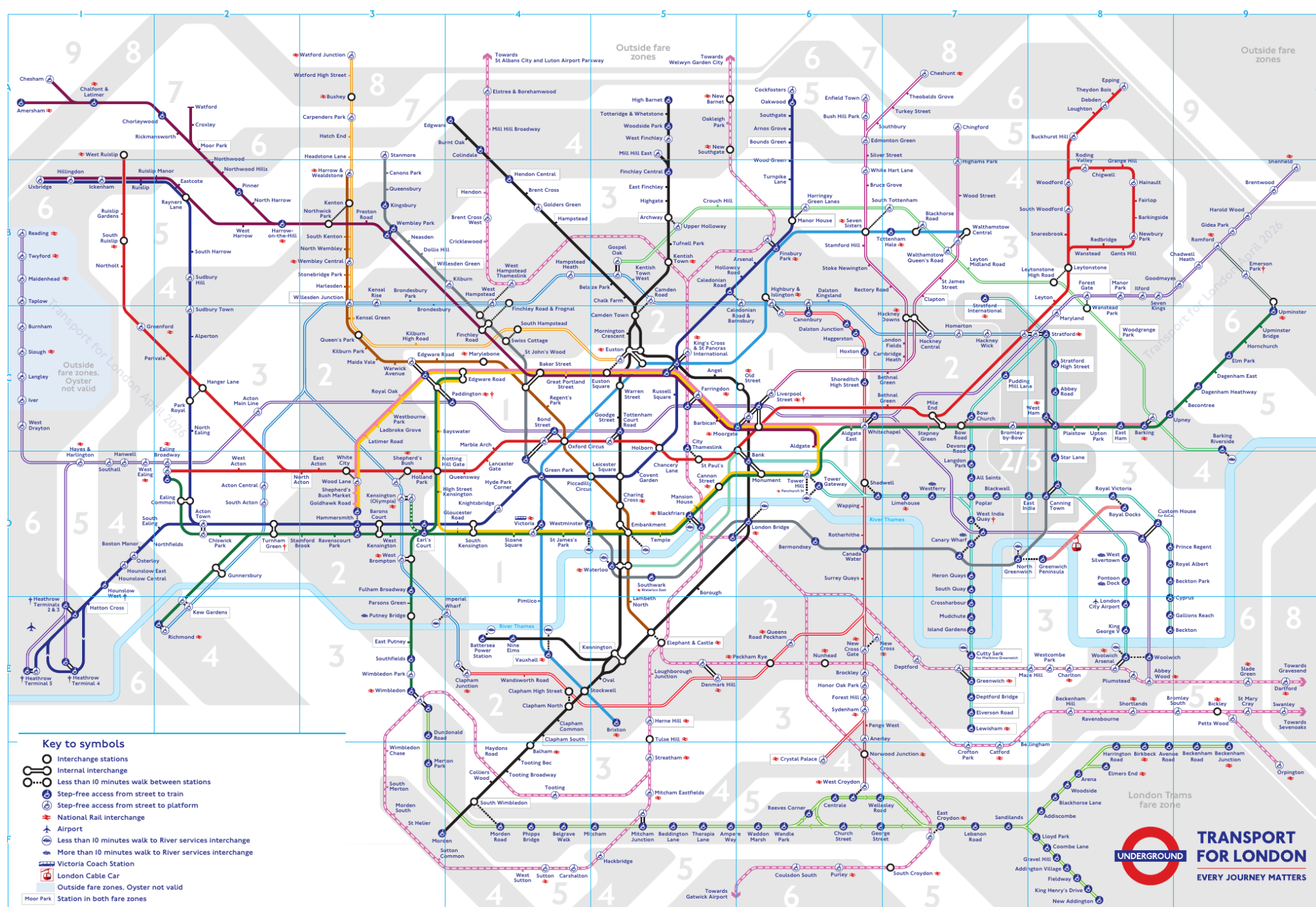
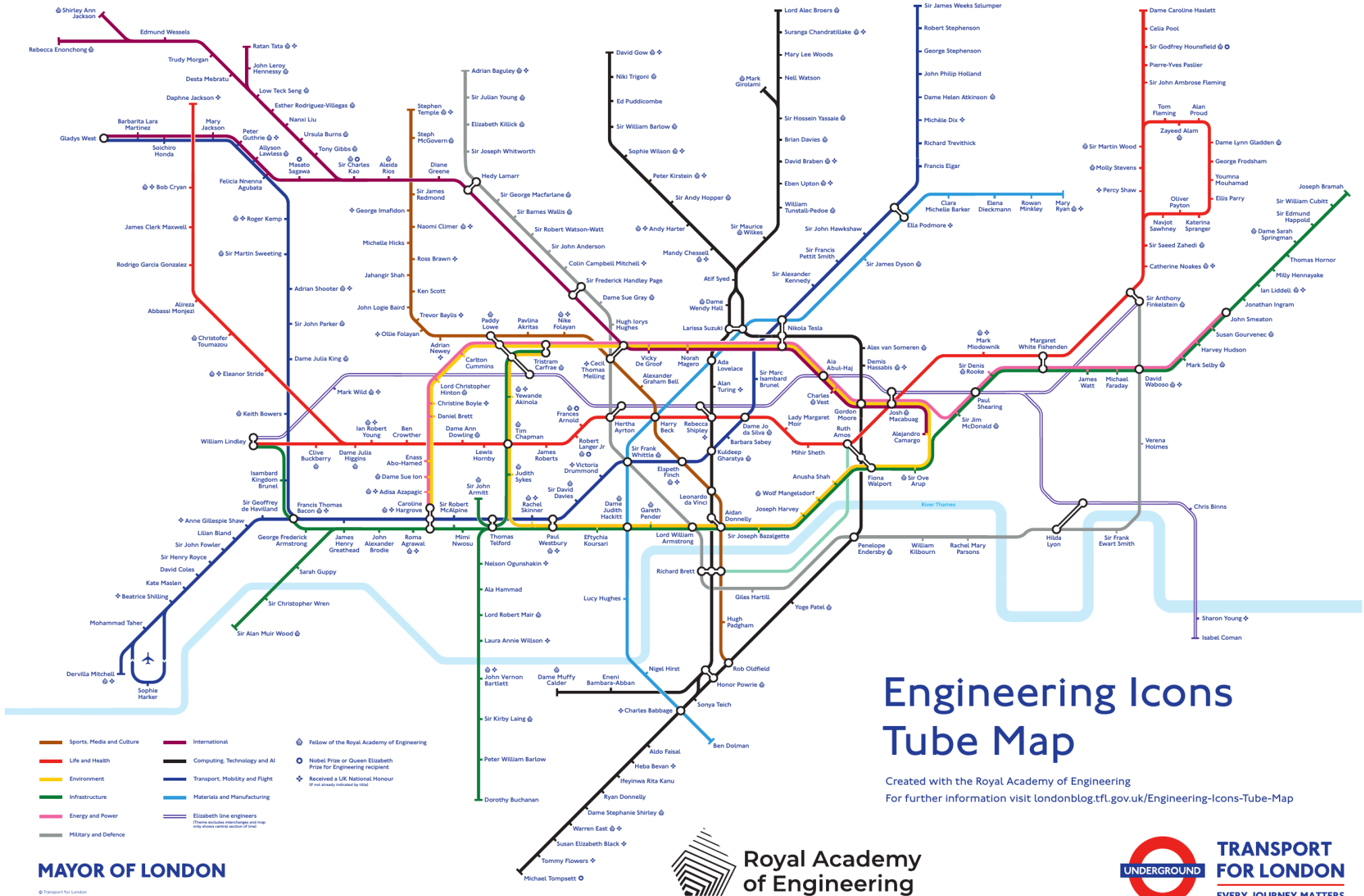


Victoria Drummond
Marine Engineer







Finished with Engines

The life of Victoria Drummond, marine engineer, 1894 to 1978



Forty years, forty-nine voyages

- 1894: born at Megginch, godchild of Queen Victoria
- 1916: apprentice, Northern Garage, Perth, three shillings a week
- 1922: Tenth Engineer, SS *Anchises*, to Australia
- 1926: first woman with a Board of Trade engineer's certificate
- 1929 to 1956: Chief's examination sat 31 times, failed 31 times
- 1940: bombed in the Atlantic in SS *Bonita*; MBE, Lloyd's War Medal
- 1948: first ship as Chief Engineer, under a foreign flag
- 1962: paid off from her last ship, aged 67

REJOICE AT BIRTH OF LITTLE DAUGHTER

"At the time, the Queen was the only person who had rejoiced at my birth.

Everyone else had wanted a boy."

page 27

"That child has neat fingers. Some day I will teach her to turn. She might even make an engineer."

Lady Amherst, her grandmother, page 25



Megginch

- Carse of Gowrie, between Perth and Dundee
- Three sisters: Jean, Victoria, Frances
- The sawmill workshop at Didlington: nuts, bolts and a chalk diagram
- Aged eleven, at Morton's works in Errol: *"How can I learn to be an engineer and go to sea?"*
- 1906: the family fortune gambled away. *"The whole solid background of my childhood vanished as if it had never been."*



"I'm going to be a marine engineer"

Her twenty-first birthday, 14 October 1915. Her father:

"Now you are 21, you can choose your own career."

"Every one's apprenticeship days are much the same. One is always black, hungry and tired by the end of each day."

page 55

- Northern Garage, Perth, from 18 October 1916
- Evening classes, Dundee Technical College
- Caledon Shipbuilding, Dundee, 1918 to 1922



Tenth Engineer, SS *Anchises*, 1922

"Excuse me, sir, but I forgot to ask where she is going?"

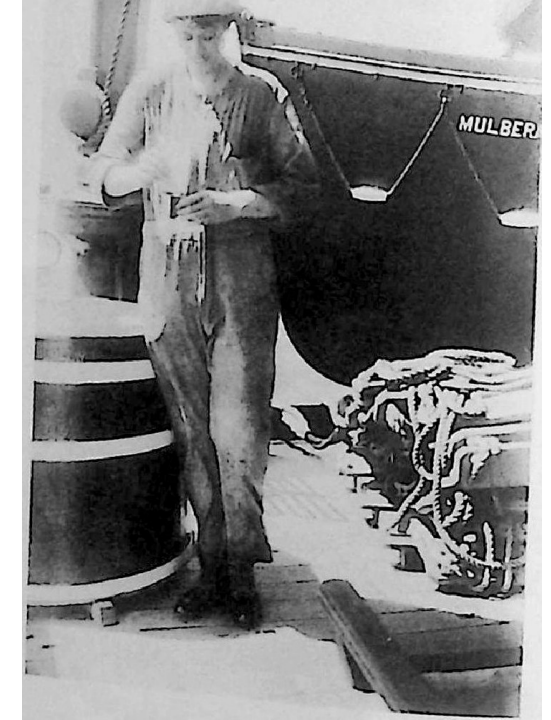
"Australia!" was the reply.

page 77

- Blue Funnel Line, coal burner, 24 fires, ten pounds a month
- Glasgow to Cape Town, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane
- Six voyages, 1922 to 1924; the Hedgehog

"No one ever thought I would stick it out, but I did."

page 92

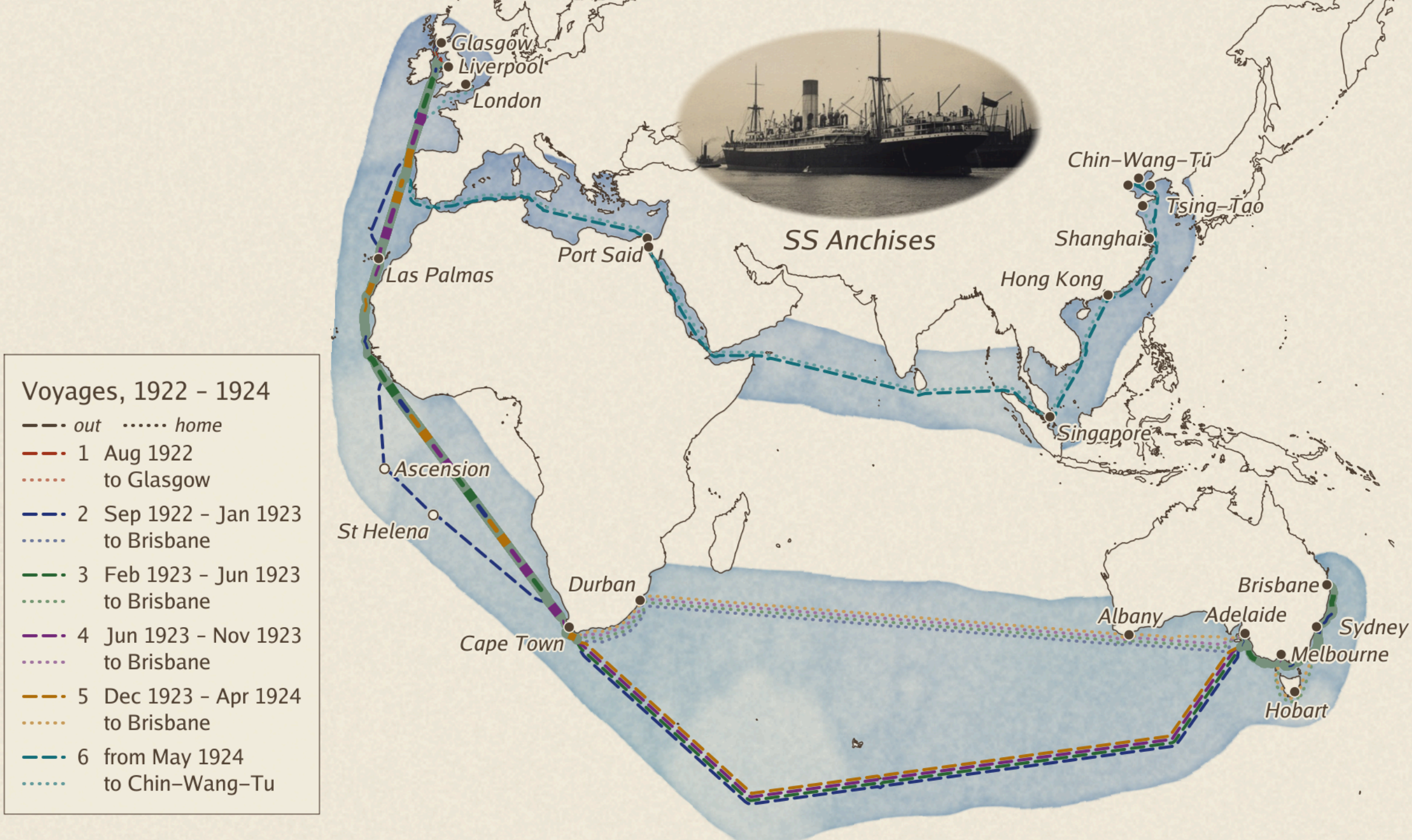




S.S. "Anchises."

*Length 493·0.
Breadth 60·4
Depth 28·6*

PUBLISHED BY C.W. HUNT & CO LIVERPOOL.



The first certificate

October 1926: Second Engineer's certificate, at the third attempt. The first woman in Britain to hold a Board of Trade certificate as a marine engineer.

Blue Funnel would not take her back:

"I suppose they feared a scandal."

page 112

British India Line: Fifth Engineer, TSS *Mulbera*, 1927 to 1928.



"Can you mend it?"

"What are you?"

"An Engineer Officer of this ship."

"But can you do it? Can you mend it?"

"That is what I am here for."

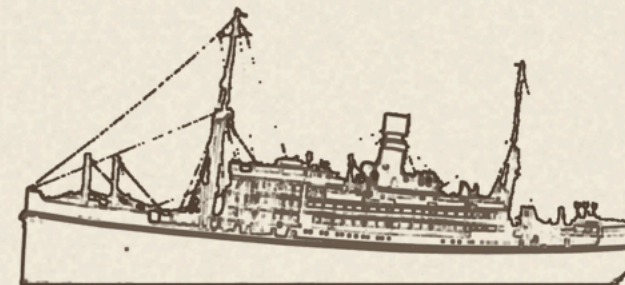
Colombo, 1928, page 135

April 1928: the Hedgehog dies at sea.

"You are never down until you say it yourself."

page 140





TSS Mulbera

Voyages, 1927 - 1928

- out home
- 7 Apr 1927 - Jul 1927 to Beira
- 8 Jul 1927 - Nov 1927 to Calcutta
- 9 Nov 1927 - Feb 1928 to Calcutta
- 10 Apr 1928 - Jun 1928 to Calcutta
- 11 Sep 1928 - Dec 1928 to Calcutta

Thirty-one times

- October 1929: Board of Trade examination for Chief Engineer. Failed.
- 1930: failed. Then failed "with the utmost regularity".

"If only I could do a perfect paper, then they would not be able to fail me."

page 155

"Mr Pemberton, one of the examiners, admitted that it was a question of sex. They would not pass me because I was a woman."

page 161

- The Thirties: goldfish, car repairs, trade fairs. Vienna, March 1938.



SS Har Zion, 1940

--- out home

--- 12 Mar 1940 - Jul 1940

..... to Haifa



SS *Bonita*, Sunday 25 August 1940

- Panamanian flag, china clay, unescorted, 300 miles out
- 8.55 am: a four-engined bomber, four passes, 25 bombs, 35 minutes
- Voice pipe gone, water-service pipe fractured

"'Get out,' I shouted. The ship must be doomed, I knew that now. My duty was to keep the engines going as long as they would turn."

page 187

Nine knots became twelve and a half.



SS *Bonita*
later attacked
by a German

"You must never drive them"

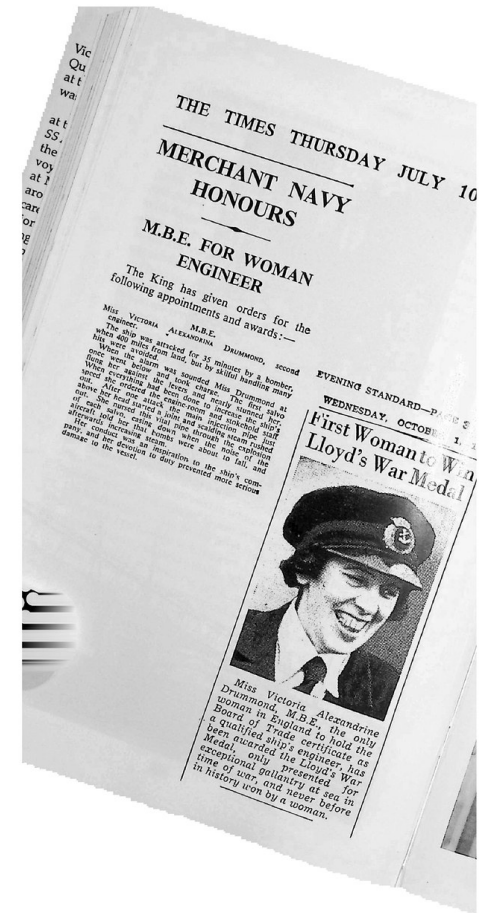
"Oh, I just talk nicely to them. You can coax or lead engines to do what you want, but you must never drive them."

to the Mate, page 189

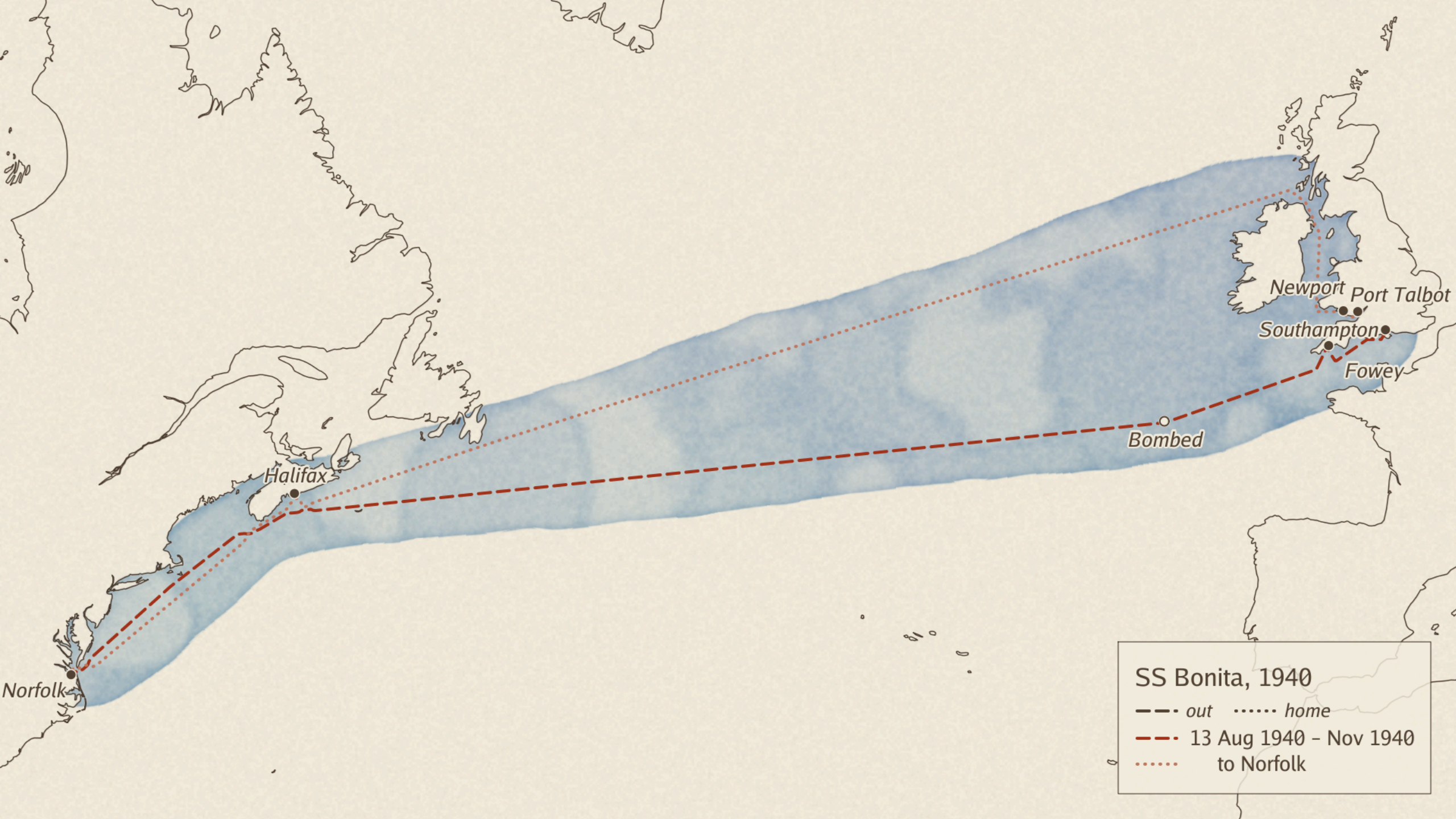
"She gave them a chance for their lives and stayed alone where she knew she had none."

the Mate's diary, page 189

- July 1941: MBE. September 1941: Lloyd's War Medal for Bravery at Sea.



"Nobody seemed to want me I thought. But Lloyds of London



SS Bonita, 1940

- out home
- 13 Aug 1940 - Nov 1940
- to Norfolk

The Ministry replies

Her letter, 1941, after 31 failed examinations, asking for an oral:

"I would rather go down with a Chief's certificate than with a Second's."

page 197

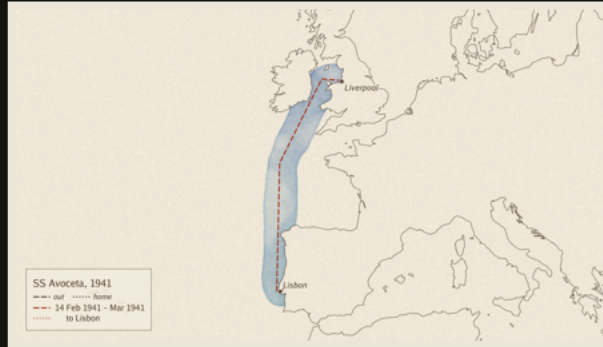
The Ministry of Shipping:

"Your talents would be equally well employed, for example, in the training of women as assistant engineers ashore."

page 197

Then: *Czikos* attacked by a *Condor*; round the world in *Perseus*; the tanker *Karabagh* on the D-Day run; VE Day at Antwerp with 10,000 tons of aviation spirit.

The wartime ships, 1941 to 1946



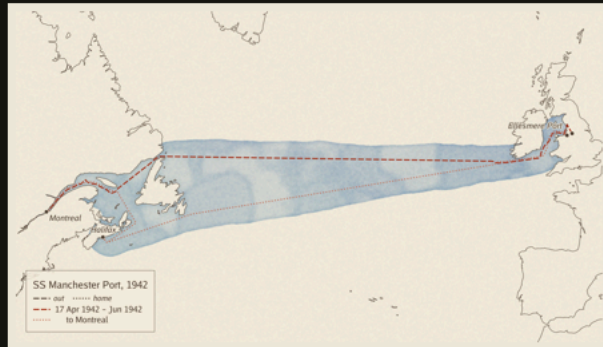
1 SS Avoceta, 1941



2 SS Czikos, 1941



3 SS Auk, 1941 - 1942



4 SS Manchester Port, 1942



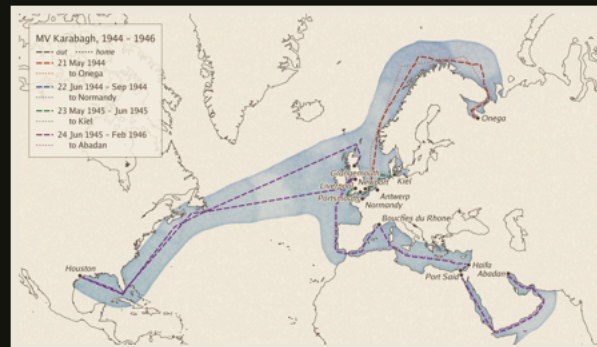
5 SS Elizabeth Lensen, 1942



6 SS Danae II, 1942



7 TSS Perseus, 1943



8 MV Karabagh, 1944 - 1946

Chief at last

- 25 April 1948: Chief Engineer, *Eastern Med*, "a rotten old tub, built in 1909"
- *Elsie Beth* to the White Sea; *Theems* to Malta
- 31 January 1953: Chief of the *Markab*, 10,000 tons, Panamanian flag

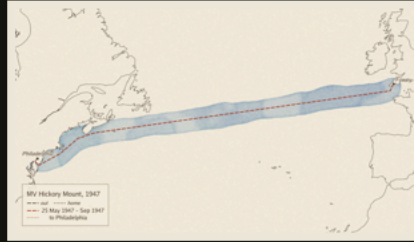
"The excitement of going through the Suez Canal as Chief Engineer of a 10,000 ton boat, something I had wished for all my life."

page 243



Paid £64 a month. Her Second Engineer: £100.

After the war, 1947 to 1957



1 MV Hickory Mount, 1947



2 MV Bancinu, 1948



3 SS Eastern Med, 1948



4 SS Alberto Gianpaolo, 1948



5 MV Lenamill, 1949



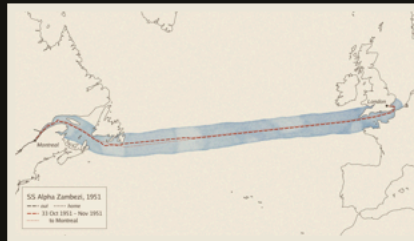
6 SS Elsie Beth, 1949



7 SS Canford, 1950



8 SS Theems, 1951



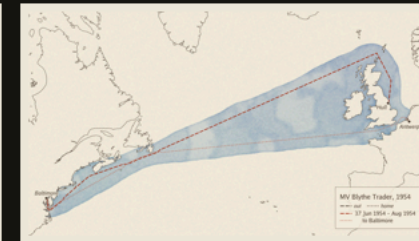
9 SS Alpha Zambezi, 1951



10 SS Markab, 1952 - 1954



11 MV Lord Canning, 1954 - 1956



12 MV Blythe Trader, 1954



13 MV Dundalk Bay, 1955



14 MV Rampart, 1956



15 SS Concha, 1956



16 MV British Monarch, 1957

MY Adventuress, 1958

--- out home

--- 43 May 1958 - Jul 1958

..... to Izmir



The China years, 1959 to 1962

- 1959, aged 64: Chief of SS *Grelrosa*, Jeb-Shun Shipping, Hong Kong
- Fire in the hold at sea, March 1960
- SS *Shun Fung*, "the happiest ship"; Typhoon Alice, May 1961
- December 1961, *Santa Granda*: ten frames corroded through, four days to Whampoa

"I sat at the head of the table surrounded by my Chinese engineers; I felt very proud."



Paid off, 31 March 1962

"Take me with you, Chief, take me with you! Never another Chief the same, Chief very, very good."

her Second Engineer, page 336

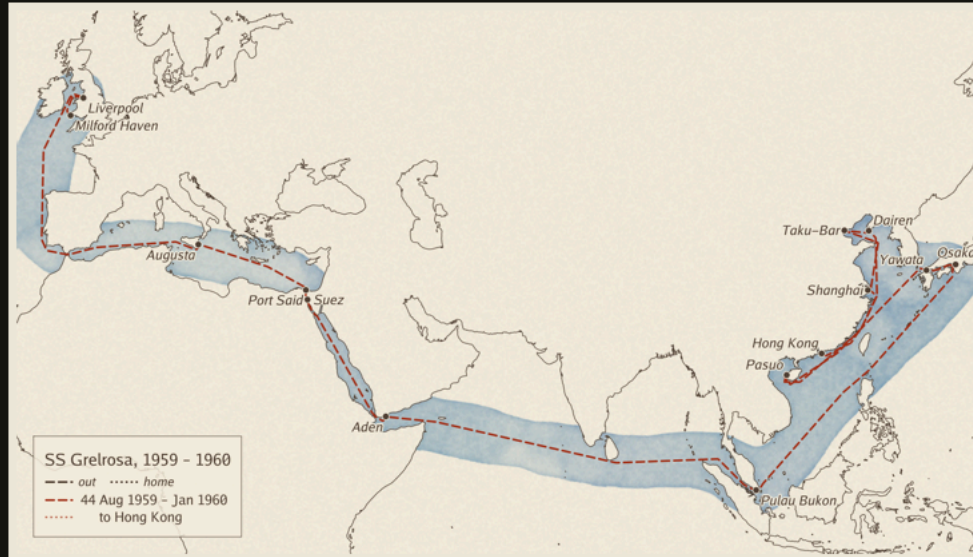
"This had been my last voyage and the Santa Granda my last ship, but I did not know that then."

page 351

Aged 67. Fuel and stores accounts correct to a figure. A silver junk from the crew.



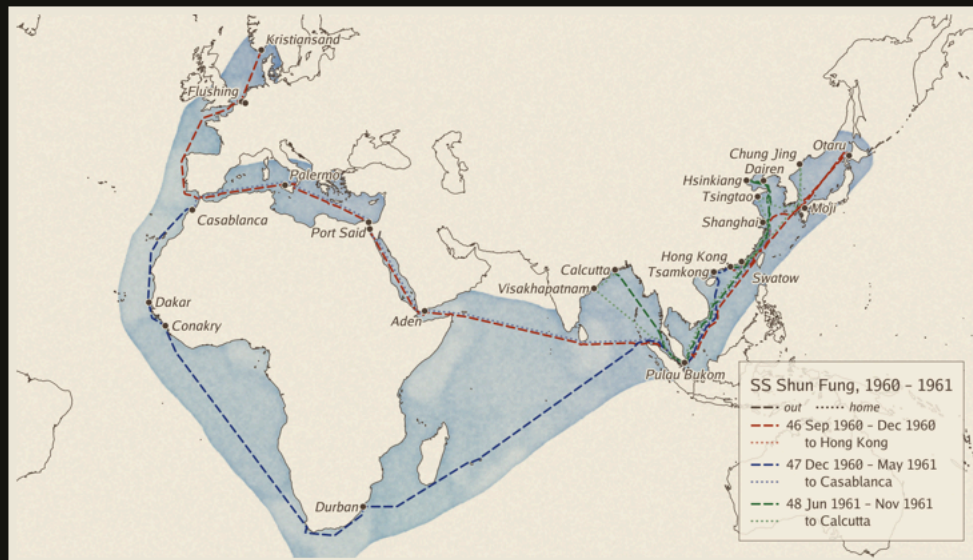
The China ships, 1959 to 1962



1 SS Grelrosa, 1959 - 1960



2 SS Shan Tae, 1960



3 SS Shun Fung, 1960 - 1961



4 SS Santagrande, 1961 - 1962

▶ 0:00 / 0:35



Full Away

*If you were good at something and could be of useful service,
then you should be allowed to do your job.*

Hyde Park Corner, Piccadilly line, since 1 November 2023

Legacy

Victoria Drummond, First Woman Marine Engineer



Abertay University / Dundee Technical College

Inducted into the Scottish Engineering Hall of Fame, 2018

engineeringhalloffame.org/profile/victoria-alexandrina-drummond

Legacy

Victoria Drummond opened doors for other women to follow and is still cited by the Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology together with various women's organisations as a role model to be followed.

The Victoria Drummond Award, set up by Nautilus (seafarers' union), is presented to women whose achievements boost the profile of women at sea.

Victoria Drummond was shortlisted for the Wallace Monument "Hall of Heroines".



Victoria Drummond Award

January 9th, 2012 by JCB

Posted in [Articles](#), [Coastlines](#) | [No Comments »](#)



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The Victoria Drummond Award

"An amazing woman with an amazing history."

Rachel Dunn, Admiralty Pilot





Victoria Drummond

Engineer

Born: Errol 1894 – Died: Sussex 1978

Victoria Drummond had a childhood fascination with marine engineering and went on to break many barriers for women, including becoming the first woman marine engineer in Britain.

Hall of Heroes, National Wallace Monument, Stirling



Victoria Drummond

6 languages

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Mulbera

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■ World War II service

Har Zion

Bonita

Developments ashore

Czikos

Manchester Port

Danae II

Perseus

Karabagh

Post-war years

■ Jebshun Shipping Company

Article

Talk

Read

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View history

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Victoria Alexandrina Drummond, MBE(14 October 1894 – 25 December 1978), was the first woman [marine engineer](#) in the UK and the first woman member of [Institute of Marine Engineers](#). In the [Second World War](#) she served at sea as an [engineering officer](#) in the British [Merchant Navy](#), and received awards for bravery under enemy fire. Her career included service at sea with [Blue Funnel Line](#), [Manchester Liners](#), and [Cunard-White Star Line](#), and ashore at [Caledon Shipbuilding & Engineering Company](#) in [Dundee](#).

During her engineering career, Drummond encountered both acceptance and prejudice because she was a woman. In 1926 she qualified as a [second engineer](#), but no-one would sign her on as such, so she took work as a fifth engineer. From 1929 onwards she repeatedly sat the [Board of Trade](#) examination for promotion to [chief engineer](#), but the BoT examiners repeatedly failed her, solely because she was a woman.

In the global shipping slump in the years after the [Wall](#)

Victoria Alexandrina Drummond,
MBE

Remembered

- National Library of Scotland, 2013
- Abertay blue plaque, Dundee
- Scottish Engineering Hall of Fame, 2018
- Drummond Theatre, HMS Sultan, 2018

Drummond after receiving her MBE, July 1941

Born14 October 1894
[Errol](#), [Scotland](#)

Died25 December 1978(aged 84)
[Burgess Hill](#), [East Sussex](#)

Appearance

hide

Text

- Small
- Standard
- Large

Width

- Standard
- Wide

Color

- Automatic
- Light
- Dark



Her grave

The Chapel, Megginch Castle



Dear Chief,

"... we take time to celebrate Victoria Drummond for her leadership, devotion to duty, determination, and bravery in the face of bombs, bullets, and bullies."

*Emily Buck, 4th Class Marine Engineer,
2019*

Victoria Drummond

First Woman Marine Engineer