



# MARITIME HERITAGE ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

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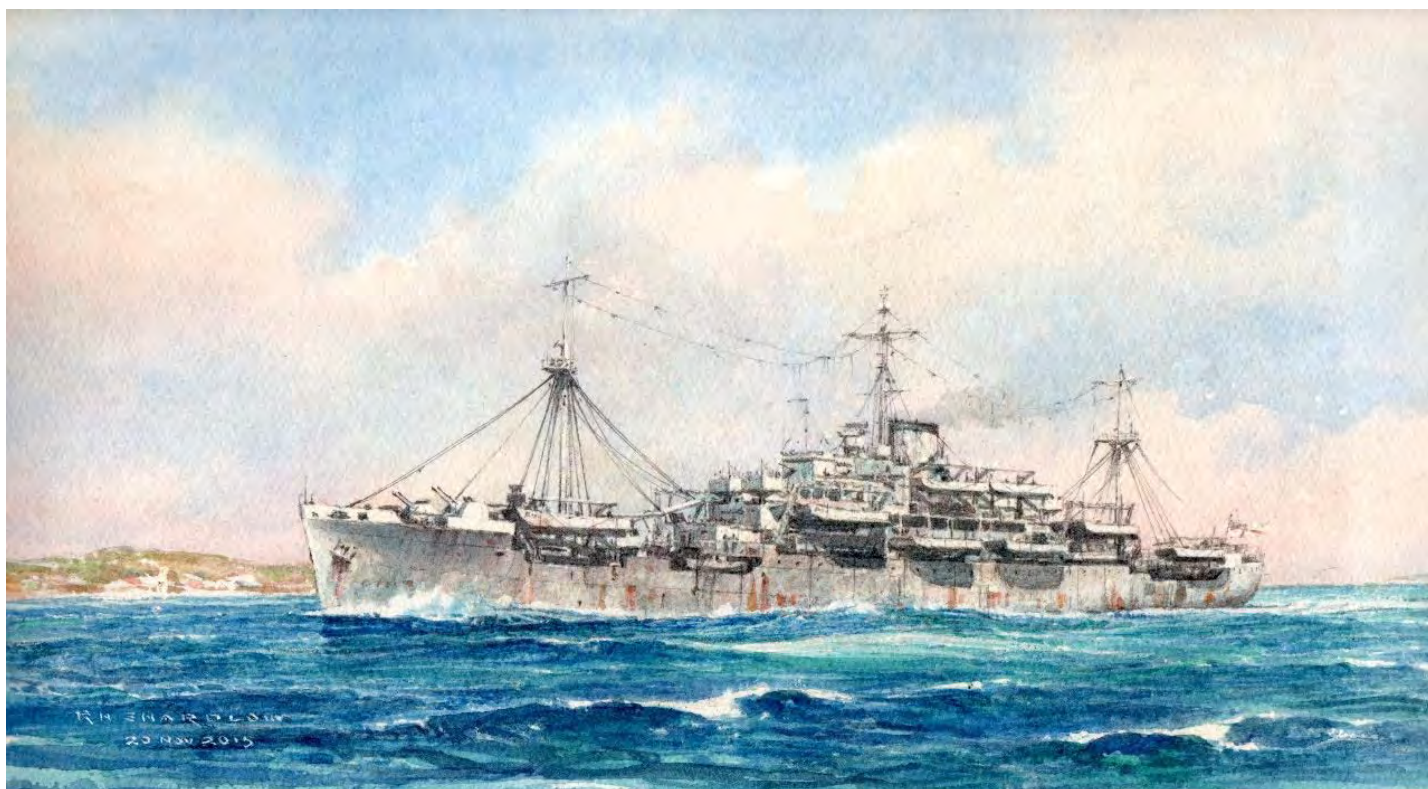
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C/o: The Secretary (Marcia Van Zeller)  
47 Conochie Crescent  
Manning, W.A. 6152

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

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



*The Infantry Landing Ship HMS Glenroy painted for Barry Hicks for his 90th Birthday  
20 November 2015.*

Watercolour by Ross H. Shardlow (2015)

The late Barry Hicks served with the Royal Marines on HMS Glenroy (1945–46) as coxswain in charge of one of her Assault Landing Craft.





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

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

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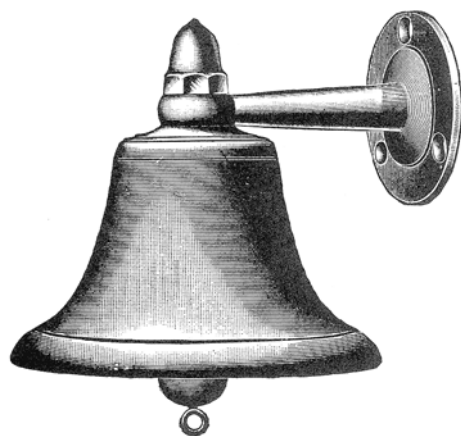
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# **Annual General Meeting**

**Where: 12 Cleopatra Drive, Mandurah**

**When: 10am, Sunday 3 April 2016**

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



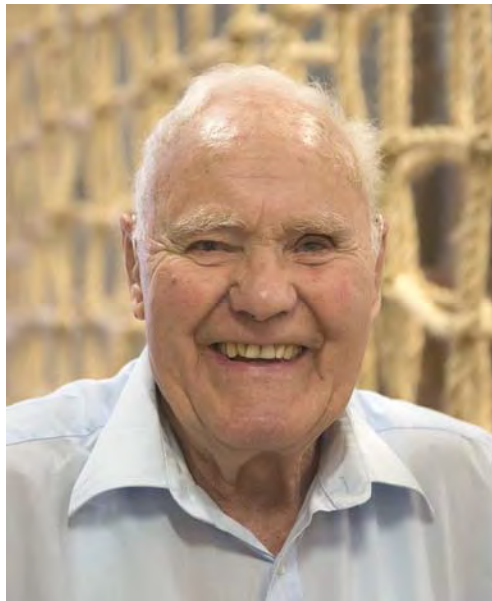
**For catering purposes please let Peter or Jill know at:  
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# Vale Barry Keith Hicks – Master Rigger

20 November 1925 – 17 January 2016



*Photo by David Nicolson*

THE END OF SEASON LAY-UP held at the Hicks' Private Maritime Museum on 22 November 2015 was an extraordinary event. Billed as the Celebration of Barry's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday and the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Maritime Heritage Association – it was, sadly, also to be the last open-day at Barry's Museum. Four months earlier Barry had been told he might only have days or weeks to live following a diagnosis earlier in the year of the rare and aggressive form of skin cancer known as Merkel Cell Carcinoma. With cheerful resolve Barry set course with a staunch determination to celebrate his 90th birthday on the 20th November 2015 with as many friends as he could muster into his museum. Anticipating 130 guests, Barry emptied the museum, painted the floor, stripped the blocks, varnished and polished the brightwork – and had it all squared away, fore and aft, set for a 'fair topsail breeze'. It was the best day. Barry not only saw out his birthday, he saw Christmas and the New Year as well, and then on the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2016, with his beloved wife Doris by his side, Barry quietly slipped his moorings.

Barry was born the youngest of three sons to William and Elizabeth Hicks 20 November 1925. The family originally came from London, but the boys were brought up at Southend-on-Sea on the Essex coast. As a boy Barry watched the old Thames barges on the Estuary. In Barry's own words, "that fleet of barges foreshadowed my lifelong passion for the sea and vintage sailing ships". Barry's lifelong passion for rigging, however, went back to his school days. When the Second World War broke out the old fishermen of the town were brought out of their retirements to work for a company manufacturing barrage balloons. These old-timers taught the arts of wire splicing and rigging to school leavers like Barry, who in turn passed on their skills to the women who took over when the men went away to fight in the war.



*A young Barry Hicks in the Home Guard in the early 1940s.*

*Photo courtesy Hicks Private Collection*

All three brothers served in the Forces during the Second World War. In August 1942, when Barry was still sixteen, he enlisted with the Royal Marines. After



training on Assault Landing Craft, he joined the famous Infantry Landing Ship HMS *Glenroy* at Port Glasgow in February 1945 as coxswain in charge of one of *Glenroy*'s landing craft. HMS *Glenroy* sailed for India on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 1945 to fight in the war against Japan. Barry took part in the Assault of Rangoon, the Surrender of Singapore, the Relief of Semarang and the Evacuation of Sourabaya. Barry returned to England on the *Glenroy* in May 1946, and was paid off when the ship was 'Released from Admiralty Service', 21 June 1946 – only to lose three months service pay because he was under-age when he joined up.

Happily, all three brothers survived the war and after Barry's demob he trained as a bricklayer – a good career choice in battle-scarred Britain. Soon after, he met Joan and married in late August 1946. In June 1947 they had a son, Roger. As Barry's oldest son, Roger Hicks was bestowed the privilege of presenting a heartfelt family eulogy at Barry's funeral service, flying out from England with his wife Vikki to do so.

Despite 'Joan' being tattooed upon his arm, the marriage did not last, and Barry was cast adrift. Fortunately, for all of us, a mutual friend introduced Barry to the lovely Doris Tomlin and they were married in August 1953. As Roger Hicks put it, "besides being the Coronation year, the winds and the tide were set fair for a marriage that truly blossomed – for the next 62 years". Settling near Wickford, then Burnham-on-Crouch in Essex, Barry and Doris were blessed with Robin in 1957, Martin in 1959, Suzanne in 1962 and Andrew in 1968.

It was no accident that Barry settled on the Essex coast; inspired by the Thames barges as a boy, he was soon pursuing that "lifelong passion for the sea and vintage sailing ships". Doris recalled, "within two years of Barry and me being married he spotted a coil of rope in an auction. It was tarred sisal, 120 fathoms long. He just HAD to have it and said he would pay £5.0.0 for it in the auction. Since that was almost a week's pay for him I was naturally worried. Imagine my reaction when it went up £5.10.0, then £6.00, before he finally secured it for £7.10.0. It was his most treasured possession." In the early-to-mid 1960s Barry sailed with the legendary Jimmy Lawrence who owned the spritsail barge *Marjorie*. Jimmy Lawrence was one of the last skippers to work the barges in trade and also established the reputable firm of James Lawrence Sailmakers, manufacturers of traditional sails and rigging.

Doris reflected on the origin of Barry's museum and his passion (malady) for collecting, or as Roger called it, *Collectitis Nauticalia Hicksii*: "We came to Australia on the last day of December 1968. About a year later Barry bought a six-inch pulley block from J. N. Taylor's in Fremantle and he sat with it in his lap all that evening just running his

hands over it. It cost \$9.00 and his wage, as a bricklayer, was about \$100.00 a week, with rent being \$33.00 of that. After work Barry used to pick up our son Andrew from day care and take him down to 'the big house' in Fremantle – that was the Fremantle Museum. The visits to the big house and the six-inch pulley block were how Barry's Museum started."



Barry Hicks at the helm of the spritsail barge *Marjorie*  
Photo courtesy Hicks Private Collection

Looking for company for his gaff ketch *Jean Dee*, Barry placed an advertisement in the *Sunday Times* in March 1980 seeking people who were interested in gaff rigged wooden boats. Receiving several replies, the following Friday they had the first meeting in his private maritime museum in Jubilee Street, Beckenham, for what was to become the Old Gaffers Association of Western Australia. By 1981 they had twenty-one paid up members and on 18 April 1982, held their first race with fifteen confirmed starters from the Royal Flying Squadron. In May 1983 Barry handed the running of the Old Gaffers over to Frank Marchant as he and his son Robin had been called away on much bigger things.

Throughout the 1970s a proposal to build a sail-training vessel for Western Australia was being considered. When Australia won the America's Cup in 1983, and Fremantle was named as the venue for the Challenge, the proposal to build a sail-training vessel gained real momentum. Designed by acclaimed naval architect Len Randell, construction of what was to become *Leeuwin II* began in earnest in June 1985 with a determination to have the three masted barquentine completed in time to be used as a spectator craft for the America's Cup Challenge due to commence at Fremantle 31 January 1987.



Respected traditional riggers and sailmakers Barry and Robin Hicks were assigned the task of rigging the vessel. What started off as the *Leeuwin's* Rigging Team with Barry & Robin Hicks (riggers), Ray & Ken Miller (sparmakers), Dan & Bill Thompson (blacksmiths) and Mike McKenzie (project manager) continued to grow into a vast resource of skilled traditional maritime tradesmen. I was assigned to the Rigging Team as project draughtsman and would not have gained the appointment had not Barry taken me on board. My diary entry for 29 August 1985, the day I met Barry, reads: "I went round to see Barry and Robin Hicks, riggers and sail makers, and introduced myself. We got on exceptionally well." That meeting changed my life forever.

After the launching of the *Leeuwin* in August 1986, and with completion of her sea trials later in the year, work soon began on the Endeavour Replica Project. This time Barry and Robin were assigned the task of manufacturing well in excess of 750 she-oak and tuart pulley blocks required for the ship. Such was the commitment to his work Barry again came out of retirement and even sold his beloved gaff ketch *Jean Dee*. Work started on the *Endeavour* in January 1988 and she was launched down the ways 9 December 1993.

The inaugural Classic and Wooden Boat Festival was held in Challenger Harbour, Fremantle in October 1989. With over a hundred classic and wooden boats on show, the Festival was promoted as a celebration of our maritime heritage. Besides providing Barry and Robin with a venue to show their remarkable wares and workmanship the Festival was significant for another reason. On display was a collection of some of the finest model boats ever seen in Australia, if not the world, put on by the WA Model Steamship Association. Barry and Robin soon struck up a friendship with Brian Lemon and the other 'boys' of the association, Bill Wright, Murray Johnson and Ted Sturgeon.

Coinciding with the Boat Festival another event was about to unfold – the formation of the Maritime Heritage Association. With talk of another replica and the growing awareness to preserve the maritime heritage of Western Australia through the preservation and promotion of traditional maritime skills, museum curator Graeme Henderson (soon to be first Director of the WA Maritime Museum) felt that the time had come to form the heritage group that he and I had so long talked about. With that objective in mind I was at the Classic and Wooden Boat Festival to recruit new members for our proposed association and it was Barry and Robin who alerted me to the remarkable collection of models in the big marquee – so began an extraordinary association of friendships that formed the very foundation of the Maritime Heritage Association. With the help and expertise of Graeme Henderson and Sally May from the WA Maritime Museum, the Maritime Her-

itage Association was formed a few weeks after the Boat Festival in November 1989, and had an official launch aboard the sail-training ship *Leeuwin II* in March 1990.

The Endeavour Replica Project put on the first Classic and Wooden Boat Festival but subsequent Festivals were backed by the Leeuwin Sail Training Foundation. Brian Lemon and the Model Steamship Association, Barry and Robin, and the MHA continued to exhibit each year at the Classic and Wooden Boat Festival, but it wasn't long before we all started to drift over to Barry's ever-expanding museum relocated to Lacey Street, East Cannington since September 1990. On Wednesday 18 March 1992 Barry invited Brian Lemon and the boys of the Model Steamship Association to put on a display of models in Barry's museum. Barry also invited members of the MHA and Desmond Miller from the Tool Preservation Society. In welcoming the group Barry gave the following address:

My initial thoughts were to get people like ourselves together to talk about maritime activities and to help keep alive traditional skills that are becoming extinct in Western Australia.

Since buying that 6-inch pulley block from J.N. Taylor & Co in Fremantle, Barry's museum fast became a legend, but from that meeting in March 1992 with Brian Lemon and his mates, Barry's museum took on a new status. Brian Lemon was so taken by Barry's museum and Doris's "delightful sausage rolls and cake" that he donated a large number of his models to add to Barry's display. From that time Barry's museum (more a living heritage workshop than a museum) became the social centre not just for the MHA but also for any group of like-minded people; indeed, more than 150 groups have been through Barry's museum over the past 25 years. In 2003 Barry, Doris, Brian and his wife Irene were made Honorary Life Members of the MHA in recognition of their contribution and service to maritime heritage.

When Alec Coles, the new Chief Executive Officer of the Western Australian Museum visited Barry's museum in 2011 for the dedication of the 32-foot Naval Cutter *Albatross* (another of Barry's special projects) Mr Coles was unequivocal in announcing – "this is what a REAL museum looks like."

Going into retirement again Barry took possession of the gaff cutter *Roma* and went back to chasing down other gaff rigged vessels on the Swan River as he had done in his Old Gaffer days. It was not to last, however, and he was soon taken out of retirement yet again to help Robin with some massive orders for an assortment of nets and rope ladders for the mining and shipping industries. A heart attack, diabetes and the loss of an eye did not seem to slow him down – his new glass eye giving rise to endless amusement.





The last open-day at the MHA End-of-Season Lay-up at the Hicks Family's Private Maritime Museum, 22 November 2015. From left to right: Barbara Shardlow, Irene Lemon, Robin Hicks (background), Doris & Barry Hicks (holding hands) and Ross Shardlow.

Photo David Nicolson

As the main feature in Barry's museum was actually Barry, it has always been understood that his museum would die with him. But on that last open-day in November Robin rang the bell to welcome the guests, a ritual previously entrusted to the late Brian Lemon who passed away just a few months earlier. In ringing the bell, Robin also announced that though this was the last meeting of Barry's Museum, it was not the last meeting of the Museum itself. In ringing the bell Robin proclaimed he had picked up the baton – or in this case, the boathook – and the Hicks Family's Private Maritime Museum, including Barry's collection and the Brian Lemon models, will live on in Robin's new Workshop and Museum Complex in Orange Grove.

Barry's letter to Brian Lemon and the boys of the Model Steamship Association, 19 March 1992, thanking them for putting on their first display in Barry's museum, concluded:

So many thanks again to all of you and we hope to see you here again soon. (I will have to get a bigger museum so that we can show the world what you can do).

It was fitting, therefore, that Barry's last words to Robin as they walked away from Barry's museum for the last time, were: "I'm thinking about starting up a new museum." Indeed, Barry's funeral looked very much like a museum. Several fine eulogies were delivered by family and friends but the most touching, perhaps, was a 'eulogy without words' delivered by Robin. In front of Barry's casket on which stood the painting of HMS *Glenroy*, and the easel with the cherished family photo, Robin had placed Barry's sail and rigging bench with all its gear and accoutrements, accompanied by two triple 10" naval blocks either side of a binnacle, and two books: *The Anatomy of Nelson's Ships* and *Steel's Elements of Mastmaking Sailmaking & Rigging*.



Barry's sail and rigging bench, a eulogy without words.

Photo Robin Hicks

And somewhere in all this Barry's good glass eye was watching over us.

Compiled by Ross Shardlow with contributions from Doris, Robin and Roger Hicks.

The Maritime Heritage Association extends its deepest sympathies to Doris, Robin, Martin, Suzanne, Andrew, Roger and families, friends, colleagues and shipmates.

## Did You Know?

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

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



# MHA embarks on a publishing voyage with *Albany and the Whalers*

In 2014, the MHA Committee decided to test largely uncharted waters as a publisher of books on maritime heritage themes.

An early book idea, proposed by Jill and Peter Worsley, was the re-publication of *Albany and the Whalers*, first released by Albany historian Les Johnson in 1979.

The re-release features a fresh look and design, with new images by MHA members Ross Shardlow and Jill and Peter Worsley and layout and production by Julie Taylor and Par Excellence.

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

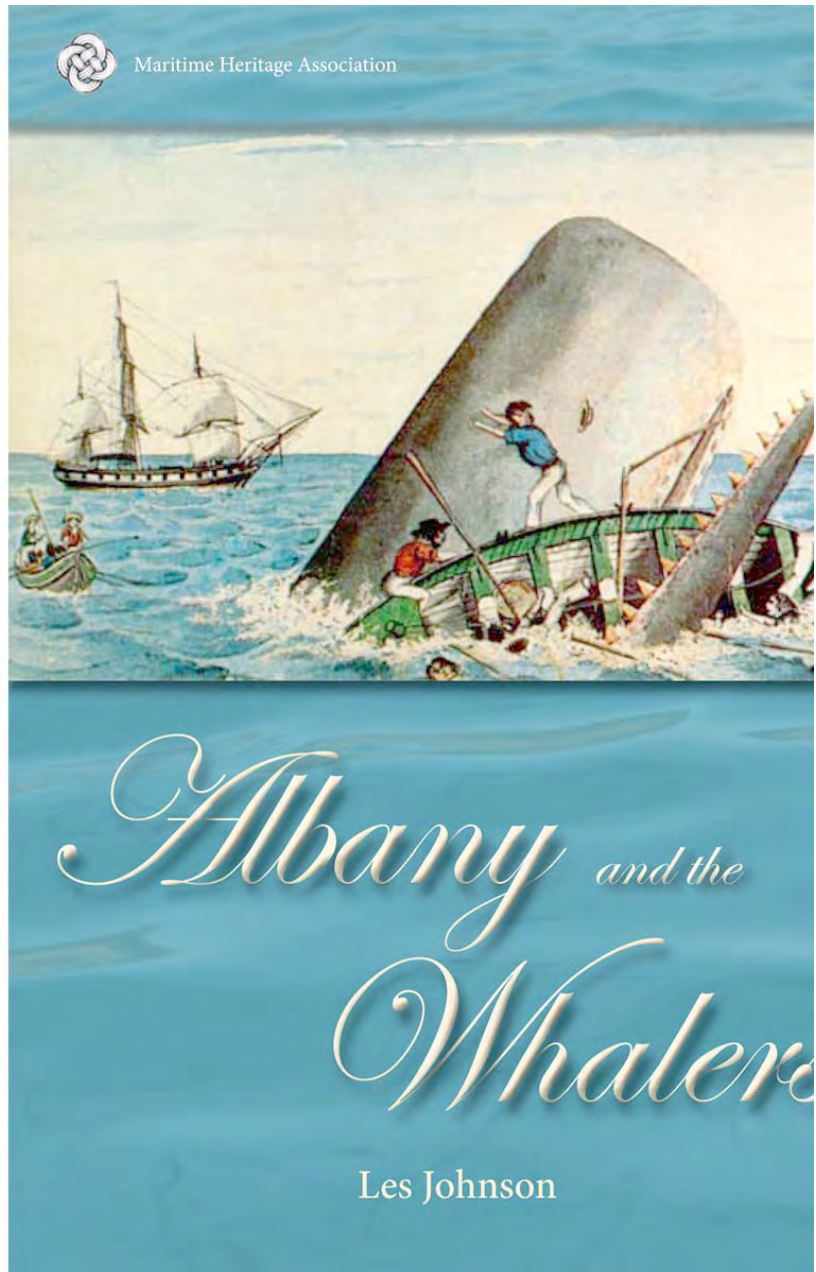
Mr Johnson, who continues to reside in Albany with his wife Valerie, was pleased to receive copies of his newly printed book, and to learn that *Albany and the Whalers* was once again available to the public through MHA and retail outlets.

"Our charter is to preserve and promote the maritime heritage of Western Australia, and to achieve that goal we have recently adopted a new focus on publishing," said MHA Committee member Murray Kornweibel.

"Les Johnson's book, which has been out of print for some years, presented a wonderful project for MHA, and we set out to give the book a new lease of life."

*Albany and the Whalers* has been keenly received by independent book stores and visitor centre shops. Secretary Marcia van Zeller secured the

first orders, followed by Treasurer Bob Johnson who, along with Murray Kornweibel, completed a tour of South West coastal locations, promoting the book on ABC Radio and further extending its distribution reach.



*Albany and the Whalers* retails for \$12.50 and can be ordered from:

The Secretary, email: [vanzellerm@gmail.com](mailto:vanzellerm@gmail.com).



# Ships of the State Shipping Service

By Jeff Thompson

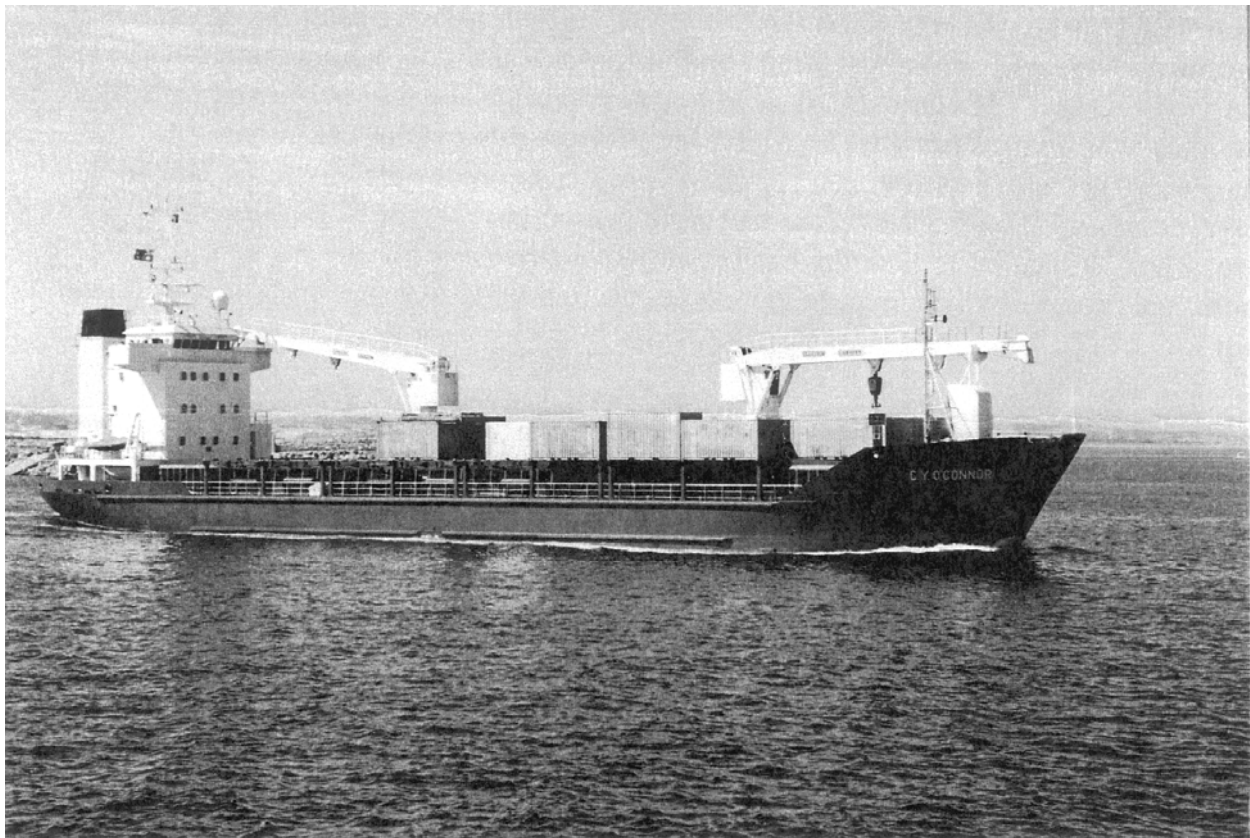
## No. 39 *C.Y. O'Connor* I M O No. 8607684

The last of three chartered Chinese built ships was delivered in December 1988 as *Baltimar Jupiter* for M/S 'Baltimar Jupiter' Ltd by Zhong Ghua Shipyard, Shanghai China (Yard No 8605). As built she was 2,850 gross registered tons, 3,168 deadweight tons, 91.0 metres overall, 84.2metres between perpendiculars, 14.7metres breadth, 4.6metres draft with a single 4 cylinder ItJudong - B & W 4L35MC diesel of 2,300bhp to give a service speed of 13 knots.

In February 1989 *Baltimar Jupiter* was chartered by the State Shipping Service and renamed *C. Y. O'Connor* to commence service.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> January 1994 at the end of her charter, *C. Y. O'Connor* was returned to her Danish owners at Singapore and reverted to her original name. In 1995 she was renamed *Mekong Jupiter* but in 1996 reverted back to *Baltimar Jupiter*. Renamed again in 1996 as *Java Sea* by Gulf South Shipping Pte Ltd with Singaporean registration and trading between Cairns and Amanapore J J (Indonesia) for mining company Freeport.

On 24<sup>th</sup> May 2005 whilst at Trinity Bay, Cairns , fire started in the engine room and quickly spread to the accommodation with extensive damage but no casualties. In July 2005 the vessel left Cairns under tow for Singapore where repairs were to be carried out, expected to take 50 days.



## Old Nautical Quotations

At sea with low and falling glass,  
The greenhorn sleeps like a careless ass.  
But when the glass is high and rising  
May soundly sleep the careful wise one.







# The Kula Ring

**A story of survival in the Solomon Sea by Chips Mackellar.**

*Kula is a system of ceremonial gift-exchange among the small islands off the south-eastern coast of Papua New Guinea. It is a form of alliance by the ceremonial exchange of gifts in public.*

When the search for the missing MH370 Malaysian Airways jet is finally over, it will be an amazing story to tell. But there is another amazing story of loss at sea, not as spectacular as that of MH370 but with a happy ending.

I was Assistant District Commissioner Trobriand Islands when one day a blind man on Alcester Island lay down on a beached canoe in the warmth of the afternoon sun and dozed off to sleep. No one on the island took any notice of him as they were used to seeing him asleep on beached canoes. But later, when his family went to fetch him for dinner, they found the canoe had gone. By then it was dark and the canoe was nowhere in sight. The tide had come in, lifted the canoe and it just floated away with the blind man still asleep on board. The alarm was raised and people ran up and down the beach calling frantically to the blind man, but there was no response. In desperation, they took to the sea in other canoes, and paddled around the island in the dark but still did not find the missing blind man or the canoe.

The search went on all night until the first light of dawn, when it was obvious that the sea was empty in all directions. The canoe had disappeared. Reluctantly, the search for the blind man was abandoned because there was nothing else the islanders could do. Although Alcester is an idyllic island in all other respects, it is a speck in the ocean, miles from anywhere. There was no radio on the island, no power boat, the only communication with the outside world was by their own canoes or visiting canoes from other islands or passing coastal vessels bound elsewhere.

Fortunately one such vessel called in at the island a few days after the blind man went missing. It had a radio aboard and contacted with District Headquarters at Samarai, raising the alarm and beginning an air-sea rescue operation. Scheduled flights to the Trobriands were diverted south. Flights to Misima were diverted north. Chartered aircraft out of

Alotau searched north-east. And coastal vessels plying the Solomon Sea were asked to keep watch.

The Trobriands were considered too far north of Alcester Island to be useful in the search so we were not called on to assist. However, we followed the progress of the search by listening to radio reports which came in from time to time. But the blind man and the canoe were not found, so after two weeks of disappointment the search was called off and he was officially declared probably lost at sea.

This is not the end of this story. About a month after the search had been called off, villagers from the southern end of the main Trobriand island of Kiriwina brought the blind man to the Sub-District Office at Losuia. He was seeking assistance to return to Alcester Island. I could hardly believe it. Not only was he alive. He was very well. I sent him to the doctor, just to make sure. The doctor said the blind man was fit to return to Alcester Island and had suffered no ill effects from his ordeal. And what an ordeal it must have been. Yet when I told him about the air-sea rescue which had been mounted to find him, the blind man couldn't understand what all the fuss had been about.

The blind man explained that, when he woke up on the canoe, he knew it was dark because he could no longer feel the warmth of the sun on his skin. He also knew the canoe was floating in the sea because he could smell the water and feel the canoe rocking when he moved, a situation confirmed when he put his hand in the water. He called for help to get back to the island, but received no reply. He assumed that people on the island would also be calling out for him but he could not hear them, so he knew the island was out of earshot.

He felt around the canoe and found a paddle. He could have paddled back to the island if he had known where it was. One problem was that the sea was big and the island was small and,



even if it had been visible, he could not see it. So he did not know in which direction to paddle. He also knew that if he paddled in the wrong direction, he might never make landfall alive.

Adrift and alone in an empty sea might have been bad enough for ordinary people, but for a blind man alone in a canoe, it was infinitely worse.

"So what did you do?" I asked him in Motu.

"Well, Taubada," he replied, "since I did not know where Alcester Island was, there was no point in attempting to return there.

"I knew that Woodlark Island was directly north of Alcester, and it was a larger island and therefore more easy to find, so I decided to head for there, until I could beach the canoe either on Woodlark Island, or here in the Trobriands."

"These island are miles apart," I said.

"Yes," he replied, "but even if I could see, there was no way I could compensate for drift

and current, so by heading north the chances were that if I missed Woodlark, I might still land in the Trobriands." I was astonished at his good, sound reasoning.

"Have you been here before?" I asked.

"No, Taubada," he said, "I had been to Woodlark before with other people in another canoe. But I have never been here before."

I was amazed.

"So how did you know where the Trobriands were?" I asked.

"From stories people told," he said, "you know Taubada, the Kula."

Ah, yes, the Kula Ring. The customary system of ceremonial exchange which formed the traditional social bond between people of different islands. We had several anthropological publications about it in the office at Losuia. Malinowski, Fortune, Uberoi and the rest. I had read them all. They explained that from the Trobriands in the north to Wari Island in the south,





from Milne Bay in the west to the Laughlan Islands in the east, the people of 18 different island groups across the Solomon Sea were connected by this invisible ring of ceremonial exchange. Invisible to us, that is, but to them it was a social bond more real than the strongest kinship ties. No one knows how it all began and it is overlaid with myths and legends and magical rites and rituals. But it has a powerful practical purpose.

The Kula Ring involves strong mutual obligations to provide hospitality, protection and assistance to partners of the same Kula artefacts. Thus, any Kula associate from any one island in the Kula Ring, blown off course, marooned, washed overboard, or in any other way distressed from the sea, must be provided with sanctuary, protection and assistance from any other Kula partner on any other island in the Kula Ring. Even if they have never met before, the bond between them has already been established by the ceremonial exchange of Kula artefacts passed on from one man to another from other partners on other islands elsewhere in the Kula Ring. In other words, the Kula establishes an invisible bond of indissoluble brotherhood which is spread unseen across reefs and islands and coral atolls to the far reaches of the Solomon Sea.

So, unable to find Alcester Island, and confident that he might find safe haven somewhere else in the Solomon Sea, the blind man paddled his canoe in the direction of Woodlark Island.

"But how could you navigate your canoe," I asked, "if you could not see where you were going?"

"I could not see," he said, "but I could feel the sun's heat." And he went on to explain that if he kept the sun on his right side in the morning, and on his left side in the afternoon, he would roughly be heading north. So by paddling his canoe in this way he headed for Woodlark Island.

"You could not see the stars," I said, "so how did you navigate at night?"

The wind was blowing from the south-east, he told me, so he knew he was travelling northward because of the sun's heat during the day, and when heading this way he could feel the wind on his back. So, he said, when the sun had

set he paddled with the wind on his back until morning, then, with the sun rising on his right side again and the wind still at his back, he knew he was more or less, on course during the night.

And so, long after the official air-sea rescue had ended, the blind man's own search for a safe haven continued.

"But you were paddling your canoe for weeks," I said, "What did you eat and drink?"

He said he felt around inside the canoe and found a bailer shell. Sometimes it rained, he said, and the rainwater would collect inside the hull of the canoe. Instead of bailing it out, he left the rainwater to slosh around inside the hull and he used the bailer shell to scoop it up and drink it.

"And food?" I asked. There were flying fish, he said. They skipped across the sea and over his canoe, but some did not make it across and fell into the hull whence they could not escape. He said he could hear them jumping around inside the rainwater in the hull and after a while they died. He said he could not see them, but by feeling around inside the rainwater, he could catch them and eat them raw. There weren't many, he told me, just a few every day, but enough to keep him going.

"And landfall?" I asked, "Tell me about that:" After a few weeks of paddling in the direction of what he thought was north, he told me he could hear the surf breaking on a shore somewhere. He did not know where, but he could hear sea birds flying overhead and he could smell land: palm trees, smoke from cooking fires, the smell of a village. So when he knew he was close to shore because of the back swell from the beach, he began to call out the name of his Kula artefact.

He called and called and called, he said, and soon he could hear voices from the village and some shouting. Then amongst the shouts he could hear the name of his Kula artefact being repeated by one of the village men who identified himself as the local Kula partner of that artefact. The blind man then knew that his search for a safe haven was over. People swam out through the surf and guided his canoe to the beach, and that is how he made landfall. "I





missed Woodlark Island," he said, "but I found the Trobriands instead:"

His Kula partner, whom he had never met, fed him and cared for him in the village until he was fit enough to continue his journey, and then the village people brought him to my office. As soon as I received the doctor's report, I sent a signal to District Headquarters in Samarai and everyone there was just as amazed as I was that the blind man had made it safely to the Trobriands. I was told to put him on the scheduled air charter from Alotau the following day, and from Alotau I heard that he went by shuttle vessel to Samarai and from there by government trawler back to Alcester Island.

From Alcester Island to the Trobriands, the blind man had paddled and drifted for approximately 320 km. In an open canoe travelling solo, it would have been a remarkable feat of survival for anyone, for the blind man travelling alone it was almost a miracle. Yet when I discussed the blind man's miraculous survival with the Paramount Chief of the Trobriand Islands, he was signally unimpressed. "We have been sailing across the Kula Ring for a thousand years" he said. "Canoes get lost, blown

of course, break up in rough seas, or get swept on to coral reefs and atolls.

"It doesn't happen very often, but when it does happen we know what to do. Your search with ships and planes could not find this blind man," the paramount Chief continued, "but he knew what to do, and it was his own search for a safe landing which saved him:"

"But he was blind," I insisted. "Yes," the Paramount Chief continued, "but he still knew what to do, and that is the way it is in these islands." I was astonished that the Paramount Chief was so unimpressed by the blind man's ordeal. "It was nothing special," the Chief continued, "it was just another event of life in the Kula Ring."

It might have been, but I will always remember the amazing feat of endurance, determination and skill of a blind man paddling a canoe solo for 300 km in search of a safe landing, out there in the solitude of the Solomon Sea.

Chips Mackellar

Note:

This article was first published in *Una Voce* (2015, No. 4—December): the Journal of the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia Inc.

## Interesting Internet

**An occasional list of internet sites that may be of interest to readers.**

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=wm#inbox/1519a4cc0656067e>

<http://www.gizmodo.com.au/2015/12/a-sunken-galleon-worth-billions-has-been-discovered-off-the-coast-of-colombia/>

<http://www.foxnews.com/us/2015/11/25/donations-save-iconic-american-ship-from-heading-to-scrapyard/>

<https://youtu.be/iFQAQQlwKmw>

<http://reneweconomy.com.au/2015/worlds-first-grid-connected-wave-energy-array-switched-on-in-perth-77510>

<http://nypost.com/2016/02/29/mummified-sailor-found-on-abandoned-yacht/>



# 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!)



John Lort Stokes served on HMS *Beagle* for the three famous voyages that ship made between 1826 and 1843. Commencing as midshipman he rose to command the vessel.

In the 2015 Tall Ships Race there were 28 Class-A ships (the big ones) which started off from Kristiansand, Norway. This is two more ships than Admiral Nelson had at the Battle of Trafalgar.

The America's Cup challenge of 1937 was considered so important by the American press that it received four times the newspaper column inches in US newspapers than did the 1936 Olympic Games.

In 1963 world shipping casualties issued by the Liverpool Underwriters' Association for motor and steam vessels over 500 gross tons were:

Total losses 148

Partial losses 7,860

Foundering accounted for 18 total losses; strandings for 71 total and 978 partial losses; collision for 24 total and 1,793 partial; fire and explosion for 23 total and 416 partial. Various other causes accounted for the remainder.

31 March 1910: The White Star Liner *Pericles* (10,925 tons, Captain Alexander Simpson) struck a rock south-east of Cape Leeuwin and quickly sank. All 461 passengers and crew survived.

David Hunt in his amusing sort-of history of Australia, *Girt: The Unauthorised History of Australia*, contends that William Dampier's greatest contribution was not to geography and cartography, but to literature. His *A Voyage to New Holland* (itself a best-seller) in turn helped to inspire Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

Two forged coins have been found amongst those brought up from the *Batavia* wreck, and one from the *Rapid*. These coins were originally made by carefully fusing two sheets of thin silver over a copper core. Do readers know of any other forgeries from Australian wrecks?

The daily issue of rum formerly practiced by the Royal Navy, termed 'splicing the main brace', ceased in 1970.

**Spales:** The temporary cross beams fixed to support and hold in position the frames of a wooden vessel while under construction. They are subsequently replaced by deck beams.

In 1797 during the war against France the British Channel Fleet refused to go to sea until the seamen's demands had been met. These demands included an increase in pay—the last pay rise had been 139 years previously.

Australia's first world champion was Edward Trickett. He won an international rowing race against the English champion on the Thames on 27 June 1876.

James Stirling was born on 28 January 1791 near Glasgow in Scotland. He died on 22 April 1865; by then he was Admiral Sir James Stirling.

*Any man that would send a ship here a second time is a damned ass.* Captain D.B. Shaw, American barque *Saranac*, November 1892, reporting on Fremantle.

**Stevedore:** A docker who is employed in the working of cargo in the holds of a merchant ship when she is being loaded or unloaded in port. From the Spanish *estivador* a wool packer.

The Honourable East India Company was incorporated by a royal charter from Queen Elizabeth I on 31 December 1600. Its starting capital was £72,000.

16 December 1773: Fifty men disguised as Indians attacked three ships anchored at Boston. They opened the cargo of 342 chests of tea valued at £10,000 and threw it overboard. The incident became known as the Boston Tea Party.



# QUIZ

## Answers to December

1. The *Georgette* was wrecked on 2 December 1876.
2. It doesn't matter whether you answered YES or NO—it is all a matter of opinion.
3. The winner of the 1870 America's Cup was the 112-ton, 84-ft schooner *Magic*.

## Quiz

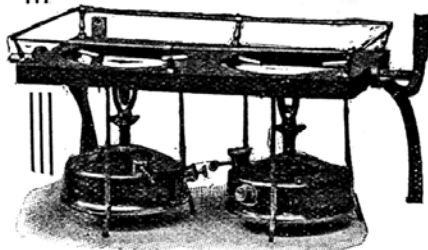
1. Why is the depth of a vessel a set measurement, while the draft of the same vessel varies?
2. What is the difference between rum and grog?
3. How long was the Long Jetty at Fremantle?



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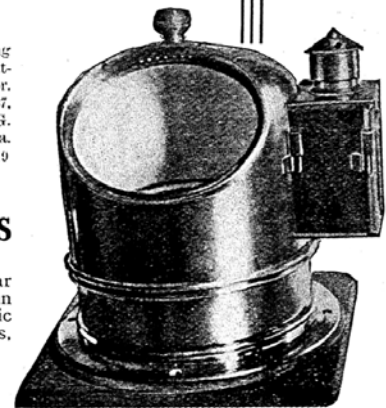
### AGENTS ABROAD:

New Zealand—Fleck & Cameron, 32, Dowling St., Dunedin. Norway—Damsgaards Baatbyggeri & Motorforretning, Damsgaard, pr. Bergen. Belgium—Maurice Pauwaert, 37, Place du Dock, Ghent. Hamburg—R. G. Schreiber, Civ. Engineer, Borsenbrücke 2a. Vancouver, B.C.—Tullis & Hamilton, 1119 Premier St., W.

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5-in. .. £4 10s.



## Cutty Sark Replica

Fund raising has begun in a proposal to build a replica of the famous tea clipper *Cutty Sark*. The *Cutty Sark 2* Foundation will have the vessel built in Russia by Vladimir Martus. He has already built a 70-foot Baltic trader and a replica of Peter the Great's 1703 flagship, the 113-foot frigate *Shtandart*. The 212-foot *Cutty Sark 2* will be built using the same composite construction method as the original — timber planking over wrought iron frames. The contract to build the *Cutty Sark* was for a vessel to beat the *Thermopylae*, and not to exceed 950 tons (its actual gross tonnage was 963) at a cost of £17 per ton, or £16,150. The replica is estimated to cost €28 million (c £20.4 million). *Cutty Sark 2* will be used as both a commercial trader and a sail training ship. Launching is expected to take place in 2019, 150 years after that of the *Cutty Sark*.





# My Time on the *Singa Betina*

## Part 6 of Ted Whiteaker's article.

Two of the crew on board were of a fractious disposition and were unhappy because they were unable to go ashore and get ice creams (Ed: expletives deleted...). One of them, an Australian from Sydney in his early thirties, had come on board in Singapore with a German mate. On the way to Bali, I discovered the petty theft of a personal item, and after much thought had concluded, wrongly as it turned out, that the German fellow was the perpetrator. Both of them wanted to come on to Australia, but while each of them were easy enough to handle on their own, together they reinforced each other's meanest qualities, and I decided that only one of them was going to be offered a berth out of Bali. When we left Bali, as our journey progressed, I came to realise I had made the wrong choice in taking on the Australian.

From Bali, we had taken aboard another German fellow in his thirties, who had a Swiss-German girlfriend whom he had met in Bali. Apparently, she was not always amenable to his amorous advances, and he thumped her a couple of times in the dark of night, leaving the evidence of a black eye. Inge was naturally upset about it, and so were we, and we had left her in Maumere to fly off to wherever she was headed. Then our Sydney larrikin and the German teamed up, and their petty juvenile behaviour became very irksome to deal with. The other crewmember was a young Scottish lad, Andy, who was on an eye-opening adventure to visit his grandparents in Australia and fitted in without any issues. I was tempted to offload one of the others, but we were now in isolated areas and it seemed a bit too drastic an action, so we suffered their pettifogging behaviour as best we could for the rest of the journey.

We plugged on in indifferent winds, reaching Pulau Leti, off the north-western end of Timor, after two days of sailing. The dry season conditions here meant very little fresh produce was available, and the cost of everything was around double the prices we had seen elsewhere. We found out that teak timber was available at nearby Pulau Moa, and set off to investigate. However, we were now running out of shelter from the easterly winds, and encountered rough seas around the northern side of Moa, making it impossible to approach the coast. Instead of a short couple of hours of sailing, we were now forced to continue for another 100nm eastwards to Pulau Babar. The Banda Sea

in this area has a tortured bottom that promotes heavy seas, and in the consistent ten to fifteen knot headwinds the conditions were very uncomfortable. One dark night, while motoring during a period of shifting winds, the furled jib that was tied down to the bowsprit came loose in the heaving seas, and with Jude on the tiller, I went forward to crawl out on the bowsprit and secure the luff, which had started to creep up the forestay. The bow was dipping into the oncoming seas, and I was drenched by successive waves. During one of the plunges, I was swung 360 degrees completely around the outside of the forestay while I hung on grimly, and I was mightily relieved when all was secure and I could retreat to the safety of the stern deck. We discovered that our diesel supplies were badly contaminated with sediment, requiring frequent cleaning of the engine filters, and it was a relief to arrive into shelter at Tapa, the major port on Babar, after another couple of days.

Tapa was a major Indonesian military installation, with a significant naval presence and a large base on shore. The Harbourmaster was distinctly unfriendly, as were the naval officials we dealt with. The local townspeople were fine, and we spent the major portion of our dwindling funds on a few veggies, of which there was not much available. When we returned to the beach, a couple of military blokes had commandeered our dinghy and had just set off in the direction of Singa Betina, where Jude was keeping watch alone. Fortunately, they had not opened the fuel cock on the Seagull outboard, and did not get very far from the beach before the engine died and they had to paddle back to shore. I was tired after the rough passage of the last few days, and on edge with the constant poor behaviour of the devilish duo on board, and lost the plot. I yelled at the soldiers, and told them what I thought of them. This was a bad mistake. It is extremely bad form to lose one's temper in Asia. A crowd gathered around us as I took the soldiers to task. I asked them why they thought they could just take my dinghy without permission. They replied that there was no one guarding it, and therefore it was available for anyone to use. I put it to them that they would not be happy if it was their dinghy and I came and took it without permission. Their response was that if it had been their dinghy, there would have been a guard posted. I was fuming, and stated that I had never experienced such behaviour anywhere else in Indonesia, and found it hard to believe that



it could be considered a reasonable thing to do. I then started to become aware of dark mutterings within the crowd, and it looked like a nasty situation developing, so we left hastily to return to the boat.

We intended to move on the following day, and rested for the remainder of the day. Late in the afternoon, we heard rifle shots on shore. Through binoculars, I could see a soldier on the beach with what appeared to be a .303 calibre rifle. He was floating off old thongs, commonly found in the detritus of flotsam along the tideline, with an upright leaf stuck in the upper sole to act as a sail, and using them for target practice. Being directly downwind, and although a fair distance offshore, we were well within range of a .303 bullet. The chance of a ricochet skipping over the surface towards us was an alarming proposition. We took cover down below until the soldier gave up and wandered off. All considered, Pulau Babar was not a pleasant experience, and as it transpired, we did not escape unscathed.

I forgot about Babar over the next few months. A year or so later, while thoroughly spring cleaning Singa Betina's bilges, I found what appeared to be an old .303 bullet head in the detritus that accumulated around the limber holes in the ribs along the keel. I wondered how it got on board, thinking that someone on board must have had it as a souvenir and had dropped it – I did not think of Babar.

Another year passed, and Singa Betina filled up with water on her mooring while unattended in Darwin's Sadgroves Creek. While re-caulking and searching for a cause for the unexpected near sinking, I discovered a hole bored through the caulking on a waterline seam between the hull planks, about the diameter of a pencil. I wondered then if someone had drilled the hole in a fit of malevolence, but there were no likely suspects around, and the mystery was shelved away in another section of the mental filing system. A few more years were to pass before a jolt of realisation joined the dots in my mind, and a plausible explanation arose. The soldier at Babar had achieved his aim. He successfully skipped a bullet into the seam. It may have lodged part way through and worked through the seam over a period, or it may have gone straight through, although I think I would have discovered the hole earlier if the latter had been the case. The inside hull was strongly ceiled with thick stringers and planking, and the bullet would have naturally fallen away into the bilge. The rate of leaking would not have

been significant while we were living on board, especially as the hole was at the top edge of the painted waterline and only submerged on the starboard tack, but when left unattended for a time the leakage would have increased as the hull filled with water. The incident was a successful time bomb, of sorts.

Our next stop after Babar was a short hop of 30nm east to Pulau Dawera, another idyllic anchorage where we spent a couple of days. There was a village nearby and the people were friendly; it was a welcome relief from our previous stop. From here, we aimed for Pulau Laibobar, in the north west of the Tanimbar Islands group. The mountainous volcanic topography of Nusa Tenggara Indonesia (the "middle islands") was behind us, and the landscape was flattening out to sweeping vistas of mud and mangroves and shallow, murky waters reminiscent of the North Australian coast. We threaded our way at leisure over several days down the coastal passage from Laibobar, around the southwest end of Tanimbar Island, and up to Saumlaki, the principal town and our departure port for the final leg of our journey back to Australia.

Saumlaki was an interesting place. The harbour was fringed with reef all around, with an uncomfortable swell in the anchorage. Cockles were abundant, with two big handfuls costing a mere 100 rupiyah from the local people. There was a thriving timber industry in the area, and the buildings were constructed of planking, with wide verandahs overhanging timber boardwalks along the main street, giving the appearance of a cowboy town transplanted from an old Western movie. The shops had timber and glass display cases lining the walls that were well made, and added to the charming character of the place. We stayed for a few days, but we were now penniless, and reduced to trading Jude's wedding ring from a previous marriage to pay for a few veggies, harbour fees, and a top-up of diesel. Water was available at a cost of 1,000 rupiyah per ton, delivered from a pipe to the end of the jetty. We had just enough to pay for the 400 litres we required, but the operator of the supply valve was demanding the exorbitant sum of 5,000 rupiyah. We did not have the money, and it took a lot of discussion before the brigand finally relented and accepted the correct payment.

The easterly winds had been blowing at 15–20 knots for a week or so when we left. Fortunately, they moderated to a fairly consistent 10 knots on departure, and we made good progress on a broad reach across a swell of three or four metres to



*The town of Saumlaki in the Tanimbar Islands*

*Photo: Peter Worsley*

cross the Arafura Sea in good time. We covered the 338nm to Darwin in two days and ten hours before anchoring off Lameroo Beach close to 5pm on Tuesday 29 June 1982. We flew a strip of yellow cloth to alert Customs and Quarantine to our arrival, and a representative turned up an hour or so later, advising us to stay on board, and to expect clearance formalities the following morning. This was disappointing news. We were all itching to get ashore, and I dearly wanted to see the last of the crew, but we swallowed our disappointment and boiled up a pannikin of rice, flavoured with the last of our dried fish, and hunkered down pending the new day.

The next morning we waited impatiently for Customs and Quarantine to turn up, which they did, eventually. They brought a sniffer Alsatian with them, and let the dog loose down below. It bounded around inside the cabin, poking its nose into every nook and cranny, and upset a hurricane lamp that leaked kerosene all over the floorboards. I cleaned up the mess when they took the dog back on deck, and answered questions about

where we had come from and where we had been. The men were reasonably friendly, but it was a bit of a shock to experience their brutal efficiency on the job after the general laissez-faire attitudes of Asian authorities. They made us dispose overboard our last few handfuls of rice and remnants of dried fish, and tipped out all of our water, finally stamping our papers and leaving us to our devices. I then ferried the crew ashore and dumped them on the beach, pointing the way to the path leading up the cliff towards town, and returned to the boat.

Jude and I sat down below, experiencing the quietness of the empty ship. Here we were, back in Darwin. The crew was gone, taking with them the odious human tension of the last two months. We were absolutely broke, without so much as a skerrick of food on board, and not even enough water for a cup of tea. We looked at each other, and burst into hysterical laughter, strangely at peace with our circumstances and the vagaries of an uncertain future.







# Batavia Longboat Replica

Darwin MHA member Tony Duvollet writes about Geraldton's replica longboat

**S** In the early hours of 4th of June 1629 the Dutch East Indies (VOC) Retourshepen *Batavia* was wrecked on Morning Reef, Houtman Abrolhos Islands, off the then uncharted West Australian coast. The ensuing battle for survival for those that landed on nearby Beacon Island is a saga of anarchy, murder and rape...but that is another story!

Three days later, 7th of June 1629, Merchant Commodore Francisco Pelseart and Skipper Jakobsz along with 45 other survivors, including two women and a baby, set sail in the *Batavia's* longboat on a remarkable open boat sea voyage of 2890kms (1560nms) to Batavia (present day Jakarta). And I am pleased to report that all arrived safely. But that is yet another story!

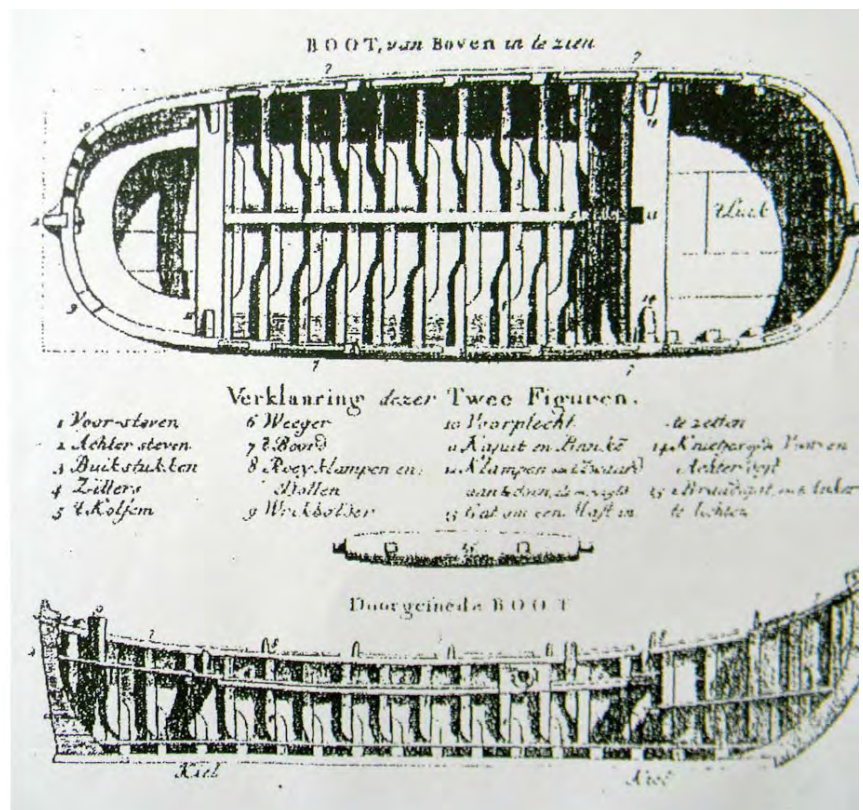
The story of interest here is about the building of the Batavia Longboat Replica.

September 2001, Geraldton. A working committee was formed to set about the construction of a replica longboat.

February 2002, Geraldton. The Batavia Coast Replica Boat Association was set up in conjunction with the Central West College of TAFE (now the Durack Institute of Technology) and the WA Museum Geraldton. The result is the interesting and unique vessel we see today afloat in the waters of the marina in front of the WA Museum Geraldton (which incidentally, houses an incredible array of items recovered from not only the *Batavia* but other Dutch VOC wrecks including the *Zeewyk* and *Zuytdorp*).

Retired shipwright, Les Cawley along with four students and volunteers began laying down the flat bottom (Dutch longboats did not have keels but relied on leeboards; more of that anon.)

Timbers used included kapur, an Indonesian hardwood cut from an 8m x 1m log found drifting off the Geraldton coast; two tonnes of karri, a WA hardwood; celery top pine from Tasmania and English oak crooks, which are naturally grown bends in the tree, usually between the trunk and branch and selected for their particular angle. Since the grain follows these angles they make very strong connecting pieces such as gunwales, deck shelves and stringers to stem post, stem and stern posts to keel, etc. and are known as stem knees, hanging knees, quarter knees, breasthooks, etc.



The replica was constructed from plans drawn up by Nick Burningham and a Perth naval architect, Adriaan De Jong. Using contemporary drawings and descriptions of similar vessels of that era, a half model was made and the lines were taken off and faired beforehand. This was the traditional method of designing ships and boats before computers came and took away such skills.

Traditional methods were used in the clinker planking using steam to bend the planks into the rather tight curves of the noticeably bluff bow (whereas the traditional Dutch method of plank bending was by heating the green planks over an open fire). Fastenings were copper nails and roves (conical copper washers) to the ribs, futtocks, and the landings of the planks, as well as



trunnels (literally, tree nails, or wooden dowels) making a strong and seaworthy hull.

The longboat was launched March 23rd 2003, hauled off the Town Beach by a gang of enthusiastic volunteers using rope hawsers, then manned by a team of experienced rowers. The mast and rigging was fitted at a later date.

At 10.5m (35ft) long, 3m (10ft) beam, 0.6m (2ft) draft and displacement 4.7tonnes (4.63tons) Dutch longboats were built to the traditional rule - being the length of longboat equals beam of ship (in this case, *Batavia*). Fitted with a single mast 8m (24ft) and supported by rope shrouds tensioned by deadeyes, and rigged as a sloep (sloop) with a jib sail and main sail. The main sail being quadrilateral, is similar in shape to a gaff sail but is supported at the peak by a sprit, a spar going from the base of the mast to the peak, as opposed to a gaff which goes from near the top of the mast to the peak. The lack of a keel is compensated by the aforementioned leeboards (similar to centreboards on modern dinghies and yachts, but suspended outboard of the gunwhales). Leeboards provide a degree of inhibiting leeway (downwind drift) but contribute nothing to stability, although the wide flat bottom helps in that respect. Both the jib and main are loose-footed and each are controlled by a single sheet passing loosely through the clew cringle, the bitter ends being secured to the gunwhales with a figure of eight knot. The main peak is controlled by a similar line through the top of the sprit to the gunwhales. From all appearances, a simple rig, but in fact quite difficult to handle, there being no sheet or halyard winches and only



one block (used to haul the peak of the main to the top end of the sprit). Increasing the sail area is by the simple expedient of adding an extra sail (called a bonnet) along the length of the foot of the main using simple wooden toggles. Toggles are also used to bend the rope parrels securing the luff to the mast.

To tack efficiently requires not only the helmperson (to be politically correct) but two crew on the main sheet, two on the jib sheet and two raising and lowering the leeboards all working together as a co-ordinated team, as any crew should be! Whereas, I can tack my 38ft ketch solo. Because of the bluff bow and wide beam the longboat requires a fair turn of speed to tack across the wind sometimes helped by the use of an oar on the leeward side, in light winds or lumpy seas. The oar comes in very handy when making a series of short tacks into the marina!

Whilst being a difficult, and at times exhausting vessel to sail, I feel humbled and privileged just crewing on a day sail around Champion Bay, getting only an inkling of what it must have been like a mariner sailing off an inhospitable and unknown coast...400 years ago. "I dips me lid to 'em!"



Footnote – 17th century Dutch longboats were built with flat bottoms, shallow draft and quite beamy as they were the ship's workboats, ferrying crew, passengers, provisions and water but were built strong enough to carry the ship's anchor slung underneath for kedging when working the ship in or out of harbour and also to drag the vessel off into deep water when aground (unfortunately, in the *Batavia's* case, proved absolutely useless!).





At some stage the replica was put on a truck and stored in an industrial yard. On 28 February 2007 it was on exhibit at the airport building in Geraldton, and two years later put back into the sea where she should have been all along.

26th January 1988, whilst Australia celebrated 200 years of European settlement, Geraldton folk were wearing t-shirts depicting the *Batavia* and the notation "359 years ahead of the rest". It is a little known fact that the first European constructions (Webbie Hayes forts on West Wallabie Island and Cornelius's jail on Beacon Island, albeit crude buildings) still exist today...some 387 years later.

**Sources:**

Bob Urquheart  
Gary Warner  
Batavia Coast Replica Boat Association archives.

**Thanks to:**

Vince Nock.  
WA Museum Geraldton.  
Batavia Coast Maritime Association.  
Geraldton Guardian.  
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*The Batavia longboat replica sailing*

Photo courtesy Geraldton Newspapers Pty Ltd



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PO Box 1080, Guilderton, Western Australia, 6041.

