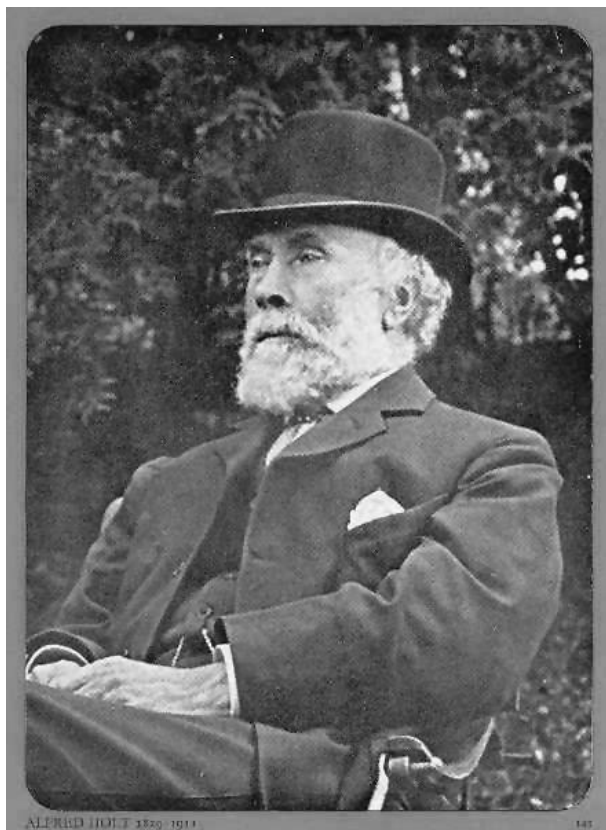


Alfred Holt

Born 1829.

Available online at www.livesretold.co.uk



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This life story was archived by Alex Reid in 2021, with acknowledgement and thanks, from internet sources.

1. Early Life

Alfred Holt, born on the 13th June, 1829, was the third son of Mr. George Holt, of Liverpool. After being privately educated he was apprenticed in 1846 to the late Mr. Edward Woods, under whom he gained a varied and extensive experience of railway surveying and construction and locomotive building.

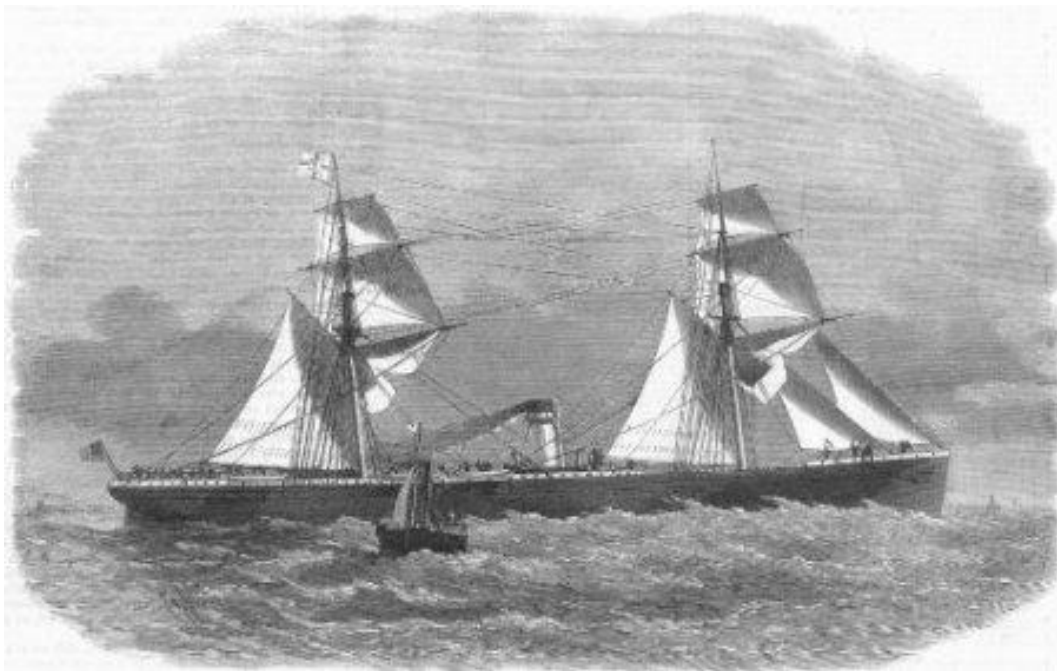


The Lamport and Holt ship SS Tennyson, with its 'clipper bow'.

He later turned his attention to marine engineering, and after a short time with Messrs. Lamport and Holt, of Liverpool, he engaged in business on his own account in 1852 as a consulting marine engineer. To this he later added the commercial management of steamship lines, in which he showed considerable enterprise, and became very successful.

2. West India and Pacific Steamship Company

In 1855 he commenced the first unsubsidised line to the West Indies, which formed the nucleus of the West India and Pacific Steamship Company. He also assisted in the establishment of Messrs. Lamport and Holt's line to South America, and accompanied their first vessel, the 'Kepler,' in 1864 as volunteer supercargo and engineer, the vessel having been built to his design.



The Colombian, belonging to the West India and Pacific Steam-ship company.

Up to this period all steamship engines were of the low-pressure (generally under 20 lbs.) wet-condensing type, good specimens burning perhaps 5 lbs. of coal per IHP. per hour, but it was becoming daily clearer that less fuel must be burned if longer voyages were to be undertaken. Cornish engines were the school for fuel economy, and Mr. Holt made a complete study of these engines, applying his knowledge to marine engines. Of course the crux of the question was the employment of high-pressure steam, and Mr. Holt was probably the first to use high-pressure steam successfully at sea.

In 1864 he fitted the 'Cleator' with a boiler carrying 60 lbs. steam, and the resulting economy in coal consumption proved it was possible for a vessel of 400 tons to undertake long voyages. The engine was a compound one with a single crank. Compound engines had always been used in conjunction with low pressures,

3. Ocean Steamship Company and Blue Funnel Line

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IN
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Regular Passenger Services to South Africa & Australia, The Straits & China

SAILINGS FROM *LIVERPOOL—

January	23rd, 1926 ..	.. T.S.S. "NESTOR"	14,547 tons ..	.. To South Africa and Australia.
January	30th, 1926 ..	.. T.S.S. "SARPEDON"	11,321 tons ..	.. To Straits and China.
February	27th, 1926 ..	.. T.S.S. "AENEAS"	10,058 tons ..	.. To Las Palmas, South Africa and Australia
February	27th, 1926 ..	.. T.S.S. "PATROCLUS"	11,316 tons ..	.. To Straits and China.
March	13th, 1926 ..	.. T.S.S. "ANCHISES"	10,000 tons ..	.. To Las Palmas, South Africa and Australia.
March	27th, 1926 ..	.. T.S.S. "ANTENOR"	11,174 tons ..	.. To Port Said, Straits and China.
April	10th, 1926 ..	.. T.S.S. "ULYSSES"	14,626 tons ..	.. To Las Palmas, South Africa and Australia.
May	8th, 1926 ..	.. T.S.S. "HECTOR"	11,192 tons ..	.. To Port Said, Straits and China.
June	5th, 1926 ..	.. T.S.S. "ASCANIUS"	10,048 tons ..	.. To Las Palmas, South Africa and Australia.
July	3rd, 1926 ..	.. T.S.S. "SARPEDON"	11,321 tons ..	.. To Port Said, Straits and China.
July	3rd, 1926 ..	.. T.S.S. "NESTOR"	14,547 tons ..	.. To Las Palmas, South Africa and Australia.
August	14th, 1926 ..	.. T.S.S. "PATROCLUS"	11,316 tons ..	.. To Straits and China.

*London passengers conveyed to Liverpool by special trains from Euston on sailing day at the Company's expense.

Special Reduced Seasonal Rates between U.K. and South Africa, and U.K. and Port Said. All Eastern passenger Steamers call at Penang and Singapore. Through Rates quoted to other Straits Ports.

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Monthly Service : Next departures from Marseilles, February 10th, March 31st, May 5th, June 2nd, June 30th.

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BIRKENHEAD GLASGOW NEWPORT SWANSEA HAMBURG BREMEN ROTTERDA AMSTERDAM BREMEN-HAMBURG BIRKENHEAD GLASGOW	} STRAITS, PHILIPPINES, CHINA, JAPAN.	With transhipment to SIAM, MALAY STATES, BORNEO, COCHIN CHINA, FORMOSA, COREA and SIBERIA.	} GLASGOW LIVERPOOL HAMBURG BREMEN ROTTERDAM ANTWERP	} SOUTH AFRICA, AUSTRALIA.	} Via LAS PALMAS and SUEZ.
BIRKENHEAD GLASGOW	} PADANG, JAVA.	With transhipment to ALL PORTS DUTCH EAST INDIES.	} BIRKENHEAD GLASGOW NEW YORK, STRAITS and FAR EAST, via Socar and Panama.	} PACIFIC COAST OF NORTH AMERICA, Via PANAMA.	

NEW YORK, PADANG and JAVA, with transhipment to all ports Dutch East Indies.
HONG KONG, PACIFIC COAST OF NORTH AMERICA, via Japan. SINGAPORE, WEST AUSTRALIA, via Java.

ALFRED HOLT & CO., LIVERPOOL

The 'Cleator' gave him confidence to build three vessels of about 2,300 tons each, with which his blue-funnel China line, known as the Ocean Steam Ship Company, began in 1866. The route had to be via the Cape of Good Hope, the Suez Canal not being open till the end of 1869, and the unbroken run between England and Mauritius was at that date a rather exceptional performance. The venture, though thought doubtful by many, was successful, and became a large well-known steamship undertaking. Throughout, he was associated with his brother, Mr. Philip H. Holt.

4

In the early eighteen seventies, Messrs. Butterfield and Swire, his China agents, conceived the project of running steamers on the Chinese rivers, mainly on the Yangtze. Mr. Holt secured financial support for the venture and advised as to the hulls and machinery.

After an exhaustive study of American river-boats in 1872, Mr. Holt recommended the construction by Messrs. Inglis of Glasgow of four vessels based on the American type. The wooden hulls, however, were replaced by iron, and the walking-beam engine was retained though somewhat modified, they were a complete success and competition soon ceased. This was the nucleus of the China Navigation Company. His practice in connection with the machinery of steamboats involved his becoming acquainted with the subject of hull-construction, he conducted extensive studies and became somewhat of an expert.

Mr. Holt was for over 25 years a member of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, and, having been chairman of several of the committees, was elected in 1891 and 1892 chairman of the Board. He took a great interest in the general business of the Board, and especially in the works and marine departments. He originally suggested the construction of an overhead railway on the line of docks, along which passenger traffic had become almost impossible.

By 1887 the overall level of competition between British rival companies led to a freight rate war and a complete breakdown of the Conference system. The profits of the major British rivals: P & O, Ocean Steam Ship Company, Glen Line, Castle Line,

Shire Line and the China Mutual were all affected to the extent that, finally, agreements were made that led to a new Conference system being introduced in the 1890s. This was undoubtedly a turning point for Alfred and Philip Holt who now became firmly wedded to the Conference system and the principle that equalisation of freight rates would eliminate wasteful competition. They were, nevertheless, determined to maintain competition in the provision of quality of service whereby the most efficient company was sure of receiving the largest reward.

4. The China Trade

The 1890s also saw a change in trading patterns and in the types of cargo required to be carried in the China trade. Light measurement cargos such as textiles from Yorkshire, for example, were being replaced by heavier, dead-weight cargos such as machinery from the Midlands, and the Holts took the decision to build new vessels designed to accommodate these changes.

In 1891, the Holts created two new shipping companies in order to strengthen their competitive position against Dutch shipping lines. The first, *Nederlandsche Stoomvaart Maatschappij Oceaan* was founded in Amsterdam, and its fleet consisted of a number of older Blue Funnel ships but now under the Dutch flag. The second, the *East India Ocean Steam Ship Company* comprised a part of the Bogaardt fleet together with other vessels already purchased by the Holts for the East Indies trade. This latter company was to be operated from Singapore but under the control of the *Ocean Steam Ship Company Managers*.

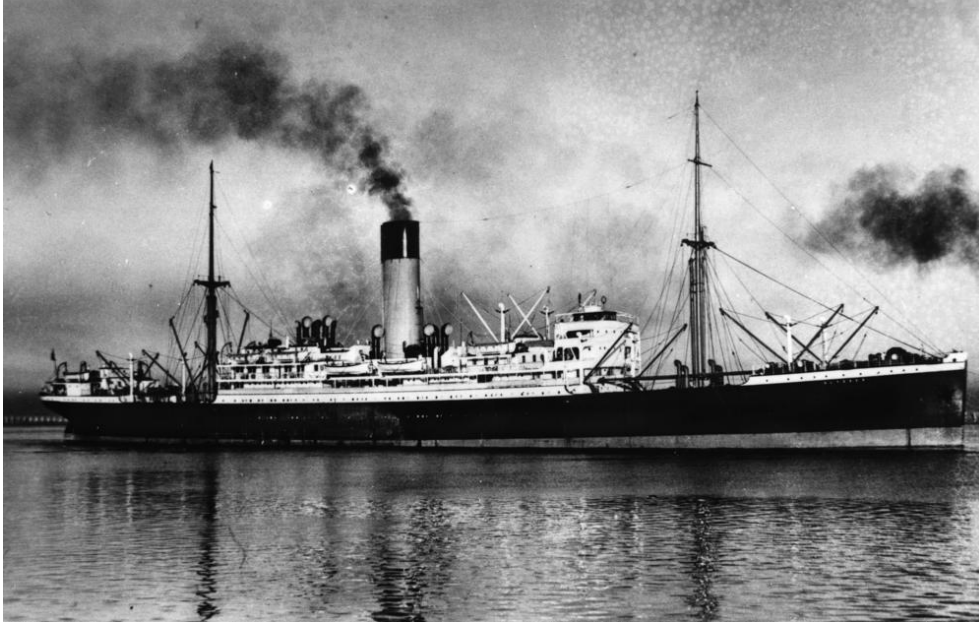
In 1895, Richard Durning Holt, Maurice Llewelyn Davies and George Holt junior joined Alfred and Philip Holt and Albert Crompton as Managers of the *Ocean Steam Ship Company*. Albert Crompton had become a Manager in 1882. The new Managers undoubtedly made a major contribution to the improvements in the profitability of the *Ocean Steam Ship Company*. Significant operating economies were made, even to the extent of reducing salaries and wages of *Ocean Steam Ship Company* employees by 15%. New markets were identified, and operating practices revised. Old ships were disposed of, and, between 1894 and 1902, twenty-two new, large steam ships were added to the Blue Funnel fleet.



The house flag of the Blue Funnel Line, the letters standing for Alfred Holt.

5. Blue Funnel Line in the 20th Century

Ships of the Blue Funnel fleet all had names from classical Greek legend or history. The majority were cargo ships, but most of the Ocean SS Co cargo ships also had capacity for a few passengers. The line also had a few purely passenger vessels.



Passenger liner Ulysses. U-160 sank her in 1942 but all 290 people aboard survived.

Nestor, launched 7 December 1912, and Ulysses, launched 5 July 1913, are examples of large cargo/passenger vessels entering the line's service at the time. Both ships were built in Belfast by Workman, Clark and Company with a length of 580 ft (176.8 m) and 14,500 gross tons. Passenger accommodations were for first class only and seven cargo holds, one and a 'tween decks space fitted for refrigerated meat, dairy and fruit cargoes, provided accommodation of the largest consignments.



Painting of the 9,076 ton Cyclops approaching Hong Kong. U-123 sank her in 1942 with the loss of 87 lives. The painting is in the Museum of Liverpool; the artist is unknown.

In the 1920s, Blue Funnel became the first British shipping company to employ a woman marine engineer. Victoria Drummond served with the company three times: firstly as Tenth Engineer on the liner *Anchises* 1922–24, then as refrigeration engineer on the refrigerated cargo ship *Perseus* in 1943 and finally as resident engineer at Caledon Shipbuilding in Dundee supervising the completion of *Rhexenor* and *Stentor* in 1946. These were two of the first new ships built for Blue Funnel to replace its Second World War losses.

The company expanded in 1937 through acquisition of the Glen Line in 1935, that provided cargo and passenger service to the Far East from eastern English ports such as London. The overall managing director, C. E. Wurtzburg, brought Herbert Gladstone McDavid to London from the company's Liverpool office as director of the new acquisition and profits increased. Eight new Glenearn class ships were ordered, four from UK shipyards and four from abroad but not all were delivered when the Second World War started.

Outward Bound

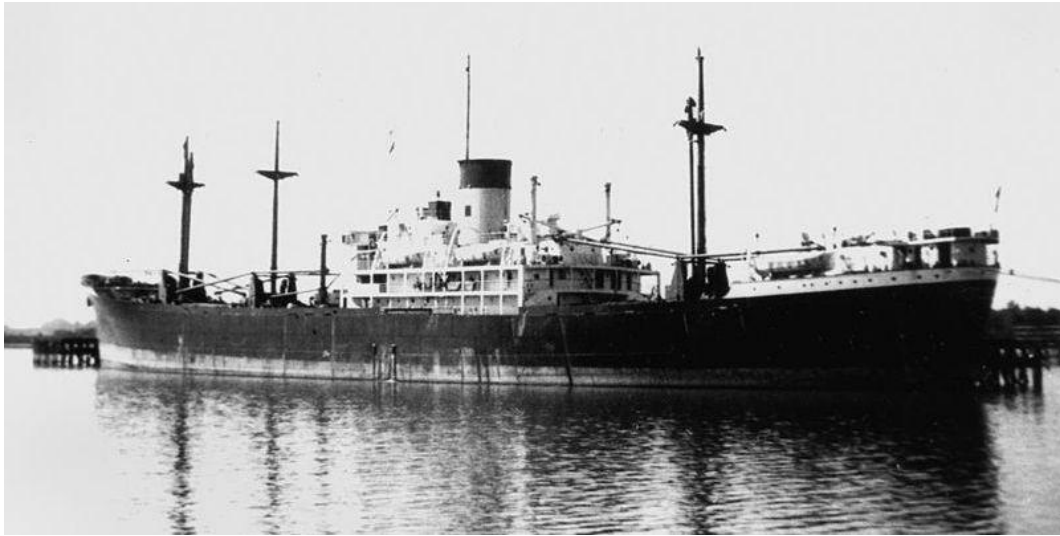


The early days of Outward Bound.

The first Outward Bound school was opened in Aberdyfi, Wales in 1941 with the support of the Blue Funnel Line. Outward Bound's founding mission was to improve the survival chances of young seamen after their ships were torpedoed in the mid-Atlantic.

Captain JF "Freddy" Fuller of the Blue Funnel Line took over the leadership of the Aberdyfi school in 1942 and served the Outward Bound movement as senior warden until 1971. Fuller was seconded following wartime experience during the Battle of the Atlantic of surviving two successive U-boat attacks and commanding an open lifeboat in the Atlantic Ocean for 35 days without losing a single member of the crew.

Ships of the Blue Funnel Line



10,198 ton cargo ship Rhexenor in 1953.

Blue Funnel lost 16 ships in the First World War and 30 in the Second. After each war it restored its fleet with new ships. After the Second War it regained tonnage rapidly by buying six Victory ships from the United States Maritime Commission in 1946 and eight "Sam-" ships from the Ministry of War Transport in 1947.

Six of the eight new ships ordered by Glen Line in 1938 were reacquired, resulting in a fleet of 15 ships by September 1948. The twice-monthly fast service and a slower secondary service to the Far East resumed.

Two Blue Funnel ships, Agapenor and Melampus were trapped by the Six-Day War of 1967 and became part of the Yellow Fleet in the Great Bitter Lake, remaining there until 1975.



8,510 ton cargo ship Menestheus in King George V Dock, London in about 1960

THE BLUE FUNNEL LINE

(ALFRED HOLT & CO., LIVERPOOL)

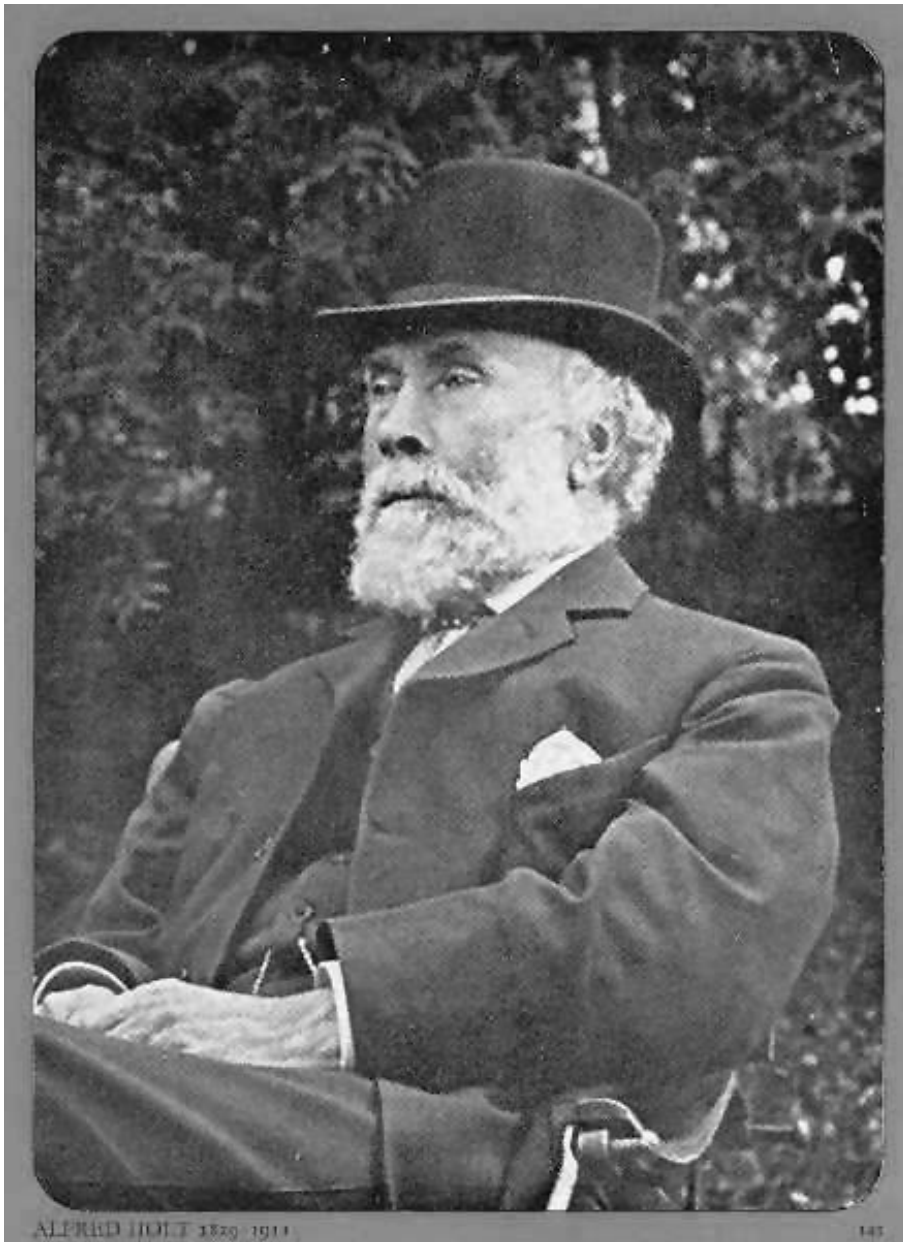


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SOUTH AFRICA *VIA*
LAS PALMAS
& **AUSTRALIA**
AND TO **THE FAR EAST**

Decline

From 1947 to 1970, as Britain's empire began to shrink, so did its trade. Simultaneously, companies from other parts of the world began to operate more competitively. Cabotage regulations prevented British flag companies from trading on routes that were previously their monopolies. Several factors resulted in a decreased number in the Blue Funnel's fleet. The company finally came to an end in 1988 when Ocean Group withdrew from the Barber Blue Sea Service, its last shipping line.

6. Family



Holt was married twice. He married his first wife, Catherine Long in 1865. They had a daughter, Jane (1867–1922), who married the marine biologist William Abbott Herdman; a son, George, who became one of the managers of the Blue Funnel Line; and another son, who died in his teens. After Catherine's death in 1869, Alfred Holt married her cousin, Frances Long (in 1871), with whom he had two more sons.[1] The youngest son, also named Alfred (1877–1931), became a Reader in Chemistry at the University of Liverpool.

Mr. Holt died at Liverpool on the 28th November, 1911, in his eighty-third year.

7. Home

Archived in 2021, with acknowledgement and thanks, from the placenorthwest.co.uk website. The article was published in 2014.



Crofton, Aigburth, Liverpool.

IT WAS one of the most elegant mansion houses in south Liverpool, home of Alfred Holt, founder of the famous Blue Funnel Line. Crofton Estate sold for £4.2m

The Pervaiz Naviede Family Trust has bought Crofton Estate in Aigburth in Liverpool from administrators for £4.2m.

The acquisition comprises 26 properties set in a 2.5-acre estate, including the original mansion house with 11 apartments, and a further 15 houses within the grounds.

One of the houses is part refurbished and, by completing the works, offers an immediate opportunity to increase the value of the estate. Currently 21 of the 26 properties are let.

Renovated and redeveloped in 2008, the mansion house was originally built in the mid-1800s for Alfred Holt, founder of the Blue Funnel Shipping Line. The estate was used as an auxiliary hospital during the First World War.

Crofton Hall is the Trust's fourth acquisition in Liverpool and follows the purchase of 63 apartments and the freehold to Heysmoor Heights, a block of 98 apartments in Sefton, last year.

Rudi Falla, spokesman for the Trust, said: "The purchase represents an excellent investment for the Trust as it provides a solid rental income and clear opportunities to add value by completing the unfinished conversions. Early indications from our advisors are that the £4.2m purchase price was extremely good value and we would expect that once our work is complete the estate would be worth in excess of £7m."

The properties will be managed by the Pervaiz Naviede Family Trust's residential arm, LPC Living, which is based in Salford.

The Crofton Estate was marketed by Allsop on behalf of the joint fixed charge receivers CBRE. The Manchester office of Gateley was the legal representative acting on behalf of the Trust with Zameero acting as broker.

Archived in 2021, with acknowledgement and thanks, from the youliverpool.com website. The article was published in 2004.

Crofton, Aigburth, was one of the most elegant mansion houses in south Liverpool, home of Alfred Holt, founder of the famous Blue Funnel Line. The shipping magnate had the house built to his own design so that he could be close to his brother George, who lived across the road in Sudley House.

Today, Crofton, in North Sudley Road, Aigburth, is desperately in need of a facelift with paint peeling from its wall and crumbling masonry giving an air of dereliction. Once horse-drawn carriages would have gently journeyed along the driveway to the elegant finely carved entrance pier of the stucco-finished house in grand Italianate style. House servants and stablemen would have been on duty to tend to the needs of the family and their guests.

From the upper tower, Mr Holt would have had commanding views of the River Mersey, able to watch the arrival of his ships from journeys to the Far East.

The days when Liverpool was the premier port city of the British Empire have, like Crofton, faded into the annals of history.
