

since they had loaded and New York merely represented one more intermediate stopping place on their long journey to England. The Glen Line's *Glenapp* had loaded cocoa, palm oil and copper at Lagos, but instead of going home with a Sierra Leone convoy had been sent across to Cuba to join the American convoy system, by which means she had arrived in New York at Christmas, no nearer to England than she had been at Lagos. A Lloyd's surveyor had then declared *Glenapp's* port engine unsafe and, while waiting for repairs, she had been berthed at one of the Manhattan piers close by the hulk of the burnt-out French liner *Normandie*.

The Royal Mail Lines *Nariva* and Donaldson Line *Coracero* were both refrigerated ships which had come from Buenos Aires loaded with meat. Due to pressure on shipping space, the meat had been boned and the carcasses 'telescoped' to pack in the maximum amount of meat possible. Instead of coming up past Brazil, where U-boats were operating, the River Plate traffic was being sent round Cape Horn into the Pacific and then through the Panama Canal to New York. Neither the *Nariva* nor the *Coracero* was destined to reach England.

Several ships had come from Australia and New Zealand, also through Panama. Among these were the Rotterdamsche Lloyd *Terkoetei*, loaded with Australian wheat and zinc. She had once been the German ship *Essen*, one of three German merchant ships taken as prizes by the Dutch at Sourabaya when Germany invaded Holland in 1940. The New Zealand Shipping Company's *Tekoa* had also come from Australia. It was the first voyage in command for her master, Captain Albert Hocken. The master of another of the company's ships had died at Sydney, *Tekoa's* master had been transferred and Hocken had been promoted and had taken over. *Tekoa* had been allotted an anchorage near the George Washington Bridge but had dragged her anchor one night in the swollen North Hudson River and drifted downstream a mile but without hitting any other ships. *Tekoa* and her new master were to play a vital role in coming events.

Another ship from Australia had never been intended for convoy at all. She was the fast Blue Star Line ship *Canadian Star*, which already had a patch on her funnel as a result of a gun duel with a U-boat near the Azores in 1941. The *Canadian Star* normally sailed as an independent but, while coming across the Pacific, a shell had exploded at gun drill, killing two gunners, badly injuring several others and wrecking the gun. Fortunately a colonel in the Indian Medical Service was among the passengers and he looked after the injured until they were landed at Panama. American naval workshops at Panama could neither repair nor replace the gun. *Canadian Star* resumed her independent voyage to Eng-

land, but in the Caribbean a message was dropped by an American airship ordering her to New York, presumably because she could not be risked as an independent with her gun out of action.

There was a great variety of ships. There were two brand new Fort-type ships built in Canada for Britain—*Fort Cedar Lake* and *Fort Anne*. The two masters had been in Canada for three months watching their ships being completed. They were very impressed with the great care taken in the Canadian yards with materials; not a nut, bolt or piece of wire seemed to be left lying about spare and they compared this with the waste often seen in British yards. The crews gathered together in Britain and sent out to collect the *Fort* ships were a rough lot. There had been many desertions while travelling across Canada and, when the ships had sailed from Vancouver, two men of the *Fort Cedar Lake* were left behind in jail for insubordination. The *Fort Cedar Lake* had then gone to Portland, Oregon, to load timber at a beautiful up-river wharf, but the crew were so far gone with cheap local wine that Royal Navy men waiting there for their own new ship had to be called in to raise steam for the winches. At Panama a donkeyman came aboard from shore leave drunk and attacked the chief steward, breaking his jaw. The captain debited the donkeyman's pay with the resultant medical expense but, on arrival in England, the Board of Trade did not uphold the master's judgement and the man was not penalized in any way. The *Fort Cedar Lake* and the *Fort Anne* were almost identical in design but the *Fort Cedar Lake's* engineers could not raise the required steam for a fast convoy and she had to leave her sister ship and sail with the slow convoy.

Another vessel that would sail with the slow convoy was typical of the many old tramp steamers pressed into service for the war.

I had been sailing in the *English Monarch* for eighteen months at that time and she was by present standards 'Rather Tatty'. She was a three-island steamer of about twenty years old, previously owned by a tramp owner who spent little on her. We were inclined to cover up her shortcomings and put up with her discomforts because a few of us were convinced she would survive. Our speed was slow and difficult to maintain as we were a coal burner and always ended up at the tail end of the convoy. On one occasion the Commodore asked if we were 'jet propelled' as our station-keeping was so erratic. (Chief Officer W. D. Morton, S.S. *English Monarch*)

This ship, typical of so many in the convoys, set out from New York but had to put into Halifax for repairs. She did survive the war and was sold to a Japanese company, but sank in a Pacific storm in 1960. Another old ship brought into service was the *Carso*, an ex-Italian ship scuttled at Mogadishu in Somaliland. She had been repaired at Mombasa and