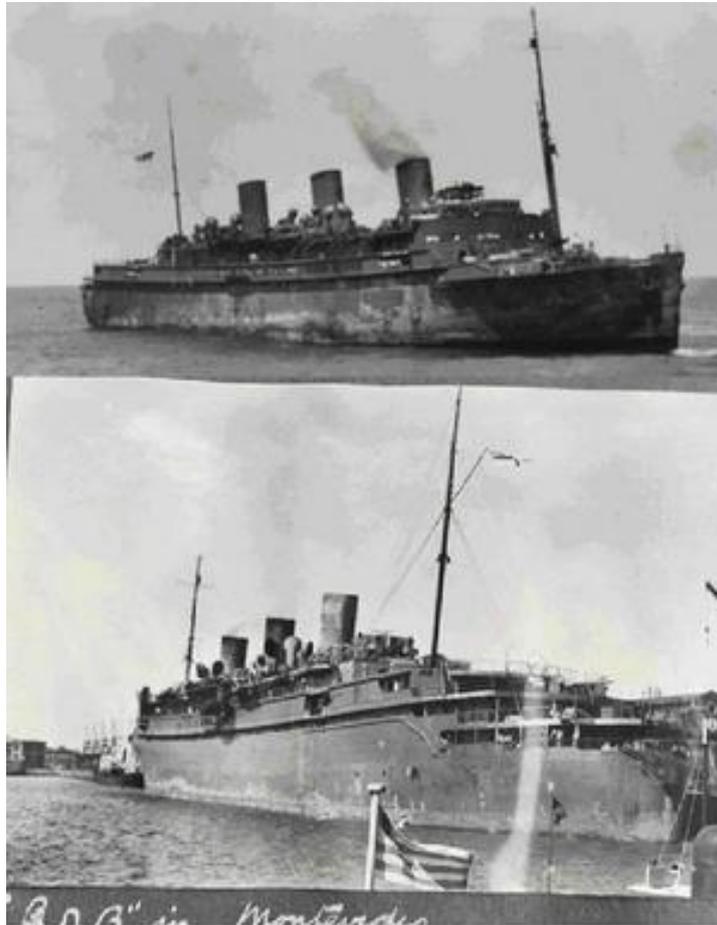


HMS Queen of Bermuda
16th January-5th April 1941



1941 HMS Queen of Bermuda arrived at Port Stanley on Thursday **16th January** 1941. Early on Monday 20th she sailed for South Georgia. A raider had worked in amongst the whaling fleet and she was to go south to investigate.

Arriving at Grytviken on the Island of S. Georgia, 48 hours after leaving Stanley, she collected what information there was to be had, embarked a Norwegian skipper from the whale catcher who had sighted the raider and pushed off for the whaling grounds in the South Orkneys.

She found the whale factory there. The stay was short as they had to get down to the whaling grounds with speed, at the same time escorting an Argentine supply ship to South Orkneys. The **Queen of Bermuda** broke records on this trip.

On 23rd January 1941 she was heading south, convoying the supply ship and to reach the South Orkneys on the Saturday morning; a 48 hour run if there was no fog or snow.

Friday 24th January bound SSW towards the South Orkneys, going along steadily at about eleven knots with the weather getting cooler and plenty of ice about. At 15.30, a message was received from Grytviken that a strange ship was entering the harbour and it was suspected that this might be the raider. So they left their charge and turned back at full speed. The first time that the ship had been on full speed since leaving England.

1100 hours the following day they reached Cumberland Bay. No sign of the raider or anything else, so why the alarm was given no one knew. At 1300 hours, she set off again back to the southward and out to catch her charge who was some 500 miles ahead by this time.

She arrived at the very bleak South Orkneys on the afternoon of **Monday 27th January**. This, desolate and barren group of islands consisting of black rocks and glaciers. There they expected to meet some of the whaling fleet there, but were disappointed. Sailing in to some of the large bays there, they saw no trace of whale factories or supply ships.

Wednesday 29th January, after an uneventful voyage back to the southward she eventually sighted what proved to be the "**Southern Empress**" on the Wednesday morning. She was in company with her supply ship which **Queen of Bermuda** had previously escorted.

There she had her first close acquaintance with the "Blue Whale" and a gathering of whale catchers. The factory had a wire round her propeller, so **Queen of Bermuda** remained with her until it was cleared, then in the afternoon, carried on to the westward in hopes of picking up another factory. This they failed to do as the FF had shifted her position, but by carrying out a search, they eventually located both factories in a much more southerly position.

30th January, a trip was made over to the **whale factory "Svend Foyn"**. Where they met the Captain, Chief Officer and Chief Engineer.

who were very doubtful of the good intentions and were greatly relieved to find it was the British Navy which had arrived and not someone else.

The next three days were spent dodging between the "**Southern Empress**" and "**Svend Foyn**" with a trip to the southward to investigate the pack ice on the Barrier. Monday 3rd **February 1941**, a fortnight away from Port Stanley they were sharing their time with the "**Southern Empress**" and "**Ernesto Tornquist**", but had intended going to look for "**Svend Foyn**" the following day if the weather was fine.

Friday **7th February** we spent a few hours alongside the **Southern Empress** for oil fuel and stores. The previous day had been her biggest, dealing with 31 whales in 24 hours.

8th February saw them back alongside **Svend Foyn** and the ice berg that formed her breakwater. It was some 7½ miles long and a typical S. Atlantic flat topped iceberg.

Sunday **23rd February**, **Queen of Bermuda** received the news that they were to stay on the whaling grounds until the middle of April. It had originally been the **7th March** but orders had come through that the season had to be extended and further stores are being sent down. **Queen of Bermuda** spent a fortnight between the two ships. **Southern Empress** and **Svend Foyn**.

At present we are down at the edge of the ice with **Svend Foyn** and we are to take water from her in a day or so.

Saturday **1st March**, they met **Thorshammer** and took oil and water from her.

Monday **3rd March**, they arrived off Deception Island but it was blowing too hard to make an entrance to the Harbour. but managed to get through Neptune's Bellows into the deep volcanic anchorage on the following morning. The entrance is tricky as it is very narrow and there is a reef which extends half way across and there is always half a gale blowing in it so the passage has to be taken at speed. Once inside there is plenty of room and very deep water. The island is roughly horseshoe shape and the whaling station, which they had to put out of action, was just inside the entrance.

It had been abandoned for some eight years and had last been visited by **Discovery II** in 1938, and apart from the natural rot due to machinery being left unused and exposed, the plant looked to be in very good condition. The living quarters were very fine indeed and no sign of dust in the huts, which had been exposed to the weather due to broken windows etc.

There was a vast quantity of valuable things lying around. Hundreds of tons of metal that had never been used worth a small fortune Much of the machinery had never been used and there were a large numbers of spares. However they blew up the main parts and put the whole plant out of action.

They commenced demolitions in the morning and the job was completed by 1600 hours. A few souvenirs were brought off.

They arrived at Port Stanley on Saturday **8th March** and proceeded to oil and store right away.

14th March they were still at anchor in Stanley, and there was no news at all. There was a great disappointment when they found no mail waiting, it turned out that the islanders had received nothing since they had left for the South.

Friday **21st March** they departed Port Stanley and squared away for the ice again, with the idea of rounding up the whaling fleet and taking them to South Georgia. The passage to the Southward was uninteresting; the temperature falling as they approached the South Sandwich group where they found the "**Thorshammer**" pretty well where they had left her. She had the "**Lancing**" alongside.

Much to their astonishment she declared her intention of carrying on for another week or so and not joining the convoy. It took 24 hours to pick up the "**Southern Empress**" and her catchers, but at 1800 hours that evening they were heading back in the right direction. So far there was no news of "**Svend Foyn**",

By the look of the catchers, it has been pretty cold as they were covered in ice. At that moment there were 10 vessels including themselves, **Southern Empress** and eight whale catchers.

Saturday **29th March** after an uneventful passage from the ice. **Southern Empress** and her catchers carried on to Leith

1st April Queen of Bermuda arrived at Grytviken.

5th April they sailed from Grytviken that afternoon and waited outside Leith Harbour for the two factories to come out.

shared by Clifford Allen 2015