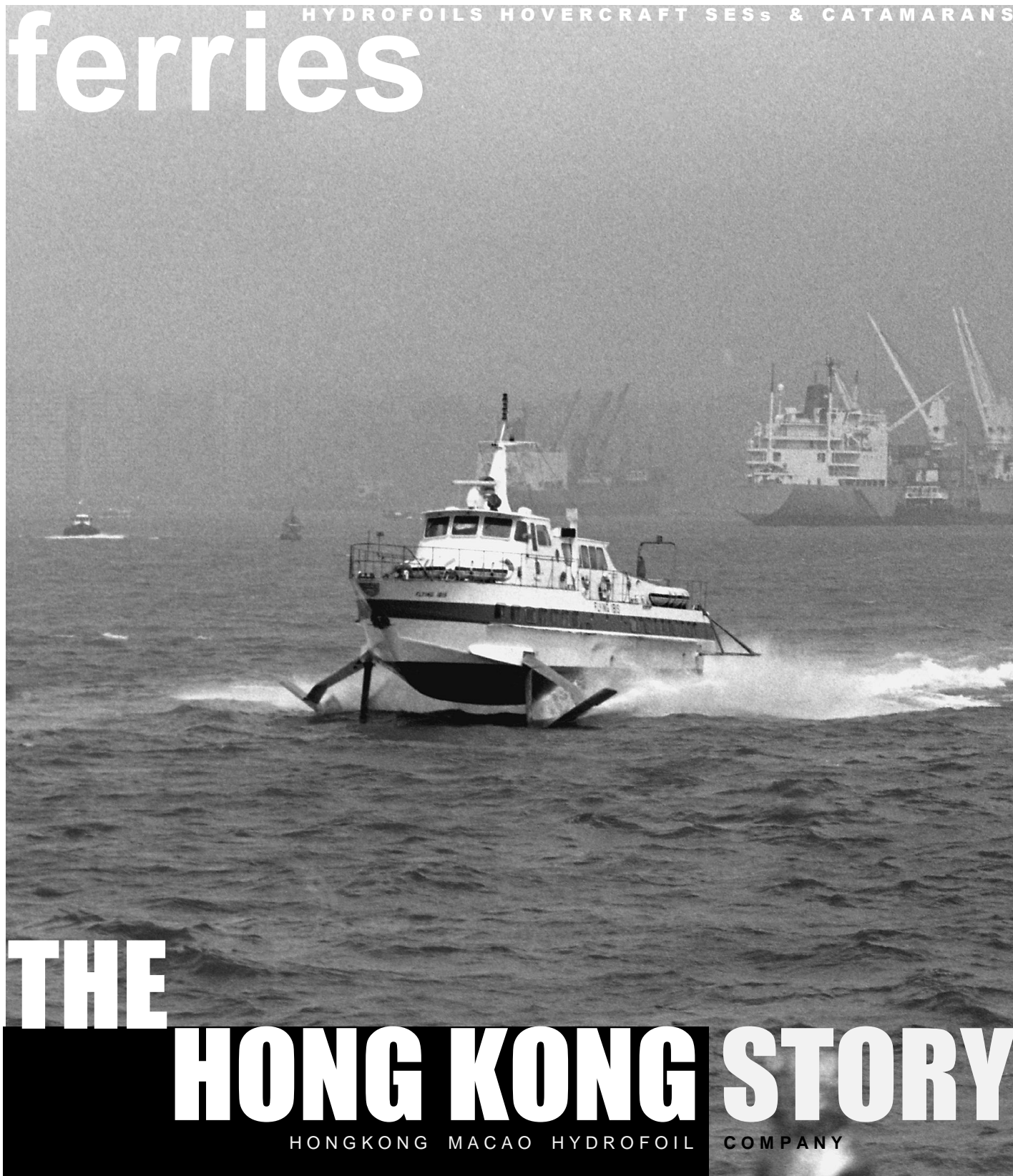


ISSUE 55 ■ APRIL 2016

# classic fast ferries

HYDROFOILS HOVERCRAFT SESS & CATAMARANS



# THE

# HONG KONG

# STORY

HONGKONG MACAO HYDROFOIL

COMPANY

*But first ...*

**HYDROFOILS ARE** not classic only and the subject of which is reduced to nostalgic articles on days gone past, like the one on the Hongkong Macao Hydrofoil Company in this issue of *CLASSIC FAST FERRIES*.

For instance, as we have reported on in recent months the designing and building of hydrofoils have been resumed in Italy. Not as you would expect at the Rodriguez yard in Messina but by a new shipyard established by Ustica Lines, HSC Shipyard, in Trapani in western Sicily.

Two Admiral 250 hydrofoils carrying 230 and 250 passengers were delivered in 2014 and 2015 and a third is currently under construction. A contract for another two vessels for a Greek customer is expected to be signed shortly.

Most recent of course is the Admiral 350 prototype, *Gianni M*, which was officially launched on March 24. Carrying up to 350 passengers, this will enter service with Ustica Lines in June.

Read more about these projects in *CFF* News on [www.classicfastferries.com](http://www.classicfastferries.com).

**Below :** The first Admiral 250 hydrofoil under construction in 2013. Another and the first Admiral 350 have since been built .  
A third Admiral 250 is currently under construction  
/ EUSTACHIO PATALANO photo

# NOT JUST NOSTALGIA



**classic  
fast  
ferries**

APRIL 2016 / ISSUE 55

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

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**COVER :** Hongkong Macao Hydrofoil Company's RHS 140 *Flying Ibis* in Hong Kong in March 1987

PHOTO: GEORGE SCHNEIDER



# THE HONG KONG STORY

**Right :** Flying Condor was one of four PT.50s operated by Hongkong Macao Hydrofoil Company

**Below :** PT.50 Flying Albatross entered service with HMH in 1964 and is seen here alongside at the Hong Kong terminal in 1982  
/ GRETE HOWARD photo



**B**oth companies commenced operation on the 38 nautical mile Hong Kong–Macau route almost simultaneously in 1964, initially using 68-seat Supramar PT.20 hydrofoils. A rather small design when considering the circumstances under which it would operate.

When the service was inaugurated in May, HMH had two PT.20s available, *Flying Phoenix* and *Flying Kingfisher*, built in Italy by Cantiere Navale Rodriquez. A third, *Flying Swift*, was added before the end of the year as was a 125-seat PT.50, *Flying Albatross*, likewise from Rodriquez. For comparison, FEH initially opted for just one Rodriquez PT.20 and two PT.50s built in Japan by Hitachi Zosen, the first such to be built by this Supramar licensee.

*Despite being situated at the busiest fast ferry waters in the world having seen virtually every type of high speed craft being introduced over the years, the former British colony of Hong Kong has managed to slip the pages of this journal, at least as far as a detailed review is concerned.*

*In this issue we outline the history of one of the two pioneering operators, the Hongkong Macao Hydrofoil Company. The other, Far East Hydrofoil Company, will be dealt with at a later date.*





Part of the Hong Kong–Macau route is sheltered and part exposed to open sea conditions and thus subject to variable force winds, seas and tide. Add to this limited visibility due to heavy rainfall during the monsoon season between May and September, the occasional foggy day, a plethora of small fishing and other craft criss-crossing the Pearl River estuary and the frequent occurrence of floating debris at Hong Kong and Macau – and you would think these are not ideal conditions under which to operate hydrofoils.

What was to come would however put to shame any concerns as to the suitability of hydrofoils, and later other fast ferries, in the area.

Due to the relatively shallow waters, particularly at the Macau end, a three-mile channel had had to be dredged to allow for foil clearance when manoeuvring in hullborne mode.

The special berthing facilities required for hydrofoils obviously had to be prepared. In Hong Kong three pontoons were constructed and moored to the existing wharf used by the ferries. Included here was a workshop which would handle running maintenance and repair work that did not require slipping or lifting. In Macau pontoons were likewise added to an existing wharf, although not the same as that used by the ferries but still close to the town centre.

## THE EARLY YEARS

By the time *Flying Swift* and *Flying Albatross* appeared on the route, a fourth PT.20 and another PT.50 were already around the corner. These, *Flying Heron* and *Flying Skimmer*, entered service in early 1965.

With the introduction of the hydrofoils, trip time was halved compared to that of the traditional ferries already on the route. This had also been one of the major arguments in the discussions in the early 1960s concerning the future of this route, which was in desperate need of additional capacity, and which resulted in the decision to choose hydrofoils rather than conventional vessels.

Scheduled berth-to-berth journey time was 75 minutes, only a few minutes of which needed to be spent hullborne when navigating through Hong Kong harbour. This was particularly welcomed by day trippers who could now enjoy more time ashore and less on transportation. Some would go to Macau, then Portuguese territory (until late 1999), to experience the tranquility and beauty of the town and peninsula, whereas others, assumingly a majority, went there to experience the beauty of winning at the betting and gambling halls. Unlike in Hong Kong, these activities were legal – and extremely popular with both locals and tourists – in Macau.

Operating hours were from around 0800 to 1830 in summer and 1700 in winter, no services were operated after dark. Typically, in the second half of the 1960s with eight vessels available, HMM scheduled a total of 40 single crossings in summer and 34 in winter.

**Below :** Flying Kingfisher was one of two Rodriguez PT.20s to inaugurate HMM's Hong Kong–Macau hydrofoil service in May 1964  
/ HONGKONG MACAO HYDROFOIL photo

**"HONGKONG MACAO HYDROFOIL CO. LTD.**  
**"Flying Phoenix" e "Flying Kingfisher"**  
Partidas tanto de Macau como de Hongkong:  
8.00, 9.45, 11.30, 13.15, 15.00, 16.45 e 18.30  
**CUSTO DE PASSAGENS**  
De Macau para Hongkong: Nos dias feriados em Hongkong nas carreiras da tarde aos domingos e nas carreiras de manhã das segundas-feiras e dos dias a seguir aos feriados em Hongkong — \$ 20.00  
(Nas outras viagens há uma redução de 50 por cento)  
De Hongkong para Macau: Aos sábados, domingos e dias feriados em Hongkong — \$ 20.00  
(Nas outras viagens há uma redução de 50 por cento)  
**Escritório e venda de bilhetes:**  
Rêz-do-chão GRANDE HOTEL «KUOC CHAI» — Telefone 2742  
**Caís de embarque:**  
PONTE NOVA DO PORTO EXTERIOR — Telefone 3474





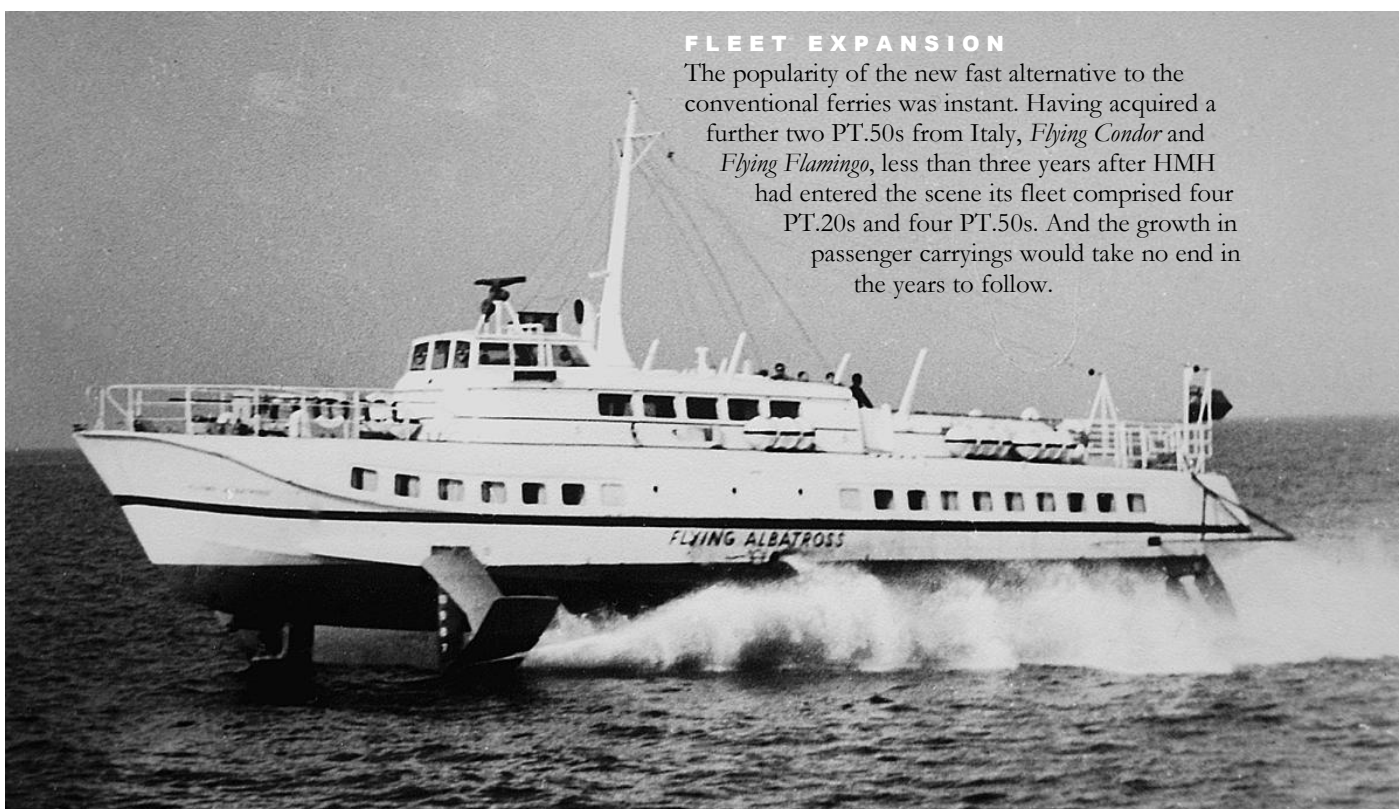
**Above :** Flying Swift was the third PT.20 delivered to HMH, in 1964. Note the covered up windows forward in the passenger saloon (also on Flying Kingfisher on page 4)  
/ RODRIQUEZ CANTIERE NAVALE photo

**Below :** The first PT.50 for HMH, Flying Albatross , was likewise delivered by Rodriquez in 1964  
/ HONGKONG MACAO HYDROFOIL photo

To meet with the requirements of the authorities, a crew of five was needed on the PT.20 and seven on the PT.50. In addition one or two cabin attendants would serve passengers refreshments. The rather dense seating on both types – 68 and 125, respectively – reflects the nature of the traffic, which was mainly short-stay visitors and, with time, to some extent commuters with no bulky luggage why the space normally needed for this could be eliminated.

#### FLEET EXPANSION

The popularity of the new fast alternative to the conventional ferries was instant. Having acquired a further two PT.50s from Italy, *Flying Condor* and *Flying Flamingo*, less than three years after HMH had entered the scene its fleet comprised four PT.20s and four PT.50s. And the growth in passenger carryings would take no end in the years to follow.







During 1969–71 traffic grew by 25–30% a year (both operators), with HMH's market share being well over fifty percent.

To keep abreast with, and preferably being ahead of, this promising outlook, between 1971 and 1974 the company took delivery of as many as five more hydrofoils. This time they were of the new RHS 140 series, a successor to the Supramar PT.50 developed by Rodriquez. Only the second of the type built (the first had been ordered by a Guernsey operator), *Flying Dragon* arrived in Hong Kong in 1971. Two were delivered the following year, *Flying Egret* and *Flying Sandpiper*, and one each in 1973 and 1974; *Flying Goldfinch* and *Flying Ibis*.

By the time the latter entered service, Rodriquez, or Navaltécnica as the shipyard was then known, had expanded its hydrofoil range with the RHS 160, which, in principle, was an enlarged RHS 140, seating up to 160 passengers. An order for two RHS 160s was placed, but HMH later decided against introducing yet a different design and the contract



**Above :** As many as five RHS 140s entered service with HMH between 1971 and 1974. First to appear was *Flying Dragon*  
/ KASPER PETERSEN photo

was allowed to lapse as the shipyard had other customers wanting immediate delivery. Another reason for the cancellation may very well have been the drop in carryings around this time due to the economic recession.

Also in 1974 the third of the PT.20s to enter service with the company, *Flying Swift*, was withdrawn and subsequently scrapped.

Having been laid up for some time, in 1977 the remaining three PT.20s were sold in Brazil where they entered service with Aerobarcos do Brasil Transtur between Rio de Janeiro and Niterói as *Flecha de Icarai*, *Flecha de Ipanema* and *Flecha de Ribeira*.

**Right :** Flying Flamingo  
on builder's trials off  
Messina in 1967.  
The last PT.50 for HMH,  
it featured an extended  
superstructure  
foreshadowing the styling  
of the RHS 140  
/ RODRIQUEZ  
CANTIERE NAVALE  
photo



That same year, in March, *Flying Albatross* collided with a conventional ferry in Hong Kong, fortunately with no serious personal injury or major material damage.

The outcome of another incident five years later was less fortunate. In July 1982 the PT.50 *Flying Flamingo* travelling from Hong Kong to Macau and RHS 140 *Flying Goldfinch* going the other way collided at speed off Lantau Island, killing two and injuring 84 people, some of them seriously. Both hydrofoils suffered considerable damage. The PT.50 sustained a large gash in the hull, resulting in the stern sinking, and the RHS 140 was seriously damaged at the bow. The fifteen year old *Flying Flamingo* was written off, whereas the RHS 140 was repaired and re-entered service as *Flying Swift*, thus taking on the name of the scrapped PT.20.

### CATAMARANS & CHINA

Having backed out of the RHS 160 order, it would be eight years from the last RHS 140 was delivered until a new fast ferry entered service with HMH. This time it was not a hydrofoil but a catamaran.

Not one but four were ordered from Marinteknik Verkstads in Sweden. Developed by the Swedish shipyard and initially designated Jetcat JC-F1 and later JC 3000, this was a single-deck, 30m catamaran featuring detachable and interchangeable symmetrical hulls. As the name suggests, the design was propelled by waterjets rather than conventional propulsion. A significant advantage, HMH felt, considering the limited draught in places, the increasing problem with floating debris and to some extent the trouble with cavitation damage to the stainless steel aluminium bronze propellers on the hydrofoils. The JC 3000 was the first waterjet propelled fast ferry in Hong Kong waters.

*Continued on page 10*

Flying Skimmer alongside at the Macau terminal in the early 1970s  
/ HONGKONG MACAO HYDROFOIL photo







**Above :** Although completed the same year, in 1972, the second and third RHS 140 for HMH were not fully identical, as is evidenced by these photos. *Flying Egret* is seen here against the characteristic backdrop of Hong Kong island in 1983  
/ JOHN LAW photo

# RHS 140

**Below :** The other 1972-built RHS 140 *Flying Sandpiper* in full flight in fairly calm conditions in the Pearl River





**Below :** Same but different. Having been damaged in a collision in 1982, *Flying Goldfinch* was repaired and reentered service as *Flying Swift*. It is seen here approaching the Hong Kong terminal in March 1986 / GEORGE SCHNEIDER photo

**Bottom :** The vessel originally entered service as *Flying Goldfinch* on the Hong Kong–Macau route in 1973 / KEN HALL photo





**Right :** Marinteknik Jetcat  
 JC 3000 Janus Jet on builder's  
 trials in Sweden in 1982  
 / MARINTEKNIK VERKSTADS  
 photo

**Below :** The second JC 3000,  
 Hercules Jet, entered service in  
 June 1982 and is seen here racing  
 past the photographer in  
 March 1987  
 / GEORGE SCHNEIDER photo



The first unit, *Apollo Jet*, arrived in Hong Kong in December 1981. It was joined by *Hercules Jet* and *Janus Jet* in June and November 1982, and *Triton Jet* in June 1983. All were fitted out with dense seating for 215 passengers, 90 more than on the PT.50s and RHS 140s. And it was needed. Traffic continued to grow as did competition from other operators and vessels, mainly FEH's 260-seat Jetfoils. On the downside was the cruising speed of 30 knots, which was about four knots below that of the hydrofoils. Also, some problem with pitching in head seas was experienced, resulting in an uncomfortable ride to some passengers.

Around this time the People's Republic of China began to open up for tourism and visits which in

October 1982 resulted in a new service being introduced between Kowloon and Juizhou, just north of Macau. Having formed a wholly owned subsidiary, Hongkong China Hydrofoil Company, *Hercules Jet* was allocated to the new 37 nautical mile route.

After a somewhat slow start, traffic picked up and a second catamaran was later transferred to the route.

By the mid-1980s, an increased preference by operators for the catamaran over the hydrofoil was evident everywhere, perhaps with the exception of in Italy and the USSR. HMM was no exception and the company's close association with Marinteknik further indicated that no more hydrofoils were likely to be ordered. This proved to be true, although no new craft would enter service until 1989.





Visible fore and aft in this view of Apollo Jet is the unique feature on the JC 3000 design of detachable and interchangeable hulls  
/ MARINTEKNIK VERKSTADS photo



Another factor was the increasing demand for more capacity, not just in general but also on the individual crossing, and the only hydrofoil design in production at the time offering 250+ seats was the Rodriguez RHS 200, of which two had been built.

Only three years after having entered service with HMM, in September 1986 JC 3000 *Triton Jet* was sold to Zhao Gang Navigation Company in the PRC and renamed *Duan Zhou Hu* was put into service between Zhaoqing and Hong Kong.

Responding to a falling market share, in 1988 HMM embarked upon an extensive fleet renewal programme by ordering three Marinteknik 41 CPV catamarans, the

first of which entered service in early 1989. Also built in Sweden and carrying the name of the town in which the Marinteknik Verkstads yard was located, *Öregrund*, this too was a waterjet powered, single deck design, however, with a length overall of 41m. What was also not the same was the considerably higher service speed of 38 knots, allowing for a 60-minute crossing to be timetabled. Contrary to earlier, spacious seating for 306 passengers had been specified.

Two more 41 CPVs, *Camões* and *Estrela do Mar*, followed in July and August, not from the Swedish yard, though, but built by FBM Marinteknik Shipbuilders in Singapore.

The first 41 CPV was built in Sweden by Marinteknik Verkstads and is seen here on a demonstration run in the Stockholm archipelago in November 1988  
/ TIM TIMOLEON photo





**Above + Below :** Two of the four 41m catamarans delivered to HMH in 1991, Santa Cruz and Magellan / MARINTEKNIK SHIPBUILDERS photo, both

Also that same year, in December, *Apollo Jet* was involved in a fatal accident, resulting in the loss of four lives and seriously injuring seven people.

The vessel was on a positioning trip from the Kowloon terminal to its overnight mooring with seven crew but no passengers on board when at high speed it passed through a typhoon shelter in Kowloon, collided with two vessels and ran aground by mounting a seawall. Considering its speed, *Apollo Jet* sustained relatively minor hull damage and while it may not have reentered service with HMH it remained on the operator's fleet roster. A four week investigation into the incident was carried out by a Marine Court in Hong Kong.

A further four identical 41 CPVs were delivered from the Singapore yard during 1991; *Lusitano*, *Vasco da Gama*, *Santa Cruz* and *Magellan*. With all seven 41m catamarans in place, each seating 306, which was more than twice the capacity of the hydrofoils, it was no longer necessary to add extra services on the Hong Kong–Macau route during peak periods. Operating hours continued to be from 0730 to 1800 or 1700, with half-hourly departures from each end during most of the day. Unlike the other operators, HMH still decided against introducing night services.

The remaining three JC 3000s were laid up in early 1993. One of them was sold in Malaysia to Kuala Perlis–Langkawi Ferry Service and renamed *Mustika Ekspres*. The other two reappeared with Gold Coast Express, a new operator entering the scene following the handover of Hong Kong to the PRC in 1997, as *Gold Coast Express 1* and *Gold Coast Express 2*.

#### THE END OF AN ERA

Having completed the replacement programme, the hydrofoil era at HMH was definitely over.

Two of the PT.50s, *Flying Albatross* and *Flying Condor* were scrapped and the other, *Flying Skimmer*, was sold in the PRC to Onway Success. This company, later known as Nan Sha Ferry Service, also acquired at least three of the five RHS.140s; *Flying Dragon*, *Flying Egret* and *Flying Sandpiper*. It appears that only two of these were refurbished and re-entered service as *Nansha No. 3* and *Nansha No. 5* on a 46 nautical mile route between Nan Sha and Hong Kong in 1992–93. They seem to have been operated for only a couple of years, being superseded, once again, by new catamarans introduced by the company from 1993.





In early October 1994 the Hongkong Macao Hydrofoil Company was acquired by CTS-Parkview Holdings. Formed the previous year, this company was operating a fleet of six catamarans on routes from Hong Kong to Shenzhen airport and Macau, with another five vessels on order.

The 41 CPVs did not remain in Hong Kong waters for very long after this, however. In 1995 a joint venture was agreed by CTS-Parkview and Aboitiz Shipping in the Philippines and Universal Aboitiz was formed. The first of the seven former HMH catamarans, renamed *SuperCat 1*, entered service in the Philippines between Batangas and Calapan in March 1995, followed by two more, *SuperCat 2* and *SuperCat 3*, that same year. The remaining four 41 CPVs were transferred from Hong Kong to the Philippines during 1996 and renamed *SuperCat 5*, *SuperCat 7*, *SuperCat 8* and *SuperCat 9*.

All have since been sold off. *SuperCat 1* was acquired by Emeraude Lines in France in 1999 and later sold in Tahiti and finally scrapped early last year. *SuperCat 2* went to a Korean operator, *SuperCat 3*, *SuperCat 5*, *SuperCat 7* and *SuperCat 8* entered service with Jadrolinija in Croatia between 2001 and 2005 and *SuperCat 9* was sold to another Croatian operator.

Having introduced as many as thirteen hydrofoils over a ten year period from 1964 to 1974 and eleven catamarans between 1981 and 1991, a pioneer in Hong Kong waters was gone at age 30. **cff**



**Above :** The original 41 CPV Öregrund at Macau in 1992, sporting the new HMH livery. Four years later all seven 41 CPVs had left Hong Kong waters / FRANK FÖRST photo

**Right :** HMH ticket issued in 1981.

It is interesting to note that the illustration shows an RHS 160 hydrofoil. An order for two was indeed placed with Rodriguez and one of the vessels was even named Flying Phoenix before HMH decided to back out of the contract, following which the two craft went elsewhere





# THE SOULFUL DAYS OF

# HK

***Being one of the busiest waters  
and largest cities in the world,  
there is something very soothing  
about this capture of PT.50  
Flying Albatross alongside at  
Hong Kong in 1983***

/ JOHN LAW photo





# THE SOULFUL DAYS OF HK

CFF55 APRIL 2016 15



Another atmospheric view of days gone by in the congested waters of Hong Kong.

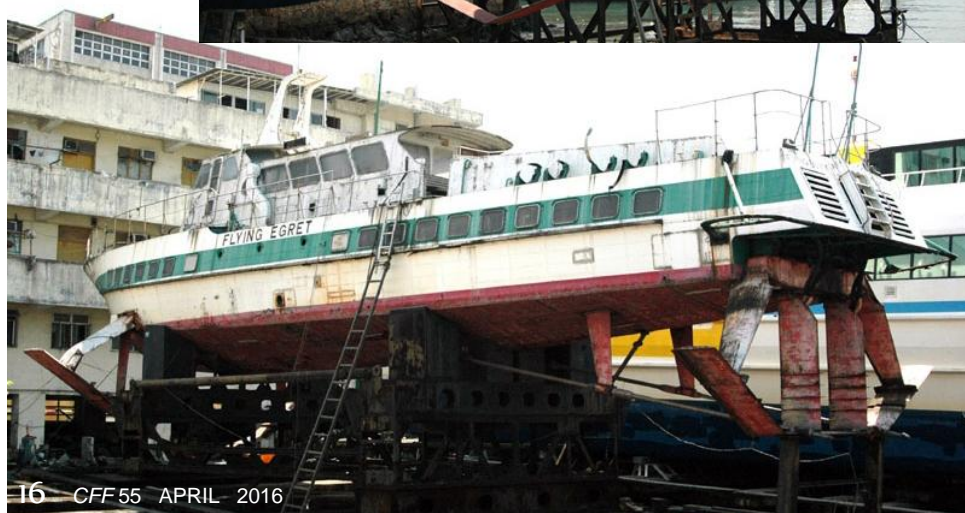
The scale and design of things were so much more pleasant to the eye when this lovely shot of RHS 140

*Flying Iris* was taken in 1987

/ GEORGE SCHNEIDER photo



Following the withdrawal of its hydrofoils, HMM sold some of them to a PRC operator. Two which did not get a new lease in life were PT.50 *Flying Skimmer* and RHS 140 *Flying Egret*, which were left to slowly deteriorate on dry land. Also read on page 12



# ***THE ONE.***