

Though many ships carry the same name, usually one has sunk or been broken up before another can be registered in that name. When a fleet like the Sun Tugs uses a common name, each craft has to carry a distinguishing number. This is Sun XXI; we believe that the latest is Sun XXVIII.



# Naming a Ship

BY EDYTH HARPER

WHAT'S in a name? A great deal when it concerns the names of ships. The name given to any vessel, big or small, adds to its appeal and 'personality'. Such names need care in choosing. No one knows if the ship bearing the name will sail on its appointed journeys almost unknown to the world or if by some freak of fortune, it will go down in history. The *Mayflower*, Admiral Nelson's *Victory*, and the *Mary Celeste* are known to millions while such names as the *Pride of Boston* may sail for a score of years unnoticed.

Naturally each nationality, in naming its shipping, turns first to its own history and culture. The *Île de France*, *Bretagne*, and *Jeanne d'Arc* slip in and out of French ports. German harbours are accustomed to the *Bremen*, *Siegfried*, and *Kaiser Wilhelm*. America delves into the past to name the *George Washington*, *Texas Ranger* and *United States*, but all American ships have their origin, as far as names go, way back in Anglo-Saxon history.

The *Mayflower* brought with her more than a band of men and women dedicated to the task of building a new way of life. She also linked future American shipping with a fleet of named ships that had long since sailed for the last time.

Anglo-Saxon records show that the Saxon King Edgar (959-975 AD) certainly laid the foundations of a navy. King Alfred also owned a fleet of ships but important as they were, chroniclers of the period mention no names, either of trading vessels or fighting ships.

The first authentic record would appear to be William the Conqueror's *Mora*, the vessel in which he sailed on his voyage across the Channel to conquer England. Another known name was a 'great ship' owned by Henry III who called her *The Queen*, possibly as a compliment to his consort. This forerunner of the Cunard liners of today appears to be the earliest, if not the first truly British ship to be known by name.

In the 15th century, it became the custom to bestow names connected with religion on ships. Three of Henry V's ships, also chronicled as 'great ships' were called *Jesu*, *Trinity* and *Holigost*. Shortly afterwards Henry started a custom prevalent among some shipping companies today. Just as the Canadian Pacific Company ships were "Empress of . . ." so Henry's new vessels all had names in 'of the Tower', referring to the Tower of London. His *Jesu of the Tower* was 1000 tons, quite large for those days. The carracks, ballingers and barges, lesser merchant vessels, go unmentioned by

name although the King subsidised the owners to the tune of £8,240.17.6 a quarter for their upkeep, so important was trade to Britain.

By the time America was re-discovered in Tudor times, most ships seem to have been well and truly named. Drake's *Golden Hind* and the *Santa Maria* of Columbus sailed into the history books. By the 19th century even small boats had names. Pleasure seekers on holiday by the sea had the choice of a row round the bay in the *Mary Ann* or the *Abraham Lincoln*. The Mississippi steam boats, the ferries and the fishing vessels all had their names duly painted on them.

The romance of the tea-clippers was undoubtedly heightened by their attractive names. The famous American clippers *Lightning* and *Flying Cloud* raced home with precious cargoes, followed in later years by the *Cutty Sark* and *Friar Tuck* from Britain.

Explorers such as Nansen and Capt. Scott brought tales of the *Fram* and *Discovery* into every household. Disaster at sea fortunately rarely happens but when a tragedy such as the loss of the *Lusitania* occurs, the world never forgets the ship's name. Even small craft can become famous. Thor Heyerdahl's balsa raft, the *Kon-Tiki* is as well known for his voyage to Easter Island as many an ocean liner.

The sea is rarely romantic to those whose business it is to sail on it but in the names of the ships they sail in, men do find an outlet for their imagination. It will be a long time, if ever, before all ships are classified by name or number.

Which would you prefer? To book a cruise in the XY/ABC or voyage to sunnier climes in the *Belle of New York*? All things being equal, the latter would probably have the longer passenger list.

We may never know who first named an Anglo-Saxon ship, but one thing we can be sure of—she had a nickname.

It is an old custom sailors bestow on anything they like.

The "Lizzie" may sound disrespectful for the *Queen Elizabeth*, but it shows affection. Possibly even Henry III's *Queen* was called "The Nelly" after his consort, Eleanor of Provence—strictly in private, of course, for disrespect for the Crown soon petered out in a dungeon in those days.

Each age sees its own type of ship and produces its own name to suit. So long as there is a sea to sail on and a ship to voyage in, mankind will think up a name for one of the oldest forms of travel in the world.