On 26th October 1914 the Queen saved around 2,200 Belgium refugees.

The town of Folkestone witnessed unbelievable scenes of Belgium refugees arriving at the harbour fleeing the German army as they arrived principally by boats from Ostend. As the weeks went by, the numbers increased until Ostend was captured by the German forces, and all kinds of vessels were utilised including small fishing boats to mud barges crossed the channel, full of people seeking refuge from the invaders. Close upon a quarter of a million refugees had to be dealt with at the harbour, also in the town itself, heartrending scenes were witnessed. In the third week in that memorable August there arrived a big rush of refugees from Belgium, principally by boats from Ostend. The numbers increased as the weeks went by, and just before Ostend was captured by the German forces, the influx was particularly great and all kinds of vessels, from small fishing boats to mud barges, were utilised to bring people of stations of life seeking a refuge from the invaders of their native country.

Close upon a quarter of a million refugees had to be dealt with at the harbour. Soldiers of the Belgian Army, who had been engaged against the enemy and had cut off from the main body, arrived in the third week in August, and the first batch of British wounded from the Front crosses from France to Folkestone, and were followed by other British soldiers, who had need in action at Mons, and had become
detached from their units. One of the saddest sights was afforded on October 13th in 1914, when 2,000 Belgian wounded arrived from Ostend; a number having come straight from the fighting line, and their wounds were but roughly dressed. Hotels were commandeered; the visitors in them being given notice to leave immediately and these buildings were converted into hospitals, while every motor-car seen in the streets was ordered to assist in the transport of the injured soldiers, some of whom were terribly wounded. Folkestone therefore opened the way for the whole of Great Britain to show their thought and care for the people and wounded heroes of a nation driven from their native land. [1]

Boatloads of Belgian Refugees, exhausted, destitute and hungry, came into the harbour. Day after day, week after week they came in fishing boats and colliers, and meals, clothes and beds had to be found at short notice. In the first months of the war 64,500 refugees came to the town for succour, and it is to the credit of the town folk and the Belgian Committee for Refugees that so much was done at short notice.

One of the ships that brought the refugees across the Channel was the SS Amiral Ganteaume. Built in 1902 by Napier & Miller Limited, of Glasgow, and operated by
Chargeurs Réunis, of Havre before being requisitioned in La Havre on 1st September 1914. She was originally named Orient Point operated by Norfolk & North American SS Co, this 4,590 ton cargo steamer was sold in 1904 to the Montreal Ocean Steamship Company, Allan Line which renamed her Hibernian, and in 1913 she was purchased by 'Chargers', and sailed under the name of Amiral Ganteaume. In October 1914 she departed Ostend for Havre with around 2,000 Belgian refugees, and stopped in Calais on 26th October after which she continued on her voyage to Havre.

Off the French coast was U-24 a German submarine on patrol, and looking out for ships to sink, when the Amiral Ganteaume was sighted off Cap Gris-Nez, near Boulogne.

The U-24, was ordered on 18th March 1911, her keel was laid down on 5th February 1912 in the Germaniawrft, Kiel, (Werk 178) shipyard. Launched on 24th May 1913, and commissioned on 6th December 1913. Her commanders where from 6th December 1913 - 3rd June 1916, Rudolf Schneider, 4th June 1916 - 10 July 1917 Walter Remy, 11th July 1917 – 1 August 1917 Otto von Schubert. "U-24" went out on 7 patrols during 1st August 1914 – 11th August 1917 III Flotilla, 24th August 1917– 11 November 1918 training Flotilla. During her patrol she sunk 34 ships with a total of 106,122 tons. 3 ships
damaged with a total of 14,318 tons. U-24 surrendered at the end of WWI. One ship taken as prize with a total of 1,925 tons. Also *HMS Formidable* sunk on 1st January 1915 a total of 15,000 tons.

![U-Boat](image)

**Rudolf Schneider, Kapitänleutnant (Crew 4/01)**

Born 13th February 1882.
Died 13th October 1917, North Sea.

**Rank:** 29th September 1904 Leutnant zur See:
6th April 1907 Oberleutnant zur See:
25th April 1912 Kapitänleutnant.

**U-Boat commands:** U-24 6th December 1913 to 3rd June 1916, and U-87 26th February 1917 to 13th October 1917+

**Successes:** 44 ships sunk with a total of 125,802 gross tonnage, 1 warship sunk with a total of 15,000 tons, 5 ships damaged with a total of 21,956 gross tonnage, and one ship of 1,925 gross tonnage taken as a prize.

**Decorations:** Lifesaving Medal, Military Merit Order (Bayern), Iron Cross 2nd Class. Iron Cross 1st Class, 19th November 1915 Hasorden von Hohenzollern mit Schwertern.

**Notes:** Most people knew him as Rudi. He entered the Kaiserliche Marine in 1901 as a Seekadett. In June 1914 he received the Rettungsmedaille as a Leutnant zur See and was promoted Kapitänleutnant. He became CO of *U24* and was responsible for the sinking of the British battleship *HMS Formidable* during the very first underwater attack at night on the 1st January 1915 off Portland Bill. On October 13 1917, during a very stormy weather, he was lost overboard from the conning tower of *U-87*. One of his shipmates managed to bring him back on board but it was too late. He was subsequently buried at sea between the Shetland Isles and Norway. His 1WO, KL Freiherr Rudolf von Speth-Schulzburg, took over the command of the boat. [2]

The French steamer *Amiral Ganteaume*, on 26th October 1914 with over 2,200 Belgian and French refugees on board, on its way from Calais to Havre suddenly exploded in the Channel. One of the crew of the steamer claimed that the ship's boiler had exploded.
According to the Times special correspondent in Folkestone: 'The French Steamer *Amiral Ganteaume* carrying about 2,500 French refugees from Calais to Havre, struck a floating mine about 12 miles off Cape Gris Nez.' [3]

On board the German submarine U-24, her commander Rudolf Schneider was near Boulogne harbour and saw the steamer underway off Cap Gris-Nez, he claimed that he had mistaken the steamer *Amiral Ganteaume* carrying Belgium refugees for a troop transport ship and torpedoed her. By his action U-24 became the first submarine to attack an unarmed merchant ship without warning.

One of the finest epics of the war stands to the credit of the captain and crew of the South Eastern Railway Company's Steamer "*The Queen*", and the Captain R.E. Carey and the men under him, on their crossing from Boulogne to Folkestone. The French steamer *Amiral Ganteaume*, with over 2,200 Belgian and French refugees on board, on its way from Calais to Havre was torpedoed in the Channel by a submarine. Captain Carey, despite the presence of the undersea craft when he saw what had occurred, dashed to the rescue of the sinking vessel, and although there was a rough sea, he manoeuvred his ship so as to bring it alongside the torpedoed steamer and kept both boats interlocked sufficiently long enough to enable practically all the passengers and some of the crew of the doomed ship to jump or be thrown abroad the *Queen*, passengers and crew of which caught children and adults as they were thrown or assisted from one vessel to the other. The *Queen*, after its great task accomplished in twenty minutes, made for Folkestone, its decks crowed with a complement of passengers double its ordinary capacity. [1]

The *Queen* was built in 1903 at the William Denny Brothers yard, Dunbarton. She went into service for the South Eastern & Chatham Railway Company, on the Folkestone to Calais route. She was the first steamer on the cross-channel run to be fitted with the new turbine engines. She was fast and comfortable, and could cross
the Channel in less than 1 hour and during WW1 was used to move troops from the UK to France.

Former cross-Channel ferries were deployed as troop carriers to the Continent and as passenger ships for the return journey. One such ship was The Queen a cross channel turbine steamer under the command of Captain Robert Carey. Robert Edward Carey, was born on 30 October 1864 at 2 Townwall Street, Dover, and went to sea with his father when he was 14. They mainly worked on colliers, brigs and schooners sailing out of Dover. In 1892, Robert joined South Eastern and Chatham Railway Company and had only been appointed the Master of the Queen six days before 26 October 1914.

The 'Doverhistorian' accounts of the events of 26th October 1914

The Queen was a steel triple screw turbine steamer, built by Denny's of Dumbarton for the Railway Company in 1903. Her tonnage was 1,676 gross, 345 net and she had 3 compound direct drive steam turbines, one of high pressure driving the central screw and two of low pressure, driving side screws. The Queen was put on the Dover / Calais route in June 1903 and quickly became a favourite both for speed and comfort. She was seen by the Company as one of the main reasons for the dramatic increase in passengers that and subsequent years.

Captain Carey had taken the Queen across the Channel to Boulogne and at 16.30hrs, off the Varne bank, he saw distress signals. According to the Times special correspondent in Folkestone: 'The French Steamer Amiral Ganteaume carrying about 2,500 French refugees from Calais to Havre, struck a floating mine about 12 miles off Cape Gris Nez.' The Amiral Ganteaume was 4,560 ton steamer that had been built by Napier and Miller Ltd, Glasgow, in 1902.

Donald Waylen, a Daily Mail reporter on board the Queen, wrote that screams could be heard. As they came closer, they could see that most of the 2500 passengers on the Amiral Ganteaume were tightly packed on the main deck with some climbing the mast. To his horror, passengers could be seen jumping or being pushed overboard. He continued by describing the sea, which was running high and with great skill, Captain Carey manoeuvred the Queen to the leeward side of the Amiral Ganteaume. According to another journalist on the Queen, Wentworth Huyshe, 'Before this seaman like manoeuvre was complete ... we saw that the whole mass of the refugees were frantic with terror, shouting crying, gesticulating frantically, waving caps and handkerchiefs. A long loud, wailing cry of terror and despair arose, but mingled with it, and soon, thank God, drowning it, the sound of cheering and clapping of hands and a joyous shout of 'Vive l'Angleterre!' Wentworth Huyshe went on to say that although rescue was at hand, some passengers jumped over the side and swam AWAY from the Queen!

Once alongside and gangway made, the passengers of the Amiral Ganteaume swarmed onboard the Queen, pushing others to the ground and trampling on them. About 15 passengers were pushed over board, between the two ships and were crushed to death or drowned. A number of the crew and passengers of the Queen, who were helping, were also knocked down in the rush. Nonetheless, as Donald Waylen, the Daily Mail reporter observed, 'The crew and passengers of the Queen
worked splendidly to rescue the refugees, and eventually their coolness had a pacifying effect, and something like order was restored.' Eventually, with 1,964 passengers on board the Queen sailed for Folkestone. The captain and crew of the Amiral Ganteaume, remained with the ship and as they parted the two captains saluted each other.

Arriving at Folkestone about 19.00hrs the injured – seventeen – were first taken to the Pavilion Hotel and then to Folkestone Hospital. The remainder were put on a train for London and on arrival, they were taken to Alexandra Palace. Of the injured one died, one lost a leg and two others had an arm amputated. Several children were badly scalded or burnt about the head.

The Amiral Ganteaume eventually made it to Boulogne, where her crew stated that she had not hit a mine but that the ship’s boiler had exploded. Most of the passengers who had been thrown into the sea were rescued by fishing boats out of Boulogne. With watertight bulkheads closed, the Amiral Ganteaume was towed to Bordeaux where she arrived on 27 October and was examined.

An official inquiry was held in Paris where the captain of the Amiral Ganteaume said that the ship was torpedoed on the starboard side between the engine and the stokehold. The helmsman had seen the periscope of a submarine. A formidable explosion had occurred raising a column of water about 50-yards high. The experts that examined the Amiral Ganteaume reported that portions of a torpedo had been found.

The conclusion was that the ship had been subject to a torpedo attack without military excuse. With the help of the Channel steamer Queen and the trawler Sagale nearly all the passengers were rescued. Four engine-room hands were killed by the explosion and 20 passengers, consisting of old men, women and children, died. Finally, the attack was the first recorded attempt made to sink a passenger vessel.

Following the heroic rescue, Captain Carey remained engaged in the transport of troops across the Channel. However, although his tactics, fine seamanship and courage in the rescue were recognised by all those who witnessed it, neither the British of French authorities showed any form of recognition.

Local and national newspapers took this up with positive results. The French awarded Captain Carey the Medaille de Sauvetage en Or (2iéme classe) and the Medaille d’Or Societe Centrale de Sauvetage de Nauprages. King Albert I of Belgium created him Chevalier de l’Ordre de Leopold. Sir Francis Dent, General Manager of the South Eastern and Chatham Railway Company, gave Captain Carey a gold watch and when George V was returning from Boulogne, on the hospital ship Anglia in November 1917, he personally expressed his appreciation.

On 4 June that year, King George, recognising a gap in the honours system and wishing to officially acknowledge the many thousands of people who had served in numerous non-combatant capacities during the war, introduced the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. Captain Carey was one of the first to be honoured with the MBE.
She was returning at night from Boulogne to Folkestone on 26 October 1916, on the
return journey after disembarking troops, with just mail on-board. When during a raid
in which German Destroyers attacked the Dover Patrol, resulting in the sinking of
the Destroyer HMS *Flirt* was sunk and seven drifters patrolling the Barrage. German
destroyers came across *The Queen*. Surrounded the ship, and the crew were
ordered to abandon ship. The German commander allowed the crew to take to their
boats and then blew the *Queen* up either torpedo or by placing charges in her.
According to the Admiralty report, she drifted for over three hours finally coming to rest on
the South Goodwins. The ship's crew were picked up with no loss of life and returned to
Dover, Lewis Dilnot (21), the ship's cook, later died from injuries sustained while
launching the vessel's lifeboat.

Following the war Captain Carey was appointed Master of the *Maid of Orleans*. Then
in 1925, Commander of Southern Railways newly launched *Isle of Thanet*. A post he
held until he retired in November 1929.

The *Queen*, the ship involved in the heroic rescue, was the first turbine steamer
commissioned by South Eastern & Chatham Railway and initially worked the Dover-
Calais run. In 1907, she was transferred to the Folkestone – Boulogne service. Commandeered in World War I as a troop carrier, in August 1916 she was involved in
another heroic rescue when she towed the packed but disabled troop transport
*Queen Empress* to safety. [4]

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launching the vessel's lifeboat.
The wreck of the “The Queen” lays upright on the seabed and is quite intact in a max depth of 30m. She is quite settled into the seabed with a row of empty portholes above this. The cabins on her deck are still intact and can be looked into. There is a large bank of sand off to the north of her but the south side is very clear. There is a lot of damage and a large hole at the stern end and you can penetrate into the engine room area around here.* [5]

A hundred years after 26th October 1914, when Captain Carey and the crew of the “Queen” saved the lives of the Belgium refugees from the stricken “Amiral Ganteaume”, and brought her 1,964 passengers into Folkestone and the safely and the care of the town folk, and the 24 or the 40 in another report, who perished that day, - we should remember them.

On 26th October 2016, is the 100th anniversary of the loss of the Queen, which might qualify the shipwreck as a cultural, historical or archaeological character for the purposes of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage 2001? UK Government has adopted the Annex to the Convention as being the best practice for underwater archaeology. [6]

The Maritime events need to be remembered and suitably marked on land and sea in the coastal communities of Dover and Folkestone, Ostend and Boulogne.

[5] Canterbury Divers website
[6] English Heritage

www.coastalheritage.org.uk