

**MARITIME ARCHIVES & LIBRARY****INFORMATION SHEET 11****BLUE FUNNEL LINE**

Alfred and Philip Holt established the Blue Funnel Line in 1865 to run steamers, equipped with Alfred's own design of compound engines, from Liverpool to Asia. After initial difficulties the company achieved success when the Suez Canal was opened in 1869. The Suez reduced the long voyage and gave Blue Funnel steamships an advantage over their sailing contemporaries, to which the Suez Canal was not accessible.

In the 1870s the Holts developed the service further with the assistance of Butterfield and Swire, agents in Shanghai, and were instrumental in establishing the Far Eastern Conference in 1879.

Blue Funnel continued to expand, for example, into Sumatra and the tobacco trade, and later a Dutch subsidiary was established to run a direct service from Amsterdam to Indonesia. By 1901 a direct UK to Australia service commenced.

By 1911 Blue Funnel Line had acquired ownership of numerous previous competitors and owned between sixty and seventy ships. The First World War did, however, cost Blue Funnel twelve vessels and the 1920s witnessed such reduced demand for the Australia service that a joint service was established with the White Star Line. In the 1930s the Holts acquired control of the Elder Dempster Line (1932), the Glen and Shire Lines (1935) and the Straits Steam Ship Co.

The Second World War proved extremely costly for the Blue Funnel Line, with a loss of forty-one ships. Peacetime services utilised Liberty Ships for many sailings until A-class replacements were delivered between 1946 and 1953.

The Blue Funnel Line maintained its dominant position in Asia until the 1970s, their stability due, in part, to participation in the Overseas Container Lines consortium, set up in 1965. Blue Funnel changed its name to Ocean Transport and Trading Co. in 1972. Further developments included the takeover of the Cory Fuel Distribution Group, the creation of Ocean Inchcape Ltd., the operating of off-shore supply vessels and the purchase of bulkers, tankers, gas carriers and the Barber Blue Sea transpacific service.

**The Ocean Archive**

The Ocean Archive collection offers a sound body of records regarding the development of the parent company, Blue Funnel Line, which extends back over a hundred years. General arrangements of many Blue Funnel ships can be located in the Maritime Archives' Plan Collection.

The Ocean Archive also contains the records of numerous shipping companies including: African Steamship Co.; British & African S.N. Co.; China Mutual S.N. Co.; William Cory & Son Ltd.; Elder Dempster Lines; Glen and Shire Lines; Henderson Line and Straits Steam Ship Co., Ltd. Researchers are advised to refer to the *Guide to the Records of Merseyside Maritime Museum, Vol. 1*, or to the relevant information sheet, in order to obtain the historical background and summary of records for the shipping company of interest.

The catalogue relating to the Ocean Archive is in file E7, located in the Maritime Archives & Library Searchroom. The collection was originally catalogued and indexed by the company and so the primary index utilised is not related to the archival structure or consistent with our usual archive standards. Therefore the location of records can be problematic. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that this substantial collection can be re-catalogued or re-indexed in the near future.

### **Secretarial (Ocean Steam Ship Co.)**

Minute Books, Annual Meetings, with Reports and Accounts, 1866-1955  
Managers' Minute Books, 1902-1980  
Directors' Meetings Minutes, 1957 on  
Finance Committee, 1973-1976  
Articles of Association, 1865  
Annual Reports and Accounts, 1965-1966  
Filmed Annual Reports, 1976-1980  
Investment Papers, 1910-1976  
Register of Members, 1903-1956  
Documents, re legislation (includes A. Holt's evidence before Board of Trade), 1874  
Requisition of Vessels, World War I  
Legal Opinions, Judgements, etc., 1942-1958  
Merger Letters, A. Holt & Co./Glen Line, 1935

### **Financial**

Ledgers, 1853-1914  
Prime Costs of Vessels, 1921-1963  
Final Costs, 1913-1917, 1944-1952  
Birkenhead Accounts Book, 1913-1957  
Freight Ledger, 1938-1943  
Ships Ledgers, Voyage Books, 1897-1902  
Managers' Commissions, Depreciation Statements, 1908-1947  
Captains' Commissions, ditto, 1934-1947

### **Management**

Personal files relating to leading personalities in the firm's management, including members of the Holt family, Bruce Glasier, Sir Sydney Jones, Sir John Hobhouse, Sir John Nicholson, Sir Lindsay Alexander and R.H. Thornton, c.1870-1980.

Reports and notes by senior managers on various subjects, for example, UK south coastal ports, Australian and Far Eastern ports, dock labour, Dutch ports, stevedorage and air cargo economics. Additional notes regarding various management issues including ship management, security, fleet operation, Rochdale Report, Suez Canal, China visitors and cruise ships, c.1915-1985.

### **Correspondence**

Mainly regarding overseas property and affairs. Additional material includes early letters, references to Singapore, Melbourne, Kowloon, Indonesia, Shanghai and Yokohama (earthquake). Information on South Africa, Chinese crews, Suez Canal and trading in World War II, c.1870-1980 is also included.

## Speeches and Addresses

1950 - 1956

### Staff

Directions to Captain Middleton, master on the *Agamemnon's* first voyage, 1866.  
Shore staff records (including overseas), 1955-1980.  
Papers on office organisation; includes Staff Handbook.  
References to principals of Aulis Training Establishment and appointments of senior staff - shore staff files, 1872-1977.  
*Nestorian* Association Minute Books, 1962-1975.  
Salary and Establishment Surveys, 1969, 1972, etc.  
Deck Officers Registers, c.1890-c.1920  
Officers' Reminiscences, etc., c.1880-1960  
Engineers' Records, 1888-1949  
Stewards Records, 1914-1957  
Carpenters' Records, c.1920 onwards  
Chinese Crews, Miscellaneous Papers, c.1945-c.1970  
Seamen's Strike, 1960-1961  
Medical Staff Records, 1940-c.1960  
Wages Books, 1868-1967 (one of the finest surviving series)  
Papers, re Training, c.1960-c.1970  
Superannuation and Pension Records, 1910-1977

### Cargo

Pooling Rules, 1913  
Agreements, Australian, Conference and Trade, c.1890-c.1960  
Minutes, Far Eastern and Indonesian Trade Division, 1973-1975  
Marine Committee Minutes, 1974-1979  
Far Eastern Conference Minutes, 1918-1940  
Papers, re Services to Japan, 1872  
Stevedoring Agreements, 1912-1951  
Charter Parties, 1958-1961  
America, China, Australia, Far East, Various Papers, re Cargo Services  
Stowage Plans, 1924-1975  
Port Log Books, 1960-1975  
Bills of Lading (selected), c.1940-c.1970  
Sample Manifestos, 1972-1976  
Movements of Freight, 1901-1919  
Blue Funnel Tonnage, 1923-1964  
Voyage Results, 1935-1949  
Steamer Earnings, 1876-1967  
Carryings and Earnings, 1930-1968  
Outward Cargo Tonnage and Net Freight, Summary, c.1950-c.1968  
Freight Statistics, c.1950-c.1960  
Freight Tariffs for areas in the Middle and Far East, incomplete voyage, 1937-1972

### Passengers

Far Eastern Passenger Conference Agreements, 1954  
Advertising, 1938  
Enquiry into the Future of BH & Class of Ships, 1962-1963  
Passenger Literature, 1892  
Cruise Brochures and Passenger Lists, 1923-1924  
Passengers aboard *Phemius* when lost, 1943  
Chinese Passengers, Piracy, 1928  
Papers, re Pilgrims to Mecca (includes photographs), 1929-1961

## **Trade (General)**

Air Cargoes, 1966-c.1975

Suez Canal, 1936-1964

Tallow, uranium, latex, tobacco, Tasmanian apples, copra, frozen cargoes, carbon black, timber, rubber, c.1950-1980

Containerisation, c.1951-1967

German Agencies, c.1921

## **Fleet**

Ships Journals, 1866-1974 (virtually complete)

Other Records, are extremely extensive (1910 onwards), particularly for the Second World War and post-War

Wireless Code Books, pre-1938

Shipbuilding Records, c.1885-1978, includes drawings, specifications, agreements, papers written on specific issues and engine arrangements, c.1885-1895

Papers, re *Phemius* Typhoon Salvage, 1932

Fires on Various Ships, 1953-1969

Suez Canal Problems, 1964-1968

Incidents in China, 1949, 1968, 1970

## **Publicity**

Press Reports, 1944-1977

Publicity Material and Ephemera, c.1920-c.1970, includes calendars, diaries and menus

Sailing Cards and Notices, 1866-c.1970

Promotional Films, 1965-1968

## **Property**

Papers, re company property, Birkenhead, Liverpool and Overseas, 1912-1980

## **House Magazines**

*Halfdeck*, Midshipman's Magazine, 1956-1966

*Staff Bulletin*, 1940-1967

*Ocean*, 1967-1979

*Ocean Mail*, 1970-c.1985

*Nestorian*, 1984 to date (Library)

## **Photographs**

Ships, Directors, Captains, Port Scenes, c.1860-c.1980

Please request a member of staff to search the following ACCESS databases:

MMOCEANPHOSHIPNAME

MMOCEANPHOSHIPOWNER

MMOCEANPHOSTAFF

MMOCEANPHOVIEW

## **Tape Recordings**

Interviews with long serving staff members, c.1970

## Other Unofficial Records

There is a large amount of this material, including the following personal documents:

- The diary of Captain Kidd, first master of the *Ajax*, 1845;
- The diary of Philip Wearing, Steward on *Nester*, 1875;
- The reminiscences of G.A. Pridgeon, a dock worker, 1887-1940

These records also include virtually all books, articles and papers, published and unpublished, which were relevant to the Ocean Company history.

## Bibliography

LE FLEMING, H.M. *Ships of the Blue Funnel Line*. Southampton: Adlard Coles Ltd., 1961.

BEATTIE, Neil R. *East with a Blue Funnel*. Devon: Merlin Books, 1985.

CLARKSON, John, HARVEY, Bill, FENTON, Roy. *Blue Funnel Line*. Preston: Ships in Focus, 1998.

HAWS, Duncan, *Merchant Fleets 6: Blue Funnel Line*. Hereford: TCL Publications, 1988.

FALKUS, Malcolm, *The Blue Funnel Legend - A History of the Ocean Steam Ship Company, 1865-1973*. London: MacMillan, 1990.

*The Blue Funnel Line - Passenger Steamers*. Liverpool: Alfred Holt & Co., 1924.

HYDE, Francis E. *Blue Funnel - A History of Alfred Holt and Company of Liverpool, 1865-1914*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1957.