

Prefabricated gunboat sections arriving by rail at Abadiya



Launching the sections into the Nile, ready for assembly by the Royal Marines.

Sheikh, one of Melik's two sister gunboats



The third gunboat: Sultan



Aerial view of Melik today at the Blue Nile Sailing Club, Khartoum

The Melik Society



The Melik Society
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www.melik.org.uk
Registered Charity 1049646

Mission

The purpose of the Melik Society is to advance public awareness of British and Sudanese history, and to establish a permanent memorial to those brave men on both sides who fought in the campaigns 1883–1899.

Immediate objectives

- To assist in the restoration and maintenance of the gunboats *Melik* and *Bordein* so that they can be exhibited to the general public.
- To stimulate public interest in Anglo-Sudanese history by research and publishing information.
- To establish in the UK a database of Sudanese military history.
- To encourage goodwill and cooperation between the British and Sudanese organisations involved in the preservation of Sudan's historical artifacts.

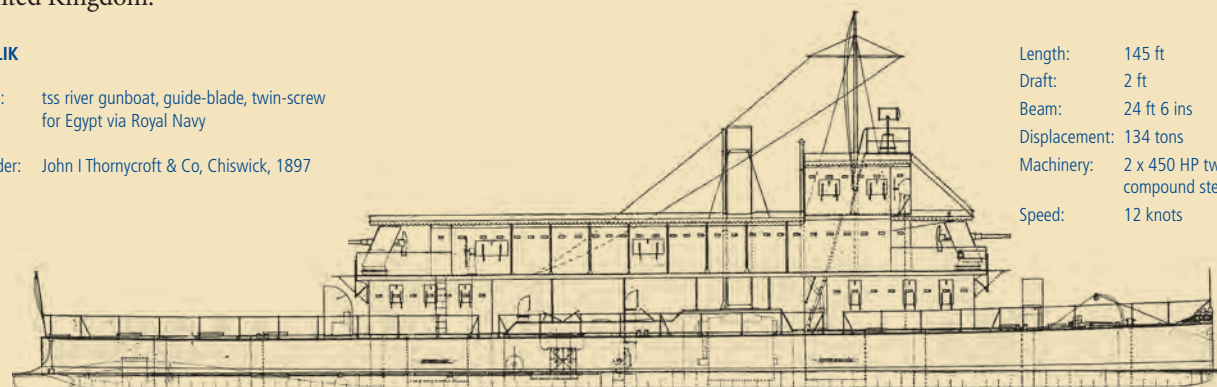
The Society is a registered charity formed in 1994 by a group of individuals with a common interest in the history of the Sudan and her relationship with the United Kingdom.

MELIK

Type: tss river gunboat, guide-blade, twin-screw for Egypt via Royal Navy

Builder: John I Thornycroft & Co, Chiswick, 1897

Length: 145 ft
 Draft: 2 ft
 Beam: 24 ft 6 ins
 Displacement: 134 tons
 Machinery: 2 x 450 HP twin-cylinder compound steam engines
 Speed: 12 knots



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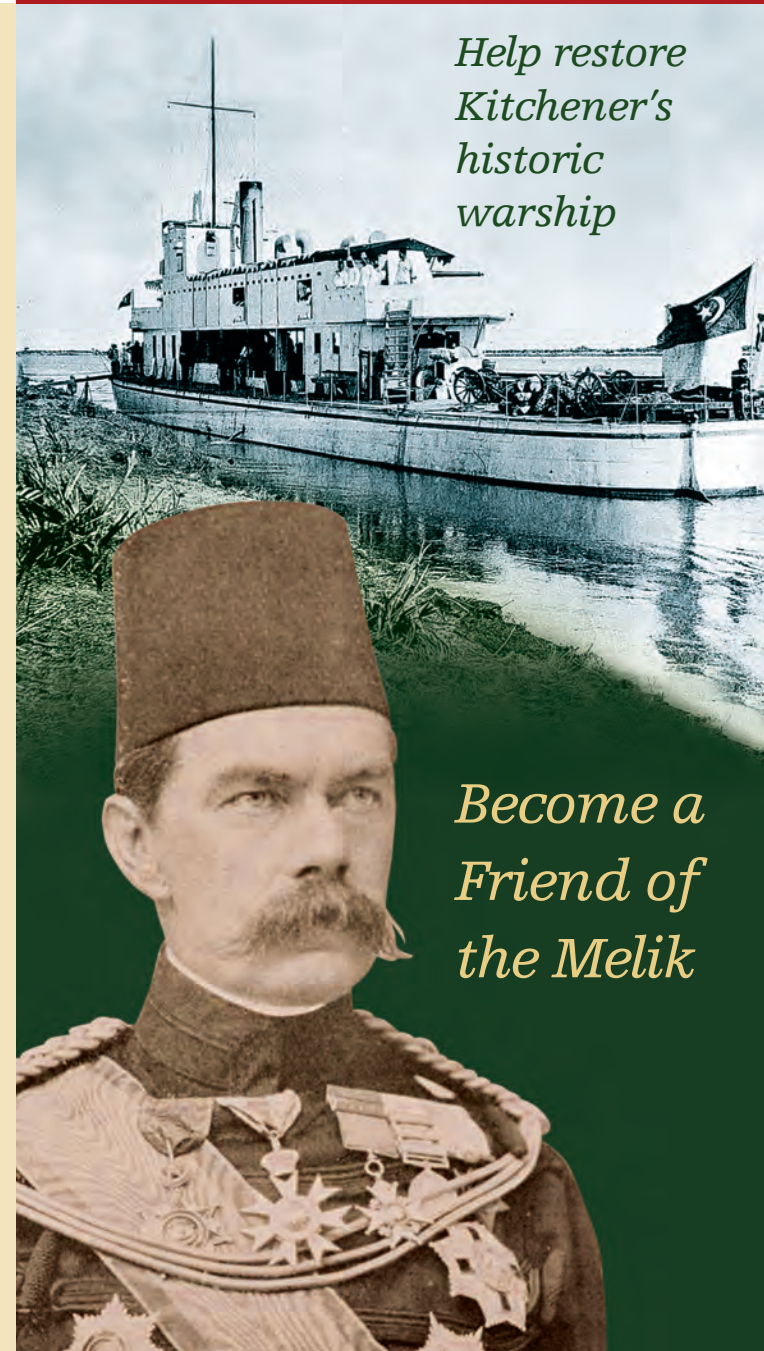
Anthony Harvey

How you can help

If you can contribute in any way to the Society's objectives, or would like further information, please contact us at the above address, or email secretary@melik.org.uk

Design: www.louismackaydesign.co.uk

THE GUNBOAT MELIK



Help restore Kitchener's historic warship

Become a Friend of the Melik

In 1896 when Kitchener, the Sirdar (Commander-in-Chief) of the Egyptian Army, set out to re-conquer the Sudan in the name of the Khedive of Egypt, eleven years after the death of General Gordon, he knew that he had not only to defeat a great host of dauntless Mahdist warriors, but also to overcome the huge logistical problem of supplying 25,000 men and 10,000 beasts of burden over great distances in one of the world's most inhospitable climates.

Control of the River Nile was vital. Together with the railway which was to be constructed across the Nubian Desert, the Nile would be the principal supply route from Egypt for an army which, by the eve of the Battle of Omdurman in September 1898, was consuming 37 tons of supplies daily.

Ships of the gunboat flotilla were crucial to the success of the enterprise. In the Dongola campaign of

1896, the first stage of the re-conquest, only four elderly stern wheelers were available. By early 1898 the Flotilla had grown to ten vessels including the new twin-screw armoured gunboats *Sheikh*, *Sultan*, and *Melik*. These were shipped in sections from England, towed up the Nile to Wadi Halfa, then carried by railway to Abadiya. Here, under the supervision of Royal Engineers officers Lieutenant Gorringe and Major 'Monkey' Gordon,

(a nephew of General Gordon), the sections were unloaded, launched into the river, and assembled.

The Gunboats were mainly commanded by officers of the Royal Navy, including Lieutenant David Beatty,



later Admiral of the Fleet Earl Beatty. However, *Melik* was commanded by Major Gordon. With their shallow draft, the gunboats, towing barges, could sometimes make only 2 knots against the strong current and thus became known as "Monkey Gordon's Greyhounds".

The crews included British, Egyptian and Sudanese service personnel and civilians of many nationalities. The gunboats bristled with weapons – 12½ and 12 pounders, 4-inch howitzers and Maxim machine guns – manned by Royal Marines. Some, including *Melik*, mounted powerful searchlights which helped to discourage a much feared Mahdist night attack before the Battle of Omdurman. After playing an important role in that decisive action *Melik* carried the troops to Khartoum for a memorial service for General Gordon.

Melik was perhaps the first warship in history to have a cine camera on board, though no viable film was produced. Most of the river gunboats remained in service with the Egyptian Army and later the Sudan

Defence Force. But gradually, like all old soldiers, they faded away. Today, only *Melik* and one of General Gordon's armed steamers, *Bordein*, survive.

Melik served as the clubhouse of the Blue Nile Sailing Club at Khartoum from 1925 until 1989, when she landed high and dry upon the bank of the Nile during an exceptional flood. The club built new premises and *Melik* now lies in a sand berth surrounded by an attractive canopy of bougainvilleas. In 1998, being a hundred years old, she became the responsibility of Sudan's National Corporation of Antiquities and Museums. The Society fully supports the plans for her restoration and is closely involved with the Sudanese authorities.

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THE SIDE-WHEELER BORDEIN



Bordein today – restoration under way



Bordein approaching Khartoum, where she was captured by Mahdists in 1885

In 2011, following representations by the Melik Society over many years, the hull of General Gordon's side-wheeler *Bordein* was finally rescued by Sudan's River Transport Corporation from the Khartoum North Dockyard, and moved to a heritage site on the bank of the Nile near the old Omdurman fortifications. The hull sections have since been reassembled, and a complete restoration is under way. *Bordein* was originally built by Samuda Bros. of Poplar in 1869 and assembled in Cairo for Sir Samuel Baker's 1871 Nile Expedition. She will become a major attraction for British and other visitors. The Society is proud to have played its part in preserving this unique steamer for future generations.

The Melik Society



Become a Friend of the Melik

Your annual subscription as a Friend of the Melik directly helps the Melik Society achieve its aims, including the restoration of the *Melik* and the *Bordein*, the promotion of interest in Anglo-Sudanese history, and the publication of *The Gunboat*, and regular bulletins.

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