

Sea Breezes

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Cover picture: Harrison Liner "Craftsman" in the Thames off Dartford,
from a colour transparency by Skyfotos Ltd., Ashford Airport

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STEAMERS OF THE PAST

BY J. H. ISHERWOOD



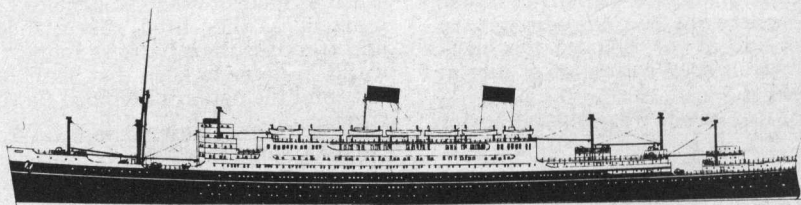
Shaw Savill Liner "Dominion Monarch" of 1939

IN 1933 financial control of the Shaw Savill Line passed to the Furness, Withy company. At that time the most recently-built passenger/cargo ships in the fleet were the *Tamara* and *Mataroa*, and the *Arawa* (ex-*Esperance Bay*), all of 1922. The largest ship owned was the fine old *Ceramic* of 18,500 tons.

About 1937 the company decided on a new fast service to New Zealand via the Cape and Australia, a route they

tons and a load displacement of 36,220 tons. She was 682 ft. in overall length with 657.6 x 84.8 x 44.4 ft. as registered dimensions. The load draft was 34 ft. 1½ in.

The ship had eight decks, three of them full length, rather unusually labelled since the weather deck or forward well deck was called "A" and the others lettered downwards, while above "A" deck were the Promenade, Lounge, and Boat or Sports deck.



Long, sweeping lines of the "Dominion Monarch" are apparent in this profile.

were already serving in conjunction with the Blue Funnel Line. For this a new and very much faster ship than those already owned was required and, in fact, the new ship was to be such a dramatic innovation within the existing fleet that the owners went outside their normal system of nomenclature and christened her *Dominion Monarch*.

The contract went to Swan, Hunter and Wigham Richardson Ltd., and on July 27, 1939 this very outstanding ship was launched from their WallSEND yard.

The *Dominion Monarch* had tonnages of 27,155 gross and 15,813 net, with a deadweight capacity of 17,360

Ten main bulkheads divided the ship up into the two peaks, six cargo holds, main and auxiliary engine rooms and a refrigerating machinery room. She had a capacity for 12,800 tons of frozen cargo and 3,600 tons of general, making her an immense cargo ship.

For working this there was a very complete system of derricks on six pairs of derrick posts and the foremast, with 24 electric winches. The watertight doors were electrically operated and the steering gear was electro-hydraulic.

A large amount of welding was employed in the hull construction, on

the butts of shell plating and the butts and seams of all decks, tank top and bulkheads and this was estimated to produce a saving in weight of 700 tons. For fire extinguishing the sprinkler system was employed in accommodation spaces and CO₂ in the machinery and cargo spaces. Fourteen steel lifeboats were carried under gravity davits, including two 30 ft. motor-boats.

The *Dominion Monarch* was notable in being a quadruple-screw oil engine ship though in this she was not quite unique — the *Augustus* of 1927 had such an arrangement, also the *Reina del Pacifico* of 1931. Each of the four engines, two built by Doxford and two by the hull builders, was a 5-cylinder Doxford opposed piston engine with cylinders 725 mm.in. diameter and a combined stroke of 2,250 mm.

At 133 r.p.m. each developed 3,200 b.h.p. and the combined 32,000 made the ship the highest powered motor liner in the world, though only by a small margin since the *Augustus*, *Georgic* and *Capetown Castle* ran her very close. Service speed was 19½ knots and maximum about 21. The four propellers were outward turning.

The main engine room was 87 ft. long, below the after funnel, while the auxiliary engine room, under the forward funnel, was 56 ft. long and contained five generators, some of the main pumps and four oil-fired auxiliary boilers. Forward of this was the refrigerating machinery room with, below it, deep tanks for oil fuel. In these and double bottom tanks it was possible to carry 5,200 tons of oil, enough to enable the ship to fuel only in South Africa, both homeward and outward.

A one-class ship, exceptionally comfortable accommodation was provided for 517 passengers. It was luxurious without ostentation and one of the main characteristics was spaciousness. There were 129 single-berth cabins and each bed had a bedside telephone — there were no electric bells.

The Thermotank system provided heating and ventilation while the saloon, on "C" deck, was air con-

ditioned. Most of the public rooms were on the Lounge deck, with the officers' accommodation at its fore end. Staterooms were on the Promenade, "A" and "B" decks. A children's playroom and dining room, a swimming bath, gymnasium, verandah and Palm Court were all incorporated.

The engineers lived at the after end of "B" deck, near the engine casing. Seamen, greasers and leading hands in the catering dept., were at the after end of "C" deck and the stewards on "D" deck in way of No. 3 hatchway. I doubt if any one-class ship has ever been more pleasantly fitted out for her passengers on a longish voyage in very varying climates.

The *Dominion Monarch* was a splendid looking ship, with long sweeping lines, funnels slightly abaft amidships and a foremast only. The sheer audacity of the step taken in building her is often not recognised for she was in 1939 not only the largest ship ever built for the New Zealand trade but also for Australia and South Africa as well, let alone being the highest powered motorship afloat. She was larger in tonnage than the P. and O. "Straths" and the Orient liner *Orcades* and, by a few tons, than the *Capetown Castle*.

The ship's service route was from London and Southampton to Teneriffe, Capetown, Durban, Fremantle, Melbourne, Sydney and New Zealand ports, reaching New Zealand in 35 days and returning along the same route, the whole round voyage taking about 3½ months, and with her entry into service the arrangement with the Blue Funnel Line ceased.

Having run her trials and reached 21½ knots in January 1939 the *Dominion Monarch* left London on February 16 and Southampton on the 17th. Between Teneriffe and Capetown she averaged 19.55 knots and between Durban and Fremantle 19.86.

It was a spectacular maiden voyage and she had a triumphal progress round the Australian and New Zealand coast, earning enthusiastic praise at each port of call. She was

however a "lone ship" on the run and it would be interesting to know whether Shaw Savill had ideas for a second or even third similar ship eventually.

But the *Dominion Monarch* was only nearing the end of her second outward voyage when war broke out. She was left on commercial service for the first few months, her huge refrigerated cargoes being of such value to the nation, and even when she was commandeered for trooping in August 1940 and converted at Liverpool it was considered too much like sacrilege to rip out her beautiful new passenger fittings and she was fitted for only 142 officers and 1,340 other ratings. As war went on however such considerations ceased to count and the stripping process went on bit by bit until she was carrying over 4,000 men. But her cargo space continued to be used as far as possible throughout.

Her first trooping voyage was to Egypt, Australia and New Zealand and thence back to Liverpool with a full cargo. The next was to Australia and New Zealand and from there with 1,550 reinforcements to Singapore in September 1941.

Here she was nearly lost. For some reason she was put into drydock and then a general overhaul of her main engines was got under way. When her machinery was partly dismantled heavy Japanese air raids took place, the fall of Singapore was imminent and all native labour was withdrawn or just disappeared.

By superhuman efforts her engine room staff managed to get the engines back into working order so that she was able to escape just in time. From Singapore she returned to Liverpool.

After further stripping out, her troop accommodation was increased to 3,550 and she went off on a voyage to the Near East round the Cape, colliding in convoy off South Africa with the *Highland Chieftain*. In 1943 she carried troops to India via the Cape, her convoy narrowly escaping a "wolf pack" which however caught a slower convoy a day or so later and sank seven out of 11 ships. She was then engaged in trooping to and from

the Middle East, India, Australia and New Zealand making the best use of her cargo space homeward.

On her last run home she picked up in Capetown 1,900 sick and wounded men from the North African campaign. Later in the same year, 1943, she took 3,600 troops from the United Kingdom to Egypt and went on to Augusta to bring home 3,500 men of the 8th Army for rest and reposting.

After this she was ordered to the U.S.A. for American troop ferry service, carrying over 4,000 at a time, also some "permanent" sand ballast. By the end of May she had ferried over 29,000 men.

In August she made a trip to Iceland with British and American personnel, bringing back 2,000 for leave. She also on occasion carried German prisoners of war to America.

By January 1945 her regular trooping duties were over but she carried mixed Service and civilian passengers to Sydney and was otherwise fully employed, having by the end of 1945 carried 90,000 troops, brought 70,000 tons of cargo to Britain and "steamed" 350,000 miles.

She remained under Government orders until July 1947, when she was released to her owners. They sent her up to her builders on the Tyne where she underwent a 15-month refit and was put back into her peace time shape once more.

In spite of her continuous hard driving for the last six years her machinery was found to be in excellent condition and to need little more than a general overhaul.

In December 1948 she resumed her original service and left Southampton on the 17th for South Africa, Australia and New Zealand with 500 passengers. Of their passenger fleet Shaw Savill had only lost the *Ceramic* during the war but the old *Themistocles* was not considered worth reconditioning and was withdrawn.

On the other hand during 1947 and 1948 the four new ships of the *Corinthic* class joined and these were placed on the Panama route. The *Arawa* had reopened the Cape route in August 1947 and the *Dominion*

Monarch now rejoined her, with the *Mataroa*, *Tamaroa* and *Akaroa* helping to maintain the regular service either via the Cape or Panama as required. Wellington was at first the only New Zealand port called at but Auckland and Lyttelton were added later.

Over the next 13 years the *Dominion Monarch* established herself as a most popular ship. Many made the voyage out and home in the form of a cruise while I believe that one or two actually made the ship their home for a time. But during the later years, with the older ships needing replacement, it had become apparent that passengers and cargo no longer "mixed". Labour disputes over cargo work, beyond the company's control, caused long and unexpected delays to the great inconvenience of passengers on board.

Consequently, and for other reasons, about 1952 the company decided on another drastic innovation, a ship carrying passengers only and so many as to be able to replace the passenger capacity of three or four of the old-type ships.

This new ship, the *Southern Cross*, was launched in August 1954 and in February 1955 inaugurated the new round-the-world passenger service from Southampton to the West Indies,

Panama, New Zealand, Australia, the Cape and home to Southampton, taking about 76 days for the run.

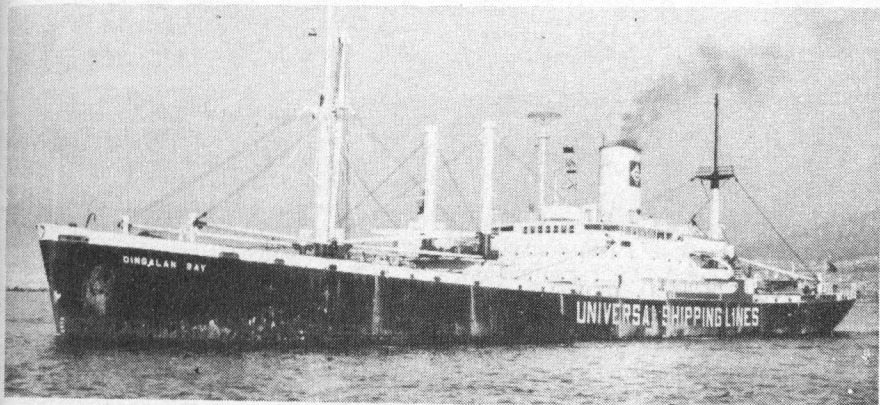
Her success led to the completion of the *Northern Star* in July 1962, the two ships providing eight round-the-world sailings per year. Her completion ended the *Dominion Monarch's* career and on December 30, 1961 she made her final sailing from London.

On return home she was sold in February 1962 to the Japanese Mitsui group who chartered her to an American firm for use as an hotel ship at the World Fair in Seattle. She sailed to Seattle but the hotel ship scheme did not prove a success and her earnings were not remunerative.

Accordingly, handed back to the Japanese, she was renamed *Dominion Monarch Maru* for the voyage across the Pacific and arrived at Osaka for scrapping in November 1962.

Thus the *Dominion Monarch* was only 23 years old when broken up, her rather untimely end brought about by labour disputes, the commissioning of the two passenger-only ships, and, of course, increasing air travel. She had been a splendid ship and when she went the most pleasant and happy way of travelling to New Zealand went with her.

For Scrap in Taiwan



V. H. Young

Among many ships sold to Taiwan shipbreakers during last year was the Philippine cargo ship "Dingalan Bay".