The P·L·A MONTHLY

The Magazine of the Port of London Authority

Beckley

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No. 241 November, 1945 *Registered for Transmission by Canadian Magazine Post* Price One Shilling

THE P.L.A. MONTHLY

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NOVEMBER 1945

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P.L.A. MONTHLY

Being the Magazine of the Port of London Authority

Edited by E. KINGSLEY HOLMES

NOVEMBER 1945 NUMBER 241

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All communications relative to text matter or proffered contributions or photographs to be addressed to the Editor, "The P.L.A. Monthly," Port of London Authority, London, E.C.3 (Royal 2000). Advertisers' enquiries, etc., to be addressed to 6, Norfolk Street, London, W.C.2.
Annual Subscription (Twelve shillings post free).

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THE WHITE ENSIGN IN THE PORT OF LONDON

By "LIGHTERMAN"

WHILE we are still in the mood to remember, and before new problems shoulder into the gutter of indifference some of our thankfulness for deliverance, it would be as well to record the work of those officers, bluejackets and Wrens of the tideway navy who also suffered, watched, fought, and in some cases died to the greater glory of London port.

On the outbreak of war London in common with all other ports in the United Kingdom became the responsibility of the Admiralty. In each case the navy gladly made full use of the experience and existing organisation of the port authority. Rear-Admiral E. C. Boyle, V.C., was appointed Flag Officer in Charge, London. From his offices in the Port of London Building he had a view of the time-smoothed stones of the Tower of London and these inspired him to choose for his new base-ship the name H.M.S. *Yeoman*. In 1942 he was succeeded by Admiral Sir Martin Dunbar-Nasmith, V.C., K.C.B. These two officers successfully combined the outwardly-different but fundamentally similar traditions of the Royal Navy and the Royal Port, weaving a pattern of service which resulted in full co-operation and loyalty from all workers whether in uniform or not. Space does not permit a detailed account of all the ramifications of the London Naval Command, and the following chapters deal only with the principal duties of the Royal Navy in the wartime Thames.

Royal Naval Auxiliary Patrol

The Royal Naval Auxiliary Patrol was one of the Navy's largest organisations in the tideway. The name of its base-ship was also inspired by the picturesque ramparts in the Pool: it was H.M.S. *Tower*. The R.N.A.P. had its genesis in a river A.R.P. service formed by the P.L.A. before the war and then known as the River Emergency Service. Its functions were to supplement the Harbour Service, to man emergency river hospital ships and to assist the port generally through the trials envisaged after the failure of Munich. It was mobilised as such on the outbreak of war, craft and crews coming principally from the enthusiastic little-ship sailors of the London Yachting Clubs. They soon showed the professional watermen that they intended to be something more than keen amateurs, and their work became so important to the tideway, that in June, 1940, a large proportion of the men and craft of the R.E.S. were transferred to the white ensign.

"The Royal Naval Auxiliary Patrol, Thames, was one of the Navy's largest organizations in the tideway"

Only we who were associated with the London River during its years of endurance know what London owes to this organisation. From its main depots at Tower Pier, Greenhithe, Tilbury, Cliffe and Holehaven, its craft were continuously employed as handmaidens of the tideway, answering any and every call made on them by other naval departments, merchant service, army, air force or port authority. When mines were reported in the fairway, it was their duty to warn or turn back all river traffic likely to be endangered. If the report came too late, the men of the R.N.A.P. were on hand to tow damaged vessels, assist survivors and help in a dozen other ways. When the great fires of London night after night threw up the banks in hideous relief, the R.N.A.P. towed barges out of danger and assisted the N.F.S. and A.R.P. organisations.

When the inevitable night "alert" wailed its warning, R.N.A.P. craft immediately took up action stations. If raiders were foolish enough to come within range they found the claws of these craft both swift and sharp, for their armament was modern and plentiful. When parachutes fell like autumn leaves over the Thames, dismounted airmen, allied and enemy, had occasion to bless the promptitude with which R.N.A.P. crews got off the mark. The rivalry between the crews regarding the number of airmen picked up exceeded the keenness of the most besotted philatelist.

In between these excursions R.N.A.P. vessels ran a kite balloon delivery and collection service for merchantmen entering or leaving the port, cheerfully accepting the rude remarks of other crews about the danger of their little ships becoming airborne. Another important duty of the R.N.A.P. was the manning and servicing of some sixty mine-watching barges in the lower river, the purpose of which will be dealt with more fully in a later chapter.

The R.N.A.P. suffered a number of casualties in men and craft when the Tower Pier was destroyed by the direct hit of a high explosive bomb. Tilbury

Tower Pier, from which thousands started pleasure trips and dock cruises before the war, was totally destroyed by an H.E. bomb with loss of life, including five P.L.A. officials

Landing Stage was also hit, while the other depots at Greenhithe, Cliffe and Holehaven were by no means strangers to the whine and crump of bombs exploding uncomfortably close to them.

When D-Day was projected it was recognised in high quarters that the erstwhile amateurs had acquired expert knowledge of the river and the insidious power of its tides. This knowledge was made full use of to assist the Harbour Service during the initial stages of herding to their rendezvous the great concrete "Phoenix" units, built on the Thames for the "Mulberry" port of Arromanches. As might be expected from the type of man who volunteered for the R.N.A.P., this organisation is believed to have supplied more lower-deck candidates for commissioned rank than any other branch of naval service.

Minesweeping

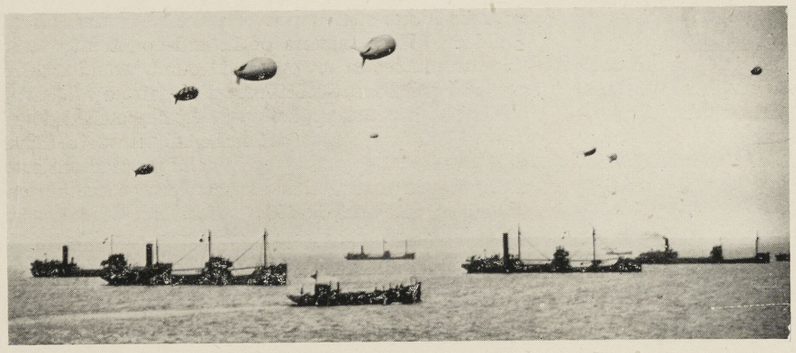
An equally important section of the London Naval Command was the Minesweeping Service. Minesweeping inside the *Nore* was not in the navy's programme until November, 1939, when the enemy made history by dropping the first aerial mines in the estuary and lower tideway. Following this attack, a minesweeping base was established at the Southern Railway Pier, Gravesend ; among its early units was the immortal and notorious *Girl Pat*. The first attempts to sweep magnetic ground mines required a wooden barge laden with old iron, much courage and considerable luck. When the effort was successful, another barge and a further supply of old iron, courage and luck were necessary.

When the enemy got his second wind he dropped parachute mines in the river as high up as Hammersmith and a more comprehensive sweep was organised. The principal minesweeping base was established in the P.L.A. Building under Commander C. S. Lockhart, D.S.C., R.N. The London River minesweepers made a daily sweep which was divided into two sections. The sub-base at Gravesend had the larger and more seaworthy ships and they swept from an imaginary line drawn between Canvey Point and Yantlet Creek up to Ford's Jetty at Dagenham. Seaward of this line was the responsibility of the Sheerness Command. The Gravesend sweepers used the highly scientific "Double L" sweep, which proved to be the complete and annihilating answer to the magnetic mine. Above Dagenham it was difficult to use this apparatus owing to the low degree of salinity of the water. So from Ford's Jetty upstream various tugs and launches were employed to tow skids, the skid being an earlier and more clumsy method of sweeping than the Double L, but one which was suitable for use in fresh or semi-fresh water. Could there have been anything more symptomatic of this fantastic war than the spectacle of minesweepers regularly working through the Tower and other London bridges ? In both sections there were minesweepers equipped to deal with the acoustic ground mine. Every day for some five years the tidal river was swept from end to end by these methods. I have no record of the number of mines swept, but a sufficient number was put up fully to warrant the men and material employed.

Minewatching

This daily sweep safeguarded only the main channel and could not be used to search all the berths, barge roads, docks, creeks, etc., in which mines might and were in fact dropped. This gap in the defences was painfully brought to light when the fully laden oiler *Lunula* blew up while shifting berth at Thameshaven. She had successfully eluded enemy aerial, underwater and surface raiders on her long voyage from the Gulf only to come to grief at her journey's end ; ship, cargo, crew, jetty and tug went up in a ghastly belch of flame. At least one other vessel was damaged in similar circumstances due to the unsuspected presence of an enemy mine in her berth. A hurried conference was held in the P.L.A. Building, as a result of which a minewatching service was organised under Commander Lord Teynham, D.S.C., R.N. Nothing like it had ever before been envisaged and he had no book of rules and only imagination to guide him. As a

"Could there have been anything more symptomatic of this fantastic war than minesweepers regularly working through the Tower and other London bridges"



The principal Naval Control Service Station for assembling and routeing convoys from the Port was at Southend

first measure, all night watchers, sentries and patrols on the river banks were asked to co-operate and within a short time fire spotters, policemen, A.R.P. wardens, Navy, Army and Air Force personnel, Home Guard, watermen and others were organised into a skeleton mine watch. A reward of £5 was offered for each proved mine reported, and at least one old waterman put out in his skiff each time the night "Alert" was sounded to drift under the rain of shrapnel and splinters, determined to earn what he considered to be easy money. Each shore position was numbered and plotted on a key chart in the naval operations room in the P.L.A. Building. A bearing board, set to true north, was supplied to each fixed post ; in many cases the figures were outlined in phosphorescent paint for easier use on dark nights. Thus a watcher had only to report the number of his post, the bearing in degrees of any missile seen to enter the water, the estimated distance and the time, for an accurate plot to be instantly forthcoming in the operations room. A vast network of communications over the whole of the port was improvised to ensure speed in reporting. This organisation was adopted eventually as a standard for the whole of the United Kingdom and overseas ports threatened by aerial mine-laying.

But all this was not enough. A special problem was the tunnels under the river, a train passing through which might actuate an acoustic or magnetic mine lurking in the mud overhead with fearful consequences to the passengers. There were also other gaps in the voluntary line of defence. Accordingly, a number of naval ratings unfit for more active service were specially recruited. In the lower reaches where the river was too wide to be watched adequately from the banks, they manned some sixty superannuated barges moored along the channel. In the middle tideway they manned specially constructed strong posts overlooking tunnel sites and other vital targets and equipped with direct telephone lines to the railway signal boxes concerned. In the upper reaches the strong points were manned by Wrens who evoked the admiration of all who saw their keenness and courage under bombardment. Other posts were constructed and special communications arranged in the dock areas.

By these methods the tideway was watched from end to end and several thousand men and women turned out to combine mine-watching with their other duties each time a night "Alert" was sounded. To train them in taking bearings and judging distances and to maintain their tremendous enthusiasm a fortnightly exercise was arranged involving the employment of Petty Officer A. P. Herbert, M.P., H.M.S. *Water Gipsy* and an illuminated balloon. They were of the utmost value due in no small measure to the careful night positioning and excellent seamanship displayed by the very independent member for Oxford University.

Mine and Bomb Disposal

If mines were reported in a position not suitable for detonation by the sweepers or if, as more frequently happened, they were discovered squatting hideous and smug on a wharf or in a factory, a flying squad of mine-disposal experts was instantly available. These young men acquired an excellent knowledge of the geography of London's dockland, for there were few districts along the river or in the docks to which they were not at one time or another urgently summoned. On more than one occasion they donned diving gear to deal with an otherwise unapproachable mine. The bomb-disposal squad was similarly in frequent and urgent demand, but by virtue of the fact that their

The fully laden oil tanker *Lunula* burning after striking a mine at Thameshaven

particular pets came down at 500 miles per hour as compared with the 30 miles per hour descent of the parachute mine, digging played a large part in their work. The members of both mine and bomb-disposal squads were all volunteers, and the officers and most of the ratings were temporary sailors to boot; one wonders all the more at the cold-blooded courage and ingenuity shown in their work.

Naval Defences

During the "backs-to-the-wall" stage after Dunkirk when invasion seemed just a matter of time, the naval defences of the port were particularly on the *qui vive*. Two booms were laid across the river, the inner boom being in the vicinity of Scars Elbow on Canvey Island. Royal Naval gate vessels stood by with steam up ready to close the gap if the enemy attempted a dash up the river. Had he tried and succeeded in bursting through, several torpedo tubes were mounted on a jetty farther upstream ready to poke something more than fun at him. Still farther upstream was an extensive controlled minefield guarded by naval watchkeepers ready to blow an invading fleet to pieces. The Navy also mined most of the piers and jetties in the lower river ready to deny these facilities to any hostile force attempting to land.

Merchant Ship Defences

A large section of the tideway navy was engaged in maintaining watch and ward on the merchantmen using the port. In addition to the naval kite balloons supplied from a depot at Tilbury, merchant ships were equipped during the last three years of the war with an armament which would have excited the envy of the captain of many a full-blooded naval vessel in the early days. The installation of guns in merchant vessels was the work of the D.E.M.S. (Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships) section. This department also supplied key ratings for laying and training the guns and also trained selected members of the merchant navy crew to man them. A double-decker bus, stripped and painted the traditional "crab fat" grey, was equipped with dummy guns and on most days was employed in dockland as a mobile lecture room. Actual firing practice was given on the riverside marshes. Yet another form of merchant ship defence was organised by the navy in the form of the degaussing girdle which gave ships a high degree of immunity from the magnetic mine. When the ship had been so neutralised she was taken over a range in the lower reaches where the strength of the magnetism remaining in her was accurately recorded.

Naval Control Service

The merchantman now armed, with trained gunners aboard, degaussed and ready to pick up her kite balloon and any other of the novel lethal devices which the navy produced in Woolworth-like profusion, she was allocated to a convoy. The principal Naval Control Service station responsible for assembling and routeing convoys from the port was at Southend, but for the convenience of the ships using the upper docks and wharves a sub-station was established in the P.L.A. Building. Here masters of inward-bound merchant ships would report or, outward bound, would receive route instructions, identification signals, confidential books and instructions before being despatched down river to join their convoy at Southend. It was a brave sight to see a large convoy weigh and proceed out past the *Nore* with Naval Control Service tugs beating up stragglers, and attendant destroyers and other escort craft streaming out past the Bar Buoy from Sheerness to join them. When, as sometimes happened, an inward-bound convoy arrived at the same time the Thames saw a gathering of ships which was only surpassed just before D-Day.

Other Duties

These were the special duties of London's tideway navy. In addition, there was a vast routine machine which repaired, fed and paid the itinerant naval vessels using the port. The navy was also responsible for overseeing and fitting out the enormous amount of new construction which the war brought to London. A large increase in London's naval commitments was occasioned by D-Day, when the allocation of berths and plans for the ships to queue up for men and materials of the liberation armies added to their burden. Throughout the whole of the war a naval intelligence service centred in the P.L.A. Building kept its ear close to the ground in dockland, for the ship has always been an important link in the bush telegraph. Motor transport for a score of naval services was supplied from and serviced at an Admiralty garage established in Stepney. Accommodation for the many hundreds of naval ratings in the London Naval Command was widespread and varied; it ranged from the training ship *Worcester* at Greenhithe, a derelict fort at Cliffe (practically rebuilt by the R.N.A.P. ratings living there), dismantled paddle steamers in the London Dock, church halls at Forest Gate, to a vicarage at Richmond, a hostel at Hampstead, etc. Communications in the London Naval Command were a triumph of organisation, and a vast mesh of telephone and teleprinter lines, radio, despatch riders, etc., were centred in a basement in the P.L.A. Building. There a 24 hours' watch was maintained by business-like Wren ratings who stoutly observed the traditions of the Silent Service on the two occasions that the building was hit by bombs.

In many ways the introduction and expansion of the Royal Navy in the Thames revolutionised the life of the port worker. Apart from the Coronation festivities, many Thamesiders had never before seen a white ensign worn in the river. But Father Thames took it all in his stride for he at any rate has had a long and intimate acquaintance with ships of war, and he knows from his vast experience that, blue water sailors or men of the tideway, there has been fundamentally little difference through the centuries in the way in which the call to serve has been answered.

(Reproduced by courtesy of the Editor, "Lloyd's List").

THE KARAKUL INDUSTRY OF S. W. AFRICA

By CHARLES F. GUYER

THE recent announcement concerning the breeding of a new type of Karakul sheep in South-West Africa, pure white in colour, has attracted considerable attention in Persian lambskin circles. Hitherto, nearly all Karakul pelts have been black; brown ones were rare, while grey were the most valuable of all. As London was the principal market for these pelts at the outbreak of war, a short account of the Karakul sheep industry in South-West Africa may be of interest.

Known to many as Astrakhan, and once the monopoly of the Tsars of Russia, Karakul is the name given in Africa to the "Persian Lamb" fur obtained from the newly-born lambs of the Karakul sheep—the fur which goes to make the warm coats prized by fashionable women.

The history of the industry dates back to the German colonisation of South-West Africa. Paul Thorer, a Leipzig fur-dealer, was instrumental in introducing the first flock of Karakuls, obtained from the Emir of Bokhara, into the territory in 1907. Now there are few places in the world where Persian sheep will flourish, but it soon became apparent that South-West Africa was one of them. Despite various setbacks the industry prospered. It was found that the hardy Karakul survived conditions of drought, and thrived on the scanty grazing of this semi-arid country. The dry air suited it admirably. From this modest beginning has grown, in less than 40 years, the present important industry, which in 1943 exported nearly 2½ million pelts, the value of which represented 40 per cent. of the total exports from South-West Africa.

Another important feature contributing to the successful growth of the industry is that the country has indigenous "haired" sheep like the Karakul, whose fleece is also of hair. Thus, cross-breeding was most favourable. In the trade, the term "Cross-bred" means the progeny of a pure-bred Karakul ram and an ewe of the indigenous breed. If a "Cross-bred" is again crossed with a pure-bred Karakul ram, the progeny is termed a "Grade Karakul." A ewe can safely produce three lambs every two years, as the lambs require no rearing, being slaughtered at birth for their pelts.

Skilful breeding is of paramount importance in the production of high-grade pelts, for it is by selective crossing that the farmer "grades up" his flock. In this he is assisted by Government breeding stations, where the intricacies of the subject are being studied

S.A. Railways and Harbours Administration

Karakuls on a Windhoek Farm

scientifically. As stud breeding is a specialised branch most farmers buy their flock rams. A pure-bred Karakul ram costs anything from £20 to £100. At one Government sale in 1944, as much as £130 was paid for one. Elaborate pedigree charts are sold with stud Karakuls, and include a photograph of the animal at birth in order that the purchaser may select the ram most suitable for his particular flock.

The lambs which provide the pelts are slaughtered within a few hours of birth—the moment the curl begins to open. A sensitive touch, backed by long experience, is required in judging the proper time. If the lambs are killed too soon, the curl shrivels and hardens; if too late, the pelt becomes loose. Practically all male lambs are killed, but ewes are frequently preserved for breeding purposes.

After the slaughtered lambs have been carefully skinned, the pelts are washed in cold water. They are then treated with a poison solution to ward off moths and other insects. Next comes the drying process. This is done by stretching the pelts fleshy side downward on squares of hessian across wooden frames. Skill is here necessary as the skins are easily cracked and ruined. When dry they are packed flat, 250 in a bale, with the furry sides facing. Later, they are sold to one of the travelling skin buyers who visit the farms, or else they are despatched overseas for auction.

At one time the Windhoek sales attracted buyers from all over the world, and one heard uttered on every hand such picturesque trade jargon as "watered silk," "shallow curl," "wavy curl," and "long pipes," in a variety of accents. Fifteen years ago the sole market for South-West African Karakul pelts was in Germany, but by the outbreak of hostilities the trade had become centred in London. With the London market closed during the war, however, business is now concentrated in North America where the demand for these skins is steadily increasing.

(*Continued on page* 148)

NEWS IN BRIEF

SIR CHARLES DAVIS, D.L., J.P., LORD Mayor-elect of the City of London, is the first member of the Port of London Authority ever to be elected to that high civic office. Brought up to the profession of civil and mechanical engineer, Sir Charles became actively interested in cement manufacture, and ultimately a leading figure in the industry—an industry, incidentally, of great production and export importance to the Port of London. Sir Charles has been a member of the P.L.A. since 1928. He has served as chairman of the London Chamber of Commerce. He is a member of the City Guild of Fanmakers and an underwriting member of Lloyds.

* * *

MR. ALDERMAN F. M. WELLS AND MR. F. Tidbury Beer have been installed as Sheriffs of the City of London.

* * *

IT HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED THAT UNTIL the rationing situation improves and training up to peace-time standards is possible, the boat race will not be rowed from Putney to Mortlake. A boat race, however, will be held at Henley, probably on March 2nd, 1946.

* * *

THE FIRST ANNUAL LIST OF MEMBERS of the recently established Institute of Shipping and Forwarding Agents has now been compiled. Membership of the Institute already numbers 998 from all parts of the United Kingdom.

* * *

THE REPLACEMENT OF THE TONNAGE lost on war service by the Shaw Savill Line for the resumption of their London service is well under way. The motor-vessel *Waiwera* is already in service, and two further refrigerated cargo liners of similar characteristics are under construction. They will each have a gross tonnage of about 13,000 tons and a service speed of 17 knots. As Empire food carriers they will materially help to relieve the present shortage of ships suitable for the carriage of meat and dairy produce from the Dominions. They will each have over half a million cubic feet of refrigerated space, nearly a quarter of which will be suitable for chilled cargo. In addition there will be over 200,000 cubic feet capacity for general cargo. The vessels will be twin-screw with single-reduction geared turbine engines driven by oil fuel. This is a departure from the *Waiwera*, which has motor propulsion. Although they will normally carry only twelve passengers, the accommodation will be built to the highest and most modern standards, and each of the nine staterooms will have a separate bathroom.

The Lord Mayor-Elect of the City of London, Sir Charles Davis (*right*) with the Lord Mayor, Sir Frank Alexander, after the former's election at the Guildhall.

H.M.S. *WORCESTER*, THE FAMILIAR training ship of the Incorporated Thames Nautical College, moored at Greenhithe, is to be replaced by the former L.C.C. t.s. *Exmouth*, a steel and iron vessel, accommodating 250 cadets. The old *Worcester* of 4,725 tons, is the largest wooden vessel afloat.

* * *

THE SPLENDID PHOTOGRAPH OF THE Clyde Anchorages Emergency Port in our October issue was by Mr. James Hall of Gourock.

THE KARAKUL INDUSTRY (*continued from page 147*)

Despite the setbacks of the war, and the competition from wild furs, the industry has prospered. With the supply of the latter gradually diminishing, the future of the Karakul sheep, with its economical cost of production, is bright. The Government, fully alive to the industry's possibilities, is rendering it every assistance, including a ban on the export of live Karakuls, and under the existing favourable conditions South-West Africa bids fair to become the world's premier producer of Persian Lamb fur.

UPSTREAM AND DOWNSTREAM

By "THE FERRYMAN"

The Port Transport Industry

It is to be hoped that before this number is in the hands of readers an end will have come to the undisciplined conduct of many workers at most British ports which is causing hindrance to the nation's affairs. The strike occurred just as the employers and trade unions of the Port Transport Industry were getting together to frame a programme for post-war organisation and conditions.

Dock work is intermittent in character because of factors (weather, tides, etc.) outside the control of the industry. Unemployment, therefore, cannot be eliminated, and the aims must be to reduce it to the lowest proportions and to give to the dock workers reasonable financial security against under-employment.

The Port employers have long been desirous of decasualising the industry and before the war endeavoured to evolve a suitable scheme. Recently they have given much thought to the problem and for a meeting of the National Joint Council for the Port Transport Industry, representing the employers and trades unions, on October 18th, a complete scheme was ready. But as there was a large section of men on strike contrary to Clause 18 of the Constitution of the National Joint Council, the Council were unable to make any progress.

The employers in their post-war plan have prepared a new charter for the industry. They offer to every able-bodied dock worker employed at the greater ports a guaranteed minimum wage of £16 for each four weekly period. At the smaller ports the guarantee offered is £15. All earnings of the men while at work will count against the guarantee. The guarantees are the least amount a man will receive even if he does no work during the period, and this is a unique provision in any industry. In practice many men will earn considerably higher wages.

In addition, the employers offer improved holiday conditions ; the extension and improvement, where necessary, of existing medical and port welfare services ; and arrangements for orderly recruitment and training of workers. They are also willing to examine the present basis of piece-work, as the Unions ask, and to review the existing classification of ports.

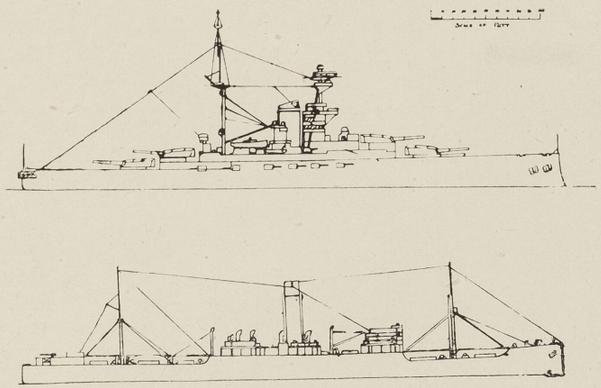
Other comments by the Employers are :—

Pensions. The obligation to give pensions to aged and infirm workers of any industry is one for the State under the national scheme, to which employers and workers in all industries contribute.

Hours. The question of the 40 hour week is one for the Government to determine for industries generally.

Pay. As regards the Unions' application for an increase in the minimum daily rate from 16s. to 25s. per day, the present rate is at the highest level in the history of the industry, and was given in recognition of the intermittent nature of employment. The employers now propose that dock workers should, in future, be employed on permanent terms with a minimum monthly guarantee and, in their view, the increase which the Unions seek in the daily rate is not justified on any economic or social ground. The increase would saddle the industry with an intolerable burden and endanger the export, import and coasting trades. Under existing conditions dock workers can and do earn good wages without working long hours. The increase proposed by the Unions would imperil the wage structure of industry generally. The result would be a process of inflation and the frustration of the Government policy of price control.

The National Joint Council is holding itself in readiness for an immediate continuation of the discussions as soon as a general resumption of work takes place.



How dummy warships helped to defend Britain during the first two years of the war has been revealed recently. The top drawing shows a plywood and paint 33,500-ton battleship of the *Revenge* and *Resolution* class, evolved from the (*below*) Shaw, Savill and Albion Company's refrigerated merchant vessels s.s. *Mamari, Pakeha* or *Waimana*, all similar in outline and normally engaged in the London-New Zealand service

Phantom Fleet

Dummy ships, known for security purposes as Fleet tenders were quickly brought into use at the outbreak of the war by adapting merchant ships to resemble " R "-class battleships and an aircraft carrier. The transformation was accomplished on the instruction of Mr. Churchill, as First Lord of the Admiralty, by fitting elaborate superstructures of plywood and canvas, suitably painted. For nearly two years these phantom ships hoaxed enemy reconnaissance aircraft and bombers. They were also bait for U-boats, and kept the enemy guessing as to the strategic disposition of our capital ships. Three 7,900-ton ships—*Pakeha*, *Waimana* and *Mamari*—belonging to the Shaw Savill and Albion Co., Ltd., were used. The two former were converted into the 35,500-ton battleships *Revenge* and *Resolution*, and the third became the 12,000-ton aircraft-carrier *Hermes*. Their holds were filled with thousands of empty barrels to give greater buoyancy in the event of their being hit by bombs or torpedoes. By 1941 these dummy warships had served their purpose. The *Mamari* (alias *Hermes*) had by then been wrecked off the Wash. The other two, stripped of their camouflage, continue to-day to sail the seas for their owners.

Southend Returns to Peace

The heavy hand of war is slowly being lifted from the tideway. In the Estuary the Navy, who requisitioned and renamed it H.M.S. *Leigh* at the outbreak of war, has relaxed its hold completely on Southend Pier—the mile-long structure which is so powerful a magnet to thousands of Londoners seeking a breath of sea air. Describing the pier in wartime in the *Evening Standard*, Patrick Kirwan wrote :

" After Dunkirk, Southend had no reason to doubt that it was ' on-the-sea.' Rumours came that piers at other resorts had been chopped in twain, lest they should provide a foothold and feeding-place for invading armies."

Southend pier redoubled its defences. Sharp scaffold-poles jutted from the surrounding sands, a trap for parachutists and gliders. The beaches were mined, the promenade blocked. But the pier still remained, and the traffic of its railway intensified.

It carried arms for the ships and men for the ships. It carried the dead and wounded, rescued from the vessels that " sat on " the mines with which the enemy so plentifully sowed the estuary.

The enemy held the coast of France ; their big guns were shelling the narrow seas ; but the English Channel was still the English Channel, and it was from the pier of Southend-on-Sea the ships sailed that were to run the gauntlet and uphold the proud claim.

The residents of Southend would watch the convoy sail, each vessel with its pursy, fishlike balloon swaying in the wind. Further down the estuary, in the open waters, they would see the streams of coloured tracers and hear their faint staccato as the ships' Oerlikon soldier-gunners in their concrete zarebas tested their weapons.

Then, as night fell, the enemy bombers would come, and the Thames' mouth spew fire and flame ; while in the Straits the convoy would be steaming on, with lowered balloons lest the enemy on the French coast got a " ping " on them and locate their position.

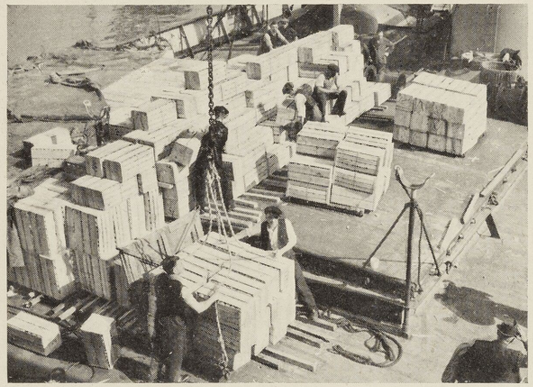
Southend's greatest day came when one morning its citizens awoke to find a vast concourse of shipping lying off its pier. In the dance-hall at the pier's end the masters were being given their sailing orders. D-Day had dawned.

Soon it was sailing majestically down the estuary and, behind its smokescreen, heading for the narrow waters and the coast of France.

Now H.M.S. *Leigh* is Southend Pier again. And it is established for evermore that Southend is " on-the-sea."

Tilbury Beats Record

The Orient liner *Orontes* sailed from Tilbury on October 5th, only 22 days after she had been seriously damaged by fire. In those 22 days, 650 men from Tilbury and district—shipwrights, joiners, painters, sailmakers, electricians with their foremen and chargehands—and about 60 Tilbury charwomen



worked long hours, even all night at times, so that the ship could sail on schedule. Many of these workers stood on the quayside to wave as the liner moved away, realising they had broken all records for a refit at Tilbury, and believing they had broken all records for any port in the British Isles.

Everybody did an excellent job—a tribute to British workmanship and team-work. Every possible hour of overtime was worked, and the charwomen even brought their meals to the ship. So well did everybody do their jobs that the ship was ready ten hours before she sailed. Besides repairing the fire damage and giving her a normal refit, her wartime armament had to be removed. This amounted to nearly 200 tons weight, including 18 guns, and there was the repair work after these had been taken away.

" Transportation is Civilisation "

Sir Frederick Handley Page, C.B.E., the President of the Institute of Transport (successor to Mr. R. Kelso, member of P.L.A.), not unnaturally devoted most of his inaugural address on October 8th to air transport—past, present and future. He also had something to say about transport generally as " a prime factor in world history."

" Kipling's tag that ' Transportation is Civilisation ' is none the less true," said Sir Frederick, " because it is hackneyed. From the dawn of recorded history, transport facilities have determined whether villages have become towns, and the towns, cities, which eventually have become the nodal points of the larger communities we call nations and empires." (*London, he might have added, is a supreme example.*)

" Surely, we may safely assume that the coming of air transport will also be marked by profound effects in yet closer knitting together of our world community. Not many generations ago the journey from London to Edinburgh lasted a week ; to-day no main centre of population in the world is more than two-and-a-half days by air from any other. The effect may be envisaged as a tremendous shrinking of the world in units of time which, from the traveller's viewpoint, has the same result as an actual shrinkage in distance.

Yet another aspect of distance is gained if the world is redrawn on the basis of freight-rates, whereby countries between which freight rates are low are shown relatively close together and those between which freight rates are high are shown far apart. When completed, such a map reveals the astonishing advantage of seaborne freight over any other form of transport, and explains why sea communication and a favourable position on the world's sea highway have earned Great Britain her empire and her predominance in the shipping commerce of the world."

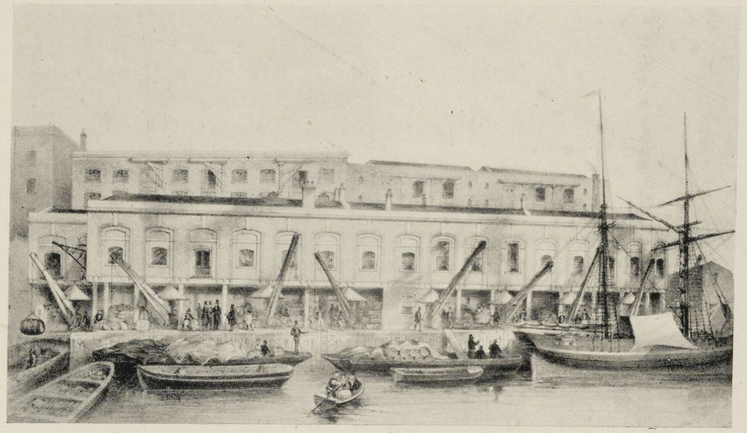
British Genius for Transportation

After remarking that " shipping marries naturally with the air," Sir Frederick turned again to his own special element, saying that " this is the Air Age, though only its beginning. The estimates of operating costs mentioned in this paper and the performances foretold are certain to be surpassed by reality in the next ten or twenty years.

" The role of Great Britain and of the British Commonwealth is to make the new age predominantly British, as our ancestors made the Shipping Age. In doing so we may claim to be serving humanity. The British race has always shown outstanding genius in the art and science of transportation, and that genius has served the world community well. It can continue to do so in the field of the air."

(*Left*) The Union-Castle liner *Rowallan Castle* arrived in the Port of London recently from South Africa with a large cargo of fruit, including 25,000 cases of grape fruit and 120,000 cases of oranges which are here seen being discharged at the West India Dock. This is the first of the Union-Castle " R " ships to bring fruit to London since the war. The *Rowallan Castle* is a motor ship of 7,950 tons gross and was built by Harland and Wolff in 1939

(*Below*) General view of Richmond Lock and Weir
See page 153



This reproduction from an old print (kindly loaned by Mr. Sydney Whitehair) shows Brewers, Chesters and Galley Quays as they were 100 years ago.

London Bridge,
November, 1945

DEAR MR. EDITOR

No. 241

Twenty years have passed since THE P.L.A. MONTHLY made its first appearance in November, 1925. The first illustration in the magazine was an air view of the Upper Pool, and to-day there is little change discernible. There are admittedly gaps where wharves were destroyed by enemy action, but on the whole the picture is much the same. Tower Bridge still stands as the seaward portal of the City, while London Bridge remains the principal of London's river crossings.

LICENSED CARMEN

Posted on the wall of the steps down to Lower Thames Street from London Bridge Approach is a City of London notice signed by the Keeper of the Guildhall. It is a list of persons licensed " to stand and ply for hire with carts, carrs and carrooms within the City of London and Liberties thereof." The list contains the numbers of the carts, which are branded with the letter E. Only three proprietors' names are in the present list, but a few centuries ago the number of licensed carmen ran into hundreds. Charges were laid down for the carriage of goods from any wharf between the Tower and London Bridge (The " Legal " Quays) to various points in the City. Under an Act of 1668 Carmen were licensed by the Governors of Christ's Hospital, but in 1836 they were placed directly under the Keeper of the Guildhall—acting for the General Purposes Committee of the City of London Corporation, who now have the power of marking all cars, carts and carrooms.

The word " carroom " according to the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary is now defined as " a licence by the Lord Mayor of London to keep a cart."

BREWERS QUAY

I referred in the last issue to the Legal Quays, and stated that Galley Quay was one of the old quays still in use to-day. This was not strictly accurate, as at the moment Galley Quay is unfortunately out of use owing to bomb damage sustained in December, 1940.

Galley Quay, with the adjoining Brewers and Chesters Quays, was known as " Brewers Quay."

The General Steam Navigation Company, who own the premises, inform me that until early in 1940 a Nelson letter was kept in the Quay office, and fortunately this was opportunely presented to the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich, and thus escaped the blitz.

FOUNDATION STONE

On June 15th, 1825, the Lord Mayor laid the foundation stone of the present London Bridge. In the cavity of the foundation stone was placed, amongst other things, a Latin inscription which recorded that " the City of London . . . resolved to erect a bridge . . . of a character corresponding to the dignity and importance of the royal City."

ST. MARY OVERIE DOCK

On the South bank of the River, between London Bridge and Cannon Street Railway Bridge, is St. Mary Overie Dock. The road access to the Dock is from the North end of Cathedral Street (formerly Church Street), at the West end of Southwark Cathedral, by a lane dedicated for the public use by the Warden of the Great Account. This notice of dedication is dated June 7th, 1859. On a low wall at the head of the Dock is a notice board which reads :

ST. MARY OVERIE DOCK
NOTICE
This Dock is a free landing place at which the Parishioners of St. Saviour's Parish are entitled to land goods Free of Toll.
Signed by order
Clerk to the Corporation of Wardens of the Parish of St. Saviours, Southwark.
Market Officer, S.E. July, 1935.

The Dock is really a cut in the River bank between massive blocks of warehouses and accommodates a number of Thames lighters which at low tide rest on the mud.

Yours Sincerely
Looker On

LUFTWAFFE ATTEMPTED TO CUT LONDON'S PETROL SUPPLY

DURING the critical pre-invasion months, the German air force planned and carried out an operation on a Thames target comparable with the famous " dam busting " raids of the Royal Air Force. And they achieved some measure of success. In the very early hours of February 19th, 1944, a lone enemy bomber made an obviously carefully planned attack on Richmond Lock and Weir. Three bombs were dropped, one making a direct hit on the lock, destroying the lock gates at the up-river end and causing blast damage to the Weir. The second bomb fell and penetrated the tow-path within a few feet of the Surrey side river bank just missing the downstream lock gates. Fortunately, this bomb did not explode, but necessitated the immediate evacuation of the lock keeper and his family from the adjoining lock residence. Traffic had to be diverted from the towpath and confined to the Middlesex side of the river for at least a month whilst the bomb disposal people got to work and eventually succeeded in extracting this unexploded bomb. The third bomb fell harmlessly in the adjoining fields at the side of the lock premises. The lock was put out of action completely. From that time onward river traffic to and from the Upper Reaches was rendered more difficult. At all times traffic throughout the tideway of the Thames is considerable and important.

Why was Richmond Lock and Weir a special target for the Luftwaffe ? The answer is concerned with that all-important commodity throughout the war—oil.

Normally London's enormous petrol requirements are drawn from the great importing and storage installations at Thameshaven, Shell Haven and elsewhere in the Lower Reaches, and distributed by specially designed tank barges to innumerable depots on the riverside. These installations being within very short flying time from the Continent became extremely vulnerable when war broke out, and an alternative means of supplying London had to be found. This had been foreseen by the authorities and a pipe-line had been laid from a point in the Severn Estuary to Walton-on-Thames. The oil pumped through this pipe line was received into tank barges which were brought to the Thames, most of the craft usually employed being too big for the narrower and shallower Upper Reaches. Thus London's flow of oil was completely reversed from east to west to west to east. The German intention was to disrupt this channel of supply, and the attack on the Lock and Weir at Richmond did slow down the flow of oil to some extent.

Priority permission was obtained to reconstruct Richmond Lock, and actual work was commenced in

Richmond Lock in course of reconstruction

June, 1944. It has been pressed forward with all speed, and it is expected the lock will be in commission again by the end of the year.

Apart from local residents, few of London's millions even heard of the attack upon this vital river target, and perhaps none fully comprehended its significance.

The locks and weirs on the Thames were built primarily to hold up the water in the upper reaches on a falling tide to permit navigation over a longer period. This condition is secured at Richmond by means of three " undershot " Stoney's patent weir gates and a lock. The former are movable, i.e., can be raised or lowered. On an ebb tide when the water has fallen to roughly half tide level, the weir sluices are lowered, thus holding up the water above the weirs, the level of water being controlled by allowing surplus land water to flow beneath the weir gates by raising them by a suitable amount.

To enable navigation to be continued up and down river when the sluices are down, vessels are passed from the higher or maintained water level to the lower or tidal water and *vice versa* by means of the lock.

The weir structure is built in the form of a twin footbridge, the footways being 6 feet wide and 16 feet apart, the central space between being occupied by the weir gates and operating machinery. There are five spans, the three centre ones being 66 feet wide in the clear, with two 50-feet spans over a slipway for small boats and lock respectively. Each weir

gate weighs 32 tons, and is suspended by flexible steel wires passing round trunnions fixed at the neutral axis of the gate, the free ends of the wires passing over wheels with their ends connected to cast-iron weights of 8 tons each, i.e., two at each end of each weir gate. The balance weights rise and fall in water-tight wells to keep their weight constant whatever the level of the water in the river. The lock is 250 feet long and 37 feet wide for two-thirds of its length, narrowing to 26 feet wide at the lock gates. The lock gates are of oak and greenheart, operated by capstan gearing. Richmond Lock and Weir was completed in 1894, the first pile having been driven in 1891. (*See pictures on page* 151).

BOOK REVIEWS

THE GUILDS OF THE CITY OF LONDON, *by Sir Ernest Pooley, K.C.V.O.* (*Collins*, 4*s.* 6*d.*)

The history of The Livery Guilds of London, usually known as the City Companies, dates back at least to the time when Alfred the Great granted a piece of land for the establishment of London's first wharf at Queenhithe. Throughout the centuries the Guilds fostered London's trade and commerce, but with changing customs and conditions many of the earlier objects became obsolete. While the industrial revolution meant the end of the handcraft in which the Guilds were so vitally interested, in recent years many of the Guilds have done much to foster their particular trades by founding scholarships, and generally to further technical education. Among the few Companies which have contrived to carry on in their original character is the Fishmongers' Company, who still have a voice in the affairs of Billingsgate and who have important duties in connection with freshwater, crab and lobster fisheries.

Prominent among the Guilds is Grocers' Company, who besides being importers of spices (whence their original title of Pepperers) were also the first tobacco merchants, and gave instruction in the use of this herb. It was a Grocer, Sir John Philpot, Mayor of London, who in Richard II's time raised at his own expense a force of 1,000 London watermen and equipped a fleet with which he sailed against the pirate Mercer. He not only defeated this East Coast pirate but captured all his ships. The next year when the King needed ships for an expedition to France, Sir John Philpot handed over his fleet, with the addition of the captured prizes, for this purpose.

It was the City Livery Guilds who found the money for the colonization of Virginia. No less than 56 of them became shareholders in the "Company of Adventurers and Planters in the City of London for the Colony of Virginia." The venture was commended as having lucrative possibilities. Emigrants were promised "meate, drink and clothing, with a howse, orchard, and gardens for the meanest family, and possession of lands to them and their posterity." The venture was not successful and ended by the Crown taking over the Colony and revoking the charter, leaving the emigrants to carry on as a trading society and to make what little they could by the shipment of tobacco.

Other trading concerns which were sponsored by the City Guilds were the Muscovite, Turkey and Royal African Companies. There were also the Merchants of Spain, the French Merchants of Virginia, and the notorious South Sea Company. More important in later years were the East India Company, the greatest of all these enterprises, and the Hudson's Bay Company, which still flourishes in the City of London to-day.

In reviewing "The Guilds of the City of London" one looks for references to the River Thames, without which London would never have risen to be a mighty and wealthy city. Sir Ernest Pooley who has written this charming and beautifully illustrated book has made very few references to the River, but this is possibly due to lack of space. He mentions that the Vintners share with the King and the Dyers' Company the privilege of keeping swans on the Thames, and he refers to the river pageants with the rich barges of the Companies, but he does not mention the Lord Mayor's Show on the River. However, Sir Ernest Pooley does remind us of London's association with the sea. The book records that one-fifth of the men who fought in Nelson's *Victory* at Trafalgar were London born and that one of the most modern of the Companies is the Master Mariners. A.G.T.

THE HANDLING OF MOTOR CRAFT, *by Lt.-Cdr. C. A. Lund, R.N.* (*Brown, Son and Ferguson, Ltd.*, 5*s.*)

Like the author's previous excellent book on navigation, a book which many amateur navigators have found useful in this war, *The Handling of Motor Craft* goes straight to the point without any nonsense. The author obviously feels that there has been enough fine writing about the sea and he has crammed into the seventy odd pages all the theoretical knowledge necessary to the beginner who aspires to handle motor craft. He wisely points out that ship handling cannot be learnt from a book, but this pocket-sized volume will save the amateur much of the expense and worry usually attendant upon inexperience at sea. Although essentially a practical book, it has not been spoiled for the beginner by the introduction of too many or unexplained technicalities. The last chapter on engine troubles is particularly valuable and will prove of use even to many not-so-amateur cruiser owners. The many diagrams with which the book is illustrated assist in making clear the most complicated evolutions.

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Published by
THE PORT OF LONDON AUTHORITY
London, E.C.3

Printed by
WILLIAMS, LEA & Co., Ltd.,
Clifton House, Worship St., London, E.C.2