

Shipping Company

Brief History



Avenue Shipping Company Ltd

Operator of worldwide cargo liners and occasional tramping services

Pre-P&O Years

In 1924, the shipping agents Birt, Potter & Hughes (who were behind the formation of the Federal Steam Navigation Company in the mid 1890s) established the Avenue Shipping Company as their ship-owning division. The shipping company's name was derived from BP&H's London office at 2 Fenchurch Avenue. During its brief existence, the company operated only a small number of ships and was wound up in 1934.



The P&O Years

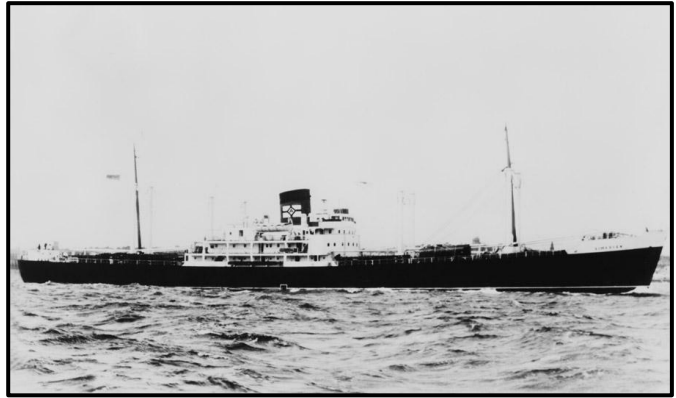
In 1954, the New Zealand Shipping Company (a P&O subsidiary) revived the Avenue Shipping Company when a need arose to find use for their smaller part-refrigerated ships which had been replaced by new ships in the NZ/East Coast North America trade. The intention was for Avenue Shipping's service to augment both the NZSCo and Federal Steam's fleets when needed as well as serve on tramping duties. By putting the new company under the



management of Trinder Anderson & Company (which was not part of P&O) the ships were more easily chartered to outside companies when needed, though they were also employed by other P&O-owned companies. W.C How, the Deputy Chairman of NZSCo, became Avenue's first Chairman. The new company was floated on the stock exchange, where 1,500,000 shares were sold at £1 per share. In their Annual Report on 30 September 1955 the accounts showed there was a loss of approximately £50,000 during their first year although the company saw profits increase over the next few years.

Avenue Shipping Company initially inherited 5 ex-NZSCo vessels which became *Antrim*, *Armagh*, *Roscommon*, *Tyrone* and *Westmeath*, to which was added one ship owned by BP&H and renamed *Limerick*. The house flag and livery from the original Avenue Shipping Co set up in 1924 was adopted by the new company. By 1957, Avenue Shipping had a total of seven ships in service; the original five plus the newly-built *Donegal* and the time chartered *Kildare*. The new ships were an economic success, and *Donegal* even inaugurated a route from Australia to New Guinea.

W.C. How retired in 1961, and C.A.W. Dawes was elected Chairman of the Board. Not long after Dawes' took up the reins, the company began to lose its economic viability due to growth in container operations in the general cargo trades meaning that Avenue's conventional ships were no longer needed. The *Limerick* was transferred to the British India Steam Navigation Company in 1969 which reduced the fleet to only *Antrim*, *Donegal* and *Galway*. During the re-organization of the P&O Group in 1971, Avenue's remaining ships were absorbed into P&O General Cargo Division which took over its livery. The ships were immediately redeployed and renamed and in 1976, Avenue Shipping was renamed P&O Overseas Holdings Ltd.



Archive Collection

Records relating to the Avenue Shipping Company have been deposited on permanent loan by P&O to the [National Maritime Museum](#), Greenwich. The records include minute books from 1954 to 1962, annual reports and accounts. For a complete list of the material held at the Museum, it is recommended that you consult the NMM [catalogue](#) directly.