



# MARITIME HERITAGE ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

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Maritime Heritage Association, Inc.*

C/o: The Secretary (Leigh Smith),  
1 Meelah Road  
City Beach W.A. 6015



Editor: Peter Worsley. 12 Cleopatra Drive, Mandurah, W.A. 6210  
Email: [mha.editor@gmail.com](mailto:mha.editor@gmail.com)

## Annual General Meeting

at

12 Cleopatra Drive  
Mandurah

on

Sunday 1 April 2012—10 am

**Come for morning tea and stay for lunch**

Those spouses and friends not involved with the meeting  
upstairs, please bring a long-time favourite book for a group  
discussion



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

All of the Association's incoming journals, newsletters, etc. are now archived with Ross Shardlow who may be contacted on 9361 0170, and are available to members on loan. Please note that to access the videos, journals, library books, etc it is necessary to phone ahead.

(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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## EDITORIAL

It must seem a long time since the last journal, but this was due to the necessity of getting the December journal out early for two reasons. Firstly the notice regarding the Annual Windup on 20 November had to be published in advance so that members could RSVP. Secondly, I went on a trip to the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and Antarctica in early November, and the journal had to be out before I left. Should anyone prefer a more regular publication than my traipsing around the world sometimes allows, they are welcome to vote me out at the next AGM. *That* should increase the attendance at the meeting!

My three week trip was on the smallest of the ice-breaker expedition ships that head down from Ushuaia in Argentina to Antarctica and related islands. The *Ocean Nova* is 72.8 m long, 11 m breadth and draws only 3.35 m. This small size means that the maximum of 72 passengers (there

were 64 on my voyage) get to places that none of the other ships can, and spend much more time exploring ashore.



**Your Editor Needs You!**

(To send more articles for the Journal)

## Things They Would Rather Have Not Said

“Victory, with only slight losses. On balance a good day for England.”

**British War Correspondent, July 1916.**

The correspondent was commenting on the Battle of the Somme in which 20,000 British troops were killed and 60,000 wounded.



# 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!)*



Nelson's statue in Trafalgar Square, London, stands on a base cast from cannons recovered from the wreck of the *Royal George* (August 1782). The four bronze relief panels on the plinth are cast from captured French guns, and depict the Battle of Cape St Vincent, the Battle of the Nile, the Battle of Copenhagen and the death of Nelson at Trafalgar.

According to archaeologists who recently examined 340 skeletons from three 18th and 19th century Royal Navy graveyards, more than 6% of the sailors in Nelson's day had suffered amputations.

In 1840 during the salvage of the *Royal George* the Royal Engineers let off an explosion to break up the wreck. They accidentally managed to shatter windows as far away as Portsmouth and Gosport.

Thanks to Rod Dickson for this recipe for a popular dish on the whaling ships during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

*Sea Pie:* Flour, suet or pork fat and minced porpoise meat. Mix in a sail cloth bag and then boil for 3 hours.

The world's fastest sailor is Robert Douglas. On 28 October 2010 he kite-surfed to an official world speed sailing record of 55.65 knots (103.06 km/h).

By way of contrast, the fastest sailing yacht is the French *L'Hdroptere* which set a record of 52.86 knots (97.9 km/h) in September 2009.

The Australian Ken Warby stills holds the world water speed record set on 8 October 1978 when he raced at 511 km/h on Blowering Dam in *The Spirit of Australia*. His boat was built of wood.

An 1860 recipe for painting naval guns: 4 oz. resin, 2 oz. lamp-black, 3 oz. bees-wax, 2 oz. shellac, 1 quart linseed oil. Boiled 50 minutes, and, when taken off, half a pint of turpentine added. This to

be laid on as a first coat, and afterwards kept up with ordinary bees-wax and turpentine. For bronze guns, omit the lamp-black, and previously apply a solution of sal-ammoniac, after scraping.

**Chappelling:** *This operation is performed when, instead of coming to, you are taken aback in light winds. Put the helm up, if she has headway, haul up the mainsail and spanker, and square the after yards. Shift the helm as she gathers sternway, and when the after sails fill, and she gathers headway, shift your helm again. When she brings the wind aft, brace up the after yards, get the main tack down and sheet aft, and haul out the spanker as soon as it will take. The head braces are not touched, but the yards remain braced as before.*

R.H. Dana, 1845.

The navigator/explorer Jules-Sébastien-César Dumont D'Urville, sent by the French Government to find the missing *La Pérouse*, was a classical Greek scholar. In 1817 while on a tour of duty in the Mediterranean he noticed a statue which had recently been dug up on the island of Melos. He recognized it as the *Venus de Milo*, and his report on the matter led to the statue's procurement and preservation by the French. As a reward, D'Urville was promoted and awarded the Legion of Honor.

28 April 1791—George Vancouver in the *Discovery*, accompanied by the *Chatham*, arrived at Santa Cruz, Tenerffe, for wood, water, wine and fresh provisions, and to obtain more ballast for the *Chatham*. On 1 May some of the sailors were ashore on leave when a fracas arose between them and some Spanish guards. During what turned into a serious fight Vancouver was thrown into the harbor, and needed to be rescued by some of his crew in one of their boats.

Over a one week period in September 1908 while the United States' Great White Fleet was in Albany, 120,000 postcards were sold in the town.



# Ships of the State Shipping Service

By Jeff Thompson.

## No 27: *Yarrunga* Official Number : 196733

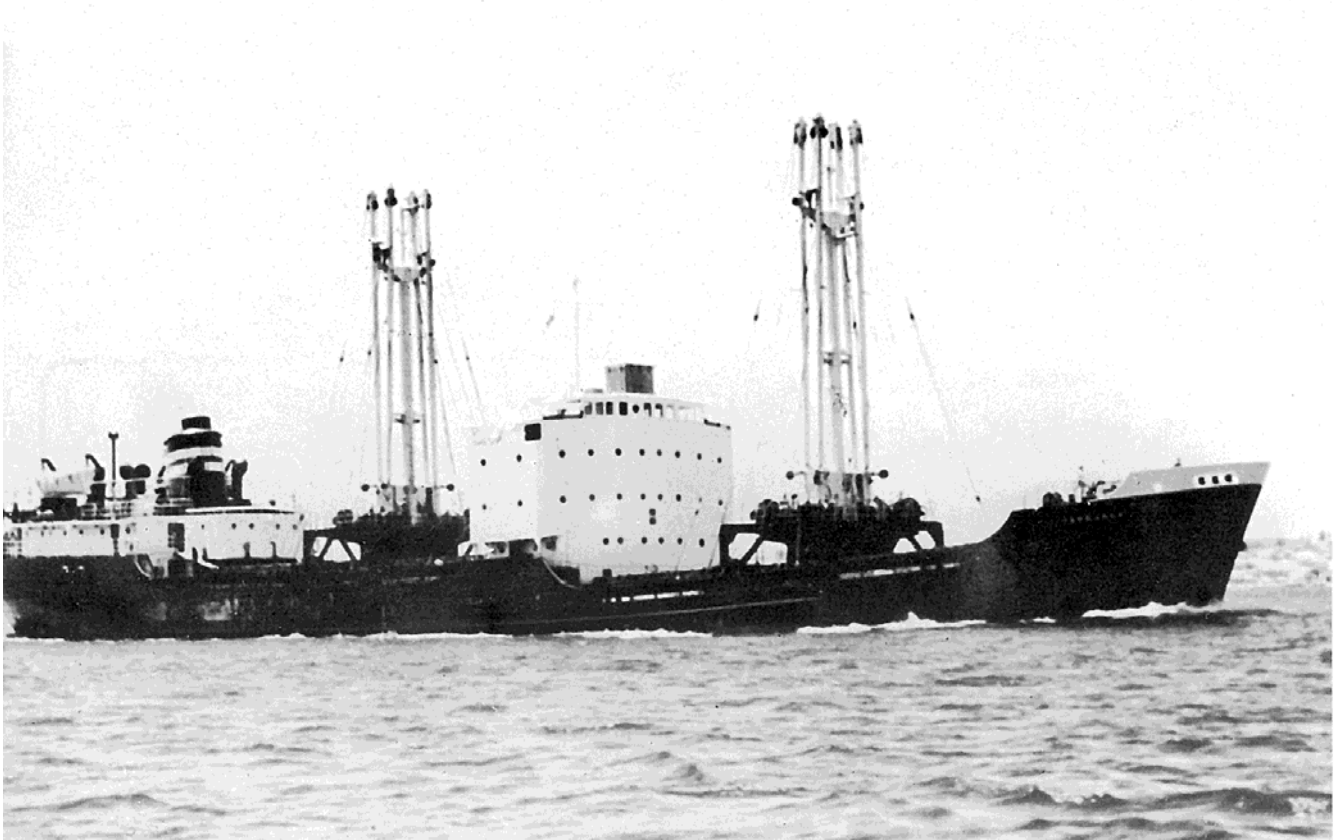
To meet the increased needs for shipping to the North West of the State due to the large industrial developments in the Pilbara region, a short term charter was arranged for the *Yarrunga* from the Australian National Line.

The *Yarrunga* was completed on 5th May 1955 as a bulk carrier by The Broken Hill Propriety Co. Ltd; Whyalla (Yard No 28) for the Australian Shipping Board, being 3,474 Gross registered tons, 4,750 deadweight tons, 100.6 metres overall, 14.6 metres breadth, 6.6 metres draught. The 4 cylinder Lentz compound steam engine was built by the State Dockyard in 1948, the same as the 'D' class coastal vessels. This gave a service speed of 9.5 knots on a single screw.

In May 1967 a bareboat charter to the State Shipping Service was taken up to lift railway sleepers from Bunbury to Dampier for iron ore rail projects. During May 1968 the vessel was returned to her owners.

In October 1970 a further charter was arranged with the vessel, to lift larger cargoes now required and to replace the *Koojarra* then being withdrawn from service. Returning to her owners in July 1971.

During December 1971 *Yarrunga* was sold to Corona Navigation Co S.A., Panama, and renamed *Unicorn*. In 1974 the ship was sold to Regan Shipping Co., Panama, and renamed *Good Hope*. On the 4th April 1975 the vessel sank in the Persian Gulf after an engine room fire on a voyage Singapore to Basra with a cargo of timber.





## HMAS *Wyatt Earp*

On 8 February 1948 HMAS *Wyatt Earp* under the command of Commander Karl Oom, OBE, set sail from Williamstown, Victoria, taking the first post-WW II expedition from Australia to Antarctica. The expedition had actually set sail the previous year, but was compelled to turn back due to problems with propeller shaft alignment. This Royal Australian Navy ship with its very American name had an interesting history, and a long life.

Built by the firm of Bolsones in Molde, Norway, in 1919 as the wooden sealing ship *Fanefjord*, it was 136 feet long with a beam of 29 feet and a draft of 15 feet. Gross tonnage was 402, and both masts were rigged with sails, plus two headsails. Because of its original task of sealing in Arctic waters the ship was built very strongly so as to withstand ice. It was also given a very rounded bottom and no bilge keels, to mitigate against being trapped in the ice. This resulted in extreme rolling in any sea, but particularly so in heavy seas. The amount of roll went as high as 55° each way, and 50° was common. The period of roll for this was 4½ seconds from port to starboard and back to port. The resulting chaos in the galley, particularly when meals were being served, can be imagined.

In 1933 the American millionaire explorer Lincoln Ellsworth bought the *Fanefjord*, renamed it *Wyatt Earp* after his home county hero, and sailed from Bergen, Norway, to New Zealand and on to Antarctica. Before leaving Norway Ellsworth had the hull sheathed in oak and then steel plates as further protection against ice. In all, Ellsworth made four expeditions to Antarctica in the *Wyatt Earp*; 1933-34, 1934-35, 1935-36 and 1938-39. These voyages were made during the summer period, and he took an aircraft on board with him. The pilot of this aircraft and photographer to the expedition was the great Australian polar explorer, Sir Hubert Wilkins. At the end of the 1939 voyage Ellsworth had become so exasperated with the excessive rolling of the ship that he gave it to Wilkins who immediately sold it to the Australian Government for £4,400.

Shortly afterwards WW II began and the *Wyatt Earp* was handed over to the RAN, renamed

HMAS *Wongala*, and used initially to carry stores from Sydney to Darwin. It was then sent to South Australia where it served as an Examination Vessel at Port Adelaide, and later as a Guard Ship at Port Pirie and Whyalla. At the conclusion of the war it was moored in the Torrens River and made available to the Sea Scouts.

When the Australian Government formed the Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition in 1947 they were looking for a suitable vessel. Another great Australian polar explorer, Sir Douglas Mawson (a South Australian), knew of the *Wyatt Earp* and recommended it for this task. It was handed to the control of the RAN, and underwent a £150,000 refit. Rotting timbers were replaced and the superstructure was altered to provide better visibility from the bridge as well as laboratories and extra accommodation for crew and scientists. An 8-cylinder Crossley semi-diesel of 400hp was installed, and two auxiliaries for the supply of electricity. Extra fuel tanks gave a range of 10,000-11,000 miles at 8½ knots, and radar, gyrocompass and echo sounder were fitted. The masts and sails were retained, and on 16 July 1947 it was renamed HMAS *Wyatt Earp*.

HMAS *Wyatt Earp* returned to Australia on 31 March 1948. Three months later, on 30 June, it was paid off and sold to the Pucker Shipping Company (Victoria) for £11,000. After stripping off the sheathing and removing the extra fuel tanks the company renamed the ship *Wongala*. In 1956 it was sold to the Ulverstone Shipping Company, renamed *Natone*, and traded in eastern Australian waters. In January 1959, now 40 years old, the *Natone* was heading south along the Queensland coast when it was struck by a severe storm. The pumps could not cope with a leak which flooded the engine room, but under sail the ship managed to make Rainbow Bay. Here, during the night of 23-24 January the anchor failed to hold and the ship was blown ashore. The crew made it safely to shore using hatch covers as rafts, and the *Fanefjord/ Wyatt Earp/ HMAS Wongala/ HMAS Wyatt Earp/ Wongala/ Natone* broke up within a couple of weeks.

Peter Worsley



## Otago in Distress

In the June 1999 edition of this journal Ross Shardlow wrote an article on the full-rigged ship *Narcissus*, made famous by Joseph Conrad's novel *The Nigger of the Narcissus*. The cover illustration for that June journal was a black and white rendition of Ross's painting of the *Narcissus*. However, that reproduction failed and failed dismally, due partly to my ignorance of computers but mainly to the poor quality of photocopying available at the time. In that article Ross mentions the iron barque *Otago*, the only vessel of which Conrad was ever in command. Conrad took command at Bangkok in early 1888 after the previous master had died at sea. He sailed from Thailand to Sydney and then Mauritius. A drawing by Ross of the *Otago* illustrated this vessel.

I was reminded of the article, the painting and the drawing when I found a short article in a local newspaper of 1895 while carrying out some completely unrelated research.

### THE BARQUE OTAGO PUT INTO FREMANTLE IN DISTRESS

*The iron barque Otago, 346 tons register, Captain F. Jameson, bound from Mauritius to Melbourne, with a cargo of 567 tons of sugar, put into Fremantle on Thursday to repair a leak which was sprung four days out from Mauritius during very heavy weather. Captain Jameson reports that following her departure from Mauritius on September 7, the Otago had to contend against strong head winds with high seas. During the boisterous weather which prevailed one of the bow plates was smashed in. On the weather abating fair weather prevailed for about 10 days, but on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September the ship fell in with a fierce westerly gale, during which another of the bow plates was stove in. On the pumps being sounded it was discovered that there was 8ft of water in the fore compartment. In order to prevent the water getting into the hold and damaging the cargo the sluice between the fore-*

*peak and forehold was closed. The pumps were then got to work, and had to be kept continuously going in order to keep down the inflow of water. It was impossible to round the vessel to, and the ship had to be kept running before the wind. Efforts were made to stop the leak, and by means of pads this was effected after much trouble. The captain then decided to make for Fremantle, and the Otago was brought to an anchorage in Gage Roads on Thursday afternoon. The vessel will be inspected by Lloyd's surveyor, Captain Laurie, today. The Otago, which was built in 1869 by Messrs Stephens and Sons, Glasgow, is owned by the Commercial Bank of Australia, and her cargo is 567 tons of sugar, consigned to Messrs Charles Jacobs and Sons, Melbourne (West Australian, 15 October 1895: 4a).*

That short article enables a reader with even a little imagination to visualise the scene; the fierce gales, the sprung plates with water pouring in and the fight by the crew to keep the barque afloat!

With the advent of our current excellent photocopying/printing of the journal by Par Excellence I am again reproducing Ross's painting of the *Narcissus*. I believe that this time readers will better be able to appreciate Ross's magnificent work of art, even if it is reproduced in black and white. To see the full colour version you will have to go to the MHA website.

The *Otago* was built 1869 (the same year as the *Cutty Sark*) by Alexander Stephen & Sons in Glasgow as their Yard No. 136. An iron barque of 447<sup>24/94</sup> tons BM, the contract price was £16 per ton, and her construction gave the builder a profit of £222. The shipbuilding company of Alexander Stephen & Sons dates from 1750. The company was incorporated into the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in 1968, and was closed when the latter organisation collapsed three years later. The Scottish comedian Billy Connolly served his apprenticeship as a welder with Alexander Stephen & Sons.



*Narcissus—Foaming to the South*  
By Ross Shardlow



# Nelson Cole Haley

An important figure in the history of American whaling during the 19th century was Nelson Cole Haley, born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, on 7 March 1832. His father died soon after Nelson's birth leaving a widow with two daughters and Nelson. As he grew up his sole aim was to go to sea as a whaler. Unable to obtain his mother's permission, at the age of 12 years he ran away from home and shipped on the whaler *John*. This voyage lasted almost 4 years, so he was sixteen when he returned home. At his mother's insistence he spent a short period (the winter of 1848-49) at school, but then left to sign on to the *Charles W. Morgan*. Captain John D. Sampson must have liked what he saw as the sixteen year old was shipped as a boat-steerer. This important position acted as bow oarsman of a whaleboat, and consequently also the harpooner.

During this voyage the *Charles W. Morgan* called at Two People Bay near Albany, where the crew cleaned the ship, painted the hull and took on about 100 barrels of water.

About three weeks later, off New Zealand and at the age of only 17, Nelson harpooned his first whale, a sperm whale which yielded 85 barrels of oil. This, the third voyage of the *Charles W. Morgan*, lasted almost 4 years, from 5 June 1849 to 27 May 1853, and earned Haley \$200. He wrote a book of the voyage titled *Whale Hunt*, a factual, interesting and informative story of a voyage in a whaling ship during the middle of the 19th century.

For a year he left the sea (again at his mother's insistence) and travelled to Minnesota where he first managed a general store and later a timber mill. However, the pull of the sea was too much, and he shipped out of New Bedford as mate on a ship bound for the right-whaling grounds in the Arctic. He shipped aboard other vessels until, as captain of one, he reached Hawaii. Here he based himself for some years, marrying Charlotte Brown in March 1864. They had five daughters and a son. He had left whaling by then and become an exporter of sandalwood and other commodities.

In 1883 Haley and his wife, as important mem-

bers of Hawaiian society, received an invitation to the coronation of the ruling monarch of Hawaii, King Kalakaua and his queen, Kapi'olani. The invitation is shown opposite.

One of his daughters later described her father:

*He was not a large man, being only five feet six and one-half inches in height; yet he did not appear small. His shoulders were broad and he had the strong well-muscled frame of the active outdoor man. His deep blue eyes could be merry or serious, or, occasionally, severe. His golden-brown hair, in middle age, became snow white, but his full beard remained dark red until his death. Although not a well-educated man, he was highly intelligent and very well informed.*

He moved to Seattle, and later, in 1897, started up a business supplying food and equipment to the Alaskan miners during the gold rush. In Alaska he caught pneumonia and died in the late winter of 1900.



*The Charles W Morgan*





Captain & Mrs Haley's invitation to the coronation held at the Iolani Palace on 12 February 1883



Just in case you didn't realise how big whales are!



# Was This Sydney's First Seagoing Vessel?

When George Vancouver was given command of the sloop-of-war *Discovery* on 15 December 1790 to lead an expedition on a voyage around the world:

*The intention of the Government at the first was not to send out two Established Vessels, but to send out in the Discovery the frame of a small Shallop, to be set up when the occasion required it, and to be manned and victuall'd from the Discovery; but after this frame of the small Vessel was stowed away, it was found that there was not sufficient room left, for a requisite proportion of Stores & Provisions, this Scheme was therefore abandoned, and it being deem'd necessary for the service on which we were to be employ'd to have a second Vessel smaller than the Discovery, the Chatham Brig, then a Tender lying at Deptford was chosen, as best calculated for the purpose required (Edward Bell, clerk on board Discovery).*

The shallop was of 42 tons, and was stowed on board *Discovery* between 8 and 14 March 1791. It was returned to the shipyard on 19-20 March, and later placed on the convict ship *Pitt* (775

tons, Captain Edward Manning) which departed Yarmouth Roads on 17 July 1791. It arrived at Port Jackson on 14 February 1792. The shallop was there assembled, named *Venus*, and was most probably 'the first seagoing vessel launched in Sydney'.

For a while *Venus* was employed carrying stores to Tasmania, but on 17 June 1806, while at Port Dalrymple with the master ashore, it was seized by the disgruntled mate Kelly, a convict, and a soldier from the garrison at the port. After setting adrift five loyal crew the vessel sailed to New Zealand. There are a number of different stories as to what happened after that. One says that the crew were killed by Maoris, another adds that they were then eaten. The *Venus* was supposed to have been burned. Kelly, it appears, was captured and sent to England for trial. Yet another story is that the vessel was lost in the South Sea Islands with all the crew saved.

Note:

The *Pitt* was built on the Thames in 1780, and was the largest convict transport at that time. It was a regular East India Company vessel, and carried 402 convicts on that voyage, 29 of whom died on the passage out. A large number of crew, soldiers, soldiers' wives and children, and convicts' children also died.

## 1882 Sea Sickness Cure

The following is a cure for sea sickness as reported in the *Inquirer* of 10 May 1882.

When the person feels the sick sensation coming on tie a handkerchief (a silk one is the best) round the loins close above the hips, and squeeze as tight as possible until almost unbearable. Then tie another above this under the short ribs, squeezing as tightly as the first. Then lie down on the back, with the head pointing to the bow of the ship, remaining still till the sensation passes off. Do not take off

or loosen the handkerchief till after walking about some time on the deck of the vessel. I hope some person will try this if they should be afflicted with sea sickness and report the results for the information of others.

Editor's note: I also would like to hear from anybody who tries this remedy!

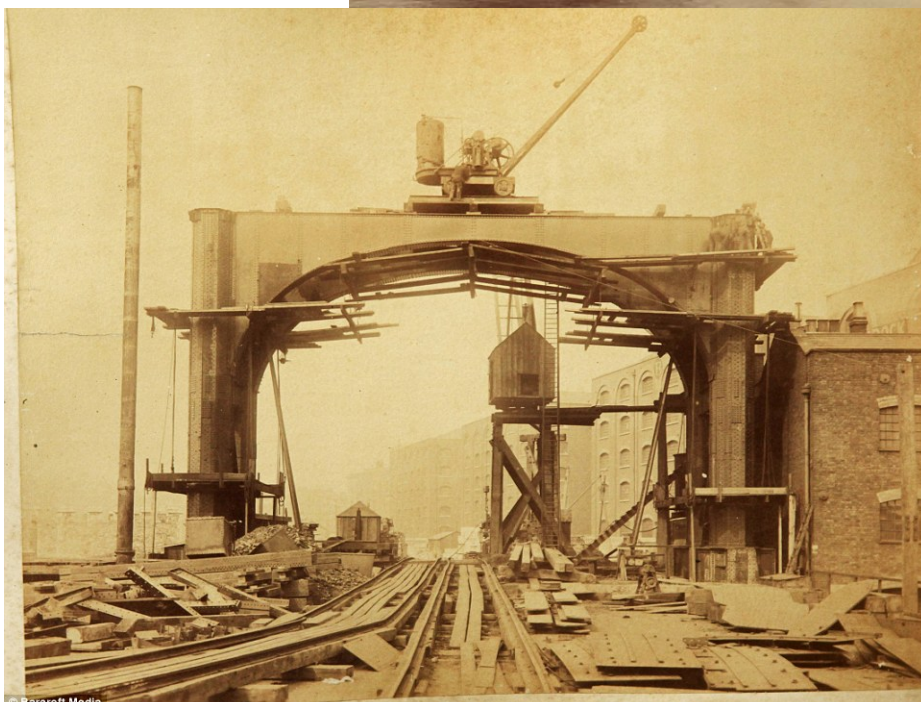


# London's Tower Bridge

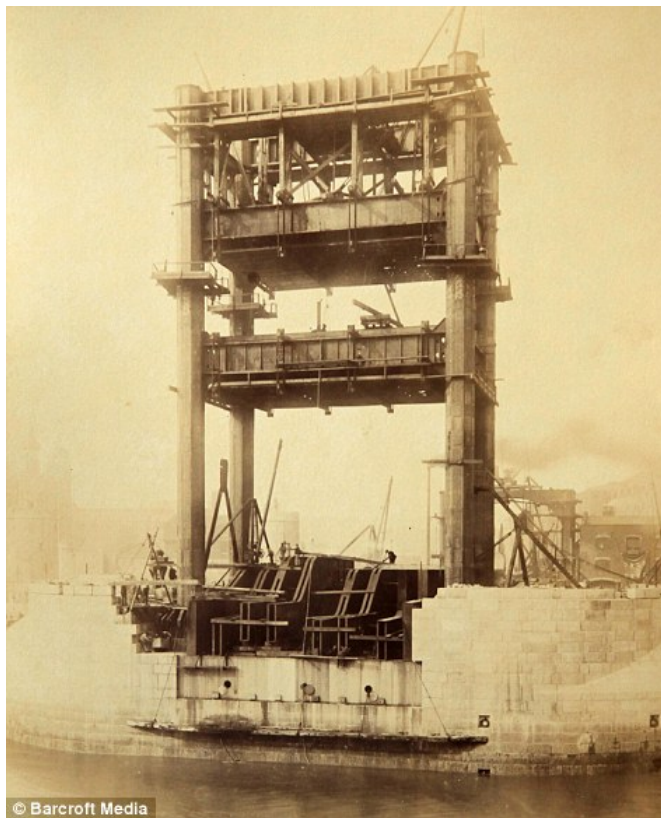
The following photographs are courtesy of Bob Johnson, and many of you may have already seen them. For those that haven't, I include just a few.

The Tower Bridge is one of London's most famous landmarks, recognised around the world. A chance find of photographs taken during its construction in 1892 reveal that the famous and imposing stone towers are in fact made of steel, and are only clad with stone.

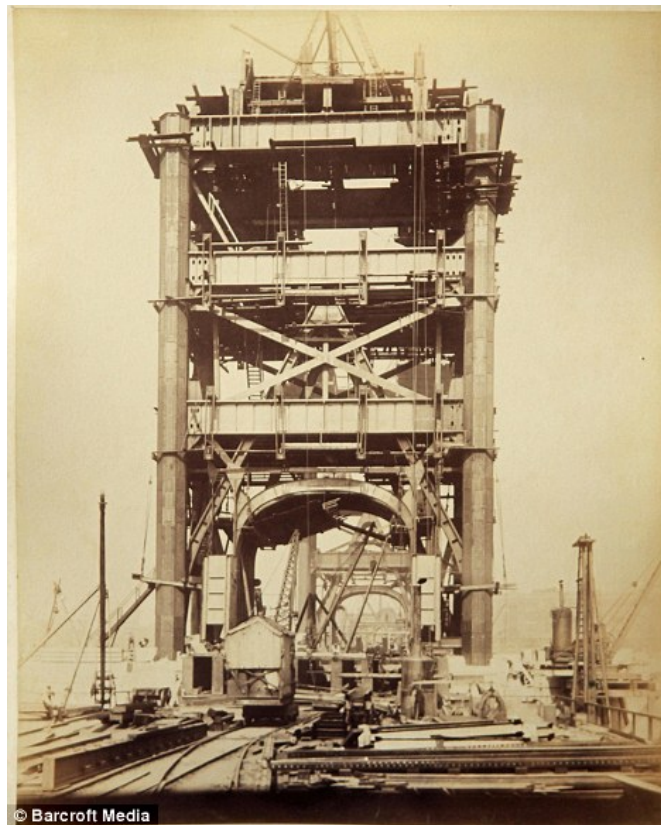
The 50 photos were found in a skip bin in 2006 and placed in a carrier bag. When the finder offered them to the Tower Bridge Museum they were rejected, sight unseen, with the comment that they had plenty of pictures of the bridge. The finder kept them under his bed for six years until one of his neighbours looked at them. The neighbour, a city guide and expert in London's history, was astounded. They can now be seen on the internet. I haven't got the internet address, but I believe they are part of an article in the *Daily Mail*.



*See following page for more photos*



© Barcroft Media



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TOWER BRIDGE WORKS OCT 18th 1892



# Convict Public Works

**The following is a summary of Public Works in the Colony during Captain Henderson's term as Comptroller General 1850-1862, as contained in the Annual Report for 1862 from Governor Hampton to Lord Newcastle, Colonial Secretary.**

Memorandum showing approximately the Amount of Work performed by Convict Labour, from the arrival of the *Scindian*, in June 1850, to November 30, 1862.

- 563 miles road cleared.
- 563 miles road made and repaired.
- 167 miles road drained.
- 4 miles road paved with pitcher paving.
- 1 mile road paved with wood blocks.
- 6,600 yards stone causeway made.
- 7¼ miles of earth embankment made.
- 239 bridges erected or extensively repaired.
- 12,900 yards of approaches to bridges made.
- 158,300 yards of stone procured and stacked.
- 65,800 yards of stone broken for macadamizing.
- 54,000 yards of gravel dug and screened.
- 4,000 trees felled and removed from roads.
- 543 culverts made and repaired.
- 44 wells sunk.
- 14½ miles of tramway laid and repaired.
- 2,650 loads mahogany timber cut into scantling.
- 2,260 yards fencing prepared and fixed.

## Fremantle

Jetties, south bay, 455 x 22, north bay, 205 x 11, with wide head, both furnished with hoisting cranes and guarded by post and rail, both constructed of mahogany, the piles driven into sandstone rock. Sea wall built in the south bay, 280 feet in length, which supports the roadway.

On the north beach about seven acres have been filled up and protected by a rough stone wall.

A powder magazine has been built in two separate compartments, and enclosed by a boundary wall; also a guard-room at a convenient distance.

Several swamps have been filled up in the town, and some of the streets have been graded and metalled and the paths laid with flagstones.

## River Swan

This has been deepened and improved for navigation by the removal of shoals &c., &c., and a large flat built for the ferry at North Fremantle.

## Perth

Drainage. – A vast amount of labour has been consumed in draining several large lakes at the back of the town, to render the land available for garden purposes.

Causeway. – The two sides have been piled with mahogany, and the road made up about half a mile in length, and a sawn timber bridge erected of 20 feet span.

Perth streets. – A very heavy cutting has been made in the main street, entailing the removal of many thousands of yards of sand; a portion of the roadway has been formed and metalled, and one and a quarter mile graded, paved and metalled.

The channel from the jetty has been deepened for a distance of half a mile.

## Rottneest Island

A boat-slip has been constructed, additions made to pilot's quarters and lighthouse, a well sunk at the quarters, barn, stables, and sheds built; a new house has been built for a marine residence for his Excellency the Governor, consisting of 12 rooms and the necessary out-buildings; a hay press screw has been made and sundry additions to the press, as well as various incidental services performed.

[Also itemized is a long list of buildings erected including a new Government House in Perth, a hospital, barracks for soldiers and pensioners, offices for the Comptroller General's Department, the Commissariat and Superintendent of Convicts, warders' quarters, a prison with cells for solitary confinement, cookhouse, bakehouse and wash-house, bath-house, punishment cells, chapel and many other buildings for the Convict Establishment at Fremantle; buildings for hiring and outstation work parties at depots – North Fremantle, Freshwater Bay, Mount Eliza, Guildford, York, Toodyay, Bunbury, Albany, Champion Bay and Port Gregory.]

Reference: Evans, L. & Nicholls, P. (editors), 1984, *Convicts and Colonial Society 1788-1868*. The Mac-Millan Company of Australia Pty Ltd, Melbourne.



# The *Sophia Jane*: Australia's First Steamship

By World Ship Society member G. Griffiths

This article appeared in the World Ship Society, Fremantle Branch Newsletter, Vol. 23, No. 9, September 2003, and is reprinted with their permission.

The unique spectacle witnessed by the few inhabitants of Newcastle located at the mouth of the Hunter River, New South Wales, on the evening of 13 June 1831 possessed of all the ingredients to qualify for an "I was there" story.

This overcurious crowd had their startled attention focused seaward as the first steamer to visit Australia skirted the coast off Colliers Point as she shaped her course to clear Nobby's Head at the river's entrance. Above the hiss of breaking surf, an unfamiliar sound drifted ashore - the thwack, thwack of the *Sophia Jane's* paddles as they clawed the moderate swell.

Endless speculation would have prevailed among the spectators as they commented on the vessel's thin black funnel as it spewed out clouds of black smoke. Accustomed only to the sight of unpretentious sailing vessels, they no doubt questioned the intruder's presence. Where had she hailed from? What was she doing near the Hunter river? Where bound? So what chain of circumstances brought the precursor of Australia's steam coastal vessels to the east coast of Australia in 1831 just over forty three years since the arrival of the first fleet? Let us then start at the beginning of the *Sophia Jane's* career.

In 1826, her Baltic pine hull slid down the launching ramp at Bame's and Miller's yard at Rotherhithe on the Thames. When completed she took on a London registry. The dimensions of her flush decked hull were:

Length: 126ft

Beam: 20ft (30 ft over the paddle boxes)

Depth: 10ft

Draft: 6ft

Tonnage: 256 burthen; 156 tons builders measurement

Her single cylinder side-lever, jet condensing engine of 50hp was a product of the ship-builders Barnes and Miller, both ex pupils of James Watt, inventor of the condensing steam

engine in 1776. The single brass cylinder had a bore of 40 inches and in common with other side lever engines, had a long piston stroke; the revolutions rarely exceeded 25 per minute.

For the carriage of passengers she was adequately fitted with three separate cabins, all of a high standard. The ladies cabin, adorned with glass panels, contained eleven bunks while the gents possessed sixteen; steerage passengers were allocated twenty bunks.

When completed, the brig-rigged *Sophia Jane* came under the management of the St George Packet Company for service between Liverpool and Douglas on the Isle of Man. Consequently, she inaugurated the regular steamer service between the two ports. She plied this Irish Sea route until late in 1830 when she was withdrawn, her seven knots being no match for the newcomer on the run, the *Mona's Isle*, launched in 1830 for the newly established Isle of Man Steam Packet Company, Limited. The *Sophia Jane* now found herself directed to the English Channel where she ran between various channel ports on the English side with the occasional trip to France and the Channel Islands.

Following her brief appearance on the Channel, the *Sophia Jane* appeared on the River Thames where she was engaged in towing sailing ships in and out of London. A short time later she upset the Watermen's Guild by inaugurating the steam passenger ferry service between London Bridge and Gravesend, a distance of some 30 miles. Not to be outdone, the Guild, who had a long established monopoly ferrying passengers up and down the Thames, took their grievance to court, where, after weeks of wrangling, the verdict was handed down in favour of the Guild. As a result of this expensive lawsuit, the *Sophia Jane* found herself banished to a quiet Thames backwater until later 1830 when she became the property of a retired naval lieutenant,



Edward Biddulph who paid £8,000 for her, which was also her original building cost. Her new owner bought her solely with the intention of selling her to an overseas buyer, although some sources believed that her builders Barnes and Miller retained a share in her. Be that as may be, the *Sophia Jane*, with Biddulph in command sailed from the Thames on 16 December 1830.

She proceeded as a brig rigged sailing vessel, her side paddles having been removed and stowed below deck with a quantity of stores that included a complete set of spare machinery parts. Passengers on the southbound voyage were Mrs. Biddulph, her family and two of her friends. Along with Biddulph there were two other qualified crew members, the mate Henry William Prescott and the engineer William Bourne who later established a marine machinery and engineering business near Sydney's Market Wharf.

The *Sophia Jane's* first port of call was the Brazilian port of Pernambuco (now named Recife), where she took on supplies of stores and fresh water. Biddulph, well aware of the scourge of scurvy, paid particular attention to the quality of the fresh fruit required for the next leg of the voyage, across the South Atlantic to Cape Town, where she arrived on 17 March 1831.

In an endeavour to sell the *Sophia Jane* in Cape Town, Biddulph called a meeting of local businessmen a week following his arrival. A large crowd attended the meeting held in the Commercial Exchange, one group having the intention of acquiring the vessel as the first step to establishing a joint stock shipping company to trade between Capetown and Algoa Bay, a distance of some 420 miles. Unfortunately for Biddulph, negotiations with the interested businessmen did not reach an amicable conclusion thus forcing the sale's abandonment. Biddulph now decided to head across the Southern Ocean to Australia.

She arrived unheralded at Port Jackson on the evening of 14 May 1831, just over forty-three years since the First Fleet's arrival. The passage from England had taken five months. Bourne, the engineer, immediately set about

shipping the paddles and carrying out maintenance work that extended over four weeks by which time the vessel was deemed ready to undergo sea trials before entering the coastal trade to the Hunter River. Biddulph's decision to enter the Sydney - Newcastle trade was a sound one. He had gleaned first hand accounts concerning the unsatisfactory service that prevailed over the 60-mile run from passengers who traveled on the sailing craft. These vessels were mostly small cutters.

On 6 June 1831, the paddler was pronounced ready for her sea trials under steam. Drawing considerable interest from the onlookers on shore, she steamed around Sydney Harbour at a 7 knot clip, meeting up with the barque *Lady Hareward* of 429 tons making slow progress towards the Heads on her passage to England. The *Sophia Jane's* tow was much appreciated. Throughout the trial her engine behaved perfectly, so much so that a second shake-down cruise occurred on Friday 11 June. On this occasion the vessel was honoured by the presence on board of His Excellency the Governor of New South Wales, Sir Ralph Darling, who was accompanied by a retinue of guests. All enjoyed a sumptuous breakfast as the paddler chugged leisurely around Darling Harbour before heading for Goat Island and Dawes Point.

The same morning, on her return to Sydney Cove, the *Sophia Jane* embarked a number of the town's lesser citizen for yet another promotional cruise. She cast off at eleven o'clock, and then headed for Pinchgut Island, since renamed Fort Denison. Course was then set for South Head, where she took on board the pilot Mr. Watson who had held the position since 1805. Watson Bay, located south of South Head is named after him. Under guidance of pilot Watson, the *Sophia Jane* rounded Middle Head then steamed in a northwesterly direction into today's Middle Harbour.

When the vessel's course was reversed at four bells, the enthralled passengers were escorted into the dining saloon to partake of a "sumptuous cold collation" catered for by Mr. Bax from the town's "Australia Hotel". After the guests returned to the upper deck, where to their astonishment, they all realised the vessel was well out to sea, the Heads barely visible in



the distance. Despite contrary winds and tide, the *Sophia Jane* completed the 5 mile leg separating the outer North Head and Pinchgut Island in a record time of twenty minutes, compared to the customary forty minutes taken by sailing craft with favourable winds and tide.

The *Sophia Jane's* inaugural run to the Hunter River began on 13 June 1831 when at 7.15 am she slipped her moorings at Sydney cove. On her way to the sea, she assisted the barque *Emma* with a tow till the latter was well clear of the Heads. The paddler arrived at her destination King's Wharf, Watt Street, Newcastle at 3.15 pm, having covered the distance of 60 miles in 8 hours. The first steam coastal run in Australia had been recorded.

Next day the *Sophia Jane* steamed up river to Green Hills (now Morpeth), taking 3½ hours for the trip of 20 miles much to the consternation of the local aboriginal tribes. Whenever the vessel's steam whistle blew to disturb the quite rural environment, flocks of parrots rose screeching from trees, adding to the abuse hurled at the intruder by the aboriginals as they ran along the river bank keeping pace with the *Sophia Jane*. At Green Hills, the newcomer followed the custom of tying up alongside the store ship *St Michael* that performed the dual role of floating warehouse and landing stage until she capsized in 1841. Next day, the paddler returned to Sydney by way of Newcastle taking seven hours and forty minutes for the trip.

Fares charged by Captain Biddulph for the one way trip from Sydney to Newcastle compared very favourably with that demanded by the cutter *Lord Liverpool*. A single fare on the *Sophia Jane* set the cabin class passengers back £2, inclusive of wines and meals; steerage travelers paid £1. Weather permitting; the *Sophia Jane* covered the trip twice weekly compared to the *Lord Liverpool's* weekly service.

The paddler remained on the run until around 1840, completing 630 round trips with no delays brought about by engine failure. There was however one exception late in 1832, when her badly corroded boiler had to be replaced by one dispatched from England, necessitating a two month lay-up before sailings could be resumed on 7 December 1832.

In December 1834, she faced keen competition from the second steamer to arrive in the colony from England; this was the paddler *Tamar* of 88 tons built on the Clyde for the Tamar Steam Navigation Company of Launceston. The two vessels lost little time unfurling their rivalry, setting the scene for further "races" along the sixty mile run such as the legendary neck and neck races between the *Newcastle* and *Naomi* that reached their peak in the 1880's.

On 26 June 1835, a notice appeared in a Sydney newspaper announcing the impending sale of the *Sophia Jane*, either wholly or by shares. Interested parties were advised to contact Lamb, Buchanan of Sydney. By August 1835, only ten shares remained, the majority of shares sold were held by T. Street and J. Hickey Grose, the latter already the owner of the paddler *William the Fourth* of 54 tons launched 1831, the first steam coastal steamer built in Australia. However, in December 1838, Grose became the *Sophia Jane's* sole owner, transferring her registry from London to Sydney.

Following her sale, Biddulph relinquished his command to Captain Pearse, who remained her master until September 1841, when Captain Wiseman took over until succeeded by Captain Stericker on 5 December 1843, who was destined to become her last master.

While owned by Grose, the *Sophia Jane* deviated from her usual Sydney to Hunter River run in May 1839 when she called at Moreton Bay to pick up convicts and their guards for return to Sydney. She thus became the first steamer to visit Queensland.

In July 1839 she became the property of John Thomas Wilson, but he retained her for only a brief period before selling her to the General Steamship Company in August 1840. Following this sale, the *Sophia Jane* departed from the Hunter River scene, sailing instead to the southern ports of New South Wales, with the greatest number of calls being directed to Wollongong, some 50 mile south of Sydney. Passengers embarked at the Jacques Coasting wharf from where she departed every Thursday and Friday.

The paddler was sold again in October 1842 when she passed into the hands of T. Barker and





Partners who in turn sold her to Edye Manning in 1844. In April of the same year, she had the misfortune, under the command of Captain Stericker, to strike a reef in the approaches to Wollongong but was soon refloated to continue her run to Sydney.

Now almost nineteen years old, her soft-wood hull had passed its prime so it came as no surprise to discover that damage sustained in the grounding proved to be more severe than at first assessed. This compelled her owner Edye Manning to sell the *Sophia Jane* to shipbreakers as he considered the necessary repair work to be uneconomical. Consequently, in 1845, the *Sophia Jane* limped into Chowne's shipbreaking yard, located on Darling Harbour's western shore at Pyrmont. Eventually, some of her timbers became part of a new vessel, the *OPS*, aptly named by Chowne who quipped that as the new vessel had been constructed from "old pieces of ships" so he considered the name appropriate.

The *Sophia Jane's* engine was transferred to a new paddle steamer, the *Phoenix* of 212 tons,

owned by Edye Manning and built by Chowne's shipbuilding yard at Pyrmont. She commenced running on the Sydney to Newcastle run in October 1846 following her launching on 24 June 1846.

In April 1852, whilst inward bound, she struck the Clarence River bar at the river's entrance then drifted on to the North Beach to become a total wreck. No attempt has ever been made to recover her engine, ex *Sophia Jane*, which lies buried under the sands.

With the exception of a model housed in Newcastle's Maritime Museum, not a shred of evidence remains to serve as a reminder of the *Sophia Jane's* unique status in the annals of Australia's Maritime History --- the nation's first steamship and the first to arrive from an overseas port.

Perhaps this observation is not strictly correct as in Newcastle's Cathedral Cemetery lies the mortal remains of Edward Biddulph R.N. His decision to sail the *Sophia Jane* to Australia earned her that special niche in the country's Maritime History.

Surveyor General's Office,  
Perth, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1874.

The following communication is published for the information of Masters of Vessels trading to and from Champion Bay, Western Australia.

Brig *Centaur*, Champion Bay  
26<sup>th</sup> March 1874

Sir, - I beg leave to report a Reef which I passed on my passage from Fremantle. This morning, while steering for Moore Point, N.N.W., breakers were reported on the port bow. Being, as near as I could judge, about 5 miles outside the coast reef at the time, I consulted my charts of the coast; 3, the latest, is corrected (1872) by H.M.S. *Clio*. I called Mr Victor's and Mr Forrest's attention to it, and we found that it is not marked. I took the bearings of the North end from the ship, centre of the Break West, distant 1½ mile, Mr Forrest's Trig Station J N.E. by E. ½ E., distant about 8 miles, the low black Port Grey N. by E., distant 12 miles; wind at the time blowing strongly from S.S.W., with heavy seas. From the mast-head I could see the coast reef quite plain, and the reef above mentioned to run N.E. and S.W., I should say about 3 miles in extent, breaking heaviest at the extremes. Trusting, Sir, that you will take notice of this for the benefit of shipmasters.

I have &c  
Andrew L. Edgar  
Master of the *Centaur*

To the Surveyor General, W.A.



# GRYTVIKEN

A brief description of the whaling station in South Georgia.



*Grytviken whaling station with the wreck of the Petrel on the shore.*

Late last year I was lucky enough to visit Grytviken on the island of South Georgia. Situated roughly between 54° and 55° south latitude, this long, narrow island has a coastline deeply indented by hundreds of bays and fjords. In November 1904 a Norwegian, C.A. Larsen, set up a whaling station in King Edward Cove, a small bay within one of the largest, Cumberland Bay. This was the first shore-based whaling station to be established in the Antarctic. It was named Grytviken, and at its height it employed 300 men. Other whaling stations at various sheltered bays soon followed. Over the next 58 years the Norwegians hunted whales every year, including through both World Wars. In 1963 and 1964 Grytviken was leased to a Japanese company, but at the end of the latter year whaling ceased as the stock of whales had become exhausted. The station was abandoned with virtually none of the equipment being removed.

South Georgia has some harsh weather especially during winter, and this took its toll with buildings

starting to collapse, and general deterioration of the factory. During the summers of 2003-5 the Government of South Georgia carried out extensive remedial work such as the removal of asbestos products, fuel oils and the loose corrugated iron cladding of some of the buildings, making the site safe for visitors. This has had the benefit of opening for display the whole of the factory workings, such as the pressure cookers, centrifuges, boiler house, and so on. It is now possible to wander among the ruins of the workings.

The station manager's house has been turned into an excellent museum showing the history of exploration and whaling in South Georgia, together with wildlife exhibits. However, it is the whaling station itself with plenty of explanatory signage which is of main interest. Along the shore can be seen the wrecks of a number of vessels. The main one is the steam whale chaser *Petrel*, bows high on the beach and in quite good condition.



Built in Oslo in 1928 the 245-ton ship is 115 feet long, and chased whales until 1956 when it was converted to hunt seals. Her 810-horsepower engine drove her at 11 knots.

Close by are two similar but slightly smaller wrecks, also with their bows on the beach. These are the sealers *Albatross* (229 tons) and *Dias* (167 tons). *Albatross* was built in Norway in 1921 as a whale chaser and later converted to sealing. *Dias* was built in England in 1906 as the steam trawler *Viola*. After seeing service during WW I as an auxiliary patrol vessel in the North Sea (during which she was involved in sinking a U-boat) she was converted to a whaler, and used off the west coast of Africa. *Dias* went to South Georgia as a sealer in 1927.

To the west of the main buildings and lying in the shallows are the remains of the *Louise*. Built in Maine in 1869 as the barque *Jennie S Barker*, she was renamed *Louise* in 1880 when engaged in the Baltic timber trade. Larsen bought her in 1904 and transported much of the material required to set up the whaling station at Grytviken. The *Louise* was then used as a coal hulk, supplying the whale chasers with fuel. She remained afloat until the 1920s, and was considered one of the best preserved wooden American sailing ships of the period until a recent fire burnt her to the waterline.

On the side of a hill above the wreck of the *Louise* is the cemetery. Whaling was a dangerous undertaking, especially in the conditions prevalent around South Georgia, and most of the graves are of Norwegian sailors. However there is one grave that stands out. At this grave, my companions and I gathered and drank a tot of rum in toast to the interred, Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton, explorer. He suffered a heart attack and died in January 1922, aged only 47. The voyage he and his five comrades had made in 1916 from Elephant Island to South Georgia remains one of the greatest of small boat voyages. The following is a quote by Sir Emund Hillary:

*For speed and efficiency of travel, give me Amundsen; for scientific discovery, give me Scott; but when all hope is lost, get down on your knees and pray for Shackleton.*

The ruins of another Norwegian whaling station are at Stromness, but these have not been cleared of hazardous material and are off limits to visitors. This station operated from 1907 to 1932, and was



Shackleton's destination when he, Frank Worsley and Tom Crean started the arduous trek from their landing in King Haakon Bay. These two were the main whaling stations in South Georgia, although a whale factory ship was anchored in Godthul between 1922 and 1929. The bottom of this inlet is evidently thick with the discarded whale and elephant seal bones, and many still litter the shore.

Peter Worsley



*Dias and Albatross*



# QUIZ

## Answers to December

1. Moondyne Joe arrived in Western Australia in 1853 on board the transport *Pyrenees* (832 tons; B. Freeman, master).
2. The RAN ship which took the first post-WW II ANARE expedition to Antarctica was named *Wyatt Earp* (see article inside).
3. Although a sub-lieutenant on board the French corvette *Naturaliste*, Heirisson is listed in the crew muster as coming from Madrid.

## Quiz

1. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert had how many Royal Yachts?
2. The French explorer Dumont D'Urville landed in King George Sound on 7 October 1826. What was the name of his ship?
3. What is 'deviation' in a magnetic compass?

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## Maritime Heritage Association Inc.

46 Sandgate Street, South Perth, Western Australia, 6151.

