

Annual Scottish Maritime History Conference,

Wednesday 23 October 2013

Riverside Museum, Glasgow

Programme

10.15 Welcome

Prof. Ray Stokes, Director, Centre for Business History in Scotland, University of Glasgow

10.20 Session I Chair: Professor Hugh Murphy

Dr Roy Fenton, Editor, *'Ships in Focus: Was the Steam Coaster a Scottish Invention?'*

Dr Robb Robinson, University of Hull: *'Fish, Fishermen, Fishing Ports and the Fishing Industry: reflections on the crucial Scottish role in the broader UK industry's engagement during the Great War at sea.'*

Barry K. White, University of the Highlands and Islands: *'Two years before this one captain George Scot came to Inverness and there built a ship of prodigious bignes.'* Ship building in the eastern Highlands and the exploitation of local timber by the Royal Navy circa 1660-1700

11.40 Coffee/Tea

12.00 Session II Chair: Dr Martin Bellamy

Dr Jo Stanley, University of Lancaster: *'Path-breaking women ships' engineers: From Victoria Drummond to Jyoti Kumar.'*

Derek Janes, University of Exeter: *'For several years past, there has not been a single smuggler residing in this parish'...The apparent changing face of smuggling in SE Scotland after 1776*

13:00 Lunch

14:00 Session III Chair: Professor Ray Stokes

Dr Bruce Peter, Glasgow College of Art: *The Curious Case of the trans-Atlantic liner Oscar II*

Mike McDonald, University of Glasgow: *'The Public Acquisition of Orkney Piers and Shipping Services-1920s-1960s.'*

Chris Miller, University of Glasgow: *'Clydeside elites and British naval rearmament, 1933-42'*

15:30 Coffee/Tea

15:45-17:00 Session IV Chair: Professor Hugh Murphy

Professor John Foster, University of the West of Scotland: *'Upper Clyde Shipbuilders: new light on ministerial attitudes from the National Archives.'*

Professor Alan McKinlay, University of Newcastle and Sandy Ross: *'Jimmy Reid: the Making and Unmaking of a Communist.'*

ABSTRACTS

Dr Roy Fenton, Editor, *Ships in Focus*

Was the Steam Coaster a Scottish Invention?

The steam coaster is a peculiarly British – and perhaps peculiarly Scottish – vessel. From 1870 onwards, an estimated 2,000 were built for domestic owners, with probably as many again for non-British and dominion owners. The steam coaster was characterised by a reliable and economical vertical steam engine, a water ballast capacity sufficient for frequent voyages without cargo, and capacious holds served by generous hatches to expedite loading and discharge, largely of bulk cargoes. These features enabled the steam coaster to replace an even larger fleet of small, usually wooden, sailing craft in the coastal and short sea trades.

Indeed, the steam coaster contributed to the development of the modern industrial world through its ability to efficiently carry the raw materials and/or products of many industries, including mining, quarrying, agriculture, chemicals, construction, gas and electricity generation.

Although steam coasters were built at shipyards around the British Isles, west coast Scottish shipyards were pre-eminent in their construction, and there is evidence that these yards played a key role in developing the type. This paper considers the output of yards building steam coasters, and quantifies the contribution of west coast Scottish yards in order to assess whether they can claim to have ‘invented’ this important type of craft.

Dr Robb Robinson, University of Hull

Fish, Fishermen, Fishing Ports and the Fishing Industry: reflections on the crucial Scottish role in the broader UK industry’s engagement during the Great War at sea.

In terms of the current historiography of the Great War at Sea, the role of the British fishing industries has been at best under-played and at worst ignored. Whilst acres of academic print has been written about Dreadnoughts and Jutland, far less has been published about the role of fishermen, fishing vessels and coastal communities. Yet, week after week, year after year, they were active participants on the maritime front line, either in the struggle to keep sea lanes open in the face of the mine and U-boat menaces, or in terms of ensuring the maintenance of vital supplies of fish.

During the Great War, large numbers of fishing vessels, mainly steam drifters and trawlers, were requisitioned and armed. Their crews saw action not only around the coasts of the British Isles but also in many other theatres of war, not least the Mediterranean.

This paper, which draws on a range of primary and secondary sources, focuses mainly on the role of the Scottish fishing industry and related coastal communities in the Great War. It seeks to explain why the Scottish fishing industry was so heavily involved; the nature of that involvement, and the cost in terms of fishermen and vessels. It also examines aspects of the long-term impact on the fishing industry of the Great War and reflects on the reasons why contributions of fishermen and coastal communities have often been partially neglected by naval historians.

Barry K. White, University of the Highlands and Islands

‘Two years before this one captain George Scot came to Inverness and there built a ship of prodigious bignes.’ Ship building in the eastern Highlands and the exploitation of local timber by the Royal Navy circa 1660-1700

The given quotation from the *Polichronicon* of Rev James Fraser of Wardlaw refers to the accidental arrival of a London shipwright in his parish. The shipwright in question was one of the famed Pett dynasty who suffered the misfortune of being shipwrecked on the coast of the Beaulieu Firth near Inverness. The identification of a previous captain in the region by Fraser is important because it suggests that there was outside influence and skills being utilised in the

ship building industry of the Highlands in the seventeenth century. Far from being isolated the Highlands and Islands were a significant hub for timber collection, delivery and ship manufacture in the latter part of the seventeenth century.

The presence of Pett in Scotland is given in an entry dated 26th September 1666 in the diary of Samuel Pepys, where he suggests 'looking out into Scotland about timber, and to use Pett there'. Confirmation of Pett's role and responsibilities is outlined in the records of the Register of the Privy Council of Scotland, 3rd series, volume 2 (1665-1669). A record relating to 1668 gives information relating to a dispute between a local builder named Semple and Phineas Pett described as the 'agent for his Majesty's woods in Scotland'. The timescale of these two pieces of evidence corroborate the information given by Fraser about the arrival of Pett in the region.

The aim of this paper is to discuss the presence of Pett in the eastern Highlands, briefly describe the judicial case, identify where Pett was sourcing timber and suggest what use the Royal Navy had for these materials. Archival sources in Inverness and other parts of Scotland, the Records of the Privy Council as well as other sources available online, have been utilised to attempt to understand why Pett was in the Highlands and what he intended to do with the timber he sourced.

Dr Jo Stanley, University of Lancaster

Path-breaking women ships' engineers: From Victoria Drummond to Jyoti Kumari.

Scarlet fingernails, henna and mothering do not usually go with ships and Scottish traditions! But women have moved from unthinkable 'outsider' to welcomed asset, and in doing so they bring together surprising former disparities.

Typically, ships engineers were Scots - and male. It is perhaps no accident that Victoria Alexandrina Drummond (1894-1978) the first ship's engineer was Scottish. Seeking a marine engineering career would seem logical - if she ignored gender. She did. Men did not. Her most high-profile successor, Anne James (later Madsen) (born 1970), became the first post-war woman Chief Engineer, when she became a testing engineer at BAE Systems in Scotstoun, including Type-45 destroyers. She sea-trialled RFA *Lyme Bay* while pregnant.

This paper briefly summarises the careers of these two women Chief Engineers and other women training and sailing in between, many of whom trained in Glasgow. British women engineers' historical career struggles are compared to those of today's women from less-developed countries such as India, whose paths are now replicating the 1930-1980 patterns in Britain.

The central question asked is what can open doors for women entering the profession, and what then enables them to continue on the path? Answers include equal opportunities legislation, role models, family encouragement, supportive employers and mentoring, determination in the face of obstacles such as misogynistic colleagues' hostility, help with household work back home, and above all proven ability and willingness to pull their weight. When a female engineer is seen to be able to do her job well and work hard, then she is accepted.

Indeed, her fellow engineers can welcome her presence on ship because of the 'normality' and humane attitudes she brings to a formerly testosterone-fuelled engine room culture. Modern engineer Jyoti Kumari opines that a woman can bring about positive changes in the engine room: she states, 'my chief engineer once told me that the engine room has become homely... When a woman is in the engine room, men tend to be decent and ... they don't abuse and quarrel'.

Derek Janes, Centre for Maritime Historical Studies, University of Exeter

For several years past, there has not been a single smuggler residing in this parish... The apparent changing face of smuggling in SE Scotland after 1776.

The title of this paper is taken from the First Statistical Account, in which the Minister of Eyemouth wrote:

For several years past, there has not been a single smuggler residing in this parish. The former dealers in that illicit trade are now all dead, or removed to distant parts. Not one of them died rich, and the far greater part of them became bankrupt.

Recent research has established that from the mid-1740s until the mid-1770s, Eyemouth was the centre of smuggling in SE Scotland. Smuggling during this period was largely organised and conducted by the local merchants, often as a sideline on regular voyages. It appears that after 1776 the nature of smuggling in the area changed, with the 'part-time' merchant/smugglers being pushed out of the market by 'professional' smugglers, including those from the south of England.

This paper will review the evidence for smuggling on the Berwickshire coast and seek to tease out the apparent changes after the mid-1770s. It will also outline the trade of the port of Eyemouth from the 1740s to the 1790s, look at the merchant community and seek to identify ships and their owners that were used for both smuggling and regular trade – often on the same voyage.

The detailed examination of the Free and Fair Trade of Eyemouth, surely one of the late Gordon Jackson's "unimportant ports", has provided the opportunity to develop an understanding of the working methods of, and relationships between, a group of around thirty merchants, the majority of whom had at least some involvement in smuggling.

There is also evidence of the merchants in northern Europe who supplied the contraband and of some of the customers who took the goods so supplied. As with all work on smuggling, evidence is largely confined to those smuggles (episodes of smuggling) that were unsuccessful – detected by the authorities. Inferences can be drawn, based on names of ships, masters and merchants of undetected smuggles, but there are only inferences.

Dr Bruce Peter, Glasgow College of Art

The curious case of the trans-Atlantic liner Oscar II

In 2016, the famous Danish shipping company DFDS (Det Forenede Dampskibs-Selskab) of Copenhagen will be 150 years old. As part of ongoing research to produce a new and comprehensive history of the company, this paper will consider the circumstances surrounding the building and early operation of the trans-Atlantic liner *Oscar II* (Alexander Stephen & Sons, Linthouse, 1902, 10,012 gt)

In October 1898, DFDS took over Dampskibs-Selskabet Thingvalla, a struggling operator of emigrant liners between Copenhagen, Gothenburg, Kristiania (Oslo) and New York whose fleet badly needed modernisation. As it was very difficult to raise sufficient finance in Denmark for the three projected replacement vessels and as the existing ones were disintegrating and required major structural enhancements to remain in class, DFDS needed to act quickly and to build cheaply.

Having failed to obtain American government subsidies to build the new ships in the USA, DFDS signed a contract with Alexander Stephen & Sons of Linthouse, initially for one, then for two additional vessels. The first of these, the *Oscar II*, soon proved to be rather poorly constructed; the first thing DFDS' senior management noticed was the poor carpentry in her passenger accommodation and, worse still, she sprang leaks on her maiden voyage. Notwithstanding repairs being carried out under the supervision of Bureau Veritas, on subsequent voyages, more serious leaks appeared. In a storm in February 1903, a cylinder came undone from its mounting, then yet more very serious leaks were discovered, leading to cargo being jettisoned and passengers being called upon to man hand-pumps while the vessel limped to shelter in The Azores. There, she was patched up and eventually returned to the Clyde for substantial reconstruction by her builder.

The author is keen to ascertain how unusual the case of the *Oscar II* was. It appears that Fred Stephen admitted to DFDS that there were severe difficulties with the shipyard's workers while DFDS internal documents suggest that supervising the construction of so large a vessel from Copenhagen was challenging. Fortunately, there were no similar problems with her sister ships, the *Hellig Olav* and the *United States* and all three vessels continued in service until the early-1930s.

Mike Macdonald, University of Glasgow

The Public Acquisition of Orkney Piers and Shipping Services-1920s-1960s

The Orkney Steam Navigation Company Ltd (OSNCo) was a locally-owned joint-stock company incorporated in 1867 to provide shipping services between Kirkwall and the North Isles of Orkney. During the 1920s and '30s, services were maintained by Post Office mail contracts and Board of Agriculture subsidies. The purchase of new steamers in 1928 and 1931 was financed by the sale of Government stocks and bonds and by bank mortgages. Until the 1930s, the island piers were owned and maintained by the local landowners. To ensure that the piers were kept in safe working condition, the local authority, Orkney County Council, was authorised to take them into public ownership under the Harbours, Piers and Ferries (Scotland) Act, 1937.

During the 1950s, there were continuing complaints by North Isles councillors (the North Isles Depopulation Association) about the inadequacies of the services the OSNCo steamers provided. The steamers required to be replaced but a consultant's report concluded that, 'I do not think that the Company could raise locally the capital necessary to provide two new ships, and it is improbable that any other company would undertake the task. It is clear that some form of financial assistance will be necessary in due course, if the North Isles service is to continue...' ['Transport Services to the Orkney North Isles', Report by William MacGillivray, Managing Director, Prince Line Ltd, 22 July 1957].

In 1960, the Company asked Government to be relieved of its responsibility for providing the North Isles services. OSNCo was wound up in 1962 and a new company, the Orkney Islands Shipping Company Ltd, was formed with local and Government-appointed directors, and a new passenger/cargo motor ship was chartered from the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Chris Miller, University of Glasgow

Clydeside elites and naval British naval rearmament, 1933-42

This paper considers the role of a small network of individuals connected through shared business interests on the Clyde and West of Scotland in the years before 1914. The primary actors were Lord Weir, Sir James Lithgow, and Sir Andrew Rae Duncan. It will be argued that their efforts during the Great War were so valued that they were approached, above all others, to assist the CID in constructing future war hypotheses following the Manchurian crisis in late 1931. As such, it is suggested that this allowed this network access to 'inside' info on future industrial needs, allowing them to act ahead of the market and secure strong business advantages in the field of naval arms, despite in many cases little prior experience in this sector. This study thus considers the role of the National Shipbuilders Security (NSS) scheme, the Bank of England, and the purchase of the Beardmore yard in Dalmuir from Lord Invernairn

Professor John Foster, University of the West of Scotland

Upper Clyde Shipbuilders: new light on ministerial attitudes from the National Archives

Materials from the National Archives throw significant new light on government responses to the Upper Clyde Work-In. They refute claims subsequently made by some ministers that the change of policy at the beginning of October 1971 was motivated by fears of violence 'spreading from Belfast to the Clyde'. The key concern, expressed in the report by the Central Policy Review Staff, was the wider impact of the Work-In on attitudes in the trade union movement towards the Industrial Relations Act and the loss of influence by those who supported compliance such as the TUC General Secretary Vic Feather, and Danny McGarvey of the Boilermakers Society. The papers reveal the closeness of ministerial relations with

McGarvey throughout. They also show the restraints placed on the government negotiating position by concerns about the attitudes of employers on the Lower Clyde and the degree to which some senior civil servants were out of sympathy with the government's original objectives.

Professor Alan McKinlay, University of Newcastle Business School and Sandy Ross

Jimmy Reid: the Making and Unmaking of a Communist

Jimmy Reid gave voice to the UCS work-in of 1971-72. Reid was one of a group of communists who devised the strategy and provided the work-in's leadership and organisation. Reid was a central figure in this collective leadership. Here we trace Reid's political formation as a communist in 1940s Glasgow; through the 1952 apprentices' strike that first brought him to prominence in the Communist Party; his twelve years as a full-time Party official; his return to Clydebank as a working engineer in 1967. Reid's election as shop stewards' convener of John Brown's in 1968 meant that the union leadership of four shipyards in the new UCS consortium was a communist. Securing these four key union leadership roles had been the strategic objective of the Communist Party Shipbuilding Group since its formation in 1962. The Group had developed a distinctive approach to union politics, stressing the need for modernisation and challenging the corrosive tribalism of shipyard trade unionism. The UCS crisis was the moment that allowed Reid, as one of the collective leadership of the work-in, to transcend sectionalism. For Reid, the triumph of UCS was followed by a series of political and electoral set-backs, each of which distanced him from the Communist Party. In 1976 he very publicly left the Communist Party. We explore the personal and political motivations behind this watershed in Reid's life, the moment when he rejected over twenty-five years of committed communist activism.