

## Reardon Smith Line During WW1

With the world currently remembering the events and history of WW1, I thought I would take the opportunity to put together what we know of the involvement of the Reardon Smith fleet during those mindless years. In doing so, as well as describing the events that beset the company during the actual conflict, I have also included details of the ships both leading up to the outbreak of the war and to the years that followed. Understandably, and ever mindful of the fact that so much of Smith's history went up in smoke when Merthyr House was destroyed by fire in 1946, first hand information is somewhat thin on the ground. However, by dividing the narrative into two parts, namely losses and the gains, it has been possible to create something of a potted description of events. Though somewhat anecdotal in context, it at least gives us some idea of what the Reardon Smith men endured aboard the fleet.

Major conflicts have historically never been a good time for Merchant fleets, and WW1 was no exception. Though we are aware of the tremendous losses incurred by global merchant fleets during WW2, it is often forgotten, that in terms of the loss of lives, and the loss of ships, the figures for WW1 almost match those of the conflict twenty years later. In fact, though the casualty figures for both wars are not completely accurate, the actual British and Commonwealth ship losses, in both wars, are both virtually the same; just under 2400 in WW1 and just over 2400 in WW2. The worst year for Britain in WW1 was 1917, when over 1100 vessels were lost to enemy action. This was also reflected in the losses that Smiths incurred.

Upon the outbreak of WW1, on 28<sup>th</sup> July 1914, W. R. Smith and Sons owned a total of nine vessels, which were divided between four management companies; The Instow SS Co.Ltd., The Bradford SS Co.Ltd., The St.Just SS Co Ltd. and The Great City SS Co.Ltd. With tonnages ranging between 3800 and 5525 gross tons, they were modern vessels for the day; the oldest having been built in 1906 whilst six of them were less than two years old. By the end of hostilities, on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918, despite ten of those vessels having been lost in the conflict, the fleet had actually grown to eleven ships, though just four of the original tonnage had survived.

### **The Ships Smiths Lost**

#### ***Cornish City (1)***

Though the war had already begun in parts of Europe, it was not until 4<sup>th</sup> August 1914, that Britain herself officially declared war upon Germany. Six weeks later, on 21<sup>st</sup> September, W.R.Smith and Sons suffered their first loss, the *Cornish City (1)*. It had been two years earlier, on 12<sup>th</sup> March that the company's first ship, the *City of Cardiff*, had been dramatically wrecked off Lands End. In order to keep up the strength of the fleet, the *Charlton* had been purchased from previous owners and renamed the *Cornish City (1)*, a 1906 built vessel of just under 4000gt. And it was surely a piece of ironic fate, that at the time of the loss of the *Cornish City (1)*, the master was Captain Julius Bethke, himself a German, who had been the rescued Chief Officer of the *City of Cardiff*.

Whilst on passage from Barry to Rio, with a cargo of coal, the *Cornish City (1)* was intercepted by the German cruiser *Karlsruhe*, some 250 miles south of St.Pauls Rocks

in mid-Atlantic. The *Karlsruhe* had been enjoying easy pickings for over a month in the area, and her mode of attack, already established by the German Naval High Command, was to disembark the crews of merchantmen, and place them aboard the German merchant ships that accompanied the cruiser. Explosives were then placed aboard the captured vessel and the unfortunate victim was then fired upon and sent to the bottom; thus was the fate of the *Cornish City (1)*. Captain Bethke and his crew, which also included the Chief Engineer, William Lilley, a son-in-law of William Smith, were put aboard the *Crefield*, where they joined the crews of earlier victims of the *Karlsruhe's* rampage. However, as the cruiser continued with her exploits, in all accounting for eleven allied merchant ships, her commander, Captain Kohler decided to despatch the *Crefield*, along with another of the flotilla, the *Rio Negra*, to Tenerife. They arrived there on 24<sup>th</sup> October, and the survivors were subsequently got back to the UK and the other allied nations. Not long afterwards, on 4<sup>th</sup> November, the *Karlsruhe* herself came to grief, when an explosion of ammunition caused her to sink in the region of Barbados.

The war was over for Captain Julius Bethke, and he was quickly despatched to the US, where he and his family spent the rest of their lives. The following year, William Gilbert Lilley was appointed Engineering Superintendent at the Cardiff Office in Pier Head Chambers, Bute Street, Cardiff, and in 1919 he became a Board Member, and remained as a director until his death in 1955.

It would be another six months before Smiths suffered their next casualty.

### *Indian City (1)*

Despite a certain amount of industrial unrest within the shipbuilding industry at the time of the outbreak of war, Smiths were nevertheless able to take delivery of the *Indian City (1)*, from Doxford's Paillon yard in January 1915, though there had been some delay with her completion. However, her service for the company was brief. On 12<sup>th</sup> March, on the return leg of her maiden voyage from Galveston to Le Havre, with a cargo of Cotton and metal alloys, when only ten miles south of the Scilly Isles, she was torpedoed and sunk by *U-29*. Fortunately, all hands survived. Also on 12<sup>th</sup> March, but more fortunate, the *Atlantic City (1)* under the command of Captain George Mead, was able to outrun a surface submarine in the North Channel. Two years after the end of hostilities, the *Atlantic City (1)* was renamed the *Bradburn (1)*, and after being sold out of the fleet, survived the conflict of WW2, before being wrecked off Cape Villano in 1950, by which time she had become the *Maria L*.

### *Eastern City (1)*

Together with sister ship *Devon City (1)*, the *Eastern City (1)*, had been built by Ropners of Stockton, in 1913, and were both put under the management of the St. Just SS Co. Ltd. William Smith's brother, John Henry Smith was given the command of the vessel.

In May 1914, the *Eastern City (1)* was berthed in Hamburg preparing to proceed to Texas. Either by design or by accident, a man by the name of Hans Rositzky took passage aboard the vessel. Though of German extraction, he had been born in Natal, South Africa. When the ship arrived in Port Arthur, in mid-June, Rositzky was

interrogated by the US Immigration Authority, and he then took leave of the ship in that port. Sometime during the following year, he appears to have successfully obtained US Citizenship, and by the end of the hostilities, he is married and living in Baltimore. According to his records at the time, he could easily be identified because he had only one leg!

It is interesting to note, that at this period of time, the *Eastern City (1)* was sailing with just a Master and two mates and in the engine room there were just three engineers in addition to the Chief Engineer

The *Eastern City (1)* managed to survive the hostilities until 9<sup>th</sup> April 1916 when, whilst on passage from St.Nazaire to Boston, via Barry, the ship was sunk by gunfire from *U-66* when 18 miles north west of Ushant. At the time, she was in ballast and there were no casualties from the loss.

### *Jersey City (1)*

Continuing their fleet expansion, even during the war years, Smiths bought the *Santeramo* from Furness Withy in 1915, having only been completed a year earlier. She was renamed *Jersey City (1)*. She survived hostilities until 24<sup>th</sup> May 1917, when she was sunk off the Flannan Isles by *U-46*. As an insight into her early days under the company flag, the following has been taken from the *Jersey City (1)* profile pages. It was originally printed in an RSL Newsletter, having been submitted by Captain Brice Thomas.

*'At the end of December 1914 I applied for a Second Officer's berth and was interviewed by Captain W R Smith, the founder of the Company. He asked me with which firm I had served my time and I informed him "before the mast" in firms such as Morels Ltd., Cardiff; Williams and Mordey, Newport and on the Morocco Coast with James Power and Company's Line, London—making in all some 5 ½ years. Captain Smith informed me he would have a berth available for me a week or two's time and would I wait – which I agreed to do. A week or ten days went by when I received a letter to report to the office at Pier Head Chambers, Cardiff Docks. I was interviewed by Mr Willie Smith, eldest son of Captain Smith, who informed me that I was rather young for such a large ship. However, it was agreed I should have the berth at the agreed sum of £12 per month on joining, which would be in a few days time. I also agreed to leave my Discharge Book in care of the Office.*

*Three days later, early January 1915, I received instructions to proceed to London to join the s.s. "Santaramo" in Surrey Commercial Dock. The vessel at the time was owned by Furness Withy. I duly arrived onboard, having travelled from Paddington to Surrey Commercial Docks in a hansom cab. The Santaramo was a likely vessel of the three island type, about 9000 tons DW and only six months from the builder's yard. Having single decks she was unsuitable for Furness Line general cargo run from the United States. Vessel was duly purchased and handed over to St.Just Steamship Co.— Captain Garnett of Furness Line in command. Vessel sailed from London to Port Talbot, where she dry-docked, was overhauled and painted, with Furness Withy funnel markings stripped off and funnel painted red with black top and black "S" on sides, being the Messrs, W.R.Smith & Sons' funnel mark. The name was*

*changed to “Jersey City” – Bideford. Vessel sailed from Port Talbot for Iqueque via Panama Canal (only newly opened) to load nitrates for the United States.*

*When we were four days out from Port Talbot, during the Third Engineer’s a.m. watch, the propeller cast four blades from propeller boss, not a portion of root of blades being visible. In those days there was no wireless on ships; we depended entirely on visible signals, flags, Morse code or semaphore to any passing vessel. Having a N.E wind and approaching the Portuguese Coast, we lashed a derrick athwart the foremast and spread new tarpaulins from derrick to deck hoping to assist down to Lisbon. After drifting like this for about 2 ½ days, a vessel steering north passed nearby in the early hours of the morning. We immediately called her up on the marine lamp. She did not reply and sheered from us with all speed. An hour later and daylight broke, and we set a flag signal for tow, the other vessel then cautiously came towards us and enquired what was our trouble. Satisfied that we were not an enemy vessel, she came fairly close and arrangements were made to tow us into Lisbon. The vessel proved to be the Mamarie of the New Zealand Shipping Line – and the terms agreed – “no cure no pay”. We finally got coupled with tow line, using our starboard cable and the other vessel’s heavy towing wire.*

*After two days towing, we finally arrived in Lisbon Harbour. We were delayed her a month. We had a spare propeller on board stowed in lower hold aft. Repairs were also carried out to windlass, etc. On completion of repairs we sailed for the Panama Canal. Fairly good weather was encountered on voyage and on 18th day out from Lisbon, a day prior to arriving Panama Canal, and in the afternoon, propeller cast one of its blades. The sea was absolutely clear of any floating objects such as dead-wood or trunks of trees, etc. We arrived Panama Canal (Colon) the next day, and transited the Canal. On passing through the locks, which were guarded by USA soldiers, one of them would hail me with “Hey, Mr Mate, there is a blade missing off your” wheel”. I would reply with “OK Bud”, and give him a waive of the hand as a friendly gesture. We sailed in the evening out of the Pacific side of the canal, and proceeded to Iqueque for orders. We arrive Iqueque 9 days after leaving Panama and, being Saturday, Captain Garnet received no loading port instructions and, I may add, that on ring off the main engines at this port, it was important that the part of the propeller with no blade should not be visible above the water. Captain Garnet was very much afraid that the shipper of the nitrates cargo would object to putting his cargo in a vessel that was probably not seaworthy, having a defective propeller.*

*In this event happening, vessel was in a spot as there were no facilities for dry-docking on the West Coast of South America or of casting a new propeller. The only other option open was for vessel to proceed to West Coast USA, San Francisco or Seattle or transit Panama Canal and proceed to New Orleans for dry-docking. This would have incurred serious loss to owners regarding time and money.*

*However, on the following Monday, Captain Garnet received orders to proceed to Antofagasta to load Nitrate in bags for Charleston, South Carolina, USA. Vessel proceeded forthwith arriving at loading port the following day. On anchoring in the harbour and in loading berth, a similar procedure was carried out as on arriving Iqueque after ring off the main engines – propeller turned so that part of the propeller boss with no blade was not visible above water. However, loading was commenced and a full and complete cargo was loaded in a period of about ten days.*

*Favourable weather was encountered on passage to Panama and, after transiting the Canal, preceded to Charleston S.C. I might add that a few weeks after the vessel passed through the Canal, a landslide occurred at Culibra Cut, which meant closing the Canal for a month. Vessel duly discharged total cargo at Charleston as per Bill of lading. We then proceeded to New York for orders, fully expecting a new propeller to be fitted there. Vessel lay at anchor off the Statue of Liberty for a couple of days, during which time Captain W.R.Smith, the owner of the vessel, visited the captain and crew. The visit was doubly welcomed when it was learned that Captain W.R.Smith had given all hands an increase in their monthly wages. Vessel was chartered by Compagnie General Transatlantique to load general cargo for Le Havre.*

*Vessel loaded a full cargo of general in about nine days and sailed. Twenty-four hours after the vessel sailed from New York, another blade was cast off the propeller, not opposite the already missing blade, but adjacent, thus leaving two blades on one side of the propeller. The main engines, I can assure you, did not have a balanced and rhythmic beat. Mr Wilkie, Chief Engineer, ran engines at best possible speed in order to nurse the two remaining blades and avoid further loss. A speed of about seven knots was maintained until a strong S.E. wind shipped up a nasty sea, and it was decided to stop main engines and let the vessel drift. This lasted for about two days when weather eased up and the sea became smoother and vessel again got underway and proceeded on passage. When off Cherbourg a passing vessel informed us by Morse Lamp that there was an enemy submarine in the vicinity. The Captain and Chief Engineer had a consultation and they decided to take a chance with the propeller and increase revolutions and get best possible speed considering the condition of the propeller, also bearing in mind, wind and tide were favourable and much to our surprise, a speed of ten knots was achieved. Vibrations of main engine were severe. However, we safely arrived at Havre Roads and lay at anchor there for a period of two weeks waiting for a discharge berth in the docks. All hands had visions of proceeding to the UK on completion of discharge of cargo, for dry-docking and the fitting of a new propeller. Unfortunately, our dreams were shattered as when entering the locks, there on the Pier Head was a propeller with "Jersey City" painted on it in white!*

*On completion of discharge of cargo, vessel dry-docked under the supervision of Captain R.Compton, Marine Superintendent. Vessel had to find labour to scale and paint vessel's bottom and topsides. I accompanied the Chief Officer, Mr.Whittle, each morning outside the dry-dock and assisted him in picking up any casual labour, including young lads who were available to carry out the work, and in the evening, we paid each person his daily wage due. Captain Garnet left the s.s.Jersey City at Havre and returned to his usual employers, Furness Withy & Co. He was relieved by one of this company's masters, Captain J.Storey of Whitby. The ensuing voyage was very pleasant and of short duration; about three months. No propeller trouble with the propeller fitted at Havre. The voyage ended in the UK where I left her on paying off and attended Mr Manson's Nautical School, Queen Street, Cardiff, in order to sit for my First Mate's Certificate. **Brice Thomas.**'*

### **Coniston Water**

The *Coniston Water* was a vessel of 3758 gt, built by Bartrams on the Tees, in 1908 for The Coniston Water Steamship Company. She appears to have been the

company's sole ship, and presumably built for the prosperous Welsh coal exporting trade, and for this reason she was registered there, but managed by Macfarlane and Lang of Cardiff. Very little is known of her history, but sometime in the first half of 1916, the company, and ship, were acquired from the managers and operated under the W R Smith mantle.

The ship certainly spent some of her early years tramping around the Australian Coast, and she again spent about three months there in 1913/1914. Whatever her previous history, her life in the fleet was short lived. On 21<sup>st</sup> July 1917, having cleared the North Channel, *Coniston Water*, bound from Newport, with a cargo of coal and generals destined for the peoples of Russia, set course for Archangel. When some 70 miles north west of the Butte of Lewis, she was attacked, torpedoed and sunk by *U-87*. Though there were no casualties reported, one of the military gunners was taken prisoner. The event also brought an end to the subsidiary company of the Coniston Water Steamship Company.

### **Bradford City (1)**

From almost the beginning, of what was to become the Reardon Smith Line, the founder, William Reardon Smith had developed strong connections with the North of England, and in particular Yorkshire. The brothers Priestly and Frederick Mitchell were obviously keen to be involved with the new company, and their financial contribution to the enterprise must have been considerable, particularly when we consider that the establishment of the two subsidiary companies, The Bradford SS Co Ltd. and the Leeds SS Co Ltd. were created in recognition of this connection; the latter company remained an integral part of RSL up until the late 1960's. The naming of the fleet also strongly reflected the association, and considering so few of the fleet were ever named in tribute to British cities, those of York, Bradford and Leeds at least featured prominently for many years. The "*Brad*" ships further emphasised the northern investment. I believe there is more to be told of this Yorkshire-South Wales association, but I doubt it will ever be revealed.

The *Leeds City (1)*, the company's second ship, built in 1908, was also the first vessel named in recognition of this of the "Northern" connection whilst their third ship, the *Bradford City (1)*, built in 1910, also recognised the association.

Early on in the conflict, the British government, at the suggestion of their military advisors, thought to create a type of Merchant ship that could mislead and confuse the enemy. These "Mystery" ships, as they were originally called, came to be known as "Q" ships. They came in all types of guises; some were purpose built, others were small sailing ships, but the most well known were Merchantmen, generally between 3000 and 4000 gross tons that were requisitioned from their owners: the *Bradford City (1)* was one of this type to be chosen. She was referred to as a collier, no doubt from her civilian roll in carrying cargoes of coal.

The roll the Q ships played was a varied one. During the early days of the war, they were used to tow submerged submarines towards their targets. They were fitted with hidden armaments, and used a variety of camouflage disguises. If hit by the enemy, they had inflatable or impermeable ballast that prevented them from being quickly sunk. However, their most common type of disguise was to appear as a neutral vessel

by displaying a foreign ensign and were assigned with false names and ports of registry. Whilst in their roll as “Q” ships they were fully manned by Naval personnel.

Records have in the past have stated that the *Bradford City (1)* was renamed either the *Saros* or the *Ballistan*. Though the first of these names is correct, the second one should read *Baltistan*. As part of their deception, they often changed their identity and nationality, hence the use of more than one name. One can imagine the Whitehall spooks gathered around a large table with copies of Lloyds registers etc., looking for suitable names to give the “Q”ships. I suspect the following would have been the background to the naming of the *Bradford City (1)*.

On 7<sup>th</sup> of March, 1913, the Chairman of the Howard Smith Shipping Company (note the name), based in Melbourne Australia, announced to their Board of Directors, that because of the industrial unrest at British Shipyards, there was a serious delay in the delivery of tonnage that the company had ordered. It had become a matter of urgency therefore, in order to honour current engagements, to purchase a second hand vessel, namely the *Baltistan*, from other owners. Once acquired, the ship was renamed the *Saros*. The *Baltistan*, was a cargo ship of 3297gt, LPP 106.7m and beam 14.2m. She had been built for the Anglo Algerian SS Co. of Swansea (aka F.C.Strick), by William Gray of Hartlepool in 1910. Compare these details with the *Bradford City (1)*, built in 1910 at Ropners Yard: 3683 gt, LPP 105.6 and beam 15.5.

The *Bradford City (1)* was not commissioned as a “Q” ship until 1917. Little is known of her activities during that period, but it is known that she did not destroy any enemy targets. She was, however, a target herself, and on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1917 she was torpedoed and sunk by the Austrian *U-28*, in the Straits of Messina. There were no casualties reported and the crew appear to have been picked up by a French fishing boat.

The only image we have of the *Bradford City (1)* is a poor one, but it can be compared with the one of the *Saros* that we have. Perhaps the oddest piece of “spookery” is the house flag of the Howard Smith Shipping Company!

### **Fallodon**

The *Fallodon* was one of eight vessels purchased from the London and Northern Steamship Company, owned by Pyman and Watson, during the early part of 1917. Some of their number went on to be renamed as Smith vessels; the *Fallodon* did not get to achieve that distinction. Soon after becoming part of the Smith fleet, on 14<sup>th</sup> March 1917, she came into contact with a German u-boat in the English Channel. Although she was fired upon, she was able to respond with her own armaments and successfully saw off the assailant. Three months later, on 16<sup>th</sup> June, *Fallodon* had just left Cork with a cargo of hay for the horses of the British troops serving in France, and was bound for Cherbourg. However, she once again had an encounter with a German submarine. When 9 miles ESE of Mine Head, she was hit by a torpedo from *U-61*. The damage sustained was not fatal, and she was escorted back to port by the American warship *USS Douglas*. She was then beached, but after being refloated and successful repairs made, she lived to fight another day. Finally, however, on 28<sup>th</sup> December 1917, her luck ran out. Whilst on a ballast passage from Le Havre to the Clyde she was yet again torpedoed, but this time fatally, by *U-71*, and sank some 12

miles south east of St Catherines Point. The Second Engineer, John O'Neil from Hebdon-on-Tyne, was lost in the attack.

### **Runswick**

Another of the Pyman ships that never reached the re-naming stage was the *Runswick*, which managed just one year in the fleet. Built in 1904 by Grays of Hartlepool, she had the usual stylised "swan-necked" bow associated with the Pyman fleet, but at just 3060 gt, she was one of the smaller vessels. It is worthy of note, that in today's money, the cost of the eight Pyman ships was in excess of £35m.

On 18<sup>th</sup> April 1918, having left Newport, Mon the previous day with a cargo of steam coal, she was fatally struck by a torpedo fired by *U-109*, when 3 miles north of Trevoise Head. Some reports say she was immediately sunk, but she was in fact beached further inshore in the region of the Quies Rocks. It was the company's intention to attempt to repair her in situ, but the scheme was thwarted by an Atlantic depression. She remained intact for about five weeks before being nudged off a ledge into deeper water. Today, her remains lie in about 35 metres. It is believed she was en route to a port in Italy.

### **Leeds City (1)**

After the loss of the *City of Cardiff* in 1912, the company's oldest original vessel was the *Leeds City (1)*, built by Ropners in 1908. Soon after the outbreak of WW1, she was in Australian waters, under the command of Captain Storey, who had been Master of the *City of Cardiff* at the time of her loss. The *Leeds City (1)* raised a few eyebrows when "downunder" where she was described as "a peculiar looking trunk steamer". She also caught the headlines in other ways. It seems that the industrial unrest present in the UK and other European nations in the months leading up to the declaration of war had spread to British Merchant vessels, and in 1913 and 1914, Capt Storey had to deal with several instances of unrest amongst his crew that eventually lead to the involvement of the Australian authorities.

Details of her trading after that, as with most vessels during WW1, are sparse. However, on 6<sup>th</sup> May 1918, having loaded a cargo of wheat and bagged flour in Portland, Maine, in late April, the *Leeds City (1)* was negotiating her passage south through the North Channel on her way to Manchester, when she was hit by a torpedo from *U-86*, and sank 5 miles east of Skulmartin Light Vessel. It is interesting to note that the exact location is given in the old compass notation as E x S 1/2 S.

### **Escrick**

The third of the Pyman ships was the last ship the company lost in WW1. The *Escrick* was virtually identical to her sister ship, the *Langholm*, later to be renamed as *Madras City (1)*. The *Escrick* was on a ballast passage from Bordeaux, where she was to load grain for Europe. On 18<sup>th</sup> August, in 46.42N:16.10W, some 360 miles north west of Cape Finistere, she was attacked by *U-90*, an 87 class U-boat designed for ocean operation and a forerunner of the u-boats of WW2. *Escrick* was fatally struck by a torpedo from the u-boat. The 4<sup>th</sup> Engineer lost his life and the Master was taken prisoner.



Doubtless, there were many other incidents that involved the fleet with the enemy during WW1, just as there would be in WW2, details of which have long since been lost. Three of the remaining Pyman ships certainly described their narrow escapes. The *Normanby*, later to be renamed the infamous *Norwich City*, was attacked by a U-boat on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1917, when some miles west of the Straights of Gibraltar. The same ship was obviously involved in some kind of action later in the same year, since the crew of a Naval "Yacht" received salvage money for their efforts in assisting the ship between 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> December 1917. The "baby" of the Pyman fleet, the *Quarrydene*, aka the *King City (1)* managed to fight off a U-boat when off the West Coast of Ireland on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1917. It was not until 23 years later that her luck ran out, when as the Greek registered ship *Anastassia*, she was torpedoed in the Atlantic by an Italian submarine.

Arguably the most mysterious of the casualties concerned the *Claughton*. Historically, there is mention in several sources, including Heaton, that the *Claughton*, later renamed as the *Orient City (1)*, struck a mine in the Mediterranean on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1917, but "was towed in and successfully repaired". No other details have been found about this version of events. However, fifteen years later, some interesting facts emerged.

In the early part of May 1932, the *Fresno City (1)* was berthed at the Railway Jetty, Port Lincoln, South Australia. She was loading bagged grain for Shanghai. By coincidence, some days later, the *Orient City (1)*, berthed on the opposite side of the jetty, and she, too, was to load grain; in her case, bagged wheat for the UK. Like so many small Australian ports, before and since, a great interest was shown by the local community in visiting ships, and the presence of the two Reardon Smith ships proved to be no exception, with The Ladies Harbour Guild, the Mission to Seamen and even the local Football Team making contact with the two ships from Cardiff. The local press were much involved and as a consequence, we know that Kirton Wanderers postponed a scheduled league match in order to play a combined eleven from the Fresno and the Orient, the outcome being a well applauded draw for the "visitors". A special dance was arranged at the Mission, with the Ladies Harbour Guild providing food and other facilities, and the local "Merrymakers" ensemble provided the music. Such was the success of the evening that the ships returned the compliment the following weekend, the venue being aboard the three year old motor ship, the *Fresno City (1)*.

Obviously, with all this mingling activity, both Shipmasters had plenty to say to the Press. Captain Benjamin Pearson in command of the *Orient City (1)*, and Captain Dan Davies of the *Fresno City (1)*, then Commodore Master of the fleet, were both Welshmen and were very enthusiastic about their employers. Captain Davies's wife had launched the *Vancouver City (1)*, a couple of years earlier. As appeared to be quite commonplace in the company at the time, Captain Pearson was quite new to Smiths; not surprising, since despite the depression, the fleet had grown to 35 vessels. Amidst their "press releases", to an enthusiastic audience, it emerged that Captain Davies had taken command of the *Claughton*, aka the *Orient City (1)*, after she had become "indisposed" in 1917, and according to his words, she had been torpedoed in the Mediterranean, and sat on the bottom for three months before being raised and repaired. Unfortunately, he gave no more detail than this.

The *Orient City (1)* was the only Pyman ship that saw out the rest of her days peacefully in the fleet, and was scrapped in 1935.

Up until 1917, when the 6000 tons *Eastern City (2)* was delivered, the largest vessel and pride of the fleet was the *Great City (1)* built in 1914. On 19<sup>th</sup> June 1917, she was torpedoed by *UC- 47*, 30 miles west of Bishops Rock. She was loaded with steel and oats, destined for London that she had loaded in Newport News. She was able to survive the initial impact, and managed to make St.Mary's in the Scilly Isles, where she was beached. She was subsequently towed up to Liverpool where she was successfully repaired which must have been something of a feat in itself. Surviving the WW1 conflict, she went on to play an interesting roll in WW2, but this time for the opposition.

Another vessel to survive an attack was the *Homer City (1)*. She was damaged by a torpedo fired from *U-100* on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1918, when some 300 miles south west of Ushant. There is nothing to say how she made it back to port, since the details are not given in "Lloyds War Losses"

At the time of the attacks on the *Great City (1)* and *Homer City (1)*, both ships were part of the Great SS Co, but by the end of the war that subsidiary company had been wound up and they had been transferred to the St.Just SS Co.

Two other vessels of the fleet also had lucky escapes; the *Devon City (1)* narrowly missed being hit by two torpedoes fired at her when in the English Channel, on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1917 and the *Eastern City (2)* was able to use her own armament to fend off a surface attack in the Western Mediterranean on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1917.

That basically sums up the actual losses incurred by Smiths in WW1, so let us move on to the ships they gained, once the conflict had come to an end.

### **The Ships Smiths Gained**

Under Article 235 of the Treaty of Versailles at the end of WW1, Germany was required to hand over to the Allies, every merchant ship over 1600gt, half their ships of between 1000gt and 1600gt, and a quarter of all ships under 1000gt. Even this was not considered sufficient in terms of tonnage and numbers to compensate the Allied nations for their losses during the conflict, so to this end, they were further obliged to build new tonnage at their remaining shipyards in order to meet the full requirements of reparations.

Exactly how this arrangement was to be passed on to individual ship owners and operators is not fully understood. In the case of W.R Reardon Smith and Sons Ltd, the company lost a total of ten ships, with a tonnage amounting to 40,867gts. In 1921, the Shipping Controller, who had been operating many of the German vessels directly, sold the majority of them, mostly to British owners, but several to foreign fleets. Smiths, by now Sir William Reardon Smith & Co Ltd., "purchased" nine of them, with a total tonnage of 40,223gts. All nine vessels had been owned by well-established German Lines:-

*Answald* (Hamburg Bremer-Afrika Line), *Berengar* ( Roland Line), *Gerfrid* (Globus Reederei), *Haimon* (Roland Line), *Iserlohn* (Deutsch-Australia Line), *Riol* (Roland Line), *Schwaben* (North German Lloyd), *Winfried* ( Hamburg Bremer-Afrika Line) and *Wismar* (Deutsche-Australia Line).

**Berengar**, 4849gt.Blt.by the Bremer Vulcan Yard, Bremen. Launched 18<sup>th</sup> March 1911.

At the outbreak of WW1 the *Berengar* was laid up in the port of Talcahuano, Chile, where she remained, with her crew still on board, until the Chilean authorities seized her in September 1918; not however, before the crew had severely damaged the engine. In July 1920 she was towed back, by way of Cape Horn, to Germany where she was fully repaired. In July 1920, she was taken by the Controller of Shipping, and operated by Sir William Reardon Smith & Sons. A year later, she was purchased from the British Government for the reasonable sum of £30,000. Under the mantle of the Oakwin Shipping Company, the first Crew Agreement was signed in Barry on 3<sup>rd</sup> August and she sailed, two days later for the West Coast. Capt Thomas Dunster was in command and the Chief Engineer was Francis Patterson. She carried 7 apprentices and the crew was made up of several nationalities, many of who deserted when the ship arrived in San Francisco in late August.

A year later, the ship was back on the West Coast, arriving at Aberdeen Harbour, Portland on 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept from South Shields. Capt Dunster was still in command and Mr Patterson was still keeping the engines running. The same seven apprentices were still aboard but most of the crew had changed, though they were still very mixed. Whilst in Portland, one of the crew was discharged with 1<sup>st</sup> stage syphilis and as a result, in good old US fashion, the ship was fumigated!!

By 1923, the company had established strong ties with South Africa, and in recognition of this relationship, three of the fleet's vessels were re-named in tribute to three of the Union's leading Generals: *Oakwin (I)* became the *General Lukin*, the *Phoebus* became *General Smuts* and the *Berengar* was re-named *General Botha*.

In August 1925 the *Berengar*, now as *General Botha*, arrived on the west coast at Portland, having sailed from Kobe. Though Mr Patterson still remained aboard, as did some of the apprentices, the ship was now under the commander of Captain H McKenzie. There were more desertions amongst the multi-racial crew.

August 1926, again saw the *General Botha* on the west coast, this time at Astoria having arrived from Newcastle, NSW. Captain A H McKenzie was still Master, but Francis Patterson had been replaced by Mr Davies as Chief Engineer. The Second Mate was R.G.Vanner, father of Richard Vanner, who was subsequently lost aboard the *Bradfyne* in WW2. Two of the long suffering apprentices and been promoted to the exalted heights of QM.

In March 1927, her services in the fleet came to an end, and she was sold back to the Norddeutscher Lloyd group and renamed *Berengar*!

By 1934, she was chartered out to Hamburg Sud-Amerika Line, and in May 1935 she was sold to that company. In 1937, H S A changed her name to *Petropolis* and re-registered her in Hamburg

Upon the outbreak of WW2, in September 1939, the *Petropolis* was taken over by the Kriegsmarine and renamed *Sperrbrecher XI*, one of several merchant ships converted to minesweeping. In April, whilst carrying out clearance work in the Baltic, she was herself mined, and required extensive repairs.

In March 1940, she was returned to Sud-Amerika Line as *Petropolis*, but there is little documentation of her until the latter days of the conflict when, on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 1945, she was seriously damaged by an allied bombing attack whilst in the River Elbe near Hamburg. This was literally the final bombing of the region. Her back was broken and she was beached near Juelssand Lighthouse in the Elbe a few days later. She remained there until 1946 when she was broken up.

**Answald**, 5401gt.Blt.by the Bremer Vulcan Yard, Bremen. Launched September 1909.

There is little data available for the *Answald* after her launch, except that she was a regular trader between Germany and South Africa. She was also able to carry a small number of passengers in her early years. Soon after the outbreak of WW1, she was leased from HBA by the German Government and at considerable cost, converted into a seaplane carrier. Fitted with hangars for a maximum of six aircraft, she had sophisticated hoisting equipment to allow the loading and unloading of the planes. She was originally intended to double as a u-boat torpedo boat tender, but this idea was scrapped, and she entered service in the Baltic in July 1915. She was the first such vessel to be converted by the Germans. Her role as seaplane carrier has been long remembered, and several models of her have been made that are much sought after by enthusiasts.

An earlier claim to fame had occurred when *Answald* was in collision with the British collier, "Humber", in the Elbe in 1912. The latter sank and there was protracted litigation between the two parties.

At the end of hostilities, the ship, still in the Baltic, was surrendered to the allies. Upon being taken over by The Ministry of Shipping, *Answald* appears to have been engaged in troop duties to the East, presumably carrying returning Asians to the Sub-Continent. Then, in 1920, she underwent a complete refit, and the following year Smiths bought her for £35,000. Upon entering service with the company she was added to the fleet of the St.Just SS.Co.Ltd. and renamed the *Vulcan City*. Initial command of her was given to William E Owens and John Smith was Chief Engineer. There were 6 Apprentices aboard her and she sailed from Hull in October 1921, arriving in New York on 28<sup>th</sup> of the month.

The *Vulcan City* served the company well, and it was no doubt something of an occasion to sail on her, particularly considering the enormous conversions that the ship underwent. She remained in service until the summer of 1933, when she was broken up at Blyth.

**Gerfrid**, 5280gt. Blt by Earle's SB & E Co, Hull, for Nav a Vapeur Unione,  
Dubrovnik. Launched February 1913

The *Federiko Glavic* was owned by the Yugoslav company of Nav a Vapeur Unione. She had been built on the Humber in 1913, by The Earle Engineering Company, which by then, was a subsidiary of Wilson Line.

In 1916, she was seized by the German Government, and the ship was allocated to Globus Reederie, a tramp division of Roland Line and renamed *Gerfrid*. As was the case with other Yugoslav vessels of the time, she was involved in carrying Jewish citizens to South America, and it appears that though her trading was world wide, it was to that continent that most of her voyages were made. Little else is known about her, either before, or after her seizure by the German Government, and it was not until the end of hostilities that she emerged from wherever she had been hiding. Taken over by the Ministry of Shipping in 1919, she was initially managed by C.T. Bowring before being purchased by Smiths in 1920 and added to the St. Just fleet. She cost almost £100,000, and was renamed *Royal City*. When she was taken over from Bowrings, Captain Gerald Clements was her Master and William Doughty was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mate. Six years later, in 1926, the *Royal City* was under the command of Captain Walter Hain and the Chief Engineer was Mr Peter Thompson. A 19 year old Idris Williams was coming to the end of his apprenticeship and was one of the six apprentices aboard.

By 1928, the *Royal City* no longer suited the requirements of Reardon Smiths, presumably, because like the other German acquisitions, she was not ideally suited to carrying lumber. She was then sold to Greece and was renamed *Anna Mazaraki* by her new owners. Though she continued her life tramping, just as in her earlier life, she would make voyages to Argentina carrying immigrants from Europe, mostly Jewish immigrants, fleeing from the Nazi threat.

From the outbreak of WW2, she sailed in several convoys and in her final one, ON 94, originally bound from Swansea to Sydney, Nova Scotia, she became detached from the group and ran aground on Sable Island on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1942.

**Schwaben**, 5102gt. Blt by Bremer Vulkan, Vegesack for Norddeutscher Lloyd.  
Launched February 1906.

The *Schwaben* made her maiden voyage in April 1906 which was a trip to Brisbane and Sydney under the command of Captain O. Kraeft. As was the case with many Reardon Smith ships, she became a familiar sight in Australian waters. She visited Australia at least twice annually up until the outbreak of WW1. As a regular trader to Australian ports, the ship had considerable refrigeration capacity, and it was noted that on her second voyage to that continent in 1906, she had consignments of fruit for the festive season.

As the vessel was preparing to depart from Hamburg for Freemantle, in late July 1908, a case of fireworks exploded, causing localised damage and killing one crew member.

During the eight years of trading to the Antipodes, her European calls frequently included visits to the Mersey, where she would load generals out of Liverpool or Birkenhead for Australian ports.

Understandably, there is little detail of her movements during the years of conflict, though for the final eighteen months she was assigned to the German Government and converted into a minesweeper, and renamed *Speerbecher 6*. As such, her time would have then been spent in Baltic waters

After the cessation of the hostilities of WW1, the *Schwaben* was taken from the German authorities as a war prize in 1919. Initially, she was operated directly by the British War Department, under the command of Captain William Slater, a Scotsman, as were the majority of the Officers and Crew. Midway through 1921, she was bought from the British Government by W.R. Smith and Sons for £28,000, and placed within the Cornborough Shipping Group, who renamed her the *Cragness (1)*. Her first Master under her new ownership was Captain John Sneller and her Chief Engineer was Lewis Goule. In late 1923, in yet a further reorganisation of the group, she was transferred to the Oakwin SS Co Ltd., and renamed *Oakwin (1)*. Command was handed to Thomas Sydney Dixon. He had not long been in the company, and was making his maiden voyage as Master. Previously, he had served with a small London shipping company, Harris and Dixon, with whom, at one time, he had served as an apprentice aboard the *Wakefield*.

On 30th April, 1924, whilst heading North East, on passage from Durban, with a cargo of bunker coal for Perim, the *Oakwin (1)* ran aground on a barren stretch of the Portuguese East African Coast whilst navigating the Mozambique Channel. Fortunately, there were no casualties. However, expert opinion was that salvage was impractical, and she was declared a total constructive loss.

**Wismar**, 4686Gt. Blt by Neptun AG, Rostock for Deutsch-Australische Dampfs Ges.  
Launched July 1910

The *Wismar* was one of a growing number of German ships built specifically for the German and Near Continent / Australia trade, during the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. She was one of five new ships built for Deutsch-Australische Dampfs Ges., at this time, and she became a familiar sight in Australian waters over the next three years. She commenced her maiden voyage, from Sundsvall, Sweden, with a full cargo of timber, including deck-stowage, in November 1910, and reached Melbourne, via Suez, on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1911. Under the command of Captain Prohn, she had averaged 12kts for the whole voyage. Whilst on the Australian Coast, she was much admired for her modern construction, which included chilled cargo capacity, and particularly, for her cargo handling gear. Reportedly, the accommodation for Officers and Crew was of a very high standard.

She left Sydney on her return leg, on 8<sup>th</sup> March with a mixed cargo of general, that included wool, bagged wheat, zinc concentrates and tin clippings. On her voyage back to Europe, *Wismar* came to the aid of the Hamburg America line ship, the *Swakopmundo*. The latter had lost her rudder in heavy weather in the Bay of Biscay. Initially, the *Itzehoe* had taken her in tow, but due to hawsers breaking, she was

unable to complete the salvage and *Wismar* came to the rescue and towed the disabled ship into Plymouth.

In 1913, after many months of negotiations, a deal was made between Deutsch-Australische Dampfs Ges., and several parties in New Zealand, whereby a direct service between Hamburg / North Europe, and the Union would commence in the Summer of 1914; *Wismar* was the first vessel to be nominated for this service, and she left Hamburg on 25<sup>th</sup> June that year, with a cargo of agricultural commodities mostly consisting of superphosphates for the farming industry.

When she was built, the *Wismar* had been fitted with wireless telegraphy, and as a consequence, she received a cable on the 29<sup>th</sup> July, that war had been declared the previous day between the Central Powers and the Triple Entente. In the light of her destination to New Zealand, her owners gave Captain Schroder instructions as to how and where to proceed. Those instructions have never been fully revealed but it is known that she was instructed to search for another Deutsch-Australische Dampfs Ges., ship, known to be in southern waters but not fitted with WT., and to pass on instructions to her.

Some days out from Cape Town, the British immigrant ship, *Port Lincoln*, had tried to make contact with the *Wismar*, and the latter had initially approached her when both were in the Indian Ocean, but the *Wismar* subsequently turned away. That was the last that was heard of her, until it was confirmed in late September, that the *Wismar* was berthed in Banyuwangi, Batavia, and would be remaining there until further notice.

At the time her voyage to New Zealand had been curtailed in August 1914, there had been considerable resentment from New Zealand farmers and other consignees, who had already paid for their shipments. In fact, at least some of their goods were transferred from the *Wismar* in Java, and delivered by them to consignees in NZ.

Though, during the early stages of WW1, the Axis powers considered invading Holland, they never went that far and in consequence she remained neutral throughout the conflict, as to did her colonial territories including the Dutch East Indies. It was therefore no surprise to find that in the late Summer of 1914, many German vessels took refuge in and around the Island of Java. Nevertheless, it was standard procedure for their crews to immobilise the main engines once they reached there, thereby preventing their "forced" removal. In the case of the *Wismar*, she was to remain in Java for over five years.

Under the reparation settlements of WW1, in August 1919, the *Wismar* was taken over by the Shipping Controller, and BI were appointed to initially operate her on a commercial basis. Still berthed in Banyuwangi, Java, the vessel required considerable repair and maintenance to be carried out before she could set sail. From mid-September, she was formally advertised in the shipping press that she would load a cargo of grain in Freemantle, for the UK. As it happened, due to delays in leaving Java, and further engine problems on passage to Freemantle, she did not arrive there until 6<sup>th</sup> November, when she met up with the *Falls City*.

*Wismar* remained in Freemantle for six weeks and more repairs were carried out before she loaded a full cargo of grain for Europe, finally departing on 17<sup>th</sup> December. By way of confirmation that the world was back on the track to normality, during her Australian stay, the BI Master was fined for not putting out rat guards!!

BI continued to operate the ship until the summer of 1921, when the ship was purchased by Smiths on behalf of The St. Just SS Co. Ltd. Capt George Thomas Crerar took command of the ship in Port Talbot. The company paid the British Government a little over £45000 for the ship (about £1.3m) in today's money. However, in the light of the reparation clauses within the Peace Treaty of Versailles, it is not fully understood how individual shipowners were compensated for their war losses, but the fact that William Reardon Smith was created a Baronet in 1920, partly as a reward for his good works and partly for his contribution to war effort, compensation for shipping losses may have come in the form of a "gong" to shipowners!

**Riol**, 5359gt. Blt 1907 by Bremer Vulcan, Vegesak.

At the end of WW1, the British Government acquired two sister ships from the Roland Line; they were the *Riol* and the *Naimés*, and both had been built alongside each other in 1907, at the Bremer Vulcan yard, in Vegesack, the same yard that would build many WW2 u-boats, including, notoriously, *U-67* that sank several British merchantmen, including the *Bradford City* (3).

In 1921, the two vessels were transferred; *Riol* to W.R. Smith (initially in the name of Douglas Smith) before being transferred in the same year to the Leeds Shipping Co. and the *Naimés* to the Ornis Steamship Company (probably a branch of the Bristol Steamship Line) and became the *Woron*. In 1927 she was sold on to the Finns, and renamed *Kastelholm*.

For reasons that are now unknown, the *Riol*, unlike the other German vessels, did not undergo a name change, remaining as the *Riol* until she was sold in 1927. This seems even stranger when it is noted that in 1923, Roland Line acquired the ship *Arcturas*, and renamed her *Riol*. This must have been somewhat confusing, since both ships were trading world-wide for four years under the same name.

The first Master under the Smiths flag was Captain Lawson and her Chief Engineer was Nicholas Bastian, and her compliment included six apprentices; something that was common on all of the reparation ships.

The *Riol* was sold by Smiths in 1927 to the Yugoslavs, and she became the *Prerodovic*. She later returned to UK registry in 1940, when she was bought by the Crest Sg Co., of London and renamed *Fircrest*.

Ironically, the two sister ships became victims of WW2; the *Kastelholm* hit a British mine in 63.07N/11.18W on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1941 when on passage Petsamo-S America, with cellulose & paper and the *Fircrest* was torpedoed by *U-124* in 58.52N/6.34W on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1940 when on passage Wabana-Tees, with iron ore. *U-124* had also been built at the Bremen yard.



**Winfried**, 5771gt Blt 1911 by Frerichswerft, Einswarden.

Built in 1911 at the Frerichswerft yard at Einswarden for the Hamburg-Bremen Afrika line, *Winfried* at 5771 tons, had ample accommodation for passengers, and doubtless this was much occupied on her voyages to and from Walvis Bay and other Southern African ports during the years leading up to WW1. When hostilities did break out, there is no detail as to where the *Winfried* could be found, and she possibly spent the war years in the Baltic. However, like the majority of all the other German merchant ships, she was ceded to the allies in 1919, and taken over by the Ministry of Shipping.

Whatever her fate between 1914 and 1919, it was to be equally matched by the remainder of her life. Though the *Winfried* was renamed *Siam City* in 1921 and in similar fashion to the *Riol*, her previous owners, Hamburg-Bremer Afrika Line acquired a new vessel of the same name, and traded at the same time as the Smiths vessel. There were some familiar names amongst the officers who took her over; Captain Brice Thomas was Master, Potts was 1<sup>st</sup> Mate and Alfie Ward 3<sup>rd</sup> Mate. A 31 year old Harry Orr was 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer whilst amongst the 8 apprentices, was a 16 year old Charlie Exton. As usual, the crew was made up of several nationalities. Quite what Lloyds registry made of the naming system in those immediate post war years is something to ponder upon.

Smiths continued to operate her as the *Siam City* until 1927 when it was decided to sell her to the Yugoslavs. Her new owners, Jugoslavenska-Amerikanska Plovidba ad, renamed her *Gundulic* and still with that name she was transferred to Jugoslavenski Lloyd dd, the following year. For most of her time under the Yugoslav flag, her trading was mostly to the southern end of South America. On more than one occasion she would carry Jewish families from Dubrovnik to the Argentine. Then, on one fateful voyage to Chile in March 1934, she ran aground in the Straits of Magellan. She was in ballast, and on passage to the West coast of Chile to load saltpeter. Arriving off Punta Arenas, the Master declined the services of a Chilean Straits pilot, and took on the treacherous navigation himself. On 19<sup>th</sup> March, he decided to anchor for the night in the Sarmiento Channel, close to Puerto Bueno. In doing so, the bottom was severely ruptured and the vessel soon flooded leaving her completely stranded; there she remained for almost two years!

Fortunately for the *Gundulic*, though long since given up as a total loss, an enthusiastic Chilean Navy officer, devised an amazing salvage operation and two years later, after what can only be described as a cinema epic, the vessel was successfully refloated and towed to Punta Arenas. Doubtless after an equally epic refurbishment, the *Gundulic* was given another new life as a Chilean Naval Transport vessel and appropriately renamed the *Magallanes*. She was not, however, officially commissioned as such until 1943.

The illustrious ship served with the Chilean navy until 1955 when she was decommissioned and sold to Panamanian interests who renamed her *Sanbar*. The following year she was sold on again to similar interests and her name once more changed: this time to *Springwater*. Finally, her amazing days came to an end when, in August 1958, she arrived at La Spezia where she was broken up. If only ships could speak!

**Iserlohn**, 4667gt. Blt 1909 by Reiherstiegwerft, Hamburg.

*Iserlohn* had been built in 1909, at the Hamburg yard of Reiherstiegwerft for Deuchs Australische Line, and was a modern styled ship for her day. At 4667 gts and LPP 121.9 metres she had been fitted out specifically for the Antipodian trade, which appropriately included refrigerated capacity. Her maiden voyage from Hamburg to Australia was in late 1909, and she would thereafter average two and a half voyages a year.

In early August 1914, *Iserlohn* was discharging and loading on the Australian coast. On 5<sup>th</sup> of that month, whilst in Port Pirie, her Master Capt. Weiss, received orders from his owners to quit the port immediately and head for Java. In the subsequent days, she was sighted several times heading in that direction with her crew busily at work changing her funnel colours and other distinguishing features. She arrived in Batavia later in the month and would remain there until 1919. It was revealed much later, from official sources, that the Germans had made such plans for their Merchant Fleet, years before the conflict actually broke out.

After negotiations had been completed at Versaille, the *Iserlohn* was taken over by the British Ministry of Shipping, and management handed over to W R Smith and Co. After considerable repair and refit, she was bought by the company in 1921 and renamed *Union City* and put under the flag of the St. Just SS Co. Her first Master was the diminutive figure of sixty year old Captain John Davies and the Scotsman, Robert Drummond was the Chief Enginner. She had five apprentices on board, including two aged just 15.

*Union City* remained in the fleet until 1925 when she was sold to Finland, and became the *Wasaborg*. She continued under the Finnish flag for ten years before being sold on in 1935 to the Italian conglomerate Achile Lauro. She was then renamed *Erica*. In June 1940, whilst berthed in Liverpool, the *Erica* was seized and handed to the MOWD and appropriately renamed the *Empire Defiance*. It would be in that guise, that *Iserlohn* would survive another four remarkable war years, during which time she sailed in many allied convoys doing her bit to defeat the enemy. At the close of the hostilities of WW2, there is considerable irony in the fact that she was selected as a block ship for the D-Day landings and as such she was sunk, at Gooseberry 5, off Sword Beach. In 1951, she was successfully raised and towed to Belgium, only to sink again off Zebrugge. She was however, successfully raised once more and was finally broken up at Antwerp in September 1951.

As with several of the other German shipping companies, Deutch Australia Line had another *Iserlohn* built in 1922.

**Haimon**, 4924gt Blt 1911 by the Flensburgher yard in North Germany.

Built in 1911 by the Flensburgher yard for the Roland Line, the *Haimon* was another modern vessel of the age. What little information there is available about the *Haimon*, prior to 1919 is somewhat confusing. She was the third ship of that name under the German flag, and all three ships, albeit renamed, were trading well into the 1930's; the oldest, built in 1898, was not scrapped until 1961 when named the *Pirangy*

It is likely that *Haimon* (3), started her career trading with South America, in which case she may have remained in one of the “friendly” nations during the hostilities. After the Treaty negotiations, she was taken over by the Ministry of Shipping and subsequently handed to Smiths to operate and by October 1921, the company had paid in excess of £85,000 and added her to the fleet. Captain Henrichson took command and Francis Patterson was the Chief Engineer. Five apprentices had berths aboard her, and she boasted a multi-racial crew of twelve nationalities. October 1921 found her in Calcutta, and it is possible that repairs and refurbishment were carried out in that port. Soon afterwards, she was renamed the *Quebec City*.

Her time in the fleet was relatively brief, and in 1927, in similar fashion to the *Berengar*, she was sold back to her original owners, albeit now under the guise of North German Lloyd, and to confuse matters further, was given back her original name of *Haimon* ! She survived a further eight years before being broken up at Emden in July 1935.

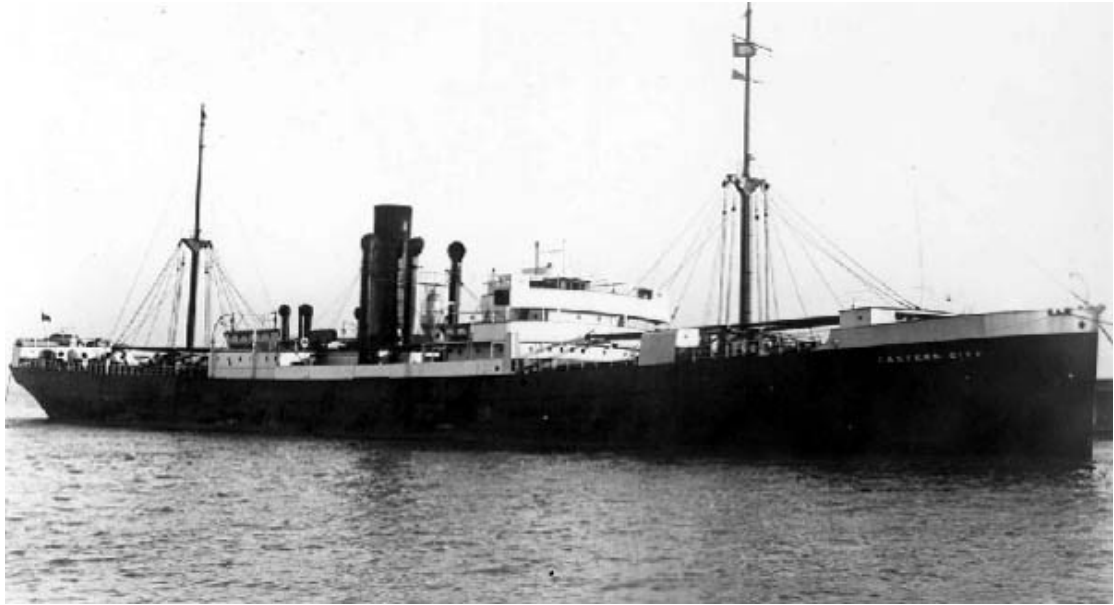
In the years that followed WW1, it is interesting to note, that of the nine ships that Smiths bought from the Government, the German companies that had previously owned them, with the exception of the Answald and the Gerfrid, continued to use their names within in their own revived fleets. As pointed out above, in the case of two of them, the *Berengar* and *Haimon* the original German owners actually bought the vessels back from Smiths and renamed them as they had been.

Smiths, on the other hand, apart from *Quebec City*, declined from using the “City” names of the ceded vessels for future tonnage. Conversely, of course, in the case of their own City ships that were lost, their names would reoccur on more that one occasion.

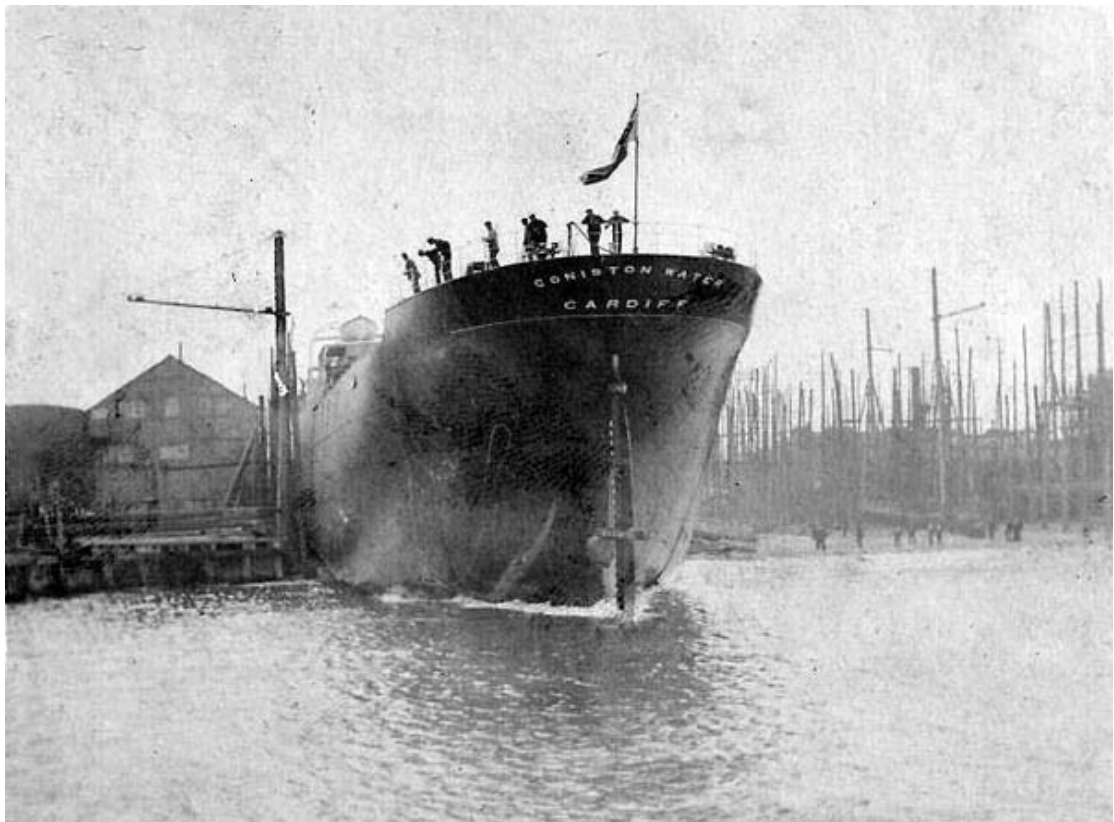
It did not take long for the allied powers to realise that such apparent harsh terms of the Treaty of Versailles would go a long way towards kindling the motives for WW2, and at the end of that conflict no such stringencies were forced upon Germany and the other axis nations, and it would be America and Britain that ensured that it would not happen.



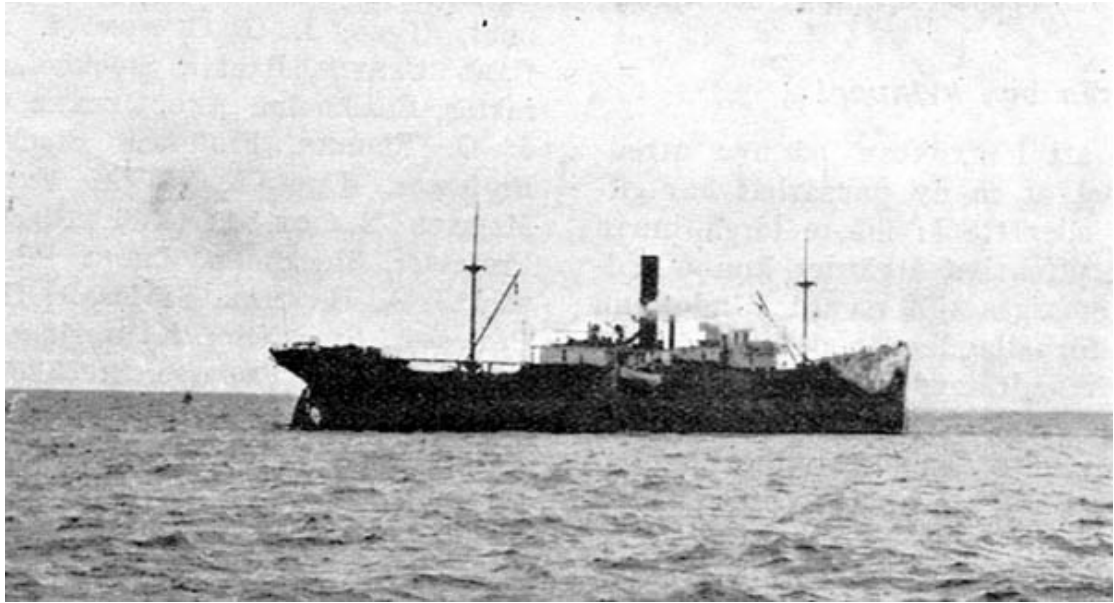
Indian City (1)



Eastern City (1)



Coniston Water

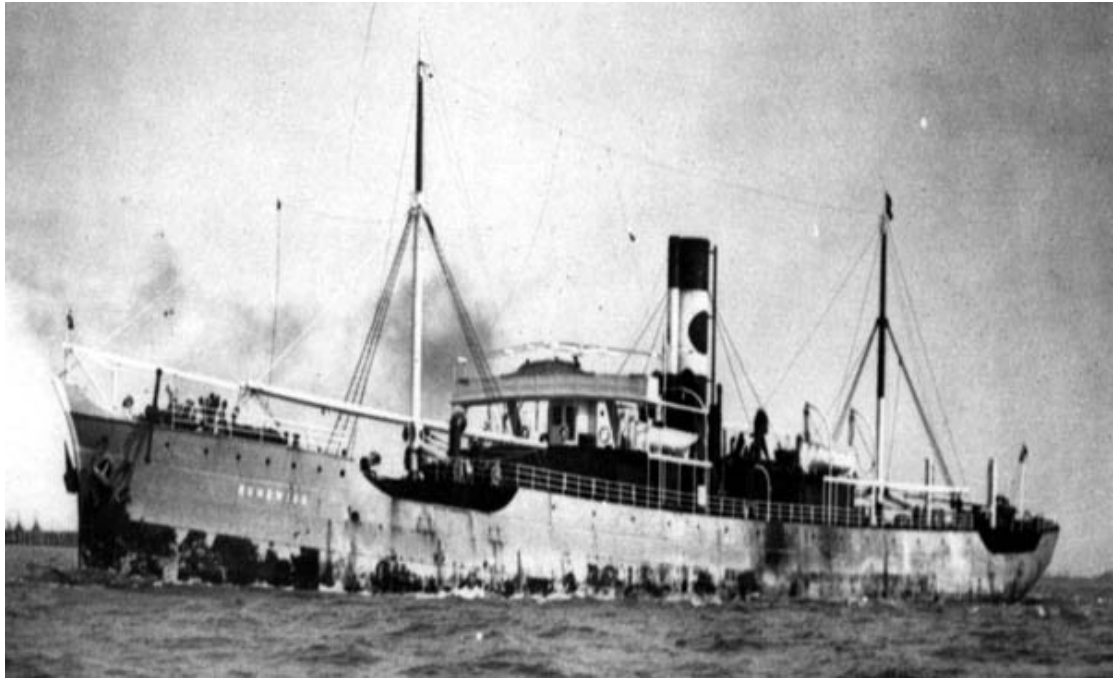


Bradford City (1)

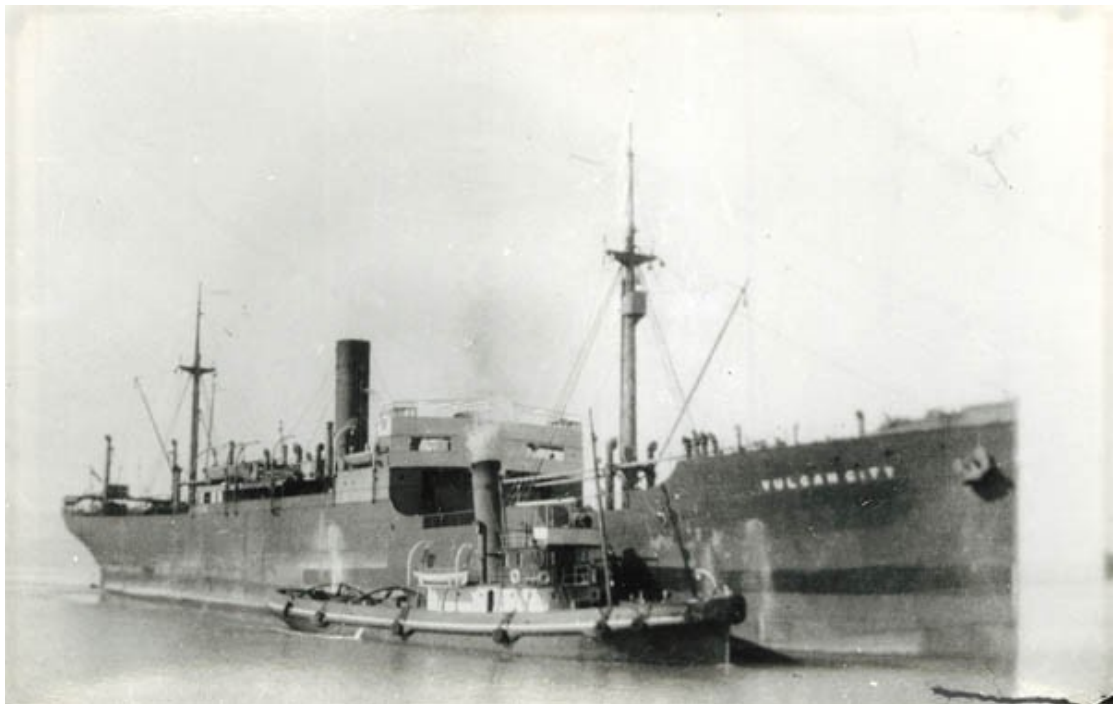


Falldon





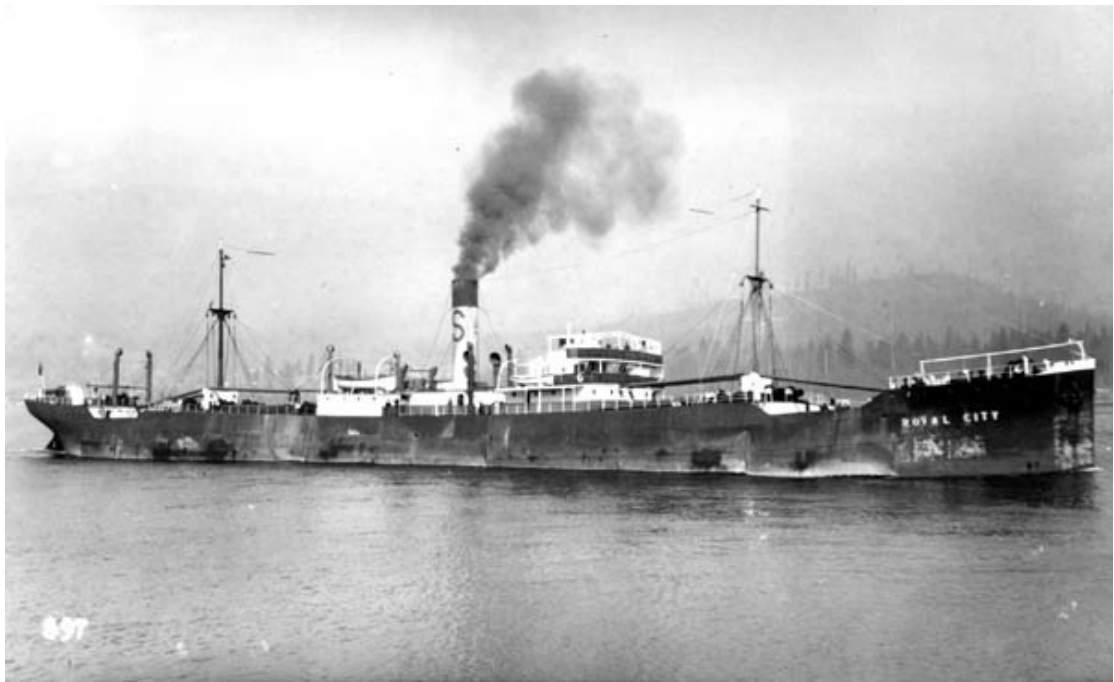
Runswick



Vulcan City ex-Answald

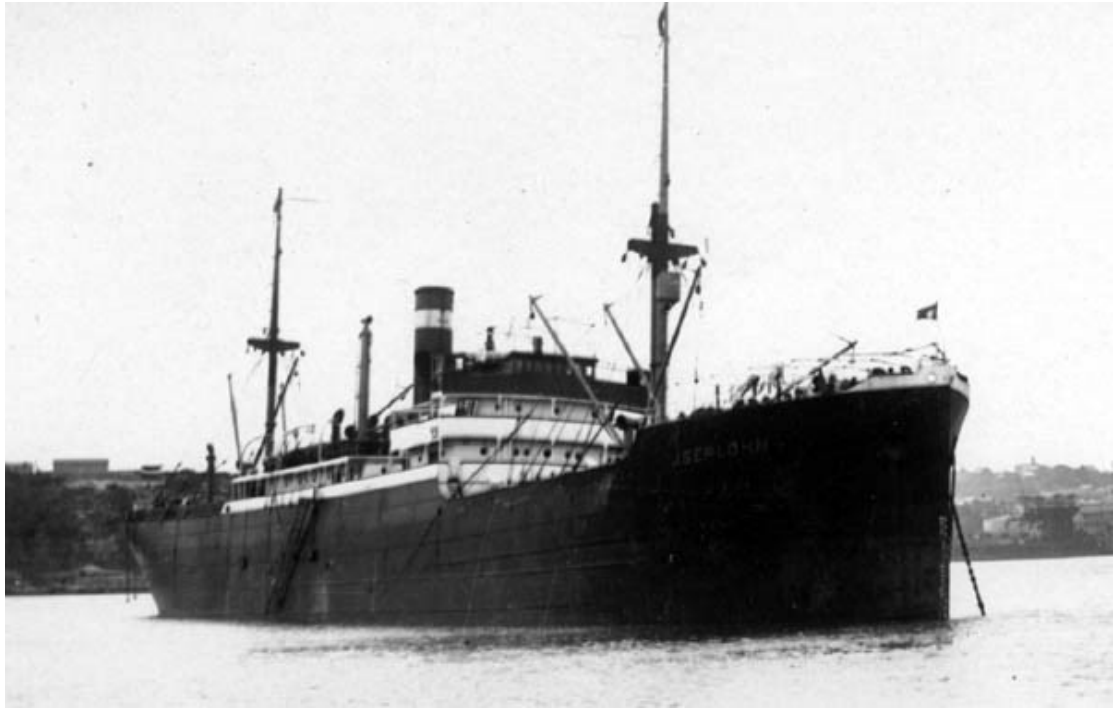


Berengar

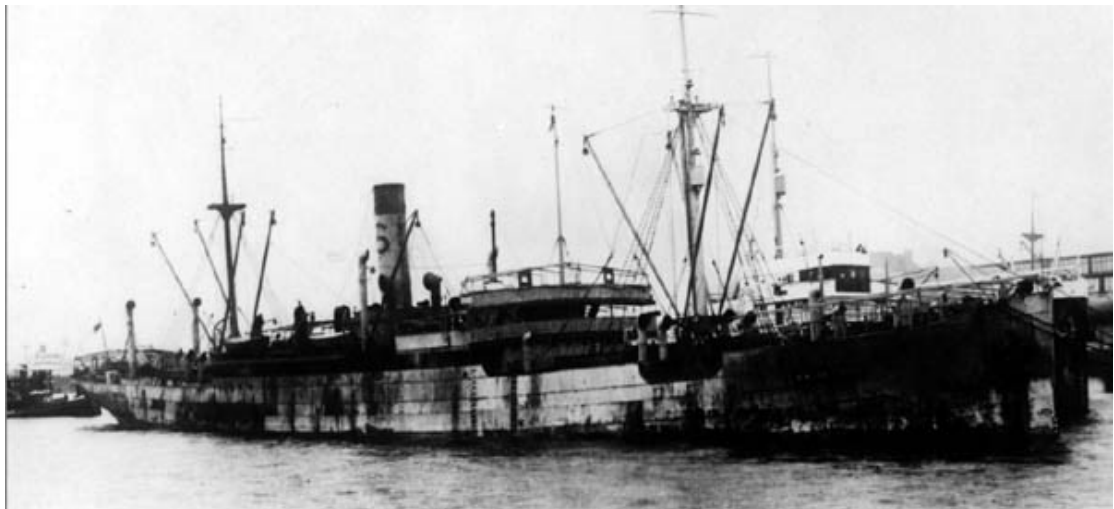


Haimon as Royal City

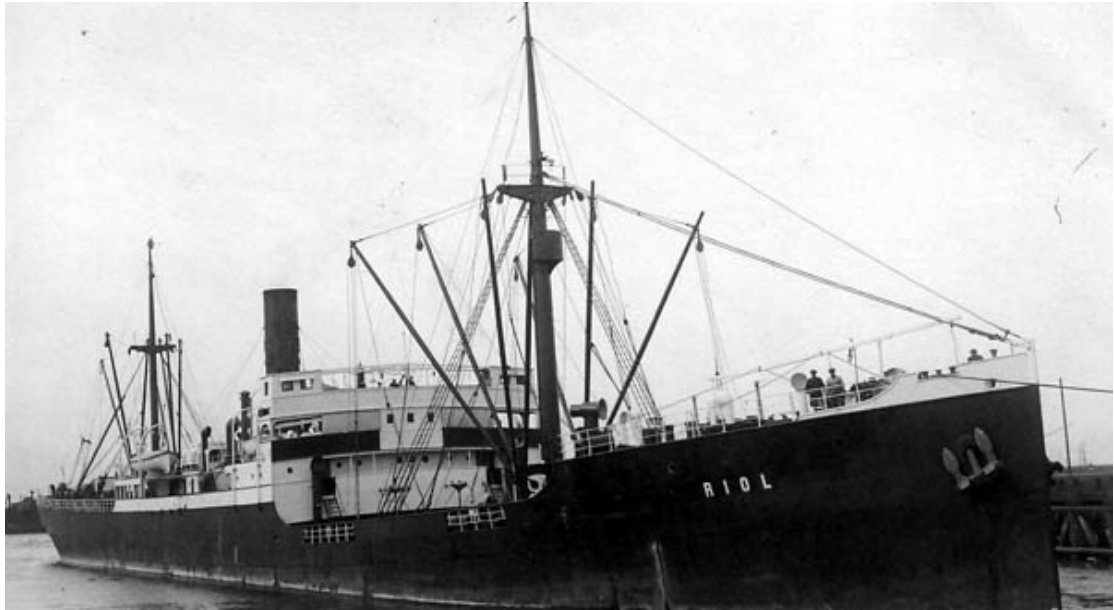




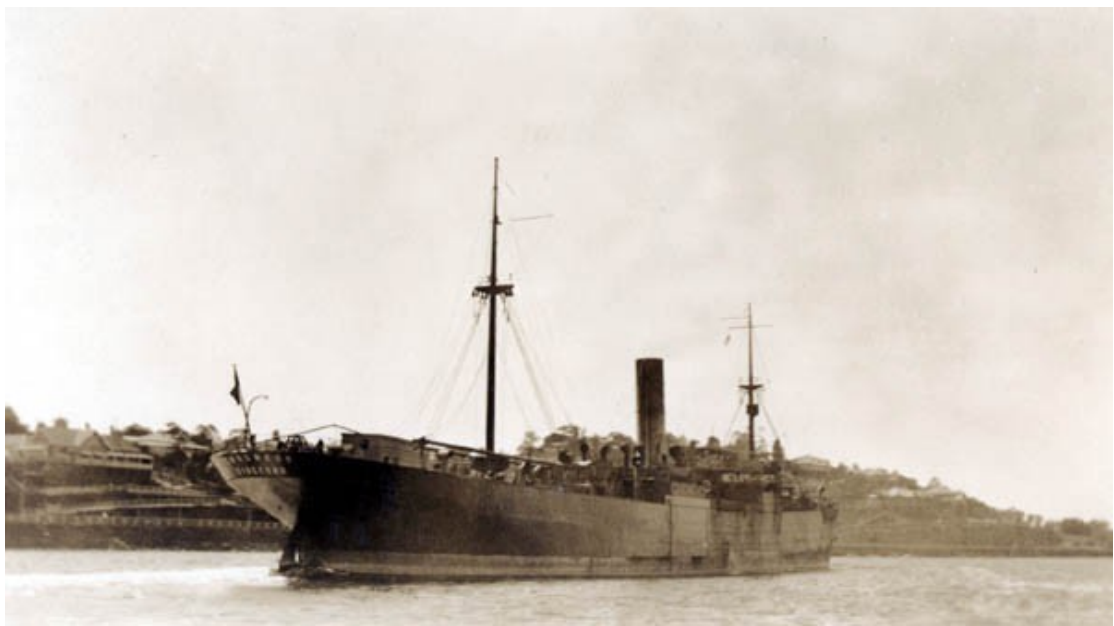
Iserlohn



Iserlohn as Union City



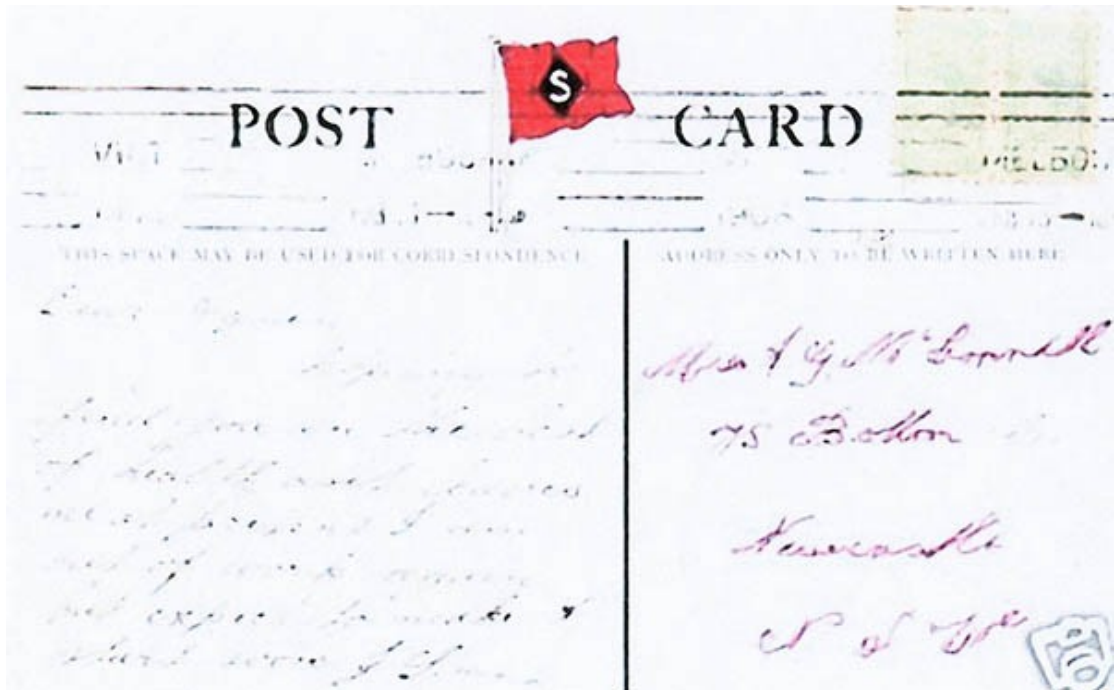
Riol



Schwaben as Cragness



Wismar as Truro City



House Flag of The Howard Smith Line

Mike Jones July 2014