

MARITIME HERITAGE ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

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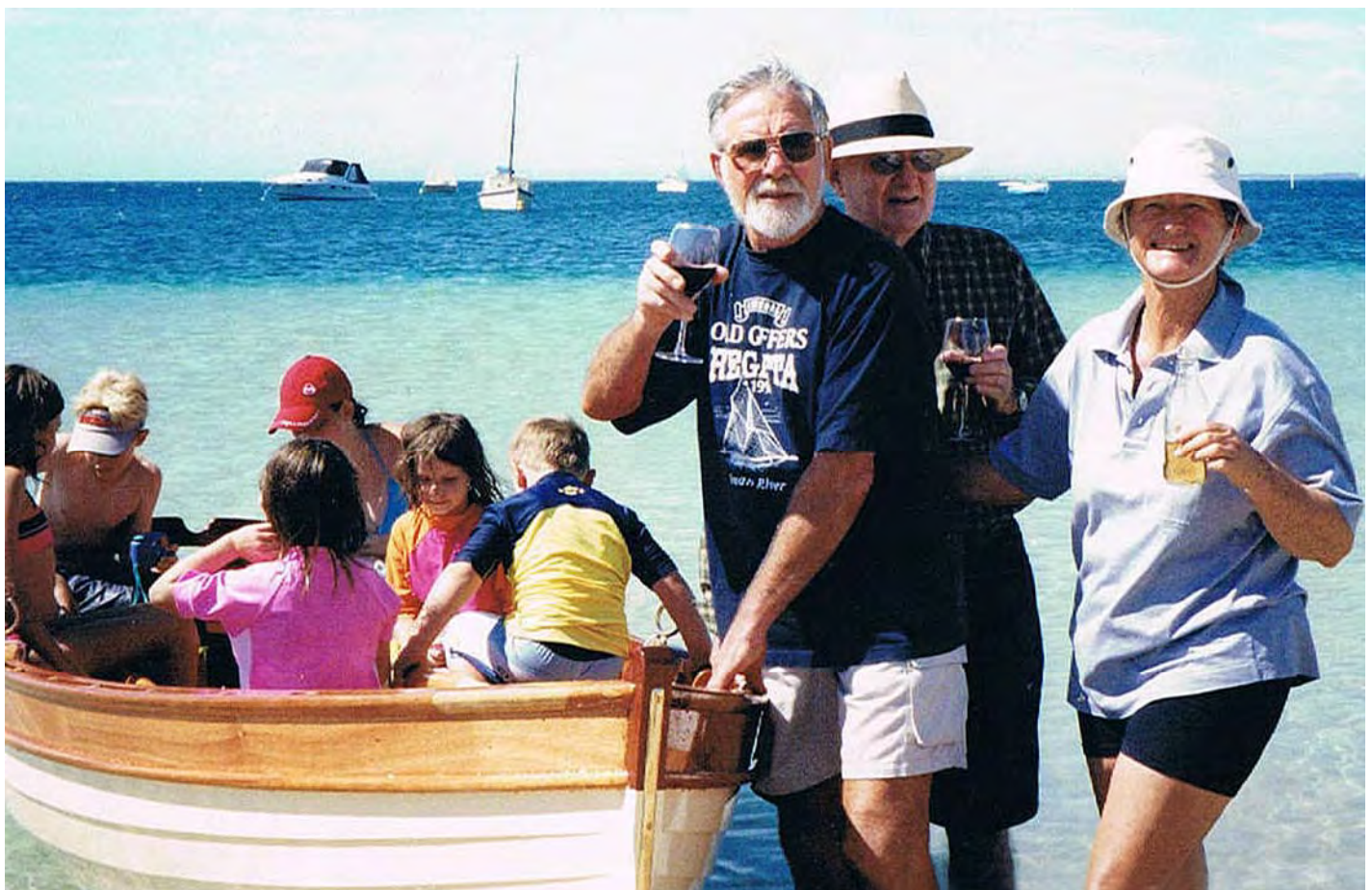
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*A quarterly publication of the
Maritime Heritage Association, Inc.*

C/o: The Secretary (Marcia Van Zeller)
47 Conochie Crescent
Manning, W.A. 6152

Treasurer: Bob Johnson, PO Box 1080, Guilderton, W.A. 6041.

Editor: Peter Worsley. 12 Cleopatra Drive, Mandurah, W.A. 6210
Email: mha.editor@gmail.com



Brian Axcell (left) with Sydney and Danae Corser. Jack Tar is carrying a precious cargo

See article page 9



The Maritime Heritage Association Journal is the official newsletter of the Maritime Heritage Association of Western Australia, Incorporated.

(If you have an unwanted collection of magazines of a maritime nature, then perhaps its time to let others enjoy reading it. Contact the Association; we may be interested in archiving the collection.)

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The Editor, 12 Cleopatra Drive, MANDURAH, Western Australia, 6210. mha.editor@gmail.com**

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EDITORIAL

It is a very welcome fact that I have received a few articles from people who have not previously contributed items to this journal. It can be difficult to edit the MHA journal if I don't receive material from readers. It is not necessary to be an MHA member to have an article published by the Association in its quarterly journal. So please put fingers to keyboards and continue to send me something!

This plea turns up in the heading to the Ditty Bag in each journal, but perhaps you skip that bit and go straight to the snippets of information that makes up the Bag. Surely it is possible for all members (and other interested readers) to send me some obscure but interesting fact that could be included in the Bag.

I am sure that as you browse the internet, over a three month period you must also come across sites

which would be of interest to other readers. The addresses of these sites could also be passed on in future issues, along with a small precis of their contents.



Did You Know?

There is a superstition among sailors that to sail on a Friday brings bad luck. The following is from *Incidents of a Whaling Voyage* by Francis Allyn Olmsted, published in 1841:

I have been told, that several years ago a ship was built and sent to sea to test this superstition, and convince the craft of its folly. The keel of the ship was laid on Friday; on Friday her masts were set; she was completed on Friday, and launched on this day. Her name was Friday, and she was sent to sea on Friday; but unfortunately for the success of the experiment, was never heard of again.



Maritime Heritage Association Inc.

President's Report to the Annual General Meeting

April 2nd, 2017

This has been a year of regrouping and consolidation for the MHA and a year in which our esteemed treasurer again reports an excellent financial situation.

I won't claim that we have implemented a strategy to make the MHA Great Again, either because it is still great or because . . .

I will say that we are forging ahead with the publication of maritime heritage. We are headed for world domination in maritime heritage publication.

Manuscripts progressing through pre-production phases include: Tim Blue's *Whalehunters of the West*, and *A Hazardous Life: Captain George A.D. Forsyth (1853-1894) – Mariner and First Chief Harbour Master for the Colony of Western Australia* by the brothers Forsyth, Ian and Ron. At a slightly earlier phase in the process are my history of the Indonesian Perahu Pinisi, Ross Shardlow's *History of the Emily Taylor* and Jill Worsley's *Wagyl – a history of the Swan River*.

This year has seen the publication of *Brian Lemon and his Wonderful Models*, a fitting tribute to the esteemed man with a major contribution by Ross Shardlow. And we must also thank Ross for taking on the role of Southwestern Region Sales Director.

The MHA Journal continues to be the flagship publication in its field. Many thanks to our indefatigable Journal editor, Peter Worsley. Our website continues as an important research asset for maritime heritage enthusiasts and professionals world-wide, through the online publication of the Journal. Our thanks to web-master Bob Johnson.

Julie and Marcia are leading the important work to complete the MHA style manual. Many thanks to them and all on the crucial Publications Committee.

Aside from publication, the sale of the Albatross trailer and display stand to Carnarvon Heritage Group has benefitted our financial position significantly and continues the purpose for which the trailer was built.

Syd Corser has, most generously, donated his classic clinker dinghy, *Jack Tar*, to the MHA. The dinghy was built by Brian Axcel, back in the heyday of Wooden Boat Works, an organisation founded by the MHA. *Jack Tar* will be displayed in Robin Hicks' splendid new museum.

Public outreach continues with Marcia's lecture tour, which has included the City of South Perth's 'Words with Wine' series at Manning Library and the Margaret River Historical Society.

Geoff has given a well-received talk to the Rockingham Historical Society.

A couple of projects are yet to reach fruition. The Brian Lemon Memorial Prize for scale model-making is one of these, and the all-important design-phase of the MHA Assets Register is near finalisation.

Once again, I would like to thank all the committee members for their many efforts and successes in keeping the Association on the course plotted by Admiral Shardlow back in the previous century, and still making respectable headway.

Nick Burningham

MHA Committee

The following were elected to the MHA Committee at the AGM held on 2 April 2017:

President: Nick Burningham,

Treasurer: Bob Johnson

Secretary: Marcia van Zeller

Editor: Peter Worsley

Publications Officer: Julie Taylor

Committee Members: Murray Kornweibel, Geoff Vickridge, Jill Worsley



The Ditty Bag

An occasional collection of nautical trivia to inform, astound, amuse and inspire.

(The inspiration could take the form of contributions to this page!)



Walter Taylor and his son (also Walter) began the first mass-production of wooden rigging blocks in the western world during the latter half of the 18th century. From 1759 they were the sole supplier of blocks to the Royal Navy, until Taylor, Jnr, died in 1803 when the contract was taken over by Marc Isambard Brunel. The Taylors were supplying 100,000 blocks per year to an exact standard for the RN. They guaranteed replacement if any of their blocks failed.

The owners of the ships that brought convicts to Australia were paid so much per vessel ton for the trip out. For example, in 1840 for the *Asia* (536 tons) it was £5.9s per ton, out of which all expenses had to be met. The following year the *Mexborough* (376 tons) received £6.6s per ton.

The first time a submarine launched a torpedo while submerged was in 1890 by an electric-powered submarine of the Spanish Navy.

The first British ship casualty during WW II was the 13,465-ton liner *Athenia*. It was torpedoed by *U-30* (Oberleutnant Lemp) at 7.40 pm on 3 September 1939. War had been declared by Britain less than nine hours previously, at 11.15 am. The *Athenia* remained afloat until 10.40 the following morning, enabling rescue ships to take off most of the 1,418 people on board. 117 died. The torpedoing of the passenger ship was in violation of both the Hague Convention and the London Naval Treaty.

The following are some monthly pay rates promulgated in January 1824 for RN personnel:

1st Lt £11.10s (1st rate ship); £9.4s (sloop)
Master £13.0.8 (1st rate ship); £7.13.4 (sloop)
Midshipman (all ships) £2.8s
Surgeon (all ships) £12.5.4

In 1883 the Royal Navy unsuccessfully searched for Drake's lead coffin. However, they searched in the wrong place, Puerto Cabello instead of Puerto Belo where Drake was buried at sea. The two places are hundreds of miles apart.

In 1865 John 'Rob Roy' MacGregor had a 15-ft, 77lb canoe which he named *Rob Roy* built in London. In it he sailed through many of Europe's canals, lakes and rivers, starting what has been described as the birth of canoeing and kayaking as a sport. His book *A Thousand Miles in the Rob Roy Canoe on Twenty Lakes and Rivers of Europe*, published in January 1866 sold out immediately, and the second edition just three months later sold 2,000 copies in five days.

George Bayley, third mate on the *Hooghly*, wrote in his journal on 17 February 1830 regarding Cockburn Sound:

When we came to the entrance it was truly horrible to see the rocks and reefs in all directions. The channel is not more than half a mile wide and only small beacons to direct us through.

The ship *Columbia* departed Boston in 1787, and became the first American ship to circumnavigate the world.

The Baltimore clipper *Ann McKim* (494 tons) cost \$50,000 to build in 1833, of which \$9,000 was just for the copper fastenings.

Taiwan currently has four submarines in its navy. Two of these were built in the USA prior to the end of World War II. It was announced that one of them, originally the USS *Cutlass* now *Hai Shih*, would be refurbished at a cost of US\$19 million so that it will last until 2026. It would then become the submarine with the longest active career, 81 years.

HSK *Kormoran* which sank HMAS *Sydney* on 19 November 1941 carried 5,200 tons of diesel fuel. This gave it a range of 84,500 miles at 10 knots.

When HMAS *Sydney II* sank, it hit the sea bottom 2,468m down so hard that the ship bounced and slewed sideways. The groove in the seabed where it first hit is one metre deep, even after more than 75 years.



My Time on *Singa Betina*

The ninth episode of Ted Whiteaker's tale.

We anchored on the outer edge of the moorings in front of the Gove Yacht Club late in the afternoon on Friday 21 January 1983. There were a couple of wooden boats from the Dinah Beach [Darwin] diaspora there, and a lot of social chitchat as acquaintanceships were renewed. Going ashore next day, I was pleasantly surprised to meet up with John Parry, an old high-school friend who was now the Regional Director of the Department of Transport and Works in the East Arnhem Region. John asked me what I was doing there, and I explained that I was looking for work. He asked what sort of work I was after, and I outlined my skills at labouring, gardening, painting and carpentry, but said that I would ideally like to use my boat to cart small cargoes around. He asked me to see him in his office the following Monday to discuss possibilities.

When I went to see John at the appointed time, he said that he needed to get a rough survey done in relation to a proposed windmill installation and bore equipment at an outstation called Dhipirringura (most often shortened to *Dhipirri*; the suffix '-ngura' simply indicates 'place'), on the mainland near Milingimbi Island. A basic mud-map of the layout of the outstation, with the bore location, general description of the terrain, and heights of trees was required. For John to do the survey himself would require a return air charter from Gove to Milingimbi, liaison with the Milingimbi Outstation Resource Centre (ORC) to get a dinghy from Milingimbi to Dhipirri, and his time at Departmental executive rates. If I could give him a price that proved economical, I would have the job. I went off and made enquiries about costs of return charter flights, and fudged up a figure of a couple of hundred dollars that was accepted. It was far too cheap, but I was happy enough with the prospect of moving about and being paid for it. We planned to set off the following week.

Shortly after our arrival in Gove, Ken had asked us to take him around to Cape Arnhem, one of the local beauty spots about thirty miles south of Gove, to take some promotional photographs. It paid a few dollars, and we did a short trip, overnighting at the Cape and returning the next day. Ken and Ros then left the boat to move on elsewhere. They were nice people, easy to be with, and some of the best crew we had had on board *Singa Betina*.

In preparation for the Dhipirri trip, we then blew our cash reserves on four 44-gallon drums of petrol and one of diesel, and a twenty-litre drum of two-stroke outboard engine oil; intending to call in at any outstations we could find along the way to sell them. Before departing Gove, we sank our sixty-pound plough anchor into the mud with sixty feet of short-link 3/8"

chain and buoyed it off as a semi-permanent mooring to mark our spot in the anchorage.

Our first stop was at Mata-Mata, an Elcho Island-administered outstation on the mainland in the English Company Islands. Cabbage, who had turned up in Gove just before we left, gave us the location details and directions for anchoring. The charts for the area were incomplete, making local knowledge of reefs, rocks and tidal influences a necessity to get around, and Cabbage was a font of information in this regard. Mata-Mata is about 45nm from Gove, and distinguishable by a gravel airstrip that was aligned perpendicularly to the mangrove-fringed shore and clearly visible from Nalwarung Strait out front.

We arrived in the mid-afternoon, anchoring a mile offshore in a depth of eight metres. We went ashore and walked up the airstrip to find the camp deserted. The outstation consisted of a couple of standard corrugated iron and bush-pole shacks, and a couple of stilted structures with elevated sleeping platforms about a metre and a half above ground and topped with a low iron roof. This design allowed smoke from a fire underneath to percolate around the occupants above to keep the mossies and sand flies at bay. I later came to appreciate the ingenuity - Mata-Mata has a reputation for biting midges.

Ellen Kettle, in her book "Gone Bush" (Devonshire Press, 1967), described Mata-Mata in 1963 thus:

At the side of the airstrip stood the most surprising aboriginal village I had seen: the houses were all on high spindly stilts with precariously frail ladders leading up to them. Built of heavy bark, the houses were not high enough to stand up in, but would have provided excellent shelter during wet weather. The ground around the houses had been raked clear of rubbish, and billycans and pannikins hung under the houses out of the reach of dogs. Young Poinciana trees, cashew nuts and mangoes surrounded the living area. I felt anxious to meet the owners.

Twenty years later, we felt the same.

We returned to the boat and spent the night pondering what to do next. John Parry had given us a couple of trenching shovels to drop off there to prepare for installation of poly-pipe for reticulation to a water tank from a proposed windmill over an existing bore. There was a hand-pump on the bore that was not very effective, but saved the labour of lugging jerry cans from the original water source, a beautiful little freshwater stream on the beach a mile or so distant from the camp.



Next morning a dinghy appeared from down the strait, and came alongside. In it were Don, his wife Dorothy and daughter Christine; and his older brother Bluey, all from Mata-Mata; and a brother-in-law, Johnny, from Gikal, a nearby camp on the coast. They were returning from a visit to another outstation and came aboard for a cup of tea. When introductions were completed, Don adopted us forthwith into the Burarrwanga clan and I became his classificatory brother, with Jude classed as Dorothy's sister. *Singa Betina* was included in our adoption, and gained the alias of *Birru Pirru* after the Pleiades constellation. The name loosely translated to 'Canoe of the Old People' ('Old People' meaning Yolngu ancestors, not us. The word *pirru* is likely a derivative of the Macassan *perahu*. The Burarrwanga clan have a visibly obvious degree of Macassan influence in their bloodlines).

A familial classification is a pre-requisite for any meaningful relationship with Aboriginal people. Without it, white fellas are regarded as simply peripheral background noise of no material consequence in the Indigenous scheme of things. The Yolngu had heard of our movements from Cabbage, who was also an adoptee of the tribe, and were expecting us. They said we could get closer to shore, and guided us in between the reefs to an anchorage half a mile off the end of the airstrip in six metres of depth. It took me some time to get used to the possibility of shallow anchoring after the extreme tidal ranges of Darwin Harbour – the maximum range in these areas was around four metres.

They bought a drum of petrol, which we pumped out into an empty drum in their dinghy. After a lazy day of instructions about the kinship system and general chat, we moved on to Elcho, skidding over the mud bank at the entrance to Cadell Strait before a heavy squall line that pursued us up the channel to the barge landing at Wapuruwa. We fairly flew along, motor sailing with just the jib set.

After another day at anchor, we set off for Milingimbi. Our navigational aids, down to charts, compass, the depth sounder, binoculars, and a wristwatch after the loss of the log impeller a few weeks beforehand, were simplified further as we approached the outer passage around Rapuma Island, when my watch ceased to function. We had no other timekeeper on board other than a transistor radio, which gave intermittent service as we travelled in and out of reception areas. This was no big deal since our coastal passages were generally daylight journeys within sight of identifiable land.

We made our way through the entrance channels, losing both spoon lures to big strikes as we passed through reef areas, and finally anchored at Milingimbi late in the afternoon. The local Outstation Resource Centre had been advised of our coming and on reaching shore the boss, old Jimmy, met us and after introductions and a bit of chat, established that he was my *Mari* (Grandfather). The Mata-Mata mob had obviously been in radio contact and established our bona fides. This made me his *Gutarra*, or grandson. The

Mari-Gutarra relationship is a strong bond of reciprocal respect and mutual care and in subsequent years I spent some time working at Milingimbi, with Jimmy becoming my mentor in furthering my understanding of the intricacies of Yolngu society and thought. ('Yolngu' is the term that the people of Eastern Arnhem Land apply to themselves as Indigenous people).

Arrangements were made for the ORC dinghy with its 40HP outboard to be ready on the next morning's high tide to scoot across to Dhipirri, which was fifteen miles away to the south east on the mainland. The inshore Crocodile Islands are a maze of mud and sand flats at low tide, with local knowledge essential for the intricate navigation required to get around. Milingimbi itself seemed a strange place for human habitation at first glance. With a habitable diameter of about four miles, and surrounded by salt flats, mud and mangroves, the island is low and flat, with a maximum elevation of fifteen metres. It's the sand fly and mosquito capital of the world, but the couple of hundred inhabitants are fiercely patriotic and for them, it's home. The Methodist Overseas Mission had established there in 1924, and slowly pacified the aggressive tribal factions in the area by sheer determination and unwavering missionary zeal. The island was occupied by the military in World War 2, with an important airstrip built and used as a base for missions into South East Asia and New Guinea. Most of the locals were evacuated to Elcho Island to get them out of the firing line, and there were several attacks by Japanese bombers, with some allied aircraft wrecks still in evidence today.

Next morning, Mickey the boat driver and a couple of other young men picked us up off *Singa Betina*, and we went to the outstation, located on the shore of Castlereagh Bay, a couple of miles west of the Woolen River mouth. Dhipirri is fronted by a sweeping sandy beach, with a gently rising background of stringybark forest. There was one corrugated iron shack there, but nobody in residence, and after being shown the bore site I drew up a mud map, pacing out distances and using a sextant to determine the tree height. The job was done in an hour or two, and we returned to Milingimbi to report to Jimmy. I told him that we had fuel on board for sale if there were any outstations that might require it. He showed me a wall map in his office, and pointed out two outstations that were currently occupied; one north of Milingimbi on the north-western side of Moorungga Island, and the other to the east on Howard Island not far from Elcho. He said he would let them know by radio that we were coming. Most of the outstations had Codan 6924 HF radio transceivers for communication with each other, and regular schedules were maintained with the ORCs, provided the twelve-volt vehicle batteries used to power them held out and the radios remained serviceable. Usually there was a generator available to charge the batteries, and sometimes a solar panel, but scarcity of fuel and mechanical breakdowns along the chain of dependency often meant long periods of radio silence.



After a dawn start the next day, we covered the fifteen miles to Moorungga and threaded our way through the large rocks visible in the clear waters off the beach, anchored, and went ashore to meet an old man, Michael, and a couple of kids who were in occupation. They had not received any notification of our visit because their radio was not working. When I asked Michael if he needed any fuel, he said, “Oh, my boy, I would like some fuel, but we don’t have any money”. We had anchored fairly close to shore, which was exposed to the open ocean with a bit of a swell rolling in, and as the tide was dropping rapidly, we exchanged a few pleasantries before setting off again for Langarra, the outstation on Howard Island some 25nm to the east-southeast.

Langarra has a long, sandy beach with a black rock reef at either end, and the outstation is behind a grassy secondary dune beyond the steep beachfront. The bay has a flat sandy bottom, and we anchored that afternoon on the low tide half a mile from shore. The community is not visible from the sea, but through the binoculars we could see a tell-tale dinghy pulled up at the high tide mark about where we expected to find the camp. There was no movement and the area looked deserted. We decided to wait for the tide to rise over the sand flats before attempting to reach the shore, and kept watch for signs of people. Nothing happened for an hour or more, and then we saw a mob of women and children in a tight group trudging along the top of the sand dune along the beachfront, heading towards the camp. They were moving quickly, and gave the impression something was not quite right. I set off in the dinghy to make contact, and as I got closer to shore, the party disappeared over the dunes, leaving one lookout observing my progress and turning occasionally to report to the others out of view behind her. I reached the beach and anchored the dinghy, adopted my best non-threatening pose, and approached slowly to within hailing distance of the lookout, who was exhibiting signs of nervousness. I stopped and called out, explaining my circumstances. The lookout reported back to the others behind the dune, and eventually the whole mob of twenty or so women and kids tentatively collected and came down for a closer inspection.

After I gave a full explanation, they visibly relaxed and said they had not heard from Jimmy at the Milingimbi ORC because their radio was not working, and the outstation *bungawah* (boss, from the Macassan *Pungawa*), a man called Geoffrey, was off on the tractor hunting with the other men and boys, but would be back soon. Their nervous behaviour was explained when the spokeswoman apologised, saying “Sorry, *wawa* (brother). We thought you were fishermen.” This intriguing statement, eloquent in its brevity, brought to mind the chequered not-so-distant history of contact between whites and blacks along these stretches of lonely coast. We all sat down and chatted for a while until a small tractor and trailer loaded with the men appeared, chugging along the dune line. After introductions were established, they bought forty

litres of petrol and 400cc of outboard oil for \$33.00. We were not going to get rich quickly with our trading at this rate.

We spent the night offshore, rolling in the swell, and the next morning a visiting dinghy came alongside and bought another 40 litres of petrol and 55 litres of diesel for the tractor on shore. We then set off for Elcho, and anchored in that afternoon at Mission Bay, out the front of Galiwin’ku. Early the next morning, in the dim, grey pre-dawn light, we were rudely awakened by a hell of a clattering at the foot of the companionway, not far from the foot of our bedding. I leapt up in alarm, banging my head on the parcel shelf in the process, and found a decent breakfast-sized mackerel had arrived through the hatch and was flapping about stunned on the floor. This was the sort of fishing I liked – no chance of a lost lure, and an absolutely certain result for the frying pan.

Greg and Trish, the schoolteachers of our previous ill-fated Raragala charter, took us under their wing and were very hospitable to us, providing the odd meal and shower facilities for a few days while we made contact with extended members of the Burarrwanga mob and allied relatives. The local YMCA bought the remaining spare petrol, leaving one drum in reserve that I had promised to keep for Rurruwuy, an Arnhem Bay outstation, and which was to be offloaded at Mata-Mata.

We delivered the fuel to Mata-Mata, and returned to Gove with brother Don, Dorothy and Christine catching a lift with us. The north-westerlies had set in at ten to fifteen knots and we ploughed along in good time, finding our mooring anchor at 9pm on a Saturday night after a fortnight away. We still had three-quarters of a drum of diesel, but had sold all the petrol, and felt happy with results. Because of the ad-hoc nature of the journey, the customers were not aware of our presence, and generally had not much cash on hand to part with. As time passed and we got more regular with our schedule, they arranged their finances to take advantage of our availability and were supportive of our endeavours. We provided a practical economic alternative to the usual practice of paying community prices for drums of fuel, which then had to be delivered to the outstations by local aircraft charter – a very expensive option.



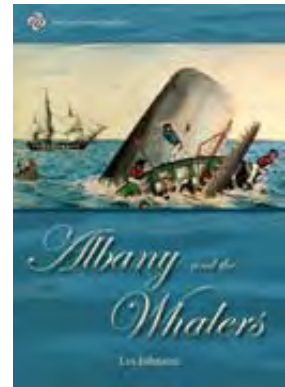


Publications by MHA Members

Albany and the Whalers by Les Johnson. Republished by the Maritime Heritage Association 2015.

Albany and the Whalers chronicles the whaling industry's development and demise in Australia, from the voyage of the *Emilia* from Britain to the South Pacific in 1790, to Albany's rise as an important whaling centre in the mid-1800s, and the closure of the Cheynes Beach whaling venture in 1978

Available: The MHA Secretary, email: vanzellerm@gmail.com



The Capes by Marcia Van Zeller. Published 2015.

The Capes is an historical novel that challenges long-held beliefs about the wreck of the *Georgette* off Western Australia, in 1876. According to many accounts, 16-year-old Grace Bussell and Aboriginal stockman Samuel Isaacs rode their horses into treacherous surf to deliver fifty souls from the stranded ship. The incident made heroes of them both. Perth writer/academic and MHA Secretary Marcia van Zeller proposes an alternative reading of this tragic shipwreck tale.

Available: email: vanzellerm@gmail.com



Brian Lemon and his Wonderful Models compiled by David Nicholson.

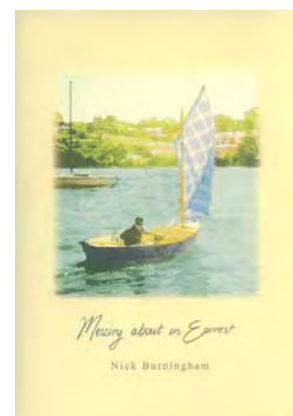
Brian Lemon was a maritime heritage enthusiast and consummate maker of ship models whose work was known and lauded around Australia and the world. Brian, who was born in Perth and had a long career as an aerial photographer, died in 2016 at the age of 84, but his legacy lives on in this book. Compiled by long-time friend and professional photographer David Nicholson, *Brian Lemon and his Wonderful Models* is a tribute to Brian's extraordinary body of work, told in superb photographs by David and humorous and touching tribute from his friends.



Messing about in Earnest by Nick Burningham. Published 2003.

Take a river journey in a small boat with Nick Burningham at the helm. *Messing about in Earnest* is a delightful blend of travel writing, history, geography and real-life adventure. Nick drifts down the Swan and Canning rivers in his trusty boat called *Earnest*. His book takes the reader on the trip of a lifetime with whimsical and humorous stories of the people, places and history he encounters.

Available: Fremantle Press, ABC Shop, The Chart and Map Shop and other quality outlets.





Jack Tar: A Generous Donation

By Nick Burningham

Long-standing Maritime Heritage Association member Sydney Corser AM OBE has donated his much-loved clinker-built sailing dinghy, *Jack Tar* to the MHA. This classic boat will be displayed at Robin Hicks' splendid new rigging loft and venue for the Maritime Museum founded by his late father, Barry Hicks.

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 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 Axcel to build the dinghy. Brian is now retired, 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 is a yachtsman of international renown. He built his own first boat at around 17 years of age, a VJ (Vaucluse Junior), and began competitive sailing with the South of Perth Yacht Club.

He won his first Australian 14ft class Championship in 1958 and successfully defended the Australian 14ft class Championship title in 1959 and 1960. He went on to win numerous national sailing championships and represented Australia in regattas in the USA, Sweden, Norway and Italy. Sydney was instrumental in establishing the Ron Tough Yachting Foundation that provides financial support to the yacht clubs and competitors. In 1986 he was awarded yachting's highest honour, the Ron

Tough Gold Medal, in recognition of his services to the sport.

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 Axcel and Sydney Corser.

Editor's note:

When donating *Jack Tar*, Sydney Corser made special mention of Brian Axcel'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 the 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.

The name Jack Tar was chosen by Brian in memory of his much loved dog and companion, a Blue Heeler/Kelpie cross.

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





The Saga of the *Moorburg*

Journal readers may remember the story of Margaretha Meinders and the German 3-masted topsail schooner *Johanna* in the September 2016 journal. Eleven years earlier another German schooner, the *Moorburg*, had also brought praise to the captain's wife.

The German 3-masted schooner *Moorburg* (227 tons) sailed under the command of Captain H. Boldt. On board were Captain Boldt's wife, Maria, and their six year-old son. Mrs Boldt had sailed with her husband for four or five years, and was therefore acquainted with sailing and navigating.

Moorburg loaded with a cargo of tea at Foochow, China, and sailed for Melbourne on 11 July 1879. On board were the captain, his wife and child, the German mate named Lond, four or five Manilla seamen (according to various newspaper reports) and a Chinese cook. During the first part of the voyage the weather was excessively hot, and by early September near the Solomon Islands a member of the crew came down with what was described as some form of tropical disease:

of a dropsical nature... His limbs and other parts of his body became so distended that he became utterly helpless. The disease appeared to be infectious, for in a day or two afterwards three more of the seamen, and then the captain and the mate, became similarly affected, and all were laid up (West Australian, 2 July 1880: 2f & 3a-b).

All the sailors died with the exception of the captain and mate, and then the *Moorburg* was struck by a storm. With her husband and the mate too sick to carry out any tasks Mrs Boldt took the wheel and sailed the schooner to Moreton Bay, arriving on 14 October. Here the pilot brought it into Brisbane. Many of the sails had blown out as neither the captain nor the mate was capable of furling them.

At first the newspapers reported that the crew had been overcome with scurvy, but it was later reported as a 'tropical disease' as stated above. Captain Boldt needed five weeks of medical treatment before he was once again fit enough to sail the *Moorburg*. The schooner departed Brisbane on 17 November, arriving in Melbourne on 12 December, after again experiencing bad weather. At Melbourne a newspaper advertised the sale of 899 packages of '1st crop of this season's tea...All more or less damaged by sea water' (*Argus*, 12 January 1880: 2d) from the *Moorburg*.

In recognition of her courage the German Consul, W.A. Brahe, on behalf of the German Society of Melbourne presented Mrs Boldt with a testimonial and gold locket set with diamonds on a gold chain together with a purse of £57. The testimonial presented to Mrs Boldt in Melbourne read:

Mrs Maria Boldt, of the German schooner Moorburg.

The undersigned have been deputed by your countrymen, residing in Melbourne, and some British fellow-citizens, to welcome you amongst them, and to offer you their sincere congratulations on the safe arrival, with the aid of God's providence, of yourself, husband and child, and the vessel under the command of Captain Boldt, after an eventful and terrible voyage from China to Australia. On this voyage, when the whole crew was prostrated with fever, five of them not to rise again, when the ship had sprung a leak, when there was little hope of the vessel ever reaching a port of safety, you did not lose hope and confidence, but with marvellous courage, self-devotion, and endurance, not only attended to the necessities of the sick, but performed the duties of a common seaman, and materially assisted in the naviga-



PERILOUS POSITION OF THE GERMAN SHIP MOORBURG.—THE CAPTAIN'S WIFE AT THE WHEEL.



tion of the ship. We doubt not that you have thus been the means of saving valuable lives and property. Heroism such as you have manifested on this occasion fills us with the greater admiration, as there are but rare instances of it amongst women. Thus giving expression to our acknowledgement of your high-spirited qualities, we request you to accept the accompanying locket and present to remind you hereafter of your Melbourne friends.

W.A. Brahe, Chairman

J.G. Luehman, Hon. Secretary

Melbourne, 3rd January, 1880 (*Argus*, 5 January 1880: 6f).

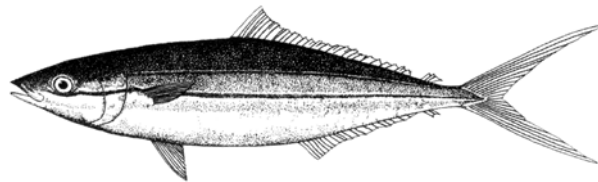
Other rewards came her way. The 'insurance companies, and underwriters for the cargo of tea which the *Moorburg* brought, have presented a purse of 75 sovereigns to Mrs Boldt, and have also given a sum to be distributed among the crew' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 January 1880: 5f).

After arriving at Fremantle on 15 May 1880 the Governor, Sir William Robinson, presented Mrs Boldt with a medal from the National Shipwreck Relief Society of New South Wales at a large gathering of the State's dignitaries.

During the night of Saturday 10 July 1880 the *Moorburg* was loading a cargo of sandalwood for Hong Kong when a severe north-westerly gale struck the Fremantle area. This continued all night, and early on Sunday morning the *Moorburg* dragged its mooring and went ashore at Owen Anchorage. It was stated to be firmly embedded in the sand.

Although the *Moorburg* appeared to have suffered little damage it was necessary to off-load some of the cargo. By 17 July it was reported that 40 tons had been taken ashore, but it was expected that all the cargo would need to be discharged before it was possible to get the schooner afloat. This, together with the salvage and the subsequent re-loading of the cargo took until 10 August when the *Moorburg* sailed for Hong Kong. Mrs Boldt and her son were still on board, plus a crew of seven.

The *Moorburg*'s bad luck continued, as on 7 September, a month after departing from Fremantle, it struck Belvedere Rock in Gelasa Strait, Indonesia, and became a complete wreck. Captain Boldt, Maria Boldt, their son and all seven crewmen were rescued by the American barque *Abiel Abbott* (Captain Chase).



The Leeuwin Current

In autumn and winter a fascinating phenomenon takes place along the Western Australian coast that has far-reaching consequences for the distribution of marine life throughout the area. The Leeuwin Current is a band of warm, low-salinity water that moves south from Exmouth to Cape Leeuwin. On reaching Cape Leeuwin, it flows eastward to Esperance.

In winter, when it is at its strongest, the Leeuwin Current can usually be identified from satellite imagery as a stream of warm water moving down the upper continental slope. It is around 50 kilometres wide and 200 metres deep and moves south at a rate of between one and three knots. It appears to originate as a result of a complex pattern of water circulation from the Western Pacific

Ocean through the Indonesian Archipelago and from currents and eddies in the Indian Ocean.

The current transports larvae of tropical marine life, such as corals, south and provides a flow of warmer water that enables many tropical and subtropical species to survive further south than they would in other parts of the world. The many tropical fish that proliferate in Perth's Marmion Marine Park and on the spectacular reefs around Rottnest Island can also be attributed to the Leeuwin Current.

Thomson, C. (ed.), 1997, *Dive & Snorkel Sites in Western Australia*. Department of Conservation and Land Management, Como, WA. p87.



Ships of the State Shipping Service

By Jeff Thompson

OCEAN CREDIT IMO Number : 8509404

The delayed delivery of the new chartered ship *Roberta Jull*, having mechanical problems on completion, necessitated an additional vessel to be chartered in 1990 to meet the shipping obligations of the State Shipping Service. This ship was the *Ocean Credit*, chartered from Pan Rex shipping Co (Panama), the Panamanian flagged subsidiary of China Ocean Shipping Co, China, for 2 voyages to South East Asia to replace the *C. Y. O'Connor*, diverted to the Australian services.

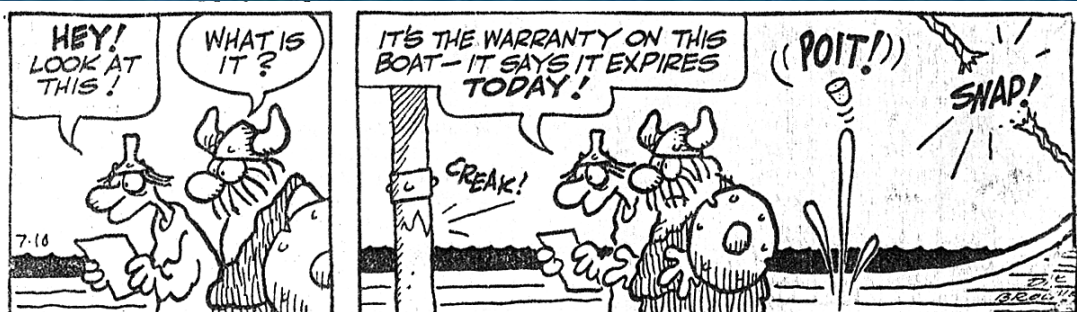
The *Ocean Credit* was built by Hayashkane Shipbuilding & Engineering Co., Nagasaki, Japan (yard No. 935) for the Guangzhou Ocean Shipping Co., China in March 1986. She was 4,181 gross registered tons, 4,976 deadweight tons,

108.5 metres overall, 100 metres between perpendiculars, 17 metres breadth, 6.35 metres draft and fitted with a single Hitachi/MAN B&W 6-cylinder 6L35MC diesel of 4,560 bhp to give a service speed of 14.5 knots.

In September 1990 *Ocean Credit* was returned to her owners and left Fremantle in ballast for Port Adelaide, arriving there on 20th September 1990. On 25th September 1990 departed Port Adelaide for Bangkok with a load of soda ash. Her owners took delivery of the vessel at Bangkok on 11th October 1990.

Still listed in 2005/06 Lloyds' Register.

Editor's note: Name changed in July 2005 to *Victoria*, and registered at Vladivostock.





They Served Neither King nor Fuehrer, Only Humanity

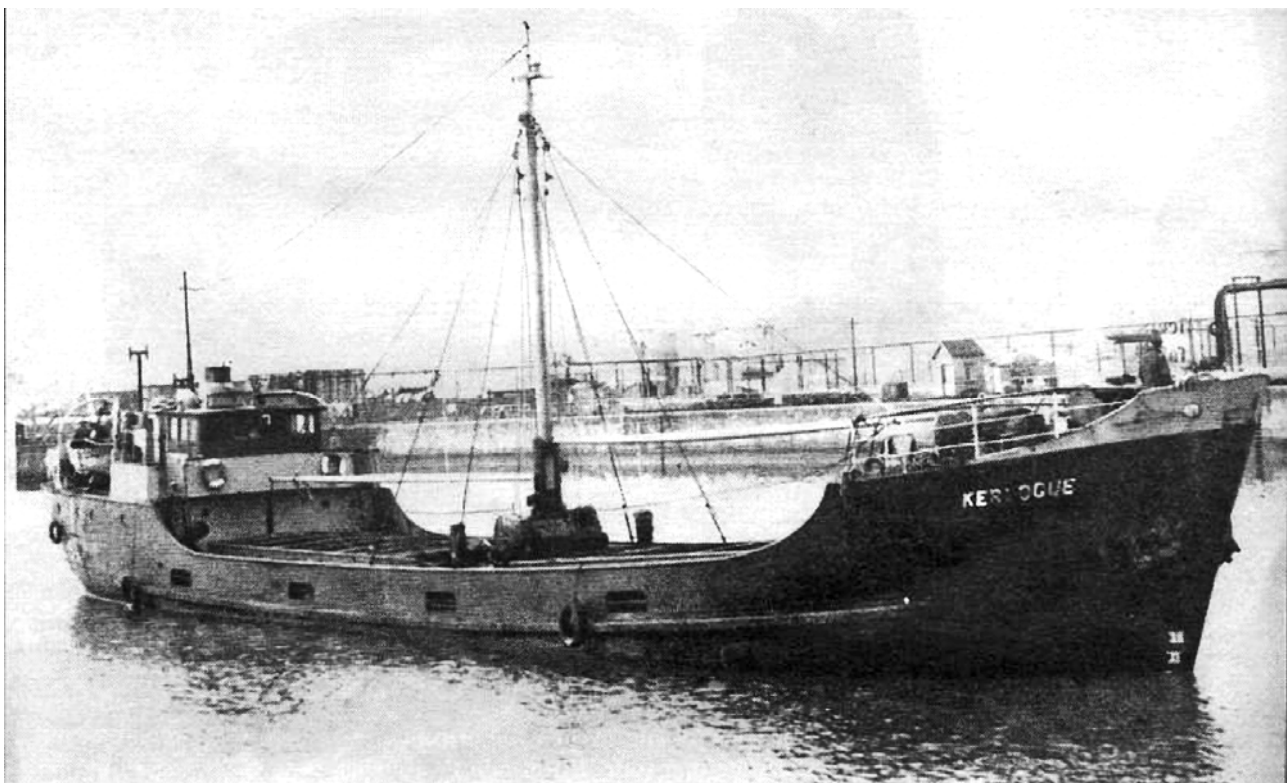
The MV *Kerlogue* was the smallest of three ships belonging to the Wexford Steamship Company. It was built in Rotterdam in 1939, just prior to the outbreak of the war. Intended for coastal work, it was a mere 142ft long and able to carry up to 335 tons, but its freeboard when loaded was less than one foot. It carried an 11-man crew. Between its maiden voyage and 1945 it experienced attack by the allies (who allegedly mistook it for a French or Italian ship), it was damaged by an acoustic mine, and saved seamen from both sides. Through all this, it continued to act as neutral a cargo ship, sailing out of convoy with the tricolour and EIRE painted in large letters on the sides and deck, and with full navigation lights. Perhaps the most striking factor when considering all of the activities of the *Kerlogue's* crew during these war years was not just the number of lives they saved, but that they saved lives from both sides – highlighting Ireland's neutrality during the war, and thus making the crew's actions purely humanitarian.

2 April 1941. Following an attack by German bombers on a British convoy, the *Wild Rose*, a collier out of Liverpool, was damaged by bombs, its engines were disabled, its two lifeboats were unable to be launched and it was left behind. The *Kerlogue* en route Wexford to Cardiff under the

command of Captain Samuel Owens sighted distress rockets, altered course and went to the aid of the stricken *Wild Rose*. The 12-man British crew was taken on board, and the larger *Wild Rose* taken in tow and beached on Rosslare Strand on the Wexford coast which prevented it sinking. When the salvage case was heard in Dublin, Justice Conor Maguire stated that: "The master of the *Kerlogue* had shown enterprise and courage on the occasion". The *Kerlogue* was awarded £4,000 for salvage.

7 October 1941. The *Kerlogue* struck a mine in Cardigan Bay while en route Swansea to Wexford.

23 October 1943. En route from Port Talbot to Lisbon with a cargo of coal, the *Kerlogue* was attacked for 20 minutes about 130 miles south of Ireland, by two planes later identified as RAF Mosquitoes from 307 Polish Squadron. Many of the crew were wounded. To name but a few, Captain Desmond Fortune had both legs fractured, Second officer Samuel Owens had severe shrapnel fragments embedded in his chest and Second Engineer James Carthy sustained a gaping back wound. It was Chief officer Denis Valencie who then took command. The attack not only seriously affected the crew, (Captain For-





tune relied on crutches and suffered from wounds he received for the rest of his life) but also the ship. The entire bridge was destroyed, both lifeboats wrecked along with the compass and radio transmitter, and water was pouring into the engine room. Thankfully the pumps were able to keep the inflowing water under control and *Kerlogue* slowly limped into Cork. It was the cargo of coal which had saved the ship. Shells which ripped through the deck lodged in the coal and did not reach the hull. Remnants of cannon shells were later found and taken away for examination and were found to be of British origin. The *Kerlogue* was repaired in Cork following the attack and Captain Thomas Donohue then took command. Eamon de Valera on 2 December 1943 made the following statement in the Dáil:

“They (the British) informed us that the attacking plane did not identify the ship as Irish and at the time of the attack *Kerlogue* was sailing off course...The British government for that reason will not accept responsibility for the attack but are prepared to make a payment ex-gratia to the injured men.”

29 December 1943. On that date the *Kerlogue* hauled 168 injured and shipwrecked German sailors from the icy waters of the Bay of Biscay. It had been a choppy, dirty trip as the *Kerlogue* sailed towards Ireland from Lisbon with a cargo of oranges. A.B. Tom O'Neill had just turned in after the four to eight watch. He had barely gone to sleep when Captain Donohue shouted in the door "Get up boys, it's the Germans". All hands tumbled out of their bunks as fast as they possibly could, and ran up on deck to see a German warplane approaching the ship. It swooped towards them, but instead of strafing them with cannon fire (as was feared) the plane signalled them and dropped flares away off the starboard bow of the coaster. They could hear no gunfire but were aware of the possibility that they were heading into a war zone. The captain changed course, heading north-east towards the flares. When they reached the area lit up by the flares they found the sea covered by hundreds of men clinging desperately to life rafts in the very rough seas.

Three days earlier, a German flotilla of ten ships, including three destroyers, had sailed from Brest to meet with the merchant ship *Alsterufer* from Japan with a cargo of materials vital to the German war effort. As they waited to rendezvous with the blockade-runner two Royal Navy cruisers, H.M.S. *Enterprise* and H.M.S. *Glasgow* (which were also out searching for the merchant ship), appeared on the horizon.

Commander Joachim Quendenfeldt of the German 2,543-ton Narvik-class destroyer *Z27* ordered his men to open fire on the British cruisers, despite knowing that he and the other destroyers were out-gunned and their shells could not even reach them at that distance. Within minutes the battle was over. Both of *Z27*'s engines were out of action and a shell had hit the bridge. Meanwhile the two German 1,294-ton Elbing-class torpedo boats *T25* and *T26* had been sunk. Quendenfeldt had no choice but to abandon ship. Two boats were lowered although one of them capsized, and 12 life rafts were thrown overboard. *Z27* then also went down. By then there were upwards of 700 men burned, shot, or wounded by shellfire, struggling to hold on to whatever was available. The remaining lifeboat picked up as many wounded as could be carried. As darkness fell British planes flew over and dropped life rafts and flares to aid the struggling German sailors. The cruisers had meanwhile sped away to avoid prowling U-boats.

That was the situation when the *Kerlogue* arrived on the scene, except that by the time of its arrival there were only about 300 German sailors left floating. The *Kerlogue* crew immediately began to haul the sailors aboard. They stood in the scuppers from mid-ships to aft and used grappling hooks and their bare hands to pull them in. There was still a heavy sea running and the *Kerlogue* was rolling heavily, so as the ship dipped they grabbed on to a body and hauled it in as the ship rose. It was long, backbreaking and heart-breaking work. Many of the men pulled aboard were found to be dead, and had to be slipped back into the sea in order to be replaced by others. The rescue continued for ten hours.

The rescued were tended to by Captain Donohue and Engineer Gary Roche, and made as comfortable as possible. They packed the German sailors in wherever they could. Fourteen on the 11 ft long bridge gave helmsman Tom Grannell very little space to manoeuvre his ship among the floating bodies. Fifty-seven were put in the engine room, so many that the engineers were unable to move to tend the engines. They had to make signs to some of the able-bodied Germans, who then carried out the procedures. All alleyways, stores etc. were filled to capacity. Then, after ten hours Captain Donohue had to call out "No More!" The ship was packed so tightly that it was impossible to get any more aboard. The *Kerlogue* turned away to the north, leaving half of the men still in the water, facing certain death. A head count lat-



er revealed that there were 168 German sailors on board the *Kerlogue*.

The crew of the Wexford ship were all totally soaked to the skin. All their spare clothes had been given to the rescued and in a very short time all the ship's stores had been used up. As *Kerlogue* was carrying a cargo of oranges, Captain Donohue ordered that the cargo be broken open which enabled the crew to make hot orange drinks for the Germans. This was all they all had to sustain them until they arrived in Cork. To avoid them being seen by passing Allied planes, the Germans were kept out of sight below decks during daylight hours, only coming up for fresh air at night. On the first day of the return trip one of the badly burned Germans died, and after a



Some of the crew of the *Kerlogue*:
L to R: Tom Grannell, Tom O'Neil, Dick Roche,
Gary Roche, 'Chum' Roche.

short service he was buried at sea. Two days later one more died, and that night another passed away. By now they were close to Cobh so it was decided to bring these bodies ashore. At Cobh the *Kerlogue* was met by emergency service personnel who treated the injured before they were hospitalised.

While sailing towards Ireland Captain Donohue had ignored German requests to take the survivors to Brest or La Rochelle. He also ignored British radio orders from Land's End to go to

Fishguard in Wales. He berthed at Cobh at 2.30am on 1 January 1944. Once they were declared fit, the rescued Germans were transferred to the Curragh Internment Camp for the duration of the war.

At the time rumours sprang up that the Germans had attempted to take over the *Kerlogue*. They could easily have done so with their superior manpower, but this was strongly denied by Captain Donohue. It was also said that thereafter, whenever German warplanes came across the *Kerlogue* on passage, they swooped on it, dipped their wings in thanks and flew off.

The crew of the *Kerlogue* on that famous occasion consisted of Captain Tom Donohue, Chief Officer Denis Valencie, 2nd Officer Patrick Whelan, Chief Engineer Roy Giggins, 2nd Engineer Joseph Donahue, 3rd Engineer Gary Roche, Bosun John 'Chum' Roche and A.Bs Tom Grannell, Dick Roche and Tom O'Neill.

A silver cup inscribed *Biscaya* and the date 29 December 1943 was later presented to each of the crew by the German Ambassador to Ireland, Dr Eduard Hempel.



The *Kerlogue* was lost on 7 July 1960 when it was wrecked off Lindsnes, Norway. A cargo of grain shifted and it capsized.

Specifications:
Official No.: 166367
Length: 142.1ft
Breadth: 23.8ft
Depth: 9.2ft
Tonnage: 317 gross, 172 net
Machinery: 6-cylinder Humboldt0Deutzmotoren, 300bhp

Peter Worsley



QUIZ

Answers to March

1. The CSIRO's deep ocean research vessel is the 93.9m *Investigator*. Completed in 2014 at a cost of \$120 million, the vessel has a range of 10,800 miles. For more interesting facts see: <http://mnf.csiro.au/Vessel/Investigator-2014.aspx>
2. Gage Roads was named by James Stirling in 1829 after Rear-Admiral William Hall Gage, then Commander of the East Indies Fleet.
3. The Portuguese ship *Correio da Azia* was wrecked near Point Cloates on 25 November 1816. The wreck was found by WA Museum staff in 2004.

Quiz

1. The *Hooghly* was chartered by Thomas Peel to bring him and his party to the Swan River Colony. They left on 25 October 1829 and arrived on 15 February 1830. Who was the captain of the *Hooghly*?
2. After whom did James Stirling name Point Walter?
3. There are two features named Gantheaume in Western Australia, Gantheaume Bay and Gantheaume Point. After whom were they named?

The Battle of Bergen Harbour

A battle that should have had a favourable outcome for the English, but for want of orders arriving in time it proved to be a disaster.

On 2 August 1665 an English naval force consisting of 14 ships of the line, three fire ships and four ketches attempted to capture a fleet of 60 Dutch cargo ships that had sought refuge in the neutral port of Bergen in Norway. The Dutch ships had sailed north around Ireland and Scotland before needing to seek shelter in Bergen. Among the Dutch vessels were 10 heavily armed VOC ships under the command of Commodore Pieter de Bitter. They were returning from Batavia loaded with a very valuable cargo of spices, ivory and diamonds supposedly purchased

with 36 tons of gold. The ships with the value of their cargoes in guilders were:

<i>Kogge</i>	67,972
<i>Diemermeer</i>	272,087
<i>Jonge Prins</i>	438,407
<i>Walcheren</i>	346,964
<i>Gulden Phenix</i>	297,326
<i>Slot Hooningen</i>	386,122
<i>Brederode</i>	296,773
<i>Rijzende Zon</i>	288,440
<i>Wapen Van Hoorn</i>	300,464
<i>Amstelland</i>	282,785





Frederik III, the king of Denmark/Norway, had secretly approved the capture of the Dutch ships so as to share the booty with Charles II of England. However, Frederik III's Order for this to be allowed did not reach Bergen from Copenhagen before the attack started. To defend Bergen's neutrality the Bergenhus and Sverresborg fortresses commanded by Claus von Ahlefeldt, therefore, had no other choice than to open fire on the English fleet.

After two hours of bombardment by the Norwegian guns and the Dutch fleet the English fleet under Rear-Admiral Sir Thomas Teddeman was forced to withdraw, having suffered losses variously reported as 200 or 500 men, although none of his ships were lost. Ahlefeldt received the Order on 8 August, six days after the battle. On reading it he travelled to the British fleet which had retired to the island of Herdla, 21 miles northwards. He offered Teddeman the chance to again

attack the Dutch without interference from the fortress. Teddeman, although reinforced by a further eight vessels, declined the invitation. Von Ahlefeldt refused to attack the Dutch himself.

On 19 August a large contingent of Dutch warships under the command of Admiral De Ruyter arrived at Bergen to escort the treasure fleet to Holland. The English fleet under the command of Lord Sandwich attacked some Dutch stragglers, capturing two of the VOC ships, *Slot Hooningen* and *Gulden Phenix*. Both these vessels were subsequently retaken by the Dutch during the Battle of the Medway. The others were able to return home safely.

The painting of the battle is by Willem van de Velde the Younger (see previous page).

Peter Worsley

A cannonball from the Battle of Bergen embedded in the wall of the Bergen Cathedral



*Rear-Admiral Sir Thomas Teddeman
Commander of the British fleet at the Battle of Bergen*



RIawe – 105 Years Old

By Geoff Vickridge

Listed on the Australian Register of Historic Vessels, the 11-metre *Riawe* is in good working order and is taken for a run every two weeks or so by current owner Lindon Haigh.

Riawe was built as a workboat for wealthy grazier Captain James Holyman in 1912 by well-known Tasmanian shipwright E. A. ‘Ned’ Jack, at his boatyard on the Tamar River near Launceston, as a workboat for wealthy grazier Captain James Holyman. Displacing nine tonnes, the wooden carvel-construction hull was planked in Huon pine and powered by a Rugby Red Seal 16 horsepower petrol engine.

Captain Holyman used the vessel to service his farming properties around Tasmania, including guiding cattle swimming between Robbins Island and Smithton, a practice known as ‘saltwater mustering’. He sold *Riawe* in 1924 to Launceston businessman Gordon Allison who used the vessel as a river workboat, carrying various cargoes as well as passengers, on the Tamar River and further afield, until she was requisitioned by the Navy in January 1942 for duties with the Naval Auxiliary Patrol. Mr Allison signed *Riawe* over to the Commonwealth for the duration of the war, and on 28 September 1942, he was mobilised as a boat-owner skipper Chief Petty Officer, aged 41. She was painted grey, had her mast removed, wheelhouse adapted and a .303 Vickers machine-gun fitted to the foredeck. HMAS *Riawe* was fitted with a four-cylinder 24 horsepower Invincible en-

gine capable of eight knots although she usually cruised at five using 4.6 litres of fuel an hour.

Riawe’s duties included rescue work, minesweeping, and target-towing for the Army, until June 1944 when, with the threat of war waning, she ceased duties and was placed in reserve at Launceston. On completion of her wartime service, *Riawe*’s old engine was stripped, fitted with new rings and bearings and reinstalled in as new condition. She was decommissioned on 12 December 1945, the same day Chief Petty Officer Allison discharged from the Navy.

Returned to Mr Allison, she continued her role as a ferry across the Tamar River, north-west of Launceston until he replaced her with the new ferry *Dalrymple* in 1950. *Riawe* was passed to his son Wilfred who, among other tasks, used the boat to deliver films to remote cinemas up the Tamar River. In 1951, Wilfred Allison sold *Riawe* to his brother-in-law Dick Curwen, who restored the boat and sold her on to Charles Gulliver in 1952. Mr Gulliver renamed her *Lady Pam* and converted her to a crayfishing boat. *Lady Pam* worked in that role for more than 50 years until 2004, being fitted with a Fordson 52.5 kilowatt four-cylinder diesel engine in 1968.

Current owner Lindon Haigh bought *Lady Pam* in 2004 and changed her name back to *Riawe*. He plans to keep her well-maintained and promote her history.



Over a century old, the carvel-planked *Riawe* is berthed at Kettering, Tasmania



Sleeping Beauties

There is a document now available on the National Archives of Australia website which has relevance to anyone interested in Western Australia's maritime history during World War II. It is a British publication titled *The "Sleeping Beauty" Provisional Handbook for Training Operational Teams*. Its relevance to Western Australia lies in the fact that Motor Submersible Canoes (MSC), otherwise known as 'Sleeping Beauties', were brought to WA, and taken by Z Force to be used in Operation Rimau. This operation was to be another attack on Japanese shipping in Singapore Harbour following the successful Operation Jaywick in September 1943. Operation Rimau was a failure, but this was no fault of the 'Sleeping Beauties', which were in fact lost when the junk carrying them and the Z Force personnel was deliberately scuttled.

The MSC was designed by Major Quentin H. Reeves in conjunction with the famous yacht designing firm of Camper and Nicholson. The Special Operations Executive (SOE) requirement was for a craft to deliver one man silently into an enemy harbour where limpet mines could then be placed on ships. The first craft were designed and constructed in 1941–42 and developed further in 1943. Each had a canoe-shaped hull built of aluminium and steel, 12.7ft long and only 2.25ft wide, with an open cockpit. There were two ballast tanks, compressed air bottles to blow water from the tanks, a sealed electric motor and batteries, hydroplanes for diving at the stern and a joy stick control. The small dashboard in the cockpit had a compass, depth gauge and pressure gauge. The operator, or pilot as he was called, sat with his head above the level of the canoe, and breathed through a standard oxygen re-breathing unit while submerged. This had only a two-hour oxygen supply, so most of the time the craft was designed to be just beneath the water surface with the pilot's head slightly above water so that he breathed air. This was called the 'trimmed down' position. The MSC had a top speed of 4.4 knots with a range of 12 miles, or a cruising speed of 3.1 knots giving a maximum range of 40 miles. Normal operational planning range was 30 miles.

Major Ivan Lyon, the commander of Operation Jaywick, had gone to England after that operation in an attempt to find a substitute for the folding canoes used to place limpet mines on Japanese ships in Singapore Harbour. He heard of the MSCs and asked for some to be sent to WA for

training and then use on another raid. SOE refused, stating that the secret craft might fall into enemy hands. Lyon's exasperated reply to this was: "What the hell are you making them for, then? They've got to get somewhere near the enemy. In fact they've got to get within arm's length of the enemy because the operator has to put the limpet on with his hands." He eventually received permission, plus the use of a mine-laying submarine, HMS *Porpoise*, to carry them close to the target. Thirty six MSCs were sent to WA, and after training 15 or 16 (depending on the reference) went on Operation Rimau. After being carried north from Fremantle to Indonesian waters on the *Porpoise*, the Z Force men captured a junk, *Mustika*. The 'Sleeping Beauties', along with other equipment were transferred to the junk to be moved closer to Singapore. However, when near Singapore the men were discovered, and it is believed that they scuttled the *Mustika* near Pulau Bantam to prevent the MSCs falling into Japanese hands. They escaped immediate capture by using the folding canoes that they also carried, but were subsequently all killed during fighting or captured and executed. This was the first operational use of 'Sleeping Beauties' anywhere in the world.

The training manual describes the method to be employed in approaching enemy shipping, and the placing of the limpet mines. It demonstrates the enormous courage needed by the men who piloted them.

It was considered possible to approach within 150 yards of the ship trimmed down so that the pilot could check the target and set a compass course directly towards the middle of the vessel. He then allowed the MSC to sink and head towards the target. When he bumped into the ship he applied full helm to bring his craft alongside and then stopped the motor, allowing it to sink further. By keeping his hand on the ship's hull he could feel when he got to the turn of the bilge. He switched the motor back on and turned so as to go ahead diagonally under the ship until he could get hold of its bilge keel. Stopping the motor he slightly blew the buoyancy tanks so that the MSC was resting against the ship's bottom just inside the bilge keel. He had a clamp and cable which was then used to fasten the MSC to the bilge keel of the ship. He then carried the limpet mines, swimming or pulling himself along the bilge



keel, to whatever part of the ship was most vulnerable.

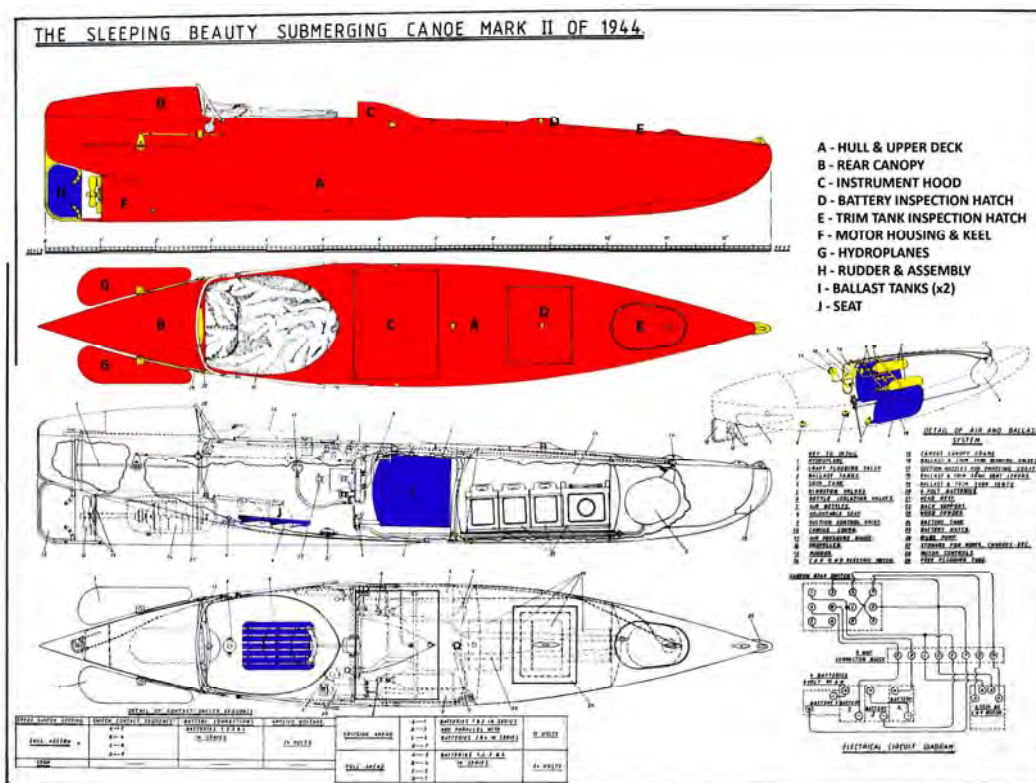
After placing his mines the pilot returns back along the bilge keel to his craft, unfastens and stows the clamp, vents the tank to gain slight negative buoyancy, and drives off on a compass course.

Training at Careening Bay, Garden Island, continued after Operation Rimau. At some time between February and May 1945 during a night training exercise a 'Sleeping Beauty' and its pilot were lost. The training was being followed by a naval craft, and the MSC was seen to be circling out of control at a depth of 60–70ft. Its batteries ran out and it sank. It was presumed that the pilot had become unconscious because he was using oxygen re-breathing equipment at an unsafe depth. Neither the pilot nor craft were found.

There is a reference that the MSC was later found by fishermen, thought to be a torpedo and buried at the Byford ammunition depot. During the 1980s the aluminium dashboard was found near Garden Island, and is now at HMAS *Stirling*.

A little-known piece of Western Australian history. Those interested can find the operating manual by copying the following and pasting it in Google:

The Official History of the Operations and Administration of] Special Operations - Australia [(SOA, also known as the Inter-Allied Services Department (ISD) and Services Reconnaissance Department (SRD)] Volume 4 - Training Syllabi - Part 8 - 'Sleeping Beauty' handbook; Technical Reviews, nos 1 - 5 (incl); some technical observations in the detection of sabotage; canoes, inflatable boats and equipment; silencing of small marine engines - copy no 1 [for Director, Military Intelligence (DMI), Headquarters (HQ), Australian Military Forces (AMF), Melbourne]



Maritime Heritage Association Inc.
 PO Box 1080, Guilderton, Western Australia, 6041.

