

DART 8

IMO No: 7822201 RORO-CARGO 1980 / 22748 GT

COMPANY:

Ropner Ship Management Ltd.,
U.K.

YARD INFORMATION:

Kawasaki Heavy Industries Ltd.
Sakaide (Japan) 1319

DEMOLITION:

Alang 28/5/2010



Tilbury 21/3/2004 © S. Wiedner

BASIC DATA:

GT: 22748
DWT: 14019
TEU: 729
Reefer: 40
Trailers: 213
Lanes-length: 2723
LOA: 176.98
Bmd: 26.50
Draft: 8.52
Engine: 2 x oil MAN
Power: 11630 kW
Speed: 18.0 kn
Decks: 3
1 x stern door/ramp (centre)

OWNER & FLAG HISTORY:

WINNER XI since 01/04/2010
SERPENTINE 2006-11-20 LRF
DART 8 12-05-2000 LRF
Flag Date of record Source
St.Kitts and Nevis since 01/04/2010
Bermuda 18-04-2001 LRF
Bahamas 12-05-2000 LRF
Registered owner Date of record Source
MERRION NAVIGATION SA since 29/04/2010
JACOBS VII 2006-05-30 LRF
BRITISH LINEN SHIPPING 01-01-1999 LRF
Ship manager Date of record Source
ARGO SYSTEMS FZE since 29/04/2010
COBELFRET FERRIES NV since 22/11/2007
EUROSHIP SERVICES LTD since 01/06/2007
BRITISH LINEN SHIPPING LTD since 01/11/2006
DART LINE 2006-05-30 LRF
ROPNER SHIP MANAGEMENT 01-01-1999 LRF

EX-NAMES:

XI FENG KOU	1980-99	Coscon, China
DART 8	1999-06	British Linen Shipping Ltd., Bahamas
SERPENTINE	2006-10	Jacobs VII Ltd., Bermuda
WINNER XI	2010-10	Merrion Navigation S.A., St.Kitts & Nevis (Argo Systems FZE)

GENERAL VESSEL INFORMATION:**FROM DELTA TO DART**

Brent Hanson

Ever so slightly reversing the flow of discarded tonnage from west to east is the recent sale of three large Chinese roll-on/roll-off (ro/ro) vessels to a British ferry operator. The Dart Line has acquired the three Xi Feng Kou class vessels for its English Channel service between Dartford and Zeebrugge, from the Shanghai container liner division of Beijing based China Ocean Shipping (Group) Company (COSCO).

The three vessels were all delivered in 1980 and whilst registered at Shanghai, were placed under the temporary ownership of a Hong Kong based COSCO subsidiary, the China Merchants' Steam Navigation Company. They were the larger of several classes of ro/ro vessels that COSCO had on order in Japan at the time to replace conventional services operating from China to Japan, the U.S.A. and Australia. The first of the vessels delivered from the Sakaide shipbuilding complex of Japan's Kawasaki Heavy Industries was the GU BEI KOU, delivered in August 1980. She was followed into service by the XI FENG KOU in October and finally the ZHANG JIA KOU in December. The word Kou translates to mean river mouth or delta, while the first part of their names are Chinese rivers. Each of the vessels were of 23,000 gross tons, 14,000 deadweight tons, and had a heavyduty McGregor quarter folding ramp, feeding three decks with various wheeled, break-bulk or containerised cargoes. All decks were connected by rampways including the weather deck and the ships were also fitted to carry 753 TEU of general and refrigerated containers. There was a popular theory amongst the crews of the vessels that they were all built as tank carriers for the liberation of Taiwan, but fortunately, this theory has never been tested, although the political differences between China and Taiwan have meant that they, along with all Chinese flag vessels, have never called at the island nation.

Their delivery coincided with the early stages of COSCO's shift into the unitisation and containerisation of their services, so it was not unexpected that they were placed into the high volume express route between the Far East and North America. Their stint on this service was brief, as within a few years, they were replaced by container vessels and transferred to the Far East to Australia service. They spent most of their lives on this route, along with the five smaller Tai Ping Kou class vessels built at the same time. In 1988, the service was extended to New Zealand to lift much of the vast wool cargoes regularly shipped to China. In

1990, the New Zealand service was split off and the three Gu Bei Kou vessels operated the service for a short period, before transferring back to the Australia service in June and being replaced by the smaller ro/ro vessels. Through most of the nineties the eight ro/ro vessels carried containers and ro/ro cargoes south to Australia and New Zealand, and northbound loaded containers of wool, cotton, timber, meat and vegetables and both frozen and chilled fruit. In 1988 COSCO fully containerised the Australian service, which saw the smaller vessels withdrawn and the GU BEI KOU and her sisters taking over the New Zealand service. This change was shortlived, as early in 1999 COSCO decided to revert back ten years to a combined Australia and New Zealand service, introducing modern, fully containerised vessels and offering the ro/ro's for sale. During March and April a British company inspected the vessels which were scheduled to be withdrawn in April and May after completing their voyages from New Zealand to Yokohama and then laying up in Hong Kong. It was rumoured the vessels would be given "Dart" names, and their sale was confirmed in May, when it was announced that Jacobs Holdings of the United Kingdom, owners of the Dart Line ferry service, had purchased all three vessels for US\$7 million each. The price included an extensive refit, featuring an increase in lower deck heights to accommodate freight vehicles and double stack trailers, replacement of the quarter ramp by a conventional stern ramp, accommodation for lorry drivers and improved manoeuvring capabilities. The ships spent 42 days undergoing modification at the Nantong shipyard, where the original vessel builder Kawasaki has a considerable interest.

On completion, the vessels re-entered service under new names, the XI FENG KOU, becoming the DART 8 and entering service in mid August and the GU BEI KOU the DART 9 and joining her sister in mid September. The third vessel, the ZHANG JIA KOU, briefly became the DART 10, before being renamed MONTVENTOUX in September, having been chartered out for 12 months. The first to re-enter service was the DART 9, introduced to the Zeebrugge route followed by the DART 8. The third ship in the trio, the DART 10, has been renamed MONTVENTOUX, and chartered to Sudcargos, a joint venture between SCNM and Delmar, operating a daily freight service between Marseilles and Tunisia. The ship has been chartered for an initial year plus three further six month options. With the arrival of the new ships, Dart Line has transferred the DART 2 and DART 4 to the Flushing service to replace chartered vessels.

(Report @ Marine News)

1999: **Jacobs Holding had** plans for four new-buildings with a capacity of 2500 lane meters, but in spring 1999 they **bought from China Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO) three ro/ro's**. The ships, "**XI FENG KOU**", "GU BEI KOU" and "ZHANG JIA KOU" were build in 1980 on the yard of Kawaskai Heavy Industries in Japan, and were used for the transport between China, Australia, New

Zealand and the USA. The ships were converted in China on the Natong shipyard, the special hook stern-ramp was changed by a normal stern-ramp. The first ship - the **"DART 8" - came into service on the Zeebrugge-Dartford route on 11 August 1999** and would be followed by the "DART 9" in September. (<http://hansenmonika.tripod.com>)

2006: **Dart Line has been sold** by Bidvest-Group to Cobelfret N.V., Belgium for US\$ 11 mio **including the fleet of 4 RoRo-vessels** & terminal facilities at Dartford. (AK Jan/Feb 2006)

Last update: 8/8/2014