

EASTERN TRADER (1959-72) and MYSTIC (1959-75)

Howard Dick with assistance from Stephen Kentwell,
Bill Schell, Malcolm Cranfield and Alan Lee

All Rights Reserved August 2021

h.dick@unimelb.edu.au

May be cited with acknowledgement to the author at www.oldchinaships.com

Posted 4 August 2022

Among the assorted postwar fleet of Jardine's Indo-China Steam Navigation Co. Ltd, the cargoliner *Eastern Trader* (1956) stands out as a chameleon. Colin Hardy's unpublished company history records that she was ordered from Swan Hunter in late 1956 after the Suez crisis and closure of the Canal to take advantage of the consequent high time charter freight rates. She was dual purpose in that she could be used by Jardine's on their own liner routes or chartered out to other operators. After delivery on the Tyne in February 1959, she was not immediately placed in the company's liner services, but sailed to Madras, where she took on a full load of iron ore for Hirohata, Japan [Carstairs, *Shipping & Trade News*, Tokyo] via Hong Kong, where she called for the first time down to her load marks. She then made a transpacific voyage to Vancouver in June to load grain for Japan, before in August being slotted into the company's traditional run from Japan via Hong Kong to the Straits and Calcutta. In mid-1960 she was replaced by the 15-knot *Eastern Moon* and switched to the higher cargo volume Japan-Hong Kong-Australia line. When freight rates were rising significantly again in March 1964, her liner service ended at Sydney, from where she sailed on 27 March 1964 for the Russian port of Nakhodka, then proceeded to Japan to enter transpacific service, probably on charter to Japan's NYK. Lloyd's Shipping Index reported her movements over the next eight years and they are summarized below. It can be seen that at some point she visited almost every coast except for the West Coast of South America. The charterers are seldom identified except for Chargeurs Réunis (six months in the latter half of 1967), Messageries Maritimes (1970-71) and, lastly, East African National Shipping Line (January to July 1972). Hardy reports that she proved a good investment for Jardines but she was sold after only 13 years just a few months before her next major survey fell due.

Eastern Trader was not a Jardine design and it is an interesting question as to what shipyard and/or company provided the prototype. Without access to the relevant Jardine records, we cannot be sure but there is quite a close resemblance in dimensions and appearance to Johnston Warren Lines' *Mystic*, delivered by Burntisland in March 1959 for charter to Shaw Savill. *Mystic*, in turn, may be

traced back to the same company's slightly shorter *Southern Prince* and *Rowanmore*, both delivered by Harland & Wolff within four months of each other.

Name	Year	grt	dwt	lbp x beam	engine
<i>Southern Prince</i>	1956	5,443	8,938	435.0 x 61.3	M5cy/14k
<i>Rowanmore</i>	1956	5,964	10,245	435.0 x 63.0	M4cy/13k
<i>Eastern Trader</i>	1959	6,914	10,828	451.3 x 62.3'	M5cy/14k
<i>Mystic</i>	1959	6,656	10,685	450.0 x 63.5'	M6cy/15k

Southern Prince and *Rowanmore* were definitely the prototype for *Mystic*, though some 15 feet shorter between perpendiculars and with smaller engines, that is one or two less cylinders and one or two knots less in service speed.



SOUTHERN PRINCE eliminated the trunked No. 3 hatch of *Cingalese Prince* (1950) (coll. Chris Howell).



Johnston Warren Lines' ROWANMORE, shown here at Durban as *Adriana I*, had the same layout but a less powerful engine (Trevor Jones).



MYSTIC in Shaw Savill colours on Manchester Ship Canal with heavy lift and radar mast lowered. Same layout as SOUTHERN PRINCE and ROWANMORE but closed bridge front, raked funnel and bigger engine (Paul Boot).

Eastern Trader was 1.3 feet longer between perpendiculars and 1.2 feet narrower than *Mystic* but with a slightly higher deadweight tonnage. Both ships had Doxford engines but *Eastern Trader's* had one less cylinder and one less knot of service speed, which might also help to explain the slightly longer and more narrow hull. Despite the different builders and visible differences in forecastle, cargo gear and superstructure, including extra boats, these may all be seen as variations to a design. The different manning is relevant: *Eastern Trader* had European officers and a larger Chinese crew.



MYSTIC/EASTERN TRADER comparison. Latter has extended forecastle, topmasts, kingposts between Nos 2 and 3 and modified superstructure, also small boat aft. Upper: (B. Nicoll/coll. Chris Howell) Lower: (M. Cranfield).

The similarity in dimensions between *Eastern Trader* and *Mystic* is likely to have been more than coincidence. The two ships were built to fulfil very similar roles. Furness Withy subsidiaries Prince Line and Johnston Warren Line had been cross-chartering to affiliate Shaw Savill since 1950 (*Nordic* ex *Chinese Prince*, 1943), then in 1953 the wartime builds *Brazilian Prince* (1944) and *English Prince* (1943). The newbuild *Southern Prince* (1956) was chartered immediately to Shaw Savill to replace *Brazilian Prince*, subsequently becoming *Medic*. Her slightly older sister *Western Prince* (1955) followed in 1957 as *Zealandic*. The circumstances in which Jardine's may have taken over a Furness design can only be surmised but the world of British liner shipping coalesced in London circles and a casual meeting and conversation could easily give rise to a business arrangement. As of 1956, the cargoliner that would become *Mystic* was a more modern and streamlined version of a proven design.

Burton's Order No. 385 was launched for Johnston Warren Lines Ltd as *Mystic* and on completion in March 1959 commenced a ten-year time charter to Shaw Savill. The fact that Jardines are said to have taken up an 'option' might imply that Furness Withy originally had in mind to build two ships for delivery in early 1959, when Moller Line's rebuilt escort carriers *Bardic* ex *Muncaster Castle* (1944) and *Gallic* ex *Greystoke Castle* (1944) would both complete their 5-year time charters, but then decided, around the time of the Suez Crisis, that one would suffice. Ian Stewart, 'The Ships that Serve New Zealand' (1964) states that in mid-1957 Shaw Savill ordered the single-screw, turbo-charged 'I' class quartette that would be delivered as *Ionic* (1959), *Illyric* (1960), *Icenic* (1960) and *Iberic* (1961). In fact, *Ionic* would be delivered in the same month as *Mystic* with her three sisters to follow, so this pending order would have reduced Shaw Savill's interest in chartering tonnage from its Furness Withy affiliates. As Spong & Osborne's 'Fleet History' (2011) records, *Southern Prince/Medic* and *Western Prince/Zealandic* both reverted to Prince Line in 1960 without completing their five-year time charters, though *Nordic* continued until 1963 and *Cingalese Prince* (1950) was taken up in 1960-61 as *Gallic*. Nevertheless, it must be noted that *Eastern Trader* was ordered not from Burton but from Swan Hunter.

Mystic made a last Shaw Savill voyage from Liverpool in June 1969 to New Zealand (Port New Plymouth and Lyttelton) and after discharge in UK in October completed her 10-year time charter. She then loaded at London (29 October) for the Persian Gulf via Durban and made couple of voyages UK-East Africa before in January 1971 commencing a long-term charter to Royal Mail Lines for service to South America. According to Schell's register, in mid-1975 she was delivered to Trans Globe Maritime Ltd of Hong Kong and registered to Liberty S.S. Corp. Ltd of Liberia as *Sea Swallow*, then in 1977 transferred to the Panamanian flag as *North Sea* before finally passing in 1978 to Siam Venture Shipping Co. S.A. of Panama under Wallem Shipmanagement Ltd in Hong Kong as *Golden Rays*. On 10 November 1982 Noori Trading Corporation began demolition at Gadani Beach.



MYSTIC at Cape Town in Johnston Warren colours, c.1970 in UK-East Africa service (coll. M. Cranfield).



MYSTIC in Royal Mail Lines colours passing Portishead, 17 April 1971 (M. Cranfield).

EASTERN TRADER Tramping/time charter movements in summary, 1964-1972

(from Lloyd's Shipping Index with thanks to Bill Schell, Malcolm Cranfield and Alan Lee)

1964

27/3 Sydney to Nakhodka... then Yokohama to Prince Rupert, BC (arr. 23/7)...

27/10 in South China Sea o/v North China - Batu Pahat...

3/12 mid-Pacific o/v Yokohama - San Francisco.

1965

27/1/1965 **Port Swettenham** to Yokohama

27/3 San Francisco to Br. Columbia; 10/4 Los Angeles to Yokohama, then 9/6 Vancouver, 29/6 San Francisco to Japan, thence Vancouver [arr. 19/9, NYK colours – Walter Frost photo], thence Japan, 9/10 sld. Moji for Vancouver, sld. 6/11, 15/11 San Francisco for Kobe, then 8/12 San Francisco for Japan...



EASTERN TRADER at Vancouver, 17 Sept. 1965 on NYK charter (W. Frost/VCA).

1966

7/1 Nagoya for Onahama, then Hsinkang for Dakar, 10/3 sld. Port Harcourt for ??

18/6 Victoria, BC for Russia, then Nakhodka for **Port Kembla** (arr. 9/8), 23/8 sailed for Piombino, NW Italy (arr. 27.9), then 15/10 Naples and 14/11 Lisbon 4.11 for San Juan (Puerto Rico), 3/12 arr. Cristobal.

1967

20/12/66 Houston for Liverpool, 11/1 sld. Avonmouth, then 9/2 Antwerp for Umm Said, 4/4 arr. Dubai...

14/6 sld. Moji for Jakarta, 1/7 Tegal (N. Central Java) for Bangkok, 8/ 7 anchored off Bangkok Bar.

21-26/7 loading Straits for New York (sld 9/9), Savannah, New Orleans (sld 21/9), Houston (29/9), thence Surabaya and Straits, adv. to load Straits 20-27/12 for same ports but before arrival 29/11 at Singapore the return loading no longer advertised [Chargeurs Réunis charter].



EASTERN TRADER at New York on Chargeurs Réunis charter, Sept. 1967 (coll. M. Cranfield).

1968

1/1/68 in 26.10S, 44E off Madagascar o/v Durban – Singapore.

15/2 Yokohama for Sydney (arr. 1/3), 16/3 Port Kembla via Cape Town (arr. 8/4) to Italy, then Naples (24/5) and Genoa (5/6) to Kuwait...

5/9 Mauritius to UK, then 29/10 Antwerp to Mersin (Turkey), then 12/68 loaded Odessa for Port Sudan (30/12 off coast of Western Sahara in 26.55N-14.17W)...

1969

26/2 Sld. Mauritius for UK, 24/3 anch. off Mersey, 3/4 at Liverpool, 14/5 sld. for Fremantle and Melbourne (arr. 27/6), thence Whyalla (arr. 22/7), 3/8 sld. for Swansea (9/9 in 17.41N-17.43W), then 24/9 Bremen via Maracaibo for Santa Marta (Columbia)...16/11 sld. Charleston for Spezia (arr. 18/12)...

1970

27/1 sld. Trieste for Abu Dhabi (11/2 in 00.51N-19.30W)...

4/6 arr. Venice for docking [Messageries charter], sld. 4/7 for ?Marseilles, thence via Panama Canal (4/8) to Noumea. 29/9 sld. for Port Vila (arr. 30.9), thence France. 17/12 sld. Dunkerque for Sydney...

1971

7/1 passed Panama Canal en route to Sydney (arr. ??), sld. 12/3) for Ceylon, thence 9/5 sld. Rangoon for East Africa, 24/5 sld. Lourenco Marques for Avonmouth, London & Hull...

24/7 Montreal & Savannah (9/8) for Adelaide (28/9), thence via Townsville (7/10) for Noumea (19/10) for Genoa, subs. for Havre & London but 8/12 put into St. John's, Nfld after cargo shifted...

25/1/1972 from Glasgow and Liverpool (26/1) on East Africa National Shipping Co. charter for Mombasa (30/3), Dar-es-Salaam (10/5), thence Dublin, Liverpool and Glasgow, 30/6 arr. Avonmouth rep. 'SOLD'.



EASTERN TRADER on East Africa National Shipping Line charter off Portishead outbound from Avonmouth, July 1972, just prior to delivery to Greek owners (D. Chaplin/M. Cranfield).