D-Day: Stories from the Walls

Troop Ships that Docked in Southampton

During the Maritime Archaeology Trust's National Lottery Heritage Funded D-Day Stories from the Walls project, volunteers undertook online research into topics and themes linked to D-Day, Southampton, ships and people during the Second World War.

Their findings were used to support project outreach and dissemination.

This Research Article was undertaken by one of our volunteers and represents many hours of hard and diligent work. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our amazing volunteers.

D-DAY STORIES FROM THE WALLS

Maritime Archaeology Trust

HERITAGE FUND

Notes on a Selection of Troop Ships which Docked at Southampton

This narrative is not a complete list of troop ships which docked at Southampton but presents indicative types of ship used in this role. Some of the examples were frequent visitors, and some embarked only once.

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USS *Exchequer*

Built in 1943 as a C-3 freighter by Bethlehem Sparrows Point Shipyard, Inc., in Baltimore, the *Exchequer* was 144.2m long with 20.11m beam, 8.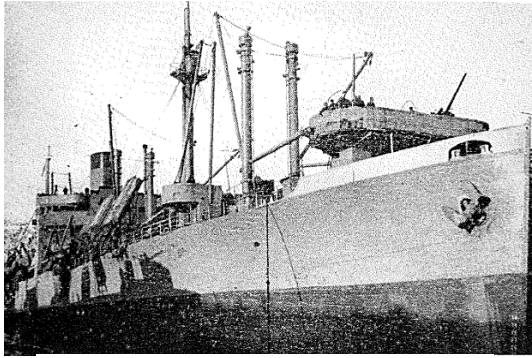46m draught, 4,360m^3 cargo space and 6,683 grt, driven by steam turbine and capable of 16.5kts. Immediately it sailed to New York for conversion to a troop ship when the intended 1,613 passenger complement was uprated to 2,216 troops [AMMW (1)]. Operated by American Export Lines, Inc. during the war, it commenced carrying troops in 1944, sailing to Liverpool followed by repeated sailings from New York or Boston to the western ports in UK and subsequently to Cherbourg when opened. For the first quarter in 1945, Mediterranean, Iraqi and Iranian ports were visited, then in late March 1945 and thereafter for seven months commenced

Figure 1: SS **Exchequer** *(undated)*

Image by Signal Corps, U. S. Army. Source:
https://history.army.mil/documents/WWII/wwii_Troopships.pdf

shuttling between Le Havre and Southampton. From October 1945, the *Exchequer* made return voyages between Marseilles and Boston before being released from troop service on 26 January 1946 [Troopships: 184].

USS *General G. O. Squier*

The *General George Owen Squier* was launched on 11 November 1942 by Kaiser Co., Inc., Richmond, California, and completed on 2 October 1943. The first C-4 type transport ship, the *Squier* was built to carry 3,286 passengers with 780m^3 cargo capacity but could carry 3,823 troops. Driven by steam turbine through a single screw capable of 17kts, it was 159.4m long, 21.79m beam with 7.32m draft, and 13,000 grt. From 29 October 1943 until 30 March 1944, the *Squier* was deployed in the Pacific then to the Mediterranean embarking casualties and prisoners of war to America and redeploying troops. For the first seven months of 1945, the *Squier,* captained by Robert David Threshie, shuttled between America and Le Havre, and on one of these five voyages called also at Southampton [Troopships: 94].
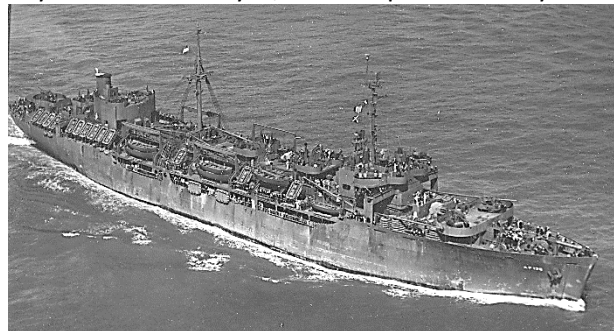
Figure 2: USS **General G. O. Squier** *(undated)*

Source: http://www.navsource.org/archives/09/22/22130.htm via https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:USS_General_G.O._Squier_(AP-130).jpg Copyright free.

Repatriating troops from the Far East and Europe until decommissioned on 10 July 1946, *General G.O. Squier* was awarded a Battle Star in recognition of war services. Converted to a cargo ship, *Squier* was successively sold and successively renamed *Penmar, Penn* and *Penny* until scrapped in 1984. During war service, *Squier* was armed with 4 × 5"/38 calibre guns, 8 × 1.1"/75 AA guns and 16 × 20 mm Oerlikon AA guns [Wikipedia: *Squier*].

USS *General T. H. Bliss*

(Not to be confused with the USS *Tasker H. Bliss*, torpedoed on 12 November 1942). An identical ship to *General G. O. Squier*, the *General Tasker Howard Bliss* was launched by the same shipyard on 19 December 1942, acquired by the US Navy on 3 November 1943 and commissioned on 24 February 1944. Initially deployed in the Pacific, *Bliss* was assigned to voyages between America and Europe during the second half of 1944 through until the autumn of 1945, docking twice at Southampton in the spring of 1945, and subsequently voyaged to Japan [Troopships:116]. The *Bliss* was also converted

to a cargo ship, and successively sold and renamed *Seamar*, then *Coroni*, and scrapped in 1979 [Wikipedia: Bliss].

USS *General W. H. Gordon*

The *General Walter Henry Gordon* was launched on 7 May 1944 by Federal Shipbuilding & Drydock Co., Kearny, New Jersey, and commissioned from 29 June 1944 until 11 March 1946. Several British newspapers carried the announcement of the launch, including the *Manchester Evening News* of 8 May 1944, each reporting that it was "*the largest transport built on the Atlantic coast since the US entered the war*". The *Gordon* was 189.76m long, with 23.01m beam, 7.77m draught and 17,833 grt, driven through twin screws by two steam turbines capable of 19kts, and designed to carry 5,196 passengers in addition to 2,298m^3 cargo space. The maiden voyage was from Boston on 5 September 1944 to Cherbourg and Plymouth but it was not until February 1945 and again in March that *Gordon* docked in Southampton. The ship was re-designated USAT *General W. H. Gordon* utilised by the US Army Transport Service for post war troopship duties. The ship was used by the US

Figure 3: USS **General W. H. Gordon** *(undated)*
Source: https://history.army.mil/documents/WWII/wwii_Troopships.pdf
Image by U.S. Navy.

Military Sea Transportation Service crewed by civilians during the Korean War, subsequently removed from service and endured a period of being laid up. Reinstated in May 1961 on the US Naval Vessel Register, *Gordon* shuttled between New York and Bremerhaven for several years, and then was involved with the Vietnam War. Removed from the Naval Vessel Register in March 1986 following some years being laid up, the *General W. H. Gordon* was scrapped in 1987. The ship was awarded with four Service Stars for the Korean war service and two for the Vietnam War Service. During the Second World War, armament comprised 4 x single 5"/38 calibre dual purpose guns and 4 x quad 1.1" guns, which were subsequently replaced by 20 x single 20mm guns [Troopships: 121] [Wikipedia: Gordon].

USS *General William Weigel*

Named *General C. H. Barth* on 15 April 1944, one month after being laid down, and renamed *General William Weigel* on 24 August 1944, this ship was launched on 3 September 1944 by Federal Shipbuilding & Drydock Co., Kearny, New Jersey and commissioned on 6 January 1946, as USS *General William Weigel.* It was the last of the P2 type transports, a US Maritime Commission design for a passenger ship easily converted into a troop transport. *General William Weigel* was 189.6m long with 23.01m beam, 7.77m draught and 17,833 grt, designed to carry 5,209 passengers and 2,407m^3 of cargo capable of 21kts propelled by twin screws driven by two turbines through turbo-electric transmissions. Its maiden voyage with 5,000 troops departed New York on 11 February 1945 for Le Havre via Newport, and then, returning, embarked US and French

Figure 4: USS **General William Weigel** *(Undated)*
Source: https://history.army.mil/documents/WWII/wwii_Troopships.pdf
Image by U.S. Navy

veterans at Southampton arriving at New York in March followed by a repeat voyage to Le Havre and from Southampton returning to New York by 19 April 1945 [Troopships: 125]. Armament then included 4 x single 5"/38 calibre dual purpose guns, 4 x quad 1.1" guns, subsequently replaced by 20 x single 20mm guns. Thereafter, *General William Weigel* was employed as a troop transport in the

Pacific. Following hostilities, the ship was transferred to the War Department, being utilised for peacetime Army transport, and subsequently saw similar hostility service during the Korean and Vietnam wars gaining respectively seven and one Service Stars. It was scrapped in 1987 [Wikipedia: Weigel]. A newspaper report from 1945 shows an image of its construction (below).
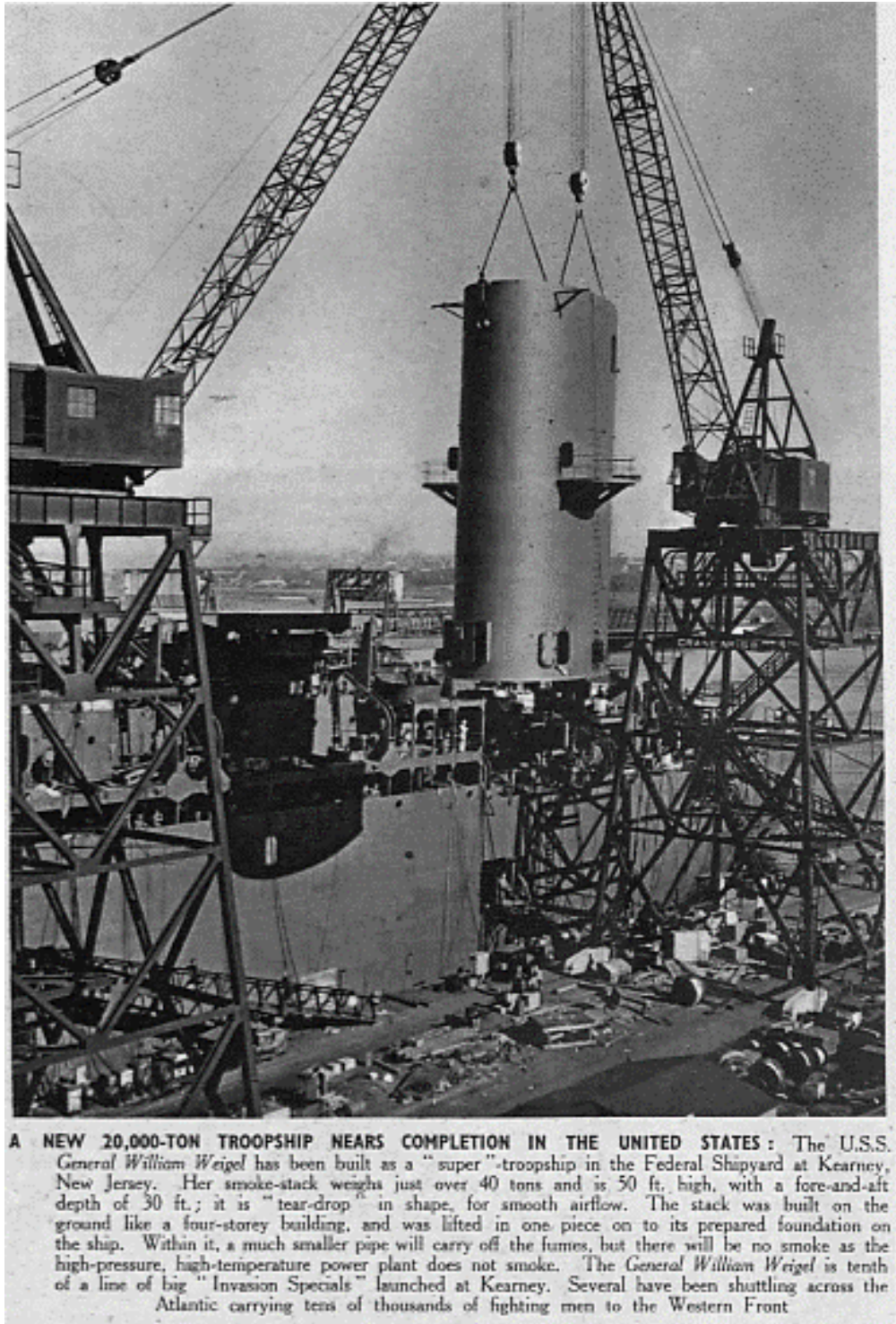
A NEW 20,000-TON TROOPSHIP NEARS COMPLETION IN THE UNITED STATES : The U.S.S. *General William Weigel* has been built as a " super "-troopship in the Federal Shipyard at Kearney, New Jersey. Her smoke-stack weighs just over 40 tons and is 50 ft. high, with a fore-and-aft depth of 30 ft.; it is " tear-drop " in shape, for smooth airflow. The stack was built on the ground like a four-storey building, and was lifted in one piece on to its prepared foundation on the ship. Within it, a much smaller pipe will carry off the fumes, but there will be no smoke as the high-pressure, high-temperature power plant does not smoke. The *General William Weigel* is tenth of a line of big " Invasion Specials " launched at Kearney. Several have been shuttling across the Atlantic carrying tens of thousands of fighting men to the Western Front

Figure 5: USS **William Weigel** *under construction*

Source: *The Sphere* **– Saturday 24 February 1945**
From the British Newspaper Archive

USS *Hermitage*

Launched as SS *Conte Biancamano* on 23 April 1925 and completed seven months later by Wm. Beardmore & Co. Ltd., of Dalmuir, Scotland for Lloyd Sabaudo S.A. per Azioni, of Genoa, this ship was
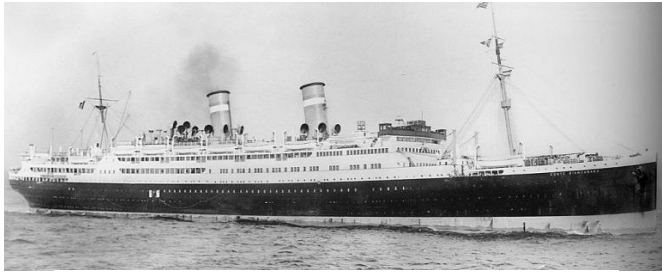

Figure 6: SS **Hermitage** *when a Liner (Undated)*
Source: http://clydeships.co.uk/view.php?year_built=&builder=&ref=2168&vessel=CONTE+BIANCAMANO#v

a steam turbine driven passenger liner, equipped with 180 1st Class, 220 2nd Class, 390 Economy Class and 2,660 3rd Class cabins. Four steam turbines were fitted, each pair driving one screw through double reduction units. It was 198.4m long, with 23.2m beam and 8.38m depth, and 24,416grt. Ownership changed to Flotte Riuniti Cosulich, Lloyd

Sabaudo, N.G.I., Genoa in 1932 when it was renamed *Italia*, and again in 1937 to Lloyd Triestino Soc. Anon. di Nav., Genoa. In 1940, *Italia* was interned at Balboa, a district of Panama City at the Pacific entrance to the Panama Canal and when Italy declared war on the USA, the Americans seized it in December 1941. Following conversion by the Americans to a troop ship capable of transporting 7,000 troops, it was commissioned on 14 August 1942, now named USS *Hermitage* [Scottish Shipbuilding Database.] The troop ship voyaged

Figure 7: USS **Hermitage** *during Second World War*
Source: https://history.army.mil/documents/WWII/wwii_Troopships.pdf
Image by US Navy.

extensively between America and the Antipodes via India until the 2nd half of 1944 [Troopships: 129] when it departed New York to Southampton arriving 9 October 1944 returning four days later,

Figure 8: Part of SS **Conte Biancamano** *in Milan Museum*
Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_Conte_Biancamano#/media/File:Conte_Biancamano_Museo_scienza_e_tecnologia_Milano_IGB_007 081_20130122_001.jpg **CC BY-SA 4.0**

followed by a departure on 15 February 1945 from New York to Le Havre, then to Southampton arriving 21 February 1945, departing next day to New York. It then departed New York, arriving Le Havre 6 May 1945, departing 8 May, arriving Southampton 9 May where it was anchored outside the port for three days, departed 13 May arriving Boston on 23 May 1945. Southampton did not feature thereafter although Le Havre did, and *Hermitage* moved to the Pacific later, being decommissioned on 20 August 1946. It underwent a refit, and was renamed *Conte Biancamano*, reinstated as a premier Italian liner. It was broken up from 1960; in 1964 part of the bridge, some first-class cabins and the large ballroom were dismantled and reassembled in the Air and Ship Pavilion of the National Museum of Science and Technology "Leonardo da Vinci" in Milan [Wikipedia: Hermitage/Conte Biancamano].

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USS *Marine Angel*

A C4-S-B2 type ship, and a late addition to the Second World War. Being built as a tanker, it was launched on 15 November 1944, converted and delivered as a troop ship on 7 April 1945 by Sun
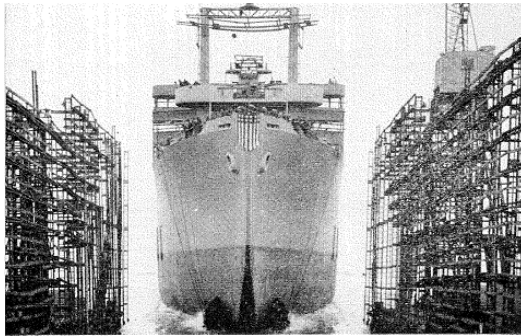

Figure 9: USS Marine Angel *at Launch*

Source: https://history.army.mil/documents/WWII/wwii_Troopships.pdf

Image courtesy Sun Shipbuilding Co.

Shipbuilding & Drydock Co., Chester, Pennsylvania for the US Maritime Commission [Sun Shipbuilding]. The ship was 158.5m long, with 21.95m beam and 9.14m draught with 11,758grt, rated for 2,407 passengers and 2,945m^3 cargo capacity, driven by a steam turbine capable of 17kts. It sailed for Le Havre from New York returning via Southampton to Boston in the spring of 1945, and although it made five more trips to France, none called at Southampton. Voyages to Ceylon (as then called), India and Singapore followed, being released soon after 14 March 1946 [Troopships: 200]. It was sold to McKee Sons to become a "Laker" (used on the Great Lakes) and was converted in 1953, length increasing to 192.9m, beam to 21.8m and depth to 11.73m, with carrying capacity of 19,900tons. Standing idle from 1982, the ship was again converted in 1992 into a self-unloading barge but as of June 2017 was laid up [World of Warships].

Figure 10: SS Marine Angel *in 1962*

Source: http://www.mhsd.org/photogallery/mckeesons-u1962-gale.jpg

Image by Keith S. Gate
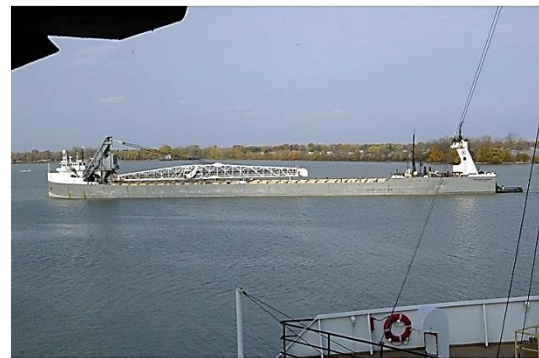
Figure 11: SS Marine Angel *ca. 2016*

Source: http://www.mhsd.org/photogallery/mckeesons-u1962-gale.jpg

SS *Marine Devil*

Another C4-S-B2 type vessel, SS *Marine Devil* was launched as a cargo ship on 18 December 1943 and delivered on 30 August 1944 by Sun Shipbuilding & Drydock Co., Chester, Pennsylvania for the US Maritime Commission. It was later sold to the Matson Line [Ships List] to become a Ro-Ro as *Hawaiian Queen* in 1964, renamed *Maunalei* in 1978, and was scrapped in 1989 [Sun Shipbuilding]. With the same physical data as USS *Marine Angel* above, *Marine Devil* was operated

Figure 12: SS Marine Devil *(Undated)*

Source: https://history.army.mil/documents/WWII/wwii_Troopships.pdf

Image by US Navy

by the United Fruit Co. during the Second World War. It voyaged from Boston in September 1944 to England (port not listed) but on the next trip in November 1944 called at Southampton and other (unlisted) ports in the UK. Voyages to Europe continued until October 1945 and included Southampton

with Le Havre and Plymouth in February and again in April 1945, followed by voyages to Colombo, Calcutta, Manilla, and Korea finishing on 1 April 1946 at San Francisco for repair and discharge from war service [Troopships: 203].

SS *Marine Dragon*

A C4-S-B2 type ship, *Marine Dragon* was built as a cargo ship and launched on 15 January 1944, completed and delivered as a troop ship on 23 December 1944 by Sun Shipbuilding & Drydock Co., Chester, Pennsylvania for the US Maritime Commission [Sun Shipbuilding]. The ship was 158.5m long, with 21.95m beam and 9.14m draught with 11,758grt, rated for 2,439 passengers and 2,945m3 cargo capacity, driven by a steam turbine capable of 17kts. Operated during the Second World War by the

Figure 13: SS **Marine Dragon** *(Undated)*
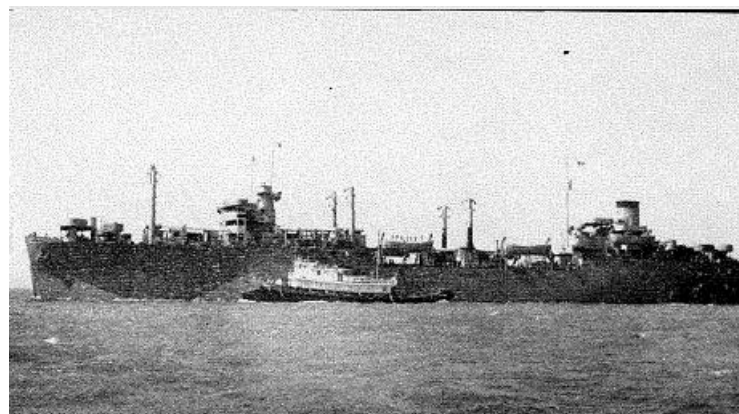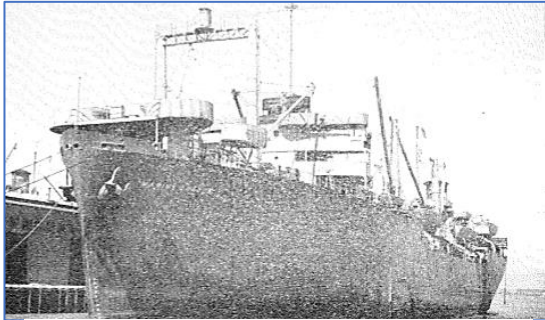**Source**: https://history.army.mil/documents/WWII/wwii_Troopships.pdf
Image by US Navy

Figure 14: SS **Marine Dragon** *Arriving San Francisco 20.09.1946 from Yokohama*

Source: http://www.ajlambert.com/denny/foto_md.pdf

Waterman Steamship Co., [Troopships: 204] it first went to New York whence its maiden voyage in mid-January 1945 was to Southampton and Le Havre, returning in late February. Departing on 7 March 1945 for the same two ports, *Marine Dragon* then remained for nearly a year shuttling between UK and France, and although the ports are not itemised, most likely these included multiple visits to Southampton. It then served the Pacific before being decommissioned in 1946 at San Francisco. It presumably remained with Waterman Steamship Co. although details have not been found, but it was sold to the Matson Line in 1965, renamed *Hawaiian Monarch*, renamed in 1978 as *Maunawili (2),* laid up in 1982 and scrapped in 1986 [Ships List]. According to the builder's website, it operated as a Ro-Ro when named as *Hawaiian Monarch*. Outboard profiles are available at https://drawings.usmaritimecommission.de/drawings_c4.htm

SS *Marine Panther*

Marine Panther was of the same type and physical dimensions as *Marine Dragon*, also launched by Sun Shipbuilding & Drydock Co., Chester, Pennsylvania for the US Maritime Commission [Sun Shipbuilding]. Launch date was 15 November 1943, similarly built as a cargo ship but delivered as a troop ship on 31 October 1944; during the Second World War, *Marine Panther* was operated by American Export Lines. Until 19 October 1945 when it sailed to India and the Philippines, all voyages were to England, France or Gibraltar – the 69th Infantry Division sailed from New York in

Figure 15: SS **Marine Panther**

Source: https://www.rubylane.com/item/477186-2017x2e86/WWII-US-Navy-ship-photos-two
Captioned: Arriving in San Francisco from Calcutta, India via Manila. June 3, 1946

December 1944 arriving in Southampton [Troop Ship Crossings] and there were three successive round trips from New York to Le Havre and Southampton between February and 20 May 1945 [Troopships: 212]. War service finished in 1946 and the Sun Shipbuilding website gives "Later *Alicia* 1961, containership *New Orleans* 1962, *Anchorage* 1964, *Rose City* 1969, *Arecibo* 1975, scrapped 1987".

SS *Marine Fox*

This ship was of the same type and physical dimensions as SS *Marine Dragon*. It was a cargo ship launched by Sun Shipbuilding & Drydock Co., Chester, Pennsylvania on 26 April 1944 and delivered to
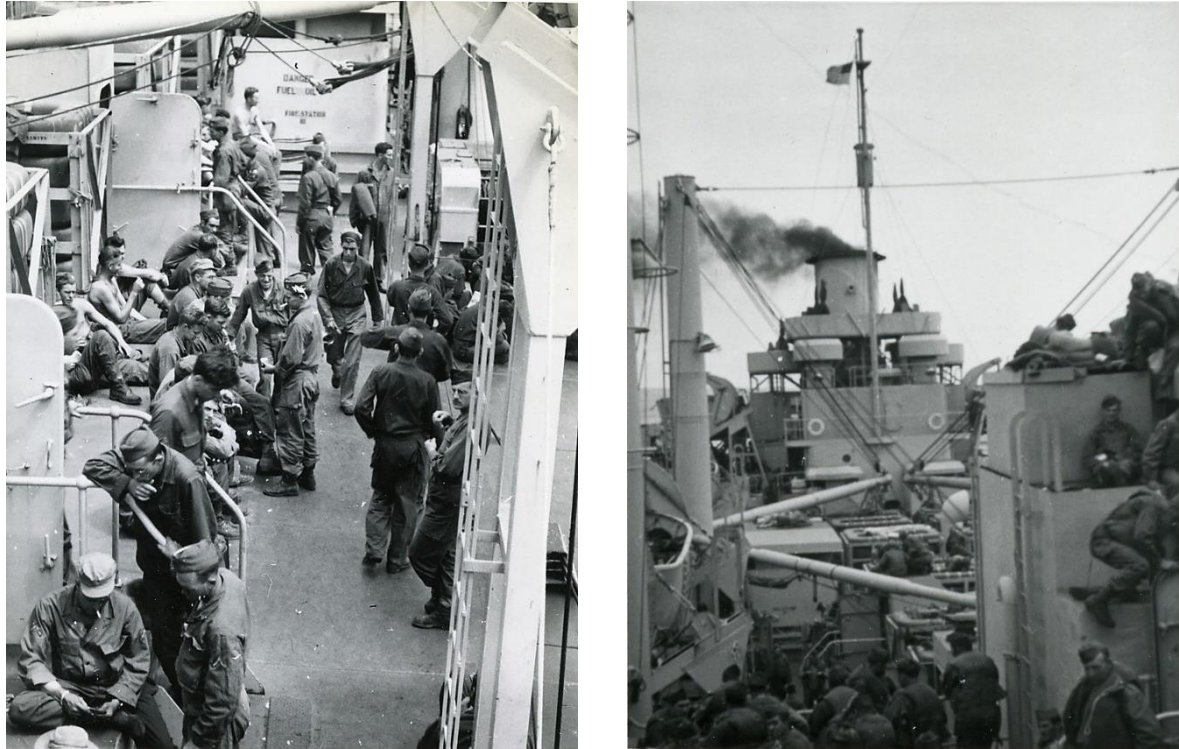
Figure 16: SS **Marine Fox** *(Undated)*
Source: https://gallery.87thinfantrydivision.com/keyword/Troop%20Ship/i-VhjzmDx/A
Images by Ronald Hibbert

the US Maritime Commission on 20 February 1945, but initially used as a troopship [Sun Shipbuilding]. During the Second World War, it was operated by Isthmian Steamship Co. [Troopships: 208] and its maiden voyage when it departed New York on 7 March 1945 was to Le Havre and Southampton, returning to New York then back to Le Havre and Southampton in April 1945. Thereafter, it voyaged to the Mediterranean and subsequently in the Pacific finishing at San Francisco on 11 May 1946. The Sun Shipbuilding website states "Later *Dorothy* 1961, containership *Mobile* 1962, *Seattle* 1964, *Pittsburgh* 1969, scrapped 1988".

USS *Marine Raven*

Yet another ship of the same type, a C4-S-B2 cargo ship, with the same physical dimensions launched by Sun Shipbuilding & Drydock Co., Chester, Pennsylvania [Sun Shipbuilding] on 28 April 1943, *Marine Raven* was the first of the C4 type in the "Marine" Class. Commenced as a cargo ship, it was delivered as a troop ship on 27 January 1944 to the US Maritime Commission, and operated during the Second World War by the United States Lines Co [Troopships: 215]. During 1944, *Marine Raven* made calls at Southampton and other UK ports (details not listed). The 285th Engineer Combat Battalion embarked in New York whence they departed aboard the USS *Marine Raven*, arriving at Barry on 2 November 1944, transiting to Southampton where they embarked another ship on 7 January 1945 [285th]. Then *Marine Raven* from January to June 1945 made six successive voyages to Le Havre and/or

Southampton. Voyages to Europe continued but not to Southampton interspersed with trips to Manila and Colombo. These voyages included transporting several thousand of General Ander's Polish troops (aboard were also 47 wives and seven children) from Naples to Glasgow as reported in *The Scotsman* of 8 June 1946, and two subsequent voyages repatriating some of them to Danzig on 16 and 30 November 1946 as respectively reported in the *Western Mail* of 16 November and *The Scotsman* of 30 November 1946.

The Sun Shipping websites states "Later cargo ship *Sophie* 1961, *Vasso* 1962, *Transpacific* 1965, *Vall Moon* 1973, scrapped 1976". A booklet of general plans of the USAT *Marine Raven* are available at https://maritime.org/doc/plans/marine-raven.pdf

SS *Marine Wolf*

Marine Wolf, a C4-S-B2 type cargo ship built by Sun Shipbuilding & Drydock Co., Chester, Pennsylvania, was launched on 18 September 1943 and delivered on 30 June 1944 to the US Maritime Commission [Sun Shipbuilding]. This type was also used as a hospital ship, but not *Marine Wolf*. 160m long with 21.8m beam and 9.1m draught, and 11,757grt, it was designed to carry 2,407 passengers with 2,945m^3 space for cargo at 17kts, powered by a single screw from a steam turbine [Wikipedia]. On 26 June 1944, the 4th District Section, Joint Merchant Vessel Board conducted an inspection of the SS Marine Wolf at the builders [Fold3: Inspection].

Figure 17: SS Transglobe, formerly MV Llangibby Castle.

Source: http://www.marinelicenseinsurance.com/about/about-ss-transglobe/
Courtesy of Ralph J. Mellusi, member of crew of SS Transglobe

The first voyage was a three-week shakedown from 5 July 1944. Operated during the Second World War by Lykes Bros. Steamship Co., this ship sailed initially from Norfolk to Naples and on its fourth and fifth trips docked at Southampton from Boston, then a sixth one from New York to Le Havre and Southampton in January 1945. Another visit to Plymouth, Southampton and Plymouth was in February 1945 followed by one to Le Havre, departing New York on 31 March 1945 [Troopships: 221]. A total of 13,524 American GIs was transported during these trips [SS Transglobe]. This was followed by 52 shuttle trips between Le Havre and Southampton until October 1945, or 105 crossings according to the quoted sources. A letter of commendation dated 7 October 1945 from 14th Port Southampton is transcribed thus:

'Subject: SS "Marine Wolf"

To   : CG, Hampton Roads Port of Embarkation, Newport News, Va., (Thru Channels)

*   1. On 12 April 1945, SS "Marine Wolf" entered cross-Channel shuttle service between Southampton, England and Le Havre, France. On 7 October 1945, this ship will sail from this Port, having completed its assignment.*

*   2. While on this shuttle service, the SS "Marine Wolf" made 105 Channel crossings. Ten trips were made before V-E Day, during which time the threat of enemy submarines and mines was constant.*

*   3. In all, 201294 passengers were carried between the United Kingdom and France by the "Marine Wolf". These included troops on leave, repatriated prisoners of war, troops for return to the US, reinforcements, those attending Information & Education courses, and a large number of casuals. Valuable service was rendered by this vessel.*

*   4. All concerned – including the Transport Commander and his staff and the Master and his crew – are to be commended on handling a difficult assignment in an excellent manner.*

Sherman L. Kiser.
Colonel, TC Commanding'

During the Second World War, Marine Wolf transported 201,294 passengers which included troops, repatriated prisoners of war, reinforcements and a large number of casualties which was a record unsurpassed by any other merchant vessel during the War.

Although the *Marine Wolf* is consistently referred to as SS, and nowhere was found in official records that it was deployed as an hospital ship or as USAT, nonetheless a 462 page paperback book was published titled '*Love Letters from the Marine Wolf: A US Hospital and Transport Ship, an Army Medic Afloat, and a War Bride in World War II Paperback – May 31, 2019'* described as a "*biography of the World War II hospital and troop transport ship USAT Marine Wolf. The story is told from the perspective of Sergeant Michael Makros Jr., ship's complement surgical technician, and other shipmates under Army Transportation Command 9222 TSU TC. Their letters, photographs, documents, memorabilia, and testimonials take history below deck to find the human experience of a wartime ship at sea".*

Marine Wolf was laid up until 1960 when it was sold to Globe Waterways Inc., a subsidiary of the Hudson Waterways Inc./Seatrain Lines Group of Companies. It underwent a refit and conversion by the Alabama Dry Dock and Shipbuilding Company to a Roll-On Roll-Off (Ro-Ro) ship, was renamed SS *Transglobe* and, under charter to the American government, departed the Brooklyn Army Base on 18 July 1962 carrying military cargo to and from Bremerhaven which continued for nearly four years.

SS *Transglobe* was reassigned to Vietnam service and departed New York in this role on 12 February 1966, and again as a shuttle service, voyaging between Naha, DaNang and Saigon, some 3,500 miles round trip, without a break for six years. Its record for delivery of cargo during the Vietnam war unsurpassed by any other vessel. SS *Transglobe* was the most decorated ship of the Vietnam War - "*On Oct.27, 1968, in a ceremony attended by Rear Admiral Rapp and other high ranking military officers, Maj. General Horner, CG 2ND Logistics Command presented the vessel's master with plaque depicting Four Battle Stars and the Purple Heart with Three Clusters acknowledging service under fire*

on four occasions and the loss of a crewmember". [SS Transglobe]. SS _Transglobe_ completed its Vietnam shuttle service in 1972 and was scrapped in 1974. [Sun Shipbuilding]

RMS _Queen Elizabeth_

This large British passenger liner features in a separate article summarising the overall 14th Port operations, and this separate article covers the period from late 1945 when it was able to enter Southampton following a massive refit after constantly carrying troops to ports other than the south coast of England, until mid-1946. Converted to carry up to 15,000 troops, it carried in all over 800,000 troops as reported in the _Kingston Times_ of 31 August 1946.

A brief resume of some of its voyages, which were normally sailed fast and alone to minimise the U-boat threat, making the crossing in five or six days, prior to late 1945 [Troop Ship Crossings]:

- Departed Australia on 9 April 1941 to the Middle East with _2/9th Battalion (Australian 2nd Infantry)_, arriving 3 May 1941.
- Departed New York 22 November 1942 with _15,000 troops including the 78th Fighter Group_, arriving in the Clyde on 27 November 1942.
- Departed New York on 19 August 1943, again with _15,000 troops including the 67th Fighter Wing_, arriving in the Clyde on 25 August 1943.
- Departed New York on 2 February 1944 with _approx. 12,000 troops including Air Corps replacements_ arriving in the Clyde on 8 February 1944.
- Departed New York 17 April 1944 with _492nd Bombardment Group (859th Bombardment Squadron_ and probably 3 other squadrons) arriving in the Clyde on 27 April 1944.
- Departed New York on 2 July 1944 with _Headquarters Battery 404th Field Artillery Group; field artillery units and others_, arriving in the Clyde on 12 July 1944.
- Departed New York on 8 October 1944 with _106th Infantry Division (advance parties, including Col. Thomas J. Riggs, CO of 81st Engineer Combat Battalion); 200 Royal Canadian Air Force Aircrew Officers_, arriving in the Clyde on 12 October 1944.
- Departed New York on 17 October 1944 with _423rd Infantry Regiment and 2nd Battalion of the 424th Infantry Regiment (106th Infantry Division),_ arriving in the Clyde on 22 October 1944.
- Departed New York on 7 January 1945 with _about 15,000 replacements_ arriving in the Clyde on 13 January 1945.
- Departed Scotland on 15 July with _44th Infantry Division men headed for training for Japan (probably Infantry Division Reorganization Detachment "A" or "B")_ arriving New York on 20 July 1945.
- Departed Gourock, Scotland on 6 August 1945 including on board the _Ground Echelon of 492nd Bomb Group_, arriving New York on 11 August 1945.
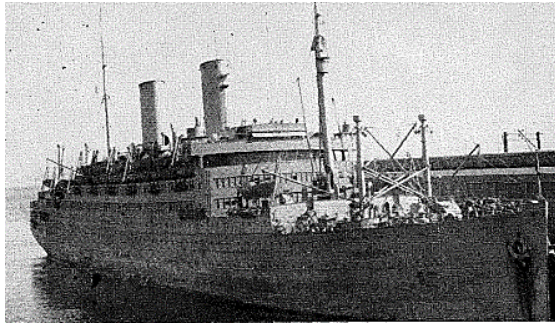
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USS *John Ericsson*

Figure 18: USS John Ericsson
Source: Troopships: 291 (See Bibliography)
Image by Signal Corps, US Army

This liner was built by Blohm & Voss, Hamburg, Germany, being launched in 1928 and delivered to the Swedish American Line [SAL] for their cruising and transatlantic service later in 1928, named the MS *Kungsholm*. It was 185.6m long with 23.8m beam and 8.8m draught, grt of 16,552, [Troopships: 291] capable of 15kts driven by twin screws from two Burmeister & Wain diesel engines, with a capacity of 5,461 passengers and 4,729m^3 for cargo. The liner was impounded while berthed in New York and was sold on 21 December 1941 to the American War Shipping Administration, when it was renamed USS *John Ericsson* and used with distinction as a troop transport. Making 27 crossings of the Atlantic to a variety of European and African ports, it first voyaged with troops to Australia and New Zealand followed by three trips to Casablanca, covering the period from January 1942 to May 1946. In February 1943, several newspapers reported an erroneous German radio claim that the ship had been torpedoed off the Moroccan coast. Voyages included calls at Southampton, disembarking the US 272 Infantry on 1 December 1944 [Fold3]. The *John Ericsson* carried approximately 5,400 troops, (8th, 65th, 70th Armoured Infantry Battalions; 9th, 20th, 27th Tank Battalions; and Divisional Headquarters and Special Troops) from Le Havre to New York, arriving 6 August 1945 [Facebook]. The 20th was expecting after some leave to sail to invade Japan but the Hiroshima bomb that day ended the war with Japan. The final three trips were to Southampton and back to New York by late May 1946. In 1947 while moored in the Hudson, fire broke out in the *John Ericsson*, but before the fire could spread to the *Queen Elizabeth* moored nearby, New York fire squads put out the blaze.

Figure 19: USS John Ericsson *on fire at New York*
Source: British Pathe (See Bibliography)

The British Pathe film reel from which this still is taken reported that the *John Ericsson* was a total loss but with fire damage estimated at between $500,000 and $1,500,000 to repair, the ship was sold back to Swedish American Lines.
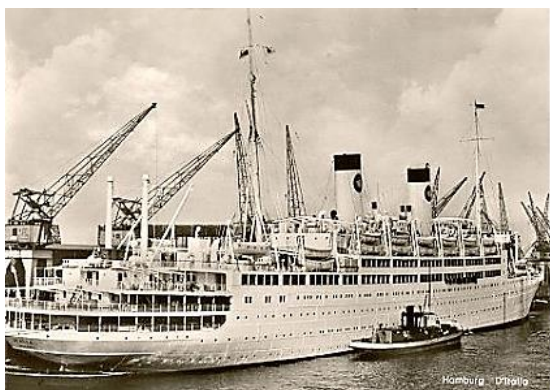
Figure 20: As the Italia*, at Hamburg*
Source: http://simplonpc.co.uk/HomeLinePCs.html
Ocean Liners].

Within a few months, the *John Ericsson* was sold to Home Lines in 1948, extensively refitted and renamed MV *Italia,* and again sold, in 1964 to Freeport Bahama Enterprises being renamed *Imperial Banana* for use as a floating hotel until sold for scrap in 1965. At some point, the grt increased to 20,223 [Shipwatcher] [Officeapps]. The grt is also quoted as 21,250 [Wikipedia Ericsson], probably a function of its various refits. While docking at Steubenhöft, Cuxhaven on 6 October 1954, the tug *Fairplay* was pushed under the *Italia's* bow, with two losing their lives [Great

Three interesting facts: In a 10-day voyage from Boston to Liverpool arriving 22 February 1944, the *John Ericsson* was part of the largest convoy ever to cross the North Atlantic [Officeapps]; as *Kungsholm* in 1941, J. D. Salinger of "The Catcher in the Rye" fame was the entertainment director of the ship [SAL]; on a voyage from Scotland to New York in December 1946, a Scottish emigrant introduced the "John Ericsson Sailing Song" on Christmas Day which was sung to the tune of Glory, Glory Hallelujah [Fallible].

USAT *Santa Rosa*

(Not to be confused with the USAT *Santa Rosa* used as a troopship in the First World War, renamed as *Oregonian* and sunk on 13 September 1942 by three aerial torpedoes when sailing as a civilian freighter in convoy PQ18) [Murmansk 1942].

Figure 21: SS **Santa Rosa** *passing the Statue of Liberty*
Source: Cruise Line History
https://www.cruiselinehistory.com/grace-lines-ss-santa-rosa/
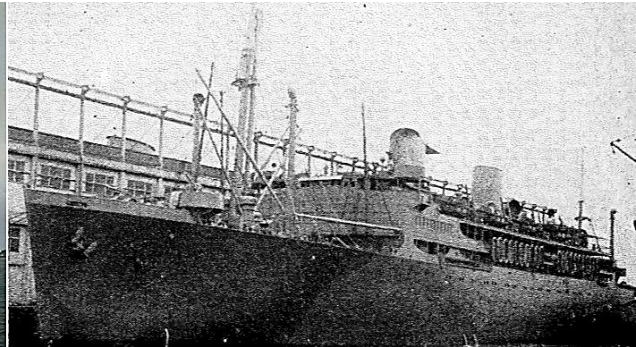
Figure 22: USAT **Santa Rosa**
Source: Troopships: 253. (See Bibliography)
Image by Signal Corps, US Army

Built in 1932 by Federal Shipbuilding & Drydock Co., Kearny, New Jersey for Grace Line with maiden voyage from 26 November 1932, *Santa Rosa* was a passenger and cargo ocean liner 155m long, 22m beam and 7.9m draught, 9,154 grt, capable of 19kts driven by twin screws through double reduction gears from two steam turbines. Built for 2,426 passengers and 4,123m^3 cargo, the initial service was intercoastal between New York and Seattle via the Panama Canal, but by 1936 it was serving the Caribbean. Requisitioned by the US War Shipping Administration on 3 January 1942 and operated as an Army transport with Grace Line acting as agents, *Santa Rosa* between 1942 and 1945 made 21 return trips to Europe, mostly from New York, one to Australia, one to India and three to Africa. Voyages departing from New York to Southampton were: 3 January 1945 including Le Havre, 15 March 1945 including The Solent and Le Havre, 2 May 1945 including Le Havre and just to Southampton on 3 June 1945 [Troopships: 253].

Refitted and returned to Grace Lines in 1947, *Santa Rosa* resumed its Caribbean service until 1958 when it was replaced by a larger ship of the same name, necessitating a name change to *Santa Paula. Santa Paula* was laid up at New Jersey until 1961 until sold to Greek owners, renamed again to *Athinai* as a cruise ship for Typaldos Lines whose owners were arrested in 1968 whereupon the *Athinai* was laid up at Phaleron Bay. It eventually was scrapped in Turkey in 1989 but not before it was used in 1978 as a film set for "Raise the Titanic" [Wikipedia: Santa Rosa].

SS *Sea Owl*

There were several ships with this name – note that the Maritime Archaeology Trust's Shipwreck Centre on the Isle of Wight has an artefact from USS *Sea Owl* (SS-*405*), a US Balao class submarine, built in 1944 and decommissioned in 1969.

The cargo ship, SS *Sea Owl*, a type C3-S-A2 transport completed and used as a troop transport in the Second World War was launched by Ingalls Shipbuilding, Pascagoula, Mississippi on 17 December 1943 for the War Shipping Administration [Wikipedia: Sea Owl]. It was completed on 27 June 1944 and first

sailed on 27 June 1944 to Naples. 149.96m long with 21.21m beam, 8.97m draught and 7,886 grt, *Sea Owl* was rated for 2,156 passengers and 6,598m^3 cargo, capable of up to 18kts driven by a single screw powered by two Westinghouse geared steam turbines. Operated during the war by American Export Lines, Inc., crewed by United States Merchant Marines and US Naval Armed Guard, *Sea Owl* was armed with 2 × single 5"/38 calibre guns (fore and aft), 2 × single 40 mm AA guns, 2 × twin 40 mm AA guns and 18 × single 20 mm AA guns.

Following its maiden voyage, *Sea Owl* made 14 crossings to a variety of European ports finishing on 5 December 1945. Thereafter, it sailed to Japan and Korea returning to Seattle on 14 February 1946 where it was decommissioned, converted to a cargo ship in New York, then acquired by Isthmian Lines in 1947 and renamed SS *Steel Scientist* until sold to Taiwan where it was scrapped during July 1971. Southampton calls included: departed Boston on 24 November 1944 with the US 385th Infantry Regiment on board arriving 4 December 1944; then departed New York on four successive voyages, 10 January 1945 to The Solent, Le Havre, Plymouth and Southampton; on 27 February to Le Havre and The Solent; on 4 April to Southampton; on 10 May to Le Havre and Southampton [Troopships: 261]. The Wikipedia entry highlights that *Sea Owl* was at Le Havre in late December 1944 having off-loaded cargo, which correlates with the first Southampton arrival above, having a crew numbering approximately 45 and "*relatively unarmed*" and was due to transport *"fifteen hundred to two thousand German prisoners of war back to the States....The German soldiers come aboard in single file over the narrow gangplank"*.

Figure 23: SS Sea Owl
Source: Troopships: 261 (See Bibliography)
Image by Signal Corps, US Army

SS *Sea Pike*

SS *Sea Pike* was also a C3-S-A2 type cargo ship, but built by Western Pipe & Steel Co., San Francisco, California [Western Pipe], launched and completed on 13 February 1943, with dimensions very close to those of *Sea Owl* with similar engine, single screw, and similar crewing disposition but operated during the war by Moore-McCormack Lines, Inc. *Sea Pike* had made one freight voyage before being converted to carry troops, sailing primarily to Australia, New Zealand, Micronesia and similar areas until mid-1945. It then contributed to a shuttle service during October 1945 between Southampton and Le Havre [Troopships: 264]. Returning to New York by 3 November 1945, it was renamed *Mormacwave*, made two more troop transport voyages, released from war service, and operated for Moore-McCormack Lines until 1955 when the ship was acquired by States Marine Corp., New York and renamed *Lone Star State*. In 1970, *Lone Star State* was sold to Taiwan Shipbreakers and scrapped in April at Kaohslung [States Marine Lines] (this website gives the type as C3-S-A1 but the type used has been taken from the ship builder).

USAT U*ruguay*

Although only making a few calls at Southampton, this ship is notable for being the world's first ocean liner built with turbo-electric transmission, the high number, 25, of troop voyages, a collision when it was seriously holed near Bermuda in 1943, and, unusually, landing European evacuees from Japan at Southampton in early 1946.

Launched as the SS *California* on 1 October 1927 by Newport News Shipbuilding & Drydock Co., Newport News, Virginia for American Line Steamship Corporation, the ship, one of four with this name

built by the yard, was delivered on 13 January 1928 [Newport News Shipbuilding]. Then, the largest American built liner, it voyaged to and from east and west coasts of America by the Panama Canal until 1938. The ship was 183.2m long with 24.4m beam, 15.85m deep, 10.5m draught, 17,833grt capable of 18kts (although in 1951 it was recorded at 19.95kts) driven by twin screws through turbo-electric motor transmission from oil fired boilers feeding two steam turbo-generators, the first time this arrangement was used in an ocean-going liner [Wikipedia: California (1928)]. Due to financial problems, *California* ceased the coast-to-coast service in May 1938, and was bought by the United States Maritime Commission in June 1938 – the ship was dry-docked and its builders, Newport News Shipbuilding, refurbished the ship, fitting new propellers, fire-proofed the ship, and performed a series of other accommodation improvements including air conditioning and a new swimming pool and café, and
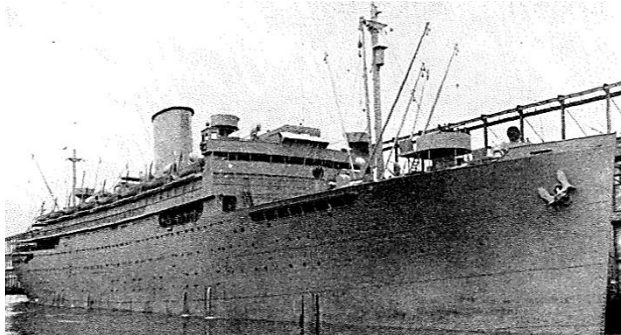

Figure 24: SS Uruguay
Source: Troopships: 278 (See Bibliography)
Image by Signal Corps, US Army

removing one of the two original funnels. SS *California* was operated by the Moore McCormack Line on behalf of the United States Maritime Commission from 13 January 1939 and this continued until 30 January 1942 when operation was assumed by the US War Shipping Administration who continued the association with the Moore McCormack Line. Conversion to an Army troopship of capacity 4,473 persons with 6,012m³ cargo capacity, including the installation of a hospital, was carried out between 2 January 1942 and 1 March 1942, and increased the grt to 20,183, with the vessel now named SS *Uruguay*. Being swift, *Uruguay* operated without escort from 3 March 1942 through until 25 June 1946. Very few other ships exceeded its 25 voyages as a troopship, carrying over 200,000 troops.

From	Departing Date		Destination
New York	3 March	1942	Panama, Auckland, Melbourne, Wellington
San Francisco	26 May	1942	Auckland, Panama
New York	6 Aug.	1942	Halifax, Swansea, INVASION, Oran, Gibraltar
New York	12 Dec.	1942	Casablanca
New York	8 Feb.	1943	Bermuda
New York	15 May	1943	Panama, Brisbane
Los Angeles	3 Aug.	1943	Fremantle, Bombay, Sydney, Auckland
Los Angeles	18 Nov.	1943	Hobart, Fremantle, Bombay, Capetown
New York	5 Feb.	1944	Liverpool
Boston	7 Apr.	1944	Liverpool, the Clyde
New York	12 May	1944	The Clyde, Liverpool
Boston	3 July	1944	Liverpool
New York	11 Aug.	1944	The Clyde
New York	20 Sept.	1944	The Mersey
New York	30 Oct.	1944	United Kingdom
New York	9 Dec.	1944	Southampton
Boston	10 Jan.	1945	The Solent, Le Havre
New York	27 Feb.	1945	Le Havre, Southampton
New York	8 Apr.	1945	Southampton
New York	19 May	1945	Leghorn, Gibraltar, Panama, Manila, Leyte, Honolulu
San Francisco	22 Sept.	1945	Manila
San Pedro	22 Nov.	1945	Yokohama
San Francisco	17 Jan.	1946	Manila, Yokohama, Panama, Southampton
New York	20 Apr.	1946	Le Havre
New York	15 May	1946	Southampton, Le Havre

Figure 25: SS Uruguay *Troopship Voyages*
Source: Courtesy of Troopships: 278 (See Bibliography)

On 12 February 1943, SS *Uruguay* was en route from New York with 5,000 troops bound for the UK. The USS *Salamonie*, a US Navy tanker and only slightly smaller than *Uruguay*, suffered a steering malfunction and accidentally collided heavily with *Uruguay*, opening a 21m hole in *Uruguay* and penetrated its hospital, killing 13 and injuring 50 of the troops. Apparently, concrete ballast in the *Uruguay's* hull prevented a worse disaster. Both ships diverted to Bermuda. On board *Salamonie*, a Sergeant Cecil Davis from SS *Uruguay* was found, injured but

BLOWN ABOARD

Story told in Washington yesterday by General Gross, United States Army Chief of Transportation.

When the troopship Uruguay was rammed near Bermuda by the U.S.S. Salomie, a Navy tanker, the impact was so great that a sailor in the sick-bay of the troopship was blown out and landed unharmed on the deck of the tanker.

Figure 26: Involuntary Change
of Ship Mid-Ocean
Source: *Daily Herald* **– Thurs. 14 June 1945**
From the British Newspaper Archive

luckily alive - his story is told at http://www.moore-mccormack.com/SS-Uruguay-1938/SS-Uruguay-Photos-2.htm - on board the *Uruguay*, an emergency but temporary bulkhead was constructed enabling the *Uruguay* to reach Bermuda where repairs took three months. "*President Franklin D. Roosevelt*

decorated Uruguay's *Master, Captain Albert Spaulding, with the Merchant Marine Distinguished Service Medal for saving many lives, his ship and her cargo"* [Wikipedia: California 1928]. This remarkable event was also reported in the media.

The third to last voyage is notable in that *Uruguay* returned from Yokohama, departing 15 February 1946, with, on board, European diplomats and dignitaries whom had been detained by the Japanese during the war and they were landed at Southampton, having sailed via the Panama Canal. Wounded US soldiers were also on board.

After 25 June 1946, SS *Uruguay* was converted back to an ocean liner and used by Moore-McCormack Lines – on 8 August 1952, the ship hit an underwater object, damaging a propeller. Subsequent voyaging lasted only until 1954 when the ship was laid up and in 1964, it was sold to North American Smelting Co of Wilmington, Delaware for scrap.

MV Llangibby Castle

Figure 27: MV Llangibby Castle (Undated)

Source: http://www.bandcstaffregister.com/page72.html

Launched on 4 July 1929 and completed in November 1929 by Harland & Wolff Ltd. of Govan for the Union-Castle Mail Steamship Co. Ltd., London, MV *Llangibby Castle* was a passenger and refrigerated cargo vessel [Scottish Shipbuilding Database]. Registered in London, the ship was 148m long with 20.18m beam and depth of 11m with 11,591grt driven by twin screws powered by 2 × 8-cylinder Burmeister & Wain diesel engines for a speed of 14.5kts. It had the distinction of being the first ship to utilise pressure charging in combination with exhaust gas boilers. [Wikipedia] MV *Llangibby Castle* was primarily assigned to the Round Africa route but also in the West Coast intermediate service.

"*It was, as Marischal Murray points out in his book "Ships and South Africa", built for an English firm by an Irish Company in Scotland and with a Welsh name! She was the finest of the "LLANS", perhaps not in looks but certainly in the luxury of her cabins, wide deck space and speed. She carried 450 passengers in two classes*". [British Armed Forces]

Figure 28: MV Llangibby Castle Interior (Undated)
Source: http://www.bandcstaffregister.com/page72.html

The Sydney Morning Herald of 25 March 1940 reported that *Llangibby Castle* had on the previous day at Genoa "*landed 110 Germans who are being repatriated from Kenya and Tanganyika. Later they entrained for Germany*". This was before Italy had joined the war on 10 June 1940. *Llangibby Castle* was requisitioned on arrival at Falmouth on 6 July 1940 from Capetown and converted as a troop transport.

The *Llangibby Castle*, assessed to have capacity for 1,619 troops, was part of convoys WS2, WS26, WS9A, and WS15 [naval-history: A] (WS = "Winston's Special").
- Convoy WS2A – Escorted by armed merchant cruiser *Kanimbla* to join convoy WS2A on 29 August 1940. Joined 10 other ships off Durban, under escort until detached to enter Mombasa on 7 September 1940. [naval-history: WS2]
- During the night of 21/22 December 1940, *Llangibby Castle* with three other ships was damaged during a German bombing raid while at Liverpool [naval-history: B].
- Convoy WS6A – With 16 other ships, on 6 February 1941, formed convoy 6A escorted by one heavy and three light cruisers. Despatched as a fast section with four other ships with one light cruiser escort, arriving Capetown on 22 March and Durban 4 days later. [naval-history: WS6A]
- Convoy WS9A – The convoy from different ports rendezvoused on 3 June 1941 off Oversay, arrived Freetown on 18 June, sailed again on 20 June. *Llangibby Castle* arrived with five other ships at Capetown from Freetown on 1 July 1941, then departed Capetown for rendezvous on 5 July 1941 with Durban portion of convoy. A weak raider signal heard from an unknown ship at position 1-18S, 30W [naval-history: WS9A]
- Convoy WS15 – This convoy of 24 other ships plus escorts also rendezvoused off Oversay, having sailed from Liverpool on 10 January and from the Clyde on 11 January 1942. On 16 January, *Llangibby Castle,* commanded by Captain R.F. Bayer, was struck aft by a torpedo fired

from German submarine U-*402*, the first casualty for some time and the first submarine attack on WS convoys. [naval-history: U-*402*] The service history of HMS *Resolution* – a Royal Sovereign-class 15in gun Battleship including Convoy Escort Movements – includes the following:

- o *"Joined the convoy on 15 February.*
- o *16th - At 0900 hours the Admiralty signalled that the convoy had been reported by a U-Boat. This signal was followed by a signal from the destroyer* Boreas*, an escort with WS15, stating that the MV* Llangibby Castle*, 11,951 tons with 1,149 troops embarked had been torpedoed in the stern (the torpedo had been fired by U-*402 *in position 46-04N, 19-06W, 700 miles north east of the Azores).* Resolution *detached* Garland *from her screen to investigate.*
- o *Later in the day* Resolution *detached* Anthony *from her screen to assist the damaged* Llangibby Castle*"*. [naval-history: Resolution]

Accounts of the following period until 13 April 1942 appears in different websites, often similar, and the following account is taken from uboat.net:

"At 11.15 hours on 16 January 1942 the Llangibby Castle *(Master Ronald Frederick Bayer) in convoy WS-15 was torpedoed by U-*402 *north of the Azores. One torpedo hit the stern and blew away the after gun and the rudder, but the propellers remained intact. 26 of the troops aboard as passengers were killed by the explosion. The crew of 184 men and eight gunners managed to get the ship underway at 9 knots to Horta in the Azores, fighting off attacks by German Fw200 aircraft on the way, assisted by volunteers from the troops who manned anti-aircraft guns. The neutral Portugal allowed only 14 days for repairs and on 2 February, the ship had to leave with the troops still on board and set course to Gibraltar, assisted by the rescue tug HMS* Thames *and escorted by the three destroyers HMS* Westcott (D 47) *(Cdr I.H. Bockett-Pugh, RN), HMS* Exmoor (L 08) *(Lt Cdr L.St.G. Rich, RN) and HMS* Croome (L 62) *(Lt Cdr J.D. Hayes, RN). On 3 February, the small convoy was followed by several U-boats, but none managed to hit the ship, while HMS* Westcott *sank U-*581 *(Pfeifer). On 8 February the troopship arrived at Gibraltar in tow of the tug and disembarked the troops.*

On 6 April, the Llangibby Castle *left Gibraltar under escort after temporary repairs, but still without rudder, for the UK, arriving on 13 April. Altogether she sailed 3,400 miles without a rudder and with a badly damaged stern, only using her engines for steering, a feat for which her master was awarded the CBE and the chief officer and chief engineer officer the OBE and Lloyds War Medal for bravery at sea"*. [uboat.net] The award of CBE to Captain Mayer, R.N.R. was announced in the Surrey Advertiser of 7 March 1942. There is a convoy report, not available online, at the National Archives, reference ADM 199/1211.

Records in naval-history also include:

"She retired damaged to Ponta Delgada. On 2 February, the troopship departed Horta with destroyers Croome, Exmoor, *and* Westcott *and tug* Thames*. They were joined by destroyers* Laforey *and* Blankney*, which departed Gibraltar on 4 February, and corvette* Pentstemon*, returning from escort duty.*

The troops in liner Llangibby Castle *departed Gibraltar on 10 February to return to England in troopships* Batory, Royal Scotsman, Royal Ulsterman*, and* Ulster Monarch*, escorted by destroyers* Wishart, Wivern, Whitehall*, and* Vidette*"*.
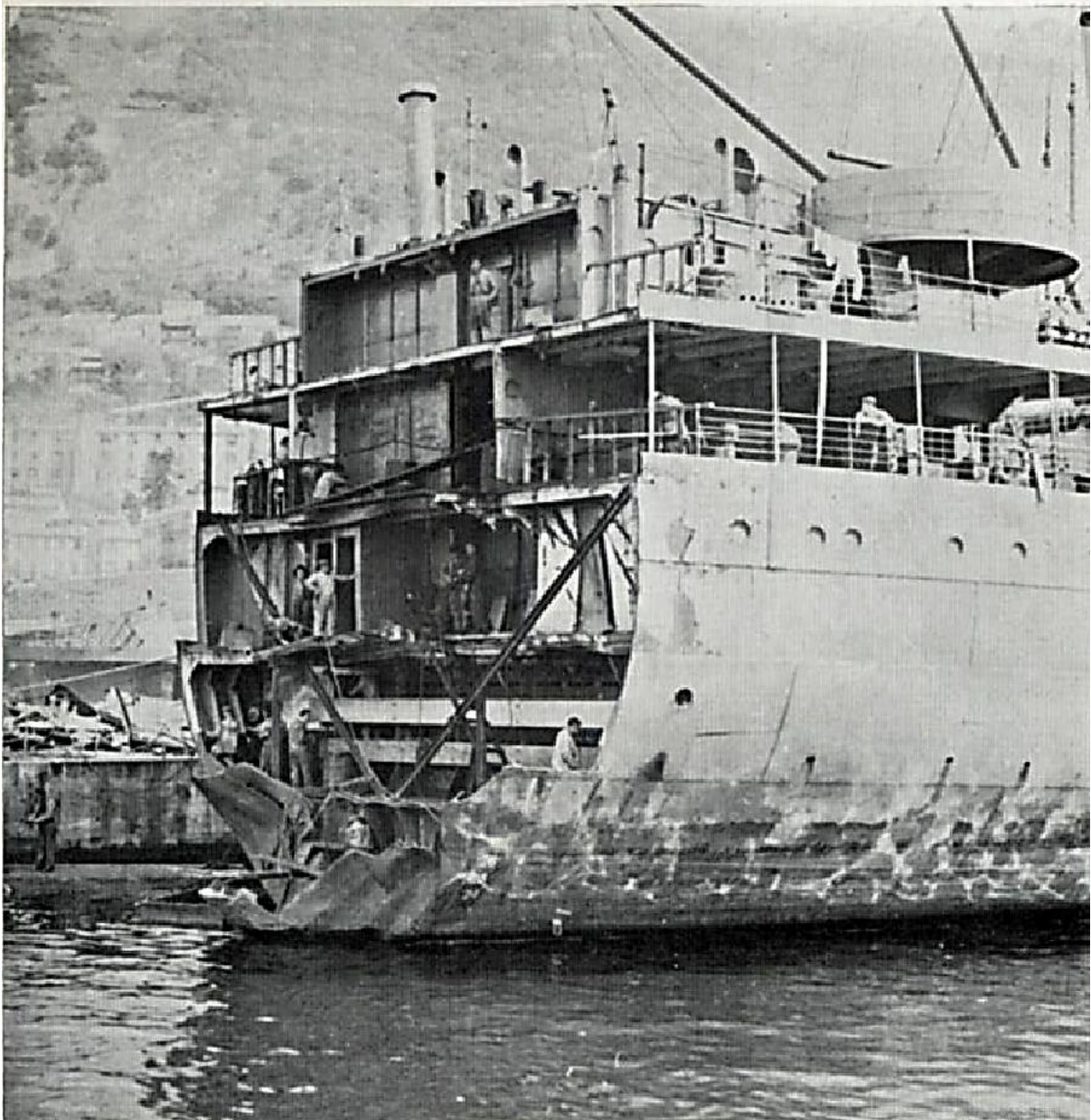
Figure 29: MV Llangibby Castle Torpedo Damage
Source: http://www.bandcstaffregister.com/page72.html

The Appendix includes an extract from a blog archive featuring David Lloyd-Thomas of the Welch Regiment, a trained machine gun officer, who was on board destined for Bombay when the *Llangibby Castle* was torpedoed and he describes his experience from when he boarded in Glasgow to reaching Gibraltar.

The next episode is again taken from uboat.net:
> "On 9 November 1942 the Llangibby Castle *was part of the KMF-convoy in Operation Torch, the landing in North Africa. She was hit by an 8in shell from a Vichy-French shore battery which killed one person".*

On 10 November 1942, *Llangibby Castle* arrived (location not identified but possibly Gibraltar). Again, with an unidentified location but possibly Gibraltar, on 5 December 1942, "Tegelberg *and* Llangibby Castle *arrived after both ships had been damaged in collision. Estimated that the* Llangibby Castle *would require fourteen days in dock to make her seaworthy, and* Tegelberg *would be ready p.m. 6th*

December. Personnel for onward passage to North Africa were transferred from Llangibby _to_ Llanstephan Castle". [naval-history: Collision]

In July 1943, _Llangibby Castle_ transported and landed Canadian commando troops on shore at Sicily. [Troopships] On 7 November 1943, "_Llangibby Castle reported on arrival at Alexandria from Port Said that she had sighted torpedoes first from seaward in position 31-31N, 30-06E at 0305. A surface A/S sweep was instituted at daylight, but produced no results_" [naval-history: Sighting] In 1943, the ship returned to the UK for repairs to her bow, which had been damaged at Gibraltar during the preparations for the Italian landings.
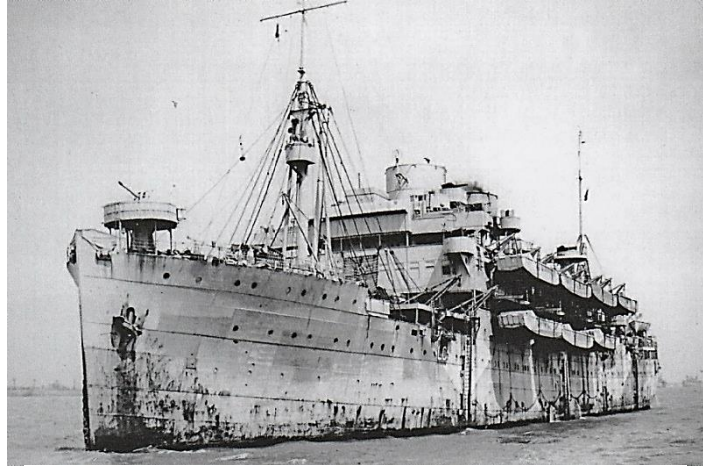

Figure 30: MV LLangibby Castle with LCA's
Source: http://www.bandcstaffregister.com/page72.html

"In March 1944 the Llangibby Castle _was sent unexpectedly to the Clyde where she was fitted out as a Landing-Ship, Infantry (Large). Her boats had already been replaced by assault landing-craft, now she was painted in a new style of dark and light blue camouflage, and the Royal Marine Flotilla 557 embarked. The ship then sailed, via Milford Haven, for the Solent. There she and a huge number of other ships were exercised with as much secrecy as possible in night manoeuvring, anchoring in formation, shipping landing craft and, of course, signalling. She then received the troops she would carry for her greatest operations so far, the attack on Hitler's "Festung Europa" and with them made an "invasion" of the English coast at Bracklesham. Her troops were again Canadians, the Regina Rifles, the Winnipeg Regiment and some unattached personnel. The 120 men of the Marine Flotilla party were also on board"._ [Troopships]

Figure 31: T.W. McAllen (As Commodore)
Source:
http://www.bandcstaffregister.com/page72.html

The _Llangibby Castle_ had 24 Masters over its career, and T.W. McAllen commanded the ship from May 1944 to December 1946, embracing the Normandy landings and subsequent Far East involvement.

For D-Day, _Llangibby Castle_ embarked about 2,500 troops at Southampton 39 Berth starting at 17.00 D-Minus 4 (1 June 1944). The ship carried 18 LCA's in 3 rows each side of the ship. On D-Day, _Llangibby Castle_ was part of Assault Group "J" 1, designated Serial J16, Group 314(f) and was carrying eighteen LCA of 557 Assault Flotilla, consisting of, with those lost marked with an asterisk_: LCA *303, LCA *590, LCA 642, LCA 830, LCA 989, LCA *1016, LCA 1017, LCA 1036, LCA 1037, LCA 1089, LCA 1090, LCA *1093, LCA *1096, LCA 1124, LCA *1131, LCA *1146, LCA 1173, LCA *1382_.

Having sailed at night within a group which included Ulster _Monarch, Canterbury, Laird's Isle, Queen Emma_, and MGB _324, Llangibby Castle_ arrived at 05.30 on D-Day off Coursailles on the Normandy coast for the assault on Juno beach. _Llangibby Castle_'s assault troops included Royal Marines, 7 Canadian Brigade and 'C' Company, Royal Winnipeg Rifles – the ship, having carried the largest contingent to that part of the coast, was the last to discharge all its troops, and the group departed at about 15.00 to return to Southampton, less the above LCA's which were swamped

returning to *Llangibby Castle*, losing 12 of their officers and crew. [naval-history.net: LCA], [WW2Talk], [Troopships] and [British & Commonwealth Register]

Figure 32: MV Llangibby Castle on D-Day
View from LCI(L) 306 of the 2nd Canadian (262nd RN) Flotilla,
showing *Llangibby Castle* and other landing craft of Force 'J' off the coast of France
Source: Library and Archives Canada PA-137022 Credit: Gilbert Alexander Milne/Canada. Dept. of National
Defence/Library and Archives Canada/PA- Restrictions on use: Nil Copyright: Expired
Obtained from http://ww2talk.com/index.php?threads/m-v-llangibby-castle.17258/

Figure 33: Canadian Troops
Landing at Juno Beach
Source:
http://www.bandcstaffregister.com/page72.html

Thereafter, *Llangibby Castle* made nearly seventy trips to Omaha and Utah Beaches and to Le Havre, carrying some 100,000 troops to the Continent and then went to the Far East on troop carrying duties, repatriating troops from India and Burma.

Llangibby Castle was returned to Union-Castle in January 1947, having carried 156,134 troops and covered 300,256 miles. A refit followed and it returned to the around-Africa service. One of its voyages from Mombasa departing 8 October 1947 for London carried nuns from the Polish order of the family of Nazareth who opened a boarding school for girls in Pitsford Hall in Northampton. [Nuns] There was a serious outbreak of fire in its No 3 lower hold while at Dar-es-Salaam, as reported in the Melbourne edition of *The Argus* of 28 December 1949. In June, 1954 *Llangibby Castle* was sold for scrap and broken up in Wales.

Torpedoed in The Atlantic

The word 'torpedoed' is usually associated with members of the Senior Service, but David Lloyd-Thomas of the Welch Regiment was one of those normally shore-based officers who experienced the terror of being at the receiving end of a submarine-borne missile.

He was trained as a machine-gun officer and, as the only machine-gun battalion in the British Army was stationed in Hong Kong, he expected to be posted there. Hong Kong had been captured by the Japanese in December 1941 though and his posting order was written like a telegram: 'Port of embarkation – Greenock (Scotland). Destination – Far East'.

When he arrived at the seaport of Glasgow, He had his first sight of the SS 'Llangibby Castle', the pride of the old 'Union Castle' and where he was due to spend the following two months. She was a fine-looking ship but his faith in her collapsed when she failed to sail with the rest of the convoy. Something was wrong in the engine room and it took two days to put it right.

On their first night at sea a howling gale gave passengers a good idea of what lay ahead for them. They were a mixed bunch from all three services but had one thing in common: to do a job in the Far East where the Japanese were devouring our Empire.

He had an eerie feeling in his stomach when he went on deck that first day. Gone was the comforting sight of land and all around were angry waves which he knew concealed German U-Boats. Fortunately, there were two destroyers which zigzagged fore and aft and helped to give him a feeling of security.

The 'Llangibby Castle' was an aristocrat of her day. She provided a comfortable billet for her passengers but speed was not her best feature. The two destroyers fussed about her like a pair of Jack Russell terriers urging her to 'get a move on' but instead, she sailed on serenely, unmoved by hassle and cajolery.

A few days later the ship caught up with the rest of the convoy. The weather improved and his first sight of the others was tell-tale plumes of smoke from their stacks. Soon he was able to identify individual shapes and passengers waving as the 'Llangibby Castle' took its place in the convoy. The two destroyers – their job done, gave a final pass and a few short 'whoops' of their sirens before setting off to another station on the perimeter.

About a mile ahead of them was the largest ship in the convoy – the French liner 'Louis Pasteur'. She had been the pride of the French mercantile fleet before the war but her character had been changed by the application of grey paint, common to all ships that sailed the seas in World War Two. Other ships, all bound on the same course, radiated from the central position to all points of the compass. David felt reasonably confident that he had, by law of average, a good chance of getting to Cape Town - his first haven on the long journey to the Far East.

His feeling of security however was shattered when on the 16th January 1942 a deafening explosion cut short his ablutions.

David clutched his life jacket and raced up to the deck where he had practised lifeboat drills. He gathered that something serious had happened as the ship was losing speed and veering to starboard. A few minutes later a voice on the intercom from the bridge informed the passengers they had been hit in the stern by a torpedo that had blown the rudder off. The 'voice' went on to say that there was a large hole in the stern but the bulkhead doors had been closed and that the propellers were still turning. As an afterthought, the 'voice' informed them that many of the crew had been killed and injured.

David digested this unpalatable information and wondered what else lay in store for him. He did not have long to wait as two Fokker Wulf Kondors emerged from a bank of cloud. They were the eyes and ears of U-boats and were most probably the ones that had guided the killers to their quarry. David watched, mesmerised, as these huge aircraft, like the sea-eagles after which they were named, closed the distance between them and the 'Llangibby Castle'. The few light anti-aircraft guns they had aboard pumped shells at them but the 'great birds' kept on coming. Their machine-guns opened up and, miraculously, only one of the passengers was hit. Then they dropped their bombs, but they were off target and fell harmlessly into the sea. The Kondors made a few more runs without doing any more damage and then they headed off for France from whence they had come.

Their next visitor, a friend this time, was one of the escorting destroyers whose captain asked what had gone wrong. He was told over the loud hailer that they had no rudder and a big hole in the stern. David and the others were astounded to hear the destroyer Captain reply: "Try and get to the Azores. Goodbye and good luck." He wondered what had happened to those two nice destroyers that had looked after the ship him from the time she left Greenock to when she joined the convoy - they would not have left us – or would they? He knew that once you are hit by a torpedo, the old adage: 'survival of the fittest' takes on a real meaning. As the 'Llangibby Castle' lumbered around in a huge circle, David watched the smudges of grey paint and then thin wisps of smoke fade away below the horizon. They were on their own.

It was beyond the knowledge of landlubbers to know how the Captain and the crew managed to keep a course towards the tiny Portuguese sanctuary of the Azores. Throughout the time they struggled against impossible odds, the crew behaved with remarkable confidence. Their optimism was infectious and the passengers even put the possibility of another U-boat attack on the back burner as they willed the ship to keep her nose straight. After three days of painfully slow progress they came in sight of some volcanic out-crop islands that make up the Azores in mid-Atlantic. A huge sigh of relief was given when tug boats nudged them to their moorings in the port of Horta.

The British Consul came aboard and attended to the business of getting the wounded ashore and into hospital. He explained that under the International Neutrality Law they could stay in Horta for only two weeks. The German Consul, with whom he had been good friends before the war, insisted that the rule be observed but he, the British Consul, felt sure the Portuguese would not cast them out. Even though the Portuguese technically remained neutral throughout the war, such a callous act as making the ship put to sea in such a helpless state, was not in their nature. They are not known as 'our oldest allies' for nothing. Nevertheless, two weeks later a large Dutch ocean-going tug arrived to tow the ship to Gibraltar.

As David and the other passengers waved goodbye to those who had come to see them off, they were hailed by a British destroyer at the entrance to the harbour. "Good luck," the Captain shouted through the loudhailer, and told them that the group of people on the foredeck were German survivors of a U-boat that had been waiting outside the harbour. It had been rammed and sunk. "Well, that's one less," said David to a shipmate. "Throw the b-----s back in!" he replied.

Even though there were three destroyers to escort the 'Llangibby Castle' to Gibraltar, all the terror of the first part of the voyage returned as they crept slowly towards the mouth of the Mediterranean, 1,000 miles away. During those terrifying days they were once again attacked by U-boats. They fired torpedoes but due to the erratic course of their target and the close attention of the escort, they missed. Nerves were at stretching point and two Army officers jumped overboard, never to be seen again.

At last, after six days out from the Azores, the ship arrived at Gibraltar. The familiar shape of the Rock, a bastion against so many sieges and the refuge of so many mariners, was the best sight David had ever seen. He remembers counting the ships in the harbour – there were twenty-two, all blowing their sirens in a great musical salute.

It was reported that both Churchill and Hitler were kept informed about the ship's progress from the Azores. Both looked upon the 'Llangibby Castle' as a tool for national morale – to be saved or sunk, depending upon which side you were on.

Two of the passengers were war correspondents from London newspapers. They had not been able to make any contact with their editors while at sea, but had plenty of time to write their stories. As soon as they were able get ashore, they broke news of survival to the rest of the world.

The grand old ship went into dry-dock and spent fifty-seven days being patched up before she lumbered back to UK on her own. For the passengers, Gibraltar was only a staging post on the long voyage to the Far East and David still had a long way to go before boarding the 'Dilwara' at Cape Town.

Bombay was his destination and it was from there that he travelled overland to Nowsheera in the North West Frontier Province of India to join the 11th Sikh Regiment (a machine-gun battalion). It seemed, at last, that his military skills were about to be fulfilled, but for those who know anything about machine-gun battalions, Burma was hardly the place for effective use of those weapons.

Source: Regimental Stories: Soldiering is Fun
Courtesy of https://regimentalstories.blogspot.com/ **accessed April 2020**.

Casualties including D-Day Invasion: This is an incomplete list as specific casualties who were aboard particular LCA's have not been found.

6 June 1944. [naval-history: Casualties]
  Llangibby Castle, Normandy invasion, operation Overlord
  COULTHARD, Frank, Marine, PLY/X 106715, killed.
  GREGORY, William, Ty/Act/Corporal, PLY/X 108740, killed. Aged 20.
16 June 1944 [naval-history: Casualties]
  WOODWARD, Frank, Marine, CH/X 114330, LCA.557, in *Llangibby Castle* lost overboard, MPK.

From other sources [WW2Talk] and CWGC

18 July 1940. BROADLEY William - MV *Llangibby Castle* MERCHANT NAVY (Steward). Aged 52.

9 July 1941. LECKY James C. MV *Llangibby Castle* MERCHANT NAVY (Master July 1940-41). Aged 56

8 November 1942. MOORE North Huntly - MV *Llangibby Castle* MERCHANT NAVY (First Electrician) Aged 50

6 June 1944. Terrel, Eugene. 557 LCA Flotilla Royal Marines.

6 June 1944. Styles, Sidney Verdun. 557 LCA Flotilla Royal Marines.

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