

Volume 30, No. 2



June 2019

MARITIME HERITAGE ASSOCIATION JOURNAL



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Replica of the helmet found on the Sutton Hoo ship

Photo: British Museum



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EDITORIAL

You will have noticed the new cover layout in the journal. This was re-designed after some opinions in the replies to the questionnaire sent out last year. The new design was suggested by Barbara Shardlow, and your comments to the editor on the design would be appreciated. You may have also noted the change in the printing. This is now being done locally by a company here in Mandurah.

Those who attended the launching of MHA's latest publication, *A Hazardous Life* by Ian and Ron Forsyth know of the great effort put into this publication, not just by the authors but by Julie and Marcia. Their efforts have been vital to bring this book to a point where MHA could publish.

Both Julie and Marcia have stood down from their positions of President and Secretary, and grateful thanks are due to both for the hard work and dedi-

cation they have put in over their periods of tenure.

At the recent MHA Annual General Meeting the following office bearers were elected:

President:	Nick Burningham
Vice-president:	Murray Kornweibel
Minutes Secretary:	Jill Worsley
Treasurer:	Bob Johnson
Editor:	Peter Worsley
Committee:	Jill Worsley
Committee:	Steve Gilmour
Committee:	Jim Gregg

Note: MHA member Tony Duvollet is pictured in the May 2019 *Classic Boat* magazine demonstrating caulking at the Wooden Boat Show in Hobart held earlier this year.

Geoffrey L. W. Vickridge RFD RANR **1 May 1942—8 March 2019**

It is with sadness and regret that the Maritime Heritage Association must note the passing of Geoff Vickridge, a long-standing Association Committee member and past President. Geoff, with his RAN background was a most energetic, imaginative, dauntless and forthright committee member, proposing many projects and innovations. Our condolences are extended to his family.

Sydney D. Corser OBE AM CitWA **6 April 2019, aged 88 years**

It is with sadness and regret that the Maritime Heritage Association notes the passing of Syd Corser, a long standing member of the Association. A generous man and an avid sailor, readers of the journal will be aware of Syd's most generous donation of his beautifully built dinghy *Jack Tar* in 2017. Our condolences are extended to his family.



President's Report 2019

The Maritime Heritage Association has had a year that has been busier than most.

For the first time, certainly since I have been a member, we held a mid-year social gathering which was very kindly hosted by Robin Hicks and Pam Taylor. There was an excellent attendance, and we took this opportunity to announce the forthcoming publication of *A Hazardous Life*, the biography of Captain George Forsyth, written by Ron and Ian Forsyth.

A Hazardous Life has been a major project for the MHA, one which has taken several years to bring to fruition. For all the hard work, it has been an extremely worthwhile project which furthers one of our constitutional aims of promoting Western Australia's maritime heritage. The social and mainstream media coverage it has achieved has not only promoted the book, but raised the profile of the MHA.

Thanks are due particularly to Nick Burningham for the technical editing of the manuscript, Marcia van Zeller for copy editing and proofreading, and Peter and Jill Worsley for proofreading and assistance with the maps and references. Thanks also to Ross Shardlow for the use of his painting of the *Georgette*, and David Nicolson for his photographic work.

The official launch could scarcely have been better; very generously hosted by Fremantle Ports and its harbour master Captain Allan Gray. From our side, the launch was expertly managed by Marcia van Zeller who has also put significant work into the marketing of the book.

I understand that just over 100 copies, or one fifth of the print run, have already been sold. As well as direct sales, the book has been accepted by several bookshops including the WA Maritime Museum. Ron Forsyth is being kept very busy with sales and distribution duties.

Jill Worsley has completed the first draft of her manuscript *The Wagyl and the Swan*, which the MHA committee has formally agreed to publish. Jill is currently working on the selection of images. This will be in the 48-page A5 format which we established with *Albany and the Whalers*. This booklet continues to sell well in Albany.

In other publishing news, MHA member Tim Blue has published his history of American whaling in Western Australia. David Nicolson is working on a second volume of Brian Lemon's

models, and also a book on the models of Mike Westerberg.

November 2018 saw the end of a longstanding MHA tradition - the end-of-year layup at the Hicks Maritime Museum. Members and friends gathered there for the final time and enjoyed Doris' legendary morning tea before the bell was rung, and then lowered by Robin Hicks and Ross Shardlow. Robin will be taking on the mantle, although I am assured by Doris that she is not completely retiring.

Thanks to Bob Johnson for his work as treasurer and webmaster. As well as his usual duties of keeping the association's finances in order, he has been busy this year managing the finances of the *A Hazardous Life* project, as well as re-vamping the website to improve content and accessibility. The new News & Events page tells the world that we are alive and kicking.

Grateful thanks are due to our editor Peter Worsley who continues to produce the MHA Journal, the mainstay of the MHA's activity. We have a new cover format designed by Barbara Shardlow. Feedback from last year's survey told us that readers of the Journal want to see more Australian and Western Australian history. Peter has taken up that challenge and has been encouraging members to put pen to paper with more local stories.

As well as a year of achievement, it has also been a year of loss. This year the MHA has lost sitting committee member and former president, Geoff Vickridge; former committee member Mike Iglesden and just last week, member Syd Corser.

My thanks to Marcia van Zeller and Bob Johnson for hosting this year's committee meetings; and of course also to David and Linda, respectively, for tolerating the use of their homes for our meetings! And of course, thank you as ever to Peter and Jill Worsley for hosting today's AGM.

Recent projects have made the last two years rather all-consuming so I have decided to step down from the committee after serving as publications officer for several years. Marcia van Zeller has also decided to step down after serving, I believe, five years as secretary. Sincere thanks Marcia for your dedication and splendid work.

Thank you to all committee members for your work this year. My best wishes to the continuing and new committee members as you carry the association forward.

The Ditty Bag

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

(The inspiration could take the form of contributions to this page!)

The first shipping casualty suffered by the USA during W.W. I occurred on 27 January 1915, when America was still a neutral country. The 3,374-ton barque *William P. Frye* was scuttled by a boarding party from the German cruiser *Prinz Eitel Friedrich*. The steel *William P. Frye* was carrying a cargo of wheat from Seattle to England, and the German ordered the crew of the barque to dump it overboard. Unloading proved too slow for the Germans who consequently scuttled the barque.

In 1871 Governor Weld visited the North-West in HMS *Cossack*, and the following year the port for Roebourne, known previously as Tien Tsin Harbour, was renamed Cossack. HMS *Cossack* was a screw driven corvette built in the UK, and launched in May 1854. The corvette was laid down for the Imperial Russian Navy as the *Witjas*, but with the advent of the Crimean War it was seized for the Royal Navy and re-named *Cossack*. HMS *Cossack* saw action during 1855 against the country that had placed an order for the vessel.

Despite the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, for the remainder of the 19th century more cargo left Australia in sailing ships than in steamers.

Prior to 1842 mail was carried in a ship at the master's discretion.

The only peninsula in the world named after a brand of gin is Boothia Peninsula in far northern Canada. It was named in 1827 by John Clark Ross after Felix Booth, gin distiller, who partly funded the Arctic exploration voyage.

In 1824 the Admiralty instructed a private ship-builder in Blackwall to build an iron 12-gun brig for the Royal Navy. So great was naval prejudice that the vessel was never allowed to have trials against the wooden brigs, and it was eventually sold out of service.

In 1784 England had 44 Revenue cutters employing over 1,000 men. These vessels were fast armed cutters carrying extremely large sail areas.

The 140ft American schooner *Mohawk* (launched June 1875) was owned by millionaire William Garner. In 1875 the *Mohawk* was the largest racing yacht built, and as it was fitted with a centre-

board, possibly the largest such yacht ever built. With a beam of 30ft, draft of only 6ft with the board up it carried over 20,000 square feet of sail. On 20 July 1876 it capsized and sank drowning the owner, his wife and three others.

Possibly the earliest racing yacht to be built of metal was the 50-ton, 70ft cutter *Mosquito* built of iron in 1848.

The Falkland Islands were named Iles Malouines by Louis-Antoine de Bougainville in 1764. He financed a private expedition using his own money and claimed the islands for France. His ships and sailors came from Saint Malo, so he named the islands after them.

Among the many stores taken on board the *Erebus* before it left England in May 1845 under the Command of Sir John Franklin for the Arctic were 2,700lb weight of candles as well as hundreds of lamps. These were to light the interior of the ship in the dark months during the expected three year voyage.

The first paddle steamers on the Murray River were the *Mary Ann* (Captain William R. Randell) in August 1853 and the *Lady Augusta* (Captain Francis Cadell) the following month.

Squat: The tendency for a ship to sink deeper into the water when under way. The higher the speed the more the squat. A 50,000-ton ship doing 15 knots will squat about 6ft (2m).

The Russians built eight ships to the lines of the famous HMS *Victory* after its plans were stolen and copied.

During the early 19th century the six Royal Dockyards in England employed over 15,000 men. The dockyards did not deal in guns, food or drink, which were handled by ordinance and victualling yards.

Flemish horse: The short foot rope at the outer end of a yard.





Nile shipwreck discovery proves Herodotus right – after 2,469 years

Greek historian's description of 'baris' vessel vindicated by archaeologists at the sunken city of Thonis-Heracleion. Article by Dalya Alberge (*The Guardian*)

In the fifth century BC, the Greek historian Herodotus visited Egypt and wrote of unusual river boats on the Nile. Twenty-three lines of his *Historia*, the ancient world's first great narrative history, are devoted to the intricate description of the construction of a 'baris'.

For centuries, scholars have argued over his account because there was no archaeological evidence that such ships ever existed. Now there is. A 'fabulously preserved' wreck in the waters around the sunken port city of Thonis-Heracleion has revealed just how accurate the historian was. "It wasn't until we discovered this wreck that we realised Herodotus was right," said Dr Damian Robinson, director of Oxford University's centre for maritime archaeology, which is publishing the excavation's findings. "What Herodotus described was what we were looking at."

In 450 BC Herodotus witnessed the construction of a baris. He noted how the builders 'cut planks two cubits long [around 100cm] and arrange them like bricks'. He added: 'On the strong and long tenons [pieces of wood] they insert two-cubit

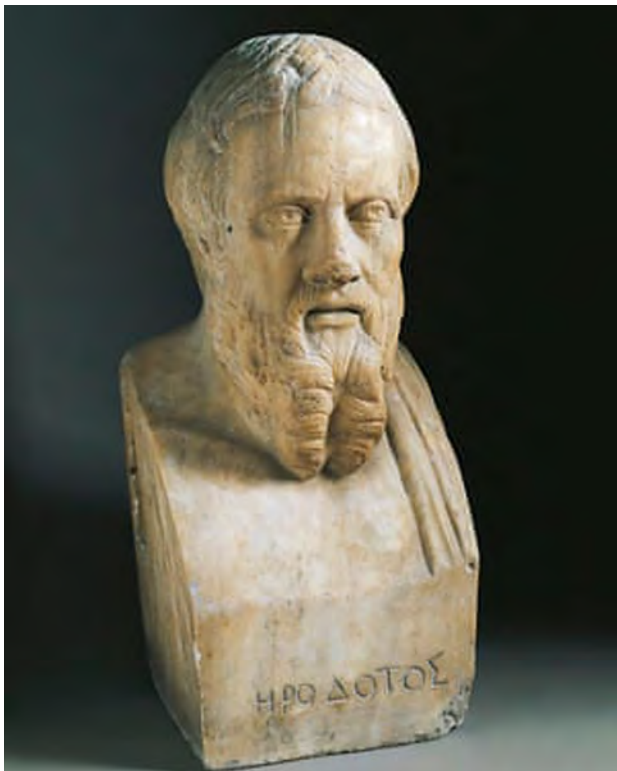
planks. When they have built their ship in this way, they stretch beams over them... They obturate the seams from within with papyrus. There is one rudder, passing through a hole in the keel. The mast is of acacia and the sails of papyrus...' Robinson said that previous scholars had "made some mistakes" in struggling to interpret the text without archaeological evidence. "It's one of those enigmatic pieces. Scholars have argued exactly what it means for as long as we've been thinking of boats in this scholarly way," he said.

But the excavation of what has been called Ship 17 has revealed a vast crescent-shaped hull and a previously undocumented type of construction involving thick planks assembled with tenons – just as Herodotus observed, in describing a slightly smaller vessel. Originally measuring up to 28 metres long, it is one of the first large-scale ancient Egyptian trading boats ever to have been discovered. Robinson added: "Herodotus describes the boats as having long internal ribs. Nobody really knew what that meant... That structure's never been seen archaeologically before. Then we discovered this form of construction on this particular boat and it absolutely is what Herodotus has been saying."

About 70% of the hull has survived, well-preserved in the Nile silts. Acacia planks were held together with long tenon-ribs – some almost 2m long – and fastened with pegs, creating lines of 'internal ribs' within the hull. It was steered using an axial rudder with two circular openings for the steering oar and a step for a mast towards the centre of the vessel.

Robinson said: "Where planks are joined together to form the hull, they are usually joined by mortice and tenon joints which fasten one plank to the next. Here we have a completely unique form of construction, which is not seen anywhere else."

Alexander Belov, whose book on the wreck, *Ship 17: a Baris from Thonis-Heracleion*, is published this month, suggests that the wreck's nautical architecture is so close to Herodotus's description, it could have been made in the very shipyard that he visited. Word-by-word analysis of his text demonstrates that almost every detail corresponds "exactly to the evidence".



Bust of Herodotus of Halicarnassus (c484–425 BC)

Photo: G Nimatallah/De Agostini/Getty Images



A Submarine on Your Beach?

On 23 February 1918 the German submarine *U-118* was launched at the AG Vulcan Stettin shipyard, Hamburg and commissioned three months later. Commanded by Kapitänleutnant Herbert Stohwasser the *U-118* operated in the eastern Atlantic, and before the war ended on 11 November had sunk two merchant ships, the steamer *Wellington* and the tanker *Arca*. After the end of hostilities the *U-118* was transferred to France.

On 19 April 1919 *U-118* was under tow through the English Channel en route to Scapa Flow to be broken up for scrap. A storm blew up, the towing hawser snapped and the *U-118* was washed ashore on the beach at Hastings, Sussex, directly in front of the Queens Hotel.

AUS\$24,000 in 2018) which was put towards a welcome home celebration for the troops returning home from the war.

The wreck was under the control of the local coast guard, and two members, chief boatman William Heard and chief officer W. Moore, showed important visitors around the interior of the submarine. The visits were curtailed in late April, when both coast guard men became severely ill. Rotting food on board was thought to be the cause, but the men's condition persisted and got worse. Moore died in December 1919, followed by Heard in February 1920. An inquest decided that a noxious gas, possibly chlorine released from the submarine's damaged batteries, had caused abscesses on the men's lungs and brain.



Attempts to re-float the submarine with the use of tractors proved unsuccessful, and the use of explosives to break the *U-118* apart had to be ruled out due to the proximity of the hotel and the town. The stranded submarine became a popular tourist attraction. Thousands of people, many from distant parts, came to see the stranded submarine. The Town Clerk of Hastings charged a small fee for visitors to climb on the deck. After two weeks this had raised £300 (about

Although visits inside the submarine had stopped, tourists still came to be photographed alongside the U-boat or on its deck. Finally, between October and December 1919, *U-118* was broken up and sold for scrap. The deck gun was left behind, but was removed in 1921. Some of the ship's keel may yet remain buried in the beach sand.

The *U-118* was a Type UE II submarine 267.4ft long with a beam of 24.3ft and a displacement of



1,146 tons surfaced and 1,488 tons submerged. It had twin propellers driven by either two 2,367 shp diesel engines or, when submerged, two 1,184 shp electric motors. The submarine had a range of

16,000 miles at 8 knots, and carried 14 torpedoes launched from four bow tubes, 42 mines launched from two stern chutes and a 15cm deck gun.

Peter Worsley



For Sale

Mike Igglesden's beloved *Oriel* is for sale

Clinker-built, gunter-rigged half-deck sloop 18' x 6.5' x 3.75' with the steel centreboard down. Built in 1950 by Thornycroft in Singapore. Sail area approximately 160 sq ft. Fitted with a small inboard motor.

Winner of the award for Best Gaffer at the 1992 Classic and Wooden Boat Festival.

For more information ring Kim on 0409 518 232.



Charles Olaf Wilson and *Leviathan*

By Nicholas Reynolds

Charles Olaf Wilson (1838 – 1926) played a significant part in the maritime history of Mandurah. “Old Mr Wilson was an unforgettable character as I remember him”, (as described by a past resident). “He was a small man, very spritely for his age, bare-headed and sported a huge yellow beard.” He was born in Scotland, brought up in Stockholm and spent half his time as a shipwright, but apparently had a flair for photography to which he devoted the other half. His parents had been lost in the North Sea when he was a baby and, having no family ties or responsibility like so many young men of his day, ran away to sea. He was 21 and found his way to New Zealand, but did not care much for this country. His often repeated remark was “It was raining when I arrived and raining when I left.”

Wilson then made for Victoria and set up a studio in Burke, a terrific contrast to the sea, ships and shipbuilding. In the 1890s, he came to Western Australia and its goldfields, eventually settling with his family at Mandurah in 1911. Ironically he was supposed to have travelled to Mandurah by sea with his boys on one of the small cargo vessels owned by a Mr Halliday, a local Mandurah resident. However, Halliday never reached Fremantle to make the voyage back; he was lost at sea. So Wilson took the train to Pinjarra and coach to Mandurah.

The mural of Charles Olaf Wilson and Leviathan on the walls of the Mandurah Community Museum



The Leviathan

It was about this time that Bolton’s of Fremantle acquired a timber mill almost at the head of the ‘creek’ which ran into Soldier’s Cove. After virtually rebuilding the mill and installing quite a deal of equipment, the company began to turn out cartwheel fellies (wooden wheel rim sections), axle boxes, spokes and other equipment for the manufacture of horse-drawn vehicles. It was still the day of the horse, and Bolton lost no time in helping to finance and commission Wilson’s boat to bring the timber products by sea to Fremantle.

The timber, which was felled almost at the mill site, was tuart which abounded along the coastal plain and lent itself well to cart, dray or wagon manufacture, being extremely tough and dense. As the mill was situated only a short distance from the water’s edge, a jetty was built and a trolley line run out from the heart of the mill to the jetty, where the boat was to load. It took Wilson more than four years to build his craft, and he was almost 85 when he completed it to the stage of launching. It was painted black and from then on it was tagged ‘Black Bess.’ He died at the age of 88 but lived to see his pride and joy wrecked on the Mandurah Bar in full view of spectators on the beach who flocked from the town and countryside to watch her break up. It was said that the tragedy of losing his beloved Black Bess hastened his end.

In 2019 the company Blank Walls was selected to complete a mural commemorating the *Leviathan* at the Mandurah Community Museum. Their design, which highlights the story of Charles Olaf Wilson and the *Leviathan* was completed in a shaded spray can style which allowed a realistic portrait of Wilson to be included. Jerome Davenport, the artist who completed the mural, divides his time between Perth and London, with a number of his murals featuring historical scenes and figures.



New book charts the stormy life and times of Harbour Master George Forsyth

MHA has launched our latest publishing project – a biography of George Forsyth, appointed in 1879 as the inaugural head of the Colony of Western Australia’s Department of Harbour and Light.

The book, written by his great grandsons Ron and Ian Forsyth, was launched on 26 March at a fitting location - the Fremantle Port Authority building at Victoria Quay, Fremantle. The launch was attended by current Fremantle Harbour Master Captain Allan Gray together with other staff from the Fremantle Port Authority, who generously made their beautiful foyer available for the event.

George Forsyth arrived in Western Australia from the United Kingdom in the early 1860s to find the port of Fremantle – a critical maritime hub for the colony – woefully unfit to meet the demands of growing maritime activity. In his position at the Department of Harbour and Light (a predecessor of the Fremantle Port Authority) he was responsible for all ports in the colony.

Forsyth was eventually dismissed under a cloud of controversy, but not before he had risked his life on many occasions and suffered injury and assault. Ultimately, he was instrumental in saving the lives of many people caught up in shipwrecks and other dangerous incidents at sea. Resilient and defiant, he went on to become a sea captain, plying the treacherous waters along Western Aus-

tralia’s coast.

This book provides many fresh insights into the colony’s colourful maritime heritage and its evolving political and social dynamics. It also contains 16 of Forsyth’s artworks, many of which have not been seen before in public. The authors said that what began as a family history project has grown into something much greater, given the intersections of George Forsyth’s life and his often contentious relationship with early rulers and members of the so-called ‘six hungry families’ who were influential in political, judicial and commercial spheres of the colony.

“It transpired from our research of original documents that George led a dramatic life in unique and interesting times,” says Ian Forsyth. “We also discovered that little has been written of much of that history, particularly of the Harbour Master’s service, which was so critical in the development of the colony. We are delighted that the MHA has supported us in publishing that story for posterity.”

MHA’s publishing committee, particularly Jill and Peter Worsley, Nick Burningham, Julie Taylor and Marcia van Zeller, all contributed considerable time and effort to bringing the book to completion, from manuscript to design and layout, production, marketing, distribution and launch. To purchase or enquire about the book go to:

www.maritimeheritage.org.au or

<https://a-hazardous-life.com/>

Marcia van Zeller



Ian and Ron Forsyth with Harbour Master Captain Allan Gray

Photo: David Nicolson



HMAS *Sydney*—First Salvo

The story behind this well-known painting of HMAS *Sydney* II by Ross Shardlow



Following Bob Carter's excellent series of articles in the *Australian Artist* magazine in which my book jacket illustration of HMAS *Sydney* II was kindly included as an example of an application of marine art, I have received several inquiries asking how and why I went about the work. *First Salvo* was painted for Wesley Olson's book *Bitter Victory: the Death of HMAS Sydney* - it started out, however, as a postage stamp.

In 1992 I was commissioned by Australia Post to produce paintings of *Arunta*, *Centaur*, *Bathurst* and *Sydney* for a World War II 'Australian Warships' commemorative stamp issue. The commission stipulated the size, format and design layout, a requirement for the work to remain unsigned, and to be painted on a 'flexible but flat support' to allow for direct scanning. The first step was getting approval of 'comprehensive colour visuals' before the 'final and complete artworks' were executed on stretched Arches Satine 300gsm watercolour paper, each work being six times larger than the finished stamp. Varying the colour and composition to give some distinction for each image, *Sydney* was presented in a gamboge quarter view firing a full salvo.

Eight years later, Wesley Olson contacted me. He liked the painting on the stamp and wanted to have it as his book cover. He asked me if ar-



Even allowing for extra space around the image for cropping, the painting was still only 28cm x 19cm.

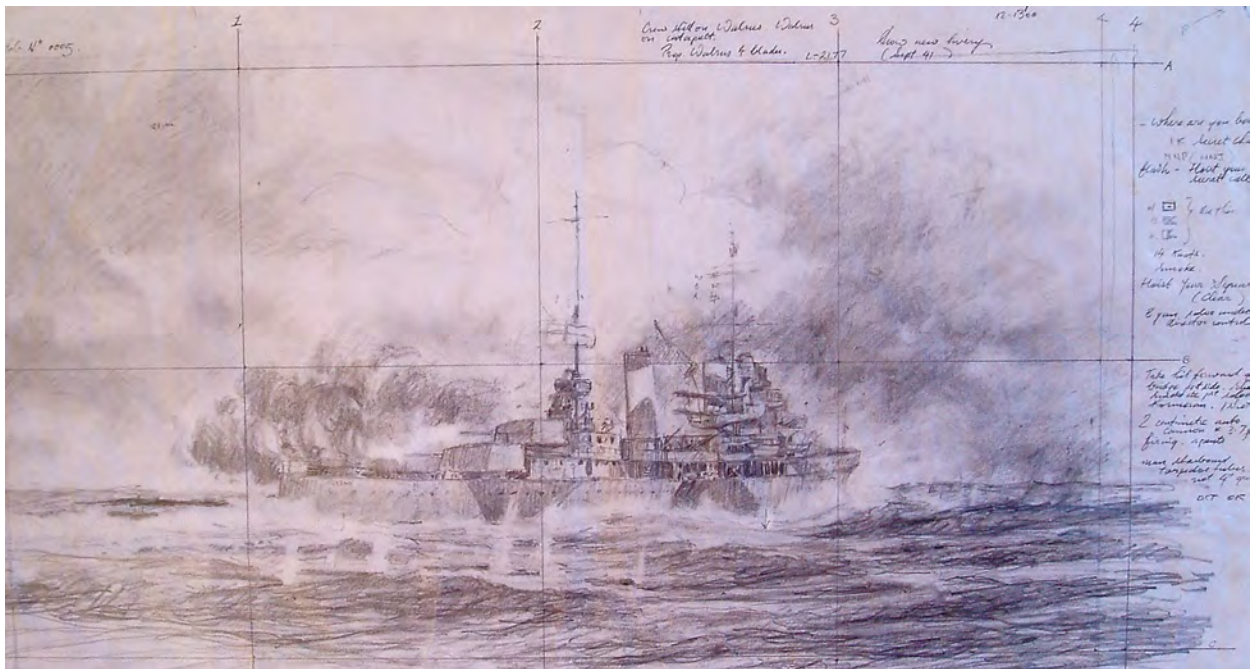
rangements could be made for its use. Though I was happy for Mr Olson to use my work, it wasn't mine to give - Australia Post held the copyright and ownership of the original artwork. I was also concerned that the painting was simply too small for quality reproduction on a book jacket. Moreover, the image on the stamp depicted the ship in an earlier guise and was not specific to



Sydney at the time described in Olson's book. As the complexities of negotiating copyright clearance became evident, I suggested – why not make a new painting? Dismissing anxious inquiries from Mr Olson about cost, I outlined the advantages of preparing artwork for a specific purpose. Furthermore, after studying Mr Olson's meticulous scrutiny of historical evidence and his conclusions, I saw the opportunity to portray the last gallant action of HMAS *Sydney* with absolute accuracy, and if I could sell the painting on the open market, there would be no charge to the au-

allow for flexibility in cropping, I was still able to keep the size down to 58cm x 37cm to fit directly on a flat-bed scanner, yet also be large enough to sell as a framed painting – which I did to a private collector the following year.

The painting is a reconstruction of Wesley Olson's *Sydney* as revealed in his detailed research and depicts the late afternoon of November 19, 1941 when HMAS *Sydney* opened fire with a full 8-gun salvo on the German raider HSK *Kormoran*. The view of the postage stamp has



One of about eight sketches ranging from thumbnails to full size pencil drawings such as this tonal arrangement. A minimal outline drawing was transferred from this sketch to the prepared watercolour paper using the grid pattern to maintain proportions.

thor.

Although we thought this was a very agreeable arrangement, the publisher did not. Publishers have their own ideas on what makes a good cover design and also have their own design departments and regular contractors to produce artwork. Nevertheless, after some 'influential intervention' by the author, I was permitted to submit pencil roughs and sketches. After agreeing to include rather more smoke for dramatic effect than I wished for, my work was accepted. I issued a Licence of Copyright to complete the agreement.

The watercolour painting was done on stretched and pinned 300gsm Arches Aquarelle Satine, the flat smooth surface allowing for fine detail in painting and good reproduction qualities for scanning. I used paper rather than illustration board in case the painting had to be rolled on a drum scanner. Giving plenty of 'bleed' around the image to

been reversed in a mirror image to show the guns trained to port. The stern view is quite deliberate and is the reason why Mr Olson was attracted to the image in the first place, it represents a tribute to the gunners of X and Y turrets whose heroic action enabled the ultimate destruction of *Kormoran*. Employing a reasonably limited palette of Viridian, Raw Sienna, Raw Umber, Alizarin Crimson, Chrome Orange, Cerulean, Indigo and Antwerp Blue, the painting took 140 hours to complete. *Windsor & Newton* Series 7 sable brushes were used throughout. On completion, I had three 5 x 4 transparencies made to ensure I retained an archival record of my work – and as well I did, for in spite of all the trouble I went through to make the artwork suitable for direct scanning, they ended up using the trannies instead.

The resting place of the *Sydney* and her entire complement of 645 men was to remain a mystery



for sixty-six years. On 16 March 2008, HMAS *Sydney II* was discovered by the Finding Sydney Foundation's chartered search vessel SV *Geosounder* just a few kilometres from where histo-

rian Wesley Olson said she would be, 22 kilometres from the wreck of the *Kormoran* and 207 kilometres west of Steep Point, Western Australia, at a depth of 2,560 metres.

Sutton Hoo Ship Replica

By Peter Worsley

In 1939 the ghostly outline of an Anglo-Saxon vessel was discovered at a burial site at Sutton Hoo near Woodbridge on the River Deben in England. The boat dates from the time of the reign of King Rædwald of East Anglia (560–624AD), and, because of the high quality of the artefacts found at the site, it is most likely that Rædwald was buried in this ship. Nothing remained of the 27-m vessel, but archaeologists were able, by very careful excavation work, to reveal the boat's shape and construction by the imprint of the planks, frames, fastenings, etc. left in the soil. Similarly, there was no body, this having been destroyed by the acidic soil. However, the archaeologists found chemical trac-

es proving that there had been a body in the ship when it was buried.

The many artefacts found at the site are of the highest quality, and include some of the finest Anglo-Saxon metalwork ever discovered. Among these is an iron helmet decorated with gold. The iron in the helmet had deteriorated, but the British Museum has made a replica which it has on display.

A group in Woodbridge, Suffolk, have begun to build a replica of the Sutton Hoo ship, the project is expected to cost £90,000.



Excavating the Sutton Hoo ship in 1939



The Convict Ship *Hougoumont*: An Appropriate Charter?

This is the second part of Nick Birningham's talk given at the Hougoumont Hotel on 11 January last year as part of the Fenians, Freedom and Fremantle Festival. The first part of the talk was in Volume 29, No.1 March 2018. This second part should have been in the following edition, but due to the editor's oversight was left out. My apologies for the omission.

In 1833 the East India Company's monopoly was ended and the Company was much diminished. Most of their ships were sold, many were scrapped, but the Indian-built ships were sold at high prices. These included the first of the largest class of Indiaman built at Bombay: *Earl Balcarras* (1811) and *Hertfordshire* (1813). *Hertfordshire* was often chartered to transport troops. She was inspected by government and insurance surveyors when forty-years old and 'found in every respect to be as perfectly sound as if she had only been launched a twelve-month' (MacGregor 1985:206). The following year *Earl Balcarras* carrying troops survived a terrible cyclone off Madagascar. She was completely dismantled, deck houses and galleries were smashed and washed away, but the hull did not strain or distort. It was believed that almost any other ship would have foundered. However, it was not just the strength and seaworthiness that were esteemed by the Army. The Indian ships were found to be so carefully built, and built from such stable timber, that there were internally no gaps or cracks in the woodwork in which vermin such as bedbugs could hide. They were, because of the excellence of their build, more salubrious or sanitary.

The Bombay yard continued to do good business after the ending of the Company's monopoly. In truth they had always built more large ships for Indian Parsi merchants than they built for the Company. An 1840 parliamentary Select Committee reported that a group of Parsi shipwrights from Bombay were on a study tour of yards in Britain and Europe. By that time Bombay had much competition from yards set up at ports around the Indian coast, particularly at Calcutta. And to take advantage of the excellent Burmese teak, a yard was established at Moulmein, Burma ... which brings us to *Hougoumont*, built there in 1852 for Duncan Dunbar & Company, a highly respected shipping line whose ships were intended to carry both cargoes and passengers in safety and comfort. Duncan Dunbar and Co. owned the

shipyard at Moulmein. It has been said that Duncan Dunbar owned the largest fleet in the world in the mid-19th century. He was certainly one of the shrewdest ship-owners and his ships were known to be of the highest quality.

Duncan Dunbar was an interesting character. His name obviously denotes Scottish ancestry, but he was born at Limehouse, London where his father was a brewer. He was sent north to the relatives in Morayshire for his schooling, but at the age of 12 was taken from the school, where he had learned all they could teach, for private tuition. He was a child prodigy and at 13 years old went to Aberdeen University! Back in London, following his father's death, he took over the family business at the age of 22. Three years later, 1827, he made his first foray into ship ownership, buying a 50% share of a new barque built for the Indian Ocean trade. Between 1835 and 1841 he bought eight second-hand ships and ordered three new ones. From 1842 till his death twenty years later, he ordered or built at least one ship a year, sometimes as many as three, and bought up good quality ships when they were available. It can be argued that Dunbar, along with Joseph Somes and one or two other ship-owners, pushed English shipbuilders to emulate the quality of Indian-built ships, particularly Laing of Sunderland from whom he ordered several much-admired ships. For migrants to Australia, Dunbar's ships were the ships of choice. For the British army sending troops to India or Hong Kong the same applied, and the navy often sent invalids home in Dunbar's ships. Despite the terrible reputation of the early convict ships, by the 1840s better shipping was required for convicts. Dunbar's ships were chartered for 37 convict carrying voyages.

When the Crimean War started there was a sudden need for many troop transports. Dunbar's ships were immediately chartered, both by the British and French armies, and he bought up more Indian-built ships for the war effort. Dun-



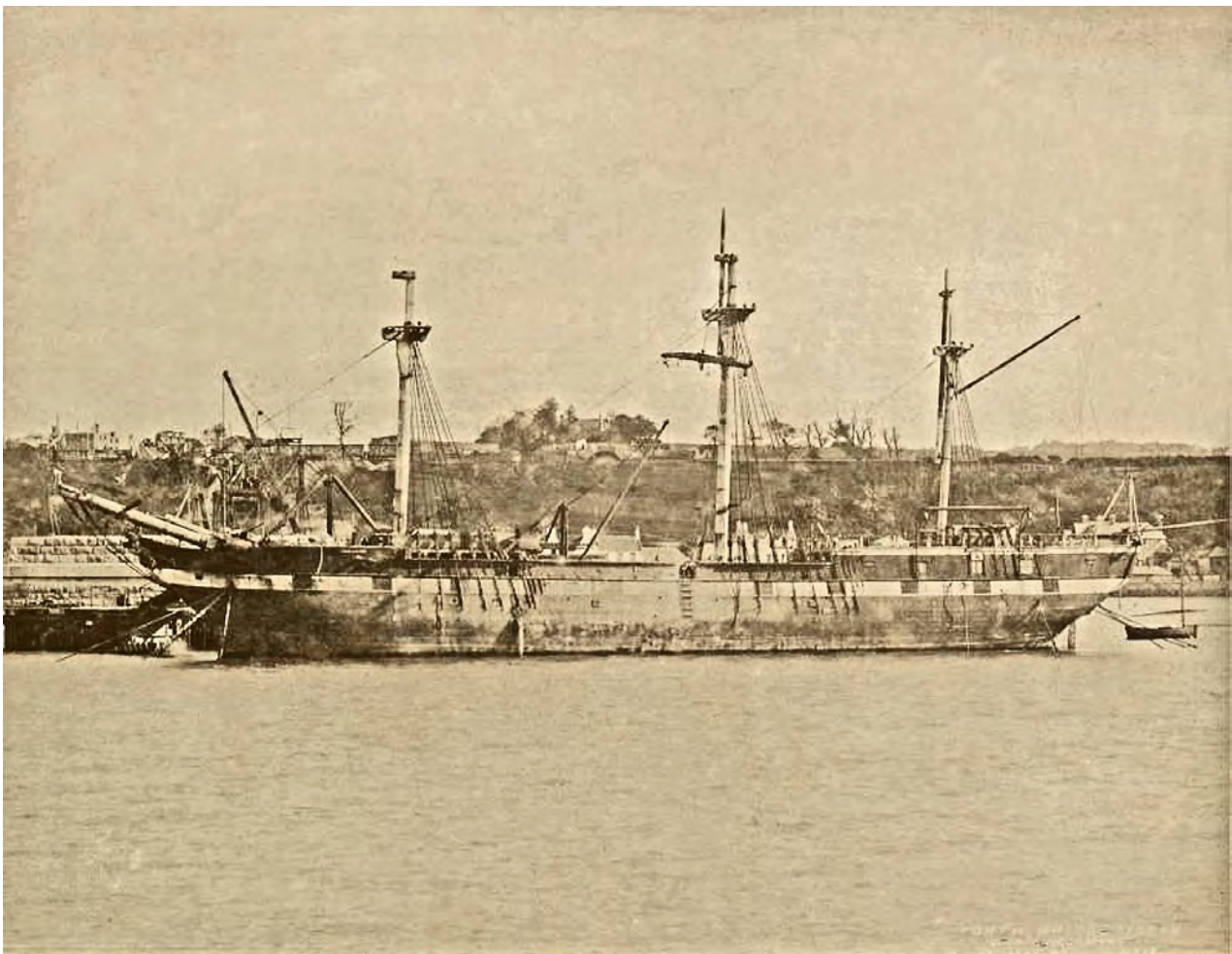
bar profited very much better from the Crimean War than the Light Brigade did.

As far as I can determine, none of Dunbar's many ships were built at Blackwall on the Thames where the East India Company's yard had been, but they were styled like the East India Company's ships and naval frigates and so could be referred to as 'Blackwall frigates'. They retained the quarter galleries of frigates and were painted with false gunports. Below the waterline they reflected more modern naval architecture and the beginning of the clipper ship era.

The only known photograph of *Hougoumont*, taken at the end of her life, shows a poop deck that extends almost to the mainmast. The first class passenger cabins and saloons were under the long poop deck. If she were chartered to carry troops, the officers would be comfortably accommodated. Another of Dunbar's ships, built one year after *Hougoumont*, on the Ganges near Calcutta, was the *Edwin Fox*. She still survives and is being restored in New Zealand. She too carried troops to the Crimea, and frequently to India. And she also carried convicts to Fremantle. The two ships would have been similar in appearance, and both

were rather modern by Dunbar's standards in that they lacked quarter galleries. When the restoration is complete you will be able to get a very good idea of *Hougoumont*'s appearance by visiting Picton, New Zealand.

A ship carrying passengers, troops or convicts would necessarily carry a surgeon – a Surgeon Superintendent to give the proper title. The position of Surgeon-Superintendent on a convict ship was considered a useful step in the career of an ambitious young surgeon. Ashore, there were few opportunities for an inexperienced young man to operate on patients or dissect cadavers. On a convict ship, where the Surgeon-Superintendent had some authority to accept or reject convicts for the voyage, it was useful to select mainly healthy convicts and a small number of obvious candidates for surgery or posthumous dissection. Only one man, Thomas Cochrane, died on *Hougoumont*'s voyage to Fremantle. Another duty of the ship's surgeon on voyages to Australia was maintaining a small coterie of infectious cowpox sufferers so that the active ingredient of smallpox vaccine could be got from their pustules on arrival in Australia. The *Hougoumont*



The only known photograph of the Hougoumont, taken in 1885 when the ship had been reduced to a store hulk used during the construction of the Firth of Forth Bridge.



Surgeon's name is given variously as William Smith or William Brownlow.

What's in a name? Given her name, *Hougoumont*, it is surprising that she was chartered to carry French Army troops during the Crimean War. The Chateau d'Hougoumont for which she was named, was the site of some of the fiercest attacks, defence and counter-attacks in the Battle known to the English as the Battle of Waterloo (which didn't go well for the French). During her French charter to the French army her name was changed to *Baraguey d'Hilliers* – the name of a then-serving French General. Dunbar was a patriotic Victorian and named about half of his ships after battles and noted commanders of the British Army and Navy.

As said above, there is only one known photograph of our *Hougoumont*. There are plenty of photographs of a later sailing ship of the same name which continued sailing till 1932 when she was hulked at Stenhouse Bay, South Australia. Often photographs and a painting of that ship are mistaken for our *Hougoumont*. But the two ships are easily distinguished. Our *Hougoumont* had three mast. The steel-hulled four-mast barque *Hougoumont* had four masts. In the photograph of our *Hougoumont* only the lower masts remain standing. She was employed then (1885) as a store ship during the construction of the Firth of Forth rail bridge. We can get some idea of how she was originally rigged by looking at sail plans and photographs of Dunbar's ships built in the early 1850s.

She would have been a fine looking ship and far from the worst vehicle for the voyage to Fremantle. She made the voyage in 89 days, which was no clipper ship record run, but no disgrace either.

In conclusion, to step back from the details of a particular ship and voyage ... to get a little bit political and consider a history of oppression and injustice. About 2,000 years ago one of the tribes or peoples of Ireland, the Scoti or the Scots invaded what is now Scotland, and to a greater or lesser extent suppressed the indigenous Celtic

people. To what extent that quintessential Victorian patriot Duncan Dunbar, owner of *Hougoumont*, was descended from the Scots invaders and to what extent from the indigenous Celts, we will never know, but he had a fine Scottish name of Gaelic origin meaning hilltop fort.

Fast forward a thousand years from the Scots invasion: frenchified Scandinavians, the Normans, invaded England and then Ireland, cementing rule from London – something to which the Irish understandably objected, and over the following centuries plenty of specific reasons to object and resent were piled on. Which is how we get to the Fenians and the 19th century. Britannia ruled the waves and a significant swath of lands. Unscientific notions of racial superiority and inferiority were deeply entrenched. But business is business, and rational judgement is useful. The superiority of Indian-built ships, and Indian shipbuilding techniques, were recognised by shrewd ship-owners (and the British Army).

The English have treasured the image of themselves as the great seafaring people – descendants of Drake (though he was of Celtic West-Country descent). It was the wooden walls of Nelson's navy that had made unassailable Britain's naval pre-eminence (if you ignore inconvenient details such as the War of 1812 for example). But the wooden walls of old England that survived longest, and most intact, had not hearts of oak, but Indian teak!

And now, most of Ireland is an independent nation. Eire's current prime minister or *Taoiseach*, Leo Varadkar, is a gentleman of part Indian descent, who with impeccable manners is gently wringing the scrawny neck of the United Kingdom's prime minister in Brexit negotiations.

The cycles of history: who is in a position to oppress others at any time in history has little to do with innate superiority, and even less connection with justice ... but the sailing ship *Hougoumont* was a superior ship and the product of a superior shipbuilding tradition.

400 Years Houtman Celebrations

In July it will be 400 years since Frederick de Houtman visited the shores of Western Australia in July 1619. To mark this milestone various events are being held at Rockingham, Geraldton and the Abrolhos Islands.

Information on these events can be found by contacting the Convener, Howard Gray, at:

hsgray@midwest.com.au

or

the Coordinator, Rebecca Millar, at:

rebecca-millar@bigpond.com



My Time on *Singa Betina*

Episode 16 of Ted Whiteaker's tale.

Moving on, *Singa Betina* did a round of the outstations down to Mapuru and back to Waparuwa, where we were well sheltered from the effects of Tropical Cyclone Kathy which tore eastwards across the Gulf and up the Roper River mouth with winds to 280kph forecast near the centre. Galiwin'ku was 160nm away from the centre, and we experienced gusts to 25 knots from the west-north-west in the channel at Waparuwa, grateful we were not in more exposed waters.

All goods sold steadily, and on 27 March we left for Gove, overnighing at Mata-Mata en-route. A brother, George D., and his partner Rhonda came on with us, and after a brief stop at Dholtji to pick up a turtle for delivery to Gunyangara, *Singa Betina* was back on her mooring in Gove.

Jude was becoming unhappy with life on *Singa Betina* in Arnhem Land. I enjoyed it thoroughly, and found the Yolngu people and their way of life endlessly fascinating, but Jude had more refined social aspirations and found it difficult to relate to a woman's role in Yolngu society. She made her feelings known, suggesting that we return to Darwin. I was initially disappointed that she felt this way, and mulled the situation over for a couple of days. I understood her feelings, but I was a little taken aback by the change of direction into an uncertain future.

Overall, things had gone well for us in Arnhem Land. *Singa Betina* was in good shape, apart from rotten sails, and we had slowly but steadily built up our finances to a kitty of around \$7,000 in a little over twelve months. It wasn't a fortune, but the way of life paid for itself with a bit left over for contingencies. We discussed the possibilities of trading out of Darwin, using the regular barge services to Elcho and flying out to meet the barge and distribute goods, and I decided that it might be a novel experience to change my course while on a roll, rather than wait for a disaster to provoke movement, as so often happens in life. We set about preparing for one last return trip to Elcho before a return to Darwin.

We bought another scooter from John of *Patricia*. This was a 90cc four-stroke Honda step-through in good condition, and another power increment

over the 70cc Yamaha we already had. We planned to leave the Yamaha on Elcho for future use, and take the Honda with us through to Darwin.

There was the usual complement of abandoned or unused bits of boating gear in the Boat Club member's yard, where we found two four-metre aluminium dinghies for sale and bought them. A brother-in-law at Galiwin'ku had asked us to look out for one, and there was a general demand for dinghies and outboards, which provided vital transport for all of the coastal outstations. Aluminium dinghies eventually develop splits from the constant vibrations of their outboard motors, and the battering they receive from often travelling in rough and choppy seas, and the remains of a half-buried dinghy or two litter the shore at most outstations. Outboard engines run until they seize, generally through lack of maintenance; but in any case, they eventually break down and are generally replaced. Outboards sent to Darwin by barge for repairs could easily take months to reappear, usually at phenomenal expense for the freight and repairs.

The preferred outstation boats were around five metres long, powered by a 50hp rope-start outboard with tiller steering, or a 40hp if funds were tight. Mariner and Yamaha were the preferred engine marques. Some Yolngu at Galiwin'ku used smaller dinghies and outboards for hunting and fishing in the local area, but any serious travel was far more comfortable, and safer, in the bigger versions. It is not uncommon for Yolngu to travel up to 50nm between communities, often out of sight of the low-lying land, and not always in fine weather.

On a previous Wet Season trip to Galiwin'ku, we were travelling across Donington Sound, towards Point Napier and Cadell Strait, in north-westerlies blustering to 20 knots. About half way across the Sound we were dodging storms in a rolling swell of a couple of metres, when we came across a dinghy bobbing up and down on the waves with half a dozen young men in it, waving a t-shirt to attract our attention. Their outboard tank had run out of fuel. They had spare fuel in a 20-litre drum, but no funnel, and in the rough conditions they did not want to spill fuel everywhere trying to pour it di-



rectly from the drum into their outboard tank. I gave them a length of hose to use for a siphon. They bought some cigarettes and a cigarette lighter while we bobbed about, and after a few minutes, they cranked up their engine again and disappeared over the swells into the gloomy weather ahead of us. Yolngu are excellent coastal seafarers in their home environments, and for the amount of travel they do, there are surprisingly few adverse incidents.

Our kava from Sydney had arrived in Gove, and we put in an additional order with Say Tin Fong for stock to carry on our future Darwin trip. Petrol, diesel and food supplies were topped up, with a few odd items specifically requested by Yolngu, and *Singa Betina* was on her way again on 10 April with the two dinghies in line astern.

The Dry Season south-easterlies were just beginning to stir and fill the atmospheric void left by the departing Wet Season monsoon. We anchored overnight at Dholtji, Mata-Mata and Djurinalpuy in reasonably light winds, and reached Waparuwa as the south-easterlies

strengthened for a while. The barge landing is a lee shore under these conditions, with soft mud of unreliable holding power in the anchorage, so we moved around to Mission Beach in the sheltered lee of the island for a few days. The two dinghies found new owners, and after disposing of them we did a quick trip to Mapuru to deliver a load of roofing iron and building materials from the Galiwin'ku ORC.

Back at Galiwin'ku, the ORC wanted another load of sheeting iron and materials delivered to Ban'thoela, in Refuge Bay at the north-eastern end of Elcho, and after completing the delivery there we continued on to Raragala Bay for a relaxing two-day break before returning to Galiwin'ku. Then it was back to Gove, via Mata-Mata and Dholtji. An intense high-pressure system over South Australia sent strong south-easterlies against us while at Dholtji, and we moved up to Elizabeth Bay for better shelter from the winds that built up to 30 knots; waiting three days for the system to subside before plunging around Cape Wilberforce and sprinting down to Gove.

QUIZ

Answers to March

1. *2nd May 1829...on that day formal possession was taken of the whole of the West Coast of New Holland in the name of His Britannic Majesty and the Union Jack was hoisted on the South Head of the River* (Captain Charles Howe Fremantle, HMS *Challenger*).
2. Hügel Passage is a narrow passage south of the Straggler Rocks which can be used to enter Cockburn Sound, but only with local knowledge.
3. The orlop is the lowest deck in a ship. In a cargo ship the orlop is the bottom of the hold.

Quiz

1. In what bay were George Grey's two whaleboats wrecked on 31 March 1839?
2. Who was the commander of the German cruiser SMS *Emden* when it fought a losing battle with HMAS *Sydney* at the Cocos Keeling Islands in 1914?
3. What was the date of the infamous mutiny on the *Bounty*?

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A Clipper Ship I Knew

By Joseph Conrad

The *Torrens* composite ship, built in 1875 by James Laing, is authoritatively stated by Mr. Basil Lubbock in his monograph on Australian clippers as one of the most successful ships ever launched. Captain R. H. Angell sailed her with the greatest success between London and Adelaide for fifteen years, making some wonderfully quick passages, which are the more remarkable because, out of regard for the comfort of her passengers, the *Torrens* was never hard driven.



Model of Torrens in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

Her length was just over 230 feet over all, of which the poop took up 80 feet. Her accommodation was mainly for the first-class, but there was a limited accommodation for a few second-class passengers. Altogether, fifty two very roomy berths. She was the last sailing passenger ship out of London. Her last voyage under the British flag ended in 1906.

It is one of the pleasant surprises of my accumulated years to be still here when the shade of that beautiful ship is being evoked for a moment before the eyes of a public which does its sea travelling under very different conditions. Personally, I cannot help thinking them not so much improved as needlessly sophisticated. However, that opinion of mine may be wildly wrong. I am not familiar with the demands of the spirit of the age. And, besides, I know next to nothing of sea travel. Even of people who do that thing I know but few.

My two years in the *Torrens* is my only professional experience of passengers; and though we, officers brought up in smart Indiamen and famous wool clippers, did not think much of passengers, regarding them as derogatory nuisances

with delicate feelings which prevented one driving one's ship till all was blue, I will confess that this experience was most fortunate from every point of view, marking the end of my sea life with pleasant memories, new impressions, and precious friendships. The pleasant memories include the excellent ship's companies it was my good luck to work with on each of my two voyages.

The *Torrens* had a fame which attracted the right kind of sailor; for, apart from her more brilliant qualities, such as her speed and her celebrated good looks (which by themselves go a long way

with a sailor), she was regarded as a 'comfortable ship' in a strictly professional sense; which means that she was known to handle easily and to be a good sea boat in heavy weather. The way that ship had of letting big seas slip under her did one's heart good to watch. It resembled so much an exhibition of intelligent grace and unerring skill that it could fascinate even the least seaman-like of our passengers.

A passage under sail brings out in the course of days whatever there may be of sea love and sea sense in any individual whose soul is not indissolubly wedded to the pedestrian shore.

There are, of course, degrees of landsmanism—even to the incurable. A gentleman whom we had on board on my first voyage presented an extreme instance of it. It, however, trenched upon the morbid in its excessive sea fright which had its pathetic as well as comic moments. We had not been more than ten days out from Plymouth when he took it into his head that his shattered constitution could not stand the voyage. Note that he had not had as much as an hour of seasickness. He maintained, however, that a few more days at sea would certainly kill him. He was absolutely certain of it, and he pleaded day



after day with a persistent agonised earnestness to be put ashore on the first convenient bit of land, which in this case would have been Teneriffe. I don't know why I was called to one of these awful conferences. The even, low flow of argument from those trembling lips impressed me. The captain looked dead tired, but kept his temper wonderfully under the implication of callous heartlessness. It was I who could not stand the absurd inconclusive anguish of the situation.

It was not so long since I had been neurasthenic myself. At the very next pause I remarked in a loud and cheery tone: "I suppose I had better get the anchors ready first thing tomorrow."

The captain glared at me speechlessly, as well he might. But the effect of the hopeful word "anchors" had an instantaneous, soothing effect on our passenger. As if satisfied that there at last was somebody on his side, he was willing to leave it at that. He went out.

I need not say that next day the anchors were not touched. But we sighted Teneriffe at thirty miles off, to windward—a towering and majestic shadow against the sky. Our passenger spent the day leaning over the rail watching it till it melted away in the dusk. It was the confirmation of a death sentence for him, I suppose. He took it very well.

He gave me the opportunity to admire for many days an exhibition of consistent stoicism. He never repined. He withdrew within himself. Though civil enough when addressed directly, he had very few words to give to anybody—as though his fund of speech had been expended while pleading in vain for his life. But his heart was bursting with indignant anger. He went ashore unreadable but unforgiving, without taking notice of anyone on the ship. I was the only exception. Poor, futile creature as I was, he remembered that I, at least, had seemed to be 'on his side.'

I must say that, in general, our passengers would begin very soon to look thoroughly at home in the ship. Its life was homely enough, and far removed from the ideals of the Ritz Hotel. The monotony of the sea is easier to bear than the boredom of the shore, if only because there is no visible remedy and no contrasts at hand to keep discontent alive. The world contains—or contained then—some people who could put up with a sense of peace for three months. The cabins of the *Torrens* had two berths each, but they were roomy and not overfurnished by all sorts of inadequate contrivances for comfort so called. I have

seen the cabins of a modern passenger steamship with three or four berths (their couches being numbered) which were not half as big as ours. Not half as big. In fact, some of our passengers who seized the opportunity of learning to dance the hornpipe from our boatswain (an agile professor) could pursue their studies in their own rooms. And that art requires for its practice more space than the proverbial swinging of a cat, I can assure you. Much more.

The *Torrens* was launched in 1875, only a few months after I had managed after lots of trouble, to launch myself on the waters of the Mediterranean. Thus we began our careers about the same time. From the professional point of view, hers was by far the greater success. It began early and went on growing for fifteen years under the command of Captain H. R. Angell, whose own long career as a shipmaster was the greatest success of the three. He left her in 1890. I joined her a year afterward, on the 2nd of November, 1891, in London, and I ceased to 'belong to her,' as the saying is (it was a wrench), on the 15th of October, 1893, when in London Dock I took a long look from the quay at that the last of ships I ever had under my care, and, stepping round the corner of a tall warehouse, parted from her forever and at the same time stepped (in merciful ignorance) out of my sea life altogether.

I owed the opportunity of my close association with my famous contemporary to my acquaintance with Capt. W. H. Cope, who succeeded Capt. H. R. Angell.

Hearing from his brother that I was ashore, he sent me word that the *Torrens* wanted a chief officer, as a matter that might interest me. I was then recovering slowly from a bad breakdown after a most unpleasant and persistent tropical disease, which I had caught in Africa while commanding a steamer on the river Congo. Yet the temptation was great. I confessed to him my doubts of my fitness for the post from the point of view of health. But he said that moping ashore never did anyone any good and was very encouraging. It was clear that, as the saying goes, 'my looks did not pity me,' for he argued that as far as appearance went there did not seem to be anything the matter with me. And I suppose I could never have been half as neurasthenic as our poor passenger who wanted to be put ashore, for I lasted out for two voyages, as my discharges prove, though Mr. Basil Lubbock in his book, *The Colonial Clippers*, credits me with only one. But in the end I had to go (and even to stay) ashore.



Thus my famous contemporary outlived me at sea by many years, and if she had perhaps a harder life of it than I, it was at least untinged with unavailing regrets, and she escaped the ignominious fate of being laid up as a coal hulk, which so many of her sisters had to suffer.

Mr. Lubbock, who can put so much interesting knowledge and right feeling into his studies of our merchant ships, calls her 'The Wonderful *Torrens*.' She was! Her fascinations and virtues have made their mark on the hearts of men. Only last year I received a letter from a young able seaman whom I remembered having in my watch, invoking confidently her unforgotten name. 'I feel sure you must be Mr. Conrad, the chief officer in whose watch I was when serving the *Torrens* in 1891, and so I venture to write you . . .' A friendly, quiet, middle-aged seaman's letter, which gave me the greatest pleasure. And I know of a retired sailor (a Britisher, I suppose) in Massachusetts, who is making a model in loving memory of her who, all her life, was so worthy of men's loyal service. I am sorry I had not time to go and see him and to gaze at the pious work of

his hands.

It is touching to read in Mr. Lubbock's book that after her transfer to the Italian flag when she was taken to Genoa to be broken up, the Genoese shipwrights were so moved by the beauty of her lines and the perfection of her build that they had no heart to break her up. They went to work, instead, to preserve her life for a few more years. A true labour of love, if ever there was one!

But in the end, her body of iron and wood, so fair to look upon, had to be broken up—I hope with fitting reverence; and as I sit here, thirty years almost to a day since I last set eyes on her, I love to think that her perfect form found a merciful end on the shores of the sunlit sea of my boyhood's dreams, and that her fine spirit has returned to dwell in the regions of the great winds, the inspirers and the companions of her swift, renowned, sea-tossed life which I, too, have been permitted to share for a little while.

Toodyay Herald, 10 May 1924: 5. Thanks to Ron Forsyth for this article.



The clipper Torrens by Jack Spurling