

WORLD SHIP SOCIETY

Mid - Essex Branch

Newsletter Number 9 - April 2021

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

Best wishes to all of you and hope you are coping with the latest lockdown conditions. Thankfully these are gradually easing over the next weeks and months. I hope that you have had your first jab by now, or at least have an appointment. Please take care, keep healthy and safe so that we can look forward to seeing you all once more on the "first Monday" of the month. Probably the earliest we could meet is September and only then if everyone is happy to do so and regulations allow.

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

SHIPPING NEWS



IDUNA, outwards at Gravesend 05/02/2020 © D. Berg

Mitsui O.S.K. lines has bought Norwegian shipping company Larvik Shipping which runs a fleet of CO2 Tankers. I expect quite a few people will remember HYDROGAS I, II, and III which for many years travelled between Sluiskil and Tilbury. All three were renamed as YARA GAS I, II, and III with III being renamed as IDUNA in 2016. IDUNA arrived at Danish breakers Fornæs Recycling, Grenaa, Denmark on 10th March 2021. Built in 1975 (as a containership) so a grand old lady of 45 years. YARA GAS II broken up at same location as IDUNA 29/03/2013. YARA GAS I was broken up at Fredrikshaven 19/08/2013.



SCI NEW DELHI, taken 29/08/2011 at Terneuzen © David Berg

Danish company Celsius Shipping has sold one of its containerships, GH SCIROCCO, built 2009 in Shanghai for \$14.5 million which is a very good profit as they only bought it for \$6.2 million in March 2017. Ex HS DEBUSSY - 2017, SCI NEW DELHI - 2012.

Hapag Lloyd has bought shipping company Niledutch so that they (Hapag) can strengthen their position in the African Market.

David Berg

INFORMATION REQUEST

We have not received any replies to Mid-Essex member George (Jerzy) Swieszkowski seeking information on the photograph below. For more details see Newsletter 8. If this jogs your memory please get in touch.



FROM THE IAN WELLS COLLECTION

Two ships that are featured in Ian Wells' PowerPoint slide show Number 23.

OTAIO



© Ian Wells, taken on 4th July 1964 in the Royal Albert Dock

A 13,314 GRT motorship built by John Brown & Co (Clydebank) Ltd for the New Zealand Shipping Co. Ltd. She doubled as a cadet training vessel for 40 deck cadet officers and 30 engineering with instructors. She is seen here discharging meat loaded in her last port, Timaru, New Zealand. In 1966 she transferred to Federal Steam Navigation Co. and in 1971 she came under the management of P&O General Cargo Division before transferring to P&O ownership in 1973. In 1976 she passed to the ownership of Laggan Bay Shipping Co. Ltd (Liberia) with Gulf Shipping Lines as manager and renamed EASTERN ACADAMY and as her name suggests was still used as a cadet training ship. In 1977 she came under the management of World Shipmanagement Services Pte., Singapore. Gulfeast Ship Management Ltd., Hong Kong became her managers a year later. In 1981 whilst still under Gulfeast Ship Management Ltd., she transferred ownership to Arabian Maritime Transport Co. Ltd., and then laid up at Karachi. On 20th July 1982 she was beached and at Gadani Beach (Pakistan) and demolition commenced on 11th October 1982.

AMERICAN CHARGER



© Ian Wells, taken on 4th July 1964 in the Royal Victoria Dock

AMERICAN CHARGER was built by Newport News Shipbuilding & Drydock Co. for the United States Lines. She was the third of eleven C4-S-57a type, American Challenger Class. She is seen here dressed overall for Independence Day. The class were built to replace the wartime built fleet. The 1st sister ship completed, AMERICAN CHALLENGER, set the transatlantic speed record for cargo ships on her maiden eastbound voyage, averaging 24.42 knots. Four more “Americans” received “Pioneer” names in 1966/67 after the start of the Vietnam war, and nearly all of the class were in the Pacific but without change of name. In August 1981 she arrived at San Francisco to be laid up and was later allocated to the United States Reserve Fleet. On 4th May 1988 she was scrapped at Kaohsiung, Taiwan. United States Lines, under various guises was never really financially stable and the company was liquidated by 1992, most ships having been sold to pay creditors.

Ian Wells

JOHN HARRISON PRESENTS PART 5 of his “SING A SONG OF SHIPPING ” series

I have one more song to add to those about ships we have encountered so far in these newsletters. I was listening to “Saturday Live” on Radio 4 on 19 December and at the end they played a song called “La France” in French. I vaguely heard it marked the sale of the liner “France”, but did not have opportunity to get the full details. I subsequently learnt it was written following the decommissioning of the “France”. I e-mailed the programme and they kindly told me it was “La France” sung by Michel Sardou. Googling revealed there was a French Wikipedia entry for the song. This reveals (using Google Translate with a bit of tweaking to make the English more idiomatic), “*Le France* is a French song by Michel Sardou, composed by Jacques Revaux on lyrics by Pierre Delanoë and Michel Sardou, released in 1975 and paying homage to the liner *France*. The song was a huge success, with over 800,000 copies sold. The song, which is offended by the decommissioning of the liner *France*, was welcomed by the CGT of Le Havre and the PCF (French Communist Party) at the time of its release.” The website reveals the song was number one in the French hit parade and number 45 in the Dutch one should you be interested. Michel Sardou (born 1947) is a popular French singer who has his own British Wikipedia entry. There is a YouTube video featuring the song on the net. There is also an English translation of the words, written in the first person as if sung by the liner. They do seem rather repetitive, but reflect how the “France” was a symbol of French national pride and understandably there was a lot of opposition to her withdrawal.

John Harrison

EMPIRE WINDRUSH ex MONTE ROSA

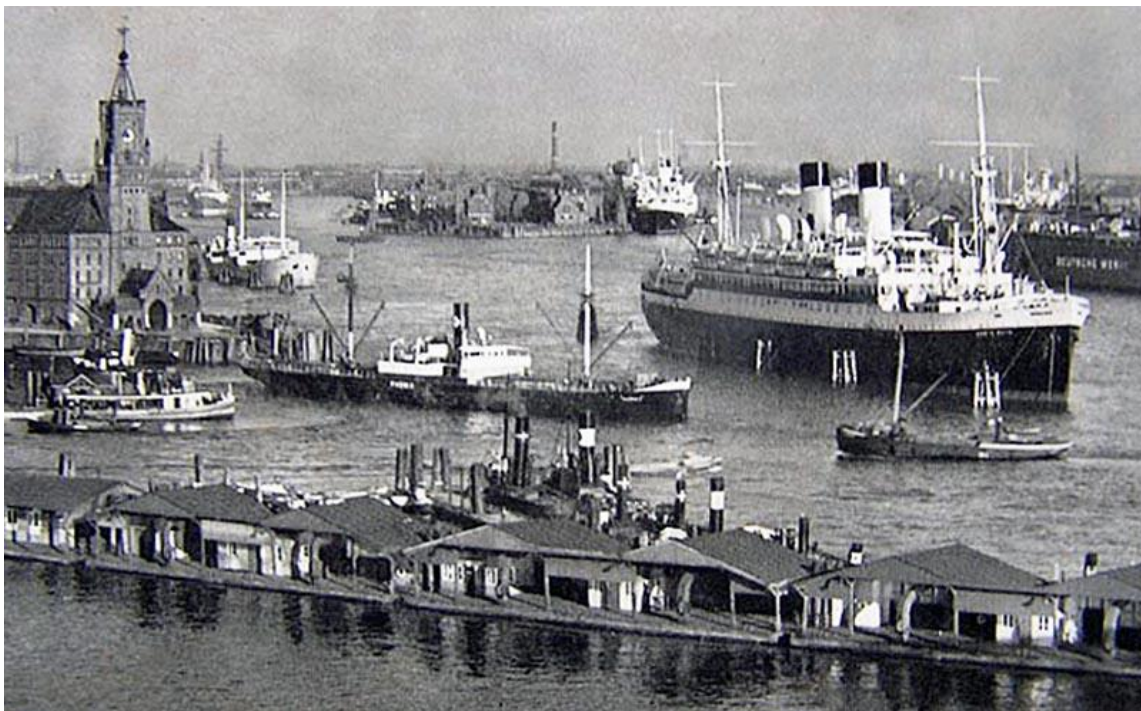


MONTE ROSA had a chequered career under both the German and British flag. Even 90 years after her launch she is still in the news following the recent embarrassing "Windrush Generation" scandal. Our late branch member George Barratt was a steward aboard EMPIRE WINDRUSH on the voyage to Tilbury and was awarded a certificate in 2008 being the last surviving crew member. The young passengers were always pleased to see George on duty in the dining room as he would always serve them a second helping of ice cream!

MONTE ROSA of 13,882 G.R.T. was launched 13th December 1930 at Hamburg's Blohm & Voss yard. She was delivered to Hamburg-Südamerikanische Dampfschiffahrtsgesellschaft, Hamburg (Hamburg Sud) in March 1931. She was the last of five similar sisters (MONTE CERVANTES, MONTE OLIVIA, MONTE PASCOAL, and MONTE SARMIENTO) that were initially built for the perceived lucrative emigration of German citizens and trade to South America. Due to the 1930s great depression this failed to materialise. MONTE ROSA however, did make 20 trips with immigrants to South America before the outbreak of World War II. The sisters were re-designed as budget cruise ships to operate in Northern Europe, the Mediterranean and South American waters which proved to be very successful. The sisters were powered by four oil burning four stroke single acting MAN diesel engines giving a speed of 14.5 knots. These were the first large diesel operated passenger ships to see service with a German operator, no doubt reflecting the experience gained by Blohm & Voss building U-boat engines during the Great War. Passenger accommodation was single-class with 1,150 in cabins and 1,350 in dormitories. The number of crew was 272. After the Nazi regime came to power in Germany in 1933, the ship was used by the party to help spread its ideology. She was operated as part of the state-owned *Kraft Durche Freude* (Strength through Joy) programme, which provided leisure activities and cheap holidays.

When visiting South America, the opportunity was taken to spread Nazi ideology among the German-speaking community there, and was also used to host Nazi gatherings when she docked in London.

At the start of World War II MONTE ROSA was requisitioned for military use and was used as a barracks ship at Stettin. In April 1940 she was used as a troopship for the invasion of Norway and later as an accommodation and recreational ship attached to the battleship TIRPITZ in Altafjord in the North of Norway.



MONTE ROSA at Hamburg

In 1942 she was one of several ships used for the deportation of Norwegian Jewish citizens for onward transportation to Auschwitz concentration camp. On 30th March 1944 an attack was mounted on her by 9 RAF and 9 RCAF aircraft close to the Island of Utsira. Two allied aircraft were reported as destroyed but despite MONTE ROSA suffering damage by two torpedoes, rocket fire and cannon fire she managed to reach Aarhus in Denmark on 3rd April.

In June 1944 following intelligence that she was to be used to transport 3000 troops back to Germany, the Norwegian resistance mounted an attack on her with Limpet Mines whilst she was in Oslo harbour. Their purpose was to sink her during the trip. The mines detonated when the ship was close to Øresund causing hull damage but she was able to return to harbour under her own power. She suffered hull damage on two further occasions, once in September 1944 when it was suspected she struck a mine and again on 6th February when she struck a mine in the Baltic and was towed with a flooded engine room to Gdynia for temporary repairs.

MONTE ROSA was then towed to Copenhagen carrying 5,000 German refugees fleeing from the advancing Red Army. She was towed to Kiel in May 1945 and subsequently seized by British forces. She was by then, the only one of the class of 5 to survive the war.

In November 1945 she was taken to Jarrow, Northumberland for extensive repairs and refitting as a peacetime troopship with a G.R.T. of 14,414. She was painted in peacetime troopship colours, yellow funnel, and a white hull with a blue line. In April 1946 she sailed under her own power for the River Clyde to complete repairs at Alexander, Stephen & Sons Ltd, Glasgow and once again was repainted in wartime grey overall.

In 1946 she suffered a serious fire in the engine room and was blighted with engine problems whilst undergoing trials in 1947. On 21st January 1947 she was renamed EMPIRE WINDRUSH by the Ministry of Transport. The vessel was operated for the British Government by the New Zealand Shipping Company, and was scheduled to be used on the Southampton–Gibraltar–Suez–Aden–Colombo–Singapore–Hong Kong route, with voyages extended to Kure in Japan after the start of the Korean War. Her first voyage under the British flag in late 1947 however, was to Suez followed by two voyages calling at Gibraltar, Suez, Aden, India, Kenya, Sudan, Egypt and Malta.

In 1948 she made her one and only voyage to the Caribbean before resuming normal trooping voyages. En-route from Australia to England via the Atlantic she anchored offshore at Tampico, Mexico in order to pick up 66 Polish refugees who had travelled from Siberia via India and the Pacific, and who had been granted permission to settle in the United Kingdom under the terms of the Polish Resettlement Act of 1947. She docked in Trinidad, Cuba, Bermuda and Kingston, Jamaica, to pick up servicemen who were on leave. Of the other passengers, 119 were from England and 40 from other parts of the world. The ship was far from full so an opportunistic advertisement was placed in a Jamaican newspaper offering cheap transport on the ship for anybody who wanted to come and work in the UK. Many former servicemen took this opportunity to return to Britain with the hopes of finding better employment including in some cases re-joining the RAF; others decided to make the journey just to see what the 'mother country' was like. The journey took 22 days and a ticket cost £28 (about £1000 today). One passenger later recalled that demand for tickets far exceeded the supply and there was a long queue to obtain one. The ship docked at the Port of Tilbury on 21 June 1948, and the 1027 passengers began disembarking the next day. A commonly given figure for the number of West Indian immigrants on board is 492 based understandably on news reports in the media at the time, which variously announced that "more than 400", "430" or "500" Jamaican men had arrived in Britain. However, the ship's records, kept in the United Kingdom National Archives at Kew indicate conclusively that 802 passengers gave their last place of residence as a country in the Caribbean. Fifteen stowaways had smuggled themselves aboard, most of them jumped overboard before reaching Tilbury but were later apprehended. All fifteen came in front of the court at Orsett (Tilbury) on 22 and 23rd June. One, a Miss Evelyn Wauchbe, became too cold during the journey to sleep out at night and had to give herself up. The news spread like wildfire through the ship. Someone took the hat round and a band gave a benefit concert. A total of £48 was collected to pay for a first class fare. As she had technically paid her fare she is not included in the stowaway total. Ten had boarded the EMPIRE WINDRUSH in Kingston, three in Trinidad and two in Bermuda. The precedent for this transport of Caribbean residents to the UK was not an approved activity and proved to be highly embarrassing for the UK Government of the time.

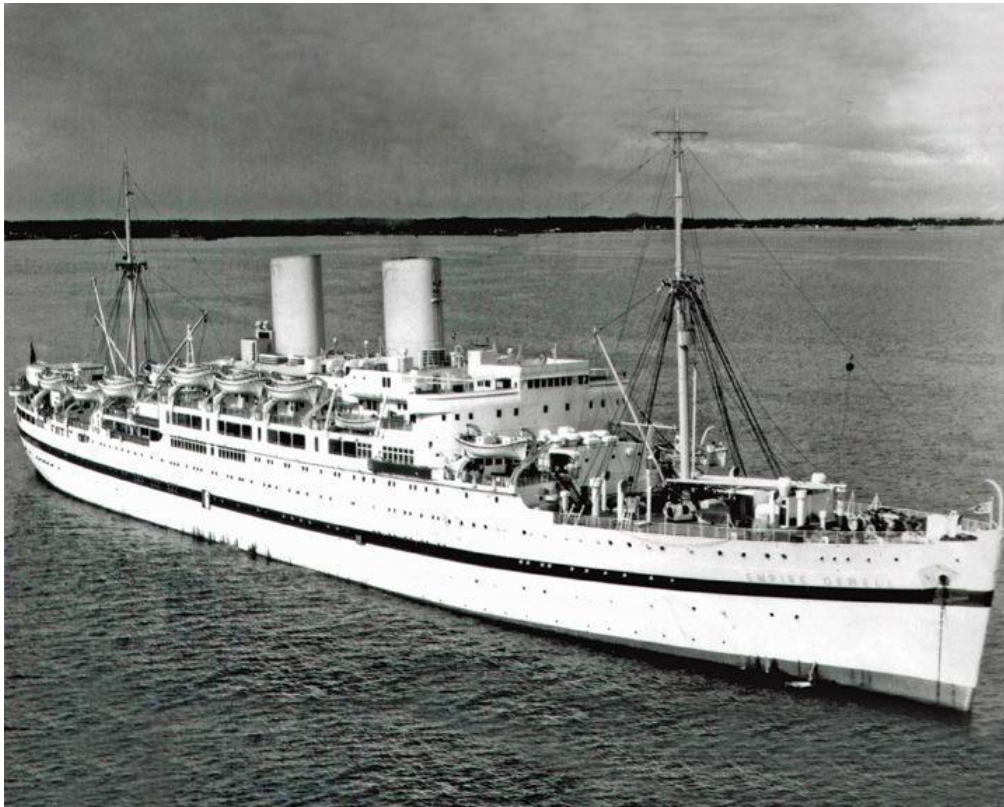
The disembarkation of EMPIRE WINDRUSH's passengers was a notable news event, and was covered by newspaper reporters and by Pathé News newsreel cameras. The name Windrush as a result, has come to be used as shorthand for West Indian migration, and by extension for the beginning of modern British multiracial society.





EMPIRE WINDRUSH at Tilbury

In May 1949 EMPIRE WINDRUSH was on a voyage from Gibraltar to Port Said when a fire broke out on board. Although passengers were placed in the lifeboats they were not launched and the four ships placed on standby to assist her were stood down. The ship was towed back to Gibraltar and subsequently refitted at Southampton between April and August 1950.



EMPIRE WINDRUSH painted in 1950 as a troopship

In 1950 EMPIRE WINDRUSH was again repainted in peacetime trooping colours and was used to repatriate the last British personnel stationed in Greece, calling at Thessaloniki, and Piraeus for troops, some of whom had been in Greece since 1944.

She was present at the Coronation Fleet Review in June 1953.

In February 1954 EMPIRE WINDRUSH left Yokohama calling at Kure en-route to the United Kingdom, scheduled to call at Hong Kong, Singapore, Colombo, Aden and Port Said. However the voyage was plagued with engine breakdowns, it taking 8 weeks for the journey to Port Said from Hong Kong instead of the expected three. On board were 222 crew and 1,276 passengers a total of 1,498 passengers and crew having a certificate to carry 1,541. 32 nautical miles (59 km) off Cape Caxine, Algiers in the early morning of Sunday 28th March there was an explosion and fire in the engine room. All power to the ship was soon lost, disabling the fire hose pumps and the ability to close the watertight doors.



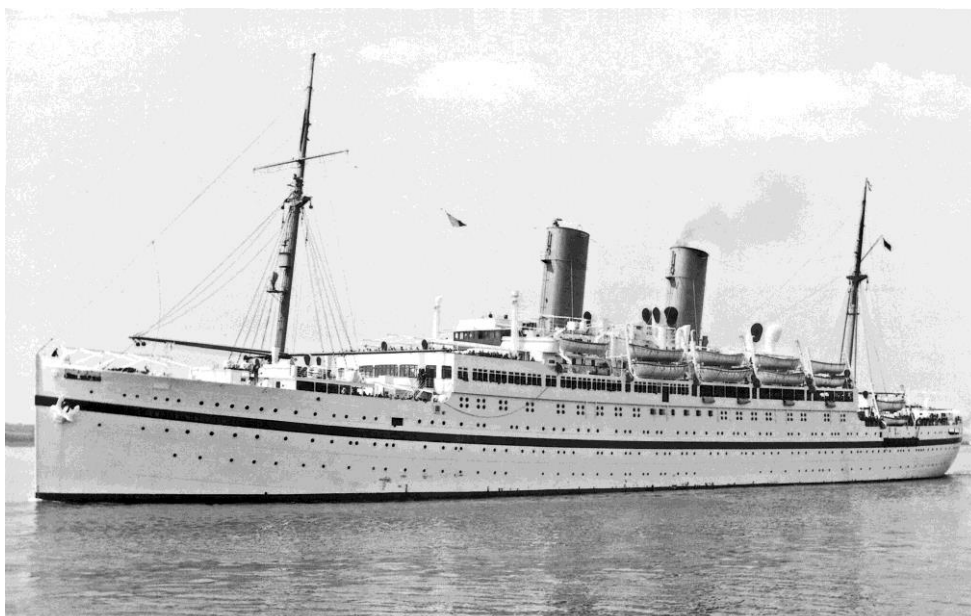
EMPIRE WINDRUSH on fire in the Mediterranean

Within 10 minutes SOS distress calls were transmitted with the emergency transmitter. The order to abandon ship was hampered by billows of thick smoke and in the event only half of the 22 lifeboats were able to be launched due to lack of electrical power. Although some passengers were in the sea for over two hours the only fatalities were the third engineer, two other members of the engine-room crew and the first electrician present in the engine room at the time of the initial explosion. Ships responding to the emergency were the Dutch MV MENTOR, The British P&O cargo ship MV SOCOTRA, the Norwegian ship HEMSFJELL the Italian ships SS TAIGETE and SS HELSCHELL. An RAF Avro Shackleton also assisted in the rescue. Rescue vessels took the passengers and crew to Algiers who were then transferred to Gibraltar on board the Aircraft Carrier HMS TRIUMPH and then onward to the UK by air.

As the ship was government property, she was not insured.

The following day HMS SAINTES (Early Battle Class Destroyer, D84,) of the Royal Navy's Mediterranean Fleet reached EMPIRE WINDRUSH, 100 km northwest of Algiers to find the fire still burning. A party from HMS SAINTES boarded her and managed to attach a line before beginning the slow tow to Gibraltar at a speed of around 3.5 knots. However EMPIRE WINDRUSH sank stern first early the following morning, Tuesday 30th March 1954 after having been towed a distance of only around 16 kilometres. The wreck lies at a depth of around 2,600 m (8,500 ft).

In 2020, a fund-raising effort was begun for a project to recover one of the ship's anchors as a monument to the people of the "Windrush Generation".



SHIP of YESTERYEAR

A selection of ships from the past, taken mainly in Australian waters. Forwarded by Ken Bottoms for inclusion.



CITY of LIVERPOOL (Melbourne)



CITY of OXFORD (Melbourne)



CITY of SWANSEA



CITY of WINCHESTER (Melbourne)



CANTERBURY STAR (Napier, New Zealand.)



CAPE ARNHEM (Adelaide Australia)



CAPE YORK (Adelaide)



CARTHAGE (Melbourne)



CELLANIA (Adelaide)



RIVER BURNETT (Melbourne)

SETTING BOUNDARIES

This article is somewhat off-topic but as it follows from something in the last newsletter, I think I can justify it. In his article on the Thames Iron Works David referred to the Middlesex and Essex banks of the River Lea (the River Lea is also referred to as the River "Lee", of course) at its mouth. I was rather surprised at the reference to a Middlesex bank and I checked a map of Middlesex and confirmed no part of it was anywhere near the Lea mouth. I then did some googling to try and work out what the situation was here and discovered that the Lea was the boundary between London County Council and Essex until the Greater London Council was formed in 1965 and that boundary was thus moved further east. Therefore, I assumed David had made a mistake. I then thought further. It occurred to me that the London County Council would have been a "comparatively recent" creation – in fact it was formed in 1889. It was possible much of the LCC's area was carved out of Middlesex, so I looked up the Middlesex entry on Wikipedia and found the map of Middlesex below: This was drawn by Thomas Kitchin, geographer and engraver to the Duke of York in 1769. Thus, before the LCC was formed the western bank of the River Lea mouth was in Middlesex. The Thames Iron Works was established well before the LCC was, so David was right to refer to the Middlesex side. This article may not have told you much about shipping but I hope it has taught you a bit of history and geography!



John Harrison

I hope you have enjoyed this varied miscellany of news, articles and images etc. to help us through this difficult time.

Please feel free to contact us to add or correct any of the articles found here.

Apologies if any copyright is breached. Please contact us so that we can make amends and include any credits.

Any articles or photos of interest will be gratefully received for the next publication.

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

Newsletter compiled by David Brown

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

Ian Wells, George (Jerzy) Swieszkowski, John Harrison, Ken Bottoms, David Berg, David Brown

Newsletter Number 10 will be published as and when there is any further news and/or 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, Secretary, WSS MID-ESSEX BRANCH