

Black Jack

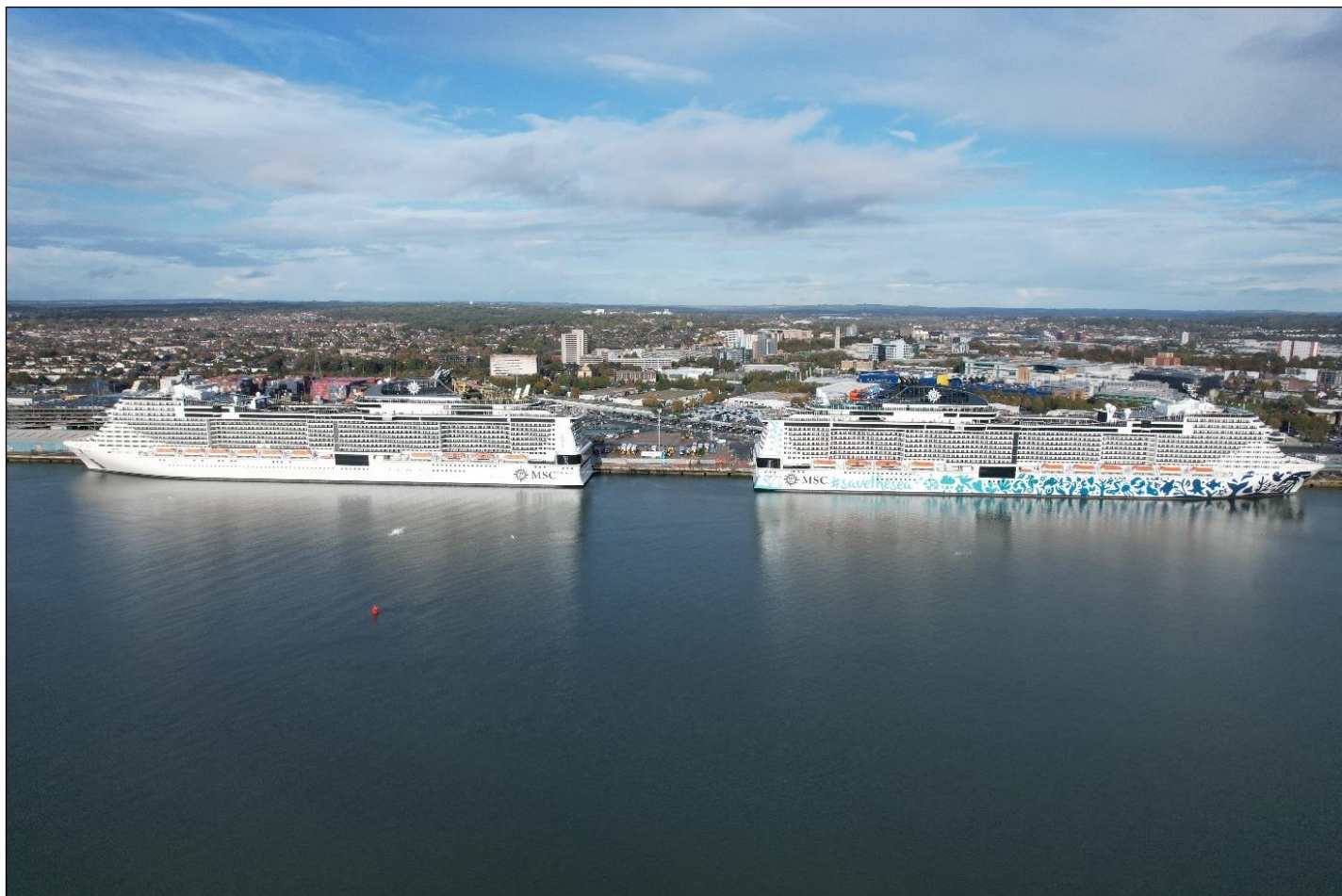
QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
SOUTHAMPTON BRANCH
WORLD SHIP SOCIETY
www.sotonwss.org.uk



Issue No: 209

Winter 2023-24

A Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year to all our Readers



MSC Virtuosa and MSC Euribia berthed together on 27th October

photo: Andrew McAlpine

Black Jack – Winter 2023-24 No.209

Editorial team

Nigel Robinson, Michael Page & Andrew McAlpine.
Website – Neil Richardson

***Black Jack is the quarterly magazine of the
Southampton Branch of the World Ship Society.***

Branch Meetings

Venue:

St James Road Methodist Church

St James Road

Shirley

Southampton, SO15 5HE

All meetings commence at 19.30 and the meeting room is to be vacated by 21.30. Meetings are on the second Tuesday of each month.

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2024 Branch Meeting Programme

January 9th

Dredging around Vlissingen

Graham Mobbs

February 13th

Carnival Corporation

Bob Bagley

March 12th

The QE2 Story.

Steve Harra

April 9th

Cornish Ports.

Krispen Atkinson

May 14th

The rise of MSC.

David Hornsby

June 11th

Capt. James Cook.

Dr. Michael Wilshaw

July 9th

Cable Ships.

Barry Peck

August 13th

London Dock in the 1960s.

Ian Wells

September 10th

The Bristol Floating Harbour

and the SS Great Britain

Philip Benstead FIET AOC ARINA

October 8th.

Amsterdam.

Richard Joliffe

November 12th

AGM and Digital Photography

Competition

December 10th

Travels with Andy Skarsten

Branch Cruise 2024

**Monday 15th July – from Town Quay departing 11.15
returning at 6.15 – numbers limited to 60. Cost £25.**

Articles please!!

Your editor would be delighted to receive any articles for inclusion in Black Jack and also any snippets and photos for possible inclusion,

All contributions to *BJ*, by post, email, memory stick or CD are most welcome. Any article with a connection to The Solent area would be much appreciated. The Editor could reproduce magazine or newspaper articles but preference is given to articles 'by the branch – for the branch'.

Would members please ensure that any changes to their postal and/or email addresses are notified to the Branch as soon as possible.

Andrew's Note Book

Some new or infrequent callers to Southampton Docks by Andrew McAlpine

Welcome to the latest notebook from the port of Southampton; here are the latest updates on the comings and goings and other news from around the port.



The winter months' have meant the end of what was a bumper cruise season, the end of the 2023 season also means saying goodbye to a regular cruise visitor. **Celebrity Silhouette** has been calling to Southampton since 2018 and has made no less than 81 visits and carried a total of 199,164 guests.

She will be replaced by **Celebrity Apex** next year.

*Left: **Celebrity Silhouette** making the final departure on 26th October.*

On 13th October MSC Cruise's newest LNG powered ship **MSC Euribia** made her maiden visit, launched earlier this year; she is replacing sistership **MSC Virtuosa** for the UK winter season. On the 27th October in a first for MSC Cruise's both ships were in port together which was the first

time two ships of this class were in any port together. (see photo on cover) This was also **MSC Virtuosa**'s final visit until Summer 2024.

On 13th November a rather unusual visitor arrived, when the large Chinese semi-submersible heavy load carrier **Xiang An Kou** arrived from China. She was carrying 18 modules for a new low sulphur production project at Esso's Fawley refinery. Her arrival was delayed by a week due to storm Ciaran.

*right: **Xiang An Kou** (built 2021) seen alongside 103 berth 22nd November*



In October a new tug joined the Svitzer fleet in Southampton. **Svitzer Eleanor** arrived after being based on the Humber since 2021. Built in 2018 she has previously been based in Europort as **Innovation** for Kotug before being purchased from Damen in 2021 and being renamed after a crew member's daughter.

*left: **Svitzer Eleanor** seen on 10th October 2023*

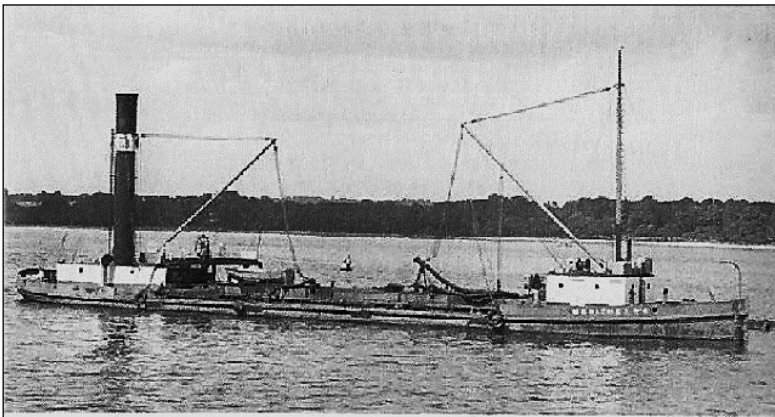
until next time wishing you and your family a very Merry Christmas.
and happy ship spotting Andrew

all photos by Andrew McAlpine

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO (1923), the British Mexican Petroleum Company oil fuel bunkering jetty was completed on the eastern side of the River Itchen, opposite Berth 30 in the Old Docks. At the time, Mexican oil production was around 30 million tons per annum, about 25% of the World total.

The Company was formed in 1919, the originator being US oil personality E. L. Doheny, who had acquired huge tracts of Mexican land in the early 1900's. In 1915, Doheny had proposed to major steamship companies that oil should be substituted for coal, but nothing much happened until after during the War. Storage bases were built in England, South America and other major ports, to be supplied by a fleet of tank ships. Half the Company capital was acquired by Pan-American Petroleum controlled by Mexican Petroleum (where Doheny was President) and the remainder by larger UK shipping companies.

In Liverpool, Brit-Mex established a major storage and distribution facility at Dingle Bank capable of storing 32,000 tons in 4 huge tanks with a 10-inch pipeline connection to the Herculanum Dock. Within a year, other distribution centres had been set up at Southampton, London, Avonmouth, Belfast, Hull and Newcastle.



Eleven bunkering barges were ordered from Harland & Wolff, six from Belfast and five from Govan, named **BRITMEX NO. 1 to 11**.

BRITMEX NO 4 built 1920 at Govan and based at Southampton. 1938 sold to Anglo-American Oil and scrapped 1960 in Holland.

The first ships acquired in 1920 were **INVERARDER** (ex **WAR HAGARA**) a British 'Z' class standard ship ordered during during the War, but not completed until 1919, while the first distributing ship was the **INVERCORRIE** (ex Admiralty oiler **PALMOL**). By 1926, the fleet comprised 8 ocean tankers, 4 distributing ships and 11 bunkering vessels, all managed by Andrew Weir & Co. Amongst the ships supplied in the early days were the 3 large Cunarders' **AQUITANIA**, **BERENGARIA** and **MAURETANIA** with Cunard vessels being supplied with up to 30,000 tons of fuel per week.



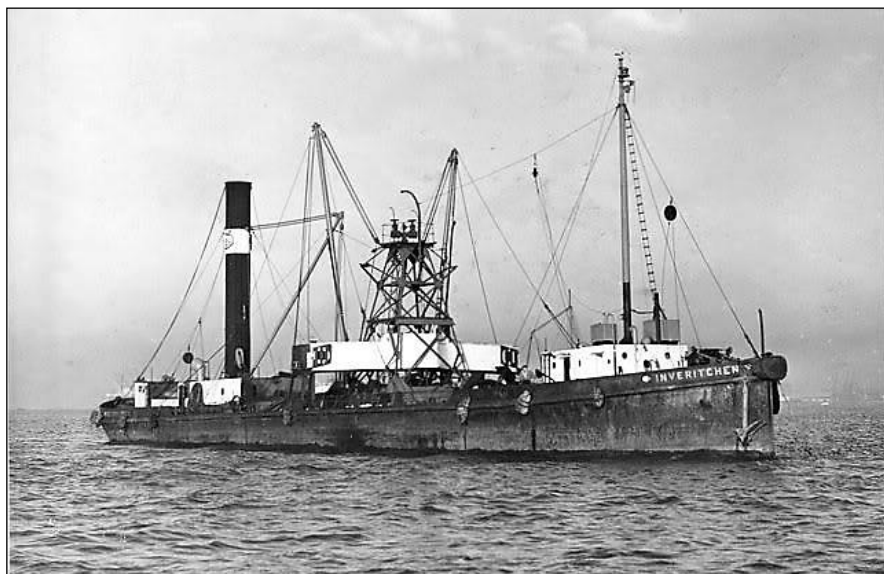
FRANCUNION

Completed 1921 by Harland & Wolff, Glasgow
737 gross, 925 deadweight
180ft x 40ft, twin screw compound
Based at Southampton from 1933, except WW2, scrapped 1960

In 1923, British Mexican Petroleum acquired the A.G.W.I. Petroleum Company, formed in 1920 as the British subsidiary of Atlantic, Gulf & West Indies SS Co. On its formation, A.G.W.I. had acquired 406 acres from the Cadland Estate, which would become the refinery at Fawley. The first ship to berth at the new AGWI Jetty

on 18th June 1921 was **AGWILAKE**, discharging 1,398 tons of Mexican crude, 5,843 tons of fuel oil and 2,677 tons of gas oil, the site already having a tank capacity of 99,000 tons.

In 1925 Pan-American Petroleum sold its share in Brit-Mex to Anglo-American Oil Company, which in 1926 acquired complete control, although the Brit-Mex name was retained. In 1930, ship management transferred to Anglo-American and by 1938, just 4 ships remained under the Brit-Mex management.



INVERITCHEN (left)
Completed 1920 by Harland & Wolff,
Goven, Glasgow

708 tons gross
180ft x 40ft
Single screw compound,
5 knots
1939 to Anglo-American Oil
1951 to Esso Petroleum Co.
1968 broken up at Bruges

Below **INVERTEST** alongside **QUEEN MARY**

Built 1920 by H. Scarr, Hessle 259 tons gross 120 ft x 31 ft single screw oil engine
1961 foundered off Dunglass and scrapped 1962 at Glasgow.



During 1968, the Esso Petroleum Company decided to discontinue bunkering and coastal delivery services. To fill the local void, Williams Shipping and Husband Shipyard formed Southern Tanker & Bunkering Co Ltd, but after just seven years, the bunkering services were sold to Bowker & King Ltd.
(see Black Jack – Williams Shipping part 4)

Some images from "IOW Collection" and some of history from Auke Visser's tanker and ClydeMaritime web pages

Leslie John Lillywhite

The Southampton Branch was saddened to learn of the death of John, as he was always known, on 5th November 2023 aged 84 years, our former Branch Chairman (1986-2010).

John was born on 13th June 1939 in Southampton and after leaving school trained as a Joiner. He decided to 'see the World' and worked for Union-Castle on *Capetown Castle*, before joining Harland & Wolff in his hometown. When H&W closed locally, John worked for a local council before joining Vosper Thornycroft as a Foreman Joiner. He joined the WSS Southampton Branch in 1976 becoming a very popular Branch Chairman from 1986. Since his illness in recent years, we miss his calm, quiet personality at meetings and his avid passion for Blue Funnel ships and his native City's football team.

Bit & Pieces

Red Funnel have taken over the Hythe Ferry which was due to cease operation on New Years Eve,



A seasonal scene of RMS **Queen Elizabeth** at the old Ocean Terminal 43/4 berth taken early December 1967 - note the diesel shunter - steam had finished in the Docks and on the mainline earlier that year. *Queen Elizabeth* finished service herself the following November.

From a postcard - Nigel Robinson collection



Early in February 2004 I rejoined the Ocean Seeker (Ex Granuaille II, Granuaille IMO 7012179 GBR 1970 1,943 GRT) in Lowestoft to take the vessel out of lay-up prior to going down to the English Channel to start work for MCA/MOD, to update the Admiralty charts south of Isle of Wight.

Whilst getting the vessel ready we had a change of orders, to go to Arzew and Skikda in Algeria to undertake some seabed sampling using a vibro-coring machine for the installation of a couple of single-point mooring buoys. This vibro-corer is a frame with a pod, inside are 2 linear motors and that is attached to a core tube and barrel liner. When we sailed, the top speed of the vessel had slowed down to 8 knots, the Chief Engineer was extremely upset by this and set about doing something about it. We stopped off in Gibraltar Bay to embark our survey crew and then sailed the 2 days to Arzew. We were there for a total of 18 hours, most of which was taken up by the local Coastguard inspecting the vessel to see if we were "fit for purpose". From there we sailed for Skikda, another 2 day steam, but were only there for 12 hours. We had a 4 day steam back to Gibraltar Bay, only to get diverted to Algeciras. The vessel's Superintendent was not happy about this as a previous vessel got a very thorough inspection by the local equivalent of the MCA, fortunately we arrived on a Sunday morning to disembark the survey crew and were told, in no uncertain terms by Gardline, to get out of there soonest, we sailed Sunday lunchtime, they don't work on a Sunday! From there we sailed for Hull to go to dry dock, we had done the job in 28 days and the Company got paid \$500,000 for it.

We had another change of orders whilst in dry dock; we had to get ready for the Oceanographic Exhibition at the Excel Centre in London. That is quite exciting getting into the docks there, as the entrance is just by London City Airport. Before leaving the lock the vessel has to get permission from Air Traffic Control as the entrance is right across the runway. Once passed that we had to wait to make sure that there are no aircraft moving before we proceeded. To get up the dock in time we had to go full speed, up to 12 knots now, pass through 2 swing bridges going full astern and then swing around to get port side alongside, our wash going over the dock side and into the gardens of the new houses built on the dockside. All great fun at 2300 on a Sunday!!

Once this exhibition was over we proceeded to the Dover Straits to work for Hanson Aggregates, to find more dredging areas for aggregate. This involved taking samples with a grab and lowering video cameras, very dramatic when surrounded by all sorts of vessels passing close by, and us facing the "wrong" way, approved by the MCA of course! We did this for about 4 days before proceeding to Portland to start the MCA/MOD job.

The survey was basically the same as before in Lyme Bay, but in more crowded waters. As it was a World Cup year we had to make sure that when England matches were on, we had to be at the Northern edge of the site. We didn't have satellite TV at the time so had to keep on swinging the antenna around, although the TV in my cabin was hitched up to a set of 2 coat hangers, up the mast, and didn't have that problem. We tried to do the same for the main TVs but nothing worked. The port calls were in Portland for the MCA/MOD job and had been cut down to 12 hours now, from 24. The Company had tried to get the calls down to 6 hours, but this was rejected by all the Masters on the vessels as not workable.

A – Z of Sail

by Michael Page

For the letter “J” I have chosen the JAMES CRAIG

The barque **James Craig** was built by Bartram, Haswell & Co in Sunderland England 1874. Originally called **Clan Macleod** her maiden voyage was to be to Peru. For 26 years she plied the trade routes carrying general cargoes during which she rounded Cape Horn 23 times. In 1900 she was purchased by Mr .J.J. Craig and used on trans-Tasman trade'routes route as a general cargo carrier. In 1905 she was renamed **James Craig** and then a short six years later, in 1911 she was laid up because increasing competition from steam ships made sailing vessels uneconomical. She was then stripped and used as a copra hulk in New Guinea.

After the first World there was an acute shortage of cargo ships. This gave **Jaimes Craig** a new lease of life after being towed from new Guinea to Sydney for re fitting. Her return to service was brief because in 1925 she was reduced to a coal hulk at Recherche Bay, Tasmania. In 1932 she was abandoned and became beached after breaking her moorings in a storm. She remained beached until 1972 when volunteers from the Sydney Heritage Fleet refloated her. In 1973 she was towed to Hobart where temporary repairs were carried out. She was towed to Sydney in 1981 and restoration work commenced. The **James Craig**s restored hull was re-launched in February 1997.

Off Sydney Heads, on a glorious summers day in 2001, she hoisted all her 21 sails for the first time in nearly 80 years and is now fully operational.

James Craig is berthed at wharf 7 Pyrmont and is open to the public for guided tours from 10 am to 4 pm daily. She sails most weekends, either on Saturday or Sunday. These cruises are open to the public and small groups. The vessel carries 80 passengers at sea and 200 in the harbour. Bookings can be made through the Fleets highly secure online shop. She is also available for charter, either for a cruise or simply tied up alongside her berth.

A very unusual history of one of the fleet of tall ships more famous vessels.



Various views of the **James Craig** as restored