NATIONAL MUSEUMS LIVERPOOL

MARITIME ARCHIVES & LIBRARY

INFORMATION SHEET 18

THOMAS & JOHN BROCKLEBANK

Brocklebank is one of the oldest firms in the world of merchant shipping, dating back to 1801 when the two sons of the founder of the business took control following their father's death. The founder was Captain Daniel Brocklebank, a master mariner and shipbuilder, whose shipbuilding enterprise was first established at Sheepscutt (near Portland, Maine, North America) in 1770. Brocklebank was a Loyalist and when the Revolution took place in 1775 he sailed back to Whitehaven in his own ship, *Castor*. The Letter of Marque for the *Castor*, dated 1779, is the earliest document in the collection.

Captain Daniel Brocklebank restarted his shipbuilding business at Whitehaven in 1785 and the plans and specifications of his yard's products from 1792 are one of the most important sources for 18th and early 19th century merchant ships. By 1795 his fleet consisted of eleven vessels totalling 1,750 tons.

In 1801 Daniel Brocklebank died and the firm became Thomas and John Brocklebank, later shortened to Thos. and Jno. Brocklebank. The firm suffered somewhat in the Napoleonic Wars but by 1809 it was sending ships as far as South America. By 1816 the fleet totalled seventeen ships.

In 1815 the new ship *Princess Charlotte's* maiden voyage to Calcutta was a successful venture following the end of the East India Company's monopoly. Her return freight was estimated to realise more than £10,000 in profits for her owners and other merchants. This trade was eventually to eclipse Brocklebank's South American and China trades.

In 1819 Thomas Brocklebank moved to Liverpool and an office was opened there in 1822. His brother John remained in Whitehaven to run the Bransty shipyard and the ropery. In 1829 Brocklebanks began trading to China but on an irregular basis.

In 1831 John Brocklebank was killed by a fall from his horse, while trying to avoid a small child who ran into his path. Daniel Bird became manager of the Whitehaven shipyard. In the same year Thomas Fisher Brocklebank moved to Liverpool to assist his uncle, Thomas Brocklebank, in the family business. In 1843 Thomas would make his nephew, Thomas and cousin, Ralph (later to become Chairman of the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board), partners in the firm. Thomas (Jnr.) was politically and socially active and became a Baronet in 1885.

By 1844 the fleet had reached its highest number, comprising fifty vessels. The Whitehaven shipyard was closed in 1865 and larger iron and later steel sailing ships were bought mainly from Harland & Wolff, Belfast. Their first steamer, *Ameer*, was not purchased until 1889.

In 1911 Brocklebanks ceased to be a family business. A substantial shareholding was sold to Sir Percy, Frederic and Denis Bates (grandsons of Sir Edward Bates) who had built up an Indian trading firm and were major Cunard shareholders. In the same year Cunard acquired the Anchor Line, which retained its independence and in turn gained a controlling interest in Brocklebanks in 1912. The Bates brothers, Sir Alfred Booth and Sir Thomas Royden, strengthened the business under the chairmanship of Sir Aubrey Brocklebank. In 1916 the

Well Line was acquired and in 1919 Cunard bought out the Brocklebank and Bates shares and the final one-fifth shareholding held by Anchor Line was acquired in 1940.

The firm experimented with motor ships including, for a short time, the first all-welded vessel, the coaster *Fullagar* of 1920. The shipping depression of the 1930s saw a reduction in the size of four of its ships in 1935 - a unique operation at the time.

Sixteen out of twenty-six ships were lost in the Second World War including the *Malakand*, which blew up with an ammunition cargo in Liverpool in 1941. The fleet was rebuilt and services extended because of the decline of business at Calcutta after Indian Independence in 1948. In 1964 they bought H.E. Moss & Co., tanker owners, and in 1967 Cunard reorganised its business. Cunard Line became responsible for the passenger business and a new Cunard Brocklebank company took on all cargo services.

However, the 1970s witnessed further deterioration for the financial situation of the company. The last two Brocklebank liveried ships were sold in 1983.

The Brocklebank collection is varied and includes not only shipping business but also family papers and research notes on the history compiled by J.S. Rees which were used by J.F. Gibson for the company history. There are also excellent photographs and, under the care of the Merseyside Maritime Museum, Maritime History Department, paintings (especially extensive for the sailing ships 1815-1891) and models (1854-1946) which make the collection one of the most outstanding and of national importance.

Thomas and John Brocklebank Archive

Administration

Minutes of Directors Meetings, 1898-1963
Annual General Meetings, 1918-1965
Executive Committee, 1912-1961

Whitehaven Letterbooks, 1801-1841, 1852-1863
Liverpool Private Letterbooks, 1888-1907
Letterbook of Denis H. Bates, 1912-1919

Letter of Thomas Harrison to Captain Daniel Brocklebank, re privateering and new ships, 1782

Business Letters, 1825-1829, 1861-1864

File, re Thomas Brocklebank's chairmanship of Liverpool, London and Globe Insurance Co., 1874

Legal

Lease of Brantsy Ropeworks, Whitehaven, 1775
Conveyance of Isaac Littledale & Co.'s Ropeworks, Whitehaven, to Daniel Brocklebank, 1749

Agreements for the sale and construction of ships, 1810, 1811, 1812

Partnership Agreements, 1843 & 1892
Articles of Association, 1898-1948

Seal Book, 1898-1948

Heads of Agreement between T. & J. Brocklebank and Anchor Line, 1912, with Correspondence, Accounts and Articles of Association, 1907-1922

Correspondence, re the liquidation of Anchor Line, 1935-1942
Memorandum and Articles of Association of Well Line, and Agreement of Sale to T. & J. Brocklebank, 1916

Papers, re war compensation against the Ministry of Shipping, 1921, and Inland Revenue, 1923-1925

Investment

Scrip Book, 1898 - 1912
Debenture Holders' Minute Book, 1912

Companies Act Registers: 1900
1903-1906
1911-1919
1948

Register of Mortgages and Debentures, 1907-1921
Register of Transfers - Debenture Issue, 1907-1921
Register of Applications and Allotments, 1911-1945

Correspondence with the Treasury, re Shares, 1951

Finance

Ledgers, Whitehaven, 1808-1855
Cash Books, Whitehaven, 1833-1860
Cashier's Office Letterbooks, 1882-1905
Loan Book, 1900-1924
Register of Bills Payable, 1929-1947
Private Ledger, 1938-1943
Valuation of Assets, 1921-1954

Correspondence and Accounts, re Excess Profits Duty - obsolescence claims, shareholdings, profit and loss accounts - Income Tax, 1920-1931

Management

Reports: Japanese and Korean Ports, 1908
Bombay, 1920-1921
Suez, Aden and Calcutta, 1931
Calcutta Agency, 1933-1934

Reports: Visit to India and Sri Lanka, 1948-1949
French, U.S. and Canadian Ports, 1959
Reports on Overseas Visits, 1950 & 1960

File, re Calcutta Conference, 1916

Correspondence and Reports on the Liverpool Steamship Owners Association, 1931-1937

Report: Indian Railway Cargo, 1897
Correspondence, 1925
Report of Disagreement, re Calcutta berths, 1922-1934

Continental Conference Agreement, 1930
Chairman's Notes on British Shipping Speech, 1936
Report: Shipping Conference, 1944
National Maritime Board - Rates of Pay, 1947
Memorandum of Meeting, 1950
Correspondence on Malpractice, 1958

Correspondence on Calcutta Conference, 1957-1959
Reports: Chamber of Shipping
Liverpool Steamship Owners Association, 1960

Operational

Letter of Marque to Daniel Brocklebank for privateering against Spain in the *Castor*, 1779

Store Book, 1895-1899
Notebooks of ship movements, 1907-1932
Schedule, Anchor - Brocklebank Line, 1912
Notebooks of Voyage Details, 1931-1950
Anchor - Brocklebank Charter Parties, 1911-1936

Correspondence, re berthing arrangements of T. & J. Harrison and T. & J. Brocklebank at Liverpool, 1950

Staff

Whitehaven Apprentices Book, 1809-1840
Liverpool Apprentices Books, 1820-1897
Officers and Apprentices Books, 1851-1900
Officers and Engineers Books, 1891-1923

Sea Staff Index, 1890-1920

Seaman's Apprenticeship Indenture, 1787
Letter of Instruction to the Captain of the *Lord Althorp*, 1851
General Rules for Commanders, Officers and Chief Engineers, 1889

Volume of Crew Lists, 1938

Merchant Navy Pension Fund Correspondence, 1939-1961

Documents of Indian Seaman's Home, Mere Hall, Wirral, includes accounts, plans, correspondence, photographs

Fleet

Log of: *Princess Charlotte*, 1826
Ariel, 1831
Boyton, 1841

Specifications for building steel and iron sailing ships, 1884-1885
Hull Specification: single-screw steamer, 1898
Specification for steel twin-screw cargo steamer, 1911

Agreement for construction and sale of steamships: 1913-1917
1919
1924 & 1925
1937 & 1939

Legal Protests, re damage or loss to vessels, 1939-1940 & 1955
File: values of ships, 1921-1935

Whitehaven Shipping

Dimensions of ships built and repaired, 1792-1841
Shipyard Ledgers, 1818-1865
Shipyard Journals, 1832-1865
Original Plans of Ships: *Nestor*, 1792
Everest, 1863

World Wars I and II

Reminiscences of sea staff during World War I

Files relating to losses, staff experiences, awards for gallantry
Record of decorations and recommendations, 1939-1945

Official protests against the torpedoing of Brocklebank vessels, 1939-1945

Radio Logs of ships, 1944-1945
Confidential Logs, 1941-1945

Log of MV *Samovar* towing MV *Trocas*, 1943

File containing:
Application for Trading Licence, 1948
Certificate of Tonnage Replacement Scheme, 1941
Ministry of Shipping Agreement, 1940
Wartime Dock Labour Correspondence, 1941
Fire Prevention Guidelines, 1942 - 1943

Photographs

Series of ship photographs
Four photograph albums
Set of Photographic Copies of Paintings

Historical Notes

Fleets, 1770-1962
Voyage Details, 1770-1901
Calcutta Trade, 1814-1933
Sailings to China, 1829-1911
Sailings to Bombay, 1833-1885
Marine Superintendents in Liverpool, 1836-1934

Building specifications, launches, fast passages, 1834-1858

Brocklebank Family

Copies of Parish Register Entries, 1734-1779
Epitome of Will of Thomas Brocklebank, 1843

Licence for Thomas Fisher to take the name "Brocklebank", 1845
Official appointments of Thomas Brocklebank, 1864-1869
Papers, re Baronetcy, 1885

Obituary volume, Sir Aubrey Brocklebank, 1929

Bibliography

GIBSON, John Frederic. *Brocklebanks, 1770-1950, Vols. I & II*. Liverpool: Henry Young & Sons Ltd., 1953.

HAWS, Duncan. *Merchant Fleets, Thos. & Jno. Brocklebank*. TCL Publications, 1994.

HOLLET, D. *From Cumberland to Cape Horn. The Sailing Fleet of Thomas and John Brocklebank of Whitehaven and Liverpool, 1770-1900*. London: Fairplay Publications, 1984.