **Cedar**, which was a substantial vessel of 1341grt., 200ft long, carried a crew of 40, and had a passenger capacity of 400. The others had a combined minimum passenger capacity of 800. Lowle informed Captain J.W. Troup the CPR coastal shipping manager at Victoria what had been done.

From about 6.30a.m. on the 24th it had ceased snowing at the reef (and by 6.50 a.m. at Sentinel Island) and the weather had abated sufficiently, and remained so until early afternoon, for the vessels standing by to have removed all those on board by the later testimony of those on the boats, including Captain Cornelius Stidham of the **Petersen** and Captain Miller of the **King & Wing**. Captain James Davis of the **Estebeth** and Edward McDougall of the **Amy** both supported that contention. They said that Locke refused two offers to do so.

At this time, Captain Locke also thought that the boats standing by would be able to take off the passengers; prudence should have dictated that was done.

However, as he was apparently confident that the ship would lift off safely with the rising tide, he declined to transfer them, and at 2.10 p.m. he telegraphed to say that there was too much sea to do so, but the ship was safe. He also had two anchors slung out to further hold her in the situation she was in until the tide rose.

An obvious assumption he should have made in view of the nature of the ground that the ship was high and dry on was that the outer skin of the hull had been ripped open; particularly as fuel oil was leaking from the tanks in the double bottom of the ship, and further movement across the reef could open up the inner skin; floating off the reef would then bring the total loss of the ship.

However, by 7 p.m. the high tide had not floated the ship, and the strong northerly wind now prevented any passengers from being taken off by the boats still standing by. At 11.45 p.m. Locke sent a message to agent Lowle saying that he would try to get some passengers off on the steamer **Cedar** at 4 a.m. (25 October), presumably at high tide. But another message from the ship at 5.50 a.m. said that although the **Cedar** had got in close, the heavy seas running (and the dark) prevented any passengers being taken off, and nothing could be done until daylight. By 4.30 p.m. no progress had been made and no more news from the ship had been received (due to the batteries powering the radio being too depleted).

As the weather had begun to worsen the passengers had become more aware of the grave danger that they were in. Part of a letter written by passenger J.R. Maskell to Miss Dorothy Burgess, his fiancé, in Longsight, Manchester said, *"Shipwrecked off the coast of Alaska. S.S. Princess Sophia. 24th Oct. 1918.*

My Own Dear Sweetheart, I am writing this dear girl while the boat is in grave danger. We struck a rock last night which threw many from their berths, women rushed out in their night attire, some were crying, some too weak to move, but the life boats were soon swung out in all readiness, but owing to the storm [it] *would be madness to launch* [them] *until there was no hope for the ship… there are now seven ships near... We are expecting the lights to go out any minute, also the fires. The boat might go to pieces, for the force of the waves are terrible, making awful noises on the side of the boat*."

Part of the letter passenger Private A.W. McQueen wrote about 9 a.m. on Friday the 25th said, "*She is a double-bottom boat and her inner hull is not penetrated, so here we stick. She pounds some on a rising tide and it is slow writing, but our only inconvenience is, so far, lack of water. The main steam pipe got twisted off and we were without lights last night, and have run out of soft sugar. But the pipe is fixed so we are getting heat and lights now, and we still have lump sugar and water for drinking*." Both of these letters were found in the clothing of their recovered bodies.

The **Princess Sophia** sat awaiting the weather to change. However, some 38 hours after grounding two things occurred simultaneously at about 5 p.m. (Alaska

time) that sealed her fate and that of all those aboard her: an abnormally high tide[5] in conjunction with a suddenly rising and ferocious offshore gale moved her bodily across the reef, tearing out the anchors as it did so, and placed her in deep water where she was battered against the reef rocks, and quickly started to fill - either due to her bottom inner skin being open, or to her plates having sprung. The onset of the gale had driven all the would-be rescue craft to seek shelter, and consequently she was alone when the disaster proper occurred.

The last S.O.S. message received from **Princess Sophia** was at 5.20p.m. on 25 October saying: "*Taking water and foundering. For GOD'S sake come and save us*!"

By daylight of 26 October the storm had calmed and the rescue boats returned at 8.30 a.m. to find that only the top section of the foremast remained to be seen. The bodies of several women and children were recovered frozen to life-rafts.

The Company's first priority now was the recovery of bodies from sea and shoreline. Some 25 boats were employed in the search. A report said that the sea was awash with fuel oil (from the ship's burst tanks), which covered many of the bodies, all of which were wearing life jackets. Watches found were stopped at 6.50 p.m. (BC time). The *Victoria Times* of 29 October reported that 192 bodies had been recovered. Those recovered arrived at Victoria on the **Princess Alice** on 11 November.

In all the CPR Co. spent $78,874.22 on boat hire, payment to searchers, transportation and care of the bodies recovered, undertakers, and telegrams.

Captain W.H. Logan, a Lloyds surveyor for 13 years, arrived at the wreck site on 26 October in the salvage tender **Tees**, but the weather was too severe to approach the wreck. He boarded the **Amy** on 28 October and a 28lb lead was dragged over the wreck. It was found that the fore part of the ship was resting in a cleft in the reef's slope at a depth of about 70ft on a fairly even keel, but he thought that from about 50ft aft the foremast the after end of the ship was missing, and it was concluded that it had sunk in the adjacent very deep water. This was found later to be not so - she had not broken in two. Captain Logan said that due to its location, the strong currents and prevailing severe weather at the site, salvage was out of the question.

Two divers, Thomas Veitch and George Donaldson, were sent down on three occasions to look for bodies, the ship's log, the Wells-Fargo safe (said to contain $60,000), and on the last dive three mail sacks containing a total of 300lbs of gold. Two bodies were recovered as well as the safe and the gold, but the log was not found. Subsequently, a local diver, Selmer Jacobsen, hired by the husband of one of the victims, recovered two bodies from a cabin known to be that of his wife. As a result, CPR did other thorough searches on the wreck finding other bodies in the public rooms and elsewhere.

Although the disaster had occurred in United States' waters, the CPR Co. and the ship and its master being Canadian, a Royal Commission of Inquiry was ordered,

to be chaired by Mr Justice Morrison. The first sitting convened at the Bastion Square Court House, Victoria on 6 January, 1919, However, because His Honour had not officially received his commission, and did not know the scope of the Inquiry, nor had any witnesses been called or preparations made, the Inquiry was adjourned. The first sitting proper was held at Vancouver, 31 January 1919. Subsequent sittings were held on 10 February and 11, 10 March, 13 and 20 at Victoria, and 26 and 27 February at Juneau.

At the 31 January Inquiry, testimony was given by a number of people engaged on the waterway during the period the disaster occurred and subsequently during the attempts at limited salvage. One was Captain H.G. Bayers of the **Electro**. He said that the wind and snow was so severe on the night of 23 October that they had to shelter in Berners Bay (nine miles north of Vanderbilt Reef), and were unable to leave until after **Princess Sophia** had sunk. Captain Hallie Le Roy of the **North Star** also found the weather too severe to reach the stricken vessel.

Captain Troup testified that '*He always read the navigation rules to the masters on the British Columbia Coastal Service, which called on the officers to take no risks, to slow down, to blow the whistle, take necessary soundings, keep double watch and have a lookout in thick weather or snow*.' Utmost caution was the watchword. His last injunction to Captain Locke on leaving on his final trip of the season was "*For God's sake keep out of trouble this winter*"; the remark being made owing to the scarcity of boats, and if any boats were put out of commission, the CPR would be out of business on the northern run.

Despite this known injunction to Captain Locke, and in view of the Company's rule that it was mandatory for a vessel's speed to be restricted to a maximum of 7 knots in such conditions, it was not asked why the **Princess Sophia** should have been so far south by that time. Mr M.H. Jackson, counsel for relatives of some of the deceased, was apparently the only voice raised to ask (at the Vancouver sitting) as to the actions a good navigator would have taken in a snowstorm. The Chairman would not allow an answer on the grounds that Captain Locke was not there to defend himself, and it was the Chairman's duty to see that no unfair impressions were left concerning the late commander! The Commission of Inquiry's conclusion was simply that '*the ship was lost through peril of the sea*.'

Within weeks of the disaster CPR had filed for, and been granted, Limited Liability under an Act of 1851. At a U.S. District Court hearing (exact date unknown) in a petition brought by relatives of the deceased questioning CPR's right to limited liability *'the court denied the appellee's* [CPR] *claim of exemption from all liability in connection with the foundering, and, on the contrary, "affirmatively found * * * that the proximate cause or causes of the disaster * * * were the failure to maintain a proper lookout on the steamship * * * and the excessive speed* [an average of 13**½**

knots on the passage] *of said vessel at the time she stranded on Vanderbilt Reef."'* As a result, on 3 October 1932, in the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals (Ninth Circuit), relatives of the deceased petitioned for the original limited liability decree granted to CPR to be revoked. The Court declined to do so. At the conclusion of the hearing the presiding judge said: "*The general opinion is that Captain Locke cannot be blamed in any way for his actions, and he acted according to his best judgment and lost*."

This tragedy occurred just seventeen days before the end of the Great War and in the middle of the 1918/19 flu pandemic, which killed a far greater number of people, including some 670,000 Americans, than died as casualties in the Great War. It was not therefore, understandably, accorded the coverage and concern that it would otherwise have done, and soon faded from public attention. Hence it has become known as the 'Forgotten Titanic of the Pacific West Coast.'

Notes:

[1]Named for Captain J.M. Vanderbilt of the **Favourite** who charted the reef for the North West Trading Co. in 1850.

[2]A light was placed on the reef's highest point (1921) on a skeletal structure atop a concrete pier. It is a flashing light (2·5s) 36ft above mean high water with a range of 6 miles and has the most intense beam along the Canal. Near the top of each of its four sides is a large diamond-shaped panel comprised of four alternating red and white diamond shapes.

[3]Gas boats were gasoline-engined boats used by most of the cannery fishing and tender boats at the time.

[4]The ship's clocks (and the watches of those aboard) kept Vancouver time, one hour ahead of Alaska time, therefore times noted from ship or shore vary accordingly.

[5]For some weeks previously strong south-easterly gales in the north Pacific had caused abnormally large inrushes of water at high tide in the inlets around the Alaska coast, consequently tide times and their heights were erratic.

Acknowledgements and sources consulted:

Circuit Court of Appeals, Western District of Washington (State), Courtesy of JUSTIA US LAW

Daily Alaskan, The. October issues of 1918

Daily Colonist, Victoria, BC, Various 1918/19 issues of the. Courtesy of University of Victoria Library Historical Collection

Final Voyage of the Princess Sophia, The. Betty O'Keefe & Ian MacDonald (Heritage House)

NOAA Coast Survey Lynn Canal, *Icy Point to Point Sherman* chart

Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry by His Honour Mr Justice Morrison to the Minister of Marine & Fisheries, Ottawa, dated March 27th, 1919

U.S. National Archives, San Francisco Branch, Record Group 276

Willie Williamson – Chairman Elect

Willie was born in Glasgow in 1943. Aged 16 he attended the Glasgow Wireless College obtaining his 2nd Class Postmaster General (PMG) Certificate.

Employed by Marconi International Marine Company, he joined his first ship, the Shell tanker **Varicella**, in Rotterdam on Christmas day 1960 as junior RO. After a three month trip he received a dispensation from the Board of Trade to forgo the six month training period and sailed solo on the ss **Uskmouth** to Mediterranean ports

During the seven years he spent at sea he sailed on a variety of ships, including cargo ships, tankers and tramps. He sailed with the Booth Line, City Line and Canadian Pacific among others. His favourite ship was the **Cedar Hill**. His fifteen month trip on her took him from Cuba to Russia to Venice to the Far East, managed to avoid being shot at by both side during the Cuban missile crisis.



His last voyage was an eleven month stint on the **Caltex Canberra**. The highlights? Nine weeks dry docked in Osaka, Japan, then three trips from Singapore to Saigon with cargoes of “combat gasoline” i.e. petrol during the Vietnam War.

He improved his qualifications, gaining a 1st Class PMG certificate and later a BOT Radar Maintenance Certificate. He joined the shore staff of Marconi at their Liverpool office as a Marine Electronics Engineer. As such he tramped the docks of Liverpool and Birkenhead servicing a vast array of electronic equipment. For seven years he was assigned to fitting radio equipment to new ships in Cammel Lairds with the odd foreign job over in Rotterdam and Tenerife.

In 1980 he took up a teaching post at Riversdale Technical College finally retiring as a Senior Lecturer. He continued working as a consultant, teaching at the Lairdside Maritime Centre, Birkenhead and various periods teaching in Austria and Italy.

He was a committee member of the Association of Marine Electronic Colleges and was in charge of writing multi-choice questions for AMERC's examination panel for fifteen years. In 1994 he was awarded a BSc, from the Open University.

Willie has been a member of LNRS for several years, was chairman for two years and has written many articles for the Bulletin. He is co-author of Handbook for Marine Communication published by Lloyds of London and now in its seventh edition.

An Eventful Voyage to Pitcairn Island – Part 1

Submitted by LNRS Member Captain Bob Settle

After a long career in the engineering branch of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Bob began a busy retirement. One initiative was to join the Liverpool Nautical Research Society where he served as Chairman from 2013 to 2015.

Whilst sorting family papers he discovered some letters which he had written to his parents back in 1976. Two of them referred to a deployment to Pitcairn Island on board RFA **Sir Geraint**, when he was serving as Second Engineer. Bob has kindly donated those letters to the Society and we are delighted that we can now publish them as written forty-five years ago

RFA Sir Geraint, B.F.P.O. Ships
London
14th May 1976

Dear Mum and Dad

We have been at sea for just over a week now and we've had an eventful time. We left Vancouver on the Thursday afternoon and took the scenic passage out through the islands that protect the coast from the Pacific gales that were just finishing as we poked our noses out into the sea. Since then the weather has been gorgeous and we are all acquiring deeper tans.

If you remember in my last letter I told you that we had a newsman aboard. He has turned out to be a very interesting bloke. His name is Brian Fremantle and he used to work for the Daily Mail as foreign correspondent in Moscow and Vietnam. He then became the Mail's foreign editor until late last year when he left to write books full time. When he was on the Mail he was the man who organised last year's "Baby Lift" out of Saigon three days before the city fell. The trouble he had with bribery having to be paid to the Vietnamese authorities just to get those kids out were disgusting to hear. If you can remember just before the end an American giant jet doing the same orphan evacuation crashed on take off. Well the reason was, and is still not widely known, that the Viet Cong put a bomb into one of the orphans toys before he boarded the plane. He is here with us now because he heard that we were going to Pitcairn and as he is writing a book about the mutiny asked the Navy if he could come along and in return write reports for public relations work in the three papers, the Daily Mail, New York Herald Tribune and the Melbourne Daily News. He is in fact writing another Mutiny on the Bounty for M.G.M. who are going to make another film. His book is going to be of the historical fiction type mixing fact with fiction. However his research must have been very accurate as he has earthed up some new twists on the whole episode. For instance he maintains that Christian was not murdered on Pitcairn but did in fact get away as a man answering his description was seen by the Sailing Master of the Bounty in Plymouth in 1810, reacted to his name being called out he turned and ran. He believes that Christian was then hidden by his family in Cumberland for some years.

His main aim is to visit the island and interview the descendants living there. Evidently no author who has written about the islands connection with the mutiny has ever bothered to go there.

He says that his reports to the papers will not be going out until he is able to file them from Panama which won't be until at least the end of June. So there is no need to buy the Mail just yet.

Well what else has happened, yesterday we crossed the Line and had a visit from King Neptune. A lot of the wives and nearly all of the soldiers hadn't been across before so we well and truly initiated them into the realm with all the usual ceremony of trials, and pills, and the ceremonial ducking after a shave with thick evil shaving lather. I was one of the pirates so did the dunking and as you may guess we all got very wet and sticky.

Today we played our deck hockey finals as half of the army will soon be leaving us for their nine month stay on Pitcairn. We have three different crowds aboard, a Royal Marine boat unit who will do all the ferrying of the stores when we get there in their landing craft which we have on deck. A Royal Corps of Transport crowd who will look after the actual moving of stores both on the ship and ashore, and the Royal Engineers team who will stay on the island to do the job. Three of the team are divers as they have a lot of underwater demolition to do as they clear a channel.



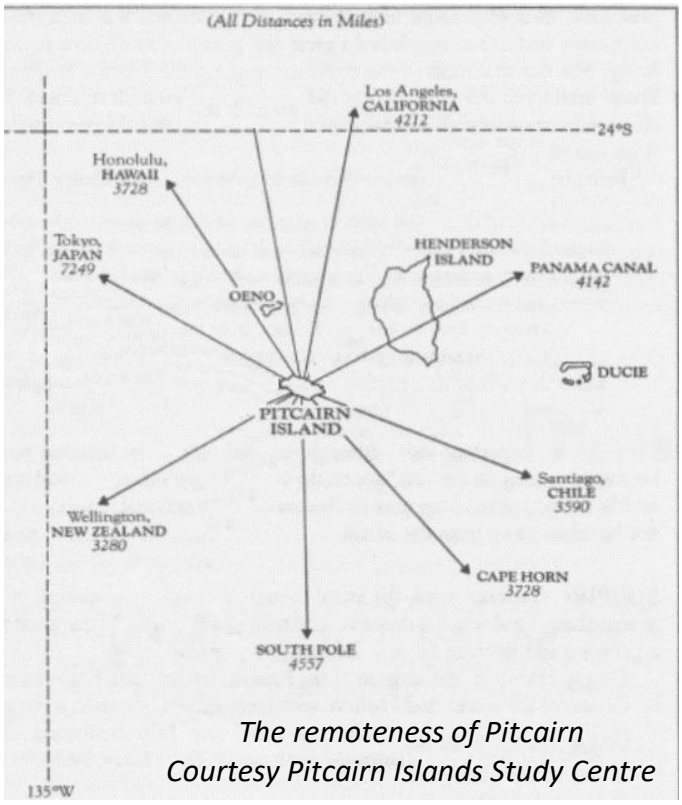
RFA Sir Geraint alongside in Amsterdam September 1972 Courtesy Wikimedia

Anyway the deck hockey was played by a team from each of these and one from the officers. I was playing centre forward and scored two goals both of which were disallowed so the final outcome of the days matches was that the RE won and we came last. There were surprisingly no broken bones, just a few cuts and scrapes.

The other thing that happened was that yesterday I won the tombola, £23, which will come in handy as we now hope to get a night in Tahaiti which is supposed to be very expensive.

My diet, well since we left Vancouver I don't really know how well I've done as the ship does roll in the long Pacific swell you get here, I've been on the grapefruit diet again but not as rigidly. This is because I've been eating a lot of fruit. When in Canada we took on some large apples, bigger than a grapefruit, and very, very red. I first thought that like large English red apples they would be all skin and no

taste, but honestly they are the best apples I have ever had so sweet and juicey that I'm getting through about six a day. So the sugar in them may be harming my diet though I'm still off the beer and drink just soda water in the bar.



The remoteness of Pitcairn
Courtesy Pitcairn Islands Study Centre

This I'm afraid is the last letter for at least five weeks as we don't really know how long we will be at the island. In terms of cargo we only have three days actual work on board but because there is no secure anchorage at the island we will be very much at the mercy of the weather. This time of the year has been chosen as it is the calmest but anything can happen. There is only one landing place at the island (Bounty Bay) and all landings have to be made through surf which is there at the best of times. In fact when they have built the jetty and the adjoining breakwater things will be much safer. So for this three days unloading they have allowed us a definite three weeks with a possible extra week. We may be able to get the mail off on to passing ships, but we don't really know. If we do get an extended stay we will probably be able to send a free 25 word telegram home. The other thing is that if we do get the work done quickly we will probably have to go down to New Zealand to pick up those islanders that wish to return. So if you get a letter from there you know we have been lucky.

We hope to arrive in Tahaiti on Monday 17th in the early afternoon and hopefully our mail is there too.

Additional information:

RFA **Sir Geraint** (L3027) was ordered for Army Service and built by Alexander Stephen & Sons, Linthouse, Glasgow. She was initially commissioned in July 1967 and taken over by the RFA in1970. Such 'Round Table' class ships were exclusively manned by Hong Kong sailors from their introduction in 1963 until 1989.

With a displacement tonnage of 3,270 standard and 5,674 loaded her length was 412ft, beam 60ft and draft 13ft. Powered by twin Mirrlees National AL SSDM 10 diesels engine with 9,400 bhp her speed was 17 knots. She had a crew of 68 and capacity for up to 340 passengers.

She was decommissioned in May 2003 and sold to commercial interests to be scrapped in India in December 2005

To be concluded

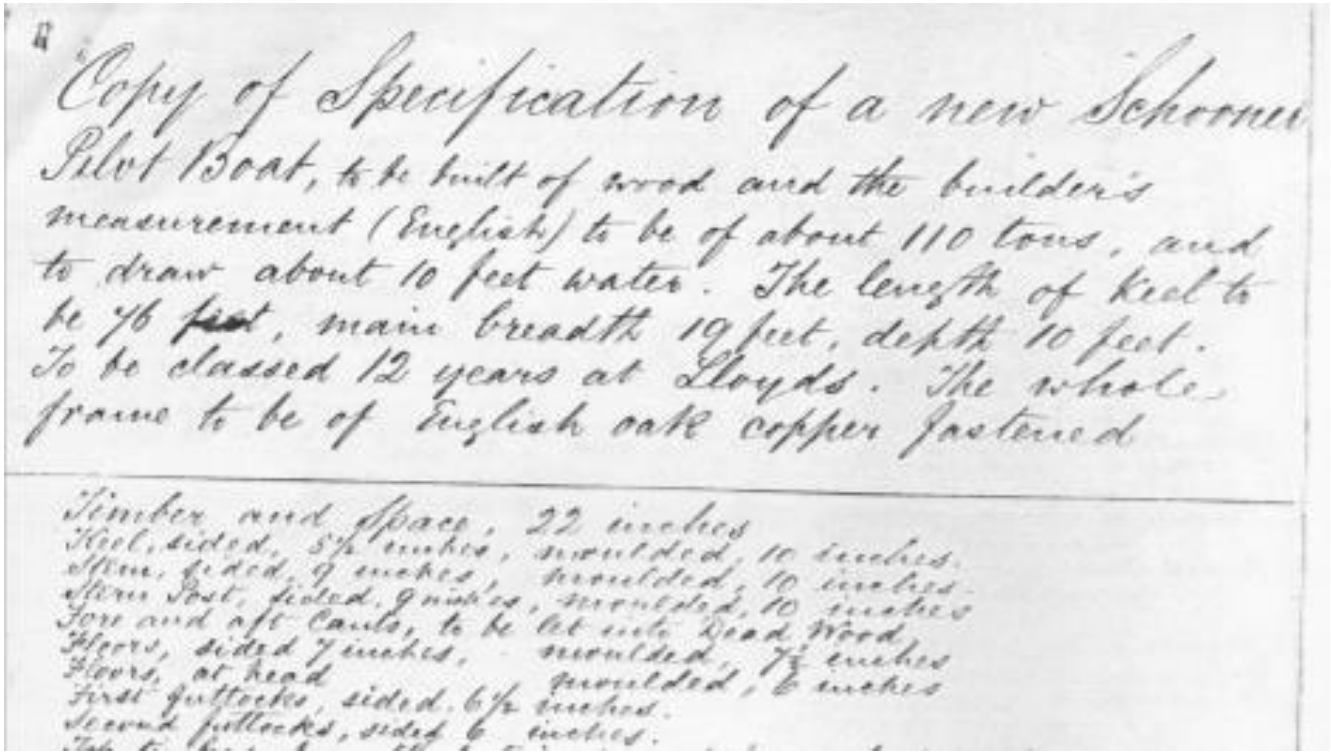
Déjà Vu all over again!

By LNRS Member Elfyn Hughes

The inspiration for this article came after reading Peter Kelly's account in the March 2021 issue of the Bulletin about the loss of Pilot Vessel No 9 **Guide** in 1882 following a collision with **SS Mariner**[1]. I was struck by the similarity with the loss of Pilot Vessel No 11, **Mersey** in 1885 after a relatively short period in service. The March edition of the Bulletin, which contains this article, is available to members on the website.

Mersey was built in the yard of William Thomas, Amlwch in Anglesey and was the only pilot vessel built in the yard. She was the largest schooner built for the pilot service and the third to carry the name Mersey. The agreement[2] between William Thomas and Robert Williams, representing the Pilot Service, was signed on 25th March 1874 and details the specification of the vessel and her fittings right down to the galley stove and pots and pans. The agreed price was £2600 (approximately equal to £206,000 today) to be paid in four instalments, *"one fourth when the keel is laid, one fourth when in frame, one fourth when the deck is laid and the remainder when the vessel is finished and ready for sea by a Bill at three months"* The agreement states that the vessel was to be finished not later than November 1874 and *"a penalty of £100 will be enforced by Robert Williams if the vessel is not ready during the month of November 1874",* - £100 in 1874 is almost £8000 today; William Thomas was given nine months to complete and fit the vessel out.

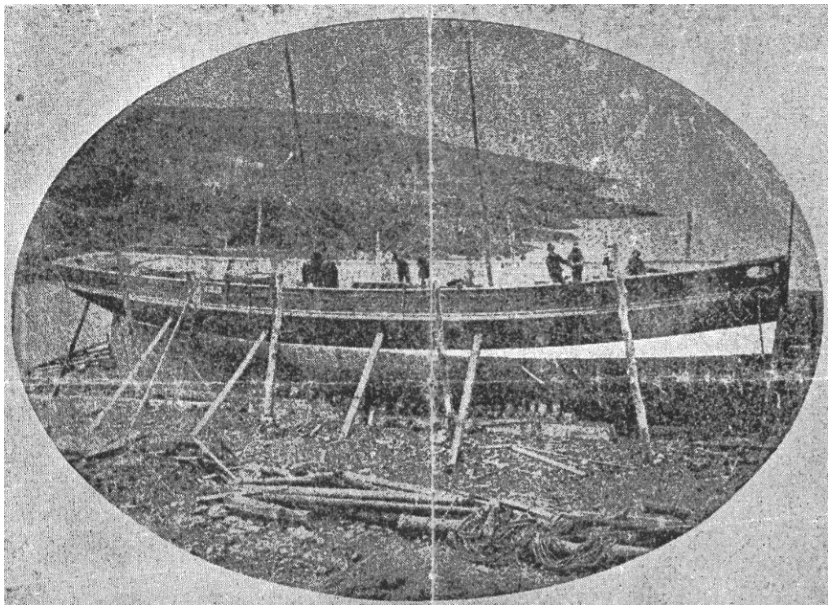
This copy is an extract from the specification:



Copy of Specification of a new Schooner Pilot Boat, to be built of wood and the builder's measurement (English) to be of about 110 tons, and to draw about 10 feet water. The length of keel to be 76 ~~feet~~, main breadth 19 feet, depth 10 feet. To be classed 12 years at Lloyds. The whole frame to be of English oak copper fastened

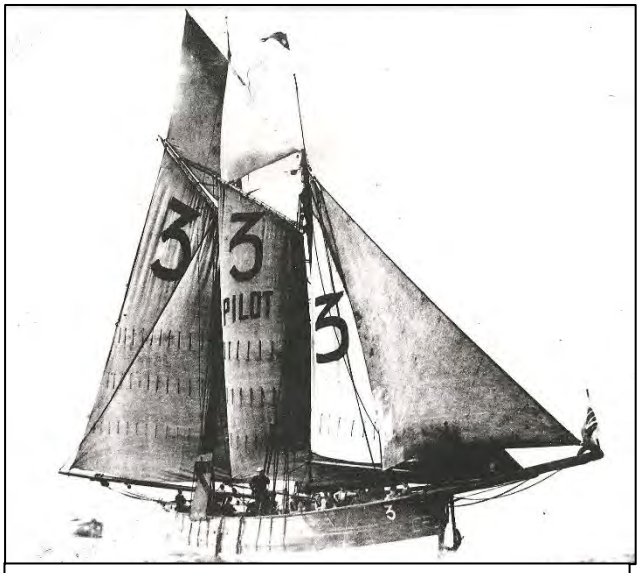
Timber and space, 22 inches
Keel, sided, 5½ inches, moulded, 10 inches.
Stem, sided, 9 inches, moulded, 10 inches.
Stern Post, sided, 9 inches, moulded, 10 inches
Fore and aft Canks, to be let into Dead Wood
Floors, sided 7 inches, moulded, 7½ inches
Floors, at head moulded, 6 inches
First Gutlocks, sided, 6½ inches.
Second Gutlocks, sided 6 inches.

William Thomas had obviously done his homework because the agreement makes reference in several places to other vessels already built for the service where fittings are being specified, for example *"Dining Tables, Mahogany, two, similar to No7 (Lancashire Witch)"* or *"Store Room, cupboards, bread bins, locks and hinges similar to No8 (Pride of Liverpool) or No7"* or *"Water Closet, patent, complete, to be fitted on starboard side of rudder similar to No2 (Leader)".*



This photograph held in the Anglesey Archives dated 1875 shows her on the stocks ready for launching and in the yard records and Harbour Master's log she is shown as being launched on 6th April 1875 and not leaving the dry-dock until 8th May, so perhaps William Thomas did indeed have to cough up the £100 penalty.

Mersey did not prove to be a lucky ship. According to John S Rees' "History of the Liverpool Pilot Service" she was in collision with SS **Menelaus**[3] on 12th October 1877 in a position with North Wall Light bearing NE½E about 1/3 mile. There is no recorded loss of life or casualties and she was soon raised and, following complete refurbishment, continued in service. Sometime in 1885 she became No 3 but retained the name **Mersey**. A photograph in the author's possession, that must have been taken sometime that year, shows her as No 3[4].



'MERSEY'
Liverpool Pilot Boat No. 3; 79 tons Gr; built 1875 at Amlwch, by William Thomas. She was No. 11 until early 1885. Sunk after a collision December 2 1885.

The change of number must have been a bad omen as on 2nd December 1885 she was involved in a collision once again, this time with SS **Landana**[5] in a position 2 miles SW of the Bar Light vessel. Unfortunately on this occasion the Master lost his life and the vessel was lost. **Mersey**'s service only lasted ten years, relatively short by comparison to some of the other sailing cutters – her immediate predecessor, the second vessel to be named

Mersey served for 28 years. An earlier vessel, **Queen** (No 1) entered service in 1856, sank following a collision with **Sailor Prince** in the Crosby channel in 1891 but was raised and continued in service until she was withdrawn in 1898. She then became a fishing vessel, and was eventually wrecked off Iceland on 1 April 1933 (caption on a copy of photograph sent to the author by MMM and Liverpool Echo article, October 2010 online)

Despite the advent of steam since the early 1800s, sailing cutters continued in use until the twilight years of the nineteenth century. The first steam powered pilot vessels were built in 1896 – the **Francis Henderson** and the **Leonard Spear**[6]. They were followed by two more in 1898, at which time all the sailing cutters were withdrawn.

Notes:

The information in this article has been drawn entirely from books and documents in my possession and from the internet. Owing to the restrictions imposed due to the coronavirus pandemic I have been unable to consult archive material. If there are errors, please let me know so that they can be corrected.

1. SS **Mariner** 1881 – 1896 – Thos & Jas Harrison Ltd, Iron steamship rigged as two-masted schooner. O.No 84089, 1443g, 917n, 2050d. (extract from Harrison's of Liverpool, Captain Graeme Cubbin, World Ship Society, 2003. Copy in the author's possession, signed by Captain Cubbin)
2. Copy of hand-written document in the author's possession, also reproduced in "A Commodious Yard" by Bryan D Hope, Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 2005
3. SS **Menelaus** 1871 – 1894 – Alfred Holt. 1956g. Transferred to NSMO in 1891, presumably on the formation of the Dutch subsidiary of Ocean Steamship. She was the first of five ships to carry the name. (Information taken from www.theshipslist.com)
4. Bryan Hope's book, A Curious Place (Bridge Books, Wrexham,1994) states that her number was change to No3 following the refurbishment 1877/78 but the caption attached to the photograph I have stated that the change took place in early 1885.
5. SS **Landana** 1859 – ?, 1569g Elder Dempster. Originally built as Venetian for Bibby Line, purchased by Elder Dempster in 1880 from Leyland Line and renamed **Landana**, the first of three ships to carry the name. Sold to Chile in 1891 and renamed **Tarapaca**. (Information taken from www.theshipslist.com)
6. Article by Geoff Topp –The Bulletin, vol 59, no1, June 2015, available in the archive through the LNRS website.

Further Changes at the Port of Liverpool

The Editor



The tidal deep water berths of Liverpool2 have been constructed around the triangular area marked.

Since opening in 2016 Liverpool's new £400m deep-water container terminal, aptly named Liverpool2, has rapidly expanded to become one of the country's best equipped and connected terminals. Recent news releases from owners Peel Ports Group clearly demonstrate the scope and range of the changes now taking place:

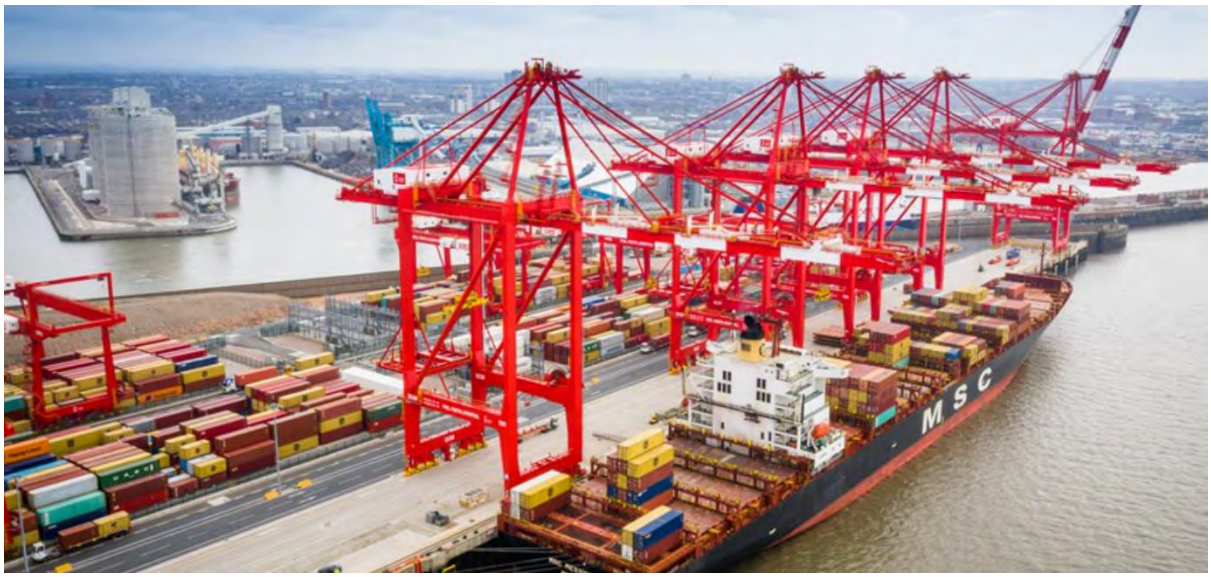
On 15th March 2021 that a new weekly service between Dunkirk and Liverpool, operated by the CMA-CGM Group, will help ease congestion at English Channel ports.

On 4th April 2021 the Port welcomed arrival of a further five cantilever rail-mounted gantry (CRMG) cranes as part of the next phase of growth at Liverpool2, the port's deep-water container terminal. The five new cranes are the second of two deliveries in 2021, which will complete the set of 22 such cranes operating as part of the £400 million Liverpool2 project and will provide additional capacity for growing volumes of cargo. Their arrival coincides with the Liverpool City Region's successful application for freeport status, which will create a further opportunity to position the area at the forefront of the UK's future global trading relationships. Once completed, Liverpool2 will be capable of handling the largest container ships in the world, whilst supporting the UK haulage sector via the very latest landside automated gates and vehicle booking systems.

On 19.03.21 Allseas Global Logistics announced it will operate a number of supply chain critical container vessel sailings from Shanghai and Ningbo to Liverpool. The first service is due to depart Shanghai on 4 April, with two additional sailings on the 22 and 25 April. This will provide relief to customers who are facing increased ocean freight rates, as well as reduced reliability due to the knock-on impacts of the global pandemic. The service will have a 28-day transit time and the vessels will be feeder size, rather than panama or larger. This will offer multiple benefits to cargo owners as

it will significantly reduce the chance of port delays, as there are no multi-port callings, and will ship directly into the heart of the UK market, and also offers guarantees that once space is booked, the cargo will be shipped.

On 28.03.21 the Port of Liverpool's deep water container terminal broke a new terminal record after the MSC **Federica** docked and exchanged 5,452 TEUs, the highest number seen from a single vessel in Liverpool since the terminal opened in 2016. The vessel is part of MSC's Turkey - Canada service which includes calls at Montreal, Liverpool, Sines, Valencia, Barcelona and Tekirdağ amongst other terminals. This service directly links Liverpool to the Far East.



The Liverpool2 deep water river berths are adjacent to Gladstone/Seaforth docks

Re-issue of Safety Notice: the illegal use of dangerously weighted heaving lines continues to be an issue in UK ports. If a dangerously weighted heaving line is used in the Port of Liverpool, the dangerous weight will be confiscated and the vessel reported to the Maritime & Coastguard Agency. International and domestic codes are clear and unambiguous on the construction and weight of heaving lines.

The Code of Safe Working Practice (CoSWP) 2020 Amendment, Section 26.3.5 states: "*To prevent personal injury to those receiving heaving lines, the 'monkey's fist' should be made with rope only and must not contain added weighting material. Safe alternatives include a small high-visibility soft pouch, filled with fast-draining pea shingle or similar, with a weight of not more than 0.5 kg. Under no circumstances is a line to be weighted by items such as shackles, bolts or nuts, or twist locks*."

The biggest container ship to visit the port to date has been the **Maersk Sentosa** on 31st July 2018; her dwt is 87,618, she is 318m long with a 40m beam, 14m draft and capacity of 6,478 TEU. She was built in 2007 and is one of the twenty vessels operated within the US flagged fleet of Maersk

The Amours of a Cardiff Captain

Submitted by LNRS Member John Cook

In March, 1884, the editor of the *Western Mail* of Cardiff republished, under the above heading, the following paragraph[1] which had appeared in the previous day's *St. James's Gazette*:

"A bad case of overloading a vessel is reported from the West of England. A vessel left Newport the other day laden up to the load-line with scrupulous accuracy. At the last moment – unobserved by the Board of trade officials – the captain shipped certain ladies desirous of sharing the perils of the voyage with him, his engineers, and his crew. The overloaded vessel did not return to Newport. The owner became anxious – delighted, Mr Chamberlain would say – as the days went on, and the insurers gloomily re-assured at heavy premiums. A few days ago the owner received a telegram telling him to go down to a remote spot on the coast of Wales. He hastened down and saw in the offing his long-lost vessel. There had been no mishap; but the ladies had been very ill and had insisted on the vessel being stopped and put back to the shores of England [sic] …. The owner, finding his presence inconvenient, retired; a new crew was sent to navigate the ship into Cardiff, and the too gallant skipper has had his certificate cancelled. The story throws a new light upon one of "the perils of the sea." Perhaps a clause to meet such cases might be introduced into Mr. Chamberlain's Bill."

Whilst this story must have caused much jocular comment in the pubs and eating houses of the business area of the town,[2] the Board of Trade had not been amused when notified of what had happened aboard the S.S. **Hoy Head** and ordered the Bristol Marine Board to hold an inquiry which took place on March 24th. It is from the report of this inquiry and the subsequent case at the Cardiff Police Court that we can learn what really took place.

The **Hoy Head** had only been launched at Paisley the previous year and was completed in November by Hanna, Donald & Wilson[3] for Charles R. Scott & Co., of Cardiff who were embarking upon a new shipowning venture. Captain John Scott (no relation) was given command towards the end of the month and his first few voyages were completed without incident but February 26th found him missing, along with his chief engineer, when the ship was ready to sail from Newport, Mon., at 05:00. His eventual appearance must have caused comment as he had with him not only the chief engineer but two 'ladies' who disappeared with them to their respective berths

[1] *Western Mail*, 26th March, 1884.
[2] Cardiff was not granted city status until 1905.
[3] Later known as the Abercorn Shipbuilding Company.

leaving the mate, Alfred Nicholson, to navigate the ship to Caen where it arrived a couple of days later.

Whilst the 300 tons of coal that had been transported from Newport were being unloaded, the holds cleaned and a cargo of barley loaded for Wexford, Captain Scott and his party spent much of their time ashore, and, according to the Board of Trade's lawyer, when they did return on board, both at Caen and at Wexford, they spent the remainder of the evenings singing and dancing in the captain's cabin.[4] Since the **Hoy Head** was a mere 150 feet long, this cabin must have been a touch on the small side for such athletic activity.

On sailing day Captain Scott was drunk and the **Hoy Head** was run into a quay wall on leaving Caen. According to the mate's evidence the master was drunk most of the time, sometimes "as senseless as a child" and interfered with the navigation and the steering. On one occasion he was actually steering the ship towards a fishing boat, and on others his orders to the helmsman were such that the ship veered between a course that would have cause it to be wrecked on the rocks of the Cornish coast, or to have sailed out into the North Atlantic. When the ship was heading for the infamous Runnelstone, the boatswain, who was acting as second mate begged Nicholson to take command[5] which he did, ordering the master below but the carousing and 'dancing' continued and also at Wexford where they arrived on March 8th.

According to the *St. James's Gazette* the 'ladies' suffered from *mal de mer* after leaving Wexford and so Captain Scott, who appears to have taken command again, put into a bay near Milford to save them further suffering. They were there three days before a member of the crew got ashore and telegraphed the owner as to the ship's whereabouts. The mate later said that they were there to make repairs but this statement was possibly to cover his lack of decisive action on their arrival in Welsh waters. When the owner arrived on the 15th he discovered the master in his berth with his 'lady.' His evidence continued, "I went away, and in two or three minutes returned, and gave the master his written discharge." The 'ladies' were initially ordered off the ship but the owner must have relented as they later sailed in her to Cardiff.

In the late nineteenth century the Board of Trade were normally very prompt in calling official inquiries, principally because witnesses had a habit of quickly disappearing off to sea, but in this case it was more than prompt as everything was arranged within a week for the Bristol Marine Board sat on March 24th. The charge was that Captain Scott was guilty of 'gross acts of misconduct and drunkenness' (debauchery not being a misdemeanour under the Merchant Shipping Act of 1854) to

[4] *Western Mail,* 25th March, 1884.
[5] *Western Mail,* 1st April, 1884.

which he pleaded 'not guilty' but the evidence of the mate and of the owner was so damning that his lawyer could do nothing but change the plea and beg for leniency. At the time, drunken behaviour would usually result in a master or mate having his certificate suspended for between three and twelve months, or in a particularly bad case, twenty-four months; however the Board was in no mood to treat Scott's behaviour as a mere peccadillo and unanimously agreed to cancel his certificate. He did not, as was so often the case, request that he should be granted a mate's certificate in lieu.

With no command, no certificate and a reputation in the Bristol Channel that would take many years to live down, John Scott must have felt that fate could hardly have been more unkind. If he did, he was wrong because the Board of Trade immediately took a prosecution against him under Section 239 of the 1854 Act which reads:

"any master of any British ship who by reason of drunkenness does any act tending to the immediate destruction or serious damage of such ship, or tending to materially endanger the life or limb of any person belonging to or on board of such ship, shall for every such offence be deemed guilty of a misdemeanour."

The case was heard within a week at the Cardiff Police Court where the prosecution produced as witnesses the mate, the bosun, the helmsman and the steward, all of whom testified to the master's drunkenness; the first two also explaining how his orders placed the **Hoy Head** in danger of both a collision and of running aground.[6] The defence lawyer however claimed that a different course had been ordered and so the case was adjourned for forty-eight hours for some chart-work to be done by the respective sides.

When the court reconvened, the defence claimed that the *Hoy Head* would have cleared the Longships by two miles, and then lamely produced a solitary witness, a fireman, who claimed that at the time in question the master was 'quite sober.'[7] Neither claim did John Scott's case any good as the stipendiary magistrate said "I have not the least doubt … that the captain was not sober" and found him guilty as charged, but he was surprisingly lenient, given the gravity and extent of the offence, when it came to punishment. Scott's lawyer had produced no character witnesses and his plea in mitigation was solely that the former captain had lost money on an investment in another steamship and this had caused him to seek solace in drink. The penalty was a fine not exceeding £100, or imprisonment without the option of a fine but the stipendiary must have felt that Scott had been punished sufficiently by the Bristol Marine Board as he fined him just £20 plus costs, with two months imprisonment in default.

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[6] *Western Mail*, 1st April, 1884.
[7] *Western Mail*, 3rd April, 1884.

Scott's means of livelihood for the next nine years are unknown but in May, 1893 he re-sat the master's examination, which he passed, and the Board of Trade re-issued his certificate. Very soon afterwards he obtained a mate's berth for a couple of months in Thomas Greenwell's S.S. **Ashbrooke**, a Sunderland collier and then managed to obtain command of a London short-sea trader, the S.S. **Carlaw**, owned by the Gordon & Co.[8] This lasted for almost two years but after that he only managed to sail as mate on a couple of ships before leaving the sea.

Charles Scott didn't have much better luck as the **Hoy Head** foundered three years later, in November, 1887, eight miles off the Godrevy lighthouse on the north Cornish coast. He tried shipowning again in 1894 when he purchased the S.S. **Bedouin** which he renamed **Pentland**.[9] He also used her in the coal trade but his luck didn't change as she was wrecked in the River Usk, outward bound from Newport, just before Christmas, 1896;[10] about the same time as his former captain ended his seagoing career.

ss **Maidan** Radio Log 20th June 1964

Submitted by LNRS member W.G. Williamson

[Editor's note: in some cases explanations are inserted as [ ] in italics]

I am grateful to ex-Radio Officer the late Frank Dunn for having given permission to publish extracts from his log while serving on the ss **Maidan** in 1964. Frank trained at the James Watt College in Greenock and first went to sea in 1957 with Brocklebanks. Later he moved to Cunard and finally served with P & O Containers until he retired in 1998 after a very long career at sea.

The **Maidan**/GDND left Calcutta homeward bound for the UK via Suez when at 0615 hrs GMT she received the international alarm signal on the distress frequency of 500 kHz.

The **Maidan** proceeded to the distress position which was about 300 miles ENE of Trincomalee. After the incident a copy of the radio log was typed up to be sent to the owners and a carbon copy was retained by Frank. It was this rather faded carbon copy that I was able to transcribe and quote in this story.

The distress situation lasted about 24 hours and the majority of the communications were conducted on the distress frequency using Morse code. The log clearly reveals the frustration of the **Maidan's** master (Captain Dennis Keller) as the distress progressed. The distress signalling was continuous so the two Radio Officers on the **Maidan**, Frank Dunn and his junior Frank Fallon had an intensive 24 hours.

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[8] *Lloyd's Confidential Index,* June, 1900.
[9] *Lloyd's Register,* 1894.
[10] *Western Mail*, 14th January, 1897.

The log entries begin at 0615 hrs GMT when Madras Radio transmitted an alarm signal followed by the message, “SOS de HOYA = /HOYA at noon No 1 lower hold full of water lat. 11.30 N long 86.38 E course east slow speed cargo iron ore No 1 hold full water vessels in vicinity please help.”
At 0642 **Union Atlantic**/HOYA signals, “True position now lat 12.07N long 85.58E vessels in vicinity please immediate assistance +”

On the **Maidan** the operator was annoyed that he could not get through to the **Union Atlantic** because of heavy radio interference, and knew from the positions given that the **Maidan** was the nearest ship.

0732 **Union Atlantic** now gave out an updated position and at last **Maidan** made contact with the distressed ship, “Maidan noon 234 miles W/N Union Atlantic can be there 0330 tomorrow please indicate = Master”.

0742 From amended position **Maidan** now 191 miles due west proceeding 15 knots and expect reach at midnight but suggest if ship still steaming to turn towards me on due west course establishing radio contact immediately and giving details of trouble stop other ships please indicate their eta = Master

0748 From **Union Atlantic**: Yr vessel very near me please come quickly increase speed

0748 From **Maidan**: Increasing speed to 16 kts

0840 From **Rutenfjell**: LIUK position 13.09 N 85.99 E 10 kts do you need my assistance

0903 From **Rutenfjell**: Present course 24 can reach your position at midnight confirm

0906 From **Maidan**: To Master HOYA = please reduce speed to minimum as you appear to be making about 7 kts which is not helping us to reach you and will also increase the flooding of your holds please control radio traffic as difficult to work you and I am nearest please contact and instruct or release other ships = Master

0937 From **Maidan**: To Master HOYA = now doing sixteen knots but you are drawing away at a rate of 35 miles in three hours WHY? = Master

1000 From **Maidan**: Do you want air help from Colombo they are offering it = Master

1019 From **Union Atlantic**: Please call me in air help immediately fm Colombo and tell him my position at 1000z 12 18 N 86 12 E

1111 From **Maidan**: We are coming fast do not worry stop your ship and establish permanent radio link with me or LIUK stop all other ships will hear stop please keep us advised as to your position course speed and ships condition stop fire rockets every 15 minutes from 1530 gmt above all please stop your ship. if engines necessary to work bilge pumps please head west or work astern but do not steam away as you are only spoiling your own chances eta 2200 hours = Master

1154 From **Clan MacLennan**: Master **Union Atlantic** = at 1115 gmt our position 09 22 N 86 12 E speed ten knots proceeding to you stop faster ships being closer to you please advise if our assistance still needed = Master

1208/15 **Maidan** asks **Union Atlantic** to transmit so that direction finding bearings could be taken. **Maidan** isolates her aerials during these operations.

1212 From **Maidan**: OK OM you are ahead we are on way pse use this all the time

1213 From **Union Atlantic**: My position Lat 12.18 N Long 86.12 E course 070 slow nw nr. 1 and nr. 2 holds full of water very danger in want immediate assistance K

1215 From **Maidan**: Master HOYA = If your position so desperate stop immediately repeat stop stop stop = Master K

1236 From **Maidan**: Will stop windward of you to pump oil and launch motor boat stop boat will come under your lee side whilst steam down to leeward to await its return

1515 From **Maidan**: Master **Rosebank** = you and I appear nearest but have no faith in his position stop will start firing rockets every half hour from 2130 stop have you vhf =

1515 From **Rosebank**: No vhf AS

1525 From **Rosebank**: To Master **Maidan** = Please do not fire rockets till you sight **Union Atlantic** stop If we arrive and you are not there we will fire rockets to guide you stop sorry no vhf = our course is between his last positions = Master

1528 To **Rosebank**: Yours understood agree have you seen anything of Liberator = Master (QSL TU +) *[Standard abbreviation]*

1536 From **Rosebank**: I have only hand operated 76 person aluminium lifeboats =

1544 From **Union Atlantic:** pse fastest come

1545 From **Maidan**: OK am coming at full speed OK

1639 From **Union Atlantic**: To **Maidan** = crew launched No 2 lifeboat without orders

1647 From **Maidan**: To Master **Union Atlantic** = How many in boat and can you manage to make them lay close to you to await me as dont want my maneuvering spoiling when I close you eta now possibly 0100 to 0200 as you position inaccurate =

1651 From **Union Atlantic**: 18 men they will lay close +

1720 From **Union Atlantic**: SOS **Union Atlantic** vessel in danger very soon sink estimate posn 1220 N 8631 E all crew off ship now in two lifeboat want immediate assistance

1728 From **Maidan**: We are now at the first amended position with df showing you bearing 078 but we cannot see you stop please fire a rocket every 15 minutes and when in boats remain together near ship = Master

1741 From **Union Atlantic**: To Master **Maidan** = We have fire rocket regret misfire regret no more available stop spares in No 2 lifeboat

1746 From **Maidan**: If abandoning please keep close to ship and burn flares = Master

1758 From **Maidan**: Will switch on my searchlite in sky at midnite = Master

1759 From **Union Atlantic**: OM (Old Man) we are nearly off radio room danger

1800 From **Maidan**: Tell me when abandoning

1833 From **Union Atlantic**: Now abandoning ship

1838 From **Clan MacLennan**: Master **Maidan** = expect arrive posn before midnite gmt please endeavour contact vhf soonest agree shambles = Master

1910 From **Union Atlantic**: Can see you ahead

1914 From **Maidan**: Did you see my rocket?

1921 From **Union Atlantic**: Yes we saw your rocket Tks come soonest

1927 From **Union Atlantic**: How far are yu from ship?

1928 From **Maidan**: Abt 28 miles can see your rocket but not on radar

1930 From **Union Atlantic**: Ok nw you burn rockets nw

1930 From **Maidan**: Firing rocket now and flashing searchlite + K

1934 From **Union Atlantic**: We are saw the rockets tks + as

1937 From **Maidan**: Pse are your lifeboats still alongside ship? (R yes tks)

1938 From **Maidan**: ETA 0215 coming at full speed +

1949 From **Union Atlantic**: We saw your searchlite now tks pse come K

1957 From **Maidan**: As we approach please abandon ship and remain in your boats alongside until we come to leeward of you. we will pump oil as we go round you. nets are at No 2 hatch and boat ropes and climbing ropes on both sides fore and aft. men with heaving lines are stationed all around the ship. keep your feet dry and good luck food and and beds are ready for you = Master

2005 From **Union Atlantic**: To Master **Maidan** = No 2 boat is two cables on my lee side now boat is swung out on weather side prefer not to use engines to make lee can you send your lifeboat to my lee side = Master **Union Atlantic**

2009 From Master **Clan MacLennan**: To Master **Maidan** = We will send a rocket at 2030 gmt pse lookout and advise try on Ch 16 nw pse

2023 **Union Atlantic**: To Master = Position Nr 1 lower hold flooded and water 3 feet over tween deck now deep tank sounding 20 feet crew refuse to take soundings as

requisite pumps cannot take water away would like to await daylight for definite decision to abandon crew on board 22 who wish to leave ship = Master

2038 From **Maidan**: OK will wait for daylight meanwhile get all crew possible into your boat on lee side and come to me when I signal = Master

2044 From **Maidan**: to all ships SOS am now in command pse QRT (i.e. do not transmit)

2049 From **Maidan**: Coming to windward pumping oil then to leeward to find position of lifeboat then to windward to pick up crew = Master

2055 From **Maidan**: From your appearance advise abandon immediately = Master +

2058 **Union Atlantic**: Have only half crew so must abandon

2100 From **Maidan**: Request urgently abandon using your own boat = Master

2106 From **Maidan**: Suggest you abandon with utmost speed = Master

2106 From **Union Atlantic**: Send boat alongside = Master

2106 From **Maidan**: Am turning to make lee for my lifeboat

2107 From **Union Atlantic**: We are on way to lifeboat = Master

2119 From **Union Atlantic**: Tell captain must send lifeboat for us as crew on board

2126 From **Desh Deep**: Now three miles to east can we help = Master

2132 From **Maidan**: Please keep clear am turning to starboard to pick up other lifeboat but would appreciate lying to windward and pumping oil if possible = Master

2134 From **Rosebank**: Now arrived do you require assistance

2136 From **Maidan**: Would Rosebank pse lie to windward with **Desh Deep** & pump oil

2137 From **Maidan**: Have 16 survivors on board so far

2139 From **Desh Deep**: What position would you like me to be = Master

2140 From **Maidan**: On Union Atlantic port quarter

2141 From **Maidan**: Pse watch out for empty lifeboat in searchlight beam = Master

2144 From **Maidan**: Pse take position on **Union Atlantic** port bow and pump oil

2155 From **Rosebank**: **Union Atlantic** abandoned?

2155 From **Maidan**: Just going to pick up second lifeboat now will tell for sure then

2244 From **Maidan**: All survivors on board but for two who appear to have no wish to be rescued they are in lifeboat = Master

2244 From **Desh Deep**: Who are they?

2246 From **Maidan**: Appear to be captain and one other

2249 From **Maidan**: Pse maintain distress until two men picked up. = Master

2303 From **Maidan**: Now lowering motorboat to pick up survivors = Master

2310 From **Maidan**: Have rescued all survivors thank you for your assistance you may resume your voyage stop am radioing VWM (Madras) awaiting instructions = Master

2314 From **Maidan**: to all ships: All survivors now on board **Maidan** no further assistance reqd please instruct reference hulk **Union Atlantic** still afloat QUM DISTRESS

Note QUM is a Q Code used by Radio Officers to tell everyone that the distress conditions no longer apply and all ships can go back to normal working.

2358 Auto alarm on and checked. RO signs off watch.





The above pictures were taken from Maidan



*Frank Dunn pictured in **Maidan**'s radio room. He joined T & J Brocklebank in 1957, moving to Cunard and finally P & O Containers until he retired in 1998 after a 40-year career at sea. Frank passed away in 2020.*



The ships involved, not all included in the above traffic?

Clan MacLennan (GSYP) Built 1947 Greenock Dockyard Co Ltd. for Clan Line Steamers 6366grt, 439/61/38. Broken up Shanghai 1971

Desh Deep (VWMP) *Perhaps a crude oil tanker of the Shipping Corp. of India*

Fakirjee Cowasjee (AQBQ) Built 1925 by Furness Shipbuilding Company, Haverton, Teeside as **Manchester Commerce**. 5343grt, 418/57/28
1952 sold to East & West SS Co., Karachi. Broken Karachi 1970.

INS **Konkan** Built by Lobnitz & Co., Renfrew as steam powered minesweeper, transferred to the Royal Indian Navy and commissioned as **Konkan**. Scrapped 1973.

Maidan (GDND) Built 1946 by William Hamilton & Co., Port Glasgow for Thos. and Jno. Brocklebank Line 8632grt, 486/63/32.
1971 sold to Pretty Cia. Nav., Troodos Shipping Ltd., Cyprus and renamed **Pretty**. In June 1972 she grounded near Djibouti, but severe bottom damage was beyond economical repair and she was scrapped at Kaohsiung that year.

Rosebank (GBMA) Built in 1958 by Harland & Wolff Ltd., Belfast for Bank Line 8694grt, 483/63/39. Sold 1976. Broken Chittagong Dec. 1982

Rotti (PHEM) Built 1946 by Sun Shipbuilding & Drydock Co. Chester, Pennsylvania as standard ship type C3-S-A5 for Dutch Government, named **Holland**. 7921grt, 492/70/28.
Transferred to Stoomvaart Maatschappij Nederland, Amsterdam and renamed **Rotti**. 1970 transferred to Nedlloyd. Scrapped Kaohsiung 1971.

Rutenfjell (LIUK) Built 1953 by John Crown & Sons Ltd. Sunderland for Olsen & Ugelstad, Oslo 1600grt, 260/43/18.
1965 Seaways Co. Inc., Piraeus; 1971 Margamma Inc., Piraeus; 1975 Mariraklion Shipping Co. S.A., Piraeus; 1979 to Panama flag; 1980 Tamarix Maritime Inc., Panama; Broken up Greece 1981

Sedco Anne (HOFK) Details of this Panamanian vessel unknown, possibly a tanker

Southern Mariner (HOFC) Details of this Panamanian vessel unknown

Staffordshire (GJFG) Built 1950 by Vickers Armstrong as **Eastern Prince** for Furness, Withy & Co Ltd. 8827grt, 471/63/29.
1960 renamed **Bardic** for charter to Shaw Savill & Albion.
1964 sold to Bibby Line Ltd & renamed **Staffordshire**
1970 main engine damage on voyage from Liverpool to Rangoon; on arrival at Colombo this was declared beyond economic repair. 1971 arrived Hong Kong for breaking.

Union Atlantic (HOYA) Built 1945 by New England Shipping Corp., S Portland, Maine (Liberty ship EC2-S-C1 Type). 7176grt., 442/57/28 for West India SS Inc. NY. 1946 **WSA** (Sword Line Inc, NY); 1948 Laid up James River; 1951 **Pacific Range** SS Corp, NY; 1952 **Pan Oceanic** Nav.Corp, NY; 1957 **Penn Mariner**, Drycargo Shpg.Corp. Liberian flag (Penn Shpg Co, NY); 1958 Penntrans Co., US flag (same managers); 1961 **Union Atlantic**, Union Navigation Corp., Panama flag. (Union Navigation Corp, Hong Kong). Presumed sunk 20 June 1964.

Vassilila (ODCB) Details of this Lebanese vessel unknown

Liberator aircraft (VUAGA)
Madras radio (Plus VWM)
Mauritius radio (part of the area scheme) (GXO)

War Experiences 1939 - 45

Captain Harold Horatio Davies - Submitted by L.N.R.S. member Glyn Evans

The day before war broke out, the RMS **Empress of Britain**, 42,500 tons, flagship of the Canadian Pacific Steamships Ltd, in which I was serving as Chief Officer, sailed from Southampton and Cherbourg for Quebec after amazing scenes in which frantic U.S. citizens, not booked in the ship, offered all sorts of inducement to get a passage back to the U.S.A. before hostilities commenced in Europe. More passengers boarded than could be accommodated in cabins, so two of the public rooms were made into dormitories. On the following day, Sunday, the S.0.S. of **Athenia**, sinking North West of Ireland after torpedoing by a German submarine, brought home vividly that the Germans were already stationed in the Atlantic Ocean. The orders were at once given to darken ship, steam without lights etc. and those of us who had experienced the 1914/18 war at sea realised how, once more we were sent to sea unarmed and unprotected. Nothing had been learned from previous experience and apparently the authorities were still living in the age of chivalry. However, the ship arrived safely at her destination to the relief of the passengers and crew. It was thought by the powers-that- be that a great luxury liner, as the **E/B** was, would be of no use in a war so preparations were made to lay her up in the Northwest Arm in Halifax N.S. After a couple of months lying in Quebec, winter was approaching and the ship sailed for Halifax N.S. arriving safely and the moorings were laid in this sheltered water. On the very day that she was to be moored, orders were received cancelling this. She was to be ready to take troops to England and shortly she sailed in convoy making two round voyages with Canadian troops, who were berthed in the utmost luxury for no attempt was made to adapt her for troop carrying.

Early in 1940 she was fitted out for a voyage to New Zealand to carry N.Z. troops to Egypt, proceeding outwards via the Suez Canal and Red Sea. Embarking troops at Wellington N.Z. for a rendezvous off Sydney Heads where the cream of the British Merchant Navy met and formed a convoy. What magnificent ships were in it, huge Cunarders, P and O, Orient, Royal Mail and Canadian Pacific; all great and fast ships. I feel that never again will such beautiful ships be seen in one convoy. After fueling at Fremantle, the great convoy of Australian and New Zealand troops left for Colombo en route to Suez. Before reaching the Equator news came through that Italy had come into the war, France was in a parlous state and Allied troops retreating. Orders to change course were given by the Commodore and Durban became first port of call with Capetown the second port. To provide facilities to all, some ships went to Durban and some to Capetown.

After refuelling and exercise of troops, the convoy reformed under strong escort and proceeded to the Clyde, arriving safely. It seemed as if these Aussies and N.Z. troops would be needed for the defence of the old country and that invasion was imminent. The **E/B** constantly under steam lay at anchor at the Tail of the Bank with rumours that she would take the War Cabinet to Canada if invasion of England took place. I was in distress of mind, if rumour should turn out to be true and the Cabinet did leave in our ship. Was I to leave my wife and young daughter behind to face the terror of conquest. My son was already in the RAF rescue service and there was no one to protect my womenfolk. I even planned to smuggle them on board if the worst came, the horrors of Holland and France were too vivid to leave them behind.

Thank God these plans were not necessary as the invasion appeared to hang fire and the ship was ordered to join a convoy for Suez via Capetown with British troops for Egypt. On the homeward voyage to the Clyde from Capetown while proceeding independently, the **E/B** was attacked by Focke Wulf aircraft 100 miles West of Tory Island and hit by a stick of heavy bombs which set her on fire from stem to stern. The fire swept through rapidly and with the fire mains destroyed there was little time to lower the boats. However of nearly six hundred souls aboard only forty nine were lost, some being machine gunned, some killed by the bombs and others trapped in the blazing engine and boiler rooms. [*Editor's note: the attack took place at about 0920 hrs. on 26th October. After abandoning **E/B** she stayed afloat and the following day a rescue party from HMS **Broke** went aboard and towage by ocean going tugs began. **U-32** was ordered to intercept and attack which she successfully accomplished. E/B was again abandoned and she sank at 0205 hrs. on 28th October 1940].*

A short spell in hospital at Greenock and three months convalescence at home and then I received orders to take passage in the Dutch liner **Edam** to New York. I would then proceed to Newport News to take command of s.s. **Bellemina**, one of the fleet of U.S. vessels laid up in James River, Virginia and now being reconditioned by the neutral but benevolent U.S.

The passage in **Edam** was lively in the extreme for while the convoy was struggling to the westward in heavy weather it was attacked three mornings in succession by enemy bombers and several ships sank. Conversation with the Dutch

captain, a fine skillful seaman, revealed that he was receiving four times the pay that the Ministry of Transport were paying us, yet doing the same work. I recalled that in the 1914/18 war I had sworn that if another war should come, I would not be such a fool as to sail for the pittance thought adequate by the powers-that-be, yet here I was doing the whole thing again; £600 per annum for command of a 9,000 ton ship while the business-like Dutchman says, "Nothing doing." It makes me almost wish I was a foreigner too instead of a patriotic fool. I arrived in Newport News with my officers and crew expecting to find **Bellemina** ready and 'raring to go' but she was far from ready and when I saw another of that laid up fleet dug up from the mud and put in dry dock I realised why. Mussels four feet thick on her bottom, saplings and ferns luxuriating in her saloon and cabins.

However, the Navy yard at Newport News put a bustle on and one morning while walking from my hotel to the dockyard I heard a faint shrill screech. This grew louder as I entered the dockyard until, alongside the ship, it was deafening like a locomotive whistle. The propeller was whirling around and the engine was being tested for the first time in 20 years. The **Bellemina** had a double reduction geared turbine engine, very small in size, but the noisiest I have ever heard.

On seeking out the Yard Manager I asked him the reason for the screech, he said 'It is a bit musical but it goes round' and that appeared to be all he was interested in. Expecting to have a trial trip in the Chesapeake Gulf I expressed the hope that the sound would diminish with use, he replied "you've said it Cap'n, because tomorrow she's all yours, and it ain't going to be any trial trip." She was fuelled and stored next day and I received orders to proceed to Baltimore to load steel. A tall rangy Virginian Pilot boarded to pilot the ship down the James River to Cape Henry where the Baltimore pilot would take over. As she backed out, turned and proceeded down the channel the pilot and I looked astern and saw a three masted schooner in full sail coming down river so the pilot said "Give her full speed, Cap'n, this fellow is travelling some".

Full speed was rung on the engine telegraph and the deafening screech from the engine skylights almost lifted the caps off our heads. The Pilot looked amazed and said "A little noisy, Cap'n."

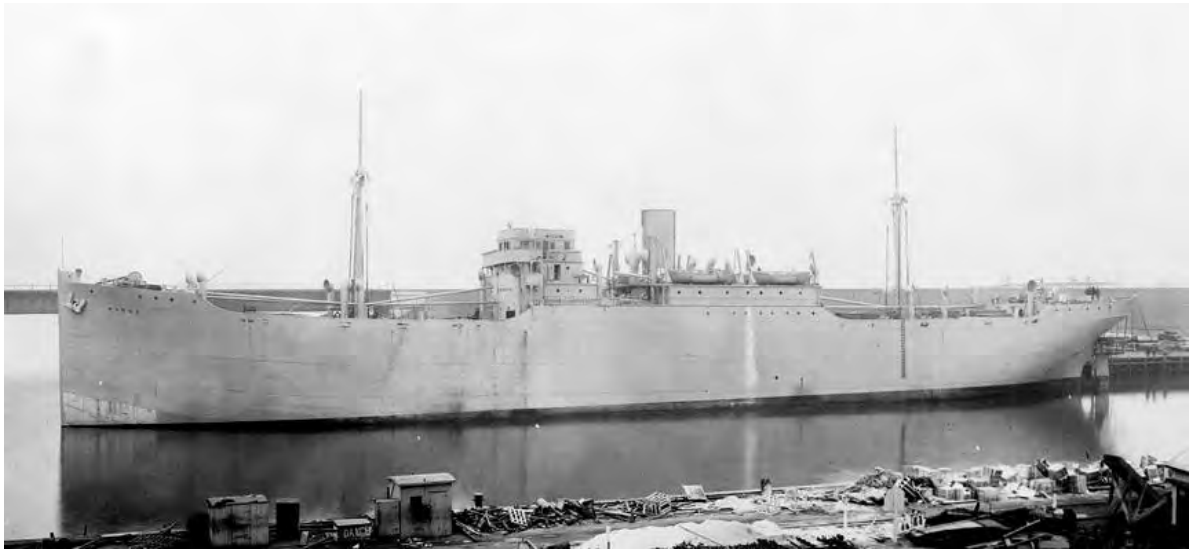
Less than five minutes later, the noise fell away to a whine and I saw the ship rapidly losing headway. Enquiries to the engine room elicited that the vacuum in the turbine had been lost and the propellor was just turning over. The schooner rapidly overhauled us and as she passed her crew made derisive and vulgar gestures. Looking forward at the ugly girder that comprised our foremast, the pilot blandly remarked that if I would order a tarpaulin to be bent on the signal yard, he guessed that we would sail faster than the engine would send us.

At barely 2 knots we ambled down the long buoyed channel and when he was bidding me farewell he said, "So you are going to Baltimore, eh, I guess it will take you a long time." What herculean efforts were being made in the engine room will never

be known but some hours later a slightly shriller crescendo of noise informed me she was going a little faster.

At almost midnight, just as the traffic was getting heavy, all lights in the ship failed, my urgent orders to light the oil masthead and side lights produced the lamps but no oil, nobody knew where the oil was or if there was any oil. On the bridge we were reduced to flashing electric torches at on-coming ships and then curiously enough the vacuum in the turbine rose and so did the deafening screech and no orders to the helmsman could be heard. For over an hour a good time was had by all until at last the dynamo came to life. It was a great relief to get safely alongside at Baltimore where the engines were given an overhaul while loading billets of steel for U.K. Orders were received to proceed to Philadelphia to load timber on top of the steel and the ship proceeded through the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal which proved very interesting especially the railway bridges which rose bodily in the air as the ship passed. Her steering gave me much anxiety when passing vessels in that canal because no ship ties up as in the Suez Canal but pass each other under way. After more repairs to engines and windlass at Philadelphia, the ship sailed for Halifax N.S. to join a homeward convoy.

At sea, efforts were made to see what the ship's maximum speed was but the best she ever did was $8^{1}/_{2}$ knots. Guns were mounted at Halifax N.S. and she eventually formed one of a slow convoy of 57 ships.



S.S. ***Marne*** *(Design 1037) pictured around the time of her completion in January 1919. She was built by the Federal S.B. Co, Kearny, N.J. and was a sistership to ss* ***Bellemina****. 6,197 tons, 411ft long, 57ft beam and 27ft draft. Speed 10.5 knots*

Much has been said about convoy maneuvers but this one was a seven knot convoy, too slow to zigzag. The usual Banks' fog was experienced and with ship's compasses affected by magnetic attraction of steel cargo it was a hectic time to say the least. Collisions avoided by a hair's breadth, getting into the wrong column etc. made me devoutly thankful when the fog cleared and found only about twenty ships

scattered about but we were in the Commodore's bunch so all was well. Southeast of Iceland we experienced a heavy SW gale and the heavy-laden ships carrying steel commenced shipping seas and yawing about

Unfortunately, the Commodore's ship was a passenger vessel and I think the Commodore did not realise what a tough time his flock was having. I requested him to 'heave to' the convoy as we were being swept from stern to stem but he carried on. Several ships left and hove to without orders but eventually the sea got too high to heave to and we who were left had perforce to carry on and hope for the best.

The **Bellemina** lost all her boats and was most of the time like a half-tide rock. The scene from the bridge was shocking, the ship lurching heavily and yawing four or five points, great towering seas rising continuously on the quarter and crashing into the well decks so that I feared for the hatches. The night was terrible but daylight was worse and felt she might go at any time. As I was gloomily surveying this desolation I saw a figure fighting its way over by the funnel casing and finally reaching the bridge ladder. It was the Chief Engineer who breathlessly said he must stop the engines at once or else the propeller would drop off. He said the tail end shaft was chewing up the lignum vitae linings and would soon be metal on metal.

I pointed to the great breaking seas and said, "If you stop the engines we will be gone in five minutes". With a tragic gesture, both hands held up to heaven, he left the bridge without another word and disappeared. The engines kept going and the propeller did not drop off and when the weather moderated some hours later I went down to the Chief's cabin to have a chat to him about the tail end shaft.

His room door was locked and I went to the engine room looking for him but the engineer on watch had not seen him for hours nor had he been to any meals. He had locked himself in his cabin with a nervous breakdown after he left the bridge. It is strange that in such imminent danger, mental processes act like that and though later on I persuaded him to unlock the door and take some food, he was completely useless for the remainder of the voyage and had to go to hospital on arrival.

After discharging at Glasgow the ship joined a westbound convoy and proceeded on Admiralty routing to a point where she was to go alone and unescorted to New York. At the poor speed of $8^{1}/_{2}$ knots she zigzagged across the North Atlantic and eventually arrived at New York berthing practically below the Brooklyn Suspension Bridge on the Brooklyn side. At the opposite side of the wharf, the **Harpagon** was loading steel also and becoming friendly with her master, Captain Laycock, I found he lived at Meols also, just a stone's throw across the Common from my home. As he was ready to sail in a convoy from Halifax N.S. much earlier than I, we parted with the assurance that he would call at my home and tell my wife that he had seen me recently and I was well. Alas, his ship was lost by enemy action, Captain Laycock did not survive and only much later did I hear of this.

After finishing loading steel at Hoboken, the now renamed **Empire Magpie** sailed for Halifax N.S. to join the convoy. At the Convoy meeting at the naval barracks, I found myself sitting alongside of a Greek master of the **Nicolas Virginia** who besought my aid in interpreting some of the convoy orders. As our ships happened to

be No.55 and 56 in the plan, the Greek master seemed delighted and said he would stick to me and do what I did. To digress a little, I feel our Naval Authorities were a little lax in not ensuring that Allied Masters thoroughly understood their orders; lack of understanding often caused trouble in the convoy.

We left Nova Scotia a large convoy of slow ships and for a day or so it kept fine then fog descended. For pure anxiety of mind I recommend being in the midst of a slow convoy in dense fog. One is not sure of the course being steered owing to deviation by steel cargoes, some ships slow down and their followers pile up against them, some veer this way and that way and confusion reigns. During this time, by keeping the whistle of the Commodore as near ahead as possible I endeavored to maintain station. From time to time frantic telephone calls from the poop gun station told me of the near approach of an overtaking ship which would nose up a few yards off until abeam of the bridge then a hail from the Greek skipper, "Is that you my friend?" and on being reassured his ship would drop back.

The fog was thick and prolonged and it was obvious that many ships had left the convoy so when clear weather prevailed I was astonished to find less than twenty ships left. My ship by now was just behind the Commodore ship, with everything to starboard and astern gone. Within the next two or three days the strays gradually rejoined. Alarms, diversions and attacks occurred and it was dreadful to see a ship mortally hit and unable to render any assistance. Some of the awful sights I saw in convoy remain ever with me.

From Loch Ewe a convoy was formed to go around Pentland Firth to the East Coast and while awaiting orders at Methil, captains were requested ashore for briefing as to routes and ports. As the naval drifter went round the anchored convoy picking up masters, it happened that the master of an oil tanker said to me, "Are you the master of the **Empire Magpie**? On assuring him I was, he stated, "Did you see that torpedo track that came between your ship and mine?" I had indeed seen this and wondered what had been the reaction of the oil tanker. He continued, 'I am the master of that tanker with 1,500 tons high octane spirit aboard. Had that torpedo struck all I would have heard would have been the clang of the pearly gates behind me". It now seems humorous and apt but there was no joking that day. The oil tanker after surviving attacks in the Atlantic Ocean was to make the very perilous voyage to London, almost as if the powers-that-be were oblivious to the risk so long as an oil berth was available in the most dangerous port of all. Anchoring at nightfall in Tees Bay, a heavy air attack took place on the ports adjacent and quite a number of bombs were dropped around the anchored ships without result save loss of a night's sleep.

Increasing lameness due to war injuries forced me to leave the ship and come ashore at Liverpool where I was appointed temporary assistant Marine Superintendent of the Canadian Pacific Steamships.

I did not really enjoy this kind of work as the walking round dock roads and climbing on and over ships became hard on my injured limbs. Presently, I was given charge of the refit of the ex-French liner **Winnipeg II** which was fitting out to carry extra passengers on the North Atlantic run. However just before she was ready I

received Company instructions to proceed to London to take command of ex-Italian **Empire Union**, she also being a passenger cargo type. It was not on the cards for me to sail in her either, for urgent orders sent me to the ex-U.S. liner **Emma Alexander** which was ready to leave for Singapore in convoy with troops. By a strange coincidence both the **Winnipeg** and **Empire Union** were lost by enemy action soon afterwards. The master of the first being seriously affected by tuberculosis due to immersion in icy waters when she foundered and the master of the latter losing his life along with many of his crew.

On 10th January 1942, the **Emma Alexander,** now named **Empire Woodlark,** sailed in a fine convoy of troop ships from Liverpool bound for Singapore via Capetown or Durban (Convoy ref WS15). Very strong weather was experienced when west and south west of Ireland but I found the ship to be a grand sea boat. She was then over 30 years old, narrow in beam and deep draughted for her size. She had two thin funnels and a prom deck extending practically to the poop with a low bridge very much further forward than British built ships and the best speed we could now manage was 14 knots. I found that in the great waves, she forged ahead better than the big P and O liners in the convoy with a minimum of fuss and practically no heavy water breaking aboard. An attack on the convoy when down towards the Azores put the **Llangibby Castle** out of effective action and part of the escort had to stay with her while she made slow progress to the Azores.

Arriving off Sierra Leone on January 25th 1942, the convoy was fuelled and watered and on attending a meeting of masters on the Commodore ship, P and O **Strathmore**, the Commodore congratulated me on what he termed splendid seamanship in bringing **Empire Woodlark** through the very severe weather experienced. He stated that from his ship he thought that, on several occasions my ship had disappeared under the sea and he thought she would not weather the storm.

This to me was astonishing because I never had sailed in a more sea-kindly ship. However, I assured him that never was she in any danger at any time, pointing out that of the scores of rafts on deck (all unlashed because rope had not been put aboard in rush of departure) not one had been lost. Of the 1,600 troops aboard I suppose they would feel and think differently but no-one on board had been injured.

Leaving Freetown on 29th January and arriving Durban on 13th February 1942 without incident beyond daily signals from Commodore urging me to abate smoke, the troops were landed for exercise etc.

Left Durban on 17th February and crossed Indian Ocean but when within two days west of Sunda Straits word was received from the Commodore that Singapore had been captured and our convoy would turn and make for Ceylon. When in the vicinity of Colombo, several ships were sent in there, but the majority proceeded to Bombay where all troops were disembarked. The **Empire Woodlark** was ordered to Karachi for tank top repairs and arrived there on 13th March 1942.

On 2nd April, repairs completed, she sailed for Bombay arriving on 4th and I was instructed to the Naval Office for briefing. There I was given sealed orders to be opened 24 hours after sailing but on requesting a course to steer during that interval

as not knowing destination I might add a day or two steaming on the passage. After much discussion, it was agreed that southwest would be enough for us to know until the ship was 24 hours out and sealed orders could be broken.

Sailing on 16th April 1942, proceeding out of Bombay and then steering a South Westerly course until next day when I opened my sealed orders. These ordered me to proceed to Port Louis, Mauritius and report to Naval headquarters, keeping a mid ocean course.

The lovely weather of that voyage was thoroughly enjoyed until one morning while East of the Seychelles, tripod masts were sighted low down on the Eastern horizon. Altering course to the West and putting on best speed we did not expect to get away from that fleet, which we thought was the Jap fleet, particularly as a cruiser speedily hove over the horizon and morsing us to stop. The mirage caused her message to appear misspelled and seemed to confirm our worst fears. She came on like a train and at five or six miles off opened fire. If was not much use trying to escape at 14 knots when the cruiser was doing 30, so we stopped and she circled us at full speed all guns trained then dropped a boat and shot out of the way. When the boat reached our side, a naval lieutenant soon clambered aboard with an armed guard.

Greeting him with great relief as he asked "What ship and where bound, why didn't you stop when ordered, where are your ship's papers etc. "

I gave him all particulars when I learned the cruiser was British. It appears that we thought she was Jap, she thought we were an enemy raider particularly as our ship's number BCJF showed us as **Emma Alexander** of Seattle while we had given him **Empire Woodlark** of London on the morse lamp. On being allowed to proceed and to cancel our 'Enemy fleet' signal when they were out of sight, the ship came without further incident to the lovely isle of Mauritius on 15th April 1942.

Reporting as ordered to Naval Control, orders were given to fuel and water and be ready to sail next morning. The deposed Shah of Persia with his sons would be conveyed to Durban as the Shah needed special medical attention. The Governor of Mauritius came aboard later in the day to inform me of the conditions of the Shah's voyage. He was to be treated as royalty as far as troopship conditions permitted and given every facility commensurate with safety of the ship. He then informed me he was also taking passage in the ship with his wife and daughters as he was being transferred to Trinidad.

Sir Bede Clifford and Lady Clifford and daughters proved most friendly and helpful and I enjoyed deeply their company to South Africa. He gave me useful advice on the tactful handling of the ex-Shah who, he said, was very despotic but a soldier and would put up with the Spartan troopship amenities.

On April 16th 1942 about noon, big automobiles were observed coming down towards the ship. Mustering the ship's officers at the gangway, I saw the Shah and one of his sons alight from a car and come up the accommodation ladder, followed by other sons and his court officials.

As he stepped aboard we all saluted him, he returned the salute and shaking my hand said something in Persian (I presume). Not knowing that language I was for

a moment nonplussed when I heard a voice from the Shah's staff say, "His Majesty speak 'How are you:" I replied that I welcomed him on board but regretted that the ship had so few amenities to offer him. He then spoke again in his own language which was translated by the official we afterwards nicknamed the Grand Vizier that the Shah would like to go to his cabin. The ship had only two of her original suites remaining; all the others had been turned into dormitories, so on viewing these and some of the dormitories, the Shah expressed his satisfaction that as a soldier he had lived in worse.

All conversation between us was through the Grand Vizier who always prefaced his translations to me by saying 'His Majesty he speak.' I began to get slightly pigeon English myself and was glad when he excused me to go and see the ship away to sea. As we cleared the harbour and set a course for the South West of Madagascar the worried looking Grand Vizier appeared on the bridge. Addressing me thus, 'Oh Captain sah, where His Majesty servants sleep, O Captain, servant must not sleep under same roof as His Majesty. Where servant house, please? His Majesty must see at once.

Asking him to wait until the ship cleared the entrance, I asked the Chief Officer where he thought would be a suitable place seeing the ship had one continuous deck from stem to stern. He suggested the isolation Hospital on the after deck. It was not a convenient place to berth passengers particularly as we had embarked 700 Mauritian troops and perhaps would be needed but the Grand Vizier was wringing his hands with anxiety and seemed so terrified at the delay that in pity I went with him. Telling him to inform the Shah that this ship had really only one roof but this hospital was a house on a roof away from him, we proceeded to the Shah's cabin. Poor Grand Vizier, he really was afraid of the Shah to judge from his expressive gestures, but fortunately the Shah made no objections. Beyond roping off one side of the prom deck for his personal use, he gave us no trouble and his servants cooked all his meals and waited on him as all his special food had been brought on board.

Prior to leaving Port Louis I requested the Naval Officer in charge to send a signal to Durban asking that the ship be permitted to proceed direct into port and land the Shah and his entourage owing to the special circumstances of this case. He assured me that Whitehall had made all these arrangements but would signal Durban notwithstanding.

About 10.30 hrs on 21st April 1942, the ship arrived at the Examination vessel off Durban Bluff and the naval officer boarded and ordered the ship to an anchorage in Durban Bay. I explained the special mission of the urgent medical treatment of the Shah and asked if he would signal Naval Officer of our arrival. His reply was terse. I don't give a damn if you have the Queen of Sheba aboard, you go to anchor in the Bay. 'So to anchor we went.

Hardly had the ship anchored when the Grand Vizier appeared at my cabin door. ‘His Majesty he speak, what for you stay here, must go into harbour at once.' I tried to explain that ship was not allowed to go into harbour without permission and we were awaiting orders. As the hours went by the Grand Vizier made a number of visits giving me his Master's demands to go into harbour without further delay. Poor

little man, he was frantic with anxiety and at his last visit to me wrung his hands and burst into tears when I said there were no orders yet. He told me that a Persian naval commander of the Shah's yacht had been beheaded for running the yacht ashore when entering a port in the Persian Gulf when the Shah was on board on a State visit. I think the Grand Vizier was expecting to be beheaded himself. Finally, the Shah's eldest son came on the bridge to enquire why the ship was not proceeding into harbour, stating that the Shah must get immediate medical assistance, which was the reason of his journey to South Africa. I endeavoured to explain how naval orders must be obeyed and that without permission, the ship could not enter. Our conversation was somewhat awkward as I could not quickly follow his rapid French, nor he my Quebec patois, so we both went to the Governor's cabin and I requested his aid with the Authorities ashore. He made a signal to Pretoria which we sent by morse to the Bluff Signal Station. Nothing happened during the night and at daybreak a signal from Bluff informed me to get under weigh as a pilot was coming out to the ship. Proceeding into harbour, we tied up outside of two troopships at the Point and after putting ashore the big motor cars we bade farewell to the Shah and his sons. The Shah appeared to show no animosity at the delay but shook my hand and thanked me (in Persian) for the safe passage and so he departed with a mound of baggage. As I returned to my cabin a Naval Commander was waiting who gave me instructions to go to Navy Office at once, the Commodore required my presence immediately. For a brief moment I thought perhaps he is going to convey the grateful thanks of the country for a meritorious deed but the demeanour of his herald did not show the joy that the bearer of good news usually displays. To my questioning of what the Great One required of such a humble one he ominously replied, "He will tell you himself" and urged me to show proper zeal in betaking myself to the House.

In a spirit of no-enthusiasm I was conveyed in a Navy car to the Office. Entering the Secretary's office I gave name and ship and received a sympathetic look and heard her words, "The Old Man is ramping so look out, cyclone warnings are imminent". A few moments later I was ushered into the Presence and immediately the cyclone burst. From the hurricane blasts I caught various phrases, "Who the devil are you signalling to Pretoria over my head", and "B…….. skipper of a fifth-rate trooper questioning my orders" and "What do I care for the b….y Shah of Persia, b….y rebel." I remained hove to until the first fury subsided then finding I was still seaworthy began to get angry myself stating that my voyage had been a special one and he had better enquire from Whitehall and learn the facts before blasting me.

He then told me to go back to my ship and leave the harbour at once and go back to anchor in the Bay and rung several bells at which a number of Naval officers appeared and were ordered to see the ship away at once. I thought the Commodore would have an apoplectic fit when I said the ship had practically no fuel oil left or fresh water owing to her long voyage from India and required 1,000 tons of fuel oil and six hundred tons of water in case bad weather or enemy activity forced me to sea from the anchorage. The various bods that carried out these functions were told to give the ship her requirements and she was to leave harbour for the Bay anchorage by dawn

next day. Shifting across to the old oil wharf with a skeleton crew (most of the others having disappeared into the pubs) she was fuelled and watered and was ready to leave harbour when Ministry orders were received to proceed at noon for Capetown thus avoiding a week of rolling at anchor in Durban Bay which is always demoralising to the crew, being so near but so far from the delights of the city.

Arriving at Capetown on 25th April 1942 the ship remained there until 16th May awaiting orders from the Ministry of Transport. I think the powers-that-be were considering her capabilities in various spheres of action but the possibility they had received reports of excessive smoke made by the Commodore of the first convoy caused them to relegate her to the "Legion of the Lost". (Smaller troopships based on Durban or Mombasa for special trooping and not returning to Britain.

Then followed a voyage from Capetown to Mombasa via Durban and back to Durban. Enemy submarines were operating now in Mozambique Straits and odd South African waters and convoys were essential. In early June the first attack by Allied troops on Madagascar to secure the naval harbour of Diego Suarez was made and on 15th June 1942 the **Empire Woodlark** left in a big convoy with South African troops for Diego Suarez.

The main fighting between Allied and Vichy French troops had died down when we arrived in the harbour though many fires were raging in the town. I managed to visit the main battlefield at the approaches to the city as mopping up was going on and also visited the naval dry dock in which a new German cargo ship lay on fire with frequent explosions aboard. The troops had rounded up her German crew and were forcing them to remove the charges and put out the fire. The anchorage, with so many ships and wrecks, was not comfortable particularly the strong trade wind which caused ships to swing on to each other, so.....

The concluding sections of this story are missing but it is known that the **Empire Woodlark** did survive the war and in 1946, with a cargo of chemical ammunition, was scuttled off the north west of Ireland in position 59^0 00N 07^0 40W

Video recordings of Athenaeum Presentations.

The Society is building a permanent library of current and future presentations which is now available to members on our web site. To access them you should first login to the site with your username and password. Once you have logged in, select 'Activity' on the main menu and then 'Video Presentations'. You can then pick your video and follow the on-screen instructions. (Unsure how to Register or forgotten your Password? Simply ask the webmaster via contactlnrs@gmail.com or from the web site).

LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

The Bulletin Volume 65, No. 2, September 2021



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Above: ss Great Britain at Brunswick Wharf, Blackwall c1850 and below as restored in Bristol Harbour in 2013 Both courtesy Wikimedia



Merseyside Maritime Museum Archive and Library.

The Archives are now open to the public, subject to pre-booked appointments. Full details and link are on their website at:
https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/archives-centre/visit-archives-centre

Liverpool Nautical Research Society

President
Captain M.D.R. Jones

Vice-President
Mr. J.P. Stokoe

Chairman
Mr. W.G. Williamson

Vice Chairman
Mr. E. Hughes

Council:
Mr. I. Duckett (Talks Secretary),
Mr. W.A. Ogle (Bulletin Editor)
Mr. E.J. Scaplehorn (Web Master)
Ms. S. Starkey (Representing M.M.M.),

Honorary Officers:
Secretary: Mr. E.J. Scaplehorn Treasurer: Mr. A. Melling

Web site: www.liverpoolnauticalresearchsociety.org

For all enquiries our contact details are: contactlnrs@gmail.com

Or via our website at
www.liverpoolnauticalresearchsociety.org

If mail is required our address is:
Hon. Secretary, L.N.R.S.,
The Archives Centre, Merseyside Maritime Museum,
Royal Albert Dock, Liverpool, L3 4AQ

THE LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD BY ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCE
ON 20 MAY 2021

1 Jun 21

Present: The President of the Society and 20 Members

ITEM 1 – WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1. The Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting. Apologies for absence had been received from Captain Hugh Daglish, Commander Tom Cunningham, Mr Ian Duckett, Mr John Duckett, and Mr Mike Feltham. A quorum of members being present, the meeting was duly constituted and called to order.

ITEM 2 – ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2020 AGM

2. The 2020 Annual General Meeting had been delayed by Covid-related restrictions. The minutes of the meeting, held in November 2020, had been published in the March 2021 edition of *The Bulletin* and in the members' area of the website, and additional copies had been circulated with the 2021 agenda. All the statutory motions had been carried without dissent and there were no matters arising. The minutes were accepted as a true record. *Proposer:* Chairman. *Seconder:* Secretary. **Accepted***: Nem Con*.

ITEM 3 – ANNUAL REPORT

3. The Chairman presented his Annual Report, which is attached. Although the past year had been one of uncertainty caused by the ongoing and continually changing Covid-related restrictions, the overall impact on the Society had not been entirely negative. Despite the suspension of the Athenaeum-based talks programme in March 2020, *The Bulletin* had continued to be published as normal, while the introduction of video recordings and, more recently, the Oral History Project, both of which had become permanent features, meant that most of the Society's activities were available to the whole membership, irrespective of location. The Society had actively cooperated with the Liverpool History Society and Maritime History North over joint video productions and had recently accepted an invitation to be represented on the committee of the Centre for Port and Maritime History, under the chairmanship of Professor Nick White.

4. Membership was bearing up well and currently stood at 194 (from 206 in May 2020). The meeting was invited to remember those members who had sadly died during the past year, whose names are listed at Annex A.

5. The Chairman thanked members of Council for meeting the challenges of the last year and the wider membership for displaying continued confidence in the Society.

ITEM 4 – FINANCIAL REPORT AND APPROVAL OF 2020-2021 ACCOUNTS

6. The Treasurer presented the independently examined 2020-2021 accounts which are attached. Income for the year had increased slightly overall from £3.5k (2019/20) to £3.6k (2020/21). This was largely due to the increases in subscription rates which had offset the small reduction in membership levels, and reduced income from donations. Due to the suspension of live talks, income from merchandise and book sales had been negligible. Expenditure had also been reduced from £2.8k (2019/20) to £2.3k (2020/21), mostly through reduced *Bulletin* printing costs which, after a full year with our new supplier, were £1.4k per

annum less than 2018/19. There had also been a very substantial reduction in room hire fees because of the suspended talks programme, although this had been offset by the investment in equipment to enable video recordings.

7. The overall impact had been to consolidate the reserves, which had increased from £6.7k to £8k while providing the opportunity for long-term investment in recordings, thereby making the talks programme available to the whole membership. The Society was judged to be in a strong and stable financial position at the start of the new financial year. The 2020-2021 accounts were approved. *Proposer:* Chairman. *Seconder:* Secretary. **Approved***: Nem Con.*

ITEM 5 – TALKS PROGRAMME FOR 2021-2022

[Secretary's Note: The Talks Secretary had presented apologies for absence and his report was delivered by the Secretary]

8. The live talks programme had been suspended since March 2020 because of Covid-related restrictions. Through the good offices of our speakers and with mutual support from the Liverpool History Society and Maritime History North, a video talk had been released each month from September 2020 onwards, although there had inevitably been changes to the advertised titles and sequence. It was anticipated that the live talks programme would resume at The Athenaeum on Thursday 16 September and would then continue monthly as normal. A new feature would be that all future talks would be recorded live and made available to members through the website. Members who wished to present a talk to the Society on any maritime subject were encouraged to contact the Talks Secretary.

ITEM 6 – CONFIRMATION OF THE CHAIR OF COUNCIL

9. Mr William Williamson was confirmed as Chair of Council in succession to Mr Elfyn Hughes on completion of his tenure. *Proposer:* Chairman. *Seconder:* Secretary. **Agreed***: Nem Con.*

ITEM 7 – ELECTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

10. Mr Ian Duckett, Mr Bill Ogle, Mr Tony Melling and Mr Ted Scaplehorn were re-elected to the Council. *Proposer:* Chairman. *Seconder:* Vice-Chairman. **Agreed***: Nem Con.*

ITEM 8 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11. Society Merchandise. Members were reminded that Society ties and lapel badges were available for sale via the website and would also be available at The Athenaeum following the resumption of live talks.

12. Merseyside Maritime Museum. The museum had reopened on 18 May and the Maritime Archives and Library had also reopened (Wednesday to Friday) on an appointment-only basis. Members were encouraged to resume research activities where appropriate.

13. Postal Address. It was noted that reopening the Maritime Archives and Library would enable the Society to resume advertising its postal address as a means of communication.

ITEM 9 – DATE OF NEXT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

14. The next Annual General Meeting of the Liverpool Nautical Research Society will be held in May 2022 at a time and venue to be notified.

E J SCAPLEHORN
Secretary

ANNEX A TO
MINUTES OF THE 2021
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
DATED 1 JUN 21

Annex:A. LNRS Members Who Have Died Between May 2020 and May 2021.

Mr Vin Finn
Professor Eric Grove
Mr Gerald Hayes
Mr John Huxley
Mr Sean Kennedy
Mr Alan McClelland
Ms Angela Oates
Mr Jack Olin
Mr Brian Pierpoint
Mr William Walsh
Mr Gordon Wright

Attachments: A. Chairman's Annual Report – May 2021 (See June Bulletin)

B. Accounts for the Full Year 2020-2021 (See below)

Liverpool Nautical Research Society

Accounts for the Full Year 2020/2021 held at Santander Bank PLC

Full Year: 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021

Opening Bank Balances: Current Account: 3596 Deposit Account: 3099 Total = 6695

Income		2019/20	2020/21
	Subscriptions	2659	3549
	Donations	546	20
	Refreshments	165	
	Book Sales	54	
	Merchandise Sales	48	24
	Deposit Interest	25	20
	Total	3497	3613
Expenditure			
	Bulletin Printing	918	608
	Distribution/Stationery	93	80
	Room Hire	765	85
	Speaker Expenses	78	40
	Refreshments	141	39
	IT Costs	140	710
	Hon. Treasurer Expenses	36	
	Hon. Secretary Expenses		
	Donations/Gifts	25	195
	Bulletin Postage	591	446
	Other Postage		62
	Pastoral	13	9
	Bank Charges		30
	Total	2800	2304
	Surplus / Deficit during Year	697	1309
	Opening Cash Balance	5994	6695
	Closing Cash Balance	6695	8004

Closing Bank Balances: Current Account: 1850 Deposit Account: 6154 Total = 8004

Nominated Assessor: Mr C Loughran

Tragedy on the s.s. **Gothic**

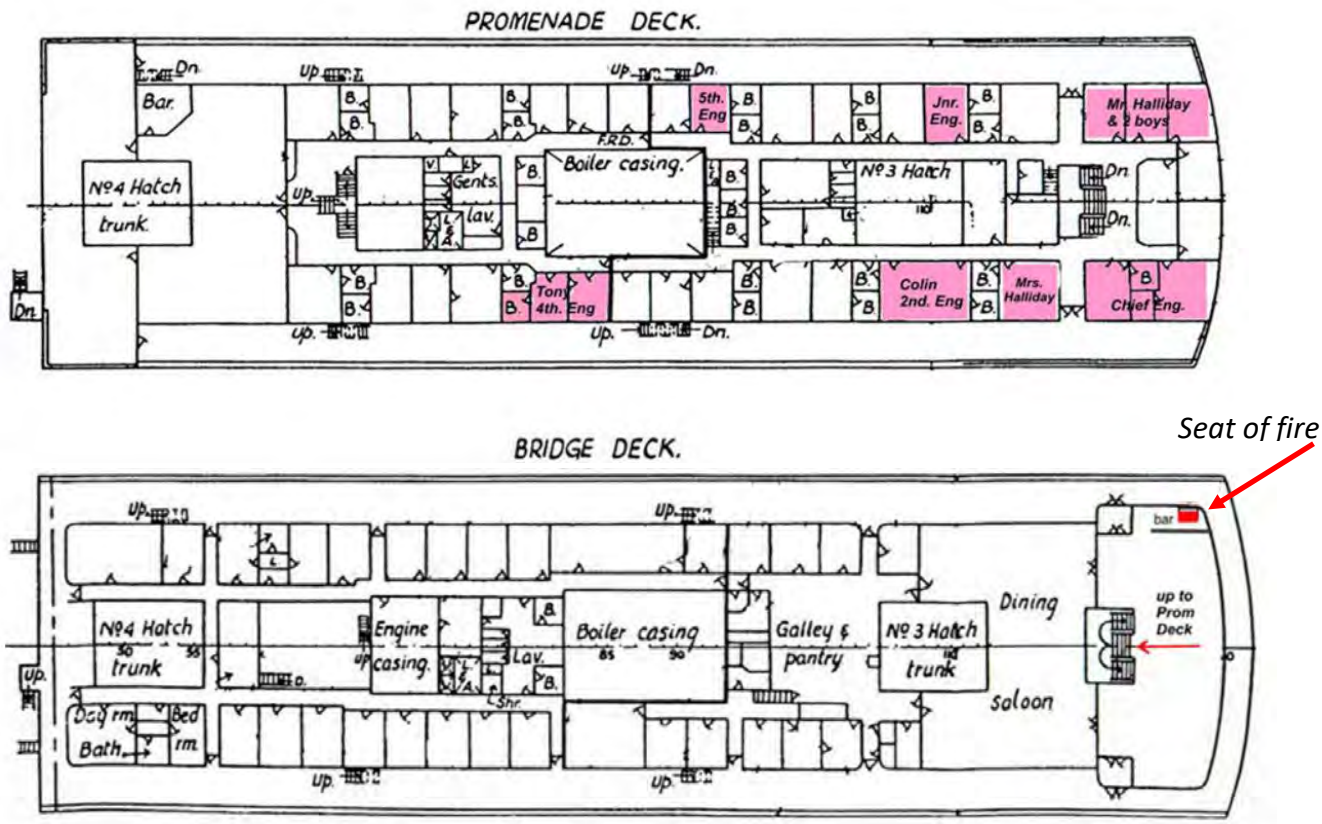
Some of the information and pictures used in this article have come from the journal "Shipmates", produced by, and for, Shaw, Savill line crewmen.
It was first published in this format by 'Tees Packet' (Teesside Branch of the W.S.S.), in August 2019, and is reproduced here by kind permission of their editor."

It is now just over fifty-two years ago, on the 1st August 1968, when the s.s. **Gothic**, of the Shaw, Savill Line, was around 1,800 miles east of Bluff, New Zealand's most southerly port, on her way back to Liverpool via the Panama Canal, when she suffered a disastrous fire, which claimed the lives of seven persons.

On Sunday, the 28th July, the **Gothic** sailed from Bluff for Panama and then home to Liverpool. The weather took a turn for the worse as she steered towards South America (this is believed to be referred to as the 'Southern Circle' route) where the vessel would then pick up the current taking them up the coast towards Panama.

It was at about 02.30 hrs, when the ship's automatic fire alarm sounded during the midnight to four a.m. watch. The Second Officer, in charge of the watch, sent the duty Cadet to investigate. He discovered a small fire in the Officer's Smoke room in the forward part of the accommodation. He attempted to douse the fire with the nearest fire extinguisher, but he was unable to activate that one or another one he located nearby. A large lounge window close to the source of the fire, suddenly cracked and shattered with the heat of the fire, allowing a sudden inrush of wind. The fire then erupted and started to spread rapidly. In no time the Officer's Smoke room, Dining Saloon and the cabins above, including the bridge and chartroom were engulfed in an inferno. Some of her crew who had just come off the eight to mid-night watch, were sitting in a cabin having a beer and a natter, when they smelled smoke. Looking out of the cabin the passageway was starting to fill with smoke. As they dashed out to assist, the fire alarm went off, they then started to check the other cabins on that deck to rouse, and get out, any occupants who were still inside the cabins.

Roused from his cabin, Captain Brian Agnew turned the ship downwind using engine commands relayed by another crew member, to the engine room. The ship's steering and engine telegraph on the bridge were disabled by the fire. The Captain took up his emergency station aft on the docking bridge, from where the ship was now being steered. The steering gear controls and the hydraulic rams on the steering engine were in the 'poop' deck aft, all that the crew had to do was to disengage the controls from the bridge by removing the locking pins from the connecting arms, and replace them into the holes that connected them to the control arms that were attached to the emergency wheel on the deck above.



These deck plans are from the ATHENIC, a near identical sister ship of the GOTHIC

The ship was turned about 180^0, the crew could then start to follow up the flames and push them back through to the forward areas that they had already consumed. The lifeboats were swung out and lowered, and were being loaded with any members of the crew who were not required to man the fire-fighting parties.

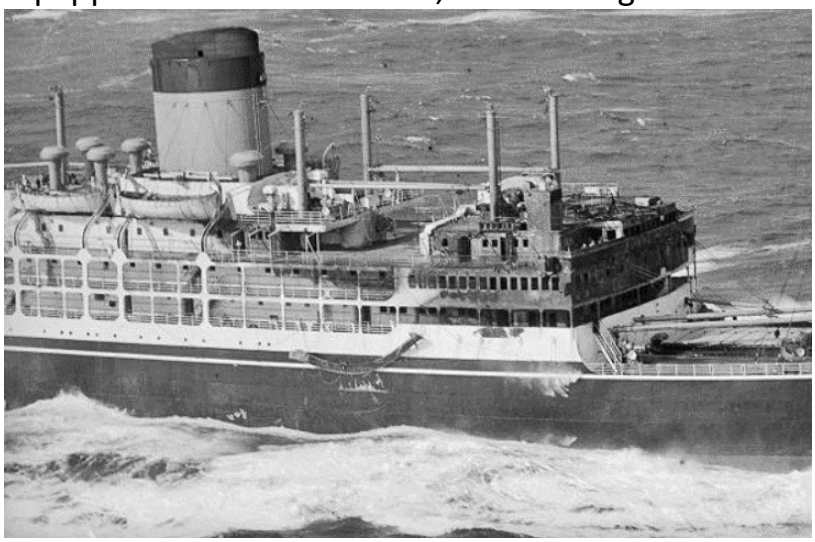
Meanwhile the Chief Officer was in charge of the fire-fighting parties, being assisted by the Chief Engineer, who had left the Second Engineer in charge of the engine room. The crew fought the fire with water hoses from behind on three decks, eventually after three hours the fire was brought under control.

Gothic was rolling very heavily during the fire fighting. With the large amount of water being pumped into the upper decks, with the water being contained by the lip on the lower part of the door openings, much of it couldn't escape. With each roll of the ship, she stayed at a very acute list, before eventually coming back onto an even keel. It is thought that this erratic rolling could have been what caused Edward Skelly, the third electrician, to lose his balance and fall overboard, and was lost at sea. It took a further three hours before the fire was finally extinguished. The forward part of the accommodation extending to around seventy feet aft was eventually totally destroyed.




Pictures:- Evening Post, Alexander Turnbull Library. The remains of the Dining Saloon and the damaged Navigation Bridge.

With the Ship's Bridge and Radio Room both out of action because of the fire, the Radio Officer used a life-boat radio transmitter to send out a distress message, with a cheap transistor radio belonging to a crewmember as his receiver. The message was eventually picked up by a radio operator at Awarua Radio ZLB on the 4th August, more than three days after the fire. An RNZAF Lockheed 'Orion' aircraft, a radar-equipped submarine hunter, was circling the **Gothic** and would have been giving a more accurate position of the ship. The next day the 'Whitby' class frigate HMNZS **Blackpool** (F77), arrived on the scene, and the New Zealand freighter **Navua** [1,952grt/1955] also headed to the area of the **Gothic**. By 12.15pm on the 6th August **Gothic** was 100 miles off Cape Palliser, sailing under her own power, ploughing through 15 to 20 feet high waves as she was heading for Wellington.

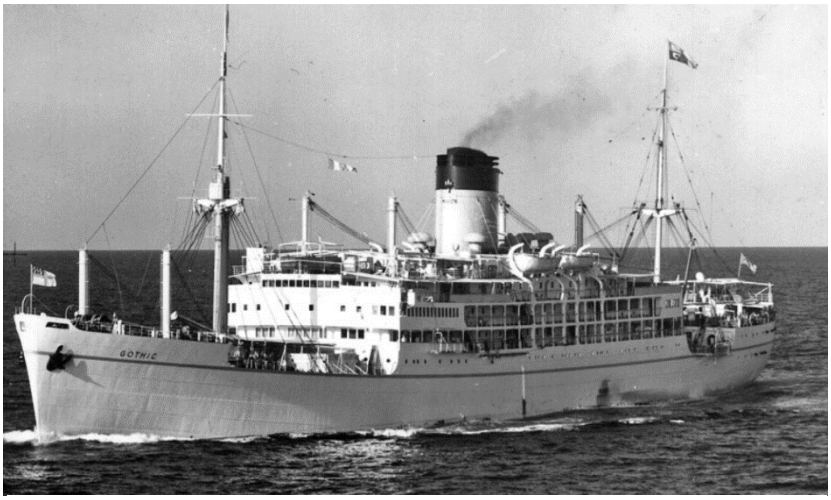


Picture:-Evening Post, New Zealand. The damage caused by the fire.

Sadly two of her ship's engineers and four passengers, including two children died in the fire. The passengers were:- John Halliday, his wife Eileen, and their two children Alan (11) and David (7). The crew were:- Daniel 'Peter' Mulcahy, fifth engineer; Paul Goldfinch, junior engineer; A funeral service had been held aboard the fire damaged **Gothic** and all the six victims of the fire were given a burial at sea.

Gothic was partially repaired in Wellington to enable her to return to the U.K. under her own power. But within a year she was destined to go to the ship breakers in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, where she arrived at China Steel Corporation for breaking on 13th August 1969.

Gothic was built on the River Tyne by the Swan, Hunter & W. Richardson's yard at Wallsend. She was launched on 12th December 1947 as yard No.1759, being completed in December 1948. She was powered by six steam turbines (HP, IP, & LP) built by the Wallsend Slipway Co. Ltd., driving two propeller shafts, giving her a service speed of 17 knots. Her hull dimensions were length – 540 feet; beam – 72 feet; depth – 40 feet. She could carry 85 first class passengers and had a crew of 95.



*A Shaw, Savill Line postcard of **Gothic** as the Royal Yacht*.

In 1953 she was chartered to be the British Royal Yacht, being converted for that role by the Cammell Laird yard in Birkenhead. Her hull was now painted white instead of with the usual black paint. Her Majesty the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh sailed in her for the Royal Visit to Australia and New Zealand which they undertook in 1954.

Acknowledgement.

Some of the information and pictures used in this article on the Tragedy on the **Gothic** has come from the "Shipmates" a journal produced by and for Shaw, Savill Line crewmen.

Editor's [Tees Packet] addition. Your 'editor' has memories of that time, and of the fifth engineer Peter Mulcahy. He used to live with his auntie Winn. in Hartlepool, living next door to where my wife's mother and sister lived. On one evening when I was dropping off my mother-in-law back home, I saw Peter walking along the street carrying his bags heading for the overnight train to London. I went around the block and picked him up, giving him a lift with his bags to the station. Peter had been at sea before, but had decided to come ashore to work, having been employed as a mechanic in the local United bus depot/garage. Unfortunately, the call of the sea beckoned him back, and on that night, he was leaving home for his first trip back to sea, which was a posting to the **Gothic**. I was also in the merchant navy at the time, and several weeks later, during a leave between ships, my wife and I attended a memorial service for Peter that was held in the local R.C. church. I can still remember, to this day, the look I got from his auntie as she was walking out of the church. It was as though she was thinking "What are you doing here?" thinking that I was away on a ship, and "You were the last person here in Hartlepool to see my Peter alive".

Sugar trade in the West Indies and Demerara

By LNRS member W.G.Williamson

Sugar mania is an expression used account for the almost insatiable demand for sugar during the late part of the 17th and the early part of the 18th centuries. This public demand led to a major rise in shipping to and from the Caribbean and Demerara as merchants in Liverpool and elsewhere vied with each other to cash in on this bonanza. Gladstone & Co. were one of the companies that invested in plantations, principally in Demerara, and used their own fleet of ships to transport the goods. In the 1820s the company was a major importer of sugar and rum into Liverpool.

John Gladstone was a Liverpool based merchant and shipowner who was very prominent in this field. Over the years he had acquired mortgages on sugar plantations in Demerara and used his ships to transport his produce back to Liverpool. John Gladstone instructed his son Robertson, his business assistant, to made a voyage to Demerara and the West Indies in 1828. The purpose of the trip was to inspect and report on the various plantations, business associates and agencies in Demerara that Gladstone & Co. employed in the colony. Although only 22 years of age at the time, Robertson had considerable business experience and a major part of his remit was to look at all aspects of the business and to make suggestions to improve its efficiency and profitability.

It is from information that Robinson recorded in a journal of his travels and from letters he wrote to father back in Liverpool, that this article has been produced. From these letters the names of particular ships are mentioned with some regularity and from listings in Lloyds Index, the Gladstone fleet comprised of the following ships.

Corinthian, **Richard**, **Roscoe**, **Ann McKenzie**, **Indian Chief**, **Elizabeth**, **Barton**, **Higginson** and **Duke of Lancaster**

The letters also give an insight into some aspects of the workings of a shipping company at that time and the dangers and frustrations attendant on such operations. Robertson made his outward voyage on one of the company's ships as this extract from his journal states, *I should take my passage in some vessel that would sail about the end of the ensuing September - The **Roscoe**, Capn George Knubley, (James Lowe, first Mate, John Watson, second Mate) was destined as such, & on the 12th October 1828 (Sunday) we made sail for Demerara*.

The vessel was to have an inauspicious start to her forty-day passage to South America, from the journal, *When the **Roscoe** reached the Floating Light, the wind was almost extinct so as consequence, we made little way & the tide being nearly expended it began in the course of a few hours to flow, which brought us again in sight of the Floating Light.*

After what he described as a voyage *tedious in point of time rather through pleasant and agreeable as to the weather*, he arrived off Demerara on the 21st November 1828.

Having arrived safely in the colony, he wasted no time in reviewing the work of their agents in Georgetown, Messrs McDonald Watson & Co, and he did not like what he uncovered. This is what he wrote, *I found this subject upon my arrival in Demerara to be one which would require very strict attention in order to gain such a knowledge of it as would enable me to write with any confidence upon the subject to my Father. It very soon appeared manifest to me that the system so long adopted by Messrs McDonald Watson & Co would in point of fact never do to be continued. What we receive from them, and what they receive from us, stands in this way; when one of the ships arrive, not hurrying themselves, they get a port pass, and the next day enter her at the Custom House which is a very short operation unattended with any trouble whatever. On her arrival they advise M.G.& W. of it in Liverpool and write when she is going to sail. This is all their trouble.*



Robertson Gladstone (1805 – 1875)
Picture courtesy Wikimedia

*In the instance of the **Corinthian**, from St Andrews, the carelessness of the Pilot got her ashore entering the river. McD went and ordered another pilot to her but took no pains to see that he was actually sent, and so it happened no one did go. There the ship remained for 7 or 8 days when I could have sold her cargo @ 4 Gds (guilders) & a half - which I afterwards sold @ 84 fls (florins)They do not pay that attention they ought to our concerns and we gain nothing by employing them*.

In another letter some months later he writes, *I can see no advantage whatever that you derive from McDonald & Watson & Co being your agents. They do not have much to do other than, enter the ship at the Customs House on her arrival – advertising her and entering her out, supplying provisions (for which they charge you about double the price they pay). With the selling of the lumber, which is quite as simple as the rest, and gives them no trouble at all, for it remains on board till the purchaser consequently*

receives it and delivered by the captain, who keeps account of the number of feet discharged from the ship, and the discharge of cargo from Liverpool costs them as little trouble.

The captain of the vessel generally employs himself by calling at the consignees when residing at a distance or takes care to land them himself if in town as soon as possible. They have their own store and will sell their own lumber etc before Gladstone's. He goes on to list the advantages of using Mr McLean, the competent manager of their plantation named Vreed en Hoop.

Upon this subject I was satisfied from the first, our ships must anchor off Vreed en Hoop to the southward of the Ferry Stelling (pier/jetty) as near shore as is safe. They will receive from Vreed en Hoop their Sugar, Rum, Coffee &ce, the Captain will have more induced to remain on board being at a greater distance from George Town, the sailors will be out of the way of obtaining New Rum, most destructive to health, from the Town's people. They will have no sickness comparatively speaking, they will be a protection to Vreed en Hoop, should an accident happen there, and Mr. McLean's management will be I am sure a most satisfactory one to us.

He expands on this topic in a later letter. *The advantages of this were that ships could anchor off the estate although a bit away from town. Presently ships anchor near Georgetown and the consequence is that the sailors are constantly buying new rum, which is most poisonous in its effects from the boats coming alongside at all times. Captains and officers should prevent this but it was not always possible due their other duties. The fact is well known here that new rum is the cause of more deaths among sailors than anything else, and to put a stop to their getting it, is almost impossible*.

In his first letter home dated 16th September 1828, he reports on the loading of three of the company's ships. He continues this theme in his next letter.

***Indian Chief** is now nearly all on board 100 Hhds (hogsheads) from Success and this estate 93 Hhds besides rum. Nothing left out there (the estates) for the **Roscoe**, she I fear will not leave this before the middle of February next.*

*We have just heard of the arrival of the **Ann McKenzie** at St. Andrews on 4th November. The **Corinthian** has not yet arrived (at St Andrews). McDonald, Watson & Co tell me lumber off both will come in well as no more ships are expected with the same article.*" He continues, *I have been very anxious to get justice done to the stowage of the **Indian Chief's** cargo. She will have in all 400 - 460 Hhds of sugar with some tierces, 150 puncheons rum and about 100 Hhds rum with 25 bales cotton, which, on reference you will find considerably more than her last cargo from hence. Her cabin is considered one of the best here, but owing to the season she has no passengers for her early return.*

In his next letter two weeks later, he reported that the **Corinthian** lost one of her boats on the outward passage to St. Andrews and this information was from Alexander & Co. (of St. Andrews, New Brunswick*).* He then outlines the cargo from each estate to be loaded on the **Roscoe** as follows:

Vreed en Hoop - 85 Hhds sugar, Success – 100, Hamers – 180, Reed – 100, Jones – 100

Mr. C. Grant will probably ship some sugar also, with a proportion of rum and 90 casks of coffee will about compose her cargo.

As well as dealing with business matters, Robertson was not above taking an interest in promoting an individual's job prospects. His letter 20th December 1828 shows that he is willing to let the 2nd Mate of the **Roscoe** sail on a competitor's ship as 1st Mate.

Indian Chief *has completed cargo and will sail with tomorrow's tide. She has shut out 10 hogheads sugar and 12 puncheons rum which I expected she would have taken, but has, as you will observe, upon the whole, a very fair cargo.*

I have given John Watson, the 2nd mate of the ***Roscoe****, permission to take advantage of a vacancy that has occurred on the* ***Huddersfield*** *as 1st mate. He is perfectly competent to the situation and from what I saw of him on the voyage (out), promises to be a very steady, clever fellow. To this I know, you can have no objection particularly as he has improved his situation by the change.*

Captain Gill has just told me that the sugar sent by McDonald Watson & Co on board his ship for stores is so bad that he cannot make use of it and begs to have a little from this estate. I shall see into this again but is really too bad when they charge the ship the very highest price going for everything wanted."

He then lists cargo on board the **Indian Chief** as: *468 Sugar (Hhds), 10 Tierces Sugar, 130 Puncheons Rum, 83 Rum (Hhds) and 25 Bales Cotton*.

Robertson writes about the massive devastation to Georgetown after a fire broke out in a grog shop owned by a Frenchman. Efforts to quench the fire were not good, in fact downright bad. "*This most destructive and heartrending scene all was distraction, confusion and despair."*

"The ***Roscoe*** *and* ***Huddersfield*** *sailors behaved admirably but others took advantage of their situation and got so intoxicated as to be of no service whatsoever. The Frenchman's name was Magnôt, (Maigrot) the Negroes stole everything they could lay their hands on but most of them have been detected."* He then adds to this letter*. "This fire will very much affect the price of lumber, of which there is none in the Colony except one small lot in the brig* ***Norah*** *arrived a few days ago."*

Two days later he writes that he proposes to, *Sell the* ***Ann McKenzie's*** *cargo and keep the* ***Corinthian's*** *cargo for the estates. Preferable to sail the* ***Ann McKenzie*** *before the* ***Richard*** *as it will not be necessary for her to return home depending on the*

state she may be in. Captain Gill has an excellent name here and only requires to be more known to become a favourite with passengers.

That the **Indian Chief** carries less cargo than she could is attributed to being very injudiciously placed, besides the hold being too shallow. On his voyage out to Demerara, Robertson noted that he *Took note of ships stores. Certainly, Captain Knubley is as careful of everything connected with the ship as a man can be, but Jones the overbroker is as careless as can be. For example, out of all the old sails at home, we had not on board the* ***Roscoe*** *a particle of old canvas to make or repair the awnings or other purpose. Nothing is more useful than old canvas.* ***Indian Chie****f had the same problem when she left Liverpool. Regarding sails, we were compelled to use new canvas while old would have been suitable. At Demerara the captains generally spend their time anywhere but on board their ships."*

Letter of 5th January 1829, he notes *the cargo for the* ***Ann McKenzie*** *is listed as 138,000 feet broadest plank, 30,240 ash staves. For the former we have offered flsf72 for the latter fls84. I expect we shall get more than these prices in the course of a day or two. Vreed en Hoop and Success estates will need part of the cargo for immediate use, the greater part will be sold.*

I am sorry to say the ***Ann McKenzie*** *is in a leaky state and from the captain's report on her and her topsides, I trust you will be induced to sell her, being now wholly unfit for the Demerara trade.*

I expect to get some cotton in exchange for sugar for her in order to make her as light as possible. She will leave in March and I hope the ***Corinthian*** *in five weeks after her. In the latter vessel, Mr. Charles Simson intends travelling home. Sugar from Vreed en Hoop per* ***Roscoe*** *is of very superior quality.*

A week later he writes, **Elizabeth** arrived yesterday after a 48-day passage. He received letters written in Liverpool in November 1828.

The ***Harmony*** *has not yet come in and Captain Tobin tells me that it is very probable she would put back for Liverpool owing to the severity of the weather she had encountered. The* ***Elizabeth,*** *some of her bulwarks are gone.* ***One man overboard and another dead occasioned by extreme fatigue.***

17th January 1829 per **Belmont.** *Lumber on the* ***Ann McKenzie*** *is nearly all sold at fls80 payable cash on sailing of the vessel.* ***Corinthian*** *expected with a further supply. He wants to sell as soon as possible to prevent competitors and to get a good price (fls80).*

From calculation I am able to make at present after the ***Roscoe****, which will be ready for sea 25th February the* ***Ann McKenzie*** *will leave in March and* ***Corinthian*** *in April or first week in May at latest. We shall be ready by that time for the* ***Indian Chief*** *which shall doubtless arrive here in April. The* ***James McInroy, Cloud Scott*** *and another vessel are daily expected from Liverpool.*

6th February 1829 per **Hopkinson.** *Letters received per the **Elizabeth**, captain Boltons, after a fine passage of 28 days. **Richard**, captain Nelson arrived. **Corinthian** not arrived. I could sell her cargo for fls88 if in port without difficulty. Our estates will take what they want from her when she arrives but will reserve themselves for the **Richard** cargo and particularly Success for the new sickhouse.*

*When **Conrinthian** arrives, we shall have four ships in the river and I trust you will think that under the circumstances I acted judiciously in sending the **Richard** to St. Andrews. She is in excellent order and will sail from this in the first or second week of March, which will be as soon as she can get rid of her outward cargo and go up the river to take in ballast. You will therefore please order insurance accordingly. The **Ann McKenzie** is nearly out and caulking, she will come next after the **Roscoe** and sail in all March.*

7th February 1829 per **Higginson.** *The **Roscoe** is getting on with loading and will most likely sail this month. The **Ann McKenzie** is nearly discharged and caulking. The **Richard** is delivering her cargo in good order and will be ready to sail for St. Andrews by the first week in March. The **Corinthian** is not yet arrived but we expect her daily as was to sail on the 5th January. (from Liverpool)*

*We have been busy grinding both at Vreen en Hoop and Success. At the former we are making sugar of beautiful quality. Mr. Grant does not make too great a shipment in the **Roscoe** as I expected, but we will have plenty of our own produce to fill her*.

Six days later, 13th February 1828 *I have left the **Roscoe** proceeding with loading nearly 400 hogheads of sugar and likely to get away in all this month.*

***Ann McKenzie** next and sails in March. The **Richard** is discharging and will sail for St. Andrews in the first week of March, which please to affect insurance.*

*I am induced to hope that you will be able to dispose of the **Ann McKenzie** on her arrival as she is decidedly after this voyage, unfit no longer for the trade. (Note: The **Ann McKenzie** was not disposed of until 1836).*

*The **Roscoe** will not be required before July/August. She is I find much too large for the Demerera bar and has to take in so great a proportion of the cargo outside the bar that it becomes not only expensive also attended with some risk in loading her. If there were to be a blow and for such ships it would be hell to get rid of her for even if Hamist (?) business was to be continued, this is more than the estate could give anything like respect. The **Indian Chief** is the very best size for the Demerera trade. She takes in everything inside the bar. (Note: The **Roscoe** was sold to Hardy & Co of Leith in 1831).*

26th February 1829 per **Elizabeth.** *A Mr. Montauroux goes home as passenger on the **Roscoe** for the purpose of securing an advance of plantation "Great Diamond" on the east bank of the Demerera river. He will go with Mr. McLean to inspect this*

estate and report. Mr. Montauroux a young man of colour a very respectable and unassuming both in character and manner, and was very much pleased with him.

I refer you very particularly to my previous letters respecting the state of our ships and the necessity for getting rid of the ***Ann McKenzie*** *and* ***Roscoe*** *as early as circumstances may admit of. The* ***Richard*** *is now ready for ballast and will commence taking it immediately. Captain Williams has frequently in the Bay of Fundy and is well acquainted with its navigation. 20 in staves of the best lumber will compose her cargo – those per* ***Corinthian*** *are now landing at Vreed en Hoop and must be kept for the estates to be told they would not bring prime cost and they take no harm whatever when piled up in heaps.*

The fish per ***Corinthian*** *(26 casks) will be principally sold. Although not much inferior in quality to that from* ***Frand*** *it is not near so well cured and will not keep – a few casks sold for 2¼ stivers*. He notes that the average price for a slave fls1938 *from an inferior gang* sold 10 days ago.

7th March 1829 per **Severn.** Letters received per **Mermaid***. Robertson writes that he had a rough passage from Demerara but made it to Barbados in three and a half days. He stayed in Barbados five or six days before moving on to Trinidad.*

I forgot to mention to you the necessity of either a drop poop or house of some kind put upon the ***Corinthian****. All the captains that have been on her complain of their inability to ballast or other method to get her into sailing trim. Indeed Captain Strogan told me in Demerera that he could not upon trying every means in his power get her down by the stern which he said was extremely detrimental to her sailing. I remember recommending a drop poop for her at the time she was fitting out as advantageous for passengers, but now owing to this cause it seems doubtless and hence will be plenty of time to make any alterations when she is home after this voyage.*

Mr. Grant will easily be able to learn from captain Strogan not only the necessity we should derive in passengers and in stowage of cargo by having a poop. The ***Corinthian*** *is very much admired in Demerara and with good accommodations will always command passengers when any are to be had.*

Ten days later on 17th May 1829, he writes, *Your accounts of Indian matters are really ruinous and worse much beyond anything I recollect in my nearly seven years' experience. If nothing better than Demerara should toss up and no change take place for the* ***Duke of Lancaster.*** *I trust you will not think of dispatching her there for three or four months after arrival from Calcutta: as we have already more ships than we can reasonably fill in the river by the means of filling her slowly will be attended with very heavy expenses, independent of our connection with McDonald and Watson & Co has terminated.*

Schooners to carry produce over the bar to the ship in safety *can with great difficulty be procured and then only as a matter of favour. McDonald got built for the*

purpose of going out to our vessels when loading and from what Watson told me of the expense she was to them, our ships being taken away they will sell her and such schooners cannot be in any other way hired. Then the ***Duke*** *(****of Lancaster****) as you are aware would have to take in a great proportion of her cargo outside the bar, rendering the loading both tedious and dangerous. She would monopolise in a great measure, the Little we have for the other vessels.*

12th June 1829 per **Sandbach.** *I have already advised you of the arrival of the* ***Ann McKenzie*** *with a lumber which I am glad to say has come to a very fair market. I mentioned in my letter that fls72 had been offered for the boards and planks and fls84 for the staves. This I refused and am now selling the boards at fls80 but have not as yet got any of the staves. McDonald & Co, had I not been here, would have sold the whole cargo at once for fls72, to prevent it interfering with the sale of their own. The article is extremely scarce and I shall most likely tell you in my next of the sale of the whole cargo.*

McDonald & Co I now feel convinced are not interested, as they ought to be, in your business but I shall refer this subject till we can converse on it together.

The ***Corinthian*** *would not leave St. Andrews before 25 next and is not therefore got her cargo. I have no doubt do well but Allan Steward & Co (?) write that she will have 100m staves, is much too great a proportion, however the estate will soon require a good part of them. Mon Repose, Success and Vreed en Hoop will take in part of the lumber each – say about 10 feet – the remainder will of course be to sell.*

20th July 1829 per **Sappho.** *The* ***Corinthian*** *arrived 15th February 1829 but due to the stupidity of the pilot who ran her aground several times so that she finally arrived on the 19th February. 70 ft of lumber for the estate.* ***Elizabeth****, (Capt. Tobin) is about to sail. The* ***Richard*** *is nearly empty and will go up river in a few days for ballast. Expected to sail for St. Andrews the end of March (1829).*

The ***Roscoe*** *will not leave the river till the 3rd March and then about the 7/8th March. She has a large cargo. Risks of the bar and suggest do not send her back here again.*

Ann McKenzie *is quite unfit for the trade in her present state.*

No ship required from Liverpool till the end of July except the ***Indian Chief*** *so can spare* ***Ann McKenzie*** *and the* ***Roscoe*** *from the trade.*

Richard *had a cargo of lumber and lots of ships lying idle.* ***Corinthian*** *has too large a cargo of staves and too little lumber. But I will take care that the* ***Richard*** *has the right assortment.*

Information sources:

Athenaeum Archive collection

Gladstone Museum, Hawarden

From the Falkland Islands Magazine Dec 1904

The Last of the Mersey Pilot Cutters

[Editor's note: in finalising publication of recent articles regarding Mersey Pilot Cutters, published in March and June 2021, this much earlier article was discovered from Bulletin Vol 36. No 4 in Spring 1993. It is considered to be yet another interesting aspect of these powerful vessels.]

Sailing on September 23rd 1904 for the Falkland Islands Liverpool has bidden farewell to the last of the old Mersey sailing pilot cutters, which sailed from Clarence Dock, to take her place on that station for the Falkland Islands Co. Ltd. The **George Holt** (or as she was known in the service, **No. 10**), was the finest of the splendid fleet of sailing pilot boats which have been suspended by the present steam fleet.

She was built by Phillips & Co. at Dartmouth in 1892 to the design of Mr. Richardson, Liverpool with dimensions of 101ft length x 21ft beam and 12ft draft and of 78grt. She speedily made herself known as the fastest and most successful boat in the service. Previously, and for some time after her advent, the pilots' earnings in respect of each boat were pooled and divided among the pilots allotted to the particular boat, but the **George Holt** proved so speedy that she frequently cut out the other boats, and her earnings, and consequently those of the pilots on board, far exceeded those of the other vessels. The result was that a certain amount of dissatisfaction was engendered, and it was finally decided to pool the earnings of all the boats and divide the proceeds amongst all the pilots. Even after the introduction of the steam boats the **George Holt** was retained in the pilotage service of the Dock Board as a supplementary boat, so that she has never until recently been out of the service entirely.

A short time ago Messrs W. Lowden & Co, Water St. were instructed by the Falkland Islands Co. to secure for them a good and serviceable sailing yacht for their trade amongst the islands, and Messrs Lowden were fortunate in securing a boat of the type of the **George Holt**, which is eminently suited for the work of the company. Port Stanley, the capital of the Falkland Islands is a port of call of some of the intermediate steamers of the Pacific Steam Navigation Company, and the Falklands Islands Company have a fleet of sailing yachts which carry passengers, mails and cargo from Port Stanley to all the other islands of the group, and bring back other cargo for export - this consisting chiefly of wool collected from the numerous farms in the various islands. This is the work in which the **George Holt** will now be engaged, and she sailed as stated to begin her work there.

Quite a large number of Mersey pilots were at Canning Dock to see the last of their old favourite, and Captain Fortay, lately chief officer of the Liverpool ship **Lalla Rookh**, who goes out in command of the vessel, must have been pleased with the heartiness of the send-off. The **George Holt** is a vessel of 100 tons net register, and as she is a fast sailer she may reach the end of her voyage (a matter of 7,300 miles) in ten or eleven weeks. She has been refitted for her new service by Messrs R.&J. Evans of Liverpool, the midship section being reserved for cargo, while the passenger accommodation is aft; the crew being berthed forward. She is taking out a full general

cargo for the islands. Capt. Fortay, on arrival at Port Stanley will hand over the vessel to her new captain and return home. The crew, however, will remain with the **George Holt** for two years.

She will, in future be known as the **Lafonia**. Mr Cobb, the Falkland Islands Company's shipping agents, Dean Brandon and a large company of pilots and others gave her a good send off on Friday the 23rd September, from the Liverpool docks. They followed her on her passage through the docks until the tug was alongside to take her out. Some of the crew gave their friends a rather strange farewell, sending them - verbally at least - to a certain hot world. The tug reported that she cast her off at the usual place and she sailed away with a fair wind. It is a question whether she or the PSNC's **Panama** leaving in October 27th will reach the Falklands first. Our old friend, Captain MacLaughlin, had the oversight in the F.I. Co's interests of her being fitted out for her new sphere of duty: he got quite 10 years younger while engaged on her. Her masts have not been cut down, as she has experienced worse weather on the Liverpool bar than she is ever likely to encounter in the islands.

She is an exceptionally strong composite schooner of steel frames with English oak planking. The cabins and saloon are most comfortable and roomy, a very great improvement on the **Fair Rosamond**, comfortable as she was. She will most likely be the fastest schooner trading in the Falkland Islands. We can but wish her God-speed, good luck and a long, useful career in the Colony.

To bring the story up to date your editor has been unable to find any detail of her service in the Falklands, nor of her end. However her memory lives on in the **Spirit of Fairbridge** which was built in 1984 under the original name of **Spirit of Merseyside** and is a replica of the Mersey pilot schooners. She is 92.5ft overall, with a beam of 18.5, a draft of 11.2 and 88grt. Her air draft is 84.5ft. Her role has been to take disadvantaged children and young adults on sailing trips. In 1994 she changed names to **Spirit of Scotland**. In 2002 she became **Spirit of Fairbridge** where she again had a role of taking disadvantaged youths on excursions around the British Isles. She is now named **Spirit of Falmouth** and was donated to the charity *Turn to Starboard* where she currently resides.



An Eventful Voyage to Pitcairn Island – Part 2

Submitted by LNRS Member Captain Bob Settle

[Concluding reprinting letters Bob wrote to his parents regarding this unique experience]

RFA Sir Geraint
B.F.P.O. ShipsLondon
8th June 1976

Dear Mum and Dad

We are now at sea again after finalising our task at Pitcairn with fourteen days to spare in our allowed schedule. From my last letter you must have realised that we left Tahaiti on Wednesday 19th May and it took just over three days to get to Pitcairn. We first caught sight of it at about 1000 in the morning but the island to over 1,000 feet in places so it was just after lunch when we dropped anchor in Bounty Bay, with the ship lying off the island by about half a mile and only a few hundred yards from the spot where the Bounty was burnt all those years ago. The islanders were quick of the mark and we had barely finished with the engines than two of the island longboats pulled alongside and the crews were clambering across our decks laden with fruit and wood carvings to trade.

The first two that I met were the island magistrate Ivan Christian and the radio operator Tom Christian. The only two original mutineer surnames still in evidence on the island are Christian and Young since the last McCoy died or left the island some years ago.

Anyway, after an hours trading we were able to unload the Royal Marines landing craft into the water to begin a recce of the harbour using an islander as a pilot. The swell was quite tame on this first day which made it quite easy. I took our Gemini into the harbour through the surf, but we decided that using the Gemini to discharge cargo would not really be worth it, so that idea was scrubbed. That day was in fact one of our best for sea state but unfortunately we were unable to unload any cargo as it was a Saturday and the islanders being Seventh Day Adventists would not agree to any work being done, though making money on the Sabbath does not seem to count. The islanders finally left us about 1700 as they had to get back into the harbour and pull their boats out of the water and into the boathouses before nightfall.

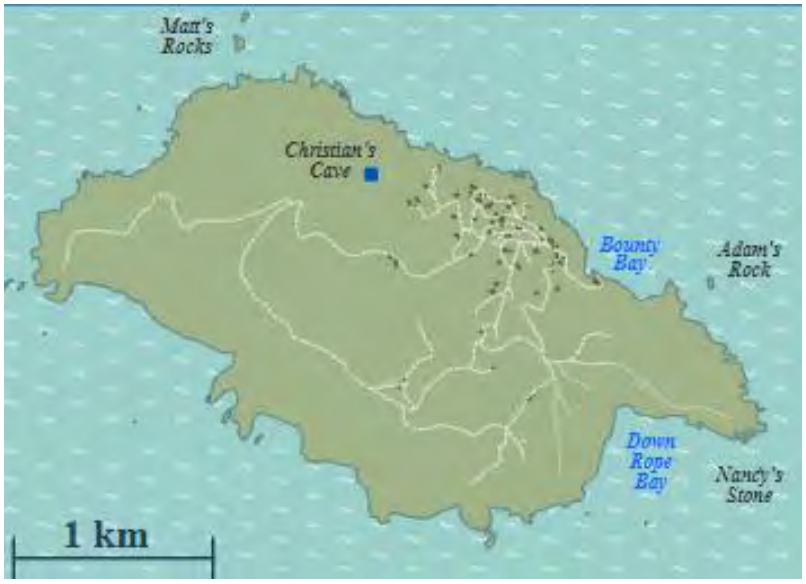
While talking about their boats it seems a good time to tell you exactly why we have brought the Royal Engineers out here to build the new port facilities. The islanders only link with the outside world other than their radio are four 36 foot long boats (two with motors) and a dozen or so canoes with outboard motors. They tend to use the latter only for fishing on very calm days but there is an absolute need to use the long boats to go out to meet passing ships to get their supplies off and to sell fruit and the island handicrafts for whatever they can barter from the ships crews. Up to about ten years ago when the island population was about 100 the longboats were pulled to the passing ships and it took about 30 men to man the boats and getting in and out of constant surf was always a danger. One accident could easily wipe out all the adult male population. Now, even though the boats are motorised and only require a crew of five the surf is still a problem and with the island population of only 57 an accident would be even harder on the community. So some years ago the island council approached the Commonwealth Office and asked what

could be done. A civvy firm was asked to do an appraisal but the expense was too high and the influx of a large number of construction workers would have completely upset the island in all ways. Finally the Army was asked what they could do and by cutting out a lot of the original work and just having a small team of technicians and using the available labour in the island this scheme was finalised. The crowd we brought out (1 Officer, 1 Warrant Officer, 2 Sgts, 1 Corporal and 2 Sappers) are only here to build phase 1 of the project, which is to improve and lengthen the present small jetty, deepen the water alongside the new jetty, improve and widen the 45 degree road to the only town and build a new road across the island to a possible quarry site. This will then make things a lot easier for the second phase to begin next year which is to bring in a slightly larger team to build large breakwaters either side of the new jetty to make passage for boats a lot easier and certainly a lot safer.

Work started very early on the Sunday morning and by the end of the day, over 30% of the cargo had been landed but since this was all in the form of 450lb bags and drums of cement we did not think we would be able to keep up this average, and we were proved right as next day as well as the swell getting up and making the loading of boats difficult (both alongside the ship and alongside the jetty where they continually bumped the bottom and damaged their screws. The other factor was that it had rained during the night and made the road from the jetty to the dump for all equipment completely impassable to the island tractor. This meant stopping the discharge while the Army built up from pieces a Caterpillar tractor which would be able to make the road. It was doing this that our only accident occurred and we were extremely lucky that this was all for with all the heavy boxes swinging in and out of boats there were many possible situations. Anyway the only accident was to one of the sapper divers who caught his hand in the fan of the tractor whilst test running it. We thought he had lost his finger but he was lucky and only cut the tendons. Our doctor spent three hours operating and thinks that he has a 90% chance of regaining complete use. Now however the Army team is down to six as the man has to come back to England with us for further attention. Anyway after this, things went better for a while as the roads dried out and the new tractor began work. For one day all was well then calamity struck again in the form of damage to the two landing craft. The first happened when I had been ashore for the first time on the Wednesday. One of the craft was caught on a large swell under the ship's rubbing strake and broke its back, they just managed to get back aboard in time. The second was to the boat which was bringing me back aboard at the end of the working day which was lifted on another heavy swell and dropped down hard alongside the jetty which bent its shaft and screw. So the next day I spent repairing this boat, and the unloading continued using the island boats.

My first day ashore started early when I caught the first run in and finally stepped on Pitcairn at 0900. I was instantly surrounded by the islanders working on the jetty who knew that I was the second engineer and could supply them with tools, oil, fuel and the like. I had been warned of this and took a pen and notebook to write down names and requirements. When I had finished this I took the long climb up the landing road, slipping a few times in the mud, to the top where I met the only man on the island who smokes and is therefore considered a bit of an idiot by the rest. He is about 75 and apart from smoking has an addiction for Coca Cola so for a packet of cigarettes and two cokes a day he kept me well supplied with bananas, oranges, mandarins (larger than cricket balls), limes, lemons, paw paws and lots of other fruit.

As you can imagine there is not much on the island as after passing a few wooden houses I found myself standing in the island square having passed the only shop on the place, a CO_OP which is only opened for two hours a week. The island square consists of the Church, as dispensary for the nurse (an islander trained in N.E.), the post office and the community hall. One of the Bounty anchors is also in the square. The other interesting artifact is in the Church which is kept locked in a glass case, this is the Bounty Bible, the only book on the island from the mutiny to about 1830. I bought some stamps and postcards in the post office and had quite an interesting conversation with the Post Master. He put me on the road to his house where behind the chicken coop under a grapefruit tree I found the grave of John Adams the last mutineer who died in 1830. He became the patriarch figure, since when only he and Midshipman Young were left of the mutineers, Young had taught him to read from the only book, the Bible. Adams when left alone then taught the Tahaitian men and women the Bible, and this is why they were probably so receptive to the missionaries when they arrived. Adams always rejected the bad things done in the name of the mutiny and the aftermath on Pitcairn, which had been a bloody time as the mutineers quarrelled over the women and the food. There were many murders and eventually only Adams was left, it was then he turned to the Bible and there has not been a murder or major crime on Pitcairn since. His grave was well tended and was close to three other graves; the occupants of which no one could tell me as thee were no headstones. Whilst here I was told that when the Bounty was taken there was a considerable amount of gold on board and it has not been found. Rumour has it that it is buried under Adams. One islander refuted this saying that some years ago when this rumour was first heard his father and friends dug up Adams just to see. Just by the grave was a grapefruit tree at which we threw oranges to knock down the very sweet fruit.



My next stop was at the house of Len and Thelma Brown, two very nice people who were most helpful to us during our stay. It was a large house with many rooms having large windows. Power on the island is at night from a community generator, which is also on during the day occasionally, when they do their washing on the automatic washing machine. They all have tape recorders, food mixers etc but nearly all cook on wood stoves and bake in stone ovens. The Browns also had a windmill which drove a small generator and supplied some of their needs. Behind their house stood a sugar mill which is used to extract molasses from the wild sugar cane that grows here.

Further on was the main cemetery which was surprisingly unkempt considering that most of the graves were within the last twenty years. Further on still was the Government Hostels where the army team are living for their stay. It was a very modern prefab with all mod cons although they have engaged the help of an islander to cook for them. She however would not cook at the hostel on calor gas but preferred to cook at home on wood. Behind the hostel is the oldest house on the island having been built by Thursday October Christian, Fletcher's first son. It is no longer lived in.

I went back to the Browns for lunch and when asked if I wanted fruit salad for sweet said yes, expecting a fresh selection of all the different fruits growing on the island. You can imagine my surprise when I was given the normal fruit salad you get out of a tin. They evidently lap up any fruit from a tin and rarely use the fruit on the island except bananas which they make into a madeira type cake. After lunch one of Thelma's teenage daughters offered to take me up to see Fletcher Christian's cave.

We started off walking along a reasonable dirt track road to the school where I met the island school teacher, a Maori on a two year stint. He is also the island administrator, newspaper editor, accountant and many other jobs. He has a class of ten ranging from five to fifteen. Anyway past the school, she led me off on to a jungle track which got thicker and thicker until as far as I was concerned we were not walking a path at all. Eventually we broke out at the bottom of a steep cliff which she started to climb like a goat, leaving me to struggle about 50 feet below her. She must have got to the cave about ten minutes before me and waited patiently for me to arrive breathless in the cave. It was not really a deep cave just an eroded hollow about 500 feet up the cliff face. From it one got a lovely view of the bay and the township below. It was not as I saw it when Christian first used it for the entrance was covered with creepers and vegetation then. Christian found it by accident when he fell from above, while looking for birds' nests. He always got to it by a rope and spent the last days of his life sitting and peering through the undergrowth with his spy glass, looking for the ship that would one day come to fetch him to be hanged in England. After a breather we started off down through a vertical funnel or chimney in the rock and on to a jungle track which was even worse than the one we came up on.

On the way back to her house I saw my first glimpse of what the mutiny was all about. This was the breadfruit tree which Bligh had been sent to get from the Pacific to take to the West Indies. The mutineers had had the presence of mind to save some of the plants and introduce them to the islands. In fact not many of the fruits now abounding on the island are indigenous to it, being mostly plants brought by missionaries and visitors. I had one disappointment which was the fact as hard as they have tried, no one has been able to grow an apple on the island, though with the volcanic soil virtually everything else does. The best fruit I found were the mandarins which though of a green skin were very sweet. The locals don't eat them until they turn orange but they were perfectly all right to me. The lemons which grow there are like the mandarins and grow very big (the mandarins are as big as grapefruits) and it is quite possible to peel them like an orange.

On leaving the Browns I met our author who lived ashore for a week and he was able to fill me in on a lot of history and the local places of interest. He was living at the chief (only) magistrate's and took me there for a large glass of fresh squash. The jail was at the bottom of his garden and it has not been used for so long that the door could not be opened. In his house he had a number of old glass oil lamps, one of which I was able to buy for a couple of pounds.

Soon it was Saturday again and even though it was a calm day work stopped for the Sabbath. The interesting thing about their religion is that they are not supposed to drink, smoke or eat meat. Though only one man smoked, corned beef and fish made a big part of their diet. The men that came aboard would drink whatever we put in front of them and they all swore like troopers. In the evening the Chief Officer and I were the cooks at a barbeque and managed to cook 80 steaks, 160 chops and hundreds of sausages over a charcoal fire on deck without anyone getting food poisoning.

On the Sunday I went ashore with two of the ship's wives and another officer. We were met by the Brown's two daughters who drove us to the radio station at the top of the island on their motorbikes. Every family has two or more motorbikes and it is not a rare sight to see a mother going to the allotments, or gardens as they call them, with three children on the bike with her. There are only three cars on the island, all minimokes, one belonging to the schoolteacher, one to the pastor and one to the nurse. From the motorbikes going up the mountain tracks, we got a marvelous view of the island which we were to see later from our sore feet. They dropped us at the top and put us on the right track to walk through the gardens with potatoes, beautiful crisp lettuce and very sweet tomatoes growing all over the place. We walked for over an hour through jungle tracks and steep paths only to be met by one of the girls at the top. She then took us up and over a razor back ridge to where Christian had got to his cave the first time. We then walked all the way back the way we had come to the Browns house where we found Len and Thelma busy making the island handicrafts which they sell both on the passing ships and through mail order. Feeling very weary we made our way back to the jetty and the boat to get back aboard.

Monday started for me hectically as a mistake had been made with the loading plan as a number of steel piles could not be loaded on to the one landing craft because they were too long. So I spent the day with an oxy+acetylene cutter on deck burning the things into workable lengths. The work of unloading the cargo was now getting to a difficult stage as all the small loads that could have been handled by the islanders had gone and only large machinery parts were left aboard, if anything happened to the last landing craft the whole project would fall over, as there was no way we could put the large boxes ashore. Luckily both the boat and the weather held out and the last piece of cargo went ashore at 1700 on Wednesday 2nd of June.

I went ashore again on the Wednesday taking with me a few gifts for the people who had been helpful to us. On this day the Captain came along with me, for only his second run ashore. He didn't last long no sooner than he realised we were going to walk all over the island he quickly found an excuse to go back aboard. Anyway we started off at the Brown's again as I had some petrol for them and something for Tom Christian their next door neighbour. We walked nearly half way up to the radio station again before we struck off the road and followed goat tracks up the headland, they call Ship Landing Point, from which there is a commanding view of the bay and the buildings on the jetty. At this point we stopped to eat our packed lunches and washed it down with large mandarins we had picked on the way up. We then went down the cliff and further to the East of the island where we were told we would be able to see the edge of the volcanic crater from which the island was first formed all those years ago. It was an interesting walk through different trees and bushes and then we were at the top. The view that we had was quite a contrast to the rest of the island, as at this end absolutely nothing grew at all. There being no plants or trees just a large expanse of the red volcanic soil that was being continually being torn away by the wind and the rain.

Our way back took us to the edge of an 80 foot cliff which lead down to a place called Downrope which is a small bay with the only place you can call a beach on the island, though there is a small sandy ribbon at the main landing point that is being continually pounded by the surf. Anyway this place Downrope, I had been told, had once been of Holy meaning to the first visitors to Pitcairn, these being Polynesian voyagers in about the 6th Century A.D. They had evidently left carvings at this bay, so having seen almost everything else I was not going to miss this. The way down was extremely steep and the path and steps were covered with fallen banana

leaves for most of the way down. At a few places it was touch and go which way the path went but eventually I got to the bottom. I began to look for the carvings and really had expected too much. What I thought would be large statues like those on Easter Island, turned out to be just small scratchings into the cliff face. Anyway after a long time climbing back to the top we made our way back to the township getting drenched on the way in a cloud burst. The islanders were very pleased to have the rain as there is very little natural water on Pitcairn and they collect all they can from their rooves. We went back to the Browns where we got talking to them and the Christians about the mutiny and the Bounty. It was very surprising to learn that they did not really know very much at all about it. We saw in the garden a few relics from the Bounty which were brought up in 1973. These consisted of one of the anvils which was in very good condition and still in use today, part of the iron ballast and a cannon, both these last two were in very bad condition, just falling away, with nobody bothering to save them. We were each given a bit of the cannon and later I was given two of the copper nails which had also been saved. So we went back to the ship wearily again.

With the finish of the cargo for the harbour project the islanders now had the chance to come out to the ship and get what they could from us. Apart from the dunnage, they took drums of fuel and lubricating oil, flour and coke. But the most favourite items were torches, batteries, tools of any description and for the few of the islanders who had been out of the place; whisky and Playboy magazines. The unloading of the dunnage and fuel took all day and it was left to Friday to do most of the trading. I was able to buy some more stamps as well as a few carvings and basket work. Some of it was given for the work and stuff we supplied them with. I got as a gift a 3 foot six long wooden shark made of a wood that doesn't grow on the island, but on Henderson Island 125 miles away. A journey that they do twice a year in their long boats. I was also given some paintings which they do on the back of dried leaves. When I had been ashore I had noticed in the Island Magistrates house a lot of old glass bowled oil lamps and after a bit of haggling was able to purchase one of these. I have no idea what it is worth but I am sure it's more than the £10 I paid for it.

Eventually the Saturday came around again and the Chief Officer and I were delegated by the Captain and Chief Engineer respectively to represent them in Church. We went ashore in the last remaining landing craft which then went off with the marines on a crayfish hunt. We took our uniforms in plastic bags and changed ashore. We arrived in Church and I suppose three quarters of the islanders were there. The Pastor, we learned later, was an Aussie who had spent most of his life with his wife as missionaries in the South Pacific and Pitcairn was his last job before retiring. The service was slow with a terribly long boring sermon, mostly telling us that we would go to Hell if we sinned by eating meat, smoking, drinking etc. We had the feeling that even though we were guests at his Church he wasn't going to let us leave without feeling guilty. Anyway it didn't work because as soon as we left and talked to a few people, the Army who were staying on the island, invited us to the hostel where they had already set up a bar. As it was the hottest day we were to have there the beer was doubly welcome. Anyway to get back to the Church the hymns were mostly of the rousing evangelistic type which none of us knew, being played by one of the islanders on an old pedal organ which was not really up to rip roaring sounds. We were to learn later that they sang as an island far better without the organ.

After a few beers we went off to lunch with the Chief Magistrate, Ivan, who had been first to invite us to lunch, in all I had received five invites. They have an enormous appetite and seem to live on corned beef and sweet potatoes. I'm afraid the

lunch was not very good but we managed to eat it all and hopefully caused no offence.

The rest of the day was spent just walking around the villagers and talking about our life and their life as well as arranging for them to get us some fruit for the voyage home. We arrived back at the jetty well in time for the last run, only to learn that while out fishing the landing craft had bent its propellor shaft and could not come in to pick us up. This was quite fortunate in a way as it gave us a chance to ride in their longboat as well as helping to launch it through the surf.

Sunday was to be our last full day at Pitcairn and to do something we invited the whole island on board for lunch, expecting about half to turn up. In fact all but five islanders came on board to be fed eggs, sausages, chips and beans with plenty of squash and jellies. Some more trading went on and we were all given a lot of fruit, my fridge being full and my bed covered with bananas still on the stem, oranges, coconuts and of course hundreds of mandarins. There will be no scurvy this trip.

For the children we had rigged an aerial ropeway, swings and rides on our fork lift trucks, and at 3 o'clock there was a tea for everyone with sticky cakes and buns. We all enjoyed it very much and by their happy faces I'm sure the islanders did too. We exchanged gifts between the islanders and the ship and then they sang for us. It was quite something to hear and I hope to borrow one of the blokes' tapes so that you can hear it too. They sang in a very South Sea way three hymns finishing with the Pitcairn goodbye song, and the Queen who they all love dearly.

Then it was time for them to line up and get in their boats with all the gear they had got. They are a truly remarkable community who live very closely together and thrive. There is very little congenital sickness as you would expect from an in bred people. In fact the only defects I noticed or heard about was diabetes in the older people and the fact that all their big toes curled inwards, like thumbs. This was easy to notice as hardly anyone wore shoes at all, even the men working hard with heavy loads on the jetty went barefoot.
Eventually all the islanders, soldiers and gifts were in the long boats and as they pulled away they gave two circuits of the ship waving and singing the Pitcairn goodbye song again. We all waited on deck until in the lowering dusk they had disappeared from our sight.

The next morning we upped anchor at ten o'clock and sailed off in a circuit of the island blowing the whistles as we passed Adamstown for the last time.

We were lucky with the weather because it has broken now and we are rolling through some quite heavy swells, being four days out of Pitcairn on our way to Panama and not as we had all hoped to Wellington.

Well we hope to arrive at Panama on Friday 18th and transit over that weekend and be at Marchwood by about July 2nd or 3rd.

Well I hope you haven't been too bored with my account of our stay at Pitcairn but since it is such a unique experience I thought you would like to hear the lot. It is such an enchanting island and the people so friendly that I could easily live there myself.

Queen of the Isle

Paddle steamer and sailing ship.

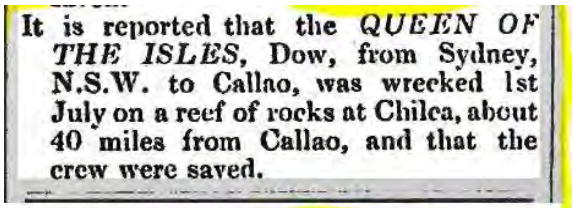
By L.N.R.S. member Dick Clague

The **Queen of the Isle** was the third of four wooden hulled paddle steamers built for the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company (IOMSPC) which were all engined by Robert Napier. Her hull was built under contract to Napier by John Wood & Co of Port Glasgow being launched on 3rd May 1834, and arriving in Douglas on 10th September under the command of Captain William Gill. She was regarded as a fast ship, capable of 9.5 knots and scheduled to reach Liverpool in 8 hours!

By 1841 larger ships were needed, which led to **King Orry,** the final IOMSPC wooden paddle steamer being built. Her hull was built in Douglas by John Winram before being towed to the Clyde for her engines to be installed. She entered service in 1843, replacing the 1832 **Mona**. The **Queen of the Isle** was then sold to Robert Napier in 1844 and her engines removed for use in the iron-hulled **Ben-my-Chree** which was launched in 1845 for the Steam Packet.

The hull of the **Queen of the Isle** was sold to Robert Barclay, another Clyde shipbuilder, who converted her into a sailing ship, and sold her in 1847 to John Mitchell, a Glasgow Merchant and Shipowner. She is believed to have traded world-wide until Lloyd's List carried a notice on 27th August 1855 advising that she had been wrecked on 1st July that year on a reef at Chilca, Peru whilst on passage from Sydney NSW to Callao. The crew, including her owner/captain Matthew Dow were reported all saved.

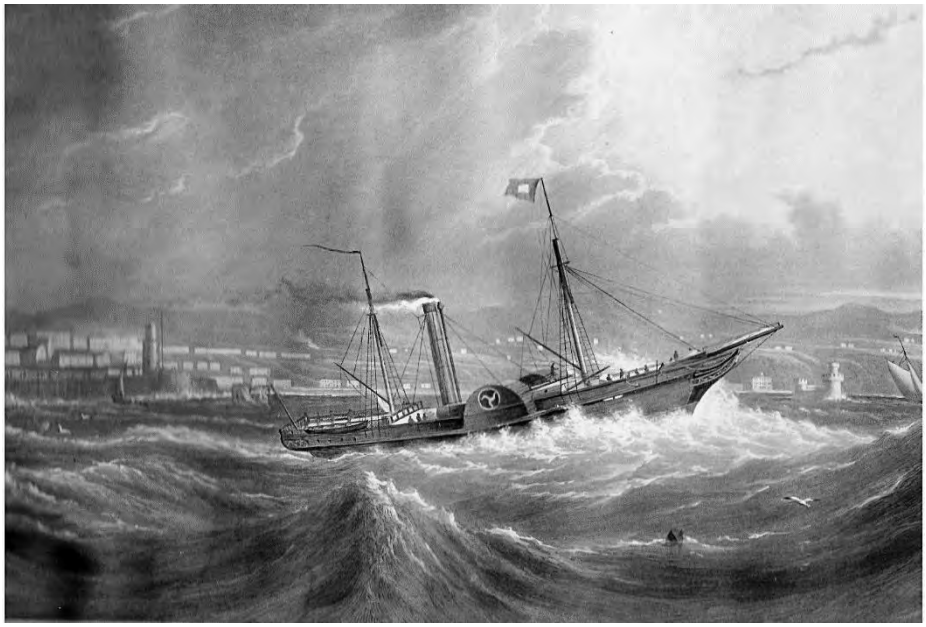
Mr. A.W. Moore – a Director of IOMSPC and respected Manx historian who in 1904 wrote what has been regarded as the definitive source book by most subsequent writers about the company wrote “After ten years’ service the **Queen of the Isle** was sold. She was turned into a full-rigged sailing ship and is said to have been lost off the Falkland Islands”. Over the subsequent century this presumption of where she was lost seems to have been taken as fact by subsequent writers.


It is reported that the *QUEEN OF THE ISLES*, Dow, from Sydney, N.S.W. to Callao, was wrecked 1st July on a reef of rocks at Chilca, about 40 miles from Callao, and that the crew were saved.

Lloyd's List 27 August 1855

Callao is on the west coast of South America – approximately 3,000 miles from the Falklands. Chilca is a Peruvian fishing village about 40 miles from Callao. How could this be confused with the Falkland Islands? The Lloyd's List report and the sinking took place almost 50 years before A.W.Moore wrote his “Historical Account of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company 1830 – 1904”, so he probably had no source available from which to check what he'd heard from others.

There is however documentary evidence[1] in the Jane Cameron National Archives (Falkland Islands) https://www.nationalarchives.gov.fk/ that the **Queen of the Isle**, under the command of Captain Thomas Evans called in at the Falklands in distress, between 8th and 26th June 1849 on passage from Liverpool to Lima. The master reported "we encountered a hurricane, during the violence of which a sea struck the ship, swept her decks and carried away her bulwarks, stanchions and the boats with their contents …. the main hatch was stove". Whilst this was actually six years before her sinking this might have been the incident which had led to the assumption that she had sunk off the Falklands. At this time she was still owned by Mitchell, but she was subsequently sold in 1854, the year before she was lost, to Matthew Dow.



Queen of the Isle *leaving Douglas*
This engraving by W.Westall ARA is in the author's collection

One sailing ship with Manx connections wrecked in the Falklands is the Sunderland-built **Lady Elizabeth** – built in 1879 and operated world-wide by the Castletown based Karran fleet until sold to Norwegian owners in 1905. In 1913 after rounding the Horn on passage from Vancouver to Delagoa Bay (now known as Maputo Bay) in Mozambique, she struck Uranie Rock at the entrance to Berkeley Sound, Falkland Islands. She was converted to a floating warehouse in Stanley Harbour and finally beached in Whalebone Cove.

Note [1] - [Source: Jane Cameron National Archives (Falkland Islands), Inward Despatch & Letter Books (H3 1842-1850 part 12), page 8]

The assistance of one-time Falkland Island resident Peter Beardmore and information from the: -

Scottish Shipbuilding Database https://clydeships.co.uk/ and
Wear-Built Ships http://sunderlandships.com/

Which have been most helpful in compiling this item.

William Henry Fox Talbot

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

Some members may be familiar with this name but his story is worthy of telling. *He was an English member of parliament, scientist, inventor and a pioneer of photography.*



Fox Talbot at work.
From Wikimedia Commons under CC-BY 2.0 license

Talbot was the only child of William Davenport Talbot, of Lacock Abbey near Chippenham, Wiltshire and of Lady Elisabeth Fox Strangways, daughter of the 2nd Earl of Ilchester, and was born 11 February 1800 in Melbury, Dorset, his father died when he was less than a year old and he and his mother lived in a succession of homes until she remarried in 1804.

He was educated at Rottingdean, Harrow and Cambridge from where he graduated in 1821. Then, in 1832 he married Constance Mundy, the same year as being elected as MP for Chippenham. In 1833, while visiting Lake Como in Italy, his lack of success at sketching the scenery prompted him to dream up a new machine using light-sensitive paper which would make the sketches for him automatically. Returning to England, he began work on this project at his home in Lacock Abbey, Wiltshire. It was regarded as a photographic breakthrough from which he later wrote 'I found that the faithless pencil had left only traces on the paper, melancholy to behold". This led him to:

".....reflect on the inimitable beauty of the pictures of nature's painting which the glass lens of the camera throws upon the paper in its focus – fairy pictures, creations of a moment, and destined as rapidly to fade away....the idea occurred to

me…..how charming it would be if it were possible to cause these natural images to imprint themselves durably, and remain fixed upon the paper".

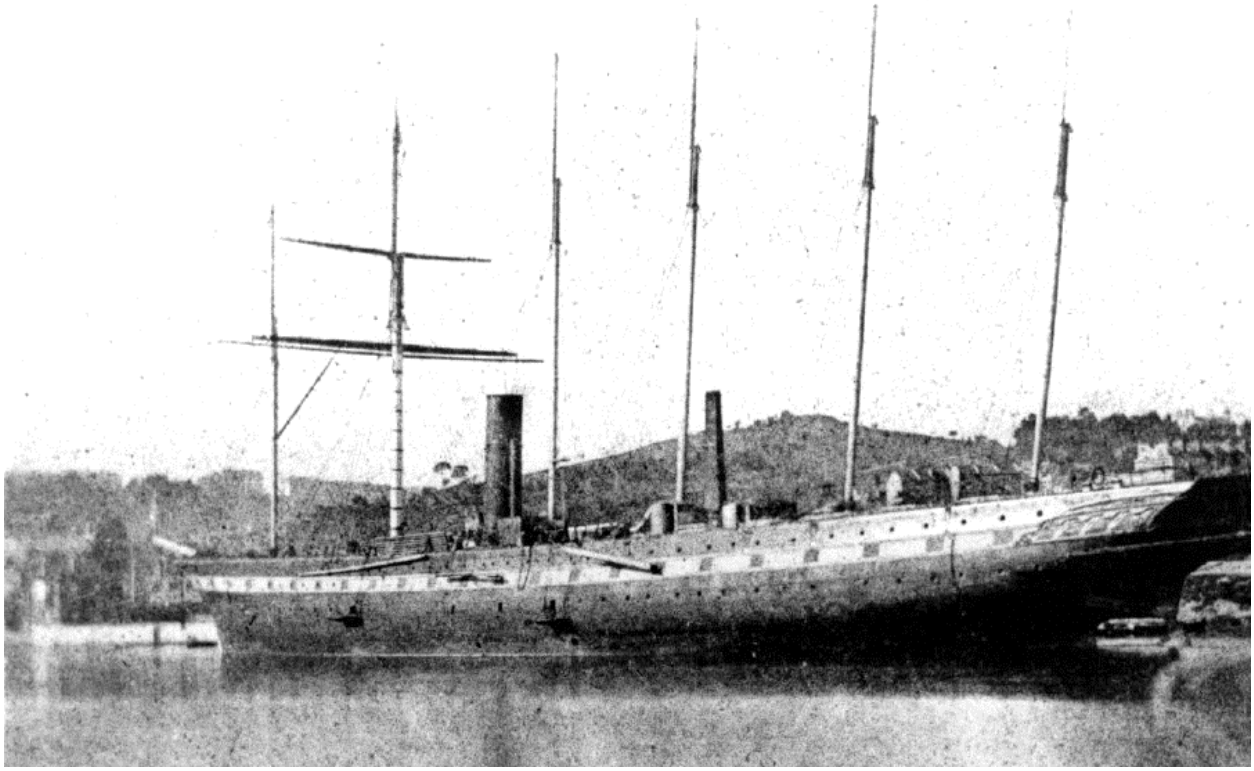
Thomas Wedgwood had already made photograms - silhouettes of leaves and other objects - but these faded quickly. In 1827, Joseph Nicéphore de Niepce had produced pictures on bitumen, and in January 1839, Louis Daguerre displayed his 'Daguerreotypes' - pictures on silver plates - to the French Academy of Sciences. Three weeks later, Fox Talbot reported his 'art of photogenic drawing' to the Royal Society. His process based the prints on paper that had been made light sensitive, rather than bitumen or copper-paper.

Fox Talbot went on to develop the three primary elements of photography: developing, fixing, and printing. Although simply exposing photographic paper to the light produced an image, it required extremely long exposure times. By accident, he discovered that there was an image after a very short exposure. Although he could not see it, he found he could chemically develop it into a useful negative. The image on this negative was then fixed with a chemical solution. This removed the light-sensitive silver and enabled the picture to be viewed in bright light. With the negative image, Fox Talbot realised he could repeat the process of printing from the negative. Consequently, his process could make any number of positive prints, unlike the Daguerreotypes. He called this the 'calotype' and patented the process in 1841. The following year he was rewarded with a medal from the Royal Society for his work.

His work in the 1840s on photomechanical reproduction led to the creation of the photo glyphic engraving process, the precursor to photogravure. He was the holder of a controversial patent which lead to the early development of commercial photography in Britain. He was also a noted photographer who contributed to the development of photography as an artistic medium. He published *The Pencil of Nature* (1844–46), which was illustrated with original salted paper prints from his calotype negatives, and made some important early photographs of Oxford, Paris, Reading, and York. It remains worthy of note that Fox Talbot delivered a wide range of papers to the Royal Society, many relating to mathematical subjects as well as astronomy and archaeology and also translated cuneiform inscriptions from Nineveh.

In the early 1840s his interest moved to shipping and river scenes where he photographed, amongst others, Brunel's ss **Great Britain** then being completed at Bristol. This picture (see following page) was taken in April/May 1844 and is considered to be one of the earliest photographs of a ship.

Fox Talbot's death at his Wiltshire home was reported on 17 September, 1877.



*SS **Great Britain** fitting out alongside Gasworks quay in Bristol Floating Harbour (not Cumberland Basin), April 1844. This photograph was taken by pioneering photographer William Henry Fox Talbot is not only the first taken of **Great Britain**, but also believed to be the first photograph ever taken of a ship. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons*



As an abandoned hulk in Sparrow Cove, Falkland Islands taken in 1969 by Marion Morris Picture courtesy Talbot.Bodlian

Chair stuck in Suez Canal

A Jotting by LNRS Member Glyn L Evans

While the above piece of information should, I feel, have made headline news in all the daily papers, it never did, being somewhat overshadowed by the fact that the chair in question was in a 20 foot container on board the **Ever Given** along with 17,999 other containers. The story began on 17th February when, having seen a leather armchair advertised on the website of a furniture company based in Southport, Lancashire, I placed an order (lead time 6/8 weeks) and made payment by credit card. In anticipation of delivery, a space was cleared in the sitting room by the disposal of an old family heirloom, my conscience being cleared by the fact it went to another family member.



Based on the fact that my leather armchair (see above) at £600, was half the price of similar chairs being advertised I might have guessed it was not of British manufacture, and suspicions were aroused when the estimated delivery time came and went. After several enquiries of the supplier for an up-date, my suspicions were confirmed when, on 6th April I received the following response. “We are expecting these chairs to arrive in the next 2/3 weeks. Suspect have been sadly delayed with the Suez episode last week.” When I read, some weeks later, that **Ever Given** was being detained by the Suez Canal Authority (SCA) against some hefty and disputed release payment, I decided that I didn’t really need a new chair and so I advised the seller that, due to failure on their part to perform, I was terminating the contract of sale. Within an hour of sending an email to that effect, I received a reply saying “We totally understand,” and the next day my bank account was credited with a full refund. I almost felt a bit of a heel but was relieved nevertheless.



The shipowners have declared a General Average on the basis that the expenses incurred in refloating the stranded vessel were voluntarily and necessarily incurred to save the whole adventure. General Average is a liability accepted by

marine underwriters and the laws governing it entered the statute books with the passing of the Marine Insurance Act of 1906. However, GA is of greater antiquity than marine insurance as its principle goes back to the laws of a sea empire flourishing centuries before the establishment of the Roman Empire. As a system for making good maritime losses voluntarily incurred for the common benefit it has always existed quite apart from marine insurance. When **Ever Given** is released and eventually reaches either a port of refuge or of discharge, the shipowner will appoint a firm of specialists to draw up the average adjustment. As there are potentially 18,000 separate cargo interests involved, the GA might take anything up to seven years to complete. To secure the release of cargo in advance of this, the shipowner will ask cargo owners to sign a GA bond and will insist upon either a deposit, normally paid by underwriters, against their eventual contribution to the GA or to the issue of a GA Guarantee to do so, signed by underwriters.

Let us now consider the man on top of the Clapham omnibus, a hypothetical, ordinary and reasonable person, used by the courts in English law where it is necessary to decide whether a party has acted as a reasonable person would. His daily dealings have seldom before been concerned with the laws of General Average although, with an estimated 90% of all manufactured goods purchased in the UK being imported, this may no longer be the case. One other law, as old as General Average, has always concerned the above gentleman and continues to do so. I was reminded of it during my recent endeavours to purchase a leather armchair. CAVEAT EMPTOR.



Maybe a True Story?

A gentleman in his early 70's had retired and to help pass the daytime hours he had started a second career stocking shelves in B&Q. However, he just couldn't seem to get to work on time. Every day he was 2, 3, 5 minutes late. However, he was a good worker and really clever, so the Manager was in a quandary about how to deal with it. Finally, one day he called him into the office for a talk. ‘I have to tell you,’ the Manager said. ‘I like your work ethic, you do a top class job, but you're being late so often is quite a worry.' 'Yes, I realise that, sir, and I am working on it.' replied the OAP. 'I'm pleased to hear that, you are a team player. It's odd though, you're coming in late. I know you're retired from the Merchant Navy. What did they say if you came in late there?' 'They said, "Good morning, Captain".'

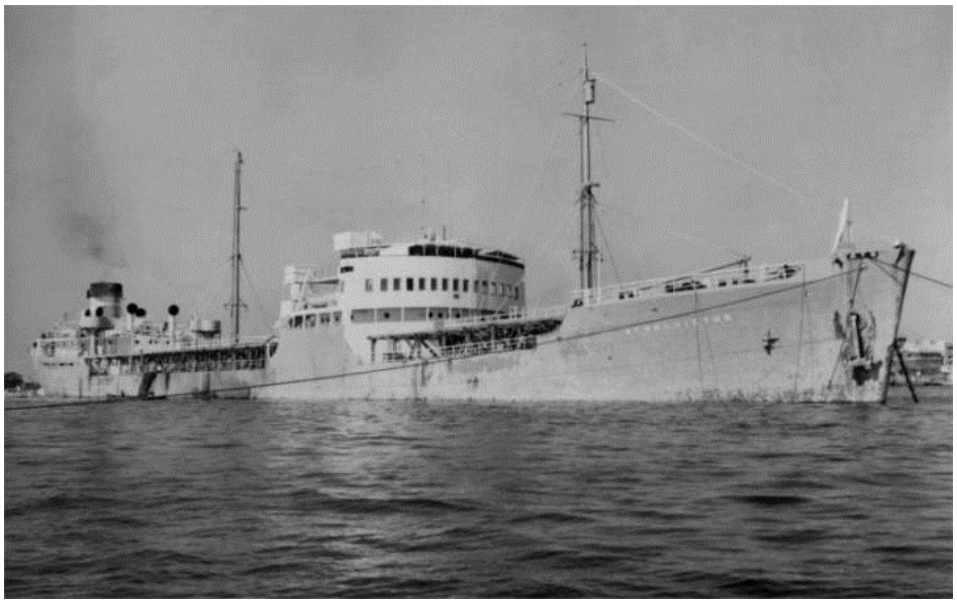
A Bad Day in Lagos

By LNRS Member David White

Molasses is the by-product of sugar production and runs off when sugar cane is passed through rollers and crushers, being a viscous heavy liquid having twice the weight of petrol. In the early days at sugar plantations in the West Indies it was run off into the ground. However, uses were soon found for molasses in alcohol fermentation processes, animal feed industries and farming. Molasses in bulk needs heating coils in the transporting tanks as it can solidify at any temperature below 96 degrees F. Its transportation is thus very similar to the carriage of bitumen.

Athel Line Ltd came into being in January 1940 as a wholly owned subsidiary of United Molasses Co. Ltd, to own and operate the Group's molasses tanker fleet. The entire company was taken over by Tate & Lyle in 1965 and Athel Line joined a group with two Scandinavian partners as Anco Tanker Services. Athel Line took over the whole of the shareholding in 1972 and the Athel Line and Sugar Line Fleets merged. In 1973 the company became wholly owned by Tate & Lyle and in 1976 it merged with Panocean. Though primarily concerned with the transport of molasses, the tankers were often tramped around to carry whatever cargoes were available, including vegetable oil, crude oil and petroleum spirits.

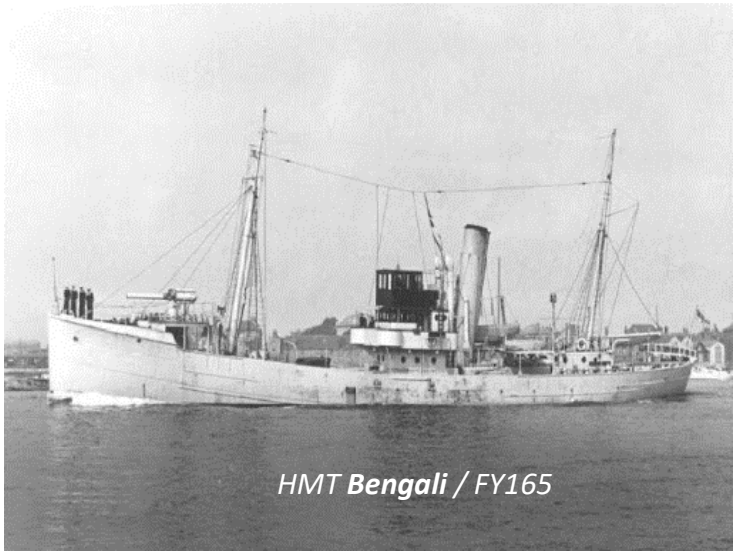
Athelvictor had an unusual start in life. Her ice-strengthened hull was launched in Gothenborg as **Silenus** in 1939 for Swedish owners Axel Johnson but then transferred to Caledon Engineering at Dundee for completion. Of 8,400grt, 12,000dwt, she had an eight-cylinder Hawthorn Leslie diesel engine driving a single propeller. In 1941 after trials she was sold to Tankers Ltd (Athel Line) Liverpool for about £300,000 and renamed **Athelvictor**/GPQQ.



Members will be well aware of the numerous armed trawlers in service during WW2 performing a vital and undervalued role as patrol vessels, rescue ships, convoy escorts and anti-submarine vessels. Before the vessel's name, the prefix HMT – not HMS – was used. Though there are a number of confusing exceptions, the general rule of identification by pennant numbers is that those trawlers built for the RN carried the prefix T in the pennant

number while those taken up from trade (ie former active commercial fishing boats) carried the prefix FY.

A group of trawlers were based at Freetown providing patrol and escort duties and had been involved in a number of actions off the coast of West Africa. In early December 1942, three trawlers were refitting at the Naval Base on the river at Lagos. They were the Isles Class **Canna**/T161, built by Cochranes at Selby 1940, 550 tons and the other two were the sister-ships **Bengali**/FY165 and **Spaniard/**FY144, built in 1937 on the Tees at Smiths Dock and at 455 tons were slightly smaller than **Cann***a*.



*HMT **Bengali** / FY165*

Carrying high octane petrol from the Persian Gulf, the tanker *A***thelvictor** had completed a partial discharge at Takoradi. On Friday 4th December 1942, HMT **Kelt**/FY112 (sister to **Bengali** and **Spaniard**) arrived in Lagos from Takoradi escorting **Athelvictor.** The tanker secured to the Shell terminal at Apapa while **Kelt** moored at the Naval Base.

The following day, Saturday 5th December, **Athelvictor** commenced discharging but several thousand gallons of highly inflammable cargo escaped into the river and drifted rapidly down to the Naval Base and ignited, completely destroying **Canna, Spaniard** and **Bengali** and badly damaging **Kelt**.

Gordon Bates writes:

*I joined the mv **Athelvictor** in Swansea on 30th January 1942. The voyage was to last some eighteen months. When laden, we carried 12,000 tons of spirit, generally of high-octane value.*

We arrived at the oil terminal of Apapa, which is across the river at Lagos. It was intended that we should discharge the remainder of petroleum which we had earlier loaded in the Persian port of Abadan. The following day, a Saturday, I was to accompany the Captain to Lagos across the river where I was to have an ear checked following an infection. We were awaiting the arrival of the boat and I was looking down river to the Naval Base some three quarters of a mile when I saw the river was on fire. At the time there were three anti submarine vessels (ex trawlers) undergoing refit. They would be carrying ammunition and depth charges. Suddenly there was a massive explosion and air blast as one or more of the trawlers exploded. The river was moving down stream at about 4 knots and it would appear that an amount of petroleum had entered the river at the terminal and had been

carried downstream to the Naval Base. We completed unloading and the next day lay at anchor in the river whilst over the next three weeks an enquiry into the incident was carried out.

Of the four trawlers, **Kelt** suffered the most casualties, with only one survivor out of her crew of 26. Casualties on the other three vessels were less, totaling 15, as many of their crew were ashore. Final casualty figures including those ashore were never accurately known but are believed to have been about 100. Though she had her bows blown off, **Kelt** was refitted and returned to service. Sold in 1945, she was scrapped at Bruges in 1960 as **Camilla**.

The War Diary of the Flag Officer in Charge, West Africa for December 1942 contains surprisingly little information about the incident:

Friday, 4th December	H.M.S. KELT arrived Lagos from Takoradi escorting tanker ATHELVICTOR.
Saturday, 19th December	H.M.S. DESPATCH arrived Lagos where her Commanding Officer will hold enquiry into the cause of the explosion which occurred on 5th December.
Monday, 21st December	At Lagos, Naval Board of Enquiry opened on board H.M.S. DESPATCH dealing with the explosion in the Marine Harbour on 5th December.
Tuesday, 22nd December	Board of Enquiry second day sitting on H.M.S. DESPATCH at Lagos.
Wednesday, 23rd December	Board of Enquiry concluded on board H.M.S. DESPATCH at Lagos.

What became of the **Athelvictor**? Contrary to numerous inaccurate records, she did not explode, she did not sink. As Gordon Bates wrote (above) she remained at anchor until the completion of the Board of Enquiry and then resumed her vital operations. She next appears in the records as being part of the large convoy HX247 (73 merchant ships and 25 escorts) which departed New York on 8th July 1943. She arrived safely in Liverpool on 22nd July with her cargo of petrol.

1952 Sold to Chiarella Societe di Navigation, Genoa for £735,000 and re-named **California**; Port of Registry Genoa
1960 Sold to Garla Cameli, Genoa for £132,000
1961 Sold to Armatorati Mediterraea Idorabutt, Palermo
1962 Sold to the breakers at La Spezia

A Full Life – Part 1 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. He had no access to a computer and 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. You could say his wartime experiences were as a result of the law of unintended consequences. Working as a humble office apprentice for the PSNC in the late 1920s, early 1930s, and then for his uncle in Bermuda in the 1930s would explain how he gained employment with the Imperial Censorship in Bermuda.

Pacific Steam Navigation Company, Liverpool 1926/31

From 1926 and into the 1930's was a dismal period for anyone remotely connected with shipping. Trade was going through a slump, export cargoes were not called for and imports were similarly short. In 1926, in September, I had the misfortune to be selected as an office apprentice in the Customs and Forwarding Department of the Pacific Steam Navigation Company at the princely salary of £6/13/4d per month which equals £80 per annum.

My duties involved, among other tasks, operating a heavy press which was used for making duplicates of all letters sent out, which I had to note in a postage book and take to the G.P.O. The press was kept in what was a former broom cupboard, it was hot, very, and was graced by a 40W globe, presumably because this size was the cheapest available. The operator was obliged to stand, no seats of any kind were available, and this and other cupboards were in various parts of the main wall.

The Company offices comprised two floors of half the building known as the Cunard Building at Liverpool's Pier Head. There was a large basement area used as a paint store, dump for old documents and for other purposes, one of which was as a bolt hole for members of the staff to sneak out earlier than the official closing time of 5.15 pm. in the summer and 6 pm. in the winter. It was possible to gain access to the offices without going through the main doors and attracting unfriendly attention.

Another charming use for this dungeon was to keep what was known as a putty copying machine, which consisted of several large metal trays which held a peculiar mixture of putty, to which water was applied and the putty worked by hand to a consistency which enabled it to reproduce bills of lading and consular documents. By placing an original document face down on the putty and if this special purple was not too wet, a fatal event, fair copies could be made. Should they turn out blurred, the luckless operator, me, was the victim of a torrent of uncommon words involving my parentage and general uselessness and the amount of unnecessary work I had caused. Let me add, there was only one method to cope with the blank documents which was to invert them on the putty tray and rub with the hand. As a result of this painful process I have, many a time, temporarily removed the fingerprints as such, being left with very sore and smooth fingertips.

Twice a month, on a Thursday, it was necessary to work overtime till the work was complete and it was very common for me to catch the 1.00am ferry to get to my home in Rock Ferry 2 miles away. I was expected to turn up at 9.00am the same day.

The company operated an overtime scheme which allowed payments of 3/- for working until 9.00pm. and a further 1/- for each subsequent hour. This bonanza was supplemented by a 3/- meal ticket for an ample plain meal at a restaurant associated with various companies known as the Allied Staffs which was high up in the Royal (Liver) Liverpool Building. I do not recall that overtime was worked at the scale above by any other department It is likely that the Customs and Forwarding Department was not most desired and most unpopular.

With my exception, the various clerks and all those associated with it were exceptionally heavy smokers and the area in which they worked was blue with smoke, supported by a heavy barrage of words not heard in polite Society.

I was too busy down below rubbing away my fingerprints preparing the invoices for the senior men to deal with after they went to the local pub. Had they not done this there would have been no overtime necessary by any means. These clerks were quite able people in their knowledge of French and Spanish and their familiarity with the South American trade and, indeed, some of them did graduate to Company Offices on the South American route.

I have no idea what were the scales of pay, but I have some recollection of £375 per annum as being the minimum salary on which a man might contemplate marriage, and this dizzy height perhaps took 15 years' service.

The company, as a whole, was regarded in Liverpool as being a respectable concern, but I would not think that it could be at this time be deemed a golden opportunity for anyone of ambition, but for any one such as I with highly limited achievement, it offered a means of some modest start in life with somewhat remote prospects, virtually minimal.

Thankfully after two years I obtained a transfer to the Passenger Department. This was a very different cup of tea; it was interesting to mix with the wide selection of passengers involved.

I was on very good terms with an experienced policeman who watched the passengers coming and going on the ocean liners. I remember an occasion on which my friend, who sat with me in the disembarkation lounge, told me he expected something interesting to happen. Sure enough, the passenger presented himself before going ashore and gave his name. My police friend corrected this gentleman and told him that his real name was something quite different and that he was a deserter from the British Army during the 1914/18 war. The poor fellow looked shattered, but was immensely relieved to hear that my friend had gone into his behaviour whilst abroad, and had established that his life and conduct abroad had done nothing to conflict with the British interests, and he might be relieved to know that no action against him was contemplated.

Staff were allowed precisely one hour to have lunch. Some people had various types of parcels with sandwiches and flasks, others had something in a pub and I

favoured one of the numerous cafes which sold large rolls containing tongue or egg and tomato. One of these with a cup of coffee cost 1/6d. Fares on the Rock Ferry steamer, as I remember, cost about 30/- per month, all of which overstrained my meagre salary. It was during this period that I met a dear girl who became my wife 13 years later, which was about the only thing I did right.

The group had serious financial problems in 1930, and Lord Kylsant was sent to prison in 1931 for 'producing a document with intent to defraud'. I presume that it was as a result of this that the Group was liquidated and that Father and his colleagues were made redundant.

Between 1931 and late 1935 my father worked on his maternal uncle's small estate in Bermuda, which while not the most exciting of jobs would have given him a very good insight into who was who, and the workings of the island.

On returning to the UK with precisely 30/- in his pocket his father, my grandfather, who has been the subject of two talks to the LNRS, remarked that he had 'cut it a bit fine', which must have been the understatement of the year.

There followed three years 1936 to 1939 as Secretary warden/Resident at the Liverpool Children's Friend Society, Boys' Home and Refuge. My father worked here until shortly before the War, when the home was closed down.

As a side line I became a Sector Warden in the A.R.P. service and personally fitted some 4,000 people with gas masks. I can think of more salubrious jobs.

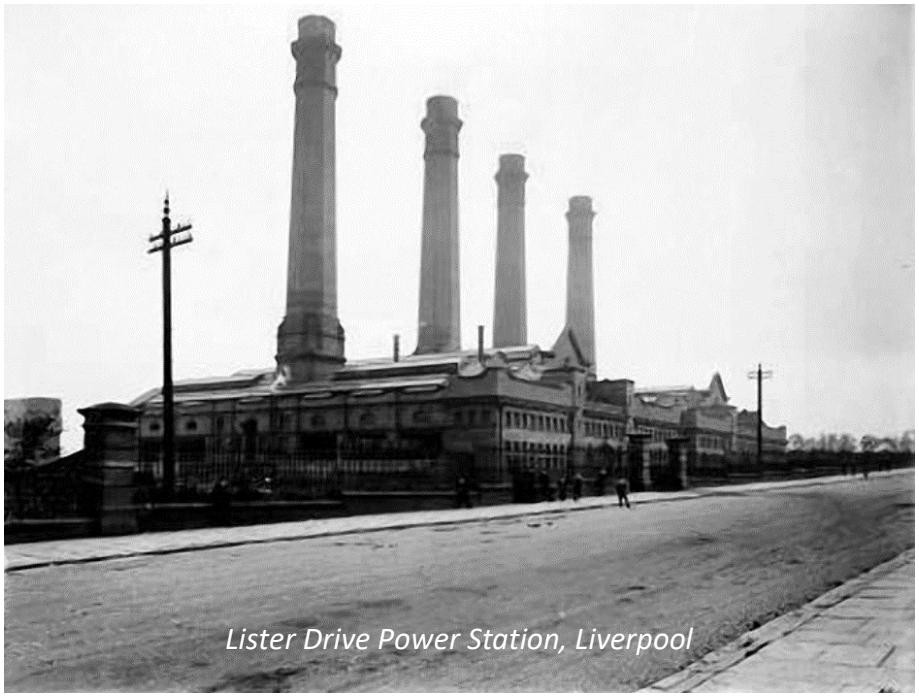
Police War Reserve No 483

Being a little over 31, moderately fit, in September 1939, the only prospect seemed to be to join the Army and see the world, probably with a jaundiced eye.

It was amazing, at that time, to find that the fighting services did not greet each aspirant to the colours with any enthusiasm; recruiting offices were so busy that the average applicant was turned away with the information that he would be sent for when required; being an average applicant, this was my experience. The Navy told me that my age group would have to wait two years, and one R.A.F. recruiting sergeant made me aware of the fact that my buttocks were too close to the ground, but he put it a little plainer. The Balloon Barrage was the only organisation currently recruiting.

Accordingly, I lent my valuable services to the Police War Reserve, as Number 483 to wit, complete with all kinds of coats and cloaks, whistles, notebook a truncheon and not the slightest knowledge of what to do, but I soon found out. Two of the group with me turned out to be illiterate. Our duties, in my Division, were for six of us to be posted on beats round Lister Drive Power Station, Liverpool 11.

The war reserves were eyed askance by the regular police, but they were useful to perform any particular work that the regulars did not fancy and this was easily arranged by a little collaborating among the sergeants, the boys who really keep the coppers ticking. Hence I and my WR colleagues guarded the power station and supported the dictum 'Let there be light'.



Lister Drive Power Station, Liverpool

To ensure good discipline, a sergeant or an inspector was liable to "visit" a policeman on duty at any time, and I soon became aware that one must, on these occasions, not pass the time of day or night as I did, but say meekly 'all correct sergeant' in a business-like manner, observing care not to call an inspector a sergeant, although a sergeant does not mind being called in "inspector". The police sergeant of this section was a dour and humourless Scotsman who had no redeeming features, and was especially at loggerheads with an amazing character who had left the merchant navy and joined the War Reserve. I never knew why.

If the weather records for October 1939 are ever made public, it will be found that the temperatures experienced were the coldest for 30 years. Sullivan, or was it Gilbert, spoke truly when he said a policeman's lot is not a happy one.

There are 8 hours in a normal Bobby's day, but the hours of duty are so planned that the maximum inconvenience is obtained. The first tour of duty commences at 7am. which means 6.45, which means leaving a warm bed and a shivering wife at 5.30 in order to report for duty in good time, and one may be dismissed at 3pm?

The second duty is from 3pm. to 11pm. which prohibits any evening activity except keeping warm, the third duty is the piece de resistance, 11pm. to 7am... 8 hours to ruminate over a misspent life and little to amuse and less to do.

To guard a large electric power station may be regarded as a most important war job, but to patrol for eight hours a choice of four beats; a blank wall, a man-made valley between mountains of coal for fuelling the power station, otherwise known as The Silo, a section of fencing, or a section of railway line, does not bring glamour and leaves variety a very poor starter.

The beat encompassing the section of railway line passed the foot of several large cooling towers, the tops reached by external ladders. Our Merchant Navy colleague had had enough of the aforesaid duty sergeant, and whilst on the cooling tower section armed himself with a bucket of very ripe cow manure from the local cow keeper, of whom he was a friendly customer. One dark night, when he was on the 10.45 pm to 7.00 am shift he ascended the cooling tower immediately above the railway line, and deposited the lot slap on Sergeant McK. My friend had time to climb down on the other side without being seen and did not come under suspicion. I was

on the adjoining beat, and did. However the victim was in no state at that time but to go away and clean up. I do not believe there was any outcome to all this, and could claim to be snow white.

On one occasion it was my turn to guard, for one week, The Silo. In the moonlight I noticed a dark animal about the size of a fox terrier, floppy ears, substantially tall, but quite unlike anything I had seen before. A charge hand said that I *could* believe my eyes; there were numerous rats in the area which had mated with rabbits. I had never heard of such a cross breed before and since I only saw them at night it was not easy to describe them.

Using legal terminology, I found that "within the precincts" of the power of the station was the best place to be assigned, that is to say, to the spot known as the "Silo", or to the "Line". In both these places one had ample time to smoke cigarettes, make toast, yarn a little with sundry charge hands, and generally pass the time more pleasantly. One gatekeeper was a sportsman, for the price of a pint he offered the use of a hut, an armchair, a fire and a telephonic warning of the approach of "Sarge".

Outside the precincts aforesaid, one had to make sure that those going beneath the adjacent railway bridge were going there for courting purposes, and not as a fifth columnists to blow it up. The only disadvantages that I could see from a courting point of view were that there was only a narrow clay ledge on which to remain, and every train which passed by a foot or two distant, shed its contribution of soot and hot sparks over the happy couples, but love is a wonderful thing.

On two other occasions there were happenings which exemplified the horrible nature of police work. From information received, the police heard that a criminal and depraved type had established his own rubber goods service by collecting, cleaning up and reselling discarded articles. It is incredible that he could do this but no doubt there are records somewhere.

There was an instruction sent out to all sections ordering them to look out for a man who went round the same area exposing himself to young girls. I had a neighbourly chat with a seemingly harmless middle-aged man wearing a heavy overcoat and it transpired later that this individual wore long socks and suspenders under his coat and nothing else. I think he was arrested by a brighter and more dedicated copper.

We of the power station had a barrage balloon all to ourselves, "Emma", I never heard her other name, save for odd occasions when she cavorted in a blustery wind; the crew serving her were good fellows and must have been just as bored as I was, they dug zig zag trenches, gardens, latrines, borrowed gramophone records from sympathetic neighbours and generally killed time and nearly each other.

Sad was the occasion, one very stormy dawn when "Emma" and 7 of her sisters were struck by lightning and came down in fiery remnants, one of the many reasons why income tax was 10/- in the pound. One of these fell near an electrified part of the railway. The cable straddled the wire and there ensued a real Brock's Benefit. A police inspector, who should have known better, ordered me to pick up and coil the wire. I felt quite justified in refusing, and in pointed terms, told the silly man why.

Do policemen suffer from chronic indigestion, I know not, but they ought to? Fifteen minutes off duty were allowed for refreshments, during which period one was obliged, in theory, to gulp a Thermos of hot tea or coffee and whatever sandwiches or other eatables one had brought along.

Having read the fine work that was done later in "The Blitz" by the Police, both regulars and war reserves, it seems a pity that something was not done in the first place to make the work more interesting. I heard of many resignations brought about by the sheer boredom and the feeling that there was every restriction with little to compensate. More power to those fellows who stuck it out, some to their brave end and many to win official recognition of gallantry and valuable service.

This special police service lasted only three weeks; just long enough for me to enjoy one week on the three shifts. The stories I have narrated are perfectly true; no doubt there is much that is sordid, and indeed I found it all so very distasteful. At the end of this time, Instructions came for No 483 and several others to proceed to the Police school for a course in police work, but alas, I was not born to follow the noble Sir Robert Peel.

One day, towards the end of the dismal three weeks, I met a very much valued school friend, a lawyer, whom I met outside the Littlewood's Building. He made appropriate remarks about meeting things without a gun and enquired if I was happy, which drew from me a very big 'NO'. George said, "you know something of a foreign language, the Censorship, is the place for you, my boy," and then he excused himself and told me to wait until he came back.

Sure enough he returned and told me that a Colonel Roberts would see me. This officer was most courteous and indicated that he was quite happy with what Mr. Stern had told him, so I renounced Sir Robert and all his works.

To be continued.

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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**

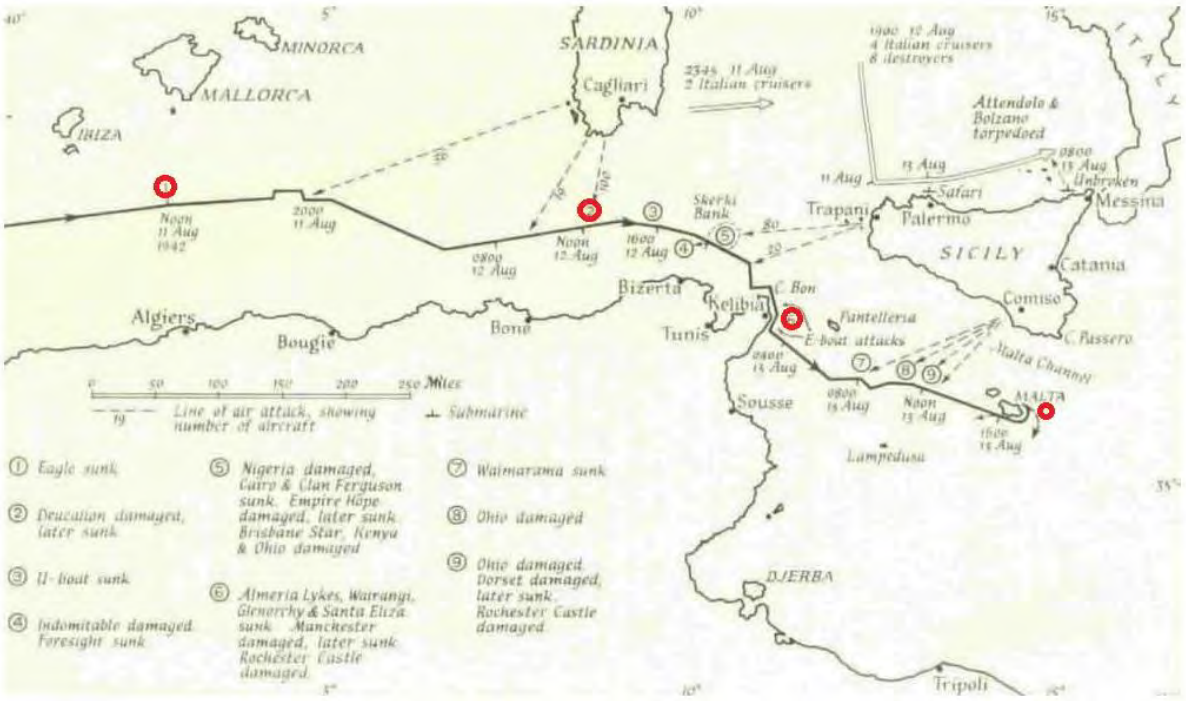
Force X (Through Escort) – Under Rear Admiral Burroughs in HMS **Nigeria** included several other cruisers and a large number of destroyers.

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*

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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.

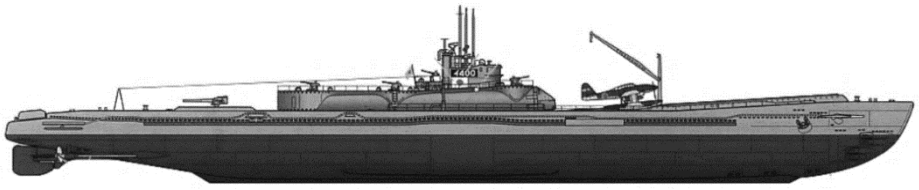
Once we get this done, and consider the move back to Mersey, volunteers will be needed to operate the heritage yard, and to act as hosts for visitors. We also need people to come forward with stories and reminiscences of the old yards and their working craft.

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."

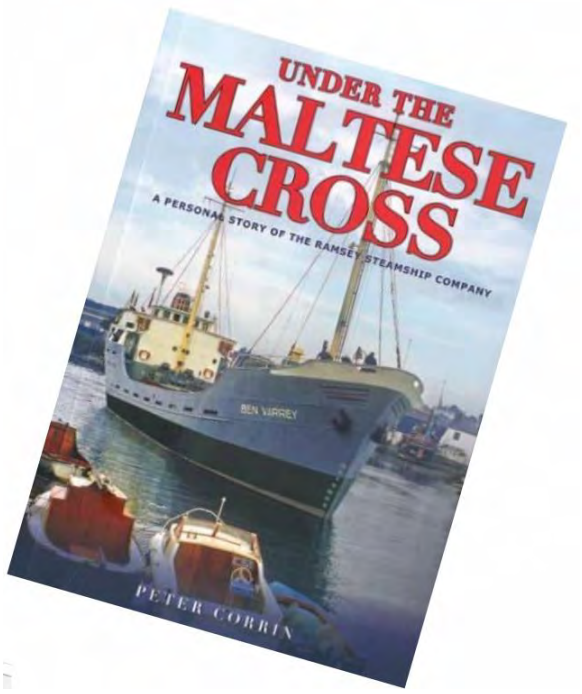
The following table indicates the significance of the I class boats, particularly their immense size for the time:

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.

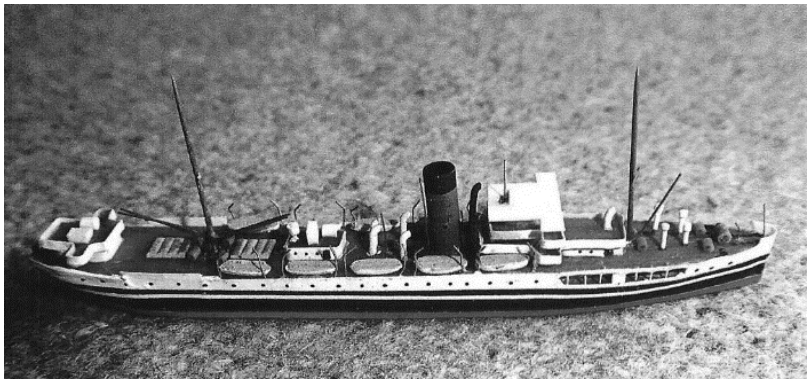
Our convoy, HGF34, had 20 ships, escorted by H.M.S. **Scarborough**, and left Gibraltar on 13th June 1940. Around midnight on June 19th the convoy, was attacked by a number of U-boats. Their marksmanship was first class and three ships were sunk on the 19th followed by one more on the 20th. There was 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.

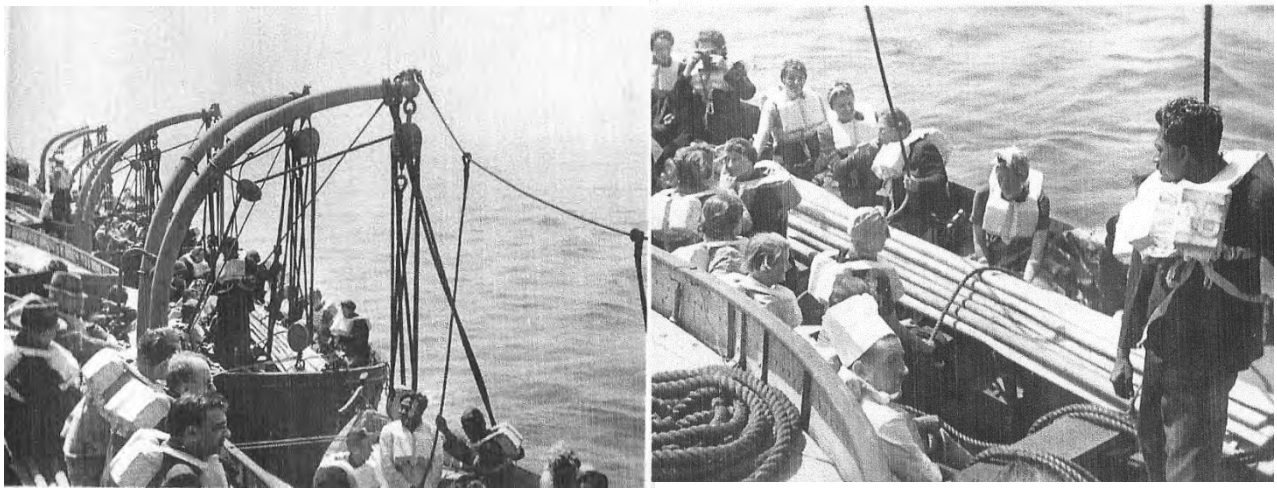
It would be right to add a footnote to the foregoing, to mention that the **Al Rawdah** and the passengers were saved by the magnificent way the vessel, and her limited capacity in every way, was handled by Captain Harvey and his crew, particularly the Lascan stokers, who managed to build-up the speed, 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.

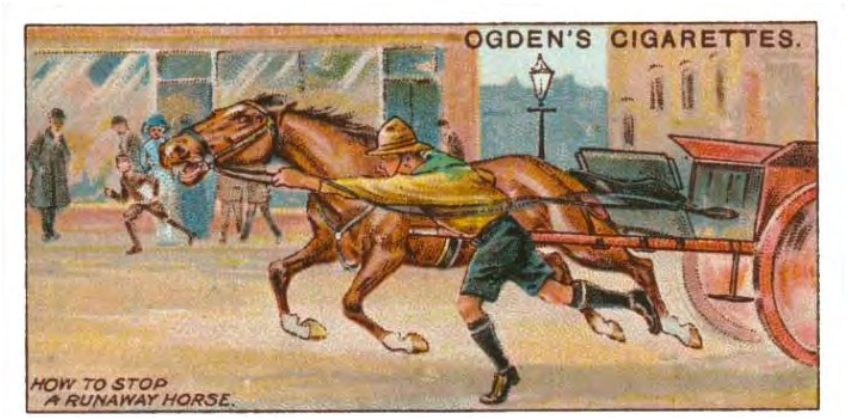
THIRD – To relieve the immediate necessities of those saved, and assist them in getting to their destination.

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.

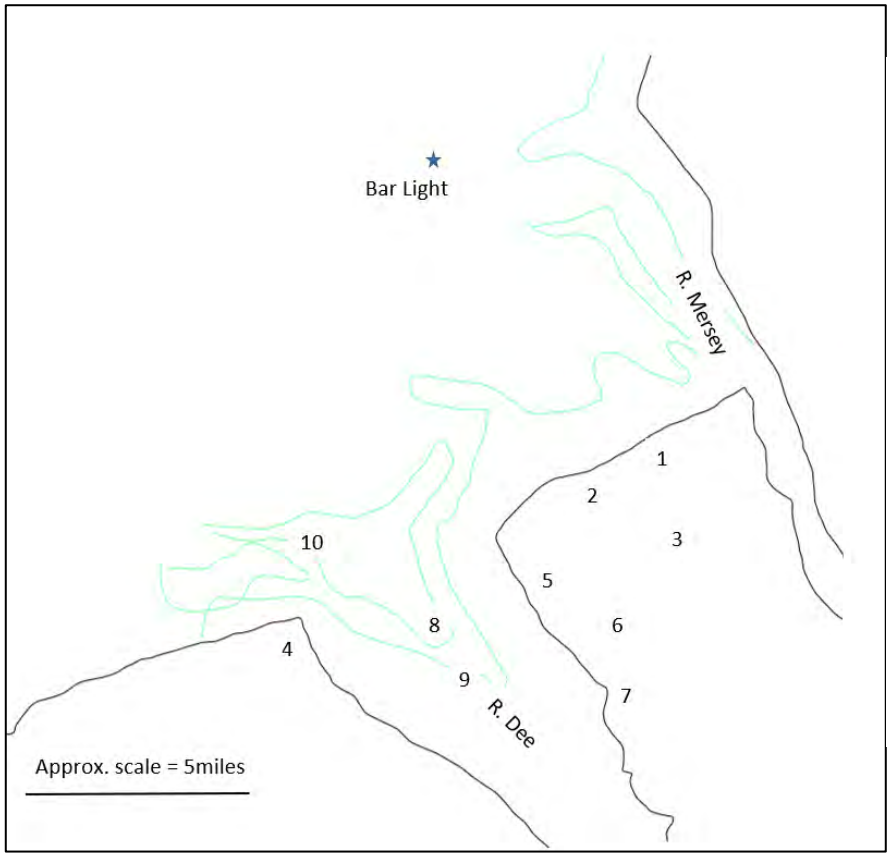
Total weight of fuel 719.4 tons oil + 1480 tons of coal = 2199.4 *(T.B. figure 2198)*

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.

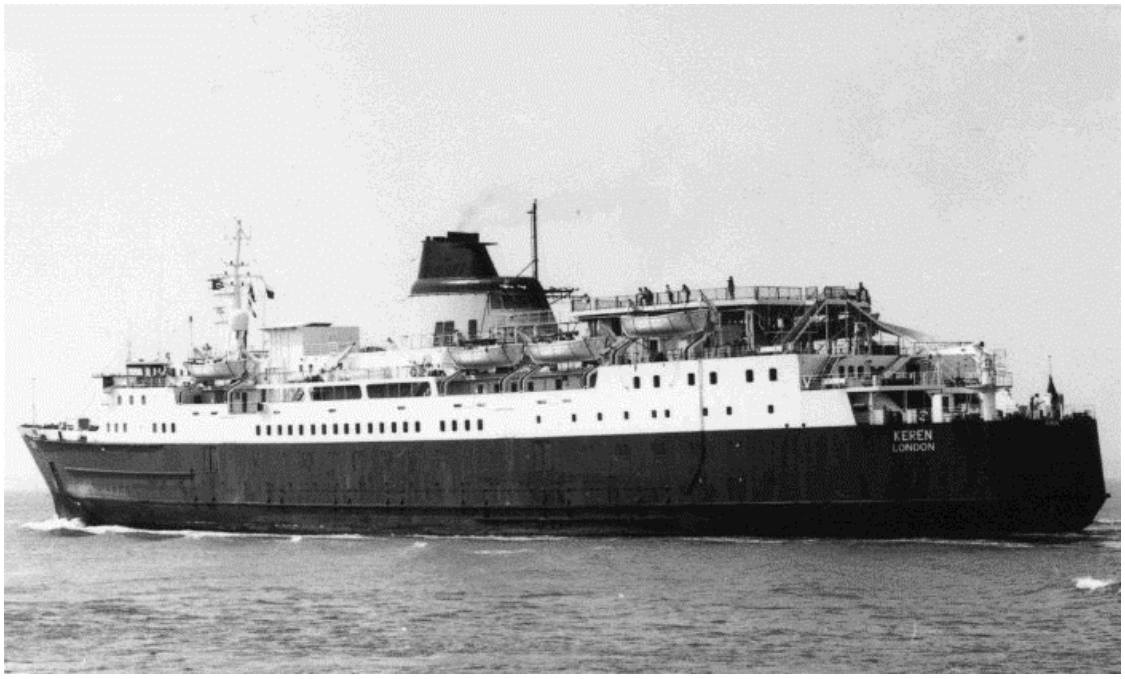
It could be that she is directed, first, to San Carlos Water, just 100 miles by sea from Stanley, at the north western corner of East Falkland, where the returning British landed. We go alongside an anchored tanker to take fuel (still called bunkers) in the now silent inlet, so like the English Lakes.

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.*

Video recordings of Athenaeum Presentations.

The Society is building a permanent library of current and future presentations which is now available to members on our web site. To access them you should first login to the site with your username and password. Once you have logged in, select 'Activity' on the main menu and then 'Video Presentations'. You can then pick your video and follow the on-screen instructions. (Unsure how to Register or forgotten your Password? Simply ask the webmaster via contactlnrs@gmail.com or from the web site).

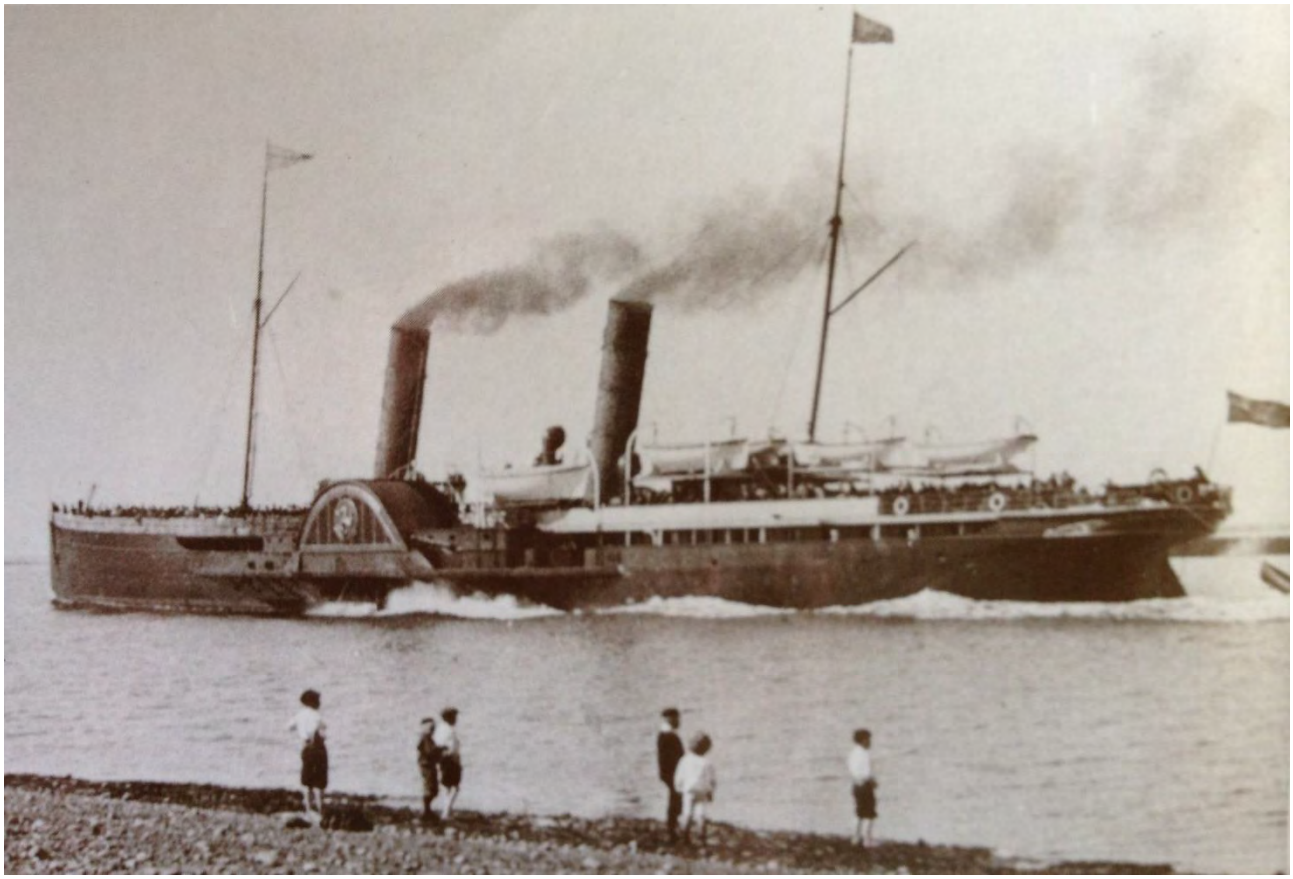
LIVERPOOL NAUTICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

The Bulletin Volume 65, No. 4, March 2022

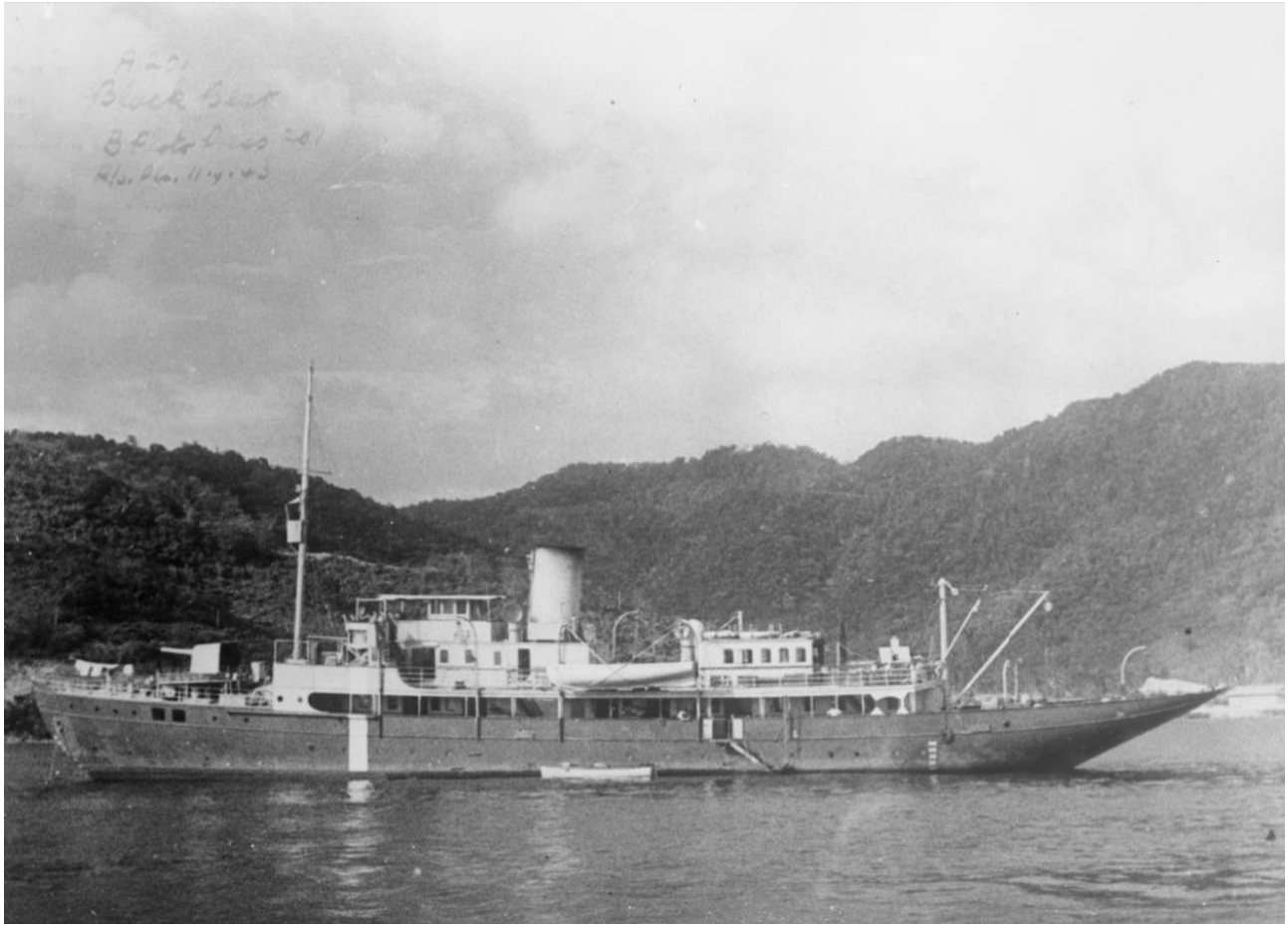


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Mona's Isle *outbound in the Mersey, passing New Brighton* *See page 40*
By Unknown author - Harvey Milligan, Public Domain, Wikimedia



H.M.Y. ***Black Bear*** *pictured anchored off Trinidad in 1943* *See page 26*
Courtesy IWM and used under Non-Commercial Licence Ref. © IWM FL 2186

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Web site: www.liverpoolnauticalresearchsociety.org

For all enquiries our contact details are: contactlnrs@gmail.com

Or via our website at
www.liverpoolnauticalresearchsociety.org

If mail is required our address is:
Hon. Secretary, L.N.R.S.,
The Archives Centre, Merseyside Maritime Museum,
Royal Albert Dock, Liverpool, L3 4AQ

Addressing the Future

Over recent years the membership of the society has slowly declined and new members need to be attracted to ensure the future viability of the society. The LNRS council has been looking at a number of ways to enhance the appeal of the society to new members.

One proposal is to have a change to the society's name. To reflect the society's wish to broaden the range of interest in nautical matters the name,

"**The Liverpool Maritime Society**"

has been put forward. This proposed name change will be put to the society members for consideration at the AGM in April 2022. The LNRS council are in favour of this change and would urge members to support it in order to assist in the long term future of your society.

W.G. Williamson, Chairman LNRS

Membership Renewals

A belated Happy New Year to one and all!

In recent years our membership renewals have stretched further and further into the year, perhaps partly because of Covid. The final renewal of 2021 actually arrived in mid-December.

Can I please remind *all* members that our renewals are due at the start of the financial year, i.e. on 1st April.

Delays beyond this date create a considerable administrative burden and we would appreciate your support and cooperation in this matter.

Tony Melling, Hon Treasurer

Seeking Information

A member asked the following question:

"*Please may I ask if you know much about the mile markers that were installed in pairs along the Mersey channel from Blundellsands to Formby. I know they were used for performance trials of ships, but wonder when they were first installed, and when they fell out of use? Lairds later sent new vessels up to the measured mile Skelmorlie on the Clyde, which were installed in 1866.*"

Cunard: the first 175 years; 1840 to 2015
By David Hearn

Many lines have sailed in and out of Liverpool over the years but there is a reasonable argument to suggest that the Cunard Line is among the most famous if not, indeed, the most famous in that it was a tangible link between, especially, New York and Liverpool which raised the importance of Liverpool to the extent where it was known in some circles as "the New York of Europe".

The success and world-wide reputation of the Cunard Line was by no means predictable in the origins of the Cunard family. The Cunard family were Quakers and were successful merchants in New York dealing with ships' supplies including coal, timber and food to Royal Navy vessels in that port. At the outbreak of the Revolutionary War (the American War of Independence) in 1775 Samuel's father, Abraham, decided to support the British rather than the revolutionary Americans. The term given to people in the 13 colonies who supported the crown was 'United Empire Loyalists' and following the Treaty of Paris in 1783 they were given three options, namely – to remain in the newly independent United States of America, to be taken "home" to Britain or to be given land in Canada. The land offered was in Nova Scotia and was not good for farming, however Abraham Cunard took land in Halifax and continued his business there.



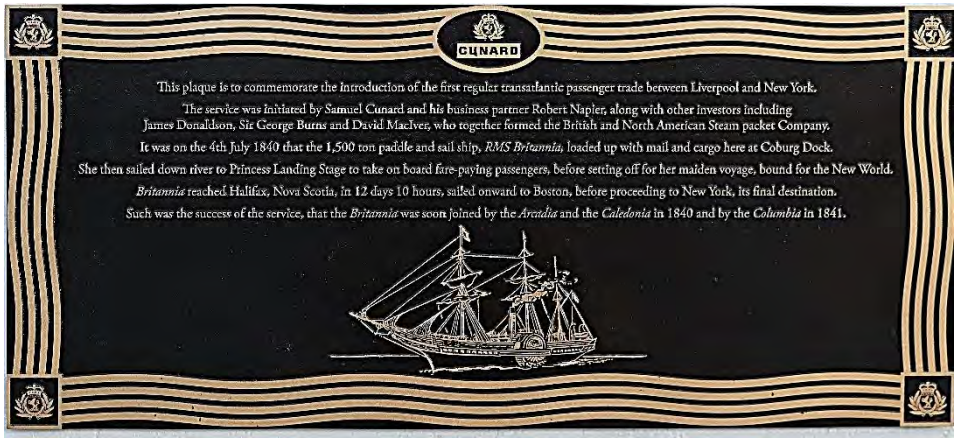
This statue Samuel Cunard is at Halifax, NS seaport. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons, author Peter Spiro

Samuel Cunard was born in Halifax and a statue to him was erected on the quayside there in 2006. It is interesting that the two Cunard memorials in Liverpool have both been funded privately. Samuel started a general store which flourished because of his careful buying and also because he had a name for honesty and integrity. He was also involved in his father's timber business. During the War of 1812 Samuel Cunard volunteered to serve in a Canadian Militia regiment and rose to the rank of Captain which was one of many official roles which he took in the Halifax area.

Samuel Cunard's business expanded very profitably and he became involved in shipping and in a ferry company in Nova Scotia. With the growth of steamships Samuel Cunard expanded into coal mining to supply steamers coming into Halifax.

When the British government decided, to use a modern expression, to outsource the carrying of mail from Britain to Canada and the United States in 1839 Samuel Cunard tendered for the work and was successful. The tender was dealt with by the Royal Navy who were represented by Admiral Sir William Parry who later went on to achieve fame as an Arctic explorer. As a Royal Navy Captain in Halifax Parry had been a friend of Cunard.

Cunard injected £55,000 into the new business and had sold all the shares in the company with 10 days of offering them which gave him the capital to pay for four ocean going steam ships of the Britannia Class. These four ships were built in the Clyde. Cunard's first voyage, the *Britannia,* set sail from Liverpool to Halifax, Nova Scotia and Boston, Massachusetts On the 4th July, 1840 and among the passengers were Samuel Cunard and Charles Dickens. Since 1818 the Black Ball Line had been offering a sailing ship service from Liverpool to America. These crossing took several weeks whereas Cunard's steam ships could do the crossing in 12 to 13 days meaning that they quickly won the wealthier passenger business with sailing ships being more involved in the emigrant market.



In December 2018 a privately funded plaque was unveiled on the Coburg pub in Stanhope Street to commemorate this first Cunard voyage.

Day to day operations of the company in Liverpool were initially handled by David MacIver but, following his death in 1845 his younger brother, Charles, took over the day-to-day management role. By 1848 the British government had dramatically increased the subsidy paid to Cunard for carrying the mail and further services were introduced from Liverpool to New York.

Two important features of the Cunard Line were adopted as soon as the company started, namely, the red funnel with a black top and two or three thin black lines around the funnel and the convention of naming ships with names ending in "IA". Whilst the colour of the funnel remains the same today Cunard cruise ships are now named after British Queens rather than by names ended in "IA".

Cunard was not, of course, without competition in the increasingly important trans-Atlantic carrying trade, with both the United States based Collins Line and the British Inman Line being major competitors although both of these lines suffered from losses at sea which damaged their reputation at a time when, speed, comfort and, above all, safety were the most important factors in the choice of passengers who were crossing the Atlantic.

During the Crimea War Cunard built on their already good relationship with the British Government by supplying eleven ships for troop transport. They were also involved in both Boer Wars, the Egyptian Campaign, the First and Second World Wars and, indeed, the Falkland Conflict.

The trans-Atlantic passenger trade continued to expand and as the c19th drew to a close Cunard found itself increasingly with competition from American, German and French lines. British prestige was threatened and in 1903 the British Government came to an agreement with the company which would secure and promote the company while at the same time ensuring its important strategic connection with Britain. The main points of the agreement were:

- A low interest loan of £2.5 million
- An annual subsidy of £150,000
- In time of war all Cunard ships were to be put at the disposal of the British Government
- All directors and shareholders of Cunard were to be British
- All masters, officers and engineers together with ¾ of all crews to be British
- British government to approve the sale of any Cunard ship which was capable of over 20 knots
- All officers and not less than ½ of crews to be members of the Royal Naval Reserve.

Because of this last requirement Cunard ships flew the Blue Ensign of the Royal Naval Reserve rather than the Red Ensign of the merchant marine.

When this agreement was made in 1903 the First World War was only 11 years away but nobody in either Cunard or the British Government would have had any idea that a war was likely. When war did come Cunard liners were immediately converted for use as Armed Merchant Cruisers with ships built after 1903 already having strengthened decks to carry 4.7 inch or 6 inch guns as well as a magazine. Although fast and well-armed, the coal consumption of the Cunard liners meant that they were not well suited to the Armed Merchant Cruiser role and they were fairly quickly diverted into the troopship or hospital ship role and even housing German prisoners of war, as well as maintaining a trans-Atlantic passenger service.

During the First World War Cunard's repair facilities and laundries were put at the disposal of the government and the company made shells at a factory in Rimrose Road, Bootle, as well as aircraft at a factory in Bootle which employed 5,000 staff. Cunard also managed ships from smaller companies and, at one stage, had almost 300 ships under management. Without even counting the ships under management Cunard ships sailed around 3.5 million miles, transported 9 million tons of food, war materiel and other cargo together with 900,000 troops.

Whilst Cunard lost tweny ships during the First World War perhaps the sinking of RMS **Lusitania** on 7th May 1915 was their highest profile loss. Much controversy

surrounds the sinking of this liner and the loss of 1,201 passengers and crew. Many Americans were among the dead and it was hoped that this would bring America into the war on the side of the Allies. The **Lusitania** was carrying over 3,000 cases of rifle ammunition and was, as such, a legitimate target. However the captain of the U Boat did not follow the accepted 'Cruiser Rules' and the British Government used the sinking for propaganda purposes very heavily.

After the war Cunard took over a number of companies whose ships had been managed and acquired the German liner **Imperator** of the Hamburg-America Line for a very favourable price after it was seized by Britain as part of the war reparations. Refitted, the **Imperator** became RMS **Berengaria**.

Between the wars Cunard restored its position until, again, competition and the 1930s Depression damaged her business. However it was Cunard's Liverpool rival White Star Line that was struggling even more. In 1934 the government intervened by offering Cunard a total of £8 million to complete the ship that was to become **Queen Mary** and build the **Queen Elizabeth** as long as Cunard took over the troubled White Star Line. In 1934 the combined line became Cunard White Star Line.

At the start of the Second World War Cunard was again called upon to assist in the war effort and the company more than fulfilled what was expected of it with **Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth** carrying US and Canadian troops in one direction and prisoners of war in the other.

The war was not without its losses for Cunard with three tragedies in particular casting a very dark shadow, namely the sinking of HMT **Lancastria**, the collision of HMT **Queen Mary** and HMS **Curacoa**, and HMTS **Laconia**. The loss of the **Lancastria** at St Nazaire in 1940 is the greatest loss of life at sea in British maritime history although the actual number of those who died is not known. The **Lancastria** was evacuating British and French troops as well as some civilians when she was struck by a bomb and sank quickly. The number of people on the ship was not recorded and estimates of the numbers who died range from 3,000 to 9,000 – Britain's greatest maritime disaster



Cunard Liners travelled so fast that they could cross the Atlantic without escort until they reached the North Passage where they would slow and be joined by one or more escorts for their entry into Liverpool, Glasgow or Belfast. In August 1943 HMT **Queen Mary** carrying American troops was in collision with her escort, the light cruiser HMS **Curacoa** which was cut in two with the loss of 338 men. In accordance with her orders the **Queen Mary** did not stop but made for Glasgow instead of Liverpool. In Glasgow the damaged bows were shuttered and filled with concrete before the ship returned to New York for more permanent repairs.

The third catastrophe to befall a Cunard ship during the Second World War was HMT **Laconia** which was torpedoed and sunk off the coast of Africa. The ship was carrying Italian prisoners of war and some women and children and when the U Boat captain – Werner Hartenstein – realised what he had done he surfaced to try and help the survivors who were in lifeboats. His attempts to summon help were treated with suspicion by both the British and German navies who both suspected a trap. Eventually a US Liberator bomber from Ascension Island flew over the scene and returned with others who bombed U Boat and lifeboats despite a Red Cross flag draped over the U Boat. Over 1,200 people died in the incident.

Following the war Cunard resumed its role as a major player in the trans-Atlantic passenger business until 1958 when jet aircraft started to operate in the Atlantic crossing trade. Cunard bought a 30% share in British Eagle Airways in 1960 – the first year in which more people crossed the Atlantic by air than by sea. Cunard faced stiff competition from BOAC which was owned by the British Government and in 1963 Cunard sold its share back to British Eagle Airways.

As the trans-Atlantic market went almost entirely to air travel, Cunard were still involved in cargo carrying with a cargo fleet in 1971 of 42 ships and 20 on order but their aging liner fleet was disposed of and what was left of it transferred to the cruising market where it has been since being owned by Trafalgar House for a time and, since 1998, the Carnival Corporation.

In response to the question at my talk about Cunarders using Fishguard to facilitate rail travel to and from London, it appears that this was the case from 1909 to 1914. For some more information and some rather wonderful photographs follow this link:

https://museum.wales/collections/online/object/d1161ee8-9790-3412-a8ef-d5fca0631c59/Cunard-Line-ships-at-Fishguard-1908-9-photograph-album/?field0=string&value0=criccieth&field1=with_images&value1=on&sort=relevance

Merseyside Maritime Museum - Archives Opening Hours

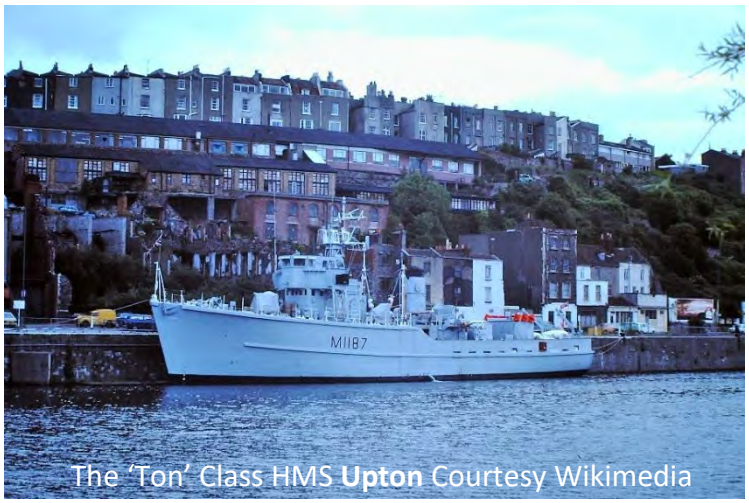
The Archives Centre is now be visited without the need for pre booking.
Opening times are Wednesday to Friday, both inclusive, from 10.00am to 4.00pm

Inshore Mine Sweepers

A Summary of the Presentation to the Society by LNRS Member David White

Conventional mines have been used in the thousands in both World Wars. Spherical with horns acting as detonators, they were laid in deep water and moored to lie just below the surface, where ships could strike the horns and detonate the device. It was generally understood that they would not be used in the shallow waters of ports and estuaries as a large tidal range such as that in the Mersey could expose them on the surface where they could be easily dealt with. However, in December 1939 this confidence was rudely shattered when Kapitan-Leutenant Fritz-Julius Lemp brought U-30 into Liverpool Bay and laid thirty TMB mines in the vicinity of the Bar Light Vessel. TMBs were cylindrical in shape, and were launched through the torpedo tubes to then lie on the seabed until triggered by the magnetic influence of passing vessels. In the following months twenty ships were destroyed or badly damaged. The Port of Liverpool remained open during this period, unlike the Port of London which was closed for three days after suffering a similar attack in the Thames Estuary.

In the late 1940s the Government considered what could be done to counter any such future operation. In addition to mine-laying ships, there was now a fear that the Soviets were capable of deploying mini-submarines as mine layers and would soon have long range aircraft capable of doing the same. This resulted in the Government ordering 243 Inshore Mine Sweepers which came into service from 1951 onwards.



The 'Ton' Class HMS **Upton** Courtesy Wikimedia

Under the overall title of IMS, the new ships were in four classes, namely 119 Tons, 93 Hams, 11 Leys, and 20 Fords.

The Tons were the most numerous and were also the largest. At 350 tons on a nine foot draft, they were designed with an extremely low magnetic signature, having built-in degaussing gear and a double mahogany hull. HMS *Coniston* was the first of class, with an open bridge and a pair of Mirrlees diesels driving twin propellers. Early developments included an enclosed bridge and the replacement of the Mirrlees by a pair of English Electric Napier 18-cylinder Deltics. They were designated as Coastal Minesweepers and went on to operate in every ocean and every continent on the globe except Antarctica for the next forty years.

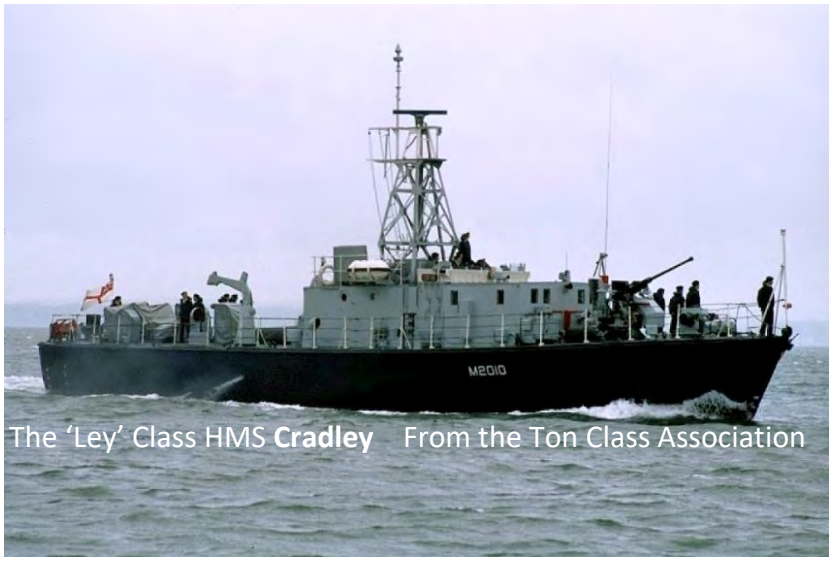
Some of the numerous actions involving Tons were examined, and their "coastal" credentials well proven. These ranged from Limbang (Sarawak) in 1962, to peace-keeping on the Demarara and Essesquibo Rivers as Guyana headed towards independence in 1965, to celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Canadian naval reserve when in September 1973 four Tons did a double crossing of the Atlantic for Operation Maplehaul. From 1969 to 2007, 34 RN Tons and 11 RNR Tons ran Operation Grenada, anti-gunrunning patrols in the Irish Sea, the RN contribution to Operation Banner.



The 'Ham' Class HMS **Shipham** Courtesy Wikimedia

At approximately 150 tons the Hams were half the size of the Tons, and like the Tons, they had wooden hulls. Powered by a pair of Paxman diesels, they became maids of all work but retained the original description of Inshore Mine Sweepers. **Arlingham** had no sweep gear, being designated as a Torpedo Recovery Vessel and for many years was the Gibraltar Guardship, having to deter the Spanish destroyer which attempted to interrupt the victualling supply boat coming over from Morocco.

The Leys utilised the same hull and engines as the Hams and were classed as Inshore Mine Hunters, an odd designation as they carried very little equipment at all. Instead, they often carried a dive suite and for some decades after the war they worked to put divers into the water who would search around and under jetties, piers and dock walls locating wartime munitions. When a suspicious item was found, it would be marked and the boat would withdraw, leaving the handling of the object to the ordnance disposal teams.



The 'Ley' Class HMS **Cradley** From the Ton Class Association

The Fords were a very different concept. With a welded and riveted hull, they were powered by a pair of Paxman diesels plus a Foden lorry engine driving a third small propeller for slow patrolling. They were designated as Seaward Defence





HMS **Beckford/Dee** lying ahead of HMS **Pollington/Mersey** and as the schooner **Beckford**

Boats, with the role of monitoring any attempts to lay mines in the approaches to the major ports and harbours. Armament was depth charge launchers and anti-submarine mortars.

All four classes carried as standard a 40mm Bofors gun on the foredeck. Some of the eight Fords which operated around Singapore during the Indonesian confrontation carried an additional Bofors down aft. Some of the Fords were allocated to the RN University training role until they were sold out of service, usually to the scrap man, **Beckford** was sold into civilian ownership and converted to a three-masted schooner. She survived at Felixstowe until 2018.

The generation of sweepers and hunters which followed the Tons are very different technically. As they in turn come towards the end of their operating life the Hunts and Sandowns are likely to be replaced by something even more technical. In an effort to protect human life, future mine hunting is expected to involve either remotely-controlled vessels or totally autonomous vessels.





The 'Hunt' class HMS **Middleton** and the 'Sandown' class HMS **Bangor** Pictures Courtesy Wikimedia

Featured Ship – ss **Graf Goetzen**/ mv **Liemba**

By Bill Ogle

In this new series of articles, we will introduce a one-page article about a particular ship. She may be well known, or totally unremarkable. She may be of any nationality and function. In this case we begin with the film *African Queen*:

The film depicts the attempted attack on a German gunboat named **Königin Luise**. Although fictional, she was inspired by the **Graf Goetzen** which operated on the lake until she was scuttled in 1916 during the Battle for Lake Tanganyika.





*Pictured a century apart; as ss **Graf Goetzen** in 1915 and mv **Liemba** in 2015*

The **Liemba** started life as the **Graf Goetzen** in 1913 when she was built as a passenger/cargo ferry by Meyer-Werft in Papenburg on the River Ems in northern Germany. One of three such vessels to operate on Lake Tanganyika in conjunction with the East African Railway Company. After initial assembly she was taken apart, packed in 5,000 crates, shipped to Dar es Salaam on three cargo ships and then transported some 1,500km by rail to Kigoma on the lake, where she was re-assembled and launched on 5 February 1915.

Originally **Graf Goetzen** had seven first class single cabins, five second class double cabins together with First and Second class dining and smoking rooms.. Her crew numbered 64.

On the outbreak of war she was commandeered by the German navy and fitted with a 4in and a 3in gun. She gave Germany complete control of the lake although her primary role was as a troop transport. To regain control of the lake themselves the Royal Navy shipped two armed motor boats via Belgian Congo which were able to sink the other German ships. Unable to protect their last ship she was scuttled in July 1916

Refloated by the British who placed her in service on Lake Tanganyika in 1927 as the passenger ferry MV **Liemba**, she has operated since then. In 1976 she was given a major overhaul; twin diesel engines replaced the original steam plant. Again in 1997 she received new MAN engines of 620hp each and a new deckhouse.

In January 2020 she was reported as being under repair, and in October 2021 that she was not running. One probable cause being reducing water levels at Kigoma pier.

A sad ending for one of the world's oldest operating passenger vessels

The Loss of the **Ellan Vannin**

by LNRS Member Ron Evans

[This article was first published in the Bulletin in Volume 43, December 1999. It is repeated here following a decision to re-print important articles from the past so as to indicate to members the scope of the archives now available on the website. In this case it is a well-documented report of an important local disaster but also reference to the major rebuild of a ship as long ago as 1883].

From Lloyds Register, 1908/09
ELLAN VANNIN Official Number: 27260 Signal Letters: PQMG
Built as an iron paddle steamer with simple oscillating engines by Tod & McGregor, Meadowside, Glasgow in 1860, and named **Mona's Isle** (2).
Converted to twin-screw steamer in 1883 by Westray, Copeland & Co. of Barrow with 4-cylinder double compound engines.
Renamed **Ellan Vannin** on 16th November, 1883
Gross Tonnage: 380, net 128 Overall length: 207ft Breadth: 22ft

'Oh Ellan Vannin of the Isle of Man Company
Oh Ellan Vannin lost in the Irish Sea

Few Manx men now remember
The third day of the month of December
The terrible storm in 1909
Ellan Vannin sailed for the last time'

So goes the last verse of the song immortalised by The Spinners – 'The Ellan Vannin Tragedy'. In this 90th anniversary year of the loss of the **Ellan Vannin**, the story of the disaster is remembered with perhaps some further explanations as to how it happened.

The sinking of the **Ellan Vannin** on 3rd December 1909 with the loss of all 14 passengers and 21 crew, mail and 60 tons of cargo, was the worst peacetime disaster in the 169-year history of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company.

In answers to questions the Court of Inquiry stated '*the Ellan Vannin was in good seaworthy condition as regards hull and equipment when she left Ramsey. Her cargo was properly stowed and secured from shifting and the weight so distributed as to make the vessel easy in a seaway. She had the required freeboard and was in good trim for a voyage to Liverpool*'.

In the absence of any direct evidence as to the circumstances in which the vessel foundered it was impossible for the Court of Inquiry at the time to express a

decided opinion as to the cause of loss of the **Ellan Vannin**. To this day her loss remains something of a mystery.

The question has always remained as to why the disaster occurred so swiftly and without warning to a vessel which under the command of many experienced captains of the IOMSPCo. had made this voyage on countless occasions over the previous 49 years in all kinds of weather and in safety.

The **Ellan Vannin** had become known affectionately as the “Li’l Daisy” by Manx sailors who thought of her as the mascot of the Manx fleet, and passengers and crew had every confidence in the vessel.

It may further help to explain the disaster by retracing the voyage with reference to sketch charts of the Irish Sea and the approaches to the River Mersey along with the synoptic chart for 07.00 on 3rd December 1909. The captain at that time did not have access to present day weather forecasting data and radio communications. It is therefore of some significance that Captain Teare of the **Ellan Vannin** would not have had any reliable weather forecast other than that obtained from the barometer reading of 28.30 inches (958 millibars) when leaving Ramsey.

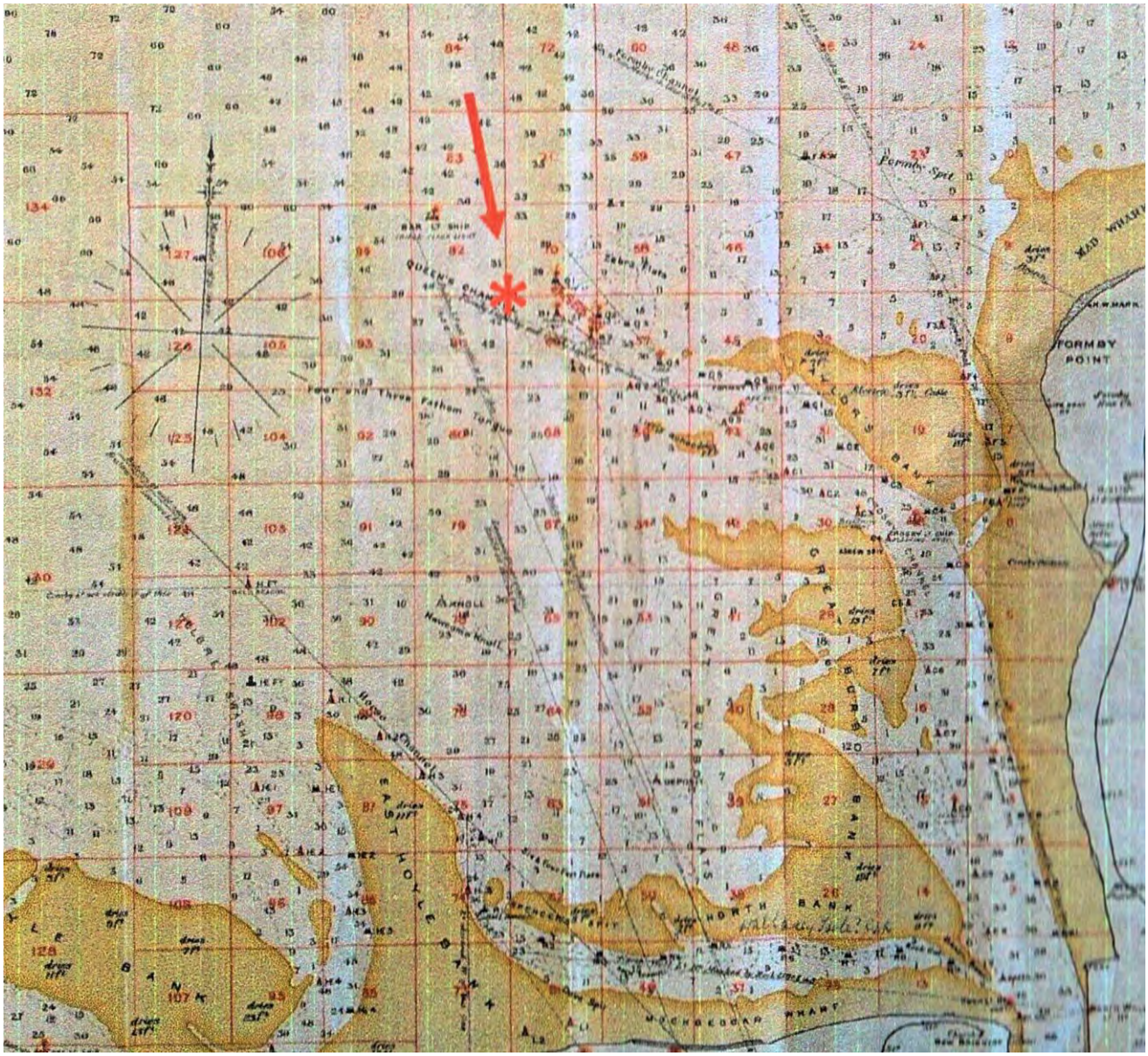
Voyage to Disaster

The **Ellan Vannin** left Ramsey at about 1am. on Friday 3rd December 1909 bound Liverpool in weather which was described as ‘dirty' with sleet falling but only a moderate wind, the barometer standing at 28.30 inches. There was no suggestion made by Captain Teare that the weather was unfit for the vessel to leave.

Ramsey is a sheltered port in a north-west wind and dries out at low water. The **Ellan Vannin** would have had to leave the harbour at about high tide. According to present day Admiralty charts, with high water at about 1am., tidal streams would have been in the vessel's favour. With the following wind the **Ellan Vannin** would have cleared the shelter of Isle of Man in about an hour and a half. She was probably running quite easily before the following wind and tide, and as the wind increased she would have been too far into her voyage to change course and return to the shelter of the Island.

The 60 nautical miles from Ramsey to the Bar Lightship were covered in about five hours at an average speed of 12 knots, close to the vessel's maximum of 13.

It appears from evidence given by those on board the Bar Lightship and vessels in the vicinity that at about 4am. a severe gale from the north-west sprang up, reaching force 11 with frequent rain squalls and a very rough sea. These conditions continued until about 8 am. with the waves becoming more dangerous and reported as up to 24 feet in height. The wind and waves were meeting the strong ebb tide from Mersey estuary.



[Editor's Note: the original article contained a number of charts and drawings which, in our file copy, were of very poor quality and unusable. They have been replaced and individual notes apply. In the case of the above Admiralty Chart of Liverpool Bay for 1895, it has kindly been replaced by the Merseyside Maritime Museum.
The red arrow indicates the probable course taken by Ellan Vannin which, coincidentally approximates to the direction of the wind. The asterisk shows the approximate location of the wreck]

Shortly after 6.30am. an inward bound steamer passed the Bar Lightship half a mile to the northward. The lightship's crew saw her lights for about five minutes before they were obscured by heavy rain squalls. Taking into consideration the course usually taken by the **Ellan Vannin** from Ramsey to the Mersey Bar, and the direction from which the steamer was approaching, it is highly probable that the lights seen were those of the **Ellan Vannin**. At about 6.45am one of the seamen on the Bar Lightship saw what he thought was a flash lasting about one second in the vicinity of

the Bar. No other flash was seen although the seaman and the master of the lightship watched for about twenty minutes.

At 11.30am. a report was received by the Mersey Docks and Board that Q. I Black Buoy was adrift. The Board's tender **Vigilant** went out to recover the buoy, and when she was off the Rock Lighthouse at about 1.30pm. a lot of wreckage and several dozen lifebelts were sighted. The **Vigilant** recovered some of this wreckage, including a package of mails. At about 3.30am. on the following day, 4th December, lifebelts marked **Ellan Vannin**, more wreckage and dead sheep were found by the coastguards at Blundellsands, and later the ship's clock, attached to some panelling, was found. The clock had stopped at 6.50.

The Discovery of the Wreck (extract from Annex to the Report of Court of Inquiry).

The wreck of the **Ellan Vannin** was located on 4th December 1909, 1,170 yards from the Bar Lightship and 1,000 yards from position of Q1 Black Buoy on a direct line between them, and broadside on to the tide The wreck was heading about West by South; the fore end was broken off about 35 feet from the stem and was separated from the after part by a space estimated at about 6 feet. The after portion was nearly upright; the forward portion had a list to port of 15 to 20 degrees on the first examination. This list had increased to about 45 to 50 degrees on the 12th December when the last examination was made. The break, the whole way round from rail to rail was a straight one mainly in the line of the rivets, varying not more than 6 or 8 inches either way, except on the port side where the stringer waterway and sheer strake was attached to the forward part, and projected aft about 4 feet. The keel at the fore part at the fracture was bent up about 3 to 18 inches. The deck in way of the facture was torn across except where the butts come; there the butts were torn but taking the deck bolts with the planks. Two divers reported an indentation of a part of the two plates below the sheer strake on the port side of the fracture, of 18 inches in length in a vertical direction, the broken edges of the plates being bent inwards from 3 to 6 inches. One of the other divers did not notice any such indentation, and the fourth denied that it existed, but stated that some of the plates in the neighbourhood of the bilge were bent slightly inwards and upwards. The Court, however, does not attach much importance to the evidence on these points. The davits of the starboard lifeboat were stated to have swung and guyed out. The boat was gone from the chocks. This boat was found the day after on the beach at New Brighton bottom up, cover on, and all her gear in. The davits of the port lifeboat were swung out not guyed, the boat was gone, and no trace of her has been found. The divers found that the square house (which contained the saloon entrance and smoke room) on the after deck was completely washed away, only the whaling pieces on the deck being left to indicate where the house had been.

Here it may be mentioned that a theory was advanced that **Ellan Vannin** fouled the Q1 buoy. The buoy was reported by the master of the ss **Heroic** to have been in place when he passed it at about 6am. It was missed from its position by those on board the Bar Lightship at 10am. This buoy was recovered on the 4th December,

but no marks were found on it, and the light was still burning. Therefore the Court is unable to accept this theory. Nor from a careful consideration of all the facts in evidence can it conclude that the **Ellan Vannin** was in collision with another vessel or with any wreckage whatever.

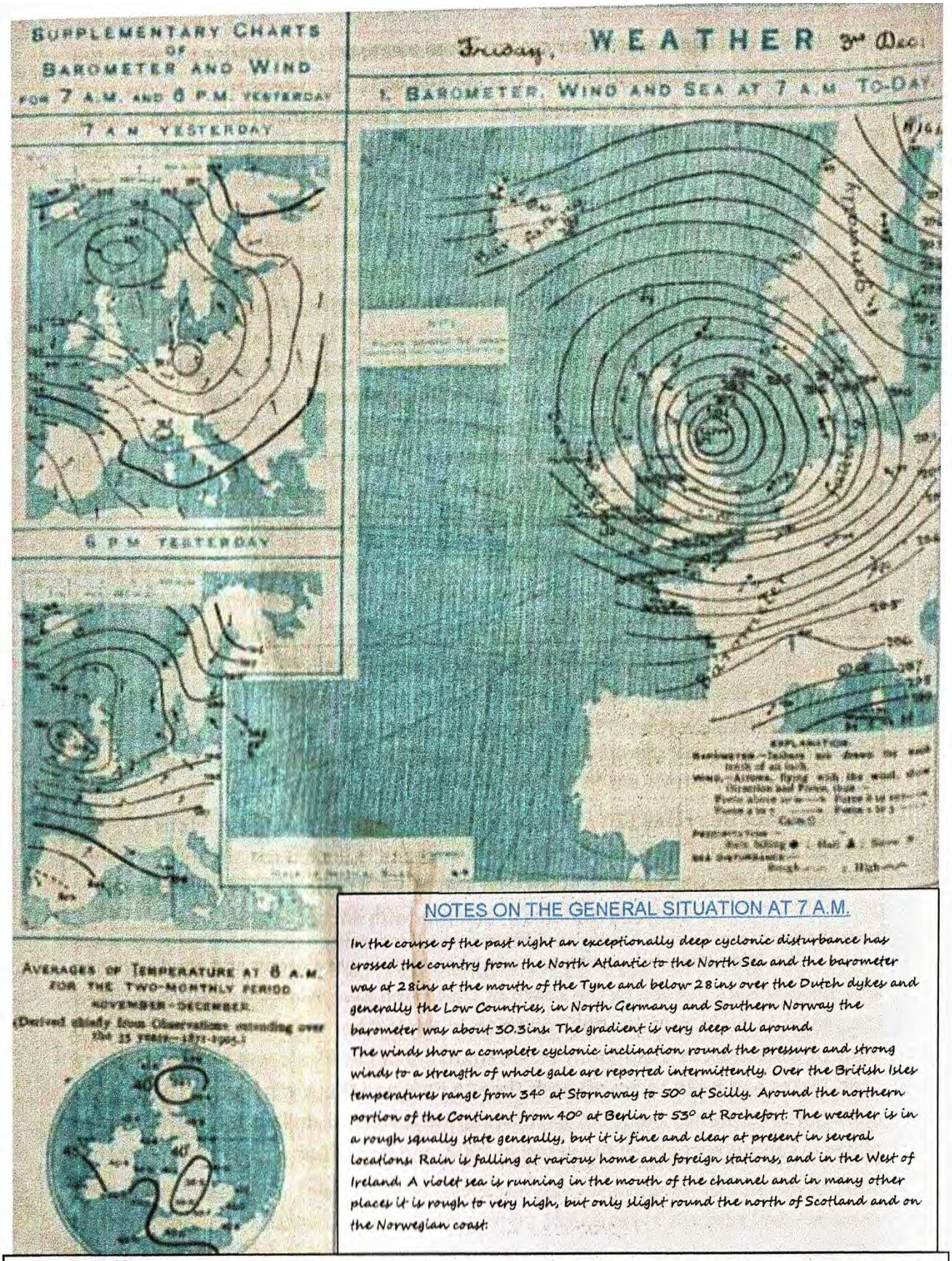
The twin-screw steamship **Heroic** made the passage from Belfast to Liverpool on the night of 2nd and morning of 3rd December, passing the Bar Lightship just before 6am. Her master, Arthur Porter, reported that the weather he experienced when approaching the mouth of the Mersey was of most violence and that during his experience of 11 years he had never known it so bad. The wind was from the north west blowing with hurricane force. the sea broken most dangerous.

The Findings of the Court of Inquiry

The **Ellan Vannin** appears to have been kept in good repair and condition. She was periodically surveyed by the Board of Trade who gave evidence and who certified the vessel to be in a seaworthy condition in September last, when she showed no signs of weakness. In that month the Board of Trade Certificate was renewed for one year. Plates had been removed from time to time and these were said to be in good condition. A plan has been put in showing the results of drilling a large number of plates in various sections of the vessel in 1902, and from this it appears that up to that date there had been no wasting of the iron. The fact, however, cannot be ignored that this vessel was 50 years old. Possibly some corrosion may have occurred at some places that were difficult to access (for example, the chain locker), may have led to her breaking at this particular place, although there was nothing to indicate that such was the case. The chain locker was about 26 feet long, and had a wooden platform on which to stow the chain. It is well known that if corrosion took place at all this is the most likely part for it to do so.

T.S.S. **Heroic** 1906 1,869 Belfast Steamship Co. Ltd.
Length bp: 320.2ft Beam: 41.3ft Depth (mld): 16.8ft Speed: 18 knots.
Service: Belfast/Liverpool.TSS. **Heroic** was a much larger and more powerful vessel than the **Ellan Vannin** and had a full poop, bridge deck and forecastle.

The Q1 Black Buoy was 12ft diameter x 15ft high overall and weighed 9 tons 15 cwt. Iron keel plate $1^{1}/_{4}$ inches thick, base $^{3}/_{4}$ inch and $^{5}/_{16}$inch thick: superstructure $^{3}/_{16}$ thick plate. Moored with 1.5/8 inch iron cable. 5 fathoms formed bridle next to buoy. 30 fathoms in addition with anchor at end.



The Synoptic Chart for 07.00hrs on Friday 3rd December 1909 which was printed in the original article is replaced here with the same chart obtained from the Met Office Archives at https://library.metoffice.gov.uk/ by kind permission of the National Meteorological Library and Archive, Bracknell. Here the Notes section has been typed to improve legibility

The fact that the **Ellan Vannin** when examined by the divers was found to be partly across the channel and nearly at right angles to the wind and sea at the time she foundered indicates that she broached to before sinking

In answer to the Board of Trade question (3): '*what was the cause of the loss of the **Ellan Vannin** and the loss of life*?'; the Court gave the following answer:

In the absence of any direct evidence as to the circumstances under which the vessel foundered, it is impossible for the Court to express a decided opinion as to the cause of the loss of the **Ellan Vannin**, but after carefully considering all the theories which have been suggested by various witnesses and weighing them in the light of the evidence produced, the Court is of the opinion that the following appears the most probable explanation of what occurred: -

The vessel passed the Bar Lightship about 6.45am. on the 3rd December, the weather at the time very bad; the Wind was hurricane force, the sea of a height of about 24 feet, and generally the weather the worst ever experienced in that vicinity. The wind and sea were slightly on the starboard quarter. Before reaching Q1 buoy the **Ellan Vannin** broached to and was probably swept by heavy seas which washed away the after companion, filling the after part of the vessel and causing her to sink by the stern, leaving the bows out of the water. While in this position the heavy seas striking the fore part of the ship would account for the bows being broken off as described by the divers.

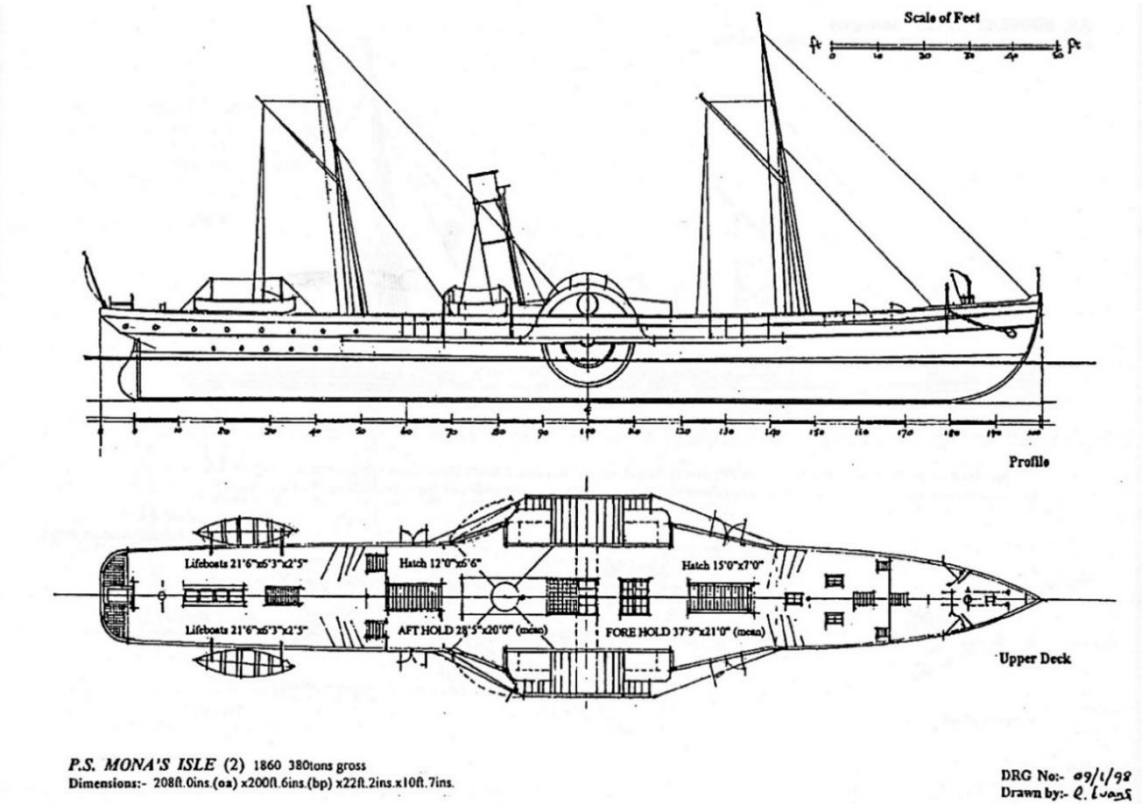
The Court does not have evidence of the ship being previously in collision either with another vessel or with floating wreckage, nor does it consider that the fact of the bows breaking off under such exceptional circumstances implies structural weakness.

The catastrophe by which the vessel was overtaken must have so sudden that there was probably no time for those on board even to put on lifebelts or to take other steps to save life, which accounts for the unfortunate loss of all on board.

Comparison Between the Drawings of the **Mona's Isle** (2) and the **Ellan Vannin**

On the following two pages, drawings by Ron Evans of the **Mona's Isle** (2) and the **Ellan Vannin** are reproduced. As has already been stated the **Mona's Isle** was a paddle steamer built in 1860. In 1883 she converted a twin-screw steamer and renamed **Ellan Vannin**.

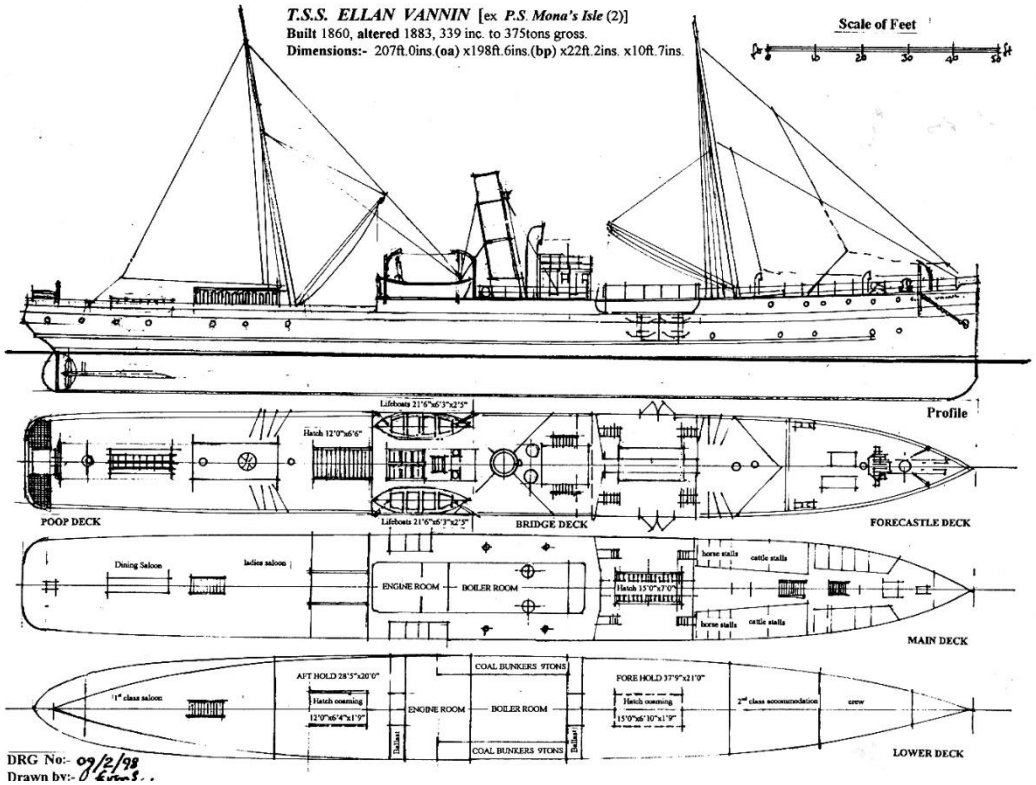
[Editor's note: plans for the original article were reconstructed by the author from photographs and plans of contemporary vessels, particularly from paintings and photographs in the Manx Museum and also a survey and photographs of the shipbuilder's model in the Merseyside Maritime Museum. Due to poor copy of the surviving copy these 'original quality' versions were kindly provided by LNRS member Dick Clague]



Fleet List Ref: 09. **Name**: Mona's Isle (2)
Type: Iron paddle steamer, simple oscillating
Official No: 27260 **Signal Letters**: PQMG
Builders:Tod & McGregor, Meadowside, Glasgow
Launched: 10.04.1860 **Yard No**: Not known
Tonnage: 380 tons gross **Cost**: £10,673
Dimensions: Loa: 208ft 0ins. Lbp: 200ft. 6ins. B: 22ft. 2ins. D: 10ft. 7ins.
Machinery: Oscillating, 2/cyls. 44ins diameter, 48ins. Stroke, 25psi, 130shp, 12kts
History:

1860 May 25: Trials, attained a speed of 12 kts
1882 Main mail carrier for 23 years from Ramsey to Whitehaven, Liverpool & Scotland
1882 Taken for conversion to a twin-screw vessel. Conversion cost about £9,000
1883 Nov 16 Renamed after conversion by Westray, Copeland & Co. Barrow
1891 Dec Special overhaul at the Naval Construction Works at Barrow. Costing £2,914
1900 After a collision, repairs by A & J Inglis, of Partick, Glasgow. Cost about £800
1900/09 General repairs by the owners, including new main deck. Cost £5,000
1909 Dec 3 Left Ramsey for Liverpool with 14 passengers, a crew of 21, mail and 60 tons of cargo. A severe north-westerly gale reaching Force 12 blew up as she approached the Mersey. She passed the Bar Light Vessel before 7am. Foundering shortly afterwards with the loss of all on board.

Model Notes: The first vessel in the company with oscillating engines instead of side lever, with a raked stem, schooner rigged with two masts and a single funnel abaft the paddles



Fleet List Ref: 09. **Name**: Ellan Vannin [ex Mona's Isle (2)]

Renamed Ellan Vannin 16.11.1883 Converted to a twin-screw steamer

By Messrs Westray, Copeland & Co. of Barrow, fitted with inverted compound engines.

Tonnage: 379.53 tons gross, 128.30 tons net, 304 tons under deck

Cost: £10,673 as built. Cost of conversion £9,000 approx.

Dimensions: Loa: 207ft 0ins. Lbp: 191ft. 6ins. B: 22ft. 2ins. D: 10ft. 7ins.

Machinery: Compound, 4-cyls,18ins,14ins dia,24in stroke, 80psi, 100rpm, 500ihp, 12knts 2/single ended boilers 10ft x 9ft 6ins. 80psi, 4/furnaces 2ft 9ins dia, firegrate area 55sq ft, heating surface 2,004sq ft. Coal consumption 9 tons/23 hours, bunkers 18 tons.

Passengers: 1st 134; 3rd 165; total 299. Crew 14.

Further Particulars: Schooner rigged, 2 masts, height deck/truck, fore-60ft -main 68ft.

Hull: Iron, single bottom, one deck, 4/iron bulkheads, 2/water ballast tanks capacity 44 tons Raised quarterdeck with new deckhouse over saloon companionway. Bridge deck amidships with wheelhouse, steering by hand, no steam steering gear. Engine room skylight 9ft long x 3ft 2ins high. Topgallant forecastle under which was the steerage, forward of the steerage was the forecastle. Below the forecastle was a chain locker and water ballast tank, between these compartments and forehold was an iron bulkhead. Iron bulkheads each end of holds. Height main deck/bridge deck 7ft 4ins. Bulwarks 4ft 6ins high, 4/freeing ports, one each side 14ins x 9ins and 24ins x 24ins. 3 hand bilge pumps.

Cargo Holds:Capacity, forehold 6441 cu.ft. 161 tons. After hold 4830 cu.ft. 120.7 tons.

Hatches: Fore hatch 15ft 0ins x 6ft; 10 after hatch 12ft 0ins x 6ft 4ins, coamings 15ins high

Lifeboats: 2/21ft 6insx6ft 3insx2ft 5ins, capacity 382 cu.ft.38 persons,320 lifebelts,6 life buoys

Draught: Draught on leaving Ramsey on last voyage aft 10ft., forward 7ft 6ins. Mean draught 8ft 9ins, freeboard 2ft 9ins. Freeboard assigned by the Board of Trade 1ft 10ins.

Twin screws: Cast iron, each 7ft 3ins diameter, and 13ft 9ins pitch, surface area 17 sq ft

The recent maritime tragedies involving modern, well-found, purpose-built car ferries have shown the cataclysmic effects of a large inflow of water into vehicular decks. Such information and experience was not available at the time of the loss of the **Ellan Vannin**.

The Annex to the of the Court of Inquiry stated: 'It may be noted that the original plans and specifications were not produced to the Court and it would seem that they had long since ceased to exist.

A comparison between the reconstructed drawings (by the author) of the steamer **Mona's Isle** (2) and the twin screw **Ellan Vannin** show many of the modifications which could have resulted in changes to the stability of the vessel, and in the ability of the vessel to resist a large inflow of water and some of these modifications may be summarised as follows:

1) Oscillating engines were changed to vertical compound engines requiring repositioning.
2) Boiler dimensions and positions were changed resulting in changes to their CGs.
3) Forecastle and Bridge Decks were added to form a well deck.
4) Paddles and sponsons were removed reducing the overall deadweight by about 60 tons.
5) Beam overall sponsons reduced from 43ft 6ins (approx) to beam (moulded) 22ft 2ins.
6) Twin screws instead of paddle could have made the very narrow hull difficult to handle in very severe sea conditions especially if rudder dimensions were unaltered.
7) Beam to length ratio was 8.95 and beam to draught was 2.535 compared with the **Fenella** (1) of 1881 of 7.69 and 2.30 respectively, indicating that **Ellan Vannin** had a very slender hull of shallow draught compared with her contempories.
8) Hatches fore (15' x 7') and aft (12' x 6' 6") were twice the size of comparable vessels.
9) Deck structure over aft companionway to saloon. Referred to in the Inquiry, but taken in conjunction with the very large after-hatch the large skylight, a feature of the early paddle steamers, these could have provided many large openings for the inflow of water.
10) The **Ellan Vannin**, for her size, had a greater cargo capacity than her contemporaries, and it was also at one deck level. Cargo capacity: - Fore hold 6441 cu.ft., 161 tons. After hold 4830 cuff, 120.7 tons. At the time of her loss. the **Ellan Vannin** only carried 60 tons of cargo.
11) It will be noted that the **Ellan Vannin** was trimmed with a deeper draught aft than forward, many photographs refer. The deeper draught aft could have made her more vulnerable to following seas; the steps down to main deck below the

new bridge deck could have made the engine room and boiler room more liable to flooding from aft, by-passing the bulkheads.

12) The Ellan Vannin had the minimum of four bulkheads recommended at that time positioned at each end of the cargo holds and between engine / boiler room. The forward would also have served the dual purpose of a collision bulkhead

Epilogue

The previously unpublished divers' reports provide a unique view of the wreck, which today would be provided by deep-sea submersibles and remote controlled video cameras. This evidence, in the light of day knowledge and experience of recent maritime disasters, and research into stability and performance of paddle steamers versus screw steamers without further 'direct evidence' the most probable cause of the loss of the **Ellan Vannin** reached by the Court of Inquiry.

Chris Michael in his book '*The Wrecks of Liverpool Bay'* locates the wreck of the **Ellan Vannln** in position $53^0$32-02'N. $3^0$16-90' W, which confirms the position stated by the divers in evidence (chart refers). The wreck was dispersed soon after the vessel sank by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board using explosives, so as not to be an obstacle to shipping. It is possible that the wreck site is now covered in sand and silt; the depth at low water is 11 metres to the seabed, but some wreckage may still remain.

The loss of the **Ellan Vannin** should no longer remain a maritime mystery. Certainly the tremendous power of the sea should never be underestimated and the causes of these disasters must always be investigated to answer the question: '*What caused the vessel to sink*?'

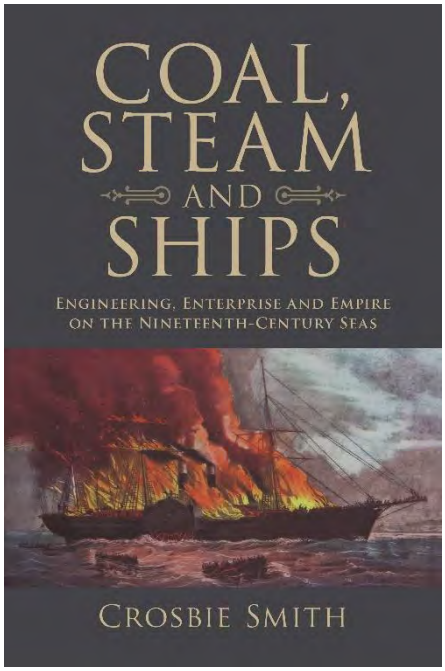
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Manx Museum - Archives, ship photographs, reports etc.
Merseyside Maritime Museum - The Ship Models Collection

Book Review

'Coal, Steam and Ships:
Engineering, Enterprise and Empire on the Nineteenth Century Seas' by Crosbie Smith
Cambridge University Press (Science in History Series), 2018.
I.S.B.N. 978-1-107-19672-8. Hardback
xxi + 449pp. 40 illus + 8 tables. Bibliography. Index. D.8vo. (24 x 16cms.)
Available from Amazon at £26.95

With an impeccable academic pedigree, Professor Smith has earned an international reputation for his work on the history of science; a reputation that was more than enhanced in 1990 by the award of a Pfizer Prize for his 900 page biography, with Professor M. Norton Wise, of Lord Kelvin, and cemented in 2000 by the award of a second for his *Science of Energy.* Only one other historian has been awarded the Pfizer Prize twice. To add further laurels to his achievements, *Coal, Steam and Ships* has brought him the award, by the Society for Nautical Research, of the Anderson Medal for the best work of maritime non-fiction.



One of the advantages of such academic success is that funding becomes easier to obtain. Those of us who struggle to extract the price of a new book from the family budget will miss a heartbeat or two, or perhaps even three, to learn that Professor Smith persuaded the Arts & Humanities Research Board to part with £445,000 for his project on ocean steam navigation in the Victorian era. In case readers may suspect a printing error, I will write that out – four hundred and forty-five thousand pounds Sterling! In truth, this is a reflection of the cost of in-depth research involving transatlantic travel and numerous hotel stays; a cost not made any easier by the restricted opening hours of archives such as that at the Merseyside Maritime Museum - 13½ hours per week compared with 25 at the Liverpool Record Office and 41½ at The National Archives in Kew.

The first thing this reviewer does when examining a new book is to check its bibliography and in this case it exceeded all expectations. It includes numerous books and papers of limited circulation (including this *Bulletin* and the works of a number of L.N.R.S. members) and shows how thoroughly Professor Smith has trawled the libraries and archives on both sides of the North Atlantic. As well as a mouth-watering bibliography, there is an index of 63 pages – a whole column is devoted to the Holts and nearly another one to William Schaw Lindsay whose little used papers

have been explored by Don Leggett, one of the helpers on the 'Ocean Steamship' project.

Those members who enjoyed the recent extracts from Kennedy's *History of Steam Navigation* published in the *Bulletin* will find a vast amount of additional information here which will add enormously to their understanding of the subject. The text is an absorbing mélange of the many factors which shaped the early years of Britain's principal oceanic steamship companies: Royal Mail, Cunard, Pacific Steam and the P. & O. As you would expect, finance and mechanical engineering are considered in detail but the author also introduces the constraints stemming from the firmly held religious views of the time, and the need to create and hold public confidence which in turn influenced political readiness to fund the expensive mail contracts on which hung the financial viability of these pioneering companies. He is particularly strong on the relationships between the directors/managers and the builders of their ships and engines and there are many penetrating insights into the principal characters which show how their decisions were influenced by the cultural mores of the early Victorian age. Professor Smith is fortunate that three of the concerns were public companies (Cunard was a private partnership) and therefore subject to comment in the press from disaffected shareholders or former employees and he makes the most of the vituperative correspondence which was a regular feature in the *Railway Magazine,* a source that few can have thought of tapping for maritime related invective.

Mercifully free of typos, the text is printed on high quality paper which should have allowed a much higher quality of reproduction of the illustrations which, in the main, are far too small and lack clarity, although not the dust jacket which is a splendid reproduction of the print (from the author's collection) of the loss of Pacific Mail Line's *Golden Gate* in 1862 when over 250 passengers and crew died. Dramatic though the image is, one wonders about its appropriateness as neither the ship itself, nor its owners are mentioned in the text.

The price of academic books has sky-rocketed in recent years and Cambridge University Press have recently published Prof. Harlaftis' study of Onassis and the Vagliano Brothers at no less than £90 (for fewer than 400 pages) so a price of £29.99 is a welcome relief, even if it is 'perfect' bound rather than gathered, however Amazon are retailing it at £26.95 and, by a bit of extended browsing, copies can be found at less than that – worth every penny.

A Full Life – Part 3 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 books, and have amplified, in the third person, what he wrote, in the first person.

Bermuda August 1940 to September 1944

Before leaving Gibraltar, I was informed that I would be required in Singapore as boarding officer, or for other work. It seemed glamorous at that time. I do not think that anyone forecast the terrible events shortly to happen in that area and my orders were countermanded and, because I had lived in Bermuda, someone from on high up felt that my experience there would be useful.

Accordingly, in August 1940 I sailed on MV **Mataroa**, New Zealand Line, and reached Hamilton towards the end of the month. Also on board were many former colleagues which I had met in Imperial Censorship. Since I held joint U.K./Bermuda citizenship, I found lodgings with a police officer friend. For the numerous others, two of the largest hotels, later increased to three, were commandeered by the British Authorities; officers each had a room and full board the charge for which I forget but was not excessive. A goodly number of married couples and family with useful knowledge came into the plan.

Prior to leaving England I had gone, cap in hand, to a shipping agent friend with my difficulty regarding my wife joining me. Since she was not a doctor, a nurse, or a sister of religion she was ineligible to go abroad; the situation presented a problem. My friend looked quizzically at me and stated that he was arranging for a party of 80 nuns to go to Havana and, of these, Sister Maria Theresa would disembark at Hamilton. The ship left Liverpool on 10/09/1940. I had not told my wife of this, but, as a civilian, she felt it odd to be with these good ladies, but felt it due to war exigencies and dismissed the matter from her mind. May I say that Kay was nobody's baby and helped me very particularly in some somewhat hairy situations: in fact, I would claim that her services were more than valuable to the war effort?

As writer of these notes, conceived & born in Bermuda, can I claim to be son of a nun?

We rented a lovely little cottage in 16 acres of ground on the South Shore and I cycled every day to work at the Princess Hotel. I was a Boarding Officer for most of the time and searched the purser's office of ships of all descriptions and flags. Many of these vessels were hauled into Hamilton without warning and the resultant catch in mail, in documents and in kind was quite amazing.

An old tub of a Portuguese freighter was brought in with much of the riff raff of central Europe travelling from Nazi domination. One man had little luggage but a battered suitcase which was stuffed with bearer bonds of colossal value. Further I had smelt a most pungent smell of cheese, which emanated from a bosun's locker built around the mainmast. I felt this to be unusual and I had noticed that the container

had been addressed to a countess somewhere in Cuba. My colleagues did not have to look very far to find that the addressee was an enemy agent and the cheese was stuffed with diamonds and precious stones, worth a fortune.

At this time America was not at war and we found rich pickings in some of their ships. With a colleague, we spent much time on ***Excambion***, American Export Lines, and we did not pass her as clear till around 1.00am. The nice kind chief steward pressed us to have a drink and produced two Rye on the rocks. I gulped mine. We then cleared ship and went home very sweaty. Arriving at my veranda I was sick and had never felt so ill in my life. When I arrived at the office very green and ragged, my Chief, Rear Admiral Siddalls, asked me if I had heard about Ross. My colleague was in hospital and not expected to live. I told him of my experience and in the minute was in touch with New York. It transpired that this amiable Chief Steward was a Jerry and had been operating a short-wave transmitter in a pillar in the 3rd class saloon bar. Happily, Ross made good a recovery. I was not so affected as I had gulped my drink whilst Ross had drunk his like a gentleman.

*The ship's barber on the **Excambrian**, one Oscar Richard Stabler was an American Citizen as was the Chief Steward, Conradin Otto Dold, with strong Nazi connections. It transpired that they were members of the Duquesne Nazi Germany Spy Ring which was broken by the FBI before America entered the War. Dold was sent down for ten years plus two concurrent.*

With the approval of the H.E. the Governor, the late Lord Knollys, I arranged and ran public meetings all over the islands and gave the people what I felt to be a synopsis of what I felt could happen. Bermuda was much afraid of ships like the **Graf Spee**. The U.S. operating base at St. Georges had some heavy guns and there were two units of a local militia; added to this the American and West Indies Squadron had various Cruisers and sloops at Ireland Island. There was, however, no civilian protection whatsoever. Polite, but not too concerned, audiences gave me some attention but the attitude was, that "it could not happen to them".

As I recall, I made plans for Bermuda to spend money on modern fire engines and for effective alarm systems throughout. Thrown in were proper ambulances and the like. I fear that we were regarded as something by way of being alarmists. The goods bought amounted to £30,000 and I was told that the ship bringing this equipment was sunk within sight of Bermuda and the lot was lost; whether or not this was the case I do not know… in those days rumour was rife; I did not take any further part in the exercise, but there did seem to be new equipment about.

About this period, after my month of detached duty, I was friendly with Bob Anthony, Colonel on the U.S. Base at St. George, and, of all things, he asked me to help him with camouflage there. I knew absolutely nothing about this, but Bob knew of my ARP service and concluded that the likes of myself were experts in such things. I was given permission to have time off to consult Bob and his staff and worked out a plan which seemed to work and delighted the Americans.... I was most surprised that my brief secondment was approved and I felt that this arrangement was in no way

instigated by me. I was allowed to 'have a bash', no publicity, no word anywhere. Bob told me he was delighted with my efforts, but I felt a complete fraud.

One Saturday, at my office in the Princess Hotel, I was, a little later *(going home)* than my colleagues, and a coloured man, a cleaner, handed me a folded piece of paper secured by a stamp mount, no envelope, but addressed to somebody in Havana. Our man had found the paper in a trash bin and wondered if it was of interest; it had come from the same gold mine as had supplied the cheese. The letter was in German schrift and was full of priceless information about a German agent who was making her way to Alexandria to report fleet movements there... there was also a complete account of her dalliances with a high British officer. Fortunately one of the members of my team had also stayed a little late and between us we were able to pass on what appeared to be most valuable...

We concluded somebody on a ship, who had been acting as courier, grew alarmed when the ship was brought into Bermuda, and, because he knew the contents of the letter, ditched it.

Venezuela August 1943 – September, 1944

About August 1943 I was bidden to Admiralty House and told that there was a leak in our security in Venezuela. I had to look it up on the map. I arrived in Caracas, having travelled to Puerto Cabello aboard H.M.Y. **Black Bear**. (see frontispiece)

This steam yacht was completed in 1930 for the American yachtsman R.M.Singer, and bought by the Royal Navy for use as a safety ship for Fleet Air Arm trainee pilots, and anti submarine work, based in Trinidad. She was sold out of the Royal Navy in 1946.

Why it was felt that I might unearth something, I do not know I would ever have felt myself competent so to do; I did not feel that my Spanish was all that good but I had a fair experience with the Latin trade. We were given a house in Puerto Cabello belonging, to Blue Star Line, I think. It had basic furniture but we were obliged to buy beds, tables and other large items. I felt conned into this position, which was a bit much for my salary of Bolivares 1500. (1B was about 1/9d.)

There appeared to be completely trustworthy and loyal people in Caracas but, with others, I had my doubts. I was ordered to keep my eyes open for anything suspicious; for example there was a brisk trade with schooners running between Curacao, Aruba and Puerto Cabello. Any of these vessels could have carried a quantity of oil drums available for U-Boats and no questions asked.

My Vice-Consulate was in part of what had been a tyre making factory owned by Ford. In this massive wreck of a building was a floor foot deep in carbon black, of which we were in great need. I never really found out how I was to nose around and find anything untoward; George Emerson, my assistant was equally puzzled. Had we entered bars and wayside hostelries, those therein would have immediately clammed up, so we felt able to go about in search of things suspicious.

George and I set off for Caracas (155 miles) one day but, before leaving, we stopped on the vast salt pan outside *(Puerto Cabello)* to check the car. George, ever of a suspicious nature, found that four bolts, which held the differential, had been

sawn through in such a manner that a short distance of running would have crashed the car. The road to Valencia, and thence to Caracas, consisted of something like 176 double S. bends with a sheer drop of hundreds of feet on one side or the other, whilst ascending some 4,000 feet. On, or near, most of the corners were little memorial shrines with names of those killed at the point. Looking over the wall, dozens of wrecked vehicles could be seen down the ravines.

On another occasion we went up a steep section of the main road in a lonely area with large rocks on one side. As my hat blew off and hit the windscreen George yelled, "Quick, drive like hell we are being shot at". I was very brave about this because I thought it was a gust of back draught, but George told me that he distinctly saw a man with a gun behind a rock. He thought that the gun was of a very popular type, consisting of three barrels, a rifle barrel super-imposed by twin shot gun barrels. He was willing to bet it was our friend from the Hotel. I kept the hat, in the rim of which there were several holes, and Michael played with it for a long time.

I was at a loss what to do. I felt that I was on dicey ground at the Legation and that it would be a good idea to contact Trinidad. Unfortunately, few British ships came to the port, then an isolated ship with a British Master and crew came in. I boarded her and introduced myself to the Master with the request that he carry a message for me to Trinidad. Quite rightly, he stated that he had no evidence that I was not up to no good; this gentleman had told me that he was from Liverpool so I said "Captain" listen to this…. Scott, Wadsworth, Bromilow, Longworth, Lucas, McKinley, Johnson, Chambers, Hopkin, Forshaw….. This was a recent Liverpool football team; he grinned and stated that "only a scouser would know that, I'll take anything you want".

When I first arrived in the country, I had been ordered to take coded messages on my telephone, then to read them over the open telephone to the Legation*, (Legation – a group of officials who represent their government in a foreign country but who have less importance than an embassy)* who had a key to the code, and then I was instructed to write the translation of these naval messages as they were given to me. This operation in itself made me thoroughly suspicious and my wife stated at the time, "This is what you have to watch". I made a courtesy visit to the Legation, a very frosty event, and went back to Bermuda via New York; my wife and baby had flown previously to Bermuda on the last flight of a service which was then discontinued. Strenuous efforts were made to discourage me from going to Bermuda and go direct to England, but instead reported to Admiralty House with my saga and was requested to put it all down in writing... "We consider it will be valuable to the war effort".

BERMUDA October, 1944

Kay and I were stuck in Bermuda around the end of October 1944, on nobody's payroll and no hope of work in Bermuda. I was aware that I was entitled to transport to England, but when?

I had arranged for a job at the U.S. base at St. David's Island where a number of local people had found work on the base, but the pay was a fraction of the money paid to Americans. I had not been there very long when I was arrested by a detail of

soldiers and a Corporal and taken before a Colonel G2. Another man named Evans, Lootenant U.S. Army and stated to be a "G" Man" was in on the game. I was questioned as to why I had been to Venezuela and what I had been doing there. I referred them to the Naval C. in C. and disclosed nothing, whereupon I was shown a large 4-engined plane in which, I was told, I could be in Leavenworth in two hours.

I then referred him to H.E. the Governor, Lord Burghley. All this was "naowd" strongly, so I thought fast and stated that I would get my report but they would have to take me to my cottage. News had come through to me the day before this that I had been granted a priority "A" passage home two days hence, on ***M.V."Rangitata"***.

We all set off in the direction of our cottage, rented to us by local friends when en route, in the middle of a rather affluent village, the gallant Colonel alighted and relieved himself in the middle of the road. When we neared out cottage, I instructed my gaolers to wait for me and went into the house of a local friend who had a telephone. I gave him a speedy run down of events and he promised to hide me. I rang Government House and was lucky enough to speak to Lord Burghley, told him what had happened and assured him that I had divulged precisely nothing. H.E. asked me if I could hold the line, he would get onto the Vice Admiral at our base and he would ring back. In a short while H.E. called and stated that he had spoken to the Admiral and our Chief Security Officer. He spoke kindly of my action and stated that I might care, in the meantime, to tell the precious pair where exactly to go. It gave me great joy, succinctly, to give these two cowboys a brief dismissal notice and I told them what I had done. His Excellency had arranged with our Security Officer to summon the Americans and myself to his office the following morning.

We turned up at the Security Office the next day and the precious pair was given more than the rounds of the kitchen and that they were on British soil, albeit on lease. I chipped in, I could not resist it, to demand a written apology from the base and, since I was a special constable, I would charge the gallant Colonel with committing a nuisance on the public highway. The good Colonel Hordern shut me up, but probably he loved it. I heard later that heads rolled somewhat in the U.S. Base. Kay and I were whistled through the formalities like Royalty; we were told that the operation was being watched by our Embassy in Washington.

We had an uneventful voyage although there was a continuous state of alarm from our American escorts. Kay and Michael occupied Cabin State A1 and I was in a dormitory below. Included in these was a ship's officer who had saved his life by swimming 7 miles in the Caribbean after his ship, a tanker, had been torpedoed.

*The **Rangitata** was part of Fast Convoy CU46 which left New York on 7th November 1944 and arrived in Liverpool on 18th November 1944, so this was the first time I was in the UK. There were 33 ships escorted by 10 US escorts.*

To be concluded

Able Seaman John Dennett

His Service in WW2

[Editor's notes: John has kindly provided these notes for use by the Society

John Dennett was born in Yorkshire on 23rd July 1924 but soon moved to Somerset with his parents. He grew up in a town called Melksham and spent most of his youth there. Upon leaving school John worked as an apprentice bricklayer with his father, and in the harsh winter of 1941 was working on the construction of accommodation blocks for the Royal Navy. It was local work in Corsham in Wiltshire near where he had been brought up.

"Everything above ground was frozen solid for months, so they moved us underground working in tunnels. I suppose in one sense it was good to have employment, yet it was a farming area and I was used to being in the fresh air so I didn't take to it. My mate and I joined the local Home Guard and they gave us each a pair of boots and a rifle so we had a bit of fun being soldiers in our spare time. Even though I could have claimed 'reserved occupation' that winter gave us the idea of joining up. We wanted to be part of what was going on in the big world and it seemed exciting"



"*My mum was strongly against the plan and refused to give me my birth certificate. She just said "You can't go" and that was that. My Dad was happy with the idea; he said it would do me good. So I went off to Bristol and joined the Navy. Because I didn't have my birth certificate, I added 6 months to my age to get me over 18. It was funny that nobody asked for my birth certificate and, looking back, the irony is that if my mum had given it to me, they would have turned me away on account of being underage.*"

Having joined the Royal Navy at the age of 17 in March 1942, John was sent to Devonport for twelve weeks of basic training, then onto Gunnery School to be trained as an anti-aircraft gunner. Active service came in November when, with a rail ticket to Scotland, he boarded RMS **Queen Elizabeth** in Loch Ewe. This was an Anti-Submarine Boom Defence Depot in the far North West where the deep-water sea loch was ideal for the assembly of convoys, with access through the Minches directly into the North Atlantic. Loch Ewe was situated close to the Home Fleet based at Scapa Flow, so well suited for convoys gathering for the unenviable trip to Murmansk. Happily for John, he was destined for the United States, making the trans-Atlantic voyage aboard one of the fastest ships afloat.

Never going into passenger service, the Cunard Liner had been refitted in

Singapore for service as a troop ship. Like her sister ship, the **Queen Mary,** both liners could operate without military escort and relied upon their ability to maintain a constant speed of around 30 knots. Designed and well suited to the trans-Atlantic route, the **Queen Elizabeth** ferried American troops mainly from New York into Gourock on the River Clyde. The return crossing was useful to take Royal Navy crews over to the US dockyards to collect the ever-increasing quantity of ships being built under Lend-Lease.

John and his crew members landed in Halifax Nova Scotia then travelled by rail across eastern Canada through Quebec & Montreal down to the British establishment of HMS Astbury in New York. This was essentially two hotels in use for RN personnel.

"*It had already been quite an adventure coming over from Scotland, and then of course we realised that we would be in New York for Christmas. The Americans treated us so very well and after the shortages and black-out at home it was a really great Christmas. Each one of us was matched with a local family for the holiday season: we were all at the Newark Railway Station and as each name was called, we were introduced to our 'family' for the duration. We couldn't fault the welcome we were given.*"

What was to become John's ship was named **LST322**, the initials standing for "Landing Ship Tank". these vessels were designed to carry heavy military equipment, vehicles and tanks. With wide opening doors at the bow and a flat-bottomed hull, despite her size the LST could offload directly onto the beaches. She had been built at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. In January **LST322** was launched and ready for commissioning; John and the crew moved into the US Naval Base to begin training. "Even now I remember how fantastic the food was."

After working up and sea trials, **LST322** set off within a much larger convoy destined for Gibraltar in support of the landings in North Africa, codenamed Operation Torch. Comprising a mixture of tankers, freighters and troop carriers then convoy took about three weeks for the passage.

"*Of course, the flat bottom was not suited to the deep sea so it certainly wasn't a comfortable crossing. The convoy routed into Gibraltar but we went straight into Algiers and Oran. Along with other equipment, our LST was loaded with smaller landing craft which were needed. Once we had offloaded, they gave us a bit of shore leave.*

"*We generally operated in support of Monty's 8th Army and worked our way along to Tripoli. By this time we were getting the best of the battle against Rommel's Afrika Corps but we were certainly kept busy. Malta was a key part of the supply line and we were ferrying petrol, provisions and equipment there quite a lot.*

We were often under air attack and took a few hits but nothing serious. It

*was **LST 429** which ran out of luck, and was sunk just off the coast of Libya in July.*"

John took part in the Sicily landings codenamed Operation Husky. Weather conditions were not at all good when **LST 322**, by this time part of the 3rd Flotilla which landed on the south east coast of the island roughly between Licata Torre di Gaffe and Mollarella beach. This was the largest amphibious operation of the war to date in terms of the number of divisions landed on the first day, 10th July.

The landings were supported by four battleships and four aircraft carriers, along with a variety of other smaller ships. The British 8th Army including the 1st Canadian Division under Montgomery struck out from the east whilst the US 7th Army under Lieutenant General George Patton moved from their landings in the west, both striving to reach Catania and the Messina Straits. The taking of Sicily coincided with the coup which removed Mussolini, urging the Allies into a quick continuation onto the Italian mainland. Planning for the next assault was rushed, combining an 8th Army crossing of the straits into Calabria followed swiftly by the seaborne landings at Salerno which took place from 9th September, codenamed Operation Avalanche. The drive north from Messina was largely unopposed but occupying forces took advantage of the geography in their favour and the Salerno landings were fiercely opposed, calling on massive naval support.

"*The landings at Salerno were made under heavy fire from shore-based guns and the usual air attacks, but we managed to beach and unload, then departed for another load, this time from Palermo in Sicily. The first mail since America was waiting for us to pick up. We continued to load at Tripoi to move stores to Italian ports; this time it was Taranto. The Italian fleet had just surrendered and it was interesting to see these warships up close and out of action.*"



LST 322 was in the thick of the action, taking part in the transport and landing of the British X Corps and the VI Corps of the 5th US Army. Salerno Bay had a wide beach of approximately 20 miles but this time the enemy was expecting the landings and was fully prepared.

On 8th September Marshal Badoglio announced on the radio "The Italian Government, recognizing the impossibility of continuing the uneven struggle against the overwhelming enemy power, with the intent of saving further and more serious

calamities to the Nation, has asked Gen. Eisenhower, C. in C. of the Allies forces, for an armistice. The request has been accepted. Consequently, every action of hostility against the allied armed forces must stop from the Italian armed forces in every place. They (the Italian forces), however, will react to possible attacks of any other origin". This action led to the surrender of the Italian Fleet the following day, coinciding with the Salerno Landings. The fleet sailed from La Spezia running west of Corsica and Sardinia although one of the battleships was sunk by German air attack. The Italian Fleet was then escorted to Valetta Grand Harbour by HMS **Warspite** & HMS **Valiant**, leading to the signal sent by Admiral Cunningham on the 11th: "Be pleased to inform Their Lordships that the Italian battle fleet now lies at anchor under the guns of the fortress of Malta."

The two battleships were despatched back to Blighty but were urgently re-directed to Salerno as the situation there had deteriorated. During the period 12th to 14th September the Germans had unleashed a concerted counter attack deploying six divisions against the Salerno beachhead with the objective of driving the Allies back into the sea before there could be a link up with the British 8th Army advancing from Calabria. The defending forces drove between the two American divisions between the Sele and Calore rivers. Allied troops were too thinly spread to resist these concentrated attacks so the heavy battleships were desperately needed to redress the situation.

These descriptions of the Salerno Landings give some flavour of the situation faced by John and the LSTs running back and forth in support of the landings. As well as the ground action, there were continuing heavy air attacks by Focke Wulf 190 fighter bombers and Dornier 217 heavy bombers. During the afternoon of 14th it was a DO-217 K2 bomber which released a cluster of three glider bombs aimed at HMS **Warspite**, with two of these on target. Given the intensity of aerial bombardment it was inevitable that some success would be achieved by the enemy.

HMS **Warspite** suffered casualties and limped back to Malta, then on to Gibraltar and finally to Rosyth. The foothold eventually gained from Operation Avalanche was inconclusive so another landing was planned further north in order to outflank ahead of the Winter Line deadlock at Monte Cassino and allow a faster advance on Rome. This was codenamed Operation Shingle under command of American General John Lucas. The landings started in the early hours of 22nd January 1944 on a fifteen mile wide stretch of beach near the holiday towns of Anzio & Nettuno.

Landings in January and/or February were entirely unexpected so unopposed, with all British and American objectives successfully taken by noon on the first day.

"*Although the enemy didn't have ground troops, beaching was carried out under heavy shelling and air raids by bombers. Luckily we survived to carry on back*

to Naples for another load, this continued for the next few weeks and each time running the gauntlet of "Anzio Annie" a 12 inch gun on a railway track, which attacked all the convoys of LSTs, and also being harassed by air attacks. Some LSTs were lost and also the hospital ship ***St David*** *was sunk."*



LST offloading a Sherman Tank on the beach during the Allied invasion of Sicily in 1943 From Wikimedia

For the assault troops the second day saw an easy penetration up to four miles inland. Some reports suggest it was sunny and quite warm for the time of year, and hard to believe there was a war at all. Anzio was just 30 miles south of Rome and 55 miles north of the main line of resistance. It seemed there was a clear run to Rome, but historians generally agree that General Lucas was overly cautious and spent too long securing his bridgehead. This gave the defending forces time to recover and build new defences. Resulting from this lack of offensive vigour, the following four months saw some of the most savage fighting of the War.

Allied forces engaged in the Anzio attack consisted of five cruisers, 24 destroyers, 238 landing craft, 60+ other ships, 40,000 troops and 5,000 vehicles. Although the main worry for these landings was shortage of supplies, this never reached a point of serious concern. With the main Force ashore, six LSTs left Naples every day each carrying 1,500 tons of cargo loaded on 50 lorries. Once ashore, these vehicles moved directly inland and returned to the same LSTs empty for return to Naples.

Supported by other smaller craft as well as four Liberty ships, during the period of February to May over 530,000 tons of supplies were delivered to the Anzio beachhead, a daily average of 3,920 tons.

As Allied resources were stretched, and as soon as the situation in Anzio could manage, ten LSTs were released and sent back to England to be available for the Second Front invasion of France. **LST 322** was part of this flotilla and John was

pleased to be on his way home, arriving in Liverpool on 4th April. John remembers that two LSTs separated to Tilbury, two to Swansea, two to Liverpool and thinks the remaining four went on to Glasgow. It was necessary to have these vessels in dry dock for repair and maintenance after so long in the water and such consistent action.

"*It was great to be back, even if Liverpool was not my home town. Of course everywhere was a hive of activity. We had an extended shore leave whilst the work was being carried out. This gave me the opportunity to be out and about around the city – in fact this is when I met Joyce, my wife to be. It is also how I came to remain in the Merseyside area.*"

As soon as she was ready, **LST 322** departed Liverpool for Portsmouth. By late May the vessel was loaded ready, waiting for the final decision to make the crossing.

"*We didn't know too much about what was going on. I suppose we knew more than the troops but it was just a question of waiting for that final decision so we could make a start. To clear dockside space we were moved out into the Solent but it was late on 5th June that we set off properly so we could get into position off the French coast.*

I remember passing fairly close to HMS ***Warspite*** *as she opened up with her heavy armour. We hadn't seen her since Salerno and knew her affectionately as the "Old Lady". Even with one turret still out of action the first broadside made it seem like the she had taken a hit. The whole ship rocked backwards recoil, with a great belch of flame before being covered in smoke. It was such a fantastic sight. We went into Sword Beach to offload troops and heavy equipment, returning promptly to Portsmouth.*"

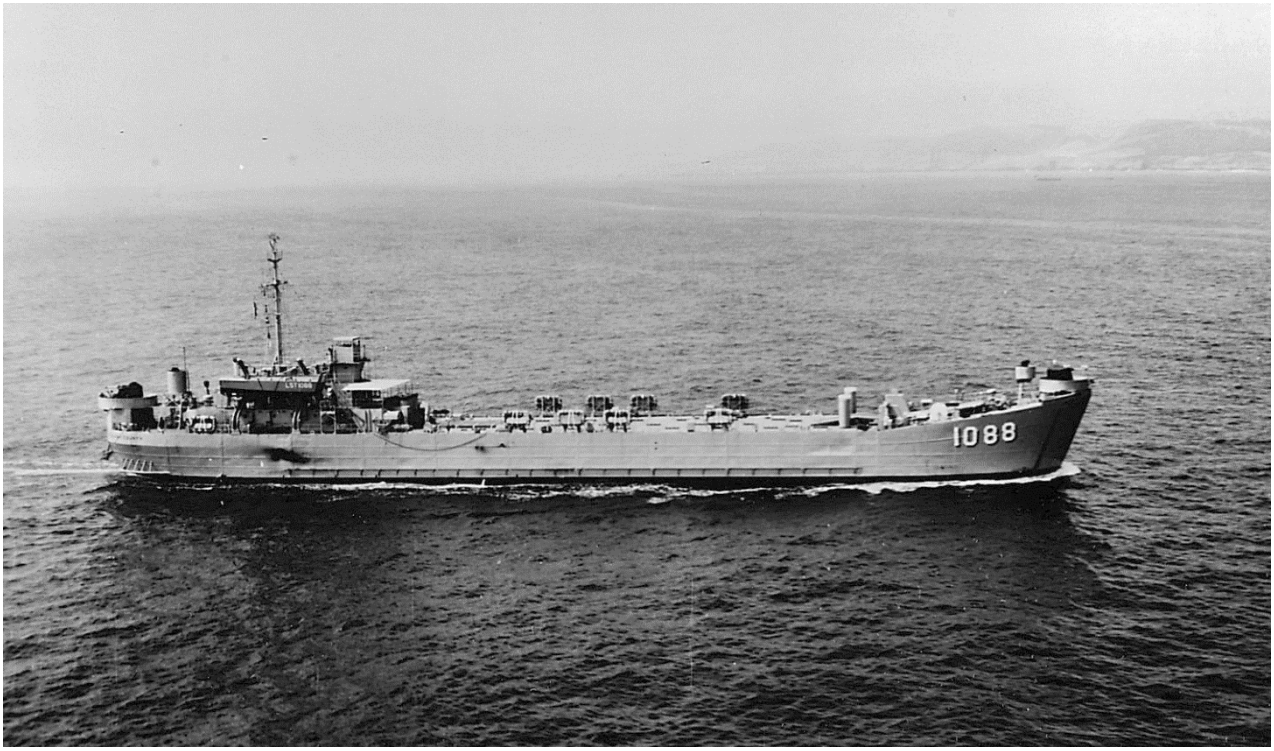
"*I think we made a dozen or so crossings in all. On the return journeys we would be loaded up with injured troops and prisoners.*"

In fact John and his crew mates on **LST 322** made a further 15 crossings, picking up troops, tanks and vehicles at Portsmouth, Southampton and Tilbury. This went on into August.

"*I had a chance for promotion, to go on a higher gunnery course, so I took some leave. Then they transferred me to the aircraft carrier, HMS* ***Patroller****. This was originally an American ship but it had been transferred to the Royal Navy towards the end of 1943 and was used for the duration on convoy protection duties on the Atlantic crossing.*"

"*By August 1945 we were in Glasgow being made ready for use in Burma. I was transferred South Shields to join a minesweeper and we were tasked to take part in the efforts to clear the Irish Sea and Western Approaches. I was on this until*

May 1946 and took a release; there was a degree of priority for those who could return to a reserved occupation although that meant I had to lose three weeks' pay. It occurred to me then that I could have claimed 'reserved occupation' all the way through and avoided all those beach landings. On reflection, I wouldn't have missed it for the world! We all felt like it was a great adventure; we were young and fit and a bit daft and happy to serve. I am sure the youngsters would do the same today."



This personal history of John Dennett's war service is in itself a history of the Royal Navy's supported sea borne landings throughout the war. All main landings are included – Torch in North Africa, Sicily, Salerno, Anzio... then the big one in Normandy. He didn't miss much!

So what does John think of it all now, looking back over so many years?

"I have been back to Normandy every June for the last five years. Traveling in a group of 50 or so veterans it has been a terrific experience. I enjoy meeting the local French people and we have done a few school visits. I am so happy to receive the warm welcome from the French people because we know they had a very tough time from occupation, then invasion. I particularly like to pay my respects at the Landing Craft Association memorial at Ouistreham and make sure I go there each time.

I recently went over to Italy with the Italy Star Association. I was there for about a week visiting all the main sites that I remember well. Even so, I didn't realise quite how many men we lost once they moved off the beach landing areas. For all those, and the ones we lost in Normandy, it is important to remember and to make sure the kids today understand what was done for them. I enjoy school visits near my home in Wallasey and sometimes we get over to a school in North Wales. I get

a real kick from talking with the children. It is important they know what happened, and they ask what it was like and if we were frightened. The children are always full of questions, sometimes a bit bloodthirsty and they lose interest if you say you haven't shot anyone! But they also want to know the basics: what did we get to eat and where did we sleep? They even ask what my Mum had to say about it all."

Landing Ship, Tank was the military designation for naval vessels created during World War II to support amphibious operations by carrying significant quantities of vehicles, cargo, and landing troops directly onto an unimproved shore.

The first tank landing ships were built to British requirements by conversion of existing ships. This was followed by a purpose-built ship. Thereafter, the British and US collaborated upon a joint design which was adopted for the use of both with majority of the construction carried out by the US and supplied under lend-lease. The majority, a thousand, were laid down in the United States during World War II for use by the Allies. Eighty more were built in the United Kingdom and Canada.

LST Specification: -

Length, 327ft; Beam, 50ft; Draft-full load 8ft fwd, 14ft 4ins aft, unloading 2ft 4ins fwd

Displacement, 1780tons (light), 3880tons (full)

Engines 2xGM 12-567 diesels; Speed, 9knots, max. 10.8 knots; twin screws; twin rudders

Complement 8 – 10 officers; 115 enlisted

Armament 1x3inch/50 DP; 1x40mm; 6x20mm

LST 322 was built at Philadelphia Navy Yard beginning 10 August 1942, launched 5 November 1942 and commissioned (HMS) 9 January 1943. She was paid off into Care and Maintenance 29 January 1945 and returned to US Navy custody at Bremerhaven 2 August 1946. Struck from the Naval Register 29 October 1946 she was then sold to the Government of Greece 6 January 1947, fate unknown

Wireless Operator Harold Sidney Bride

By LNRS Member W.G. Williamson

Harold Bride was a modest man who disliked talking about the role he played in one of Britain's greatest maritime disasters, the sinking of the liner RMS **Titanic**. He was deeply moved by the death of his senior operator Jack Phillips and in later life did not like talking about the events of the 14th April 1912.

Early history. Harold was born in Nunhead, London on 11th January 1890 to Arthur and Mary Ann Bride, the youngest of five children and lived with his family in Bromley. After primary school Bride decided he wanted to become a wireless operator and he worked in his family's business to help pay for his training and achieve his dream.

He started training at the British School of Wireless Telegraphy, Clapham, London in September 1910 at the age of 20 years. This was a prodigious training establishment in its day. Founded in 1906 it eventually evolved into the London Electronics College.

After spending nine months of fulltime study at this college Harold sat his examination for the Postmaster General certificate, known as the PMG, on the 28th June 1911; and did very well. His sending and receiving speeds were a creditable 22 words per minute and his knowledge of operational rules was assessed as being very good. The examiner used a symbol indicating “a good man” against the box rating his technical knowledge. Having passed the examination in all respects, Harold was issued with PMG certificate number 478 on 29th June 1911.

Following this success, he joined the Marconi Company and was sent up to Liverpool to do some additional company training at the company's training centre at Beaconsfield House. On completion of this training his first sea assignment as a wireless operator was on the ss **Haverford.** Later he sailed on the **Beaverford** and it is known that he also sailed on the **Lusitania, La France** and the **Anselm**, making three round trips to Brazil and New York. His total sea experience prior to the **Titanic** incident was nine months.

Bride and Jack Phillips signed on the Titanic in Southampton on the 9th April 1912 but had boarded the ship in Belfast. Bride's monthly pay was £2-6-6 and he gave his address as Bannisters Hotel, Hulse Road, Southampton. However at this time the Bride family were living at 58 Ravensbourne Avenue, Bromley.

The two operators had to cover a 24-hour work schedule and between them they decided to work a six-hour shift rota. Phillips would be on duty from 0800 to 1400 hours and again from 2000 hours to 0200 hours the following morning. That of course left Bride with the 0200 to 0800 hours and 1400 to 2000 shifts.

The Titanic incident. When the **Titanic** struck the iceberg at 2340 hours on the 14th April 1912. Jack Phillips was on duty in the wireless room, 22 year old Bride was asleep in his bunk. As the disaster unfolded, Phillips as the more experienced man continued to operate the wireless equipment. Harold Bride assisted and supported Phillips but

mainly acted as a messenger for Captain Smith relaying information that Phillips received concerning the progress of the rescue ships such as the **Carpathia**.

As part of a statement published in the New York Times on the 19th April 1911, Harold said,

"*I was conscious of waking up and hearing Phillips sending to Cape Race. I read what he was sending. It was a traffic matter. I remembered how tired he was and got out of bed to relieve him. I didn't even feel the shock. I hardly knew it had happened until after the captain had come to us. There was no jolt whatsoever. I was standing by Phillips telling him to go to bed when the captain put his head into the cabin.*

'We've struck an iceberg,' the captain said, 'and I'm having an inspection made to tell what it has done for us. You better get ready to send out a call for assistance. But don't send it until I tell you.'"

The captain went away and in ten minutes, I should estimate the time, he came back. We could hear a terrible confusion outside, but there was not the least thing to indicate that there was any trouble. The wireless was working perfectly.

'Send the call for assistance,' said the captain, barely putting his head in the door. *'What call should I send?*' Phillips asked*. 'The regulation international call for help. Just that.*'

Then the captain was gone. Phillips began to send CQD. He flashed away at it and we were joking while he did so. All of us made light of the disaster. We joked that way while he flashed signals for about five minutes. Then the captain came back. 'What are you sending?' he asked. 'CQD' Phillips replied. The humour of the situation appealed to me. I cut in with a little remark that made us all laugh, including the captain. *'Send SOS,*' I said*. 'It's the new call, and it may be your last chance to send it.' Phillips with a laugh changed the signal to SOS."*

Harold Bride was extremely lucky to have survived the sinking of the **Titanic**. Washed overboard he was for a while trapped under an upturned collapsible boat but freed himself and, although terribly cold, managed with terrible effort to swim to a nearby boat crowded with survivors and was pulled on board. He stated; "*There was just room for me to roll on the edge. I lay there not caring what happened. Somebody sat on my legs. They were wedged in between the slats, and were being wrenched. I hadn't the heart left to ask the man to move. There was a terrible sight all around; men swimming and sinking everywhere. I saw some lights off in the distance, and knew a steamship was coming to our aid. I didn't care what happened. I just lay and gasped when I could, and felt the pain in my feet. I feel it still."*

He was rescued by the **Carpathia** and taken to the ship's hospital where he spent most of that long day. Later that evening the **Carpathia**'s wireless operator, Harold Cottam, was suffering badly from exhaustion and Bride was asked if he could help. He willingly agreed and was carried up to the wireless room where he remained until the ship reached New York. He and Cottam were still sending telegrams when the ship docked and the famous Mr. Guglielmo Marconi himself came on board.

Harold had sustained injuries during his ordeal and had to be carried ashore from the **Carpathia**. He spent some time in hospital and then later stayed with some

relatives in New York. He had to remain there until the US inquiry into the disaster, where he had been called as a witness, was completed.

Telegrams. Harold sent this message to his father

Bride, 58 Ravenbourne Avenue, Shortlands, Kent, England.

Quite safe. Uncle Walter and Aunt Millie and Esther looking after me. One foot badly sprained, the other frostbitten. Both improving. Am leaving for Washington for Senatorial Inquiry Monday morning. Home as soon as possible. Love to all. HAROLD

To his fiancée he cabled

Miss Mabel Ludlow, Isolation Hospital, East Grinstead, Sussex.

Safe and well. One ankle sprained. Home as soon as possible Fondest love. HAROLD.

From a letter he wrote from New York;

I am now staying with relatives and waiting orders from the Marconi Company here, who have been most considerate and kind, bringing me much needed clothes and looking after me generally.

I am glad to say I can now walk around, the sprain in my left foot being much better, though my right foot remains numbed from the exposure and cold, but causes me no pain or inconvenience whatever.

Once he had given evidence to the US Senatorial inquiry he was free to return to the UK and took passage home on the RMS **Baltic.**

The item below is from Daily Mirror 20th April 1912

Mr Harold Bride tells of New York Crowd Who shadowed Him, Claimed as "Lost Son."

"It is a very difficult thing to be a hero, or at least to be thought a hero. How I longed at times to be quite unknown and just my ordinary self!"

*With a smile Mr Harold Bride, the junior Marconi operator of the **Titanic**, made this remark to The Daily Mirror shortly after he had landed at Liverpool from the **Baltic** on Saturday morning. A flutter of excitement went round the waiting crowds on the landing stage as he walked down the gangway - the first passenger to leave the ship.*

With eager eyes he searched everywhere for his father, who had come to meet him. Then he saw him. The two rushed to each other.

"Hullo father!" cried the son, with the assumed casualness of youth.

Harold Bride now bears little trace of his terrible ordeal. His right foot, however, is still numbed, and a curious result of his exposure and struggles in the icy sea-water is that the finger-tips of his right hand feel as if they were frozen - they are still insensitive to touch.

Otherwise, but for sleepless nights, Mr. Bride is quite well, and after a rest at his home at Shortlands (Kent) will resume his work as a Marconi operator.

*During the train journey from Liverpool to Shortlands, he described his experiences "as a hero" in America. Of the actual story of the sinking of the **Titanic** and his own escape he can say nothing until after the **Titanic** inquiry.*

Of course when the **Titanic** sank Harold lost his precious wireless certificate which he need as proof of his profession abilities, so naturally he required a replacement. Thus, almost exactly a year to the day after gaining his original certificate, he was issued with a duplicate by the GPO, and the authorities waived the replacement fee. That small act of benevolence saved Harold all of 5/-.

The Radio Officer Examination Records of the period have an interesting entry. Overwriting the original examination results for Harold Bride, is an entry made in red ink, which reads:

"*Certificate lost in the Titanic disaster. Duplicate issued 25/6/12. Fee waived*."

After Titanic and World War I. Before joining the **Titanic**, on the 16th March 1912, Bride had become engaged to Mabel Ludlow who was a nurse. However he then met a teacher, a Miss Lucy Downie, and he broke off his engagement to Mabel. Subsequently he married Lucy on the 10th April 1920 at Stranraer, Wigtownshire. The best man was Lucy's brother, James Downie, a marine engineer.

The couple had three children: Lucy in 1921, John in 1924 and Jeanette in 1929. In 1922 he and Lucy moved to Glasgow, where Bride became a salesman. This move to Glasgow was in part due to his reluctance to being a "**Titanic** survivor" which had given him a certain cachet as a celebrity. He intensely disliked this so-called fame, as he was emotionally scarred by the death of Jack Phillips whom he regarded as a dedicated colleague and friend and a true hero.

After recovering from his injuries, Harold Bride was assigned to the P&O liner **Medina** in August of 1912. Later in December of that year he was assigned to the **German.** It appears he only served on this vessel for a short period for it is known he was appointed to the **Dover Castle** and **Namur** in the first two months of 1913. this would have been a typical experience for a Marconi operator moving from ship to ship. It seems he got tired of the life at sea for according to a quote from the publication "Titanic Calling," in October 1913 he took two years leave of absence without pay, then returned in May 1915 on "special duty at Leafield station and room 106". This was a relay station on the coast of Scotland and actually one of the first of wireless intercept stations.

During World War I, Bride served as the wireless operator on the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's paddle steamer the **Mona's Isle** (see frontispiece). This vessel had been requisitioned by the Admiralty in 1915. As HMS **Mona's Isle** she was used as a net layer to deter submarine attack, and for patrol work around the UK and Western Ireland.

However an interesting article in Marconi Mariner of April 1965 shows that at one period late in the war Bride had trained for wireless duties in Russia to assist "White Russian" forces:-

"*Among these, I remember Charles Gordon. Harold Bride, Bradley, Huggins, Davies, Hudson, Sayers, Thompson, Catt, Frazer and Saunders. Harold Bride, as I mentioned before, was the surviving operator of the **Titanic**. Bradley had come from a Spanish coast station — Las Palmas, if I remember rightly. Many coast stations were*

operated in those early days by the Marconi Company. They were all Marconi men in the party with the exception of Catt, who had been a newspaper telegraphist.

Those days were packed with activity, and we were aware vaguely that we were going to Russia. Our training included Morse practice in the pavilion — the room was wired up with buzzer circuits — exercises in the erecting and dismantling of portable wireless stations consisting of Marconi pack sets and cart sets, riding lessons at a nearby private riding school in St. John's Wood, map reading, coding and decoding, and lessons in 'essential' Russian."

It appears that Harold remained attached to the **Mona's Isle** until about 1919 although this has not been verified. His last seagoing assignment was as wireless operator on a Cross-Channel Ferry, until 1922. Later that year, Harold and Lucy moved to Glasgow, where Bride worked as a travelling salesman dealing in herbal medicines. Harold's niece, Christina, reported that he retained his Morse skills as an amateur wireless operator.

Subsequent occupation. Finally, Harold Sidney Bride worked as a live-in caretaker at Provan Hall, a National Trust property near Glasgow.

"*MR HAROLD S. BRIDE has been appointed representative at Provan Hall, Stepps, Glasgow, by the National Trust for Scotland. Mr Bride was the representative in Scotland for Fassett & Johnston, Ltd., for a period of twenty-five years and for a shorter period the company's representative in the North of England. "*

Harold Sidney Bride lived out the rest of his days in Scotland, living in comparative obscurity. He died of lung cancer on April 29, 1956. He was cremated at Glasgow Crematorium, Necropolis and his ashes scattered. Surviving relatives describe him as a small stocky man with curly hair, who loved a good joke.

Lucy Downie Bride died in 1973.

References

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Titanic Calling
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Merseyside Maritime Museum - Archives Opening Hours

The Archives Centre is now be visited without the need for pre booking.
Opening times are Wednesday to Friday, both inclusive, from 10.00am to 4.00pm