



The Capetown Castle leaves Table Bay for the last time

[Photo: The Cape Argus]

## GOODBYE, OLD-TIMER

*CAPETOWN CASTLE* has sailed on her last passenger run; she was withdrawn from service in September. The vessel left Cape Town flying a 29-ft. paying-off pennant, but a complete lack of wind on arrival at Southampton prevented the final ceremony. Passengers disembarked and the job of stripping out and de-storing began.

The 27,000-ton liner, always a popular and happy ship with passengers and crew, was built by Harland & Wolff, Belfast, in 1938. She served as a troopship during the war and on some voyages carried as many as 6,000 troops. Towards the end of 1942 she went from Bombay to Suez to pick up a load of German prisoners—"a particularly bad lot, this". The prisoners were in a continual state of unrest as they had been told prior to capture that no British ship could survive more than a day at sea. *Capetown Castle* headed for Durban and Cape Town but the waters round the South African coast were infested at this time with the worst of the U-boat packs. She was sent to Saldanha Bay from where she made a dash across the South Atlantic to the Magellan Straits. Emerging into the comparative quiet of the Pacific Ocean she made her way to Panama, eventually reached New York and then crossed safely to Great Britain.

A group with memories to recall met last August, at the invitation of Captain R. A. D. Cambridge, at Southampton's Red Lion Hotel. They were the ship's gunners during the war. Captain Cambridge was second officer of *Capetown Castle* when hostilities were declared and he was in charge of the 6 in. gun of 1911 vintage which was installed at Cape Town. This was changed later at New Zealand for a 1916 anti-submarine gun and the ship also had a 3-in. anti-aircraft gun.

Among those at the reunion was Mr. Towyn 'Taffy' Jones, now bosun in *Pendennis Castle*, who recollected that "we carried half a million troops during the war without losing a single life. There were some narrow misses. Once the ship's stern was practically lifted out of the water by an explosion and the hull had plenty of bullet marks".

*Capetown Castle* was the first of the mail ships to be restored to pre-war standards of elegance and comfort and almost forgotten memories of luxurious ocean travel were revived when she left Southampton for the Cape in January, 1947.

Since 1965 she has been engaged in an extra service to Cape Town via Madeira, with calls either at Ascension and St. Helena or Walvis Bay.