

DAILY SHIPPING NEWSLETTER 2003 – 031

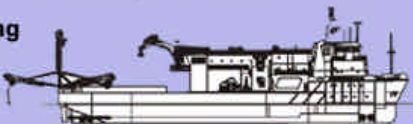


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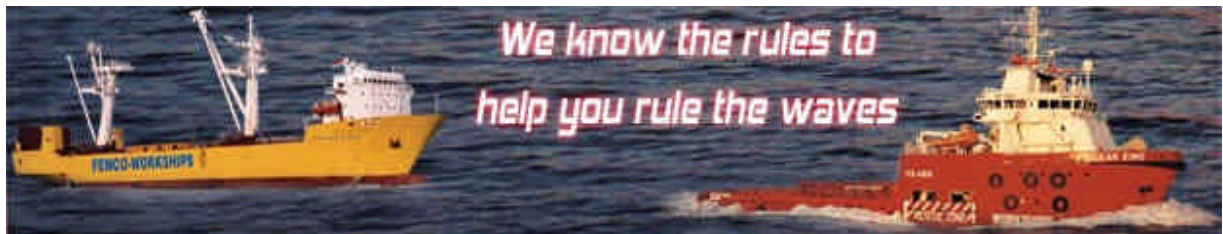
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China to hold trial in death of ship captain

A Chinese crew member suspected of killing Canadian captain Ma Sai Chung during a mid-ocean fight will be tried in China on a charge of murder. Canadian Foreign Affairs spokesman Reynald Dorion said Friday that China's Public Security Bureau has completed its three-month investigation into the case.

"And they have told us verbally that the suspect has been arrested and the paperwork is being prepared to have him formally charged with murder. It should be done within a matter of days," Mr. Dorion said. Mr. Ma's death caused an uproar in Canada after Singaporean authorities refused even to look into the matter after the crew told police a seaman killed the captain during a fight while the ship was in the Strait of Malacca. The officials said they did not have jurisdiction over international waters. As a result, the suspect, identified only by his surname Liu, was allowed to remain free on board the

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MV Jin Bi during the eight days it was docked in Singapore and sail with it to its next destination, Hong Kong. Mr. Ma, a resident of Maple Ridge, B.C., was allegedly stabbed fatally in the neck during an altercation on Dec. 17 and his body tossed overboard. Finally, when the vessel landed in Guangzhou on the southeast coast of China, Chinese police took the suspect into custody and launched an investigation into Mr. Ma's death.

"We have been urging the Chinese to ensure their investigation is completed as fast as possible," Mr. Dorion said, "and we are satisfied this has happened. The suspect will now be tried in a Chinese court and this sad affair can be brought to an end." Mr. Ma, 53, took the job as captain of the Hong Kong-owned, Panamanian-registered ship last year, after finding it difficult to make ends meet in Canada.

Willy Lau, a friend and spokesman for Mr. Ma's wife and two sons in Canada, said the family wants the whole matter over as quickly as possible. "I guess this news is better than nothing, but we still don't know when he will go on trial. It is very hard for the family." But Mr. Lau gave credit to China for taking up the case, after Singapore spurned any involvement. "It was really a surprise what the Chinese government did. It was a lot better than what other governments would do. It looks like they really want to settle this." Mr. Lau said the captain's family has been devastated by what happened, even beyond the tragedy of losing their husband and father. Because Mr. Ma's body has not been found, it has been difficult to collect death and pension benefits, he said. "They have lost all their income. It is very hard for them."

DUTCH AQUAMARINE COLLISION



A collision incident in the English Channel has led to a 12-month jail sentence for the watchkeeping officer of chem.tank **Dutch Aquamarine**, found guilty of manslaughter. He had pleaded guilty to a charge under Britain's Merchant Shipping Acts of endangering his vessel. The incident, which yesterday led to the conviction and sentencing of second officer Brian Norcutt D'Esterre Roberts, took place on Oct 9, 2001, 10 miles off Hastings in the south-

west lane of the Dover Strait traffic separation scheme. Roberts was officer of the watch on board **Dutch Aquamarine** when his vessel ran into the stern of general cargo **Ash. Ash** quickly sank and the crew of six were forced to jump into the water. Five were picked up by Dutch Aquamarine's rescue boat but the master of Ash, Captain Wolfram Gross, who was pulled from the water by crew from a Coastguard helicopter, did not survive. Commenting on the prosecution, in which the Maritime and Coastguard Agency co-operated with Sussex police, MCA director of operations John Astbury said Roberts standard of watch-keeping "fell so far below the level required that this collision was inevitable".

THETIS LAUNCHED



The Floating Sheerlegs **TAKLIFT 3** of SMIT heavy lift lifted last Saturday the newbuild tug for Iskes in IJMUIDEN named **THETIS** at the IHC shipyard in the water.

The weight of the **Thetis** was 480 ton.

Photo :
Arie Terpstra
(SMIT) ©

Coast guard ice breaker frees ferry stuck in pack ice off Cape Breton



A coast guard ice breaker has freed a ferry that was stuck in the ice off Cape Breton. The **Leif Ericson** was caught in ice about 38 kilometres off North Sydney during part of the day on Sunday.

The ferry was escorted into port late Monday by the coast guard ice breaker **Earle Grey**. The ferry docked 13 hours late, and then began its journey back to its regular destination of Port aux Basques, Nfld. Marine Atlantic said ice conditions are expected to cause schedule problems for the next 24 to 48 hours.

CASUALTY REPORTING

MIAOULIS I (GREECE)

Ferry **Miaoulis I** (1198 gt, built 1994) and general cargo **Roksolana** (3953 gt, built 1982) were in collision in lat 38 19N, long 21 46.8E, near Rion, at 2205, local time, Friday. Miaoulis I sustained starboard side damage, Roksolana sustained forepeak damage. Both vessels are now in Rion.

CENTURY (NORWAY (INT. REGISTER))

Following received from Piraeus RCC, timed 0925, UTC: Following main engine damage sustained offshore Algeria, lng/lpg **Century** (26097 gt, built 1974) is being towed to Syros Shipyard by tugs **Vincenzo Onorato** and **Maria Onorato**.

P&O NEDLLOYD CAPRI (LIBERIA)



SMIT Salvage BV in combination with Loucas G.Matsas have been awarded German form by underwriters to render their services to general cargo **P&O Nedlloyd Capri** currently grounded at Kalymnos, north of Cape Kryso Spilaio.



Anti-pollution activities by local parties and salvage tug Matsas Star are ongoing. Additional salvage experts, a marine chemist and specialised equipment including Smit's "Dirty Harry" diving system are being mobilised. This system allows divers to go down in flooded holds/compartments and work in water that is contaminated by IMO cargoes. -- **SMIT Salvage BV**.

Photo's : **SMIT Salvage**

TITAN (U.S.A.)

Following received from Coast Guard Alameda, dated Mar 5: The Coast Guard responded to tug Titan (148 gt), official No.959442, that was taking on water in-between Alcatraz and Angel Island this morning. Coast Guard Group San Francisco received a phone call at 0700 hrs from the tug's master stating they were taking on water. Coast Guard Station Golden Gate, Coast Guard Station San Francisco and the Richmond Police Department responded to the vessel and began dewatering efforts. The tug was then successfully towed back to the port of Oakland by its sister tug, Sarah. No injuries were reported.

GAS ROMAN (PANAMA)

A collision in the South China Sea a week ago has left two vessels floating, still stuck to each other. None of the 14 crew onboard general cargo **Springbok** and the 21 crew members on lpg **Gas Roman**, were hurt in the Feb 27 accident, which took place more than 30 km north-east of the

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Horsburgh Lighthouse. They remain on board and there are no plans to evacuate them for now, said the vessels' managing agents. Springbok was struck in its midsection where the cargo hold is located, and its load of timber probably helped to cushion the impact, said a source. Work to separate the two vessels has begun and according to Supertramp Maritime, which manages **Springbok**, both vessels have been towed to sheltered Indonesian waters to help facilitate salvage operations. Shipping traffic remains unaffected, said the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore, which is investigating the incident. Dutch company **SMIT Salvage BV** and Singapore's **Semco Salvage** and Marine, are both currently working on salvage operations. Describing the work as being 'very difficult', Mr Lars Walder, public relations manager of **SMIT Salvage BV**, said that after the timber cargo is unloaded, the hole will be patched with steel plates. Separating the vessels before that would result in the **Springbok** sinking. Divers are also assessing the damage and the patching work will hopefully be complete in three or four days' time, he added. Meanwhile, the tanker - which is carrying 44,300 tonnes of propane - remains intact. Shipping sources in Korea said yesterday that **Gas Roman**, which is managed by KSS Line, may even be in good enough shape to continue its journey after minor repairs.

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Matson wants out of deal to buy 2 ships

The firm still wants to use the vessels but only if they are owned by somebody else, Matson Navigation Co. has told a Philadelphia shipyard it no longer wants the two \$110 million ships the yard is building for Matson. Matson said it could still use the container ships if another buyer can be found who is willing to charter the vessels to the mainland-Hawaii line.

Matson said yesterday it has not canceled the purchase contract, but has asked the shipyard to find another buyer. Matson blamed its oceangoing unions for not making concessions it claims are needed, and said chartering the ships would allow it to avoid dealing with the unions for those ships. Another owner-operator combination would do the hiring, said Jim Andrasick, Matson president and chief executive officer. Andrasick said Matson exercised its option to step aside from the purchase and work with the shipyard to find another buyer.

"It was fully within our power to do that," Andrasick said. He declined to detail what would happen if another buyer cannot be found for the ship. Andrasick would only say: "It is still Matson's intention to use the ship in the Hawaii trade. The only issue is ownership." An executive of the shipyard said today there is still "a binding contract with Matson," but he believes there will be no difficulty finding a buyer to relieve Matson of its financial burden.

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"Just as we are performing to the letter and spirit of that contract, we expect them to them to conform to the letter and spirit," said John Graykowski, senior vice president and general counsel of Kvaerner Philadelphia Shipyard Inc. However, Matson is not likely to be forced to take the vessels. "The



likelihood of that happening is about as likely as the temperature dropping below 32 degrees Fahrenheit in Honolulu," Graykowski said.

The **MV Manukai** at KPSI - January 29, 2003.

There is a demand for U.S.-built ships, with two or three operators looking for them. The cost is \$30 million less than Matson paid for a similar ship 10 years ago, and bolstered by a Matson promise of a long-term charter, he said. A memo issued to Matson employees Feb. 28, under the signatures of Andrasick and Brad Mulholland, Matson's vice chairman, said the company's operating costs have

increased since it committed to buy the ships. In the memo, Matson said "labor cost savings vital to the project were not achieved, and the investment no longer can be financially justified.

"Matson cannot afford to make investments that do not return its capital," the memo said. Mainland-based union officials dealing with Matson could not be reached for comment. The company said it began talking to its seagoing unions in 2001, discussing cost savings it would like to make, including reducing the number of crew, but could not reach an agreement. "Clearly, the project to acquire and operate new ships is now even more uneconomic and can no longer be viewed as a reasonable investment," the memo said. When it announced the plans last year, Matson said it would achieve efficiencies with the new ships, saving the company \$6 million a year. That meant smaller crews, as well as lower fuel and maintenance costs.

Matson, the largest subsidiary of Honolulu-headquartered Alexander & Baldwin Inc., had planned to finance the purchase by using its existing capital construction fund of \$170 million and borrowing \$50 million. Information on the Kvaerner Web site says the first ship, **M.V. Manukai**, is well on the way to completion. A blessing of the ship and a ceremonial delivery were planned for June 3. Parts of the second vessel are already being made, and a keel-laying is set for this year, the Kvaerner Web site says. Each 712-foot ship will carry the equivalent of 2,600 20-foot containers. Kvaerner, part of a Norwegian-based company, had been attracted to Philadelphia through incentives to develop a U.S. commercial shipyard.

THREE ASYLUM SEEKERS FOUND ON SCOTS FERRY

SECURITY has been stepped up at a Scots port after asylum seekers were found on a new ferry service. The trio of immigrants were discovered at Rosyth, Fife, after boarding a ferry from Zeebrugge, Belgium. The two Iraqi men and a Romanian woman are now seeking political asylum and have been allowed to remain in the UK while their applications are processed. It is the first time illegal immigrants have been found on the new service. Security at Rosyth has now been tightened and lorry drivers warned over fears it could be a new route into the UK for asylum seekers. It is believed the three boarded the ferry at Zeebrugge and remained undetected until it arrived in Scotland. The service

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between Rosyth and Zeebrugge was launched last May and is the first direct ferry connection from continental Europe to Scotland. Police in Belgium have reported a rise in the number of illegal immigrants trying to smuggle themselves into Britain from Zeebrugge. A total of 3776 were found hiding in lorries and containers at the port last year, compared with 3114 in 2001. Even though the British port authorities have installed extra detection equipment at Zeebrugge and Ostend, Belgian officials say they do not have the resources to check the 1000-plus containers which are shipped every day. The Freight Transport Association fear Rosyth will be targeted by illegal immigrants. Spokesman Jeff Dossiter added: "Lorry drivers travelling from Zeebrugge to Rosyth are having to be extra vigilant."

Hyundai cars rev up Batangas port

The normally quiet port in this city came alive over the weekend as a hulking ship made its maiden call bearing more than 100 cool-looking Hyundai cars set to be launched into the local market this month. The Port of Batangas, the second biggest in Luzon next to the Port of Manila, even served as an informal test track for the Hyundai Matrix upon its arrival. Some of the 100 units of this mini multi-purpose vehicle (MPV) were test driven by government officials, members of the media and other curious guests after they were unloaded from the ship. Port operator Aries Arrastre Inc., a subsidiary of Asian Terminals Inc. (ATI), said the arrival of the Matrix signaled the official start of its operations in Batangas. "We have seen this port since 1994 when it was barely two hectares big," said Ramon Atayde, senior vice president of ATI. "We saw the promise of this port and we are excited at what it could bring to our economy." Located 110 kilometers south of Manila, the Port of Batangas is being developed into the country's next premier gateway to international shipping and trade. Traditionally, the port serves as an entry point to the island of Mindoro, with its cargo traffic in the past dominated by agricultural and forestry products. However, with the Matrix's arrival, things are bound to change. Atayde said the Matrix was the first car to be shipped through the Batangas port. He expressed gratitude to Hyundai Asia Resources Inc., the official distributor of Hyundai vehicles in the country, for trying out Aries Arrastre's facility. "We hope other car manufacturers will see the benefit of the port in terms of time, money and energy saved," he said. He added that with a brand new highway — the STAR tollway — reducing travel time from Manila to Batangas by half, many companies might be enticed to try out the new port.

The Matrix will be officially launched to the public on March 25.

NAVY NEWS



Top : The **USNS 1st LT Baldomero Lopez** seen here departing from Antwerp bound for the Middle East. **Photo : Peter Westdijk ©**

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In this handout photo from the U.S. Coast Guard, Coast Guard gunners mate third class Ozzie L. Perez, 22, a native of Myrtle Beach, S.C., loads a 50. caliber machine gun onboard the U.S. Coast Guard cutter **Adak**, homeported in Sandy Hook, N.J. Sunday March 9, 2003 in the Persian Gulf. Four 110-foot Coast Guard patrol boats are in the Gulf region in support of Operation Enduring Freedom **Photo : US Coast Guard**

MOVEMENTS

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MULTRASHIP Towage & Salvage

Scheldekade 48

4531 EH Terneuzen

The Netherlands

Tel : + 31 – 115 645 000

Fax : + 31 – 115 645 001

Internet

commercial@multraship.nl

<http://www.multraship.nl>

ADMIRAL



Sources reported that the "**Admiral**" ex "**Warnemünde**" has left Genova in tow of the Turkish tug **Ocean Ergun** last Saturday (8-3-2003), She is sold for scrap in Aliaga in Turkey but there were rumours in Genova that the U.S. Navy were interested to by the ship.

Left : The **ADMIRAL** laid up in Genova

Photo : Piet Sinke ©

MIDNATSOL



The new Hurtigruten ship **Midnatsol** will be christened in Hamburg on 22nd March. She will be accompanied on her voyage from Norway by the veteran vessel **Nordsternen**, which was built at Hamburg in 1956. Hamburg was chosen as venue for this event because of the importance of the German market for Hurtigruten business - Germany is in fact the biggest market for cruise traffic. She is due to make her inaugural Hurtigruten sailing from Bergen on 4th April. **Photo : P.Madsen ©**

AIRCRAFT / AIRPORT NEWS



PH-MPD First Airbus A320 for Martinair (c/n 1944), arriving at Hamburg from its photo flight.

Photo : Frank Unterspahn ©

ACCIDENT AT MELBOURNE AIRPORT, AUSTRALIA

Special lifting equipment is being flown from Sydney to Melbourne to move a United Airlines 747 which veered off the taxiway after landing in Melbourne. The United Airlines aircraft was bogged in a grassed area at Melbourne Airport after leaving the taxiway shortly after landing at 1105, AEDT, today. The aircraft's main nose wheel is believed to be seriously bogged and Melbourne Airport crew are working with United Airlines engineers to move the plane back onto the taxiway. A spokeswoman for the airline said the heavy lifting equipment had left Sydney shortly after midday and was still en route to Melbourne. None of the 150 passengers and 12 crew on board the United Airlines flight 815 from Los Angeles was injured when the aircraft careered off track after landing. However, passengers faced delays as they awaited a shuttle bus to take them from the stranded aircraft to the international terminal. The Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) has launched an investigation into what caused the plane to leave the taxiway. An ATSB spokesman said he understood the aircraft had landed safely and was taxiing towards the gate when it veered onto a grass verge and got bogged. The spokesman said investigators would talk to the pilot, air traffic controller and crew on board at the time of the incident. United Airlines has also launched an investigation. A spokeswoman for the airline said initial investigations indicated a mechanical problem with the nose wheel steering was the cause of problems. A spokeswoman for Melbourne Airport said the incident had not affected the landing of other aircraft at the airport. With the 747 expected to be out of action for American bound flights

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tonight, United Airlines will make alternative arrangements for passengers travelling to the US west coast. A spokeswoman said passengers would be placed on other United Airlines flights, but the airline would also look to other carriers.



Student aviators and their instructors at Meridian Naval Air Station in Meridian, Miss., log flying hours in **T-45 jet trainers**, Thursday, March 6, 2003. With a possible war on the horizon, Navy officials are concerned about the availability of an aircraft carrier for their student pilots to practice their carrier landings. Successfully performing 10 landings on an

aircraft carrier is a requirement to win the Navy's gold pilot wings

RIJNMOND WEATHER

Vooruitzichten van dinsdag t/m vrijdag:

Na woensdag droog!

Morgen in de loop van de middag regen. Woensdag af en toe zon en een enkele bui. Donderdag en vrijdag (flinke) perioden met zon, droog en duidelijk koudere nachten.

© Ed Aldus 2003	DI-11	WO-12	DO-13	VR-14
Maximumtemperatuur:	12	8	9	10
Minimumtemperatuur:	7	6	3	0
Zonnekans in %:	10	30	50	70
Neerslagkans in %:	80	40	10	10
Windrichting kracht:	ZW-4-6	NW-4-6	NNO-3-5	NO-2-4

.... STORY OF THE DAY

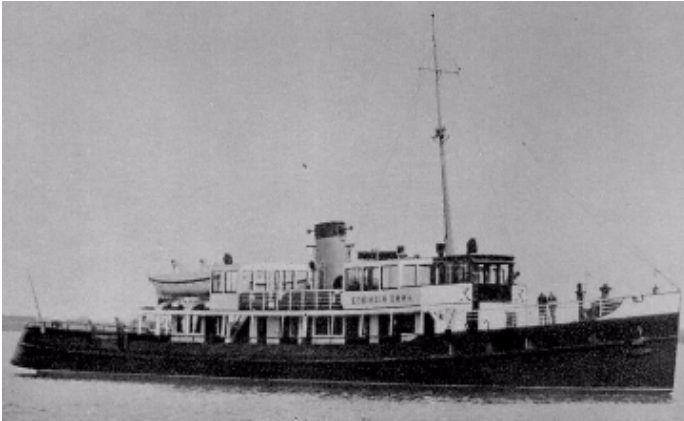
Voor altijd achter de horizon

door Rinus Antonisse

In de bijna 140-jarige geschiedenis van de Provinciale Stoombootdiensten vallen drie onderwerpen op. Er wordt al die tijd veilig gevaren. De Zeeuwse politiek houdt zich tot in detail bezig met de veerdiensten, niet alleen met de vraag publieke of particuliere exploitatie, ook met de kwaliteit van de koffie. Over de hoogte van de tarieven en vrije veren is voortdurend discussie. De geschiedenis van de PSD is samen te vatten in: veilig, steeds comfortabeler, voor de reizigers redelijk goedkoop.

De dienst verdwijnt dan ook niet omdat de dienstverlening niet deugt, maar omdat een lang gekoesterde wens - een vaste oeververbinding tussen Zeeuws-Vlaanderen en Midden-Zeeland - in vervulling gaat.

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Links : [De Koningin Emma](#)

Foto : [Coll Aad Sinke](#)

Het varen tussen overkanten is niet meer nodig. Een particulier fiets-voetveer tussen Vlissingen-Breskens en de rijksponthet kanaal Terneuzen-Gent bij Sluiskil, houden de veervlag nog in ere. En de tijden van weleer herleven 's zomers in de toeristische vaartochten van Een Rondje met een Pontje, via de oude routes van de PSD.

Nu de PSD tot het Zeeuwse maritiem erfgoed gaat behoren en er over enige tijd van de dienst niet veel zichtbaars meer over is, kan een balans opgemaakt worden. Van houten raderstoomboot tot trotse dubbeldekker. Aan de oprichting van de PSD gaat een bijna 40-jarige periode van particuliere exploitatie vooraf. De geregelde veerdiensten beginnen op initiatief van zakenlieden in 1828 tussen Vlissingen en Breskens, met de raderboot [De Schelde](#), bijgenaamd De Tobbe. Het is inderdaad tobben; er zijn steeds financiële tekorten en de provincie moet bijspringen. Ook de dienstverlening laat te wensen over.

Niet echt van harte besluiten Provinciale Staten het heft in eigen hand te nemen. Noodgedwongen richten ze per 1 maart 1866 de PSD op. Daarna worden herhaaldelijk pogingen gedaan de veerdiensten op de Westerschelde weer in particuliere handen te brengen. Op de Oosterschelde wordt particuliere exploitatie gerekt tot 1912. Dan gaat ook daar de vlag van de PSD wapperen. De diensten van Anna Jacobapolder op Zijpe en naar de Zuid-Hollandse eilanden zullen nooit onder de hoede van de provincie komen. Daar is de Rotterdamse Tramweg Maatschappij actief.

De provincie begint het PSD-avontuur met twee boten: de houten raderboot [Stad Vlissingen no. 1](#) en de schroefboot [Zeeland](#), die slecht bevalt. Statenleden uiten na de proefvaart veel kritiek. „Ik zou er nauwelijks eene geit mede durven verzenden.“ Volgens Gedeputeerde Staten ligt het schip als een meeuw in het water; Statenleden vinden dat het meer aan een kakatoe doet denken. De [Zeeland](#) wordt al in 1871 afgestoten. Pech is er ook met de [Stad Vlissingen no. 1](#), die eind 1866 in dichte mist bij Borssele op de wal loopt en zinkt. Reparatie loont niet de moeite.

Meteen al in het eerste exploitatiejaar moet de PSD boten huren om de veerdienst in stand te houden. In 1867 komt de raderboot [Wester-Schelde](#) beschikbaar, die tot 1899 in de vaart blijft. Tegenvaller is ook dat de houten raderboot [Zeeuwisch-Vlaanderen](#) na 17 jaar blijkt te zijn aangetast door paalworm. Gekocht voor 64.150 gulden, brengt de boot in 1887 nog 2310 gulden op. Maar met de meeste boten van de PSD gaat het goed. Ze doen het werk trouw, zonder ernstige ongelukken en gaan in de zilte Zeeuwse wateren vele jaren mee.

De eerste vijf veerboten van de PSD zijn nog van hout, de volgende alle van staal. Tussen 1828 en 1909 zijn tien raderstoomboten in dienst gesteld (de laatste verdween in 1935). Er hebben vier schroefstoomboten gevaren. De eerste boot met koplading, de [Wilhelmina](#), komt in 1928 in de vaart.



Een succes zijn de drie prinsesse-boten, de [Beatrix](#) (1958), [Irene](#) (1960) en [Margriet](#) (1964), enkeldekkers tussen Vlissingen en Breskens. In 1968 komt op Kruiningen-Perkpolder de eerste dubbeldekker in dienst, de [Prinses Christina](#). Een vreemde eend in de bijt is de Moerdijkpont Dordrecht - eerst stoompont, later motorschip - die tussen 1946 en 1972 passagiers over de Westerschelde brengt.

Links : [de Prinses Beatrix](#) Foto : [Coll. Piet Sinke](#)

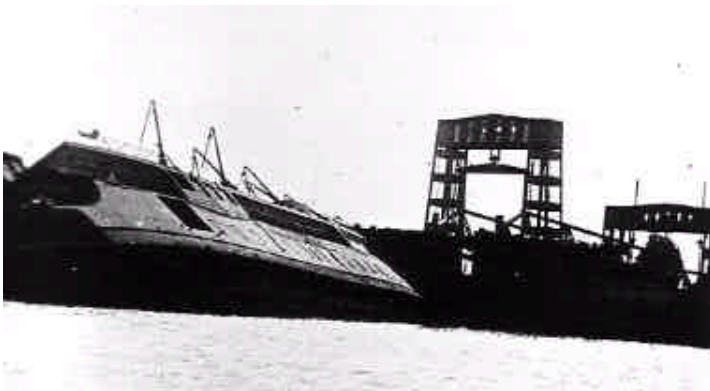
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Het kan spoken op de Deltawateren. Storm, mist, ijsgang en steeds drukker wordende scheepvaart, met name op de Westerschelde. De bemanningen hebben de elementen weten te trotseren. Een scheepsongeluk met slachtoffers is uitgebleven (afgezien van een beschieting tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog op de Oosterschelde). Gelet op het grote aantal afvaarten dat jaarlijks gemaakt wordt, een prima prestatie. Er zijn wel eens aanvaringen, bijvoorbeeld met een baggermolen en een vissersboot, ook enkele strandingen en onzachte aanvaringen met de veerfuik. Het loopt steeds met een sisser (en een beroep op de verzekering) af.

Oorlog

De zwaarste klappen krijgt de PSD te verwerken in de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Na de capitulatie op 15 mei, wordt de strijd in Zeeland nog enkele dagen voortgezet. De veerboten worden ingezet voor troepenvervoer.

De motorschepen **Prinses Juliana**, **Prins Hendrik**, **Oosterschelde** en **Prins Willem I** worden in de haven van Breskens tot zinken gebracht. De **Luctor et Emergo** zinkt na een bombardement in Vlissingen. De **Schouwen** wordt bij Hoofdplaat in brand gestoken. Alleen een kleine postboot en de schepen die op Noord-Beveland varen blijven heel. Tijdens de oorlog zijn de **koningin Wilhelmina** en de **koningin Emma** in de vaart, samen met enkele gehuurde schepen. Aan het eind van de oorlog vernielen de Duitsers de rest van de vloot, een aantal schepen wordt meegenomen. Veel aanlegplaatsen worden verwoest. De Februari ramp 1953 brengt nieuwe tegenslagen. De stoompont **Willemsdorp** wordt bij Kruiningen door het gat in de dijk geslagen en strandt drie kilometer landinwaarts. De veerhaven blijft 15 maanden buiten gebruik.



Links: De **Prinses Juliana** in gezonken toestand in Breskens.

Foto : Coll : Aad Sinke

Bemoeien Provinciale Staten zich aanvankelijk vooral met de zeewaardigheid van de boten, het accent verschuift meer en meer naar de kwaliteit van de dienstverlening, met name de frequentie van de afvaarten (een nachtboot blijft altijd

een wens). Naarmate het Rijk opdraait voor de exploitatietekorten, moet harder geknokt worden om tijdig nieuwe boten in de vaart te krijgen. Wachttijden zijn, zeker vóór de komst van de dubbeldekkers, geen uitzondering. Maar statenleden zijn niet te beroerd zich te beklagen over te droge broodjes (al worden de buffetten verpacht) en de plastic zitplaatsen van een nieuwe boot vallen niet direct in goede aarde.

Van meet af aan moet voor een overtocht betaald worden. In 1828 is het tarief voor een overtocht met de stoomboot of een steigerschuit één gulden (in de kajuit 1,50 gulden). `s Winters gaat het tarief met een-vijfde omhoog. Er zijn veel klachten: voor de armen is het veer niet betaalbaar. In 1852 besluiten Provinciale Staten tot een tariefsverlaging. Na de oorlog, eind 1945, gaat de subsidie van het Rijk omhoog tot 100 procent, tegelijk met de invoering van vrije veren op de Westerschelde. De ministerraad besluit daartoe `in verband met de noodzakelijkheid de bevolking van Zeeuwsch-Vlaanderen gemakkelijker in contact te brengen met het overige gedeelte van Nederland.`

Volksofstand

Gratis varen duurt maar kort. Al in 1950 wordt weer een matig veertarief ingevoerd; passagiers tweede klasse en (motor)rijwielen blijven kosteloos. Aan de komst van de prinsesseboten verbindt de regering de eis dat de vrije veren helemaal worden afgeschaft. Statenmoties en verbitterde brieven aan de regering halen niets uit. In 1958 ontstaat er een soort volksofstand, met name in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen.

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De 72-jarige veehandelaar Honoré Colsen, koninklijk onderscheiden verzetsstrijder, richt een actiecomité op, dat ruime en hartstochtelijke steun verwerft.

De roep om aansluiting bij België steekt de kop op. Kreten als `Zeeuws-Vlaanderen is geen wingewest` en `Wat wordt onze hoofdstad, Amsterdam of Brussel?` zijn daarvan uitingen, evenals het hijsen van de Belgische vlag op de toren van Hulst. De vrije verenactie mondt uit in een mars op Den Haag. Ongeveer 1500 Zeeuws-Vlamingen trekken via Antwerpen naar het Binnenhof. De protestdemonstratie begint met het zingen van het Wilhelmus en eindigt met de Brabançonne. Op het nippertje wordt voorkomen dat de ruiten op het Binnenhof aan diggelen gaan. De vrije veren verdwijnen.

Wel komt er in 1960 een tariefsverlaging voor voetgangers en fietsers, en een speciale regeling voor de inwoners van Zeeuws-Vlaanderen. Ondanks gemor, gaan de tarieven vervolgens regelmatig omhoog. Uitgangspunt is dat 40 procent van de kosten uit de veergelden moet worden betaald. Als in 1971 de tarieven met 35 procent dreigen te stijgen, ontstaat opnieuw commotie: een blokkade van de veerboot in Breskens (wat kort daarvoor boeren ook al deden, uit protest tegen landbouwmaatregelen van de EEG) en enkele weken later een vijf kilometer lange proteststoet naar Den Haag. De inzet is tevergeefs. Het is het laatste omvangrijke protest tegen verhoging van de veergelden.

Een enkele reis door de Westerscheldetunnel gaat voor een personenauto of motor vier euro kosten. In 175 jaar van één gulden naar ruim 8,80 gulden. Die prijs moeten leden van Provinciale Staten in het vervolg ook gaan betalen. Het gratis-vervoerpasje van de PSD is niet meer geldig.