

THE WATCH ASHORE 1933 – 1958

A SHORT HISTORY

By
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PUBLISHED PRIVATELY FOR THE
MEMBERS & ASSOCIATES OF
THE WATCH ASHORE

THE BEGINNINGS

The story of the Watch Ashore is so closely bound up with the name of Captain William H. Coombs, C.B.E., R.N.R., that one must give an outline of his work for Merchant Navy officers as necessary background. The story of The Navigators and General Insurance Company Limited is, in the words of Alan Villiers, ‘a piece of contemporary sea history which should be on record not only because it is a unique story in itself, but because of the immensely beneficial effects it has had on the lives of present-day shipmasters and officers in the British Merchant Navy—and indeed, indirectly, to Merchant Navy officers of many other countries.’

After the 1914-18 war British shipping entered a period of decline culminating in the terrible depression of the late 1920s and 1930s. In consequence the officer personnel was called upon to endure conditions which had a detrimental effect on recruitment to the Merchant Navy. It was felt that the officers themselves, as much a ‘silent service’ as the Royal Navy, should at last have these conditions made public. The various officers’ organizations were doing their utmost to convince the shipping industry of the need for establishing conditions of service in the Merchant Navy which would attract the best type of man, and retain the services of officers upon whom immense demands had been made in the recent war.

The shipping slump which set in during the 1920s did not make the time propitious for such representations. Officers’ rates of pay were reduced; it was said, with truth, that British officers were among the poorest paid in Europe, and some of the lesser firms even avoided the minimum wage agreements. Few could look forward to a pension in their old age. They had no legal right to annual leave, and such leave agreements as existed were

abandoned. Many officers who did take the leave to which they were morally entitled found, on returning, that they had been dismissed. The two-watch system became more prevalent in tramp steamers. Food and accommodation were often very bad—among the worst in world shipping. There was scant maintenance, often cases of overloading, and other abuses of minimum safety standards. There were, of course, notable exceptions; some shipping companies paid and treated their captains and officers well, but they were rare. Times were indeed grim for the majority of officers in the Merchant Navy.

It was not easy for officers to escape from these wretched conditions by leaving the sea. This was a time of acute unemployment in all trades and professions, and the officer, especially if he had a wife and family dependent upon him, was forced to put up with the prevailing conditions, even though he was bitterly aware that they were a poor return for his training and experience. A constant source of fear at the back of his mind, too, was the fact that he could lose his Certificate through causes possibly beyond his control. If his Certificate was cancelled he was down and out. There was no insurance against such a calamity.

This is where Captain Coombs comes into our story. In 1921 he was a young master mariner serving in China, surveying rivers and making coastal charts for the Chinese Maritime Customs. He had been trained in H.M.S. Conway, leaving as a gold medallist in 1909. He had sailed the seas as a Merchant Navy officer, had served during the first war as a lieutenant R.N.R., and served again in the Merchant Navy after that war with his Master's Certificate before going to Shanghai in 1920. One evening, when dining with the commander of a Chinese Customs cruiser, he heard of a mutual acquaintance, a fine officer, whose Certificate had been taken away at a Board of Trade enquiry; there had been a collision in which his ship had been involved. The last time the commander had seen him, he had been on 'Poverty Corner' in

Fenchurch Street, looking for a ship to sign on as A.B. (In the days before the first world war, 'Poverty Corner' was the name given by seafarers to one of the corners of Fenchurch Street; a Marine Superintendent, looking for an odd member for a crew, could always find a man there. This was long before the days of Service Pools.)

The two men had earlier been talking about insurance. Captain Coombs asked if there was no insurance which would cover an officer against losing his 'ticket', and was told that no company or underwriter would be interested. The following day Captain Coombs submitted his resignation to the Chinese Maritime Customs and made arrangements to return to London as soon as possible. He had decided to start an insurance company which would protect Merchant Navy officers who lost their employment at sea as a result of such hazards. And so, with that heaven-sent impulse, the beginning of reformed conditions throughout the Merchant Navy began, though Captain Coombs could hardly have foreseen how far-reaching those reforms were to be.

By all the rules of the game, a master mariner inexperienced in the ways of commerce was not likely to succeed in starting an insurance company in the City of London, especially during a trade depression of such magnitude. This master mariner, however, had two valuable assets: a first-rate idea, and fervent enthusiasm. He discussed the idea with a family friend, a Lloyd's broker, Mr. F. H. Church, who told him that his idea of insurance of Certificates was a good and practical one. On this they decided to form The Navigators and General Insurance Company Limited, which was incorporated on 1st March, 1921. Captain Coombs shared a desk in Mr. Church's office with Miss Daisy Cotter, who was Mr. Church's secretary. She became first Secretary of The Navigators and General Insurance Company, and continued as such until her retirement.

Mr. Church already had quite a nourishing business as a Lloyd's broker, but allowed his office to be used for the N. and G.

A third director, who became Chairman, was Admiral Sir John Franklin Parry, K.C.B., the Hydrographer of the Navy, under whom Captain Coombs had served. He joined the Board chiefly because he believed that the insurance of Certificates was badly needed. During his long career he had known many tragic cases in which shipmasters had been ruined as a result of a technical error of judgment, committed in conditions of great stress. The sea makes great demands of the men who serve it, and a wrong decision taken in moments of strain could at that time be followed by professional ruin.

Within a few years of its incorporation the 'Navigators', though technically an insurance company, was acting as a very live officers' organization. It set up an income-tax department which gave free advice to seagoing officers. An employment department was next added, and further services were made available to the members, as the policy-holders insisted on calling themselves. In order to help the finances, Captain Coombs turned to the amateur seaman—the yachtsman. He introduced a Navigators Yacht and Motor Boat Policy, so that a yachtsman would be able in this indirect way to help the work of improving the lot of his professional brethren in the Merchant Navy. The 'Navigators' was supported by everyone who knew what valuable work it was doing, though not all officers realized that it was not a commercial organization in the usual sense of the word. In 1926 Captain Coombs bought in all the then issued shares of the Company and put them in Trust for the Merchant Navy. The dividends on these shares have since then always been paid into the Trust for the benefit of the officers of the Merchant Navy.

There was a great deal of work to be done to better the conditions of the Service. At that time there existed a number of officers' societies which had the avowed aim of safeguarding the interests of Merchant Navy officers, but none was individually influential enough to achieve anything alone. Captain Coombs wrote a book, published in 1925, called *The Nation's Keymen*,

which set out clearly and with some passion what reforms were urgently needed in the Merchant Navy. The book was well reviewed in the national press as well as in the Service journals, and for the first time the general public was made aware of the raw deal the officers of the Merchant Navy were being given.

Having set out the problems in his book, Captain Coombs and his supporters decided on action. They suggested to the various officers' societies that they should jointly form a federation, each society keeping its own identity, but working together when collective action was necessary. The shipowners had a federation of their various Protection and Indemnity organizations, called the Shipping Federation. The only way for officers of the Merchant Navy to negotiate with this powerful body was to form their own federation, membership to be open to all bona-fide organizations representing British Merchant Navy officers throughout the world. Most of the existing societies agreed that such a federation was desirable, and the Officers (Merchant Navy) Federation came into being.

PAPER TIGERS

There was a full programme of essential reforms for the new Federation to work on. It applied for membership to the National Maritime Board but was not then successful in being admitted. One of the major aims of the Federation was to get a contributory pensions scheme introduced for officers, and such a scheme had indeed been worked out with the help of actuaries to meet the peculiar needs of the Merchant Navy. The shipping slump, however, was worse than ever at this time, and conditions at sea were in many cases deteriorating still further, instead of being improved. The Shipping Federation was not co-operative.

The Officers Federation, realizing that they could make no headway, decided to have matters raised in Parliament. Many members of the political parties were interested in the officers' problems, and questions were raised on several occasions in the House of Commons. Finally, the Federation decided to present a petition to Parliament. Thousands of ships' officers signed petition forms; and, what was equally important, members of the public signed them, too. In December 1933, the tug *Britannia*, bearing on board cases containing many thousands of signed petition forms, sailed from Tower Pier to the Houses of Parliament, her sides decorated with the words: '*Twelve thousand Merchant Officers petition Parliament*'. A similar petition was presented to the House of Lords.

A good deal of publicity resulted from this, and there was a debate in the House of Lords; but no inquiry was ordered. Still, public interest had been aroused, which was important. In spite of continued opposition, the Officers Federation at last gained admission to the National Maritime Board, and took its rightful place in the councils of the shipping industry. But there was little

progress in other directions. The plans put forward by the Federation for the long overdue officers' pension fund had been shelved by the shipowners. The officers had another strongly-felt grievance: the considerable delay in holding official inquiries into ships lost at sea. Nothing was being done about this, either. The Officers Federation, spurred on by the insistence of sea-going officers that a more emphatic policy be pursued, came to a conclusion which none of them could have foreseen.

They decided to form a trade union. At the meeting where this idea was first put forward, several officers made objections. The idea of a trade union was alien to their habit of mind; it went against the grain. Why could they not, they asked, continue to press their claims through the organization they already had? This roused Admiral Nelson-Ward, C.V.O., the President of the Federation, who was in the Chair. He rose. 'Paper tigers cannot fight,' * he retorted.

The decision was taken: the Navigators and Engineer Officers Union was formed, with Admiral Nelson-Ward as President, and Captain Coombs as General Secretary. It was soon functioning effectively. Within two or three years, the Merchant Navy Officers Pension Fund was inaugurated jointly by the shipowners' and officers' representatives—a significant step forward.

The Union, as such, no longer exists; it became merged with another association which was later federated into what is now the Merchant Navy and Airline Officers Association—the organization which today looks after the interests of Merchant Navy officers. But in the desperate time of the middle 1930s, the Union managed to achieve a great deal.

* The quotation was from a Chinese proverb, based on the custom of making paper kites in the form of tigers, dragons and other ferocious animals. The object is to bring the others' kites down.

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Captain Coombs often went down to visit Admiral Nelson-Ward at the latter's home in Sussex in order to discuss the many matters which related to their joint work for improvement in the conditions of Merchant Navy officers. The Honourable Mrs. Nelson-Ward was keenly interested in these discussions and often said to her husband that the wives and mothers of officers would be only too eager to help in the cause of reform, could this be possible. The Admiral declared that such assistance would be more than welcome if a way could be found to organize and use it.

Why should there not be a definite association of womenfolk, relatives of Merchant Navy officers? So asked Mrs. Nelson-Ward. In this manner was the future Watch Ashore suggested. Mrs. Nelson-Ward set out a sound, practical idea of a body that would not be a women's club on the pattern of those already existing. It would be an organization for the specific purpose of its members getting to know each other and working for the same end: to stimulate public interest in all matters concerning the Merchant Navy and its officers, and to enlist public support for the reforms which were urgently necessary. The need for these reforms was being ignored in official quarters as well as by the shipowners. It was essential to bring the facts to the notice of the public. The new association would make itself responsible for this; it would be a 'ginger group', writing letters to Members of Parliament, getting publicity in the Press, trying to interest influential people in the pressing problems of the Merchant Navy.

On 20th February, 1933 Mrs. Nelson-Ward convened a meeting of Merchant Navy officers' wives. A room in the premises of the Officers (Merchant Navy) Federation was put at their disposal. Here is the Agenda for that historic meeting,

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together with the list of those who attended, and the original Rules.

AGENDA

of meeting of Ladies interested in the Merchant Navy held at

OFFICERS (MERCHANT NAVY) FEDERATION

23 Leadenhall Street, London, E.C.3

20th February, 1933

- (1) The Hon. Mrs. Nelson-Ward will open the meeting and ask Lady Beaumont to take the chair.
- (2) Captain W. H. Coombs will address the meeting.
- (3) It will be moved that this meeting of ladies interested in the Merchant Navy resolve to inaugurate an Association known as 'The Watch Ashore'.
- (4) Discussion on proposed Rules.
- (5) Election of President, Committee, and Honorary Secretary and Treasurer.
- (6) Nomination of Vice-Presidents.
- (7) Any other business.
- (8) Vote of thanks to Lady Beaumont in the chair.

SIGNATURES OF THOSE ATTENDING INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE WATCH ASHORE

20th February, 1933

A. E. Sterling, D. Cotter, S. S. Coombs, G. Deighton, E. St. A. Phillips, M. Elgar, A. B. Sinclair, Beryl Faulkner, Phillipa N. Goodhart, Dorothy Nelson-Ward, A. M. Hall-Houghton, Violet Beaumont, B. B. Bradfield, I. H. Vidal, Frank Deighton, Fred J. Thompson, Wm. H. Coombs.

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Being an Association of Ladies interested in the
British Merchant Navy

RULES

- (1) The name of the Association shall be 'The Watch Ashore'.
- (2) The objects of the Association shall be:
 - To form a bond of mutual interest between the wives, mothers, sisters, daughters and others interested in the wellbeing of the officer personnel of the Merchant Navy of the British Empire.
 - To stimulate and sustain public interest in the necessity for reform in officers' conditions of service in the Merchant Navy.

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To enlist the interest and support of Members of Parliament (irrespective of party) in the Petition to Parliament which is to be submitted to Parliament, praying for a Public Inquiry into the conditions under which Merchant Naval officers serve, and in any other matters affecting the officer personnel of the Merchant Navy.

To aid in securing for due care of the sick and needy among Merchant Navy officers, their wives, widows, and families.

To stimulate social intercourse between members of the Association.

To endeavour to promote harmony and co-operation between all Societies charged with the duty of protecting and representing officers of the Merchant Navy.

To further and promote the objects of the Officers (Merchant Navy) Federation.

To organize and hold Public Meetings and publish literature in furtherance of the aims of the Association, and to do all other such lawful things as may be deemed expedient or necessary in promoting the objects of the Association.

- (3) Membership of the Association shall be open to any lady, being the wife, mother, sister, or daughter of a Certificated Navigating or Engineer Officer of the British Merchant Navy and such other persons of either sex as the Committee may decide.
- (4) The minimum annual subscription shall be Five Shillings for Members and Three Shillings for Associates, and the minimum Life Subscription shall be Two Guineas.
- (5) The affairs of the Association shall be governed and managed by a Committee of not more than twenty members.

The President, Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer of the Association shall be ex officio members of the Committee. The first Committee of the Association shall comprise seven ladies elected at the inaugural meeting.

Mrs. G. Deighton

Mrs. E. Phillips

Mrs. A. M. Hall-Houghton

Lady Beaumont

Mrs. A. B. Sinclair

Mrs. M. Robb

and shall hold office until 31st December, 1936, and shall have power to add to their number within the limits of this rule. A General Meeting of the Association shall be held in December 1935, at which shall be elected by Members, the Committee and Officers of the Association for the ensuing three-year period. Such General Meeting to be held tri-annually thereafter.

- (6) The Officers of the Association shall consist of:
A President, Vice-Presidents, Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer to be appointed by the Committee.

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The offices of Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer may be held by one person.

- (7) The Committee shall have power to appoint local Committees at Ports in any districts where sufficient active interest is shown in the work of the Association.
- (8) The Committee shall have power to appoint County and District Honorary Secretaries and local correspondents.
- (9) The Honorary Treasurer shall keep a strict account of all monies received on behalf of the Association and prepare a Balance Sheet as at the 31st December of each year.
The Balance Sheet shall be audited and certified by a Chartered Accountant.
The Committee may authorize the payment of an honorarium to the Honorary Secretary and the Honorary Treasurer.
- (10) The Committee shall have power to invest any such funds of the Association as they think fit and they shall appoint Trustees to hold such investments on behalf of the Association.
- (11) In the event of the dissolution of the Association all funds standing to the credit of the Association after the payment of all outstanding debts, shall be handed to the Benevolent Fund of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners.

In July of that year, the Secretary, Miss Vidal (later Mrs. W. H. Coombs) was able to send out her first progress report to the members.

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being an Association of Wives, Mothers,
Sisters and Daughters of Officers of the
British Merchant Navy

President:
The Honourable
Mrs. Nelson-Ward,
Stoke Dorothy,
Westburton,
Pulborough,
Sussex.

Please reply to:
The Honorary Secretary,
The 'Watch Ashore',
23 Leadenhall Street,
London, E.C.3.
Tel.: MON 2124.
15th July, 1933.

Dear Madam,

I feel sure that you, as a supporter of the Watch Ashore, will be interested to hear of the progress which has been made during the last four months since the formation of the Association.

We have enrolled over 140 Members and Associates and local Branches have been inaugurated at Cardiff and on Tyneside as a result of two most successful meetings held in Cardiff and at South Shields. Each of these Meetings was convened under the

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auspices of the Officers' Federation, and they were addressed by your President the Hon. Mrs. Nelson-Ward, and by Captain Coombs, General Manager of the Officers Federation.

It is hoped to hold meetings in Liverpool, Southampton and Hull and other ports in the coming Autumn, and I feel sure they will result in an influx of new members and help greatly in furthering the objects of the Watch Ashore.

Several Members have shown extraordinary enthusiasm and have held, or have arranged to hold, meetings in their districts. One Member organized a most successful Garden Whist Drive, the proceeds from which were passed to the Watch Ashore funds.

FUTURE POLICY

It is hoped that the Petition to Parliament calling for a Government Inquiry into the conditions of service of Merchant officers will be presented by the Members of the Parliamentary Committee of the Officers Federation in October next. Over 20,000 signatures to this Petition have been obtained.

Your Committee consider that the most important work which the Watch Ashore can do is in stimulating public interest, and disseminating information as to the real state of affairs in the Merchant Navy.

As soon as sufficient financial support is forthcoming to the Watch Ashore, it is proposed to organize a trained corps of public speakers to address meetings wherever an opportunity offers.

I would be greatly obliged if you would kindly let me know whether you would be prepared to undertake work of this kind. As the scheme develops, it is hoped that we may be able to arrange a training course in public speaking.

HOTEL AND BOARDING HOUSE ACCOMMODATION

Several Members have already notified me of good accommodation known to them at various ports which they are able to recommend to members when visiting their husbands' ships, and I would be greatly obliged if you would help me by giving me any addresses which you have found in every way satisfactory, and similarly, inform me of any of which you have had experience and which you are unable to recommend.

BADGES

Members will be helping the movement greatly if they will be good enough to wear their badges whenever travelling to a seaport.

REDUCED RAIL FARE FACILITIES

Members will be interested to know that strong recommendations have recently been made by the Officers Federation and other bodies, to the Railway Companies asking for further specially reduced fares for Merchant officers and their wives.

SUGGESTIONS

Members and Associates will be helping the movement greatly if they will kindly let me know of any suggestions they are able to make which will be helpful in developing the progress of the movement.

In conclusion, I sincerely hope that we may have your help in enrolling new Members and Associates.

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It is becoming increasingly recognized that the Watch Ashore, given adequate support, can develop into a very useful organization in furthering the interests of Merchant officers.

There is no doubt that it is the first organization of its kind which enables ladies interested in the Merchant Navy to take an active part in the great national work of introducing long overdue reforms in the conditions under which the officers of our Merchant Navy serve, and I feel sure it is the intention of every Member to make a splendid success of the venture.

The first committee meeting of the new Association was held at the Victoria Club for Ladies, London, early the following month. Here is the Report.

REPORT of the first committee meeting of the watch ashore held at the Victoria Club for Ladies, 36 Grosvenor Place, S.W., on Thursday, 3rd August, 1933, at 4 p.m.

Present:

The Hon. Mrs. Nelson-Ward.
The Hon. Rachel Caulfield.
Miss M. Leader.
Mrs. S. McKenzie.
Mrs. E. St. H. Phillips.
Mrs. A. Protheroe (Chairman Cardiff Branch).
Mrs. M. Robb.
Miss I. H. Vida (Honorary Secretary).

The Hon. Rachel Caulfield proposed and Miss Vidal seconded that Mrs. S. McKenzie, of Baling, be elected as a Member of the Committee. Carried unanimously.

The Honorary Secretary reported the progress which had been made by the Watch Ashore as outlined in the circular letter of the 15th July, 1933, attached hereto, which had been sent to all Members and Associates. She stated that the number of Members and Associates now exceeded one hundred and fifty, and there was every indication that this number would increase rapidly by the end of the year. The Petition to Parliament was receiving splendid support, and it was hoped that it would be presented in November.

Several replies had been received from Members who were prepared to train as public speakers, and the Honorary Secretary had obtained particulars of a course organized by the Anti-Socialist Union for which there is no charge except a registration fee of 1s. The course commences on 25th September, and it was decided that those interested should give their names to the Honorary Secretary, who would apply for enrolment, and the registration fee should be paid by the Watch Ashore.

Mrs. McKenzie of Baling had organized a Garden Whist Drive which has resulted in a profit of £2 12s., which has been handed to the Watch Ashore, and she is now co-operating with a friend to organize a Concert and Dance to be held on 27th September,

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1933, at 7.45 p.m. at the Good Shepherd Hall, South Baling. She had ascertained that the cost of the Hall would be 30s. plus £1 for the use of piano, and Mrs. Nelson-Ward was good enough to say she would bear the expense. The proceeds from the Concert and Dance would be handed to the funds of the Watch Ashore. Mrs. McKenzie was also contemplating another Concert and Dance on a larger scale at the Baling Town Hall at the end of October or November.

Mrs. McKenzie had also been instrumental in arranging for the President to address the Women's Branch of the Baling Conservative Association, and Mrs. Nelson-Ward had since been invited to address Meetings at other Branches of that Association.

Mrs. Nelson-Ward informed the Committee that she had been successful in interesting Her Grace, The Duchess of Atholl in the Watch Ashore and felt that Her Grace's interest would be most helpful.

Mrs. Protheroe of Cardiff reported that up to the present that Branch had been concentrating on obtaining new Members as it was felt it would be better to wait until September when the holiday season would be over, before holding the first meeting. The Cardiff Branch also intended to hold a Whist Drive in that month.

Miss Leader of Hove said that most of the people in her district were very interested in the Navy League, but she would endeavour to organize a Bridge Drive for the Watch Ashore.

Mrs. Nelson-Ward said she felt sure that the Watch Ashore would be able to serve a most useful purpose, and she had received very encouraging letters not only from the wives of officers, but from officers themselves in all parts of the world.

Mrs. Phillips stated that she was endeavouring to enlist the support of men as well as women as Associates, and had discussed the matter at some length with the officers aboard her husband's ship, and she found that they were in complete agreement with the aims and aspirations of the Watch Ashore.

The meeting then terminated with a vote of thanks for the Hon. Rachel Caulfield for her hospitality.

I.H.VIDAL

There were soon Branches of the Watch Ashore in many ports, Cardiff being the first to form a Branch. Captain Coombs was usually invited to explain the aims of the new Association; his name occurs again and again in the early Minutes of the Branches. Members met in each others' houses until they could find a suitable hall or room. Besides arranging programmes of social activities, they kept themselves closely informed of the developments going on in the struggle for reform in the Service. News of these were published in the Merchant Navy Journal, and

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*The Hon. Mrs. Nelson-Ward
Founder and First President, The Watch Ashore*

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The Lady Headley President Jubilee Year 1958

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information was also given in the Reports of the Officers Federation.

It was stressed from the first days of the Watch Ashore that it was not to attempt to be a policy-making organization. Its function was to support the measures which the Officers Federation felt necessary to take in order to achieve their objectives—the improvement of conditions in the Service. Neither was the Watch Ashore to be in any way a political organization. Everyone recognized that officers had different political ideas, and it was important that the new Association initiated by their womenfolk should not lay itself open to criticism by having political affiliations of any kind.

The Minutes of the Headquarters Committee during the next few years give some idea of the way the Watch Ashore was expanding, and the action they took from time to time to anchor the purpose for which they had originally been formed: to support the Officers Federation. Here are the Minutes of a Committee Meeting in 1936.

MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WATCH ASHORE HELD AT 23 LEADENHALL STREET, E.C.3 ON THE 30TH JANUARY, 1936, AT 4.30 P.M.

Present:

The Hon. Mrs. Nelson-Ward.

Mrs. Farmer.

Mrs. Robb.

Mrs. V. St. A. Phillips.

Miss Vidal.

Minutes of the previous meeting read and confirmed, and signed by the Chairman.

Arising out of the Minutes, the Honorary Secretary explained that the question of the prize draw had been enquired into, and it was considered that it would be not advisable to hold one for the present.

With reference to the question of the inauguration of residential clubs, enquiries had been made at Middlesbrough, but it had been found impracticable to take a house there as more funds would be needed than were at present available. The meeting resolved

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that it approved of this decision that the matter should be brought up again at a future date.

The Honorary Secretary submitted the Progress Report, and it was resolved that it be adopted, but that a suitable paragraph be included suggesting that each Member should write to her Member of Parliament, to the effect that she depends on him to support a Public Inquiry into the Merchant Shipping Act, and conditions among the officer personnel of the Merchant Navy. Proposed by Mrs. Farmer and seconded by Mrs. Phillips. Carried unanimously.

Mrs. Farmer proposed, Mrs. Robb seconded, that the accounts for 1934 be adopted, and also those for 1935, subject to the auditors' certificate.

It was resolved that the discussions of future plans be adjourned for consideration at the General Meeting.

It was resolved that the Honorary Secretary be asked to accept an honorarium of Twenty Pounds for the year ended 1935.

The meeting then terminated.

(Signed) Dorothy Nelson-Ward.

4th November, 1936.

[*Letter sent to Members of Parliament*]

SIR,

MINISTRY OF SHIPPING

We, being the wives, mothers, daughters and sisters of British Merchant Navy officers and the members of your constituency, urge you to interest yourself in the question of a Ministry of Shipping.

Of the many superb efforts made by the people of our Empire when fighting for its existence during the late war, none proved more important, or to our enemies more surprising, than that of the Merchant Service. The manner in which it carried all the extra burdens placed upon it, despite severe losses and when already depleted through supplying ships and men for the Naval Reserves, was indeed an important contribution to our ultimate success.

From recent speeches delivered by members of our present government it is made clear that to a large extent our safety in another war is based on the assumption that the Merchant Service will again be able to satisfy all demands made upon it for the carrying of foodstuffs, munitions, stores, etc. This premise is now so tragically false that we feel it a duty to have the true facts ventilated without delay, and the remedy applied. Our Merchant Service today could not furnish 70 per cent. of its effectiveness in the last war and the position is getting worse. As your constituency is so vitally affected we ask you to concern yourself with the situation.

The deterioration in our shipping position causes alarm to those who look ahead because it cannot be measured in ships or tonnage alone, nor by the numbers of employed. It is nothing less than a progressive destruction of personnel and efficiency, encouraged by national apathy. Age is removing many of our good old seamen and better opportunities in other fields are attracting our good young ones, and neither are

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being replaced, for no wise parent will enable a son to enter a calling which is so obviously withering. This means that the figures, bad as they are, do not show to the full the effect of the rot that has set in.

Reduced International trade, currency restrictions, local manufacture, are some of the excuses put forward to explain our shipping set-back, but it has been shown that foreigners have increased their tonnage and extended their routes whilst ours have been declining. Owing to uneconomic subsidies the cost of their increase has been heavy, but the cost of our decline is beyond account, perhaps great enough eventually to be the cause of our downfall. British trade routes in all parts of the world developed patiently for the greater part of a century have been lost by us to the foreigner because temporarily such runs ceased to be profitable, the valuable goodwill jettisoned. Our figures of invisible exports are already showing the loss, another war would show it more drastically.

We appreciate that hitherto other trades and industries have been more successful in gaining interest and assistance from the government than has shipping. Political expediency dictates that the loudest voice gets the most attention, an inherent fault of democracy, but we are entitled to expect a longer view from Statesmen. Until the end of the war there was no other branch of international trade in which we were so pre-eminent as in shipping, and we cannot hold our present greatly reduced position, much less regain our former, unless more active interest is shown by the government. Small subsidies and cheap credits have done some good, but even they could have been more profitably directed.

We claim that a line of defence of such importance as shipping should have its own ministry with at the head a Minister of Shipping, whose interest first and last is shipping, whose close contact with its problems would enable him to formulate a wise government policy, and whose position would be a valuable help to leaders in the shipping world. This proposal has been mooted before and had it been adopted our shipping today would have been more healthy. Even now it remains the first essential step towards the solution of our difficulties. At present as a mere department of the Board of Trade, governed by a Minister with such wide and varied responsibilities, shipping is in a less favoured state than Agriculture and Transport, none of which exceeds it in importance.

We ask you to interest yourself in this matter, raising it in the 'House' upon its reassembly. A Ministry of Shipping is an absolute necessity to the leading maritime nation of the world, and we believe the wisdom of forming one will be admitted once the present circumstances are realized by the nation.

The Watch Ashore was becoming known in many quarters. In 1938, the members noted with satisfaction that their President, Mrs. Nelson-Ward, and Mrs. Coombs, the Honorary Secretary-Treasurer of their Association, had been elected to the Ladies' Committee of the Navy League, which was taking a great interest in Merchant Navy affairs.

In the Branches, work and fun went on steadily, side by side. A suggestion was put forward that an annual Seafarers' Service should be held in all parish churches, on the lines of the great service held every year at St. Paul's Cathedral in London. Liverpool Branch reported that a case of distress concerning the wife of a Merchant Navy officer had been brought to their notice by a local organization, and they had been able to assist with a grant of £5. On all sides came news of new members, new friends, the badge of the Watch Ashore being a sign of the comradeship of the sea among officers' wives. Members were asked to let the Watch Ashore know of any distress they might hear about in a Merchant Navy household through death, sickness or unemployment. The objects of the Association were not those of a benevolent organization, but the Watch Ashore would endeavour to enlist the help of nautical charities in necessitous cases.

The introduction of the Merchant Navy Officers Pension Fund was a decided step forward in the campaign for better conditions. The Officers Federation had expressed their deep appreciation of the way the Watch Ashore was aiding their own efforts, but there was still much to be done. For instance, the conditions of annual leave for officers caused much anger and anxiety. The National Maritime Board Agreement which granted fourteen days' leave a year to officers serving in foreign-going ships was considered quite inadequate, having regard to the very long hours which were worked, especially in foreign ports. It was also felt by some that the retiring age, which was 65 under the Pension Scheme, must be reduced in due course to 60, or even to 55. The relatively satisfactory conditions which had so far been secured regarding pensions and pay would always be vulnerable unless the officers' organizations were backed by a lively public interest—which the Watch Ashore had been founded to promote and sustain. There could be no question of thinking that their job was finished because conditions were better than they had been in the bad old days. Continual vigilance must be the watchword.

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In any case, strong bonds of mutual interest and affection had been woven through the years between members of the Branches. Officers' wives had special responsibilities inseparable from the lives of those whose husbands were away from their homes for long periods; they could understand and sympathize with each others' troubles. Membership of the Watch Ashore had brought many of them together for help and comfort, when they were travelling to a strange port, or needed assistance with temporary accommodation. There were dozens of ways in which they helped each other. The Watch Ashore had come to mean something very real and valuable in lives which might otherwise have been lonely.

4

The WAR 1938 – 45 AND AFTER

On the outbreak of war in 1939, the Watch Ashore, following the example of the Officers Federation, resolved that all its energies must be devoted solely to the war effort. There were suggestions that it should organize a comforts service, but the members decided it would be better to assist, as effectively as possible, such bodies already in existence which were doing excellent work. Members knitted thousands of garments which were distributed through the regular channels. They were active in the National Savings Movement, and visited Merchant Navy casualties in hospitals. Funds raised through concerts and other social activities were given to nautical charities through the King George's Fund for Sailors.

The Branches kept going, often in difficult circumstances; ports were always targets for the enemy. The wives and other relatives of sea-going officers emulated the magnificent courage of the Merchant Navy by filling the anxious days with cheerfully done hard work. It was now, more than ever, that they felt in its true essence the comradeship of their Association. When the war ended, there were widows who remained faithful and active members of the Watch Ashore.

The Association itself had sustained a grievous loss. The Hon. Mrs. Nelson-Ward, its Founder and first President, had been killed in an air raid. This tragic loss was felt by every member throughout the Association who remembered Dorothy Nelson-Ward's devoted work and her husband's championship of the cause of the Merchant Navy. It was the end of an era.

The new era, now that the war was over, did not begin promisingly. The following account, taken from a contemporary

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report of a meeting of the Officers Federation, gives some idea of what was happening. The date is 1945.

The Council of the Officers (Merchant Navy) Federation reported that within sixteen days of the defeat of Germany, British shipowners indicated that they intended to reduce the gross earnings of shipmasters and officers of the Merchant Navy. This decision was not endorsed by the best elements in British shipowning, but the confidence of the federated ship officers and masters was badly shaken. Captain Coombs said that these proposals must obviously lead to a lowering of the standard of living of sea-going shipmasters and officers. All knew that in the national interest the size, efficiency and spirit of the Merchant Navy must be preserved. Disillusionment and discontent were not conducive to efficiency or to discipline. Mr. D. S. Tennant, speaking on behalf of the Navigators and Engineer Officers Union, said that Merchant Navy officers, bearing in mind their responsibilities and qualifications, had always been grossly underpaid. Shipping was one of this country's major assets, both in peace and war. The public did not realize sufficiently that were it not for the earnings of the shipping industry our standard of life would be seriously reduced. It should be brought home forcibly to the people that they owed a tremendous debt, in peace, let alone in war, to the men who dedicated their lives to the sea. British shipowners in the past had had a surprising degree of efficiency from the officers of the Merchant Navy at a very cheap price, but that must change. Good wages and good conditions gave handsome returns. There must be a reorientation in wages and conditions of employment in conformity with 1945, and not a patch-up of the things which were wrong in the 1930s. It was not the intention of the officers to ask for things that were unreasonable. They realized that British shipping had to compete, though they thought that the International Seafarers' Charter, if introduced along the lines suggested, would at least remove competition in labour standards between nations.

Other speakers at this meeting made further important points. There were no standard rates of pay for shipmasters. Some masters were doing their own pilotage without extra pay. The deeper loading of ships made necessary by the war should now be stopped, and the proper load line restored. There were other things which would have to be put right. If the shipowners' representatives on the National Maritime Board were successful in their attempt to reduce the standard of living of the officer personnel which had served them and the country so well during the war, history would prove that the British shipowners would have done more lasting damage to British shipping than Germany had succeeded in doing. If large numbers of highly trained and experienced officers who had survived the war abandoned their chosen calling, having lost confidence in the industry which employed them, the national loss would be great.

The Service was appalled, and there was an immediate reaction from the officers' organizations. Captain Coombs, addressing the Central Committee and Branch representatives of

the Watch Ashore at a meeting in London, said that he hoped a satisfactory settlement would be reached in the negotiations with the shipowners; but if not, the Watch Ashore might be called upon to play its part in letting the public know the true situation. Captain Coombs also told the meeting that a Maritime Conference was sitting at Copenhagen, drafting recommendations for final consideration by the International Maritime Conference due to be held at Seattle, on the questions of wages, hours and manning, leave, accommodation, food and catering, social insurance, continuous employment, entry, training and promotion, and recognition of seafarers' organizations.

Negotiations with the shipowners over the proposed reduction in pay were, in fact, successful; but the episode showed the necessity for the officers' organizations and the Watch Ashore to continue to be on the alert for any retrograde step where the hardly-won improved conditions were concerned.

By the end of 1946, there were twelve branches of the Watch Ashore established: at Aberdeen, Bristol and Avonmouth, Bath, Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Falmouth, Glasgow, Merseyside, Penarth, Teeside, and the North East Coast (which consisted of Sections at Blyth, Jarrow, Newcastle, North Shields, South Shields, Sunderland, Whitley Bay and Jesmond Dene).

The Lady Headley, wife of a Master Mariner, became the President of the Watch Ashore, and worked enthusiastically on its behalf, visiting Branches and rousing interest in its aims. The enrolment of new members was steadily maintained. The Watch Ashore was represented at meetings of the Ship Adoption Society, and at National ceremonies and celebrations, notably the wedding of the Princess Elizabeth and the unveiling of a memorial window in Westminster Abbey by the Princess Margaret; this window had the crest of the Merchant Navy incorporated in the design.

In 1949, Mrs. W. H. Coombs, who had been Honorary General Secretary of the Watch Ashore since its inception, intimated that,

acting on medical advice, she felt compelled to ask to be relieved of the work and responsibilities which she had undertaken and performed for sixteen years. The Management Committee recorded their great appreciation of the splendid work which Mrs. Coombs had so quietly and consistently done for the Association, and accepted her decision with the deepest regret, while wishing her a speedy recovery. Mrs. Coombs was later asked to accept office as Vice-President and Honorary Treasurer.

The Management Committee also recorded their thanks for the excellent work done for the Association by Mrs. G. S. Dale, who acted as Organizing Secretary for two years, from 1946 to 1948, and only relinquished the position because of domestic duties.

The 1950s found the Watch Ashore well established. A comparatively small, self-contained Association, it still had for its chief aim the backing up of the officers' organizations; but it also felt entitled to suggest improvements which its members, as wives and housewives, felt should be put forward in the right quarters by the men. Thus at the meeting of the Central Committee and Branch representatives held aboard H.Q.S. Wellington in 1951, there was a Resolution put forward by several Branches jointly that approaches should be made through the Officers' Federation to see what steps could be taken to increase the pensions for war widows. Another Branch deplored the fact that in many vessels fresh milk was not supplied when the ship was in a home port, and wished representations to be made to the appropriate authorities. A Branch stated that the rationing system which operated in the vessels in which their members' husbands served was not satisfactory from the housewives' point of view, as their husbands were able to take many meals at home, but were provided with inadequate emergency cards.

The following year, at the meeting of the Central Committee and Branch representatives aboard H.M.S. Calliope at Elswick, Newcastle-on-Tyne, there were resolutions that representations should be made through the Officers' Federation for an extension

of the privileges enabling wives to travel in their husband's ships from port to port in the United Kingdom and on the Continent, and to live aboard whilst in port; that the Officers' Federation be asked whether it was possible to urge that Radar equipment be installed in every ship in the Merchant Navy, whatever the tonnage, and most particularly in tankers; that the Officers' Federation be asked to find out from the proper quarters what provision was being made for officers and men of the Merchant Navy who, as a result of war-strain and the consequent effect on their health, were compelled to leave the sea.

It was at this meeting that Mrs. Evelyn Hamilton agreed to become Honorary General Secretary of the Association, in succession to Mrs. Coombs, who had been Honorary Acting Secretary since her resignation.

In 1954, the Association celebrated its twenty-first birthday with a dinner at the Criterion Restaurant, London. The Lady Headley, the President, was in the Chair, and the guests included Vice-Admiral and Mrs. Scott-Moncrieff, Sir Frederick and Lady Bowhill, Sir Gilmour and Lady Jenkins, Dr. and Mrs. Ronald Hope, and Captain and Mrs. Coombs. Members from all the Branches came to this great occasion. Many tributes were paid by the speakers to the Watch Ashore; those who were present will never forget that wonderful evening.

Two years later, the members heard with great pleasure that Mrs. Coombs had had the M.B.E. conferred upon her: an honour which was very richly deserved, in every sense of the term. By a charming coincidence, Mrs. Coombs was commanded to attend at the Palace on the very day of the London dinner at the Shaftesbury Hotel. Mrs. Coombs declared that she considered the honour to be directed to the Watch Ashore rather than herself, and though the members agreed, up to a point, with her characteristic way of regarding it, they also made it clear that they rejoiced in the choice of recipient for the honour.

There was a change of Honorary General Secretary that year; Mrs. Hamilton felt obliged to give up the office, for personal reasons, and Mrs. D. A. Robb, of the Southampton Branch, agreed to be Acting Secretary. Mrs. D. A. Robb, a founder-member of the re-formed Southampton Branch, and its first Chairman, has since been confirmed in the office of Honorary General Secretary.

And now it is the year of the Silver Jubilee. This Association, which began in Mrs. Nelson-Ward's Sussex drawing-room twenty-five years ago, is known today in every British merchant vessel afloat. It has an influence out of proportion to its comparatively small size; and the happiness it has brought to its members cannot be measured.

What of the future? The Watch Ashore looks forward with hope and confidence. There must be hundreds of wives, mothers and sisters of Merchant Navy officers who do not realize what membership of the Watch Ashore could mean to them. There must be many people not directly connected with the Merchant Navy who would find it stimulating and interesting to become an Associate Member. There is a breath of fresh sea air in all Watch Ashore meetings; and when husbands come along, during shore leave, the breeze becomes more pronounced. The Watch Ashore is a women's organization like no other; long may it prosper.

THE FIRST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

The watch ashore has Branches and Sections in twenty ports: Aberdeen, Belfast, Bristol and Avonmouth, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Harwich and Dovercourt, Humber, London, Merseyside, North East Coast (Blythe, Newcastle, North Shields, South Shields, Whitley Bay), Penarth, Southampton and District, Sunderland and Teeside. The first Branch, Cardiff, was followed in 1933 by the nucleus of a Branch on Tyneside. There was also a very active Central London Branch, which was vigorously supported by Mrs. H. McKenzie, who had been a member of the Watch Ashore since its inception, and who organized many functions in the early days. Two other very active members at that time were Mrs. St. A. Phillips and Mrs. D. M. Robb. At that time the London Branch concentrated mainly on organizing meetings for publicity purposes, encouraging members to take courses in public speaking, and interesting Members of Parliament of all parties in the aims of the Association. The members met informally every month in Captain Coombs' flat in the Temple. By the end of 1936, more Branches had been formed, and were sending delegates to the yearly London meeting. Mrs. V. Ramplee-Smith was very active in the Branch at Leigh-on-Sea, Mrs. P. James at Harrow, Mrs. F. Lack at Merseyside, and Mrs. Raettig at Humber. By 1936 Southampton was added to the Branches represented at the London meeting. In the following year Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Rolfe represented a Branch which had been formed at Ilford, and Mrs. McDonald and Mrs. Young were delegates in place of Mrs. Ramplee-Smith, who had had to resign owing to ill-health, but who remained on the Central Committee.

Mrs. Turnbull, wife of Engineer Rear-Admiral Turnbull, formed a Branch in Bath during the war, and helped the Watch

Ashore considerably as a Vice-President for many years, until her resignation owing to ill-health.

Miss Bridget Talbot, O.B.E., became a Vice-President in 1943, and has been one of the most forceful and lively advocates of the Watch Ashore ever since.

Lady Winster was elected a Vice-President in 1943, and has always given the Association her interest and support, though she has been unable to take a very active part in its work.

Lady Morrell, wife of Sir Arthur Morrell, former Deputy Master of Trinity House, was a Vice-President from 1944 until her husband's retirement.

Lady Maxwell, now Vice-President, was an enthusiastic supporter of the North East Coast Branch during the war, helping to rouse much interest in the Association. Several other early members should be mentioned for outstanding work, notably Mrs. M. Dixon (formerly Miss Pallister), who was Secretary of the North East Coast Branch for many years, and Mrs. Pearce and Mrs. Dale of the London Branch. Mrs. Dale was organizing secretary.

During the war, several of the Branches fell into abeyance, owing to the difficult conditions then obtaining. After the war, several Branches were restarted, and have gone on from strength to strength.

The organization of the Watch Ashore is kept as simple as possible. The Committee of Management consists of the Office-bearers, the Central Committee, two representatives from each Branch, and two representatives from each Section. The annual meeting of the Management Committee is usually held in London on board H.Q.S. Wellington, the headquarters of The Honourable Company of Master Mariners, by whose kind permission we hold our meetings. The Master of the Honourable Company is Air Chief Marshall Sir Frederick Bowhill, G.B.E., K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., whose wife, Lady Bowhill, is a Vice-President of the

THE FIRST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

Watch Ashore. These meetings are arranged to coincide with the Annual Service for Seafarers in St. Paul's Cathedral, which the delegates attend after the conclusion of the meeting. There is usually a dinner arranged for the evening preceding the meeting, where delegates from all the Branches can meet. The General Meeting of the Watch Ashore is held tri-ennially; the last took place in Edinburgh in 1955.

CENTRAL COMMITTEE

The Lady Headley (President).
Mrs. W. H. Coombs, M.B.E. (Treasurer and Vice-President).
Mrs. D. A. Robb (General Secretary).

OTHER VICE-PRESIDENTS

Lady Bowhill, M.B.E.
Miss Janet Dunbar.
Lady Maxwell.
Miss Bridget Talbot, O.B.E. Lady Winster.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mrs. G. S. Dale, Mrs. S. McKenzie, Mrs. D. Pearce.

ABERDEEN BRANCH

The Aberdeen Branch was formed early in 1946, following a request by several Merchant Navy wives and mothers. A meeting was called by Mr. R. A. Keay, District Secretary of the Officers (Merchant Navy) Federation in Leith. The Vice-President and the Secretary of the of the Edinburgh Branch visited Aberdeen to explain the aims of the Watch Ashore to those who attended the first meeting. A committee was formed, with the following officers and members:

President: Miss U. Clapperton.
Treasurer: Mrs. I. D. MacDonald.
Secretary: Miss Johnstone.
Miss E. Clapperton. Mrs. J. Hutchison.
Mrs. M. H. Hulse. Mrs. H. K. Moir.
Mrs. S. Robertson.

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The following month the new Branch was addressed by Dr. Forbes and also by Mr. Lauder of the Shipping Federation. In August of the same year a permanent meeting place for the Branch was secured in the premises of the Y.M.C.A. in Aberdeen and, in October, Captain and Mrs. Coombs visited the Branch and addressed a well-attended meeting.

There were many interesting talks and functions that year. Mr. Hector Hughes, K.C., M.P., gave a talk on the Drafting of the Seamen's Charter; there were Christmas parties and a visit to the theatre. The following year there were successful meetings and outings, and in January Lady Headley visited the Branch.

Captain and Mrs. Coombs were guests at the third anniversary dinner in March 1939, when there were 60 members present. Meetings and activities of all kinds went on during succeeding years. The Chairman of the Branch visited Newcastle in 1952, members of the Glasgow Branch attended the birthday party in 1953, and there were other exchange visits.

There is nothing very spectacular to report. The members continue to meet, to send delegates to Headquarters' meetings, and to enjoy themselves in their own quiet way, bound together by the fellowship of the sea. One of their most faithful members, Miss Porter, who died a few years ago, told the Branch that she well remembered being on board her father's ship when she was ten years of age, and how they were becalmed off Buckie, on the N.E. Coast of Scotland. Both her brothers were in the Merchant Navy, and she herself never lost her deep affection for the sea.

MEMBERS IN JUBILEE YEAR

OFFICE BEARERS

Chairman: Mrs. G. Foster.

Treasurer:

Secretary: Miss Johnstone

Mrs. C. Day.	Mrs. B. Law.	Mrs. H. R. Main.	Mrs. T. Robertson.
Mrs. I. M. Foster.	Mrs. J. D. Lumsden.	Mrs. A. B. Pirrie.	Mrs. E. Pollock.
Mrs. A. Gordon.	Mrs. I. MacDonald.	Mrs. L. Raeburn.	Mrs. C. Webster.
Mr M. H. Johnston.			

BELFAST BRANCH

The Branch was formed in 1945 and owed a great deal to the efforts of Mrs. M. Dunlop, Mrs. F. McGrady and the late Mrs. N. Carson, all of whom devoted a great deal of time and energy to the establishment of the Association in Northern Ireland.

The first Chairman was Mrs. Dunlop, the Secretary, Mrs. McGrady, and the Treasurer, Mrs. Carson. The Committee consisted of Mrs. F. Boyd, Mrs. V. Barren, Miss E. Carson, Mrs. M. Cole, Mrs. J. Gibson, Mrs. N. Graham, Mrs. M. Haddock, Miss M. Kempston, Mrs. E. Kerr, Mrs. M. Larmour, Mrs. E. Leinster, and Mrs. M. Pringle.

Mrs. Dunlop acted as Chairman from 1945-49; during her absence from the country for a time, her duties were admirably carried out by Mrs. Barren, from 1948 until 1949. In that year, Mrs. Craig was elected Chairman, and continued in the office until 1954, when Mrs. McGrady was elected. Mrs. Carson was Treasurer from the formation of the Branch until her death in 1949, when Mrs. Pass was elected Treasurer, and performed these duties until 1954. She was succeeded by Mrs. Mahon, the present Treasurer. Mrs. McGrady occupied the office of Secretary from the formation of the Branch until 1948, when she was succeeded by Miss E. Carson.

The membership stands at nearly 60; not a large Branch, but a very enthusiastic one. The meetings are lively and full of interest. Over the years, they have raised well over a thousand pounds, which they have devoted to various deserving causes. A particularly keen interest is shown in the work of the Missions to Seamen. When the new Institute was being built in Belfast the members of the Branch decided to furnish the officers' lounge in memory of Mrs. Nell Carson, their first Treasurer.

The new Institute, a fine building, was opened in May, 1956, by His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh. All the members

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of the Belfast Branch of the Watch Ashore were present, proud to know that seafarers visiting the Port could enjoy a little home comfort provided by the Watch Ashore.

Many members of the Branch do voluntary work in the Canteen at the Mission. They also assist with work carried out by the King George's Fund for Sailors, and other Associations connected with the sea.

Meetings are held every month in the Missions to Seamen Institute. There is always a varied programme for the year; whist-drives, social evenings, film shows, and outings. The Annual Dinner of the Branch takes place in March or April.

MEMBERS IN JUBILEE YEAR

OFFICE BEARERS

Chairman: Mrs. C. U. Bower.

Treasurer: Mrs. C. Dick.

Secretary: Mrs. C. J. Rea.

Mrs. J. Agnew,	Mrs. Cruden.	Mrs. D. Hunt.	Mrs. Patterson.
Mrs. R. Agnew.	Mrs. C. Dick.	Mrs. Irons.	Mrs. C. Rea.
Mrs. Wm. Baird.	Mrs. Dunlop.	Mrs. Jamison.	Mrs. Savage.
Mrs. D. J. Barkley.	Mrs. Fieldhouse.	Mrs. V. Kane.	Miss I. Savage.
Mrs. Barr.	Mrs. Gibson.	Mrs. Lavery.	Miss K. Sloan.
Mrs. R. H. Blaney.	Mrs. Graham.	Mrs. W. Leinster.	Mrs. R. B. Smith.
Mrs. Black.	Mrs. Gray.	Mrs. Mahon.	Mrs. Smyth.
Mrs. Bower.	Mrs. Haddock.	Miss Mahon.	Mrs. Spratt.
Mrs. J. M. Boyd.	Miss S. Haddock.	Mrs. Mullan.	Mrs. Stewart.
Mrs. R. Boyd.	Mrs. Hamill.	Mrs. McBride.	Mrs. Townsend.
Mrs. Wm. Campbell.	Mrs. Hamilton.	Mrs. McGrady.	Mrs. Turkington.
Miss E. Carson.	Mrs. Hewitt.	Miss M. McIvor.	Mrs. Vining.
Mrs. M. Carson.	Mrs. Hillock.	Miss N. McIvor.	Mrs. M. Vining.
Mrs. Craig.	Mrs. Houston.	Mrs. Pass.	Mrs. Welsh.
Miss J. Glint.	Mrs. Hughes.		

BRISTOL AND AVONMOUTH BRANCH

The Branch was formed in June 1944, with Mrs. J. W. Quick as Founder-Chairman. Mrs. Hobson was the first Secretary. Without any financial backing they took a room at the Grand Hotel for their first meeting, which Mrs. Turnbull addressed. A

month later, Captain and Mrs. Coombs came for their inaugural meeting. Mr. Sidney Cosford, Chairman of the Bristol Sailors' Home, took the chair and after the meeting he opened their banking account with a gift of £5. He also suggested that they might meet at the Bristol Sailors' Home, and the Branch has been meeting there ever since.

At that time the public was naturally interested in the Merchant Navy, and the Branch was soon able to raise money by means of concerts, whist drives and dances. The Branch presently had a bank balance of £100, and has always managed to keep that amount in hand. At their first anniversary dinner, the guests of honour included the Lord and Lady Mayoress, the Sheriff and his lady, the Marchioness of Carisbrooke, Lady Headley, Admiral and Mrs. Turnbull, and Captain and Mrs. Coombs.

The members are always ready to help those in sickness or trouble, especially strangers visiting the port. A few years ago the Secretary had a call from the Chaplain of the Missions to Seamen asking her to visit a young woman in one of the Bristol hospitals. She was the English wife of an officer in the Belgian Merchant Navy, her home being in Antwerp. She had been taken ill in her husband's ship and was in hospital in Bristol when the ship sailed with her husband in it. The members of the Branch looked after her and visited her regularly; her husband was most grateful.

The Branch sends an annual gift to the Bristol Sailors' Home, the Merchant Navy Orphanage, and the Lord Mayor's Christmas Dinner Fund. They exchange visits with other Branches.

MEMBERS IN JUBILEE YEAR

OFFICE BEARERS

Chairman: Mrs. D. Lundy.

Treasurer:

Secretary: Mrs. M. I. Quick.

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Mrs. Armstrong.	Mrs. Duthie.	Mrs. Lundy.	Mrs. Rutherford.
Mrs. Aucklan.	Mrs. Edwards.	Mrs. Makepeace.	Mrs. Spreckley.
Mrs. Bound.	Mrs. Fern.	Mrs. Morgan.	Mrs. Thomas.
Mrs. Brooks.	Mrs. Gilchrist.	Mrs. Nicholson.	Mrs. Wear.
Mrs. Burnell.	Mrs. Grierson.	Mrs. Philpott.	Mrs. Weeks.
Mrs. Bury.	Mrs. Griffen.	Mrs. Quick.	Mrs. Wheeler.
Mrs. Clark.	Mrs. Harrison.	Mrs. Ray.	Mrs. Whippey.
Mrs. Chorley.	Mrs. Hill, Sen.	Mrs. Reed.	Mrs. White.
Mrs. Davis.	Mrs. Hill, Jun.		

CARDIFF BRANCH

This is the oldest Branch of the Watch Ashore. It first took shape about 1935 under the Chairmanship of Mrs. A. Protheroe. Unfortunately all the early Minute Books, together with the Bank Deposit Account Book, and other papers relating to the Association, were destroyed during the bombing of Cardiff. The following were Founder Members:

Mrs. E. Griffen.	Mrs. F. C. Pillar.
Mrs. A. Griffiths.	Mrs. Schwetz.
Mrs. Tew.	

During the war knitting parties were held weekly, and the ladies visited the Royal Hamadriad Hospital, taking gifts of fruit, cigarettes and notepaper, which were very much appreciated. In January 1947 a children's party was held at the Grand Hotel, Cardiff, for Merchant Navy orphans; this was attended by over 100 children between the ages of four to fourteen. These parties continued every Christmas, and the role of Father Christmas was performed by either the Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor, or a Master Mariner whose ship was in Cardiff docks. In February 1956 the Branch held its Twenty-first Dinner Party. A presentation was made to the Chairman, Mrs. I. L. Hughes, who had been with the Branch for ten years and was leaving Cardiff to live in London.

The social life of the Branch includes card-parties, dances, concerts and other functions. Members visit the men of the

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Merchant Navy who are undergoing treatment at the Glenaley Hospital.

The Branch has presented a Watch Ashore Cup to the Cadets at the Reardon Smith Nautical College, at Cardiff. This Cup is competed for by the Port and Starboard Watches of the College each term.

MEMBERS IN JUBILEE YEAR

OFFICE BEARERS

Chairman:	Mrs. A. I. Davies.
Vice-Chairman:	Miss A. M. Wheeler.
Treasurer:	Mrs. G. E. Robson.
Secretary:	Mrs. G. M. Granger.

COMMITTEE

Mrs. S. Fowle.	Mrs. E. Lepine	Mrs. M. Morton.	Mrs. J. Rose.
Mrs. G. Granger	(Social Secretary)	Mrs. R. Pryse.	Mrs. A. Ross.

MEMBERS

Mrs. I. Abbott.	Mrs. E. Davies.	Mrs. R. Gibson.	Mrs. O. A. Selby.
Mrs. E. Baker.	Mrs. D. M.	Mrs. J. Griffiths.	Mrs. Slattery.
Mrs. Ball.	Dawnard.	Mrs. B. Halley.	Mrs. Sleeman.
Mrs. C. Barrett.	Mrs. D. Desmond.	Mrs. T. Holloman.	Mrs. S. Stanton.
Mrs. L. Berridge.	Mrs. W. E. Edwards.	Mrs. E. Kell.	Mrs. M. Swords.
Mrs. R. Bevan.	Mrs. M. Feaver.	Mrs. L. Lewis.	Mrs. D. Thomas.
Mrs. E. Blake.	Mrs. M. Ferguson.	Mrs. M. McCarthy.	Mrs. E. Tonsley.
Mrs. E. Carmichael.	Mrs. M. Fowle.	Mrs. L. McEvoy.	Mrs. G. Warr.
Mrs. E. Cornfield.	Mrs. S. Gentles.	Mrs. L. Owen.	Mrs. T. V. West.
Mrs. K. Crompton.	Mrs. M. German.	Mrs. Phillips.	Mrs. E. Williams.
Mrs. B. M. Daniells.			

EDINBURGH BRANCH

The Edinburgh Branch was formed in March 1945 with the assistance of the Chairman and Treasurer from the Glasgow Branch. Twenty-eight members joined, and Captain and Mrs. Coombs were asked to come and address a meeting. It was decided to advertise meetings in the Scotsman and other newspapers, to attract the attention of other ladies eligible to join. Mrs. S. A. Parry was the Chairman, and the first Committee consisted of Mrs. McGinn (Hon. Treasurer), Mrs. Gibbs, Secretary, Mrs. Ross, Mrs. Drummond, Mrs. Wood, Mrs. Henderson and

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Mrs. Parker. One of the members suggested sending individual pamphlets to people known by them to have relatives in the Merchant Navy.

A syllabus was planned, various people making suggestions. During an outing to Roslin in the summer, the members called at the Canadian Legion Club and invited several Canadian servicemen to join the party. Lady Headley visited the Branch in the autumn, a visit which was much appreciated. Members sold flags during Sailors' Week, and there were a number of talks by Ministry of Information and other speakers.

There was a debate and discussion on the following points to be brought up, when possible, in the appropriate quarters:

Bad overseas letter service.

Fresh milk supplies for ships in port while in the United Kingdom.

Better arrangements with regard to leave.

Hostels for Merchant Navy wives and families.

Properly trained cooks on board ship.

The provision of drying rooms where officers could dry their clothes.

Some form of heating for cabins when ships in port were undergoing engine repairs.

Permission for wives to stay aboard ships in port when the Officer of the Watch had to remain on board.

Adjustment of Merchant Navy Pension Fund so that, in the case of older men, length of service would be taken into consideration, thereby enabling them to receive an adequate pension.

As this was a Scottish Branch, members naturally celebrated in the Scottish way at New Year and on Burns Night.

Early in 1946 Mrs. Keay, Vice-President, and Mrs. Goodwin, Secretary, visited Aberdeen to help form a Branch of the Watch Ashore in that city.

A speaker at one of the meetings who was a hospital visitor in connection with seamen's welfare suggested to the members that they should visit seamen in hospital in Leith, Methil and Edinburgh.

The Branch has had many interesting speakers. Captain Ross gave a talk on his experiences in Tristan da Cunha ; and the following year he came to the Branch again to speak on the various whales which are caught in the South Atlantic, and life in general on board a whaler. Another talk which was much liked was given by Mr. John MacLean, from the Ministry of Information, on Hong Kong.

The outings and visits made by the Branch were also greatly enjoyed. About thirty members went, on one occasion, to visit the Observatory at Calton Hill. Visibility was good, and the members were able to get a clear view of the moon, a double star, and the planet Saturn. A lecture given by one of the astronomers attached to the Observatory concluded an informative and stimulating visit.

The Branch held their first Burns Dinner in 1947, at the Scotia Hotel. After the ceremony of piping in the haggis, Pipe-Major MacLeod gave an address, followed by a selection of pipe airs. A concert followed, given by members of the Watch Ashore. On another occasion, the members organized a concert in aid of the King George's Fund for Sailors.

The insurance scheme called 'The Merchant Navy Emergency Travel Indemnity Insurance' was discussed by the members at one of the meetings, and the majority agreed that the principle of the scheme was a good one.

The Branch continued to grow and to engage in varied activities, year after year. Mr. James Hoy, M.P., gave an address on the House of Commons, describing its architecture, customs and formalities. There were whist-drives, concerts, suppers, the ever-popular Burns Night, theatre parties, a visit to the General Post Office, visits to the offices of the Scotsman and to the

printing works of Messrs. Nelson, the publishers. Members of the Forth Master Mariners' Club were invited to the Branch, and the Scottish Tourist Board sent films to be shown. There was a visit to Ayr, where members saw Burns' Cottage and Alloway Kirk. Miss Pitt, an Australian lady, came to talk to the Branch on life in Australia, and brought slides and films to help them imagine the vastness of her country.

In 1949 the yearly Burns Supper was held in conjunction with the Forth Master Mariners' Club, when a company of 250 gathered at the North British Hotel. After the haggis was piped in and dinner served, the guests were entertained by Scottish country dancers.

During the spring of that year, a special general meeting of Watch Ashore Branch members was called, to ascertain if they wished to carry on the meetings. Mrs. Parry, who had hitherto sustained the office of President, found for pressing domestic reasons that she could no longer continue. After a long discussion, Mrs. Brock agreed to take on the Presidency, and it was decided to continue with the meetings, which were always such a source of happiness to the members.

In October 1955 the Triennial General Meeting of the Watch Ashore was held in the Sailors' Home at Leith. The President, Vice-Presidents and Officers of the Watch Ashore, with representatives of Branches and Sections, met in Edinburgh in October, 1955, when the general business of the Watch Ashore was discussed. In the evening, the Branch entertained over a hundred members to dinner at the Carlton Hotel, where they received a warm welcome from the Chairman of the Dinner, Mrs. Robb. The Fisher Lassies' Choir entertained the company with old Scots' songs. The castle was floodlit in their honour, and looked most beautiful.

On the following morning over 200 members attended the Triennial meeting in the Sailors' Home at Leith. The Lady Provost

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of Edinburgh, who claimed for that occasion the title of ‘ wife of the Admiral of the Forth ‘, spoke of the country’s debt to the Merchant Navy.

The Lord and Lady Provost later entertained the members to tea at the City Chambers, after they had been taken on a tour of the city by coach. The visitors from Headquarters said later that they would always look back with pleasure to the Edinburgh General Meeting.

In November of that year the chairman of the Edinburgh Branch presented a pulpit-fall, on behalf of her members, to the chapel in Leith Sailors’ Home. Mr. A. B. Normand, chairman of Leith Committee of the British Sailors’ Society, accepted the gift, and the Reverend T. D. Stewart Brown, minister of South Leith Parish Church, took the dedication service.

FOUNDER MEMBERS

Mrs. Beveridge.	Mrs. Henry.	Mrs. Parry
Mrs. Brock.	Mrs. Hoad.	Mrs. Reid.
Mrs. Brodie.	Mrs. Hutchings.	Mrs. Ross.
Mrs. Cadger.	Mrs. Keay.	Mrs. Sinclair.
Mrs. Friskin.	Mrs. Laing.	Mrs. Young.
Mrs. Goodwin.	Miss Moar.	

MEMBERS IN JUBILEE YEAR

OFFICE BEARERS

Chairman:	Mrs. S. A. Parry.
Treasurer:	Mrs. M. F. Birss.
Secretary:	Mrs. W. L. Marshall.

COMMITTEE

Mrs. Baston.	Mrs. Laing.	Mrs. Nicholson.	Mrs. Wood.
Mrs. Hill.	Mrs. Moyar.	Mrs. Westwood.	

MEMBERS

Mrs. Birss.	Mrs. Ferguson.	Mrs. Leonard.	Mrs. Ramsay.
Mrs. Blyth.	Mrs. Gilruth	Mrs. McNeill.	Mrs. Shepherd.
Mrs. Clark.	Mrs. Griffiths.	Mrs. Marshall.	Mrs. Simpson.
Mrs. Chalmers.	Mrs. Henderson.	Mrs. Mitchell.	Mrs. Smith.
Mrs. Coulthard.	Mrs. Hood.	Mrs. Parry.	Mrs. Swanson.
Mrs. Dalgleish.	Mrs. Hume.	Mrs. Payne.	Mrs. Terry.
Mrs. A Dickson.	Miss. Jack.	Mrs. Pollock.	Mrs. Thompson.
Mrs. H Dickson.	Mrs. Knight.	Mrs. Potter.	

GLASGOW BRANCH

The Branch was started in February 1944. The Founder Chairman was Mrs. McKinlay, who, with Mrs. J. S. Hughes and Mrs. E. McLean, worked hard to foster interest in the new Association. Mrs. Hughes and Mrs. McLean were already members of a Watch Ashore Branch in England. Mrs. E. D. Morton became Secretary, Mrs. E. P. Scott, Treasurer, and Mrs. J. S. Hughes, Vice-Chairman. The Branch soon became a very keen and active body, holding dances, whist-drives and other social functions, and arranging talks and demonstrations of various kinds. There were Hallowe'en and Burns Night parties, visits to the theatre and to newspaper offices.

The Branch contributed a donation to the Merchant Navy window which was to be put into Glasgow Cathedral. Other donations were sent to the British Sailors' Society, the R.N. Lifeboat Fund, and the King George VI Memorial Fund.

The meetings are held fortnightly and the Branch has now added its own dramatic group to the usual social activities. They exchange visits regularly with the Edinburgh Branch, an event which they much enjoy. A scheme has also been started whereby when any Merchant Navy seaman is admitted to a hospital in Glasgow the Branch is notified, and if he has no relatives or friends in the city he is visited by members.

MEMBERS IN JUBILEE YEAR

OFFICE BEARERS

Chairman:	Mrs. E. Hill.
Treasurer:	Mrs. E. I. Hunter.
Secretary:	Mrs. E. McFarlane.

Mrs. E. Anderson	Mrs. M. B. Caldwell.	Miss J. W. J. Colvin.	Mrs. M. Finlay
Mrs. M. Annan.	Mrs. C. Clarkson.	Mrs. M. Downes.	son.
Mrs. D. M. Arthur.	Mrs. M. S. Clayton	Mrs. M. Drennan.	Miss R. Gillies.
Mrs. C. Black.	Mrs. J. Colvin.	Mrs. I. Fernie	Mrs. M. Graham.
Mrs. Gillespie.	Mrs. E. Love.	Mrs. M. S. J.	Mrs. E. P. Scott.

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Miss A. Greenwood.	Mrs. C. M. McColl.	Morrison.	Mrs. G. Smith.
Mrs. A. J. Greenwood.	Mrs. C. G. McFad- zean.	Mrs. E. D. Morton.	Mrs. M. Steele.
Mrs. M. Hamilton.	Mrs. E. MacFarlane.	Miss N. Muir.	Mrs. A. Stickler.
Miss M. Hare.	Mrs. M. E. McGowan.	Mrs. C. Page.	Miss G. E. Stickler.
Mrs. M. Henderson.	Mrs. J. E. McGugan.	Mrs. E. Perdix.	Mrs. J. Stirling.
Mrs. A. Hill.	Miss A. McKelvie.	Mrs. R. J. C. Pirrie.	Mrs. I. Strange.
Mrs. M. Holburn.	Mrs. C. McKenna.	Mrs. J. K. Price.	Mrs. M. Timmins.
Mrs. A. Hoxley.	Mrs. M. Mackie.	Mrs. C. S. Purvess.	Mrs. M. Walker.
Mrs. J. S. Hughes.	Mrs. M. B. McLachlan.	Mrs. D. Reid.	Mrs. J. C. Walkinshaw,
Mrs. G. Hunter.	Mrs. J. M. Mansfield.	Mrs. M. Robertson.	Mrs. A. M. Wallace.
Mrs. A. F. Johnston.	Mr. D. Montgomerie.	Mrs. L. E. Roberts.	Mrs. S. R. J. Woods.
Mrs. A. Jordan.		Mrs. G. Rothwell.	Mrs. S. Wylie.
Mrs. Lindsay-Miller.		Mrs. D. W. Sangster.	
Mrs. A. Logan.		Miss M. E. Sangster.	
Miss J. Logan.		Mrs. W. G. Sangster.	

HARWICH AND DOVERCOURT BRANCH

The Branch was formed in 1949, through the efforts of Mrs. A. Atkinson and Mrs. K. Alien. Mrs. Coombs inaugurated the Branch; the name chosen incorporated the name of this very old seaport with the residential suburb where the majority of the members had their homes.

The first chairman was Mrs. D. Nugent, and she was followed by Mrs. S. Learmont, wife of the late Captain Learmont, author of *Master in Sail*. Mrs. Alien succeeded Mrs. Learmont in the chair. Other early members were Mrs. F. Walker, Mrs. Plimsaul, Mrs. Ritter and Mrs. Carter.

The Branch got off to a good start with a membership of about 20, which increased steadily to over 40. Harwich is a very small port, and the membership is almost entirely derived from ladies connected with the officers of British Railway steamers, Trinity House Steam Vessel Service, and the North Channel Section of the Trinity House London Pilotage Service.

Activities are mainly of a social character: card parties, theatre parties, socials and an occasional dance. The Committee is always looking for fresh ideas, and the members were able to spend a very enjoyable afternoon for a 'Harmony in the Kitchen'

THE WATCH ASHORE

entertainment in 1957, for which one of their number got them tickets. More serious activities are also undertaken. Many members joined in the relief work during the great floods in 1952; and in 1956, the centenary year of the Missions to Seamen, the Branch raised a sum towards the Mayor's Fund in aid of that cause.

The Branch is regarded by the civic authorities as an important organization, and has been represented by one or more of its officers on several civic occasions. The Mayor is a regular guest at the annual dance held by the Branch.

Lady Headley, and Captain and Mrs. Coombs, have been welcome guests; the members have always found them a great source of inspiration and encouragement.

The finances of the Branch, though naturally not involving large figures, are sound. Besides contributions to various causes, a prize is given every year to one of the pupils of the Royal Merchant Navy School at Wokingham.

MEMBERS IN JUBILEE YEAR

Office bearers

Chairman:	Mrs. D. Jones.
Vice-Chairman:	Mrs. F. B. Alien.
Treasurer:	Mrs. A. Atkinson.
Secretary:	Mrs. D. Cooper.

Captain F. B. Alien.	Mrs. J. Dunham.	Mrs. D. Kelt.	Mrs. B. Smithsons.
Mrs. C. Bowden-Rook.	Mrs. K. Edmunds.	Mrs. G. Lawrence.	Mrs. Sutherland.
Mrs. P. Brown.	Mrs. Francis.	Mrs. E. Loneley.	Mrs. L. Sutton.
Mrs. E. Bunn.	Mrs. M. Greaves.	Mrs. E. Luck.	Mrs. M. Taylor.
Mrs. M Garter.	Mrs. Haldane.	Mr. A. E. Murrison.	Mrs. Tooth.
Mrs. H Chambers.	Mrs. D. Hawkins.	Mrs. D. Murrison.	Mrs. Vaughan.
Mrs. E. Clark.	Mrs. Hazelwood.	Miss Newman.	Miss A. G. Walker.
Mrs. E. Cooper.	Mrs. Hooks.	Mrs. Parker.	Mrs. F. Walker.
Mrs. E. Dale.	Mrs. Horsford.	Mrs. K. Patterson.	Mrs. Warren.
Mrs. Davis.	Mrs. Hunter.	Mrs. J. Payne.	Mrs. C. Witchell.
Mrs. A. Dodd.	Mrs. Jackson.	Mrs. Ratcliffe.	Mrs. J. Woon.
	Mrs. Jardine	Mrs. J. Smith.	

HUMBER BRANCH

The Branch was founded in January, 1947, the inaugural meeting being held at the offices of the Navigators and Engineer Officers Union, Hull. The founder office-bearers were:

Chairman:	Mrs. Margaret Jones.
Temporary Treasurer and Secretary:	Mrs. Jardine.
Treasurer:	Mrs. Drinknow.
Assistant Treasurer:	Mrs. Gibson.
Secretary:	Mrs. Irene Marsh.
Assistant Secretary:	Mrs. C. Jackson.

Mrs. Thomas, Mrs. Cash, Mrs. Broadley, Mrs. Hiley, Mrs. Lawrence and Mrs. Witty.

Two representatives, Mrs. Alliston and Mrs. Stephenson, went to London in March of that year to represent the Branch at the Headquarters meeting.

The Branch decided to hold a whist drive and dance in order to raise funds; over £20 was the satisfactory result, and a bank account for the Branch was opened. A grant was made to the Port Chaplain in appreciation of his kindness and help in allowing the Branch to use a room at the Missions to Seamen premises for their meetings and social activities.

The Branch soon had over 60 members. A full programme of activities was worked out, to include fortnightly whist-drives, the proceeds of which were devoted to giving war widows' children a Christmas party and a Fayre to be partly in aid of the Missions to Seamen. There were summer outings, a visit to an open-air performance of 'Hiawatha', Bring-and-Buy sales, social afternoons, and concerts.

Two members attended the Naval Memorial Service, held on board the SS. *Wingfield Castle*, just outside the mouth of the Humber. The Branch sent a floral tribute in the form of an anchor, to be cast on the waters by one of the two members attending on their behalf.

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At the end of the year the first Annual Dinner was held at the New Manchester Hotel. This was very successful and became an annual event. In 1948 the improved financial position of the Branch made it possible to follow out a suggestion from a member that they should take the widows in the Trinity House Rest Homes for an outing. This proved to be such an enjoyable occasion, and gave the old ladies so much pleasure, that it has become an annual event. The Branch also gives them a Christmas party and concert every year, sending a bus to transport them between the Homes and the Merchant Navy Hostel, where the parties are held.

The Branch was delighted to welcome Lady Headley, and Captain and Mrs. Coombs, to dinners, dances and other social occasions. There have been the usual activities: talks, film shows, sales of various kinds—all very much enjoyed by members and friends whom they brought along.

Donations are sent annually to the Royal Merchant Navy School, and to other institutions connected with the sea.

MEMBERSHIP IN JUBILEE YEAR

Office bearers

	Chairman:	Mrs. L.. Jackson.	
	Treasurer:	Mrs. N. A. Johnston.	
	Secretary:	Mrs. R. M. Sharp.	
Mrs. Abba.	Mrs. Frost.	Mrs. E. Martin.	Mrs. Sharp
Mrs. Anderton.	Miss Gale.	Mrs. Mason.	Mrs. Sibree.
Mrs. Archer.	Mrs. Green.	Mrs. Newlove.	Mrs. Smith.
Mrs. Armstrong.	Mrs. Hall.	Mrs. L. Overment.	Mrs. Snee.
Mrs. Atkin.	Mrs. Hewitt,	Mrs. Pierce	Mrs. Snowden.
Mrs. Baldwin.	Mrs. L. Hiley.	Miss P. Priest.	Mrs. Staves.
Miss Bradley.	Mrs. Hob son.	Mrs. T. Priestley.	Mrs. Tector.
Mrs. Bryan.	Mrs. E. Howlett.	Mrs. Randerson.	Mrs. E. Threadgold.
Mrs., Cobby.	Mrs. B. C. Jackson.	Mrs. Rawlinson.	Mrs. R. V. Turner.
Mrs. Craven.	Mrs. C. A. Jackson.	Mr. E. Richardson.	Mrs. Turpin.
Mrs. Dean.	Mrs. F. A. Jackson.	Mrs. D. Robinson.	Mrs. Tyler.
Mrs. Dews.	Mrs. L. M. Jackson.	Mrs. E. Robinson.	Mrs. Wagg.
Mrs. Drakefield.	Mrs. Johnston.	Mrs. J. Robinson.	Mrs. Welcome.
Mrs. Earnshaw	Mrs. E. Johnson.	Mrs. F. Rowland.	Mrs. Whyllie.
Mrs. Edwards.	Mrs. W. Kemp.	Mr. Ruffles.	Mrs. Winfield.
Mrs. Evans.	Miss McWhirter.	Mrs. Schultz.	Mrs. Young.

LONDON BRANCH

There was no London Branch as such before or during the war. There was a Central London group, but it was not a constituted Branch, and was run by the Central Committee. Informal meetings were held, first at Captain Coombs' flat, and then at the Over-Seas League. There were two or three Branches in districts round London. Mrs. Johnstone and Mrs. Rolfe, the Chairman and Secretary of the Ilford and District Branch, should be mentioned here, as these ladies did a great deal of work.

It was difficult for these Branches to continue functioning as the war grew more severe; many of the members were evacuated, or went to live in other places after losing their husbands. It is a pity that early Minute Books and other records should have been destroyed by enemy action, as a great deal of valuable pioneer work was done by Watch Ashore members living in and around London. As the present Secretary of the London Branch so rightly says: 'The present generation are reaping the benefits of the labours of these pioneers, which must bring a great sense of achievement to those who rallied round Captain Coombs and Admiral Nelson-Ward when they fought so hard for the good of the Merchant Navy.'

The Branch had a modest beginning in February 1952, when Mrs. Lena Townson, whose son was a Third Officer, met three wives of Merchant Navy officers for lunch in the Rendezvous Restaurant in Fleet Street. A month later they lunched again, in a party of seven this time. The next lunch-party numbered twenty-four, amongst them being Captain and Mrs. Coombs. The May lunch was attended by twenty-three people, and included Dr. Ronald Hope, who offered the use of the College of the Sea, Mansbridge House, Balham, for an evening meeting. This was accepted, and two weeks later a successful evening meeting of twenty-five people was held. Since then the Branch has met once a month in the evenings at Mansbridge House.

THE WATCH ASHORE

In July 1952 a meeting of the Watch Ashore was held in H.Q.S. Wellington, when the London Branch was officially constituted. Mrs. Townson was elected Chairman, and Mrs. Hamilton, Secretary. The Branch has forged ahead and widened its scope with a variety of activities. There is a lunch meeting, with a guest speaker, on the first Wednesday of each month, and an evening meeting at Mansbridge House on every third Tuesday. There are birthday celebrations in July and a children's party at Christmas each year at Mansbridge House. The Branch is deeply indebted to Dr. Hope and his staff for their never-failing co-operation and kindness.

Mrs. Townson resigned in 1953, and Mrs. Pearce was elected Chairman in her place. Later in the year Mrs. Hamilton resigned and Mrs. Loughlin became Secretary. Mrs. Brown succeeded her two years later.

Members of the Branch run the Memorial Hall Depot in the City for King George's Fund for Sailors' flag day. The Branch also gives two prizes each year to the Royal Merchant Navy School at Bear Wood and subscribes to the Seafarers' Education Service. The members thoroughly enjoy their varied activities, but, as the present Secretary says, 'the friendships formed and enjoyed by our members are our most treasured possession.'

MEMBERSHIP IN JUBILEE YEAR

Office bearers

Chairman:	Mrs. D. Pearce.
Vice-Chairman:	Mrs. H. Atkinson.
Treasurer:	Mrs. E. R. Duddington.
Secretary:	Mrs. A. W. Brown.
Assistant Secretary:	Mrs. E. Hart.

COMMITTEE

Mrs. G. Chadwick.	Mrs. E. Harrison.	Mrs. M. Marshall.	Mrs. Scott
Mrs. U. Clark.	Mrs. K. Llewellyn.	Mrs. N. Mason.	

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MEMEBERS

Mrs. S. Akerman.	Mrs. J. Davidson.	Mrs. Hughes.	Mrs. A Potter
Mrs. W. Alien.	Mrs. D. Davies.	Miss J. LafFen.	Mrs. A. Pyatt.
Mrs. Ayre.	Mrs. G. Finch.	Mrs. Lee.	Mrs. E. Richards.
Mrs. V. Baker.	Mrs. E. Ford.	Miss McGregor.	Mrs. D. Robb
Mrs. G. Ball.	Miss F. Fry.	Mrs. McKenzie.	Mrs. Russell
Mrs. A. Bardsley.	Mrs. A. J. Gibbs.	Mrs. Mather.	Mrs. N. Sadler.
Mrs. J. Barnes.	Mr. C. Goodchild.	Mrs. P. Mitchell.	Lady Scott-
Mrs. L. Bassett.	Mrs. Greengrass.	Mrs. Simone	Moncrieff.
Lady Bowhill.	Mrs. Gundersen.	Montague.	Lady Sloan
Mr. S. E. Britten.	Mrs. Hambidge.	Mrs. Page-Phillips.	Miss Bridget Talbot.
Mrs. I. Campbell.	Miss Hann.	Mrs. Parks-	Mrs. F. Taylor.
Mrs. A. Catchpole.	Mrs. Hastings.	Bradbury.	Mrs. Thornhill.
Mrs. W. H. Coombs.	Mrs. Hoare.	Mrs. Phillips.	Mrs. W. Watkins..
Mr. Cram.	Dr. R. Hope.	Mrs. A. Pidsley.	Mrs. M. Wilson
Mrs. L. Curlett.	Mrs. E. Hewlett.	Mrs. Pinkham.	Mrs. M. Woodward.
Mrs. G. Dale.			

MERSEYSIDE BRANCH

The Merseyside Branch was started as the result of a meeting between Mrs. Grace Wylie and Miss Vidal (now Mrs. W. H. Coombs) in the Wallasey Hotel. Mrs. Wylie was able to interest the wives of other Merchant Navy officers in the idea, and the Watch Ashore became established in that district. Mrs. J. Langford was the first President and Mrs. Wylie became Secretary. The first meetings were held in a small cafe at Charing Cross, Birkenhead, and later in the Over-Seas Club, Liverpool. The numbers grew, and some of those early members are still happily active in the Watch Ashore today. Mrs. Clarke, one of the Founder Members, has three seafaring sons, and one grandson at sea.

An Annual Dinner was instituted at Merseyside, and though the Branch never made much money, they managed to pay their expenses. Mrs. Wylie still remembers with horror one Watch Ashore dinner (she believes it was the one which Admiral and Mrs. Nelson-Ward both attended) when she told the head waiter of the Bear's Paw Restaurant, where the Dinner was being held, to supply 'our guests' with sherry. The guests were about ten in

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number. Mrs. Wylie suddenly noticed that all present were being supplied with sherry—about 150 people. Realizing what had happened, she tried to stop the free drinks, but only partially succeeded. It ruined her appetite. She has now forgotten how the members faced this financial hurdle, but believes that they afterwards ran a small whist-drive to pay for the damage. (With sherry at 1s. 3d. a glass, or some such modest sum, it was not a very serious matter.) The accident did not put the Committee off holding similar affairs. Admiral Nelson-Ward visited the Branch again. Mrs. Nelson-Ward, whom they all loved dearly, came each year; also Lord and Lady Headley, and Captain and Mrs. Coombs.

The war years broke up the happy gatherings. Many members had to leave the Merseyside, and not all of them came back.

The Branch is now in a flourishing condition again, with regular meetings and many functions. An activity which merits special mention is the organization of parties who regularly visit the local theatres. Very enjoyable evenings are spent by members, this being another opportunity of getting to know one another. The Branch raises money for various causes, a special effort always being made for the Merchant Navy School, as several members have children being educated there.

FOUNDER MEMBERS

Mrs. Clark.	Mrs. Langford.
Mrs. McKinley.	Mrs. Wylie.

MEMBERSHIP IN JUBILEE YEAR

Office bearers

Chairman:	Mrs. G. Love.
Vice-Chairman:	Mrs. Richmond.
Treasurer:	Mrs. E. Davidson.
Secretary:	Mrs. S. Gilliatt.

COMMITTEE

Mrs. Dawson.	Mrs. Meldrum.
Mrs. Eyre Walker.	Mrs. Palmer
Mrs. King.	Mrs. Quale.
Mrs. Woollatt.	

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MEMEBERS

Mrs. D. Ablett.
Mrs. S. Ablett.
Mrs. Allenby.
Mrs. Anderson.
Mrs. Ansdell.
Mrs. Bailey.
Mrs. Brand.
Mrs. Burgess.
Mrs. Christie.
Mrs. Clark.

Mrs. Corkish..
Mrs. Dumphy
Mrs. Elkins.
Mrs. Gibson.
Mrs. Greene.
Mrs. Harris.
Mrs. Harrison.
Mrs. Jones.
Mrs. Johnson.
Mrs. Kay

Mrs. Kennedy.
Mrs. Lawrenson.
Mrs. Leicester.
Mrs. McCulloch.
Mrs. McMullen.
Mrs. Mylchrest.
Mrs. Partington.
Miss Pythian.
Mrs. Potts.
Mrs. Preece.

Mrs. Quinn.
Mrs. Ressich.
Mrs. Reynolds.
Mrs. Smith.
Mrs. Taylor (1).
Mrs. Taylor (2).
Mrs. Thomson.
Mrs. Watkin.
Mrs. Wilson.
Mrs. Wrigley.



A Petition to Parliament

THE WATCH ASHORE



*Lady Heaton Ellis
President 1943-44*

*Mrs. W.C. Coombs, M.B.E.
Hon. Secretary and Treasurer
1933-48
Vice-President and Treasurer
1958*



*Mrs. D. A. Robb
Secretary 1958*

NORTH-EAST COAST BRANCH

In November 1943 a meeting was held at the Royal Station Hotel, Newcastle-on-Tyne, attended by a number of ladies who were keenly interested in the well-being of the Merchant Navy. There had been a Watch Ashore Branch before the war, but it had lapsed owing to various circumstances. The object of this meeting was to restart the Branch, and it was soon apparent that a great many people welcomed the idea.

Miss Bridget Talbot, O.B.E., one of the most dynamic members of the Watch Ashore, was the speaker. She impressed upon the members the fact that constant vigilance was necessary if the Merchant Navy was to get its due. She reminded listeners of the great risks men of the Merchant Navy ran every day in order to keep open our lifeline, and stressed the debt those ashore owed to them. Miss Talbot pointed out that the womenfolk of all those connected with the Merchant Navy bore with great fortitude the difficult job of waiting, and the anxieties inseparable from the dependants of sailors. A committee was elected, and the first meeting was held in the Members' Room of the Officers (Merchant Navy) Federation.

During the following year funds were raised by dances, concerts and other social occasions. A donation was given towards the opening of a Merchant Venturers Club in Newcastle.

In 1944 it was decided to split the Branch, into three Sections. The South Section was to be Sunderland, South Shields and up river to Hebburn; the North Section, Blyth to North Shields and Whitley Bay; and all other places to be under the Central Section. It was later agreed that Sunderland should have its own Section, and a North Shields Section was also established. In November 1943 the North-East Coast Branch was revived through the initiative of Mrs. E. Dingle. The Chairman was Lady Maxwell, and Miss Pallister (now Mrs. Dixon) was appointed Secretary.

Lady Maxwell retired in November 1945 and was presented by the members with a gold fountain pen, suitably inscribed.

Separate Sections of the Branch were set up during the next year or two. Jarrow, Blyth, Newcastle, Whitley Bay, North Shields, South Shields, Sunderland and Jesmond all formed Sections. The North-East Branch was now, with all its sections; the largest Branch of the Watch Ashore. The members of the different Sections visited each other for various functions, and on different occasions welcomed Lady Headley, Captain and Mrs. Coombs, and Miss Talbot as guests and speakers. Each Section arranged its own programme, which usually included talks on all kinds of subjects, outings and visits, theatre parties, an annual birthday party, a Christmas party, whist drives and sales, and socials and dances to raise funds for many causes.

In 1947 the North-East Coast Branch produced something out of the ordinary—their own Concert Party, which was called ‘The Waves’. They had a dinner launching the new venture at the Royal Station Hotel, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and it was a very great success.

The Branch continued to flourish. Visits were exchanged between the North-East Branch and the Scottish Branches. On one occasion, Mrs. Foster, Chairman of the Aberdeen Branch, visited local Sections while her husband’s ship was being refitted at North Shields. There were Watch Ashore guests from Ireland and other ports, all of whom received a warm welcome.

In 1951 two Canadian sisters, Mrs. Helena Powell and Mrs. Vera Hammond, visited the Branch. They had been born in South Shields, but had lived in Vancouver for many years, and were now visiting their home town. They were extremely interested in the Watch Ashore, and the Chairman of the Branch discussed with them the formation of a Branch in Vancouver. This would be the first overseas branch of the Association. Mrs. Powell and Mrs. Hammond then joined the Watch Ashore, and said that when they returned to Canada they would do their best to awaken interest

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among the wives, sisters, daughters and mothers of officers in the Canadian Merchant Navy, to see if a sister-organization could be established in Canada.

October 1952 was a memorable month in the history of the Branch, when the Merchant Navy Memorial Window to the men of the Merchant Navy who died in the recent war was dedicated in Christ Church, North Shields. Many members from other Branches came to this service, as the Triennial Meeting of the Watch Ashore was timed for the following day. The meeting was held on board H.M.S. Calliope at Elswick, Newcastle-on-Tyne, by permission of the Officer Commanding R.N.V.R., Tyne Division.

The usual activities have continued with the zest associated with this large, lively Branch. Several of the members came to London in Coronation week, June 1953, and took part in the festivities in H.Q.S. Wellington. The Twenty-first Birthday Dinner was celebrated locally in C.W.S. Hall, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and 22 Branch members came to London later for the Headquarters dinner at the Criterion.

FOUNDER MEMBERS

(of re-formed Branch, 1943)

OFFICE BEARERS

Chairman: Lady Maxwell.
Treasurer: Mr. Morley.
Secretary: Miss Pallister.

COMMITTEE

Mrs. Brunton.	Mrs. Dingle.	Mrs. Scaife.
Mrs. Carrick.	Mrs. Hood.	Mrs. Smith.
Mrs. Cobb.	Mrs. Horsman.	Miss Walsh.
Mrs. Coleman.	Mrs. Mitchell.	Mrs. Wilson.
Mrs. Davidson.	Mrs. Morley.	

MEMBERS

Mrs. Armstrong.	Mrs. Hartley.
Mrs. Blakey.	Mrs. Laidlaw.
Mrs. Clayton.	Mrs. Towshend.
Mrs. Dingwall.	

THE WATCH ASHORE

MEMBERSHIP IN JUBILEE YEAR

OFFICE BEARERS

President: Mrs. S. Medhurst
Chairman: Mrs. S. Lambert.
Vice-Chairman: . Mrs. A. Mitchell; Mrs. A. Lowson.
Treasurer: . Mrs. E. Burn.
Secretary: . Mrs. J. Dougall.

REPRESENTATIVES OF SECTIONS

North Shields: Mrs. Medhurst and Mrs. Fernandes. Treasurer: Mrs. W. Swan.
South Shields: Mrs. J. Shaw and Mrs. E. Burn. Treasurer: Mrs. A. Dawson.
Whitley Bay: Mrs. E. Hare and Mrs. F. Oliver. Treasurer: Mrs. Gardner.
Blyth: Mrs. M. E. Hall and Mrs. Thompson. Treasurer: Mrs. J. Harbottle.
Newcastle-on-Tyne: Mrs. J. Begg and Mrs. E. Snowdon. Treasurer: Miss A. Winship.

NEWCASTLE SECTION

Chairman: Mrs. L. E. Begg
Treasurer: Miss A. Winship,
Secretary: Mrs. A. Fisher.

Mrs. T. Able.	Mrs. E. Clarke.	Mrs. L. Hood.	Mrs. E. Snowdon.
Mrs. Alexander.	Mrs. E. Coates.	Mrs. D. Johnson.	Mrs. Stearman.
Miss I. Anderson.	Mrs. A. Cole.	Mrs. E. Kaye.	Mrs. Storrier.
Mrs. M. Archbold.	Mrs. K. Cussons.	Mrs. A. Kenney.	Mrs. E. Tappin.
Mrs. A. Armstrong.	Mrs. M. Dixon.	Mrs. L. Marshall.	Mrs. H. Taylor.
Mrs. L. Armstrong.	Mrs. D. Dougall.	Mrs. E. Martin.	Mrs. Thomsen.
Mrs. E. Balfour.	Mrs. J. Dunn.	Mrs. Milburn.	Mrs. V. Vann.
Mrs. O. Barker.	Mrs. D. Faddy.	Mrs. E. Milburn.	Mrs. E. Waller.
Mrs. B. Bell.	Mrs. J. Gallagher.	Miss F. Millard.	Miss M. Waller.
Miss M. Bowes- Lyon.	Mrs. E. Gardner.	Mrs. S. Mitchell.	Mrs. C. Walton.
Miss W. G. Bowes- Lyon.	Mrs. E. Gray.	Mrs. M. O'Driscoll.	Mrs. J. Walton.
Miss E. Browning.	Mrs. M. Gregan.	Mrs. G. Pearson.	Mrs. J. Weightman.
Mrs. H. Byerley.	Mrs. A. Grieves.	Mrs. C. Robinson.	Mrs. S. Wilson.
Mrs. A. Cartner.	Mrs. D. Grimmer.	Mrs. W. Rowe.	Mrs. H. Wolverson.
	Mrs. M. Harrison.	Mrs. E. Slaughter.	Mrs. M. Young.
	Mrs. Hawksley.	Mrs. M. Smith.	

NORTH SHIELDS SECTION

Chairman: Mrs. M. Medhurst.
Treasurer: Mrs. H. Swan.
Secretary: Mrs. H. Fernandes.

Mrs. R. Atkinson.	Mrs. A. Foster.	Mrs. E. S. Muir.	Mrs. D. Robertson.
Mrs. I. Blakey.	Mrs. E. M. Hodgson.	Miss K. Murray.	Mrs. E. Robinson.

THE FIRST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

Mrs. S. Brandon.	Mrs. S. Lambert.	Mrs. A. Nicholson.	Mrs. E. Scorer.
Mrs. I. Clark.	Mrs. J. Lascelles.	Mrs. M. Park.	Mrs. A. Stephenson.
Mrs. A. Cooper.	Mrs. H. Love.	Mrs. N. Pattison.	Mrs. L. Temple.
Mrs. M. Currie.	Mrs. A. Lawson.	Mrs. Popplewell.	Mrs. E. Tessimond.
Mrs. M. Doran.	Mrs. D. MacGrath.	Mrs. V. Renton.	Mrs. E. Thompson.
Mrs. W. Doughty.	Mrs. D. Manderson.	Miss B. Rischmiller,	Mrs. A. Tomlinson.
Mrs. M. Emery	Mrs. V. Mitchell.	Miss S. Rischmiller.	Mrs. E. Turner.
Mrs. E. Fitzpatrick.			

BLYTH SECTION

Chairman:	Mrs. M. E. Hall.
Treasurer:	Mrs. H. Harbottle.
Secretary:	Mrs. M. Thompson.

Mrs. E. Bailey.	E. Connor.	Mrs. E. Jackson.	Mrs. A. Patterson.
Mrs. E. Beadlein.	F. Corbetts.	Mrs. I. Jeffreys.	Mrs. L. Raffell.
Mrs. L. Bell.	Mrs. A. Corner.	Mrs. I. Johnston.	Mrs. M. Sanderson.
Mrs. J. Blythe.	Mrs. Fulton.	Captain A. McRae.	Mrs. P. Sellars.
Mrs. V. Bruce.	Mrs. Godfrey.	Mrs. Melville.	Mrs. A.
Mrs. Galloway.	Mrs. S. Heatley.	Mrs. M. Miller.	Summerside.
Mrs. Castieau.	Mrs. F. Henderson,	Mrs. M. Milne.	Mrs. C. E.
Captain Claridge,	Mrs. J. Herron.	Mrs. E. Mitchell.	Thompson.
R.N.	Mrs. E. A. Hogg.	Mrs. A. Nicholson.	

WHITLEY BAY SECTION

Chairman:	Mrs. E. Hare.
Treasurer:	Mrs. S. Gardner.
Secretary:	Mrs. F. B. Oliver.

Mrs. E. J.	Miss D. Gale.	Mrs. M. Price.	Mrs. M. Sutcliffe.
Armstrong.	Miss M. Gay.	Miss A. Ralph.	Mrs. S. Taylor.
Mrs. E. Clothier.	Miss F. Grainger.	Mrs. J. Ralph.	Mrs. M. Wake.
Mrs. E. Diericx.	Miss D. Hedley.	Mrs. E. Robinson.	Mrs. Walker.
Mrs. E. Elliott.	Mrs. Hetherington.	Mrs. M. Scott.	Mrs. C. Wallace.
Mrs. E.	Mrs. E. Howell.	Mrs. M. Slater.	Mrs. Waller.
Finlayson.	Mrs. E. Maughan.	Mrs. S. Souter.	Mrs. A. Walton.
Mrs. F. Ford.	Mrs. E. Piggott.	Mrs. F. Stobbs.	

SOUTH SHEILDS BAY SECTION

Chairman:	Mrs. M. Shaw.
Treasurer:	Mrs. E. Dawson.
Secretary:	Mrs. E. Burn.

Mrs. A. Anderson.	Mrs. E. Dockwray.	Mrs. T. Jolly.	Mrs. K. Rutherford.
Mrs. F. Atkinson.	Mrs. M. Driver.	Mrs. E. Jones.	Mrs. S. Sampson.

THE WATCH ASHORE

Mrs. M. Baker.	Mrs. D.	Mrs. M. Jukes.	Mrs. H. Shaw.
Mrs. H. Bolton.	Drummond.	Mrs. A. Kemp.	Mrs. J. Shields.
Mrs. D. Boyce.	Mrs. W. Dry.	Mrs. C. Kemp.	Mrs. H. Smith.
Mrs. J. Brady.	Mrs. M. Duckett.	Mrs. R. Kennedy.	Mrs. J. Smith.
Mrs. J. Brooks.	Mrs. V. Durrant.	Mrs. K. Knight.	Mrs. F. Stainton.
Miss M. Brough.	Mrs. J. Ferguson.	Mrs. E. Kooy.	Mrs. E. Starrett.
Mrs. A. Brown.	Mrs. E. Forrest.	Mrs. L. Lambert.	Mrs. E. Stephenson.
Mrs. L. Brown.	Miss L. Forrest.	Mrs. E. Leesom.	Mrs. H. Stewart.
Mrs. M. Bullock.	Mrs. J. Foster.	Mrs. M. Leybourne.	Mrs. A. Storey.
Mrs. E. Bulman.	Dr. M. Funnell.	Mrs. E. Lloyd.	Mrs. G. Sutherland.
Mrs. H. Campbell.	Mrs. L. Garrod.	Mrs. J. McAlister.	Mrs. S. Tate.
Mrs. B. Carney.	Mrs. E. Garton.	Mrs. M. McCuaig.	Mrs. E. Taylor.
Mrs. E. Carverhill.	Mrs. O. Gate.	Mrs. R. McGuire.	Mrs. M. Theckston.
Mrs. M. Charlton.	Mrs. L. Georgeson.	Mrs. A. McKay.	Mrs. E. Thoburn.
Miss M. Chastney.	Mrs. E. Gibson.	Mrs. D. LcLeish.	Mrs. L. Thompson.
Miss C. Clark.	Mrs. E. Gillan.	Mrs. N. Maddison.	Mrs. M. Thompson.
Mrs. S. Clark.	Mrs. E. Givens.	Mrs. W. Manson.	Mrs. E. Thornton.
Mrs. D. Clarke.	Mrs. E. Gledson.	Mrs. M. Martin.	Mrs. J. Thornton.
Mrs. F. Clarke.	Mrs. L. Graham.	Mrs. N. Martin.	Mrs. A. Tinmouth.
Mrs. A. Clear.	Mrs. M. Grey.	Mrs. E. Marwick.	Mrs. E. Tullock.
Mrs. A. Coates.	Mrs. D. Grieves.	Miss R. Metcalfe.	Mrs. L. Walker.
Mrs. E. Coats.	Mrs. E. Hartley.	Mrs. A. Murray.	Mrs. E. Welbury.
Mrs. G. Coats.	Mrs. R. Hellings.	Mrs. M. Patrick.	Mrs. E. West.
Mrs. M. Coverdale.	Mrs. E. Henderson.	Mrs. M. Payne.	Mrs. J. Whale.
Miss V. Coverdale.	Mrs. J. Henning.	Mrs. H. Porter.	Mrs. L. Whincrop.
Mrs. M. Cullen.	Mrs. G. Hooley.	Mrs. E. Potts.	Mrs. G. White.
Mrs. E. Davison.	Mrs. R.	Mrs. M. Powell.	Mrs. M. White.
Mrs. A. Dawson.	Humphreys.	Mrs. F. Rae.	Mrs. C. Whiteford.
Miss M. Dawson.	Mrs. M. Hunter.	Mrs. J. Raisbeck.	Mrs. A. Williamson.
Mrs. M. Derrick.	Mrs. E. Jardine.	Mrs. W. Raisbeck.	Mrs. E. Woolgar.
Mrs. M. Ditchburn.	Mrs. M. Jardine,	Mrs. J. Ridley.	Mrs. E. Youngson.

PENARTH BRANCH

This Branch was formed in 1940, and in spite of considerable difficulties due to war conditions, the members were able to meet and to be a comfort to each other in the stresses of the period. The members have always been very active in raising funds for charities connected with the sea, particularly for the King George Fund for Sailors, the Merchant Navy School, and the Lifeboat Fund. They are also active workers on behalf of the Red Cross. Their National Savings is also in a healthy state.

THE FIRST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

FOUNDER MEMBERS

Mrs. Bulmer.	Mrs. Sadler.
Mrs. Hewitt.	Mrs. Scourfield
Mrs. Kyd.	Mrs. Sharp.
Mrs. Lee.	Mrs. West.
Mrs. Maile.	Mrs. Woods.

MEMBERSHIP IN JUBILEE YEAR

OFFICE BEARERS

Chairman:	Mrs. Scourfield.
Treasurer:	
Secretary:	Mrs. E. Miller.

Mrs. Akers.	Mrs. Fishwicke.	Mrs. McDougall.	Mrs. Smith.
Mrs. Alban.	Mrs. Gough.	Mrs. Maile.	Mrs. Stamp.
Mrs. Baker.	Mrs. Grubb.	Mrs. Meazey.	Mrs. C. Stamp.
Mrs. Baptist.	Mrs. Harries.	Mrs. Oldland.	Mrs. Stanley.
Mrs. Bonner.	Mrs. Hill.	Mrs. Plowman.	Mrs. Stickler.
Mrs. Bradford.	Mrs. Jones.	Mrs. Sadler.	Mrs. Taylor.
Mrs. Bradley.	Mrs. P. Jones.	Mrs. Samuel.	Mrs. Thomas.
Mrs. Bulmer.	Mrs. Killick.	Mrs. Seagrave.	Mrs. Trigg.
Miss Coleman.	Mrs. Kyd.	Mrs. Sharpe.	Mrs. Weaver.
Mrs. Crocker.	Mrs. Lane.	Mrs. Shead.	Mrs. AVilliams.
Mrs. Davies.	Mrs. Lawrence.	Mrs. Simpson.	Mrs. Wilson.
Mrs. Evans.	Mrs. Leader.	Mrs. Spencer.	Mrs. Winslade

SOUTHAMPTON BRANCH

The first Branch of the Watch Ashore at Southampton was formed in 1936, its first meeting being held in the house of Miss Porter, the sister of a master mariner. Mrs. A. L. Brown, Mrs. P. Black, Mrs. M. Deller and Mrs. S. Parry were among those who belonged to the Branch, but meetings were discontinued mainly because of wartime conditions at the port.

In December 1949 Captain Bruton, District Secretary of the N.E.O.U., asked the wives of some of the Union members to meet him, and suggested that the Branch should be restarted. Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Chick, Mrs. Clarke-Hunt, Mrs. FitzGerald, Mrs. Nicoll, Mrs. Pawlik, Mrs. D. A. Robb, Mrs. Teare, Mrs. Thelwell and Mrs. White attended that meeting. They were all strangers to each other, and no one knew the capabilities of her neighbour, but

a friendly atmosphere was soon established. Mrs. Robb was elected Chairman, Mrs. Nicoll, Secretary; Mrs. Pawlik, Assistant Secretary; and Mrs. Thelwell, Treasurer. Unfortunately, owing to illness, Mrs. Thelwell was not able to take up her duties, and Mrs. Jackson became Treasurer.

Captain Coombs came down in January to explain to the Committee the aims of the organization. The members had meanwhile done all in their power to interest other potential members in the proposed reopening of the Branch, and, on 8th February, 1950, an inaugural meeting was held at the Southampton Master Mariners' Club. As a result, several new members were enrolled. The early meetings were held in the Officers' Room of the Missions to Seamen, but after a time the Branch moved to the Polygon Hotel, as it was more central.

The first syllabus included a number of talks, grave and gay—on pottery, millinery fashions, public libraries, women police officers. In December 1950 the Inaugural Luncheon was held at the Polygon Hotel, several distinguished guests being invited. The Mayor of Southampton, Alderman Dr. G. H. Barendt, replied to the toast of 'The Town and Port of Southampton'. Captain G. M. Bruton proposed the toast of the Merchant Navy, which was responded to by Air Chief Marshal Sir Frederick Bowhill, G.B.E., K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O. The toast of the Watch Ashore was proposed by Captain G. W. Wakeford, Director of the Southampton School of Navigation.

Sir Frederick said, in the course of a short speech, that as the Merchant Navy was the lifeline of the British Empire, it followed that the Watch Ashore was the lifeline of the Merchant Navy. Since his days in the old sailing ships conditions had improved immensely in pay and accommodation, and, he added, they must go on improving.

The Luncheon became an annual event, much looked forward to by the members. Besides social meetings like whist drives and

coffee mornings, there were varied programmes during the next few years. A tour of Southampton was led by one of the members, Miss Elsie Sandell, a local historian; a visit was made to the School of Navigation; there were trips to London with a visit to the Houses of Parliament, and other outings. A Christmas Party, on behalf of the Red Cross and the disabled, was established as an annual event, and in 1951 the activities of the Branch included raising a sum of money for the Holy Rood Merchant Navy Memorial Fund.

In 1953 Her Royal Highness Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, performed the unveiling ceremony of the D-Day Embroidery. The Embroidery had been the conception of Miss Elsie Sandell. She had had the idea of suggesting to the women of Southampton that they should weave a tapestry depicting their town on D-Day, 6th June, 1944, when the liberation army, by sea and air, crossed the Channel from Southampton. Because of technical difficulties, the plan was changed from a tapestry to a panel of Irish linen, nine feet long, worked in embroidery cotton. Seventy-six embroiderers, representing fourteen women's organizations in Southampton, worked for nearly three years on the panel. The embroiderers included a number of members of the Watch Ashore, who were later presented with a special Souvenir Brochure to commemorate the part each played in the completion of the work.

On the occasion of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's Coronation on and June, 1953, the Branch sent a telegram of loyal greetings to Buckingham Palace. A telegram of acknowledgment was received from the Private Secretary, thanking them for their kind and loyal message. In February 1954 the twenty-first anniversary of the founding of the Watch Ashore was celebrated at Archers Court Hotel. Mrs. B. K. Barff, Chairman for that year, cut the cake which had been specially made, and there was an evening's programme of entertainment. A number of members of the Branch went to London for the dinner and reception at the Criterion

THE WATCH ASHORE

Restaurant, which was attended by members from all over the country.

The Branch continues to flourish. In this year of the Jubilee, there is as full and varied a programme as ever. Besides theatre outings, the ever-popular whist drive, and a garden party, there have been talks on Southampton's water supply, the Salvation Army, the Royal National Life Boat Institute, and the original Mayflower.

FOUNDER MEMBERS OF RE-FORMED BRANCH 1949

Chairman: Mrs. D. A. Robb.
Treasurer: Mrs. V. Thelwell (resigned before taking office owing to illness, place taken by Mrs. V. Jackson).

Mrs. A. L. Brown.	Mrs. D. Pawlik.
Mrs. M. Chick.	Mrs. G. Teare
Mrs. M. Clarke-Hunt.	Mrs. J. White
Mrs. E. FitzGerald.	

Chairman:	Mrs. H. C. Innes.
Vice-Chairman:	Mrs. J. J. W. Middlemiss.
Treasurer:	Mrs. V. Jackson.
Secretary:	Mrs. M. Clarke-Hunt.

MEMBERS IN JUBILEE YEAR

Mrs. S. Akerman.	Mrs. M. Bush.	Mrs. F. Cowdry.	Mrs. E. Gardner.
Mrs. L. Austin.	Mrs. G. Cahalan.	Mrs. J. Gumming.	Mrs. H. Greatrex.
Mrs. B. Barff.	Mrs. R. Caulder.	Mrs. B. DeLegh.	Mrs. H. Harrison.
Mrs. A. Barnes.	Mrs. M. Causton.	Mrs. M. Deller.	Mrs. C. Holmes.
Mrs. M. Barnett.	Mrs. C. K.	Mrs. A. Dines.	Mrs. P. Holt.
Mrs. A. Billett.	Chandler.	Mrs. M. Dodds.	Mrs. K.. Howe.
Mrs. J. Black.	Mrs. E. Chandler.	Mrs. J. Donaldson.	Mrs. D. Hunter.
Mrs. P. Black.	Mrs. T. Chisholm,	Mrs. E. Ellis.	Mrs. H. Innes.
Mrs. N. Blay.	Mrs. M.	Mrs. M. Fasting.	Mrs. V. Jackson.
Mrs. H. Brophy.	Clarke-Hunt.	Mrs. H. Faulkner.	Mrs. F. Janes.
Mrs. A. Brown.	Mrs. K.. Connock.	Mrs. E. FitzGerald.	Mrs. V. Johnston.
Mrs. W. Bulmer,	Mrs. S. Coombes.	Mrs. O. Gardiner.	Mrs. G. Jones.
Mrs. M. Keeble.	Mrs. P. Neve.	Mrs. H. Robinson.	Mrs. G. Teare.
Mrs. E. Kennedy.	Mrs. L. Newman.	Mrs. K. Robinson	Mrs. V. Thelwell.
Mrs. A. Laycock.	Mrs. E. Nicholas.	Mrs. H. Rose.	Mrs. M. Thomson.
Miss F. Legg.	Mrs. W. Nicoll.	Mrs. P. Rose.	Mrs. W. Thomson.

THE FIRST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

Mrs. M. Lintott.	Mrs. M. Nicholls.	Mrs. L. Russell.	Mrs. M. Trainor.
Mrs. L. McCall.	Mrs. J. Pannell.	Mrs. N. Sampson.	Mrs. M. Turabull.
Mrs. E. Mace.	Mrs. R. Pape.	Miss E. Sandell.	Mrs. E. Walters.
Mrs. D. McLean.	Mrs. T. Peake.	Mrs. C. Shepherd.	Mrs. E. Waterhouse.
Mrs. G. May.	Mrs. G. Pearce.	Mrs. J. Shepherd.	Mrs. M. Watson.
Mrs. G. Middlemiss.	Miss. K. Pearce.	Mrs. W. Smith.	Mrs. J. Watt.
Mrs. D. Miguel.	Mrs. N. Pellow.	Mrs. J. Stead.	Mrs. F Webster.
Mrs. M. Moses.	Mrs. V. Pick.	Mrs. F. Stevens.	Mrs. W. Weston.
Mrs. J. Mottram.	Mrs. D. Pickering.	Mrs. M. Strowger,	Mrs. E. Wilson.
Mrs. J. Napper.	Mrs. M. Powell.	Mrs. K. Takvorian.	Mrs W. Woodhead.
	Mrs. D. Robb.	Mrs. G. Taylor.	

SUNDERLAND BRANCH

The first meeting of the Watch Ashore in Sunderland was held in May 1944, with the object of forming a Section covering Sunderland and South Shields. A small committee was formed and social activities were planned. There was a large seafaring community in both towns and it was hoped that the organization would be of interest to many people, especially as the general public had also come to realize what a very important part the Merchant Navy had played in the war.

Mrs. Horsman was the first Chairman, and after an open meeting, sufficient people joined the new Section to enable a committee of twelve to be elected. After several changes of meeting-place, the Branch was offered the hospitality of the Missions to Seamen Hall, and have always appreciated the kindness of the Mission and the co-operation of the chaplains.

After the first few months, the South Shields group of members formed an independent Section, and the Sunderland Section continued as part of the North East Coast Branch until 1952, when they decided to become a self-supporting, independent Branch. This proved a more convenient arrangement, from many points of view.

The Branch arranges many social activities, including whist and bridge drives, parties of many kinds, and visits to industrial and other concerns. The Branch gives a yearly sum to seamen's

THE WATCH ASHORE

organizations, which they raise by special efforts. The membership averages 60.

MEMBERS IN JUBILEE YEAR

Chairman: Mrs. N. L. Tooby.
Treasurer: Mrs. D. Wilson.
Secretary: Mrs. L. Embleton.

Mrs. Anderson.	Mrs. Findlay.	Mrs. M. W.	Mrs. M. Shield.
Mrs. J. Anderson.	Mrs. L. Gidley.	McBeath	Mrs. Simpson.
Mrs. Arthur.	Mrs. B. E. Gilchrist.	Mrs. E. McLachlan.	Miss G. Stephenson.
Mrs. Arundell.	Mrs. E. Hall.	Mrs. K. Maltby.	Miss E. A. Stobbs.
Miss M. Blyth.	Mrs. M. Hall.	Mrs. Nicholson.	Mrs. E. M.
Miss R. Brown.	Mrs. F. Hibbert.	Mrs. Noble.	Temperley.
Mrs. E. J. Burlinson.	Mrs. K. Hudson.	Mrs. F. Payne.	Mrs. S. E. Vale.
Mrs. Butler.	Mrs. I. Hunt.	Mrs. J. Peterkin.	Mrs. E. Wallace.
Mrs. Cairns.	Mrs. H. Ingleby.	Mrs. Peters.	Miss I. Wayrnan.
Miss E. Gartledge.	Mrs. Jackson.	Mrs. Phimister.	Mrs. G. W.
Mrs. Crass.	Mrs. Kay.	Mrs. D. Pinkney.	Whitfield.
Miss E. Currey.	Mrs. F. F. Lane.	Mrs. H. Raine.	Mrs. F. Wilson.
Mrs. E. Dixon.	Mrs. Lascelles.	Mrs. T. Rich.	Mrs. F. E. Wilson.
Mrs. Erskine.	Mrs. M. L. Linsley.	Mrs. Rogers.	Mrs. Winter.
Mrs. Fearon.	Mrs. L. Lucas.	Capt. J. W. Shield.	Mrs. Wright.

TEES-SIDE BRANCH

A meeting was held at the Missions to Seamen, Middlesbrough, in December 1945, in order to interest possible members in the formation of a Branch of the Watch Ashore. This was followed a few weeks later by an inaugural meeting, and between 20 and 30 members were enrolled.

In March 1946 a talk was given to the Branch by a radio officer, and further members joined. By October of that year the Branch was sufficiently established for a permanent committee to be elected, with Mrs. Readman as Chairman. A dance was held in the Assembly Rooms at Linthorpe in December, the guests including the Mayor, and the Chief Constable. The meeting of the Branch in that month was attended by Lady Headley and by Captain and Mrs. Coombs.

THE FIRST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

Branch meetings and social activities of various kinds continued during the following years; the latter included children's parties for the children of members, with a number of orphans as guests; whist drives, Bring-and-Buy sales, and dances. In May 1948 the Branch took a party of Merchant Navy orphaned children on a picnic to Kiplin Hall.

In March 1949 all the members of the Branch attended a special service held in the Missions to Seamen. In June of that year, monthly meetings of the Branch began in Redcar.

Chairman:	Mrs. V. Readman.
Secretary:	Mrs. J. Bryan.
(Jubilee Year Membership not available.)	

THE WATCH ASHORE

MEMBERS JOINED IN JUBILEE YEAR

<i>Name</i>	<i>Branch</i>
Mrs. Frances M. King	Belfast
Mrs. Elsie L. Rees	Bristol
Mrs. Hettie Tresidder	Bristol
Mrs. Violet Babber	Cardiff
Mrs. Ruby V. Dent	Cardiff
Mrs. Lilian Fraser	Cardiff
Mrs. Dorothy Jenkins	Cardiff
Mrs. Barbara A. Margenson	Cardiff
Mrs. D. Morgan	Cardiff
Mrs. Gwladys Morgan	Cardiff
Mrs. Elizabeth Punchard	Edinburgh
Miss Gladys E. Stickler	Glasgow
Mrs. Freda J. Cairns	Harwich
Mrs. Ida Walker	Harwich
Mrs. Blanche Leathley	Humber
Mrs. Rita Richards	Humber
Mrs. Marjorie Taylor	Humber
Mrs. Helena E. P. Atkinson	London
Mr. Reginald Atkinson	London
Mrs. June Barnes	London
Mrs. Patricia Bateson	London
Capt. William H. Brown	London
Mrs. Olga A. Callaghan	London
Mrs. Margaret Cramm	London
Mrs. E. M. Hutton	London
Mrs. Yvonne R. Morton	London
Mrs. Esther M. Richards	London
Mrs. Dora M. Swinney	London
Mrs. Margaret Swinney	London
Mrs. Susan Wells	London
Mrs. S. W. Youngbluth	London
Mrs. Irene M. Anderson	Merseyside
Mrs. Frances H. Bayley	Merseyside
Mrs. Mary Easey	Merseyside
Mrs. A. E. Eggleston	Merseyside
Mrs. Joyce M. Forrest	Merseyside

MEMBERS JOINED IN JUBILEE YEAR

Mrs. Elizabeth M. Lloyd	Merseyside
Mrs. Patricia Lloyd	Merseyside
Mrs. Gwen Nocton	Merseyside
Mrs. L. Brown	N.E. Coast
Mrs. M. Carnaby	N.E. Coast
Mrs. Grace Coats	N.E. Coast
Mrs. Dorothy Drummond	N.E. Coast
Mrs. Elizabeth Hodgson	N.E. Coast
Mrs. Margaret Osguthorpe	N.E. Coast
Mrs. A. Patterson	N.E. Coast
Mrs. C. Robinson	N.E. Coast
Miss M. L. Combes	Southampton
Mrs. B. Eilbeck	Southampton
Mrs. H. Fisk	Southampton
Mrs. Olive Hoffmann	Southampton
Mr. Herbert C. Innes	Southampton
Commander Henry R. Laycock, O.B.E., R.D., R.N.R.	Southampton
Mrs. V. L. MacArthur	Southampton
Miss Janet McDonald	Southampton
Mrs. Patricia Menhinick	Southampton
Mr. F. L. Sampson, D.S.C.	Southampton
Mr. Henry Quayle Teare	Southampton
Commodore Robert G. Thelwell, O.B.E., R.D., R.N.R. (Retd.)	Southampton
Mr. David J. Tosh-Robb	Southampton
Mrs. Marie I. Tosh-Robb	Southampton
Mrs. Lena M. Ward	Southampton
Mrs. Violet Durrant	South Shields
Mrs. Georgina Beattie	Sunderland
Mrs. M. Dick	Sunderland
Mrs. E. A. Gallagher	Sunderland
Mrs. H. Hedder Lee	Sunderland
Mrs. Edith D. Pigott	Sunderland
Mrs. Lettie Reynolds	Sunderland
Mrs. Georgina Matson	Sunderland
Mrs. Eva Banner	Teeside
Mrs. Marjorie Sandford	Teeside
Mrs. Maisie Walton	Teeside