

First World War Mercantile Marine Losses when carrying Jute Related Cargoes



Although the red poppy at First World War Remembrance events in November each year has strong connotations with the fields of Flanders and the battlefield turmoil encountered there, the Merchant Navy, or Mercantile Marine as they were then called, played their own very important part in the war. Reading the events of commemoration planned by the school this year and particularly the poppies to be fashioned from jute, which for many years, including the war, was a key aspect of Dundee's industry, it should be remembered that jute had to be imported by sea. It is therefore appropriate also to

remember the Mercantile Marine which lost a very significant number of ships and personnel to the war at sea, many of which carried jute related cargoes.

Roger Burns, *Class of 64*, investigates the loss of ships and their crews which were carrying jute, and/or jute related merchandise and/or jute machinery. Research has been limited to on-line only – visits to the National Archives would probably give a more comprehensive picture. Throughout the war, cargoes were most often described as "general cargo" which could and did comprise a great variety of things but despite this, multiple files were identified on-line where jute and jute related items were mentioned as an insured cargo lost to a maritime event. Many of these files included the Beneficiary of insured losses and where such an organisation was clearly involved with jute in some manner, that loss has been included in the following table. In this way, the ships lost when conveying these cargoes have been identified and tabulated but there will of course be many other ships which carried jute and survived. All the ships listed were British except for the SS *Prunelle* which was Norwegian but sailing under the British flag.

The birthplace or address of the names of crew lost from these ships show that, as expected, crews were drawn from many nationalities, but none were identified as originating from Dundee.

| Ship Name | ON | Type | Use | Construction | | | Loss | | | | | BoT Insurance Payments | |
|--|--|------|-----|----------------------------------|-----------------|--------|--------------------------|---------------|---|------------------------------|--------------------|---|--------------------|
| | | | | Launch | Where | GRT | When | How | Where | En Route From/To | Survivors / Lost | Total Value / (Nr items) – in year 19xx | Approx. value 2018 |
| <i>Aaro</i> | 128175 | SS | P/C | 1909 | Hull | 2,603 | 1/08/1916 | T | 25 miles SW of Stavanger | Hull/Christiania | Yes/3 | £29 (1)-17 | £1.9k |
| <i>Aburi</i> | 123765 | SS | C | 18/10/1906 | Belfast | 3,730 | 17/04/1917 | T | 125 miles N.W. of Tory Island | Liverpool/West Africa | Yes/25 | £29 (1)-17 | £1.9k |
| <i>Amazon*</i> | 120715 | RMS | P | 24/02 1906 | Belfast | 10,037 | 15/03/1918 | T | 30 miles NxW of Malin Head | Liverpool/Buenos Aires | All/0 | £6,096 (2)-18 | £329k |
| <i>Ancona</i> | 95205 | SS | P/C | 25/06/1888 | Leith | 1.168 | 28/05/1917 | T | 110 miles WSW of Ushant | Falmouth/Lisbon | No/26 | £8,064 (4)-18 | £435.6k |
| <i>Assyria</i> | 113927 | SS | P/C | 26/11/1900 | Glasgow | 6,370 | 26/08/1917 | T | 34 miles NW xN from Tory Island | Glasgow/New York | All/0 | £4,109 (7)-17 | £271k |
| <i>Bhamo</i> | 124249 | SS | P/C | 24/12/1907 | Dumbarton | 5,244 | 26/08/1917 11/10/1938 | M(D) Scrap | Cape Aghulas Dalmuir | Unknown. Breakers. | Assumed Unknown | £960 (2)-18 | £51.8k |
| <i>Bretwalda</i> | 129771 | SS | C | 31/03/1911 | Sunderland | 4,037 | 13/12/1916 | T | 220 miles ExS of Malta | Calcutta/Boulogne | All/0 | £189,885 (3)-17 | £12.523m |
| <i>California</i> | 124230 | SS | P | 9/07/1907 | Glasgow | 8,668 | 7/02/1917 | T | 38 miles WxS of Fastnet | New York/Glasgow | 160/43 | £850 (1)-17 | £56k |
| <i>City of Baroda</i> | 131344 | SS | C | 29/04/1911 | Glasgow | 5,054 | 4/06/1917 | T | 90 miles NW1/2N of Tory Island | Liverpool/Calcutta | U/7 | £15,160 (4)-17 | £1m |
| <i>City of Lucknow</i> | 140515 | SS | C | 1917 (Completed in June 1917) | West Hartlepool | 8,293 | 21/12 1917 | T | 50 miles NExN1/2N of Cani Rocks. (Off Tunis) | Glasgow/Calcutta | All/0 | £34,720 (22)-18 | 31.875m |
| <i>Civilian</i> | 115312 | SS | C | 11/07/1902 | Glasgow | 7,871 | 6/10/1917 | T | 15 miles north of Alexandria | Liverpool/Calcutta | U/ 2 | £1,462 (5)-17 | £96k |
| <i>Clan Cameron*</i> (Ex <i>Clan MacRae</i>) | 113919 | SS | C | 11/10/1900 | Sunderland | 3,595 | 22/12/1917 | T | 23 miles SW by S ½ S from Portland Bill | Chittagong/London & Dundee | All/0 | £6,130 (1)-18 | £331k |
| <i>Clan Shaw</i> | 115691 | SS | C | 10/05/1902 | Sunderland | 3,943 | 23/01/1917 | M | 8 miles NE of St Andrews at entrance to River Tay | Chittagong & Calcutta/Dundee | U/2 | £54,480 (7)-17 £780 (14)-21 | £3.593m £36.3k |
| <i>Collegian</i> | 110534 | SS | C | 30/11/1898 | Glasgow | 7,237 | 20/10/1917 | T | 100miles NWxN1/4N of Alexandria | Liverpool/Calcutta | U/1 | £1,050 (2)-17 | £69k |
| <i>Demerara</i> | 132024 | RMS | P | 21/12/1911 | Belfast | 11,484 | 1/07/1917 | T(D) | 6 miles W of Sables d'Olonne | Liverpool/Buenos Aires | U/1 | £880 (4)-18 £34 (1)-19 | £47.5k £0.9k |
| <i>Devonian*</i> | 113399 | SS | OL | 2/04/1900 | Belfast | 10,418 | 21/08/1917 | T | 20 miles NE from Tory Island | Liverpool/Boston | 131/3 | £1,696 (2)-17 | £111.9k |
| <i>Dewerara</i> | Details not found. Just possible that it was a spelling error in the National Archives meaning to be <i>Demerara</i> ? | | | | | | | | | | | £12,500 (2)-18 | £675k |
| <i>Esneh</i> | 127925 | SS | C | 28/07/1908 | Sunderland | 3,247 | 31/05/1917 | T | 190 miles NWxW of Tory Island. | Liverpool/Alexandria | U/0 | £700 (3)-17 | £46k |
| <i>Explorer</i> | 131295 | SS | C | 5/09/1910 | Glasgow | 7,608 | 6/02/1917 | T(D) | 7 miles E1/2S of Fastnet | Liverpool/Calcutta | U/0 | £12 (2)-18 | £0.65k |
| <i>Hathor</i> | 135571 | SS | C | 27/02/1914 | Sunderland | 3,823 | 27/08/1917 | T | 3 miles NW of Cape Tenes, Algeria | Liverpool/Alexandria | U/1 | £1,000 (2)-17 | £66k |
| <i>Hirondelle</i> | 98106 | SS | C | 7/05/1890 | Dundee | 1,648 | 25/04/1917 | T | 13 miles SxE of Belle Ile | London/Bordeaux | U/0 | £5,060 (2)-17 | £334k |

| Ship Name | ON | Type | Use | Construction | | | Loss | | | | | BoT Insurance Payments | |
|---|--|------|-----|--------------|------------|-------|--|-------|---|--------------------------------|------------------|---|--------------------|
| | | | | Launch | Where | GRT | When | How | Where | En Route From/To | Survivors / Lost | Total Value / (Nr items) – in year 19xx | Approx. value 2018 |
| <i>Huntsgulf</i> | 99075 | SS | C | 14/03/1892 | Newcastle | 3,185 | 18/11/1917 | T(D) | 5 miles NW of Point Cherchell, reached port | Alexandria/Hull | U/0 | £1,610 (1)-17 | £106k |
| <i>Huntsman</i> | 118103 | SS | C | 19/05/1904 | Glasgow | 7,460 | 25/02/1917 | T | 180 miles NWxW from Fastnet | Liverpool/Calcutta | U/2 | £3,260 (4)-17 | £215k |
| <i>Istrar</i> | 105394 | SS | C | 14/03/1896 | Belfast | 4,582 | 2/12/1916 | T | 120 miles NNW1/2W from Alexandria | Birkenhead/Calcutta | U/1 | £1,662 (1)-17 | £110k |
| <i>Kafue</i> | 133309 | SS | C | 22/02/1913 | Newcastle | 6,044 | 30/04/1918 | S & T | 11 miles SW of the Mull of Galloway | Glasgow/Calcutta | U/1 | 15,132 (8)-18 | £817.4k |
| <i>Kelvinhead</i> | 121275 | SS | C | 16/10/1905 | Newcastle | 3,063 | 27/03/1917 (sunk in two sections) | M | 0.75 miles WSW of the Liverpool Bar lightvessel | Clyde & Liverpool/Buenos Aires | All/0 | Value cancelled | |
| <i>Kittawake</i> (TNA spelling) | Unable to find this ship. There are ships called Kittiwake and one, with ON120107, may be relevant. Built 1906 sunk on 0.04.1917 | | | | | | | | | | | £360 (1)-17 | £23.7k |
| <i>London*</i> | 99213 | SS | P/C | 15/03/1892 | Dundee | 1,706 | 23/06/1918 | T | 4 miles ExS of Whitby | Methil/London | 28/0 | See Note at foot of table. | |
| <i>Maizar</i> | 140551 | SS | C | 22/03/1917 | Glasgow | 7,293 | 30/01/1918 | T | NxW1/2W of Cape Ferrat | Clyde/Calcutta (Maiden voyage) | U/0 | £1,480 (4)-18 | £80k |
| <i>Malakand</i> | 120907 | SS | P | 11/11/1905 | Belfast | 7,653 | 20/04/1917 | T | 145 miles W1/2N of Bishop Rock | Calcutta/Dundee | U/1 | £3,945 (2)-17 | £260k |
| <i>Matheran</i> | 120946 | SS | C | 12/04/1906 | Belfast | 7,653 | 26/01/1917 | Mx2 | 9 miles West from Dassen Island, SA | Birkenhead/Calcutta | U/1 | £11,530 (7)-17 | £760k |
| <i>Melford Hall</i> | 131415 | SS | P/C | 23/12/1911 | Glasgow | 6,339 | 22/06/1917 | T | 95 miles NxW of Tory Island | Liverpool/Karachi & Bombay | U/0 | £40 (2)-18 | £2.1k |
| <i>Middlesex*</i> (pre-1914 <i>Knight Bachelor</i>) | 135569 | SS | C | 12/02/1914 | Glasgow | 7,265 | 16/05/1917 | T | 150 miles NW from Tory Island | Manchester/Australia | U/0 | £326 (3)-17 | £21.5k |
| <i>Mongara</i> | 136295 | SS | P/C | 11/02/1914 | Tyneside | 8,205 | 3/07/1917 | T | 1.5 miles from Messina breakwater | Sydney/London | U/0 | £928 (2)-17 | £61.2k |
| <i>Morazan</i> | 120833 | SS | C | 19/01/1905 | Sunderland | 3,486 | 11/11/1916 | T | 145 miles SWxW of Ushant | Calcutta/London | U/0 | £141,006 (33)-16 | £11.66m |
| <i>Oronsay</i> | 111292 | SS | C | 15/06/1900 | Glasgow | 3,761 | 28/12/1916 | T | 48 miles southeast of Malta | Calcutta/Dundee | U/0 | £ 206,310 (35)-17 | £13.6m |
| <i>Orubian</i> | 135540 | SS | C | 15/12/1913 | Greenock | 3,876 | 31/07/1917 | T | 160 miles NW1/2W from Eagle Island | Liverpool/Colon | U/1 | £1437 (1)-17 | £95k |
| <i>Peninsula</i> (Ex <i>Doris & Prudent</i>) | 68961 | SS | C | 25/08/1877 | Sunderland | 1,384 | 25/07/1917 | T | 235 miles southwest of Fastnet | London/Lisbon | U/1 | £2,066 (3)-17 | £136k |
| <i>Phemius</i> | 135515 | SS | P/C | 1913 | Belfast | 6,699 | 4/06/1917 | T | 80 miles NW1/2N of Eagle Island | Liverpool/Hong Kong | U/0 | £2,900 (1)-17 | £191k |
| <i>Poona</i> | 121202 | SS | P/C | 24/12/1904 | Glasgow | 7,626 | 6/12/1916 Towed to Spithead, repaired | M(D) | 9 miles south of Beachy Head | London/Calcutta | U/0 | £250 (2)-17 | £16.5k |

| Ship Name | ON | Type | Use | Construction | | | Loss | | | | | BoT Insurance Payments | |
|--|-------------------|------|-----|--------------|-----------------|-------|------------|-----|---|--------------------------|------------------|---|--------------------|
| | | | | Launch | Where | GRT | When | How | Where | En Route From/To | Survivors / Lost | Total Value / (Nr items) – in year 19xx | Approx. value 2018 |
| <i>Prunelle*</i> (Ex <i>Saturnus & Gota</i>) | 142461 | SS | C | 1874 | Sweden | 579 | 22/08/1918 | T | 2 miles SE of Blyth | London/ Dundee | U/12 | See Note at foot of table | |
| <i>Pumelle</i> | Details not found | | | | | | | | | | | £2,706 (4)-19 | £133k |
| <i>Roanoke (ex Clan Macinnes)</i> | 124329 | SS | C | 28/12/1906 | West Hartlepool | 4,803 | 12/08/1917 | SCE | 100 miles WNW of the Butt of Lewis. | Leith/ Philadelphia | U/0 | £3,759 (6)-17 | £248k |
| <i>Roscommon (Ex Oswestry Grange)</i> | 114066 | SS | C | 1902 | Belfast | 8,238 | 21/08/1917 | T | 20 miles NE of Tory Island | Manchester/ Australia | U/0 | £6,508 (3)-17 | £429k |
| <i>Rydal Hall*</i> | 96395 | SS | C | 22/11/1889 | Greenock | 3,314 | 1/12/1917 | T | 14 miles ExS Royal Sovereign lightvessel | Calcutta/ Dunkirk | 59/23 | £78,556 (18)-18 £6,400 (2)-17 | £4.244m £ 422k |
| <i>Sebek (Ex Harpeake)</i> | 129034 | SS | C | 5/07/1909 | West Hartlepool | 4,601 | 21/04/1917 | T | 145 miles NW of Tory Island | Liverpool/ Alexandria | U/1 | £1,135 (4)-17 | £75k |
| <i>Setter</i> | 124143 | SS | P/C | 4/09/1906 | Greenock | 956 | 13/09/1918 | T | 6 miles NW by N from Corsewall Point | Manchester/ Clyde | U/9 | £1,984 (12)-19 | £97.4k |
| <i>Subadar</i> | 131430 | SS | C | 12/03/1912 | Glasgow | 4,911 | 27/07/1918 | T | 112 miles NxW from Cabo da Roca, Lisboa, Portugal | London/ Port Said | U/3 | £150 (2)-18 | £8.1k |
| <i>Troilus</i> | 137543 | SS | C | 19/04/1916 | Dundee | 7,625 | 2/05/1917 | T | 140 miles WNW of Malin Head | Clyde/ China & Japan | U/0 | £335 (1)-17 | £22k |
| <i>Umaria</i> | 136313 | SS | C | 9/07/1914 | Glasgow | 5,317 | 26/05/1917 | T | 20 miles SWxS Policastro, Italia | Calcutta/ UK | U/5 | £640 (2)-17 | £42k |
| <i>Welsh Prince</i> | 118621 | SS | C | 10/08/1903 | Middlesbrough | 4,934 | 13/10/1916 | T | 33 miles SW of Cape Matapan | Calcutta/ Dundee | U/2 | BOS £147,771 (36)-16 | £12.22m |
| <i>Vasco</i> | 105060 | SS | C | 6/08/1895 | Sunderland | 1,914 | 16/11/1916 | Mx2 | 10 miles WxS of Beachy Head | Hull/ Naples | U/17 | £255 (1)-17 | £16.8k |

Note for SS London and SS Prunelle. Loss of these ships identified from “Pastscape” but the value of the jute lost not found.

Abbreviations:

ON – Official Number. This was allocated to every ship in UK when first registered and remained with the ship even if its name or ownership changed. It would only change if re-registered abroad. This unique identifier is important when more than one ship bears the same name, a frequent occurrence.

SS – Steamship. All ships in the above table were steam driven.

RMS – Royal Mail Ship, also powered by steam in the above examples.

P – Passenger liner.

C – Cargo ship.

P/C – Dual passenger and cargo.

OL – Ocean liner (as described by the shipbuilder).

GRT – Gross registered tonnage.

TNA – The National Archives.

T – Torpedo. Ship sunk in the above table. T(D) = damaged by torpedo.

M – Mine. Ship sunk in the above table. M(D) = damaged by mine. Mx2 = struck two mines.

S & T – Shelled and torpedoed.

SCE – Captured and Scuttled with Explosive Charges

U – Unknown (number on board at time of loss).

BoT – Board of Trade.

Total Value/(Nr items)-in year 19xx – Several records identify more than one payment in the one file so these have been summated and enumerated. The xx identifies the year of payment and has been used when evaluating the approximate inflationary totals.

Ship* - Signifies where the on-line record identifies that the ship was defensively armed, typically with a 6 or 12 pounder deck gun.

There are many stories available about these ships, and a brief selection follows.



RMS Amazon

Source: <http://theyard.info/ships/ships.asp?entryid=372>
(There is no apparent copyright mentioned)

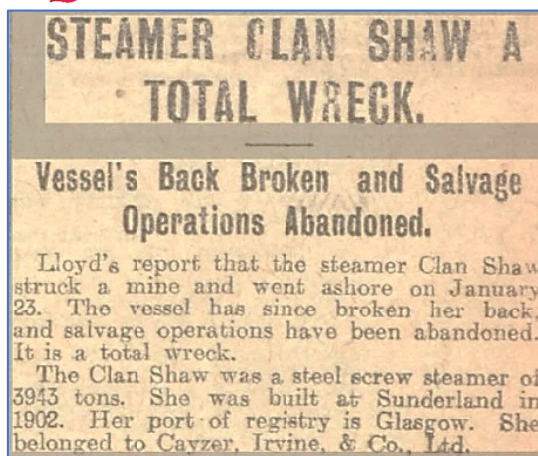
RMS *Amazon* – its attacker, German submarine *U-110*, was itself attacked and sunk by the escorting destroyer HMS *Moresby* which saved 9 of the submarine’s 48 crew. The *Amazon* was a large ship, able to carry 300 1st Class passengers, with 70 and 500 in 2nd and 3rd Classes respectively, and was the 75th largest ship attacked by the German U-boats in WW1.

SS Bretwalda, en route with a cargo of coal from Newcastle to Marseilles, struck a mine 3 miles

from the Longsand lightvessel on 30 August 1915 but managed to beach and it was re-floated, only to be sunk the following year. There were several ships named *SS California*. One was sunk on 9 November 1915 while en route in ballast and two of them were sunk in 1917. The settlement in the above table was made on 22 March 1917, so it is therefore most likely that the ship in question was sunk on 7 February 1917, the other being sunk in October 1917. *SS City of Lucknow* was sunk in the same year as it was launched and *SS Maizar* was sunk on its maiden voyage! *SS Hunstgulf* was launched as *SS Branksome Tower* for a London owner. Later that year, it became German owned and was renamed as *Rio*, and in 1902 changed German owners when it was renamed *Seriphos*. In August 1914, it was laid up at Piraeus and then seized by Allied forces on 3 September 1916 and taken over by the Shipping Controller in London when it was renamed *Huntsgulf*. By 1920 it had a Dubrovnik owner who renamed it *Jugoslaven PRVI* but in 1920 it had yet another owner, also from Dubrovnik, who renamed it *Vojslav*. Finally, in 1927 it was broken up at Inverkeithing.

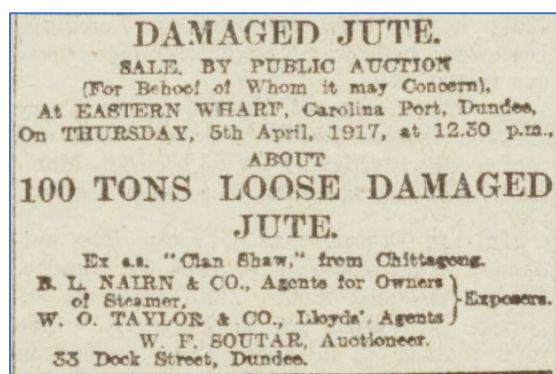


SS Clan Shaw, after voyaging from Calcutta, was probably only an hour or so of docking in Dundee, subject to the tide, when it sunk at the mouth of the river Tay after striking a mine



as reported in the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* of 31 January 1917. The two crew who died were Lascar Sulaiman Sharaf Ali, and Topass Maula Bakhsh Sadruddin, both of the Indian Merchant Service and both are commemorated at the Bombay 1914-1918 Memorial at Mumbai. (Topass was a term used by the British Merchant Navy since the mid-19th century to act as Interpreter for a group of Lascars or South African seamen on British vessels).

The *Dundee Courier* of 06 April 1917 carried the adjacent advertisement of the sale of damaged jute recovered from the *Clan Shaw*.



SUNKEN VESSEL IN TAY CAUSES DAMAGE TO ANCHOR LINER Bringing Passengers From India to Dundee.

The Anchor liner *Circassia*, with general cargo and passengers, from Calcutta, arrived in the Tay yesterday morning, but owing to a mishap at the mouth of the river, as the result of colliding with a submerged wreck, she could not be berthed at the Eastern Wharf, Dundee, as had been intended, and had to lie at anchor overnight in the roads.

The cause of the accident, which occurred about nine o'clock, when the *Circassia* had all but safely completed her voyage, was the wrecked steamer *Clan Shaw*, which was mined in the Tay over two years ago, and lies in the river opposite Carnoustie. The *Circassia*'s rudder struck the derelict, and became unworkable. She also sustained damage to her hull, and is making water in number seven and eight tanks.

The opening paragraphs of a much longer article in the *Dundee Courier* of 10 March 1919 of damage caused by the *SS Clan Shaw* wreck is highlighted and in the following day's edition, it was mentioned that the wreck lay in quicksand making it very difficult to salvage. The *St. Andrews Citizen* of 05 April 1919 reported that "jute from the sunk *Clan Shaw* at the mouth of the Tay is giving the fishermen great deal trouble. Their nets get covered with the fibre, and it is a difficult matter cleaning them. The bed of the Bay is covered with jute, and the fishermen are of opinion that this is causing the fish to migrate to other parts of the coast". Several newspaper accounts referred to the ongoing dispute between the Harbour Authorities and the Admiralty as to responsibility for clearing the wreck, during which time the *SS City of Naples* and the *SS Circassia*, both voyaging from Calcutta to Dundee were damaged when passing the wreck in the reduced width of channel. The *City of Naples* was holed and

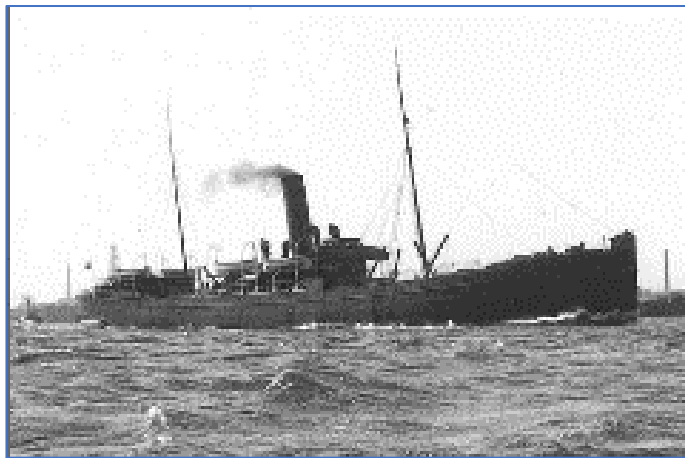
beached at Buddon Ness, eventually salvaged by early July. And then the *Dundee Courier* of 23 April 1919 reported that the Admiralty's *HMS Hearty*, originally built in Dundee by Gourlay Bros. Ltd, had also struck the *Clan Shaw* wreck suffering damage. Dundee officials met with Mr Churchill in the government on 14 May 1919 to highlight the ongoing problems caused by the *Clan Shaw* wreck, as reported in the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* of 14 May 1919. This led to a Government offer to defray some of the cost of removal but the Dundee Harbour Trustees rejected the offer as insufficient. Ongoing wrangling did nothing to resolve the matter and the *Dundee Courier* of 10 October 1919 reported that another vessel, the *SS Glentaise*, had suffered damage from striking the *Clan Shaw* wreck. The *Dundee Evening Telegraph* of 22 October 1919 reported that the Dundee Harbour Trustees had eventually accepted a salvage offer of £7,500 (approx. £370k in 2018) to remove the wreck such that there was no more than 1m of the wreck above the seabed. The *Dundee Courier* of 15 January 1920 carried a long account of the difficulties being experienced by the contractor and the same paper, in its issue of 12 October 1920, intimated that the dispersal work of the *Clan Shaw* wreck was completed.

Three of the tabulated ships were built in Dundee, *SS Hironnelle*, *SS London* and *SS Troilus*.

SS Hironnelle, ON98106, was launched on 7 May 1890 and completed in June by Gourlay Brothers & Co. Ltd for the General Steam Navigation Co. Ltd., 55 Great Tower Street, City London. It was registered on 4 June 1890 in London and allocated L.S.B.V. as its International Call Sign. Steel hulled, *Hironnelle* was 81.7m long, with 11.43m beam and was powered by a 3-cylinder triple expansion steam engine developing 400hp driving a single screw for 13 knots. The *Dundee Courier* of 8 May 1890 mentions that it was "designed for the express passenger service between Bordeaux and London with splendid accommodation for a large number of both first and second class passengers". Crew lists are

available from 1890 to 1917, except for 1895, from either the Maritime History Archive or the National Archives. It was torpedoed by German submarine *UC-36*.

SS London, ON99213, was launched on 15 March 1892, also by Gourlay Brothers & Co. Ltd but for the Dundee, Perth and London Shipping Company, Maritime Buildings, 26 East Dock Street, Dundee. It was registered in London and allocated M.P.F.B. as its International Call Sign. Steel hulled, *London* was 85.3m long, with 11.1m beam and was powered by a 3-cylinder triple expansion steam engine having two double boilers, developing 425hp driving a single screw for 15 knots. It was managed initially by James Kidd and in 1918 by Ralph Cowper. The *Dundee Courier* of 15 March 1892 reported the launch and included in a lengthy article: *Schooner rigged, with two masts, she is one of the finest examples of marine architecture ever built at Dundee, and presents a smart and handsome appearance. Designed for the Company's Dundee and London trade, the steamer is provided with splendid accommodation for the passengers, while the facilities for the loading and discharging of the cargo are also of the most approved modern type. The portion aft of the vessel reserved for the first-class passengers is fitted up in the most magnificent style. The cabin is panelled in beautiful New Zealand woods, Hungarian ash, and Sycamore, with rosewood pilasters and gilt capitals, while the staterooms, bathrooms, &c, are luxuriously equipped in every respect. The smoking-room and the music-room, which are on the poop deck, from whence the cabin is entered, are also most attractive apartments, more especially the former, the walls containing numerous beautifully carved panels, representing scenes from the works of Sir Walter Scott, designed and executed by Mr Adams, Edinburgh, the celebrated carver of antique work. The accommodation for the second-class passengers, which is forward, is also of a very superior*



SS London

Source <https://www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?12449>

Copyright stated as unknown.

description. Separate cabins are provided for the males and the females, the former being on the port and the latter on the starboard side. Altogether, the London will carry 164 passengers — 82 aft, and the same number forward. The officers, engineers, crew, and firemen, will be berthed amid-ships underneath the bridge deck. The bridge deck and the poop are covered with a shade deck for the purpose of protecting the passengers, who will also have a splendid promenade from the

*forecastle to the poop.....The vessel will carry six boats. She is to be fitted throughout with the electric light by Messrs Lowdon Brothers. The London will be not only the finest but the fastest passenger steamer on the east coast. It is expected that she will attain a speed of about 16 knots an hour, and will thus accomplish the voyage from the Company's wharf in London to Dundee in the splendid time of about 26 1/2 hours". Crew lists are available from 1892 to 1918, except for 1895 and 1905, from either the Maritime History Archive or the National Archives. Although armed with 1x13 pounder deck gun, *SS London* was torpedoed by German submarine *UB-88* blowing away the stern. Previously, *Lloyd's List* of 8 April 1901 reported that the previous day when near May Island a fire broke out in a cargo hold 3 hours after leaving Dundee for London – it returned to Dundee where the fire was extinguished by flooding the hold. And on 13 February 1913, *SS London* collided with the Dundee registered *SS Edinburgh* off Norfolk in very dense fog, as reported in the *Dundee Courier* of 17*

February, resulting in the loss of *Edinburgh* and 4 of its crew including its captain, Charles Baird who hailed from Montrose.

SS *Troilus*, ON137543, was launched on 19 April 1916, but not completed until January 1917, by the Caledon Shipbuilding & Engineering Co. Ltd., Dundee for the Ocean Steam Ship Co. Ltd., a member company of the Blue Funnel Line which at that time was the trading name of Alfred Holt & Co. of Liverpool. It was 23 March 1917 before *Troilus* was registered in Liverpool. Steel hulled, *Troilus* was 138.9m long with 17.2m beam, powered by a 3-cylinder triple expansion steam engine developing 5500ihp driving one screw for 11 knots, and captioned in the *Dundee People's Journal* of 22 April 1916 as *Dundee's Biggest Launch*. The crew list for 1917 is available from the National Archives. *Troilus* was torpedoed by the German submarine *U-69*, without casualties.

Dundee's Biggest Launch.

On Wednesday afternoon the *Troilus*, a finely-modelled cargo and passenger steamer, was launched at the Dundee Harbour. The *Troilus* is the largest vessel which has ever been launched at Dundee. The vessel has a double bottom throughout, and two deep tanks, which can be used either for carrying cargo or water ballast. Accommodation for the captain, officers, and engineers is provided in deckhouses on the fore end of the bridge, and the crew will be berthed in the poop. The forecastle is fitted up for steerage passengers. A complete installation of electric light is fitted. The whole arrangements passed off without a hitch.

Camberwell (s), Baines, Calcutta, 500 bales jute, 89 tons—J. Couper; 812 bales jute, 114 tons—W. F. Soutar & Co.; 498 bales jute, 90 tons—David Ritchie & Co.; 223 bales jute, 40 tons—H. B. Ireland & Co.; 416 bales jute, 74 tons—T. S. Ross & Co.; 553 bales jute, 98¾ tons—John N. Kyd & Co.; 739 bales jute, 172 tons—Hardie & Smith; And. Leitch & Co., agents.

Assyria (s), Blight, Calcutta via London, 250 bales jute, 45 tons—James Fullerton & Co.; The Anchor Line, Ltd., agents.
Camberwell (s), Baines, Calcutta, 734 bales jute, 133 tons—Cleppington Spinning Co.; 646 bales jute, 115 tons—John Cargill; 498 bales jute, 89 tons—John M'Nicoll & Co.; 247 bales jute, 44 tons—Grant & Baxter; And. Leitch & Co., agents.

Camberwell (s), Baines, Calcutta, 1200 yards hessian cloth—Durie & Miller; And. Leitch & Co., agents.

As an indication of the jute trade with India, SS *Camberwell* is recorded as voyaging from Calcutta to Dundee with cargoes and passengers in 1908, and the *Dundee Courier* of 2, 5 and 16 December 1905 carried news of goods from the *Camberwell* discharged at Dundee, as shown in the 3 cuttings listing goods from ships entered at the Dundee Customs House, the 2nd of

which includes the SS *Assyria* tabulated above.

SS *Camberwell* was sunk by a German mine on 18 May 1917, with loss of 7 lives but did not appear to have jute related cargo on board at that time.

In summary, Britain lost 66 merchant ships during the First World War when carrying jute or jute related items as listed above out of 2,479 merchant ships lost in total. Most of the above were lost in 1917 which accords with the peak of 1,197 in 1917 out of 2,479 in consequence of Germany declaring unrestricted warfare on shipping. These ship losses sadly were associated with 192 casualties.

Sources – All were accessed between 19 and 23 October 2018.

- The National Archives Discovery – 153 nr files, series BT365, for Insurance Payments against losses.
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