

NUMBER 2

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2001

# CLASSIC *FAST* FERRIES



**SOLENT  
SHEARWATERS**

**JUST  
*FLOATING*  
BY**



Annemarie, one of four former Ukrainian Voskhods presently in the Connexion Fast Flying Ferries fleet

# A successful connexion

**ON THE COVER**

Red Funnel Rodriguez RHS 70 hydrofoils *Shearwater 6* (front) and *Shearwater 3* alongside at Southampton in the heyday of the hydrofoil in the Solent in the mid-80s. Story starts on page 4 (tim timoleon photo )

**CLASSIC FAST FERRIES**  
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Despite having a well-organized public transit system, in the Netherlands, like everywhere else, the pressure on the roads in and around the bigger cities is nearing the point of a traffic heart attack. Some undoubtedly would say it already happened.

To help ease the situation and promote a more environmentally-friendly and sensible thinking on a whole, in 1997 the Dutch government launched an extensive subsidies program to encourage the establishing of fast and efficient commuter services also on water.

First to achieve these government grants was Fast Flying Ferries, based in Urk on the east bank of the IJmeer, which had acquired a three year old Meteor hydrofoil from Latvia already in 1995. Named *Prins Willem Alexander* this was operated on tourist trips linking Amsterdam and various points on the IJmeer during the summer months of 1996 and 1997.

That same year FFF purchased a pair of used hydrofoils in the Ukraine of the smaller Voskhod type, and by the time these arrived in the Netherlands towards the end of 1997 the introduction of a year-round fast ferry commuter route between central Amsterdam and Velsen, near IJmuiden, was in the final stages of planning. A third Voskhod followed early in 1998.

**MORE ON PAGE 14 ►►**



**Left : Six Griffon 3000TDX Mk III hovercraft are planned to be introduced on routes in the Stockholm archipelago in the near future (Griffon Hovercraft)**

## Large-scale hovercraft project launched in Sweden

A Swedish company, HoverLine, has well advanced plans of introducing up to six hovercraft carrying commuters and priority cargo on a year-round basis between central Stockholm and certain points in the Stockholm archipelago in the next few years. The new service is expected to be launched later in the spring. Three craft will be introduced during the first year of operation.

The craft chosen are Griffon Hovercraft type 3000TDX Mk IIIs which, in the Stockholm commuter version, will be fitted out for 40–50 passengers in a single saloon. A cargo version, able to carry 16 t, is also planned for.

Last year the Southampton-based yard delivered three mixed-traffic 3000TDX Mk IIs to Shell Petroleum in Nigeria.

The Swedish 3000TDXs will have a pair of 1,200 hp Scania V8 diesels rather than the Deutz 386/525s offered on the standard craft and will be equipped with a special de-icing device.

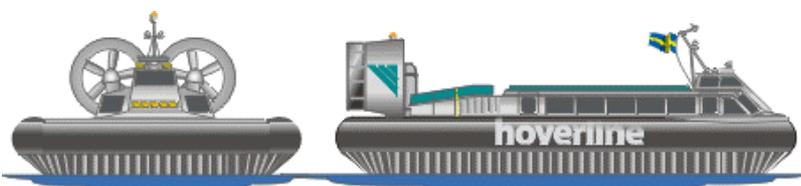
The environment through which the hovercraft will be operating naturally is rather sensitive, and while the service will provide a fast and competitive link between Stockholm and the outlying islands under almost any weather condition not all locals are unconditionally positive about the newcomer.

Obviously, the biggest concern is noise; having a hovercraft roaring by several times a day (and possibly night too) does not go well with the idea of living a tranquil life in the archipelago it is felt. An aspect of equal concern to HoverLine, which refers to impartial tests carried out by the University of Southampton on behalf of the company which have shown external noise levels not exceeding 87 dB at max speed and 77 dB at service speed (approx. 38 knots) at a distance of 25 m from the craft, and 73 dB and 63 dB respectively at 200 m. These levels will be sought reduced even further.

Real-life trial runs on location in the Stockholm area have also been performed with good results, using a hovercraft belonging to the Swedish Navy.

Fully operational the HoverLine concept will comprise three products. HoverLink, which is the commuter service portion; HoverFast, combined passenger/cargo services, and HoverCargo, priority cargo services.

**Below : Impression of HoverLine's Griffon 3000TDX hovercraft fitted out as a commuter vessel (HoverLine)**



### CHARACTERISTICS

Griffon Hovercraft 3000TDX Mk III for HoverLine

**Length 18.4 m**

**Beam 10 m**

**Engines**

HoverLine: **2xScania V8 diesels**

Standard: **2xDeutz V12 386**

**diesels**

**Service speed**

fully loaded **38 knots**

**Endurance 5½ hours**

**Passengers 40–50**

## FAC ordered for Tallinn–Helsinki route

Linda Line Express, the Estonian company which operates a pair of Morye Olympia hydrofoils on the Tallinn–Helsinki route during the navigational season, has ordered a foil-assisted passenger catamaran from Almaz Shipbuilding in St. Petersburg for delivery in May 2002.

A new design, the craft will be of aluminum construct and have a length of 40 m and beam of 11 m. It will be powered by four MTU diesels giving the vessel a service speed of around 45 knots.

Accommodation will be for 300 passengers on one deck.

MORE FAST NEWS ON PAGE 15 >>

### CLASSIC FAST FERRIES

is the only magazine devoted to the *historic* aspect of passenger HYDROFOILS as well as CATAMARANS, HOVERCRAFT, etc., and provides accurate & entertaining information to the pro and enthusiast alike

**T**eething problems with an early Hovermarine HM.2 surface effect ship play a big part in why the Southampton Water and the Solent – the straits dividing the south coast of England and the Isle of Wight – got to be hydrofoil territory for nearly 30 years.

Actually, two hydrofoils remain in the area but have been inactive for the past couple of years.

many commuters and business travelers on the route, but also to an increasing number of tourists visiting the island in the summer months.

Prior to settling for the Seaflight craft the operator had laid eyes on the HM.2 prototype developed by Hovermarine, also based in Southampton, and which it was to charter for the 1967 season.

# SOLENT



# SHEARWATERS

In 1968 Red Funnel Steamers of Southampton placed an order for an H.57 hydrofoil with the Sicilian shipyard Seaflight. This company had been founded in 1961 by a former employee of Sicily's other well-known hydrofoil yard, Cantiere Navale Leopoldo Rodriquez. Red Funnel had decided to order the hydrofoil as it wished to offer a fast alternative to its conventional car/passenger ferries plying between Southampton and Cowes on the Isle of Wight, mainly to the

However, problems with the new design prevented this from taking place.

## STYLISH ITALIANS

The hydrofoil, *Shearwater*, arrived as deck cargo in Southampton in January 1969. It was the fourth H.57 completed by Seaflight since 1966 and the first to be exported; the previous three vessels having been delivered to operators in Sicily and Napoli.

The stylish H.57 was derived from the company's smaller P.46 design, seven of which were built between 1965 and 1968.

*Shearwater* was fitted out for 60 passengers, 54 of which in a main saloon – according to the builder, “in elegant surroundings, by far more comfortable than the accommodation offered by other similar craft”.

And you were tempted to believe them when looking at the accompanying pictures of the very neat and modern interior. Seats in black washboard-patterned leather-look were arranged three abreast in two rows, with a centre aisle, all but six facing forward. A further six folding seats were provided in a small elevated area behind the wheelhouse, however separated from this by luggage racks. Bulkhead and ceiling were finished in white materials giving the cabin a light and roomy feel. All in all a simple yet sophisticated appearance, reflecting the renowned Italian design of the time.

Access to the craft was through doors on the bridge deck on either side.

With a displacement of 26 t and an overall length of 18.6m, the craft – not accidental – was slightly smaller than its closest competitor, the Supramar PT.20. Several of which had been delivered by Rodriquez as well as yards in Norway and Japan by the time Red Funnel opted for the Seaflight H.57. But this was the right size for the Southampton operator at the time, and at £120,000 also found to be the right prize.

Moreover, the H.57 was equipped with two diesel engines and twin screws as opposed to a single engine/propeller on the PT.20 – although output was approx. the same.



## FIRST HYDROFOIL

Following what seems, at least with today's eyes, a rather long period of time of trials and crew training upon delivery, *Shearwater* eventually entered revenue service on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1969. It was the first hydrofoil in scheduled passenger service within the U.K.; the only other hydrofoil operator being Condor, based in Guernsey, which had introduced a Rodriquez PT.50 between the Channel Islands and France back in 1964. The novelty was being looked upon with such interest that a commemorative cover was even issued.

During the high season, which extended into the second half of September, up to eleven round trips a day were timetabled between Southampton and West Cowes, which, with a mid-day break and stopping quite early in the evening, roughly translated into hourly departures from either end. This would drop to five or six round trips in the winter months. Quay-to-quay time for the 12 nautical mile route normally was 20–22 minutes – in bad weather or when waiting in line for a free berth at Southampton up to 25 minutes – as compared to 55 minutes for the operator's conventional ferries.

In the first five months of operation, May through September, reliability was in excess of 95%, most of the lost services being due to minor mechanical or other problems on the vessel itself. Some 55,000 passengers were carried during that same period – which may not appear as impressive. But the explanation did not lie in people not wishing to ride on the hydrofoil but rather that many were not aware of its existence as Red Funnel chose not to over-advertise the new service at the beginning by the motto ‘better safe than sorry’.



**Top : A Seaflight H.57 on pre-delivery trials off Messina (*Seaflight*)**

**Left : The interior design was as modern and uncluttered as the external lines of the H.57 (*Seaflight*)**

**Opposite : The last hydrofoil to enter service with Red Funnel, *Shearwater 6*, approaches Southampton in June 1995 (*Martin Grimm*)**

## A SECOND CRAFT

While back-up capacity in the form of the traditional ferries was indeed available whenever the hydrofoil would be unserviceable, Red Funnel had no doubts that fast ferries in these waters had come to stay and that another vessel was required in order to maintain a reliable year-round high-speed service. Also, the company faced competition from British Rail Sealink who operated a pair of SR.N6 hovercraft on the route. Thus, a second H.57 was ordered from Seaflight in February 1970. Already under construction at the yard as a stock vessel, this was delivered less than six months later and entered service during the summer as *Shearwater 2*.



Unfortunately, it came in very handy, too. 'Unfortunately', because around this time the availability record for the first vessel, *Shearwater*, was getting poorer by the month. Mainly it showed in the Fiat diesels installed starting to misbehave, reportedly since these were designed to operate under distant skies, i.e. in a warmer climate than that prevailing in the British isles.

Those H.57s operating successfully in Italy and Brazil proved this, it was felt. In the cooler Solent air and water the engines had to be run harder and longer. Another problem was difficulty in obtaining certain spares as there was no British supplier of these.

Still convinced that a fast ferry service was all-important to the area and the company, by the end of 1971 Red Funnel was faced with the fact that something had to be done – other than continuing using the one H.57 as spares for the other.

## SWITCHING TO THE COMPETITOR

Since the hydrofoil as a design had proved itself, the operator once again turned to Sicily, but this time to the Rodriquez shipyard.

This had just released its new RHS range which were to take over from the PT series, and Red Funnel signed a contract with the yard for the first RHS 70, the construction of which was already underway at Messina.

At just over 22 m and seating 72, the increased size and capacity of the new RHS 70 in comparison with *Shearwater* and *Shearwater 2* would better meet with the anticipated pick-up in traffic in the future, once the hydrofoil service got back on track with its initial high level of reliability.

A lengthened, improved and re-styled version of the well-proven PT.20, the standard RHS 70 featured three passenger areas; a forward saloon seating forty-four, the majority of seats forward-facing, arranged 3+3 or 2+2; a smaller rear compartment for nineteen passengers, plus accommodation for a further eight in a foyer aft of the wheelhouse above the engine room. The number of seats was subsequently reduced to 67 on Red Funnel's craft, however, to allow for increased luggage space to be installed.

**Above : Red Funnel's first hydrofoil, *Shearwater*, entered service on May 5<sup>th</sup> 1969 between Southampton and the Isle of Wight**

**Right : The second Seaflight H.57 *Shearwater 2* being craned onto the water on arrival in the Solent in 1970 (Red Funnel, both)**



The new hydrofoil, not unexpectedly named *Shearwater 3*, was delivered in April 1972 and entered service the following month. Like the H.57s it was initially painted in an attractive livery of black hull, white superstructure and red foils. This coupled with the clean, angular lines and nice proportions made it a good-looking mate to the H.57s as they would sprint up and down the Southampton Water.

Not that the pair of Seaflights saw a lot of service after the arrival of *Shearwater 3*. Both were sold off shortly after. The original *Shearwater* was re-engined and ended up as a work boat on the river Clyde in Scotland, while *Shearwater 2* returned home to Italy.

Outside of the peak season, during which both hydrofoils were in service, the basic timetable was such that only one of the vessels was required, with the other standing by in the event of a breakdown and to cover during overhaul periods, etc. This practice continued for the next six years and resulted in an almost 100% mechanical reliability record.

The hydrofoils were also available for charters, the opportunity of which would normally be seized by groups of Isle of Wight residents wishing a night out in Southampton or to attend a soccer game, etc. The last timetabled ferry service of the day would leave Southampton as early as around seven in the winter and half past eight in the summer.

**Inset :**  
**The first RHS 70**  
*Shearwater 3* **prior**  
**to delivery,**  
**sporting the**  
**original paint**  
**scheme** (Rodriquez)



**Left :** The RHS 70  
 was the PT.20  
 brought into the  
 1970s and beyond,  
 incorporating  
 several improve-  
 ments and a  
 restyled  
 appearance  
 (tim timoleon)

Red Funnel was so happy with its new Rodriquez craft that it wanted a second unit for the 1973 peak season. However, with the yard being as busy as ever, delivery of this could not be expected until August, and the two parties reached an agreement in which Red Funnel was to charter a PT.20 previously operated on the River Thames between central London and Greenwich until the new RHS 70 would become available.

The Thames PT.20, *Freccia di Reggio*, originally delivered to a Norwegian operator in 1961 (see March 2000 *CFF*) and belonging to Rodriquez's operating company Aliscafi SNAV, arrived in the Solent in April 1973 and operated here for the next five months, on which it reverted to Sicilian waters.

The new RHS 70, *Shearwater 4*, entered service towards the end of August.

Now with two new craft again operating successfully the number of passengers and the reputation of the service could only go one way – up.

## FURTHER EXPANSION

But this would all change in the years to come, with more crossings, longer operating days and more hydrofoils.

By 1980 a third RHS 70, *Shearwater 5*, had joined the other two, and two years later the service had grown to a four-craft operation with the introduction of yet another, *Shearwater 6*. Traffic on the hydrofoils was now reaching 400,000 passengers per year. With the arrival of *Shearwater 5* in 1980 frequency during peak hours were doubled to half-hourly departures.

And this was not all. In 1981 Red Funnel acquired a pair of Hovermarine HM.2 Mk IIIs from Hovertravel which it operated each morning and afternoon during the week under charter to Vosper Thornycroft, transporting workers living in the Isle of Wight to and from the VT yard in Woolston. More than 13,500 hydrofoil and 800 HM.2 crossings were carried out by the three hydrofoils and two SESs in the fleet that year.



With the introduction of *Shearwater 6* in June 1982 the two HM.2s were disposed of, although the Vosper Thornycroft charter continued to be covered by the hydrofoils until 1987 when the arrangement was discontinued.

Some figures to illustrate the escalating popularity of the hydrofoil service:

While the one millionth passenger was not carried until 1977, the 2 million mark was reached in 1981. Passenger No. 3 million was carried only two years later and by 1990, the last full year with an all-hydrofoil high-speed cast, well over 6 mio passengers had taken the hydrofoil.

The Southampton Water and the Solent obviously are busy and in summer leisure craft of all sizes flock to the area. Even so, the hydrofoil operation has been virtually spared of major incidents involving other vessels.

However, in November 1987 *Shearwater 3* coming off foil at Cowes on a late afternoon crossing hit a small motor boat, killing one and severely injuring another. There were no injuries among the sixty passengers or crew on the hydrofoil.

## TOO POPULAR FOR THEIR OWN GOOD

Towards the end of the 80s development in traffic was such that the hydrofoils did not offer sufficient capacity at certain times – even with departure frequencies having been increased to every 20 minutes during peak periods – and the introduction of a larger design was being discussed. What this design would be was not revealed at first, and also it may not have been finally decided until quite late in the process, but early indications pointed away from hydrofoils as any such bigger than the RHS 70 would be unsuitable for operation in Cowes harbor at low tide.

Given that Red Funnel was looking for a craft with a passenger capacity of approx. twice that of the RHS 70, or perhaps a little above, and would turn, once again, to Rodriguez, the hydrofoil matching this criterion was the RHS 150F. With a hullborne draft of 3.1 m this was out of the question.

Thus, in November 1989 it was announced that a pair of catamarans of a new design developed by FBM Marine of Cowes had been ordered for delivery in April and July 1991.

Designated the FBM Solent class, these were to be equipped with two MTU diesels and waterjets, giving them a cruising speed of 32 knots, similar to that of the RHS 70s. Fitted out for 120 passengers the catamarans would replace the two oldest hydrofoils *Shearwater 3* and *Shearwater 4*.

Just as had been the case in 1972 when the first RHS 70 was introduced and outdid the H.57s, with the arrival on the route of the FBM catamarans, *Red Jet 1* and *Red Jet 2*, these



**Top + Right :**  
Annual survey,  
hull cleaning,  
etc. which  
involved lifting  
the hydrofoils  
were carried out  
at Cowes by  
Groves &  
Guttridge  
(tim timoleon, both)

became first choice vessels with *Shearwater 5* and *6* being relegated as reserve. The other two hydrofoils, *Shearwater 3* and *4*, remained with the operator for the time being.

With all this extra capacity it was therefore decided to use one of the hydrofoils on a new route, linking West Cowes and Portsmouth. Introduced on August 2<sup>nd</sup> 1991 and operating till Christmas, making nine round trips a day, the service did not become a tremendous success, however, and did not return in 1992.

During 1992 *Shearwater 5* and *6* received a complete make-over as they were still needed as back-up and peak vessels. It is interesting to note that while the two hydrofoils were still very much alive and operating, no reference to them are being made in the company glossies of the time advertising its high-speed route, all credit going to the new 'Red Jets'.

The latest addition to the Red Funnel high-speed fleet came in July 1998 when an enlarged restyled 33 m FBM Solent class catamaran, *Red Jet 3*, was introduced. With this slick 34-knot, 190 passenger vessel the company's modernisation program was concluded (for now) and a hydrofoil era spanning twenty-nine years had come to an end. As mentioned in the introduction, however, *Shearwater 5* and *6* remain in lay-up with the company.

**Below : Passengers waiting in line at Cowes to board *Shearwater 4* while those coming from the mainland disembark**  
(tim timoleon)

**Bottom : The forward saloon on one of the RHS 70s** (Martin Grimm)



*Shearwater 3* and *4* were eventually sold in Greece in early and mid-1993 where they entered service with Hermes Hydrofoils in the Cyclades.

With experience, the Red Funnel RHS 70s proved excellent craft with few major maintenance problems. For instance, none of the four craft ever had to have their foils replaced and initial problems with cavitation were eventually solved.

Day-to-day maintenance would be carried out by Red Funnel personnel at Southampton, whereas all work involving lifting the hydrofoils, for annual survey, hull cleaning, etc., was performed at the Groves & Guttridge yard at Cowes.





**Above :** *Shearwater 6* racing past the photographer in the Solent, showing off the very attractive lines of the RHS 70 design. There were some minor external differences between the four vessels, such as the location of the radar, air intakes, etc. More noticeable was the rubber-framed windows introduced on *Shearwater 6* as opposed to the sharp edged framing

originally featured on *Shearwater 3 - 5* . A somewhat altered paint scheme was gradually applied to the hydrofoils from 1988, with a much wider white band on the hull and red mast (compare with photos on page 8). By the time this shot was taken, in 1995, *Shearwater 6* had also had the gray field around the windows, as seen on the new FBM catamarans, applied. The craft remains with Red Funnel, along with sister *Shearwater 5* , whereas *Shearwater 3* and *4* were sold off in 1993 (Martin Grimm)



**Left :** FBM Solent class 31.5 m catamaran *Red Jet 1*, delivered 1991, approaches the Cowes terminal. One more of these was delivered that same year and a third, larger and restyled catamaran from the same builder was introduced in 1998. With it a hydrofoil era spanning 29 years came to an end (Martin Grimm)

## C H A R A C T E R I S T I C S

<b>H.57</b>		<b>RHS 70</b>	
Seafight Cantiere Navale, Sicily		Cantiere Navale Leopoldo Rodriguez, Sicily	
<b>Shearwater + Shearwater 2</b>		<b>Shearwater 3 + 4 + 5 + 6</b>	
1969, 1970	<b>Delivered</b>	1972, 1973, 1980, 1982	
18.6 m	<b>Lenght overall</b>	22.2 m	
4.6 m	<b>Width, hull</b>		
8.0 m	across foils	7.7 m	
2.6 m	<b>Draft, hullborne</b>	2.7 m	
1.1 m	foilborne	1.1 m	
20.6 t	<b>Displacement, lightship</b>		
26.0 t	fully loaded	32.0 t	
60	<b>Passengers</b>	67 (originally 72)	
2 x Fiat-Carraro 650 hp V12 diesels / propellers	<b>Propulsion plant</b>	1 x MTU 1,350 hp 12V 493 diesel / propeller	
34 knots	<b>Service speed</b>	32.4 knots	
38 knots	<b>Max. speed</b>	36.5 knots	
270 nautical miles	<b>Range</b>	300 nautical miles	
withdrawn (1972) and sold off	<b>Status</b>	laid up (5 + 6); sold in Greece (3 + 4)	



# J U S T F L O A T I N G B Y

*How  
did the  
fast  
ferry get  
into the  
pen?*

**Everyone is familiar with the ship in the bottle. But how many of you know about the ship in the pen? Well, you should, because it is big business.**

In marketing terms these souvenir and promotional pens are known as Floating-Action pens, but are more commonly called float pens, or even floaties for short – whereas the term floating pens is incorrect as it is not the pens themselves that float (we tried) but what's inside them. You will also see them referred to as tilt or reveal/conceal pens.

Which probably calls for some explaining.

Basically, a typical float pen is a regular-size ballpoint pen on which the upper half is made of transparent acrylic; in technical language referred to as the window. Inside is an object, or floater, that will move from the one end to the other as you tilt the pen. In reality this object is a computer-transferred image on a piece of transparent film which floats in a non-toxic fluid. The image can be a down-scaled sketch or actual photograph.

For more fun and depth, the window also incorporates a background panel, or wallpaper, matching the floater. Which, incidentally, is not necessarily a ship or ferry, but can be just about anything you can think of... and more!

For even greater 3D-effect, some designs also have a foreground, i.e. a fixed image placed in front of the floater. Yes, it's a bit like a micro theatre, or one of those early 60s ViewMasters if you like.

On the backside of the backdrop, called the caption panel, is normally the name of the company or product, place or sight, etc. that the moving object/scene represents or promotes.

There are exceptions to the above pen-anatomy, however, depending on who manufactures and designs them, etc. For example, some more recent designs do not have a floater as such, instead the top portion is filled with silver or multi-colored glitter that will pour (float) over a fixed object when the pen is tilted – much as on a classic snowdome.

Another variant is the conceal/reveal design, the classic of which being the tip 'n'strip pen; tip the pen and the pin-up girl sheds her bathing suit – tip it the other way, and back on it goes. In the name of equality this design now also comes with a guy dropping his speedos. The latter of which being quite popular with Japanese tourists according to a retailer *CFF* spoke with. We did not double-check this statement however.

Whether featuring a male or female, the manufacturer reports that in the region of 4–5 million of these strip pens are sold every year. ▶▶

**Top : A classic fast ferry in a float pen. Depicting, supposedly, a PT.50 hydrofoil, the design is one of the first featuring a fast ferry and is being sold as a souvenir in Capri, Italy**

**Right : Although involved in fast ferry operations since 1994, Stena Line did not issue a pen with one of its fast ferries as of yet**





*Some pens are designed with a foreground for greater 3D effect. Like on these pens from Condor Ferries (left) and Hoverspeed (below, centre) showing an Incat 78 m wavepiercing catamaran and an SR.N4 Mk III emerging from behind a breakwater*

You would think that plastic souvenir/promotional products such as these can only be made out East where manpower is cheap. But not so.

The by far most well-known and respected manufacturer of float pens, Eskesen, is based in a small village in rural Denmark some 60 km south-west of Copenhagen. A few other producers do exist, including in China and Italy, but their products are not considered as refined as those made by the Danish factory.

## J U S T F L O A T I N G B Y

Founded in 1946 by a local baker who had come up with a way to prevent fluid-filled products from leaking the oil these are filled with, the Eskesen company has expanded its line of merchandise and markets ever since, leading to their products now being sold in more than sixty countries world-wide. Export accounts for more than 90% of turnover, the biggest customer being the United States. And speaking of oil, Eskesen's first order for a float pen design came from Dansk Esso.



The factory today employs some 130 people, including its own team of in-house designers who develop and assist in the designing of new pens and other products. It also manufactures pens on demand, i.e. such that have been designed by the company or individual who orders them. Basically anyone can have his or her pen made, as long as you order a production run of at least 500 items.

In addition to the significant quantities of float pens being bought each year as souvenirs by tourists all over the world, up through the



*An earlier Hoverspeed pen featuring one of the SR.N4s in the 1980s paint scheme of wide red and blue lines*

years another non-neglectable market has developed. That of devoted collectors, which Eskesen takes very seriously. Collectors obviously are scattered around the world as well, with the majority of them residing in the U.S. Fairs and get-togethers are arranged frequently, quite a few fan/collector websites have appeared within the last few years, as have firms who design and/or assist individuals in designing their own pens. Newsletters are being published, both by Eskesen and collectors, etc.



*Dutch ferry operator Doeksen has issued a float pen depicting its Harding 35 m catamaran*

Needless to say, relevant to this forum are only such float pens that have a ship or ferry in them – preferably, of course, a fast ferry. And yes, there are indeed several, some of which are presented here.

Far from all can be described as *classic* though. But they will be one day, as will the pens themselves, and also these items are fun to collect.



One of the first float pens to feature a fast ferry as the moving object was the hydrofoil pen. The one shown here depicts what is supposedly a PT.50, but could also pass for an RHS 160 as the image is not exact. While not being able to put an exact date on the pen, Eskesen confirms that the design as such is old but that the pen continues to be produced to this day. It is believed to have appeared for the first time in the mid-1960s, however, alterations are sometimes made to a design to bring it up to date.

Two other interesting designs are the Hoverspeed pens featuring SR.N4 Mk IIIs in different liveries – both now very classic indeed.

Most likely there are more fast ferry float pens than those included here and the editor would be delighted to hear from anyone who has any info about such. ■

*One of a pair of Dan-yard Seajet 250 catamarans belonging to Danish operator Mols-Linien; a less-than-successful Canadian PacifiCat catamaran off Vancouver – and a PT.50 hydrofoil in Italy*



**A special Thank you to the following sponsors & individuals:**

- Adler-Schiffe
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- Eskesen
- Hoverspeed
- Mols-Linien
- Stena Line

- Leonardo Lella
- Miranda Wittebol

# connexion

(continued from page 2)

The Voskhods were then completely rebuilt during the winter and spring, which included replacing the original M-401 A Zvesda diesels with MAN 2842 LE402s and increasing passenger capacity from 71 to 79 by eliminating a bar area as well as establishing bicycle racks aft on the superstructure. Mind you, this is bike & ride territory rather than park & ride!

Emerging as *Annemarie*, *Kusnirov* and *Prins Johan Friso* the trio, along with the 128-seat Meteor, were introduced on the new Amsterdam-Velsen route in May 1998. Initially a Monday to Friday schedule was being operated, with half hourly departures between 06:30 and 10:00 and 15:30 and 19:30 and hourly departures in between.



became Connexion Fast Flying Ferries.

The Connexion group owns more than 4,000 buses and coaches along with 18 ships, including the FFF hydrofoils, as well as numerous other road and rail vehicles and carries 1,000,000 passengers a day.

A plan to have the hydrofoils repainted in the distinctive lime and

dark green livery used on the Connexion coaches in the Amsterdam area has yet to materialize however, and for the time being only a pair of stickers on the craft indicate the family connexion.

Also in 1999 two of the Voskhods were renamed; *Prins Johan Friso* changed identity to *La Alta Rapido* and *Kusnirov* to *Archimedes*.

In the past twelve months the number of passengers using the hydrofoils has averaged 650 a day, which is well above what is required to break even.

Regular commuters buying a monthly (or 12-month) pass accounts for some 20% and students holding a student pass 33% of ridership. An evaluation report issued last year by the province of Noord-Holland reveals that the service has been very well received by passengers who believe the vessels are comfortable, the service is fast and reliable and the schedule slots in well with other public transport at either end, etc.

Based on a berth-to-berth trip time of 25 minutes for the 13 nautical

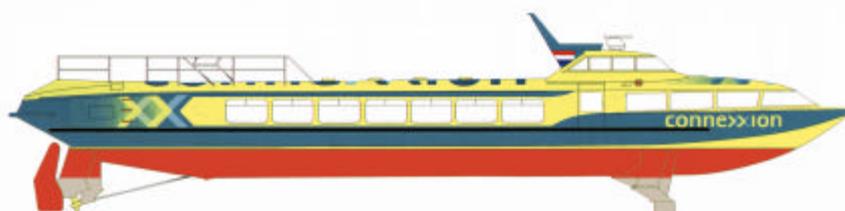


A weekend service was added at the end of May 1999, operating at a sixty minute frequency between 09:30 and 18:00.

As of September 9<sup>th</sup> 1999 FFF merged with the biggest bus carrier in the Netherlands, Connexion, by which the company's full name

**Below : This is how the Voskhods may look once they have received the new Connexion paint scheme** (Mark van Rijzen)

**Top + Centre : A fourth used Voskhod, *Squal*, arrived at the Fast Flying Ferries base in September last year**



mile journey, a minimum of two craft are required to maintain the peak hour timetable, with a third being held as back up and allowing for the fourth to be serviced.

Bad weather in the North Sea channel is not a particularly big problem, but debris is. A couple of major impacts have resulted in the foils being severely damaged with new ones having to be ordered from the Ukraine. Also, delivered between 1979 and 1983, age was beginning to show here and there on the Voskhods and it was decided to purchase yet another unit to either be refurbished and put into service or act as spares for the other three Voskhods.

The craft, *Squal*, finally arrived at the FFF base last September. 'Finally', as it had been acquired already in 1998 and thus had been en route for almost two years, the main reason being the war in the Balkans which had the vessel trapped in the River Danube. The craft has since been put up for sale.

At present Meteor *Prins Willem Alexander* is out of service due to a major problem with its starboard M-401 A engine and the company is considering whether to replace the original diesels with MTU or Caterpillar engines or possibly dispose of the vessel. A decision which very much depends on the outcome of the ongoing negotiations with the government as to whether Connexion FFF will be granted a five year extension to its present license. When introduced the program was for an initial three year trial period, which obviously is about to expire.

On the assumption that this goes without a hitch, other plans by the operator include the introduction of new services between Zaandam–Amsterdam and Almere–Amsterdam and the acquisition of more hydrofoils. These would be new Voskhod hulls from the Crimean yard custom laid out by FFF. A major interior design change over the original Voskhods that is being considered is to fit these out with a single saloon seating 90 passengers, as compared to seventy-nine in two saloons on the present craft. The final decision of which has yet to be taken.



**Above :** The company's original hydrofoil Meteor *Prins Willem Alexander* exchanges passengers at the Amsterdam terminal on a nice summer day in 1999. The Dutch is a biking lot and you can take your bicycle on the hydrofoil (Martin Grimm)

## Vikings sail for Mexico

The pair of Kværner Fjellstrand Flying Cat 40 m catamarans, *Kraka Viking* and *Sifka Viking*, previously operated between Copenhagen Airport and Malmö by Scandlines on behalf of SAS were sold overseas last month.

Acquired by Mexican operator Cruceros Maritimos de Caribe, the catamarans, now renamed *Mexico V* and *Mexico IV* respectively, left Scandinavian waters for the last time on January 20<sup>th</sup> as deck cargo on board the Dutch BigLift carrier *Happy Ranger*.

The catamarans were not going straight to

Mexico though, as they are to be refurbished in the U.S. at a New Orleans, Louisiana yard before entering service between Cozumel and the Yucatán peninsula. They arrived in New Orleans on February 10<sup>th</sup>.

Cruceros Maritimos de Caribe has previously taken delivery of a new Fjellstrand 38.8m catamaran, *Mexico*.

**Below :** *Kraka Viking*, now renamed *Mexico V*, being loaded at Copenhagen last month (tim timoleon)





**Flying Cat 40 m catamarans *Mexico V* and *Mexico IV* (hanging) being prepared for the sea voyage to the Gulf of Mexico at Copenhagen last month. See News item on previous page (*tim timoleon*)**