

United Baltic Shipping Corporation (UBC)

and

MacAndrews & Co Ltd

A Commentary by Geoff Walker



Their trim little ships often seen in the “Pool of London”, the **United Baltic Corporation (UBC)** was established in 1919 as an equal partnership between Andrew Weir & Co., of London (owners of the Bank Line) and the East Asiatic Co., of Copenhagen. It was initially intended that their ships would operate passenger and cargo services between Poland and the Baltic States to London. Passengers would then disembark and transfer to America bound ships.

In the 1930's a regular service to Newcastle was also inaugurated. Baltic services were suspended due to the outbreak of war in 1939, but services to Poland were resumed in 1946, with additional calls at ports in Finland. A total of 11 of their ships were eventually lost in the war. Due to the Baltic states being Russian controlled, at that time, these routes could not be operated and were therefore suspended. However, the Poland to London service was operated in association with Polish Ocean Lines.

The last passenger ship was sold to Greek operators in 1947, which reduce the amount of passenger accommodation on the service, it being reduced to 6 passengers, and later 12 passengers on each vessel. A summary of the services offered is listed below:

1919-1939 London to Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. (Newcastle service from 1930s)

Post war - Weekly ro-ro services Felixstowe to Helsinki and Hamina, Finland

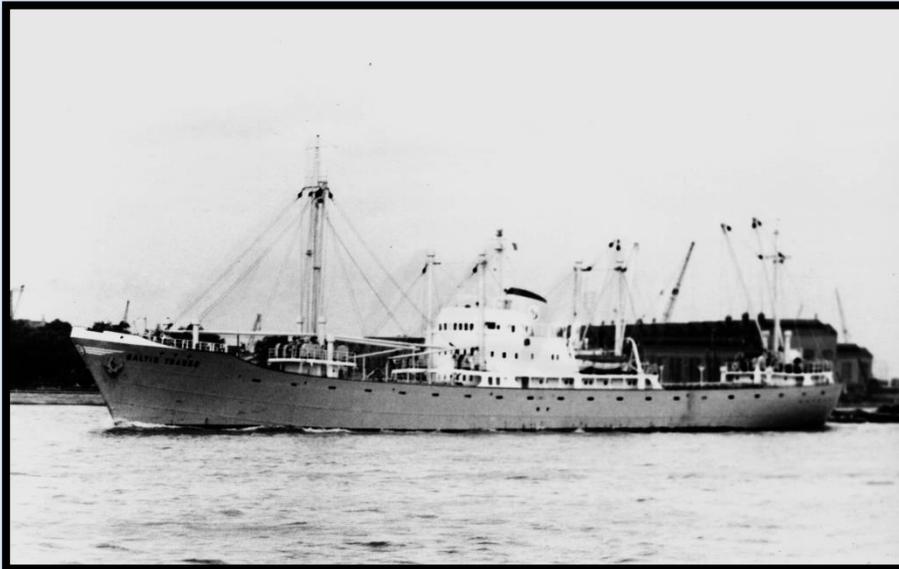
Weekly container services from Felixstowe and Hull to Gdynia, Poland

In 1982 Andrew Weir & Co. purchased the 50% share owned by East Asiatic Co. and became sole owners. The company was understood to be still operating in 2002 but information beyond that date is unreliable. Meanwhile, in 1935 Andrew Weir & Co., had purchased **MacAndrews & Co Ltd.**, as a subsidiary for their **United Baltic Corporation**. The MacAndrews ships being integrated into the **UBC** fleet for the remainder of their days.



Baltic Swift showing her classic German heritage.

Sold and name Changed to "Fijian Swift" and ownership to Reef Sg Co Ltd., change of name to Ha'amotaha in 1976. Taken to Auckland 12 March 1979 for breaking by Pacific Scrap Ltd (Allen Collection)



Baltic Trader, another fine looking German built ship for UBC

Change of name to Medov Italia and owner to Medov Lines SpA 1971, change of name to Moncalvo 1973, change of owner to Marittima del Nord SpA 1974, change of name to Emma D.P. and owner to WI.E

Line SpA 1978, change of owner to Montenavi Srl 1979, change of owner to Sidermar di Nav SpA 1990, change of owner to Bruzia di Nav SpA 1993. Taken to Taranto for breaking by B. & G. Shipyard - demolition work began on 1st August 1994 (Allen Collection)



The sleek looking, German built **Baltic Sun**. Change of name to Reefer City and owner to Reefer City Pte Ltd 1973. Taken to Kaohsiung 21st January 1983 for breaking by Chien Yu Steel Industrial Co (Allen Collection).



The **Baltic Sprite**. Change of name to Ustrine and owner to Losinjska Plovidba OOUR Brodarstvo 1974, change of owner to Caroline Sg Co Ltd 1991, change of owner to Flanonia Sg Co Ltd 1993. Taken to Aliaga 28 October 1999 for demolition by Dortel GS. (Allen Collection)



William MacAndrews left his Scottish hometown of Elgin for Liverpool in 1770, to start a business selling fresh fruit imported from Spain in small fast sailing ships. The Liverpool business changed names from time-to-time as additional partners came and went. It subsequently became one of the oldest shipping concerns in the world.

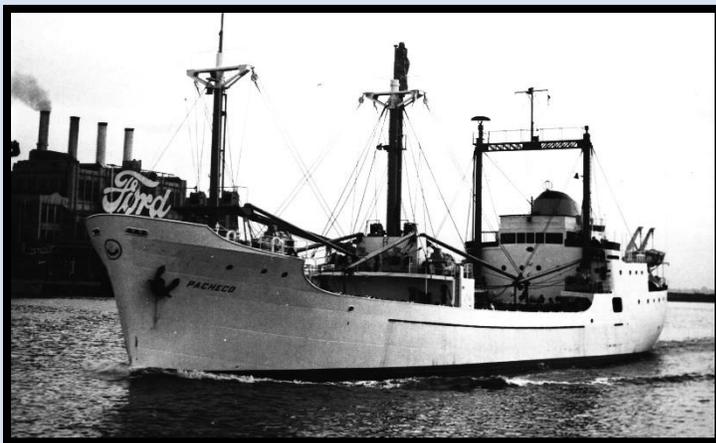
Robert MacAndrews & Co was founded in London in 1853 as shipbrokers and shipowners. The company acquired its first small steamer for use in the Spanish trade in 1857. Several Spanish subsidiaries were established, some as fruit exporters and others as shipowners. By 1900 the fleet consisted of 23 ships under the Spanish flag and 7 under the British flag. The fleet gradually changed to a smaller number of slightly larger vessels and by 1914 was made up of 10 Spanish and 8 British ships, the largest being 2,233 grt. Eventually all tonnage was transferred to the British Flag.

During WW1, the company lost 7 ships due to hostilities, but it did take over the Liverpool based Hall Line. In 1917 the MacAndrews family decided to sell the business and accepted an offer from Sir Owen Crosby Philipps, causing a new company **MacAndrews & Co Ltd** to be formed as a subsidiary of Philipps' Royal Mail Group, which was plagued with scandal in later years. Hence, MacAndrews & Co., was operated by trustees until bought by Andrew Weir & Co., in 1935.

In total, 21 ships were acquired. At the outbreak of WW2, the fleet strength was 20 vessels. These small fruit carriers were ideal for the Admiralty as anti-aircraft ships, convoy rescue vessels and store carriers. Half the fleet was lost due to enemy action and 104 crew members were sadly killed as a result.

The post war rebuilding program modernized rather than expanded the fleet and by 1959 the company had reduced its fleet to 12 ships. Ten years later containerization was introduced and by 1973 the fleet was further downsized to 3 ships, plus chartered tonnage. In 1977 these 3 ships were transferred to **United Baltic Corporation**, but MacAndrews continued operations using group and other chartered vessels. An integrated road/sea service was introduced in 1977 under the trade name **MacPak**, using ro-ro and container tonnage.

In 2001 the MacAndrews name was replaced by **AWS Iberian Services** and the following year the business was sold to the French CMA-CMG shipping group.

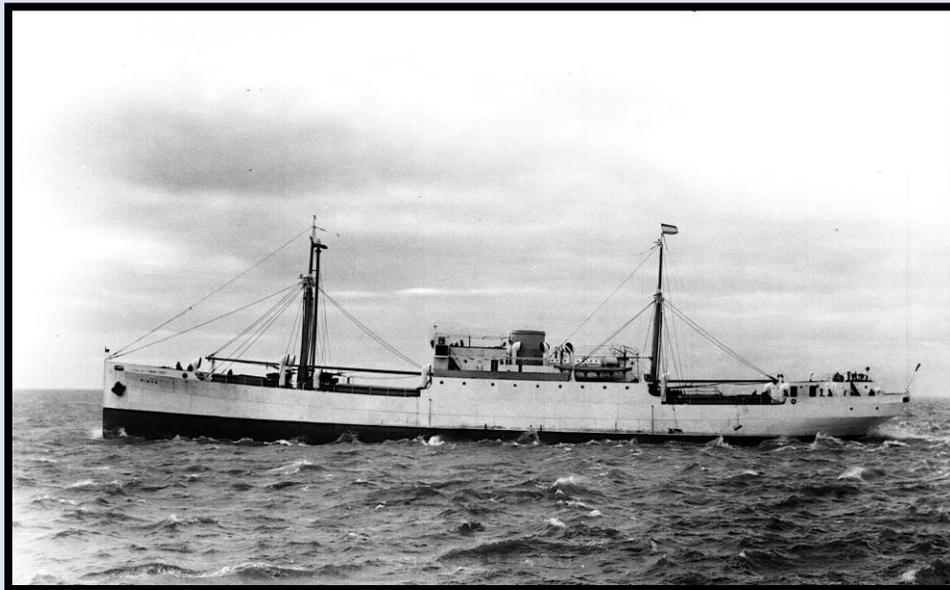


The British built **Pacheco** a trim modern short sea trader.

Change of name to Srakane and owner to Losinjska Plovidba 1972. Taken to Split 27 November 1985 for demolition by Brodospas. (Allen Collection)



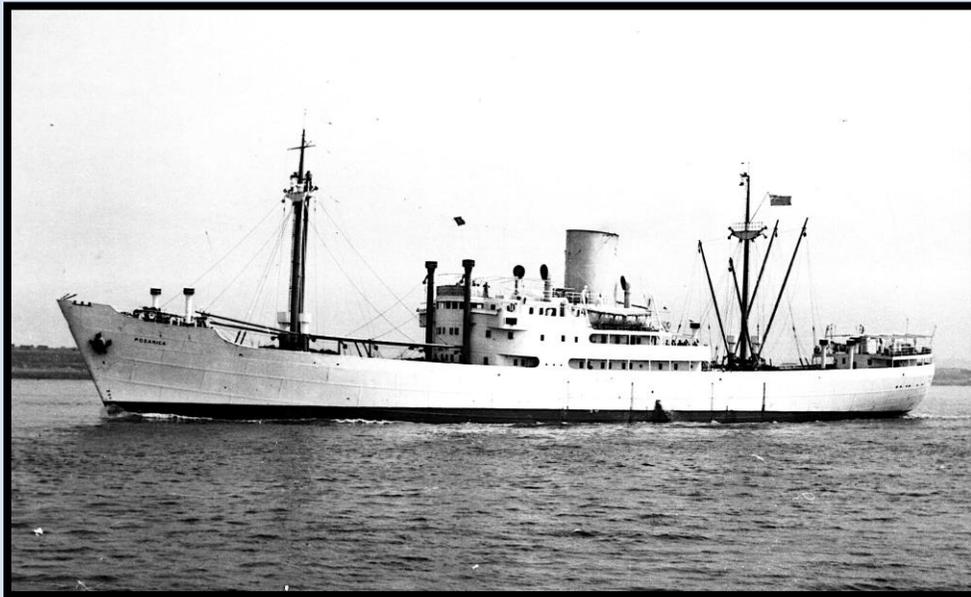
Cervantes was sunk on 27 September 1941 by a torpedo fired by German submarine U-201 at position 48° 37' N 20° 01' W. At the time she was sunk, Cervantes was carrying survivors from the sinking of **Avoceta** (Allen Collection)



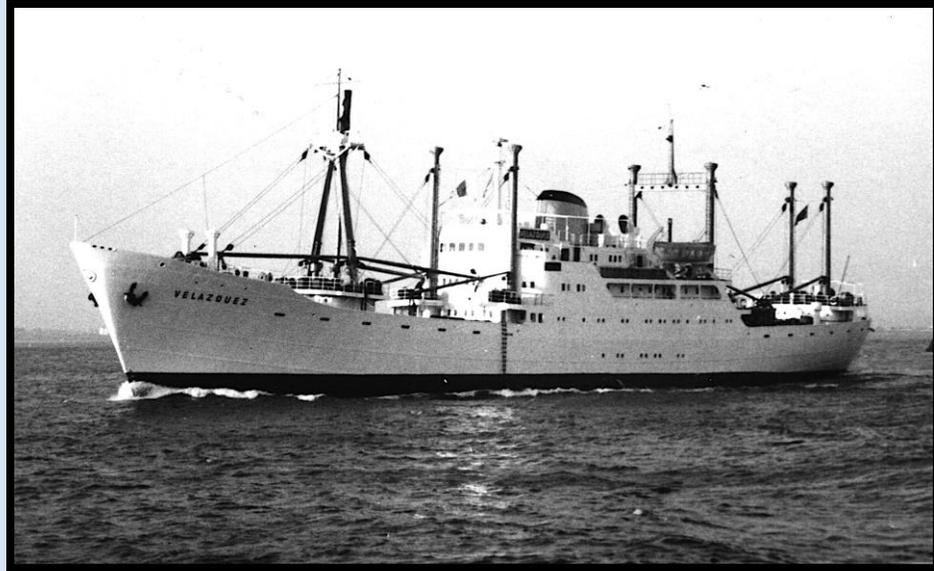
The 1928 British built **Pinto** was sunk on 8 September 1944 by a GNAT torpedo fired by German submarine U-482 at position 55° 27' N, 08° 01' W. At the time of the attack, Pinto had stopped to rescue survivors from **Empire Heritage**. (Allen Collection)



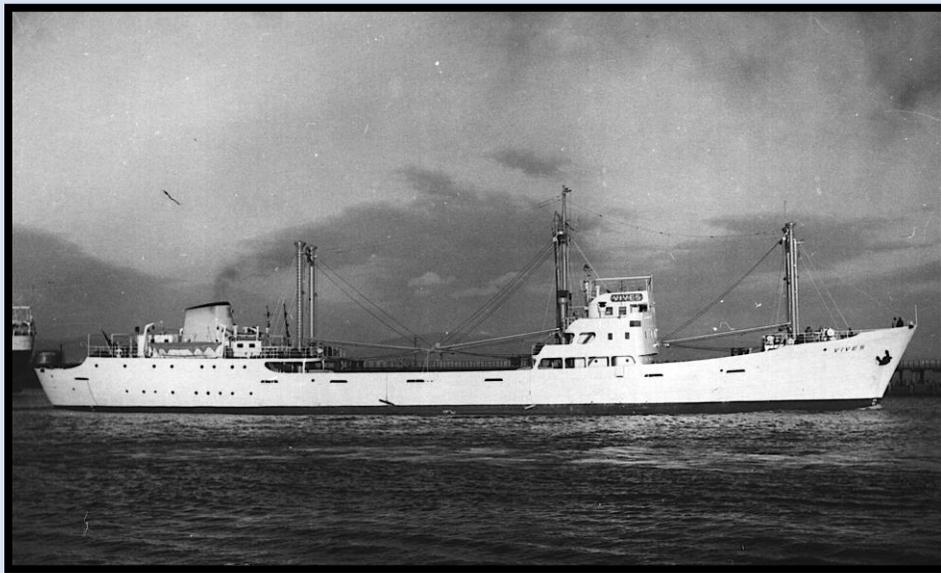
The 1928 British built **Ponzano** sunk after striking a mine on 13 November 1939 at position 51°28'38" N, 1°25'20" E whilst on a passage from Valencia to London with fruit and general cargo. A smart cargo ship for her era. (Allen Collection)



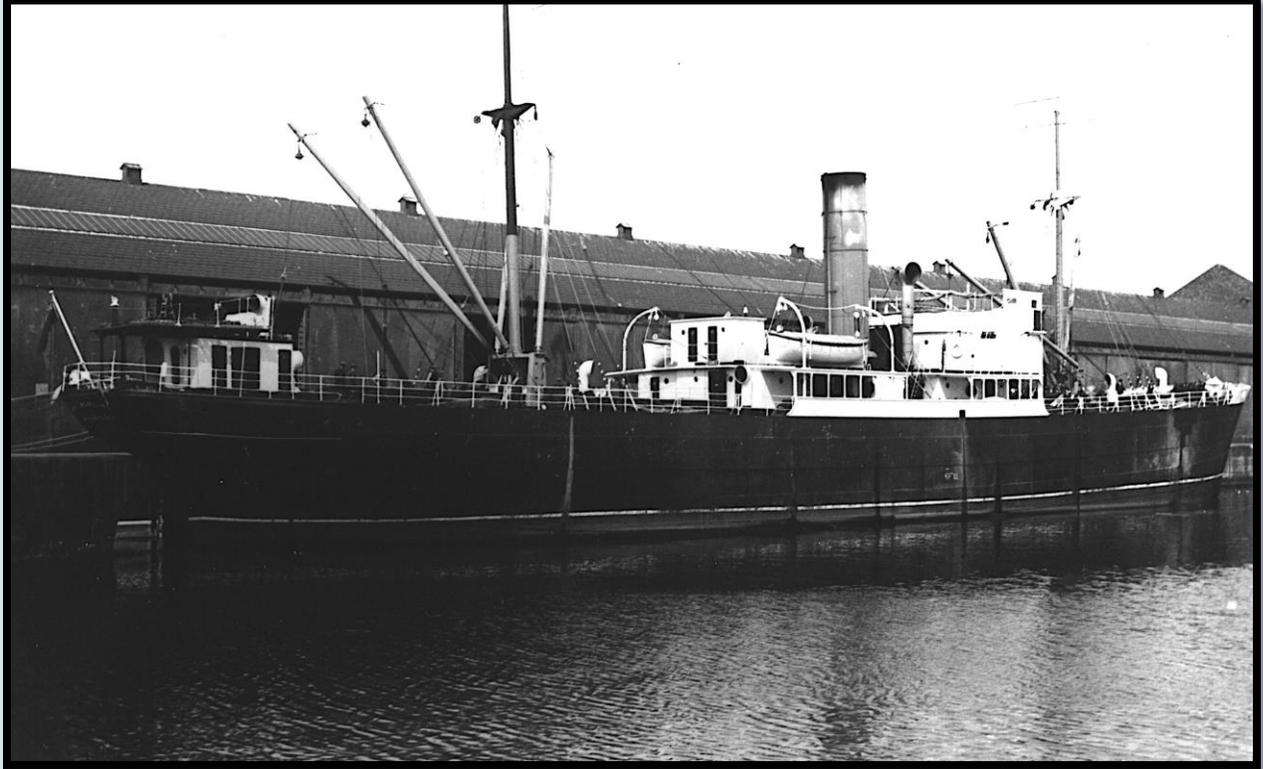
The handsome **Pozarica**. Built by Wm. Doxford & Sons in 1938. The vessel was struck by a torpedo fired by an aircraft on 29 January 1943 at position 37°04' N, 4°36' E and capsized at Bougie on 13 February 1943. She was raised on 5 March 1951 and broken up at Savona 14 June 1951. (Allen Collection)



The beautiful German built **Velazquez**. Sold to Ocean Trust and owner to Ocean Sg & Enterprises Co (Liberia) Inc 1968, change of name to Sumber Tunas II and owner to Tunas (Hong Kong) Ltd 1969, change of owner to PT Perusahaan Pelayaran Nusantara Naga Laut 1974. The vessel caught fire on 19 September 1977 and sank whilst under tow on 21 September 1977 at position 8°29'50" S, 125°36'30" E (Allen Collection)



Showing the clean sleek lines of her profile the **Vives**. Built in Germany in 1955 she was sold and name changed to Nives and owner to Francesco Visentini fu Mario 1970, change of name to Ive and owner to Claudio Marinzulich & Ci Srl 1980, change of name to Kamela and owner to Sommer Maritime Co 1983, change of name to Andros Island and owner to Seatiger Sg Co Ltd 1985. The vessel broke her moorings and was wrecked at Karachi on 24 June 1986 whilst laid up. (Allen Collection)



The old but stately **Ravens Point**. Built in Middlesbrough in 1918 The ship was acquired by MacAndrews in 1925. Sold and changed of name to Elespoint and owner to Thomas Leitch (Shg) Ltd 1956. Taken to Genoa for breaking 31 May 1959. A grand old lady that provided more than 40 years of service. (Allen Collection)

A fine British shipping company, with a strong Spanish heritage, alas no more!

End

References: The Shipping List, The Allen Collection, various Corporate Archives,

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