

# MARITIME HERITAGE ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

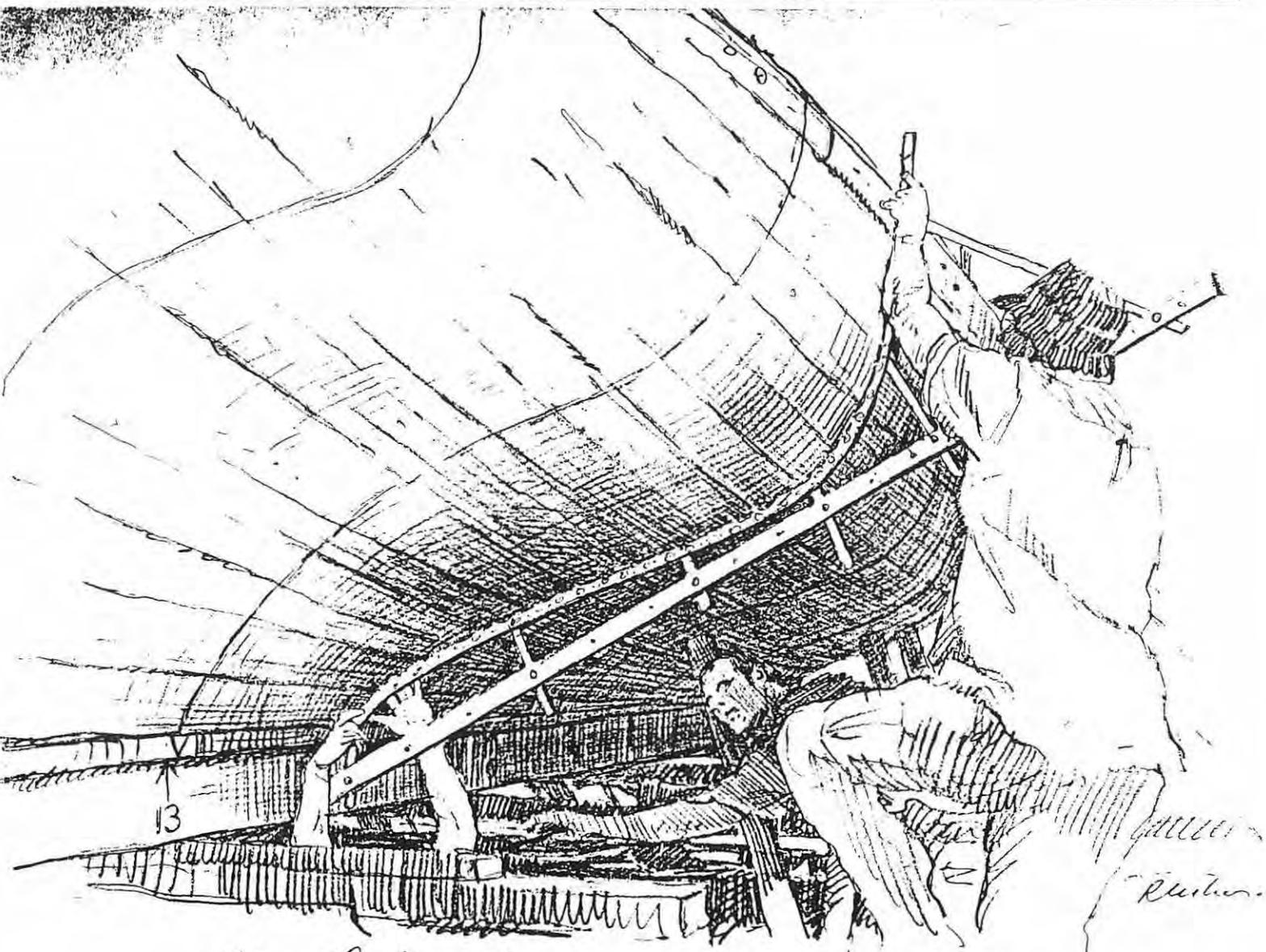
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*lifting the lines of  
"Little Dirk" . Carnarvon March 2001*



## HOW STAN MOVED THE STONES

The following story came out as an aside during the recording of an oral history by Peter Worsley interviewing Stan Gratte of Geraldton. Though I was not present at the taping, I subsequently listened to the tape and thought you might enjoy the story.....Jill Worsley.

Frank Burton was a fisherman whose family interests in fishing had continued in Geraldton and across to the islands for over seventy years by the time of the Second World War. At that time he was working two boats – the *Waterwitch* and the *Lily of the West*.

The *Waterwitch* was working the Abrolhos at that time, and had adventures of her own. The *Lily of the West* had been built as a racing boat on the Swan River. She was double ended, a 28' to 30' open boat with a small foredeck. The Burtons used her for fishing, and at the time this story started she was moored off what was then Westend Beach where Geraldton Harbour's No. 6 berth now is.

*Lily of the West* needed frequent pumping as did many of the old wooden boats. The Burtons neglected to do this for a period because they were deeply occupied with salvaging the bigger and more valuable *Waterwitch* which had hit a reef and sunk over at the Abrolhos Islands. As a consequence *Lily of the West* sank at her mooring in about 12' of water.

Stan Gratte was a schoolboy friend of the Burtons, and he and young Dick Burton were given the job of shifting the ballast stones so she could be raised.

Stan was about 15 years old at this time. Dick was a poor swimmer. They decided that Dick would man a dinghy above the *Lily*, while Stan dived down to load the ballast stones into a bucket. Dick would haul the load of stones up, and tip them out away from the sunken vessel. Their method of providing Stan with air was ingenious, but at the same time dangerous to say the

least.

Their equipment consisted of a car tyre hand pump on the dinghy which Dick would use to send air via an ordinary hose down to Stan. Stan had a helmet made from a square 4 gallon kerosene tin with the bottom cut out and a glass window fastened to another hole in the front. Scallops were cut on each side to fit his shoulders and these were padded with a 2" wide strip of tin soldered around each curve. Lumps of lead secured on to the kerosene tin ensured it did not float away. The air hose was fastened to a tap on the side of the helmet. Stan had a weight belt with a quick release buckle, but he says he can't remember if he had anything on his feet.

This primitive equipment worked "after a fashion" but Stan found out that he could only squat down to work and even then felt as though the bottom half of him was likely to float upwards. Bending caused a complete failure of their system. The two teenagers moved most of the ballast stones from *Lily of the West*, though towards the end Stan found that he could shift stones almost as efficiently by free diving.

Unfortunately Stan did not get to see the boat being raised using air pumped into 44 gallon drums because the school holidays came to an end and his father said that he had to go back to school. There must be many tales of adventure as adults (and children) constructed makeshift diving gear using the equipment which became available during the war years even though that equipment had originally been designed for a completely different purpose. How many boys began to explore underwater using gas masks which they modified according to their own wild ideas ?



## THE HORSE BOX

**This is the first of a series of stories and articles written by Captain Peter Piggford (see editorial). When you have read this reminiscence I know that you will look forward to future contributions to our magazine which Peter has promised.**

It was two years before World War II, I was a Deck Apprentice on the cargo liner *Chief Mackinlay* running as a cargo liner between United Kingdom and the Malabar and Coromandal Coasts of India.

The ships were old but well found, and the Company a good one by the standards of the day. My pay was the great sum of one pound Sterling per calendar month, we ate reasonably well provided you liked curry for the ship carried British officers and a Lascar crew and Goanese cooks and stewards.

It was the boast of the Company that their ships would carry anything. Loading in Liverpool besides a full general cargo we had six racehorses in individual, portable wooden crates placed on number three midships hatch and lashed down securely. The horses were consigned to Madras, our last port of call after we had worked our way through the fourteen ports of the Malabar and half a dozen on the Coromandal it would mean that the horses would be on board for over six weeks.

This was bad news for us two apprentices as we had the chore of looking after them without reward. In case this should interfere with our ordinary duties this had to be done outside normal working hours. Turn to early to feed and muck them out, groom them during the lunch hour and check their feed and water after we finished work at 1700 hours.

The horse boxes were made of wood, and each one had just enough room for a horse to stand up in. They could not lie down nor turn around as they were constrained by two padded side rails the width of the horse apart, so that they had to stand for the whole six weeks they were aboard. Down one side of the box there was a narrow alleyway about eighteen inches wide to allow the attendant to pass along the length of the box to groom and

muck out. There was a skillion roof just enough to clear the horse's ears and rump, and the back and sides were closed in with planking while the front had a very substantial half stable door so that the animal could look out and eat from a wooden manger hung on the outside of the door.

We had carried horses before so we knew the drill. Called at 0530 with a cup of strong tea, we stumbled out on deck still half asleep, made up six feeds and hung one on the front of each box. About three weeks out of Liverpool, imagine my surprise when I found one horse with its rump where its head ought to have been. Some how it had turned round in its box during the night and now could not get back. The animal looked at me as best he could with his head held down by the low roof at that end of the box.

The Chief Officer who is responsible for the safe delivery of all cargo was on the bridge keeping the Morning Watch, so I climbed up the ladders to report to him and get my orders for the day's work. Disbelievingly he went to the after side of the bridge from where he could view the horse boxes. He sent for the Carpenter, the Serang and his Tindals and held a council of war. Later the Captain came up and even the Chief Engineer who only came to see the discomfiture of the Deck Department. After a great deal of discussion, it was decided that the only thing to do was to take the box apart plank by plank and rebuild it the other way around the horse.

At 0900 they all went to breakfast, while we apprentices who were only allowed to eat in the Saloon at 'Second Table' at 0930 adjourned to the half deck to clean up, and discuss the matter. We could not let the horse out of its box as that was on top of the hatch, itself three or four feet above the steel deck. We would never get it back in and there was a fair chance it would jump the bulwark rail and go overboard, or at least break a leg.



Both the other Apprentice and I had some equine experience, and he said "You know, although it looks impossible for the horse to turn round like that, he has done it; therefore it must be possible to turn him back somehow. Look, let's go out on deck and try it." He got me to hold out a handful of oats at the front of the box. The horse looked at me with his head between his forelegs. The other Apprentice entered the box and passing alongside the animal, got his back against the rear of the box and his two feet on the horse's neck. "Now" he said, "Move to your left a bit." The horse with his eye on the oats moved his head until he was looking at me over his shoulder. With a push on his neck he somehow turned a somersault, landing on his four feet, looking the right way out of the box and attacked his belated breakfast in the manger.

At 0930 we slipped unobtrusively into "Second Table" breakfast, and at 1000 back

in our dungarees took up a good position to view the fun. The Serang and the Tindal were the first to arrive. Their astonishment was obvious. The Captain took up his position at the after end of the bridge deck and the Chief Engineer on the boat deck at the fore end of the midships accommodation hoping to see the Deck Department make a mess of it. The Carpenter and the Mate were busy making all the preparations. The latter said "And the apprentices will.....where are those two useless so and sos?" At that moment he looked up and saw the occupant of the box the right way round and happily chomping away at the remains of his breakfast. The Mate's face was a picture and all he could do was roar "I bet those horrible wonks are behind all this."

It proved easier to turn a horse around in the confines of a shipping crate than it was to convince the Chief Officer that somehow the whole episode had not been engineered by the innocent young men of the half deck

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

### MEMBERSHIP FEES DUE NOW

**At the Annual General Meeting it was decided that future membership fees would cover the period from 1 July to 30 June. The change has been made in order to make the Treasurer's job easier.**

**Fees are therefore due now.**

**Those members who have paid at other times will have their fees adjusted so that future payments will be due on 1 July each year.**

**Please see Membership Application Form inside back cover**



# The Ditty Bag

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



A record for the speed of building Liberty ships was set when the *Robert E Peary* was completed from laying of keel to delivery in just eight days. She was launched on 12 November 1942 only 4 days, 15½ hours after her keel was laid. Three days of fitting out and she put to sea from the builders, Permanente Metals Corporation, Richmond, California. This is probably a world record for a vessel of this size.

In a smart man-of-war all sail, including stud-ding sails, could be set in five minutes. It was customary to reef topsails while in stays. In the forties a ship of the line was expected to take a reef in her topsails in a minute and a half, while a frigate and a brig were allowed one minute and forty seconds respectively. From *Sir A. Moore, Sailing ships of war 1800-1860, p. 15.*

The accuracy of the Global Positioning System or GPS relies on extremely accurate clocks against which the length of time the signals transmitted from the satellites are compared. There are five of these clocks with the master clock in Washington D.C. The alternate master clock situated in Colorado does not vary from the Washington clock by more than 3 nano-seconds. This is 0.000,000,003 seconds or the time it takes light to travel 3 feet !

On 23 February 1861 a contingent from *HMS Fawn*, a 750 ton sloop armed with sixteen 32 lb muzzle loading cannons, hauled one of their guns 150 miles from the ship at Port Jackson to Lambing Flats near Canberra. They had been called in to quell a riot involving European and Chinese miners and which the Police appeared

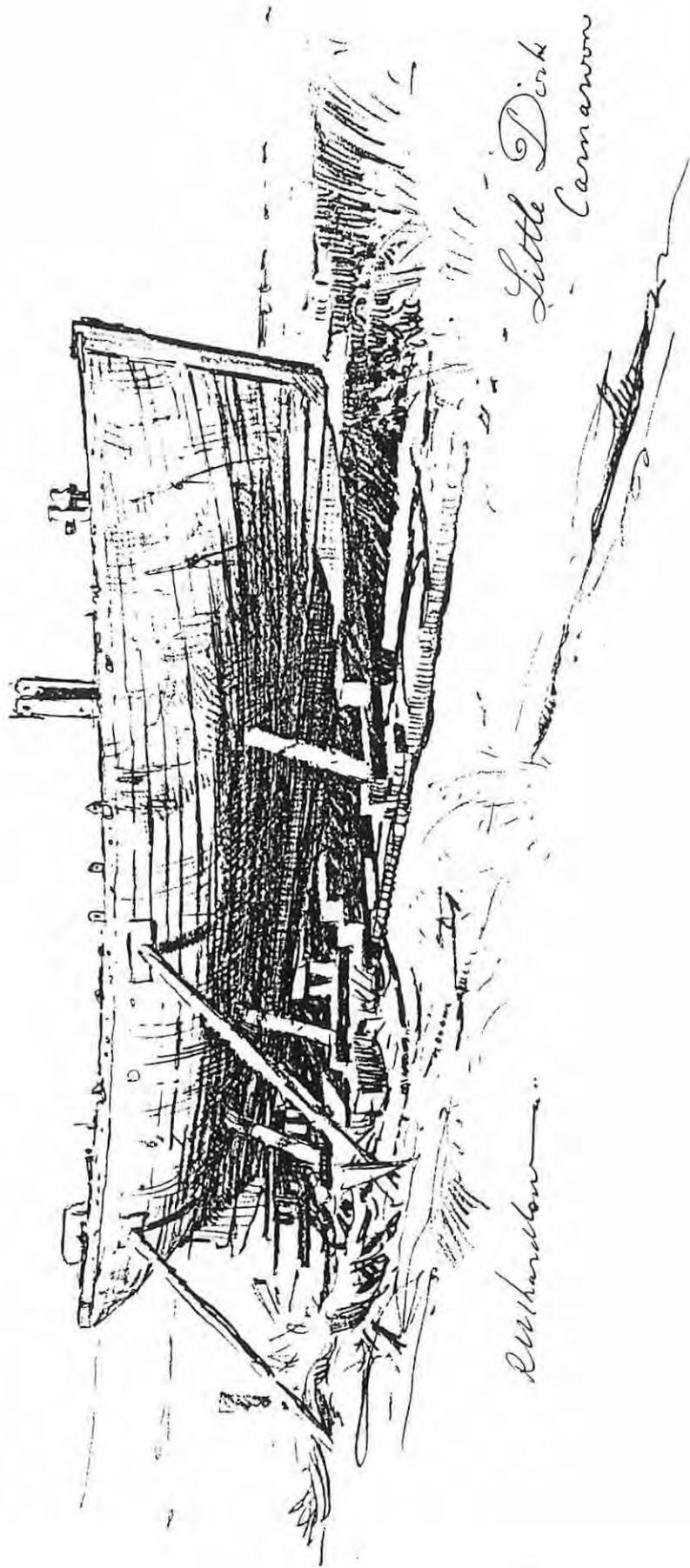
unable to stop. By the time they got to Lambing Flats the riot had been suppressed however and they then turned around and manhandled the gun 150 miles back to the ship. They arrived back on 1 April 1861.

Among the many uses whalebone was put to, that of water divining with baleen was carried on into modern times. The following is a quote from the Australian Fisheries Newsletter of July 1967.

*Recently Mrs B.A. Dalby, a member of the English Dowsing Society, visited Australia and asked the Fisheries Branch of the Department of Primary Industry to help her in the search for suitable whalebone. She explained that whalebone water divining rods are firm and flexible and do not drag and break as hazel twigs do.*

**Gross registered tonnage** A calculation of the total internal volume of a ship converted to weight by the formula 100 cubic feet equals 1 ton. Deducting non-earning spaces like machinery rooms, bunkers and accommodation gives **net registered tonnage**.

Longboats were really long boats in days of yore. The 1618 census of boats in the Royal Navy found that the First Rate *Prince* had a longboat 52 ft 4 in length, only a little under half her own keel length of 115 ft. The Second Rate *Assurance* carried a longboat of 51 ft 3 in length and her keel length was 95 ft. It was proposed to standardise boat sizes and reduce the length of longboats.



Richardson

Little Dick

Camaroon

March 2001



## LITTLE DIRK LIFTING HER LINES

As a result of the enthusiasm generated by the previous LITTLE DIRK article, several MHA members recently journeyed to Carnarvon to lift her lines and record her shape for posterity.

The idea was put forward by Bill Leonard of the WA Maritime Museum. He emphasised that recording the shape of old boats is, perhaps, even more important than rebuilding them and that this was something the MHA could seriously consider doing. Ray Miller endorsed the suggestion and offered his experience and the use of his equipment to put it into effect. The current custodians of LITTLE DIRK, Ray and Dianne Fidock generously offered free accommodation at their Carnarvon Beach Holiday Resort. No fewer than nine MHA members came forward to sacrifice their time. After drawing lots and eliminating all those whose name didn't start with R, we managed to reduce the team to Ray Miller, Rod Dickson, Ross Shardlow and Ron Richards, four being the maximum number we could fit into the Shardlow van along with the assortment of equipment and tools required for the task. As Carnarvon is a long haul, Jill and Peter Worsley generously provided a very much-appreciated halfway house at Geraldton, a fine opportunity to devour Jill's culinary delights and Peter's library.

LITTLE DIRK was raised from a mud creek years ago and has been sitting chocked up on the hard standing in the open ever since. Despite her age and abuse she has managed to hold her shape rather well, aided no doubt by a massive false keel that replaced her original centreboard. We were sadly aware however that we had caught her just in time as she is beginning to sag around her props, her bows are laced together with ropes and she is declining in her port quarter. Therefore we chose to lift her lines off the starboard side.

A close examination revealed a remnant water-line scribed into her timbers from which we were able to fix a parallel 'tightwire' from stem to stern to form our datum line. There are various

methods of lifting the lines off a boat. Ray's choice in this case was to use a wooden, lockable chain that can be pressed against the side of the hull and set to that shape by tightening each link in the chain thus forming a template that can be transferred direct to the draughting board.

We kept to Imperial Measure, sectioning off the stations at two-foot intervals from the maximum beam and working to one sixteenth of an inch tolerance. Perhaps in a future article we will describe this method in more detail. While Ray, Rod and myself grovelled about in the dust and prickles inside and underneath the boat, Ron busied himself taking some 150 photographs which in conjunction with the internal measurements gave us a fairly accurate representation of LITTLE DIRK.

While all this was happening, Ray Fidock, acting on a vague recollection that the spars were said to be 'somewhere about', lead a land party to a chook shed on the other side of town and, to our amazement, recovered the mast, boom and gaff, which were in better shape than the boat itself. The haul also included a headsail. A search for the rudder and bowsprit proved more elusive, in fact we are not sure that she had a bowsprit, though a sawn-off bolt in her stem suggested a bobstay. While discussing this, Ray Fidock recalled that some years past, while under previous ownership, LITTLE DIRK had been moored bow on to a seawall and as the tide came in her bowsprit caught under the wall's railing and as the boat rose on the tide the bowsprit snapped clean off!

From the start it was clear to us that LITTLE DIRK would never go to sea again. On the other hand, we believed that she would make a fine static display if she could be put under cover. Ray Fidock took up the challenge and alerted the Carnarvon Heritage Group of our activities and invited them over to see what we were doing. The Group is a refreshingly progressive organisation and already has responsibility for the preser-

TABLE OF OFFSETS FROM LINES TAKEN FROM HULL AT CARNARVON W.A. BETWEEN 11<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2001.

STATION	STEM	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	STERN
SHEER	0-2-8	0-10-6	2-2-6	3-4-2	3-10-10	4-2-0	4-6-3	4-7-6	4-8-4	4-8-4	4-7-1	4-5-7	4-3-2	3-11-4	3-5-4	-
WL+3	0-2-8	0-8-6	2-0-0	3-1-13	3-10-14	4-1-3	4-5-0	4-7-4	4-8-2	4-8-12	4-7-0	4-5-7	4-3-2	3-11-2	3-4-10	0-6-4
WL+2	0-2-7	0-7-3	1-10-4	2-11-15	3-7-13	3-11-4	4-3-15	4-6-11	4-7-14	4-8-9	4-6-13	4-5-1	4-2-11	3-8-6	2-9-13	0-2-10
WL+1	0-2-4	0-6-2	1-8-0	2-9-5	3-5-11	3-9-12	4-2-3	4-5-11	4-6-15	4-8-0	4-6-5	4-4-3	4-1-1	3-4-3	1-6-7	0-2-9
LWL	0-2-2	0-4-15	1-4-14	2-5-11	3-2-0	3-6-8	3-11-4	4-3-7	4-5-3	4-6-3	4-4-10	4-2-7	3-10-2	2-7-3	0-8-6	0-2-8
WL-1	0-2-0	0-4-15	1-0-10	1-11-8	2-7-2	3-0-2	3-6-15	4-3-1	4-0-7	4-2-10	4-0-1	3-10-8	3-2-9	1-7-3	0-6-1	0-2-6
WL-2	0-1-12	0-2-14	0-7-14	1-2-12	1-9-8	2-1-14	2-7-0	2-10-12	3-1-2	3-5-3	3-1-8	2-8-13	2-0-13	1-0-3	0-4-14	0-2-6
WL-3	0-1-10	0-1-12	0-3-1	0-5-2	0-8-1	0-10-9	1-1-0	1-4-2	1-7-8	1-8-11	1-6-13	1-5-3	1-1-4	0-7-13	0-3-14	0-2-6
RABBIT	0-1-12	0-1-12	0-2-15	0-3-12	0-4-5	0-4-10	0-4-13	0-4-14	0-4-15	0-4-13	0-4-9	0-4-4	0-3-13	0-3-2	0-2-7	0-2-6
UNDERSIDE OF KEEL	-	0-1-12	0-1-12	0-3-12	0-4-5	0-4-10	0-4-13	0-4-14	0-4-15	0-4-13	0-4-9	0-4-4	0-3-13	0-3-2	0-2-7	0-2-6

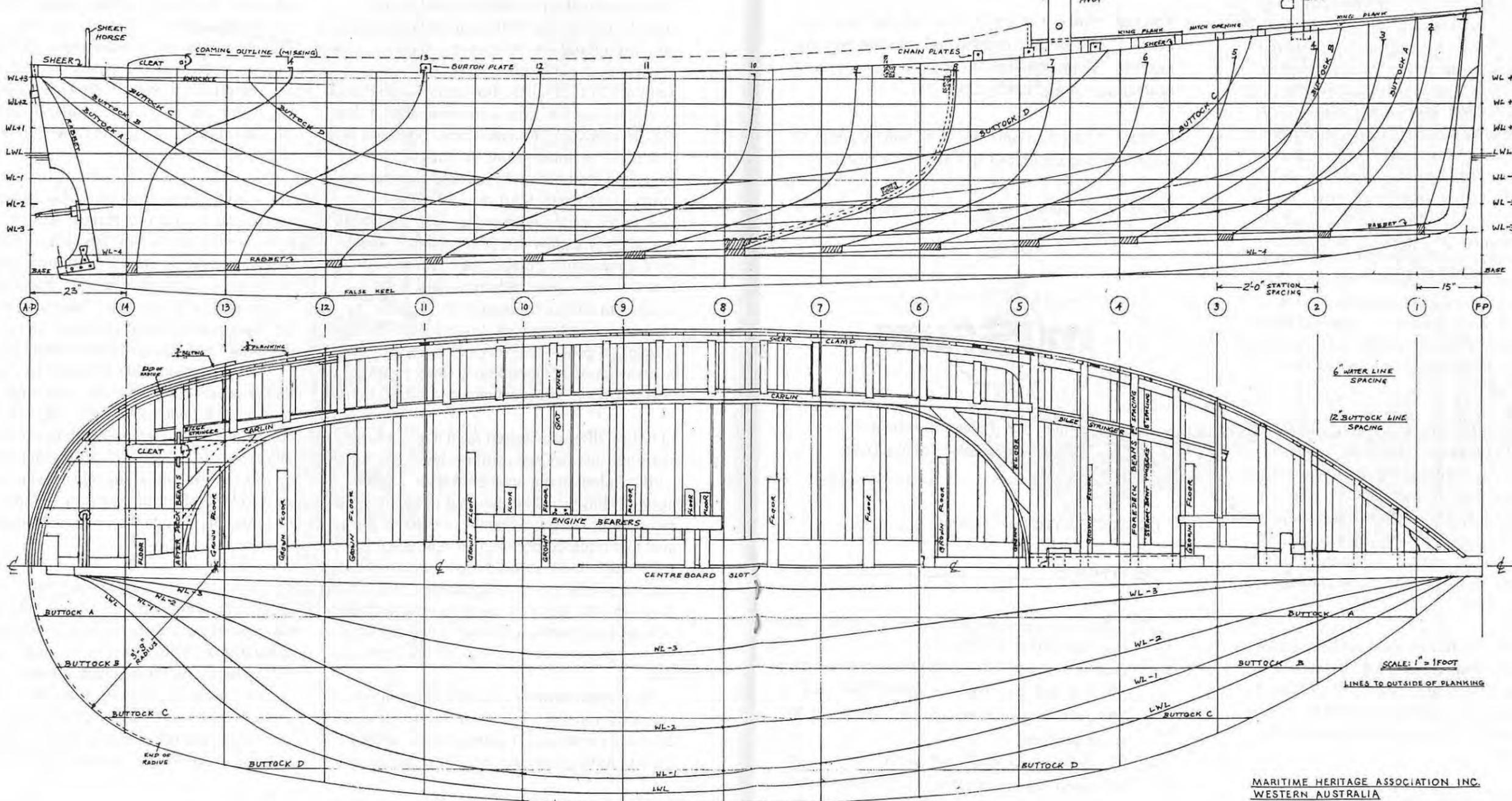
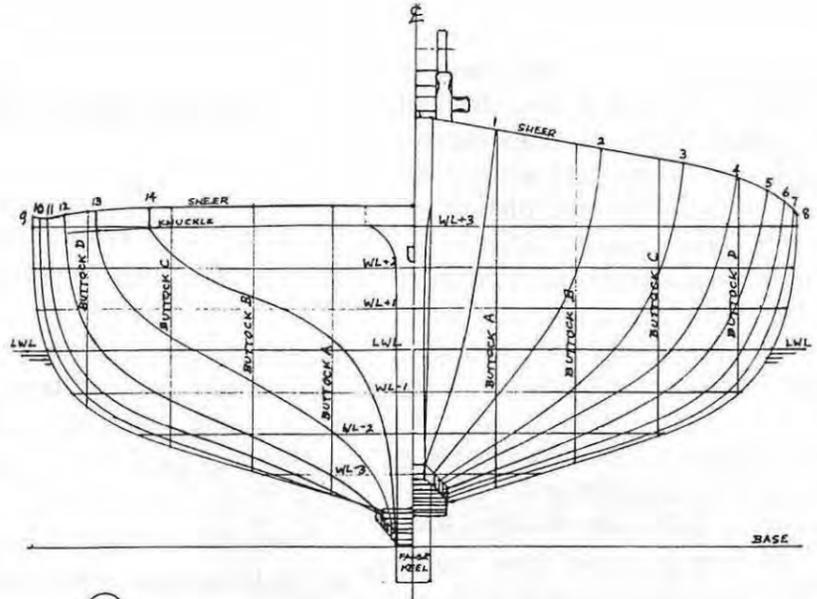
DECREASING OF KEEL BETWEEN STATIONS 2 AND 13  
BELOW LOAD WATER LINE, IN FEET, INCHES AND THIRTY-SECONDS OF AN INCH, MEASURED AT KEEL RABBIT LINE.

OFFSETS IN FEET-INCHES - SIXTEENTHS

### LITTLE DIRK

LINES PLAN  
DRAWN BY: RAY MILLER  
DATE: 11 APRIL 2001  
SCALE: 1" = 1 FOOT

PRINCIPAL DIMENSIONS  
L.O.A. ... 29' 2"  
L.W.L. ... 28' 8 1/2"  
MAX. BEAM ... 9' 5 1/2"  
DRAFT ... 2' 4 1/2" (LWL TO BASELINE)





## Australia II to sail again

vation and protection of the mile long Carnarvon jetty (currently under restoration), the lighthouse keeper's cottage, the 'Kimberley' steam locomotive, abundant rolling stock and transport machinery (including the steel lifeboat off the World War II German raider KORMORAN). Pending our final report and recommendations and Ray Fidock's good will, there may be a place for LITTLE DIRK in the Heritage Group's collection

The ever-diligent Ray Fidock recently uncovered another gem of information in a copy of Garry Kerr's *Craft & Craftsmen of Australian Fishing, 1870-1970* in which the author states

*In the 1920's Robin (Bob) Gourley [East Fremantle boatbuilder] built a number of boats in the 28 to 32 foot range, which were of similar rig and layout to the half deckers previously mentioned, except that these had a round stern with outboard rudder. This type of stern was built nowhere else in Australia, and is believed to have been introduced to this country by Gourley from his native Scotland. Boats he built with this type of stern included the LUPIA (sic LUPA), FELIMINA and MAFALDA. The idea was also copied by other builders. If it were not for the outboard rudder it could be described as an elliptical stern, but Gourley referred to it as a cart wheel stern, and sometimes a rim stern. The intention of the round stern was to give a clearer quarter when shooting nets, than that which a square stern offered.*

When Ray Miller completed his beautiful lines plan of LITTLE DIRK he showed it to Bill Leonard at the Maritime Museum. Before Ray had finished unrolling the plan Bill, who is a Scot, exclaimed, "Ooh, I'd know that shape anywhere - that's a Loch Fyne Skiff, a common fishing boat in those parts of Scotland. They are also called a 'Nobby' but the locals call them a 'Nabby'."

All in all this has been a most rewarding project for everyone involved, and for the MHA. I heartily agree with Bill Leonard that lifting the lines off boats is something the MHA could seriously consider as an ongoing activity of the Association.

ROSS SHARDLOW May 2001

*Australia II* will represent Australia at the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary America's Cup regatta at Cowes in England in August 2001.

An agreement between the Western Australian Museum and Challenge 2001 syndicate will give some of the 1983 winning crew the chance to sail the yacht at this historic event.

After the Cowes regatta, *Australia II* will be a centrepiece in the new Maritime Museum being built at Victoria Quay, Fremantle.

You can share the excitement of behind-the-scenes preparations and up-to-the-minute reports from Cowes through a new e-mail newsletter **MARITIME LOG-ON**.

Personal reports from the crew will accompany news updates about the new Maritime Museum.

So send us your e-mail address now, and be part of the action.



**E-mail the following details to:**

[karen.majer@museum.wa.gov.au](mailto:karen.majer@museum.wa.gov.au)

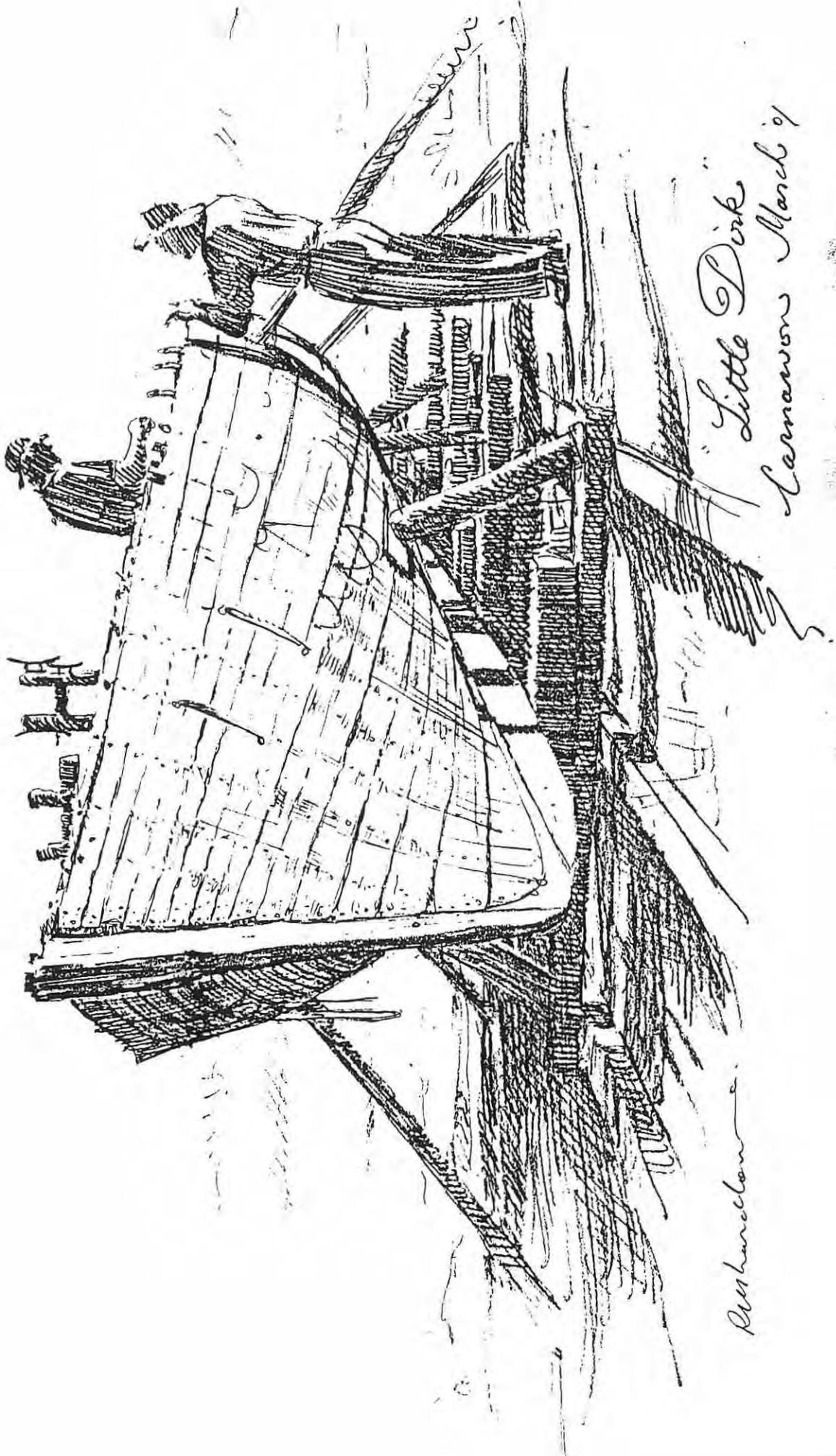
NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ORGANISATION (if relevant): \_\_\_\_\_

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"Little Park"  
Carnarvon March 9

Rushbrooke



# The Baudin Bicentenary: Celebrating the Differences of Opinion.

Nick Burningham

*At the end of May 1801 two French ships, Naturaliste and Geographe, commanded by Nicholas Baudin, sailed into the Bay we now know as Geographe Bay. It was the beginning of a survey of Australian coasts that lasted for two years. The expedition had twin missions — hydrographic survey to produce accurate charts for navigators, and scientific survey of Australia by naturalists, anthropologist, mineralogists and geographers.*

The combination of these aims is a feature of European expeditions to Australia and the Pacific that goes back at least as far as Dampier and de Vlamingh. With the emergence of specialist scientists during the 18<sup>th</sup> century it became possible for the personnel of an expedition to include scientists.

Bougainville's circumnavigation is the first scientific expedition and Cook's first circumnavigation, started a couple of years later, carried a smaller number of scientists, including Joseph Banks.

The logic of combining hydrographic survey with biological survey was unassailable, but there was inevitable conflict between the two objectives. Ship's boats were needed for hydrographic survey, for watering and provisioning, and they would also get used for ferrying scientists to and from the land. Those scientists would not be disciplined in the way that naval personnel could be. Ships needed to be ready to slip or weigh anchor and stand away to sea when necessary, and in the days before walkie-talkies, that could be very difficult with a number of shore parties wandering around an unknown and inhospitable land. Baudin was acutely sensitive to the conflict between hydrography and biology. In his journal for 10 Dec, 1802 he described the departure of a shore party.

*"The large dinghy also set off, carrying the scientists, their knowledge and their baggage, for these gentlemen never move without pomp and magnificence. The cooks with their utensils, the pots the pans and the saucepans, cluttered up the boat so much that not everyone could fit in, and part of the load had to be put in the longboat. All this apparatus so infuriated me that I went back into my cabin, extremely dissatisfied . . ."*

There are widely divergent views about the success or failure of Baudin's expedition and Baudin's role in determining the outcome of the expedition. Baudin died in Mauritius on the return voyage so he was never able to state his case. Francois Péron, the expedition's most prominent scientist, with whom Baudin had a very difficult relationship, took plenty of opportunity to denigrate the deceased commander.

On the one hand Baudin has been seen as a timid navigator, conducting inaccurate "survey by telescope" from much too far off shore. On the other hand, his expedition can be credited with the first accurate survey of Shark Bay,

the first close survey of parts of the southern Australian coast and parts of Tasmania. The chart of Australia published by Louis de Freycinet, who had served on the expedition, can be seen as the first chart to show the entire coastline of Australia in reasonably surveyed outline. Matthew Flinders felt that he was robbed of that claim by the French. In truth neither Freycinet or Flinders could really make the claim. It was Phillip Parker King whose tireless surveying made such a chart possible.

Baudin has been seen as incompetent and given to hasty and rash decisions. He has been characterised as irascible, harsh, and having taken no precautions to prevent scurvy among his crew.

Leslie Marchant, whose "France Australie" is the main source of information about the French survey of western Australia, sees "Baudin's scientific mission [as] the greatest maritime scientific mission of exploration to leave Europe in the age of discovery by sail . . ."

It is said that the Baudin expedition brought to Europe more biological specimens than any other expedition (though no authority for this is cited). But what of the quality of specimens? If we can believe Baudin himself, a significant part of the specimens were broken shells shovelled up from the beach by sailors who were bribed to collect them by scientists offering rum.

The critical question when assessing the French part in the development of the scientific maritime expedition is whether the French preference for organising on a grand scale led to greater results than the relatively parsimonious British approach? Baudin himself was quite clear about that. "If . . . attention had been paid to the observations I made likewise on the uselessness of embarking so many scientists for a voyage upon which half the present number would still be too many, then, perhaps, the personalities might have been better suited and I should have had fewer worries." Baudin's Journal, Santa Cruz, Canary Islands, Nov. 1800.

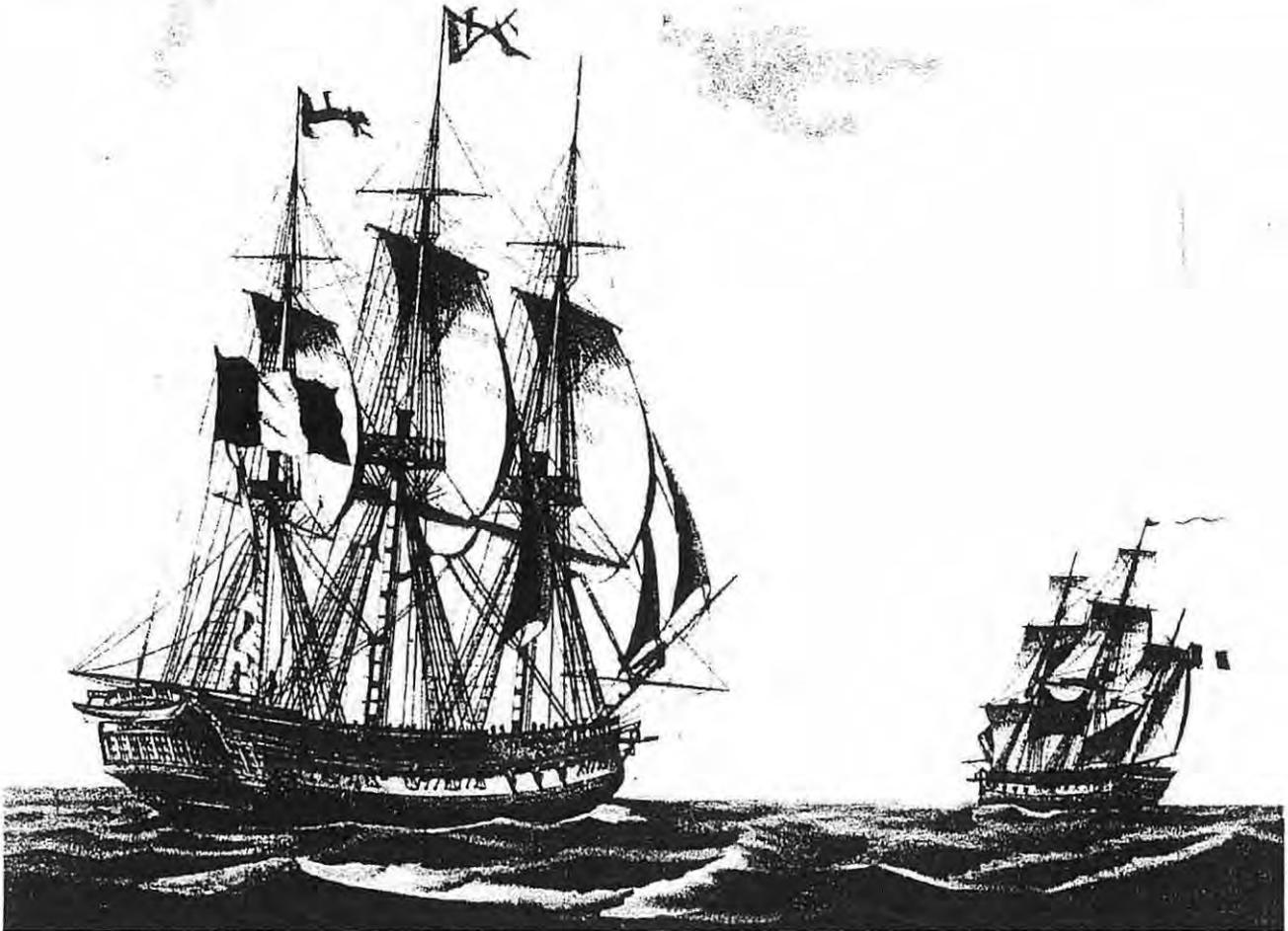
## **Baudin's career before 1800**

Born 1754, Ile de Re, off Rochelle. Or was he? Another source gives 17/2/1756 as his date of birth.

Baudin was a noted navigator. He led expeditions of scientific survey to the West Indies and to the Indian Ocean. Very little has been published about those expeditions but they were successful and Baudin's reputation was made by those expeditions.

In 1798 the Paris newspaper *Moniteur* said the collections brought to France by Baudin's expeditions were "the richest and most beautiful collection of plants [and animals] ever brought to Europe. . ." (Translated and quoted in Kelly, M., 1965)

Jussieu, a prominent French politician or statesman wrote "Of all travellers [Baudin] is the one whose achievements



*Geographe setting only topsails and staysails could easily keep pace with Naturaliste under all plain sail.*

in the sphere of natural history are the most conspicuous.” (Translated and quoted in Kelly, M., 1965)

Baudin himself had proposed and promoted a scientific circumnavigation to emulate Cook’s (and to counter the failure of Laperouse’s expedition).

He was in his mid- to late-forties when he led the *Geographe* and *Naturaliste* expedition.

#### **Baudin’s Performance in the 1800-1803 Expedition.**

Baudin’s overall performance is difficult to be certain about because the assessment hinges on the competence or incompetence of the officers serving under him. At times, Baudin seemed to be an ineffectual commander and his journal is obnoxiously self-serving. One suspects that his officers might have been performing poorly because they were exasperated by his vacillation, irritability, and arrogance. At other times Baudin seems to be reasonable and competent, and his officers seem just the opposite. A basic question is whether Baudin was really the main problem, as some authorities imply, or was Baudin a good commander struggling to conduct an overblown voyage of exploration while served by callow and lazy officers whom he dared not trust?

7th July, 1803, Baudin, dying of tuberculosis, had been spitting blood for three months. He was worn down, his intention to work eastwards along the north coast of Australia was thwarted by the strong southeast trade winds. Finally he decided to give up the unequal battle and run for

Ile de France (Mauritius). Regarding that decision, which must have been a huge relief for most of the ship’s company, Baudin made a very curious entry in his journal.

*“I leave to be imagined the effect that this change of course had, for no one was expecting [it]. Throughout the whole voyage, no one has ever known where I was going or what I wanted to do.”* Someone else has added at that point in the journal *“nor what I was doing”*.

Baudin obviously didn’t much confide in his officers or anyone else.

Sometimes Baudin seems to have been unreasonable. He seems on occasions to have sailed away and left behind Hamelin, and later Freycinet in *Casuarina*, when the ships separated. During the voyage down the Atlantic, Baudin was understandably irritated by the poor performance of *Naturaliste*. He told Hamelin that he should signal when he required *Geographe* to wait for *Naturaliste*. This was putting the onus on his subordinate and it makes little sense because when *Geographe* was too far ahead, Hamelin wouldn’t be able to signal. It was properly up to the faster vessel’s commander to maintain company with the slower vessel. Hamelin seems to have ignored the instruction and to have been disinclined to show his position at night. Baudin became more and more aggravated and eventually, in his journal, accused Hamelin of not showing a light in order to sneak ahead at night! Hamelin was presumably doing his best to keep up in his inferior ship. He was obliged to carry



more canvas than Baudin which must have made for anxious sailing in squally weather.

It has been proposed that the revolutionary French Navy had too few competent officers because many officers with aristocratic background or sympathies were purged or migrated during The Terror. There is also the idea that Revolutionary philosophy undermined the strict Naval hierarchy of authority that had been previously in place. Baudin seems to have been unable to effectively discipline his officers. They seem to have been lazy and spoilt. For example, they seem to have taken it as their right to eat very much more of the attractive constituents of the provisions than the seamen. They apparently complained that they could not survive on crew's provisions alone, yet they did not buy their own provisions.

31<sup>st</sup> December, 1801 *"At about ten o'clock Mr Freycinet, the staff-sergeant, came and told me that it was impossible for the officers to live on the ordinary ration that the regulations prescribe for everyone. According to the calculation that he showed me, they had eaten in a decade [ten days] all that they were allowed for a month. I told Mr Freycinet what difficulties he would place us in if they continued at this rate, saying that in six months, the officer's table alone would have consumed all the rations that are on board. I added that my duty made it imperative to take as much care of the sailors, who did exhausting labour, as of the officers, who appeared on deck for just four hours each day."*

Baudin, in his journal continues for a paragraph or two showing that the officers have been consuming provisions in a completely intemperate and irresponsible way. The comment that they only appear on deck for four hours each day is worth noting. Elsewhere Baudin complains that even in storms and dangerous situations, the officers never appear on deck except during their watch. Baudin himself was standing two or three watches at times and stayed on deck, without sleep, for very long periods during times of duress.

A particularly repugnant example of the officer's greed is given when there are only ten pounds of tea left. Four pounds is reserved for the sick, then the officers take half the remainder with the other half for the much larger number of sailors. As Baudin points out, they could easily have laid in their own supply rather than taking what had been bought for the sailors.

Some officers took apartments ashore in Mauritius and neglected most of their duties. Clearly some officers deserted in Mauritius. Baudin does not seem troubled by that and does not name the deserters in his journal.

The officers were often delinquent when in charge of shore parties such as expeditions for collecting water. They tend to go off hunting, using the ammunition they were issued for defence of the shore party.

16 Jan, 1802 *"The day before, there had been little order amongst the men who went fishing. The moment they landed, each one wandered off without permission and wherever his fancy took him."*

25 Jan, 1802. Baudin decided that men and officers in shore parties will not be issued with guns since they wandered away shooting things. He notes that *"Hamelin has*

*already introduced this measure"*, suggesting that the officers really were pretty irresponsible.

31 Jan, 1802 The officers, almost without exception, had made such a poor job of organising watering that Baudin entrusted the watering party to the command of the longboat "skipper" (boatswain?) who did a much better job.

28<sup>th</sup> April, 1802 Surveying the South Australian coast (without *Naturaliste*), scurvy and other health problems reduced the active crew to about thirty men. There were not enough helmsmen, Freycinet asked for authorisation to order the master carpenter and second caulker to steer. Baudin replied that an authorisation for an order was hardly necessary — a polite request to the men would do. He then went on to decide that his officers and midshipmen would steer for one-and-a-half hours each when on watch. The officers and midshipmen were apparently scandalised. Some fainted sickness, Bougainville simply refused to steer. Baudin may have been somewhat provocative in telling his officers to steer, but their refusal to comply in such circumstances does them no credit and makes one wonder whether they actually had any expertise in steering.

24<sup>th</sup> January 1803 Baudin was having a replacement chaloupe built (for the second time). Baudin himself, with his steward Boivin, set to work ripping planks for the new boat. Ronsard took a turn on the saw, *"but the other officers were careful not to show up. Although not one of them knows the first thing about ship [boat] building, they have not gone near the chaloupe since it has been on the stocks. Work, they say, is for the populace; a naval officer should only know how to guide a ship and to rest when his watch is finished."*

1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1803 provides a clear example of dereliction of duty by an unnamed officer. His instructions were to sound every hour during the night and to report if they came into soundings. At ten o'clock they found bottom at thirty three fathoms but did not report to Baudin. However, Baudin heard the report called out by the man sounding and so tacked the ship. On that particular coast (south coast, Kangaroo Island) Baudin believed or knew that being in soundings indicated the coast was already fairly close on board.

17<sup>th</sup> June, 1803. They had been anchored in light conditions, but around midnight a southeasterly gale came up and they dragged anchor. The bell was rung to summon all hands. *"not one officer appeared on deck and the only persons present [other than seamen] were Midshipman Baudin [no relation to Comander Baudin] and Brévedent."*

Baudin appears to have had respect for Hamelin.

6<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1802. East of King Island Baudin signalled Hamelin to take advantage of an easterly and make for France. *"This moment of separation was extremely painful for me and I felt a pang that obliged me to seek my cabin. I was truly fond of Captain Hamelin for his personal qualities . . ."*

Baudin had a strong sense of propriety and was offended by lack of propriety in others. Freycinet is described by Baudin, at Santa Cruz, as much too young for his rank. This was not Louis-Claude, but his brother Henri de Freycinet, who had apparently got into disreputable company in Santa Cruz and returned aboard to dine with four boon companions, including one Frenchman who Baudin obviously re-

garded as most unsuitable company. Baudin was angry at having been obliged to spend a little time at table with the man and reprimanded young Freycinet.

After leaving Santa Cruz, the Chief steward complained that Henri had threatened him with violence. Baudin says that he spoke to Freycinet, and adds that he had judged the young man to be a problem in Le Harve.

Both Freycinet brothers managed to offend Baudin: 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov 1801, becalmed, Baudin sent a boat to *Naturaliste* with some meat and a message for Hamelin. The boat returned with two men from *Naturaliste*, one of them an officer, namely Freycinet, who did not present himself to Baudin. Baudin was very angry and wrote Hamelin telling him to have Freycinet locked in his cabin for two days.

### Baudin and Louis de Freycinet

The *Australian Dictionary of Biography* says Baudin and Freycinet, Louise-Claud (1779–1842) “worked together as cartographic surveyors and naturalists.” Did they work together? Baudin has been accused of sailing away leaving Freycinet in *Casuarina* to survey, having given him insufficient time for the task.

*Casuarina*, with Freycinet in command, set out on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1803, with instructions to be away for no more than twenty days. He was to survey the northern ends and western shores of both the Spencer Gulf and the Gulf of St Vincent. On 25<sup>th</sup> he had been away for 14 days and Baudin wrote he would only wait another 4 days. He did however wait the full 20 days. As he sailed away, *Casuarina* was sighted, but she did not tack to approach *Geographe*, rather she continued to stand for the anchorage on Kangaroo island. Freycinet sailed from there to Albany without making an effort to join *Geographe* at Nuyts Archipelago.

Not long after sailing from Albany, Baudin sent Freycinet inshore to investigate a possible opening to a bay, with instructions to look and come straight back. Three days later there was still no sign of Freycinet returning and Baudin was very angry, contemplating relieving Freycinet of his command if they met again.

They did meet again at the designated rendezvous at Rottneest. Freycinet explained that he only spent five hours looking at the opening and then stood straight back out to sea where he was astonished at not finding *Geographe*. Baudin put this down to hazy conditions and did not upbraid Freycinet, commenting that the explanation “seemed fairly reasonable to me.”

At times, Freycinet does seem to have been lazy as skipper of *Casuarina*. He did not supervise the cutting of firewood for his ship at King George Sound, so the sailors detailed to do it wandered off fishing and relaxing. But perhaps that was Freycinet’s intention. Freycinet claimed to need new supplies of firewood and in the end Baudin supervised the cutting of firewood, but when the firewood was taken to *Casuarina* she was found to be already so full of the stuff that not all the crew could sleep below. While Baudin had been peevishly supervising firewood cutting, Péron and Taillefer were having a heavy lunch hosted by Freycinet on board *Casuarina*. Baudin was increasingly angry with Freycinet, who did seem to be dragging the chain with provisioning and preparations to sail from Albany.

While sailing to Mauritius, *Casuarina* carried away the main boom gooseneck or jaws. Freycinet came close to *Geographe* and reported the problem, saying that he could no longer set the mainsail. Baudin sent a carpenter to make the repair and commented on the lack of resource Freycinet demonstrated in not fixing it himself.

Baudin gave Freycinet written instructions regarding rendezvous instructions should the ships become separated, which contain harsh criticism. He says the cost of equipping *Casuarina* has become “burdensome to the government and pointless for the exhibition.” However, the criticism was written, not spoken, in instructions to be opened at sea, so that the criticism wouldn’t be overheard. He also gave Freycinet a letter for the authorities in Ile de France in case *Casuarina* was unable to rendezvous with *Geographe*, and that letter is more temperate and would not have been prejudicial to Freycinet’s reputation had he need to use it.

### Baudin’s Mistakes

Baudin was not incapable of admitting mistakes. For example, on 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1802, the lookouts reported sighting land away “West by South-West” [sic] where land had not been expected. “When the position of the reported land was indicated, everyone thought he recognised it and I made the same mistake as all the others, for I was convinced (and for longer even than they were) that it was a coastline.” Baudin goes on to say in some detail how they spent considerable time steering for this chimera created by a bank of clouds.

On 24<sup>th</sup> May 1802, also on the Tasmanian coast, Baudin was surprised that he did not recognise a cape and surrounding coast that they had sailed past earlier in the year. He was the only person not to recognise the coast. In fact Baudin had been sick, in bed, when they had previously been there. “This mistake on my part pleased more than one person on board and did much to persuade each that he was more fit to manage the ship than I was.”

It is just possible that the mistake was disingenuous on Baudin’s part — he spent the next ten days trying to survey that coast in stormy conditions, apparently to chasten his officers who had neglected to survey the coast when he had been sick in bed (and they had been searching for a missing boat). By that time, May 1802, he had only twenty healthy seamen and he should have been running for Sydney.

24<sup>th</sup> March, 1803, Baudin thought that they had sailed over the longitude that Bernier had previously fixed for Northwest Cape without seeing land. He sent for Bernier and asked for an explanation. Bernier replied that if the correction for the chronometer error was applied, the longitude given to the Cape was correct. “I had nothing to say to this reply, and recognised my error.”

Some accusations of errors levelled against Baudin are based on misunderstandings. It is said that Baudin did not follow any anti-scorbutic precautions, but that is not entirely true since, on occasions native “celery” was collected to make soup. Cook did the same. Baudin did issue lemon juice cut with water and syrup in particularly hot weather and felt the need of it himself (1<sup>st</sup> April, 1803). More to the point, Baudin did not understand the cause and cure of scurvy, and he cannot be blamed for it, because his medical officer, Lharidon,



# QUIZ

## Answers to March 2001 quiz

1. The *James Matthews* was called *Don Francisco* when she was a slave trader owned by the slave dealer Don Francisco Felis da Souza. She was captured by HM Brigantine *Griffon* on 25 April 1837 and renamed after a court hearing.
2. A moot was used to make trunnels (tree-nails), the wooden dowels used as fastenings for planking and other wooden members of ships. It had a blade similar to a plane blade and was turned on an octagonal piece of wood to convert it to a round dowel. There was one on display at the *Duyfken* building shed.
3. The scientific name of the humpback whale is *Megaptera novaeangliae*. This is derived from the Greek *Megas* meaning "large" and *pteron* meaning "wing" or "fin"; the Latin *novus* meaning "new", and the Middle English *angliae* for "England".

## Quiz for June 2001

1. What is or was breaming?
2. William Dampier made two voyages to Western Australia. Give the years and name the ships.
3. Two Peoples Bay, to the east of Albany, is named after a meeting of the ships of two nations. What were these nations?

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