

Captain Morgan Exhibition Launch, 16 May 2023

Title of paper:

Ocean Shipping before the Age of Flight: The Case of Elder Dempster's *Mv Aureol*

Ocean shipping has served man since time immemorial. Yet, the timeline of events within the sector and transitions engendered by technology assume similar contemporaneity in terms of memorialization, requiring that historical artefact of major milestones be revisited timeously to keep the arts and sciences regularly updated. The *Mv Aureol* occupied a major milestone in the 122-year history of Elder Dempster's voyages to the "Coast", as West Africa was called after the source of the River Niger was affirmed and explorers and colonial-minded Europeans began to explore the African interior. She was the finest ship built by the carrier, launched in 1951 and fondly dubbed the "White Swan" relative to the "angular, purposeful and utilitarian" characteristics of her sister-ships on the Dakar-Luanda range. The study used primary and secondary sources and qualitative analytical methodology to attempt a postmortem of a highly significant vessel whose social and political roles in colonial West Africa almost equaled her trading objectives, with the finding that although sea trade eventually lost its passengers to the aeroplane, had carriers like Elder Dempster not existed, the imperial state and emerging African elites would have needed to create intercontinental platforms similar to the *Aureol*, and her luxury, to fill the unique roles she performed for state functions during Nigeria's Independence celebration, the official opening of the Queen Elizabeth II Quay at Freetown and the opening of Ghana's new harbour at Tema in 1962.