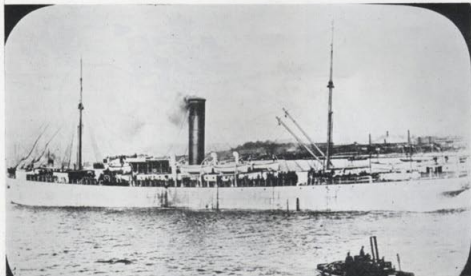


Union — in Head —



*The Berwick Castle
—the ship that sank
the British sub-
marine A1*

UNION-CASTLE vessels are often in the news—sometimes even in the headlines. In South Africa in fact, the names of the Mail ships are household words and hardly a day goes by without one of them being mentioned in the Press. The Union-Castle is one of the world's big and best-known shipping lines and has built up a great name for itself over the years. It may not be well-known among the present staff, however, that there have been occasions when almost epoch-making events have occurred involving Union-Castle vessels and some of these are given below.

One of the entertainments aboard all passenger vessels these days which seems almost commonplace and very much taken for granted, is the cinema show, held regularly throughout all voyages. But is it generally known that the first cinematograph show ever shown on a ship at sea was in a Union-Castle Mailship? Carl Hertz, an early cinema enthusiast, brought the first films to South Africa and, travelling out in the old Mailship *Norman*, March, 1896, he gave a demonstration on board—the first ever at sea. A book of his, "The Modern Miracle Merchant", was published in 1924 and contains this information.

Submarine A1 was not actually the first British submarine, but was the first one of any importance and is generally looked upon as the forerunner of the modern undersea craft. When she left Portsmouth on 18th March, 1904, for routine exercises she was the pride of the Navy and, when she failed to return and was reported missing, the British public were appalled. It was subsequently ascertained that she had been rammed and sunk—with all aboard lost, the first big submarine disaster—off the Nab Tower, between Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight, by a vessel, none other than the *Berwick Castle*.

Fifty or so years ago probably the best-known of the poets was Rupert Brooke, whose wonderfully inspiring poems are still well-known and quoted, and it was with great dismay and heart-burning that the British Nation

learnt of his death, at a comparatively early age in 1915, whilst on service in the Army in the Dardanelles campaign. He died on board the *Grantly Castle* and was buried on the island of Mudros.

During the second world war the George Cross Island of Malta was constantly in the news and the convoys of supply ships which sailed through the enemy controlled Mediterranean in 1942 will ever be remembered. The most famous convoy of all was the one in August of that year consisting of fourteen fast and well-equipped merchant vessels, one of which was the *Rochester Castle*. Only five reached the Island, of which our vessel was one, although she was gravely damaged by the almost continuous aerial attacks. The *Rochester Castle* is still a member of the fleet and must surely rank, as a result of that stirring voyage under the command of Captain Wren, as our most famous vessel.

Incidentally, an earlier Malta convoy in 1942 consisting of three vessels, the *Clan Campbell*, *Clan Chattan* and *Rowallan Castle*, came to grief. The first had to put back to port damaged and the other two were sunk, so none reached Malta.

In the eighties of the last century, a Castle vessel figured in a most notable political scandal when the British Prime Minister of the day, Gladstone, was invited by Mr. Donald Currie to go on a cruise into the Baltic in the *Pembroke Castle*. He accepted and sailed without, as, of course, was obligatory, informing the Sovereign, Queen Victoria, who was definitely "not amused". Gladstone got into serious trouble over his cruise in a Castle Line vessel.

There have of course been other probably less notable occasions when Union-Castle vessels have been in the news, but the above-mentioned cases were certainly remarkable.