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Mersey Log

***Journal of the Merseyside Branch
World Ship Society***

The Merseyside Branch of the World Ship Society meets on the second Tuesday of each month – August excepted- at the Seafarers' Centre, Cambridge Road, Crosby, L22 1RQ



**Fred Olsen's BOREALIS at the Cruise Liner Terminal Liverpool, taking on bunkers on Nov 16 2021.
(Tom Hamilton)**

Mersey Log

Winter Issue 2021/2022

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Hon. Secretary: Dave Crolley

Hon.Treasurer: John Williams

Outside Visits Secretary: Dave Crolley

Committee Members: Geoff Holmes, Stan McFerran.

Branch News With Dave Crolley

September 2021

We are very pleased to say that on Sept 14 2021 we were able to restart our meetings again. Due to Covid-19 problems at our usual Seafarers' venue we managed to arrange a temporary venue at The Old Christ Church just around the corner. It was an afternoon event and the speaker was our own branch member Philip Welsh who showed us wonderful black and white images of shipbuilding at the Cammell Laird Shipyard, Birkenhead. The period he discussed was from 1958 to 1965 but unfortunately time beat us before Philip had finished. Thank you very much Philip for a very professional presentation and hopefully you may be able to talk to us again in the near future.

October 2021

We started our October 2021 with a Branch AGM to fill in for the two meetings that we had lost because of Covid-19. Items discussed were the Chairman's and Treasurers reports, Branch subscriptions and Election of Officers, all approved by the members present. However our main speaker for the evening was David Booth from the Manchester Branch who gave us a most interesting presentation about his life at sea between 1960 and 1980. David not only showed us slides of rare Cargo vessels and Tankers he served aboard but also the different cargoes that were loaded and discharged in ports ranging from West Africa, Middle and the Far East particularly in Hong Kong. It was a fascinating evening and thank you David, we hope you will come to talk to us again soon.

November 2021

For our November 2021 meeting we were very pleased to welcome once again Alan Moorhouse from the Bedford Branch. Alan gave us a most interesting presentation covering problems that cruise ships have had during the Covid -19 lockdown. He split his talk into several sections, Covid casualties, new ships built during Covid, ships laid-up because of Covid and finally Alan's encounters looking at Naval ships during the lockdown. All this made a fascinating talk that was full of brilliant images and information. Thank you Alan for a great night and we all hope that it won't be too long before you come and visit us again soon.

December 2021

For our December meeting our own branch member Philip Parker gave us an excellent presentation about Liverpool and Birkenhead docks in the 1960's era. Philip showed us mainly his own black and white images that were wonderful. As you might expect Phil showed us examples of Liverpool owned vessels from Canadian Pacific, Cunard, Blue Funnel plus many other most interesting images. It was a great evening and thank you Phil your presentation of Merseyside Shipping Nostalgia, we all enjoyed it very much.

Mersey Maritime News

August 2021

It is always an occasion when a Cunard cruise liner visits the Mersey. During the latter half of 2021 QUEEN ELIZABETH was scheduled to call several times. The first occasion was on Sun Aug 29 when in fine late summer weather she berthed at the Princes Landing Stage during the morning, spending the day on the Mersey before departing during the evening.

September 2021

Cases of suspected Covid-19 were identified on MSC VIRTUOSA, which was berthed on Liverpool's Cruise Liner Terminal on Tues Sept 7. Some passengers were understood to be being kept in isolation on board after having tested positive, or coming into close contact with those with the virus. The company which operates the ship said increased testing had identified suspected cases, and they were an example of their protocol doing "exactly what it was designed to do."

The Navy's Here

On Mon Sept 20 Type 45 Destroyer HMS DARING arrived on the Mersey after having been towed by the tug FAIRPLAY 27 from Portsmouth, where she had been laid up for nearly four years. She was handed over to the tugs VB DONAU and VB SANDON at the Bar and she was towed by them up the river and into Cammell Laird's No. 7 dry dock. She is to undergo long awaited engine repairs and replacements to enable her to operate as originally designed as her engines, along with the rest of the class, were found to malfunction in very hot climatic conditions. With her sister HMS DAUNTLESS still in the wet basin at Birkenhead, 1/3 of the Royal Navy's most powerful surface warship class was inactive on the Mersey.



Overleaf is the tug SVITZER WARWICK, photographed by Dave Crolley on Sept 25 2021 in Huskisson No.1. She came in from Milford Haven with what seems to have been just to handle a tanker at Tranmere and then returned to Milford – a most unusual occurrence.

Below is the tug VB BARBADOS, again photographed by Dave Crolley on Sept 25 2021. She is seen flying the flag of St. Vincent and is now registered in Kingstown. When the photo was taken she was awaiting orders but her time on the Mersey was now up.



October 2021

The Navy's Here Again!

It was noted that HMS ALBION visited Liverpool, arriving in Canada Dock on Sat Oct 2.

TS BLUE CLIPPER

The Training Ship BLUE CLIPPER arrived on the Mersey on Wed Oct 6 and made her way through the Alfred Lock and into the Canning Half Tide. BLUE CLIPPER is a three masted gaff rig schooner. This means that the sails are rigged to run from forward to aft along the length of the ship. There are 10 sails, with an area of 675m². She has a steel hull and teak deck, steel masts and wooden booms/topmasts. Below deck Blue Clipper has three main compartments. Furthest forward is the forepeak, with 4 trainee berths and 2 crew bunks. Midships is the guest accommodation with 6 twin ensuite cabins and a family cabin for 4-6. Furthest aft there are the crew quarters, with 4 twin cabins and shared bathroom. The engine room and lazarette are also located at the aft of the ship. At full capacity the ship can accommodate 30 people. The deckhouses are home to the galley, the saloon and the wheelhouse. The ship usually sails with 8 crew, made up of experienced permanent crew and volunteers, wanting to put their sailing knowledge and experience to good use.

She was built in 1991 at Feab Marstrandsverken in Sweden. In 1992 the famous brandy company Hennessy chartered BLUE CLIPPER to celebrate the anniversary of the first delivery of cognac from France to Shanghai 120 years earlier. Painted white and with the name 'Spirit of Hennessy' Blue Clipper repeated this historic voyage. She has appeared in various TV programmes and TV commercials including the Trade Winds TV series starring Hugh Johnson. Following this, she went into private ownership and sailed in Mediterranean waters under a Maltese flag.

Maybe Sailing acquired the ship in 2016. After an extensive maintenance period the ship sailed to London to begin a 5 month tall ship Regatta, the 2017 Rendez-Vous. The ship was one of only four vessels to complete the whole race, travelling over 10,000 nautical miles visiting Portugal, the Canaries, Bermuda, USA, Canada and France. This Regatta was to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the Canadian Federation. It was an extremely successful regatta for BLUE CLIPPER and her crew, placing either 1st or 2nd in four of the five race legs.

2018 marked a new chapter for the vessel, as she was repainted Blue and travelled North once more to visit the Arctic before heading to the Caribbean for the winter.

2019 saw BLUE CLIPPER return to the UK, heading up to Iceland before crossing the North Sea to spend the summer in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, participating in the International Tall Ship Races and exploring the Kattergat and Skagerrak.

At the beginning of 2020 BLUE CLIPPER returned across the Atlantic from her winter season in the Caribbean to whole new world of COVID-19. After a period of quarantine in Portugal BLUE CLIPPER underwent a refit.

In 2021 BLUE CLIPPER crossed the Bay of Biscay and up the West coast of the UK to spend the summer in the highlands and Hebridean Islands and then headed north to the Orkneys and then back down the East coast of the UK and then along the south coast and into the Irish Sea.

Irish Navy

Irish Navy patrol vessel WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS paid a visit to the Mersey on Fri Oct 8, entering the dock system through Langton Dock. The vessel would perhaps be classified as a corvette in other navies.



WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS at sea. (Irish Navy Photo)

Seacombe Ferry Terminal

On Mon Oct 11 the tug CT VECTOR, assisted by tug CW6, moved the two refurbished Seacombe Ferry Terminal booms together with a new walkway, from Garston Docks to the Seacombe Terminal. The booms and walkway were placed alongside the landing stage itself, in preparation for being lifted into position. The new south walkway was lifted into position by floating crane LARA later in the afternoon.

Further work continued on Tues Oct 13 when the refurbished booms were lifted into place by floating crane LARA (ex MERSEY MAMMOTH) and later in the day the new north walkway was put into position.



LARA lifting one of the refurbished booms into place at Seacombe Ferry Terminal on Wed Oct 13 2021. (John Luxton)

Woodside Regeneration

The regeneration of the Woodside area of Birkenhead has taken another step forward with Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram announcing the expected appointment of designers for an all new **Mersey Ferries** landing stage as well as an exciting future for the popular U-Boat Story attraction.

The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority will be appointing designers to complete initial plans for a new landing stage at Woodside ferry terminal. The new design will replace the existing stage which is reaching the end of its operational life. Subject to funding being secured, the new landing stage will help maintain cross-river services running from Woodside as part of the long-term vision

for the **Mersey Ferries**. The Combined Authority is also partnering with Big Heritage to refresh the historic Woodside based U-Boat attraction. As the operators of the award-winning Western Approaches HQ museum in Liverpool, which brings to life the crucial Battle of the Atlantic, the organisation would appear to be the ideal partners for the new arrangement.

Greenpeace Arrives

Greenpeace vessel RAINBOW WARRIOR arrived on the Mersey on Mon Oct 25. She berthed in Vittoria Dock, Birkenhead. Although a sailing vessel she is also powered by x1 Volva Penta D65A MT @ 1850HP, 16cylinder, 65 litre engine. She carries 110,000 litres of diesel fuel.

New Career for RFA Ships

Long term residents of Birkenhead, the laid up RFA ships FORT AUSTIN and FORT ROSALIE were reported, on Oct 29, to have been sold to Egypt for further service. When they were withdrawn a couple of years ago the MOD stated that they would be sold for scrap only but there has been a change of heart and there is a possibility that the ships will be refurbished in the UK.

November 2021

One In and One Out

On Tues Nov 9 LOCH SEAFORTH, of Caledonian MacBrayne, departed Cammell Laird's wet basin after a prolonged refit and headed back to her home waters to resume her sailings between Stornoway and Ullapool. Meanwhile on Wed Nov 10 her fleetmate LORD OF THE ISLES arrived on the Mersey and went straight into No.6 Drydock to begin her annual refit.



LORD OF THE ISLES IN No. 6 dry dock at Cammell Laird on Nov 16 2021. (Tom Hamilton)

It was reported that VB BARBADOS (late of this Parish) eventually made it over to Panama, arriving at the Port of Colon on Sat Nov 6. She then sailed through the Panama Canal and anchored on the Pacific side awaiting further orders. She reached her final destination of Balboa, Panama on Dec 8 at 1600 hrs



VITZER STANFORD berthed in Huskisson No. 1 South that arrived on the Mersey from Svitzer's Immingham fleet on Tues Nov 16 '21 for temporary cover. (Dave Crolley)

Adverse weather conditions on Nov 26 resulted in all sailings by **Mersey Ferries** being cancelled for the day.

December 2021

Mersey Ferries were adversely affected by bad weather at the beginning of December. On Dec 1 due to poor weather, services were suspended until they were able to resume at 1000.

All services were suspended on Fri Dec 3 and Sat Dec 4, due to difficulties in the lock system and adverse weather conditions. Services did not get back to normal until 1300 on Sun Dec 5, all earlier sailings having been called off again.

Storm Barra on Tues Dec 7 resulted in all sailings being cancelled for the day. Although sailings on the River did resume first thing on Wed Dec 8 poor weather later on once again resulted in the River Cruise service being suspended. However sailings resumed at 1700 for cross river services as the poor weather began to ease.

Costs Rise Again for Ferry Terminal

The cost of a new Isle of Man government-funded ferry terminal in Liverpool has almost doubled it was announced on Dec 1. The project, which had been set to cost £38m, will now cost more than £70.6m. A bid to increase funding for the scheme at the Princes Half Tide Dock by £13.8m was put on hold by the island's parliament in July. Politicians were asked to approve spending an additional £32.6m on the facility at the December sitting of Tynwald. The Department of Infrastructure (DOI) previously said the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, as well as additional work on the quay wall and unexpected issues with the site, were to blame for the rise in the cost of the project.

Confirming the project would not now be completed until "the middle of 2023", Infrastructure Minister Tim Crookall said the new price tag included a solution to create "*scour protection*" to shield the quay wall from any future damage. He said the rise was "*deeply concerning*" and there were "*lessons to be learnt from it*", adding the matter had already been referred for review "*as part of the political scrutiny procedure that exists*" by his predecessor in the role.

"However, we must make a decision on the future of this project and this should be our immediate focus," he added.

The new ferry terminal and linkspan have been designed to accommodate the Isle of Man Steam Packet vessels, including MANXMAN, which is currently under construction and is due to start service in 2023.

In a memorandum to Tynwald members, the DOI said the new building would "*be able to accommodate up to a maximum of 1,000 passengers and 200 checked-in vehicles and winter weekend freight, with emergency backup freight provision should Heysham Port become inaccessible. A passenger access system will also be provided to ensure that all aspects of the facility can be used by passengers of all abilities*".

When planning permission was granted for the facility in April 2019, the estimated cost of the development was £31.3m, however that had increased by the time the funding received political approval in July the same year. Originally due to be completed by March 2021, the new terminal is situated about 800yds (730m) from the existing one at the city's Pier Head.

Scheduled Cruise Liner Visits to Liverpool September 2021 – December 2021

01 September 2021 Wednesday P&O BRITANNIA TRANSIT
02 September 2021 Thursday BOREALIS TURNAROUND
03 September 2021 Friday ANTHEM OF THE SEAS TRANSIT
04 September 2021 Saturday MARELLA EXPLORER 2 TRANSIT
06 September 2021 Monday QUEEN ELIZABETH TURNAROUND
07 September 2021 Tuesday MSC VIRTUOSA SPLIT VOYAGE
09 September 2021 Wednesday P&O BRITANNIA TRANSIT
11 September 2021 Saturday BOREALIS TURNAROUND
12 September 2021 Sunday QUEEN ELIZABETH TRANSIT
18 September 2021 Saturday QUEEN ELIZABETH TRANSIT
21 September 2021 Tuesday ANTHEM OF THE SEAS TRANSIT
22 September 2021 Wednesday P&O BRITANNIA TRANSIT
23 September 2021 Thursday CELEBRITY SILHOUETTE TRANSIT
26 September 2021 Sunday BOREALIS TURNAROUND
28 September 2021 Tuesday MSC VIRTUOSA SPLIT VOYAGE
29 September 2021 Wednesday ANTHEM OF THE SEAS TRANSIT
30 September 2021 Thursday ANTHEM OF THE SEAS TRANSIT
02 October 2021 Saturday CELEBRITY SILHOUETTE TRANSIT
04 October 2021 Monday ANTHEM OF THE SEAS TRANSIT

05 October 2021 Tuesday MSC VIRTUOSA SPLIT VOYAGE
 06 October 2021 Wednesday CELEBRITY SILHOUETTE TRANSIT
 07 October 2021 Thursday BOREALIS TURNAROUND
 10 October 2021 Sunday QUEEN ELIZABETH TRANSIT
 12 October 2021 Monday ANTHEM OF THE SEAS TRANSIT
 14 October 2021 Thursday CELEBRITY SILHOUETTE TRANSIT
 17 October 2021 Sunday ANTHEM OF THE SEAS TRANSIT
 18 October 2021 Monday BOREALIS TURNAROUND
 19 October 2021 Tuesday CELEBRITY SILHOUETTE TRANSIT
 25 October 2021 Monday CELEBRITY SILHOUETTE TRANSIT
 02 November 2021 Tuesday BOREALIS TURNAROUND
 16 November 2021 Tuesday BOREALIS TURNAROUND
 02 December 2021 Thursday BOREALIS TURNAROUND
 07 December 2021 Tuesday BOREALIS TURNAROUND
 21 December 2021 Tuesday BOREALIS TURNAROUND

Mishaps in Birkenhead Docks. 1. **Geoff Holmes**

In June 2020, the Daily Telegraph reprinted a report from June 1920 describing an incident at Alfred Locks (wrongly named as Albert Dock) where the coaster THE COUNTESS, which was in the South Lock, suddenly surged ahead and burst open the outer gates. A number of barges and flats were also in the lock waiting to lock out and these, together with THE COUNTESS shot out into the river. Numerous small craft were outside waiting to lock in and eight of these were sunk by the surge of water or by colliding with the vessels shooting out of the lock. Fortunately, it seems that there were no casualties although a number of men had to be rescued from the water, and, at the time of the report, several men were still to be accounted for. The report states that the speed of water gushing out was 50-60 m.p.h. An eye-witness described it as being just like Niagara Falls.

It was three hours before H.W., hence, the gates between Alfred Dock and the East Float would have been open and this meant that the complete Birkenhead Dock system would have drained down to river level – a difference approaching 15 feet. This would have meant that all the large vessels within the system would have probably taken the ground.

THE COUNTESS was owned by J. Hay & Sons of Glasgow and is pictured below after being sold to J. Kelly Ltd., Belfast, and being renamed CORRIB.



CORRIB J. Kelly Ltd, Belfast ex THE COUNTESS.

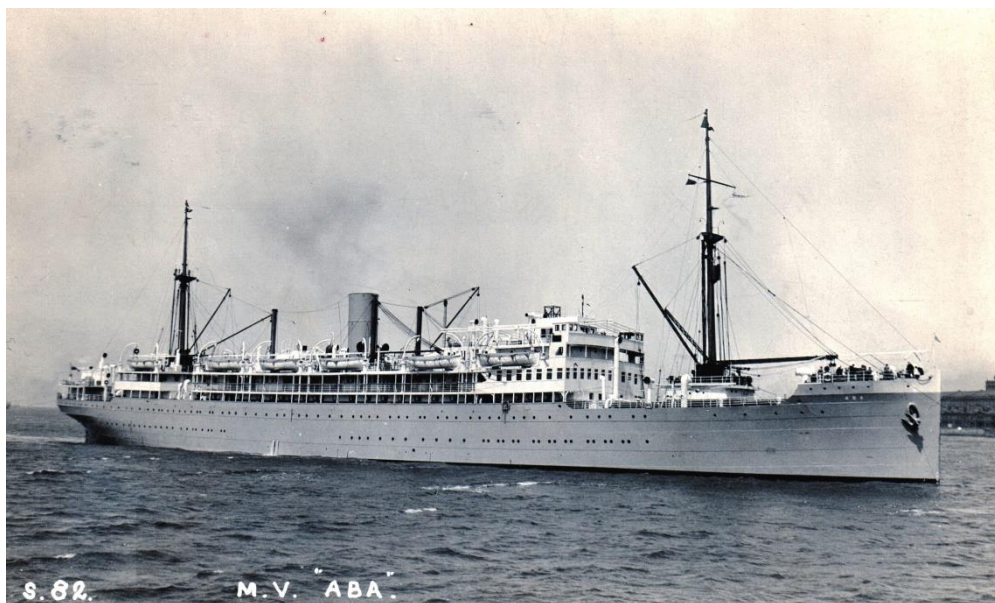
J. Hay & Co., Glasgow. 624 grt. Built by Ailsa S.B. Co.at Troon. 1928 Sold to J. Kelly Ltd, Belfast and renamed CORRIB. Sold to London owner. 1941 Sold on to another London owner. Broken up at Ghent in 1948.

Obituary – Alex Hampton

The Branch was saddened to hear in early December of the passing of longstanding member Alex Hampton.

Alex was born 1935 and lived in Crosby throughout his life. He was educated at Merchant Taylors between 1946-1953 and joined Alfred Holt & Co as a Junior Midshipman and went straight to sea for his four year apprenticeship. He later qualified as a deck officer before obtaining his Master's Certificate in 1963. He came ashore in 1970 and joined Ocean Port Services/ later Mersey Docks as a Berth Superintendent in the General Cargo area then moved to Seaforth Container Terminal later becoming Operations Superintendent and Terminal Manager up to his retirement in 2001.

Past Glories (From the Craig Carter Collection)



Above is the twin screw motor vessel ABA (ex GLENAPP) laid down in 1916 by Barclay Curle & Co. Ltd, Glasgow for the Imperial Russian Government but late in 1916 was taken over by the Controller of Shipping due to the revolution in Russia. She was of 7,938 grt 450 feet long and 55 feet in the beam. Her oil engines gave her a service speed of 14 knots. She was originally to have had 225 first class passengers, 70 second class and 70 third class. She was completed in 1918 and was renamed

GLENAPP for Glen Line for whom she operated for a couple of years as a funnelless cargo only vessel. In 1920 she was purchased by Elder Dempster Ltd, renamed ABA and was rebuilt with her passenger accommodation restored (as well as her funnel!) and in November 1921 began service on the Company's Liverpool – West Africa route. During her West Africa service she had several mishaps. For example in December 1929 she was damaged in heavy weather off Kinsale, her steering gear failed and she had to be towed to Queenstown for repairs. In June 1931 she grounded off Lagos but was refloated. However later in the year she was laid up at Devonport. By 1933 she was back in service for Elder Dempster. During World War 2 ABA was requisitioned as a hospital ship. As such she took part in the evacuation of the British Army from Norway in 1940 and later in the year was to be found at Alexandria serving in the Mediterranean. She was bombed off Crete in May 1941 but continued to serve in the Mediterranean during 1942/43 with occasional forays to South Africa. In March 1944, despite her clear markings as a hospital ship, she was bombed again, this time off Naples but later in the year she saw service in the Atlantic. After D Day she provided a hospital service between Cherbourg and Southampton. She was returned to Elder Dempster in January 1947 but was considered unfit for further service on their routes so she was sold to the Bawtry Steamship Co. and renamed MATRONA to be used as an emigrant carrier. This employment did not last very long however as she capsized and sank in Bidston Dock, Birkenhead on October 30th 1947. She was uprighted by the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board using parbuckling and buoyancy methods in June 1948. Subsequently she was sold to the British Iron & Steel Corporation and allocated the Thos. Ward Ltd. at Barrow for demolition. She arrived there, under tow, on October 3 1948.

Getting to the End

Below, photographed by Dave Crolley, is a vessel probably getting to the end of her life. She is ENDEAVOUR, ex PRINCESS ROYAL, which for a while was in Sandon Dock being refurbished as part of a plan to reopen sailings between Liverpool and Llandudno. These plans were dashed, with acrimony, when the ship half sank at her moorings. She has since been moved to west side of Huskisson Dock to await her fate.

