

Vol 61 No 2 Summer 2026

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 – except January - at the Liverpool Seafarers' Centre, 20 Crosby Road South, Waterloo, L22 1RQ



SANTA MARIA MANUELA at Pier Head, Liverpool 22nd June 2026 (Editor)

Mersey Log

Summer Issue 2026

Editor: Simon Smith

E Mail: simonsmith80@btinternet.com

Merseyside Branch Officers and Committee 2026/2027

Chairman: John Luxton

Vice-Chairman: Adrian Sweeney

Hon. Secretary: Adrian Sweeney

Hon. Treasurer: John Williams

Committee Members: Stan McFerran, Peter Purland, Simon Smith

Editorial

The many visitors on cruise ships calling at Liverpool this summer will have enjoyed the warm weather. The majority of the vessels calling were familiar to river watchers but a few were making maiden calls. Recent months saw a return of the ultra large containership with several calling at Terminal 2 before heading back to Asia. It is now ten years since the first vessel, *MSC NEDERLAND*, berthed at the new terminal. Despite her sea trials beginning in April we await the entry into service of the *ROYAL DAFFODIL* which is expected in late September.

Branch News

June 2026

On Tuesday the 9th June members enjoyed a Presentation prepared by WSS member Maurice Napier, entitled *Ex Ships*. Maurice has travelled extensively around the world as a Lloyds Surveyor and his photographs of ex British ships sold to foreign owners with new names and liveries prompted much pleasurable discussion among members, many of whom recognised some old friends from British Waters from long ago.

July 2026

Our AGM was held on the 14th July. The current committee was re-elected by the Meeting and after the formal business was concluded, there followed members' slides and images which included some of John Luxton's photos of a recent trip to the Isles of Scilly on board the soon to be retired SCILLONIAN III.

August 2026

Our August Meeting Presentation was by Branch Secretary Adrian Sweeney who showed a well-attended meeting some of the slides of the late Fred Kissck. Fred had been Branch Secretary of the Isle of Man Branch for many years and the slides shown were not only of various vessels in and around the Isle of Man coast, including ships of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company, but also ships at other locations which either had had Manx connection or were registered in Douglas.

Peter Head

Sadly we report the recent passing of Peter Head at the age of seventy seven. Peter was a long standing member having joined the WSS and the Merseyside Branch in 2002.

Merseyside Maritime News

FOUR CUNARD QUEENS COMING TO LIVERPOOL

In 2015 three Cunard cruise ships 'danced' on the Mersey in the Three Queens spectacular – now the iconic cruise line is to go one better with all four Cunard ships coming to the river at the same time. **Tony McDonough reports**



Queen Elizabeth, Queen Mary 2 and Queen Victoria on the Mersey in 2015. Picture by Christopher Ison

All four Cunard cruise ships are to appear on the Mersey all the same time in a spectacular follow up to the Three Queens event 11 years ago.

In 2015 *Queen Mary 2*, *Queen Elizabeth*, *Queen Victoria* sailed up the Mersey for the event to mark Cunard's 175th anniversary. It was estimated more than 1m people lined the banks of the River to see the three vessels perform a 'dance'.

Now [Cunard](#) has announced that on May 16, 2028, it will go one better with all four of its vessels – adding the recently-built *Queen Anne* – will appear on the Mersey at the same time in another tribute to the company's "spiritual home".

Cunard was founded in Liverpool in 1840 by Samuel Cunard flourished thanks to the growing appetite for transatlantic travel in the new high-speed age of steam. However Southampton grew in importance and in 1919 Cunard shifted its prestigious New York route to the Hampshire port.

Its administrative headquarters remained at the Cunard Building (one of the famous Three Graces and now home to Liverpool City Council) until 1967 when that too was relocated to Southampton.

A severe blow had already been dealt to Liverpool in November 1966 when RMS *Sylvania* left Princes Landing Stage and became the final vessel to depart for New York from the city. The service had merely been "suspended" but it has never been reinstated.

However, Cunard's emotional connection to the Mersey and to the city has endured. And in a nod to the old transatlantic routes, *Queen Mary 2* will travel from New York to Liverpool for the Four Queens event.

Katie McAlister, president of Cunard, said: "Bringing our four Queens together on the Mersey for the first time will be a rare and incredibly special moment for Cunard.

"Liverpool is where our story began, and returning with the full fleet is a powerful celebration of that bond. It will be an unforgettable day for our guests, for the city, and for everyone who comes together to enjoy the spectacle from the shore."



Cunard vessel Queen Elizabeth at the Three Queens event in 2015. Picture by Tony McDonough



Cunard vessels on the Mersey and the Red Arrows in2015. Picture by Cunard



Queen Mary 2 will sail from New York for the Liverpool event. Picture from Cunard

This event will mark the first time the full fleet of four has ever assembled. It will also help Liverpool mark another anniversary. In 2028 the city will remember its year as European Capital of Culture in 2008.

The city is preparing a year-long programme of music, maritime and sporting events, with Cunard's return forming a centerpiece of the celebrations.

Liam Robinson, leader of Liverpool City Council, added: "Welcoming the four Cunard Queens at the same time will be an extraordinary occasion for our city, our residents, and our visitors.

"We are incredibly proud of our rich maritime heritage, and this promises to be a really special moment here in Liverpool. 2028 is shaping up to be a very exciting year for us.

Queen Anne begins her 2028 season in Scandinavia and Northern Europe, including the overnight stay in Liverpool. *Queen Elizabeth* will sail from Southampton to Le Havre while *Queen Victoria* will arrive following a scenic voyage around the British Isles.

John Mawer, general manager UK for Global Ports Holding, operator of Liverpool Cruise Port where *Queen Mary 2* will berth, told LBN the occasion would be a "proud moment for Liverpool".

"To welcome all four Queens to the River Mersey for the first time is truly historic, and it will once again place Liverpool firmly in the global spotlight.

"Liverpool Cruise Port is looking forward to hosting these iconic ships and working closely with our partners across the city to deliver an unforgettable celebration for residents, visitors and cruise guests alike.

"*Queen Mary 2*'s arrival in Liverpool will also mark her first ever transatlantic crossing from New York directly to the city, as well as Cunard's first eastbound arrival from New York to Liverpool in more than 61 years.

"Liverpool Cruise Port will then host a trans-Atlantic embarkation following the event, celebrating historical ties from the birthplace of passenger shipping and showcasing the ports renewed capacity for homeport operations."

(Liverpool Business News 21 April 2026)

CAMMELL LAIRD SOLD TO PADSTOW-BASED BALAENA

In June Liverpool Business News reported that the Cornwall-based maritime engineering and shipbuilding group Balaena had agreed to acquire Cammell Laird Shipyard along with the A&P Falmouth and A&P Tyne yards from the parent APCL group. Founded by entrepreneur Simon Gillett, Balaena also own Gibdock at Gibraltar and a shipyard in Padstow, Cornwall.

Cammell Laird employs around seven hundred people and has seen a major upturn in its fortunes since 2021 and the challenges around the delivery of the research vessel *Sir David Attenborough*. Aside from a steady flow of seasonal dry dockings and life support work on Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships new contracts will see the construction of two vessels for Western Ferries.

The first new Mersey Ferry for sixty years, *Royal Daffodil*, was delivered in April and the yard is also supporting Bae Systems on the Type 26 Frigate programme.

Subsequent reports covered the announcement that Cammell Laird Shipyard will be renamed Balaena Birkenhead. The new owner plans to open a public visitor center in due course.

FIRST CALLER AT NEW FINSA FACILITY IN WEST FLOAT

June saw the first caller at the new Finsa facility at Granddages Quay in Birkenhead's West Float. Glencore Construction completed the building which comprises 159,000 square feet of warehouse and 5,000 square feet of office space. Vessels previously called at the company's Vittoria Wharf location and bring cargoes of MDF from the Spanish port of Vilagarcia de Arousa.

The 3,169 gross tonnage Dutch-built coaster *EEMS RUNNER* entered Alfred Lock on the afternoon tide on 22nd June and proceeded through the Tower Road and Duke Street bridges to her berth.



EEMS RUNNER off Alfred Lock 22nd June 2026 (Editor)

CRUISE TERMINAL CALLERS

Another busy cruise season has seen a number of first time callers at Liverpool's Pier Head cruise terminal. These included the 53,769 gt *VIKING MIRA* which arrived from Dublin under a month after her handover to Viking Ocean Cruises by her Fincantieri builders at Ancona.

Other noteworthy callers included the Portuguese four-masted schooner *SANTA MARIA MANUELA* (see page 1). She was built at Lisbon in 1937 as a codfish fishing lugger. Obsolete and partially demolished by 1993 she was the subject of a major restoration project at Aveiro that was completed in 2010.



VIKING MIRA sailing for Reyjavik 22nd June 2026 (Editor)

AN UNUSUAL CALLER IN 1984

Thanks to Philip Parker for these interesting images of the Military Sealift Command Ro/Ro vessel *ADM. WM. M. CALLAGHAN*. Unusually the vessel loaded cargo at Liverpool without dock workers on a late summer Saturday afternoon. The cargo consisted of items that had been stored at Burtonwood since the end of the Second World War and loading was supervised by the US crew side loading into the vessel.

ADM. WM. M. CALLAGHAN was delivered to the US Navy in 1967 by Sun Shipbuilding and Dry Dock at Chester, Pennsylvania. The first all-gas turbine vessel built for the US Navy is named after Vice Admiral William M. Callaghan who captained the battleship *USS MISSOURI* and was the first commander of the Military Sea Transportation Service that later became Military Sealift Command.



ADM WM. M. CALLAGHAM at Liverpool 1984 (Philip Parker)

Now in her sixty first year the vessel remains in the Maritime Administration's Ready Reserve Fleet and was recently berthed at Oakland.



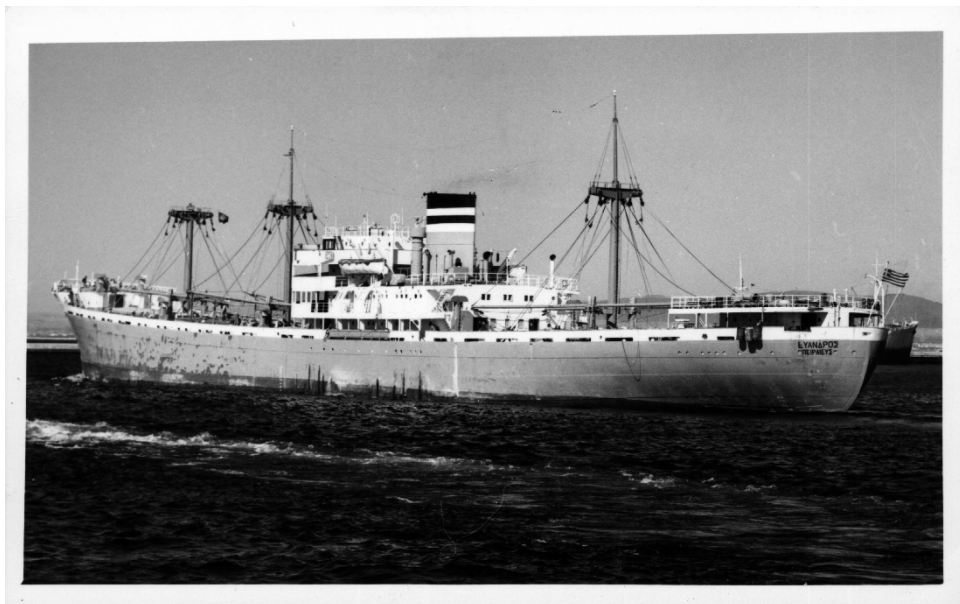
ADM WM. M. CALLAGHAM at Liverpool 1984 (Philip Parker)

FROM THE CRAIG CARTER POSTCARD COLLECTION

A further selection from the Craig Carter postcard collection.

The Greek-flagged general cargo ship *EVANDROS* is seen at Cape Town on July 16th 1978. She was launched at the Rotterdam yard of P. Smith Jr. N.V. as *TAMO* in 1941. Taken over by the German Navy in 1943 she served as *SPERRBRECHER* 28 the name alluding to her role as a mine sweeper. At the end of the war she was returned to her original Dutch owners, NV Mij Vrachvaart, reverting to *TAMO*. Following sale to Greek owners in 1963 she became the *VASILIS*. She took her final name in 1978 when Maya Cia. Nav, S.A. of Piraeus renamed her *EVANDROS*. On October 21st 1978 she arrived at Blyth for demolition by Hughes, Bolcrow Ltd.

Just four months before her arrival at Blyth Merseyside photographer Malcolm Cranfield recorded her arriving at Eastham from Grangemouth to load a cargo of soda ash for Durban at Partington.



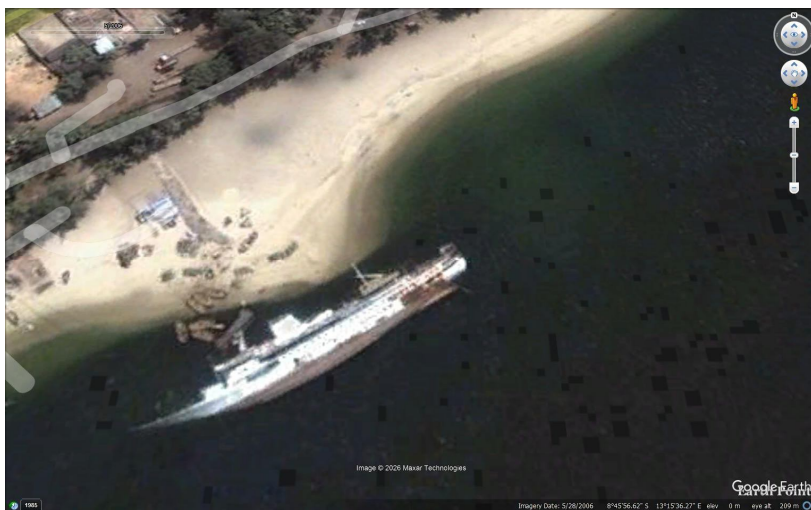
EVANDROS at Cape Town 16th July 1978

The tug *EVANGELISTRIA III* was built by Henry Robb at Leith in 1953 for the Manchester Ship Canal Company as *M.S.C. RANGER*. She was one of a number of tugs built by Robb for the MSC known as the “1200 Robbs”. Sister tugs included *M.S.C. PANTHER*, *M.S.C. PUMA*, *M.S.C. QUARRY* and *M.S.C. QUEST*. In 1976 she was sold to Weston Marine Services of Weston-super-Mare as *RANGER*. A year later she headed for Greece. There are some inconsistencies in her further history but she is believed to have been demolished in Greece during 1995.

The general cargo/passenger ship *LITVA* was the ninth of a class of nineteen Seefa 340 design built at the Matthias Thesen yard in Wismar for Soviet shipping companies between 1958 and 1964. She was delivered to the Black Sea Shipping Co. in 1960 and remained with the company until sold to St. Vincent flag interests as *BOGUCHAR* in 1988. 1993 saw a further sale to China as *FU JIAN*. In 2001 the ship, which had been renamed *GREEN COAST* and flagged in Panama, arrived at Luanda to operate as a floating hotel for local workers. Subsequently abandoned the vessel caught fire and capsized in 2006.



EVANGELISTRIA III, LITVA, Crete date unknown



Wreck of GREEN COAST, Luanda 28th May 2006