

# MARITIME HERITAGE ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

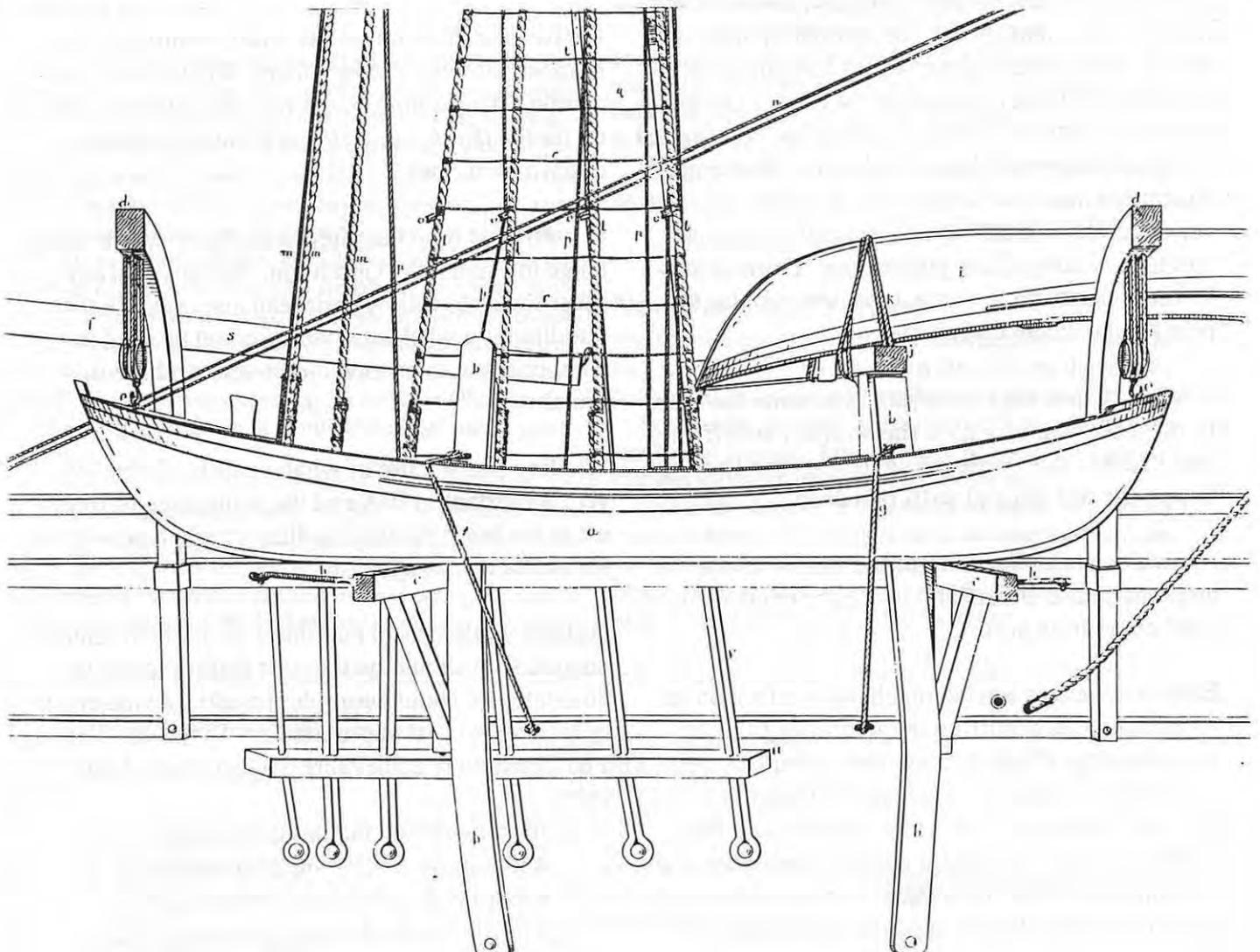
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C/o: 4 Cunningham Street,  
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Editor: Peter Worsley. 294 Chapman Rd., Geraldton, 6530.



Whaleboat On The Cranes Of An American Whaler 1887



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 at *Wooden Boat Works*, Slip Street, Fremantle Harbour, and are available to members on loan. Please note that to access the videos, journals, library books, etc it is necessary to phone ahead on 9335 9477.

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

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## EDITORIAL

I have been a little concerned for some time that the Journal has strayed (considerably far in many cases) from the original intention of the Maritime Heritage Association's basic charter which is to promote and encourage interest in Western Australian maritime history and heritage. However I am limited as to what goes in the Journal by what is sent to me or what I can research from my own library as I don't have access to the Batty Library and other Perth resources. Some of the contributed items which are not directly related to Western Australian maritime history are never-the-less very interesting and I would personally be reluctant to discourage their publication. From numerous comments made to me, most readers also appear to like the mix of articles.

**It is important that members give some thought to the direction in which the Journal is drifting, and express their opinion as to whether they are happy (or not happy) with this drift.**

I would welcome more contributions of a local nature, but please understand that these contributions must come from you.

Early newsletters carried much more information about activities occurring in the Association and the individual efforts by members to further the Association's charter. Again this information has to come from you as I am four hundred and fifty kilometres from Fremantle when in Geraldton and not much less when in Albany. Please understand that you are all interesting people with a story to tell.

Since I started studying in Albany I have been impressed by the enthusiasm, translated into action, of the Albany Whaleboat Association. They now have one whaleboat and by the end of this year will have another.

I draw your attention to the article contributed by Maurice Howlett on the Albany Whaleboat Association. An exciting future has been planned, and on past performance I am sure that they will succeed in their aims.

In particular note that they have thrown out a challenge to Fremantle, Geraldton, Bunbury and any other towns to follow their lead and organise the building of a whaleboat which could be used in competitions, inter-town, inter-state and international.

Whaling and the use of whaleboats is historically very important in WA and the resurgence of interest in the building and handling of this type of craft should be encouraged.

Perhaps while debate continues over which replica historic ship should be the next major project in this state, we should consider building a whaleboat in Fremantle (cost approximately \$25,000). This is a comparatively achievable goal and would provide :-

- training during the building phase,
- a link between city and regional ports,
- a display of part of our heritage, and
- a lot of fun for decades to come.



## Maritime Heritage Association: President's report to the Annual General Meeting, 1999-2000.

This has been a year of literary, artistic and cultural endeavour for the MHA.

Publication of our respected *Journal* has continued to be a major focus of the organisation and its members. Our editor, Peter Worsley, has been innovative in his approach to providing enough copy to keep the journal at its 20 page A4 format, and he has continued to refine his word processing and typesetting skills.

All committee meetings throughout the last year have been combined with meetings of the "Cultured Persons' (formerly Gentlemen's) Maritime Reading Club", held either at Phillimore's Hotel, or here in the new Wooden Boat Works Conference Facility. The discussions of the reading club are broad ranging but very nautical in focus and have greatly helped to ensure that the MHA Committee convenes in an atmosphere of appropriate maritime and nautical focus.

The enthusiasm for the Maritime Reading Club's activities gives hope that future connection between the Club, the MHA, and the *Journal* could re-invigorate the Association and provide material for the *Journal*.

It has long been an aspiration of this organisation that it promote appreciation of maritime heritage among young people through some form of scholarship or sponsorship of appropriate activity. Since neither the former president or I have off-spring to whom the benefits of such a scheme could be bestowed, the idea has not previously been implemented. However, I am very proud to announce that the committee has agreed to a sponsorship of \$ 500 to Rachele Walker, towards enabling her to join the Duyfken Replica's Chevron 2000 Expedition Voyage as ship's artist. Ms Walker has undertaken to provide an illustrated account of the voyage for the *MHA Journal*. If she carries out this commission as well as I believe she will, we will have a lasting and tangible result from our sponsorship, as well as fulfilling our aim of promoting appreciation of Maritime Heritage among young persons.

I have continued representing the MHA on Fremantle Port Authority's Community Liaison Committee which has had a number of meetings in this last year. Our stance has been to stress the importance of Fremantle continuing to be a working port and to some extent to counter the residents' concerns about opera-

tions' perceived negative impact in Fremantle as a residential environment (although a Fremantle resident myself).

The demolition of the disused grain silos on the northern side of the harbour, which was discussed at the previous AGM, has recently become a much more contentious issue with Fremantle Council taking legal action against the Government in an attempt to halt demolition. The stance of the MHA committee has not, of course, favoured demolition *per se*, but we have accepted in good faith the Port Authority's argument that the space occupied and obstructed by the silos is needed for the efficient running of the container port in Fremantle Harbour. The silos are certainly a monumental part of Fremantle Port's industrial history and are aesthetically interesting but the committee has felt that the retention of Fremantle as a working port is a more important issue than the preservation of the silos.

The loss of the minutes of the 1999 AGM is a serious matter, and while I was not the minute keeper of that meeting, as President I feel constrained to take the full blame for the loss, and in those circumstances I cannot stand as President again.

I would like to thank all of you for the support that you have given me during my several years as President — it has been and honour and a pleasure to serve you, the MHA committees and membership. I trust you will not lose the minutes of AGMs chaired by my successor.

Finally, my thanks to Tup Lahiff for the use of these splendid facilities.

Nick Burningham, 10/4/2000.

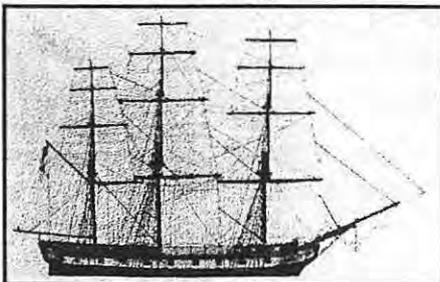
### New President Elected

Rod Dickson stood for election as MHA president at the AGM on April 10th. Rod was at sea on that date but through his proxy, Ross Shardlow, presented a platform of policies.

Rod is keen to return MHA committee meetings to the regular and formally, fully minuted, and structured agenda that they followed until a couple of years ago.

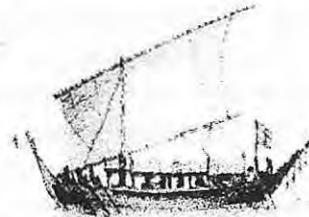
Rod is also keen to provide funds and facilities to ensure quality in the reproduction of illustrations in the *Journal*. There has been concern that the printing done in Geraldton has not done justice to illustrations, in particular Ross Shardlow's magnificent painting of the ship NARCISSUS.

### Investment Opportunity



Now's the time to get any spare capital out of shares and e-commerce. Invest in traditional value. Commission a portrait of your yacht or your favorite historic ship.

Noted maritime artist Nick Burningham is now accepting commissions at very reasonable prices. Classic motor boats a speciality.



Phone 9430 6457  
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## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS!!

It was with some trepidation that I first accepted the nomination of President of the Maritime Heritage Association as, still being a serving seaman, I was faced with the fact that I would not be able to attend every meeting nor serve in the way that I would wish to serve the Association. However it was pointed out to me that this was of a minor nature and that the meetings would run just as well with the Vice President standing in for me.

There were a number of other issues that I wished to be raised and I believe they were and accepted by the membership.

I received a fax this morning on board officially informing me of my Presidency and I am honoured that the membership would accept me for the position. I thank you all. (When the Captain handed me the fax and I'd read it I enquired whether, under protocol, as President, was I now senior to him. I won't repeat his answer on the grounds that I might upset some delicate feelings, suffice it to say he just shakes his head in disbelief.)

In accepting this position I realise that I hardly know any of the members of the Association and conversely hardly any of you know me and so here is a brief run down on my career.

I was born in Melbourne in 1941 and managed to escape from there when I went to sea in December 1957. My legacy of those days in Melbourne were that I allegedly gave my mother all her grey hairs!!

When I finally left to join my first ship half of the street were there just to make sure that I went and only had a one way ticket. For the first four years I served aboard oil tankers running from the Persian Gulf to anywhere there was a refinery. After that it was to WA and the whale chasers of Northwest Whaling Company at Carnarvon and in between a cray boat at Ledge Point. I was there when the *Gilt Dragon* was first discovered and dived on her and still have relics from those days. There was also a turtle hunting boat in there be-

fore heading back overseas on the *Rhodesia Star* of Blue Star Line. Next came the *H.M.T.S. Monarch* an undersea cable layer based at Greenwich. At the end of ten months I arrived in dry dock at Harland and Woolfes in Belfast and it was there that I joined the Royal Navy and signed on to the *R.F.A. Regent*, an ammunition ship. After an exciting two years on her I paid off in Singapore and joined an American seismic ship working in the Gulf of Thailand. When that job finished I returned to Australia, got drunk at the top pub in Freo and found myself at Barrow Island on the landing craft that ran from Onslow to Barrow Island.

So, from 1968 I have been a permanent resident of WA and in that time my love of matters maritime has grown to where I am today. This is due to not only my wife who encourages me but to Dr. Michael McCarthy who first gave me the push into research and writing.

There has been, metaphorically speaking, a lot of water passed under the keel, some of it bad and other times good to hysterical and the memories are still with me!! I am now into my 43<sup>rd</sup> year at sea and it will not be long before I walk down the gangway for the last time. Will it be a sorrowful day or will it be with gladness only time will tell. I certainly have a lot of research and writing to do in the future as I do today.

I hope, over the coming months to meet as many of the members as I can and introduce myself personally to you at our meetings and if any member wishes to contact me for any reason please feel free to do so. If I am not at home at the time my wife will take a message and I will contact you when I arrive home on leave.

Once again thank you for your support and confidence in me. I shall do my best to uphold the ideals of the Association and support our maritime heritage.

**Rod Dickson**



## A Very Ordinary Seaman

**This is the second part of Chris Buhagiar's reminiscences on his Navy days.**

Since leaving Port Adelaide we had clung to the coast, a wild, rugged, rolling green coastline, in stretches edged by impressive cliffs, and seemingly untouched by humanity. Eventually we entered a passage between the mainland and a series of islands. The scene was spectacular, especially between squalls, as the terrain would be suddenly illuminated by the brief appearance of the sun. As sunset approached, we cleared the passage; we found ourselves leaving the sight of land, with only open sea ahead. Darkness came, with one full day remaining before Sydney.

Although now steering approximately due North, we still had a following sea; I had imagined we'd be butting into it by now.

Sea-watching had been my preferred past-time since leaving Albany a sea that was continually heaving, moving, swirling, changing shape and colour; waves that constantly rose, rolled and fell; the wind catching the spray, dashing it along, and dispersing it. The occasional gull or albatross would follow us seemingly immune to the big sea. It seemed impossible that the gull would not eventually misjudge its glide, and run smack into some oncoming wave, or clip a wing into the sea and come to an ignominious end. But no, it continued on and on banking, wheeling, climbing, soaring.

We were now steaming at something between fifteen and twenty knots, and slightly ahead of schedule. Occasionally dense black smoke would briefly blast from the funnel, to be caught by the wind, and blown in long billowing, rolling plumes across the ship and then beyond. Standing on deck I'd be conscious of the unending hiss of the sea as the ship sliced along, slowly rising and falling and corkscrewing as successive waves gently lifted her by the stern, and passed along her length. Occasionally the bow wave would rise to full fo'c'sle height as the stem "took it green". An unending sequence, and quite spellbinding. Eventually it would be back below to the warmth

and security of 2-Charlie mess. The scuttles regularly showed solid green outside - we were only one deck above sea level.

Settling back into mess routine, I got my head down or played monopoly again. Was my drowsiness simply me, or was it because of living in an enclosed space, ventilated only by forced draft? As old Stranger was usually asleep, I felt it must be the latter.

Early morning's arrival off Sydney Heads required a further reduction in speed as we were still well ahead of schedule. Though the sea was relatively flat now, there was a significant swell running, and it was still behind us.

Shortly before breakfast the ship was turned about, to make back for the Heads, and in so doing brought us up against the oncoming sea for the first time. ANZAC now took on a significant rise-and-fall motion, greatly magnified where we were, forward in 2-Charlie mess. After rising up an oncoming wave, the bow would suddenly drop as the wave was cleared, leaving our weight and stomachs somewhere above. Hull met water, the rising motion began again, and body weight would drop to ankles. Walking of course became a bit of a joke, as we lurched about, grabbing at whatever would help maintain balance. John Stranger then decided he'd had enough, and freely emptied his stomach into our gash (rubbish) bin, then rushed up on deck to continue the process much to everybody's delight.

A little after breakfast we made the final run for Sydney Heads; Special Sea Duty Men were closed up, and the ship prepared for landfall. Some Type-12 frigate steamed past in the distance.

The air became stuffy once within Sydney Heads. We were lining the ship's sides on the fo'c'sle, dressed in full blues, and it became decidedly uncomfortable; in addition, the camber of the deck made the standing hard work on the ankles and calves. I soon tired of the glamour of entering harbour in this fashion.

Moving further into the inner harbour, we passed the lovely HMAS QUEENBOROUGH, now laid up, riding high and awaiting disposal stripped and



neglected, a sad sight. Beyond us I made out Sydney Bridge and the Opera House. The unmistakable superstructure of HMAS SYDNEY was distinguishable amongst the gantries and sheds of Garden Island.

Gliding closer in, much of the RAN fleet seemed to be there. HMAS MELBOURNE was in dry-dock, undergoing refit, and looking shabby and unkempt. We passed HMAS SUPPLY, riding high by the bow, then moved in astern of HOBART, with the SYDNEY showing her port beam ahead. An impressive gathering.

Once our lines were ashore, the effort of manually taking up the slack began; three or so sailors myself included hauled on a spring. Then it was time for the ship's cable holders to slowly haul her alongside the wharf. Numbers of dockside workers some with hair of considerable length (they were civilians, and it was the seventies, after all) watched our manoeuvres with interest, as did families of ANZAC's personnel. Once everything was squared away on deck, and with bollard covers in place, I went back below, to pack, say my farewells, and prepare to "step".

### The 'Battle' Class Fleet Destroyer

This class of destroyer was the culmination of several decades of British destroyer design, and was evolved to meet the stringent requirements of the Pacific theatre during World War II, for which the standard 'War Emergency' destroyer types were not adequately equipped. The "Battles" were a class regarded by many as the most handsome to serve in the Navy.

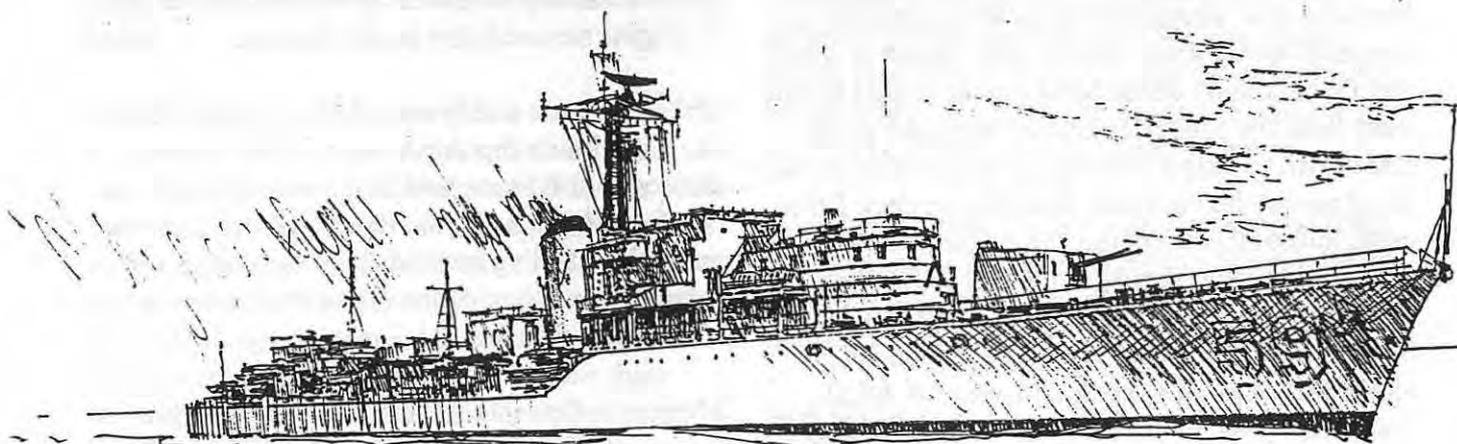
HMAS ANZAC, together with her sister TOBRUK, were ordered in 1945-46, the last of the 'Battle' class to be constructed. They were both built in Australian yards ANZAC at HMA Dockyard, Williamstown (launched August 20, 1948) and TOBRUK at Cockatoo, Sydney (December 12, 1947).<sup>4</sup>

For their time they were particularly well armed ships, carrying two twin 4.5 inch MK VI mountings forward, ANZAC's being manufactured here. Unlike their Royal Navy sisters, they were given a high deckhouse abaft the funnel with staggered single 40 mm Bofors MK VIIs to port and starboard; a centreline STAAG (Stabilised Tachometric Anti-Aircraft Gun) sited on the midships gundeck; the usual STAAGs 'en echelon' aft; two sets of pentad torpedo tubes, and a Squid mortar aft. Single Bofors abreast the bridge and one on 'B' gundeck completed the close-range armament. Like the RN 'Battles', they had a HA/LA MK VI director mounted above the bridge, but internally they were arranged to suit RAN accommodation requirements.

TOBRUK went into reserve in 1960 and ANZAC was converted to a Fleet Training Ship. Her director, 'B' mounting, the STAAGs, and the torpedo tubes were removed and extra deckhouses built forward and aft.

### References:

- Peter Hodges 1971 Battle Class Destroyers, Almark Publications, London
- H.T. Lenton 1970 British Fleet and Escort Destroyers, Vol 2, Macdonald, London



C. Sahagov 1995

# The Ditty Bag

An occasional collection of nautical trivia to inform, astound, amuse and inspire.



The sprat is an oily fish and in 1833 the sprat fishing industry on the east coast of England was so successful that an attempt was made to use the oil from the fish to produce gas to light London.

It was not successful.

As a young man a crewman on King William IV royal yacht the *Royal George* was very proud of the fact that the king had spoken to him. When asked what the king had said he replied: "Get out of my way, boy, damn yer."

John Harrison, the man who by his clock making abilities helped solve the problem of finding longitude, was a joiner by trade. Both his clock making and his literacy were self taught and his first clocks were almost entirely made of various woods, carefully selected for their particular properties. He completed his first clock in 1713 before he was 20 years old. A wooden clock he built over the door of a barn in 1722 is still working today and has never needed oiling. All the parts that would need oiling were made out of lignum vitae, a dense, oily wood.

The first Sydney-Hobart yacht race started on Boxing Day 1945. There were nine entrants and final results were:-

YACHTS	ELAPSED TIMES		
1. Rani	6 days	14 hours	22 minutes
2. Ambermerle	8	08	19
3. Winston Churchill	7	07	38
4. Kathleen	8	06	20
5. Horizon	8	07	47
6. Saltair	8	13	48
7. Mistral	8	12	56
8. Wayfarer	11	06	20
Archina	Retired		

## CORRECTED TIMES

1.	4 days	09 hours	38 minutes
2.	5	14	39
3.	5	15	20
4.	5	15	59
5.	5	19	23
6.	5	21	09
7.	7	17	13
8.	7	19	43

The first defender of the America's Cup was the yacht *Magic* (US) in August 1870. This was not however a single challenger meeting a single defender. That did not occur until 1876. *Magic* led a team of 17 schooners (including the original *America*, which came fourth) and defeated *Cambria* (UK) by 27 minutes elapsed time and over 39 minutes on corrected time.

The largest towing operation in history was probably the towing of the 'Mulberry Harbour' components across the English Channel in 1945. There were 132 tugs involved, comprising UK Ministry of War Transport - 42, British Admiralty - 30, US Navy - 19, US Army - 41. The number of vessels involved in the D-Day landings in Normandy in June 1945 was enormous. There were 1,213 naval combat ships including the battleships *Rodney* and *Warspite*, 23 cruisers, 105 destroyers and numerous frigates, corvettes and armed trawlers. There were also 4,126 landing ships and craft, 736 auxiliary craft and 864 merchantmen. These merchantmen included 80 troop carrying vessels. It also included the *Leviathan*, a suction dredge built in 1904, which went over just behind the first wave of ships (mine sweepers) to dredge the channels for the assault ships.



## FOOD FOR THOUGHT !!

Rod Dickson has again written about the possibility of building a further replica vessel. Having received no response regarding the building of a replica of the *Empress* Rod has suggested a smaller, cheaper alternative.

After having written numerous letters to various personages and institutions regarding the building of this states next replica vessel I have been met with the deafening sounds of silence. Not one reply has come in answering in the negative or positive about building the *EMPRESS*, and so I am forced to the conclusion that either the powers that be don't want another replica or that my suggestion didn't meet the whims and wishes of others. Speaking personally to others of a like mind as myself though has seen the opposite reaction and all agree that the project would be quite feasible, however, there are a few problems that would need to be sorted out. It is generally agreed that funding for the project could possibly be raised without too much bother and the vessel could be built to AMSA standards, surveyed and licensed for a passenger carrying role. So having built the vessel, what next? How do we keep paying for her? Do we join in with STAWA and run the vessel in conjunction with the *LEEWIN*. For example when the *LEEWIN* is visiting the outports would the *EMPRESS* be able to do daysails and extended tours to say Geraldton and Bunbury? Could she also carry the odd small cargo of say bagged wheat or wool in the time honoured tradition with the occasional bag of specially franked mail, (a special sea mail frank). The original *EMPRESS* as I have already stated visited all ports on this coast and traveled as far afield as China and South Africa and having seen the success of the *ENDEAVOUR* with her paid crewing arrangements it is possible that the builders and owners of the *EMPRESS* could do the same considering the upsurge in popularity of sailing ships around the world.

Having got that off my chest and hopefully spur the members, and others, into forming some sort of group to discuss the pros and cons of the next replica, I would now like to offer another solution. One that would be considerably cheaper to build, much more economical to operate and very

highly visible to the population of Perth as the vessel would never leave the river.

I'm referring, of course, to the first moderately successful, locally built steam boat, the *PIONEER*. She was jointly built by Solomon Cook, Thomas William Mews and ? Stevenson. Mews constructed the hull, Stevenson the engine and Cook the boiler. Cook also oversaw the whole project. In fact Solomon Cook was quite an innovative person and built or supervised the construction of four river steamers. He was an American who deserted from his whaling ship at Albany and went on to bigger and better things in life.

The hull, of the *PIONEER*, was a simple box shape with the engine and boiler aft and she was fitted with a stern paddle wheel extending the width of the vessel. With the weight of the engines and boilers aft the passengers has to stand, or sit in the forward well to bring her to an even keel. She had a very shallow draft to allow her to pass over the river flats and sand banks around Heirrisson Island and the Burswood area.

The vessel was designed for the Perth to Guildford run and on her maiden voyage up river, on the 21st of January 1857, with twenty guests she was greeted with acclamation. Unfortunately on the run down river a steam gland blew out and the passengers not understanding what was happening jumped overboard, fortunately into shallow water and only their dignity was harmed !!

On the 4th of Feb 1857 the *PIONEER* carried the Governor and Mrs. Kennedy and their entourage to Guildford for an official visit to that town and the journey from Perth to Guildford took approximately two hours to complete. Even though her main run was from Perth to Guildford she also made the occasional voyage to Fremantle when necessary.

The *PIONEER* was also used as a cargo carrying



vessel and used to bring wool and other produce from the outlying areas to Perth's William Street jetty for local use and for transshipment to Fremantle and the world. Another of her main uses was to ferry punters and race-goers to Belmont whenever the meetings were being held. The PIONEER ran on this regular advertised service until at least 1883. After her career on the river was over she became a houseboat for the Ahern family and then just became a derelict on the Perth foreshore. When the land filling along the Esplanade was being carried out the old PIONEER was filled in and now lies buried somewhere just to the west of William Street and under the bus station.

At this stage there is only one photo in extant of this pioneering steamer which shows in detail the working end of the vessel. Clearly shown is the large boiler and the tall, fold down funnel with the engine abaft this. The photo also shows the stern paddle wheel

with what appears to be a crank arrangement to drive it around. It is similar in appearance to the driving rods of a steam train. The hull is a very simple barge shape and although the bows aren't shown the stern is cut away. From contemporary drawings and paintings we get the idea that the bow was square but sloped under at about a 45 degree angle.

Once again it should be possible to raise funds for her construction and what I envisage, and this is only a personal view, is that she would complement the Old Perth Port and make occasional trips upriver on what would be a history tour with stops at Tranby House and Woodbridge, which would be her terminus upriver. She could also make the odd trip downriver as well and would be a definite novelty on the river. It would bring history to life for the present and future generations.

### An Answer to Mr N.P. Curmudgeon

In the journal for March Mr N.P. Curmudgeon questions some of the information given in the December 1999 edition. I am glad that the journal is provoking responses from readers. Mr Curmudgeon may be right but I am quoting my sources so that the matter can be further debated as there is nothing quite like a good verbal stoush! This is also an excellent way of learning.

#### RATES

With regard to the rating of ships I can do no more than quote from *The Oxford Companion To Ships And The Sea* edited by Peter Kemp and published by Oxford University Press, London, in 1976. "The system was introduced in Britain by Admiral Lord Anson during his first term as First Lord of the Admiralty (1751 - 6) but some naval writers have antedated it for the sake of convenience in describing earlier warships."

Richard Woodman in *The History of the Ship*, Conway Maritime Press, 1997, states "During the reforms of the French navy carried out by Colbert in the 1730s, the system of rating was introduced and this was soon adopted in other European navies. In the Royal Navy it was based upon the 'great guns',....."

Brian Lavery in *The Arming and Fitting of English Ships of War 1600 - 1815* states "It was 1755 before Anson was able to create a Navy Board to support him in his work, rather than obstruct him, but thereafter reforms began to take place very quickly. Before 1755 the gunning of ships was usually

rather an afterthought. Before 1677 they were fitted with what was available, and after this date with what the flag officers or the Navy Board thought was most appropriate. After 1755 the best ships were designed round a specific armament..... This heralded the end of the establishments, both of dimensions and of guns. That of 1745 was the last to be put into effect....."

#### THERMOPYLAE

The length of 81 feet given for the raised quarter deck of the Thermopylae comes from notes I made some years ago from a book entitled '*Clippers For The Record*' by Marny Matheson, published by Spectrum Publications, Melbourne in 1984. The author is a descendant of C. Matheson, a captain of the Thermopylae in the mid to late 1870's. I concede that MacGregor's drawings show a shorter quarter deck.

#### FRANCE II

The source for the claim of 420 miles in a day's run for the France II comes from "*The History of the Ship*" by Richard Woodman, published by Conway Maritime Press, London, 1997. It occurred in 1921 during a ninety day passage from Wellington, New Zealand, to London and was when she had aboard the record wool cargo also mentioned in The Ditty Bag.

According to *The Oxford Companion To Ships And The Sea* the France II, at 8,000 tons deadweight, was the largest sailing ship ever built. She was abandoned by her crew after going on a reef near Noumea in 1922.



## DAVID and GOLIATH

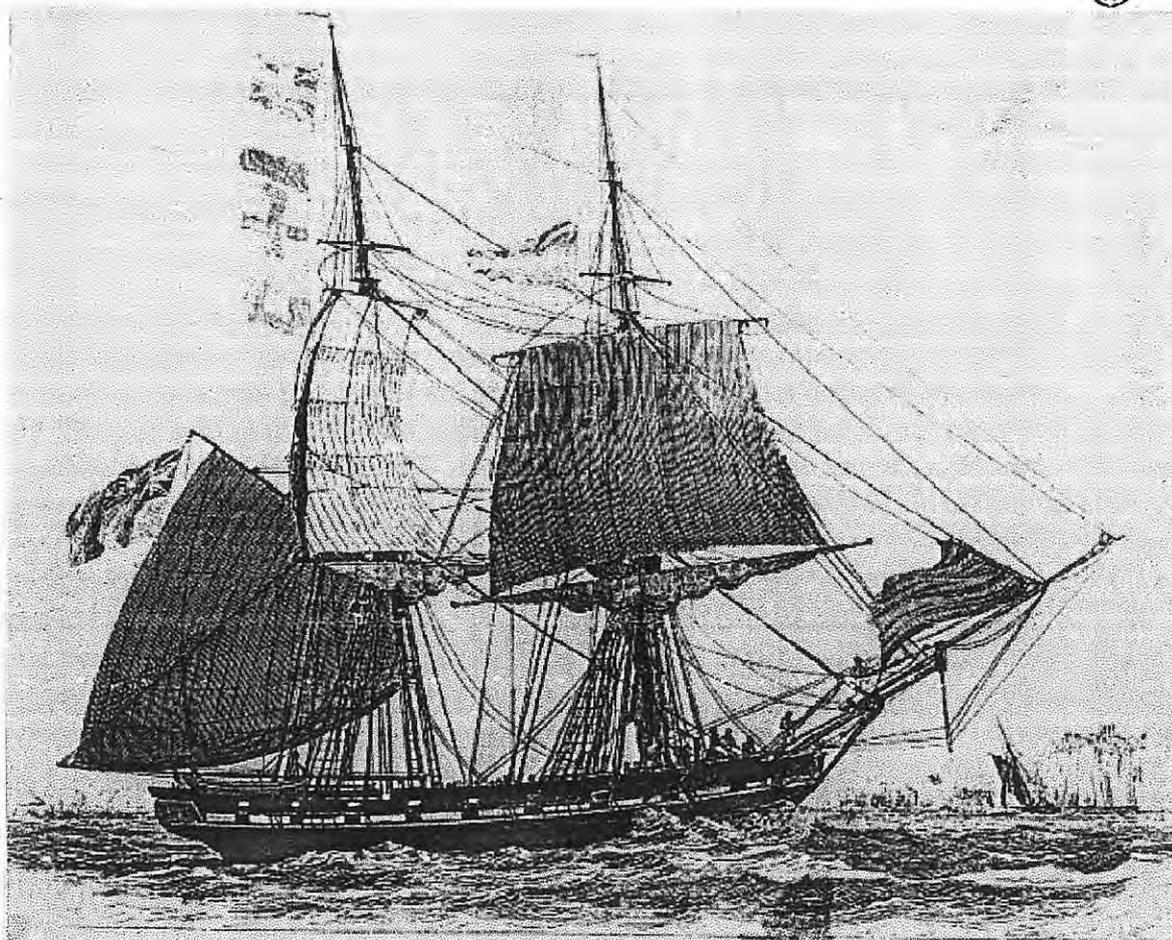
I recently read an account of a battle of the David and Goliath type which I thought might interest readers of the Journal. It occurred in January 1801 in the Mediterranean Sea between vessels of the English and Spanish navies and the story is told by the English author James Henderson in his book 'Brigs and Sloops'.

The *SPEEDY* was a brig-sloop, one of the small, unrated and often overlooked vessels of the Navy of Nelson's time. She was commanded by Lieutenant Thomas, Lord Cochrane, a Scottish nobleman, son of the Earl of Dundonald. She was his first command in early 1800. Her normal complement was 6 officers (only 2 of whom were commissioned, the other being Lieutenant Parker, the second-in-command) and 84 men. She was quite small for her class being only 158 tons or 1¾ tons per man compared with a frigate's 4 tons per man. *SPEEDY* carried only 10 tons of water, about 25 gallons per man. This meant her time away from port was very limited. Her armament was very small. It is said that on one occasion Cochrane carried a complete broadside – seven shot - in his coat pockets as he walked the quarter deck!

*SPEEDY*'s first task as a convoy escort resulted in the capture of a French privateer. She was subsequently sent to cruise the coast of Spain and attack anything in sight. Over the next few months she captured a considerable number of prizes. She became such a thorn in the side of the Spanish that they outfitted a frigate specially to 'abate the nuisance'. In December 1800 she was stopped by the Spanish Frigate *GAMO*, but by using the ruse that she was the Danish vessel *CLOMER*, two days out from Algiers where the plague was raging, Cochrane saved the *SPEEDY* from serious investigation and escaped. Some of the officers on the brig thought that despite *GAMO*'s six to one superiority they would like to have had a go at her. The fiery Cochrane said he would think about it.

I can do no better than to quote Henderson when, at the beginning of 1801, '*another profitable cruise on the coast of Spain left the SPEEDY with a crew of only 54, due to the prize crews sent with the captured ships to Port Mahon. Off Barcelona a large ship was sighted sailing close under the land, and she was eventually made out to be the GAMO. Cochrane piped all hands, told them what was before them, and gave his orders. As the ships approached the GAMO fired a gun and hoisted her Spanish colours, the usual way of demanding that a strange ship should identify herself. The SPEEDY hoisted American colours and continued to approach. In the odd sort of sea-etiquette of the period it was perfectly all right to show false colours so long as one hoisted the true colours before opening fire; to fire under false colours laid the whole crew open to the penalties of piracy. The Spaniard hesitated long enough for the SPEEDY to go about on the other tack, when she ran up the British ensign, and the GAMO fired a broadside without hitting anything. A second time she fired, also without effect; while the SPEEDY came on in perfect silence, until she ran alongside and locked her yards in the Spaniard's rigging.*

*This manoeuvre was not bravado: during the previous encounter Cochrane had taken a long look at the GAMO, and had noted that not only was her main battery mounted fairly high, her ports did not allow for the guns being depressed. The low-velocity cannon of the period needed a high trajectory to carry any distance; it was a matter of tossing the shot rather than shooting it with velocity. If the port were made large enough to allow of depressing the gun as well as elevating it there would be very little bulwark left to give an impression of protection to the gun-crew. Locked alongside, the SPEEDY was so small and so low in the water that the shot of the GAMO roared through her rigging, with damage to the cordage and sails but very little to her men; whereas the little guns of the SPEEDY, being elevated and double-shotted, sent their light shot smashing up through the sides and deck with such effect that the first*

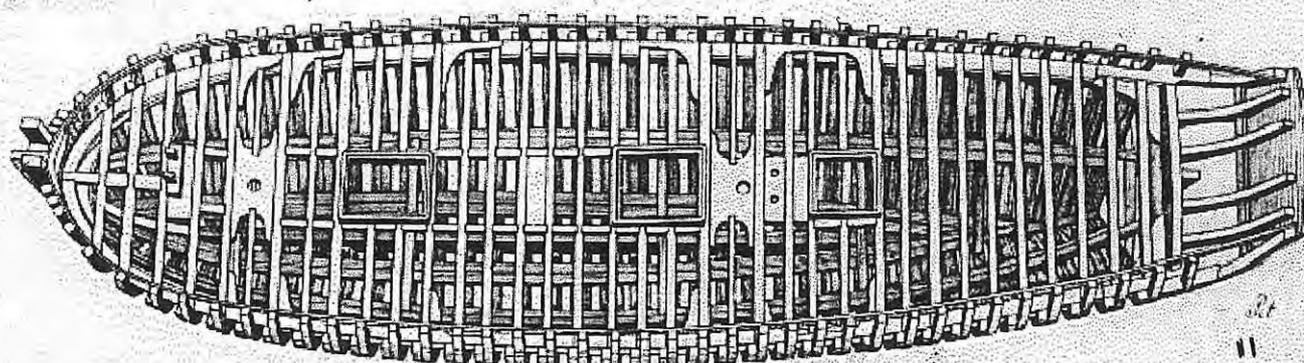


The above picture is of the brig sloop *HMS Wolf*, a vessel of very similar size and appearance to *HMS Speedy*.

From an etching by E.W. Cooke

The picture below illustrates the construction of a brig sloop of that period.

From a drawing by E.W. Petrejus





broadside killed the captain and boatswain. The Spanish next-in-command saw his disadvantage, and gave the order for boarding, which was heard just as clearly on the SPEEDY. When the Spaniards were assembled for boarding, the SPEEDY sheered off, and put a broadside and a volley of musketry into the close ranks. Again and a third time was this manoeuvre repeated, until the Spaniards gave up the idea of boarding and stood to their guns, however little effective.

This, however, could not continue; the SPEEDY was in exactly the position of the lady who went for a ride on a tiger; as long as she remained close enough she could get along well enough, but she could not get away. Cochrane determined to board the GAMO with all hands. The surgeon, Mr Guthrie (descended, I believe, from a locally famous Covenanter family), volunteered to take the tiller, and with two or possibly three boys formed the whole ship's complement. With admirable skill he laid the SPEEDY right alongside the GAMO, and the boarders leapt up her side, one party at the head and the other at the waist, which was as far as the SPEEDY extended. The boarders at the head had been ordered to blacken their faces and generally make themselves look like pirates, and when they emerged through the gun smoke, yelling like fiends, the Spaniards wavered for a moment; and in that moment they were assailed in flank and rear by the main party. Seeing an opportunity, Cochrane sent a hand to haul down the Spanish colours; the Spaniards supposed that their officers had surrendered the ship, and laid down their arms. It was a legend in the Navy that the surrender was expedited by Cochrane calling to the SPEEDY 'Send another fifty men!' to which the surgeon replied 'Fifty men - aye aye Sir!'

All troubles were not over, for the unwounded prisoners numbered about 270, almost seven times the unwounded of the SPEEDY. The officers were transferred to the sloop, and the men battened down under hatches; but there must have been very little sleep for Cochrane and his men for the next few days, until they brought their big prize into Port Mahon. This was perhaps the most astounding single-ship encounter in all recorded history. There have been cases where the weaker ship has defended herself courageously, and sometimes successfully; but never before or since has a ship actually attacked another of an altogether superior class, and conquered. The bare statistics show the amazing disparity of force:

	<u>SPEEDY</u>	<u>GAMO</u>
Tonnage	158	Over 600
Main-deck guns	14, 4-pounders	22, 12-pounders
Quarter-deck guns	None	8, 8-pounders
		2, 24-pound carronades
Weight of broadside	28 pounds	190 pounds
Total crew	54	319

Of these crews, the SPEEDY lost three killed and nine wounded, including Lieutenant Parker; the GAMO 14 killed, including her captain, and 41 wounded, total 55 casualties, one more than the whole crew with which the SPEEDY went into action'.

Thomas Cochrane lead a controversial and very chequered career and there will be an article on him in the next edition of this journal.

#### Rferences

Henderson, J., *Sloops and Brigs*. Adlard Coles Ltd., London, 1972.

I would like to thank all those who have made a special effort to contribute to this Journal. It is great to think that so many members have made a special effort to answer the plea which I made in the last edition. My studies in Albany are going well, but I will continue to need your contributions for following editions. Keep up the good work!



# THE ALBANY WHALEBOAT ASSOCIATION

The following article has been written by Maurice Howlett. Maurice is a member of the above association and the coordinator of the Wooden Boat Building course at Albany TAFE

In the 1995 March issue of the Maritime Heritage Association Journal, an article was written about whaleboat racing on Princess Royal Harbour in Albany. The races were conducted as part of the 1994 Albany Maritime Festival, which coincided with the visit of the replica sailing ship *Endeavour*. Two whaleboats were shipped from Warrnambool in Victoria to Bunbury, and later road transported to Albany to be part of the celebrations.

A number of rowing teams were formed, including crews from the *Endeavour* and *HMAS Darwin* (which was also in port for the festival), with Victoria being represented by an experienced team from Warrnambool, home of the borrowed boats. This Victorian team had competed against Mystic Seaport, Connecticut on two previous occasions.

Considering the lack of experience and training the local teams acquitted themselves quite well, however they were defeated by the experience and knowledge of the Victorian team.

Following the Maritime Festival, the Victorians issued a challenge by inviting an Albany team to compete in Warrnambool at the Wunta Festival in February of the following year. This challenge was accepted and a team trained for months in preparation for the event.

Race day saw the team perform creditably, finishing second in the mixed open, the men's open, the national championship event, and third in the bathtub derby. The Albany Whaleboat Association was now formed.

In the following years the association existed

with a small but very determined membership, but more surprisingly the absence of a boat. This can be likened to a jockey without a horse. However their endless efforts and perseverance in the quest for a boat has finally come to fruition with the launching of the first of two whaleboats on December 19<sup>th</sup> 1999.

The success in gaining a boat was the result of a combination of factors.

In addition to their own fund-raising efforts, the Albany Maritime Heritage Association provided financial assistance towards the cost of the first boat, and recently the Whaleboat Association was successful in gaining government funding for the second boat which will be built this year.

The whaleboat Association approached Great Southern Regional College of TAFE for the possibility of having a boat built as part of an education program. While a traditional wooden boat building course did not exist within TAFE, the college was able to obtain a course on licence from the renowned Shipwright's Point School of Wooden Boat Building in Franklin, Tasmania.

The shed used for the construction of the *Duyfken* in Fremantle was gifted to the City of Albany and a WA Lotteries Commission grant provided the necessary funding required to relocate the shed. A portion of the Duyfken shed was used by the TAFE Albany School Wooden Boat Building course to construct the first boat and also provide storage, maintenance and other facilities.

Following completion of the first whaleboat, the association has begun the process of planning



and preparing for future events.

The first of these events was the launching of the first whaleboat, *City of Albany*, on December 19<sup>th</sup> 1999 at the Albany Duyfken Boatshed. The ceremony included the hand over by TAFE, followed by the official naming and launch by Alison Goode the mayor of Albany.

July 2000 the association will celebrate the keel laying of the second whaleboat.

December will see the launching of the second whaleboat.

Australia Day 26<sup>th</sup> January 2001, Albany will host a local Whaleboat Regatta using the two boats and would like to have other interested towns nominate a rowing team.

Come on Geraldton, Fremantle, Bunbury and others, put a team together and give it a go.

In mid to late 2001, Albany will host the National Whaleboat Regatta as part of a maritime festival in celebration of Australia's Centenary of Federation. Victorian and Tasmanian teams will be invited to take part in this competition.

## THE WHALEBOAT

In keeping with the Victorian boats and the availability of plans from Mystic Seaport, Connecticut, the association opted to have Beetle Whaleboats built.

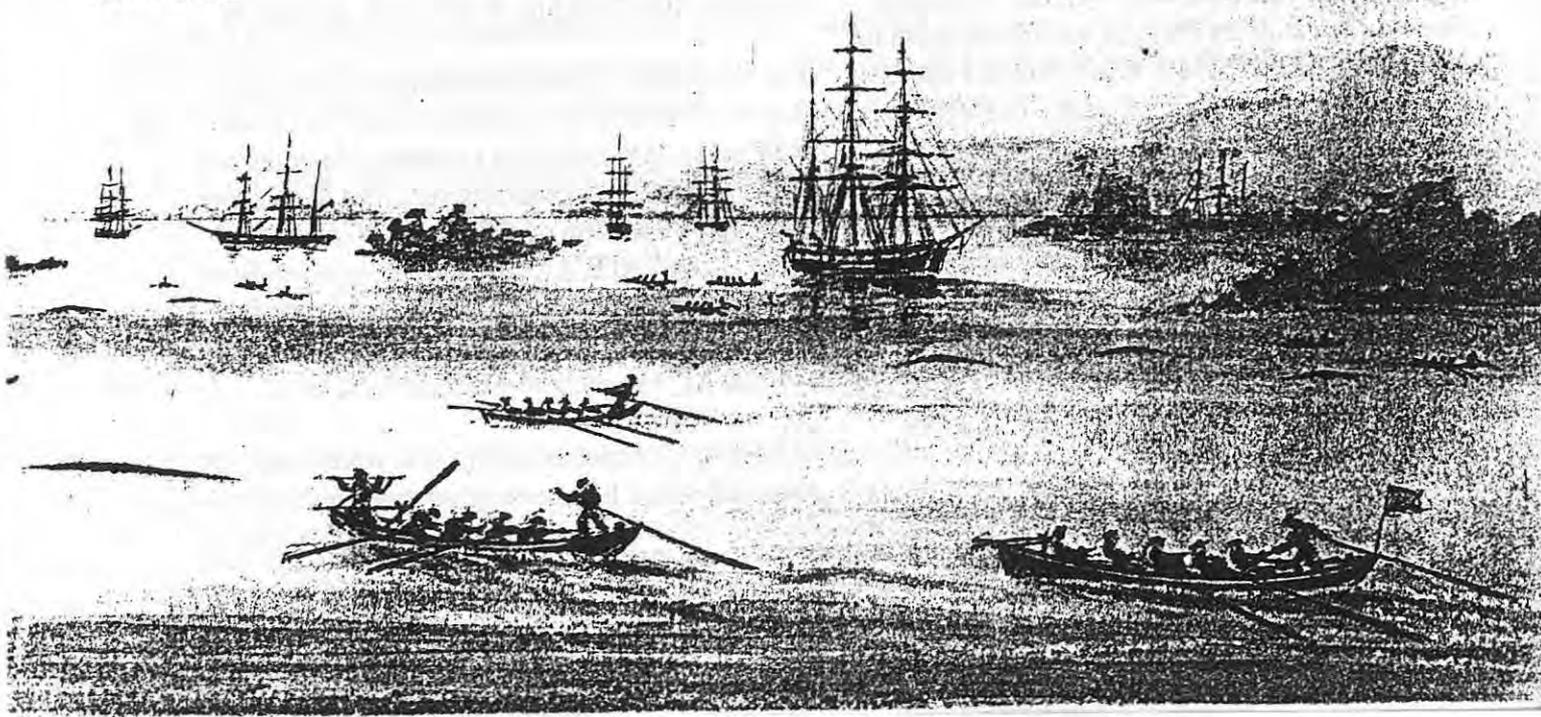
These are 28'6" x 6'5" x 2'2" open, double ended boats and are built with a combination of both clinker and carvel construction on steam bent frames. They carried a crew of 6, consisting of 5 rowers and a sweep. The oars vary in length with two at 15', two at 16'. One at 17' and the sweep at a massive 21'4".

Gaff rigged sails have a total area of 294 square feet, which, combined with the narrow beam, make for a fast but somewhat tender boat under sail.

Materials used for construction included blackbutt keel, laminated jarrah stems, 1/2" huon pine planking on karri steam bent frames of 2" x 1" on edge, and thwarts, gunnels and other trim of nyatoh. Oars are laminated oregon with a hardwood central spline and all spars are hollow section oregon.

The association has had a purpose built trailer constructed, and with the completed boat weighing in at approximately 800kg it is a viable towing proposition.

For more information or details about the Albany Whaleboat Association contact :-  
Frank O'Donnel, President, on 0898 428787 or  
Paul Robertson on 0898 412136.



# DUYFKEN: CHARTING A SEA OF MISCONCEPTIONS

Nick Burningham

*At the time of writing, the Duyfken replica is sailing from Geraldton to Denham, making eight knots as she approaches Kalbarri at the start of her "Chevron 2000 Expedition" voyage to re-enact the original Duyfken's historic landfall on the Cape York Peninsula of Queensland.*

*The Duyfken replica has already had a scrape with a coral head in the Abrolhos (a tradition with Dutch sailing ships) but she is sailing well. During her first twenty-four hours out of Fremantle she covered about 170 nautical miles, a respectable days run for a small square rigger of 16th century design. As Captain Peter Manthorpe, first mate Garry Wilson, and the crew get more familiar with the ship, performance should improve further. They will need to get pretty good at persuading her to go to windward if they are to beat all the way up to Cape York against the dry season southeasters.*

The construction of the *Duyfken* is widely regarded as a very successful project and the finished ship is certainly an aesthetic triumph. One of the project's aims was to increase public awareness of the original ship's historic voyage and the important part played by Dutch mariners in the early recorded history of Australia.

The original *Duyfken* made the first historically recorded voyage to *Australia*, and that message is probably fairly well absorbed by the public. The details of the original ship's voyage are still little known, and almost everything that is "known" by historians and the public is WRONG!

Matthew Flinders knew about *Duyfken's* voyage. On 8th November, 1802, exploring the same part of Cape York Peninsula that *Duyfken* had surveyed almost two hundred years earlier, Flinders gave the name Duyfken Point to the low headland on the northern side of the bay now called Albatross Bay. Two days later he recorded in his journal ". . . noon, our latitude was then 14° 32' 35", longitude 141° 32', being nearly the position of Cape Keer-weer, at which point the Yacht *Duyfken* gave up her examination".

In the introduction to his "A Voyage to Terra Australis" he succinctly set out what was understood about *Duyfken's* voyage.

*"The Course of the Duyfken, from New Guinea, was southward, along the islands on the west side of Torres strait, to that part of Terra Australis, a little to the west and south of Cape York; but all these lands were thought to be connected, and to form the west coast of New Guinea."*

Flinders knew about *Duyfken* because back in Cook's time, the RN hydrographer Dalrymple accessed documents including the instructions given to Abel Tasman for his second voyage of exploration — a voyage to Cape York Peninsula and the Gulf of Carpentaria. Those instructions do suggest that Cape York was thought to be part of New Guinea.

Since then other historical evidence has come to light, and has been the subject of further study. Much the most impor-

tant evidence is a chart in the "Atlas van Hem" (sometimes known as the "Secret Atlas of the Dutch East India Company") which clearly and explicitly shows the course followed by *Duyfken* in 1605–6. The inscription on the chart states that it "shows the routes taken by the jacht *Duyfken* on the outward, as well as the return voyage . . ." *Duyfken* did not follow the New Guinea coast to Torres Strait, follow the islands of the Strait then work down the Cape York Peninsula coast as far as Cape Keer-weer before turning for home. Her route ran in the opposite direction, surveying Cape York Peninsula before turning north across Torres Strait and finding the barrier of reefs on the southern coast of New Guinea, yet Flinders' understanding of the voyage has not been superseded in most histories.

Some historians, starting with Gunter Schilder, have spotted the course shown on the chart, but have still not analysed the significance. Schilder has accepted that Willem Janszoon and everyone on *Duyfken* thought Cape York to be joined to New Guinea. On the face of things, there is a very good reason for making this assumption — Janszoon, or whoever drew the original chart, labelled the Cape York Peninsula "Nova Guinea".

But things are not always what they seem. What would Jansz have understood by "Nova Guinea"?

There is no doubt that he was looking for Nova Guinea. The instructions issued by Governor Veerschoor to Jansz and his supercargo Rosengein direct them ". . . to discover the great land Nova Guinea and other undiscovered east and southlands." John Saris, an English merchant based in Bantam Java, noted the departure of *Duyfken* on her voyage of discovery:

*"The eighteenth [November, 1605], heere departed a small pinasse of the Flemmings, for the discovery of the Island called Nova ginnea, which, as it is said, affordeth great store of Gold."*

Much of the island we know as New Guinea had already been discovered by 1605, and it had not afforded great store of gold. How could Veerschoor direct exploration for an island that was already known? Why did Saris think it was said that great store of gold came from that island?

The Nova Guinea in question was not our New Guinea. It was either a theoretical island lying just off the Great Southland, or it was a region of that undiscovered Southland. Which ever it was, it was the land from which King Solomon's fleet had brought great store of gold.

The existence of a huge southern continent (to counter-balance the landmasses of the northern hemisphere) was a tenet of theoretical geography (for which Ptolemy is sometimes blamed). The location, somewhere away to the southeast, beyond the furthest Indies, of Ophir and Tharshish (where King Solomon's mines were) had been "proved" by biblical scholars. Guinea in Africa had afforded great store of gold and, when discovered, this hypothesised land would be a new Guinea.



The island that we call New Guinea had been discovered, but it wasn't the hoped for new Guinea.

Janszoon would have been familiar with Dutch world maps such as those of Ortelius, Hondius and Mercator which showed the Great Southern Continent (Terra Australis Incognita) including the region called Nova Guinea. Ortelius's map shows it as an island separated from Terra Australis by a narrow strait, but the inscription on his map states that it is not known whether Nova Guinea is an island or joined to the Southern Continent.

*Duyfken* sailed east-south-east from the Spice Islands of Banda, first to the Kei islands, then to the Aru islands, visiting the entrepot at Dobbo, and perhaps talking to Asian merchants who visited New Guinea to trade products such as bird of paradise feathers. From Aru, they sailed east-south-east again until they came on the low lying and muddy coast of New Guinea, an area never previously visited by Europeans. The chart shows that they made detailed survey of the estuary of the Digul river (which has a fearsome tidal bore) and visited a village called Tiuri, but they did not label the land "Nova Guinea". The area is labelled "Larghlandt modderlandt" (Low land, muddy land).

From there, perhaps, because of thick wet season weather and the lee shore, *Duyfken* stood away to the south, out into the Arafura Sea, and was within a day's sail of the Wessel Islands before resuming the exploratory course east-south-east. That course brought them to the Cape York Peninsula at the river now known as the Pennefather river. Curiously, the coast running north-south conformed very well, both in location and alignment, with the west coast of the theorised Nova Guinea of Ortelius' map.

From Pennefather, *Duyfken* worked southwards past the point that Flinder's named *Duyfken* Point and into the wide but shallow bay now called Albatross Bay. Janszoon obviously didn't notice any albatross there because he called it *Vliege* bay (Fly Bay). From there they continued south, noting rivers and bays until the low and featureless coast trended away somewhat to the southeast in about 14° south (by their imprecise reckoning). At that point Janszoon decided to turn around, naming the point *Cabo Keer-weer* (Cape Turnaround).

We can only guess why they decided to turn north because *Duyfken*'s log books have been lost since sometime in the 17th century.

Carstenszoon who led the subsequent Dutch expedition to the area did have access to *Duyfken*'s log and in his own log noted, on 12th May 1623:

*"... in their ... huts on the beach we have found nothing except ... a piece of metal which the wounded man had in his nets and which he possibly received from the Duyfken."*

On 15th May he observed that the Aborigines in the area towards *Cape Keer-weer* "... have also knowledge of muskets whose terrible effects they learned in 1606 from the men of *Duyfken* who landed here."

Sailing northwards beyond the original landfall at Pennefather river, *Duyfken* evidently put into Port Musgrave and sent an expedition up one of the three rivers which debouch there. Again we know this from a comment in Carstenszoon's journal:

*"On 11th [May] we sailed close inshore past a large river (which in 1606 the men from the jacht Duyffken went up with a boat, on which occasion one of them was killed by projectiles of the natives) ..."*

*Duyfken* followed the coast until the point it turned north-east towards the tip of Cape York. At this point Janszoon continued northerly towards Prince of Wales Island which he simply called 't Hooght Eylant (the High Island). The chart indicates a boat sent ashore there. From the high island, *Duyfken* went further north, sailing across the western side of Torres Strait, charting islands including Moa and Badu before confronting an impenetrable line of reefs which Janszoon labelled in his straight-forward descriptive style "*Vuyle Bancken*" (foul banks or vile reefs). It was there that he concluded the program of exploration. *Duyfken* stood straight out to sea. Since the *Vuyle bancken* were some thirty nautical miles off the low-lying New Guinea coast, it is unlikely that *Duyfken*'s crew saw that coast, and they did not try to close with the New Guinea coast until they had sailed well to the west, approaching False Cape, where they had ventured out from some weeks or months previous.

Did Janszoon believe that Cape York Peninsula was joined to the island we call New Guinea? The chart showing *Duyfken*'s voyage gives no indication of any connection between Cape York and New Guinea. There is no evidence that Janszoon did make that mistaken assumption. We will never know for certain, but evidence suggest that he did not.

No Dutch chart showing Cape York joins it to New Guinea until after Tasman's voyage of 1644. Tasman was directed to investigate the area we know as Torres Strait but preferred to keep well out to sea, away from the reefs and dangerous currents.

The accuracy of the *Duyfken* chart shows that Janszoon spent some time in the western part of Torres Strait. The relative sizes and positions of the islands shown there make them identifiable (unlike the work of Carstenszoon and Tasman). Janszoon must have been a fine mariner. The investigation of both Torres Strait and Cape York Peninsula bespeaks remarkable seamanship. *Duyfken* was on the west coast of the Peninsula during the west monsoon or wet season, so Janszoon was exploring an unknown lee shore during a stormy season.

Perhaps the west monsoon was fading by the time he reached Torres Strait. Whatever the weather was doing, he would have experienced the very strong currents that flow unpredictably in the various passages between the islands and reefs. The strength of the currents would have suggested to Janszoon that he was not just sailing across a shallow bay. If, while he was there, either the west or east monsoon blew strongly for a few days, the current would have started to run consistently in the same direction as the wind, despite the tides, providing stronger evidence that he was in a strait with a large body of water at the other end.

It is well known that European nations involved in the exploration of distant lands were not anxious to publicise their discoveries — rather they hoped to keep them secret. However, we know that John Saris, an Englishman in Bantam, discovered what *Duyfken*'s mission was. He was presumably

interested to learn what *Duyfken* found. Some time after *Duyfken* got back to Banda, Saris noted:

*"The fifteenth of June [1606] have arrived Nockhoda Tingall a Cling-man from Banda, in a Java Juncke, laden with mace and nutmegs, the which he sold to the Guzerats; he told me that the Flemmings Pinnasse which went upon discovery for Nova Ginny, was returned to Banda, having found the Iland: but in sending their men on shoare to intreat of Trade, there were nine of them killed by the Heathens, which are men-eaters: so they were constrained to returne, finding no good to be doene there"*

Saris's information is at least secondhand, it may well be inaccurate, but it shows the difficulty of keeping secret a voyage of discovery.

The reported death of nine men has excited a good deal of speculation. Authors who believe that Janszoon mistook Cape

York Peninsula for New Guinea, tend to presume that the reported incident took place on our New Guinea, and that it happened on the outward voyage so that Jansz made most of the voyage with nearly half the crew already dead — it makes a good story.

We know from Carstenszoon that one man was killed on the Cape York Peninsula. We can only speculate where the other men were killed, if indeed they were. Again the chart offers a suggestion. If one assumes that Janszoon would not have continued his exploration with almost half the crew gone, then the deaths occurred at Tiuri, on Dolak island, near False Cape, New Guinea, on the return voyage. Until that point, the chart shows a voyage of close, coasting, survey. *Duyfken* returned to the village marked Tiuri on her way back from Torres Strait, and from there sailed away to the northwest, on a straight course, until they closed with another part of the New Guinea coast (which Janszoon called Os Papuas). They changed course by 90°, getting clear of the land again, until they reached the correct latitude for passing north of the Kei islands and running back to Banda. But a massacre at Tiuri is speculation.

A few months after *Duyfken*'s return, Torres passed through the strait that now bears his name, heading for Ternate in the Spice Islands and Manila. Whether Torres and his crew were more successful than *Duyfken*'s in keeping secret what they had found is another area of speculation.

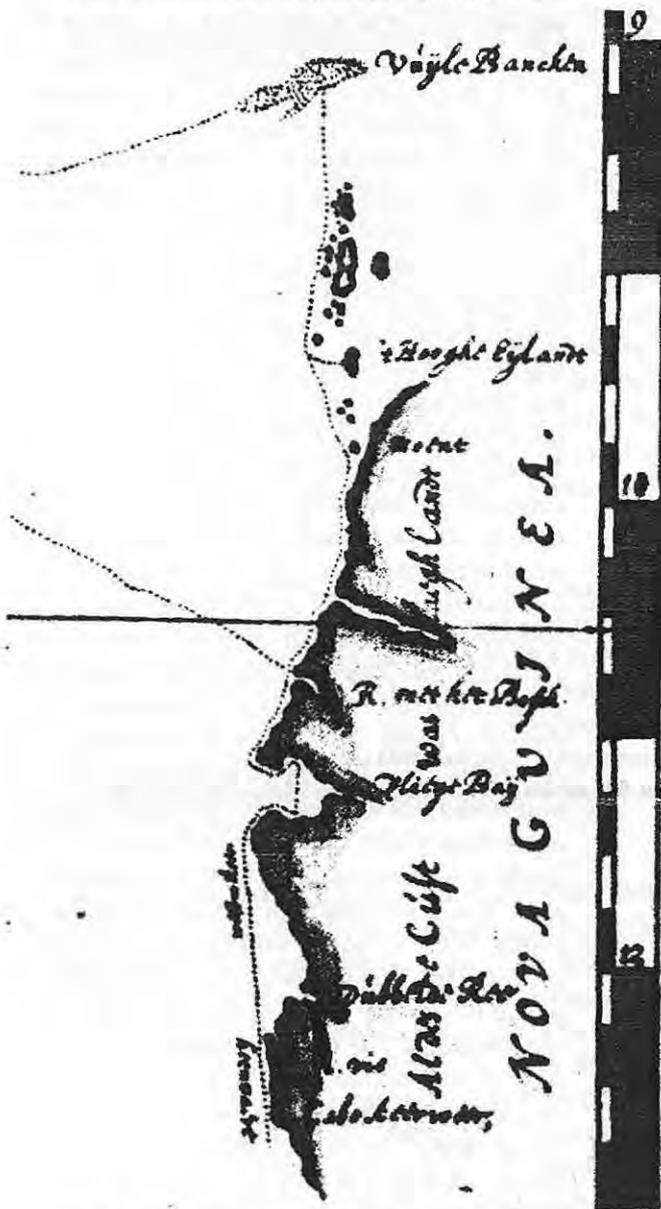
As noted above, Dutch charts before Tasman do show a gap between Cape York and New Guinea, and there is some evidence that the Dutch knew that a difficult and dangerous passage south of (our) New Guinea was possible. In 1616 two Dutch ships commanded by Schouten and Le Maire sailed across the Pacific to reach the Spice Islands, hoping to evade the VOC's monopoly. Their plan was to sail south of New Guinea but as they approached Australia/New Guinea, short of provisions, they were increasingly uneasy. Schouten still wanted to try the passage but the Le Maire and the crew preferred to take the known passage to the north of New Guinea.

On 18th may, 1616, Schouten recorded the reasons for their decision to go north:

*"... if we proceeded on the same track [sailing west on 15°S] we should without doubt fall to southward of New Guinea; and in case of not finding a passage to the south (which was dangerous and uncertain), and then the ship and goods would be lost..."* (Dalrymple's translation)

Schouten's comments are ambiguous, but he seems to have believed (correctly) that by sailing west in 15°S he would reach land and that he could pass between it and New Guinea somewhere north of that, but the passage was dangerous and uncertain. If that is what he meant, he did indeed know of Torres Strait.

Finally, we should note the inscription on the first map to incorporate *Duyfken*'s discoveries: Hessel Gerritsz' 1622 chart notes "the coast from 9-14 degees . . . called here the coast of Nova Guinea, was sailed along by Jan Rosengein . . ." (*Duyfken*'s supercargo). Gerritsz is making the point that on this particular chart, the name Nova Guinea is applied to our Cape York coast, not to the island we know as New Guinea.



The portion of the *Duyfken* chart showing Cape York Peninsula and Torres Strait



# BOOK REVIEW

By Ronald Richards

## THE LOG OF THE *MAKEN*

By Ian Nicolson (Peter Davies, London, 1961)

This book was published in 1961 and is now quite rare, though several MHA members will have read it and at least two have copies.

There have been many books on the experiences of intrepid mariners (usually complete amateurs) who undertake voyages across the oceans in all types of craft – for a host of reasons – and with varying degrees of success.

This book is about a 24-year old Englishman who helped crew an ex-Norwegian sea-going lifeboat 14,000 miles from England to Vancouver, via the Panama Canal.

The *Maken* was a 45-foot ketch built in 1910 as one of the lifeboats which Norway sent to sea from September until May each year to wait on station until required to assist rescuing crews from vessels in distress. Keeping the boats at sea rather than launching them from shore when required was done because of the difficulty at that time in getting lifeboats to windward from the coastline in gale conditions.

As one would expect, *Maken* was built on massive lines; Ian Nicolson explains that these vessels had to be rugged – "... truly stupendous and virtually unbreakable, regardless of weather conditions". The mainmast was 45 feet high and of 18 inches diameter at deck level; standing rigging was of  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch steel wire; and the running rigging ropes were an inch thick. Canvas was of like strength – so thick and heavy that setting or reducing sail was a major project even in calm conditions.

The *Maken* had been designed with a large crew in mind, so when she set off with a crew of three, difficulties were to be expected. There was an engine – a massive single cylinder semi-diesel (glow plug?) creature which ran on paraffin (kerosene?) and took at least twenty minutes to start. The author explained:

*The procedure went like this: First the galley pressure-stove (primus stove?) was lit. Yachtsmen will know the cursing, fiddling messing-about which that simple sentence sums up. Sometimes the stove behaved and roared into life quite quickly; at other times it was found, too late, to need refilling with [kerosene]. The pricker might be rusty, or the boat might roll just*

*when the pricker was going into the hole, so that the pricker got broken.*

*Once the stove was going just right, the top of our blow-lamp was held against the flame to heat. This was no ordinary blowlamp [sic], but a gigantic model, in keeping with everything else aboard; it stood about eighteen inches high, a truly lethal weapon. Before heating its topknot in the cooker flame it was necessary to pump the blowlamp exactly fifty times. When the top was hot right through, the operator would turn the valve on the blowlamp. Three things might happen at this stage. A hot, vicious, blue flame should shoot out of the spout, a wicked flame full of power and noise. That is what the operator was trying to achieve. However, sometimes nothing happened. That meant the operator had either forgotten to fill the blowlamp with [kerosene], or he had not held it right in the cooker flame and it was not hot enough. Or perhaps he had only pumped it forty-eight times instead of the statutory fifty. The third possibility was the most exciting of all: if the operator had negligently pumped fifty-two times, instead of a short hot blue flame, a long waggly yellow one would whip out of the nozzle. This long dragon's tongue of flame was laden with burning gats of [kerosene]. It was completely uncontrollable and would lick with hot embrace anything and everything. Other crew members would find their trousers growing suddenly hot. The bunk curtains would smoulder, the cushions would turn yellow, there would be wild shouting and yelling, and patches of the white paint on the bulkheads would blister due partly to the flame, partly to the language. The wretched operator would have to rush up the steep ladder to the deck, bearing his frightening burden, to douse the flames as best he might. The obvious thing would have been to hurl the whole blazing mass into the quenching sea, but far offshore one cannot replace vital pieces of machinery.*

Once the blowlamp was working properly it was taken to the engine room:



*The engine room was not a pleasant place. It lacked both light and ventilation. In the centre stood the massive single cylinder, a tower of rusty steel coated with oil, grime and soot. Various pipes meandered about with disconcerting lack of straightness, and some sharp bends which were rank bad engineering. At the fore end of the engine was the flywheel. If everything else on the *Maken* was oversize, the flywheel gout all the other gear. It lurked deep down in the bilge, a thick circle of steel so ponderous in appearance that at first glance one could be excused for wondering if any human hand could turn such a vast piece of ironware ....*

*Down the engine-room ladder our operator directs the blowlamp on to the top of the engine. The idea is to get the top of the cylinder thoroughly hot. Meanwhile a second victim has climbed into the pit of horrors and is oiling various points on the engine. There are, dotted about in the most remarkably inaccessible places, little brass bowls, like egg cups, which have to be filled with oil from a battered old can. Doing this in the dark, with the ship pitching in a seaway, it was not surprising that plenty of oil spilled into the bilge. Naturally the risk of an engine seize-up was not to be considered, so we were liberal with the oil. This merely doubled the quantity which went into the bilge.*

*With the top of the cylinder almost glowing hot, one victim would pump the fuel into the cylinder while the other rocked the gargantuan flywheel backwards and forwards. If all went according to plan and prayer, there would be a thumpety-thumpety-thump and the engine would go at once and for ever till the fuel ran out.*

Being a gaff-rigged ketch, the boat did not sail well to windward, so the course was usually set to make the best use of a following breeze, if possible. If the breeze turned into a gale, sail would have to be taken in. In order to take in a reef or two, the gaff had to be lowered. As the sheaves invariably rusted to the pins, the only way to get the rigging to run was to stand on the gaff and jump up and down until something gave way. This must have been rather interesting in high wind, at night, and with the boat tossing around. Once the gaff had come down, the crew then had to manhandle the canvas below, which, like everything else on the *Maken*, was tough and unyielding.

Apart from a lot of frustration from the incompetence of the authorities while the *Maken* was in Portuguese waters and an annoying encounter with thieves in Barbados, the first part of the voyage – across the Atlantic – was relatively uneventful. Getting through the Panama canal was fairly easy and inexpensive (the charge was based on tonnage and cost about \$7.00). Once in the Pacific a major problem was a lack of wind, together with the overbearing heat and humidity, but as higher latitudes were reached conditions became much better – and much cooler. After nearly colliding with the prison island of Alcatraz, the *Maken* finally berthed in San Francisco. She left there and eventually reached her destination of Vancouver where the author left the ship.

Ian Nicolson worked in Canada for a period and then sailed home single-handed in a yacht he purchased. He wrote another book about this voyage, called *Sea-Saint*.

This book makes very entertaining reading, and illustrates some of the hardships faced by yachtsmen undertaking long voyages in vessels not ideally suited to the purpose. Danger, discomfort, boredom and lots of back-breaking hard work always seem to result from such "acts of folly", but the author tells all with clarity and humour. One could argue that better technology means that sailing across oceans is now not so dangerous and difficult as Ian Nicolson's experience – but even if it were, people would not be put off by what happened to him – as he himself was not.



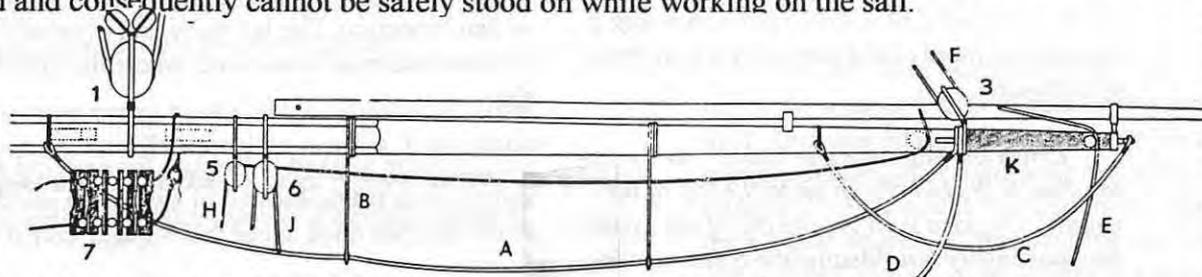
Colin Archer 1832 –1921  
Designer of the *Maken*



# QUIZ

## Answers from March quiz:

1. **Yardarm** – that part of a yard which lies outboard of the lifts at each end. The outermost ends of the yard. It is a common to call the whole yard a *yardarm* but this is an incorrect use of the term.
2. **Flemish horse** – the short foot rope at the end of a yard used by the man at the very outer end when furling or reefing sail. This is required as the normal footrope rises at its end to be attached to the yard and consequently cannot be safely stood on while working on the sail.



C – This rope is called a Flemish Horse.

K – The shaded section K is the yardarm.

3. **Vlamingh's ships** – *Geelvinck* (means Yellow Finch also surname of a director of VOC).  
*Nyptangh* (means Nipper or Pincers)  
*Weseltje* (means Little Weasel)

## Questions for June:

1. What is a logger head?
2. What is the difference between hawser laid, shroud laid and cable laid rope?
3. In what year was the English East India Company ship the *Tryall* wrecked off the WA coast?

Answers in September journal.