

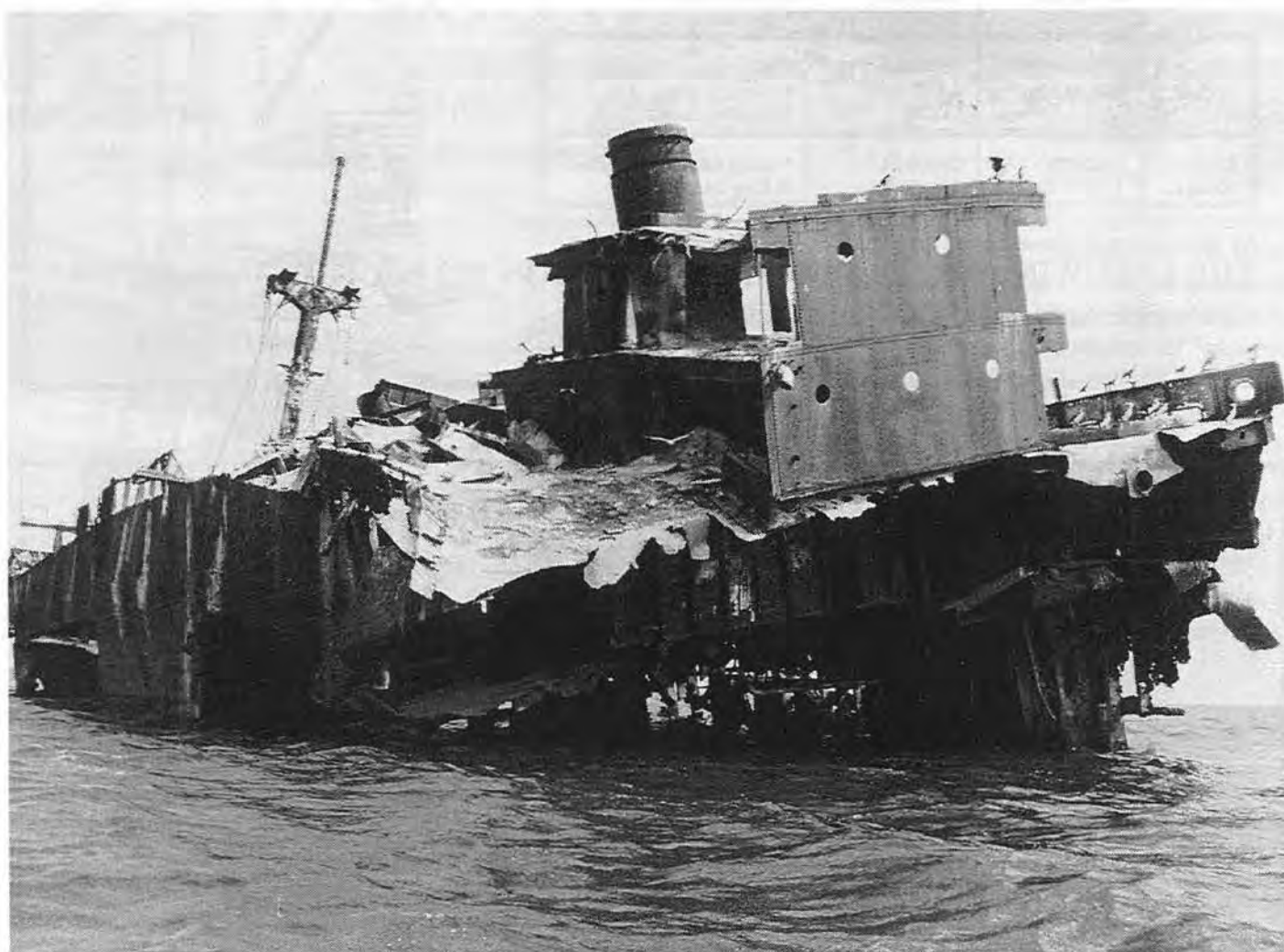
# MARITIME HERITAGE ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

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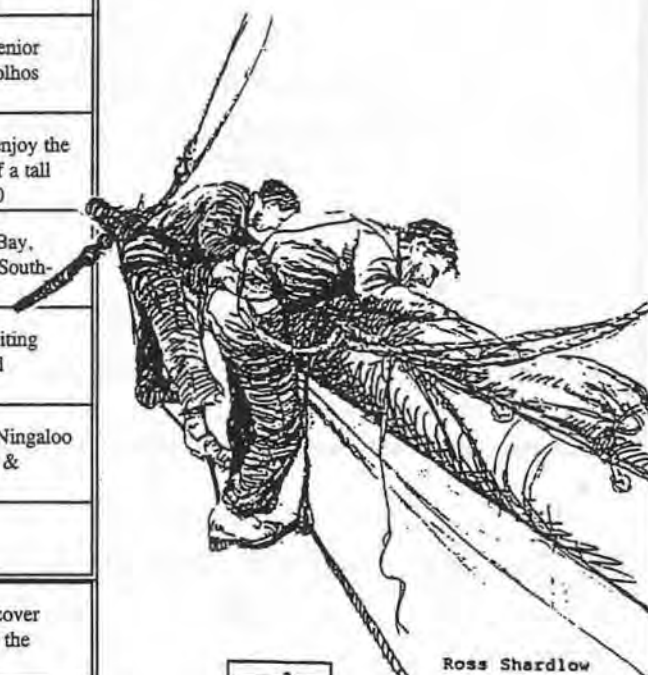
Editor: Chris Buhagiar. 13 Solomon St., Palmyra 6157



A recent photograph by Liam Slaven of the mortal remains of the Liberty Ship ALKIMOS near Eglinton Rocks, south of Yancheep, Western Australia. (See article page 7.)

## Schedule: S.T.S. LEEUWIN ADVENTURE VOYAGES

| No.              | Departure                 | Arrival                     | Remarks  |
|------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| 97/6<br>10 days  | FREMANTLE<br>17/3/97 Mon. | FREMANTLE<br>27/3/97 Thurs. | Special voyage for senior sailors, visiting Abrolhos Islands.                    |
| 97/W1<br>3 days  | FREMANTLE<br>28/3/97 Fri. | FREMANTLE<br>30/3/97 Sun.   | Easter Weekender: enjoy the thrill of being part of a tall ship's crew! \$375.00 |
| 97/7<br>10 days  | FREMANTLE<br>1/4/97 Tue.  | FREMANTLE<br>11/4/97 Fri.   | Visiting Geographe Bay, Busselton jetty, and South-West Cape.                    |
| 97/8<br>10 days  | FREMANTLE<br>14/4/97 Mon. | GERALDTON<br>24/4/97 Thu.   | School holidays. Visiting Abrolhos Islands and Batavia coast.                    |
| 97/9<br>10 days  | GERALDTON<br>29/4/97 Tue. | DAMPIER<br>9/5/97 Fri.      | Visiting NW Cape, Ningaloo Reef, Exmouth Gulf & Serurier Island.                 |
| 97/10<br>10 days | DAMPIER<br>13/5/97 Tue    | BROOME<br>23/5/97           | Visiting Depuch & Lacepedes Islands.   |
| 97/11<br>11 days | BROOME<br>26/5/97 Mon     | DARWIN<br>6/6/97 Fri.       | Eco Adventure. Discover the natural beauty of the Kimberley coast.               |
| 97/12<br>10 days | DARWIN<br>10/6/97 Tue.    | DARWIN<br>20/6/97 Fri.      | Visiting the Kimberley coast & King George River.                                |



Ross Sherdlow

For information on all voyages, contact:

**THE LEEUWIN SAIL TRAINING FOUNDATION** PO Box 1100 Fremantle WA  
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Articles will be published at the earliest opportunity.

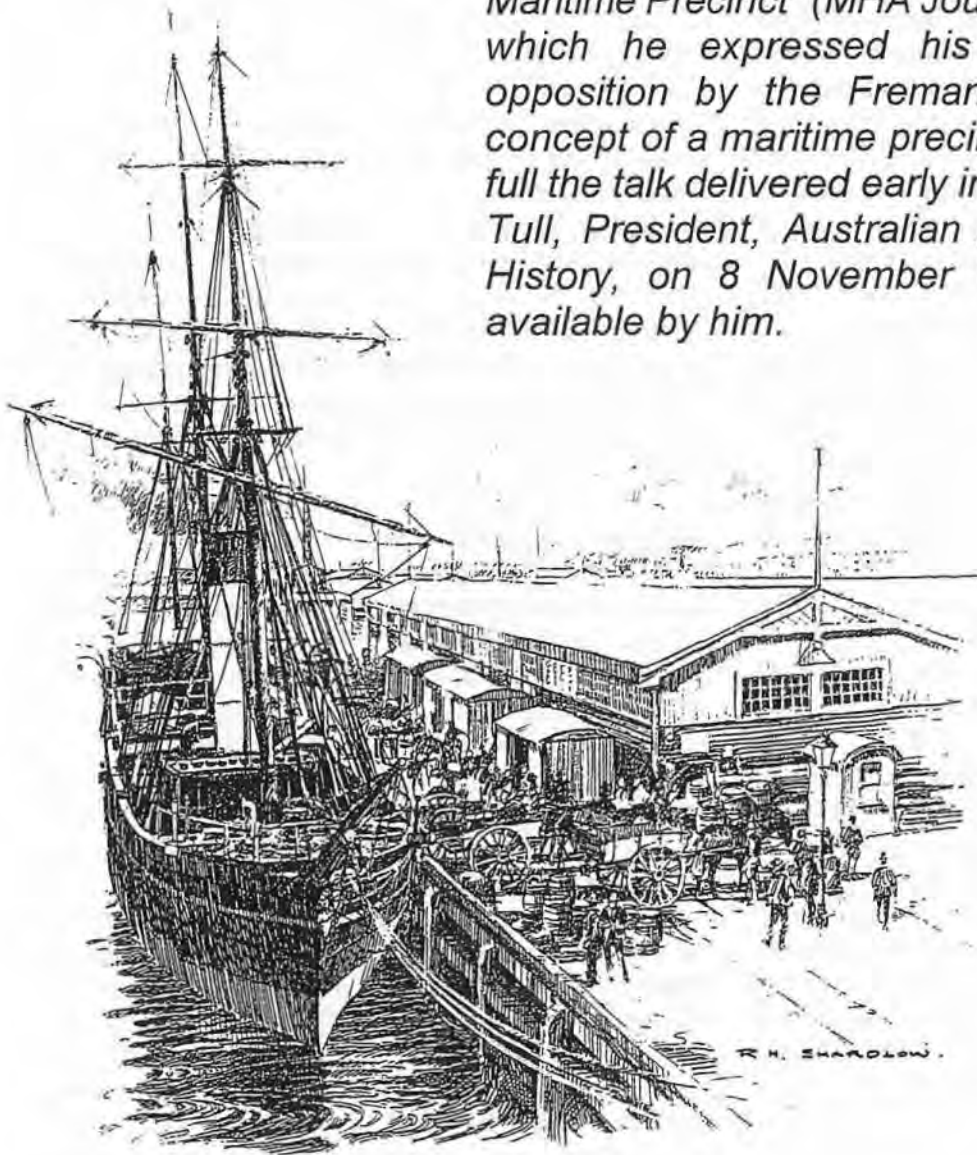
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**All of the Association's incoming journals, newsletters etc. are now archived at *Porthole Prints*, South Terrace, Fremantle, and are available to members on loan.**

(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; it may just be interested in archiving the collection.)

# Fremantle's Projected Maritime Precinct

*Following Nick Burningham's article: "Fremantle's Maritime Precinct" (MHA Journal, December, 1996), in which he expressed his concern at the open opposition by the Fremantle City Council to the concept of a maritime precinct, we now reproduce in full the talk delivered early in the seminar by Malcolm Tull, President, Australian Association for Maritime History, on 8 November 1996, and kindly made available by him.*



"It is with some trepidation that I face you today to talk about maritime heritage precincts. While I have an interest in, and some knowledge of maritime history, I do not claim any expertise on the topic of maritime heritage precincts. What I intend to do is to provide some background to the discussion by talking about the history of the Port of Fremantle and some general issues affecting the preservation of our maritime heritage.

## 1. Introduction to the Port of Fremantle

The Port of Fremantle, which is located on the edge of the Indian Ocean, was developed to provide the British Empire with a western gateway to the vast Australian continent. The Port has been a vital link in every phase of Western Australia's

development. From the difficult early years of the colony, through the convict era, gold rushes, wars and depression, the Port has remained a vital point of entry and exit for people and goods; its shipping and trade a barometer of the state's prosperity. Yet in its early years Fremantle was far from an ideal location for a port because a rock bar blocked the mouth of the Swan River and ships had to use a few exposed wooden jetties. The provision of an adequate harbour had to wait until 1897 when the rock bar was finally removed and ships were provided with a safe harbour in the lower reaches of the Swan River.

Over the years Fremantle developed into a modern port [now] with deepwater berths, bulk-handling equipment and container facilities. After the Second World War, ship size [had] increased rapidly, leading to demands for deeper channels and upgraded port facilities; moreover, land-intensive industries such as oil refineries found the existing port site cramped. Consequently, the port authority, in common with many other authorities the world over, was forced to develop a new deepwater port. The site chosen was Cockburn Sound, some 20 kilometres south of Fremantle.

The port has always been affected by technological change. Innovations such as containerisation have revolutionised the international transport system. Cargo-handling has been transformed from a manual activity, requiring a large labour force, to a capital-intensive one employing expensive capital equipment and, relatively speaking, only a handful of workers. In order to 'make money', a modern vessel - whether a bulk carrier or container ship - needs to spend as little time as possible idle in port and as much time as possible at sea carrying cargo. This has placed increasing pressure on ports to offer quick turnaround and reliable services; otherwise they may well perish - a contrast with the days of sail when voyages were long and vessels spent a long time in port. The advent of steamship changed this and led to the gradual decline of sailor towns, with their taverns, brothels, ships chandlers etc.

The opening of the new port and technological changes in shipping and cargo handling led the river port, by the 1970s, to acquire a 'decaying' image. A long line of obsolete wharf cranes straddled the wharves, idle and unsaleable; the wooden wharves began to crumble; and most of the cargo sheds echoed only with the memory of bustling stevedoring activity. The size of the waterfront workforce at Fremantle fell from about 2,000 in the 1950s to about 680 in the early 1980s. A ghost port.

In 1983, Alan Bond, one of Western Australia's most colourful and controversial entrepreneurs, succeeded in temporarily snatching the America's Cup from the clutches of the New York Yacht Club and ushered in a new era in

Fremantle's history. The city was rejuvenated in preparation for the defence of the America's Cup in 1987 and many port facilities were adapted for alternative uses, including leisure activities and a boat museum. But the decline in port activity could not be reversed by temporary success in yacht racing and the Port entered the 1990s saddled with excess capacity and crippling financial problems. A new management perspective was required to guide the Port through the painful restructuring required to improve efficiency and restore its financial position.

In November 1995 the government gave the FPA the role "to facilitate trade in an efficient and commercial manner" - the first time its role was spelled out. Focus on core business; but not much role for heritage. FPA commercialised from July 1996. This restructuring process obviously has major implications for the maritime heritage.

## 2. Heritage Issues

Ports in general contain many buildings or areas worthy of retention and conservation because of their historic and architectural merits.

The withdrawal of port functions provides an opportunity to restore the historic links between the populace and the waterfront. Growing inner-city residence and heritage awareness have led to drive the exploitation of the potential of city areas. Waterfront redevelopment is a key element in inner-city revitalisation in Fremantle. Development of port areas for a wide variety of residential, retail and recreational facilities.

Several areas of conflict arise:

1. Three areas of government (federal, state, local) with an interest in waterfront activity, with constitutionally-divided powers. The Federal role is limited in ports; most is in the hands of states and local councils. But there are numerous Government departments with overlapping concerns. The roles of port authorities.

2. Conflicts between socially and commercially-motivated uses of the waterfront space. In many cases, waterfront areas have been overwhelmed by high-income developments at the expense of open space and lower-income housing. A well known example is found in the Port of London, where the old docks, stretching from Stepney to Woolwich, were made redundant by new facilities downstream at Tilbury and Felixstowe. The London Docklands Development Corporation redeveloped the area for high income commercial, industrial, residential and recreational use.

3. Conflict exists between conservation of historic structures and higher-intensity redevelopment. Public attitudes towards heritage issues have changed enormously in the last thirty years; urban residents and tourists now

appreciate the adaptive use of warehouses, wharf sheds etc.

There is a need to promote the adaptive use of historic structures as a profitable alternative to complete redevelopment. This can provide a way of attracting tourist and leisure markets to the waterfront; provision of port facilities for visiting yachts etc. E-Shed is a good example.

City of Fremantle, Victoria Quay and its architecture. Its history and assessment of cultural significance. The historical value of VQ has three components:

1. The influence the port has had on the growth of Fremantle and the state.
2. Its association with historic personalities (Forrest, O'Connor), communities and places; and
3. Changes in operations and physical form of the Quay.

The port is linked with *the* most important historic site, Arthur's Head. The quay provides evidence of Naval wartime usage, etc. The historic functions are redundant but the buildings survive as physical links with the past.

The port administration building dwarfs the townscape of the port and the west end of the city. It was listed VQ by the Institute of Engineers in 1990 as a national engineering landmark.

E-Shed, the return of Australia II, and a new Museum, all help reinforce the historic importance of VQ.

There is a need for a similar study of North wharf in the future.

The inner harbour is to be used for next 15-20 years, but beyond that? The trend to automation and reduction in manning levels will continue. The trend to unitisation will continue but container vessels and containers themselves may increase further in size, pressuring the move to the Outer Harbour. Inner-harbour facilities will become obsolescent.

The less historic facilities on North wharf. No-one is fighting for the retention of the grain silos on North Wharf. Of limited aesthetic value, they are [nevertheless] historic port structures. Who will fight to preserve a container crane? The three-ton level luffing crane near E-shed only just avoided going to the scrap heap.

The waterfront land has high value for alternative uses, eg. housing. There will be enormous pressure for redevelopment. These developments will impact on the City of Fremantle. Residential development could lead to increased income from rates. Many conflicting interests and strong lobbying will be needed to ensure the heritage interest is not overlooked.

Crocodile Dundee 'toss another shrimp on the barbie' to promote Australia. Now its toss a model on a Whitbread

yacht and publicise WA. Perhaps we could persuade Elle Macpherson to drape herself across an historic structure or two while she's here to promote maritime heritage? "

1 C. J. Evans, 'New Ports for Old', in C. R. Ford, (ed.), Ports into the Next Century (London, 1991), p.225. Proceedings of the conference UK ports 2000 organised by the Institution of Civil Engineers, Hull, 17-18 October 1990."

[*The Australian Association for Maritime History publishes the well-known journal: "The Great Circle". The AAMH's main aim is to promote the study, publication and general appreciation of maritime history. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in seafaring, merchant shipping, naval history, ports and port cities, maritime archaeology, maritime literature, and so on.*

*The AAMH also serves as the Australian sub-commission of the International Commission of Maritime History.*

*All members of the AAMH receive a copy of their Journal, which is published twice yearly. Those interested in joining the Association should contact the Secretary, Heather Campbell, c/o WA Maritime Museum, Cliff Street Fremantle, on (09) 431 8442. - Ed.]*

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## **The Kango Hammer**

*Thanks must be extended to Gordon Samuel, of Lynwood, for responding to the query in the article - "A Mixed Complement: At Sea with HMS BULOLO" (MHA Journal, December, 1996) - that asked for verification of the function of the boom projecting from the bow of the BULOLO. Gordon confirmed that the V-frame boom was part of the hammer apparatus designed to counter the German acoustic mine.*

The legs of the frame were hinged to the ship's hull; a hammer box was run out to the apex of the frame prior to

frame being lowered into the sea ahead of the ship itself. When in operation, the hammer box - an adaptation of the *Kango* pneumatic road drill - emitted an amplified battering noise, meant to trigger any acoustic mine well ahead of the approaching ship.

The mine itself contained a reed tuned to vibrate on a frequency of 240 per second, and sensitive to the sound spectrum made by an approaching ship; this noise was picked up and communicated to an internal carbon microphone.

The hammer box contained a metal diaphragm about nineteen inches in diameter, beaten by the *Kango* hammer. The box could be run out, as explained above, to the apex of the frame, before being lowered into the sea, or be slung over the side of the ship and towed, being held away from the ship's side by paravanes.

The later forms of acoustic mine contained counters which operated like a telephone exchange - the mine would not go off until it was called up for, say, the seventh time. They also contained clocks which could keep them disarmed until a fixed date.

George Wookey (ex Lt. Cmdr, RN), also wrote in, to say that the boom projecting from the *BULOLO*'s bows was for paravane streaming. Certainly, paravanes were also streamed from warship's bows, but from fixed points on the stempost, and not from the hinged boom. The former was the method by which contact mines were kept clear of ship's hull.

Interestingly, George, now living in active retirement in Witchcliffe, in our south-west, was in clearance diving when in the Royal Navy. The Guinness Book of Records lists him as follows:

*The world's record depth for a salvage observation chamber is that established by the Admiralty salvage ship Reclaim on 28 June 1956. In an observation chamber measuring 7 feet long and 3 feet internal diameter, Senior Com. Boatswain (now Lt.- Cdr.) G.A.M. Wookey, MBE, RN, descended to a depth of 1,060 feet in Oslo Fjord, Norway.*

[I'm assuming the record still stands, as my copy of the Guinness was published in 1972! - Ed.]

## Nautical Instruments Of Distinction

### Weather Forecasting???

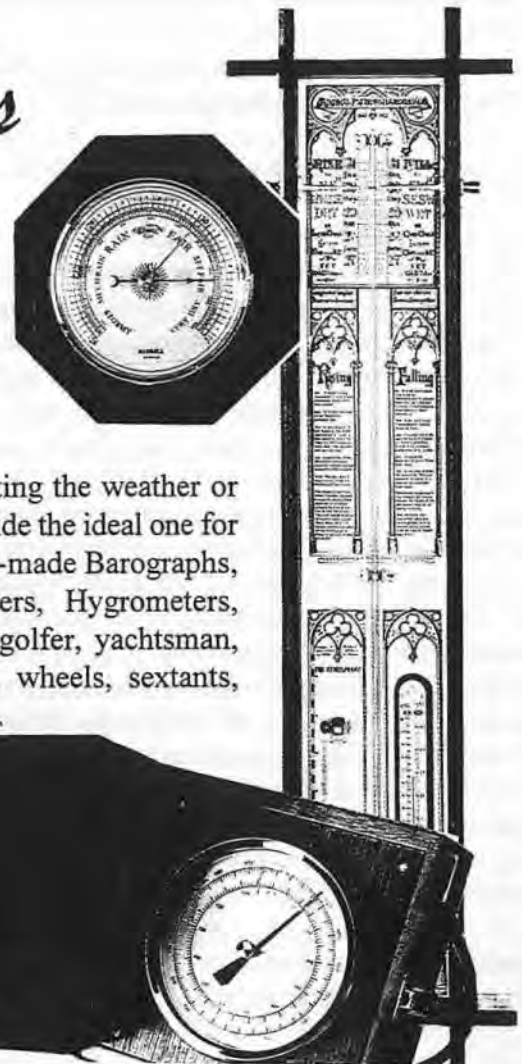
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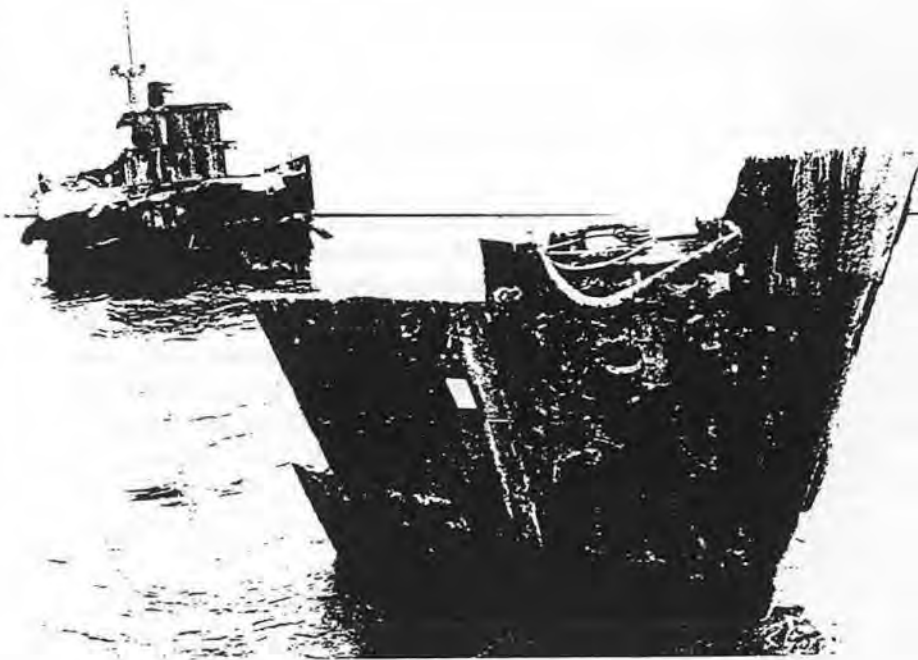
You are welcome to view some of the above, but by appointment only.

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The remains of a freighter lie corroding into ruin, not far offshore, south of Yanchep, Western Australia. The stern half and forepeak of the vessel are all that currently remain above water, the rest having subsided into the encircling sea. When these sections finally disappear, the ship will be largely forgotten by all but a few wreck watchers and some of the local boating fraternity. The only legacy left by the ship will have been an adjacent inshore development named after the vessel - ALKIMOS. Information written elsewhere on this ship - including the occult, the highly dubious, and total fabrication - has provided an insight into how myths can be created: their origins might be based on fact, but the fanciful has been allowed to dominate, as it readily captures the imagination, and makes better copy. Historical accuracy takes effort, and is usually far less colourful.

# *The ALKIMOS: Fact without the Fanciful*

PART ONE

© Chris Buhagiar



The origins of the Greek freighter ALKIMOS lie in the latter stages of World War Two. The ship was one of some 2700 EC2-S-C1 Liberty-type vessels constructed as a war-emergency measure by the United States Maritime Commission, and made available in large numbers for operation by Allied nations. She was launched mid-war as the GEORGE M. SHRIVER, but renamed VIGGO HANSTEEN on delivery from her American builders and transfer under bareboat-charter to the Royal Norwegian Government. Under concurrent time-charter back to the Commission, she saw service for the remainder of the War and the immediate post-war period. Retaining the name VIGGO HANSTEEN, she then saw commercial service with two successive Norwegian owners, before being sold to Greek interests and renamed ALKIMOS.

This article, and subsequent articles on the ship, chronicle the story of the ALKIMOS. They are adapted from research carried out by the current Editor of this *Journal* - research that still goes on.

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## AMERICAN SHIPS FOR THE NORWEGIAN FLAG: September 1943

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### REPLACING LOST NORWEGIAN TONNAGE

The exiled Norwegian Government's primary contribution to the Allied war effort was through the chartered carrying of strategic cargoes to wherever the United States and Great Britain wanted. This vital role in the Allies' joint waging of the war had been recognised on January 11, 1942 – when, in an exchange of notes between then US Assistant Secretary of State, Breckinridge Long, and Norwegian Ambassador, Wilhelm de Morgenstierne, the principle was registered that Norway "... should be assisted in replacing ships lost at sea ...". The principle moved closer to reality when, in a November 19 communique to the Secretary of State, Presidential approval was given for the assigning of replacement vessels. Shortly after, Rear Admiral Land, Chairman, US Maritime Commission, informed the Ambassador of a proposed transfer to Norwegian operation of two vessels at that time under construction in a US shipyard.

The first positive step toward the fulfilment of this principle was taken when, on January 12 of the following year, Rear Admiral Land approved the draft plan for assigning each of these ships to the Royal Norwegian Government. By this plan, each would be bareboat-chartered to the Norwegian Shipping and Trade Mission (Nortraship) - the body set up to manage the wartime Norwegian merchant fleet - and immediately chartered back to the War Shipping Administration, managing the wartime American merchant fleet, on concurrent time charter. Though the ships would be transferred to Norwegian registry and be crewed by Norwegians, title to them would remain with the United States.

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A perfect agreement in an arrangement as complex and novel as the one being implemented was seen as impossible to achieve at this point. Serious administrative difficulties were anticipated. Any initial agreement which would be worked out and executed would be experimental, and it was anticipated that on the basis of three to six months' operating experience, a substantial revision would then be required.

The assignments were the EC2-S-C1 "Liberty" vessels JOHN WRIGHT STANLEY and FRANCIS NASH, the

first two from a total of fourteen of various types to be negotiated for by Nortraship before war's end. On January 29, the former ship was delivered to the Administration by the North Carolina Shipbuilding Corporation yard, then immediately redelivered by the Administration to Nortraship and renamed LIEV EIRIKSSON; the latter followed shortly after, becoming FRIDTJOF NANSEN.

### NEGOTIATIONS FOR FURTHER REPLACEMENTS BEGIN

Breckinridge Long ably reflected on the plight of Norway's dwindling wartime fleet, before a sub-committee of the Committee of Appropriations:

*... Considering the relation of ships to Norway's wealth and the necessity of them to the Norwegian national economy, we have considered Norway in a position different from any other government. They have contributed what is practically their entire national wealth, and we have agreed with them that we would consider, in the language that I wrote a while ago, that they should be assisted in replacing ships lost in the service of the United Nations [Allies] ...*

Negotiations for the assigning of additional replacements were already underway, in a process that would continue for much of the remainder of the war. In a January 23 letter to Captain Edward Macauley, then Deputy Administrator of the Administration, Erling D. Naess, Director of Shipping, Nortraship, New York, began:

*... I would like to let you know that I was very pleased with the interview I had with you yesterday which, I hope, will prove to be the beginning of a contact which will benefit the war effort and, therefore, both of us.*

*In the interest of the war effort, I hope I succeeded in convincing you that we shall be perfectly capable of manning the additional eight vessels, including several Diesel-engined ships, which we trust will shortly be assigned to us for operation during the war.*

*I was gratified to learn that your recruitment and manning program is fully capable of keeping pace with the great expansion of the United States Merchant Marine. This is, I think, a most impressive achievement.*



*I take the liberty to suggest that we meet again, before very long, for the purpose of exchanging information and discussing our problems. In the meantime, I sincerely hope you will not fail to bring to my attention any matter relating to Norwegian crews in the U.S.A. which need clarification or special action ...*

Naess went on:

*... The closer we get to the invasion of the continent of Europe, the more important it will be that the morale of the people of the occupied countries including Norway, is such as to lend the greatest possible support to the invading Allied armies by sabotage of enemy communications, passive resistance and even active participation. To the people of Norway, news of the allocation of ships from Allied shipyards is a great stimulant, the importance of which I am very glad you realise. It provides proof of a cooperation and assistance from her Allies which the German propaganda is busy trying to persuade the Norwegians is denied them ...*

*... I, therefore, sincerely hope we have your cooperation and support in our efforts to obtain allocations of further vessels for operation under the Norwegian flag ...*

These efforts bore fruit between April 24 and May 31, when a further six newly constructed ships were similarly transferred to Norwegian registry – of them, four were EC-2s, the remainder being C1-A(M)s from the Maritime Commission's long-range shipbuilding programme:

| Delivery | US Name          | Type     | Renamed             |
|----------|------------------|----------|---------------------|
| April 24 | WILLIAM STRONG   | EC2-S-C1 | ROALD AMUNDSEN      |
| April 30 | CAPE ARAGO       | C1-A(M)  | GENERAL RUGE        |
| May 14   | SALLIE S. COTTEN | EC2-S-C1 | OLE BULL            |
| May 31   | THOMAS F. BAYARD | "        | EDVARD GRIEG        |
| "        | JOHN M.T. FINNEY | "        | CHRISTIAN MICHELSEN |
| "        | CAPE BARNABAS    | C1-A(M)  | GENERAL FLEISCHER   |

The eight replacement hulls were nevertheless a relatively insignificant number; at the-then rate of total US output of constructions, they represented only thirty six hours' total production time and replaced only three percent of Norway's war losses. But it was a start.

On September 14, Nortraship was notified that a further two EC-2s were now earmarked for Norwegian registry though not yet definitely decided upon. Their construction was about to commence. On the assumption that a favourable decision would eventuate on these assignments, Nortraship was asked to nominate Norwegian names for them. Four days later, with the allocations still unconfirmed, the keel of one of the pair – hull number 1803 – was laid on



Capt. Edward Macauley (USN, retired): Deputy Administrator, War Shipping Administration.

slipway 12 at Bethlehem-Fairfield's Sparrow's Point Shipyard, Baltimore. The GEORGE M. SHRIVER - named after a member of the Board of Directors of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroads - began to take shape.

#### TREADING ON AMERICAN TOES

Nortraship had, meantime, inadvisedly taken it on itself to appoint non-American berth loading agents to serve its bareboat EC-2s and caused an immediate flurry among US operators. By strongly worded telegrams to the Administration, the American Merchant Marine Institute,

the Isthmian Steamship Company, and other operators, reiterated the general understanding governing such vessels assigned to foreign governments:

*Several instances have been called to the attention of the Institute by member companies pointing out that it is proposed by the War Shipping Administration to allow other than American flag owner operators to act as berth loading agents. As a particular instance we are informed Nortraship propose nominate Kerr Steamship Company as berth loading agents for Angelic [the GENERAL FLEISCHER] loading for Persian Gulf ports at Philadelphia [stop] this procedure is contrary general understanding that transfer of registry such vessels is to accomplish specified war objectives only and that whenever such vessels handle such cargo from or to United States ports over routes on which American flag operation regularly maintained the American operators shall be appointed as berth agents [stop] this departure from reasonable sound principles as indicated by Nortraship proposal has numerous serious implications for American flag owners operators therefore we trust proposed action does not have your approval and that you will instruct Nortraship to adhere program use American flag operators also that this principle be maintained with respect all American owned vessels on which registry transferred as war measure to insure [sic] employment American owners operators at all times when these vessels engaged in operations from or to ports of the United States.*

#### RATES OF CHARTER HIRE

Immediately prior to the approval by Rear Admiral Land of the execution of the now-amended bareboat and time charters for the Norwegian EC-2 programme to date, and in conjunction with the January-proposed transfer of the first two EC-2s, the Commission had asked Nortraship to produce a cost analysis of operating such a ship under the Norwegian flag. From this analysis, a suitable rate of time-charter hire would be established.

After considerable exploration and discussion with the Norwegians – discussions which were somewhat protracted due to the lack of Norwegian experience with the EC-2 type, and what appeared to be incomplete and distorted reports costing such a vessel operating under the US flag – it was finally concluded that \$24 084 per month would be a reasonable payment as time charter hire by the Administration to Nortraship, to cover the cost of Nortraship running each EC-2. This time charter rate per vessel per month represented a compromise between the estimates prepared by the Auditing and Accounts Division of the Administration and those prepared by Nortraship on items for which precise estimates of cost could not be

determined, such as maintenance and repairs, stores, supplies and subsistence, and with no allowance made for profit or loss. It included crew expense for unlicensed seamen, as well as basic wages, war bonuses, war risk insurance, and contributions for accident and health insurance, protection and indemnity. It also included a small allowance for a vessel's miscellaneous expenses, as well as one for administrative expense.

It was understood that the time charter hire could be modified as experience indicated, and the agreed form of charter provided that either party could request a re-determination of the rate once every 120 days, on thirty days' written notice to the other.

The time charter hire would make no allowance for bareboat charter hire. Originally it had been proposed to set a nominal bareboat hire by Nortraship of 25c per deadweight-ton (ie. carrying capacity), per month; however, in view of the fact that such a rate of hire might be regarded as a precedent for the bareboat rate of hire for future EC-2 negotiations, it was decided to eliminate the bareboat rate entirely from the calculations of charter hire and to require instead a nominal payment by Nortraship of a mere \$1.00 per vessel per annum.

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#### GEORGE M. SHRIVER: CONSTRUCTION AND EARLY MOVEMENTS

The ship's assigning to Nortraship was confirmed on Monday, October 4, one week before scheduled launching. On delivery, the vessel was to be renamed VIGGO HANSTEEN, commemorating a Norwegian resistance leader shot by the Germans on September 10, 1941.

Breaking from the protocol employed on the earlier vessels, Erling D. Naess wished to have the name change executed either on or before the more public christening and not after subsequent delivery by the builders. In an October 5 memorandum he began:

*... I refer to my memoranda of September 15 and September 29 and inform you that Madame Morgenstjerne has accepted invitation to sponsor the S/S "George M. Shriver", due to be launched by the Bethlehem-Fairfield Shipyard, Baltimore, on or about October 13.*

*In the circumstances, it seems to me important that the vessel should be named Viggo Hansteen and not George M. Shriver, although the practice has been, hitherto, that the ships we take over in this manner are christened with their American names at the time of their launching and re-named with their Norwegian names at the time of their transfer to Norwegian registry.*

*I shall be glad if you will take this matter up with the War Shipping Administration as soon as possible and ascertain if they will be willing to waive any objection, in view of the fact that the wife of the Norwegian Ambassador is sponsoring the ship ...*

*I then suggested that perhaps they could give this name to another ship but even this is impossible as the Navy has been advised and call letters prepared - all of which would create a good deal of commotion if changed. I think this is understandable ...*

Georg Mejlaende, Nortraship's representative in Washington, clarified the state of affairs:

*... I note from telephone conversation that this ship is to be named "Viggo Hansteen" and that you would like the name changed at the launching in Baltimore, October 12.*

*Commissioner Carmody, the Chairman of the Committee, has been out of the office today but I have spoken to a Mrs Kunich who handles these matters. Inasmuch as notices have already gone out to the family and friends of Mr. Shriber [sic], who has a widow living in Baltimore, it is impossible to change the name of this vessel and she must be launched with the name of "G.M. Shriber" [sic].*

CHRISTENING. Monday, October 11: 4.00pm

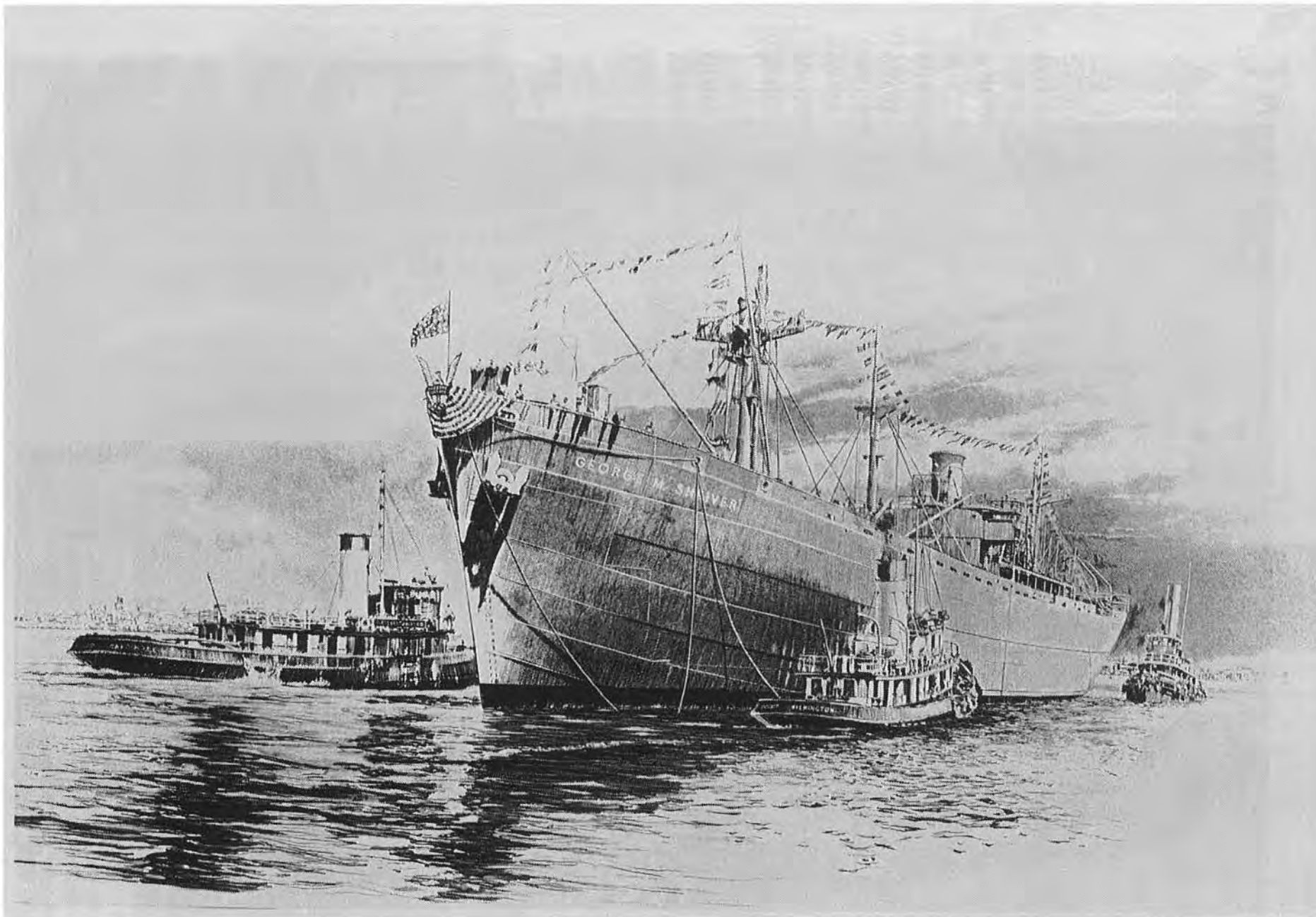
After much ceremony and a large luncheon, and in the presence of J.M. Willis, General Manager of the Fairfield yard; Roy Barton-White, President, Baltimore and Ohio Railroads; Captain Thorbjorn Thorsen, master of the ship, his officers, and a large gathering of the Shriver family, the vessel's sponsor, French Shriver, granddaughter of George M. Shriver, broke the traditional champagne across the vessel's bow. After a scheduled week at the fitting out facility, sea trials would commence on Chesapeake Bay. Loading was scheduled to commence at Philadelphia - war aid destined for the Soviet Union, via the Persian Gulf.



French Shriver being presented with a memento of the launching. J.M. Willis, General Manager of the Fairfield yard, giving her an inscribed case containing a gold wristwatch set with diamonds and sapphires. Looking on is Mrs. George M. Shriver Jr.



French Shriver (clutching decorated champagne bottle and bouquet), family and dignitaries, immediately prior to the christening. Left to right: Roy Barton-White; Charles M. Shriver (French's father); Charles Mayer Shriver Jr. (French's brother); French; J.M. Willis; Ruth French Shriver (French's mother). Small boy in front is George M. Shriver III. [Note the wooden receptacle for the champagne bottle, in the lower right-hand corner of the photo. The diagonal segment in the upper right-hand corner of the photo is the bow of the ship.]



The GEORGE M. SHRIVER afloat. Curtis Bay Towing Co. tugs taking the ship in tow. Note the Maritime Commission's "Ships for Victory" emblem fixed to the bow for the occasion. French was later presented with an inscribed mahogany box with the champagne bottle's remains inside; Nortraship in turn gave her an inscribed sterling silver plate bearing the Norwegian coat of arms. (From a drawing by the author.)



Capt. Thorbjorn Thorsen, while in command of the liner STAVANGERFJORD, and photographed presumably prior to departing New York, circa 1947. With the Captain is HRH Crown Princess Martha, of Norway, who would be travelling home on the ship. The Captain, with 136 of the ship's officers and crew in attendance, had earlier laid a wreath at the grave of the unknown soldier, in Washington. (A. Bredal-Thorsen.)

# The Maritime Archaeological Association of W.A. (MAAWA)



For those not in the know, MAAWA is a wreck-diving-oriented association, established a good many years ago by the Department of Maritime Archaeology, WA Maritime Museum, as a voluntary arm to assist in its work. MAAWA has continued in this role. However, on its own initiative, MAAWA has also undertaken research into and on-site investigation of countless other wreck sites that the Department has simply not had the resources to pursue. One of these sites is the wreck of the barque STEFANO, wrecked in 1875.

Long-standing MAAWA member (and MHA member), Peter Worsley, of Geraldton, wrote the following article as a preliminary to MAAWA's expedition to Ningaloo/Point Cloates during April 1993. It is a brief summary of some of the evidence pointing to where the barque STEFANO might have been wrecked. The precise location remains unknown.

MAAWA's work in looking for the remains of the STEFANO continues, and we hope to be able to provide readers with updates as information becomes available; as well as articles on other aspects of MAAWA's invaluable work.

## The STEFANO



"On the 27 October 1875 at 0230 hours the barque STEFANO was wrecked in the vicinity of Point Cloates. Of the seventeen crew on board, seven died during or immediately following the wrecking. These included the captain and first mate, and the only non-Croatian crew member, Henry Goiss, the cabin boy from Cardiff, Wales. Only two of the ten who made it ashore lived to be rescued; these were Michael or Miho Baccich, and Ivan Juric. To date, the wreck of the STEFANO has not been found although there have been indications discovered during the Western Australian Maritime Museum's expeditions to the wreck of the RAPID.

Some time ago I obtained a copy of the book *The Wreck of the Barque Stefano off the Northwest Cape of Australia in 1875*, by Gustave Rathe, the grandson of Miho Baccich. The main substance of the book is a translation of a manuscript (the original of which is in Rathe's possession) written by Father Stjepan Skurla S.J., on interviewing both survivors in 1876 a few months after their rescue, and

restated in modern prose. The ship's owner was Baccich's uncle, and the captain, Vlaho Miloslavich, was his cousin. The barque was brand new, having been built in Rijeka in 1875, and was on her maiden voyage. Baccich was sixteen years of age and was a cadet or midshipman for the voyage. The STEFANO loaded 1300 tons of coal at Cardiff, in Wales, then sailed for Hong Kong.

The ship struck a reef or rock in the early hours of 27 October 1875. There was a strong wind at the time which increased to gale force, pounding the ship on the rock. Soundings were taken around the vessel, which showed no deep water. The pumps would not work and, as the ship was almost filled with water, the order was given to abandon her. Baccich and some others moved towards shore in a small boat that was often capsized or almost awash from the seas breaking over it.

In the first light of morning, Baccich says that they could see that they had covered about half the distance from the wreck to the shore. They had holed the small boat when they struck a reef they had passed. They thought that land was some three or four miles away at this stage. They had clear water ahead and a favourable current from astern.

They washed ashore at 2.00 pm; an hour later the others arrived. They decided the next day to walk north towards a large point of land jutting out into the ocean, a mile or two north. The wind had shifted to south of west, and they thought the point might form a barrier to catch any floating debris.

There is a small paragraph which is, I think, very important in establishing where the STEFANO was wrecked: "The offshore reef appeared to parallel the coast and seemed to be about three or four miles out. This suggested that the Stefano had not struck a reef, or at least not the major reef which we could see breaking from shore. It must have struck submerged rocks."

In the book is a map of N-W Australia, and which accompanied the original 1876 manuscript. The map has letters on it corresponding to certain incidents quoted in the manuscript. The wreck site is designated A and is shown on this map to be close to where we now know Black Rock is located. This also agrees with the distance offshore of the wreck; that is, approximately six to eight miles off the coast when viewed from the shore near Camp Hill. The fact of the ship's boat being holed after hitting a reef approximately halfway between the wreck and the shore fits in with Black Rock and the reef on the southern edge of Black Rock Passage.

Camp Hill is point B on the map and is close to where the survivors washed ashore. Here they set up their first camp with material gathered along the shoreline, including near Point Cloates. Karlo Costa, stated as being Deputy

Captain, had recovered and used a sextant to attempt to establish where they were. Without any method of establishing the correct time, he fixed the position of the wreck as nine miles west north west of their camp. This is fairly close to correct for Black Rock and, considering the lack of a time-piece, the approximate figure of S22° 48' and E113° 37' 40" points to this. There are no isolated rocks close enough to the surface to be a hazard within five or six miles of Black Rock, and certainly none where there is clear passage to shore and where you could "pass a reef" (where their small boat was holed) rather than have to cross a reef.

When the ship struck, Baccich states that it gave a violent lurch to starboard. This would seem to indicate that the barque's port side struck the rock. He also states that, a while later before he finally abandoned the vessel, he noticed that she had turned 180°, so that the bow was facing south. It had also been driven higher onto the rocks. For the ship to have hit facing more or less north on its port side, it would indicate that it must have been wrecked on the south-to-south-east edge of Black Rock. The soundings taken around the ship, and showing no deep water, fits in with Black Rock. The rock itself, while showing above water, is surrounded by an area of rock running between about 1800 metres north to south and 1200 metres west to east and at a depth of a fathom (two metres) or less. As stated above, the STEFANO had been driven higher onto the rocks by the gale and would therefore have shallow water on both sides.

The Admiralty Pilot, Volume V, states: "Black Rock lies 2.5 miles SW of Point Cloates and the sea always breaks on it; there is a pinnacle rock in the centre 2 metres high. There is foul ground for some distance around this rock, and it is probably a detached portion of the barrier reef". It also states: "In the offing a strong current has been observed setting south and obliquely towards the land, and should be guarded against". This current may have been the deciding factor in the wrecking of the STEFANO as it pushed the barque towards the coast, invisible at night and often during the day except when very close. The fact that the sea always breaks on Black Rock, and would do so violently in the gale, Baccich mentions would ensure there was no chance of getting the STEFANO off safely.

Where is the wreck of the STEFANO?

The important thing to note here is that on about December 21, 1875, a cyclone struck the Ningaloo area. Baccich mentions how the winds stripped the leaves from every bush and tree, and that trees, brush, logs and even sizeable boulders were strewn everywhere. Even had the wreck remained more or less intact (the evidence indicates that it disintegrated partly or wholly soon after wrecking), this cyclone would have demolished it.



Captain Penberton Walcott, in the schooner VICTORIA, was ordered to examine the Point Cloates area and anchored there in June 1876. He found a great deal of wreckage on the beach, and had pointed out to him by aborigines the wreck of the STEFANO and the camp of the survivors. He states: "This wreck, since verified beyond doubt as the remains of the STEFANO appeared to us the oldest wreck on the beach, as far as amount of damage sustained, and more buried in sand, seaweed etc. But at the same time, the paintwork appeared brighter and fresher, probably having been newly painted". Remember, this was the STEFANO's maiden voyage and her paint would have been new.

It would appear therefore that the STEFANO struck Black Rock in late October 1875. Most of the survivors got ashore near Camp Hill, some in a small boat, and which struck the reef at the southern edge of Black Rock Passage on the way to shore. The ship was obviously badly damaged on the initial grounding, as the survivors gathered much debris including a door, the usual spars, barrels of beans, onions, flour, cans of olive oil, lard and bottles of wine. They also found a cask of water, hatch covers, ladders, tables, boatswain's trunk, sextant, a packet of letters to the captain, gunpowder, ship's wheel and other debris, indicating that much of the ship must have been very badly damaged.

I consider from the evidence available that most of the ship, certainly almost all the timber, would have finished up on the shore where Captain Walcott found the identifiable STEFANO wreck. Baccich states that the ship had been driven further onto the rocks and "had a more solid purchase on the rock" when he finally abandoned her, but that three crew were "huddled in the safety of the forepeak", indicating the bow may have been relatively undamaged and had driven up onto the rocks. These people abandoned the ship at daybreak when the mainmast fell and the ship was about to break up. The anchors could therefore now be well up on the submerged, shallow rocks and reef surrounding Black Rock's pinnacle and not in the deeper water at over the edge of the rock. These shallows would be very difficult to search in other than extremely calm weather, and maybe not even then. A letter from Baccich to his parents dated 16 May 1876 states that the STEFANO broke up completely into large and small wreckage in less than three hours. Presuming the sounding around the ship for deep water included sounding towards the stern; the lack of deep water would indicate that the stern may well have been driven up on the rock and this is where the pintles and gudgeons may now lie. Alternatively, the stern may have overhung the edge of Black Rock and the rudder fittings are now in the deeper water to the south or south east of Black Rock. It is also possible that they were washed, while still attached to rudder and/or stern post, to the east of there as

the barque broke up. The fact that the ship pivoted around to face south would seem to indicate that the rudder fittings are probably on top of Black Rock.

The Museum has investigated the beach where, according to Pemberton Walcott, the wreckage came ashore, but without success. I don't know how detailed this search was and I think it would prove fruitful to carry out another search of this beach area and the shallower water close by, particularly with a magnetometer and/or metal detector. The wreckage, or what is left of it, could be quite deeply buried beneath the sand and seaweed, both ashore and in the water.

I do have a major criticism of the book and that is that the translation of the original Italian manuscript of the Jesuit, Father Stejepan Skurla, is not a literal translation. A more exact translation may produce more detailed evidence of the important information needed to precisely pinpoint the chronology of the wrecking and the position of the wreckage."

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After writing the above summary and deductions I went to Ningaloo with members of the WA Maritime Museum and the Maritime Heritage Association of WA, and the relevant area, including Black Rock, were examined to the best of our ability. A few things are worth noting:

1. Black Rock no longer has the pinnacle of rock protruding above water level, mentioned in the Pilot.
2. The sea always seems to break over Black Rock, and this would appear to prevent any search of its surface except either on exceptionally calm days or by someone very experienced in rough water diving.
3. There appears to be a depression on the top of Black Rock which may have helped trap any heavy material such as anchors, chain, pintles, etc.
4. From personal observation while swimming close to Black Rock, and searching the surrounding seabed for signs of the STEFANO, I noted that there was virtually no coral or weed growth on the bottom, certainly as far as the east side is concerned. The bottom appears to be cleanly scoured rock, with small gullies and depressions which have sand trapped in them. These gullies are likely places for wreckage to have lodged but I could not search thoroughly because of the depth (I was snorkelling without a tank or weight belt) and the presence of a couple of inquisitive sharks. I did however see some items in one gully which could be wreckage, but could not examine them closely. They appeared to be curved and straight pieces of timber, certainly too regular in shape to be the surrounding rock.

## ARE THERE MORE NINGALOO WRECKS?

"In late 1981 Jill, my wife, and I were preparing for the WA Maritime Museum's 1982 expedition to the site of the wreck of the RAPID. As part of our personal preparation, we wrote to the Hydrographer of the Royal Navy, requesting assistance in obtaining copies of old charts and surveys of the Point Cloates area. When we returned to Geraldton from the expedition we found photocopies of many old charts waiting for us, dating back to Phillip King's original survey of 1818 - 1821.

Two charts of particular interest were dated 1877 and 1886. These show four wrecks near the shore of what is locally known as Four Mile Beach, east of Point Cloates. There are a number of known wrecks in the Point Cloates region - the RAPID, the STEFANO, and the PERTH (a 170 ton iron steamer wrecked in 1887) are probably the best known. Also the ZUIR, an Austrian vessel wrecked in November 1902; the CHOFUKU MARU, a Japanese wheat ship wrecked on 18 February 1931; and the FIN, a whalechaser wrecked on 15 February 1923, near Fraser Island.

There have been many other wreckings in the vicinity, many probably unrecorded, many whose names are forgotten or buried in old records and newspapers. In Graeme Henderson's *Report on the First Season of Excavation of an Unidentified Shipwreck at Point Cloates, Western Australia*, dated August 1979, he states that in May 1876 the Police Sergeant at Roebourne who investigated the wreck of the STEFANO at Point Cloates, wrote: "In addition to the wreck of the Stefano there were lying on the sea shore and on the rocks near there, the wrecks of three or four other vessels all broken up ... One of the wrecks there is of a vessel of about 2000 tons register. It is not known what any of the vessels are, but the Stefano".

This observation corroborates the evidence of the chart dated 1877, just one year later. This is a sketch chart by Captain Pemberton Walcott, the sole purpose of which appears to be to show the position of the four wrecks. On the chart he gives, within the chart title, the latitude and longitude of the wrecks. The official Admiralty Catalogue number of this chart is A8413. It appears that there was probably an explanation to go with the sketch chart by the Captain, but this has, as yet, not been located.

Captain Pemberton Walcott was an experienced navigator and captain, and therefore had the knowledge to clearly distinguish between minor scattered wreckage from one or two past wrecks and the wrecks of four fairly large vessels. The *Inquirer* of 11 July 1883 describes him as "a

skillful navigator" who "often undertook perilous expeditions up the coast in search of harbours and landing places". It states that for "some years past" he was master of a revenue cutter. The *Inquirer* of 18 July 1883 names the cutter as the GERTRUDE, and it was on this vessel that the Captain died as a result of dysentery, on 14 July 1883. He was on his way with supplies for the relief of the party led by the Hon. J. Forrest, believed to have been stranded at Roebuck Bay. Captain Walcott was buried there. The 1886 chart also showing the four wrecks is a standard issue Admiralty Chart, number B1096.

During the Museum expedition, several copper bolts and nails were found near the shore where the wrecks are supposed to be. I have heard that wreckage has been seen by an experienced diver, and have heard of a report that the vessels concerned were reputed to be of about 600 tons. There is therefore a great deal of evidence to indicate that wrecks, other than those already known, lie near the shore in the area of Four Mile Beach. Besides the obvious search to be made here, there should also be a search of records for further information on the wrecks themselves, and a search for the explanation that must have accompanied Captain Pemberton Walcott's sketch chart - an interesting exercise, with the possibility of unearthing some as-yet unknown ships wrecked on our coast."

Much has happened since I wrote that bit, including the publishing of Graeme Henderson's *Unfinished Voyages 1851-1880*. In this he quotes part of Captain Pemberton Walcott's report of his expedition to examine the Point Cloates area in 1876 as a result of the rescue of the survivors of the STEFANO. It is probably this report which accompanied the sketch chart mentioned above. He mentions a vessel of from "300-500 tons burthen ... Indian built - hard wood"; another of oregon pine and possibly American built. Also a considerable amount of another hardwood vessel, very like teak, copper-fastened and coppered, which he judged to be about 1000 tons. There were evidently many, many masts and spars.

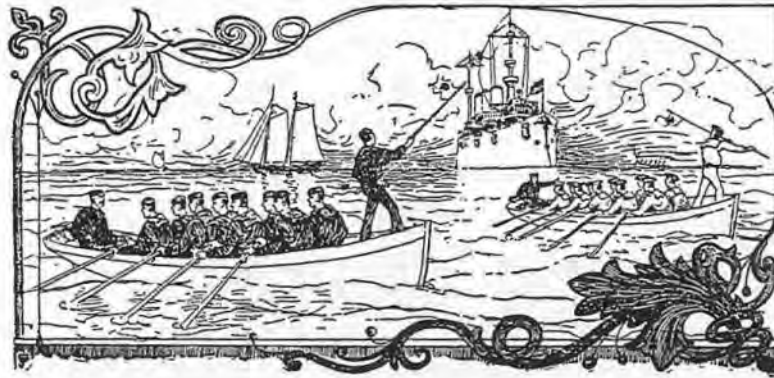
I consider that this area is worth a very thorough study, both onshore, and within the water out to about 500 metres from shore. Neither the RAPID nor the STEFANO were of Indian build or of wood which could be mistaken for or likened to teak. Neither the EMMA, OCATOR nor BROTHERS would have spars anywhere near the sizes that Walcott mentions. I do not know the size nor timber of the CORREO DI AZIZ, so it may be possible she contributed some of the wreckage seen on and near the beach.

This is just one of many fascinating mysteries regarding the early shipping on this coast that needs more investigation and research.

# Albany Maritime Festival

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*To be held at the Town Jetty and Residency Museum complex over Saturday & Sunday, April 19/20, 1997, and a Major Attraction of the Festival of Albany:  
April 18 - 25*



*Yacht Race; Classic, Historic and Interesting Boats; Boat-building & Restoration; Model Boats; Restored Marine Engines; Maritime Artwork, History, Photography, Books and Memorabilia; also Canvas & Sailwork, Wood Carving, Spars, Oars, Blocks, Rigging, Scrimshaw, and much more...*

*Come for a walk along Albany's historic waterfront, and soak in the atmosphere, as well as take in the Festival of Albany in its entirety.*

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Alternatively, if you are interested in mounting a display at the Maritime Festival, then contact The Secretary, Albany Maritime Heritage Association, PO Box 630, Albany 6330, (098) 44 1014. Or for further information, contact Francesca or Noel, at The Chamber of Commerce & Industry (098) 42 2577; Fax (098) 42 3440

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## **"Flotsam and Jetsam"**

**VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED!!**

*If you can spare a little time - and maybe a little energy - to help in the assembly, manning, and disassembly of our March 17/23 exhibition of Maritime Artwork (see advertisement MHA Journal, Sept. 1996), please contact Bob Ivery on 458 3671. He would love to hear from you.*

*MHA membership is generally inclined to be non-responsive. Here's a chance to change all that!! (And, quite apart from this help, the exhibition itself will be well-worth a visit.)*

## **S.S. SULTAN: Information Sought**

In connection with the Fremantle Port Authority's preparations to celebrate the centenary of the opening of the Fremantle Inner Harbour, at Victoria Quay, on May 4, 1897, details are sought on the 2062-ton gross register steamer, the SULTAN. The vessel's entry into the harbour on that day made the

official opening of the Inner Harbour. At that time, the SULTAN was engaged in the Fremantle - Singapore trade. If you are able to shed more light on this ship and the event, please contact Helen Hicks, Co-ordinator, Centenary Celebrations, Fremantle Port Authority, on (09) 430 4911.



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