

**SOME NOTABLE SHIPS**  
**BUILT BY**  
**GEORGE BROWN & CO (MARINE) LTD**  
**GARVEL SHIPYARD**  
**GREENOCK**

Note:

Ship Nos. 1 – 4 were built by Taylor & Mitchell

Ship Nos. 5 – 200 were built by George Brown & Co

Ship Nos. 201 – 286 were built by George Brown & Co (Marine)Ltd

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March 2002

## SOME NOTABLE SHIPS BUILT BY GEORGE BROWN & CO (MARINE) LTD

All the ships which were built at Garvel Shipyard were built with that special sense of pride which allowed them to be described as "Clyde Built" – a label which, at the time, was justly renowned throughout the world

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Garvel Shipyard in the foreground, circa 1960.

Copies of these notes have been prepared for:

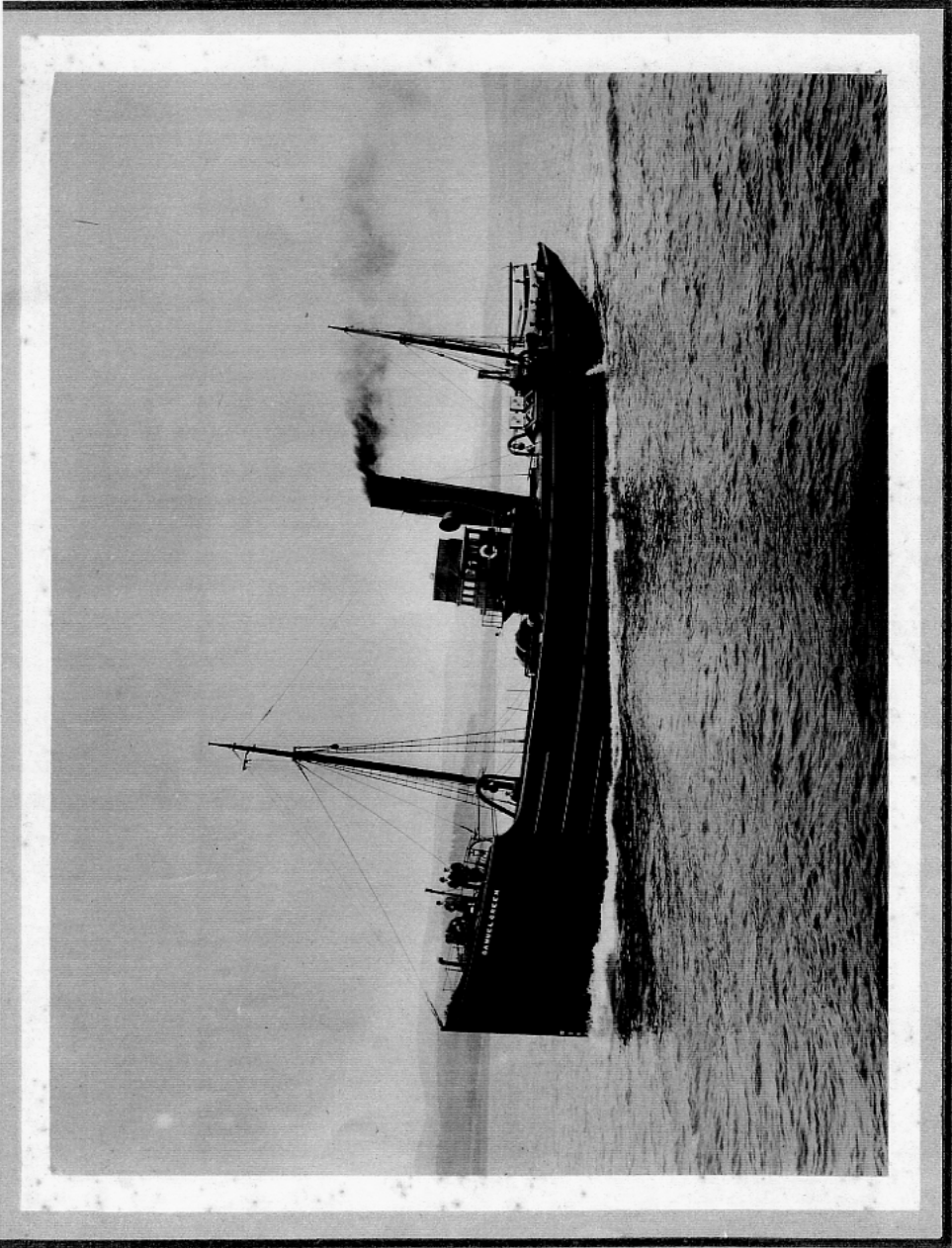
Douglas Brown (Grandson of George Brown)  
Jack Brown (Grandson of George Brown)  
Peter Brown (Great Grandson of George Brown)  
Valerie Hargreaves (Great Grand-daughter of George Brown)  
Lindy Patrick (Great Grand-daughter of George Brown)  
Archivist, Mitchell Library, Glasgow  
Local History Librarian, Watt Library, Greenock  
Librarian, Scottish Maritime Museum, Irvine

**A SAMUEL GREEN (built 1917, Ship No.116).**

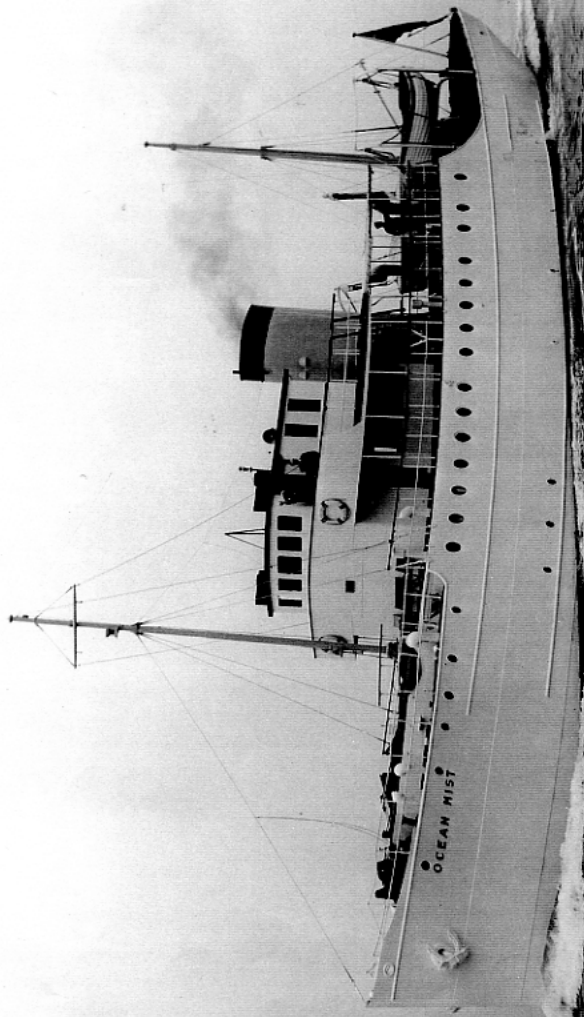
One of 14 Castle-type trawlers, designed for war purposes, built for the Admiralty during World War I, each of which was named after a petty officer who served at the Battle of Trafalgar on board HMS Victory or HMS Royal Sovereign. This trawler was converted to a luxury yacht in the 1920's and was owned for some years between the wars by the Guinness family of Dublin. She was renamed OCEAN ROVER and, amongst her cruises, for several summers undertook voyages for the Guinness family to Monaco, carrying in her hold their racing cars which regularly took part in the Grand Prix there.

After service in the Second War she was acquired by Mr Joseph Hobbs, owner of Inverlochy Castle near Fort William. He also owned the Fort William whisky distillery and became famous as developer of the Great Glen Cattle Ranch in the 1950's and 60's. By him she was renamed OCEAN MIST and was moored at Camus na Gall opposite Fort William. She appears there in many calendar and postcard photographs. He brought her back to her builders' yard in Greenock in 1960 to have a new aluminium bridge and deckhouse fitted by George Brown & Co (see photograph, page A2). Following his death his family arranged for OCEAN MIST to be brought into the Caledonian Canal where she lay for some years at Banavie and could be viewed from his former home at Inverlochy Castle which later became a first class hotel.

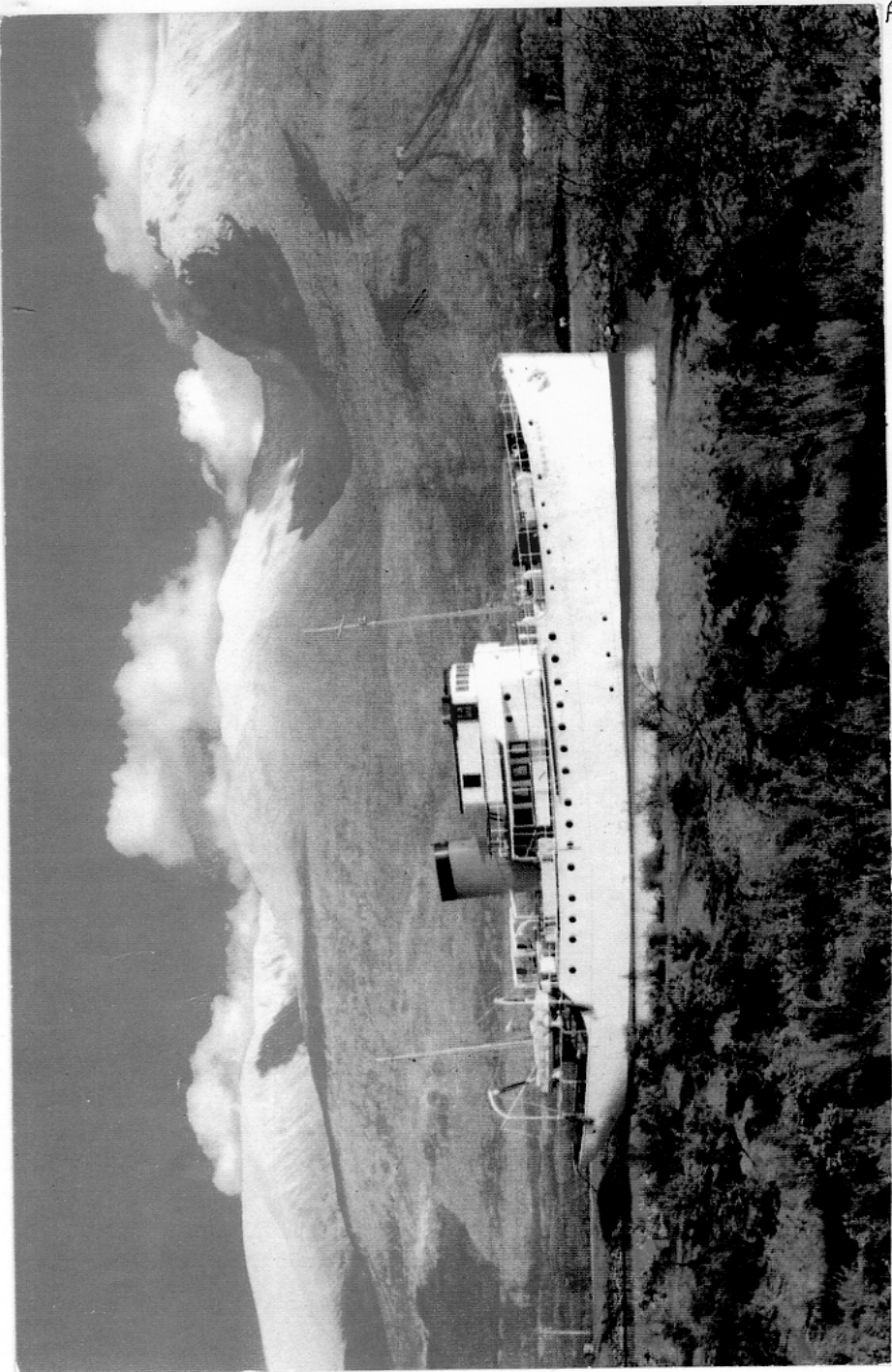
Her original steam engine was, amazingly, recommissioned for her voyage to Leith in 1984 as described on Page A4. At the time of writing (March 2002) she has ceased to operate as a restaurant ship at Leith waterfront and is for sale.

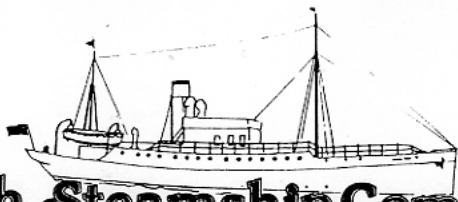


Builders:- Geo. Brown & Co Greenock



OCEAN MIST





# Leith Steamship Company

S.Y. OCEAN MIST

Historical notes on The Cruise Ship Edinburgh (formerly S.Y. Ocean Mist)

Scheduled to be built for service in World War I in the Strath class of trawler, she might have borne the name "Samuel Green" (this class being named after crew members of HMS's "Royal Sovereign and "Victory" at Trafalgar in 1805). As the Great War ended and the navy's needs reduced, she went almost immediately into private ownership - described as a yacht.

Designed by Hall Russell, she was built by George Brown of Greenock and was launched there on 30th April, 1919. The vital statistics of the young "Aries" (reported to be the Admiralty's eventual name for her) were: LENGTH: 125.6' BREADTH: 23.5' DEPTH: 12.7' TONNAGE: 383.81 gross/231.44 net - with a triple expansion 3 cylinder engine by McKie & Baxter of Govan.

The official registration and ownership records from 1921 - 1939 suggest that she sailed in some very well connected social circles under the name "Ocean Rover" (albeit with a return to the name "Aries" for a spell in the 20's). In 1939, the Admiralty 're-acquired' their former trawler (by now a yacht with a pedigree) and the "Ocean Rover" joined what has been called The Unknown Fleet - civilian vessels\* carrying out essential/routine/dangerous tasks in support of dedicated military craft. At the age of 21, she went to war as a torpedo recovery vessel, completing her service as a calibrating yacht up to 1945.

Laid up for a few years by the Admiralty, she re-entered the social scene as "Ocean Mist" in the early 50's with a re-fit at Montrose about ten years later. There followed approximately 20 years of continuous one-family ownership in the Fort William area, culminating in plans for a new career in whisky promotion on Loch Ness. When this was shelved, the "Ocean Mist" was once more on the market where she was bought in early 1984 by the present owners - The Leith Steamship Company. By that Summer, she was recommissioned mechanically and was taken by an enthusiastic amateur crew under her own steam from the Southern end of the Caledonian Canal through Inverness to Leith - taking a week which included 2 days aground at Fort Augustus and one day awaiting good weather at Inverness\*\*

Meanwhile, negotiations in Edinburgh achieved planning permission for a permanently moored floating restaurant at the Shore and an almost historic (+ expensive!) opening of the Victoria Swing Bridge in 1985 to allow this by-now pensionable aged lady into her retirement home in the outer basin of the Water of Leith. After a little rest, work began on the conversion in February 1988 and the first restaurateurs opened her for trade in August the same year. As with all restaurants, there have been intermediate refurbishments, but she is always distinctive and ever photogenic (films, t.v. dramas, national advertising and many wedding photo albums).

\* The Motor Yacht Eala Bhan (neighbour to The Cruise Ship and moored just ahead) similarly did her bit in WWII.

\*\* 220 miles Inverness - Leith = 24 hours + 500 gals of fuel oil



## B WARSHIPS (World War II).

During 1939-1945 the output of the yard was prodigious. It included, in addition to the six merchant ships launched during 1939 and 40:

- 9 Flower Class Corvettes  
(ASPHODEL, AUBRETIA, AURICULA, ALYSSUM, BELLWORT,  
BORAGE, BALSAM, ARABIS, ARBUTUS)
- 2 Twin screw turbine River Class Frigates  
(CHELMER, CAM)
- 1 Castle Class Corvette  
(ALNWICK CASTLE)
- 1 Rescue Vessel (Modified Castle Class Corvette)  
(EMPIRE SHELTER)
- 1 Isles Class Armed Mine-Sweeping/Anti-Submarine Trawler  
(DAMSEY)
- 8 Assorted Merchant Ships  
(EMPIRE RUBY, EMPIRE DWELLER, EMPIRE AUDREY, EMPIRE  
BALHAM, EMPIRE BROMLEY, EMPIRE LEWISHAM, EMPIRE  
KINGSWAY, EMPIRE LOLA)

Of these five have been selected:

- a) **HMS ARABIS (Ship No 227)**, one of two corvettes built for the Royal New Zealand Navy in 1943. Her first commanding officer was Lt Cmdr John Seelye who wrote the attached letter (page B1), dated 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1944, to the staff of George Brown & Co. Commander Seelye exchanged Christmas cards, and news, with Mr Frank Brown for many years after the war. ARABIS (Pennant No. K385) survived the war and served in New Zealand waters for several years before being returned to the UK in 1948 later being scrapped at Grays in Essex in 1951.
- b) **HMS AUBRETIA (Ship No 215)**, built for the Royal Navy in 1940. She took a prominent part in one of the few actions in which a German submarine was captured. On 9<sup>th</sup> May 1941 it was a depth charge attack by AUBRETIA which forced U-boat 110, which had been attacking a westbound North Atlantic convoy, to surface. As the U-boat surfaced, men were already pouring out of the conning tower. AUBRETIA picked up the survivors. The other escort vessels then closed in and it became possible for officers from the destroyer HMS BULLDOG to board the captured U-boat and obtain the all-important cyphering codebooks and equipment. This was done in secrecy out of sight of the convoy and the

survivors. The Enigma cyphering equipment was later urgently transferred via Orkney to the code-breakers at Bletchley Park where it played a very significant part in the Allies' success in monitoring U-boat movements, thus saving many lives and contributing significantly to the successful conclusion of the war.

AUBRETIA survived the war and was converted into a whalecatcher in Norway in 1948. She was renamed ARNFINN BERGEN and scrapped at Grimstad in 1966.

- c) **HMS BELLWORT (1941, Ship No 219) and HMS BORAGE (1941, Ship No 220)** were two Flower Class corvettes which survived the war in sufficiently good condition to be purchased in 1946 by the Irish Government. They were renamed, respectively, CLIONA and MACHA and served until 1970, being based for much of their service at Haulbowline near Cork, where they formed the principal part of the Irish Naval Service for many years.  
For details of their Irish service see "A History of the Irish Naval Service" by Aidan McIvor, ISBN 07165 2523 2, published Dublin 1994.
- d) **HMS ALYSSUM (1941, Ship No 218)** was a Flower class corvette which was transferred to the Free French Navy. Renamed ALYSSE she was torpedoed and sunk by the German submarine U654 in the North Atlantic on 8<sup>th</sup> February 1942. This event, with further details, is commemorated on a wall plaque which forms part of the Free French Memorial (in the shape of the Cross of Lorraine) on the Lyle Hill at Greenock.

In addition to the wartime record of newbuildings, George Brown & Co (Marine) Ltd was also heavily committed to the war effort with many ship conversions and repairs. These included conversions of excursion paddle steamers to minesweepers, netlayers and anti-aircraft ships as well as modifications and repairs to many of the large number of ships which visited Greenock during the years 1939 – 45.

23rd March, 1944.

To: The Employees,  
Messrs. George Brown & Co. (Marine) Ltd.,  
Shipbuilders,  
GREENOCK.

On behalf of the Officers and Men of H.M.N.Z.S. "Arabis"  
I wish to convey mine and their sincere appreciation of the gift  
of money which you have given to the ship. This money will be  
used to purchase Sports Gear and other amenities. I know you will  
agree with me that no more valuable use could be made of this  
money than for the purpose of recreation and exercise.

May we also, as some of the few who fight in one of the many  
of His Majesty's ships which you have built, express our appreciation  
and admiration of your handicraft. Not only have you built us a  
fine ship, in fact I venture to assert she is the finest Corvette  
afloat, but you have been so helpful and willing to co-operate with  
the Officers and Men in giving them so many little things which help  
to make life in a Corvette comfortable.

We shall all carry away with us to far off lands very pleasant  
memories of our stay here. Formerly we know of Scotland as a  
country which built fine ships, played Bagpipes, and brewed a very  
potent drink known as whisky. Now we know this to be true.

You may rest assured that whenever we go into battle, we  
shall rest assured, that the ship will never let us down, and that,  
we shall never let the ship down.

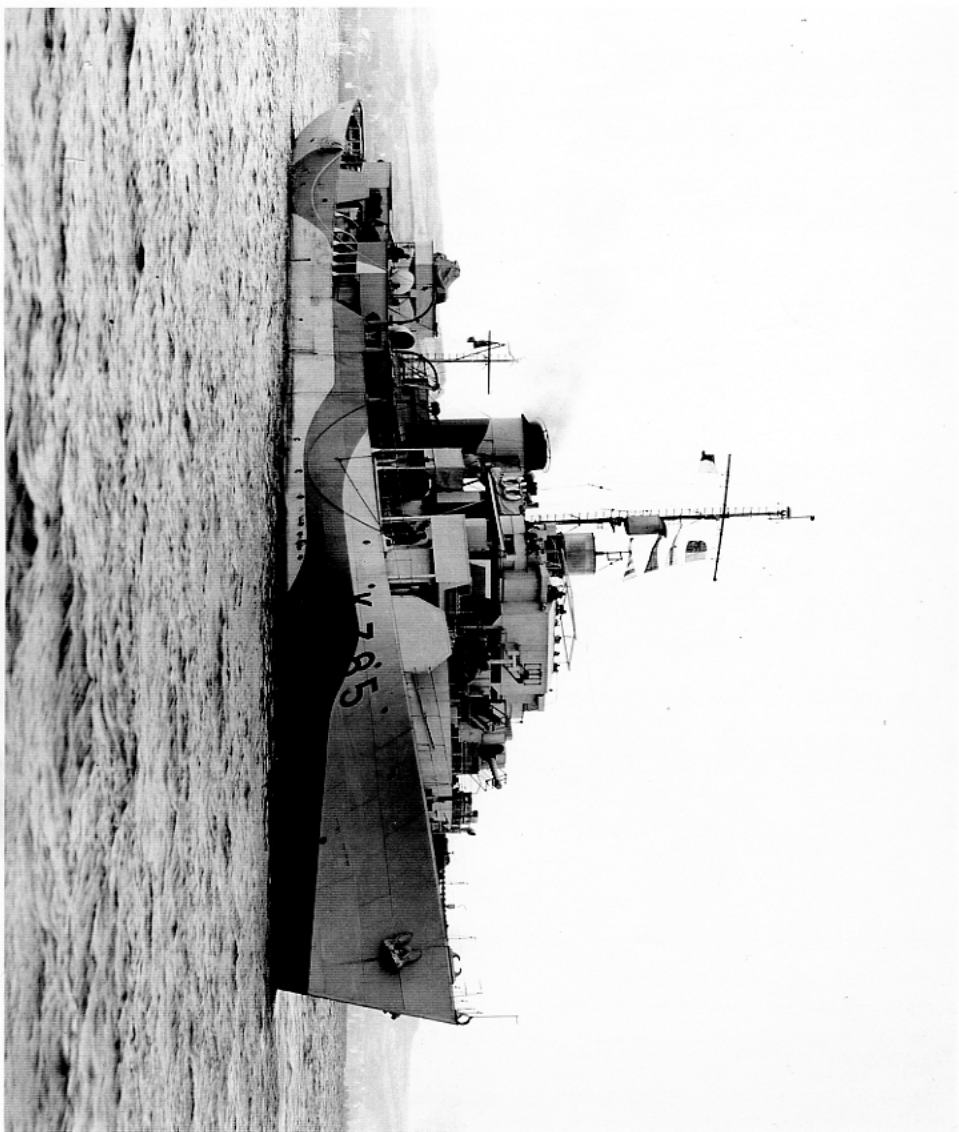
New Zealand is a long way from Scotland, but many of us have  
close ties with your country. The forefathers of many of us came  
from here and we shall renew for many of our folks the memories of  
this, their once Native Land.

Believe me,  
Very sincerely yours,

(sgd.) John H. Seelye.

H.M.N.Z.S. "Arabis"  
23rd March, 1944.

Lieutenant Commander,  
R.N.Z.N.V.R.  
Commanding Officer.



**C AFRICA SHELL, (built 1938, Ship No. 207).**

This was a small but important oil tanker which served ports on the East African coast. She achieved fame when in October 1939 in territorial waters off Portuguese East Africa she was fired on by the German battleship GRAF SPEE, then acting as a surface raider in the Indian Ocean.

AFRICA SHELL's master, Captain Patrick Dove, was captured by a German boarding party and taken aboard the battleship while his officers and crew took to the ship's lifeboats from which they safely reached the shore. Explosive charges were set off aboard the tanker by the Germans. AFRICA SHELL was assumed sunk but did not sink, her bow drifting ashore some time later on the coast north of Lourenco Marques. Shortly afterwards GRAF SPEE, with Captain Dove still on board, was trapped by the cruisers AJAX, ACHILLES and EXETER at the Battle of the River Plate and subsequently scuttled on the orders of her commander, Captain Langsdorf.

# A SHORT LIFE FOR THE AFRICA SHELL

I was in January 1939 that I received instructions to join a ship fitting out at George Brown's shipyard in Greenock. She was the *Africa Shell*. I was to enjoy a very pleasant and totally unexpected Christmas and New Year at home. On January 2 I went to Greenock to find somewhere to live, and the following morning I took a bus to the shipyard. I was in for quite a shock.

All the time I had imagined that I was going to one of the largest and best-known shipyards in the world. Brown's. When I arrived it certainly did not look very large to me. No *Queen Mary* could ever have been built here I thought. However, above the entrance was a sign which read George Brown Ltd., Shipbuilders. It was only at that moment that I realised that because the name was Brown and on the Clyde I had mistakenly assumed it was THE John Brown. What a let down.

Inside the entrance there was a small shed and inside a man who could only be the gateman, so I asked him where *Africa Shell* was lying. He looked a bit surprised because apparently there was only one ship being built there at the time. But he put his hand to the right and said, 'Why, yonder of course.' I looked 'yonder' and all I could see was the top of a jetty with a single storey building lying to the left. Just showing above the top of the jetty was a mast. Not wishing to show my ignorance, I decided that I had better walk over there and take a look.

Maybe it's at the other side of that fairly long brick building, which was close to the right of the mast I had seen. As I approached I was to see a little more than a mast. A funnel with the familiar black and buff colour of the Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company's tankers. When I peered over the jetty I just couldn't believe it.

She was the *Africa Shell*, because there was her name painted on her bow, but she was the smallest ship I had ever seen apart from coasters!

She was powered by twin diesel Polar Atlas motors which were supposed to deliver a designed speed of 11-12 knots. We never quite made the designed speed so a compromise had to be made.

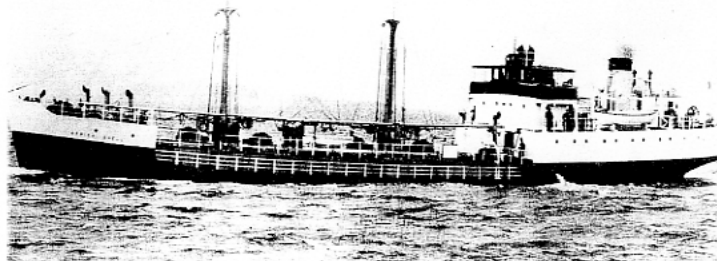
## Well found

*Africa Shell* was very small but she appeared to be well built and all the deck equipment with which we had to work cargo, particularly the packed cargo, was very well placed.

The accommodation was of a very

**Chief Officer (now Captain) Frank Mansfield joined the *Africa Shell* in Glasgow in 1939 and served in the ship until she was sunk off the African coast by the German pocket battleship *Graf Spee* later that same year.**

**Captain Mansfield retired from Fleet service in 1962 and later wrote of his sea-going experiences for his family. This is an extract from that story.**



The *Africa Shell* on her successful speed trials off the Isle of Arran.

high standard. The crew for the outward run were all Chinese. We would change to a local crew on arrival at Mombasa.

A week before the preliminary sea trials were to take place the Captain joined. He was from the Republic of Ireland and his name was Patrick G.G. Dove. He would be around 45-50 years old. He was a tall, very handsome man, and very well built. He was the sort of man that women would look at more than once. He was quite noisy so that you always knew where he was, which at times was extremely useful. If ever there was an extrovert he most surely was one of the best. He had been on the East African coast run for some three years in a ship very similar to *Africa Shell*. This new ship was a replacement. His experience was going to be very useful.

After an eventful voyage we anchored just off the Shell Installation jetty at Mombasa. It had taken us two months to get there, and it was quite a relief.

The local dockyard engineers had been instructed to board on arrival to take a look at the engines and condenser. Carpenters from the same dockyard came onboard to alter the crew's accommodation. Seemingly we would be carrying quite a few local crew members of differing religions and they had to be kept separate. Furthermore there were quite a few more of them than the Chinese.

## Doubling up

This meant that cabins which housed one Chinese would have to take two locals. Seemed crazy to me that a brand new ship should have its crew accommodation torn out and rebuilt. Still I suppose the powers that be must know what they are doing.

The new deck crew were to be local Swahilis, the engineroom crew were

from Pakistan, and the catering department were from Goa in India. I decided that if they couldn't speak English then they would have to learn. I also discovered that in spite of the length of time Captain Dove had spent in East Africa the only Swahili he knew were swear words, and he did quite a lot of that in quite a noisy way!

Shortly after arrival I received my instructions as to what cargo we would be loading and the destination of each parcel. The bulk Aviation Spirit went into the wing tanks and that was simple, the packed cargo was a different kettle of fish.

The ports we would be visiting would be pretty much the same each trip down to Lorenzo Marques. After reloading there we would proceed north to Mombasa calling at the same ports in reverse order. The ports were: Tanga, Zanzibar, Dar es Salaam, Lindi, Porto Amelia, Momba, Mozambique, Quelimane, Chindi (which was right at the mouth of the fantastic Zambezi river) then Barra, Inhambane and finally Lorenzo Marques. It was expected that the round voyage would take two months.

About a week after arrival we went alongside the Shell jetty to load our first cargo. The packed cargo consisted of, among other things, four-gallon cans of petrol, kerosene, gasoil, *Shelltox* (fly killer), cleaning fluids, various grades of lubricating oil, waxes, candles, spares for tractors, spares for motor cars and lorries etc. etc. The list seemed endless. The only things we didn't carry were

food, drink and cigarettes.

Just before sailing Captain Dove received a letter from London to say that he was to make three trips Mombasa to Mombasa and then hand over command to me. I was absolutely delighted.

Apart from the occasional engine failure things went very well for our first trip, which proved to be most interesting. A lot of the ports we visited were very tiny with perhaps a dozen European (mostly British) farmers. They lived around the port but farmed inland. Their storehouses were also in the port. We could only get into these ports in daylight because there were no navigation lights to guide us in. Some had a tiny jetty, others we just anchored and discharged into small boats. We entered one port, the name of which I cannot remember, and the only information we could find was a small booklet which advised us to follow the poles which were embedded into the river bed until we came to the last pole which was

painted red and right there we should anchor. When we anchored the whole countryside seemed to be flooded - there was water everywhere. When the tide went out there we were sitting in the middle of a small pond with nothing but mud in sight. How anyone could live there I just do not know. But everybody we met on that long coast where they were black, white or brown were absolutely marvellous. For them, of course, the arrival of strangers from the outside world was quite an occasion. So we used to invite them on board for early breakfast when the cook would serve up delicious bacon and eggs and fried bread. They just loved it.

### Change of plan

In early June we arrived back at our home port and quickly loaded and were off again south to Lorenzo Marques. When we arrived there we found that there was to be a change of plans. It appeared that the Shell Co. of South Africa wanted to take a look at us. So we sailed south for Durban. It was there that we hit quite a snag. We were in the big league of ports again with all their rules and regulations, immigration laws, customs etc., which we hadn't experienced so far on this coast.

### Ill matched

When we docked at the Shell Refinery jetty all the officials of the port were there to meet us. All the crew were lined up for inspection. Captain Dove had produced the Identity Books which had a photograph of the holder. It wasn't very long before it was realised that something was wrong. It appeared that in quite a few of the books the photograph did not fit the face of the holder. The immigration officials were very angry indeed, and in fact just couldn't believe it ourselves. After some stiff interrogation and threats of jail it turned out that a brother, son, or some close relative of the ID holder would take his place for the trip. They couldn't see anything wrong in this and had been doing it for years. If we hadn't gone to Durban nobody would have been any the wiser! And as far as the ship's officers were concerned one Swahili looked like any other.

The matter was solved by allowing ashore only those crew members whose face fitted the photograph. As it turned out no-one went ashore because Paddy Dove wouldn't give out any money! We were in Durban for only two days and we never heard whether they liked the ship or not. Back to Lorenzo Marques to load our northbound cargo.

### Eventful

We had quite a lot of engine trouble on the way north, which didn't surprise us very much because the SE monsoon was blowing quite strongly with a heavy sea and swell which made the ship jump about quite a lot. When we arrived in Mombasa we were told to go straight into dock to get the engine problem sorted out once and for all. It was at the end of the first week in August and everybody was talking about when the war would start rather than if. We were all staying in an hotel in Mombasa because there were no facilities in the dockyard at all. During that stay two major events in my life took place. First



The author, Captain Frank Mansfield (then Chief Officer) with, on the left, Second Engineer Arthur Hetherington and Second Officer Jeff Jaffeato, and right, Third Engineer 'Wee Robbie' Brown and Chief Engineer Bill Low.

of all on August 31 1939. I became a proud father.

The next event happened three days later when World War II broke out. We seemed to be an awful long way away from any war here in East Africa. In fact it wasn't quite as far away as we thought. I don't know whose bright idea it was but someone on high decided to blackout Mombasa. He even appointed air raid wardens, and as we, the officers of a ship in dock, had very little to do we were promptly sworn in. Not that we did anything because a day or so later one of His Majesty's light cruisers came into port. Sensibly he ordered the blackout to be cancelled.

### Out of line

The dockyard engineers had discovered the reason for the engine trouble. The propeller shafts to the engine were out of line, which is what Bill Low had been saying all the time. It was a far-sized job but they said they could handle it. And they did. In the first week in October we went out to sea for engine trials and in spite of the rather nasty weather she performed very well indeed, back we came to the Shell jetty to start loading again.

We finished loading and, would you believe it, we sailed for Tanga on Friday October 13, 1939. None of us were superstitious of course, or so we said, but I had had my share of trouble with it. I consoled myself with the fact that this was to be my last trip as Chief Officer. Everything seemed to be going well until we reached Inhambane.

It is quite amazing how seemingly small things at the time of their happening can have a most profound effect on people's lives. We had finished discharging the last of our cargo at Inhambane by 1000 hours on November 14 and prepared to sail. At that moment a car pulled up at the gangway and out got a European. In fact he was English and worked for Shell in Inhambane. He came aboard and requested to see me. He introduced himself and told me that he was being transferred to Nairobi, and that he had some household possessions which he would like to be taken to Mombasa. Being Shell I doubt whether I could have refused anyway, but I explained to him that we were about to sail but that we would be back here in 8-10 days time, and we could load his possessions then. In that way there would be no delay in our sailing.

We were expected at Lorenzo Marques before noon the next day.

He was, however, very anxious that it should be taken now. In that case, I said, as the Captain was expecting us to sail almost immediately we had better see him about it. The Captain's decision was to delay the sailing until the gentleman's goods were on board. This was to be a devastating decision. So we waited a couple of hours at which time a large van arrived at the jetty. He had an awful lot of possessions I thought for an expatriate to have, when they never knew when or where they would be moved. It was all part of the joy of working for Shell. They never stayed long enough in one place to become bored. However, all I had to do was load the stuff.

There were numerous crates, and dozens of tea chests, and even some oil paintings which he told me were quite valuable. It took us nearly 10 hours to load it, including the two hours we had to wait for the stuff to arrive. At 2200 hours we were ready to sail. Just 12 hours later than expected. The time is important because if we had sailed as originally planned we would have been safely berthed in Lorenzo Marques by 1100 hours the following day. Instead, at precisely that time we were off Quissica which is midway between Inhambane and Lorenzo Marques.

When we reached open sea after

leaving Inhambane we ran into some very rough weather indeed, with a very strong wind blowing from the SE. The sea and swell that went with it, coupled with the fact that we were in ballast, had *Africa Shell* jumping around quite a lot. We had decided that as a war-time safety measure we would keep within the three-mile territorial waters of neutral Portugal, which lay to starboard.

At breakfast the following morning the Captain decided that as we had missed our usual Sunday inspection of the ship we would have it this morning at 1000 hours. This we did, which was a bit wet and difficult because of the weather but everything went well and the Captain was very pleased with the condition of his ship. It has always been an extremely pleasant tradition in the Shell fleet that after the Sunday inspection all the officers involved would repair to the Captain's cabin for a pre-lunch drink. There we also reviewed the previous week's events.

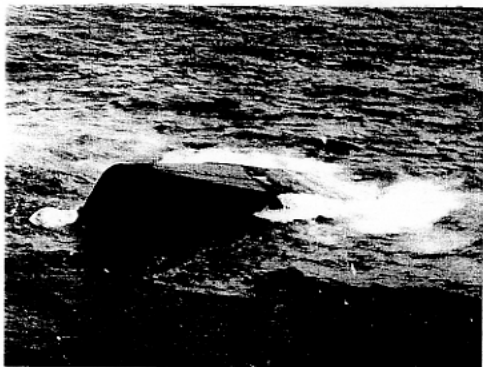
At around 1100 hours I entered his cabin and sat down. The Chief Engineer was already seated. The drinks were poured out but before we could say cheers the telephone from the bridge rang. It was the Third Officer, a tall, burly, very good looking Ugandan as black as the ace of spades. He had just obtained his Second Mate's certificate having taken his examination in England. He had proved himself to be a most likeable and competent young man. Apparently he had sighted a large warship astern of us and proceeding at great speed towards us. I'll nip up and take a look I said. Probably a Frenchman. I remarked as I went through the door. After all the French island of Madagascar was only a few miles away on our port side.

### Shock

When I reached the bridge I took the binoculars out of the box and turned round to take a look. I got the shock of my life. It was the most powerful looking warship I had ever seen. She was end on to us so that we could not see any national flag. By this time the Captain and the Second Officer were on the bridge. Then I saw a string of flags going up from her fore topmast. I had to change over to the telescope to read them.

I read the flags and the Second Officer wrote them down. The Third Officer

(Continued page 6)



The upturned bow of the *Africa Shell* stayed afloat and drifted ashore some miles off the coast from where she was destroyed.

# ASHORT LIFE FOR THE AFRICA SHELL

had meantime grabbed the International code book and was already thumbing through it. Meantime more flags were going up. The message was terse and to the point. Heavy to at once. Do not use your wireless. We are sending a boarding party'. Shortly after, presumably because we had not reduced speed at all and in fact we put the helm to starboard to get even nearer to the coast, there was a flash from one of the warship's forward guns, and shortly afterwards a column of water astern of us was followed by a loud explosion which nearly pushed us out of the water. The warship then moved to port and it was then that we saw the Nazi flag flying astern.

[ Continued from centre pages ]

was stopped right abreast of us so we got a good view of her. We saw them lower a boat which was crammed with men.

We had all the crew at boat stations by this time, except those who were on duty. We dumped over the side our lead weighted war-time secret code books, and on the spur of the moment I ran down to my cabin and looked through my porthole and there was a perfect view of her. I took my already loaded camera and quickly took several shots. I put the camera back in the drawer, thinking perhaps that these nice Germans wouldn't sink a ship as small as ours. Dashed back to the bridge and the German boat was just pulling alongside on the starboard side. It was more crammed than we thought.

There must have been around 75 of them and they boarded like a bunch of pirates. The Captain asked me to stay beside him on the bridge while the Second Officer went to his starboard lifeboat and the Third Officer to my boat. They had been instructed to clear them away for launching.

(Concluded next month)

## No fooling

A couple of minutes later there was another flash from a gun and this time almost immediately after the flash we heard the shell going over the top of us; it landed a hundred yards or so ahead. We would have been fooling ourselves if we thought the next one wouldn't blow us out of the water. We stopped engines but did not put them astern. We drifted slowly toward the coast. Very quickly the Pocket Battleship (because we recognised it when she came to port)



## Oh yes, that showed 'em

Following the match between *Serenia* and a team from Falmouth Docks, it was decided in the corridors of power that we needed to show the Cornishmen how to play football, so the *Drupa* was stummied for refit there.

After a brief training period, a friendly match was arranged for the first Saturday in August. The same strip as before was worn, W.C. Rowe the local bakers being the kind people that lent their gear. The match took place in bright sunlight, and after conceding an early goal, through an unlucky deflection, the rest of the game proved goalless, and the docks team won 1-0. Mention must be made of a string of fine saves by goalkeeper Rick Hibbert and the stern marshalling of defence by Mick Scarf. One effort by *Drupa's* attack resulted in the woodwork taking a pounding, but no goals.

A second match was arranged for the following Saturday, both teams putting out full-strength teams this time. Unfortunately, injuries took their toll in the first half, some the result of straining muscles stretched in the first match. Again an early goal was conceded, this time, however, equalised by a brilliant

headed goal by Iain Jones. Half time was taken with the score at 1-1 and three members of the team hobbling.

Fortifying draughts of Tennents worked wonders and two further goals were quickly conceded by *Drupa* before Heintken was resorted to for a last fling. Iain Jones scored another with a fine chip over the advancing goalkeeper, and the crossbar was rattled again. No further goals were scored and the match ended in a 3-2 win for the docks.

Following the match, a commemorative shield was presented to the ship by Falmouth Shiprepair Limited, and an engraved cup presented to the dockyard team's captain by the *Drupa's* team.

A disco was then arranged for the teams, supporters and other interested parties at the clubhouse of Penryn F.C. at whose ground the match took place.

Following this, resort was made to the shady, international night spots of the town and a tired and satisfied team staggered back on board in the early hours of Sunday morning. Unfortunately, the pressing business of getting the ship ready to sail prevented a third match taking place! (We are indebted to Engineer Superintendent Chris Camp for this pithy report.)

## The serious search for ET

The Jodrell Bank 42-ft radio telescope is to take part in the search for intelligent life on planets going round distant stars. Some 65,000 channels will be monitored simultaneously as Britain's contribution to the world-wide effort to see if man is alone in our Milky Way galaxy.

Some scientists argue that the sheer

fact that there are estimated to be 150,000 suns in this galaxy and that our own sun is just an ordinary and average member of this vast group that there must be intelligent life in plenty of places besides Earth.

In view of the current state of the world, I'd be just as happy if the scientists could find signs of intelligent life on Earth!



The 32nd Ship/Shore Management Course was held at The Node from September 10 to 14. Those involved were: back rows, from left to right; Operations Director Captain Rodney Davies, Chief Officer John Lewis, Second Engineer Bill Drummond, Chief Engineer Jim Nicholls, Chief Engineer Michael Chamberlain, Second Engineer Greg Hoare, Chief Officer Bob Bradley, Chief Engineer David Stuart, Managing Director John Rendle, Captain John Lakeman (part hidden), Captain Tony Watson, Second Engineer Malcolm McDonnell, Engineering Director Jim Duguid, Personnel Director Geoff Bryant and Mike O'Neill (Operations Divn.). Front row, from left to right, Chief Officer Tom Hughes, Chief Officer John Lewis, Chief Engineer John Tharme, Finance Director Chris Hutton, Captain Ian Farnell, Second Engineer Victor Danks, Chief Officer Colin Beath and Gordon Edwards (Training Consultant).

## Offshore search areas

THREE petroleum production licences were awarded to Shell UK last month - for areas in the Humberstone Estuary, Liverpool Bay and the Solent. A fourth production licence has been awarded to the Lennox Group for an area in the Solway Firth. The awards were made by Peter Walker, Secretary of State for Energy.

Bearing in mind the special environmental and navigation considerations, stringent conditions have been imposed on the licensees. These include specific control over the choice of drill site, seasonal restrictions on drilling, and a requirement for immediate response to any oil spill.

In addition, the licensees are required to maintain close consultation with such bodies as the Nature Conservancy Council, local Fishery Committees, local authorities and port authorities.

The production licences allow for all phases of oil exploration and appraisal and development.

Should exploration and appraisal be successful, any developments planned for the licensed areas will be subject to rigorous scrutiny involving all interested parties under the control of the Department of the Environment.



# A SHORT LIFE FOR THE AFRICA SHELL

After *Africa Shell* had been stopped by *Graf Spee* the warship sent a boarding party in two boats.

Captain Mansfield continues:

The second German boat was pulling alongside and it was carrying some rather sinister looking boxes. They were obviously time bombs. There were only half-a-dozen men in that boat, but the way they handled the boxes they were experts at the job. There seemed to be enough explosive to sink half a dozen ships our size. At that moment the senior Naval Officer of the boarding party was stepping on to the bridge where Captain Dove and I were standing. He was quite a young man, and with a smart naval salute and charming smile he wished us a good morning. He was followed by five other naval ratings all toting rather deadly looking guns. They in turn were followed by two sinister-looking civilians, who revealed their identity at once by wearing, in spite of the heat, leather coats. They had Gestapo written all over them. They didn't have very much to say and it looked as though they were there to keep an eye on the Germans rather than us.

One of them asked Captain Dove where the secret papers were. Much to my surprise Captain Dove replied by saying 'I don't smoke.' I was quite a bit baffled by that reply until I realised that with the very poor English of the Gestapo it had sounded very much like cigarette papers. They did not pursue the matter, however.

The senior naval boarding officer asked what our cargo was. We told him we were in ballast with no cargo at all and he seemed rather taken aback. He then told Captain Dove that he was going to sink the ship, the explosive charges were already being placed and when the last one was in place we would have 20 minutes to get clear. 'I'm afraid you cannot do that', replied Captain Dove. 'If you would be so kind as to step into the chartroom and examine the chart you will discover that my ship is inside Portuguese territorial waters and I protest most strongly at your present action'. He didn't even bother to look at the chart, smiled again and said, 'I'm afraid that I am the best judge of that. Please make arrangements for your crew to leave the ship as quickly as possible.'

(Unbeknown to me, until I landed on the beach some hours later, the Germans had changed their minds about Captain Dove. They decided to take him back to the warship as a prisoner of

**Chief Officer (now Captain) Frank Mansfield joined the *Africa Shell* in Glasgow in 1939 and served in the ship until she was sunk off the African coast by the German pocket battleship *Graf Spee* later that same year.**

**Captain Mansfield retired from Fleet service in 1962 and later wrote of his sea-going experiences for his family. This is part two of the extract from that story.**



The bow section of the *Africa Shell* floated ashore after her destruction by time bombs.

war. After the Battle of the River Plate was over and he was released he wrote me a letter in which he said he got on very well indeed with Captain Langsdorf of *Graf Spee* and they had many long chats. He said that Langsdorf had told him that in the early morning haze the *Africa Shell* had looked like a fair size fully loaded tanker which was just what he was looking for. He was very disappointed indeed at the outcome...

## Sad sight

As I went to my lifeboat I saw the Germans loading masses of loot into their boat and it saddened me because I thought that German sailors were above that sort of thing.

When I got to my lifeboat I found that the Third Officer had already lowered the boat into the sea and even had most of the crew in the boat. I blessed him for his foresight, it would save a lot of time. The boat was surging up and down the ship's side some 15 to 20 feet in the heavy swell. It meant that it was a bit

awkward to get into the boat and what you had to do was to step on board when the boat was at its maximum height. It was, if you timed it right.

The Third Officer was worth his weight in gold. I joined him on the thwart and we pulled oars like mad. I had the Third Engineer at the tiller. He had instructions to move off at right angles to the ship until we got far enough away to be safe.

The other boat was much better off than we were because they had the wind and sea to blow them away from the ship; we had to fight against it. Slowly but surely we moved away from the ship and I looked at my watch and estimated I had around 10 minutes left. At the end of the 20 minutes I thought that we were reasonably safe but, nevertheless, we kept rowing as hard as we possibly could.

It was very hot but the sea spray blowing across the boat kept us damp and cool. One, two and three minutes over the 20 passed and I wondered if the charges were going to go off. One of



The beach some miles north

them may not, but the odds against them all just wasn't on. I saw them place one of the largest over the tanks, and the wing tanks were full of gas after we had discharged the last of the aviation spirit in Inhambane.

## Sudden

There were at least another two on the same deck. There was one in the pumproom and how many were in the engine room I had no idea. Suddenly there was a terrific explosion in the area of the engine room and we watched the funnel rise into the air, stop briefly, and very slowly drop back and disappear into the hole into the engine room. Seconds later there followed two more explosions in the engineroom which seemed to take most of the stern away. Seconds later the charges which had been placed on top of the tanks went off together and there was an almighty explosion, followed by sheets of flame and smoke which went hundreds of feet into the air. This last explosion was fuelled by the gas from the aviation spirit which had been discharged in Inhambane.

## Broken

When the smoke subsided she was already broken into two sections, with the after section disappearing under the water very quickly. There must have been air in the fuel tanks in the bow section because it stayed afloat. Then slowly but surely she turned over until only a small part of the bow and the bottom plating was left sticking out of the water. I looked to see if the warship had remained in the vicinity but she was just a speck on our short horizon, confident no doubt of the result of their work. I felt quite sick as I gazed at the remains of *Africa Shell*. Only an hour earlier she had been a live thing and the home of quite a lot of people, and now nothing.

Two or three hours later we were approaching our landing place and already we could see and hear the huge seas breaking on the beach. My mind



At Inhambane where the *Africa Shell's* lifeboats came ashore.

went back to my apprenticeship days when we were being shown how to handle small boats. In the seamanship manual we studied from, one of the items told you how to land a lifeboat onto a lee shore. As you approached, so the manual stated, you turn the boat round and back it in. As all our practise had taken place in harbour it was all very simple. Out here in this vast ocean with a strong SE monsoon blowing, and a heavy sea and swell rolling towards a steeply shelving beach was a different matter entirely. I had a feeling that the theory I had been taught was not going to work.

### Out of control

I had very little to say or do in my approach to the beach. We suddenly found ourselves at the foot of the swell and were pushed forward at great speed without the use of any manpower at all. The swell rose and so did we and then we slid down the other side as though we were going backwards. I noticed some remarkable expressions of fear on the faces of the rowers. I was at the helm. I looked behind me, and there moving rapidly towards us was a mountain of water which was already rolling over at the top as it reached us. It quite effortlessly turned our lifeboat end for end and we were all shot out, like bullets from a gun, into this boiling mass of sea and surf. It happened so quickly that no one had time to think – which was perhaps just as well.

### A miracle

How long it was before we hit the beach I do not know, but we did and most of us had the wind knocked out of us, and all had stomachs full of salt water. Miraculously no one was badly hurt. The lifeboat lay upside down and was damaged beyond repair. I came to my senses as I was being dragged up the beach by Jeff. Everybody was present and correct and it was only then that we realised that Captain Dove had been taken back to the warship so was now a prisoner of war.

soaking got harder and harder. It was very shortly after we had been thinking that we had covered some 10 miles or so that we came upon the bow section of the *Africa Shell* now firmly embedded on the rocks.

It was like a bad dream seeing our old ship again. For a while we tried walking in our bare feet but that was a non-starter because not only were our feet sore to start with but the sand was very sharp indeed. Around noon we were beginning to feel a bit lightheaded and had our first doubts as to whether we were going to make it. Would it not be better to get under a shaded rock, and wait until dark. We ruled that out because of our need to quench our thirst. Already our mouths were beginning to swell and our lips cracked and painful.

### Dehydrated

We were becoming dehydrated. We never would have thought that this could have happened in such a short time. We pressed on until around three in the afternoon and we could go no further so once again we lay down under a shaded rock. We hadn't spoken to each other for quite some time, and we lay there with our feet in the sea, flat on our backs.

How long we had lain like that I don't know but through the haze in my mind I thought I heard voices. It was impossible I thought, but slowly pushed myself up onto one elbow and looked in the direction of the voices. I could see human beings, many of them and they were coming towards us. I really thought that I was imagining it and that they would eventually go away. I gave Jeff a push and pointed to them. I could see from his eyes that they were real. The smile on his cracked lips was a delight to see. We got ourselves to our feet and with a sudden lease of new life we moved towards our rescuers. At one point we even tried to run we were so elated.

### Warm greeting

We met and they greeted us by putting their arms around our necks as though we were their long lost brothers. Very quickly they produced what they knew we would be wanting more than hugs and kisses – water. They had earthenware jars full of the stuff. These jars keep the water inside quite cool by

evaporation because the jars are porous. As far as we were concerned it could have been red hot, it was water. We put the jars to our sore lips and drank and drank, it was absolutely delicious. We stopped for a breath and removed the jar from our mouths. What we removed at the same time was the skin from our lips. The pain was quite excruciating. It took months to get my lips back to something like normal, and for the rest of my life they have given me bother.

Our rescuers were absolutely fantastic. They had brought fresh fruit and other food with them and with great difficulty we were able to get some of it down. A lorry, they said, would be arriving very shortly which would take us to the lighthouse where, because it was now getting late, we should stay for the night. Apparently they would have picked us up much earlier but the lorry broke down and before they could get it going the tide rose and went over the top of it. It wasn't our day!

However, they were about to tell us that our colleagues that we had left behind had all been rescued and were now on their way to Lorenzo Marques. The lorry arrived shortly before dusk, it had been delayed by several breakdowns on the appalling surface of the jungle tracks. It wasn't very comfortable to ride in either but it was far better than walking. We made it in one go to the lighthouse and the room where our beds lay looked very comfortable indeed.

### Secret flight

We were met by a Shell representative when we arrived at Inhambane, who told us that London had been informed of our rescue, and that they would be informing our families. The British Embassy in Lorenzo Marques required me there as soon as possible and that under no circumstances were we to talk to the press. A plane was waiting for us on a small grass runway and we were introduced to the pilot. How thoughtful of our hosts to choose the very pilot who had seen the sea drama and had alerted the outside world.

We got on very well with him and his English was perfect. He couldn't stop talking about what he had seen. We had the small plane to ourselves and the pilot asked us if we would like to fly over the area where the ship had been sunk. We said we would and it wasn't very long before we got there. The first thing

(Concluded page 6)



The *Graf Spee* continued as a commerce raider for barely a month before being damaged by the cruisers *Ajax*, *Achilles* and *Exeter* and scrapped in the River Plate, where she was eventually scuttled.

# A SHORT LIFE FOR THE AFRICA SHELL

We recognised as the bow section of *Africa Shell* and shortly after the upside-down lifeboats. We made two circuits of the area and then went on our destination. There was a car waiting for us at the airport and we were whisked off to the British Embassy.

Thereafter, with Chief Engineer Bill Low to Simonstown to try to identify the ship which had attacked us.

Bill and I were shown into separate rooms where we had the most searching interrogation. We had hundreds of photographs of dozens of ships to look at and discard as required, and in between sessions we answered hundreds of questions. This went on for two days, at the end of which they decided that the warship they were looking for was the *Graf Spee*.

Not long after *Graf Spee* was intercepted off the River Plate and a fierce naval battle took place there, at the end of which *Graf Spee* broke off the engagement and entered the river with permission to carry out necessary re-

[ Continued from centre pages ]

pairs, but there was a limit placed on the time she could stay by international law. At the end of the time limit, her stay in Montevideo was brought to an end and she left.

### Scuttled

Captain Langsdorf took his ship out into this great river for a distance of some three miles or so and there he scuttled her. All his crew had been taken by barges to Buenos Aires, where the regime was very favourable towards Nazi Germany. All the allied prisoners on *Graf Spee* had already been taken ashore in Montevideo. Three days later Captain Langsdorf shot himself. So ended the saga of *Africa Shell* and the Pocket Battleship *Graf Spee*.



**Achatina high end dry on a beach off Chittagong, where she is to be broken up. Our photograph was supplied by Captain Robin Wigg, her final Master.**

and Lloyd's War Medal.

Unfortunately the war had not finished with George Taylor for, on June 15 1943, the *San Ernesto*, sailing in ballast from Sydney to Bahrain, was hit by a torpedo from the Japanese submarine I37 (Lt. Cdr. K. Otani) which wrecked the main engine and extinguished all lights.

Captain G. Waite, OBE, tried to locate his attacker but was defeated by poor light and, with a totally crippled ship unable to take avoiding action, he gave orders for the boats to be swung out. The *San Ernesto* was abandoned as dawn broke on the 16th.

A second torpedo caused a violent explosion and the ship began to settle by the stern. At 0330 hrs gun flashes were seen and a particularly vivid flash led the Master to believe that the after magazine had been hit.

### Safely away

Three boats had got safely away, the fourth being destroyed in the initial attack, and at 0900 the Master attempted to reboard his vessel but her back was broken, she was gutted by fire and all ladders had been carried away. Having lost contact with the other two boats he set course for Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) about 1000 miles away. Nine days later they were rescued by the *Alcoa Pointer* and taken to Fremantle.

Nos. 2 and 4 boats, with George Taylor in charge of No.4, stayed together for 36 hours but No.2 was appreciably slower and, after transferring four men to the faster boat, they both set course for the Maldives where they were eventually rescued by local fishermen.

George Taylor sailed his boat for 28 days before landfall, during which one man died and was buried at sea. Subsequently it was said of him: 'Displayed good judgement in remaining in the vicinity of the wrecked vessel for 36 hours. Throughout the whole period, by his courage and confident manner, he displayed leadership of the highest order and inspired his men to carry on until they made land.'

For this exploit George Taylor was awarded the MBE.

Truly the passing of a little-known hero.

# TWICE-SUNK MASTER DIES IN RETIREMENT

As we went to press last month, retired Chief Engineer E.A. Rogers reported the death, on October 4, of Captain George Taylor, MBE, GM and Lloyd's War Medal, at the age of 70.

Captain Taylor joined Eagle Oil in 1936 and served with them throughout the war before leaving in 1948 to join first the Aden then Singapore pilots, ending his distinguished career as Marine Superintendent with Niarchos in their London office.

George Taylor was second Officer on board the *San Florentino* when she was torpedoes and finally sank by gunfire from the U94, under the command of Lt. Otto Iles, 1200 miles ENE of Newfoundland on October 2 1941.

*San Florentino*, commanded by Captain R.W. Davies (who was drowned

after this action), lost contact with her convoy when bound for the Dutch West Indies from the Clyde. She proceeded independently but was hit by the first of three torpedoes at 7.45pm on October 1.

The ship manoeuvred to keep U94 astern and brought her 4.7 inch gun into action. Second Officer Taylor registering one hit or very near miss during the five hours his gun crew remained at action stations.

### Second blow

The second torpedo hit at 10.25pm and after the third at 0035am on October 2 *San Florentino* began to break in two and orders were given to abandon ship.

Chief Officer S. Miller took charge of No.1 boat but while this was being lowered her port side was stove in by

heavy seas and she was waterlogged, nine of her 19 survivors subsequently dying from exposure.

Second Officer Taylor took charge of No.3 and got away safely with 22 men on board.

While these boats were standing by a fourth torpedo hit No.10 tank, causing the collapse of all the bridge superstructure and blowing the midships raft to pieces. The Master, Chief Engineer A.B. Jackman and seven other crew members were lost from this raft.

Twenty minutes later the *San Florentino* broke in two.

The Third Officer and an AB clung to the stern until they were rescued 13 hours later by the Canadian corvette *Mayflower*. This vessel also picked up the survivors in the two boats and all were landed at St. John's, Newfoundland, on October 7.

For his part in this incident George Taylor was awarded the George Medal



**San Ernesto, the second of the ships to be sunk under Captain George Taylor, MBE, GM and Lloyd's War Medal.**

#### **D YELCHO, (built 1906, Ship No. 34).**

This was a small vessel designed and built as a tug and salvage vessel for the Government of Chile. She sailed on her 10,000 mile delivery voyage from the Clyde to Puerto Monte in 1907. YELCHO became famous as the vessel which, in August 1916, rescued Sir Ernest Shackleton's Antarctic expedition from Elephant Island where 22 men had been stranded for four months, following the abandonment of ENDURANCE which had been beset in Antarctic ice some 16 months earlier.

In order to seek help from the outside world Shackleton, in April 1916, had chosen five members of his expedition to accompany him in sailing the open boat JAMES CAIRD from Elephant Island to the south coast of South Georgia. Leaving three of his exhausted crew behind at a remote beach there, Shackleton with two companions (Worsley and Crean), although themselves worn-out by 16 months of isolation and under nourishment, then courageously crossed the mountains of South Georgia on foot in horrendous conditions to seek help from the whaling station at Stromness.

Four months later, YELCHO, with Shackleton on board, successfully brought the members of the expedition back from Elephant Island safely and triumphantly to Punta Arenas – not a bad achievement for a 120 ft long vessel designed for harbour and coastal duties. Notably she succeeded when several earlier attempts by other vessels had failed due to weather conditions.

The bow of the YELCHO is still in existence in Chile. It has been erected in front of the shopping centre in the small town of Puerto Williams as a monument to the Chilean pilot Pardo who played an important part in the Elephant Island rescue.

Further details of the YELCHO's part in the Elephant Island rescue can be found in:

- a. "The Endurance" by Caroline Alexander, ISBN 074754123X, published Bloomsbury, London, 1998.
- b. "Shackleton's Captain – a biography of Frank Worsley" by John Thomson, ISBN 0889626782, Orca Book Services, Poole, 2001.



*The Yelcho, triumphant. This photograph capturing the little tug's return to port was taken by a*

*Mr. Vega, who was, according to Hurley, the town's leading photographer.*

*3rd September Sunday. Beautiful sunrise, with fine mist effects over the hills & distant mts. surrounding Punta Arenas. Shortly after 7 a.m. Sir E. roved ashore & telephoned our arrival on to Punta Arenas, so that the populace might roll up and greet us after church, we being due to arrive at 12 noon. The Yelcho was bedecked with flags. . . . On nearing the jetty we were deafened by the rooting of whistles & cheering motor craft, which was taken up by the vast gathering on the pier & water-fronts." (Hurley, diary)*



Rescuing the crew from Elephant Island

"30 August - Wednesday - Day of Hauls." - *Hurley diary*

**E MISRIF SABAH (built 1906, Ship No. 32)**

MISRIF SABAH was a twin screw steam yacht built for the Sheik of Kuwait at a time before Kuwait became an oil-rich state with the communications and infrastructure it has today.

— The reason for the inclusion of MISRIF SABAH in this booklet is the quite remarkable story in 1912 of her boiler reconditioning and renewal of bottom plating (provided as a "shipment job" by George Brown & Co, her builders).

Details of this task and how it was brilliantly executed in Kuwait, especially considering the remoteness of the site, are given in the attached sheets. In particular the method of using sand to get the heavy boiler back in place is fascinating!

On reading the latest edition of the B.I. News and the Editor's appeal for further material. I thought it might interest readers to describe a period of nine months I spent in Mahommerah and Kuwait. I am quoting from memory, so my dates may not be correct, But I think it was 1912 when Mr. McFarlane, Superintending Engineer in Bombay, sent me to recondition the yacht belonging to the Sheik of Kuwait.

I arrived at Basra in the mail steamer and reported to the Agents there, who informed me that a small launch would be leaving for Mahommerah in the early afternoon. I sat among a howling mob of Arabs, all shouting at the top of their voices, and after three hours arrived at Mahommerah feeling not a little depressed. There the Agents' representative met me and I was transferred to a small dug-out for the last few miles to where the yacht was moored near the palace of Sheikh Huzelle, which stood near the bank of the river. Here I procured an Arab boy who looked after my personal wants and did it very well.

The yacht had been built at home and was the proud possessor of a gun given to the Sheik by Queen Victoria. She was managed by Arabs, who had no knowledge of how to look after a steel ship, so the whole interior had rotted and on three occasions had sprung a leak and had to be beached. A complete hull, frames and plates were sent out from home to replace the worn-out hull. First of all, the engines had to be removed and this was done without difficulty, but when it came to taking the 15-ton boiler out, this was another matter.

Prior to my arrival, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company at Abadan had arranged to lift and repair the boiler but when we arrived there I found to my dismay that the only crane available was much too small. I next tried the British gunboat lying at Basra to see if they could help. The Captain was very kind and entertained me to a very good dinner but was sorry he had no gear capable of dealing with this weight.

Eventually, through the help of the Company's Agents in Basra, I got an enormous wooden derrick, which was much too big for the job but which I towed down to Abadan, and with the help of one of the Anglo-Persian engineers, it was erected on the jetty. The boiler was removed without further trouble and the derrick was then taken over by the Oil Company. It was now necessary to get the yacht dry-docked but the only dock available was one which had been used previously for smaller craft. In reality, it was merely a hole dug in the clay and it had to be enlarged and suitable keel blocks placed in the centre, all of them well tied down in the clay. A gateway must also be made so the clay was dug out and put in barges. The following day the ship was floated in at high tide and put in position and when the tide receded, she was left resting on the blocks. Pearl divers were of great assistance in this operation.



At low water the clay from the barges was replaced and this had to be done very quickly, as the wall had to be kept ahead of the tide. The water remaining in the dock was baled out by men with a chain of buckets and I was happy to note that the clay was perfectly watertight, and in fact in a short time dried up and was quite comfortable to work on. The Indian labour was brought up from Karachi, four men being very good, and the others ordinary riveter type. I must say they all worked well and I had no trouble with any of the Indians.

The rest of the work was now just a case of cutting down the old frames and replacing them with new ones, together with renewal of the hull plates.

One incident that occurred, I think, is worth mentioning here. I had taken on among others an Armenian and a Syrian riveter. After getting their pay one Saturday, they had been gambling and quarrelled and this fracas ended with the Syrian stabbing the Armenian in the back, evidently with some malice aforethought, as he inflicted some five wounds.

About 2 a.m. I was awakened and asked to dress the fellow's wounds and to get sufficient bandages I had to tear up two white shirts. That done, he was taken away and immediately afterwards the Sheik's police brought along the Syrian for sentence, and so about 2.30 a.m. by candlelight., I pronounced sentence of three months' jail!

Things settled down and for two days all went well, but then the Syrian's wife appeared, dashed up to me, and commenced kissing my hands, imploring the release of her husband. I found this most embarrassing and a most difficult situation to handle. She persisted in waylaying me, repeating the hand-kissing for three days, until at last I suggested to the Sheik that perhaps I had been a little harsh but he insisted that as I had given three months' sentence, then three months it must be. I was sorry to be compelled to be rude to the woman and drive her off but there was little else I could do and it is noteworthy that after completing his sentence her husband returned to his duties and worked well to the end.

Having completed the work on the hull, we returned to Abadan to pick up the boiler, Only to meet with a further disappointment, I found the lifting derrick had got broken and the boiler was lying on the bank of the river. What was to be done? Happily, I thought of the old system of using sand, so we erected a wooden bulkhead, shoring off the boiler space, which was filled with sand.

The yacht was moored as close to the river bank as possible and an Arab Dhow placed between the yacht and the river bank. We then laid a kind of wooden railway track composed of heavy logs from the bank across the supporting dhow to the ship and the boiler was rolled across. There was an anxious moment when the boiler was half-way across, as one of the logs threatened to give way, but we managed to shore it up and so the boiler arrived safely on top of the sand. What a relief to get it there, The removal of the sand was simple, as the coal bunkers were situated on either side of the boiler space and then all was rigged the yacht was towed to Kuwait, where the job was completed, and a trial trip successfully run.

While at Kuwait I lived in the visitors' quarters at the Palace and had an interesting insight into Arab life there. The window of my quarters looked out on a large flat roof where the Sheik held his weekly courts. He sat with his back to my window and the bodyguard and offenders were facing him and facing me too. It was interesting to watch the expressions on their faces.

Before leaving for India the Sheik presented me with a handsome Persian rug, now a little the worse for wear, and a gold embroidered Arab Robe.

S. Biggam.

(2)

miles south of Basra where the clan said made it possible the two Shaikhs were were entirely different characters.

Hazelle cruel & terrifying, all Arabs fell on their knees when they met him.

Mubarak gentle & kindly. The people loved him, his African slaves were devoted to him.

Both these men had killed their nearest of kin. Hazelle employed a negro to kill his father.

Mubarak who returned from a major a precligal murdered from his brother. However that is by the way. I am almost certain that the

Mr. B. M. C. G. P. 1958  
Mr. B. M. C. G. P. 1958  
Mr. B. M. C. G. P. 1958

1958  
15<sup>th</sup> Nov 1958  
Mr. B. M. C. G. P.  
Dear Sir

1958  
15<sup>th</sup> Nov 1958

I received your letter describing the Misir Sabak built by your <sup>friend</sup> ~~friend~~ in 1906. There is no doubt the vessel I referred to was the same, as she fits in exactly with your description. The vessel was owned by the Sheikh of Kuwait.

Sheikh Mubarak al Sabak generally known locally as Sheikh Mubarak. On the land named Kuwait was spare sand it was impossible to carry out the repair there!

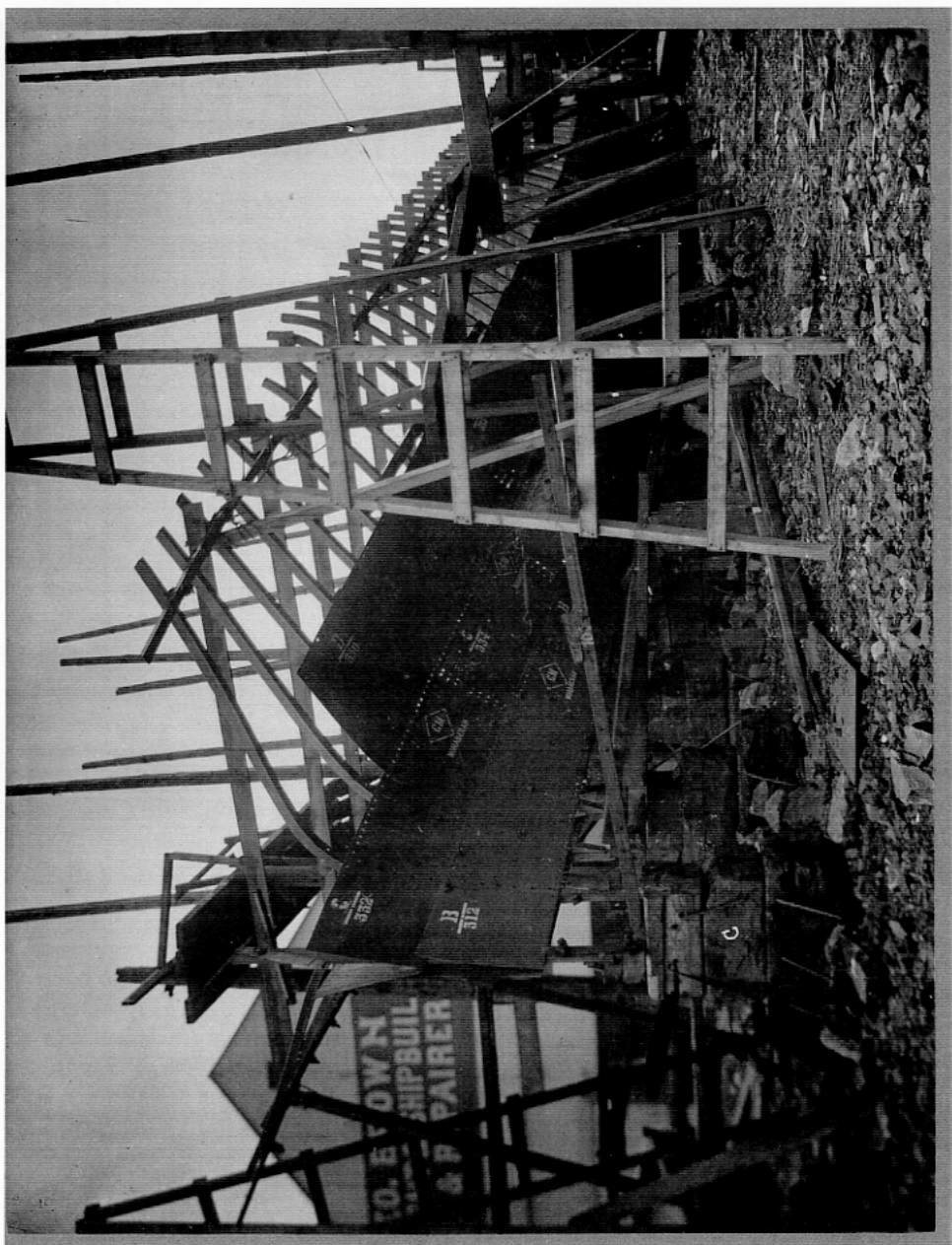
Most of the work was done at Sheikh Hazelle's palace. The work

3.

Hepler was carried out in 1912  
 It was Mr. E. Spahr Lane Superintendent  
 Engineer in Bombay who sent me there  
 about a month later for my return  
 He had just gone on leave  
 & Mr. Murdoch had taken his  
 place.

These facts might enable the  
 B. S. M. P. to piece down  
 the date if you get in touch  
 with them.  
 Getting this information may  
 be a help to you.

I remain  
 Yours faithfully  
 Samuel B. Ingram



**F S.S. AMPANG, (built 1925, Ship No.146).**

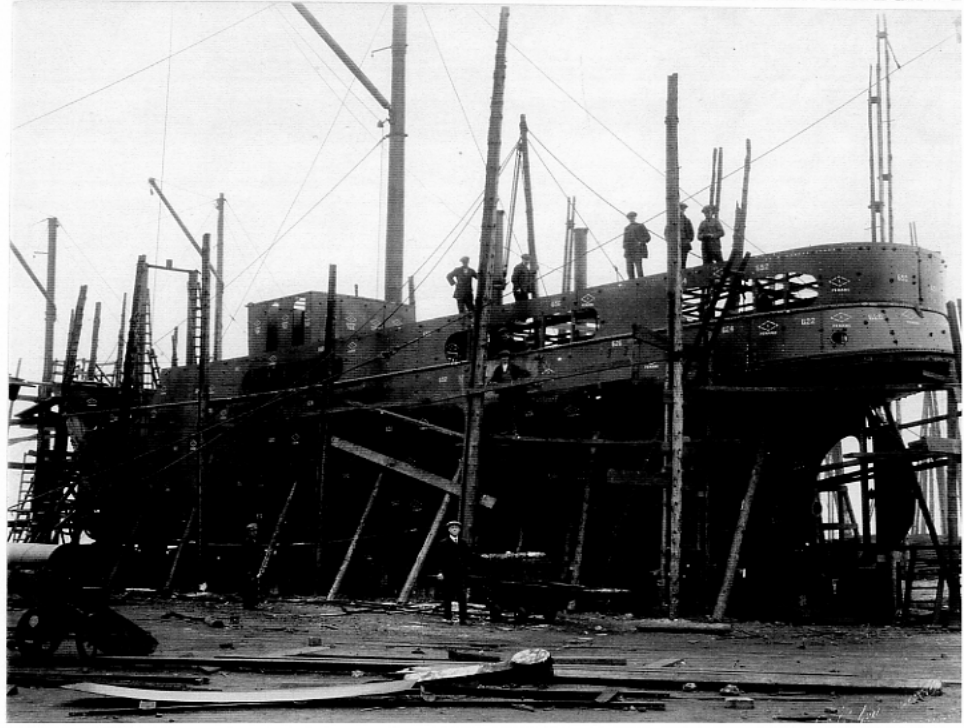
This was one of four "shipment jobs" for the Straits Steamship Co of Singapore. The ships were first erected in pieces bolted together at Garvel Shipyards then the hulls were dismantled for packing and shipped to Sungei Nyok (Penang) in Malaya. There they were re-erected and successfully traded locally with passengers and cargo for over 15 years. Handsome looking ships, they belied their small size. The first two RENGAM (1924) and ROMPIN (1925) were fitted with early diesel engines (by Bolinders of Sweden) but these appear to have been unreliable (early design? crew unfamiliarity?) and the final two AMPANG (1925) and GEMAS (1925) were fitted with the more familiar reciprocating steam engines (by McKie & Baxter, Glasgow). All four were caught up in the fall of Singapore to Japanese forces in February 1941. Their stories read as follows:

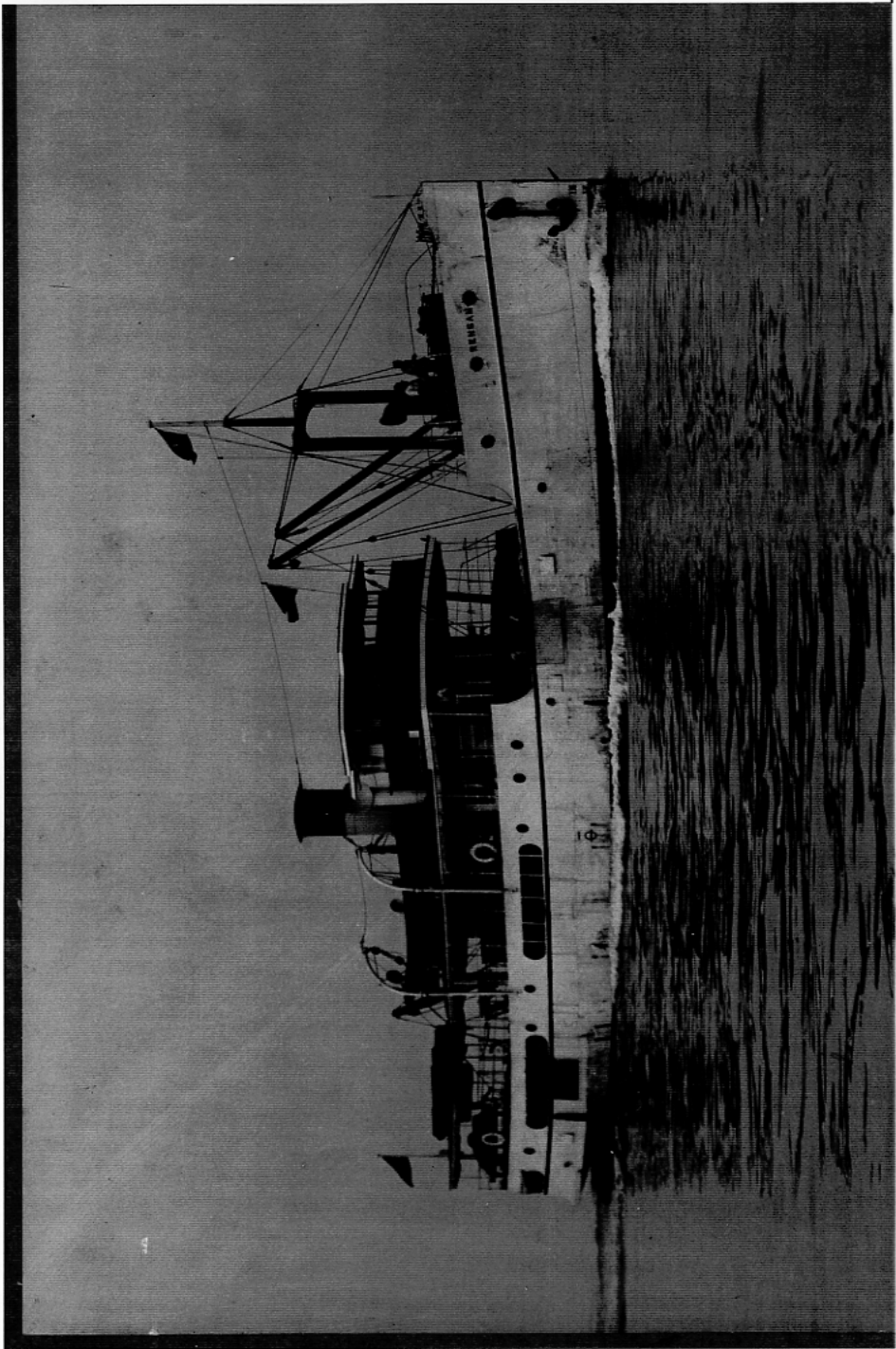
**M.V. RENGAM** Hull erected by George Brown shipped to Sungei Nyok and re-erected there by owners. Captured by the Japanese at Penang, January 1941.

**M.V. ROMPIN** Hull erected by George Brown, shipped to Sungei Nyok and re-erected there by owners. Requisitioned by the Admiralty, January 1941, renamed HMS ROMPIN. Sailed from Singapore 10<sup>th</sup> February, captured by Japanese at Muntok after engine failure 15<sup>th</sup> February 1941.

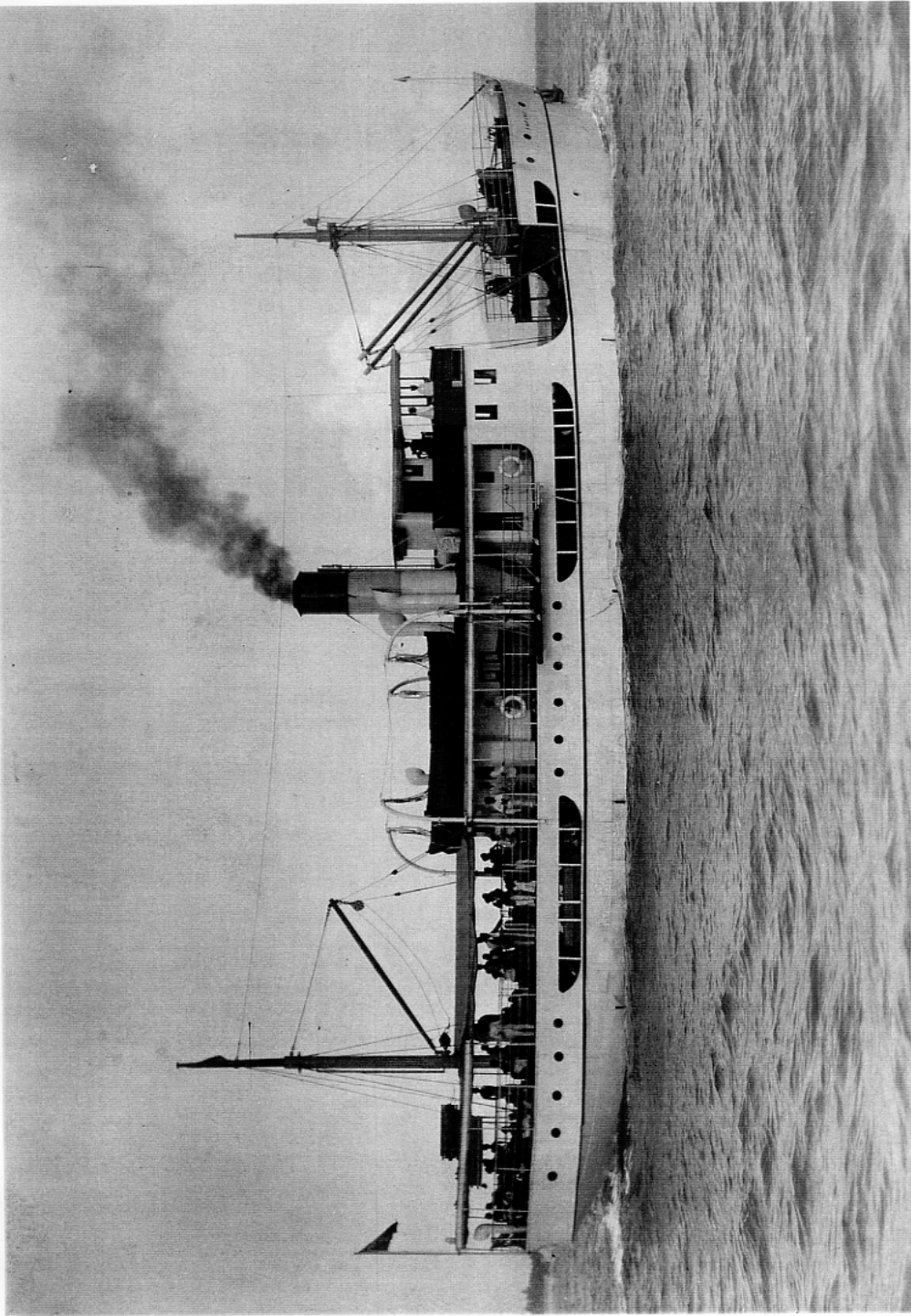
**S.S. AMPANG** Hull erected by George Brown, shipped to Sungei Nyok and re-erected there by owners. Requisitioned by the Admiralty, January 1941, renamed HMS AMPANG. Scuttled at Singapore 14<sup>th</sup> February 1941.

**S.S. GEMAS** Hull erected by George Brown, shipped to Sungei Nyok, traded to Batu Pahat. Requisitioned by the Admiralty 1939 and based at Singapore as an auxiliary minesweeper. Left there 4<sup>th</sup> February 1941 arrived Batavia 4<sup>th</sup> February. 22<sup>nd</sup> February ordered to Tandjong Priok for repair, scuttled Tjilatjap 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1941.









**G KARATTA, (built 1907, Ship No. 45).**

It is significant that many of the vessels built by George Brown & Co had very long careers and must have been good investments for their owners.

An example is SS KARATTA built in 1907 for the Adelaide Steamship Co of Australia, later to become internationally known as the very large multi national conglomerate "Adsteam". KARATTA served for 54 successful years, running continuously until 4<sup>th</sup> November 1961.

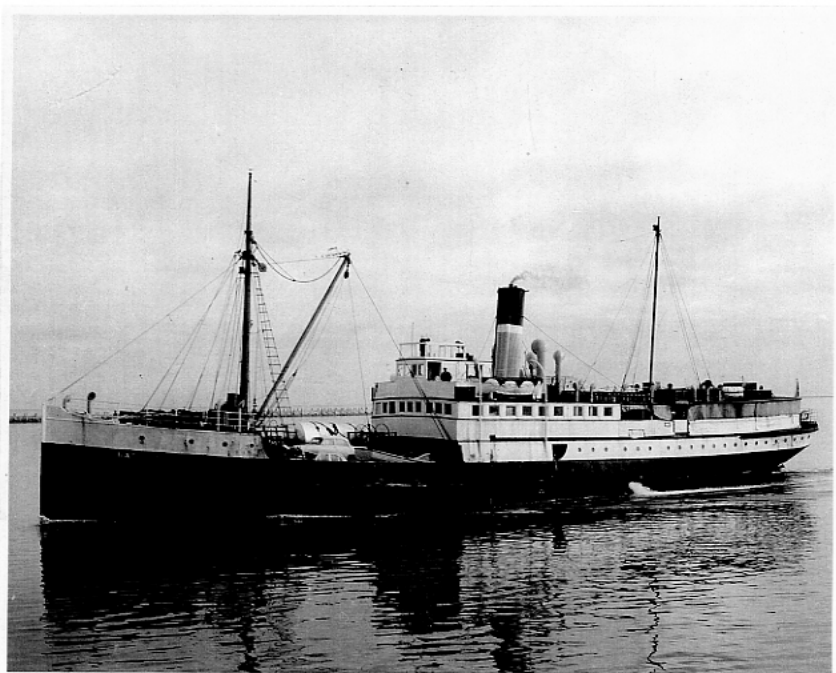
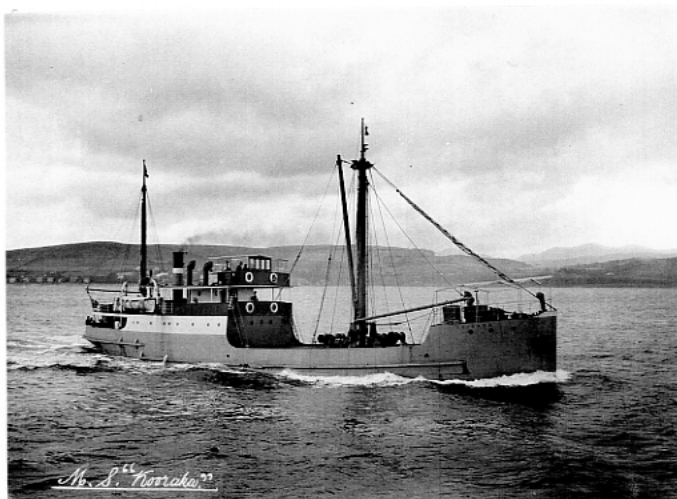
Adsteam not surprisingly returned to George Brown & Co for further ships:

Ship No 73 KAPOOLA in 1912, served until 1957

Ship No 145 KOORAKA in 1925, served until 1960

Ship No 155 KATOORA in 1927, served until 1961

The log of KOORAKA's delivery voyage from Greenock to Australia in 1925 makes fascinating reading (Pages G2 - G13). It is seen through the eyes of Mr J Harris who having suffered from poison gas while on army service during the 1914 -18 war had been advised to go to Australia for the good of his health. He took passage as the carpenter on the KATOORA's eventful voyage, for which he was paid one shilling (5p)!! It turned out to be quite an adventure and illustrates well the view of the world through the eyes of a deckhand in the 1920s!



Return to  
F. A. Brown

L O G

O F

M/S "KOORAKA".

135 x 24 x 8'-9"

Greenock to Adelaide.

28th April to 19th Augst. 1925.

Greenock to Sydney

300 BHP

9 knots

Morris

Was a former trade  
passed in Nov 1914-1918  
was advised to go to  
Australia &  
shipped on "Kooraka"  
as Carpenter.

LOG OF M. S. "KOORAKA".

300 Tons.

GREENOCK TO ADELAIDE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

=====

28th April to 19th August, 1925.

J. Harris, Carpenter.

LOG OF M. S. "KOORAKA", 300 TONS.  
GREENOCK TO ADELAIDE, S. AUSTRALIA.



- 28th April, 1925. Signed on as Carpenter working my passage out to Australia. 12 o'clock mid-day we cast off our mooring ropes and made for the "Tail o' the Bank". adjusted our compasses there, and started on our long run with Port Said as our first stop.
- 30th April. Into the English Channel, gale coming up and sea rising, getting life lines rigged up along the decks.
- 1st May. In the Bay of Biscay now, and the weather is good. We have had a rotten time the last two days, seas got too high for us and heave us to heave too. What a tossing we got; our small craft was more under water than above it; taking grub from the galley along to the fore-castle was out of the question, you just had to go along to the galley, grab something in your hand and scoff it the best way you could. I have been sea-sick the last two days, and don't feel like eating just yet, but you have got to turn too and work, sea-sick or not.
- 2nd May. Sighted Portuguese coast at 4 a.m. Weather good, and am feeling fine.
- 3rd May. 7 a.m. Entered Straits of Gibraltar and reported ship by flag signal to the wireless station at Sagres. 9 a.m. Opposite the Rock, engine# stopped, bearings heating, and have got a fine view of the Rock and the Terraces on it. 12 mid-day, off again, into the Mediterranean, heavy swell running.
- 9th May. Heavy swell still running, engine# continually breaking down, ship rolling too much to write this week; working from early morning till all hours at night. Captain reckons we are off Malta, although we are out of sight of land, and thinks of putting in there to get our engine# fixed.
- 10th May. 60 miles by Malta. Have decided to carry on to Port Said. Going along like a crippled duck now on three cylinders, and only doing 7 knots.
- 12th May. Meat and water running short and weather against us. Salt junk doesn't agree with me.
- 18th May. Sighted land on starboard bow 3 a.m. Egyptian coast. 9 a.m. Into Port Said, anchor down and Arabs aboard with fruit and cigarettes, and all sorts of things, even a barber and shoemaker came alongside in their boats. I took my boots off and they put a sole on

18th May.

them while I sat down on the hatch and waited; charged 3/6d. and made a good job. I wasn't half glad to get some fruit, and they didn't forget to charge for it either. Only going to stop an hour and a half here in order to get through the Suez Canal in daylight. French Pilot on board and three Egyptian boatmen to make fast the boats on the Banks of the Canal. It is so narrow that two boats can't pass; one has to tie up and let the other pass. 11.30, into the Canal now. Arabs working all along the Banks clearing sand away. They do look funny in their long white robes and skirts and bare legs, and bawling at the camels and donkeys. 5 p.m. at Ismailia, halfway through the Canal, not allowed through in the dark without a search light, and we haven't got one. These Egyptians and Arabs are tough looking customers and filthy with grease and dirt and awful thieves.

19th May.

8 a.m. leave Ismailia and get through the other half of the Canal. 3 p.m. arrive in Suez. All the crew are going ashore, but I don't like the look or the smell of these Arabs, so I am stopping on board to write letters. Barges alongside with oil fuel and fresh water. I have got to see that all the tanks are properly fitted up, that's one of my jobs.

20th May.

7 a.m. Away from here and glad to get away. The heat is bad to put up with, but these filthy Arabs are worse, you can't leave a thing down but they've got hold of it and pawing it all over.

21st May.

Still in the Gulf of Suez, terrific heat, I am as black as any nigger with the sun. All I'm wearing is a short pair of pants, a thin singlet and a hat, and even that is too much.

22nd May.

Into the Red Sea now, no twilight here, darkness comes down like a blanket about 6.30 p.m. Engine doing well and weather fine.

26th May.

Still in the Red Sea. The heat is awful. Anytime we get a few minutes to spare we turn the salt water hose on each other. We take a blanket and sleep out on the hatches. The skies are lovely at night, and I'm learning the names of all the stars. We can see the Southern Cross quite plain now. Passed the "Twelve Apostles" this morning; these are twelve huge rocks rising sheer out of the sea, probably the top of a subterranean mountain range.

27th May.

4 a.m. Sighted Perim and reported ship by flag signal to wireless station there. This is the place where the Children of Israel crossed the Red Sea.

- 28th May. In the Gulf Aden now. Perim marks the end of the Red Sea. The heat is unbearable. Should reach Colombo in ten days. Shoals of flying fish are continually passing, and often when the porpoises are after them they come right on to our well deck. We put a light in the rigging at night and it attracts them, and we watch and grab them as they land on deck, and put them in a bucket and the cook dishes them up for breakfast. They are great eating - just like fresh water trout.
  
- 29th May. Off Cape Guardafui - most easterly point of Africa. The wind is rising and we are in for a Monsoon; getting everything battened down, and life lines rigged up: the seas sweep right over our low well deck when it is rough, and you have got to hold on tight, you're always soaked to the skin.
  
- 3rd June. 6.30 a.m. Have had a rotten time, been sick for four days, can't even keep a drop of tea down, gas troubling me again, our grub is going rotten with the heat, we've no ice box. Lost my hat in that last storm. I'm going round like an Arab now with a handkerchief round my head.
  
- 7th June. 6.30 a.m. Sighted land - Ceylon - what a welcome sight. It is only a dark blue line away on the horizon yet. 11.30 a.m. outside Colombo breakwater, pilot coming out to us. 12 mid-day in Harbour, natives coming out to us in their canoes with fruit and fags. I'm for a feed of bananas, and think I'll go ashore to-night.
  
- 8th June. Went ashore last night and didn't I have a feed. O boy, you should have seen us. The natives all gathered round us with their rickshaws and we got one each and went for a drive round Colombo. These rickshaw boys can run to some tune. We had them racing. We paid one rupee for an hour. A rupee is worth 1/6d. They drove us to their temple of Buddha first. We had a look round, and then they said we would have to take our boots off to go into the inner temple, but we kicked at that; they would have pinched our boots while we were inside, so we got hold of our rickshaw boys again and went to the native bazaars and bought some fruit and singlets. These natives know how to drive a bargain. However, we beat them down to about half of what they wanted. I reckon they got the best of it even at that. We bought some great tea, very cheap too, and had another feed, and got the native boatmen to take us back to our ship. We always anchored out in the stream, and never came into the quay.
  
- 9th June. 8 a.m. Got our oil tanks and fresh water tanks filled up, and are in the road again. Gale blowing outside, glad to get away. Lashing all movable gear down, and



9th June.

getting our old life lines rigged up again. This is the monsoon season, so can expect any kind of weather.

10th June.

Heavy weather and sick again. This boat thinks it is a submarine. You've got to wade through water up to your knees to get from the forecandle to the galley and every few minutes you get a complete bath from head to foot. It is some joke trying to get our grub along. Hope this wont last long. 9.30 p.m. That's a blade away off our propeller.

11th June.

7.30 p.m. Two more blades gone. This is getting cheery. Our speed reduced to four knots. Thank Heaven the sea is a bit calmer. We've altered our course and are now steering for the Island of Samatra in the Dutch East Indies 880 miles away. The old man has got the first and second mates on the bridge checking up the bearings to find out exactly where we are. 3.30 p.m. That's the last blade away. We are helpless now. We have no wireless, and we went out of the regular track of shipping when we changed our course. All hands are turned to making extra sails out of the hatch tarpaulins. I'm in for a high old time of it now: I have got to set too and make a sea anchor to keep the ship head on to the seas.

12th June.

Working like a nigger, have got the sea anchor made out of three old staging planks and a dozen coal bags opened up and sewed together and put it over on the starboard bow. It is helping her a little. We are flying a long distance distress signal and have a sailor up on the bridge with glasses all the time in hopes of sighting a passing ship to take us in tow.

13th June.

6.30 a.m. Second mate spotted a shark cruising round us. Got a meat hook and a lump of junk from the galley and threw it over. It hardly got time to touch the water before Mr. Shark had it with a rush, and then two of us got on the line and he nearly pulled our arms out. We got him over the rail at last, and I got my rule out and tried to measure him. He nearly broke my rule, and knocked the feet from me with his kicking and leaping. He was only 5'-6" long and half of that was head and teeth. He is an ugly brute. We opened him up but found nothing, so we'll use him for bait if any more come along.

14th June.

Sunday "a day of rest" but not for us chickens. The sailors commandment (six days shalt thou work and do all that thou art able, and on the seventh holystone the deck and scrape down the cable).

15th June.

Nothing sighted yet. Everybody getting fed up and short tempered, grub getting short, and only allowed a little water for drinking each day. The heat is

15th June.

terrific. We are getting plenty rain, that's one good thing. We put out buckets and cans and catch all we can. I have never seen such heavy rain in my life. It simply blots out everything and you are soaked to the skin in a second, and then it stops just as suddenly, and the sun dries you in a couple of minutes. We caught a bigger shark this morning. We got him on deck and chopped his tail off and threw him back. His pals made for him when they saw he was helpless and scoffed him, but he put up a good fight. The sailors hate sharks like rat poison and always play some trick on them. The next one we catch we are going to wedge up his mouth with a lump of wood. I've got a big wedge made ready.

16th June.

Old Man reckons we have drifted on the Singapore Colombo route. Might sight a ship to-day. 6.30 p.m. It is dark now and nothing sighted. We are getting rockets ready to send up to-night. The grub is getting rotten, salt junk for breakfast, dinner and tea, and sea biscuits instead of bread four days a week. We all went along to the Old Man and asked for better grub. He said he couldn't help it, we might drift for months and he had to be careful with the food. It is a good job we are getting plenty of flying fish flying on board. There is some talk of manning one of the life boats and trying to sail her into Samatra and send a boat out to tow us in.

17th June.

2.30 a.m. The sailor on watch at the mast head sighted a ship's light about seven miles off in the Port quarter. You bet we were out in no time when we heard him yell out. We don't take our clothes off at night, but just turn in with everything on. I even had my boots on. We got our rockets fixed and sent six up at intervals. We even got an oil barrel up from the hold filled it with straw and waste and oil, lashed it up to the rail and set it ablaze, but all in vain. We had to stand there in the pouring rain and watch that light fade away in the distance. The things we said about that boat and her crew would have shrivelled them up, and wouldn't stand putting down in this diary. We turned in again and lay down in our soaking wet clothes, too miserable even to speak. I started to write it down in my diary and they told me I was mad. 7.a.m. spotted a monster of a shark, got our hook and salt junk over and he rushed at it. Three of us got on to the line and you should have seen us getting pulled all over the show till he got a bit tired. We got him right up and half over the rail kicking and twisting like a fury. The mate yelled for someone to get a rope over his head, but nobody could get near him and at the finish he kicked himself right off the rail and left half his jaw on the hook. He went off like a streak but he wouldn't get far before his pals would scoff him. He was fully 12 feet. We were wild

17th June.

at losing him after all our pulling. 9 a.m. I have got orders to rig up a jury rudder and there's no gear to build it. I have got a couple of our awning spars and a plate off the floor of the engine room. When I get it rigged up we are going to try and sail her in. It's going to be a long job. 3.30 p.m. all working away on the rudder when a yell came down from the mast-head "Ship on the starboard quarter". Down went our tools and we all made a rush up above to see her. Looks as if she is going by without seeing us. She is only a speck on the horizon so far. We have even got a blanket up to the masthead to attract her. 4 p.m. great excitement she has altered her course, and is bearing down on us. Old Man is all excited, dashing around with an old torn and dirty shirt on. The first mate said to him "For God's sake Captain, change into a clean shirt". The Old Man's face was a picture, but he changed it and put his shore going cap on. The ship is a blue funnel boat the Theseus of Liverpool. We have got one of our life boats out and the mate is going across to her. There's a heavy swell running and the water seems alive with sharks. The life boat is bringing a line back, and she is half full of water. The crew are baling all the time, and it is over their knees. They have got back safe anyway but we can't lift her she is full right up. At the finish a wave caught her and flung her against the ship's side and smashed her up. We got what was left of her up easily enough after that. 8 p.m. still working away hauling ropes and wires across. 10 p.m. made fast now, and under way. Getting some grub now, have had nothing since mid-day. 12 midnight got a tot of rum and we needed it, no rest for us to-night.

18th June.

Bad squalls during the night and blinding rain showers. Standing by the towing ropes all the time, they are chafin badly. We are making for Padang on the west coast of Samatra.

19th June.

Sea down a bit, heavy continuous rain. We are soaked all the time. I have stopped wearing a shirt and boots. We are all going around half naked and we look a tough crowd and no mistake. I haven't shaved since Colombo, so you bet I'm some oil painting.

21st June.

2 a.m. Crossed the line, should get in to-morrow night with luck. Went along for our tea to-night and only got a small piece of salt horse. We all went up to the old Man and had a battle royal. He said he had nothing to give us, but in the end we got a tin of salmon and a small loaf. We did enjoy it after the salt junk and hard biscuits. Told him we would have to get better feeding in future or we'd go to the British Consul in the next Port. He didn't know what to say.

22nd June.

4 a.m. Sighted land. Our ship steering very bad. Strong currents here. 10 a.m. Sighted a big whale on our Port

7.

- 22nd June. beam, some sight. 7 p.m. into Padang, lovely scenery.
- 23rd June. Got up at 5.30 a.m. to get a bath on deck before the natives get buzzing round. 8 a.m. Natives alongside in their little dugout canoes with fruit. They are a tough looking lot, half Malay and half Chinese. I got two dozen bananas and two pineapples for a shilling. It is all Dutch money they use here. The heat is terrible. We are right on the Equator here. We've got the natives diving for coins. They are splendid swimmers. The fish in these waters are lovely although no use for eating.
- 24th June. Got the natives to take us ashore last night in their canoes. Queer looking place, gives you the creeps, and their bazaars put you in mind of the monkey house at the London Zoo if small goes for anything, and you can't turn round in them without tramping on parrots and monkeys. The gentry here go around in pyjamas and the working classes wear nothing. We are swopping all our clothes for fruit. It is funny to see the oxen ashore pulling the little carts along just like the stories in the Bible.
- 25th June. Working all day scraping and painting. She isn't half in a mess. Don't think we will get our propeller fixed up here. There is no dock, and we can't beach her here. Went fishing in one of the lifeboats to-night; some big fish about here but too many sharks.
- 26th June. All hands painting and scraping. It's a rotten job in this heat. Even the natives don't work during the day, but we have to. I'm sure earning my "bob" a month. We will have to go to Batavia to get our propeller fixed, 600 miles from here in the Island of Java. We will have to wait till a boat comes in here to give us a tow. We all clubbed at Port Said and bought a Melodion, so we get it going out on deck at night and have a dance. Our musician can only play one waltz and the Boston two-step. It's rather the worse for wear with the salt water, but we keep going till we trip up, and the natives think we are mad. Got a stalk of bananas ashore 180 on it for a gulden (1/8d). I traded a dozen sea biscuits for a dozen bananas with one of the natives. He seemed quite pleased. I would like to see his face when he tries to chew them.
- 28th June. Still here. Dutch ship came in to-day. Old Man away on board to see if she will give us a tow. Her name is the "Lematang". Her Officers are Dutch and her Crew Malay.
- 29th June. 6.30 a.m. Getting everything squared up and shipshape, Lematang going to tow us to Batavia. 10.30 a.m. under way again, doing six knots.
- 1st July. Bit of a swell running, hope it doesn't get too rough or we are in for a high old time. 7.30 p.m. that's our towing rope snapped and the Lematang about a mile away.

- 1st July. Our Old Man nearly off his head. All hands turned to, trying to fish up the broken end of the towing wire; our windlass broke down so we have got to manhandle it. It is heavy work, I'll never get my hands clean again. 9.30 p.m. Lematang has found out she has lost us and is circling back, sending a boat over with another wire. 10.30 p.m. Thought we were away that time. Lematang came in too close and nearly smashed our bows in, we could have jumped aboard her she was so close. However, we are under way again now. 12 mid-night, turning in now, got no extra grub for all that work. You get tea at 5 p.m. and get nothing till 8 next morning.
- 2nd July. Kided the cook it is my birthday and I'm 21, and he believes me. Got him talked up so much that he made a small duff for us in the forecabin. That duff didn't live long.
- 3rd July. Entered the Sunda Straits 3.30 p.m. outside Batavia Harbour tow rope snapped going in and we nearly piled up on the breakwater, just managed to get another line across to the tug boat in time, and got in all right.
- 4th July. Getting wireless fixed up on board. I'm helping to fix it up, making shelves and brackets and boring holes. Sent our spare propeller away ashore - going to get another one cast.
- 11th July. Going into a floating dry dock now. The Dutch have two here, all native labour. Have got to take quinine every night, very unhealthy here and the water is undrinkable.
- 13th July. Got our rudder and propeller fixed up and out of dry dock. Going to run a harbour trial.
- 15th July. Getting water and stores aboard and everything shipshape. 6.30 a.m. under way again. 11 p.m. nearly out of the Straits, engine continually running hot. 11.30 p.m. have turned and going back to Batavia. We're all in a lovely temper, and the language is enough to sink the ship.
- 16th July. 4.30 p.m. Back to Batavia. Got five barrels of special oil aboard.
- 17th July. Away again going round the East coast of Java this time. Old Man thinks we will get better weather that side.
- 21st July. At the south east end of Java, engine all burst up. Have turned and are going back about 70 miles into a place called Soerabaya. Can't get more than six knots out of her, and she won't stand up to the trade winds at that speed.
- 22nd July. Into Soerabaya, fed right up to the eyes. Going into dry dock to-morrow. Seems ages since we left Greenock.

- 25th July. Out of dry dock again. Went ashore but was glad to get back again. It's a rotten show. Natives following us all the time begging. It wouldn't be so bad if they could speak a word of English, and the smell from them would knock you down.
- 26th July. Sunday. Thought we would get a rest to-day, but got a rude awakening. Engineers wanted a kick out of the engine, so we had to turn too and put out extra wires and ropes to hold her. Nearly devoured by mosquitoes. Got to take quinine every night. This place is unhealthy. Our crew look more like a football team with our singlets and short pants.
- 28th July. Still in this rotten hole. None of the Dutch experts seem to know what is wrong with the engine. We are all sick of this place, it is red hot during the day and the mosquitoes bite lumps out of you at night.
- 29th July. Our third engineer down with malaria. I've had to go down and give a hand in the engine room. I'm earning my 1/- alright.
- 30th July. 8 a.m. Away at last. Hope she goes straight this time.
- 31st July. Passing through the Islands at the south of Java. The scenery is magnificent with the volcanic mountains and tropical trees. The passages are very narrow between the islands, and there is a very strong race running against us. Old Man's got the wind up, we are hardly making headway, and she is steering bad. 11.30 p.m. Past the Islands now, gale blowing and seas getting high. We left our ports open in the fore-castle and got completely washed out, beds, blankets and everything soaked, all our bread, sugar and stuff washed on to the deck, what a mess! Can't stand on our feet she is pitching so badly. We just lay down in our wet gear and tried to forget it.
- 1st Aug. I'm sick again (Nuff sed).
- 4th Aug. Feel better now. Heavy sea running and a head wind. Cook is giving us rotten grub in the fore-castle and giving the saloon good stuff, so we all went along and had a battle royal, threw the grub overboard in front of the Old Man. Expect we will hear more about it later.
- 7th Aug. Gale sprung up last night. What a time we've had since. She's kicking and leaping like something mad. Eating off a plate is out of the question, and when you try to drink your coffee you get half of it down your neck. Our fore-castle is leaking on top, and every time she digs her bows into a wave it comes down on us like a burn. (Who wouldn't sell a farm and go to sea?). She is only doing about three knots, can hardly keep her head on to the seas. I'm kept busy caulking all the decks and it is

- 7th Aug. some job. Every few minutes I get sent kicking into the scuppers with the stool and oakum tying themselves round my neck. The Old Man and the mate are having a good laugh at me, but I don't see the joke, and I get wild and told them so. They didn't like it and buzzed off. They can't dock much off my wages anyway. I reckon I have earned that Bob.
- 8th Aug. 4.30 p.m. Sighted land, our first glimpse of Australia. It's an Island called Dirk Hartog at the mouth of Shark's Bay, West Australia. We are hugging the land to try and get it a bit easier.
- 11th Aug. Heavy swell coming off the land and hitting us broadside on. She is rolling bad. We are busy putting extra lashings on everything. Sighted Cape Leeuwin this morning, most south ~~east~~ westerly point of Australia. Have altered course and are steering due east making straight across the Bight into Adelaide. Thank Heaven this is the last lap - should get in in nine days.
- 13th Aug. Wind rising, we are in for a blow. Making very little headway, only three knots at times.
- 16th Aug. Sea down a bit. We have had it pretty rough. Old Man reckons we are only 500 miles from Adelaide. This is Sunday, so I have got a little time off. I started to get all my clothes and gear packed up, everything is nearly ruined with salt water.
- 19th Aug. 2 a.m. Sighted Neptune Island. 4 a.m. Sighted Kangaroo Island, should get in about nine o'clock to-night. All hands on deck holystoning and scrubbing and getting mooring ropes up from below. I can hardly believe that it is nearly over. We have increased speed to try and get in earlier. 4.45 p.m. Doctor's boat alongside, and all passed. Going up the river into Port Adelaide now. 8 p.m. Into Port Adelaide, quite dark. I was the first man ashore. I leaped ashore with a mooring rope to make her fast, when she was still a few feet, and jumped right into Mrs Barr and the girls. I am going to stay with them to-night. Thank Heaven that is the end of that voyage. (NEVER AGAIN).

(sgd) J. Harris.

P.S. Got paid off with 1/-. Reckon I'll keep it for luck. I think I earned it.

**H     ANGULARITY (built 1934, Ship No. 187) and SUAIVITY (built 1936, Ship No. 198)**

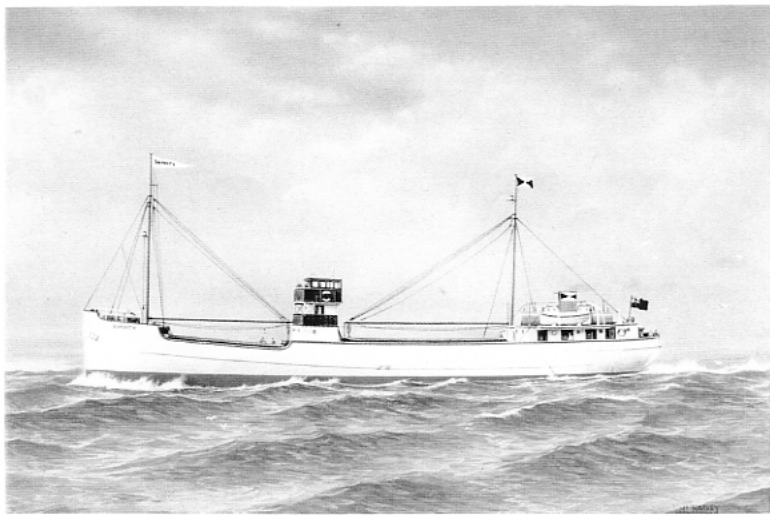
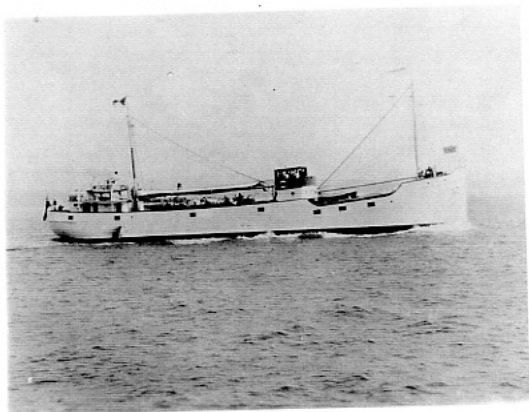
Messrs FT Everard & Sons Ltd, coastal ship owners of Greenhithe in Kent, were far and away the best customers in terms of numbers of ships built at Garvel Shipyard. From the time they took delivery of their first Greenock – built ship (AGILITY in 1924) until their final order (ATONALITY in 1949) they placed orders for 28 ships from George Brown & Co and acquired a further 3 ships which had been built for the Ministry of War Transport during the 1939 – 45 war. Clearly they were very satisfied with the ships they had received.

Two are mentioned here:

- a) ANGULARITY, which took part, representing the British coastal fleet, in the 1935 Fleet Review at Spithead. Her master at the review, Ginger Wilton had stood by during building of ANGULARITY at Greenock in 1934. For the occasion her hull was painted very smartly in a distinctive yellow.
- b) SUAIVITY was similarly honoured by being present at the Royal Naval Review on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1937 and for this occasion her hull was painted white.

Extensive details of the George Brown & Co built ships owned by Everards can be found in the book "Everard of Greehithe" by KS Garrett, ISBN 0905617584, published by the World Ship Society in 1991.





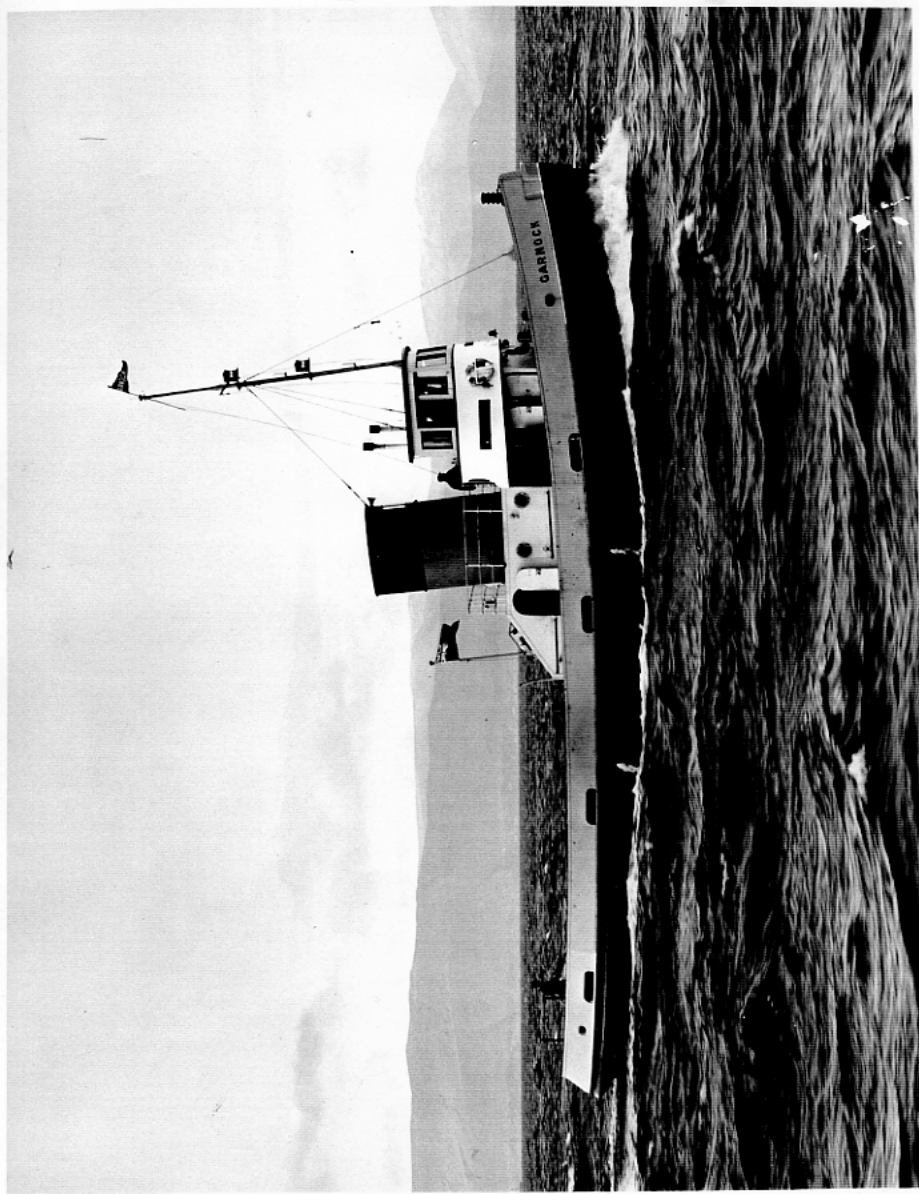
*M.S. "Security." Royal Naval Review, Spithead, 20th May, 1937*

## I      **GARNOCK ( built 1956, Ship No. 266)**

GARNOCK was a small harbour tug fitted with a Kort rudder and specially designed with a clear after deck for the carriage of explosives from the ICI explosives works at Ardeer near Irvine to a dumping ground several miles off the coast in Ayr Bay.

During her delivery voyage from Greenock to Irvine, in which the writer Douglas Brown was a junior member of the crew, she met up with her predecessor returning from the dumping ground. This was the old paddle tug GEORGE BROWN (no connection with the builders, but named after the Provost of Irvine at the time she was built, 1888).

GARNOCK continued her harbour duties until 27<sup>th</sup> February 1984 when, while dumping, an explosion occurred under her stern. Fortunately there were no casualties but the vessel was damaged aft, in way of the rudder. She was donated, shortly afterwards, to the Scottish Maritime Museum at Irvine where she forms part of the outdoor display at the time of writing (March 2002).





**Troon:** Monday February 27, 1984, at 1135, Troon's 44ft Waveney class lifeboat, Connel Elizabeth Cargill, under the command of Coxswain/Mechanic Ian Johnson, left her mooring after reports that the tug Garnock had been damaged by an explosion west of Ardrossan and her engine was out of action. There was a light north-westerly wind and the sea was slight when the lifeboat came alongside the tug. Coxswain Johnson discovered a normal tow would be impossible because the tug's rudder could not be used. Instead the lifeboat was lashed alongside the port aft side of the tug and, making six knots, steered for Troon. At 1508 the two vessels entered harbour (above) and a few minutes later the tug was safely berthed alongside the lifeboat shed.

*The Lifeboat Autumn 84.*

**J      SUNNY (built 1953, Ship No. 259)**

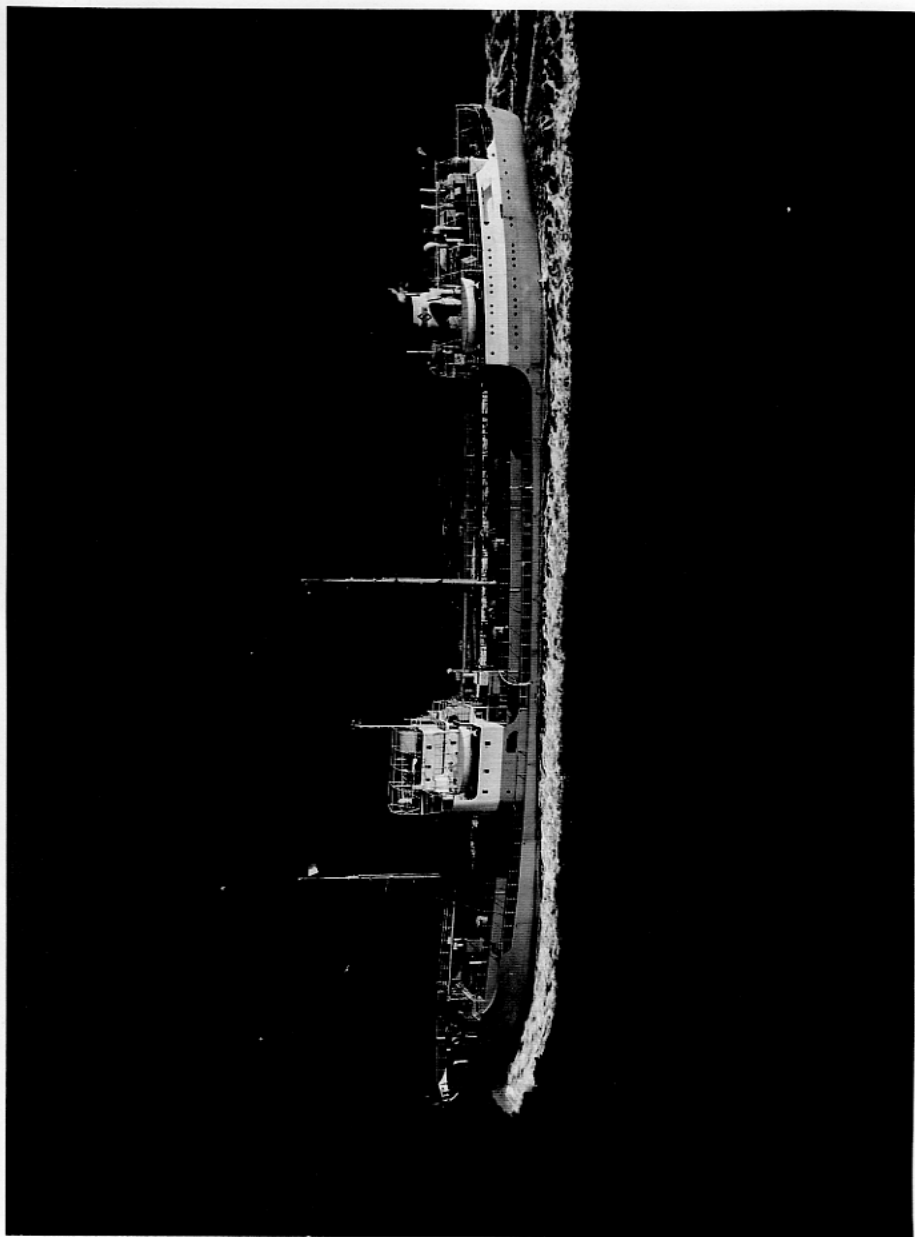
This was the largest ship built at Garvel Shipyard, and was a steam 4080t deadweight single screw oil tanker built for Norwegian owners for the trade between Singapore and Indonesia.

Much of the steel with which she was built had to be imported from Japan (there was a shortage of steel in the UK at the time – both countries were emerging from post – war shortages).

Her dimensions were 315' 0" x 47' 0" x 22' 0"

Several earlier ships built by George Brown & Co were not far short of her size, eg, ALBIONIC (built 1924, Ship No. 133) 290' 0" x 44' 0" x 23' 0" and TERNEUZEN (built 1922, Ship No. 136) 290' 0" x 43' 10" x 23' 0"

SUNNY was sold in 1966 and renamed SEASNIPE. She was scrapped in 1976.



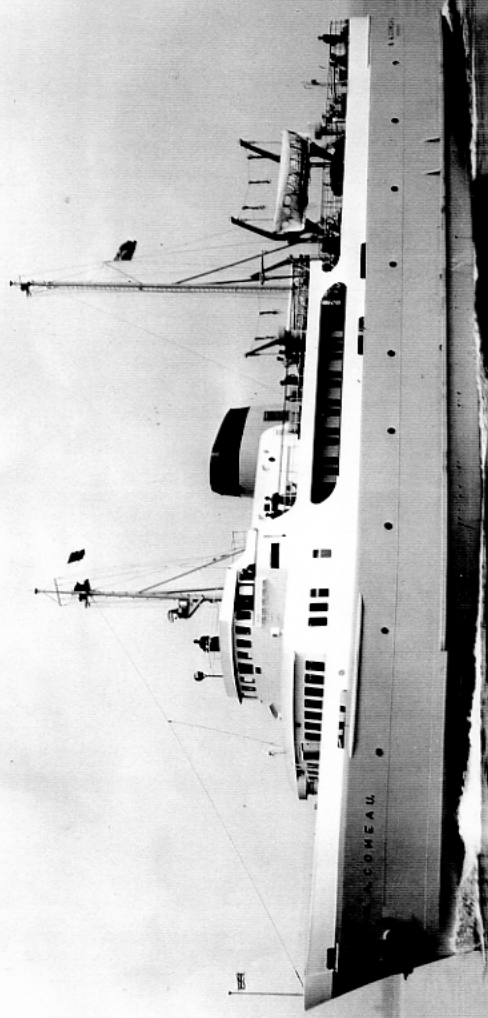
**K N.A. COMEAU, (built 1962, Ship No. 275).**

This was a pioneer ro-ro and passenger ferry which opened up a new route across the St Lawrence estuary in Canada from Matane (a small town with a railway connection on the Gaspé peninsula) to Godbout in Labrador. The route was an instant success and went from strength to strength. After some years the specially designed shallow-draught N. A. COMEAU (named after a pioneer of the Labrador coast) was replaced by larger vessels (vehicle and train ferries) and was transferred to the much more open waters between North Sydney in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

Further details of her later career in the Caribbean and, later still, moored as an accommodation ship near Melbourne in Australia are given on the attached sheet, Page K2.

What is remarkable is that, after 32 years of service, she was able to make her own way through the Panama Canal and across the Pacific Ocean under her own power in 1994. She is still in existence in Australia at the time of writing (March 2002).

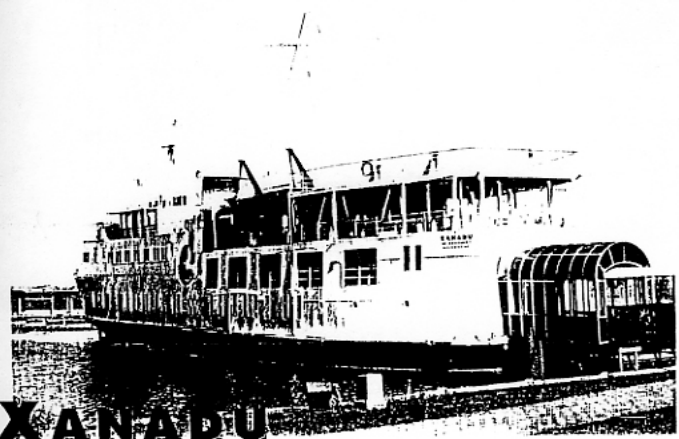
The attached letter (from Traverse Matane Godbout Limitee, dated 5<sup>th</sup> September 1963, Page K3) asking for a second slightly larger version of the successful N. A. COMEAU for delivery in June 1964 could not be acted on as Garvel Shipyard was already busy building Ship No276 KINNAIRD HEAD and No 277 VASABHA and could, therefore, not meet the delivery date. The required ferry was built at a Canadian shipyard and, as SIEUR D'AMOURS assisted N. A. COMEAU on the increasingly busy sailings from Matane.



COMEAU

11206





# XANADU Worlds Apart

By Jonathan Boonzaler

History shows us that some ships never seem to die. When it appears that their life is almost over, they miraculously reappear under a new guise and move on to bigger and better things.

When withdrawn in 1987, it was expected that the tired looking ship would be sold for scrap. Fate, fortunately, had other plans.

**T**he Traverse Matane Godbout Ltd. of Matane, Quebec could never have imagined that the little car ferry they commissioned in 1962 would, at a time when most thought her ready for scrap, sail as a cruise ship in the Caribbean, before moving to Australia, where she now operates as a floating hotel and convention center.

The diminutive 1,417-gt N.A. COMEAU was built as a drive-on, drive-off ferry by George Brown & Co. of Greenock, Scotland. The company produced a compact little vessel with workmanlike lines. A 1,650-hp British Polar diesel was linked to a single screw, which propelled the vessel at a service speed of 15.5 knots. The 57m x 12m ice-strengthened hull could carry 38 cars with access provided through a stern door. A total of 100 passengers could be accommodated in the superstructure. The passenger accommodation, consisting of a small bar lounge and cafeteria, was lined with wood panelling, and appears to have been quite adequate for the journeys the ship was expected to perform.

The N.A. COMEAU crossed the Atlantic in 1962, and began sailing routes along the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Initially Traverse Matane used her on their Baie Comeau-Matane-Sept Iles route, but as her career progressed, new owners used her

on other routes in the St. Lawrence. By the mid 1980s, age was beginning to catch up with the hardworking little ferry and her limited hull showed the scars of many years of battle with the harsh Canadian winter conditions. When withdrawn in 1987, it was expected that the tired looking ship would be sold for scrap. Fate, fortunately, had other plans.

American based Aquanaut Cruises, a company specializing in dive cruises in the Caribbean, were in need of a small ship suitable for conversion into a dive cruise ship. The laid-up ferry, thought to be ideal, was quickly purchased and sent for conversion into a Caribbean cruise ship. In early 1988 she re-emerged as the AQUANAUT HOLIDAY, a trim and attractive looking cruise ship. The conversion was extensive. The car deck had been rebuilt with 22 twin and double cabins, each with picture windows and en-suite bathroom. The aft end of the car deck had been transformed into a dive center. Passengers boarded smaller dive boats through the former stern door before being taken to remote coral reefs. On the main deck, the original public rooms were given new up-beat décor, while ten state-rooms with private balconies were added aft of the dining room. Above the new state-

rooms was a covered bar and deck lounge, the social hub of the ship.

The AQUANAUT HOLIDAY operated a variety of dive cruises in the Southern Caribbean. Unfortunately these were not a success. The ship proved expensive to operate, and Aquanaut Cruises replaced her with another ship, this time a converted support vessel. AQUANAUT HOLIDAY was sold and became XANADU HOLIDAY, operating dive cruises out of Martinique. By 1994 she was sold yet again.

The vessel's new owners were the Western Port Marina, of Hastings, Australia. Situated about an hour's drive south of Melbourne, the marina has extensive restaurants and facilities catering especially for conventions and other such corporate functions. The problem the marina faced at the time was that the town of Hastings suffered from a lack of quality accommodation in which corporate clients could stay overnight. Western Port Marina's solution was to provide its own accommodation. To create an authentic nautical ambience, they decided to obtain an old passenger ship with good quality accommodation. One hundred was deemed to be the optimum number of people the ship should be able to accommodate. A search was launched for such a vessel, and ultimately ended with the XANADU HOLIDAY. The purchase was quickly arranged and the ship's name shortened to XANADU. On November 25, 1994, she departed Martinique on a 12,000 km voyage to Australia via the Panama Canal and Tahiti.

The XANADU arrived at her new homeport of Hastings on January 10, 1995. After arrival celebrations, little time was wasted in preparing the ship for her new role as a floating hotel and convention facility. Some crew accommodation was converted into guest quarters, while three large suites were added aft of the bridge. The existing cabins and staterooms had their soft furnishings upgraded while the public rooms were adapted for multi-purpose role: seating up to 120 persons. The dive-deck was turned into a business center and reception lounge. Finally, the ship was permanently moored in front of the marina's existing convention facilities and opened for business.

The uniqueness of the XANADU, combined with the excellent reputation of the Western Port Marina has ensured the former ferry of a secure and profitable future. Not only is she popular with corporate guests, but also with tourists who stay onboard her when she is not being used for seminars. Her role as a static hotel ship in Australia is worlds apart from that of a ferry in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, but the little ship has performed as both quite admirably and looks set to enjoy an active role for a long time yet. ■

Cruijse Matane - Godbout Limitée

Matane, P. Q.

September 5th, 1963.

George Brown & Co Marine Ltd,  
Greenock,  
Scotland,  
c/o Mr Jack Brown

My dear Jack,

The "N.A. COMEAU" has been very successful and we need another boat for the beginning of next summer.

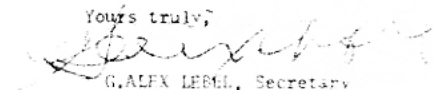
The new boat will have to be along the same lines as the "N.A. COMEAU" and have a capacity of at least 20 more American cars.

The maximum dimensions will be 250' overall length, 46' breath, 12'draft with a cruising speed not less than 18 knots and 18 if possible. The car deck will have to be reinforced for trucks and have a vertical clearance of 14' on the whole length.

The hull will be reinforced for ice Class 2 or Class 1; (give difference in price).

Will you please make a sketch, give us the approximate price (within \$200,000.), and tell us if you could build and deliver it on or before the 15th of June 1964.

Yours truly,



G. ALEX LEMEL, Secretary

**GEORGE BROWN & CO (MARINE) LTD**

**INNOVATIVE APPLICATIONS IN SHIP DESIGN AND SHIPBUILDING PRACTICE**

Many techniques in use at Garvel Shipyard in ship design and shipbuilding practice were pioneering and innovative and, in some cases, were many years ahead of current practice.

Throughout the yard's 80 years of shipbuilding the company was at the forefront of contemporary design and practice as can be seen from the following instances:

- Adoption of electric arc welding (replacing and complementing the older rivetted construction). Welding was introduced at Garvel Shipyard in 1916, many years in advance of other larger shipyards.
- Fitting of diesel main engines in ships (to save weight and volume compared with heavy steam engines and their associated heavy boilers). In the early 1900s George Brown & Co was at the forefront of designing and building diesel-engined cargo vessels with engines aft, a feature which has since become standard throughout the world.
- Shipment jobs. In a skilled practice shared with a few other leading Clyde shipyards, Garvel Shipyard was sometimes contracted to build a ship in assembly form in Greenock. The ship was then bolted together with numbered plates and bars (red for port, green for starboard) and then these parts carefully packed ready for shipment out to distant parts of the world (the Arabian Gulf, South East Asia and South America) for final erection and completion. Occasionally some of the skilled workforce would travel with the pieces and take part in the final building.
- Fitting of streamlined rudder posts and boundary plates to the top and bottom of rudders to improve rudder efficiency and the manoeuvrability of ships, particularly at low speeds. These plates were standard in ships built at the yard from the 1920s and 30s onward - far in advance of other shipyards.
- All welded ships - two small tugs were built of all welded construction in 1950 - again much in advance of current UK shipbuilding practice which used a combination of welding and rivetting.
- The yard was one of the first shipyards to introduce automatic submerged arc welding (continuous wire process) to improve welding quality and speed in the early 1960s.
- Cold frame bending (dispensing with the labour-intensive coal-fired furnace and hot bending process) using a hydraulic press was introduced about 1960. It permitted both port and starboard side

frames to be bent at the same time and, as well as being environmentally friendly, was again in advance of shipbuilding practice at the time.

- Extensive use of tubular scaffolding to facilitate both erection and painting was developed in the 1950s. This was safer, quicker and more mobile than the old-fashioned staging using wooden uprights which was current practice in many shipyards for many years afterwards.
- The adoption, in the 1950s, of steel hatch covers (Macgregor Patent Single Pull) for the main hatches of dry cargo vessels built at the yard. These were a major step forward in ship safety and were tailor made of welded construction, to close engineering tolerances, at Garvel Shipyard. They replaced, very successfully, the old-fashioned, and unsatisfactory, wooden hatchboards covered with tarpaulins.
- Investment in craneage (a single tower mobile Pionon crane mounted on a dedicated rail track and serving two building berths was installed in the early 1960s) permitted the construction of prefabricated units in covered sheds (also allowing the pre-outfitting of pipes, etc) – avoiding the earlier unsatisfactory practice of individual plates being worked on outside, in all weathers, on the building berth. This was, again, much in advance of current shipyard practice.
- In the design office the use of a very early computer installation, in 1961, in cooperation with King's College, University of Newcastle, to calculate a complete set of ship's hydrostatic data, e.g., displacement, transverse stability and trim, etc. This was well ahead of current practice at the time.
- The building, in 1962, of an early roll-on roll-off ferry fitted with a hinged hydraulically operated watertight stern door. The vessel was designed for the carriage of cars (for which a turntable was provided in the ship's garage) and had part of the vehicle deck strengthened to take heavy articulated lorries. This passenger/vehicle ferry (Ship No. 275) pioneered a route across the St Lawrence estuary in Canada which did much to open up the coast of Labrador.

For an excellent and well-informed report on the activities of George Brown & Co (Marine) Ltd during the years 1946 to 1983, see pages 271 to 276 of "Ironfighters, Outfitters and Bowler Hatters" by George O'Hara, ISBN 0 9530 8210 5, published 1997.

A full list of the ships built by George Brown & Co at Garvel Shipyard, with further details of each vessel, is held by the City Archivist at the Mitchell Library, Glasgow (File No. TD865).



