

Shipping Company

Brief History



The Hain Steamship Company

Operator of worldwide tramp services based in the UK



Pre-P&O Years

Formally incorporated as a public company in 1901, the Hain Steamship Company can trace its roots back to 1816 when the Hain family of St Ives, Cornwall, acquired a part share in the fishing lugger *Dasher*. She proved so successful that the family purchased the schooner *Camilla* in 1838 and began trading with Mediterranean ports delivering cargoes of cured fish and returning with Greek and Turkish dried fruit. At the time of the *Camilla*'s purchase, the business of Edward Hain & Son was established. The subsequent acquisition of the *Mystery* schooner in 1850 meant Hain and his grandson (also Edward) could now trade in West Indian sugar and Brazilian coffee.



In December 1851, Edward Hain IV was born, followed shortly after by the death of his great grandfather. Initially, young Edward did not share his predecessors' enthusiasm for the sea; instead choosing to move away to take up employment first with a bank and then with a London tea merchant. It was the tea trade that alerted Edward to the importance of making the switch from sail to steam and upon his return to St Ives in 1878, he convinced his father, although the elder was initially reluctant to make the transition. Armed with finance provided by

Bolitho's bank (the forerunner of Barclays) the youngest Edward visited the shipyard of John Readhead & Co at South Shields where Hain placed the first of many orders for the company. Readhead's delivered the first steamer named *Trewidden* in honour of the Bolitho estate outside Penzance. The relationship between Hain and Readhead ultimately produced a total of 87 ships for the company, all with the prefix 'Tre' a Cornish word for 'farmstead'.

In September 1901, the Hain Steamship Company was incorporated as a public company in Cardiff under the direction of Edward Hain III and Edward Hain IV. By 1913, the number of ships in their service reached 36 with another five on order with Readheads. At the outbreak of war, two of Hain's ships were docked in German ports and were immediately detained while another ship in the Black Sea was requisitioned by Russian forces. By the end of the war, the Hain Steamship Company lost a total of 18 ships to enemy action and three by other causes.



The P&O Years

A few months after the death of Sir Edward Hain in 1917 at the age of 65, the Hain Steamship Company was purchased by the P&O Steam Navigation Company at a cost of nearly £4,000,000 and promptly sold 50% of the shares to the British India Steam Navigation Company (a P&O subsidiary). As with a number of other P&O holdings, the Hain Steamship Company continued as a separate entity under the management of the Hain directors and operated with a significant level of autonomy. In late 1917, Hain acquired the majority of shares in the Mercantile

Steam Ship Company Ltd although the company soon went into voluntary liquidation in 1923 when the P&O Board felt there was no real need to run two separate companies in the tramping trade. The 1930s proved a very slow time for Hain and its ships were often laid up in the River Fal. Hain supplemented their income by managing and crewing a number of ships on permanent charter to P&O for their Eastern services. With the advent of World War II, Hain suffered considerably, losing a total of 28 ships including all of those on charter to P&O.

In the early 1960s P&O elected to rationalise the tramp shipping operations of its subsidiaries Hain Steamship Company, James Nourse Ltd and Asiatic Steam Navigation Company Ltd. Hain had always been a tramp operator, but the Nourse and Asiatic companies were new to the business, having lost their traditional liner routes in the post-colonial 1950s. Hain Nourse Management Ltd was established in 1964 to operate and manage the three companies' ships, and in 1965 Hain Steamship Company was renamed Hain-Nourse Ltd which took over ownership of James Nourse vessels as well. It also took on responsibility for the management of the P&O Group's bulk carriers, the first of which was delivered in the same year and traded through the Associated Bulk Carriers joint venture. When the P&O Group was reorganised into operating divisions in 1971, the Hain-Nourse bulk carriers were transferred to the Bulk Shipping Division and the remaining tramps to the General Cargo Division. At that time they all ceased to carry Hain-Nourse livery and to fly its flag. Hain-Nourse-owned ships were re-registered under the P&O name in 1972, and the company was ultimately renamed P&O Ferries Ltd in 1978.

Archive Collection

The Hain Steamship Company records were deposited on permanent loan by P&O to the [National Maritime Museum](#), Greenwich. Contents include minute books dating from the company's incorporation in 1901 to 1960, balance sheets and accounts from 1918 to 1964, directors reports 1929 to 1938, fleet statistics from 1941 to 1961, board papers from Hain-Nourse Management, files on the amalgamation of Hain Steamship, James Nourse and Asiatic Steam Navigation Company from 1953 to 1964, Hain-Nourse annual accounts from 1966 to 1971 and Hain-Nourse salaries and pensions from 1968 to 1969.

The collection also includes papers from the Mercantile Steamship Company including correspondence and accounts relating to the company's acquisition by P&O dating 1917 to 1920 and correspondence relating to the company's liquidation dating from 1918 to 1923. For a complete list of the material held at the Museum, it is recommended that you consult the NMM [catalogue](#) directly.

Selected Published Sources

O'Donoghue, K.J. and H.S. Appleyard, *Hain of St. Ives*. (World Ship Society, Kendal, 1986)