

## WORLD SHIP SOCIETY - FIRTH OF FORTH NEWSLETTER



**2023 - NO. 10 SPRING**

(From 1<sup>st</sup> March – 31<sup>st</sup> May 2023)



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### **BRANCH MEETINGS**

In March we held our first full AGM since 2019. Minutes from the previous EGM were presented and accepted, as were the Secretary's and Treasurer's Reports for the last year. The Committee and Officers were re-elected. Venues and dates for the Summer Lunch and ways of celebrating the Branch's 60th Anniversary were discussed. See below A brief synopsis of its history was given. The Branch programme for 2023-24 was presented. The AGM was followed by members presentations: Graham Beauman with a show entitled 'The Waverley from Glasgow to Tighnabruaich', Iain McGeachy with 'Cape Town and Durban 2020' and Donald Macdonald with range of slides from the 1960's from all around Scotland. April saw our final meeting of the year with Paul Strathdee recounting the life of HMS Howe, the last of the King George V class. Designed within the constraints of the Naval Treaties of the 1930's, Paul took us through her construction and career. Commissioned in 29 August 1942 she was adopted by the City of Edinburgh, her bell being presented to St Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh on her decommissioning. Her early career was spent providing cover for Arctic convoys and in 1943 Howe took part in the invasion of Sicily in support of the Allied landings, escorting surrendered Italian battleships to Alexandria. After an extensive refit when her anti-aircraft armament was increased, and modifications were made for operations in tropical climates she then was sent east, providing naval bombardments for the Allied landings at Okinawa. Sent to Durban for refit she returned to Britain in 1946, being placed in reserve in 1951. 1958 saw her towed to Inverkeithing to be broken up by Thos. W. Ward.

**SUMMER LUNCH** has been arranged for 12.30, Saturday the first of July. Please note the change of time. Due to the number, the restaurant has asked for advanced notification of choice so may I

ask you to let me know by mid June your choice for starter and main courses.

**60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Cruise** - the Branch has decided to celebrate its founding in September 1963 with an afternoon tea cruise on the 1921 built and Dunkirk veteran, Forth Princess, for a Three Bridges afternoon tea cruise on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> September at 13.15, sailing from Port Edgar to Rosyth and Blackness Castle. The confirmed cost is £18. Friends are welcome to join us, whether they be WSS or Branch members or not. Please contact me for further information as we have made make a group booking and paid a deposit.

### **TUG NEWS - UPDATES**

Hound Point saw the sale of the 1994 built DALMENY [IMO 9067271] 449 gt, by INEOS FPS LTD with her being renamed GROSSNORD SEA and registered in Kiel, Germany. She departed Leith 29<sup>th</sup> April for RENDSBURG, Germany thus ending nearly thirty years at Hound Point under various liveries. *{below left, with BP's Helios logo which was launched in 2000 and the one in longest use and BALMERINO below right}*



Her replacement, the 2019 built DELICAY IV [IMO 9834179], was built by SANMAR DENIZCILIK MAKINA, Turkey, and bought from them being renamed BALMERINO by Targe Towage on the 27<sup>th</sup> April. The name chosen is that of an abbey on the north coast of Fife.

### **CRUISE SHIPS**

Viking Venus opened the season on 11<sup>th</sup> April with a visit to Rosyth, in what will be a record breaking year for cruise ships in the Forth. April saw seven cruise ships, spread across all four arrivals points, with an additional twenty two scheduled for May. This is the highest number ever recorded for the opening months of the cruise season. The only non arrival was the newly formed French, Compagnie Française de Croisières (CFC)'s Renaissance, ex-

Holland America's Maasdam, on the 12th April as they had yet to commence their season, with the ship still laid up in Brest.

This is three times the number when compared to the expected ten for April and May 2020. The April list included two vessels new to the Forth: Otto Sverdrup seen heading for Rosyth in the early morning of the 26th, was formerly the 2002 built Finnmarken, renamed in 2021 and transferred from the coastal voyage fleet and refitted for cruising with a passenger capacity of 526 and the larger 2008 built AIDAbella with a passenger capacity of 2,500 off Newhaven on the 28<sup>th</sup> April.



This trend continued with another five making their maiden appearance in May: National Geographic Resolution, the first X-bow to make an appearance (below left), Viking Neptune, the small 264 passenger expedition ships Le Dumont D'Urville, Seabourn Venture and Silver Dawn and the larger AIDAsol 2,174 passengers. The smaller vessels heading for Rosyth or Leith while the larger have been tendering into the fishing village of Newhaven. The largest was the Regal Princess, (below right) with a 3,679 passenger capacity, making the first of eleven visits on a Round Britain itinerary, tendering into Hawes Pier on the 17<sup>th</sup> May.



Capital Cruising stated in a press release that 'Cruise ship calls in 2023 for Forth Ports' Capital Cruising business on Scotland's east coast are set to jump by 50%, with around 150 cruise ships,



carrying an estimated 225,000 passengers, expected to visit Edinburgh, Fife and Dundee this year - the Forth expecting 136. Commenting, Rob Mason, Head of Cruise at Forth Ports, said: "It is brilliant to see the cruise industry return so strongly and continue to grow this year and we are extremely pleased that we have provided the Victoria 1 Cruise Ferry with shore power."

## LEITH

The most noteworthy incident was the capsizing of the survey research ship *Petrel* in Dales on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March. The 76m *Petrel* is owned by the United States Naval Facilities Engineering and Expeditionary Warfare Center. Bought in October 2022, and operated by Oceaneering International, she was previously owned by the estate of Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen and placed in lay-up in 2020 as a result of "operation challenges" during the Covid pandemic, and had not been used since. She was undergoing conversion for a new role by the US Navy to inspect and protect the undersea cables that are vital to global connectivity such as the internet. She was eventually moved to an upright position, the dry dock flooded with her being floated out on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May. The U.S. Navy decided to tow her back to a shipyard in the United States for further inspection and repair, departing, under tow, by Atlantic Salvor for Tampa on May 30<sup>th</sup>.



The 1998 built bulk carrier *SELAMET* [IMO 9172105] 14,762 gt, 24,154 dwt, made two abortive attempts to enter the lock on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March, due to the high winds. She eventually docked on the afternoon of the 24<sup>th</sup> aided by Queensferry, Dalmeny and Fidra. She was preceded by two small general cargo vessels - *LIAMARE* [IMO 916648] with stone from REKEFJORD and *RDJ MAASSTROOM* [IMO 9197818] with milling wheat earlier in the day. Maize and soya were also among the cargoes delivered. *KELT* [IMO 9489534] brought material for the construction of the Renewables Hub.

The other main event was the docking of the RFA Fort Victoria on the 20<sup>th</sup> May. She will retain a skeleton crew and remain until the end of this year and be used for training. See *Naval Movements for further details behind this move and its implications.*

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of the month Seabourn Venture is seen on her maiden visit behind the Georg Stage (II), the Danish Sail Training Ship of 1935. The small motor yacht, Jura II, built by Hall Russell, Aberdeen in 1963 was also present. *(above right)*

## **ROSÝTH**

Rosyth continued to host trials for a number of minehunters with the two for the Ukraine navy being regulars undergoing sea trials.



UNS Cherkasy, ex HMS Shoreham, and UNS Chernihiv, ex HMS Grimsby and ex-HMS Blyth, (above left to right) all Sandown-class minehunters. HMS Blyth was decommissioned in 2021 and after a refit is planned to be transferred to the Romanian Navy.



*(Above left, the crane ship Uglan; right, bulker Feng Huang Feng)*

On interesting visitor was the 1987 crane ship UGLEN [IMO 7721079] 3,977gt 2,600 dwt, UGLAND, seen on the 7<sup>th</sup> April unloading a barge cargo for Methil. The small general cargo ship HOOGVLIET arrived from Riga sailed 8<sup>th</sup> March and returned from Riga 1<sup>st</sup> May. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> May Deo Valente arrived from Dundee, departed after a short stop for Immingham. The large bulk carrier, COSCO Shipping Bulk's 2012 built FENG HUANG FENG [IMO 9576806], 40,913 gt, 75,396 dwt, seen at the start of May, brought animal feedstock from Petrobras, Argentina via Immingham. IVS RAFFLES, [IMO 9620138] Geared Bulk Carrier, 20,968 gt, 32,046 dwt,

built 2013 arrived 20<sup>th</sup> May from Barcelona. May also saw the inland barge TERRA MARIQUE barge, 1,350 dwt of ROBERT WYNN & SONS LTD accompanied by the tugs COASTWORKER [IMO 9059262] 50 gt, built 1995, and SMS SHOALBUSTER [IMO 9557604] 212 gt, GSS PLANT LTD, taking tanks for Crisp Maltings at Alloa. TERRA MARIQUE brought Concord (G-BOAA) from London in 2004 to the National Museum of Flight at East Fortune.

### **GRANGEMOUTH**

Grangemouth saw the usual mix - small general cargo vessels, many with imports of fishmeal with the Wilson fleet being well represented with Almeria, Luga and Drammen. Others included HEYN, 2008, 2,528 gt, 3,500 dwt in March; VITALITY 2009, 2,984 gt, 4,181 dwt, in April, the larger Fish Carrier ,FROYSTRAND, 2007, 6,953 gt, 11,674 dwt in April. Regular container ships included ALANA, BG Ireland, BG Onyx, ENDEAVOR, JORK RULER, ELBSTAR, NJORD, SAMSKIP INNOVATOR, all on their regular cycles. Similarly the number of LPG / Product carrier list included regulars such as CHRISTINA, NORDIC SAGA, and PATRICIA ESSBERGER as well as members of the Inoes fleet from Marcus Hook in the States.



*Above: The Oil/Chemical Tankers ELISALEX SCHULTE [IMO 9439876] and KIRKEHOLMEN [IMO 9553402] heading to and from Grangemouth.*

### **HOUND POINT**

Two features noted in the previous newsletter were again seen with NAVIG8 PERSEVERANCE sailing for Delaware (USA) in March, making it the third consecutive month of a sailing to the States. In addition SEAWAYS YELLOWSTONE [IMO 9394947] departed for POINT TUPPER, Canada on the 24<sup>th</sup> May. The trend towards greener running was evident with the dual fuel EAGLE BINTULU returning to make a further three trips to BRUNSBUETTEL (Germany) and the 2011 built Suezmax Shuttle Tanker BODIL KNUTSEN [IMO



9472529], 93,759 gt, 157,644 dwt, revealing the VOC capture tank which had been added in 2021. Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) are light components of crude oil, which evaporate during loading operations or during the carriage of high-volatility crude



oil cargoes. The cargo vapour needs to be vented to prevent pressures in the tank reaching dangerous levels.

Again there were no exports to China – the last being in November 2022. The eastern, number two jetty, was the most used during May. Twenty-seven vessels were loaded during the period.

### **BRAEFoot**

Braefoot like Grangemouth saw many regular visitors – ANTWERPEN, CORAL SHASTA, KOKSIJDE and PERMIAN LADY. Others from the CORAL fleet included CORAL PARENSIS and CORAL PEARL, making nearly weekly calls, with Antwerp being the major destination.

### **NAVAL MOVEMENTS**

The period saw large number of both Royal Navy and foreign vessels as well support ships. HMS MONTROSE arrived Crombie 5th March, departing Friday 10<sup>th</sup> for an Open Day at Montrose on Sunday the 12<sup>th</sup>. In 2018 it was announced that Montrose



would become the first Royal Navy frigate to be forward-deployed to the UK Naval Support Facility in Bahrain. After nearly four years away she arrived back Portsmouth 16th

December. She was decommissioned on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2023. (*above left*). HMS Northumberland arrived Rosyth on 10<sup>th</sup> March and sailed for Crombie on the morning of the 13<sup>th</sup>. The Type 45 destroyer HMS Defender docked Crombie 20<sup>th</sup> March.

Foreign navies were well represented during the quarter: FS FLAMANT P676, patrol vessel one of three Type OPV54s, visited Leith 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023. She was commissioned on the 18th December 1997. Followed by the Norwegian minehunter, HNorMS Otra (M351), (*above right*), on the 8<sup>th</sup> April; and the Danish Frigate HDMS Niels Juel (F363) docked Leith for an overnight stay on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April. A second French warship – FS Chevalier Paul (D621), Horizon-class frigate, commissioned 2011, seen, (*below left*), arriving Leith on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May. Armed with a/a 1 × PAAMS (48 cell Aster missiles), 8 exocet and 2 × Otobreda 76 mm guns. The Horizon-class frigates are the most powerful surface combatants that France has ever built.



Anvil Point made a brief stop in Rosyth on the 6<sup>th</sup> April on route to Calais, while Hurst Point did the same on the 11<sup>th</sup> April prior to heading for Marchwood. Hurst Point returned to Rosyth on the 15<sup>th</sup> May, departing for YSTAD, Sweden. In all cases their stay was under a day.

RFA Tideforce entered the estuary at the same time on the 11<sup>th</sup> April, as Hurst Point, docking in Leith. (*RFA Tideforce above right with tugs Fidra, Corringham and Queensferry*).

RFA Fort Victoria underwent a refit in May 2022, after her return in December 2021 following her CSG21 deployment with the HMS Queen Elizabeth strike group. This does not seem to have resolved the significant defects which are believed to include the compressors which are vital to the operation of many key functions. With the ship entering her fourth decade, spares may no longer be in production and the alternatives are to either get very expensive bespoke replacements made or make do



with refurbishing old parts. The replacement Fleet Solid Support ships were finally ordered in January 2023 will mean RFA will be either forced to spend very significant and scarce funds on new items of equipment for a vessel that may only be in service for another few years or cut their losses and scrap the vessel.

In light of the escalating shortage of RFA personnel, opting to lay up a ship that demands a crew of approximately 100 is also an appealing choice for planners trying to staff the rest of the fleet. Between October 2021 and October 2022, the number of RFA sailors declined from 1,840 to 1,750, a loss of nearly 5% from a workforce that was already overstretched. At the same time, the RFA is also having to generate new crews for RFA Proteus and RFA Stirling Castle.

In the meantime, HMS Queen Elizabeth and the Carrier Strike Group are theoretically at high readiness, prepared to be sent to hotspots anywhere in the globe at short notice. For the foreseeable future, Fort Victoria will not be available to support these deployments and there is no opportunity for RN warships to practice solid stores replenishment without assistance from allies.

If it becomes obvious the ship cannot be affordably sustained until around 2028 when the first new FSS should be ready, then either there will be a major gap in capability or the RFA may



consider trying to lease a temporary replacement. One of the T-AKE dry cargo replenishment ships operated by the US Navy's Military Sealift Command would be the most likely candidate. This assumes the US would be willing to lease a vessel from its already stretched support fleet. Not insurmountable, but it would also require the RFA to operate another vessel with completely unfamiliar equipment, ammunition storage and handling arrangements. *RFA Fort Victoria, above left.*

## **METHIL**

The ROLDOCK STAR loaded 2,900 tons of parts for 2 jackets for windturbines for transportation to Arbatax, Italy, for the final construction of the jackets. The ST-Class is the second generation of Rolldock's dock type semi-submersible multifunctional heavy lift transport vessels. They have a wider and longer cargo hold which creates a larger deadweight and greater accommodation area. April saw TIM [IMO: 9434151] [CY] 2,474 gt, 3,450 dwt Built: 2008 arrive from VARBERG Sweden.

## **KIRKCALDY**

Faversham Ships SHETLAND TRADER [IMO 9030486] 1,512gt, built 1992, made at least four visits to Hutchison's Mill at Kirkcaldy during March/April/May with wheat from Rye (twice), Tilbury and Vierow. Other coasters bringing wheat during the period included AMADEUS [IMO 9232498], 1435gt, built 2001 with two further cargoes from Rye, MAIKE [IMO 8905115], 1599gt, built 1989, from Rostock, BON VIVANT [IMO 9052692], 1,596gt, built 1993 from Tilbury, LUNA B [IMO 9066045], 1596gt, built 1993 from Cowes and DANICA HAV [IMO 8401535], 1536gt, built 1984 from Vierow.

## **BURNTISLAND**

The Briggs Marine arrivals included the Kingdom of Fife and Cameron.

## **INVERKEITHING**

At Inverkeithing's East Ness jetty, regular caller TINTO [IMO: 7369168], 1739gt, built 1974, made several visits with timber from Torangsvag. The TINTO backloaded bagged fishmeal for Husoya. Other visitors to East Ness included WILSON WISLA [IMO: 9156175], 1,864gt, built 1996 with stone from Eide on 8th April (*above right - Alan Dowie*); BALTIC ARROW [IMO: 9243863], 1978gt, built 2002 with timber from Wismar. At the scrap berth, WILSON ASTAKOS [IMO 9313759], 2451gt, built 2010 and WILSON DVINA [IMO: 9005742], 2481gt, built 1992 built both loaded for Bayonne, STRAMI [IMO 8922254], 2373gt, built 1992 for Leixoes, FRI SEA [IMO: ], 2601gt, 2001 built for Setubal, and WILSON LISTA [IMO: 9117208], 2446gt, built 1994 for Ghent.

*Thanks to Alan Dowie for all the details of cargo movements. Comments, corrections and contributions are more than welcome!*

*Editor and photographs © W IAIN H McGEACHY 31<sup>st</sup> May 2023*