

MARITIME HERITAGE ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

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The Honourable East India Company's ship Scaleby Castle arriving at Cape Town

Painting by Thomas Whitcombe, 1820

Courtesy: National Maritime Museums, Greenwich

See Did You Know? p2



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

All of the Association's incoming journals, newsletters, etc. are now archived with Ross Shardlow who may be contacted on 9361 0170, and are available to members on loan. Please note that to access the videos, journals, library books, etc. it is necessary to phone ahead.

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

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Vale Leigh Melville Smith

23 July 1945 – 13 October 2014

**Honorary Vice President and Honorary Secretary Maritime Heritage Association
2008–2013**

Leigh first approached the Maritime Heritage Association in September 2005 seeking information on his great grandfather Pilot Frank Wemyss of Rottnest Island. With Leigh's long association with the sea and a family heritage that went back to the arrival of HMS *Sulphur* in 1829, he soon found a kindred spirit in the MHA and became a mainstay of the association with his tireless dedication, humour and wit.

The Maritime Heritage Association extends its deepest condolences to Leigh's family, friends and colleagues.

Did You Know?

During the evening of 5 December 1821, while off the north-west coast of Western Australia, the Honourable East India Company's 26-gun ship *Scaleby Castle* launched a cutter to look for Point Cloates (then thought to be an island) or Tryal Rocks. At that time these were, respectively, a navigation mark and a navigation hazard. In the dark early the following morning the ship's crew lost sight of the cutter and, despite searching with men stationed at each masthead and firing cannons every five minutes, neither the cutter nor its crew were seen again. There were eight men lost in the cutter — Midshipman William Clowes, Quartermaster Henry Sawkins, and seamen David Sweetens, George Greggs, Joseph Snow, John Walker, Joseph Little and George Wilson.

The 1,242-ton *Scaleby Castle* was built of Malabar teak in Bombay in 1798, and entered the service of the East India Company in 1806. At that time her owner (called ship's husband by the Company, who only leased vessels) was William Moffat.



MHA Christmas at Hicks' Museum



Our hosts Doris and Barry Hicks.



Rod Dickson whose latest book Mum's Grey Hairs was launched at the party.



Brian Lemon being presented by MHA President Nick Burningham with a book of photographs of some of the many excellent models he has made over the years.



Barry Hicks being presented by MHA President Nick Burningham with a book of photographs of many of Brian Lemon's models.



Brian Lemon's model dinghy on its trailer that won the following prizes at the 2014 Western Australian Scale Model Expo
1st Prize Scratch built Model
1st Prize Judges' Choice Best of Show
1st Prize People's Choice Best of Show



LINES of INQUIRY

Messrs Lawrence – Boatbuilders and Shipwrights: Part II

In the June 2014 Journal we established that Lawrence's boatyard in Bazaar Terrace was annexed in the late 1880s to make way for the Victoria Public Library and the beautification of the river foreshore. Ross Shardlow takes up the story.



FOLLOWING THE GOVERNMENT'S announcement to annex Lawrence's land for the proposed Victoria Public Library, Messrs Lawrence & Son applied to the Colonial Secretary 'for permission to lease or rent some more of the foreshore of the river near Mill Street jetty.' The area of foreshore in question was only a short distance from their old establishment but was ideally placed directly opposite their rapidly developing residential estate on the corner of Bazaar Terrace and Mill Street. The Colonial Secretary referred the matter to His Excellency the Governor who, in turn, instructed the Colonial Secretary to refer it to the City Council. On 7 June 1886 *The West Australian* recorded that the Mayor, aware that the Director of Public Works was planning a 'delightful promenade or drive' from the Narrows to the Causeway, was adamant that 'no more of the river foreshore should be let at all.' The consensus of opinion being adverse to the application of Messrs Lawrence & Son, the Mayor 'was authorised to write to the Government to that effect.' This was by no means the end of the matter.

THE SWAN RIVER ROWING CLUB BOATHOUSE

On 7 May 1887 *The Western Mail* announced that 'A new rowing club has been formed in Perth, styled the Swan River Rowing Club.' The article also disclosed that 'Mr. W. Lawrence, jun., is building a four-oared boat for the Club.' Two months later, on 2 July 1887, the sporting pages of *The West Australian* reported that a deputation from the rowing club had been appointed 'to wait upon the Acting Commissioner of Lands to present a petition asking for the use of a piece of land for the purposes of a boathouse.' It seems the deputation might have

have been successful, for *The Inquirer and Commercial News* (27 July 1887) announced that 'Messrs. Lawrence had kindly consented to allow the club a piece of ground ... to erect a temporary boat-shed thereon, capable of housing two gigs.' It was a generous offer on Lawrence's part, particularly as they did not have a piece of ground to give – or perhaps they did, for *The Daily News* (29 Sep 1887) reported the outcome of a City Council special meeting where a letter was read 'From the Colonial Secretary, forwarding the plan of a boathouse the Swan River Rowing Club propose to erect on the east side of the Mill-street jetty, and asking if the Council had any objection to the erection of the building. Upon the motion of Cr. Liddelow, it was decided to inform the Colonial Secretary that the Council did not entertain any objection to the erection of the proposed structure, subject to the condition that it be removed if found necessary.' If this seems a bit of a back flip on the Council's part it may be worth noting a letter to the Mayor from the Colonial Secretary recorded in *The West Australian* (8 Nov 1886) where the Colonial Secretary referred to an application made by the Stanley Brewery seeking to lease a portion of the river frontage. On reading the letter the Mayor reminded Council 'that a similar application was made in June last by Mr. Lawrence, boat builder, but that the Council recommended the Government not to lease any of the river foreshore ... The Council itself, he might say, had no jurisdiction in the matter, the municipal boundary terminated at the high water-mark; and it was only a matter of courtesy that the question had been referred to them by the Government.'



William Lawrence senior retired from the boatbuilding business when he formally dissolved the partnership of Lawrence & Son, 2 January 1888. His sons William junior and Samuel Lawrence carried on with the business trading as W & S Lawrence, a partnership they had formed as early as December 1880. Just a few weeks later *The Inquirer and Commercial News* (18 Jan 1888) announced that the Swan River Rowing Club was to 'proceed at once to erect the boathouse from plans prepared by Mr. J. Talbot Hobbs (treasurer) and that the work be placed in his hands. The boathouse will be a very neat structure standing out in the water on piles on a plot of land opposite Messrs. Lawrence's, in Bazaar-terrace, kindly granted to the Club by His Excellency.' Though the plot of land was 'kindly granted to the Club', it was soon redefined as Messrs Lawrence's plot of land – on which Lawrence's would build a boatshed for the use of the Swan River Rowing Club until the club was able to secure new premises. It seems the new shed might have been finished by 27 April 1888 for *The Daily News* announced: 'Another four-oared outrigger gig to the order of the above Club has just been completed by Messrs. W. & S. Lawrence and will be ready for launching at the Club shed, in Bazaar Terrace, at 3 p.m. tomorrow.' The new gig was named *Ethel* in compliment to Miss Ethel Hensman, daughter of the ex-Attorney General Alfred Peach Hensman, MLA. The *Ethel* was a sister to *The Swan* launched on 16 July 1887, which was the first four-oared racing gig to be built in Western Australia. Certainly the boathouse was complete when the club held their First Anniversary Regatta on Queen Victoria's birthday 24 May 1888, *The Daily News* noting the heats were watched 'by a number of citizens, and at the Club's roomy shed in Bazaar Terrace we noticed among the visitors the Patron (Mr. Hensman) as well as some ladies.'



Detail from a photograph c.1890 showing the Swan River Rowing Club boathouse by Mill Street jetty. The long building on the left is Lawrence's workshop.

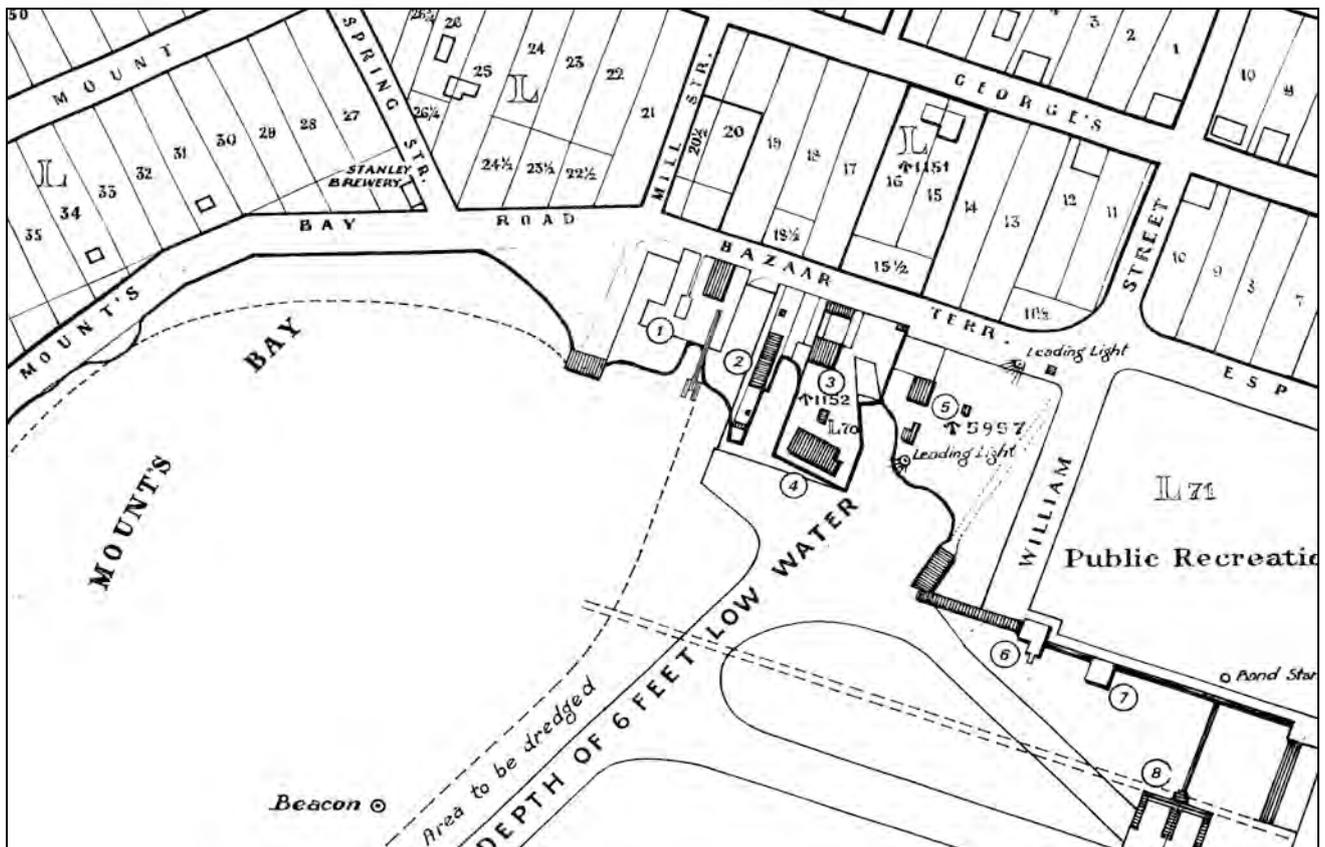
(Seddon & Ravine 1986, Fig. 7:22) photo: Batty 28216P

As a freestanding structure on wooden piles, the boathouse was not joined to the foreshore except by the suggestion of a muddy half-tide causeway; indeed, club members complained of having to wade out through prickles and broken bottles to get to it. Once the boathouse was firmly established, however, Messrs Lawrence proceeded with the task of gaining permission to extend it to the foreshore. *The Western Mail* (9 Feb 1889) reported that an application was read to the Perth City Council from Mr W. Lawrence jnr, 'to erect an edifice in Bazaar-terrace for the extension of his boat shed.' Though Council approved the application William did not go ahead with the extension and may have been a little distracted with personal matters at the time. On 17 April 1890 William's mother Bessie died after a painful illness at her home at No.18 Mill Street. William senior's response to losing Bessie was to auction off the entire household furniture, goods and chattels. The following month *The Daily News* (17 May 1890) reported: 'William Lawrence, junr., boat builder of Perth, filed a declaration of inability to pay his debts and a petition of liquidation of his estate at the Supreme Court this morning.' This might have been a sham to clear liabilities set down



Photograph from 1896 showing the W & S Lawrence boatshed and adjoining rowing club boathouse with slipway and jetty extending to the right past the boathouse. The two-storey terraced villa on the left is part of the Lawrence Estate. The Swan River Shipping Company, formerly Randell, Knight & Co, is on the promontory of reclaimed land to the right of Lawrence's. In the foreground is the Mill Street jetty with a horse team loading from a barge.

Detail from photo 5775B/18 courtesy SLWA



Map of Perth waterfront in 1904 showing reclamation works and dredging programme. Also shown is the Lawrence Estate as a portion of Lot 20 and Lot 20½ on the corner of Mill Street and Bazaar Terrace.

1. W & S Lawrence showing workshop (shaded) and site of the Swan River Rowing Club boathouse (left of workshop).
2. Alex. Matheson & Co: Melville Park Estate Ferry Service, 1896. Melville Park Wharf proclaimed as a landing place, 1898.
3. Swan River Shipping Co (formerly Randell, Knight & Co) commenced operations 1 January 1895.
4. Swan River Shipping Co wharf and goods shed.
5. T.R. Hill boatshed established 1901.
6. Perth Flying Squadron founded in 1897, the clubhouse was opened 22 March 1901.
7. Royal Perth Yacht Club founded in 1865, the clubhouse was officially opened 23 November 1889.
8. Perth City Baths opened 5 March 1898.

at £1,370, for *The West Australian* (21 June 1890) surmised, 'the usual farce was formally gone through ... A composition of 1s. in the £1 was offered, and, of course, accepted, and in due time the insolvent will obtain his discharge.' By October William was ready to proceed with a 'slightly amended' boathouse application. The first application was simply for an extension of the boathouse to Bazaar Terrace; the new application was for a separate building to be erected adjacent to the boathouse. *The Daily News* (4 Oct 1890) reported a meeting of the Perth City Council where 'A letter was read from The Commissioner of Crown Lands in reference to the application of Mr. Lawrence, boat builder, for the lease of the foreshore on the river. The applicant asked for the lease of 100 feet to erect a boat building site, and he was willing at his own expense to reclaim the land. The Commissioners referred the matter to the City Council, as it might interfere with the reclamation works.' The application was deferred to the next meeting. On 8 November 1890 *The West Australian*

referred to the Council meeting where consideration was given for an 'application of Messrs. W. & S. Lawrence for 100 feet by 200 feet frontage on the foreshore of Perth Water, in front of Bazaar Esplanade ... to erect a boat slip and landing, and other buildings.' With support from Cr Harwood, who thought the Council 'ought to encourage every industry', a lease for a portion of reclaimed land was eventually agreed to 'subject to the condition that the buildings be removed upon six months notice' should there be a need to do so. According to Sam Lawrence (*The West Australian* 2 Oct 1934) they simply moved their old boatshed across the street to the newly reclaimed site. As the Swan River Rowing Club boathouse still had independent access to the river, they retained use of the building until 13 January 1899 when the club's president, Mr H.W. Venn, MLA, used a gold key to formally open the doors of a new boathouse at the foot of Barrack Street. The old rowing club boathouse was then dismantled and grafted onto the back of Lawrence's boatshed.



W & S LAWRENCE – SHIPWRIGHTS & BOATBUILDERS
 The new W & S Lawrence boatyard went into operation after the Shark Bay lugger *Hazard*, the last vessel to be launched from the old Lawrence & Son slipway, sailed from the yard 14 April 1891. William jnr was the senior partner of W & S Lawrence and had a range of business and sporting interests: he built the first screw steamer in Perth, the *Lady Ord* (launched in December 1879), he had the lease to farm the tonnage dues on the William Street jetty, and he ran a business as a firewood and cartage contractor. He was a partner and shareholder with Randell, Knight & Co (later to become the Swan River Shipping Co) and was a lighterage & steamboat proprietor. He was also a prospector, property developer and shareholder in various mining ventures and a member of the MUIOOF lodge. In sport he was a champion oarsman, and from 1885 he was the starter and timekeeper for the Perth Yacht Club, which became the Royal Perth Yacht Club in 1890. William married Susannah Bailey 22 September 1870; they had no children but according to the *Geraldton Guardian* (14 June 1907) they did have an adopted child.

When an interview with William jnr appeared in *The West Australian* (26 Sept 1892) he bemoaned that ‘business is not so active as it was a few years ago, the reason being the decline of the pearling fishery in the North West and the shifting of the grounds further north.’ That was about to change with the development of the Broome pearling industry, but at the time of the interview they were ‘only’ employing seven men (compared to twelve or more in busier times) and were mostly constructing river barges and small leisure craft. They were also building a new 36ft 6in launch for Sir James Lee Steere, ‘quite a novelty on the river, as it is to be propelled by a screw worked by a [naphthaline] combustion engine.’ Also on the stocks was a 71ft river barge for the Swan River Brick Company and the newly completed hull of a 94ft paddle steamer waiting for her machinery to arrive. William went on to explain that the workshop, which measured 90ft by 43ft, was used to build, repair and provide a winter lay-up for small craft, while the larger vessels were built in the yard outside. Running from the yard was a slipway capable of taking vessels of 500 tons. In describing the construction and solid workmanship of the barges, William proclaimed that jarrah was the most serviceable timber, one of its chief properties being ‘its resistance to the insidious attacks of sea worms.’ William explained that the Government was reluctant to engage local boat-builders because they feared the hulls of jarrah-built vessels were liable to swell when in the water. In making his claim to the contrary, William stated ‘that the wood can be thoroughly seasoned, and its expansion

W. & S. LAWRENCE,
(ESTABLISHED 1862)

Racing Gigs,
 Wager Boats, Steam Boats and Launches, Yachts, Dingies, Punts, Canoes, or any description of BOATS built to order.
 EITHER CARVEL OR CLINKER BUILT.
 FIRST-CLASS WORKMANSHIP GUARANTEED.
 BOATS LET
 By the HOUR, DAY, or WEEK.



BAZAAR TERRACE, PERTH. W.A.

Yacht and Boat Builders.

The grand edifice of Lawrence's workshop facing onto Bazaar Terrace. (Dickson 1998, p.166)

guarded against, so as to be perfectly adaptable for the purpose.’ For the barges they used ‘wood that is bent by nature,’ natural crooks for ribs and knees, and that it was part of the local builders job to collect or cut the timber, their chief supply coming from the Canning and Rockingham districts.

The 94ft paddle steamer that William referred to appears to have been the PS *Gareenup* (also spelt *Garrenup*). Built to the order of Messrs Randell, Knight & Co, her launching was reported in *The West Australian* (21 June 1893) and ‘was affected without any incident, beyond the carrying away of a pile on the edge of the wharf, which caught a bolt on the starboard sponson.’



Inside the W & S Lawrence boatshed. (Dickson 1998, p.163) photo: Battye 10907P

Two years later W & S Lawrence built another paddle steamer to the order of the Swan River Shipping Company (formerly Randell, Knight & Co), which was about the same tonnage as the paddle steamer *Gareenup* according to the report in *The Western Mail* (25 Oct 1895). Launched by Lady Forrest, the *Nirimba* had an overall length of 92ft, a beam of 17ft 3in and a depth of hold of 5ft 9in. Her draught was only 2ft 6in.



The paddle steamer Nirimba built by W & S Lawrence for the Swan River Shipping Company in 1895. photo: Battye 52801P

When Victor G. C. Riseley interviewed Sam Lawrence for an article in *The Sunday Times* (22 Jan 1933) he gave further insight into the early workings of the W & S Lawrence boatyard. Asking about the pearling industry Sam replied, ‘The first and last luggers that went North went out of these slips.’ In stating that the ‘first was to the order of Bob Hester,’ Sam was referring to the Shark Bay and Nickol Bay luggers that were mostly built at their old yard, but with the establishment of the new site, which coincided with the development of the Broome pearling industry, Sam went on to explain, ‘and goodness knows how many others for Streeters and Streeter and Male, and Captain Biddles. The last was at the beginning of the war, the Emlyn Castle, for Mr. Davis, who paid the supreme sacrifice at the front.’ When Sam was asked what was the largest boat built at the new yard he replied: ‘The Dragon, she was launched 27 years ago for the Swan Shipping Company, and was a cargo carrier of 400 tons. She was 120ft. long with a 26ft. beam and a 9ft. depth.’ Sam added they also ‘built the tug boats Albatross and Eagle, of about the same dimensions as the Dragon.’ On the question of racing craft he said: ‘we have built racing boats, sail and oar, in scores down the years. We built the whole of the original Swan River Club’s gigs, the first compliment being six hulls, and the club originally used our sheds as its headquarters.’

William Lawrence snr formed the first syndicate that discovered payable gold on the Eastern (Yilgarn) Goldfields, ‘which laid the foundation of the enormous goldfields of Western Australia’ (Greaves 1903). The population explosion that followed during the ‘Roaring Nineties’ (50,000 in 1891 to 184,000 in 1901) also meant there was a growing need to improve Perth Water navigation

and infrastructure – and sanitation, the once picturesque but shallow waters rapidly turning into an odoriferous swamp from the detritus and scourings of the city’s streets. Plans were drawn up by the Public Works Department in 1897, which included the reclamation of Government Reserve 1152 around the old Lawrence slipway and the implementation of a dredging programme with the *Black Swan* starting with a four feet deep channel from Barrack Street to Mends Street jetty, and a six feet deep channel from the Swan River Shipping Company wharf to the Narrows (Le Page 1986). The plans were upgraded with the appointment of C.S.R. Palmer as Engineer-in-Chief of the Public Works Department, following the lamentable passing of C.Y. O’Connor on 10 March 1902. The 1904 photograph at the head of this article shows landfill already claiming the waters of Mounts Bay and Mill Street jetty. Not everyone was in favour of the changes, however, *The Sunday Times* (24 May 1908) reporting: The “reclamation works” now being perpetrated in Mount’s Bay are a living example of the unspeakable stupidity and sordidness of the Public Works Department. The Department decided, some time since, to widen the channel in Perth Water, and in order to avoid the exertion of taking the silt away in barges, it resolved to spill it on the edge of the lovely bay.’

To be continued ...

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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!)



The last commercial square-rigged sailing ship built was the 4-masted barque *Padua*. Launched on 11 June 1926 for the famous German P-Line, it was handed to the Russians in 1946 as war reparation. They re-named it *Kruzenshtern*, and it is still sailing, but now used as a training ship.

The last engineless commercial square-rigger to round Cape Horn was the 4-masted barque *Pamir* (2,365 tons, Captain Verner Björkfeldt) at 12.50am on 11 July 1949. At that time the vessel was owned by Gustaf Erikson.

The most southerly German War Grave of W.W. II is that of Bernard Hermann, a sailor on the auxiliary cruiser *Atlantis* which was taking on water at the Kerguelen Islands in December 1940. Hermann fell to his death while painting the ship's funnel, and is buried on the island.

In June 2014 Trinity House, the British organization responsible for lighthouse services and deep sea pilotage around the coast of England and Wales, celebrated its 500th birthday.

The Nore lightship, moored at the mouth of the Thames Estuary, was the first such vessel in the world. It was set up in 1732 as a single-masted sailing vessel with two candle-powered lanterns to mark the Nore Sands.

In May 2014 it was announced that shipwreck remains found off the north coast of Haiti had been tentatively identified as those of Christopher Columbus's ship *Santa Maria*.

Idlers: Those members of the crew of a sailing ship not required to keep a watch at night because of their constant daytime employment. They included the sailmaker, carpenter, cook and boatswain. They were, however, required on deck if the order 'All hands on deck' was given.

Cape Horn lies at 55° 58' 48"S and 067° 17' 21"W.

The famous poet Percy Bysshe Shelley was drowned on 8 July 1822 when his 24-foot yacht,

Don Juan, capsized on a voyage between Livorno and La Spezia in north-west Italy.

The America's Cup is 27 inches high, and is made from 134 ounces (3,800 gm) of silver.

The hub of a ship's steering wheel from which the spokes radiate is called the nave.

Arthur Philip was designated Governor when the First Fleet left England, and Major Alexander Ross was the appointed Lieutenant-Governor. However, should the Governor have died it was not Ross the Lieutenant-Governor who would have assumed the role, but the governorship would have gone to Captain John Hunter of the *Sirius*. Why was the Lieutenant-Governor not named as the successor if the Governor died?

According to Arthur Bowes Smyth, surgeon on board the First Fleet transport *Lady Penrhyn*, in 1787 "every Child born on board a Ship at Sea, belongs to the parish of Stepney."

The first man to sail single-handed across the North Atlantic Ocean was Alfred Johnson. He was a Grand Banks fisherman, and his 20-ft dory named *Centennial* was given a deck, gaff rig with a short bowsprit and a square sail. He left Gloucester, Massachusetts, on 15 June 1876, and arrived in Wales 64 days later.

The barque *James Craig* was originally named *Clan Macleod*, and launched on 18 February 1874 in Sunderland, UK. It was purchased in 1900 by Joseph James Craig of J.J. Craig Ltd, Auckland, NZ.

The Royal Navy's largest and most powerful paddle warship was the frigate *Terrible*, launched in February 1885. It had a length of 226 ft, beam of 22½ ft, and the direct acting steam engines produced 800 nhp. It was armed with eight 56- and eight 68-pound guns, and was broken up in 1879.

Richard Henry Dana, American author of *Two Years Before the Mast*, died in Rome in 1882.



From Trafalgar to Pinjarra

Part 2 of Geoff Vickridge's article on John Pollard.

The First John Pollard

Half a world away from Cape Trafalgar, the new Swan River Colony was struggling to establish itself on a more permanent footing. One of the pioneers was Thomas Peel who, although he contemplated establishing himself with a large tract of land bounded on the north by the Swan River, was forced to accept a grant further to the south. His grandiose schemes failed to come to fruition and in 1839 he sold 10,000 acres of his best land which was near the junction of the Murray and Dandalup Rivers to Captain Singleton for £1,250 (\$2,500).

Singleton planned to rent out his newly acquired land to 'small capitalists, tradesmen and industrious agricultural workers'¹ whose holdings were to range from small farms to properties of 400 acres, depending on the wealth of the applicant. On balance, both parties would benefit from the scheme; Singleton's property would be improved over time at little or no cost to himself and men of little wealth had an opportunity to better themselves. One of the men who joined Captain Singleton in the Murray District near Pinjarra in 1839 was the nineteen year old William Pollard, a son of John Pollard.

William had come to the colony under the auspices of the 'Australind Colonization' scheme arriving at Fremantle on 20 April 1839 in *Hindoo*. As a result of the scheme's failure, however, he, along with others, joined Captain Singleton. Initially, William was Singleton's shepherd and cattle-keeper. John McLarty and John Fairbairn the former of whom

was married to Mary Ann, a daughter of John Pollard² came with Pollard.

It was not long after that, however, that the mother and father of the two Pollard children with their remaining five children migrated to the Swan River Colony to join William. John and his family arrived at Fremantle on 15 October 1841 in *Ganges*. John agreed to become a settler under Singleton on the 'Creaton' estate on the South Dandalup River³ but by 1844 he had established a farm about 13 kilometres south of Pinjarra on the present site of Coolup.



The second and current Anglican Church of St John at Pinjarra was built in 1860.⁴

Pinjarra was established in 1834 on the banks of the Murray River and within a decade of its foundation, the town boasted a church and cemetery, a barracks for the small detachment of soldiers and a bridge over the river.

¹ McKay, Margaret: Pinjarra District 1829-1900 (Unpublished entry in the 1967 Royal Western Australian Historical Society, Lee-Steere Essay Competition, p13).

² Mary Ann's middle name was sometimes spelt Anne; she was born in Wicklow, Ireland c1818 and died in 1896. John McLarty was born in c1810 and died in 1886. The unsupported story handed down through the generations of the Pollard family was that the McLarty, Fairbairn and Pollard families all had adjoining farms in County Wicklow, Ireland.

³ Captain Singleton was not blessed by good luck as his first house was destroyed by fire, the second by a flood only three years later and most of his stock perished after almost certainly eating the highly toxic Heart Leaf. By 1849 he had had enough and so he sold his property and went to South Australia with his family to try his luck in other pastures.

⁴ Photograph from the GLW Vickridge Collection.



1844 was not an auspicious year for John Pollard and his family. On 10 January, his daughter Jane⁵ died at 14 years of age and on 21 February, his son George was murdered by his father's employee John Gaven who was subsequently hanged.⁶

Jane and her brother George were buried in the church grounds at Pinjarra and four years later, on the 7 January 1848 at the age of 64 years, their father John passed away and was buried with his two children who had pre-deceased him. Their graves are in the grounds of the current Anglican Church of St John at Pinjarra.

Could a clue to his apparent role at Trafalgar be the headstone which rather unusually describes him as Mr John Pollard? Midshipman were once referred to as 'Mister'. That evidence, which,



The shared headstone marking the grave of John Pollard is inscribed with the words, "Sacred to the memory of Mr John Pollard who died Jan^y 7th, 1848 aged 62 years."⁷

while far from being conclusive, nonetheless, seems to lend some credence to the fact that the man who shot Admiral Nelson's killer is buried in Pinjarra.

Ronald Richards⁸, cites an interview with William Pollard, a descendant, and cuttings from various books and papers in the possession of another descendant, George Pollard, as the authority for the Pinjarra John Pollard being the man who is reputed to have shot the French rifleman who had earlier shot Admiral Nelson. Regrettably for the Pinjarra John Pollard, no primary evidence of his naval service has ever been found.

The family tradition of the John Pollard who settled in Pinjarra, maintains that although he survived the battle unharmed, he was badly injured when the ship was returning to England.

Apparently the capstan got out of control while the anchor was being raised and one of the capstan bars thrown out of the spinning mechanism hit him in the back. He was walking aft some distance along the deck; some of those further forward were killed.⁹

As a result of the injury, it is said that Midshipman Pollard was invalided out of the Royal Navy shortly after.

Despite his apparent physical disability, the Pinjarra John Pollard is said to have turned to farming at County Brook on the border with Dublin. There he met and married Jane Collins with whom he had a large family.

In 1981, a Mrs Edna Haller (*nee* Pollard) claimed that her mother told her that her great-great-grandfather was the man who shot the man who shot Lord Nelson for which he received a King's Bounty.

In 1805, the John Pollard onboard HMS *Victory* was 18 years old whereas in that year, the Pinjarra John Pollard was 20 years of age.

In summary, the evidence to support the first John Pollard being at the Battle of Trafalgar is tenuous at best.

The Second John Pollard

There was, however, another man who was said to be the 'real' John Pollard (1787-1868) and

⁵ As with her brother George, Jane's place of birth and father are said to be unknown as is her mother. The registration number of her death is 92.

⁶ Gaven, spelt 'Gavin' on his death certificate, was 16 years of age at the time of his execution.

⁷ Photograph from the GLW Vickridge Collection.

⁸ Richards, Ronald: *The Murray District of Western Australia: A History* (Shire of Murray, Pinjarra, 1978, p135)

⁹ Richards, p135



who continued to serve in the Royal Navy for many years after the Battle of Trafalgar, albeit some of them on half pay, before he finally retired with the honorary rank of Commander. As to whether he was the man who shot the French marksman, his case is supported by William Laird Clowes who wrote, ‘The man who shot the Commander in Chief seems to have been ultimately shot by Mr (later retired Commander) John Pollard, a signal midshipman of the *Victory*.’¹⁰

The Midshipman Pollard who served in HMS *Victory* was on her quarterdeck at Trafalgar was one of the first to be injured. He suffered a bruised arm when he was hit by a heavy splinter. His telescope was then shot through by a musket ball a foot above his hand and his watch was smashed in his pocket by another which just grazed his skin beneath before he fired at the sniper who shot Nelson.

It was this John Pollard who entered the Navy as 12 year-old in November 1799 in the sloop *Havick* and later served in the 74-gun *Culloden* in 1802 and a year later in the 80-gun *Canopus*. From her he was transferred to *Victory* in the Mediterranean serving in the Admiral’s flagship from March to November 1805 after being rated midshipman. After Trafalgar he was promoted to lieutenant, serving in *Queen* off Cadiz, *Dreadnought* and *Hibernian*. His final active service was in Brunswick in the Kattegat. He then spent 14 years on half-pay, during which time, in 1822, he married and eventually had six children, before being given a post in the reserve at Chatham for three years from 1828 and then in the coastguard in Ireland from 1836. In 1852 or 1853 he was finally appointed a Lieutenant of Greenwich Hospital and later made an honorary retired commander – both belated acknowledgments of his role at Trafalgar. He died in the Greenwich Hospital on 22 April 1868.

It is therefore, almost certain that it is the second John Pollard who is the hero of the piece. Regrettably for Western Australian history and the descendants of the man who is buried in the grounds of the Anglican Church of St John at Pinjarra, the greater preponderance of the evidence does not support the contention that he is the John Pollard who served in HMS *Victory* at the Battle of Trafalgar and who shot the man who shot Vice Admiral Horatio Nelson.

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¹⁰ Volume 5, p142, footnote 3



QUIZ

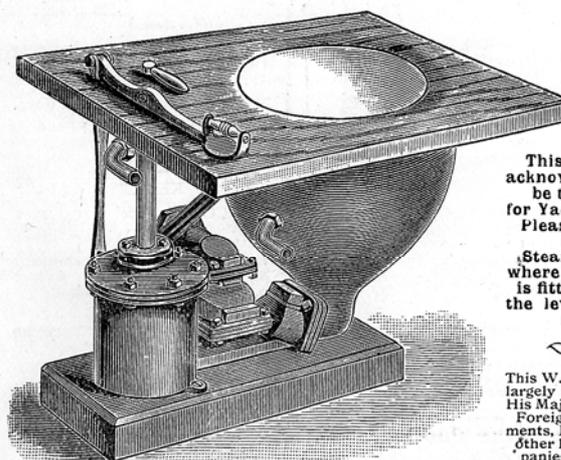
Answers to September

1. Captain Thomas Hanson was master of the brig *Amity* when it went to Albany in 1826. *On Friday evening last, the Government brig Amity, Captain Hanson, bound from Port Jackson, for King George's Sound, put into port [Hobart] in stress of weather. In a heavy gale of wind, which carried away her main-boom, she parted company with His Majesty's sloop-of-war Fly, Lieut. Fisten [sic], R.N. commander, both destined for King George's Sound, there to establish another British Colony. They had both experienced very strong westerly winds, and had also been driven into Port Dalrymple. Captain Lockyer, of the 57th Regiment, proceeds to King George's Sound, as the new Commandant there; together with a detachment of the 39th Regiment, and a number of prisoners (Colonial Times and Tasmanian Advertiser, 8 December 1826: 2a).*
2. Mangles Bay was named after George W. Mangles, who was appointed the superintendent of the Government stock after his arrival on the *Parmelia* in 1829.
3. Flood tide is a when a tide rises from low water to high water. An ebb tide is a falling or receding tide.

Quiz

1. What is the difference between reefing a square sail and reefing a fore-and-aft sail?
2. Lieutenant James Nias Croke RN held an important position in Western Australia during the late 1860s and early 1870s. What was his job?
3. Which is the tallest lighthouse on mainland Australia?

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Correction

Hugh Lander of the Sydney Heritage Fleet has asked me to correct an error in the September issue of this journal. On page 20 the article on the Floating Forest states that the *Lady Hopetoun* is now an exhibit at the National Maritime Museum, Darling Harbour. This is incorrect—the *Lady Hopetoun* is part of Sydney Heritage Fleet's collection, and is berthed at their Heritage Berths and Workshop at Rozelle Bay. The vessel is fully operational. Their website is - www.shf.org.au



What Happened to the *Charlotte Padbury*?

The editor asks – does any reader know of the true fate of the Western Australian barque *Charlotte Padbury*?

The barque *Charlotte Padbury* was well-known in Western Australia during the last quarter of the 19th century. Under the ownership of Western Australian entrepreneur Walter Padbury (the barque was named for his wife) it carried mainly wool to London, often racing against the other well-known local barque *Helena Mena* (owned by Shenton & Monger), and later the *Chalgrove* (R.M. Habgood)

Charlotte Padbury was built by H.S. Trethowan in Falmouth, UK, and launched in April 1874. The dimensions of the vessel were 161.5ft (other references state 163.5ft) length, 31.5ft beam and a depth of 17.9ft. Tonnage is variously given as 642, 640 or 636 gross, 558 underdeck and 636 net. It was registered at Fremantle as No. 10/1874, with the Official Number 61118.

Most sources I have seen (including the authoritative Basil Lubbock, *The Colonial Clippers*) state that the barque *Charlotte Padbury*, while under the Norwegian flag, was wrecked in April 1903. However, I have come across one reference which states that it was wrecked in February

1916. This source states that the following is from Norwegian records.

In 1889 the *Charlotte Padbury* was sold to Frederick Alexander Edelsten & Co., London. In 1896 that firm sold the barque to Peder Fløystad of Arendal, Norway. Five years later he sold it to another Norwegian, O.M. Halvorsen of Kristiana. In 1903 Halvorsen re-named it *Charlotte*, dropping the Padbury. He then sold the *Charlotte* to Fred Th. Bergh of Porsgrund in 1907, who sold it to T. Christoffersen of Brevik five years later. The last owner was Victor E. Bull who was the owner when, on 24 February 1916, the *Charlotte* ran aground on Tees Beach. It was carrying a cargo of pit props from Arendal in Norway to Middlesbrough, UK. Tees Beach is presumably near the mouth of the Tees River, on which Middlesbrough is situated..

The important point would appear to be the change of name in 1903. Was the *Charlotte Padbury* wrecked in 1903, or did the change of name mean that her subsequent history was lost outside of Norway?



The Charlotte Padbury at Port Adelaide ca.1887



My time on the *Singa Betina*

By Darwin MHA member Ted Whiteaker.

In May 1977, in a fit of disaffection with the course of my life, I chucked in my job as an Air Traffic Controller in Darwin, sold my house, and withdrew from social responsibilities with the intention of setting off on a search for a more personally meaningful existence. My girlfriend and I were planning an extended trip down the WA coast in a short wheelbase Toyota Landcruiser FJ40, intending to wander about, camping and taking our time, with an intermediate aim of visiting old friends on a farm in the Margaret River area of the south-west, and an open agenda from there.

While disposing of possessions, I took an old admiralty pattern lugger anchor, which I had scavenged from the debris of Cyclone Tracy some years beforehand and had hanging beneath the house, to an old mate, Keith, who was camped on a derelict hull in the mangroves down at Dinah Beach. Dinah Beach was the local careening area for boats, with a long tradition of free access. From the fringes of the built-up area of suburban Stuart Park, the track led in through sparse mangroves, with a slow decline on relatively firm ground to about half tide level, where it became soft mud. The beach was in the lee of the Darwin peninsula for the north-westerlies of the Wet Season monsoon, with only a short fetch of exposure across the mouth of Sadgroves Creek to worry about on high tides in the south-easterlies of the Dry Season. The firm and gently sloping ground was ideal for beaching boats, although a bit muddy.

The area was flanked on the far side by the workshop yard of a local pearling company, with a prawn factory next to it on reclaimed land, and a trawler maintenance workshop and yard beyond, bounded by the thick mangrove belt lining Sadgroves Creek. Apart from a small industrial yard, the near side of Dinah Beach was mud and patchy mangroves stretching for a mile or so before encountering the outer edges of the industrial waterfront proper. The track in was also the access point for boats moored in Sadgroves Creek for the shelter it provided. There were a few old wrecks rotting in the mangroves, and a motley collection of vessels ranging from a couple of modern steel and fibreglass hulls, and concrete constructions, to wooden boats of some vintage in various states of disrepair or reconstruction scattered among the clumps of mangrove trees. Most of the population were busted-arse renegades resisting mainstream urbanity, living cheaply and dreaming about a life on the sea, and one could sense the ghost of the impact of the clash of dreams and reality that the place had endured over its history. It had an interesting feel about it. It was a bit of a dead end; the end of the line in many ways, with a revolving set of all manner of boats and characters and tales. The nuisance of sandflies and mosquitos and mud generally weeded out the longer-term inhab-

itants to the hardier types, or those whose circumstances gave them little alternative.

I found my mate Keith and gave him the anchor, and we had a natter over a cup of tea. I had noticed an advertisement that had been running for a few weeks in the local paper for a 45-foot wooden boat for sale, and asked Keith about it. He told me it was nearby, and we went to have a look at it as a matter of curiosity.

I had lived in Darwin all my life (I was then 27 years old). My old man was a keen fisherman, and when I was a kid we spent most weekends up tidal creeks drag-netting and chasing barramundi with handlines. Small plywood rowboats kept us afloat, and for many years we had a lot to do with a family friend who lived on the bank of Racecourse Creek just beyond the edge of town. Bluey had an 18-foot open double-ended marine ply boat driven by an old radiator-cooled petrol motor from a Vanguard sedan, and an 18-foot plywood barge which we used to push around in the creek with a 5HP British Seagull outboard motor, using a spotlight at night to scoop-net mullet to use for bait. I learned about tides, how to row a dinghy, and the intricacies of British Seagull outboards. My marine pursuits were furthered in the early 70s when I co-owned an 18-foot *Australis* racing catamaran (everything seemed to be 18-foot in those days), that we used to flog around the harbour with great exhilaration but very little science – it was simply a matter of feel for the best speed we could get on any tack. Cyclone Tracy put an end to the catamaran, sadly damaged by falling branches in the back yard where it was kept.

So there I was, a few years later, looking at this 45-foot double-ended carvel planked wooden hull with a rather ugly wind-catching monstrosity of a wheelhouse aft, and an obsolete and useless Lister air-cooled diesel engine in a sad state of disrepair below in an otherwise empty hull. From what I could gather, the boat was tethered to the edge of the shoreline landfill area on the edge of the mangroves when Cyclone Tracy hit on Christmas Eve in December 1974. A steel cement silo in the adjacent yard had toppled over in the force of the wind and landed square amidships on the boat, wrecking the mast and deck and splaying the hull open a tad. The yard caretaker, a short, stocky and rugged-featured Hungarian ex-circus performer called Rick, bought the wreck cheaply from the disillusioned owner. He stripped the damaged top structure, decks and beams, and chain-blocked the hull sides back into shape, tying them together with salvaged beams of construction timber. He then planked the first third of the deck from the bow with 4x2 inch Kapur, a common framing timber originating in Malaya and much used in Darwin housing con-



struction at the time. The next third of the boat he decked with used $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch construction ply, with a large hatch over the engine, and married to a remnant of the original planked deck of the poop. The wheelhouse was his finishing touch. It was pretty obvious that he had started off with good intentions and an attempt at sound workmanship, but as time passed he lost interest and cobbled the construction together in order to flog the vessel to some unsuspecting sucker. That's when I entered the scene...

The tide was out and the boat was high and dry, leaning upright against the landfill edge. I looked around at it, and was marvelling at the fine lines of the bow from the ground in front when a powerful vision of tropical islands and swaying palms overwhelmed me. A week later I became the new owner, after shelling out twelve thousand dollars, and Keith thoughtfully gave me my anchor back.

My old man was a carpenter, and I knew the rudiments of hammers and nails, copper and bronze fastenings, roves, rivets, and resorcinol glue, having built a heavy 8-foot plywood rowboat under Dad's guidance while in my early 20s. It turned out a solid and well-built craft, which I used for a year or two before selling it to get the money to pay for my share of the *Australis*. I had also spent some time on set construction with the local theatre group - and that was the limit of my experience with carpentry and boat building. I had no idea of the extent of the task before me, but my romantic myopia knew no bounds in those days.

An ex-girlfriend had teamed up with a bloke known as Cabbage, and they were living aboard *Penelope*, a 38-foot timber Bedor from Kuala Terengganu in Malaysia, modified to a bermudan cutter-rigged sloop. My boat was a bit bigger and a more traditional Bedor in hull shape, and it was helpful to compare the structures. Cabbage became my mentor in the course of action necessary to get on with my boat, and helped to outline the task I had before me.

About a month later I had to quit my house, which had been sold and settled. Having put a fresh lick of paint on the hull and renewed the anti-fouling, the boat was floated off on the peak of a spring tide and towed out to anchor in the channel of Sadgroves Creek with all of our worldly possessions scattered about on deck and down below. It looked and felt a bit like a floating junk yard.

The hull seams had been pretty dry on the weather side for a long time, and she leaked like a sieve. We ballasted the boat on an angle to keep the open seams out of the water as much as possible, and lived on a slant for a few weeks, gradually regaining an even keel as the planks swelled and closed up, and pumping the bilges with a Whale Gusher hand pump at alarmingly short intervals. We pumped for half an hour every hour in the beginning, and it was not unusual to wake from an exhausted slumber to find water sloshing over the floorboards down below, requiring an hour or so of frantic pumping to clear, but eventually she tightened

up and a month or so later I was ecstatic to observe a dry bilge.

To this point, the name of the boat was *Tunder*, a Hungarian mythological phantom/fairy presence: "there, but not there", according to Rick's wife, Fyete. Fyete had a bouffant beehive hairdo dyed brilliant orange, was always heavily made-up, regal and erect of carriage, impeccably and colourfully dressed, and flamboyant in her gestures - another ex-performer who was a readily identifiable character on the streets of Darwin in those days. Rick, for reasons best known to himself, had been less than forthcoming with any information on the previous history of the boat and who had owned it before him. When asked about it, he creased his brow as if stretching his brain and searching his recollections, looked down, grunted a little and then said, "I forget - I can't remember" in a manner that closed the line of conversation. I have never understood his motive for this.

One day a fellow boatie from further up the creek came alongside in his dinghy and told me that my boat was in fact the *Singa Betina*, and gave me a sketchy outline of its arrival in northern waters in the hands of Henri Bourdens back in 1967. (Nick Burningham mentioned this story in an article in MHA Journal, Vol 17: No. 4, December 2006). Henri had written a book about the origins and voyage of *Singa Betina* called "*Cruise to a Cruel Shore*", which I borrowed from the local library. It was an interesting tale and gave me some insight into the history of the old tub, and by studying the photographs I began to gain an appreciation of the original junk rig. I liked the aura of previous history behind the name, and thenceforth *Tunder* became known again as *Singa Betina*. Henri had named the boat after his wife's nickname, "Lionne", meaning "Lioness" in French. In Malay, "Singa" is lion, and "Betina" means female (of animals), hence "Lioness" in the Malay lingo.

I was not very well organised as far as boatbuilding was concerned, and spent far too much time fishing and avoiding the realities of the task ahead of me to get the boat sailing. I started on the engine, pulling it to bits and buying replacement parts in bits and pieces. As a novice mechanic, it was slow work, and the vintage of the Lister often meant that parts had to be sourced from the manufacturer in England, and everything seemed to cost an arm and a leg. We had an old portable petrol generator on board which I could fire up to recharge the 12v battery which gave us a couple of lights at night, and a 240v Bosch electric drill. Most work was done with hand tools - handsaws, a brace and bit for long drill holes beyond the scope of the Bosch, hand planes, wood rasps and coarse sandpaper. Four months after launching, the sum of activity was a permanent mooring weighed down with half a dozen 440lb railway wheels, a 3-foot x 3-foot hatch in the foredeck to promote a bit of air flow down below, a strongly built pipe shade frame over the mid deck, and an engine which still had a long way to go before it would ever run again. I had grasped the rudiments of splicing rope, and salvaged many shortish pieces of



abandoned mooring lines discarded by prawn trawlers and other vessels when they tangled in the barnacles on the piles of the wharf on departure. It was common to find lengths of 20 to 30 feet and sometimes more, which, when spliced together, made serviceable anchor lines which lasted for whole of my 6 years with the boat.

My girlfriend and I had a tempestuous relationship, and at this point she moved off the boat and into a caravan in a back yard in town. I stuck it out on my own for a few days, and then joined her in the caravan. Disillusioned with the enormity of the task I had taken on with the boat, and badly lacking in self-confidence, I half-heartedly decided to sell it, and we made plans to revert to our original intention and resume the Toyota dreaming of a walkabout by road down the West coast.

Time slipped by. Almost a year had passed since I had first bought the boat, and no one had made any offers for it in the meantime. The next Dry Season had arrived, and we were preparing to leave “soon” in the Toyota. I dragged the boat out of the water to scrape off the weeds and give her a fresh anti-foul. An old friend, Jerry Williams, had once remarked that as the unpleasant heat and humidity of the Wet Season faded and the Dry Season set in, there was a time when one would look out at the colour of the water in the harbour, and “you just had to get out there on it”. This was one of those days, and the tropical islands and swaying palms re-asserted their alluring presence in my mind. I pondered deeply on the vision for a day or two as I scraped off the barnacles and weeds on the hull in the balmy Dry Season air, and eventually decided that this dream had too much potential to chuck away, and announced my intention to carry on with the boat. It was too much for my girlfriend, who left the scene with the speed of a rectal thermometer, and I spent the next two years on my own, living on board while I dealt with the demons of self and loneliness, and doggedly getting on with the fitting out.

Around this time, Cabbage sold *Penelope* and acquired a 60-foot Vietnamese refugee boat called *Tu Do*, a long, low-slung narrow hull with a sharp entry and a pointed stern, powered by an air start Yanmar diesel that propelled it around with speed and economy. He had decided sail was too technical and unduly expensive to maintain, and was opting solely for the simplicity of engine power. He also had a couple of kids and another on the way, and needed more accommodation than was available with *Penelope*. The sharp ends of the Bedor sacrifice a lot of internal hull volume, while *Tu Do* offered five hatches along the deck, originally ice and fish holds, which were adapted to become storage spaces and mini-cabins for the kids, with the captain’s cabin in the aft wheelhouse. (As a side note, *Tu Do* is now in the collection of the National Maritime Museum in Darling Harbour as a representative Vietnamese Refugee vessel).

I did some hard thinking about the old Lister engine in *Singa Betina* and decided to abandon it. I bought a

practically new 67hp Perkins 4236 engine with a Borg Warner Velvet Drive 2:1 hydraulic reduction gearbox from another boatie, and got it on board. Cabbage had suggested that I would probably be less distracted from the boat if he towed me off behind Channel Island, about 7 miles from the Darwin wharf in Middle Arm, and left me there to get on with the engine installation (engine beds and mountings, fuel tanks, exhaust system etc.). I thought it was worth a try, and spent four months there on anchor, being collected by *Tu Do* once a week or so for a trip to town for food and supplies. At the end of that time I was mobile, and it was a great day when I heaved up the 60lb plough and headed back to town under my own power. It was a fairly primitive beginning, with the engine throttle controlled by a length of fishing line routed through a hole drilled in the poop deck and tied off to a screw next to the tiller with a clove hitch. Since I had no forward and reverse controls, I had to leap in and out of the engine room to change gears to and from neutral and into reverse. It kept me fit until I eventually got hold of a set of Morse engine controls, which allowed manoeuvring with precision, style and a greater degree of dignity.



Singa Betina on the beach at Doctor’s Gully ready for loading the Perkins diesel, 1978

Over the course of 1979, I plugged away at the boat, fitting out the hull below with a very basic platform and shelving layout with a walkway up the centre. I was interested in the idea of small-scale cargo carrying, and kept the construction and layout of rugged 6x2 inch hardwood framing and short loose ceiling planking as simple as possible to maintain flexibility of the space. The guiding consideration was the dimensions of 44-gallon drums. I would spend a couple of days on the mooring in Sadgroves Creek while I got supplies, and then motor off exploring the far-flung reaches of the harbour and its arms and creeks and carrying on with work until I had to return to



town for more supplies. Progress was slow, but it was happening and results were becoming visible. My money ran out, and I took on short-term jobs for friends and contacts around town, working in gardens, building bookshelves and other furniture, house painting and repairs, and having a go at anything that presented itself that would earn a few dollars.

In the Dry Season of 1980, a new lady, Jude, appeared and settled on board, and the pace of change sped up considerably. We bought a two-burner LPG gas cooktop to replace the Primus kerosene burner, which improved the cuisine somewhat, and a few power tools, the most important being a 9-inch circular saw which saved a lot of grunting over a handsaw on long cuts of heavy timbers. An electric plane was the next favourite labour saving device, followed by a belt sander. A raised cabin framed with 6x3 inch Oregon planks with a marine ply roof was built amidships to get headroom down below, and the bowsprit was fitted. Another milestone was celebrated when the wheelhouse was finally unbolted from the deck and tipped overboard. The stern came up about eight inches with the loss of weight, and the railway fishplate ballast, and lead ingots that I had been accumulating by melting scrap lead into a mould, were redistributed to counter the imbalance.

A local journo called Bob Hobman was managing a guesthouse setup on the beach at Golden Sands, across the harbour from town on the seaward side of Mandorah. He had an Indonesian *perahu* called *Tunis Harapan* anchored offshore, but the area is notorious for rough water in the south-easterlies, and the boat dragged anchor in a Dry Season blow and was wrecked on the beach. I bought the salvaged grown-timber mast from Bob, and towed it back to Dinah Beach to modify it to suit *Singa Betina*.

I knew nothing of rigging and sail design. I checked out other boats and their rigs, read Eric Hiscock and a few technical publications, and discussed the matter with other boaties. I pondered on adopting a Bermudan sloop rig, but the junk sail with a western jib on a bowsprit seemed like a handy low-tech solution that had some precedence attributable to the traditional *bedor* rig. *Singa Betina* had originally had a two-masted junk rig, but smaller *bedor* carried a junk sail on a single mast and a jib. I opted for the junk main and western jib.

Towards the end of 1980, an old friend, Peter Walker, crewed with Nick Burningham to Bali on a joint cargo venture on *Hati Senang*, Nick's newly built *perahu lambo*. Pete had kindly offered to get the junk sail made for me whilst in Bali. I drew up a plan of the sail dimensions that Pete took with him. Nick cut the sail and arranged a team of locals at Benoa Harbour to do the sewing. The material used was a trouser-suiting cloth called *Famatex 6000*, which was robust enough, if handled carefully, and might last a couple of years. It was a quick and achievable solution, and the sail arrived back in Darwin Harbour with a cargo of ce-

ment tiles and stone statues on board *Hati Senang* some months later, just before Christmas.

The year disappeared in a blur as the ship started taking shape, and early in 1981, we were ready to step the mast. Nick offered to lift the mast with the gaff and halyards of *Hati Senang*. We tied up alongside in the shelter of Sadgroves Creek to do the job, but my mast was too heavy for the rather slender mainmast of the *Hati Senang*, and the attempt was abandoned when it started to bend significantly before the load was clear of the water. I then offered a Port Authority crew a carton of beer for their assistance, and the mast was lowered by a yard crane from the wharf, through the collar in the *kapur* planked fore deck, and locked into the original mast-step mortise in the keelson.

The junk sail didn't require much mast height. We had 36 feet above deck, with the stays attaching at 35 feet, and the hull's 13-foot beam spread the load onto the chainplates bolted through the ribs. A set of double shrouds either side held the masthead without needing spreaders, and there was a pair of running backstays to an anchor point bolted down either side on the poop deck. It was simple stuff – rugged and robust agricultural construction with smoothed and rounded edges, and a lick of paint for longevity. The tale is easy in the telling, but at the time it always seemed to take forever to finish anything.

The problem of battens for the junk sail came up. The longest batten was around 24 feet. I had experimented with long, thin mangrove tree trunks that were prolific in some parts of the Blackmore River, which drained into the Middle Arm of Darwin Harbour. I cut a couple of lengths and had them immersed in the brine alongside the boat for a month or so, then placed them in a shady spot on the dry beyond the mangrove line to season, but they dried out too rapidly and the timber split like crazy longitudinally.

At the time, Oregon pine was fairly readily available from Darwin timber yards. It was mostly second grade stuff for the construction industry. I rifled through the timber stacks and got the best of the 4x2 inch lengths. Surprisingly, I got all the lengths I needed in one go, and cut them to length and rounded off the corners, coating them with lots of linseed oil diluted with kerosene. The batten ends were seized tightly and securely with small cord to resist splitting of the timbers as they weathered. The finished product was fairly supple and looked good, as newly worked and finished timber always does.

In March 1981, we careened the boat on a sandy beach behind the mangroves of Blaydin Point, in the East Arm of the harbour. We finished the antifouling job after a couple of days and got back on the water. There was talk on the local radio station of a Cyclone Max bearing down upon us from the east, so we hastened into town, recharged our depleted LPG gas supplies and got a few other necessities, and set off for the shelter of Southport.



Nineteen nautical miles south-southeast from Stokes Hill wharf by sea via Middle Arm, Southport is situated just upstream of the Darwin River junction with the Blackmore. In the early days of gold mining around Pine Creek, another 85 miles or so to the southeast as the crow flies, sailing ships discharged cargo at Southport rather than Darwin which was further north. It was now just a spot in the bush where people sometimes fished.

The anchorage is not very large, maybe a quarter the size of a football field, and there is even less room at low tide. Surrounded by tall mangroves on high banks, the lack of air can make you breathless on the mid-day low of a spring tide in the heat and humidity of the build-up to the Wet Season. Conditions can be very unpleasant, but the area is well protected from any wind, and like most places it can look beautiful on a high tide at sunset, when a faint zephyr from the distant sea breeze may briefly deter the sand flies and mossies. Located on the downstream side of an abrupt right-angled bend of the river, where the current swirls and eddies with considerable force on outgoing tides, and with no room to swing, it requires a spider web of ropes to anchors and trees on the banks to position any vessel securely.

The passage from Southport to Darwin Harbour is littered with rocks, sandbars and shallow water, and it is only practicable to traverse it on high tides. There are only two or three intermediate places where one could safely anchor. I had previously sounded the channel with a lead line in my dinghy when fitting the engine in the boat behind Channel Island, and had drawn up a mud map in anticipation of a good bolt-hole for cyclonic weather. I had travelled up there in *Singa Betina* a couple of times in good weather to stay for a few days once the engine was going, and was pretty familiar with the route.

According to a subsequent Bureau of Meteorology report about Cyclone Max, "The first cyclone warning for Darwin was issued at 5 am CST 11 March and by mid-afternoon all normal business activity had ceased. An estimated 2500 people left the city, while 7000 spent the night in public cyclone shelters. Darwin Airport was closed at 10 pm and all light aircraft ferried inland to Batchelor or Tindal. Small craft moved to sheltered areas in Darwin Harbour, while large vessels left port."

At around mid-day on 11 March the skies were reasonably clear of cloud, with a consistently freshening wind of around 20 knots. Unfortunately for us, it was low tide, and as we made our way towards Southport we had to stop and anchor at several points to wait for the incoming tide to give us enough depth to continue over shallow sections. We reached Middle Arm Landing around 8pm in driving rain and lousy visibility, and decided to anchor there for the duration since this was one of the possible intermediate stops with enough water to stay afloat safely.

The rain got heavier as the wind intensified, and around 11pm I was feeling decidedly uncomfortable,

so we upped the anchor and moved on up the channel, spotlighting the banks through the rain and attentively observing the depth sounder. There was a raging current against us with the river swollen by floodwaters, and we arrived at the next possible stop, which was characterised by a dangerous rock bar on the upstream side. About a mile short of Southport itself, the channel was quite narrow at this point and relatively sheltered, and I was not willing to travel any further with regard to the rock bar, so we threw the anchor overboard and prepared to sit it out.

I was worried about the skinny channel and what would happen when the tide again turned to the incoming, as we had very little room to manoeuvre and I could imagine scraping the banks as the boat swung with the change of current. It was after midnight when we got there, and despite my worries I eventually fell into an exhausted sleep. I woke up several times during the night and flashed the spotlight around, but there was no change to our heading as we continued to hold with the bow pointing upstream. When daylight arrived we were in the same attitude. The tide had turned during the night and come in again, but there was such a volume of floodwater pouring out that the current remained outgoing through the complete tide cycle.

The cyclone passed overhead during the night. The Met Bureau report said "Darwin recorded a maximum wind gust of 107 km/h from the southeast at approximately 1915 UTC 11 March (Ed: 0445 CST 12 March). At this time Max was located 15 km north northwest of the airport." We stayed put for the remainder of the day and the next night before returning to town in calmer waters.

A few weeks later, we needed a sheltered location to tie the battens together for the framework of the sail, and tie the sail to the battens. Southport was the ideal spot, so we returned there and after a marathon of splicing and rope work got the sail sorted out. Finally, the battens were on the mast and the sail was actually there! The impending ability to haul up the sail was a powerful motivator to sort out the pulleys and ropes required to control it. A week or so later, Peter Walker came on board one evening while we were anchored in Fannie Bay, the preferred Dry Season anchorage. I was still sorting out ropes and pulleys and had not pulled up the sail since Southport. With Pete's encouragement, we hauled it up then and there, and with a fistful of individual ropes tied to the batten ends of the mainsail to keep it in check, slipped the anchor and ghosted out into the dark on a light breeze for a few hundred yards, came about, and returned to find the anchor. It was a huge milestone; an exhilarating event, and the vision of tropical islands and swaying palms lurking in the periphery of my consciousness took on an added vibrancy.

A couple of days later we moved the boat to Lameroy Beach, which was right on the edge of the business district of town and convenient for access by foot. It was a late afternoon with an almost full incoming tide, and a good following sea breeze blowing at about 10



knots. Emboldened by our first venture under sail with Pete, we hauled the main up and were scooting along well until I realised we had to jibe to alter the course of the boat around the end of a sandbar. I untied the handful of sheet ropes from the poop deck rail, discussed the manoeuvre with Jude who was on the tiller, and cautiously pulled in the sheets while we approached the point of no return. The wind backed slightly and took us by surprise; there was a loud crack as the sail shot out on the other tack, and I was slingshot overboard to find myself being skull dragged along in the water, still grasping the sheet ropes. I looked up to see Jude peering over the taffrail at me and preparing to jump in to my rescue. The boat was flogging along at a good clip, with the cliffs of Emery Point not too far in front of us, and I managed to convey to her through mouthfuls of water the urgent necessity to stay on the tiller and steer the boat. I caught hold of the dinghy painter and climbed back on deck, and we brought the boat up into the wind, dropped the

sail, and fired up the engine for the remainder of the trip. We didn't pull the sail up again until we got the sheet ropes sorted out and could utilise the mechanical advantage of a pulley system.

The rigging was finally finished after a few more weeks, and we spent a lot of time gaining familiarity and experience with sailing the boat around Darwin Harbour. We were planning on leaving Australia on a voyage through the Indonesian islands later in the Dry, and spent our time working to obtain funds, and dealing with the myriad little jobs required to have everything satisfactorily ship-shape. We took friends and acquaintances on social sails on the weekends, with occasional jaunts out of the harbour for practice, and started casting about for expressions of interest for paying crew; a necessity considering our perennially parlous state of finances.

To be continued.

Singa Betina
moored at
Southport,
1979



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