

MARITIME HERITAGE ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

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*A quarterly publication of the
Maritime Heritage Association, Inc.*

C/o: The Secretary (Ross Shardlow),
23 State Street,,
Victoria Park, W.A. 6100.



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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

At

12 Cleopatra Drive
MANDURAH

On

Sunday 13 March 2005 – 10.30 am

Come for morning tea and stay for lunch

**For those spouses or friends who do not want to be involved
with the AGM, please bring along some of your handwork
or an heirloom treasure for a SHOW & TELL.**



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

All of the Association's incoming journals, newsletters, etc. are now archived with *Ray Miller* who may be contacted on 9337 2614, and are available to members on loan. Please note that to access the videos, journals, library books, etc. it is necessary to phone ahead on that number.

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

Material for publishing or advertising should be directed, preferably typed or on disk, to:
The Editor, 12 Cleopatra Drive, MANDURAH, Western Australia, 6210.

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EDITORIAL

The editorial is a platform for the editor to air his concerns, explanations, excuses and grievances. It should be available to all members to do the same. If you have any complaints or compliments, queries or quotations, this is your chance to get them read by others. I received the following letter from Tony Duvollet, a member from Darwin:

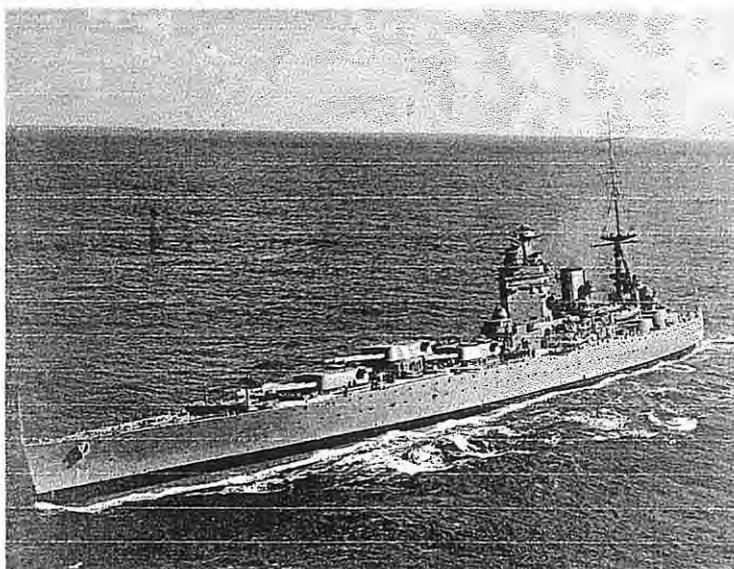
I enjoyed Jack Gardiner's extensive and informative articles on the unique Thames Sailing Barges. They brought to mind many memories of my childhood playground, which was an old ferry dock (from the days of the water boatmen, the rowing equivalent of today's water taxi) next to a flour mill and a lovely 18th century Georgian church by the river Thames at Battersea. (This area, by the way, has become very upmarket since the Duvollets left for Australia in 1959). My earliest impressions of Thames Sailing Barges are of houseboats alongside the river bank by the church, and also on the other side of the river at Chelsea Reach (yes, we really did live on the wrong side of the river). A conglomeration of sailing barges, wooden landing barges (built and used for the "D"-day landings), World War II motor torpedo boats and clinker-built lifeboats all converted to comfortable floating residences, were still in use when I was there in 1998. One barge was converted for use as a dry-dock, and another as a magnificently spacious community hall.

However, although I did not realise it at the time, my playground was also the graveyard for many of these peerless vessels. It was here that they were

hauled up on a spring tide and dismantled, a sight that would bring tears to my eyes nowadays. I have very distinct memories, at the age of nine years, of seeing one of the Thames Sailing Barges under full sail, close-hauled and very close to the shore at Ramsgate, Kent. This was the only one I ever saw working. I do remember seeing barges with their sails brailed as described by Jack alongside merchant yards at Millwall, so they must have still been working then (mid 1950s). I also recollect barges (steel caverns with swim ends) drifting down the river on the outgoing tide, controlled only by one man with a sweep (long steering oar) conning them carefully between the pylons of the many bridges of London.

Thanks Jack for bringing back those memories.

Tony Duvollet



HMS Rodney
(see article opposite)



Presidential Tidings

Tidings: from the Old English Tidung meaning news and information. (Ed.)

Another year has begun and I hope it brings health, wealth and happiness to all. Having such a diverse range of people on the committee with so many different interests always makes for an interesting evening whether it is The Cultured Person's Book Reading Club or the standard Committee Meeting.

We have Authors, Model Makers, Shipwrights, Boat Builders, Artists, Collectors, Historians, etc.; all keeping busy on their own projects but sharing their knowledge verbally as well as through the medium of the magazine.

The project of the moment is the detailing of the "Rottnest Dinghy". By the time the two protagonists finish this work it will no doubt be the most examined, measured, drawn and analysed vessel in Western Australian history.

Every time I go over to the shed and see their improvisations culminating in new and novel ways of taking lines, I am amazed. This is a fantastic project and whether or not the boat is as old as thought to be or whether it was used at Rottnest or not, makes little difference really, as the project has thrown different minds together to solve various problems in marking off and taking lines. I look forward to seeing the finished drawings and the restored boat in all its glory.

When I wrote the report for the last issue I did so well before Christmas and my mind was definitely not in Christmas mode and therefore I forgot to wish you all the usual Christmas and New Year greetings. My apologies and greetings for next year just in case I forget again.

Rod Dickson

Things They Would Have Rather Not Said

Even if the propeller had the power of propelling a vessel it would be found altogether useless in practice, because of the power being applied in the stern it would be absolutely impossible to make the vessel steer.

Sir William Symonds, Surveyor of the Royal Navy, 1837

The chief things required in a man-of-war are smart men aloft, cleanliness of the ship, the men's bedding and the boats. Her gunnery is quite a secondary thing.

Admiral Sir Edward Seymour, circa 1880

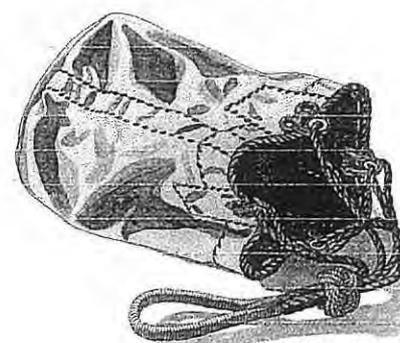
N.B. Efficiency at gunnery was a feature not added to annual efficiency reports on Royal Navy ships until 1903. Even after that it does not appear to have been taken really seriously – in 1941 the battleships *Rodney* and *King George V* fired, at point-blank range, a total of 719 shells at the *Bismark* without managing to sink her. Admiral Sir John Tovey told his fleet gunnery officer that he would have more chance of hitting the *Bismark* if he threw his binoculars at her. Torpedoes were the *Bismark's* final undoing.



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!)



According to Falconer's *Universal Dictionary of the Marine* (1815) the following are the number of shipwrights necessary for building ships of war within twelve months.

Guns	Approx. tons	Men
74	1,700	47
36	900	27
18	430	11
Brig	380	9
Gun vessel	180	7

The consumption of timber for a 74-gun ship is given as 2,000 trees of about two tons each.

In 1791 Sergeant John Bell of the Royal Artillery invented a novel method of putting a line ashore from a wrecked ship. He provided a mortar that used a chamber capable of containing 1lb (455 grammes) of powder and with a bore able to take a lead ball of at least 60 lbs (27.3 kg). A rope was attached to the ball and the mortar fired towards the shore. The ball was intended to bury itself in the sand of the beach and so fasten the line from ship to shore along which rafts could be pulled. The rafts were to be made of five empty casks lashed together and on to which a seaman's chest was tied. The chest had holes cut in the side to allow water from waves to run out and the people being rescued sat in it and pulled themselves ashore. The scheme evidently worked well in trials and Bell was awarded fifty guineas for his invention.

In 1815 any shipwright hurt in an accident while building government vessels was eligible for sick pay at the rate of 2 shillings and 1 penny per day for a maximum of 6 weeks. They also had superannuation that they got if "rendered incapable of labour from hurts received, or after an uninterrupted service of thirty years".

The weekly provision allowance for each member of the crew aboard a Royal Navy ship in 1815

were as follows:

Bread	7 lbs (3.2 kg)
Beer	7 gallons (32 litres)
Beef	4 lbs (1.8 kg)
Pork	2 lbs (0.9 kg)
Pease	1 qt (1.2 litres)
Oatmeal	1½ pints (0.85 litres)
Sugar	6 oz (170 grams)
Butter	6 oz (170 grams)
Cheese	12 oz (340 grams)
Vinegar	½ pint (285 mls)

When the beer was expended it was replaced by a daily issue of one pint of wine or half a pint of rum, brandy or other spirits.

Gunpowder was supplied to the Royal Navy in 90 lb (41 kg) barrels and 45 lb (20.5 kg) half-barrels. The barrels were actually capable of holding 100 lbs (45.5 kg) and 50 lbs (22.75 kg) of powder but were not completely filled, as giving the powder room to shift was considered to preserve it better. Special waterproof barrels of 80 and 40 lbs (36.4 & 18.2 kg) were also supplied to form the first layer (called the ground tier) in the magazine, because it was subject to possible wetting from bilge water.

The first job that Napoleon Bonaparte ever applied for was as assistant astronomer on La Perouse's expedition. At the time he was only a cadet at military college, aged just 15. A fellow student and two of Napoleon's lecturers were chosen. Napoleon was not successful in his application; but had he been picked for the voyage he would have been lost with the rest at Vanikoro, and wouldn't that have changed the history of Europe!

Before C.Y. O'Connor built Fremantle Harbour the northern end of Cliff Street ended in a jetty for lighters. This jetty is evidently still there, buried under reclaimed land.



The Stolen Steamship *Ferret*

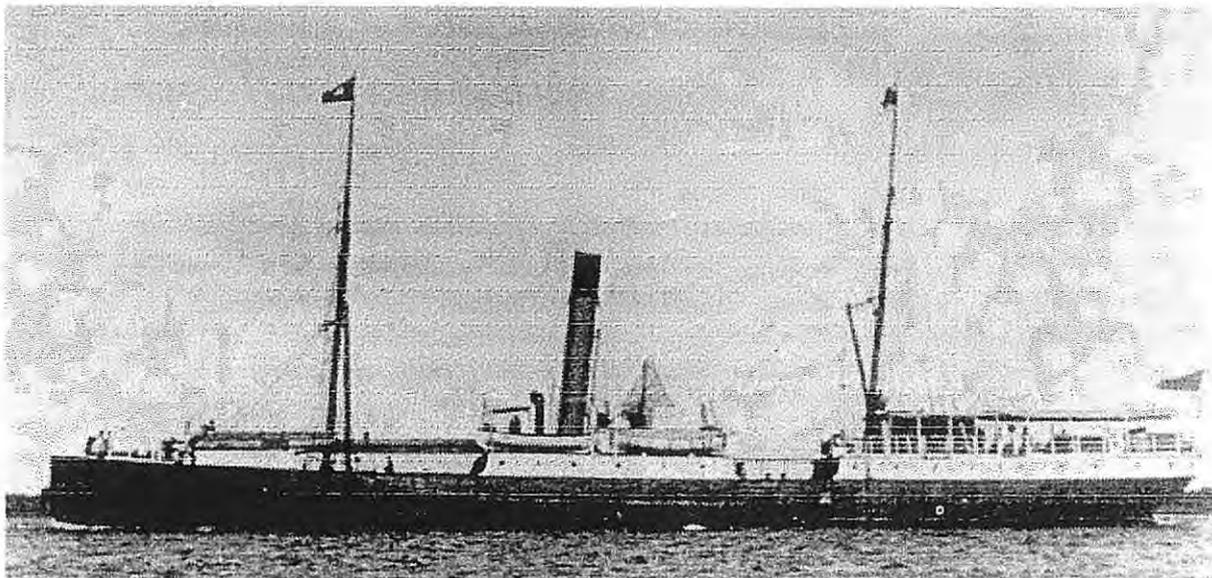
The following article appeared in *Australian Steamships: Past & Present* by D. Gregory.

It seems almost a romance that a steamer of 346 tons should have been stolen from the Clyde, but this is an actual fact. The *Ferret* was built by J. & G. Thomson, at Glasgow, in 1871, and belonged to the Highland Railway Company. By means of false pretences a man, calling himself Walker, managed to obtain credit in Glasgow, and pretended he was requiring a vessel for a six months' yachting cruise. He produced references, which later were found not to be genuine, and left the Clyde with the steamer *Ferret*, in October 1880, and a crew of "runners," and made for Cardiff. At that port a new crew was shipped, a fresh supply of coal was obtained, and the vessel departed on her "cruise." Almost immediately the merchants who had supplied wines and stores for the voyage began to feel uneasy, and applied to the owners of the vessel from whom she was supposed to have been chartered, but no charter money had been forthcoming, and they, too, had been in communication with Lloyd's and the Board of Trade. Inquiries were then made by the British consuls all over the world, but without any information as to the whereabouts of the *Ferret* being obtained.

An extraordinary heading of an advertisement appeared in the Glasgow papers of 12th February 1881 respecting the missing steamer: "Vessel Lost, Stolen or Strayed." Some time after it was learned that a steamer answering to the

description of the *Ferret* had passed Gibraltar and had not been sighted again. Particulars were sent to the Australian ports, and on the 20th of April 1881 a vessel named *India* passed through Port Phillip Heads. A constable at Queenscliff, noticing that she was a stranger to the port, and having read the account of the *Ferret's* disappearance from the Clyde, became suspicious, and communicated with the authorities at Melbourne, and in consequence a strict watch was placed on the *India* while at anchor off Williamstown. When the customs and health authorities boarded the vessel on arrival they refrained from exciting any suspicion as to the *India* being identical with the *Ferret*, and it was noticeable that the captain did not come on deck, neither did the men leave the vessel for some time. The man who had previously passed under the name of Walker assumed the name of Henderson, and represented himself as the owner of the ship. He made overtures to a firm of shipbrokers for her disposal when he came ashore. Sufficient information eventually arrived from Scotland, and the Commissioner of Customs, accompanied by water-police and detectives, duly armed, formally boarded the vessel and seized her.

On an examination it was found that the name on the ship's bell had been filed out, and a number of mutilations on various parts of the vessel had been made by altering numbers, etc. The crew later confessed, and narrated that, after passing



Steamship
Ferret



Gibraltar, the vessel retraced her course during the night, steering close to the coast, and while in the vicinity, to give the impression that the vessel had foundered, a lifeboat and a number of lifebuoys with the vessel's name, and other articles, were all cast overboard. When the *Ferret* first passed through the strait her funnel was yellow, and the lifeboats painted blue, but, after passing into the Atlantic, the funnel was painted black and the lifeboats white. The name of the ship was altered to *Bantam*. The chief engineer informed the police that soon after the vessel entered the Atlantic the man Henderson called all the crew into the cabin and intimated that he was the owner of the vessel and could do whatever he wished with her, and that all must obey his orders and be faithful to him, otherwise he would shoot anyone who betrayed him. He informed them that he was a colonel in the American army, and was obliged to destroy all traces of himself as he was wanted on a charge for a political offence. He was so plausible that the men believed his story and promised to help him.

The first port of call was San Antonio -one of the Cape Verde Islands-and from thence she went to Santos, in South America, and took a cargo of coffee, ostensibly for Marseilles, but went to Cape Town instead, where the cargo was sold. From thence she went to Mauritius, and, after taking in stores and cargo, sailed for Albany, West Australia. When she arrived at Albany her name had again been altered, to *India*, and after a short stay in King George's Sound, where fresh water and provisions were obtained, she went on to Melbourne. When Henderson became suspicious he and one of his accomplices left Melbourne, but were later on arrested at Seymour. The three ringleaders, who had several aliases, were charged at the Central Criminal Court, Melbourne, on 18th July 1881, with conspiracy and other charges in reference to the steamer *Ferret*. They had represented themselves as captain, owner and purser of the vessel. After a long trial Henderson received a sentence of seven years, the "purser," also, a similar sentence, and the "captain" three and a half years, on 24th July 1881.

When the authorities made a search on the

steamer during the trial, among the ship's papers were found bills to the value of £8350 and £626 in sovereigns. The *Ferret* was sold by order of the Vice-Admiralty, and purchased by Mr. Whinham, of Adelaide, who subsequently disposed of her, in 1883, to the A.S.S.Co., who placed her in the Gulf trade. She continued to trade to various South Australian ports until she ended her romantic career by being wrecked on Yorke Peninsula in November 1920.

Editor's Note

After its sale in Australia the *Ferret* (Official Number 63864) was used mainly around the Yorke and Eyre Peninsulas in South Australia, but was sent to Western Australia and Queensland on occasions. She was clinker built of iron with dimensions of 170.9 feet x 23 feet x 12.7 feet, one deck and a round stern. She had two masts. Her steam engine was a vertical two cylinder compound with direct drive producing 90 n.h.p.

When it was re-registered in 1885 the gross registered tonnage of 347 was increased by 87 by the addition of a poop deck and 'houses'. Some time after that a fore-castle was added which increased the gross registered tonnage by a further 31. These increases were partially compensated by increases in engine space tonnage. This meant that the net tonnage, on which she was registered, did not increase to the same extent.

The loss on Yorke Peninsula in South Australia on 14 November 1920 was caused partly by fog and partly by the master (Captain Blair) not using all navigation means at his disposal to ensure he had adequate sea room in the fog. Her general cargo included beer, wine and whiskey, much of which was washed ashore near Reef Head.

References

Coroneos, C. & McKinnon, R. 1997, *Shipwrecks of Investigator Strait and the Lower Yorke Peninsula*, Australian Institute for Maritime Archeology & Australian National center of Excellence for Maritime Archaeology.

Gregory, D. 1928, *Australian Steamships: Past and Present*, The Richardson Press Ltd., London.



A Coil of Old Rope?

- Part two of Ray Miller's story of the nautical side of his younger days.

Shad to leave school; my class teacher, Alex K. Langley whom I greatly respected, believed I could still pass my six Junior subjects (when I confronted him with my thinking) even if I left in July, as I was planning. But Mr. Langley suggested I should still come to his home in Shenton Park for an hour every Sunday morning to keep up with the revision in all subjects. That was wonderful of him and helped me enormously. It helped me recover and settle down a bit too. One of my poor choices was that I had arranged a meeting (before consulting with Mr. Langley) with Mr. Hudson Fish, the Australia-wide head of QANTAS Airways, hoping for a job. It seemed a good idea at the time. Hudson Fish accepted me but said I first had to work in the parts store to familiarise myself with their methods.

After making many enquiries of my own throughout the previous twelve months, I had accepted, reluctantly, that getting an apprenticeship in boat building during those war years, was going to be near impossible, and my Uncle Jim was in Brisbane with Evans Deakin, building ships for the war in the Pacific. So I thought: "Take any job to keep the pot boiling". Poor choice! I went back to Tommy Rann from whom I had enquired months earlier. My Uncle Jim had worked for Tommy Rann before World War I. Tommy, who had actually retired prior to W.W.II, had been "man powered" into doing work for the Navy. I think it was out of his respect for Uncle Jim that he took me on, but only for the time being. "I've got plenty of work you can do, but I can't give you an apprenticeship; you must keep looking for one. You must get your ticket," he kept saying. So we scraped and repainted and did all manner of slipway work, including putting a new stem post in Valdavia (or was it Valfreda?) and we built a couple of replacement life boats in Queensland maple, (delicious stuff!), for the Navy. Tommy paid me £1.0.3d a week, I recall. But I was thankful.

But it was not working out, so I went to see Eric Carnaby down at Nedlands foreshore, only a one-

mile bike ride from home. Ever ingenious and cunning, (?) Eric suggested that although he would not give me a job, he would let me use part of his work-shop where I could build boats (dinghies really), under his supervision. The deal was that I would build dinghies four days a week, for myself to sell on spec., and I would work for him two days a week, as rent, to help him with work on his jobs. He had commercial boat building contracts, as well as his own boats to do. In fact for some years, when ever he got the time, he had been building up his fleet of twenty-two-foot open-cockpit cruisers. This had been the "Asteroid (or Star) Fleet" that his father, Fred Carnaby, had built and hired out after W.W.I and during the early twenties. (Fred was forced to sell off his boats to survive the depression). This work was good fun for me and very enjoyable. I had a feeling of some independence, but as my Dad kept pointing out – it looked good on paper but there never was any paper! At first I got my four days a week in, but they were riddled with interruptions, when Eric would ask me to "Give us a lift with this Tuart knee will you?" and we would spend half to three quarters of an hour or more cutting out this heavy lump of curved Tuart on an open, unguarded, three foot circular saw bench! Eric was extremely clever at using this saw bench, his only piece of machinery, as a bandsaw, to fret out the almost-final shape of a twenty-two-footer's stem post. By the time he had finished it would practically be ready to fit to the gripe joint of the fore-foot! (This was long before the advent of the Arbortech Woodcarver!)

The main problem with this arrangement with Eric was not only the interruptions on my four days, but when ever he had a boat to launch, or load onto a truck, he would ask me for a couple of days (what I called "Rent Days") in advance. When he had to launch one of his "Asteroid Fleet" was the worst time. From Eric's boat shed door to the water, after the reclamation of the foreshore in the 1930s, was no longer fifty feet, over the tram track which ran past the door, but over one hundred yards! We used to lay down two lengths of tramline on sleepers and packing



blocks, to run the cradle on; put two more lengths end-on and in front of the first pair, and with crowbars lever the boat-laden cradle onto the second pair, take up the first pair and move them to the front with the first set of sleepers under them. This "leap frog" method we repeated as many times as it took to get across the sand to the stone wall at the water's edge. That was the end of the first day's work for just the two of us! It did give us a sense of achievement; but it was really hard work pushing my gearless bike uphill, all the way home to the highest elevated block in Nedlands, 53 Thomas Street.

The next day's work was more tricky; it was all down-hill from the top of the wall to the water and we might have to wait, maybe a day or so, for a really high tide! Setting up the tram lines was the important bit – getting the down-hill pair of tracks prepared and packed up and braced adequately took great care – we did not want to lose her at this stage! Jarrah planked and Karri ribbed throughout, with Jarrah thwarts and centrecase and Tuart grown knees everywhere, she weighed a ton and a half or more. We also had sleepers tied transversely by two parallel heavy lines from the back of the cradle, dragging in the loose beach sand to act as a brake. We could control the bite of the brake into the sand by standing on the sleepers – risky? But then, wasn't it all?!

We certainly used a lot of ingenuity; also a lot of care, for the boat's sake, as well as our own. If anything adverse happened, we knew we only had ourselves to blame. Fortunately, nothing adverse did happen. She ran down into the water like a dream! Then getting the empty cradle back over the wall was something else! Thinking back about the effort we put into the whole project, we felt we must have been pretty strong.

What finally ended this arrangement with Eric was for me, the bartered 'rent days'. It became unworkable in the end. I put my third ten-foot dinghy across my Dad's wheel barrow and pushed it the mile home. There I finished it off, complete with centre-plate, mast, m, sails and rudder, for a neighbour four doors up our street. Four pounds a foot (in this case £40) was the asking price for a bare-hull clinker dinghy in those days - 1945. (Spars, oars, sails, rudder and centre-

plate were extra.) It was all right if you could complete one every three weeks to a month! Also timber was extremely hard to get - you had to get a permit from the Ministry of Munitions in order to buy it (or even buy your tools for that matter.)

No sooner had this work dried up than a new direction presented itself - an apprenticeship in Carpentry and Joinery was found for me by a friend of one of my best friends from school days. So I started work with C.H. Richardson Pty. Ltd. at 36 Broadway, Nedlands. Again only a mile bike-ride from home. I was almost eighteen, rather late to be starting an apprenticeship, and it was not boat building, but it was much more secure than what I had tried previously. After all, I could hope to "get a ticket", as Tommy Rann kept telling me was so necessary.

This Carpentry and Joinery stuff seemed very mundane after what I had been used to and, at first, I found it rather boring. But Charlie Richardson before long got me doing all sorts of interesting things, like building wood-working machines of composite construction, with cast iron metal parts and bearing assemblies and wooden chassis and table tops. We used Sheoak as I recall, a very stable and good wearing timber. I built a three-wheel, moving table, belt-sander for sanding 'six-eight, two-eight' flush panel doors, which was quite successful. And then my next creation was a spindle-moulder with a tenonning head, for making window sashes and solid framed doors. That worked a treat, I was so pleased with it. What was even more pleasing to me was that Charlie, (I should say Mr. Richardson) was very pleased with it. So it worked out that I was given more exciting things to do than some of the other men, not just joinery.

So it continued for over two years until a Collie coal strike so affected the power supply, that a joinery shop like ours, with power one-hour-on and one-hour-off, is brought to its knees. We needed our wood-working machines at any time, or all the time, each working day, or we could not keep up production to a viable level. Charlie had to start putting men off, which he hated doing, because not only were they good tradesmen, but when the strike ended, he would need them back again. If it continued long enough, they would



have found other work, then he would have even less chance of getting them back.

It so happened that, at about this time, a contemporary of mine who had done two years of an Architectural Course decided that he wanted to do something more 'hands on; such as building. His Father had been a successful builder and had built himself many blocks of flats, which brought in a good living in rents. Also his Builder's Licence was still current. They joined forces and registered their business as 'Tee-Square Builders'. Then they suggested to me that seeing things were a bit uncertain in my place of work, that I might see if Charlie would release me from my indentures, and agree to have my Apprenticeship Papers transferred to 'Tee-Square Builders'. This was all agreed to and I transferred my employment to my friends, John Plunkett and his Dad, Jack, or 'J.J.' as I knew him. They had a good big factory full of good quality, but fairly old machinery, but no one to use it. So that was it. I became their Wood Machinist and Joiner. My job also consisted of going out on site, to the State Housing Commission building sites that they had been allocated, in Carlisle or Tuart Hill and Joondanna. There we would set out the house sites, two to six at a time. John and I would do all the digging and setting up of stumps for all the houses, while J.J. would do the detailed setting out of bearers and joists.

Then they got another carpenter, Des Bailey, who could help John and his Dad with the joists and wall framing, while I worked at the factory making door jambs and window frames, including the sashes and doors for each house. Then we would all be out there, standing up wall frames and pitching roofs. As soon as the roofs were pitched and gutters on, the Roof Tilers would do one house after another and we would follow them with the asbestos wall cladding. As each shell with roof was completed, they would lay the floors and I would be back at the work-shop doing any cupboards required, (there were not all that many in those days). 1946-51 were years of enormous activity in-house building, with ex-servicemen returning and needing homes, following the material and labour shortages of the war years. So this work continued to run like clockwork and we were having a wonderful time!

Early in 1951 at a gathering of young people of the Presbyterian Church, Jim Duncan, the Superintendent of the Kunmunya Aboriginal Mission Station in the West Kimberley, was telling his audience in Perth of the Mission's dire need of someone to repair their 48-foot lugger and of a carpenter-builder to dismantle the Mission buildings at Kunmunya and transport them to Wotjulum. This was over 100 miles, by sea, to a place on the mainland, opposite Cockatoo Island in Yampi Sound. That was something I thought was urgently demanded of me. I agreed to go as soon as I had completed my apprenticeship, which would be on the 23rd August 1951. That would give me six months to get myself tooled up and ready. Also I thought it would give 'Tee-Square Builders' time for me to show someone what was required, in order to do my job, so a smooth transition would be effected. Unfortunately, for some reason unknown to me, some months went by before anyone was found and I had to train John to do my job as he had no previous experience with production machining. I felt bad about pulling out of the team that had worked together so efficiently.

But go I must, for I had volunteered and I was prepared. I was to catch MacRobertson-Miller's DC3 to Derby at 6.00 a.m. on September 1st, arriving at 6.00 p.m. Off I went. All my tools and gear had been sent on ahead, including my own 10-foot dinghy Didgeridoo by the State Shipping Service. I had just my personal belongings on the plane with me. The Post Master at Derby, Jack Armstrong as I recall, met me at the airport and invited me to come to his home for the evening meal. That I will not forget! We had roast turkey - wild plain turkey or bustard. This pleasant interlude had been organised from Perth by my Dad who, as an Engineer in the Post Master General's Department, seemed to know all the country Post Masters personally!

To be continued



Ships of the State Shipping Service

The second in the series by Jeff Thompson of the Fremantle Branch of the World Ship Society. The article is reprinted courtesy of that Society and the editor of their newsletter.

No.2 *Eucla* Official Number 115233

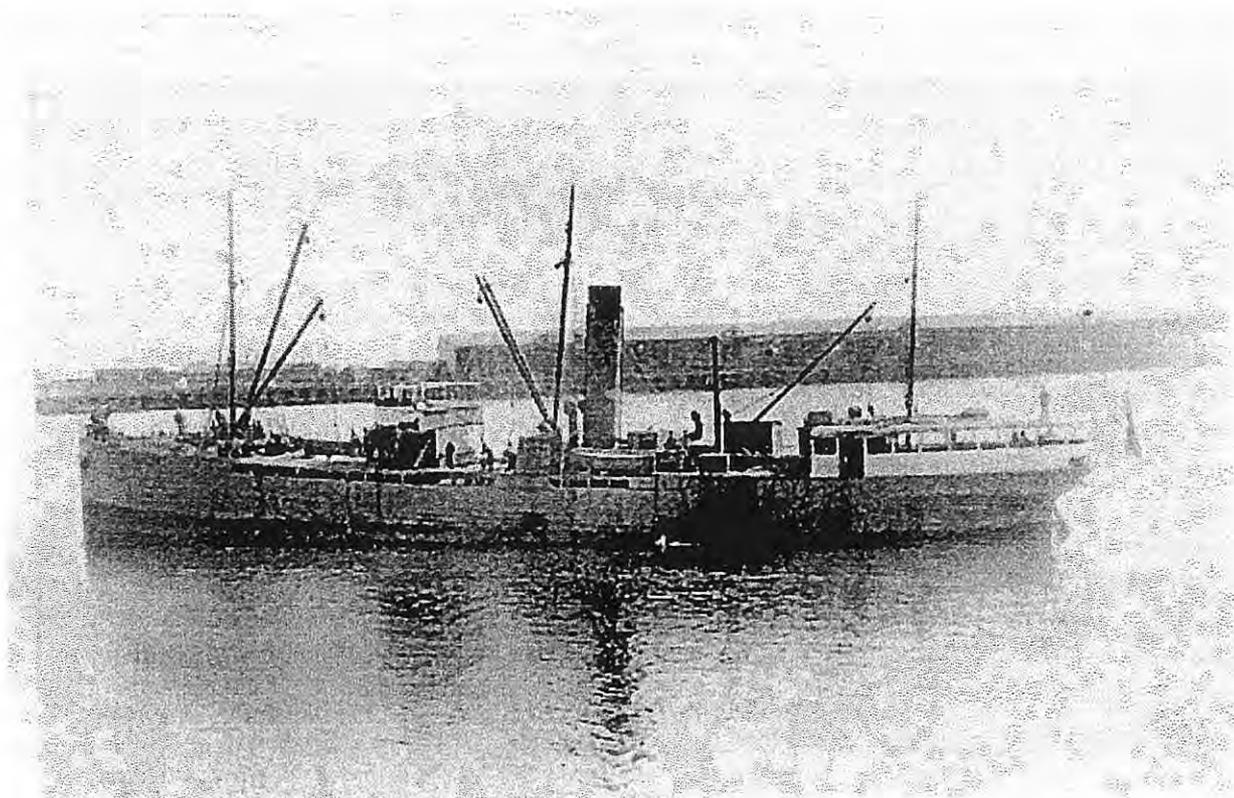
With the State Steamship Service being formed in 1912, the Scaddan Government did not waste any time before it acquired a second vessel. Before the first ship, *Una*, had returned from its inaugural voyage a second ship was purchased. This was the *Wexford*, a vessel especially designed for coastal work around Britain. The new acquisition was to be used on the service along the south coast from Albany to Eucla to replace the *Ferret*, as the Adelaide S.S. Co. had lost the Government shipping contract to the newly formed Western Australian State Steamship Service.

The *Wexford* was purchased from the UK company, J Bacon Ltd, Liverpool, on 16 May 1912 for £10,000 through the W.A. Agent General. The *Wexford* was built as a coaster by S. McKnight and Co, Ayr, Scotland in December 1901, for shallow water use in the cattle and pig trade in the English and Irish Channel ports. She was 564 gross registered tons, 452 deadweight tons, 57.31 metres overall, 8.54 metres breadth,

with a coal fired triple expansion engine built by Ross & Duncan, Govan, giving a speed of 11 knots. As constructed she had a clincher built steel hull with an elliptical stern and having a special shoe fitted to protect her keel when in shallow waters. As the *Wexford* she had a cattle capacity of 250 head and could accommodate 34 saloon and 12 steerage class passengers with the ability to carry 40 additional steerage passengers if required.

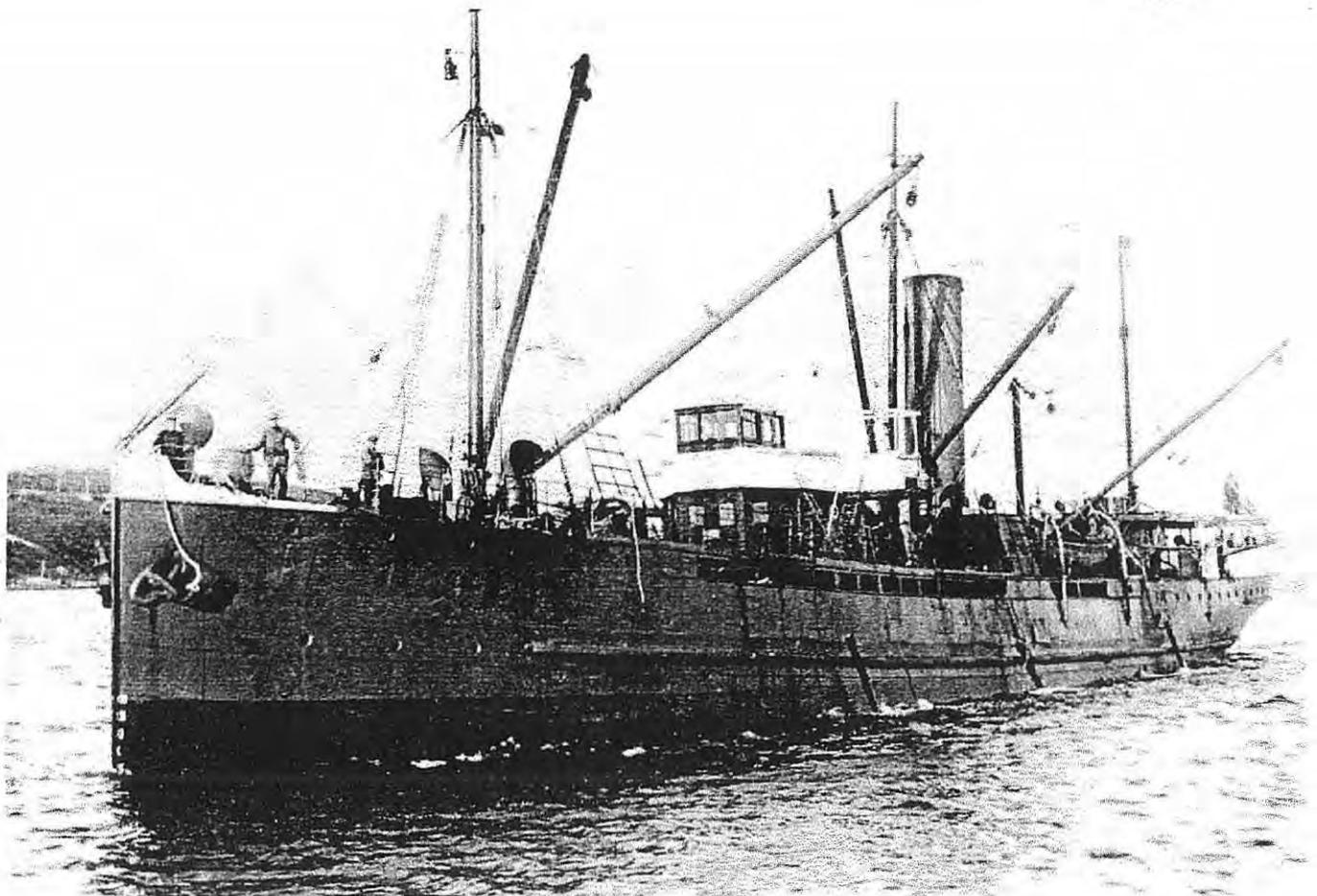
The *Wexford* left Liverpool on the 11 June 1912 for Fremantle with 300 tons of coal in her bunkers, arriving at Fremantle on 1 August 1912 with 100 tons of bunker coal remaining. On 4 August 1912 the *Wexford* left Fremantle for Albany where she was to be renamed *Eucla* before commencing service along the south east coast

In 1926 the vessel was sold for scrap to a local scrap merchant for dismantling, being replaced by the newly built *Kybra*. On 9 March 1932 the hull was scuttled off Rottnest.



*Eucla in
Fremantle
Harbour*

*Photo
Navarro
Collection*



Stateship Eucla

Australia's Greatest Maritime Tragedy

The greatest Australian maritime tragedy was the sinking of the Japanese ship *Montevideo Maru*.

On 22 June 1942 over 1,000 Australian prisoners were loaded aboard this vessel by the Japanese at Rabaul on the island of New Britain. 845 were military personnel and included Prisoners of War from the 2/22nd Battalion, the 1st Independent Company, the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles, an anti-tank battery, an anti-aircraft battery, a coastal defence battery, a small group of RAAF and a detachment of the 2/10th Field Ambulance. These were the members of Lark Force who had survived the Japanese capture of Rabaul in January 1942 but were taken prisoner. Others had escaped and some of those who escaped made it back to Australia, but 160 were captured at Tol Plantation

and executed by the Japanese. Also taken on board were 206 civilians of whom all but a small group were Australian. This small group was the Norwegian crew of the ship *Herstein* that had been sunk at Rabaul.

The Japanese had not marked the *Montevideo Maru* to indicate that it was carrying POWs and on 1 July 1942 the American submarine USS *Sturgeon* torpedoed and sank the ship off Luzon Island in the Philippines. There were no survivors among the 1,051 prisoners.

In February 2004 a polished black granite monument to the victims of this disaster was dedicated at Ballarat, along with a general memorial to all Australian POWs.



Fire Ships

Fire ships date from at least 190 BC when the Romans used them against the Syrians. However I had always thought, certainly as far as the Elizabethan navy and the later Royal Navy of Nelson's day, that any old vessel was packed with combustible material, set alight and sailed towards the enemy. This is not so. According to Falconer's *Universal Dictionary of the Marine* published in 1815 there was a great deal of science and forethought that went into fitting out a fire ship. In fact the book devotes some three pages of small print and a page of drawings to the vessel, its fitting out and the means to fire it.

Generally an old vessel was chosen and a fire-room built between decks, extending from the forward bulkhead to one specially built behind the main mast. Into this were constructed a number of wooden troughs that intersected each other and were supported by cross pieces and stanchions. Regulations decreed:

The whole breadth of the fire-room is to be divided into nine parts, and troughs laid the whole length of the room. Cross troughs of communication are laid between them, about twenty in each row, perpendicular to the long troughs. These troughs are usually four inches wide, and four deep. There are two fire-trunks and two fire scuttles on each side, under which the eight fire-barrels are to be placed.

The reeds and bavins are to be tied down in the troughs. The curtains are to be nailed up to the beams, equally throughout the fire-room. The ship is not to be primed when fitted out, but only when intended to be fired.

Bavins were small bundles of brushwood, two or three feet in length, with their brush ends dipped in a kettle of melted composition to make them burn more fiercely.

Curtains were one square yard in area and were dipped in composition to make them very flammable.

Composition was a very combustible concoction of saltpetre, resin, sulphur, Swedish pitch, tallow, tar, oil and gunpowder. Precise ratios of ingredients were set down, and the total used in a fire ship of 150 tons was 3,006 lbs of dry mixture and 11 pints of oil.

The regulation even stated the size of the fire-barrels and the other details of their construction:

... two feet four inches high, and one foot six inches diameter. Each barrel must have four holes of about six inches square, cut in its sides; and these holes must have a square piece of canvas nailed over them quite close. They are then filled with the same composition... and four plugs, of about one inch diameter and three inches long, and well greased, are thrust into the top, and then left to dry. When dry these plugs are taken out, and the holes filled with fuse-composition, and quick-match at the top; which goes from one hole to the other: after this the top is smeared over with mealed powder mixed up with spirits of wine. When dry again, a sheet or two of brown paper is laid over the top, and then one of the canvas covers, which is made secure by the upper hoop of the barrel.

There were six or seven ports on each side of the ship, each 18 inches wide and 15 inches high. These were fitted with lids that opened downwards, contrary to the normal practice where most port lids opened upwards. Against each port was placed an "iron chamber" 10 inches long and 3.5 inches in diameter, secured to prevent any recoil. They were each loaded with nine to eleven ounces of gunpowder, had a wooden tampion driven into the muzzle and were primed with a small piece of quick match in the vent. Quick match was a very quick burning fuse made from cotton, gunpowder, saltpetre and vinegar. The iron chambers were to blow open the ports, thereby opening a passage for the flames to go outwards and the air to enter the vessel to maintain the combustion inside it.

Two troughs were constructed from openings in the back bulkhead to a sally port cut out on each



side of the ship. Lighting the material in either of these troughs instantly conveyed the flame to the fire-room and to both sides of the ship. In these troughs were placed quick-match and "reeds". Reeds were one-foot diameter bundles of reeds four feet long, which had been dipped in the composition to make them into fuses. These and the quick-matches were distributed throughout the fire-room and over the fire-barrels, whose tops were cut open.

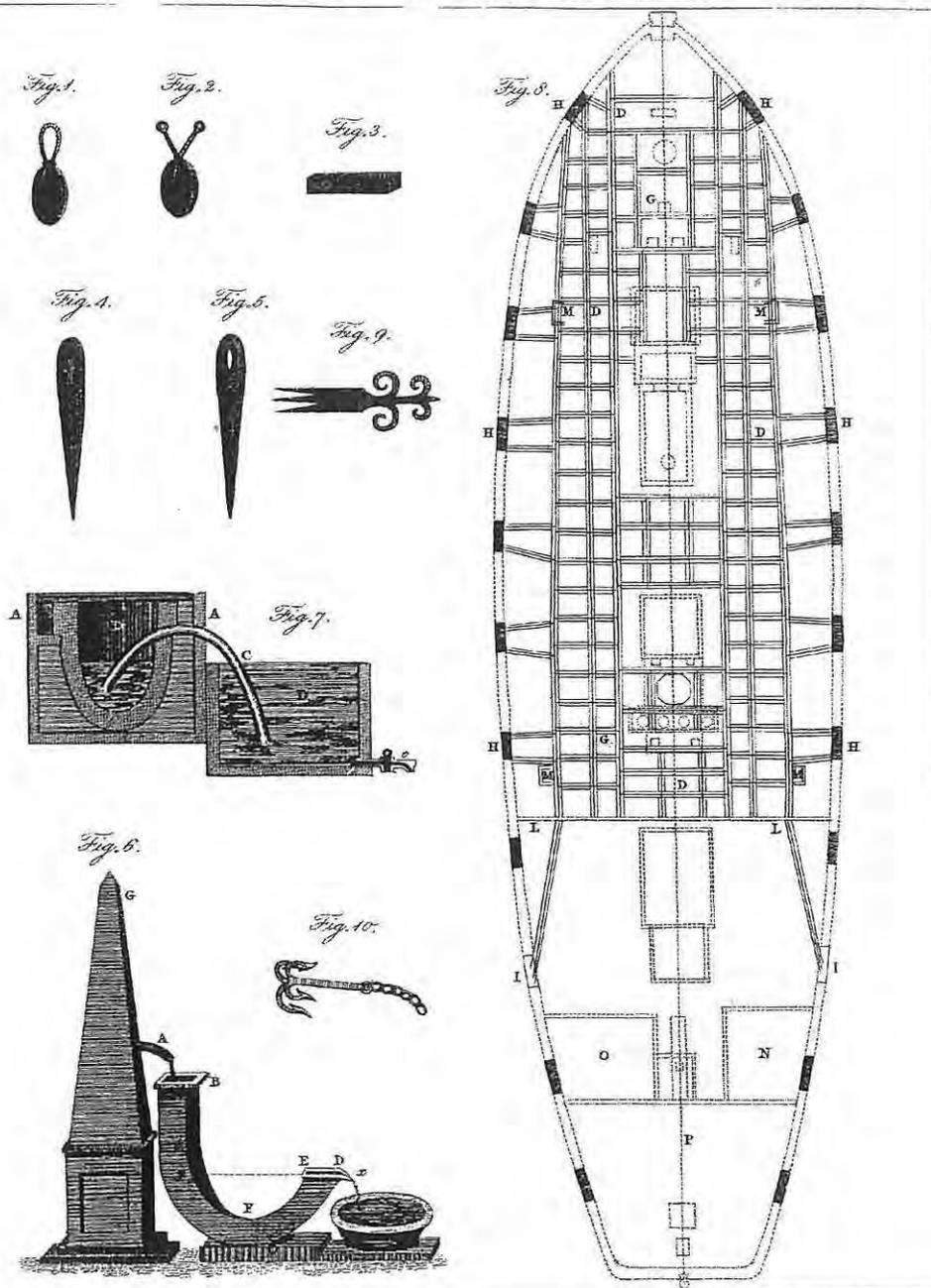
Above deck were placed forty-four fire-boxes suspended from various parts of the rigging, including the bowsprit, catheads, deadeyes and shrouds. Also fire-barrels were arranged on the forecastle,

on the main deck, two in each crows nest, and on the poop deck. The fire-boxes and fire-barrels were all connected with quick-match, and curtains were suspended in the shrouds to ensure that everything lighted as close to instantaneously as possible.

Sheer-hooks were fastened to the yard-arms to hook the enemy's rigging, and there were grappling hooks with chains to be thrown by the crew of the fire-ship to "confine the ships together". The captain of the fire ship was expected to be the last to leave the ship, and then only when the vessel was securely fastened to the enemy ship, and well alight. One hopes he was well paid!

DECK OF A FIRE-SHIP, &c.

PLATE X.





Rabbits in the Ballast

The following is an excerpt from *A Gypsy of the Horn: The narrative of a voyage round the world in a Windjammer*, by Rex Clements. Clements sailed about 1900 as an apprentice on the three masted barque *Arethusa* (1198 tons, built on the Clyde in 1890), and his book of the sixteen month voyage was first published in 1924.

On a subsequent visit to Newcastle the ballast was nearly the cause of our being locked up. We had come from a little place in the Spencer Gulf, where we had discharged and taken in five hundred tons of soil as ballast. Rabbits had been very plentiful there and by way of recreation we had caught large numbers, digging them out of their burrows and putting them down the hold alive, with the idea of having a supply of fresh meat when we wanted it.

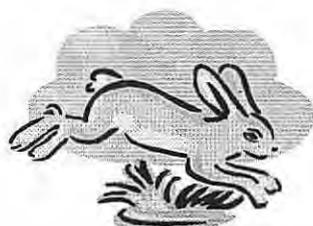
On arrival at Newcastle the Customs officers came aboard and somehow or other heard of our livestock down below. Now, as everybody knows but we had forgotten, rabbits are the curse of Australia, and the Chief Customs officer nearly had a seizure when he realised what we had got aboard. He talked to the Captain in a way the latter was entirely unaccustomed to and, to wind up, put the ship in quarantine. There we had to remain until we had laboriously dug over every inch of that ballast and killed every rabbit in it, and not till the port

officials were fully satisfied there wasn't a live bunny left were we allowed to get on with our legitimate business.

It is easy to understand the crew's interest in fresh meat when you read that they had:

One meal a day, and one only, was our portion. That was dinner, which consisted of a plate of pea-soup and three quarters of a pound of pork, or a plate of bean-soup and a pound of beef, on alternate days. For the rest we had a pannikin of hot liquid, called "coffee," for breakfast, and a similar pannikin described as "tea" for supper; with sea-biscuits ad lib. This was all; and though it hardly sounds sumptuous, in reality it was far worse. The meat was weighed before cooking and included both fat and bone – in generous proportions. It was as hard as a brick and the only flavour it had arose from its degree of rottenness. For twenty-four hours before boiling it was soaked in the steep tub – a large receptacle filled with salt water that was kept under the fo'c'sle-head ladder. It fell to us boys to replenish this tub every morning, and devilishly the water stank when we emptied it away after a dozen lumps of greasy pork had floated around in it overnight.

The *Arethusa* was sunk by a German submarine off the Fastnet in 1917.





Warana 016-100

Brian Lemon writes of another of the models he has made.

In early 1978 my youngest stepson wrote to me from Townsville, where he was in the Army at the time, about an Air Force boat that he thought would make a good model. He also sent a couple of photos of this boat he had taken with his cheap little camera. These pictures were not good enough to build a model from so in December 1978 his mother and I took off in my 1972 Beetle, towing a Caravanette, for Townsville to spend Christmas with him, and of course to photograph this boat from a modeller's perspective. I was able to get a bit closer to the boat than he was, and take several reasonable shots.

The *Warana* was about 40ft long, of hard chine construction and based on the R.A.F. crash tenders

used during the Second World War. We stayed about a week in Queensland and then headed for home. During the early months of 1979 I built the model which was radio controlled, and in July 1979 we headed back to Townsville in my current VW (1973 model) armed with a series of photos of the model. Having arrived in Townsville I made contact with the R.A.A.F. people involved with *Warana* and was taken for a "tour" of the "full-sized" model. Most impressive. The "crew" seemed to think the model was a pretty good replica of the full-sized boat.

In 1981 I won the State Championship for this class of model and in about 1984-85 I presented the model to the Bull Creek Air Force Museum, where it still is to this day.



*Brian's model of Warana (left)
and the real thing (above)*



Shipwrighting Tools

A further contribution to previous discussions on shipwrighting tools. This one is by Tony Duvollet on rove punch, dolly, maul and spar gauge.

There are a number of tools peculiar to the shipwrighting and boatbuilding trades, some of which have already been discussed in previous articles, such as the adze and caulking tools. Some tools, while not restricted to the maritime trades, were often adapted to suit a particular job. For example, a wooden plane shaped with a convex sole may be used to hollow the inside face of a plank to fit snug to frames at the turn of a “tight” or “hard” bilge. As an apprentice an old shipwright took me to his home and proudly showed me four sea-chests full of hand-made wooden planes. Then he sadly showed me one plane that replaced the whole lot: the Stanley multi-plane, now of course itself replaced by the router and spindle moulder. I have continued the trait of adapting tools to suit a particular job, albeit power tools now. The belt sander on its side makes a wonderful tool for sanding angle cuts and shaping. One router I have adapted to enable routing into tight corners and curves. I very rarely use the draw knife or spokeshave any more. A pity, but economics dictate that the job has to be done as quickly and as efficiently as possible. So, the few tools left to discuss besides hand-made custom planes, are rove punch, dolly, maul and spar gauge.

ROVE PUNCH

Used in conjunction with the dolly for pressing the copper rove over the copper nail prior to cutting the nail off then roving (with a ball-peen hammer) forming a head, pulling two timbers tight together, usually the plank and ribs. These tools are generally custom-made by a fitter and turner. A hole is drilled into the centre of a piece of rod, then countersunk to the angle of the rove. Some rove punches were previously available commercially, some were double punches in that instead of rod, they were made of rectangular section with two countersunk holes to suit different gauge nails.

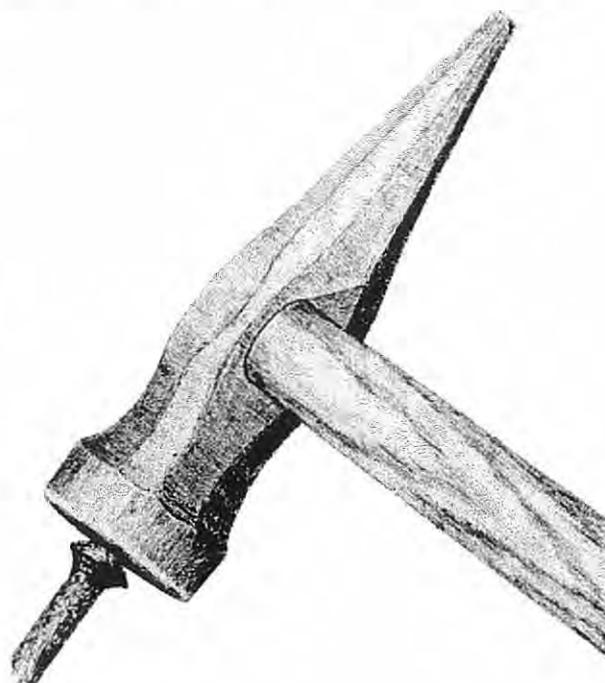
DOLLY

Used in conjunction with the rove punch, it was simply a heavy weight behind the head of the

copper nail used to counter the blows from the ball-peen hammer whilst roving. The shape is distinctive (see diagram) and the device was usually nicknamed “Sabrina” or “Marilyn Monroe” because one end was shaped like a ... Aw, come on fellers, use your imagination. Again most were custom-made but some were available commercially. The Rolls Royce of dollies is one with a sprung “D”-handle to check the recoil from the hammering.

MAUL

This always draws comments whenever I use it: a large two-handed hammer weighing about the same as a small sledge hammer. The difference is that the maul has a flat face as opposed to the slightly convex face of the sledge. The maul has only one face, the other end is either tapered to a point or shaped to a chisel edge, both of which serve their own purpose. The tapered point was used to knock out the pin retaining the anchor chain, the ship’s carpenter awaiting the order “let go the anchor”. The chisel point was used for “battening the hatches” where hatch boards were placed over the hatch, covered with canvas tarpaulin then secured with timber battens laid onto lugs welded to the side of the hatch. These were then tightened up with wedges using the





maul, which in this case had a very short handle, about 16 inches long (for those that are not bilingual that is 400mm or 40cm). A feature of a good maul was that it was well balanced, unlike its owner. A well balanced maul could be swung all day, and be a joy to use. Teams of shipwrights with mauls would actually work together on launch day to wedge the sliding ways up to the keel and poppets ready for the nudge from the bottle of champagne that sends her on her way to the water. A spectacular sight; for once under way you cannot stop her. Far more exhilarating and memorable than launching a ship by flooding a dry-dock! The maul I have owned for 40 years (ah, that dates me,) I sort of obtained from one of R.W. Miller's coal-burning steam colliers; that dates me again. It was foundered in Sydney by a company called Plumb, and is rare item indeed.

SPAR GAUGE

Again another custom-made tool, used for marking the eight-siding in spar-making. The beauty of this gauge is its simplicity. A piece of scrap timber, two nails and a bit of time and care setting out and cutting out, and you have this wonderful device that marks lines precisely even on a tapered spar or tapered three faces and one face straight as

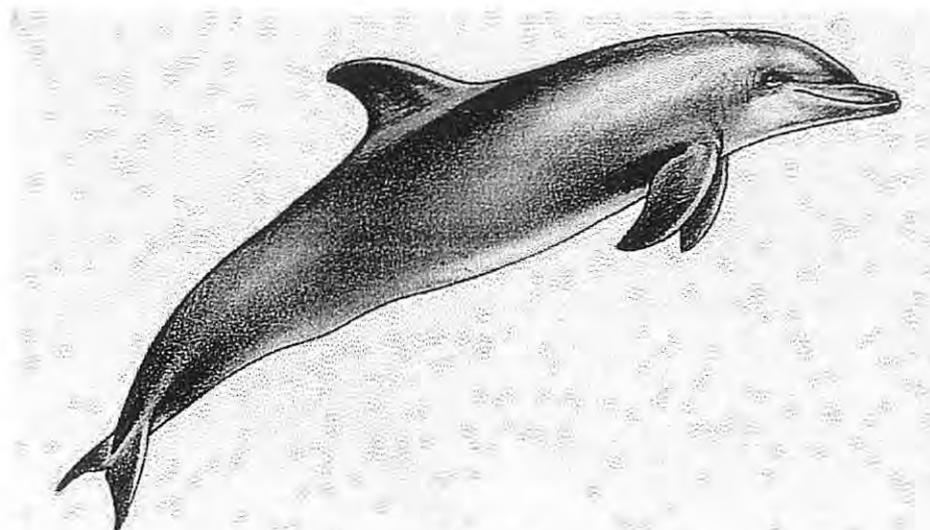
used in a mast for a Bermudan-rigged sail. This gauge is not necessary when using Noble's bird's mouth method of spar making, as this mode automatically gives you an eight-sided spar as described in Peter Worsley's article on bird's mouth spar making in MHAJ Vol. 11 No. 3, September 2000. There is a rule of thumb using the old inches ruler for setting out the marking gauge pins, but the method escapes me. (*Editor: Can any readers enlighten Tony and the rest of us?*) However if you draw an octagonal plane inside a square, the intersecting tangents give you the position of the marking pins. The gauge is simply drawn down the faces of the square section timber and the corners dressed down to the marks leaving an eight-sided figure. It is then sixteen-sided by simply knocking off the corners, then carefully hand planed using a very fine blade. Then sand using long strips of sandpaper across the grain, to achieve a round section.

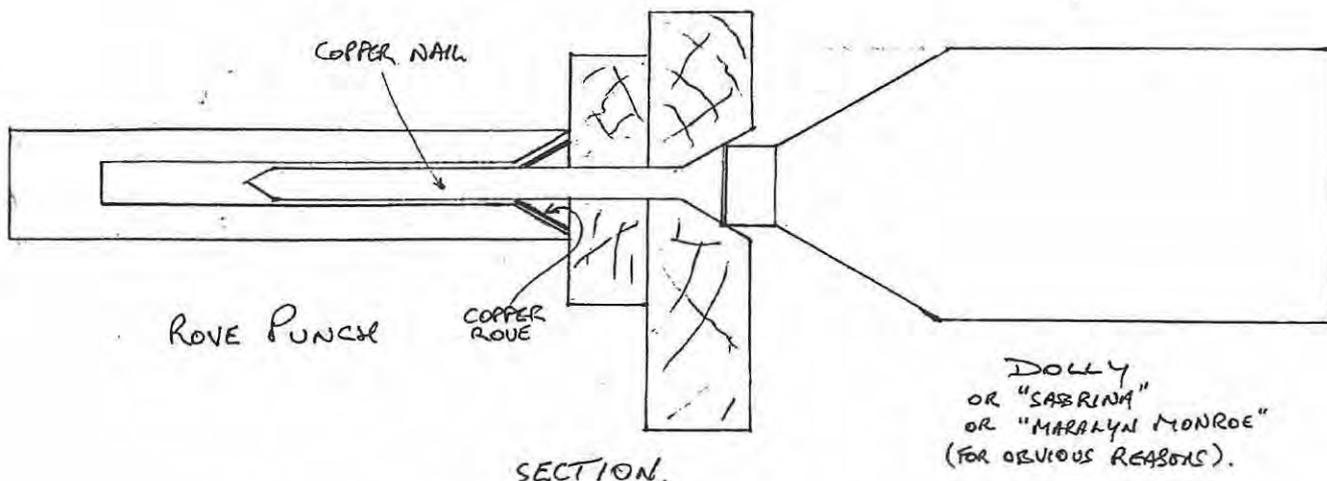
These are some of the tools unique to the trade. I still have them and when I can I use them with pride and a bit of smugness, for the ability to use these is being lost, along with many other skills.

See page opposite for Tony's drawings

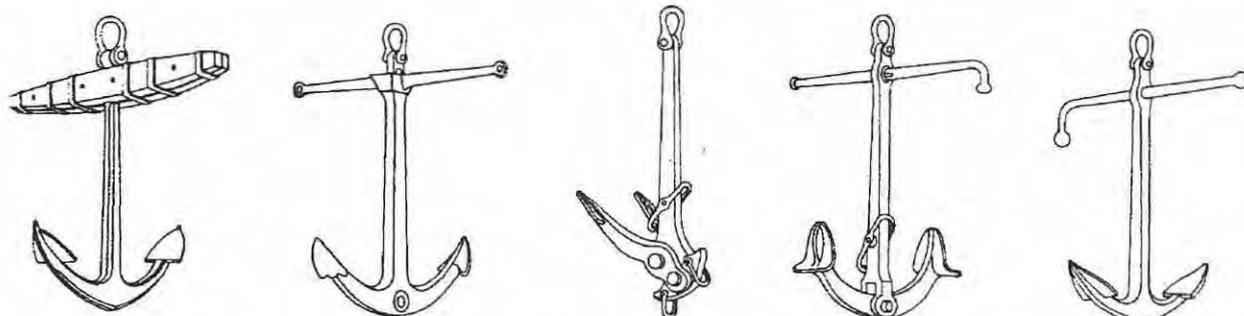
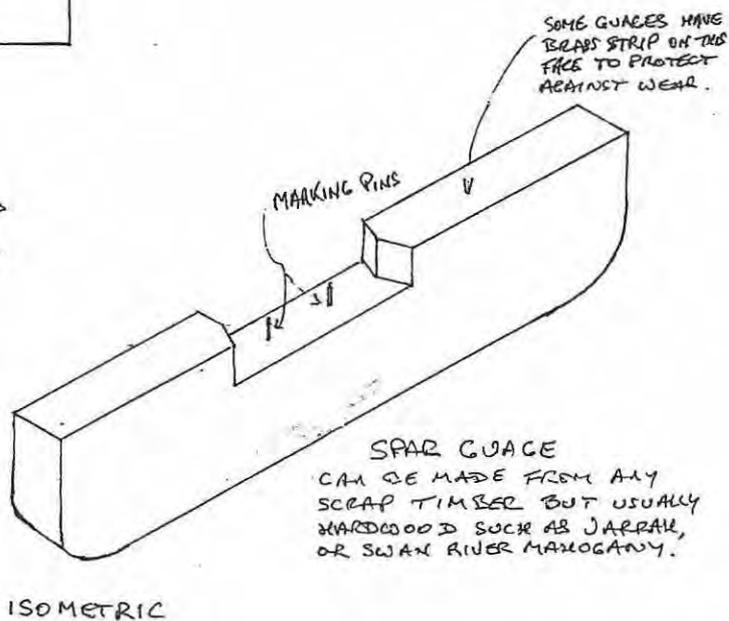
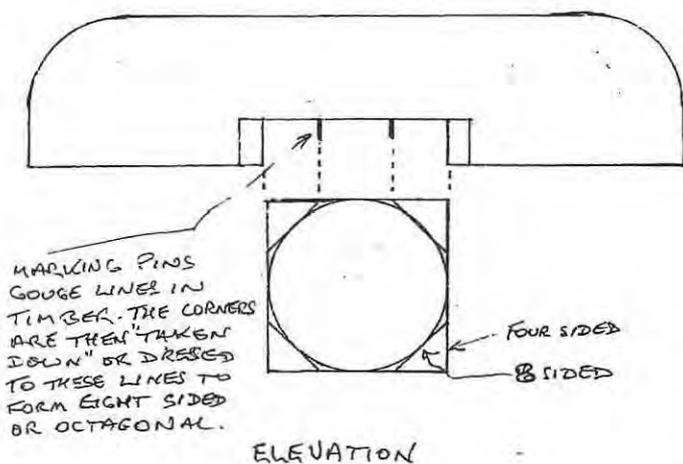
Editor's note:

I have checked at least seven different sources, including the *Collins English Dictionary*, *Boatbuilding* by Howard I. Chapelle and *Boatbuilding Manual* by Robert M. Steward for the correct spelling of peen as in ball-peen hammer. There is no consensus! The spellings are peen, pein, pane or peign. The dictionary states that it is a 17th century variant of *pane*, perhaps from the French *panne*, ultimately from Latin *pinna* point. The *Boatbuilding Guide* by Arthur N. Swinfield and published by the South Pacific Commission (specifically written to teach Pacific Island people the art of building small fishing boats) compounds the problem by referring to it as a clenching hammer! It appears that you take your pick and none can gainsay it!





ROVE PUNCH AND DOLLY (USE OF)





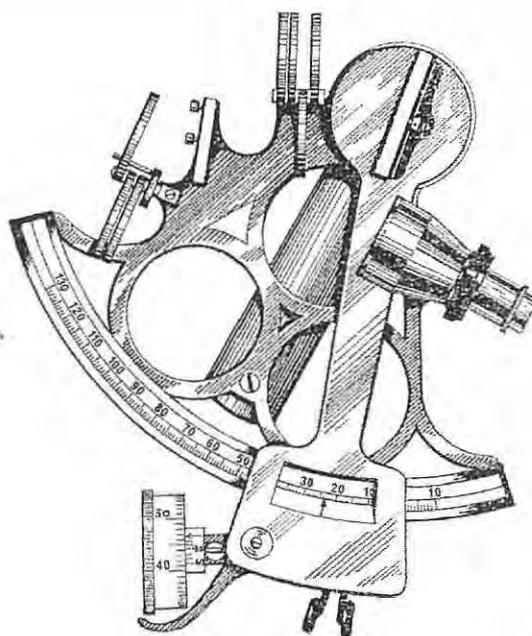
QUIZ

Answers to December 2004

1. George Vancouver named these features in September 1791.
2. Cock-a-bendy is a contrivance for twisting ropes, consisting of a hollow piece of wood through which a pin runs. By reason of the rotation of this pin when the cock-a-bendy is held in the hand, twist is imparted to the rope.
3. These disastrous sounding names all come from Shark Bay.

Questions

1. What are knight-heads?
2. Where in Western Australia are the Darwin Ree
3. What flag is flown to denote a vessel has a pilot



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