

# A Moment in Time # 2

## Chapman and Willan Ltd.

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One of the best known and dynamic Tyneside tramp shipowners. The company was commenced as a partnership in 1878 between **Ralph Chapman**, and **Thomas R. Miller**, both originating from the Newcastle area. They had previously worked together and held interests in several small sailing vessels. Ralph Chapman had a background as a Ship Chandler, Insurance Broker and in Shipping Agency.

Ralph Chapman and Thomas R Miller decided in 1878, to form the partnership **Chapman & Miller** to buy two ships. They purchased their first ship later the same year, a steamship which named **Benton**, which had been built in 1872. Their new acquisition was soon lengthened by thirty feet to increase her dwt cargo carrying capacity.

Expansion of their shipping enterprise was expanded on a steady and solid footing with both the Carlton Steamship Co. Ltd. and Cambay Steamship Co. Ltd. being established in 1892 as subsidiaries. The principal shareholders in both companies were the Chapman family, business associates and some friends. The managing partnership eventually became **Chapman and Son**. Thomas Miller had left the Newcastle area to spend more time in London on business, but the Miller family continued to own shares in the Chapman companies until 1958. **Frank Chapman** was the son of Ralph Chapman and he had joined the family business in 1892, having served a four years apprenticeship with Stephens and Mawson of Newcastle, later **Stephens Sutton Ltd**. Consequently, the main company name was changed to **R. Chapman & Son** in 1896. Chapmans again changed name in 1950s to become **Chapman & Willan Ltd**. The introduction of bulk carriers and later, container ships signaled the end of tramp shipping and the old fleet was progressively reduced, by either sale or demolition. Eventually, the company was sold to **Burnett Chapman Ship Management Ltd.**, part of the Federal Commerce and Navigation Group, of Canada in 1974.

Throughout its tenure Chapmans had principally been involved in worldwide tramp trades from its inception and was the basis on which their business had become successfully established, by 1914 eight ships were owned. Their fleet never became overly large however, one of the main factors being that they suffered frequent losses at sea, including ships lost during WW1. Nevertheless, by the outbreak of WW2 their fleet had been rebuilt to some 15 vessels. Unfortunately, 11 of those ships became casualties of WW2. Their ships were engaged in long trade routes from North Africa to the U.S.A. with iron ore, and on the '**Eternal Triangle**' route with Tyne coal to the Mediterranean, usually returning with grains from the Black Sea.



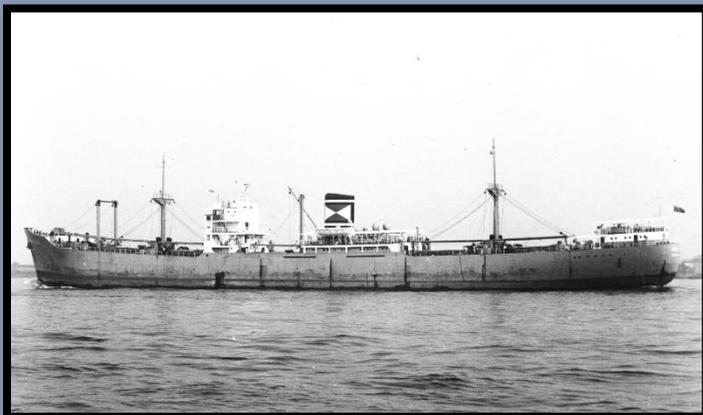
Steamship **Amberton**, built 1928. Wrecked Western Head, Cape Pine, Newfoundland in 1947 whilst en route from Quebec to London with a cargo of timber.



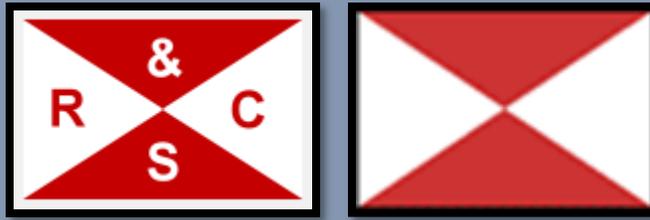
The Steamship **Allerton**, built 1941. Originally managed by Carlton SS Co Ltd & Cambay SS Co Ltd

Sold and changed name to **North Lady** in 1957, on sold 1961 and renamed **Ypapanti**. Sold 1964 and renamed **Ever Fortune**. She went for demolition at Kaohsiung in 1968

All their vessels had the suffix "ton" in their name, ie. **Allerton, Amberton, Brighton, Carlton, Demeterton, Ingleton, Merton, Norton.**



**MV Brighton** built 1960. A handsome profile and the forerunner to several similarly designed vessels. Change of name to **Kaptayanni** in 1971, renamed **Mareantes** 1973, change of name to **Loukia** and owner to Conship Cia SA 1975, change of name to **Melpo** 1976, change of name to **Despoula K**. Parted tow and wrecked 1982 whilst en-route from Monrovia to Split for demolition.



Chapman Group House Flag and funnel Logo



One of the last Chapman ships **MV Frumenton**. Built in Japan 1968 for John Manners of Hong Kong, as “**East Breeze**” but delivered ex yard as “**Frumenton**”. In 1974 sold to Burnett SS Co of Canada, 1974 sold to Maidstone Shipping, Liberia r/n **Aegis Typhoon**, 1979 sold to Asterion Shipping, Greece r/n **Asterion**, 1987 r/n **Nicolaos A**, 1990 r/n **Astron**, 1992 r/n **Colmena**, 1994 sent for demolition.

So, there came about the demise of yet another British shipping icon, but the company lives on through the mists of sentiment and nostalgia, especially for those mariners who sailed on Chapman ships.

End

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References: Various C&W archives available in Public Domains on the Internet