

Infosheet No. 36 The Maltese Cross ❖

As users of the Register Book know, the mark indicating that a ship has been built to Lloyd's Register class is the cross ❖, commonly but erroneously called a Maltese Cross - its correct name is actually the Formée Cross. The introduction of this mark into the Register Book arose from the first stage in the overseas expansion of the Society.

As early as 1836 the posting of Surveyors at Quebec, Montreal and Rotterdam had been requested. Considerable numbers of new ships were built in those days in Canada; but the timber used was of indifferent quality and since the building was done largely in the winter months by unoccupied agricultural workers, the workmanship left much to be desired. Canadian-built ships could be surveyed in Britain, but the terms of years assigned was small.

However, in 1852, having consolidated their position at home and recognising the scope offered by the North Atlantic Colonies, the Committee appointed a Leith shipbuilder, Captain Thomas Menzies, as exclusive surveyor for Quebec and the St. Lawrence River.

Within a few years there were six surveyors operating in Canada, who zealously undertook the task of supervising the entire construction of ships. Captain Menzies suggested that the words 'Built under Special Survey' should appear on certificates issued for Canadian-built ships so constructed.

This was so greatly appreciated that, in 1853, the Committee decided to adopt a distinguishing mark for all ships built under special survey anywhere in the world, and for reasons known only to themselves, selected the 'Maltese' Cross.

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