



## **SS ROSALIE**

### **“Three Ships, One Grounding, Two U-boats”**



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## FOREWORD

Like the *SS Vera* off Cley Beach, the *SS Rosalie* which lies off Weybourne is a familiar, if less visible, wreck and a regular dive site.

It is well known that she was torpedoed and subsequently grounded in 1915 but what was her history and who was her Captain?

The only sign of the ship is a single iron upright which belies the extent of the large wreckage beneath the water. A similar analogy could be applied to the story of the *Rosalie*, for my research has revealed some surprising discoveries “under the surface”.

What has emerged is not the story of just one ship, but the story of several, all carrying the same name and all owned by the same shipping company, John Cory & Sons Ltd.

The *Rosalie* off Weybourne was actually the third of four ships – the second steamship – of this name to be built for the same owner. And in a further “twist”, the *Rosalie* off our coast was neither the first nor the last *Rosalie* on which her Captain and some other crew members served.

This report describes the history of the *Rosalie*, her construction, ownership, and the circumstances of her loss. The timeline then goes backwards to reveal the man who was her Master, the other ships on which he served, and his family.

Since my original report appeared on the website in March 2019, a relative of one of the crew members of the *Rosalie* torpedoed off Weybourne contacted me with new information about his great-uncle’s family. This man, the First Mate, had served - together and severally – with the Captain and other crew members on other ships owned by John Cory, including some named *Rosalie*.

The information which Julian Hanwell has very generously shared through personal accounts, postcards and photographs is fascinating in itself and adds much to what we know of the people who were on board the *Rosalie* at Weybourne and who had known and served together previously and subsequently.

Julian said, “I do feel the lads of the *Rosalie* would like their story told as it happened 100 years ago” and I hope this report does that and honours their memory.

While there were photographs in my original report of a number of ships owned by John Cory and (dive site) images of the *Rosalie* as she lies below the water off Weybourne, any other image of the ship eluded me. It was, therefore, something of a discovery, to find a postcard - now the cover picture - entitled “Wreck on Weybourne Beach” showing the *Rosalie*.

## NOTES

### Censuses

The Censuses were taken on the following nights, each a Sunday:

1841	6th June
1851	30th March
1861	7th April
1871	2nd April
1881	3rd April
1891	5th April
1901	31st March
1911	2nd April

### 1911 Census

The 1911 Census gives more detailed information about each household than the preceding ones and, unlike those in the 19th Century, was completed “by, or on behalf of , the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling” rather than by an Enumerator.

The Census requested information about the property and the person completing it had to state “the Number of Rooms in this dwelling (House, Tenement or Apartment) and to count the kitchen as a room but not “the scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom; nor warehouse, office, shop”; throughout this report, references to the 1911 Census reflect this.

Like earlier Censuses, people’s professions or occupations had to be stated but , in addition, the “Industry or Service with which worker is connected” and whether each person was an “Employer, Worker or Working on Own Account” and whether or not someone was working “carrying on Trade or Industry” at home”.

Similarly, Birthplaces had to be given but also now the nationality of anyone born in a “Foreign Country”.

Two very significant changes were to ask – in a section “Particulars as to Marriage” - for each married woman the number of years the marriage had lasted, the total number of children born alive, the number still living, and the number who had died.

A section titled “Infirmity” asked that if anyone shown on the Census was “Totally Deaf” or “Deaf and Dumb”, “Totally Blind”, “Lunatic “, “Imbecile” or “Feeble-minded”, the infirmity should be stated against the person’s name and “the age at which he or she became afflicted”.

### The 1939 Register

Due to the onset of war, the 1939 Register was taken on 29 September 1939 with the purpose of producing National Identity Cards; it later came to be multi-functional, first as an aid in the use of ration books, later in recording the movement of the civilian population over the following decades, and subsequently, from 1948, as the basis for the National Health Service Register.

The information was used to produce identity cards and, once rationing was introduced in January 1940, to issue ration books. Information in the Register was also used to administer conscription and the direction of labour, and to monitor and control the movement of the population caused by military mobilisation and mass evacuation.

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## SS ROSALIE - THE SECOND STEAMSHIP - 1914

### Specification and Sea Trial

The *SS Rosalie* which lies off Weybourne - official number 136965 - was built in 1914 by William Gray & Co. Ltd., West Hartlepool (Sunderland) at Yard number 850. Her owners were "The New Ruperra Steam Shipping Co. Ltd.", Mount Stuart House, Cardiff; her Manager was John Cory of the same address.

The *Rosalie* was launched on 21st October 1914, completed in November 1914, and registered in the same year. She was a single shaft, single screw cargo steamer with a 3-cylinder steam engine, fitted with three single boilers and nine corrugated furnaces. The number of seamen for whom accommodation was certified was thirty-five.

Length	Breadth	Depth	GRT	NRT	NHP	Speed
376'2"	52' 0"	24' 7"	4,243	2,682	388	11 knots

"The Newcastle Daily Journal" of Friday 4th December 1914 carried a report of the "Trial Trip of the S.S. Rosalie" and described the ship as being "built to the highest class in Lloyd's Register", adding that she had an "extra long bridge, poop and topgallant forecastle".

The newspaper report gave further, detailed information about the ship's specification:

"The hull is built with deep frames, cellular double bottom and large after and fore-peak ballast tanks, ten steam winches, ten derricks, direct steam windlass, steam steering gear amidships, hand screw gear aft, patent direct steam windlass, steel grain divisions, stockless anchors, telescopic masts with fore and aft rig, boats on deck overhead, and all the requirements for a first-class cargo steamer have been fitted. Triple engines have been supplied by the general Marine Engine Works of the builders, having cylinders 25 in., 41 in., and 68 in., diameter with a stroke of 18 in., and three large steel boilers adapted for 100lb. working pressure per square inch. The engine room auxiliaries include a winch condenser, evaporator, feed and ballast pumps, all of the "Cmew" type."

The report of the *Rosalie's* Trial continued by saying that the owners were represented by a Captain W.P. Hodge - who is shown on the "Account of the Voyages and Crew" as an Official or other Witness to the Engagement - "under whose superintendence" the ship and machinery were built and that a Mr A.B. Coull, superintendent engineer of Newcastle, also witnessed the trial. The performance of the ship and machinery was deemed "very satisfactory, an average speed of 12 knots being attained".

The Master of the *Rosalie* was a Captain John Peters Couch, aged 56, who was born in Padstow. Two of his thirteen crew members - James House, aged 29, the Mate, and R. Quick, aged 33, the Steward - were also Cornishmen and both had, immediately prior to the voyage, served with John Couch on the *SS Rhodesia*, another ship owned by John Cory & Sons Ltd.

The Board of Trade's "Half-Yearly Agreement and Account of Voyages" for the period ending 31st December 1914 shows that John Couch joined the *Rosalie* as Master on 28th November 1914, presumably the date of, or shortly after, her trial trip. The same record shows that the *Rosalie* was "coasting" and on voyage from West Hartlepool for South Shields. Couch's address was given as Rhoose in Glamorganshire.

The *SS Rosalie* off Weybourne was the third ship of four - and the second steamship - of this name to be owned by the John Cory & Sons Ltd; she was also not the first nor the last *Rosalie* on which the Master, Captain John Couch served.

## The Ship and Engine Builder

William Gray & Company Ltd. of the Central Marine Engineering Works in West Hartlepool was the largest and most enduring firm of shipbuilders in the Hartlepoons and, for the period 1874 to 1963, was a major employer.

Gray's held the British record for output in 1878, with eighteen ships launched in a single year, and the company soon became West Hartlepool's largest producer of iron clipper barques, sailing ships and steamers. Employing some 2,000 men, the company recorded the highest output of any British shipyard six times between 1878 and 1900.

In 1883, Gray's established the Central Marine Engineering Works to manufacture their own marine engines, recruiting the engineer Thomas Mudd from T. Richardson & Sons to set up the business. Gray's became a private limited company on 1st January 1889, with William Gray as its chairman, and his sons Matthew and William, and a son-in-law, as directors.

The Company was at the forefront of technological and technical innovation. During World War I, the yard built thirty cargo liners and tramps to private order, thirteen vessels built to Admiralty order, and thirty standard "War" tramps built for the Shipping Controller.

## Ownership

The Registered Managing Owner of the *Rosalie* was John Cory & Sons Ltd. of Mount Stuart House, Cardiff.

John Cory was born in Padstow in 1823, the son of a farmer. He went to sea but, after being Master of coasting and foreign-going ships, in 1854 established his own shipping business, beginning with sailing vessels.

In 1863, John Cory retired from the sea in order to manage his vessels from an office in Padstow. However, with the silting of the Camel estuary, Cory's ships – with their deep draughts – were unable to enter the harbour and cargoes were in decline. Cory moved his three-ship fleet to Cardiff in 1872, with offices set up in the Docks, and built up a large mercantile business as a shipbroker and shipowner with substantial deep-sea tramp fleets. He was joined in his firm by his sons John (who had been training in London as a merchant and ship-broker) and James, born in 1855 and 1857 respectively.

By 1876, Cory's fleet had grown to ten vessels, and to twenty-three in 1898; nearly all had names which began with the letter "R". At the outbreak of the First World War, John Cory & Sons was one of the most successful of Cardiff businesses, still with twenty-three ships and a world-wide market for its particular blend of coal. However, twenty of Cory's vessels were sunk during the war and by its end just nine ships remained, fewer than half the pre-war fleet.

Shortly after the *Rosalie's* completion and trial trip in November 1914, the "Agreement and Account of Crew" Schedule for her first voyage shows that she set off from South Shields on 8th December 1914 and returned to the same port on 6th August 1915.

It has not been possible to trace the Crew Lists for all the voyages for which John Peters Couch was Master but it is evident from those available that many of the men who served with him did so on a number of occasions, some having served not only on the *Rosalie*, but also other ships owned by John Cory & Sons Ltd., including the *Rhodesia*.

On the *Rosalie's* voyage from South Shields, Captain Couch's crew of thirty-one included three men - James House, the First Mate, R. Quick, the Steward, and I. Tull, the Carpenter - who had accompanied him on the *Rosalie's* trial and also served with him on the *Rhodesia*. One of the Firemen and Trimmers, W.E. Knight, had also served on the *Rhodesia*. An Apprentice, Bertram Watts, and the First Engineer, William Morgan, went on to serve with Couch subsequently.

## SS ROSALIE – THE SECOND STEAMSHIP - 1914

### Grounded off Weybourne

A little under a year after Captain John Couch took command of the ship, and two days after the ship had returned to South Shields on 6th August 1915, the *Rosalie* left South Shields on 8th August 1915 on passage for San Francisco.

The twenty-seven crew members again included James Strout House, the First Mate, Robert Quick, the Steward, and William Morgan, the First Engineer. Also on the *Rosalie* were Walter Wilson, the Ship's Cook, and an Apprentice named Gwilym P. Williams who both went on to serve with Couch subsequently.

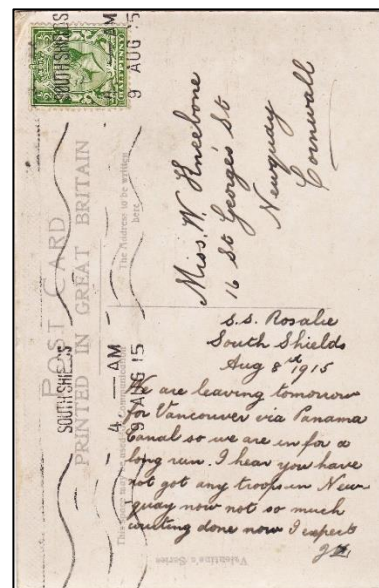
James Strout House was born on 9th March 1885 and baptised on 2nd January 1887 in Newquay. He came from a seafaring family. His father, Nicholas House was a Master Mariner of Newquay who, the 1901 Census shows, later became a Ship Owner and was an Employer. His mother, Agnes (née Strout) of Port Isaac was the daughter of a Mariner.

James House sent postcards to his fiancée, Harriet Wilmot Kneebone of 16 St George's Street, Newquay, Cornwall, which outline their passage.

Writing from the *Rosalie*, South Shields on 8th August 1915, he said:

"We are leaving tomorrow for Vancouver via Panama Canal so we are in for a long run. I hear you have not got any troops in Newquay now not so much writing done now I expect."

Two days into her voyage, on Tuesday 10th August 1915, the *Rosalie* was torpedoed by the German submarine UB-10 three nautical miles off the Blakeney Buoy. At 4,243 gross registered tons, she was the largest ship sunk by UB-10 during the submarine's career.



**SUBMARINES DESTROY  
ELEVEN MORE CRAFT**

**Still Another Vessel, the British  
Steamer Rosalie, Is Run  
Ashore in War Zone.**

The *Rosalie* received a direct hit on the port quarter and the after hold and boiler room started to take in water almost immediately. A second torpedo was fired but missed and failed to explode.

The ship dropped anchor and the crew took to the boats. Six minesweepers were then on the scene and the Master, the Mate and the Carpenter were able to return to the ship, which was then towed to the beach where fourteen or more of the crew re-joined her; no crew members lost their lives.

"The New York Times" of 12th August 1915 reported that the *Rosalie* had been beached and her crew saved. It was hoped that the *Rosalie* could be patched sufficiently for her to be towed for repair but this was not possible, she was irreparably damaged, and was found to be a total loss.

The "Agreement and Account of Crew" Schedule shows the "Termination of Voyage" was on 12th August 1915 at Weybourne, Holt.

On the same day that UB-10 attacked the *Rosalie*, the submarine stopped and scuttled the 46-ton fishing smack *Esperance* of Lowestoft – official number 125900 – seventeen miles E.N.E. of Cromer; her crew was also safely landed.

One day after sinking the *Rosalie*, UB-10 sank ten fishing smacks off Cromer ranging in size from 41 to 62 tons; all ten ships, all sunk seventeen miles E. by N. from Cromer, were boarded and sunk by explosives.

These were:

*Young Admiral*, 60 grt; *Trevar*; 47grt; *Welcome*, 56grt; *Palm*, 47 grt; *Illustrious*, 59 grt; *George Crabbe*, 42 grt; *George Borrow*, 62 grt; *Ocean's Gift*, 60 grt; *Humphrey*, 41 grt; and *Leader*, 57 grt.

**MORE VESSELS SUNK.**

**Including Two Steamers and Seven Trawlers.**

Intelligence has been received that three vessels were sunk on Tuesday night by a German submarine. One was the British steamer *Oakwood*, the crew of which, numbering 36 hands, were rescued by the steamer *Narcissus*. The other two vessels sunk were the Russian barquentine *Baltzer* and the Norwegian barque *Morna*. The crews of both have been landed.

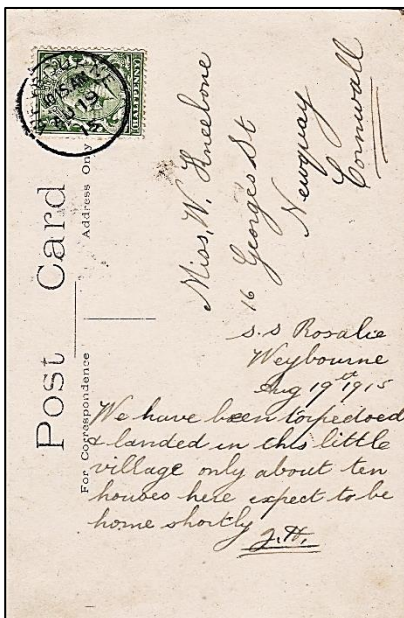
A Lloyd's message states that the Norwegian steamer *Geiranger* is reported to have been sunk by a submarine. All the crew have landed, as well as those of the British steamer *Rosalie*, which has been beached.

The "Eastern Daily Express" (Norwich) says: The crews of the trawlers *Young Admiral*, *George Crabbe*, *Illustrious*, *Palm*, *Trevire*, and *Welcome* have been landed, all six vessels having been sunk.

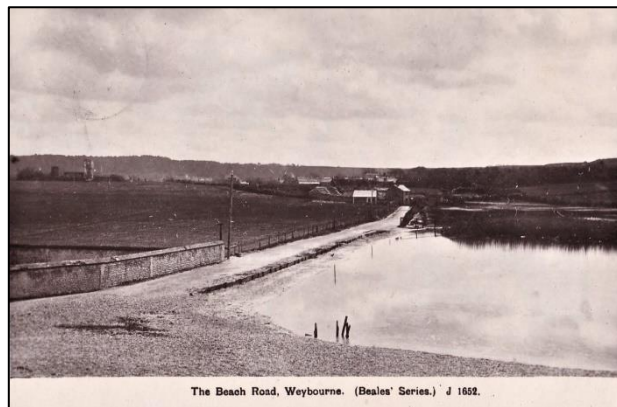
The steam trawler *Utopia* and the French barque *Francois* were sunk by submarines yesterday morning. The crews were saved.

**Belfast News-Letter - Thursday 12th August 1915**

A week after the *Rosalie* was torpedoed off Weybourne, the First Mate James Strout House sent a postcard to his fiancée from the "S.S. *Rosalie*, Weybourne", dated and postmarked 19th August 1915, saying:

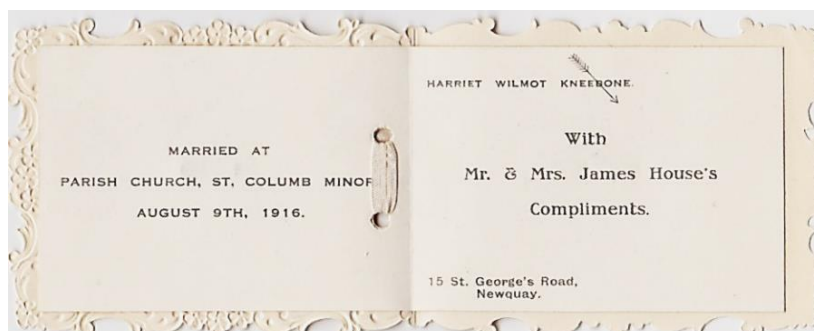


"We have been torpedoed and landed in this little village only about ten houses here expect to be home shortly."



**The Beach Road, Weybourne**

Almost a year to the day of the *Rosalie* being torpedoed, James Strout House was married to Harriet Wilmot Kneebone, aged 28, on 9th August 1916 at St. Columb Minor, a village just outside Newquay.





## **SS ROSALIE – THE SECOND STEAMSHIP - 1914**

### **The Submarine - UB-10**

UB-10 was a Type UB1 coastal torpedo attack boats class with two torpedoes, built at Germaniawerft, Kiel. The submarine was ordered on 15th October 1914 and laid down at the AG Weser shipyard in Bremen on 7th November 1914. She was launched on 20th February 2015 and commissioned on 15th March the same year.

*UB-10* was a little under 92' 0" in length and displaced 127 tons when surfaced and 141 tons when submerged. She carried two torpedoes for her two bow torpedo tubes and was also armed with a deck-mounted machine gun.

UB-10 was the first of her class to begin operations when she entered service on 27th March 1915 and her first Commander was Otto Steinbrinck, who then held the rank of Oberleutnant zur See.

Steinbrinck had command of UB-10 until 12th January 1916, during which time he had twenty-seven successes, of which twenty-five British ships - twenty-one fishing vessels (smacks) with a total 985 tons and four steamers with a total 8,424 tons – were sunk. Fifteen of the twenty-seven successes were in August, the month the *Rosalie* was hit.



**Otto Steinbrinck - 1888-1949**

In the period from her commission in March 1915 until she was scuttled during the German evacuation of Belgium in October 1918, the submarine UB-10 went on one hundred and fifteen patrols and sank thirty-six ships with a total 22,604 tons and one warship of 1,010 tons.

Otto Steinbrinck was the fourth most successful U-boat Commander in terms of tonnage sunk; in the period from November 1914 to January 1918 and under his command of U-6, UB-10, UB-18, UC-65 and UB-57, two hundred and six ships with a total 244,797 tons were sunk or captured and thirteen ships with a total 69,524 tons were damaged.

At the end of World War 1, Otto Steinbrinck was discharged from the reconstituted Reichsmarine (German navy) with the rank of Kapitänleutnant. He went on to pursue a successful career in industry in the 1920s, becoming a Director of the Flick conglomerate, a major industrial family-owned empire with holdings in coal and steel companies, later holding senior office in Flick's private secretariat. In 1933, Steinbrinck joined the National Socialist German Workers Party (known as the Nazi party) becoming an SS Oberführer in 1935 and an SS Brigadeführer in 1939.

Through the Freundeskreis Reichsführer SS (Circle of Friends of the Economy) - a group of German industrialists whose aim was to strengthen ties between the Nazi Party and business and industry - Steinbrinck could expand relationships with the Third Reich's leading circles; in 1938 he was appointed as a Wehrwirtschaftsführer, an industrialist or leader of a factory used to prepare for and support the war effort by producing armaments.

Steinbrinck resigned from Flick in 1939 and became a Trustee at Krupp, a prominent and longstanding German dynasty famous for its production of steel, artillery, ammunition, and other armaments. In the same year, 1939, Steinbrinck was remobilised as a frigate captain.

In August 1945, Steinbrinck was arrested by the American forces and indicted at the so-called Flick Trial in Nuremberg. For his leading position within the Flick conglomerate and for his role in integrating coalmines and heavy industry in occupied West European lands into the German war economy, he was sentenced in December 1947 to six years in the Landsberg am Lech prison; he died in custody in 1949, shortly before the wave of general amnesty began.

## SS ROSALIE - THE SECOND STEAMSHIP - 1914

### The Wreck

The *Rosalie* lies in shallow water at 52°57.03N, 001°08.25E at a depth - depending on the tide - of approximately 8-9 metres at its far end and 4-5 metres at the bow closer to shore; she is approximately 120 metres from the shore with her bows pointing landward.

The whole bottom of the ship is laid out and exposed from bow to stern on a sandy seabed; she is orientated head on to shore, with bows pointing south. The stern of the vessel sits in a depth of no more than 10 metres at high tide. There is fine silt over some of the low flat areas although most edges are clean or, like higher parts of the wreck, covered in plant growth.



The wreckage under water stretches over a large area. The hull outline is approximately 120 metres long South-North and about 50 metres wide East-West; the debris plain is considerably wider, with flat sections for 15 metres to the West and more broken pieces to the East. It is possible to see some of her wreckage - a mast post - above the water at low tide.

Reports from North Norfolk diving groups describe that the ship is much broken, that the wreckage consists mainly of scattered plates and ribs which cover the seabed, but that many of her features are still evident; the boilers, engine, prop shaft and tunnel bearings have all remained in place. The main upper bulk of the ship appears to have fallen out to the East at the port aft and there is no superstructure left erect.

On the starboard aft, the hull is clear and has a low void underneath. The outline of the opened hull is marked by ribs on the starboard fore section and, beyond the curved keel at the bow, has plating extending more than 20 metres either side of the keel and towards the port side.

The heart of the wreck, midships, is the engine, which is very broken and large lumps of mechanics remain. The engine block stands about 8 metres proud of the seabed; the distance between the engine block and the stern is approximately 60 metres. Aft of the engine, the prop shaft runs back for 30 metres, still supported 1.5 metres from the plate covered seabed.

A steel propeller, more than 7 metres across, lies approximately 20 metres aft of the engines, between the prop shaft and the starboard hull edge; this is the spare, which was not fitted and not salvaged. One blade of the spare propeller can be seen amidships.

The twin boilers are each 4 metres long x 3 metres round, stand upright and lie inshore of the engine, accompanied by a third round, flat-ended object on the starboard side.

The triple expansion engine is 3-4 metres long and its remains stand upright, rising 5 metres from the seabed, along with various other items of machinery associated with the engine room.

The starboard stern bollards, steering quadrant and large sections of the double bottom are also visible.

The end of the main wreckage lies 10 metres past the tall rudder gear, at the end of the broken section of the prop shaft. The rudder itself lies to the West of the mooring bollards at the stern of the wreck, about 3-4 metres long, but some further fallen upper structure extends further to the West. At the end of the prop shaft, the quadrant for the rudder stands at an angle marking the end of the wreckage.

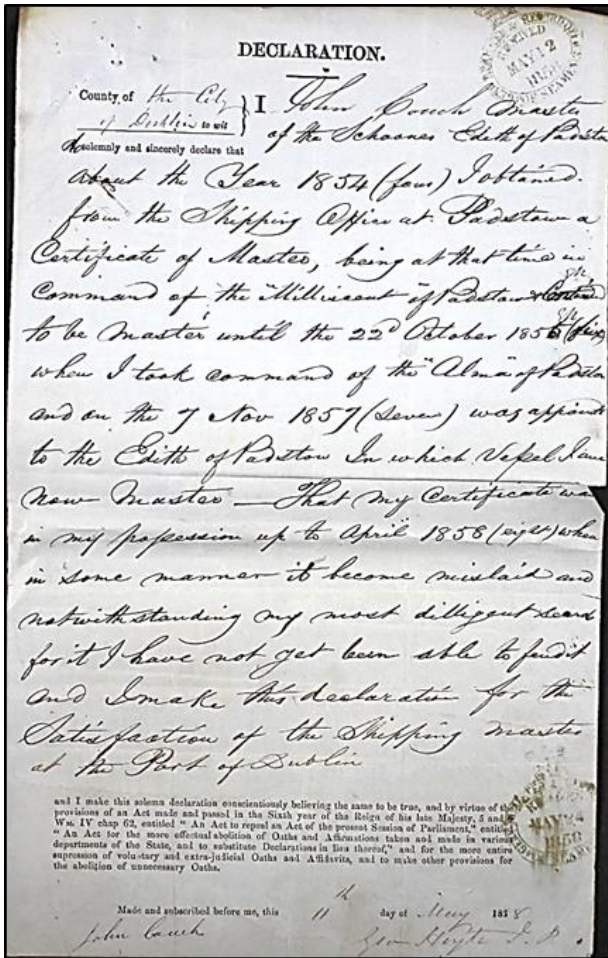
# CAPTAIN JOHN PETERS COUCH

## Early Years

John Peters Couch was born in 1858 in Padstow, the son of John Couch and Jane Peters Chalk who were married in 1857. His father, John Couch was born in Padstow circa 1831 and baptised there on 17th August 1834; his grandparents were John (born circa 1803) and Elizabeth (born circa 1801).

John Peters Couch was the third generation at least of a seafaring family; his father and his paternal grandfather were both Master Mariners, his maternal grandfather was a Mariner, all of them born in Cornwall.

A letter to the City of Dublin, requesting renewal of his Master's Certificate, outlines John Couch senior's maritime commands in Padstow during his fifteen year career to 1858; the ships for which he was Master were all Padstow registered sailing vessels, the *Millicent* 39 tons, *Alma* 86 tons, and *Edith* 101 tons.



I, John Couch, of the Schooner Edith of Padstow, do solemnly and sincerely declare that about the year 1854 (four) I obtained from the Shipping Office at Padstow a Certificate of Master, being at that time in command of the "Millicent" of Padstow and to be Master until the 22nd October 1855 (five) when I took command of the "Alma" of Padstow and on the 7th Nov 1857 (seven) was appointed to the Edith of Padstow in which vessel I am now Master – That my Certificate was in my possession up to April 1858 (eight) when in some manner it became mislaid and notwithstanding my most diligent search for it I have not yet been able to find it and I make this declaration for the satisfaction of the Shipping Master at the Port of Dublin.

John Couch, this 11th day of May 1858

John Couch's original Master's Certificate dated 5th September 1855 was renewed on 22nd May 1858 and shows that he had been employed in the capacities of "Boy, Mate and Master" for fifteen years in the British Merchant Service in the Coasting Trade.



The 1841 Census shows John Couch, aged 6, living with his mother and siblings at Horsemill Terrace, Padstow; his father (John Peters Couch's grandfather) was presumably at sea when the Census was taken on Sunday 6th June.

Name	Age	Profession, Trade or Employment	Born in County
Elizabeth Couch	41	Wife of Master Mariner	Yes
Mary Couch	14		Yes
Eliza Couch	12		Yes
John Couch	6		Yes

1841 Census

Jane Peters Chalk was baptised in Padstow on 27th September 1835, the daughter of Thomas, also a Mariner, and Philippa. The June 1841 Census shows the family at Church Street, Padstow.

Name	Age	Profession, Trade or Employment	Born in County
Thomas Chalk	40	Mariner	Yes
Philippa Chalk	35		Yes
Jane Chalk	6		Yes
Harriott Chalk	3		Yes
Mary Chalk	1		Yes
Richard Peters Chalk	35	Mariner	Yes

1841 Census

By the time of the 1851 Census, taken on 30th March, John Couch and his family were at Mile Street, Padstow. John Couch was serving on the Padstow registered *Conservator* at this time.

Name	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age	Rank, Profession or Occupation	Where Born
John Couch	Head	Married	48	Master Mariner	Cornwall, Padstow
Elizabeth Couch	Wife	Married	50		Cornwall, Padstow
Mary Cory Couch	Daughter	Married	24		Cornwall, Padstow
Eliza Couch	Daughter	Unmarried	21	Tailoring	Cornwall, Port Isaac
Mary Louisa Couch	G'daughter		7 mo		Cornwall, Padstow

1851 Census

The 1861 Census taken on Sunday 7th April shows John Peters Couch, his mother and sister in Cross Street, Padstow. His father was Master of the *Aurora*, a wooden Padstow built brig.

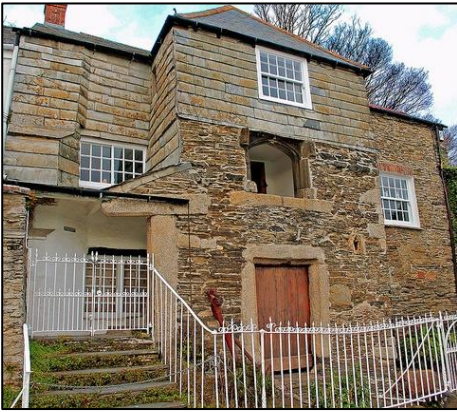
Name	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age	Rank, Profession or Occupation	Where Born
Jane Couch	Head	Married	25	Master Mariner's Wife	Padstow, Cornwall
John Couch	Son		2	Scholar	Padstow, Cornwall
Lela Couch	Daughter		1		Padstow, Cornwall

1861 Census

By 1871, John Peters Couch's family were living in the High Street, Padstow; his grandparents, Philippa, 66, and Thomas Chalk, 75, Master Mariner, were living in the adjacent house.

Name	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age	Rank, Profession or Occupation	Where Born
Jane Couch	Head	Married	35	Master Mariner's Wife	Cornwall, Padstow
John Couch	Son		12	Scholar	Cornwall, Padstow
Thomas Couch	Son		9	Scholar	Cornwall, Padstow
Lela Couch	Daughter		11	Scholar	Cornwall, Padstow
Charles Couch	Son		6	Scholar	Cornwall, Padstow
Mary Couch	Daughter		4	Scholar	Cornwall, Padstow
Maud Couch	Daughter		1		Cornwall, Padstow

1871 Census



**The Harbour, Padstow**



At some time during his residence in Padstow (the dates are unknown), John Peter Couch's father was living in a property (now) known as Abbey House, situated prominently on the North Quay. A photograph of the house (left) - still a very well-known landmark on North Quay and now a Grade II\* listed building - is held in the Couch family archives.

John Couch senior evidently moved from Padstow to Cardiff at some time between the two Census years of 1871 and 1881. The probable explanation lies in the marriage on 2nd April 1849 between his sister, Mary - shown in the 1851 Census - and John Cory, founder in 1854 of the Cardiff-based firm John Cory, later John Cory & Sons Ltd. Mary Couch died in 1868, the same year in which a daughter Mary was born.

It seems likely that John Couch was working with his brother-in-law John Cory's shipping business and this would probably explain the reason for his move to Cardiff, following John Cory when he relocated his shipping fleet there in 1871. The 1881 Census, taken on 3rd April 1881, shows John Couch and his family living at 4 St Augusta Street in Cardiff.

Name	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age	Rank, Profession or Occupation	Where Born
John Couch	Head	Married	46	Pilot	Cornwall, Padstow
Jane Couch	Wife	Married	45		Cornwall, Padstow
<b>John Couch</b>	<b>Son</b>	<b>Unmarried</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>Pilot's Assistant</b>	<b>Cornwall, Padstow</b>
Lela Couch	Daughter		21		Cornwall, Padstow
Charles Couch	Son		17		Cornwall, Padstow
Mary Couch	Daughter		14	Scholar	Cornwall, Padstow
Maud Couch	Daughter		12	Scholar	Cornwall, Padstow
William Couch	Son		8	Scholar	Cornwall, Padstow
Josephine Couch	Daughter		6	Scholar	Cardiff

**1881 Census**

The family connection with John Cory was, according to a family source, how John Peters Couch came to work for his uncle, the ship owner, and why he stayed with him/his Company all his working life.

Records suggest that it was in circa 1877, when he was about eighteen, that John Peters Couch began his career with the Merchant Service, and in circa 1882 that he began what was to be his long career working for shipping companies owned by John Cory & Sons Ltd. of Mount Stuart House, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff.

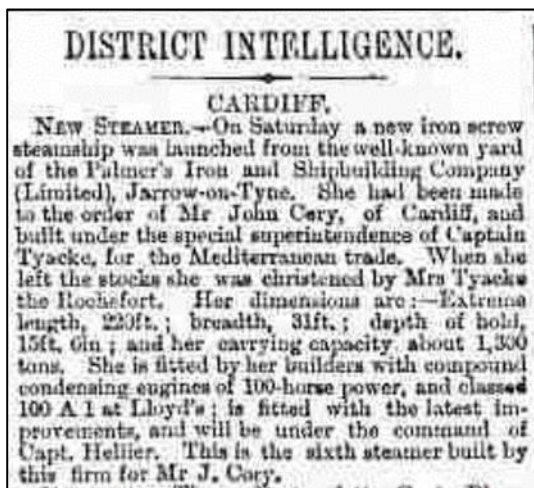
On 2nd March 1882, John Peters Couch, aged 24, was awarded his "Certificate of Competency" as Second Mate, followed a year later, on 6th July 1883, with his "Certificate of Competency" as First Mate. Both Certificates were issued from the Port of Cardiff and each carried a handwritten notation for "Fore and Aft rigged Vessels only".

During the period 1st July to 31st December 1884, John Peters Couch was serving as Mate on the Plymouth registered *Venus* – official number 24288. Towards the end of this engagement, he was awarded his “Certificate of Competency” as Master on 18th December 1884.

The Crew List shows that, prior to serving on the *Venus*, his previous vessel was the *SS Rokeby*, presumably in early 1884 and prior to him gaining his Master’s Certificate; the *Rokeby* was one of John Cory’s ships.

### Another Cory Connection

John Peters Couch’s uncle by marriage was John Cory and there was also, within the Couch family, a further connection with John Cory & Sons Ltd.



South Wales Daily News - 10th June 1878

Eliza Couch (shown on the 1851 Census), another of John Peters Couch’s aunts, was married on 27th August 1855 in Padstow to Joseph Tyacke, a Master Mariner, born in St Agnes, Cornwall.

Joseph Tyacke also worked for John Cory and details of Shipping Arrivals and Sailings suggest that, in the 1870s, he was Master of Cory’s ship *SS Rothesay*.

“The “South Wales Daily News” of 19th June 1878 reported on a new iron screw steamer which had been built under the special superintendence of Captain Tyacke and which was named by Mrs Tyacke, *Rochefort*.”

Eliza Tyacke (née Couch) died in 1890 and Joseph Tyacke married again in 1892 to Sarah Edgar Hellier, the widow of a Captain Richard Henry Hellier, who for many years had been a Cory employee.

Joseph’s second marriage was short; newspaper reports of Joseph Tyacke’s death in December 1892, aged 65, describe that, at the time of his death, Joseph Tyacke had lived for more than twenty years in Cardiff “latterly having acted in a general managerial capacity, and superintended the construction of the firm’s new boats”.

Eliza and Joseph’s son, John Couch Tyacke, John Peters Couch’s cousin and his contemporary, was also a mariner, and Master of one of John Cory’s ships, the *SS Rhiwderin* – official number 87491. This 737-ton, Cardiff registered steamer was built in 1883; the Register was closed in 1893.

Welsh newspapers of December 1891, reporting on the funeral of John Cory, list among the chief mourners “Mr John Couch, brother-in-law”, and “Mr John Tyacke, nephew”.

Reference is also made to all staff members of John Cory & Co. Ltd. attending the funeral, among them “Captain Couch” and “Captain Tyacke”, the fathers of John Peters Couch and John Couch Tyacke.



John Couch Tyacke – 1856-1914

## CAPTAIN JOHN PETERS COUCH

### Middle Years

#### Master - SS Rokeby

A year after receiving his Master's Certificate, John Peters Couch re-joined the *Rokeby* and Crew Lists show that he was Master of the ship from December 1885 to February 1886.

The *SS Rokeby* – official number 79390 – was an iron, single screw cargo steamer, built in 1878 at Palmer's Ship Building & Iron Co. Ltd. in Jarrow, at Yard number 377.

Length	Breadth	Depth	GRT	NRT	NHP	Engine
250' 0"	33' 2"	21' 0"	1435	935	150	2-cylinder (31.5 & 59 x 36ins)

She was launched on 28th September 1878 and registered in the same year to John Cory of 8 Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff.

The *Rokeby* was wrecked on 25th January 1888 on Conil Reef near Cadiz on a voyage from Newport to Savona with a cargo of coal; a formal investigation held by the Board of Trade makes no reference to John Peters Couch being a member of her crew at that time.

### Marriage

John Peters Couch married Mary Maria Tillett in 1887. Mary Tillett was baptised in Cardiff on 17th May 1868, the daughter of John and Lucy Emma (née Hole). John Tillett was a Marine Engineer/Seaman who was born in London.

Mary Tillett's mother died in January 1881, aged 30, and the 1881 Census shows her widowed father John Tillett, aged 29, living at 25 Richards Terrace, Cardiff with his four children Mary, 13, Emily, 9, Lucy, 7, and John, 4. His widowed mother-in-law, Mary Hole, aged 72, was living with the family as a Housekeeper.

At the time of his marriage, John Couch was serving on the *SS Rapid*, another ship owned by John Cory & Sons Ltd.

Crew Lists for the periods July - December 1886, January - July 1887 and July 1888 - March 1889 show the *Rapid's* Master as George J. Mills but John Couch's name is also recorded alongside; it is not clear, therefore, in what capacity John Couch was serving.

#### Master - SS Rapid

The *Rapid* on which John Couch served was the second ship of this name in John Cory's fleet. The first *Rapid* – official number 77191 – an iron screw steamer, was built a year earlier than the *Rokeby* and by the same builder, Palmer's Ship Building & Iron Co. Ltd. in Jarrow. She was launched on 31st January 1877 and registered to John Cory senior of 81 Bute Street, Cardiff; the ship ran aground and was wrecked off Ile de Sein on 27th August 1883.

The second ship *SS Rapid* – official number 89163 – also an iron, single screw cargo steamer – was built in October 1883, shortly after the loss of the first ship, at Yard number 515. The shipbuilder was again Palmer's, the same firm which had built the first *Rapid* and the *Rokeby*.

Length	Breadth	Depth	GRT	NRT	NHP	Engine
220' 0"	31' 7"	15' 5"	1042	657	99	2-cylinder (28 & 52 x 33ins)

The *Rapid* was launched on 30th October 1883 and registered in November that year to her Managing Owner, James H. Cory of 9 Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff. James (Herbert) Cory was John Cory's brother.

The *Rapid* was sold in 1911 and renamed. She had a long life, changing hands three times subsequently, and in May 1941 was requisitioned by the Italian Navy. Shortly afterwards, while on passage from Tripoli to Benghazi, and 50 miles West of Benghazi, she was torpedoed and sunk by the submarine *HM Thunderbolt* on 7th September 1941.

## Master – SS Resolven

A report in “The Cornishman” of 9th January 1890 – of the inquest into the death of a sailor on board the ship shortly after leaving port - refers to John Couch being Master of the *SS Resolven* at the time; his written statement to the Coroner related that the *Resolven* left from Cardiff on 4th January, bound for Genoa.



Crew Lists subsequent to this incident show that between February and November 1891, John Couch was Master of the *Resolven* and made four voyages in this period.

He was, therefore, at sea at the time of the 1891 Census and a Cabinet Card photograph of him - circa 1890-1895 - suggests that one of his voyages took him to America

The address on the photograph was a photography studio on the second floor of Captain James Abercrombie House, 270 S. 2nd Street in the Society Hill district of Philadelphia. The address had been used for photography since 1862 and by Piper & Marcus (1886-1889) and then by Samuel Piper (1890-1895); it reverted from commercial use to a family residence in c1902-1908.

Abercrombie House was one of the tallest buildings in Colonial Philadelphia and must have overlooked the harbour for the original owner was apparently able to see his ship from the building's upper floors.

## John Peters Couch

Like John Couch's previous ships, the *Rokeby* and the *Rapid*, the *SS Resolven* - official number 86484 – was an iron, single screw cargo steamer and also built at Palmer's Ship Building & Iron Co. Ltd. in Jarrow, at Yard number 472.

Length	Breadth	Depth	GRT	NRT	NHP	Engine
265' 5"	36' 2"	19' 0"	1705	1103	190	2-cylinder (33, 62 x 42in)

The *Resolven* was launched on 1st August 1882 and registered on 20th September 1882 to John Cory Junior of 9 Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff.

Less than two years after her launch and while on voyage from Newcastle to Lisbon with a cargo of coal, the *Resolven* was wrecked on Cockle Sands, Great Yarmouth on 9th February 1894. The Board of Trade Inquiry held at Cardiff in March 1894 found that the then Master alone, a Jules Merlin, was “in default”.

Five years after her marriage, the 1891 Census of Sunday 5th April shows Mary Couch and her family at 252 Newport Road, Roath, Cardiff and City records show them at that address until at least 1897. John Peters Couch was probably on the *Resolven* at the time of the Census.

The suggestion is that the couple were quite comfortably off; they now had two young children, Mary Couch's grandmother was living with the family, and they had employed a Family Servant.

Name	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age	Rank, Profession or Occupation	Where Born
Mary M. Couch	Head	Wife	22	(Wife of) Sea Captain	Cardiff, Glamorgan
John T. Couch	Son		2		Cardiff, Glamorgan
Dorothy M. Couch	Daughter		2 mo		Cardiff, Glamorgan
Mary Hole	G'mother	Widow	82		Cardiff, Glamorgan
Elizabeth A. Parson	Servant	Single	18		Cornwall, Padstow

1891 Census



In the same year, John Couch's parents and his siblings were living at 75 Richards Terrace in Roath, Cardiff; his father was no longer at sea but a Foreman. Richards Terrace was the same street where John Couch's father-in-law, John Tillett and his family were living in 1881.

Name	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age	Rank, Profession or Occupation	Where Born
John Couch	Head	Married	56	Overlooker Man	Padstow, Cornwall
Jane Couch	Wife	Married	55		Padstow, Cornwall
Thomas Couch	Son	Single	28	Rigger Ship	Padstow, Cornwall
Charles Couch	Son	Single	26	Boiler Maker	Padstow, Cornwall
Harriet Maud Couch	Daughter	Single	21		Padstow, Cornwall
William Couch	Son	Single	18	Optician	Padstow, Cornwall
Josephine Couch	Daughter	Single	16	Scholar	Cardiff, Wales

1891 Census

### Master – SS Ruabon



SS Ruabon

Crew Lists and “Crew Agreements and Official Logbooks” for the port of Cardiff for the period from 1863 to 1913 show that, after leaving the *Resolven* in November 1891, John Couch was Master of the *SS Ruabon*, another of the ships owned by John Cory & Sons Ltd. These records show that John Couch's five engagements in the period from November 1891 to December 1896 took him on seventeen voyages.

The *Ruabon* – official number 98417 – was a steel, single shaft, single screw cargo steamer built in 1891 by William Gray & Co. Ltd. of West Hartlepool, at Yard number 427, and fitted with an engine by the Central Marine Engineering Works Ltd., West Hartlepool.

Length	Breadth	Depth	GRT	NRT	NHP	Engine
280' 4"	38' 1"	18 0"	2004	1285	160	3-cylinder (20, 31.5, 53 x 36 in)

The ship was launched on 6th October 1891 and registered to The “Ruabon” Steamship Company Ltd. of 9 Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff, her Manager being James H. Cory of Whitchurch, Glamorgan.

No records have been found for voyages made after December 1896 until John Couch was discharged from the *Ruabon* after a voyage from July 1898 to January 1899. The *Ruabon* was torpedoed and sunk by U-20 on 2nd May 1916 when 160 miles W. by S. of Ushant (Ouessant) on passage Sevilla for Troon with iron ore. There were no casualties.

### Master – SS Ramillies

John Couch had already, many years before the *Ruabon* was lost, moved to his next ship, the *SS Ramillies*. In the period June 1899 to October 1900, he undertook six voyages on the *Ramillies*, three between June and September 1899 and three between November 1899 and October 1900.

The *Ramillies* – official number 98425 – was a steel, single shaft, single screw cargo steamer built in 1892 by William Gray & Co. Ltd. of West Hartlepool, at Yard number 445.

Length	Breadth	Depth	GRT	NRT	NHP	Engine
314' 9"	40' 6"	22' 4"	2,935	1,904	250	3-cylinder (24, 38, 64 x 42in)

The ship was launched on 24th August October 1892 and registered to The “Ramillies” Steamship Company Ltd. of 9 Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff, her Manager being John Cory of the same address.

Compared to other ships in John Cory's fleet, the *Ramillies* had a relatively long life. She was on voyage from Troon to Huelva with a cargo of coal when, on 21st July 1917, she was sunk by gunfire by the German submarine U-58, 120 miles W.N.W. of Tory Island. There were no casualties.

At the time of the 1901 Census, John Peters Couch and his family were still living at 252 Newport Road, Roath but he described himself as an "Employer" and to the question "If working at home", John Couch replied "Trading". The suggestion is that he may have had his own enterprise but this is at odds with John Couch's long career with John Cory & Sons Ltd.

Name	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age	Rank, Profession or Occupation	Where Born
John P. Couch	Head	Married	40	Master Mariner	Cornwall
Mary M. Couch	Wife	Married	33		Glamorgan, Cardiff
John T. Couch	Son	Single	13		Glamorgan, Cardiff
Dorothy M. Couch	Daughter	Single	11		Glamorgan, Cardiff
Marjorie J. Couch	Daughter	Single	8		Glamorgan, Cardiff
Kenneth Couch	Son	Single	3		Glamorgan, Cardiff
Donald Couch	Son	Single	2		Glamorgan, Cardiff

1901 Census

The 1901 Census indicates that John Couch's father died between 1891 and 1901; his widowed mother was still living at 75 Richards Terrace, Roath.

Name	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age	Rank, Profession or Occupation	Where Born
Jane Couch	Head	Widowed	65		Cornwall, Padstow
Lela Jane Couch	Daughter	Married	39		Cornwall, Padstow
Mary M. Couch Hill	G'daughter	Single	9		Glamorgan, Cardiff
Lilian E. Edwards	Servant	Single	23	General Servant, Domestic	Glamorgan, Cardiff

1901 Census

At about the same time that John Peters Couch was Master of the *Ramillies*, the 1901 Census shows that his brother Thomas Chalk Couch was a Dock Pilot's Assistant in Cardiff. By 1911, Thomas Couch was a "Rigger on board ship" working in the Docks and until at least 1914, he and his family were still living in the same street, Adelaide Street, Cardiff.

## SS ROSALIE - THE FIRST STEAMSHIP - 1900

The *Rosalie* torpedoed and aground off Weybourne was the second steamship to be given the name. The first *Rosalie* was also under the command of John Peters Couch.

The first *Rosalie* – Official number 109791 – was a steel, single shaft, single screw cargo steamer built in 1900 by the Northumberland Shipping Company Ltd. at Howdon-on-Tyne, at Yard number 81. She was registered at the port of Cardiff on 16th January 1900 to John Cory & Sons Ltd., Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff, and her Manager was John Cory.

Length	Breadth	Depth	GRT	NRT	NHP	Engine
360' 0"	48' 0"	28' 2"	4,303	2,821	319	3-cylinder (23, 38.5, 65 x 48ins)

The "South Wales Daily News" of Monday 11th December 1899 reported on her launch on, the previous Monday, 4th December.

### NEW CARDIFF STEAMER LAUNCH OF THE S.S. ROSALIE

On Monday afternoon there was launched from the yard of the Northumberland Shipbuilding Company Limited, Howdon-on-Tyne, a fine large steel spar deck steamer of 7,000 tons dead weight capacity, built to the order of Messrs John Cory and Sons, Limited, Cardiff.

This vessel is built to the highest class of Lloyd's, and is 370 feet long by 48 feet beam by 30 feet 10 inches depth, moulded with long bridge, topgallant forecastle, all the midship accommodation being in steel houses on the bridge deck. The steamer has been specifically designed for the rapid handling of large cargoes, with extra large hatchways, a large number of powerful steam winches, derrick posts at sides of hatchways, etc. and she will be fitted with the latest type of machinery of 2,000 L.H.P. by the Wallsend Slipway and Engineering Company.

A large company assembled to witness the launch, the steamer being christened the *Rosalie* by Mrs Rowland Hodge, the wife of the managing director.

The *Rosalie* is the second of the four steamers, building by the Northumberland Shipbuilding Company Limited, for Messrs John Cory and Sons Limited, the s.s. *Ravenshoe*, a steamer of over 6,000 tons dead weight having been delivered in the spring of this year, whilst there are two other vessels, each of 7,000 tons, in the course of construction for delivery in the spring and autumn of next year.

Mr John Cory is one of the directors of the Northumberland Shipping Company Limited, and it must be a source of gratification to the company to feel that the directors are supporting them with their orders in this way.

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The ship was owned by the British Steam Shipping Company Limited and the management of the vessel was entrusted, as per the company's seal received on 13th April 1901, to Mr John Cory (John Cory & Sons Ltd.) of Mount Stuart House, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff.

John Cory's address was "Sea View", Penarth, Cardiff.

The other two of the four ships referred to in the report of the launch of the *Rosalie* were the *SS Rhodesia* launched on 14th June 1900 and the *SS Ruperra* launched on 9th November 1900. Like a number of Cory's ships, the *Ruperra* had a very short life; she sank on 29th July 1903 after a collision with the *SS Melampus* when 14 miles South of Bishop Rock Lighthouse on a voyage from Barry to Port Said with a cargo of coal.

The "Shields Daily Gazette" of 20th January 1900 gave the following description of the *Rosalie*.

The s.s. *Rosalie*, a fine steel screw spar steamer built to the highest class at Lloyd's, by the Northumberland Shipbuilding Company Ltd., of Howdon-on-Tyne, and owned by Messrs John Cory & Sons Ltd., left the Tyne for her trials. The practical dimension of the steamer are 370 feet over all by 47 feet beam by 30 feet 10 inches d.m., with a deadweight capacity of over 7,000 tons on a moderate draught of water, and she has been specially arranged for the rapid handling of large cargoes with increased size of hatchways, a large number of powerful steam winches, derrick posts at sides of hatchways etc. The propelling machinery has been constructed by Messrs The Wallsend Slipway and Engineering Co., Ltd., with cylinders 23, 38<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> and 65 in in diameter, by 48 in. stroke, the working pressure being 180 lbs. Throughout the trial trip, the engines ran most satisfactorily, the vessel maintaining a speed of over 11 knots per hour, the i.h.p. being over 2,000. Afterwards the *Rosalie* left for Cardiff under the command of Captain Pengelly where she will load preparatory to her first voyage.

Captain John Pengelly – who, as reported, captained the first *Rosalie* back to Cardiff following her trial – was her Master from January to June 1900.

John Peters Couch became Master of the *Rosalie* from June 1900 and the assumption is that he had relinquished his captancy of the *Ramillies* to take command of the new, first steamship named *Rosalie*.

The Crew Agreement records show that he had an advance of wages for his first engagement, which took him on three voyages in the year beginning November 1900.

Shortly after John Couch took command of the *Rosalie*, the 1901 Census taken on 31st March shows him and his family still at 252 Newport Road, Roath.

Name	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age	Rank, Profession or Occupation	Where Born
John P. Couch	Head	Married	40	Master Mariner - Seas	Cornwall
Mary M. Couch	Wife	Married	33		Cardiff, Glamorgan
John T. Couch	Son	Single	13		Cardiff, Glamorgan
Dorothy M. Couch	Daughter	Single	11		Cardiff, Glamorgan
Kenneth Couch	Son	Single	3		Cardiff, Glamorgan
Donald Couch	Son	Single	2		Cardiff, Glamorgan

**1901 Census**

The "Schedule for Vessels - List of Officers and Crew on Shore" on the night of the Census shows for the *Rosalie* John Couch, the Master, 42, and Arthur G. Cross, the Mate, 36, and states that "the position of the vessel at midnight on Sunday 31st March 1901" was Roath Dock in Cardiff.

On completion of that first year, John Couch undertook three voyages in the year November 1901 to November 1902, followed by four in the year November 1902 to November 1903.

With John Couch as her Master, the first *Rosalie* had a short and eventful maritime career of just five years, first being held "captive" in 1904 and then, a year later, running aground and being wrecked.

## SS ROSALIE - THE FIRST STEAMSHIP - 1900

### Taken Captive - 1904

Newspapers in February 1904 reported on information received from Lloyd's that the steamer *Rosalie* had been captured, during the Russo-Japanese War, by the Russian Government of Vladivostock.

**THE "CAPTURE" OF BRITISH STEAMER.**  
The British steamer *Rosalie*, which had been chartered by the Russian Government in October last for Port Arthur or Vladivostok, is reported to have been captured by the Russian Government. It is believed, however, that the vessel has simply been detained in port to prevent the leakage of information of Russia's naval doings.

"The Western Gazette" commented, "The offence alleged against the vessel is not stated. She had conveyed a cargo of coal to the Far East for her captors." and other reports surmised that the *Rosalie* was being detained just as the Russian authorities had detained another ship, the *Foxton Hall*, also at Port Arthur, to "prevent Russia's naval movements there being known".

A press cutting – from the Couch family archives – gives more detailed information. The child or children referred to are possibly one or both of John Couch's young sons, Kenneth, aged 6, and/or Donald, aged 5.

#### **Cardiff Steamer's Fate DETAINED BY RUSSIA**

Lloyd's report that the owners have received advice that the steamer *Rosalie* has been "captured" by the Russian Government at Vladivostock.

The only steamer *Rosalie* which is recorded in the "Mercantile Navy List" is that belonging to the British Steam Shipping Co. Ltd. (Messrs J Cory and Sons), Bute Docks, Cardiff. She is a steel vessel, built in 1900, and has a registered gross tonnage of 4,303 tons, and is of 319 horse power.

When approached on the subject Messrs J. Cory and Sons said they were "not in a position to make any statement today".

In other quarters, however, we learn that the *Rosalie* was chartered by Messrs Hull, Blyth and Co. for the Russian Government on October 27th last, for Port Arthur or Vladivostock. She left Cardiff with coal on November 21st, and received orders at Sabang (China) to proceed to Vladivostock, and information was received that she was at this port on the 17th inst.

The probable explanation is that the vessel is being detained – just as the Russian authorities detained the *Foxton Hall* at Port Arthur – to prevent leakage of information as to Russia's naval doings at Vladivostock.

The s.s. *Rosalie*'s captain is Mr J. Couch, of Cardiff, who is accompanied by his wife and one if not two of his children. The mate, Mr Cross, and the second engineer, Mr Harris, are also of Cardiff, but the crew were signed on at a Continental port, and are practically all Dutchmen.

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## SS ROSALIE - THE FIRST STEAMSHIP – 1900

### The Last Voyage - 1905

The *Rosalie* had been in service for just over five years when, on 7th October 1905, she ran aground and was wrecked off Carrumeiro Chico Rocks, Corcubion, Spain while on a voyage from Odessa to Christiansand carrying a cargo of wheat.

The “South Wales Daily News” of Wednesday 1st November reported:

“The master, Captain Couch, and crew of the s.s. *Rosalie*, which was wrecked a fortnight ago in Corcubion Bay, arrived at Liverpool on Sunday, and returned to Cardiff on Tuesday morning. The *Rosalie* was owned by Messrs John Cory and Sons, Ltd., and was wrecked on submerged rocks while leaving Corcubion on a passage from the Black Sea to Norway loaded with grain.”

A formal Board of Trade investigation under the terms of The Merchant Shipping Act 1894 was held at the Town Hall in Cardiff on 21st and 22nd November 1905 to investigate the circumstances of her loss.

It was reported that the Board of Trade looked upon this as “a most important case” and “desired a thorough investigation because the money involved by the loss of the *Rosalie* and her cargo of wheat was very great”.

The “Annex” gave details of the ship’s specifications, of her owners, and the navigational equipment (three compasses including a Whyte-Thompson compass on the upper bridge, used in the navigation of the vessel) and life-saving equipment on board and described her as “in every respect well found and seaworthy”.

It went on to describe that the *Rosalie* left Odessa on the evening of 22nd September 1905; she was commanded by Captain John Peters Couch and had a crew of twenty-nine hands. Her cargo of 6,500 tons of grain was consigned in Christiansand and Bergen and consisted of rye stored in the lower hold and barley in the ‘tween decks; the value of the cargo was approximately £50,000, the freight about £3,000, and the vessel herself was worth about £40,000.

The *Rosalie* left Odessa with about 500 tons of bunkers on board and Captain Couch expected that, on her usual consumption of about 23 tons per day, the quantity would be sufficient to take his vessel to her destination. The ship had been running on previous voyages from Rotterdam to Port Said, Odessa, and back to Rotterdam, and was carrying on this occasion the same quantity of bunkers as those previous voyages.

However, on 6th October, when the vessel was near Cape St. Vincent, there were an estimated 170 tons of bunker left, insufficient to carry the vessel to her destination or even to enable her to reach England in the event of her meeting severe weather from the N. or N.E. while crossing the Bay of Biscay.

Captain Couch decided to call at Corcubion and take in additional coal. He had not been to this port before and did not have on board an Admiralty or other largescale chart of the bay and used instead an ordinary Norrie Blue Back Chart for 1901. The position of the Ereza Shoal, a danger on entering and leaving this port, was not marked on this chart, but Couch marked the position of the shoal as indicated by the Notices to Mariners issued by the Board of Trade.

The *Rosalie* arrived at Corcubion at about 3.00 p.m. on 6th October, without a pilot but without difficulty; she anchored alongside the coal hulk, started bunkering and about 95 tons were shipped. Coaling was finished by about 9.00 p.m. but Captain Couch thought it inadvisable to leave at night and waited for daylight.

On the following day, 7th October, the anchor was weighed at 5.20 a.m. and the *Rosalie* proceeded down the bay steering by the land. John Couch expected to follow the same track on leaving as he had made going in and did not obtain the services of a pilot. There was a fresh breeze from the North-East but the sea was smooth and the weather clear. Full speed was ordered which, with a full head of steam, was about 8½ knots but Couch stated that the pressure was low and the speed was only about 5½ to 6 knots.

After passing between Los Bois de Gures and Carrumeiro Chico rocks, Couch intended to pass between the Carrumeiro Chico rocks and the Ereza Shoal leaving the Perch on Carrumeiro Chico rocks about two cables on his starboard hand.

The investigation heard that "when this Perch was about abeam and distant about two cables", Couch ordered the helm-a-port and brought the vessel on a course of about S.S.W., when she was steadied.

"No bearings were taken and about two or three minutes later the vessel struck the rocks on the S.E. end of the Carrumeiro Chico. It was 5.50 a.m. and about two hours flood. Captain Couch and the First and Second Officers were on the bridge. The Perch was then as nearly as possible abeam and nearly in line with Cape Cee.

Cape Cee bore N. westerly and Carrumeiro Viego S.E. by S.  $\frac{1}{4}$  1° S. and the ship's head was about S.W. by S. Subsequently the distance from the vessel to the Perch was ascertained by the use of the leg line to be about 115 fathoms. The engines were put full speed astern but the ship remained fast. Soundings were taken around her, and the following depths found: - Aft about 11 fathoms, in the wake of the fore rigging on the port side about 6 fathoms, in the wake of the fore rigging on the starboard side about 16 to 18 ft., and under the bow about 6 fathoms."

The *Rosalie* was holed in the fore peak and that compartment and the number one hold quickly filled. The engines were worked alternately ahead and astern until about 11.00 a.m. but failed to move the vessel and they were stopped until the afternoon when some lighters were obtained and about 50 tons of cargo discharged. They were again started and kept working until about 11.00 p.m. but with no effect and they were again stopped.

The following day, a salvage steamer belonging to the Carrumeiro Salvage Company worked at the vessel for several days until the weather became bad, causing operations to be suspended. Nothing could be done for two days and, eight days after arriving at Corcubion, the stokehold bulkhead gave way on 14th October and at 4.00 a.m. all hands were obliged to leave the vessel. Captain Couch and the First Officer returned on board at 5.00 a.m. and found the engine room and stokehold full of water. The crew refused to return and at 5.00 p.m. the master and first officer got back into the boats."

Newspapers of the following days gave information about the efforts to refloat and then to salvage the ship.

The "South Wales Daily News" of Monday 9th October reported that the *Rosalie* was floated off and managed to reach Corcubion with a damaged bow and 18 feet of water in one of her holds and that all other watertight compartments "fortunately held tight". A salvage steamer was on its way from Corunna to Corcubion to help in discharging the *Rosalie's* cargo.

Two days later, "efforts to float the *Rosalie*, ashore near Corcubion (Spain), have not been successful but the Corunna Salvage Company, who have the case in hand, expect to be floating her off the rocks should the weather at present there continue fine".

Six days after the wrecking, it was reported on Friday 13th October that a special officer of the London Salvage Corps was travelling to the wreck. A German salvage steamer *Newa* was already at the site and doing everything possible but the latest reports showed that the vessel was badly damaged and the situation so serious that there was little hope of saving her.

Captain Couch stated that in going out of Carrumeiro harbour, he took as near as possible the same course as he followed in entering. On one side was the Ereza Shoal, which was submerged, and he thought it was wise to keep as near to Chico Rock on the other side as possible. He intended to pass Chico Rock at about two cables' length but evidently was not so far off as that. John Couch admitted that he had made an error of judgement.

For a week after the *Rosalie* struck, he and the officers and crew tried to save the ship and the cargo but the weather became "boisterous" and the vessel was afterwards pillaged by fishermen. The *Rosalie* eventually became a total wreck.

The Second Officer and other members of the crew gave evidence which supported Couch's statement. At the conclusion of the evidence and in response to questions raised by a representative of the Board of Trade, the following points were confirmed.

All three compasses on board the *Rosalie* were in good order and Captain Couch had ascertained their deviation by observation from time to time and made appropriate corrections to the courses. The ship was supplied with "proper and sufficient Charts and Sailing Directions". A good and proper look-out had been kept.

Safe and proper courses were steered out of Corcubion Bay in the early morning of 7th October, until about 5.50 a.m. when the helm was ported with the object of passing between the Carrumeiro Chico rocks and the Ereza Shoal. However, the course then set was not safe or proper and no allowance was made for tide and currents.

The *Rosalie* struck upon the South Eastern edge of Carrumeiro Chico rocks. The obstruction was marked on the chart which John Couch had used and there was also a clearly visible Perch standing on the rocks to indicate the danger. John Couch had omitted to measure on his chart the distance from the centre of the rocks to the line of danger marked on the chart, and, ignoring the warning of his Sailing Directions to pass two cables length from Carrumeiro Chico, he navigated the vessel to the point where she struck, "situated within a cable and a quarter of the warning mark that was in view".

The inquiry deemed that, given all the circumstances in which the ship stranded – moderate wind and sea, daylight, clear weather, and ample warning of danger from Chart, Sailing Directions and vision - the vessel was not navigated with proper and seamanlike care. "The loss of the s.s. "*Rosalie*" was caused by the master's act in negligently steering an unsafe course to pass the Carrumeiro Chico rocks, having omitted to take bearings which were available, and having omitted to give heed to the warnings either of his Chart or Sailing Directions."

In a letter to the Inquiry, John Cory & Sons gave John Couch "an excellent character" reference; he had been in their employment for twenty-three years, twenty as Captain, and had discharged his duties to their "fullest satisfaction". Giving John Couch "full credit for a long and honourable career – twenty-eight years in the same service without complaint", the Court suspended his certificate for "six months only".

The Register entry for the first *Rosalie* was closed in 1905.

Having suffered such a loss – the value of the ship, cargo and freight totalling £93,000 - it is perhaps surprising that John Couch's employment as a Master for John Cory's fleet continued for a further twelve years, and that he subsequently became Commodore of Cory's fleet, but his very long and otherwise blameless service since circa 1882 with the same employer must have mitigated in the Company's considerations. His family connection with John Cory was very likely to have been another factor.



## CAPTAIN JOHN PETERS COUCH

### Later Years

John Couch was Master of the first *Rosalie* when she went aground and was wrecked in 1905. The second ship *Rosalie* was not registered until the end of 1914.

The Board of Trade's "Half-Yearly Agreement and Account of Voyages and Crew of a Ship" for the six-month period ending 31st December 1914 records the *Rosalie*'s trial trip with John Couch as her Master; in it, John Couch stated that his previous ship was the *SS Rhodesia*.

John Couch presumably took command of the *Rhodesia* when the six month suspension of his Master's Certificate - following the sinking of his former ship *Rosalie* in 1905 - was lifted circa May 1906.

The family group in the photograph shows as a baby one of John Peters Couch's grandsons, who was born in 1905, an event which quite accurately dates the photograph to that year or very close to it.



### Master - SS Rhodesia

Like the *Rosalie*, the *SS Rhodesia* of which John Peters Couch was Master was the second of John Cory's ships to carry that name. The first *Rhodesia* was a steel, screw cargo steamer - official number 109781 - built at Sunderland in 1899 and registered in the same year in Cardiff. The Register was closed in 1900 when the ship was sold to G.W.F. Brock.

The sequence of their official numbers - *Rhodesia* 109781 and the first *Rosalie* 109791 - bear out that the two ships were built and registered at Cardiff within a short time of each other, the *Rhodesia* on 14th April 1899 and the *Rosalie* on 16th January 1900.

**Launch at Howdon**  
On Thursday afternoon there was launched from the yard of the Northumberland Shipbuilding Company, Limited, Howdon-on-Tyne, a fine steel spar deck steamer of 7,000 tons deadweight capacity, built to the order of Messrs John Cory and Sons, Limited, of Cardiff. This vessel is built to the highest class at Lloyd's, her dimensions being 370ft. long by 48ft. beam, by 30ft. 10in. depth moulded, and she will be fitted with the latest type of machinery by the North-Eastern Marine Engineering Company, Limited, of Wallsend. On leaving the ways the steamer was christened *Rhodesia* by Mrs Bate, wife of Capt. Bate, Messrs Cory's superintendent. This is the third vessel which has been built by the Northumberland Shipbuilding Co., Ltd., since their inauguration two years ago, for Messrs John Cory and Sons, Ltd., and this company have still another vessel on the stocks for the same owners.

Both ships were owned by The Seville & United Kingdom Carrying Co. Ltd. Of 9 Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff, whose Manager was John Cory J.P. of Sea View House, Penarth, Cardiff.

Mrs (Anna) Bate, who christened the second *Rhodesia*, was the wife of Captain Mark Bate, Master of the first *Rhodesia*. Bate, then "Messrs. Cory's superintendent", was a contemporary but a few years older than John Peters Couch.

The ships must have held great significance for Captain Bate for *Rhodesia* was the name given to his house in Padstow.

### Shields Daily Gazette – Saturday 16th June 1900

The second *Rhodesia* - official number 113529 - was a steel, single shaft, single screw cargo steamer, built by the Northumberland Shipping Company Ltd. at Howden-on-Tyne, at Yard number 84.

Length	Breadth	Depth	GRT	NRT	NHP	Engine
360' 0"	48' 0"	28' 0"	4,313	2,826	319	3-cylinder (23, 38.5, 65 x 48ins)

The *Rhodesia* was launched on 14th June 1900, completed in August 1900, and registered in Cardiff on 13th August 1900 to The Seville and United Kingdom Carrying Co. Ltd, Mount Stuart House, The Docks, Cardiff. John Cory of Sea View House, Penarth, near Cardiff was her Manager.

The suggestion is that John Couch was Master of the *Rhodesia* from 1906, after the wrecking of the first *Rosalie*, until he took command of the second *Rosalie* from her launch in 1914 and until she was torpedoed in August 1915.

Crew Lists for the *Rhodesia* show that John Couch made one voyage in each of his initial engagements: one in the period from May to June 1906; and one in the period August to November 1906.

He then undertook a greater number of voyages in the years following: three between December 1906 and October 1907; four between November 1907 and October 1908; three between November 1908 and October 1909; four between October 1909 and December 1910; and three between October 1911 and September 1912.

The cabinet photograph of John Peters Couch, taken by "Dura, Portrait Specialist" appears to date from about this period. There were a number of "Dura" branches in Wales in the early 20th century but two, both operating in Cardiff from 1908 until 1911, suggest an approximate date for the photograph.



**John Peters Couch**

The second *Rhodesia* was first owned by John Cory & Sons Ltd. from 1900 to 1915 but subsequently changed hands twice, firstly to Oscar de Lucovich of Cardiff in 1915 and then in 1916 to the Franco-British SS Co. Ltd. (Olivier & Co. Ltd.), Cardiff.

The ship suffered a similar fate to the *Rosalie* torpedoed off Weybourne. While in the service of her third owner, and defensively armed, the second *Rhodesia* was on voyage from Tampico to London with a cargo of oil and bitumen. She was torpedoed and sunk by the submarine U-61 on 11th October 1917, when 7 miles S.E. by S. from Coningbeg Light Vessel, Ireland. Four crew members were lost.

### **Westward Ho! - John Couch's House**

In 1908, and now aged 50, John Couch was evidently a man with an established career and was financially sound; documents with the Glamorgan Records Office indicate that an architect named S. Rooney had submitted on John Couch's behalf plans for a house to be built in Rhoose, Cardiff and also for a "Lumber Room at Captain Couch's Villa" in Rhoose.



**"Westward Ho!"**

The 1909 City Directory and the 1911 Census taken on Sunday 2nd April show that the house was "Westward Ho!", in Fontygary Road in Rhoose, a quiet town overlooking the Bristol Channel.

John Peters Couch was clearly doing well and it is possible that he had already attained the position of Commodore of Cory's fleet, as referenced later.

The 1911 Census shows that "Westward Ho!" was of significant size and comprised nine rooms not including "the scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom".

John and Mary's marriage is shown to have lasted for twenty-four years and seven children were born, one of whom had died.

Name	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age	Rank, Profession or Occupation	Where Born
John Peters Couch	Head	Married	53	Master Mariner	Padstow, Cornwall
Mary Maria Couch	Wife	Married	43		Cardiff, Glamorgan
Dorothy Mary Couch	Daughter	Single	21		Cardiff, Glamorgan
Marjorie Jane Couch	Daughter	Single	19		Cardiff, Glamorgan
Kenneth Gordon Couch	Son	Single	13	School	Cardiff, Glamorgan
Donald Hector Couch	Son	Single	12	School	Cardiff, Glamorgan
Douglas Laurence Couch	Son	Single	6	School	Rhose, Glamorgan

1911 Census

The 1911 Census shows John Peters Couch's widowed mother, still apparently caring for her granddaughter, and still at the same address, 75 Richards Terrace, Roath, described as a house with three bedrooms, two sitting rooms and a kitchen.

This Census required people to indicate any "Infirmities" and Jane Couch stated that she was deaf. City Directories show that Jane Couch was still at this address in 1914.

Name	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age	Rank, Profession or Occupation	Where Born
Jane Couch	Wife	Widow	75		Padstow, Cornwall
Mary Mabel Hill	G'daughter	Single	19	Teacher of Music (at home)	Padstow, Cornwall,
Miriam Daisy Ham	Maid	Single	20		Cardiff, Wales

1911 Census

## SS ROSALIE - THE THIRD STEAMSHIP - 1915

### Specification and Ownership

After the loss of their (second) ship *Rosalie* off Weybourne in August 1915, The Seville & United Kingdom Carrying Co. Ltd. of Mount Stuart House, Cardiff commissioned - or possibly named a ship already laid down - a third steel ship of the same name in 1915, also from the shipbuilder William Gray & Co. Ltd., West Hartlepool (Sunderland), built at Yard number 860.

The third *Rosalie* - official number 136982 - was similar in size and tonnage to the original *Rosalie*.

Length	Breadth	Depth	GRT	NRT	NHP	Engine
376' 2"	52' 0"	24' 7"	4,237	2,682	387	3-cylinder

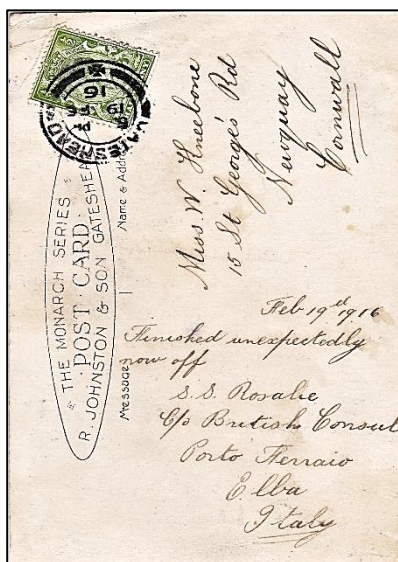
She was launched on 25th August 1915 and completed in October the same year. John Cory was her Manager.

Records from the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic in Nova Scotia show that, two months after his ship was torpedoed off Blakeney, John Peters Couch was the Master of the third *Rosalie* on her voyage leaving Liverpool on 9th October 1915 and terminating - via Malta, Port Said and Bombay - at Hull on 14th January 1916.

John Couch's crew of twenty-nine again included men who had served with him previously: James House, the First Mate; R. Quick, the Steward; William Morgan, the First Engineer; Walter Wilson, the Ship's Cook and the two Apprentices, Bertram Watts and Gwilym P. Williams. Other crew members - Fred Drew, the Second Engineer, and Harry Sparkes, the Third Engineer - went on to serve with John Couch again.

Shortly after her return to Hull in January 1916, the *Rosalie* departed from Hull on 10th February 1916.

James Strout House wrote a postcard to his fiancée dated 19th February 1916 and postmarked Gateshead, saying:



"Finished unexpectedly, now off.

S.S. Rosalie  
c/o British Consul  
Porto Herraio  
Elba  
Italy"

The voyage terminated at Cardiff on 27th August 1916.

John Couch's crew of thirty-one men on this voyage again included long-standing former crew members: James House, the First Mate; Robert Quick, the Steward; William Morgan, the First Engineer; Fred Drew, the Second Engineer; Harry Sparkes, the Third Engineer. Two Apprentices, Bertram Watts and Gwilym P. Williams. J. Djerve, the Carpenter, and Edgar Punal, the Donkeyman, had joined the ship for the first time.

It was perhaps a potentially difficult voyage for Couch as the Second Mate failed to join the ship and three crew members, one Sailor and two Firemen and Trimmers, subsequently deserted.

## The Last Voyage - 1917

The *Rosalie* was on voyage from New York to Salonica with a cargo of munitions and oats when, on 20th February 1917, she was torpedoed by the German submarine U-39 and sunk eight miles east of Djidjelli, Algeria. "The Merchant Navy History of the Great War" describes:

"Day by day throughout the month of February the Germans continued to take more toll of the British mercantile marine, as well as of neutral shipping. The heaviest loss of life occurred when the Clan liner *Clan Farquhar* (5,858 tons) was sunk without warning 80 miles N. from Ben Ghazi. No fewer than forty-nine lives were lost. The *Rosalie* (4,237 tons), which like the *Clan Farquhar* was defensively armed, went down off the Algerian coast; the master and twenty of the crew, out of a total complement of thirty, being drowned."

Nine seamen were saved but the Master, Captain John Peters Couch – the man who was Master of the second *Rosalie* - and twenty other men, including all the other Officers and the remainder of the crew, lost their lives. None of the Officers or Engine Room crew survived.

News of the sinking and loss of life was quickly and widely reported on Friday 23rd February.

Information has been received at Cardiff that the steamer *Rosalie* has been sunk, and twenty-one of the crew, including the captain and officers, have been lost. Nine members of the crew are reported saved. Captain John Couch, who was in command, has been for twenty-five years in the service of the owners, Messrs. J. Cory and Sons, Cardiff, and was the commodore of their fleet.

Messrs. J. Cory & Sons, Cardiff, have received information that 9 seamen from the s.s. *Rosalie*, which has been sunk, have been saved. All the officers and the remainder of the crew, numbering 21, were lost.

Daily Record

### Birmingham Daily Post

Many of the *Rosalie's* crew - John Couch, James House, William Morgan, Frederick Drew, Harry Sparkes, J. Djerve, Edgar Punal, and Bertram Watts - had previously served together under Captain John Couch's command and together they lost their lives. Fifteen of those who died were British, six of other nationality.

Name	Position	Age	Born	Nationality
John Peters COUCH	Master	58	Padstow, Cornwall	British
James Strout HOUSE	First Mate	31	Newquay, Cornwall	British
William Andrew GREY	Second Mate	28	Gateshead, Tyne	British
William MORGAN	First Engineer	50	Gloucester, Gloucs	British
Frederick DREW	Second Engineer	32	Hartlepool, Co. Durham	British
Harry SPARKES	Third Engineer	31	Cardiff, Wales	British
Peder PEDERSEN	Boatswain	35	Bergen	Norwegian
D. CICERES	Fireman and Trimmer	33	Valparaiso, Chile	British
Robert GUTIERREZ	Fireman and Trimmer	27	Chile	British
Manuel LIENDO	Fireman and Trimmer	30	Spain	Spanish
J. SAN MARTIN	Fireman and Trimmer	23	Chile	British
P. MELLA	Fireman and Trimmer	22	Chile	British
M. VINIEGRA	Fireman and Trimmer	35	Vera Cruz, Mexico	British
J. CAMPBELL	Mess Room Steward	24	South America	British
J. DJERVE	Carpenter	40	Russia	Russian
Edgar PUNAL	Donkeyman	21	Riga	Latvian
Herbert Henry PETERSEN	Able Seaman	31	Melbourne, Australia	British
C. CAPATOLIS	Sailor	22	France	French
J. BANKS	Sailor	23	Jamaica	British
M. SUAREZ	Sailor	30	Portugal	Portuguese
Bertram WATTS	Apprentice	18	Ilfracombe, Devon	British

The "Western Mail" carried a similar report about the loss of the *Rosalie*, adding that John Peters Couch's long career with John Cory and Sons had culminated in his appointment as Commodore Captain of their merchant fleet. Very poignantly, John Couch had intended this voyage to be his last and to retire on his return.

Captain Couch, who resided at Rhoose, near Barry, was the commodore captain of Messrs. John Cory and Sons' fleet. He went away on this voyage with the express intention of retiring on his return.

Western Mail – Friday 23rd February 1917

John Peters Couch, aged 58, was the oldest man on the *Rosalie* to lose his life. The youngest was Bertram Watts, aged 18, of Ilfracombe, Devon, and the Apprentice who had sailed with Captain Couch on three previous voyages.

**ILFRACOMBE.**  
MRS. ROBERT WATTS, 10, Larkstone-crescent, has just received from Messrs. John Cory and Sons (Cardiff), the official news of the death of her second son, Bertram, aged 18, apprentice on the "s.s. Rosalie," which was sunk about a week ago. Twenty-one of the crew, including the captain and all the officers, were drowned. Much sympathy is felt for the family, and the more so, as Mr. Watts, father of the lad, is still in hospital at Wimborne, suffering from severe wounds received in France, he being a member of the Sportsmen's Battalion (Royal Fusiliers).

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MRS. ROBERT WATTS, 10, Larkstone-crescent, has just received from Messrs. John Cory and Sons (Cardiff), the official news of the death of her second son, Bertram, aged 18, apprentice on the "s.s. Rosalie", which was sunk about a week ago. Twenty-one of the crew, including the captain and all the officers, were drowned. Much sympathy is felt for the family, and the more so, as Mr. Watts, father of the lad, is still in hospital at Wimborne, suffering from severe wounds received in France, he being a member of the Sportsmen's Battalion (Royal Fusiliers).

**North Devon Journal – Thursday 1st March 1917**

## **SS ROSALIE - THE THIRD STEAMSHIP - 1915**

### **The Submarine - U-39**

U-39 was a Type U31 ocean-going diesel-powered torpedo attack boats class with six torpedoes built at Germaniawerft, Kiel. The submarine was commissioned on 13th January 1915 and her second Commander, from 11th February 1915, was Walther Forstmann, who then held the rank of Kapitänleutnant.

Walther Forstmann was the second most successful U-boat Commander during World War I and during his time as Commander of first U-12 and then U-39 he conducted forty-seven patrols.

Prior to taking command of U-39, he had very briefly, from 1st August 1914 to 9th February 1915, been Commander - with the rank of Kapitänleutnant - of U12, a U9 gasoline-powered boats class. In this period, U-12 sank one warship of 810 tons.

Forstmann had command of U-39 from 11th February 1915 to 14th October 1917, during which time he had one hundred and fifty-five successes.

One hundred and forty-eight ships (total 390,797 tons) were sunk and seven ships (total 30,552 tons) were damaged. One ship of 798 tons was taken as a prize. Of these, eighty-four were British, mainly fishing and sailing vessels, trawlers and steamers but including Navy drifters, motor launches, a passenger steamer and a tanker.

In February 1917, the month the Rosalie was hit, three other ships were sunk by U-39.



**Walther Forstmann - 1883-1973**

Walther Forstmann returned the command of U-39 in October 1917 and in January 1918 was appointed Commander of the III Submarine Flotilla; he left Naval service in March the following year. U-39 was interned on 18th May 1918 in Cartagena, Spain after being damaged by allied escorts and aircraft that same day.

After the war, Forstmann qualified as an Attorney in 1921 and in 1924 joined the August Thyssen coal company in Duisberg, becoming a Director. From 1929 to 1933, he was a city delegate and parliamentary group leader of the German People's Party in Duisberg; in 1933, he became a member of the Supervisory Board of four large housing cooperatives of the Ruhr steel plants.

During the Second World War, Forstmann served as Chief of different commands, of Armaments in Osnabrück and, in Copenhagen, firstly of Naval Operations and then of Military Economic Staff, Germany's chief industrial purchasing entity in occupied Denmark.

After the war, Forstmann became a pioneer of settlement building, including working on the design structure of the thirty Pestalozzi villages. He became Vice President of the German Settler Federation, his service for which was recognised by an Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany. This was one of a total three Orders of Merit awarded to Forstmann, one 1st Class, and two Grand Crosses; he also received two Honorary Doctorates, in 1968 and 1972.

On his eightieth birthday in 1963, Forstmann received from the Captain of the Sea of the German Navy the congratulations of the Federal Minister of Defence and the Inspector of the Navy who described him as "a knight without fear and blame".

Walther Forstmann died in 1973 aged 90.

## SS ROSALIE - THE THIRD STEAMSHIP - 1915

### The Torpedo Attack – A First-Hand Account

One of the men who lost his life in the torpedo attack on the *Rosalie* was James Strout House, the First Mate.

James House was born in 1885 in St. Columb Minor, Cornwall to Agnes (née Strout) and Nicholas House, who, the 1881 and 1891 Censuses show, was a Master Mariner and later, in 1901, a ship owner.

The 1901 Census shows James House, an Ordinary Seaman, aged 16, with four other crew members on board the ship *Hind*. The *Hind* of Padstow - official number 45222 – was a 100 ton schooner, whose Managing Owner from 1889 to 1905 was Nicholas House, James's father. The ship's Register was closed in 1905 after the *Hind* went ashore at Ventry, off County Kerry, when newspapers reported that "a terrific gale raged there all night" and that all the crew were saved.

James House was awarded his Second then his First Mate's Certificates on 29th November 1907 and 14th May 1909 respectively.



James House and Harriet Wilmot Kneebone, born in 1887, were married on 9th August 1916, almost a year to the day after the second *Rosalie* was torpedoed off Weybourne. However, within six months of becoming James House's wife, Harriet had tragically become his widow.

Among photographs in the possession of James House's family is one known to be of Harriet and a second is assumed to be of James Strout House.

**Harriet Wilmot Kneebone**



**Harriet House**



**?James Strout House**

Captain John Couch, James House, the First Mate, and Robert Quick, the Steward, served - together and severally - on different ships owned by John Cory, including the ships named *Rosalie*, and the three men were members of the crew on the New York to Salonica voyage. They must all have known each other well and been accustomed to working together.

It was Robert Quick who wrote to James's widow following the loss of the ship and the deaths of her husband and of so many of her crew and who was, apparently, also in contact with Captain Couch's widow, Mary Couch. The letters - in James House's descendants' family archive - suggest that Harriet House had written to ask about the circumstances of the torpedo attack and of her husband's death; they also suggest that Robert Quick was in contact with, and planned to write to others who had been bereaved, including Captain Couch's widow.



A family recollection is that James House was going to be promoted as Master or Captain in the Merchant Service following what was to be the third *Rosalie's* last voyage and this is supported by Robert Quick's second letter to Harriet House, in which he says: "Have you ever heard Mr House speak of a Mr Whitefield? He was up for Master at Plymouth the same time as him."

The man referred to was William Whitefield, a fellow Officer in the Mercantile Marine and the 1911 Census shows him, aged 24, James House, aged 26, four other Officers, one Merchant Marine Seaman and one Naval Seaman all lodging at an address in Plymouth.

In his first letter to Harriet House, Robert Quick wrote:

81 Clare Road  
Cardiff  
March 15th 1917

Dear Mrs House

I received your letter this morning. I really don't know how to answer your letter, it is a terrible calamity altogether. I think it will be best to tell you everything from the time of the explosion.

We were 130 miles past Algiers when we were torpedoed by an enemy submarine without warning, the torpedo striking the ship amidship on our starboard side just under the 2nd Mate's room and smashing the lifeboat that was hanging over it. The captain immediately gave orders for the port life boat to be cleared away, which was Mr House's boat, and rang the telegraph to stop the engines. The Fourth Engineer who was on watch at the time states that he was unable to stop the engines owing to the coal having fallen into the engine room and covered all the valves, thus the ship was still going ahead when they started to lower away the boats. The captain then came off the bridge and went into his room to destroy his papers. I never saw him again.

Mr House was superintending the lowering of the lifeboat and Mr Grey the port jolly boat, the one over Mr House's room, which is only a small boat.

Mr House lowered his lifeboat into the water with the two gunners and a young sailor on board and somehow or other the painter, that is the rope that makes the boat fast to the ship for towing purposes, was let go and the boat was quickly a long way astern.

In the meantime I was on the bridge with Mr Grey lowering away the small boat, which was my station, when the other lifeboat was smashed when the boat was level with (the) rail I got into, with another seven men, Mr Grey unfortunately stopping on the bridge and lowering instead of getting into the boat. If he had done so, we might have saved some more lives. As soon as it struck the water a Portugese sailor cast off the block in his excitement and we also drifted away with only eight men on board leaving 19 men aboard.

As soon as we were clear of the ship, we all started pulling back to the ship again, but owing to the heavy sea and the ship still not stopped, we were unable to make any headway to come up to her. After pulling for about 10 minutes, one of the men broke one of our only two oars and we had to abandon our chase, we then made towards the lifeboat with the three men in it, which was about a mile astern of us, and after getting on board again made an attempt to overtake the ship. When about a mile from the ship, the submarine hailed us and made me come on board him, and asked me various questions concerning (the) ship, destination, cargo and owners. I asked him to tow us back to the ship, which was very low in the water by this time, and after some argument he attempted to do so. He had only just commenced to tow, when the "*Rosalie*" went down stern first and the submarine immediately cast off our painter. You can judge our feelings on seeing the ship disappear with 19 men on board.

We pulled towards the spot we thought we saw her last and afterwards hoisted our sail and sailed around the place but could find no survivors nor any wreckage. We then made towards the shore and in beaching the boat lost three men overboard. We rescued one of them, the other two being drowned in the heavy sea or surf.

Contd/

The submarine was still cruising around the vicinity the ship was last seen in up to the time we entered the surf therefore we might possibly have picked up some of the crew and there has been cases known of men being heard of three months after their ship has been sunk. We landed at the mouth of a little river 8 miles from Taher and two of us were fortunate in getting a motor car to take us there. I then sent a telegram to the nearest port, Bougie for them to send out a couple of torpedo boats to try and find some survivors. They sent their boats out but were unable to find any one. I also sent a telegram to the owners with the name of the saved.

We made our way by slow stages to Algiers, then to Marseilles, and then overland to Havre and Southampton and Cardiff. I returned home last Saturday at midnight March 10th. I saw Mr Sparkes' sister and mother on Sunday and they were broken-hearted over the news. I also met his mother in the office yesterday and, poor souls, I never wish to see anything again so pitiful, that is the Third Engineer's mother, you know him I think.

The Captain's wife, Mrs Couch, sent for me the day before yesterday. I went to see her. She was greatly upset at first, but after a time brightened up a bit, she is a marvellous woman. Dear Mrs House, I hardly know what to say about Mr House. I would give half my life to know he is safe again, he was one of the finest men I have ever been shipmates with and we were ever the best of friends.

Dear Mrs House, I must draw to a close for this time. If I can be of any assistance to you, please command me. Hoping to hear again from you soon.

I remain yours most sincerely, Robert Quick

Robert Quick wrote again eight days later, presumably in response to Harriet's request for further information about the loss of the *Rosalie* and of her husband's death.

81 Clare Road  
Cardiff  
March 23rd 1917

Dear Mrs House

Your letter to hand, I was very glad to hear from you again. Of course, you must be dreadfully upset, I can quite understand your feelings and I feel awfully sorry for you.

I received a letter from Mrs Drew last night and I will answer it this afternoon. Poor soul, she will miss her husband terribly, I am afraid, she has got three little ones to look after. I was down to Mrs Couch's last night and we were talking over everything. She knew nearly everyone on board. I don't know if I told you or not that I visited Mr Maddock at Barry last week. He told me he was going to write to you but really it is such a difficult subject to write upon, that you can quite understand anyone putting it off. Everyone that I come across is saying how sorry they were for Mr House. He was such a general favourite with everyone.

I think it was ridiculous of your cousin saying Mrs House was downhearted leaving New York. Of course all (of) us knew where we were bound to and what to expect, but as to any of us being afraid or disheartened, I am sure it is not true, besides I don't know of anyone being jollier than Mr House in New York, he spent three days with his cousin at Boston and when he came back he was always with Mr Morgan and myself and I never heard him mention submarines only in fun. Poor Mr Morgan, this shock has nearly killed his wife, so Mrs Couch was telling me, she has been in bed ever since, I believe.

Have you ever heard Mr House speak of a Mr Whitefield? He was up for Master at Plymouth the same time as him. He left a French bay port last Friday and his ship was torpedoed on Saturday morning, and Capt. Whitefield and nine of his men drowned, he was an old friend of Mr House's and was in Cardiff when we were torpedoed, he was greatly cut up when he heard Mr House was lost. I knew him years ago when he was Mate of the *Caradoc*.

Contd/

Dear Mrs House, you ask me if they put on lifebelts and jumped overboard, could they have been saved. You must remember that it was a heavy sea running the day we were torpedoed, if it had been fine we should not have lost a man even after the boats had been cast adrift, we should have been able to pull back to her again in time, to take off the others, and again were the engines stopped, the boats would not have got so far astern and we could have rescued them that way, but owing to heavy sea it was very difficult to discover the exact position the ship went down in. Of course there is a dozen and one things you think you might have done but which you don't think of when you are in such a position.

Dear Mrs House, pardon me for asking you such a question, have you made out Mr House's claim for his clothes, of course his effects were insured for £50. I received mine this morning. I made out Capt. Couch's list last night, if I can assist you in making your claim out I shall really be only too pleased to help you. There is also compensation which you must apply for, but perhaps you understand these things better than I do. I must now conclude with kindest regards.

I remain, yours sincerely, R. Quick

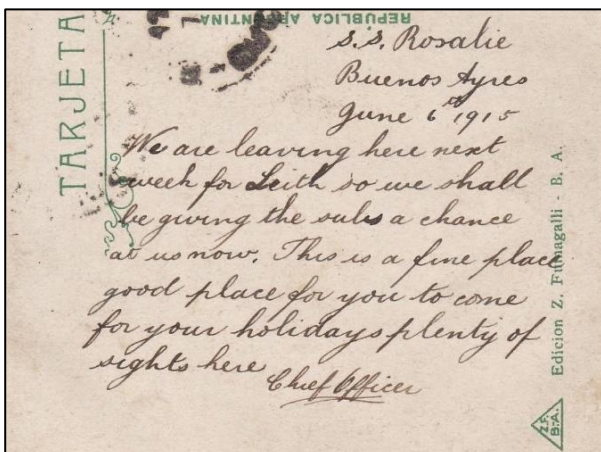
James Strout House's name is recorded on the Mercantile Marine Memorial, Tower Hill, London, which commemorates men of the Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleets who lost their lives in the two World Wars and who have no grave but the sea.

HOUSE, 1st Mate James Strout. S.S. "Rosalie" (Cardiff). Drowned, as a result of an attack by an enemy submarine, 20th Feb., 1917. Age 31. Husband of Mrs. House, of 15, St. George's Rd., Newquay. Born at Newquay, Cornwall.

**Memorial Register, Tower Hill Memorial**

James House's Mercantile Marine Medal and British Medal were issued to his widow on 21st April 1922.

Captain John Couch had intended for the voyage to be his last before retiring. James House had sent postcards from America to his fiancée in 1915, signing himself affectionately "Chief Officer", and he was to become a Master himself, quite possibly as Captain of the *Rosalie* on her return to her home port.



Less than two years before the torpedo attack that claimed his own life and the lives of his Captain and fellow crew members, James House had written with optimism but also with a tragic prescience to his fiancée in a postcard from Buenos Aires on 6th June 1915:

"We are leaving here next week for Leith so we shall be giving the subs a chance at us now. This is a fine place good place for you to come for your holidays plenty of sights here.

Chief Officer"

## SS ROSALIE - THE THIRD STEAMSHIP - 1915

### Robert Quick- Steward



Robert Quick was born on 4th May 1882 in St. Ives, Cornwall.

The 1871 Census shows his parents James, 42, a Farm Labourer, and Nancy, 30, and their daughter Susan, 2, living in Towdenack, St. Ives.

Ten years later, James, 52, still a Farm Labourer, and Nancy, 40, now with three children - Susan Anne B., 12, William W., 8 and John J. 4, all Scholars - were still living in Towdenack, at Lower Trevage.

James Quick died in 1890, aged 62, and the 1891 Census shows Robert, a Scholar aged 9, living in Gabriel Street, St. Ives with his widowed mother Nancy, 50, and siblings Susan, 22, a Domestic Servant, William, 18, a Farm Labourer, and John, 14, a Scholar.

Crew Lists show that just less than a year after surviving the torpedo attack on the *Rosalie*, Robert Quick, 34, was engaged at Cardiff on 5th December 1917 as Steward on the *Reading*, arriving at New York from Portland, Dorset on 13th April 1918. He subsequently served on the same ship, arriving at San Francisco from Cardiff on 21st August 1921.

Crew Lists to show Robert Quick's career are not comprehensive but those available reflect his long merchant naval service.

In 1925, arriving at New Orleans from Rio de Janeiro, Robert Quick – shown as having twenty-five years service - was Steward on the *Ruperra*, the fifth of five ships of this name owned by John Cory & Sons of Cardiff.

The Crew List shows that Robert Quick, 42, was a tall, slim man, whose height was just over 6'0" and weight 172 lbs. He had an injury/scar to the second finger of his right hand.

Form 500 U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR IMMIGRATION SERVICE																
LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIENS EMPLOYED ON THE VESSEL AS MEMBERS OF CREW																
Required under Act of Congress of February 5, 1917, to be delivered to the United States Immigration officer by the representatives of any vessel having such aliens on board upon arrival at a port of the United States.																
Vessel <i>RUPERRA</i> , arriving at <i>New Orleans La 4/11/25</i> from the port of <i>RIO DE JANEIRO</i>																
(1) No. on list	(2) NAME IN FULL		(3) No. of seaman's identification card	(4) Length of service at sea	(5) Position in ship's company	(6) SHIPPED OR ENGAGED		(7) Whether to be paid off or discharged at port of arrival	(8) Whether able to read	(9) Age	(10) Sex	(11) Race*	(12) Nationality	(13) Height in lbs.	(14) Weight in lbs.	(15) Physical marks, peculiarities, or disease
	Family name	Given name				When	Where									
27	Quick	Robert	894042	25	Steward	"	"	"	"	42	"	"	"	6'0"	172	2nd finger of right hand injured

Robert Quick was engaged as the Chief Steward on the *SS Harpalycus* in 1928, 1935 and 1938 and as Steward on the *SS Hartlebury* in 1941.

In 1943, he was Chief Steward on the *MV Axel Johnson* sailing from Avonmouth to New York, in 1946/47 Chief Steward on the *MV Hartington*.

Robert Quick appears to have remained single; he had a long maritime career and was at sea until shortly before his death on 25th June 1950.

**QUICK** Robert of 66 Taff Embankment Cardiff died 25 June 1950 at The Royal Hamadryad Seamens General Hospital Cardiff Probate Llandaff 15 September to Winifred Taylor spinster and Brian Meakins postal clerk. Effects £2435 8s. 6d.

Brian Meakins, who was aged 54 in 1950 and lived in Cardiff, had served with the Royal Navy.

## JOHN PETERS COUCH

### In Memoriam

On the first anniversary of John Peters Couch's death, a notice was placed in the local newspaper, assumed to be by his wife and family.

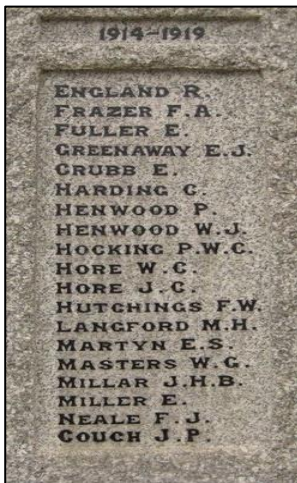
COUCH – To the Dear Memory of Captain John Couch, Officers, and Crew of the S.S. Rosalie, of Cardiff, who lost their lives through enemy action in the Mediterranean, February 20th, 1917. – Until the dawn breaks.

**Western Mail - Wednesday 20th February 1918**

John Couch's name is recorded on the Mercantile Marine Memorial, Tower Hill, London, and in the Rolls of Honour for 1914-1945 for Shipping and Seamen.

COUCH, Master John Peters. S.S. "Rosalie." 20th Feb., 1917. Age 58. Son of the late John and Jane Couch, of Padstow, Cornwall; husband of Mary M. Couch, of Westward Ho, Rhoose, Glam.

**Memorial Register, Tower Hill Memorial**



In his home town of Padstow, John Couch is remembered on the War Memorial which overlooks the Camel Estuary. Originally omitted, his name appears - out of alphabetical order - on the bottom of the middle panel; it was added retrospectively following a petition by his family.

Members of the John Peters Couch's family – some of his siblings and children – continued to live in Cardiff.

### Padstow Memorial

The 1939 England and Wales Register, taken on 29th September, shows his widow Mary still living at "Westward Ho!", Rhoose, Cardiff, together with a daughter-in-law and two grandsons, also a third grandchild. The preceding entry shows Mary Maria Couch's married daughter, Dorothy Drew living at "Rhodesia", the (assumed) adjacent house, with her two sons.

Address	Name	Date of Birth	S, M, W or D	Personal Occupation
Rhodesia, Rhoose	Drew, Dorothy M.	31st January 1891	Widowed	Unpaid Domestic Duties
	Drew, Duncan W. A.	25th March 1916	Single	Student, Medical and Dental
	Drew, Peters Bryant	3rd October 1919	Married	Student, Agricultural
Westward Ho!, Rhoose	Couch, Mary M.	19th April 1868	Widowed	Unpaid domestic duties
	Couch, Mabel A.	8th January 1906	Married	Unpaid domestic duties
	Couch, L. Douglas	7th September 1875	Married	Agriculturist, B.Sc.
	Miller, Ethel Miller	16th April 1904	Married	Unpaid Domestic Duties
This record is officially closed				
This record is officially closed				
	Couch, John P. M.	13th June 1937	Single	Under School Age

**1939 Register**

Mary Maria Couch died in 1960, forty-three years after her husband's death, aged 92. She had been married for thirty years and widowed for forty-three.

## **THE FIRST ROSALIE – THE SAILING SHIP**

John Cory's fleet had three steamships named *Rosalie*, the first was sunk, the second and third were torpedoed, but these ships were preceded by a sailing ship which also carried the name *Rosalie*.

The 220 ton barkentine *Rosalie* – official number 81775 - was built at Padstow, the original site of John Cory's shipbuilding, in 1879 and registered on 5th September 1879 to James H. Cory of 8 Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff. James (Herbert) Cory was John Cory's brother.

Crew Lists show that the Master of the *Rosalie* - on six voyages between September to November 1879, two voyages between January to March 1880 and six voyages between January to June 1881 - was a Captain William Bastard.

No records of voyages after 1881 have been found, nor records of a transfer of ownership.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I am very grateful to:

- Peter Smith, who I discovered was also researching - for a different purpose - the career and family of John Peters Couch and who has generously shared information not only from his own research but also photographs and family archives from John Couch's grandson.
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- Rob and Dawn ("1 town houses") for allowing information about dives and wrecksites on their website to be used, with appropriate credit.
- George from the organisation "Tees Built Ships" for permission to use information from its website.
- The webmaster for the site "Tyne Built Ships", part of the Shipping and Shipbuilding Research Trust.
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- Simon Gresham for proof-reading many draft versions of this report as and when it was updated.

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