The World Ship Society

Southend Branch

News and Views

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NOTES

Thanks go to Geoff, Eddie, Peter Andrew and Tony, for their contributions

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NEWS

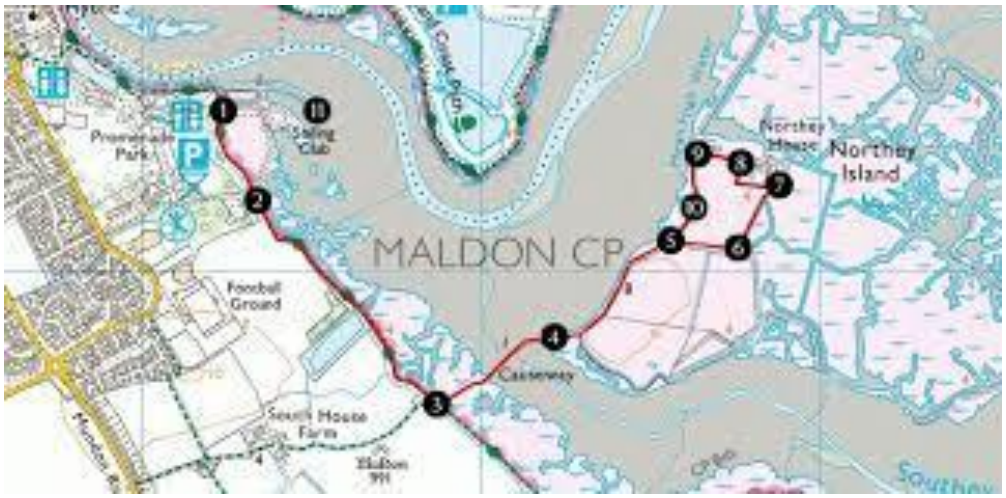
DREDGING AT HYTHE QUAY, MALDON

I visited Maldon for the first time this year on 6th February for lunch at the Queen's Head. To my surprise, a dredging operation was taking place just outside the sailing barges. It involved a barge held by spuds on which was an excavator fitted with a grab. Moored alongside was the small tug GW 108.

The work is being carried out “to remove excessive mud and ensure safe access for the Thames Barges” under a contract let by Maldon District Council worth £135,000. The dredging will run the length of the Hythe Quay and include the Visitors’ Pontoon.

The last time that “significant” dredging was undertaken was in 2000, although minor work was carried out in 2016 and 2019. The dredging was planned for completion in November 2025, but the stated completion date is currently 1st April 2026.

HYTHE QUAY AND VISITORS PONTOON



The spoil from the dredging is being transported to the Northey Island Causeway Saltmarsh under a “Beneficial Use of Dredged Sediment (BUDS) project for the National Trust. The material is being spread to regenerate the saltmarsh on the northwest side of the island. The “island shoulder” is being raised by 350mm to restore eroded areas to create some 10 hectares of saltmarsh.

THE CAUSEWAY SALTMARSH

THE GW 108 is a UK flagged harbour tug built in 1966 by Appledore Shipbuilders Ltd. as the LUNDY PUFFIN for their own use as a workboat and occasional fishing vessel. She later was acquired by George Wimpey and renamed GW 108. She is currently operated by NOD Tugs (Richard Cardy) at Maldon. She is of 17 gt with dimensions 18.25m x 4.5m x 1.5m.

As built, she had twin Lister Blackstone engines of 400 bhp driving 2 screws. In 2014 she was re-engined with a pair of Doosan oil engines of 400 bhp.

Yarmouth Belle

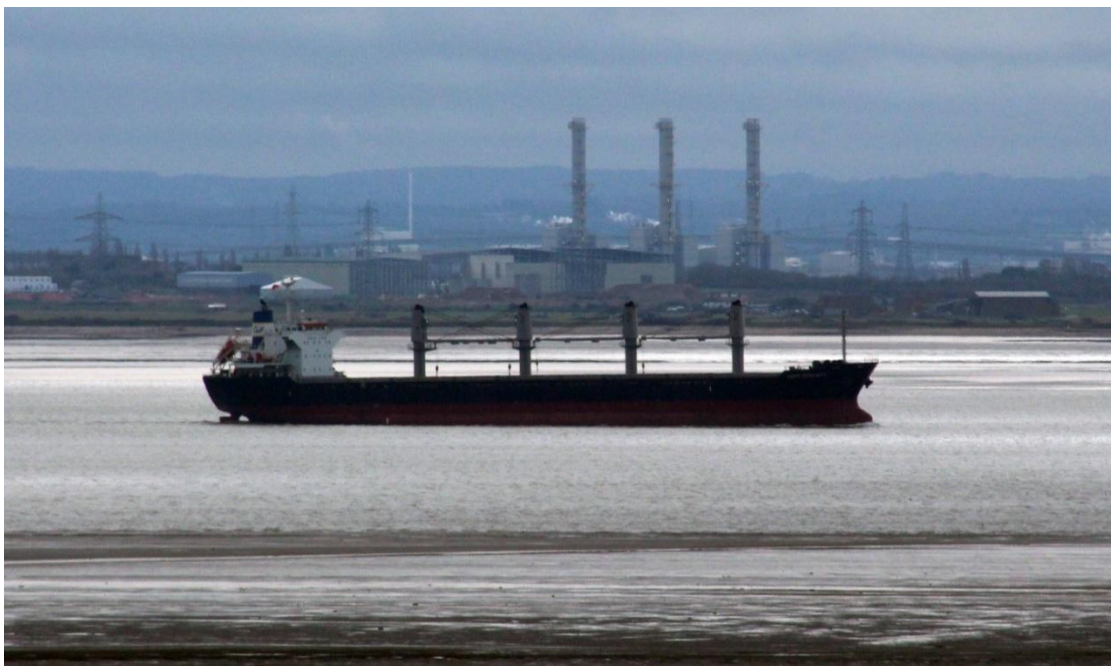
Seen moving upriver on AIS

Yarmouth Belle was built as a passenger steamer in 1892 by Thomas Bradley, Southtown, Great Yarmouth and was sold to the Great Yarmouth & Gorleston Steamboat Co. She was mainly used on the Yarmouth to Norwich service on the River Yare, but occasionally ran to St Olaves on the River Waveney and elsewhere on the Broads. In 1946, she was sold to Henry Hastings of Kingston-upon-Thames, who in 1947 converted her to diesel using a 1933 engine. In 1955, she passed to Thames Launches and had several other owners before being purchased by Turk Launches, in 1988. She was later completely rebuilt and restored at the Turk boatyard in Sunbury-on-Thames: the paddle wheels and funnel are dummies. Her current engine is a Perkins Sabre diesel of 130 hp installed in 1997.),

New Vessel for Salcombe

Parkol Marine Engineering has been awarded the contract to build a 15.58-metre workboat for Salcombe Harbour Authority in Devon. The vessel's purpose is service and maintenance of the moorings and infrastructure within control of Salcombe Harbour Authority.

VISITORS



Cape Doukato Built 2014 17027 GRT Marshall Islands

Current Position Tilbury

Santa Teresa Built 2011 85656 GRT Denmark

Current Position En route Algeciras

Omodos Built 2009 30040 GRT Panama

Current Position En route Thames

Msc Clorinda Built 2012 153115 GRT Panama

Current Position West Africa En route Abu Dhabi

Lily Bolten Built 2009 19972 GRT Marshall Islands

Current Position Sheerness

Msc Utmost VIII Built2006 90389 GRT Cyprus

Current Position En route Le Havre

CMA CGM Cingaro Built 2024 60284 GRT Portugal

Current Position En route to Martinique

Clearocean Milano Built 2021 29667 GRT Philippines

Current Position En route to Houston

Msc Cameroon Built 2025 79121 GRT Liberia

Current Position En route to Sines

CMA CGM Costanza Built 2010 40352 GRT Malta

Current Position Atlantic SW Spain en route Tanger

XT Progress Built 2020 11440 GRT Panama

Current Position Atlantic en route Huelva

Adnan Torlak Built 2001 11403 GRT Liberia

Current Position Atlantic en route Gibraltar

CMA CGM Mercantour Built 2023 57907 GRT Liberia

Current Position En route

Arendal Built 2010 29953 GRT Panama

Current Position Bilbao

Ab Bonito Built 2011 23332 GRT Panama

Current Position Jorf Lasfar

Hanoi Express Built 2023 229376 GRT Germany

Current Position West Africa En route Singapore

Catherine Grace Built 2016 29770 GRT Marshall Islands

Current Position En route Antwerp

Mayview Maersk Buil 2014 194989 GRT Danish

Current Position North Sea En route Malaysia

Energy Universe Built GRT

Current Location Gulf of Mexico

Msc Surabaya VIII Built 2006 94322 GR T Cyprus

Current Position South Africa

Discoverer Built 2011 20924 GRT Marshall Islands

Current Position En route Algeciras

Corinthian Spire Built 2009 20242 GRT Bahamas

Current Position En route Iskernderun Turkey

Msc Togo Built 2025 79103 GRT Liberia

Current Position

Rider Built2006 7852 GRT Antigua

Kaupang Built 2022 26614 GRT Liberia

Current Position En route Hammerfest

Msc Jeongmin Built2016 95514 GRT Portugal

Current Location W Africa en Route REPDG

Msc Marseille Built 2025 764875 GRT LIberia

Current Position W Africa En route South Africa

Marseille Maersk Built 2018 214236 GRT Denmark

Current Position N E Atlantic en route Malaysia

Cartagena Express Built2017 188945 GRT Germany

Current Position Caribbean en route Cartagena

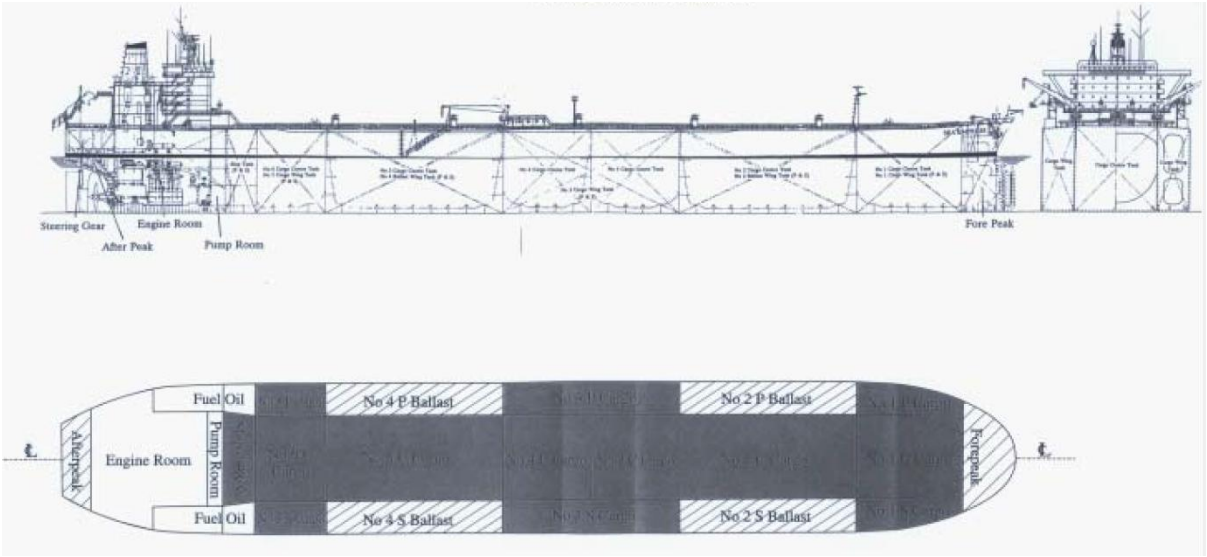
Los Angeles Express Built2014 149475 GRT Singapore

Current Position Off South Africa en route Oman

NEWS FROM PEMBROKESHIRE

The 'Sea Empress' Oil Spill

This February marked the 30th anniversary of a major oil spill at Milford Haven in Pembrokeshire. It occurred when the 'Sea Empress' struck rocks on entering the haven on the night of 15th February 1996. The 'Sea Empress' was a fairly new oil tanker, built in 1993 by Astilleros at Cadiz in Spain, and had a deadweight tonnage of 147,273. She was owned by Alegrete Shipping of Monrovia (where she was registered) and managed by Seatankers Management, Cyprus. She was a Suezmax single-hull crude oil carrier with segregated ballast tanks.

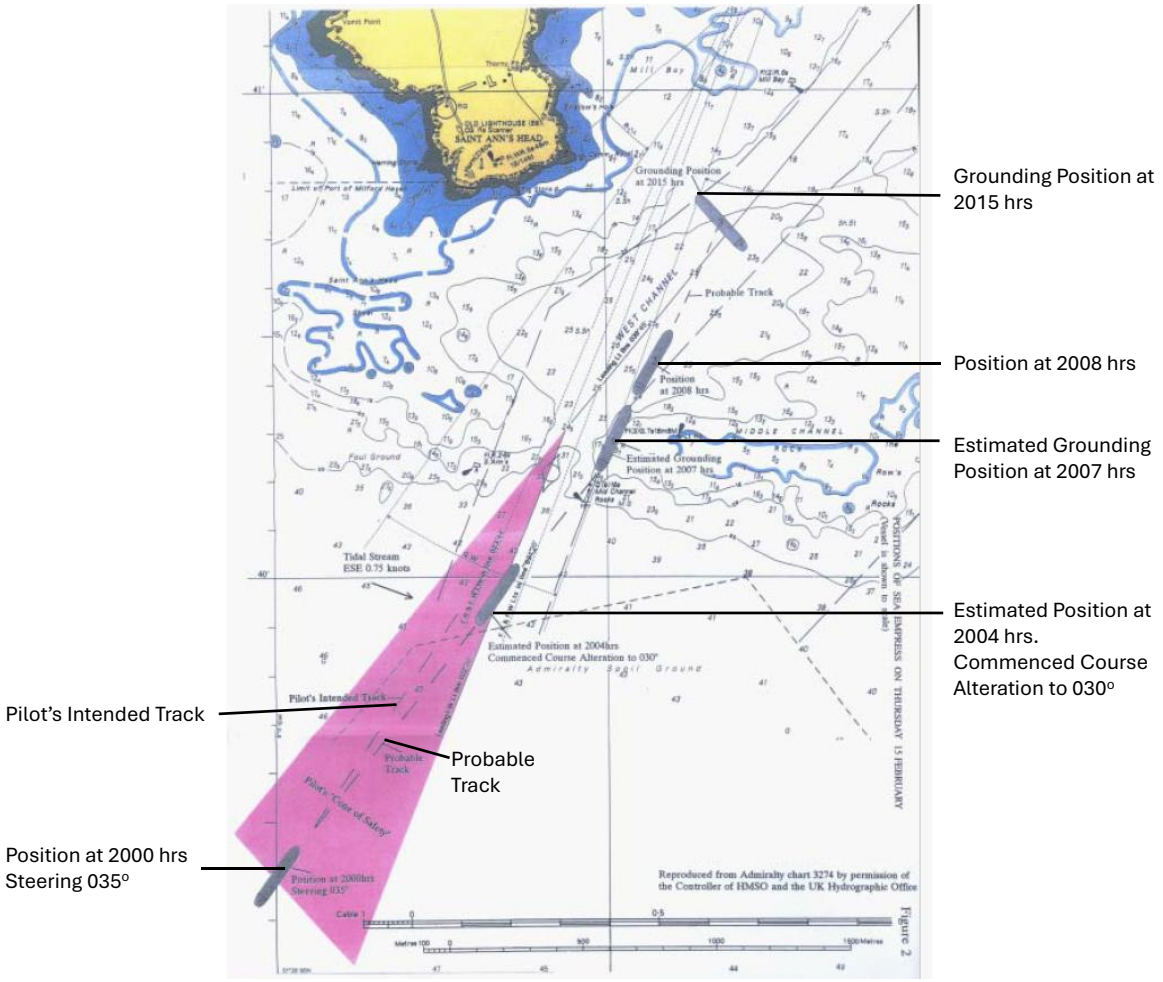


General arrangement drawings of the 'Sea Empress'
(Source: MAIB Report, 1997)

The 'Sea Empress' left Hound Point on the Firth of Forth on 13th February with a cargo of 130,018 tonnes of light crude oil from the Forties field in the North Sea (typically pumped ashore by undersea pipeline). She passed through the English Channel and approached Milford Haven on the evening of 15th February. The weather was fine and clear with a west-northwesterly force 4/5 wind. The ship's papers and certificates were all in order and she was deemed, by the enquiry, to be a in good seaworthy condition. She had an all-Russian crew of 27 and all the officers and crew were properly qualified. Outside the haven, the vessel slowed to 5 knots to take on board the pilot. The latter was properly qualified to guide ships up to 150,000 dwt, having gained this qualification 9 months earlier. However, he had only piloted two vessels of

over 100,000 dwt into the haven from the sea by the time of the incident. Furthermore, as the ‘Sea Empress’ was a fairly new vessel built to the latest regulations of having segregated ballast tanks (which held water rather than oil) her size was more like that of a former 200,000 dwt tanker.

The pilot boarded about 4 miles south-west of St Ann’s Head (which is the northern headland of the entrance) and the speed of the vessel was increased to about 10 knots to provide sufficient steerage. The intended course was 035° and the tidal stream outside the entrance was expected to be slack although changing to an ESE flow at about that time. The pilot noticed from the outer leading lights (i.e. one light in line with another to mark the entrance approach) that the vessel was to the east of the intended course and ordered a course change of 5° to port. As the ‘Sea Empress’ started to turn she narrowly missed the Mid Channel Rocks Light Buoy to starboard but then struck the outer edge of the rocks it was guarding. The helmsman reported that the ship was no longer responding to the helm. The pilot ordered “full astern”, that the anchors be dropped and called out the four harbour tugs which were waiting to assist her onto the berth. The ship’s momentum carried her across the ‘pool’ (an area of deeper water at the entrance) and 8 minutes later grounded on the other (northern) side, down at the bow and with a starboard list of 18°.



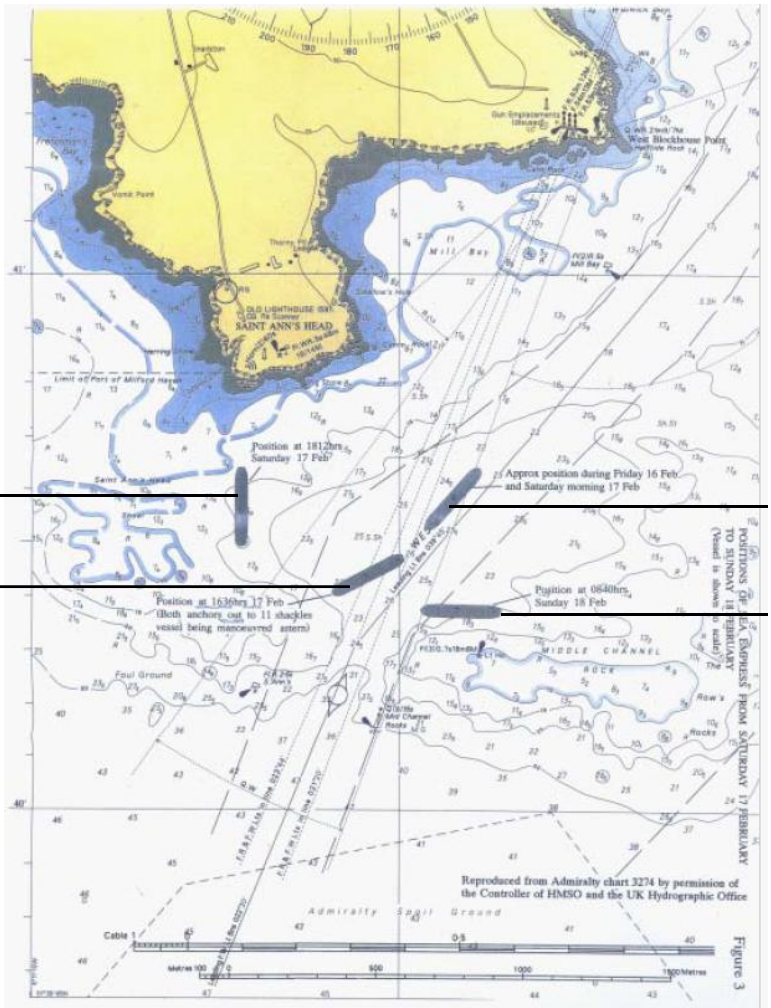
Grounding of 'Sea Empress' on 15th February 1996
(Source: MAIB Report, 1997, with some notes repeated in larger type)

Three cargo (oil) tanks and two ballast (water) tanks had been damaged and the pump room flooded. A salvage agreement was quickly reached that night with a consortium of Smit Tak BV, Cory Towage and Klyne Tugs (Lowestoft) on a 'No Cure-No Pay' basis. The master and pilot agreed to move the vessel into the deeper area of the 'pool' with the aid of the ship's engine and the four harbour tugs, namely 'Dalegarth' (45 tonnes bollard pull), 'Stackgarth' (43 tbp), 'Thorngarth' (45 tbp) and 'Tito Neri' (50 tbp). Although the tugs were having problems of their lines parting on occasions, this was achieved successfully and the anchors repositioned. The following morning the AHTS (Anchor handling, tug and supply) vessel 'Anglian Duke' (100 tbp) arrived from Falmouth and also made fast to the ship. The tanker 'Star Bergen' (31,502 dwt) was chartered by the salvors with the aim of lightening the load by ship-to-ship transfer (although this did not ultimately prove possible). Meanwhile, pumping and ventilation operations were carried out and by the afternoon the pumproom was declared safe.

'Sea Empress' down at the bow and listing to starboard
(Source: Pembrokeshire Herald / Huw Evans)

Unfortunately, by the morning of 17th February the weather was deteriorating and a severe gale was forecast (reaching force 9, WSW, on the following day). The 'Sea Empress' had been pointing north-east with its stern into the wind and the decision was taken to turn the ship around in the 'pool' so that the bow was almost into the wind, providing some shelter for the intended lightening operations. The tug 'Eskgarth' (50 tbp) and AHTS 'Anglian Earl' (84 tbp) had arrived by this time from Cobh and the English Channel respectively so a total of seven tugs secured lines for the manoeuvre and the ship also had use of its own propulsion. The turn was completed but the 'Sea Empress' started drifting westwards with the ebb tide and at least two tow lines parted. The ship's anchor lines were crossed and fouled on the rocks so it was decided to slip the two anchors. She struck the rocks again by St Ann's Head and the decision was taken to fill her bow ballast tanks to secure her there. Non-essential personnel were taken off by helicopter. The salvors called for more tugs and the following morning the 'Eldergarth' (42 tbp) and 'Yewgarth' (50 tbp) arrived from Liverpool and the Chinese AHTS 'De Yue' (200 tbp) from Falmouth.

On the rising tide, the ‘Sea Empress’ worked loose and the remaining personnel were evacuated by helicopter. Owing to the danger to the tugs, just two were left with lines attached. The ship was taken by the tide and wind across the ‘pool’ near to where she originally hit the rocks. Over the next four days, the ship grounded and refloated across the ‘pool’ on a number of occasions (as shown on the charts below) and the salvors were taken to the ship and evacuated intermittently depending on the danger. The powerful ‘De Yue’ was found to be unsuitable owing to her cumbersome towing equipment, deep draught and restricted manoeuvrability, whilst the towing tugs often lost their lines and the tugs used for pushing found that their bows slid off the ship’s hull owing to the oil that surrounded the ship. Considerable further structural damage and oil loss occurred during this period when the vessel could not be controlled.

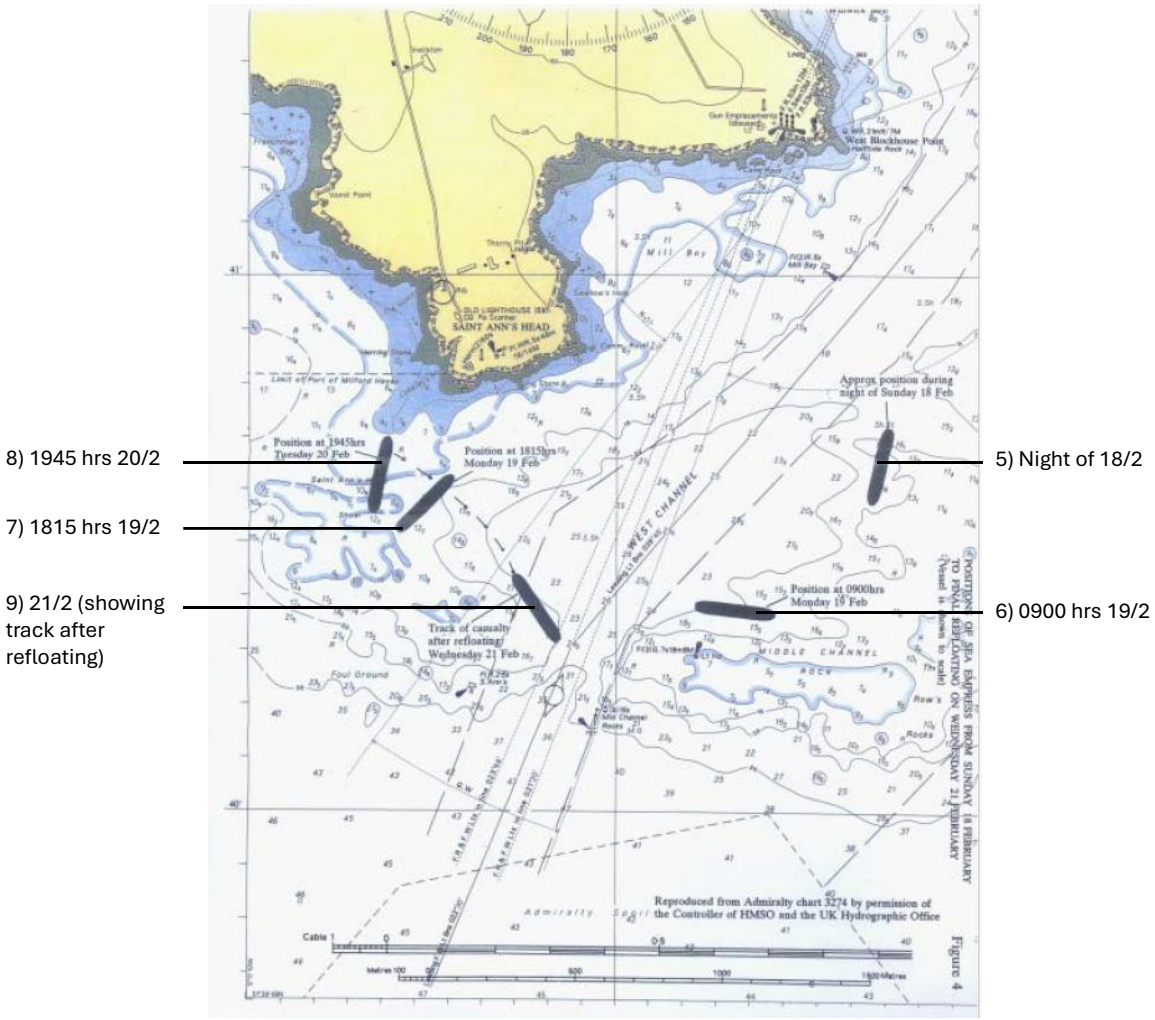


3) 1812 hrs 17/2

2) 1636 hrs 17/2 (being manoeuvred)

1) 16/2 all day and a.m. 17/2 (held in the ‘pool’)

4) 0840 hrs 18/2



Two charts showing the movements of the 'Sea Empress' around the 'pool' from 16th to 21st February 1996
(Source: MAIB Report, 1997, with notes added)

By 21st February, the tugs 'Vikingbank' (62 tbp) and 'Portgarth' (50 tbp) had arrived from the North Sea and from Avonmouth respectively, plus the AHTS 'Arild Viking' (145 tbp) from Lowestoft. The pump room of the 'Sea Empress' had again been flooded so portable pumps were used to pump out and force compressed air into some ballast tanks and to repressurise cargo tanks using inert gas, as required. On that day, the tugs successfully towed the bow away from the rocks and, although the ship's main engine failed to start at first, it did start eventually and the ship was moved to the disused Herbrandston Jetty, now the South Hook LNG (liquefied natural gas) terminal. The remaining oil on board was transferred in four operations on to the 'Star Bergen' and 'Onward Mariner'. After about three weeks, when the 'Sea Empress' had been made seaworthy, she was towed to Belfast for repairs.

Aerial photograph showing twelve tugs trying to refloat the 'Sea Empress' near St Ann's Head
(Source: BBC / Huw Evans)

In total, 72,000 tons of crude oil and 480 tons of heavy fuel oil were spilt into the sea, polluting the coastline and oiling birds and other wildlife. Chemical dispersants were dropped from aircraft and there was a massive clear-up operation involving thousands of volunteers to clean oil from the beaches and shoreline. It is believed that up to 20,000 sea birds (particularly common scoter) were killed but this would have been much higher if the incident had occurred a couple of months later when the guillemots, razorbills, puffins, manx shearwaters and other birds would return to breed on Skomer and Skokholm islands and along that coast. In the end, it was further gales which dispersed the oil most effectively.

The subsequent report by the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) found that the immediate cause of the accident was pilot error by failing to "take appropriate and effective action to keep the vessel in the deepest part of the Channel". When it was realised that the vessel was to the east of the leading lights a course change of 5^{o} was given rather than an order to turn the helm much harder and immediately to port. There had been no discussion about the approach between the pilot and the captain so the latter did not appreciate early enough that the pilot's plan was going awry. As the 'Sea

Empress' went to the edge of the channel into shallow water it was noted that there would have been an effect of 'squat' i.e. an area of reduced pressure under the ship resulting in the ship's draught increasing. This effect is particularly pronounced at speed. At the initial grounding, the rocks were at a depth of about 15.9m, the same as the ship's draught on approach. However, it is estimated that the ship's draught would have increased to about 16.6m at 10 knots over shallow ground.

Over the next few days, it was deemed that there was not an effective incident management team (the structure being too large and unwieldy), there was a lack of suitable and powerful tugs and there was a dearth of knowledge of the exact tidal streams within the 'pool'. These streams were later surveyed and modelled in detail for future information. It was also found that the port radar system was not working, although this was not considered a direct contributory factor (as, at that time, it was not routine to communicate the planned approach in any case).

In summary, the initial grounding was said to be caused by pilot error. After that, the combination of gale force 9 winds, associated heavy swells and tidal streams of up to 6 knots, sometimes from unexpected directions, made it impossible to control the tanker, particularly with the tugs available.

As a footnote, there were two emergency Coastguard tugs at the time of the incident but these were stationed at Dover and Stornoway, considered by the salvors too far away to be called upon. A third tug was added after this incident for the south-west approaches. However, nowadays there seems to be just one Coastguard emergency towing vessel, the 'Ievoli Black' (140 tbp), which operates to the north and west of Scotland. On the plus side, Milford Haven now has a fleet of harbour tugs that are much more powerful than they used to be, one example being the 'Svitzer Kilroom' ASD (Azimuth Stern Drive) tug at 113 tbp, used particularly for the handling of the large LNG tankers that discharge at the port. Hopefully, these tugs would be able to handle a similar situation much more ably in the future.

NEWS FROM SOUTHAMPTON

Cruise to Canaries on Quenn Victoria with Wendy and Andrew

We have just come back from 14 days to Canaries on Queen Victoria (our favourite ship). We had 5metre swells till level with Agave and then 3 metres till Madeira and all with 40 to 60 knot winds relative on the ship so no walking on the decks. The movement was not bad and Wendy was quite ok. We escaped the rain you have had (thank heavens). Everything here is so wet and New Forest saturated along with high tides. Attached are photos of Windstar and Mein Schiff 7. Also pictures of Windea Curie Offshore windfarm vessel.

The vessel features an X-STERN at each end, providing soft movements, increased comfort, and reduced fuel consumption. She has highly efficient engines and a heat recovery system to ensure optimal performance and reduced environmental impact, aligning with Schulte Group's commitment to sustainability. Featuring advanced DP systems and incorporating the TWIN X-STERN technology, the vessel keeps precise positioning and stability in challenging offshore environments. This capability is crucial for maintaining operational excellence and safety.

The vessel measures 89.6 m in length and 19.2 m in beam. It has a large, centrally positioned walk-to-work motion-compensated gangway and elevator tower for personnel and cargo transfers. Furthermore, a 3D-compensated crane capable of lifting 5 tonnes of offshore cargo is installed. The optimised

onboard logistics include large storage capacities and a stepless approach to the offshore installations. She offers up to 90 cabins with daylight, providing comfortable living conditions for offshore personnel. In total, there are 111 cabins, accommodating up to 132 people, and all onboard have access to life-saving equipment.

The motion-compensated Ampelmann gangway and 3D motion-compensated Motus crane represent significant upgrades compared to previous BSO vessels. The crane can handle loads of up to 5 tonnes under optimal conditions, enhancing operational efficiency and versatility.

Milestones

Contract signed:2023, Jun

Steel cutting: 2023, Oct

Keel laying: 2024, Jan

Outfitting start: 2024, Dec

Launch: 2025, Feb

Naming and delivery: 26 June 2025

Pictures of Queen Victoria in Lisbon from the hill and we liked the sky (as it was not raining)












QUIZ MARCH 2026 – ANSWERS

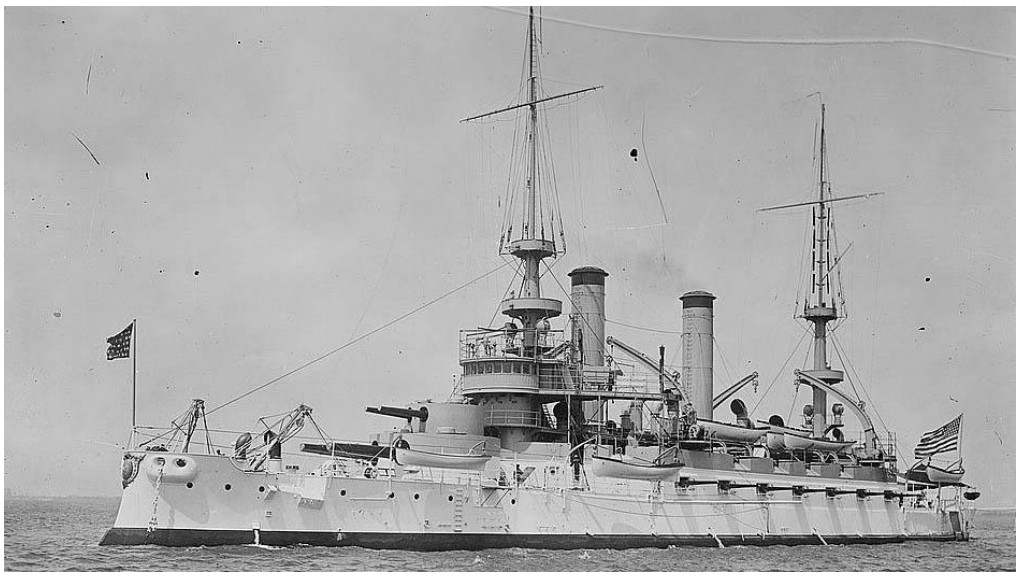
Here are the answers to the latest Ships in the News Quiz, but what were the questions?

1. CHRISTOPHE DE MARGERIE
2. BOM JESUS
3. XV EXCALIBUR
4. LYNX, JAGUAR, PANTHER & CHEETAH
5. ISLE OF ISLAY
6. HMS ANSON
7. RFA RESURGENT
8. USS DEFIANT
9. STENS CONNECTA
10. USS ZIMWALT
11. BAYESIAN
12. ZHONG DA 79
13. SINEGORSK
14. USS JOHN F KENNEDY
15. OCEAN ENDEAVOUR

USS KEARSAGE (BB-5)

USS KEARSAGE

The USS KEARSAGE was a Kearsage class pre-Dreadnought battleship. She was laid down at the Newport News shipyard, Virginia on 30th June 1896, launched on 24th March 1998 and commissioned on 20th February 1900. Her sister ship, the USS KENTUCKY was commissioned in May 1900.



USS KENTUCKY

Her displacement was 10,470 tons and her dimensions were 375’ 4” x 72’ 3” x 23’ 6”. She had 5 Scotch coal-fired boilers providing steam for her twin 3-cylinder vertical triple expansion engines of 11,674 ihp driving 2 screws giving a top speed of 17 knots. In 1911 she was converted to water-tube boilers and in 1925 she was converted from coal to oil fuel.

She was armed with four 13” guns, four 8” guns, fourteen 5” guns, twenty 6 pounders, eight 1 pounders and four o.3” machine guns as well as four 18” torpedo tubes. Her armour protection consisted of 5” to 16.5” belt, 12.5” to 15” barbettes, 15” to 17” turrets and 10” conning tower.

She spent her first 8 years operating along the US East Coast & Caribbean, often as Flagship, North Atlantic Squadron. In December 1907 she began a cruise around the world with most of the US Navy’s battleships in “The Great White Fleet”, finishing in February 1909.

She was decommissioned in September 1909 for modernisation work, but she was mainly used for training until the USA entered WW1 in 1917. Thereafter she operated as an escort as well as an engineering training ship along the US East Coast. In May 1920 she was decommissioned at the Philadelphia Navy Yard and her conversion to a heavy-lift crane ship began.


AB-1

Her turrets, superstructure and armour were removed as well as some of her boilers. A large revolving crane with a lifting capacity of 250 tons was installed together with 10’ wide blisters (or sponsons) on each side to improve stability.

After 1920 she seems to have still been self-propelled, with some machinery also operating to power her crane and ballast pumps. The conversion caused her displacement to drop to 8275 tons. In trials, the crane lifted 312 tons at 101’ reach.

She served for decades in heavy-lifting, salvage and construction. Lifting heavy components like guns, turrets and armour. In 1939 she was re-designated AB-1. She that year was instrumental in raising the sunken submarine SQUALUS. She was again re-designated CRANE SHIP No. 1 in 1941. She served throughout the USA’s time participating in WW2, assisting in the construction and repair of battleships and carriers, including the USS HORNET and the USS BOXER. By 1945 her steam engines were worn out and she ceased to be self-propelled, relying on tugs as needed.

She remained in use in the years after the war. One of her last projects was assisting in the re-assembly of the ex-German crane ship YD-171 in 1955. On 22nd June 1955 her name was removed from the US navy register and on 9th August 1955 she was sold for scrap.

The story of Mary Rogers, stewardess of the Stella

Postman's Park, near St Paul's Cathedral, is the location for the Memorial to Heroic Self-Sacrifice. It was established by George Frederic Watts, a famous 19th century British painter and sculptor. It is a memorial to ordinary people who died while saving the lives of others and who might otherwise be forgotten. There are about 50 ceramic memorial tablets, setting out a person's name and a brief description of their sacrifice. One of these tablets refers to Mary Rogers, a stewardess on the steamship *Stella.*

Her memorial plaque in Postman's Park reads, "Mary Rogers, Stewardess Of The Stella, Mar 30 1899, Self Sacrificed By Giving Up Her Life Belt And Voluntarily Going Down In The Sinking Ship."

Stella was built on Clydebank in 1890, one of three sister ships for London and South-Western Railway Company – *Frederica*, *Lydia* and *Stella*. *Stella* was the last of the three to be launched and completed. She was about 1,000 GRT. She had twin screws, each powered by a three-cylinder triple expansion steam engine which gave her a speed of about 19 knots. *Stella* could carry 712

passengers and carried 754 lifejackets, 12 lifebuoys and lifeboats which could carry 148 people. *Stella* was built for the London and South-Western Railway's route between Southampton and the Channel Islands.

It was the day before Good Friday in 1899. There was a thick fog between Alderney and Guernsey. *Stella* left Southampton but failed to slow down in the fog and was caught among the Casquet rocks, on her way to the Channel Islands. She was about 20 miles from Guernsey and similarly about 20 miles from the French coast. Her steel bottom was torn open in a few minutes on a submerged reef of sharp jagged stone. The ship sank in eight minutes, with an explosion of her steam-boilers. Nearly all who had remained on board were drowned.

Four lifeboats were successfully launched, with many passengers, including all the women and children, while a fifth lifeboat capsized. The capsized lifeboat was later righted by a freak wave and 12 people managed to climb into it. Four of these died of exposure during the night. The eight remaining survivors on that boat were rescued by the French Naval tug *Marsouin*.

One lifeboat, with 38 survivors on board, had a cutter in tow with 29 survivors on board. These two boats were sighted at 07:00 on 31 March by the LSWR steamship *Vera*. They were picked up and landed at St Helier, Jersey. The other cutter, with 24 survivors on board, had a dinghy in tow with 13 survivors on board. They were picked up by the Great Western Railway steamship *Lynx*, sailing from Weymouth to St Peter Port.

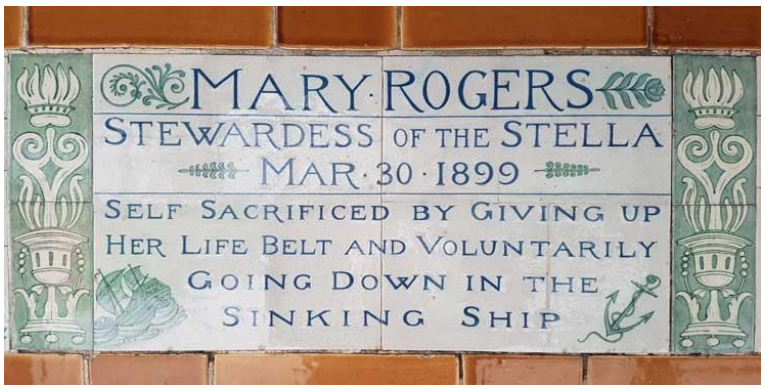
There are different reports of the number of lives lost. But of the 140 passengers and 40 officers and crew, it seems that over 100 lives were lost, including 19 of the crew.

The story emerged of the heroism of Mary Rogers, a 46-year-old stewardess on board *Stella*. She got all the ladies from her cabins to the side of the ship, and after placing lifebelts on them, she assisted them into the lifeboats. She noticed a woman without a lifebelt and insisted upon placing her own belt upon the lady and she led her to the fast-filling boat. The sailors called out "Jump in, Mrs. Rogers," and she replied, "No, no; if I get in the boat will sink. Good-bye, goodbye." With uplifted hands she said "Lord, have me," and immediately the *Stella* sank beneath her feet.

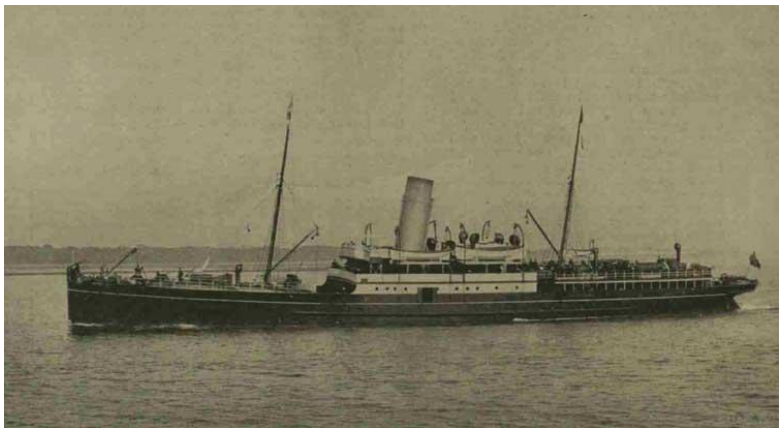
It soon transpired that Mary Rogers had left behind an elderly father and two children, all of whom were dependent on her.

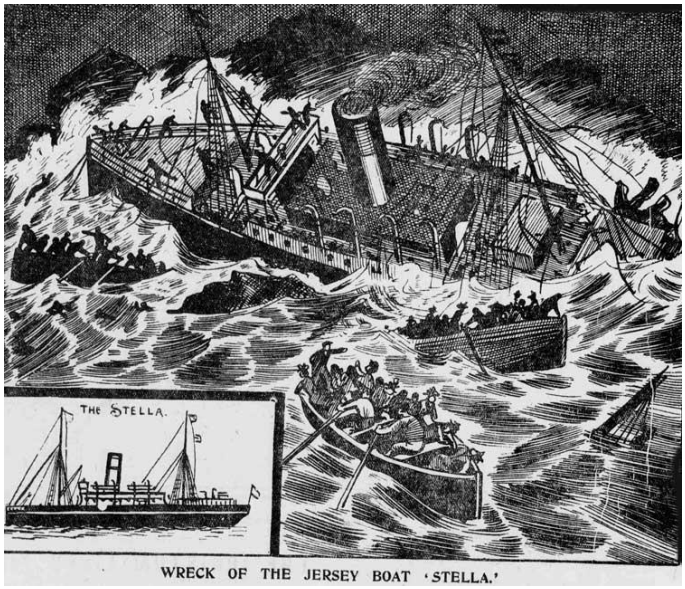
By the end of April 1899, a campaign was established to erect a memorial to commemorate her sacrifice and establish a fund that would support her bereaved dependents. They hoped to raise four hundred pounds at the very least, two hundred pounds to provide for the bereaved father and children, and two hundred pounds to raise a monument worthy of commemorating her.

The Victorian public showed themselves more than willing to contribute to such a worthy cause and the money began to flood in. Ultimately the amount raised was £570 and this was split between the dependents of Mary Rogers and cost of producing a public memorial in the form of a drinking fountain which was unveiled on the Western Esplanade in Southampton.



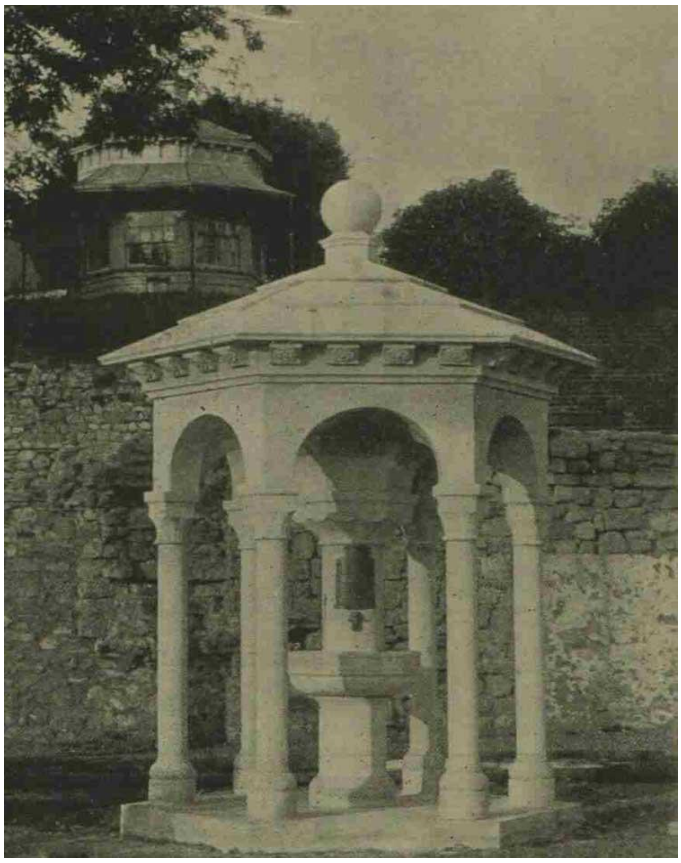
The Stella, From The Illustrated London News 8th April 1899





WRECK OF THE JERSEY BOAT 'STELLA.'

From The Illustrated Police News, 8th April 1899

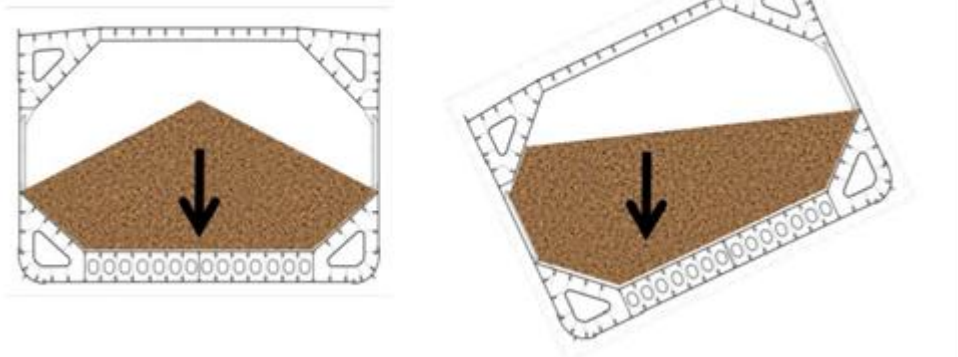


The monument in Southampton

DEVON BAY

On 23rd January 2026, the Singapore flagged bulker DEVON BAY capsized and sank in heavy seas near the Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea. She sent out a Mayday call late on 22nd January when the ship had a list of 25 degrees. 17 of her crew of 21 Filipino nationals were accounted for, being rescued by Chinese Coast Guard patrol vessels which were nearby, but 2 of the 17 had died. In view of the tensions between the Philippines and China over the Scarborough Shoal, it was good to see the two coast guards co-operating in the rescue efforts.

The ship was carrying a cargo of 55000 tons of nickel ore from Zamboanga del Sur in the Philippines to Yangjiang in China. The 17 were transferred to the Philippine Coast Guard vessels BRP TERESA MAGBANUA and BRP CAPE SAN AGUSTIN and returned to Manila on 26th January. A Search & Rescue operation for the remaining 4 crewmen was unsuccessful.



It is considered very likely that the loss of the ship was due to the liquefaction of the nickel ore cargo, probably accentuated by the ship shaking from the rough sea. Nickel ore is notorious for being prone to liquefaction, normally when its moisture content is above safe transportable levels. Ship losses due to cargo liquefaction comprise about 20% of total ship losses, but they represent over 60 % of fatalities. This is due to the sudden and unpredictable nature of the liquefaction phenomenon.

Presumably, in this case the cargo was stockpiled in the open on the quayside for a considerable period. Theoretically, the moisture content of the stockpile should have been checked prior to the start of loading, but the inquiry will need to ascertain how this was missed.

The DEVON BAY was built by the Mitsui Engineering and Shipbuilding Co. Ltd. in Japan for the K. Line Pte Ltd also of Japan. She was laid down on 14th December 2010, launched on 15th March 2013 and completed on 1st July 2013. She was of 56,095 dwt with dimensions 189.99m x 32.25m x 12.71m. She was powered by a single low speed two-stroke single-acting 6-cylinder diesel manufactured by Mitsui and giving 9070 kW at 125 rpm. Her maximum speed was 16.5 knots, but she cruised normally at 14.5 knots.

BRP TERESA MAGBANUA

THE BRP TERESA MAGBANUA is a Philippine Coast Guard patrol vessel of the Teresa Magbanua class. She was built in Japan, being launched on 26th July 2021 and commissioned on 6th May 2022 by Mitsubishi Shipbuilding Co Ltd. She is of 2265 t displacement with dimensions 96.6m x 11.5m x 4.3m. She is powered by twin diesels totalling 13,200 kW giving a top speed of 24 knots and a range of 4000 nautical miles at cruising speed. She carries one helicopter

and two RHIBs. She has a history with the Chinese Coast Guard, for example in September 2024 she sustained hull damage from collisions with 3 Chinese Coast Guard vessels, during a standoff at Sabina Shoal.

BRP CAPE SAN AGUSTIN

THE BRP CAPE SAN AGUSTIN is a Philippine Coast Guard patrol boat of the 10-strong Parola class. She was built by Japan Marine Ltd. of Yokohama, being commissioned on 28th March 2018. She is of 321 tons displacement with dimensions 32.25m x 7.5m x 4.0m. She is powered by twin MTU 12-cylinder diesels of 2580 kW giving a top speed of 25 knots and a range of 3000 nautical miles at cruising speed of 15 knots.

TID Tugs

What TID denotes is anybody's guess I found several explanations but none definitive.

Best Guess: Tugs Inshore & Docks, Dockyards called them Tidlers

Ministry of war transport brief 1943:

"*Design, organise and start work immediately toward achieving, in the shortest possible time, the delivery of one tug per week, using in the process, little or no shipyard labour."*

Richard Dunston a leading builder of tugs and small craft was contracted to design a tug using all flat plates, it was specified that the vessel be able to be constructed without the use of shipyard skills.

A design was established and two hull forms were tank tested at Teddington before construction began.

Construction would utilize eight prefabricated sections, overall dimns, 65 feet long , 17 ft beam, draft 7.3 ft, Triple Ex. Engine 220IHP. Bunkering 8 tons of coal and a speed of 7-8 knots.

Crew comprised a Mate, two engine room ratings and two deck hands an AB and an OS.

An initial contract for twelve tugs was placed subsequently amended to 25. then 50 As the anticipated invasion of Europe indicated that large numbers of tugs would be required, in all some 192 were delivered 152 (coal fired) by Dunston and 23 oil fired by Pickersgill of Sunderland the latter, being intended for service in the far east, these were shipped as deck cargo.

Some 13 fabricators were involved, Dunstons having arranged for each section to be built by two fabricators so that in the event of bombing production flow would suffer minimal disruption.

Fabricated sections would be taken by road to Dunstons yard at Thorne where assembly would take place, once launched the hull was towed to Hessle where the boiler and engine were installed, the engine bed plates were machined to dimns, taken from the alignment of the engine to the shaft, Note that the aft section came fully fitted with the rudder and propeller shaft.

Contrary to shipyard practice, some 1400 drawings were produced, some of the contractors produced even more detailed drawings

Dunstons were delivering one tug a week, as one was commissioned at Hesssle it sailed back to Thorne to tow to next hull to Hessle for outfitting

Welding of the sub assemblies was in some large proportion undertaken by Government trained women welders, who, after the war the Unions demanded be sacked

We have an example on our doorstep, the Brent moored at Maldon

Contractors

Initially, contracts for making the units were awarded to :
William Neill Ltd.
Foster Yates and Thom,
R. Dempster and Sons,
Charles Roberts and Co. Ltd.,
Newton Chambers and Co. Ltd.

The original order was for twelve tugs to be constructed, but when this was increased to fifty, Dunstons allocated the work so that two companies were responsible for making each section. This meant that supplies were assured if enemy bombing put one company out of business. Steam was from coal or later oil - the change being to allow use in the Far East. They were capable of around 8 knots.[

Each tug comprised eight units:
Unit One, the stern, a 4ft 2" section was made by Robert Jenkins and Co., also Foster Yates and Thom.
Unit Two, the aft peak tank, 10 ft, was made by A.J.Riley and Son, also Foster Yates and Thom.
Unit Three, the after cabin, 8ft 4", was made by Nortons Tividale Ltd., also Robert Dempster and Sons.
Unit Four, the engine room, 10ft., was made by Wrights Forge and Engineering Co., also Robert Dempster & Son. It is known that with such a prefabricated system, the bedding of the engine and alignment of the propeller shaft were difficult, and Robert Dempster and Son were trusted with this area from the outset.
Unit Five, boiler room and bunkers, another 10ft. section, was made by John Booth and Sons (Bolton), also Newton Chambers and Co. Ltd..
Unit Six, boiler room and bridge, 8ft 4", was made by Head Wrightson and Co., also Charles Roberts and Co. Ltd..
Unit Seven, forward cabin, a 10ft section, was made by C. and W. Walker Ltd., also William Neill and Sons.
Unit Eight, the bow section (incorporating the chain locker and fore peak), a 9ft 2" unit, involved the most difficult shaping, It was made by Orthostyle Ltd., also William Neill and Sons.

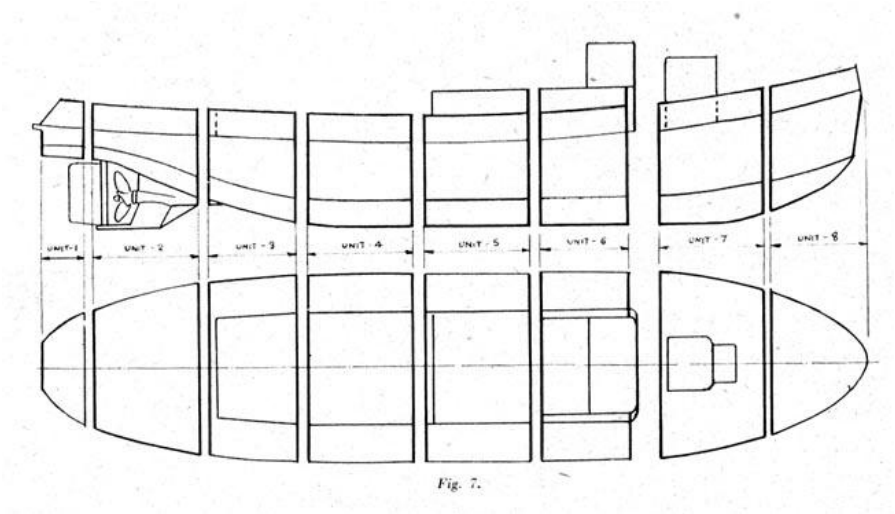


Fig. 7.

Sections to be prefabricated

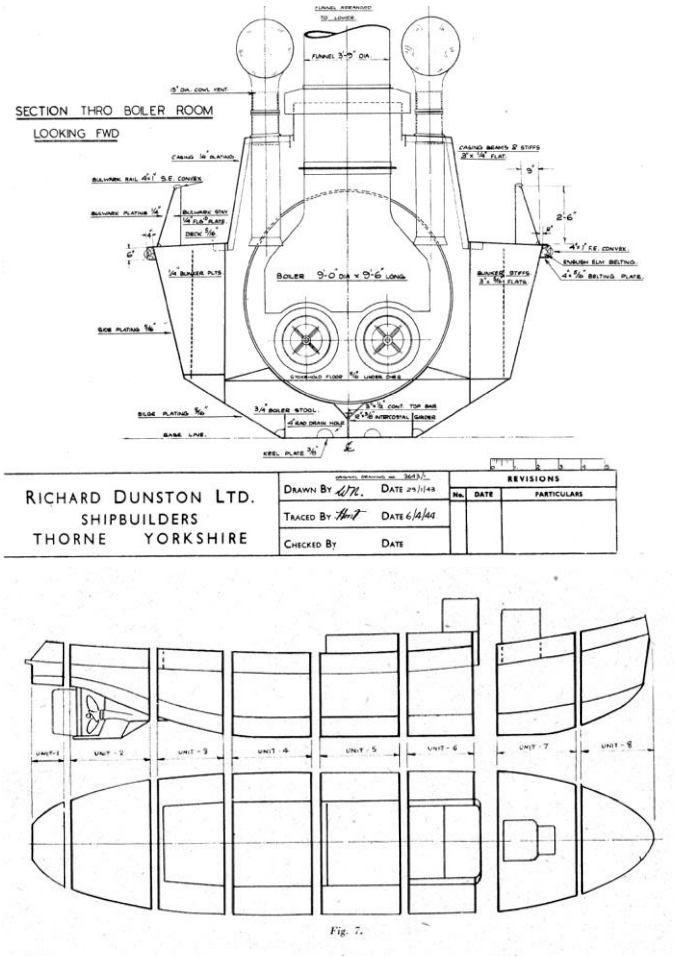


Fig. 7.

RMS WATERCOURSE

RMS WATERCOURSE

The RMS WATERCOURSE (Y30) was built by Drypool Engineering & Dry Dock Co. of Hull as the RMAS WATERCOURSE, being launched on 3rd May 1973 and completed in December 1973. She was built for the Royal Maritime Auxiliary Service as a water tanker, her function being the supply of fresh water to warships and bases. for the Royal Navy.

RMAS WATERCOURSE – Y30

She was of 300 sdwt with dimensions 40.1m x 7.85m x 2.54m. She was powered by a Lister-Blackstone ERS8MCR diesel of 600 bhp driving one screw and giving 11 knots. She had a crew of 8.

She was initially based at Rosyth but in the early 1990s she transferred to Portsmouth. In 1997 she was sold to Rosyth Marine Services and renamed RMS WATERCOURSE. In 2012, after RMS had closed, she was acquired by M.C. Pratt of Rainham in Kent. Recently she has been operated by Alan Pratt based on the Medway but has been up for sale and there are rumours that she is to go to the Bahamas.

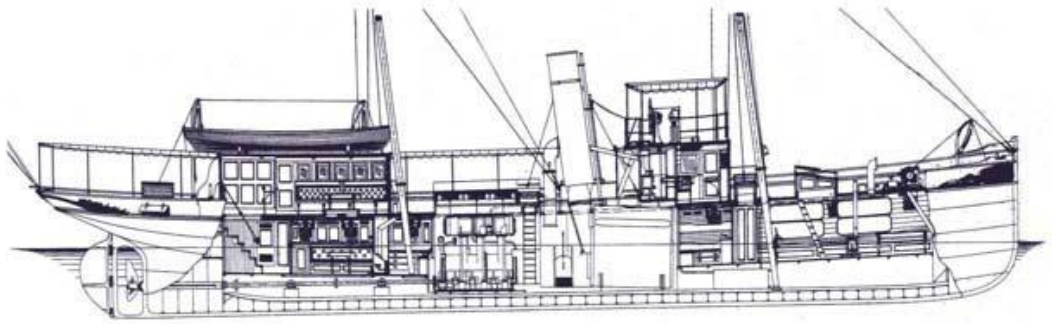
HM CUSTOMS CUTTER VIGILANT

VIGILANT LYING OUTSIDE JOHN H AMOS

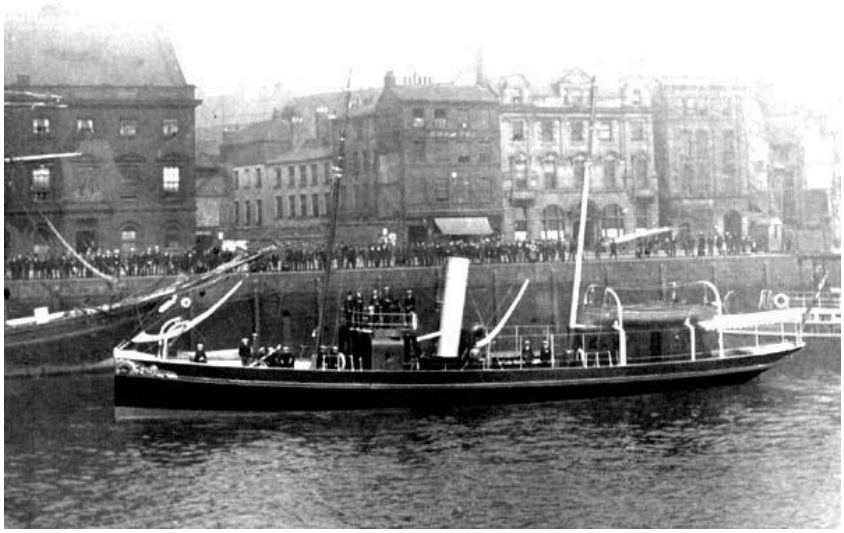
Lying alongside the former paddler tug, JOHN H AMOS, which was the subject of an article last year, is the VIGILANT. The two are berthed on the bank of the Medway just upstream of to Chatham Docks, From the aerial or drone photos doing the rounds recently, both vessels are in a poor state and no longer floating on the tide. The Vigilant, like the Amos, is included in the National Historic Ships Register.


1904

The Vigilant was built of steel by Messrs Cox & Co. in Falmouth for the Commissioners of HM Customs, being launched on 20th June 1902. She was of 124 grt with dimensions 99.93’ x 16.00’ x 8.00’. She was powered by steam, with a return-tube boiler with twin furnaces providing steam at 150 psi for her triple expansion engine rated at 200 indicated horsepower at 200 rpm. Her single screw drove her at a maximum of 11 knots.



For her life with HM Customs, she was based at Gravesend, and her duties were mainly the control and clearance of ships using the Port of London. In August 1903 she undertook an “inspection” of every port from Gravesend to Penzance, and this became something of an annual “Jolly” for the senior Customs staff for many years.



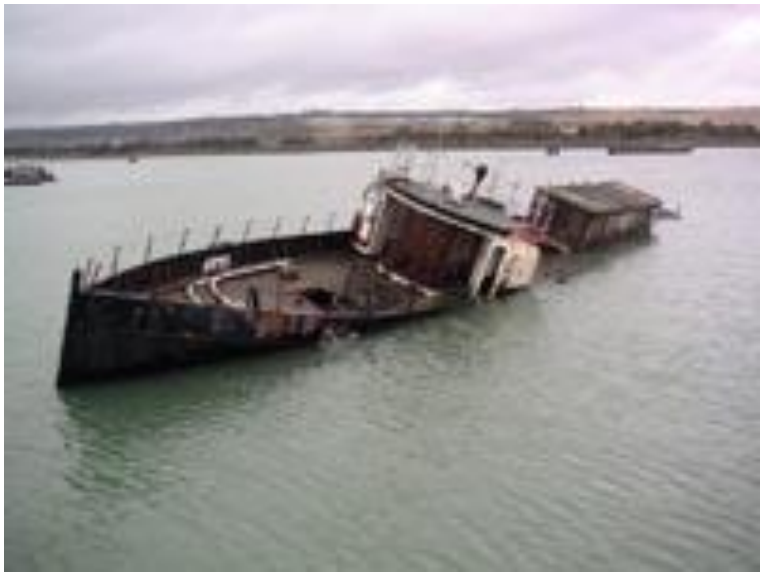
She is the sole surviving ship to have been involved in the 1911 Spithead Review. HM Customs seem to have been quite “Bolshy”, insisting on the Vigilant’s steaming down the assembled lines of warships, as was apparently their ancient right.

In 1920 she was sold out of the Customs service and was converted into a private yacht, being renamed SHALIMAR. In 1928 her steam engine and boiler were removed, and a 4-cylinder diesel was installed. Between 1930 and 1940 she was owned by Thomas O. Wilton and based at Walton on Thames.

AT SHOREHAM

In 1947 she was bought by Mrs. N. Kelly who renamed her EILEEN SIOCHT and lived aboard her in Lady Bee Marina at Shoreham. By the late 1950s, she had become one of the many houseboats in mud berths in the River Adur. In 1992, she was in a rather poor state but was bought by a Trust formed by employees of HM Customs & Excise called The Vigilant Trust and her name reverted to Vigilant. She was patched up and in April 1993 towed to Vosper Thornycroft at Portchester and onto a covered slipway for restoration.

The restoration soon came to a stop, but some replating of her hull was carried out. The Trust managed to arrange a free of charge berth for her at the Pound's Marine Shipping Ltd. at Portsmouth. But by 2006 she was in a poor state again, hardly floating, when developers of the Pounds Yard evicted her from her berth.



AT POUNDS

In November 2006, the Medway Maritime Trust offered a berth in Faversham Creek, and the Vigilant Trust organised more patching and the tow to

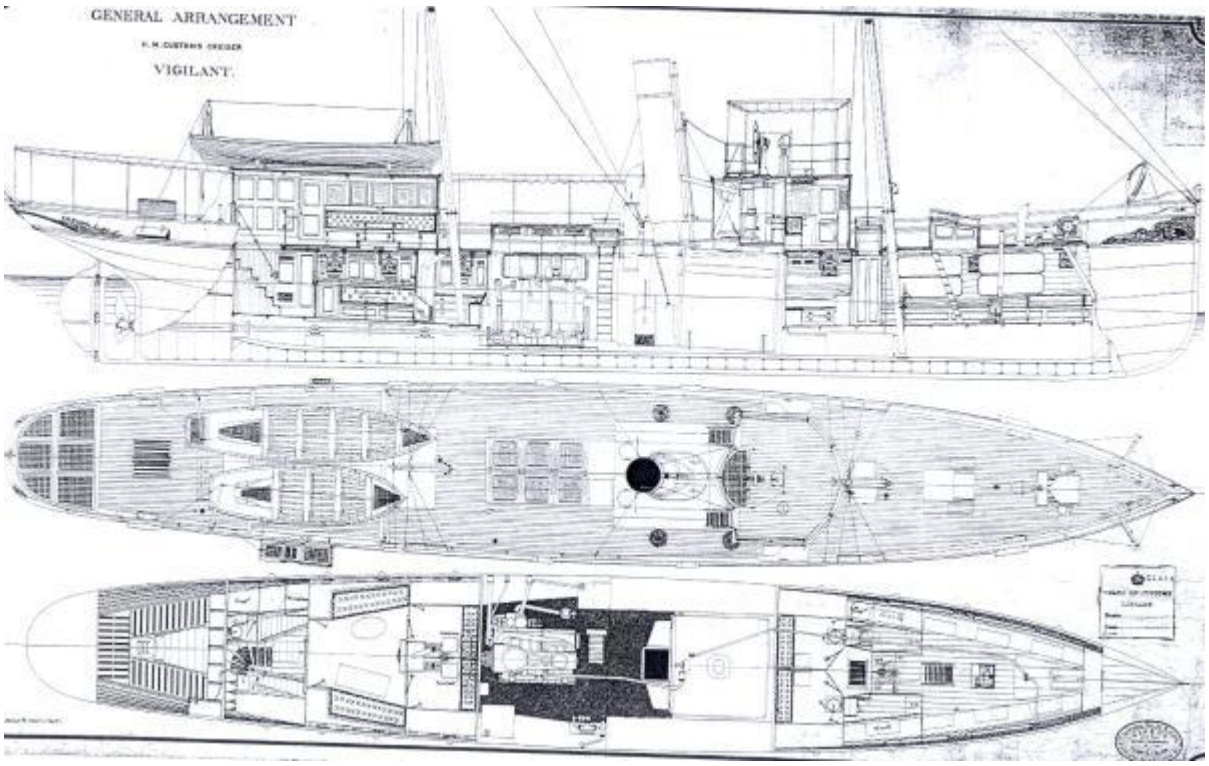
Faversham, pending plans for her continuing restoration. The Medway Maritime Trust took over full ownership from the Vigilant Trust in 2008.

TOW INTO FAVERSHAM CREEK

FAVERSHAM

She is at present berthed alongside the John H. Amos looking very sorry for herself. She is apparently still in the care of the Medway Maritime Trust, but adequate funds for a project to transport her to Maldon for restoration to full working condition have not yet been achieved.


Photo by Fraser Gray


GENERAL ARRANGEMENT
VIGILANT.

BELLA I / MARINERA

Hitting the news headlines since before Christmas was the large crude oil tanker BELLA 1. She had been sanctioned by the USA since 2024 for allegedly carrying Iranian oil for Hezbollah, Houthis and the IRGC. At the time she was intercepted by the US Coast Guard, she was flying the Guyana flag but was not properly registered there and, according to the Americans, she was stateless. She had a history of spoofing. She was owned and managed by the Turkey-based firm Louis Maine Shipholding Enterprises.

On 21st December, she was heading to Venezuela to load crude oil when the US Coast Guard attempted an interception near the Venezuelan coast. The ship did not submit to boarding and instead turned round and headed northwards,

shadowed by the US Coast Guard cutter USCG MUNRO. As the ship was old and travelling light, it is curious that the USA has set so much store on intercepting her.

BELLA 1 AS OVERSEAS MULAN

On 30th December, a Russian flag was painted on the sides of the ship, thus claiming Russian protection. On 1st January, she appeared on the Russian Maritime Register of Shipping under a new name, MARINERA, under the ownership of the Russian concern, Burevestmarin. International law stipulates that ships aren't permitted to change their flags mid-voyage unless there is a change of ownership or registration.


MUNRO WITH MARINERA BEHIND

On 7th January, when she was some 250 nautical miles off Ireland, the US Coast Guard finally boarded her, with support from the British RFA TIDEFORCE. On 11th January, the Marinera moored off Burghead in the Moray Firth, whilst the USCG Munro berthed in Aberdeen. It is reported that the tanker will be taken to the USA. On 28th January, the US Coast Guard took the Marinera's captain and first officer on board the USCG Munro and out of UK territorial waters to face prosecution in the USA. The abduction caused some controversy here, particularly in Scotland. The remaining crew were repatriated to Russia.

THE SHIPS

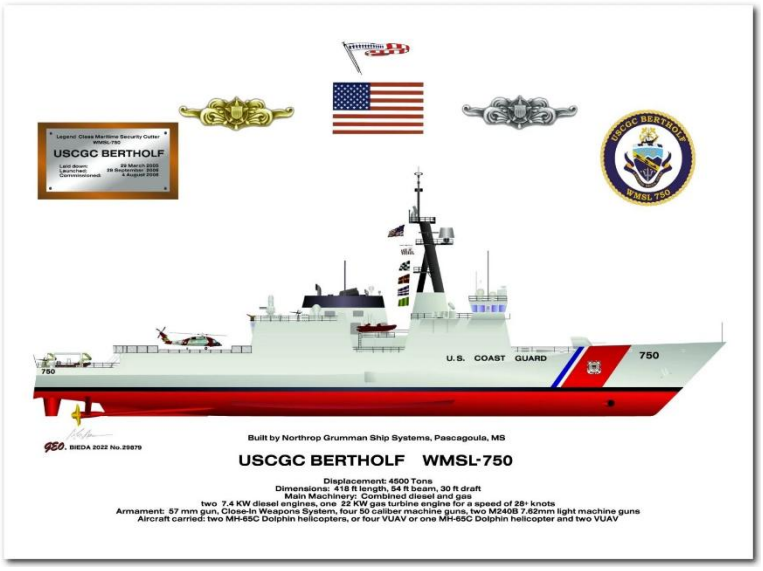
OVERSEAS MULAN

BELLA 1: She was built by Hyundai Heavy Industries at Ulsan as the OVERSEAS MULAN, being laid down on 29th October 2001, launched on 19th January 2002 and completed on 3rd April 2002. She is of 318,518 dwt with dimensions 332.99m x 60.0m x 22.5m. She is powered by a single 16-cylinder diesel of29,745 kW driving a single screw. She was renamed MARINERA and transferred to Russian Registry on 1st January.

LEGEND CLASS CUTTERS

USCG MUNRO: She is a Legend class Coast Guard cutter, one of ten. She was built by Huntington Ingalls Industries at Pascagoula, Mississippi, being laid down on 5th November 2014, launched on 12th September 2015 and commissioned on 1st April 2017. She is of 4500 tons displacement with dimensions 418’ 0” x 54’ 0” x 22’ 6”. She has a “CODAG” power plant, with a GELM2500 gas turbine of 29,500 hp in her forward engine room for fast transit and two MTU 20V1163 diesels of 9900 hp each in her aft engine room for cruising. She has two controllable pitch propellors. Her top speed is over 28 knots, and her range is 12000 nautical miles. She is armed with a single 57mm gun and a 20mm Phalanx CIWS together with four 0.5” machine guns. She normally carries a MH-65C Dolphin MCH helicopter.

Incidentally, the Legend class of cutters is the basis for the proposed US Navy FF(X) frigate programme following the cancellation of the proposed Constellation ongoing programme. The FF(X) is a modular, simpler and above all, cheaper vessel than the Constellations.



LEGEND CLASS

RFA TIDEFORCE

RFA TIDEFORCE: She is a Tide class fleet replenishment tanker. She was built by DSME in South Korea and fitted out in Falmouth, being laid down on 24th December 2015, launched on 21st January 2017 and in service on 30th July 2019. She is of 37,000 tons displacement with dimensions 200.9m x 28.6m x 10m. She is armed with two Phalanx CIWS and two 30mm cannons as well as one helicopter, normally a Merlin or Wildcat.

She has a CODELOD powerplant ((Combined Diesel-Electric Or Diesel) with twin Wartsila 12V6 diesels and twin Wartsila 16V26 engines together with two GE electric motors, giving roughly 23,800 kW in total for propulsion. This

hybrid system allows for fuel-efficient electric cruising at lower speeds and direct diesel drive for higher speeds.

UB 144, 145 OR 150


THE REMAINING WRECK

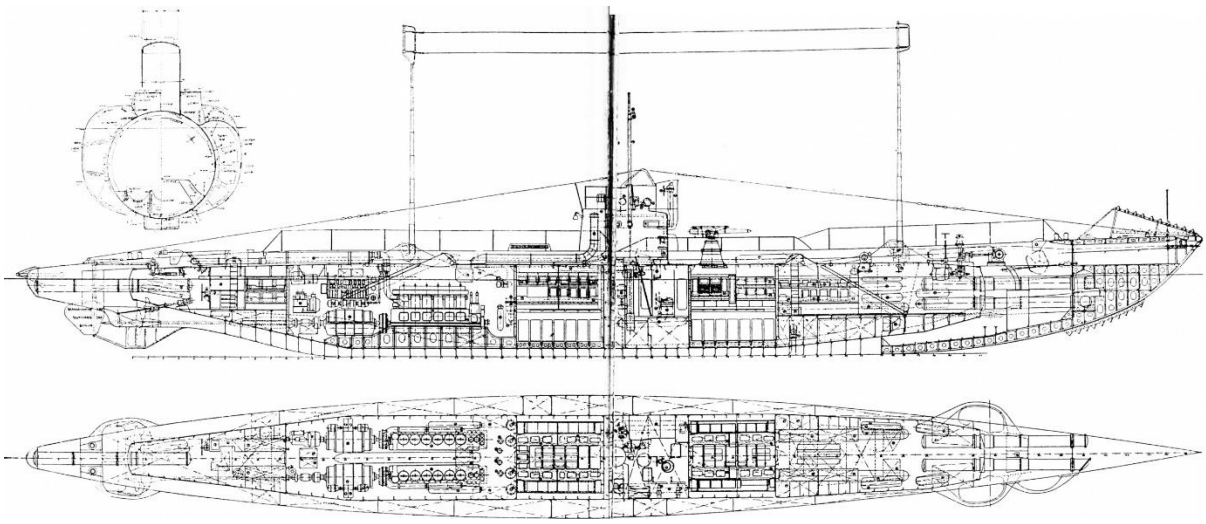
Lying in the Stoke Saltings to the west of Humble Bee Creek in the Medway are the remains of a WW1 U-Boat, clearly visible at low tide. It was of the Type UB111 submarine, built towards the end of the war and was surrendered under the terms of the Armistice. Identification of the vessel is difficult, with several U-Boats of that type having been taken into the Medway for scrapping around 1921-22. Alongside the wreck are the remains of the sailing barge SWALE, dating from 1864.


THE REMAINING WRECK

Local enthusiasts have long asserted that the visible unit is the UB 122, but this is contradicted by Admiralty official records. The records show that the UB 122 was exhibited at Southampton in December 1918 and then laid up in Portsmouth before being scuttled in the English Channel on 1st July 1921.

TYPE UB 111 U-Boats were produced in large numbers by various builders from 1916. 201 were planned but only 96 were completed, some not until 1919. Their displacement was 500 to 546 tons surfaced, and 619 to 673 tons submerged. Overall length was between 55.3m and 57.8m, beam was between 5.76m and 5.8m and draught was between 3.67m and 3.85m.

They were propelled by twin Korting 4-stroke 6-cylinder diesels of 780 kW each or twin Siemen-Schuckert electric motors of 580 kW each coupled to two screws. They could make 13.9 knots when surfaced and 7.6 knots when submerged. Their range was 7120 to 9090 nautical miles at 6 knots when surfaced and 50 to 55 nautical miles at 4 knots while submerged. They were tested to a depth of 50 metres. Their complement was 3 officers and 31 men.

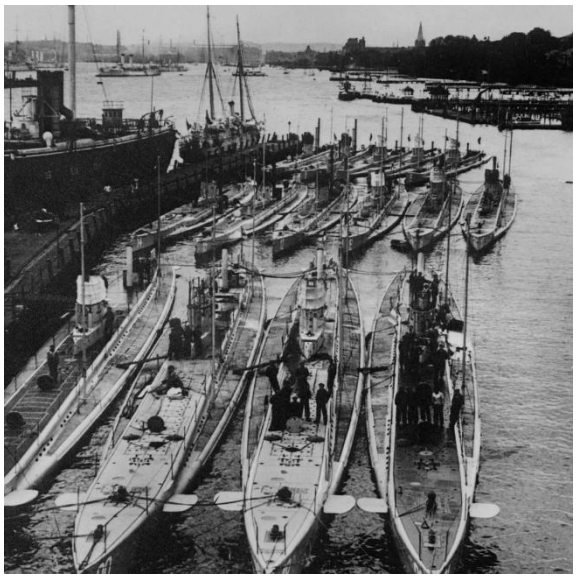


Their armament was mainly torpedoes, with four 500mm tubes forward and another aft and they could carry 10 torpedoes, with one reload for each tube. They also carried an 88 mm deck gun.

The UB 111s joined the conflict from mid-1917. They sank 521 ships totalling 1,123,211 grt and 7 warships, including the battleship HMS BRITANNIA. 37 boats were lost.

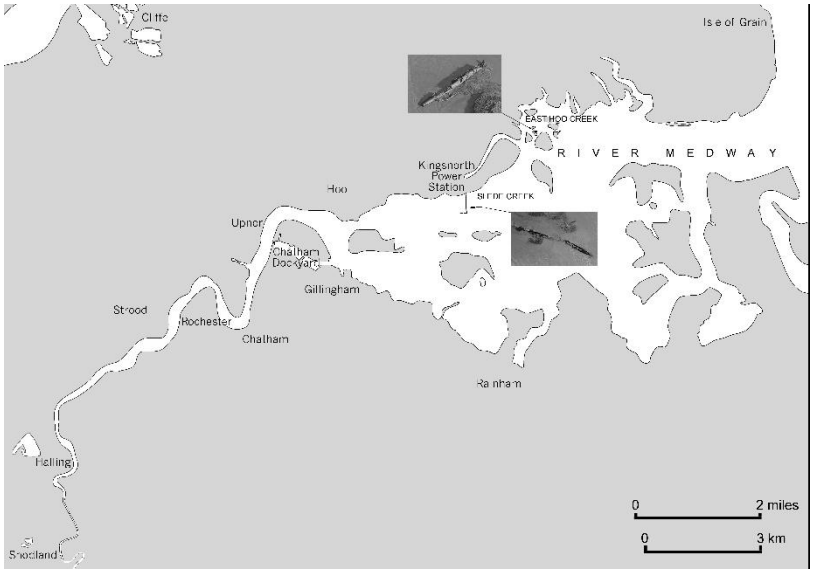

TYPE UB 111 SUBMARINE

All four U-Boats discussed above were built by A.G. Weser at Bremen, but only UB-122 participated in the war. She carried out 2 patrols, and on the second, sank a merchant ship of 3150 tons off the west coast of Ireland. The other three boats were launched in October 1918 and were officially completed on 27th March 1919, although it is likely that they were not fully fitted out and clearly way too late to participate. Like the remaining U-Boats, the four were surrendered to the Allies in accordance with the requirements of the Armistice signed in November 1919 and assembled in the River Stour, upstream of Harwich.


SURRENDERED U-BOATS AT HARWICH

On 22nd July 1920, eight U-Boats, including our three, were sold to M. Lynch & Sons for scrapping and they were towed to Rochester where they were

moored in Bridge Reach. They were stripped of any re-usable material, with their diesels being sold as back-up power for cement works on the Medway and also for Southend Corporation. The market for scrap steel soon collapsed, and full breaking up of the hulls became uneconomic.

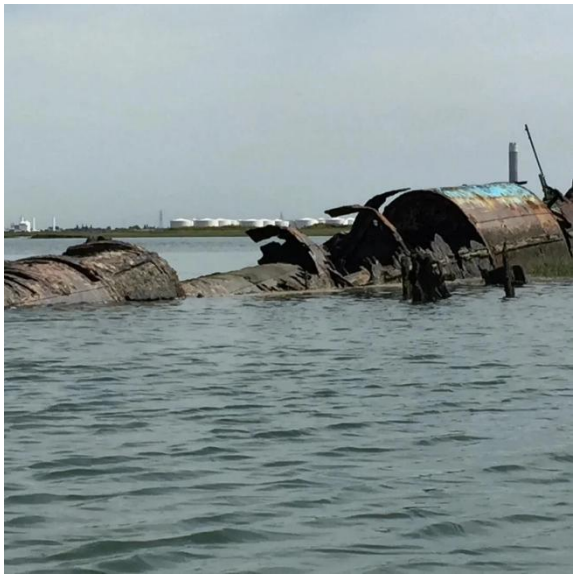


Five of Lynch's U-Boats were sunk in deep water in the Thames Estuary in 1922, but for some reason, special dispensation was granted for the remaining three to be dumped in shallow water in the Medway. Two were dumped in Slede Creek, just off the former Kingsnorth Power Station, whilst the third was dumped further downstream to the west of Humble Bee Creek.

Once the scrap metal market recovered in the late 30s and during WW2, the more accessible pair in Slede Creek were stripped down to their floor frames on site, but the third was difficult to reach, and little further removal of steel seems to have taken place.

MODEL OF TYPE UB 111

The identity of the Bumble Bee Creek U-Boat is not known, as all distinguishing marks were removed at the time of their initial breaking, but clearly, according to the experts, it is one of UB 144, UB 145 or UB 150. Lying alongside her, since the 1930s are the remains of the sailing barge SWALE of 37 tons. She was built by J & S Taylor at Sittingbourne in 1864 and after various local owners, mainly associated with the cement trade, she was still trading in 1932. She was hulked in her present position in the late1930s, presumably being hit in the depression.



THE LOSS OF THE ROMA AND THE FRITZ X BOMB

The ROMA was the third of the LITTORIO class Italian battleships and was the last Italian battleship to be completed. The first two were LITTORIO and VITTORIO VENETO, but the fourth, the IMPERO, was never completed.

The Roma was built by Cantieri Riuniti dell'Adriatico, being laid down on 18th September 1938, launched on 9th June 1940 and commissioned on 14th June 1942. She was of 40,992 tons standard displacement with dimensions 240.8m x 32.8m x 9.6m.

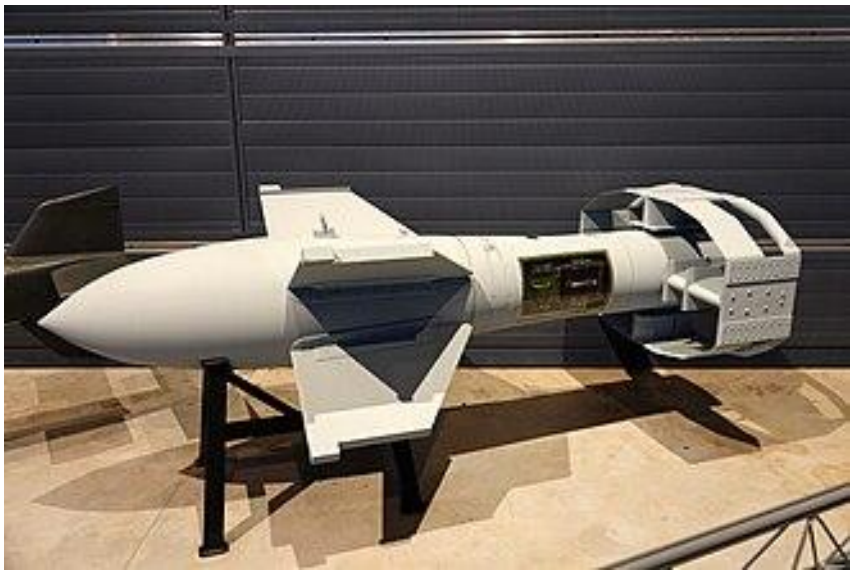
She had 8 oil-fuelled Yarrow boilers supplying steam for the 4 Belluzzo geared steam turbines of 95000 kW combined, driving 4 screws and giving 30 knots. Her range was only 4580 nautical miles at 16 knots, but she was designed to operate in the "Mare Nostrum" so long range was not needed.

Her armament consisted of nine 15” guns, twelve 6” guns, four 4.7” guns, twelve 3.5” guns, twenty 37mm guns and twenty 20mm guns. She carried 3 aircraft and one catapult, normally Imam Ro 43 reconnaissance float planes or Reggiane Re 2000 fighters. Her armour consisted of 350mm main belt, 162mm deck, 350mm turrets and 260mm conning tower.

Her life in the Italian navy was quite short as on 9th September 1943 she was hit by two German Fritz X radio- guided bombs off Sardinia to prevent her surrendering to the Allies. The first bomb caused severe flooding in her machinery spaces, slowing her down, and the second destroyed the machinery and caused the forward magazines to explode, sinking the ship. 1393 of the ship’s complement were lost.

Apart from the short range, the Roma was a modern and effective battleship design.

THE FRITZ X BOMB


FRITZ X

The Ruhrstahl X-1 or Fritz X was the first guided bomb that worked in combat. It consisted of a 3450 lb armour-piercing bomb fitted with a radio receiver and control surfaces in the tail. It was intended for use against heavily armoured ships and ground targets. When dropped from 20,000 feet it could penetrate 28” thick armour. Aided by flares in the bombs tail, the bombardier could send radio signals which moved the control surfaces and produced minor changes in the bomb’s course. Later Fritz X bombs were wire-guided instead of radio-controlled to prevent jamming. As well as sinking the Roma, the bomb severely damaged the battleship ITALIA on the same raid and on 16th September 1943, HMS WARSPITE and the US cruiser SAVANNAH were damaged off Salerno and the Warspite was out of action for 9 months.

USS SAVANNAH BEING HIT

Between April 1943 and December 1944, some 1386 of the bombs were produced, of which 602 were expended in testing and training. Use in combat was limited by the small number of Luftwaffe aircraft available to carry the bomb. It was estimated after the war that a skilled operator could land the bomb within a100 feet radius about half the time, pretty good for an aircraft at 20,000 feet.

THE LOSS OF THE URSA MAJOR

URSA MAJOR

On 23rd December 2024 the Sanctioned Russian Heavy Lift vessel URSA MAJOR sank off the coast of Almeira in the western Mediterranean. She was on a voyage from St. Petersburg to Vladivostok in the Far East, with a cargo stated to be empty containers, two large Liebherr 420 mobile cranes and two 45-ton hatches for an icebreaker. At the time, she was owned by the Russian state controlled Oboronlogistika.

On 22nd December, whilst she was sailing eastbound between Spain and Algeria, tracking showed her speed suddenly dropping to 1 knot. According to TASS, there had been an explosion in her engine room. By 23rd, she was drifting southwards down by her stern with a list to starboard. And that evening she sank in some 2500 metres of water. 14 of her crew of 16 were rescued and taken to Cartagena by the Spanish patrol boat SERVIOLA and the rescue ship CLARA CAMPOAMOR. 2 other crew members were missing.

URSA MAJOR

Whilst Spanish and other nations' rescue craft were quickly on the scene, the Russian military Landing Ship IVAN GREN arrived promptly and took charge. According to the initial Russian news reports, the ship had suffered an explosion in the engine room which cut out all power including the electrics. Russia later admitted that the loss of the ship had been caused by "a terrorist attack, citing the nature of three holes in the side of the hull.

It was later reported that the two cargo hatches on deck were in fact a pair of VM-45 nuclear reactor components for submarines under construction by North Korea, which would explain the Russian attempts at security. In January

2025, the Russian intelligence vessel YANTAR arrived on site. She is equipped with unique underwater reconnaissance capabilities, including manned and unmanned submersibles, enabling a thorough examination of the sunken ship. On 28th January, N. Patrushev, Assistant to the President of Russia, stated that the sinking had resulted from a terrorist attack organised by an unfriendly country.

THE SHIPS


URSA MAJOR

URSA MAJOR: She was built by Peene-Werft at Wolgast in Germany as the SCAN BRITANIA, with Rolandwerft of Berne, Germany building her forward and cargo sections. She was laid down on 28th January 2009, launched on 28th October 2009 and completed on 14th December 2009. After various changes of name and ownerships, she became the SPARTA 111 in 2017 and the URSA MAJOR in 2021. She was sanctioned for carrying Russian military equipment to Syria.

SCAN BRITANIA (FRONT SECTION) EN ROUTE TO WOLGAST

She was of 9490 dwt with dimensions 142.5m x 23.2m x 7.2m. She was powered by a MAN B & W 16-cylinder medium speed 16V32/40 engine of 8000 kW built under licence by STX Corporation in South Korea driving a single controllable pitch propellor giving 17 knots. She was rated at Ice class 1A and had two 350-ton cranes mounted on her port side.

In 2020 as Sparta 111, she was stuck in the ice in the Yenisei Gulf on the Northern Sea Route and required a month-long multi-ship rescue involving the nuclear-powered icebreaker VAIGACH.

SERVIOLA

SERVIOLA: She was the lead ship of the Serviola class of Offshore Patrol Vessels serving the Spanish Navy. She was built by Navantia in Ferrol and was commissioned in 1991. She is of 1200 tons displacement with dimensions 66.6m x 10.4m x 3.4m. She is powered by twin MTU diesels of 5600 kW in total driving 2 controllable pitch propellors and giving 20 knots. She has a pad for a helicopter and carries a 3” gun and 2 machine guns.

CLARA CAMPOAMOR

CLARA CAMPOAMOR: She is a Spanish Pollution Control & Salvage Vessel operated by Sociedad de Salvamento Maritimo. She was built in 2007 as the MARIA ZAMBRANO. She is of 3646 gt with dimensions 80.0m x 18.0m x 6.6m. She is powered by four Bergen B32:40L8P diesels of 16000 kW in total driving 2 controllable pitch propellors and giving a bollard pull of 220 tons.

YANTAR

YANTAR: She is a Special Purpose Intelligence Collection Ship built for the Russian Navy by the Yantar Shipyard in Kalingrad. She was laid down on 8th July 2010, launched in December 2012 and commissioned in May 2015. She is of 5736 tons displacement full load with dimensions 107.7m x 17.2m. She has diesel-electric propulsion with four 1600 kW and two 1080 kW diesel generators with two 2500 kW electric motors driving two azipods with fixed pitch propellors giving 15 knots. She has a helipad and carries 2 deep-diving AUVs, along with a Rus class and a Konsul class boats.

VAIGACH

VAIGACH: She is a nuclear-powered icebreaker built for the Soviet Union by Wartsila Marine Helsinki Shipyard. Her KL-40 reactor was then installed at the Baltic Shipyard in St. Petersburg. She was launched on 26th February 1988 and commissioned on 1st August 1990. She is of 20,791 gt with dimensions 151.8m x 29.2m x 7.5m to 9.0m. She is powered by a KLT-40M nuclear reactor rated at 171,000 kW driving two GTA 6421-OMS turbo generators of 36800 kW combined giving 18.5 knots. She has a hangar and landing platform for a helicopter.

THE ARLEIGH BURKE CLASS

It has been reported that eight Arleigh Burke class destroyers form the main escorting fleet in the ABRAHAM LINCOLN carrier Task Force currently threatening Iran. The Arleigh Burkes are the only US Navy class of destroyers apart from the three somewhat controversial ZUMWALTs. The numbers are impressive, with 76 so far completed and another 23 planned. All were or will be built by either Huntington Ingalls Shipbuilding in Mississippi or the General Dynamics Bath Iron Works in Maine. The class was designed for anti-air, anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare.

The class was developed in a series of four “Flights”, referred to as Flight 1, Flight 11, Flight 11A and Flight 111. In the Royal Navy, these would probably be considered as “Sub-classes”, or more

recently, “Batches”. The first ship was the USS ARLEIGH BURKE, which was commissioned in 1991, and production has continued almost constantly ever since, through the four Flights as technology advanced.

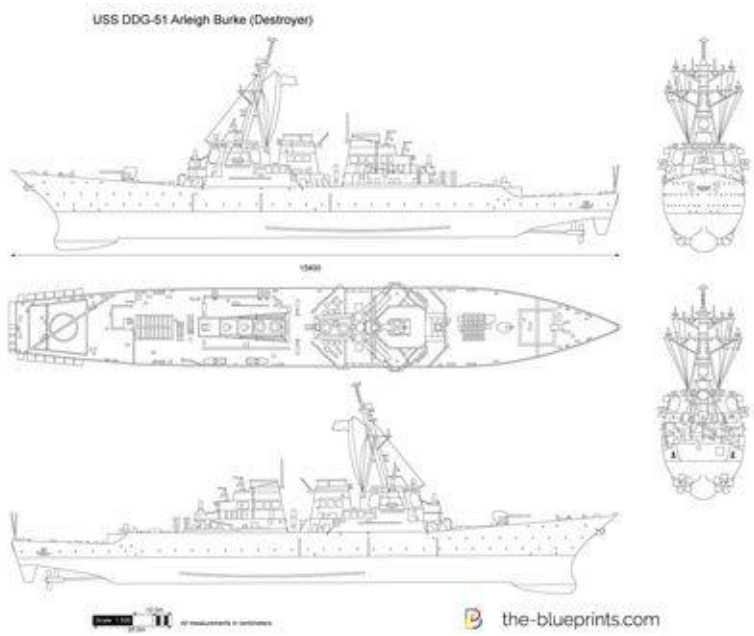
The class was designed around the “Aegis” Weapon System, which integrates the ship’s censors and weapon systems. The hulls are entirely of steel, but with critical areas reinforced with 70 tons of Kevlar armour. Aluminium superstructures are no longer used, partly from the Royal Navy experience in the Falklands War.

The power plant is common to all flights and consists of four General Electric LM 2500-30 gas turbines of 78,000 kW in total driving two 5-bladed reversible controllable pitch propellors and giving over 30 knots. The stated range is 4400 nautical miles at 20 knots.

To accommodate the increasingly complex systems, each flight was larger than the previous one. For example, the displacement of Flight 1 vessels was 8300 tons, Flight 11, 8400 tons, Flight 11A 9500 tons and Flight 111 9700 tons.

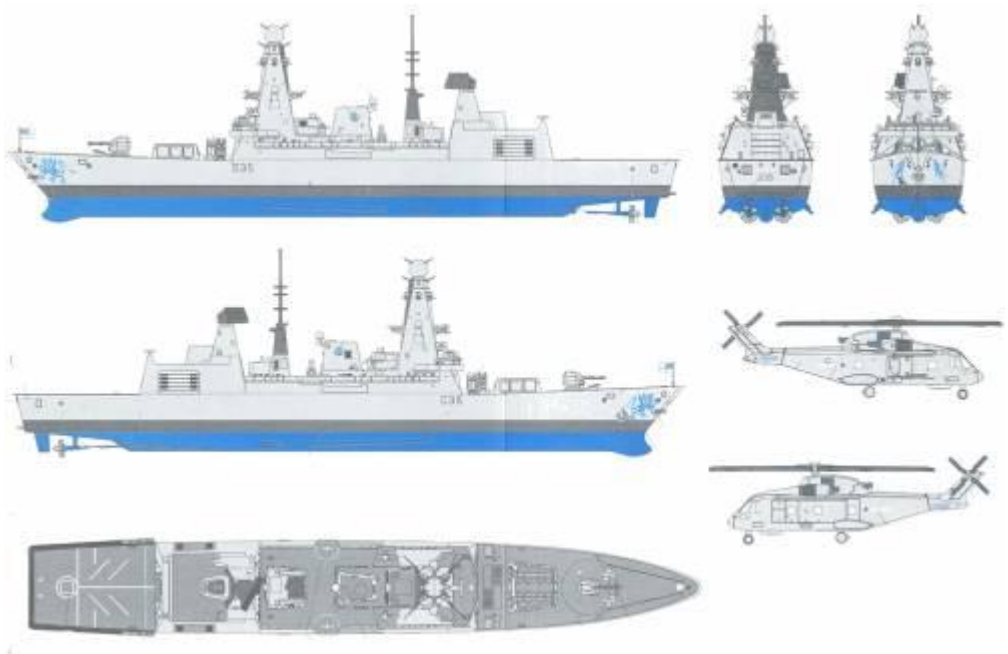
Overall lengths similarly increased from 154m (Flights 1 & 11) to 155.3m (Flights 11A and 111). In all cases, their beam was 20m and their draught, reportedly, was about 9.4m. The Royal Navy Type 42 destroyers similarly increased in size, following the lessons learnt in the Falklands.

Armament consists of a 5” Mk. 45 gun, two Phalanx CIWS, two triple torpedo tubes for Mk. 46 torpedoes, 90 to 96 VLS cells for ASROC, Tomahawk and Evolved Sea Sparrow missiles. Flights 11A and 111 also carry two MH-60R Seahawk helicopters.




TYPE 45 DESTROYER

It is interesting to compare the Arleigh Burkes with the six British Type 45 destroyers. Displacement and dimensions are roughly similar, and the integrated electric propulsion system, at least in the Power Improvement Project ships, has an equivalent power output and top speed. The Type 45s have a better range at 7000 nautical miles at 18 knots. In these times of manpower shortages, the Type 45s have a complement of 190 to 235 compared to the Arleigh Burke's 303 to 323.



In terms of weapons including helicopters, the two types have similar portfolios except that the Type 45s do not carry torpedo tubes. Even in the

proposed upgrade between 2026 and 2032, the Type 45s will only carry 72 vertical launch cells, compared with the Flight 111 Arleigh Burke's 96.

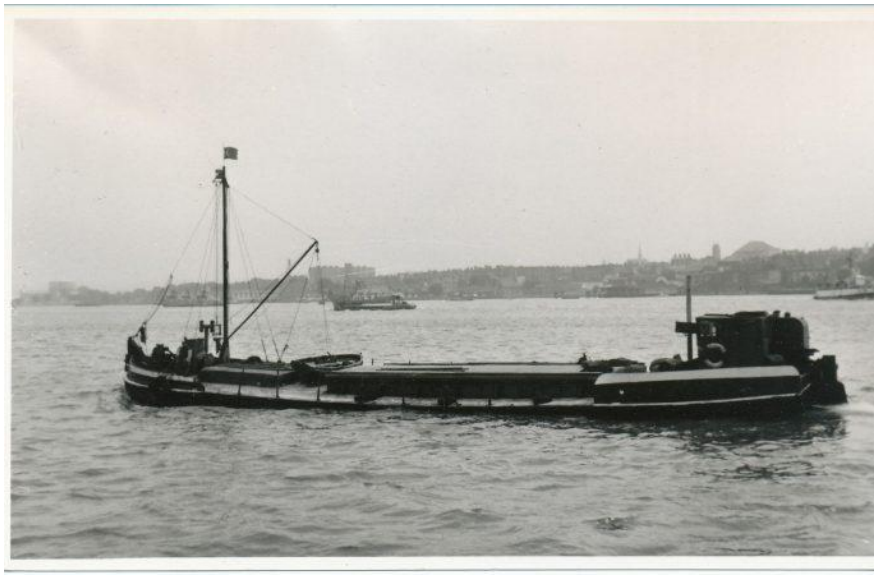
Overall, the Type 45 s are designed mainly for anti-aircraft and anti-missile warfare, whereas the Arleigh Burkes are designed for a more all-round role.

SAILING BARGE SCONE

The SCONE was a wooden spritsail barge built by Gill at Frindsbury near Rochester for his London & Rochester Barge Company in 1919. She was among the last few wooden sailing barges built, and possibly she was built to keep Gill's workers usefully employed during a slump after the First War. At the time of her build, the London & Rochester Barge Company, soon to become the London & Rochester Trading Company, had a large fleet of sailing barges and lighters.

The Scone was of 67 tons and was 88.3’ x 21.0’ x 6.9’. She traded under the L & R T C for 52 years, apart from a spell for the Ministry of War Transport in 1940. In 1946 she was fitted with an auxiliary engine, a 3-cylinder 66 hp Kelvin K3 marine diesel, and in 1957 she was cut down to a motor barge. Her last commercial cargo voyage was in 1970, consisting of 180 tons of Canadian wheat which she carried from Tilbury to Stambridge Mills at Rochford. She was then laid up and bought by P.J. King in 1971 and converted to a house barge.


AS AN AUXILIARY IN 1953



AS A MOTOR BARGE IN 1971

Between 1977 and 1979 she was re-rigged by Steve Mallet and used for chartering, based at St. Katherines Docks. In 1983 she was put up for sale and was bought by G. Heald in 1984. He was a publican from Whitstable who sailed her for a short time but then converted her into a static restaurant and by 1985 she was owned by Patchlord Ltd in the West India Docks.

She had various owners in the next few years as a bijou restaurant in Millwall Dock, but she was blown off her moorings by the Crossharbour Bomb in February 1996. Lack of access for maintenance for 6 months after the bomb caused some further deterioration. In 2000 she sank at her moorings in West India Docks. She was raised and was moved to Barking Creek but, sadly here

that she twisted her hull. In July 2004 she arrived in Benfleet Creek, ostensibly as a temporary measure before being taken to Hoo for repairs. Instead, she was hulked just to the west of the bridge onto Canvey Island. Very quickly she started to flood on each tide, and there she remains, rapidly deteriorating.

SOON AFTER ARRIVAL AT BENFLEET

RECENT

RECENT

RECENT


RECENT

It is apparent from the last few images that the mud has now well and truly got into the hull, and it won't be long before the internal pressure pushes the sides of the hull out. A sad but typical end of a wooden barge that didn't quite make her centenary.

CAESAREA TRADER


UNDER TOW TO PORTSMOUTH

The CAESAREA TRADER, a Ro-Ro cargo ferry suffered a major engine room fire on 9th February 2026 off the coast of the Isle of Wight. She was en route from St. Helier, Jersey to Portsmouth, her normal run for DFDS since they took over

the service in last June. She lost power and anchored off Shanklin because of the severity of the fire.

AS COMMODORE GOODWILL

Her crew of 23 and her one passenger were reported as being safe. A search and rescue helicopter was used for thermal imaging of the fire whilst the Bembridge lifeboat and tugs VB ENGLISHMEN, VB SCOTSMAN and VB BOUNTIFUL fought the fire, which was brought under control that evening. She was towed to Portsmouth on 10th February by the tugs SD TEMPEST, VB ENGLISHMAN AND VB SCOTSMAN and temporarily docked at No.2 Berth for inspection.

AS COMMODORE GOODWILL

The DFDS chartered ferry STENA VINGA made an extra round trip as a stopgap whilst DFDS's standby ferry ARROW was readied to take over the service from 11th February.

THE SHIPS

CAESAREA TRADER

The Caesarea Trader is UK flagged and was built by Royal Schelde Group BV at Vlissingen as the COMMODORE GOODWILL, being laid down on 14th March 1995, launched on 6th November 1995 and delivered to Condor Ferries on 1st March 1996 for the Jersey to Portsmouth service. She is of 11,166 gt with dimensions 126.4m x 21.4m x 6.0m. She provides 1250 lane metres of cargo space, roughly 80 trailers and has accommodation for 12 passengers. She is powered by twin 6-cylinder MaN diesels of 8600 kW combined giving 17.3 knots.

DFDS bought the ship in June 2025 when they won the contract to operate the service for 20 years. She was renamed and UK flagged.

STENA VINGA

STENA VINGA: She is a Swedish flagged Ro-Ro Passenger ferry built at the Merwede Shipyard BV at Hardinxveld in the Netherlands as the HAMMERODDE in 2005. She was rebuilt in 2010 to give extra freight capacity. She is of 14,551 gt with dimensions 129.9m x 23.4m x 5.6m. She is powered by twin MaK 9MMM32 diesels of 4320 kW each at 600 rpm giving 18.5 knots Her capacity is 400 passengers, 200 cars and 1500 lane metres of freight.

ARROW

ARROW: She is a UK flagged Ro-Ro cargo ferry built by Astilleros de Huelva in Spain as the VARBOLA for the Estonian Shipping Company of Tallin. She was launched in August 1998. She is of 7606 gt with dimensions122.3m x 19.8m x 6.2m. She is powered by twin Wartsila 9R32 diesels of 7400 kW combined

giving 16 knots. Her capacity is 65 trailers and 12 passengers. She is at present owned by the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company and chartered to DFDS.

VB ENGLISHMAN and VB SCOTSMAN

VB ENGLISHMAN and VB SCOTSMAN: Both are UK flagged Azimuth Stern Drive (ASD) tugs built by Damen, the former in 2014 as the BAUS and the latter in 2007. They are of 247 gt with dimensions 24.4m x 9.15m x 4.4m. They are powered by twin Caterpillar Type 3512 hp diesels of 2355 kW combined giving a bollard pull of 50 tons. They are owned and operated by Boluda Towage UK and are based at Portsmouth.

SD BOUNTIFUL

SD BOUNTIFUL: She is a UK flagged Azimuth Tractor Drive (ATD) tug built by Damen in Poland and the Netherlands in 2019, one of their ASD 2909 design.

She is of 271 gt with dimensions 29.1m x 10.0m x 4.8m. She is powered by twin Caterpillar 3512C HD diesels of 3000 kW combined at 1600 rpm driving two Rolls-Royce US205 azimuth thrusters and giving a bollard pull of 43 tons. She is operated by Serco Marine Services, primarily for assisting Royal Navy ships at the Portsmouth Naval Base.

SD TEMPEST

SD TEMPEST: She is a UK flagged ASD tug built by Damen in Gdansk in Poland in 2017. She is of the Damen ART 8032 design and is of 495 gt with dimensions 32.9m x 12.6m x 6.5m. She is powered by three Caterpillar 3512C HD diesels rated at 1765 kW each at 1800 rpm riving three azimuth thrusters with controllable pitch propellors giving a bollard pull of 81.7 tons. She is operated by Serco Marine Services, primarily for assisting RN ships, especially the Queen Elizabeth class carriers.

VESSELS ON THE HISTORIC SHIPS REGISTER BUILT AT WOOLWICH

PART 1

The Harland and Wolff yard in North Woolwich was the largest in London, another six H&W repair yards were dotted along the Thames at London Docks, Surrey docks, Millwall docks, King George dock & Tilbury.Opened in 1921 with the Royal Dock group

At the North Woolwich yard the machine shop was capable of producing shafting up to 80ft long and crank shafts of 5ft 6 ins, there were upholstery and French polishing workshops, sail making, boiler making, a foundry able to forge iron with up to 14ins square section under hammer, producing castings up to 15 tons. In the 1930s they built here vessels for the Grand Union Canal Carrying Company. Known as the Small Woolwich class they were of composite construction, and fitted with National diesel engines. Later they built 24 vessels of the Big Woolwich class. They also built steam ships in the yard at that time, as well as other working boats, like lighters. The yard also worked on refits for

major vessels, including warships. They undertook a range of repair and maintenance contracts for marine equipment. Other works were for instance eight marine diesel platforms - i.e. Esso Pegwell Bay - built between 1962 and 1964. One of the last vessels built by Harland & Wolff was the bulk cement carrier Blue Circle launched from their slipway in 1971. This 1,000 ton vessel was built for Associated Portland Cement Manufacturers Ltd.

At the North Woolwich yard Harland and Wolf built vessels for the Grand Union Canal Carrying Company G.U.C.C. known as the Small Woolwich class they were of composite construction, and fitted with National diesel engines. Later they built 24 vessels of the Big Woolwich class.

The Star Class Prototypes

The hull depth was 4' 2", and all 12 boats in the class, (6 pairs) were wooden. Engines fitted were Russell Newbery twin cylinder diesels, of 18hp. Nearly all the boats of this size were named after stars and constellations, and thus was born the Star class. The boats were built to a 7' 1/2" in beam, 71' 6" long, and a deep draught of 3' 3". Harland and Wolff built two motors **Venus** and **Alderbaran** and two butties **Saturn** and **Orion** (they where delivered in 1935).

The Star Class (Small Woolwich)

In January 1935 Harland and Wolff received an order for 24 pairs, the boats to be of composite construction, and fitted with National diesel engines, known later as the Small Woolwich class.

The Town Class (Big Woolwich)

The Town Class boats from Harland and Wolff were known as the Big Woolwich class, being of all steel construction, and numbered 24 pairs, and 24 single motors. All the Big Woolwich boats have names from A to H, **Aber** being the first, and **Hawkesbury** being the last. Delivery commenced in July 1936 and was completed in May 1937.

Its probably true that more Harland and Wolff boats survive on the English canals than anywhere else!

Lyndsey

2111 had a semi-circular stern and a single screw combination with a Kitchen's Reversing Rudder. This device surrounded the propeller with a steerable tunnel made of two shells. To go astern, an inner wheel at the helm caused a worm drive in the stern compartment to close the shells behind the propeller and provide reverse thrust. This is similar to the manner in which modern jet engines achieve reverse thrust, but was patented by Jack Kitchen of Windermere in 1915. Unlike conventional single screw vessels, the reversing rudder enabled LINDSEY 2111 to move her stern to port or starboard from a standstill, and to turn in her own length using astern power.

Built in the earlier years of arc welding, LINDSEY 2111 is a hybrid of riveted and welded construction. The hull and deck plates are riveted together, but are welded onto the frames and bulkheads from the inside. Two specially strengthened lifting points are provided each side at deck level, near the shoulder and quarter of the vessel, so that the entire craft can be craned out of the water without the need to get slings beneath the hull. These, together with beaching legs which bolt straight into the side of the hull, enabled her to be lifted ashore for maintenance, or put onboard a larger vessel for long distance servicing of the flying boats.

LINDSEY 2111 was the seventh in a batch of eight refuellers ordered by the Ministry of Aircraft Production for the RAF. She was completed and delivered to RAF Mountbatten in May 1946 where she served with the Sunderland flying boat squadrons. She was later stationed at Pembroke Dock and Calshot. She stayed in service until the end of the flying boat era when RAF Sunderland ceased operations in the UK in 1956. LINDSEY 2111 was decommissioned in November 1957 and converted for private use. The three thousand gallon tank for aviation fuel was removed and a wooden coach roof placed over the remaining hold space. The steering was also moved from the cowl immediately aft of the front deck to a new position above the engine room. This only involved removing part of the long run of shafts that linked the helm to the steering gear. All the components of the Kitchen's Reversing Rudder are still original. The present owners acquired her in 1975 when she was lying at Teddington with a damaged engine and in use as a houseboat. They rebuilt the original Croslley BWMC4 air-start engine and ran it for a number of years until the block cracked irreparably, when it was replaced with a 1955 Foden FD6. A wheelhouse has been added over the engine room. The hull is sound and has not been altered and she retains many original features, such as the lifting points, beaching leg attaching points, manholes in both side decks, anchor and winch, accommodation ventilators, hatches to engine room and stern compartment, bollards, engine room portholes and light fittings. In 2008 she was painted in black and white with her RAF service number and roundel back in place.

LINDSEY 2111 is currently moored on the Thames and remains in use as a private leisure craft.

Bargus

Designed and built for the Grand Union Canal Carrying Company by Harland and Wolff in Woolwich, London, BARGUS is a Small Woolwich Star Class boat. Delivered in November 1935 with her butty BETELGEUSE she worked for the company until 1948, when she was transferred to British Waterways on Nationalisation, and was at some point sold to the Anderton Canal Carrying Company.

In 1969 she was part converted for use as a pleasure boat by J Pogson in Middlewich. She was then fitted with her Lister HA3 diesel. In 1971 she was purchased by D Tunbridge of London, who cruised her throughout the area until 1977 when she became permanently moored at Little Venice, London. In 1982, she was purchased as a share boat based in Milton Keynes, and remained there until 2016, when she was purchased by her current owner, who already owned BETELGEUSE, her original butty pair, who then reconverted her for cargo carrying. She traded coal, gas and diesel up to 2023, when both BARGUS and BETELGEUSE began being used as pleasure boats.

Alperton

ALPERTON is a narrow boat butty built by Harland & Wolf Ltd. at Woolwich and delivered to the Grand Union Canal Carrying Company Ltd. in August 1936. Her hull is made of riveted steel with a wooden cabin and she has a pointed bow with a plumb curved stem and a pointed stern. She was registered at Coventry as number 544 and was fleet number 207 and gauging number 12573. She was named after Alperton near London. ALPERTON was one of twenty-four similar vessels known as the Town or Woolwich class. One of these has now been completely scrapped and at least two others have had a counter stern and engines fitted. Some have been converted to houseboats. ALPERTON, with her motor the DARLEY, carried cargoes from Birmingham to London until 1948 when British Waterways took over. By the 1950s, she lay disused in the Wendover arm of the canal until the Union Canal Company bought her for carrying and use on camping holidays. The wooden cabin was restored in 1972. The present owner purchased the vessel in 1980.

Dodona

ODONA was built as a butty in 1935 by Harland & Wolff Ltd, Woolwich, for the Grand Union Canal Carrying Co. - one of their Star Class boats known as a Small Woolwich. Her fleet number was 269, and she was registered at Brentford No 574 in December 1935. She was originally paired with the motor COLUMBIA.

During the Second World War, DODONA was used as a training vessel for women who had volunteered to operate English narrowboats and aid in the war effort, known as the ‘Idle Women’. Later, in 1948, DODONA become a part of the British Waterways fleet when Nationalisation took place. Sold by British Waterways in the early 60's, she was then cut in half, with both halves being motorised and turned into two leisure boats.

DODONA was subsequently restored in 1995 to a 50' motorboat in working condition. It was during this restoration that the wooden bottom was removed and replaced by the current steel bottom. DODONA is now used purely used for pleasure but is available for commercial use should the occasion arise

Achilles

ACHILLES was built by Harland & Wolff Ltd., at Woolwich, in November 1935 and was commissioned by the Grand Union Canal Carrying Company. She was a 70ft 'Star' class narrowboat butty, designed to work as a pair, and was inherited by British Waterways in 1948. After 1965, ACHILLES was purchased by the Birmingham & Midland Canal Carrying Company and used to carry cargo alongside the motor COLLINGWOOD until the 1970s.

Between 2015-2021, under the ownership of the boat restorer Roger Farrington, ACHILLES was cut in half and converted into two separate motor vessels at Braunston Marina. The stern end of the vessel - still called ACHILLES - is now a 45ft small Woolwich tug and has been fully restored as of 2021, with a new stern, new base plate, all rotted steel replaced, and completely refitted interior.

Update, February 2025: Under new ownership.

ONE FACT WONDER MINESWEEPERS

HMS Bronington

HMS *Bronington* is a former Royal Navy Ton-class minesweeper, perhaps best known for being commanded for a short period by King Charles (at the time, still Prince Charles). With hulls of mahogany, the Ton-class minesweepers were among the last wooden warships built for the Royal Navy before it switched to today's plastic-hulled minehunters in the 1970s.

Bronington was laid down on 30 May 1951 by Cook, Welton & Gemmell. They built trawlers and other small ships at Beverley in Yorkshire, on the river Hull, a tributary of the Humber. She was launched on 19 March 1953 and was commissioned as HMS *Humber* on 4 June 1954. *Humber* spent four years in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, serving as part of the 101st Minesweeping Squadron.

Reverting to her original name of *Bronington* in 1958, the vessel was converted into a minehunter at Rosyth Dockyard between 1963 and 1965. Alterations included the fitting of an enclosed bridge, a tripod mast and the latest sonar. In February 1965, she recommissioned as part of the 5th Minesweeper Squadron, which was based at *HMS Vernon* in Portsmouth. She returned to Gibraltar Dockyard for a major refit and then returned to the Forth in 1976 for further service in home waters for the 1st Mine Counter Measures Squadron.

Prince Charles (now King Charles III) commanded *HMS Bronington* for a short period between 9 February and 15 December 1976. On 14 November that year, during a visit to the Pool of London, the vessel was visited by the Queen, the Queen Mother, HRH Prince Philip and eight other members of the royal family.

During the late 1980s, *Bronington* saw service in the Mediterranean Sea as part of 2nd Mine Counter Measures Squadron, with NATO as part of the Standing Naval Force Channel and as a fishery protection vessel.

After returning to Portsmouth in 1988 and being decommissioned from service, the vessel was purchased in January 1989 by the Bronington Trust, a registered charity dedicated to her preservation and display to the public, and

she left Portsmouth for Manchester. The vessel was berthed in the Manchester Ship Canal at Salford Quays and was open to visitors for ten years. On 11 July 2002, she became part of the collection of the Warship Preservation Trust and was moored at Birkenhead on Merseyside. After the closure of the Trust in 2006, she became the property of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company and remained in storage, formerly at Vittoria Dock and latterly in the West Float of Birkenhead Docks. She deteriorated rapidly, particularly her wooden deck.

On 17 March 2016, *Bronington* sank at her moorings in Birkenhead.

In December 2021 the *HMS Bronington Preservation Trust* was formed with the aim of raising and preserving the vessel. The preservation trust commissioned a dive survey in June 2022 to establish the state of the vessel. The survey revealed the vessel to be in good condition, with only two minor holes in the hull.

The trust wanted to see the vessel used to deliver yachting and diving courses, teach navigation, be hired for fishing/diving trips, filming, and used by Sea Cadets and the Prince's Trust. If those goals proved too much due to cost and unavailability of equipment, then the plan was for *Bronington* to revert to becoming a static display alongside or in a dry dock, open to the public, like her successful years as a museum ship on the Manchester Ship Canal.

Merseyside shipbuilder Cammell Laird agreed to take *Bronington* into their dry dock for restoration under their apprenticeship scheme in stages if the funding could be found.

In June 2023, the National Museum of the Royal Navy said that there were potential locations in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, which could be considered if the restoration effort was successful.

The trust continues to find it difficult to obtain sufficient funds to restore the vessel. A recent news article highlighted that an application for funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund was turned down because there were too many other applicants, but the trust has not given up their hopes of securing the necessary funding.


Z
CITADEL


M1115

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OPERATION RHEOSTAT

The minelayer H.M.S. Abdiel with three Ton class minesweepers; built by J. I. Thornycroft, Southampton, and completed in October, 1967, she was used as a MCMV support ship. She was broken up at Santander in 1988.

Operation Rheostat was a Royal Navy led multinational effort to clear the Suez Canal of explosives and shipwrecks before its reopening in 1975 following the end of the Yom Kippur War in 1973.

The clearing operations covered the whole of the canal, including the West Bank, the East Bank and the Great Bitter Lake. The other navies involved were

those of the USA and France. The operation took place between April and November 1974, with a follow-up in early 1975 to finish the job.

Taking part in the 1974 operation were the MCM support ship, HMS ABDIEL, and Ton class minehunters HMS BOSSINGTON, HMS MAXTON and HMS WILTON. In the following year, HMA ABDIEL was back, together with the minehunters HMS SHERATON and HMS HUBBERTON.

The minehunters located and identified underwater munitions etc making use of the new Type 193 mine hunting sonar and active rudders with divers carrying out controlled demolition of the ordnance. They cleared to a depth of 8 metres. which was probably adequate for the ships in use in the canal at that time. No doubt, deeper clearance has been undertaken since, as ships of up to 20.1 metres can traverse the canal.

The final tally was 209 tons of high explosives of various types, around 800 anti-tank and anti-personnel mines, 6000 rounds of ammunition and 70 missiles of various types.

THE R.N. SHIPS INVOLVED

HMS ABDIEL

HMS ABDIEL: She was designed as a minelayer, mainly for training purposes. She was built by Thornycroft at Woolston, Southampton, being commissioned in 1967. She was of 1375 tons standard displacement and was powered by twin Paxman Ventura 18-cylinder diesels of 2210 kW combined driving 2 screws and giving 16 knots. She acted as support vessel to the minehunters

during both sessions of Operation Rheostat. She had a short life, being scrapped in 1988.

HMS BOSSINGTON

THE TON CLASS: A total of 119 Ton class minesweepers were built in the 1950s, built in various shipyards. They were of 440 tons standard displacement and were powered by twin Napier Deltic diesels. They were constructed with aluminium framing and double diagonal mahogany skins to minimise their magnetic signature. At first, they towed “Oropesa” and magnetic sweep equipment, including acoustic hammers, basically little changed from WW2 minesweepers.


HMS BOSSINGTON and HMS HUBBERSTON

In the 1960s, 16 of the class were converted into minehunters, with all the sweeping gear removed, and Type 193 mine hunting sonar installed. Active rudders were fitted to facilitate hovering in one position as well as a divers' recompression chamber and a magazine for mine disposal reloads. Once a target had been found, divers were sent down to carry out the demolition. Each minehunter carried 6 divers for this purpose.

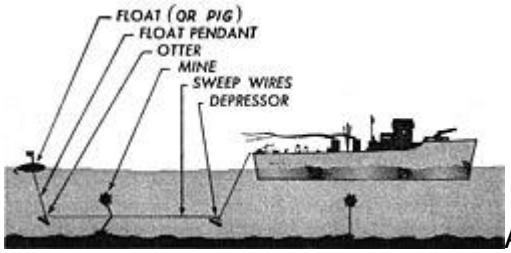
HMS WILTON

Of the 5 Ton class ships involved, the four original vessels had been thus converted, whilst the last, the brand-new fibreglass HMS WILTON, was built as a minehunter.


THE WILTON TODAY AT LEIGH

WORLD WAR 1 MINESWEEPERS AT HARWICH

The earliest known usage of the naval mine dates to the Ming dynasty. Dedicated minesweepers, however, only appeared during the Crimean War, when they were deployed by the British. The Crimean War minesweepers were rowboats trailing grapnels to snag mines. Minesweeping technology picked up in the Russo-Japanese War, using aging torpedo boats as minesweepers.



A minesweeper cutting loose moored mines

In Britain, naval leaders recognized before World War I that the development of sea mines was a threat to the nation's shipping and began efforts to counter the threat. The function of the fishing fleet's trawlers with their trawl gear was recognized as having a natural connection with mine clearance and, among other things, trawlers were used to keep the English Channel clear of mines. A Trawler Section of the Royal Navy Reserve became the predecessor of the mine sweeping forces with specially designed ships and equipment to follow. The dedicated, purpose-built minesweeper first appeared during World War I with the Flower-class minesweeping sloop.

The Admiralty urgently required minesweeping expertise, partly answered by existing naval minesweepers, but substantial additional resources were needed. The Admiralty turned to requisitioning trawlers. Trawlers, especially those operating out of east coast ports, voyaging to the North Sea and around Iceland, were particularly sturdy craft..

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Paddle minesweepers, Harwich, 15th April 1918. © IWM.

At the beginning of World War 1, British regular minesweeping forces comprised 10 ex-torpedo gunboats fitted with the Actaeon or ‘A’ sweep in 1908/95.

By 8 August 1914, 94 fishing trawlers had been mobilised and converted for minesweeping.

The “Trawler Reserve” was a combination of fishing vessels manned by fisherman together with GER vessels and Paddle steamers. The Harwich Company numbered under 100 trawlers, mine drifters and steamers, manned by 1500 men.

This was vitally important but extremely dangerous programme; in 1917 the paddle steamers alone destroyed around 400 enemy mines.

By 22 Aug, a further 100 trawlers had been commandeered and fitted out. By the end of the war, British minesweeping forces comprised 726 vessels

including 110 regular naval vessels (mostly Acacia Class, Azalea Class, Arabis Class, Hunt Class and Aberdare Class Fleet Sweeping Sloops), 412 trawlers, 142 drifters, 52 hired paddle steamers and 10 Dance Class 'Tunnel Tug' shallow draught minesweepers.

214 British minesweepers had been lost in action while sweeping over 30,000 mines.

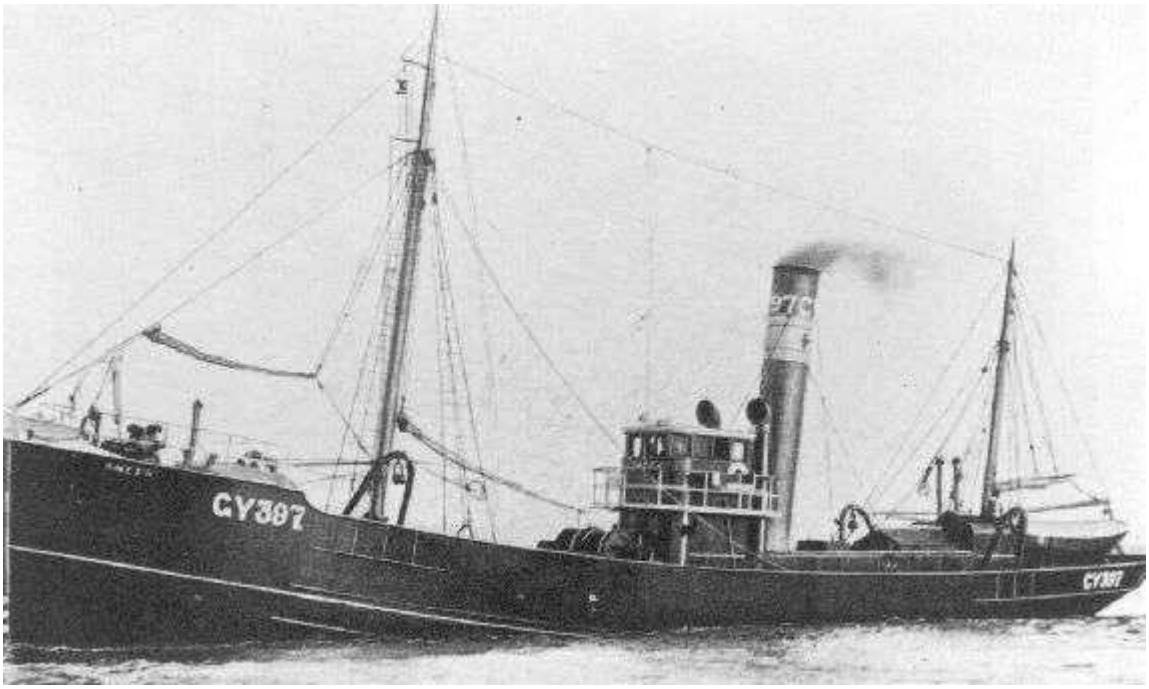
Agamemnon II

- Type. Steam Trawler
- Built. 1906
- Requisitioned. 1914
- Fate. Sank 15/07/1915

HMT Agamennon was a admiralty trawler hired in 1914 as a minesweeper, No.19, Harwich-based, Skipper Frederick Sibley RNR. With other Harwich sweepers clearing minefield discovered that morning, and in fact laid that morning by UC.1 Sank off the Shipwash Sands, off Orford Ness 9 ratings lost.

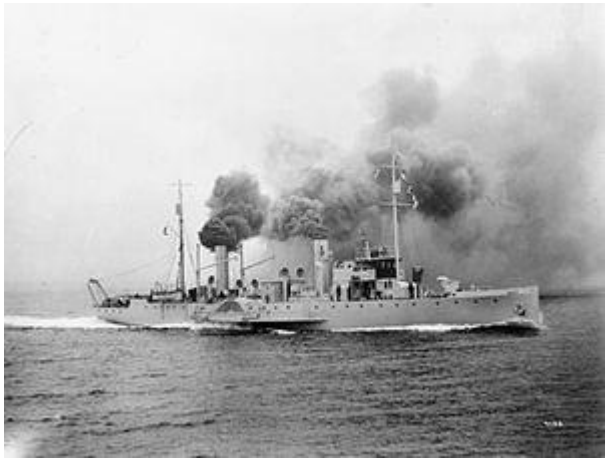
Ameer

- Type. Steam Minesweeper Trawler
- Launched. 1908
- Fate. 18/03/1916

- 

HMT Ameer

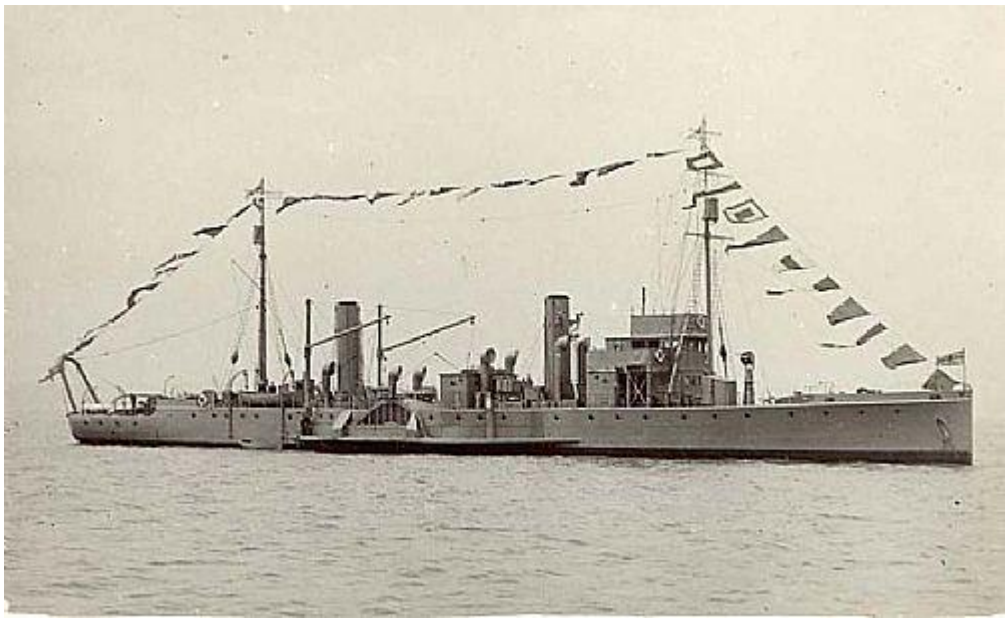
HMT Ameer was sunk on 18th March 1916 by a mine from the German submarine UC-7, off Felixstowe. 8 of the crew were killed.



HMS Atherstone

HMS Atherstone was a Racecourse-class minesweeper of the Royal Navy. Built by Ailsa Shipbuilding at Troon in Scotland, she was launched on 14 April 1916. For the rest of the war she served with the Auxiliary Patrol. Post war she was transferred to the Mine Clearance Service. She was sold to The New Medway

Steam Packet Company on 12 August 1927 and converted for excursion work on the Medway and Thames. as Queen of Kent.



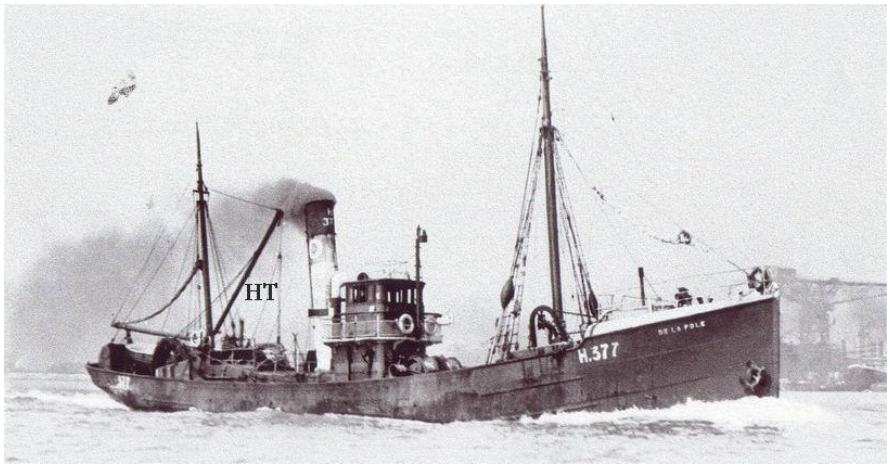
HMS Cheltenham

HMS Cheltenham was a Racecourse class minesweeper of the Royal Navy built on the 12th April 1916 by Ardrossan Dry-dock & Shipyard. She was sold for breaking on the 7th October 1927 at Newport.

Dane

- Type. Steam Trawler
- Built. 1913
- Fate. Mined 28/08/1915

HMT Dane was a admiralty trawler launched in 1913 for ‘D’ Line Steam Fishing, Grimsby and hired in 1915 as auxiliary patrol vessel, No.1446, sank 1 mile of North Aldeburgh Napes buoy, Suffolk, 5 killed.

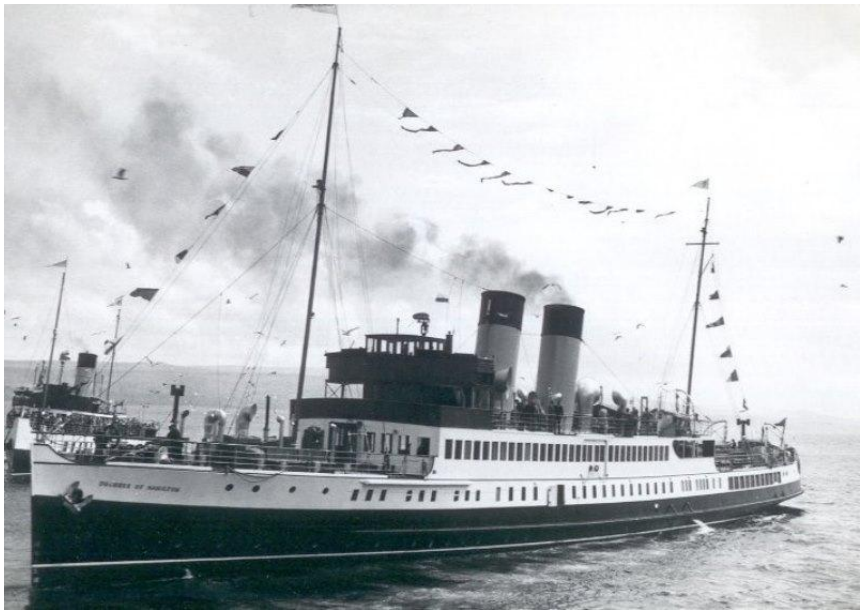


HMT De La Pole

HMT De La Pole was built by Cook Welton & Gemmell and launched on the 10th October 1911. The vessel was wrecked on the Goodwin Sands on the 4th of February 1916,

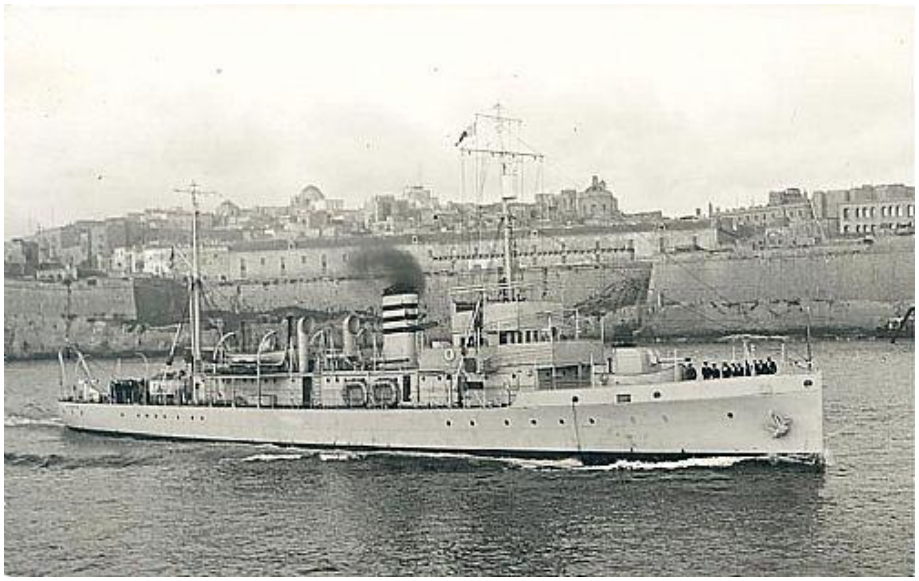
Duchess of Fife

PS Duchess of Fife was a Paddle Steamer launched on the 9th May 1903 by Fairfield Shipbuilding, and taken into Royal Navy service from 1916 to 1919. The vessel was sold in 1923 and scrapped in 1953.



Duchess of Hamilton

HMS Duchess of Hamilton was an Auxiliary paddle minesweeper built in 1890 by W Denny, Dumbarton and owned by the Caledonian Steam Packet Co. On November the 29th 1915 Duchess of Hamilton was sunk by a mine near the Galloper Lightship, Thames.

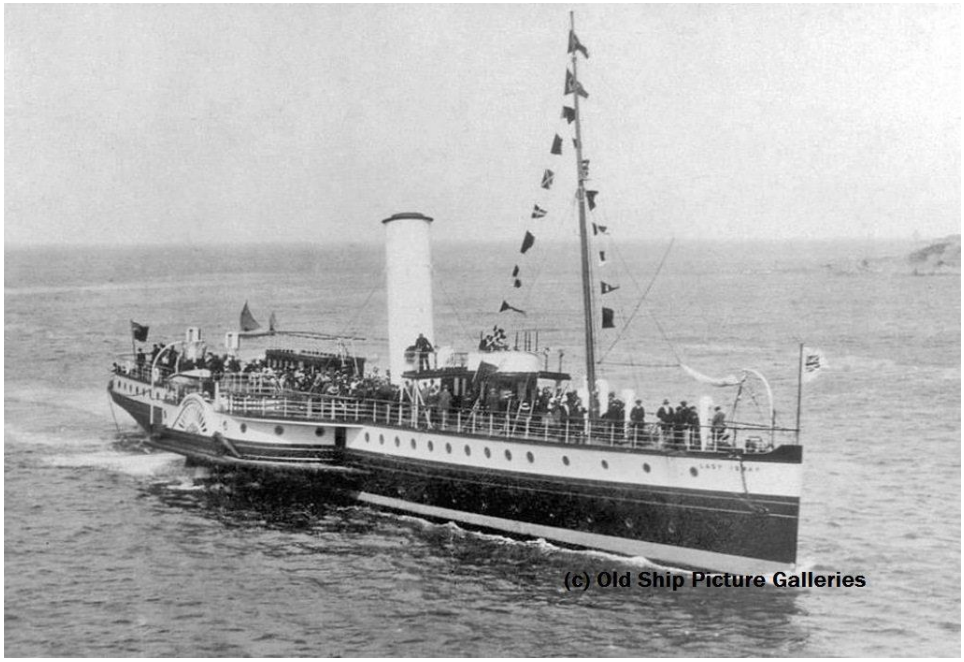


hMS Fareham

HMS Fareham was a Hunt Class minesweeper built by Dunlop Bremner & Co, Glasgow. She was launched on the 7th June 1918. History: November 1918 –

6th Minesweeper Flotillas. Harwich, 4th July 1919 – Sailed Harwich for Gibraltar.

Scraapped 1948



Lady Ismay

- Type. Steel Paddle Steamer
- Built. 1911
- Fate. Mined 21/12/1915

Lady Ismay sailed from Harwich in the morning with 6 other paddle minesweepers to sweep area to the SW. Visibility poor around noon, three of the vessels separated and left for Harwich, wireless signal to the other four including Lady Ismay not received, they slipped sweeps at 1500 and in order Westward Ho, Cambridge, Lady Ismay, Glen Avon headed for Longsand LV, off Clacton, Essex. [J/dx – 21/12/17] – First two paddlers passed the LV on the starboard hand but tide forced Lady Ismay to pass on port hand, set course for the LV, at around 1540 mined and sank within a minute [J/dx – near the Galloper;– between Longsand Head and the Galloper, in 51.45N 01.49E;]. Mine laid some days earlier by UC.3

She was damaged by a mine in the North Sea and towed to Harwich for repairs. The naval trawler foundered in the Irish Sea off the coast of Wales on the 27th of December 1915.

Lord Roberts

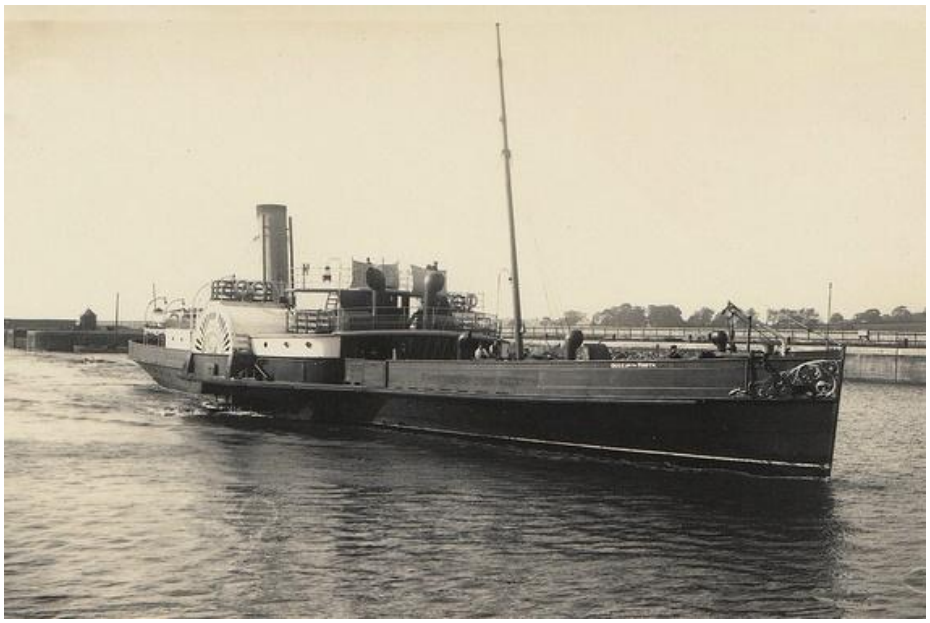
HMT Lord Roberts was a Steam Trawler built by Earle's shipbuilding in 1907, during her long career of patrol work in Harwich area she went to the assistance of many mined ships and rescued a very large percentage of their crews, unfortunately she was mined on the 26th October 1916 by a mine from the German submarine UC11,

HMT Ophir III

- Built. 1902

  1.1915: requisitioned for war service as an armed trawler
  2.1915: renamed Ophir III.
  124.10.1918: based Harwich.
  By 12.3.1919: returned to owner at Grimsby.

  Fate. Sank 1941



Queen of the North

HMS Queen of the North was a British built paddle-steam minesweeper built in 1895 by John Laird & Sons Birkenhead for the Blackpool Passenger Steamboat Company. She served the company until March 29th 1916 when the steel hulled ship was requisitioned by the Admiralty for use as a minesweeper.

On July 20th, 1917, Queen of the North was sunk by a mine from the German submarine UC-4 northeast of the Shipwash light vessel. 29 persons were lost.

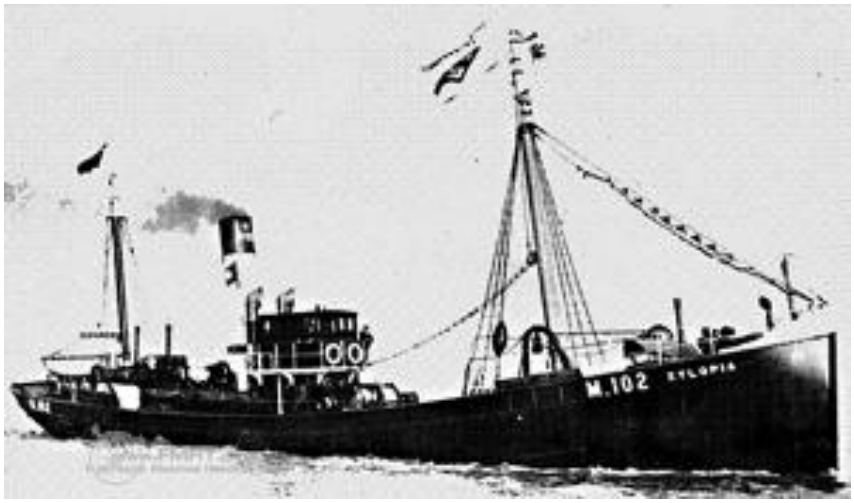
Sea Sweeper

HMT Sea Sweeper was launched on the 31st May 1915 by Cook, Welton & Gemmell Ltd, Beverley for Humber Steam Trawling Co.
1.1916: requisitioned for war service as a minesweeper based Harwich.
28.11.1939: sunk by enemy action.

HMT Urie

- Built. 1917

5.1917: Requisitioned for war service and fitted out for armed escort duties. Based Harwich.
4.1960: Sold to Bisco and allocated to G. & W. Brunton, Grangemouth for breaking up.



HMT Xylopia

HMT Xylopia was launched by Cochrane & Sons, Selby for Southern Steam Trawling Co Ltd, Waterford, 7.1914: Sold to the Admiralty and fitted out as a minesweeper.
1952: sold to Bisco and allocated to C. W. Dorkin & Co Ltd, Gateshead for breaking up.

Mine Sweeping

When the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) was first created in 1859 it consisted of up to 30,000 merchant seamen and fisherman who the Navy could call on in times of crisis.

Fishing trawlers were strong, sturdy ships designed to withstand severe weather conditions at sea, and in 1907 the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet, Admiral Lord Beresford, recognised that trawlers could be used as minesweepers. His recommendation led to the formation of the Royal Naval Reserve (Trawler Section) in 1910, with approval to mobilise 100 trawlers during any crisis period and enrol 1,000 men to man them.

Before the 1914-18 war started there were already 142 trawlers in the Trawler Section of the RNR and 109 skippers enrolled. During the first week of the war in 1914, 94 trawlers were allocated for minesweeping duties, commanded by naval officers who had had a brief training in minesweeping. By the end of 1915 the Minesweeping Service employed 7,888 officers and men.

In August 1914 the Royal Navy began to requisition more trawlers and adapt them for minesweeping duties, fitting them out with heavy guns, machine guns and depth charges. By the end of 1916 the Navy had requisitioned so many trawlers, and the war had such an impact on shipping, that the supply of fish to the UK was severely limited. New trawlers were also built. Between 1914 and 1918, 371 trawlers were built in the Humber shipyards and almost all of them were taken up by the Navy and used as minesweepers, submarine spotters and coastal patrol boats.

Postwar Mine-clearing

At the end of the war, Britain was one of 26 countries represented on an International Mine Clearance Committee dedicated to clearing 40,000 square miles of sea of leftover mines. Several hundred thousand mines had been laid during the conflict by both sides. Each power was allotted an area to clear. The Mine Clearance Service was formed in 1919 and worked to clear Britain's allocated area until it was disbanded the following year.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ 101

QUIZ MARCH 2026 QUESTIONS

1. CHRISTOPHE DE MARGERIE: A sanctioned Russian flagged LNG tanker icebreaker of 128,806 gt built in 2016. She can operate from the Arctic Yamal LNG 2 all year round, delivering to the ice-free SAAM floating storage unit in the western Murmansk region. Regular tankers can take the LNG away, mainly to China. At present, she is the only ship that Russia has able to do this, thus considerably reducing export volumes during the winter months.

2. BOMJESUS: The wreck of a Portuguese carrack lost in 1533 has been found in the desert in Namibia. The wreck contained 2000 gold coins, 40 elephant tusks and 22 tons of copper ingots.
3. XV EXCALIBUR: She is the UK's first Extra-Large Uncrewed Underwater Vehicle. She is of 19 tons and was built for the Royal Navy as part of Operation Cetus to test future uncrewed maritime technology. Formally handed over to the RN in late 2025.
4. LYNX, JAGUAR, PANTHER & CHEETAH: Four French Leopard class training ships built in 1982 visited West India Docks (three of them) and St. Katherine's Pier in mid-January.
5. ISLE OF ISLAY: The first of four new Islay class ferries built in Turkey for Cal Mac was delivered in mid-January. They are of 6235 gt and can carry 100 cars or 14 HGVs plus 450 passengers.
6. HMS ANSON: Astute class nuclear submarine left Faslane on route for Perth, Western Australia to be part of the Submarine Rotation Force – West under the AUKUS treaty.
   Mid Jan.
7. RFA RESURGENT: The programme for the three Solid Support Ships is facing major delays. Liberty Steel Dalzell faces an uncertain wait for materials (i.e. steel) due to a cash shortage.
   Mid Jan.
8. USS DEFIANT: The lead ship of the proposed TRUMP class guided missile battleships. Over 35000 tons,

probably conventionally powered with a top speed of over 30 knots. Armed with hypersonic missiles,128 VLS and a railgun plus advanced censors. Estimated cost$10 to $15 billion per ship. Two initially proposed, but 10+ eventually. If actually built, completion of the first ship is for early to mid-2030s.

9. STENA CONNECTA: She is a new RoRo ship built in China for Stena's Heysham to Belfast freight service, and she started on 23rd January. She joins her sister STENA FUTURA and is of 20,924 gt and gives 2848 lane metres of freight. She is powered by twin Wartsila 6L20 methanol-ready diesels of 10,440 kW combined plus a battery bank and shore power-ready. She also has a pair of 28 m tall Norsepower Rotor Sails.
10. USS ZIMWALT: It was announced that she will sail in 2026 for the first time, after 3 years in dry dock, armed with the Conventional Prompt Strike hypersonic missile system. She has 4 launchers, each capable of carrying 3 missiles. Both of her notorious 155mm Advanced Gun systems were dismantled as part of the conversion. The other two ships in the class will be similarly converted.
11. BAYESIAN: The Italian builder of the Bayesian, Perini Navi, is suing a company owned by Mike Lynch's widow for $500 million for the damage to their reputation from the loss of the superyacht. No new orders for superyachts have been received since the accident. Late Jan.

12. ZHONG DA 79: A small Chinese container ship of 4916 dwt 97m x 16m x 4m has been converted into an air defence ship using special containerised kit. The kit comprised 15 shipping containers and included 15 silos, each able to contain 4 missiles, 2 radar stations, 4 decoy launchers and 2 CIWS. The same ship had previously been fitted with an electromagnetic catapult for UAVs. It is probably an exercise to show how quickly civilian ships can be converted into warships when necessary.
    Late Jan.
13. SINEGORSK: A Russian flagged bulker of 12,798 dwt anchored above undersea telecom cables in the Bristol Channel, off Minehead for several hours. The cables connect with the USA, Canada, Spain and Portugal. She was built in Spain in 2004 as the BELOGA EMOTION and is not on the list of sanctioned vessels.
14. USS JOHN F KENNEDY: The second of the Ford class carriers began builder's sea trials from Newport News, Virginia. Late Jan.
15. OCEAN ENDEAVOUR: A Portuguese flagged polar expedition cruise ship of 12,907 gt built in 1982 has been chartered by Denmark to be stationed at Nuuk in Greenland to provide accommodation for Danish and NATO troops. Late January