

STRICK LINE - THE STORY OF A CARGO SHIP COMPANY AND ITS TRADE

(Part II of an article written for the Warsash Association magazine All Hands by Barry Peck)

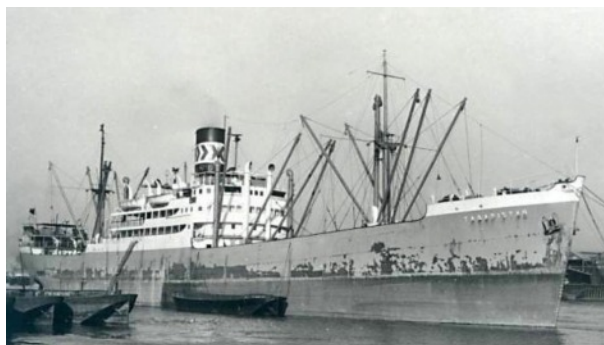
In many areas Stricks post-WWII were in the forefront of the British merchant navy for fitting the latest technology of the time for most things. On the bridge they had gyro compasses and radar well before many other companies, and to aid the discharge at the considerable number of Gulf ports called at on an average voyage the Chief Officer had a Ralston stability calculator. Into the 1960s automation in the engine room and on deck was normal. Safety equipment was always maintained at the highest level. Air conditioning for the entire accommodation started in 1956, though the earlier post-war ships had it in the public rooms. The one navigation aid they would not fit was the Decca Navigator, which considering that the Arabian Gulf had better coverage than most areas of the world and frequently had poor visibility was a strange omission.

During the period 1947 to 1970 Strick Line ships built four basic vessel designs, reflecting the patterns to be found in general cargo vessels worldwide, although within those four there were variations in layout and size in classes or individual ships. Between 1947 and 1950 propulsion was steam reciprocating engines, all with an exhaust turbine except one, steam auxiliaries, hatch beams and boards, and most had funnels too short when built, which were extended later to keep the smuts off the decks. Between 1953 and 1959 propulsion changed to motor engines but still with Scotch boilers and steam auxiliaries, and still with hatch beams and boards. From 1953 onwards all Strick built ships had Doxford opposed-piston diesel engines. Between 1959 and 1963 the auxiliaries changed to diesel generators with electric winches and manually operated McGregor hatches. Finally, from 1965 to 1970 deck auxiliaries were electric winches, cranes and hydraulically operated McGregor hatches, and the ships had main engine bridge control and an engine room control room with UMS capability. The first of this type, the *Shahristan*, was featured in The Motor Ship magazine in 1965 as having the most advanced engine room in the British merchant navy. All the motor ships from 1953 onwards, except for one, survived until the P&O merger in 1972.

The first group of ships, built between 1947 and 1950, were *Nigaristan*, *Tabaristan*, *Registan*, *Albistan*, *Armanistan*, *Goulistan*, *Muristan* and *Tangistan*. *Albistan* was notable as not being to Strick design as she had been ordered by an Australian company from Shorts of Sunderland, who then sold her to Strick while still building. With the need for larger heavy lift capacity *Nigaristan* had a 140 ton derrick and *Tabaristan* had a 150 ton.

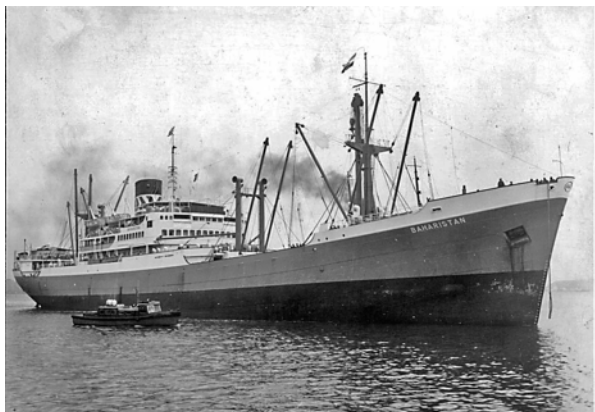


Tangistan 1950 - 1972



The third *Tabaristan* 1947 -1968

The second group, built between 1953 and 1959, were *Baltistan*, *Khuzistan*, *Baluchistan*, *Seistan*, *Karaghistan* and *Baharistan*. *Seistan* was tragically lost in 1958 on only her second voyage in a massive explosion in Bahrain that was Stricks' worst peacetime tragedy and must rate very high in the list of peacetime tragedies in the British merchant navy, with 57 dead, including four on a tug alongside.



Baharistan 1959 - 1972



The ill fated *Seistan* 1957 -1958

By 1959 Strick Line owned a total of 25 ships, but increasing competition from around the world for the Gulf trade meant this was too many, and in the period 1959 to 1963 all the surviving pre-war and wartime vessels had reached the end of their economic lives and were scrapped or sold on. In addition, the 1950 built *Goulistan* was prematurely scrapped in 1962 due to economically unrepairable engine room damage. By 1963 the total was down to 17, however these were all relatively modern vessels for the time, all dating from 1947 onwards.

The third group, built between 1959 and 1963, were *Farsistan*, *Kohistan*, *Gorjistan* and *Turkistan*. The first three were near identical sisters, while *Turkistan* was the first to adopt the three quarter aft layout that was then becoming the norm for general cargo ships.

During the period 1964 to 1968 the remaining steamships were disposed of, with the exception of two reliable ships, *Albistan* (scrapped 1971) and *Tangistan* (who arrived at the scrapyards the month of the sale of Stricks to P&O), both therefore spending their entire lives under the Strick flag.

The fourth and final group, built between 1965 and 1970, were *Shahristan*, *Floristan*, *Serbistan*, *Registan*, *Tabaristan* and *Nigaristan*. With the disposal of the old *Nigaristan* and *Tabaristan* with their very heavy derricks there was a need for replacements, and *Shahristan*, *Floristan* and *Tabaristan* were fitted with Stulcken masts, the first two with 180 ton derricks and *Tabaristan* with 150 ton. The last ship, *Nigaristan*, was fitted throughout with cranes, four of which were tandem which could together lift 25 and 50 tons. The last two were the first in the fleet to have bulbous bows. In addition to these Strick built ships, the 1965 built *Elysia* was purchased in 1968 with the demise of Anchor Line, being renamed *Armanistan*.



Armanistan 1968 - 1972



Nigaristan 1970 - 1972



Registan 1966 - 1972



The fourth, and final, *Tabaristan*

In March 1972 P&O re-acquired the 49% shares, and in April the ships were absorbed into the P&O General Cargo Division under P&O management. At that time there were sixteen ships under the Strick flag. Three of them, *Baltistan*, *Khuzistan* and *Karaghistan* were sold within the first year, while the remaining thirteen continued to trade for P&O on their various trades worldwide under their flag and livery, which was black hull with the white P&O logo on blue funnel. In 1975 it was decided to unify the entire GCD fleet under one identity, adopting names beginning with "Strath". The only remaining clue to their origins was the next letter, so the ex-Strick fleet began "Stratha". Livery was changed to the traditional P&O passenger ship corn yellow hull. With the rapid expansion of containerisation all the general cargo ships were being disposed of, many at a premature age. All the ex-Strick ships were sold off between 1977 and 1979, all except *Baluchistan* for further trading. The final ex-Strick Line ship afloat was *Serbistan*, scrapped in 1988.

Along with the other companies whose ships were absorbed into the P&O GCD, this was the end of a great company whose funnels, flag and reputation for excellence were recognised around most of the world.

Strick Line Cachalots

Inevitably with any medium sized shipping company of the size that Strick Line became in the 1960s, and with the Club having been in existence since 1928, there will be some Cachalots who sailed on the ships or were associated with them at some point, whether for a short period to get sea time in for a certificate or as a longer term career. Known to the author are:

Captain Sam Household, who went aloft in 2016, served from cadet to Master with Strick. In a career through all ranks his last voyage as Chief Officer on *Shahristan* in 1970 saw a collision with a tanker in fog in the English Channel resulting in damage to the starboard side of the accommodation, including his bathroom, and repairs in Southampton in which Cachalot Malcolm Coomer was heavily involved as ship's agent. At the end of that voyage he was promoted Master and his first command was to take *Albistan* on her final voyage to be scrapped. He continued for the rest of his career as Master in P&O GCD followed by P&O Bulk Division.

Captain Allen Brown, who went aloft in 1989, went to sea as cadet with Strick in 1920. Apart from a brief period as a junior officer in Blue Funnel he remained with Strick throughout his career, being promoted to Master in 1936. During World War II from 1939 to 1942 he was in command of firstly *Baharistan*, including the evacuation from St Nazaire in 1940 and a convoy attacked by *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisnau* in 1941, followed by *Kohistan* during which there was a serious cargo fire believed to have resulted from sabotage. At the end of 1942 he was sent to the Gulf as company superintendent in Basrah. After the war he sailed again in command, coming ashore as Marine Superintendent in 1949, and finally retiring in 1969 as Senior Marine Superintendent.

Cachalot Barry Vaughan sailed with Strick for the last three years before the P&O GCD merger, serving as Third Officer on *Serbistan*, *Khuzistan* and *Registan*, then Second Officer on *Registan* up to the P&O merger.

Finally, you cannot escape from the two who have been around the Club for the last fifteen to twenty years, and members for many more before that. Douglas Gates and myself both joined Strick in 1961 as cadets straight from school, so serving the full sea time. This included eighteen months sharing the same cabin on the *Tangistan*.

Douglas sailed as cadet on *Registan*, *Baltistan* (twice) and *Tangistan*, Third Officer on *Baltistan*, *Floristan* and *Shahristan*, and then Second Officer on *Gorjistan*, *Registan* and finally *Turkistan* up to the P&O merger.

I sailed as cadet on *Baltistan*, *Tangistan* and *Baharistan*, Third Officer on *Farsistan*, Second Officer on *Turkistan* and *Baharistan*, and Chief Officer on *Serbistan* up to the P&O merger, then finally under the P&O flag as Chief Officer on the final voyage and sale of *Karaghistan*.

BEP/03.2018



Baltistan 1953 - 72 , above

Karaghistan 1957 -72, top right

Turkistan 1963 - 72, right

Cachalots Barry Peck and Douglas Gates both served on each of these three vessels at various times.