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Salvage operations in progress on the ALKIMOS, January 1964. Note the two portable air compressors forward of the bridge structure, adjacent to hatch three. As the ship was unable to raise steam, the compressors provided power to the winches and windlass. The salvage tug PACIFIC STAR lies off. (*The story continues on page 11.*)

Nautical Instruments Of Distinction

Weather Forecasting???

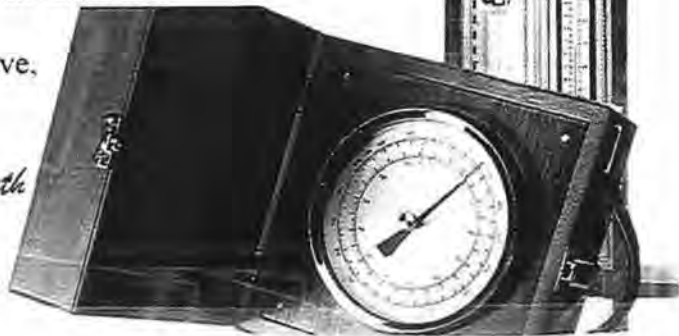
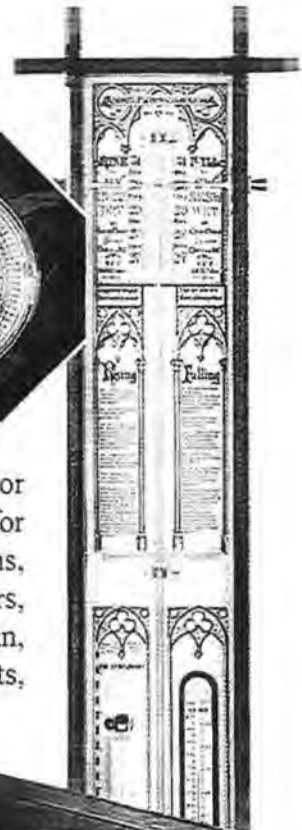
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(If you have an unwanted collection of magazines of a maritime nature, then perhaps its time to let others enjoy reading it. Contact the Association; it may just be interested in archiving the collection.)

HMS BEAGLE



One of the most famous vessels in world history, certainly within the last two hundred years, is HMS BEAGLE, the vessel in which Charles Darwin gathered the data on which he later based his famous theory of evolution by natural selection. The voyage and the results it produced were a turning point in modern history. However, many may not realise that Darwin's voyage was not the BEAGLE's first voyage, nor its last, and there is a very important connection with Western Australia. The BEAGLE is one of those ships which first explored and charted much of Western Australia's coast in the early years of European settlement. Her third voyage of exploration lasted from 1837 to 1843, and it is during this period that she surveyed much of this coast. Peter Worsley continues ...

The BEAGLE was built as one of the Cherokee Class 10-gun brigs designed by Sir Henry Peake in 1807. She was launched at Woolwich Naval Dockyard on 11 May 1820 and was the third Royal Navy vessel to bear the name BEAGLE. Brigs were small vessels, rated sloops-of-war by the navy.

The 10-gun brigs (the smallest) had a poor reputation. They were too small to carry adequate stores or guns for prolonged periods at sea and they were considered unseaworthy. Of the 107 brigs of this class built only one was lost to enemy action but 26 were either wrecked or sunk from unknown causes. Their nickname was "coffin brigs".

The dimensions of a 10-gun brig were:

Length stem to sternpost: 90' 4"

Tons "burthen": 235

Tons displacement, loaded: 297

Breadth, maximum: 24' 6"

Breadth, moulded: 24'

Draft, forward: 11' 5"

Draft, aft: 12' 6"

Armament: 8 x 18 lb carronades; 2 x 6 lb long guns

Crew: normally 65

Stores: water – 19 tons in iron tanks; coal and wood – 6 tons; provisions, spirits, etc. – 6.5 tons; gunner's stores, powder, shot, etc. – 10 tons

Anchors: 3 main bower; 1 stream; 1 kedge.

The first 10-gun brig was HMS ACHETES, launched on 1 February 1808, twelve years before BEAGLE was launched.

HMS BEAGLE was not used after launching and lay in mothballs for five years. In 1825 she was selected for a voyage of exploration and surveying and re-rigged as a three-masted barque. She was also fitted with a large poop cabin and forecastle, given a layer of sacrificial plank sheathing, and re-sheathed with copper. The poop cabin was necessary as a place to contain the reference books needed by the officers and the large table essential for accurate charting and drawing.

On 22 May 1826 the BEAGLE sailed from Plymouth under Commander Pringle Stokes. The ship was accompanied by HMS ADVENTURE. Commander Philip Parker King was expedition leader, on board the ADVENTURE. King had made a great impression on the Admiralty with his excellent surveying voyages along the Western Australian coast from 1817 to 1821. The ADVENTURE was to act as supply vessel because the BEAGLE was considered incapable of carrying adequate provisions for a prolonged period of exploration a long way from any re-victualling port.

The object of the voyage was to survey the southern coasts of South America and Tierra del Fuego. This included the Strait of Magellan and the surrounding waters, a very harsh area.

There were about 90 crew on the BEAGLE and they included a midshipman named John Lort Stokes (no relation to Pringle Stokes) and the assistant surgeon, Benjamin Bynoe. These two were on all three voyages of the BEAGLE.

In August 1828 Stokes shot himself during a period of acute depression and Lt. Skyring was given command of BEAGLE by Commander King. On arriving at Montevideo for re-supply Lt. Robert Fitzroy was given the command of the BEAGLE by the Admiral of the South American Station, Sir Robert Otway. BEAGLE then went back to Tierra del Fuego to continue her mission and eventually returned to Plymouth on 14 October 1830. She had been away nearly 4½ years.

The second voyage of the BEAGLE was required to continue the survey of southern South America and Tierra del Fuego but, on completion of that task, she was to continue around the world. The object was to establish a chain of meridian distances by chronometric measurements. This would enable the Admiralty to get a really accurate fix of

the relative positions of known points on the earth's surface to assist with the still vexing problem of longitude measurements. Fitzroy was reappointed to command BEAGLE on 27 June 1831.

After the hard use of the first expedition, the BEAGLE was in poor condition. A refit was supervised by Fitzroy who appears to be somewhat of a perfectionist and insisted on nothing but the best. The final cost of the refit was £7,583, only £220 less than her original building cost. The upper deck was raised, increasing headroom to about 6 feet and both poop and forecastle decks were also raised. She was again sheathed with 2-inch fir and recoppered.

Fitzroy was a very scientifically-minded officer with a great interest in the sciences connected with his vocation – especially meteorology and navigation. He insisted on brass cannons so not to affect the compasses on board and even supplied two of the 9-pounders at his own expense.

There were 22 chronometers aboard – eleven belonged to the government, six were Fitzroy's own, four were lent by their makers, and one belonged to Lord Ashburnham. These were housed in a special cabin built for them, all in gimbals in special boxes packed in sawdust to dampen the shock when the guns were fired.

The crew numbered about 65 and included Lt. John Clement Wickham, Midshipman Philip Gidley King (son of Philip Parker King), and the two previously mentioned – J.L. Stokes (now Mate and Assistant Surveyor) and B. Bynoe. Commander Fitzroy wanted a naturalist on the voyage and Darwin was offered the position. He was only 22 at the time. Space limitations meant that Charles Darwin, whose presence on board was not essential to the tasks of the expedition as set down by the Admiralty, was given a small area at one end of the large drafting table in the

poop cabin. He was allowed a small area under the forecastle for any specimens he might collect.

The BEAGLE left Plymouth on 21 December 1831 and, at least as regards Darwin's part in it, the voyage itself "is history".

The homeward journey after the long time spent in the waters around the southern area of South America and the Galapagos Islands was made via New Zealand, Sydney, Hobart, King George Sound and the Cocos Keeling Islands. This was the BEAGLE's first visit to Western Australian waters. She arrived back in Plymouth some five years after setting out. The chronometers had served their purpose although only three had lasted the whole voyage. When rated at the Greenwich Observatory the results were very pleasing as the error in the making of a perfect circle of longitudes was only 33 seconds.

After this final work at Greenwich the BEAGLE went to Woolwich where she was stripped, cleaned and then paid off. She was in excellent condition despite the five years of hard work, thanks to Fitzroy's insistence on the best quality of refit before, and his care of her during the voyage. Because of this, when a vessel was required to explore the north-west coast of Australia the following year (1837) the BEAGLE was the natural choice. John Clements Wickham became her commander and supervised her refit at Woolwich, which this time cost only £2384 and took one month.

She set out from Plymouth on 5 July 1837 and included in her complement Lieutenant George Grey and his party who were to explore part of the Western Australian coast. Grey left the BEAGLE at the Cape of Good Hope, continuing his voyage to Western Australia in the schooner LYNHER which he had hired because he believed there were no suitable vessels available in the Swan River Colony.

The BEAGLE arrived off Rottneest

on 15 November 1837 and, because Commander Wickham became seriously ill with dysentery, surveys of Rottneest, Fremantle and the surrounding waters were carried out by the remainder of the crew until he was able to resume duties early in the new year.

BEAGLE left Gage Roads on 4 January 1838, and headed north. The primary task was to find a river which would lead them to the inland sea, believed to exist in the interior of Australia. After many soundings they anchored in Roebuck Bay on 16 January. Here they conducted surveys until the 22nd when they left, again heading north to explore Kings Sound, the Fitzroy River, Beagle Bay, Bathurst Island, Brecknock Harbour (all named by them) and other places on the coast of what is now called the Kimberley. On the cliffs in Hanover Bay the crew painted in "characters of gigantic proportions" the words: *Beagle Observatory Letters S.E. 52 paces*. This was a message for Lt. Grey, but subsequently they met up with Grey himself on 16 April at Port George the Fourth. Grey was in very poor health but was determined to continue his land exploration. After six months away BEAGLE then returned to Fremantle, unsuccessfully attempting to locate Tryall Rocks on the journey back south.

The BEAGLE left Fremantle on 20 June 1838 and three days later rounded Cape Leeuwin and, because of contrary winds, went via Hobart instead of passing through Bass Strait on her way to Sydney. She arrived there on 25 July. In November she sailed south to survey Bass Strait, Port Philip Bay and parts of the southern Victorian coastline. BEAGLE then returned to Sydney in March 1839 and two months later sailed north to Port Essington, surveying and charting en-route parts of the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait. The survey of the northern part of Australia now called the Northern

Territory was commenced. Stokes was a great advocate for Port Essington being developed as a vital port for Australia's future trade with Singapore, especially as a refuelling point for steamers. During the time spent on this coast a survey was carried out of a possible port which was named Port Darwin. The BEAGLE also made a trip to Timor.

BEAGLE sailed south in late 1839, anchored briefly at Depuch Island and, after burying at sea their cook (a man named Mitchell) near Shark's Bay on 21 January 1840, arrived at Fremantle on 31 January. During the period they were at Fremantle the BEAGLE was moved to Rottneest "to collect a little material for the chart and select a hill for the site of a lighthouse. The one we chose lies towards the south-east end of the island, bearing N76W (true) twelve and a quarter miles from Freemantle Gaol". Gage Roads was also surveyed.

The vessel returned to continue the survey of the north-west coast on 4 April 1839. On the trip north BEAGLE anchored on 6 April off the Abrolhos Islands and work proceeded to survey this group of islands. Because of old ships' timbers found on the south-west point of the island off which they were anchored Wickham and Stokes erroneously considered that the BATAVIA had been wrecked here. The group of islands was named the Pelsart Group and their anchorage named Batavia Road. A survey of an anchorage on the mainland opposite was next carried out. This was named by them Champion Bay and its protecting southern point named Point Moore.

Returning to the Abrolhos Islands they continued their surveying and named the Easter Group. Good Friday Harbour, Rat Island, Snapper Bank, Gun Island, Zeewyck Passage, Middle Passage, East Wallaby Island and West Wallaby Island, the Pigeon Islands, Recruit Harbour, Fish Point, Slaughter

Point, North Island and Record Hill. Gun Island and Zeewyck Passage were named because of the gun found there and its association with the wreck of the ZEEWYCK. Stokes states that the place where the Dutch survivors built the small sloop to sail to Batavia was clearly evident. So while being correct in their assessment of the facts regarding the wreck of the ZEEWYCK they were very wrong with the position of the BATAVIA. This error was to cause many problems and arguments until finally resolved in 1963.

Heading north after nearly seven weeks on this task the BEAGLE, after a trip to Timor via the Rowley Shoals, continued the survey of the north-west.

In particular they were trying to solve the riddle of the whereabouts of Tryall Rocks and Ritchie's Reef. This exploration centered mainly around Barrow Island and the Montebello Islands. They returned to the Swan River Settlement on 27 September 1839. Here the BEAGLE crew erected beacons on rocks lying off Thomsons Bay, Rottneest Island.

At the end of October BEAGLE left Fremantle for Sydney via Albany and South Australia. Here further surveys were conducted. At Adelaide Captain Wickham, who had never fully recovered from the dysentery which had laid him low when he first arrived at Fremantle, left for England and Stokes was given command of the BEAGLE.

BEAGLE left Sydney in early June 1841 to chart the Gulf of Carpentaria and also the Port Essington area. More of the north-west coast, particularly an indentation in the coast just south of Roebuck Bay, was also examined. During September they sailed to Timor from Port Essington to get water and provisions, returning to their task some two weeks later. On the completion of this survey BEAGLE sailed south, arriving at Fremantle on 23 November 1841. Here surveys were carried out in the Swan River.

Because of the uncertainty over the exact positions of Champion Bay and Port Grey and their suitability as ports the BEAGLE was again dispatched north in December to settle the problem. She anchored in Champion Bay and exploration was carried out at sea and by land parties who travelled some miles inland to inspect the country for suitability as farming or grazing land. These surveys found that Champion Bay was "the only good anchorage" and that the country was "not fit for the settler, being deficient in the three most necessary articles, water, timber for building, and food for stock".

BEAGLE left Champion Bay on 16 January 1842, sailing south via Fremantle, Koombanah Bay, King George Sound and then to South Australia and Tasmania to Sydney, surveying enroute. While in Tasmania Stokes arranged with Sir John Franklin, Governor of Tasmania, to use the colonial cutter VANSITTART to assist in the survey of Bass Strait. BEAGLE arrived in Sydney on 15 March to collect stores which had been sent from England.

After collecting some of the stores the BEAGLE returned to Bass Strait to continue the charting. At one stage she came close to being wrecked but was saved by excellent seamanship. Taking advantage of the tide in the Tamar River the BEAGLE was laid ashore for an examination of her bottom. This resulted in the replacement of 130 of the copper sheets which protected her.

On her return to Sydney for further stores from England, which had not arrived on the previous visit, Stokes found that there were orders for the BEAGLE to return to England. Stokes took upon himself the responsibility of waiting for a few months so that he could complete the survey of Bass Strait, which had been expedited by the use of the VANSITTART. Having completed the survey BEAGLE returned to Sydney then sailed on 18

February 1843 for England via Hobart, King George Sound and Fremantle. She arrived back in England on 30 September, after six years away. In that time she lost only two crew. Stokes had served on her for eighteen years, "a fact unprecedented in the service".

The BEAGLE was paid off on 18 October 1843 and was subsequently employed by the Preventive Service, moored in Pagelsham Pool on the River Crouch in Essex as an observation station office and living quarters in the fight against smuggling. Here she stayed until 13 May 1870 when she was sold to "Murray and Trainer" for £525. There is no record of her after this and it is presumed that she was either cut down for use as a barge or hulk or broken up for scrap.

Thus ended the life of a small, nondescript warship which never fought in a war and was considered unsuitable as a ship of war because of her inability to carry the necessary stores and munitions for extended voyages and battles. The BEAGLE's contribution to the geographical knowledge of the world and to Australia in particular, plus her part in the formulation of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection is out of all proportion to her size and humble origins. This outstanding contribution was achieved by what was originally slated as just another "coffin ship".

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A link with the BULOLO is broken ...

An interesting post-script to the article "A Mixed Complement: At Sea With HMS BULOLO" (MHA Journal, Vol.7, No.4, December, 1996) is the following adaptation of an obituary printed in the Daily Telegraph of March 3, 1997. The obituary, "Captain Robert Phillimore: Communications Expert for Allied Landings in Mediterranean", kindly sent by ex Petty Officer Joy Willis (Wilson) WRNS, announced the death at 84 of Captain Robert Phillimore, one of the Royal Navy's foremost experts in Combined Operations communications during the Second World War, and twice Signal Officer on board HMS BULOLO.

Robert Fortescue Phillimore was born on May 16, 1912, the son of Admiral Sir Richard Phillimore. He went to Dartmouth Naval College as a cadet in 1930, qualified as a signal officer in 1938, and served on the staffs of a succession of admirals: Wake-Walker in the cruiser EFFINGHAM on the Northern Patrol in 1939; R H C Hallifax, Read Admiral (Destroyers) Home Fleet, in the Flotilla Leader INGLEFIELD in 1940; and Rear Admiral "Turtle" Hamilton, in the cruiser ARETHUSA for the raid on the Lofoten Islands in December 1941. In 1942 he went to HMS DUNDONALD,

the Combined Operations base at Inverary, Argyllshire, and then to DUNDONALD II, the Combined Signal School at Troon, Ayrshire.

The great series of amphibious landings which began with Operation Torch, in November 1942, presented unprecedented problems in communications. The naval commander and his staff would be embarked in a headquarters ship fitted with additional radar and radio; using over a dozen wavebands and more than one hundred signal personnel, they had to keep in touch simultaneously with their Army and Air Force colleagues, the infantry landing ships and craft taking the troops ashore, fighter direction officers, bombardment spotting and forward observation officers, and the offshore covering force of capital ships and aircraft carriers.

Having been involved in the planning for Torch, Phillimore then took part in the operation as signal officer on the staff of Commodore Tom Troubridge, the naval commander of the Centre Task Force for the landings at Oran. Communications at Oran were more than usually complicated because the ships were British but the troops, for political reasons, were American. Troubridge's headquarters ship, the ex-armed merchant cruiser LARGE, had only just been converted in time to take part; however the landings achieved almost complete surprise and there was little resistance at Oran, except from the French Navy.

Next was Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily, in July 1943. Embarked in the headquarters ship BULOLO, Troubridge, now promoted Read Admiral, and his staff successfully put ashore the British 5th and 50th Divisions, a tank battalion, an armoured regiment, and three commandos. Phillimore was appointed MBE, and twice mentioned in despatches, for Torch and Husky.

Later that year, he went with

Troubridge to India, to train the forces which were to carry out landings planned for the Arakan coast of Burma. They were both back in the Mediterranean by Christmas, bringing with them the assault forces they had been training, because operations in south-east Asia were given lower priority than Operation Shingle, the landing at Anzio, in January 1944. Phillimore was again Signal Officer in BULOLO, putting ashore the British 1st Division six miles north of Anzio.

In June 1944 he embarked in the Infantry Landing Ship ROYAL SCOTSMAN for Operation Brassard, the assault on Elba. Normal communications problems were compounded by the fact that the assault troops were French, the naval force was mostly British, and the aircraft were American and British. As French troops on the ground would be demanding support from American aircraft, and bombardment from British warships, the possibilities of confusion were unlimited. Because of the advance of the Army on the mainland, Operation Brassard was probably unnecessary by

the time it took place, but it proved an unexpectedly bloody affair: Elba was well defended by minefields and heavy artillery, and the German garrison, knowing they had no hope of relief or reinforcement, resisted desperately. So intense was the fire from shore that Troubridge had to switch the second assault wave to another beach in the middle of the attack: "The scene in the operations-room-cum-wireless office of my flagship", he said, "where 14 lines were working and two languages (not including bad) were flowing, was indescribable. But the signalmen as usual performed a miracle and in no previous operation have I been better served". Phillimore's communications organisation stood the strain, Elba was duly secured, and he was awarded the DFC.

After the war, Robert Phillimore had NATO appointments in Washington DC, and in Oslo as Chief Signal Officer, Allied Forces North. He retired from the Royal Navy in 1956 and took up farming at Swanmore, near Southampton.



Phillimore: cool amid the babble

The STEFANO found at last

Readers recalling Peter Worsley's absorbing article on the Maritime Archaeological Association of WA (MAAWA)'s search for the wreck of the STEFANO (MHA Journal, Vol.8, No.1, 1997) should be interested to know that the ship's remains have at last been found.

MAAWA's May 1997 newsletter gives the credit for the find to a team of WA Maritime Museum staff led by Mike McCarthy. Apparently the wreck site is not near Black Rock as suggested in the Scuria account of the tragedy, but is nearer the main reef to the south of Point Cloats. However the location has proven the accuracy of the latitude recorded in that account.

The find was made while staff engaged in looking for the remains of the CORREO DI AZIZ.

The discovery of the wreck has created a great deal of interest in MAAWA's coming July expedition to the site, and they will almost certainly have the assistance of a team of land archaeologists to investigate the caves located on their previous trip, with the intention of verifying occupation by the castaways.

Museum photographer, Pat Baker, is planning to join MAAWA on the trip to photograph the site. If the weather permits, MAAWA members will visit the wreck site itself.

Planning is also in hand by the Museum to undertake a major

expedition to the site in 1998 – possibly about April – which will open opportunities for MAAWA members to participate in the recording and excavation of the wreck site.

The Royal Western Australian Historical Society also has a major interest in the wreck, recently conducting a session on the subject, with representatives of MAAWA and the Maritime Museum present.

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

In a time of well-intentioned concern for the retention and renovation of what remains of the early fabric of Victoria Quay, Fremantle Harbour, it appeared [to the Editor at least] that nobody seemed to know quite how long each of the wharfside sheds had been standing.

It was therefore refreshing to read a snippet in the May 3 edition of the *Fremantle Herald* that put the confusion straight. The snippet, written by historian David Hutchinson, is reproduced below, with permission:

The original shed [E-Shed] was completed in September 1903 – at that time it was designated F. The alphabetic designations originally started at the upstream end of Victoria Quay. The designation order was reversed by a decision of the Fremantle Harbour Trust in December 1904. In 1928/29 three shed – D, E and F – were

demolished, and rebuilt as two sheds, which were designated D and E. The shed designated E probably contained parts of the original E and F sheds. This newly constructed (or reconstructed) shed is the one which has been relocated to become E-Shed Markets.

Only four sheds remain in-situ: A, B, C and D. The original A and B sheds were constructed 1905/06 and were demolished in 1925/26, to be replaced by the existing A and B, which are therefore about fifty years old. D, as explained above, was reconstructed in 1928/29. C is the oldest of the sheds, having been built in 1902/04 (although at that time it was designated H-Shed).

Fremantle's Forgotten Tugs

We are fortunate in having the sheds and, at the moment, six old cranes still with us as a reminder of the atmosphere and bustle that once was Victoria Quay. What a pity that not one or the earlier tugs – especially the steam tugs – was retained in running order.

A copy of an article in the 1972 summer edition of the Port of Fremantle Quarterly, titled "The Tugs of Fremantle", and passed on to the Editor by Ross Shardlow, provides a good facts-and-figures reminder of the tugs servicing the harbour at that time, or then-recently withdrawn. An extract follows:

"WYOLA – built in 1912 at South Shields, Durham, to the order of the Swan River Shipping Company.

Specially-designed for service in West Australian waters, she was one of the most powerful tugs then operating around the Australian coast. Her long delivery voyage from the United Kingdom became an instant-business affair when, en-route, she took in tow the copper-laden barque CONCORDIA at Port Hedland on September 25, 1912, and towed her on the remainder of her voyage to Fremantle. During the Great War, WYOLA served overseas as a minesweeper, returning to Fremantle in 1919, to serve continuously until 1970 when she was sold as scrap.

YUNA – Figured in some spectacular sea-going tows. She stood by the drifting freighter ARKABA which played a cat-and-mouse game with tugs after she broke a towline in the Great Australian Bight; she towed the disabled tanker LANSING (in 1957) and the explosion-damaged tanker FARMAND (in 1959), each from 800 miles out in the Indian Ocean, to the safety of Fremantle.

In the ARKABA, LANSING and FARMAND operations, the master of YUNA was Captain H.T. Owen [who went on to become a Fremantle Port Authority pilot].

Perhaps YUNA's greatest achievement was early in 1962, when she brought the stern section of the Liberian ship [tanker] BRIDGEWATER to Fremantle. The tanker had broken in two in mid-ocean. YUNA found the stern section, took it in tow – but then lost the tow. She returned to port for replenishment of fuel and stores, sailed again and regained the tow, finally arriving in Fremantle twelve days after setting out on the recovery operation.

[In March of 1963, YUNA towed the Greek freighter ALKIMOS from the Beagle Island Reef, off Geraldton, to Fremantle, following a successful refloating of the ship by Marine Surveyor, Captain C.F. Woodcock. [At the time of writing (1972), YUNA had

been sold to a fishing company, and was laid up in the Fremantle Fishing Boat Harbour. She was subsequently scrapped. – Ed.]

WILGA – Built in the United Kingdom in 1945, and formerly one of the famous Empire-class (EMPIRE NAIRN) which served with distinction in Britain's wartime merchant fleet. Her name is the Aboriginal word for "teeth" – joined the fleet at Fremantle in 1955. She was of 256 gross tons, and on trials had a bollard pull of 12½ tons. She came to Fremantle as a replacement for the tug FAIDHERBE, purchased in 1954 by the Adelaide Steamship-Swan River Shipping Towing Pool. FAIDHERBE, stationed off Dakar, sank with all hands off the South African coast on her way to Fremantle. WALANA – Took her name from the Aboriginal word for "boomerang". She was built in South Australia and commenced service in the Port of Fremantle in 1960. Her gross tonnage was 217 and on trials her bollard pull was 18 tons.

WEELA – (Black Swan) was next on the scene, starting work in 1968. She was of 232 tons and had a bollard pull of 25 tons.

WONGARA – Whose Aboriginal name means "morning" was the largest of the Fremantle tugs. Her gross tonnage was 423 and on trials her bollard pull was 43 tons. She became the seagoing member of the fleet. Her first ocean tow was waiting for her when she arrived on her delivery voyage from South Australia in January 1970. After one night in her home port, she was off to Dampier towing a big Dutch dredge. She towed the crippled lighthouse tender CAPE DON from Shark Bay to Fremantle. However, her biggest tow was when she brought the giant oil rig JUBILEE down from Barrow Island to Fremantle.

WATO – (her name meant "take hold"). Arrived at Fremantle in May 1971. Of 316 gross tons, she had a bollard pull of

34 tons.

Three of the tugs (WONGARA, WILGA and WALANA) were jointly owned by Adelaide Steamship Industries and the Swan River Shipping Company; WATO was wholly-owned by Adelaide Steamship Industries, and WEELA was wholly-owned by The Swan River Shipping Company.

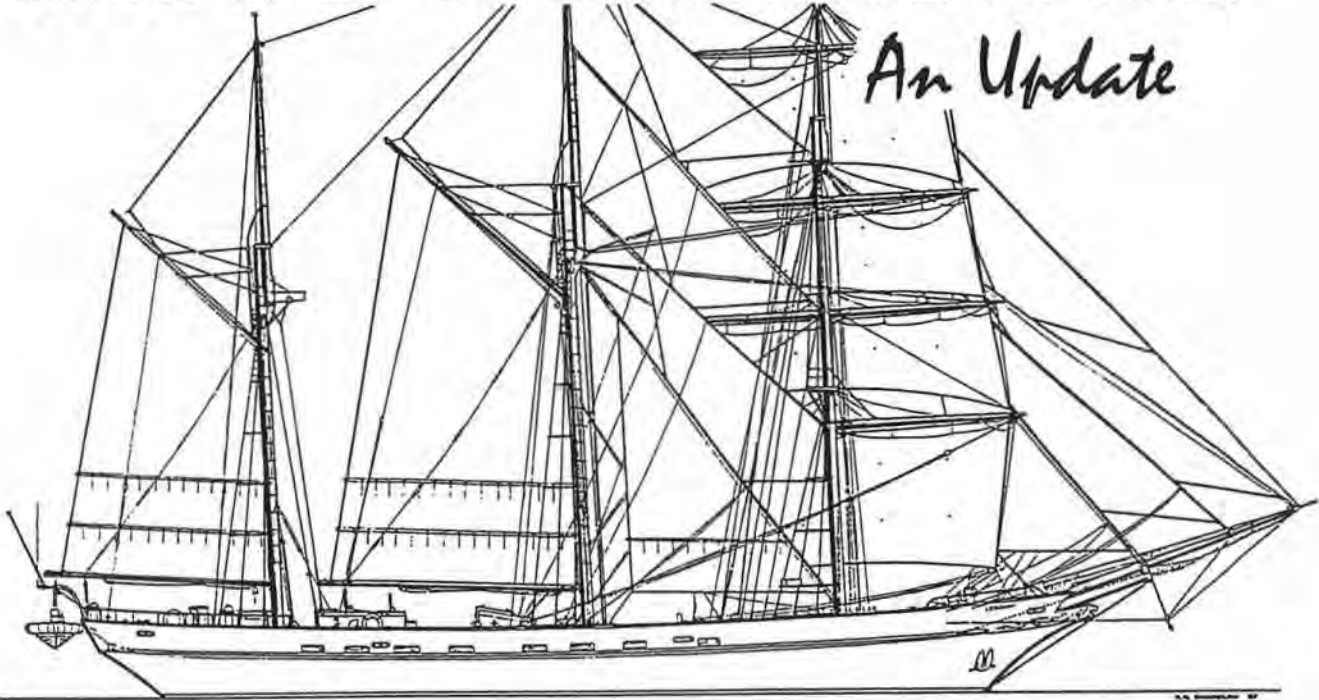
Work for the tugs was not confined to the Inner Harbour. They also serviced ships at the Bulk Cargo Jetty, the Alumina Refinery jetty, and the Steelworks Jetty, all in the Port's Outer Harbour. Major industrial developments along the shores of Cockburn Sound added to these areas serviced. [Specialists at the oil refinery berths were the tugs BP PARMELIA and BP COCKBURN.]

Fremantle Tug Operators, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Howard Smith Limited, operated all five tugs from June 1968. Prior to 1909, the tugs owned respectively by the Swan River Shipping Company and the Adelaide Steamship Company operated on a "catch-as-catch-can" basis, racing each other to compete for a tow. From 1909 a Towing Pool Agreement was entered into with the tugs AWHINA, owned by the Swan River Shipping Company, and URAIDLA, owned by the Adelaide Steamship Company.



LEEWIN OCEAN ADVENTURE:

An Update



MHA members could not have failed to notice STS LEEWIN's ongoing inactivity in Fremantle Harbour of late, her only movements seemingly confined to brief hops back and forth between her old berth and somewhere corresponding to the old J-berth area. Membership should long ago have heard of the Foundation's financial difficulties, and the strenuous attempts being made to rescue the enterprise.

1997 must go down as one of the most painful and frustrating years for all of those associated with the LEEWIN. The Foundation is currently working closely with the State Government in exploring options for a more secure future; the Government is most supportive and keen to ensure that the LEEWIN stays here in WA.

A joint communique is currently being drafted that will state the Government's commitment to LEEWIN's future operation by utilising its training facilities for its clients and staff. Armed with this declaration of support, approaches will then be made by the Foundation to the business community, seeking offers to match the support of the Government. There will however still be a need to raise funds to cover the LEEWIN's immediate ten-year survey and maintenance requirements.

Depending on progress in all these considerations, the Foundation plans to slip the ship in late September, and complete the remaining maintenance work the following month. Volunteer maintenance support is of course vital for the remainder of this year!

The planned October voyages will be run with a relief

crew and the support of the Foundation's loyal volunteers; new permanent ship and shore staff will be engaged as soon as finances permit. This is expected to coincide with the ship's recommencement of normal operations in December. It is still however too early to produce a programme for 1998, but this will be distributed and publicised just as soon as it is finalised.

(I hope I speak for all MHA membership, in wishing every success to this unique and admirable enterprise in WA. I venture to say that it is probably irreplaceable; it must not be allowed to go the way of so many worthwhile ventures that simply fade from public concern.— Ed.)

The ALKIMOS: Fact without the Fanciful

PART THREE © Chris Buhagiar

We pick up the story again, with the Viggo Hansteen on passage with Convoy UGS-25, carrying war-aid for the Soviet Union. Her earlier departure with UGS-24 had been aborted because of engine trouble – a not-uncommon problem with new ships, especially when manned by foreign crews unfamiliar with the American machinery.



THE WAR AT SEA

The period September/October, 1943 had witnessed 2468 Allied merchantmen crossing the Atlantic in sixty four convoys. Allied anti-submarine strategy, tactics and the ability to decode intercepted German radio messages, had rendered the U-boat largely impotent. Only nine ships had been lost. During September alone, a total of forty one U-boats – a third of the German submarines on station – had failed to return to their bases, twenty-five of them being lost in mid Atlantic convoy areas.

By November, there were still some thirteen U-boats operating in the Mediterranean, and both they and the Axis aircraft based in occupied southern France were continuing to attack the large Allied supply convoys on passage along the North African coast. However, with the Gibraltar Straits now heavily patrolled by the Allies, losses inflicted on these convoys were few.

Losses of merchantmen to U-boats operating in the Indian Ocean had continued, some boats reaching up as far as the Persian Gulf and approaches to the Red Sea, where shipping traffic was extremely valuable.

WITH CONVOY UGS-25

UGS-25 began redefining itself as it approached the Mediterranean: vessels of the Ocean Section that had joined at Norfolk would begin detaching for their respective destinations, while those of the Mediterranean Section would join the convoy for the remainder of the passage.

VIGGO HANSTEEN: VOYAGE ONE, EAST. At sea with Convoy UGS-25. North Atlantic, for Banda-e-Shaphur, Persian Gulf. November 28, 1943

... Steering set courses. Westerly winds, Force 1 – 2; 24-hour lookout and gun watches. Chronometer error at observation: 0^h00^m31^s+. 07.00 crew at work: painted cabins and on deck; also different deck work. Carpenter did joinery on bridge. 15.30 gun drill: all crew at respective stations. 21.00 clocks twenty minutes forward. Seaweed on ship's log ...

Nov.30

... Steering set courses. Westerly winds, Force 1; 24-hour lookout and gun watches. Crew at work: painted cabins and on deck. 15.30 gun drill ...

INSTRUCTIONS TO SHIPS' MASTERS ON CONVOY CODES AND PROCEDURES

Arrangements were in place at this time in the principal United States ports – particularly in New York and Baltimore – for special interviews and instructions to ships' masters on codes and other convoy procedure. These interviews were not compulsory but were usually supplementary to and quite apart from the ordinary convoy conferences given prior to a convoy's departure.

In instances where masters on the Atlantic seaboard wished to be given this additional information or instruction, they were advised to contact either the port director directly or through the office of the Atlantic Coast Director in New York, or through the Baltimore District Manager of the War Shipping Administration, so that special conferences and instructions could be arranged prior to the convoy conference. However, it was often very difficult for such extra arrangements to be made in the last-minute rush before sailing; it was also difficult to get together a sufficient number of masters at any one time at a given port in order to enable the establishing of a regular course of classes – difficulties contributing to a situation where requests would likely be met only on a case-by-case basis.

This apparently common shortcoming in adequate pre-departure briefing is illustrated by the experiences of the master of an EC-2 operated by the Atlantic Gulf and West Indies Steamship Lines: in a February 2, 1943, correspondence to his company – a letter which was quickly re-directed to the War Shipping Administration – he expressed the opinion that "... it [was] almost criminal [sic] to send masters (and deck officers too) to sea in convoys with a satchel full of code books and secret signals and not one minutes [sic] instruction in their use". He went on:

... The day before we sailed from Baltimore, when I was down in the Port Director's office to get my sailing instructions, I was told by the Commander in charge that they were running a class for deck officers, instructing them in the use of codes and signals. I told him it was a fine time to tell me now when I was sailing after having spent three weeks in Baltimore doing nothing but kill time to [till] the ship was turned over [around]. He said he had requested Mr. Barslow [Bouslog] of the War Shipping [Administration] to send all the stand by men down to him, but so far he had not done so, and after making inquiry [sic] of at least five other masters who was [sic] standing by to man Liberty ships I found none had heard of the classes ...

The master attributed this state of affairs for the sinking of three ships by submarines in his last convoy, ships which

had lost the convoy and had failed to regain it – due, he thought, to their masters not getting or misunderstanding the signals. He continued:

... In order [that] you may better understand some of our problems. I will relate some of our experience[s]. One night during a gale and very rough sea, the Commodore reduced speed from 9 knots to seven and with the wind and sea abeam and on the quarter the ship would not answer the helm and ran up in the wind and stood there. We were not the only one. I counted ten ships with "not under control" lights burning. After a while the Commodore changed the course by sound, first 20 degrees and soon afterward 20 more. After a while and after getting by some of the ships which laid crossways in the convoy we got on our course with wind and sea astern and had no further trouble. But all the ships in the convoy was [sic] not as well off as us. It would be an impossibility for the rear ships in the convoy to hear the whistle signals with the wind blowing away from them. Consequently, the next morning the convoy was considerable [sic] smaller. Under ordinary circumstances, if they lost the convoy, they should have rejoined us at the next rendezvous the next noon, but the rendezvous was changed by the Commodore by blinkers [signalling lamp] as follows: Jan. 20th. relay to all column leaders and ships, then report back to us when all the columns have it. Cancell [sic] straglers[sic]. Xray, yoke, zebra, able and baker and substitute george (latitude and longitude) hypo (latitude and longitude.)

After spending all day looking up all my letters, codes and books trying to solve the message I was still at a loss. Later I received an other message from the Commodore: See Port Director's letter of 12- 10- 42 addressed to all masters subject to route. Again I went over all my letters but could not find any dated 12- 10- 42. So blinked Rear Commodore and told him so.

The next day the Rear Commodore blinked me again and said: Letter of 12- 10- 42 meant sealed letter given us in New York. That sealed letter was marked on the outside: Do not open unless you lose the convoy and cannot overtake it within 24 hours after departure from New York.

My interpretation of that is, if you do not lose the convoy, the letter must be returned unopened to the Naval Control Office at the port of arrival, so naturally, I did not open it. Other ships in the convoy must have felt as I did, because at least two ships blinked me and asked if I understood the message.

After opening the letter, everything was clear to me, but evidently it was not so to some ships, as about a dozen ships

failed to rejoin the convoy and at least two of the ships sunk were in the vicinity [sic] of the original rendezvous and several hundred miles from us.

I feel that if the first message had been in plainer language ... most masters would have understood it and been able to rejoin the convoy.

If you could have seen the actions of the ships in the convoy to the very last days before arrival after having had drills almost daily, you would readily [sic] see the importance of masters and deck officers need in getting instructions before sailing in convoys, as they are not only endangering their own ship, but every ship in the convoy. The ones who do know and execute their turns right, can't do so, lest they ram the ones there is [that are] out of station ...

MAKING SMOKE

From Convoy UGS-19 on, no ship had been included in outbound UGS or homebound GUS convoys that did not have a declared speed of at least ten knots. This was to ensure that a sustained speed of nine knots was possible by each vessel without it making smoke.

The problem of excessive smoke as well as straggling in convoys had been a concern of the British Admiralty and the Ministry of War Transport since the outbreak of war. In his report at the conclusion of Convoy HX-192 from Halifax, Convoy Commodore F.A. Marten had begun:

... What would otherwise have been the best convoy I have had has been spoilt by certain ships making far too much smoke.

It can be said without exaggeration that at no time during daylight hours would the smoke from the convoy have been visible less than 25 to 30 miles and during the short nights from 10 to 15 miles. Assuming that normally in [the] same conditions of visibility a Submarine would locate convoy from 12 to 15 miles, this must increase the chance of it being located and shadowed by 100%. The necessity for keeping down smoke was stressed at the Conference before leaving Halifax, when I informed Masters that I did not intend to make continual signals to individual ships "You are making too much smoke" these tending to become as fraying to tempers as to signal halliards, but after they had been warned twice the matter would be brought up in my report ...

I regret to say that this ship [the MANCHESTER EXPORT], flying my Commodore's pendant was one of the worst offenders ... Having asked him [the chief engineer] which of the following causes he considered was mainly responsible ... he reported as follows:

1. It is impossible for the Engineer on watch to give as

much attention to firing of boilers as could be wished on account of having to stay close to Manoeuvring valve while in convoy.

- 2. Class of firemen on the average is much below pre war.*
- 3. Poor and variable coal is cause of a great deal of smoke. Getting coal in different countries means different methods of firing boilers, which have to be found by experience.*
- 4. The design is arranged theoretically to give all economic advantages ...*

In a reply to a Ministry-request for co-operation on the matter, the US Maritime Commission continued:

... the MWT ... send ... the reports of the Commodores of all the convoys wherein reference is made to any of the American controlled Steamers or containing any data which would be of benefit to our vessels ... If we receive advices prompt enough before the vessels return to the other side, we will investigate the causes on this side so that corrections can be made in order to prevent recurrence ...

Though an Admiralty study had centred on vessels that burned coal, the problem was by no means confined exclusively to the type, and a mission was duly invited to visit the United States to pass on findings and discuss recommendations more fully. As a result, from late April, 1943, port directors at US ports were required to have all incoming ships in convoy adequately inspected to determine their material condition, and:

... every effort made to see that the repairs decided on are completed in time for the vessels to meet their sailing dates. The present crowded conditions of the repair yards and the paucity of shipping requires that seasoned judgement be exercised in ordering repairs ... The criterion is a vessel capable of maintaining her position in convoy without excessive smoking.

... These inspections shall be carried out by personnel qualified to pass on the material readiness of the vessel from actual inspection of the power and boiler plant including steering and auxiliary equipment, the logs and records, and questioning of the ship's officers ...

However, the problem persisted.

Experience had also shown that it was bad practice to mix vessels of different declared speeds and means of propulsion. Each time a fast American cross-compound turbine ship got mixed up in an eight knot convoy, the ship invariably had to go back to the yard for repairs to damage

from vibration to the low pressure turbine – caused by improper heat distribution on the rotor. As a remedial measure, it was therefore suggested:

... if it would not be practical to so allocate the vessels that a convoy could be made up of only 14 to 17 knot vessels and other convoys made up having only those capable of under ten knots. At the present time we see old 8 knot vessels and those of 15 knots proceeding out in convoy together. To date, except for troop convoys on large passenger vessels, we have noted that our C-2 design vessels have had to reduce their speed to 10 knots as a maximum, this being the fastest convoy they are placed in. There should now be enough of the fast vessels to arrange a 14 knot convoy to England at least, – if the allocation was worked out with this end in view ...

VIGGO HANSTEEN: Banda-e Shaphur, Persian Gulf. For Offloading. January 9, 1944

... 13.00 pilot embarked to take ship further in to harbour. 14.30 ship brought to an anchor, 90 fathoms. Some of crew already ashore or off duty; three gunners on watch. Unloading scheduled to commence at 19.00 but rain prevented this ...

Jan.10

... 17.00 crew at work: took off deckload securings and shorings, and touched up paint outboard. Marcussen oiled winches. 10.00 doctor aboard to vaccinate crew for smallpox. 07.30 stevedores arrived and offloading begun 08.00. Worked until 12.40, then from 14.00 until 14.40 when deckload cleared from no.1 hatch. Work delayed in hatch because necessary equipment not at hand. Finished 16.30. 17.30 work resumed on no.5 deckload and continued until 24.00, then from 01.00 until 04.30 following morning. In all, 154 tons removed ...

Jan.13

... 06.00 pilot embarked to take ship alongside wharf; tied up 08.45. Immediately resumed offloading with five teams working hatches 1 and 5 into barges, and 2, 3 and 4 onto wharf. Worked until 12.00, then from 13.00 until 16.45; 19.00 to 24.00, and 01.00 to 04.30 following morning. 22.50, all ammunition cleared from no.1 hatch. Some rain during night. Unloaded 681 tons ...

Jan.15

... 04.30 bosun and five crewmen rigged up no.2 heavy derrick. 07.00 crew at work: different deck jobs, wire strap splicing and various clearing jobs. Offloading continued, with seven teams working ... 19.00 some of crew out on deck in heavy rain and strong wind to haul ship further in against wharf; Second and Third Mates supervised

offloading, two gunners on watch. 990 tons unloaded ...

Jan.17

... 07.00 crew at work: painted outboard, took covers off deeptanks, and other deck work. Anholdt off duty after oiling winches for weekend; Loseth to bed, feeling a reaction to vaccination. Doctor on board, keeping an eye on things. Cargo badly handled by stevedores – boxes broken and bags torn. Cautioned by Mate. Local military authority has full responsibility, nothing could be done. 901 tons offloaded ...

Jan.19

... Shore Authorities deprive crew of further shore leave because of a quantity of alcoholic cargo stolen previous night. Some seen together ashore with local soldiers – drunk ...

It was during a break in unloading by local stevedores that the theft occurred. At the time, the spirits were on the foredeck and not under the supervision of the US and British military, who had also taken a break. Fireman/Greaser Rolf Werner Karlsen recalls:

... Some of us got some tools and opened a barrel, and filled up a few buckets with 96% proof, and went down to the messes, where we toasted [the new year], both the engine and the deck crew. When the soldiers returned, they came and took a few drinks with us ... it was only the Captain and a few of the officers who didn't have any drinks. As the Persians [now] did not have any soldiers to supervise [them], there was no unloading that night ...

The day after, everyone who had been drinking was called into the drawing room for an inquiry. There were American, English and Russian officers, with interpreters present. We were very nervous for a while, because the Russians wanted us extradited and sentenced by them, even if the ship left without us.

But then one of the American officers got up ... and banged his fist on the table, and told the Russians that so long as the load was [still] on board, it belonged to "Uncle Sam". When this had been translated by the interpreter, the [Russian] officer and the interpreter stormed out the door and went ashore. We went back to work and never heard anything more about the matter. Life on board returned to normal ... I cannot remember any of us going ashore –there was nothing there, only desert, and nothing to buy!

Though the passage out had been uneventful and in fine weather, Stoker Leif Ellefsen, who had the 0400–0800 watch together with the second engineer, recalls that Chief Engineer Trygve Froland proved an "impossible/difficult"

person, if not "crazy", denying engineroom personnel the use of the showers by having them disconnected in order to conserve the fresh water – an unpopular practice, especially for engineroom personnel, and especially in the tropics. This water was supplied by the evaporator, which burnt "tons of oil" in order to produce 24 tons of fresh water daily. Froland considered it too expensive to buy fresh water from shore. Stoker Karlsen deemed him:

...stingy, and was going to save [on] everything ... he was nervous and scared. When we were out at sea he did not dare to go down into the engine room, but while we were in port he was the first one down to tell us to start working.

I shared [a] cabin with two other "greasers", and one day [when] he arrived before 7am to tell us to hurry up and get to work, we threw him out of the cabin ...

The relationship between Froland and his staff would prove bad enough to make Ellefsen decide to leave the ship at the conclusion of voyage two, in Norfolk, with Stoker Karlsen following after voyage three. After signing off from VIGGO HANSTEEN, Ellefsen would join the M/S SOLOR, only to have his ship torpedoed – his third such experience during the war.



Fireman/Greaser Rolf Werner Karlsen (on right), photographed towards the end of 1942 when on board the S/S LAGO, a coal-powered ship on which he had served as a stoker. (Courtesy: R.W. Karlsen)

With Convoy GUS-31, for New York. January 25

... Steering set courses. Winds NE, Force 1; 24-hour lookout and gun watches. Chronometer error at observation: 0^h00^m36.5^s+; 02.00 observation⁰2 + div.; 06.00 3⁰ + div. f.k.k. 9⁵; gyro 98 in going up. 08.25 degaussing equipment on and in working order. D.R. before dinner 191⁰; 196⁰ (Obs.) ...

Jan.26

... 10.45 TND out; 15.30 gun drill: two rounds put through main guns and 120 through anti-aircraft guns ...

Jan.27

... Arabian Sea. 05.00 began zig-zagging. 07.00 crew at work: cleaned and prepared mooring lines and equipment; scraped steel, scrubbed and oiled deck. Carpenter Martinsen and Abrahamsen made tables and benches for cabins. 18.45 zig-zagging stopped ...

Jan.28

... 05.00 zig-zagging recommenced ...

[In correspondence to the author, Stokers Ellefsen and Karlsen maintain that, when out of Aden, the convoy was shadowed by a Japanese submarine for some three days: *...[the] submarine ... tried to sink an American ... Both the Americans and us fired the guns at them. They then had to submerge, and we managed to get away from the sub. However, A/B Gunner Kornelius Korneliussen comments: ... I can not remember any incident with a Japanese submarine. As far as I remember, we left the convoy shortly after Aden, but I am quite sure we were not in any gunfight with any submarine. The only unusual thing that happened, was that we caught a shark in our torpedo net ...]*

CONVOY EQUIPMENT ON EC-2s

All War Shipping Administration vessels were equipped to meet the requirements of the US Navy, the Administration assuming that any vessels so equipped would be satisfactory to British convoy inspecting officers. However, this was not necessarily the case. Typical of the problem were complaints relayed by the Navy Office, Melbourne, Australia, to the Assistant US Naval Attache, that certain items of convoy equipment required by Admiralty Merchant Shipping Instructions – namely, a zig-zag clock, bridge box for books, white rockets (two), dimming switch for navigation lights, blue stern light and a screened anchor light* – were frequently found lacking in new EC-2s in that area.

Though it was agreed by the Americans that absolute uniformity of specifications would be ideal in principle, it

was reasoned that it had been essential to equip a large number of US-controlled vessels at very short notice, and it was therefore necessary to accept certain items of convoy equipment which did not meet with such joint specifications – even if they had been agreed to. In response to criticisms raised by the Admiralty, H.W. Jackson commented as follows:

(a) *Our present blue stern lights show two points on each side instead of six points as suggested by the admiralty. It is understood that the US navy did not favor the twelve point light suggested.*

(b) *All United States vessels have the name painted out before sailing.*

(c) *A certain number of United States ships are equipped with zig-zag clocks, but these clocks have only been available in limited quantities, and as it has been possible to improvise various types of dials to be fitted on an ordinary clock, it has not been deemed necessary to insist upon the special type of zig-zag clock recommended by the Admiralty.*

(d) *Perforated metal boxes for disposal of vessels papers have been supplied to vessels whenever they have been obtainable, but as the production has been limited[,] canvas bags have been supplied where metal boxes could not be obtained.*

(e) *All United States vessels have been fitted with a varying type of fog buoy and 300 feet of 3/8 inch wire. Buoys supplied have been satisfactory to the U.S. Naval Port Directors and it has not been possible to obtain delivery of any one standard type of buoy for all vessels ...*

... The other minor points recommended have been complied with when requested by the U.S. Naval Port Director, although there has not been any uniformity in the requirements.

The suggestion made of the Port Director supplying vessels with a certificate stating that convoy equipment was satisfactory, would appear to have merit and would avoid any possibility of a vessel being delayed at transit ports while the convoy equipment was inspected.

If the United States Navy and the British Admiralty would find it possible to draw up uniform specifications for convoy equipment, it would certainly be very helpful as any new vessels put into operation would then be equipped accordingly and vessels already operating would be brought up to these uniform standards as quickly as possible. In the meantime it is suggested that the Admiralty be requested to accept any of our vessels which have been supplied with convoy equipment which meet[s] with United States Navy requirements.

VIGGO HANSTEEN: With GUS-31. Canal Transit. Port Said, Egypt. February 13

... 04.00 completed delivery ashore of 377.66 tons of oil, by order War Shipping Administration. 08.30 contract Arabs embarked to continue painting midships structure begun earlier. Bosun on deck from 06.00; remainder of crew from 08.30, to prepare ship for sea. 09.30 barrage-defence balloon got out and rigged. 10.50 pilot boarded: 13.00 weighed anchor; mooring lines taken in, then full speed into fairway. 13.05 slow speed, as steam barge MB-24 coming from port side of fairway, altered course without warning, to cut across ship's path. 13.06 full speed astern – but ship collided with barge. 13.13 ship cleared barge, which immediately sank. Different manouvres from 13.13 until 13.25 to regain position in fairway. 13.48 pilot discharged; then full speed, steering on set courses. Repeated soundings of forward peak tank and no.1 deeptank indicated ship watertight and had sustained no damage ...

Feb.14

... Alexandria. 09.06 pilot boarded. 09.30 ship passed breakwater. Picked up tug and anchored in Roads. 09.44: starboard anchor, 30 fathoms. 17.30 five American seamen boarded ship by order of Administration, for return passage ...

Approaching the Straits of Gibraltar, visibility progressively deteriorated: the wind strengthened and showers increased – a portent of an uncomfortable return Atlantic crossing. By late afternoon, in the face of a growing south-westerly gale, rising seas and intermittent squalls, the convoy was forced to reduce speed to a safer rate. Mid evening, the wind veered and began moderating, however the ships' pounding and rolling continued unabated – prompting some crewmen on VIGGO HANSTEEN next morning to brave the elements and go to the aft deckhouse to do some maintenance on the emergency steering. To cap the general discomfort, a salinity problem was then noticed in the boiler feedwater, resulting from a leak in the condenser. During an ensuing exchange of signals with the convoy commodore, it was therefore decided that rather than put the ship at risk by attempting immediate repairs while hove-to, it would be more prudent to postpone the work until the convoy was in safer waters. This, however, was not to be, as it wouldn't be too long before the salinity problem had become serious enough to warrant the ship being brought hove-to for twenty minutes, to allow a temporary plug to be fitted in the condenser.

The weather continued to strengthen, then moderate; strengthen, then moderate.

From G.H. Helmbold, Director Of Operations, WSA:

The Navy Department has drawn to our attention numerous reports received from Convoy Commodores and Naval Routing Officers regarding damage to vessels and deck cargoes carried through storm areas, particularly in North Atlantic convoys.

In drawing these reports to our attention, the Navy Department advise that they do not consider that enemy submarine activity has abated sufficiently to justify vessels loaded with deck cargo heaving to in the event of heavy weather. They suggest that, in order to avoid losses of cargo and damage to vessels themselves, wherever possible the loading of deck cargo should be avoided on vessels routed through heavy weather areas.

Owing to the present large number of certain types of bulky packages which can only be carried on deck, it is not considered possible at this time to eliminate the carriage of deck cargoes, but this matter is once again called to your attention so that extra precautions may be exercised in the stowage of deck cargo with the recommendation that special attention be given to strength of cases and to the use of extra lashings during the forthcoming heavy weather season.



G.H. Helmbold, Director of Operations, War Shipping Administration. (Harris & Ewing)

ONGOING ASSIGNINGS TO NORTRASHIP

The allocation of one or two new-building T-2 type tankers was being sought to replace considerable tanker losses. On June 10, 1943, "... over a very pleasant lunch meeting ...", Erling Naess had discussed the matter with Messrs. Henry J. and Edgar Kaiser, and with Rear-Admiral Howard L. Vickery, Vice-Chairman, US Maritime Commission.

December 17 brought results: the Administration announced that both Nortraship and the Government of the Netherlands had now each been assigned their first tankers – of the T2-SE-A1 type* – under terms of agreement similar to the dry cargo ships. A fourth C1-A(M), CAPE RIVER,** was assigned early the following year, with a recommendation to accede to a further Norwegian request for two more allocations,*** one of which was for a C-3 turbine. However, another EC-2**** – the eighth – would in due course be substituted for the C-3, as it was "... not deemed desirable ..." at this point in time to make such a sophisticated vessel type available for foreign sale.

Chartering arrangements for the first three-mentioned C1-As had by late 1943 not been completed and, although the charters for the seven EC-2s had been signed, the Administration was now only in the process of duplicating them for distribution. Assistant General Counsel had meantime notified Nortraship of newly revised forms of charter which were intended to be used with future vessels assigned to other Allied governments on bareboat out/time-charter back bases. Nortraship in turn wished to consider the possibility of having these revised forms apply to the C1-As already assigned and, in addition, substituted for the then present forms governing the seven EC-2s.*****

* The Norway-assigned vessel was M.C. hull no.407, then-building in the Sun Yard, Chester, and expected for delivery on March 15. The ship was subsequently renamed Hegra.

** On transfer, renamed NARVIK.

*** Nortraship was seeking another T-2, as well as the C-3 freighter; the T-2 eventuated as the KARSTEN WANG.

**** WILLIAM S. HODGSON: renamed SVERRE HELMERSEN on delivery on April 22, 1944 [Lost, April 23, 1945]. WSA was not yet including the more sophisticated C-3 'Victory' type among those being made available to Allied governments under bareboat out/time-charter back arrangements. Dry-cargo vessels were then limited to the Liberty type.

***** The proposition that the revised forms of charter, inclusive of the Special Provisions, be substituted for the existing forms for the Liberties, would be tentatively agreed to by Nortraship on December 17 – subject to the inclusion of a fourth Article [8], the completing of another Article, and further amendments to the Special Provisions.

IN-SERVICE EXPERIENCE WITH THE EC-2 DESIGN

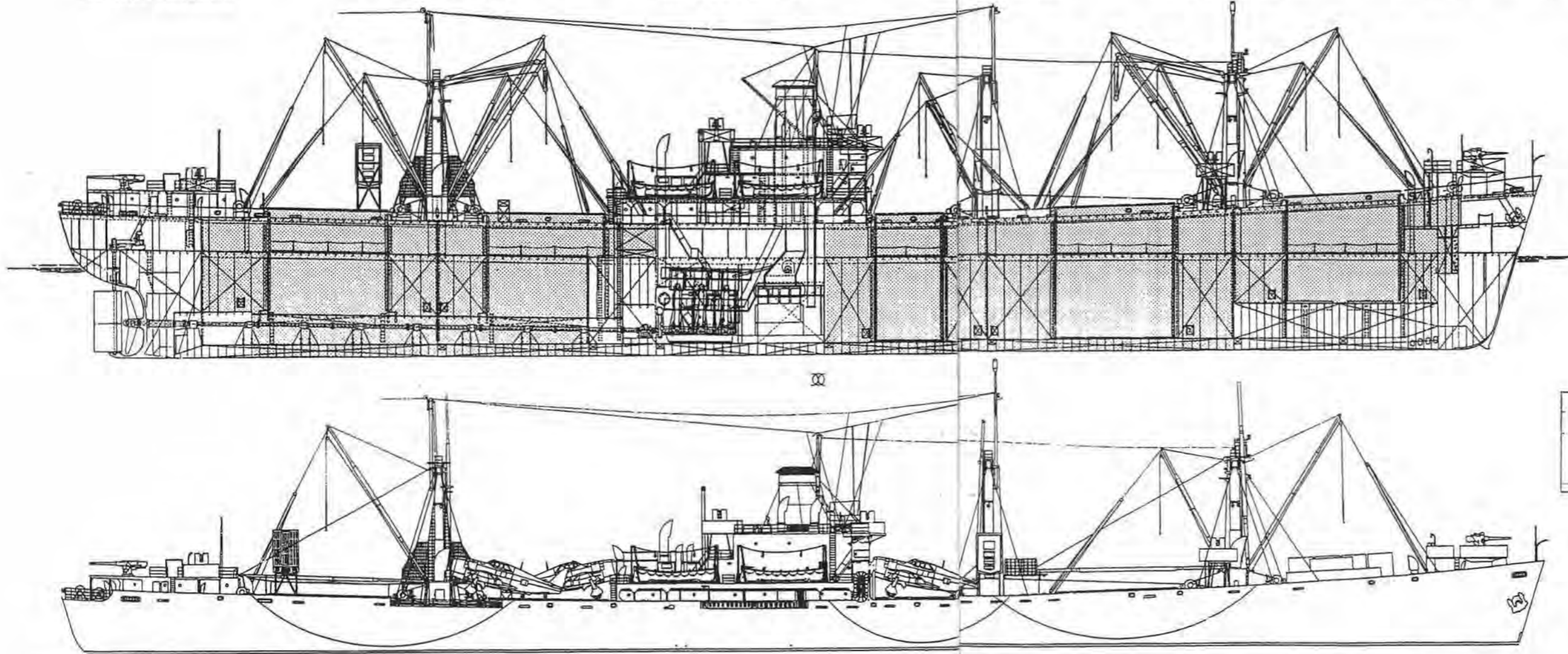
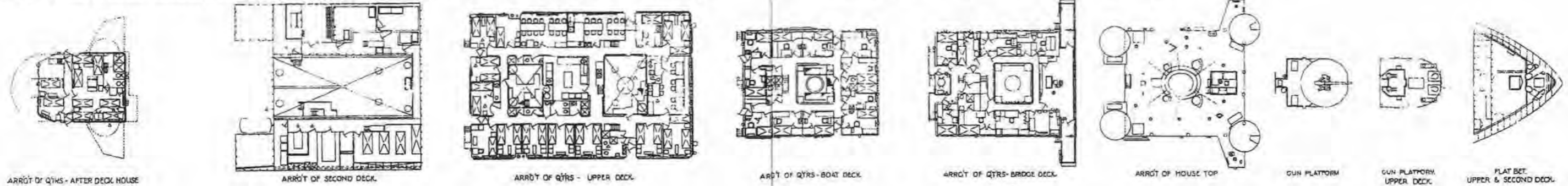
The War Shipping Administration had by now accumulated some two years' operating experience with the EC-2. In the light of this experience, and because of instances of weld cracking on certain vessels, instructions were issued to all operators of the type to implement certain prescribed alterations in all such ships "... on a not to delay service basis ...", in order to eliminate, so far as possible, conditions of high stress concentration, and to provide a form of 'crack stopper' in cases where a fracture might develop. (Crack Stopper: the riveted reinforcing of certain structural areas prone to stress fracturing. The July 15, 1946

report: *The Design and Methods of Construction of Welded Steel Merchant Vessels*, by the Ship Structure Committee of the US Coast Guard, determined that 4694 welded steel merchant vessels had been built by the Commission during the War. Of these, 970 had suffered fractures to some degree; 24 had sustained a complete fracture on the strength deck, and one had sustained a complete fracture at the bottom. Eight of these ships were lost; four broke in two and four were abandoned after fracture had occurred. The structural failures lead to the loss of twenty six lives, the age of the vessel having no appreciable influence.) One of Nortraship's EC2-s - LIEV EIRIKSSON - had developed

cold weather cracks in the boat deck plating while on a recent voyage to the Britain. Though the damage had been repaired as soon as the vessel arrived at Halifax en route, there was doubt that the work had been in accordance with the Administration's requirements. Because of this doubt, Nortraship therefore advised that it would contact the Administration's Maintenance and Repair Division and have the vessel surveyed for possible further strengthening, as soon as she returned to the US. As the other seven EC-2s had as yet shown no evidence of cracking, Nortraship also asked whether the required alterations to these vessels could be left in abeyance - as had been the Repair Division's

practice to date. Bareboat charterers were also free to make whatever changes they wished to their vessels, their quarters and equipment, if found desirable for their operation. Such work could be done at the charterer's expense, and it could be commenced without the Administration's prior approval. However, if any alterations improved the general seaworthiness and efficiency of a vessel, then the work could be done at the Administration's expense provided it received the Administration's prior approval.

(Continued)



DESIGN NO. EC2-S-C1 'LIBERTY' SHIP
 UNITED STATES MARITIME COMMISSION
 EMERGENCY SHIP CONSTRUCTION DIVISION
 GENERAL ARRGT
 SECOND DECK UPPER DECK
 SUPERSTRUCTURE
 INBOARD & OUTBOARD PROFILES
 SCALE: 1/4" = 10'-0" PLAN
 1945

To Unstable Wood ...

Wood has a mind of its own! It warps, contracts and swells. It splinters, bows, cups, puts splinters into sore hands and it changes colours.

And yet wood can be a source of great joy and pride to both men and women. Without wood there would be no life on earth. Together with water and stone it is the most basic of all materials from cradle to coffin.

By its very nature wood is a joy to work with and a finished article is a heavenly piece to feel and caress. But understand there is no such thing as perfection in wood. A small blemish, a minute worm hole, or perhaps a small mistake which you hope only you will know about but feel that everyone will notice, will make the article unique.

A blemish is part of the joy of wood. It shows that it is real wood and not chipboard or other man-made material, and adds character in its own way. Sheoak, for example, is susceptible to forest fire and it is not always possible to get the last bit of burn out. Don't try to disguise it, let it be. It is part of history and adds character to the article made. This is especially true of second-hand timber which may have been re-claimed from old buildings. This will have a history all of its own.

If you are a lover of things made of wood, take it at its face value. It is said that a thing of beauty is a joy forever; this is especially true of wood and can never apply to chipboard and laminex and other synthetic material.

(Barry Hicks)



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