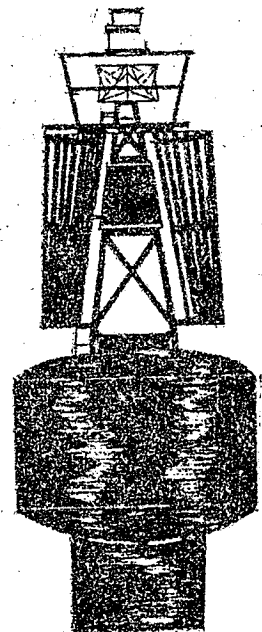


BLACK
JACK

W.S.S.
SOUTHAMPTON



old southampton callers

3

No. 2

THE ORCA

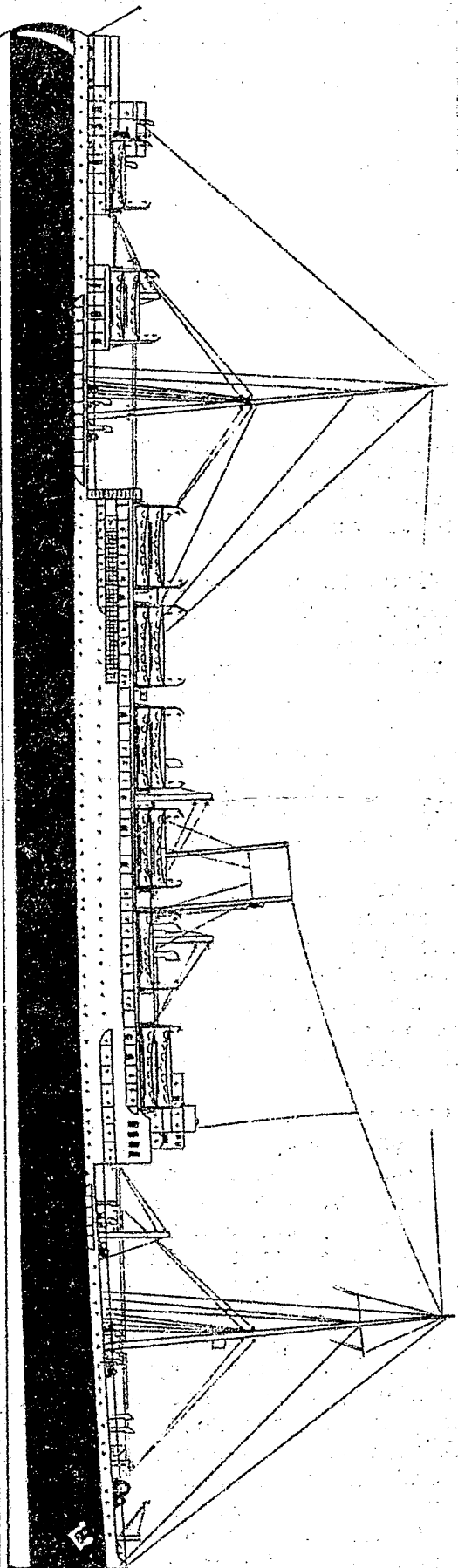
by John S Lindsay

Prior to the First World War the Pacific Steam Navigation Company had ordered from Messrs Harland and Wolff of Belfast, two 15 000 tons gross ships, with an approximate deadweight tonnage of 12 000 tons, an overall length of 569 feet, and a breadth of 67.3 feet. The machinery was to be two sets of triple expansion engines to drive the outer screws and the centre being driven by a low pressure turbine, giving a speed of 15 knots.

The first to be launched on the 2nd October 1913 was the Orduna, she was followed by the Orbita on the 7th July 1914. They were to be employed on the Valparaiso route and were the last of their size and type to be given the traditional counter stern. The third ship of this class was the Orca, her tonnage was some 1 000 tons greater than the former pair although the measurements were similar. She was also one of the forerunners of the era of the cruiser stern. She was completed at the beginning of 1918 and fitted out as a freighter, given no superstructure other than the bridge, a single funnel and mast both with no rake, two stub masts and samson posts which were hinged and stowed along the decks when at sea.

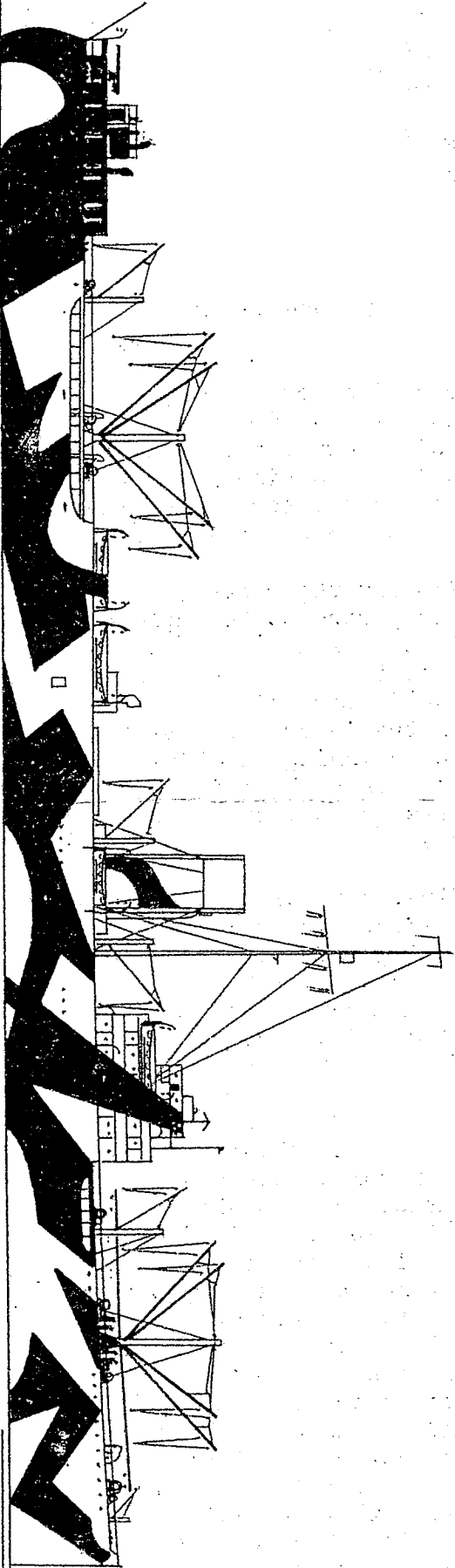
On the 18th February 1921 the Orca ended the first part of her career when she returned to Messrs Harland and Wolff at Belfast her builders, to be completed as a passenger liner. The reconditioning was not completed until December 1922 and on the 18th of that month she arrived at Southampton to commence the second part of her career in the passenger trade. Her accommodation catered for approximately 200 First class, 200 Second class and nearly 500 Third class passengers.

The Orca was built for the West Coast service of the P S N C, but never ran on it; she spent virtually all her career on the North Atlantic. In 1910 the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company took over control of the P S N C and after the war the latter lacked a profitable outlet for its ships. The R M S P inaugurated a new service from Hamburg to New York via Southampton, which had been opened in May 1921 by the Orbita, later joined by the Orduna, Ohio and - temporarily - by the Oropesa the last named being replaced by the Orca. On the 1st January 1923 the Orca was taken over by the R M S P together with the Orbita and Orduna. This was two days before the Orca sailed on her maiden voyage from Hamburg to New York. In the Autumn of 1923 the west-bound sailings were made via Halifax to cater for passengers to Canada, and in the following Spring the Orca and Orduna made three experimental voyages to New York via Quebec; these were not repeated owing to the long and involved detour which was necessary. These efforts to attract new business were largely due to the serious slump that had set into the North Atlantic trade and to the effects of the United States 'Quota' restrictions. To attract the tourist, cabin and third class passengers the Orca, Orbita and Orduna were converted into cabin-class ships, catering for Cabin, Tourist, Third Cabin and Third Class passengers only.



"ORCA" AS SHE APPEARED AFTER RECONDITIONING IN 1922.

JOHN S. LINDSAY



"ORCA" IN ORIGINAL WAR TIME RIG AS A FREIGHTER.

JOHN S. LINDSAY

Shipping Casualties of the
port of Southampton

by David Oldham

continued from Black Jack No 6 - Spring 1973

Oslofjord This liner made many cruises from the port commencing in 1968 until she was chartered by Costa Armatori of Italy from the Norwegian America Line and renamed Fulvia for a period of three years. She sank on the 20th August 1970 in a position 29.57N., 16.30W while being towed to Teneriffe. She had been abandoned by her passengers and crew the previous day, following an explosion in her engine room and a fire which gutted the vessel. The 17,000 ton liner suffered no casualties out of the 748 passengers and crew. Most of whom were picked up by the French vessel Ancerville and the Spanish tug Tamaran.

Paraguay Star Owned by the Blue Star Line, the vessel often called at Southampton en-route to South America from London. On the 12th August 1969 a fire which caused severe damage to her engine room and elsewhere when she was discharging in the Royal Victoria Docks, London. She was sold for £100,000 and scrapped at Hamburg.

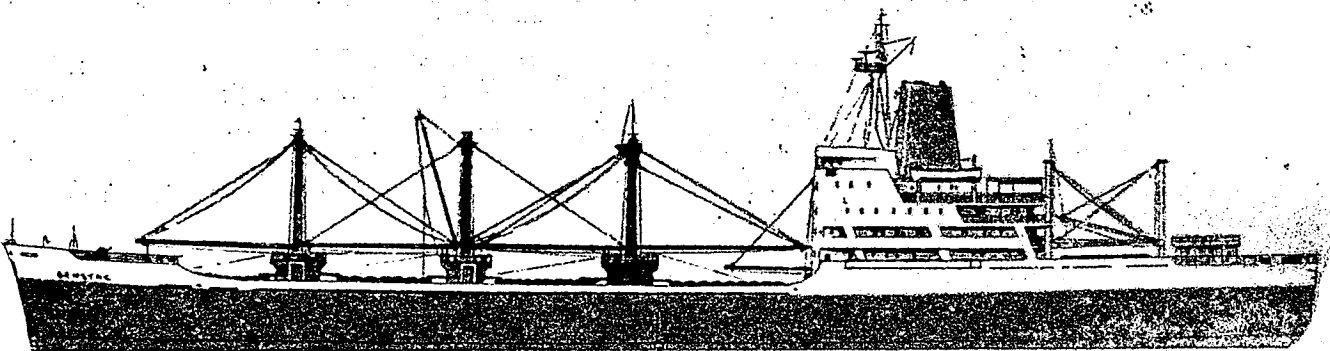
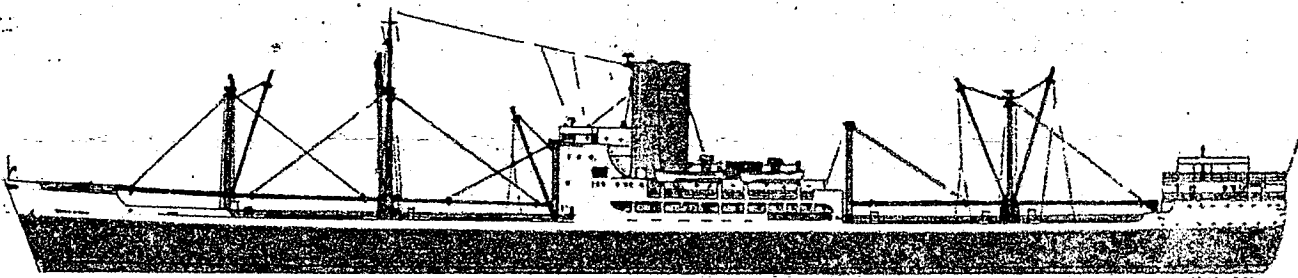
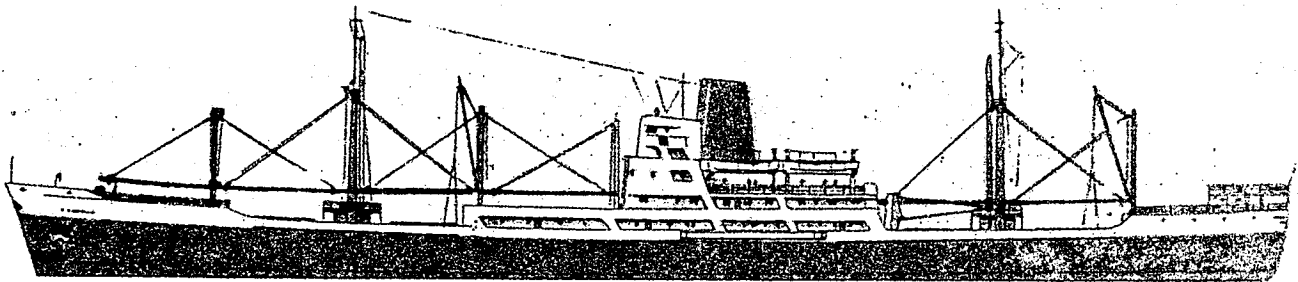
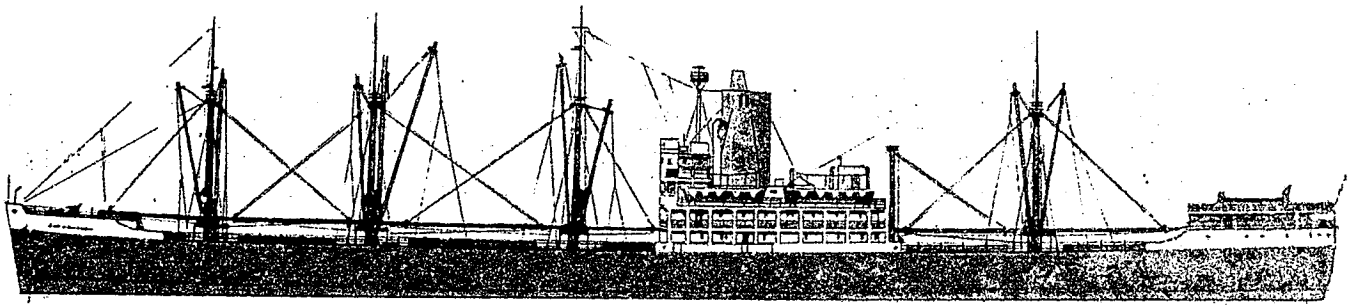
Pationik The Greek vessel was formerly the Yugoslavian Drvar and spent several weeks at berth 34 during October/November 1970 when she arrived with a flooded engine room. The 9,000 ton vessel owned by Mundial Cia Nav of Panama (whose office is in London) sailed for the Far East. Since then, she ran aground on the 29th September 1971 in a position 21.42N., 90.30E while on a voyage from Chalna to Chittagong. She was abandoned by her crew and the vessel was declared a total loss.

Piraeus This vessel used berth 34 during the spring of 1970 and was formerly the German vessel Clemens Sartori until 1966 when she was purchased by the Chrysovalandou Shipping Company. She was stranded on the Algerian coast in poor weather on the 26th March 1971 at a position 33.02N., 6.17E. The 2,500 ton vessel was on a voyage from Antwerp to Mersin, she was abandoned by her crew and the fifteen year old vessel was declared a total loss.

Queen Elizabeth The 83,000 ton Cunarder was sold to The Queen Ltd. for £3,585,000 and renamed The Elizabeth. Later she was purchased by Seawise Foundations (part of the C.Y. Tung Group) for £3,200,000 and renamed Seawise University. Disabled by boiler failure in a position 19.55N 74.00W during a voyage from Port Everglades to Hong Kong she put in at Aruba for repairs. On the 9th January 1972, when she was approaching the end of her conversion in Hong Kong, fire broke out which completely gutted her. She heeled over and sank in shallow water the following day. Investigators suspect sabotage as the fire started simultaneously in six different spots, the wind was blowing in the wrong direction to spread a fire starting in the stern which was where the fire was first reported, Chinese lettering was daubed on the funnels and Mr. C.Y. Tung a nationalist employed Chinese workers.

Redthorn A coaster which was chartered by British Rail in 1970 to run between Southampton and the Channel Isles. She was purchased from Limerick S.S.Co by S.W.Coe and was formerly the Oranmore. During a voyage from Galway to Liverpool in February 1970 her engines failed, her crew abandoned her and five days later she ran aground near Kerry Head. In March she was refloated and towed to Cork for repairs, the Limerick S.S.Co. then decided to sell her.

Saale Owned by Deutsche Seereederei of East Germany, she used number four dry dock after a fire caused extensive damage to her hold and starboard side. The



Focus on a shipping line - the BEN LINE of Leith

Drawings, top to bottom:-

Benvorlich (1946. 9 767 gross tons) sold. 1970 now Kavo Akritas

(Bencairn (1951. 10 593 gross tons) ex City of Brisbane 70

Benloyal (1956. 11 463 gross tons)

Benstac (1968. 12 011 gross tons)

drawings by Nigel V Robinson

Focus on a shipping line --

The BEN LINE of Leith

by Nigel V Robinson

The Ben Line with its slogan " Better Ship Ben Line - faster to the Far East " has been a regular caller at Southampton since the summer of 1961, on loading voyages from Grangemouth, Middlesbrough, Rotterdam, Antwerp and London etc., to the Far East. Over the years the fleet has seen many changes and now with the advent of the container vessels it has taken on a new look.

Under the management of William Thomson & Co, of Edinburgh and with the home port of Leith, the company goes back to the year 1825. It was then that William and Alexander Thomson inherited their father's marble-cutting business and began importing the stone from Italy in return for Scottish exports. The real beginnings of their shipowning came in 1839 with the building of the 218 ton wooden barge Carrara.

From then on the company developed by making occasional voyages to the East; later on the marble trade fell away and they sent their ships to Canada and also into the tea trade with the Orient. Coal, and on occasion prospectors to the Australian gold fields, were carried on the outward voyages.

Although the first vessel to carry the 'Ben.....' prefix was the BenCleuth of 1853, this nonemclature of naming after Scottish mountains - (Ben being the English version of the Gaelic Beinn) - was not to become general until the mid-1890s.

The first steamer to be completed for the line did in fact carry the prefix; she was the Benledi, the first of seven ships to bear that name in the fleet. 1899 saw the fleet composed of two sailing vessels and ten steamers. The First World War ended the Baltic trade which had been developed over the years and also the uneconomic 'one-ship companies', the whole enterprise being amalgamated into a compact 'Ben Line Steamers Ltd' in 1919.

By diversifying their employment the company was able to keep the ships at sea during the depression years and by 1939 they boasted a fleet of twenty vessels. Of these only six survived World War Two and the Ben Line set about an extensive rebuilding programme, as well as taking some war-built vessels. Suitable second-hand ships were also purchased as need arose. In the post-war period up until 1969 twenty ships were built for the line at a cost of over £30 million.

When it comes to second-hand vessels the Ben Line has always been a very astute purchaser of useful tonnage, thus adding much interest to their fleet. The last few years has seen a great deal of change taking place within the Ben Line.

Following the 1968 integration of the Ben and Ellerman Far East services the Ben acquired seven Ellerman 'City' liners - five in 1968 and two in 1970. All but three of these ships have now been returned to Ellermans or broken up. Since the start of the Ben-Ellerman participation in the Trio Lines Far East container venture (see Black Jack No 2 - Spring 1972) many of the older vessels have been disposed of, including Benalligin (1945. 9 950g) ex City of Khartoum, BenCleuth (1949. 9 952g) ex Egedia of the Anchor Line, and Benmhor (1949. 7 755g) ex Penrith Castle, all for breaking up. Other newer vessels have been sold for further trading including Benvalla (1962. 11 391g) and Benarmin (1963. 11 362g), which now fly the flag of Red China as the Yichun and Yong Chun respectively. Most notable amongst the recent disposals has been the sale of the Benalbanach (1967. 11 960g), Benledi (1965. 11 898g) and Benwyvis (1966. 11 959g) to the Italia Line as the Da Verazzona, Da Noli and Da Recco respectively.

nautical notebook

by Dock Head Correspondent

The American flag which has been little seen in the port for the last couple of years has seen a resurgence during the past two months since the last 'Notebook'.

In addition to the two regular military sealift command research vessels paying 'rest and recreation' visits - the Dutton (1945. 7606g) and Bowditch (1945. 7771g) - a further visitor was the inaptly named hydrographic research vessel Flyer (1945. 8427g) ex American Flyer 65 ex Water Witch, a C2-type acquired by the MSTS in 1965 and now operated for the Naval Electronic Systems Command.

Two other US Naval vessels arriving at the Shell-Mex Jetty during August were the T2-type tankers Saugatuck (1943. 22380 full load displacement) ex Newton and the Cossatot (1943. 22380 fld) ex Necessity.

Back in the docks the US naval cable ship Aeolus (1945. 7040 fld) unloaded cable at 109 berth. Originally named Turandot this ship was built as a S4 attack cargo ship, however she was converted to her present role in 1955 after having been in reserve since 1946. Civilian manned, the vessel has only been operated by the Military Sealift Command since earlier this year. A more modern American visitor to the same berth was Transoceanic Cables' t-e Long Lines (1963. 11326g) loading cable for Venezuela.

Another American visitor, this time calling for engine repairs, was Hudson Waterways t-e Seatrain Maryland (1944-45. 8012g) part ex San Jacinto, part ex Mission San Carlos 66 the bits and pieces being converted from T2 tankers into cargo vessels and joined in 1967. A sister-ship Seatrain Carolina (1944, 7991g) called at 40 berth in December 1972.

The first few days of August saw yet another interesting old American ship at 40 berth. Unloading US Army equipment for the Hythe base was the first non-naval 'Victory' to visit the port for a considerable time, and perhaps even the last. The Mankato Victory (1945. 7645g) still retains her original name and is owned by Victory Carriers Inc, of New York. It is reported that this fine old ship will only be making a further two voyages before arriving at the breakers.

Repairs brought other interesting ships both large and small to the port including the tanker Mesis (1957. 35246dwt) ex British Valour 73 to 107 berth; the Greek cruise liner Argonaut (1929. 4007g) ex Orion 64 ex USS Vixen 50 ex Orion 47 built at Kiel as a motor yacht and now owned by Aegean Cruises S A, and managed by Epirotiki S S Nav, which called at the end of August. Just previously the mv Shell Welder (1955. 569g) now converted to a sand dredger and owned by Northwood (Fareham) Ltd called at Camper and Nicholsons yard before being slipped for repairs at Husband's Shipyard.

Whilst mentioning yards on the Itchen, the mv Acer (1956. 554g), mentioned in the last issue, sank off the French channel coast only a few days after leaving the port.

Further up the River Itchen at Vosper Thornycroft's Northam yard, work has almost been completed on the conversion of the former tank landing craft Portcullis (L4044) for commercial use. Recently renamed Island Spruce (1017g) the vessel is now owned by Limestone Transport Co, Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Canada, although registration is at Southampton.

Following in the footsteps of the Panagia (1954. 2566g) and Fofa (1964. 1199g)

