



**FORGOTTEN WRECKS
OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR**

***SS REDESMERE*
SITE REPORT**



Table of Contents

i Acknowledgments	2
ii Copyright Statement	3
iii List of Figures.....	3
1. Project Background	3
2. Methodology.....	4
2.1 Desk Based Historic Research	4
2.3 Geophysical Survey Data.....	4
2.4 Associated Artefacts	4
2.5 Site Visit/Fieldwork	5
3. Vessel Biography: <i>SS Redesmere</i>	5
3.1 Vessel Type and Build	6
3.2 Pre-war Career	6
3.3 First World War Use & Loss	6
3.4 Associated Vessels	7
3.5 People Associated with the <i>SS Redesmere</i>	7
3.6 Post-loss Activity	8
4. Seabed Remains	8
4.1 Site Location and Environment	8
4.2 Archaeological Methodology	9
4.3 Description of Surviving Vessel Remains	10
5. Site Significance and Potential Further Research	12
6. Bibliography	13
Websites/ Online Resources	13
Books & Reports.....	13
7. Appendix	13
7.1 List of Sailing Dates and Locations	13

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ii Copyright Statement

This report has been produced by the MAT with the assistance of funding provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund through their Heritage Grants Programme. Unless otherwise stated all images are copyright of the MAT.

iii List of Figures

FIGURE 1: <i>REDESMERE</i> WITH A FULL DECK OF TIMBER DESTINED FOR TRAFFORD WHARF.....	5
FIGURE 2: CERTIFICATE AWARDED TO FIREMAN ALI JANRAH FOR SAVING THE <i>REDESMERE</i> 'S CAPTAIN. IMAGE FROM THE LIVERPOOL SHIPWRECK AND HUMANE SOCIETY.....	8
FIGURE 3: LOCATION OF THE <i>SS REDESMERE</i>	9
FIGURE 4: CHALKY SEABED WITH LIGHT COVERING OF SAND AND SHINGLE (COURTESY OF DAVE ROBBINS)	9
FIGURE 5: BOILER THROUGH WHICH THE FIRE TUBES ARE VISIBLE (COURTESY OF DAVE ROBBINS).....	10
FIGURE 6: CRANK SHAFT MECHANISM (COURTESY OF DAVE ROBBINS)	11
FIGURE 7: PROPELLER BOSS ATTACHED TO THE SHAFT (COURTESY OF DAVE ROBBINS).....	11
FIGURE 8: SPARE PROPELLER (COURTESY OF DAVE ROBBINS)	12

1. Project Background

Forgotten Wrecks of the First World War is a Heritage Lottery Funded project which is dedicated to raising the profile of a currently under-represented aspect of the First World War. While attention is often focused on the Western Front and major naval battles like Jutland, historic remains from the war lie, largely forgotten, in and around our seas, rivers and estuaries.

With over 1,200 wartime wrecks along England's south coast alone, the conflict has left a rich heritage legacy and many associated stories of bravery and sacrifice. These underwater memorials represent the vestiges of a vital, yet little known, struggle that took place on a daily basis, just off our shores.

The study and promotion of these archaeological sites presents a unique opportunity to better interpret them and improve physical and virtual access.

The project focuses on underwater and coastal sites between Kent and Cornwall, which include merchant and naval ships, passenger, troop and hospital ships, U-boats, ports, wharfs, buildings and foreshore hulks. These sites, under water and on the foreshore, have been degrading and deteriorating due to natural and human processes for approximately 100 years and, as a result, are extremely fragile. In many cases, this project represents a final opportunity to record what remains on the seabed and foreshore before it is lost forever.

The project aims to characterise the nature and extent of the maritime First World War archaeological resource surviving on the south coast's seabed and around the coast. This will enable an understanding of maritime activity just off our shores during the conflict and provide a window onto some of the surviving sites. While it will not be possible to visit and record all c.1,200 vessels dating to the First World War, lost off the south coast of England, a representative sample of sites have been selected for more detailed study, analysis and interpretation. This report collates information collected during the project, relating to one of the south coast's First World War wrecks, namely that of *SS Redesmere*.

2. Methodology

General detail on the methodologies employed during the project are outlined within *Forgotten Wrecks of the First World War: Project Methodology Report*, this report section concentrates on approaches and resources relating to SS *Redesmere*.

2.1 Desk Based Historic Research

Research to identify material related to the SS *Redesmere* located a range of sources within The National Archives (TNA), including:

Document/ Source	Ref.	Where	Date accessed
British Merchant Vessels Sunk & Captured by the Enemy September 1917 – Feb 1918: Contains a single page summary of the loss of the <i>Redesmere</i> .	ADM 137-2963	TNA	2017
English Channel: German Submarines, October 1917	ADM 137/1344	TNA	2017
English Channel: Various Subjects; September-December 1917	ADM 137/1340	TNA	2017
Ship <i>Redesmere</i> , 124298	BT 110/395/29	TNA	2017
Extracted logs - Dates of Voyages 1 October 1913 - 13 January 1914, 20 January 1914 - 9 March 1914, 13 March 1914 - 11 May 1914, 15 May 1914 - 17 August 1914 and 19 August 1914 - 7 December 1914	BT 165/874	TNA	2017
Extracted logs - Dates of Voyages 9 December 1914 - 7 February 1915 and 12 March 1915 - 15 November 1915	BT 165/1208	TNA	2017
Extracted logs - Dates of Voyages 26 March 1916 - 4 June 1916 and 16 June 1916 - 25 August 1916	BT 165/1484	TNA	2017
Extracted logs - Dates of Voyages 26 August 1916 - 21 January 1917, 23 January 1917 - 12 March 1917, 19 March 1917 - 07 April 1917 and 15 June 1917 - 19 October 1917	BT 165/1680	TNA	2017
1915 – crew list	BT 400/3815/12	TNA	2017
1915 – crew list	BT 400/3815/13	TNA	2017
1915 – crew list	BT 400/3815/14	TNA	2017
Year of Manchester Registration: 1911 -1913	M110/124298	TNA	2017

2.3 Geophysical Survey Data

Desktop research included studying bathymetric imagery for data from the wreck of SS *Redesmere*. Data was kindly provided by the Maritime & Coastguard Agency but the resolution of the data was low, making it difficult to extract any detailed information from it.

2.4 Associated Artefacts

While the Forgotten Wrecks project had a non-recovery policy, where possible, the project aimed to ‘virtually reunite’ artefacts historically recovered from the Forgotten Wrecks.

Two artefacts were reported during the 2000 Receiver of Wreck (RoW) Amnesty as to belonging to the *Redesmere* but it is unclear if these items were from the *Redesmere* or from a nearby wreck nearby which was charted as the *Redesmere* (Pastscape, 2015). These artefacts were: 1 piece of brass, and 1 funnel-shaped tube.

2.5 Site Visit/Fieldwork

Forgotten Wrecks site visits and fieldwork aimed to:

- Provide opportunities for volunteers to access and take an active role in the recording and research of a range of different types of maritime First World War site.
- Record extant remains for heritage records.
- Record extant remains for public dissemination, enabling 'virtual' access for those not able to achieve physical access.

The most appropriate methods for site recording were chosen from the following, on a site-by-site basis: site sketch, measured survey, photograph and/ or video.

Forgotten Wrecks funded diving from the dive boat *Wight Spirit* took place on the wreck of the *Redesmere* on 22 and 24 September 2014. Initial dives aimed to assess the condition of the remains and obtain a sketch drawing, then to build on this information with a measured sketch/survey and photographic recording where possible.

A total of eight divers undertook a total of 361 minutes diving on the wreck, the first day only remains of scattered wreckage were found but the divers located the main wreck on the second day. On both days the light was very low on the dive site and the visibility was very poor. The dive team used self-contained breathing apparatus (SCUBA) with a breathing gas of enriched air nitrox (EANx) using accelerated decompression procedures.

3. Vessel Biography: *SS Redesmere*

SS Redesmere was chosen as one of the Forgotten Wrecks case study sites because of its varied voyaging pre-war, being requisitioned early in the war for use as a collier, and for a number of war time Expeditionary Force sailings. It was the second of six vessels built for the initial owners whose fleet, prior to the war, chiefly but not exclusively voyaged between Manchester and the Mediterranean for the fruit trade. The vessel also represents one of the general cargo steamers typical of its day in use during the First World War (Figure 1).



Figure 1: *Redesmere* with a full deck of timber destined for Trafford Wharf
(Image from SearlCanada.org no copyright indicated/over 100 years old)

3.1 Vessel Type and Build

SS *Redesmere* was built by the Sunderland Shipbuilding Company, in Sunderland South Dock and completed in October 1911. The ship was a schooner rigged steel screw steamer with one deck having a gross tonnage of 2123 tons. The 290ft (c.88m) long ship had a beam of 42ft 7ins (c.13m) and was powered by a three cylinder triple expansion engine with two single ended boilers with 226 nominal horse power. The engine was manufactured by North Eastern Marine Engineering Co. Ltd., and driven by a single screw, with average speed of nine knots. It was registered in Manchester with nr. 124298, with signal letters HKSF.

The *Redesmere* had a single deck, poop, bridge, and top-gallant forecastle and met the requirements of Lloyds 100A1 class – during construction it was under the supervision Messrs A.C. Hay and Sons of Liverpool, and Captain Britten. Four derricks on tables were fitted to each mast for working the four hatches. The deck machinery consisted of six large steam winches, direct steam windlass, and steam steering gear fitted at the after end of the bridge, the whole being worked by a large donkey boiler. Accommodation was provided in houses on the bridge for captain, officers and engineers, the sailors and firemen being berthed in the forecastle. The saloon was placed amidships and was reported to be very tastefully fitted out, and all the accommodation was heated by steam (Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser Tues 12th September 1911).

3.2 Pre-war Career

Launched in 1911, *Redesmere* spent its pre-war career transporting goods around Europe. Various cargoes included: cotton bales, oil, tobacco, lumber, corn syrup, auto parts, lard, sugar, wax, resin, oranges and onions. Its sailings and cargo are listed in contemporary newspapers (for examples of such see Appendix 7.1).

3.3 First World War Use & Loss

The *Redesmere* was a British vessel, owned originally by Watson & Sons, then Bromport Steam Ship Company Ltd but at the time of loss, it was owned by William Lever and was operated by the Royal Navy having been requisitioned (official number 124298, pennant number Y3.92/F6812). At the time of the sinking the *Redesmere* was on route from Barry Dock bound for Southampton via Falmouth and was carrying a cargo of 3,600 tons of coal and a cargo of timber on its deck. The vessel was armed with one x 12 pounder, 12cwt stern gun.

It entered Eastham Locks with ore and fruit from Valencia in mid-August 1914 and within a few days, one month after the First World War being declared, *Redesmere* was requisitioned by the Royal Navy on 24 August 1914 for service as a collier on Midland Great Western Railway service. This lasted until 11 March 1915, and within this period *Redesmere* also was at Long Hope together with the collier *Ford Castle* supplying the sloop HMS *Acacia* with 1,150 tons of bunker coal on 21 October 1915 followed by an "Off Pay" voyage until 24 November 1915. In April 1916, it was sold to Lever Brothers, but its name remained unchanged. On 12 March 1917, its service changed until 3 April 1915 to an Expeditionary Force Transport carrying British timber between UK and France. It again was used for the Expeditionary Force between 28 June 1917 and 8 July 1917 transporting hay across the Channel. The remainder of its time was serving as a collier until torpedoed, carrying coal to fuel the Royal Navy at Portsmouth.

On 28 October 1917, *Redesmere* was carrying coal from Barry to Southampton and was steaming along at night with all the lights extinguished and one lookout man on the fo'c'sle. Neither he, nor the Officer and Master on the bridge, saw the UB-40, or the wake of the torpedo that hit at 0400 hours. The torpedo hit the ship without warning just aft of the engine-room bulkhead in No.3 hold, and sank

in a minute and a half taking 19 of the crew to their deaths. There was no time to launch the boats. The sinking was reported to the owners as being 6 miles WSW of St Catherine's point.

The rest of the crew were all thrown into the sea, where the Master, Captain David Jackson, and five men were saved by clinging to wreckage and an upturned boat. They were later picked up by a patrol vessel, P18, and landed at Portsmouth. The attacking submarine was not seen (Pastscape, 2018; Searlcanada, 2017; Historical RFA, 2017; Naval-History.net A, n.d.).

3.4 Associated Vessels

UB-40 was a type UBII coastal torpedo attack boat class of German submarine which carried six torpedoes, one 88mm deck gun with 120 rounds, and no mines. UB-40, launched on 25 April 1916 and commissioned on 18 August 1916, operated out of Flandern Flotilla and undertook 28 patrols. When *Redesmere* was hit, UB-40 was commanded by Oblt. Hans Howaldt (Pour le Mérite) and it had two subsequent commanders. On 5 October 1918, UB-40 was scuttled at Ostende in position 51.13N, 02.56E during the German evacuation from Belgium. Howaldt's Pour Le Merite was awarded on 23 December 1917 for "Outstanding leadership and distinguished naval planning and successful submarine operations". In 11 patrols, he sank 65 ships totalling 130,000 tons, being 8% of the total sunk by U Flottille Flandern by 1 February 1917 (Uboat.net, 2018).

HMS P18, which recovered the survivors, was a naval patrol boat ordered in May 1915 and launched on 20 April 1916. It comprised a low silhouette for U-boat hunting, twin screws, and hardened steel ram bows and operated out of Nore Local Defence Flotilla or Portsmouth Escort Force to 1918. Later in the war, its torpedo tubes were removed and depth charges added, and some vessels of its class were fitted to tow kite balloons around August 1918. It was sold on 26 November 1921 to the British Legion, Plymouth (Naval-history.net B, n.d.).

3.5 People Associated with the SS *Redesmere*

19 of the 25 crew members of the *Redesmere* were killed during its loss. Their names can be found on several memorials including Tower Hill, Plymouth Naval Memorial, Portsmouth Naval Memorial, and another in Mumbai, India (full list available via Wrecksite EU (2017)).

The Captain at the time of sinking was David Jackson, whose survival is attributed to the actions of Ali Janrah, a fireman. His bravery was recognised by the Liverpool Shipwreck and Humane Society. Janrah saw the Captain floating on a piece of wreckage, and dived in to rescue him from the upturned boat he had managed to reach. He towed the Captain to the boat and helped him aboard, so saving the Captain's life (Searlcanada, 2018; Wrecksite, 2018 a & b).



Figure 2: Certificate awarded to fireman Ali Janrah for saving the *Redesmere's* Captain. Image from the Liverpool Shipwreck and Humane Society.

3.6 Post-loss Activity

The wreck was located in the 1960s, but initially the identity of the wreck was uncertain, and it was thought to be the *Bratt II*, additional wrecks nearby caused further confusion over the identity. By a process of elimination it was identified as the *Redesmere*, supported by the discovery of the name of the owners (Watson & Co.) engraved on a telescope recovered from the wreck (Wendes, 2006).

4. Seabed Remains

4.1 Site Location and Environment

The *Redesmere* lies six nautical miles WSW from St Catherine's Point, Isle of Wight in 38 metres of water at position 50.48078 -1.3536 WGS84 (UKHO) (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Location of the *SS Redesmere*

The surrounding seabed consists of a hard white chalky strata with a covering of sand and shingle (Figure 4). No scour has been reported.



Figure 4: Chalky seabed with light covering of sand and shingle (Courtesy of Dave Robbins)

4.2 Archaeological Methodology

A range of survey techniques were to be carried out on the *Redesmere* but unfortunately the very poor conditions on the site at the time of the Forgotten Wrecks dive prevented photography of any kind and the video footage obtained was almost un-useable. A visual survey with measurements of some of the structural features took place. Images of the site have been captured thanks to Dave Robbins, who provided permission to use images taken from his 2015 video, accessible on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtJz7jctC3M>

4.3 Description of Surviving Vessel Remains

The *Redesmere* rests on the seabed leaning over towards its port side in 38m of water with the bows orientated to the west. The wreck had previously been thought to be that of the *Braat II* but was identified by a process of elimination (see Section 3.6).

The highest part of the wreck is formed by the two main boilers which stand around 6m proud, they are approximately 4.5m long with a diameter of approximately 3.5m. There are large holes in the side of the substantial metal boilers through which many fire tubes can be observed, the fire tubes were essential for the boiler to produce the steam which would power the engines (Figure 5). One of the boilers stands on its end and there is also a donkey boiler present (auxiliary boiler) which also stands vertically. A drain cock was attached on brackets to the horizontal boiler which is a feature of the engine and boiler arrangement.



Figure 5: Boiler through which the fire tubes are visible (Courtesy of Dave Robbins)

Just behind the boilers, the triple expansion engine has fallen to port and the crank shaft mechanism can be seen (Figure 6). Amongst the broken metal debris the piston rods and cylinder heads can also be identified.



Figure 6: Crank shaft mechanism (Courtesy of Dave Robbins)

Moving aft along the vessel the hull plates are broken in some areas and still stand in others. The propeller shaft leads along to the propeller where it is still fixed to the rotating shaft with one of its four blades broken off (Figure 7).

It is reported that the stern gun lies near the propeller but this was not established on this dive (Wendes, 2006). Nearby, at the stern area, the spare propeller lies where it has fallen to the seabed (Figure 8).



Figure 7: Propeller boss attached to the shaft (courtesy of Dave Robbins)



Figure 8: Spare propeller (Courtesy of Dave Robbins)

It is reported that one of the propeller shafts is suspended above the seabed by a bearing having been pulled backwards out of the hull, it is speculated that this is possibly due to the impact with the seabed when the ship sank (Pastscape, 2018).

The condition of the *Redesmere* is what might be expected of a wreck that has survived the natural processes within the area in which it lies for nearly 100 years. The remains are partially broken down, particularly towards the stern section but some aspects of the ship are still moderately preserved, as around the midships section. A search in the surrounding area may locate other elements related to the shipwreck as divers took a little time in searching for the wreck and reported coming across various bits of unidentified wreckage during the search, so some structural parts of the ship may lie nearby.

5. Site Significance and Potential Further Research

As the centenary of the wrecking of the *Redesmere* is marked, there is still further work to do to understand the full significance of the ship and its place in history. Initial work has highlighted the potential for more archaeological investigation in a number of areas:

- Exploring whether the artefacts recorded in the RoW Amnesty are indeed from the *Redesmere*, or whether they are from one of the other suggested vessels.
- Further diving work to examine areas of structure and map the remains to help understand the site.

Historical research has established that the ship had been requisitioned by the Admiralty, and was used variously for transporting coal, hay and timber to support the war effort. An assessment of the significance of ships and boats 1914-1938 in English territorial waters (Wessex Archaeology 2011: 34), which considered the number of requisitioned vessels within the dataset outlined that “These results indicate that auxiliary military vessels used in WWI are poorly represented as wrecks. The historical record suggests that they should be more common. However, it must be borne in mind that due to the continuing need to bring wartime supplies to Britain, a great number of cargo vessels continued to operate within the industry for which they were intended”. The *Redesmere* is an example of one such vessel – requisitioned by the Admiralty, but at times continuing operating on other cargo routes.

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7. Appendix

7.1 List of Sailing Dates and Locations

The following is a list of the dates and locations visited by the *Redesmere* prior to the First World War.

10 October 1911 leaves Sunderland for Palermo.	<i>Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser</i> - Tuesday 10 October 1911.
Concern about being overdue but <i>Redesmere</i> and two other steamers arrived at destinations.	<i>Western Daily Mercury</i> . - Tuesday 02 January 1912.
Arrived Liverpool 29 May 1912 from St John.	<i>The Scotsman</i> - Friday 31 May 1912.
Sailed from St John, 19 July 1912.	<i>The Scotsman</i> - Monday 22 July 1912.
Left Eastham for Archangel, 28 July 1912.	<i>Dundee Courier</i> - Saturday 17 August 1912.
Left Kovda on 1 September 1912 for Manchester	<i>Dundee Courier</i> - Thursday 05 September 1912.
Arrived Manchester 12 September 1912.	<i>Dundee Courier</i> - Saturday 14 September 1912.
Left Manchester for Port Talbot, 20 September 1912.	<i>Dundee Courier</i> - Monday 23 September 1912.
Left Port Talbot for Syracuse, 25 September 1912.	<i>Dundee Courier</i> - Saturday 28 September 1912
Left Gibraltar for Hamburg 2 November 1912, passed Dover en route on 6 November 1912.	<i>Dundee Courier</i> - Tuesday 05 November, and Wednesday 06 November 1912.
Passed Sagres 9 December 1912.	<i>Dundee Courier</i> - Wednesday 11 December 1912
"The Christmas ship" of the Watson line to Manchester this year is the <i>Redesmere</i> which is due at the Manchester Docks on Sunday with a cargo of 28,157 packages of oranges (principally) and onions.	<i>Leigh Chronicle and Weekly District Advertiser</i> - Friday 13 December 1912
<i>Redesmere</i> has sailed for South Carolina.	<i>Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser</i> - Monday 27 January 1913.
<i>Redesmere</i> appears in the Cotton Season listing arriving at Manchester for 1912-1913 but without the tonnage given. In a later paper*, given as landing 950 tons from Philadelphia.	<i>Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser</i> - Monday 10 February 1913. * <i>Lancashire General Advertiser</i> - Monday 17 March 1913.
In Manchester Docks late February 1913.	<i>Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser</i> - Wednesday 26 February 1913.
Reported as having landed from Philadelphia: 950 bales cotton, 561 barrels lubricating oil, 860 sacks, 6,018 bags starch, 85 hogsheads tobacco, 1,220 boxes steel, 1,488 pieces oak lumber, 120 barrels corn syrup, 57 cases auto parts, 1,059 square billets, 933 pieces pine lumber, 7,296 steel sheet bars, 900 bags cornflour, 1,250 blocks lard, 895 pieces maple lumber, 215 sacks	<i>Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser</i> - Thursday 27 February 1913.

dextrin, 2,500 bags sugar, 215 bags paraffin wax, 1,200 bags resin.	<i>Lancashire General Advertiser</i> - Monday 03 March 1913.
In ballast from Manchester Docks on 1 March 1913 to Cardiff via Partington.	<i>Dundee Courier</i> - Tuesday 01 April 1913.
Left Las Palmas for West Africa on 25 March 1913.	<i>Dundee Courier</i> - Monday 05 May 1913.
At Marseilles from Bathurst on 1 May 1913.	<i>The Scotsman</i> - Monday 02 June 1913.
Sailed from Marseilles for Liverpool on 30 May 1913.	<i>Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser</i> - Wednesday 04 June 1913.
Fruit from Castellon, unloaded and sailed.	<i>Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser</i> - Friday 06 June 1913.
Sailed with part cargo to Ellesmere Port.	<i>Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser</i> - Thursday 12 June 1913.
Sailed in ballast for Archangel.	<i>Dundee Courier</i> - Tuesday 22 July 1913.
At London, 20 July 1913.	<i>Dundee Courier</i> - Saturday 02 August 1913.
At Immingham from London, 30 July 1913.	<i>Dundee Courier</i> - Friday 15 August 1913.
At Kovda from Immingham 13 August 1913.	<i>Dundee Courier</i> - Thursday 28 August 1913.
At Archangel from Kovda 21 August 1913.	<i>Dundee Courier</i> - Friday 12 September 1913.
Passed Lodingen for Belfast, 9 September 1913.	<i>Dundee Courier</i> - Saturday 04 October 1913.
At Barry from Bristol, 2 October 1913.	<i>Dundee Courier</i> - Tuesday 14 October 1913.
Left Barry for Brindisi, 11 October 1913.	<i>Dundee Courier</i> - Thursday 13 November 1913.
At Ghenitchesk, 3 November 1913.	<i>Dundee Courier</i> - Friday 28 November 1913.
<i>Redesmere</i> passed down Dardanelles, 25 November 1913.	<i>Dundee Evening Telegraph</i> - Wednesday 03 December 1913.
Left Malta for Riga, 28 November 1913.	<i>Western Mail</i> - Wednesday 14 January 1914.
Left Riga in ballast.	<i>Western Mail</i> - Wednesday 11 March 1914.
Arrived Liverpool 9 March 1913.	
List of Manchester imports from <i>Redesmere</i> – From Messina: 268 bags pumice stone, 205 bags	<i>Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser</i> - Friday 13 March 1914.

<p>soapstone, 200 half-pipes lemon skins, 44 pipes lemons, 882 boxes 12 cases lemons; from Milazzo 200 half-pipes lemon peel, 165 half-pipes orange skins; from Palermo, 238 pipes lemon peel, 20 bales 1,825 bags sumac, 238 pipes lemon peel, 453 cases 11,070 boxes lemons, 450 boxes bitters; from Castellon, 5,266 cases oranges; from Buriana, 7,058 cases oranges.</p> <p>Sailed from Manchester Docks in ballast for Newport.</p> <p>General cargo from Castellon, unloaded and sailed for Newport.</p> <p>Entered Eastham Locks from Valencia and Catania with fruit, 10 May 1913.</p> <p>Manchester imports - <i>Redesmere</i> from Catania: 50 bags nuts, 30 cases liquorice juice, 1,208 packages sulphur; from Riposto, 197 pipes lemon skins, etc.; from Messina, 628 half-pipes and 70 pipes lemon skins, 104 boxes, lemons, etc.; from Palermo, 372 pipes lemon peel, 1,900 bags sumac, 56 boxes bitters, 275 half pipes lemon skins, 320 cases, 2,330 boxes and 427 half-boxes lemons; from Burriana, 3,873 cases oranges; from Castellon, 6,571 cases, 16 bundles and 42 half-cases oranges; from Valencia, 89 cases soap, 616 bags oil cakes, 1,825 cases oranges, 20 cases onions.</p>	<p><i>Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser</i> - Saturday 14 March 1914.</p> <p><i>Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser</i> - Wednesday 18 March 1914.</p> <p><i>Lancashire General Advertiser</i> - Tuesday 12 May 1914 and <i>Liverpool Echo</i> - Tuesday 12 May 1914.</p> <p><i>Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser</i> - Thursday 14 May 1914.</p>
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