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The Aberdeen wool clipper *Samuel Plimsoll*

See article page 15



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Can You Help?

MHA recently received the following email:

Hi,

I'm seeking information on the possible arrival of a fleet of 3 mast Chinese ocean-going junks into Cooktown harbour in 1875 bringing Chinese miners to the Palmer River goldfields. The Harbour master was Capt Sykes. I have newspaper accounts of these Junks being built in Cooktown and Cairns a few years later and of Junks coming later to the Torres Straits and Cooktown for Beech-de-mur.

I can't seem to find any evidence (newspapers, harbour records etc) of this event.

Appreciate any assistance you may be able to provide.

cheers

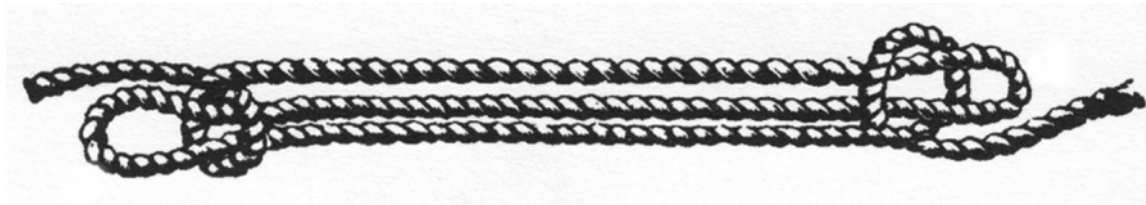
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Did You Know?

The America's Cup winning yacht *Australia II* (winner 1983) had a length of 64' 7", a displacement of 23 tons and a sail area of 1,820 sq ft. Compare this to *Reliance* (winner 1903) which was 143' 8" in length, displaced 140 tons and had a sail area of 16,159 sq ft. Then compare the specifications for the 2021 winner *Te Rehutai* from New Zealand that has a length of 68', displaces only 7.6 tons loaded and has a sail area of 2,530 sq ft. This yacht lifts out of the water on hydrofoils, and has sailed at 49.1 knots during a regatta.



End of Year Get-Together



**10:00am Sunday 21 November 2021
at
33 Gosnells Road East, Orange Grove**

All members welcome!

**It would be appreciated if you would bring a plate
of finger food to share
Robin and Pam will be supplying tea and coffee**

**There will be the raffle of a very special quilt to
raise money for MHA**

***We look forward to catching up with all our friends
at the end of a second most unusual year***

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!)

Knight-heads: Two large timbers, one on each side of the stem, rising up sufficiently above it to support the bowsprit, which is fixed between them.

Admiral Smyth, 1867

In December 1871 the brigantine *Nightingale* (220 tons, Captain D. McPhaiden) brought to Fremantle the first steam locomotive for use on the Jarrahdale–Rockingham railway. It was named ‘Governor Weld’, and arrived from Melbourne. In August the same year the same vessel had brought the steam locomotive ‘Ballaarat’ also from Melbourne to Busselton for the Western Australian Timber Company.

The English East India Company’s ship *Trial* (Captain John Brooke) sailed from Plymouth on 4 September 1621. On 24 May 1622 the ship struck rocks north of the Montebello Islands and became Australia’s oldest known shipwreck.

The founder of *Jane’s Fighting Ships*, the most recognized and authoritative book on naval ship identification, was John Fredrick Thomas Jane (6 August 1865–8 March 1916). The first edition of this book appeared in 1898.

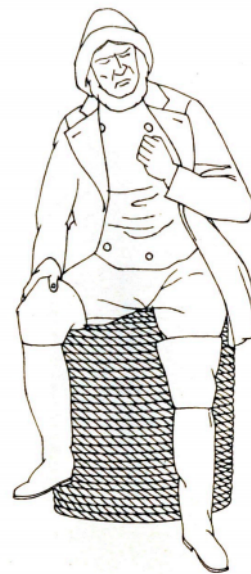
Odysseus was told, on his retirement from a life at sea, that he should journey inland carrying an oar over his shoulder until he should find a people who asked him what it was he was carrying. There, after making a sacrifice to Neptune, he should build his house.

Scull: A short oar of such length that a pair of them, one on each side, are conveniently managed by a single rower sitting in the middle of the boat. This method of rowing is correctly called sculling. Also, to propel a boat by using a single oar over the stern.

Joseph Conrad had command of the small iron barque *Otago* (637 tons, 147ft) for 14 months – January 1888 to March 1889. This experience formed the basis of his book *The Shadow Line*. The *Otago* was eventually taken to Hobart for use as a coal hulk, and in 1931 sold to a ship breaker. The rusted remains lie in Otago Bay near Hobart.

The whaler *Runnymede* was built in 1849 in Ho-

bart by John Watson. The 284-ton barque was wrecked at Frenchman Bay, Albany, on 19 December 1881. The wreck lies alongside the wreck of the *Fanny Nicholson*, another Hobart based whaler, wrecked on 22 November 1872.



*Here lies Old Harry at rest
His judgement was put to the test,
The supertanker was **not** at anchor
But of course Old Harry knew best.*

The VOC ship *Ridderschap van Holland* departed the Cape of Good Hope for Batavia in early 1694 with 325 people on board. The vessel was never seen again. Similarly, the *Fortyun* left the Cape in early 1724 with 225 people on board, and was wrecked, possibly near the Cocos Islands. Two years later the *Aagtekerke* with 212 on board left the Cape in January 1726 and was never seen again. Of these three ships the *Aagtekerke* is the one most likely to have been wrecked on the Western Australian coast—possibly at the Abrolhos.

The Brouwer route, the route along which VOC ships were ordered to sail from Cape Town to Batavia, was contained in an instruction known as the *Seynbrief* or *Seylaesorder*, published in August 1617. The benefit of this route was that it almost halved sailing time, and therefore sickness on board was greatly reduced and provisions and cargo deteriorated less.



Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea.

The Bar at the Mouth of the Swan River

Part 1 by Ron Forsyth

@s Jill Worsley wrote in her book *The Wau-gal and the Swan*:
*While many Australian rivers tend to build up a sandbar (either permanent or seasonal) across the mouth of the river, the Swan was unusual in that its bar was one primarily of limestone rock, stretching north towards Rous Head from the southern bank. The Wadjup people believed that the rock bar had been formed when a crocodile from the north had swum into the river. It was attacked by wild dogs that lived on Cantonment Hill, and one of them bit off its tail. It slid back into the river where it died. Its scaly body thereafter formed the rocky part of the bar. The deepest part of the channel near the estuary was close to the Rous Head, which meant that at most times Nyungar men could wade in deep water across the rocks and accumulated sand when the tide was low, but had to swim across this northern section.*¹

After a voyage with Baudin in 1801 Captain Louis-Claude de Freycinet had described how ‘the channel is obstructed by a bar of rocks, which it is very difficult to pass over, and indeed impracticable, if the wind blows from the sea.’²

In 1829 Governor James Stirling placed Perth, the capital of the new Swan River Colony, 17 km up the Swan River. He envisioned ships sheltering in Rocky Bay and navigating up and anchoring under Mt Eliza in Melville Waters. This he believed could become one of the finest harbours in the world. Aware of the bar he believed it would be easily removed.³ This was to prove a most serious miscalculation for the hapless colony. Captain Fremantle had warned of the insecurity of the anchorage outside the river mouth after his visit when he claimed possession of the whole of the west coast in the name of His Britannic Majesty just prior to settlement.⁴

In May 1836 the little cutter, *Lady Stirling* was launched with great fanfare, ‘to ‘Rule Britannia’, and other national airs,’ from the boatyard of William Edwards on the river foreshore at what is now Como. It was the first colonially built vessel to be crafted from local timbers. Regrettably she was stranded on the bar at the river mouth and se-

verely damaged.⁵ Difficulties were to be experienced there launching other vessels built within the river at North Fremantle such as the brigantine *Empress* in 1846 and the schooner *New Perseverance* in 1858.

By October 1837 *The Swan River Guardian* was asking what prosperous commercial city was placed ‘... seven, or six, aye, one mile distant from navigable waters.’⁶

Indeed by 1854, Fremantle residents were so bold as to hold a meeting where it was proposed that the port town replace Perth as the seat of government with Guildford the centre for the inland region. It was argued that perilously scarce resources could be better concentrated in Fremantle which was the centre of commerce. It was thought highly improbable that Perth would ever become the seaport of the colony as envisaged by Stirling.⁷

It is doubtful also that Stirling foresaw the indignity of landing at Perth’s first jetty. Boatmen then had the hazardous and unpleasant job of landing passengers ‘pickaback’ through mud for twenty five to thirty five metres.⁸

Most of the commerce was river-borne in barges which were poled over the banks and shallows. It is possible that the heavier craft of the river in those days took a day or more, to make the journey from Fremantle to Perth.⁹ There were no roads, just boggy, sandy tracks.

In January 1840, Colonial Secretary Peter Brown published rather rustic directions for boats crossing the bar through what was known as the Monkey Rock Channel:

The deepest part of the channel is close to some detached covered rocks, which lie to the north of the South Head. In steering for it, keep rather towards the South Head until you bring a black cross beacon near the sandy beach, inside the South Head, and the black gable end of a house a little beyond it, in line with a large heap of stones on the outline of the hills over the Town of Fremantle,—the heap of stones being distinguished from others of smaller size by having a white mark resembling a roadway leading down the hill from it. These three



marks in a line will lead over sandy ground close on north side of the covered rocks off the South Head, and clear of a longer ledge which projects inward from the North Head. The depth of water between the two is 5 to 7 feet, according to the time of tide.¹⁰

Boatmen ran the gauntlet at the bar or, if conditions prevented, they unloaded cargo at the sea or South Jetty from where it was transferred along Cliff St to the North or River jetty. The bar could only be approached by sail with an off shore breeze. The 'Fremantle Doctor', the summer sea breeze, limited this at a times of the year when seas were generally most favourable. Cargo was ferried up the river to Perth. Coupled with delays caused by the exposed nature of the roadstead this made transport costs in the colony extremely high.

In December 1847 the *Inquirer* bemoaned that there had been '... for about the thousandth time, the loss of property and risk of lives in going over the Bar.' The schooner *Lord Stanley* and cargo was so severely damaged that her owner threatened to leave her to her fate.¹¹

From Hobart Town in 1848 came the trenchant criticism of a colony that was so well placed geographically to India, Mauritius and England compared to the eastern ports

The apathy of the government and of the colonists, however, in not having cleared the paltry

*obstacle of a few rocks forming the bar at the entrance, during nineteen years, is a reproach not easily eradicated. Look at that evidence of inertness, and no stranger can be astonished at the little progress made at the Swan River in other matters.*¹²

The next year Mr Trigg, Superintendent of Public Works, used explosives to widen and deepen the channel on the north side of the river by Rous Head.¹³ He ran out of water fuse and money so the work was left uncompleted. The Trigg Channel became the favoured channel in rough weather with certain tidal conditions. It had some protection from rocks extending from Rous Head.

When transportation began in 1850 it was widely expected that convict labour would be utilized to open the river mouth and create a sheltered harbour.

Distressing news of the drowning of Captain Douglas of the *Louisa* shook the colony in July 1852. A reckless attempted crossing of the bar in heavy surf in Mr Rewell's boat left his wife and four children without a breadwinner.¹⁴ Subsequent to this disaster the government established a foul weather signal to be hoisted at Arthur's head when the bar was not to be crossed. Failure to comply would result in the forfeiture of a boatman's license.¹⁵

To be continued, when endnotes will be given.....



Detail from a painting of Arthur Head and the mouth of the Swan River signed and dated 'G. A. D. Forsyth 3.93' showing (from left to right):

the flagstaff, No.1 lighthouse, powder magazine, guardhouse, and Garden Island on the distant horizon. In the foreground is the North Jetty with a lifeboat slung on davits. The flagstaff is flying an Exemption Flag at the masthead, indicating the brigantine in the far distance is a coaster exempt from pilotage dues. The black ball hoisted to the yardarm signifies: 'No person shall cross the Bar at the Mouth of the Swan River'.

*Photo supplied for assessment courtesy Andre Lipscombe.
City of Fremantle Art Collection*



An Account of the Expedition of H.M.S. *Success*, Captain James Stirling, R.N., from Sydney, to the Swan River, in 1827.

By Augustus H. Gilbert, Clerk of HMA *Success*

Note: This reprint published in 1906 is in error. Stirling's clerk was W.C. Gilbert

H.M.S. *Success*,

Sydney, 30th April, 1827.

We sailed from Sydney on Wednesday, 17th January, having on board as passengers Mr. Fraser, Colonial Botanist, and Mr. Garling, of this place, in company with a cutter attached to the *Success* by the Governor, for the purpose of being employed in surveying the coast and to carry provisions to King George Sound, where an infant settlement has been formed, and which I shall speak of in the course of my letter. On the Friday following we parted company, finding she sailed so indifferently that we ran away from her under double-reefed topsails and top-gallant sails, while she had all sails crowded.

On Sunday we encountered a severe gale of wind, which, lasting only twenty hours, did us little or no injury, and from this time we had light winds, and nothing of any interest occurred till the 27th January, in the evening of which day we came to an anchor in the River Derwent, Hobart Town. The capital of Van Diemen's Land is situated about thirty miles from the entrance of this river, at the base of a lofty mountain. The next morning we weighed, and ran up to this town. The different views in passing up the river were most interesting. The little farms and fine ripe cornfields that adorned either side of this beautiful river reminded me strongly of England. The variety of tints the extensive forests afforded at that season of autumn, together with the romantic appearance of the cloud-capped mountains, particularly the one under which the town is erected, gratified the taste of every lover of the works of Nature in the most ample manner.

The town is well planned, and is extensive, considering the short time that it has been in existence (about thirteen years), and appears to be rapidly increasing. This town possesses some natural advantages over Sydney, which renders it a more desirable place of residence; it is not subject to those sudden changes from heat to cold, and the soil is far superior and much deeper than at Sydney. All the necessaries of life are to be procured here in abundance, particularly vegetables, which flourish during the whole of the year. They have not erected a market place, which is an evil much complained of by the inhabitants, making the price of provisions, although abundant, excessively

high, little or none being brought in from the country; there is one now, I believe, in contemplation, which will shortly be built. During our short stay we had many visitors, and we received several invitations, the inhabitants being much pleased with our arrival, and anxious to show us every attention. Among those who came on board was the son of one of the principal chiefs of New Zealand. He was brought on board by Captain Wilson, late of the Hon. East India Company's service, now a merchant of this place. This young chief had the misfortune to be wrecked in New South Wales, in one of Mr. Wilson's vessels, and only escaped with his life by being an excellent swimmer. He had an intelligent open countenance, and appeared quickly to comprehend the use of the different things on board on being explained to him.

On the Wednesday following we went down the river to await the arrival of the cutter, and came to an anchor between Beanis Island and Pierson's Point, sixteen miles from the town. As there was now no probability of getting to the town, we went ashore at these places shooting, there being many kangaroos, quail, parrots, a beautiful species of pigeon, etc. We thus passed our time agreeably till the 8th February, when the cutter arrived, having experienced a heavy gale of wind for ten days. She had carried away her boom and gaff in two places, and was otherwise considerably damaged. Several head of stock, including two cows, which she had on board for King George Sound, died. We immediately sent the carpenter and sailmaker on board; and, having completed the necessary repairs by evening, we weighed and stood out to sea in company with her. We had a fine moderate breeze at first, but the next day it changed to a fresh beating breeze with occasional squalls. The cutter continued in company till the 13th, when, finding that she proved a great drawback to our progress, we hove to, and sent a boat on board with orders for her to make the best of her way to Swan River. If, however, she could not round Cape Leeuwin on the 15th March, on that day to bear up for King George Sound; and, if she could not reach that place by the 20th, to shape a course for Sydney.

We now filled and made sail, and lost sight of her. On the 4th March we weathered Cape Leeuwin,



and on the 5th arrived off Rottnest Island, a place described by the French as being a terrestrial paradise^[1] but we found it a barren place, not possessing the slightest inducement for anyone to settle, the whole island being almost entirely composed of sand, covered with brushwood. There is a vast number of the small species of kangaroo on this island. The next day we sailed toward the Swan River, an distant about ten miles, and came to anchor, off the mouth of the river distant three miles. We sent a boat into the river, and on its return the crew gave us an unfavorable account of the entrance, there being a bar of sand and rocks, with scarcely sufficient water for a boat to pass over in safety, but immediately over this bar they got into deep water, having from 4 to 10 fathoms^[2].

They shot several black swans, a remarkable bird found in great numbers there. This bird is about the size of the white swan, and perfectly black, with the exception of the quill feathers at the tip of the wings, which are white. The bill, legs, and eyelids are red, and they fly in flocks. They are rather gross, but otherwise good eating. The next day (Wednesday) we proceeded to the island of Berthollet (Carnac), when we moored ship. This island is a mere mass of rock, intersected here and there with brushwood, the resort of sea birds, breeding here in vast numbers, every part of it being covered with holes similar to a rabbit warren.

The next day (Thursday, March 8) being fixed for the expedition up the river, the first gig and cutter were ordered to hold themselves in readiness. At 8 o'clock they accordingly started from the ship, the boats being victualled for a fortnight and well armed. The object of this was to proceed, if possible, to the source of the river, to examine the banks, the depth of water, to fix on an eligible spot for a settlement, to ascertain the productions of the country, the nature of the soil, and the practicability of forming a harbor for shipping; and I am happy to state that our expectations are fully realised, and that our report has given so much satisfaction to the Governor that an immediate settlement is to be formed there. The boats proceeded about twenty^[3] miles up the river the first day, when they were prevented going further by meeting with the flats, that here extended themselves the whole width of the river, and one and a-half (1½) miles in length. They were reduced to the necessity of taking everything out of the boats, and landing them on one of the many islands that are formed in this part of the river by the floods, and to drag the boats over by main

force, there not being sufficient water to float the gig. In doing this the party were above their knees in mud, and obliged to walk over extensive beds of oyster shells, which lacerated their feet very much.

The next day (Friday), however, they got the boats over and continued their course up the river. It is strange that immediately on getting over these flats they found deep water of nearly 8 fathoms. The river, after running two miles to the eastward, takes a N.N.E. serpentine direction. The scenery was delightful—the trees growing to the water's edge, the transparency of the river, the mountains and plains alternately appearing, and the picturesque points and bays, formed the most interesting scenery possible, and this place only requires a little assistance from art to render it one of the most delightful spots on earth.

On Sunday they first observed the natives, two children were playing on the shore, who, immediately on perceiving the boat, ran off, but in a few minutes they could see about two hundred watching them from behind trees and the tops of the hills. We continued our course for some time without noticing them, and the natives kept moving along the shore with their spears in their hands, making signs for our people to come on shore. They having followed for some time, we put on shore, and all the natives on this retreated towards a hill near the spot except five rather elderly men, who immediately laid down their spears and made signs of friendship by holding their arms over their heads, etc. Mr. Belches, third lieutenant, went out to meet them, but upon another following him they showed strong symptoms of alarm, snatched up their spears, and would have fled had not the person instantly returned to the boat. By making signs of peace, and giving them some presents, they soon became more easy and familiar. They seemed particularly fond of bread and sugar, but they could not relish the salt meat.

These people are about the middle size, possessing rather intelligent countenances than otherwise, and live in the most simple state possible; they walk upright, are small made, their thighs being no larger than the calf of a leg of a common-sized man; this may be owing to the small quantity of animal food they take, living chiefly on roots and berries, and their possessing no effective instruments for sporting, fishing, or hunting. They go in tribes of twenty or thirty, and each tribe has its chief^[4], whom they obey and respect. They speak an uncouth and harsh language^[5], and



when they express either admiration, surprise, or pleasure they vociferate several times the word "Quabba." They have only these weapons, at least we only saw these amongst them—namely, the spear, knife, and tomahawk^[6]. The spear is formed of a species of reed that grows in abundance here. These spears are from 8 to 11 feet long, and they fasten a small piece of wood at the end of it to form a barb; this wood they sharpen with stones to a point, and secure it to the spear with the gut of the kangaroo, and strengthen it with the gum that is found here in large quantities. They throw them with great force and correct exactness. The tomahawk is simply formed of a small piece of wood, about 18 inches long, with a stone at the end, fastened only by gum. The knife is also formed of stone, sharpened by others, but this is the meanest apology for a knife I ever saw. The natives are almost perfectly naked, having merely a band about 3 inches wide round their waists, made of the bark of a tree. The chiefs paint themselves with a sort of red clay, and twist their hair, which is long^[7], round their heads, binding it with the feathers of the cockatoo and swan. The chiefs have likewise feathers through their ears, and a single quill feather through the septum of the nose^[8]. On Monday, March 12, we reached the source of the river, which latterly had become so narrow that we were obliged to boat

the mast and pull, the trees overhanging on both sides so as to prevent our sailing.

End notes:

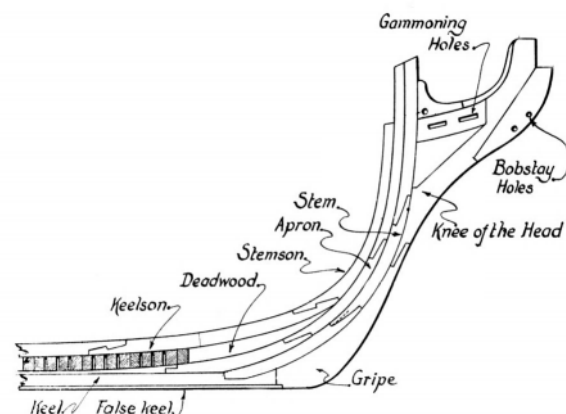
1. Rottneest Island was not called by the French a terrestrial paradise, but a very correct description of the island which is diversified by hill, valley, and salt lakes, was given by them.
2. Immediately over the bar the depth of water was about three or four fathoms, and this was followed by a number of sandbanks, some of which, near the railway bridge, still exist.
3. Really twelve miles.
4. The aborigines of Australia have no chiefs in the proper sense of the term. Their most expert and powerful warriors are feared and obeyed, but can scarcely be said to govern.
5. Some authorities consider the aboriginal dialects to be soft and mellifluous.
6. In addition to these are others, notably the boomerang, womerah and nullah.
7. The hair of the natives of Australia is short and curly as a general rule; in some instances the tail of the dingo has been introduced and wound round the top of the head, which no doubt deceived the visitors.
8. Usually a small bone of the kangaroo or a piece of wood is passed through the septum of the nose.

To be continued.....

QUIZ

Answers to September

1. The apron is the reinforcing timber aft of the stem (see diagram).
2. The *Xantho* was wrecked on 17 November 1872.
3. HMS *Warrior* was launched in 1860 and commissioned in August 1861.



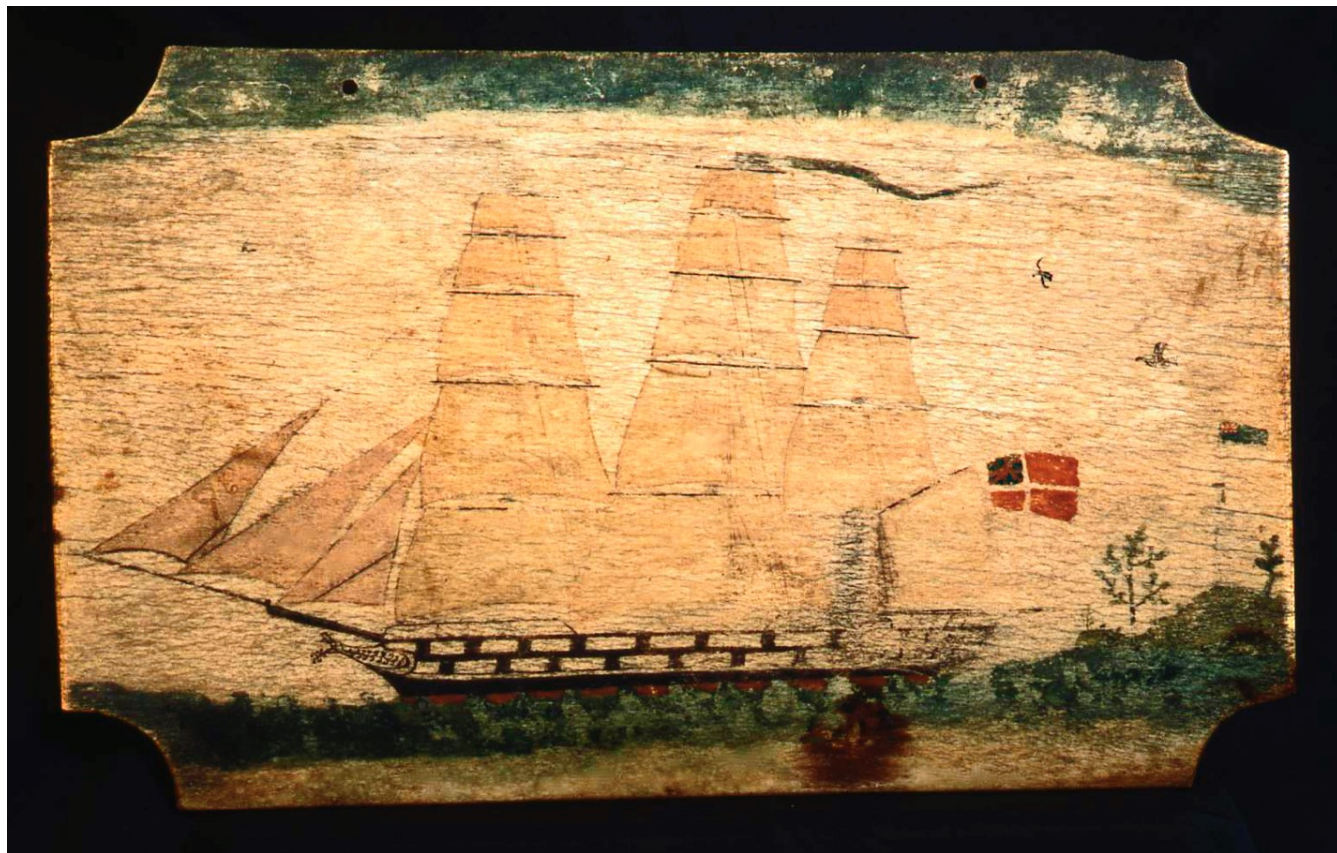
Quiz

1. In what year (day and month if you know it) did the following events occur: The Fenians boarding the American whaler *Catalpa*; the wreck of the *Eglinton* off Wanneroo and the naming of Cape Naturaliste?
2. The French explorer Dumont D'Urville landed in King George Sound on 7 October 1826. What was the name of his ship?
3. In what country was François-Antoine Boniface Heirisson, after whom Heirisson Island in the Swan River is named, born?



The Tapper Panbone

By Ross Shardlow AM FASMA



Mews Family Collection

A member of the Mews family asked me if the vessel painted on a piece of scrimshawed whalebone might be the *Rockingham*, the ship that brought the Mews family to the Swan River Colony in 1830. Scrimshaw is the whalemens' art of carving, engraving and painting on whalebone and whale ivory (teeth). The whalemens who produced these artworks were called scrimshanders. The scrimshander's whalebone of choice was a section of the lower jaw of the sperm whale known as panbone. Flat, tightly grained and easily shaped into thin slabs, panbone made an ideal 'canvas' for the decorative arts and crafts of the scrimshander.

Provenance:

The panbone was purchased by a member of the Mews family from Trinity Antiques of Perth in 1998. The provenance given in a letter from Richard Brouwer, owner of Trinity Antiques, stated the panbone had been acquired from the last male member of a branch of the Tapper family. According to the provenance the land behind the ship on the panbone is 'said to be by family history, Garden Island'. The Tapper family and

the Mews family both came to the Swan River Colony on the ship *Rockingham*, arriving off Garden Island 13 May 1830. Daniel Tapper was engaged as a boatman in Fremantle. His son John, born in Fremantle in 1831 followed in his father's footsteps as a boatman and became a successful whaler and lighterman from 1849–1872, and was, for a time, engaged as Headsman of a whaleboat crew for Bateman's Fremantle Whaling Company. There is no suggestion, however, that he was directly engaged in scrimshaw. John Tapper's son John Jnr, born in 1854, was also involved in the whaling industry.

Description:

A fine example of a coloured scrimshaw panbone plaque depicting a ship of the early 19th century under full sail with an island in the background, 441mm wide x 266mm deep x 15-17mm thick, weighing 2.252 kg. Though engraving was commonly used on scrimshaw there is no evidence of inscribing on this work. Accomplished in a naïve style using black ink and coloured pigments, best described as *stuff*, this work is a painting rather than a hand tinted engraving. Attempts have



been made to restore some of the black inked images that have broken down over time. Most of the rigging, for example, has fallen off, while the masts have all but disappeared. There is evidence that the work has been varnished over at some time, probably in an attempt to preserve the work. The plaque has been crudely carved with scalloped corners and there are two holes on the top edge for hanging the plaque on a wall. There is no signature, date, title or place name on the work, front or back. For all the wear, tear and deterioration, the work is in a remarkable state of preservation.

The ship:

The vessel on the panbone appears to be a typical British East Indiaman, characterised by a full-rigged ship with a flying jibboom and skysails on all masts, two-tiered chequer pattern painted gunports, and two-tiered quarter galleries. She is flying a prominent but unidentified defaced British red ensign from her peak and a blue pendant from her masthead. She has a raised forecastle and quarter deck and carries a draped full female figurehead with outstretched arm holding a branch or floral arrangement.

The red ensign flying from the peak is a puzzle. Initially, I considered if the ensign might be one of the many forms of the Honourable East India Company flag, or the Danish flag or even an early Tasmanian State flag, but dismissed them all. One flag that does resemble the defaced red ensign on the panbone is the little-known Sovereign Flag of the Military Order of Malta as flown during the British Colonial Period 1814–1875. Unfortunately, it does little to help us with the identification of the ship on the panbone as none of the early ships calling at the Swan River Colony seem to have a connection with Malta – unless we consider someone such as the ship's owner, captain or even the scrimshander himself, was making a private signal as a pun on the name *Medina*!

Medina was built in Devon in 1811 and it is generally given that *Medina* was named after the River Medina on the nearby Isle of Wight. Though built as a West Indiaman, she later traded to the East Indies under licence to the HEIC. When she came to the Swan River Colony in 1830 she was under the command of Captain Walter Pace, late commander for the HEIC fleet. Perhaps Captain Walter Pace was flying a Maltese flag as a private signal to represent the ancient Maltese city of Mdina (correct spelling) to mean *Medina*, the name of his ship. *Medina*,

however, is not a likely candidate for the panbone ship. Paintings of the *Medina* by Thomas Whitcombe in 1820 show her as a merchantman with only one row of painted ports and single-tier galleries. Furthermore, *Medina* seems not to have any connection with Garden Island or the Tapper family. *Medina* did not come into Cockburn Sound via the Challenger Passage, she came in via Gage Roads, and seeking a safer anchorage towards Garden Island promptly ran aground on the Parmelia Bank. She managed to get off with considerable damage to her keel and though she was close to Garden Island when aground on the



The prominent unidentified British red ensign defaced by a 'white cross throughout' flying from the peak

Parmelia Bank it is hard to imagine that this is the heroic scene of nautical splendour depicted on the panbone.

The use of the Maltese flag as a private signal might have nothing to do with identifying the ship, it might be the private signal or signature for the scrimshander. Perhaps the scrimshander who



The Sovereign Flag of the Military Order of Malta during the British Colonial Period 1814–1875



crafted the panbone came out to Fremantle on the *Medina* – like John Bateman, joint owner of the



Another version of the defaced red ensign by caricaturist Charles Williams: 'The Merry Ships Crew or Nautical Philosophers', given as c.1810, but the absence of the red Cross of St Patrick for Ireland on the Union flag in the canton suggests the date might be earlier than 1801

Fremantle Whaling Company, or it might have been someone who had done military service on Malta.

British East Indiamen and Extra or Licensed Ships:

The vessel depicted on the panbone is typical of an East Indiaman and *Rockingham* was an East Indiaman, or more correctly, *Rockingham* was an Extra Ship for the HEIC. There were several other ships in this class that came to the Swan River Colony in this period. Extra Ships were East Indiamen in miniature. Extra Ships were considerably smaller than a Regular East Indiaman, say 600 tons compared to 1200 tons, and were scaled down to look precisely the same as a Regular

East Indiaman, right down to having two-tier gun decks, two-tiered stern and quarter galleries, and a lofty rig with a flying jibboom and skysails on all masts. Extra Ships were built for the HEIC trade but were placed in the ordinary merchant service until called on when extra service was required for the HEIC. Licensed ships were much the same, smaller versions of the HEIC ships that could be licensed for charter to the HEIC for specific duties. The vessel on the panbone might well be an Extra or Licensed Ship. Several Extra and Licensed Ships called at Swan River in the early years of the colony, including the *Parmelia*, *Hooghly*, *Gilmore*, *Medina*, *James Pattison* and, of course, *Rockingham*. *Parmelia* can be ruled out because she had a different rig, while *Hooghly*, *Gilmore*, *Medina* and *James Pattison* can be ruled out as we have faithful paintings of them that show only a single row of gun ports. In fact, most of the ships of *Rockingham*'s size (427 tons) seem to have only one row of painted gunports. The *Hooghly*, *Gilmore* and *James Pattison* were all larger than the *Rockingham*, yet they all only had one tier of painted ports.

Garden Island:

Of the ships that tried to enter Cockburn Sound in the early years of the colony, only the *Rockingham* seems to have made a safe passage through the Challenger Passage between Carnac and Garden Islands. The others either ran aground, touched or simply abandoned the attempt. The juxtaposition of Garden Island to the vessel on the panbone is significant and makes *Rockingham* a likely candidate for the painting – if, in fact, it is Garden Island on the panbone. The flagstaff on the island is flying a British blue ensign. As Australia was part of the Royal Navy's East India Station (Blue Squadron), the British blue ensign was flown in Australia for official government and naval purposes. The blue ensign was certainly used as the official flag when the Swan River Colony was established in 1829, giving support that the island on the panbone, small that it is, might well be Garden Island. The landform of the island appears similar to drawings from 1830 depicting Sulphur Bay and Beacon Head at the northern end of Garden Island at the entrance into Cockburn Sound. There is also the suggestion of a roof of a hut to the left of the flagstaff that is similar to the structures depicted on other artworks of Garden Island in the 1830s. The other islands in the vicinity do not match the description. Carnac Island does not have the substantial trees indicated on the panbone, while Rottneest Island had a 15-foot flagstaff mounted on a 15-

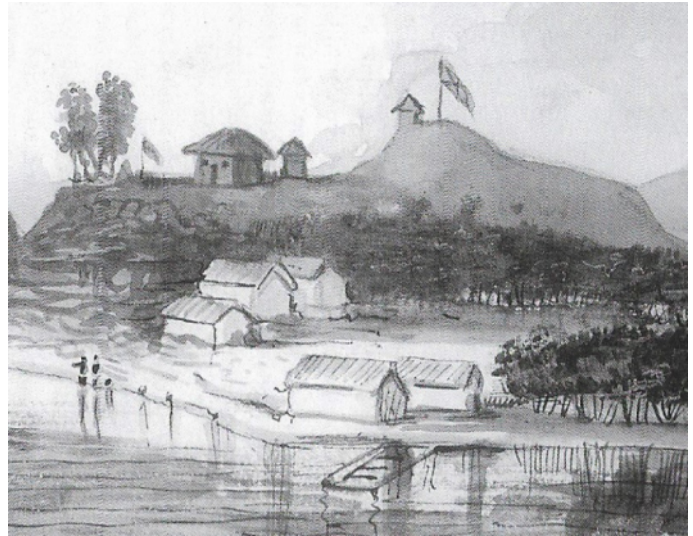


foot stone obelisk on the highest part near the centre of the island. If the scene on the panbone does



To the right atop a hill is a flagstaff flying a British blue ensign. At the bottom left hand corner at the bottom of the hill there appears to be a roof of a hut

show Beacon Head on the northern end of Garden Island, then the ship in the foreground is likely to be entering Cockburn Sound via the Challenger Passage – just as the *Rockingham* did 14 May 1830.



Detail from Garden Island in Western Australia, Seamen's huts and workshops, c.1830. Artist unknown

Collection: Art Gallery of Western Australia

Detail from The Success hove down to the Cruiser c.1830. Artist unknown. Note the blue ensign

Collection: Mitchell Library, Sydney



The Success hove down to the



Some other East Indiaman:

A close examination of the panbone revealed a remarkable stain on the flying jib that resembles the figure '96'.

On a hunch that this might be an act of bravado to announce the arrival of something like the 96th Regiment I found that a company of the 96th Regt did in fact arrive at Swan River in 1847. The troopship *Java* departed from Hobart for Swan River 31 January 1847, stayed three days at King George Sound and arrived at Fremantle 22 February 1847 to bring a company of H. M. 96th Regt. to relieve the 51st stationed at Swan River.

Though the troopship *Java* was built as an Extra Ship in Calcutta in 1813 she was, in fact, large enough to be a regular East Indiaman. At 1175 tons, *Java* was by far the largest sailing ship to call at Swan River up to 1847, the nearest contender being HMS *Driver* at 1100 tons, but she was a steam ship. Though built as an Extra Ship and only carrying four guns when she came in to Gage Roads, *Java* had two gundecks and could carry twenty-six guns and might easily have had two tiers of painted gunports. She also carried two-tier stern and quarter galleries and had a female figurehead. *Java*'s figurehead, however, was described as a nude bust of a woman with her hands crossed over her breasts, which does



Java as a coal hulk at Gibraltar. In 1939 she was towed to Genoa to be broken up. In 1940 Italian frogmen blew her up with limpet mines in a training exercise

not match the fully clothed female figurehead with outstretched arm on the panbone. Furthermore, *Java* anchored in Gage Roads and did not appear to go anywhere near Garden Island. Though *Java* might not be the vessel on the panbone her impressive appearance in local waters may well have inspired budding scrimshanders to depict East Indiamen in their works.

Another East Indiaman Extra Ship that came to the Swan River Colony was the *Coromandel*. She called on 16 January 1841 and though smaller than the *Java* (639 tons compared to 1175 tons), she was also built as a full-size East Indiaman with two gun-decks and double-tier stern



The draped full female figurehead with outstretched arm holding a branch on the panbone ship. Compare with the figurehead shown on Thomas Whitcombe's painting of Medina in 1820

Detail (below) from Thomas Whitcombe's painting of the Medina in 1820 showing a draped full female figure with outstretched arm, similar to the panbone figurehead. The Coromandel had a similar figurehead





and quarter galleries. She was every bit as impressive as the *Java* and might well have caught the attention of the Fremantle scrimshanders. Her figurehead looked very similar to the one on the panbone; a full female draped with floral pattern scrollwork with outstretched arm holding (perhaps) *Plants of the Coromandel Coast* as described by William Roxburgh, 1775-1820, Assistant Surgeon Madras Establishment, Botanist in charge of the HEIC Botanic Garden, published by the Directors of the HEIC under direction of Sir Joseph Banks, 1795.

We do not have a description of *Rockingham*'s figurehead and do not know whether it was a male, female or simply a scroll head. With the Tapper family being custodians of the panbone up until 1998, their connection to the *Rockingham* and the plausibility that it is Garden Island depicted on the panbone, *Rockingham* remains a serious contender for the vessel in the picture. There is no suggestion that one of the Tappers actually

painted the panbone; indeed, it is more likely the panbone was crafted *for* the Tappers not *by* the Tappers. I suspect the work was done a generation or so after the arrival of the *Rockingham*, perhaps about 1850 when John Tapper became well acquainted with the shore-based and off-shore whaling industries giving him access to panbone and the scrimshanders to fashion it. By 1850 the memory of what the *Rockingham* looked like in 1830 might have become a little faded and perhaps a little embellished. John Tapper wasn't even born until 1831 and his father Daniel died in 1847. Without first-hand knowledge a scrimshander might have been compelled to resort to painting a typical East Indiaman (like the *Java* seen in Fremantle in 1847), coming through the Challenger Passage past Garden Island into Cockburn Sound 14 May 1830. In conclusion, I can only say that the painting on the panbone might be a representation of the *Rockingham*, not a faithful portrait of the *Rockingham*.

Wool Clippers: Average Passages and Characteristics

Nick Burningham

In my previous musings on clippers and their relative sharpness of lines (*MHA Journal* 32, 2) I drew attention to the dominance of Glasgow (or Greenock) built tea clippers. In these further lucubrations I shall consider the pre-eminence of Aberdeen-built ships among the wool clippers.

Basil Lubbock in *The Colonial Clippers* gives the passage durations of the seven most reliable wool clippers for their voyages to Australia in the years 1886 to 1894. Some made eight passages to Australia in those nine years, others made nine. It is a period when sailing ships were not earning high freights and few were being driven as hard as they had been, but a fast ship would still slip through the water at a good speed.

Lubbock lists the ships in the following order, giving a list of passage durations for each, but he gives no averages. However average passage durations can be calculated. I list them below and append the year of construction for each ship.

	Average
<i>Cutty Sark</i> (1869)	77.875 days
<i>Salamis</i> (1875)	80.77
<i>Patriarch</i> (1869)	84.11
<i>Mermerus</i> (1872)	86.875
<i>Miltiades</i> (1871)	85.625
<i>Cimba</i> (1878)	88.888
<i>Samuel Plimsoll</i> (1873)	82.125

The two ex-tea clippers head the list and have the best averages, so one might assume the ships were listed according to their averages, but in fact the order listed per averages would be:

	co. udt.	NRT	Length
<i>Cutty Sark</i>	0.55	921	212.5
<i>Salamis</i>	0.58	1079	221.6
<i>Samuel Plimsoll</i>	0.618	1444	241.8
<i>Patriarch</i>	0.629	1339	222.1
<i>Miltiades</i>	0.642	1452	240.5
<i>Mermerus</i>	0.637	1671	264.2
<i>Cimba</i>	0.610	1117	223.0



Miltiades waiting to load in Port Jackson

The “co. udt” or coefficient of underdeck tonnage is calculated using underdeck tonnage and registered dimensions (given in Imperial feet) from Lloyds Register. It is calculated thus: underdeck tonnage \div (length \times breadth \times depth \div 100). The underdeck tonnage was the calculated volume of the hull converted to tons at the rate 100 cubic feet = 1 ton. The lower the coefficient the sharper the ship.

Cutty Sark and *Mermerus* were Glasgow built ships. The others were from Aberdeen, built and designed in Walter Hood’s yard, and their hulls were painted Aberdeen green. *Cimba* was owned by Nicolls, the other four were Aberdeen White Star Line ships. *Patriarch*, *Miltiades*, *Samuel Plimsoll*, and *Salamis* were the first four iron-hulled ships designed and built by Walter Hood for Thompson’s Aberdeen White Star Line (Hood also built an iron barque *Leucadia* for Thompson in 1870-1). *Thermopylae*, owned by the Aberdeen White Star Line, was not included in Lubbock’s list because she was sold to Canadian owners in 1890, but she had a very fine record as a wool clipper, and also on voyages out to Aus-

tralia when still in the tea trade. It is the iron-hulled clippers built for the Australian wool trade that I want to assess here.

Patriarch (1869) and *Cimba* (1878) were 222.1 and 223 feet in length, but *Patriarch* had 10% more beam. *Cimba* was heavily sparred and was considered a tender ship with not quite enough beam for her length and lofty rig. In her sharpness and relatively small tonnage she was a return to the clippers of nearly a decade earlier. Similarly *Salamis* (1875) was built, six years after the opening of the Suez Canal, as a last-gasp tea clipper. She was, more or less, an iron-hulled *Thermopylae*; perhaps ordered as a response to Willis’s *Halloween*, which was more or less an iron-hulled *Cutty Sark*, thus mirroring Willis’s ordering of *Cutty Sark* to rival *Thermopylae*.

In the latter years of the wool clippers *Samuel Plimsoll* was the fastest and the second sharpest of the non-tea clippers. She, along with *Miltiades* and *Mermerus*, had the advantage of being relatively large ships. Of *Miltiades* Lubbock wrote “taking her average, both outward and homeward,



Cimba depicted by Allan Charles Green

I do not think that any ship can beat her record for an iron ship except the little *Salamis*.” Lubbock is taking her average from her first voyage in 1871, and all her homeward voyages, into consideration, not just those later outward voyages considered above. In effect he says she was the fastest wool clipper excluding those built as tea clippers. *The Tweed* made several very good passages in the wool trade but she wasn’t consistently employed in the trade and she was built of timber, not iron.

A remarkable thing about the four wool clippers built in the 1870s – *Miltiades*, *Mermerus*, *Samuel Plimsoll*, and *Cimba* – is that their coefficients of underdeck tonnage decrease serially. This does not reflect the general trend in sailing ship design, but it does indicate an interesting recovery in confidence among the most prestigious of sailing ship operators, despite the Suez Canal opening and the financial crisis and depression of the 1870s.

A minor point of interest about *Miltiades* and *Cimba*, which were very similar looking ships, is that neither had a spanker boom. Photographs of both ships show the lack of a spanker boom, and

a painting of *Cimba* shows her setting a small spanker with no boom. Another outstanding wool clipper, *Harbinger*, was modified to carry a boomless spanker.

Miltiades has such a fine average performance over a long career, and yet she has the highest coefficient of underdeck tonnage of the seven ships listed by Lubbock, meaning she was in some way the least sharp, or the most capacious relative to her dimensions. This is perplexing. In photographs she looks very sharp indeed, she has as dainty a counter stern as a tea clipper, and she was known to be a wet ship in heavy weather, which implies sharp bow and stern. Perhaps she had little deadrise and a firm turn to the bilge, giving her high capacity through the mid-body. A photograph of her in Port Jackson, waiting to load, shows her floating very high, with her deck more than twice as high above the water as it was when she was fully laden. She was presumably lying at anchor with no ballast. *Salamis*, with her great deadrise could not have been floated so light without capsizing. *Samuel Plimsoll* can be seen floating almost as high in two photographs. *Miltiades* and *Samuel Plimsoll* were similar in proportions and were built two years apart in the



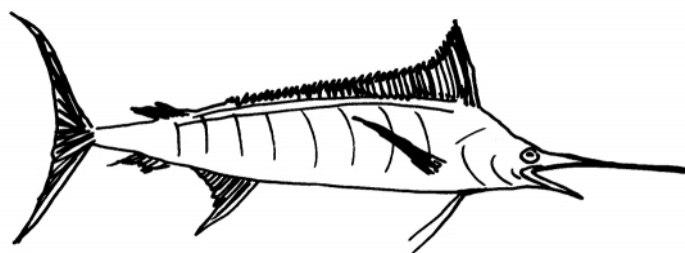
same yard. *Samuel Plimsoll* was slightly longer, broader and deeper, but had underdeck tonnage 5% less. Yet *Miltiades* looks at least as sharp in her run, and both ships were very sharp in the bow.

Perhaps sailing ships sailed faster if they were designed to look faster? Sailing ships were not really animate beings, but seamen found it difficult not to view them as having character and some kind of life-force. As Conrad observed, a good ship served those who sailed her with obvious loyalty, even if she was not fast. *Miltiades* was designed to appear the very epitome of the clipper. Did *Miltiades* always tear through the seas as fast as she could out of gratitude for being given such stylish clipper-ship appearance? Might the same be said of the tea clippers from Robert Steele's yard?

Patriarch was a fine ship, but her looks were somewhat spoiled by a long and heavy poop. All the other ships considered here were magnificent examples, but *Miltiades* had no poop (though she did have a raised quarter deck) and no topgallant bulwark to her fo'c's'le. Like *Cutty Sark* and *Thermopylae*, and most of the finest tea clippers,

Miltiades' bulwark rail ran flush from bow to stern. All the other ships considered here had a low topgallant bulwark around their fo'c's'le deck, or in the case of *Mermerus*, a low poop. What's more, *Miltiades* had only a small pilot house on her quarter deck, plus the wheel and wheel box, and what appears to be a skylight, giving her the style of a gentleman's yacht. The other Aberdeen ships, even *Thermopylae*, had the kind of aft deckhouse called an "Aberdeen house" projecting through their quarter decks ... making them just a bit more utilitarian in appearance.

It is unfortunate that the lines plans of the clippers built in Walter Hood's yard are lost. *Miltiades'* lines, like those of *Taeping*, might have something important to tell us about designing easily propelled yet relatively capacious sailing hull forms. Computer modelling of hydrodynamics is now very sophisticated, but given the almost infinite variables of actual seagoing experience, it requires empirical data about the actual performance of vessels of known design. For ship-types where the empirical data is scant, or the precise design is unavailable, computer modelling is less useful.



HDML 1321

An historic vessel in danger

The Harbour Defence Motor Launch 1321 was one of 30 motor launches built for the RAN during WW II. It was built of double diagonal planked Huon pine in Hobart, Tasmania, by Purdon & Featherstone, and commissioned on 11 November 1943. HD 1321 was the first of this class to be built in Australia. The 80-ft, 46-ton vessel was powered by two Buda-Lanova 6-cylinder diesels of 200 bhp. The normal armament consisted of a 20mm Oerlikon, a Vickers .303 machine gun, two .303 Lewis machine guns and eight depth charges.

By February 1944 HDML 1321 was at Milne Bay in New Guinea, and had been placed under the operational control of Supervising Intelligence

Officer North Eastern Area to carry out, among other tasks, the support of Allied Intelligence Bureau personnel, including the support of Australian coast watchers operating behind Japanese lines. The first lieutenant at this time, Sub Lieutenant Russel Smith, noted:

The vessel was unique in that it had been seconded to the AIB and we were allocated the duty of servicing the famous coast watchers, taking in their food and equipment, bringing out their sick and so on. To do this we operated the whole time amongst the occupied islands in enemy waters. The Japanese used powerful barges and they were a constant hazard as they were armed with a 20mm twin-barrelled pom-pom, on a two-man mounting



and were very accurate and dangerous. To counter the enemy menace, and with the help of our American friends, we armed our vessel in an unorthodox way. We added two automatic 37mm cannons plus four .5-inch heavy machine guns to back up our 40mm Bofors, 20mm Oerlikon and four rapid fire .303 machine guns.



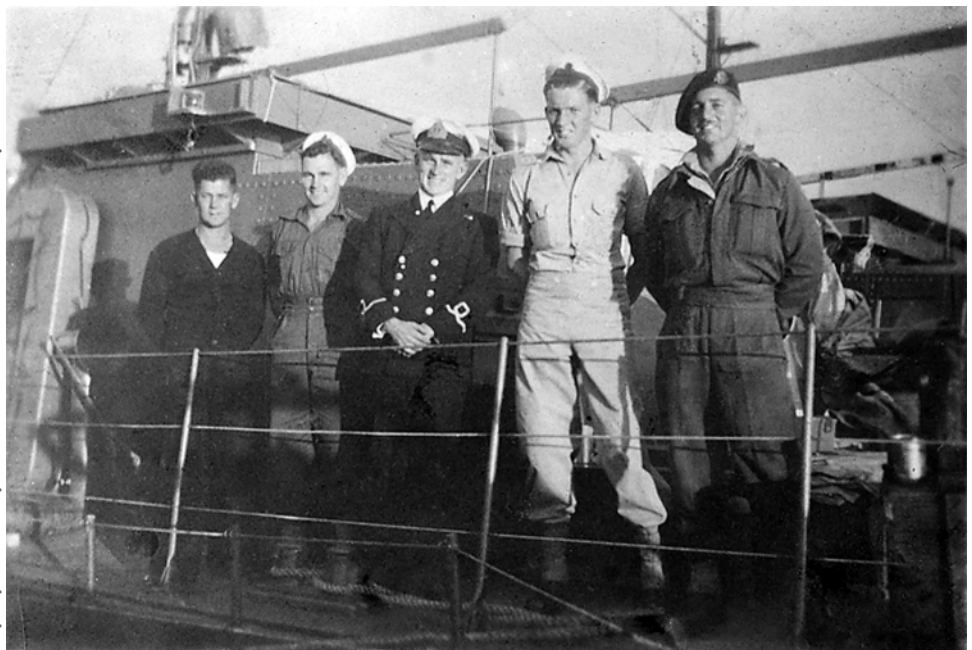
HDML 1321 being launched at Hobart

In April 1945 HDML 1321 was used by Z Force for Operation Copper. The operation involved eight Z Force men being dropped off together with four kayaks near the Japanese held island of Muschu off the coast of northern New Guinea. It had been reported that the Japanese had two 5.5in guns on the island. These had enough range to pose a threat to the invasion of Wewak, so a reconnaissance was required to verify whether the guns were there, if so where exactly were they and what was the strength of the enemy forces on Muschu Island. Also Kairiru Island, just north of Muschu was a known Japanese naval base with 3,000 personnel and at least two 75mm guns.

The eight men and their kayaks were successfully dropped off on the night of 11 April 1945, but they were immediately swept south by a strong current. Three of the boats capsized in the surf when attempting to land and the men lost two sub-machine guns, a radio and a

paddle. The fourth boat made it to shore unharmed, and, after drying their equipment, they headed inland. A Japanese soldier was captured, but when returning to their temporary base camp they saw a Japanese patrol. The Japanese had found washed up on the beach some of the equipment the Z Force men had lost in the surf. Their prisoner managed to sound an alarm, and the Z Force men had to escape into the jungle. The Japanese had also discovered their kayaks and had laid an ambush there. The Australians moved to a cliff where they could look out that night and see HDML 1321 waiting off shore for them, but their radios and torches had been ruined by the dunking, and they were unable to signal the ship. It returned to the rendezvous point for the following five nights without any success.

The men on shore, however, had constructed a log raft and, with the hope that they would be sighted by either HDML 1321 or a friendly aircraft, they launched it that night. The surf caught the raft which disintegrated, and they were all swept back to shore minus almost all of their weapons and packs. Four of them decided to use individual logs to attempt to reach the mainland, while the others



Sapper Edgar Thomas 'Mick' Dennis on the right with four of the crew of HDML 1321



moved to the western end of Muschu and were going to swim there, a distance of about 10 miles across Muschu Passage.

Only one man survived, Sapper Edgar Thomas 'Mick' Dennis MM. He made his way through enemy held country until 20 April when he met up with an Australian Army patrol. The information he returned with proved vital to the Allies in the attack on Wewak. He was subsequently awarded the Military Medal for his 'great courage and initiative'. The fate of the others were unknown until in 2010 and then 2013 when remains were uncovered by the MIA Australia and the Australian Army's Unrecovered War Casualties unit and forensically examined. Three were killed in ambush, two were drowned and two were captured by the Japanese, tortured and beheaded. Their remains had been dismembered and cremated by the Japanese in an effort to hide their war crimes. Two are buried in the Lae War Cemetery and the other five in Bomana War Cemetery in Port Moresby.

HDML 1321 continued service in New Guinea, was then lent to the Northern Territory Administration, returned to Sydney in 1951 and reclassified as a Seaward Defence Motor Launch used in

training. In 1953 the launch was re-named HMS *Rushcutter*, and was decommissioned in 1970 and sold in 1972 for \$14,200 to a private owner. Purchased again in 2006 *Rushcutter* was taken to Nhulunbuy, N.T., and refurbished at a cost of \$150,000 as a cruise and dive craft. In 2016, after a survey proved the vessel to be in sound condition, it was put up for sale. In April 2016 a group of prospective buyers travelled to Darwin to inspect the boat, but the Federal Police got information that the prospective buyers were ISIS sympathisers trying to find a suitable vessel to sail to the Middle East. Naturally there was no sale, and in October that year *Rushcutter* sank at its moorings. It was salvaged a month later, put on dry land, and subsequently sold for \$2 to a committee named 'Save Motor Launch 1321 Inc.'. By late April 2021 the ship, which was in a commercial shipyard in Darwin, had to be removed as the NT Government were about to start work on constructing northern Australia's biggest ship lift, and *Rushcutter* was in the way. At that time the owners did not have the funds to shift the vessel, so there was a possibility that it could be destroyed.

Does anyone know where HDML 1321 is now?



HDML 1321 as the launch Rushcutter after refurbishment and prior to sinking