

MARITIME HERITAGE ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

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Maritime Heritage Association, Inc.*

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MHA & FRIENDS

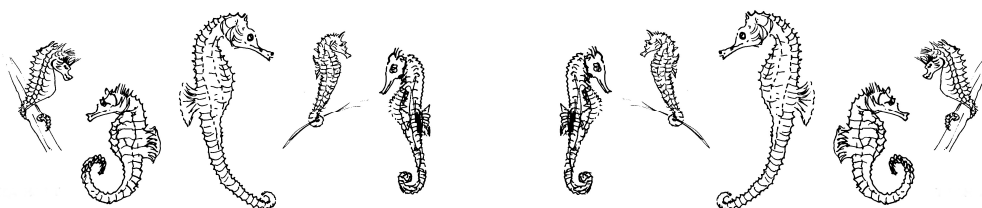
Christmas Windup 2010

Sunday 21 November at 10.00am

Hick's Museum

49 Lacey Street, CANNINGTON

Please come!





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

I would like to encourage more committee members to come along to the meetings on the first Monday in the month. The meetings are not long, and the discussions are wide-ranging and interesting.

I would also like to send the best wishes of all the members of the association to Ray and Jan Miller, who are finding things a bit difficult at the present time.

Jill and I have now given the Western Australian Museum the first draught of our second book. This one is on the maritime history of the coast between Mandurah and Augusta, and will be titled *Capes of Sunset*. However it will be at least a year or two before it ever sees a printer's workshop! It amazes me how much work is involved in the lay-

out, editing, proofreading, etc. We have already started on the research for book three—the maritime heritage of the south coast from Augusta to the South Australian border, so if any one has information that could help us please let us know.

I must mention the help we have received from the various historical societies while doing research for the second book. Members we have met at Augusta, Bunbury, Busselton and Mandurah have all been encouraging and pointed us to various resources they hold in their collections.



Things They Would Rather Have Not Said

The Dogger Bank patrol need not be continued. Weather too bad for destroyers to go to sea. Arrange for cruisers to watch Broad Fourteens.

Admiralty Chief of War Staff, Vice-Admiral Sir Frederick Sturdee, 19 September, 1914

Three days later on 22 September the three Bacchante class cruisers, *Aboukir*, *Hogue* and *Cressy*, with no essential anti-submarine escorting destroyers, were torpedoed one after the other on the Broad Fourteens, an area known to be the favourite haunt of U-boats. The ships were all sunk in less than half an hour by just the one submarine, U-9 commanded by Kapitän Leutnant Otto Weddingen. 1,459 men were lost, although there were eight destroyers, capable of rescuing them only 50 miles away. This is claimed to be one of the greatest naval disasters of World War I.



Marlborough

In the June 2010 Ditty Bag were two short newspaper articles sent in by Rod Dickson. Ron Parsons has replied to the query I made in introducing these items with an extract from the 8th edition of the book *New Zealand Shipwrecks*, published in 2007. The following is a summary of that extract.

Marlborough Official No. 73858
Length: 228ft; Beam: 35ft; Depth: 21ft
Tonnage: 1,191 gross, 1,124 net
Builder: R. Duncan and Company, Glasgow
Owner: Shaw, Savill and Albion Company
Master: Captain W. Herd; crew: 29, plus one passenger (presumably the Mrs Anderson reported by the *Lyttleton Star* of 12 January 1890).

The ship *Marlborough* sailed from Lyttleton, NZ, in 11 January 1890, bound for London with a cargo comprising frozen meat and wool. She was spoken by a passing vessel two days later. After a few months with no word of the ship an investigation was made into her condition when she sailed. This concluded that the ship was well founded and properly manned for the voyage.

In October 1913, over 23 years later, the vessel *Johnson* sailing off Tierra del Fuego sighted a 3-masted derelict stranded almost upright in a shel-

tered cove. The derelict's sails, rigging and deck were green with mould. On the stern could just be seen the name MARLBOROUGH and the port, GLASGO (W missing). On boarding the ship the crew of the *Johnson* found that the deck planks were rotten and yielded to their tread. They also found what remained of the *Marlborough's* crew. Skeletons, still clothed, lay in various places about the ship. One lay at the wheel, one near the hatch to the hold, three in the poop, ten in the fo'c'sle and six in the ward-room.

The log had rotted to the extent it was unreadable and the ship's papers had been blown away by the wind, leaving no clue as to what had happened many years before aboard the *Marlborough*.

Editor's note:

Readers are referred for further information to:
[http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?.title=Marlborough_\(ship\)&oldid=350853723](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?.title=Marlborough_(ship)&oldid=350853723)





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!)



Quarantine: The period, originally 40 days, during which a vessel suspected of carrying contagious disease is detained in a port in isolation. The word derives from the Italian *quaranta*, meaning 40, and appeared first in Venice in 1374.

Two attempts have been made to blast the rock at the Fremantle bar during the week, but without success, the fuses not igniting the charges. Some patent fuses have been offered to the Government but the expense was considered too great; it is unfortunate that a mistaken economy should thus be suffered to frustrate the most useful undertakings (Perth Gazette, 18 December 1847: 2d).

The Local Government has, we understand, closed with the offer of Mr Capehorn, to take the patent fuses in exchange for 20 acres of land, and preparations are being made for a good “blow-up” at the bar of the river (Perth Gazette, 1 January 1848: 2d).

On Tuesday and Wednesday last; attempts were made to blow up the bar, at Fremantle, but unfortunately proved abortive from the fuses not burning down to the charge. The project is not however given up, but will be persevered in at the next low water (Perth Gazette, 22 January: 2d).

An attempt to blast a portion of the bar at Fremantle was again made on Saturday last and with complete success, the charge we understand was only half a pound of powder and was fired by means of a portion of the fuses obtained by Mr Capehorn. Although so small a charge was fired, it had the effect of removing a large piece of the rock, and we hope will encourage the Government to persist in the attempt to remove this hitherto insuperable impediment to the free navigation of the river (Perth Gazette, 29 January 1848: 3b).

In 1917 the British Admiralty constructed a flotilla of 325-foot long steam powered submarines

with the designation ‘K’. Under no circumstances could these be considered a success:

K2 caught fire on its first dive.

K3 sank to the bottom with the Prince of Wales on board, but was later salvaged.

K3 was rammed by K6 and sank.

K4 ran aground.

K5 sank with the loss of all hands.

K7 rammed K17 and was subsequently scrapped.

K14 sprang a leak while still in dock.

K14 later rammed K22 and sank.

K17, during sea trials, rammed an escorting cruiser and then K7, went out of control and then sank.

K22 was rammed by another escorting cruiser.

The following year the ‘K’ submarines project was scrapped, having lost 250 sailors.

The brig River Chief was sold at Hobart Town for the sum of £300; she has since made four trips to Port Phillip for Stock and the proceeds have cleared her (Perth Gazette, 8 January 1848: 2d).

The battleship *Warspite* (31,000 tons, 8 15-inch guns), returning from the Normandy beaches, June 1944, wearing the flag of a full admiral, found her way impeded by a tiny coal-fired drifter captained by a skipper RNR. The *Warspite* using a twenty-inch slatted searchlight signalled the drifter from a great height:

“From *Warspite* to *Ocean Wave*. Are you aware of the Rules of the Road?”

Back came the reply from a very weak yellow Aldis lamp:

“From *Ocean Wave* to *Warspite*. Yes, what did you want to know?”

Stream anchor: An anchor carried as a spare, normally about one-third the weight of the bower and sheet anchors, but larger than the kedg.

11 June 1770: HM Bark *Endeavour* strikes a reef off the east coast of New Holland.



Ships Of The State Shipping Service

By Jeff Thompson.

No: 21 - KOOLAMA (2) Official Number: 19689

Further passenger accommodation was needed on the North West service due to the demand and an additional ship was ordered from overseas in April 1955 with accommodation for 58 passengers and limited facilities for the carrying of cattle were provided on the lower decks. This vessel being fully air-conditioned was to be named *Koolama*.

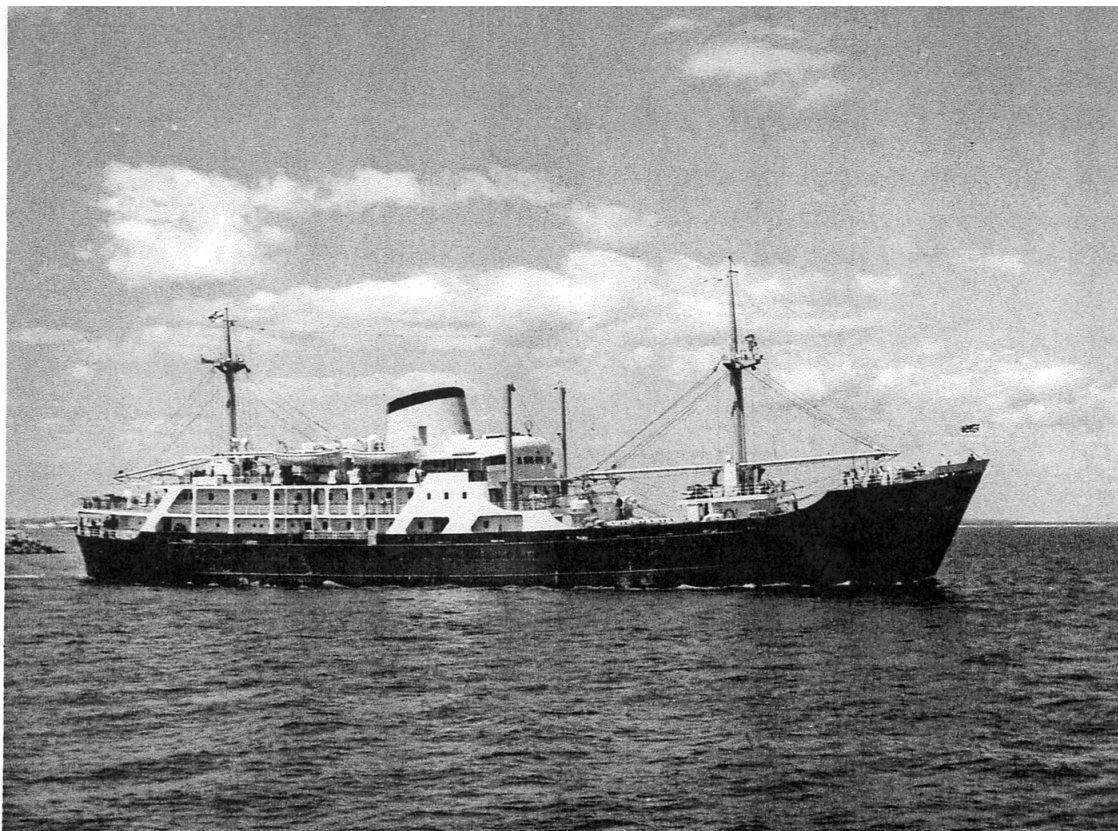
The second ship to be named *Koolama* was delivered by William Denny and Bros, Dumbarton, Scotland (Yard No. 1490) on 27 May 1958 and being 3,777 Gross registered tons, 2,020 deadweight tons, 92 metres overall, 14.9 metres breadth, 5.3 metres draught. Fitted with 2 British Polar M47M 7 cylinder diesel motors of 2,620 bhp and a single screw giving 13 knots service speed.

During September 1966 structural alterations were carried out at the Taikoo Dockyards, Hong Kong and included lengthening by 7.3 metres and increasing the passenger accommodation to 96

berths. The gross tonnage increased to 4,171 and the deadweight to 2,365 tons.

With a fall off in south bound cargoes from 1963 it was decided to operate a round Australia service with the *Koolama* in conjunction with the *Koojarra*. A total of 5 round trips were to be carried out initially as an experiment. During 1969 these voyages were cancelled as generally being too long and the vessels not fast enough. On 4 March 1973 the *Koolama* was paid off at Fremantle.

During April 1973 the vessel was sold to O'Shea's (Dublin) Ltd to operate between Ireland and European ports. On 16 May 1973 the *Koolama* left Fremantle for Singapore to be altered to carry livestock. During 1974 the vessel was renamed *Grain Trader*. In August 1974 the ship was sold to Eastern Steamship and Enterprises Pty, Singapore and renamed *Eastern Peace*. During 1977 she was sold to Lye Shipping (Panama) SA, retaining the same name. In April 1980 the vessel was sold to Taiwan ship-breakers to be broken up at Kaohsiung.





A Tragic Voyage!

Rod Dickson came across this remarkable sequence of events when he was carrying out his research in the Carnarvon Police Journals and followed it up.

The barque *Aberfoyle*, Captain Robertson.

The Australian coastal steamer, s.s. *Tagliaferro*, Captain Strom, on a voyage north from Fremantle and Geraldton, arrived at the Carnarvon Roads at 8 pm on May 17, 1895 and dropped her anchor to await the cargo lighters and the visit of the Water Police to take off the mail. W.P.C. Evenson and his Native Assistant, Champion, put off in the Police Cutter to deliver the outward mails to the s.s. *Tagliaferro* at 7 pm and while on board the ship Captain Strom reported to W.P.C. Evenson that on the 16th of May, 1895, they had met with a large sailing vessel apparently in distress off the Murchison Bight, about 80 miles north of Geraldton and 4 miles off shore. The actual position of the meeting was 27° 40' South and 113° 51' east. It was late in the evening when the ship was first sighted and there was a heavy sea running. It was deemed too rough to lower a boat in safety and so Captain Strom took his ship close enough to the sailer to make voice communication.

It was learnt that the Captain had committed suicide on May 5th and that there were no other Officers on the vessel. The s.s. *Tagliaferro* stood by all night keeping a close watch on the sailing ship as she was on a lee shore and drifting in towards the cliffs. At dawn Captain Strom made a lee with the steamer and lowered the ship's boat. The 3rd Mate and a boat's crew rowed across to the sailer and ascertained that she was the barque *Aberfoyle* from Frederickstad, Norway bound to Melbourne with a full cargo of dressed timber.

From the time the Captain committed suicide the Sail Maker had been given the task of sailing the barque due to his age and experience, however his age and experience counted for nothing as he had absolutely no idea of the intricacies of navigation, but then neither did any of the other 19 men and one woman on board. The Chronometers had stopped long before as there was nobody to wind them. The crews idea of sailing was to sail east as they knew there was land over the horizon somewhere and they were bound to find it sooner or later.

Luckily for them they were found in time by the s.s. *Tagliaferro* as they were sailing right into the death trap of the Murchison Cliffs, that high wall of cliffs that stretch from just north of Geraldton to the south end of Sharks Bay, with hardly a gap or beach for landing.

Following is the story of the voyage as told by the crew on arrival at Melbourne

The Dead Captain and his Crew

The story told to an *Argus* newspaper reporter by the crew of the barque *Aberfoyle*, which arrived in Melbourne recently after having been picked up by the s.s. *Tagliaferro* near Geraldton, bristles with Sensational Incidents, and what might have been the ultimate fate of the vessel had she not opportunely fallen in with the steamer *Tagliaferro* is hard to conjecture.

The spectacle of a large vessel riding the seas with a crew of over twenty men on board, none of whom possesses sufficient knowledge of navigation to steer her with any degree of certainty as to the course to be pursued, is happily an uncommon one, but such was the plight of the *Aberfoyle* when the s.s. *Tagliaferro* bore down on her on the 16th of May last.

The loss of the *Aberfoyle's* Chief Officer, Mr Percy Norton, who was washed overboard during an exceptionally heavy gale in the North Sea, marked the commencement of a series of exciting occurrences. There being no Second or Third Officer on board, the responsibility of navigating the ship was thrown upon her Captain, who from all accounts, was at the time lying helplessly drunk in his cabin, and whose subsequent violent conduct towards the crew led to their adopting the extreme measure of putting him in Irons. This step, it is alleged, was only taken as a last resort, and after he had, in addition to ill-using several of the men without provocation, threatened in turn to Shoot Them, to Burn the Ship, To Run her Aground, and generally to jeopardize in diverse other ways the lives of those on board.



The situation was rendered extremely painful from the fact that Three of Captain Robertson's little daughters, the eldest being only four years old, were on board in charge of the Stewardess, their mother having died on board some months ago shortly after the birth of the youngest child. The tragic death of their father, by his own hand on the 5th of May has left them Orphans, and the *Aberfoyle* practically without a guiding hand.

Although the crew, one and all, aver that from the departure of the vessel from Frederickstad, Norway on the 25th of January last until the 15th of the following month, the Captain was maddened from excessive drinking, it would appear that between the latter date and the 11th of March he recovered himself to an extent.

Matters proceeded quietly on board, and the Log Book, which had not been written up from the hour of the Mate's disappearance on the 28th of January, engaged, among other things, the Captain's attention. During this temporary lull in the ship's troubles, the Captain, having entered into the Log Book his recital of the circumstances attending to the loss of the Mate, requested several of the crew to append their names to the entry as a proof of its authenticity, but as they considered that the true facts of the matter were NOT stated, they refused to sign, and Captain Robertson is stated to have then resorted to the violent conduct which led first to a meeting of the crew in the forecabin to discuss the situation, and to their subsequently putting the Captain under restraint, a course which was precipitated by his assaulting some of them.

The precaution of seizing his firearms and placing them under lock and key was also taken, and the removal likewise from his reach of all intoxicating liquors appeared after a while to have the effect of restoring him to a comparatively tranquil and reasonable condition of mind. Chafing under his restraint and altered status, however, the Captain grew Sullen and Obstinate. He continually refused to partake of food until the morning of his death, when he ate something, but just as his mental restoration was anticipated, a quantity of Carboic Acid, which he had in his cabin was seized upon by him as an Agent of Self Destruction.

This event occurred in his own cabin, as previ-

ously stated, on May 5th. The steward, having his attention attached to the compartment by a groaning noise found the door bolted on the inside, and as there was no response to his request that it should be opened, he, assisted by several of the crew, broke in the door, and found Captain Robertson having violent convulsions, with an empty cup beside him. Upon examination it appeared that the cup had been almost filled with the poison, and that the unfortunate man had just swallowed the deadly draught.

Every effort was immediately made by the administering of emetics and other means to counteract the effects, but without avail, and after a few minutes of intense agony Captain Robertson breathed his last. His body was afterwards placed in one of the starboard boats on the skids and covered with a tarpaulin until a deal box was constructed for its reception, in which it was ultimately laid. The case being protected by a coating of tar and a covering of canvas.

The position of the *Aberfoyle* at this stage of her eventful passage cannot be ascertained, and the crew, which was composed of Norwegians and Swedes, whose sum total of Navigating Knowledge was so slight that it enabled them simply to pick out an approximate track, was in a dilemma. Consequently the movements of the ship thenceforward were regulated by everyone in general and no-one in particular. Fortunately, this unique system of navigation worked better than might have been expected.

Forming a rough, and, as it turned out, comparatively accurate idea as to their latitude, the crew, hopeful of striking Australian Shores by heading to the eastward, shaped a course in that direction, and although the track followed, as far as can be judged, deviated somewhat to the northward, which was not their intention, the route followed proved approximately correct, and driving before favourable winds, the ship luckily encountered the steamer s.s. *Tagliaferro*, on the afternoon of the 16th of May. The latter was then making passage between Geraldton and Carnarvon, on the West Australian Coast, and observed the *Aberfoyle* standing in towards the land off Gantheume Bay.

Captain Strom, suspecting the ship was well out of her track, bore down in her direction, and see-



ing she was flying distress signals, and learning her predicament, sent off a boat to ascertain further particulars. The result was that Joseph R. Amery, 2nd Officer of the s.s. *Tagliaferro*, was left on board the *Aberfoyle* to navigate her round to Melbourne and the *Tagliaferro* continued her trip.

Upon learning details of the events just related and satisfying himself as far as possible as to the manner in which Captain Robertson died, Captain Amery decided to bury the body, which was still on board. Before committing it to the deep, however, he had the wooden shell in which it was encased opened to make an inspection of the body, for the preservation of which nothing had been done by those on board. A gruesome sight was the result, and no time was lost, therefore, in lowering the corpse over the side. The last melancholy act in the voyage of the *Aberfoyle* was particularly impressive, being performed in sight of those, who some weeks before had manacled the deceased, and who now stood with uncovered heads on the vessel's deck as Captain Amery read aloud the burial service of the dead.

Albert Weberfeldt, Steward of the *Aberfoyle* stated: - My wife accompanied me on the voyage to look after the Captain's three children. The Mate was a temperance man. The Captain was Drunk during the run from Frederickstad to Rotterdam. The Captain tried but could not get a Second Mate at Frederickstad. From sailing until the 15th of February he was drunk. Sometimes he was half drunk and gave orders. On the 4th of February the wind was blowing a hurricane and between 6 and 8 pm the mate disappeared overboard. During this time the Captain was drinking Rum and could not stand.

From the 25th of January to the 15th of April the Captain consumed 65 bottles of Rum and at one time threatened to jump overboard. He had no care for his children or his crew's lives.

We, the crew, had a meeting and decided to force the Captain to eat food, and on this day I took his meal to him but could get no answer to my knock. We forced the door open and found a strong smell of Carbolic Acid. The Captain was sitting with his head on his breast, his mouth was burned, his ears were blue and his face yellow. The mug produced was on the locker and contained liquid Car-

bolic Acid. The Captain was unconscious so we gave him an emetic and took him out on deck, but he died after ten minutes.

The barque *Aberfoyle* is an attractive vessel of 1,597 tons, and is owned by Messrs Kerr, Newton & Co., of Glasgow. Captain Robertson, who was about 48 years old, had some friends residing in Williamstown, Melbourne, under whose care the three little girls will, in all probability be placed. He also left four other children behind him in Scotland, the eldest of whom is ten years old.

The Melbourne newspaper *Argus* suggested setting up a Trust Fund for the little girls' future and to pay their passages back to the relatives in Glasgow, however, the newspaper received the following letter from a friend of the family in Melbourne, as follows -

Sir, I am requested by Mrs Doull, in whose care the orphans of the late Captain Robertson are placed, to state that, while duly appreciating the kindly feelings which have prompted Captain Amery and others, a public subscription for the purpose of sending the little ones to Scotland is entirely unnecessary.

Captain Robertson's relatives in Scotland are fortunately in affluent circumstances, and the idea of a Public Subscription would, I am sure, be equally as repugnant to them, as it is to us who are connected to them here. The children will be well cared for here in Williamstown until advices are received from Glasgow respecting them. Yours & etc; Alfred Fowler, 195 Vernon Street, Williamstown.

A Court of Marine Enquiry was held in Melbourne on the 3rd of July, 1895, and following is the verdict.

Finding of the Court

The Crew Exonerated.

The Court of Marine Enquiry, Mr Panton, P.M. President, delivered its findings yesterday concerning the loss of the Mate, Percy Norton of the ship *Aberfoyle* and the death of her Master, Captain Robertson, during the voyage from Frederickstad, Norway to Melbourne.

The finding was a lengthy one, and carefully traversed the whole of the voluminous evidence given



during the progress of the Inquiry. Briefly put, the Court's Decision was a complete exoneration of the men. The Captain had Drunk to Excess and had Rendered himself incapable of performing his duties up to the 14th of February. Then he had attended to the navigation of the ship, had filled up the back entries in his Log Book, and had endeavoured to induce members of the crew to subscribe to what he had written.

His explanation of the Loss of the Mate was not a correct one, and the crew would not sign their names to what he had put down. Then when he had vainly endeavoured to induce them with offers of increased pay to sign the log he began to threaten the men, and taking once more to drink was considered dangerous, and was placed under

restraint.

Fearing an enquiry and disgrace he appeared to have determined to commit suicide, and to cause his death, deliberately swallowed a quantity of Carbolic Acid. The Mate, Percy Norton, seemed to have been an excellent Officer, respected and liked by the Crew. The latter might have rendered themselves liable to blame for their actions in placing the Captain under restraint, but the Captain's behavior gave them, what they considered ample justification. Their efforts to preserve the body of the Captain showed that they courted a full inquiry.

Author's note: The girls' names were Ursula, Rose and Jill.

Government Gazette, Saturday 31 December 1836 (No. 40)

*Colonial Secretary's Office, Perth,
December 29, 1836*

REQUIRED for the use of the Colonial Schooner *Champion* –

One cask of Tar.

Half cwt. Of Condemned Butter or Tallow.

Six Blocks, of various sizes.

One cwt. Of Spun-Yarn.

Persons disposed to furnish the same are requested to transmit their Tenders to this office, at 12 o'clock, on Wednesday next, the fourth of January.

Any further information may be obtained on application to Lieutenant BULL, R.N.

*By His Excellency's command,
PETER BROWN
Colonial Secretary*

*Colonial Secretary's Office, Perth,
December 29, 1836*

REPAIRS and Alterations on Board the Colonial Schooner *Champion*.

TENDERS in Triplicate will be received at this Office, at 12 o'clock, on Wednesday next, the fourth day of January, from persons desirous of contracting for the execution of the following Repairs and Alterations on board the Colonial Schooner "*Champion*":-

To lay a Hatch-Deck in the Hold

13 feet 3 inches by 14 feet 6 inches.

To fix a table for the Seamen.

To repair facing of Chain-Wales; Belaying Racks; Mouldings; and furnish and secure a new Bolt in the Fore-Chains.

For further particulars, applications to be made to Lieutenant BULL, R.N.

*By His Excellency's command,
PETER BROWN
Colonial Secretary*



DOVER - 3,500 YEARS GONE-BY

Mike Igglesden reports on a truly ancient vessel now on display in Dover.

At the time when the Pyramid of Cheops at Giza had recently been completed, and long before Tutankhamen had become Pharaoh of Egypt, a boat was built in a place we now know as Dover. The 40-foot flat bottomed oak planked boat, discovered in 1992, is the world's oldest known sea-going boat. This Bronze Age find was made 20 feet under what is now Dover's Market Square, when a shaft was being dug for a storm water pump. In a remarkable piece of archaeological rescue, within three weeks the boat was lifted from its grave of 3,500 years and the conservation process of replacing the water in its structure with wax (polyethylene glycol) over a period of 16 months, was commenced. Now on display in Dover in one of the finest archaeological galleries in England, it is an absolutely fascinating presentation which includes artifacts discovered in Dover and around the UK describing the life of people living in the Bronze Age. Since the Dovorians are admitted free of charge I talked my way in, being an ex-Dovorian, and managed free entry for the three days that I spent in there. Very un-Michael!

The age of the boat was determined by Carbon Dating and by the construction method used. The planking sewn together with yew withers was similar in construction to other Bronze Age boats previously discovered elsewhere, and so also assisted in determining the age of this Dover example. The stitch and glue method used in boat-

building today is not that far removed from their technique for joining planking. We use glue, they used moss and beeswax as a caulking media.

We know from archaeological evidence that there was considerable trade between Britain and Europe in the Bronze Age. It has long been a puzzle as to what kind of boat was used to cross the Channel. The 'Dover Boat' is an answer to this question, as, in calm weather, she would be quite capable of the voyage. There was a crew of 16 paddlers, also 4 bailers who were a very necessary component of the crew as the planking, especially the butt joints, would have been very difficult to keep tight.

A speed of about 5 knots could be achieved, enabling a crossing of 5 hours duration. Propulsion would have been by using paddles, as there is no evidence on the boat of the use of sail or oars. A possible cargo of up to three tonnes could have been carried. Goods probably traded include:-

- Metal - ores, ingots (for tools)
- Jewelry
- Pottery
- Textiles
- Food, crops and cattle
- People, possibly including slaves.

If ever you have a chance to view this exhibition - don't miss it!



The preserved boat in its special case in the boat gallery at Dover Museum.

To view other photos of the boat go to:
[Www.dover-kent.co.uk/.../bronze_age_boat.htm](http://www.dover-kent.co.uk/.../bronze_age_boat.htm)



A Cornish Cave Holds The Key to a 41 Year Old U-Boat Mystery

Mike and Anne Reveley sent the following intriguing article from the *Padstow Echo*, but which had first been published in *The Fishing News* of 13 June 1958.

On Monday, February 13th, 1917, the Lowestoft Smack *Zircon* was stopped and sunk by a German U-Boat off Trevoze Head in Cornwall. On the same day another smack, the *Fleurette*, was found to be missing. While the *Zircon* mishap received fairly wide publicity, what exactly happened to the *Fleurette*'s crew has never been known. Subsequently events threw rather a mysterious light on the incident and questions asked then still remain unanswered.

As a result of examining 1917 issues of *Fishing News*, and also speaking with fishermen, who were based at Padstow during the relevant period, I have been able to piece together the main points of the story although a complete picture cannot be produced.

Peace Shattered

It seems that on that day, a number of Lowestoft smacks were working the grounds 15 miles from Trevoze. The *Fleurette* and *Zircon* were among them, the former being easily distinguished by virtue of her white topsail.

Also in the fleet was the *Holkar*, commanded by skipper Jack Bean. He now lives in retirement at Milford Haven and, although 85 years of age, he still remembers the day in detail.

A fresh south-easterly breeze, assisted the smacks in their tow, and, as a whole, conditions for trawling were good. However, the peace was shattered when a destroyer hared past, at full speed, signalling that an enemy submarine was in the area.

Dispersed

The Lowestoft men began hauling in their gear immediately and set course for Padstow and safety. The south-east breeze that had been a boon now proved to be a bugbear, for, blowing directly off the land, it obliged snacks to make long, cumbersome tacks before reaching harbour.

Slowly they became dispersed over a wide area.

Looking back on the incident, a man who was a boy cook on board the *Eclipse*, says that, while they were scurrying to safety, he and his ship-mates could see the topsail of the *Fleurette* on the horizon. To their surprise she was behaving in a strange manner, continually going upwind then paying away. At the time, their feelings were only of curiosity and they continued on their course.

In a few hours, the smacks began to arrive in Padstow, the *Pentire*, *Eclipse*, *Holkar*, *Fern*, *Olive*, *Waverly*, *Evolution* and the *Greyhound* all sailed up the picturesque approaches and moored up. A count revealed two vessels were missing. The *Fleurette* and the *Zircon*.

To the fishermen it seemed all to clear that the U-Boat had made her kill after all, although none of them witnessed the proceedings.

Resigned to the fate of their fellows, they all went about their tasks normally, but the *Fleurette*'s strange manoeuvrings before she disappeared took on a more sinister aspect and discussion as to her last moments were rife.

Under the Cliff

Later came the biggest surprise of all. A farmer on business, related to some local men how, on the day of the U-Boat alarm, he was standing on a very high cliff at Portreath, a few miles away, when a smack sailed from seaward directly at the cliff and disappeared under the overhang straight in front of him.

As an aside, he described her as having a white topsail.

When the smackmen heard this they began a search. The Padstow steam lifeboat, *Helen Peele* was launched and, with three of the Lowestoft skippers on board, she set out down the coast.

Why the farmer waited precious days to reveal



what he saw can only be conjectured; probably the true significance was lost on him.

Anyway, the *Helen Peele* finally arrived at the indicated spot. Skippers Effie Moore, Proggy Turrell and Solly Mullender, got into their small boat and rowed into the towering cliffs. After a short search, they discovered a huge cave running into the cliff and inside the cave was the *Fleurette*.

Nothing Unusual

On clambering aboard, they found everything in perfect order, even down to the gutting knives stuck into the deck in an orderly line. The only visible damage was to the topmast, which had been broken off by the roof of the cave. The cabins, like the decks had nothing unusual about them; in fact, the only strange aspect of the vessel was the total absence of the crew.

Salvaging was quite out of the question. A million to one chance had brought her through tortuous rocks into the cave and the odds of getting her out were the same. Faced with no alternative, the skippers returned to their craft and Padstow. Naturally their report caused much discussion among the smackmen, but no positive explanation could be furnished.

Ripped Apart

What really did happen to the *Fleurette's* men? Perhaps the experience of the crew of the *Zircon* gave a clue, but, again, no one can say for sure.

After the destroyer with its warning signal had passed the smacks, skipper Fred Sutton on the *Zircon*, like his fellow skippers, hauled his trawl. Unfortunately however, the U-Boat surfaced nearby and forced the *Zircon* to stop. Skipper and crew were ordered into their boat and told to row over to the Germans. This they did and were taken on board.

The Germans, themselves, then rowed to the smack and after looting her set explosive charges in the holds. Shortly afterwards she was ripped apart and sunk. The crew watched her go down before they were bundled back into their small boat. Heartlessly the Germans then cast them adrift but without any provisions.

The strong south-east wind drove them away from the Cornish coast into the Western ap-

proaches. It was bitterly cold and, with no food or water, the fishermen quickly became exhausted.

The chances of their being rescued alive were indeed slim, but by sheer endurance they did manage to survive three days when they were spotted by a pilot boat from Queenstown, Ireland.

They had drifted for over 140 miles and were terribly weak, yet after being taken to safety, duly recovered.

Now for the *Fleurette* mystery. Did her men, after seeing the U-Boat, take to their boat, only to be swept away and lost? Did the U-Boat commander order them into their boat, with the intention of sinking the smack, but was then frightened off by the destroyer before being able to do so? Were the men taken aboard the U-Boat which was subsequently sunk?

These are some of the many questions one might ask, but all are destined to be left unanswered, for what exactly happened to that Lowestoft smack on that February day 41 years ago, is one of the many mysteries of the sea that will never be solved.

David J. Thompson

The Fishing News, 13 June 1958

Editor's Note:

The story of the fate of the *Zircon* is also related in Edgar March's *Sailing Trawlers* (page 141). March tells of how the five crewmen were so cold that two of them went insane 'and had to be shoved under the thwart in the bottom of the boat where they were so frozen that they had to be wrapped in cotton wool for 3 days' [on being taken ashore]. The skipper, Fred Sutton, spent 16 weeks in hospital with frost-bitten feet.

March does not mention the *Fleurette*, but he does put the date of this incident as 13 February 1916, not 1917 as stated by David Thompson in his 1958 article. So here is another small mystery; in what year were the *Zircon* and the *Fleurette* lost?

Reference:

March, E.J., 1981, *Sailing Trawlers: The Story of Deep-Sea Fishing with Longline and Trawl*. David & Charles, Newton Abbot, UK.



Another Voyage against the Southeast Trades

Part 16 of Nick Burningham's endless account of sloggng to windward in unsuitable boats

On 26th August, 1990 Dan and I departed from Jinato in the Tiger Islands, sailing HATI MULIA, bound for Bonerate, thirty-five miles to the south, and from there eastwards around Flores Head and through Larentuka Strait, then southeast across the Sabu Sea to Kupang. It would be a voyage of about 260 miles following rhumb-line courses. Much of this account was written during the voyage and immediately after with the intention of making general observations about how *perahu* perform and how they were handled when making a windward passage. By 1990 there were relatively few engineless *perahu* making such passages and I correctly suspected that in a few years there would be none.

The southeast trade winds had been blowing hard for a week before we sailed from Jinato, but on the morning that we left, the wind had definitely moderated. HATI MULIA had just been given a new mast. We cleared the end of the reef to the south of the island at about 0830 and put HATI MULIA hard on the wind, heading about 180° with a good full-sail breeze. By 1030 we had sailed south to the sand bank called Bungi Kamassi on charts (it should be Bungin Kamassi: Bungin means "sand bank" in the language of the Sama Sea-Gipsies). South of Bungikamassi, a current sets strongly to the west through the deep water channel between the Tiger Islands and Bonerate, so, it is necessary to make ground eastwards up to windward before standing south across the channel to Bonerate. Accordingly we went about, we were about a mile to leeward of the sandbank and intend to beat up in the lee of the bank and then continue tacking southeast towards the Passi Tallu Islands. On starboard tack we reached a point about half a mile north of Bungikamassi, but the wind was failing and the tide was setting to the west, so we went about in the hope of anchoring on Bungikamassi until a better breeze picked up. By 1130 we were totally becalmed and drifting away to the west in water too deep to anchor. We remained becalmed for much of the afternoon and gradually lost sight of the sandbank. In the late afternoon a light breeze from the north-northeast allowed us to stand



southeast and sight Passi Tallu Laut before dark. A local would never have allowed themselves to get even slightly to leeward of Bungikamassi. I knew that and should have tacked earlier in the morning.

During the night the light breeze veered round to the east and we continued to stand south on port tack, steering about 150° although we were really too far to the west to fetch Bonerate. In the second half of the night we fetched up about halfway along the north coast of Lambego (Kalao) some ten miles to leeward of Bonerate Strait. We went about and began to beat eastwards against the light easterly wind, tacking every hour. By 0700 we had made ground up to Popokang, the eastern peak of Lambego, and we were relieved to find that we were not being set to leeward too badly by the current. On the tack to the north we were making almost no ground because of a short head sea and the wind backing slightly to the north. We tacked close in shore because if we stood north for longer than about twenty minutes we seemed to be set more severely by the current which was evidently running more strongly further off shore. We made short tacks using an oar to maintain headway and to keep HATI MULIA heading up into the light wind while we were on starboard tack heading north. On port tack we sailed to within 100m of the fringing reef before putting about. We were also using the oar when going about close to the reef to be sure that we would not miss stays. All morning we tacked in this way while the breeze increased very slightly.



We rounded the northeast tip of Lambego to enter Bonerate Strait very close in shore at about noon, with the wind still light. The wind freshened from the east soon after that and we beam reached down the strait in smooth water at an excellent speed. As we approached Bonerate anchorage the wind went ahead, from the southeast, but in the smooth water with a stiff breeze HATI MULIA beat up into the anchorage, pointing high and going fast. With the mainsheets eased to spill wind we tacked around a large *lambo* and asked the best place to anchor. The anchorage is small and very narrow: one anchor must be dropped on the reef, in very shallow water, while a second anchor must be dropped over the edge of the reef into almost bottomless water to catch somewhere on the steep drop-off of the reef. Fortunately we managed to anchor without getting aground or aboard one of the other *perahu*.

The following day (28th August) we started to get up our anchors intending to depart at about 1600. We found that the outer anchor was fouled somewhere a couple of hundred feet down the cliff face on the outside of the reef and we couldn't break it out. We let out the line and drifted off a little, then pulled up again vigorously, but the anchor remained fast. Next we set all sail and tried sailing around on the anchor for a while, pulling it in different directions, but to no avail. With no anchor winch and short handed it was very hard work letting out and pulling up short on the anchor warp in a moderately fresh breeze. Eventually we resorted to superstition and magic. Using an Indonesian trick that I had been told of some years previously, I took a glass of fresh water, let the line go slack, and poured the water slowly down the line. Once we had done that, we were able to pull up the anchor quite easily; it had let go of the reef and was hanging straight down in the deep water.

We got out of Bonerate a little after 1700. With a stiff breeze from the northeast we stood out on 140° with the sheets eased a little to go to leeward of a reef called Takka Bassi. A *lambo* that had left about an hour before us was just in sight on a slightly more southerly course. Out of sight, some twenty miles away to the west, a bigger *lambo* also named HATI MULIA and from Jinato, was leaving Ujung Jampea deep laden with timber, in

company with her sister HATI DAHALIA. They were also bound for Kupang, Timor. Both *lambo* were owned by Haji Syukri's youngest brother, Gusman, who was sailing as captain of HATI MULIA. Gusman's HATI MULIA was built at Bonerate in 1983 and she could load about 90^3m of timber with the deck cargo stacked to the height of the cabin roof. HATI DAHALIA was newly built in 1990, she was not quite as big as HATI MULIA.

During the night the wind slackened and veered round to east. We continued to sail south, close hauled on a course of about 150° . Although the rhumb-line course for Flores Head from Takka Bassi is about 110° , it was usual for a *perahu* to continue south towards Flores, even if the wind came round from the southeast and she had to lose ground to the west. In general an east bound *perahu* will find sailing conditions and wind direction are more favourable close to the coast of Flores than they are further out in the Flores Sea during the southeast monsoon.

At 0600, on the 29th, the wind shifted right round to south; this was a land breeze off the mountains of Flores which we had been approaching through night. We went about to head east, but the wind was light and fitful, and there was a considerable headsea, so we made almost no headway.

We were still about twenty miles off the Flores coast and conditions were hazy, as they often are when the southeast trades are bringing smoke and dust from the deserts and bush fires of Australia. We could only see the land for a short time around dawn. Later in the morning the volcanic peak of the island of Paloe began to loom out of the haze to the southeast. Another *lambo* was in sight, away to the south-southwest at dawn. She gradually went out ahead of us, though she was also having trouble keeping her head up into the wind and making way against the lumpy headsea. We were hardly going through the water at all, but a favourable current seemed to be setting us slowly to the east. During the morning the wind backed round to the east. We tacked again at 1230 and the breeze backed to northeast and increased to force 3, allowing us to stand towards Paloe on a course varying from 100° to 140° as the fickle wind backed and veered.



We sailed into the strait between Paloe and the mainland of Flores during the first part of the night and lay there becalmed for a while. At 2230 a puff of breeze came off the land, heavy with the jungle scents of spices and wet humus. We went about to sail east on starboard tack, but that land breeze faded to nothing. We were again becalmed for a while, then a light breeze came up from the southeast. At the same time the sea, which was still running from the northeast, became sharper and larger, standing up against an east-going current. In those unhelpful conditions HATI MULIA staggered away to the northeast, head-butting the seas and making little way through the water.

At dawn on the 30th, we were heading 55° towards the island of Sukur with Paloe not far astern. We had two *lambo* in sight; one was the *perahu* we had kept in company the previous day she had gradually fallen astern during the night. The wind backed slowly and at 1030 we tacked to steer about 150° towards the coast of Flores.

By midday we had a third *lambo* in sight ahead of us. During the afternoon the breeze picked up to reach force four at times, and we stood inshore towards Pamana Island on about 120°. HATI MULIA weathered slightly on the two *lambo* that were ahead and dropped the other slowly below the horizon (but we were still able to see her two days later).

Shortly after nightfall we were totally becalmed once more, having tacked close under the western end of Pamana in the twilight. There were a few puffs of a land breeze but it never really got started. With sails, sheets, and booms slatting heavily, we clattered slowly away to the north during the night. The complete lack of land breeze blowing out of Maumere Bay was unusual and disappointing. Usually a fresh breeze streams out from the bay during the night. A *perahu* can often reach across to Flores Head hard-pressed and spray flying. But on this occasion we remained becalmed all night with a small headsea making it impossible to keep the vessel on the right heading to take advantage of any occasional puffs of breeze. At dawn on the 31st we were about five miles north of where we had tacked the previous evening. There were three other *lambo* in sight. A little easterly breeze in the morning enabled us to shamble slowly north, heading



about 30°. We crossed tacks with a fairly attractive Buton *lambo* which had been in company since the previous day. We were about 100m to windward of her when we crossed tacks. At about 1200 the wind began to back round to the north and we went about. We were able to steer between about 95° and 120°. At 1430 we were passed by a very heavily canvassed and deep laden Butonese *lambo* that had come up from the west at tremendous speed. She was being sailed full and by, sometimes falling off to a reach in order to keep up her speed. She seemed to be sailing two metres for every one made by us and the other three *lambo*, and despite falling off to a reach at times, she was able to make as good a course as us because she made less leeway. The wind improved during the afternoon and reached force 5 for an hour or so. We stood in towards the northern side of Labuan Hading. Again we were becalmed soon after nightfall.

A good southeasterly land breeze reached us at 2230 and we tore away to the northeast on a beam reach in smooth water. Ten minutes later we were becalmed again. There followed occasional puffs of easterly land breeze during the second half of the night which brought other *lambo* up close to us in the darkness. At dawn, on the 1st September, we could see nine *lambo* lying in a line abeam where we had all been left becalmed at the extremity of the patchy land breeze. We were the most easterly of the line and just to leeward of us was the heavily canvassed Buton *lambo* that had



Leaving us behind with the first puff of breeze at dawn

passed us the previous afternoon. We hailed her across the water and learned that she was carrying salt from Bima, Sumbawa and was bound for Bau Bau, Buton. They commented on the speed of HATI MULIA and we replied that she was fast enough when given enough wind, but unlike them we didn't have the sail area to sail well in light winds. A few puffs of breeze soon came from the east and enabled the Buton *lambo* to walk away from us as if we were at anchor. We remained virtually becalmed until after 0900, by which time we could count fourteen *lambo* in sight, all converging on the area of calm in the lee of Flores Head, ten of them east-bound like us. The nearest two *perahu* to leeward of us, after the Buton *perahu* had slipped away, proved to be the big HATI MULIA and HATI DAHALIA from Jinato.

The wind started up from the east-northeast and we stood north to tack around Flores Head. Four of the *lambo* in sight that morning were running west in ballast, at least two of them appeared to be large Bonerate built vessels, one looked like HATI SANTALIA. The one that passed closest to us was a smaller vessel with the clumsy and unaesthetic lines of a Jampea built *lambo*. All four were probably timber carriers returning from Timor.

We stood north until 1100; I would have continued north for longer, hoping for a favourable wind shift to get us around the headland, but all the other *lambo* had gone about to make shorter tacks, closer inshore, so I assumed that was the best thing to do. They were



Hati Dahalia under the massif of Flores Head before the wind got strong

quite right, the wind continued to blow from the northeast all day. In the early afternoon it increased to force 6 7. We matched tacks with big HATI MULIA and gradually we proved to be sailing very slightly faster and slightly higher than her. We were ballasted with lead and had expensive racing anti-fouling paint while she was deep laden, probably a little foul and carrying a high deck cargo which increased her windage. When the wind was at its strongest, HATI DAHALIA was the fastest and most weatherly of the three Jinato *perahu*, but in the afternoon, as the wind moderated, both HATI MULIAS got ahead of her. The two big timber laden *lambo* sailed almost upright through the strongest gusts. While the wind was gusting force 7, and perhaps occasionally it was stronger, they sailed with their



Hati Dahalia buffeting to windward with her main halliard eased



sheets close hauled but their main halliards started to depower the mainsails. Their jibs were kept full at all times and they steered straight, making no attempt to luff through the gusts. They were pitching very little and buffeting into the head seas with a very steady motion. Meanwhile we were charging along with the rail down and the main sheets started, luffing through every gust and pitching violently. We would certainly have reefed had we not been racing against the two big sister *lambo* from Jinato. When the wind became strong, all the other *lambo*, which had been falling behind the Jinato *lambo*, tucked into tiny coves and gullies that must exist along the forbidding cliff-girt massif of Flores Head.



Big Hati Mulia preparing to sail with a deck cargo of timber for Kupang

Just before dusk HATI DAHALIA stood inshore to anchor behind a little point called Tanjung Gedong, about a mile west of the tip of Flores Head. I think her crew wanted to rest and look for a leak that had kept them at the pumps for much of the afternoon. The two HATI MULIAS tacked eastwards into the night against the unremitting headwind and a slight head current. We tacked just to the east of the tip of a headland at 1900 and the wind veered to the east so that we had to continue sailing tack and tack down the coast to Tanjung Wutun instead of making it on one tack, as we had hoped we could. There was a moon for most of the night and we could often see big HATI MULIA's sails to leeward. Like us she was tacking about every forty-five minutes.

Shortly before dawn, on the 2nd September, we were off Tanjung Wutun where the wind again shifted so that we had to make an extra board before we could head south, around the end of

Flores, towards the Larentuka Narrows. By the time the sun had risen we were sailing south between Tanjung Wutun and Serbete Island. Big HATI MULIA was about half a mile to leeward as she had been twenty-four hours earlier. Another timber carrier was about half a mile ahead of us. For a while we were becalmed, then a northeasterly breeze began to set in allowing us to ease sheets, almost for the first time since leaving Bonerate. The *lambo* ahead proved to be a Jampea-built vessel. Most *perahu* from Jampea were dull sailers with great cargo capacity, and we went past her as if she was hove to. By the time we got into Larentuka Narrows it was blowing quite hard from dead astern and we were able to sail through the Narrows over a strong north-going tide. We went past Larentuka town, where there were three or four *lambo* at anchor, at a good eight knots. We carried the breeze ten miles south to Lewatobi Strait where we were briefly becalmed and then met by a headwind blowing into the Strait from the south. We tacked out of the Strait with a favourable tide.

By 1600 we were becalmed again and drifting out towards a formidable stack of rock called Pulau Kambing (Goat Island) that lies in the approaches to Lewatobi Strait. We used the oars to head northwest with the swell behind us, attempting to pass to the west of the islet where the Indian Ocean swell was crashing and sucking horribly on the jagged rocks. The breeze then started up from the northwest to thwart us but we reached clear of the islet. As we sailed out around Pulau Kambing, small motorised whaling *perahu* from Solor were coming in to anchor in its lee: the whalers must lie within a few metres of the rocks because the island rises absolutely sheer from the sea.

Once we were outside of Pulau Kambing the wind backed round to the southwest. We sailed southeast, heading on a course for Kupang. Later, after nightfall, the wind backed southeast so we went about and sailed 180° to 200°. The current in the Sabu Sea sets to the southwest, so we tacked again after a couple of hours in order to keep up to the east. Then the wind backed east and we tacked south again. By 0430 on the following morning it was blowing hard from the east-northeast and we were reaching at six or seven knots in a flurry of foam. We were not burning our



navigation lights and a *lambo* that passed less than 200m to leeward heading north had none.

Collisions between *perahu* at night were uncommon but not unknown. Engineless *perahu* never had navigation lights; sometimes, if the crew suspected that there were other vessels close-by that might present a risk of collision, they would pour a little kerosene on to the cooking fire so that it would blaze up and briefly illuminate their sails. By 1990 most *perahu* carried an adequate battery-powered flash light that could be used for the same purpose. Further south in the Sabu Sea there is a major shipping lane where becalmed *lambo* have been run down by big bulk carriers or tankers.

The northeasterly breeze did not last and at dawn we were becalmed again. Light variable winds frustrated us all morning. At 1200 the wind started from west or slightly north of west. By 1300 we were broad reaching on a pleasant breeze, an unusual treat in a season when one expects nothing but easterlies on the open sea. It lasted until 1630 when an increasingly steep head sea put an end to progress. This was quite different from the confused and choppy head sea that we had experienced in the Flores Sea: this was much bigger and steeper, and very regular. When we were able to put HATI MULIA on course, head to the seas, she was dipping her bowsprit deep into the waves even though she was making no way through the water and there was virtually no breeze blowing. At 1730 we furled the mainsail to stop it from slatting while we lay rolling beam on to the sea. We set the main again soon after dark when the westerly returned, but it lasted for only a few minutes. There was very little wind during the night. Fortunately the head sea gradually moderated.

Between 0130 and 0300 on the morning of the 4th September we sailed a course of 120° on starboard tack in a light breeze, but apart from that we were becalmed until after sunrise. A light westerly gave us about a knot in the early morning, then the westerly backed round southeasterly until we were forced off course to 85°. We went about and then found ourselves becalmed for a couple of hours. At 1100 the wind started from the west again and gradually improved in strength whilst backing slightly; by 1400 we were making four to five knots. As the

afternoon progressed the wind backed further and strengthened; we stood in towards the mountains of Timor, which were faintly visible through the haze, steering about 120°.

The wind continued to increase in strength. At 1600 we started the mainsheet to depower the sail; we should have reefed but Dan was cooking and I assumed that the wind would soon ease. At 1700, with the wind back round to east-south-east, we went about to stand south, parallel to the coast, and at 1730 we were obliged to deep reef the main. An hour later, as darkness fell, the southeasterly was howling. It had quite suddenly increased to a good thirty-five knots, and for a minute or two HATI MULIA was tearing along with her lee rail well under water. I had to climb down into the lee rigging to let go the jib halliard and then had quite a fight to get the jib furled out on the bowsprit. The jib of a *lambo* is very difficult to furl in a strong wind. Because it is laced to a boom and cut very full, it keeps ballooning with wind and running back up the forestay while one tries to get a line around it.

We lay-to with only the deep reefed mainsail set, but still fore-reaching at a good speed under a full moon and a clear sky, while the wind howled in the rigging. At about 2100 we picked up Semau light away to the south, bearing 150° and showing us that we had made good progress to the south but had been set too far off shore to the west. By 2130 the wind had moderated enough for us to reset the jib and the mizzen, and we went about to stand in towards the land. The breeze continued strong almost until dawn of 5th September. We didn't take the reef out of the mainsail until 0530. The wind failed completely just after dawn and we spent the morning becalmed, drifting south-southwest with the current. An hour of southeasterly in the afternoon allowed us to stand in towards the land again; later in the afternoon the wind went round to the east. We tacked up under the land during the night until the wind backed to the northeast and allowed us to reach across the Bay of Kupang and into the small bay of Namo Sain just west of Kupang at 0200 on the 6th September.

Big HATI MULIA had got into Namo Sain some hours ahead of us, even though she had stopped at Larentuka. She had entered the Sabu Sea through Lamakera Strait to the east of Solor



Island and she had not been so far out to sea after the blow on the night of the 4th, then she had picked up a local sea breeze to get down the coast to Kupang Bay while we lay becalmed. Gusman was happy to tell us that we should not have tried to sail straight across the Sabu Sea, instead we should have headed further east and tacked up under Tanjung Mas on the coast of Timor before heading south to Kupang.

We had taken eight days and ten hours to sail from Bonerate to Kupang; a voyage that would be a distance of little more than 260 nautical miles for a motor vessel sailing the rhumb line to Flores Head after clearing Takka Bassi and then from Pulau Kambing to Kupang. Distances between our estimated noon positions added up to 285 nautical miles. In fact, we sailed a considerably greater distance through the water because we were frequently tacking against a head wind. We must have sailed nearly 100 miles just to make the twenty miles around Flores Head; but we spent more time becalmed or nearly becalmed than we spent sailing close hauled. Too often we were held up by headseas that seemed to be larger and steeper than was compatible with the light winds we were experiencing. Only the heavily canvassed Buton *lambo* off Flores Head was obviously faster than our HATI MULIA. The big HATI MULIA made a better passage than us crossing the Sabu Sea because she sailed further east and allowed the current to take her south. Eight days was not a good passage for the time of year, but it was not an especially bad passage either, and HATI MULIA can be regarded as a reasonably fast *lambo*. Later in the year, when calms are more common and prolonged, *perahu* sometimes take more than eight days just to sail the 100 miles across the Sabu Sea. In 1977 I met a *lambo pinis* at Larentuka

that had taken two weeks to cross from Kupang during October.

This kind of sailing against the prevailing winds and frequent calms, without a motor, requires a great deal of patience and determination. In a seaway a weatherly *lambo* cannot be sailed within 55° of the wind, so it is very important to predict and take advantage of wind shifts as often as possible. On the other hand, if the wind shifts unfavourably, it must be accepted with stoicism. In fact many of the crew of *lambo* seem to prefer to ignore the whole question of navigation and wind direction, remaining cheerfully oblivious to set-backs and lack of progress. Some of them apparently have no mental map of where they are sailing. Of course the navigators must have good mental maps and well-developed memory.

With a *lambo* the size of my HATI MULIA one can use oars to manoeuvre when there is little or no wind. With a larger deep-laden vessel the oars are much less effective. It is generally agreed that a large *perahu* is most at risk if she gets becalmed close to rocks or a reef with seas setting her towards the danger. Such circumstances are sometimes encountered when entering or leaving the Lewatobi Strait at the eastern end of Flores, no matter how cautiously the Straits are approached, because the water there is too deep to anchor, right up to the edges of the reefs and islands that obstruct the approaches of Strait.

During the 1990s engineless cargo-carrying *perahu* disappeared. New Chinese diesel motors were available for little more than their scrap-metal value and fuel was cheap. *Perahu* design changed: most motorised *perahu* had sharper lines and less cargo capacity because they were propelled by low-power engines. Cheap, bulk freight of cargoes such as copra ceased with unfortunate consequences.

Timber carriers, some loaded some unloaded, anchored off Namu Sain, Timor





QUIZ

Answers to

1. A jackass barque is a four-masted barque, square-rigged on the two foremost masts and fore-and-aft rigged on the two after masts. There are minor variations of this rig. The *Omeo* was a jackass barque, but there were very few vessels using this rig.
2. Owen Stanley (1811-50), after whom the mountain range is named, was captain of the survey vessel *Rattlesnake* when the survey of Torres Strait and the eastern shores of New Guinea was carried out in 1847-50.
3. Britannia Road was a mile to the southward of Gage Roads i.e. what is now called Owen Anchorage. *In consequence of the late shipwrecks in Gage's Roads, a new anchorage has been taken up, about a mile to the southward, called Britannia roads, from the brig Britannia having first used it, and, in company with the Orelia, having rode out the late gales in them without being at all distressed (Hobart Town Courier, 7 August 1830).*

Questions

1. When was the Long Jetty at Fremantle completed?
2. Who named Princess Royal Harbour, Albany?
3. What are the clew and the tack on fore-and aft sails?

J. M. SOPER
M.I.N.A.
Naval Architect and Surveyor
184, PICCADILLY
LONDON

Designer of

<i>Satanita,</i>	<i>Yawl</i>	<i>300 tons</i>
<i>Charmian,</i>	<i>Schooner</i>	<i>175 tons</i>
<i>Clara,</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>185 tons</i>
<i>Cetonia,</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>295 tons</i>
<i>Xarifa,</i>	<i>A. Ketch</i>	<i>276 tons</i>
<i>Stratherrick, S.Y.</i>		<i>186 tons</i>
<i>Adventuress,</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>363 tons</i>

YACHTS OF ALL SIZES
FOR SALE OR CHARTER

DESIGNS AND ESTIMATES FOR
NEW YACHTS. SURVEYS. ALTER-
ATIONS & MOTOR INSTALLATIONS.

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