

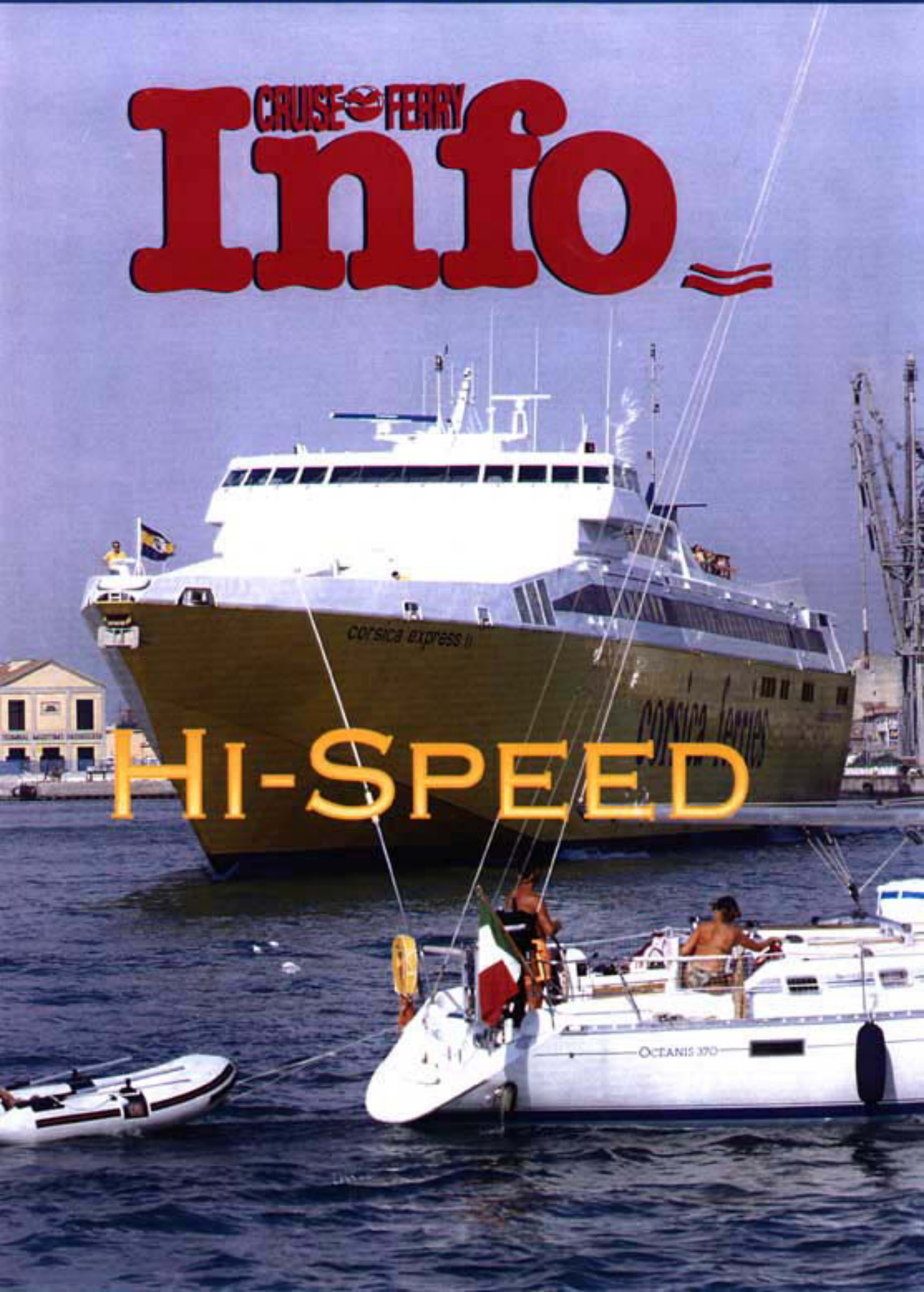


October 1997, No. 10

Design copying a no-no?  NORSE MERSEY  Hi-Speed on Order

CRUISE FERRY Info

HI-SPEED



THE MERSEY VIKING



The MERSEY VIKING is the first of two new Italian flag ro-ro vessels built at Visentini's shipyard on the Adriatic for their own subsidiary, Levantina Transport and longterm chartered to Norse Irish Ferries (NIF). Delivered in late July, the vessel together with her sistership, the LAGAN VIKING due in October, offer a new level of service for both passengers and freight on the Liverpool - Belfast service. She is by far the largest vessel serving Northern Ireland adding extra capacity to an already overcrowded market.

NORSE IRISH FERRIES, along with the other Irish Sea operators, have had a rough year with the introduction of new capacity by all the operators. Freight rates have fallen by 10% and NIF's volumes have fallen by 8% compared with the 88,000 units shipped in 1996 but the line is confident of attracting a growing volume of passenger/car traffic on the overnight services beyond the 32,000 passengers carried in 1996. While there are a plethora of shortsea links from Belfast to Stranraer by Stena's HSS and from Larne to Cairnryan with P&O, taking the relaxing overnight crossing with NIF is becoming more popular especially for drivers continuing to France and the rest of Europe. Consequently, NIF has put a lot of effort into the passenger facilities on board. Apart from the expected revenue emanating from the passenger facilities, the 22 knot service speed permits the vessels to make a daily roundtrip. Initially, NIF plans 3 day sailings during the week but this will be boosted to 6 when the much hoped for Mersey river berth finally come on stream in 1998 or 99.

IN HER RED livery, the MERSEY VIKING cuts a very striking pose complemented by a sharply raked forward accommodation and unusual funnel aft. With an overall length of 186.0m and 25.6m beam she is close to the maximum size able to be built by the productive Visentini yard or navigate down the River Po. In fact, the vessel's bow section had to be added after floating out. Designed by the Trieste based naval architects NAOS, the ro-pax combination is seen by many industry analysts as being the correct complement to the burgeoning number of fast ferries.



Up to 2300 lane metres of freight can be loaded on 3 decks. The 14.0m long by 16.0m wide Navallimpianti stern ramp gives direct access on the portside to the wide fixed ramp leading to the upperdeck. Its 9.2m width should permit two way traffic. At the widest point of the upperdeck 8 traffic lanes are available. A clear height of 4.8m is available under the accommodation. The maindeck has a clear height of 4.9m and is reached via the starboard side stern entrance. As on earlier Visentini vessels such as the DANA FUTURA, the engine casing does intrude into the cargo space but Visentini has chosen to locate the engine control room at maindeck level. 62 x 13.6m trailers can be loaded on the maindeck.

AN END-HINGED WATERTIGHT cover supplied by Navalimpianti, located on the starboard side, can be opened to reveal the fixed ramp leading down to the cardeck and tanktop. Up to 100 cars can be parked on the 1.8m high deck and 19 x 13.6m trailers on the 4.5m high tanktop. The side hinged watertight doors at the forward end of the deck add only 2 trailers to the capacity but, when open, they improve vehicle turning areas which would otherwise be very constricted. The 3 level accommodation block is located forward and can accommodate a maximum of 330 passengers. On the restaurant deck,



the aft entrance hallway leads to the office/information desk, a small room with slot machines and a conference lounge for up to 36 persons. A small shop is located adjacent to the ship's office as well as an area equipped with reclining pullman style seats for 36 persons. The forward area of the deck incorporates a "free-flow" restaurant - all meals being included in the ticket price. A separate bar/lounge, family room and drivers lounge complete the public facilities.

On the passenger deck above, 72 2/4 berth cabins have been installed, all with private facilities. On the bridge deck, 22 single cabins and 14 double cabins will be mainly occupied by the officers and crew. The complete accommodation area as well as the cabins have been outfitted by GS Allestitenti of Ancona. Lifesaving equipment comprises four Harding 62 person lifeboats complemented by a number of davit launched liferafts.

WITH THE PASSENGER cardeck located beneath the maindeck, internal passenger access has to be specially considered. Having no centre casing, a lift is located on both port and starboard sides of the vessel. The portside lift and stair casing begins at the cardeck while the starboard lift and stair casing connects the upper vehicle deck with the accommodation. These casings intrude into the parking areas but there are few other practical solutions for a vessel with forward accommodation.

THE HULLFORM OF THE MERSEY VIKING is understood to be of a completely new type. It is a combination of twin skeg and free-flow form with short exposed shafts and streamlined brackets. Having a comparatively low block coefficient, a trial speed of 24 knots was achieved on an output of 2 x

7800 kW. The two Wärtsilä 8R46 main engines drive a pair of 4.8m diameter Wärtsilä-Wichmann propellers via single input / single output vertically offset gearboxes. Each gearbox is fitted with a 1000 kW shaft generator complementing the pair of Caterpillar 3512 1070 kW gensets. A pair of Bot rudders are fitted with Frydenbo steering gear as well as a pair of 680 kW Berg bow thrusters. For the first time, Visentini has fitted a pair of Fincantieri fin stabilisers and reports excellent results in service.

THE DAMAGE STABILITY fully complies with all the latest requirements beyond Stab 90. In all damage cases, the freeboard is greater than 2m so no extra fixed or folding bulkheads are required on the maindeck. A lower hold has been incorporated between the B/5 longitudinal bulkheads but the vessel is not designed according to the alternative A.265 rules. However, the MSA has insisted that the flooded lower hold be included in the damage calculations requiring a folding bulkhead to be fitted at the forward end of the lower hold.

THE LIVERPOOL - BELFAST passenger connection has a long history and with NIF's attractive new vessels passenger/car traffic will be significantly boosted. It is interesting that Merchant Ferries new vessels are rather similar to the MERSEY VIKING and will operate on the similar distance Liverpool - Dublin route. However, on the freight side, both routes are subject to intense competition from shorter routes which can offer better vessel utilisation. With such a massive investment it is nothing short of scandalous that MDCH (the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company) has not completed the river ro-ro berths already. The project has been mooted for years but still nothing has happened. At the present level of activity there is room for both the Liverpool and Birkenhead facilities to proceed. ■



FACTS MERSEY VIKING

Length o/a	188.00 m
Beam	25.60 m
Depth main deck	9.15 m
GT	21,500
NT	6,500
tDW	8,000
Single crew cabins	22
Passengers	330
Cars	100
Trailers	164
Speed	24.0 knots
Engines	2 Wärtsilä BR46
Fuel consumption	22.0 l/24h

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