Annual Scottish Maritime History Conference

Mitchell Library, Glasgow
24 October 2019

Programme

10.00am Welcome

Professor Ray Stokes (Centre for Business History in Scotland, University of Glasgow)

10.05 Session 1, Chair: Dr Martin Bellamy

Christin Simons (University of St Andrews)
The Swedish East India Company – a British steppingstone?

Rachel Blackman-Rogers (King's College, London)
Turning the Tide: British Strategic Evolution 1796-1798

J. D. Davies
"For Fear To Be Perished By The Tide': The Scottish Maritime Presence In Carmarthen Bay

11.15 Coffee/Tea

11.45 Session 2, Chair: Professor Stig Tenold

Prof. Alan McKinlay (University of Newcastle) & Dr William Knox, (University of St Andrews)
'Little Bees': British Shipbuilding apprentices from the 1850s-1930s

Dr Nina Baker
Women in the Shipyards in Scotland (and elsewhere) in the 20th Century

Professor Michael Moss (University of Northumbria)
'The lost art of Bill Finance: the case of William Denny & Brothers of Dumbarton, Shipbuilders'

13:00 Lunch

A selection of maritime documents from Glasgow City Archives will be available to view during lunch

14:00 Session 3, Chair: Professor Ray Stokes

Professor John R. Hume
The origins, development and decline of the marine side-lever steam engine

William Stewart Lindsay
'The first auxiliary screw ship of large size ever built' by Scott & Co in 1854

Matthew Bellhouse Moran (Scottish Maritime Museum)
Location Location Location – The Story of the Stephen of Linthouse Engine Shop

15.15 Coffee/Tea

15.45-17.00 Session 4, Chair: Professor Hugh Murphy

Professor Faye Hammill (University of Glasgow)
Imagining the ocean liner: mechanism, modernity, magic

Professor Stig Tenold (Norwegian School of Economics, Bergen)
Globalization and the transformation of a maritime city: The case of Bergen since 1970

Dr Roy Fenton (Ships in Focus Publications)
'Sex and Drink and Rock and Roll': The sea shanty in its economic, social and cultural context

17:00 Concluding Remarks

Paper Abstracts

Christin Simons (University of St Andrews)
The Swedish East India Company – a British steppingstone?
When in 1731, a royal charter was issued to the Swede Henrik König for the establishment of a Swedish East India Company, both national and foreign critics were convinced that König only served as a stooge. Colin Campbell, a Scottish merchant was seen as the real initiator of the company. The SOIC had to come up with a strategy to survive despite the fierce competition of the rivalling Great Powers, like the British EIC and the Dutch VOC. This struggle reached a head when, in 1733, a 600 strong Anglo-French force of the English and French East India Companies attacked 30 men at the Swedish warehouse in the neutral trading port of Porto Novo on the Coromandel Coast of India. They took this action under the allegation that the SOIC served merely as a cloak for interloping British merchants. Was the SOIC a national idea or just a substitute for foreign interlopers?

This paper aims to investigate the accusation raised by Great Britain and to discover the British commercial networks involved in the Swedish East India Company. It does so using previously unused sources from a number of Scandinavian, British and Dutch archives giving a very fresh perspective to this notorious affair. A special focus will be put on the Scots Colin and Hugh Campbell, both directors of the SOIC during the first charter and the British Charles Barrington, who acted as the first supercargo of the Swedish voyage to Porto Novo.

Rachel Blackman-Rogers, (King's College, London)
Turning the Tide: British Strategic Evolution 1796-1798
Britain spent the first three years of the war against Revolutionary France believing it to be a limited economic war that could be won through maritime expansion. It was a strategy that had been born out of the successes of the Seven Years' War and the failures of the American War of Independence and had, unfortunately, failed to be informed by the unlimited rhetoric, aims and strategy of the revolution in France. By October 1796, His Majesty's Navy had been expelled from the Mediterranean and the First Coalition was collapsing. Shocked and now under threat of invasion, Britain was forced to face up to the fact that it was alone and would have to support and pay for an unlimited war. The only way that Britain would accept this was if His Majesty's Navy began to deliver victories that would instil confidence in the nation that British sea power was more than a match for French land power. Nurturing the seeds planted by the Glorious First of June, the battles of St Vincent, Camperdown and the Nile demonstrate an evolution within the Navy that would turn the situation in Britain's favour. Admirals Howe, Jervis, Duncan and Nelson recognised that sea power would have to project power and influence into Europe at an unprecedented level to compensate for the failures of British and Coalition strategy. These Admirals became increasingly willing to engage in high-risk, aggressive opportunities that departed from the *"regular system of war."* They became entrepreneurs of a new system of war, consolidating tactical development into doctrine and providing inspirational leadership that would drive changes to naval culture. Not only would it mark the beginning of permanent British command of the sea, the Navy would become the embodiment of British political stability and military supremacy. As Mahan would later say: *"….the tide had turned."*

J.D. Davies
"For Fear To Be Perished By The Tide': The Scottish Maritime Presence In Carmarthen Bay
The ports and harbours of Carmarthen Bay are probably little known to Scottish audiences. Most were very small, with markedly difficult navigation and primarily local trades and hinterlands; the only reasonably large port, Llanelli, developed despite significant and ultimately insuperable problems. The area's short sea trades were principally with the southwest of England, Lancashire and Ireland. Even so, there was always a Scottish presence in the bay. Vessels from the south-west of Scotland came there to load coal from at least the eighteenth century, with the master of the Peggies of Campbeltown recording a particularly vivid first-hand account of his experiences during a voyage in 1753. A few Scots settled in the area (including, briefly, Lord George Murray, the inventor of the Admiralty shutter telegraph), while the most prominent landowner in the littoral was actually the holder of one of Scotland's most iconic titles, Lord Cawdor. However, the area

was perhaps even more important as a graveyard for Scottish shipping. The ferocious tidal range, the second highest in the world; the orientation of the Pendine, Cefn Sidan and Rhossilli sands, deadly lee shores in the prevailing southwesterlies; and, until the 19th century, the presence of elusive wrecker gangs – all these proved fatal to vessels and seafarers of all nationalities, including Scots. The remains of the Teviotdale (Govan built, Glasgow owned, wrecked 1886) and Craigwhinnie (Edinburgh owned, wrecked 1899) are still two of the most visible wrecks in the bay, reminders of what was once one of the most feared coasts in the British Isles. This paper examines a neglected aspect of Scottish and Welsh maritime histories, shedding light on the long history of maritime interaction between the two nations.

Prof. Alan McKinlay (University of Newcastle) & Dr William Knox, (University of St Andrews)

'Little Bees': British Shipbuilding apprentices from the 1850s-1930s

The drive towards the specialisation of skill has been a continuous and contested feature of the development of industrial capitalism. Under the impact of supply-side innovations and the expansion of the market, the years prior to 1850 witnessed the emergence of new productive processes and techniques which fundamentally altered the mode and organisation of work. The traditional all-round skills of the pre-industrial craftsmen were broken down into a series of detailed and precise operations. Shipbuilding was not immune to these pressures. Specialisation and sub-division of work was a major threat to the privileged and secure position of the artisan as it had the potential to swamp trades with semi- and unskilled labour. It therefore became of paramount importance to skilled workers to control the supply of labour and, ultimately, the labour process itself. Regulating apprenticeship numbers was vital to the balance of power in labour markets and shipyards. Shipbuilding employers evaluated technological investment in terms of how it would impact upon craft and managerial prerogatives. Equally, employers were acutely aware that increasing apprentice numbers would diminish the long-run bargaining power of craft labour in the workplace and the labour market. Central to these concerns has been the debate on de-skilling and the destruction of craft control over the labour process and its subordination to the needs of capital. This paper discusses ideas of deskilling within three important areas of debate: firstly, as they relate to skill as a social construct; secondly, as they affected the relationship of the employer to the apprentice; and, lastly, as they relate to the changing role of the apprentice in the structure of the British shipbuilding industry from the 1850s to the 1930s.

Dr Nina Baker

Women in the Shipyards in Scotland (and elsewhere) in the 20th Century

Seafaring, shipbuilding and naval architecture have been amongst the fields of work most resistant to the entry of females at any level. Nevertheless, some remarkable women have found ways to overcome this barrier and carve themselves a place in the work of shipyards and marine engineering. This talk will look at some of the best known named women in Scotland and England (Lacey, Vansittart, Drummond, Harvey) and also the work done by countless un-named women during the war periods. This year is the centenary of the Women's Engineering Society and the historic stories can help to normalise what is often described as an unusual or exceptional choice by a young woman today who expresses a wish to work in these fields.

Professor Michael Moss, (University of Northumbria)

'The lost art of Bill Finance: the case of William Denny & Brothers of Dumbarton, Shipbuilders'

It is a commonplace that bill finance was used extensively in the United Kingdom and some bills, such as those from the Board of Ordnance and the Victualling Board, became a form of currency as most were negotiable and could be discounted. Bills are peer to peer lending and held off balance sheet and as a result many enterprises and individuals were very highly leveraged. It is well known that they were used extensively in the finance of ship construction. Unusually amongst the records of William Denny & Brothers there are details of the volume of bills running in the early twentieth century. They demonstrate graphically just how highly leveraged the company was, confirming contemporary comment. This paper will illustrate how bill finance functioned using Denny as an example and offer an explanation as to why the use of bills declined.

Professor John R. Hume
The origins, development and decline of the marine side-lever steam engine
This paper addresses the background to the introduction of the marine side-lever engine, its success in early steamboats in the United States and on the Clyde, its development for ever-increasing demands for power for ocean-going vessels, and its subsequent eclipse due to the adoption of screw propulsion. I refer briefly to its survival in paddle tugs. The specific contributions of William Murdoch and David Elder are central to the analysis.

William Stewart Lindsay
'The first auxiliary screw ship of large size ever built' by Scott & Co in 1854
The arrival of the steam engine revolutionised shipping in the 19th Century. Shipowners and builders had a choice; improve tried and tested sailing ships or move to steam powered ships. There was however another alternative; to design (or fit) sailing ships with an auxiliary steam engine. These vessels had the advantage of conventional sailing ships, with their speed and economy, but with the added advantage of a small steam engine which could be used in light winds and in assessing harbours and navigating channels. Unlike fully powered steamships, they required limited amount of coals and hence maximised cargo and passenger space. One advocate of these auxiliary steamships was William Schaw Lindsay MP, a shipowner and a major ship broker, born in Ayr, who designed an auxiliary iron screw steamship the Robert Lowe built by Scott & Co in 1854. He quantified both financial and logistical benefits of his auxiliary steamships. The ship had an eventful and successful 37 years life in various roles around the globe. Following the Crimean War as a Transport Ship, she was involved as a Royal Mail steamship to the Cape, a troop carrier to the Maori Wars, a bride ship to Canada, a tea clipper and finally a cargo ship.

Matthew Bellhouse Moran, (Scottish Maritime Museum)
Location Location Location – The Story of the Stephen of Linthouse Engine Shop
In the late 1980s the ghostly buildings left behind after the decline of Clyde shipbuilding were being cleared for redevelopment. One earmarked for demolition was the original 1872 engine shop built for Alexander Stephen & Sons. At the same time the fledgling Scottish Maritime Museum was looking to expand from a small building by the river Irvine into something more ambitious. With backing from several funders including, the Irvine Development Corporation, plans were drawn up to transport the engine shop from Linthouse, Govan to Irvine in North Ayrshire, where it still stands today.
The talk will cover in brief the historical significance of the engine shed, the story of its relocation, and a discussion of the suitability and limitations of using a brick, glass and iron building as a museum.

Professor Faye Hammill, (University of Glasgow)
Imagining the ocean liner: mechanism, modernity, magic
Commenting on the launch of the *Queen Mary* at Clydebank in 1934, the editor of *The Observer*, J.L. Garvin, considered "the future connection between the almost magical mechanisms which concern every aspect of our being and the right use of life itself". The vocabulary of magic often connects in unexpected ways with accounts of the technical innovations of the early twentieth-century shipping industry. This paper explores the range of meanings that were invested in the ocean liner in the visual and literary culture of this period. It presents a range of (brief) examples from painting, drama, journalism, fiction, and travel writing, as well as from the manifestoes of modernist art and architecture. There is a particular focus on the dimension of time: the liner was sometimes represented as the realisation of a Futurist dream, yet as early as 1927, Osbert Sitwell speculated that: "it may well be that the rusty hulks of transatlantic liners, like the cast shells of some gigantic crustacean … will one day seem the supreme monument which this age has left to itself."

Professor Stig Tenold, (Norwegian School of Economics, Bergen)
Globalization and the transformation of a maritime city: The case of Bergen since 1970
"Economic globalization" has had a profound effect on both the demand and supply for maritime products and services. The Norwegian maritime sector has been transformed over the past fifty years, due to a combination of domestic and international development traits. This presentation focusses on Bergen, a city on the Norwegian west coast with between 200,000 (1970) and 300,000 (2018) inhabitants. The maritime industries have played a crucial role in the city's economy for centuries.

The maritime industries in Bergen had four pillars: a substantial number of shipping companies that owned and operated ships performing transport services for foreign interests; a shipbuilding industry building for local and non-local owners; ancillary companies built up to support maritime activities; consisting of brokers, ship equipment producers, banks, insurance companies etc; and the port of Bergen. This presentation shows how the effects of and response to globalization have varied across the four dimensions.

Dr Roy Fenton (Ships in Focus Publications)
'Sex and Drink and Rock and Roll': The sea shanty in its economic, social and cultural context
There were three recurrent themes in the lyrics of sea shanties, which can be characterised as work songs used to maximise the efficiency of muscle power on sailing vessels. There were references to the women sailors had encountered or hoped to meet at the next port. Second, as most ships were technically at least 'dry', much was made of the pleasures of alcohol, and its after-effects. The third theme was shipboard life in general, the work, the discipline, the officers and the dangers. For instance, the shanty chorus 'rock and roll me overboard' long predates the name given to the post-war popular music genre.

This paper explores why there was an economic need in ships of the mid-nineteenth century to employ a seaman solely for his abilities as a shanty singer. It considers the social role of the songs in knitting together a group of men who not only did not know each other at the start of the voyage, but also came from disparate cultures, often spoke different languages and had varying abilities as seamen. Finally, the paper looks at the survival of shanties, long after their redundancy as work songs, and how a strong culture has grown up of amateurs performing them, particularly at shanty festivals.