



**The  
World  
Ship  
Society**



**Southend Branch**

## *News and Views*

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### **NOTES**

Thanks go to Graham, and Andrew for their contributions

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**AROUND THE SOLENT TO FAWLEY ON ??? WITH  
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**Songa Opal**



**Propontis**



**Whitonia**





**Hafnia Shinano**



**Eolos G**



**Emily Kosan**



**One Treasure**





**Manxman**



# THE 1953 FLOODS



On the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 1953 , the Stranraer- Larne ferry “ Princess Victoria” was overwhelmed in the Irish Sea and sank with the loss of 135 lives. Tragic though this was, few people realized that far worse was to follow-apart from a few elderly fishermen in places like Whitstable who pointed out that the previous tide had not gone out. Admittedly a police car did visit Old Leigh , broadcasting a warning that flooding might happen in this low-lying area. But no-one thought that a storm surge was on the way and that sea walls would be breached.

The surge caused 120 deaths in Essex, 59 of them on Canvey Island, where many residents were left clinging to the roofs of their homes. A rescue was obviously needed, and it was largely Leigh fishermen who answered the call.

I went for a walk-through Old Leigh that morning, before breakfast, and had no inkling what had happened. Fishermen were standing around chatting- nothing unusual in that ! A few dinghies were drawn up on the shore ,unusual but it meant nothing to me. It was only when I got home and my father shouted from upstairs “ Oh my God the railway us flooded , I shan’t be able top get to work tomorrow”, that I realized that anything was wrong.

Shortly after this we had a visit from a Civil Defence man. He said that he understood that my father owned a motor cruiser and he be prepared to use is in rescuing survivors on Canvey island ?

My father explained that his boat was laid up for the winter with parts of the engine in a garage for repair. He would, if need be, contact the garage owner and get the engine re assembled, but this would take time and, in any case the boat would not float until the next high water. However , he was prepared to crew on one of the other rescue boats.

So he was allocated to the big white- weeder New Pride of Essex . The idea was that should the next tide submerge the bridge between Benfleet and Canvey she would act as a ferry boat. This did not happen, so he and the other crew members spent a busy day drinking tea and playing cards and then returned.

My later father in law , David Benson, had a more active time. He went to Canvey with a motor boat and a few dinghies . He then rowed several groups of survivors to comparative safety.. He also persuaded an unwilling couple with a car, who were on their way to a party, to take two bedraggled people to hospital!

I volunteered at the same time as my father , but was told that, since I was only sixteen , I was not to go to Canvey, as there were dead bodies floating around there. However there was a need for a messenger, with a bicycle, on Bell Wharf, to work with Frank Bently, the local Sea Scout master. I did , in fact take one message to a house in Avenue Road, but spent most of my time on the wharf watching the fishing boats bringing back groups of refugees.





*Editors note: My grandfather Billy King and uncle sailed the bawley Doris which at 40 feet overall was too big to go. However they had a 16 ft skiff called Brian, after my cousin, which they took to Canvey to take part. Brian never came back from Canvey. My dad worked for Leigh Building Supply and was sent their to with a lorry to take part*

Most of the rescue fleet were cockleboats for, at that time , they worked a full week, summer and winter, whereas the fleets of shrimping and white weeding vessels were smaller and less inclined to work during the winter.

At Westcliff High School assembly on the Monday, the Headmaster announced the names of three Canvey pupils who were missing. Fortunately all were traces as taking refuge with relatives on the main land.

Once the immediate evacuation was complete, work began on restoring the sea walls. Several units were set up to fill and transport sand bags for temporary repairs. One of these was on Bell Wharf Leigh. Virtually anyone, including school boys could volunteer to fill bags for a small amount of money, but I was busy studying for O Levels and stayed out of it, although I did keep a record of the boats used to take the filled bags to Canvey .

This was where the shrimp boats and white weeders came into use, as being smaller they could get in closer at their destination and their regular trade was stagnant at the time .

Over the years a number stories of the floods , which may even be true, have emerged. One is of a coach driver delivering passengers after a night out in London. As he drove down Pier Hill in Southend his headlights were reflected in water. He hastily reversed, wondering what the hell was going on.

The Summer Rose was an excursion vessel in summer and a white weeder in winter , based at Small Gains Creek , Canvey. Her skipper realised what was about to happen. He alerted his mate and they went aboard the boat, threw her wheelhouse overboard to make room, collected a number of rowing dinghies and sailed for what they thought was the weakest point of the sea wall. As the wall collapsed, they went through with the surge and immediately began rescue work.

It so happened that the floods occurred on the night of a Leigh Sailing Club dinner. After the event, several of the Club's committee went down to Old Leigh to see that the boats laid up there were all right. As they arrived two things happened. First the electrical junction box supplying the area blew up, secondly Southend Lifeboat went past on its way to rescue the night watchman at Two Tree Island sewage treatment works. It looked as if it was almost over their heads.

They decided that there was nothing they could do for the boats until the waters receded, so they settled down in the Club, which only had its basement flooded, to wait . They found some candles and opened the bar and had quite a pleasant night.

The crew of a cockle boat were searching bungalows on Canvey. Their youngest member expressed concern that they might find a dead body, so the two older men went first.

" Come and look at this" they called to the youngster from a bedroom,. The lad looked into the room and recoiled in horror,

"It's a body" he cried.

It wasn't , it was a tailors dummy, floating face down.

About three days after the flood, a horseman arrived in Great Wakering , explaining that nearby Foulness Island was badly flooded but no one arrived to effect rescue. A small armada of fishing boats and barges was instantly dispatched . Apparently the rider had come across the island, swimming his horse over the deeper bis

G.E. D

# **THE VIEW FROM THE SEASHELLS RESTAURANT MILTON FOR SUPPER !**

The vigilance of our contributors knows no bounds!



**Horizon Highway outbound to Zeebrugge**



**Toledo outbound Suez**





**FWN Star inbound from Ijmuiden**



**COSCO Glory outbound Rotterdam**



**Tucapel outbound Le Havre**

## **DENNY BUILT SHIPS PART 4**

1975 Broken up Faslane

**1957 Bardic Ferry** for Atlantic S N 2549 GRT



1976 Nasim II

1988 Broken up Aliaga

**1957 Valetta** for Skibs Kirkoy 9367 GRT



1964 Mosfield

1965 Orient Explorer

1975 Ionic

1975 United Warrior

1975 Sank

**1958 Koolama** for Western Australian Coastal Shipping 3777GRT

1973 Grain Trader

1974 Eastern Peace

1980 Broken up Taiwan

**1958 Ionic Ferry** for Atlantic SN 2545 GRT



1976 Kamasin



1980 Tamerlane

1985 Broken up Aliaga

**1958 Gladys Bowater** for Bowater SS 4045 GRT



1972 Gigi

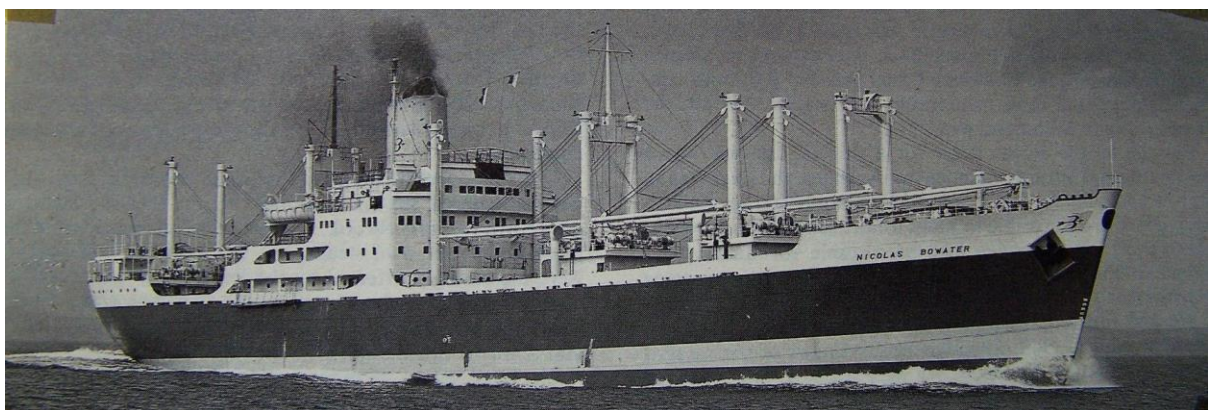
1976 Aginor

1977 Alexandra

1985 Lamyaa

1985 Broken up Gadani Beach

**1958 Nicolas Bowater** for Bowater SS 7136 GRT



1973 Vall Comet

1978 Broken up Gadani Beach

1959 The yard was modernised in 1959 but remained unable to compete for bulk carrier orders.

**1959 Norna** for Scottish Home Dept 580 GRT

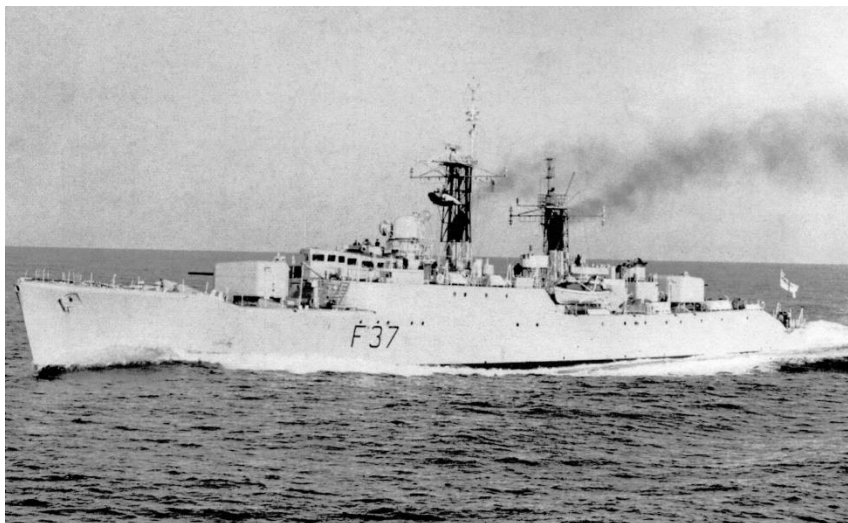
1987 Norna II

1987 Torrington

1988 Ispringsen

1998 Diversity

**1959 HMS Jaguar** frigate for Royal Navy



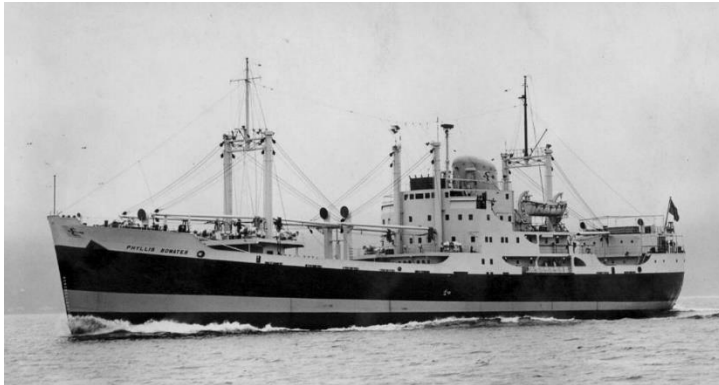
2014 Broken up

**1959 Maid of Kent** for British Transport Commission



1982 Broken up

**1960 Phyllis Bowater** for Bowater SS 4083 GRT



1973 Charlotte

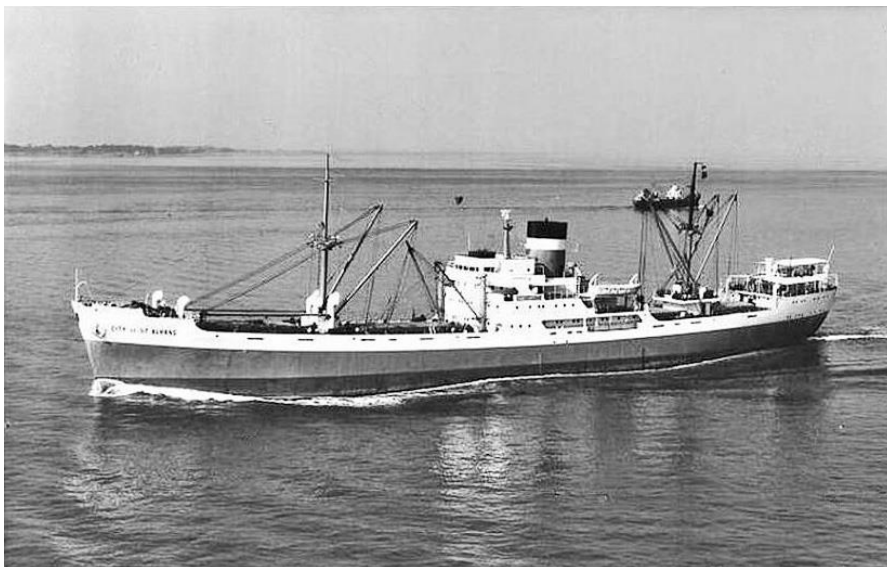
1978 Tassos K

1982 Malermo M1

1983 Naz K

2001 Broken up Alang

**1960 City of St Albans** for Ellermans Lines 7155 GRT



1979 Island of Mamara

1983 Broken up India

**1960 Cape Sable** bulk carrier for Lyle Shipping 10660 GRT





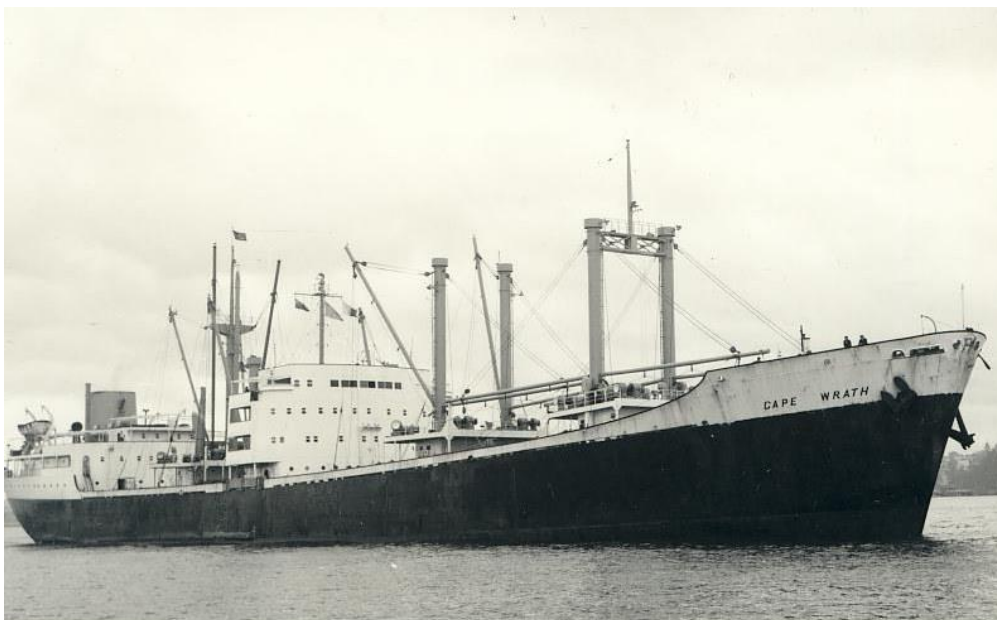
1966 Elisabeth

1974 Koraes

1978 Elka

1980 Broken up Kaohsiung

**1960 Cape Wrath** bulk carrier for Lyle Shipping 10733 GRT

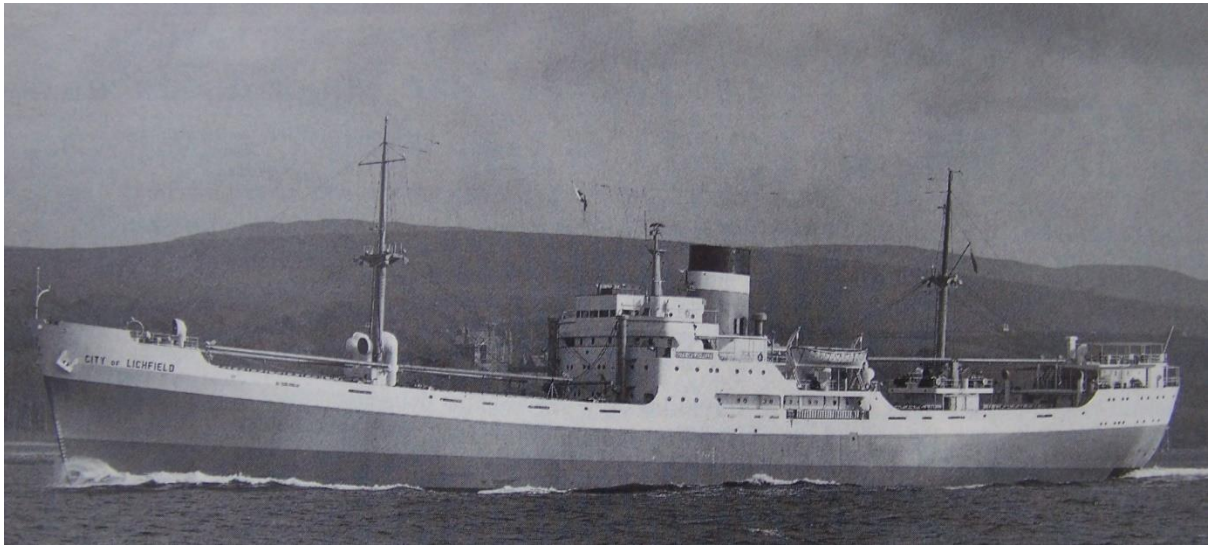


1966 Stephanie

1974 Athlos

1980 Abandoned and floundered

**1961 City of Lichfield** for Ellermans Lines 7155 GRT



1978 Leeds

1980 City of Leeds

1980 Stranded and broken up

**1961 Caledonian Princess** for Caledonian Steam Packet 3630 GRT



1991 Tuxedo Princess

2008 Prince

2008 Broken up Aliaga

1961 Experimental hovercraft



1961 Shipbuilders, designers and marine engineers. Specialists in the construction of Cross Channel steamers. 1,800 employees.

**1962 Aramoana** for New Zealand Government 4160 GRT



1984 Captain Nicolas V- Aramoana

1985 Najd II

1994 Niexo III

1994 Broken up Alang

**1963 City of Gloucester** for Ellerman Lines 4961 GRT

PIC

1979 Suerte

1985 Broken up China

**1964 Mary Fisher** Yacht 158 GRT for Orne Ltd

Hull only built by Denny Fitted out at yard of J A Silver

1963 The company went into liquidation in 1963. Later, the Denny yard was demolished and a sawmill company used the old fitting-out basin.

1961 GMV Aramoana Last vessel built by William Denny and Brothers.  
Built for New Zealand Railways Department.