

***Rolf Marschner, DL9CM, translated this story on the M.V. ROSCOE into German for a German publication. It was published in a German radio publication.***

## **M.V. ROSCOE**

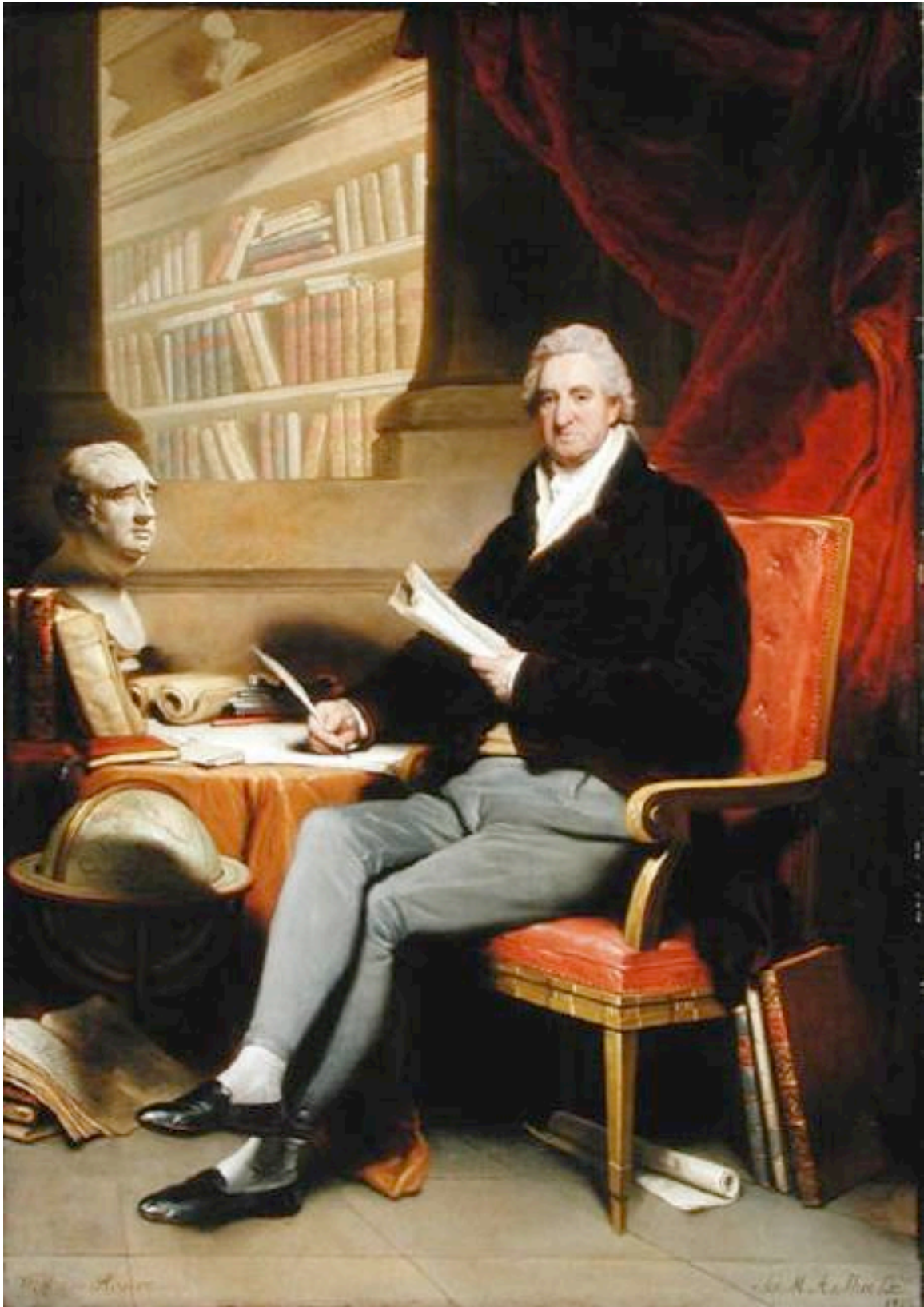
*By Spurgeon G. "Spud" Roscoe*

The M.V. ROSCOE was in service from 1955 until scrapped in 1962. She had been launched in 1935 as the German ship DUSSELDORF. She had been captured in Chilean territorial waters in 1939 by HMS DESPATCH. ROSCOE was her sixth name of a long career. It is not a name that I would approve. The name looks too much and sounds too much like **rescue** and could create confusion when more confusion was not necessary.



***M.V. ROSCOE***

Brian Kenefick sailed in M.V. ROSCOE as a Junior then 4<sup>th</sup> Engineer on her last three trips in 1961. They carried racehorses and pedigree cattle in wooden stables on deck for part of that time. Brian states that all the Lamport and Holt vessels were named after artists and writers. When he joined this fleet in January 1961 they had the Defoe, Debrett, Delius, Roscoe, Ruebens, Raphael, Ronsard, Romney and many smaller vessels that he could no longer remember.



Wikipedia

William Roscoe 1753 - 1831

The M.V. ROSCOE was named for William Roscoe who lived from 1753 until 1831. My family tree is wall to wall and tree top tall in William's. I descend from several of them but it is the first that I was to learn one was felt important enough to name a ship after. This William Roscoe was an Art Dealer and Poet and the reason Lamport and Holt chose to name a ship after him. He was no relative of mine. He came from Liverpool and my family, another William, came from Essex in 1635. The William Roscoe from Essex and his family came over in the vessel INCREASE and settled on what today is Harvard College Yard.

William Roscoe the artist was a sympathetic friend of John James Audubon (1785 – 1851). Audubon was a most gifted early naturalist-artist of North American wildlife according to a history titled Audubon's Animals, compiled and edited by Alice Ford. He was one of the first to study and paint the birds of the United States, according to the World Book Encyclopedia. His drawings and paintings look more like photographs than drawings and paintings to me.

The M.V. ROSCOE was on its way to Japan with German technicians on board when captured. Originally the deck and engine room crew were housed in the poop and the engineers and stewards on the main deck amidships. By the time Brian joined her, the engineers had been moved up a deck into what was originally passenger cabins on the port side amidships. Passengers and chief steward were on the starboard side and the deck officers were a deck higher. Deck and engine crews took over the main deck amidships. Brian did not state the location of the radio officer or radio officer's cabin but it was probably with the deck officers.

Brian Kenefick did go on to state that M.V. ROSCOE was unusual in that she had six hatches and just forward of the poop had a small hatch for a sail locker. The Germans built her to train seamen and the derricks could be removed and stepped on the mast and she could be sailed as a square rigger or tall ship in today's terminology. Brian did not know if that had ever been carried out.

M.V. ROSCOE had a single 150 ton derrick that could be mounted on either the foremast or aft mast that was stowed vertically behind the foremast. He said they had occasion to remove it, float it alongside and bring it back on board to use on the aft mast. It was quite a feat that took all hands to accomplish.

The mainmast was 127 feet from the deck to the truck so that with the high masts, heavy lift derrick stowed vertically and a swimming pool behind the engine room skylights she was a very lazy roller. She would go over to one side and lie there through a couple of waves before starting back the other way.

M.V. ROSCOE had been built to a semi-military spec and where there was a pipe down one side of the engine room there would be a duplicate on the other side, all copper with brass flanges. These pipes were for lubricating oil, fuel oil, salt water and cooling water for the main and auxiliary engines. Originally she had revolutionary five cylinder German radial or rotary diesel engines for generators. These engines only had two main bearings and were very short in length. They were stopped from rotating by restraining straps similar to the rolling chocks of the old fire tube horizontal boilers. When they wanted to remove a piston or cylinder head they removed the straps and rotated the engine until the cylinder was horizontal and slid the parts off onto a special bench just for that purpose. Brian said they had Rustons with minimal clearance to work on the heads due to low deckheads. The Rustons were an inline six cylinder model diesels and quite tall and took up nearly all the space between the deck and the deckhead.

Another thing that was different was the refrigeration plant that was a CO2 system and one of the compressors was slotted into such a small space it was impossible to work on it. The German solution was to make the carpenter's bunk, on the deck above, semi portable. We had to turf poor old chippie out of his cabin, remove the bunk and take up a section of the deck to remove the pistons from the compressor. Today some of that stuff would be unthinkable but in the 1930's the seamen were made to suffer all this.



*The "Red Duster"*

The M.V. ROSCOE flew the British Merchant Navy flag on her stern when in port and this can be seen in the above photograph of the ship. This flag has been known for years as the "Red Duster". This was the flag flown by the British North American ships, the many wooden vessels built in Canada during the 1800's and until Canada adopted this red ensign as the national flag with the Canadian coat of arms on the fly. The exception is if a certain number of the officers in a British merchant ship hold rank in the Royal Naval Reserve they can fly the blue ensign.



The M.V. ROSCOE was part of the Lamport and Holt Line Limited, as stated, and flew this, their house flag, from the top of her mizzen or aft mast. This was common practice back then to fly the house flag as it was known at this location and can be seen in the above photograph.



*International code "J" over code "I"*

There is a line from the top of the foremast to the top of the mizzen with a signal halyard on top of "Monkey Island", the top of the bridge. The flag she is flying from this location is a signal of some description and I blew this photograph up to see if I could read the signal. I would be willing to bet it is code "J" over code "I" meaning; "I am adjusting my compass or calibrating my radio direction finder." This was changed shortly after this to code "O" over code "Q" but no one knows why.

She is in her home waters of the United Kingdom someplace because she is not flying the flag or colours of another nation from the top of her foremast. If she were in Canadian waters she would be flying the Canadian flag at this location or the national flag of whatever nation she visited.

I believe M.V. ROSCOE spent her time on a run from the United Kingdom to South America. Her log books would be interesting if one could find and go through them.

The M.V. ROSCOE carried 6 passengers and a crew of 45. Her Radio Officer would have held either a Second Class Certificate of Proficiency in Radio countersigned for ships of the second category or a First Class Certificate of Proficiency in Radio. She was a British ship so would often carry two radio officers, an additional junior radio officer for six months experience, one right out of Radio College with a Second Class Certificate of Proficiency in Radio.

The official merchant navy radio officer's uniform of the British or British Commonwealth Countries indicated the class of certificate held by the officer. The colour green was used to distinguish the radio officer. The diamond was worn to indicate a certificated officer. One gold stripe with the green and the diamond was a junior radio officer. This was a radio officer right out of radio school with a second class certificate of proficiency in radio. Two gold stripes, the diamond and the green indicated a radio officer with a second class certificate counter signed for ships of the second category. A ship of the second category was a freighter of 1600 gross registered tons or larger and the holder of this certificate could act as the chief radio officer or the sole radio officer of a vessel of that size. One required six months experience in order to obtain this endorsement as the radio officer in either a ship of less than 1600 gross registered tons, or six months experience with a radio officer or radio officers in a ship larger than 1600 gross registered tons. I received my endorsement from six months experience in a vessel of 416 gross registered tons. Three gold rings, the diamond and the colour green indicated a radio officer with a first class certificate of proficiency in radio. The first class certificate was the highest certificate and permitted one to act in charge of any radio station.

The duty Radio Officer in M.V. ROSCOE would have paid special attention to three radio call signs; GJZX, GTZM and GZXJ. He would have always signed with the GJZX call sign.

The duty radio officer would have been interested in weather broadcasts and notice to mariners broadcasts made for the area they were in. He would have paid special attention to the traffic lists transmitted by Portishead in England, the station nearest the port she had departed and the port she was bound. Portishead was the largest British radio station for merchant ships and was located outside Bristol, England.

The GJZX call sign was the international call sign of M.V. ROSCOE and on hearing that call sign in a traffic list meant that there was a message for M.V. ROSCOE. Warships still make their number quite often and merchant ships did it when meeting another ship at sea and sometimes when in port. When the M.V. ROSCOE "Made Her Number" she would have done this by flying the letters GJZX in a vertical line, in this order, with the G at the top on the same signal halyard she is flying code "J" and code "I".







***M.V. ROSCOE "Making Her Number" International codes "G" over "J" over "Z" over "X"***

M.V. ROSCOE was fitted with a Marconi Radio Station. The GTZM call sign was the international collective call sign of the Marconi International Marine Company Limited. If one heard that call sign it meant that there was a message for all ships that were fitted with Marconi Marine Radio Stations. If Portishead transmitted that call sign in their traffic list broadcast it meant that there was a message for all Marconi equipped ships and it would be broadcasted at a known time. If one heard the GTZM call sign transmitted on the calling frequency it meant that the ship transmitting this call wanted to communicate with a Marconi equipped ship. Quite often the ship transmitting the call was a Marconi equipped ship and wanted help in one form or another. The most common request that I experienced was the ship making the call had unserviceable short wave or high frequency equipment and wanted a message relayed.

The GZXJ call sign was the International Collective Call Sign of the Lamport and Holt Line Limited. This call sign was used in the same way for the Lamport and Holt Line Limited ships as it was for the GTZM call sign for the Marconi equipped ships.



*Rolf Marschner DL9CM*

*M.V. ROSCOE*

I must admit it is rather nice sitting here killing time and listening to these calls in radiotelegraph as they would have been heard during the many years I operated radio.

S. G. Roscoe  
Halifax, N.S.