

### From Cannons to Condoms and Woolly Hats

*Recently my 'Google alert' brought me news of the Crimean war and how the sinking of just one Merchant ship had a disastrous effect on for the British soldiers fighting there. Some thousands were to die from exposure as their winter uniforms went down with 'The Prince'.*

Ukrainian archaeologists say they have identified the remains of HMS Prince, a British naval vessel that sank off Balaclava during the Crimean War. The sinking, with all 150 men on board, caused outrage not only for the human toll, but because thousands of badly needed winter uniforms were also lost.

The ship had not been found since it sank during a storm in November 1854.

Other underwater expeditions have found parts of the ship, but it is the first positive identification. According to Sergei Voronov, of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, and the leader of the expedition, explorers discovered a plate fragment from the captain's mess last summer.

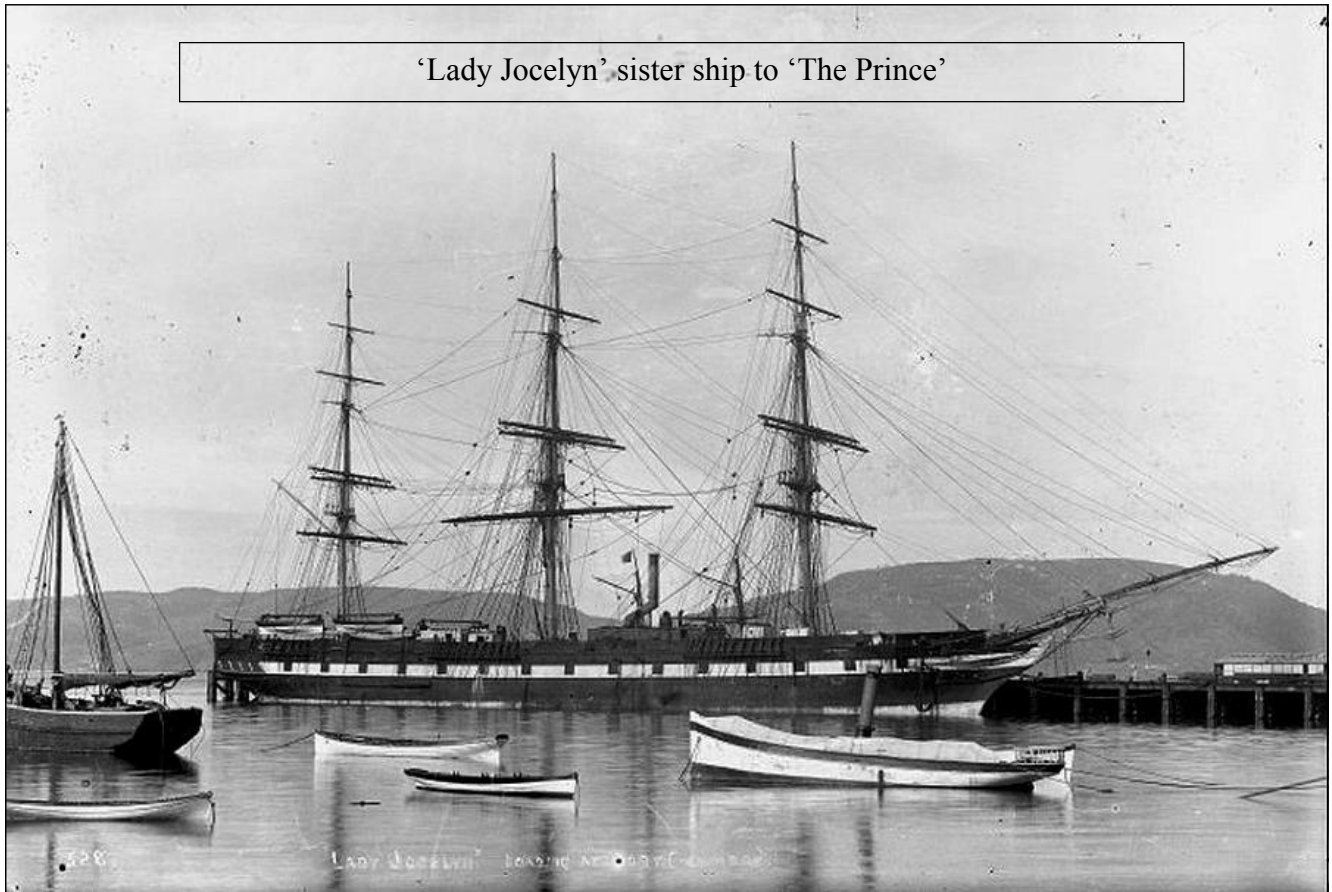
After months of meticulous cleaning, the fragment revealed the name of the company which owned the Prince before it was hired by the Royal Navy: the General Screw Steam Shipping Company.

The Prince was lost during a winter storm near the Crimean port city of Balaclava, during the historic siege of Sevastopol, which was part of the Russian Empire but is now located in Ukraine.

Its sinking unleashed an uproar in Britain, as troops were suffering from the extreme cold and widespread disease. The Crimean War, which lasted from October 1853 to February 1856, pitted Russia against Britain, France, the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Sardinia.

It was during the Crimean War, at the Battle of Balaclava, that the ill-fated Charge of the Light Brigade took place which led to the deaths of 272 British soldiers.

The Crimean War is sometimes called the first modern war, and was the first to incorporate the tactical use of railways and telegraph, and was captured extensively in photographs.



The Prince 1,850 tons was built in the same yard at the same time as the Lady Jocelyn

In 1852 by C.J. Mare & Co., Blackwall, London.

The 'Lady Jocelyn' went on to live a long life with many owners the last one being Shaw Saville & Albion.

I suppose the sinking of a merchant ship loaded with supplies has affected many a campaign.

The latest example I can think of is the sinking of the 'Atlantic Conveyor' in the Falklands War, hit by an Exocet missile she took down with her all the heavy lift helicopters, infantry personnel carriers and other land transport plus thousand of tons of supplies.

Which put a modern army back to a Crimean like campaign of foot soldiers who carried all their gear in a Knapsack

## From Cannons to Condoms 2-The General Screw Steam Shipping Company

The General Screw Steam Shipping Company was founded in 1848 by James Laming, who for some 30 years previously had owned sailing ships plying between England and the Netherlands.

In the autumn of 1849 the 500 ton iron screw BOSPHORUS inaugurated the new company's service from Liverpool to Gibraltar, Malta and Constantinople (Istanbul), the HELLESPONT and PROPONTIS of similar size joining her as soon as completed.

The Company was contracted in November 1850 to carry the mails monthly between Plymouth and Cape Town for £30,000 a year. The BOSPHORUS opened the service in December 1850 and reached Cape Town in 40 days; 5 more than the contract time.

Almost at once orders were placed with C. J. Mare & Co. of Blackwall, London, builders of the earlier ships, for the QUEEN OF THE SOUTH, which was followed by the sister ships LADY JOCELYN, INDIANA, CALCUTTA, MAURITIUS and HYDASPES. On 29 May 1852 an agreement was reached for the Company to provide a monthly mail service from England to Madras and Calcutta, via St. Vincent, Ascension St. Helena, Cape Town, Mauritius and Ceylon. The Australian Royal Mail Steam Navigation Company started a mail service between England and Australia in June 1852 which proved so unreliable that the contract was withdrawn in April 1853.

The General Screw Company had already despatched two steamers to Australia early in the year and decided to step in with a regular service. The new steamer ARGO sailed from Southampton on 8 May 1853 and reached Melbourne in 64 days, calling only at St. Vincent; she returned via Cape Horn and after a passage of similar duration received considerable publicity as the first steamer to encircle the globe.

Unfortunately, the Indian service had been a disastrous failure owing to a number of serious breakdowns of the steamers, the unexpectedly high cost and consumption of fuel and the disappointing passenger and cargo results.

There was no alternative but to withdraw the service, the last sailing being taken by the PROPONTIS on 15 March 1854. Despite the award of a short-term mail contract, the Australian service did not last much longer, and the ARGO took the final sailing from Southampton on 4 October 1854.

The problem of what to do with the superfluous units of the fleet was partially solved by chartering the new steamers GOLDEN FLEECE, JASON and THE PRINCE to carry troops to the Mediterranean.

The INDIANA left Calcutta on 16 March 1854 on her third homeward voyage from India and arrived at Plymouth on 27 May. A fortnight later that she would inaugurate a new service for the General Screw Company from Le Havre and Southampton to New York, under the management of Croskey & Co., agents for the American owned Ocean Navigation Company, which was running a monthly service between New York, Southampton and Bremen with two wooden paddle steamers and for the New York & Havre Steam Navigation Company, whose monthly service between New York, Southampton and Havre was being undertaken temporarily by chartered wooden paddle steamers.

The intention was that the INDIANA and MAURITIUS should sail once a month between Le Havre, Southampton and New York, and the CROESUS and the QUEEN OF THE SOUTH once a month between Bremen, Southampton and New

York on alternate dates with the American steamers, thereby providing a combined weekly sailing from Southampton.

All the units of the fleet were chartered as a Crimean War transport in 1854-1855. Disaster befell three of the transports, as THE PRINCE was wrecked in the Crimea in November 1854 during a hurricane, the CROESUS was destroyed by fire in April 1855 when carrying Sardinian troops to the Crimea and 2 months previously the

MAURITIUS was badly damaged by fire in drydock at Southampton.

The entire fleet was sold after the war and in 1857 to the European & American Steam Shipping Company, four of them were chartered in 1859-1860 to the Galway Line.

**Left**— the Screw Steamer 'Liberty' photo taken 1864





Edwin Hughes, otherwise known as 'Balaclava Ned', was born in Wrexham and died in Blackpool in 1927 aged 96.

He rode in the infamous charge in the Crimean War in 1854, which led to the deaths of 272 British soldiers.

One critic said Balaclava Ned would be "spinning in his grave".

The company behind the plans refused to comment.

On 25 October, 1854, Troop Sergeant-Major Edwin Hughes and 600 others rode in the Charge of the Light Brigade, at the Battle of Balaclava.

Historians have debated over whether it was a reckless or stupid military action while it has become a symbol of heroic failure.

Hughes was injured and his horse was shot from under him as British forces mounted an attack on the Russian artillery. Despite the deaths of hundreds

of colleagues, he survived and continued to serve in the Crimean campaign until being discharged in 1873.

From then on he was known as Balaclava Ned.

It is thought he was born at number 2 Mount Street, where a plaque was unveiled in his honour nearly 20 years ago.

Shropshire-based company, The Fantasy House, now plans to run a sex shop from the premises, just a few doors down from an existing adult shop.

On Monday, the Environmental Licensing Committee granted permission on the condition none of the licensed

material is positioned near the front of the shop.

The committee was told there had been no objections to the application.

However earlier, Colonel Peter Knox, chairman of the Crimean War Research Society, said: "I think old Ned would be spinning in his grave." Col Knox, who lives near Mold, Flintshire, said: "As I don't live in Wrexham, I don't really feel



I could object to the type of shop - that's up to the people of Wrexham.

"He's quite a famous son of Wrexham, having been the longest surviving member of the Light Brigade, and I think it's a pity that the premises where his plaque stands could become a sex shop.

"But I'm sure something could be done. There's no reason why the plaque couldn't be moved elsewhere."

Mr Hughes' medals were sold at auction in 2005 for £16,000.

According to press interviews he gave in later life he said that following the attack he was "damaged about the face and left leg but not seriously".

"We just did our duty without any thought of glory, and, of course, as in all wars many of our lot paid the supreme price."

### **The Black Sea port city Balaklava at the head of Balaklava Bay**



In the Crimean War a British shipping and supply base for the army for the campaign in the South of Crimea (Ukraine) after the long march south from the battles near Alma. Including the siege of Sevastapol and the battles fought around the region including the charge of the Light Brigade.



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*From wikipedia*

**Left** supply ships crowding into Balaklava Harbour.

**Below-** The survivors from the Charge of the Light Brigade :

13th Light Dragoons photographed in 1855 by Roger Fenton

The brigade (617 men) was not completely destroyed, but did suffer terribly, with 118 men killed, 127 wounded. After regrouping, only 195 men were still with horses. The futility of the action and its reckless bravery prompted the French Marshal Pierre Bosquet to state "C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas la guerre." ("It is magnificent, but it is not war.")

The Russian commanders are said to have initially believed that the British soldiers must have been drunk.

Somerset Calthorpe, ADC to Lord Raglan, wrote a letter to a friend three days after the charge. He detailed casualty numbers, but he did not make distinction between those killed and those taken prisoner:

"Killed and missing. Wounded.

9 Officers 12

14 Serjeants 9

4 Trumpeters 3

129 Rank and file 98

156 Total 122

278 casualties;

335 horses killed in action, or obliged afterwards to be destroyed from wounds.

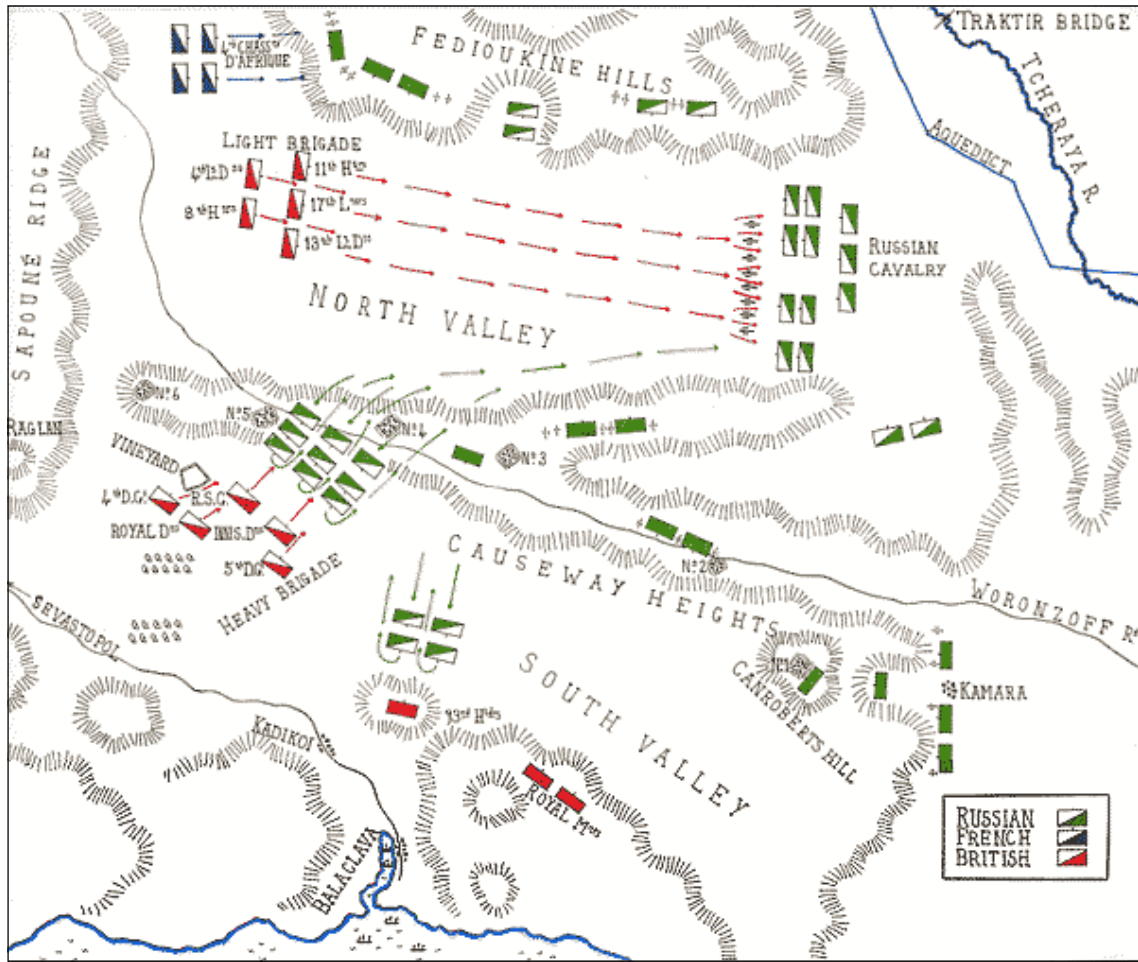
It has since been ascertained that the Russians made a good many prisoners; the exact number is not yet known."

The reputation of the British cavalry was significantly enhanced as a result of the charge, though the same cannot be said for their commanders.



**Above-** the "Valley of Death" today

## From Cannons to Condoms 5



Cavalry Camp at Balaklava



**From Cannons to Condoms 6**  
Balaklava Railway track being landed



Balaklava –Harbour

## From Cannons to Condoms 7



Left Photo-graphic van

Right Sgt. Major Bailey Of the Royal Dragoons



Below-Fusilier's camp. A forest of masts in harbour below



The Crimean War (October 1853–February 1856) was fought between the Russian Empire on one side and an alliance of the British Empire, French Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the Kingdom of Sardinia, and the Duchy of Nassau on the other.

The war was part of a long-running contest between the major European powers for influence over territories of the declining Ottoman Empire.

Most of the conflict took place on the Crimean Peninsula, but there were smaller campaigns in western Turkey, the Baltic Sea, the Pacific Ocean and the White Sea.

The war has gone by different names. In Russia it is also known as the "Oriental War" (Russian: Восточная война, Vostochnaya Voina), and in Britain at the time it was sometimes known as the "Russian War".

It cost over one million lives.



## **Cannons to Condoms 8**

*The previous article led to this one:-*

### **Brigade bugle echoes over 'Valley of Death'**

By Helen Fawkes

BBC News, Balaclava

Wearing authentic blue and grey uniforms, a group of British men rode into the Valley of Death once again.

The horsemen galloped across the battlefields of the Crimean War, now surrounded by vineyards.

"We often remember people who die in 20th-century conflicts, but so many men lost their lives here that we shouldn't forget them," says 18-year-old John White, one of the military enthusiasts taking part.

To prepare for the event, the group have been experiencing similar conditions to that of soldiers from the Crimean War.



The re-enactors have been living in Victorian tents and eating food typical of the period.

The 150th anniversary of the Charge of the Light Brigade is being marked in what is now Ukraine.

It is one of Britain's most famous military blunders. Almost 700 Cavalry men took part. Confusion and incompetence

meant the soldiers were sent in the wrong direction. They faced Russian guns on the hills to the left, to the right and straight ahead. There were many casualties.

Len Gardner's grandfather was one of the survivors.

"Being here, seeing the battlefield and all the hills around it, I can understand why the mistake was made," says the 80-year-old.

### **'Suicidal bravery'**

The original charge was led by the Earl of Cardigan on instructions from Commander-in-Chief Lord Raglan. As part of the commemorations, the current Earl, David Brudenell-Bruce, retraced his distant relative's steps on horseback.

"They knew it was suicidal, but they showed great bravery by following the orders they were given," he says.

"My journey through the valley was a very special moment."

A ceremony attended by the Duke of Edinburgh was held to pay tribute to those who died.

At a British monument, wreaths were laid by all the nations who took part in the Crimean War.

Up to a million people died in the conflict, which started after Russia had attacked the ailing Ottoman Empire.

In response, Britain and France invaded the Crimea which was then part of Russia.

As the mist gathered around the Crimean hills, the original bugle which heralded the start of the charge was played.

It is the first time the battered instrument has been heard here for 150 years.



British war memorial Balaklava



Entrance to Balaklava bay