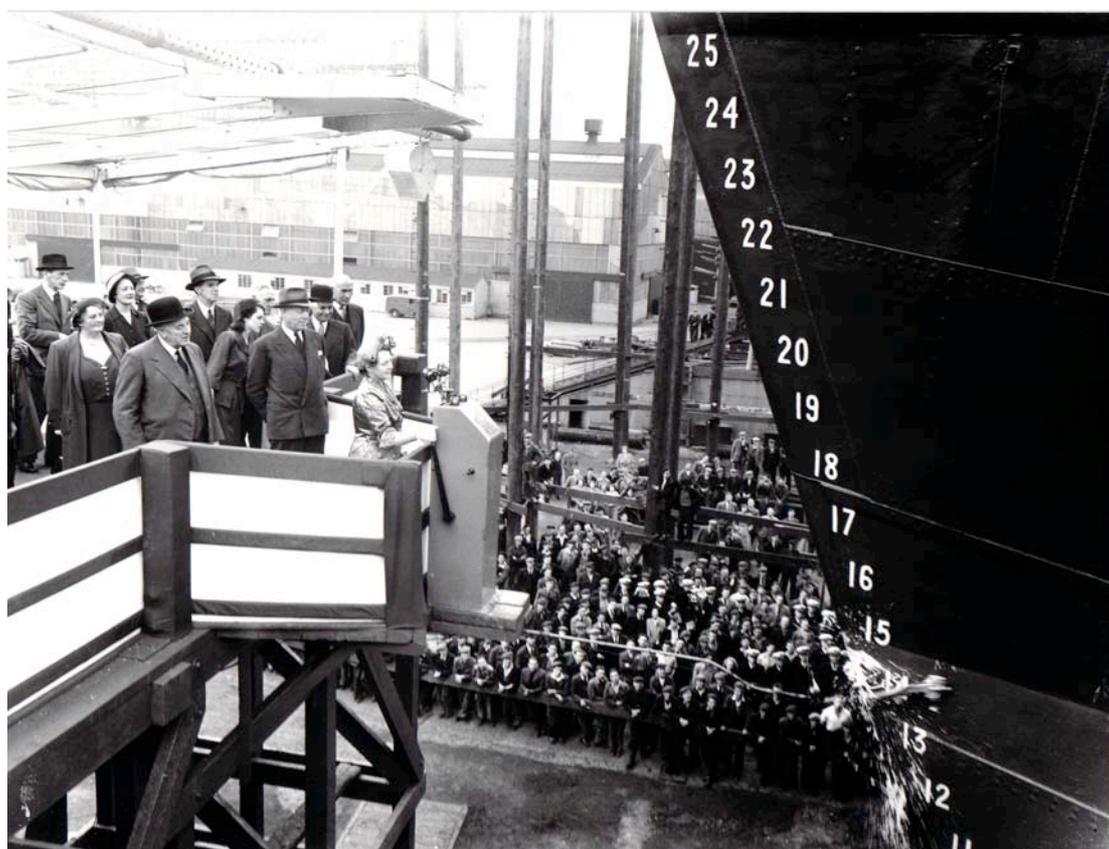


The following article provides a pictorial record of the launch and sea trials of Elder Dempster's M.V. Obuasi. All the photographs are reproduced with the kind permission of the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, and the museum's reference number is shown underneath each photograph. Anyone wishing to purchase one or more of these photographs should contact the museum at the address shown at the end of this article.

OBUASI LAUNCH

Built for Elder Dempster Lines Limited by Harland and Wolff Limited, Belfast, *Obuasi* was launched on 24th June 1952 by Mrs M B Glasier.



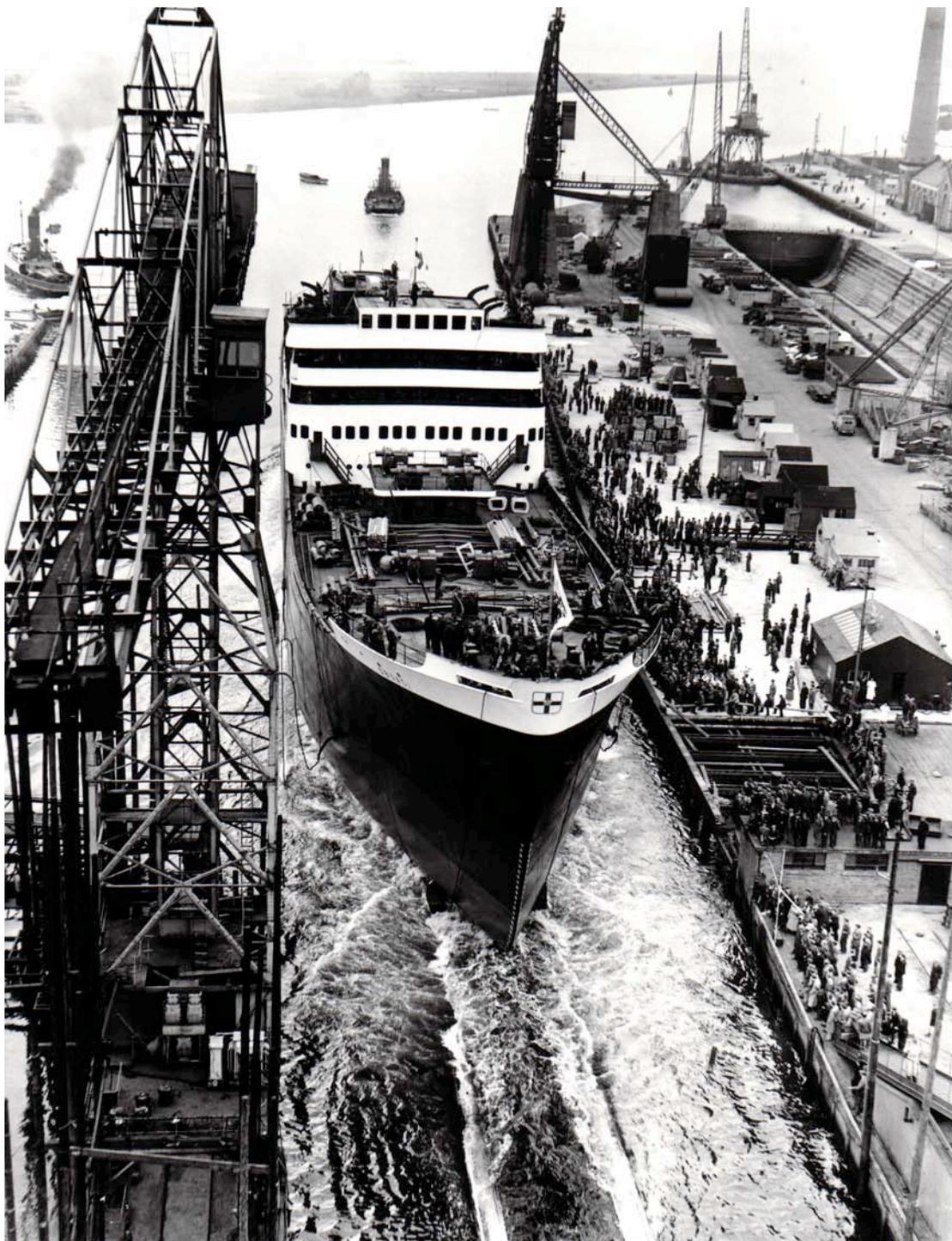
Ulster Folk and Transport Museum – Reference No. 14031

This photograph, which shows Mrs Glasier and some of the VIPs on the launch platform, has captured the instant that the bottle, presumably champagne, has broken on *Obuasi's* bow. An excellent indication of scale is provided by the crowd of people, presumably Harland and Wolff employees, gathered below.



Ulster Folk and Transport Museum – Reference No. 14035

Those on the bow of *Obuasi* may be forgiven for thinking that they have the grandstand view, but the eagle-eyed will spot a lone figure standing on the cab of the crane above them!



Ulster Folk and Transport Museum – Reference No. 14033

This spectacular view of *Obuasi* moving down the slipway and into the water was taken from the top of a gantry, and it provides an excellent sense of movement.

There is so much detail in this photograph, from the crane in the foreground to the tugs in the background.



Ulster Folk and Transport Museum – Reference No. 14034

Was this photograph taken immediately before or after the one on page 3? It is difficult to tell.

What is not in doubt is that, nearby, the construction of another vessel is well underway, and that this is a period in British shipbuilding history when Harland and Wolff was certainly very busy.

Obuasi was the second in a class of three vessels built by Harland and Wolff for Elder Dempster Lines Limited. The first, *Onitsha*, was launched on 29th January 1952, and the third, *Owerri*, was launched on the 14th October 1954. Despite the fact that *Owerri* joined the Elder Dempster fleet some two and a half years after *Onitsha*, all three vessels were sold by Elder Dempster in the same year, 1972.

Obuasi was uniquely different from *Onitsha* and *Owerri* in one important respect. She was Elder Dempster's first cadet training ship, and she operated in this role from July 1953 to July 1961.

However, unlike her successor in this role, *Fourah Bay*, she was initially fitted out to carry a normal complement of seamen.



Ulster Folk and Transport Museum – Reference No. 14036

With a length overall of 449 feet 5 inches and a summer draft of 23 feet 3.25 inches, *Obuasi* was an all steel, general cargo ship with accommodation for 12 passengers.

The passenger accommodation, which was situated on the bridge deck, was withdrawn in 1966.

Her tonnage figures were: 7089 deadweight, 5883 gross and 3147 net, and her general cargo handling facilities were designed to equip her for the West African carrying trade.

A typical cargo, from West Africa to the United Kingdom and/or the Continent of Europe, would comprise: timber, bags of coffee, oilseeds, nuts and kernels, cocoa, and bales of rubber. In order to maximise the amount of freight carried, it would not be uncommon for *Obuasi* to carry items, such as logs, as deck cargo.

Obuasi had a 5-cylinder diesel engine, which was built by Harland and Wolff under licence from Burmeister and Wain. This 2 cycle, single-acting unit enabled *Obuasi* to maintain a service speed of 13 knots.

Registered in Liverpool, *Obuasi* was allocated an Official Number of 185449, and her Code Letters were GMLQ.



Ulster Folk and Transport Museum – Reference No. 14227

This splendid view of *Obuasi* shows her undergoing sea trials in Belfast Lough.

With these completed, *Obuasi* began her maiden voyage late in 1952 under the command of Captain R A Roberts.

Her second voyage, however, was to be in the entirely new role of a cadet training ship. Initially, she carried a total of 18 apprentices, who were designated as midshipmen by Elder Dempster. Four were accommodated in what was the original apprentices' cabin on the officers' deck, and the remainder were accommodated in cabins on the upper and lower poop decks, which had originally been designed for the normal quota of seamen. The total number of midshipmen was later increased to 20, when a cabin on the officers' deck was allocated to the 2 most senior midshipmen. Usually, a midshipman would spend 2 or 3 voyages on *Obuasi*, totalling approximately 9 to 12 months, and the remaining sea-time under articles would be spent on other vessels in Elder Dempster's fleet.

Although *Obuasi* was not equipped with a schoolroom, midshipmen were required to study through a correspondence course, and one of the deck officers was made responsible for their training and welfare. The midshipmen had their own recreation room on the upper poop deck, and they usually took their meals in the messroom on the starboard side of the main deck.



Ulster Folk and Transport Museum – Reference No. 14028

Finally, this picture was taken just before the launch, and it shows a young Harland and Wolff apprentice presenting a bouquet of flowers to Mrs Glasier.

The Alternative Training Scheme was introduced in 1952, the year in which *Obuasi* was launched. Under this scheme, it was possible for a prospective ship's engineer to complete his training without having to undergo a shore-based engineering apprenticeship. It is only possible to speculate as to whether or not this young man eventually went to sea.

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Ulster Folk and Transport Museum
Cultra
Holywood
Country Down
BT18 0EU
Northern Ireland

Telephone: +44 (0)28 9042 8428

Web Site: www.uftm.org.uk/