

Stan Mayes

11. Neritina

This page describes Stan's account of his voyages on the ship. There is a history of **Neritina** with photographs on the Benjidoog website [HERE](#).

Maiden Voyage

I was on Articles from 7th December 1943 to 1st May 1944.

*In early December 1943 my pal Ron Wood of Grays and I went up to Glasgow to look for a job on a 'deep sea' ship. Most of the ships coming into the Thames at this time were coasters as the Channel was still closed to shipping. The few ships that did come to London were in convoys down the East Coast and escorted by units of the Royal Navy. By this time there was also good air cover from Coastal Command. So on 7th December 1943, Ron and I signed on the newly built tanker **Neritina** at the shipyard of Harland and Wolff Ltd at Govan.*

***Neritina** was equipped with torpedo protection nets, A.N.D. Admiralty Net Defence and her armament was a 4" gun aft -anti-aircraft gun for'ard - plus 4 Oerlikons and 4 machine guns.*

Her Master was Captain W.Shaw Commodore of Anglo Saxon Co. - he was known as 'Butcher Shaw'.

Voyages on Neritina

*After joining **Neratina** we took part in engine trials in the Clyde we sailed and later rendezvoused with a convoy from Liverpool ON 215 which departed on 9 December 1943..*

Convoy ON 215

*The total number of ships in the convoy was 58 with 17 naval escorts. These included four ex US four funnelled destroyers, British and Canadian corvettes and **Empire Macalpine** - a small aircraft carrier. The convoy rescue ship was **Accrington** of Associated Humber Line. We experienced many days of atrocious weather - gales and blizzards -and a few hours before arrival at New York we had problems with the steering gear which caused difficulty in maintaining our course. Being light ship we drifted across the sea into the other columns and were in collision with the tanker **F.J.Wolfe**.*

*Our bows cut a huge gash into the counter stern of **F.J.Wolfe** and I believe an engineer was killed in his bunk. Our bows were crushed back about 20 feet and the gun on the fo'c'sle head was carried away and rolled overboard in the heavy seas. Our position in convoy was 54 - fifth column fourth ship - and **F.J.Wolfe** was 75 so we must have had some near misses with other ships before **F.J.Wolfe**. After repairs to our steering gear we returned to our position in convoy.*

Note: According to correspondence quoted on [Ext Ref 6](#), **F.J.Wolfe** was rather unlucky.

- On 10 Sep 1942, **F.J.Wolfe** was torpedoed and damaged by German submarine **U-96** whilst in convoy ON 127. Incidentally, **U-96** was the inspiration for the novel *Das Boot* by Lothar-Günther Buchheim, which was later made into a famous film of the same name. **F.J.Wolfe** was damaged between No7 and 8 tanks port side in position 51.30 N, 28.25 W. She was able to continue as part of the convoy.
- On 16 Sep 1942 **Empire Soldier** sank after collision with **F.J.Wolfe** at 06.30am.GMT in position 47.35-N, 51.44W. Strangely, according to [Ext. Ref. 5](#), **Empire Soldier** was listed as in convoy SC.100 though **F.J.Wolfe** is not.

On arrival at New York on 28th December we entered Brooklyn dry dock to have our bows rebuilt and this took us well into the New Year of 1944.

As we were restricted by the shipyard from doing work on our ship some of us crew found employment in the shipyard and docks [with permission from our Chief Officer] and we painted newly built Liberty ships and lashed and secured cargoes on them. We usually worked an 8 hour day for a dollar an hour.

Image 1 is a studio photo of Stan taken in New York on 29 Dec 1943.

Basic Data: Neritina

Type: Tanker

Registered owners, managers and operators:
Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Co Ltd,
London

Builders: Harland & Wolff

Yard: Govan

Country: UK

Yard number: 1174g

Registry: London

Official number: 169634

Signal letters: N/K

Call sign: GDFY

Classification society: N/K

Gross tonnage: 8,228 tons

Net tonnage: 4,788 tons

Deadweight: 11,874 tons

Length: 483.3 Feet

Breadth: 59.5 Feet

Depth: N/K

Draught: 33.8 Feet

Engines: Oil 4 SC S.A - 8 cylinders, 25 9/16" bore, 55 1/8" stroke

Engine builders: Harland & Wolff

Works: Glasgow

Country: UK

Boilers: 2 double, 180lb/sq inch

Power: N/K

Propulsion: N/K

Speed: N/K

Cargo capacity: N/K

Crew: 58 on maiden voyage - this included a number of DEMS gunners



Image 2 shows Stan's wage slip for Dec 1943.

No. **22** F.I.
ACCOUNT OF WAGES.
(Sec. 133, M.S.A., 1904.)

Name of Ship and Official No.
M.V. NERITINA
169634

Name of Seaman: **J. Mayes** Rat. No. in Agreement: **22**

Date Wages began: **7 DEC 1943** Date Wages ceased: **1 MAY 1944** Total Period of Employment: Months: **4** Days: **25**

A. EARNINGS

Basic wages at £ 14 per month: **56 0 0**
Days at **9/4** per day: **48 6 8**
Increase of Wages on promotion by £ per month for months days
Overtime hours at per hour
War Risk Money 4 months 25 days at £ 1.0 per month: **48 6 8**
TOTAL EARNINGS **116 0 0**

DEDUCTIONS EXCLUDING ALLOTMENTS

B.

Reduction of Wages, on duration by £ per month for months days
Advance on joining
Fines **10 0**
Other Cash Advances, Stores, &c., (in order of date):
Date: **10 11 0**
10 11 0
2 4 8
14 12 0
14 10 0
1 10 4
INCOME TAX **15 19 6**

Health and Pension Insurance for 21 wks: **1 1 0**
Unemployment Insurance for 21 wks: **17 6**

TOTAL DEDUCTIONS, exclusive of Allotments and Cash on leaving Ship **55 19 10**

TOTAL EARNINGS (A) less **65 0 2**
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS (B)

Alotment: **40 0 0**
Cash on leaving Ship: **40 0 0**

Amount Due on day of Discharge: **25 0 2**

C.

War Leave Due for Voyage: Days
War Leave Taken during Voyage: Days
War Leave Still Due 9 days @ 9/4 per Day: **4 4 0**
Furlough Allowance 9 days @ 3/4 per Day: **1 7 0**
Carried Forward: **50 11 2**

The above Account of Earnings and of Deductions exclusive of Allotments is correct.

Image 2

Convoy UGS 31

With repairs completed we sailed for Philadelphia on 21 January 1944 loaded aviation spirit then rendezvoused with convoy UGS 31 from Hampton Roads for Port Said on 25 January 1944.

In UGS 31 were 106 merchant ships and 26 US Navy escorts. Included were 48 Liberty ships with many of them carrying troops for the North African campaign. Another six Liberty ships were 'Sam' boats flying the Red Ensign.

Research shows that we had a reasonably quiet trip with little attention from U boats.

On 11th February a few ships including **Neritina** left the convoy and diverted into Casablanca where we found total devastation in the port area. Three months earlier on 8th November 1943 Casablanca had been bombarded by US naval ships. 10 passenger and cargo ships of Vichy France were sunk alongside berths, and 11 of their warships, which included 3 submarines, were also sunk - hundreds of casualties were caused during the onslaught. It was the Western area of Operation Torch - the Allied invasion of North Africa.

As all berths were occupied by sunken ships, we lowered both anchors and moored our stern to the breakwater.

A postscript to this is that four days after the occupation of Casablanca by US forces, **U-130** Commander Ernst Kals sank three US troopships at anchor in the heavily guarded area outside the port. **U-130** was the U boat which sank my ship **Viking Star** on 25th August 1942.

Convoys OS 67 and LTS 12

On 16 February 1944 we left Casablanca and later joined in with a Southbound convoy OS 67 from the Clyde bound for Freetown. In this convoy were 27 ships and were escorted by 5 RN escorts.

On arrival at Freetown on 26 February, we berthed at Kissy and discharged part cargo and on following day we sailed for Takoradi escorted by French corvette **Atalante**.

We completed discharge of cargo at Takoradi and later joined in with convoy LTS 12 from Lagos for Freetown -11 ships and 6 escorts. We arrived and anchored at Freetown on 11 March.

Two days later we sailed independently for Trinidad. We streamed our torpedo protection nets and it was an uneventful eleven days voyage arriving at Port of Spain on 24 March 1944.

Convoys TAG 123 and TAG 124

We took on bunkers and stores and joined convoy TAG 123 for Curacao - Arnold Hague records 35 ships in this convoy which included two neutral ships La Salina Venezuelan and Marquessa de

ships in this convoy which included two neutral ships..La Salina venezuelan and Marques de Comillas Spanish..

TAG convoys operated Trinidad -Aruba -Guantanamo and ships for Curacao would divert into that port as we did. At Bullen Bay Curacao we loaded petrol and diesel for Dublin. Five days in Curacao which was very welcomed [my sub book records a £10 sub] and we then sailed on 31 March 1944 and later rendezvoused with convoy TAG 124 and arrived at Guantanamo Bay on 3 April 1944. This convoy was 18 ships and Arnold Hague records one of them as the neutral ship **Harpon** of Argentina.

Harpon was built in 1897 in Germany and I saw her again in 1957 in Tilbury Docks. Among her cargo she had rotting sacks of hoof and horn and it was infested with maggots. Dockers refused to handle it until 'the price was right'..I believe the ship went to the breakers from Tilbury - 60 years old.

Note: According to Miramar - [Ext Ref. 2](#) - **Harpon** was launched in Germany on 16 Dec 1896 as **Wally**, renamed **Silesia** in 1898, **Zaandijk** in 1918, and finally **Harpon** in 1923. She was taken to be broken up at Spezia on 27 Jul 1957. Stan must have seen her just before her final voyage to the breakers.

Convoys GN 124 and HX 287

From Guantanamo we joined convoy GN 124 and sailed same day. This convoy was from Guantanamo to New York and consisted of 29 ships. We arrived at New York on 10 April 1944and sailed again on 12 April in HX 287.

With more ships joining from Halifax we then had 72 ships. Of these, 42 were US flagged Liberty ships all deeply loaded with war materials and having deck cargoes of small invasion barges and crated aircraft for the planned invasion of Normandy.

One of the Liberty ships was **Jeremiah O'Brien** on her maiden voyage and I would be seeing her again very soon off Omaha beach head during the invasion - I was then in **Dolabella**.

We had 17 escorts for this very important convoy and **MacAndrews Pinto** was Rescue Ship - the voyage was uneventful. The convoy arrived Liverpool 26 April 1944, but before that our ship had diverted to Belfast Lough and anchored.

A Royal Navy unit boarded us and removed the breech blocks from guns and these with the machine guns and all ammunition was taken ashore. The reason -we were bound for Dublin and Ireland was neutral. Most of the crew were very upset in hearing of our destination. There were many rumours that U boats were using small remote ports in Southern Ireland - and President de Valera was not pro-British.

We made the trip from Belfast to Dublin during the hours of darkness. At Dublin we had a bad start from the Customs when they confiscated all books, magazines and newspapers which we had been given by the Seamen's Mission in New York - but this was more than compensated for by the wonderful welcome of the very friendly people we met there. We had arrived Dublin 26 April 1944.

Our visit to Dublin will be forever in my memory as one of the happiest times in my sea life. A pub only 50 feet from the gangway and the company of some of the nicest people I ever met who knew how to enjoy life. We had sailed from Dublin for Liverpool where we were paid off on 1st May 1944.

Image 3 is a copy of entries from Stan's discharge book from this period

7 CERTIFICATE				OF DISCHARGE 8			
Of Certified Extract from List and Copy of Report of Character				of Crew and Official Log Book, if cleared by the Seaman.			
No.	Name of ship and official number, and tonnage.	Date and place of Engagement* Discharge.	Rating.	Description of voyage.	Copy of Report of Character. For sailing. For general conduct.	Signatures of (1) Master, and of (2) officer and official stamp.	
7	CAPE HOWE G. 190. 168749. NET, 4851	5 Oct 1943 Glasgow	AB	Foreign	VERY B 92 GOOD	(1) <i>Johnnie D.L.</i> (2) <i>Johnnie D.L.</i>	LINCOLN 1943
8	LARGE BAY 187925 G.R. 14, 173	1 Oct 1943 Birkenhead	AB	CHMS	VERY B 95 GOOD	(1) <i>Johnnie D.L.</i> (2) <i>Johnnie D.L.</i>	TILBURY 1943
9	NERITINA 166256	1/10/43 Glasgow	AB	Foreign	VERY B 92 GOOD	(1) <i>Johnnie D.L.</i> (2) <i>Johnnie D.L.</i>	TILBURY 1943
10	DOLABELLA 167358	20/3/44 Glasgow	AB	Ops.	VERY B 95 GOOD	(1) <i>Johnnie D.L.</i> (2) <i>Johnnie D.L.</i>	TILBURY 1944
11	LUCELLUM 166255	20/9/44 Tilbury	AB	Foreign	VERY B 92 GOOD	(1) <i>Johnnie D.L.</i> (2) <i>Johnnie D.L.</i>	TILBURY 1944
12	EMPIRE UNITY 167346	Tilbury 28-11-44 14/11/44	AB	Foreign	VERY B 95 GOOD	(1) <i>Johnnie D.L.</i> (2) <i>Johnnie D.L.</i>	TILBURY 1944

Image 3