

# Pride of the Tyne and Shieldsman

The two vessels currently in service between North and South Shields Ferry Landings are the Pride of the Tyne and the Shieldsman. The vessels are of broadly similar design and dimensions although Pride of the Tyne is slightly larger and is designed to be more suitable for private hires and river cruises. Both ends of the hull are identical, i.e. neither have a conventional "bow" and "stern", to make the best use of deck space for carrying passengers. The relatively large water plane created by the double-ended arrangement gives increased stability to the vessels. A Voith Schneider propeller unit is sited at both ends of each ferry. The unit which both propels and steers the vessel is driven by its own engine and gearbox. Each boat also has twin diesel generators to supply electrical power. The double-ended ferry operates diagonally across the river without the need for turning. This saves time, so the speed of the ferry can be reduced, saving wear and tear on the machinery and fuel without reducing frequency of the service.

The Shieldsman was designed by Sir Bruce White, Wolfe, Barry and Partners, Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive and the ship builders Hancock of Pembroke, South Wales. Pride of the Tyne was designed by Wilson, Ross MacDougal, Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive and the builders Swan Hunter of Wallsend. The design was adapted from that of the Shieldsman. The basic configuration was retained while the standard of passenger accommodation was improved. Pride of the Tyne was also the first river ferry to incorporate, from new, all of the new safety features introduced in the wake of the Marchioness disaster on the Thames in 1989.

To ensure passenger safety the hulls of both the Shieldsman and Pride of the Tyne are divided into 5 watertight compartments. Both boats incorporate buoyant apparatus in the upper deck seating and Pride of the Tyne has self inflating life rafts mounted at each end of the main deck.

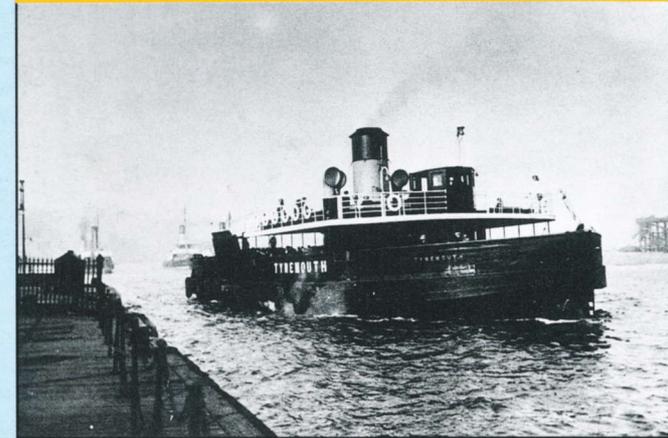
Additionally 353 lifejackets are carried on board, sufficient for a full complement of passengers and crew.

Both vessels have 2m wide boarding ramps allowing easy embarkation for all passengers including those with prams, wheelchairs and bicycles.

The main deck of the Shieldsman can accommodate 64 seated passengers, with another 56 on the upper deck. With standing passengers total capacity is 350 for ferry crossings or 212 for river trips.

Pride of the Tyne can accommodate 60 seated passengers on its main deck, 112 on its upper or promenade deck and, during river cruises, there is a below decks bar with approximately 50 additional seats. In addition to the toilet facilities which both vessels have for use on river trips and private hires, Pride of the Tyne has a wheelchair accessible toilet. On normal ferry crossings, with standing passengers, total capacity is 350 while 250 are allowed on board during river trips or private hires.

## THE SHIELDS FERRIES



## • PAST & PRESENT •



TYNE AND WEAR PASSENGER TRANSPORT EXECUTIVE

# Ferry Operations

There are currently two boats available for service between North and South Shields, the *Pride of the Tyne* which began working in 1993 and the *Shieldsman* which has been in service since 1976. A half hourly service is maintained from each quay daily with a 20 minute service at peak times. The average crossing time is 7 minutes.

The day to day operations are controlled and supervised by the Ferry Manager at South Shields ferry landing, where the offices and workshops are based.

The vessels are in radio contact with other Tyne shipping, the Port of Tyne harbour master and the Metro Control Centre at South Gosforth.

The ferry crew are all fully trained and qualified 'masters' and their composite duties include all aspects of the ferry's operation. There are three 'ferry operators' on board for each sailing.

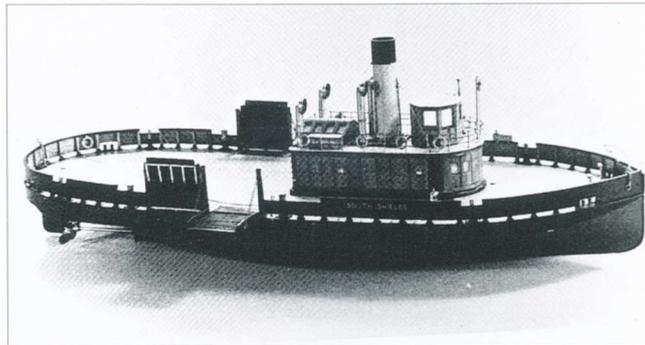
The ferry service forms part of the Tyne and Wear Metro operations and as such Network Traveltickets, Concessionary Travel Permits, Day Rover and Explorer tickets can be used on the ferry service. The river crossing is classed as a one zone fare and the adult single fare currently costs 45p. Tickets, including Transfare through tickets to Metro and bus at North Shields and Metro only at South Shields, can be purchased from the ferry operators on the ferry.

Besides operating the regular cross-river service the two ferries are also available for private hire and during the Summer season special evening sailings are arranged which include a disco, live music, bar and catering facilities. On Summer Sunday afternoons there are also cruises from North and South Shields to Newcastle and return. Full details regarding the hire of the ferries and the special sailings can be obtained from the Ferry Manager by telephoning Tyneside 454 8183 or write to Ferry Manager, South Shields Ferry Landing, Ferry Street, off River Drive, South Shields, NE33 1JR.

# A Brief History of the Tyne Ferries

The area's rivers have an important role to play in the life of the community — and have had for a very long time. Historical documents indicate that as far back as 1377 there was a ferry service operating between North and South Shields. As long ago as 1816, a steam packet was operating between Newcastle and South Shields, and from 1862 until 1908 the paddle steamers of the Tyne General Ferry Company provided a passenger service between Elswick and South Shields. This service stopped no fewer than twenty-one times in as many miles. River steamers could not compete with the faster electric trams and the company went into liquidation.

But it was not until 1828 when the North Shields Ferry Co. obtained a charter to operate a ferry service across the Tyne that there was a service as we now know it. To begin with there were three ferry boats: *Baron Newcastle*, *Durham*, *Northumberland*; eventually the *Baron Newcastle* was replaced by *Tyne*. The North Shields Ferry Co. was not the only ferry company to operate a service: The Tyne Direct Ferry Co. began a ferry service in 1847 with a ferry called *Percy*; the Whitehill Point Ferry followed in 1856 with a ferry called *Favourite*.



1911 South Shields

In 1863 the Tyne Improvement Commission purchased the three ferry companies mentioned above and took over the ferry boats. In all the Tyne Improvement Commission had thirteen ferries built to its specification: *Shields* (1868), *Tyne* (1869), *Tynemouth* (1883), *J B Proctor* (1890), *Northumberland* and *Collingwood* (both 1896), *George Armstrong* (1904), *Thomas Richardson* (1906), *U A Ritson* (1906), *South Shields* (1911), *Durham* and *Tynemouth* (both 1925), *Northumbrian* (1929). With no bridge downstream of Newcastle this ferry service was very busy.

Before the Tyne Tunnel was opened, the three ferry boats then in operation — *South Shields*, *Tynemouth* and *Northumbrian* — carried about 400,000 cars each year as well as countless pedestrians.



1929 Northumbrian

The opening of the Tyne Tunnel in 1967 brought about a tremendous drop in ferry traffic — after all, the tunnel can carry far more traffic than a ferry can. The opening of the tunnel also caused the ferry between Jarrow and Howdon to be discontinued.

In 1929 there were eleven ferry routes across the Tyne between Newburn and the mouth of the river, now only what was known as the Market Place Ferry survives as today's Shields Ferry. This ferry boat service was taken over by Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive on May 1, 1972. The ferry boats built to their order were: *Freda Cunningham* (1972), *Shieldsman* (1976) and *Pride of the Tyne* (1993) which are passenger only diesel ferries. The *Freda Cunningham* was taken out of service in 1993 and sold.



1972 Freda Cunningham