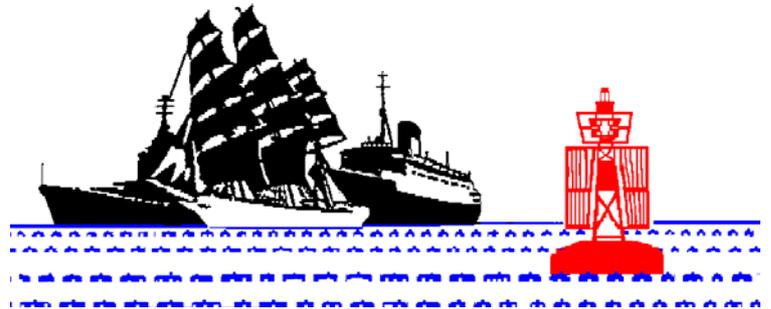


# Black Jack

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SOUTHAMPTON BRANCH  
WORLD SHIP SOCIETY  
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Issue No: 158

Spring 2011



A foggy and atmospheric day greeted the Royal Navy's HMS **Ark Royal** when she arrived at Portsmouth for the last time on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2010. Large crowds visited her on the weekend of 22/23 January 2011 – see article on page 8.

*Photo by ????????????*

## Black Jack - Spring 2011 No. 158

Editorial team

Mick Lindsay, Nigel Robinson and Editorial Assistant Michael Page. Website – Neil Richardson

**Black Jack is the quarterly newsletter for the Southampton Branch of the World Ship Society.**  
Four editions available for £5 inclusive of postage.

### Branch Meetings

Venue:

St James Road Methodist Church  
St James Road  
Shirley  
Southampton, SO15 5HE

All meetings commence at 19.30 and the meeting room is to be vacated by 21.30. Meetings are on the second Tuesday of each month.

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## 2011 Branch Meeting Programme

- February 8<sup>th</sup>      ***Cruising on the Orpheus*** – Bill Mayes
- March 8<sup>th</sup>      ***To Antarctica with the British Antarctic Survey*** – Robbie Peck
- April 12<sup>th</sup>      ***From Dagebull to Duisburg*** – Bernard McCall
- May 10<sup>th</sup>      ***The New Queen Elizabeth*** – Alistair Greener
- June 14<sup>th</sup>      ***A Captains Tiger*** – Geoff Bradley
- July 12<sup>th</sup>      ***Derricks & Cranes*** – Neil Davidson
- August 9<sup>th</sup>      ***Members' Image Gallery*** – Our annual competition with slides and digital entries
- September 13<sup>th</sup>      ***The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Fawley Refinery*** – Neil, Andrew & Mick
- October 11<sup>th</sup>      ***Salvage*** – Vincent Williams
- November 8<sup>th</sup>      ***A.G.M.*** – plus short programme
- December 13<sup>th</sup>      **?????????????** – David Oldham
- Plus the Annual Branch Cruise on 4 June**

All contributions to *BJ* either by post, email, floppy disk or CD are most welcome. Any article with a connection to the Solent area would be much appreciated. The *BJ* Editors could reproduce magazine or newspaper articles but preference is given to articles 'by the branch – for the branch'. Any member who would prefer to receive the Branch Magazine *Black Jack* by email please contact the Editor. Colour printing costs are relatively high so all recent *Black Jacks* can be viewed in full colour via the Branch website in pdf format.  
[www.sotonwss.org.uk](http://www.sotonwss.org.uk)

### Ship Visits

Ship visits, though rare these days, often become available at short notice and more recently during the week due to the nature of shipping now. Those wishing to participate should ensure their details are held by the Visits Organiser and kept up to date. All members participating in visits organised by the branch do so entirely at their own risk and should be aware that ships and dock areas may have trip and other safety hazards and are advised to use personal protective equipment when appropriate. All participants must accompany the 'guide' at all times, unless instructed otherwise, and follow any instructions from the party leader.

## MONTY'S NOTEBOOK

A round-up of new or infrequent recent callers to Southampton Docks. Details and photographs supplied by Monty Beckett. Photos top to bottom: **OOCL Seoul, Sydgard, Thomson Dream**

### Berths 204/7 - Container Ships:

APL Zeebrugge 86679/10, NYK Venus 97825/07, CMA CGM Callisto 131332/10, Hyundai Vancouver 71861/10, APL Turkey 71787/09, APL New Jersey 67009/08, NYK Altair 105644/10, Budapest Express 93750/10, Basle Express 93750/10, APL Russia 86692/08, CMA CGM Pegasus 131332/10, Sophia 7464/08, OOCL Seoul 89097/10, Elusive 6326/95, OOCL Luxembourg 89097/10, NYK Olympus 98799/08, Vancouver Express 91203/09, CMA CGM Onyx 39906/07, Katharina B 3999/97, CMA CGM Warner 65247/04

### Ro-Ro Vessels:

Vany Rickmers 47090/10, Pleiades Spirit 60330/08, Grand Dahlia 59217/09, Bishu Highway 56978/09, Equieus Leader 61800/05, Planet Ace 38349/92, Morning Lena 70687/10, Hoegh Masam 44210/98, Aegean Highway 60325/08, Michigan Highway 56951/08

### Berth 107- 109 & No 7 Dry-dock:

Blue Sapphire 28085/01, Sormovskiy-3058 3041/87, Henny 1241/82, Aressa 1926/78, Midjur 13834/92, Blue star 25457/04, Maxime 1554/05, Mormelland 2164/05, Porhov 1926/79, Flinterbright 2474/04, Fletum 4115/98, Jason 2453/08, Western Santiago 27011/97, Nanos 27986/02, Fast Sus 20557/96, Oslo Bulk 3 5629/10, Wilson Astakos 2451/10, Bounder 1984/89, Veerseborg 6130/96, Sydgard 2868/00, Ar-lau 2461/04, Celia 3610/07, KlazinaC 5608/07, Peleus 2452/09, Peak Bergen 1543/86, Moana 2992/09, Chuetsu Maru 33853/87, Ran 1943/86

### Berth 104:

Humboldt Rex 7837/98, Chikuma Reefer 7367/98, Mogami Reefer 7367/99, Green Magic 5103/90

### Other Cargo vessels:

Kumando 20087/06, Artisgracht 7949/90, Elandsgracht 8448/95, Frauke 12950/08, UAL Texas 6577/02, Erasmusgracht 9448/94, Beluga Formation 9611/07, Aragonborg 11864/10

### Marchwood Bulk Berth:

Isidor 2735/93, Thurkus 2561/91

### Berths 36:

Marjam C 5629/08, Beaumont 2545/05, Islay Trader 1515/92, Tina C 3388/08, Karina C 4151/10, Sea Hunter 2443/90

### Dibles Wharf:

Independent 2113/82

### Prince's Wharf:

Ostenau 2461/05, Kossau 2482/07, Pewsum 1960/90, Rodau 2461/04

### Passenger Vessels:

Thomson Dream 53872/86, Saga Pearl II 15627/81, Balmoral 34242/88

### Tugs:

Svitzer Kilroom 819/08



# ***The speculatively-built ships of Oswald, Mordaunt and Company, 1879-84: Woolston, Bitterne, Test, Itchen and Netley***

By A G K Leonard

*This article was originally published in the Winter 2010 (number 16) issue of the Journal of the Southampton local History Forum, sponsored by the Southampton Library Service. It is reprinted here with permission.*

The steamship **Bitterne** had only a short life in the 1880s but it holds a place in Southampton's maritime history as the largest ship built in the yard at Woolston created in 1875-6 by Thomas Ridley Oswald, who pioneered large-scale iron shipbuilding there until his departure in 1889. At 5,085 tons, the **Bitterne** was also the largest vessel of its time to enter the port of London.

Her builder was a man of experience and enterprise. Born at Stepney in 1836, he began his apprenticeship in the yard of his uncle, the Sunderland shipbuilder James Laing, and then worked for Scott Russell at Millwall on Brunel's **Great Eastern** before returning to Sunderland in his early twenties to establish his own shipyard and iron works at Pallion.

Between 1859 and 1875 Oswald launched 149 iron ships, mostly sailing vessels of around 1,000 tons for bulk cargo carrying but including some steamships of 2,000+ tons, for which he also constructed the boilers and engines.

To expand his activities (and probably also to escape some of his creditors, for he had over-reached himself financially) Oswald moved his operations and most of his workforce from Wearside to Woolston, where previously only small-scale boat building had been undertaken on the east bank of the Itchen.

The first vessel completed in his new yard in 1876 was the **Aberfoyle**, a barque of 953 tons, using iron frames already made up and brought down from Sunderland.

Late in 1877 Oswald found an unlikely partner in John Murray Mordaunt, a sporting gentleman from an old Warwickshire family who doubtless contributed useful capital to the business, which was thenceforth styled Oswald, Mordaunt and Company. Mordaunt actively identified himself with it, coming to live at 'Middanbury Lodge' all through the 1880s.

T R Oswald, a member of the Institution of Naval Architects from 1869, acknowledged the contribution of his brother William Rudd Oswald as manager of the shipbuilding works during its first four years. He lived at Charlton Lodge in Weston Grove Road. The Southampton directory of 1883 listed 'Hercules Linton, marine architect, Prospect Villa, Obelisk Road, Woolston.' The designer of the celebrated clipper **Cutty Sark** made his skilled input to the styling and construction of some of the 104 vessels built at Woolston in 1876-89 - over 70 of which were three-masted full-rigged iron sailing ships of around 2,000 tons intended for world-wide service as economical carriers of bulk cargoes such as coal, grain, lumber and wool, in the period when sail could still undercut steam for long-haul voyages.

Some of these sturdy Woolston-built windjammers were remarkably long-lasting, most notably the 2,170 ton **Wavertree**, which reached her centenary in 1985, lovingly restored as a showpiece of South Street Sea-port Museum, New York.

T R Oswald himself made his home in Southampton, taking a lease of New Place House, an early Georgian town mansion at the foot of Bedford Place. (Subject of a detailed account in the *Journal of the Southampton Local History Forum* no.10, Spring 2003, this was demolished to provide the site for Southampton's first purpose-built public library, opened in July 1893 - bombed in 1940, replaced by modern offices in 1988).

The 1881 census recorded Oswald, then 44, living there with his second wife Wilhelmina (29) and their three young children aged 1 to 4. Oswald's first wife had died in 1872, at only 27. The Oswalds were attended by five resident female servants. If Oswald kept his own carriage, his coachman was not then living-in at New Place House; Oswald may have hired horse cabs to take him to and from the Floating Bridge across to Woolston.

The census enumerator described him as 'shipbuilder and engineer (1,200 men)'; White's Hampshire directory of 1878 noted that his yard occupied 20 acres and 'in full work employs 1,000 hands; all the details for the vessels and their engines are made on the premises.'

A statement contributed to the port authority's review in 1882 listed the ships built at Woolston up to August that year - 24 sailing vessels with a total tonnage of 40,920 and 15 steam ships totalling 23,763 tons. Then under construction were 11 more vessels - five sailing ships aggregating to 10,307 tons and six steamers totalling 16,400 tons. The latter included the two largest built at Oswald's yard.

Most of its output was directed to meeting the orders of shipowners, mainly Liverpool companies with whom Oswald had earned a good reputation. At times when such orders were not sufficient to keep his yard in full operation Oswald maintained its productive capacity and skilled workforce by himself undertaking speculative building on his own account, expecting soon to sell or charter such vessels. When found new commercial owners they were appropriately renamed but initially Oswald gave them distinctive local names - **Woolston, Bitterne, Test, Itchen** and **Netley**.

## ***Woolston and Bitterne***

The *Southampton Times* of 13 May 1882 carried an account of the launching at Woolston the previous

Saturday, 6 May, of 'a large screw steamer of 4,500 tons named the *Woolston* ... length 385 ft, breadth 44 ft ... engines made by the same firm ... intended to take the highest class at Lloyds. The ceremony of naming the vessel was performed by Mrs T R Oswald' (figure 1).

The *Woolston* was never listed as such by Lloyds. Its 1883 register showed that her builder had soon found a purchaser for the steamer more exactly assessed at 4,252 tons - the Compañia General de Tabacos de Filipinas, a Barcelona-based company which renamed her *Isla de Luzon*. She was later transferred to another Barcelona company, the Compañia Transatlantica, adding a further chapter to her long-distance

**LAUNCH AT SOUTHAMPTON.**—On Saturday last, Messrs. Oswald, Mordaunt, and Co., launched from their shipbuilding and engineering works, Southampton, a large screw steamer of 4,500 tons, named the *Woolston*, of the following dimensions, viz. :—Length, 385ft. ; breadth, 44ft. ; depth of hold, 32ft. The ship is built with top-gallant fore-castle, long bridge, and cape aft. She is fitted with Emerson and Walker's patent windlass for lifting anchors and all the latest improvements. The engines, which are made by the same firm, are on the compound principle, having cylinders of 46 and 90, and a stroke of 60. She has two double-ended main boilers, with a working pressure of 100lbs. The ship and engines are intended to take the highest class at Lloyd's. The ceremony of naming the vessel was performed by Miss Mordaunt, of Midanbury, Southampton.

Figure 1. *Southampton Times*, 13 May 1882. Report of the launching of the *Woolston* on 6 May. All reports of such launchings follow an

Figure 2. *Southampton Times*, 16 June 1883. Report of the launching of the *Bitterne* on 9 June 1883. Her name is curiously printed as 'Bittern', i.e. the reedbed bird of the heron family rather than the place. Several unconnected ships carried the name *Bitterne* but there was only one named *Bitterne*.

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**SHIP LAUNCH AT SOUTHAMPTON.**—On Saturday last, Messrs. Oswald, Mordaunt, and Co., launched from their shipbuilding and engineering works, Southampton, a fine large screw steamer of 4,800 tons, named the *Bittern*, of the following dimensions:—Length (extreme), 395ft. ; breadth, 44ft. 3in. ; depth of hold, 33ft. The ship is built with top-gallant fore-castle, long bridge, and large poop aft. She is fitted with Emmerson and Walker's patent capstan windlass for lifting anchors, and all the latest improvements. The engines by the same firm are on the compound principle of 3,000 indicated horse-power, having cylinders of 46 and 90, and a stroke of 60. She has two double-ended main boilers, with a working pressure of 100lbs. The ship and engines are intended to take the highest class at Lloyd's. The ceremony of naming the vessel was performed by Miss Mordaunt, of Midanbury, Southampton.

Figure 2. *Southampton Times*, 16 June 1883. Report of the launching of the *Bitterne* on 9 June 1883. Her name is curiously printed as 'Bittern', i.e. the reedbed bird of the heron family rather than the place. Several unconnected ships carried the name *Bitterne* but there was only one named *Bitterne*.

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In 1885-6 Lloyds listed T R Oswald as the owner of the *Bitterne*, giving her tonnage as 5,085 tons and dimensions as 382 x 44 ft, with nominal accommodation for 50 first class and 1,350 steerage passengers, the latter in the holds intended primarily for cargo. Oswald had chartered her to the recently established Liverpool company styled the 'Twin Screw Line' (although she was, of course, a single screw steamer, making 13 knots).

The *Bitterne* made her maiden voyage from London to New York for this company on 27 June 1884 and completed seven round voyages across the Atlantic by November 1885 before being sold to the Palermo shipowner Michel Amoroso.

Renamed *Robilant*, she sailed for him under the Italian flag but still operated out of London, making five round voyages to New York between December 1886 and August 1887. She was recorded sailing from Italian ports to New York in February 1888, with 1,324 steerage passengers. Thereafter the *Robilant* carried cargoes to South America, Java and New York. From there she set off on the last day of 1889 for China and Japan but on 6 February 1890 she was lost near the Cape of Good Hope. The *Times* of 8 February reported Lloyds agent at Cape Town telegraphing that this ship had been totally lost in Saldanha Bay, with little prospect of salvage. Fortunately, all her crew were saved.

### **Test and Itchen**

Launched in July 1883 (according to Lloyds - no local press report has yet been located) a lesser steamship than the **Bitterne** enjoyed a much longer career under several different names. Originally called the **Test**, this 2,600 ton iron steamer, 310 x 39 ft, was listed at Lloyds in 1884 under the ownership of T R Oswald, registered at Liverpool, where he was presumably seeking to charter or sell her.

In 1885 he found a purchaser - the Liverpool, Brazil and River Plate Steam Navigation Co Ltd, which promptly changed her name from **Test** to **Caxton**, ahead of her maiden voyage from Liverpool to the River Plate in June 1885. Oswald built another three similar steamships for the Lambert & Holt company in 1885-8. After ten years in its service, the **Caxton** was sold in 1895 to T Hogan & Sons, who renamed her **Mendota**.

In 1908 the one-time **Test** was given another new identity as the **Angiolina**, having been bought by the Italian shipowner Cesare Parodi of Genoa. In 1905 he sold her to another operator, who renamed her in grander style as **Citta di New York**. She made her first voyage from Italy to New York in March 1905, carrying 31 cabin and 951 steerage passengers, but after three such round trips she was withdrawn and sold in 1907 to another Italian company, the Societa Marittima La Platense, for general cargo-carrying - with yet another change of name, to **Co-stanza**.

Her career ended during World War I, when she was bound from Tyneside to Leghorn with a cargo of coal and was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine in the North Sea off the British coast on 14 August 1917.

In its issue of 27 September 1884 the *Southampton Times* reprinted a paragraph from its London contemporary praising the Woolston shipbuilders for speedily undertaking a Government contract for 70 special boats designed for use on the Nile in the intended expedition to relieve the siege of Khartoum and rescue General Gordon - which was unfortunately overtaken by events.

Flanking it in the adjoining column was a report neatly headed 'Launch of the **Itchen** at Southampton', recording in the usual style the launching from the Woolston Shipbuilding and Engineering Works on 20 September of 'a fine iron sailing ship of 1,500 tons ... length 251 ft, breadth 38 ft ... built to class A 1 at Lloyds ... having full poop for the accommodation of captain and officers, large deck house amidships for crew, petty offices, galley etc ... and Emerson & Walker's windlass for working anchors.'

The **Itchen**, seemingly not accorded a formal naming ceremony at her launching, was acquired by the Liverpool shipowner R J Swyny, who renamed her **County of Clare**. In 1899 the owner was listed as Miss T Swyny, presumably following her father's death. This prompted her to dispose of the ship, which was sold in 1900 to N Paneilius of Rauma, the port in Finland, then ruled by Russia. Renamed **Sylfid**, she continued to be listed under Russian ownership there until the early 1920s.

### **Netley**

Completing the quintet of Oswald's spec-built vessels - chronologically the first and by far the shortest-lived - was the 2,500 ton steamer built in 1879 as the **Netley** but restyled **Hansa** on being bought by the Norddeutscher Lloyd company of Bremen. It doubtless had regard to Oswald's yard at Sunderland having built five steamers of 1,900 - 2,500 tons in 1871-3 for the Baltischer Lloyd company. Some of these eventually had working lives of 30+ years but the **Netley/Hansa** had a sadly brief time afloat.

The second of that name in the NDL fleet, the **Hansa** was its first purely cargo-carrying ocean steamship. She left Bremen on her maiden voyage to New York on 25 November 1879 but never completed a return voyage, being wrecked on 4 January 1880 on Terschelling Island, off the Dutch coast - fortunately without loss of life.

In part payment for this ill-fated new **Hansa**, Oswald had taken the previous bearer of that name in the NDL fleet, a 3,000 ton steamer built in 1861 by Caird & Co at Greenock. This was overhauled and fitted with new engines and boilers, then sold in 1881 to a Liverpool shipowner R Gibbs. Two years later he sold her to the White Cross Line of Antwerp, which renamed her **Ludwig**.

The *Southampton Times* recalled her history when reporting her arrival on 18 June 1883 with a large cargo of cattle and sheep from Canada. She sailed again from Antwerp for Montreal on 2 July that year ... only to disappear *en route* without trace, involving the loss of 70-80 lives.

### **Solent**

Not in the same category as the foregoing five Oswald-built vessels but worth a brief mention is the **Solent**, launched in September 1878 to the order of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company. This 1908 ton schooner-rigged steamer was designed for the Royal Mail inter-island service in the Caribbean, based at Barbados.

Withdrawn from this duty in 1905, she was given a new role - with smartly painted white hull - as the first Royal Mail vessel wholly engaged in cruising in and around the West Indies. Her last duties were more prosaic, carrying labourers to work on the Panama Canal, before being sent back to Britain in 1909 for breaking up.

### **Final years**

Oswald, Mordaunt & Co got into financial difficulties in the late 1880s, leading to the closure of their Woolston yard in April 1889 and the dissolution of the company. It seems that Oswald's engineering skills and organisational enterprise were not always matched by commercial acumen and prudent business management.

Oswald then moved his operations to Milford Haven, where he took over an unoccupied yard and resumed ship-building and repair work on his own account, until retiring in 1895.

He spent his later years at Blackheath, Kent, as tenant of a house in Beaconsfield Road called 'Riverview' - the Thames could indeed be seen from its upper floor. There he died on 22 June 1916, a week short of his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. By his will made a few days previously he left all his property to his 'dear wife Wilhelmina'; for probate his total effects were valued at precisely £213. 17s. 7d. a very modest legacy from a lifetime of noteworthy shipbuilding.

Oswald's widow continued to live at Blackheath until her death in 1930, when her body was interred beside his in the family vault/grave in the Old Cemetery at Southampton.

The substantial memorial which now carries the names of T R Oswald, his wives and seven of their children occupies a railed-off plot about 100 yards on the left of the path running south from the Hill Lane entrance. Fronting the path is a long inscription 'in Proud and Loving Memory of Lt Colonel William Digby Oswald DSO ... mortally wounded in France in July 1916', detailing the highlights of his army service in South Africa and France.

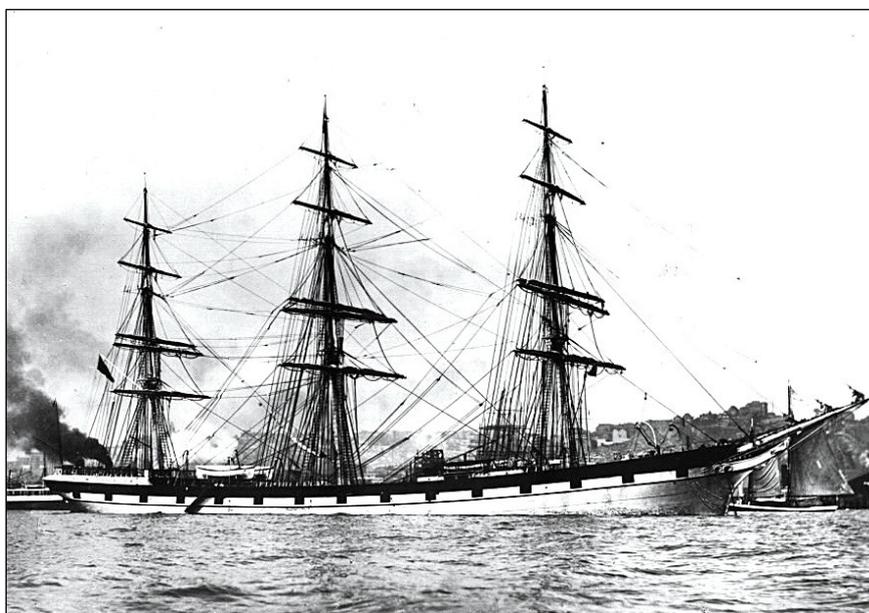
On the opposite face of the memorial, unseen at the back, the inscription for his father records only dates of birth and death - no mention of his distinctive contribution to the development of Southampton, as the pioneer of large-scale iron shipbuilding.

### Postscript

The shipyard Oswald established at Woolston was reopened early in 1890 by a company called the Southampton Naval Ironworks Ltd. Its venture closed in 1893. The yard was taken in 1897 by J G Fay & Co, then from 1900 by Mordey, Carney & Co, before being acquired in 1904 by J I Thornycroft & Co.

Shipbuilding at Woolston is now all past history ... to which T R Oswald and his locally-named ships merit this footnote.

© A G K Leonard 2009



The three-masted full-rigged ship **Wavertree** built at Woolston in 1885 – the only Oswald, Mordaunt built ship known to survive - now preserved at South Street Seaport Museum, New York. Hercules Linton, designer of the **Cutty Sark**, would have had an input into her design – see text.

### THANK YOU!!!

I would like to thank each and every one of you for supporting me for the last 25 years as your Chairman. I have enjoyed those years immensely, introducing many interesting guests as well as our own speakers all with good subjects.

Some of my highlights during that time were – in September 1980, (as Vice-Chairman), the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner with guest Michael Crowdy, the founder of WSS, at the Albany Hotel; at the Moat House Hotel, Liverpool the WSS 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner held on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1997; the 51<sup>st</sup> WSS AGM held at the Polygon Hotel on 9 May 1998. These were followed on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2000 by the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Lunch of our own Branch at the De Vere Grand Harbour Hotel and of course on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2010 our 60<sup>th</sup> Diamond Anniversary on board P&O Cruises' **Oceana**.

Then saving the best till last, Mike Lindsay presented me in November 2010, halfway through his talk, with a framed photo of mv **Maron** of my beloved Blue Funnel Line. What a very pleasant surprise.

So there we are, those were the years. Again thank you all very, very much.

John Lillywhite

**Farewell to the Ark Royal** by Bill Lawes

Over the weekend 22nd and 23rd of January 11,000 or more people visited Portsmouth to bid farewell to **HMS Ark Royal**.

One hundred years ago the name Ark Royal was unknown in the Royal Navy. Since then it has always been associated with vessels connected to Naval aviation. The first ship to carry the name was an Elizabethan galley. Originally built in 1587 and called **Ark Raleigh** she became **Ark Royal** later in her service life. She did gain the "Armada" battle honour, but after grounding she was broken up in 1638. The name was not used again till 1914. In September 1914 the Admiralty purchased a collier being built at Blyth. She was redesigned with engines and bridge aft so that a large hold could be incorporated so the ship could act as a seaplane carrier. She was given the name **Ark Royal**, as such she served at the Dardanelles and else where in the Mediterranean during the First World War. After that period she was retained in the Navy and when in 1934 it was planned to construct a new carrier she was renamed **Pegasus**. In 1941 **HMS Pegasus** was refitted as a catapult ship to carry fighter aircraft that could be launched from her to help to combat aerial attacks on convoys. As other ships became available for these duties she was utilise as an accommodation ship. After WW2 she was sold to a commercial owner who used her for a few years till she was scrapped in 1950.

**Ark Royal 3** was of course the famous world war 2 aircraft carrier. She was laid down at Cammel Laird in 1935 and set the trend for all of the later carriers. Her career during the first two years of WW2 are well known, as is her sinking in November 1941 by U 81 off Gibraltar.

The 4th **Ark Royal** was laid down by Cammell Laird in 1943 as one of three aircraft carriers of a much larger design displacing almost twice as **Ark Royal 3**. At the end of the war one of the ships was cancelled but the construction of other two, **Eagle** and **Ark Royal**, was continued at much slower rate. When commissioned in 1955 the ship differed in many ways from the original design reflecting the changes seen in naval aviation since the end of WW2. In the 1970's **Ark Royal** was the star in an excellent TV documentary series about the ship. She eventually paid off in 1979.

The current **Ark Royal** was the third ship of the **Invincible** class, some reports state that her original name was to have been **Indomitable**. She was built at Swan Hunter and entered service in 1985 and differed from the two earlier ships by having a 15° "ski-jump" instead of the 6½° on installed on the forward end of the flight deck of those ships. Originally **Ark Royal** was to stay in commission till 2012, but the recent "Defence Review" has taken her out immediately.

One of the Royal Navy's reactions to this decision was to open the ship to the public for one last time. I decided to go to Portsmouth on Sunday 23rd and thought an early start would be the best action. I was there by 9 o'clock but there was already a queue several hundred yards long out side the dock yard. Later this queue was allowed to move towards the ship's berth and just before 10 o'clock we started to board the vessel. Later as we left the ship the queue stretched from the ship, past the **Victory**, down to the gates and along the road past "The Hard", a very impressive turnout by the public. Looking at the ship before we boarded we could see that stripping the vessel has already started. There were no boats in her davits and the barrels had been removed from her Phalanx gun systems, but apart from this she was still in a very good condition. Once on-board there was plenty to see and to try to retain as an impression of the ship. As often happens the best feature occurs almost by accident. Just at the top of the gangway used to disembark from the ship was a ship's bell. It looked rather "used" but on looking in more detail it was obviously from **Ark Royal 3** as engraved on it were all of her movements during first years of WW 2 and a list of her captains during those years. A fascinating little article, but it will most likely disappear from the public now and be stowed away a store somewhere till another **Ark Royal** appears. If that ever happens.

**Battle Honours for Ark Royal:-**

ARMADA	1588	SPARTIVENTO	1940	AL FAW	2007
CADIZ	1596	MEDITERRANEAN	1940-41		
DARDANELLES	1915	BISMARCK	1941		
NORWAY	1940	MALTA CONVOYS	1941		