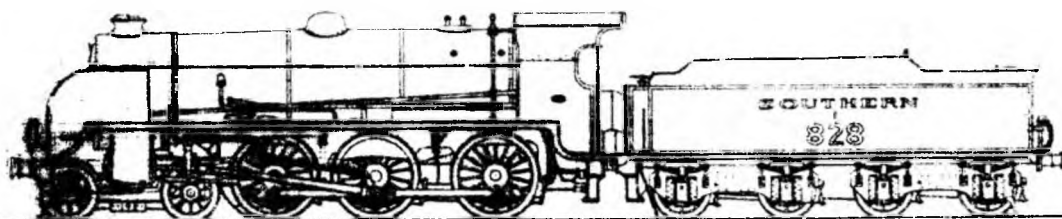


Memories of boyhood and youth. 1914-1932.



S15 CLASS
4-6-0 Freight Loco



Designed R.E.L. Maunsell
Built 1927 withdrawn 1954
Preserved at Eastleigh 1981

This is an account of the early years of my life spent in a town almost entirely dependent upon the railway industry, and covers the years from 1914 until 1932. It will be obvious that the railway, in many ways, had a great interest for me, and I am quite unrepentant that this narrative has a strong railway theme woven into it.

In 1904 my parents left London to live in Eastleigh, in southern Hampshire. My father worked at the London and South Western Railway Company's Nine Elms Works as a coach painter and writer until being transferred to that Company's newly built carriage and wagon works at Eastleigh.

The L.S.W.R. had erected their works there in 1889 because their Nine Elms works had become out-dated and inadequate for the construction of the larger rolling stock which began to take its place on the railways of Britain around the turn of the century.

My father, born at Newport, Isle of Wight, in 1879, had learnt his craft in his eldest brother's coach building business at Freshwater. Those were the days of horse drawn vehicles, the motor car only just beginning to make its appearance upon the roads. Throughout his life my father, who died in his ninety-first year, referred to himself as a coach painter, never as a carriage painter. I always thought that this was somehow connected with the years he spent in the old fashioned coach building business.

Having completed his apprenticeship he travelled to South Africa on the Union Company's R.M.S. "Gascon"; he also visited Germany. Upon returning to England he married and settled down to follow his trade, hence his employment at Nine Elms for the L.S.W.R.

Eastleigh, lying in the valley of the River Itchen, is situated almost equidistant between the Port of Southampton and the ancient capital of Wessex, Winchester. Here, upon the extensive flat land of the valley floor east of the railway station, the railway company decided to erect their carriage and wagon works, which was followed in 1910 by the construction of the locomotive works.

The re-location of the railway works had a tremendous effect on the area. A glance at the population figures shows that in 1811 46 persons were living there, whilst a hundred years later the figure had risen to 15,247.

Because most of Wessex is predominantly in agricultural use there are within its confines towns where engineering, ship-building, and many other diverse industries are pursued. Not the least of these are the towns of Swindon and Eastleigh. Both of these "railway" towns employed, in their hey-day, thousands of work people engaged in the construction of locomotives, carriages, wagons and other ancillary railway equipment.

The L.S.W.R., by bringing their works into southern Hampshire created one of the first "new towns" of this century. The fine purpose-built work-shops for the construction of railway rolling stock in the good conditions provided, were undoubtedly some of the most advanced in the country at that time.

Into this rapidly growing town I was born in September 1911. My earliest recollection is of a steam-roller making up the road in which we lived. I was about two and a half years old. The houses where we lived had been built some five years previously. The road was lighted at night by gas-lamps, the footpaths were paved with concrete flags, and the road surface was of rolled gravel. In summer the roads were sprayed with water from a horse-drawn water-cart to prevent dust blowing into the houses. In Northlands Road where we lived, there were fifteen houses, seven and a small chapel on one side, and eight on the other. All the adult males, in one way or another, were employed in the railway industry. On one side of the road lived a "top-link" driver, a plumber, a saw-mill foreman, an assistant machine shop foreman, a coach painter, a coach builder and a machine shop labourer. On the opposite side of the road lived a station-master's clerk, an engine fitter, a shunter, a coach finisher, a gas fitter, (most carriages were then lighted by gas), a trimmer (upholsterer), and a gentleman who was held in some regard by the children: he went each day to the "office" wearing a pin-stripe suit and spats. I think he was the clerk of Mr. Urie, who was then the Chief Mechanical Engineer.

From 1880 until 1909, houses, mostly built in terraces, were erected in their hundreds. To those coming from London the town must have had the atmosphere of a "gold rush" town. Gradually, however, the streets were drained and surfaced, shops built, together with churches, public houses, and the inevitable clubs, from the Conservative to the "Working Men's".

The L.S.W.R. Co. built the Railway Institute for its employees, a fine red brick Edwardian building, to provide facilities for educational classes as well as for recreational pursuits in the form of billiards, whist-drives and socials. This building was demolished in 1983 to make way for a supermarket. I recall my sister and myself looking forward each year around Christmas to being invited to a pantomime or concert at the Railway Institute where, upon leaving, each child received a currant bun and an orange. Children looked forward eagerly to this annual event which was given not by the L.S.W.R. Company, but by the Railwaymen.

As might be expected my friends and I were steeped in railway lore. We knew an engine designed by Mr. Adams from those of his successor Mr. Dugald Drummond. One of Mr. Adams' fine engines, A T.9 was driven for some years by one of our

neighbours, Mr. Harry Stone, who displayed in his parlour a water colour of the engine he usually drove. The most elegant of all the locomotives in use on the L.S.W.R., in my opinion, was the T.3 built by Mr. Adams at Nine Elms works in 1897, and which proved to be one of the most powerful express engines of its day. One of these beautiful machines is currently on display at the York Railway museum, in its light green livery with the scrolled L.S.W.R. lettering in gold leaf on the driving wheel splashers.

Boys regarded "top link" drivers as being rather special. The names of some of them spring to mind. There was Mr. Chandler who invariably drove engines on steam trials when they were "out shopped" after repair or overhaul, or when emerging from the erecting shop as new. Always identified by the highly polished copper tea-can he carried was Mr. Alf Short, long on driving experience, but short on conversation. An outstanding figure was Mr. Snow, a tall, bearded, dignified gentleman. We took great care not to kick our ball into his garden. Mr. Stokes, who with his wife and son kept very much to themselves, owned the first motor car in the part of town in which we lived.

Mr. Snow became a widower in his early sixties, and a great friend of his, also an engine driver, had lost his wife some years before. Mr. Snow and his friend each had one daughter, both in their early twenties. In a year or so the two drivers married each other's daughters at a double wedding ceremony.

A chum of mine, Wally Notley, lived nearby. His father, an engine-driver, often brought a heavy goods train up from the west country which arrived at a "distant" signal close to a line crossing at about 1.0 p.m. This crossing, part of a public footpath, had a stile at each side of the tracks, and was known locally as the "line-gates", although gates were non-existent. It was a favourite place for children to watch the trains. The 1.0 p.m. "goods" invariably had to wait at the signal until the main London/Bournemouth line was clear. The line from Salisbury and that from the direction of Brighton crossed the London line at Eastleigh station and the north/south traffic had priority.

Knowing which turn of duty would find Mr. Notley on the 1.0 p.m. "goods" we endeavoured to be there. He would allow us to mount into the cab and after some time had elapsed permitted one of us to pull the lanyard of the whistle so as to acquaint the signaller in the Eastleigh east box that he was waiting at the signal. When the quadrant dropped, giving him the "all clear" to proceed, we clambered down from the engine, a H.15 4-6-0, designed and built by Mr. Urie, who had succeeded Dugald Drummond as Chief Mechanical Engineer. The H.15s were usually painted black, had short stovepipe chimneys and heavy eight wheeled tenders. These locomotives were the fore-runners of the ubiquitous King Arthur class, which in Southern

Railway days were to be seen working on most parts of the system.

On the railway metals at the "line gates" we children would occasionally place 4" cut nails when we knew that a goods train was due. The engine would flatten nails changing them into - what we fondly hoped - were knife blades. These we set into hazel sticks to serve as handles. Needless to say our knives were as sharp as tennis balls. As children we failed to see the danger to which we were exposing ourselves. Had our parents known they would have been horrified. I think we became immune to "Now don't play near the railway". A stupid and dangerous game we sometimes played, was known as "under quick". This entailed crawling below the wagons of a goods train whilst it stood waiting for the signal to come off. Once we were playing this game and a boy named Stevens had just crawled under between the wagons when the train began to move with a clanging and banging as the engine took the slack out of the coupling chains. Terribly frightened, Stevens nevertheless had the presence of mind to lie flat on his face off the centre of the track, so that the hanging links of the couplings missed hitting him. In this position he remained until the train had passed over him. Most of the goods trains on the Salisbury line consisted of between forty-five and fifty wagons, and I think eighteen wagons passed over the boy before he emerged safe but shaken. We were very glad the guard was in his van, and not standing on the rear platform.

The days when drivers were allocated an engine which they drove exclusively, unless the engine was "in shops", ceased many years ago. In the era of "one engine one driver" a keen competitive spirit existed between engine crews, and this could be seen in the condition of the machines. The polished brass of cab gauges and wheel splasher rims, the gleaming steel of the connecting rods and motion gear and the brilliant shine of the paintwork all provided ample evidence of the interest taken not only by the driver and his fireman, but also by the cleaners and maintenance fitters.

I recall that enginemen carried their food etc. in boxes which had rounded ends. These were about 18" x 10" and were covered with a kind of American cloth. I saw no workmen use these boxes other than enginemen and guards. Despite oil, soot and coal dust, in general engine crews were clean and tidy in their appearance, took pride in themselves, and the machines they drove.

The coaches of the L.S.W.R., prior to the amalgamation of the nation's railway systems in 1921, were quite distinctive in their livery of brown umber panels with a kind of salmon pink above, and white roofs. I eagerly looked to see the lovely blue livery of the Somerset and Dorset Railway's engines and coaches at Templecombe, when we travelled to Torquay for our summer holidays.

Up until the late 1920s railway coaches were, in the main, constructed of wood, and prime timber was obtained from all over the world for this purpose. Different woods were required for the framing, the panels, flooring, and the inside finishing. My father told me that from the time a coach came from the finishing shop into the paint shop, and was ready for the "road", up to seventeen coats of paint had been applied, each coat was rubbed down with pumice powder and water and the work completed with two coats of Copal coach varnish.

Those employed in the railway work-shops, the motive power department, the traffic department, signalmen and numerous others, worked a twelve hour day, before and during the first world war. As the war proceeded my father was loaned to the Isle of Wight Railway and worked at Ryde St. John's. There, in a shed just capable of holding one small coach, he worked alone painting one coach after another until near to the end of the war.

As a child there many things to delight and interest me, but the "railway" took pride of place. I think that the zenith of the British railway industry was reached between 1921 and the beginning of the second world war.

During the early days of the first world war the street lamps, unlike the total black-out of the 1939-1945 war, were not blacked out. However, as the war dragged on, the top half of the glass of the lamps was blacked out.

Imprinted on my memory are the long queues of people, mainly women, often with one or more children at their sides, waiting patiently at the food shops for an hour or longer hoping to obtain some basic items of food. Just now and again there would be an extra treat available such as black treacle or offal. As soon as a shop-keeper received some little "luxury" goods, word went round like wild-fire and in a very short time a queue would form. I remember the dark unpalatable bread and the margarine which, to me, always seemed to taste as if it had been stored close to a gas-works.

One evening, my mother, sister and I were returning home after visiting my grandmother who lived in Southampton. This I think was the latter half of 1916. The searchlights, very thin on the ground in those days, picked up in their beams a German Zeppelin: anti-aircraft guns sited on the hill at Midanbury, north east of Southampton, opened fire; although the airship seemed to be flying low no hits were scored and it rose and disappeared into the clouds.

Upon the Eastleigh recreation ground in the town centre, wooden huts were erected to accommodate wounded soldiers, there being two categories of wounded; those who wore dark blue uniform and others in light blue.

Lying just outside the town at North Stoneham were the extensive estates of the Fleming family, upon which stood a large house reputed to have three hundred and sixty five rooms. Here on a large part of the estate a remount depot was set up. Horses and mules were used, and killed, in huge numbers between 1914 and 1918, and this depot took in horses as well as countless mules which were shipped over from the Argentine to re-stock the various army units. I recall seeing hundreds of mules, four abreast, reaching from Eastleigh station for half a mile in the direction of Southampton, having arrived by rail, and on their way to the "remount" as it was known locally.

Between 1915 and 1918 the site where the Pirelli General Cable works are now situated, was an aerodrome for the Royal Flying Corps. When I was six years old our neighbour took my sister and me for a walk, in what was then the countryside. Passing the airfield we stood watching a plane coming to land, and as it swept over the hedge bordering the field the wheels caught the top of the hedge and the plane crashed onto its nose. The planes then in use remind me very much of the bi-planes in use today as trainers, which until recently, were often to be seen flying over Eastleigh.

During the 1914-18 war, most of the motor transport seen around Eastleigh was either attached to the United States aerodrome at Wide Lane or the Royal Flying Corps airfield at Leigh Road. The vehicles used by these establishments were manufactured by the Crossley Motor Company, and they displayed a green cross on a brass radiator. These crosses were similar in design to the German Iron Cross. The motors had a good turn of speed coupled with a crisp exhaust note.

On Armistice Day, 1918, my parents joined the crowds of people gathered outside the railway station, this being a focal point for people to foregather on special occasions, as the Town Hall had not been built at that time. I was carried shoulder high by my father, and from this vantage point I had a good view of the joy and sadness that such events create. I had just turned seven years of age, and to me it was just a jolly flag-waving outing.

My only sister, Margery, in 1917 was ill with gastric trouble caused through lack of sugar and other nutritional deficiencies. Consequently, it became necessary for her to enter hospital at Southampton, a journey of six miles by horse drawn ambulance. The roads between Eastleigh and Southampton had gravelled surfaces, quite unlike the highways to which we have now become accustomed. Then the slow clip-clop of the trotting horse, the poorly sprung ambulance and the uneven roads were a far cry from the sophisticated motor ambulances now in every-day use. The Eastleigh Council of those days possessed two horse drawn ambulances,

one painted green to carry patients to the isolation hospital at Chandler's Ford, and another painted brown for general hospital service.

When Margery left hospital an important part of her diet, of which I was envious, was sugar candy. This was obtained from the chemist on a special prescription from the doctor.

My school days commenced at the school of the Holy Cross, in Leigh Road, basically a Roman Catholic school although many Protestant children, including myself, were pupils. All the teachers, who were most efficient and capable, were women, who maintained discipline usually without undue trouble. Just now and again they had to deal with a recalcitrant boy or two in the older age group. If this proved to be difficult, the good ladies called in the Catholic priest, Father Doran, whose house adjoined the school.

Father Doran was a tall and heavily built Irishman who brooked no nonsense. A few cuts with the cane across the behind was the usual punishment. There are those who might regard this as degrading; be that as it may, the children were well behaved and turned out to be good citizens. The only boy who ran foul of the police committed the "crime" of riding a cycle without lights. As to whether punishment was, or was not, more severe in those days is a moot point; what is evident today is the degree of vandalism and lawless conduct we see all around us.

North of Eastleigh lies the village of Colden Common where there lived a family named Cooper. Two boys of this family walked to the Holy Cross school each day, a return journey of nine miles. There were occasions when they arrived at school wet through; plastic rain-wear and "wellies" were then a thing of the future, and many a time the Cooper boys walked in wet clothes, which must have been a problem for their mother, having to dry their clothes ready for school the next day. Summer and winter these lads ate their sandwiches at mid-day in the school playground. During the winter months it must have been quite dark by the time the village was reached, especially as children are apt to dawdle.

A prank which misfired was an occasion when a three wheeled hand-cart carrying a brightly polished milk churn stood unattended whilst the roundsman delivered milk. Fascinated by the tan on the churn, a boy much bolder than I, decided to quickly open and shut it. Unfortunately once opened it defied all efforts to close it. With milk running down the road panic took over, and we made a fast and undignified retreat. Later, wearing looks as innocent as babes we returned to the scene. The milk-float had gone, but the evidence of the disaster was still plain to see.

A further event which comes to mind occurred when bowling a metal hoop along the pavement. The hoop escaped my control and ran into the road where it became entangled in the legs of the horse pulling the Co-op bread van. The poor

animal was trotting at the time and fell with the hoop fast around its legs. Frightened by what had happened I did not linger to see the outcome of the accident.

During my school days a very special event took place each summer. Mr. Stuart, the owner of "Oakwood", a large house situated in extensive grounds in the parish of Otterbourne, invited the whole school, pupils and teachers, numbering approximately one hundred and twenty people, to a huge garden party in the grounds of his estate. We travelled by steam wagons hired for the occasion from the Winchester Brewery, which in itself was a great thrill. Arriving at "Oakwood" we found installed in one of the fields a full size fun-fair, complete with roundabouts, swinging boats, cokernut shies and hoop-la. All these exciting things were free, the nuts were not too difficult to knock off, and the whole affair must have cost Mr. Stuart a great deal of money. In addition, we could pick fruit from the walled garden and wander in the beautiful grounds. At tea-time we sat down to a magnificent meal in a large marquee where we were waited on at table by waiters. At the end of the day, as we boarded the steam wagons for the homeward ride, each child was handed a paper bag usually containing fruit. The Stuarts were devout Roman Catholics and the annual outing to "Oakwood" was the envy of children attending other schools in the town.

Towards the latter part of the 1920s the Stuart family fell upon bad times which forced them to leave the lovely Oakwood estate, lying close to the River Itchen, and take a smaller house in Winchester. They will always be remembered by those of my generation who enjoyed so much their kind generosity so freely given when we were children. To permit over a hundred children the run of the estate, especially the gardens, was remarkable. As for the children, they had received their talk on "do's" and "dont's" the day before the event. Consequently everyone was on their best behaviour and, as far as I recollect, no damage occurred.

Another Otterbourne personality who worshipped at the Roman Catholic church Eastleigh, was Mr. Christian of Otterbourne House, recently converted into flats. It was customary for Mr. Christian to be driven to church in a limousine so designed that he was able to sit wearing a top hat, which resulted in a rather high bodied vehicle.

Barely a quarter of a mile from where I lived a Mr. Goodenough owned a small holding, although his prime interest was running a coal merchant's business. On this holding were four or five well constructed pig-sties, some of which were not in use. In one of these sties lived an old man known as Dave Houghton who gave the impression of having seen better days. Obviously very poor, he nevertheless somehow managed to acquire a little "something to keep out the cold". He slept in the sty and cooked his food over a wood fire. He made no contact with those

living nearby and children, being a little scared of him, gave him a wide berth. One cold day in winter he was found unconscious lying by his fire. Evidently he had fallen asleep and had been too close to the fire. He was badly burnt and was taken into hospital; whether or not he recovered, we never knew, but we never saw him again. A pathetic end to a miserable existence.

Most Eastleigh boys, on leaving school at fourteen years of age found employment in the railway industry. However, my parents thought it best for me to enter a different industry and arranged for me, when attaining the age of sixteen, to take up an apprenticeship with the firm of John I. Thornycroft - now Vosper Thornycroft - at their Southampton ship-building and ship repair yards. With two years to wait for my sixteenth birthday I took a job as a van-boy for Messrs. Brixey and Sons whose bakery and two shops, one in High Street, and another in Leigh Road, were well known in and around Eastleigh.

Brixey's had three bread rounds, two in Eastleigh town, and a third, a country round, and it was on this round that I worked. The round covered a wide area, serving outlying villages and hamlets, some of which were without a village shop. The bread vans, manufactured by the Ford Motor Company of Detroit, were well maintained. The van allocated to the country round was a Model T, complete with brass radiator, which I kept resplendent, cleaning it each day with "Brasso". I thought it was a splendid motor van, and I suppose for its time, it was. The cab doors were barely waist high when we were seated, and a side wind on a wet day ensured that we got wet. There were no screen wipers and no gears as we know them today, and although the side and head-lamps were electric they were dim by today's standards. During the time that I worked with this van I cannot recall a single instance of mechanical failure, which I think remarkable considering the condition of the roads. We had, of course, our share of punctures. Few of the roads were surfaced with asphalt and the minor roads which we mainly frequented had rolled gravel surfaces. In addition the tyres had not reached the high degree of reliability we expect today. In view of the road conditions prevailing then, I think it was the sturdy construction of the vehicle that gave us trouble free motoring.

Our routine was to work one group of villages on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and another group on the alternate days.

On Christmas Eve 1927 we left the bakery about 8.30 a.m., loaded to the roof of the van with bread, flour and cakes. It was a cold December day, but free of snow, and the heat from the freshly baked bread was quite a comfort at our backs, although the wind-screen frequently steamed over and required wiping with a chamois leather. At 10.0 p.m. that night we arrived at the homes of our last five

customers who lived in the hamlet of Hensting. Here lived a family named Davies who had twenty one children, albeit some had left the parental home. In addition there were two farm houses and a pair of farm cottages. Left in the van were about five two pound loaves of bread and a few bags of flour. Four days would elapse before we worked the round again. Mr. Ashford, the roundsman, asked me if my parents would be worried if I arrived home late. I indicated that they would not be alarmed as I had mentioned to them that I would probably be late getting home. Assuring the customers we would return to Eastleigh in an attempt to bring them bread, and if no bread was available, we would return with flour and yeast, we set off. Fortunately the other roundsmen, and the shops, had put their unsold bread in the bread store, and so we were able to deliver, somewhat belatedly, the bread for the Christmas period. It was a motley collection of bread - white, brown, Hovis, Youma, Bermaline, and currant.

Returning to Hensting we served our grateful customers, and felt pleased with a job well done. In my case all for twelve and sixpence a week (62 $\frac{1}{2}$ p). One of the farmers gave me a pound of freshly made butter, and the other presented me with, as he put it "a brace of partridges". The "partridges" were a pound of pork sausages which his wife had made, and very good they were.

All in all, those were happy days, despite coming home, now and again, wet through. Journeying into the quiet countryside in all seasons, watching the changing colours of the trees and crops as one season gave way to another I found most enjoyable.

What a terrific contrast it was to leave behind the peace of the countryside to work in the ship-building industry, where the intolerable din of the riveters and caulkers pneumatic hammers was incessant. At that time Thornycroft's had on the stocks six destroyers for the Chilean Navy and two for the Canadian Navy. With hulls of $\frac{3}{8}$ " plate and standing on slip-ways where there was nothing to deaden the sound; the noise had to be experienced to be believed. It is no wonder that many boiler-makers and platers suffer from deafness in later life.

Around 1924 buses of the Hants and Dorset Omnibus Company first appeared upon the streets of Eastleigh. They were the open top double deckers and ran on solid tyres. The Stoneham Motor Company of Eastleigh owned two or three single deck buses mainly employed in conveying emigrants from the railway station to the Atlantic Park Hostel. Following closely upon World War I the aerodrome, built by and for the American army, east of Wide Lane, was used to accommodate White Russian and eastern European refugees. This establishment had been taken over by the leading steam-ship companies who were engaged in the north Atlantic passenger trade. Emigrants lived at the Atlantic Park, in some cases many years, until they were granted entry visas by the United States government.

There are few people living in Eastleigh today who will remember the standard gauge railway line that ran from Eastleigh to the aerodrome on the east side of the line to Southampton. The sidings extended to where the Ford Motor Company's works now stands.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s a price war developed between the Hants and Dorset Company and a one owner bus business known as the Santoy Company, the latter a small local enterprise. Mr. Miller, the proprietor, also owned a couple of taxis. During the struggle between the two bus companies the travelling public benefited. But, as is usual in such tussles, the big organisation won the day. In 1936 the return fare from Allbrook to Eastleigh, a return trip of five miles, was threepence; the same journey today (July 1984) is £1.06p.

The General Strike of 1926 had a dramatic impact upon the life of the town. Almost at the drop of a hat the great railway works, and the motive power department, fell silent. It was very strange not to hear the bang and clatter of wagons being shunted throughout the day and night. Noises emanating from the various railway activities to which the townspeople had become accustomed were silenced.

Sentries with fixed bayonets were posted at the railway station, the carriage and wagon works, the locomotive works and at other places considered vulnerable. At Eastleigh the strike passed off, in the short time it lasted, in a good humoured and orderly manner. One casualty was a rail van standing on a siding near the station and loaded with bananas. The pleasant aroma at the beginning of the strike changed into a most objectionable smell with the passing of time.

My apprenticeship at Thornycroft's commenced in August 1927, and after a short stay in the shipyard at Woolston, Southampton, where the new vessels were built, I was transferred to their ship repair works in Southampton Docks.

At that time the docks were a hive of industry, ships of the major shipping lines constantly entering or leaving the port. The golden age of the trans-Atlantic liner however, was drawing to a close by the end of the 1920s. Ships of the Cunard and White Star lines held pride of place, and always docked in the Ocean Dock; the White Star liners at berths 42, 43 and 44, and the Cunarders at berths 46, 47 and 48. The ships of the Union Castle Company in their distinctive colourings could be easily recognised by the vermillion smoke stacks, with their black tops, and hulls painted a pretty lilac. They left weekly for South Africa from the "dock head" at berth No. 36 each Friday at 4.0 p.m. precisely,

despite the seafaring superstition concerning sailing on a Friday. Among those I remember best of the Castle fleet were the "Windsor Castle" and the "Warwick Castle". The funnels of these ships being tall and slim, earned them the nickname of the "Woodbines". These vessels were the only four funnelled ships in the Castle stable. I do not propose to comment upon all the great liners that used the port of Southampton. Suffice to mention that there were so many shipping lines using the port prior to the outbreak of the second world war that berths were at a premium, in direct contrast to the situation today, with most berths lying empty.

John I. Thornycroft's held the contract to maintain and repair the three western ocean-going vessels of the Cunard Line, namely the R.M.S. "Berengaria", the "Aquitania", and the "Mauretania". In addition, there was the occasional repair work required on the Cunard intermediate ships which traded to Canada as well as participating in the business of cruising, which was then becoming popular. One of the most successful of the cruise liners was the Blue Star Line S.S. "Arandora Star" which was sunk by a German submarine whilst conveying German and Italian internees to a prison camp in Australia. On one occasion, at least, I recollect seeing three Star line ships in the docks at the same time; the White Star's "Homeric", the Red Star Line's "Lapland", and the "Arandora Star" of the Blue Star line.

After the first world war Germany, as part of her reparations, handed over two of her giant liners to the White Star line. These were the "Bismarck" (56,550 tons), and the "Columbus" (34,000 tons). They were renamed the "Majestic" and the "Homeric" respectively. The Cunard line acquired the "Imperator" (52,220 tons) which became the "Berengaria". The White Star and Cunard lines continued the tradition of naming their ships with names ending in "ic" and "ia". The United States Lines became the owners of the "Waterland", and after a re-fit she entered service as the "Leviathan" (59,950 tons).

R.M.S. "Aquitania" (45,640 tons) was regarded by many as the Grand Old Lady of the Atlantic, and the famous "Mauretania" (30,690 tons), after coming safely through the rigours of the 1914-1918 war held the "Blue Riband" of the North Atlantic for twenty years. The lines of her sleek hull were beautiful, not only were her turbines powerful and practically free of vibration, she also had the graceful slim bows of a yacht. The splendid mahogany panelling lining the corridors and some of the public rooms was earmarked years ago, and long before she went to the ship-breakers. I understand that the panelling now adorns a rather select club.

The White Star liner R.M.S. "Olympic" (46,430 tons), and Cunard's R.M.S. "Aquitania" and "Mauretania" were all four funnelled ships. I have seen all three plus the "Majestic" in the Ocean Dock at the same time, and it was indeed a sight to remember.

During the 1920s and the 1930s, when it became necessary to dry-dock the Cunard and White Star liners, and large vessels of other shipping companies, the Southern Railway's huge floating dock was used. For years this dry-dock was moored in deep water opposite the Town Quay and was a familiar sight, so much so that when the dry-dock was eventually sold to a firm in the Far East, after the King George V graving dock was opened in 1934, it was a long time before Southampton people became used to the open expanse of water where the dry-dock was moored for so long.

In winter, ship-yard workers working on the hull, "tail-ends" or the rudder of a liner in the "floater" had the bitter cold winds to endure as they swept through the dock bottom, also the spray that blew in the wind, as the deck of the dock was barely a foot above the level of the sea. I recall that in very cold weather men constantly engaged, day and night, in keeping the compressed air lines thawed out to enable the riveters, caulkers and drillers to use their pneumatic tools.

Occasionally I entered the door situated at the base of the mast of the "Berengaria" or "Aquitania", to climb up the iron ladder fixed inside the steel mast, and after a long climb in darkness to emerge into the "crow's nest" from where an astounding panoramic view of the Isle of Wight, the New Forest and Southampton could be enjoyed.

Repairing tools for the Bos'n of the "Berengaria" invariably produced from that gentleman a chunk of ship's chocolate. On a cold day a cup of this rich beverage, with cocoa butter floating on top, was excellent. Sharpening knives for the ship's butcher assured one a tender beef steak an inch thick and as big as a dinner plate, which, cooked on a piece of $\frac{1}{4}$ " plate over a coke fire, produced a meal fit for a prince.

On a dreary November day, with the wind blowing more than half a gale, I and three others were ordered to gather up tools and materials in preparation to effect repairs aboard an oil tanker which was lying in Cowes Roads, in the Solent. We travelled down to the tanker by the steam launch "Bee" owned by Thornycroft's. We came alongside the tanker, which I think was the "San Antonio", after some difficulty, as a fairly high sea was running, and the launch would have been

damaged had we attempted to go alongside the companionway. Harry, in charge of the "Bee" moved round to the lee of the ship where the ship's crew had let down a rope ladder from a boom extended over the ship's side. Scrambling up and aboard we quickly became absorbed with the job in hand, all of us, except one, an apprentice senior to me, who considered himself the "tough guy" of the apprentices. He had, during the trip down to the tanker, turned a paler shade of green, and we settled him down in a huge coil of rope on the after end of the ship in the (very) fresh air. Towards mid-afternoon the ship's steward gave us fresh bread, tinned cheese and a 7lb empty butter tin in which he put tea, sugar, and powdered milk topped up with boiling water. The resultant brew would have dissolved a teaspoon - strong, sweet and with an oily film floating on top where the butter had been hastily removed before making the tea. For this food we were most grateful.

With the tanker swinging to her anchor and in ballast, with a stiff wind blowing up the Solent, we thought it best to eat our meal on deck, preferring the fresh air to the smell of crude oil which was then inherent in most tankers below deck. I was ravenous, and made an excellent meal from the food provided, buttery tea and all. Not so our forlorn and pallid friend who, taking one brief glance at the can of tea, hastened to the ship's rail.

Soon after 9.30 p.m. the "Bee" returned to take us back to Southampton, but owing to the rough sea was unable to come alongside, so kept a safe distance off on the lee side. The weather showed no sign of abating, and eventually the First Officer told us that unless we left the ship within a short while, the next time we would see land would be at Galveston, Texas, where the "San Antonia" was due to pick up a cargo of crude oil. Apparently sailing time was scheduled for midnight, and it was now turned 11.00 p.m. We decided to leave, and one by one we sat astride the boom, which was moving up and down a bit, and inched our way cautiously along to the rope ladder, and descended onto the mobile deck of the "Bee". Snug inside the diminutive saloon of the launch we had a bumpy ride back to the docks, where we arrived to find the workshops locked up. Hiding the tools and equipment away as best we could, we went our several ways home.

The last train for Eastleigh had long since departed, and I spent the remainder of the night in the Docks Station waiting room until about 5.0 a.m., when the first train of the morning took me to Eastleigh. I really enjoyed that little adventure, which is more than can be said for my "tough" friend.

In 1929 the Wall Street financial collapse, which followed the failure of Mr. Hatry's monetary dealings on the New York stock exchange, had very serious repercussions throughout the United States of America, and almost all the industrialised nations of the world, not least of these being the United Kingdom.

Almost overnight a vast change occurred throughout the British Ship-building industry and within a few weeks the only people employed in the work-shop where I worked were the foreman, the charge-hand, a store-keeper, and six apprentices.

All the berths at Thornycroft's yacht yard at Northam were occupied by luxury steam yachts, laid up indefinitely as a result of the financial problems which hit all and sundry as the effects of the money crises spread. A sign of the times were the five or six two-berth motor cabin cruisers, built at the Thornycroft's Chiswick yard, and brought round to Southampton in the hope that they would sell quicker there. These boats were about seven feet in the beam and twenty-four feet from stem to stern. The asking price? A mere £250.

Through the early and mid-thirties the trade depression continued with very little let-up. It was not until Hitler annexed one European country after another in the latter half of the decade that Britain began to realise the strong position Germany had created for herself. Consequently, Britain slowly started to build up its armaments which brought a new impetus, not only into ship-building, but to almost every other facet of industry.

It was into this industrial scene that I started out as a journey-man after serving a five year apprenticeship. I had in my childhood lived through one world war, and was about to experience another, but that is quite another story.

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