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MARITIME HERITAGE ASSOCIATION JOURNAL



Ray Miller and Robin Hicks surveying Leeuwin II's damaged jibboom after an earlier altercation with the Broome Jetty. This was the last occasion when Ray, Robin and Ross were together in Robin's sparshop, Friday 18 June 2010.

Photo: Ross Shardlow

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MHA End of Year Wind Up



When: 10:00am,
22 November 2026

Where:
33 Gosnells Road East,
Orange Grove

**It would be appreciated if you would bring a plate of nibblies
or finger food to share**

Robin and Pam will be supplying tea and coffee

***This venue is a workshop and, for safety's sake, enclosed foot-
wear is obligatory***

**If you have any books and magazines of a nautical nature to
sell, please bring them along (proceeds to MHA)**

A nautical-themed quilt will be raffled



A Timely Rescue

Thanks to Ron Forsyth for this article

The search for the missing ship *Knowsley Hall* has recently directed close attention to the examination of most of the islands in the Southern Ocean where it was thought likely, as in the case of the *Strathmore*, the unfortunate ship might have met her luckless fate. With this view H.M.S. *Comus* was sent on a mission to the Crozets, touching at both Amsterdam and St. Paul's Islands, but saw nothing of shipwrecked people. Capt. Stephens, of the barque *Lady Douglas*, which recently arrived at Fremantle from London, passed close to St. Paul's, but likewise saw no signs of the presence of people on shore.

It appears, however, that only a very short time after the *Lady Douglas* passed the island a large number of persons in distress were rescued there, the following particulars of which have been handed by the captain of the rescuing ship, the *Queen of the Seas*, to the *Straits Times*, and appear in the issue of that journal of May 24. The captain (LeBoeuf) says: "We left Cape Town the 27th March, and on 22nd April made the island of St. Paul, about eight miles off saw on the summit a flag flying, and, thinking that might be a signal of distress, hauled quite close under its lee. Observed at the entrance of the basin a French flag flying half-mast, and at the same time saw a boat making for the ship. Hove to for the boat, and, on its coming alongside, a voice called out, in French, "We are ship wrecked, and have nothing to eat; will you take us on board," adding, "our captain is behind in another boat." A few minutes after the captain, a Frenchman, came alongside; his statement was that they were fishermen from the island of Bourbon; that their vessel, a schooner of 80 tons, was a complete wreck, and that they had nothing to eat, except the fish of the island; he implored of me to take them — they were 30 in number, and there were 8 more on the island of Amsterdam, 40 miles off. The captain also begged of me to pass by Amsterdam Island and take the others off. Their pleading was such that I resolved to take them on board, although we had still a long distance to go, and my great fear was shortness of bread and water. However, by good management we thought it could be done. By 5 p.m. we had them on board, and proceeded to the other island, arriving there the following morning at 10' o'clock; we soon

hoisted in the eight others — thus bringing up the total to 38 — and proceeded on our voyage. Arrived at Anjer [Java] on the 10th instant, where we procured yams, and on the 16th May we reached Singapore, being 40 days from Cape Town and 23 days from Amsterdam Island.

The Frenchman's schooner's name was *Decide*, and hailed from Bourbon. By what we learnt from the captain they left Bourbon [now Reunion] on the 22nd of November, and arrived at St. Paul's in December, for the purpose of fishing, expecting to leave again for Bourbon in March. On entering the crater, or basin, she touched on part of the wreck of H.M.S. *Megaera*, causing the schooner to leak badly. They had just time to haul to the water's edge and heave her down, when they found several planks badly gone. However, they repaired her, and she seemed quite tight. They could not return to Bourbon as early as they wished, as the swell would not allow them to leave the basin; so it was not until the middle of April they succeeded in bringing the schooner to an anchorage outside, where they hoped to load the fish they had caught and proceed to Amsterdam Island for the others and proceed home. The night following the schooner parted her cables, with the mate and two men on board. She fetched Amsterdam Island, but sprang a leak in the interval. At the latter island but two out of the ten men would venture on board to return to St. Paul's, the vessel making so much water; preferring to remain on the island to risking their lives in the vessel. She also lost an anchor there. However, they returned to St. Paul's, having but 30 fathoms of chain and no anchors. They then hauled the schooner into the basin and anchored her with an anchor that was on shore. This was the last vessel of the season, and none were expected over until next year. The captain said they had no means of repairing the schooner, and expected her to fill shortly. On telling them to bring all the food they had, they said they had only about 100 lbs. of bread, being what remained of the bread given to them by Her Majesty's steamer *Comus*, when she called there on the 29th of March. She also gave them tobacco and sugar."

This is probably the only instance of relief given to shipwreck persons for many years from St.



Paul's and Amsterdam Islands. They lie, in mid-ocean, directly in the track of vessels from Home, the Cape, and Mauritius, to Fremantle, and the praiseworthy example shewn by Captain LeBoeuf, and in fairness we should add the name of Captain Stephens, in keeping a look-out, might well be followed by ship masters generally if the opportunities of approaching the land are favorable.

H.M.S. *Raleigh*, Captain C. T. Jago, arrived in Sydney Harbour on June 17 with reliefs for the various ships on the Australian station. The ship called at Amsterdam Island in search of traces of the missing ship *Knowsley Hall*, from London bound to New Zealand, but found none. The following interesting particulars of the ship's visit to Amsterdam Island have been supplied to the *Sydney Morning Herald*: — Arrived under the lee of Amsterdam Island on May 27. Lieutenants Gissing and Hay left the ship in the cutter, accompanied by the gig. The cutter sounded, getting seven and five fathoms, and then anchored. Lieut. Hay and Gissing then got into the gig, and they landed among some large boulders of basaltic rock lying at the base of the cliffs. The boating party proceeded to the top of the cliffs and then in the direction of a hut which had been observed from the ship, about 700 yards above the cliffs. From the coast the land slopes gradually up to the highest central peak, 2,760 feet. On this slope there were several small craters, now extinct, and higher up some larger ones, which there was not time to visit. They then walked to a flag-staff on Hocking Point, and found, a little to the north of it, a hut 7 feet in height and 8 feet long, by 6 feet wide, built of stout poles driven into the ground, and with thatched roof, the sides being of dry grass with a piece of matting for a door. Outside the hut were a few empty casks, a wooden tub, a bucket, some iron hoops, a barge glass jar covered with wicker work, containing water, a few iron staples, ring bolts, birds' feathers, sea birds' egg shells, and a few empty bottles. Inside the hut were three bunks, so placed as to leave a narrow space in the centre of the hut. These were constructed of light stick framework, partly closed in with grass matting, and were bedded with the same material to about a foot from the ground. There was no furniture of any kind, but a large iron pot in perfect repair lay on one of the bunks.

On the rocks, below the hut, was an old whale-boat, quite rotten; about 20 yards to the north of

this was a larger hut, 30 feet long by 14 feet wide the side walls were of scoriae, built about five feet high, the end walls being made of wood planking. There was a well-thatched roof, but from the same cause (probably wind) the walls had fallen outwards, the roof consequently had settled, partly on the ground, and partly on the remaining stone work. On crawling inside they found a boat in very good order, lying bottom up, and covered with pitch, evidently to preserve it. The oars belonging to it were there, also some wooden cases half filled with dried fish, and a miscellaneous collection of small gear belonging to a fishing boat. On regaining the outside they found carved on a rock, in Roman capitals, the following: —

1880.

ENAUULT.

ETIENNE.

AL'AGE 22.

On the same rocks, between the hut and the old whaler, were other letters, also in Roman capitals LOUIS DUGAW, 1880.

DUGAIN, JULIEN.

AN. 1830. MULOT.

On the rocks is a natural pier, on which were two iron davits for hoisting up a boat. Close to the hut was a wooden cross, and close to it was a natural well of dripping water. Inland of the flag-staff they came across a slab of rock on which was cut the following inscription: —

DANIEL LOW DEPARTED THIS LIFE,
JUN 13th,
AE, AD. 1803.

There were no signs of any shipwrecked people having been on the island; but on the other hand, there was every indication of recent habitation by fishermen. Before leaving the fishing party deposited in a conspicuous place a sodawater bottle containing a statement of their visit. The return to the boats was facilitated by the party finding a mail path running along the edge of the cliff. They arrived on board the *Raleigh* shortly after dark. The ship steamed along the side of the island and fired guns at intervals, to attract attention. Meeting with no response the vessel left.

Inquirer and Commercial News, 13 July 1881

Editor's note

The *Knowsley Hall* was a 1,866 GRT iron ship built in Liverpool and launched in 1878 with the following dimensions:

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!)

1,303,301 cubic yards of rubble was removed by steam dredges during the removal of the rock bar at the entrance to Fremantle Harbour. The work was directed by C.Y. O'Connor.

In 1541 Spanish historian Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo was rather impressed by the track that Magellan's ship had followed in its voyage around the world.

[It] is the most wonderful thing and the greatest novelty that has ever been seen since God created the first man and ordered the world unto our own day.

In 1976 the wreck of the WW II Japanese submarine *I 124* containing the remains of its crew had a 500m radius no-go zone declared around it. This was the first such protected zone declared around an historic shipwreck in Australian waters.

The shortest navigable sea route from Fremantle to Wyndham is 1,780 nautical miles.

Austrian Herbert Nitsch holds the world record for holding his breath underwater for 9 minutes 4 seconds. This was set in 2006, and is only one of a number of free diving records held by Nitsch.

Did you know that $111,111,111 \times 111,111,111 = 12,345,678,987,654,321$?

Lizard: A rope or wire pendant with a round thimble in one end used as a fairlead for such things as the sheet of a sail.

The way bottom paint used to be made was to put scraps of brass and copper into a glass jar with nitric acid. After this has stood a month or two and become a green liquid concoction, which they call verdigris, some of it was mixed with white lead paste, linseed oil and turpentine.

Herreshoff, L.F., 1956

Weather has many meanings in the language of the sea. These are just a few:

The *weather side* of a ship is the side from which the wind is coming.

To *weather another ship* is to pass on her windward side.

To *weather the storm* is to pass safely through it.

To *weather a gale* is to lie to in a gale.

Weather bow is the bow of a ship on her windward side.

Weather helm is the amount the tiller has to be moved to windward to keep a sailing vessel on course without her coming into the wind..

Weather gauge is the advantage of position due to being to windward of a vessel or hazard.

Weather deck is a deck open to sea and weather.

Weather cloth is the canvas screen temporarily erected to protect a helmsman from wind and spray.

There are many more.

A knörr was a Viking cargo and trading ship as distinct from a longship which was used in raiding. Each had a square sail made of wool, that of a knörr was about 970 sq ft made of panels 25½ inches wide, and used the wool from 200 sheep. The spinning and weaving of such a sail by experimental historians took 7,850 hours.

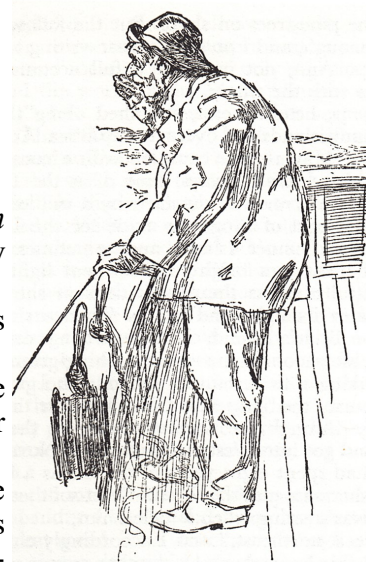
On the day the ship sails there is often so much confusion, and the cook is so drunk, that there are no meals to be had. It will be well, therefore, to have a sort of picnic provision in a basket for the first day's dinner and supper.

The Emigrant to Australia, 1852

A steep peaked hill near our landing place was named Donkin's Hill, after the inventor of the preserved meats; upon a canister of which our party dined This invention is now so generally known that its merits do not require to be recorded here; we had lately used a case that was preserved in 1814 ...

Phillip Parker King, 12 September 1820

Partners: Stiffeners of strong planks on the underside of the deck to strengthen it in way of holes in the deck for masts, capstan spindle, etc.





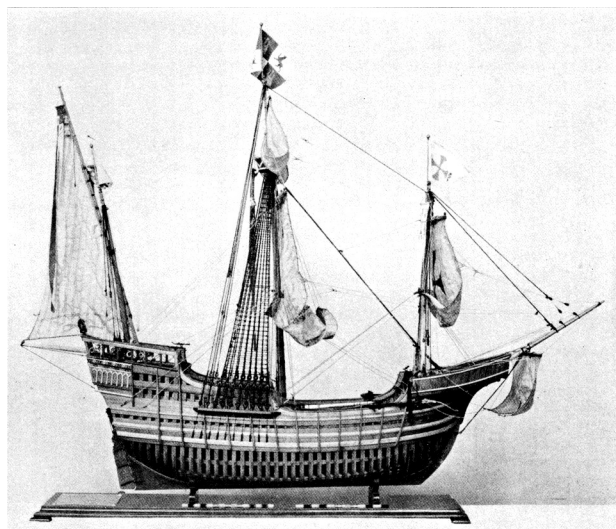
A Lesson in Exactitude

This extract from an old book on many different nautical subjects illustrates the care needed in research and building model boats and ships if they are to be authentic.

Not so long since [1923] the Spanish Government presented the British Government with a large model of the Santa Maria—a model most exquisitely wrought. Its perfect workmanship filled a craftsman's heart with despair at his own poor efforts. But, mark you, when the model was seen by the experts at South Kensington, where it is housed, they found fault with it. Not glaring faults, but still, faults were there, and the hawk eyes of the

naval architects and riggers at once spotted the bobstay on the Santa Maria—that heavy stay of rope or chain which holds down the bowsprit. And the point is that in Columbus's time ships did not carry bobstays. They came into fashion a long time after, when the lengthening of bowsprits necessitated the bobstay to take the added strain. A little matter perhaps, but it did not escape the vigilance of the experts.

Stanley Rogers, 1929, *Sea-Lore*. London.



This model of the Santa Maria which, for all its excellent workmanship, was not quite correct

*Photo: Science Museum,
South Kensington*

*On 25 April 1719 Daniel Defoe published the now famous novel *Robinson Crusoe*. The tale of a castaway who lived on an island for many years was probably based on a number of stories of real life castaways. It is thought that the main one was Alexander Selkirk who spent four years and four months voluntarily marooned on Más a Tierra, one of the Juan Fernández Islands off the coast of Chile. He was rescued in 1709, and a plaque on the island (now called Robinson Crusoe Island) where Selkirk maintained a lookout for ships reads:*

In Memory
Of

ALEXANDER SELKIRK

A native of Largo, in the county of Fife, Scotland, who lived on this island in complete solitude for four years and four months. He was landed from the *Cinque Ports* galley, 96 tons, 18 guns, AD 1704, and was taken off in the *Duke*, privateer, 12th February 1709. He died Lieutenant of HMS *Weymouth*, AD 1723, aged 47. This tablet is erected over Selkirk's lookout, by Commodore Powell and the officers of HMS *Topaze*, AD 1868.

In fact the date of Selkirk's death is incorrect. It should read 1721—Selkirk died of fever on 13 December 1721 off the coast of west Africa, and was buried at sea. The fever had been picked up when he and others went ashore to cut wood.



Gold Heist in Hobsons Bay

During the Victorian gold rush a great deal of gold was stolen and this is one such incident

The 128ft, 603-ton barque *Nelson* (Captain Walter Wright) was anchored in Hobsons Bay short of crew. Most had deserted to the goldfields, as had so many other ships' crews. On board were 8,183 ounces of gold worth \$50,296,465.81 at current value (9 June 2026). On 1 April 1852 Captain Wright went ashore leaving the chief mate, Henry Draper, in charge. Very early the following morning the barque was boarded and the gold stolen.

A Melbourne newspaper published the following description:

The whole place is in a vast bustle. Many ships are lying here deserted by their crews, and they are likely to lie till the rainy season drives the Jack Tars down again from the diggings. ...Scarcely a day passes in which some person or other is not knocked on the head, assaulted, or robbed, and it is by no means safe to be out of doors after dark. Three or four nights ago an armed gang of twenty-two thieves took possession of a couple of boats lying near the shore, muffled the oars, and rowed to the ship Nelson, which had about £25,000 worth of gold on board. They boarded her, found but five hands who were asleep, no watch being kept. They compelled the mate to show them where the gold was placed, which he did not do until he had received a wound from a pistol and a thrust from a sword. Finding resistance useless, he pointed out the spot, and the ruffians compelled him to hand them up the gold, which they quickly conveyed to their boats and then rowed away.

The Government have offered £250 reward; and Messrs Jackson and Rod, the agents for the ship, have also offered a similar sum. It is said 15 men have been arrested on suspicion, doubtless well worthy of punishment, even though innocent in this matter. It is supposed they

attacked the Nelson by mistake, as they expressed themselves surprised at not finding more gold on board. Their object had been the Admiral [780 tons, Captain J. Freyer] which had just sailed with about £100,000 of gold. [30,396 ounces worth \$186, 810,022.58 at current value]. More care will doubtless be taken in future; the gold should not be placed on board till the ship is quite ready to sail, and it should be placed in a strong safe, one of Chubb's for instance; and the quantity shipped should not be published till the vessel has already sailed.

An Australian Journalist, 7 April 1852

Nine men were arrested, but only five (John James, James Duncan, James Morgan, Stephen Fry and John Roberts) were found guilty of the crime. They were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment with hard labour, although John Roberts was released a couple of months later as he had witnesses to prove he had been on the goldfields at the time of the crime.

Only a very very small amount of the gold was ever recovered.

Illustration: National Museum of Australia





QUIZ

Answers to June

1. A swinging basin is that part of a harbour commodious enough for vessels to be turned around, so that when leaving they do not have to be assisted backwards from berth to open water, e.g. the inner harbour, Fremantle.
2. The barque wrecked at Cottesloe was the 194-ton *Elizabeth*. No lives were lost.
3. A deadeye is a round, hard wooden block with three holes fitted to the lower end of shrouds and the top of the chain plates. Lanyards are used for setting up the shroud. See illustration below.

Quiz

1. What is the difference between a voyage and a passage?
2. On 7 October 1826 the French explorer Dumont D'Urville landed in King George Sound. What was the name of his ship?
3. What was the nationality of A.B. Heirisson after whom Heirisson Island in the Swan River is named?

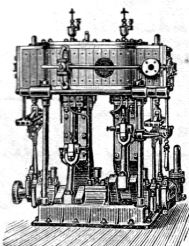
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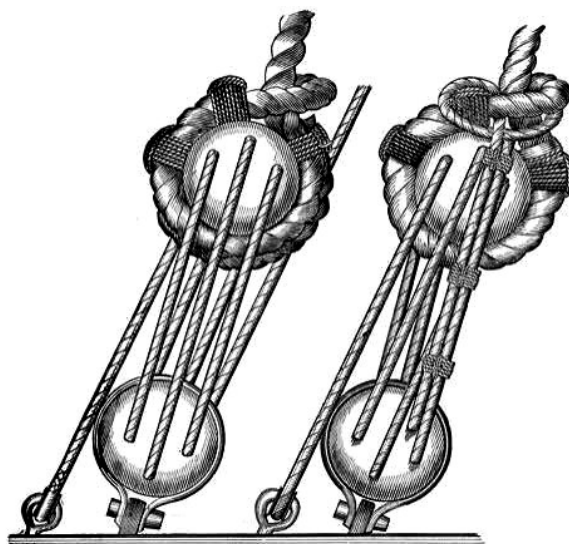
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Did You Know?

Was this the first European baby born in Australia?

On the 27th [1623] Willington Janszoon, wedded wife of Willem Janszoon of Amsterdam, mid-shipman, was delivered of a son, who got the name of Seebaer van Nieuwelant.

Journal of the VOC ship Leyden, Texel to Batavia

According to the ship's journal the birth occurred about seven miles off the Western Australian coast at latitude 24° 15'. This places the *Leyden* off shore from Cape Cuvier.



Ray Miller – Fond Memories and *Fellowship*

As the task of replacing the masts and spars for STS *Leeuwin II* nears completion, Robin Hicks reflects on past times and fond memories working with master spar-maker, friend and mentor, the late Ray Miller.



Ray Miller – teaching the skills of spar-making.

Photo: Dave Nicolson

I first met Ray Miller in May of 1986. I had just returned from a year or so away in the UK and I was at a loose end regarding work. Malcolm Hay was again knocking on the door wanting to talk about his plans for a new ship. We had met Malcolm ten years or so before, and each year the ship got bigger. In 1986 the stars lined up for all of us as Malcolm had raised enough money to enable a start to be made on *Leeuwin*'s hull and Australian Shipbuilding Industries had agreed to build her as a 'Hospital Job'; that is to say, they would build her as and when they had guys to spare in the yard in between other jobs. Shortly after things ramped up again, Barrack House Group chartered the (as yet) unbuilt ship for the coming America's Cup races due to start in late January of 1987. My father Barry and I had agreed to put the barquentine rig together and Ray was about to retire and close down his business of Millercraft General

Woodworkers. He only had one last job to do before retiring – he agreed to take on the manufacture of all of the wooden spars for *Leeuwin*, pin rails, belaying pins, ship's wheel, rigging cleats and bullseyes, essentially anything in wood that was above the deck. Ray's younger brother Ken joined him for the duration of the job. Ross Shardlow also made his entrance into our lives at this time, compiling a wonderful set of drawings for us all to work with. With Mike McKenzie as Rig Master to liaise between the ship builders, riggers, Len Randell, spar-makers, Ross's drawing office/studio, Malcolm Hay and the ship's new office – we were set to go. We all had a wonderful time on this job, and we have all stayed together ever since. Regrettably, Mike slipped his moorings and passed away in 2004, Ray left us in 2011, and Barry crossed the bar in January 2016.

I called to see Ray and Jan on a regular basis over the years, keeping in touch with the jobs that he was doing from home. He had a good sized well-equipped workshop and he was never idle. In the later years, maybe about 2003–04, he asked whether I would take on the job of dismantling his workshop, 'when the time comes', as he did not want Jan to have the worry about what to do with it all. What a question to ask, and what a job to do. At the time, we were sitting in the workshop with a cup of tea, looking around at a lifetime collection of tools, patterns, jigs, fastenings, timber, various other stock and equipment, and all packed in so tight I had to negotiate a goat track winding through the building to get about. There were machines on wheels so that they could be moved outside when he needed to use them. His wooden bench was set up by the window that let in some natural light. It had a carpenter's underslung vice on one end and an engineer's vice on the other end. Unlike my own workshop it was immaculately tidy in an orderly way. Ray was in his late 70s at the time and was still pretty active. We laughed about it for a while, shrugged it off and then got on with the next cup of tea.

Roll on to 2009–10. Ray's health had started to decline. His hearing was steadily getting worse



and unable to hear the machines when they were running. He was also getting quite frail in that last year or so. That question about dismantling the work shop came up again, 'the time had come', a daunting task that had been worrying in the back of my mind over the intervening years. Following some discussions with Ray's brother Ken to keep the Miller family in the loop with what had been asked of me, and with a number of counselling sessions with Mr Shardlow in the Staterooms, Victoria Park (fortunately the Stateroom Barber's Chair is bound by the Marine Artist/Sailmakers Confidentiality Laws), I was able to make a start a couple of weeks later.

The job ran over a few months and was actually a lot easier emotionally than I anticipated. The greater part of the gear was distributed throughout Ray's family and some friends. I would call by two or three times a week, Ray would come out to the workshop for an hour or so and we would discuss what was going to go on that day, and who it was going to. I felt very honoured to be asked to do this job, and very sad at the same time. A lifetime of work was being undone.

On the up side of this job there were two things that deserve a special mention. Over the years, Ray had made somewhere between 100 and 150 copies of the Stanley No.100, a small squirrel tailed block plane that is much treasured by model and musical instrument makers alike. Stanley stopped making these planes in 1958. Ray made a wooden pattern in the late 1950s copied from an original plane which he would send off to the local foundry whenever someone wanted a few more squirrel tail planes. They were cast from whatever was hot on the day. I have six of them myself that he made for me in the late 1990s. These all have different shaped bases for rounds and hollow work. Mine were cast in Navy Bronze, some of his early ones were cast in Nyhard steel. I was shown two wooden patterns when we were doing *Leeuwin's* rigging in 1986, and then they were hidden away again until 2010. Right from the start of that job, I had an eye open looking for the two patterns. Hidden in plain sight, they were finally located packed away in some padding in an old ice cream container sitting on top of the bench. They now reside here in my tool collection, hidden again in plain sight in a show case. Unlike Ray's workshop, however, I have the two patterns behind Perspex alongside the six bronze planes that he made for me and another that he made for Brian Axcell at about the same time. The first small

plane Ray made for me had the usual flat bottom. Several years later when I asked him to make a selection of round and hollow bottomed planes, he asked for that first plane to be returned for a modification. Stanley planes, and all of Ray's squirrel tail planes up to that date, had never been fitted with a blade adjuster screw for the rise and fall of the blade. They were always finely fitted and tapped lightly for more or less blade clearance. Subsequently, all of my planes have now been fitted with this screw adjuster and it is a vast improvement of the original design by Stanley. Made from broken power hacksaw blades, the hand plane blades are one inch wide and are the perfect size to suit. The steel is a very good quality and they have lasted well.



Robin's collection of Stanley No.100 squirrel tail block planes. The two wooden patterns for casting Miller squirrel tails are in the centre.

Photo: Robin Hicks

Fellowship

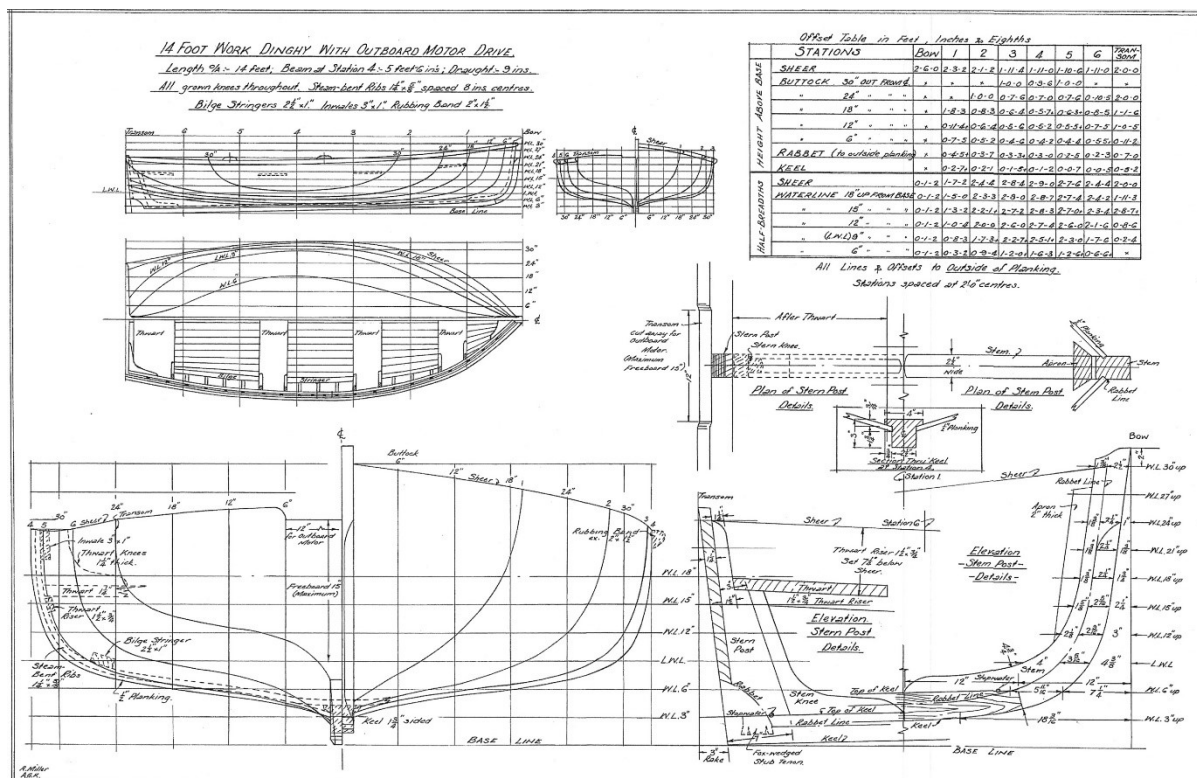
The second discovery, also towards the end of the dismantling job, came from a small stand up drawing desk rather like a sawn off tally clerk desk with a sloped desktop that hinged up with room inside for drawing implements, pens, pencils, French curves, rules and all of the associated gear. That desk was becoming a bit of a problem. Like all of Ray's gear it was very well made but we had not yet found a new home for it. It stayed in the corner right up till the end. It wasn't until the last few days when I had to move it that I realised there was a drawer in the bottom. It was so well fitted that it looked more like a wide edge trim around the base. Inside the drawer was a small drawing of a 14-foot work boat. We all knew that Ray had charge of the mission luggers *Watt Leggatt* and *Watt Leggatt II* back in the



1950s for the Kunmunya and Wotjulum Mission stations. This dinghy was to Ray's own design and I believe was built in Fremantle as a tender for *Watt Leggatt II* to run gear back and forth to the beaches and landings. I showed the drawing to Ray, he just smiled and quietly said, she's called *Fellowship*.

I would be happy to help out with advice if someone else wants to take her on.

Robin Hicks



Fellowship – the 14-foot dinghy Ray designed as a tender for the mission lugger *Watt Leggatt II* (which he also designed).

Plans by R. Miller A.G.K. (1954)

I've always wanted to build *Fellowship*. She would probably be a challenging hull to build, but is not out of the reach of a small workshop and probably best built in glued clinker ply to better handle the climate on our coast. She is beamy and flat in the bilge, full in the ends and was obviously designed for load carrying. She could easily be fitted with a centre board, a small bilge keel/wear strip at the turn of the bilge, rudder, a mast and sails. She should row and scull well too. An ideal small boat for trailering without being too heavy. A fine boat for one or two to have a great deal of fun in, she will still be out there sailing well when all of the lightweights have gone back to the beach. As I am heavily involved with other projects these days it is unlikely that I will ever get around to building her.



The four square-sail yards nearing completion soon to be dressed with sails and rigging ready to be sent aloft. *Leeuwin II* is booked into the old North Port Yard for 20 July 2026 where they can get a crane alongside the ship for the final installation.

Photo: Robin Hicks



Dress from a 17th Century Shipwreck

By Jill Worsley

Researchers from Finland's Aalto University have used pieces of timber from the Hahtipera cargo ship wrecked in the 17th century, to produce two similar high-fashion garments. The remains of the ship, wrecked in 1684, were found in 2019 under a parking lot in Oulu, central Finland.



The team producing the dresses consisted of maritime archaeologists, organic chemists and textile designers. While substantial parts of the vessel could be removed and conserved for future study and display, some smaller were unidentifiable, though they were carefully documented during recovery. It was decided to try to give these parts a 'second life'—as a textile!

All outer layers of these small parts, which were highly contaminated, were removed and discarded. The larger pieces of what remained were cut into small planks. These were sanitised, then shredded and processed into pulp which, having a plant origin, was high in cellulose similar to other plant-based fabrics such as cotton and linen. Using long-cell technology, the pulp was then made into fibres. This involved using a non-toxic solvent to break the cellulose down into a thick liq-

uid polymer which could then be turned into fibres. The resulting fibres have a silky feel, and are suitable for spinning. The yarn was found to be stronger than cotton.

A knitwear designer then used the yarn in an industrial knitting machine to fashion two similar seamless maxi dresses. These feature the brown of the original timber, as they remain undyed and unbleached. Abstract patterns emerged naturally in the dresses due to the original wood grain, and also affected by some 'digital noise' during knitting.



The dresses will become part of an exhibition called *Tomorrow's Wardrobe* at Oulo Art Museum.

Who would have believed in such a transformation?

Photos: Aalto University

<https://www.dezeen.com/2026/05/21/dress-wood-17th-century-shipwreck-aalto-university/>





Inland Town Was Once a Major Shipbuilding Port

By Marcia van Zeller

The town of Collingwood in Ontario, Canada is 1600 kilometres from the Atlantic Ocean. So how did Collingwood become a major ship building hub for ocean-going vessels? Following up on Peter Worsley's article on the Collingwood-built *Bonthorpe* (March 2026), Marcia van Zeller explores Collingwood's history and the building of the complex inland waterway system enabling ships to navigate their way to the Atlantic and beyond.

Canadian summers are brief and when they come around people make the most of the season, flocking to lakeside cottages and resorts around the province. The most popular holiday spots in Ontario are within a two-hour drive of the largest city, Toronto.



Collingwood skiffs

One of these is the town of Collingwood, located on the shore of Georgian Bay, a giant body of water connected to Lake Huron (one of the five Great Lakes). Collingwood is home to Wasaga Beach, at 14 kilometres in length the longest freshwater beach in the world.

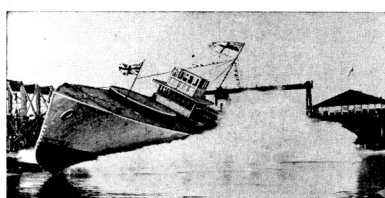
The town lies in the shadow of the Blue Mountains, which are not really mountains by geological definition, but with a rise of 219 metres they are Ontario's best ski slopes.

I spent the first 26 years of my life living in Toronto and I was one of those who saw Collingwood as a weekend playground (in summer, that is.) In winter the ski slopes were more of a weekend purgatory for me, but that's s another story. Despite making many visits to Collingwood I never had an inkling of the town's long maritime history.

'Collingwood skiffs'

Well before Collingwood became a popular playground for all seasons, the town was the centre of a thriving ship-building industry. In 1850, to meet the needs of the burgeoning Lake Huron fishing industry, William Watts began building his so-called 'Collingwood skiffs'. The skiffs

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Advertisement from the National Post dated 21 September 1940



were stable sailboats, capacious enough to carry large volumes of fish but nimble enough to dodge sudden squalls on the lake.

Around the same era, another impetus came along to drive the expansion of Collingwood's shipbuilding industry: the completion of a rail line from Toronto, with Collingwood as the terminus. Suddenly the lakeside town was a pivotal link to destinations west including Chicago, Illinois and Green Bay, Wisconsin.

In 1883 a dry dock was completed and opened on Queen Victoria's birthday, taking the name, 'Queen's Dry Dock'. Collingwood's shipbuilding output quickly expanded to wooden steam ships, foot passenger and freight vessels and later oil tankers, minesweepers and other orders to supply naval vessel requirements during World War I. One such vessel was the *Bonthorpe*, the subject of Peter Worsley's article in the March 2026 Journal.

'Sulkers'

When the war ended, Collingwood's shipbuilding career was far from over. Demand for trawlers and cargo vessels was brisk, and as World War II loomed, naval vessels became a priority. The shipyard remained busy after the war, building tankers, bulk carriers, barges, ferries and 'sulkers' – an innovative design combining bulk carrier and self-loader features.

In step with a global decline in shipbuilding, Collingwood's industry diminished and after 103 years of operation, the shipyard closed in 1986.

A shipping route to the ocean

How did the ocean-going vessels get to and from Collingwood and the Atlantic Ocean? If you have ever visited Ontario, you probably noticed the ubiquitous fresh water bodies. While Australia's inland waterways consist of connected river systems which are vulnerable to drought and arid conditions, some 20 per cent of Ontario's area is taken up by 250,000 freshwater lakes (including the five Great Lakes) as well as extensive river and canal systems. The province accounts for around 20 per cent of global surface freshwater. In Ontario there's water, water, everywhere! Fresh water you can drink (well, maybe don't dip your water bottle in Lake Erie). And as a big plus for swimmers – there are no sharks! The Great Lakes are naturally interconnected but engineering solutions have made it possible for vessels to bypass obstacles such as Niagara Falls.

The Great Lakes Waterway is a system of natural waterways and man-made locks and canals, principally the Welland Canal between Lakes Ontario and Erie, and the Soo Locks between Lakes Huron and Superior. Connecting to the St Lawrence Seaway, the Great Lakes Waterway affords passage from the Atlantic Ocean to the inland port of Duluth on Lake Superior (3,700km) and to Chicago on Lake Michigan (3,620km). The combined system is complex and best understood by viewing a map. For copyright reasons no map is provided with this article but if you visit the Great Lakes St Lawrence Seaway System website (www.greatlakes-sea.com/en) you will find maps and other resources.

The first mariners

It would be remiss not to acknowledge the earliest watercraft builders in the Georgian Bay region. The area was inhabited by the Iroquoian-speaking nation until they were displaced in 1650 by the Iroquois. Traditional First Nations people built canoes from birchbark for the hull and other timbers for the ribs and planking. Their canoes were versatile and so lightweight that a single person could portage them over land, but sufficiently strong to withstand the unpredictable and choppy waters of the Great Lakes.

The canoes were instrumental to the traditional trading activities, taking the Georgian Bay First Nations people over distances up to 400 kilometres, carrying goods such as game, furs, shells and copper. From the late 1700s they formed alliances with French fur traders and shared their knowledge of boat building, territory, hunting and survival skills.



Birchbark canoe

Photo: Wikipedia



Historical Ships from Around the World

Second edition

Article and photos by David Nicolson

This is the second edition of my series of historical ships I have photographed during my travels. In it I will include the very old, a Viking ship on display in Oslo, to the relative new Queen Elizabeth 2, arguably the last of the true ocean liners.

The Gokstad ship



Norway has the three best preserved Viking ships in the world. One of those, the Gokstad ship, is shown above. Built in the 9th century, she was discovered in 1880 within a Norwegian burial mound. Clinker-built with 16 planks (strakes) per side she is 24 meters in length and capable of 12 knots powered by 32 oarsmen to compliment her large sail. This photo taken in 2009 shows her in the original museum display hall. She has since been restored and re-housed in the Museum of the Viking Age located on the Bygdøy peninsular scheduled to be opened in late 2027.

The Wasa



Still in Scandinavia, the photo above shows the *Wasa* on display at the magnificent Vasamuseet (Vasa Museum) in Stockholm Sweden. Laid down in 1626, she sank in 1628 only 1,300 meters into her maiden voyage. *Wasa* was built on the orders of King Gustavs Adolphus as part of his military expansion with his war with Poland-Lithuania. She had a displacement of 1,210 tons, a total length of 69 m (226 ft), a beam of 11.7 m (38ft) and an overall height of 52.5 m (172 ft). Her crew numbered 145 plus an additional 300 soldiers. She carried 64 guns of various sizes and was exquisitely decorated, however was dangerously unstable due to the excess upper superstructure.

The largely intact hull was salvaged in 1961. Following extensive restoration and preservation, she was moved to her present location in 1988. My photo was taken in 2014 while on a Scandinavian cruise.

HMS *Belfast*

At the opposite scale of warship survivability is HMS *Belfast*. Shown here in 2010, she is permanently moored in the Pool of London as a museum ship. Commissioned in 1939 as a Town-Class light cruiser, she displaced 11,550 tons, had a length of 187m (613 ft), a beam of 19.3 m (64 ft) and a draught of 5 m (19 ft). With a top speed of



of 10 knots, she was the first screw-propelled ocean-going wrought iron ship. Due to a navigation error, she ran aground in Northern Ireland. She was subsequently sold in 1852 for salvage and eventually converted to all sail in 1881. During those intervening years, she carried thousands of emigrants to Australia. In 1884 she retired to the Falkland Islands and served as a coal hulk until she was scuttled in 1937. In 1970, money was raised to have her to be repaired sufficiently for transport back to Bristol to be fully restored. My picture was taken in 2010 and shows her in drydock with a replica propellor in place. There is a

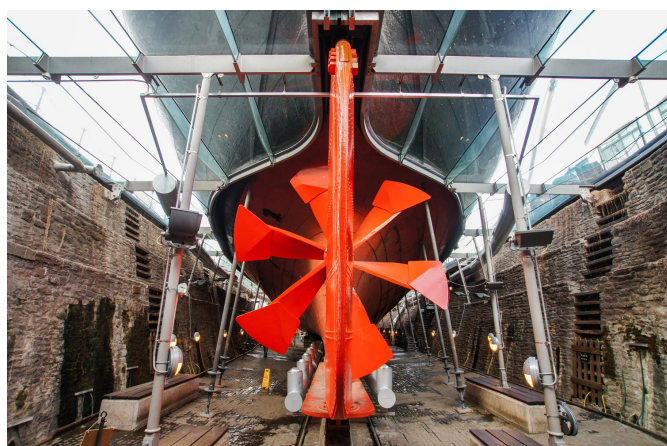
32 knots and carrying 12 x 6-inch and 12 x 4-inch guns she presented a formidable fighting ship. Her battle honours include the Arctic 1943, Cape North 1943, Normandy 1944 and Korea 1950–52. In November 1939 she was badly damaged by a magnetic mine in the Firth of Forth. During her lengthy repair, there was an opportunity to significantly upgrade her capabilities with the increase of her AA armament and improved radar systems. She was involved in many actions during World War Two and served as a shore bombardment ship in the Korean War. After a further extensive refit which lasted from 1956 to 1959, she was eventually paid off in 1963 eventually becoming a museum ship in 1971.

simulated water line which forms an air lock with the ‘submerged’ hull so as to preserve the metal work. She is now a major tourist attraction in Bristol with tens of thousands of visitors every year.

HMS Holland 1



The Great Britain



Above is the business end of Brunel’s great ship, the *Great Britain*. Often labelled as ‘the ship that changed the world’, she was the largest passenger ship in the world from 1845 to 1853. Designed by the legendary Isambard Kingdom Brunel for the trans-Atlantic run, she was launched in July 1843. At a length of 98 m, and able to carry up to 730 passengers and 1,200 tons of cargo at a speed

HM Submarine Torpedo Boat No. 1, to give its full name, was the first submarine commissioned by the Royal Navy. She was the first of five Holland-class submarines when she was launched in 1901. Following her decommissioning in 1913, *Holland 1* was lost while under tow on her way to being scrapped. Recovered in 1982, she was put on display at the Royal Navy Submarine Museum, Gosport and this where I photographed her in 2017. Considerable amount of work was done between 1983 and 1995 to restore her to current condition. One of the interesting aspects coming from her discovery was that her batteries were still in a serviceable state after all those years. Her only call for action came in 1904 when in company with other Holland and A-Class submarines, she set out to attack the Russian fleet that



had mistakenly sunk a number of British fishing boats.

Queen Elizabeth 2



My picture of *QE2* was taken in 2008 from the deck of *Queen Victoria* while moored at Circular Quay in Sydney. She was on her last around the world tour before being sold off to become a floating hotel in Dubai. Her send off from Sydney was accompanied with much fanfare and media attention. The photo shows only 4 of the 9

helicopters in attendance filming her from every angle. The *QE2* was 963 feet long and launched in 1967 as a premier transatlantic vessel and subsequently as a cruise ship. She famously served as a troopship in the 1982 Falklands war and was considered a prime target for the Argentine air force. In an attempt to keep her commercially viable, her steam turbines were replaced with high efficiency diesel-electric engines in the late 80s. Her maximum speed was given as 34 knots, but her service speed was a much more economical 28.5 knots. After she was paid off in November 2008, there was considerable debate as to her final resting place. There was even a proposal that she would spend time in Fremantle as a hotel during the ISAF Sailing World Championships.

This was one of many ideas for eventual resting places including being returned to London or Liverpool. She was also slated to be broken up in China in 2012. Eventually she ended up as a floating hotel in Dubai and is now run by the French hospitality group Accor.

British Navigation Laws

Thanks to Ron Forsyth for this article

British Navigation Laws were designed to protect her shipping interests around the world. They came to be seen, however, as a restriction on free trade in her colonies. In August of 1843 the American schooner *Pacific*, master Harris, arrived in Fremantle with a much-needed cargo of ‘rice, paddy, pigs, and ducks.’ She was refused permission to unload and dispose of her cargo. The master and owners may have been unaware that the Navigation Acts required that all goods imported into British colonies be carried either on British ships or on ships belonging to the country where the goods originated. The rice had been loaded in Lombok, a Dutch dependency, on an American ship.

Earlier in April that year the *Pacific* had traded cargo from New London in Connecticut and saw the prospect of further trade there. The local papers described her produce for sale as:

Beef in barrels, Tobacco, Tar, Pitch, Raisins, Paint and paint oils, Molasses, Dried fish, Prints, Cottons, Umbrellas, Clocks, Boots and shoes, Earthenware, Haberdashery, Oars, Cigars, &c, &c, &c.

Probably seeking a loophole in the laws, the master sought to sell cargo sufficient to cover ship repairs under a standard maritime legal loophole known as ‘entering under distress’ (or *in misericordia*).

It is not known what cargo he was able to dispose of, but he was still in Fremantle on 16 September when the Colonial Secretary published *Instruction for the guidance of Masters of Vessels visiting the ports, harbors, or anchorages of Western Australia*. This was no doubt prompted by the incident and clearly laid out amongst other things, Customs requirements in the colony.



HMQS/HMAS *Gayundah*

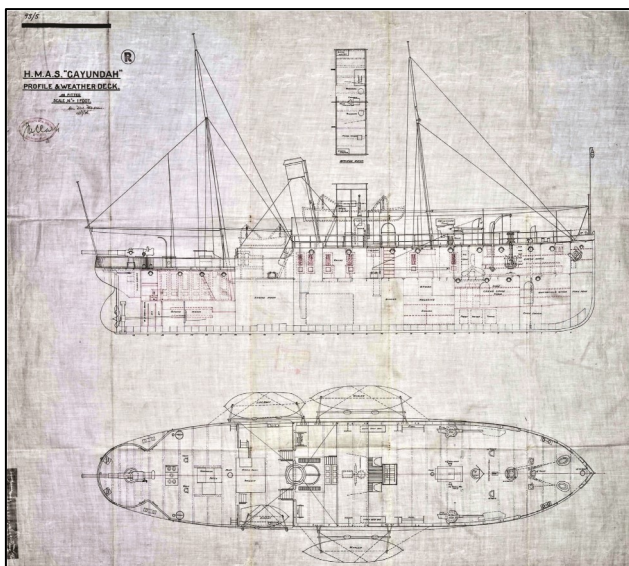
Dr J.K. Haken

In the nineteenth century there was much instability in Europe and disquiet locally about invasion by a European fleet in the Pacific. After much procrastination, volunteer military services date from the 1850's and naval almost a decade later. The news of the intended withdrawal of the British garrison troops, complexed the matter and the British Government was requested in 1877 to examine the defences of the mainland colonies and New Zealand. Major General Sir W. Jervious was selected to conduct the task and assisted by Colonel Sir P. Scratchley. A recommendation of the Jervious-Scratchley Report was more surveillance of the Queensland coast. The Queensland Government ordered an Armstrong Type B1 Flat Iron Gunboat from Sir W.G. Armstrong, Michel and Co. Newcastle-on-Tyne. The HMQS *Gayundah* was launched on 13 May 1884 and commissioned on 28 October 1884. The vessel departed the U.K. on 17 November 1884 under the command of Captain Henry Townley Wright and arriving Brisbane on 27 March 1885. Commander Wright RN to be a Commander in the Queensland Defence Force Marine and to command HMQS *Gayundah*, effective 30 March 1885 ⁽¹⁾.

Specification of HMQS *Gayundah*

Type	Armstrong Type B1
Tonnage	360 Imp tons (365.78 metric tons)
Length	120ft (37m)
Beam	26ft (9.7m)
Draught	9ft 6in (2.9m)
Speed	10.5 knots (19.4 km/hr)
Propulsion	Horizontal direct action compound steam engine 400 HP (298 KW) 2 shafts
Armament	1 x 8in, 1 x 6in breech loading gun, 2 x 1.5in Nordenfelt guns and 2 machine guns. In 1899 the 6in gun was replaced with a 4.7in quick firing gun
Crew	55

Lieutenant F.P. Taylor RN was engaged as Senior Lieutenant, effective 1 April 1885 and as a Lieutenant in the Queensland Defence Force Marine with effect from 7 March 1885. while R.B. Nicholson became Chief Engineer, effective 24 March 1885 ⁽²⁾. The ship was originally intended to patrol the coast to Thursday Island, but its range of 700 miles made this impossible.



Sketch of HMQS *Gayundah*

Illustration: NHSA Archives

The vessel carried out survey work for the Admiralty and was authorised to fly the flag of the British fleet ⁽³⁾. While Captain Wright was apparently successful in his professional life, having achieved senior rank in the Royal Navy, his private life was questionable. He was a bankrupt, employed on the basis that discharge would be achieved, which however did not occur. Early in the Colonial employ there were some unauthorised purchases and misappropriation. While these were overlooked, further problems resulted in Captain Wright being ordered in October 1888 to resign and to hand command to Lieutenant Taylor. Instead Captain Wright sought the police to arrest Lieutenant Taylor but was himself escorted from the ship ⁽⁴⁾. The command of Captain Taylor was short. On 30 September 1892, the crew were paid off due to a Government Retrenchment Scheme and only a skeleton remained for maintenance. Walton Drake RN, formerly First Lieutenant of HMCS *Wolverene* and since 8 November 1887 First Lieutenant of HMQS *Gayundah* assumed command on 1 October 1892. Both 6 and 8in guns were removed on 19 October 1892 and the vessel was a gunboat without guns. The 6in gun was remounted on the 11 April 1900. The HMQS *Gayundah* was used as a Training Ship for the Naval Brigade rather than coastal surveillance. Captain W.R. Creswell became Captain of HMQS *Gayundah* on 1 May 1900 ⁽⁵⁾.



With Federation, the Queensland Defence Forces passed to the Commonwealth, but with clerical problems, this was delayed until 1904. The first ship to shore radio communication (then named Marconi Apparatus) was made from HMQS *Gayundah* on 9 April 1903⁽⁶⁾. On 10 July 1911, King George V granted the title Royal to the Australian Navy which became the Royal Australian Navy and the ship was redesignated HMAS *Gayundah*. The vessel travelled to Broome on behalf of the Departments of Foreign Affairs and of Trade and Customs to enforce Australia's boundaries. Two Dutch schooners were boarded at Scotts Reef on 25 May 1903. Illegal catches of sea cucumber and trocus and the vessels were escorted to Broome, to allow prosecution by the local authorities.



Stokers on HMQS Gayundah

Photo: NHSA Archives

The HMQS *Gayundah* arrived in Broome on 29 May 1903 and stayed until mid-July to allow the complement to give evidence. In 1914 the ship was extensively modified at Cockatoo Island Dockyard. With war, the ship remained in Australian waters patrolling the East Coast and on guard duty in Moreton Bay, Sydney Harbor and, Spencer Gulf. HMAS *Gayundah* was decommissioned on 23 August 1918, sold by tender on 14 October 1920 (tender approved for £1,500) to shipping firm, John Burke Ltd, Tribune Street, Brisbane⁽⁷⁾. The ship left Melbourne for Brisbane on 12

March 1921 for modification for coastal trade. This trade was uneconomic and the vessel was sold, early in 1924 to Peters and Co. The vessel disassembled for use as a coal hulk⁽⁸⁾. The ship was then acquired by Brisbane Gravel Ltd in early 1926, the year of their formation to scoop sand from the upper reaches of the Brisbane River⁽⁹⁾. The vessel to be rejuvenated and a derrick and dredging equipment fitted. *Gayundah* sank without warning at its mooring at Melton Reach on 16 October 1930⁽¹⁰⁾ but was refloated on 20 October 1930⁽¹¹⁾. *Gayundah* is reported as operating on 22 December 1954⁽¹²⁾ it was withdrawn from service, towed to Bulimba Wharf and stripped. The hull was sold to Redcliffe Town Council. On 2 June 1958, the *Gayundah* hull was beached off Woody Point.

After almost 75 years, wreckage is visible. The Colonial Queensland Naval Forces and their ships are described in Australia's Colonial Navies⁽¹³⁾.

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¹ *Queensland Government Gazette* XXXV1 56 1117 30 March 1885

² *Queensland Government Gazette* XXXV1 76 1343 25 April 1885

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1888

⁵ *Queensland Government Gazette* L111 126 1240 5 Mat 1900

⁶ *Brisbane Telegraph* 11 April 1903 2

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⁸ *Townsville Daily Bulletin* 18 February 1924 4

⁹ *Brisbane Courier* 15 April 1926 6

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¹² *Brisbane Telegraph* 22 December 1954 3

¹³ R. Gillett, 2021, *Australia's Colonial Navies* 2nd Ed. Naval Historical Society Australia, Sydney.

Nautical Weather

If clouds look as though scratched by a hen
Get ready to reef your topsails then.



A New Submarine Boat

On Monday evening there was exhibited in the St George's Swimming Bath, Buckingham Palace Road, a large model of a submarine torpedo-boat and blockade-runner, in the presence of a distinguished and cosmopolitan audience, which included the Naval Attaches of most of the foreign Embassies. The demonstration commenced with a lecture regarding torpedo-boats and their use and management. Mr Manville then described the electric equipment of the boat, and showed how the giroscope [sic], by a novel application, had been pressed into the service to aid in the steering of the boat when submerged to a depth which would interfere with the working of the magnetic compass. He also explained how by means of an ingenious sounder the position of the boat above the ocean-bed is automatically recorded within the hull. Mr M.F. Purcell followed Mr Manville with a dissertation

upon the air problem and the difficulties encountered in the past—difficulties which have been overcome in this present boat after many experiments. The model was put through various manoeuvres showing her capabilities, such as going ahead or astern upon the surface, and, while immersed sinking to any given depth and then remaining stationary, or proceeding ahead or astern at that depth as desired; descending either bow or stern foremost at any angle; sinking instantaneously from the surface in a perfectly horizontal position; rising either rapidly or a slowly as desired. Altogether it was a most successful demonstration of a principle which may be expected before long to be embodied in the form of an actual service vessel equal in size to one of our first-class torpedo-boats.

Illustrated London News: 18 July 1896

