

**THE HISTORY OF THE A.U.S.N. CO. LTD.  
AND ITS PREDECESSORS**

THE HUNTER RIVER STEAM NAVIGATION CO.  
THE AUSTRALASIAN STEAM NAVIGATION CO.  
THE QUEENSLAND STEAM SHIP CO.

[By courtesy of the A.U.S.N. Co. Ltd.]

(Read at a meeting of the Society on 25th November  
1954, by Commander N. S. PIXLEY, M.B.E., V.R.D.,  
R.A.N.R.)

**THE HUNTER RIVER STEAM NAVIGATION CO.**

In 1839 the Colony of New South Wales had a population of approximately 130,000, the greater proportion being stationed in and around Sydney, Parramatta, Windsor and the Newcastle and Hunter River District, and with the population increasing through the Government's bounty immigration system, the problem of efficient transport became proportionately greater. This applied more particularly to the transport between the Hunter River District and Sydney as apparently the settlers in that District had for some time been very badly treated in this matter.

Although a few individual shipowners were running ships from Sydney to various towns in the nearby districts it was very apparent that there was a great need for an efficient and regular shipping service, and accordingly John Eales of Duccenfield called a meeting in Sydney on August 1 of that year. The meeting was held in the Royal Hotel and the first minute passed read as follows:

"That a Company be formed to be styled THE HUNTER RIVER STEAM NAVIGATION COMPANY for the purpose of building or purchasing such steam vessels as may be found necessary to ply between Sydney and Hunter River."

The capital of the Company was fixed at £40,000 to be divided into 4,000 shares of £10 each with power to increase the capital and number of shares at any future period. A deposit of £1 per share was to be paid upon signing the share list.

A provisional committee of the following men was formed to draw up the prospectus and generally manage the early affairs of the Company:

Messrs. Eales, Grose, E. Lord, R. Anderson, John Lord, J. T. Hughes, I. I. Peacock.

Mr. Hickey acted as Secretary to the Committee, and Mr. John Lord was appointed Provisional Treasurer, but Mr. Eales was shortly afterwards appointed Permanent Treasurer.

Although this meeting was the initiation of the Hunter River Co. and although the Prospectus was issued on August 3, the first Board of Directors was not formed until January 29, 1840, and this consisted of Messrs. John Eales, John Hosking (who was then or shortly after Mayor of Sydney), Edward Lord, William Drake, William Abercrombie, Thomas Steele, Daniel Cooper, Robert Scott and Ward Stephens. On January 30, the first General Manager and Secretary, Mr. Matthew Whytlaw was appointed. His salary appears rather inadequate by to-day's standards, as he was paid £250 per annum until the ships arrived, increased to £500 per annum after they came into operation.

Some idea of the difficulty of launching a venture such as this can be obtained from the knowledge of the monetary matters of those days. Money was a rare commodity and bill books must have been at a premium, for it was the accepted custom then and for years afterwards, in purchasing stock, to pay a portion (and that a small portion) in cash, and the remainder by bills, some of them of very long date. This shortage of ready cash must have seriously embarrassed the commencement of any new business in those days, but how much more this would apply to the formation of a shipping company can be readily understood when it is necessary to outlay such relatively large sums for the purchase of ships long before any revenue whatever can be obtained.

Despite these difficulties, however, the Company was formally launched in July 1840, and its capital fixed at £40,000.

Orders were immediately placed in England for three steam paddle ships to be built and generally the Company set about all the necessary preparations prior to commencing trading, and in April 1841 they purchased land and premises at the foot of Margaret Street for their Head Office and wharf. The purchase price of £5,000 is indicative of the land values at that time, as on the ground there was a dwelling house, stone smithy and wharf all well fenced in. In accord-

ance with the general custom this was not a cash transaction, but bills of very long date were given for part at least.

Probably the greatest milestone in the history of any shipping company is the arrival of its first ship, and as far as the H.R.S.N. Co. was concerned this event occurred on April 6, 1841, when the s.s. "Rose"<sup>(1)</sup> commanded by Captain Thomas Stewart<sup>(2)</sup> arrived in Sydney. Her arrival caused a great sensation, and although there were one or two other small ships running for individual owners in the Colony, this ship really heralded the birth of the Australian Mercantile Marine, as apart from being one of the first iron ships ever built she was the first steamer built for an Australian Shipping Co. to the requirements of the Australian trade. The first Certificate of Registry of the "Rose" is at present held by the Royal Australian Historical Society.

One hundred and seventy-two tons burden, length 146ft., breadth 19ft. 6in., depth 11ft. were her measurements, and she was the first of three famous ships, her two sisters, which came out later in the year, being named "Shamrock" and "Thistle." These three ships established the Company and were the forerunners of some 120 odd ships that have traded on the Australian Coast, and in the Pacific, for the A.U.S.N. Co. and its predecessors during the past 100 years.

One of the biggest worries was the docking and repairing of their vessels, and Mr. John Eales sought to overcome this by digging a drydock in the bank of the Hunter River. This was at the best a very primitive affair, there was always a doubt as to its safety, and in the end the three ships were careened in Double Bay, Sydney Harbour. The Newcastle Dock was actually used a few times by the Company's ships, but soon fell into disrepair and the project appears to have been abandoned.

Another cause for concern at that time was the high cost of premiums on Insurance, and on a statement being laid before the Board showing that the cost of Insurance would in three years come to nearly

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1. The *Rose* was the first iron steamer to make the voyage from England to Australia.  
 2. See *Hist. Socy. of Q'ld. Journal*, Vol. III, No. 1. p. 9.

the value of the vessel insured, it was determined that the Company should bear their own risks.

### OPENING OF SERVICE TO MORETON BAY

The first sign of expansion came in December, 1841, when it was proposed to send the "Shamrock" to Moreton Bay. The Directors were faced with serious opposition on their decision, as many of the shareholders contended that it was in direct contravention of the Deed of Settlement, which stated that the Company's ships were to run from Sydney to Hunter River and adjacent ports, and they claimed that Moreton Bay could not be classified as being adjacent to Hunter River. It was further contended that the trade was a dangerous one as Moreton Bay was not considered safe for navigation.

However, legal opinion was obtained on the question and the advice of several Mariners was also sought and, although the legal finding is not recorded, it was reported to the Board that the Mariners regarded Moreton Bay as being, from a nautical point of view, adjacent to the Hunter River and therefore within the meaning of the Deed, and it was decided to continue with the project.

The "Shamrock" pioneering steam communication between Sydney and Moreton Bay left Sydney on December 21, 1841, with seventy-eight passengers and a bumper cargo, a considerable portion being left on the wharf due to lack of space.

Copy of an advertisement from "Sydney Mail," December 1841, reads as follows:

#### STEAMER FOR MORETON BAY

The fine first-class iron steamer  
"SHAMROCK"

will sail for Moreton Bay on Friday the 21st instant at six o'clock.

First Cabin	.....	£8
Second Cabin	.....	£6
Steerage	.....	£4

Exclusive of provisions, which will be furnished by the Steward at moderate rates.

It is expected that the "Shamrock" will make the passage to Moreton Bay in about sixty hours and remain there for not less than four days.

As the "Shamrock" will positively sail at the time stated above early application for passage will be necessary.

Full particulars of freight and charges for cattle apply to Mr. Whytlaw, Hunter River Wharf.

Mr. William Kent was appointed as agent at Moreton Bay for the first trip of the "Shamrock" only, as it was decided by the Board that the permanent agent could not be appointed at that port until the Government decided on the actual position of the township. In the selection of this position the "Shamrock" is alleged to have played quite a vital part for in one of her early trips to Brisbane she had as a passenger Sir George Gipps and party. Sir George was then Governor of the Colony and decided to travel to Moreton Bay to see for himself which should be the site of the port of Moreton Bay, Brisbane or Cleveland.

The "Shamrock" first visited Cleveland where it was found impossible to get her close enough inshore to land the party direct, and an attempt was made to ferry them ashore in the ship's boats. Unfortunately, the boat grounded in the mud and the Governor and his party had to wade ashore.<sup>(3)</sup> If this is correct it is perhaps not to be wondered at that the present site of Brisbane was chosen in preference to Cleveland as the port for Moreton Bay.

On July 30, 1842, it was decided at a half-yearly meeting of shareholders that a steamer should trade once a month to Melbourne town, and the "Shamrock" was nominated for the trade. On 1st August, however, the following resolution was passed at a Directors' meeting: "As it will be both dangerous at this time of the year as well as unprofitable to send the 'Shamrock' to Melbourne town it is resolved that she continue in the Moreton Bay trade"; and the extension of the Company's service to Melbourne was deferred until the following year.

In September the "Sovereign" and "Tamar" were purchased from Mr. Grose for £12,000, and a new addition to the Company's services was made by placing the "Sovereign" in the Sydney to Windsor trade. Although the cabin fare was 25/- and steerage 12/6,

3. The Governor and party arrived in Brisbane on 24/3/1842. *Hist. Socy. of Q'ld. Journal*, Vol. III, No. 1, p. 6.

with freight at 20/- per ton, the speculation was not a success and was soon discontinued.

The year 1843 was one of quiet trading, the most notable changes being the "Sovereign" entering the Moreton Bay trade in place of the "Shamrock," when this latter vessel once again pioneered a new departure for the Company and further expanded their services by replacing Mr. Ben Boyd's "Seahorse" in the Sydney-Twofold Bay-Melbourne-Launceston trades. The "Seahorse" had been run by Mr. Boyd until she could operate no longer.

Early in the year the "Rose" required to have her boilers renewed, although she was only two and a half years old, an incident which does not speak too highly of Marine Engineering of those early days.

For the next few years the Company maintained their services with nothing more startling than a few changes in ships from one trade to another. The "Thistle" was in the Brisbane trade from 1844 and for a number of years her partner was the "Sovereign." "Tamar" replaced "Thistle" in this service in 1846 and "Thistle" replaced "Sovereign" in 1847<sup>(4)</sup> and continued in the trade until transferred to the Hunter River service in 1848.

Apparently up until the end of 1845 the steamers to Brisbane used a rough landing stage made of a log laid parallel to the bank on the south bank of the Brisbane River somewhere near Kangaroo Point,<sup>(5)</sup> and a further account speaks of the ships tying up to Macintyre's gum tree on the river bank until a dispute between the Company and the owner of the gum tree put an end to the tree being used as a mooring place. The Company's first wharf was built in the same position as the mooring place, and it was some years before they moved to the other side of the river to the position they occupy to-day.

Examples of the close association of this Company with the development of Australia continually arise during this History and three early instances are related here.

In July 1846 the following appeared in the Company's Minute Book:

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4. The *Sovereign* was wrecked in the South Entrance to Moreton Bay, 11th March 1847--44 lives lost.  
5. See J. J. Knight, *In the Early Days*.

“Dr. Leichardt’s<sup>(6)</sup> application for passage to Moreton Bay. Dr. Leichardt’s letter read setting out that he and a party of men were about undertaking an exploring expedition to Port Essington. Resolved that his application be granted.”

In December 1847 it was decided by the Company that equipment for Leichhardt’s expedition should be sent forward gratuitously by the Company’s ships to Moreton Bay.

Mrs. Chisholm, the wife of a Military Officer, who was campaigning at the time for protection for emigrant girls coming into the Colony was granted a passage to Moreton Bay for the purpose of finding employment for them there.

In 1846 the first step towards creating their own shiprepairing and building works in Sydney was undertaken with the purchase of property and the erection of a wharf and boiler sheds at the cost of £111. This property was then known as “The Island” and its approximate position is about 13 Pyrmont, near the site of the present Port Line Berths in Sydney Harbour.

Mr. Chowne, another shipbuilder, seems to have been well established at this time at Pyrmont, Sydney, and in 1847 he contracted to build the steamer “Eagle” for the Company. The contract price was £17/5/- per ton or £5,300 for 307 tons, and she was launched on August 23, 1848.

Her engines came from the “James Watt,” which had been dismantled the previous year, and she was fitted with tubular boilers, a pattern which was then becoming popular in ships in England, but this was the first ship using them in Australia. These boilers were actually constructed at the Company’s works at Pyrmont and marked quite an achievement in ship construction in Sydney.

The Company continued to expand and prosper, this expansion, both in number and frequency of services, easily finding a parallel in the gradual enlargement of the new colonies at Moreton Bay and Melbourne Town.

By 1851, the Company owned their own wharves at Sydney and other ports and had started a ship re-

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6. Correct spelling LEICHHARDT.

pairing and building works at Pymont, altogether a splendid achievement for so young a Company wholly established and run within the Colony and financed by colonial capital.

## Chapter II

### FURTHER EXPANSION AND FORMATION OF AUSTRALASIAN STEAM NAVIGATION CO.

The Hunter River Co., however, were called upon to expand still further to meet the demands which the rapid growth of the Colony placed on their services, and accordingly in July 1851 the Company was completely reorganised and a new Company started.

This Company with the assets of the old Company and a capital of £320,000 was incorporated by an Act of Parliament, was granted power to make its own by-laws, and was given the name of:

The Australasian Steam Navigation Co.

Mr. James Patterson, who had been manager of the Hunter River Steam Navigation Co., was appointed Secretary of the new Company, and as he had supervised the building of the "Rose," "Shamrock," and "Thistle," was sent to England to arrange for and oversee the building of four new steamers for the coastal service.

It could now be said that the Company had a virtual monopoly on the coast and their hold on the trade increased as they built new and bigger ships in England and bought others as they became available. The "Yarra Yarra," 556 tons, the "Waratah," 256 tons, and the "Clarence," 222 tons, were built on the Clyde in 1851. In 1853 the "City of Sydney," 393 tons, was built in England and the "Ballarat" in Sydney, whilst the "City of Melbourne,"<sup>(7)</sup> 144 tons, was purchased in Australia. The "Ben Bolt," 500 tons, was purchased in 1854 and the "Telegraph," 367 tons, "Boomerang," 445 tons, "Illalong," 294 tons, and "Wonga Wonga," 681 tons, were all built in the same year.

About the year 1852, the residents at Moreton Bay commenced to press for separation from New South Wales and for the formation of a separate colony of Queensland, and amongst the various demands, for which the northern settlers were agitating,

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7. *City of Melbourne* in August 1853 was the first steamer with a screw propeller to come up the Brisbane River. *Hist. Socy. of Q. Journal*, Vol. III, p. 21.

was the formation of their own steamship service. This was really the first serious attempt to form a shipping company to run in opposition to the A.S.N. The initial meeting held in Brisbane in 1852 proposed to float a company known as the "Moreton Bay Steam Navigation Co.," and its capital was fixed at £15,000 composed of 1,500 £10 shares. The object of the Company was stated to be "for the purpose of laying on a steamboat of proper power and speed to run from Brisbane to Sydney or elsewhere." It is stated that £6,000 was subscribed at the meeting and that the venture was supported a few days later at a further meeting at Ipswich.

By the end of August it appears that more than two-thirds of the required capital had been subscribed and there was a call of £4/10/- per share in October, when the whole scheme broke down. William Coote, in his "History of the Colony of Queensland,"<sup>(8)</sup> expresses the opinion that its failure would place another weapon in the hands of the Sydney opponents of separation, and this opinion was fully borne out by arguments subsequently advanced in the Sydney newspapers, all of which were fighting the separation movement as hard as they could.

An historic event occurred on February 16, 1853, when the "Ballarat," a 130-ton steamer, was launched from the Company's works at Pymont. She was an iron steamer, the ribs and plates for which were brought out from England in the "Yarra Yarra," and she was put together at Pymont; her engines came from the "Raven," which had been wrecked on the McLeay River bar. Her launching created great interest in Sydney and was indeed another milestone in the nautical affairs of the colony.

The A.S.N. Co. now had four steamers constantly employed in the Sydney-Melbourne trade, the "Yarra Yarra," "Telegraph," "City of Sydney," and "Wonga Wonga," and in December 1854 they made their next step in the expansion of their trade when they placed the steamer "City of Melbourne" in the Brisbane to Gladstone service. This step clearly indicates the northward growth of the colony and how the A.S.N.

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8. Vol. I. p. 143.

Co. was ready to expand its services in parallel with this development.

It is hard to realise just how much ships really meant to the colonies in those days when they were the only means of communication with the outside world. The sounding of the whistle of the A.S.N. steamer as it came up the Brisbane River meant more than anything else, news of the outside world. One special instance of this occurs in a report<sup>(9)</sup> of the arrival of the "Boomerang" in Brisbane, on December 15, 1855, steaming up the river gaily bedecked with bunting and blowing her whistle incessantly, bringing the news of the fall of Sebastopol.

The year 1855 brought a great depression in Australian shipping, largely on account of the Crimean War. This war, amongst other things, caused a cessation of the P. & O. Mail Service to Australia and the A.S.N. Company immediately offered to run the mails to Ceylon, but their offer was not accepted. One result of this depression was the winding up of the Sydney and Melbourne Steam Packet Co. and the sale of its ships by auction. The A.S.N. Company bought two of the ships, the "London," 405 tons, and "Governor-General," 502 tons, for £7,000 each.

Three important events in the history of the Company occurred in this year, and strangely enough each one seems oddly at variance with a shipping depression.

The first event was on January 9, with the arrival in Sydney of the new paddle steamer "Telegraph," of 367 tons; she was built on the Clyde and being a modern steamer she soon became a great favourite on the coast. Writing of her arrival, a reporter of the Sydney paper made the following observations:

"A splendid modern paddle steamer with cabin appointments of the most elegant description, having ample space for fifty saloon and 100 steerage passengers. Her saloon is panelled with birds-eye maple and rich gold beadings and cornices. Her staterooms and sofa berths fitted in a most costly manner."

The second was the commencement of a weekly service between Sydney-Wide Bay and Port Curtis

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9. COOTE: *History of the Colony of Queensland*, Vol. I, p. 180.

with the employment of the steamers "Yarra Yarra," "Waratah" and "City of Melbourne," whilst a third was a further expansion to the Company's works at Pymont with the opening of a Patent Slip, the material for which had been imported into the colony from England.

The shipping depression continued into 1856 and caused a sharp decline in fares and freights on the coast, the saloon fare between Sydney and Melbourne coming down to £8/8/-, the intermediate to £5/5/- and steerage £3/10/-. Freight between those two ports was down to 40/- per ton and between Brisbane and Sydney 45/- per ton.

For the next two years, the A.S.N. Co. enjoyed more or less peaceful trading on the coast and the period saw a gradual extension of trade and fleet. The gold rush to the Port Curtis diggings was the beginning of the town of Rockhampton, and the A.S.N. Co.'s ships were well to the fore in carrying prospectors to the area. Captain R. T. Moodie, who commanded the "City of Sydney" in this trade, stayed in Rockhampton and looked after the Company's interests there, so associating the Company with the growth and development of the district from the very outset.

The cotton industry in the Moreton Bay District was coming under notice by May 1859, and to assist the industry in its early stages, it was agreed by the Company to carry cotton gins to that District free of freight, whilst a further example of their desire to help in the progress of the northern area is shown by the contribution they made in November to build a bridge over a creek in Eagle Street, Brisbane.

An interesting shipbuilding feat<sup>(10)</sup> was accomplished at the Pymont works when the "Telegraph" was lengthened by twenty-eight feet. This was the first time such an operation had been performed in Australia and an account of how it was performed will perhaps be of interest. The "Telegraph" engines were approximately amidships and her hull was first cut through just forward of the engine-room and a new piece, fourteen feet in length, added. When this addition was completed, the hull was again cut through

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10. See *Hist. Socy. of Q'ld. Journal*, Vol. III, No. 1. p. 12.

just abaft the engine-room and another piece, fourteen feet long, was inserted and the after end joined on. The belief that this increase in length would, besides increasing her capacity, give her greater speed was fully justified by results obtained when she re-entered the service.

On December 10, 1859, Queensland, after considerable agitation, became a separate colony and within a few months the colonists were organising their own Shipping Company<sup>(11)</sup> in opposition to the A.S.N. Co.

#### QUEENSLAND STEAM NAVIGATION CO.

The first meeting of the proposed company was held at Ipswich when consideration was given to a circular from R. Towns & Co., proposing the establishment of a shipping company to be known as the "Queensland Steam Navigation Co."

The prospectus of the Company was first advertised in the "Moreton Bay Courier" of May 22, 1860, and as an inducement to possible applicants for shares, mention was made in it of the very large revenue which the A.S.N. Co. was drawing from its Queensland trade and of the fact that the rapid settlement of the northern portion of the colony and the contemplated occupation of extensive areas of country on the Burdekin River held out a further inducement to make Brisbane the centre of a system of steam navigation, linking together the various ports of Queensland and of connecting them with Sydney.

The capital of the Company was set down as £50,000 in 2,000 shares of £25 each, and it was proposed to commence its services with three sea-going vessels, two to run between Brisbane and Sydney and one to connect Brisbane with the ports of Maryborough, Gladstone and Rockhampton. The new Company appeared to remain dormant for a few years and further mention is made of its development later in this history.

During 1860 the Company launched a steamer, the "Ipswich," built for the trade on the Brisbane River between Brisbane and Ipswich, and they appear to have been very much alive to the necessity for offering a good service to the residents of Queensland.

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11. See *Hist. Socy. of Q'ld. Journal*, Vol. III, No. 1, pp. 15-20.

During 1861 the Queensland Steam Navigation Co. was floated, and an important appointment to the new Company was Captain Patullo. This officer did a considerable amount to place the Q.S.N. Co. on its feet and one of his first missions was to proceed to England and supervise the building of the three new steamers which the new Company had ordered. He had been Master and Engineer of the A.S.N. Co.'s ship "Brisbane," and later the "Ipswich," running on the Brisbane River, and because he had only engaged in river work, he did not possess a Master's Certificate for deep-sea voyages. However, whilst he was in Glasgow supervising the building of the Q.S.N. Company's first ship "Queensland" he studied for and obtained his certificate and brought the ship out to Australia.<sup>(12)</sup>

Early in 1862 the Queensland Government signed an agreement with the Queensland Steam Navigation Co. for the conveyance of the colony's mails for three years from April 1. The "Queensland," built specially for the trade, arrived in Brisbane amidst great rejoicing and was immediately placed in service. The A.S.N. Co. met this opposition by cutting its passage rates and the following comparative table gives the rates prevailing in August of that year:

	A.S.N.	Q.S.N.
Brisbane-Maryborough—Saloon .....	£2 0 0	£2 5 0
Steerage .....	17 6	£1 0 0
Brisbane-Rockhampton—Saloon .....	£3 0 0	£4 0 0
Steerage .....	£1 7 6	£2 0 0

The new steamer "Diamantina"<sup>(13)</sup> arrived in April and was placed in the Sydney-Brisbane-Maryborough-Rockhampton trade, whilst the "City of Sydney" was lost off Green Cape on November 7 in that year.

### Chapter III

#### FURTHER COMPETITION—EXPANSION OF AUSTRALIAN COASTAL COMPANIES

In the years 1863 and 1864 competition on the coast became fiercer and the war of rates which was carried on in the Sydney-Brisbane trade between the A.S.N. Co. and Q.S.N. Co. became so strong that by the end of 1864 the A.S.N. was actually charging only

12. See *Hist. Socy. of Q'ld. Journal*, Vol. III, No. 1, p. 17.

13. *Idem*, p. 23.

one-quarter of the rates previously charged. This does not appear to have dampened the ardour of the Queensland people, however, who still hopeful of success, increased the capital of the Q.S.N. Co. to £60,000 and purchased the "Lady Young" and "Lady Bowen," 442 tons, and the "Platypus," a cargo vessel of 164 tons.

Extensive wharves and stores were built by the A.S.N. Co. at Brisbane and Rockhampton, the Brisbane wharves being built on the site of the present Mary Street wharf.

The Company's shipyards were very busy during this period as they built the "Yaamba," 75 tons, and two similar river steamers and the "Leichardt," 459 tons.

In March of 1865 the A.S.N. steamers extended through to Townsville, and in July the "James Patterson" was sent to Hokitika to service the new goldfields opening there; the new paddle steamer "Leichardt"<sup>(14)</sup> of 459 tons was placed in the Sydney-Brisbane-Maryborough-Rockhampton service and generally the A.S.N. steamers were being placed in ever-expanding trades, but despite all this the Q.S.N. competition was so strong that at the half-yearly meeting in July a loss of £10,000 was shown and the 5% dividend was declared out of the Insurance Fund.

By November, however, the Q.S.N. Co., who had themselves been feeling the strain of the fierce competition, finally agreed after many conferences to come to friendly terms with the A.S.N. and collective rates to Queensland ports were accordingly arranged. It was not until July 1866, however, that the A.S.N. were able to declare another dividend.

The "Kennedy," 201 tons, and "Tinonee," 297 tons, were all built at the Company's Pyrmont works about this time, but the Company suffered a further casualty when the "Cawarra" foundered off Newcastle in July 1866 and all hands were lost with but one exception.

In October 1867 the Company lost the steamer "Telegraph," wrecked off Cape Perpendicular, and so ended the career of probably the most popular ship on the coast at that time and one whose records for passages were unsurpassed for many years.

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14. The name of this steamer (*Leichardt*) appears to have been mis-spelt with only one "h" instead of two.

With the advent of the year 1868 the Queensland Steam Navigation Co. suffered a crippling blow when it lost the mail subsidy from the Queensland Government, and being unable to carry on without it had perforce to cease trading. All its assets were sold to the A.S.N. Co. for £42,000, including the ships "Queensland," "Lady Bowen," "Lady Young," and "Emu," thereby removing the A.S.N. Co.'s most serious opposition and at the same time adding these fine steamers to their fleet.

For the next few years trade ran smoothly on the coast with the Company declaring regular half-yearly dividends of 10% plus bonuses of up to 5/- per share. Land was purchased at Bundaberg to erect wharves and sheds, new sheds were built at the foot of Margaret Street in Sydney, and the Marine Superintendent was sent to England in 1872 for the purpose of purchasing new ships for the Company. The gold rushes to Townsville, however, had proved a failure and the records tell of the Company's ships bringing the destitute gold-seekers back to Brisbane and Sydney under Government subsidy.

The year 1874 witnessed the extension of the Company's services still further up the coast of Queensland with the "Leichardt" taking passengers to the goldfields of Cooktown.

This vessel was also the first coastal steamer to call at Trinity Bay (Cairns), making the visit when southbound from Cooktown on October 8. Six days later the "Florence Irving" arrived from Brisbane inaugurating a regular mail service between these two ports.

The Company now entered on a period of peaceful trading and little happened to upset the tranquil task of running steamers at a profit with scanty opposition. A few of their ships were lost about this time, the "Rangitara" being wrecked in May 1875, the "Florence Irving" lost near Port Stephens in December 1877, "Queensland" stranded in the Fitzroy River in the same month, whilst in November of that year "Ly-ee-Moon" had been partially destroyed by fire.

Two other incidents occurring at this time and worthy of mention were the purchase of Campbells Wharf in Sydney for £100,000, the wharf being situated at the N.W. corner of Circular Quay, and

the resignation of Captain O'Reilly,<sup>(15)</sup> the Brisbane manager. Captain O'Reilly commenced in business as a Customs agent and no name is better known in the Customs and Shipping associations of Brisbane than his. He had served for many years in the A.S.N. Co. and had been master of most of their crack steamers before being given the Brisbane management.

A notation appears in the history of the A.S.N. Co. written by Captain F. H. Trouton that the Company entered the China trade in March 1877, but there is no further information as to how far they became involved in it, and it was apparently a spasmodic venture. One apparent result, however, was the importation into Australia of three crews of Chinese seamen and firemen for the ships engaged in the Company's Australian Coastal services. This departure caused a strike amongst seamen and waterside workers engaged on the Company's ships, a strike which lasted for about three months and terminated with the Company undertaking to abandon its policy of importing Chinese crews and to return to Australian labour.

The year 1880 saw the withdrawal of the A.S.N. Company from the Sydney-Hunter River trade and the sale of all their steamers and plant engaged in that service; the Company also sold the "Balclutha" and "Bee" and in January 1881 Captain Trouton went to England to arrange for the construction of eleven new steamers, the intention being to bring the Company's tonnage completely up to date.

#### **QUEENSLAND STEAM SHIP CO.**

By 1881 the British India Steam Navigation Co. was well established, running from Brisbane to England via Torres Strait, and they commenced a coastal service in December of that year as a feeder service to their mail steamers. The name of the new Company was the Queensland Steam Ship Co., with head offices in Brisbane, and it brought out three steamers all well in advance of anything on the coast at that time. They were the "Warrego," 1,552 tons, "Barcoo" and "Maranoa," 1,505 tons each. Parbury Lamb were appointed Brisbane agents and Burns Philp & Co. Ltd. Sydney agents, and the Company entered into the trade between Sydney-Brisbane and Queensland ports.

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15. See *Hist. Socy. of Q'ld. Journal*, Vol. III, No. 1, pp. 10-12, 21.

This new Company was by far the strongest competition the A.S.N. had so far met, backed as they were by Queensland interests who apparently were only too pleased to support any venture in opposition to the southern colonies, and also by the strong over-sea shipping company, the B.I.S.N. Co., and they immediately forced a bitter war in freights and passage money on the coast. This war continued for five years with fluctuating fortunes for both companies, and culminated in what was then and probably still is the biggest shipping transaction in Australia. The transaction itself is described in greater detail later in this history, and it is perhaps advisable at this juncture to consider the position of shipping generally on the Australian coast up to the year 1886, with particular reference to the A.S.N. and Q.S.S. companies.

The main companies were the Adelaide Steamship Co., running between Adelaide and Sydney. Huddart Parker Ltd., in the same service with Howard Smith's ships, were running from Sydney to Queensland ports alongside the A.S.N. and Q.S.S. ships.

These Companies were all trading in friendly competition, and it seems that they did not engage in any freight war until the advent of the Q.S.S. Co. This state of affairs is probably accounted for by the fact that no company was really strong enough to challenge the A.S.N. and they were apparently content to maintain their place in the coastal service and more or less follow the lead of that line. It is also probable that the A.S.N., because of their preponderance of tonnage, could well afford to ignore any attempt their competitors made in the way of trade competition.

The officials of the A.S.N. Company in 1884 were as follows:

**Board of Directors:** James Ewan (Chairman), Edward Lord (Deputy Chairman), R. Binnie, Jun., Henry Moses, M.P., Charles H. Myles, Esq., Capt. W. J. Hynes.

**Auditors:** George Rattray, E. M. Stephen.

**Manager:** F. H. Trouton.

**Secretary:** Frederick Phillips.

**Accountant:** Dawson A. Davis.

**Superintendent Engineer:** George Davidson.

**Marine Superintendent:** Festing C. Knight.

**Traffic Manager:** Hamilton Spier.

The fleet of the A.S.N. Co. in 1884 was:

Steamer	Gross Tonnage	H.P.	When built
"Birksgate"	1,458	163	Feb. 1882
"Bunyip"	58	16	1873
"Cintra"	1,979	400	Nov. 1882
"City of Adelaide"	1,212	200	Mar. 1864
"City of Melbourne"	838	200	1862
"Dingadee"	640	80	Mar. 1883
"Egmont"	419*	100	May 1864
"Elamang"	496	200	Aug. 1876
"Eurimbla"	1,055	180	1884
"Fitzroy"	870	180	Oct. 1883
"Glanworth"	877	160	April 1882
"Gunga"	1,257	220	Oct. 1864
"Hesketh"	640	80	June 1883
"James Patterson"	570		1862
"Katoomba"	1,006	200	Feb. 1878
"Leichardt"	690	100	1865
"Palmer"	267	74	May 1884
"Porpoise"	91	12	1875
"Queensland"	425	120	1861
"Quirang"	1,166	200	Dec. 1881
"Rockton"	1,971	400	June 1882
"Tenterden"	1,529	140	May 1883
"Victoria" <sup>(16)</sup>	1,225	120	Oct. 1871
"Wentworth"	956	160	Jan. 1873
"Yaralla"	303	60	1875
"Ranelagh"	836	160	1881
"Currajong"	603		
"Governor Blackall"	487	100	

Plus a large number of hulks, barges and launches.

\* Nett.

As against this, the Queensland Steam Ship Co. were running services from Sydney to Cooktown, via ports, and to Thursday Island, Normanton, Burketown and monthly to New Guinea, their steamers being:

"Archer"	694 tons		
"Barcoo"	1,505	„	built 1885
"Maranoa"	1,505	„	„ 1883

16. The *Victoria* was chartered by the Queensland Government to return Kanakas (kidnapped by Blackbirding Ships) to their islands. See *Hist. Socy. of Q'ld. Journal*, Vol. IV, No. 3, p. 401.

“Warrego”	1,552	„
“Corea”	606	„
“Polly”	194	„
“Truganini”	203	„

The railway position was that the Sydney to Brisbane line had not been completed and the railways in Queensland were all built from the ports to the interior and no line had been built along the coast connecting the ports.

The steamers therefore had no rail competition whatever on their services from Sydney northwards, and although the Brisbane-Sydney line was opened in 1888 it was some time before the railway offered serious opposition on the Queensland coast, and many years before it extended through to Cairns from Brisbane.

#### Chapter IV

### **ONE OF THE BIGGEST SHIPPING DEALS IN AUSTRALIAN HISTORY—AMALGAMATION OF Q.S.S. AND A.S.N. COYS.**

To arrive at the reason behind the amalgamation of the Queensland Steam Shipping Co. and the Australasian Steam Navigation Co., it is necessary to retrace the history back to about the year 1880, when the British India Steam Navigation Co. extended their services to Queensland.

Queensland had for many years been agitating for an independent mail service between London and her own ports, via Torres Strait, with the terminal port at Brisbane. The northern colony had previously conducted a branch service through Torres Strait connecting at Singapore with the P. & O. Liners, but this was abandoned when the southern colonies derived the principal advantage from the service on Sydney being made the terminal port.

In the year 1880 the British India Steam Navigation Co., which had gradually been extending its services, undertook the contract for a monthly steamer to London through the Suez Canal and by way of Torres Strait, calling at the principal Queensland ports and terminating at Brisbane.

From all accounts, this service did not pay at first, but nevertheless the British India Co. continued to maintain a monthly steamer until the year 1881, when they realised that a considerable amount of the

Queensland trade was still going via the southern ports by the operations of the coasting steamers, i.e., A.S.N. and Howard Smith's, who had their headquarters at Sydney, sweeping the Queensland ports and carrying traffic via Sydney instead of permitting it to be carried by the legitimate route, the direct Queensland steamers to and from London.

It was obvious, therefore, that the only way out was to start another shipping company and accordingly, in conjunction with Mackinnon Mackenzie & Co. and McIlwraith McEacharn Ltd., it was decided to form the Queensland Steam Shipping Co. This company immediately entered into the Australian coastal trade between Sydney and Brisbane to Queensland ports, and for the first two years their operations were very successful, their profits being not only sufficient to pay dividends but also to set aside an ample amount for depreciation and the Company were induced to expand and to increase their tonnage.

This action on the part of the Q.S.S. Co. alarmed the A.S.N. Co. and Howard Smiths, who also took immediate steps to increase their tonnage on the coast, and in three years the A.S.N. Co. added eleven steamers to their fleet, whilst Messrs. Howard Smiths added four or five. Consequently, when the Queensland Steamship Co.'s new vessels arrived in the colony they were met by the opposition of these new steamers and the nett result was that the total tonnage on the coast was practically doubled.

At the same time, Australia had a very severe drought, affecting the Queensland trade severely, which was also further impeded by the action of the Queensland Government in prohibiting the importation of Kanaka labour from the Pacific Islands for the sugar industry.

Early in 1885 the A.S.N. Co., who had been feeling the effect of the trade war very seriously, made overtures to the Queensland Steamship Co. to prevent the coastal competition as no dividends were being paid. These overtures were unsuccessful, and an offer by the A.S.N. Co. to amalgamate with the Q.S.S. Co. (but excluding landed property) was refused.

In June 1885 the A.S.N. Co. revealed at their general meeting that they had incurred a loss, and to make matters worse their latest and best ship, the

“Cahors,” had become a total wreck at Evans Head. The “Cahors” being totally uninsured and costing £60,000 meant a very serious loss to the A.S.N. Co.

In the meantime the British India Co. and Queensland Agency had been formed on May 5, 1885, by Mackinnon Mackenzie & Co., Gray Dawes & Co., and the McIlwraith McEacharn & Co. The business of this company was that of steamship management. They opened their Head Office in Australia at Brisbane, and became managing agents in Australia of the British India Co. and the Q.S.S. Co.

Negotiations between the B.I. & Q.A. Co. and the A.S.N. Co. resulted in an offer by the B.I. & Q.A. Co. to purchase the existing fleet of the A.S.N. Co., furniture fittings, etc., for £200,000 sterling.

A special meeting of the A.S.N. Co. in Sydney was held on December 3, 1886, when after nearly two hours' discussion the Directors were empowered to close with the offer of the B.I. & Q.A. Co.

## Chapter V

### **GROWTH OF A.U.S.N. CO. LTD.—FREIGHT WARS— FEDERATION**

The British India and Queensland Agency Co. Ltd., incorporated in London, with its head office in Brisbane, who became Managing Agents of the A.U.S.N. Co. Ltd., had the following partners:

Gray Dawes & Co., Mackinnon Mackenzie & Co.,  
McIlwraith McEacharn Ltd.

Several changes were made in the initial stages to the agencies at various ports, but the main agency in Sydney was retained by Messrs. Burns, Philp & Co. Ltd.

The new Company did not alter any of the old services at first, but generally rearranged the ships to suit requirements. During their first two years they disposed of the “Governor Blackall” and the “Currajong,” whilst the “Wentworth” was wrecked off Bowen, and to offset this to a certain extent, the new steamer “Bulimba” arrived in Brisbane on September 9, 1888, for service on the coast.

In June the A.U.S.N. Co. successfully tendered to the Queensland Government £15,900 per annum to run the mails Brisbane to Burketown for five years.

In November 1889 the "Polly" became a total loss through grounding and breaking her back in the Johnstone River, whilst in 1890 the "City of Adelaide" and "Dingadee" were sold. These ships were replaced by the arrival of the "Aramac" on November 5, 1889, "Arawatta" January 10, 1890, and "Wodonga" on October 12 of the same year. With a gross tonnage of over 2,000 they rapidly made themselves firm favourites on the coast and will still be remembered by many people to-day. Their arrival on the coast created quite a stir as they were large ships for their day and electric light was installed throughout—a very rare thing for coastal ships. With the exception of one stranding, they ran free from serious accident until withdrawn from service in 1924, a period of about thirty-four years.

The Hawkesbury River railway bridge was opened to traffic in May 1889, and although this caused a big reduction in rail fares between Sydney and Brisbane, the steamer fares were well below these.

The railway connection between Brisbane and Bundaberg opened in July bringing the Shipping Companies into opposition with the railways for the first time on the Queensland coast and the A.U.S.N. Co. reduced their fares to Maryborough from 40/6 single saloon and 70/- return to 20/- and 30/-, and those to Bundaberg from 50/6 and 90/6 to 30/- and 45/-, thus bringing them well below the rail fare.

By June 1892 the freight rate Melbourne-Sydney was down to 4/- per ton, and the rail competition between Brisbane and Bundaberg had caused a great falling off in trade. To add to the A.U.S.N. Co.'s troubles, Moxon & Co. commenced to run steamers between Brisbane and Gulf ports and were canvassing very strongly for support in direct opposition to A.U.S.N. Co.

From 1891 to 1893 the Company sold the "Archer" and "Alexandra" and lost the "Truganini," "Corea" and "Tenterden," and the fact that these ships were not replaced is perhaps indicative of the falling-off in trade, passenger especially, caused by the rail competition.

The years 1893 and 1894 saw no diminution in the war on the coast, and during those two years the passage rates between Brisbane and Sydney were fur-

ther reduced by Howard Smith and A.U.S.N. Co. to £1 saloon single, thus undercutting the Adelaide Steamship Co., who had entered the Queensland service after securing the contract for the carriage of the bulk of the C.S.R. Co.'s sugar. Mr. Moxon was appointed Queensland Manager of the Adelaide Steamship Co. when that line was extended to the northern colony. In retaliation for this extension to Queensland, the A.U.S.N. Co., in conjunction with Howard Smiths, extended their services through to Adelaide and Fremantle and entered into freight contracts at Northern Queensland ports.

During July 1893 a new weekly service from Melbourne to Rockhampton was started by the A.U.S.N. Co., who had just secured the Queensland mail contract for a further five years, and a new fortnightly service, Sydney-Burketown, was commenced in April 1894.

By the end of 1895 the Companies had reached bedrock in their undercutting, and freights and passage money on all services commenced an upward trend. The increases, although not very great, were general and continued in 1896, when they were stabilised as far as the Queensland trade was concerned by an agreement signed in February by Howard Smiths Ltd., the Adelaide Steamship Co., and the A.U.S.N. Co.

The Company lost the "Glanworth" on Settlement Point, near Gladstone, in January 1896, and later in the year sold the "Hesketh" to a New Zealand firm, whilst the "Elamang" and "Katoomba" were converted to cargo steamers. This latter move gives a very good indication of the effect that the ever-expanding railway services were having on the coastal passenger trade.

In March 1898 all the Australian Shipping Companies at a meeting in Melbourne unanimously decided on the desirability of a comprehensive agreement, but at a further meeting in April failed to agree owing to the excessive demands of two of the Companies.

By August, however, the freight rate between Sydney and Melbourne, which was ridiculously low, was increased by agreement between all the Companies and, further, a joint purse agreement was

signed by the A.U.S.N. Co. and the Adelaide Steamship Co.

Matters were now moving rapidly towards the formation of an association, and at a meeting of all the steamship owners held in Melbourne in July 1899, it was decided to form a Shipping Federation, and in September of that year the first meeting was held in Melbourne of the "Australasian Steamship Owners' Federation."

This was followed in January 1900 by an agreement on a freight and passage money schedule between Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane to Queensland ports signed by the A.U.S.N. Co., Adelaide Steamship Co. and Howard Smiths, and this spirit of agreement prevails until the present day and has resulted in the maintenance of an efficient and up-to-date coastal shipping service.

Several changes had been made in the A.U.S.N. fleet during this period, the "Fitzroy" was lost near Newcastle on December 11, 1897, fortunately without loss of life, "Ranelagh" was wrecked off Burnett Heads, Bundaberg, in 1898, "City of Melbourne" sold by auction in February 1897, and in November and December 1899 the "Bulimba" and "Waroonga" were both sold in India and the "Victoria" was disposed of in Sydney, whilst the only additions were the "Pilbarra," taken over early in 1898, and the "Paroo," which arrived in Brisbane on February 21.

An interesting item appears in the Company's history in July 1897 stating that arrangements had been made with Thos. Cook & Sons for them to book passengers by the Company's steamers.

## Chapter VI

### **THE LAST FORTY YEARS—TWO WARS— COMMONWEALTH NAVIGATION ACT**

From the year 1900 the Company's history becomes merged in the Federation of all the Shipping Companies on the Australian coast and to a large extent loses its individuality and becomes one of domestic interest only. On January 1, 1901, the Federation of Australia was brought about and the Federal Tariff announced in October 1901 had the effect of simplifying the Australian coastal shipping to a large extent by eliminating the various State tariffs.

From 1901 to 1910 many changes were made in the Company's fleet, and many of the old ships were lost or sold and new passenger and cargo steamers added. The following ships, most of their names still recalling memories in to-day's minds, were built during that period:

The cargo ships "Moirra" and "Mildura" in 1901, both well known in the cattle service from Fremantle to the North-west Coast, "Wyandra" in 1902, a popular passenger ship for many years, "Kanowna" and "Kyarra" 1903. No two ships were better known on the coast than these two sisters. "Bingera," 1905, the first turbine steamer in the Australian coastal service and one who developed an enviable reputation for her regularity in the Brisbane to Townsville mail run, "Suva" in 1906 earned her reputation for many years in Fiji trade, "Wyreema" in 1908 and "Levuka" in 1910, two passenger liners which enhanced the Company's name on the coast and whose records for popularity amongst travellers have yet to be broken, and in 1909 the cargo ship "Mallina."

Offsetting this rebuilding programme are listed the following losses and sales:— "Paroo" and "Katoomba," both sold in 1903, "Birksgate" in 1904, "Elamang," "Eurimbla" and "Rockton" were all sold in 1905, and the "Yaralla" was lost in Fiji in 1906, "Mildura" wrecked on N.W. Reef, Western Australia, March 1907, "Mareeba" lost on Stockton Beach, Newcastle, July 1908, and "Cintra" sold in September of that year.

During the next three years the "Indarra" was the only addition to the Company's fleet, and entered the West Australian passenger service; she was by far the biggest ship on the coast and many years ahead of her time, whilst the "Barcoo," "Maranoa," "Warrego," "Currajong," and "Dolphin" were disposed of in the same period.

By 1914 the A.U.S.N. Co. had fourteen steamers in regular service, with four in reserve and two under charter, and were running schedules as follows:

Sydney/Fremantle: Passenger and cargo; four weekly; "Indarra."

Melbourne/Fiji: Passenger and cargo; four weekly; "Levuka."

- Fiji/Inter-island: Passenger and cargo; fortnightly;  
"Amra."
- Melbourne/Cairns: Passenger and cargo; weekly;  
"Kyarra," "Kanowna," "Wyreema," "Wyandra."
- Sydney/Rockhampton: Cargo; weekly; "Mallina,"  
"Moir."
- Brisbane/Townsville: Passenger and cargo; weekly;  
"Wodonga."
- Townsville/Cairns: Passenger and cargo; weekly;  
"Kuranda."
- Townsville/Cooktown: Passenger and cargo; weekly;  
"Aramac."
- Brisbane/Gulf of Carpentaria: Passenger and cargo;  
three weekly; "Suva."
- Brisbane/Maryborough/Bundaberg: Cargo; weekly;  
"Tinana."

The vessels in reserve were the "Arawatta," "Pillarbarra" and "Palmer." "Bingera" was refitting her engines and the Company had under charter the "Musgrave" and "Providence A," the last-named trading between Brisbane and Townsville with coal and railway material. The "Taldora" was sold in January in Sydney.

The Brisbane/Townsville/Cairns and Cooktown mail contract was secured for three years from December 5 with the option of a further two years for a subsidy of £17,950, plus varying additional amounts for incomplete journeys between intermediate ports.

#### ADVENT OF 1914-18 WAR

With the advent of the first world war the Company's ships played their part as and when required. The "Mallina," which was very fast for a cargo ship, was one of the first in service, sailing from Sydney on November 8, 1914, as a fleet collier and tender to H.M.A.S. "Australia." It was thought at the time that Von Spee's squadron would endeavour to reach Canada and H.M.A.S. "Australia," the only battleship in the Pacific, sailed to intercept them. Although "Australia" never met up with Von Spee it was nevertheless fortunate that there was available a cargo ship sufficiently fast to act as collier to her and so enable her to

travel so far afield. The "Kanowna," "Kyarra"<sup>(17)</sup> and "Indarra" served as troopships and hospital ships, and it was whilst serving as the latter that the "Kyarra" was torpedoed in the English Channel on May 26, 1918. The "Kanowna," also, whilst serving as a hospital ship, embarked the remnants of General Townsend's garrison at a Turkish port in 1918, who, after being besieged at Kut-El-Mara early in 1914, had been prisoners of war of the Turks.

Probably the most spectacular incident of war service as far as the Company's fleet was concerned fell to the lot of the little steamer "Amra" in September 1917, whilst she was peacefully engaged trading in the Fijian Group. On arrival at Levuka inward bound, her Commander, Captain P. H. Day, was asked by the Customs Officer to take a police party, comprising a Sub-Inspector and three native constables, to the small island of Wakaya, about seventeen miles away, to investigate a report that a foreign launch had put in there with six Europeans aboard who apparently could not speak English.

The "Amra" arrived there early the following day, and after anchoring in the lagoon, the Chief Officer, Mr. James Herd (now Captain J. Herd, well known Salvage Officer in Brisbane), accompanied by the police party, plus a Police Inspector who was a passenger in the ship, proceeded in the "Amra's" surfboat towards a small craft which was lying at anchor. As the occupants were obviously German and were pulling up their anchor, the Sub-Inspector ordered them to proceed with them to the "Amra." On reaching the "Amra" the Officer in charge of the launch boarded the vessel, and on being met at the head of the gangway by Captain Day, he told him he was Captain of the "Seadler" and to Captain Day's astonishment gave his surrender.

After taking the Germans on board the "Amra" it was found that they had enough small arms in their boat (two machine guns, two mortar pistols, one rifle and one bag of bombs) to have captured the "Amra," as the police party carried only an empty revolver holster and the "Amra" herself was also quite unarmed. Von Luckner later stated that the open cattle

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17. A cloth signed on 1st January 1915 by the A.I.F. nurses on the s.s. *Kyarra* is in the possession of the Society at Newstead House. The s.s. *Kyarra* brought back to Australia the first contingent of men wounded in the Dardanelles campaign.

ports with fresh red lead showing where the crew had been chipping a few days before gave him the impression they were gun ports recently cut in the ship's side, and he felt quite sure their game was up.

As Von Luckner's party only consisted of five other persons, viz., his navigator, engineer, wireless operator and two seamen, the "Amra" was subsequently sent out with a party of soldiers from Suva to search for the remainder of the "Seeadler's" crew, a task from which she was soon relieved by the arrival of the Australian warship "Encounter" and two Japanese cruisers. Although the warships found traces of where the balance of the crew had camped, it transpired that they had captured a schooner and made their way in her to South America where they were eventually interned for the remainder of the war.

In October 1915 the British India and Queensland Agency Co. went out of existence and Macdonald, Hamilton & Co. was formed in its place, taking over the Managing Agency of the A.U.S.N. Co. Ltd. It had at first been under consideration to name the new firm Mackinnon, Mackenzie & Co., but it was thought that Mr. B. W. Macdonald and Mr. David Hamilton, who were at the time General Manager and Melbourne Manager respectively, and thus were the two senior men in the Company, would like their names associated with the new venture and so the name was adopted.

In the year following the war the Company added the two new cargo ships "Mackarra" and "Macumba" to their fleet, making their first trips on October 18, 1919, and January 15, 1920, respectively.

A good comparison of shipbuilding costs can be obtained here by taking the cost of the "Mallina," built in 1909 for £66,681, and comparing it with that of the "Mackarra" for £133,841 in 1919. This gives a very good indication of the effect of the 1914-18 war on costs generally and shipbuilding costs in particular, and the 1939-45 war has also had a similar effect on costs and will thus make it increasingly difficult for the Companies to replace their losses and out-of-date tonnage.

In 1920 the "Indarra" was sold to the Belgian Government and was handed over on August 26. This ship was later sold to the Japanese and was, up to the commencement of the 1939-45 war, running for them

under the name of "Horai Maru," whilst in April of that year the Company sold the "Palmer." In December the Company secured an extension of the Queensland mail contract for one year, this extension eventually continuing to December 5, 1924, when it ceased with the opening of through rail connections.

Probably the most important single event in the development of Australian shipping occurred in 1920. Hitherto all oversea ships trading to Australia were permitted to carry passengers and cargo between Australian coastal ports if they so desired, and this naturally made it very difficult for the smaller ships of the Australian coastal companies to compete with them, especially from a passenger point of view. However, in 1920 the Commonwealth Navigation Act became law and provided, inter alia, "That the coastal trade of the Commonwealth be reserved for ships on the Australian register, i.e., ships conforming to Australian conditions and licensed to trade on the Australian coast."

This had the effect of giving Australian shipping the protection it needed from the competition of the large oversea liners and provided the incentive for the shipping companies to build larger and faster passenger and cargo ships for the coast, a policy culminating in the excellent service the Companies provide on the Australian coast to-day.

From 1920 to 1930 the A.U.S.N. Company passed through what can be termed a period of reorganisation as far as their fleet was concerned. Practically from the inception of the colony of Queensland the Company had been primarily responsible for the carriage of passengers, mails, and cargo, firstly to and from the southern colonies and later extending coast-wise on the Queensland coast, its services becoming more numerous as the colony expanded. To do this efficiently it had been necessary constantly to enlarge their fleet not only in numbers of ships but also in size, and this expansion had continued up to about 1910, nearly all the ships added to the fleet being passenger ships.

The railway, which had gradually been creeping up the Queensland coast, was now through to Townsville and soon was to connect Cairns with the capital and the dependence on passenger ships for transport began to diminish. The railways took the mails and a

large proportion of the passengers and left the ships with the cargo (which, of course, had grown with the progress of the State), plus a share of the passengers.

The following list of the passenger ships disposed of during this ten-year period, together with the cargo ships acquired, will serve to illustrate more fully the reorientation which took place.

The "Indarra" was sold in 1920; the "Suva" was fitted with new cargo space in 1921, and the "Bingera" was dismantled in Brisbane in 1922. Other sales were "Amra" in 1923, "Arawatta" and "Wodonga" in 1924, "Aramac" in 1925, "Moirra," "Wyandra," "Wyreema," "Levuka" and "Kuranda" in 1926, "Suva" in 1928, "Maranoa" and "Mallina" in 1929 and "Tay" in 1930, whilst the "Kanowna" was wrecked off Cleft Island, near Wilson's Promontory, on February 17, 1929. A total of eleven passenger ships and five cargo ships.

The replacements were "Mareeba" and "Mildura" in 1924, "Baralaba" 1925. "Milora," "Maranoa," "Murada," "Mungana" 1926 (all these except "Baralaba" being former Commonwealth Government ships), "Orungal" and "Ormiston" 1927, formerly the Khedival Mail Liners, "Famaka" and "Fezara," a total of seven cargo and two passenger ships.

The A.U.S.N. Company were then in the position to cater for the cargo trade on the coast and also to provide their share of the passenger ships required to cope with the coastal passenger traffic, and running in conjunction with the other companies' ships they maintained cargo services from Adelaide to Rockhampton, Sydney to Cairns, Brisbane to Maryborough and Bundaberg, Whyalla to Newcastle, and passenger and cargo services from Melbourne to Cairns. The Fiji run had long since been abandoned when it became uneconomical to continue the service following the placing of the high tariff by the Government of Australia on the importation of Fiji bananas, whilst the rail service through to North Queensland and the failure of the Croydon goldfield had caused the loss of the mail run from Gladstone north and the abandonment of the Gulf service respectively.

The Company lost the "Milora" wrecked in Port Phillip in 1934, and sold the "Maranoa" in 1935, but added the "Bingera" to their fleet in 1935, followed by

“Babinda” in 1936 and “Buranda” and “Corinda” in 1937.

On September 3, 1939, came the second World War, and along with all other ships on the coast the A.U.S.N. fleet was requisitioned by the Government. They suffered an early casualty, though not from war, when “Orungal” became a total loss on a reef off Barwon Heads, outside Port Phillip, on November 12, 1940, in heavy weather and with “nil” visibility, whilst their first war casualty was the “Mareeba,” sunk by a German raider in the Indian Ocean on June 26, 1941. The “Mareeba” was on a voyage to Ceylon and her crew were taken prisoners on the raider, and after many experiences most of them reached internment in Germany.

The “Ormiston” was the next of the Company’s fleet to be selected for attention by the enemy when she was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine whilst acting as Commodore’s ship of a coastal convoy on May 12, 1943. Although badly holed and with her No. 1 hold full of water, she was brought safely to Sydney under her own power, a feat of seamanship which earned her Commander, Captain H. Raven, the O.B.E. She was repaired in Sydney and for the remainder of the war carried Australian and Allied troops from the mainland to practically every part of New Guinea and New Britain.

Later in the year, on August 6, the “Macumba,” whilst en route from Thursday Island to Darwin with supplies for the troops there, was singled out by Japanese bombers and was sunk after they obtained direct hits on her. Her sister ship, the “Mackarra,” had previously been sold in Sydney and renamed “Cardross,” and the “Buranda” was sold to Eastern buyers early in 1946.

“The Corinda” was another of the fleet to perform yeoman service. After running in the coastal trade she went to the British Eastern Fleet and saw service as an Armament Store Issuing ship, and later came back into the Pacific to join the Fleet Train attached to the British Pacific Fleet in the same capacity. It was whilst serving with that unit that she steamed right up into enemy waters to replenish the fleet during their attacks on the Japanese mainland.

The "Bingera" was taken over by the Navy and became H.M.A.S. "Bingera," an Auxiliary Anti-Submarine vessel, which for many years escorted convoys on the Australian coast and formed part of a submarine hunting flotilla. She later served as an escort vessel in New Guinea waters and as a mother ship to an M/L. flotilla.

With the war over the A.U.S.N. Company is looking towards a resumption of peaceful trading, though with a greatly depleted fleet. The Company enters the post-war period with one passenger ship, "Ormiston," and seven cargo ships, "Corinda," "Murada," "Mungana," "Mildura," "Bingera," "Baralaba" and "Babinda," but already they have placed an order for a new "Corinda," thus commencing the rehabilitation of their fleet.

Although this fleet is small by comparison with earlier years, it is smaller in number of ships only, as it now provides a greater deadweight tonnage for cargo than when the Company owned many more ships, but at that time the greater part of their spaces was allotted to passengers, thus illustrating clearly how the requirements of the coastal service have altered.

Their new ships, "Corinda," "Bingera" and "Babinda," are modern motor ships embodying all the latest improvements in propulsion and cargo handling.

### THE FLEET

Whilst there has been great progress over the last 100 years in the ships employed on the Australian coast, they have not increased greatly in size when compared with the progress of oversea steamers. This is, of course, due to the limitations imposed on them by the facilities at some of the ports to which they trade and by the requirements of the trade in general.

A glance at the list of ships owned by the A.U.S.N. Co. since its inception will show how the Company has always kept abreast of the times in providing adequate tonnage to serve the Australian coastal trade, and some of their names will no doubt recall memories in the minds of older travellers as well as those of the present day.

Names that are really a part of the History of Australia itself appear in the list, for who amongst

those who have studied that History have not heard of "Rose," "Shamrock" and "Thistle," "Telegraph," "Ly-ee-Moon," to mention but a few of the more famous of the older ships of the Company.

Perhaps a grouping of some of the sister ships the Company has owned will be of interest, and are appended here, together with the year they came on the Coast:

1841	"Rose," "Shamrock," "Thistle"
1851	"Waratah," "Clarence"
1864	"Lady Bowen," "Lady Young"
1876	"Elamang," "Wotonga"
1881-2	"Ranelagh," "Glanworth"
1882	"Rockton," "Cintra"
1883	"Dingadee," "Hesketh"
1883-6	"Barcoo," "Maranoa," "Warrego"
1889	"Aramac," "Arawatta," "Wodonga"
1897	"Pilbarra," "Paroo"
1903	"Kanowna," "Kyarra"
1908-10	"Wyreema," "Levuka"
1919	"Mackerra," "Macumba"
1924-26	"Mareeba," "Mildura," "Milora," "Mungana," "Maranoa," "Murada."
1927	"Orungal," "Ormiston"

The A.U.S.N. Co.'s latest ship, the m.v. "Corinda," a modern motor ship, built just prior to the war, has already proved herself to be an excellent ship for the coastal trade, and an order has been placed for a similar vessel.

Short biographical notes of some of the better known Captains of the A.U.S.N. Co. complete the history.

**J. B. S. Medley**—Joined from the old A.S.N. Co. in 1878. Commanded the "Waroonga," "Eurimbla," "Paroo," and other well-known ships in the 'nineties.

**W. C. Thomson**—One of the best known Masters on the Australian coast in his time, having joined the Company in 1875. He took a very keen interest in historical<sup>(18)</sup> and geographical matters and possessed a very fine private collection of sea relics, etc.

**J. E. Meaburn**—Joined the Service in 1873 as Third Officer and subsequently was appointed Master of various vessels of the Company's fleet. His last com-

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18. Capt. Thomson was an original member and later Vice-President of The Historical Society of Queensland.

mand was the "Wyreema." He died in Hobart, where he had been living in retirement for a number of years, in 1922.

**James Banks** — Joined the Service in 1869 and commanded many of the well-known ships in the 'nineties, including the "Cintra," "Barcoo" and "Pilbarra."

**James J. Grahl**—Joined the Service in 1883, having served previously with the Q.S.S. Co. Subsequently was Master of a number of the Company's vessels, including the "Elamang" and "Ranelagh," "Barcoo," "Aramac," "Arawatta" and "Wyandra." His last command was the "Wyreema."

**M. M. Osborne**—Joined the Service in 1878, transferring from the A.S.N. Co. Was well known on the coast between Sydney and Fremantle as Commander of the "Indarra." He retired in 1924 and died in 1939.

**T. Law Johnston**—Joined the Company in 1881, having served some years previously in the A.S.N. Co. as Second Officer. His first command was the "Glanworth" in 1886. He was appointed Acting Deputy Marine Superintendent for the A.U.S.N. Co. Ltd. in Brisbane in 1916, in which capacity he served until 1919 when he again went to sea, finally retiring from the sea and the Company's Service in 1922, at which time he relinquished command of the "Wyreema." He died in Brisbane in 1943.

**D. Calder**—Joined from the old A.S.N. Co. in 1872 and was well known in the 'eighties as Master of the steamers "Gunga," "Rockton," "Birksgate" and "City of Melbourne" in the Sydney-Noumea-Fiji trade. After many years in this service he was appointed Agent for the Company in Suva, from which position he retired in 1916 and lived in Sydney where he died about twenty years ago.

**R. A. Sharland**—Was an Able Seaman in s.s. "Corea," joining the Company in 1892. Rose to command and on his retirement was Senior Master, his last command being "Kanowna." Had "Wyreema" and "Levuka" for many years.

**Harry Tyrer**—After service with Messrs. Potter Bros., London, joined the A.U.S.N. Co. in 1893 and after long service at sea became Marine Superintendent for the Company at Sydney, subsequently entering private business in that city as a Marine Surveyor.

**John Mackay**—Was probably best known on the coast as Commander of the T.S.S. "Bingera" in the Brisbane-Townsville Weekly Mail Service, which vessel was famed for her consistent service during all weathers.

**Sam Gilling**—Joined the A.U.S.N. Co. and was perhaps one of the best known and popular Captains of the A.U.S.N. Co. prior to the last war. Captain Gilling for many years had command of the "Orungal" and "Ormiston," and retired from the Company in 1946, after having served as Deputy Marine Superintendent in Brisbane.

**C. H. G. Loriard**—Was for many years in command of the "O" passenger steamers and will be well remembered by passengers on the coast. Captain Loriard died in Melbourne.

**H. Raven**—Last served as Captain of the "Ormiston" and will be remembered by many Australian troops for his years of trooping in that ship during the 1939-45 war. Captain Raven had command of the "Ormiston" when she was torpedoed in 1943 and received the O.B.E. for the brilliant seamanship displayed in bringing her to port under her own steam. He died in September 1954.

**Captain P. H. Day**—Captain Day came to Australia in the "Levuka" and stayed with the A.U.S.N. Co. holding command of most of the Company's ships. He died in 1946 whilst serving as Marine Superintendent. He will be best remembered for his association with Count Felix Von Luckner, the instance having been previously reported in this history.

It is felt that the history of the A.U.S.N. Co. would not be complete without the mention of one of its most colourful servants known to thousands on the coast—Charlie Traise, Wharf Constable at Brisbane from 1894 until his death in 1943 at the age of eighty. He was serving in the B.I. steamer "Quetta" at the time she was wrecked at Thursday Island on the homeward voyage from Brisbane to the United Kingdom, on February 28, 1890.

