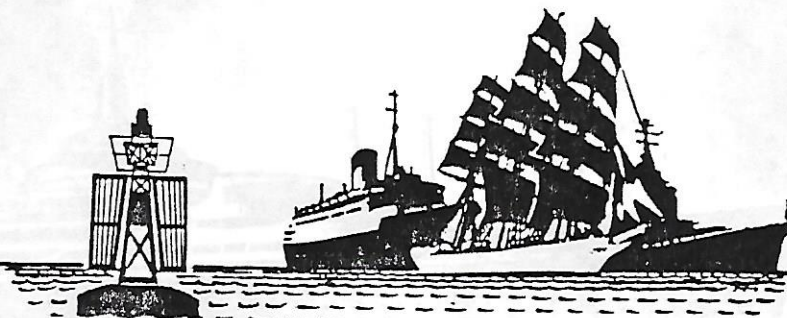


# BLACK JACK

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE  
SOUTHAMPTON BRANCH  
WORLD SHIP SOCIETY



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SHIP SOCIETY.

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## EDITORIAL

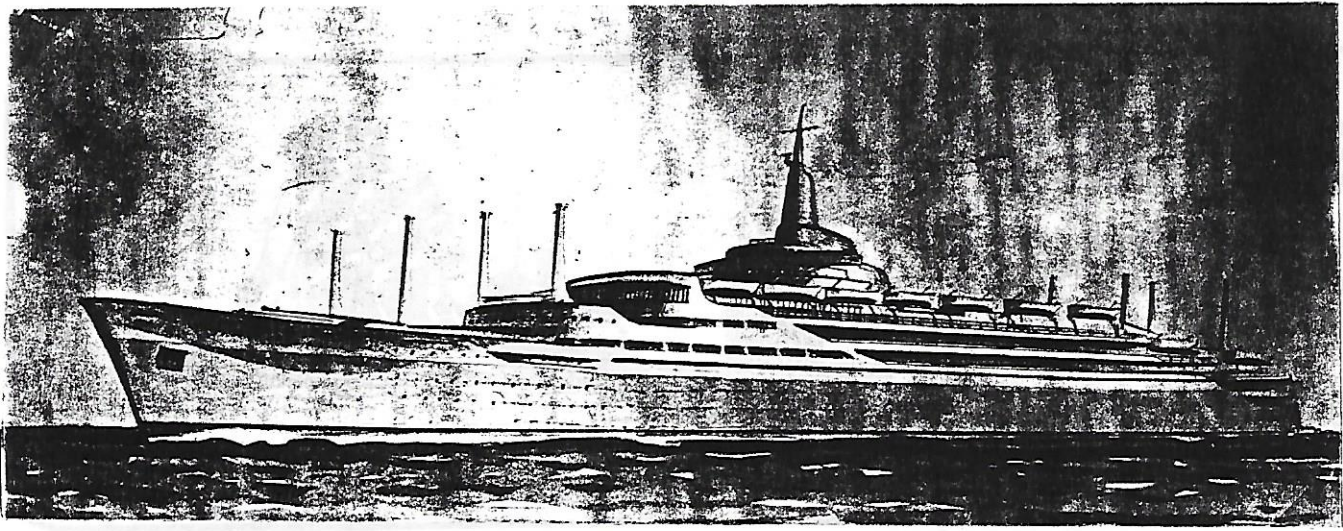
My thanks to the contributors of articles for this issue and for the articles which are still in store. May I remind you the Editor can only edit what is sent in by you - the members. Please put pen to paper for future issues.

Bill Mitchell's articles in this issue could well be the basis for an exhibition next year. 1992 has been designated as Maritime Heritage Year. All that is needed is for someone to take over responsibility for setting up such an exhibition.

The A.G.M. will take place next month on the 8th October. Come along with ideas and your thoughts on the way our Branch operates.

On the 12th November there is a W.S.S. Slide Show entitled "Ports of the Tees and Hartlepool."

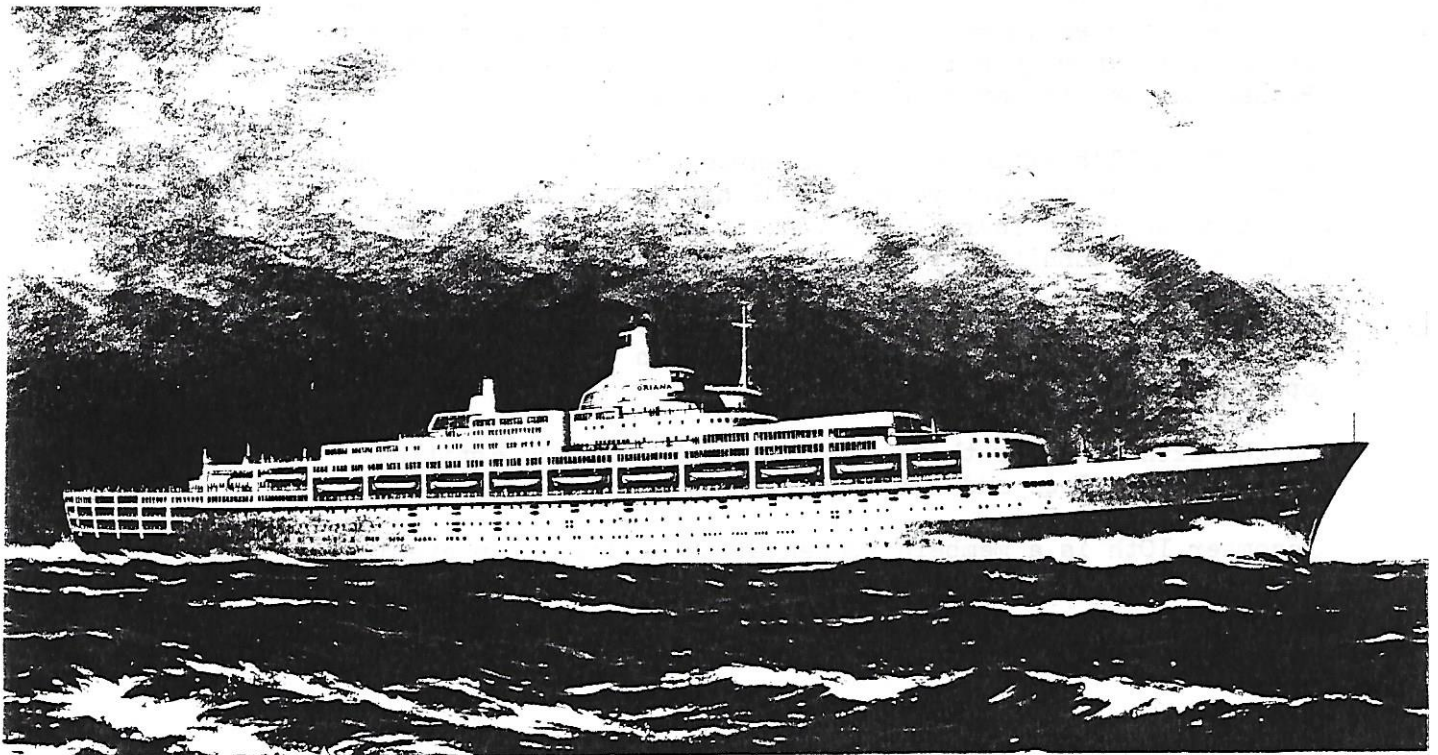
December 10th is a members presentation entitled "An evening with the Grey ships."



The above picture is of an Artist's impression taken from the preliminary plans prepared by the Naval Architects for a new Passenger Liner. These plans were duly modified and the ship became the S.S. ORIANA.

The lower picture was prepared from the finished plans of the ship as built and shows the amount of rethinking which was done between the preliminary stages and final thoughts on design.

In the first original picture it will be noted that the lifeboats are positioned in the usual position on the Boat Deck but they eventually finished up between decks at a lower level.





# The Fourth Arm of Defence

by W.H.Mitchell

In the mid-1930s the Red Ensign was flown from the ships of the greatest Merchant ship fleet in the world. The Great War of 1914-1918 had seen the loss of 3,400 British merchant ships and the rebuilding of the fleet was undertaken in the difficult years of the early 1930s with one third of Britain's ships in lay-up and thousands of their seamen vainly walking the streets searching for employment. The general strike of 1926 was followed by the Wall Street crash of 1929 and slump but, by the later 1930s British merchant ships of over 100 gt totalled nearly 9,000 of nearly 20 million gross tons.

Each year the Royal Navy proudly opened the three great naval dockyards at Chatham, Portsmouth and Plymouth where thousands visited the many warships of Britain's defence during 'Navy Week', as it became known.

Yet there was nothing similar for the Merchant ships. However, it was gradually realised by more and more that without merchant ships to bring raw materials for Britain's industries and foodstuffs for its people they would face starvation. True, at the passenger ship ports shipping companies frequently opened their great liners for the public to view but it was not until 1937 that a similar Merchant Navy week was introduced to the public.

The theme of the exhibition was to demonstrate the work of the Merchant Navy and of the Merchant seamen, their life at sea and the services rendered to the nation in both peace and war.

The exhibition, under the Patronage of King George VI was based at 107-108 berths At Southampton Docks. It was open from 17th to 24th July.

## The Layout

Just inside the entrance to Shed 107 there was placed a full-size ship's bridge of a passenger liner. Not only did it contain all the instruments of modern navigation, but officers were present to explain the capability of the instruments. From the bridge the exhibition could be seen down the whole length of the shed and into Shed 108. It had been cleverly broken down to eight sections:

Seaman's Equipment Section This was of interest to potential seamen who were required at this time. There were models of types of engines, craneage on a ship and on the quayside, scientific instruments and builders models

'He Transports You' Section This explained and illustrated the trade routes of the world. Six sub-sections were devoted to the principal passengers routes to and from Great Britain.

'He Clothes You' Section went back in history and described the development of the cotton, silks, wool, linen and wood, all brought from overseas to the factories of Britain.

'He Protects You' Section This featured the part the Merchant Navy plays in supplementing the Royal Navy with ships. In war many flew the White Ensign and were in action in convoys and as Armed Merchant cruisers. Trawlers, Drifters and numerous Paddle steamers did enormous work under the White Ensign.

'He Feeds You' Section Food is usually taken for granted, but has to be brought from many far off places. Grain is brought in bulk carriers, cocoa is brought from West Africa, sugar from the West Indies. Fruit comes from many places; from Tasmania, from Jamaica and West Africa where bananas grow; oranges, apples, lemons and dried fruits from South Africa; tea rice and mangoes from India - the list is endless.

'He Houses You' Section brings to mind great quantities of hardwood and softwood and cement. Also imported are paints, , varnishes and polishes.

'He Warms You' Section The great movement of coal from the mine, its cleaning and on-movement to gasworks, early generating stations and processing plants for by-products gave much work to the colliers of the Merchant fleet.

So to 'He Re-creates You' Section. The lure of cruising under cloudless skies, of deck games, swimming in blue water and long days of leisure.

There was much more of great interest. The Post Office featured its cable ships and the laying of submarine cables. The method of moving the mail was outlaid, as was the telephone system and its apparatus. There was an Aquarium of exotic fish, an exhibition of the shipping work of Lloyds of London and another for the humane work of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, the Yarmouth (IOW) lifeboat at the quayside for some days.

One of the most outstanding features of the exhibition was the Michelham model of the Empress of Britain, constructed to  $\frac{1}{8}$ " = 1 ft scale. This superb model, constructed by Dr Rex Stansfield, was regarded as one of the most realistic and complete ship models ever built, with plans and drawings supplied by herowners, Canadian Pacific Steamships Ltd. Begun in September 1935, a CPSS representative was sent over almost monthly to offer assistance. She was launched on 11 June 1936, an internal keel supporting ribs carrying some 1,500 scale metal plates of the hull. The rooms, cabins etc contained 400 chairs, 2,200 beds and bunks and 800 baths. Over one mile of electric wiring was used and 50 lights installed. The steering and engine control were worked by radio up to  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile. It was a great attraction.

There was a continuous afternoon cinema; Training School athletic displays by pupils; demonstrations of shipboard deck games which the visitors could join and dancing until midnight each evening on a covered quayside dance floor to Charles Waygood and his band.

Daily lectures were given on shipping and the Merchant Navy; there was a 600-capacity theatre for cabaret and variety. Whaler races between ships and shore offices were arranged and on display was one of the two lifeboats from the ill-fated Trevassa which foundered in the mid Indian Ocean in June 1923. Both made landfall, at Mauritius and Rodriguez in 23 and 25 days under thirst and severe exposure. Eleven of the forty men in the boats did not survive. One-hour cruises in Southampton Water were run by the Southampton & I o Wight SP Co paddle steamers and one or two longer cruises by Southern Railway steamers.

### Ship visits

Both naval and merchant ships were open to visitors. Two warships, the battleship Resolution and cruiser Southampton were to be berthed at 107-8 berths but owing to operational reasons the Resolution was replaced by the battleship Revenge.

Cunard White Star Line's giant Queen Mary was open to the public on Saturday 17th and Monday 19th; Royal Mail Line's Asturias on Tuesday 20th thru Saturday 24th; the Canadian Pacific liner Empress of Britain and Union Castle Line's Warwick Castle both on Wed 21st and Thursday 22nd. Another Cunarder, Aquitania was open on Friday 23 and Saturday 24th. Buses connected the Exhibition with the various liners in the docks and also worked to and from the Town Centre although many voluntary-worked stalls at the Exhibition sold food, drink and all kinds of souvenirs, all proceeds to the Missions to Seamen

### The object

of this great exhibition was to arouse public interest in the Merchant Navy. Since the war of 1914-18 when 3,400 merchant ships were lost and when, in 1917, such was the fury of the U-boat that there was less than six weeks supply of foodstuffs in Britain and the possibility of losing the war arose, the rebuilding of the merchant fleet had begun, but with the scrapping of old worn-out ships and a lay-up of others there was a general slump in the shipping industry and many officers and seamen were paid off. Then came the general strike of 1926 and the slump of the early 1930's with unemployment in Britain almost 3 million.

But when the situation eased it was realised that many of the younger generation had become reluctant to pursue a career in such an unstable industry. So it was that the exhibition was arranged to show the public the great part the Merchant Navy plays in its role as the fourth line of the defence of Britain. Two years later they were to learn much more of its great deeds as World War 2 began a six years struggle.

Then, in 1946 there again began the scrapping of worn-out ships and the sale of many war-built vessels to foreign owners.

In the 1960s there came the great shipping revolution as passengers took to the air. Many of the world's great liners were sold to new owners and new routes; some were scrapped. There followed the containership, replacing the cargo ships on the trade routes and even the coaster as time went by. Regretfully, public interest began to wane for there were less and less ships to be seen in British ports

But more serious was a report sent to Government that there were not enough ships and seamen to meet the nation's defence needs, exemplified in that of the ships chartered by the Ministry of Defence during the Gulf War only eight were British, 134 were not.

### Decline of United Kingdom owned and registered ships

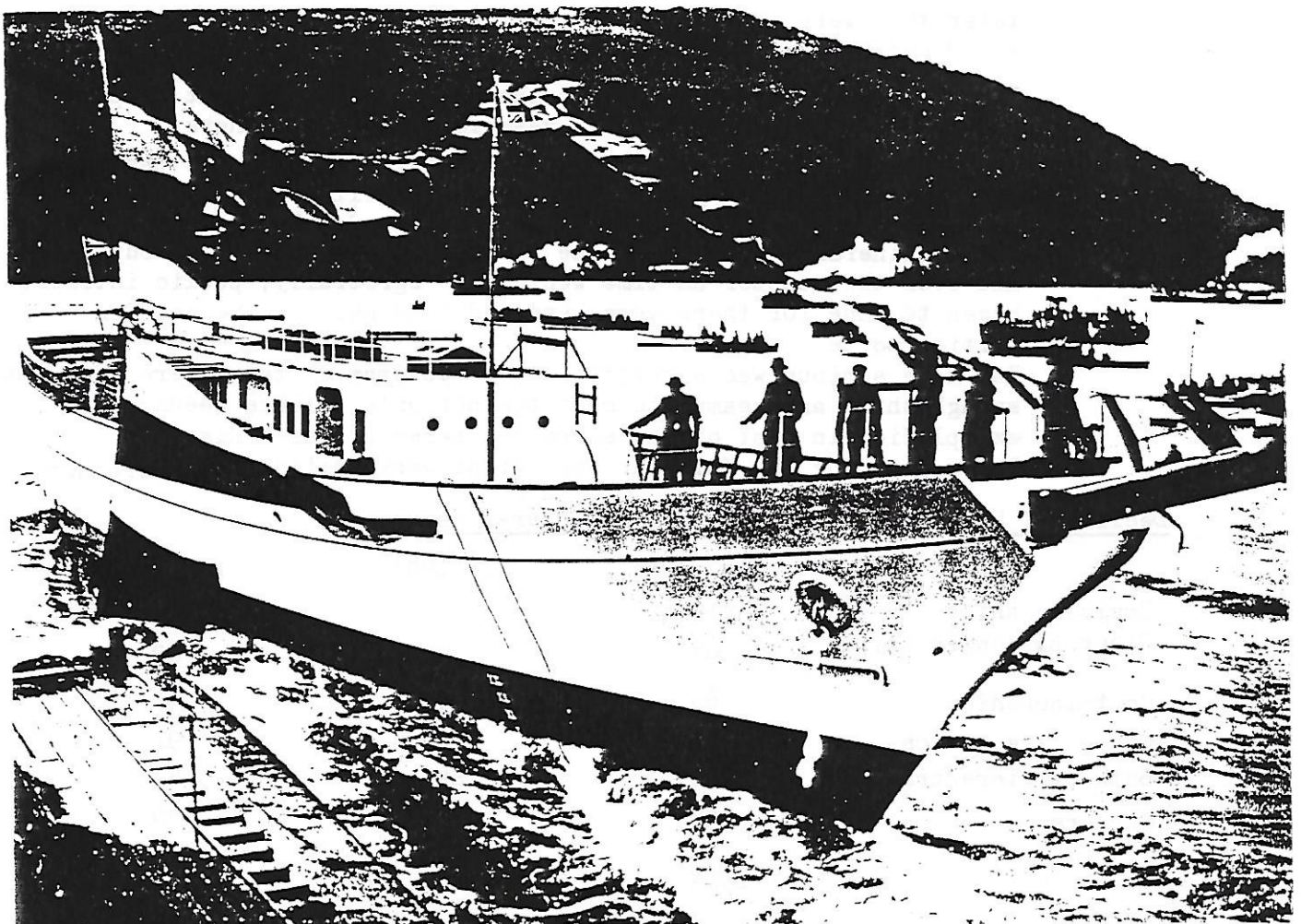
	in 1975	in 1983	in 1991
Cruising ships	19	9	7
Other passenger ships	93	78	60
Containerships	89	60	31
Other cargo ships	413	409	91
Bulk carriers/tramps	546	249	42
Tankers	454	264	79
	<u>1614</u>	<u>769</u>	<u>310</u>

In September 1990 Sir Jeffrey Sterling, Chairman of the P & O S.N Co. Ltd., and President of The General Council of British Shipping launched a month's campaign dedicated to making people aware of the value of British Shipping and of its decline in the past decade.

Fifteen British ports were chosen where a host ship of a G.C.B.S member would be open for a day to local dignitaries, the press and to school children. Sir Jeffrey launched the month of awareness on Sunday 16th September on the P & O liner Canberra at Southampton. Other ports included Barry, Portsmouth in the south finishing with Aberdeen in late October.

At Southampton the host ship was the Queen Elizabeth 2. Apart from local dignitaries there were many young persons nearing school leaving age from the surrounding area. They were shown the ship, heard lectures, watched videos and, noticeably made rings of chairs around ship's officers who described life at sea and who gladly answered their never-ending questions on how to become a ship's officer .....

The Merchant Navy Exhibition took place  
at Southampton 54 years ago. Is is not  
time that another should be staged



LAUNCHING OF R.D.S. "RESEARCH" 4TH APRIL 1939.

## R.R.S. "RESEARCH"

This ship was ordered by the Admiralty for use as a vessel to chart the oceans and to be a Hydrographic Ship. She had an overall length of 142ft. 6ins. with a beam of 34ft. and a draft of 13ft. 2ins. The vessel was to be non-magnetic and she was of composite construction having 5in. thick Teak planking which was bolted with bronze bolts to bronze frames.

The keel was laid on the 8th October 1937 and this was also of bronze. Launching was on the 4th April 1939 and the launch was performed by Mrs. Spencer Jones who was the wife of the Astronomer Royal.

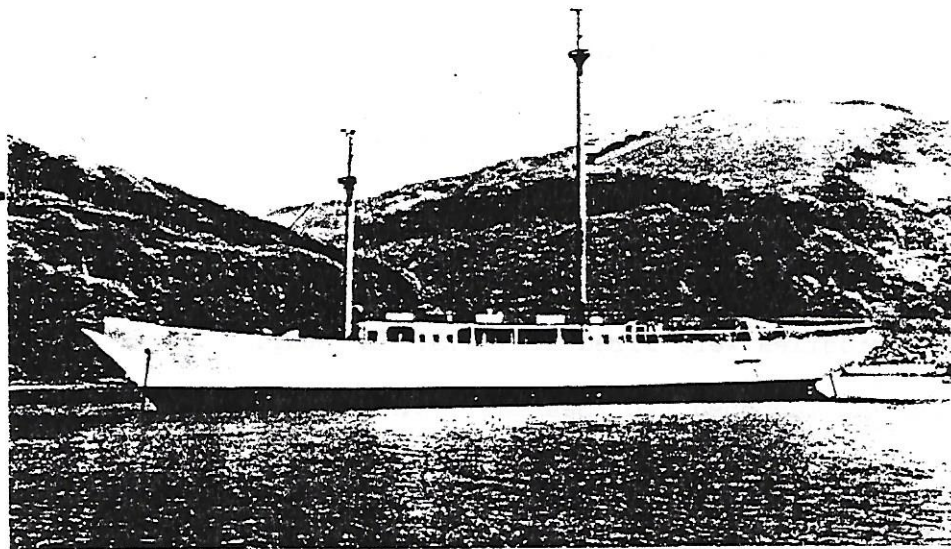
Fitting out continued until the outbreak of war and on the 23rd July 1939 King George VI and Queen Elizabeth visited the vessel at the Builder's Yard, Philip & Son Ltd. of Dartmouth to inspect the vessel.

Throughout the war the "Research" lay on buoys on the River Dart and once a year she was dry docked so that she could be scrubbed and recoated with black varnish.

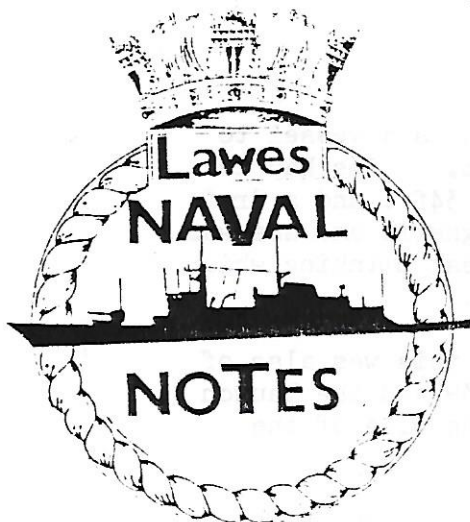
At the time of the magnetic mine a suggestion was made that she should be used as a sweeper, but in view of the cost of the vessel this idea was abandoned.

By 1952 the craft was still lying on the buoys and the powers that be at the Admiralty decided that so much had been learnt about magnetism during the war years that the "Research" was out of date and could serve no useful purpose. She was towed from Dartmouth to Devonport in October 1952 and was broken up for scrap. What a fine training vessel she would have made.

The photographs reproduced are of her launching on the 4th April 1939 and as she was waiting to be towed to Devonport.



No. 841. R.R.S. "Research"  
The uncompleted vessel ready  
for towing to Shipbreakers'  
Yard October 1952



During the last few months it has almost been the case of "If you didn't see them the first time - take a look at the ships now."

The first "double take" was the change over from CAPE MURICAN to CAPE MAY. The latter vessel ex ALMERIA LYKES arrived in

Southampton with the same mechanical problem as her sister, at least there was an experienced work force available to repair the defect.

A vessel making a return visit to the port was the Dutch submarine POTVIS of the DULFIN class. She last visited us in October 1985. Completed in 1965 this vessel must now be nearing the end of her active life.

Another old timer seen in Southampton was H.M.S. "SOVERTON" one of the rapidly dwindling members of the once numerous Ton Class M.C.M.V. She was completed in 1957 at Gosport by Fleetlands Boat Yard and is one of the few ships of the class that remains as a minesweeper, as most of them have over the years been converted to the minehunter role.

Ships originating from Vosper Thornycroft were in the spotlight during the Gulf War. H.M.S. Gloucester achieved the distinction of destroying an Iraq "silkworm" missile. Two of these Chinese antiship missiles were fired at U.S.S. MISSOURI. GLOURCESTER detected them and launched two 'Sea Dart' S.A.M. one of which hit one of the incoming 'silkworms' when it was about 4 miles from its target. The second Iraqi missile landed harmlessly in the sea. In addition to this success



the Gloucesters Lynx helicopter and its 'Sea Skua' missiles proved to be a very effective weapon against Iraqi patrol boats.

Of the Southampton built M.C.M.V.'s in the Gulf H.M.S. CATTISTOCK had the honour of being the first ship into Kuwait City after the war ended. This was a fitting climax to a very successful minehunting duty throughout the war. It also serves to act as a reminder of the task that will have to continue for many months to ensure that the sea is safe for ships taking supplies and equipment to rebuild the countries in that area.

From Secretary Rod

This is the first edition produced by our new Editor Frank Bandey and on behalf of us all I wish to thank him for taking on the position. "Black Jack" is a unique Southampton publication with its description and comment on the Port and its past and with some members their only source of contact with the Branch. Secondly, I would like to publically thank our "retiring" Editor for his period of office. He took over the position as a "caretaker" but very much left his individual mark upon it. Like Dick himself, BJ was lively, sometimes controversial and frequently humorous - one of a line of distinguished Editors. Dick - many thanks from us all.

## IN THE BEGINNING

### THE SHIP IS BUILT- 1924

P.S. Medway Queen was just one of the large fleet of paddlesteamers operating around Britains coast for the day excursion trade. Built in 1924 on the banks of the Clyde specifically for the New Medway Steam Packet Company she operated in the Medway and Thames Estuary areas from Clacton to Herne Bay. In 1939 she exchanged her 'day trippers' for minesweeping equipment and anti aircraft guns and became known as H.M.S. MEDWAY QUEEN. In May 1940 she crossed the channel to Dunkirk a record number of seven times rescuing over 7,000 allied troops earning her crew a reputation for courage and bravery and congratulations from Vice Admiral Ramsey, in Dover, 1940: "WELL DONE THE MEDWAY QUEEN!"

### LANDMARKS IN THE P.S. MEDWAY QUEEN'S HISTORY

1924 The P.S. Medway Queen is built by the Ailsa Shipbuilding Company Ltd, Troon as a pleasure paddle steamer operating in the Medway and Thames Estuary areas.

1937 Attends the Royal Spithead Review as a record of her popularity and good service.

1939 H.M.S. Medway Queen is selected for Admiralty duty as a minesweeper and training ship.

1940 During the Dunkirk evacuation H.M.S. MEDWAY QUEEN makes a total of seven trips and saves 7000 souls from the beaches of N. France. Gallantry medals are awarded to her crew.

1947 P.S. Medway Queen retires from Admiralty service and is completely refitted before returning to her excursion work.

1953 She is given the honour of following the Royal Yacht through the lines of assembled ships at the Royal Spithead Coronation review.

1963 After years of excellent service she completes her final season as an excursion paddle steamer in the Medway and Thames Estuary area.

1966 The P.S. Medway Queen becomes the new exclusive club house to the Isle of Wight Yacht Marina.

1984 P.S. Medway Queen returns to the MEDWAY RIVER .

1985 The MEDWAY QUEEN PRESERVATION SOCIETY is formed and saves P.S. Medway Queen from the scrapyard.

1991 P.S. MEDWAY QUEEN currently moors at Kingsnorth Industrial Estate by kind permission of BOM holdings Ltd.