

A dramatic photograph of 'Ferdinand Verbiest' and 'Beaufort' of the Belgium company Scheidt. Towage fire fighting at Larak, Iran, following an attack on tankers and the oil installation by the Iraqi airforce in 1988. See Alan Hughes' article 'The Forgotten War' – Tales from the Persian Gulf' inside.



The Daniel Adamson Preservation Society



No. 16



May 2008



Editor: John H. Luxton

The Tow Line



Daniel Adamson at Salisbury Dock – October 07, 2006 photo: John H. Luxton

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Editor's Notes
Apologies for late delivery of this edition of "The Tow Line" due to a major item for inclusion having gone missing in "cyberspace"!
I would like to advise members that I will be relinquishing my position as editor of "The Tow Line" due to increasing time pressures following publication of the August edition, however, I will continue as editor of the DAPS web site.
The Society, therefore, needs to recruit a new Editor to produce "The Tow Line" from the November edition onwards and develop the magazine further, an ability to use Microsoft Word and / or Publisher would be useful. If anyone is interested in taking up the challenge please get in touch and I will forward details to the committee.
- John Luxton, Editor
The Tow Line - published end of February, May, August and November. Press date for contributions is the fifteenth day of the month prior to publication.

the first master of the 'Ralph Brocklebank' was a Mr G Howard and her Port of Registry Chester. Tonnage was 173 and her classification was "For river purposes".

Back at Sandon Dock we are building up a small collection of artifacts from the restoration which are either broken or worn to show the original materials and methods used and keeping a written and photographic record of the work in progress.

Any further items of interest and excitement will be duly forwarded. Thank you all for your continued support.

Graham Dean, Archivist.

The DAPS Shop	
<p style="text-align: center;">New!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Happy Dan Fan "T" Shirts A Great Summer Gift For the whole family! Adult: small, medium, large, extra large and XXL £7.00</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Child: small, medium & large £6.00 All plus £1.00 each p&p</p>	
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to the Sea Breezes magazine to enquire who might know the vessels' names, or may have even sailed on one of them.

Before we put pen to paper, Colin was speaking to Nigel Farrell, who was on the April 14th working party. To our amazement Nigel knew the names of the two ships. However, that was not all; he actually witnessed the incident from the canal bank with his friends – quite remarkable!

Nigel informed us that the outward bound ore carrier was the Sunderland registered 'Naess Trader'. The inward bound ship was the London registered 'Silverfell' of Silver Line. The incident occurred at Partington on Sunday March 17th, 1963.

I had been under the impression that 'Silverfell' had been on her maiden voyage, but with Nigel's vast knowledge of shipping matters he assured us that she was on her first visit to the canal and not her maiden voyage.

Colin and I would like to thank Nigel for his expertise in solving this riddle.

- **George Hayes**

Archivist's Report

One of the recent duties of the archivist's role has been the gathering together of press cuttings from the earliest days of the tug's rescue from the jaws of the breaker's yard up to our present position of generous donations from many quarters.

Sifting through the many interesting snippets I came across the very first newspaper mention of the tug in her previous guise (October 1903) as the 'Ralph Brocklebank', it reads as follows -

STEAMER LAUNCH AT TRANMERE

Yesterday at noon was launched from the shipbuilding yard of the Tranmere Bay Development Co., Limited at Tranmere, the twin-screw steamer 'Ralph Brocklebank', built for the Shropshire Union Railways and Canal Co., and intended for river towing and passenger traffic between Liverpool and Ellesmere Port. The steamer is built throughout of steel and in accordance with Lloyd's rules and Board of Trade requirements and her dimensions are:-

Length overall, 110ft. Breadth of beam 24ft. Depth (moulded) 11ft.

In the unavoidable absence of the chairman of the company, after whom the steamer has been named, the ceremony of christening was gracefully performed by Miss Hales, daughter of the general manager.

Among those present were Mr Chas. Jones (managing director of the Tranmere Bay Development Company) and Mrs Jones, Messrs. T. Hales, J.G. Hope, E.R. Knowles, C. Whitridge, L. Lindop, and Mr and Mrs. E.G. Griffiths.

There is also a separate mention of her trials - Steam trials Crosby measured mile, 31st October. Mean speed 11.601 knots Timed by L.W. Lindop. Supt. Engr. SUR&CCo, Ellesmere Port.

Back to the present, with the assistance of volunteer Colin Brogan we visited the Maritime Museum Records Office, Albert Dock, Liverpool, for a peep in the Lloyd's Register of 1904/5 where we found that

Chairman's Letter

When I wrote the last report there seemed to be much to report; matters now seem a little quieter. The crankshafts and bearings have now gone to the contractors for the work to bring them back to specification. Seeing the crankshafts come out of the engine room seemed to be a far more difficult task than I and I suspect some others had expected; they just fitted through the openings. The contracting out of this work was a safe investment; considerable damage could have been done, for which we would have been liable for the repair bill.

We have reached the end of our fourth year, how time flies. It has been another successful one. We have a further project under way (researching and writing reports to back our main HLF bid) principally funded by HLF. As part of this project we have had two very useful meetings with representatives from Mersey Ferries and Peel Ports about the operation of the DA.

The engine restoration project is moving forward, our workshop and rest room have been fitted out and the panels from the saloon are being removed to give access to the steel behind. Numerous other tasks that have been undertaken on the tug moving her restoration on.

The new TAG is developing the specifications for the full restoration and putting into operational order. Additional funds have been gained, the largest being from the HLF and our friends at Halton Borough Council. Member's subscriptions, donations and the added value they generate from Gift Aid have produced around £10,000, a very valuable contribution, thank you to everyone for their contribution.

Visits to the DA have always proved popular and this year's Open Day was held in May and was well attended by members and friends. Separating the Open Day from the AGM appeared popular and certainly allowed more time for a leisurely look around accompanied by refreshments - this format may well be continued in future years.

I was in the south east at the beginning of May and went on a trip on the steam paddle steamer 'Kingswear Castle'. Not only was it enjoyable evening cruise on the Medway but was an opportunity to talk to some of their volunteers who have been operating her for a number of years in what appeared a very professional way. It is always worth learning from those who have been involved in similar enterprises to ours.

- **Tony Hirst**
May 2008

Working Parties

Tuesdays and Thursdays and alternate Saturdays.

Those wishing to attend working parties should contact:

John Deakin - Tel: 01928573877.

**DANIEL ADAMSON PRESERVATION SOCIETY
2008 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
&
MANCHESTER SHIP CANAL CRUISE**

Saturday 6th September 2008

**To be held at The Tom Rolt Centre, National Waterways Museum,
Ellesmere Port @ 11:00 Hrs Prompt.**

As notified in the February edition of The Tow Line the 2008 AGM will held at a new venue The Tom Rolt Centre, The National Waterways Museum, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire on Saturday 6th September 2008. There will be no admission charge for members, families and friends attending the Museum for the AGM

To make a journey to the 2008 AGM a family day out the Society has chartered the passenger vessel 'River Princess' for a three hour cruise along the Manchester Ship Canal.

The Cruise will depart at 14:00 and head to the Sea-Locks at Eastham where large ships enter the Ship Canal from the tidal River Mersey. The cruise will then head upstream as far as Old Quay, Runcorn, the site of the former MSC workshops and formerly the Daniel Adamson's home berth for many years. Arrival back at Ellesmere Port will be at approximately 17:00.

The fare for the cruise will be just **£10.00** per person.

A buffet lunch will also be available at the "Tom Rolt Centre" at a cost of **£8.00** per person.

There are only a limited number of tickets (80) available for the cruise – all bookings should be sent to our Member Liaison Officer as soon as possible:



Kevin Price, 21 Lawson Close, Woolston, Warrington, WA1 4EG

Email: kevinwprice@tiscali.co.uk Tel: 07882425674

Please make cheques payable to "The Daniel Adamson Preservation Society" and enclose a SAE for the return of tickets.

least provide some much needed shelter and a degree of comfort hitherto unknown on board.

Importantly these facilities allow us to continue the work whatever the weather or in cases when access to the vessel is restricted due to ongoing work or other activities on site.

We were able to make use of the messroom ahead of time at the start of the month when the high winds, sleet and freezing temperatures decided the issue for us even though painting and preparation was yet to be completed!!

With the temporary arrangements it was a tight squeeze with about seventeen people in there, but it was certainly warm and as you might imagine a very popular decision!!

ONGOING WORK

As I have already mentioned there is a lot of activity down below cleaning the engine room, while elsewhere volunteers have been cleaning out the aft peak tank. Access is very limited due to its shape so that only a handful of volunteers can enter. It is a slow process and very hard work mainly carried out by Pete Murray and Jack Nulty, sadly Jack's efforts led to a severe muscle strain which has put him out of commission for some weeks.



Not such light work was the removal of the main engine exhaust steam pipes, there are two per engine, the larger of the two carries steam between the HP and LP cylinders while the (marginally) smaller one delivers the steam to the condensers.

Amazingly these pipes are cast and are of considerable proportions, Dan Cross's photo shows the removal of just one pipe to the deck for cleaning, checking and ultimately testing. As can be seen just moving them is a team effort, visible in this view Pete Murray, Graham Dean, Kevin Lytton (foreground) and in the rear John Huxley.

The heavy, dirty job of cleaning the pipes has been cheerfully undertaken by Kevin Lytton, whose proper job is helping to run a power station!! (Busman's holiday they call it don't they?)

- **Neil Marsden**

Manchester Ship Canal Tugs – Memories Post Script

I have been asked by a few people with regards to the collision on the Manchester Ship Canal between the two ships that I wrote about when I was on the head tug 'Badger'

I was unable to remember the names, so after some discussion with Colin Leonard on a working party day on the 'Daniel Adamson', he suggested that I should write a letter



The next photograph by Gordon Weston (left), provides some atmospheric shots of the work 'down below'.

Finally, a photograph by Colin Brogan (right), shows the shafts looking quite small on the back of the



transporting lorry, wrapped and secured they take up very little space, though we did add the cylinder covers which will also receive some TLC from Mark. We hope

at some stage to see the shafts being machined at Walsall.

APRIL

I am pleased to say that by April the workshop re-wiring had been completed by the TTE apprentices and commissioned by United Utilities. Our existing machinery is now already in regular use and the bulk of our equipment, materials and stripped components housed beneath one roof. The working conditions, particularly in the light of the recent poor weather during the month have been noticeably improved, so much so that on occasion everyone seems to find a job in the workshop rather than outside 'on deck'!!

As can be seen from the following photograph, there is always plenty of activity in the workshop, here we can see left to right Wally Graham, Graham Dean and Colin Brogan checking boiler valves (following overhaul) against records. Ultimately these will accompany the boiler when it is despatched for overhaul and will be refitted for the boiler testing phase. Background, Pete Irlam checking where they've put the hammers, while store man John Churchill continues stocking the shelves!

As well as the workshop, United Utilities also provided additional rooms in an adjacent building which we are in the process of cleaning up for use as a messroom / dining area.

Dining 'Al Fresco' on the promenade deck has always been pleasant for most of the year, but sometimes it can be bitterly cold and rather exposed to the elements which usually makes for very short lunch breaks!! The new facility will at



Membership Matters

Once again it is a great pleasure to welcome new members since the last newsletter - from Merseyside and afar:

- 349 David Clear, Runcorn, Cheshire
- 351 Norman Crockit, Darlington, Co.Durham
- 352 Brian Hepworth, Holywell, Flintshire
- 354 Tom McManus, Liverpool
- 350 Tom Phillip, Skipton, North Yorkshire
- 348 M. Ratcliffe Accrington, Lancashire
- 347 Jeff. Richardson, Eastham, Merseyside
- 353 Paul Sprakes, Liverpool
- 346 David Wren, Liverpool

Although the new 'year' has hardly begun, over 240 members have joined or already renewed - quicker than last year, and many more have taken out standing orders - thank you all. I do hope this spurs the rest of you respond straight away - before you forget!

Your memberships really do matter, to ensure we get the grants we need.

The May 17th 'open day' at the boat was well attended, and attracted members from places like Nottingham and Goole, including 4 new members.

As ever, the hard work of our regular volunteers made the day possible - I'm sure you will wish me to thank them on your behalf. Kevin Price will provide details in the next issue.

Di Skilbeck also reports on the young peoples visit (hinted at in the last Tow-Line) - an involvement very necessary for us to succeed.

- Pat Crecraft, Secretary

Four years on - How it all started...

I sometimes struggle to believe that it is now over four years since the society was formed to save the unique survivor that is the 'Daniel Adamson' or the "Danny" as she has been shortened to. It only seems quite recent that the "Danny" became such a large part of my life and that of many other people as well.

I was reminded of this fact at the recent open day where I met several new members, members who have only visited the boat for the first time or those who attend working parties on a Saturday, a day I have set aside for all things "family" while on leave from the "day job". Yes -you probably know that the "day job" actually involves yet more boats, tugs to be exact so that only confirms I am a sucker for punishment!

I would be the first to admit that I and possibly a few other original, founder members, take for granted the history of the society in terms of how it all started and how we initially got by with very few members, hardly any money but I suppose plenty of trepidation and obviously little fear. Foolhardy - without doubt!

At this point I want to dispel a myth. People often ask me how long I had wanted to save the "Danny". Why the "Danny"? Why you? Well I hope the following attempt to explain the story will explain that I have never had a life long affection for the boat now in the spot light, nor had I ever held an opinion that one day I, along with others, would restore it back to an operational item.

No - I had never even been for a trip on the "Danny" nor been aboard it when she was in operational condition. This may come as a shock. I do however have a soft spot for all things nautical, I used to be (I suppose I still am if the truth be known) a tug enthusiast and am a firm believer that in this day and age, items of great importance should not simply be "scrapped" without a fair crack of the preservation whip.

Well where to start? The beginning I suppose... The Maritime community is a small one, nationally but especially locally. A chat over a brew one day with a mate of mine briefly touched on the emerging news that the 'Daniel Adamson' was due to be towed from the Ellesmere Port Boat Museum to Garston and scrapped by a Widnes based scrap man.

The impending scrapping probably didn't take up much more than five minutes before we moved onto other items on the world agenda but those five minutes proved to be crucial. The date was early February 2004 and my wife Rachael was due to give birth to our first child in April, not far away now and I had this fact constantly on my mind.

A few days passed, and then an historic picture appeared on the live message board of "Tugtalk" part of the Clydesite web site (www.clydesite.co.uk).

The picture which appeared of the 'Daniel Adamson' on February 16th 2004 was from George Robinson (now a DAPS member). This was followed later that day by a picture from Alan Hughes (now our treasurer). This showed the "Danny" at Ellesmere Port in 2002 looking very sad and run down. Anyway, when I looked at the site in the evening and saw the two pictures posted along with a post from Belgian member Piet Van Damme with historical details, I felt it only right that I should post the news that the old girl had been surveyed and cleared for passage to Garston within a week or so.

The response to my message took me a little by surprise, lots of "tug talkers" posted messages in protest and the shock of the impending scrapping but the most radical action was that of the website owner, Bruce Biddulph. More of that in a minute. Alan Hughes, a former Mersey tug man echoed the comments of many when he commented that this was a disgrace and the 'Daniel Adamson' should be saved. Alan continued to say that if the "Danny" was an important piece of art work, it would indeed be purchased by and saved for the nation.

Former tug man and Lock Keeper Carl Leckey, now also a DAPS member, was in New Zealand at the time but posted on the site saying how a pressure group should be formed and the vessel saved - a view echoed by many.

Anyway, returning to Bruce Biddulph's input. Bruce is an I.T. and computer guy with a soft spot for all things nautical and especially ships built on the Clyde, the parent site of "Tugtalk" is Clyde Shipping where the 'Clydebuilt' database is maintained. One thing Bruce is not by his own admission a) Local (he lives in Ayr) and b) of a nautical background. Anyway, with this in mind, he posted the following message out of the blue on the site on the 17th February: "*I have spoken to a chap at Manchester Ship Canal. The tug has not been sold yet. We have won some breathing space!*"

delighted to say that the scheme is an annual event and that Kevin is already well on the way to amassing the necessary hours for the 2008 award!!

On Tuesday March 4th we received a visit from the Mayor and Mayoress of Halton, Councillor Mike Hodgkinson and his wife Kathy making their second visit to the vessel. On this occasion the visit marked the award by Halton Borough Council of a further £10,000 in support of the project, bringing Halton's contribution to the restoration of 'Daniel Adamson' to an impressive £25,000!!

Thursday March 6th saw the realisation of what such support can achieve with the removal of the main engine crankshafts.

Removing the crankshafts was a task requiring the specialist skills of experienced riggers and a substantial crane. North Western Ship Repairers provided both, as well as the means of transporting the shafts to their destination, namely to Mark Rigg's 'Industrial Crankshafts' in Walsall. There they will be cleaned, tested and provided no major faults are disclosed will be ground in readiness for the fitting of the newly re-metalled bearings, work being carried out by bearing specialists J.H.Richards of Birmingham.

Some photographs to accompany this auspicious occasion, which really stands as a milestone in the restoration process, follow:

The first photo, courtesy of Colin Brogan shows the start of the process,



New lifting lugs are welded in place. While the engine itself is fitted with lugs to allow lifting the crankshafts, these like the engines are 105 years old, would you risk it? Neither would we, hence the new lugs, as I say better safe.....

Then add a crane, a big one!



The BEAUFORT was completely covered in blazing crude oil and was herself now on fire surrounded by a blazing sea. The tug master, Captain Tony Iveson from Hull, managed to push the engine telegraphs to full speed ahead, and they were able to sail clear of the blazing oil on the water. Due to the air conditioning fans sucking smoke into the accommodation four of the Filipino crew members thought that the BEAUFORT was completely on fire and unfortunately abandoned ship jumping into the blazing sea. The SAFIR was quickly on the scene and managed to extinguish the fires on the BEAUFORT and fortunately another vessel managed to rescue one of the crew from the water. Sadly, the other three seamen were never seen again.

Very sadly indeed, the SCAN PARTNER which was actually moored alongside the BARCELONA when the explosion took place was lost with her entire crew.

After these tragic events the BEAUFORT returned to Sharjah for much needed repairs both to the tug and the crew.

So much for the forgotten war!

- Alan Hughes

Restoration Diary

MARCH



When not lending a hand aboard with working parties, DAPS volunteer Kevin Lytton's full time job is with 'E-on' at their Deeside Power Station. The company has a scheme whereby any employee engaged in voluntary, charitable work can apply for funding for an item to assist their project. The company stipulates that the volunteer must complete at least 80 hours unpaid work per annum on their chosen project to qualify for an award up to £250 in value.

Kevin had no problem in qualifying with the necessary time as all working party hours are fully documented, but in order to qualify for the 2007 allocation we had just a couple of weeks to decide what was needed before the expiry date.

Accordingly pressed by a deadline we considered our needs and looked for something suitable, a portable welding kit, and managed to qualify in time!

Kevin is pictured (by Dan Cross) with the item we bought with the money. Amazingly light and portable, the machine (not Kevin!) is extremely powerful and has already been put to good use, easily accomplishing the manufacturer's claims for its capabilities. Another very useful item for our workshop has been acquired for which we must express our sincere thanks both to Kevin and of course to E-on. In closing I am

I will go down to view her myself on Saturday. Anyone wishing to meet with me please do so, especially if you can input some technical knowledge about her chances of salvation. If anyone can organise a place for her to berth - she MUST come out of the canal - get wangling. Next week I will visit the Canal's Chief Engineer to talk about the prospects of removal, and how we get ownership. In effect, if we can get this tug out of the Canal - she is ours. Contact me ASAP if you can input in anyway. We have started, we can save this vessel!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

Many messages of support followed but it soon became clear that what Bruce lacked in a marine background, he made up for in true grit! Anyway, by the evening of the 18th I had a long chat on the phone with Bruce and it became clear he needed help and the current owners, the Manchester Ship Canal Co would only talk to us if the "Danny" was removed a) off the dock estate at Ellesmere Port and b) off the Manchester Ship Canal entirely. Now as chance would have it, my tug in Liverpool at the time, the 'Ashgarth' was in Clarence dry-dock which was run by North Western Ship Repairers. When I reported to work for my week on duty on Thursday 19th February, I had a plan but not much time.

At this point I should point out who owned the 'Daniel Adamson' and why she had to be moved. She was retired from service in 1985 after failing a boiler examination. The decision was taken to not carry out a re-tube and some other work due to costs but there were probably other political reasons the 'Daniel Adamson' was to be retired as the Canal Company's Directors' inspection vessel.

The vessel was laid up at her operating base at the MSCCo's work shop's in Old Quay, Runcorn. In 1986 a deal was struck with the fledgling Boat Museum, Ellesmere Port to tow her there on loan where the Museum would take care of general day to day care of her.

During the mid nineties her condition began to worsen and although many ideas were put forward by the museum to safeguard the vessel's future, the Canal Company refused to officially hand her over for various reasons and the Museum, already short of cash for it's own collection was unable to spend any money on a vessel that did not belong to them – result stalemate.

From 2002 onwards, residents of the Raddle Wharf area of the lower basin at Ellesmere Port began complaining to the local authority and police about the "Danny" as she was becoming a magnet for the local "hooded brigade" and she was regularly broken into, fires were started and generally she was being ravaged by time and weather..

Eventually the MSCCo took the decision in early 2004 she was to be disposed of in the only way known – by scrapping.

Firstly I had to speak to my boss, the Svitzer port manager in Liverpool, Barry Rees. I explained the situation to him and that to have any chance of saving the "Danny"; we needed to move her off the Ship Canal. Barry had a think; maybe I caught him on a good day? Anyway he told me that the first and most important thing to do was once removed, get the vessel in dry-dock for a full survey of the hull. He told me that Svitzer's in Liverpool had quite a few tugs due for dry-dock over the next few months so he agreed two things. Firstly Svitzer would provide a tug free of charge for the tow out of the Canal to Liverpool and secondly, subject to North Western Ship Repairers

agreement, would allow us to place the "Danny" in dry-dock along with a Svitzer vessel free of charge.

This was to be the crucial and most important offer and a great turning point. Firstly I had to speak to the Mersey Docks and Harbour Co. The MDHC Harbour Master, Capt. Steve Gallimore couldn't have been more helpful he passed me on to the assistant Harbour Master, Capt. Steve Hardcastle who to this day, couldn't be more helpful and accommodating.

An important thing to mention here is that due to the background of many of our members and committee, we understand the regulations that govern the way we are obliged to do things when dealing with a vessel which is under the scrutiny of a major Port Authority and for this reason we have always set out to do things as requested, when asked to and without cutting any corners, especially on items such as insurance etc. I am convinced that we are seen as a professional outfit and not as one that is a bunch of enthusiasts with little or no idea what we are dealing with. It is for this reason, I believe, we continue to enjoy a good working relationship with many authorities and companies who actively support this project.

Secondly I had to speak to the dry-dock owners, North Western Ship Repairers to see if they would agree to Barry Rees's proposal and secondly to see if any docking/rigging charges would be billed to us. Initially I spoke to the Ship Manager at Clarence Dry Dock, who put me in touch with Mike Moran, one of the Directors. Again there was a sympathetic ear on the end of the phone and I think once news of Svitzer's and MDHCo's offers had been revealed, this helped. The dry-docks would lay extra men on and supply new "side shores" due to the "Danny's" size but again no cost to us would be incurred.

Whilst at the dry-dock I just happened to come across (ok I went looking for him) the surveyor who carries out the ultrasonic testing on the plates in the hull, Mark Nicholls. I bent his ear as I can do so well and next thing we had a surveyor lined up also free of charge!

Anyway, a meeting at the boat museum had been set up of like minded enthusiasts for 10 am on Saturday 21st Feb 2004. I spoke to a few contacts I knew to try to spread the word. Stuart Gardiner, former Chairman of the River Weaver Navigation Society was due to attend the museum on the Evening before we met for the Boat Museum Society's AGM and promised he would announce our meeting there. I spoke to Nigel Bowker who ran the small barges 'Panary' and 'Safe Hand' and was also involved with the Liverpool based steam tug 'Kerne'.

Nigel Bowker offered some advice and spread the word for me. He told me about something called the National Register of Historic Ships - What this was - I was to learn over the coming months! This register was administered then by the National Historic Ship Committee and via their website I was again able to spread the word via a forum they hosted at the time. I did the same with the Steam Boat Association's web site and by Thursday night I had contacted John Luxton, again we had never met before but I had sent him photographs for his excellent Irish Sea Shipping website which is great for news etc. John agreed to post information on his site and via various Yahoo groups. For this I am eternally grateful and for John's beginning of a great involvement with DAPS.

The operations at Sirri Island continued without any threat from air attack although the shuttle tankers going to and from Kharg Island were regularly attacked and several were lost along with their crews - a fact that was hardly ever mentioned in the western press.

The peaceful calm of operations at Sirri came to an abrupt halt on Tuesday, 12th August 1986 when Iraqi jets flew over 500 miles to attack the storage tankers at Sirri Island. It was claimed at the time that these jets had refuelled in mid-air despite the suggestions that the Iraqi air force had no refuelling tankers - did they land somewhere? We will never know.

The attack at Sirri killed at least eight tanker crew and set two super tankers on fire. Our tugboats along with others successfully extinguished the fires and relatively peace returned for a short time. This attack by Iraqi jets sent shockwaves through the Iranian authorities and they were now aware that Sirri Island was vulnerable to further attacks by Iraqi jets, so it was decided that the whole operation should now be moved to Larak Island which is a 120 miles away from Sirri and is, indeed, in the Strait of Hormuz which is very close to the Iranian port of Bander Abass and, therefore, the operation would be better protected by the addition of Chaff dispensers (which divert missiles) and anti-aircraft guns on selected tankers and also used electronic counter measures and towed radar reflectors to draw away Iraq Exorcets from the intended targets. Therefore, the whole Sirri Island operation moved lock stock and barrel to offshore Larak Island and a new storage tanker was chartered, the SEAWISE GIANT, which at the time was the largest oil tanker in the world. Shuttle tankers continued the hazardous voyage between Larak and Kharg and the export of Iranian crude oil continued despite the best endeavours of the Iraqi air force to stop it.

Operations at Larak continued uneventfully until Saturday, 14th May, 1988 when at 12.55 hours the terminal was attacked and the SEAWISE GIANT received direct hits and was set on fire. The export tanker, BARCELONA, was moored on the portside of the SEAWISE GIANT was also hit and set on fire. The three tugboats of Scheldt Towage, BEAUFORT, SAFIR and FERDINAND VERBIEST were then engaged fighting the fires. All three tugs continued to fight the fires on the SEAWISE GIANT whilst the BARCELONA had been cut adrift and drifted away from the scene. By 0430 hours on Sunday 15th May the fires on the SEAWISE GIANT had been extinguished and the tugs then moved off towards the BARCELONA which had run aground near Larak Island. By 0500 hours the tugs were engaged in fighting the fire on the BARCELONA which was ablaze from the stem to the accommodation. She was stern into Larak Island and down by the bow. At 0600 hours the tugs were instructed to stop fire fighting as it was considered hopeless to extinguish the fire at that time and they were instructed to return to the SEAWISE GIANT.

On Monday, 16th May, at 1700 hours the tugs were instructed to proceed back to the BARCELONA and commence fire fighting duties once again. The only flames and smoke were erupting from the port bow of the casualty. The complete sea area was covered in oil. Our tugs were assisted by the SCAN PARTNER and the SCAN FORCE. Fire fighting continued all day and through the night until by midday on Tuesday 17th, the fires were virtually extinguished. Our tug BEAUFORT was instructed to move from one side of the tanker to the other side to extinguish some small flames. As they moved away from the BARCELONA the tanker exploded in a ball of fire which can only be described as a small atomic explosion.

At the end of the visit the young people enjoyed tea in the mess room and were given a copy of 'Towline' and a pen--- great delight over the pen!

We look forward to seeing the completed game and, hopefully welcoming some of these youngsters in the future.

Thanks to Kevin and the volunteers who helped with the visit, kept the youngsters safe and ensured that the "Danny" was treated with respect.

- Di Skilbeck

The Forgotten War Tales from the Persian Gulf

Many people will regard the Gulf War as the one known as "Desert Storm" back in 1991 when the allied forces went to war to evict Saddam Hussein of Iraq after he invaded Kuwait. This particular conflict was known as the Gulf War throughout the world whilst the second so-called Gulf War was the invasion of Iraq by American and British forces in 2003 which, as we all know, is still ongoing. However, very few people know anything about the real Gulf War between Iran and Iraq which lasted eight years from 1980 to 1988. Many thousands of Iraqi and Iranian soldiers and civilians died during this conflict.

I remember it only too well from my time in the Gulf. In 1980 I was appointed marine manager for a Belgian tugboat company, Scheldt Towage, based in Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) after having already spent three years as a tug master working throughout the Persian Gulf. Scheldt Towage operated a fleet of tugboats in the Gulf both locally at Sharjah Port and also working for the Iranian authorities berthing large oil tankers at Sirri Island which was about 60 miles offshore from Sharjah Port. The oilfields from which the tankers loaded at Sirri Island were adjacent to oilfields belonging to the UAE.

Shortly after joining Scheldt Towage in 1980 Iraq invaded Iran and began what was to become an eight year long war. At the time it was considered that Sirri Island being 500 miles from the Iraqi airfields were safe from attack by Iraqi fighter jets. However, Iran's major oil exporting terminal which is in the north of the Gulf at Kharg Island and only about 150 miles from Iraqi airfields became a main target in Iraq's attempt to destroy Iran's oil exporting capability. After a number of oil tankers were hit by Exocet missiles fired by Iraqi French built Mirage jet fighters the major oil tanker owners were reluctant to risk their vessels proceeding into the north of the Persian Gulf to load crude oil at Kharg Island. To overcome this reluctance of the tanker owners to risk their ships it was decided that Sirri Island would become a transshipment terminal for the export of Iranian crude oil. To enable this to happen a large number of elderly and almost obsolete oil tankers were chartered to shuttle crude oil between Sirri and Kharg Islands.

A large storage tanker was chartered in and this was anchored off Sirri Island so that the shuttle tankers could moor on one side of them and the export tanker could moor on the other side. In the event that no export tanker was available the shuttle tanker would pump their cargo directly into the storage tanker. Scheldt Towage tugs and mooring boats were engaged in berthing and unberthing these tankers as well as normal oilfield supply duties.

Friday morning brought more phone calls and one in particular to a good friend of mine, Mike Stammers who, retired a few years ago as Curator at the Merseyside Maritime Museum. Mike proffered some great advice and pointed me initially in the right direction in terms of who to speak to. Mike agreed to attend the meeting the next day and also would speak to people at the museum and those involved in the associated support groups.

Of course while all this had been going on, I had become point of contact rather than Bruce Biddulph, with a guy from the Ship Canal Company. That guy was Gerald Dickinson. Now I didn't know Gerald from Adam but I found him to be refreshingly helpful but again he was a toll manager and had no maritime background to speak of, it seems that he was in the wrong place at the wrong time and in his words was "lumbered" with dealing what he had affectionately known as "Anoraks"- a term I hear from time to time but one on which I'll reserve the right to silence as to when it should and should not be used!

Anyway, Gerald had a script to stick to and that was the one which said firstly a deal HAD been done with the scrap man and secondly, the boat IF offered to us, must be removed from the Canal. So Friday morning came and no sooner had I got to the dry-docks than the phone rang and it was Gerald. He called to say that "Mr Scapman" had discovered what was going on and in his opinion for him to scrap the "Danny" was a done deal. I must point out here that at the time, a few vessels were being scrapped in Liverpool because scrap prices had just broken the £100 per ton mark.

Now things were suddenly looking bad. An irate scrap man was seeing money disappear (we all know how they struggle!) and he was going to do anything he could to prevent this happening. What could I do? The proposed meeting on the Saturday could reveal five attendees or a few more. Who could I speak to? No one had offered their phone number, was it just me who was trying to save the "Danny"? Was I mad? Why was I doing this?

Phone calls back to Gerald did nothing, he was under orders and that was that although he did try to help. I eventually found myself threatening to do something! I have no idea what made me do it. "I want this sorted by the end of the day (Friday) or I'm coming over to your offices and won't leave 'till it is sorted!".....What did I just say?...Just me go to their office? Oh God help me! It so happened that the MSC Company offices were in Bridgewater House, Runcorn, five minutes from my home in Widnes. I needed a plan - I didn't really have one but they didn't need to know my fundamental weakness!

First thing to do was to obtain a letter from Barry Rees (my boss) confirming in writing the offer of the tow and dry-dock. After much arm twisting and 2pm on Friday afternoon, I set off for Runcorn blindly with just a letter in my back pocket. What was I doing? Was I mad? What would my pregnant wife say - "Oh God". Yes, there was the small matter of the impending addition to our family - yes I was mad!

Anyway, on the way over Gerald rang me with more bad news, his boss and Manager of the Ship Canal Company, Jim Chiltern refused to speak to me unless I spoke to the scrapman first - they felt it was his shout not theirs! Great news! - There was no getting around the fact I would have to ring a rather pi##ed off bloke who was about to have a crowd of "anoraks" spoil his money making plans - great! To make it worse, the scrap man lived about 80 yards from my former family home which would make all in all for an "interesting" conversation to say the least!

Now anyone who knows me will know I have a Scouse accent, some say a strong one, others say a slight one, and this was to be the key to the tone of the conversation. I pulled over, took many deep breaths, asked my self again what the hell I was doing? (but got the same blank reply) and dialled the supplied mobile number.

Now the details of the phone call are not really printable due to the amount of expletives used! Needless to say that the term "Dirty Scouse B*****d" and claims that we were to cost him thousands were used more than once. I did attempt to reason with him but eventually I succumbed to pressure and once I revealed I wasn't indeed Scouse but "woolly back" like him, this made matters worse! I set out to prove the point by reading his private registration plate which I had seen hundred's of times, back to him which didn't go down too well! This was followed by a recital back of his wife's plate which was promptly followed by a very kind invitation to visit him at his yard where an iron bar awaited me - I declined the offer and I think the only thing we did agree on was to hang up in unison!

Well I have to say that after the phone went dead I was by this point really wound up and shocked, visibly so. I had the shakes by the time I arrived at Bridgewater House. By this point it was around half past three on Friday afternoon - not the best time of the week to try to "do business" but then I didn't exactly choose to be there, it just happened I suppose.

Gerald came to reception looking worried. "I thought you might turn up, are you alright? You look awful". I must have looked bad as we had never met before.

"I did as requested and spoke to Mr Scrap dealer" I told him -"waste of time though!" "Yes- I have heard you attempted to speak" Gerald was aware of our friendly chat. It was only half an hour before- things were moving quickly I thought. "I'll tell Jim Chilton you are here but he may not see you", I told Gerald I was going no where 'till he did after what I had just been through.

I made myself comfy in the reception in a big arm chair and Gerald got me a glass of water although a large single malt was more like what I needed. Gerald went off upstairs to see the Port Manager and Chief Engineer for the company. He was away for around half an hour. He returned with an invitation for me to go and see them. He looked slightly shocked but told me quietly that "things were happening..."

Next thing I found myself in a board room surrounded by paintings of past directors of the Canal Company and sitting at one of those famous round, polished meeting tables. I was asked to explain myself and the actions of others and what our plans where, did we have any? The initial reaction from the Port Director and Port Engineer was a little frosty it has to be said but I am able to bullshit with the best, I offered some explanations and reasons why the "Danny" should be saved, and I should be trusted. Cue the letter in my back pocket from Barry Rees on Svitzer's headed paper. After being asked "was I an Anorak?" and "did I know what I was doing?" both, valid questions, when I produced the letter from a company they knew it appeared to work wonders. There was a slight look of acceptance as they read the letter and realised I (or we if I actually at this point knew who "we" was), were serious.

They tried it on with me a couple of times but I didn't take the bait. My finest moment, well I was proud of it anyway, was when I was asked by Jim Chilton how much money we had to buy it? I emptied the contents of my pocket onto the shiny table and I would

hazard a guess that there was about £3.50 in loose change. "That's all I have" I told them. Raised eyebrows were exchanged along with more discussion when a deal was finally agreed upon. That being that IF the Daniel Adamson was removed from Ellesmere Port Lower Basin, removed off the Canal and taken away, a preservation society or group could have possession of her for £1.

A contract was drawn up and just before I left the meeting I asked for some information on her, I was given a hand drawn copy of a GA plan with a few dimensions scribbled down.

Now to see if anyone out there shared my blind enthusiasm for the project. Would anybody turn up on Saturday morning.....?

TO BE CONTINUED.....

- Dan Cross

Visit of Merseyside Play Action

The Heritage Lottery Fund 'Young Roots' has given a grant to the Merseyside Play Action Council to create a computer game covering all forms of transport on Merseyside and Wirral during the last 100 years. The game, when finished, will be available in local libraries and museums. The project is overseen by Liverpool Museum.

The group has visited the Birkenhead Tram Museum, the Mersey Railway and the Mersey Tunnels. On March 29th seven of the young people visited the 'Daniel Adamson' and were shown around by Kevin Price. They were a lively group; they boarded the boat and rushed straight up to the bridge!! After they had got used to the boat they went down to see the engines and boilers and found these amazing. They went into the saloon but the grandeur of the saloon did not create the same interest as the engine room or the bridge!! The discovery of the speaking tube on the bridge caused great excitement and messages were exchanged between the bridge and the engine room. The young people took many photographs and made sketches of various parts of the boat, such as the steering gear, the boiler and the towing hooks. Some of these illustrations will be used in the 'game' so it will be good publicity for the Daniel Adamson.

