Ferries to the Rescue

Mike Royden

Mersey Ferries

The Mersey Ferries played an important role in the defence of the port of Liverpool during the Second World War, and also carried out vital war work elsewhere. The Manx ferries too, a familiar site on the river, played an indispensable role, working in many supporting roles for the military and serving with great distinction and honour during the evacuation of Dunkirk.

Although the Queensway Mersey Tunnel had opened in 1936, the Mersey Ferries were still essential to both commuters and pleasure seekers alike. Nevertheless, contingency plans for the safe operation of the Mersey ferries had been put in place a full year before outbreak of war. On 24 September 1938, meetings took place at the Mersey Docks & Harbour Building, where it was agreed that there should be no public lighting on the St George's stage, nor the Wirral stages, while the ferries would only show navigation lights to the exterior at night and inside 'if lights were necessary in the various rooms on such ferry boats, it would be necessary for all windows to be darkened and possibly for the lighting to be reduced in power'. In the event of an air raid when the ferry was crossing, 'Such ferry should immediately come to rest and either stem the tide or anchor, and extinguish all lights'. If the vessel was already at the stage, the orders were to move into the river and anchor at least 400 feet away. As the air raid sounded barricades were to be placed at the top of bridges 1,2 and 3 and water pumps for fighting fire were to be installed on all stages. There would be a reduced timetable; sailings between Liverpool and Seacombe were dropped to quarterly from every ten minutes, while the New Brighton service was cancelled completely. Sand bags were to go up around all the ferry buildings.

Norah White, a passenger in May 1941, tells how the Ferry captain followed the book when faced with a terrifying enemy attack,

> 'We got on the ferry. I can't remember anybody getting on with us. There was just us four girls with our little suitcase with our pyjamas in and cigarettes. And we got into the middle of the river and it was dark – you must remember it was the blackout, there was no lights anywhere all through the war. So, it was pitch dark and the captain said, 'Be quiet, don't sing, don't do anything, don't light any cigarettes up, I'm turning the engine off', and all of a sudden, the boat went quiet. It was that quiet that we could hear the water lapping at the sides and you can't normally hear that. It was just floating in the water, lapping in pitch dark. He said, 'don't sing, don't talk, because they're coming up the river, the Germans are coming up the river. They're flying low, it'll carry up to them.' So, we just sat there like mice, no cigarettes, no singing, and we always used to sing on the top deck. And they came over and it was frightening. They weren't far off but they were heavy with bombs. When they dropped them, they used to fly away and you didn't get that heaviness. And they came up in droves over us, up to Liverpool. We were there for an hour in the middle of the river, it was just dead silence, really frightening. And then all of a sudden, the captain said, 'I think we've seen the last of them for the time being, I'm going to make a dash to Woodside'. We weren't far away and when we arrived, he said 'run for it, so we ran along the gang plank.'
>
> **Nora White, WWII Memories, Merseyside Maritime Museum,**

Egremont Pier towards New-Brighton 1920
(Britain from Above − English Heritage)

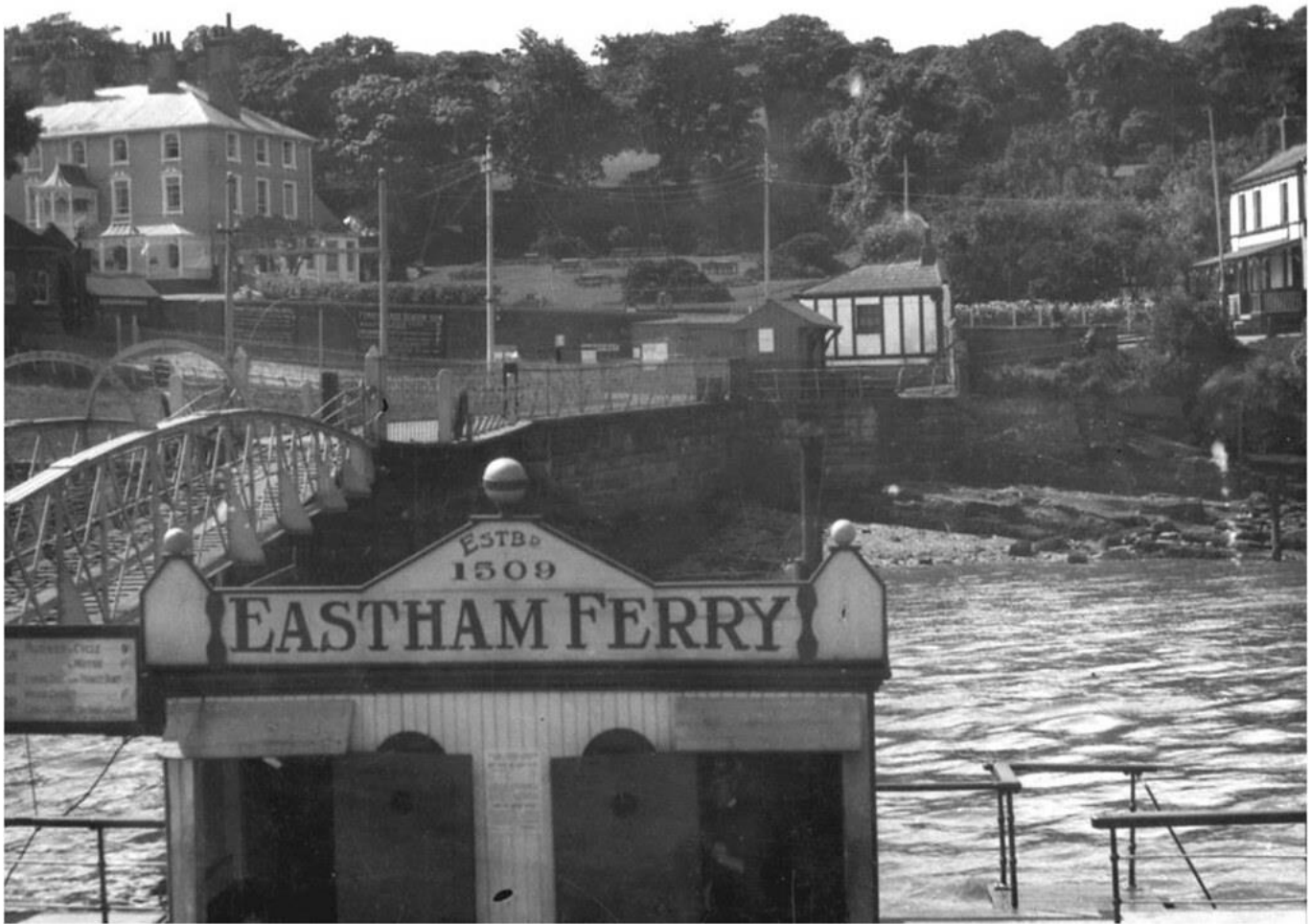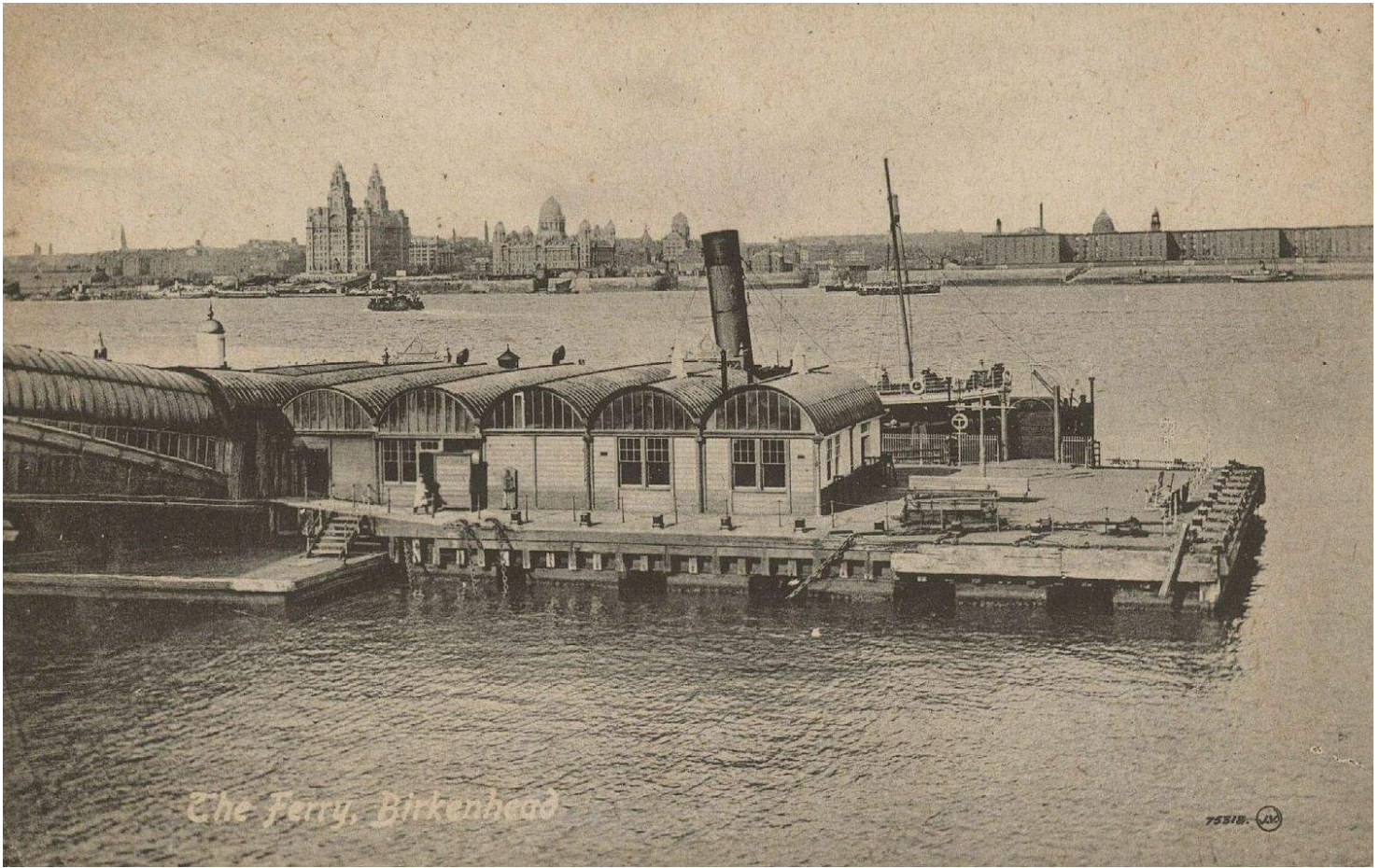**Egremont Pier**
(old postcard)

New Ferry Pier 1920
(Britain from Above – English Heritage)

Rock Ferry Pier
(old postcard)

Eastham Pier
(old postcard c.1910)

Woodside
(old postcard)

Seacombe Pier
(old postcard)

New Brighton Pier
(old postcard)

Although the ferries were still heavily patronised after the Tunnel opening, there was an inevitable loss of trade, and Wallasey Corporation were keen to close the Egremont stage. Financial losses had already prompted the closure of New Ferry on 22 September 1927 by Birkenhead Corporation, and the southern terminals of Eastham (1929), and Rock Ferry (1939), followed suit. The closure of Eastham was also the death knell for the last of the ferry paddle steamers.

So, by the start of the war, the stages in use on the Wirral side were; Woodside (Birkenhead), Egremont Seacombe and New Brighton. Regarding Egremont however, Wallasey Corporation faced stiff opposition to its closure from locals, but the chance came again during the war.   On 13 May 1941, just as Merseyside was recovering from the intense pounding from the Blitz, *Newlands*, a coaster, rammed into Egremont pier so hard that the resulting damage was too prohibitive to rebuild the structure, and the Egremont service never reopened. (The New Ferry stage had met a similar fate twenty years earlier).

Six ferries were operating under the control of Birkenhead Corporation in 1939;
the luggage boats *Oxton* and *Bebington* (which carried cars and luggage as well as passengers.
Thurstaston (1930), *Claughton* (1930), *Bidston* (1933), and the smaller *Upton* (1925) designed for the Rock Ferry service. Their sister ships *Barnston* and *Churton* had been sold just before the war.

The Wallasey fleet consisted of;
Liscard (1921), *Leasowe* (1921), *J.Farley* (1922) and *Francis Storey* (1922), *Wallasey* (1927), *Marlowe* (1927), *Perch Rock* (1929), *Royal Iris II* (1932), and *Royal Daffodil II* (1934), while *Hinderton* (1925), chartered from Birkenhead, supported the ferries and ran river cruises.
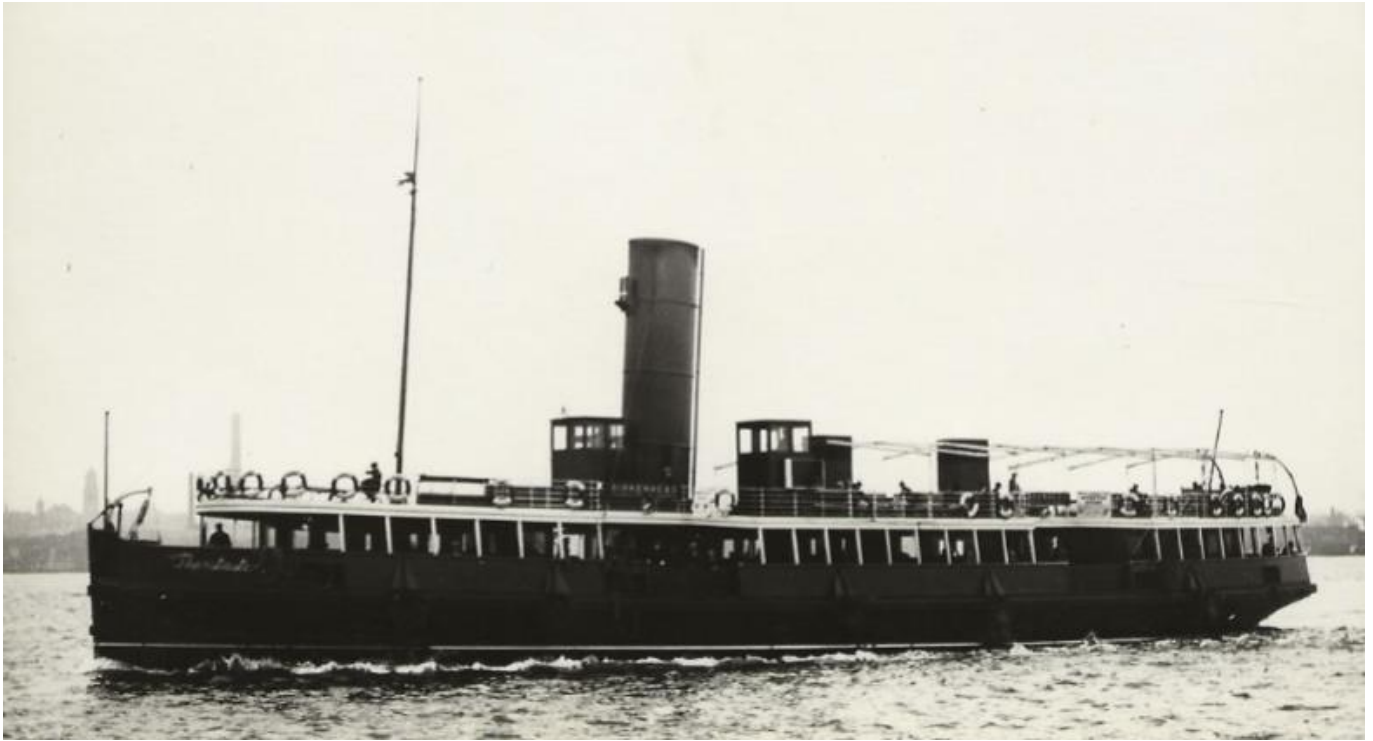
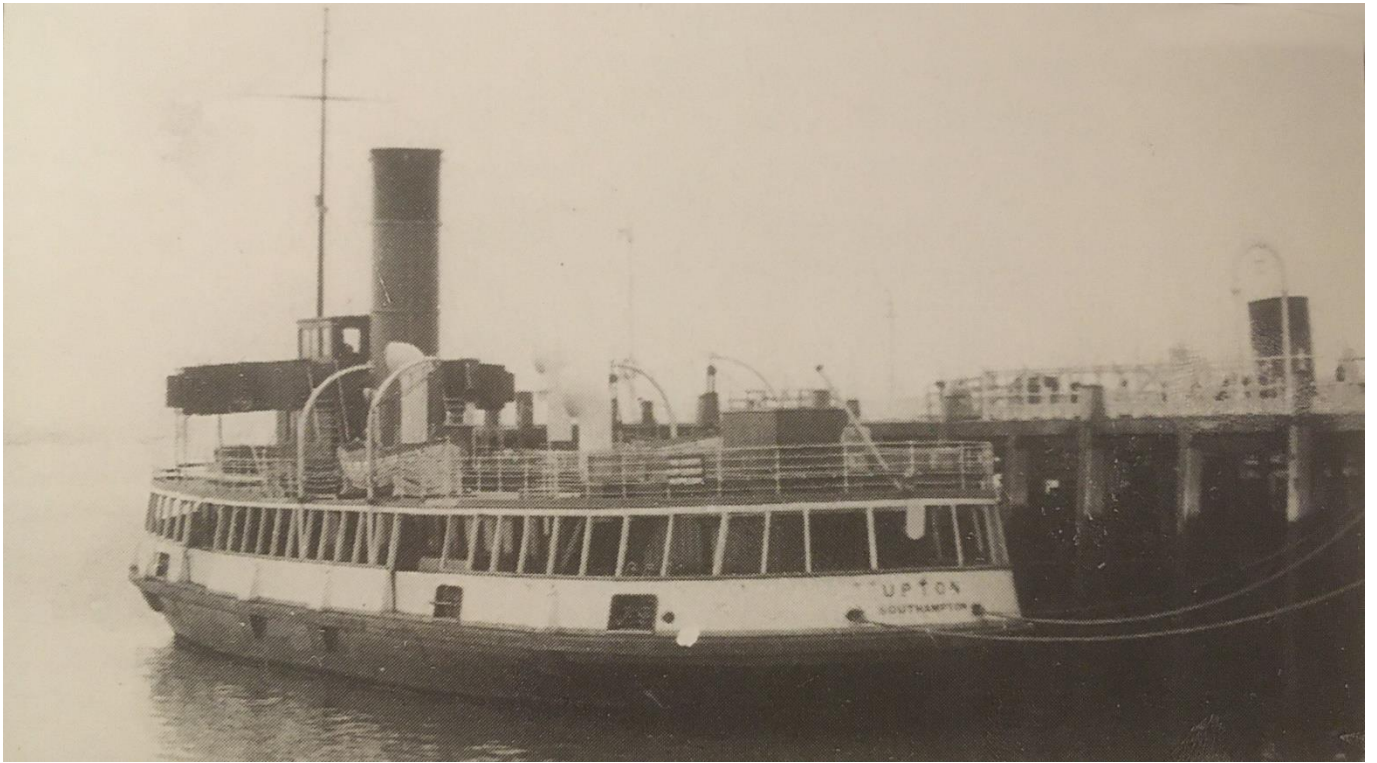# Birkenhead Corporation Ferries
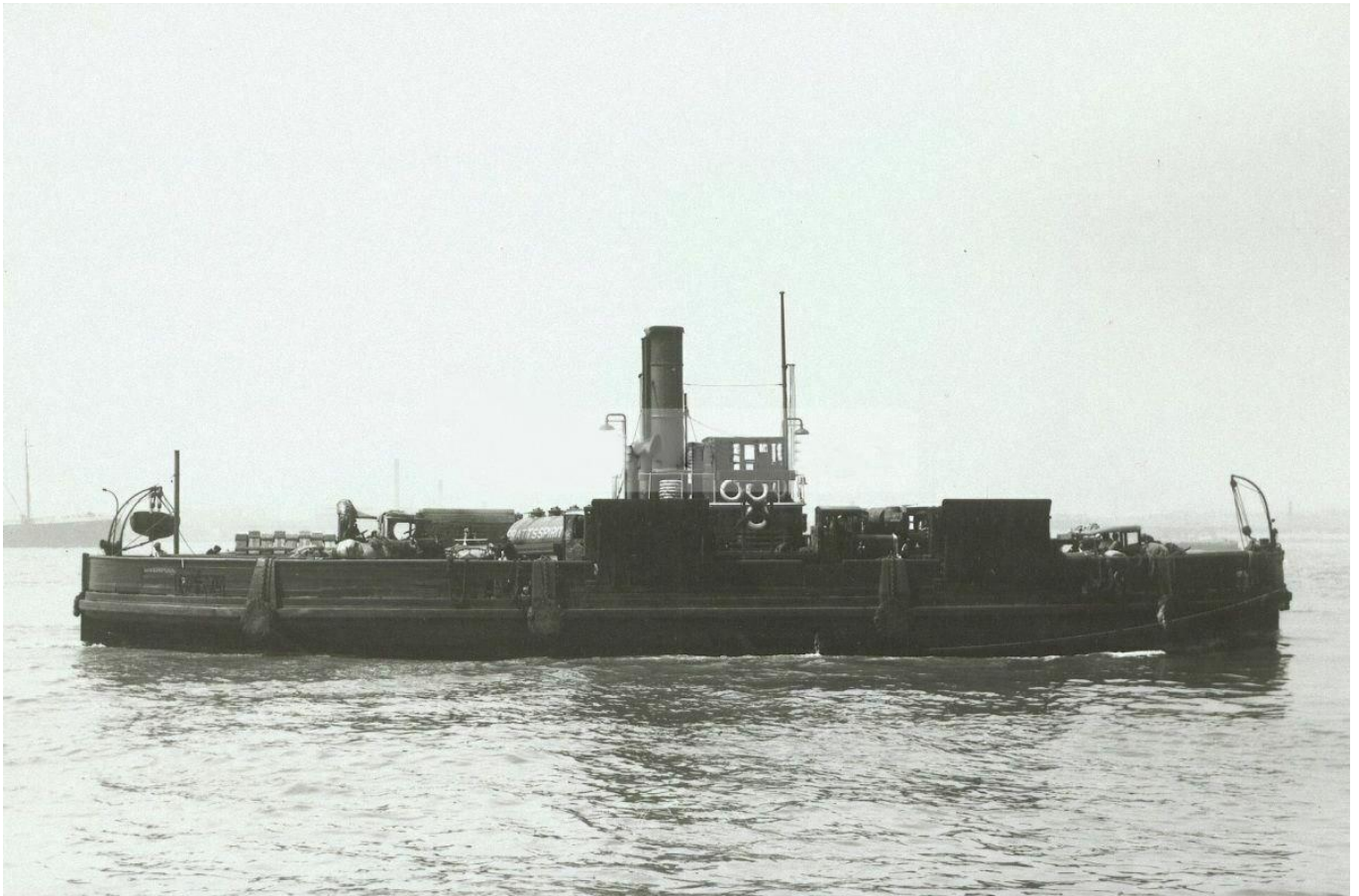
The luggage boat *Oxton*

The luggage boat *Bebington* which carried cars and luggage as well as passengers
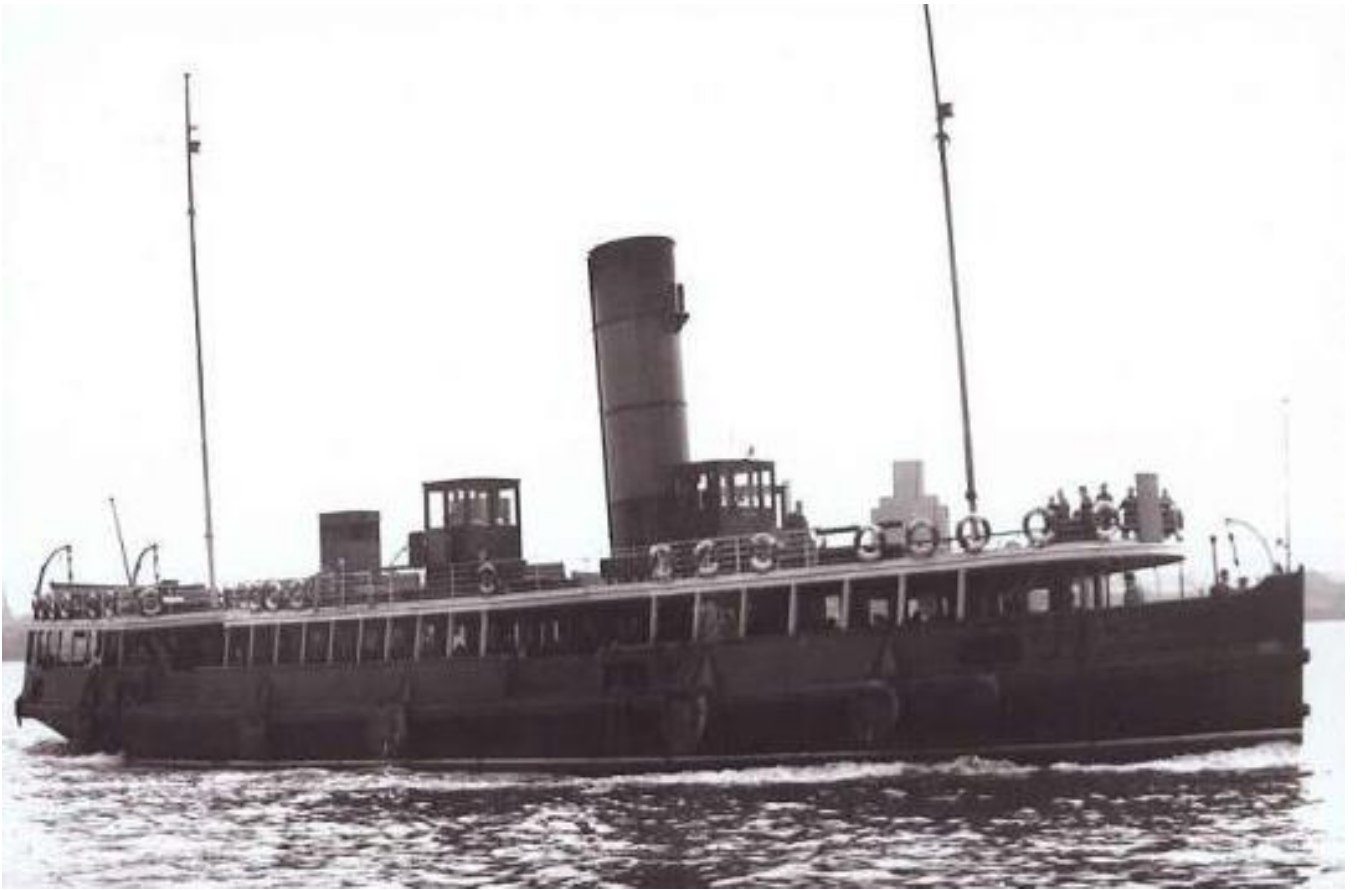
Thurstaston (1930)

Claughton (1930)

The luggage boat *Upton* used on the Rock Ferry service, shown here after being sold in Southampton

Bidston (1933)

Barnston

Churton
Both had been sold just before the war.
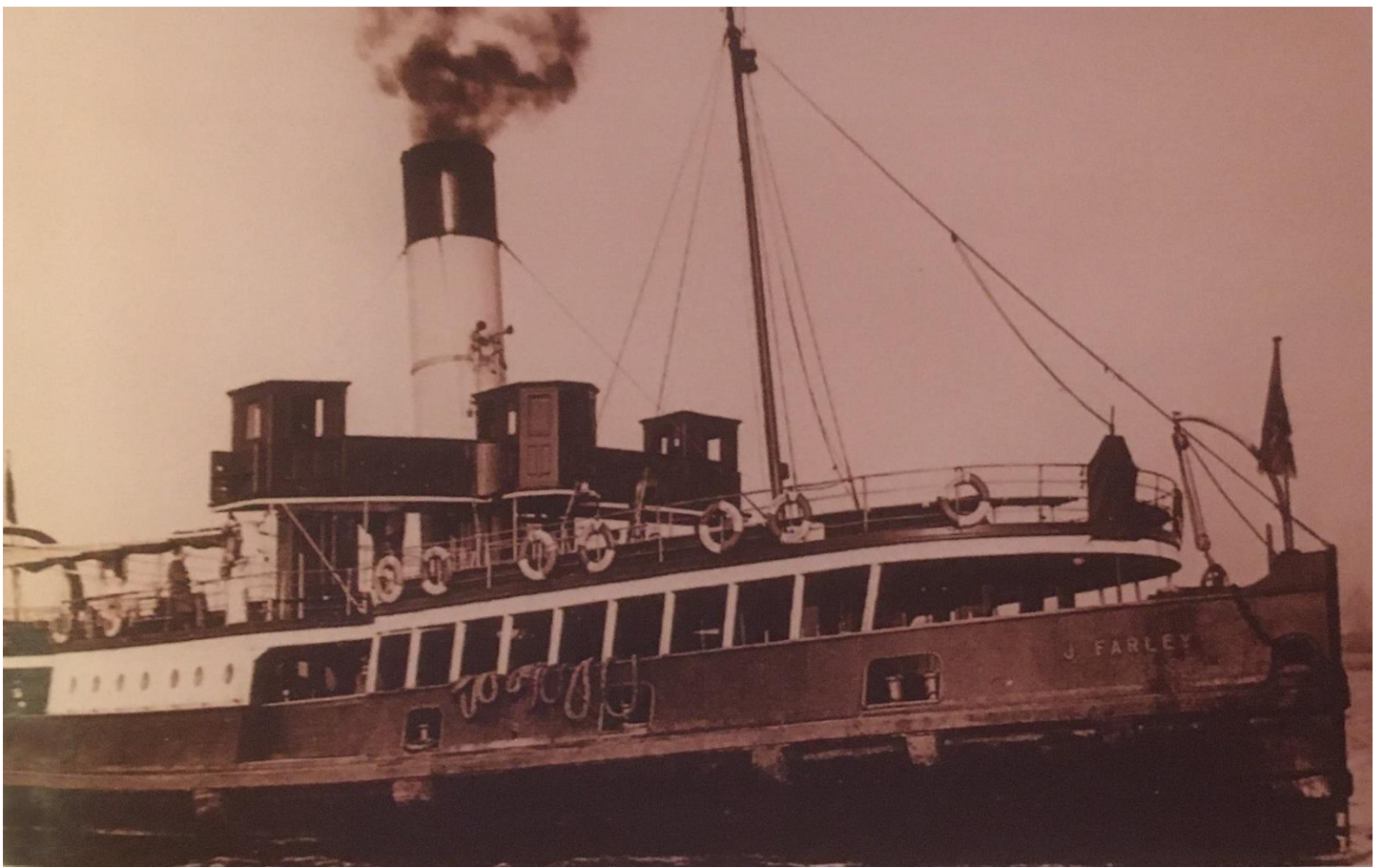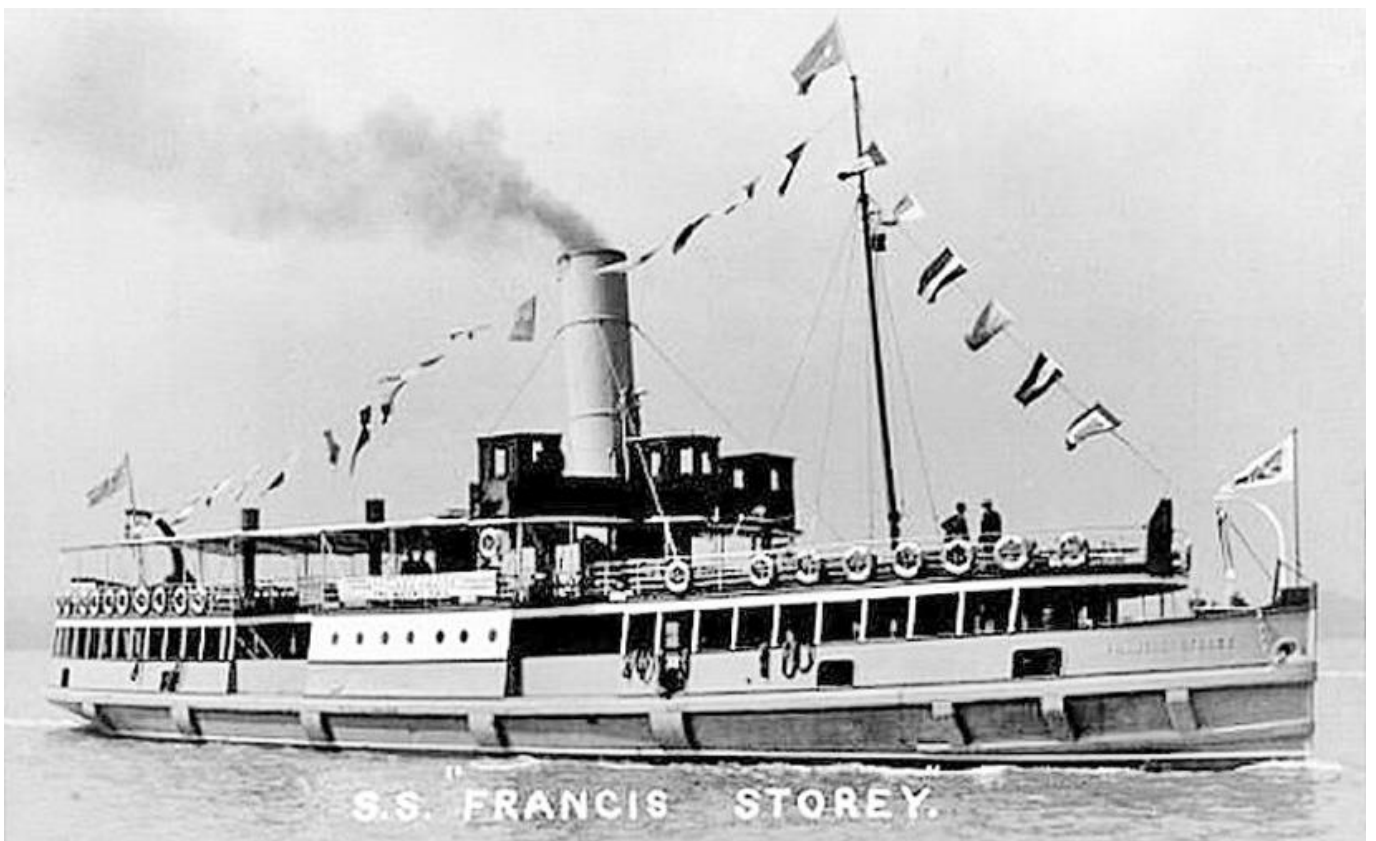
Wallasey fleet

Liscard (1921)

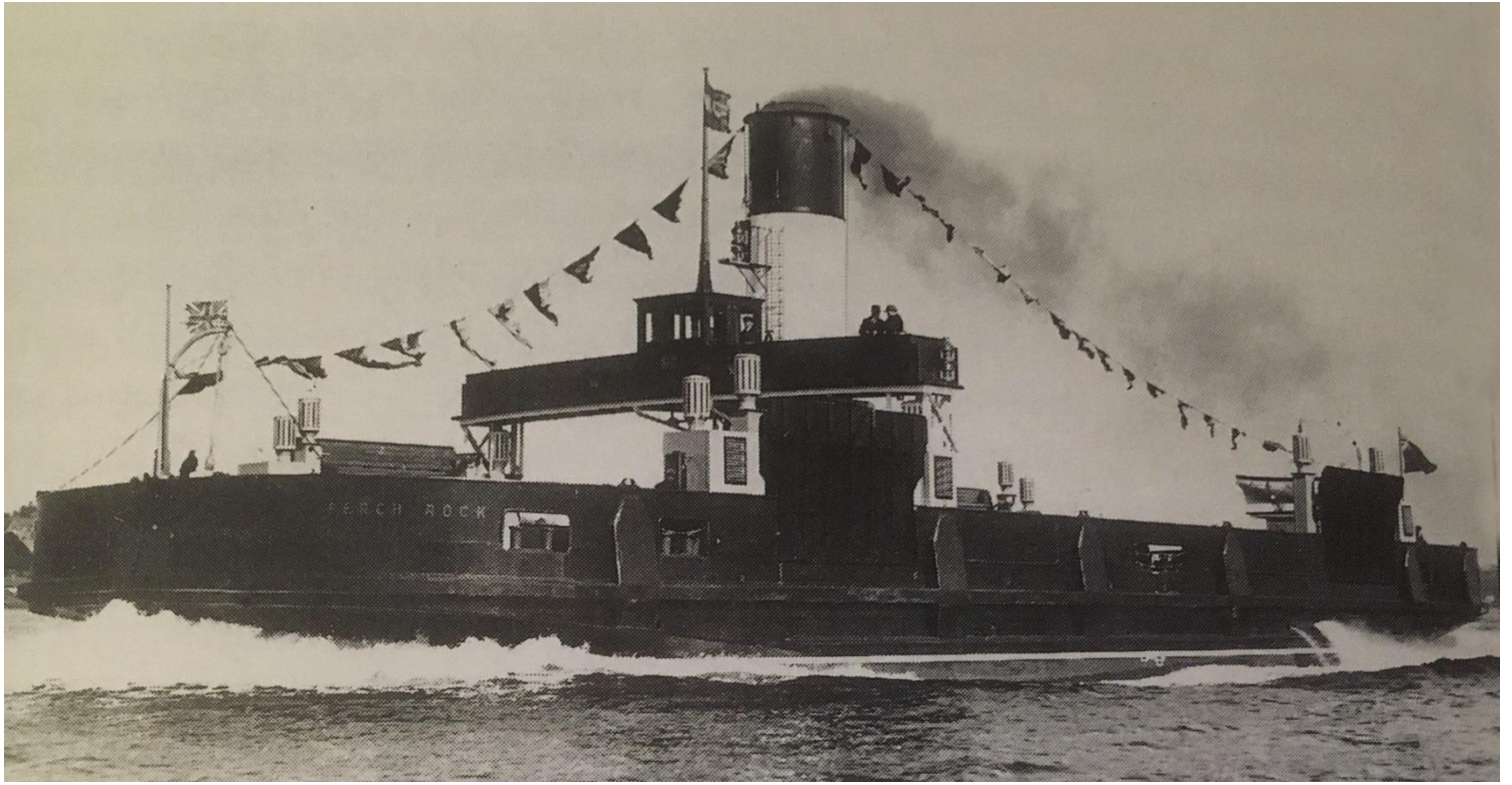*Leasowe* (1921)

J. Farley (1922)
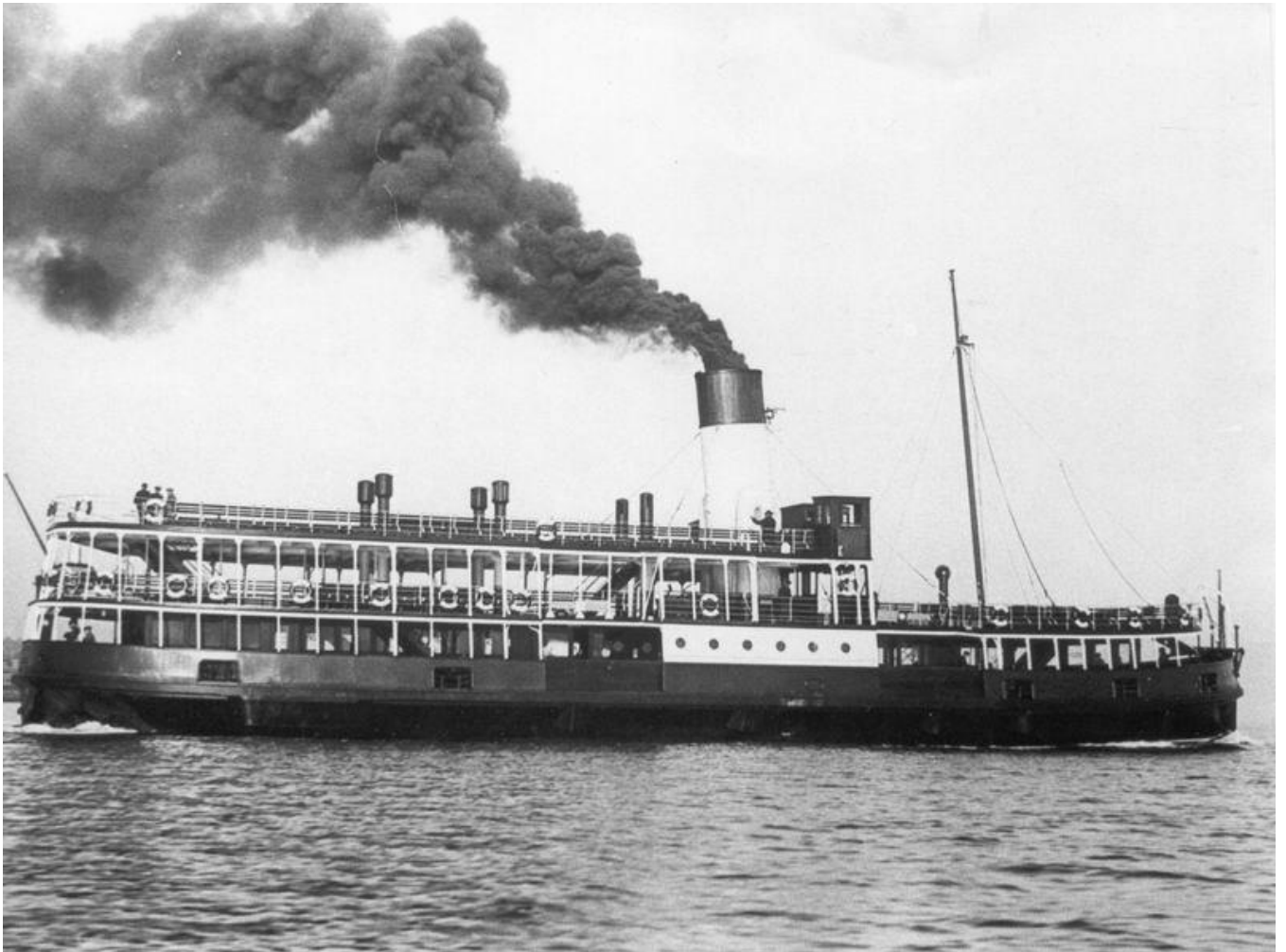

Francis Storey (1922)
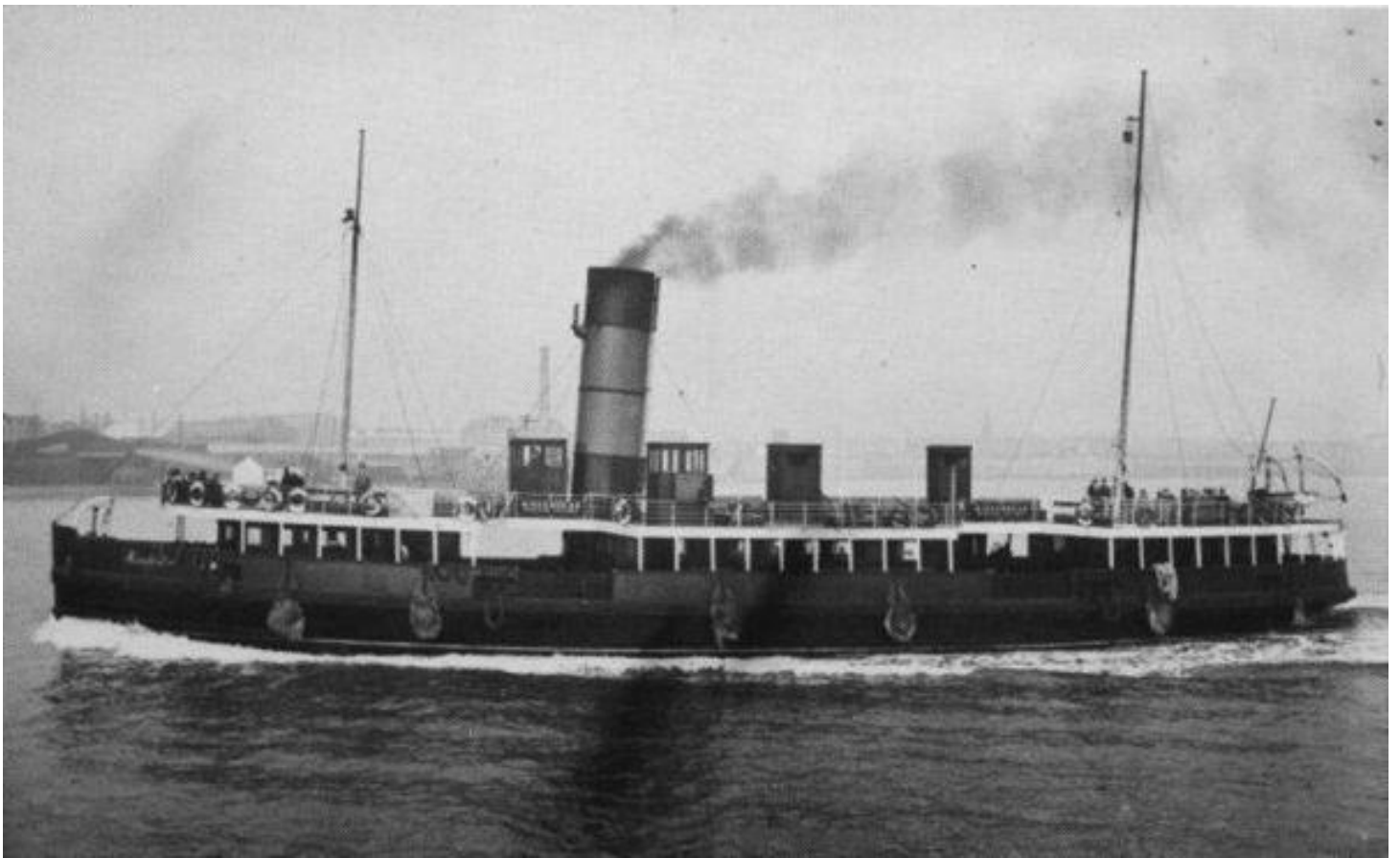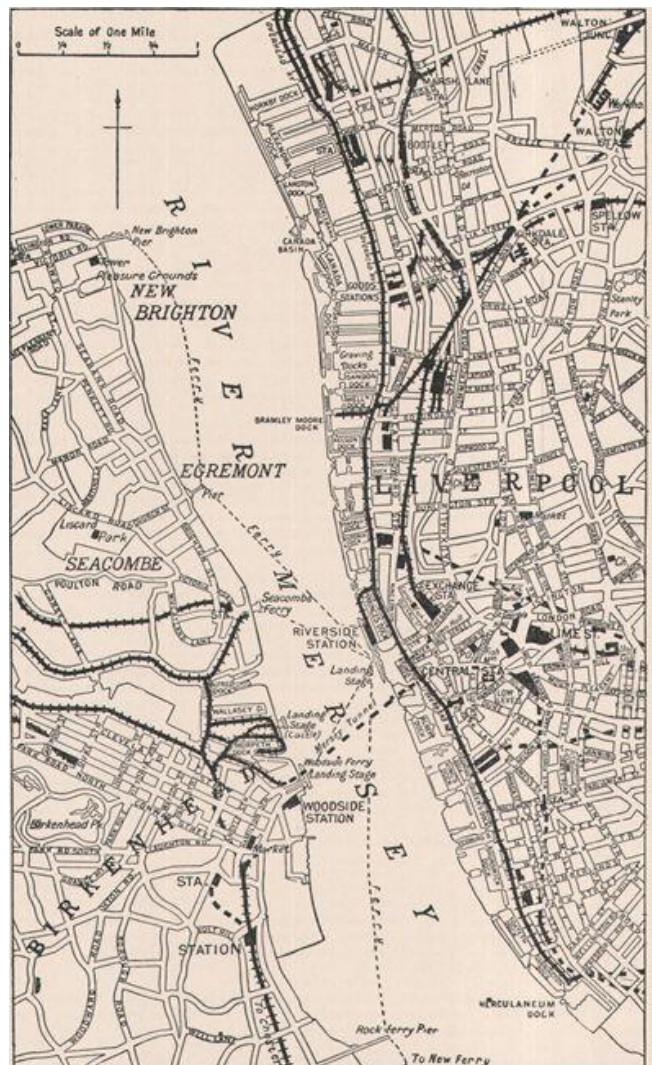
Wallasey (1927)

Marlowe (1927)

Perch Rock (1929)

Royal Iris II (1932)

Hinderton **(1925) chartered from Birkenhead supported the ferries and ran river cruises.**

Royal Daffodil II (1934)

Royal Daffodil Myth

On a point of clarification before the role of the ferries during the war is discussed: A measure of confusion has arisen in certain publications, and a number of websites, that the Mersey ferry, *Royal Daffodil,* saw action at Dunkirk in 1940. This is incorrect.

The confusion has resulted for two reasons, first from the oft repeated story of the two ferryboats, *Daffodil* and *Iris*, which did see war service, but this was the First World War, where they served with distinction during the raid on Zeebrugge on 23 April 1918 - for which they were both awarded the *'Royal'* moniker by the King. And the second, because this Mersey *Royal Daffodil* (built in 1906) was sold in October 1933 to the New Medway Steam Packet Co. Ltd, where she was used on the Rochester-Strood-Sheerness-Southend route.

When she was sold for scrap in 1938 in Ghent, Belgium, after the NMSPC was taken over by the General Steam Navigation Co. Ltd of London in 1936, they replaced her with a larger vessel, which her owners also named the *Royal Daffodil*. And this is where the confusion arises, as it was this vessel that saw heroic service in Dunkirk.

SS *Royal Daffodil* (built in 1906, launched 20 April 1906, scrapped in 1938).

**Owned by Wallasey Corporation, sold to New Medway Steam Packet Co. Ltd October 1933.
Sold for scrap in 1938 in Ghent, Belgium**

Ship's bell from the *Royal Daffodil* (1906), Williamson Art Gallery and Museum, Birkenhead

Official New Medway postcard of *Royal Daffodil*

The caption reads:-
This steamer is known the world over as a result of the important part she played in the famous raid on the Mole at Zeebrugge in 1918. She is now engaged in afternoon cruises to the London Docks, or down River trips to Gravesend every afternoon in summer except Fridays. Luncheons can be obtained on board from about 1pm at Tower Pier. Teas and Light Refreshments at popular prices. Fully Licensed.
(From *Simplon Postcards* www.simplonpc.co.uk/GSN-NewMedway.html)
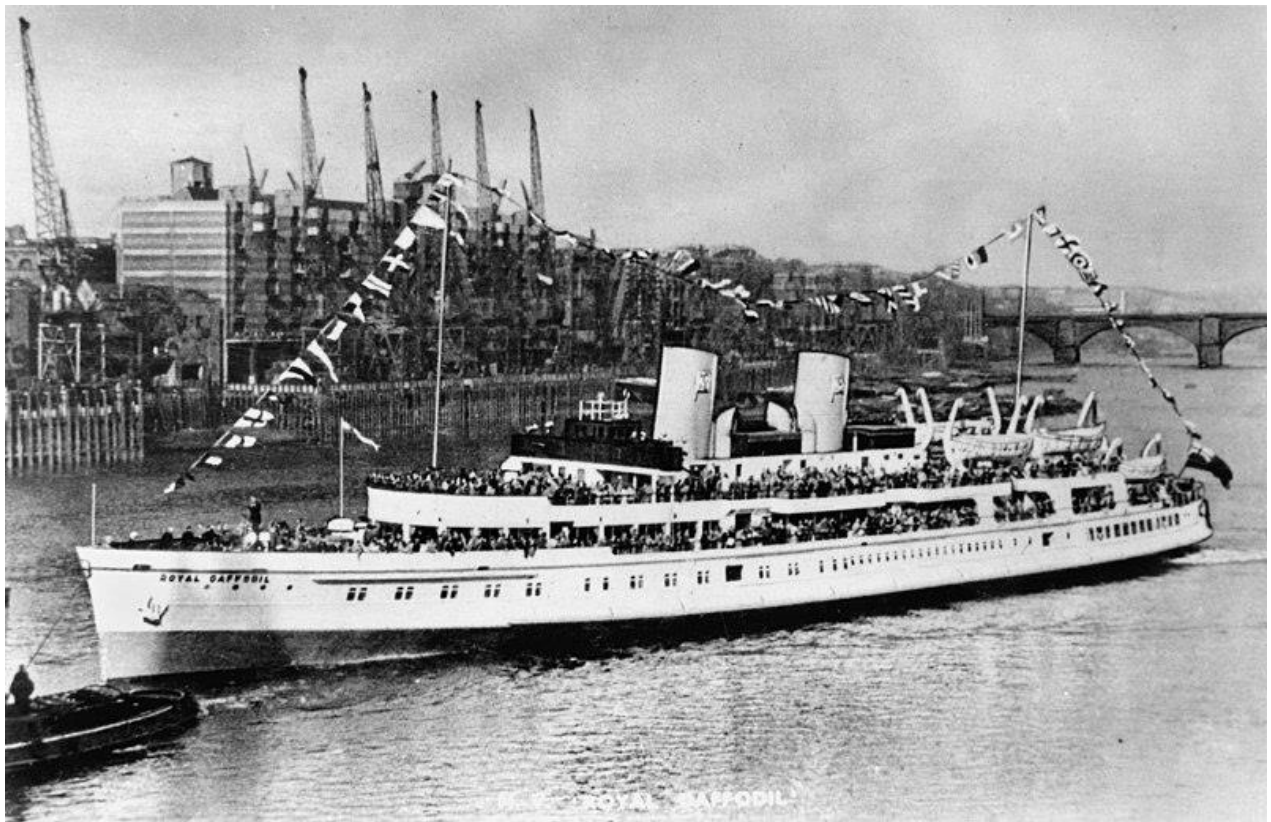
New Medway *Royal Daffodil* – the vessel that served at Dunkirk

M.V. *Royal Daffodil* **-** (General Steam Navigation Co. Ltd, London. Built 1939, scrapped 1967)

After the General Steam Navigation *Royal Daffodil* was requisitioned for war service, her first role was to evacuate children from South East England to East Anglia, before being despatched to Dunkirk, where she evacuated 7,461 service personnel in five trips between 28 May and 2 June, among them the French historian Marc Bloch, who served as a captain in the campaign. Clearly, she played a major role, as this was the largest number evacuated by a single passenger vessel in the operation. However, on 2 June, she was attacked by six German aircraft, and a bomb penetrated two of her decks blowing a hole below the water line, but she managed to limp back to port.

The Jetty, Margate

Royal Daffodil II

Meanwhile, Wallasey Corporation had their own *Royal Daffodil* delivered to the Mersey in 1934, a vessel of 591 tons (compared to the larger namesake of 2,060 tons). However, in 1939, to the chagrin of Wallasey Ferries, the General Steam Navigation Co. Ltd launched their previously described new vessel *Royal Daffodil*.

Of course, given the style of naming used by the Mersey Ferries, Wallasey Corporation still felt they had moral ownership of the name, especially as the original ferry had earned her spurs and moniker under their operation in WWI.

Irrespective of the dispute, the larger *Royal Daffodil* (with her two funnels and a greater tonnage) was the vessel that carried out the heroics at Dunkirk, not her Mersey namesake, and Wallasey ferries were obliged to rename their vessel *Royal Daffodil II.*

Royal Daffodil II (built 1934)

On 7 May 1941, she took a direct hit at her Seacombe landing stage mooring and sank.

Royal Daffodil II

An attempt to re-float *Royal Daffodil II*

Re-floated, under repair

Royal Daffodil II

Royal Daffodil II **back in to wartime service**

Admiralty Control and War Service

Once the war started, the control of vessels on the Mersey came under the Admiralty, although in practice their operation still remained with their owners and crewing was the same, while ferry duties continued until they were required for war service. *Liscard* became a floating crane, unloading aircraft from cargo vessels and loading tanks and army stores, while the luggage boats continued to carry cargo and vehicles across the river. Navigation on the river in darkness was extremely risky and the ferries had their own ARP ambulance service and firemen. During the Blitz in March 1941, mobile tenders were pumped full of water by a ferry luggage boat before being rushed to fire fighters battling the burning buildings.

The *Bebington* and *Oxton* were also fitted with large cranes on their open vehicle decks in a similar fashion to *Liscard,* for the purpose of offloading aircraft and heavy cargo arriving on Merchant shipping. At the end of the war they were scrapped, their usefulness as car carriers now usurped by the Mersey Tunnel. The *Upton* carried out general transport duties, carrying men and supplies to port defences in and around Liverpool Bay, while the *Royal Daffodil II*, when not on ferry duties, operated as a standby tender to troopships in the river in case of emergency evacuation.

However, she became a casualty herself, at the height of the May Blitz. Just after 10pm on the night of 7 May 1941, she took a direct hit at her Seacombe landing stage mooring. The explosion blew through the funnel which saved serious structural damage, but the bomb tore a large hole in the hull near her starboard engine. As the water gushed in, twelve crew scrambled out from below deck, while an engineer on a ladder was knocked flying to the deck, escaping without serious injury, apart from needing a new set of false teeth. She began to settle to the bottom, upright on the mooring, and took on tons of sand and silt as the tides washed through below deck. She was a sorry sight, and no doubt a depressing and demoralising image to the local people who witnessed her forlorn state. However, after a challenging operation to remove 300 tons of silt, she was salvaged a year later, re-entering service the following year on 2 June 1943 after structural repairs and a refit – although not to her luxurious pre-war standard.

Her return to service enabled the *J. Farley* and *Francis Storey* to step up their defence role, after both were requisitioned by the government. They were manned by their Wallasey Ferry crews under direct control of the Admiralty, installing anti-torpedo nets for Merchant Navy ships using the Western

Approaches. *J. Farley* moving to Milford Haven in 1943, and then to the Clyde, before being sold in 1952, while *Francis Storey* continued to operate around Liverpool Bay from 1942 as a net defence vessel among other roles. She was sold to Cork Harbour Commissioners in 1951.

In March 1941, ferry services were disrupted when German mines dropped by parachute were spotted in the river, necessitating Royal Navy minesweepers to clear the Mersey. Then during the Blitz, the ferryboat *Marlowe* suffered damage after being struck by a bomb while berthed at the Liverpool landing stage, which saw her Mate Frank Welch injured by flying shrapnel.

The fate of the *Churton,* sold with *Barnston* just before the start of the war, finally came to light in 1945,
> The discovery of the old Birkenhead luggage ferry steamer, *Churton* at the north-west end of the Kiel Canal, where she had been used by the Germans as a tank ferry between Flushing and Breskens, recalls that the *Churton* and her sister ship, *Barnston,* were sold to a Dutch shipping firm in early 1939. Both vessels had a useful life on the Mersey during their twenty years' service, and had carried many thousands of vehicles across the river between Birkenhead and Liverpool Pierhead. They were built at Garston by Messrs. H. & C. Grayson and each cost £100,000.   In 1938 they were offered for sale, but no one appears to have wanted them at that time. They eventually left the Mersey on 10 March 1939, in tow of a Dutch tug and were taken to Rotterdam. No one seems to know what has happened to the *Barnston,* and even the *Churton*, which played an important part in the Dunkirk evacuation, had been lost to sight until her recent discovery.
> **Liverpool Daily Post** *31 May 1945*

After the war, the *Royal Iris* had the suffix '*II*' dropped in 1947, was renamed *St. Hilary* in 1950, and sold in 1956, after which *Royal Daffodil II* took her name *St Hilary* in 1957, before being sold in 1962. *Liscard* remained in service until 1946, *Leasowe* until 1948, *Perch Rock* (1953), *Marlowe* (1958), and *Wallasey* (1964). *Upton* (1946), *Oxton* and *Bebington* ended their service in the Birkenhead fleet in 1949, followed by *Hinderton* (1958) *Bidston* (1960) *Thurstaston* (1961) and *Claughton* (1962)

ISLE OF MAN FERRIES

One of the most familiar and popular sights on the Mersey have been the Manx ferry boats. First introduced in 1830 when the *Mona's Isle* commenced the Douglas to Liverpool service on 16 August, Liverpool's close ties with the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company and the island have continued to the present day, with many of the crew and staff coming from the city. In the summers of 1937 and 1938 the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company maintained a fleet of eighteen steamships, the maximum number in its history (although *Mona* (4) and *Peel Castle* were retired for breaking in 1938 and 1939). They sailed to full capacity during the holiday season, with the Mersey vessels mainly travelling to Douglas and Llandudno. During the quieter months of the year they were laid up for care and maintenance, usually in Birkenhead or Barrow. Although the Mersey Ferries did not go to Dunkirk as they were already in war service at home, several IOM Steam Packet vessels served with distinction in the 1940 evacuation, before being put to other essential work, often on the Mersey.

At the commencement of hostilities, the Admiralty requisitioned the sixteen vessels of the Steam Packet fleet, although several vessels still had to maintain an essential domestic service to and from the island, and to this endeavour the company retained the cargo steamers *Peveril(2), Conister* and *Cushag,* while the *Rushen Castle* and *Victoria* would initially continue on passenger routes. Eight passenger steamers were put into use as personnel carriers; *Lady of Mann, Tynwald (4), Manxman, Fenella, Ben-my Chree, Viking, Mona's Queen,* and *Snaefell,* while the three remaining vessels, *King Orry, Manx Maid* and *Mona's Isle* were converted into armed boarding vessels.

ISLE OF MAN

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ON ARRIVAL OF TRAIN, DUE AT 2.P.M.

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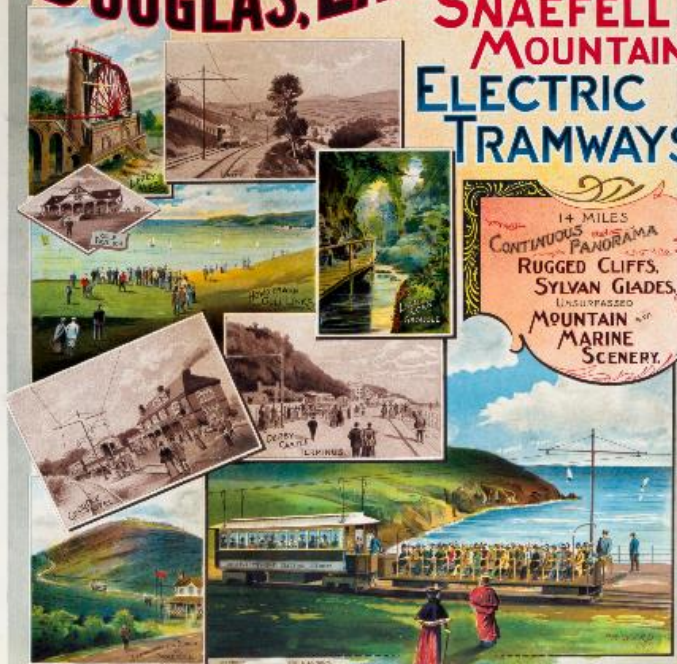
From HEYSHAM in $2\frac{3}{4}$ HOURS

Fleetwood Service Commences FRIDAY, MAY 25th, 1928, for Season
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SYLVAN GLADES,
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# The Sixteen Vessels of the War Time Fleet

Domestic Service - Cargo Vessels

SS *Peveril (II)*

Built by Cammell Laird at Birkenhead in 1929, *Peveril* was the first cargo ship ordered directly by the Steam Packet, previous vessels having been bought from other companies. She had accommodation for 12 passengers a crew of 17, trading mainly between Douglas, Ramsey and Liverpool, and was retained for Island service during the war. She served the Steam Packet until 1964, when she was broken up at Glasson Dock, Lancaster.
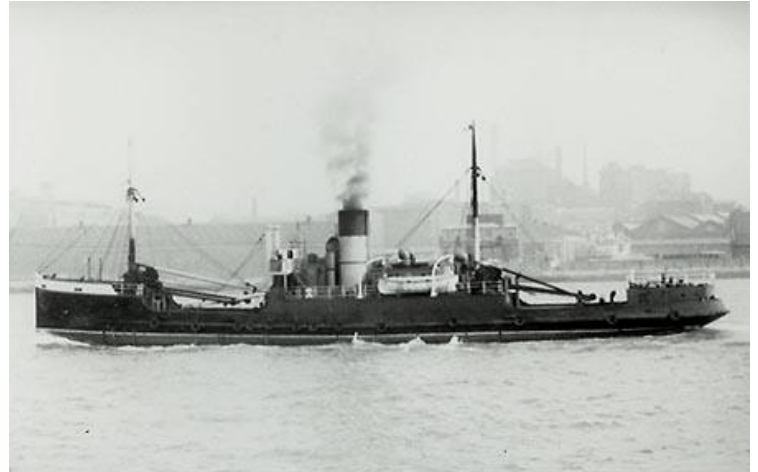
SS *Conister*
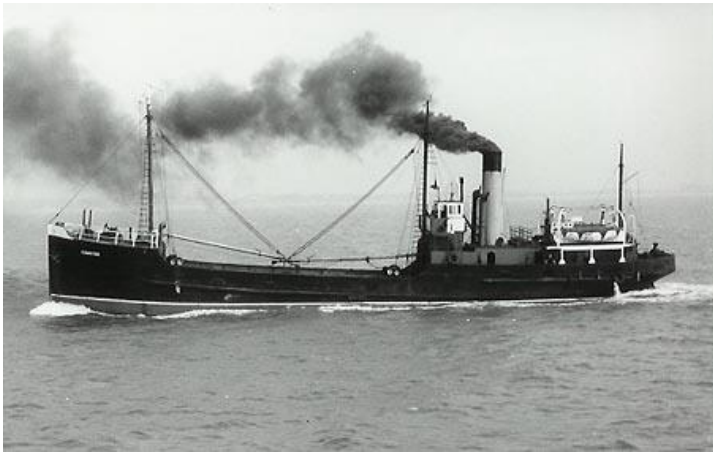
Conister was built by the Goole Shipbuilding Company in 1921, and originally named *Abington*. Previously operated as a coastal cargo vessel by Cheviot Coasters Ltd, mainly out of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, she was purchased by the IOM Steam Packet in January 1932, where she was engaged in general cargo work operating mainly from Liverpool to Douglas via Ramsey. *Conister* maintained the supply lifeline to the Island during the Second World War, although she was put out of action for a while after being damaged following an air attack on 27 October 1940. She continued service post war until her sale on 26 January 1965 to Arnott Young & Co., Glasgow, for scrapping.

SS *Cushag*

Built by G. Brown & Company at Greenock in 1908 for James Waterson & Company of Antrim, she was originally named *Ardnagrena*. She was sold to Humber Steam Coasters Ltd in 1914, then to a London broker in 1919 who sold her to the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company in May 1920. Operated as a coastal cargo vessel, with such a small draft, she was predominantly used for shipping cargo in and out of the smaller ports of Port St Mary, Peel, Laxey and Castletown. In 1943 she was sold and worked out of Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis until 1947, then to Kirkwall on Orkney for ten years until her breaking in Grangemouth in 1957.

Domestic service – passengers and cargo

TSS *Rushen Castle*

Launched on 23 April 1898 as *The Duke of Cornwall*, by her original owners, she was used on the Fleetwood to Belfast route by railway companies Lancashire & Yorkshire and the London & North Western. During the First World War the Admiralty had her converted to an armed boarding vessel. Purchased by the Steam Packet on 11 May 1928, she was renamed *Rushen Castle* and maintained the lifeline to the Island, initially to Liverpool until the end of 1940, before returning to the Fleetwood run. She was sold for breaking in Ghent, Belgian January 1947.
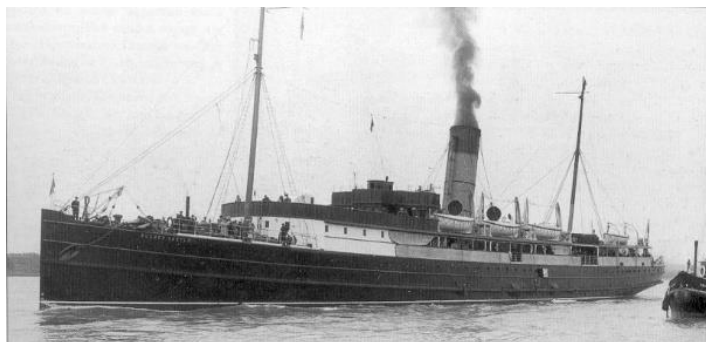
SS *Victoria*

Built in 1907 at Dumbarton by William Denny and Brothers, *Victoria* was operated by the South Eastern and Chatham Railway Company, until her sale to the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company in 1928.

After the outbreak of war in 1939, *Victoria* assisted the *Rushen Castle* maintaining the domestic supply routes from Liverpool and Fleetwood to Douglas.
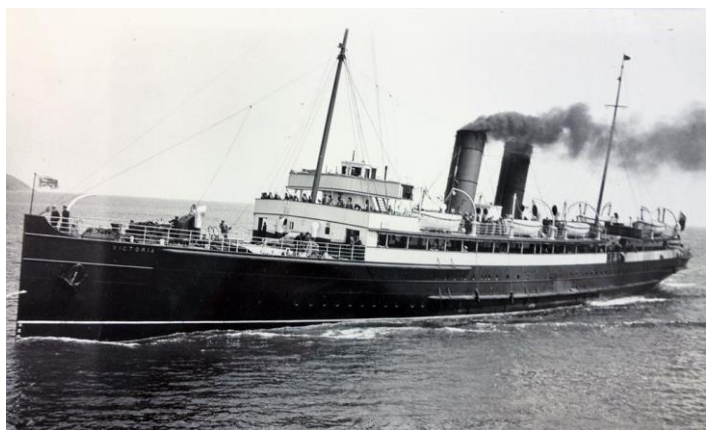
However, she became a victim of the Royal Navy minefield laid around the approaches to the Mersey as a protection against enemy U-boats, when northwest of the Bar lightship on a homeward run with passengers, she struck one of the mines on 27 December 1940. There were no casualties, but over 200 passengers were taken off and split between the trawler *Yulan* heading to Douglas, and the pilot boat which returned to Liverpool. *Victoria,* meanwhile, was also was taken back to Liverpool, but under tow.

As a consequence, during the repair, *Victoria* was fitted out with LSI (H) – Landing Ship Infantry (Hand Hoisting) - and the Admiralty requisitioned her to serve out of the Firth of Forth as a target towing vessel. In the summer of 1943, she was despatched to Southampton, where she was part of the infantry training for the impending D-Day landings, and when D-Day came on 6 June 1944, *Victoria* was involved in landing British Army assault forces on the western extreme of the small bay of Arromanches. Following D-Day, *Victoria* was moved to Utah Beach landing further American troops, after which she was utilised in supplying the harbour at Arromanches. As troops moved inland, *Victoria* was increasingly deployed as an emergency hospital ship, transferring the wounded to hospitals around Dieppe, as well as returning troops to England for leave.

She finally returned to the Steam Packet in 1947, where she resumed her duties operating between Douglas and Liverpool. Following the introduction of the 'six sisters'*, she became surplus to requirements and was sold in 1957 for breaking in Barrow.

[*A post war class of vessel all built by Cammell Laird between 1945 and 1955, which included *King Orry IV*, *Mona's Queen IV*, *Tynwald V*, *Snaefell V*, *Mona's Isle V, Manxman II*, the last in service until 1982.]

Captain Jack Keig, Master on *Victoria* in 1940 and at D-Day.
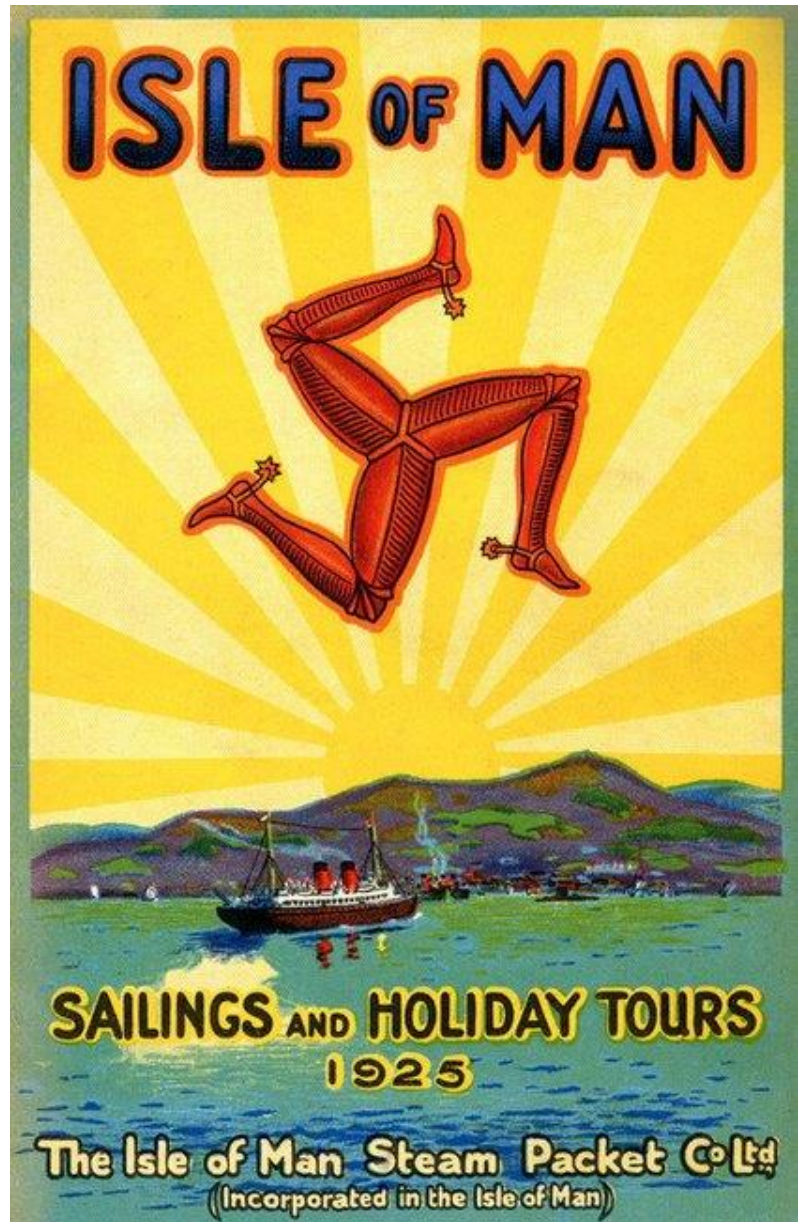
Operation Dynamo 26 May to 4 June 1940

While on Merseyside the initial days of war gradually began to take a grip, matters in France had reached a state of desperation as Allied forces were being forced back to the Channel coast in May 1940. *Operation Dynamo* now became the main focus of the military, as evacuation of the troops from the beaches of Dunkirk was becoming a matter of acute urgency.

The events between 26 May and 4 June are now firmly etched into British history, not least because of the heroic efforts of the flotilla of craft that heeded the call to aid the operation. Several ferries became part of that history, and three would not return. During those dark days, 338,226 men were rescued, of which 24,669 were recovered by the eight Isle of Man Steam Packet vessels. This may have been the 'finest hour' of the Steam Packet, but the worst day in the company's history was 29 May when three of its vessels were lost.

Mona's Queen (III)

The *Mona's Queen (III)* was launched in 1934 from Cammell Laird and brought a new level of luxury to passengers where she was immediately employed during the busy summer season on the main route between Douglas and Liverpool. She also inaugurated evening cruises from Douglas to the Calf of Man.

		Top Row		
Randolph Underhill **A.B. Ramsey**	Egerton Watterson Bosun, Port Erin Awarded DSM	Fred Crebbin A.B. The Howe	Henry Maddrell A.B. Glenchass	Willie Lord A.B. Ramsey
	William Salter A.B. Liverpool	Frank Callow A.B. Peel	Eb Cannan A.B. Peel	
		Middle Row		
James Collister A.B. Port St Mary	Frank Watterson A.B. Port Erin	Freddie Watterson A.B. Port Erin	Jimmy Hall A.B. Glen Maye	**Tom Duggan** **Lamptrimmer**
	Paul Kelly **A.B. Port St Mary**	Edward Kelly A.B. Peel	Jack Sansbury A.B. Port St Mary	
		Bottom Row		
Charlie Cannell **Carpenter, Peel**	Bob Clucas Chief Officer, Douglas	Radcliffe Duggan Captain, Douglas Awarded DSC	Edwin Cregeen 2nd Officer, Glenchass	**Roy Gallagher** **Purser, Douglas**
		Eric Ambler Radio Officer, Blackpool		

Rows read R-L
N.B Those names in bold were Lost at Dunkirk

Officers Muster

This photo would be taken on the same day as the other MQ3 crew musters. It is of the officers of the ship with the notable inclusion of Mr Ted Groom.
I was told by a friend of the Steam Packet Commander Harold Thornber of Blackburn, that his brother Robert Thronber of Blackpool took the shot. Apparently there were shouts of 'Come on Ted let's get you in this one!'

Top Row

Tom Varley	**Charlie Cannell**	Ted Groom	Edwin Cregeen	**H. Neilson**
Purser, Douglas	**Carpenter, Peel**		2nd Officer, Glenchass	**3rd Engineer,**
Barrow				

Bottom Row

| Bob Clucas | Radcliffe Duggan | **Harry Barwell** | **Bob Kneale** |
| Chief Officer, Douglas | Master, Douglas | **Chief Engineer, Douglas** | **2nd Engineer, Douglas** |

Taken on 17 August 1939 just before she was requisitioned for war service. From a collection of photographs by Ted Groom, put together for exhibition by Captain John Ronan (Master of Ben-my-Chree V, 1973-1984).

Mona's Queen by Arthur Burgess

But in 1940, *Mona's Queen* was busy evacuating thousands of troops with her Steam Packet crew from Calais, Boulogne, Ostend and Dunkirk, dodging air attacks and shore bombardments. She was the last merchant vessel to leave Calais, having delivered 300 tons of explosives for the demolition of the docks before the advancing Germans seized the port. At 5.30am on 29 May, she was approaching Dunkirk when she hit a mine about a mile offshore. The damage was devastating, breaking her back, causing her to sink within ninety seconds. Twenty-four of her crew perished, of which, seventeen were Manxmen. (Crews were often a mixture of men from the island and the ports they frequented on their domestic routes, mainly Liverpool).

KILLED ON MONA'S QUEEN

Mr John Edward Lyon, ship's steward, of Glamis Road, Tuebrook, Liverpool, lost his life in the Isle of Man steamer *Mona's Queen*, during the Dunkirk evacuation. Mr Lyon, who was aged 56, had long service on the Isle of Man boats. He was in the *Snaefell* when she was torpedoed in foreign waters during the last war. He leaves a widow, two daughters and three sons. The eldest son is serving in the Royal Navy.

Liverpool Evening Express, **7 June 1940**

Lost in *Mona's Queen,*

Liverpool Echo, **7 June 1940**

Gallant Manxmen Lost with "Mona's Queen"

R. BARWELL, Chief Engineer.   R. C. KNEALE, Second Engineer.   T. E. NEILSON, Third Engineer.   R. C. CALLISTER, Assistant Engineer.   M. H. DELANEY, Assistant Engineer.   G. KENNAUGH, Assistant Engineer.   ROY GALLAGHER, Paymaster.   E. C. CANNELL, Carpenter.

THE LOST SHIP.

The Mona's Queen was the latest of the series of three graceful and well-appointed "white ships" which have spread the Island's fame all over the British Isles. She was second in size only to the Lady of Mann, which came on the service four years earlier. Most Manx people remember her arrival in Douglas on June 27th, 1934, after she had been completed in the great shipbuilding yard of Cammell Laird's, Birkenhead. She had been launched on April 12th of that year by Mrs Waddington, wife of Mr J. B. Waddington, of Lancaster, one of the Steam Packet Company's directors.

She was 348 feet long and 48 feet broad, and displaced 2,756 tons, having a carrying capacity of about 2,500. With three water-tube boilers and two sets of Parsons geared turbines, she developed a speed of 22 knots. Her interior was worthy of her appearance outwardly; she was most handsomely furnished. Among her fine decks was one screened by glass for a considerable part of the ship's length, allowing passengers to promenade in perfect shelter.

Her first commander was Capt. J. J. Comish, who subsequently became commodore of the Steam Packet Company's fleet. Her first chief engineer, Mr R. B. Moore, is now the company's superintendent engineer.

MONA'S QUEEN CAPTAIN.

Captain A. Holkham joined the Steam Packet Company's service in 1926 as second officer on the Mona's Isle. He became a captain in 1938, and last season was in command of the King Orry. Up to date, he has had charge of every steamer in the company's fleet except the Mona's Maid, which constitutes a very remarkable experience. He is a native of Southampton and has followed the sea all his life. He served throughout the last war in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, and part of the time was lieutenant on a destroyer.

It was Captain Holkham who rescued the great flier Alex. Henshaw when his plane came down in the Irish Sea while competing in the King's Cup air race on September 6th, 1935. The captain was in command of the Ramsey Town. Mr Henshaw presented him with a handsome barometer, bearing an inscription which acknowledged that his skill and seamanship had probably saved the airman's life.

THE MISSING 24.

The information obtained by the Steam Packet Company indicates that 26 of the crew are saved, and 24 missing and presumably lost. Those missing are:— H. Barwell (chief engineer), Queen's Promenade, Douglas (married); R. C. Kneale (second engineer), 34, Valley Drive, Barrow-in-Furness (married); T. E. Neilson (third engineer), 73, Undergreens Road, Barrow (married); G. Kennaugh (assistant engineer),

6, Woodbourne Square, Douglas (single); R. C. Callister (assistant engineer), 17, Queen's Road, Onchan (married); M. H. Delaney (assistant engineer), 3, Mona Street, Douglas (married); T. Mitchell (donkeyman), Sailors' Home, Southampton (single); C. Hindle (greaser), 6, Wellington Square, Douglas (married); R. Radcliffe (greaser), Agneash, Laxey (single); T. Gurry (fireman), 26, St. Mary's Place, Southampton (married); A. T. Parsons (fireman), 146, The Drive, Coxford, Southampton (married); D. J. Looney (fireman), Glen Road, Laxey (married); W. E. Crellin (fireman), Gordon Cot, Port Erin (single); A. L. Lawton (fireman), 112, Castle Mona Avenue, Douglas (single); E. C. Cannell (carpenter), Woodville, Western Avenue, Douglas (married); J. R. Gallagher (paymaster), Glen Roy, Duke's Road, Douglas (married); R. Underhill (seaman), 46, Maughold Street, Ramsey (married); W. Cromwell (seaman), Riveredge, Spring Valley, Braddan (married); O. Radcliffe (seaman), Cregneash, Port St. Mary (married); T. Duggan, senr. (lamptrimmer), 4, James Street, Douglas (married); P. Kelly (seaman), Bay View Road, Port St. Mary (married); A. Mills (steward), 26, Fincham Road, Liverpool (married); A. Murray (steward), 64, Strand Street, Douglas (married); J. Lyons (steward), 4, Glamis Road, Liverpool (married).

THE SURVIVORS.

The survivors are:— Captain A. Holkham, Devonshire Road, Douglas; R. Craine (first officer), ... Douglas; E. M. Creepers (2nd officer), Howe, Port St. Mary; P. Stodholme (3rd officer), The Point, Port St. Mary; A. E. A. Ambler (wireless operator), Nobs (injured); L. Knowles (3rd engineer), 15, Earl Terrace, Douglas; E. Watterson (seaman), Athol Park, Port Erin; F. Watterson (seaman), 6, Drogheda Road, Port Erin; T. Nuttall (seaman), 29, Chester Street, Douglas; E. Kelly (seaman), 14, Charles Street, Peel; T. H. Crebbin (seaman), Howe, Port St. Mary; F. Crebbin (seaman), Howe, Port St. Mary; J. Hall (seaman), Gordon, near Peel; T. Costain (seaman), Howe, Port St. Mary; W. Quayle (fireman), Main Road, Colby; T. Gordon (fireman), Cliff View, Laxey; J. Joughin (fireman), 20, South Quay, Douglas; J. Peel (fireman), 45, Sutherland Street, Barrow-in-Furness; R. A. Bridson (fireman), 41, Hillside Avenue, Douglas; J. M. Gale (fireman), 41, Hildesley Road, Douglas; A. Moran (chief steward), 10, Brookfield Road, West Kirby, Cheshire; A. Hawley (2nd steward), Cadran Cottage, Ballamona Road, Onchan; H. Craine (cook), Napier, Glen Road, Laxey; G. Brown (steward), 13, Duke's Road, Douglas; W. Quane (steward), Niarbyl Road, Dalby; S. Quirk (steward), 7, Cypress Grove, Pulrose; F. J. Tollurton (galley boy), 477, East Prescot Road, Liverpool; G. Gregson (steward), 41, Tallon Road, Liverpool; H. J. Crebbin (seaman), Cregneash.

THE SINKING OF THE KING ORRY.

The day following the sinking of the Mona's Queen came news on May 30th of the loss of the King Orry at Dunkirk, an armed patrol ship or boarding ship.

The King Orry was taken over by the Admiralty and the services of only six of her crew—the chiefs of the engineering staff and the donkeyman—were retained. All were saved. Their names are Engineer-Lieut. Stanley Cowley, Selbourn Drive, Douglas; Eng-Lt. Laurie Vine, Buck's Road, Douglas; G. Hughes, The Manor, Belmont Terrace, Douglas (engineer); and R. Scriff, King

(engineer); J. Campbell (donkeyman); Engr A. S. Cowley, a regular hand on the King Orry; and Arthur Corkill (greaser), whose family have resided in Douglas and Liverpool.

The King Orry enjoyed the honour of being the sole representative of the British mercantile fleet present at the surrender of the German Fleet in Scapa Flow at the conclusion of the Great War. She had been in Government service throughout the war, principally as an armed boarding vessel and contraband interceptor. She captured several prizes, including one carrying 10,000 tons of wheat destined for Germany, and a valuable cargo of iron ore. During the Battle of Jutland she and the cruiser Duncan were appointed to cruise off the Norwegian coast, to intercept any of the German fleet which might break through. For some time, because of her speed and manoeuvrability, she was employed as a "repeating ship," transmitting signals from the flagship to the ships of the squadron who were steaming astern.

Her chief engineer during her war service was the late Engineer-Lieutenant John J. Keig, son of the late Commodore Thomas Keig.

Built in 1933 at Cammell Laird's—the last ship acquired by the Steam Packet Company before the last war—she was the first vessel sailing from Liverpool to be fitted with geared turbines. She was 313 feet long, with a breadth of 43 feet, and her gross tonnage was 1,877. Her speed was 20 knots, and her carrying capacity about 1,000.

The Mona's Isle.

The Admiralty announced in their first communique that the Mona's Isle had been lost, and this was subsequently corrected. Amongst the crew of this boat, which is a naval patrol boat, and as such appears in the Navy List, are four Manxmen—Mr Harry Kelly, chief engineer, of Castletown Road, Douglas; Mr George Corphey, the second engineer, now of Southport; Mr Arthur Corkill, of Crosby, third engineer, and Mr Killip, chief steward. Mr Killip was shipwrecked once before, when the Douglas was lost, when he and the "Times" Editor were aboard and were about to when they were rescued by a passing tug-boat.

One of the White Ships the Island was so proud of—the Mona's Queen—sunk by the Germans in the great evacuation work of the B.I.F. from Dunkirk.
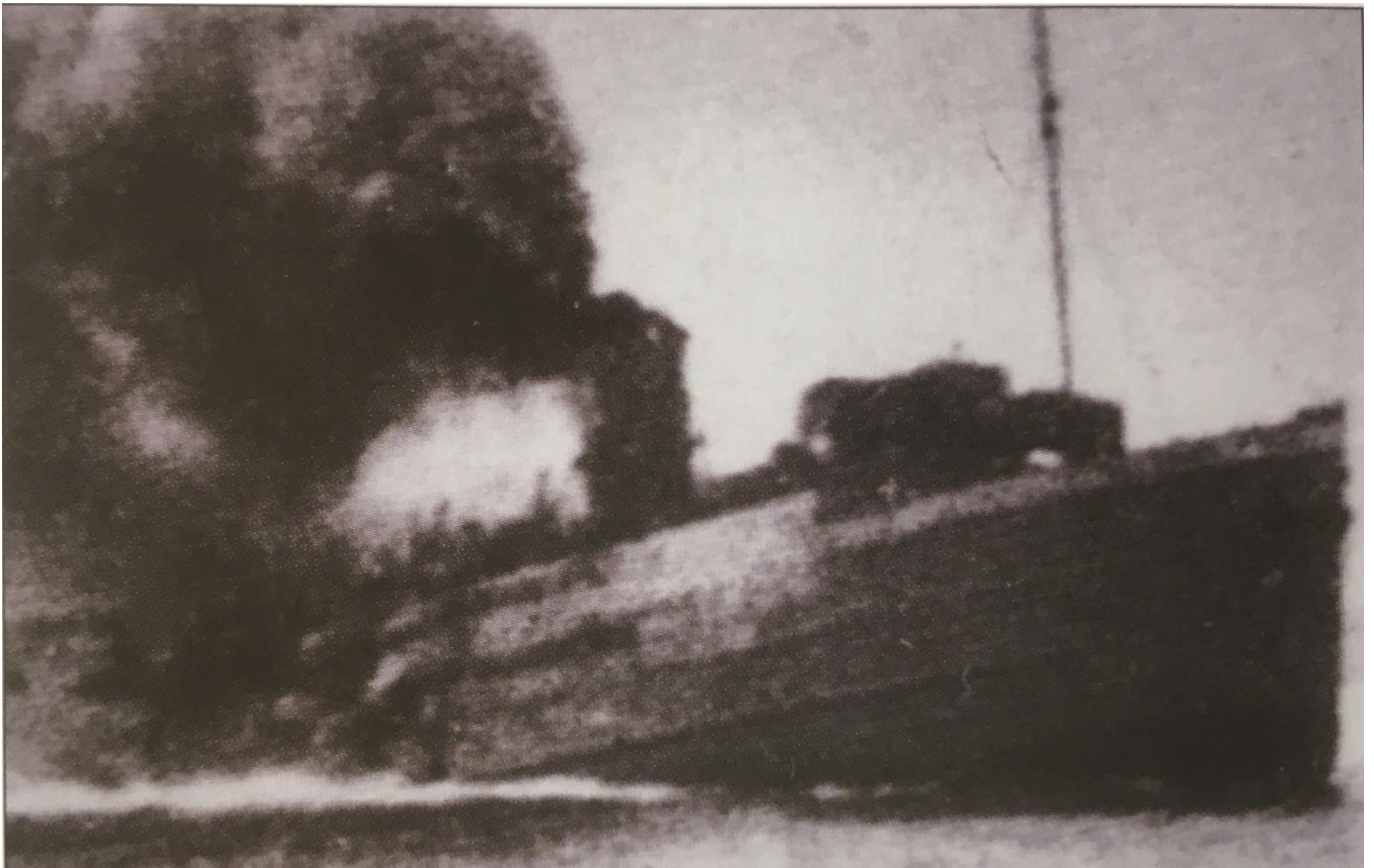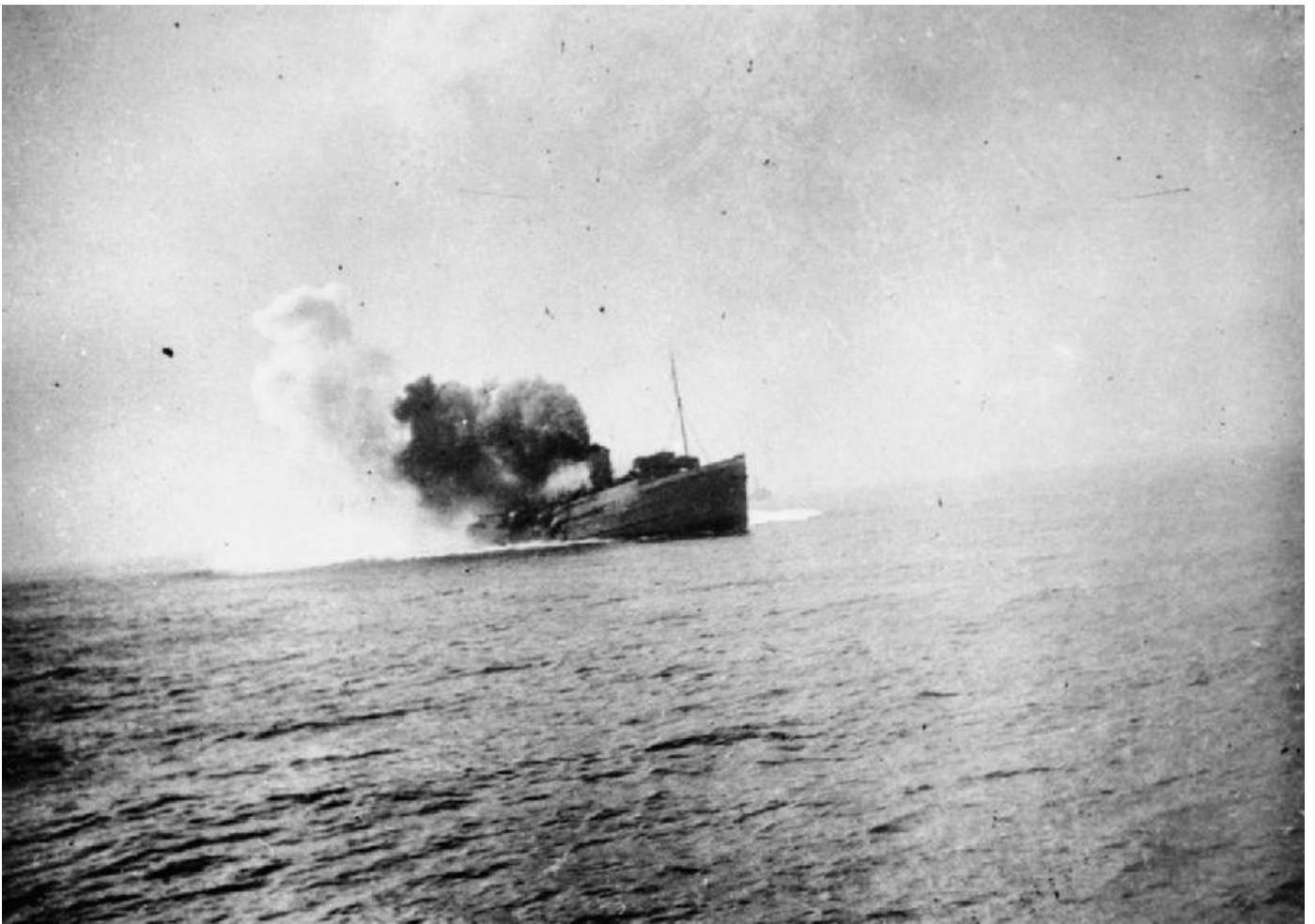
Mona's Queen, pictured shortly after she struck a mine on the approach to Dunkirk, 29 May 1940.
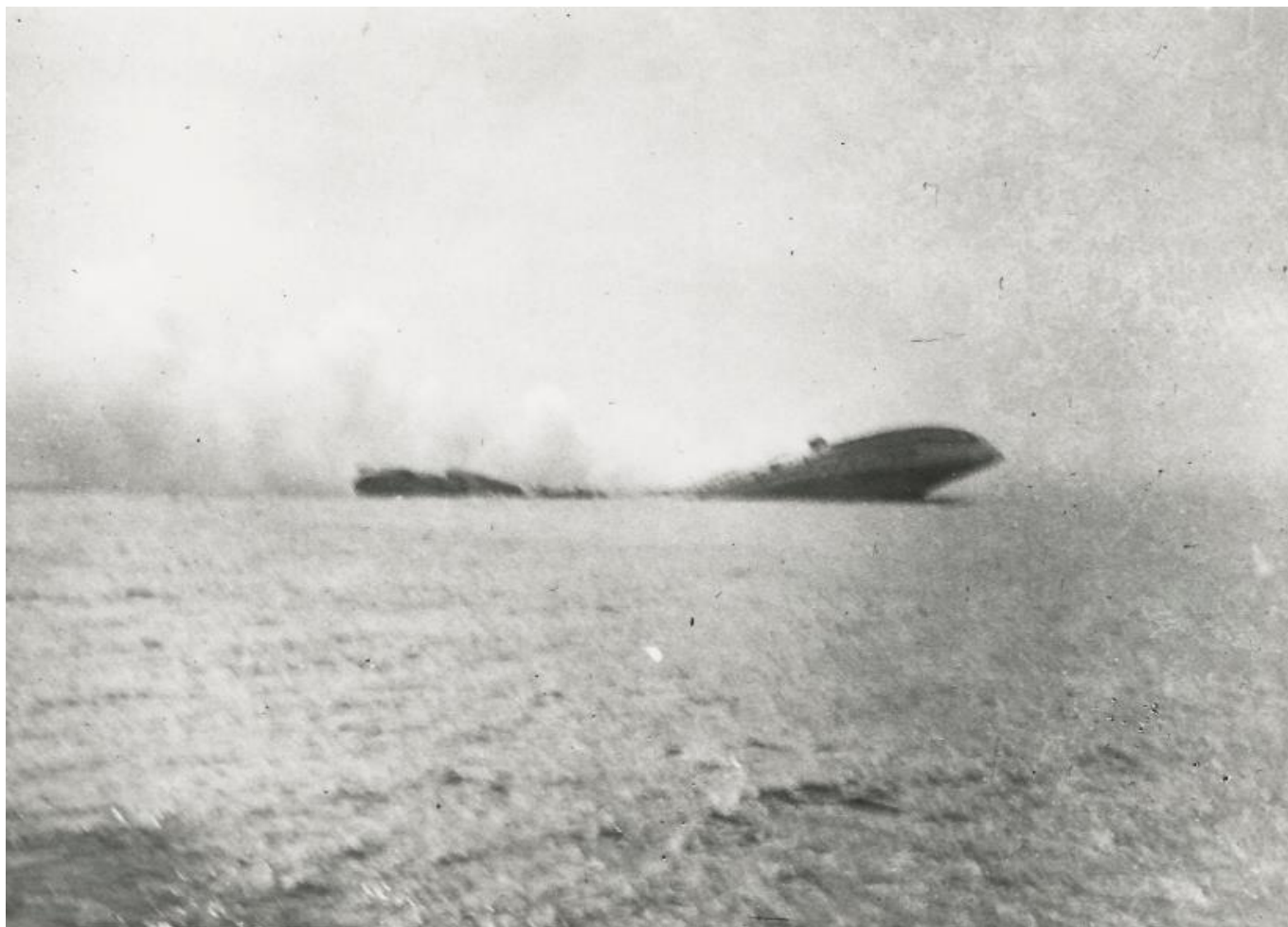
Survivors from *Mona's Queen*,
(photograph taken from the destroyer HMS *Vanquisher*
after the sinking of the vessel on the approach to Dunkirk.)

Fenella (II)

Launched in 1936, *Fenella (II)* was the shortest-lived Steam Packet ferry, serving for only two and a half years before her requisitioning as a personnel carrier. A twin vessel of *Tynwald (IV)* and launched on the same day in the Barrow yard, she transported troops between Newport, St Nazaire, Brest, La Pallice, Quiberon Bay, and Cherbourg, until setting on off on her first mission to Dunkirk on 28 May 1940.

Just before 6pm on the 29th, waves of bombers began to make their third attack of the day over Dunkirk harbour. The *Fenella*, lying on the East Pier, had by then already taken 650 men on board as around 100 bombs were unleashed. She was hit first on the promenade deck, then a second hit the pier sending chunks of concrete below her waterline, while a third fell between the pier and vessel and wrecked her engine room. At least some of the men could be disembarked, where they were sent down the pier to board the *Crested Eagle*, as the now sinking *Fenella* was abandoned. Others were later picked up by the Dutch skoot, the *Patria*, which was under Royal Navy command. The *Crested Eagle*, a well-known old London pleasure steamer, was subsequently bombed and also beached.

Thirty-three of *Fenella's* crew, some badly wounded, made it back to Dover, where one died of his wounds. In all they had lost sixteen of her crew. A young steward, nineteen-year-old Tommy Helsby of 18 Roderick Street, Liverpool, had last been seen terribly burned on the sinking *Fenella*. A few weeks later, to great surprise, a postcard arrived at home - he had been taken prisoner, the only Steam Packet crew member to be captured throughout the war. He was in hospital in Belgium, where he recovered and was repatriated before the end of the war, and eventually re-joined the Steam Packet. Initially, it was thought the Germans raised *Fenella* and had her refitted, but this was found to be false, her wreck being confused with the nearby steamer *Bawtry* which was recovered and taken as a prize of war. It is now believed *Fenella* was gradually broken up and the wreck cleared for scrap.
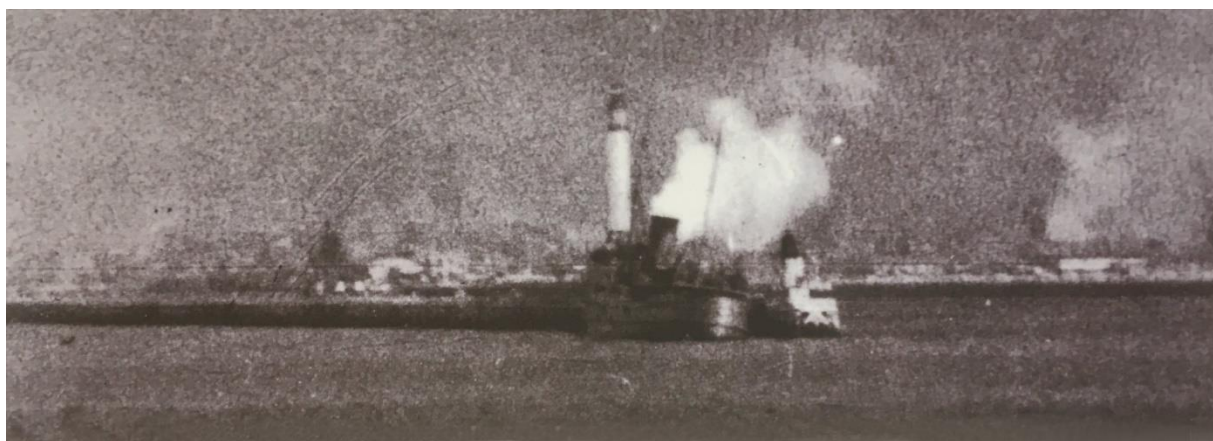
King Orry (III)

By the time *King Orry (3)* was requisitioned, she was beginning to show signs of age, having been in service since 1913.   She was no novice, having seen action in the First World War as an armed boarding vessel operating from Scapa Flow. Disguised as a trader under the name *Viking Orry,* she patrolled the treacherous northern waters off Norway, and intercepted and captured many ships carrying contraband to Germany. She was also part of the force leading the defeated German Grand Fleet into Scapa Flow.
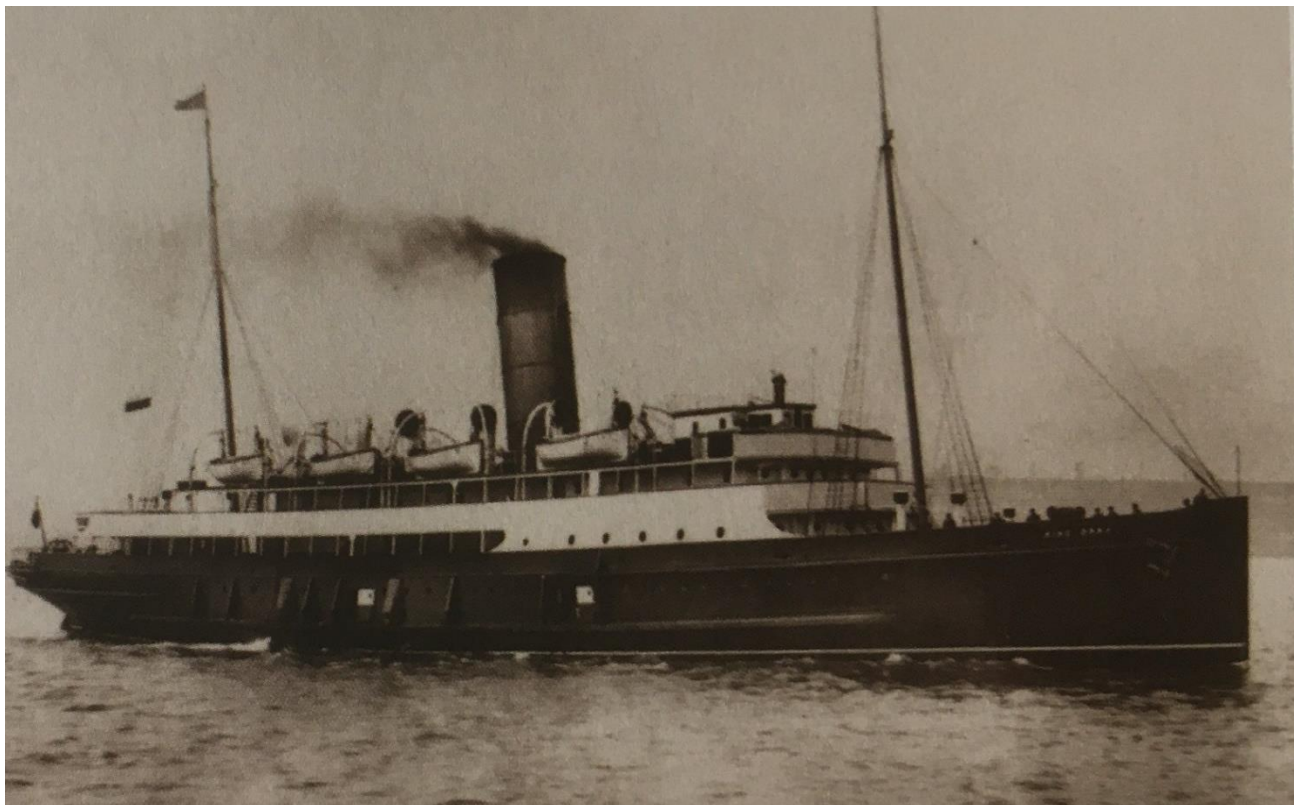
In 1939, she resumed her role as an armed boarding vessel, and was sent in at the beginning of the Dunkirk evacuation. Despite coming under heavy fire from both coast and air, she saved many thousands of soldiers within a few days. On her first visit to the port, she recovered 1,131 soldiers leaving for Dover in the early hours of 27 May. She took a few hits from the Calais shore batteries resulting in some damage and a few casualties, but she still made Dover, docking just before midday. Late afternoon on 29 May she returned once more to Dunkirk after surviving a dive-bombing attack en route. While alongside at the East Pier she suffered a heavier attack, which put her steering gear out of action and shattered all the instruments and woodwork in the bridge. After colliding with the pier, she was still able to moor, although the attacks continued. Under the cover of darkness, it was clear that repairs would be unsafe and cause danger to other vessels attempting to berth in a highly dangerous environment. She was given orders to leave after midnight, and was able to clear the harbour entrance. However, she soon started to list to starboard, her engine room flooded and she sank at 2am on 30 May. Nearby ships in the hostile waters moved in to pick up survivors (which included four Manx engineers). One of rescue ships was the *Bystander*. Captained by Lieutenant Commander RNVR H. Miller, she was reported to have saved 99 crew and evacuees from the *King Orry*, in addition to soldiers picked up from the shore. Her cook, Jesse Elton from Poole, single-handedly swam to rescue twenty-five from *King Orry* and later received the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal from the King at Buckingham Palace.

HAPPY SURPRISE FOR PARENTS

Lieutenant-Commander Ernest Gleave RN, who was reported to have been lost when the *King Orry* was sunk in the Dunkirk evacuation operations, has given his parents at St Helens a pleasant surprise, in the shape of a letter informing them that he is safe. He had he says, been transferred to another ship a fortnight before the Dunkirk evacuation. Lieutenant-Commander Gleave served in the Great War and two vessels in which he was serving were torpedoed. He was then 18 years of age.

Liverpool Evening Express, **7 June 1940**

Evacuees rescued at Dunkirk by MV *Bystander*.
Lieutenant-Commander RNVR. H. Miller is 4th from left in the front row (standing).

Tynwald **passes the wreck of her sister Steam Packet ship, *King Orry*, as she approaches Dunkirk.**

Even older than *King Orry* was *Mona's Isle (IV),* built in 1905, but not purchased by the Steam Packet until 1920. She too had seen service in the First World War as a troop ship. In 1939, she was fitted out as an armoured boarding vessel, and on 27 May 1940 was the first vessel to leave Dover for Dunkirk, and the first to complete a round trip. After the embarkation of 1,420 troops, she left at first light the next morning. On the return journey, she came under fire from German shore batteries and several shells exploded close to the ship, sending plumes of white water into the air, with water spraying over the decks. A number of shells failed to explode as they hit the ship, but one fell aft and smashed the rudder. With careful use of the engines and under escort by the destroyer HMS *Windsor*, she reached Dover safely but not before a Messerschmitt Bf 109 attack which killed twenty-three and wounded sixty. The journey had taken fifteen hours.

She made a second round-trip to Dunkirk, bringing out a further 1,200 troops, taking her rescue total to 2,634. *Mona's Isle* continued her war service as an ABV, or accommodation ship, until her release in 1946. She returned to the Steam Packet where she was eventually withdrawn in 1948 and broken up.
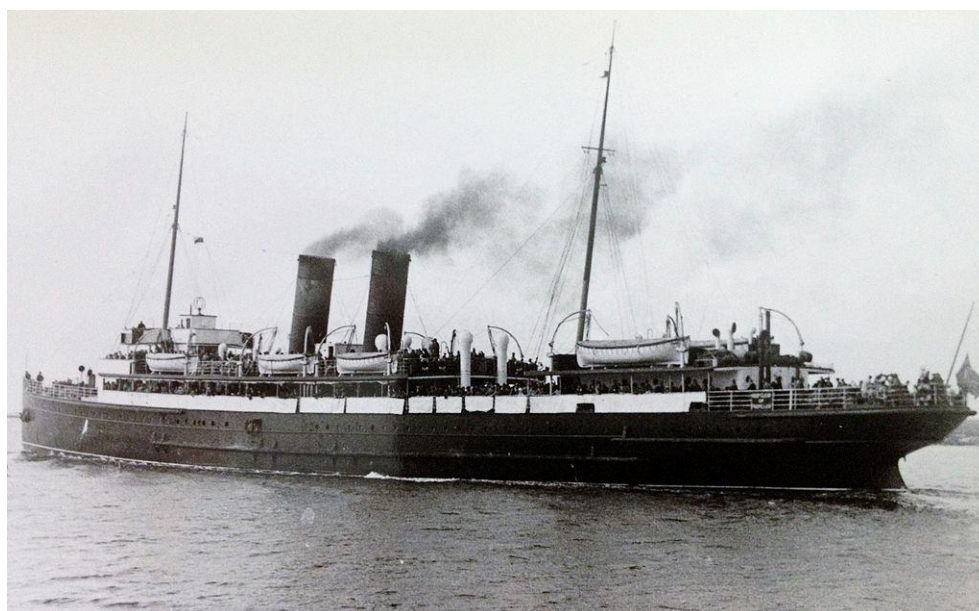
Manxman (1904)
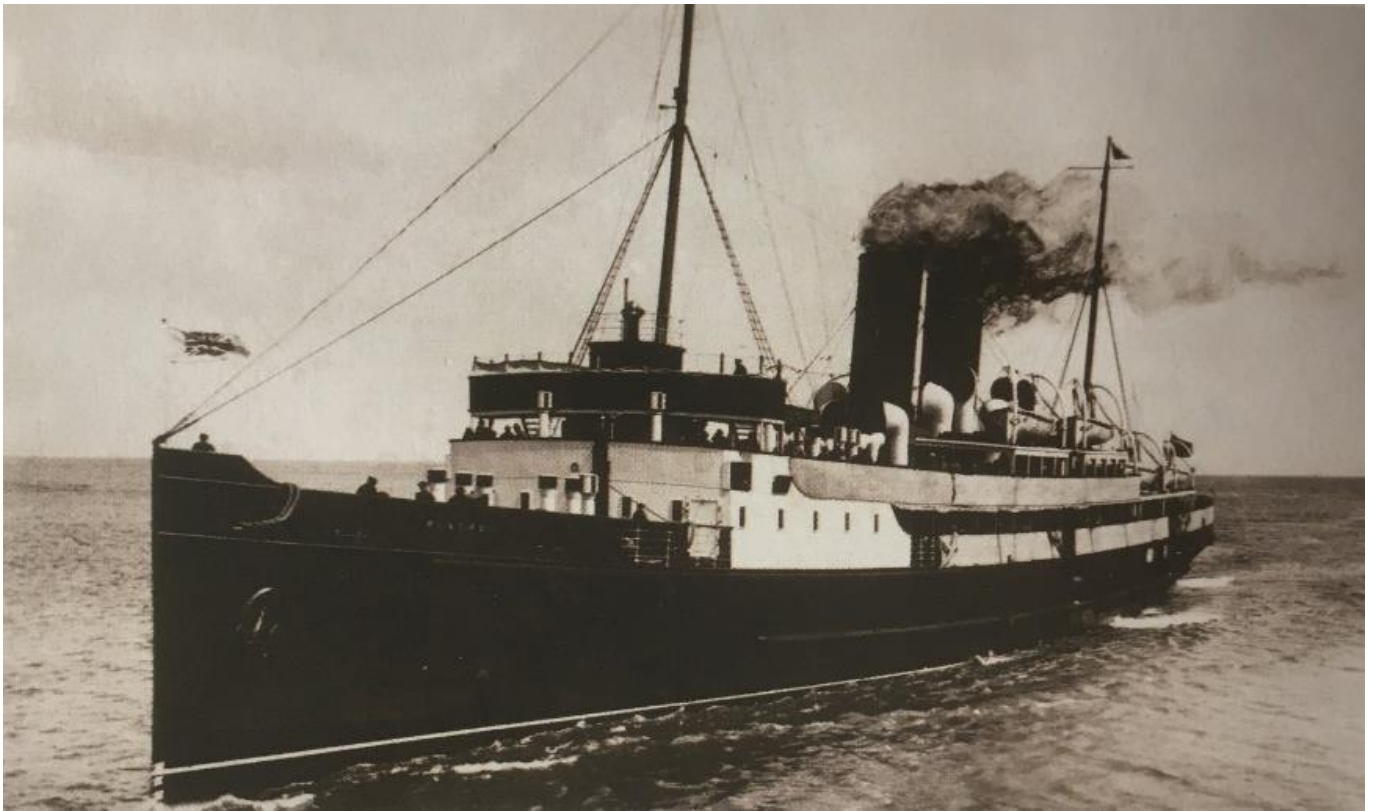
The *Manxman* also served in both wars. Launched in 1904 and built for the Midland Railway Company, she worked on the Douglas-Heysham crossing before her conversion by the Admiralty as an early aircraft carrier in 1916, to enable Sopwith Pup fighters to launch from her decks. However, methods and technology were still primitive and they had to land on the sea, where they were supported by flotation bags while they patiently waited for the vessel to come alongside and to be hoisted on board again.

At the end of the war she was purchased by the Steam Packet, and again requisitioned at the start of WWII. The *Manxman* was also deployed as a troop carrier, evacuating troops from Dunkirk and north west France. She returned to Dunkirk on the morning of 2 June, when the operation was getting near its close, and took on 177 troops. In all, *Manxman* evacuated 2,394 men. On leaving Cherbourg fully laden with troops and ammunition, she only managed to escape from the harbour with the aid of a destroyer despatched specially to escort her, which fired upon a column of Panzers attacking along the quayside.

After Dunkirk, she continued to ferry troops from the French ports of Cherbourg and Le Havre under the command of Captain P. B.
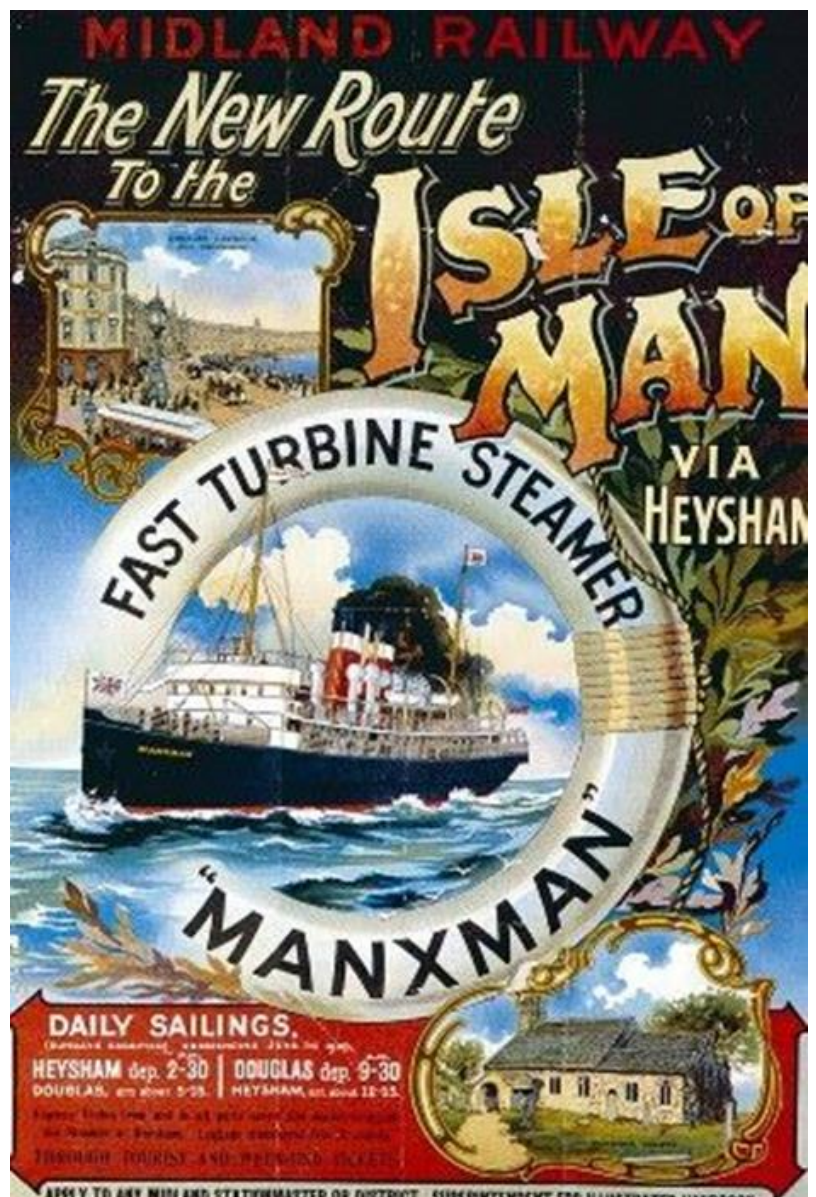
Cowley and assisted by veterans from the *Manxman's* crew; Chief Officer Lyndhurst Callow, and Second Officer A.W.G. Kissack, who later became the company's Marine Superintendent. The operation was relentless, with the vessel often under air attack. Back in port at Southampton, there was little or no time for rest, the vessel refuelling and being turned round to head back to Cherbourg once again. As the operation progressed, so the danger intensified, as they were in range of the frequent shelling, vulnerable to air attack and a harbour being congested with wrecks and debris, plus other survival boats negotiating the hazards while under fire. The situation had now become impossible, and the destroyer L.11 was deployed to enable the Manxman to make good her escape.

> The large cranes along the dockside had been blasted and broken, and were one of the many hazards to shipping. Tanks were approaching the harbour area; the remnants of the Allied armies were fighting them off as best they could. The *Manxman* herself was laden with troops and with stacked ammunition, small arms and even field weapons saved from the catastrophe – one hit from an enemy aircraft could have blown up the entire ship.
> Chief Officer Callow (later Commodore of the Steam Packet Company fleet),
> in **Chappell, Connery, *Island Lifeline*, (1980) p116**

The *Manxman* crew even had to cut her mooring with axes to ensure her escape under the covering fire of the Navy destroyer which was busily engaged with a tank column advancing down the quayside. *Manxman* was also the last vessel to evacuate St Malo during her daring deployment.

Back in England, she was commissioned as HMS *Cadaceus* in October 1941, as a radio detection finding ship. Ordered to her home port of Douglas, she linked up with one of the early radar training stations - HMS *Valkyrie* which was installed on Douglas Head, and patrolled the Irish Sea while naval personnel were trained in radio direction finding. She twice collided with the Victoria Pier, which moved the Admiralty to declare that Douglas Harbour was unsuitable for a vessel of her size, a bizarre decision given it was her home port. Nevertheless, she was despatched to work on her radar training duties out of the Clyde, although she was driven ashore near Greenock in a fierce gale in February 1943.
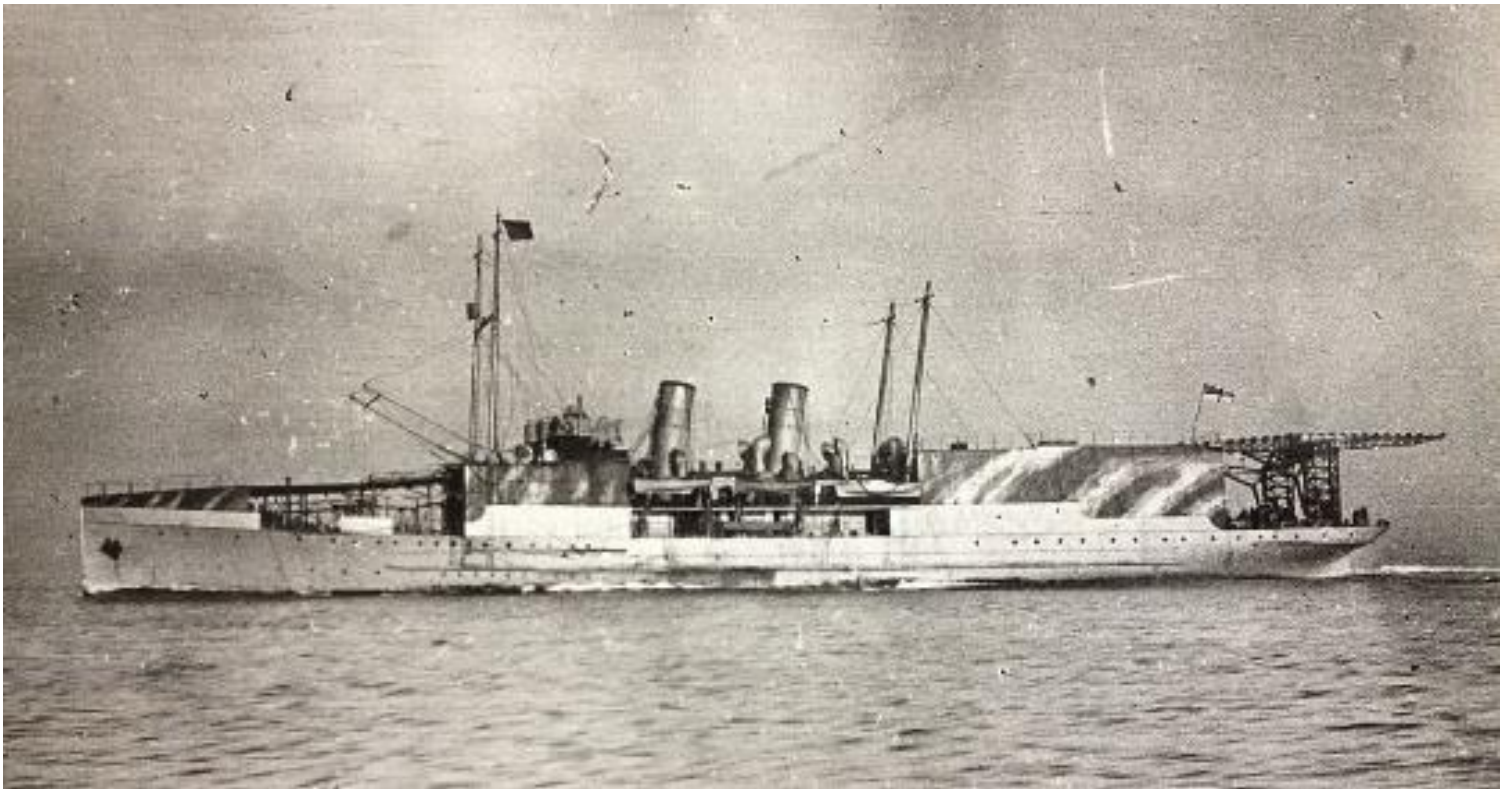
Post war she was transferred to the Ministry of War Transport and operated as a troop carrier in the English Channel, then to the British Army of the Rhine, now reverting to her *Manxman* name but still carrying troops between Harwich and Hook of Holland. She never returned to Steam Packet use and being no longer fit for purpose, together with being surplus to requirements following the commissioning of the 'six sisters', she was laid up in Barrow-in-Furness in February 1949 and scrapped in August in Preston.

SS *Viking*

Viking was built at Armstrong Whitworth's Walker Shipyard on the River Tyne and on 9 March 1905. The *Viking* had a quite special history in her half century in service. Like a number of ferries, she served in both wars, and like the *Manxman* she was converted to a seaplane carrier in the First World War operating as HMS *Vindex*. As a pioneering aircraft carrier, she was the first ship to launch a plane with undercarriage from her decks, well before the first purpose-built naval aircraft carriers.
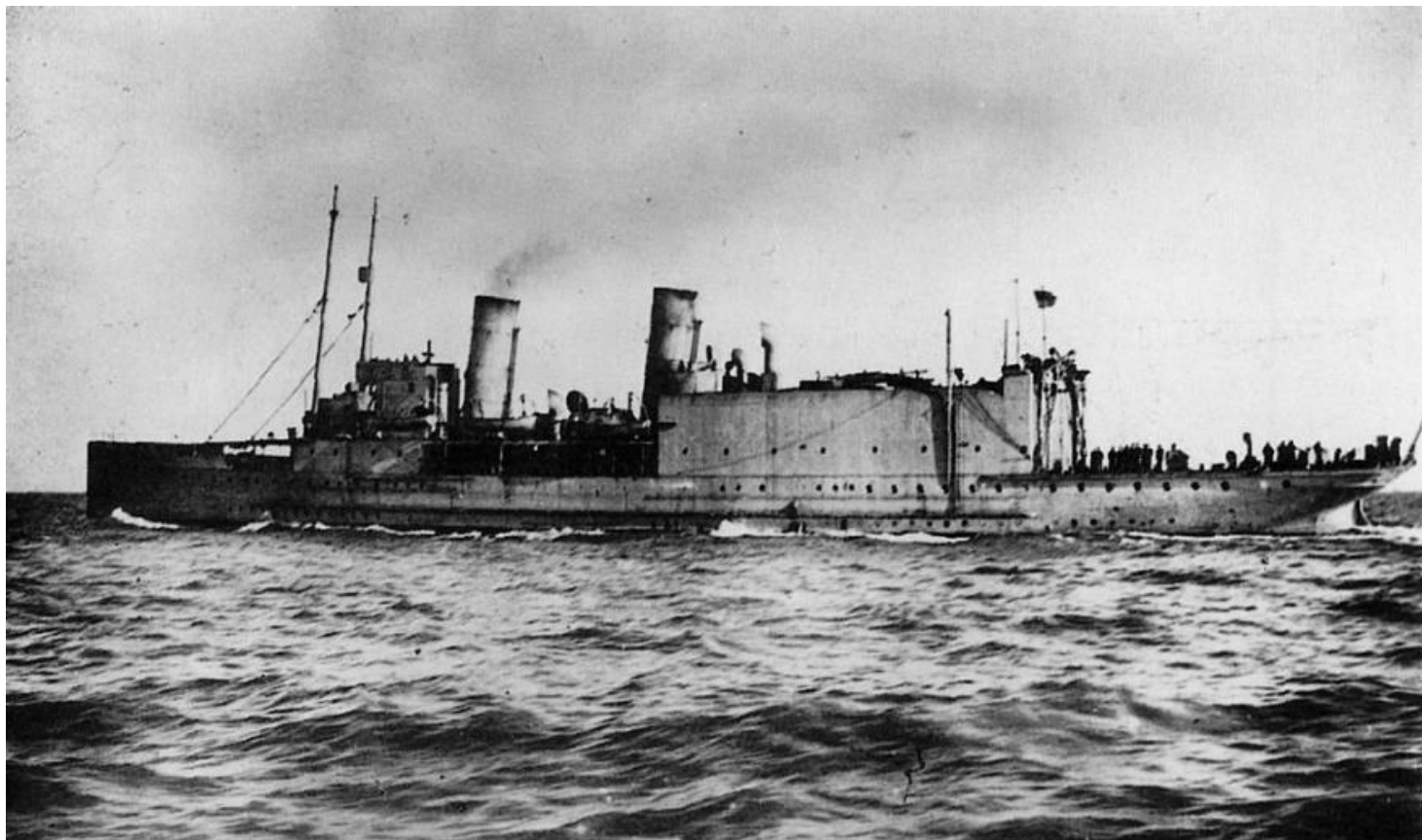
HMS *Vindex*

After her return to Steam Packet duties during the inter-war years, she was again requisition by the Admiralty in the first week of the Second World War, and operated as a personnel vessel, mainly out of Southampton for Le Havre and Cherbourg. Although she didn't take part in *Operation Dynamo* due being under repair following bomb damage in the Thames Estuary, under the captaincy of James Bridson with Edward Gelling and Harry Kinley as Chief and Second Officers, *Viking* was at Dunkirk by 10 June, following which she was immediately deployed in *Operation Ariel* at Le Harve and Cherbourg in the latter stages of the allied withdrawal from France.

Captain James Bridson of Castletown, joined the IoM Steam Packet Company in September 1913 as an Able Seaman, although within the year was serving under the Royal Navy in the First World War, taking part in the Battle of Jutland while on HMS *Malaya*. In 1919 he re-joined the Steam Packet and a year later was promoted to 2nd Mate, and by 1927 he was a Chief Officer, before promotion to Ship's Master in July 1934. **Ned Gelling** of Laxey joined the Steam Packet in 1911 as a boy rating. He also served in the Royal Navy during the First World War, but later returned ashore becoming a policeman in Barrow. Sea life called him once more and he returned to the Steam Packet in the twenties, and was a 2nd Mate by 1927. He joined SS *Peveril* when she was acquired in 1929.

Harry Nelson Kinley came from Fistard, close to the village of Port St Mary, situated in the south west of the Island, and went to sea in the 1920s with Wilson's of Whitehaven and the Zillah Steamship Company of Liverpool. He joined the Steam Packet in 1936 as 2nd Mate of the SS *Rushen Castle,* and in 1939 was the 2nd Mate of the SS *Mona's Isle*, before deployment to the SS *Viking*.

Captain Kinley (by then in his nineties), spoke about his war experience in 1999/2000,

Now I'll tell you, one incident in *The Viking*, Captain Bridson was the master, we were sent to Dunkirk, but not to enter Dunkirk but to lie out, not to anchor but to just lie off to port just a mile or so off to port, you see. No-one knew why, we don't know to this day why, but I think, I imagine, it was to pick up any chaps that was floating about or in rafts, or bits of wood, you see. Because the evacuation had just finished and the land ashore, right down the whole harbour, was ablaze and we were lying there right under the HMS *Kelly,* with her big guns above us, because she could fire right across to England, and we were lying there, everybody biting their nails, thinking what are we going to do, and next we got an order saying, 'As from midnight you'll be at war with Italy,' you see, that's the night it happened.

Well, then we got another word to remain where we were, and then proceed to Cherbourg. And arriving in Cherbourg, it was a lovely summer morning, and there was a big battleship lying up in the north east corner. And I said to the captain, 'Well, we've got to anchor,' you see, 'until we're called in the harbour.' He said, 'We'll go up close to that warship.' 'Well, I wouldn't, Captain,' I said, 'because if Jerry comes over, it's him they'll aim for,' you see. 'Oh, well, I don't know.' So anyway, the Chief Officer, Eddie Gelling, says, 'I think we should go up to the warship,' you see, 'because he's more guns than we've got,' – we had a gun right enough. So, I said, 'No, but please yourself Captain, but I would stay as far away from that battleship as I could.' With that, over comes Jerry machine gunning, you see, we were hit with machine gun but we all got shelter, but then they started to bomb, drop bombs, and the feller that was at the machine – we had a machine gun up on the boat deck, you see, I took over while he went down for his breakfast.

I took the gun, you see, and Jerry was coming over and I could actually see the bomb door opening right dead above us. But I was still hammering away there, you know, and a young feller called Kelly from Castletown and a feller called Watterson from the Howe, was passing me up the bands you see, and we hit him all right, but we couldn't claim him because he went down over Cape Levi and we couldn't see him, you see.   The battleship was bombed, and one each side of *The Viking*, it shook the old lady very good and proper. It was a damn close shave. The first was on a machine gun all night but he was down getting his breakfast at the time, you see. Anyway, 'We'll get the hell out of that,' I said, 'the best thing we can do, Captain.' He said, 'Yes, right ho, Harry, we'll do that.' Well, by this time we were called in the harbour and *The Lady of Mann* was just leaving, you know, in Le Havre, you see.

So, we went into Le Havre and we loaded up, and over comes Jerry again and we got the vice-consul of Dieppe and his wife aboard with us. We went back for Cherbourg, and I was on watch and Captain Bridson went below, he was tired, we were all tired come to that, every man on the ship was tired, engineers in particular and we came to the land, the Cherbourg peninsula, the sun came out, a beautiful morning, and a lot of Scotchmen on board, all Scotchmen. She was, the fo'c'sle end, from one end to the other was one mass of Scotchmen, with the rifles and kit and all, they'd been travelling for four days, chased by the Germans, I don't know how they were able to stand up, them men, the remnants of the Scotch regiment it was, and they were looking at this land, you see. He said, 'Hey, Jock, that's no' Dover,' so, 'Mr Mate, that's no' Dover,' you see. Well, I couldn't tell him where it was, 'No, I'm sorry old boy, it's not.' You see, couldn't tell him where it was. So we went into Cherbourg, and we were disembarking them again to fight back, you see. They didn't know they were going back, no, they thought they were going home for Dover, you see, it was an awful shock for them, those men had been travelling for days and with all the gear they had.

[Captain Kinley, (who was a friend of the author's family – see **Personal Notes** at end) was interviewed by John Rimmington on **28 June 1999** and David Callister on **3 August 2000** for the Manx Heritage Foundation Oral History Project, *'Time to Remember'*]

However, SS *Viking* will always be remembered for evacuating almost the entire child population of Guernsey, running the gauntlet of air attacks while steaming from St Peter Port to Weymouth. After the invasion of German troops in France, fears of an invasion of the Channel Islands were heightened and Guernsey being close to Cherbourg made it vulnerable to attack by both air and sea. The British War Cabinet had decided that 'the Channel Islands are not of major strategic importance either to ourselves or the enemy… we recommend immediate consideration be given for the evacuation of all women and children on a voluntary and free basis'.

We got into Southampton and disembarked the troops, and the next thing we got was, 'Proceed forthwith to ... the Channel Islands'. Navigating the waters around the Channel Islands was difficult, but fortunately I had kept all the charts up to date and we had a very good ship's master, Captain James Brisdon. We docked without trouble at number one berth in St Peter Port at 4am on June 21, 1940. By 9am, the children were arriving in great numbers and I will never forget the sight of those thousands of children lined up on the pier with their gas mask cases over their shoulders and carrying small cases. Aged from four to seventeen they came aboard, many of them in tears. It was hard to keep back our own tears, I can tell you. We stopped counting the children after 1,800 and with the teachers and helpers, there must have been well over 2,000 on board.

The ship was packed – every cabin, corner and space was filled. Going around talking to the children, I found that they had been waiting so long, that most of them had eaten the food their parents had packed for them. They were hungry, poor mites. In my own cabin there were at least a dozen little ones with their Sunday school teacher. This lady gave me her prayer book and I gave her my Merchant Navy badge. Another lady gave her front door key to Ned Gelling, our chief officer, and asked him to lock her front door if the ship went back to Guernsey because she had forgotten to do so. So, in my cabin, it was full up with children, some were laughing, some were crying, you see. Some were looking out through the porthole and whatever. And this schoolteacher was there, well, she says, 'Officer, I'm awfully sorry, but they've got no more food.' They'd eaten all their sandwiches, you see. Well, we had to do something about it, the poor little kids, they were starving, imagine young children, hungry at that time of morning, you see, so I went up to Captain Bridson, he was well known as Ginger Bridson, he was a good chap was Ginger, and I went up, 'Captain Bridson,' I said, 'these children are starving, they're literally starving.' So I said, 'I'll tell you what, we've got American rations on board,' you see, in little cardboard boxes, condensed milk and cigarettes and all sorts of stuff, 'What about those? They'll have to get food, Captain, it doesn't matter who they belong to but they've got to have food.' 'And I damn well believe you too,' he said, 'what will it take?' I said, 'It's a desperate situation we're in.' 'Right,' he says, 'get a crowd with you and get them.' So, I rounded up some seamen and we robbed the lifeboats, there was nowhere else, we had to do it, there was no question about that, you see. They were American rations right enough, but they belonged to the ship, you see. Anyway, they were lying months in the lifeboats, never used, we replaced them as soon as we got back to Southampton, that was no difficulty, you see. Anyhow, I went down, I opened a tin of condensed milk first, you see, and one for you and one for you – it was laughable. It was a scene, it was laughable. And one boy said, 'I've only had the one.' 'Well, here's another for you,' but I give them a whole tin of condensed milk, you see. And then they got the biscuits and hard rations was going, and I left them there quite happy. Well they had to, they had to feed them, the little children, you see, and you had to go across to Weymouth, and then all the way up to Scotland, to Glasgow, that's where they were going. So, they'd got to get something,

We finally set sail at 11am. Because we were a coal-burning ship we were very conspicuous and a passing warship signalled a message saying: 'You are a pillar of smoke by day and a ball of fire by night and can be seen for 20 miles.' We signalled back: 'Thank you, we know'.

There were mines in the Channel and enemy aircraft overhead and we had one old gun and no escort. A plane did swoop down over us, which caused a bit of panic but it was one of ours, and this made the children cheer.

We said our prayers and zigzagged across to England with our precious cargo, eventually landing safely at Weymouth, where crowds on the quayside sent up a cheer. As the children disembarked, I was standing with Captain Bridson at the gangway saying goodbye and I said to him: "I wonder what will become of them all?" "So do I, Harry," he said. "I wish we could sail on to the Isle of Man with them, they would be safe there."

From Weymouth, the children were put on to trains and taken, with their school teachers, to many parts of England and Scotland, where they were to remain for the next five years, as it transpired. But for many of the children the separation from Guernsey was to be much longer. They never went back and the island lost a significant part of a generation. Fearful of the German invasion and not knowing what lay ahead, parents made that heart-breaking decision to send the children away for their own safety. I had many memorable experiences during the war years and a lifetime at sea – but what I shall never forget is the evacuation of the children from Guernsey.

Years later the war had finished, you see, I was on *The Lady of Mann*, sailing with Tom Woods, one of the finest masters in the company, and I was home each Sunday, but however a niece of mine came down you see, she said, 'I'm courting, Uncle Harry.' I said, 'Good, I'm very pleased. Well, I'll be home next Sunday, bring him down and I'll vet him.' 'Right-ho,' she said. And right enough she did. A very nice chap and he was, and we had a nice chat and, I queried him a bit, you know, and he said where he was living now, and I said, 'Where did you come from?' He said, 'The Channel Islands.' 'Oh,' I said, 'how did you get from the Channel Islands?' 'Oh, we were evacuated,' he said. 'Did you go up to Glasgow?' 'Yes, that's right.' I said, 'Tell me, this is interesting,' you see, 'how did you travel and that.' 'Oh, it was a fine big boat, two funnels,' he said, 'and there was an officer came down, an officer came down,' and he said, 'he started feeding us with just condensed milk.' Now, wasn't that funny?   And he was one of them, 'I never tasted condensed milk so sweet in my life,' he said, 'it's sweet enough as it is!' And he went up to Glasgow and he came down, he was a fully-fledged plumber by that time, and eventually he came to Castletown and married my niece. Isn't it a good story? That's the God's honest truth that.

Edited from the *'Time to Remember'* interviews with Captain Kinley, plus family notes.

After her role in the evacuations, *Viking* had a period at Barrow, and was then laid up at the Tongue in Douglas Harbour, before resuming her civilian run between Fleetwood and Douglas.   In 1942, *Viking* was requisitioned again, initially deployed on troop movements to Orkney and Shetland, following which she was used as a target vessel for the Fleet Air Arm, operating out of Crail for seven months from June 1942. From December 1943, she was again operating as a troop ship and was in service off the French Coast during the D-Day landings. Back in London for a refit in Surrey Commercial Docks, she was hit by a flying bomb on 28 June 1944, but after repair was back again in troop movements until the end of the war.   Derequisitioned, she left Tilbury on 17 May 1945, arriving at Barrow on the 23rd for overhaul, which was completed at Birkenhead, before her return to the Fleetwood-Douglas service on 18 June (the Liverpool service was not resumed at all by the Steam Packet until 8 April 1946).   After forty-nine years in service, she finally sailed into the breakers yard in 1954.

In May 1997, *The House of Manannan* was opened in Peel, by Manx National Heritage to present an exhibition in The Story of Mann and its rich Celtic, Viking and Maritime history.   The museum staff and project team met Harry Kinley, by then aged 88, after being invited to his home in Colby in February 1996. They were looking for a suitable candidate to appear in the Maritime Encounters display, alongside Peter Heywood, Captain Quilliam and Sir William Hillary. After reading an interview with him in a local

Manx magazine, they though him the perfect subject, with his long service with the Steam Packet, his WWII experiences and working as Captain on the *Ben-my-Chree* until his retirement. As expected, he was a mine of information about his childhood in Fistard, wartime, and career at sea. But they also wanted him to be in the exhibition 'in person', so after taking dozens of photographs, a life-size model was made of Captain Kinley, which also entailed commissioning a sculptor in a London studio to recreate his head and facial features as accurately as possible. The most satisfying moment for the curators came when they collected Captain Kinley from his home and took him to meet his double. It was an incredible likeness, and for the first time since they had met him he was almost speechless. That is until he eventually managed to say 'A good likeness, but don't you think he looks a bit old?'

[**Neate, Kirsty & Cresswell, Yvonne,** *The House of Manannan – The Latest Chapter in the Story of Mann,* Social History in Museums: Journal of the Social History Curators Group (vol 23 1997-98 pp.41-45)]

SS *Viking* (1905)

"Viking". New Turbine Steamer I. O. M. Boat.
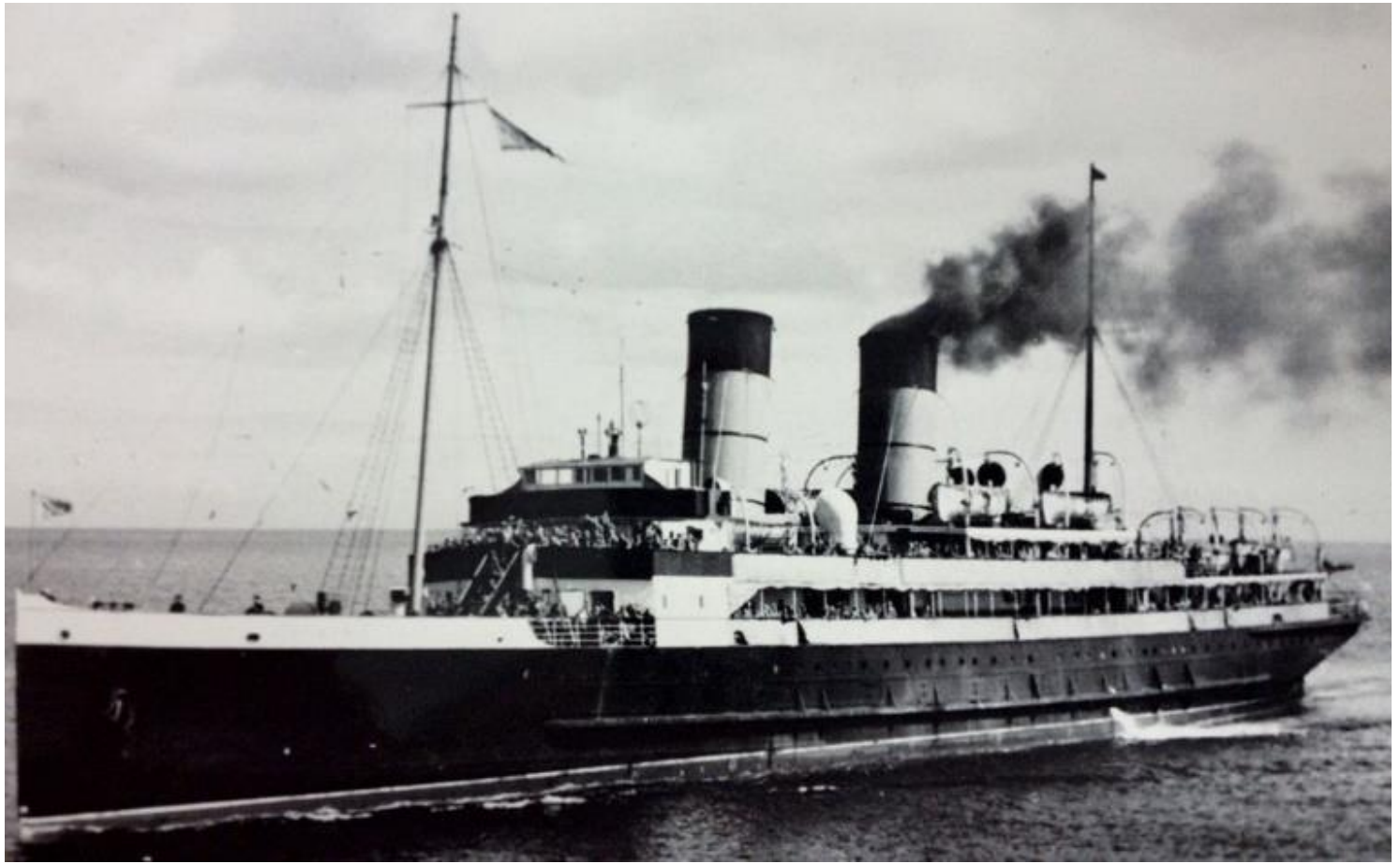
TSS *Manx Maid (I)*

Launched in 1910 and named *Ceasarea* she was employed on the Southampton to Channel Islands route under the ownership of the London & South Western Railway Company. On the outbreak of the First World War she was requisitioned by the Admiralty and converted to an armed boarding vessel.

Back in domestic service after the war, she ran aground in thick fog off St Helier on 7 July 1923 and had the appearance of a total wreck. Nevertheless, two weeks later she was re-floated and salvaged, being taken to Birkenhead for a refit following repairs in Southampton. Restored to fully working order, she was purchased in 1923 by the Steam Packet, renamed *Manx Maid* and worked the usual domestic routes until she was requisitioned in 1939, and once again converted to an armed boarding vessel.

Manx Maid was undergoing repairs at the time of *Operation Dynamo* so played no part, but once back in service she was despatched to Southampton and crossed to St Malo. However, the port was already under enemy occupation by the time she arrived, and unable to go ashore, she returned to England. Her second trip was to Brest, and picked up nearly 3,000 troops (almost twice her peace-time capacity). Due to being so low in the water, she developed condenser trouble and had to wait off-shore for three hours for calmer weather, before she eventually reached the safety of Plymouth harbour.

In October 1941 she was renamed HMS *Bruce* by the Royal Navy, and became a 'Special Duties' vessel. From the end of March 1942 until March 1945 the Fleet Air Arm used her as a target vessel. She was returned to the Steam Packet on 21 March 1945 and was given a refit (including a new mainmast) and put back into full passenger use on the domestic service. She was another of the old class of ferries due to be replaced by the 'six sisters' and was towed to Barrow-in-Furness for breaking up in November 1950.

***Manx Maid* approaching the Liverpool landing stage** *(Manx National Heritage)*

Snaefell (IV) (1906)

The Snaefell

Tonnage, 1,713; Length, 315; H.P. 7,500; Average Speed 20 Knots.

Launched in 1906, **Snaefell (IV),** was purchased by the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company in 1920 following her war service as a troop carrier. In the Second World War, *Snaefell* was again requisitioned and again used as a troopship, but after one year she was returned to the company and resumed her duty serving the Island's wartime link with the mainland, first to Liverpool and then to Fleetwood. On the cessation of the war, *Snaefell* was withdrawn from service in 1945, and sold for breaking in 1948 after forty-two years in service.

S.S. "Snaefell," I.O.M.

Tynwald (IV) (1936)

Tynwald (IV), launched in 1936, from the Vickers Armstrong yard in Barrow, was put in service on the winter sailings on the Liverpool-Douglas route, before being requisitioned as a personnel carrier in September 1939.   Manned by her peace time crew, *Tynwald* first served on English Channel routes to Cherbourg and Le Harve, before being despatched to Dunkirk on 28 May 1940, bringing out a total of 8,953 men. She was the last ship to leave on 4 June, and brought home the greatest number of evacuees of any of the Steam Packet vessels.

Unarmed and with normal peacetime crews under the command of Captain Wilfred Qualtrough, *Tynwald*, accompanied by *Fenella,* had sailed to Dunkirk on the night of 28 May 1940. *Fenella* was lost the following day. *Tynwald* transported 1,500 men to Folkestone on 29th and 5,000 more over further trips on 30th and 31st while under sustained enemy air attack. On 1 June she was again ordered to sail from Folkestone. However, her crew, which had already performed heroically in extremely stressful conditions, were totally exhausted both mentally and physically, and *Tynwald* did not sail that night.

> Even endurance has its inevitable limits. The personnel ships had been working now, some of them, for a full week. They were civilian ships – before everything this must be remembered. They were not trained to the necessities of war, nor were they moulded to its disciplines. Now as their weariness grew, there were failures. *Tynwald* should have sailed from Folkestone at this time. She had completed three hard voyages bringing away 4,500 men, but on this evening failed to sail. Her master stated that his men had been constantly on their feet for a week, that his officers were completely exhausted and he himself had only four hours' rest in the whole course of the week and was unfit for further duty.
> The *Ben-my-Chree* was in the same condition. Exhaustion was beginning to show amongst the naval vessels as well. It was found possible in certain circumstances to put fresh captains aboard. With the personnel ships Admiral Ramsey now took the necessary step of putting a naval commander on board with a party of ten seamen. Relief crews were ordered for the *Ben-my-Chree* and *Tynwald*.
>
> **Devine, David,** *The Nine Days of Dunkirk* (1959)

© PATHE GAZETTE
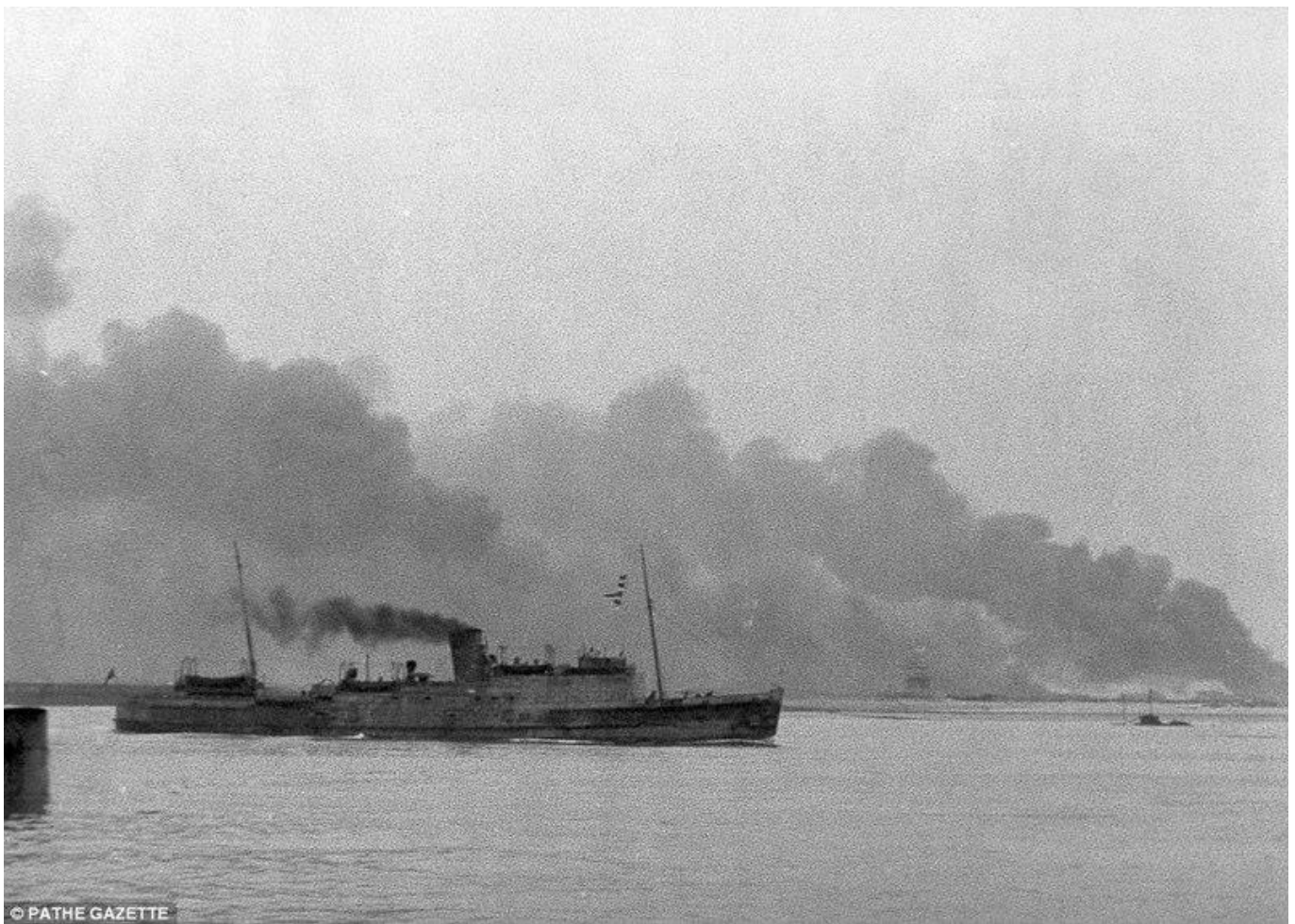
Captain Qualtrough stood down and *Tynwald* sailed with a relief crew of a naval officer and ten ratings. Nevertheless, a number of the original Steam Packet crew including John Henry Whiteway (Chief Officer, who became acting master); Alan Watterson (second officer, who became Chief Officer); the radio officer Charles Mason; purser Will Lister; John Gawne (carpenter) and Arthur Allen (donkeyman), who had all endured so much already, volunteered to carry on. *Tynwald* made her fourth passage to Dunkirk leaving Folkestone at 9.15pm on 2 June, again endured heavy air attacks and brought home another 1200 men. Still she was unfinished and returned again the following day with a relief crew to bring out more evacuees, bringing her total number rescued to 8,953, the largest number recovered by any vessel under *Operation Dynamo.*

Tynwald 1938

Captain Jack Keig and
Chief Officer J H Whiteway
Whiteway was in charge of Tynwald at Dunkirk
and awarded DSC

Steam Packet Officers Whiteway, Watterson and Mason were honoured for their bravery and returning once more on the fourth voyage. Each was awarded the DSC.

In November 1941, now converted to an auxiliary anti-aircraft ship as HMS *Tynwald,* having most of her superstructure removed, she was deployed on coastal convoy escort duties in the Western Approaches.

On 5 November 1942, now under the command of Philip George Wodehouse, she left Gibraltar to join the assault convoy the following day, forming part of the naval force supporting *Operation Torch*, the North Africa landings. By 8 November, HMS *Tynwald* had arrived off Algiers C beachhead, where she provided anti-aircraft support, as well as a radar guard ship directing aircraft from the carrier HMS *Avenger*. Two days later, she left for Bougie arriving on 11 November, again to provide anti-aircraft support, this time directing aircraft from the carrier HMS *Argus*. The following day, while standing by the monitor *HMS Roberts* in Bougie Bay, 100 miles to the east of Algiers, the *Tynwald* was hit on the starboard side after two torpedoes were fired by the Italian submarine *Argo* in the early hours of 12 November. She went down by the bow which became grounded enabling the rescue of survivors by the *Roberts* and the corvette *Samphire*. Tragically, ten men on board the *Tynwald* were killed. *Tynwald* was now the fourth Steam Packet vessel to be lost.

Ben-my-Chree (IV)

Launched at Cammell Laird in Birkenhead in 1927, *Ben-my-Chree* was the first steamer built after World War I for the Steam Packet and would remain in service, mainly on the Douglas-Liverpool route, for almost four decades until 1965. Her initial livery was the traditional black, but changed to white with green topping at the Vickers Armstrong yard in 1932 for a charter, which was later cancelled. However, it added a touch of glamour to their already luxurious vessel, and the Steam Packet believed the colour scheme would be impressive advertising when she steamed up the Mersey. The livery was applied to the Lady of Mann in 1933, and to the Mona's Queen on her 1934 launch. All three ships of similar quaility built for the company between the wars, typified the style and elegance which was associated with the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company during the 1930s, and were highly regarded by both their passengers and crew.
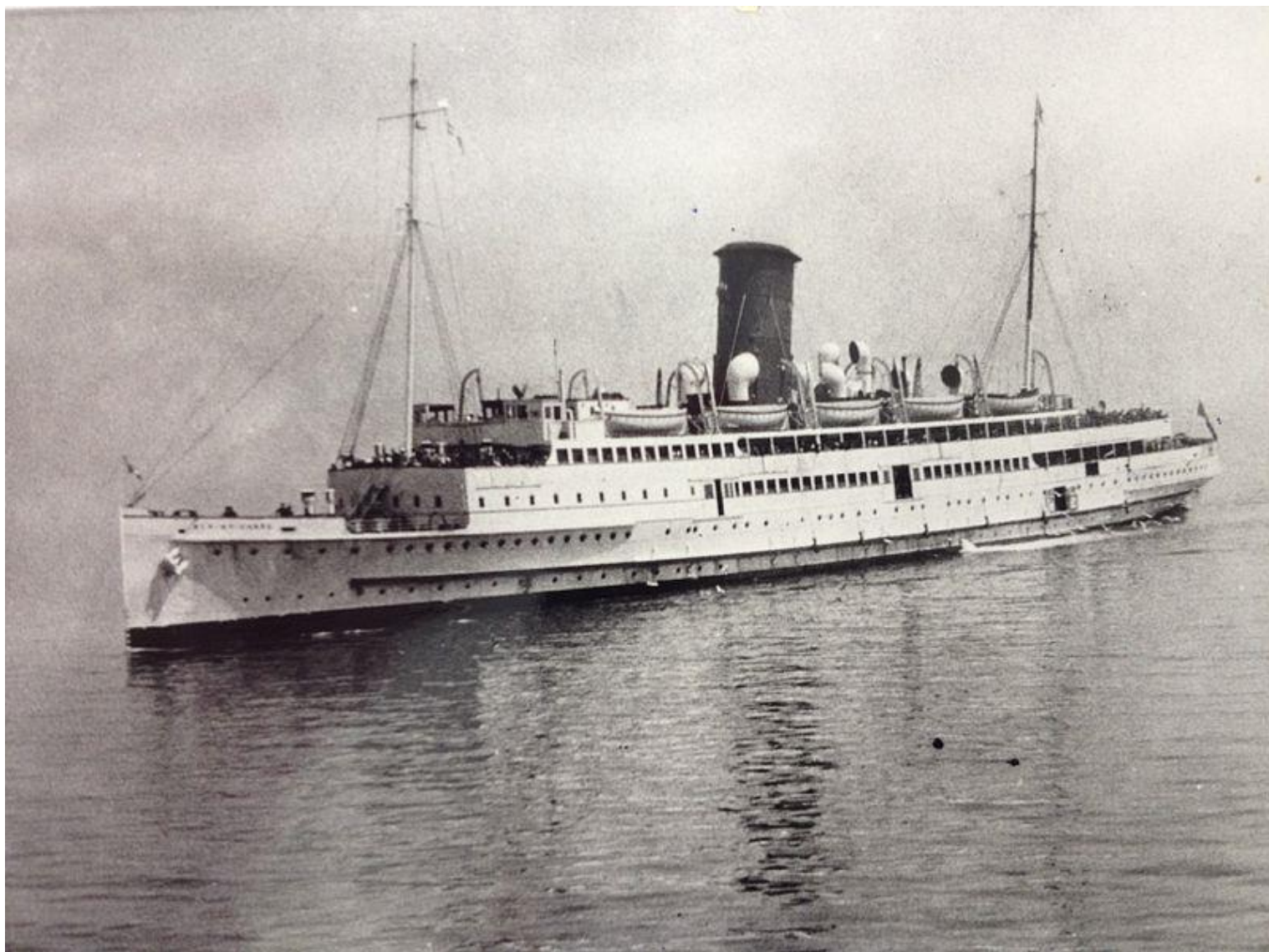
Ben-my-Chree was requisitioned at the beginning of the Second World War, painted in naval grey in September 1939, and made three trips to Dunkirk, rescuing a total of 4,095 troops, before a collision soon after leaving Folkestone effectively finished her part in the Dunkirk evacuation. After repair, she served as a transport vessel between the Faroes, Iceland and Britain, usually in the company of *Lady of Mann*. Her service out of the Scottish ports of Greenock and Invergordon continued until January 1944, when she was moved to North Shields, converted into a landing carrier vessel (Landing Ship Infantry Hand Hoisting) with a carrying capacity of six landing craft assault, and prepared to take part in the forthcoming invasion of France. On D-Day, 6 June 1944, as headquarters ship of the Senior Officer of the 514th Assault Flotilla, she dropped her landing craft with their American troops of the Ranger Assault Group at Pointe du Hoc off Omaha Beach.

Her war role continued well after VE Day, where she was still used as a transport vessel until May 1946. By the time she returned to Birkenhead she was in very poor condition, but after a reconditioning and a refit, which included a shortened mainmast and funnel (the cravat later being removed in 1950), she returned to service with the Steam Packet operating only during the summer season. Her final passage was to Liverpool on 13 September 1965 after almost four decades in service (not before the author had made several trips on her, to both Douglas and Llandudno before her withdrawl).

She was then moved across the river to be laid up in Birkenhead until she was bought by Van Heyghen Freres of Antwerp. *Ben-my-Chree* was taken under tow to Bruges where she arrived on 23 December 1965 for breaking.
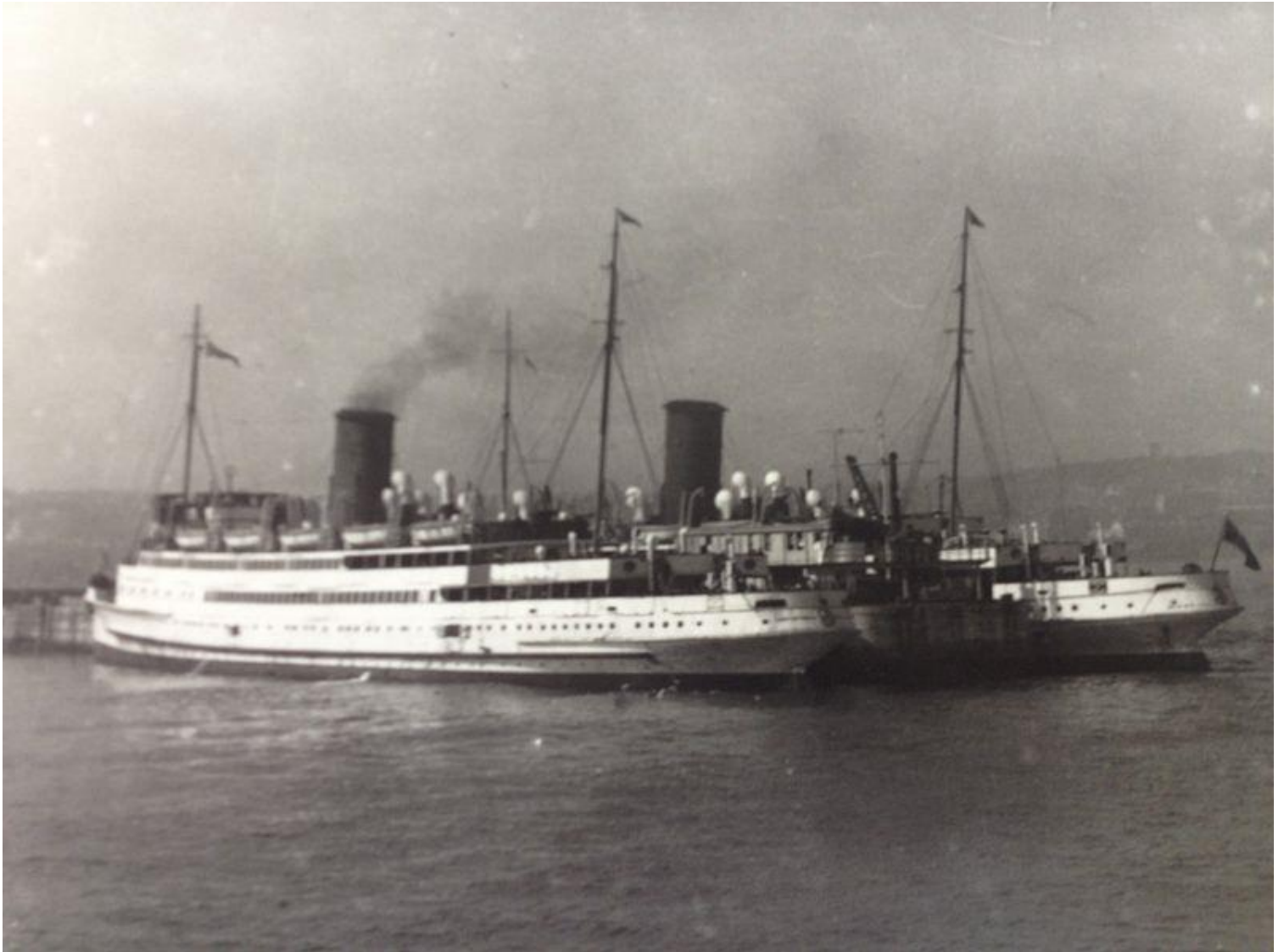
Lady of Mann (left) and *Ben-my-Chree* (right)
in company summer livery, berthed at the Victoria Pier, Douglas.

A pristine looking *Ben-my-Chree (IV)* in her 1930s white livery at Barrow. (Photo Jeffrey D. Sankey).
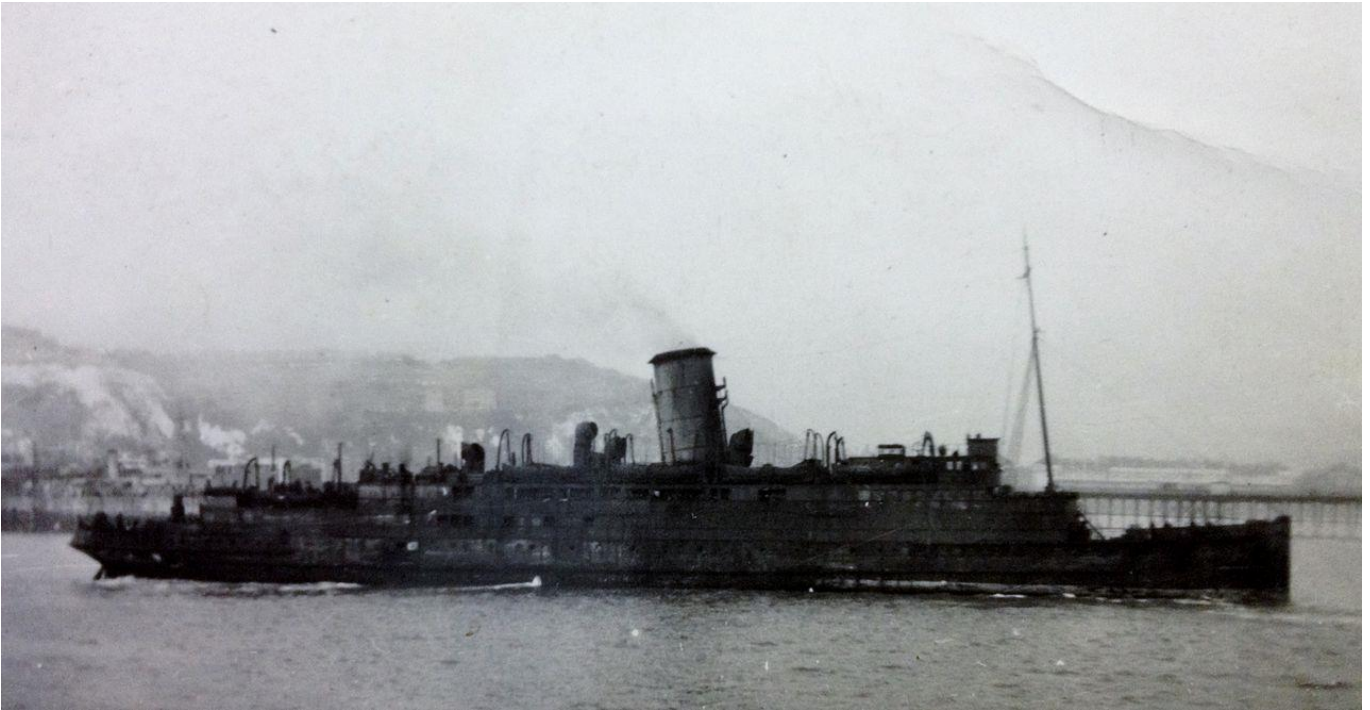
Ben-my-Chree pictured on wartime service.

Ben-my-Chree pictured at Dover, 18 June 1944
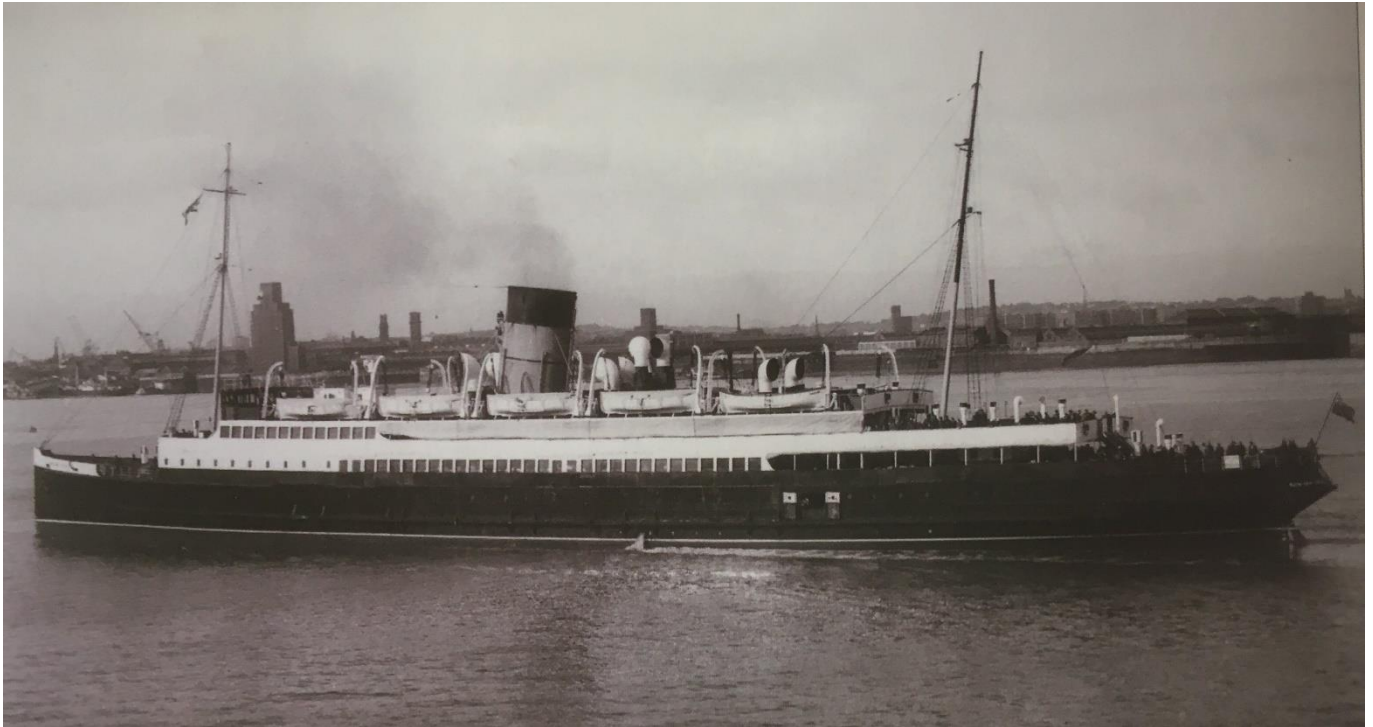
Post war service on the Mersey

Lady of Mann

The **Lady of Mann** was the flag-ship of the Manx ferry fleet, with a lengthy service between 1930 and 1971. Once requisitioned by the Admiralty, she too served as a personnel carrier, and was soon in action in Dunkirk where she made a total of four crossings evacuating 4,262 troops. With a top speed of 23 knots she successfully evaded the heavy fire, both from the air and coastal guns. Two weeks later she was at the heart of *Operation Ariel*, rescuing more exhausted British troops from Cherbourg, Brest and Le Havre, while again under attack.

She continued to serve as a troop carrier, often based in Lerwick in the Shetland Islands, which made her ideal for the Normandy D Day landings. Like *Ben-my-Chree,* she was converted into an L.S.I. (Landing Ship, Infantry) to enable her to carry six landing craft, and saw action operating as a Headquarters Ship for the 512th Assault Flotilla, being responsible for the landings on Juno Beach.

From her return until the end of the war, she continued to ferry troops and refugees between Europe and England, before being decommissioned by the Admiralty in 1946. She returned triumphant to a civic reception in Douglas on 9 March 1946, before being partly reconditioned by Cammell Laird and at Morpeth Dock. She returned to full service on 14 June 1946, and a became welcome sight once more on the Mersey. After her long service lasting four decades, she was sold for breaking in 1971.

Pathe News reel featuring *Lady of Mann* - Second BEF Home Again (1940)

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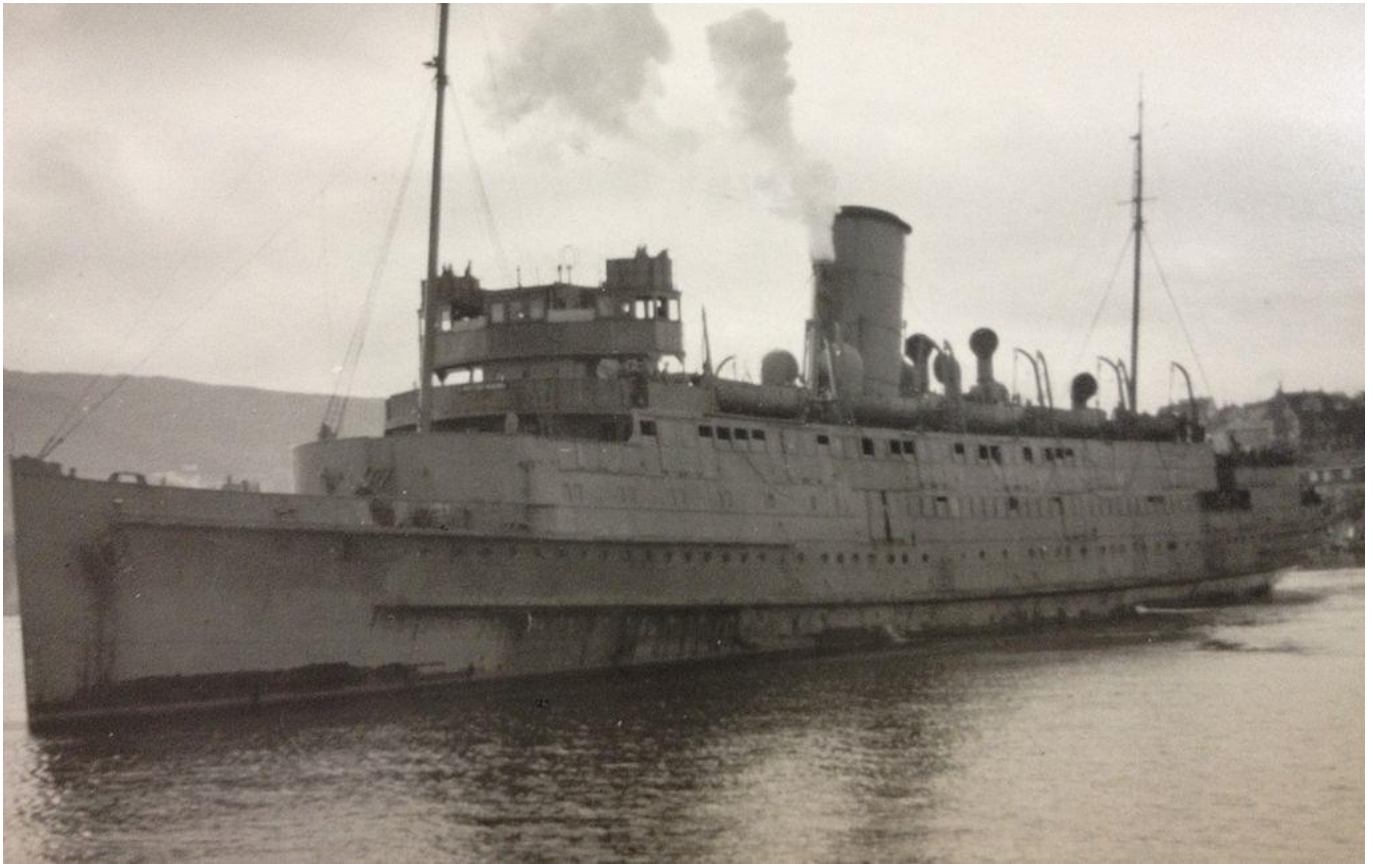
Lady of Mann at the Faroe Islands on war service
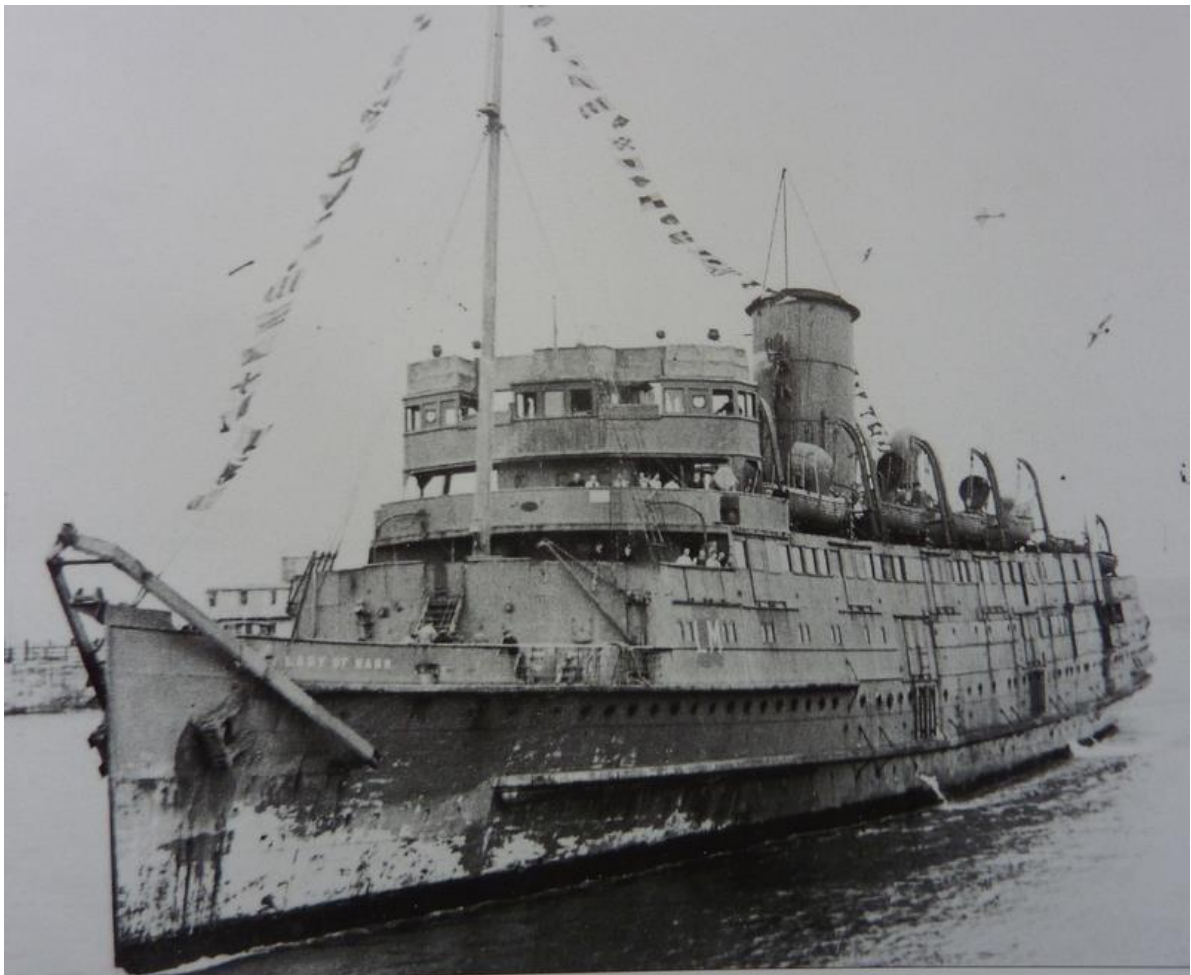
A rather war-weary *Lady of Mann* returning to Douglas, 9 March 1946

Lady of Mann in post-war livery at the Pier Head

1939

10 Sept 1939. Left Liverpool for Avonmouth
14 Sept 1939. Left Avonmouth for St Nazaire
with troops, & made another
12 trips to St Nazaire to Dec 27 1939
Estimated mileage 15.000

1940

1 Jan 1940 Left Southampton for Cherburg &
made 28 trips to Cherburg & Le Havre till
the 24 April.
28 April 1940 Left Southampton for Clyde
1 May . . Left Clyde for Southampton &
made another 7 trips to Cherburg.
29 May 1940. Southampton to Dover
30 " . Dover to Southampton
30 " " Southampton to Dover
31 " " Dover to Dunkirk
31 " " Dunkirk to Folkestone.
1 June 1940 Folkestone to Dover to Dunkirk
2 " " Dunkirk to Folkestone Dover
2 " " Dover to Dunkirk
3 " " Dunkirk to Dover
3 " " Dover to Dunkirk
4 " " Dunkirk to Dover.
4 " " Dover to Plymouth ✓
10 " " Plymouth to Southampton ✓ ✓
11 " " Southampton to Le Havre ✓
12 " " Havre to Cherburg ✓
12 " " Cherburg to Southampton ✓
15 " " Southampton to Brest ✓
16 " " Brest to Plymouth ✓
17 " " Plymouth to La Palice
20 " " La Palice to Plymouth ✓
23 " " Plymouth to Liverpool

Captain Tom Woods (pictured previous page) was in command of the *Lady of Mann* during the Dunkirk *Operation Dynamo*. Above is a page of his handwritten notes of ports visited during 1939/40. He served with distinction, being Mentioned in Despatches and awarded the OBE. More of his story can be found here: http://www.fightingthrough.co.uk/#/lady-of-mann-dunkirk-ww2-1/4587204488

News of the role played by the Manx steamers began to filter back home, but it was several months before this article appeared in the *Liverpool Daily Post*,

MANX BOATS HEROISM 1940

The heroic part played by the Manx steamers will have an honourable share when the history of the war comes to be written.   In the evacuation of the Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk, eight of the Manx steamer fleet brought to England 30,000 British and some French soldiers. They were under constant bombardment and machine gun fire from the air, while floating mines and submarines added to the perils of each trip. Their only protection was one machine gun each.

5,000 INSTEAD OF 1,200

The *Tynwald* made 5 trips from Dunkirk, licensed to carry 1,200 passengers, she had on one trip 5,000 troops. The *Lady of Mann* made 4 trips, her last with over 5,000 troops. On two trips she carried stretchers and other less serious cases, and on two others French troops. The *Manxman* made 3 trips, and on the *Ben-my-Chree II*, the soldiers were "packed like herrings."   Three of the companies steamers were sunk at Dunkirk, the *Mona's Queen* and the *Fenella*, which since the outbreak of war had been acting as troop ships, and the *King Orry,* which, except for the engine room staff was manned by the Royal Navy.   The *Mona's Queen* was sunk on May 29th while entering Dunkirk, 24 crew were killed when half a mile from their berth they were attacked by two German bombers. Mr R. Clucas of Douglas, 1st Officer says, "Our gunners were splendid and drove the Germans off, we were returning from the attack when from nowhere a Hurricane appeared and shot both the Germans down. In the next moment, there was a terrific explosion, we had struck a mine, the ship lifted out of the water and broke in two, her funnel was lifted clear out of her." Her crew were mostly Manx. Roy Gallager, her paymaster, a native of Liverpool in civil life an insurance agent, he had lived in Douglas some years, G. Gregson, a steward lived at 1 Talton Rd, Liverpool.

ENGINE ROOM WRECKED

On May 30th, the *Fenella* was sunk by a bomb when taking troops on board alongside the jetty at Dunkirk. Capt W. Cubbon stated, there were 800 troops on board when the bombers came over in wave after wave between 5.30 and 6am. A bomb fell between the *Fenella* and the quay wall. The masonry smashed into the side wrecking the engine room. The troops were taken off safely, some got on board the *Crested Eagle*, a Thames steamer, but she in turn was bombed, and 16 of the *Fenella's* crew were lost.
Among them:-
J. Corrin, Chief steward, 16 Hereford Rd, Liverpool
T. E. Gibson, Steward, 16 Marsden Rd, Wallasey, Liverpool
T. Helsby, Steward, 18 Roderick St, Liverpool
A. E. Corkish, Paymaster, 2 Craig Ave, West Derby Rd, Liverpool

THE LAST AT BOULOGNE

Previous to the Dunkirk evacuation the *Mona's Queen* had had a very rough time at Boulogne and Calais, she was the last ship of the Merchant Navy to leave Boulogne. She brought into the port, though under bombardment from the air, 300tons of high explosive chiefly TNT and gun-cotton to blow up the docks. After she had unloaded, troops were rushed on board until she could hold no more, these were safely landed in England. At Calais she was under heavy bombardment while evacuating troops. She took part in the evacuation of Rotterdam and Ostend. After her exploit at Boulogne a grateful message was sent to Capt Duggan, her Master, by the Port Admiral, who referred to the most excellent work she was doing, "under the most hazardous conditions." The *Manx Maid* was another vessel which "did her bit" most nobly. After Dunkirk a number of Manx boats were at the evacuation of Le Havre, in some ways more adventurous than Dunkirk - Cherbourg, St Malo, Brest and La Pallice, during all of which service they were attacked again and again.

Liverpool Daily Post, **Tuesday 21 Dec 1940**

The anchor was raised after an initiative involving the late Captain Andrew Douglas and Captain Hamish Ross to return it to the Isle of Man to form a memorial to all Steam Packet Company staff who lost their lives during World War Two.

MANX BOAT HEROES

OFFICERS AWARDED THE D.S.C.

The D.S.C. has been awarded to a number of officers of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Co. for their heroic work at the Dunkirk evacuation.

They are Captain R. Duggan, master of the Mona's Queen. Captain James H. Whiteway, master of the Tynwald; Allan Watterson, second officer of the Tynwald, all of Douglas; and Edgar Hugh Bishop, of Ramsey, paymaster of the Viking.

Mentioned in despatches: A. J. Allan (Douglas) donkeyman on the Tynwald; John Gawne (Port St. Mary), carpenter on the Tynwald; W. E. Lister (Port Erin), paymaster on the Tynwald; and Captain T. C. Woods (Douglas), master of the Lady of Mann.

A MANX BOAT SKIPPER

AWARDED D.S.C. FOR "GOOD SERVICES"

Among naval decorations announced last night in a supplement to the London Gazette is the Distinguished Service Cross to Captain Radcliffe Duggan, of H.M.T. Mona's Queen, for "good services in operations off the Dutch, Belgian and French coasts."

The Mona's Queen, of course, was an Isle of Man Steam Packet boat, and Captain Duggan, her peace-time commander. He is one of the company's senior officers and is well-known in Liverpool.

The Mona's Queen was reported lost by enemy action shortly after the withdrawal of the B.E.F.

Captain Duggan, aged 50, is a native of Ballabeg, near Port St. Mary, and now resides at Primrose Avenue, Douglas. He has commanded many of the company's well-known passenger and mail boats.

He made several trips in the Mona's Queen in the course of the evacuation, the scope of the operations including Rotterdam, Dunkirk, and a number of points off the North-West Coast of France.

After negotiating a number of hazards, both from below and above the water, Captain Duggan handed over command to a relief officer, and returned for a well-earned leave. He learned shortly afterwards that his ship had been mined and lost.

Captain Duggan now has a new command, again in the Government service.

Two naval radio petty officers, Ernest John William Ames and George Frederick Oliver Hoyer, who had been seconded to the Mona's Queen, are among those "mentioned in despatches."

Mr. W. Patterson, a naval rating engaged as Lewis gunner aboard the transport Lady of Mann, another of the company's vessels, has been awarded the Distinguished Service Medal "for good services during the withdrawal of Allied troops from the French coasts."

MANX STEAMERS SAVED 30,000 LIVES

War Deeds Of Famous Pleasure Ships

Steamers and crews of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company, Ltd., have again, as in the last war, taken their place in the front line and acquitted themselves with distinction.

Some of the vessels, bearing names known to legions of holiday passengers, have figured in the grim events of landings and evacuations, and four have been lost while on such service.

THERE is less evidence that Helen's face launched a thousand ships than that a young Manx woman's complaints started the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company. That was well over a century ago—for the company is the oldest independent Liverpool shipping line—and the nearest we can now get to her name is that she became known as "Little Alice."

She, like others, had had a shocking passage in one of the hulks then connecting the island as doubtful links with the mainland, and her account aroused Manx feeling to such a pitch that at a public meeting funds were pooled for the building of a steamer; and the Steam Packet Company was founded. This ordered its first vessel, the paddle-steamer Mona's Isle, in December 1829. She was 200 tons gross and did the crossing in about eight hours.

During the long intervening years the company has met and defeated more than one challenge. In its earliest days there was fierce rivalry with the St. George company of Liverpool, which once, in a desperate spirit of defiance, actually reduced its fare to sixpence; and in 1854 another Manx company tried to kill the Steam Packet Company with a shilling. But the dog it was that died. In 1939 the I.O.M. Steam Packet Company was carrying the biggest volume of sea tourist traffic in the British Isles. Messrs. Thomas Orford and Son have been the Liverpool agents of the company since 1851.

In Two Wars

The Manx steamers have been cast for vital rôles in two wars, but their work during the present hostilities has been very different from what it was in 1914-18. Then, although so well suited to the conveyance of troops across the Channel, they were not called upon to perform that duty with the exception of two of them—namely, the Empress Queen, and Mona's Queen. Others in the fleet of fifteen steamers were employed as seaplane carriers, net-laying ships and armed boarding-vessels, and one, the King Orry, was attached to the Grand Fleet. Four steamers were lost and three were retained by the Government.

During the present war all but two of the company's fleet of handsome, efficient, well-appointed "little liners" have been used mainly for a purpose similar to that for which they were designed—namely, the carriage of passengers, and the work they did in getting our men away from France and Belgium has added exciting pages to the history of the company and covered with glory the vessels themselves and the fine men who once again turned so quickly from the duties of peace to the grim test of battle.

This test was not long in coming, for eight of the fleet were thrown into the historic struggle of the evacuation from France. Some 30,000 British and French soldiers owe their escape to these brave steamers and their indomitable officers and crews, who loaded up again and again under almost constant bombardment and machine-gun fire from the air, and made their zig-zag crossings under menace from U-boats. Often they carried five times the number of passengers for which they were registered; but, of course, that was no time to observe conditions of contract.

Fate Of Mona's Queen

Three of the company's steamers were lost in this great withdrawal—the Mona's Queen and the Fenella (which from the outbreak of the war had been serving as troopships) and the King Orry. The last-named was manned, with the exception of the engine-room staff, by the Royal Navy. She was a twin-screw steamer of 1,877 tons, and was built in the year before the last war opened.

Mona's Queen (2,756 tons, built in 1924) fell victim to a mine, which she struck as she was entering Dunkirk on May 29, 1940, after evading a determined aerial attack. The mouth of the harbour was obstructed by two sunken trawlers, and the previous day, with only twenty feet to spare, the steamer was swung round and backed into what was once a quay side. Having crowded every inch of her space with troops, she steamed to England. It was on her return trip that disaster occurred, and twenty-four of her crew were killed.

One of the survivors, First-Officer R. Clucas, of Douglas, in an account of his gallant ship's fighting end, said:—"Our gunners were splendid, and drove the Germans off. They, however, circled round, and were returning to the attack when out of nowhere appeared a Hurricane and shot down the Germans. Four minutes after the attack the German air crews were dead.

"It looked as if we were safe for the time being, but the next moment there was a terrific explosion. We had struck a mine. The ship was lifted out of the water and broke in two, and the funnel was lifted clean out of her." Mona's Queen was only half a mile from her allotted berth when this fate engulfed her.

Loaded With Explosives

Before taking part in the Dunkirk evacuation, this steamer had had a very rough time at both Boulogne and Calais. She was the last ship of the Merchant Navy to leave Calais, into which port she had carried, under bombardment from the air, a 300-ton cargo of high explosives, mainly T.N.T. and gun-cotton for use in blowing up the docks. It had required fourteen hours to load the ship at a British port, but at Calais she was unloaded in three hours, for the explosives were wanted "in a hurry." One can imagine—or can one?—the tense anxiety of the officers and crew to get their terrible load safely ashore. When the vessel had been cleared, troops were rushed aboard until the steamer would hold no more, and these were duly landed in England.

After this exploit, her master, Captain R. Duggan, of Douglas, who was then sixty-one years of age, received a grateful message from the Port Admiral, who referred to the excellent work she was doing "under the most hazardous conditions." The message ended: "You have the admiration of us all."

At Calais, again, she was subjected to repeated attacks while evacuating troops, and took part in the withdrawal from Rotterdam and Ostend. Altogether, a brave and splendid record for any ship, but one reposing with special honour on a pleasure steamer dedicated to the carefree purposes of peace. Captain Duggan was awarded the D.S.C.

How Fenella Was Lost

On May 30, the day following the loss of Mona's Queen, the Fenella (2,376 tons, built in 1937) was shattered and sunk when a bomb fell between her and the Dunkirk quay wall, at which she was embarking troops. This tragedy occurred at the height of the German attack on the town and port, when bombs and shells were raining down and the enemy was doing his fiendish utmost to prevent our ships from getting in or out. The fearful explosion which caused the destruction of Mona's Queen and smashed the quay has already been described in a previous article, which told how the North Wales steamer St. Seiriol escaped damage at an adjoining berth.

When the devastating bomb fell the masonry of the quay smashed into the side of Fenella, wrecking the engine-room. There wer 800 troops aboard her at the time, but they and the crew were taken off. Some got on board the Thames steamer Crested Eagle, which (again as already detailed) was herself hit by a bomb, set on fire, and run aground. Many of those aboard the Crested Eagle were terribly burnt, and sixteen of the Fenella's crew were lost. Survivors were rescued by the small boats of the St. Seiriol. One may well suppose that when this war is over the men of the North Wales and Manx steamers will exchange admiring salutes when their steamers rub fenders at Liverpool Landing Stage.

Tynwald's Record

The steamer Tynwald, sister ship of the Fenella, and built in the same year (1937), lies at the bottom of Bougie Harbour, where she was sunk after a great fight in the North African operations at the end of 1942. For four days, as an A.A. ship, she ran the gauntlet of swooping Axis bombers while helping to escort the Allied convoy successfully to its journey's end. Every transport in her charge reached port, though one was damaged. She went down with her guns firing, and many of her crew, including the commander, Captain P. G. Wodehouse, cousin of the author, were saved.

In the Dunkirk days Tynwald made five trips to that port and brought home about 10,000 Britishers. On one crossing she carried 5,000 troops—nearly five times the number she used to take to the Isle of Man when we were wont to say she was "packed." Chief Officer J. H. Whiteway took charge of the steamer when the master was no longer available, and, with the assistance of Second Officer Watterson, who acted as chief officer, made two runs to Dunkirk. Mr. Watterson, who was at that time twenty-nine years of age, has since been lost at sea. As a result of these trips, an able-seaman, Mr. Tom Gribbin, of Port St. Mary, was promoted to second officer. He had served fourteen years in the Navy.

Early in the war the Tynwald was taken over entirely by the Government and was replated and otherwise so changed in appearance that Liverpool would not know her.

Manx boats were in the thick of the evacuations of Rotterdam, Le Havre, Cherbourg, St. Malo, Brest and La Pallice, during all of which they were under almost constant attack; and since then have done, and are doing, splendid work in many waters. In 1923 the company published a stirring record, "How the Manx Fleet Helped in the Great War"; its sequel, when the new—and, we pray, more profound and lasting peace comes to the world, will add some moving chapters to its history.

ROLL OF HONOUR

D.S.C.—Captain Radcliffe Duggan, Chief Officer (Acting Master) John Henry Whiteway, Acting Chief Officer Allan Watterson, Purser Eli Bishop, Radio Officer C. P. Mason, Radio Officer E. F. Ambler.

D.S.M.—Seaman T. F. Gribbin, Seaman Egerton Watterson.

Mentioned in Despatches.—Captain T. C. Woods, Captain P. B. Cawley, Second Engineer S. Manning, Third Engineer J. Ferguson, Purser W. E. Lister, Carpenter J. Gawne, Donkeyman A. J. Allen.

Manx Ship Doing Fine War Job

TWENTY-one years ago R.M.S. Caesarea ran aground in a fog near St. Helier. Today, H.M.S. Manx Maid, formerly the Caesarea, is doing a grand job with the Royal Navy.

After running aground she was salvaged and taken over by the Isle of Man Steam Packet Co., Ltd., and renamed Manx Maid.

Commissioned for the Navy when war broke out, she shot down a Junkers 88 at Scapa Flow. Although she missed Dunkirk, she was at the evacuation of St. Malo and Brest.

Since December, 1942, she has been mainly engaged in important experimental work.

ACTED AS "TIRPITZ"

For several months the Manx Maid acted as the Tirpitz while the Fleet Air Arm were training for the real attack.

On a recent important mission through the Irish Sea, the weather was so bad that when she arrived at her destination she had over 8ft. of water in her hold, and the fore screen had been forced back several feet against the bridge. But she completed her mission.

The chief steward, Chief Petty-Officer J. Mylreay, of Birkenhead, who also served in her in peace-time, has been drafted to the Manx Maid on three occasions since war started.

Also members of the crew are Petty-Officer O. H. Temple, of Liverpool; Stoker E. McGinty, of Wallasey; and Stoker J. E. Kelly, Onchan, I.O.M.

Awards for Gallantry

Several awards for gallantry were made to crewmembers in respect of actions performed on board the following vessels;

Tynwald
Mason, Charles Powell, Radio Officer, DSC
Watterson, Allan, Second Officer, DSC
Whiteway, John Henry, Captain, DSC
Gribben, Thomas, Seaman, DSM
Allen, Arthur James, Donkeyman, MID
Gawne, John, Carpenter, MID
Lister, William Edward, Purser, MID

Lady of Mann
Patterson, William, Gunner, DSM
Woods, Thomas, Captain, MID

Manxman
Cowley, Philip Basil, Captain, MID
Ferguson, John, Third Engineer, MID
Quirk, Sidney Manning, Second Engineer, MID

Mona's Queen
Duggan, Radcliffe, Captain, DSC
Ambler, Ernest Harry, Radio Officer, DSC
Watterson, Eggerton, Boatswain, DSM

Between 28 May and 6 June, no less than eight ships belonging to the fleet were engaged in the evacuation of British troops from Dunkirk; 24,669 were rescued by the Isle of Man packets, some making several crossings. Some 333,800 men, in total, were brought back to safety - one in every 14 were transported back across the Channel on board Manx ships. Half of those vessels were lost – *Fenella, King Orry, Mona's Queen* all went down within twenty-four hours of each other on 29/30 May 1940, the blackest day in the company's history, followed by *Tynwald* on 12 November 1942. Despite the losses, the story of such heroism turned a military disaster into a successful operation and went some way to raise morale at a time of great despair.

FOR DUNKIRK BRAVERY

AWARDS TO MERSEY SHIPS' OFFICERS AND MEN

In addition to several already mentioned, the following officers and men in the service of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Co. have received recognition for their gallant rescue work during the evacuation of the B.E.F. at Dunkirk and other Channel ports.
Captain P. B. Cowley, of the steamer Manxman, has been mentioned in despatches, as have also been the Second Engineer, Sidney Quirk, and Third Engineer John Ferguson, of the Manxman.
Radio Officer Charles Mason, of the Tynwald, won the D.S.C., and Seaman Thomas Gribbin (Port St. Mary) has been awarded the D.S.M.
Mr. Ernest Ambler, radio officer on the Mona's Queen, won the D.S.C., and Mr. Egerton Watterson, bo'sun on the Mona's Queen, received the D.S.M.

Liverpool Echo, **5 March 1941**

Memorial

To mark the seventieth anniversary of her sinking, *Mona's Queen's* starboard anchor was raised on 29 May 2010 and subsequently returned to the Isle of Man to form the centrepiece of a permanent memorial. The anchor had become detached during the sinking, and therefore did not form part of the War Grave. Her anchor was raised by a French salvage vessel, and was shown live on BBC television. There was a 12-gun salute from HMS *Monmouth* as a crane lifted the anchor of *Mona's Queen* from the seabed.

On 29 May 2012, a memorial featuring the restored anchor to commemorate the losses 72 years earlier on *Mona's Queen, King Orry* and *Fenella* was opened in a ceremony at Kallow Point in Port St Mary and attended by representatives of local and national government, the Lieutenant Governor, the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company and the French Navy. A service of remembrance is now an annual event on this date.

TSS MONA'S QUEEN III
ANCHOR MEMORIAL

This memorial commemorates those men and women of the Merchant Navy who sacrificed their lives for our future during Operation Dynamo.

TSS Mona's Queen III was one of three Isle of Man Steam Packet Company vessels lost during the evacuation of Dunkirk. Her anchor was recovered from the seabed off Dunkirk on 29th May 2010, to commemorate the 70th anniversary of her sinking.

Dedicated on 29th May 2012

Memorial at Kallow Point, Port St Mary, commemorating the loss of *Mona's Queen, King Orry,* and *Fenella.*

Model of famous ship returns 'home'

A model of one of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's most famous ships has returned 'home'. Mona's Queen III was one of 10 Steam Packet Company vessels commandeered for active duty during World War Two. She sank at Dunkirk having hit a magnetic mine one mile from port on the 29th May 1940. On the same day the Steam Packet Company also lost Fenella and King Orry. A scale replica model, which has been on a long-term loan in Fleetwood Museum, has been brought back to the island and is now proudly on display at the Ferry Travel Shop in the Sea Terminal, Douglas.

Mona's Queen was built and launched at Cammell Laird Shipyard in Birkenhead in 1934. Six years later she took part in the historic rescue of the British Expeditionary Force – known as Operation Dynamo at Dunkirk - and brought an estimated 25,000 men to safety. The operation came at a cost with the loss of 24 crew members, 17 of them from the Isle of Man. In 2012, the anchor of Mona's Queen was sited at Kallow Point in Port St Mary as a permanent memorial to all the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company crew who fought in World War Two. The original 1934 model, which has been on loan at Fleetwood Museum (one of the Company's former destinations) since April 1990, was unveiled by Captain Jack Ronan whose family has a long-held association with the vessel and the Company having first worked there in 1945. Captain Jack's father served on her in 1935, while his two uncles were also serving on board when she was hit at Dunkirk. In 2012, Captain Ronan placed her anchor at the Port St Mary site. Next year marks the 80th Anniversary of the evacuation of Dunkirk.

To commemorate the milestone, a dive team from the Isle of Man is planning to visit the wreck and pay respects on behalf of the Manx nation. Divers will take a commemorative plaque and flags to the wreck site to mark the sacrifice of the crew. The team will also conduct video and photographic surveys of the wreck, and the imagery will form part of an exhibition to be held in Port St Mary in May 2020.
Isle of Man Steam Packet Company Chief Executive Mark Woodward said: 'The Island played a vital role in what proved to be a critical chapter of World War Two and it's important those involved are remembered by future generations. 'The model honours all those Company staff who lost their lives and it is fitting that Captain Ronan, who has many personal connections with the ship and knew most of her crew from that era, carried out the official unveiling. 'He has a considerable personal archive from that period and tells me the decks of the Mona's Queen were the first ships decks he trod.'

*IOM Steam Packet News Release,* **22 March 2019**

Representatives from Isle of Man Steam Packet Company and Port St Mary Commissioners with Mona's Queen Model

https://www.steam-packet.com/information/news/2019/mar/pr804_model_of_famous_ship_returns_%27home%27

Personal Notes

As a youngster I made numerous trips on the Manx ferries to the Isle of Man (and Llandudno) on the hero vessels of Dunkirk; the *Lady of Mann* and the **Ben-my-Chree**, both of which were still in service in the 1960s. We also became family friends of Captain Harry Kinley and Captain Harry Collister. Captain Kinley was a good friend of my parents, and we would visit him regularly in his retirement to Colby in the Isle of Man, usually while holidaying a couple of miles away at the home of Harry Collister and his wife Gertie in Port St Mary. I can vividly remember the thrill of being taken to visit the bridge of the *Lady of Mann* and Captain Collister when he was her Chief Officer during 1963/64. Both men had also served on the Manx ferries during the war.

Harry Kinley was on the *Viking* during the famous evacuation of children from Guernsey, while Harry Collister was on the *Victoria* before being seconded to other companies for the duration of the war following the Dunkirk evacuation. The role played by the Manx vessels wasn't lost on me back in the sixties, my father regaled me with tales of their exploits, and I felt proud even at that young age to travel on them, let alone know men who served with them. Both were thorough gentlemen, and although they told me a few tales of their exploits when I was a young boy, there are so many more questions I would ask them now if they were still with us.
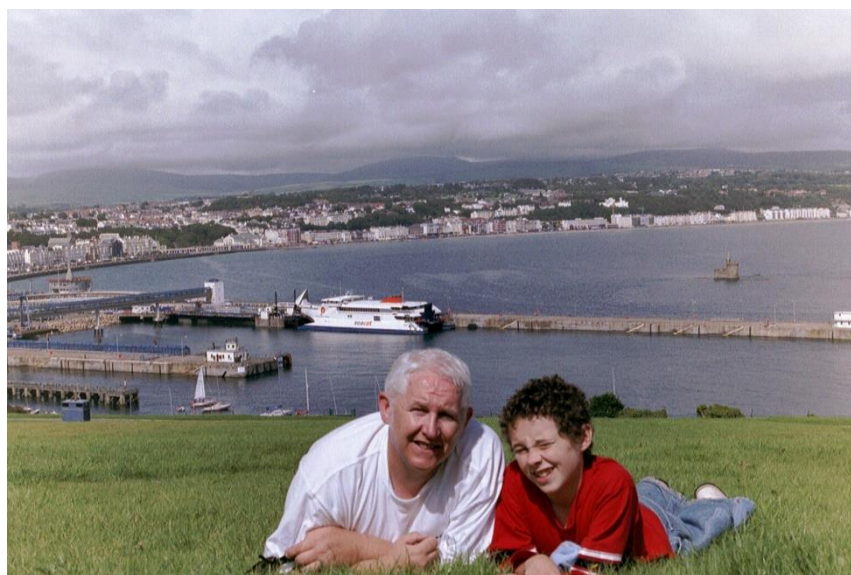
Captain H. E. COLLISTER (43)

From Port St Mary, he was born at Cregneish in 1910, a member of a large and traditional seafaring family. He went to sea at a young age in coasters with firms such as the Zillah Steamship Company (Savages) of Liverpool. He joined the Steam Packet in 1936 as 2nd Mate of the *Mona* and in 1939 he was 2nd Mate of the *Victoria*. After the French evacuations and the loss of so many ships, along with most of the 2nd Mates he was seconded to other companies for the duration of the war. Among those companies were Stewarts of Glasgow and he was Mate there on *Yewmount*, also seeing service in tankers. He returned to the Steam Packet in 1946 as 2nd Mate of the *Manx Maid* (1) and was thereafter on every rung of the ladder as 2nd Mate. He was the first 2nd Mate on the new cargo vessel *Fenella* (3) in 1952 then 2nd Mate of the *Lady of Mann* (1) in 1955 with the writer as AB. He was promoted to Chief Officer of the *Peveril* (2) in 1957. He was for two years the senior Company Chief Officer on the *Lady of Mann* during 1963 to1964.

Master: 1965   First Command: *Ramsey*

He had a short career in command going ashore in the same year. Harry Collister was a fine seaman and officer of great experience. He was holder of both a Master's Certificate and the Liverpool Licence and later worked with the Liverpool University Marine Biological Station at Port Erin. He retired to his home in Port St Mary.

My sister Gill and my father Bill with Gertie Collister (Harry's wife) in 1975 at the Balqueen Hydro, Port St. Mary.
(*Right*) Harry Collister on the *Victoria* in 1939.
(*Below*) A view of the two bays at Port St Mary. The Balqueen Hydro dominates the promenade and the Collister house is in the centre, backing on to the hillside.

Text biographies of Captain Collister and Captain Kinley taken from **Cowsill, Miles & Hendy, John,** *Steam Packet 175; The Official Anniversary of the IOM Steam Packet Company 1830-2005* (Ferry Publications 1992)

Captain H. N. KINLEY (40)

Born in 1908 at Port St Mary, he came from a strong seafaring background. His father was a 'Nickey' skipper and Master on coasters. He went to sea in the 1920s with Wilson's of Whitehaven and the Zillah Steamship Co of Liverpool, later becoming Master in Wilson's in his 20s - he was for some time the youngest Master on the British Register. He joined the Steam Packet in 1936 as 2nd Mate of the *Rushen Castle* and in 1939 was the 2nd Mate of the *Mona's Isle* (4). Thereafter he served as relief officer in vessels on war service in the English Channel. He was with the *Viking* during the 1940 evacuations and was on the famous escape of 1,800 children from Guernsey. After the occupation of France, along with most of the Company 2nd Mates, he was laid off but being a holder of a Mersey Pilotage Licence he was seconded to the Liverpool Pilotage Service where he remained for the duration. After hostilities he returned to the Steam Packet as 2nd Mate of the *Viking* and later the *Lady of Mann* (1) for four years. Promoted Mate of the *Peveril* (1) in 1953 he was made Master in 1961.

Master: 1961 to 1973   First Command : *Conister* (1), 1961

He was with the cargo section for four years as Master and was appointed first Master of the new *Peveril* (3) in 1964. His first passenger command was in 1965 on the *King Orry* and thereafter he served on every rung of the passenger ladder to the *Ben-my-Chree* (5) from which he retired in 1973. He was then the Senior Sailing Master of the Fleet. His brother George was also a Steam Packet Master and Commodore 1957 to 1965. His nephew Vernon also became Master, illustrating the strong family traditions within the fleet. Harry Kinley was a fine seaman, ship Master and an experienced ship handler who lived all his Steam Packet career of 37 years in Castletown then retiring to Colby.

After 50 years at sea he enjoyed a long and healthy retirement, lasting until his 95th year in 2003, the longest surviving Steam Packet Master in history? A devout churchman, he was a Church Warden of Arbory Parish and a co-founder of the still most-popular Mariners' Choir.

My mother Hazel (centre) with Harry Kinley and his wife in their home in Colby, Isle of Man.

Captain Harry Kinley Interview

Captain Kinley was interviewed about his life for *Culture Vannin* which can be streamed online and a transcript downloaded: Captain Harry Kinley Interview

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