

339/8855

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

? Denise Patterson
562/4978
Thurs to 9.3

MONDAY 4th DECEMBER Talk: "Another Clydebuilt Project- University of Glasgow Archives". Speaker: Lesley Richmond, Archives Services director

MONDAY 8th JANUARY Talk: "The Millennium Link- Forth & Clyde Canal". Speaker: Andy Carroll, Canal Ranger

MONDAY 19th February Talk: "The Restoration of the Maid of the Loch" Speaker: Michael J. Hughan, Loch Lomond Steamship Preservation Co.

MONDAY 2nd APRIL Talk: "The Battleships - an illustration talk on the Channel 4 Series". Speaker: Ian Johnston, series associate producer.

(all meetings at 7.30pm in Yorkhill Pumphouse, Clyde Maritime Centre)

Clydebuilt Association Committee, elected for the year 2000-2001 after the recent AGM, is as follows:

Chair: David Paterson; Vice Chair: John Money; Secretary: Iain Morrison; Treasurer: Fred Owens; Publicity: Gordon Borthwick; Bill Black, Nigel Orr

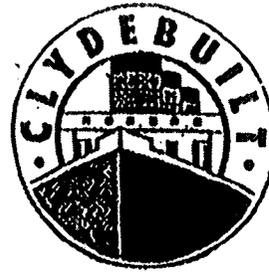
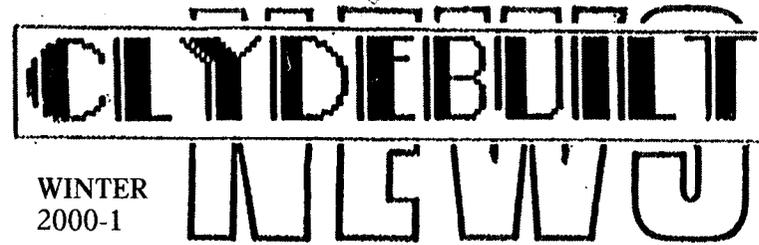
Further to the report "Millennium Funds Sought For Book" in our last newsletter, we are pleased to report that the reprinting of 2000 copies of our "Clydebuilt" brochure is to be funded by the "Lottery Grants for Local Groups - Awards For All" scheme. Printing will now proceed and it is hoped to have copies available soon (perhaps for Christmas?).

A new bus service No.26 by First Glasgow is now running from Robroyston to Yorkhill Pumphouse & "Glenlee", via Springburn, St George's Cross, Buchanan Street Bus Station, Union Street and SECC. It leaves Robroyston on the hour/half hour, passing the Bus Station at the quarter hours and Union Street (Central Station) at 6 minutes before the hour/half hour.

Anyone know the whereabouts of the battle ensign of the John Brown's-built battleship "Duke of York" which was presented to the City of Glasgow after she sank the "Scharnhorst" in 1943 - it was encased in a mahogany casket made by the ship's "chippy" Bill Catling. Any clues to Gordon Borthwick 334-0228.

Is your subscription due for renewal?
Individual £5, Family £8, Concession £2
to - Iain Morrison, 19 Greenhill Crescent, Elderslie PA5 9AW

01505 321857



WINTER
2000-1

£500m YORKHILL PLAN WILL HIGHLIGHT "GLENLEE"

The adjacent sailing vessel "Glenlee" will be featured prominently by the £500m "Glasgow Harbour" plan, Scotland's largest project, proposed for the Yorkhill area by Clydeport and the Bank of Scotland.

According to press reports, the 100-acre riverside development would extend from the Scottish Exhibition Centre to the Clyde Tunnel in what is claimed will be the biggest development site in Scotland.

It would include 2000 high-quality houses, and a leisure centre around Yorkhill Basin with bars, bistros, clubs, a multiplex cinema, hotels and office space. Already leading business people are reported to be reserving £500,000 flats "with stunning river views".

The existing Yorkhill Basin would be a likely site for an city-centre marina, while a quayside promenadewould continue the Clyde Walkway along the riverside. Existing dockside sheds and the giant Meadowside Granaries (largest brick structures in Western Europe) would be demolished, while Clydeside Expressway approaches would be altered.

Estimated to create 3000 permanent jobs, the plans will complement development on the south bank where the £75m Science Centre, view-point tower and IMAX cinema are nearing completion. Controversial road and pedestrian bridges would link to the proposed new BBC HQ.

Launching the £500m project, Clydeport's chief executive Tom Allison said "Glasgow has always turned its back to its river. What it is now doing is turning itself towards the river". Glasgow City Council leader Charles Gordon, one of whose top priorities is the regeneration of the Clyde, was reported to be very much in favour of riverside development in this area.

It is hoped that part of the project will be ready in time for the proposed Tall Ships Festival at Glasgow in 2005.

NEXT MEETING: Monday 4th December at 7.30pm
"Another Clydebuilt Project: Glasgow University Archives"

Secretary: Iain Morrison, 19 Greenhill Cres, Elderslie PA5 9AW
Tel: 01505-321857 Website: <http://www.hypernet.com/clydebuilt>
CLYDEBUILT ASSOCIATION

7 year ags

Chair's Chat

It is now over a year since the Tall Ship at Glasgow Harbour ("Glenlee", to you) opened to the public. A lot of water has gone under the bridge since. A step change in our approach has been necessary, from thinking only "restoration" to running a business in a very difficult market.

It has been a very hard year, keeping the whole project viable. At times I wondered, has it all been worthwhile, as money matters and visitor rates dominated agendas month after month. I know personally I had to keep reminding myself that the means would justify the end. Certainly, without the help of the City Council we would definitely not be where we are today.

Nevertheless I hope I am not being over optimistic but maybe, just maybe, there is now some light at the end of the tunnel. I say that as most of the different sections that make up the Tall Ship project look as if they are about to take effect - that is the functions and catering held aboard ship, the school visits, visitor attraction and cultural events. Also, once the new exhibitions and displays are in place by next Spring, following the HLF and ERDF grants, the visitor numbers should increase further.

But the role of volunteers remains a crucial aspect of visitor attraction. Their significant contribution is invaluable, in completing the fitting-out of the ship's galley and renovation of various pieces of machinery so that they can be put on public display. Now volunteers are starting work on the ship's engine-room, and therefore creating further access areas for visitors and more interesting material on display.

I cannot stress enough the importance of the work by volunteers. The project will not survive without their help. Basically there is not the money nor grants available to carry out many of the jobs required at the ship.

So, if you have some time on your hands, contact Bob Layden at the ship (tel: 0141-639 3281), and let's hope that next year that light at the end of the tunnel gets brighter.

Have a good Christmas and a happy New Year!

DAVID PATERSON, CHAIR

Dear David

READER'S LETTER

Whilst it is still possible for many of our young folk to learn a trade, there are gaps - where does one go to learn wood-carving, traditional upholstery (not foam packaging!) or antique restoration, or gilding?

A week ago, I came across a woodcarving gouge - the name stamped on the handle was that of my great, great grandfather - I resharpened it and used it. But who do we pass these skills onto? One would have to travel far to find such carving skills on offer in our further education colleges. And if carving is not available as an interest in our Secondary School Technical Departments, have Art Departments exhibited an interest in lifting the baton? Understandably our F/E colleges are creating more and more classes in the new technologies, but manual skills are becoming two-fingered dexterity on a keyboard.

It is sad to read the small ads at the back of a woodworks magazine and occasionally come across "Bereavement Sale" - and realise that another carpenter's toolchest is being sold off rather than kept in the family by a young man who has watched and learned from Grandpa. I don't know the answer - we're reduced to ten-minute interludes on television as "Trade Secrets". I'm going out to sit on my own in the woodshed!

ROBIN HODGE



HMS Starling which sunk 10 U-boats in the Battle of the Atlantic.

The Clyde Goes To War

She was laid down in Fairfields yard in Glasgow at the end of 1941. In February, 1943, as she neared completion, an advance party of officers and key senior ratings joined the ship at the builder's yard. Our Navigator, Lieutenant Arthur Ayers RNVR, referred to from now on as 'the Pilot', remembers arriving at the yard on a cold February day. He describes the scene that met his eyes on 15 February, 1943, in filthy Scottish weather:

'As she lay there, all I saw was a mass of black plates, red lead and rust alongside the dock wall and it was there that I met the advance party from *Stork* which had just arrived. The first man that I saw was Chief Engine Room Artificer Eddie Freestone who seemed very unhappy about taking over the ship at five days' notice, but he managed.'

An all-night journey in an overcrowded and unheated train, sitting on a suitcase in the corridor, brought me to Glasgow. After a ride on the dirty and stuffy subway and an early morning tramp through the back streets, I finally reached the big main gates of Fairfields Yard.

Starling had not yet been given a name: she was just Job Number SL 11701, lying somewhere amongst the apparent confusion of a very big and busy yard in the midst of the wartime rush. Picking my way along the slimy roads between the great sheds, surrounded and deafened by the clatter and hammering of the riveters, I made my way to the dock where the ship lay. To the right and left, through the doors of the buildings could be seen vistas of great machines and spinning driving belts. Down the congested tracks between the sheds, long unwieldy lorries with overhanging loads fought for right of way with railway trucks full of rusty iron plates. On the edges of the dock, cranes trundled to and fro hooting officiously.

In the dock itself there was a confused jumble of stumpy naked masts sticking drunkenly out of grotesque top-heavy hulls. On board the half-built ships, piles of metalwork obscured the upper decks.

The embryo of *Starling* lay amongst this heap of junk, tucked away behind the towering hull of a cruiser. A cold drizzle cast a gloomy spell over this depressing scene. The little that could be seen of the ship looked more decrepit than the oldest coal-burning tramp that ever belched smoke from one east coast port to another. The acrid smell of the red-hot rivets did nothing for my breakfastless stomach and my head throbbed from the

remains of an unenviable hangover after a short few days leave in London.

I went on board over the two planks that connected her with the dockside, and found my way on deck and into the passage way. The smell was even worse below: the air was cold, damp and foul, resounding with the clatter of hammers and the hiss of escaping compressed air. Ragged holes in the decks gave glimpses of machinery down in the bowels of the ship. Tangled knots of bare electric cables hung down from the deckheads. Men in cloth caps and overalls scurried backwards and forwards. In a compartment some shipyard workers whiled away their breakfast break playing cards on top of a packing case. It was quite clear that I wasn't welcome and I wandered back to look for the office, thoroughly deflated and dispirited by this first encounter.

There was so much to be learnt in so little time before the ship went to sea: the operation and the layout of the complex multi-position telephone systems, the damage control systems, the boat-hoisting arrangements, the Asdic system, the gunnery system, the depth-charge and ammunition supply systems were just a few of the things that had to be mastered.

The key rating of every department joined the ship to watch and learn about the installation of his own equipment. More officers appeared and some were sent away on last-minute courses to cover the latest drills and routines for operating their weaponry.

The ship was, of course, uninhabitable, so we lived ashore in billets, flats or hotels. Days at sea on a draughty open bridge were replaced by hours in an office surrounded by piles of paper and the clatter of the typewriter. Instead of an unsympathetic able seaman pulling us from our bunks in the early hours of the morning with a bad weather report, our landladies shook us with cups of tea. For a week or two we enjoyed leisurely breakfasts and travel down to the Yard on the subway hidden behind newspapers, no longer bound by routine and unvaried discipline.

Very quickly, the jumbled mass of girders and plates was riveted and welded into place, and the ship began to take shape. Leisurely breakfasts became less and less common as the days of preliminary trials began. Stores had to be brought on board and mustered; soggy sandwiches replaced proper meals and very soon we realized with a shock that the great day of commissioning was only two weeks away.

The last days before the final inspection by the Admiral Superintending Contract Built Ships were scenes of terrific activity in the Yard. Ship's Officers had now prepared the Watch Bills and each man's watch card which would tell him his part of the ship, his mess, where to sling his hammock, his locker, his Action Station and all the other details which would regulate his life for the coming months.

On the night before the inspection the last air pressure hoses and heaps of tools were taken ashore. The ship was almost complete structurally but still looked like a wreck recently brought up from the ocean bed.

As the last workmen left the ship a great armada of Glasgow buses drew up alongside and discharged an army of cleaning ladies, complete with the tools of their trade, and, just behind them, the painters. They worked all



through the night in relays and when the morning came they had completed a magical transformation from a jumble of iron into a ship that looked as if she might one day be good enough to enter the Royal Navy.

But this was a very special ship, to be commanded by this man Captain Walker, who already had quite a reputation and a couple of DSOs. To him the ship was always to be 'My Gallant *Starling*'.

After this day the ship would cease to be a lifeless hulk resounding with the noise of riveting and welding, and would become a throbbing man-of-war, humming with machinery and alive with the talk, laughter and complaints of many men. This was the day when two hundred men shifted house at the same time and met the friends (and enemies) with whom they would live for months in the closest proximity and under the most exacting conditions.

The ship, its upper works still glimmering in its fresh paint, rapidly took on a new appearance as the first sailors came over the side. Bunches of men, staggering along with their bags on one shoulder and their hammocks on the other, followed the signposts down the narrow passageways, directed by harassed petty officers in their shirt sleeves. As the train disgorged more and more men to crowd down the gangways, it seemed impossible that any more could be crammed into such a small space; the mess decks, empty a few minutes before, lost their semblance of order and began to resemble an ant's nest in a treacle pot. Piles of kit bags littered the decks. Down below, the great competition for the best place to sling a hammock was in full swing. In the middle of this mêlée, others tried to find room to gulp down their first hot meal for twelve hours; an ex-policeman sweated gloomily alongside an ex-salesman as both tried to stow impossible quantities of badly folded gear into adjacent lockers while a cursing leading seaman climbed wearily over their suitcases.

In 1943, the proportion of regular naval ratings available for draft to any ship was small. Consequently the first few weeks of most ships' working-up period were often nightmares. The new Hostilities Only ratings, recruited from all the cities, towns, villages, factories and schools of Britain, arrived in their ships to find that not only were they going to live in an entirely different environment, but they were also expected to understand a new vocabulary, full of complex terms for which their short basic training had not been long enough to prepare them. They were thrown into close proximity with scores of others from every walk of life, with whom they had

to eat, work, sleep and spend each minute of the day and night, with no hope of privacy, for many weeks on end.

The daily routine of the ship started with Hands Fall In at 0800 and finished at 2055 with Hands under Punishment to Muster (yes, even on the first day), before Piping Down. The next day a tug took us up to Prince's Pier to ammunition ship.

This is a big job in which every man in the ship is involved. It is also a good test of a ship's organization. Although it takes only a short while to blast off the whole stock of ammunition, it takes many hours to replenish and to stow. Each shell must be taken out of a lighter or railway truck, unscrewed from its special box, carried by hand into the magazines right down in the bowels of the ship and the box screwed up and returned to its transport. Every shell has stamped on it the details of manufacture, the type and date of the explosive filling and the batch number. The shells must be systematically stowed and systematically served up to the guns in action, so that each broadside is made up from shells from the same batch, thus minimizing the risk of error in range through variations in charge.

Since we were due to go to sea the following day for trials, the hands worked in shifts throughout the day, the afternoon and on until midnight, first in the cold Glasgow fog and later in the dim blue lights of the vast shed in the black-out, until the many tons of explosives had been stowed safely below in their proper places.

No sooner had weary bodies settled into their hammocks than the air-raid sirens started their dreary wail and it was 'Fire Parties To Muster'. Guns and the gunnery officer had certainly started off determined to make themselves unpopular.

The only man excused this duty was the Pilot and his Yeoman, who were still trying to get their charts up to date. After all, we were to proceed several miles to the Tail of the Bank on the morrow.

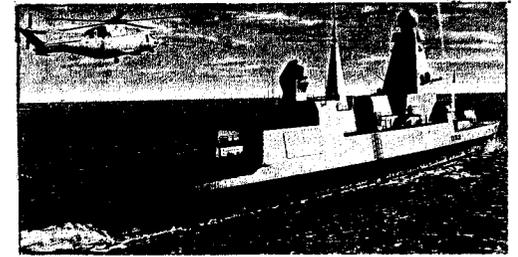
Next morning, we slipped from the jetty and proceeded down the narrow dredged channel, under our own power for the first time. On the way we passed Fairfields Yard. Every foot of the jetty lining the river was packed with the men who had built the ship on which our lives would depend for the coming months. They watched her for the first and last time as she moved slowly downstream against the flood. I had seen *Starling* grow from a shapeless hulk with a number to a live ship with a name. They had seen her as a mere keel, growing to a ribbed skeleton and then to a top-heavy hulk on the slipway. They had seen her launched, waterborne, commissioned and taken over by the Royal Navy.

Now they stood in complete silence to see this new untried ship glide down the river with her white ensign fluttering out astern. We could feel the wish of 'Good Luck and God Speed' reaching out to us across the water.

They turned back; and soon in the distance we heard the hammering and riveting starting up again as they went to complete *Woodcock*. We went on down towards the Clyde and the open sea beyond.

(excerpts from "The Fighting Captain" by Alan Burn
- Leo Cooper Publishers, £12.95)

CLYDE -E- SCOPE



Recent months have seen much activity amongst Clydeside firms and organisations. Yarrow's (now BAe Systems Marine) won a £1 billion order for two of the new Type 45 Destroyers for the Royal Navy (It was headline news in the QE2 newspaper during my recent cruise! - Ed.) The new ships will be 7,200 tonnes, 151 metres long and capable of 29 knots, and will be the first of a planned series of 12, sustaining a total of 5,500 jobs in the UK. Known as the "D Class", they will be manufactured in sections throughout the UK and assembled in shipyards (Yarrow's and Vosper Thornycroft)

Rather strangely the Govan yard (formerly Kvaerner) did not bid for the MOD ro-ro ferries which would have returned passenger shipbuilding to the Clyde. Instead they are to build two landing vessels on subcontract from Swan Hunter. Next April they will launch the RFA tanker "Wave Ruler", and are reported to have taken over completion of the 8 landing craft built by the Ailsa Troon yard which has now tragically closed after 190 years of shipbuilding there. Their last vessel was the CalMac car-ferry "Lochnevis" which incorporates the latest technology including bow thrusters and bulbous bow, and has just gone into service on the Small Isles route. The yard's closure, reportedly to make way for P&O's new Irish-service port, is also serious in that it means that the Garvel dry-dock at Greenock is the only medium one left on the lower Clyde.

There is better news from Ferguson's at Port Glasgow where the CalMac ferry "Hebrides" for the Skye route was launched by the Queen in August, and they recently completed the lighthouse tender "Pole Star". A Western Ferries order for a replacement on the Gourock-Dunoon run has been followed by others for a 2,000-tonne oil-rig tender/tug and a 8,600-tonne ferry for the Northern Isles, their largest build yet, giving the yard over two years work in hand.

Meanwhile Clydeport, whose profits are up from £5.36m to £8.4m, have introduced a new weekly freight feeder service from Greenock to Liverpool and Southampton, and are investigating Port Glasgow's potential for sailings to Northern Ireland. Clyde cargo tonnages are up by 35% but there have been problems in moving coal by rail at Hunterston.

Other good news for the river is that salmon (already reported seen off the "Glenlee") have been recorded up the Kelvin, probably due to a £25m diversion and treatment of industrial pollution - and perhaps of more significance to the "Glenlee", the naming of Glasgow as Britain's top tourist city (after Edinburgh) despite the much publicised decline in Scottish tourism which now employs 177,000 people and earns £2.47 billion a year.