

Black Jack

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70 years of the WSS Southampton Branch



Farewell - P&O's **Oceana** leaving Southampton for Greece and new owners on 8th July; she will sail as **Queen of the Oceans** for SeaJet Ferries – built in 1999 and of 77,499gt she was originally the **Ocean Princess** of Princess Cruises. On the 70th Anniversary of the Branch it is appropriate to feature **Oceana** as we celebrated the 60th Anniversary with a visit and an excellent lunch on board her on the 2nd October 2010.

photo: Doug Toogood

Andrew's Note Book

Some new or infrequent callers to Southampton Docks by Andrew McAlpine

Welcome to the latest notebook from the port of Southampton, here are some updates on the comings and goings and other news from around the port.

The last few months has continued to be dominated by the Coronavirus pandemic, with the cruise industry still at a standstill. The Southampton based ships of P&O and Cunard have all now returned to UK waters and spend their time anchored off Poole, Weymouth and Torbay returning every couple of weeks for stores.

There continues to be a steady stream of new and returning cruise ship visitors to the port from other cruise lines.

On 8th June, **Carnival Valor** arrived for the first time, having sailed from the USA, **Carnival Magic** followed her on 15th July.



left: The 2004 built **Carnival Valor** arrives early 8th June
On 11th June, two Carnival Cruise line ships were in port for the first time in the port's history. **Carnival Magic** arriving early in the morning and passed **Carnival Valor**.

below: **Carnival Breeze** passes fleet mate **Carnival Valor** on 11th June



On 30th June, the 152m long German Dry Docks **Dock VI** arrived from Bremerhaven undertow by **BVT Formidable**, they were heading for Falmouth and called for bunkers (and I believe engine repairs – Ed)

below: **BVT Formidable** Built 1979 (for Alexandra Towing) with **Dock VI** built 1956



right: The 31,541gt **GDF Suez North Sea** (built 2012) seen alongside loading scrap on 18th August

June and July saw the first visits by three ships of HMM's new class of 24,000TEU ships, which are now the world's largest containerships. The first was 23,820TEU **HMM Oslo** 25th June, followed by the slightly larger 23,964TEU **HMM Copenhagen** 9th July and **HMM Dublin** 22nd July – see photo on page 6.

all photos by Andrew McAlpine

Until next time stay safe and happy ship spotting
Andrew

CHANGES TO PORT SKYLINE

DEMOLITION OF PORT LANDMARKS – PART 2

Within a few months, the view entering the Port at Dock Gate 10 will have changed forever, as in mid-July 2020, work commenced on the demolition of Solent Mills, the largest and most imposing building in the Western Docks. ABP's announcement resulted in many objections, as the building is Locally Listed for preservation, but because ABP have special planning powers, this historic structure is going the same way as the former Ocean Terminal and Trafalgar Dry-dock.

Construction of this Art Deco style building started in 1932 for Joseph Rank Ltd, later



Rank Hovis McDougall from 1962 and RHM Flour Mills Ltd from 1971. The structure was the first, the largest and most imposing building in the 200 acre 'New Docks' extension. Building works being completed early in 1934, the plant becoming operational in August that year, with a formal opening by the Mayor in October 1934, when it was "*the most modern in the UK*".

In addition to the flaking and Provender Mill, the original buildings comprised a ferro-concrete 15,000 ton capacity silo, a receiving house, engine house and warehouse. The electrically-operated plant had an initial output of 40 sacks or 5 tons/hr with provision to double the output when required. The Mill was supplied by water from a 260 ft deep artesian well on the site.

The buildings were located about 200 yards behind the new quay wall with the most up-to-date means of direct discharge of grain directly from ships to the Mill. Initially, a single pneumatic discharging plant was installed with a capacity of 120 tons/hour,

with provision for a second unit at a later date. Grain was discharged to a 700 ft long enclosed overhead conveyor parallel to the quay, linked to a similar 600 ft long conveyor directly into the Mill receiving house. A second pneumatic discharge plant and second conveyor to the receiving house were added later.



Building works at an advanced stage in 1933 (Southern Railway)

In November 1941, the Mill and warehouse were partly destroyed in a bombing raid, being rebuilt after the War with building work completed about July 1950 and production restarting in 1951, by which time the Mill had doubled in size and warehouse tripled in size, becoming the largest Mill south of London.

Right: After the post-war rebuilding works – note the two conveyors from 102/3 berth and the adjoining extensive railway sidings and carriage shed.

Below A more recent photograph showing the 1955 and 1964 additions:



Apart from the wartime damage, the plant has experienced occasional incidents.

On 29th August 1979, the Spanish-flag general cargo vessel **Mar Cantabrico** (67/8319g) inbound from Hamburg on charter to ELMA had steering gear failure passing Mayflower Park and hit the quay at 102/3 berth, colliding with one of the grain elevators, which was knocked into the water killing the two occupants. The ship was moored at 105 berth and arrested, eventually sailing for Buenos Aires without loading. *

In other later incidents, an over-height load, travelling along Herbert Walker Avenue, collided with and partly demolished one of the conveyors, but that was never replaced. In August 2014, a fire started in second-floor milling machinery, but that was quickly extinguished by the plants own sprinkler system, without serious damage.

In the 1960's and 1970's, in addition to the many coasters from continental Europe, occasionally 10/15,000 dwt vessels discharged from other areas, including as far afield as Canada. However, gradually fewer sea-borne cargoes were arriving, leading to the eventual dismantling of the pneumatic discharge elevator and conveyor, so severing the Mill from the quayside and making the plant solely reliant on road transport.

In October 2018, the closure of the Solent Mills building complex, including the RHM Central Laboratory operations, was announced with the loss of 70 jobs.

* a further feature about the **Mar Cantabrico** incident will appear in the Winter edition No 197 of Black Jack.

David Hornsby

Bits and Pieces



Your Editor was recently browsing a book about locomotive headboards (as you do!) and came across this photo (acknowledged as from the ABP collection/Southampton Archive), which is offered as a follow-up to David's article in the last issue about the opening of the Ocean Terminal on 31st July 1950. It shows the 12-car Pullman special conveying the Prime Minister and other dignitaries to the opening ceremony arriving at the terminal at 11:45 am – the locomotive was the first of Oliver Bullied's Merchant Navy class, No 35001 (originally No 21C1) **Channel Packet** which was completed at Eastleigh Works in 1941. The train arrived from, and returned to, London Waterloo.



left: **HMM Dublin**
(2020/228283g) passing
through the Solent inward-
bound for Southampton on
22nd July as part of the
Alliance service.
See also Andrew's Note
Book on page 3

photo:
Captain Peter Anthony



left: **Onego Bayou** (2007/2878g)
arriving from Castries, St Lucia to
unload yachts on 26th July.
photo: David Oldham

Fred. Olsen are retiring **Boudicca** (1973/28551g) and **Black Watch** (1972/28613g) - they started life as the **Royal Viking Sky** and **Royal Viking Star** respectively. They are to be replaced by the Holland America Line's **Amsterdam** (20000/62735g) to be renamed **Bolette** and **Rotterdam** (1997/61849g) which will become **Borealis**.

Your editor is always pleased to receive any articles and/or pictures on the local scene that you may be able to submit. Particularly useful would be articles which are not date sensitive and so could be used at any time.

I am happy to receive items by any method – email to nigelyrobinson@gmail.com or on CD or memory stick, or hard copy at meetings or by post to 2 Glencarron Way, Bassett, Southampton, SO16 7EF.

Colin's Southampton Memories

A further selection of Colin Drayson's pictures from a lifetime in and around Southampton Docks



Pinewood--Passing JIT Woolston--1985

Pinewood (1978/2025g)
photo Colin Drayson



Passing Dockhead--1979

Stem (1976/499g)
photo Colin Drayson collection



River Test--Aug 1995

Warburg II (1967/1624g)
photo Colin Drayson

A – Z of Sail

by Michael Page

For the letter “V” I have chosen the VIRGO

This vessel was built in 1881 by Russell & Co of Port Glasgow for Thomas Guthrie also of Glasgow and was originally named **Closeburn**.

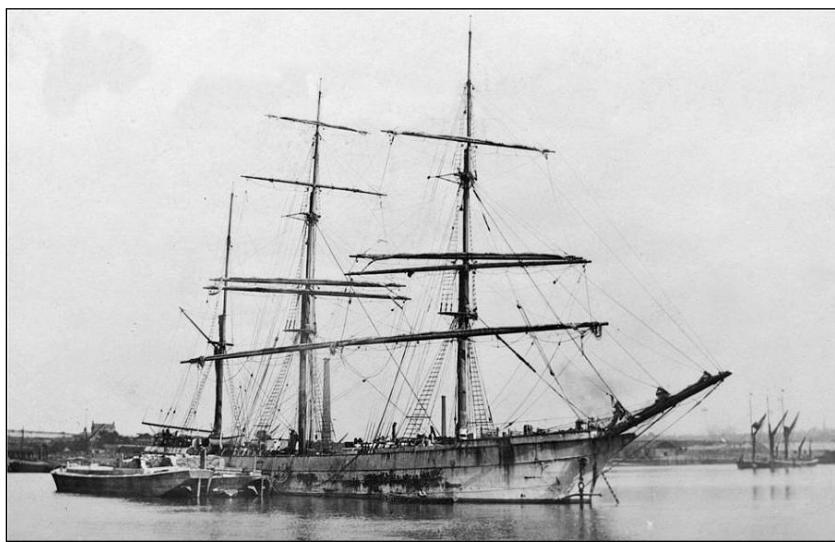
Her tonnage was 924 gross and 897 net. She had a length of 201 feet with a beam of 33 feet.

She had double topsails, single topgallants and royals and although having a spike bowsprit she had separate fiddled topmasts. The **Closeburn** spent her first twenty years under the red ensign, but like so many British sailing vessels at that period, she was sold in 1902 to the Norwegian owners, Matthias Hansen of Kristiansand, and then had almost twenty years, including those of WWI, keeping her original name.

In 1921 she was sold to Swedish owners, her name changed to **Virgo** and seven years later she completed her round of Scandinavia when she came under the Finnish flag and the ownership of Erik Nylund of Mariehamn.

Although in her early years she traded worldwide, she was too small for the Australian grain trade, one of the few trades left for sail. Instead she spent her last years in the short but “split wood” trade from the Baltic to England, discharge often being in London’s Surrey Commercial Docks or in the Medway where one of our photographs was taken. **Virgo**’s adventures included a collision with a German steamer in the Baltic. She only lasted one year in Finnish ownership. On 5th December 1928 she struck a rock in the approaches to Mariehamn and became a total wreck..

A sad end to a fine sailing ship’s life ...



left: **Virgo** in the Medway and

below: in her earlier life as **Closeburn**

