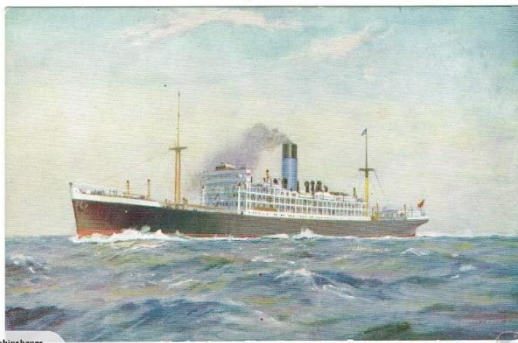


A REFLECTION" by Martin Spencer-Hogbin

With June 25th, "The Day of the Seafarer" now behind us and with 3rd September, "Merchant Navy Day" ahead it is good to know that we are at last being recognised and appreciated, unlike the days after WW2 when seafaring families inverted their MN badges to read Not Wanted.

In that regard it is pertinent to note that when watching the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of D Day on 6th June, including the magnificent pageant at Portsmouth and the ceremonies on the beaches, no mention was made of the contribution of the Merchant Navy to "Operation Neptune" being the Maritime section of "Operation Overlord". The contribution of Alfred Holt & Co. (Blue Funnel Line, Glen Line and three vessels manned and managed by the Company), was considerable consisting of "Glenroy", "Glennearn", both of which had been converted to Armed Merchant Cruisers (A.M.C) with special davits to accommodate landing craft, "Antenor", "Ascanius", "Samneva", "Samnesse" and "Empire Capulet", the last three carrying vehicles, guns and ammunition. The only casualties suffered were "Samneva" torpedoed and then towed to the Solent and beached but was written off as a total loss. "Ascanius" serving as a depot ship was also torpedoed but was not severely damaged and was later back in service, also "Glenroy" which struck a mine, had her engine room flooded and had to be towed to Portsmouth. The mines were of the type dropped by aircraft and operated by the change of pressure caused by a vessel passing overhead and for which no successful method of sweeping had by then been developed.



"ANTENOR"

11,174 GRT Twin screw 15Kts 1924 - 1953

"Antenor" (pictured) on which I was serving as 4th Mate had also been a A.M.C. and now converted to a troopship was one of several troopships acting in convoy conveying U.S. troops from the Solent to Omaha and Utah beaches. The Solent at the time being so densely crowded with shipping that it was dubbed "Piccadilly Circus". Convoy orders and other communications were transmitted by lamp from Calshot Signal Station at the Western corner of Southampton Water and was good practice

for future examinations. "Antenor" carried about 2,000 troops and made the crossing on a frequent irregular basis and during my time there were no serious incidents. In fact, my most abiding memory was the consistent music relayed throughout the ship. Popular recordings by such as Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, and Artie Shaw etc. were so persistent that I can remember many of the numbers to this day. I expect the U.K. convoys to the East of us were playing Vera Lynn and I'm sure the music helped a great deal to divert the minds of the troops from what lay ahead. I did feel that we were playing an important part in this operation, and although I obviously felt we were also contributing to the war effort over the preceding years, the Normandy invasion felt far more condensed and relevant to the ultimate victory