

classic fast ferries



STRAITS OF
ORESUND
HYDROFOILS

DID YOU EVER reflect on the fact that the hydrofoil has its limits? Not in terms of worldwide spread, suitable areas of operation, cruising range or passenger capacity. But from an aesthetical point of view, literally speaking.

Regardless of its shape, size and builder, more often than not a hydrofoil is only really interesting to view when foilborne – or sitting on dry land – be it live or in a photograph. This obviously also applies to hovercraft and surface effect ships. Unless underway (or lifted for inspection or under construction) these craft look very little different from any other maritime vessel in displacement mode.

In the case of photographing for instance hydrofoils in full flight a problem always was finding suitable points from which to capture them. With speed restrictions inside most harbours, this would mean piers and breakwaters or other parts of the port often not accessible to the public just like that.

THE CHALLENGE

This is a challenge to a journal such as *CLASSIC FAST FERRIES*. The distinctive character – you may even say personality – of these types of fast ferries imply a certain amount of images showing the vessels underway. And the fact is that there are far more in which they are not. Indeed, such are of interest as well, especially if from days gone by as they serve as great time documents and also provide variety. Still, you can only find so many different spots and angles from which to shoot hydrofoils. They are where they are – in the water, or, on your lucky day, sitting in a shipyard.

It is not like with other modes of transport such as buses, trams, trains and lorries, or even conventional ferries and ships, which may be seen and captured in a great variety of settings and poses. As we are probably all aware, this segment of transport history always enjoyed a high level of attention, from enthusiasts and professionals alike. Of course, there are lots more of these than fast ferries.

Another challenge is tracking down old photos at all. While easier these days in comparison with thirteen years ago when *CFF* first appeared, it is probably safe to assume that the images that no doubt must



exist in thousands from the early days of the hydrofoil and up through the 1960s are stuffed away in shoe boxes and photo albums, likely belonging to persons of a generation who are now only sparsely or not at all active on the internet where you can get in touch with them.

In view of the above, we wish to extend a special thank you to Lars Helge Isdahl and Tomas Johannesson for taking and providing all the great, *classic* photos included in this issue. **cff**

Above : *Photographing hydrofoils is often a bit more complicated than doing conventional ships or buses, trams or trains – or street photography. (It is not the editor in the photo!)*

/TIM TIMOLEON photo

classic
fast
ferries

THE ORIGINAL PERIODICAL ABOUT THE HISTORY OF HYDROFOILS, HOVERCRAFT, CATAMARANS AND SURFACE EFFECT SHIPS, THEIR BUILDERS AND OPERATORS WORLDWIDE.

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COVER : SRÖ RODRIQUEZ PT.50 TÄRNAN ALONGSIDE AT MALMÖ. PHOTO: TIM TIMOLEON.

Below : A rare colour image of
Swedish operator Sundfart's
PT.20B Sundfoil II in 1963
/ WESTERMOEN HYDROFOIL photo

THE STRAITS OF ORESUND 1960 – 1969



THIS IS the 50th issue of *CLASSIC FAST FERRIES* since its inception in January 2000.

And it was 50 years ago this June that the first permanent hydrofoil service was introduced between Malmö, Sweden and Copenhagen, Denmark. The beginning of a Scandinavian success story which would last for four decades.

The hydrofoils are of course long gone, as are all fast ferries in these international waters. As a consequence of the opening of the fixed link between the two countries in 2000, the last service operated in April 2002 bringing to an end nearly forty-two years with fast ferries across the Straits of Oresund.

All of which indicating there was a hydrofoil service prior to 1963.

SIRENA – A FLYING VISIT

Already in September 1960 a PT.50 belonging to Finska Ångfartygs AB, FÅA, (Finland Steamship Company) of Helsinki made a guest appearance on the route for a few months.

The 95-seat vessel, *Sirena*, had been delivered by the Leopoldo Rodriguez shipyard in May of that year – simultaneously with the first

PT.50 for Norway, *Vingtor* – and entered service with FÅA between Stockholm, Sweden and Mariehamn in the island of Åland the following month. Owing to the nature of the route with frequently rough conditions in the Baltic Sea in the autumn and occurrence of ice at some places in winter, it was clear from the start that the service was to be limited to the summer months only, June through August. It was decided therefore to transfer *Sirena* south for the winter to better utilize the craft and to test the market for a fast alternative to the ordinary passenger ships already plying the waters of the Straits of Oresund.

However, this was not *Sirena*'s first visit to the area as on its delivery trip from Messina to Stockholm – the hydrofoil was shipped as deck cargo to Antwerp and from there travelled on under its own power – it had called at Copenhagen and Malmö to perform promotional trips for the press, port authorities, tourist trade and others.

Following its first season on the Stockholm–Mariehamn route, *Sirena* was repositioned, again under its own power, to the Oresund and commenced regular service on September 15, 1960, having first completed a series of demonstration runs. Initially four daily roundtrips were operated, which as the days grew shorter and also partially due to unusually foggy weather was later reduced to three as the hydrofoil was not allowed to operate in darkness.

Journey time for the 18 nautical mile route was timetabled to 30–35 minutes, quay to quay. This was a considerable saving of time in comparison with the 1 hour 40 minutes of the conventional ferries, and in fact some ten minutes faster than later days hydrofoils and catamarans. However, some of the gain in travel time on *Sirena* was lost on the transfer between the ill-situated off-lying berth and the city centre at Copenhagen. A one way adult was SEK6,50 – the corresponding journey today, by train, is SEK 105.

Right : Finnish PT.50 *Sirena* (right) and Norwegian mate *Vingtor* prior to being shipped from Italy in 1960 / RODRIQUEZ photo

Below : Rodriguez PT.50 *Sirena*, owned by Finska Ångfartygs AB of Helsinki, made a guest appearance in the Straits of Oresund for a few months in 1960–61 and is seen here taking off at Malmö / FÅA photo





Top, left : Sundfoil II was one of a pair of PT.20Bs delivered by Westermoen Hydrofoil to Sundfart of Malmö, Sweden in 1963 / SUPRAMAR photo **Top, right :** Great emphasis was put on the aircraft style service on board the PT.20Bs / SUNDFART photo
Above : Sundfoil I (right) in tow by Sundfoil II after some sort of hick-up with the former / TOMAS JOHANNESSON photo

Unfortunately the hydrofoil service came to a premature end in March 1961 when a strike at the shipyard in which *Sirena* was being overhauled grounded the craft for more than a month. It was decided not to continue with the operation in the Oresund and the craft was returned to the Baltic.

According to the agents which handled the operation, Nyman & Schultz, the experience with *Sirena* in the Oresund was generally good. The number of reservations may not have been great but decent. It has to be remembered that this was still in the early days of the hydrofoil and also the time of year, September through March, cannot be described as ideal for pleasure trips for neither locals nor visitors to the area.

FÅA continued operating *Sirena* on the Stockholm–Mariehamn route for six more summer seasons. Initial

thoughts of adding one or more hydrofoils, possibly including operating on the Malmö–Copenhagen route on a permanent basis, never eventuated.

During its seven years with the company, and with no further transfers to other routes, *Sirena* had actually been running for only approximately two of those years and thus was practically as good as new when sold in April 1967 to Società Aliscafi Sud, an affiliate of Aliscafi SNAV, in Italy.

Renamed *Freccia Atlantica* it entered service in north-western Sicily linking Trapani and the Egadi Islands. It would later serve other routes in the SNAV network as well as be leased to other operators.

Freccia Atlantica was withdrawn in 1995 and reportedly scrapped shortly after.



Above : Sundfoil I at Copenhagen, racing past a vessel of a somewhat different generation
/ JOHN STAEHR/Scanpix photo

SUNDFART

But like elsewhere in the world at the time, the interest in the hydrofoil concept was catching on in Sweden and Denmark – and Norway. So much so that the Norwegian ship builders Westermoen Båtbyggeri acquired a license from Supramar, the Swiss firm which had developed the PT.20 and PT.50, to build its hydrofoils for the Scandinavian markets.

In June 1962 Rederi AB Sundfart, an established ferry operator based in Malmö and marketed as Centrumlinjen, announced it had placed an order, worth in the region of SEK 2.5 million, with Westermoen Hydrofoil, as the yard was now known, for two 67-seat PT.20s to be delivered in May 1963. Of the PT.20B type, also referred to as Caribe or Caribbean, these featured a different layout to the standard PT.20. With the engine room and wheelhouse being arranged forward rather than amidships, this allowed for a main saloon over almost three-quarters of the length of the vessel with some additional seating rearward of the bridge. A PT.20B already in service in Norway since 1961, *Ekspressen*, had not been built by Westermoen, however, but by Rodriguez. This craft inspired Sundfart to choose this version over the standard PT.20.

Coinciding with the Sundfart order Westermoen was just completing its first hydrofoil, a 100-seat PT.50, aptly named *Westfoil*, to be delivered to Cay Shipping Company in the Bahamas. Prior to being shipped overseas the vessel was thoroughly

tested in southern Norway and demonstration runs carrying passengers were made. These included a number of trips between Sandefjord, south of Oslo, and Strömstad on Sweden's west coast and several more between Malmö and Copenhagen in September 1962.

Having adopted the marketing name Flygbåtarna, the first of the PT.20Bs, *Sundfoil I*, entered service with Sundfart on the Malmö–Copenhagen route in mid-June 1963, with *Sundfoil II* joining it a good two weeks later. With the arrival of the second craft the planned timetable of hourly departures from each end between 07:00 and 19:00 was implemented. The craft were painted in an attractive red/white and blue/white, respectively.

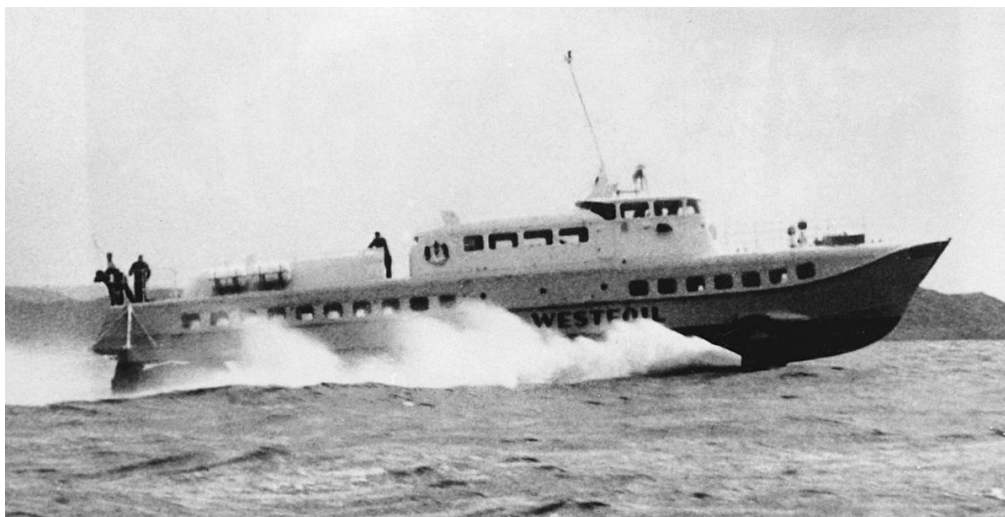
Great emphasis was put on the aircraft style atmosphere on board, including cabin attendants serving drinks and snacks and selling tax-free goods at your seat, and the prospect of the hydrofoil service becoming an attractive alternative to the air shuttle between Malmö and Copenhagen airports. Less on the fact that at times the ride on the relatively small vessels could prove a rather bumpy such.

One improvement over the service by *Sirena* was that hydrofoils were now allowed to operate into the port of Copenhagen, albeit off-foil, berthing at a much more convenient location next to the city centre. The journey time was still announced to 35 minutes, however.

Some 123,000 passengers were carried on the two craft during the just over six months of 1963.

Below : Westermoen Hydrofoil company logo





Left : Westfoil on builder's trials in Norway in 1962 / WESTERMOEN HYDROFOIL photo

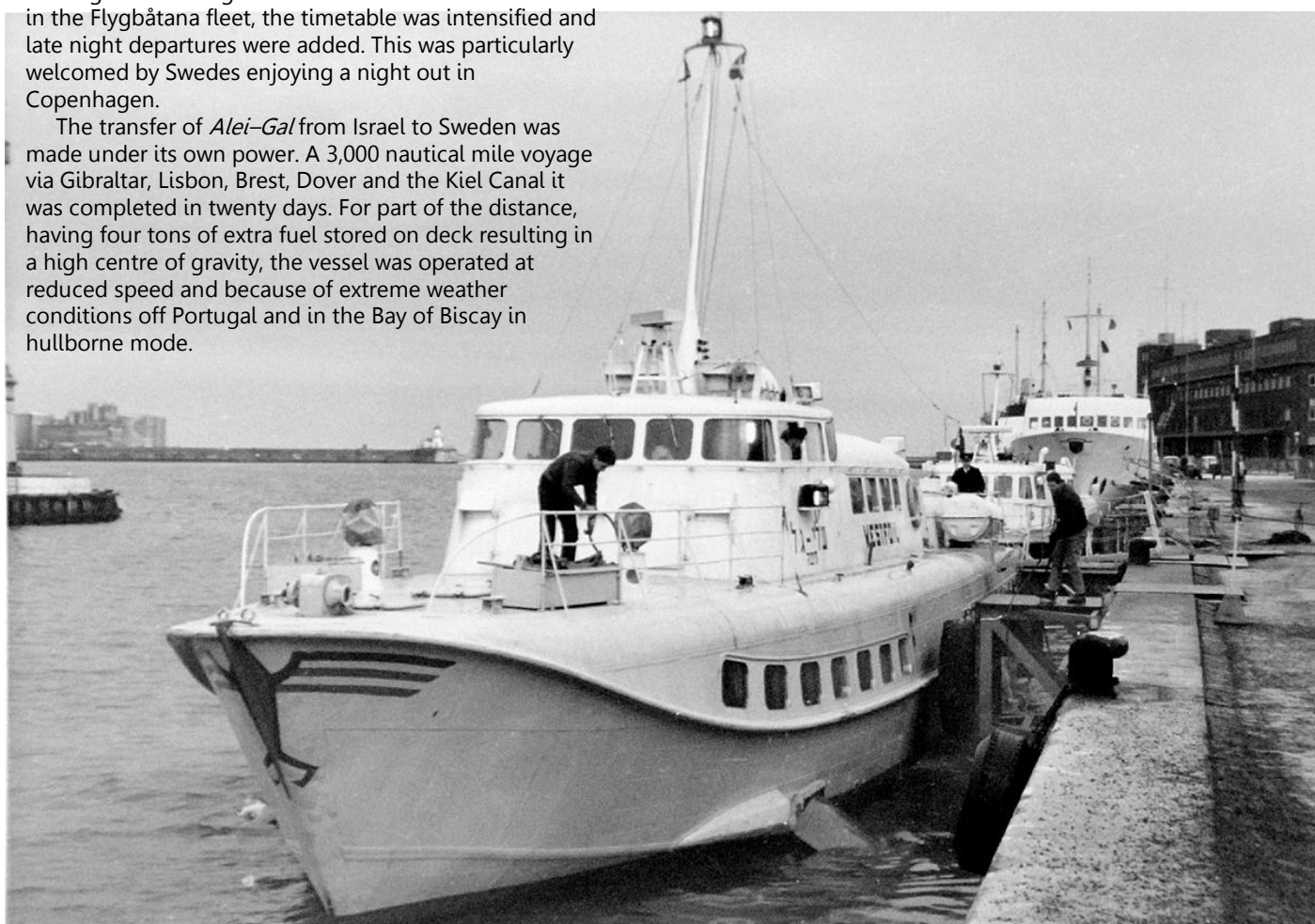
Meanwhile *Westfoil* had returned from the Bahamas to the building yard, only to be sent out on another long voyage. Viking Norway Israel Shipping Company, a Norwegian Israeli joint venture, had been formed to operate the hydrofoil between Haifa and Famagusta in Cyprus. Renamed *Alei-Gal*, the PT.50 commenced service in June 1963. Journey time was in the region of four hours allowing for just one round trip a day to be operated, leaving Haifa in the morning and arriving back in late afternoon, including a one-hour stop in Cyprus.

This operation would also exist for only a short time, in this case at least in part due to the disturbances in the area. By April 1964 the hydrofoil was back in Scandinavia – and the Oresund, having been chartered by Sundfart and regained its original name. With three vessels now in the Flygbåtarna fleet, the timetable was intensified and late night departures were added. This was particularly welcomed by Swedes enjoying a night out in Copenhagen.

The transfer of *Alei-Gal* from Israel to Sweden was made under its own power. A 3,000 nautical mile voyage via Gibraltar, Lisbon, Brest, Dover and the Kiel Canal it was completed in twenty days. For part of the distance, having four tons of extra fuel stored on deck resulting in a high centre of gravity, the vessel was operated at reduced speed and because of extreme weather conditions off Portugal and in the Bay of Biscay in hullborne mode.



Below : Alei-Gal / Westfoil alongside at Malmö shortly after its arrival from Israel in 1964. Behind it one of the Sundfart PT.20Bs / TOMAS JOHANNESSON photo





COMPETITION

But Sundfart was not to rule the waves for very much longer.

In late 1964 Danish-Swedish state owned competitors Dampskibsselskabet Øresund, DSØ, and Svenska Rederi AB Öresund, SRÖ, announced they too were to add hydrofoils to their joint fleet of conventional ships and ferries. Two PT.50s were ordered, to be built by Westermoen and Rodriquez and delivered in May and July 1965, respectively. The price per vessel was approximately DKK 3.6/SEK 3 million.

Prior to the arrival of these SRÖ acquired *Westfoil* and took over from Sundfart the Flygbåtarna concept, including shore installations. The PT.20Bs were relocated and introduced on a new slightly longer route between Hälsingborg, north of Malmö, and Copenhagen. Landskrona, also on the Swedish end, was later added.

The Danish PT.50, *Flyvefisken*, arrived from Westermoen at the end of May 1965 and entered service a few days later on the Copenhagen–Malmö run along with *Westfoil*. SRÖ's Rodriquez-built counterpart, *Svalan*, joined them in mid-July. The delivery voyage from Messina to Malmö was made in ten days under variable weather conditions. Calls were made at Gibraltar, Lisbon, Brest and Dover among other ports.

With three PT.50s now available a back up vessel was almost always at hand in the case of unavailability of one of the other two craft and obviously capacity increased considerably.

During the first seven months of operation, June–December 1965, 330,000 passengers travelled on the three DSØ/SRÖ hydrofoils.

Convinced that this mode of transport in the Oresund had come to stay – for instance, it had opened up for new customer segments such as commuters and businessmen flying out of and into Copenhagen Airport – in late 1965 DSØ/SRÖ were in negotiations with Westermoen for one or two more craft. The orders for these would however be placed with Rodriquez instead.

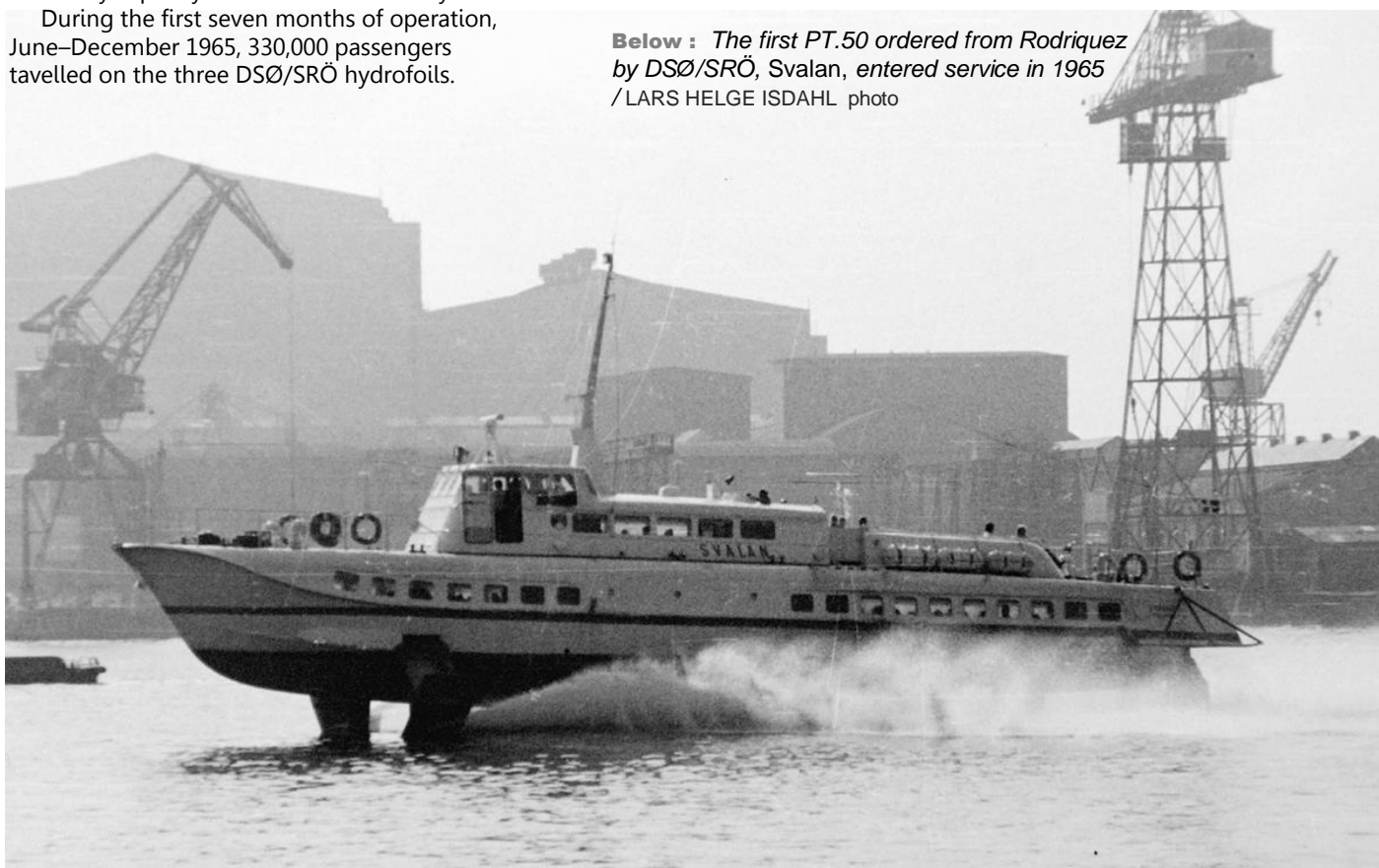
The first of the new PT.50s, *Tärnan*, was delivered to SRÖ in June 1966. Like the one before it, this too was taken from Italy to Sweden under its own power.

Simultaneously with but not related to this, *Sundfoil I* and *Sundfoil II* were taken over by a newly established Norwegian shipping company based in Oslo, A/S Masl. Keeping their names, the vessels continued on the Hälsingborg–Copenhagen and Landskrona–Copenhagen routes.

Also around this time Westermoen completed its third PT.50, *W 14*, built ahead of order, and revealed plans for the construction of the much larger Supramar PT.150. This design was to be built also by Rodriquez.

A few months later the charter of *Westfoil* expired and the vessel was taken back to Westermoen to be rebuilt. With the ever-increasing popularity of the the swift hydrofoils across the Oresund, it was therefore decided to order another PT.50 from Rodriquez, to be registered with DSØ, for delivery in spring 1967.

Below : The first PT.50 ordered from Rodriquez by DSØ/SRÖ, *Svalan*, entered service in 1965 / LARS HELGE ISDAHL photo





Above : Svalan idling at Copenhagen in the 1960s / OLAV MOEN photo

Below, centre : D/S Øresund / Rederi AB Øresund company shield



Below : Hard to tell apart, Svalan was joined by Tärnan in 1966.

It is seen here on pre-delivery trials in the Straits of Messina

/ RODRIQUEZ photo



FULLY SUBMERGED FOIL

In addition to preparing for the building of the first PT.150, Westermoen was taking on another project.

Based on promising results from trials carried out by Supramar on Lake Lucerne in Switzerland with a PT.3 on which the original surface piercing rear foil had been substituted by a fully submerged air controlled unit, the Norwegian yard decided to implement this system on *Westfoil*.

This modification work was completed in January 1967 and renamed *Flipper* the hydrofoil commenced test runs in the waters off Mandal,

in offering a speedy connection between Denmark's two largest cities as an alternative to the air service. Merely to test such a vessel's suitability for the intended route, including calling at Helsingborg, no passengers were carried.

However, it was found that the PT.50 was not suited for operation in the open sea across the Kattegat.

Following this, for a month from late March 1967 *Flipper* operated a test service between Trelleborg, on Sweden's southernmost coast, and Copenhagen.



some of which alongside the aforementioned *W 14* for direct comparison in behaviour between a stabilized and conventional PT.50 under the exact same sea conditions. The test results were generally very satisfactory.

For a couple of weeks in February *Flipper* was leased to long standing Danish shipping company DFDS. Already operating the overnight ferry on the Copenhagen–Aarhus route, DFDS saw a potential

Above, inset : Having been re-equipped with a fully submerged air controlled aft foil, the former Westfoil emerged as *Flipper* and is seen on trials in Norway in January 1967 / WESTERMOEN HYDROFOIL photo

Above : *Flipper* (re)appeared in the Oresund in early 1967 – and not for the last time either / TOMAS JOHANNESSON photo

Below : Springerer coming off foil at Copenhagen
/ LARS HELGE ISDAHL photo



REDESIGN AND REBUILD

In the first week of April passenger number one million on the DSØ/SRÖ hydrofoils since the inception in 1965 was carried. This translates into 19,000 single crossings having been operated. Not a bad growth when considering that the cost of a single adult by hydrofoil was a little over three times that of the same distance by ordinary ship.

Two months later the new PT.50 ordered from Rodriquez in September, *Springerer*, entered service with DSØ.

This differed somewhat in appearance from the others in that it featured a restyled superstructure with a larger main deck saloon, allowing for more seats to be fitted here resulting in an increase in total passenger capacity by

approximately 15 in the Danish version. First seen on a unit delivered to Australia the previous year, the upgraded and re-styled PT.50 was designated PT.50/S.

During the summer of 1967 the service by *Sundfoil I* and *Sundfoil II* on the Hälsingborg/Landskrona–Copenhagen route closed down. Passenger figures had been dropping for some time, due to, at least in part, bad publicity on regularity with departures being frequently cancelled for weather or mechanical reasons. Also, passengers felt the vessels were generally uncomfortable when they did indeed run. All resulting in the collapse of Masl and the vessels being bought back by their builders.

Below : Westermoen PT.50 Tumleren in Malmö in May 1968.
It is believed to have been leased by DSØ/SRÖ from the building yard during the absence of Flyvefisken
/ TOMAS JOHANNESSON photo



At the beginning of 1968 *Flyvefisken* was taken back to Westermoen for modifications to be carried out. DSØ had found the cavitation damage to the aft foil being more palpable on *Flyvefisken* than on the three Italian built craft. The conclusion was that this was down to the former having its propellers positioned in front of the aft foil whereas the latter had theirs behind it. Modifications included also the replacement by a new rear foil and a slight exterior restyling of the wheelhouse windows.

Also during 1968 DSØ/SRÖ in cooperation with SAS and other air carriers established a taxi and coach service between the hydrofoil terminal and airport at Copenhagen, wishing to capture some of the significant traffic of residents in south Sweden flying out of and into Copenhagen Airport.

THE SHY PT.50

It would appear that during its absence in the Oresund, *Flyvefisken* was substituted by the less known and operated 1966-built PT.50 *W 14*, now properly named *Tumleren*.



Above : Designated PT.50/S, Springeren differed noticeable in appearance from the PT.50s hitherto seen in the Oresund. It was delivered by Rodriguez in May 1967 / TOMAS JOHANNESSON photo **Inset :** A cabin attendant on Springer. The interior was in red, brown and gold, with a typical 1960s pattern on partitions/walls, etc. / DSØ photo

From June to September that year *Tumleren* was leased to Norwegian operator Hardanger Sunnhordlandske D/S in Bergen.

The PT.50 was finally sold in April 1969 to Alilauro Aliscafi del Tirreno and renamed *Alischia* entered service in the Bay of Naples. In January 1981 it was acquired by Conamar Sud in Sicily which introduced it between Trapani and the Egadi Islands as *Alimarettimo*. Two years later, in February 1983, it was bought by F.I.L.A. in Napoli and in September of that year by Alivit, an affiliate company of Alilauro. Renamed

Alirug it was employed in the Bay of Naples until withdrawn in 1987.

THUNPILLEN

With the PT.20Bs gone from the Oresund, new interest was shown in a seasonal service between Hålsingborg and Copenhagen.

In June 1968 *Flipper* was back in the Oresund, having been chartered by Swedish shipping companies Rederi AB Göta Kanal and Thunbolaget. Trading as *Thunpilen*, six daily



roundtrips were operated between 09:00 and 22:00 with an added late night round trip on Friday and Saturday until mid-September whereupon the vessel returned to Mandal . The plans of resuming the seasonal service the following year was not realized.

Instead, in April 1969 *Flipper* was acquired by Alilauro in Italy, along with *Tumleren*. Renamed *Alicapri* it was likewise put into service in the Bay of Naples. For the first six months the vessel operated with the fully submerged rear foil still in place, and successfully so. But being the odd man out obviously was impractical and it was replaced by a conventional surface piercing unit.

In May 1977 the craft was acquired by Società Aliscafi Sud and renamed *Freccia di Lipari* introduced between Trapani and the Egadi Islands.

It was sold once again in late 1983 to Aliscafi SNAV and keeping its name stayed with this operator until withdrawn from service around 1994.

WHERE DID THEY GO?

But back to the pair of PT.20Bs.

Following some time of lay up at Westermoen, *Sundfoil II* was sold in early 1969 to Norwegian ferry operator Fosen Trafikklag in Trondheim. Renamed *Nisen*, the refurbished PT.20B entered service with Fosen in May 1969. For the 1970

Below : Thunpilen / Flipper was leased by Thunbolaget and Rederi AB Göta Kanal and operated between Helsingborg and Copenhagen for three months in 1968 / THUNBOLAGET photo



season the vessel was once again renamed *Fosenfoil*. As such it operated for only a couple of years until sold to Aliscafi SNAV and shipped to Italy in late 1973 – incidentally along with two more Westermoen PT.20Bs previously operated in the Oslo fjord.

Renamed *Freccia di Procida* the hydrofoil was used on SNAV's short cross-Straits of Messina commuter run until retired in 1987.

The other Oresund PT.20B, *Sundfoil I*, was purchased by Hardanger Sunnhordlandske D/S and renamed *Tjelden* entered service out of Bergen in September 1968. It was again renamed *Tranen* in 1980 and as such served with HSD for two more years until sold to a private individual to be

used as a leisure boat. Having been stripped of its engine and foils and dubbed *Exfoil*, nothing much more happened and the vessel was seen lying like a stranded whale in the Bergen area for several years.

CONTINUED SUCCESS

The 1970s would prove no less dynamic in the Straits of Oresund. More players would enter the field and more and larger hydrofoils, hovercraft and catamarans were introduced.

We will revert to this interesting period in a future issue. **cff**



Above : *There has to be in thousands of snaps like this one of crew members taken by a colleague lying in drawers and stuffed-away shoe boxes and sitting in photo albums all around the world. Very few ever get a wider audience, which is a shame considering their great value as a document of their time. The above snap from 1968 shows six of the Norwegian and Swedish crew and a Swedish cabin attendant on Thunpilen. If you recognize any of the members, or yourself, we shall be pleased to hear from you / UNKNOWN photo*

Below : *W 14 and Flipper foiling in parallel during trials in southern Norway in 1967 / WESTERMOEN HYDROFOIL photo*





Top : Sirena was sold in Italy in 1967 and renamed Freccia Atlantica is seen passing Rendsburg on the Kiel Canal on its positioning trip from the Baltic to Sicily on April 23rd

/ MICHAEL NEIDIG photo

Above : Freccia Atlantica arriving in Capri from Napoli sometime around the mid-1970s

/ KEITH FRANSON photo

Right : ... and the 32 year old PT.50, still looking its best, alongside in Messina in June 1992. Behind it one of SNAV's PT.20s used on the short commuter route across the Straits of Messina, introduced in the 1950s / TIM TIMOLEON photo

AS FOR THE PT.20Bs, SEE THE OCTOBER 2003 CFF

WHERE DID THEY GO?

Right + Below : The widely travelled and frequently renamed Westfoil is seen here as Freccia di Lipari during its career with SNAV in the Bay of Naples.

The less fortunate dark blue hull which the PT.50 carried in the 1980s at right was later modified into the more becoming livery seen below

/ GIUSEPPE D'AMELIO and TIM TIMOLEON photo, respectively



Above : The former Tumleren entered service with Alilauro in the Bay of Naples as Alischia in 1969
/ALILAURO photo

Right : It was renamed Alimarettimo in 1981, having been acquired by Conamar Sud and transferred to north-western Sicily and would later return to the Bay of Naples
/ GIUSEPPE PASTORE photo





THERE IS ALWAYS A FIRST

Above : Where it all started. PT.20 *Freccia del Sole* exchanging passengers at Messina in 1956. Perhaps some of them are staying in Jolly Hotel?
/ RODRIQUEZ CANTIERE NAVALE photo

IN THE FIRST CLASSIC FAST FERRIES of January 2000, there was, of course, a short piece on the first Supramar PT.20 hydrofoil built.

Launched in 1956 at the Cantieri Navale Leopoldo Rodriguez, *Freccia del Sole* entered service with Aliscafì Società di Navigazione Alta Velocità, the operating company set up by Rodriguez and which would later be abbreviated

to the more catchy Aliscafì SNAV or just SNAV across the Straits of Messina, linking Sicily and Reggio di Calabria on the mainland.

At the time of the inauguration of *Freccia del Sole* in August 1956, already two more PT.20s were under construction at the yard. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Unfortunately, this first-born PT.20 is just that – history. Having seen service for twenty-nine years, *Freccia del Sole* was retired and stored on land at Rodriguez in 1985. The intention of preserving the hydrofoil and putting it on display never materialized, instead it fell victim to the cutting torch in the mid-1990s. This certainly is most tragic. Not only because it was the first PT.20, but it also represented the birth of the fast ferry business, which has continued to this day, and the vessel – as indeed Rodriguez itself as a trailblazing company – would have deserved this accolade.

To the best of our knowledge, no other of the 45 PT.20s built by Rodriguez is still around in Italy and most definitely not active. However, the last PT.20 delivered, in 1971, has been preserved in South Korea (April 2013 *CFF*) and also the first PT.20B built, in 1961, still exists, at least in part, in Norway (October 2012 News) .

RODRIQUEZ CANTIERE NAVALE photo



A NEW FIRST

Needless to say, there has been numerous other firsts since the 1950s, and not only in Italy, most of which have been mentioned in these pages before.

The most recent development is however also happening in Italy. And an interesting one it is.

Perhaps most revolutionary is the fact that this new hydrofoil is not built by Rodriguez but in a cooperation agreement between the boat builders of Air Naval, south of Napoli, and long-standing operator Ustica Lines in Sicily.

The hull of the first vessel, being referred to as Super Admiral or HF 01, was constructed by Air Naval earlier this year and then taken to Ustica Lines' new yard facilities at Trapani for completion and fitting out. It is believed the vessel will be finished before the end of this year.

While details have yet to be released, it is understood that Ustica Lines will in future be building hydrofoils itself at its new shipyard, possibly including also for other operators, of the current HF 01 type and possibly a projected larger design, called HF 02.

The last Rodriguez Foilmaster built to date entered service with Ustica Lines in 2007. Since, Rodriguez has built two experimental hydrofoils, however, only the one has actually been launched and extensively tested (December 2012 CFF). **cff**



Left : Two young lads in a wooden rowing boat in Messina harbour in the 1960s with, it is believed, Freccia del Sole in the background
/ FRANCESCO MASSARO photo, collection of ENZO ANNUARIO

Below : The hull of the first new hydrofoil for Ustica Lines, HF 01, was built by Air Naval in Napoli and arrived at Trapani in early July
/ EUSTACHIO PATALANO photo



last but not least ...

NOT ALL past 35 is over the hill.
An excellent – and we do mean excellent –
exception to this rule is RHS 70
Freccia dei Gerani.
Everything points to this 1977-built
hydrofoil continuing service this winter on
Lake Como in northern Italy. It is seen here
being slipped for overhaul at Dervio
on October 18.
Read about this and the other RHS 70s on
Lake Como in the February and April 2005
CLASSIC FAST FERRIES.
/ JACOPO MEMEO photo

