



PROBUS RECORDER



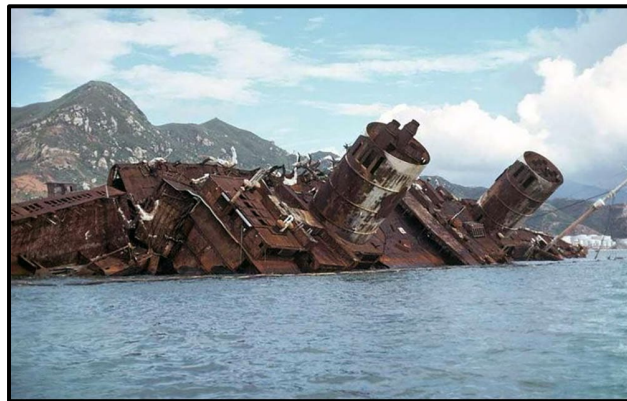
THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PROBUS CLUB OF GILLINGHAM, DORSET
(www.probus-gillingham-dorset.org.uk).

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Chairman's Notes

This month we enjoyed two talks with a maritime theme - right up my street! The first was Ian McLellan who spoke on the Far Eastern German Cruiser Squadron, and 2 weeks later we were treated to Dr. Stephen Payne talking on the designing of the liner QM2.

At the latter talk, I was especially interested in the mention of the fire on the old Queen Elizabeth - renamed '*Seawise University*' by its new owner. When I was in Hong Kong in January 1972 I remember seeing the sad sight of the burnt-out hulk of this fine vessel in the harbour. The fire was eventually attributed to arsonists, but no one was ever held to account for the tragedy.



Following our last talk we enjoyed an excellent meal at the Udder Farm Shop, organised at short notice by Roger Ellis, and we look forward to the next one at the Walnut Tree in Mere on the 18th February. Our thanks to Colin Chamberlain for taking over the future lunch arrangements.

The recent storms have been quite severe with winds reaching 60 mph, and I hope none of our members have been badly affected.

Mention of which brings me back to the post of **Welfare Officer** which is still unfilled, and I ask again for someone to **PLEASE (!)** step forward for this highly necessary role.

And to finish I bring to your attention that following our last meeting at the Rugby Club, someone picked up my blue padded coat by mistake - I feel lost and lonely without it! I would be so grateful if whoever finds that they took the wrong coat gets in touch so that we do a swap!



Andrew

WELFARE & SOCIAL

Welfare

Mike Madgwick. It was with great pleasure that at the last Club meeting we were able to welcome Mike back from his hospital incarceration over Christmas, and we wish him full success in his rehabilitation and return to 'normal' life.

Jane Cole. It was with sadness that we learned of the death of Jane Cole, wife of our late member – **Malcolm Cole**. She died in her home near Exeter and was buried on 29th January. The Club was represented at the funeral by Peter Marshall.

Welfare Officer post. We continue to seek a caring and club-minded individual to serve as our Welfare Officer, to support our members with empathy, discretion, and dedication. **PLEASE.**

Social - February Club Events

4th February 2025 <i>(Men only)</i>	Peenemunde Raid - August 1943 <i>John Smith</i>
18th February 2025 <i>(Wives/Partners)</i>	The Moving of Debra D51 <i>Roger Weekes</i> <i>(Mayor of Gillingham)</i>
	Members' Lunch <i>Walnut Tree, Mere, 12.30 for 1pm</i>



JANUARY TALKS

“Kreuzerkrieg” (Cruiser War)

Ian McLellan

7th January 2025



Gillingham Probus member Ian McLellan gave a stimulating talk on the Imperial German Navy's East Asia Squadron in the first months of the in First World War in 1914.

The East Asia Squadron of the German Imperial Navy was stationed in the Pacific to provide military protection to Germany's expanding trading interests and recently acquired colonies. Since Unification in 1871, Germany had acquired territories scattered throughout the vast area of the Pacific, including the northern part of New Guinea, the Solomons, much of Micronesia, Nauru and Samoa. There was a significant German settlement in China. On the eastern rim of the Pacific, there were German settlements in Mexico and Chile.

At the outset of the war in August 1914 the East Asia Squadron comprised five heavy battle cruisers (*SMS Scharnhorst*, *SMS Nurnberg*, *SMS Dresden*, *SMS Leipzig*, *SMS Gneisenau*) and an assortment of gunboats, colliers and other support ships. It was based in **Tsingtao** (Qingdao) in North East China, under the command of Vice Admiral Graf von Spee. When war was declared, the Squadron evaded capture when the British and Japanese forces besieged and took Tsingtao. Nearly all the ships were dispersed at various island colonies. The Squadron rendezvoused at Pagan Island in the northern Marianas and spent the next five months sporadically attacking Allied shipping and island radio stations as it crossed the Pacific. Realising that the Squadron had no secure harbour to use as a base for operations and had limited opportunities to take on coal and replenish ammunition, Admiral von Spee saw no alternative but to head for home.



The vast distances involved, difficulties in communication and, critically, problems of ensuring supplies of food and fuel, meant that this was no easy task. Ultimately these logistical problems limited the strategic effectiveness of the Squadron in fulfilling its primary purpose of protecting German interests in times of war. However, at the time, the Squadron was a significant threat to merchant shipping and was perceived by the Allies as a serious impediment to the movement of troops from Australia and New Zealand to the Middle East and Europe.



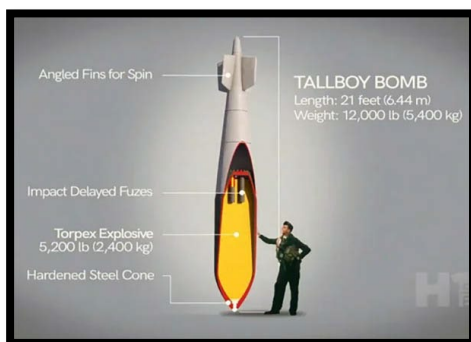
The *SMS Emden* was sent westward to harass shipping in the Indian Ocean. In September and October, it shelled a fuel storage depot in Madras (Chennai) and sank two Allied warships and 25 civilian merchant ships. It was eventually intercepted and wrecked by British and Australian warships near the Cocos Islands west of Australia.



Meanwhile, the main flotilla of the German East Asia Squadron progressed across the Pacific, bombarding the French colony of Tahiti and taking on supplies of food from German farmers on Easter Island, (where an intrepid British archaeologist, Catherine Routledge, recorded her surprise at learning that war had broken out in Europe).

Off the coastal Chilean town of Coronel, the German fleet chanced upon a British naval squadron. In the skirmish that followed the Germans prevailed with little loss. [The British fared far worse](#). Two Royal Navy ships were sunk with the loss of 1,500 lives. The Germans then sailed into Valparaiso, where they were welcomed by the local German settlers. However, as Chile was neutral and ships of belligerent countries could only remain for a limited time in a neutral port, the German ships had to put to sea again.

They headed for the Falkland Islands, intent on raiding the important coaling station at Stanley and harassing British shipping. There, on 8 December 1914, they encountered an overwhelmingly strong British task force that had been sent to engage them. By the end of that day, the *Scharnhorst*, *Leipzig*, *Gneisenau* and *Nurnberg* were all sunk with great loss of life. Only the SMS *Dresden* escaped for the moment; it was later cornered by the Royal Navy in March 1915, and then scuttled by its own crew near the Juan Fernandez islands off Chile. Thus the German East Asia Squadron was entirely wiped out.



For Ian, the story of the East Asia Squadron combines a number of interconnecting interests: a lifelong interest in history, a fascination with the Pacific, and a personal connection through his father's experience during the Second World War. This last element stems from the involvement of McLellan senior, an engineer, working with Barnes Wallis on the development of ordnance, specifically the 12,000 lb 'Tallboy' bomb.

This huge bomb, dropped from specially adapted Lancaster bombers, was designed to penetrate heavily armoured U-Boat pens and V2 launch pads. Between September and November 1944, several Tall Boy bombs were dropped on the Nazi battleship *Tirpitz* off Tromsø in Norway. *Tirpitz* posed a potential threat to the Russian convoys, but it was largely contained in Norwegian waters for most of the war. It had already been partially disabled by a Royal Navy mini-submarine attack earlier in the year, but the bombing raids rendered it irreparable. The threat that it posed was neutralised.



At the end of the talk the Chairman thanked Ian for a fascinating talk on a little-known aspect of history. After questions, the meeting was brought to a conclusion

Steve Baines

Queen Mary 2: Genesis of a Queen

Dr Stephen M Payne OBE

21st January 2025



Stephen Payne was the chief designer of the Queen Mary 2. His fascinating talk explained his childhood ambition to design an ocean liner, and his employment with Carnival Group the owners of Cunard. It also described the design and construction process and some of the special features of the ship.

One of Stephen Payne's earliest memories was of watching Valerie Singleton on the liner RMS Queen Elizabeth for Blue Peter in May 1965. When he was nine in 1969, his family had a tour of her successor the newly commissioned Queen Elizabeth 2. This sparked a life-long fascination for naval architecture.

By 1972, when the decommissioned Queen Elizabeth (resurrected as Seawise University) caught fire in Hong Kong, it was generally thought that the golden age of the ocean liner was over. A comment to this effect on Blue Peter prompted the young Stephen to write a letter of complaint to the BBC. This solicited a response from the Corporation and, somewhat to Stephen's disappointment, a standard Blue Peter badge.



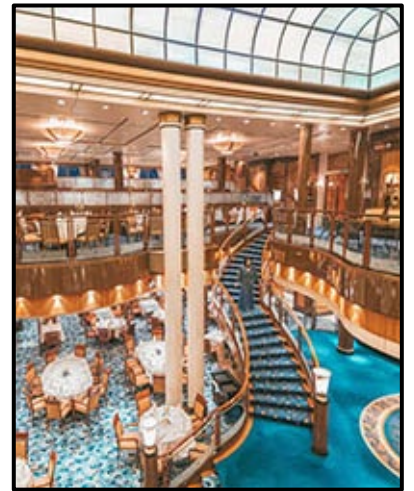
Encouraged at school to study Chemistry rather than ship design at university, Stephen began a degree in Chemistry at Imperial College. However, after a year, and prompted by his school Physics teacher, Justin Johnson, he switched to study nautical engineering at Southampton. On leaving university he started work with the Carnival Group working on the design of cruise ships.

At that time it seemed that the hay day of transatlantic liners had indeed passed. The expansion of air travel and the increased demand for cruise holidays brought a new set of market requirements. Paradoxically, the discovery of the wreck of the Titanic in 1985 revived public interest in transatlantic travel. The release of James Cameron's 1997 film, Titanic, brought a surge in bookings for the QE2. The advancing obsolescence of QE2 prompted Carnival to invest in a new ship.

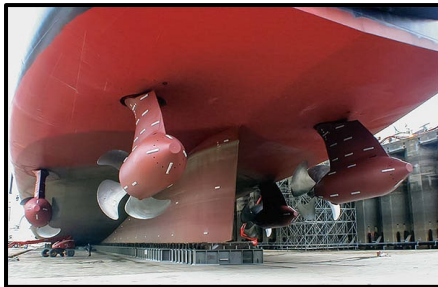
Compared to a cruise ship, a liner has a narrower, more pointed shape, a deeper draught and enhanced strength, endurance and speed. It is also more expensive to build and operate, so in order to take advantage of the economies of scale, it has to be big. At 350 metres in length, the Queen Mary 2 was the largest passenger ship in the world when she was built, with a gross tonnage of 148,528 GT. The height of the funnel in the original design had to be adapted to allow the ship to pass beneath the Verrazano-Narrows bridge in New York. Until recent enlargement work on the Panama Canal, the ship was too wide to pass through.



Not only is the ship large, but she was also designed to be luxurious. The stated intention from the outset was to provide all passengers with levels of luxury which in previous liners was reserved for first class passengers. Queen Mary 2 carries 2,800 passengers and has 1,300 crew. Intended for regular transatlantic crossings between Southampton and New York, she also provides cruises and an annual world voyage. Most of the public areas (restaurants, theatres, bars etc) are located on the lower decks, with passenger cabins stacked above.



The ship is powered, primarily, by four diesel engines and two gas turbine engines in an integrated electric propulsion configuration. The power plant generates electricity to provide all hotel facilities and drive the ship. Propulsion is provided by four electric propulsion pods housed outside the hull, two of which swivel to act as a rudder to steer the ship. Each pod with its forward-facing propeller weighs the equivalent of a Jumbo jet. Normal cruising speed is 26 knots, but the capacity of the power unit is sufficient to allow the ship to maintain a constant speed of 29 knots whatever the weather conditions. This was put to the test in August 2008. On this occasion, the ship arrived in New York on time, having sailed through a force 12 storm in the Atlantic.



The contract for the building of the Queen Mary 2 was awarded to 'Chantiers de l'Atlantique' in November 2000. Shipbuilders incur enormous upfront costs, the

majority of which are not recouped until completion. Harland and Wolff also bid for the work, but its proposal depended on UK government investment guarantees and was not successful. Ship building started in the Saint Nazaire construction dock in July 2002. It was delivered on time, following sea trials in December 2003. Her maiden voyage was in January 2004.



Sadly, Stephen's mentor, Justin Johnson, died shortly before the ship was completed. Stephen ensured that a eulogy to his old teacher was secreted on board in his memory. When the ship entered service, it featured on Blue Peter. As the designer of the ship, Stephen was awarded another Blue Peter badge. This time it was a much-coveted gold one!



The Chairman thanked Stephen for his very interesting talk, and after inviting questions, he closed the meeting.

Steve Baines



ENDPIECE (Editor)

The following letter was sent by Tesco's Head Office to a customer in the Manchester area.

Dear Mrs. Murray,

While we thank you for your valued custom and the use of your Tesco Loyalty Card, the Manager of our store near Levenshulme is considering banning you and your family from shopping with us, unless your husband ceases his antics.

Below is a list of his offences over the past few months, all verified by our surveillance cameras:

1. **June 15:** Took 24 boxes of condoms and randomly put them in people's trolleys when they weren't looking.
2. **July 2:** Set all the alarm clocks in 'Housewares' to go off at 5-minute intervals.
3. **July 7:** Made a trail of tomato juice on the floor leading to the Feminine Products aisle.
4. **August 14:** Moved a 'CAUTION - WET FLOOR' sign to a carpeted area.
5. **September 15:** Set up a tent in the outdoor clothing department, and told shoppers he'd invite them in if they would bring sausages and a Calor gas stove.
6. **September 23:** When the Deputy Manager asked if she could help him, he began to cry and asked, "*Why can't you people just leave me alone?*"
7. **October 4:** Looked right into the security camera; used it as a mirror, picked his nose, and ate the results.
8. **November 10:** While appearing to be choosing kitchen knives in the Housewares aisle, asked an assistant if he would tell him where the anti-depressants were.
9. **December 3:** Darted around the store in a suspicious manner, loudly humming the "*Mission Impossible*" theme.
10. **December 6:** In the kitchenware aisle, practiced the "*Madonna look*" using different size funnels.
11. **December 18:** Hid behind a clothing rack and when people browsed, yelled "*PICK ME!*" - "*PICK ME!*".
12. **December 21:** When an announcement came over the loudspeaker, assumed the foetal position and screamed "*NO! NO! It's those voices again.*"

And last - but not least:

13. **December 23:** Went into a fitting room, shut the door, waited a while; then yelled, very loudly, "*There is no toilet paper in here.*"

Happy Christmas,

Yours sincerely,

Charles Brown

Head of Customer Services