

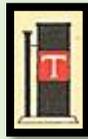
A Cardiff Shipping Icon

W. J. Tatem – Cardiff and London

Tatem Steam Navigation Company Ltd.

Atlantic Shipping and Trading Company Ltd.

Compiled by Geoff Walker



W.J. Tatem was an exemplary symbol of a Welsh shipping, originating during the era when Cardiff was a major coal exporting port, around the turn of the 19th century. The company remained as such throughout its history, until going into liquidation in 1975.

William James Tatem was borne in Appledore, North Devon, in March 1868 and ran off to sea at an early age, serving for two years under sail, during which time he was unfortunate enough to suffer Yellow Fever and shipwreck. At the age on nineteen he decided he would try his hand working ashore and moved to Cardiff; He gained employment with a Cardiff shipowner, Anning Brothers as a clerk and his 11 years with the company provided him with a thorough understanding of tramp ship management and chartering. During his time with Anning, Cardiff had developed into the largest coal exporting port in the world, which encouraged him to move into ship owning himself. Thus in 1897 he ordered his first steamship the “**LADY LEWIS**” from Richardson, Duck & Company of Stockton on Tees and formed the **Lady Lewis Steam Ship Co. Ltd.** which was the first of sixteen single ship companies incorporated during the next eight years, all of which were public companies. Funding was partly from his own substantial holding, as well as being subscribed to friends, relatives, and others.

The **LADY LEWIS** of 2950 gross tons was launched in 1897, and for her first seven voyages was placed under the command Captain William Reardon Smith, who had also previously served with Anning Brothers, and was later to enter ship owning himself. All the early ships were managed by Tatem himself, supported only by his secretary, a Mr. Williams. The original the business office was at 127 Bute Street, Cardiff but moved in 1902 to Phoenix Buildings, Mount Stuart Square and again in 1909 to Cambrian Buildings, Mount Stuart Square, yet again in 1927 to much larger premises at the National Provincial Bank Building, 113 116 Bute Street, Cardiff. These moves of office premises were a direct result of the company’s success and expansion.

The **LADY LEWIS** was followed by the **SIR W.T. LEWIS** in 1898, although vessels that were to follow were given names of towns and villages in Devon. In keeping with traditional trading patterns of the time his early ships were employed in the usual tramp trades from South Wales which generally involved taking

'coal out' to Italy and bringing 'grain home' to Europe from the Black Sea and later the River Plate ports of South America.

W.J. Tatem's favored shipyard for his new tonnage was the Stockton based, Richardson, Duck & Company, with whom he had a long association. Tatem's shipping business expanded rapidly, and in 1900 the fleet consisted of six ships and five years later it had risen to sixteen, all being new buildings.

In 1905 two turret deck vessels were delivered and joined the Tatem fleet, the **TORRINGTON**, and the **WELLINGTON** each of 5600 gross tons. Both these vessels were delivered by William Doxford & Sons Ltd., Sunderland, and were the first ships built outside the Stockton yard.

Tatem suffered his share of misfortune. In 1906 the steamship **LADY LEWIS** was wrecked Mogotes Point, whilst on a passage from Bahia Blanca to Barcelona, with a cargo of grain. Similar loss occurred in 1907 when the steamer the **DULVERTON** went missing on a voyage from Bahia Blanca to Antwerp. The **SHANDON** stranded near Heligoland at the end of 1909 while on passage from Odessa in the Black Sea to the Weser, and although refloated she was later sold to German interests. One more casualty was sustained when the **TORRIDGE (1)** was wrecked on Farcluhar Island whilst on passage from Port Natal to Ceylon (Sri Lanka), in April 1910. It would be some 30 years before the company was to experience any further ship losses.

In 1910 Tatem decided to rationalize his shipping company's financial affairs and the then fourteen ships in the fleet were transferred to the newly formed **Tatem Steam Navigation Company Ltd.** Thereafter, with the exception, of the **Dulverton Steam Ship Co. Ltd.**, which was used again, all the single ship companies were wound up. The formation of the new company coincided with the increased coal shipments from Cardiff, which by 1913 had reached an all - time record, which was never to be repeated. The years immediately prior to WW1 were to prove to be the most prosperous in Cardiff's history with more cargo handled at the port than either at London or Liverpool. It was as a direct result of this period of prosperity that motivated the delivery of five additional ships during 1910, followed by two more in 1911, and a further one 1912, namely SIR W.T. LEWIS and EGGESFORD to Greek owners, and WESTWARD HO to Cardiff owners so at the commencement of hostilities the fleet had some 16 ships. During the war years a further 6 ships were acquired. However, nine ships were lost due to enemy action and five were sold to other owners.

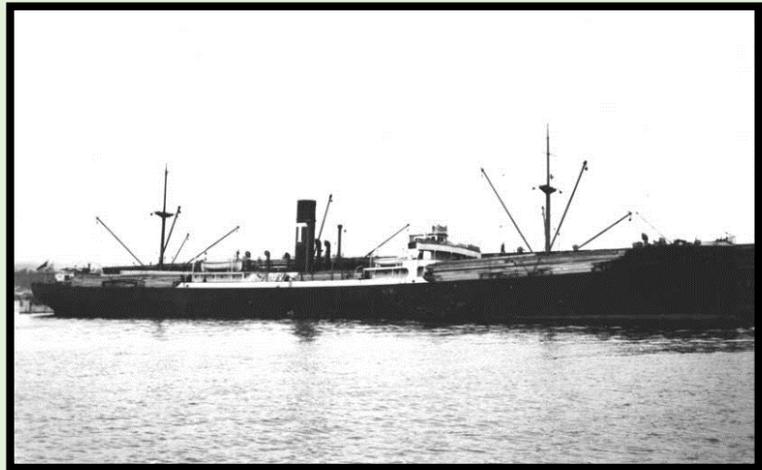
In October 1914, the German cruiser EMDEN captured the **EXFORD (1)**. Hearing of the loss of the vessel the company allocated the name to a newbuilding which had been purchased on the stocks at Bartram & Sons Ltd., Sunderland. However, in December of the same year, H.M.S. EMPRESS OF ASIA recaptured the original **EXFORD** and took her to Singapore where, early the following year, she was handed back to the Tatem's ownership. Hence, for a short period there were two ships of the same name in the fleet, but this was resolved by renaming the earlier vessel **BRENDON**.

The first War loss was the **HONITON** which had only been delivered in May 1915. Whilst homeward bound from Buenos Aires to Hull she was mined off the Longsand Light Vessel in August 1915, and in a damaged condition was beached at Shoeburyness where she was subsequently declared a constructive total loss. In April 1916, the **BRAUNTON** was torpedoed and sunk by the German submarine UB 29 off Beachy Head whilst on a voyage from Boulogne to Newport with Government stores. The same submarine was also responsible for the next loss, on 6th September 1916 the **TORRIDGE (2)** was captured 40 miles from Start Point and sunk by bombs whilst on a voyage from Genoa to River Tyne in

ballast. 1917 was a bad year with five vessels being lost due to hostilities, first the **TORRINGTON** torpedoed during April and sunk 150 miles South West of the Scilly Isles, by the U 55. Two months later, **APPLEDORE** (1) fell victim to a torpedo from U 70 when 164 miles South West of the Fastnet. July saw the **EXFORD** (2) torpedoed and sunk 180 miles from Ushant by U 48. The newly completed **ASHLEIGH** (1) was torpedoed and sunk 290 miles South West from the Fastnet by U 54 also in July, and in September the **CHULMLEIGH** (2), after less than one year in the fleet, was torpedoed and sunk by U 64 off Cape Salou, Spain. The final war loss was the **WELLINGTON**, which was in September 1918, torpedoed and sunk off Cape Villano by U 118. During 1915 **CHULMLEIGH**, **WOODA**, **CHORLEY** and **DUNSTER** were sold to Brys & Gylsen Ltd, the London based section of Lloyd Belge, while **NORTHAM** was sold to Harris & Dixon Ltd.

Meanwhile, in December 1916, a new company was formed, the **Atlantic Shipping & Trading Co. Ltd.** and early in 1917 the entire fleet was transferred to the new company, thus leaving the **Tatem Steam Navigation Co. Ltd.** temporarily without any ships. It was also during the war years an office was opened at London and the registry of the ships transferred from Cardiff to London.

Below, the **SS UMBERLEGH** 4950 GRT built in 1927 by William Gray & Co Ltd., West Hartlepool, for Tatem Steam Navigation Co.Ltd., Changed owner to Atlantic Shipping & Trading Co Ltd (Tatem Group company). On sold in 1944, to Bayswater Shipping Co. and name to Bayswater. From 1946 onwards there then followed several sales to Greek interests each with name change. She went for demolition at Komura in 1960. (Allen Collection)



(Teesbuiltships.co.uk)

SS. EVERLEIGH, 5222 GRT, Built 1930 for Tatem by Furness shipbuilding Co.Ltd., Middlesbrough. On 6 Feb 1945, U-1017 attacked convoy TBC-60 southeast off Durlston Head and claimed the **EVERLEIGH**. Six crew members were lost.

At the conclusion of WW 1 hostilities there were eight vessels in the fleet, all registered in the ownership of the **Atlantic Shipping & Trading Co. Ltd.** The period immediately following the war was one of great prosperity for shipowners as markets neglected during the waring years were rejuvenated by industry returning to peace time production, and as a result freight rates boomed. This resulted in ship prices being at a premium so in 1919 Tatem took advantage of the buoyant market for good quality used tonnage and disposed of eight ships. However, during 1919 and 1920 six new ships were acquired of which two were from the Ropner Shipbuilding & Repairing Co. (Stockton) Ltd., and four from the British Government. By the middle of 1920, five of these ships were registered in the ownership of the **Atlantic Shipping & Trading Co. Ltd.** and one with a new company, the **Foreland Shipping & Trading Co. Ltd.** but by the following year this latter company's ship had passed to the ownership of the **Atlantic Shipping & Trading Co. Ltd.**

By 1922 there were many South Wales shipowners in serious financial difficulties but by careful management the position of the companies under the control of W.J. Tatem (now Lord Glanely) had remained secure. However, in order not to place the capital of his friends and associates in the Atlantic Shipping & Trading Co. Ltd, under stress, six ships were transferred to the ownership of W.J. Tatem Ltd. The Atlantic Shipping & Trading Co. Ltd. was a public company with numerous shareholders whereas W.J. Tatem Ltd. was a private, limited company of which the founder, Lord Glanely, held virtually all the shares. Thus, during these stressful years, Lord Glanely assumed the entire risk.

Having weathered the worst of the difficult years in the early 1920s and not having added any new tonnage for five years, it was decided to order a number of ships which were all to be built on the North East Coast and bore names taken from Devon with the suffix 'leigh'. The **Tatem Steam Navigation Co. Ltd.**, which had not owned a ship for five years took delivery of the three ships built in 1925 and the four built in 1927. The **Atlantic Shipping & Trading Co. Ltd.**, which had not owned tonnage for six years took delivery of one ship built in 1928 and two vessels completed in 1930 whilst a single ship completed in 1928 was delivered to the **Dulverton Steam Ship Co. Ltd.** Hence, by 1930 the fleet managed by W.J. Tatem Ltd., and its associated companies totaled fifteen ships, all of which had been built since the First World War. However, there expansion was stemmed somewhat by the depression of the early 1930s, and no new ships were to be added to their fleet for seven years.



8 Sep 1939 the unescorted **MV Winkleigh** was hit by one torpedo from U-48 and sank southwest of Ireland. The ship had been stopped by a shot across the bow and the crew was ordered to abandon ship. The Master and 36 crew members were picked up by the Dutch liner Statendam and landed at New York.

(uboat.net)



Atlantic Shipping & Trading Co.Ltd., MV Chulmleigh, built by W.Doxford & Sons as **MV Empire Northfleet**, name changed prior to completion in 1946. In 1961 change of ownership to Whalton Shipping Co. Ltd. and renamed **Rugele**. 1964 Change of owner to Union Fair Shipping Co. and renamed **Madura**. Later in 1964 wrecked off Lantao Island, Hong Kong, and sent for demolition in Hong Kong.

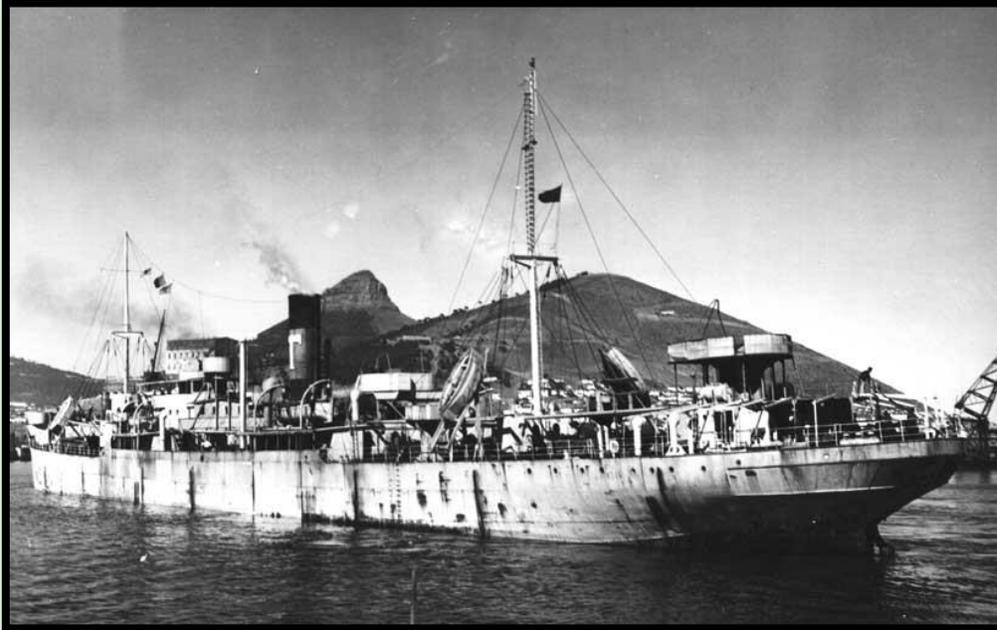
(sunderlandships.com)

Tatem Group companies, over the years, had established strong trade connections with Vancouver shippers and many tramps returned with grain and lumber and the River Plate, Baltic and Mediterranean trades were busy. At the start of the Depression some 15 tramps were owned, and such was its severity that at one point only **HADLEIGH** was trading, with **BUCKLEIGH** and **CHULMLEIGH** sold to the Scindia Line of India, in 1933 and the rest of the fleet laid up at Fowey, Cardiff, Barry and Milford Haven. The WAR "C" type **SHANDON** was sold to Turkish owners in 1934 and acted as a collier for the Turkish Government for many years afterwards, and the WAR "W" type **SOMERTON** went to Greek owners a year later. **ASHLEIGH** was sold to Counties Ship Management in 1936 and renamed **KINGSTON HILL**, and the smaller **GOODLEIGH** to German interests in 1937.

By the end of 1936, the fleet consisted of ten ships, but trading conditions required new ships to be built so orders were placed in 1937 for the construction of four new vessels. Three of these were steamers from the yard of Wm. Pickersgill & Sons Ltd., Sunderland, and the fourth was a motor vessel from William Doxford & Sons Ltd., Sunderland. The latter was the first motor ship to enter the fleet and was named **LADY GLANELY** in memory of the founder's late wife. **LADY GLANELY** was delivered at Sunderland at the same time as the steamer **CHULMLEIGH** from Pickersgill, both ships taking identical charters for their maiden voyages, in ballast to Galveston to load malt grain for the U.K. The steamer **CHULMLEIGH** was still under construction by Pickersgill when war broke out and was launched in February 1940.

At the outbreak of WW 2 eleven ships were managed by W.J. Tatem Ltd., and during the period of hostilities a further new vessel was acquired, in addition to a number of ships which were managed on behalf of The Ministry of War Transport. The first war casualty was the **WINKLEIGH** (1) which was torpedoed and sunk by the German submarine U 48 on 8th September 1939, just five days after the declaration of war. The **WINKLEIGH** had been on passage from Vancouver to Manchester with a cargo of lumber and grain at the time of the sinking. In December 1940, the shipping company was unfortunate to lose two more ships, both on the same day, and from the same Eastbound convoy, HX90. The motorship **LADY GLANELY** was torpedoed and sunk by the submarine U 101 whilst the **GOODLEIGH** fell victim to a torpedo from U 52

Having moved temporarily to Weston Super Mare, Lord Glanely was tragically killed when the town was bombed by German aircraft in June 1942. He had achieved outstanding success as a shipowner. He was succeeded as Chairman of the group of companies and principal shareholder in **W.J. Tatem Ltd.** by his nephew, Mr. G. C. Gibson, who at this time disposed of his **Maritime Shipping & Trading Co. Ltd.**, and its single ship the **APPLEDORE (2)**, to Michalinos & Co. Ltd.



(Allen Collection)

SS. Monkleigh, 5203 GRT, Built 1927 for **Tatem Steam Navigation Co.Ltd.**, by Robert Thompson & Sons Ltd., Sunderland. Changed ownership to **Atlantic Shipping & Trading Co. Ltd.** in 1944, change of ownership to Dolphin Steamship Co. Ltd. and name to Ionian Sea in 1949, change of ownership to Attica Shipping Co. Ltd. and name to Attica in 1951. She was taken for demolition at Hong Kong at the end of 1960, after 33 years of service.

in November 1942, the **CHULMLEIGH (4)** was wrecked when she struck a reef and capsized off South Cape, Spitzbergen, whilst on passage from the United Kingdom to the Russian port of Archangel.

Five months later in March 1943, the **HADLEIGH** was torpedoed and sunk by the submarine U 77 in the Mediterranean, North West of Oran, and on 17th August 1944, whilst acting as a supply vessel at the Normandy Beach head, the **IDDESLEIGH (2)** was torpedoed and sunk by a one man torpedo chariot. The **EVERLEIGH** was torpedoed and sunk in the English Channel by U 101 in February 1945, and in April of the same year, the final war loss occurred when the **FILLEIGH (1)** was torpedoed and sunk by U 245 in the North Sea. The casualties amongst crews was tragically high in the WW2 conflict, as it was in WW 1.

The almost new Empire Chaucer, was torpedoed and sunk 300 miles SW of Cape Agulhas in October 1942, whilst on a voyage from Calcutta and Durban to Trinidad and the U.K. with 8500 tons of general cargo including 2000 tons of pig iron, with the loss of 2 lives

At the conclusion of WW 2 the fleet had been reduced to four ships, the **UMBERLEIGH, MONKLEIGH, NORTHLEIGH and WINKLEIGH**. The two oldest, **UMBERLEIGH** and **MONKLEIGH**, were sold off in 1946/47 for the high market prices, then obtainable for well maintained, second - hand tramp vessels. Gradually

the peacetime pattern of trade was resumed, and markets recovered especially in the world-wide tramping sector. In 1946 the **UMBERLEIGH** was replaced by a newbuilding, the motorship **CHULMLEIGH** (5) (ex - EMPIRE NORTHFLEET) from William Doxford & Sons Ltd., Sunderland, and the following year the **MONKLEIGH** was replaced by the turbine steamer (the last steam tramp ever owned by the company) **LORD GLANELY** from Wm. Pickersgill & Sons Ltd., Sunderland. The Lord Glanely remained with the company for 13 years.

For the next decade, the fleet was maintained at four vessels. After the Second World War the ships were all registered in the ownership of the public company, the **Atlantic Shipping & Trading Co. Ltd.**, or the private family company, **W.J. Tatem Ltd.**, although all the ships were managed by the latter company. Eventually with the demise of the coal trade the Cardiff office was closed and in 1960 the firm's offices were moved from 7 St. Helen's Place, London to Forum House, 15/18 Lime Street, London.

In 1956 the **NORTHLEIGH** was disposed of to Hong Kong owners and was replaced during 1957 with the newbuilding **FILLEIGH** (2), a motor vessel from Bartram & Sons Ltd., Sunderland in 1957.



MV GLANELY 8261 GRT, built 1960 by Austin & Pickersgill Ltd, Sunderland operated by **Atlantic Shipping & Trading Co Ltd** – London. 1969-sold to Douglas SS Co Ltd (Williamsons & Co Ltd managers), London, renamed **INCHONA** (Hong Kong British flag). 1975 sold to Greek interests - sold for scrap 1987. (Sunderlandships.com)

In 1960 two ships, the **WINKLEIGH** (2) and **LORD GLANELY**, were sold followed the next year by the **CHULMLEIGH** (5). However, two ships joined the fleet when the **GLANELY** and the **LANDWADE** were delivered from the Sunderland yards of Austin & Pickersgill Ltd., and Bartram & Sons Ltd., respectively. With the fall in freight rates in the early 1960s the fleet was reduced to two ships with the sale of the relatively modern **FILLEIGH** (2) to Peruvian owners in 1963.

By 1965 market conditions had improved sufficiently to justify the arrival of a third vessel, the **EXNING**, from Austin & Pickersgill Ltd. During 1969 the **GLANELY** was sold and for three years the remaining two ships continued trading. In 1972, however, the **LANDWADE** was disposed of and this was followed in 1973 with the sale of the **EXNING**, these two being the last ships to sail under Tatem's house colors.

This then, became the demise a well-known and highly respected company which for so many years had been one of Cardiff's leading tramp ship owners and had been managed throughout by three generations of the same family.



MV LANDWADE, 7585 GRT, built 1961 by Bartram & Sons Ltd., for Atlantic Shipping & Trading Co. Ltd. (W.J.Tatem Ltd as managers). 1972 Sold to Tonia Maritime Co. Ltd. (Union Commercial S.S. Co. managers), Cyprus and renamed MARYTONIA. 1976 Sold to Karavos Cia. Naviera S.A., Greece, and renamed SWEDE TONIA. 1981 sold renamed UNILUCK, 1984 broken up at Jamagar, India.

(Sunderlandships.com)



MV EXNING, 7465 GRT, built 1965 by Austin & Pickersgill Ltd., Sunderland for Atlantic Shipping & Trading Co. Ltd. (W.J. Tatem Ltd. managers). 1973 Sold to Maravilia Compania Naviera S.A., Panama and renamed MARITSA. 1974 Renamed MARITSA III. 1983 sold renamed CYPRUS TRADER, 1985 broken up at Gadani Beach. (Allen Collection)

So, came about the demise a well-known and highly respected company which for so many years had been one of Cardiff's leading tramp ship owners, and had been managed throughout by three generations of the same family.

End

References: W.J. Tatem & Co. Ltd archives, Atlantic Shipping & Trading Co. Ltd archives, Allan Collection archives, Sunderlandships.com.

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