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An array of naval shells at the Naval Fire Power Museum, Portsmouth

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MHA End of Year Wind Up

When: 10:00am, 19 November 2023

**Where: 33 Gosnells Road East
Orange Grove**

**It would be appreciated if you would bring a plate of nibbles
or finger food to share**

Robin and Pam will be supplying tea and coffee

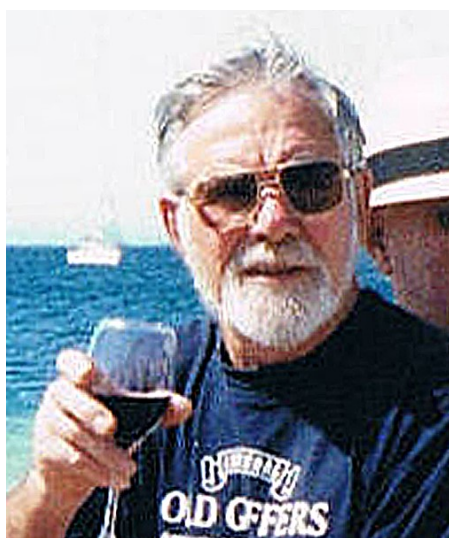
**If you have any books and magazines of a nautical nature to
sell, please bring them along (proceeds to MHA)**

**There will be another quilt raffle—this time a very special
one featuring a print of Ross Shardlow's beautiful painting
of the historically important vessel *Mermaid***



Brian Axcell – Boatbuilder and Shipwright (1933–2023)

Compiled by Ross Shardlow AM with contributions from mates of Maritime Heritage.



It was with heartfelt sorrow that we learned the sad news from Robin Hicks that his mate Brian Axcell passed away on the morning of Saturday 9 September 2023. Brian had been in Secure Aged Care in Shoalwater since early 2019. Robin explained that he had Brian's Apprenticeship Indenture papers in front of him which were signed on Brian's 16th birthday, 25 October 1949 for a term of five years with Seacraft and Company Ltd, 8 The High Street, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, England, to learn the Art, Trade and Business of Boat Building and Shipwrighting. Robin knew Brian for well over forty-five years and had sailed a lot of sea-miles in his gaffer *Lady Rose* in company with his father Barry in *Jean Dee* and Brian in *Delta*. Robin said he owed a debt of gratitude to Brian Axcell, George Huxford, Ray Miller and Mike Reveley, also to Tuppy Lahiff and Norm Shorrocks from Wooden Boat Works, all of whom, through their guidance, patience and instruction taught him the Art, Trade and Business of Sailmaking, Sparmaking and Boatbuilding. Though all have sailed on previous tides, they were all his teachers, and good teachers too.

Robin's mother Doris, wife of the late Barry Hicks, recalled that she and Barry first met Brian Axcell in October 1979 when he had a business called B & N Shipwrighting on Preston Point Road. In March 1980 Barry and Doris formed what was to become the Old Gaffers Association of WA when Barry put an advertisement in the *Sunday Times* seeking the company of people with an interest in gaff rigged boats. He received seven replies including one from Brian Axcell whom they had met the year before. A meeting was arranged at the Hicks's house in Jubilee

Street, Beckenham, and the OGA set sail from there. Some familiar names came out of that association—Rod Waller, Frank Marchant, Tony Larrard, Shirley & Wally Cook, Mike & Mary Igglesden, Jack Gardiner and Brian Phillips - to name but a few. Barry was (reluctantly) elected as first President and sailed the old cray boat *Dove* which he converted to the gaff ketch *Jean Dee*. Robin Hicks skippered *Lady Rose* and Brian Axcell, always the loyal, faithful stalwart of all things gaff rigged, sailed his full-rigged gaff cutter *Delta*.

While working on the proposed STS *Leeuwin II* I was told to 'go and see the old gaffers' to find out how to rig a barquentine. Shortly after meeting Barry & Robin Hicks in August 1985 I was invited to a 'Gaffers Party' at their house in Jubilee Street where I was warmly welcomed into the fellowship of gaffers and met Brian Axcell for the first time. We were friends ever after.

Before *Leeuwin II* was launched 2 August 1986, plans were already under way to form a Maritime Trust (later the Maritime Heritage Association) for the preservation and restoration of traditional craft. After work started on the *Endeavour* Replica project in 1988 the MHA was officially launched on *Leeuwin II* on 30 March 1990 to preserve and promote the traditional maritime trades and skills that had come together with the Old Gaffers Association, *Leeuwin II* and HMB *Endeavour*. Brian Axcell, Brian Phillips, Mike & Anne Reveley, Peter & Jill Worsley, Mary & Mike Igglesden and Bob Johnson were quick to come on board in 1990. Under the supervision of WA Museum MHA member Sally May, Brian Axcell, Brian Phillips and Mike Reveley were in-



strumental in setting up the B-Shed Boat Building School, later to become Tuppy Lahiff's Wooden Boat Works, which was transferred to Slip Street, Victoria Quay in 1995.

It was an annual custom at Wooden Boat Works to donate one of the boat building school's *Tom Thumb* dinghies to a community organisation to help raise funds for that group. On Friday 13 November 1998 I was asked to attend a presentation as a guest of honour to read out the name of the recipient for that year's dinghy. Astonishingly, the recipient's name was—Ross Shardlow—for services to maritime heritage. My beautiful little wooden boat was built (in secret) by student Kat Edghill under the supervision of Brian Axcell. Brian, ever mindful to the special requirements for a studio-boat made sure the craft would fit in the back of my four-wheel drive van, had added buoyancy for stability (not to spill a wine glass), and a mast-step for a beach umbrella (complete with sailing instructions on the virtues and qualities of umbrella-rig)—a gesture of friendship that I treasure to this day. Though most people refer to the generic name of *Tom Thumb* for the Wooden Boat Works dinghies, Barbara and I renamed the boat in tribute to those who built her—Kat, Tupy

and Brian Axcell and came up with the name RB *Katuprian* (RB for Rowing Boat or Ross & Barb).

In 2017, the late Sydney Corser AM OBE CitWA (MHA member No.116), donated his boat *Jack Tar* to the MHA. President Nick Burningham, in his article *Jack Tar: A Generous Donation* (MHA Journal Vol.28, No.2, 2017), paid a fitting tribute to Brian Axcell who built the beautiful 11ft 6in clinker sailing dinghy—named after Brian's much-loved dog and companion, a Blue Heeler/Kelpie cross called Jack Tar. Brian also had earlier companions Salty Dog, Scallywag cat and Tanson. Nick wrote:

Jack Tar is a significant vessel for a number of reasons ... as well as being an object of great beauty. She was built for Syd Corser at Wooden Boat Works on Slip Street, Fremantle, in the heyday of that fine enterprise around the year 2000 when Graham (Tuppy) Lahiff was magisterially in command. Syd commissioned shipwright Brian Axcell to build the dinghy ... and Jack Tar stands as an appropriate reminder of his consummate skill and perfectionism. Brian was asked to build a dinghy which would row and sail well, and also be safe and seaworthy carrying a number of grandchildren, nephews and nieces.



A commission from Sydney Corser would be regarded as a great honour by even the most acclaimed shipwright, for Syd was a yachtsman of international renown.

Thus it is that the MHA is most grateful and honoured to accept this generous donation which will be displayed as a tribute to three giants of Western Australian Maritime Heritage: Tuppy Lahiff, Brian Axcell and Sydney Corser.

Brian Axcell's full-rigged gaff cutter Delta (OGA 1) at the Old Gaffers Annual Raft-up & Regatta, Sunday 12 November 1995. On the weather rail – Ross Shardlow (helm), Brian Phillips (striped beanie), Brian Axcell (cup of tea) and Mrs Barbara Shardlow (scarf).

Photo presented to Ross & Barbara Shardlow by Brian Axcell & Brian Phillips to commemorate a fine day out.

MHA editor Peter Worsley noted that when Syd donated *Jack Tar* to the MHA, he made special mention of Brian Axcell's particular interest in the building of the dinghy. He wrote:



He was ever mindful of enhancing the appearance and uniqueness of the craft and incorporated the use of some antique jarrah timber, part of a timber beam salvaged from the early construction of the original Fremantle wharf as well as Latvian Oak from off cuts of planking of the replica Dutch ship the Duyfken, the first European ship to land on the Australian mainland (in 1606). He also embedded a coin in the keel timber at the mast heel, a century old tradition at the completion of construction of timber craft.

Jack Tar is a fine example of craftsmanship. It is not only aesthetically beautiful, but rows and sails wonderfully.

We join Robin Hicks in saying, ‘So Long Brian, Fair winds and Following Seas – R.I.P.’

Compiled by Ross & Barbara Shardlow with contributions from Robin & Doris Hicks, the late Barry Hicks, Nick Burningham, Peter & Jill Worsley, the late Syd Corser – and mates of maritime heritage.



Jack Tar under sail at Moore River (with Bob Johnson on the helm?).

Errata

@ photo appeared in MHA Journal No. 1 of 2010 depicting a yacht named *Black Simon*. After further research I have found out that this was incorrectly named. The photo came from the Mandurah Historical Society, and that was the name given on the photo’s reverse side. The yacht was in fact named *Black Swan*, a Camper and Nicholson designed yacht built in Singapore for the brothers Charles and Theodore Wearne. *Black Swan* was a 145-ton, 18-metre class yacht, with a length of 97ft and fitted with a 48hp Gardner diesel engine.

The Wearnes were originally from Western Australia and owned property both in Perth and Mandurah. They had set up a motor importing business in Singapore which they ran for 30 profitable years. Following launching *Black Swan* was sailed to Fremantle, arriving on 27 May 1927. After six months in Western Australia it was sailed to Cowes in the UK where the photo in the journal was taken.





The Ditty Bag

The training camp for Z-Force during World War II was a large house in the hills behind Cairns named Z-Experimental Station, known by those who trained and worked there as 'The House on the Hill'. It belonged to Richard Kingsford, grandfather of Sir Charles Kingsford Smith of flying fame.

See photo right.



During the early years of WW II, communication between Allied forces was not very efficient. Consequently, as the American submarine *Sargo* approached Fremantle in March 1942 it was bombed by an RAAF Lockheed Hudson aircraft on patrol, looking for a reported Japanese submarine in the area. *Sargo* suffered considerable damage, but managed to limp to Fremantle for repairs.

Following the success of the Jaywick raid by Z-Force on Singapore Harbour in 1943 Australia assembled a 'snake flotilla'. This consisted of captured enemy boats, converted luggers and locally built vessels such as *Mother Snake* (200 tons), *Grass Snake* and *River Snake*, each 80 tons. Boats from the Snake Flotilla were used in clandestine operations in waters north of Australia.

An act of the British Parliament in 1670 was meant to keep sailors from being enticed ashore. The act, regarding the use of 'devices for the contrivance of beauty', was directed at women:

... of whatever age, rank, profession or degree; whether virgin maids or widows; that shall after the passing of this act, impose upon and betray into matrimony any of his Majesty's male subjects, by scent, paints, cosmetics, washes, artificial teeth, false hair, Spanish wool, iron stays, hoops, high-heeled shoes, or bolstered hips, shall incur the penalty of the laws now in force against witchcraft, sorcery and such like misdemeanours, and that the marriage on conviction, shall stand null and void.

The first fiberglass yacht to circumnavigate the world was the Seawind-class ketch *Apogee* skippered by Alan Eddy. The 30ft ketch was designed by the American yacht designer Thomas C. Gilmer, and completed the voyage in 1969.

Sept. 22, Tuesday. Had a pretty good night's rest, rather a change to bed, woke up feeling all right. Got up and then felt up a tree [felt seasick]. Went on deck, not pluck enough to come down to breakfast. Felt ill all morning;

could not hoist the main deck [was suffering from nausea, but could not be sick] till 12pm when, by the aid of a marlin spike in the shape of my first finger, I effected an eruption.

First entry in diary entry, Joseph Sams on the *Northumberland*, 1874

The English whaler *Eclipse* was returning from the Arctic whaling grounds in 1872 when James Webster aged 75 died. He had been crew on board a whaling ship every year from when he first went to sea in 1815.

The first operational deployment of a steamship in the Royal Navy was the 126ft paddle steamer *Lightning*, launched 19 September 1823. In 1824 it was part of the RN's expedition to Algiers. However, it was the *Alban* (launched 27 December 1826) that was the first steamship given a fighting armament—one long pivot and two shorter 32-pounders.

The distance from Melbourne to the nearest point in Antarctica is 3,120km. The distance from Melbourne to Darwin is slightly more at a little over 3,140km.

While we lay in this harbour, we carried ashore the bread remaining in the bread-room to clear it of vermin. The number of cockroaches that infested the ship at this time is incredible [they] had increased so fast that when a sail was loosened, thousands of them fell upon the deck.

Captain James Cook, October 1777

After H.M.S. *Success* grounded on what became known as Success Bank on 28th November 1829, she was found to be extensively damaged when careened at Garden Island. The only timber available was from a local species known as Swan River Mahogany. These repairs, which took almost a year, were the first occasion that jarrah was used in boat building.



A Visit to the Historical Naval attractions of Portsmouth.

Article and photos by David Nicolson



The restored HMS Holland 1 submarine.

This is my account of a day visit to the various naval attractions in Portsmouth in 2017. I hasten to say that all the photographs show the exhibits at that time and I am certain a visitor today would see many changes. A good example would be HMS *Victory* which is now undergoing a significant refurbishment.

Before I left on my trip to the UK, I accidentally discovered that Fort Nelson, one of the five defensive forts built in the 1860s, had acquired an 18-inch railway gun. (Fort Nelson overlooked the vital Portsmouth naval installation to provide protection in case of attack from the sea.) The 18-inch barrel was one of five originally built for the lightly armoured battle cruisers, one of which was HMS *Furious*, the brainchild of Admiral Fisher, the First Sea Lord of the Admiralty in World War One. The whole philosophy of the fast battlecruiser proved a failure, not the least of its problems were the destructive effects of firing such a large calibre gun on a lightly built vessel. After experimenting with an 18-inch gun on the monitor HMS *Lord Clive*, the barrels were

put into storage only to reappear as railway guns for use in the Second World War. As far as I can establish they were never fired in anger. In 2016 this unique piece of naval history was acquired by Fort Nelson as part of the Royal Armouries collection of weapons. It is an understatement to say that this gun is huge, it is difficult to appreciate its dimensions until you stand beside it. I hope the accompanying photo gives some idea of its colossal



The 18inch ex naval gun now on show at the Fort Nelson Museum, Portsmouth.



sal size.

The fort also displays another naval weapon, a single 14-inch barrel as used on the King George V class battleships which served extensively in the Second World War. The gun and counterweight weigh 91 tons or 92,460kgs and had a range of 22 miles or 35.4 km. Alongside the barrel is an example of a 14-inch shell. It weighs 1590lb or 721kg. The 14-inch gun was developed as a compromise gun being significantly lighter than the earlier 15-inch design which used wire-wound technology. The weight reduction allowed for the introduction of a novel 4-gun turret to be used in this new class of battleship which could now mount a total of 10 barrels on a 35,000-ton ship. Initially the gun turret was troublesome and unreliable, witness the problems HMS *Prince of Wales* had engaging the *Bismark* in 1941. The defects were eventually remedied, and the gun proved her worth in the successful action against the German battle cruiser, *Scharnhorst* in the Battle of North Cape in 1943

A short drive brought me to the Royal Navy Submarine Museum located in Gosport. The building was designed to look like a submarine and houses an incredible selection of submarine technology including the first Royal Navy submarine, HMS *Holland 1*. *Holland 1* sank in 1913 while on the way to the breakers yard but was recovered in 1982 and subsequently restored for display at the museum. She was one of three Holland class submarines that set out to attack the Russian Fleet on its way to challenge Japan in 1905, however they turned back before contact was made.

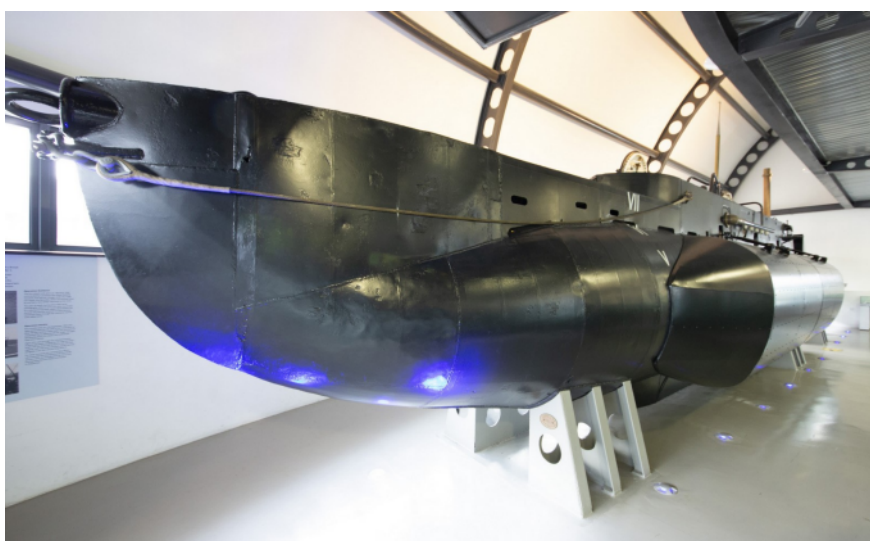
Also on show is the X24, a remarkable craft which was used on such daring exploits as the attack on

the German battleship *Tirpitz* in Norway in 1943. Leut. Donald Cameron and Leut Godfrey Place were both awarded the Victoria Cross for badly damaging the *Tirpitz* using their X6 and X7, although both crews were subsequently captured. These X-Craft were armed with two side mounted explosive charges of amatol to be set off by a timer after dropping them off beside the intended target. During the run up to the D Day landings these little craft were used to survey the coast and acted as navigational beacons on the day of the landing. The X24 in the Royal Navy Submarine Museum is the only remaining example.

Alongside the museum is HMS *Alliance*, the pinnacle of RN submarine design at the end of World War Two. She was intended for use in the Far East, where the size of the Pacific Ocean made long-range, high surface speed and relative comfort for the crew important features compared with operating in the Atlantic or Mediterranean. Her main claim to fame was an experimental cruise where she remained submerged for 30 days relying solely on her snorkel mast for crew and engines to operate. Commissioned in 1947, *Alliance* underwent significant modifications during her life to keep up with improving technology. In 1973 she served as a static training boat and eventually fully decommissioned in 1979. After falling into a poor state of repair, restoration began in 2011 with funds from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This was completed in 2014 and she was opened to the public in April of that year.

My next port-of-call was the 'Explosion Museum of Naval Fire Power' located in buildings formally known as the Naval Ordnance Museum. (Another example of the marketing people's influence on the naming of museums.) As the name suggests,

there is a large array of naval weapons ranging from 16-inch shells to guided missiles. It also holds a magnificent display of model ships including a 1/24 scale model of HMS *Victory* and examples of other iconic RN ships such as HMS *Hood* and HMS *Iron Duke*. The galleries are packed with examples of torpedoes together with ship and air carried missiles including the Australian developed Ikara weapon system. Of particular note was the inventively displayed array of naval shells with the 16 and 15-inch shells taking pride of place. Capping off this gallery is the 15-inch



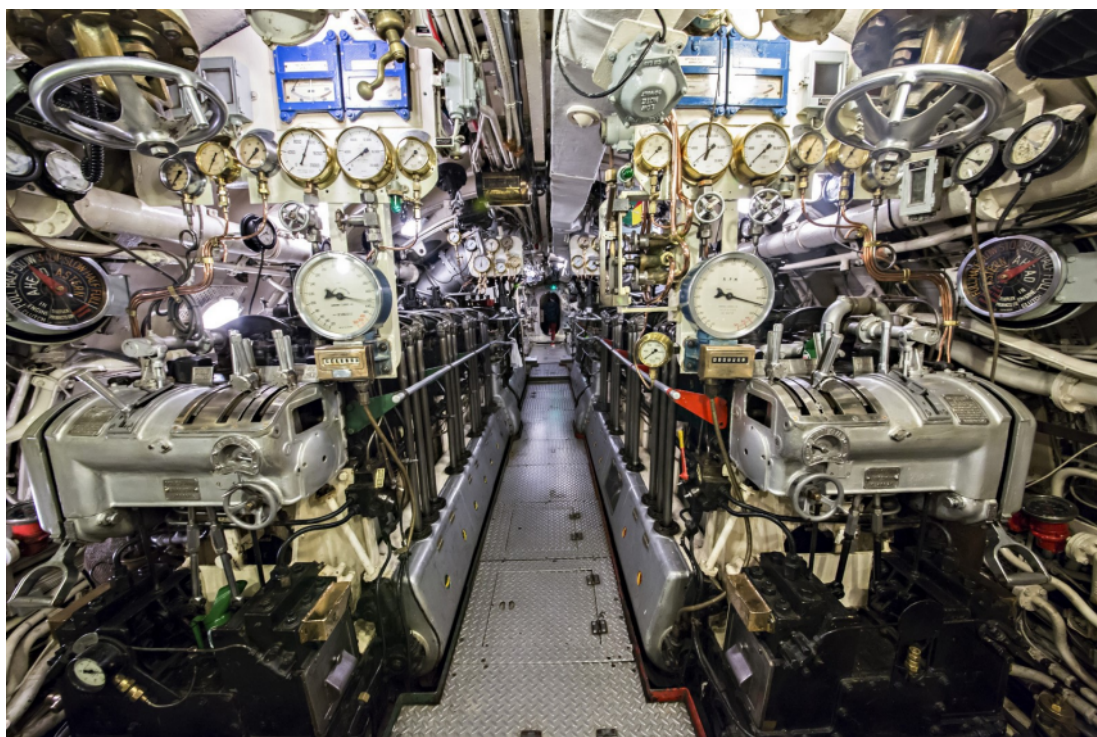
The last surviving X-Craft. A similar boat attacked and damaged the Tirpiz.



breach mechanism taken from HMS *Vanguard*. This impressive piece of recycled memorabilia originally came from a first world war battleship. Other examples of naval weaponry such as mines, depth-charge throwers, gatling guns and a range of deck mounted guns were all available for close

inspection.

In the next edition of the journal, I will be travelling to the Historic Portsmouth Naval Dockyards, home of HMS *Victory* and the *Mary Rose*.



The engine room of Alliance now shown in 'as new' condition

Currency Lass and the Swan River

By Ron Forsyth

The modern country we know as Australia was founded in 1788 by a ragged assortment of convicts from the overflowing prisons of the United Kingdom. By the mid 1820's there were the stirrings of a national awareness expressed by the term 'currency lads and lasses.' It was an emerging consciousness that Australia was a country, not merely a prison. It referred in the first instance to the children of convicts rather than the children of free settlers. Initially it was a derogatory term, distinguishing the free settler from the convict class. The shortage of specie in the colonies at New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land saw a distinction between British Sterling and other currency that circulated. The latter was seen as inferior and was not always accepted. The free settler of 'good breeding' no doubt preferred the classification of 'Sterling' or 'Pure Merino.'

In 1826 William Charles Wentworth, famous son of an expirée, owned a successful racehorse called *Currency Lad* and another mare raced in Sydney under the name *Currency Lass*.

Later, in 1832, Horatio Wills—born in Sydney in 1811 to a convict father—founded *The Currency Lad*. It was 'the first newspaper published in the colony which specifically set out to protect the interests of the native-born' (Wikipedia).

The *Colonial Times and Tasmanian Advertiser* on 10 November 1826 carried the following:

A very beautiful cutter, of 105 tons, called the Currency Lass, was launched on the 17th ult. in the elder Colony. She was built by T. W. M. Winder, Esq. a very enterprising Gentleman, who has lately settled on the Banks of Hunter's River, where she was launched. It is a singular fact, that the whole of the people employed



in building this vessel, even to the blacksmith, were Currency Lads; that is to say, youths born in the Colony. She is a real Australian indeed; and this shews the rapid progress that the rising generation of these Colonies is making towards those arts which so nobly characterised our native land. - To shew that we are not behind the elder Colony, in this respect, we have to notice, that Messrs. Lucas and Griffiths, both Currency Lads, have at this moment two more vessels in a forward state on the stocks at Launceston.

The little vessel was commissioned to accompany Captain James Stirling on HMS *Success* from Sydney in January 1827. The purpose of the voyage was to assess the suitability of the site of the Swan River as a place for settlement.

Next month the papers reported:

On Wednesday night, the Currency Lass, tender to the Success, sloop-of-war, arrived in Storm Bay where the Success has been awaiting her since the departure of the latter vessel from the harbour. On Thursday evening they sailed in prosecution of their Voyage of Discovery, to Rotness (sic) Island, near Swan River, on the northern coast of New South Wales (sic.) (ibid., 9 February 1827).

Captain Stirling had, coincidentally, just brought from England on the *Success* a cargo of Sterling specie for the colony at Sydney the previous November (*The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 29 Nov 1826).

Under the command of Lieutenant Proudfoot R.N., she intended to travel via the little settlement at King George's Sound, founded the previous year with a convict garrison to keep the hands of the French off the continent.

All was not plain sailing, though, and she had to call in at Port Dalrymple on the north coast of what is now Tasmania having lost her rudder (*The Sydney Gazette & New South Wales Advertiser*, 9 April 1827). From stress of weather, she was forced to abandon her quest and 'was taken up by the government at £100 per month' (*Colonial Times and Tasmanian Advertiser*, 2 February 1827). The relentless westerlies probably proved too much for her.

There was considerable optimism in Sydney and Hobart Town about the prospect of another colony founded by free settlers on the same continent (*Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 18 April 1827).

After Stirling arrived to establish the Swan River settlement the *Colonial Times* (Hobart), 5 June 1829, recorded:

This promising Settlement, now called 'Western Australia,' is situated on the Western Coast of New Holland, with its front running north and south in a parallel line to 115 east longitude, and facing the Indian Ocean, the Mauritius, Madagascar on the Coast of Africa, and the Cape of Good Hope; on its right lies the East Indies, China, and all the numerous Islands and Countries in the Indian Ocean; on its left the Great Southern Ocean, leading to the Atlantic, to Europe, and to the Americas; and at its rear lies the main body of land known by the general appellation of New Holland, to the southward of which lie Van Diemen's Land, New Zealand, and the entire North and West Coast of South America, extending from Kamptskatka to Cape Horn, 55 degrees each side of the Equator, by the Great Pacific Ocean!!!

The extreme isolation of the people on the east coast seemed to thaw a degree or two.

Perhaps it was a bad omen for the Swan River Colony that the *Currency Lass* never made it to her shores. It struggled for over two decades before Stirling's 'Sterling' settlers had to resort to a lesser 'currency' and became a penal colony.

The *Currency Lass* went on to have a long and varied career. In 1831 she is recorded as carrying 25 tons of flax from New Zealand (*The Australian*, 15 April 1831). As New Zealand was not established as a colony within the British Empire until 1841, she was an early trader to her shores.

Charles Bateson, *The Convict Ships, 1787-1868*, Sydney, 1974, states that between the years 1834 and 1835 the *Currency Lass* was involved in the transport of convicts between Hobart Town and Sydney. Her tonnage is given as 90 ton (bm.) and she is described as a schooner.

The Sydney Monitor of 15 Feb 1837 reported 'that Captain Edwards has become the purchaser of the *Currency Lass*, which vessel he intends to run in the Island's trade.'

In 1839 she carried passengers to the Bay of Islands in New Zealand and so was involved in the early settlement there (*The Sydney Monitor*, 10 June 1839).



Almost two decades after her launching, a good life span for a working wooden vessel of its era, she was involved in another drama.

Captain Simmonds, late of the Currency Lass schooner, while lying at Upolu, shot one of the seamen, named Edward Griffiths, the crew being in a state of insubordination at the time. Griffiths struck the Captain in the face with a billet of wood, who went into his cabin, and brought out a pistol, and shot at Griffiths, who fell and died instantaneously; and on, being opened, it was found that the ball had passed through his heart.

The captain gave himself, the vessel, and cargo and what money he had belonging to the owner (Mr. Hooton, of Tahiti), into the possession of Mr. Williams, American Consul, there being no British Consul at that place. He was then given in charge to the captain of the American whaler Ohio, which was lying there at the time, there being no prison in the place. Through

some neglect of the captain, or his officers, Simmonds made his escape in a whale-boat, and a man of color belonging to the vessel accompanied him. It was afterwards reported that they went to Wallis' Island; and the schooner Currency Lass was given in charge to Captain Rabey, who was immediately despatched to several of the adjacent islands in quest of Simmonds, but no trace of him could be found; it is supposed he must have slipped on board some whaler at Wallis' Island. (The Australian, 1 May 1845).

On the 15 May in 1851 three sailing vessels were lost on the coast of New South Wales. One, the *Currency Lass*, described as a cutter, was driven ashore on the Ulladulla Beach, wrecked.

Other sailing vessels of the era bore the similar names of *Currency Lad*, *Currency Boy*, and *Native Lass*.

The Honda Point Disaster

By Peter Worsley



USS S.P. Lee and another ship on the rocks

At 21.05 hours on 8 September 1923 the United States Navy suffered its greatest peacetime loss of ships in its history. On that day 14 ships of Destroyer Squadron 11 were steaming south from San Francisco to San Diego. They were all Clemson Class destroyers of 1,308 tons, 314.4ft long and capable of 36.5knots. The destroyers were in line astern, and under the com-

mand of Captain Edward H. Watson on board USS *Delphy*. The ships were navigating by dead reckoning, the distance travelled being calculated on time and the number of revolutions per minute of the propeller. There was a heavy fog, but Captain Watson had ordered all ships to travel in close formation, and he was in a hurry. At 9.00pm, and steaming at 20 knots, the ships



turned eastwards, supposedly heading for the Santa Barbara Channel leading into San Diego.

However, the turn had been made too early and five minutes later USS *Delphy* ran aground on rocks north of the channel. Her siren was immediately sounded, enabling some of the fleet to avoid the tragedy. Not so USS *S.P. Lee* which tried to turn but, being only a few hundred yards behind, also ran aground. USS *Young* did not even try to turn and tore her hull open on rocks and capsized onto her starboard side. USS *Nicholas* turned to port, but struck a rock, USS *Woodbury* was next to strike the rocks, and she in turn was struck by USS *Fuller*. USS *Chauncy* was attempting to rescue sailors from the capsized *Young* when she also ran aground.

Two more were damaged, but were not lost, and the remaining five avoided disaster. The destroyers were less than five years old, and those wrecked were

worth US\$13,000,000. The human toll amounted to 23 sailors drowned and many injured.

No attempt was made to salvage the vessels, all of which were considered damaged beyond repair. They were, in fact, sold to a scrap metal merchant for \$1,035. The wrecks were still there six years later.

A Court-Martial Board ruled that 11 officers were to be charged. These were Captain Watson, the USS *Delphy*'s navigating officer, the captains of all the wrecked destroyers and the two damaged ones. It was the Court's opinion that a captain's first responsibility was to his own ship, no matter that he was in formation in a convoy. Captain Watson assumed full responsibility and, in the subsequent court martial, was stripped of his seniority, three other officers were admonished, but all except Captain Watson were acquitted.

An aerial view of the scene soon after the disaster



QUIZ

Answers to September

1. The skipper of the *Leeuwin* in 1622 was Jan Franz.
2. After being seriously damaged near New Zealand, the *Samuel Plimsoll* was converted to a coal hulk. It finished up as a hulk in Fremantle, and on 17 June 1945 was hit by the steamer *Dalgoma* in the middle of the river opposite G Shed. It was not until 1947 that the *Samuel Plimsoll* was cut up and the pieces of hull dumped south of South Mole.
3. Captain James Stirling named Point Walter after his older brother Walter Stirling.

Quiz

1. Name the single Fenian convict who escaped from WA in 1869, and subsequently helped the escape of a further six Fenians in 1876 on the *Catalpa*.
2. Which vessel wrecked on the W.A. coast was originally a slave ship named *Don Francisco*?
3. What is the difference between a ketch and a yawl?



Early Steamer Communication and Western Australia

By Ron Forsyth

S.S. *Enterprize* (not to be confused with *Starship Enterprise*) was the first steam powered ship to round the Cape of Good Hope. The auxiliary paddle wheeler took 103 days in 1825 to reach Calcutta from London using engine power on 64 days of her journey. (The first crossing of the Atlantic had taken place in 1819. S.S. *Savannah* sailed and steamed from Georgia, U.S.A to Liverpool with a retractable paddle. Although an historic voyage the steam propulsion was afterwards removed, and she reverted solely to sail.)

Australia's first steam powered ship was the S.S. *Sophia Jane*. She sailed all the way to Sydney. Arriving there on 13 May in 1831 her paddles had been stowed and engine not yet commissioned.

The first steamer to ever be seen at Fremantle in December 1845, H.M. steam-sloop *Driver*, was a matter of great curiosity. So great was her novelty that the man on look-out gave the alarm that there was a ship on fire in the roads. Coal being unavailable 150 cords of wood at 15 shillings each were taken aboard (*Inquirer*, 10 Dec 1845). (A cord of wood is 128 cubic feet or 3.6 cubic metres.) Repairs were also required to her boilers.

According to the New Zealand Electronic Text Collection:

The Driver was a paddle-steamer of 1,058 tons, with engines of 280 horsepower; she was rigged as a brig. She was armed with six guns. Her crew, under Commander C. O. Hayes, numbered 175 officers and men. The vessel had recently been engaged in the suppression of piracy in the East Indies.

The paddle steamer was on its way to New Zealand to assist in the movement of troops in what was known as the Maori wars. Two of the ship's company, a carpenter and an able seaman deserted at Fremantle and a £3 reward was offered by Commander Hayes (*The Perth Gazette*, 27 Nov 1845).

Perhaps the following article explains the crew's desertion?

H. M. Steam-Ship Driver—This vessel has been detained here for the last three or four days in consequence of the very defective state of her boilers having rendered it impracticable for her to put to sea. The boilers, of which there

*are three, are so worn by nearly four years' use, that they are unable to sustain the pressure upon them, and any attempt to get up the steam is followed by one or other of the boilers giving way. All last week the engineers were hard at work repairing damages, by screwing down new plates over the unsound places, but the old parts are so bad that they tear away from the new, and no sooner is one rent repaired than another presents itself. The condition of the boilers has been happily compared to that of an old coat, which has been patched and darned in innumerable places, until it has become past mending. On Sunday afternoon last, Captain Hayes being exceedingly anxious to put to sea, an attempt was made to get up the steam, but the engines had scarcely made one revolution, when the middle boiler gave way, and the water issued from it at the rate of many gallons in a minute. The fire was consequently drawn, and an attempt was made to proceed with two boilers only, when it was found that one of these (the starboard boiler) had bulged out, and was pressing against its neighbour, showing that this also could not be depended on, and all idea of putting to sea that night was abandoned. Since then the engineers have been actively engaged in repatching the boilers, but whether they will succeed in putting her in a serviceable state for sea, seems to be a matter of much doubt. At the present moment of writing, it is not known when she will be ready for a new trial, but the opinion seems to be that she will be here at least another week, unless, indeed, her Commander resolves to abandon steam for the present, and have recourse to her sails alone, which, considering her very inefficient rig, would indeed be a miserable expedient. It must be highly vexatious to Captain Hayes and his officers to find themselves in this crippled state, more especially as the *Driver* has been ordered on a particular service, the urgency of which may be great. It seems very surprising to us that the naval authorities in China should have despatched a vessel in so ineffective a state on such an errand; the condition of her boilers must have been known when she started, and surely there were other vessels on the station that might have been more safely and profitably employed. Besides the injustice done to the commander, his officers, and crew, in expecting any efficient service from a vessel in such a state as*



the Driver, it is showing a lamentable want of consideration for the safety of the settlers at New Zealand, in ordering thither a vessel which seems to have very doubtful means of getting there at all; which will certainly only get there after a very long and unnecessary delay; and which, when there, promises to be of little or no service as a steamer of war' (Inquirer, 17 Dec 1845).

In spite of the parlous state of her boilers the departure of the little steamer left the isolated colonists longing for the '... mighty advantages we should derive from the extension of a branch hither from the steam communication already established with India, China, &c, &c, from Great Britain' (*Inquirer*, 14 Jan 1846). Her earlier problems did not stop *Driver* being credited with being the first steamer to circumnavigate the world between her embarkation for the British China station in March 1842 and her return to Portsmouth via Cape Horn in May 1847. This was an enormous achievement for a paddle steamer. During her absence from England, she had travelled 75,696 miles. (*Perth Gazette*, 15 Jan 1848)

Albany, King Georges Sound, first witnessed steam when H.M.S. *Acheron* paddled her way there in 1848. Under the command of the highly respected hydrographer and explorer Captain John Lort Stokes she was bound for New Zealand to undertake surveys. Stokes had previously shared a cabin with Charles Darwin on H.M.S. *Beagle* and had been involved in surveying Australasian waters. He was to be later remembered in 1849 by his good friend Lt. John Roe who named Stoke's Inlet and Lort River on the south coast of Western Australia. It had been a voyage of mixed fortunes. At Madeira in the Canary Islands Stokes had been invited to dine with Her Majesty Queen Adelaide. Les Johnson (*Albany, Port with a Past and Future*, p.85) notes that after leaving Rio '... the *Acheron* had crept into Cape Town only by burning spare rope and timbers to maintain a head of steam.'

Unlike the hapless Flinders before him*, Stokes had been permitted to have his wife and daughter accompany him. Australian born Fanny Anne Marlay had married Stokes in Sydney in 1841. She had travelled back to London with her husband and daughter where he produced his two volume *Discoveries in Australia*. Fanny had a considerable number of friends there awaiting her return. Sadly, she never made it past the Cape.

Mrs Stokes landed, in a very precarious state of health, and all the efforts of medical skill

*proving unsuccessful, she died there, and her remains were sorrowfully deposited in the little cemetery at Simon's Bay. So deeply did Captain Stokes feel her loss, that he was never seen on deck but twice from the time the *Acheron* left Simon's Bay till she reached the Sound, a period of five weeks (*Adelaide Observer*, 23 Sept 1848).*

Aged just twenty-seven years she left behind a grieving husband and six-year-old daughter.

There was no coal at Albany so *Acheron* '... took in 150 cords of kingla as fuel.' So recorded the *Inquirer* (27 Aug 1848). This appears to be a misprint of *Kingia australis*, the grass tree that grows in abundance around Albany. It could have been an interesting experiment, not to be repeated, as the high resin content probably caused problems with the ship's boilers.

While lying at anchor in Princess Royal Harbour Stokes found time to write to the *Inquirer* newspaper in Perth. He was disturbed at what he considered the wanton destruction of the kangaroo. It had been drawn to his attention '... that upwards of eight thousand kangaroo-skins were exported from this colony during the past year; and it is anticipated the number will be more than doubled during the present season.' His concern was not just for the kangaroo but out of consideration for the 'New Hollander' who is essentially a hunter who '... derives the chief portion of his sustenance from the chase.'

November of 1852 saw the s.s. *Chusan* steam into King George Sound. The port was prepared with 3,000 tons of good steaming coal having been stockpiled there in preparation. The coal had been transported from London and Cardiff. It required three sailing ships to deliver the coal necessary to establish the coal bunkering depot (*Perth Gazette*, 23 July 1852). This was the inaugural voyage by the P&O Steam Navigation Service's mail service to Sydney. She was on her return via Fremantle and Singapore. Her stop at Fremantle confirmed the company's intention to retain Albany as its refuelling port – a situation that was to remain almost five decades.

Technological advancement had seen a single screw propeller replace inefficient paddle propulsion.

In August of 1853 the ship *Larkins* arrived from London with a cargo of 1,000 tons of coal. She was described as the Peninsular and Orient's de-

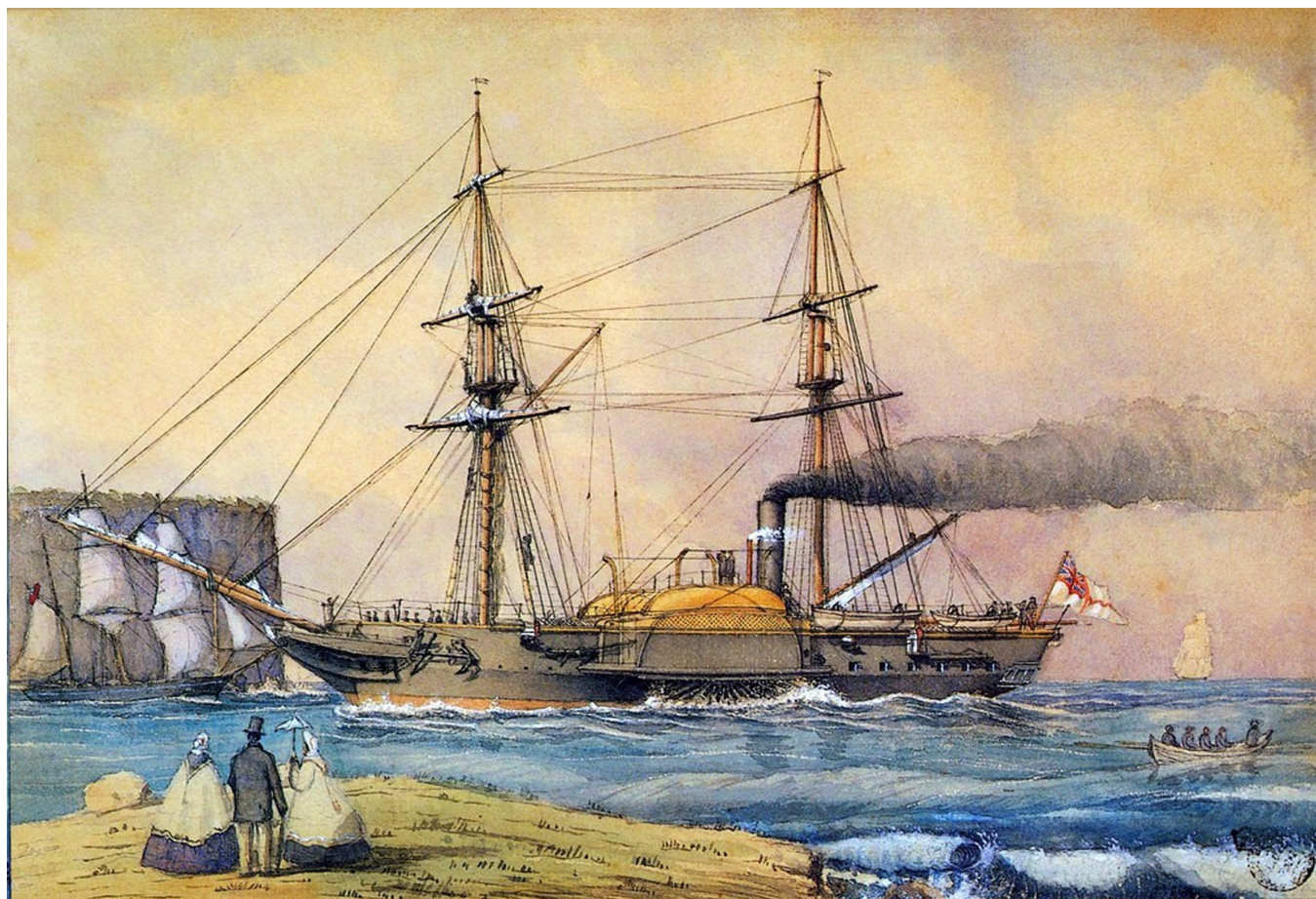


pot ship. Dismasted to her lower masts she became Albany's first of many coal hulks providing dusty accommodation also for coal lumpers.

Albany had become an important coaling station.

*Flinders had been ordered to leave his newly married wife behind in 1801 and did not see her again for almost nine years.

Editor's note: The *Larkins* was built of teak in Calcutta in 1808 and served in the Honourable East India Company. When no longer required the hulk was demolished in Princess Royal Harbour in September 1876, and its figurehead can be seen in the Western Australian Museum in Albany. Some of the teak was used by an Albany resident as flooring in his house. When that was later demolished, Rolly Tasker bought some of this teak and used it in the construction of one of his yachts. A long lasting and highly prized timber.



HMS Driver entering Sydney Harbour

Illustration: Flickr

Did You Know?

Did you know that Western Australia's border with the other states and territories is not, as shown on most maps, a straight line? In 1922 an agreement was signed between the Prime Minister and the Premiers of WA and SA. This agreement required that the border between them be a line determined by the 129th meridian east longitude. It also required that the border run south and north between two independently fixed points, one at Argyle and one at Deakin. A survey in 1963 discovered that these two requirements were in fact incompatible, as there was a horizontal distance of 127m between them. To overcome this problem, in 1968 it was agreed by the then governments to allow a 'kink' in the border. It was to be where WA, SA and the NT meet. This double corner is now called Surveyor General's Corner. Fewer people have visited this site than have been to the South Pole.



Not a *Zephyr* but a Storm of Derision

By Michael Gregg

Sn February 1937 the comprehensively named *Kulin Advocate and Dudinin-Jitarning Harrismith Recorder* had some choice words to say about the pride of the Swan:

For the second time in six weeks the pleasure steamer, Zephyr, was recently allowed to run on a sand bank. On this occasion she was carrying 500 passengers and the Master (a new one this season), confused spit posts in a heavy haze over Freshwater Bay with the result that several hours of enforced idleness had to be spent on the Karakatta Bank.

One wonders just how much the ancient plates are capable of standing. A few more jolts like those sustained recently and the old flat-bottomed tub, which has been the pride of the river craft for about 30 years past, will surely show signs of advancing age. If ever the old boat 'turned turtle' on the Rottneest run it would be—well—hellish! She must have been a veritable gold-mine for McIlwraith and McEacharn over the years and has probably more than paid off its original cost from the bar trade done at the Island.

*There will be few in this State who will not feel a tinge of regret when, eventually, the Zephyr is sent to the ignominious end which awaits all good old faithful ships. She has done a large and faithful service in the holiday traffic of Western Australia, and most people have spent an enjoyable day on board her, some time or other (*Kulin Advocate and Dudinin-Jitarning Harrismith Recorder*, 11 February 1937: 3).*

In slightly more restrained form, *The West Australian* had this to say:

ZEPHYR AGROUND.

MISHAP IN HEAVY HAZE.

Claremont Spit Posts Confused.

Carrying about 500 passengers who were returning from a picnic at Rockingham, the steamer Zephyr ran aground on the Karrakatta Bank in Freshwater Bay, midway between the Claremont jetty and Keane's Point early last night. The passengers, who took the mishap cheerfully, were transhipped to the Emerald and to motor launches, and the Zephyr was later hauled off by the tug Eagle.

In command of Captain C. Dunkley, the Zephyr had visited Rockingham for the annual picnic of

the Public Works Department. During the return journey up the river a heavy haze affected visibility and this, it is considered, caused Captain Dunkley to mistake an unlighted spit post for the Burnside spit, when approaching the Claremont jetty to land passengers. He altered his course to starboard and a few moments later the steamer ran aground. The first intimation that the passengers had that anything was amiss was when the propellers of the Zephyr went into reverse, churning up the mud on the sand bank.

While awaiting assistance from the Emerald which had been signalled, Captain Dunkley requested the passengers to run backwards and forwards on the deck in an effort to rock the vessel free, but this also proved unsuccessful.

By this time the plight of the vessel had been noticed from the shore and several launches went out to render assistance. The Emerald, which was engaged on a river trip, went to Point Walter to land passengers before attempting to tow the Zephyr free. The tow-line, however, was not strong enough and immediately the strain was applied it parted. Captain H. Tilley, the commander of the Emerald, manoeuvred his ship alongside the Zephyr, and, after they had been tied together, the forward gangway was made fast and passengers for Perth were taken aboard the Emerald. Passengers who had intended leaving the ship at Claremont were taken off by the launch Dawn.

The skipper of the Dawn, Mr. R. Cooper, said that the haze over Freshwater Bay was one of the heaviest in his experience.

Several passengers who were questioned after they landed said that they did not notice any bump as the ship grounded. One passenger alleged that the green light on the Claremont jetty was not burning at the time of the mishap, but it was observed to be alight a short time afterwards. The transhipment of passengers, which was taken in good part was watched by a large crowd of interested sightseers who assembled on the Esplanade in Peppermint Grove, a few hundred yards from the stranded vessel.

When it was realised that the Zephyr could not be removed under her own power, the owners,



McIlwraith, McEacharn, Ltd., sent the tug Eagle to her assistance, and, with the aid of a rising tide, she was towed off shortly after 11 o'clock, and returned to Perth.

It was the second time in six weeks that the Zephyr had run aground in the river. Eight years ago she stuck on the identical spot on Karrakatta Bank when the then commander, Captain C. Strue, confused the two spit posts at the approach to the Claremont jetty.

The retiring Under-Secretary for Works (Mr. C. A. Munt) will have particular cause to remember last night's mishap as the picnic was in the nature of a farewell to him by his staff (The West Australian, Wed 27 January 1937: 21).

The *Zephyr*, built in 1906 of course managed to last until May 1965 when her plates finally succumbed and she sank at her mooring off Coffee Point in Applecross. She was subsequently raised and broken up at Rocky Bay.



The Zephyr and Swan River sandbanks were common companions—here she is on 7th March 1957 renewing their acquaintance (The West Australian, 12 May 1957)

The loss of the yacht *Mischief*

By Peter Worsley

A fatal accident in 1887 resulted in some positive safety measures.

There is no indication in any of my references of the size or who built the yacht *Mischief*. However, Alfred Edmund Brown, one of Fremantle's foremost boat-builders was on board during the incident described below, so it is possible that he was the builder. The yacht was owned by H.F. Lane, the

secretary of the Perth Yacht Club, and ballasted with lead and iron. During the afternoon of Saturday 17 December 1887 it was being sailed in a race for the Perth Yacht Clubs' Crawley Cup. On board were Carlton Richard Pether, Henry 'Harry' Pether, Thomas Lowden (a German), Alfred Edmund Brown and Arthur Heath Tiddy.



There were no oars or life buoys on board, and the bottom boards had been taken out and left behind to lighten the yacht for racing. Tiddy, a ledger keeper with the Bank of New South Wales, had arrived from Sydney ten months previously. He had informed the other members of the crew that he had sailed yachts in Sydney. It was therefore assumed that he could swim.

The yachts in the race sailed to Lucky Bay in a fresh south-west breeze. After rounding the marker buoy, the *Mischief* squared away for the sail back to Perth. Harry Pether was at the helm, and at this time the spinnaker was set. The yacht was rolling when it was suddenly struck by a strong gust of wind from the southward. This resulted in the yacht heeling sufficiently for the boom to dip into the waves. This dragged the yacht over, when it immediately sank in 35 ft (10.7 m) of water. The five men, all of whom were fully clothed, were left floundering in the water. At this time it was realized that Tiddy could not swim. Carlton Pether went to assist Tiddy, but had to leave him when Tiddy grabbed him, forcing him underwater. Pether was afraid that Tiddy would drown him, and pulled clear. He looked around without success for something that would support Tiddy. Lowden also tried to assist, but also had to leave Tiddy for fear of being dragged under.

By then, being dressed in heavy water-logged clothes, they were all rapidly tiring, so the four who could swim left Tiddy and, to save their lives, attempted to swim for the nearest shore. This was a mile away, and not long before they reached it the exhausted swimmers were picked up by the yacht *Sunbeam*, which had tacked back to their rescue. Subsequent dragging for Tiddy's body by police and volunteers was unsuccessful until Richard Wynne discovered it about 2.00

p.m. the following day, 200 metres from where the *Mischief* sank.

An inquest into the death of Tiddy was held by the acting coroner, J.F. Stone, with a jury of John Arnold, W. Britnall and W. Rowland. The verdict was that Arthur Heath Tiddy was accidentally drowned by the upsetting of the *Mischief*. A rider to the verdict stated that 'we are of opinion that yachts and other pleasure boats should be compelled to carry at least two properly fitted life-buoys' (*Daily News*, 22 December 1887: 3g). They also stated that they thought 'greater exertion might have been used to save the deceased' (*West Australian*, 21 December 1887: 2h). This latter statement was later withdrawn.

As a result of the accident to the *Mischief* Mr Wilkinson of the Bank of New South Wales donated £5 to the Perth Yacht Club to buy life buoys. Also the club formulated three rules covering safety during races:

1. *No person or persons shall be allowed to sail in or form part of the crew of any yacht competing in any race under the auspices of the club unless he can swim and that the owner of the yacht be held responsible for the due observance of this rule.*
2. *That every boat according to her size be compelled to carry during any such race life saving apparatus loose either on deck or in the well, and ready for immediate use, as may in the opinion of the starter be sufficient to ensure the safety of the crew.*
3. *The non-compliance with either of these rules disqualify any boat for any race. Members are also strongly advised to keep the life buoys and life saving apparatus on board on all occasions* (*Daily News*, 22 December 1887: 3f).

The *Mignonette*

The loss of the yacht *Mignonette* resulted in a court case that is part of law studies in both England and America. The topic was suggested by Bob Johnson

In 1884 two men appeared in court in Exeter, UK, charged with murder. The two had formed part of the crew of the 52ft, 19.43 registered net ton yacht *Mignonette* which had been bought by Jack Want, a Sydney lawyer and Commodore of the Sydney Yacht Club. He had been in England in 1883 and purchased the yacht before returning to Australia by steamer. The

Mignonette had been built very strongly for the previous owner as a Dogger Bank fishing smack. It had a beam of 12.4ft, depth of 7.4ft and was insured for £550, about half its actual value. Want had difficulty hiring a crew to sail his newly purchased yacht halfway round the world to Sydney, and it wasn't until the following year that he found four men willing to undertake the



voyage. They were Captain Thomas Dudley, the mate Edwin Stevens, Edmund Brookes and a 17 year old cabin boy named Richard Parker.

The *Mignonette* left Southampton on 19 May 1884, and after calling at Madeira on 5 July was some 700 miles from Saint Helena, the nearest land, running before a gale. Dudley gave the order to heave to so the crew could get some rest, after which Parker was sent below to prepare tea. Almost immediately a large wave struck the yacht, washing away the lee bulwark and opening up the butt ends of the planks at the stern. The yacht began to sink, so the 13ft lifeboat was hurriedly launched, but was holed in its thin ¼ inch planking in their haste. The *Mignonette* sank within five minutes of being struck by the wave, the crew managing to save only some navigation instruments, no water and just two tins of food. These turned out to be two tins of turnips.

A sea anchor was improvised, and on 7 July one of the tins of turnips was opened and shared. Two days later Brookes spotted a turtle which Stephens dragged on board. This and the second tin of turnips lasted about a week. The crew had failed to catch any rainwater, and began to drink their own urine. About 20 July Parker became ill through drinking seawater.

Discussions on survival ensured until on about 23 or 24 July Dudley suggested that it was better that one of them die so that the others might survive. He suggested that they draw lots, but Brookes refused to take part. Dudley then suggested to Stephens that the obvious person to die was Parker. He was, according to them, dying and may have been in a coma. Parker was killed by Dudley pushing his pen knife into the boy's jugular vein, with Stephens holding the victim's legs in case he struggled. The three men then drank blood caught in a tin and fed on Parker's body,

with Dudley and Brooks consuming the most. They also managed to catch a little rainwater, and this and Parker's flesh kept them alive until 29 July when they sighted a sail.

The German barque *Montezuma* picked them up and returned them to Falmouth, arriving on 6 September 1884. As was required by law statutory statements were taken regarding the loss of the *Mignonette* and what occurred subsequently. Both Dudley and Stephens were candid regarding the killing and cannibalism believing themselves to be protected by a 'custom of the sea'. This was that the necessity to save lives was a defence against murder.

The authorities did not agree, and the Home Secretary, after consultation with the Attorney General and Solicitor General, decided to prosecute. Meanwhile, much to the annoyance of the Solicitor General, public sympathy had been firmly on the side of the charged men. The prosecuting lawyer realised that the public sentiment and a lack of witnesses (the only witnesses were the three men, and

FEARFUL SUFFERINGS AT SEA.

LAD KILLED AND EATEN.

A fearful tale of suffering and shipwreck has just come to light, by the landing of three of the men at Falmouth, by a German barque. They were part of the crew of the yacht 'Mignonette,' bound for Australia, which foundered in a storm, and they were twenty-four days in an open boat. Their sufferings were so great that they killed a lad named Parker, and lived on him for several days.

Air—Driven from home.

Just for a few moments your attention I crave,
While I relate a sad death on the wave;
God help poor sailors—for we cannot see
What they go through when alone on the sea.
A terrible story, alas, has been told,
A worse one I'm sure we never could unfold,
Of the sufferings of sailors on the ocean alone,
What they went thro' may never be known.

The waves rose like mountains round the poor ship-
wrecked crew,
Starving and thirsty, oh, what could they do,
They thought of their children, their homes and their
wives,
They killed the poor boy to preserve their own lives,

It was but a vessel fragile and small,
Not fit to sail the Atlantic at all,
The 'Mignonette' yacht was a speck on the wave,
A coffin to carry poor men to their grave.
A storm she encountered she could not withstand
She sank on the ocean far, far from the land;
The captain and crew in an open boat lay
Exposed to the weather by night and by day.

For twenty-four days they were tossed on the sea,
Expecting each moment their last it would be,
Five days without water seven days without food,
By ravenous sharks the boat was pursued,
Mad with the thirst and the hunger as well,
What they did then is fearful to tell,
Between life and death on the desolate wave,
They killed the poor boy their own lives to save.

The captain went to him as he laid on his side,
'Dick your turn's come,' to him he cried,
I pray God forgive me for what I must do,
The story is terrible, but alas! it is true.
The poor lad was stabbed, they drank his life's blood,
He died as his manhood was yet in the bud,
Only nineteen he drew his last breath,
To give life to others he met with his death.

They lived on the body of the ill-fated boy,
To satisfy hunger his limbs did destroy,
It may seem strange to me and to you,
But we cannot tell what hunger will do,
What must it be when day after day,
Starvation slowly takes life away,
The burning sun on them, 'tis fearful to think
Tho' surrounded by water not and dr p to drink

The captain and mate are now on their trial,
To killin': the boy they give no denial,
'Tis a terrible story which they have to tell,
How they have suffered and how the boy fell.
They will never forget those days on the sea,
As long as they live, wherever they be
Good bless poor sailors alone on the wave,
The ocean, alas, is too often their grave.





they had a right to silence) would cause serious problems for his case. He circumvented this problem by stating that he would offer no evidence against Brooks, and requested that he be discharged. Brooks was then called to give evidence as a Crown witness, and that evidence and that of those who had heard the survivors relate their story formed his case. The trial in Exeter opened on 3 November, and the men had a QC for their defending counsel, paid for by public subscription. Both Dudley and Stephens pleaded not guilty, but it was evident that the judge, Baron Huddleston, had made up his mind that they were guilty, and wished to settle the contentious *custom* for ever. The judge had in fact already produced a special verdict he had written previously without waiting for the jury's decision. The two men were found guilty with the jury attempting to add facts to their decision. The judge disregarded these facts, ending his verdict with the statement: *But whether upon the whole matter, the prisoners were and are guilty of murder the jury are ignorant and refer to the Court.* The trial was then adjourned to be heard in London on 25 November 1884.

Between the adjournment of the hearing and 25

November Judge Huddleston realised he had made a serious error-describing *Mignonette* as an 'English merchant vessel' and had altered that to read 'yacht'. This tampering with the written court record and a number of other factors resulted in a further postponement until 4 December. After some legal argument the court found there was no defence of necessity to a charge of murder, and Dudley and Stephens were sentenced to death, but with a recommendation for mercy. The two were sentenced to six months in prison, and were released on 20 May 1885. This case is still taught at Law Schools in England and America.

By an extremely strange coincidence the author Edgar Allan Poe had in 1838 written a story, *The Narrative of Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, a whaling novel in which a man named Richard Parker was eaten by fellow shipwrecked sailors.

It is believed that Poe took the name of Richard Parker for his character in the novel from the man hung in 1797 after the famous Nore Mutiny.

Peter Worsley

Mignonette under full sail (below)

