

WORLD SHIP SOCIETY

Mid - Essex Branch

Newsletter Number 6 - October 2020

AN OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER TO KEEP IN TOUCH DURING THIS STRANGE TIME IN OUR HISTORY

Trusting that you are all coping with the current conditions. Essex has moved into Stage Two so we are unable to meet indoors and only six are allowed to meet outdoors. This does not look good for a resumption of meetings this calendar year. Please keep observing the restrictions and keep healthy and safe so that we can look forward to seeing you all once more on the "first Monday" of the month.

I trust those not in the best of health at the moment continue to improve and I'm sure that those members are in our thoughts at this time.

LOCAL NEWS

SIR WILLIAM ARNOLD, the decommissioned Arun Class Lifeboat moored in Heybridge Basin since March 2020.

Due to the tightening of movement and contrary to recent plans she will remain in Heybridge Basin over the winter and move to London's St Kathrine's Dock in March next year. Colin Trowles, owner, will also needs a crew of five for three days to take her to St Katherine's. It is unsure whether she will be open to visitors again this year.



John Raven

See report later in this newsletter on a boat tour taken by David Brown on her recent open day on 11th October.

COUNTESS of ZETLAND

Some months ago we had a request for information on the Greenwich Ferry COUNTESS of ZETLAND which was used as a barge for installing the temporary Vauxhall Bridge in the 1890s. Our branch member Jerzy Swieszkowski has been doing some research and has come up with the following information which has been passed on to the enquirer who is very grateful. I thought you would like to see the fruits of his labours.

COUNTESS of LATHOM/HAYLING/UNTERELBE O.No. 95497

COUNTESS of ZETLAND O.No. 95498

Details of ships (both)

Built 1888 by Steward & Lathom, Millwall for Greenwich Ferry Co. (Sir E.A. Inglefield, London, Man)

Double ended steel, twin screw steamers

Length 120 ft. Breadth 40 ft. Depth of Hull 10.1 ft.

Gross Tons 338, Net Tons 230.

Engines Appleby Brothers, London. 2 Sets of compound 2 cylinder 18 inch, 34 inch by 24 inch engines, giving 92 N.H.P.

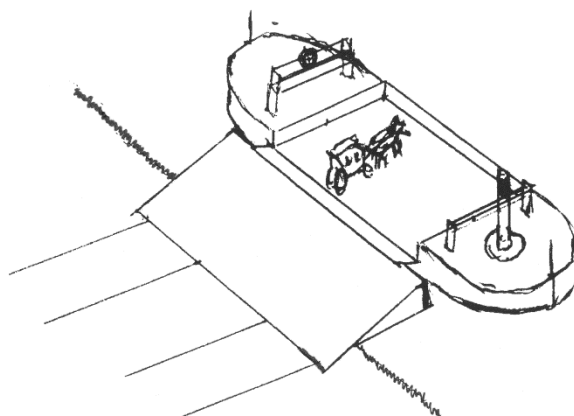
Greenwich Ferry Co. From South to North Greenwich and was worked in conjunction with the Thames Steamboat Co.

The modus operandi was rather futuristic; there were a pair of wide, presumably concrete ramps either side of the river with rails embedded. Operated by means of shore winding engines, a wide loading ramp from the slipway to the vessels side, being of a shallow triangle in cross section. The whole of the, say, port bulwark was turned 90° from vertical to horizontal to give a loading ramp. Traffic was parked across the ship's deck, being 40 ft wide. The ramp was returned to the vertical. The ferry crossed the river and berthed starboard side onto the loading/unloading ramp and the vehicles discharged without the need of turning.

The two ferries were short lived and were only in service from 1888 to 1897/8.

In 1897 the COUNTESS of LATHOM was sold to the Southsea & Hayling Steam Ferry Co., Portsmouth and renamed HAYLING. In 1902 she was sold to the Nordischer Berungs V Regin, Hamburg and converted into a salvage vessel and renamed UNTERELBE. On 5/5/1913 she was sunk in a position 54.11N, 7.56W off Heligoland after collision with the German Torpedo Boat S-178.

In 1898 the COUNTESS of ZETLAND was sold to J. Constant. In 1906 she was sold to A. Tolhurst, Northfleet. It may be at this point in time she was used as a pontoon during the construction of Vauxhall Bridge. She seems to have been broken up around 1912 but this is unconfirmed.



SKETCH of FERRY LOADING

SHIP PHOTOS

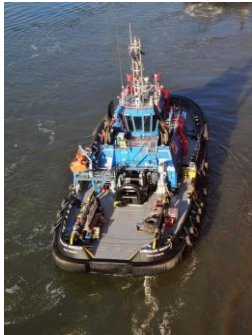
Photos forwarded by Ken Bottoms for inclusion



SANDY PEARL



LAMNALCO HODEIDAH



LAMNALCO MUKALLA



BALMORA



BANKURA



BARADINE



BARPETA



BOMBALA



HYRIA



REINA DEL MAR

FROM THE IAN WELLS COLLECTION

Two ships that are featured in Ian Wells' "London Shipping 1963/1964" PowerPoint slide show.

SANGOLA



SANGOLA © Ian Wells, taken on 1st September 1962

SANGOLA was the first of 3 sisters (SIRDHANA and SANTHIA) of 8,646 GRT especially constructed for British India's post-war Calcutta-Far East service (Calcutta, Rangoon, Penang, Singapore, Hong Kong, Yokohama, Kobe and return), known as the "Apcar Route", - which B.I. had obtained from the "Apcar" family back in 1912. She was constructed by Barclay Curle & Co., of Glasgow, and launched on January 8, 1947. When she was completed and undertaken her speed trials where she achieved a top speed of 15.39 knots, she was delivered to "British India Steam Navigation Company Ltd" on June 6, 1947, having cost B.I. £1,116,000. She accommodated 21 1st Class and 70 2nd class passengers and could carry up to 2,447 passengers on deck, mainly between ports of S. E. Asia. From 1951 most of the passengers were Ghurkhas on relief trooping

She is seen here loading for Malta, Port Said, Port Sudan, Aden, Karachi and Bombay in the Royal Albert Dock after arriving with cargo from Calcutta on 2nd August. Much has been written about this ship but there is no mention of this final voyage back to Europe near the end of her career of only 15 years.

On 1st July 1953 SANGOLA was grounded in the River Hooghly downstream of Calcutta. With her back close to breaking she almost became a constructive total loss. The Ghurkha troops on board organised the safe evacuation of passengers, for which the regiment was presented by B.I. with three silver bugles, now famous as the "Sangola Bugles" and are used on ceremonial occasions. Eventually dry-docked on 9th September she had to be cut in two and did not re-enter service until December 1954.

The Apcar Line passenger trade was abandoned at the end of 1962. For a short time SANGOLA operated on other services but after returning from Europe and a trip to the Persian Gulf, she arrived at Mihara, Japan on 26/3/ 63The ship's bell was presented to the Ghurkha Regiment.

SIRDHANA and SANTHIA survived until 1972 and 1977 respectively.

RANGITANE



RANGITANE © Ian Wells, taken on 29th September 1962

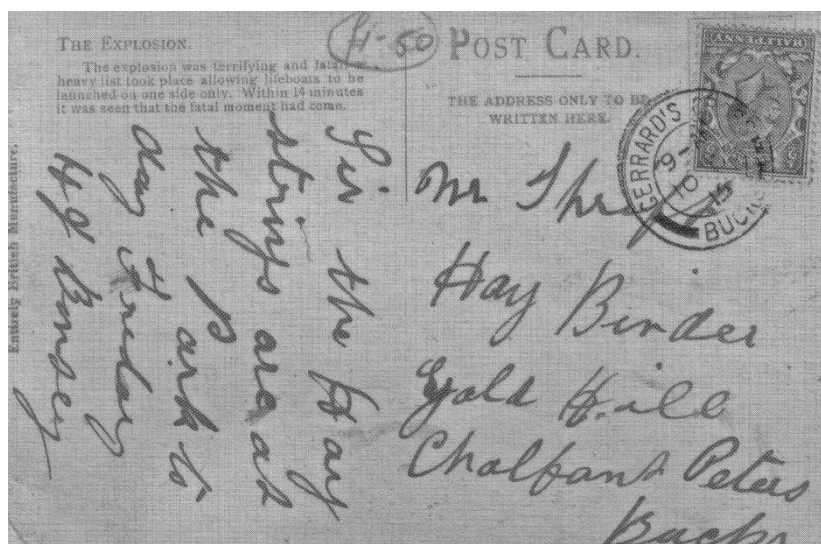
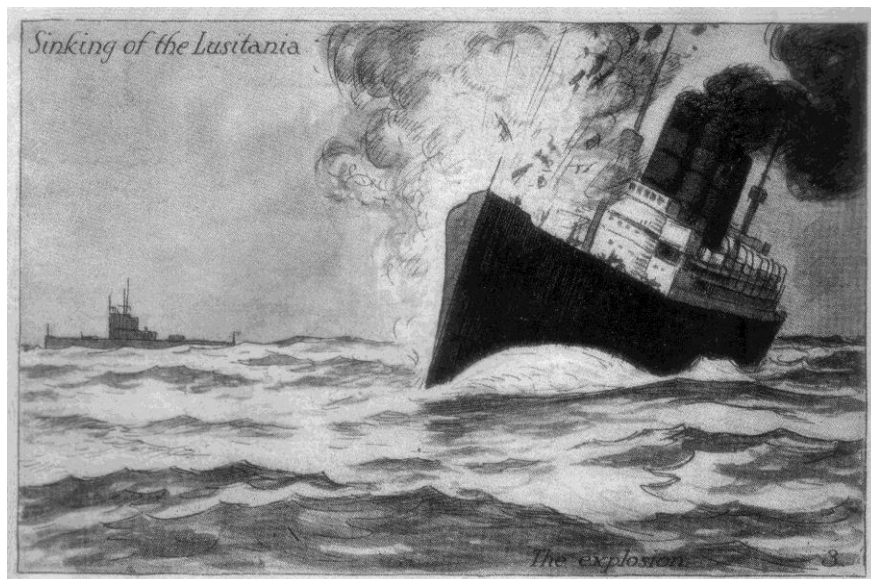
RANGITANE was built by John Brown & Co. Ltd. in 1949 for the New Zealand Shipping Co. She had a sister ship RANGITOTO and a smaller near sister RUAHINE. These three were the final three ships built for the company. RANGITANE was of 21,867 G.R.T. and had single class accommodation for 416 passengers. Her regular run was London-Curacao-Panama-Papeete-Wellington-Auckland. She is seen here in the Royal Albert Dock loading a cargo for Wellington and Dunedin. In 1965 RANGITANE and RANGITOTO had their mainmast (aft) removed and were transferred to the Federal Steam Navigation fleet, with their funnels repainted in Federal colours. In 1968 RANGITANE was sold to Astroguarda Cia. Nav S.A. (Mavroleon Ship Management Ltd.) and renamed JAN. She was chartered back to Federal Steam Navigation for a cargo only voyage to Australia.

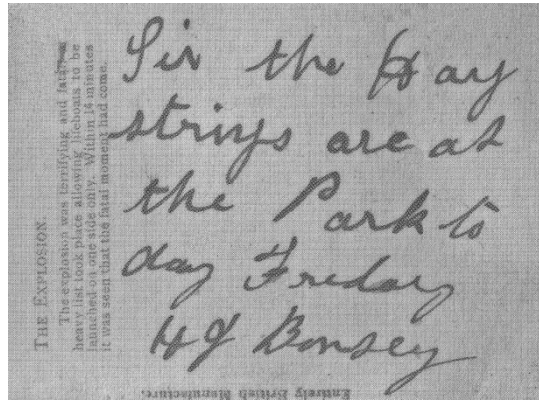
Later in 1968 she arrived at Piraeus, Greece for breaking but was sold on for further trading to the Oriental Latin American Lines Inc. (C.Y. Tung). Following a refit in Hong Kong she was renamed ORIENTAL ESMERALDA and departed on her first round the World Cruise in June 1969 from San Diego. RANGITOTO and RUAHINE followed the same path although both were sold direct to C. Y. Tung by Federal S.N. (NZSC). ORIENTAL ESMERALDA was broken up at Kaohsiung, Taiwan in 1976

Ian Wells

"MESSAGES FROM THE PAST" – LUSITANIA

This is another "Messages from the Past" article originally published in the Ocean Liner Society's "Sea Lines" magazine, slightly adapted.





On a market stall in St Peter Port, Guernsey I picked up a couple of postcards of the “Lusitania” for £2 each which I thought was a bargain. One was a colourised photo of the ship which had not been used. The other was a “propaganda” card with a drawing of the “Lusitania” being sunk by a German submarine. There was outrage at the sinking of the “Lusitania” and no doubt this postcard was produced to fuel and take advantage of this outrage. On the back is printed, “THE EXPLOSION”.

The explosion was terrifying and fatal. a (sic – no capital) heavy list took place allowing lifeboats to be launched on one side only. Within 14 minutes it was seen that the fatal moment had come.” No manufacturer’s name is printed on the card but “Entirely British Manufacture” is printed on it, clearly appealing to patriotic sentiment.

The message on the card is “Sir the Hay strings are at the Park to day Friday HJ Bonsey” (I have used the writer’s punctuation or rather lack of it). It is addressed to Mr Thrift, Hay Border, Gold Hill, Chalfont Peters (sic – no “St.”). On line I found a 1931 directory of Gerrards Cross and Chalfont St Peter. It lists a H. J. Bonsey living at St. Elmo, Marsham Way, Gerrards Cross (the place on the postmark) and J. T. Thrift, Gold Hill, Chalfont St Peter, so I think we have correctly identified the sender and recipient.

The postmark on the card is not very clear, but we know the card was sent on a Friday. With this information I can be reasonably sure that it was postmarked 9am on 10 September 1915 – the “Lusitania” had been sunk on 7 May 1915. Bizarrely the stamp is placed upside down. Googling reveals this is either a sign of treason or one is in love with person it is sent to. As Mr Bonsey is sending a card which supports the government’s position one can disregard treason and as he addresses Mr Thrift as “Sir” and signs with his initials one can presume there was probably no loving relationship involved and, if there was, in view of the then state of the law it would have been unlikely he would have wished to publicise it. Thus, I guess he simply inadvertently stuck the stamp upside down.

Normally a card featuring in “Messages from the Past” has a message describing the sender’s voyage, but this card has been sent from an inland destination, not from a ship. I presume it is to notify Mr Thrift that a particular musical ensemble is performing in the local park. Maybe Mr Bonsey knew Mr Thrift was a “fan” of theirs (though he would not have used that word in those times). There is no connection between the message and the subject of the card. In fact it is difficult to think what would be an appropriate use for a card intended as a piece of propaganda relating to a maritime disaster with significant loss of life.

Looking at the picture on the postcard and comparing it with the colourised one, one recognises that the artist has not drawn a generic four-funnelled liner, but made an effort to depict the “Lusitania”. The “Lusitania” is listing to port, but the submarine is on her starboard side. As the “Lusitania” was

sunk by torpedo, the list to port would seem to defy the laws of physics. I do not know enough about the design of First World War German submarines to be able to comment on the accuracy of its depiction on the card. Maybe our warship expert, Andrew Smith, can advise. The depiction of the submarine itself, however, is an error as the deed was considered particularly dastardly as a merchant ship had been sunk by an enemy that could not even be seen. Including the submarine in the picture must have been artistic licence as a card without it would not have had the same propaganda value.

Writing about the “Lusitania’s” career in a publication intended for shipping enthusiasts seems rather unnecessary as I am sure most readers will be familiar with it, but I will do so briefly for the sake of completeness. She was completed by John Brown & Co, Clydebank in 1907. With a gross tonnage of 31,550 tons, she was then the world’s largest ship and she briefly held the Blue Riband, but in both respects she was soon surpassed by her sister, the “Mauretania”. On 7 May 1915 she was torpedoed and sunk by the German submarine U-20 off the coast of Ireland with the loss of 1,191 lives. There has been much discussion subsequently about whether she was carrying armaments and therefore a legitimate target for the submarine, but this is a topic most definitely beyond the scope of this article.

John Harrison

A VISIT TO LIFEBOAT 52-02



Photos © Peter Smith 2020

On 11th October 2020 I paid a visit to the Arun Class lifeboat, Sir William Arnold (Lifeboat 52-02) currently moored in Heybridge Basin. Formerly the St Peter Port Lifeboat, Guernsey was on station in 1974 (replacing the Barnet Class lifeboat) and was involved in over 550 rescue missions. It was instrumental in earning its coxswains and crews 15 RNLI medals for gallantry, from Gold to Bronze, countless Certificates on Vellum and other external awards for gallantry. She is succeeded by the current Severn Class lifeboat.

Due to latest regulations the visit had to be booked and was limited to 5 persons per tour. Before venturing below we were given a brief history of the vessel and the involvement Colin Trowles, the current owner, has had in its purchase and restoration. The boat has been restored to as near as possible condition as it was at the end of its service with the R.N.L.I. in 1997. Much of the boat’s technology is now out of date but Colin has managed to obtain kit of the time from various sources including ebay!

Probably the most famous rescue was of the BONITA in December 1981. She rescued 29 people from the sinking freighter in the English Channel. The Coxswain Mike Scales made 50 run ins in force 12 conditions, a blizzard in darkness, to get the crew off a sinking boat.



Photos © David Brown 2020

We later moved to the fo'c'sle to view the equipment carried and then inside to the control room where the engineer controls the engines, observes the navigation, the vessel's draught etc. and monitors communications.



Photos © David Brown 2020

From there we moved to the wheelhouse where the Coxswain manoeuvres the vessel and directs operations. The equipment of the day is in place and only more modern equipment, necessary to navigate on today's seas, is included. Down below we visited the engine room, housing the two Caterpillar 460 bhp diesel engines giving a speed of 18 knots and a range of 250 nautical miles. One engine was started and gave us a backdrop to the final part of the tour, a re-enactment of the messages sent during one of its rescues.

Our thanks go to Colin for a most interesting and knowledgeable tour of Lifeboat 52-02. Due to the latest Covid restrictions the decision has been made to delay its journey to its home port at St Katherine's till March 2021. If there is an opportunity to visit the vessel at Heybridge before then it is highly recommended.

David Brown

FROM OUR SOUTHAMPTON CORRESPONDENT

On 29th September in anticipation of storm Alex several ships were seen sheltering off the Isle of Wight. One such was the MUSKETIER seen here offshore from Yaverland. She is a general cargo ship and appears to be on the regular run from Portsmouth to the Channel Islands. Of 2,545 g.r.t. she was built in 2006 and is registered in the Isle of Man.



Photo © Rob Childs 2020

Rob Childs

RRS DISCOVERY



Photo © Rob Childs 2020

DISCOVERY was built for the "blue ocean" research role. The ship was ordered in 2010 from the C.N.P. Freire shipyard in Vigo, and was launched in April 2012. *Discovery* was delivered to the NERC in the summer of 2013 for a period of sea trials prior to her planned initial deployment. She is of 5,954 g.r.t. with a marine crew of 24 and 28 scientists. She has an endurance of 50 days.

The ship is fitted with flexible laboratory spaces, allowing the laboratories to be tailored to the nature of the different scientific activities intended to take place on each cruise. DISCOVERY is also fitted with an advanced hydro acoustic system in three major parts; a pair of major echo sounders plus a

hydrophone are installed in a special "blister" installation on the ship's keel, while she also carries a pair of "drop keels" containing more echo sounders, hydrophones and CCTV cameras. DISCOVERY is also capable of operating the National Oceanography Centre's ROUV (Remotely Operated Undersea Vehicle) ISIS.

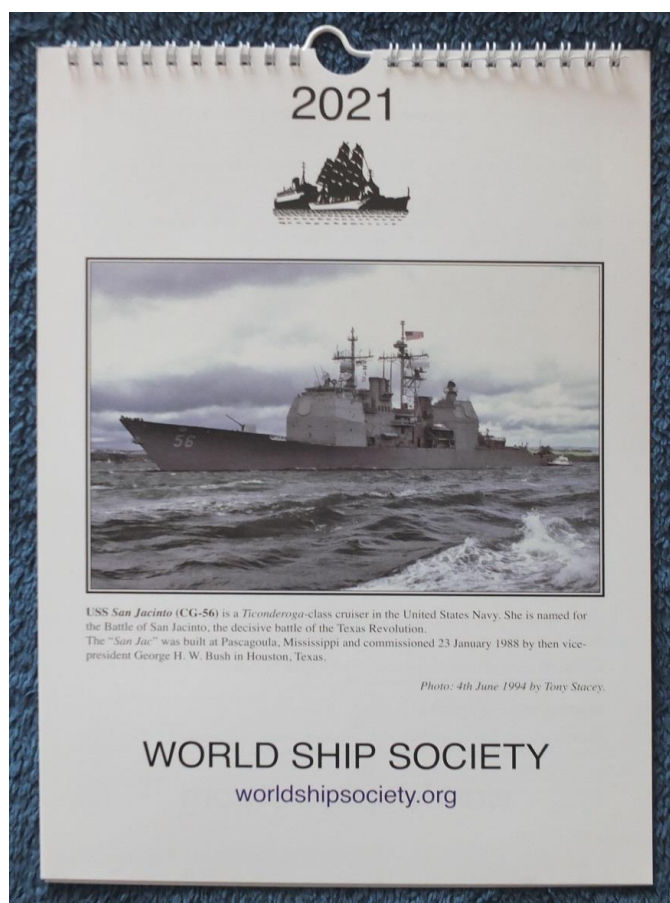
She is seen here leaving Southampton on Thursday 8th October, and is taken from Weston Shore. She is bound for the North Atlantic following a 1 week of lockdown to guarantee they are all clear of any virus.

Rob Childs

INFORMATION REQUEST

George (Jerzy) Swieszkowski is seeking information on the Sailing Barge **JESS** of 49 tons. JESS was built in Maldon by John Howard for local millers H.T. Eve & Co. in 1899. On October 14th 1934 she was laying in Harwich harbour loaded with barley when she was hit and sunk by the SS MALINES. She was raised and taken to Pin Mill and used as a workshop/store before finally being broken up and scrapped in the 1980s. Any further information about this barge would be gratefully received.

SALES - WORLD SHIP SOCIETY 2021 CALENDAR



I have a small number of 2021 WSS calendars for sale. These are priced at £7 each.

I am able to post these out or deliver to local (Chelmsford) branch members.

If you would like one, please contact me via email or the website contact form.

Photos include the Cardiff class bulk carrier MALE; the Liberty ship OUISTREHAM; MANDRAKI ex BEECHMOORE; Royal Mail Lines ANDES; FIESTA MARINA ex EMPRESS OF BRITAIN and CHITRAL ex JADOTVILLE.

For members of other branches wanting calendars please contact your branch secretary or Jimmy Poole direct.

I hope you have enjoyed this varied miscellany of news, articles and images etc.
to help us through this difficult time.
Articles or photos of interest will be gratefully received for the next publication.

Best wishes to all WSS Mid-Essex branch members plus all other WSS members
who are forwarded this newsletter.

Please take care of yourselves until we can meet on a Monday evening once more.

My thanks go to those that have contributed to this edition:

*Ian Wells, John Harrison, John Raven, Ken Bottoms, David Brown, George Swieszkowski, Rob Childs
and Peter Smith.*

Newsletter Number 7 will be published as and when there is any further news and articles to impart.

If you have any contributions for the next edition please contact me on bravedown09@live.com

or through our website contact form:

<http://www.midessexships.org.uk/contact.html>

David Brown,

WSS MID-ESSEX BRANCH Secretary
