

**Lewis Cope Newman**  
**1885 - 1961**

*This relates something about the professional life of  
a Conway cadet.*

Lewis was the son of **William Watt Newman**, who was born in 1856 in Trieste, an important port at the head of the Adriatic, largely Italian in language and culture, but then part of the Austro-Hungarian empire.

William had trained as a naval engineer for two and a half years in the Austrian Lloyds shops at Trieste, then for the same length of time in Scotland under Denny Company of Dumbarton, and six months at an engine fitting establishment in Birmingham. He then spent two and a half years at Whiteheads Torpedo Factory Fiume Hungary. In 1881 he had moved to India and was an "Assistant Engineer 2<sup>nd</sup> class" in the **Royal Indian Marine**.

William and Jane's first son, **Lewis**, was born in Karachi (then India, now Pakistan) in 1885. William was successively promoted, becoming a **Chief Engineer** from 16<sup>th</sup> June, 1890. There is a family photograph (below) showing his impressive uniform with gold epaulettes, sword and cocked hat.



He was placed on the Retired List from 8<sup>th</sup> June 1901, and by 1902 the family had moved to England, and settled in Ilford

### Lewis Cope Newman and a career at sea.

No doubt William Watt Newman's service with the Indian Marine stimulated Lewis's interest in a career in the merchant navy, which developed early. Like his father, he came to Britain to prepare himself.

The archives of **Bedford Modern School**, show that Lewis was *admitted in January 1898 and left at the end of the Christmas term that year:*

*"Lewis Cope Newman, born 21st January 1885. Parent Jane Newman, address 25 Clarendon Street, Bedford."*

The school, a 16<sup>th</sup> century foundation, adopted this name in 1873 *"to reflect the School's modern curriculum, providing an education for the professions"*. B.M.S. provided education not only for the locality, but also for colonial and military personnel abroad, seeking good education for their young families. [Wikipedia]

Lewis's father was, of course, serving in the Royal Indian Marine at this time, however the Marine records show that he was on 6 months general leave from 4.6.98 to 4.12.98, so he might well have joined his wife and son for some of their time in Bedford.

### HMS Conway

On leaving Bedford, Lewis joined *HMS Conway*. *HMS Conway* was a training ship set up by ship owners in 1859 to provide training for merchant naval officers. For the period relevant to Lewis Newman, it was housed in the *Nile*, a 92-gun second-rate line-of-battle ship which was renamed "*Conway*", and moored in the Mersey.



The *Nile*

"The *Nile* had survived the Baltic Blockade during the Crimean War, later protecting British possessions in the Caribbean and 'showing the flag' along the eastern seaboard of North America" during the tensions of the American civil war. This historic ship is where Lewis Newman started his naval training. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS\\_Conway\\_\(school\\_ship\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Conway_(school_ship))

The H.M.S. Conway archive Cadets' list shows:

NEWMAN LEWIS,

Joined Jan 1899

Left Dec 1900.

<http://www.hmsconway.org/Cadets%20N.html>

### Royal Naval Reserve

After his training on the *Conway* from about 1901, and he became a *probationary midshipman in the Royal Navy Reserve* in 1904, at the age of 19. He was promoted to "Acting Sub-lieutenant" with seniority from 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1909, and is shown in the Naval Lists of the time.

## The Royal Navy and the Mercantile Marine (Merchant Navy)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal\\_Naval\\_Reserve](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Naval_Reserve)

The Mercantile Marine (later called the Merchant Navy) comprised British ships involved in civilian activities such as carrying goods or passengers by sea. Fighting ships made up the Royal Navy. In times of war it would often be necessary to expand the Royal Navy and in the mid-nineteenth century the **Royal Navy Reserve (R.N.R.)** was established to provide a reservoir of trained professional seamen and officers from the Merchant Navy and fishing fleets, who could be called upon during times of war to serve in the regular Royal Navy. A number of "drill-ships", such as *H.M.S. President*, mentioned below, were established to provide appropriate training for merchant seamen. Thus it became common for merchant navy officers to carry a Royal Naval rank alongside their merchant navy position.

### Lewis Newman's Naval Record Card

Lewis' connection with the Royal Navy Reserve provides details of his early career by way of his *Naval Record Card*. The original can be consulted in the National Archives at Kew. Its can be downloaded from the National Archives' reference ADM 340/102/13. (See **Appendix** below for more details)

Unfortunately much of the form is very difficult to read. Here is presented some of the interesting detail from the Naval Record Card.

#### Information from Lewis Newman's Naval Record Card:

##### 1. "Served on the *Conway*"

Written on the left extreme top of the Record Card are the words "*Served on the Conway*". This clue prompted a search for [www.hmsconway.org](http://www.hmsconway.org) and contact with the organisation's archivist, Alfie Windsor, who generously provided the details set out above.

#### Information from Lewis Newman's Naval Record Card:

##### 2. "DRILL on the *President*"

Lewis Newman's Royal Naval training seems to have centred on drill sessions based on *H.M.S. President*, each lasting 6 days. 16 of these are listed, dated from 25/11/07 to 18/7/09 after which it seems that a "new training" system was introduced. This list occupies most of the *left hand half of the front* of the Record Card.

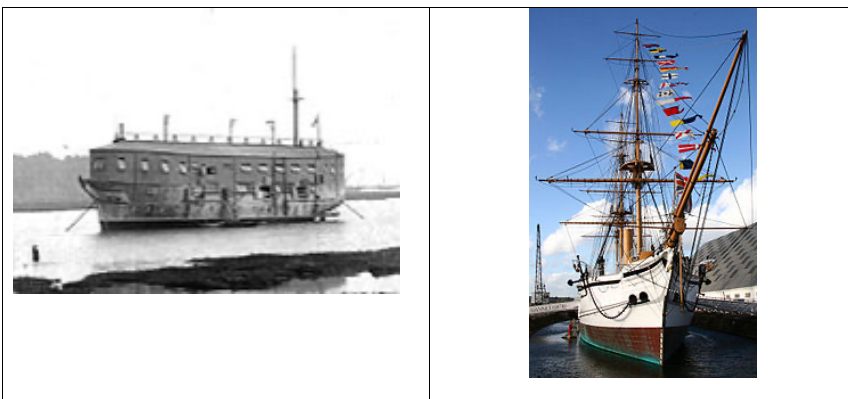
No information is given about what these sessions involved. It is implied that the content of the "drill" was substantial and was performed satisfactorily, as his promotion from midshipman to Acting Sub-Lieutenant R.N.R. dates from 2/7/09.

#### "President" – naval training ship where "drill" was based

The *U.S.S. President* was a monster frigate captured by the British navy at the close of the 1812 war. A succession of ships, each renamed as "*H.M.S. President*", has been used ever since as naval training stations based in London.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS\\_President\\_\(shore\\_establishment\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_President_(shore_establishment))

For the period relevant to Lewis Newman, 1903-11, a former Doteral class sloop of war, *H.M.S. Gannet* served this purpose. After which *President* (ex-*Gannet*) served as the dormitory to training ship *Mercury*, and was moored in the Hamble (1913 – 1968). *H.M.S. Gannet*, has now been restored, and is in Chatham Historical dockyard.



Two pictures "*H.M.S. President*" (ex-*Gannet*) on which L.C.N. did his "drill" sessions  
**left** as the dormitory to Training Ship *Mercury*, moored in the Hamble (1913 – 1968);  
**right** as H.M.S. *Gannet*, restored Chatham 2005

#### Information from Lewis Newman's Naval Record Card:

##### 3."EMPLOYMENT"

The *right hand half of the front* of the Record Card records Lewis Newman's employment relevant to his naval career. Entries are in tabular form with ten columns headed:

How Reported	Name and Official Number of Vessel	Gross Tonnage	Owners	Description of Voyage	Capacity	Engagement	Discharge	Character:	Remarks
ability/Conduct									

There are about 15 different entries in a variety of hands, dating from January 1901 to September 1914. Many are difficult, or impossible to read. Quite a lot of technical jargon and abbreviations are employed. For example in the column "Capacity" "3M" means "Third Mate", *VDKS* is assumed to mean *Victoria Docks*. Some points of particular interest are made here.

(i) The first entry, refers to a ship called "*Ellidand*" owned by J. Haydon of Liverpool. Lewis Newman was an "Appce" (presumably apprentice) from 11.1.01 to 5.4.02. It may be that this relates to his time with the *Conway* in the Mersey.

(ii) P&O (Pacific and Orient Steam Navigation Company) is frequently listed as "Owner", either explicitly or by ditto marks.

(iii) The wide variety of destinations listed include: Colombo, China, Japan, Sydney, Bombay, P. Caroline (not identified).

(iv) The most poignant entry is fourth from the last referring to the *Oceana* bound for Bombay, but shipwrecked in the Channel 16/2/12. ***This is described in detail below.***

(v) The last entry 16/8/14 seems to read:

*On Kimmlaka at Avonmouth appln for ???/attachment(?) 14/9/14*

This, of course, is after the start of the First World War, and it is tantalising that the entry is not readily legible:

### First Mate's Certificate

Although not explicitly mentioned on the Naval Record Card, Lewis Newman was awarded a Certificate of Competence as *First Mate for Foreign-Going Steamships* dated 14<sup>th</sup> May 1909. It is also endorsed as *2<sup>nd</sup> Mate of a square rigged sailing vessel*. There is a family tradition that he had sailed "round the Horn" under sail.



Lewis Cope Newman



Commented [DPI]:

L.H.S. MS text:

*Lewis C. Newman is also entitled to act as 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate of a square rigged sailing vessel*  
*Henry N. Malan Registrar General 14<sup>th</sup> May 1909*

### The Oceana accident

The *Oceana* was built in Belfast in 1887, and owned by the P&O. She was a passenger cargo ship 6,610 grt (gross register tonnage) with four masts, fore and aft rigged, and with steam

engines giving her a top speed of 16.5 knots. She had accommodation for 250 first class passengers and 159 second class.

The final voyage of the *Oceana* was under the command of Captain Thomas Hermann Hide, R.N.R. The crew of 221 included a Chief Officer, a Supernumerary Second Officer (Lewis C. Newman) a Third Officer. As apparently was customary, a pilot was aboard and would have been dropped when the ship reached the Nab light vessel (between Selsey and the easterly end of the Isle of Wight).

Thus it seems that Lewis was third in command, after the Captain and First Officer. There were 15 first class passengers, 26 second class (21 men, 18 women and 2 children). On board were gold and silver ingots of valued at the time to be worth £747,110.

#### **The final voyage 15-16<sup>th</sup> March 1912.**

The final voyage of the *Oceana* started at 2 p.m. on 15 March 1912 from Tilbury (on the Thames below London) for Bombay. From midnight to 4 a.m. was the Chief Officer's watch. He had two other officers with him, Lewis Newman (with him on the navigating bridge) and the Third Officer with a two man lookout in the forecastle. Shortly after 2.56 a.m. the pilot retired to the chart room to rest telling the Chief Officer "Call me if you need me". The *Oceana* was off Bexhill on the Sussex coast, steaming full speed ahead at about 14½ knots in "fine and clear weather with a north fresh wind".



**The *Oceana* 6,610 grt**

#### **The *Pisagua* collision**

The *Pisagua* was a German four-masted barque, built with a steel hull in 1892. On the early morning of 16<sup>th</sup> March 1912, having taken a bearing from the lightship off Selsey Bill, she was sailing up the Channel under full sail at nearly 20 knots carrying 4,500 tons of nitrate\* from Chile to Hamburg. The two masthead lights of the *Oceana*, and shortly after her

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\* Sodium nitrate, "Chile saltpetre", used as a component of gunpowder and as a fertiliser.

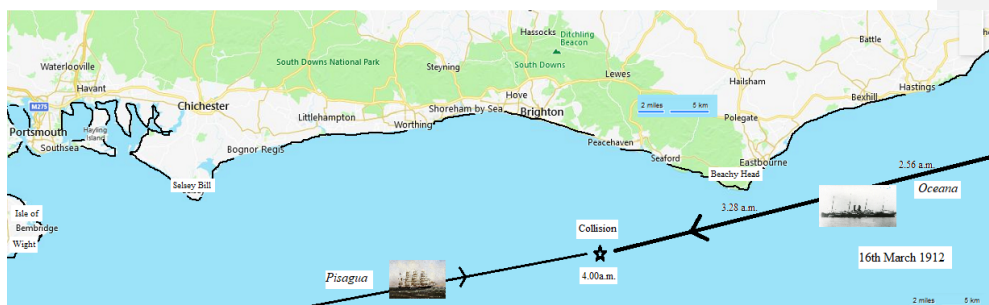
port light, were reported to the *Pisagua's* Captain when about 6 miles distant. The Captain ordered his navigation lights to be checked. In accordance with the "steam gives way to sail" rule he did not alter course. When at between a half and three-quarters of a mile distant, he ordered a blue warning flare to be ignited. Immediately after the blue light burnt out, the two lights on the *Oceana* indicated that her head was turning more to starboard.



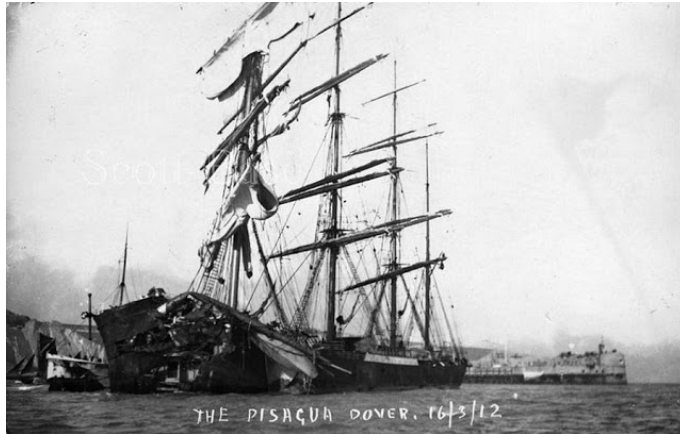


The "*Pisagua*" 2906 grt

The *Oceana* had passed Beachy Head when, at about 3.55 a.m., the port look-out signalled a ship on the port bow. The Chief Officer responded, and saw a large sailing ship (the *Pisagua*) under full sail on his port bow at a (guessed) distance of  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles. Her starboard was open and a blue flare was burning. He ordered "Port five degrees". This was obeyed, and the pilot came out of the chart room, and quickly ordered "Hard-a-port!". Shortly afterwards, when about 4 nautical miles off Beachy Head, the *Pisagua* struck the *Oceana* at nearly a right angle, about 18 feet before the foremast. She rebounded and struck the *Oceana* again just at the break of the bridge and sweeping away all the boats on the port side, excepting the last. She then passed astern and (eventually) was towed to Dover.



Approximate courses of the barque *Pisagua* and P&O steam ship *Oceana* in the English Channel on the morning of 16/3/1912



#### After the Collision

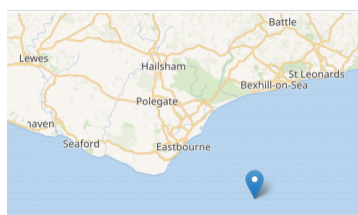
The pilot ordered the immediate closure of all the watertight bulkhead doors on *Oceana*. The Captain sent Lewis Newman to ascertain the damage and to sound the water depth in no. 1 hold. 15 minutes after the collision he recorded 14 feet; this increased to 22 feet after a further 20 minutes and to 33 feet later on.

The captain had ordered all crew and passengers to their boat stations to stand by to abandon ship. The crew tried to lower one of the lifeboats while the ship was still under way, but it crashed to the sea and capsized, resulting in the loss of seven passengers and two crew members.

Sending out an immediate distress signal, the passenger ferry *Sussex*, returning to Newhaven from Dieppe attended the scene, while two other ships stood by. While awaiting rescue *Sussex* managed to remove the remaining 241 surviving passengers and crew.

Although listing, *Oceana* was taken in tow by the Newhaven tug *Alert*, stern first, at 08:00. But by 10:00 she had developed an adverse list, enough to raise her propeller out of the water. Captain Hyde and the crew who had stayed aboard to help the tow now abandoned ship to the *Alert*, and watched from the tug as she sank in less than 20 minutes. *Oceana* sank in relatively shallow water, roughly 14 km from Eastbourne on an approximate bearing of 120° i.e. E30°S. She settled on the sea bed with her masts and the tops of her funnels showing out of the sea at low tide.

#### Wreck of the *Oceana*



Approximate site (above)

G. F. Morrell *The Graphic* 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1912

Under the circumstances it was not surprising that the accident attracted press publicity, some at least sensationalised.



Much of the account of the accident related above is based on the Official Board of Trade Report which gives considerable detail of the evidence provided from crew members of both the *Oceana* and the *Pisagua*. It comments drily that the two versions were "indeed irreconcilable". The Report, dated 25<sup>th</sup> June 1912 concludes:

"The collision was caused by the wrongful act of the Chief Officer [of the *Oceana*] in attempting to cross ahead of the [*Pisagua*], ..... for this the Court suspends his certificate of competency for six months.

After the collision 17 lives were lost through the swamping of No. 1 lifeboat. This was largely due to the error of judgement of the Chief Officer in lowering the boat while the vessel was still under way. For failure to take adequate measures to rescue the persons thus thrown into the water the Court severely censures the Master [Captain] and Chief Officer, and also attaches blame to the Third Officer."

Note that *no blame* was attached to the Supernumerary Second Officer, Lewis Cope Newman. Despite this, it is understood that P&O adopted a policy of "collective responsibility" to dismiss *all* the officers of any ship which was wrecked.

Divers promptly recovered the gold and silver from the wreck, and the navy demolished the masts, funnels and other hazards to passing ships. The wreck is a popular destination for amateur divers to this day.

#### Sources:

P&O Oceana Liner Wrecks <https://www.linerwrecks.com/po/wrecks/oceana.html>

Wikipedia: SS Oceana (1887) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS\\_Oceana\\_\(1887\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_Oceana_(1887))

Official Report

No. 7539, "Oceana" S.S. and "Pisagua"

Board of Trade, London, 13<sup>th</sup> July 1912

[http://www.plimsoll.org/images/35048\\_tcm4-333830.pdf](http://www.plimsoll.org/images/35048_tcm4-333830.pdf)

Lewis Cope Newman's Naval Record Card

Transcription:

"Oceana" 93170      Bombay      2M (2<sup>nd</sup> mate) Shipwrecked in Channel 16.2.12  
???? 16.2.12 Tilbury

#### Subsequent career

The data of Lewis Newman's Naval Record card peters out at about 1913-14, but the Employment section lists three items after the *Oceana* tragedy. Employment on the *Opawa* (number 124566) is listed from 15/7/12 to 17/1/13 to "P. Caroline" (unidentified), and perhaps a further voyage to 16/1/14 – the writing on the pdf is scarcely legible.

Merchant marine employment during the First World War is implied by Lewis Newman's Medal Card:

*Mercantile Marine Ribbon issued 22/3/20*

*British Medal Ribbon issued 22/3/20*

*Mercantile Marine Medal issued 18/3/25 sic?*

C:\Users\mssdep\Documents\DEP\Family\Newmans\Ehrenfels\Untitled.png

The "Mercantile Marine Medal was awarded to those who *served at sea for at least six months, and on at least one voyage through a danger zone.*" The "British War Medal was automatically awarded to all recipients of the Mercantile Marine Medal".

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/merchant-seamens-campaign-medal-records-1914-1918/>

The Mercantile Marine Service War Medal from WW1 – Empire Medals

British War Medal - Wikipedia

**Mercantile Marine Medal**

**British War Medal**

At some stage Lewis Newman retired from "the Sea" and used his qualifications and experience working ashore.