

# Friends of the Ferries

Across the Mersey.frequent service



# Newsletter

This Newsletter is circulated to members to keep them in touch with the main events which have been happening since the formation of Friends of the Ferries.

Merseytravel seem to be determined to eventually phase out the Ferry service and to use the boats for excursion work, tendering to the cruise liners etc. The Ferry service comes second. During spring the Merseyrail Loop was out of service for over two months. This was a golden opportunity to provide a frequent service but apart from ensuring that the "Royal Iris" and the "Snowdrop" had been drydocked beforehand there was no enhancement of the service. With diesel cars being phased out to reduce pollution the ferries, albeit diesel propelled, will emit far less pollution than the fleets of buses going through the tunnels. (see Page Four).

On Thursday October 28<sup>th</sup> there was a points failure at James Street just after 5 p.m. in the middle of the evening rush hour. I was on a train at James Street. Passengers were advised to go to Cook Street where extra buses were to be provided. I walked down to the Pier Head and having just missed a boat I waited for 20 minutes and got the Snowdrop to Seacombe. Having looked at the time tables posted on the bus stop I was, in fact, about to call a taxi when a 409 arrived from Birkenhead and this took me to within 200 yards of my destination. Almost like the "good old days" when the boats and buses were co-ordinated. I have consulted the latest timetable which gives a time for the 409 at Seacombe and have since checked the two stops again but there are no timetables for the 409 posted in the shelters.

The M.A.I.B. have reported on the Royal Iris grounding at Eastham. They are satisfied that the internal disciplinary and other measures taken by Mersey Ferries are sufficient and are not taking any further action.

## Friend's Draw.

Included with this newsletter are your tickets for the Annual Draw. Please return the counterfoils and money by Friday December 8<sup>th</sup> to:

**Gordon Ditchfield  
7 Foxcovers Road,  
Bebington. CH63 3EQ**

The draw will take place at Seacombe on December 12<sup>th</sup> when Mrs. Linda Welsh will draw the winning ticket.

## Items for Sale.

D.V.D.s & C.D. by the well-known Don Woods.

"A Mersey Cruise", "This is Liverpool" and "Wallasey Past and Present" are £6.50. each. The C.D. "Songs of the River" is £5.50. P.&.P. £0.96 in each case. Available from:

**Joan Roberts.  
16 Bayswater Gardens,  
Wallasey CH45 8 LB**

Please make cheques payable to Joan Roberts.

# Publicity and Marketing.

The Summer has been quite busy with various events and shows which have created quite a lot of interest.

## “Discover Liverpool”

St. George's Hall, Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> April.

Sales were good at this event and we had a successful raffle.



Our stall in the main hall.



Ken Pye drawing the winning Raffle ticket.



A delighted Angela Adams with her prize – a picture.

Pictures by John Timms.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

## “Toys for Boys.”

Held at the Old Christ Church in Waterloo on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> August this event proved successful for us as sales were fairly good..

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

## “The Northwest Ship Show.”

The Old Christ Church was also the venue on September 30<sup>th</sup> for this show. It was well attended and our sales were reasonable which was pleasing.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

## “The Historic Bus and Tram Show.”

On Sunday October 1<sup>st</sup> we were at the Wirral Tramway Museum for this show. It was very successful with many old, historic, trams and buses with popular rides, especially on the old trams.

Sadly, our sales never seem to get very good at this show – so we decided to hold a raffle. The prize of a picture of the Blue Funnel liner “Automedon” (2) was won by one of our members Jim Watson who was, needless to say, delighted with his prize.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

## “Vale Park Band Concerts 2017.”

This summer was not very good – on several occasions we were prevented from attending by the weather – either too wet or too windy. Our stall was in a different position this year. This wasn't as good as in the past, but, unfortunately, we had no choice. The band concerts were all most enjoyable and attracted good audiences. Our sales were very poor, which was a shame as a lot of work is involved in the preparation.

Finally: I must, as ever, say a big thankyou to my friend and fellow member **John Timms** for all his help with our sales stall, very much appreciated.

*Joan Roberts.*



## Lessons from the Past.

On one of the internet web sites there has been discussion about new ferries. One correspondent is advocating small fast ferries. He is, obviously, not aware of two previous attempts to use smaller craft on the river.

In November 1949, in an attempt at cutting costs, Wallasey purchased for £14,500 an ex-Admiralty Fairmile B motor launch "**Channel Belle**" which had been converted to an excursion vessel. The idea being that the large capacity steamers could lie up overnight with just a skeleton crew on board whilst the launch – renamed "**Wallasey Belle**"- maintained the ferry service. In practice it was found that the launch was too small and had trouble through ranging alongside the landing stages. Passengers complained of Sea Sickness. Most of her brief career with the ferries was spent on the New Brighton service with excursions to see H.M.S. Ark Royal under construction at Cammell Laird's. Laid up in at the end of 1950 with a broken crank shaft she was sold for £1,250 to a Torquay owner and was later sold to Australia. The loss of over £13,000 caused an outcry. However, one benefit was that the Wallasey Ferries had experience in operating diesel propelled vessels and over the next two years "**Royal Iris**", "**Leasowe**" and "**Egremont**" entered service.



**Wallasey Belle.**

**Daim. 112 ft. x 18 ft 3 in.**

**Photo: P.Welch**



**Highland Seabird.**

**Dim. 89 ft x 29 ft.**

**Photo: Flicker**

In 1982 the *catamaran* "**Highland Seabird**" was chartered by Mersey Ferries. In service on the River she was found to suffer the same problems as the "**Wallasey Belle**". On one occasion she was trapped at the back of George's Landing Stage and had to be towed out by the "**Royal Iris**". She was returned to her owners, Western Ferries, after a short time.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

## The Wrong Side of the Law.

The "**Royal Iris**" entered service in the spring of 1951. After a couple of weeks, Liverpool City Police reacted to reports of drinks being served on board "After Hours". At that time pubs in Liverpool closed at 14.30 and in Wallasey at 15.00. Ch. Inspector Seymour Jones together with other officers went on board in plain clothes for a cruise. He observed drinks being served after 15.00 and about one hour later accompanied by a sergeant, he went to the Captain's cabin and attempted to arrest the Captain. The Captain, justifiably annoyed at the intrusion, in turn arrested the two police officers and locked them in his cabin. The Ch. Inspector had assumed that the Captain was the licensee and was responsible for the bar. In fact, it was the Chief Steward who held the license. On return to Liverpool the Police officers were released. At Liverpool Magistrate's Court the licensees were convicted. However, there was a case in progress in the High Court regarding the serving of alcohol on board excursion ships in the River Thames. Lord Justice Goddard found in favour of the companies and, subsequently, drinks were available on board Wallasey Ferries when on the New Brighton service or cruising when they were not alongside a landing stage.



## Mersey Ferries Service Failures.

Mersey Ferries determination to persist with only two ferries was shown to be “not fit for purpose” on several occasions during the summer. The following report is from the September edition of “Cruising Monthly” by kind permission of Malcolm McRonald. (see remarks on Page one).

### Mersey Ferries.

On Sunday July 23<sup>rd</sup> “**Snowdrop**” was required as tender to the cruise liner “**Azamara Journey**” which was anchored in the river. She was unable to use the Cruise Liner Terminal as it was occupied by the “**Celebrity Silhouette**”. “**Royal Iris**” had gone up to Salford on the previous day and the plan was to bring her back light-ship in time to take the River Cruises on the Sunday.

However, this “cunning plan” went awry as “**Royal Iris**” suffered intermittent engine problems on her way back and had to be assisted in the Manchester Ship Canal by the tug “**MSC Victory**”. This resulted in there being no River Cruises on the Sunday, no doubt disappointing thousands of tourists, with two cruise liners in the river, at the beginning of the school holidays. Meanwhile “**Royal Daffodil**” continued to languish and deteriorate laid up in the East Float, Birkenhead unable to assist in retrieving a massive loss of revenue.

“**Snowdrop**” sailed on a Manchester Ship Canal Cruise on Friday July 28<sup>th</sup> returning on Saturday July 29<sup>th</sup>. There were no ferry sailings on either day as “**Royal Iris**” was still unfit for service even though she had been out for engine trials late on Friday. To make matters worse, “**Snowdrop**” was trapped in the canal at Eastham locks as they were closed due to an oil spill in the canal. “**Snowdrop**” was noted doing an evening cruise on Sunday July 30<sup>th</sup>.

Commuter sailings on the Mersey finished early, at 17.40 ex Liverpool on Friday August 4<sup>th</sup>. This was because the “**Snowdrop**”, the only ferry at the time capable of sailing, was needed for a special evening cruise. “**Royal Iris**” resumed service at the beginning of the following week.

Sailings on the Mersey were suspended for much of the day on Wednesday August 23<sup>rd</sup> as “**Royal Iris**” needed special maintenance. “**Snowdrop**” was on a Manchester Ship Canal cruise ex Salford.

“**Royal Daffodil**” continued to languish. Services resumed at 17.00 when “**Snowdrop**” was again available.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

The Ferries Dock and River Cruise in May was very successful. It is intended to hold a cruise in 2018. However, at the time of writing, the date has not been confirmed. The date will be advertised in the next newsletter.

### **Friends of the Ferries.**

*Hon. President. G.C. Lindsay.*

*A. Hodgson.....Hon. Chairman. D. Hocker.....Hon. Secretary.*

*G.R. Ditchfield.....Hon. Membership Secretary*

*M.R. McRonald, B.A. F.C.C.A. ...Hon.*

*Vice Chairman & Hon. Treasurer.*

*Miss J. Roberts, .Hon. Publicity & Marketing Officer..*

*G. Holmes, Newsletter Editor.*

*A. Blizard. T. Edgar. R. Peers*

*Printed by “Inprint”, 48, King Street, Egremont, Wallasey, CH44 8AU*