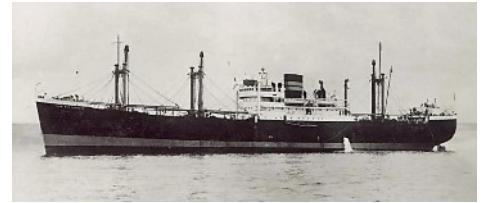


Clan Maclachlan: story of a stormy diversion on her last B&C trip

Late in the summer of 1971, *Clan Maclachlan* left Liverpool in ballast, destined for Shanghai and the hands of her new owners. To Capt. C. R. Kelso and his crew it looked like a fairly routine job—until they reached the Far East at the same time as three typhoons. Capt. Kelso's report of *Clan Maclachlan*'s enforced diversion to Hong Kong is given here almost exactly as it reached the management in London.



On departure from Singapore on October 4 "Full Away" was rung at 17.12 local time. The vessel was ballasted in accordance with the stability form part one submitted from Singapore and, immediately after departure, the fore peak was ballasted giving an estimated draft of F.10ft. 7ins, A.19ft. Oil fuel on departure was 548.0 tons the vessel having taken 220.6 tons at Singapore.

The intended route was as specified in *Steamship Routes* p.152, R691a, but passing 30' east of the Island of Taiwan in accordance with instructions received at my pre-sailing interview in London.

The best information available in Singapore was that the SW Monsoon was still strong and that the KE Monsoon was weak in the North China Sea.

On departure Singapore an hourly log was maintained detailing barometric pressure, shift of wind and cloud conditions; weather forecasts were obtained from every available source including Guam, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Taiwan. Many of these proved to be inaccurate and misleading and the "on board" record (from which a daily weather map was compiled) proved invaluable.

Typhoon *Elaine* was first reported on the morning of the 7th when Guam reported it as quasi-stationary. Our own observations during the day disputed this and speed was reduced to allow the storm to pass ahead. Although the storm centre passed some 300 miles ahead of *Clan Maclachlan* the vessel very quickly encountered the strong winds and heavy swell with rough seas generated by it.

Three-storm effect

These conditions reduced our manoeuvring potential considerably and when typhoon *Faye* swept over Luzon we were unable to make sufficient speed to clear the storm centre by as much as I would have wished. This storm (which was intense) passed some 200 miles astern and maintained a westerly course towards Hainan. The development and path of typhoon *Gloria* were masked by the already low barometric pressure and appalling weather conditions and only one radio station made reference to it, the other three continuing to report it as Typhoon *Faye*. The cumulative effect of these three violent storms in very quick succession produced a type of weather which I find difficult to describe. On Sunday, October 10 the conditions were such as to give rise to grave concern with winds of force 10 and mountainous seas which, at times, obscured the horizon from bridge level. The ship had a GM in excess of — 5.0 feet and her rolling action was so violent that it is miraculous that nobody incurred serious injury.

Throughout this period of violent weather (with the vessel trimmed some nine feet by the stern) steering became difficult and the vessel commenced to "pound" heavily. When speed was reduced to prevent pounding the vessel could not be steered at all and when speed was increased to afford steerage way the vessel pounded dangerously. Eventually it became essential to steer compromise courses and turn compromise rpm. Various methods of steering were attempted and it was found that the vessel could best be controlled by the OOW steering with the Arkas tiller attachment.

Driven steadily west

The vessel was being driven steadily west and all attempts to make an easting were abortive. Celestial navigation was prevented by heavy clouds and frequent rain squalls and an accurate assessment of our position was not possible. I was eventually forced to abandon the attempt to transit the Bashi Channel and the vessel passed to the west of the southern end of Taiwan. In the lee of Taiwan a good passage was experienced until the vessel had passed south of the Pescadores Islands (no chart of the Pescadores Channel was available on board).

After clearing the Island of Dai Sho all efforts to steer a northeasterly course proved fruitless and the vessel again started to pound heavily. Speed was reduced to limit this dangerous pounding and the vessel immediately broached-to. It was apparent that the only solution was to increase rpm and resort to compromise courses keeping the ship's head off the wind and swell. The vessel, in company with several others, virtually tacked up the Straits of Taiwan from the coast of mainland China to the coast of Taiwan and back again. This, of course, was fuel-consuming without attaining many miles towards our destination.

Fuel remains on October 13 were 178.6 tons and I estimated that with the compromise courses we would have to steer the distance to Shanghai was 600 miles plus. The weather forecasts for the immediate area and the areas ahead promised even more severe weather conditions. Gale force winds were forecast for all areas. The adverse current was running exceedingly strongly (having been accentuated by the strong NE winds; and I estimated that our passage speed would not be in excess of four knots at the permissible rpm. After conferring with my senior officers I informed head office of the situation and, on October 14, upon receipt of their reply, I altered course for Hong Kong.

If these conditions persist (and there are no indications that they have eased in the past 24 hours) I would estimate that our passage time from Hong Kong to Shanghai might well be in the region of 10 to 11 days. At a draft forward of nine feet this vessel will always tend to pound when heading into seas generated by winds of force five or more and I have little hope that the winds of the XE Monsoon will be less than force five for the majority of the passage.

The vessel has not suffered any major structural damage and soundings reveal that the hull is still tight. During the stay in Hong Kong the opportunity will be taken to re-secure the vessel for a further period of adverse weather.

In concluding this report I would wish to mention the manner in which the officers of *Clan Maclachlan* have carried out their duties during this worrying and difficult period. If I make special mention of the bridge watchkeeping officers and the radio officer it is only because their efforts were more apparent to me.

Footnote: Clan Maclachlan arrived in Shanghai on October 23, after a rough passage but without mishap. She was well ahead of the deadline for delivery to the China National Machinery Import & Export Corp., Peking.

Work then commenced to break her up and she was scrapped.