

The loss of the *Vivid*

The biography of a shipwreck

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Introduction

At about ten o'clock on the morning of Tuesday 8 July 1913, a lifeboat put ashore at Scalasaig, the tiny port of Colonsay, and a bedraggled party were welcomed into the Colonsay Hotel for shelter and refreshment. The rescues, it transpired, were neither fishermen nor seamen but teachers, who had spent an uncomfortable six hours in their open boat rounding the south and east of Oronsay after their ship had struck a rock in the small hours of that morning. They knew nothing of the subsequent fate of this ship or of her crew, but they had been charged by the Captain to deliver a telegram for transmission to Glasgow. A few anxious hours must have passed before another vessel, HMS *Research*, arrived to claim the lifeboat and to assure the party that their shipmates were safe — but that their ship, the steam yacht *Vivid*, was not.

The next morning, the *Glasgow Herald* carried the headline “Glasgow Training Ship Ashore at Colonsay. Safety of Cadets.”¹ The article described the wreck of the *Vivid*, the training vessel belonging to the Royal Technical College, which was said to be “on the rocks at Colonsay”, having been abandoned by her crew and passengers. Although there was no loss of life, nor any reported injury, the writer was clear that this was a matter of great good fortune: “Had there been a rough sea and high wind such as so frequently prevail off the West Coast, a lamentable catastrophe would in all likelihood have occurred.” The following day’s *Herald* continued the “Story of the Wreck” with a more detailed account² that rather reduced the drama — it revealed that more than ten hours had passed between the *Vivid*’s striking the rock and her eventual foundering — but hinted at complications, noting both that “Some doubt exists as to the locality in which the *Vivid* has sunk” and that H. F. Stockdale, the Director of the College, “had no statement to make” concerning the consequences of the loss. A shorter article on Friday 11 July³ discussed “The Question of Salvage”, which “if it is attempted, will be a somewhat expensive undertaking”; after that, it seems that the news moved on and there was nothing further to call the newspaper’s attention to the *Vivid*.

As shipwrecks go, the *Vivid*’s is not spectacular. Accounts of wrecks and the subsequent enquiries were not uncommon in the *Glasgow Herald*, which carried an entire section devoted to shipping, and the *Vivid* incident was newsworthy for its local rather than its maritime significance. The ship was in fact on her first extended voyage as a training vessel, less than a day into a planned cruise of a month’s duration. Her purchase represented both a significant investment and a new educational departure for the College, which had acquired its Royal status only the previous year, and with its colossal new premises on George Street was a substantial element in the network of Glasgow’s civic and industrial institutions. Indeed, the *Vivid* represents a knot in that network where the civic, academic and maritime worlds of Glasgow intersected. As well as telling the story of the ship and of her loss, this article will attempt to identify the process by which she came to hold the unique role that she had, during what would in retrospect be seen as the last years of the city’s greatness.

¹ *Glasgow Herald*, Wednesday, July 9, 1913, p. 9.

² *Glasgow Herald*, Thursday, July 10, 1913, p. 8.

³ *Glasgow Herald*, Friday, July 11, 1913, p. 8.

Backgrounds

The ship

The *Vivid* had started her existence as the *Capercaillzie*. She was built in 1883 by the Glasgow yard of Barclay Curle and Co., and served originally as the steam yacht of the ship owner John Burns, later Lord Inverclyde.⁴ Burns was a major figure in the Clyde shipping industry when it was among the world's greatest: as well as his role at the head of the family line G. & J. Burns, he followed his father into the Cunard line, becoming chairman in 1878. By 1883 he was beginning to hand responsibilities to his sons, and withdrawing from day-to-day involvement in his shipping lines to pursue his wider interests in yachting and in more public maritime affairs.

The *Capercaillzie* was a little under 200 feet long, drawing about 12 feet of water, and registered at around 400 tons.⁵ She had two masts, but was principally a steam yacht, with engines rated at 425 horsepower, and capable of 10 knots. Photographs⁶ show a long, elegant vessel with rather uncluttered deck and lines and an appealingly plump capercaillie as figurehead: a very nice toy with which a shipping magnate could display his status while indulging his hobby. In the event she kept Burns happy until 1891, when she was sold to the Admiralty to act as a tender and as a yacht at the disposal of the Commander of the Royal Naval base at Devonport. At this point, she acquired the name HMS *Vivid*, which was the name of the naval barracks at Devonport and was inherited by vessels serving as depot ships; the former *Capercaillzie* was the first of at least five holders of the name.⁷ She seems to have been rather lightly used at Devonport: in 1912, it was stated⁸ that she was in “splendid condition” and had “done very little work”. She was to return to a Clydeside where doing very little work was, perhaps, less of an option than it had ever been.

The city and the college

With hindsight, Glasgow by 1912 was a little past its zenith: still the world's workshop, but no longer the unchallenged workshop of the world's unchallenged military and industrial power. The pages of the *Glasgow Herald* at the time of the *Vivid*'s loss give an impression of the concerns of the day: at home, labour unrest and a sometimes faltering economy; further afield, wars in China and the Balkans, and the slow grinding of the political tectonic plates across Europe.

⁴ A. Slaven, “Burns, John, first Baron Inverclyde (1829–1901)”, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2006); see also the Glasgow Story web page on John Burns.

⁵ The tonnage of the *Vivid* is given differently in every record, even allowing for the various definitions of tonnage applicable to ships. In his report in 1912 (Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, University of Strathclyde archives OE/1/17/1, pp. 13a-b), Captain Brown quotes her at 550 tons. The chart of her sheer draught taken at Devonport on 8 June 1892 (University of Strathclyde archives OF/33/1) calculates her displacement at 435.65 tons, while *Lloyd's Register* for 1913-14 lists her “tonnage officiel” as 391 “total”, 351 “sous le pont” and 139 “net”. The figures in other records are unsourced. Her dimensions are much more consistent: 184 feet in length and 23 feet 11 inches in breadth, drawing 11 feet 6 inches aft, though Captain Brown quotes a “depth in hold, 12 ft 9 1/2 inches”.

⁶ University of Strathclyde archives OP3/73 and J. Wotherspoon, *In the Track of the Comet*, vol. 30, pp. 18a-b (Wotherspoon Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow, and available online via Scran).

⁷ See J. J. Colledge, *Ships of the Royal Navy: an historical index* (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1969), vol. 1, p. 596.

⁸ Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, pp. 13a-b.

Indeed, for Glasgow, the first fourteen years of the twentieth century were a time of growing insecurity. The city's mighty industrial base remained largely intact, but its foundations were becoming less sure.⁹ Wages in Scotland were no longer significantly lower than in the industrial regions of England, and although there was no shortage of the coal that had fuelled the industrial revolution, the supply of iron ore, and with it the steel industry, was dwindling.¹⁰ Ship-building had become dominant not just on Clydeside but as the major growth point of the entire Scottish economy — in 1913 Clydeside launched over 750 000 tons of shipping, more than Germany and America combined — but even it was under pressure, with yards making substantial losses on their contracts and becoming increasingly reliant on the warship contracts generated by the Anglo-German naval arms race.¹¹ The economy generally relied on exports and thus was vulnerable to cycles and fluctuations in world trade, suffering depressions in 1904-05 and again in 1908-09.¹² (A measure of the globalisation of the Scottish economy is that between 1900 and 1913 the foreign trade through Scottish ports increased from £38.7M of imports and £32.3M of exports to £56.5M of imports and £53.5M of exports.¹³)

This is not to imply that Glasgow was visibly lacking in wealth: far from it. Swathes of red sandstone tenements were still expanding in suburbs to the south and west to accommodate the growing middle classes, and the more recent public buildings still spoke confidently of the city's status.¹⁴ From its palatial headquarters in the City Chambers, completed in 1888, the Glasgow Corporation ruled the city in a spirit of benign authoritarianism, while it exercised an imperial influence over the surrounding burghs that was more often resented than successfully resisted, and led to their successive absorption within the city boundaries.¹⁵ The Corporation was the most prominent of a complex structure of public institutions, both governmental and philanthropic. To a large extent these institutions were in the hands of a relatively small "elite" dominated by industrialists, merchants and the professional classes, and it was common for members of this elite to hold key positions in more than one institution at a time, forming a densely networked system of formal and informal civic governance.¹⁶ It was from this matrix of institutions and individuals that the great assertions of civic confidence emerged: the International Exhibitions of 1888 and 1901, the Scottish Exhibition of 1911, and what was to be the last of the era, the *Comet* centenary celebration in 1912. Such events gave no indication that Glasgow's prosperity had peaked, but some at least of the city's leaders must at times have felt insecure about the basis of that prosperity.

For the mass of the population, insecurity was rather more immediate. The population of Glasgow had risen rapidly from just under 570 000 in 1891 to 785 000 in 1911¹⁷, immediately before the annexation of

⁹ For an overview, see S. G. Checkland, *The Upas Tree: Glasgow 1875–1975 and after* (University of Glasgow Press, 2nd ed., 1981), especially pp. 9–12.

¹⁰ W. W. Knox, *Industrial Nation: work, culture and society in Scotland, 1800–present* (Edinburgh University Press, 1999), chapter 14.

¹¹ Knox (1999), pp. 132–133.

¹² Knox (1999), p. 133.

¹³ S. G. E. Lythe & J. Butt, *An Economic History of Scotland 1100–1939* (Blackie & Son Ltd., 1975), p. 231.

¹⁴ See, e.g., C. McKean, D. Walker & F. Walker, *Central Glasgow: an illustrated architectural guide* (Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, 1989).

¹⁵ See Checkland (1981), pp. 28–30.

¹⁶ R. H. Trainor, "The Elite". Chapter 7 in *Glasgow Volume II: 1830 to 1912*, ed. W. H. Fraser and I. Maver (Manchester University Press, 1996).

¹⁷ C. Withers, "The Demographic History of the City, 1831–1911", p. 142. Chapter 4 in *Glasgow Volume II: 1830 to 1912*, ed. W. H. Fraser and I. Maver (Manchester University Press, 1996).

Govan, Partick and Pollokshaws in 1912 took it to just over a million. With this rise came poor housing conditions, especially in the notorious slum tenements¹⁸, and a labour supply that often outstripped demand. The situation was aggravated by the improvements in technology and the more aggressive management practices to which many industries turned to maintain their competitiveness.¹⁹ By 1907, both unemployment and underemployment had become endemic²⁰, and the casualisation of the workforce had spread to the skilled trades such as engineering, as mechanisation rendered many of these skills redundant. Against this background, the social unrest and class conflict still recalled as Red Clydeside were rapidly developing.

It is also against this background of imperial pride and economic anxiety that the Technical College must be seen. It had been formed in 1887 as the Glasgow and West of Scotland Technical College, merging several bodies (Anderson's Institution, Allan Glen's School, Atkinson's Institution) with a history of technical and vocational education. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the College had expanded rapidly and ambitiously on its premises a few hundred yards from George Square: work began on a new building in 1903, and when this was completed in 1910, at a cost of around £350 000²¹, it claimed to be the largest single educational complex in Europe. It was in 1912 that the institution's status was further secured when George V granted it permission to rename itself the Royal Technical College — a title that must have consciously emulated London's Imperial College of Science and Technology, established five years before.

Whatever the original purposes of its constituent bodies, the Technical College was aligned largely with the demands of Glasgow's industries, with the most prominent disciplines being various forms of engineering, chemistry and architecture.²² Concern about being out-competed economically by younger, smarter nations had been a theme in the debate on technical education before the formation of the College. In a public appeal in 1880 to the Institution of Civil Engineers, Henry Dyer — then Principal of the Imperial College of Engineering in Tokyo and later a life Governor of the Technical College — made this explicit:

If this motive [to undergo technical education] is not supplied in the way I have indicated — or in some similar way — by the Institution, then it is sure to be supplied in quite a different fashion in a comparatively short time, when Englishmen will find themselves thoroughly beaten in every branch of manufacture, by those nations which have paid special attention to the training of their engineers and manufacturers.²³

The model of technical education urged by Dyer was essentially that which dominated the Technical College. It combined, and generally interleaved, an academic component with a workplace-based apprenticeship. The flagship qualification was a Diploma, originally also entitling the recipient to the Associateship of the College. Accreditation of this qualification was complex, and also at the instigation of Dyer²⁴, increasingly close ties were instituted with the University of Glasgow. By the immediate pre-

¹⁸ C. H. Lee, "Economic Progress: Wealth and Poverty", pp. 144–146. Chapter 5 in *The Transformation of Scotland: the economy since 1700*, ed. T. M. Davies, C. H. Lee & G. C. Peden (Edinburgh University Press, 2005).

¹⁹ Knox (1999), pp. 145–155.

²⁰ Lee (2005), p. 143.

²¹ J. Butt, *John Anderson's Legacy: The University of Strathclyde and its Antecedents 1796–1996* (Tuckwell Press/ University of Strathclyde, 1996), p. 105.

²² GASHE record for "Royal Technical College, Glasgow" (<http://www.gashe.ac.uk:443/isaar/C0743.html>).

²³ H. Dyer, *The Education of Civil and Mechanical Engineers* (E. & F. N. Spon, London, 1880), p. 40.

²⁴ Butt (1996), p. 99.

War period, Diplomas in many engineering subjects were valuable academic currency, allowing their holders to enter the University and to obtain a BSc after six months' further study, although the College remained increasingly anomalous as an institution able to teach at a "university" level but not equipped with the corresponding status. The Secretary and Director of the College, Herbert F. Stockdale, who had served as Secretary to the College of Science at Newcastle upon Tyne (then part of Durham University) before joining the Technical College in 1899²⁵, was keenly aware of this, lamenting in 1906 that "Every British technical college of the first rank, except our own, now forms part of or is affiliated to a university, and can therefore offer its students a course leading to a degree."²⁶

Even without the cachet of a degree to motivate them, something of Dyer's samurai work ethic seems to have informed the expectations and attitudes of the students. He had proposed recruiting engineers "from the artizan class, as they would have more self-reliance, energy, and determination", and continued:

Too often we find that the students who attend colleges at present, or who are premium apprentices at work, are simply being *made* into engineers by the orders of their parents... but a great many of these students have no heart in their work. How different it would be, if these Colleges could attract men, who, having finished their apprenticeship, were determined by their own perseverance and energy to fight their way into the higher ranks of the profession.²⁷

The extent to which Dyer's vision was realised can be judged by the recollections of two students who studied at the Technical College before the War. In his memoirs, John Logie Baird described the College as "an extremely efficient national institute"²⁸ and his contemporaries as "youths... filled with zeal and determination... working men, bright lads out to make careers for themselves. Nothing could approach the frenzied concentration with which they absorbed learning."²⁹ This is supported, unexpectedly, by John Reith, who was firmly among those being "made into engineers by the orders of their parents", and who described his "eight years between Technical College and Hyde Park Locomotive Works" as a time of "intellectual and social frustration": Reith claims that during this time he worked "a fifty-six hour week in the locomotive shops" followed by "evening classes from 7 to 10 pm".³⁰

The feverish commitment of many students is not surprising given the economic background, and some indication of the demands that employers could make of apprentices in a time of high unemployment and endemic deskilling is given by the drop-out rate: only 50–55% of Glasgow apprenticeships were completed.³¹ The pressures on the Technical College as a "national institute" charged with invigorating the Glasgow economy were evidently transmitted downward to the students and apprentices who thronged its day and evening classes — over 5000 of them by the academic year 1912-13, the vast majority of whom were on evening courses of the kind that so exhausted and frustrated Reith.³²

²⁵ See George Eyre-Todd, *A biographical dictionary of nearly five hundred living Glasgow citizens and of notable citizens who have died since 1st January, 1907* (Gowans & Gray Ltd, Glasgow, 1909).

²⁶ D. I. H. Barr, "The History of the Department", p. 18, in *A Goodly Heritage: a hundred years of Civil Engineering 1887–1987 at Strathclyde University*, ed. A. R. Buchan (University of Strathclyde, 1987).

²⁷ Dyer (1880), p. 36.

²⁸ J. L. Baird, *Sermons, Soap and Television: autobiographical notes* (Royal Television Society, London, 1988), p. 24.

²⁹ Baird (1988), p. 23.

³⁰ J. C. W. Reith, *Into the Wind* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1949), p. 12.

³¹ Knox (1999), p. 146.

³² Butt (1996), Table 5.4 (p. 100).

The School of Navigation and the purchase of the *Vivid*

The School of Navigation admitted its first students for the winter session beginning in September 1910, although it had been in gestation for several years by that stage: formal negotiations with the funding bodies had begin in autumn 1907³³; approval had been given by the Glasgow City Educational Endowments Board on 30 June 1909³⁴; and the project had been public enough to raise interest among the student body in March 1909 when the college magazine carried a caricature of a ship's officer, complete with uniform jacket and telescope, over the caption "College Types: the Next Session Navigator"³⁵. Its purpose was to train cadets for the professional seamanship qualifications awarded by the Board of Trade. From the outset it was an ambitious institution which meant to lead the way in seamanship training: perhaps the most convincing and surreal evidence of this is the "Deviascope" or "Land-Ship", a rotating navigation bridge on the roof of the Royal College building, which remained in use for more than three decades.³⁶

The academic direction of the School was entrusted to the Superintendent, Captain Charles H. Brown, who was appointed in May 1910 at a salary of £300 p.a. The Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation give a brief biography:

Captain Brown was fourteen years at sea in sailing and steam vessels, as apprentice, mate, and master. For the past nine years he had been teacher of Navigation, nautical astronomy, seamanship, and collateral subjects in Dundee Navigation School. He was for six years on the staff of the International Committee for Investigation of the North Sea, and had published reports on his original investigations of deep currents. He had represented the Meteorological Office in Dundee for the past seven years; held the extra Master's Certificate of the Board of Trade; was a Medallist of the Board of Education in Navigation and a fellow of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society.³⁷

Brown was thus an unusual hybrid of practical seaman and scientist, making him well equipped to direct the School. His contributions to the Minutes and his annual Reports give the impression of a formidably active individual, and his activity was to be tested within two years by his first major project, the establishment of a training vessel.

What was to become the *Vivid* project emerged from the negotiations between various public bodies concerning the centenary celebrations for Henry Bell's *Comet*. These celebrations were to take place on a lavish scale: the *Comet* was presented both as the world's first practical steamship and as the ancestor of the whole Clydeside shipping industry, and while this claim could be, and was, contested³⁸, its accuracy

³³ Minutes of the Chairman's Committee of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, vol. 2, p. 46, 10 September 1907, and p. 52, 14 November 1907 (University of Strathclyde archives OE/1/5).

³⁴ Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, sheet before p. 1.

³⁵ Glasgow Technical College Magazine for March 1909 (vol. 1, issue VI), p. 154. (University of Strathclyde archives OJD/1.)

³⁶ Footage of this device in operation in 1942 can be found in the Scottish Screen Archive, ref. 1983 (<http://ssa.nls.uk/film.cfm?fid=1983>); a photograph (Royal Technical College Magazine for March 1913, p. 162) can be found at <http://www.strath.ac.uk/archives/iotm/august2012/>.

³⁷ Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, pp. 25–26.

³⁸ See the *Glasgow Herald's* leader on "The Steamship Centenary" (Saturday 31 August 1912, p. 8).

had little to do with the event that it inspired. As a reporter later commented, “a stranger might have been pardoned for imagining that the celebrations were wholly in honour of [the Clyde’s] own dominating position as “the premier ship-building river”... and had nothing to do with the memory of events which took place 100 years ago”³⁹. Particularly when that dominance was resting on weak foundations, this assertion of the Clyde’s continuing vitality was politically important, in particular for the City Corporation of Glasgow which took the lead in organising it. Indeed, such celebrations, including royal visits, the International Exhibitions of 1888 and 1901, and the Scottish exhibition of 1911, were occasions on which Glasgow’s government and elite cemented their status with the local population, perhaps even more than they were opportunities to advertise the city to the world at large.⁴⁰

John Bowers, the Town Clerk of Glasgow, had sent a circular dated 6 March 1912 to interested parties, announcing “a Meeting of representatives of Town Councils, County Councils, and others interested, with the object of obtaining their views as to, and their co-operation in connection with, the proposed Celebrations”⁴¹. This meeting was held on Tuesday 19 March 1912, in the City Chambers. The University of Glasgow was represented by Professor John Harvard Biles, the Chair of Naval Architecture⁴², while the Royal Technical College was represented by Professor Andrew Mellanby, the Chair of Motive Power Engineering⁴³, and it had an ally in the form of Captain J. C. Black, the representative of the Mercantile Marine Service Association and a stalwart of the Committee on the School of Navigation⁴⁴. A more powerful ally may have been Francis Henderson, a member of the Henderson dynasty which had controlled the Anchor Line until its takeover by Cunard in 1911.⁴⁵ Henderson was present in his capacity as the Dean of Guild of the Merchants House of Glasgow, a position which also made him a governor of the Technical College.⁴⁶ Although the “elite” of Glasgow were most strongly associated with the University⁴⁷, Henderson’s dual involvement indicates how the civic connections of the College placed it conveniently to take advantage of civic projects.

Most of the suggestions considered at the conference concerned the celebrations themselves, but two were entered that aimed to establish a more lasting legacy. Provost Fisher of Rothesay proposed “the

³⁹ *Glasgow Herald*, Monday, 2 September 1912, p. 9.

⁴⁰ See Trainor (1996), pp. 246–248.

⁴¹ In the records of the Merchants House of Glasgow, Miscellanea / Comet Centenary papers (Mitchell Library, Glasgow, T-MH/63.15.1).

⁴² See E. H. W. Tennyson-D’Eyncourt, “Biles, Sir John Harvard (1854–1933)”, rev. A. Lambert, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁴³ Butt (1996), p. 109.

⁴⁴ Captain Black is first recorded in the Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation for 14 January 1910, p. 1, as the representative of the Mercantile Marine Service Association. He was the only representative of the shipping community who seems to have been a fixture at Committee meetings.

⁴⁵ See the article on his retirement in the *Glasgow Herald*, Saturday 5 April, 1926, p. 5.

⁴⁶ Although the Merchants House dated to 1605, and was in some respects a survival from the era of the mediaeval guilds, it retained a place in the Glasgow Corporation, where the Dean of Guild was an *ex officio* councillor: see J. M. Reid, *A History of the Merchants House of Glasgow* (Merchants House of Glasgow, 1967), especially chapter VII. Both the Merchants House and the Trades House, which originally represented craftsmen, supplied members of the Board of Governors of the Technical College (Butt 1996, p. 95). Henderson is listed in the Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation for 27 January 1914, p. 40, as a “governor member”, but was not frequently present at meetings. A conspicuous exception will be discussed below.

⁴⁷ See Trainor (1996), pp. 248–250.

foundation of one or more Scholarships of Shipbuilding and Engineering”, while Professor Biles had a more unexpected suggestion:

That the proposed commemoration might take the form of a Training Vessel, to be specially constructed, the outside lines to be similar to those of the Steamer “Comet” and the interior arrangements to be those of an up-to-date training ship — the vessel to be stationed on the Clyde.⁴⁸

Biles was extremely eminent in his profession, a regular consultant to the Admiralty (he had been a member of the committee from which the *Dreadnought* designs had originated) and the Vice-President of the Institution of Naval Architects.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, his proposal of a *Comet* replica appears bizarre. The original *Comet* was a paddle-steamer, measuring only 40 feet by 10 feet 6 inches⁵⁰, and a quick comparison with the *Vivid*'s dimensions suggests that Biles's proposal must have involved either a dramatic expansion of the design or a dramatic underestimate of the requirements of a training vessel. Had the replica been constructed, it seems likely that its value would have been more as an illustration of the designer's ingenuity than as a practical training ship.

This, at any rate, seems to have been the conference's reaction. Consideration of all the suggestions, including that of Professor Biles, was remitted to a subcommittee of which both Biles and Black were members, along with Professor Archibald Barr, the Regius Professor of Civil Engineering and Mechanics at the University⁵¹, and Mr E. Hall-Brown of the Institution of Engineers and Shipwrights in Scotland⁵²; there was initially no representative of the College on this subcommittee.

The subcommittee reported back to a meeting on 1 April, by which time a battle had been lost and won. Both Glasgow professors sent their apologies, but Professor Mellanby had now joined the subcommittee as a representative of the College. Among roughly a dozen recommendations made to the meeting were:

(7) that an appeal be made to the public for funds for the foundation of one or more Henry Bell Scholarships in the Glasgow Royal Technical College;

(8) that, if sufficient funds be forthcoming, a suitable steamship be purchased and handed over to the Glasgow Royal Technical College to be utilised for the training of students in the practical work of engineering and seamanship.⁵³

Professor Biles had clearly not given up without a fight:

⁴⁸ Minutes of Conferences *re* Proposed Celebration of Centenary of Launch of Steamer “Comet”, p. 4 (19 March 1912). In the records of the Merchants House of Glasgow, Miscellanea / Comet Centenary papers (Mitchell Library, Glasgow, T-MH/63.15.1).

⁴⁹ Tennyson-D'Eyncourt (2004).

⁵⁰ Figures taken from the statement of John Wood & Co. (10 October 1826), reproduced beside the replica in Port Glasgow. Other sources report varying figures of generally similar magnitude.

⁵¹ See J. W. French, “Barr, Archibald (1855–1931)”, rev. Iain F. Russell, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁵² Mr Hall-Brown was an engineer with a Govan firm and apparently a specialist in engines: see *The Engineer* vol. 110 (7 October 1910), p. 24 (www.gracesguide.co.uk/images/c/c7/Er19101007.pdf). References to engines by “Hall-Brown, Buttery and Co.” appear several times in the Clydebuilt database in the 1890s.

⁵³ Minutes of Conferences *re* Proposed Celebration of Centenary of Launch of Steamer “Comet”, p. 6 (1 April 1912).

There was submitted a letter, dated 27th ultimo, from Professor Biles, explanatory of his suggestion for a training vessel, but the committee, in view of recommendation No. 8, did not see their way to recommend the adoption of his suggestion.⁵⁴

Professor Biles took no further minuted part in the centenary organisation. Whether or not the process was as neatly piratical as it appears, a proposal that would have reflected glory on Naval Architecture at Glasgow had by this point been transformed into one that was concerned with navigation and firmly under the aegis of the College.

A further meeting on 10 April ratified the subcommittee's suggestions almost in their entirety, with one exception: after an "interchange of views", the smaller County and Town Councils expressed the firm opinion that the immediate expenses of the celebrations should be borne by the two leviathan civic institutions involved, the Glasgow Corporation and the Clyde Navigation Trust.⁵⁵ It is hard to tell whether this reluctance was purely on financial grounds, or a gesture of resentment towards the overbearing and expansionist Corporation. In any case it extended to the legacy schemes, and the representatives of the smaller Councils committed to do no more than "to urge their constituent bodies to do their best to raise contributions in their respective localities" for the scholarships and training vessel.⁵⁶ Already, a cynical observer might have sensed the attitude in the room that this was a great idea, as long as somebody else would pay for it.

An aspect of the centenary planning that repays attention concerns the Royal Navy's involvement. An early suggestion had been to solicit a naval presence at the celebrations, and efforts were made to send a deputation to the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr Churchill. The initial response from the First Lord was not encouraging: he made positive but vague remarks and stated that he was too busy to receive a deputation. Nevertheless, on 23 April, the Lord Provost⁵⁷ was able to report "regarding an interview he had had with the First Lord of the Admiralty on the subject, and that the hearty co-operation of the Admiralty in this celebration is practically assured"⁵⁸: perhaps an appeal to the Liberal MP for Dundee from another prominent figure in Scottish Liberalism carried more weight than a mere civic deputation. Having committed himself, Churchill carried the promise through with his customary swagger, and by June the Admiralty were promising to dispatch a squadron comprising "three or four battleships and an attached cruiser... together with a flotilla cruiser and a division of destroyers" for the occasion.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Minutes of Conferences *re* Proposed Celebration of Centenary of Launch of Steamer "Comet", p. 7 (1 April 1912).

⁵⁵ In the event, some councils remained unenthusiastic about the celebration. Notably, Clydebank and Dumbarton, despite their strong shipbuilding links, declined to declare public holidays for the occasion: see the *Glasgow Herald*, Monday, 2 September 1912, p. 10.

⁵⁶ Minutes of Conferences *re* Proposed Celebration of Centenary of Launch of Steamer "Comet", p. 9 (10 April 1912).

⁵⁷ The Lord Provost of the day was the radical Daniel Macauley Stevenson: see I. Maver, "Stevenson, Sir Daniel Macaulay, baronet (1851–1944)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁵⁸ Minutes of Executive Committee on Arrangements for Celebrations of Centenary of Launch of Steamer "Comet", p. 4 (23 April 1912). In the records of the Merchants House of Glasgow, Miscellanea / Comet Centenary papers (Mitchell Library, Glasgow, T-MH/63.15.1).

⁵⁹ Minutes of Executive Committee on Arrangements for Celebrations of Centenary of Launch of Steamer "Comet", p. 6 (28 June 1912).

Meanwhile, arrangements between the centenary committee and the College were proceeding apace. Negotiations were formalised by a letter from the Town Clerk proposing a Henry Bell scholarship scheme and the purchase of a training vessel, in the terms of Resolutions 7 and 8⁶⁰. This formal proposal was discussed at a meeting of the Chairman's Committee on 23 April 1912. The Committee were favourably disposed to it, but with the revenues from the forthcoming public appeal a matter of uncertainty, they were also concerned that they could end up as the proprietors of a white elephant. Efforts to reduce the cost had already begun. Enquiries had been made to the Admiralty via the Secretary for Scotland, Lord Pentland, "regarding certain naval vessels out of commission", and these were now to be pursued more directly, along with other efforts to spread the expenses of the vessel:

A draft reply was submitted embodying a short history of the School of Navigation, explaining the proposals regarding the purchase of a suitable steamship for presentation to the College in celebration of the centenary of the launch of the "Comet," and suggesting that if the Admiralty could see their way to offer a suitable vessel, either as a gift, or on loan, representations might be made that the subscriptions to be raised in connection with the "Comet" centenary be utilised as an endowment fund for the maintenance of the vessel. After consideration, the Committee approved this reply, subject to the concurrence of Dr Macdonald of the Scotch Education Department.⁶¹

One difficulty faced by the College can be inferred from the need to supply a "short history of the School of Navigation" (then in existence for all of two years), which suggests the Admiralty may have been inclined to regard the School as an obscure provincial institution which they had no pressing need to recognise. The College also replied to the Town Clerk, graciously "intimating approval" and "promising co-operation" with the celebrations. Meanwhile, on the same day as the Chairman's Committee meeting, further cracks had appeared in the finances as Port Glasgow announced their intention to institute their own scholarship scheme, and to retain all local subscriptions for that purpose.⁶²

In the event, the College were given no time to develop cold feet. The Lord Provost approached Sir William Graham Greene, the Secretary to the Admiralty, to be told that no suitable naval vessel was available; Sir William seems, however, to have directed his attention to two Admiralty yachts, *Vivid* and *Undine*, which had recently been put out of commission and were to be offered for sale. Shortly afterwards, tenders for these yachts were indeed invited, with a closing date of 31 May, and Herbert Stockdale was forced into rapid action:

As no time was to be lost, I consulted the Chairman of the Governors and the Convener of the Finance Committee (in the absence in America of the Convener of the Navigation Committee), and it was arranged that I should inspect the "Vivid" in company with Captain Brown.⁶³

Following the inspection of the vessel where she lay at Devonport, Stockdale proceeded to London in order to lobby the Admiralty in person, but with limited success. Sir William was out of town, and Mr Black, in charge of the Contracts Department, could offer only to postpone the Admiralty's decision on the tenders until 6 June. All proposals other than an offer to purchase were referred upwards, as "it would rest with the First Lord or other high authority to consider an application for a gift" — the First Lord of

⁶⁰ Minutes of the Chairman's Committee of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, vol. 2, p. 205, 23 April 1912 (University of Strathclyde archives OE/1/5).

⁶¹ Minutes of the Chairman's Committee of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, vol. 2, pp. 204-5, 23 April 1912.

⁶² Minutes of Executive Committee on Arrangements for Celebrations of Centenary of Launch of Steamer "Comet", p. 3 (23 April 1912).

⁶³ Brown and Stockdale's report, in Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, pp. 13a-b.

the Admiralty, Mr Churchill, being then in the Mediterranean, beyond the reach of personal appeals, and not expected back until 13 June.⁶⁴

It was now necessary to push the College to a quick decision. Brown and Stockdale together produced a report dated 1 and 3 June 1912, which was considered by a joint meeting of the Chairman's Committee and the Committee on the School of Navigation on 4 June 1912.⁶⁵ It is clear from their report that both men had become thoroughly convinced of the scheme's merits, and that Brown in particular saw the opportunity to bring his School to the fore of maritime education. (The scarcity of such opportunities can be gauged from the fact that the Leith Nautical College had been waiting hopefully for the Board of Trade to station a training ship on the East Coast for half a century, without success.⁶⁶) First, however, they had to convince the Committee.

In addition to an enthusiastic description of the "splendid" *Vivid*, Brown and Stockdale's report is interesting for the way in which the educational case is made. Despite Glasgow's reputation as a maritime centre, the governing body of the College was not dominated by ship builders or owners⁶⁷, and so it may not be surprising that Brown felt the need to start with the basics, and with an appeal to Dyer's ethos of engineering education: "In the satisfactory teaching of the highly technical subjects related to the seaman's calling, theory and practice must be treated co-ordinately, and the principles can only be put into operation on board a moving ship." He also appealed to the College's sense that it had a higher calling than the instruction of artisans:

... unless this Department, with all the resources of the College behind it, is to become merely an institution for the preparation of candidates for the certificates issued by the Marine Department of the Board of Trade, then effort must be made to establish classes in navigation on similar lines to the work performed in the other Departments of the College.

I do not wish to depreciate in any way the value of the work done in our day tutorial classes... but what is wanted is the establishment of continuous and organised courses of study for lads destined to become officers in the Mercantile Marine.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ The First Lord had been attending conferences in Malta; in fact he had returned to London by 10 June 1912 when he was answering questions in the House of Commons (*Hansard*, 10 June 1912; vol. 39, c. 520). Given the notoriously fraught nature of Churchill's time at the Admiralty, it is entirely possible that some of his subordinates were not keen to involve him in the negotiations.

⁶⁵ Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, p. 13.

⁶⁶ See the GASHE record on the Leith Navigation School, founded in 1855 and later renamed the Leith Nautical College: <http://www.gashe.ac.uk:443/isaar/C1127.html>.

⁶⁷ The chair at this meeting was taken by Samuel Mavor, an electrical engineer who had some experience as a naval engineer in Japanese service (Eyre-Todd 1909). The only others present at the meeting who can be identified with some confidence are Captain Black; George Thomas Beilby, a prominent industrial chemist who was Chair of the Governors of the Technical College from 1908-1923 (Eyre-Todd 1909; C. H. Desch, "Beilby, Sir George Thomas (1850-1924)", rev. J. Bosnell, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004); and William James Chrystal, an industrial chemist and yachtsman (Eyre-Todd 1909). Among other attenders, James Muirhead is listed in the Minutes for 27 January 1914 as one of the Governor Members, while "ex-Bailie Alexander" is presumably the councillor and manufacturer Hugh Alexander (Eyre-Todd 1909), appears in the same Minutes as a representative of the Glasgow City Educational Endowments Board. A "Mr Watson" and a "Dr Mackenzie" remain unidentified.

⁶⁸ Brown and Stockdale's report, in Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, pp. 13a-b.

Brown's other main thrust was an appeal to patriotism: "No such organisation exists in Scotland, and the only schools in England offering preparatory instruction to youths desiring to become officers⁶⁹ are the stationary ships "Conway" and "Worcester", two wooden war vessels lying in the Mersey and Thames respectively... We have no precedent in this country for the system of instruction now put forward, but it is followed with marked success in the maritime countries." More specifically, he cited Russia, Belgium, Austria and New York as examples of the "maritime countries", suggesting an appeal to the national anxiety about commercial competition as well as European political tensions. Brown did note the existence of a single commercial rival to the proposed scheme, Devit & Moore's Ocean Training Ships, Limited, whose two sailing ships operated a yearly cruise to Australia carrying about fifty cadets. The fees for a "four years' noviciate" under this scheme totalled around £255; Brown and Stockdale's proposal, with all-in fees of £40 per year for each cadet, was clearly designed to undercut Devit & Moore as well as to offer a wider and more modern education. Both the breadth and the economy were to be emphasised as the College sought publicity for the scheme. By November, they were stressing that it was designed to overcome "the objections which many parents have given expression to that by sending their sons into the Mercantile Marine service they deprive them of the training they would receive in such institutions as the Royal Technical College if they chose for them another profession such as engineering"⁷⁰, and were also emphasising that the £40 p. a. fees were designed to make the scheme accessible to "parents of moderate means". The targets for recruitment, in other words, were the ambitious artisan and lower middle classes⁷¹, and the need to appeal to this class helped shape the nature of the project.

While Brown had covered the technical arguments, Stockdale's task was to make the finances palatable: no mean task given that Brown had estimated running costs of around £1500 for each six-month session that the *Vivid* spent at sea, not including the three assistant instructors who he proposed to add to the School's staff.⁷² By the time of the Committee meeting, he had negotiated an agreement with the Scottish Education Department to cover half the costs of the *Vivid*'s upkeep, provided that these costs fell within Brown's estimates. He had also not given up hope of persuading the Admiralty that the *Vivid* might be offered as a gift, and the Lord Provost was to be asked to write in support of this request: presumably it was felt that the influence that had summoned a naval battle squadron might be equally capable of supplying a free steam yacht. Testing the commitment of the city authorities, the Glasgow City Educational Endowments Board was also to be approached for support.⁷³

⁶⁹ The word "officers" is key here, since the main association of training ships was with reformatory schemes such as that operated on HMS *Empress* (see below), which prepared boys mainly for employment as ordinary seamen.

⁷⁰ *Glasgow Herald*, Tuesday, November 5, 1912, p. 3.

⁷¹ The value of £40 in 1912 can be computed in modern terms at £3250 using the retail price index or £13 400 using average earnings (L. H. Officer and S. H. Williamson, "Five Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a UK Pound Amount, 1830 to Present," *MeasuringWorth*, 2013.) In the period, a man's weekly earnings in a skilled trade might be in the region of 30 s (D. J. Robertson, "Wages", p. 152. Chapter 11 in *The Scottish Economy: a statistical account of Scottish life by members of the staff of Glasgow University*, ed. A. K. Cairncross. Cambridge University Press, 1954); compare the wages of £12 per month for the *Vivid*'s Chief Engineer and £6 per month for her Second Officer (Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation, p. 26, 4 March 1913).

⁷² Apart from the Captain and two other assistant instructors who Brown proposed to add to the staff of the School, the *Vivid* would require a crew of about a dozen, with combined wages of around £70 per month (Brown and Stockdale's report, in Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation, pp 13a-b; Minutes, p. 26, 4 March 1913; Minutes, p. 29, 30 April 1913).

⁷³ In the event, financial support was obtained from all three sources, "the Scotch Education Department, the City Educational Endowments Board, and the Committee of the "Comet" Centenary Celebrations", although the extent of their support is not clear. See the Superintendent's Report for 1912-13, in Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, p. 39a.

Even with the city fathers of Glasgow putting their weight behind the request, it transpired that the Admiralty, with an ongoing arms race in the background, were still not keen. The next meeting, on 24 June, brought their splendidly bland response:

There was submitted a letter from the Admiralty intimating their regret that they were unable to make a loan or gift to the College of H.M.S.Y. “Vivid” for use as a training vessel in connection with the School of Navigation. They were prepared, however, to consider an offer to purchase the vessel, and, whilst preferring to adhere to the usual terms, they might not be unwilling to accept payment in instalments.⁷⁴

By this stage, we may presume, the Committee had been given enough time to digest the arguments in favour of purchase, as well as to commit themselves somewhat to the idea. They authorised an offer to the Admiralty of £1800, which was eventually accepted and was to be paid in four instalments at 3% p.a. interest.⁷⁵ Whether the Committee felt that they had been hustled into this commitment is not recorded in the minutes.

On 28 June, both Mr Stockdale and Captain Black attended a meeting of the Executive Committee on the *Comet* celebrations as representatives of the College, and presented them with the information that a vessel, for which the funds had yet to be raised, had now effectively been bought. The Executive responded in the natural manner of committees, by constituting a further subcommittee “to consider as to the carrying out of resolutions Nos. 7 and 8”⁷⁶, and this subcommittee was ultimately given all responsibility for the raising and disbursal of the funds.⁷⁷

When this subcommittee reported on 7 August, it had carried out some further adjustments. Funds raised by public appeal were now to be “in the first place, devoted to the provision and maintenance of a suitable steamship for the college”, with any surplus being assigned to the putative Henry Bell Scholarships.⁷⁸ This shift in priorities suggests some continuing concern about the sum that would be raised by so vague a process as an appeal to be “made by the representative bodies co-operating in the celebration, and others interested, through the press and by circular”. The vessel was “to be utilised for the training of students in the practical work of navigation and engineering”, and with this replacement of the original phrase “engineering and seamanship”, the co-option of the scheme by the School of Navigation was complete.

With the purchase of the *Vivid* decided upon, the *Comet* centenary celebrations presented a vital opportunity to publicise the project and to solicit support both financially and in kind. The celebrations, including the river pageant, took place over the last weekend of August, and the appeal was launched on Wednesday 28 August in a letter to the *Glasgow Herald*, accompanied by a supportive lead article.⁷⁹ A

⁷⁴ Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, p. 15.

⁷⁵ Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, p. 18.

⁷⁶ Minutes of Executive Committee on Arrangements for Celebrations of Centenary of Launch of Steamer “Comet”, p. 8 (28 June 1912).

⁷⁷ Minutes of Executive Committee on Arrangements for Celebrations of Centenary of Launch of Steamer “Comet”, p. 12 (14 August 1912).

⁷⁸ Minutes of Executive Committee on Arrangements for Celebrations of Centenary of Launch of Steamer “Comet”, p. 9 (7 August 1912).

⁷⁹ *Glasgow Herald*, Wednesday, August 28, 1912, pp. 6 and 7. The signatories included the Lord Provost, Daniel Macauley Stevenson; the Dean of Guild, Francis Henderson; Donald MacAlister, the Principal of Glasgow

further refinement had taken place, so that the Henry Bell scholarships were now for the benefit of “highly qualified students, willing to devote themselves to research in some branch of engineering”, but still took second place to the steamship.

The first event of the celebrations was a luncheon banquet at the City Chambers on Friday 30 August, at which the Secretary for Scotland, Mr McKinnon Wood, delivered a speech in honour of Henry Bell and solicited contributions to the appeal.⁸⁰ The *Herald* reporter who described the occasion was supportive of the cause, if fulsome in style:

Pushing the interest of enterprising Glasgow still further, there were present the enlightened governors of the Royal Technical College, who are not content merely with possessing the largest institution of its kind in the world, but make direct appeal through this centenary for the endowment of research in naval engineering problems and in the training in practical steam navigation. Looking down the company assembled in the civic banqueting chamber, and interpreting the practical mindedness of the representative men assembled, the appeal which was directly made for a permanent Henry Bell memorial was yesterday received with a serious import which Glasgow audiences know mean [sic] business. There were between 400 and 500 gentlemen present at the centenary luncheon.⁸¹

The *Herald*'s leader-writer was more grudging, arguing that the credit given to the commercial innovator Henry Bell was more properly due to the engineering innovator William Symington, but conceding that “we can appeal for support for the “Henry Bell Memorial” in connection with the Royal Technical College on no stronger ground than that it should perpetuate the fame of Symington as well as that of Bell”.⁸² The leader-writer was clearly less impressed by the steamship than by the scholarships, and argued that the appeal's “real value will lie in what it may do for the furtherance of scientific investigation, both in shipbuilding and engineering”.⁸³

Despite these ambivalent notes, there was little ambiguity of tone on Monday 2 September when the *Glasgow Herald* reported on the celebrations, and in particular on the Saturday's spectacular pageant on the Clyde.⁸⁴ At the head of its report on the occasion stood three paragraphs headlined “Henry Bell Memorial: Royal Technical College Training Ship: Teaching of Seamanship”⁸⁵, which contained a digest of Brown and Stockdale's report and expressed great hopes of the appeal. Meanwhile the leader on the “Comet centenary” closed with a reminder

that our maritime supremacy, which was established long before the dreams of Watt and Bell were realised, depends ultimately not upon machinery but upon men. That is a fact we would

University; George Beilby, the Chairman of the Royal Technical College; and, representing the Glasgow Shipowners' Association, James Cleland Burns, Lord Inverclyde, who was the second son of the *Vivid*'s original owner (Eyre-Todd, 1909).

⁸⁰ *Glasgow Herald*, Saturday, August 31, 1912, p. 11.

⁸¹ *Glasgow Herald*, Saturday, August 31, 1912, p. 9.

⁸² *Glasgow Herald*, Saturday, August 31, 1912, p. 8.

⁸³ This may have been a coded attack on the award of the scholarships to the College rather than the University: not only was it generally assumed that scholarship students' natural destination was the University (see, e.g., Baird (1988), chapter 1), but despite its engineering strengths the College was a very minor centre of naval architecture (Butt 1996, p. 109).

⁸⁴ A detailed account of the pageant is given in the *Glasgow Herald*, Monday, September 2, 1912, pp. 10–11.

⁸⁵ *Glasgow Herald*, Monday, September 2, 1912, p. 9.

present for the consideration of those Glasgow citizens who are being invited, and who will be invited, to contribute to the establishment of the Henry Bell Memorial in the Royal Technical College, and to the maintenance of the training ship which is about to be acquired by that institution from the Admiralty for the education of marine engineers.⁸⁶

Despite such enthusiastic endorsement, there was apparently still some confusion about the exact purpose of the appeal. The *Herald* leader had conflated navigation with engineering, while another article, while noting that negotiations for the *Vivid* were “practically completed”, had stated that “it is hoped that the response to that appeal will be such that at no distant date a larger vessel may be obtained and permanently endowed”⁸⁷. The Celebrations Committee felt the need to set the record straight with a memorandum that appeared in the paper on 4 September⁸⁸. This memorandum laid out clearly for the first time the distinction between the training ship scheme and the scholarships, confirmed the purchase of the *Vivid*, and expanded on Brown and Stockdale’s report in its summary of comparable schemes in competitor countries — now including Britain’s geopolitical rival Germany, and rapidly-emerging Japan.

Despite the much-advertised merits of the scheme, it seems that the shipowners of the Clyde were less eager than had been envisaged to offer their support. On 5 November, a further “special article” appeared in the *Glasgow Herald*, headlined “Sea Training: Henry Bell Memorial: Shipowners and the Scheme”.⁸⁹ This article laid out in detail the decline in the supply of mercantile marine officers, the difficulties of training apprentices aboard steamers, and the marked advantages of the *Vivid* scheme over its competitors. It estimated, with the aid of some slightly creative accounting⁹⁰, that there was a shortfall of £700 per year in the maintenance of the ship, and it appealed directly to the shipowners who had been vociferous in their demand for more qualified officers to back their complaints with cash:

The shipowners of Glasgow and the West of Scotland may be expected to support the scheme, so that it may have a fair trial. It would require a sum of only £3600 to carry on the experiment for a period of five years, and among the numerous circle of those interested in shipping on the Clyde the appeal for such a sum spread over such a period should meet with a generous response.⁹¹

There seems to be no evidence of whether this article shamed more shipowners into contributing to the appeal. A possible reason for their reluctance was suggested in a letter to the Editor, signed “Officer”, which argued that the “shortage” of officers was largely illusory and confined to “tramp” steamers, and that by implication the shipowners were concerned to increase the supply of officers largely to avoid having to improve conditions of employment.⁹² The letter from “Officer” failed to generate what could have been a revealing controversy, and for the moment the College were left to continue the scheme and to deal as best they could with the financial uncertainty.

⁸⁶ *Glasgow Herald*, Monday, September 2, 1912, p. 8.

⁸⁷ *Glasgow Herald*, Monday, September 2, 1912, p. 9.

⁸⁸ *Glasgow Herald*, Wednesday, September 4, 1912, p. 11.

⁸⁹ *Glasgow Herald*, Tuesday, November 5, 1912, p. 3. The style of this article suggests that it was largely the work of somebody closely involved with the scheme, most plausibly Captain Brown.

⁹⁰ Effectively, the entire grant to the School of Navigation from the Scottish Education Department was counted towards the *Vivid*.

⁹¹ *Glasgow Herald*, Tuesday, November 5, 1912, p. 3.

⁹² *Glasgow Herald*, Wednesday, November 6, 1912, p. 5.

Commissioning and anticipation

On 5 September, the Royal Technical College accepted the Admiralty's terms of payment⁹³, and although doubts persisted about the finances, attention could switch to the details of the training scheme. The proposed course of instruction was rather reminiscent of the "sandwich" courses familiar elsewhere in the College. Over the two years of their training, cadets would spend the six months of the summer session at sea — both coasting and occasionally voyaging as far afield as "the Mediterranean, Iceland, and the Baltic"⁹⁴ — and the six months of the winter session taking courses at the College. Crucially, both elements would receive formal recognition, with the summer sessions set off against the usual qualifying period of "sea apprenticeship" required for the Board of Trade second mate's certificate.⁹⁵ As well as obtaining the approval of the Board of Trade, by February 1913 the College were able to boast that "a number of local shipping companies have promised to give special consideration to applications for employment from those who have gone through the course", suggesting that November's appeal to shipowners had borne some fruit. Despite the contrast drawn in Brown and Stockdale's report between the training needs for the crew of steam and sail vessels, there was evidently a demand for the older as well as the newer technologies, and the *Vivid* was to be "re-rigged as a brigantine so that all the seamanship, as well as the yard and sail drill of a square rigged sailing ship can be performed on board".⁹⁶

By the spring of 1913, interest in the *Vivid* was running fairly high even among the non-maritime students of the College, and the "College Notes" in the student magazine carried updates in January, February and March. The January update again displays Brown's close personal involvement, noting that the ship's "behaviour on the run round from Devonport, during which fairly rough weather was experienced, was considered very satisfactory by Captain Brown, who was on board."⁹⁷ While this sentence might have been effectively dictated by Brown himself, it seems likely that a less nautical, though equally enthusiastic, pen added the comment that "The vessel "is built on very smert lines," as Para Handy would say⁹⁸, and her graceful appearance renders her easily recognisable among the other shipping in Kingston Dock, where she at present lies." Meanwhile, the March issue of the magazine carried a slightly fanciful artist's impression of "Cadet Training Ship S. Y. 'Vivid' ", apparently proceeding under both steam and sail despite a strong headwind.⁹⁹

The publicity campaign could be considered a success, but the College may have been less pleased by the expenses associated with the *Vivid*'s removal to the Clyde and her commissioning. It emerged that she was not in quite the mint condition that a naïve reading of Captain Brown's report might have suggested. Brown had stated that

It is difficult to estimate the cost of alterations to put the vessel in commission, but, excluding the erection¹⁰⁰ and rigging referred to, it would be merely a question of workmen's time to effect the rearrangement of berthage, very little material being required.¹⁰¹

⁹³ Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, p. 18.

⁹⁴ *Glasgow Herald*, Tuesday, November 5, 1912, p. 5.

⁹⁵ Royal Technical College Magazine for February 1913 (vol. V, issue V), p. 120.

⁹⁶ Royal Technical College Magazine for February 1913 (vol. V, issue V), p. 120.

⁹⁷ Royal Technical College Magazine for January 1913 (vol. V, issue IV), p. 97.

⁹⁸ The escapades of the Clyde puffer captain and his gently venal crew had been appearing in the *Glasgow Evening News* since 1905 and would have been thoroughly familiar to the *Magazine*'s readers, though not necessarily a comparison that Brown would have welcomed. See the entry for Neil Munro in Eyre-Todd (1909).

⁹⁹ Royal Technical College Magazine for March 1913 (vol. V, issue VI), p. 162.

¹⁰⁰ This was of a superstructure on the after deck to accommodate "classes and meetings".

In contrast, once the vessel had been purchased, on 9 January 1913 Brown estimated the cost of the commissioning process at £1000¹⁰²; in the event, it came in at £1038/10/11, with the surplus attributed to the cost of refitting the engines and boilers. A number of local businesses and individuals on the Committee contributed equipment, enabling at least some minor costs to be defrayed¹⁰³; notably, Mr Mavor saw to it that his firm, Mavor and Coulson, supplied the ship's electrical lighting as a gift¹⁰⁴. In the wake of the *Titanic* disaster the previous year, particular attention was paid to ensuring that the *Vivid* complied with the newly-introduced Board of Trade regulations: one of the Committee members, the yachtsman William James Chrystal, donated a lifeboat, and the other ship's boats were equipped with the latest lifesaving equipment at a cost of £20.¹⁰⁵ In the light of subsequent events, this was probably money well spent.

Despite — or perhaps because of — the outlay of nearly £3000 on a vessel the College had hoped to acquire for free, by the spring of 1913 they were displaying considerable pride in their new possession. They had previously issued postcards showing their new premises on George Street, and postcards were now produced depicting the *Vivid*¹⁰⁶, as was a publicity photograph showing cadets taking an observation on the bridge¹⁰⁷. In May, when the *Vivid* lay in Prince's Dock for her lighting installation, she was opened for inspection to “governors of the College and a number of the subscribers to the Comet Centenary Memorial”, and these visitors were careful to express publically “their admiration of the suitability of the ship for the purpose for which she is designed and of the spick and span condition in which they found everything on board”.¹⁰⁸ That onboard equipment extended, in genteel fashion, to a piano (supplied by Messrs Paterson Sons and Co), and in a slightly grandiloquent touch an application was made “to the Registrar-General of Seamen for permission to fly the blue ensign charged with the College Arms”.¹⁰⁹ (The Blue Ensign defaced with a badge or emblem was the usual ensign of British public bodies, although a vessel commanded by an RNR officer might fly the Blue Ensign undefaced.¹¹⁰) The last detail may again have originated with Brown, as the seaman most closely involved in the process; further evidence of Brown's attention to detail and care for his pet project is given in the note that “The Committee also approved the timetable of the daily routine on board ship submitted by the Superintendent”. Nothing, it seems, was to be left to chance or to interference.

¹⁰¹ Brown and Stockdale's report, in Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, pp. 13a-b.

¹⁰² Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, p. 21.

¹⁰³ Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, pp. 28–31.

¹⁰⁴ *Glasgow Herald*, Tuesday, May 20, 1913, p. 9.

¹⁰⁵ Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, pp. 28–29.

¹⁰⁶ These can be found with other images of the *Vivid* in the University of Strathclyde archives, OP3/73.

¹⁰⁷ J. Wotherspoon, *In the Track of the Comet*, vol. 30, p. 18a. Wotherspoon gives no provenance for this photograph, which appears to be a high-quality print, although he notes rather acerbically that it is “faked”; on this basis it is plausible that the photograph formed part of the College's publicity campaign.

¹⁰⁸ *Glasgow Herald*, Tuesday, May 20, 1913, p. 9.

¹⁰⁹ Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, pp. 28–31.

¹¹⁰ See <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/gb-ensb.html>. It appears that this application was not successful, since in June 1913 the Secretary of the College applied for permission to fly the undefaced Blue Ensign on the basis of Captain Beavan's status in the RNR: see Beavan's naval record card.

In his role as Superintendent, however, Brown could not take sole responsibility for the *Vivid*. A master for the vessel was needed, and on 30 March 1913 the minutes record the appointment:

It was reported that twenty-eight applications had been received for the post of Assistant Instructor and Captain of the “Vivid”. The Superintendent had selected a short list of three, who were requested to meet the Committee. Two of the candidates presented themselves and were interviewed. After consideration it was unanimously resolved to recommend Lieutenant W. W. J. Beavan, R. N. R., for appointment at a salary of £200 per annum. Lieutenant Beavan was forty years of age, and had served twenty-three years at sea in both sail and steam vessels. For eleven years ending May last he was in command of steamers engaged in the Mediterranean and American Trades. He was a Lieutenant in the Royal Naval Reserve, and held the Extra Master’s Certificate. He had acted for a short period as Instructor in Navigation and Seamanship at the Watt Memorial School, Greenock, and was highly recommended by the Principal and by his former employers.¹¹¹

Captain Beavan’s career contrasts with that of his near-contemporary Captain Brown. Beavan was a professional seaman, originally from Liverpool, who had spent much of his career on board two- to three-thousand-ton steamships of the English and American Shipping Company, trading between British ports (principally Leith and Penarth) and ports on the North Atlantic and Mediterranean: his naval record card¹¹² records voyages to Savona, Genoa, the Canaries, Barcelona and Philadelphia. He had held his Board of Trade certificate since 1897 and his RNR commission since 1898, as Lieutenant from 1902. His brief engagement in Greenock had followed the end of his last command in May 1912.

The *Vivid* was to be headquartered at the village of Row (now spelt Rhu), near Helensburgh¹¹³; Captain Beavan accordingly took up residence in Row, moving there from Liverpool at some point during the spring of 1913. Although a very minor maritime centre, Row had a “good small steamboat quay”¹¹⁴, and more interestingly it already served as the base for the reformatory training vessel scheme operated by the Clyde Industrial Training Ship Association — a scheme, coincidentally, in which the *Vivid*’s first owner John Burns had been a prime mover.¹¹⁵ The Association’s first vessel, HMS *Cumberland*, had been destroyed by fire in 1889,¹¹⁶ but her replacement, HMS *Empress*, was still moored prominently just off shore. The Association was an equally prominent public charity, intended to provide boys judged at risk of falling into crime with a route to honest employment. It was not in fact a repository for criminal boys — indeed, those convicted by a court were specifically excluded from the scheme — but to judge by

¹¹¹ Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, p. 25.

¹¹² National Archives catalogue reference ADM/340/9. Record no. 0888, William Whitley John Beavan. All details relating to Beavan’s career are transcribed from this record card, which is sadly only partly legible.

¹¹³ Rhu appears as “Row” in the *Bartholemew Survey Atlas of Scotland*, 1912.

¹¹⁴ See F. H. Groome’s *Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland* (Thomas C. Jack, Edinburgh, 1882–1885), which also notes that Row in 1881 had a population of “527, plus 401 on board the Cumberland training-ship”.

¹¹⁵ The most comprehensive single account of this scheme is the apparently unpublished manuscript “Clyde Industrial Training Ships” (W. B. Black, Lenzie, 2007); I am grateful to Mr Hector M. Russell for supplying me with a copy of this. Less detailed but relevant information can be found on Peter Higginbotham’s “Workhouses” website and on the “Helensburgh Heritage” website.

¹¹⁶ See the RCAHMS record of the wreck (Canmore number 112139; site number NS28SE 804), as well as Black (2007). Reports are to be found in the *Glasgow Herald* for Monday 18 and Tuesday 19 February, 1889; the *Glasgow Herald* for Tuesday, 16 April, 1889 gives an account of the trial at which four boys were acquitted of arson.

recurrent complaints in the Association's annual reports, this was a distinction that often eluded public perception.¹¹⁷

There was apparently no institutional connection between the School of Navigation and the *Empress*¹¹⁸, but there were at least informal links, of the kind that naturally arose from the dense web of civic and philanthropic projects in which the Glaswegian "elite" became involved. From 1910, Mr W. J. Chrystal had been a member of the General Committee of the Clyde Industrial Training Ship Association, providing an informal connection with the Committee on the School of Navigation, and it is at least plausible that it was Chrystal who suggested the advantages of Row as a base. It is also possible that some of the instructors involved in each training scheme may have provided their services to the other on an occasional basis¹¹⁹: the *Empress* instructors, like most of her staff except the Captain-Superintendent, were resident not on board the ship but in the village, where they would have had ready access to the *Vivid*. Despite these practical advantages, the status-conscious College may have found it slightly embarrassing to headquarter their flagship next to what was widely, if unfairly, regarded as a floating borstal. Taken in conjunction with the need to appeal to the consciously respectable and ambitious social classes from whom they sought to recruit, this must have sharpened their efforts to make the *Vivid* a prestige project, as distinct from the *Empress* as possible. In the event, its proximity to the *Empress* was not to be the embarrassing aspect of the scheme.

¹¹⁷ Annual Reports of the Clyde Industrial Training Ship Association (Mitchell Library, Glasgow, Special Collections G364.72 CLY); see also Black (2007).

¹¹⁸ Neither the Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation nor the Annual Reports of the Clyde Industrial Training Ship Association mentions any official tie. There are occasional passing references in the Minutes (e.g. p. 166) to "grants from the "Empress" fund", but no explanation of this fund seems to have survived.

¹¹⁹ At the outbreak of war, the School of Navigation supplied two instructors to the *Empress*, releasing two of her existing staff for service (see Stockdale's printed report dated 6 October 1914, in Royal Technical College Chairman's Committee Minutes for 12 October 1914, p. 285; University of Strathclyde Archives OE/1/5/2).

The voyage and wreck¹²⁰

The *Vivid* left Row on her first extended educational voyage on the morning of Monday 7 July 1913.¹²¹ In addition to her master and crew, she was carrying four cadets and seven teachers from coastal towns on the Firth of Clyde and the Firth of Forth,¹²² the first contingent of a total of five cadets and twenty-nine teachers who had enrolled for the Education Department's course of instruction that summer.¹²³ Her course was to take her to Stornoway, where a further party of teachers would embark, before proceeding on an "instructional cruise" round the north coast and down the east coast of Scotland.¹²⁴ Before leaving the Clyde, she had first to call at Greenock to engage a fireman, and at Fairlie for provisions. It was at Fairlie that Captain Brown joined the vessel and assumed his role as Chief Officer. (It is peculiar that this role made Brown subordinate to Beavan at sea, although he remained Beavan's superior on land, and it is hard to believe that this would have made for the happiest of working relationships. The minutes do not suggest at what point Brown's responsibility to determine the overall course of the voyage gave way to Beavan's responsibility to navigate the *Vivid*. In view of subsequent events, this silence is unfortunate.)

Having left Fairlie at about 3 p.m., the *Vivid* rounded the Mull of Kintyre at 8.50 p.m. and made her way northward to the Sound of Islay, on Captain Brown's watch. Brown was relieved at midnight by Captain Beavan, who had the task of navigating the vessel through the Sound. They rounded Rubha a' Mhail, with its prominent lighthouse, at around 1.30 a.m. and set a course of W. by N.¹²⁵ with the intention of clearing the channel between Islay and Oronsay and then setting a course for Skerryvore.

Captain Beavan's report gives a laconic account of what happened next:

At 3-10 a.m., 8th July, vessel struck heavily on a submerged rock, and listed heavily to port. Engines were immediately ordered "Full Steam Astern" but, as this did not release vessel from her position same were stopped. All hands were ordered on deck immediately vessel struck, and boats were lowered and manned. Vessel was sounded and found to be making no water; but at 4 a.m. the engine room bilges were found to be flooded. All water-tight doors were closed and it was soon found that water was steadily gaining on vessel, which was bumping heavily on the

¹²⁰ Unless otherwise stated, details of the voyage and wreck are taken from Captain Beavan's report to the joint meeting of the Chairman's Committee and the Committee on the School of Navigation held on 17 July 1913; Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, pp. 32-36.

¹²¹ It is not clear whether this was her first educational cruise of any length. The *Herald* article of 20 May refers to plans to "visit nearly all the ports on the shores of the Firth of Clyde and perhaps cross to the Isle of Man and Belfast" during June, but no record of her actual movements seems to exist.

¹²² *Glasgow Herald*, Thursday, July 10, 1913, p. 8.

¹²³ Superintendent's Report for 1912-13, in Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, p. 39a. According to the Royal Technical College magazine for January 1913 (vol. 5, issue IV), p. 90, the *Vivid* was intended to have accommodation for "around 50 students". It had become apparent by May 1913 that it would not be possible enrol a full complement of cadets, and it was at this point that the scheme was put in place to supplement them with "teachers from seaport towns" and evening students in the School of Navigation (*Glasgow Herald*, Tuesday, May 20, 1913, p. 9).

¹²⁴ *Glasgow Herald*, Thursday, July 10, 1913, p. 8.

¹²⁵ The Minutes record the course as "N. by W. by standard compass", but this is presumably an error. While a course of W. by N. (281.25°) would pass rather tightly round the south of Oronsay, a course of N. by W. (384.75°) would have steered the *Vivid* straight into the centre of Colonsay. The error may reflect nautical inexperience on the part of the minute-taker.

rock. Pumps were kept going as long as steam was available, but soon proved unable to cope with the inrush of water. At 8-15 a.m. ship swung round with the flood tide, and floated off rock.

The *Glasgow Herald* gives two rather more dramatic accounts. The first presumably originates from one of the teachers in the party, interviewed by the *Herald's* Oban correspondent:

The night was calm and the sea smooth, and the noise of the ship striking a sunken rock caused considerable commotion on board. The grating of the keel along the rock engendered the impression that the vessel was being split to pieces, and the passengers, so rudely disturbed, rushed up on deck as quickly as they could and with the minimum of preparation. It was soon seen that there was no hope of the vessel, and small boats were quickly lowered and speedily occupied.¹²⁶

And, under the heading “Exciting Experiences”:

On their arrival in Glasgow yesterday afternoon two of the cadets—John Ramsay and Robert Gilmour—gave an account of the disaster. The vessel, they said, struck the rock at ten minutes past three on Tuesday morning. The shock was considerable, and they were thrown from their bunks. Hurrying on deck, they heard Captain Beavan, the commander of the ship, ordering all hands to turn out. The dawn was well advanced at the time. The weather was calm, but there was a considerable swell on the water. After she had struck the vessel twisted over to port, and it was found that the bottom had been torn up and that water was rushing in. Realising the gravity of the situation, the captain gave instructions for the lowering of the four lifeboats which the vessel carried. At the same time rockets were fired to summon assistance. There appeared to be imminent danger of the ship foundering, and all hands took to the boats. They stood by the disabled vessel, which, as it rose and fell with the swell, was being bumped continuously with considerable force against the rocks, until it was feared that her back would be broken.¹²⁷

At this point the accounts diverge, although it is easy to reconcile them. It appears that one lifeboat was immediately dispatched to Colonsay with a telegram, and it was presumably a member of this party who gave the *Herald* a heartfelt description of their voyage:

The boats set out for Colonsay, the *Vivid* disappearing out of sight. It was ten o'clock before a landing could be effected at Colonsay, and with several long hours' exposure to the sun and the movement of the sea the occupants of the boats experienced no little discomfort. The greatest possible consideration was shown to the shipwrecked company by the tenants of Colonsay Hotel, and all soon recovered.¹²⁸

The other boats, containing the crew and at least some of the cadets, remained close to the *Vivid*. When the flood tide lifted the *Vivid* off the rock, Captain Beavan ordered two boats to attempt to tow her to Oronsay, “then about two miles distant”, but they made little progress with the heavily waterlogged ship. At some point during this process, distress rockets were fired, and at 10.30 a.m. help arrived in the form of a fisheries cruiser, the SS *Minna*.¹²⁹ On the advice of the *Minna's* captain, the attempt to reach the rocky and skerry-ringed shore of Oronsay was abandoned, and they now aimed to tow the *Vivid* to the nearest

¹²⁶ The *Glasgow Herald*, Wednesday, July 9, 1913, p. 9.

¹²⁷ The *Glasgow Herald*, Thursday, July 10, 1913, p. 8.

¹²⁸ The *Glasgow Herald*, Wednesday, July 9, 1913, p. 9.

¹²⁹ The *Minna* was another Clyde-built vessel, launched in 1900; slightly smaller than the *Vivid*, at 147 ft and 281 g.r.t., she was nonetheless powerful enough (770 i.h.p.) to offer significant assistance. (Details from the Clydebuilt website, <http://clydesite.co.uk/clydebuilt/viewship.asp?id=16590>.)

sandy beach — which was several miles away, in the Sound of Islay. A second source of assistance now appeared, the naval survey vessel HMS *Research*,¹³⁰ but the *Vivid* was already too low in the water for a second ship to assist in the towing. At 12.50 p.m., after just under two hours of increasingly futile effort, the attempt was abandoned; the tow-rope was cut, and Captains Beavan and Brown stepped from the *Vivid* into her dinghy as the ship foundered. She took only a few minutes to sink, head-first, in six fathoms of water about a mile north of Rubha a' Mhail.

The occupants of the boats now transferred to the *Minna*, while the *Research* retrieved the lifeboat from Colonsay, and the *Minna* carried the passengers and crew safely to Oban, arriving at about 7 p.m. (The Colonsay lifeboat party were offered the opportunity of returning to Glasgow directly, on board the veteran Hebridean steamer SS *Dunara Castle*,¹³¹ but according to the *Herald's* account, “their experience had proved so upsetting that they preferred not to face the long sea trip but to take the shorter voyage to Oban”.) From there they returned to Glasgow by rail. Captain Beavan followed a day later, having settled ship's business in Oban, to present himself at the College on the morning of 11 July. Meanwhile Captain Brown seems to have made his way to Islay¹³², presumably with the intention of overseeing the salvage or dispersal of the wreck.

What did the *Vivid* strike?

Before we pursue the aftermath of the sinking, a natural question arises: where exactly was the *Vivid* wrecked? Uncertainty on this point persists as far as the RCAHMS's Canmore record, which notes that “It remains uncertain off which side of the island the vessel was lost”¹³³. This uncertainty seems to have originated with the *Glasgow Herald's* reports, and to arise from two factors: first, the dispatch of the original telegram from Colonsay and a subsequent telegram from Islay; and second, the distance between the points where the rock was struck and where the *Vivid* subsequently foundered. The *Herald* scented a story in this discrepancy:

Some doubt exists as to the locality in which the *Vivid* has sunk. The cadets, in their interview, stated that it was near Colonsay, but Captain Beavan in his telegram to the Technical College on Tuesday night reported that it was about a mile off Rudha Mhail, the northern point of the island of Islay.¹³⁴

The *Herald's* accounts show minor inconsistencies of the kind one would expect to arise from interviewing different parties (teachers, apparently in the lifeboat that was dispatched to Colonsay; and cadets, apparently in one of the boats that remained near the *Vivid*), and possibly from a journalist's imperfect geographical knowledge: the statement that it was intended to tow the *Vivid* “to the land on the north coast of Colonsay and beach... her there”¹³⁵ is undoubtedly a misunderstanding, possibly

¹³⁰ The *Research* was an unusual vessel: a paddle-driven steamship, launched in 1888, which spent most of her life surveying UK coastal waters. At 155 ft and 450 tons (Colledge 1969, vol. 1, p.460; see also <http://www.rnpatrolservice.org.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?f=3&t=925>), she would also have been competent to offer significant assistance had the *Vivid* not already been beyond help.

¹³¹ Information about this fixture of the Hebridean passenger and cargo trade can be found on the Clydebuilt database and the “Am Baile” website: http://www.ambaile.org.uk/en/item/item_photograph.jsp?item_id=13917.

¹³² The *Glasgow Herald*, Friday, July 11, 1913, p. 8.

¹³³ Canmore record 117110; site number NR39SE 8002.

¹³⁴ The *Glasgow Herald*, Thursday, July 10, 1913, p. 8.

¹³⁵ The *Glasgow Herald*, Thursday, July 10, 1913, p. 8.

substituting Colonsay for Islay. It seems reasonable to regard Captain Beavan's report as the definitive account, with the exception of his concluding sentence:

I may say that I cannot understand how the vessel could possibly strike anything but an uncharted rock, as the course steered was to run clear of any obstruction and subsequent bearings placed vessel well clear of any charted rocks.¹³⁶

Given other indications in the various accounts of the wreck, there is only one really plausible location, and sadly for Captain Beavan, it was not uncharted. The modern Hydrographic Office chart of the Sound of Islay¹³⁷ indicates only one dangerous rock between Oronsay and Islay: Bogha Chubaidh¹³⁸, which lies south-west of Eilean nan Ròn (Seal Island) and its skerries.¹³⁹ This rock is marked as "awash at level of chart datum" and sits in a small patch of shallow water. It had claimed a victim not many years before: on 16 or 17 August 1908 a 204 ton steamship, the SS *Mona*, had run aground on the east side of Bogha Chubaidh in calm weather, during a voyage from Bunessan to Stranraer via the Sound of Islay. No human lives were lost, although around 1000 livestock were drowned. The *Mona* drew 14 ft of water, only 1 ft more than the *Vivid*.¹⁴⁰

It is not certain what chart would have been available to the navigators of the *Vivid*, but Bogha Chubaidh seems to have been well known. It appears on the Hydrographic Office charts 2515 (*Islay, Jura, Colonsay & i*)¹⁴¹ and 2418 (*Colonsay and Oronsay*)¹⁴² surveyed in 1849–1855 and published in 1856, in exactly its currently charted position: chart 2418 gives a depth of 1/4 fathom over it, and 2515 gives a depth of 1/2 fathom. That this rock was a recognised hazard is indicated by the fact that both charts give instructions for how to avoid it, drawing and labelling a line "North pap of Jura a little within Rudha Mhail (Islay) S.E. by S. nearly, clears Bogha Chubaith" (2515) and "North Pap of Jura a little within Rudha maol (Jura¹⁴³) S.E. 3/4 S." (2418).

Assuming that a rock did not escape the 1850s survey and vanish again before the modern surveys, and assuming that the course of the *Vivid* lay to the south of Oronsay as Captain Beavan's report indicates, it seems that Bogha Chubaidh is the only possible culprit. This would also be consistent with the long journey of the lifeboats to Scalasaig and the decision to tow the sinking *Vivid* to the Sound of Islay in search of a sandy beach on which to ground.

¹³⁶ Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, p. 35.

¹³⁷ 2nd ed., 15 March 2007; sheet 5611.4 derived from Admiralty charts 2168 and 2169.

¹³⁸ The etymology and meaning of this name is obscure. It seems to be first named on the Hydrographic Office charts of 1856. "Bogha" is Gaelic for a bow or bend, but the termination of "chubaidh" does not appear in standard Gaelic orthography, old or modern. The word may be a map-maker's attempt to represent the lenited form of "cùbaid" (pulpit) or possibly "cubhaidh" (fit/seemly; cf. Old Irish "cubaid", harmonious); the former would translate as "the bow of the pulpit", with the lenition indicating the genitive. The rock at the end of Eilean nan Ròn, marked on the Ordnance Survey as "Cubaig", is distinct if equally obscure.

¹³⁹ The same conclusion seems to have been reached tacitly by R. Larn & B. Larn, *Shipwreck Index of the British Isles* (Lloyd's Register of Shipping, 1998), who give the co-ordinates 55.59N, 06.18W for the loss of the *Vivid*, more or less identical to those of Bogha Chubaidh.

¹⁴⁰ P. Moir & I. Crawford, *Argyll Shipwrecks* (Moir Crawford, Wemyss Bay, 2nd ed. 2003); Larn & Larn (1998).

¹⁴¹ Available on the National Library of Scotland website: <http://maps.nls.uk/coasts/admiralty.cfm?id=1224>.

¹⁴² Available on the National Library of Scotland website: <http://maps.nls.uk/coasts/admiralty.cfm?id=1265>.

¹⁴³ Despite the anomaly, "Rudha maol" is given correctly as "(Islay)" elsewhere on the chart.

A further natural question, then, is how the *Vivid* came to hit a clearly charted and well known rock. This must remain a subject of speculation, but some points may be worth noting. The accident occurred in the middle of the night, precluding the use of the North Pap as a navigational aid. The lighthouse at Rubha a' Mhail should have been visible as a reference point for taking bearings, and the lighthouse at Dubh Artach, which has a nominal range of 20 nautical miles¹⁴⁴, may also have been within sight. However, there is no obvious third point with which to triangulate. Oronsay, with its fringe of rocks and skerries, was not a forgiving vicinity: as well as the loss of the SS *Mona* in 1908, Larn & Larn (1998) and Moir & Crawford (2003) record approximately one sinking per decade in this area, and their catalogue is unlikely to be complete. Strong tidal currents, exceeding two knots in several places and with a complex flood-ebb pattern, may have exacerbated the navigational difficulties.

With these factors in mind, human error becomes highly plausible if not excusable, especially given the uncomfortable hour and the fact that the *Vivid* had recently completed the intricate navigation of the Sound of Islay. It may be relevant that although Captain Beavan was a highly experienced seaman, little of his experience was on the West Coast of Scotland. We should also not forget that the *Vivid* was a training vessel. It is not clear who was taking the bearings to which Captain Beavan refers: is it possible, perhaps, that an inadequately supervised cadet made the very small error that constitutes the difference between running south of Bogha Chubaidh and running onto it? The only person who might have been able to confirm or disprove these speculations, and who in any case bore the ultimate responsibility for his command, appears to have left no record beyond the ambiguous account he later supplied to the Committee on the School of Navigation. It is not remarkable that, as we will see, the Committee felt it necessary to evade the question of blame.

¹⁴⁴ See the Northern Lighthouse Board website: <http://www.nlb.org.uk/LighthouseLibrary/Lighthouse/Dubh-Artach/>. Once the *Vivid* was to the south of Oronsay, the recently established lighthouses at Scalasaig and Garvellachs would have been out of sight behind the island.

Aftermaths

Before the Committee

The Royal Technical College held its *post mortem* on the *Vivid* at a joint meeting of the Chairman's Committee and the Committee on the School of Navigation on 17 July, 1913.¹⁴⁵ Several of those present had been involved with the project from its inception the previous year¹⁴⁶, but the chair on this occasion was taken by "Mr Henderson" — almost certainly Francis Henderson, the Dean of Guild and director of the Anchor Line who had been a signatory to the *Comet* centenary appeal.

The Committee's main attention naturally fell on Captain Beavan, whose detailed report was read and who was then interviewed:

He pointed out on the chart the course he had set, which had been steered to his instructions, and checked every few minutes by the standard compass. So far as he was aware the course was a perfectly safe one, and in following it out he had undertaken no undue risks. He was unable to account for the stranding of the vessel, except, as stated in his report, that she had struck on an uncharted rock.

If the Committee felt that this account was not entirely satisfactory, they were probably not reassured by Captain Brown's testimony which followed.

A letter from Captain Brown, the Superintendent of the School of Navigation, was read, in which he expressed his regret at the loss of the training ship. He was acting as chief Officer of the "Vivid," and had been on duty from eight till twelve o'clock on the night in question but, as he had retired to his cabin shortly after midnight, and was only awakened by the crash of the vessel on the rocks, he could throw no light on the circumstances which led up to the accident. He was also interviewed by the Committee, and stated that everything was in order when he left the bridge; as the weather conditions were entirely favourable he had not anticipated that there would be any difficulty in connection with the navigation of the vessel.

If only by his omission of any extenuating circumstances, it is fairly clear that Brown was ready to lodge the blame where it would lie by default, with Captain Beavan. However, he and the Committee stopped short of any explicit statement to this effect. Rather, it seems, somebody threw them a line which could save them from having to make a quasi-judicial decision:

In view of the possibility of a Board of Trade Inquiry into the circumstances attending the foundering of the vessel, the Committee were of opinion that the matter should be allowed to rest meantime.

The Minutes give no indication of the source of this useful suggestion, but one can imagine the relief with which it was received, whatever the likelihood of such an Inquiry might have been.¹⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the

¹⁴⁵ Unless otherwise stated, all details are taken from the Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, pp. 32–37.

¹⁴⁶ Apart from the Chair, those present were "Bailie Alexander, Mr Biggart, Captain Black, Mr Chrystal, Councillor Macdonald, Dr Middleton and Mr Muirhead". Alexander, Black, Chrystal, Macdonald and Muirhead had all been present at the meeting of 4 June 1912 when Brown and Stockdale's report was presented. Dr Middleton remains unidentified.

¹⁴⁷ This is not a straightforward point. Under section VI of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894 (57 & 58 Vict., cap. 60; <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/57-58/60/part/VI/enacted>), Board of Trade Inquiries could be held when "any ship is lost, abandoned, or materially damaged", and could recommend that the Board apply sanctions ranging from mild censure through to the suspension or removal of masters' and mates' certificates. In practice, only

harsh employment conventions of the day gave them a straightforward means to dispose of the presumed culprit:

It was decided, however, that, as there was no further employment for Captain Beavan in consequence of the loss of the “Vivid,” his engagement should be terminated forthwith.

The rest of the meeting was taken up with matters of insurance, formal thanks for the assistance of the *Minna* and the *Research*, and the ready authorisation of the Northern Lighthouse Commissioners to disperse the wreck. One minor but appealing decision testifies further to Brown’s attention to detail, and perhaps to the Committee’s continued willingness to be guided by him:

Upon a report from Captain Brown, it was decided to make an allowance of not more than £3 to the steward’s boy to cover the cost of personal belongings which he had lost.¹⁴⁸

On this note, the College apparently regarded the matter as closed, with sufficient blandness that the *Glasgow Herald* carried no more reports and Mr Stockdale was not exposed to further interrogation. (The sudden loss of newsworthiness is not surprising: the Glasgow Fair soon arrived, and in any case the *Herald’s* pages were comfortably supplied with stories about war in Bulgaria, suffragists in London, a dock workers’ strike and riots in Leith, civil war in China, Irish Home Rule, a Royal engagement, and a stolen pearl necklace whose replica turned up suddenly on a Parisian street.)

One piece of evidence suggests how the *Vivid* episode may have been received in some quarters. The amateur shipping enthusiast James Wotherspoon devoted four pages of his cuttings album to the story, in which he took the time to criticise the scheme in some detail:

The annual wages bill of the permanent staff was estimated at £800, but no mention was made of the expense of fitting out the steamer, or of coal. As the crew, and cadets, numbered twenty eight, the venture could not be called a paying one, for the Royal Technical College...

The Commemoration would have been better carried out, had the “Vivid” been renamed “Comet” or “Henry Bell”, but that idea did not seem to have occurred [sic] to anyone, little thought having been given to the matter.¹⁴⁹

Wotherspoon, following the story in the *Glasgow Herald*, was also unimpressed by what he saw as the unnautical behaviour of the crew and passengers following the wreck:

The Fishery Cruiser, “Minna”, took the cadets and crew to Oban, as they had refused to return to Glasgow, by the “Dunara Castle”, evidently, having had enough of the sea! From Oban, they went home by train!! The “Vivid” was never seen again, and no enquiry, as far as I saw, was made regarding the loss of the vessel! The result is suggestive. Thus ended a “soft job”.¹⁵⁰

about 40 inquiries and investigations were held per year: 73 in 1912-13 including that on the *Titanic*, and 163 in 1914-17 (Board of Trade Official Inquiries, vols 1912 to 1913 and 1914 to 1917; Lloyd’s Collection, Guildhall Library 1580). The sinking of the *Vivid* was, admittedly, of minor importance, but inquiries were often held in cases where there had been no loss of life, and occasionally even when the vessel was not a total loss.

¹⁴⁸ It seems from the cadets’ account in the *Glasgow Herald* (10 July) that most of those on board the *Vivid* had retrieved their belongings before she foundered. The exception was the Colonsay lifeboat party, who were presumably bundled off at speed as being incapable of assisting to tow the *Vivid* to shore: they asserted that “Not a few of those on board had lost the bulk of their belongings” (9 July). Presumably the steward’s boy was of this party. The College apparently did not concern itself with the losses sustained by the teachers.

¹⁴⁹ J. Wotherspoon, *In the Track of the Comet*, vol. 30, pp. 18a and 18c.

¹⁵⁰ J. Wotherspoon, *In the Track of the Comet*, vol. 30, p. 18a. Punctuation as in the original.

If this reaction was in any way typical of public feeling, it is unsurprising that no further discussion of the *Vivid* appears subsequently in the Minutes, either that year or thereafter, and it seems likely that the College were happy to put a rather humiliating episode behind them.

Salvage and dispersal

As the *Glasgow Herald* had suggested, salvage proved to be a complicated matter. As soon as the first news of the wreck reached Glasgow on 8 July, the underwriters Thomas Dunlop & Sons instructed the Glasgow Salvage Association to send an expedition to the site. Captain Burns of the Association had already “engaged a tug, lighter, salvage pumps, diver and men” when the news reached the underwriters that far from being stranded on or near a convenient beach, the *Vivid* was resting in six or seven fathoms of water, and this expedition was promptly cancelled.¹⁵¹

By the time of the College’s *post mortem* meeting on 17 July, the prospects of salvage had receded entirely, while the Northern Lighthouse Commissioners had decided that the wreck posed a threat to navigation and written to the College about taking steps to break it up. The underwriters having already agreed to recognise the *Vivid* as a total loss, the Committee were only too happy to pass on this responsibility, and requested the Commissioners to arrange matters accordingly.¹⁵² The Northern Lighthouse Commissioners apparently engaged the British Marine Salvage Company, who promptly requested Captain Burns’s services from the Glasgow Salvage Association, leaving them involved with the *Vivid* case twice over, as principal agents in the recovery of equipment and as subcontractors in the dispersal.¹⁵³ It is unclear how long it took to carry out the dispersal, which required the use of at least two sets of diving gear, but the operation had certainly been completed by early September.¹⁵⁴

The *Vivid*’s boats had ended up in Oban along with her passengers and crew, while some of her smaller articles of equipment had been left in Port Askaig, presumably by Captain Brown. These were brought back to Glasgow by MacBrayne’s and advertised for sale on 4 August.¹⁵⁵ The sole exception, and the last part of the *Vivid*’s splendid equipment to leave a paper record, is the dinghy into which the two captains had stepped overboard from the sinking vessel. This was left in the possession of a boat-builder in Oban, by the name of Macdonald, who was instructed to sell it to defray the costs of storing the other equipment. Macdonald sold the dinghy for £3/10 but demanded £5 for storage; the Glasgow Salvage Association declined to pay more than £3 but conceded ten shillings in the interests of a quiet life¹⁵⁶; and with this slightly tawdry echo of the financial negotiations that had secured the *Vivid* for the College in the first place, the story of the ship herself was over.

¹⁵¹ Minute Book of the Glasgow Salvage Association, p. 212, 10 July 1913 (Glasgow University Business Archives UGD95/1/3).

¹⁵² Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, p. 37.

¹⁵³ Minute Book of the Glasgow Salvage Association, pp. 213 and 217, 24 July and 21 August 1913. The Minute Book suggests that it was not unusual for the British Marine Salvage Company to borrow Captain Burns in this manner from the Association; as the two companies shared at least one director, R. G. Service, their relationship seems to have been as much symbiotic as competitive. Confusingly, the Company’s minutes for 5th September and 31 October 1913 indicate that their diving equipment was deployed to the *Vivid* “on hire terms”, suggesting that there was some real ambiguity about which organisation took the lead in the dispersal operation.

¹⁵⁴ Minute Book of the British Marine Salvage Company Ltd., p. 326, 5 September 1913 (Glasgow University Business Archives UGD95/2/1).

¹⁵⁵ Minute Book of the Glasgow Salvage Association, pp. 213 and 214, 24 July and 31 July 1913.

¹⁵⁶ Minute Book of the Glasgow Salvage Association, p. 220, 18 September 1913.

Captain Beavan

While the *Vivid*'s story was swiftly brought to a conclusion, that of her captain was not. In the event, no Board of Trade Inquiry was held¹⁵⁷, and so Captain Beavan escaped any official penalty or censure; nevertheless, his subsequent career was an unhappy one. The only document that records it is his Royal Naval Reserve record card¹⁵⁸. Covered in the hurried handwriting of a dozen naval clerks, and in places illegible, it seems to reflect the disintegration both of his career and of the orderly institutions and record-keeping of the pre-war period.

Beavan reported the loss of the *Vivid* to the Admiralty immediately, requesting replacements for his commission and RV02 training record, which had been lost along with the vessel. The latter was replaced promptly, but the issue of a renewed commission took until December, perhaps while the Admiralty awaited confirmation that he had escaped formal sanctions over the *Vivid*. Informal sanctions, however, were another matter: employment for seamen was in any case erratic, and suspicion must have attached itself to the master of any wrecked ship. In January 1914, Beavan remained “unattached to any vessel”. About this time he made an attempt to withdraw entirely from the RNR, requesting the RNR Decoration¹⁵⁹ and in May requesting the retired rank of Commander. These requests were refused, and he was offered retirement as Lieutenant: as his RNR record continues, it seems that he declined this. Later that year (the month is illegible), it appears that Beavan had followed the infamous route of last resort for mariners and was to be found as master of a West African river steamer, in the employment of the Liverpool-based trading company John Holt & Co., and headquartered in Warri, Southern Nigeria.

Beavan's exile in West Africa was terminated by the start of the war. By July, he was writing from Row to volunteer “for active service – immediately available”. He had his wish, and in early October he was called up to active service, ironically assigned to the *Vivid II*.¹⁶⁰ In fact his posting was to a yacht, the *Zaza*¹⁶¹, which he joined on 6 October 1914. Within two weeks this posting had come to an end, with the laconic note on his record: “15/10/14 Found unsuitable – should not be called out”. Similar comments inserted at the same time appear elsewhere on the card, while his service record¹⁶² gives an expanded version:

This officer was reported to Flag Captain at Devonport as being absent without leave & for disobedience of orders: C. o. of “Zaza” considered him untrustworthy and intemperate. Report privately from Flag Captain 8/10/14. Application for further appointment refused. 21.10.14.

¹⁵⁷ Although no complete sequence of the Board of Trade Inquiry Reports exists, that in the Lloyd's Collection (Guildhall Library 1580) is continuous for the entire period from July 1913 to the end of 1914 when an Inquiry could plausibly have been held; in fact casualties in British waters were typically investigated, if at all, within a few months. Wotherspoon (*In the Track of the Comet*, vol. 30, p. 18a) also notes that he saw no report of any enquiry.

¹⁵⁸ National Archives catalogue reference ADM/340/9. Record no. 0888, William Whitley John Beavan.

¹⁵⁹ This was awarded for 15 years service (http://www.northeastmedals.co.uk/britishguide/reserve_royal_navy.htm). Beavan's appointment as an RNR sub-lieutenant dated to November 1898 so he should have been eligible for it; nevertheless his record card carries the note “Ineligible (See previous card)”. It is not clear whether this represents a technicality or a more serious matter; in any case his medal card (National Archives ref. BT 351/1/8925) makes no mention of this decoration.

¹⁶⁰ The *Vivid II*, named like the *Vivid* after the Devonport barracks, was a purely notional vessel, an “accounting section” introduced to simplify the paperwork for the swarm of depot ships in service at Devonport: see <http://www.worldnavalships.com/forums/showthread.php?t=6632>.

¹⁶¹ The *Zaza* was a private yacht, hired at the end of September 1914 as an auxiliary patrol vessel, and retained until 1919; she was purchased by the Navy in September 1939 (Colledge 1969, vol. 2, p. 399).

¹⁶² National Archives catalogue reference ADM 240/82/973.

It is not clear whether this incident has any connection with an almost illegible note written diagonally across the record form under the heading “Reported to Admiralty under Articles 94, 95, &c.”, which appears to read “Reprimanded by Court of Enquiry for neglect to use the lead with ample frequency”.¹⁶³ There is no record of a subsequent court martial, suggesting that the incident was relatively minor, but it was enough to end Beavan’s naval career.

Only some faint and sometimes unreadable pencil marks record the next three years. Beavan was not eligible to be conscripted¹⁶⁴, but it is hard to believe that this was a relief to a seaman who must have been aware of the dreadful attrition that the war was inflicting on both the Royal and the Merchant Navy. During 1915 his name appears on the crew lists for various ships¹⁶⁵: as First Mate of the *Camperdown*, as Second Mate of the *Belle of France*, and as Assistant Foreman of the *Titian*, all steamships of the 3000–4000 ton class on which he had spent most of his career¹⁶⁶; these crew lists also note his previous vessels as the *Columbia*, the *St Paul* and an unspecified “foreign” ship. This erratic period seems to have stabilised by September 1917, when his record card records that Beavan had “returned to the sea” as Chief Officer of the steam freighter *Wandby*¹⁶⁷, and was again asking for a naval position. This was refused on the basis that it was still “not desirable to call him out for service with R. N. R.” Nevertheless, he managed eventually to join the war effort: by January 1918 he is recorded as “Chief Navigating Offr of the sp. “Dorisbrook” of London, on transport services attending on H. M. ships in the Pacific”. Not long afterwards, the *Dorisbrook* too was lost,¹⁶⁸ and there is no further record on the card of Beavan’s war service. After the war, however, he was issued not only with the Mercantile Marine War Medal (a campaign medal recognising one or more voyages through a danger zone), but also with the British War Medal¹⁶⁹, the latter implying that he had served at least six months at sea during the war.¹⁷⁰

What little evidence is available suggests that after the war Beavan led a peripatetic existence, possibly seeking work largely in Liverpool¹⁷¹, while his wife Sarah remained at Row.¹⁷² In November 1919 the card

¹⁶³ Articles 94 and 95 of the Naval Discipline Act 1866 (29 & 30 Vict., cap. 109) deal with offences involving “the Wreck, Loss, Destruction, or Capture” of a ship. A Court of Enquiry was a preliminary step held after an incident to determine whether a court martial was required.

¹⁶⁴ The Military Service Act of 1916 initially made only unmarried men up to the age of 41 liable for conscription: Beavan was married; he turned 44 in 1916; and he may further have been exempt due to his reservist status. By 1918 when the age of liability was increased to 51, he had found his way back to service.

¹⁶⁵ National Archives / National Maritime Museum refs. BT 400/3988/12, BT 99/3141/7, BT 400/3674/1A.

¹⁶⁶ All three of these ships were later sunk by enemy action, in 1916, 1916, and 1917 respectively; details are available on the *Wreck Site* (entries 161145, 167246, 133709).

¹⁶⁷ The *Wandby* was a roughly 4000-ton steamship, built in 1899 (*Wreck Site* entry 149205). Beavan’s record card is hard to read at this point, but it appears that he joined the ship in February 1917. An earlier entry, dated 5/6/16, is sadly indecipherable.

¹⁶⁸ The *Dorisbrook* was a roughly 3000-ton steamship, launched in 1915 in Sunderland; she was lost by collision on 9 February 1918 while serving as a collier in non-commissioned auxiliary naval service in the South Pacific (*Lloyd’s Register* for 1918-19; *Losses of H. M. Ships and Auxiliaries during the War from 4th August 1914 to 11th November 1918*, HMSO, August 1919, reprinted in *British Vessels Lost at Sea 1914-18 and 1939-45*, Patrick Stephens Ltd, 1988.)

¹⁶⁹ Medal card of William W. J. Beavan; National Archives ref. BT 351/1/8925.

¹⁷⁰ See http://www.northeastmedals.co.uk/britishguide/british_war_medal_1914_1918_1920.htm.

¹⁷¹ His address when he was issued with the ribbons for his campaign medals in August 1919 is given as “Canning Place, Liverpool”; the Mercantile Marine Medal itself was issued to him at Row in March 1921.

records Beavan as stating he was “in command of the motor vessel “Sannox” – Bideford, Devon”, although his address continued to be Row. No further employment is recorded. On 12 September 1924, Sarah informed the Admiralty that her husband had died on 30 March 1924, and the record of Lieutenant William Beavan, RNR, was closed.

Captain Brown and the School of Navigation

Although the loss of the *Vivid* must have been a severe blow for both Captain Brown and the School of Navigation, there is little evidence of this in the records. The Superintendent’s Report for 1912-13 suggests that he still harboured hopes of reviving the scheme:

The unfortunate loss of the ship in July, which was the subject of my last Report to the Committee, brought this most promising scheme to a sudden close meantime, but it is earnestly hoped that when an opportunity occurs to procure another suitable vessel the Committee may see their way to again establish a cadet training ship in connection with the School of Navigation.¹⁷³

Having had one unfortunate experience of the financial and public complexities of ship-owning, though, it seemed unlikely that the Committee would see their way to anything of the kind in the immediate future. Instead, Brown sensibly directed his energy to developing courses in the rapidly-expanding field of wireless telegraphy, and the embarrassing topic of training ships was firmly shelved.

The arrival of the war, barely a year later, had an immediate impact on the School. Captain Brown’s assistant, Chief Petty Officer Alexander MacDonald, was called up on 1 August 1914¹⁷⁴; Brown himself remained in place, continuing to run with customary efficiency an institution that must have seemed at times like a machine for feeding the ever-lengthening College Roll of Honour. In the Superintendent’s Report written in September 1917 comes a carefully understated passage that reveals something of the pressure under which all were working:

The success of students for the higher grades of First Mate and Master is well up to the average, but the percentage for the initial Examination of Second Mate has fallen from 89 per cent. to 74. The reduced teaching staff has probably had something to do with the decrease, but the principal contributory cause has been the unsettled state of the young students themselves, many of whom were quite unable to concentrate their minds on examination work. Nor can one be surprised at this, in view of the fact that these young men had gained nearly the whole of their sea experience under war conditions, most of them having experienced the destructive effect of mines and torpedoes. Nor has there been any relaxation in the conditions of Examination during this period — rather the reverse, more work having been added during the year. It is the intention of the Marine Department to alter the system of their Examinations in January, 1918, and at the same time to add new subjects, so that the prospect of increasing the successes of students during the continuance of the war is not very promising.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² In 1920 Beavan’s address is given more specifically as “Greenside, Row (wife)”, suggesting that Beavan himself was not resident.

¹⁷³ Superintendent’s Report for 1912-13, in Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, p. 39a.

¹⁷⁴ Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, p. 43 and p. 43a, Superintendent’s Report for 1913-14.

¹⁷⁵ Superintendent’s Report for 1916-17, in Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow.

After the war, the School of Navigation continued to operate, but it seems that either the School or the College had lost any ambition that it should be more than “merely an institution for the preparation of candidates for the certificates issued by the Marine Department of the Board of Trade”, as Brown and Stockdale’s report had urged in 1912.¹⁷⁶ No further vessels were acquired larger than a few dinghies for sailing and rowing instruction, and the annual minutes of the Committee become increasingly routine. Captain Brown remained as Superintendent until 1939 when, at the age of 65 and in failing health, he retired and was replaced at his own recommendation by Captain MacDonald, who had been his assistant since 1911.¹⁷⁷ The first day of Captain MacDonald’s command, with almost painful symbolism, was September 1, 1939.

¹⁷⁶ The School still existed when, in 1964, the College was apotheosised to the University of Strathclyde, but shortly afterwards it separated from the University to become part of the new College of Nautical Studies (established in 1967-68). See the Archives Hub entry, <http://archiveshub.ac.uk/data/gb2962-gcns>.

¹⁷⁷ Minutes of the Committee on the School of Navigation of the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, p. 132.

Concluding comments

From the distance of a century, some aspects of the *Vivid's* story seem remarkably familiar, and it is easy in consequence to exaggerate the parallels with today. It now seems unsurprising that an educational institution should take its lead from the interests of local industries, or that these industries should sometimes lobby for the provision of a particular facility but prove coy about supporting it financially. Modern universities are not strangers to prestige projects that begin in publicity, increase rapidly in expense, and end in obscurity. From this perspective, it is hard not to succumb to the great temptation of shipwreck narratives from the *Titanic* onward and to present it as either a morality tale about hubris, or a futility tale about the irruption of blind fate into human schemes.¹⁷⁸ In such a presentation, the underlying irony is that, even had the *Vivid* survived her maiden educational cruise, it is highly unlikely that the College's carefully planned programme would have lasted beyond 1914. The *Vivid* scheme, in that case, would have been just one more entry on the roll of institutions destroyed or terminally disrupted by the Great War.

Such a presentation, though, fails to do justice to the *Vivid* or to her context. As a by-product of the *Comet* celebrations, the scheme emerged from a very specific blend of commercial anxiety with imperial and civic power-consciousness. The wranglings over the appeal fund and the subsequent negotiations over the *Vivid's* purchase and maintenance illustrate the combination of private philanthropy, commercial investment and public expenditure in a city whose institutions were intricately connected by the activities of a relatively small number of influential men. The training programme that the *Vivid* served, with its emphasis on the co-ordination of practical and theoretical training, exemplifies the model of technical education earlier promoted by Henry Dyer, and represents a contribution to the debate over such education which continues today. Even the details of the *Vivid's* commissioning, and especially the carefully evaded parallels with the *Empress*, reflect her careful positioning within a social hierarchy that was substantially Victorian, at the same time as the project reached forward consciously to a modern era. (Indeed, a fascinating aspect of the story is how the different hierarchies of the social, academic and maritime worlds became entangled — perhaps best illustrated by the two “captains” of the *Vivid* stepping together from the sinking vessel into the dinghy.) It would be an exaggeration to claim that the *Vivid* project could not have taken place in any other college or university in the British Isles, or in any other era, but this claim might not be too remote from the truth.

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¹⁷⁸ The classic example of the latter, Thomas Hardy's *The Convergence of the Twain*, was first published in May 1912: see <http://eraofcasualfridays.net/2012/04/23/the-convergence-of-the-twain-thomas-hardys-titanic/> for a detailed discussion.

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