

THE GRAIN RACES AND THE END OF SAIL

THE STORY OF THE LAST GREAT SAILING SHIP TRADE

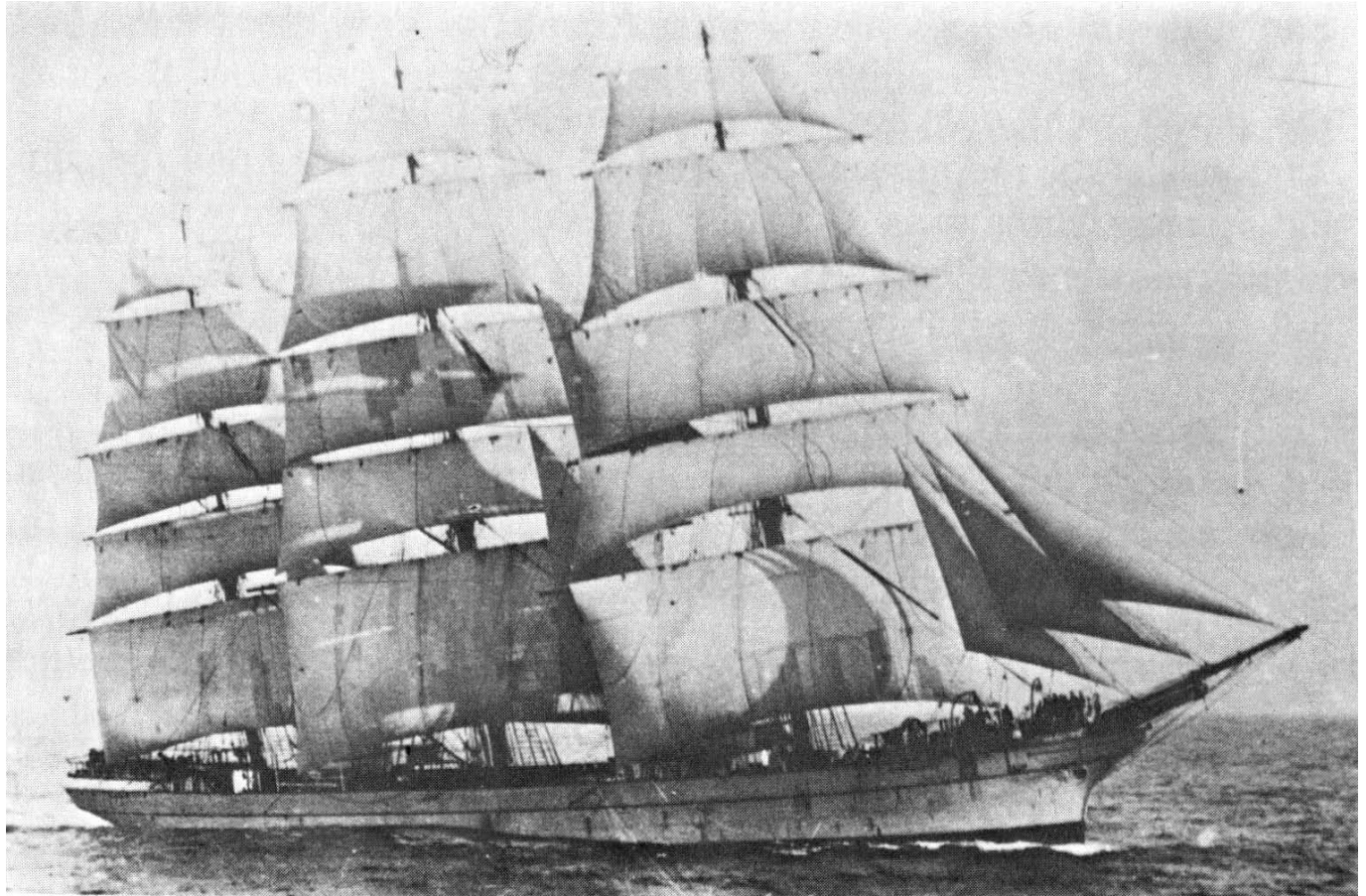
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THE END OF COMMERCIAL SAIL

Before the advent of powered ships all cargoes were carried by sailing ships. With the introduction of steam-powered vessels, it was inevitable that their greater cost effectiveness would oust sail in market after market, and thus it proved to be. The trades in which sail could make a living dwindled through the end of the Nineteenth, and beginning of the Twentieth Centuries, until, after WWI, there remained only two major ones. They were the carriage to Europe of nitrates from the west coast of South America, and grain from South Australia.

The decline had not been immediate, and, along the way, there had been some notable rearguard actions, and some fine, almost legendary, ships, and trades. Most people are aware of the China Tea Clippers, and the races from China to London, with the new crop of tea annually. After that time came the wool clippers, racing home from Australia, around the Horn with wool to England, where speed was still of the essence, and ships' reputations were made and lost with single voyages.

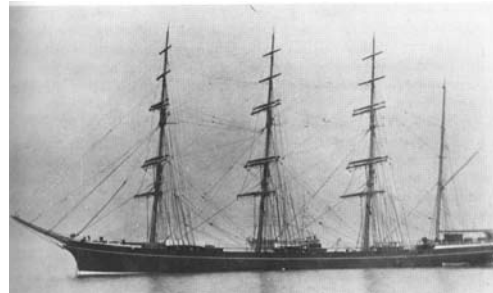
After them, as ships' sizes increased, but speed and sailing excellence were still important, came the San Francisco Grain



ABOVE: When sail was still king! 'City of Benares', once of the San Francisco grain fleet



ABOVE: Typical of late 19th Century, large square-riggers, the 'Lord Ripon'. Note the skysails on each square-rigged mast



ABOVE: Another skysail yarder, the 'Marlborough Hill' fastest in the 1921 'Grain Race'



ABOVE: The end of sail. These are French sailing ships, laid up in the Canal de la Martiniere, Nantes, in 1922



ABOVE: 'Lancing', ex steamship 'Pereire', built in 1867. When rigged as a four masted full rigger, in 1888, she was fully capable of 18 knots

Fleet, with magnificent, four masted barques and full rigged ships pounding out to California and back via Cape Horn, to bring back the harvest every year. There was the carriage of jute from Calcutta to Dundee, case oil from New York to the Far East, lumber from the ports of Puget Sound and British Columbia and the endless transport of coal from South Wales, and New South Wales, to west coast ports, ironically, often to fuel the very steamers which were replacing the windjammers.



ABOVE: The last ever, large, British owned sailing ship, the 'Garthpool'. She was wrecked in the Cape Verde Islands in 1929.



ABOVE: 'Beatrice', minus the top two sails on each square-rigged mast, with which she started life

After WWI, and the shipping boom that followed it, the remaining vessels started what was to be their last stand in commercial shipping, and it is with this period that this article concerns itself. The story, the statistics and much of the background for this piece come from an excellent book, called 'Square-riggers, the Final Epoch', by Alex Hurst. It is, to my mind, the definitive history of the period, written by a man who sailed in some of these ships, and who can speak from personal knowledge. He is also a man who is willing to speak the truth, and to speak it well. I am going to use his definition of the time period to take, and, thus, to start in 1921.

The very high freight rates in the immediate post-war period meant that almost any ship could make money. For that reason the world picture was skewed, and any look at sail's part in it would be a false one. Also, the many German square-riggers still afloat were still at their internment ports, and were out of a picture that they were to adorn for the rest of the time that we are to focus on.



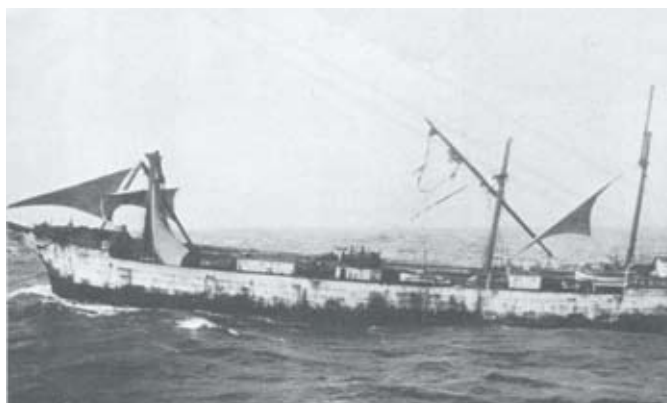
ABOVE: 'E R Sterling' before she was dismantled. This is a most unusual sailing ship rig, favoured in the coastal trades of the USA. It was far from suitable for the Cape Horn road



ABOVE: 'Kobenhavn', five masted barque, lost with all hands in 1929



ABOVE: The lovely old 'Grace Harwar' made famous in Alan Villiers' book, 'By Way of Cape Horn'. She was the last large full rigger in trade, scrapped in 1935



ABOVE: 'Hougomont', dismantled off Cape Borda in 1932. She was sailed on to Port Adelaide like this!



ABOVE: 'Olivebank', photographed from 'Pommern' in the Great Australian Bight in 1939



ABOVE: The auxiliary engine ship 'Magdalena Vinnen', later 'Kommodore Johnsen', and now the Russian training ship 'Sedov'



ABOVE: This is 'Parma' near to Mariehamn in the Aland Islands. 'Pamir' would have looked like this on the occasion of her difficult and dangerous night in 1934

Finally, 1921 was the last year in which the carriage of grain from South Australia, by the use of sail, was just one of several trades still open to the sailing ship. Because of that, the grain fleet still retained some of the look that it had in earlier times. The vessels involved were not yet just the final ships left in the world; in effect, they were a microcosm of the sailing fleets of all the years that went before. It thus presents an interesting contrast with later years, when South Australia attracted all the ships that were left.

I am not going to cover the events, in detail, year by year; the subject would fill a book, and already has (see above). The bare bones of the annual performances can be seen in the small table that appears here, and if you would like the fullest of pictures, you'll see a reference list at the end of books that are well worth the effort of finding.

Remember that the term 'race' is a misnomer; the ships, particularly at the start of the period covered, set sail home from Australia at any time of the year and it is the length of each ship's passage home that determined the 'winner'. They also set sail from different ports in South Australia, and sometimes came home via the Cape of Good Hope, rather than via Cape Horn, the more usual way. Their passages also ended at different European ports.

By covering some of the more unusual happenings, and touching on some of the pertinent aspects of these vessels, their personnel and their times, I hope to give a little insight into a world that has disappeared.

BEFORE IT WAS A RACE, 1921 TO 1932 1921 TO 1924

In 1921 68 ships loaded grain from South Australian ports for transport to Europe. The fleet included vessels made, and operated, by many of Europe's great shipbuilding nations, with maritime histories going back well into the Nineteenth Century. This year was the last in which such a concourse of sail would ever be seen again, as French ships that traded with the west coast of South America

sailed alongside British built ships that had been part of the San Francisco grain fleet.

Large German sailers were still in trade, many of them having been interned in ports all over the world for the duration of WWI. By this time, most of the British built ships were operated by other nations, as the British got out of sail earlier than most, so there were many of them in the fleet, notably the vessel that had the fastest time, the 'Marlborough Hill'.

This ship had been in the grain trade with California, taking out general cargo, and returning with grain. As built, she crossed skysails on all three square-rigged masts, that is, she had seven yards per mast, not the more usual six, and therefore was a very lofty, powerful and fast ship. She had the unusual distinction of being stopped by a U-Boat during WWI and, after smashing both her lifeboats in an attempt to comply with the U-Boat's order to abandon ship, signalled the U-Boat, "What shall I do?" and was told by the German commander, "I leave you", and was left to sail on unharmed.

Many of the vessels sailing home in 1921 were sailing in to be scrapped and, by 1922 the canal at La Martiniere, in Nantes, and the anchorage at Alameda in California, were full of French square-riggers, and the sailing ships of the Alaska Packers fleet respectively, all laid up, with no work to do. A certain ship owner, who we shall meet many times in this brief history, was starting to buy up out of work tonnage for his fleet of sailers, he was Gustav Eriksson, of Mariehamn, in the Aland Islands of the Baltic. His was to be the final fleet of large sailing ships ever to keep the sea.

Another owner from the same part of the world was Hugo Lundquist, and this year saw him acquire 'Mozart', a four masted barquentine that was to sail regularly in the grain fleet (later under Eriksson's ownership) until she was scrapped in 1935. She had been interned at Taltal, in Chile and, after being sailed back to Ostend, she set out for Norway to load timber. She had water ballast tanks, and her master thought that their weight would be



ABOVE: 'Mozart', long a member of the grain fleet. Not very fast, not very beautiful, and a real workhouse, she nevertheless always made money!



ABOVE: This is 'Pommern' in the English Channel, roaring along



ABOVE: 'Viking', a very powerful, four masted barque. Note the sailors on the main and mizzen royal yards

sufficient ballast for the expected three-day trip to Norway, so she set sail with no extra ballast.

As soon as she got outside, into the North Sea, with a crew of fourteen, it became apparent that her stability was insufficient, and she just wouldn't stand up if any sail was set. All they could do was drift, being driven, under bare poles, steadily northward, steering as best they could, still trying to make the Norwegian coast. After two weeks they ran out of water, and had to start catching the rain that fell. Coal for the galley fire ran out, and they had to start breaking up the wooden 'tween decks for fuel. They went north of all the charts that were aboard, and, in the end, made Bergen after two months! She sailed from Australia in 1923, being 136 days, Melbourne to Cardiff.

The fastest homeward passage, with grain, that year was made by 'Mayotte', which had been the Liverpool ship 'Ornasia', but the best performance was produced by 'Beatrice', possibly one of the absolute best of these last sailing ships, with a time from Melbourne to London, with wool, of 88 days. Wool was a less dense cargo than grain, so, when full, Beatrice would not have been down to her marks, and would therefore have been in the best possible trim to really sail.

She too had been a British ship, as the 'Routenburn', and originally had skysails on her main and mizzenmasts. Bear that in mind when you look at the picture of her here, cut down to the 'bald headed' rig of five sails per mast. 'Beatrice was a real thoroughbred, considered by many to have the most beautiful bows of any sailing ship.

'Greif' recorded the fastest time, under sail alone, in 1924. She too was originally British, being built at Sunderland as the 'Wiscombe Park' for Liverpool owners. There was a faster time this year, it was achieved by the Danish auxiliary engined school ship, 'Kobenhavn' ('Copenhagen'). This interesting vessel was one of only six five-masted barques ever built. She was on the small side for such a big rig, but the Danes took the view that if there were more masts, there would be more work for the cadets to do; if you like, more learning to be acquired. She sailed in the grain fleet for the rest of her life, though it was to be tragically cut short, as we shall see.

By 1924 there were still in the region of 250 square-rigged sailing ships operating worldwide, but many laid up, a fact not lost on Capt. Eriksson, who was still in the market this year. One of the most famous sailing ships ever built was scrapped in 1924; she was the 'Lancing'. This vessel was almost legendary among sailors. She had been built, of iron, as the steamer 'Pereire' in 1867, and converted to sail in 1888. Conversions of this kind were not as rare as you might think, though it was still unusual enough to make her

progress of interest to the sailing ship fraternity for the rest of her life. Steamers, at this stage in their development, often had very high length to beam ratios, and this gives a vessel a very good chance of being fast through the water.

So it was that when 'Lancing' was rigged as a four masted, full rigged ship, her large spread of canvas and powerful rig made her an extremely quick ship, fully capable of 18 knots. Iron construction gave her hull great strength and longevity, in the end it was simple economics that led to her end.

1925 TO 1928

1925 saw the appearance in the fleet of a ship later made famous in one of Alan Villiers' books. She was the 'Grace Harwar' and had the distinction, in 1935, of being the world's last big full rigged ship still trading, having been built in 1889 in Scotland. She had had a career full of incident; including once being sailed all the way back to the UK from the west coast of South America without a bowsprit!

Only six vessels took part in 1926, due to a very poor harvest in South Australia. Also, there were still other trades to occupy the sailing ships, notably the transport of guano (bird droppings) and saltpetre from South America, so the other ships were still able to find different cargoes. The famous firm of Laeisz, in Hamburg, was buying back from reparations ownership, some of their famous 'P Liners', big four masted barques, for use in the trade to South America, via Cape Horn.

1927 brought an increase in the numbers sailing from South Australia, and one of the more outrageous of the ships taking part was the six masted barquentine 'ER Sterling' (see pictures). She took 286 days from Adelaide to the Thames, between April 27th 1927 and January 28th 1928!

A flavour of the kinds of things that happened to ships in this period can be gained by the catalogue of misfortune that befell this ship. She was in lots of icebergs in the South Atlantic, after passing the Horn, some of which were ten miles long, and lost masts 2 and 3 in a gale north of the Falklands. This cut down her speed drastically, and she had only got as far as the Cape Verde Islands by September, when another gale brought down her foremast, killing the Mate in the process.

They refused an offer of help from a passing steamer, mindful of a salvage claim, and managed to set enough sail to get to the West Indies by October 15th. Repairs were not possible in the Caribbean, so a tug was sent from Europe, and she was towed to the Thames, with the doubtful distinction of being the last dismasted sailing ship ever to enter the London River. After unloading, she was sold for scrap. Another ship scrapped this year was the last ever, British



ABOVE: 'Abraham Rydberg' photographed from the 'Mauretania', as they raced up the Channel in 1934



ABOVE: 'Padua', now the Russian 'Krusenstern', the last engineless square-rigger ever built, in 1926

commercial full rigged ship, the 'William Mitchell'.

An actual race was mooted in 1928, when a trophy was put up by some Swedish underwriters for the victor in a race between 'Beatrice' and 'Herzogin Cecilie', and nothing better illustrates the obscure nature of the Grain Races than this contest that never was. 'Herzogin Cecilie' had beaten 'Beatrice' on the passage from Melbourne to Port Lincoln, and there was considerable rivalry between the two crews, but, in the event, 'Beatrice' turned west after leaving Spencer's Gulf, and came home via Good Hope, whereas the 'Herzogin' went by way of Cape Horn. You can read this story in detail in Alan Villiers' 'Falmouth for Orders'.

If someone mentions the Seychelles today, no doubt we'd all think of an exotic holiday destination. The 1928 experience of 'Olivebank' a Scots built, four masted barque owned by Capt. Eriksson, illustrates a different world view. She had come from Cardiff to Luderitz Bay, in South West Africa, and then gone on to the Seychelles to load guano for Auckland. She arrived at Mahe too late for her charter, so shipped 84 local labourers, to cut and load the guano, and set sail for St. Pierre, between the Seychelles and Madagascar, to excavate and load it there. The labourers must have been a light-hearted lot, for they spent a good deal of their time merry-making on deck during the passage.

When she reached St. Pierre and anchored, all her sails were sent down, as guano fumes will rot canvas, and everybody aboard went on to day work, loading the ship, save one night watchman. Sadly, this worthy fell asleep one night at anchor, and, when he awoke, St. Pierre was on the horizon! The ship's anchor had slipped off the edge of the bottom on which it rested, and fell to the full length (65 fathoms) of its cable, and the ship had drifted out to sea! With the poor winds prevailing, it took her three weeks to get back to St. Pierre, a further holiday which delighted the local labourers aboard.

These delays, plus a long passage to the Antipodes, resulted in many of the crew going down with beri-beri, and, by the time she was nearing Australia they were in poor shape. She had problems with the cargo shifting, which her weakened crew had a very difficult time re-trimming, and then struggled in vain to make first Fremantle and then Adelaide. She finally made Melbourne with one man dead from beri-beri, and another dying.

1929 TO 1932

1929 saw the start of some newspaper interest in the annual voyage, to Australia and back, of the grain fleet. 'Grace Harwar's' passage home was covered in Alan Villier's book, 'By Way of Cape Horn'. In its way it is a classic of the sea, covering, as it does, a death aboard, a burial at sea, the nervous breakdown of the Second Mate, and the suffering of an undermanned old ship, close to the end of her days.

The UK's last big square-rigger, the 'Garthpool', was wrecked in the Cape Verde Islands and the Laeisz' line's last full rigged ship, the 'Pinnas', was dismasted and lost off Cape Horn. The most tragic loss was that of 'Kobenhavn', gone without trace in the South Atlantic, with the loss of 60 lives, including 45 cadets. Also Gustav Eriksson was still in the process of buying up old tonnage cheaply.

By 1930 most of the world's remaining square-riggers were reduced to the final trade left, the Grain Race. In consequence the pattern of setting out from Europe in ballast, in September, began to be the norm, so as to meet the southern hemisphere harvest in



ABOVE: A big sea comes aboard 'Ponape'; an Italian built four masted barque



ABOVE: 'Moshulu', winner of the last 'Grain Race' in 1939. She is seen here in Liverpool, and her size is obvious



ABOVE: 'Gustav Eriksson' in the office in Mariehamn. On the table is the trophy for which 'Beatrice' and 'Herzogin Cecilie' raced in 1928, and on the walls are pictures of the Eriksson fleet



ABOVE: The western harbour at Mariehamn during the 1930s. The vessels are: 'Herzogin Cecilie', 'Olivebank', 'Viking', 'Mozart', 'Winterhude' and 'Archibald Russell'

the new year, ready to load for the passage home. The pattern for the rest of the big sailers' time was being set.

More ships took part in 1931, in part due to higher freights, but also due to further lack of other work. After her passage home this year, 'Herzogin Cecilie' performed one of the outstanding (and absolutely verifiable!) feats in sailing ship history. She was in ballast, en route from Barry to Mariehamn, and, at around 5 pm one afternoon, did a measured twenty and three quarter knots when running with a favourable wind, under the shelter of the land, off northern Denmark. Her positions were accurately determined using known points on the land, in order to determine her speed over the ground, and she continued almost in the same vein, around the northern tip of Denmark. She was passing Copenhagen by dawn the following morning.

In his efforts to buy any worthwhile large sailing ship, Capt. Eriksson this year bought two of the Laeisz company's last six vessels, the 'Pamir' and 'Parma', leaving that company with their last four, still in the Chilean nitrate trade.

'Magdalena Vinnen' joined the fleet this year. She was an auxiliary engine, four masted barque, and used her engine more often than most such ships. She was a regular participant from here on, but her times are not eligible for a 'win' as she had an engine!

A 'RACE' TO THE END, 1932 TO 1939

The years 1932 to 35 saw the zenith of the 'Grain Races', as almost all the remaining large sailing ships were finally reduced to this last business. Ships were also disappearing very quickly, to accident or the breakers' torch, so we are now getting down to the last, famous, core of the fleet.

The tale of misfortune, and adventure, continued unabated in 1932, with 'Hougomont' being dismasted off Cape Borda in April. Hers was a tale with which many sailing ships from time immemorial could identify. She was caught in a sudden, terrific squall, which took away her fore, main and mizzenmasts in short order. The masts of a sailer are interdependent, as soon as one goes, the others are all at great risk, so this kind of thing was not uncommon, but you need to remember that the debris doesn't just fall overboard and sink, it hangs over the side, banging away at the hull, doing damage, until the steel wire rope rigging can be cut away. Thus, the crews first job was to do just that, after which they set a 'jury rig', to try and get her to a port, which they managed 19 days later, when she sailed into Port Adelaide.

'Melbourne', ex 'Gustav', was run down and sunk by a tanker 30 miles from the Fastnet. At this time there must have been many a powered ship's officer, to whom the sudden sighting of a sailing ship must have been like being visited by an apparition, and the ability to understand how to avoid one must have been in short supply. By all accounts 'Melbourne' went down in only four minutes, for sailing ships are just a big shell, with no compartments to save them. Eleven men were lost.

Finally, and sadly, 'Beatrice' was broken up in Stavanger this year.

In 1933 Laeisz sent one of their excellent four masted barques out to Australia, a nitrate charter being unavailable for her. She was the 'Priwall', the next to last engineless square-rigger ever built (finished just post WWI). 'Herzogin Cecilie' collected lots of gear from the wreck of 'Hougomont', before the latter was sunk as a breakwater near Port Adelaide, and the best ever Grain Race passage was made by 'Parma'. As we have seen she was an ex Laeisz vessel, and was now part owned by her captain, Ruben de Cloux, in a syndicate which included the sailor/author Alan Villiers (see his book 'Voyage of the Parma').

By 1934 Laeisz had sold two of their last four square-riggers, 'Passat' to Eriksson, and 'Peking' to the British (sadly to be used as the stationary training ship 'Arethusa'), and the last two, 'Priwall' and 'Padua' were both put into the Australian trade. They left, outward bound from Europe, on the same day, and arrived in Australia within hours of each other, 65 days later. Homeward bound they were 108 and 109 days respectively.

In the picture shown here, you can see the 'Abraham Rydberg' racing the old 'Mauretania' in the Channel, homeward bound in 1934. You'll see that she'd lost her fore royal and t'gallant yards, which went during a blow near the Azores, and also note the canvas necessary to keep up with a fast liner in half a gale!

Lastly, for 1934, is the story of 'Pamir's' struggle to survive, when just outside her new home port of Mariehamn. She had arrived off the Aland Islands in company with 'Grace Harwar', and, as the 'Harwar' was there first, Eriksson's tug 'Johanna' took the old full rigger in first. By the time that this had been achieved, the easterly gale had freshened to the point that 'Johanna' could not get back out to 'Pamir', and darkness had fallen. It was decided to keep 'Pamir' outside overnight, as the entrance to Mariehamn harbour is a maze of islands and skerries.

The Aland Sea runs northwest to southeast between the Aland Islands and mainland Sweden, and is about 25 miles wide, so the long night wore on with 'Pamir' making long boards, running northwest on one tack, and southeast on the other. Now, she was only lightly ballasted for the voyage from her discharge port in the UK, back to Mariehamn, so it was impossible to tack at the end of each board.

In order to turn to go back the other way, she had to 'wear ship', turn by running off before the wind, and then come back on to the other tack, a manoeuvre which caused her to make a lot of leeway every time she did it. With that, and the fact that she made lots of leeway just sailing, she was losing ground and gradually nearing the unfriendly Swedish coast.

To add to their woes, a ferry from Stockholm appeared on the scene, and, typically for these last sailing ships, did not see the struggling barque. 'Pamir' had to put up her helm, and steer downwind to clear the steamer's stern, which put her in an even worse position as regards the Swedish coast.

By this time, all her options had gone, the strength and direction of the wind had made it impossible for her to make either the Baltic proper, or the Gulf of Bothnia to the north, so the decision was made to anchor, off the Swedish coast, amid the maze of islands there. To cut a long story short, she did manage to anchor, but, when daylight came, it brought with it the sight of a haystack, on an island, not 200 yards astern!

In 1935 the fleet continued to lose members. In this year, both 'Mozart' and 'Grace Harwar' were sold for scrap. A brighter spot was the purchase, resurrection one might say, of 'Moshulu', by this time the largest sailing ship in the world, by Capt. Eriksson. She had been laid up in Seattle since 1927, and was lucky to have the opportunity of this re-birth.

1936 brought the end of another famous ship. After her passage of 86 days home, that year's fastest, 'Herzogin Cecilie' was run aground on the Devon coast as she was going to her discharge port in the UK. The wreck was caused by negligence, and her master and mate never went to sea again. Her loss caused her owner, the redoubtable Capt. Eriksson, very great distress, as she had been the flagship of his fleet, and was known as 'Eriksson's Yacht'. This year saw the end for 'Parma', sold for scrap.

In 1937 there were only 15 ships in the fleet. The only other vessels in commission were the two Laeisz four masters 'Padua' and 'Priwall', which were back in the nitrate trade with Chile. By this time, the Nazis had forbidden German seamen from doing their

time, which they needed for officer qualification, in foreign owned sail, so they no longer formed part of the crews of the grain ships. Instead, the German shipping lines Hamburg Amerika Line, and Norddeutscher Lloyd, both bought sailing ships, the 'L'Avenir' (from Eriksson) and 'Magdalena Vinnen' respectively, in which to train their own officer cadets. They were renamed 'Admiral Karpfanger' and 'Kommodore Johnsen', and put into service.

The 'C B Pedersen' was sunk, in collision with yet another steamer, this time in the North Atlantic.

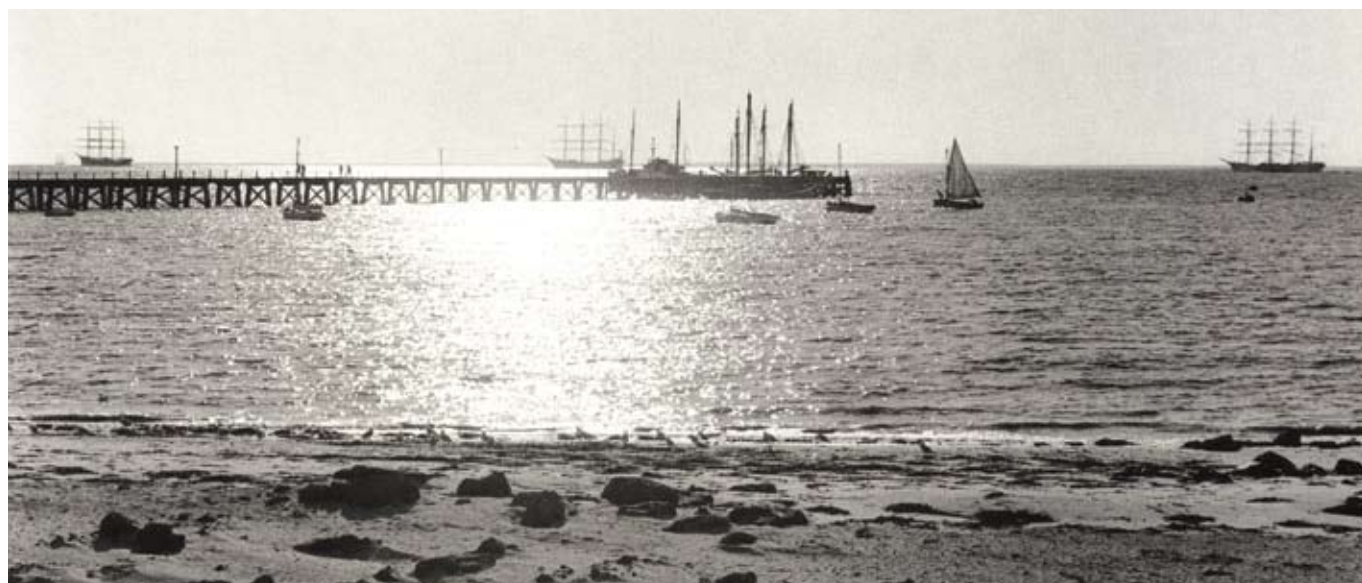
In 1938 there were less ships than ever on the run back from Australia. 'Padua' and 'Priwall' were both back in the trade to Chile, and 'Priwall' achieved one of sail's last ever great feats, by recording the fastest ever westward rounding of the Horn, in 5 days 14 hours, a time that was not beaten until a yachtsman bettered it in the 1990s.

The year had its tragedy too, when 'Admiral Karpfanger' was lost without trace on the road to Cape Horn from Australia. This was still a time when a ship could just disappear, and be lost without trace; to this day no one is any the wiser as to how she went.

The sad conclusion was reached in 1939, when the ships again gathered in Spencer's Gulf, sailing from there over a period of five months, from February to July. The climax came when 'Moshulu', then the world's biggest sailing ship, was given her head under a new master. She came home in fine style, and brought down the curtain on sail's last, major rearguard action.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

'Passat'	Preserved at Geestemunde
'Pommern;	Preserved at Mariehamn
'Moshulu'	Now a restaurant in Philadelphia, a shadow of her former self
'Viking'	Preserved at Gothenburg
'Sedov', ex 'Kommodore Johnsen', ex "Magdalena Vinnen'	Now a Russian 'Tall Ship'
'Krusenstern', ex 'Padua'	Now a Russian 'Tall Ship'
'Peking'	Preserved at New York
'Pamir'	Lost, with great loss of life in the Atlantic, in 1957
'Priwall'	Lost, on fire, as the Chilean "Lautaro", off Chile in 1945
'Olivebank'	Sunk by a mine in the North Sea in 1939
'Archibald Russell'	Sold for scrap in 1949
'Winterhude'	Sold for scrap in 1949
'Abraham Rydberg'	Converted to power, post WWII
'Penang'	Torpedoed off Ireland in 1940, the last ever merchant sailing ship sunk by enemy action
'Killoran'	Sunk by a German surface raider in 1939/40
'Lawhill'	Broken up at Lourenco Marques in 1957



ABOVE: This is Port Victoria in Spencer's Gulf, in the 1930s, with windjammers anchored offshore. Only sailing ships could have lived with the basic facilities available



ABOVE: Painting by Claude Muncaster, of 'Olivebank' rounding Cape Horn. It may not be the world's best painting, but it does give an idea of what a 70 ft swell looks like. To understand the scale, 'Olivebanks' masts were about 150 ft from deck to truck

POSTSCRIPT

Of the 13 ships that loaded grain in Spencer's Gulf in 1939, ten were owned by Gustav Eriksson, one had been owned by him, and one had been the subject of his interest for many years, post WWI.

Capt. Eriksson died in 1947, aged 74.

'Viking', 'Passat' and 'Pamir' carried cargoes of grain from South Australia after WWII, and the latter two ships made the last ever roundings of Cape Horn by a commercial sailing ship, bringing grain back to Europe in 1949.

That was the end, forever, of deepwater, commercial sail.

REFERENCES

The above has been written as a series of anecdotes, with a small framework of facts, around which to drape them. If you would like to go into this story in greater detail, you could do worse than consult the oracles mentioned below!

- 'Square-riggers, the Final Epoch', by Alex Hurst, pub. Teredo Books, 1972
- 'By Way of Cape Horn', by Alan Villiers, pub. Geoffrey Bles, 1930
- 'Falmouth For Orders', by Alan Villiers, pub. Scribners, 1972.
- 'The Voyage of the Parma', by Alan Villiers, pub. 1933
- 'The Last Tall Ships', by Georg Kahre, pub. Mayflower Books 1977
- 'Rolling Round the Horn', by Claude Muncaster, pub. Rich and Cowan, 1933 **MMI**



ABOVE: With Hitler's war raging elsewhere in Europe, 'Viking', 'Passat' and 'Pommern' lie peacefully in the harbour at Mariehamn. 'Passat' and 'Viking' were to sail briefly again, and all three have survived to this day



ABOVE: This is 'Penang', sinking, on 8th December 1940, after being torpedoed by U140, off the west coast of Ireland

The "Grain Races, 1921 to 1939						
Year	No. of Ships	Fastest Passage (days)	Ship	Port to Port	Average Passage* (days)	Comments
1921	68	91	Marlborough Hill	Port Lincoln to Queenstown	131.4	
1922	7	90	Milverton	Melbourne to London	126.4	
1923	9	111	Mayotte	Port Victoria to Falmouth	133.1	Beatrice was 88 days, Melbourne to London, with wool
1924	11	110	Greif	Port Lincoln to Falmouth	124.3	Kobenhavn, an auxiliary engined, five masted barque, was 90 days, Port Victoria to Bordeaux
1925	21	103	Beatrice	Adelaide to Falmouth	132.5	
1926	6	110	L'Avenir	Geelong to The Lizard	134	
1927	17	98	Herzogin Cecilie	Port Lincoln to Queenstown	131.9	
1928	9	96	Herzogin Cecilie	Port Lincoln to Falmouth	133.3	
1929	14	93	Archibald Russell	Melbourne to Queenstown	116.9	
1930	7	105	Pommern	Wallerco to Falmouth	113.4	Mozart was 93 days, Melbourne to Falmouth, in ballast.
1931	14	93	Herzogin Cecilie	Wallerco to Falmouth	111.8	Magdalena Vinnen, an aux. engined four masted barque (in 2009 the Sedov), was 89 days, Port Victoria to The Lizard Magdalena Vinnen was 96 days, Port Victoria to London
1932	19	103	Pamir	Wallerco to Queenstown	122.6	
			Parma	Port Broughton to Falmouth		
1933	20	83	Parma	Port Victoria to Falmouth	114.6	
1934	22	106	Passat	Wallerco to The Lizard	123	Magdalena Vinnen was 91 days Port Victoria to Plymouth
1935	20	91	Priwall	Port Victoria to Queenstown	111.8	
1936	17	86	Herzogin Cecilie	Port Lincoln to Falmouth	109	
1937	15	94	Passat	Port Lincoln to Falmouth	107.6	
			Pommern	Port Victoria to Falmouth		
1938	12	98	Passat	Port Victoria to Falmouth	125.8	
1939	13	91	Moshulu	Port Victoria to Queenstown	124.25	

* Average passage of "mainstream" ships. Excludes disasters, broken passages etc., and auxiliary engined vessels