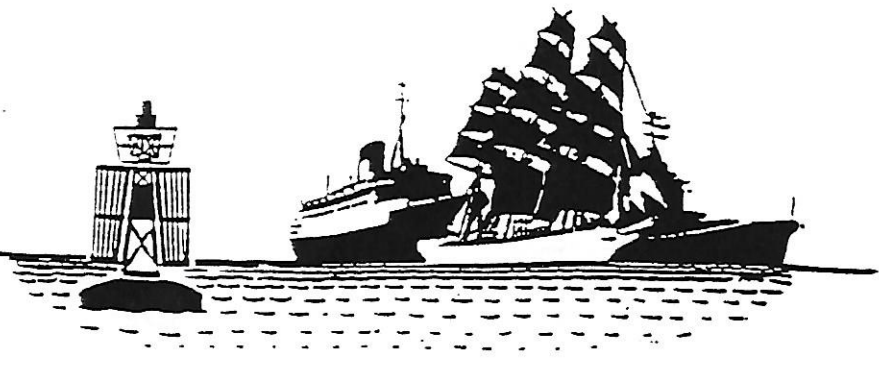


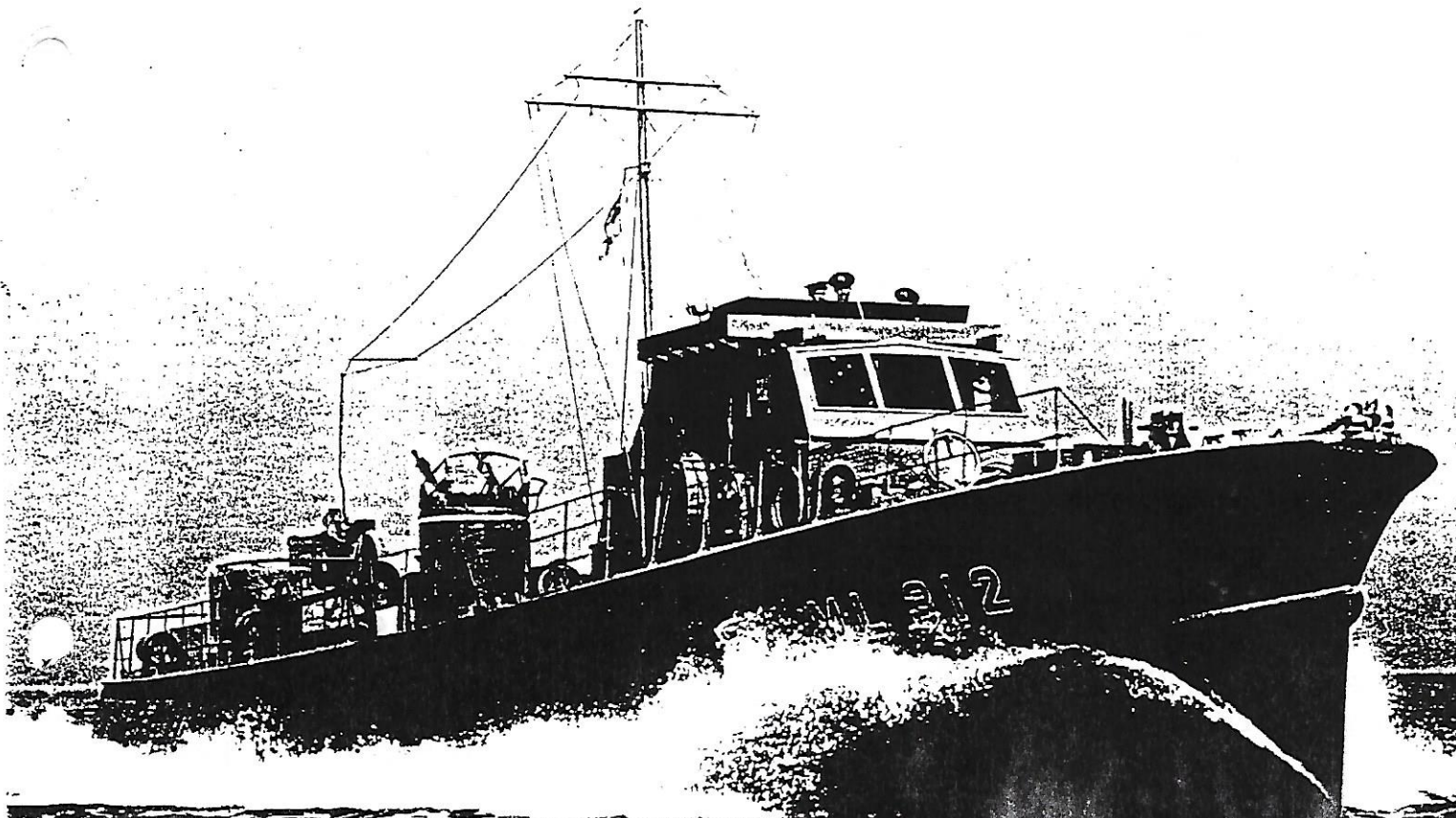
BLACK JACK

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
SOUTHAMPTON BRANCH
WORLD SHIP SOCIETY



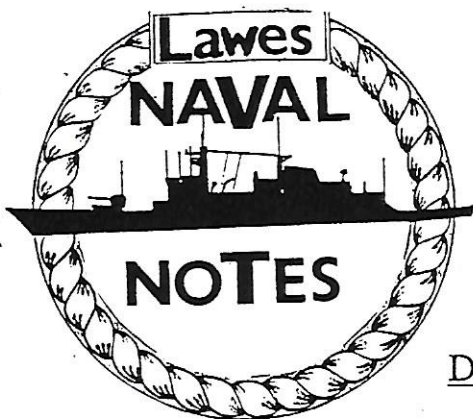
SPRING - SUMMER '94

No 89-



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NAVAL NOTES

D-Day, Southampton and the " Little Ships "

Many words have been and no doubt will be written about Southampton's part in the D-Day Landings. Rather than concentrate on the major ships involved in this event, I thought it might be of interest to look at some of the smaller vessels that played a part in the invasion of Europe in June 1944. Some of the minor naval vessels not only operated from bases along the Solent, but also started their lives locally

Many coastal forces warships were constructed of wood which meant they could be built not only by established builders such as Vosper's at Portsmouth and Thornycroft at Southampton, but also by small yacht builders or even carpentry and joinery firms.

Between the two World Wars both Vosper and Thornycroft built experimental Motor Torpedo Boats (MTB's). The former continued to build and develop their 70 ft. design throughout the war. The same design was used by Elco in the USA to supply Lend/Lease MTBs. to the Royal Navy.

The main designer and builder of Motor Gun Boats (MGB's) was British Power Boats at Hythe. Their earlier vessels were converted from Motor Anti-submarine Boats, but later their 71ft. 6in. design became a standard MGB. By D-Day the distinction between MTB and MGB had largely disappeared as most of the vessels were fitted with both light, quick firing guns and torpedo tubes. During the invasion and its follow up over a hundred of these coastal vessels were used as escorts and to patrol the flanks of the beach-head.

Coastal convoys needed coastal escorts, therefore Motor Launches (ML's) were built to carry out this duty. The most common was the Fairmile 'B' type. Several hundred of these were built, quite a few in the Solent area. The Solent Shipyard at Sarisbury Green completed 11, one of which ML 190 was at Normandy, Southampton Steam Joinery built ML252 which participated in the invasion, and Woodnut built 3 at Northam and 8 at Southampton, one from each batch (Nos.204 and 208) were used during D-Day.

Smaller MLs called Harbour Defence Motor Launches were also built locally. A.H.Moody at Swannick built 7, Herbert Woods at Southampton built 2 and Berthon Boats at Lymington constructed nearly 40 of the design of which 7 were employed during the invasion (HDML's 1013,1025,1390,1391,1392,1393,1413)

The sweeping of mines became more important as the war progressed as the number and variety of this type of weapon increased. To counter this threat a variety of minesweepers were employed, ranging from the large "Fleet" sweeper, through converted trawlers to wooden Motor Minesweepers. It was the latter type with tended to be built by non warship companies, for example, Husband Yacht Yard at Marchwood completed 9 of them, of which at least two (MM 7 and 22) were employed during the Normandy Invasion.

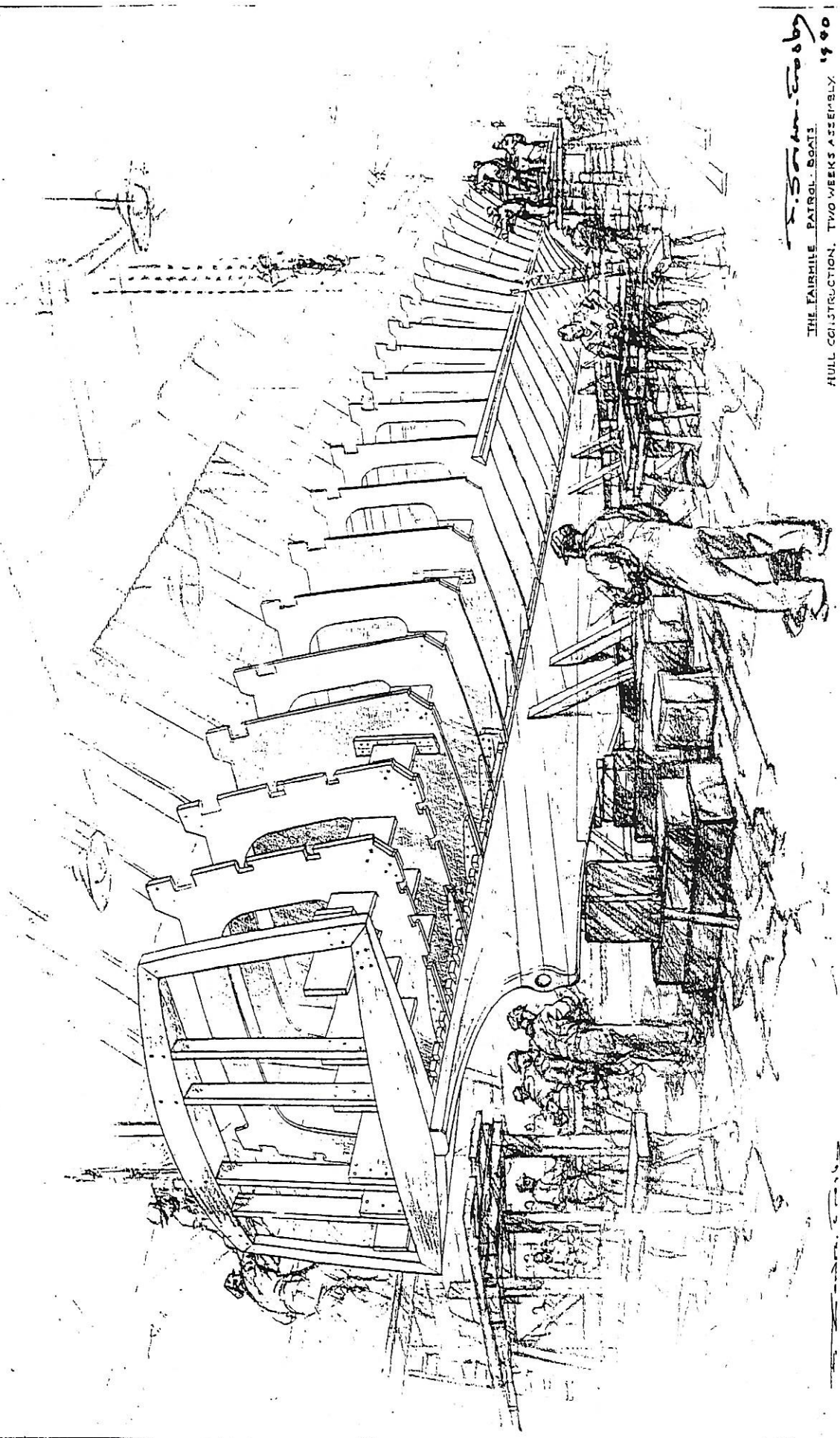
The Invasion could not have proceeded without Landing Ships and Landing Craft. Thornycroft built prototype landing craft before the War and constructed many thereafter, some at their yard at Hampton on the Thames. The Landing Craft could be divided into three main types (as an over simplification), there were those that carried troops, a second type for vehicles and thirdly those fitted with guns and used as support vessels during a landing. Amongst local builders of Landing Craft were Berthon Boat who completed over 40, Solent Shipyard 30, and Southern Railway at Eastleigh who also built 30. Not all of these boats necessarily served at Normandy.

In this article I have omitted most of the technical details of the vessels as these are easily obtained from reference books. I have however attempted to give an overall view of the total commitment needed to achieve success in June 1944.

Finally, it would be interesting to know more about such companies as Southampton Steam Joinery or Woodnut. Maybe some of our local historians can supply some information.

*We do
our own
job best*

A sea captain and his chief engineer decided a swap jobs to establish which was the more important. After a couple of hours the captain emerged from the engine room covered in oil.
'Chief, you will have to come down.
'I can't make her go.'
'Of course you can't' replied the chief,
'She's run aground.'

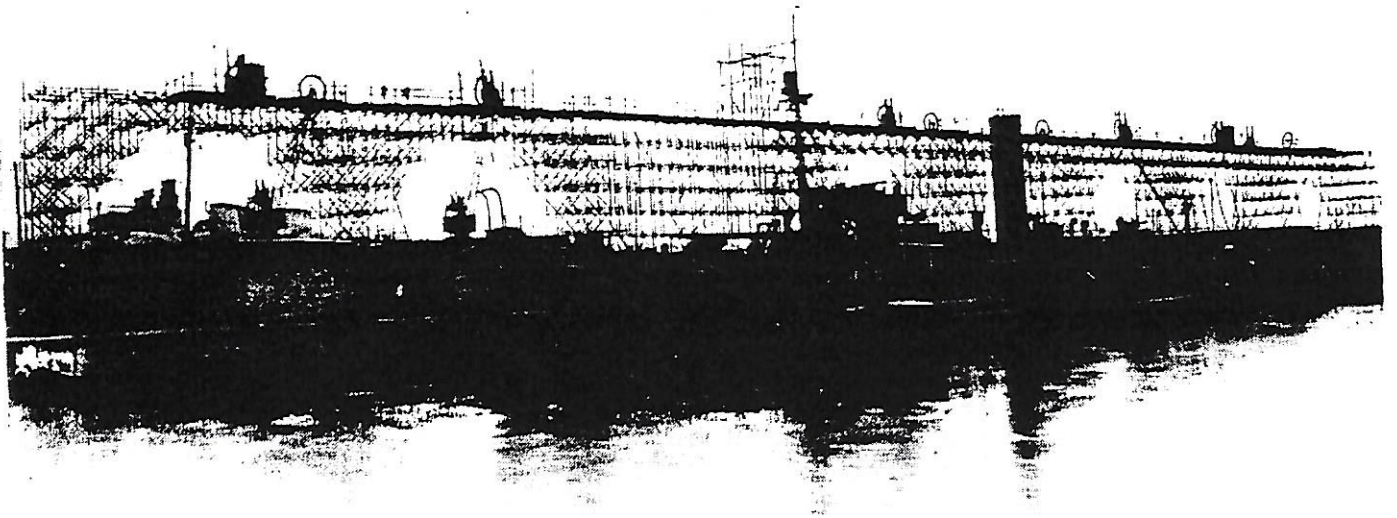


J. S. Am. - Crosby
THE FAIRMILE PATROL BOATS
FULL CONSTRUCTION, TWO WEEKS ASSEMBLY '1900
SKETCHED AT MESSRS WOODHUTTS YARD, S.O.W.

- ST. HELENS - 1744.

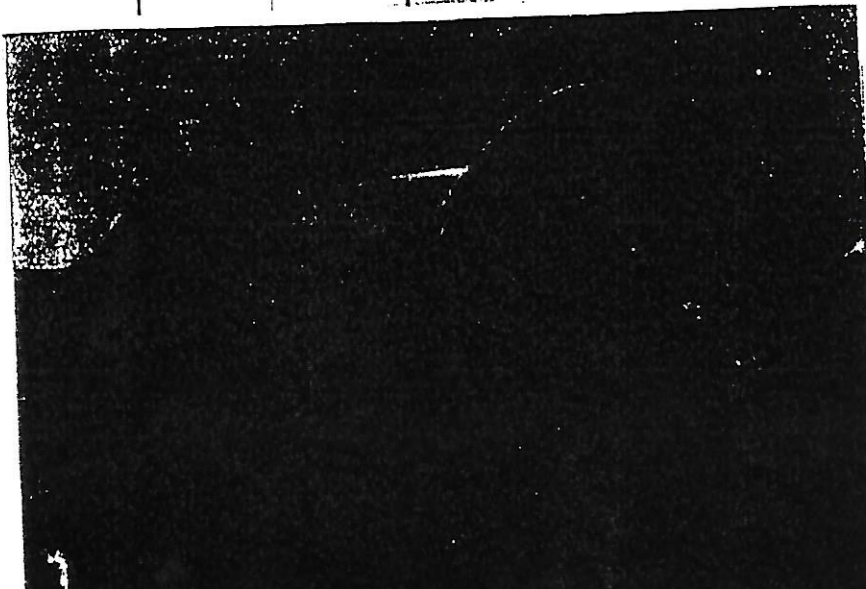
'PLUTO'

(PIPE LINES UNDER
THE OCEAN)



H.M.S. "Holdfast," the vessel that successfully laid the experimental pipe line across the Bristol Channel, is here seen taking H.A.I.S. cable aboard at one of the J. & P. storage sites specially designed and constructed for this momentous operation. Although her carrying capacity proved in-

sufficient when it was decided to enlarge the pipe to 3in. diam., H.M.S. "Holdfast" gave valuable assistance in "Operation Pluto." Like all the other cable-laying vessels employed, H.M.S. "Holdfast" is equipped with J. & P. cable-laying machinery, also designed specially for the job.



OPERATION "PLUTO"

The giant floating drums known as H.M.S. Conun used in operation "Pluto" were fabricated by Orthostyle Ltd., of Scunthorpe with Murck Electrodes

PLUTO - (Pipe Lines Under The Ocean)

PLUTO was one of the finest engineering achievements made in the Second World War and in particular to the D-Day operations. But how did it all begin? The project owes its origin to a conversation on Salisbury Plain early in April 1942 between Mr Geoffrey Lloyd and Lord Louis Mountbatten. Mr Lloyd was at the time Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fuel. Lord Louis was, of course, Chief of Combined Operations. Mr Lloyd asked Lord Louis if there was anything else that could be done to assist in the forthcoming landings in France, then in the planning stage. 'Yes' replied Lord Louis 'can you lay a oil pipe line across the English Channel?' The immediate opinion from the experts was that the task was impossible. However, a Mr R C Hartley, Chief Engineer of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, suggested that it may be possible to produce a pipe line similar to a submarine cable without the cores and insulations. After experiments two special steel pipe lines were developed, which were called HAIS and HAMEL cables. HAIS cable came in two sizes: 3½" and 4½" external diameter over a jute serving with a 2" and 3.8" bore respectfully. The large size was used principally throughout the operation, because of the large diameter it was essential that the cable was not bent to a radius of less than five feet. The cable was laid from adapted cable ships and barges. HAMEL cable also came in two sizes: 2" and 3". The 3" was used principally during the operation. It was found that these pipe lines could be coiled on and off specially built drums, providing that the diameter was not less than 30 feet. The cable was laid by the following methods: a floating drum known as a CONUN and from a drum fitted in a ship called HMS PERESPHONE. The reason for using a pipe line across the English Channel to France was to make use of pumping stations at various places on the coast; thereby pumping the fuel as quickly and safely as possible and avoid the use of precious tankers.

The first operational pipe line was laid from Sandown on the Isle of Wight to the Cherbourg peninsular which was some 70 miles. 20 lines were also laid from Lepe Beach, Hampshire, to Gurnard also on the Isle of Wight. Later some 500 miles of pipe line was laid from Dungeness in Kent and Boulogne.

Southampton was the main operations base for PLUTO. A secondary base was set up in Tilbury Dock, London. The base in Southampton was set up at the only remaining part left standing of the once Vickers Supermarine Factory, which was known as HMS ABATOS. Training was carried out for officers and seamen who were to man the vessels that laid the cables. Eventually an headquarters was set up at 21 Upper Vicarage Road, Woolston.

The PLUTO plan culminated in 3500 tons of petrol per day and a total of 600,000 tons being pumped across the Channel to our invading forces.

After the War a massive salvage operation was started, and in mid 1946 the operation to dismantle the pipe line commenced. Altogether some 22,000 tons of the original total of 23,000 tons of lead piping was recovered from the HAIS cable and some 2628 tons of steel pipe was recovered of the original 5500 tons laid.

The work was dangerous and many fires were started by the oxy-acetylene torches used. Eventually it was found more practical to use hand hack-saws. But even sparks from the steel boots used by the work-force gave off sparks, which in turn ignited the petrol. One of the main contractors was Messrs GEORGE COHEN SONS & CO. LTD. a local scrap company. Berth 102 in the Western Docks, Southampton, was made available for unloading. This was found to be the only berth capable of taking the extreme weights involved whilst unloading the cable.

All that now remains of Operation PLUTO locally is a plaque in the wall at Shanklin seafront denoting the spot where the pumping station once stood. However, a recently-discovered valve found by BP Oil Terminal Manager Mr Martin Heathcote at Hamble Foreshore is now preserved in the Terminal.

Postscript: If any readers know of any other sites connected with PLUTO, please let me know.

SHIPS AND CRAFT USED IN OPERATION PLUTO.

SS LONDON later R/N HMS HOLDFAST, 1.640 tons displ, 250' x 35' 12 kts, built at Hawthorn Leslie 1921. October 1942 converted to a cable ship and renamed HMS HOLDFAST for the Pluto operations, august 1946 to ministry of war transport renamed EMPIRE TAW, took part in the salvage operations (Pluto cable). Broken up at Passage West, Cork 1953.

HMS PERESPHONE, converted from an Admiralty Hopper Barge no W24.

EMPIRE RIDLEY and EMPIRE BAFFIN*, both standard built 10.000 ton cargo ships, 425' x 56', steam recip engines 11kts, renamed HMS LATIMER AND HMS SANCROFT.

HMS ALGERIAN 294' x 43' steam recip, 10kts.

BUSTLER admiralty tug 191' x 38' single screw diesel tug.

MARAUDER admiralty tug 165' x 32' 2 screws steam recip engines.

CONUN DRUMS no 1 to 6.

* Built at Lithgows, 1946 sold to the Stag Line and renamed CLINTONIA.

Doug Toogood.

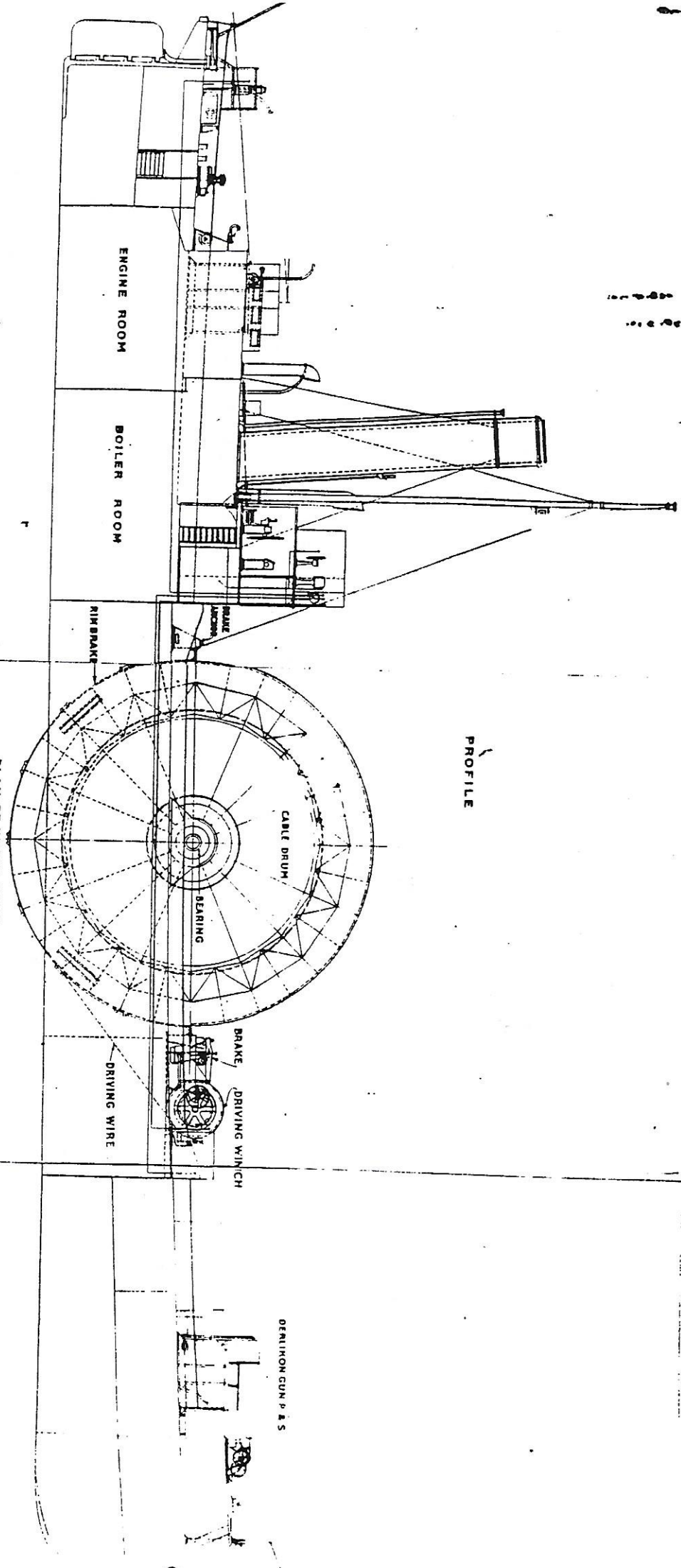
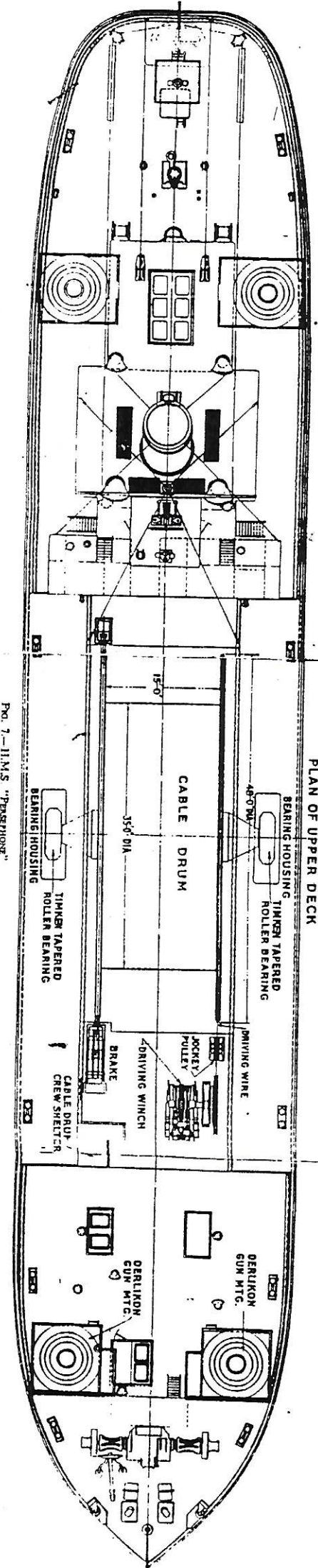


FIG. 7-111.M.S. "Pershing"

PROFILE

PLAN OF UPPER DECK

DERIKON GUN P & S

