MARITIME HERITAGE ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

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A fisherman casting out his net on Inle Lake in Burma. These fishermen, who live on the lake in houses raised on stilts, paddle their canoes with one leg, so leaving their hands free.

(See page 18)

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

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(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

The editor is feeling a trifle desperate. I, being the editor, will be away for a considerable time between you receiving this journal and the printing deadline for the next, due in December. So far I have received very little to put in the December journal, so would very much appreciate contributions from members, particularly those who have not made a contribution so far.

Discussion has come up at several MHA meetings regarding the site of Peel Town/Clarence, currently being excavated under the direction of Dr Shane Burke. I have twice written personal letters to John Day, Minister for Planning; Culture & the Arts, expressing my concern about the Kwinana Quay project and the impact it will have on this important archaeological site. The Minister's replies have not set my mind at rest regarding the impact development will have on Peel Town.

The three vessels *Gilmore*, *Hooghly* and *Rockingham*, brought settlers under Thomas Peel's grandiose plan. They settled at Peel Town, making it the most populated settlement in the state after Fremantle at that time.

Australian Invention
Tried at Portsmouth
Highly Successful

London, Friday

A trial was made today at Portsmouth of the invention of a Melbourne man for cleaning the bottom of ships without having to raise them out of the water. The device is in the form of a submarine torpedo-fashioned cleaner, and was tried upon the battleship *Bulwark* in the presence of Admiralty officials. The experiment proved successful, and there is every possibility of the invention being purchased by the Government.

Bunbury Herald, 10 May 1913: 1c

Things They Would Rather Have Not Said

The builder has built ships before. You don't need to worry like that.

Admiral Fleming, 1628

The above was spoken to Jöran Matsson, master of the Swedish warship *Vasa*, when Matsson expressed the opinion that the ship was top heavy ("heavier over than under"). A few weeks later, on her maiden voyage, the *Vasa* sank in only a fresh breeze after heeling so far that the sea entered her open gun-ports.

When They Were Very Young

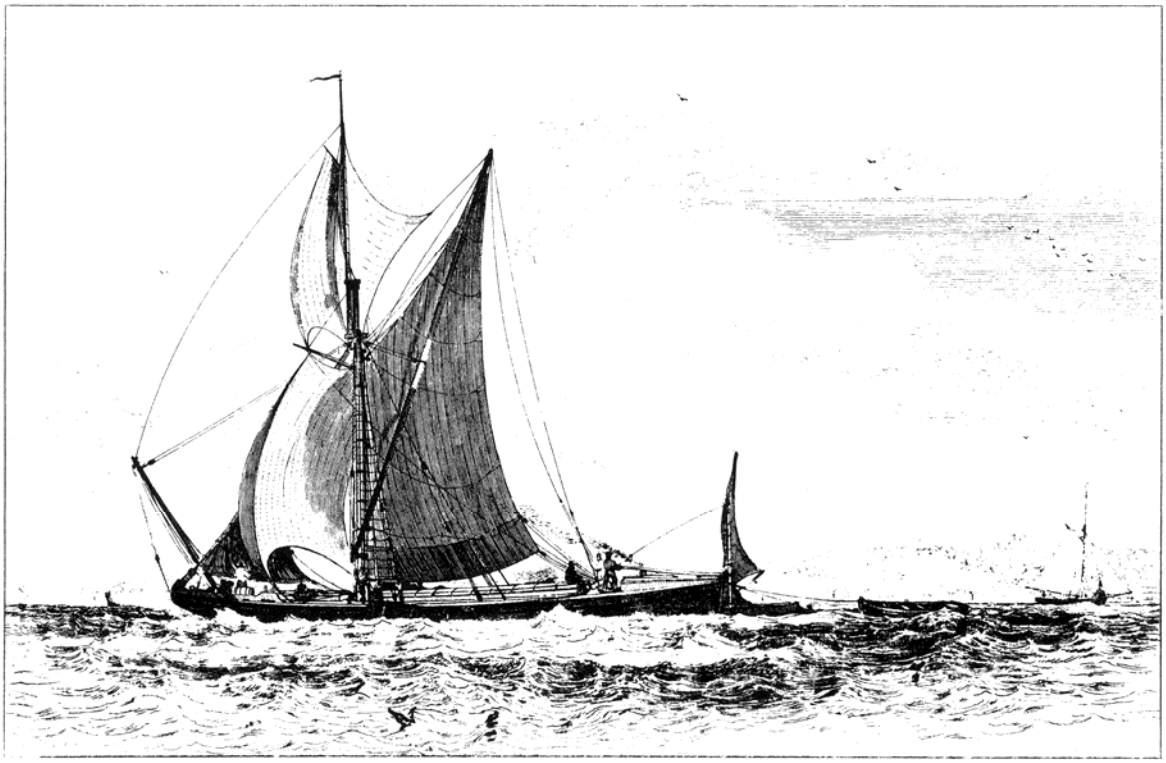
The following is a modified extract from the book *Breeze for a Bargeman* by Bob Roberts (Terence Dalton Ltd, 1981) lent to me by Brian Axcell. Richard Miller from Margate was nicknamed Dick the Dagger in his youth by a skipper who remarked "That boy Dick is as sharp as a dagger." The name remained throughout his long life. This extract shows the level of responsibility given to those who today would probably still be at school.

"Dick started at the age of eleven in barges belonging to a Mr Keep, who owned the Greenhithe Yard before it was purchased by the original Frederick T. Everard. When a barge named the *City of London* was being sent to a Paris Exhibition in 1889, his Guv'nor said: "We must take young Dick out of that barge. Paris is a wicked city. He can go mate with young Sonny Westbrook in that little stumpy. She's only 70 tons and doesn't earn enough for Sonny to get a proper mate. Dick's had a bit of experience as third hand running stone and cement up to the Pool for building Tower Bridge. Sonny's only eighteen but he's got all the makings of a good skipper. We'll see how he and Dagger get on."

So Sonny, aged seventeen, was skipper and young Dagger, aged eleven, was mate. And they traded skilfully up and down the crowded London River with materials for building the new bridge – cement, stone, bricks and shingle. In London, Dagger told me, his skipper would not let him go ashore "Because Jack the Ripper was about and done one in not far away from the wharf." To Sonny, Dick was always "the boy", and many, many years later, when they had grown to old age and retired, they used to come to watch the barge races. Bill and Fred Everard always saw to it that they were adequately wined and dined aboard the committee ship, *Royal Sovereign*.

One day I clambered aboard the *Sovereign* for the prize giving after winning the staysail class championship with the 160 ton *Dreadnought*. Sonny, now 95 years of age, greeted me with the words: "Seen young Dagger anywhere? I have to keep an eye on that boy or he'll get lost in this crowd."

Of course, Dick was six years younger, only 89 at the time. But to Sonny he was still the eleven-year-old nipper he had as a mate when he was a seventeen-year-old skipper."



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!)

A sperm whale caught in South Australian waters in the early part of the 20th century is said to have contained the largest piece of ambergris ever recovered. Its value at that time was about £25,000.

The P&O steamer *Peninsular* suffered some damage when hit by big seas during a storm off Cape Leeuwin in June 1898. When the seas hit the *Peninsular* on the beam, one of the passengers suffered an embarrassing accident. This was rather quaintly described by a local reporter:

> *One venturesome lady that was curious to watch the storm, without being properly clothed for the spectacle, was so roughly used by the gale that she had to beat a hasty retreat to her cabin, under, what is nautically described as bare poles* (*The Albany Advertiser*, 11 June 1898: 2g).

The following is from an old recipe book, and is not guaranteed to work. As the saying goes "If pain persists, consult your doctor".
To Make Seawater Drinkable:- A little citric acid or citrate of silver is added to the briny liquid, chloride of silver is precipitated, and a harmless mineral water is produced. An ounce of citric renders half-pint of water drinkable. Seven ounces would furnish a shipwrecked man with water for a week.

The stern-wheeler *Minto*(829 tons), built in 1898, was carried by train as 1,000 separate pieces from Montreal to Vancouver, and from there to Naksup on the Arrow Lakes in British Columbia. After assembly the *Minto* worked on the lakes carrying passengers and cargo for 56 years and covered 2½ million miles. It was withdrawn from service in 1954 and sold for scrap. Her remains were burned in 1968.

The first screw collier was the *John Bowes* (437 tons). Built in 1852 it ended its career by foundering in a gale in November 1933 – a grand age of 81 years.

The *Propontis* was the first sea-going ship to be fitted with a triple-expansion steam engine. The 2,000-ton cargo steamer was built in 1874 by John Elder & Co. for W.H. Dixon of Liverpool.

1842 – The Royal Navy buys its first screw ship, the 164-ton *Mermaid*, which it renames *Dwarf*.

The 438 ton, wooden paddle steamer *Calpe* was built by J.H. & J. Duke at Dover, UK, for service between England, North America and the West Indies. Launched in September 1825 she was, however, sold in 1826 to the Dutch Navy, and became that navy's first steamship, which they renamed *Curacao*.

Turbinia, built in 1894, was the first vessel ever to be propelled by turbines. Initially she had one turbine and one propeller. After disappointing results she was fitted with three propellers and three steam turbines, and reached the then astounding speed of 34.5 knots in 1897.

The *Doctor Lykes* (launched 1971, 21,667 gross tons) was a specialised vessel having a 2,000-ton elevator onto which 850-ton barges were floated. After lifting the barges were then stowed on one of three decks. The barges could later be offloaded and left to discharge their cargo at distant ports.

HMS *Vanguard*, Britain's last battleship, was launched in 1944 and completed in 1946 at a cost of £9,000,000. Her eight 15-inch guns were originally fitted, four each, in the battle cruisers *Courageous* and *Glorious* during the First World War.

The first inter-colonial boat race (in four-oared gigs) was held on 4 February 1863 between New South Wales and Victoria. New South Wales won.

The first imposition of import duties commenced in Australia in 1800. The first Comptroller of Customs was Francis Rossi, appointed 7 May 1827.

Ships of the State Shipping Service

By Jeff Thompson

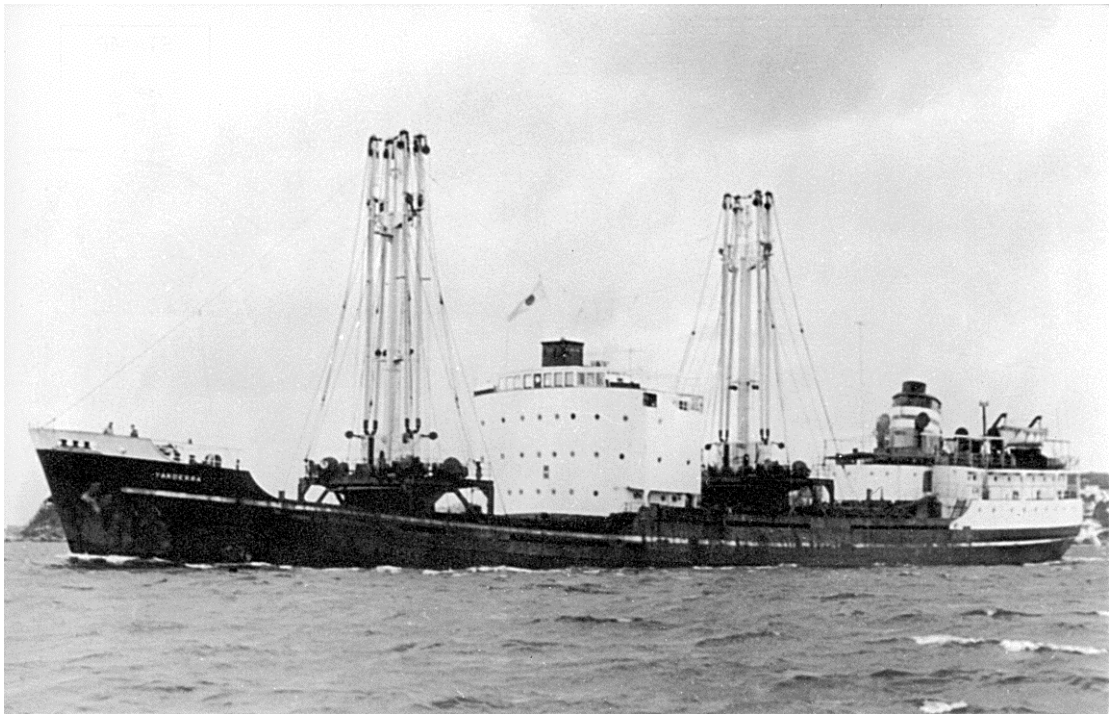
No. 17 *Yandeyarra* Official Number: 177250

Again in January 1948 office accommodation was becoming inadequate prompting the manager to write to the Premier requesting further alterations. Interim alterations were carried out to ease the situation. However the Fremantle Harbour Trust were wishing to take over the premises to extend their accommodation. Eventually in 1952 a solution was offered with the granting of the government owned building at No. l Short Street for the use by the State Shipping Service. The 1859 built premises were then occupied by the Esperance Salt Company and the Metro Bus Company on short term leases. The building was taken over by the State Shipping Service on 11th July 1955 after being suitably modified for their occupancy. At the same time, additional accommodation was necessary and this was provided in the old Metro Bus Company depot offices opposite in Short Street.

Around this time additional shipping facilities were required to shift an accumulation of cargo for northern ports. In May 1955 *Yanderra* was chartered by the State Shipping Service for one voyage to Port Hedland and Derby to lift a backlog of cargo. Being returned to her owners in July 1955

Yanderra was completed as a coastal collier by The Broken Hill Proprietary Co Ltd, Whyalla, for the Australian Shipping Board in November 1954. Of 3,446 gross registered tons, 4,842 deadweight tons, 100.65 metres overall, 14.6 metres breadth, and fitted with a 4 cylinder Cockatoo Lentz compound steam engine of 1,800 indicated horse power, a single screw and having a service speed of 9.5 knots. The steam engine was the same as in the "D" class coastal freighters, being built in 1948 by Cockatoo Docks and Engineering Co Ltd, Sydney

In February 1957 *Yanderra* was transferred to form part of the Australian National Line. In November 1970 the vessel was sold to Collin Nav. Co S.A., Liberia, and renamed *Collin Three*. During October 1975 the vessel was laid up in Singapore. In February 1976 she was sold to National Iron and Steel Co. Ltd, Singapore, for demolition, but then resold to Hifirm Co. Ltd for breaking up. In August 1976 demolition began at Kaohsiung, Taiwan.



MESSING ABOUT IN A BIGGER BOAT

Part 12 of Nick Burningham's memoir

In May 1980 we returned to Indonesia to collect our new perahu, sailing again with Peter Walker on BINTANG MAS. That year we sailed in convoy, acting as navigators, for two other yachts. (Dan and I were the only ones among the perahu sailers from Darwin who knew how to use sight reduction tables. The others used noon sights for latitude and tried to get approximate longitude from the time of the noon sight, or more often they simply dead reckoned.) The accompanying yachts were not Indonesian built. One was a fibreglass *Manatou* owned by "Monkey Bill" Stewart and his partner Irene. The other was a plywood, ketch-rigged trimaran owned by an eccentric Englishman usually known as "Lord John" and his wife whose name I regret to say I have forgotten. They had almost no sailing experience at all and Lord John proved to have no talent for sailing either.

In contrast to 1979 we had a pleasant and easy crossing of the Timor sea taking five days. We were never quite becalmed but the wind was often light and the seas nearly flat. Interestingly BINTANG MAS easily out ran the *Manatou* and the trimaran. That trimaran was loaded with all sorts of junk that Lord John collected, he was not the kind of man who could throw away a bent length of waterpipe or a pair of old pram wheels, so his boat was seriously overloaded and the slowest of the three vessels in all circumstances.

After a quiet crossing, as we entered Semau Strait to sail up to the port of Kupang, the southeast trade winds really picked up and we broad reached up the strait at BINTANG MAS's top speed which was a good knot faster than the *Manatou* though they were about the same length.

We spent a few days at Kupang. The day we left, Lord John had some trouble breaking out his anchor. Eventually it came home and the trimaran with his wife at the helm started sailing slowly under close hauled main and mizzen heading straight towards a forty- or fifty-tonne perahu from the island of Rajuni. With no headsail set and the mizzen sheeted in flat she wouldn't pay off. We were already under sail and a few hundred metres away, but we could easily hear Lord John shouting terrible abuse at his long-suffering missus. They rammed into the perahu midships at no more than two knots and the perahu crew quietly helped them to go clear.

We sailed across the Sabu Sea and the following afternoon got into Lewatobi or Flores strait, the strait between the eastern end of Flores and the smaller island of Solor. At sunset we anchored in a bay on the western end of Solor and went ashore as darkness fell. There was a market in progress there on a flat, grassy patch of land behind the beach.

The people from the eastern end of Flores and the Solorese have a reputation for aggression and for throwing stones at tourists. I joined an arak drinking school in a corner of the market. The drinking was conducted at a rather aggressive pace but everything else seemed friendly enough. However, elsewhere a bit of stone-throwing was being directed at Vicki and another girl who was sailing with us. I was completely blotto by the time I was told I had to go back to BINTANG MAS because things were getting nasty, and I remained cheerfully oblivious to the hail of small stones as we left the beach. That night I slept on the foredeck and donated my dinner to the Lewatobi strait.

The next day, a Sunday, I was feeling reasonably bright and healthy apart from areas of pain in my head and the general feeling of nausea. Some of us walked up the hill to where there was a Catholic church to hear the singing of the Italian missionary priest and his congregation. The Solorese are excellent singers of three part harmonies and very devout people when they are not drunk and violent.

Later in the morning we upped anchor and sailed north through Larentuka Narrows with a strong flood tide. There were some heavy overfalls at the end of the narrows where we met a stiff northeasterly breeze. We in BINTANG MAS and Monkey Bill on his *Manatou* chose to skirt the overfalls — they were not hard to spot and sail around — but Lord John sailed his delaminating plywood trimaran right through the middle of them. At one moment we could see the whole windward pontoon and the forward half of the main hull completely out of the water, a moment later she pitched over the wave and must have buried her forward half into the next wave. The trimaran survived without damage, but it wasn't the end of John's excitement for that day. By evening we were broad reaching quietly to the west, off Flores Head, when we were passed by a very large rig tender going east that altered course to take a close look at us. We were having our cocktail hour and remained fairly relaxed about the giant rig tender bearing down on us. We didn't carry any firearms so there was nothing much we could do even if they were speeding at us with the worst intentions. Monkey Bill was carrying a gun which he had at the ready. John followed the advice we had given him before leaving Darwin:

When in trouble, when in doubt,
Sail in circles, Scream and Shout.

He started the motor and went speeding round in a circles no doubt screaming at his wife.

After that little incident, as far as I can remember we had an uneventful sail up to Jinato. Peter didn't fancy the local's approach to Jinato sailing up through the Taka Bonerate reefs in the night so we went through Bonerate Strait and sailed up to the west of Jinato. At dawn we were a few miles to leeward of the

island and had a reasonable breeze to tack against. We were barrelling along in a welter of spray, as BINTANG MAS was inclined to do close hauled, when we found ourselves sailing through a huge pod of killer whales. BINTANG MAS suddenly seemed rather small and fragile.

At Jinato we found that our new perahu HATI SENANG was not ready. Indeed she was still at Bonerate awaiting launching. Haji Syukri was making spars and looking a little sheepish about it.

So we sailed down to Bali. I stayed with BINTANG MAS while Dan and Vicki joined Lord John to pilot him down the treacherous Lombok and Badung straits. We had probably told John too much about the perils of those very nasty straits. He took to his bunk off the north coast of Lombok and didn't get up again until safely in Benoa harbour.

Vicki flew back to Darwin from Bali and Dan's younger brother Berny, a strapping young bloke fresh from the army, joined us to help sail HATI SENANG. We returned to Jinato on BINTANG MAS in late July and found HATI SENANG ready on the beach. She had just returned from a quick voyage to Kendari and those who had sailed on her said she was very fast off the wind. She certainly looked too big to row (though later we proved that she was not) and she was about twice the tonnage we had asked for. There was never any suggestion that we should pay more than the negotiated price despite the greatly increased tonnage. We did add a substantial gift to the price, but that is normal polite practice.

There were only three of us to sail the new 15m ketch, which we called HATI SENANG: Dan, brother Berny who had little sailing experience, and myself. Fortunately Berny was strong, brave, and learned fast. The first thing we had to do was ballast HATI SENANG, although Haji Syukri said she had sailed to Kendari without ballast. The voyage to Australia would involve making about 800 miles to windward against the southeast trade winds. Jinato is a small sand cay with no rocks available for ballasting, so we had to employ locals to go and pull large lumps of live coral off the fringing reef. The coral ballast was delivered in dugout canoes on the beach beside HATI SENANG; we had to lift it on board and stow it. This operation covered our hands with tiny stinging cuts that didn't heal properly for weeks. Dan also cut his hand with a machete and he had contracted hepatitis in Bali. However, his generally excellent state of health prevented the full symptoms of hepatitis from developing until we reached Darwin and tackled a richer diet. By the time we had loaded about three-quarters of a tonne of coral, we were determined to find some other form of ballast. Eventually we bought a tonne of rough seasalt in 90kg sacks from Haji Syukri for about $20.

Provisioning at Jinato gave us a very simple diet. We had brought a sack of rice, onions, garlic and some herbs and spices from Bali. At Jinato we added salt dried fish, pumpkin and a bunch of a type of giant banana that keeps almost indefinitely. We also had tea, powdered milk and some sugar. The diet lacked variety, but it was healthy enough, and it seemed to be what prevented Dan from going yellow and developing the full symptoms of hepatitis until we reached Darwin and celebrated with steaks and red wine.

We sailed from Jinato on 21st August, with Haji Syukri and some of his men, and his brother Syaharir on board, towing a very large outrigger canoe. Haji Syukri and Syaharir were going to Bonerate to check the two new perahu that they had under construction there, and to move some timber from Lambego. The southeast trades were not blowing very hard and were particularly unfavourable in direction, coming from further south than usual. We spent most of the morning just tacking up to the reef east of Jinato. This was a good opportunity for Berny to learn from Haji Syukri and the others the technique of setting up backstays. Although Berny was physically strong and far bigger than any of the Indonesians, it took quite a bit of practice before he could set up a backstay taut enough to gain their approval. "Sekolah tiga malam—baru bisa" (Just three nights of tuition and you can do it) sang Haji Syukri in imitation of a radio jingle advertising a night school that was teaching ludicrously fast English courses.

At 1600 hrs we passed Bungikamassi, the sandbank a few miles to the south of Jinato, and continued south until we were becalmed at midnight, a mile or two off Bonerate. A breath of breeze came from the south so we tacked and started to ghost eastwards while Haji Syukri and the others motored off to Bonerate in the outrigger. The southerly came to nothing and we drifted slowly away to the northeast on a very light southeasterly. By dawn we had sagged back to Passi Tallu Timur in the Tiger Islands, only a few miles

to windward of where we'd been the previous afternoon. We tacked to the east all day against a very light breeze, and at times we drifted back to the west with the current that runs in Bonerate strait between the Tiger Islands and Bonerate. During the first half of the night we were completely becalmed and later we stood slowly south to be near Bonerate again at dawn. Again, we tacked east during the day and the wind gradually increased, but it was variable and still had too much south in it for us to stand south to the coast of Flores where we could expect to make better progress. At about 2200 in the night, the wind freshened and backed slightly so we went about and began sailing south at a good rate. At 2300 Kayu Panggang, a tiny rocky islet, suddenly appeared ahead and a moment later we could see that we were in shallow water with the moonlight reflected back by the sand. I put the helm up and gybed all standing to go to leeward of the island. On a darker night we might have piled up on that lonely rock. By midnight the wind was light again. Towards morning there were a couple of rain squalls which brought a bit of wind, but we made little progress and Kayu Panggang was still in sight a few miles to leeward at dawn.

Another day of tacking into the light breeze did not gain us much ground. We were now three days out, but with a reasonable breeze we could have run back to Jinato in a single night. I was becoming worried. In light winds, particularly with a choppy sea, HATI SENANG seemed slow and unwilling to go to windward. Lightly ballasted she drew less than 1.5m with a length on deck of 15m and a beam of 4.85m; she was also fairly high sided and slightly under-canvassed. I began to fear that we had a vessel that would hardly go to windward at all. During the night a good breeze did come up from the southwest and we sailed away to the southeast on a reach, allowing HATI SENANG to show a little of her speed for the first time. We were becalmed again by dawn and spent the whole day sitting becalmed to the north of the volcanic island of Paloe. The wide aft deck with a canopy over it was a comfortable place to sit doing nothing in the heat of the day. Rowing didn't seem worthwhile.

Unusually for the season, we got a reasonable westerly breeze for four hours before midnight, and made good progress running before it. Later in the night the wind freshened and went ahead. Before dawn we had three hours of very fast sailing, hard on the wind but making our course without luffing. Berny and I went forward at one stage to put a preventer sheet on the jib's boom which was bowing dangerously. We went forward along the lee side of the cabin and coming on to the fore deck, where the wind funnelled between the jib and the main, we had to crawl because the bows were rising and falling so fast as HATI SENANG strode over the head seas, we felt we might be blown away as the deck fell from under us. The wind eased soon after dawn, but we had made an excellent night's run and we rounded Flores Head by midday after a night of spectacular sailing.

During the afternoon we were virtually becalmed, once again. After nightfall the strong katabatic winds off the mountains returned; alternately blowing hard

for an hour or two and then moderating for a while. The wind became very gusty so we dropped the mainsail and continued to fore reach under jib and mizzen easily keeping pace for a couple of hours with a small freighter. In those conditions the ketch rig was a great advantage for a small crew. A traditional lambo sloop has no reefing and without the mainsail set she cannot sail anywhere near the wind. In order to sail to windward on a gusty night a sloop lambo has to be sailed like a racing dinghy with the crew standing by the sheets and the helmsman ready to luff her at any moment. Under jib and mizzen HATI SENANG could be left to charge along with a tackle on the tiller, the crew trying to sleep in the cabin, and the helmsman on watch sheltering from the spray as much as possible.

Of course it was impossible to get much sleep with the big new ketch charging along through the night, and after two windy nights we were beginning to feel fatigued. At dawn we were off the eastern end of Pantar Island and during the morning we sailed in towards the tiny harbour of Kokar on the northwest tip of Alor. Kokar is an extraordinary natural harbour on the side of a steep mountain that rises sheer out of the sea. It appears to be a flooded volcanic vent crater that is protected by a spit of land and a reef. It is so

deep in the middle that an anchor cannot usefully be dropped there. Instead, the perahu take one anchor out to the reef and another to the beach on the landward side and lie held between them. We were very grateful for assistance from the crew of an elderly Bonerate lambo in setting our anchors. I went aboard the Bonerate boat later in the day when the captain was playing host to a very unpleasant local policeman who had toothache and seemed to be asking for a bribe.

"What are you carrying, Captain?" he asked although the lambo was obviously in ballast.

"Just ballast and four sacks of corn."

"Is that what it says on your papers? Don't let me have to go below and find that you've got five sacks of corn." he threatened.

At the market in Kokar village we bought sopi (the local spirits distilled from palm wine), coffee and some cheap biscuits filled with a poisonous cream. A couple of those biscuits for breakfast would give you a headache until lunchtime.

We left Kokar the following day at noon. (I was back there again in 2000 when tectonic movement had made the entrance too shallow for all but small perahu.)

The captain from Bonerate had warned us to give a wide birth to Tanjung Babi (a tanjung is a headland or cape) at the eastern end of Alor. He was going to wait a few days at Kokar until the spring tides had passed before rounding Tanjung Babi and crossing the Ombai Strait. We sailed slowly along the coast of Alor during the night; at times the wind was ahead, from the east, and at other times a light breeze came off the land allowing us to reach parallel to the shore, but there was a heavy swell from the east which slowed our passage, and twice during the night single waves, exceptionally large and steep, actually stopped us and gave us sternway. The peculiar seas were perhaps generated in the tide race of Ombai Strait, where the current swirls around Tanjung Babi, or perhaps they were tsunamis.

In the morning of the next day we stood out to the northeast to keep well clear of the Tanjung. By 1300, when the wind went round to the northeast, we were well out into the Strait and were able to go about and reach southeast towards Liran and Kambing Strait which leads from Ombai Strait to Wetar Strait. We had Liran light abeam at 2100 with the wind still fresh and veering round through east. We were through Kambing Strait before the wind veered to the southeast and forced us to go about. We sailed northeast towards Wetar for a couple of hours and then decided to go about again. It was blowing reasonably hard and there was a lumpy sea running. With only three hands, going about was difficult. One had to tend the jib, first letting fly the sheets and then backing it to push the bow round to the new tack as she came head-to; one had to swap over the main running backstays and mizzen running forestays; and the helmsman had to put the helm down and back the mizzen to windward. We missed stays twice. Dan was on the helm and debilitated by his incipient hepatitis did not have the energy to back the mizzen properly (and we had not yet fully learned the importance of backing the mizzen when tacking a lambo ketch). On our third attempt to tack, I left the backstays untended and helped Dan to back the mizzen, so HATI SENANG finally came round. It was lucky that we learned that lesson then, with plenty of room to tack. An hour or so later the wind veered further and we had to tack again, but this time we got her around on the first attempt. With the wind southeast we sailed east-northeast, gradually closing with the coast of Wetar, which was the wrong thing to do. We should have sailed down to the Timor coast before trying to make our easting through Wetar Strait; and we should have stayed fairly close to the Timor coast. During the afternoon we stood south to the Timor coast, but tacked again at 1700 when we were still three or four miles off shore. During the first half of the night the wind was light and fitful, and a heavy swell from the east slowed our progress. Although our heading was almost due east we were making a lot of leeway and slowly we wandered back towards the Wetar shore. The following day we tacked back across to Timor and again we were forced north during the night in trying conditions. Just after midnight we tacked again with the island of Kisar in sight to the east. We went about because we seemed to be sailing into shallow water with a white sandy bottom that reflected the moonlight, although the chart indicated that the sea was about a mile deep. At dawn we were close to Timor again so we tacked towards Kisar. We were close under the lee of Kisar at midmorning; we sailed past the anchorage at Wonreli but decided not to go in and anchor.

We sailed south towards Timor and the wind increased in strength until we found it necessary to drop the mainsail. Close to the eastern end of Timor we tacked once more. With a very lumpy and sizeable head sea running between Kisar and Timor we made rather poor progress under reduced sail and only weathered Kisar by a couple of miles. During the night the wind shifted southerly, as it often does around the eastern end of Timor, enabling us to make a good course to the east and sail fast. Again we seemed to be sailing into milky shallow water but we knew that we must be in very deep water: it was a luminescent effect that sometimes occurs in the Banda Sea during cold and windy weather of the dry season. The whole sea glows and becomes lighter than the night sky so the sea becomes effectively invisible; and though the vessel pitches and rolls and batters her way through the seas, she appears to be gliding through space, buffeted by invisible forces, with nothing but glowing ether beneath her. This lumines-

cence is often a sign that it is going to blow hard from the southeast.

At dawn we were to the north of the island of Moa. In the morning we tacked in closer to the coast and then continued to sail east in gusty conditions. During the next night the wind was almost due south at times and we were able to close reach eastwards and pass a few miles to the north of the extensive reef of Meatti Mirang. The following day we seemed to be affected by an adverse current and made poor progress tacking along the north side of the reef towards Sermata. The wind had come round more to the east and was blowing hard. We had now been tacking to windward in fairly heavy conditions, day and night, for several days. It was hard work.

During the night we stood one long tack away to the north east. With Babar in sight we went about at dawn and by dusk we were back at Sermata having sailed at least 80 miles in twenty four hours and made good only about 15 miles to the east. Again we went about and stood east-northeast. We were reasonably close to Babar at dawn but had clearly been set to the north by leeway, big seas and probably some current. The seas which pile up between Babar and Sermata when a strong easterly is blowing have a fetch of about eight-hundred miles from the eastern side of the Gulf of Carpentaria.

During the day we tacked up under the lee of Babar, and in the evening, still blowing hard, the wind went round to the east so we were able to stand down the west coast of Babar and head south, out into the Arafura Sea with a good slant for Australia. We were able to head east of south at times during the night, and we were sailing fast over seas that were large but further apart and not so steep as those that pile up between Babar and Sermata. The following day we continued due south, hard on the wind. During the night the wind backed at times and allowed us to make some easting; it was still blowing fresh. The next day our noon position was 10° 56'S, 129° 12'E, which showed that we were making an average of nearly five knots while hard on the wind, but leeway and the current in the Arafura Sea were setting us to the west. That night the wind remained fresh and backed round to northeast allowing us to make ground to the east, sailing a course of 130° and going fast with sheets eased for a while. We picked up Cape Fourcroy light at 0100 bearing 87°. Before dawn the wind headed and dropped to less than force 3, but by then we had crossed the Arafura and were in the lee of the Tiwi Islands. In relatively smooth water we were able to keep moving and were off Cape Fourcroy at dawn. We tacked north in the light morning breeze and went about again close under the Cape Fourcroy lighthouse. During the afternoon the tide ebbing out of the Beagle Gulf set us back a little; then in the night a light northerly enabled us to head towards Darwin. The wind came out of the east again before dawn, bringing blustery squalls with it. The next day the wind backed north again and we sailed on towards Darwin Harbour. We could see the flat coast, low on the horizon at noon and by dusk we had fetched up close under Charles Point with the wind failing. We anchored to avoid being swept back out to sea by the ebbing spring tide and found ourselves to be in shallow water though we were some way from the land. When the tide turned at midnight we had very little water under the keel and HATI SENANG touched the mud a couple of times as we got under way. There was virtually no wind and we just drifted up the harbour with the tide. At dawn, at the top of the tide, we were just off the settlement of Mandorah and we were obviously going to be washed back out to sea by the ebb if we didn't anchor. We got out the large sweeps and rowed HATI SENANG in to anchor on the Mandorah shore of Darwin Harbour. It was while we were rowing a few hundred metres off Mandorah that we were finally spotted by the coastal surveillance Grumman Tracker. You could see from the way that the plane dipped a wing towards us, and then banked round as steeply as possible that they were surprised to see us.

We knew that it had been blowing unusually hard during the days when we were beating laboriously east from Timor, but we were surprised to learn that one of the yachts returning from the Darwin–Ambon race had foundered in the area at the time that we were there, and two others had been dismasted. Lord John had a difficult voyage back to Darwin. He had been anchored at Kisar when we sailed past. We had made a large genoa jib from Indonesian polyweave cloth with polypropylene bolt ropes as a reaching sail for John in Benoa. By the time he got back to Darwin it was his only sail that had not blown out.

Blue Jacket and her figurehead

The following story by Martin Navarro appeared in the World Ship Society, Fremantle Branch, Newsletter in October 2002, and is reprinted here courtesy of Martin and the Society.

Much of the information in this article referring to survivors landed at Port Stanley comes from records of the Colonial Secretary, Falkland Islands.

The Australian "Gold Boom" of the 1850's filled the shipyards of America with orders for large, fast passenger carrying clippers. The 'Down East' softwood clippers were the ideal vessels for the trade. One of these was *Blue Jacket* built by R.E. Jackson, East Boston, U.S.A in 1854. 1790 tons, 3 masted, 235 x 41.6 x 24 feet. Her poop was 80 feet long and 7 feet high, and she boasted 8 feet between decks, with plate glass portholes running the length of her 'tween decks. A very formidable ship and also a very fast sailer.

She arrived in the Mersey on her maiden voyage, after having crossed the Atlantic from Boston in 12 days, 10 hours. Bought on arrival by John James Frost and put on the Liverpool - Melbourne emigrant trade as one of the Fox Line of Packets. She maintained this passenger/cargo service for the next 15 years. Her first voyage to Melbourne, under command of Captain Underwood was made in 69 days. She later made a homeward voyage in the same time.

On the 13th February 1869, *Blue Jacket* under command of Captain James White, set sail from Lyttelton, New Zealand, bound for London. Her cargo consisted of wool, cotton, flax, tallow, skins and gold. Her crew numbered 39, and she carried 26 passengers.(65 in all).

She made good progress until March 9th when, at noon, a fire was discovered in the cargo, caused probably by spontaneous combustion through overheating of the flax or cotton cargo. So fierce was the fire that at nine o'clock that evening, it was decided to abandon the ship. Hurriedly the boats were got ready and the passengers safely disposed in them.

Three boats in all were used, a large half-decked boat of about 10 tons, known as the 'yacht', and the ships two lifeboats. Captain White, took command of the 'yacht', together with the first mate, surgeon, purser, three stewards, two seamen, one boy, seven saloon passengers and nineteen second class passengers, including six children and several women (36 in all). Their position then was about 450 miles west of the Falkland Islands.

The crew of the first lifeboat was made up with the third mate in command, boatswain, engineer, one apprentice, five sailors, four A.B's, the sail maker and the carpenter (15 in all). Into this boat also went the bar gold cargo to the value of £12,000. The second lifeboat was in the command of the second mate, and his crew were the cook, the cook's mate, six A.B's, one boy, two sailors, the second cabin steward and one lamp trimmer (14 in all).

The first lifeboat was fairly well provisioned, but the yacht, considering the number of people on board, was not nearly so fortunate, having only two bags of bread, twenty five gallons of water and a few tins of preserved meat, compared to the first lifeboat's three bags of bread plus one barrel and two jars of water, also much more tinned food.

The captains orders upon leaving the ship were to steer for Port Stanley, and with these instructions the boats pushed off from the burning ship into the night, which is the last we know of the second lifeboat and the 'yacht'.

The first lifeboat, with her fifteen men and valuable cargo of gold, is the one we are going to follow. After suffering great privations from want of food and water and rough weather for 20 days, during which time four men died from exposure and frostbite, the lifeboat was picked up by the Swansea coal barque *Antonia Vincent,* on which ship they were afforded every possible comfort, in spite of which three men died from the effects of their recent exposure.

On their arrival at Stanley they were placed under

the charge of a medical officer and were soon in good health, though a number of them had to have a foot amputated. The gold was placed under a strong armed guard of marines in the government strong room pending its removal for transmission to the Home Authorities by one of Her Majesty's ships of war.

Exactly what happened to the 'yacht' and the second lifeboat is not shown in the records, but as the loss of the *Blue Jacket* occurred on a trade route it is probable that they were picked up by some passing vessel.

Dictionary of Disasters at Sea, by Charles Hocking, tells us that 36 survivors were picked up after being adrift for a week. And also states that 3 others were picked up after three weeks, with the loss of 32 lives (71 in all). However there is no mention of who picked them up or where they were landed.

As no doubt you will notice there is some discrepancy in the numbers carried. According to the report from Port Stanley, 65 persons entered the boats, but in the report from Hocking there were 71 persons in the final count. For this I have no explanation.

For those of you who are still with me, we are now going to get to the story that I originally started to tell you. Possibly one of the most remarkable tales in Australian maritime history.

The figure head of the *Blue Jacket* drifted ashore on Rottnest Island, Western Australia, in December, 1871 and was described by the Port Pilot, George Forsyth, in a letter to the Colonial Secretary, dated 7th December, 1871, as follows:

> *The wreckage consists of a figurehead of a large sized ship and represents the body and shoulders of a man, the head, neck and back part of the figure is dressed in a loose open coat with yellow buttons, the coat appears to have been blue from the appearance of the paint left in the crevices, there is no waistcoat but a loose shirt and a large knotted neckerchief round the neck, with the ends flowing loosely over the chest, it has also a broad belt round the waist with a square buckle on it, and what appears to be the hilt of a cutlass on the left side. From the waist downwards is all carved work with two scrolls running from the bell down and apparently ending in the stem, the following words are cut in the scroll and appear to be gilded; on the starboard side is 'Sharp Look Out' and on the port side is 'Keep a Sharp Lo'. The remainder of the scroll being away. The figure is cut out of pine or soft wood and is very much chafed; I should say by grinding and rubbing over the reefs it has evidently not been long in the water, from there being neither barnacles or seaweed on it, and no worm holes in it, and the charred wood at the back seems appears quite fresh. There are five large iron bolts in it, of 2 inch iron, about 5 feet long which have been connected to the stem, the bolts are perfectly straight and the wood appears to burnt away from them. The figure itself is about 6 feet in length and I should say has belonged to a vessel of at least 1,400 tons register.*

The figurehead was given into the care of Captain Owston, the Lloyds representative at Fremantle in the era. It was towed to Fremantle and left above the high water mark at South Beach and later carted to Captain Owston's store on the corner of Cliff and High Streets. It is believed that the figurehead was later taken to Britain, though I can find no evidence of this. (If any reader can supply information about this please contact me. The figurehead certainly has historical value to the Americans, as builders of the vessel, the British who operated it, and Western Australia, where it cared to drift to).

Information gathered around Fremantle in the early 1930's, revealed that not only did the figurehead come ashore on Rottnest Island, but a spar about 40 feet long also came ashore on the mainland about 18 miles north of Fremantle at the same time. The spar showed signs at one end of having been in a fire and looked as if it had been in the water for as long as the figurehead. So far as it was able to be established it appeared as if the spar came from the *Blue Jacket.* The set of the tide from the south could have brought the figurehead into the bay on the western side of the Island where it was found, whilst carrying the

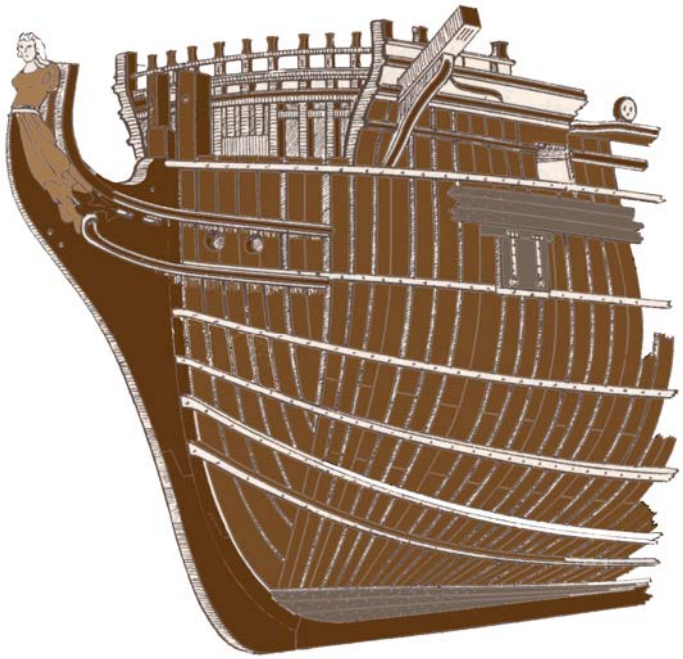
spar past the island to the mainland. The spot where the spar came ashore was a beach area always searched if a small boat went missing from Rottnest Island.

The spar was salvaged by Mr Thomas Tapper, his father and two other men and towed to Fremantle. It was later sawn into planks that were used to line the ceiling of a house in South Fremantle. (So if you live in a house, or know of one in South Fremantle, that has a pitch pine planked ceiling, please give me a ring to help authenticate this).

Martin Navarro, World Ship Society, Fremantle Branch.

World Ship Society, Fremantle Branch Newsletter, Volume 22, No. 10, October 2002.

Wreck of HMS *Victory* (1744) Found



In May 1744 a number of British transport and supply urgently ships needed in the Mediterranean were prevented from leaving Lisbon by a French squadron. A fleet of Royal Navy ships under the command of Admiral Sir John Balchen (1670-1744) in his flagship *Victory* were sent from Plymouth to relieve the blockade. On 3 October the returning British ships struck a terrible storm which dispersed all the ships. A week later all except the *Victory* had arrived back in Plymouth. But the *Victory* vanished, and was believed to have been wrecked on the Casquets, near Alderney in the Channel Islands on the night of 4 October 1744, with the loss of all of her 1,000 crew.

The *Victory*, the fourth ship of that name, was a First Rate 100-gun ship of the line, 174 feet 9 inches in length with a beam of 50 feet 6 inches, and of 1,920 tons. When completed she was described as the finest ship in the world. The ship was said to be carrying up to 100 bronze guns. She had been built using the frames of another First Rate 100-gun ship, the *Royal James*, built at Portsmouth Dockyard in 1675.

On 2 February 2009 Odyssey Marine of Tampa, Florida, announced in London that it had found the *Victory*. Odyssey Marine says the wreck has been found in international waters about 50 miles from where she was said to have been lost. Because *Victory* was a British warship Odyssey Marine have been working with Britain's Ministry of Defence.

Loch Fyne Skiff

Another of Brian Lemon's fine (!) models described and illustrated.

The skiff evolved to this shape from about the mid 1800s. They ranged from about 32 feet to 37 feet. Some were clinker built, some were carvel. The name derived from the fishing area on the west coast of Scotland called "Loch Fyne". They had two distinctive features that made them stand out from most of the other small craft around this time. Firstly, the extremely raked mast, mounted well forward, and secondly the extremely sloping stern post, from which the rudder was hung. Although they were basically an open net-fishing boat, they had a small, rather cramped forward accommodation area. Initially the hulls were varnished with a car type of paint below the waterline. Later in life, most of the topsides were painted either green or blue. Unladen, they carried about two tons of ballast, made up of bags of sand and large rocks.

The first Loch Fyne skiff with an engine appeared in 1907, and soon many others followed. But by 1930 there was said to be no herring left in Loch Fyne.

My model was built from plans from a 34 foot skiff supplied in *Model Shipwright* No. 132. The model was built to a scale of 1:16.

Editor's note: The following is an extract from a recent magazine article on the Loch Fyne skiffs:

> *The fishermen of Loch Fyne have been catching herring since the Middle Ages. In 1527, Hector Boece reported that in Loch Fyne "is mair plente of herring than in any seas of Albion." In 1603, Walter Raleigh spoke of the Dutch selling herring worth £1½ million to other nations, employing 20,000 men, all Scots, and all the herring being caught on the Scottish West Coast, most notably in Loch Fyne* (Smylie, M., 2009, The Fishing Boats of Loch Fyne. *Classic Boat,* Vol. 251 (May 2009): 34).

Lone Voyager

A book review by Geoff Vickridge

A recent acquisition is the paperback, *Lone Voyager*. [Garland, Joseph E., 2000, *Lone Voyager: The Extraordinary Adventures of Howard Blackburn, Hero Fisherman of Gloucester*, Simon & Schuster, New York] It was truly a book which, once started, I didn't want to put down. I pride myself in at least having a broad smattering of many things maritime but this is a biography of a man I'd never heard of before.

The author, a former Gloucester, Massachusetts journalist wrote the book in 1963. Clearly, the subject is his hero but he was not afraid of including the warts including criminal convictions. Understandably, Garland writes in awe about the man who is described as the 'Hero Fisherman of Gloucester' and as being 'the noblest incarnation of the men of this greatest of fishing ports, of the fishermen of all time - the embodiment of their zest and stoic courage, and of their tough love, and dread, of the seductive, the treacherous and the terrifying. My initial response to this, was, typical American aggrandisement of one of their own; how wrong I was.

The man I speak of is Howard Blackburn - has any reader heard of him before?

To set the scene, in 1883, there were 259 vessels and 3,000 men sailing out of Gloucester. They landed 40,000 tonnes of fish; in the same year, 17 vessels and 209 Gloucestermen were lost.

When fishing in January 1883, in the depths of winter, the schooner *Grace L Fears* had her dories out in snow showers about 70 nautical miles south of Burgeo, Newfoundland, when a squall hit. One of the 5.5-metre boats was not recovered and when the two men onboard lost sight of the schooner, they anchored in the relatively shallow waters of the Burgeo Bank.

Later that evening they spotted the schooner and attempted to row toward *Grace L Fears* but were unable to make any headway in the heavy seas, which by then were crashing inboard forcing them to bail continuously. They also jettisoned all their fishing gear and their catch save for one cod in case they got hungry. At dawn the schooner was not to be seen.

One of the two men was the 1.88-metre, 23 year old Howard Blackburn; his companion was slightly younger. Initially they tried to row for the Newfoundland coast but the weather was so appalling that they gave up and streamed a rudimentary sea anchor to keep the dory's head to the wind. While bailing, Blackburn's mittens went over the side.

When the temperature plunged even further, and ice became a problem, Blackburn took a sock off to use as a makeshift mitten but it became dislodged and was also lost over the side.

During the second night, another gale struck the small boat and the younger man died of hypothermia. Blackburn tried to take one of his companion's mittens off but both were frozen to the body. He continued to bail.

Before dawn on the third day the wind died and the sea subsided and Blackburn resumed rowing after ridding the dory of the accumulated ice.

> *The friction of the oar handles had wore away so much flesh the inside of my hands that I could hardly hold the oars and often my hands would slip off the ends of the oars. When I, forgetting that I could not open my hands, would make a grab for the oar handle and when the backs of my fingers would strike the oar, it would sound just like so many sticks.*
>
> *So to hold the oars I had to put the outside of each hand upon the thickest part of the oar, and by doing so the oar handles would stick out between my forefinger and thumb two or three inches. When bending forward to take a stroke I would keep one hand a little higher than the other, but sometimes I would forget and take a stroke as if my hands were all right. Then the end of the oar would strike the side of my hand and knock off a piece of flesh as big around as a fifty cent piece, and fully three times as thick. The*

blood would just show and then seem to freeze.

By then thirst also became a problem. During the night he huddled in the bottom of the dory; the wind rose and to stay awake in an endeavour to warm himself, Blackburn hooked his arms around a thwart and rocked back and forth.

At dawn on the fourth day, he spotted land and rowed towards it but it was nightfall before he managed to stumble ashore where he found a deserted hut. He tried to sleep on a makeshift bed but the cold and a raging thirst kept him awake. He ate snow until the dawn came and made for the dory but the bung had been dislodged and she had sunk with a plank below the port waterline splintered and another under the gunwale smashed.

He recovered his dead companion's body but in lifting him he ruptured his abdomen. Undeterred, he worked the bulging hernia of intestine back inside and carried on to re-float the dory. Blackburn set off to the east, every so often having to stop rowing to bail; he saw a schooner but was not seen by the men onboard and so endeavoured to return to the hut. Late in the night he approached a cove where the sea had frozen solid but he could see life. "Some persons crossing the cove on the ice from one house to another saw the dory with only one man in it and came out to the edge of the ice and waited for me to land."

His privations were not at end, however, as he had come to Little River, a fishing settlement, about 25 nautical miles east of Burgeo where the entire community was on the verge of starvation. Blackburn was taken to the largest cabin where he was given spruce tea. By then the frostbite on his hands and feet was severe. The endeavours to save his extremities included plunging them into a barrel of cold brine and then wrapping the affected hands and feet in a poultice of flour and cod liver oil. It was to no avail as he lost the fingers from both hands, half of each thumb, two toes from the left foot and three toes and the heel of his right foot. The stumps were dusted with a powder of mussel shells which caused the wounds to fester. In five weeks, however, his stumps were covered with new flesh.

It wasn't until spring that the crew of a steam sealer arrived at Little River. The ship had stuck in the ice offshore but a party from the ship brought provisions to alleviate the privations of the starving community. Somewhat curiously, Blackburn remained in the community until he set off on 23 April for Burgeo in the repaired dory. Remaining there for about a month, he eventually returned to Gloucester on 4 June where a doctor amputated what remained of his missing toes.

After his return the local newspaper advertised for donations to help Blackburn. With the proceeds, he opened a store in Gloucester selling cigars and tobacco and later a saloon; it was success. By 1885, he was able to donate the same sum which had been raised by subscription for him, for the benefit of widows and fatherless children of fishermen. He didn't forget the people in Little River either, donating clothing and food to them for many years. He also assisted Gloucester families in distress with anonymous donations of money, food, clothing and coal, something which he continued to do throughout the remainder of his life.

Born in Nova Scotia, he became a naturalised citizen of the USA and married a year later; the couple's only child died in infancy.

When news of the Klondike gold strike in July 1897 reached Blackburn he organised the Gloucester Mining Company to sail a fishing schooner around Cape Horn for Alaska with supplies to sell to miners. The aim of the company was then to build a small steamboat to navigate up the Yukon River and join the goldrush.

The schooner *Hattie L* Phillips sailed from Gloucester on 18 October but after reaching San Francisco on 23 February 1898, Blackburn had a falling out with his fellow expedition members; he also injured his knee and was forced to take a train home in June where he was on crutches for eight months.

Ever restless, in May 1899 Howard Blackburn announced that he was going to sail solo across the North Atlantic in a 10.7-metre sloop he named *Great Western,* a feat achieved by only four others before him, the fourth being Joshua Slocum. Launched on 6 June, the 39 year old set out 12 days later, taking 62 days before berthing at Gloucester, England.

In 1900, he built a 7.6-metre sloop which he

named *Great Republic* after the largest wooden sailing ship ever built. On New Year's Day 1901 Blackburn publicly challenged anyone to race him singlehanded from America to Portugal but after three months, there were no serious contenders.

Interestingly, three years before the Wright brothers took to the air Howard Blackburn predicted that by the end of the 20th century, men would cross the Atlantic in flying machines.

Setting out on 9 June 1901, the Atlantic crossing was not without incident. After sighting a dozen swordfish, he was kept awake all night worrying that one of them would send his sloop to the bottom. Later on the same night *Great Republic* struck a large sunfish but the vessel didn't suffer any damage.

On 12 July Blackburn encountered a gale and remained at the helm for 62 hours. Six days later Blackburn made *Great Republic* fast to a dock in Lisbon, 39 days after leaving Gloucester. It was the fastest nonstop singlehanded passage across the North Atlantic, a record which stood until 1939.

Once *Great Republic* was returned to Gloucester, Blackburn prepared her for his next adventure, up the Hudson River and the Erie Canal, through the Great Lakes to Chicago, down the Illinois River to the Mississippi winding up in New Orleans. From there he planned to sail to Key West, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Martinique and then to either Panama or Nicaragua. The aim was then to sail his small sloop down the Brazilian coast, back to Florida and up the eastern seaboard to Gloucester.

Setting out on 18 May 1902, all went well for Blackburn until he reached the Columbus River where the low level of the water was such that he had *Great Republic* railed from Columbus, Kentucky to Mobile, Alabama where she was returned to the water.

By the time he reached Coconut Grove in Florida he had had enough and sold the small sloop. Apart from the many difficulties he had encountered, his health was suffering after three attacks of malaria and continuing problems with rheumatism.

Given a 3.7-metre rowing boat by *Great Republic's* new owner, Blackburn set out to row the 400 nautical miles to Jacksonville. After 200 miles, however, he took a river steamer from Sanford to Jacksonville where he sold the dinghy. The 43 year old Blackburn arrived back in Gloucester on 20 February 1903.

It wasn't long before the indomitable Blackburn was contemplating another solo passage to cross and return across the North Atlantic, the first person to do so. This time he planned to make the voyage in a 5.1-metre Swampscott sailing dory named *America,* fitted with a deep keel.

He set out to cross the North Atlantic on 7 June 1903 but a series of successive storms forced him to put into two Nova Scotian ports. Howard was sick when he sailed from Halifax and he was in agony with a swollen leg; he was in no shape for an ocean crossing. Within a day of sailing he entered Musquodoboit Harbour where he sawed 17 inches off the dory's mast before sailing on 1 July; four days later he ran headlong into a screaming gale about 165 nautical miles south east of Cape Canso.

> *Just as the first signs of daylight begin to show in the north east, a fearful sea rose up under the starboard quarter, and as quick as a flash of lightening it threw the boat over on her beam ends and me overboard.*
>
> *As soon as I could turn in the water, I grabbed the mainboom, which was lying flat on the water, and hauled myself along until I reached the stern of the boat. Then I let go of the boom and caught hold of the boat, which was still laying on her beam ends. I hauled myself along til I got to midships. Then I threw all my weight onto the side of the boat, which righted at once.*

Blackburn was in bad shape. His right knee and both feet were puffed and swollen and painful. He was soaked to the skin and his body shook with uncontrollable chills. *America* was leaking and so her master set an easterly course, ending up at Louisburg, Nova Scotia four days later.

He lamented, "I did my best, but luck has been against me from the start. A polar bear could not stand such hardships much longer." Age and sickness had finally caught up with him and he

stated, "I am going home to Gloucester with my little boat and will never tackle the sea again." When asked whether he would go to heaven when he died, his response was, "Why not? I've already been to hell." Blackburn sold his boat in Nova Scotia and went home by rail.

In 1927 he posed for a portrait not knowing that the Cruising Club of America had commissioned it ahead of electing him as an honorary life member, only the eighth person to have been so honoured to that point. At the presentation, the Commodore of the New York Yacht Club declared that no living man more than Howard Blackburn represented the highest traits of heroism and courage that characterised those who followed the sea. A quarter of a century earlier he had been voted an honorary member of the Master Mariners' Association.

Not content with retirement, at the age of 69 he had a 9.1-metre sloop built for him which he named *Cruising Club*. He eventually divulged that he was planning another crossing of the North Atlantic but with fierce opposition from his wife and his doctor he sold the centrepiece of his final dream.

His wife of nearly half a century died in 1931 and by then Blackburn was beset by medical problems. He passed away on 4 November 1932 at the age of 73. Leading the pallbearers at his funeral was the Secretary of the Navy; many other leading figures of the day were at his funeral which was attended by hundreds.

As a footnote, *Great Republic,* the sole known survivor of the Blackburn 'fleet', is now on exhibition in the Cape Ann Historical Museum at Gloucester. In a somewhat ironical twist, *Cruising Club* was swept ashore from her mooring in 1980 and wrecked at Gloucester. The owner was the author of *Lone Voyager* who had purchased her four years earlier.

Inle Lake, Burma

Earlier this year I visited a remarkable place where people live on the water in a variety of different boats. Readers may be interested in a brief description of their way of life.

Inle lake in central Burma, at an altitude of 4,360 feet, is some 27km long and 11 km wide. There are 23 villages on the lake, the houses being built on stilts over the water. Canoes and boats are the only means of transport possible. Even their food gardens float on the lake and therefore have to be weeded and the crop picked from canoes.

The gardens are made by gathering weed from the lake. This floating mass of weed is covered with a few inches of mud from the lake bottom and then a few bamboos driven through it to anchor it to the lake bottom and prevent the garden drifting away. Being only 2 -3 feet wide the garden is accessible from either side while standing in a canoe. Bamboo stakes are set up for beans to climb on, and cabbages and other vegetables grown in what is essentially a hydroponic garden.

Kids travel to and from school in canoes, people go to market in boats or canoes, the buying and selling being conducted between boats. Some larger boats, used to ferry passengers or carry cargoes of bags of rice, etc., have engines. The freeboard on these can often be measured in mere millimetres!

A boat carrying rice on Inle lake. Note the freeboard amidships! Also note the floating gardens in the background.

Peter Worsley

Serendipity

Sarah Outen's successful solo crossing of the Indian Ocean.

On 3 August 2009 Sarah Outen became the first woman, and the youngest person, to row across the Indian Ocean from Australia to Mauritius. The distance of over 3,100 miles was covered in 124 days. in her boat named *Serendipity*. Although she reached Mauritius safely the landing was not without incident as the boat was rolled three times on the approaches to the channel in the reef which led into the bay. The boat ended up on the reef, but was towed off and in to port.

This was Sarah's second attempt. She departed Fremantle earlier in the year, but adverse weather and the Leeuwin Current drove her far south. She returned to Fremantle for a second try, and was at the Royal Perth Yacht Club's Fremantle annexe when the Fremantle Boat Show was held there in late March. I took a few photographs of *Serendipity*. A point worth noting is the road sign on the forward cabin bulkhead. Sarah is an Oxford University biology graduate.

Serendipity *is 6 metres in length with a beam of 1.6 metres.*

Although the Indian Ocean has been rowed single-handed before, no woman had even attempted the task. The first single-handed row was by Anders Svedland in 1971, his arrival point was Madagascar. Next was Simon Chalk who, on his second attempt, made it across in 107 days. This is the current record which Sarah wished to beat. Pavel Rezvoy rowed from the Cocos Keeling Islands to the Seychelles in 2005, and John Williams completed a crossing, partially solo, in 2007 after his team mate, Glen Edwards, was picked up part way through their row.

QUIZ

Answers to June

1. Dirk Hartog's ship was named *Eendracht*.
2. Gammoning is a rope lashing, normally 7 or 8 turns, passing alternately over the bowsprit and through a hole in the stem of a sailing vessel. This holds the bowsprit firm.
3. Lancelin Island was named in July 1801 by Jacques Felix Emmanuel Hamelin after P.F. Lancelin, a scientific writer and author of the World Map of Sciences.

Questions

1. On which of HMS *Beagle*'s three great surveying voyages was Charles Darwin on board?
2. In the south-west of WA is Hamelin Bay with Hamelin Island at its southern end. Who was Hamelin?
3. On a sailing vessel what is the fish-tackle used for?

Vale—It is with deep regret that we record the passing of Lieutenant Commander Max Shean DSO*, RANVR (Rtd) on 15 June 2009. Max, a Life Member of Leeuwin, was well known in Western Australia for both his service during World War II and his participation in yachting.

He will be sorely missed by his many friends, including those from the Maritime Heritage Association.

Condolences are extended to the family of the late Max Shean.

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