

# Court Line Limited

(Haldin & Philipps - London)

By Geoff Walker



Those mariners serving at sea during 1960s and early 1970s will recall the Court Line, whose ships were engaged in the worldwide tramp trades of the era. **Court Line** ships were named after famous country houses with the first word ending in 'ton' and with the suffix 'Court'. The ships names followed alphabetical sequence, which was retained throughout. Most purchased ships were renamed to fit in with the company tradition. A new naming convention using the prefix "**Halcyon**" was introduced when the company moved into bulk carriers and tankers in the 1960s.

The Court Line Ltd had been established in 1905 by Philip Edward Haldin, as "**Haldin and Company Ltd**", with offices located at 1 Leadenhall street, London (the heart of the shipping world in those days). He originally came from Norwich but the German sounding name of Haldin became somewhat problematical with the onset of WW1, so he changed it to **Haldin** by Deed Poll.

The number of vessels in the **Court Line** fleet fluctuated over the years, mainly as a consequence of, changing trading conditions and the imposition of wars. After 1908, there was an upturn in freight rates which led to more ships being ordered. Casualties in WW1 were relatively few.

Of the nine tramps in the fleet at the outbreak of WW1, "**Barrington Court**" (1906) – by then named "**Margam Abbey**" - was torpedoed and beached. In 1915 **Haldin** bought a second-hand ship, **Dalebank**, which he renamed "**Ilvington Court**", which was torpedoed on the 6<sup>th</sup> December 1917 when 8 miles WNW of Cape Shershel, 60 miles west of Algiers, while on a voyage from the UK to Malta with coal, armor plating and Govt. Stores, sadly 8 crew were lost. Other **Court Line** ships were damaged during hostilities but repaired and returned to service.

**Haldin** sold several ships between 1916 and 1921, reducing his fleet to only the "**Geddington Court**" and "**Hannington Court**" but from 1924 onward **Haldin** expanded his fleet again. He acquired a combination of new and second-hand ships. The second-hand ones were ships that had been built just after the end of WW1 to the Shipping Controller's war standard designs. **Haldin** continued to name his ships in his traditional "**-ington Court**" naming convention and re-used some names more than once.

By 1926 the entire fleet which consisted of 26 tramps at that time, was registered under the "**United British Steamship Co. Ltd**", (except for the "**Dallington Court**" which was owned by a syndicate). The fleet continued its expansion throughout the decade with the purchase of both new and used ships – notably three ships from the company of Evans Thomas Ratcliffe of Cardiff, after his demise in 1926. A

further new 11 tramps were built between 1928 and 1930. Only three of the new buildings were motorships, the others being steamers. At the conclusion of 1929, **Richard Philipps** joined the company which then became "**Haldin and Philipps Ltd**", and remained a director until 1948, when Philipps (by then Lord Milford) retired, and the company reverted to "**Haldin & Co. Ltd**". By way of interest, Philipps was the youngest brother of Lord Kysant of Royal Mail Line notoriety.

By the time the 1930s great depression had developed, **Court Line** found itself in possession of a large fleet, consequently a high percentage of the fleet was laid up for many years – some on the Tyne, some at Sunderland and some at Milford Haven. The company survived by keeping their ships in hot and cold layup, in order to keep its head above water, through trading with only four or five ships at a time.

In 1937 Court Line lost two ships. "**Nollington Court**" sank in the Caribbean after striking a submerged object, and only a short time later, "**Quarrington Court**" sank in the Red Sea after springing a leak in her engine room.[]

When the Second World War began in 1939, **Haldin & Philipps Ltd** had a fleet of 23 ships but during the war years it lost 14 ships, 13 of them to enemy action, with the loss of 136 lives. One ship, "**Pennington Court**", was lost with all hands

Philip Haldin was knighted in 1939, for services to shipping. He gave valuable service throughout WW2 to the Ministry of War Transport (MOWT). During WW2, **Court Line** ships played a significant role in the convoys that kept the UK afloat during WW2. Also, "**Dorington Court**" (1938) became the forerunner for the "**Empire Ship**" building program and later for the "**Ocean**" and "**Liberty**" ships. By the end of WW2 there were only nine surviving **Court Line** ships.



(Unknown photographer)

Court Line's "**Errington Court**" built 1945 as "**Empire Favour**" for MOWT. Acquired by **Court Line Ltd.**, Haldin & Co as Managers, in 1950 and renamed in accordance with company naming convention. Sold in 1956 to Monrovia interests and renamed "**Penelope**". Sold 1961 to Greeks and renamed "**Andromachi**". 1964 transferred to Greek flag. June 1969 hit by Israeli gunfire at Suez and set ablaze. 1976 Broken up at Adabiyah

At the conclusion of WW2, war losses were made good on a temporary basis through the purchase of a number of **"Empire"** and similar used ships. A new building program was commenced in 1952 but in 1953 Philip Haldin passed away



The fine looking **"Dorrington Court"** built in 1957 by Short Bros Ltd., Sunderland, for the Court Line. 6233 GRT, 10,668 DWT. A 4 Cyl B&W diesel engine, giving a service speed of 12 knots.

Sold in 1963 to Liberian interests and renamed **"Eva"**. She suffered a major fire whilst at Gdansk in 1976, declared a constructive total loss, and broken up at Hamburg the same year.

(Unknown photographer)

With the purchase of seven new motor tramps, this allowing the old **"Empires"** to be disposed of. Unfortunately, freight rates again dropped in 1957 and stayed depressed until the mid-1960s. **Court Line** had an option for two further vessels in 1962/3 but these were not taken up. By the 1960s, the company's ship-owning activity was declining.



A bulk carrier called **"Hector Halcyon"** (see left) was purchased in 1961 and renamed **"Cressington Court"** (1961).

(Unknown photographer)

There was then a transition within the company to larger ships and the smaller tramps were sold. **Court Line** also moved into the tanker market with a number being purchased and given the naming

convention **"Halcyon"** prefix. The first tanker acquisition was **"Edith Borthen"**, which **Haldin and Co. Ltd.**, bought in 1963 and renamed **"Halcyon Days"**. The second was **"Halcyon Breeze"**, built for **Court Line** in Japan by Hitachi in 1964. The Admiralty chartered **"Halcyon Breeze"** as the oiler **"RFA Derwentdale"**. Several other tankers bearing the **"Halcyon"** prefix were reportedly acquired and managed by **Court Line** during the 1960s, however a direct link in ownership to **"Haldin Co Ltd"** cannot be established.



The “**Haldin**” tanker “**Halcyon Days**” launched in 1955 as “**Edith Borthen**” acquired by **Court Line Ltd.**, Haldin & Co. Ltd. Managers, in 1968. Sold in 1974 to Panama interests and renamed “**Halcon**”. Sent for demolition at Gadani Beach in October 1976.

(Unknown Photographer)



Left “**Halcyon Breeze**” (In RFA livery) 42,383 GRT, built 1964 by Hitachi at Innoshima, Japan for **Court Line Ltd**, Haldin and Company Ltd., as managers

Chartered to Ministry of Defense, London and converted into a fleet replenishment ship and renamed “**RFA Derwentdale**” for the duration of the charter. Sold in 1975 to Saudi interests and renamed “**Alnadji**” but managed by their associates from Monte Carlo.

She was sent to breakers in Kaohsiung in 1982.

(Unknown photographer)

In 1964 Court Line bought Appledore Shipbuilders in Devon. In 1972 it took over a larger shipbuilding business, the Doxford and Sunderland Group. In the 1970s the company diversified into airlines, shipbuilding, ship repairing and package holidays, but this led to a cash-flow problem and the company went into liquidation in 1974. When the **Court Line Group** went bankrupt in 1974, the shipyards and remaining ships in the fleet were sold and the company was wound up.

End.

References: Court Line Ltd Archives, Haldin & Company Ltd Archives, and various online data from which some information may have been sourced.

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