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MARITIME HERITAGE ASSOCIATION JOURNAL



- * The 1873 stranding of the steamer *Georgette*
- * C.B. Norton—Marine Artist
- * Pedal-powered craft through the ages



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Annual General Meeting

(There will be an important motion to approve the new Constitution which can be viewed on the MHA website)

Where: 12 Cleopatra Drive, Mandurah

When: 10.00am, Sunday 14 April 2019

Come for morning tea and stay for lunch
(there will not be a Committee Meeting after the AGM)

Don't forget, you can get here on the train
(For details contact Peter and Jill,
or Julie on 0432 618 879)



**For catering purposes please let Jill or Peter know at:
mha.editor@gmail.com or 9586 9003**

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 capacity of a cask in gallons is half the sum of the areas of the head and bung circles divided by 277.27 multiplied by the interior length of the cask.

In 1907 when the Countess of Cardigan collapsed and died on the lawn of the Royal Yacht Squadron, a member was heard to remark "These damned women have no respect for the Squadron."

In 1919 the Sydney 18-ft skiff *Britannia* carried nearly 2,000 sq ft of sail in light weather. The bowsprit stretched 17ft forward of the stem, the boom was 26½ft long, the gaff 21ft and the three-piece spinnaker pole was 39ft.

In 1840 the *Erebus* and the *Terror* under the command of James Clark Ross explored Kerguelen Islands. On board the *Erebus* was the young botanist Joseph Hooker. In the frozen ground of Kerguelen he resorted to sitting on stones that were frozen into the ground until they thawed and he could pry them out to obtain the lichen specimens growing on them.

In the late 19th century the largest Scottish Zulu fishing boats were 80ft long, could carry 60 tons and the unstayed mast could have a diameter of 2ft at the deck. They were lug-rigged, and the yard was 37ft long.

Once when sailing the barque *Natal Queen* (231 tons) Captain Jack Shimmins was below asleep the mate woke him to report a light on the starboard bow. "Nonsense," said Captain Shimmins, "there's nothing for miles. Go back to your job." A short while later the mate once again woke his captain to say that the light was getting closer. The annoyed captain seized the chart, then gasped "The damned rats have eaten the lighthouse off the chart. Hard aport!"

The barque *Otago*, Joseph Conrad's only command, became a lighter in Sydney and then was for many years a coal hulk at Hobart. The remains of the *Otago* are in the shallows at Otago Bay in the Derwent River near Hobart.

The first *Nautical Almanac* was published in 1766, and went on sale in January the following year.

William Dampier's illuminated hand-drawn chart of his voyage along the coast of New Guinea in 1700 was drawn on sheepskin, and now hangs in a frame outside the Assistant Hydrographer of the Navy's office.



Kiribati is the only country situated within all four hemispheres. This Micronesian nation straddles both the Equator and the 180th meridian, so its territory is spread across the Southern, Northern, Western and Eastern Hemispheres. This encouraged them to establish a new time zone, UTC + 14:00, which means tomorrow always gets there first.

Within the first two years of the discovery of Macquarie Island sealers had taken 120,000 fur seal skins and 350 tons of elephant seal oil.

During the Napoleonic Wars the French war ships had their mast hoops painted black. Because of this Nelson ordered all British warships to paint their mast hoops white so as to distinguish the two opponents in the smoke and heat of battle.

In 1720 the crew of the *Speedwell* mutinied after the loss of the privateer on Juan Fernandez Island. They blamed the vessel's commander, George Shelvocke for carelessness, and the first lieutenant, Simon Hately, for shooting an albatross while the *Speedwell* was earlier in the Straits of le Maire. Hately's action subsequently inspired Samuel Taylor Coleridge to write his famous poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

Maintaining a boat is expensive. If your total expenditure is divided by the number of days on board, the cost per day is frightening. However, the more days you sail the more this figure reduces. This proves that it is cheaper to sail often!

The Leeuwin Current is the world's longest boundary current (i.e. a current that follows a coastline). At 5,500km long, its influence is felt from Rowley Shoals in the North-West as far as Tasmania.



QUIZ

Answers to December

1. Baleen whales include blue , humpback , right, grey, bowhead, fin and minke whales. Toothed whales include sperm, beluga, orca, narwhal, pilot and various beaked whales, and also dolphins and porpoises.
2. The four headsails from the bowsprit outer end are: flying jib, outer jib, inner jib and fore-topmast staysail.
3. The first vessel acquired by the State Shipping Service was the steamer *Una*. The *Una* was built in 1890, had a length of 111.1ft and a gross tonnage of only 178. It was sold in 1917.

Quiz

1. Where and on what date was the flag raised and possession taken by Captain Charles Fremantle of 'the whole West coast of New Holland'?
2. Where on the Western Australian coast is Hügel Passage?
3. Where or what on a ship is the orlop?

A Letter from the Past



MHA member Kent Williams recently sent me a 3-page letter from S.S. Engineering & Foundry Pty Ltd, Bush House, Goodwood Parade, Rivervale, WA, or P.O. Box 5, Rivervale. The letter was a reply to an enquiry regarding boat propellers. The letter fell from an old magazine that Kent had, and he wondered if any MHA member might be interested in the letter. There is no date, but the telephone number of the firm is given as M 1926, which obviously pre-dates the numerical 8-figure numbers now in use.

The cost of a 10 inch bored, polished and balanced bronze propeller is stated as £10, a 16 inch

£18 and a 24 inch £34. A Mr R. J. Morrison was the contact person at S.S. Engineering. The third page of the letter is a questionnaire giving information regarding the length, beam, etc. of the boat so that the firm can calculate the dimensions of a suitable propeller and its cost. There is a £2. 2s fee to do this for a new vessel.

S.S. Engineering & Foundry Pty Ltd was incorporated into VEEM Ltd, a company now at Canning Vale.

If any member would like this letter, please let me know and I will enclose it with the next MHA Journal I send to you.

Did You Know?

On 12 March 1907 the steamer *Mildura* was stranded at North West Cape. Attempts at salvage failed, and the ship was finally abandoned. During World War II the wreck was used as a target for bombing practice by aircraft and for firing practice by every US submarine that passed by. The captain of the USS *Flier* noted:

'This ship had the distinction of being shot at by more submarines than any other ship in the world.'



Pedal-powered craft

Bruce Gordon asks “Will we be returning to earlier days?”

How to get to Rottnest cheaper than flying or the ferry? Swim? Why not *ride*? Kohan Grogan, startup entrepreneur, did that this year, raising money for schools and clean drinking water in Cambodia. He



that time.

So these things are worth investigating.

The ‘hydrobike’ (or ‘cycle’) Kohan pedalled over 20km is a bicycle frame with the chain connected to a propeller. The bike sits between two pontoons with platforms either side, and a forward rudder controlled by the handlebars. Despite its lack of wheels it is so like a bicycle to use, there must be moments when less experienced ‘cycle-sailors’ are reminded that it’s not when they reach for the brake levers! There are not yet designs which allow a commuting cyclist to simply ‘click

trained for a few weeks, “improving from extremely unfit to unfit”. He then got on a ‘hydrobike’ and peddled to Rottnest in 3½ hours.

That’s faster than a very fit Solomon Wright who



won the Rottnest Channel Swim, but with no weighty machine to power and negligible wind resistance or friction to combat. A recent trip on the large ferry with huge diesels took almost half



in’ to a hydrobike, which would be a viable business in cities like Perth, with so much water and sunshine. I’ve wonder if one day pedal-powered ferries could accommodate pedestrian commuters, with the cyclists’ fares calculated on their



measured input. There are already such share-the-ride vessels, tho 'commuters' bikes would have to be stowed:



By the 1940s things had changed



1961, Mr & Mrs Gagarin have restored equality on the pedalo, although steering might strain relations



Some pedalos look quite efficient. Relations, and the craft, look very smooth-riding

Another entry in the competition near Paris in 1914, this one was already blurring the distinction between pedalo and hydrobike



The Sunbeam was an 'entertainment' on Albert Park Lake in the 1870s. About 40' long, she employed both a pedal-powered wheel and lug sails



Bicycle-based craft were around in the 1870s, and by the 1890s they were called 'water velocipedes' This 'water tricycle' (c.1900) had a propeller with some free assistance. Watch out for the boom



This propeller sits a bit high





These amphibious bikes require no adaptation to enter the water, but neither are efficient in both elements



Pedalled craft probably have quite a future. They have an interesting past.

Da Vinci had a design for a paddle boat, in Britain called a 'pedalo'. Pedals turn a paddle wheel. They are traditionally designed for stability and seating capacity.



This San Franciscan man is credited with designing a hydrobike where the whole bicycle is attached. A cable connects a wheel held onto the rear tyre with a propeller which the handlebars turn for steering. The pontoons can be inflatable, and the whole thing carried as a backpack. Inflation is done by pedalling. For commuting cyclists, this clever system is an impractical hy-

drobike design.

Fitting a hydrofoil would seem a quick conversion, but hydrobikes keep you dry, and you don't have to pedal to keep yourself out of the water!

There seem to be two distinct practical designs for a rentable commuting/touring hydrobike. One would be existing hydrobike designs, used around the world. They could be fitted with some system to stow the commuter's bike

The other would have no 'superstructure', and the commuter would ride their bike on. Their front wheel would fit into a rudder control mechanism and an adjustable drive wheel would be placed against the rear tyre. This would drive the propeller.

Perhaps one day soon Perth people can enjoy our rivers (and ocean?) as a way to get to work or fitness, or just enjoy the water. Not only crossing the river at places like UWA or Pt Walter, but travelling along the river. Perhaps before our bicentenary we'll be back to using our first main transport system.





Another Drama in the Colourful Life of SS *Georgette*

Ron and Ian Forsyth

The SS *Georgette* holds a special place in Western Australia's maritime history. Her dramatic involvement in the escape from the colony of Fenian convicts on the *Catalpa* in April 1876 and of her wrecking off Busselton some six months later, have been extensively researched and documented. Our forthcoming book *A Hazardous Life: Captain George Forsyth (1883–1894)*, which will be published by MHA in early 2019, will add a new, equally dramatic chapter to her story. Following is an abridged version of that story, as related in our book.

The *Georgette* was purchased in Dumbarton, Scotland, in 1872 by the company Connor and McKay to provide the first steamship mail and timetable passenger service between Fremantle and Albany and other outer ports in the colony. Albany was the port of call for mail carriers between England and the Australian colonies and the mail for the west coast had hitherto been transported overland between Albany and Fremantle, some 350 rough km, by horse and cart. The *Georgette*'s inaugural voyage with her precious cargo of mail and passengers was an eagerly awaited, historic event for the Colony. She departed Albany on the evening of 19 October 1873 in gale-force winds, utter darkness and rain under her new captain, Captain Wilson. Wilson had been her 1st mate on her voyage from England. Around 65 km short of Fremantle and off course by some 20 to 28 km the vessel piled onto the Murray Reefs.

An evocative account of this incident is captured in the following extract from an article in the Fremantle newspaper, *The Herald*, of 25 October 1873:

The suddenness of the catastrophe, the howling wind, the flapping sail, the surging breakers – making a clean sweep of the decks – the hideous darkness and the confusion, constituted a scene of horror and dismay that words cannot describe... The vessel was under sail as well as steam at the time she struck, and the order issued by the captain when he got on deck was to take in sail, but the confusion and disorder was so great that the order was not or could not be obeyed. Not a soul expected to be saved and the cry was for knives! knives! to cut away the boats. In the terror of the moment the engineer had rushed on deck forgetting to stop the engines, and strange to say to this neglect and the inability to execute the captain's order to take in sail, is attributable the salvation of the lives of the crew and passengers, for both assisted materially in carrying the vessel over the reef into smooth water. Had sail been taken in and the engines reversed, it is almost a certainty that the vessel would have gone down in deep water and not a soul have escaped to tell the tale of the ill-fated

vessel.

For a quarter of an hour or more, standing naked, helpless on the deck, drenched, almost drowned with the breaking sea, listening to the grinding and crashing of the ship, and expecting every moment to be engulfed, the passengers suffered all the agonies of death, when providentially a mighty sea came rolling along rearing a crest which threatened destruction, but striking the vessel on her broadside, lifted her on its summit, and aided by the still set sails and the still revolving screw carried her headlong like a feather, and deposited her safely between the reef and the shore.

The pumps were kept going, and to the great relief of all, the vessel grounded gently on a sandy beach and at that moment the fires were extinguished, the water having risen to that height in the engine room.'

Dawn revealed that the *Georgette* had come to rest in the shallows of Point Becher (Long Point) at the southern end of Warnbro Sound after striking the Murray Reefs. No lives had been lost and most of her cargo was intact.

The authorities dispatched to the scene some forty labourers to assist in the rescue of the vessel. Few were seamen, with many being picked up off hotel corners. The Fremantle port pilot, George Forsyth, and his crew made their way from Fremantle to the distressed ship in the harbour master's boat. By the time they arrived the badly holed ship had been almost pumped dry.

Fearing that the seaweed and sand which bound her holes might work loose at sea, it was determined that Forsyth would pilot her to Careening Bay in the lee of Garden Island via the shortest route possible – over the shoaling waters of the Sister's Bank and through the rarely used, hazardous passage between Garden Island and Point Peron. This was a high risk venture, not the least because the vessel had lost her rudder in the storm. And, as feared, the vessel soon started taking in water. The salvage of the ship became a tense drama, as evinced by Forsyth in the following extract of a letter he later sent to the Governor:

The gigantic spar that I had improvised over the stern in fact broke and became perfectly useless. The labourers on board, some forty in number, then wanted to seize the ship's gig – about sixteen feet long – and abandon ship. I pointed out to them that the gig could not possibly carry all hands, numbering more like sixty ... I told the men that I would do the best I could for all hands, but under the circumstances only two courses were open to them – either to "Pump" or "Sink". I had to threaten to



shoot the first mutinous man. I fortunately had a six-barreled chamber revolver in my breast pocket; but when I produced it, they might not have been so much scared if they had known it had not a single cartridge in it.

His letter to the Governor ends:

It was a narrow squeak, and the vessel sank from eight feet draft to twelve feet as I ran her ashore. ... the water had put her fires out five minutes before we touched the ground.

We safely beached the steamer in eleven feet of water, sand and weed, on the North side of Carreening Bay.

When the vessel was hove down for repairs, a hole was discovered in her starboard quarter through which I might have taken a Harlequin's leap, as in a pantomime, but the cement inside the iron plate, although cracked, had got choked with seaweed. Otherwise she could not have floated at all.

The psychological impact of this drama on the isolated colony was encapsulated by *The Perth Gazette* of 7 November 1873 which wrote: 'Thinking people felt that a national calamity had been sustained. Verily, it is most disastrous that the two first steamers [the first being the little SS *Xantho*] which have tried the coast should have both been ship wrecked almost as soon as they arrived here'. The *Georgette* had to be sent to Adelaide for repairs and was not available to deliver the mail for five months.

The court of inquiry into the incident found that Captain Wilson had not made sufficient allowance for the current, despite having been warned of a possible current of up to two knots, or for the leeway, with her weather bow being exposed to the high wind and seas. It also noted that he seemed to have been under the misapprehension that the 'heeling error' of the compass would have placed the vessel to windward of her supposed position when in reality the reverse was the case. Doubts were expressed about his knowledge of compass deviation in iron vessels and it noted he had not checked his position by heaving a lead line. The inquiry found Wilson to 'be in default'. The administration nevertheless alleged and leaked to the press that the master's certificate which the Fremantle harbor master, Captain James Nias Croke R.N., had issued to Mr. Wilson days before the voyage had not been a legitimate one and that he had failed to have the vessel swung prior to her voyage.

This posed a very unsatisfactory legal quagmire: It was at least implied

that Wilson was responsible for the accident and would face penalties. But it was claimed that because he did not hold a legitimate master's certificate the court could not order the suspension of such a certificate. This dilemma was avoided when shortly after the inquiry, when Captain Croke effectively resigned his position as harbor master and Wilson was re-examined, successfully, for a master's certificate.

This attack on Croke was for him the final straw in what had become a vexatious relationship with the administration. Since taking over from Captain Harding as harbour master in 1867, he had faced vitriolic criticism from various quarters, particularly from Colonial Secretary Fred Barlee and the Lloyds' local agent and Legislative Councillor Wallace Bickley. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the administration's strategy in leaking its allegations, unsubstantiated, to the press was to force him out of his office. Within months of the accident Croke left the colony suddenly for England, 'on family business' and 'on leave of absence', never to return.

Forsyth received considerable praise and a reward for his daring efforts in salvaging the *Georgette*. Moreover, Governor Weld promoted the thirty-year old pilot as the new harbor master, over the heads of the two much older Rottneest pilots, Captain Jackson and Captain MacEachern. Forsyth was to serve in that position for the next twelve years until he, too, fell out of favour with the colony's Lloyds' agent and Councillor, George Shenton, other members of the 'six hungry families' and Colonial Secretary Malcolm Fraser.

But that story involves several other equally dramatic episodes as also told for the first time in our forthcoming book.

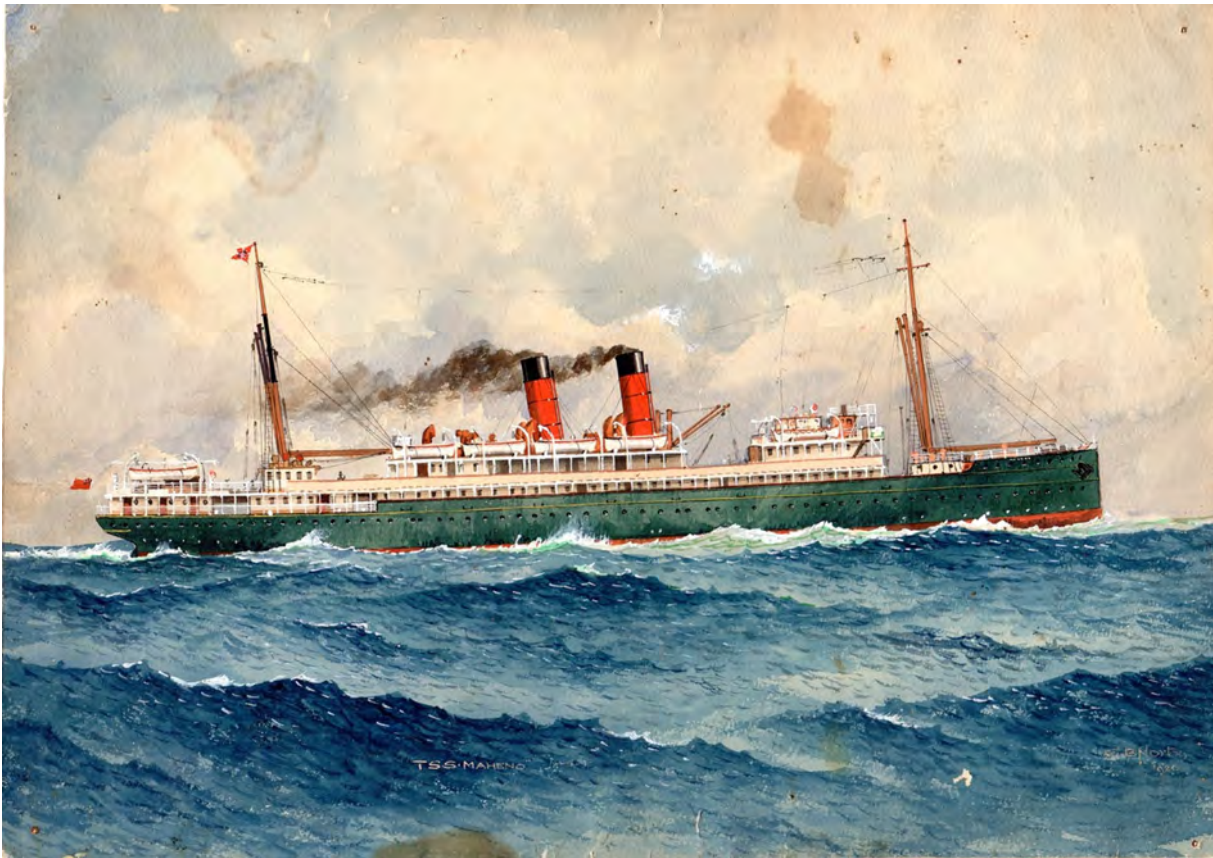


Painting by Ross Shardlow of the Georgette



C. B. Norton – Marine Artist (1886-1968)

by Ross Shardlow FASMA



T.S.S. Maheno watercolour on art paper. 11in. x 15in. signed and dated 'C.B. Norton 1920'.

Private collection

Original artwork supplied by Julie Rae for scanning and assessment.

Ross Shardlow received an enquiry from archivist Julie Rae of the York Society Research and Archive Centre, requesting information on: “two paintings by C. E. Norton, S.S. *Miltiades* dated 1921, and T.S.S. *Maheno* dated 1920”. The paintings were found in the back of a cupboard of a deceased estate and were about to be thrown out. Julie asked if she could keep the paintings, “because they were just so beautiful ... I just wanted to save them.”

A closer examination of the signatures revealed the initials were actually C. B. not C. E. – for Charles Basil Norton.

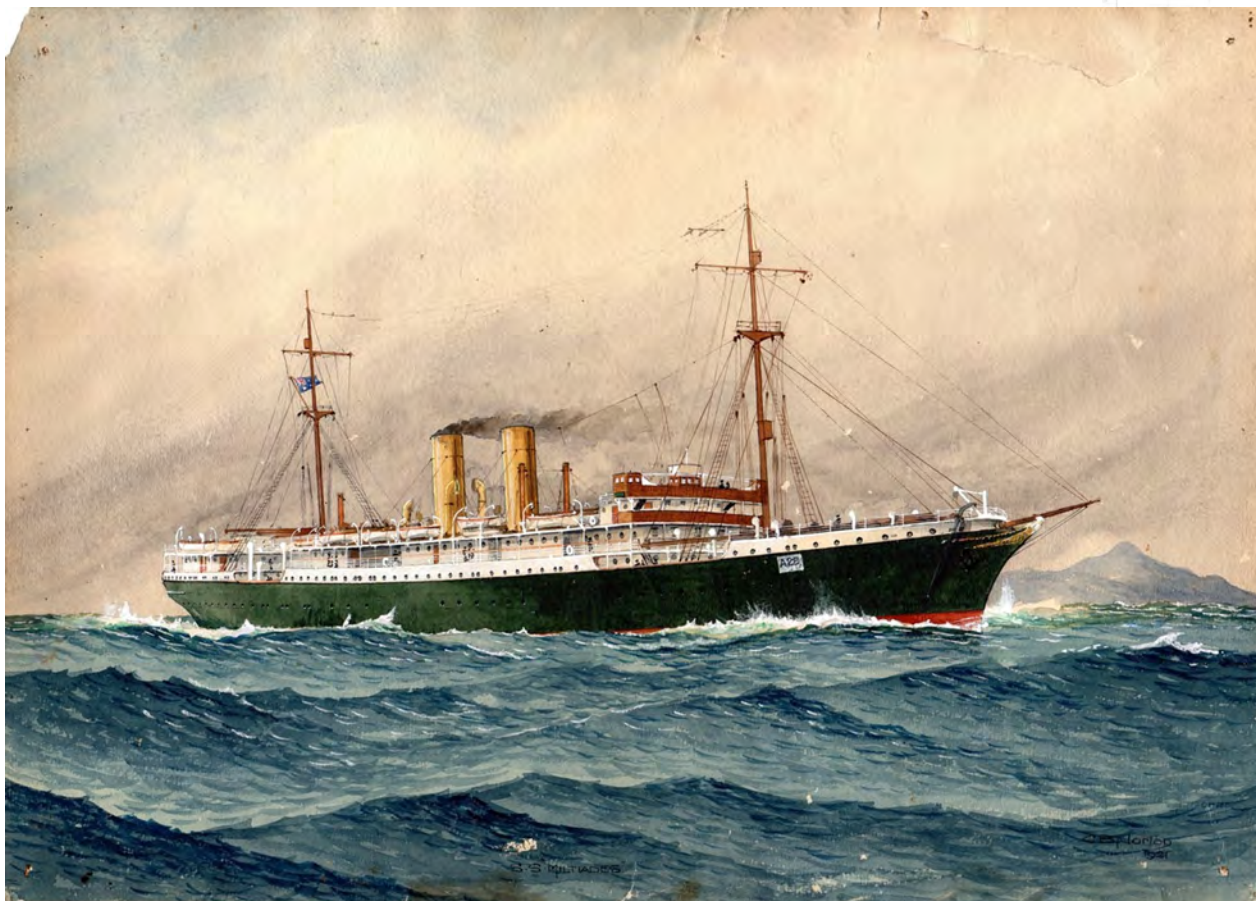
The Artist – Charles Basil Norton (1886-1968)

CHARLES BASIL NORTON was born 24 September 1886 at Broadwater, Sussex, England. He joined the Royal Navy as a ‘Boy 2nd Class’ on 13 January 1902. Charles joined HMS *Challenger* on 22 January 1909 and transferred to the Australia Station. During his time with the Royal Navy, Charles taught himself how to draw and kept personal journals of shipboard life. The only surviving journal is from his time aboard HMS *Challenger* from 1909-1910. HMS *Challenger* visited all state capitals while on the Australia Station,

which included regular visits to Fremantle and Albany on her tour of duty from 1904-1912.

In 1911 leading signalman C. B. Norton purchased himself out of the Royal Navy. On his discharge he remained in Sydney to be reunited with his Australian girlfriend Elsie Jane Prees, whom he had met earlier while on the *Challenger*. Charles and Elsie were married in 1913 and moved to Gisborne in New Zealand where they had the first of four children including their son Frank (Charles Frank Prees), who was to become an acclaimed marine artist. Charles was engaged in various shipping activities and continued to pursue his interest in marine art. In November 1916 he received his Certificate of Competency as Master in River Steamers and was employed as a dredge master with the Gisborne Harbour Trust until the family moved back to Australia in 1919 and Charles enlisted with the Royal Australian Navy.

Leaving Elsie and the children with her family at Randwick, Sydney, leading signalman Norton was assigned for ‘special service at Cockburn Sound’. From 1 March 1920, Charles was engaged as a signalling instructor for the Naval Reserve Depot HMAS *Cerberus* (V) in Fremantle. Located in a Customs



S.S. Miltiades watercolour on art paper. 11in. x 15in. signed and dated 'C.B. Norton 1921'.

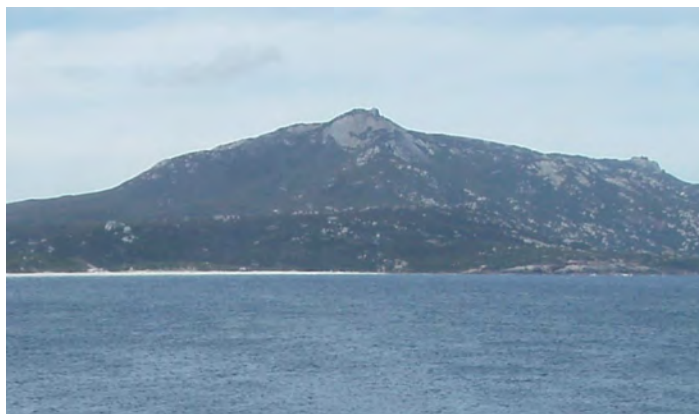
Private collection

Original artwork supplied by Julie Rae for scanning and assessment.

Department warehouse, HMAS *Cerberus* (V) served as a fender, or sub-element, to HMAS *Cerberus* (Flinders Naval Depot) in Victoria. Following the outbreak of WWII, HMAS *Cerberus* (V) changed its name and was recommissioned HMAS *Leeuwin* on 1 August 1940. HMAS *Leeuwin* relocated to Preston Point on 1 July 1942.

After a year of service in Western Australia, Charles was reunited with his family and demobilized at Sydney 20 November 1921. By 1 February 1926, when

their youngest son Kenneth was born, the Norton residence was given as 487 Mowbray Road, Chatswood (Lane Cove). On his return to Sydney Charles continued to work in the shipping industry and was employed by the Australian Shipping Line until it folded in 1929. Charles continued work as a freelance marine artist and cartographer. He also worked as a block-maker for the printing industry. By 1933 he had gained regular employment with various Sydney newspapers as an illustrator, cartoonist, cartographer and writer, working on such newspapers as *Smith's Week-*



Detail from S.S. Miltiades showing distant mountain in the background, which appears to be Mt Manypeaks, east of Albany. See photo of Mt Manypeaks.

Photo: Ross Shardlow



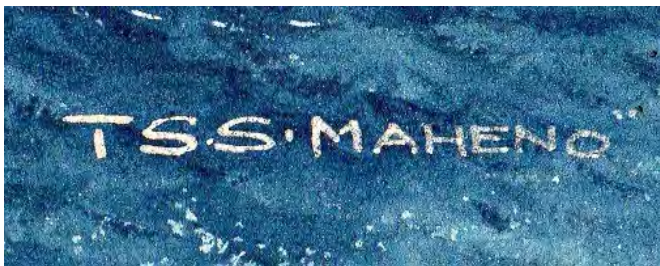
ly, *Truth*, *The Telegraph*, *The Sydney Mail*, *The Sunday Sun* and *Guardian* and *PIX* magazine. In promoting C. B. Norton's War Maps in 1940, *The Sun* claimed Norton was Australia's leading map-maker: "Himself an ex-Navy man, world traveller, and student of the European scene, his work is favourably known all over the world." Charles was also the author and illustrator of the books: *Sea Oddities* and *It's a Fact* published in 1944 and 1945, seemingly a compilation of his earlier newspaper weekly illustrated columns such as: *It Happened* and *Incredible-but!*

Charles Basil Norton was an active artist from 1909 to 1954. As a marine artist he painted watercolours of maritime subjects, particularly sailing ships, steamers and naval craft in Australian and New Zealand waters. His work is represented in numerous collections in New Zealand and Australia. Charles Basil Norton died in 1968.

The Paintings:

T.S.S. *Maheno* - Union S.S.Co. intercolonial passenger ship built 1905

Maheno was the world's first triple-screw turbine steamship and operated on the intercolonial, Tasman Sea and North American (Vancouver) routes. She also served five years as a Hospital Ship transporting 25,000 sick and wounded from Gallipoli and France. On her voyages to England, particularly when in service as a hospital ship, she called at Albany and Fremantle en-route. Norton painted *Maheno* in 1920 depicting her in her peace-time Union S.S. Company colours with red funnels and bronze-green topsides.



Detail from T.S.S. Maheno showing title of painting (lower centre)

S.S. *Miltiades* - Aberdeen Line intercolonial passenger ship built 1903

The Aberdeen Liner *Miltiades* was regarded as one of the finest liners of her time, the sight of which will never be seen again. Originally built with a single funnel, a second dummy funnel was added to improve her appearance when her hull was lengthened by 50-feet in 1912. She and her sister ship *Marathon* made fast passages on the Cape Town, Melbourne, Sydney intercolonial route for passenger and cargo ships. She frequently called at Albany and Fremantle.

C. B. Norton painted *Miltiades* in 1921 but depicted her as she was in 1914. Flying the Australian Blue Ensign and showing the flotilla prefix A28 on her bow, *Miltiades* had been leased by the Common-

wealth Government and commissioned as His Majesty's Australian Transport *Miltiades*. HMAT A28 *Miltiades* assembled with the first convoy at King George Sound in October 1914 to transport the First Detachment of the Australian and New Zealand Imperial Expeditionary Force. Norton shows *Miltiades* leading the flotilla's Third Division as she made her departure from King George Sound by the North Channel, 8.00am, 1 November 1914.



Detail from S.S. Miltiades showing flotilla prefix 'A28'

The Western Australian Connection:

The *Maheno* and *Miltiades* have a connection with Western Australia's maritime and social history. Both ships were calling at Albany and Fremantle when C. B. Norton was residing in Western Australia in 1920-21. As the paintings are dated 1920 and 1921 respectively, there seems little doubt that Norton painted these watercolours in Western Australia – how they ended up in a cupboard at a deceased estate near York is unknown. As a pair of 'undiscovered' works painted in Western Australia, these paintings are significant for WA marine art and maritime history.

There is another Western Australian connection. Charles and Elsie's eldest son Frank (Charles Frank Prees), was born in Gisborne, New Zealand on Anzac Day, 25 April 1916. Frank Norton proved to be a gifted marine artist. In 1934 Frank met his future wife, Miss Audrey Horn of Bunbury, on a P&O South Pacific cruise. Audrey was also an artist. They announced their engagement 24 December 1938 and married at the Bunbury Church of Christ 30 November 1940, and honeymooned aboard the *Wanganella* on their way back to the Norton family home in Sydney. On the 5 February 1941, the War Cabinet appointed Frank first Official War Artist with the Royal Australian Navy (1941–1945). He did a second tour as war artist (1952–1953) to document the RAN during the Korean War.

In 1958 Frank was appointed Director of the Art Gallery of Western Australia and moved to Perth with his family. He held the post of Director for 18 years until his retirement in 1976. Charles Frank Prees Norton died in 1983.



The Ketch *King Bay*

Official Number:	140183
Registered:	Fremantle (1/1938)
Length:	103.6ft
Breadth:	27.3ft
Depth:	10.67ft
Tonnage:	124.1
Engine:	4-cylinder Hornby diesel, 215 hp

The auxiliary ketch *King Bay* was built by Murray and Howson in 1938 just upstream from the railway bridge at Fremantle for the Cossack Lightering and Trading Limited. The ketch was built of jarrah, York gum and with Oregon for the deck. It had two 70ft Oregon masts and took 12 men over a year to build, with the keel being laid on 15 December 1936 and launching on 18 January 1938. At that time it was the largest sailing vessel built in Fremantle for 60 years. The frames were all grown timber, none of which therefore required steaming and bending. The hull cost £7,000, and was launched without the engines or the masts being fitted. In fact the launching was a prolonged exercise.

The two masts had been sheathed with wood to protect them, and then laid down as a slipway for the *King Bay* to slide on into the Swan River. When Lady Mitchell, wife of the Lieutenant-Governor, launched the ketch it didn't move. Two days later it was moved down 10ft and then again stuck. Two days after that, by using hoses to wash away mud in which the stern of the ship was stuck, a high tide and with the help of the *Agnes* pulling, the *King Bay* finally took to the water.

The engine, a 4-cylinder diesel with tanks to carry 4,000 gallons of fuel were fitted, as were the two masts carrying 3,500 sq ft of sail. A single-cylinder diesel engine driving a generator, air compressor and pump was also installed. On 11 March 1938 the *King Bay* was ready for her maiden voyage with Archibald Douglas as captain.

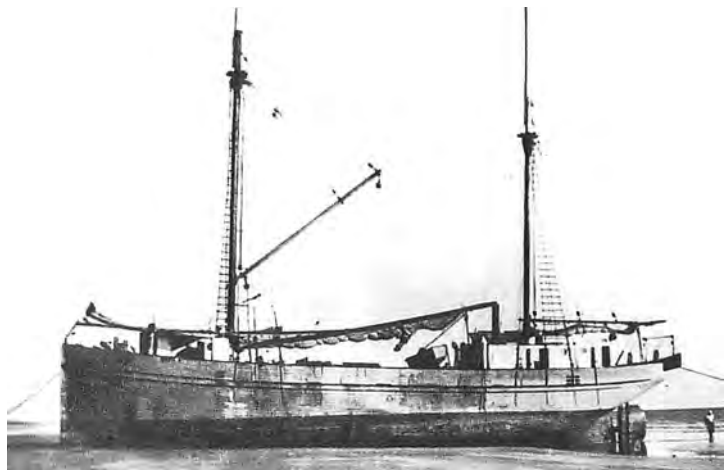
Right at the commencement of World War II the *King Bay* became involved. On 5 September 1939 the ketch and the tug *Ivanhoe* were used to ferry part of the 16th Battalion from Fremantle to Rottnest Island. Besides the troops there was the Transport Platoon with 14 horses, two GS wagons and limbers, firewood for the kitchen, bales of straw for palliasses and bales of hay for the horses. On 8 July 1940 *King Bay*

was requisitioned by the Royal Australian Navy, and a week later commissioned as HMAS *King Bay*. It was armed with two .303 machine guns, and served initially as an examination vessel at Fremantle. In December 1942 the *King Bay* sailed to Broome taking salvage divers to work on the wrecked flying boats at the port. One of these divers was British World War I veteran Claude Choules. This work finished in February 1943.

On 16 January 1944 the 1,820-ton Norwegian steamer *Ardent* ran aground at Port Hedland and the *King Bay* was used to assist the tug *McColl* in the re-floating of the freighter.

It appears that the vessel may have later been acquired by the Australian Army Small Craft Fleet and designated AV708. AV708 was based in Darwin from late February 1945 to mid-December 1945. It made at least one voyage to Thursday Island during this period.

On 13 September 1946 the *King Bay* was returned to the owners, and was slipped for repairs and an overhaul. In February the following year the vessel was chartered by the King Bay Trading Company, and with a crew of ten Western Australians under the command of Captain Alf Gifford (formerly master of the lighthouse tender *Cape Otway*) sailed for Singapore. This was a trial voyage with the possibility of establishing a regular trade in potatoes, onions and other items. In Singapore the *King Bay* was chartered by a wealthy Chinese merchant. For the next few months it traded regularly between Singapore and Cheribon in Indonesia carrying cargoes of sugar, cloves and uniforms for the Indonesian Army. On 7 July 1947 the *King Bay* was sold in Singapore, and registered at that port. Its final fate is not known.





Survey Results

Thank you very much to the MHA members who took the time to fill in the survey. It was heartening to receive responses from over 50% of our members - an excellent result! The committee has been working its way through the responses and we are working on your suggestions. Opposite is a photo of Pat Rodriguez, the lucky (and very happy) winner of the David Nicolson print. Pat's name was drawn out of a hat by David at the final committee meeting last year. Congratulations, Pat!



1. Number who expressed interest in the following activities:

Visits to open ships, museums, other sites of maritime interest	30
Tour to other regions eg Albany, Geraldton	20
Guest speakers	16
Social activities	17

Other suggestions for future activities included water activities, guided walks, visits to private collections.

2. **MHA book club.** Eleven members expressed interest in the book club. Jill Worsley has emailed an invitation to the March book club meeting to those people.

3. Best times to attend any meetings and activities:

Morning 8 Afternoon 12 Evening 11 Weekdays 14 Weekends 17

4. **Interest in activities with other members for those outside the Perth region.** Five out-of-town members said yes but they are geographically far apart.

5. Number who expressed interest in the following:

Naval	13	Models	22	Other interests are: river, harbour operations, steam ships, polar exploration, wooden boat building, Indigenous maritime and publications.
Social history	12	Restoration	16	
Western Australian history	25	Marine art	20	
Maritime archaeology	19	Lighthouses	15	

6. **Would you be more likely to attend the AGM if it were to be held in the metropolitan area?** Yes 6 No 17

7. **Like-minded organisations that may like to conduct joint activities with us?** Members provided many suggestions of a historical and/or maritime nature.

8. Would you like to write an article for the Journal, or write a booklet for publication by the MHA?

Yes 9 No 8 Not sure 8 Some members have offered to help with publications other than as an author. The publications committee has contacted members who have said yes or are not sure, and some articles have been received.

9. **Suggestions for improvements to the Journal.** Respondents were generally very complimentary about the Journal. Many expressed a desire for more local maritime history and more Australian maritime history - the editor and publications committee is working on this. There were suggestion for more colour, and for an electronic version. More colour will be costly but colour versions (including back issues) are available for download on the MHA website (see address below). Another suggestion was a re-vamped cover - please let us know your thoughts about the new cover this edition (email to Peter Worsley: mha.editor@gmail.com).

10. **Skills that can be contributed to future MHA activities.** Members have offered the following: Proofreading, photography, graphic design, presentations, woodworking, hand skills, shipwrighting, draughting, indexing.

11. **Joining the MHA committee or a sub-committee.** Three members said yes; the committee will be in touch with you!

12. **MHA website and Facebook page.** Most respondents never or seldom look at either. Only two look at the Facebook page often and three look at the website. Bob Johnson, our webmaster, has recently done a lot of work on modernising the website and more material is gradually being added. Please do have a look! Note that you do not need a Facebook account to view the MHA's Facebook page.

Thank you once again for your time and interest.



The Caporns

By Ron Lindsay

As a little boy, my paternal Grandmother told me that her Dad and his family built lots of boats, but it wasn't until I was near retirement and living in Caporn St. in rural Wanneroo I discovered that her Grandmother was a Caporn. Checking around, I found that that family had played a significant role in the early years of our Swan River Colony especially on the river its self. It was whilst chatting with Jules recently on a Freshwater Bay Yacht Club trials event that I brought up the Caporn subject. He found it interesting and you can blame him for me getting up here tonight.

So who were the Caporns? (and here, I acknowledge the work of Yvonne Coate in her comprehensive book on the Caporns, Keith Murray's book *From Oar to Diesel on the Swan* and Christopher Richards' *There Were Three Ships: Story of the Camden Harbour Expedition, 1864-65*).

The name Caporn was apparently derived from 'a maker of capes or caps' They were a Huguenot family kicked out of France following the repeal in 1685 by Louis 13th of the Edict of Nantes which had allowed Calvinists (otherwise known as the reform church) political freedom. The Huguenots dispersed to many countries.

Samuel Caporn was born in 1794, and with his wife Ann was working for a Peer on an estate in Perthshire Scotland when their first children were born – Sam and Ann were my Great-great-grandparents. An educated man, he then took up a position at a Thame Union workhouse in Buckinghamshire where he fed and doled out relief to the poor. On the 13th April 1842 following the death of two of their children from typhus, he handed in his resignation, and on 26th April, with his family left on the 431-ton *Simon Taylor* for the Swan River Colony.

There were 219 sponsored migrants on board, as were about 18 'Parkhurst Boys'. These were youths from the Isle of Wight prison. (Which poses the question, 'were these youths actually our states first convict immigrants? Or our first child migrants?) Sam was to supervise these youths and also fill the role of educator aboard. For these services he was paid the princely sum of £4.

On 20th August that same year, the Caporns ar-

rived at Fremantle and after some time as a storekeeper in Perth, Sam took lease of the 36 acre Swan location 88 at Point Walter. A house and inn had previously been built there in 1831 by an Alfred Waylen and run by a W.H. Smithe, but it was burned down in 1833.

Being a shrewd man Sam realised the importance of river transport to the new colony. He established a half-way river house and obtained a liquor licence. Sam called the establishment 'The Watermans Retreat', but it soon became better known as the 'Cape Horn Inn' where a weary boatman could get a drink - or two. (Some of its timbers are still occasionally visible near the beach). To enhance his trade, make an extra penny and cut almost two miles off the Perth to Fremantle run, he and his boys maintained a channel cut through the base of the Point Walter spit, and, we believe, charged for its use.

The Caporns had about nine surviving children. Sam ensured that all his sons became various classes of boatmen and all his daughters married shipwrights, naval architects and ships captains. The sons and sons-in-law operated lighters and barges which distributed goods to settlers along the Swan and Canning rivers. They ran mail from Perth to Fremantle daily in two-man rowing gigs, sometimes taking paying passengers. Some plied the coastal trade. Another introduced England to jarrah, known then as Swan River mahogany, extolling its durability in boat building.

Before C.Y. O'Connor constructed Fremantle harbour, there was a rocky bar across the mouth of the Swan. Some shallow draft lighters could negotiate a gap in the bar when tides and conditions were favourable so ships in Cockburn Sound could be serviced. Other goods, when conditions allowed, were unloaded from ships berthed at 'South Jetty' on the seaward side of Arthur Head, put onto oxcarts and then reloaded onto barges at the 'North Jetty' which was inside the river mouth across Arthur Head. The Caporn boys are recorded as having had a couple of unsuccessful attempts at blasting it.

In 1864, a most unlikely event took place involving a convict by the name of Wildman. He had been convicted in England for being in possession of gold nuggets which he could not account for and was deported to serve a long sentence. He



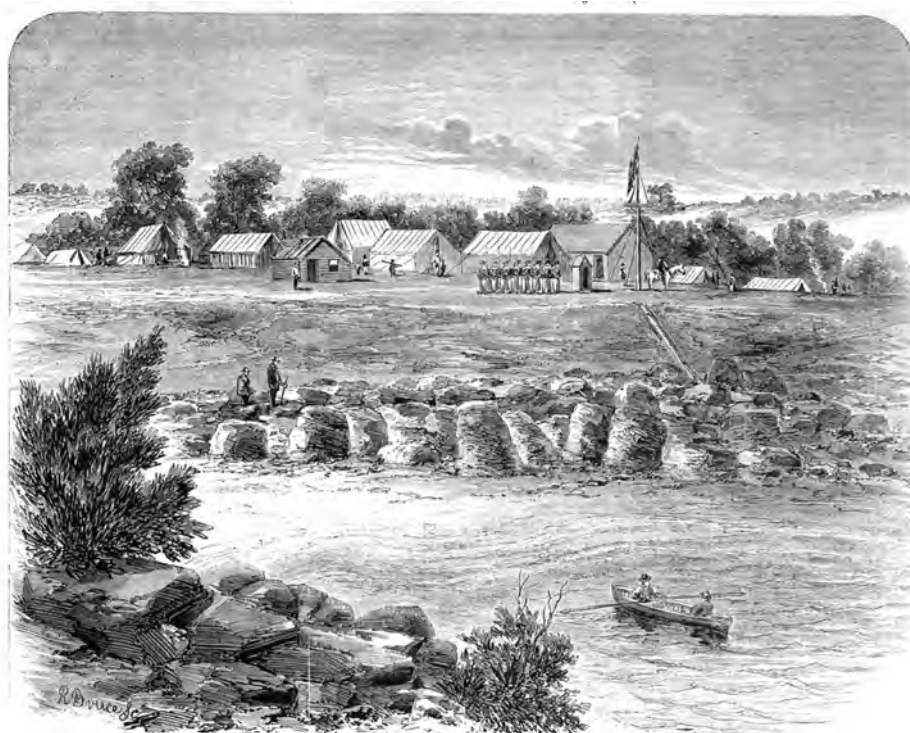
told the authorities here that he found the nuggets in the Kimberley whilst crew on a Dutch ship which called there for water, and he offered to divulge the location of the gold if they would commute his sentence. An expedition was arranged. It was to be headed by a police inspector Panter. With Captain William Outram (a Caporn son-in law), and a crew of Caporn boys and sons-in-law, the *New Perseverance* sailed to Camden Harbour. On arrival, prisoner Wildman refused to go ashore and was secured aboard, presumably with bread and water whilst the crew explored ashore.

The party found no trace of gold, but because it was just near the end of the wet season, reported boundless lush pasture land worthy of a settlement. A consequent attempt at a settlement became a disaster resulting in the deaths of many settlers and the loss of all stock to Aborigines, dingoes and disease. The remains of buildings can still be seen there as can the cemetery on Sheep Island.

It is interesting to note that on older maps of our state, there is a mountain range about 60 km inland from Camden Harbour with the name of



An old map of Brecknock Harbour with Camden Harbour in the lower right hand side. There is Depot Camp marked on the northern shore of Camden Harbour.



THE CAMDEN HARBOUR SETTLEMENT, WESTERN AUSTRALIA. — SEE PAGE 20.



'Elizabeth and Catherine Range' which were the names of two of the Caporn girls.

Whilst they were ashore, Wildman escaped in the ship's dory and after searching the maze of islands in the archipelago they found him.

They had an adventurous return journey searching for the lost Roebuck Plains exploration party, who by the way were never found, and checking on the Withnells, the first settlers in the Northwest at Nicol Bay who were trying to establish a pastoral station. And Oh! Wildman? He copped an additional sentence.

Sam Caporn was also collector of town rates for the Fremantle Town Trust, town Bailiff, plus Secretary/librarian for the Fremantle Mechanics Institute.

He died on the 22nd Feb. 1868 at age 74 and was buried at the Skinner Street Cemetery where John Curtin High School now stands. His and Ann's headstones were subsequently moved to the pioneer section of the current Carrington St. cemetery.

On 26 February 1868 the *Inquirer* reported, among endless compliments as to his honesty and energy, that: 'He was followed to the grave by one of the largest assemblages of townspeople ever witnessed. A voluntary public subscription was raised for him and Ann to have a substantial tomb erected.

Of course the Caporn name is now all over Australia, but they are all descendants of Sam and Ann.

A footnote, and another story for another time:

In March of 1844 a young American Whale boat puller and apprentice ship's carpenter deserted the whaling ship *Florida* at Albany. Amazingly, he managed to walk through the bush to Perth. Bedraggled, he stumbled into the 'Cape Horn Inn' at Point Walter and the Caporns took him in. He married Bessie Caporn. The name he gave was William Lawrence – Meikle, Craig and I still have Lawrence boats.

He was my Great-great Grandfather.

The fortunate breakdown of HMAS *Pioneer*

The light cruiser *Pioneer* was built for the Royal Navy and launched in 1899. In 1912 the ship was gifted to Australia, and became the Royal Australian Navy's first cruiser. When World War 1 was declared *Pioneer* was sent to Western Australia, and was in Fremantle when the first convoy left Albany. Also in Fremantle was the Japanese cruiser *Ibuki*. Both were ordered to proceed to join the convoy as it approached the waters off Fremantle. However, *Pioneer* had an old system of anchor handling, and had to fish and cat the anchor. *Ibuki* just had to heave in on the anchor before getting underway.

Just as *Pioneer* was getting into position in the convoy the condensers failed and the ship had to return to Fremantle for repairs. This was fortuitous to say the least, as one of the *Pioneer*'s duties was to have sailed ahead of the convoy to search the Cocos Islands. Had *Pioneer* carried out this duty and arrived when the *Emden* was at the

Cocos Islands it would have been a one-sided battle between the old light cruiser and the much newer, larger and more heavily armed *Emden*.

Pioneer was sold in 1926, stripped and later scuttled in February 1931 in 220ft of water off Sydney Heads. The wreck was discovered in March 2014 by the research vessel *Southern Surveyor*.

Peter Worsley





My Time on *Singa Betina*

Episode 15 of Ted Whiteaker's tale.

We back-tracked up the strait and found our way into the river. About half a kilometre from the entrance was a reasonably deep hole where the stream branched into two, and we nosed up the western branch until we had just enough depth to remain upright on the bottom at low tide, tying up fore and aft to the mangroves either side and deploying our anchors as well. The decks were cleared and we lashed down anything that might move, hunkering down to follow the ABC reports on progress of the system. Over the course of the day the low moved eastwards from Goulburn Island at about eight knots, staying close to the coast. Winds at the centre of the system were reported as gusting to 80 kilometres per hour, and at 1300 hours the low was stationary and intensifying close to the coast 80km west of Maningrida.

We had observed a light aircraft buzzing around the coast that morning, and during the afternoon a shout from the mangroves announced visitors. It was Johnny M., his wife, Phyliss, and their two young boys, who had walked over from Mata-Mata, about two and a half kilometres away. The tide was low at the time, and I picked them up in the dinghy after they floundered their way down the soft, muddy bank to the water. They had a message which had been parachuted down in a weighted plastic Coca-Cola bottle from the aircraft we had seen earlier. The message contained details of the cyclone warning, and instructions to seek shelter. In true family spirit, they had come over to share the news, and after a cup of tea they then walked back home again in the blustering squalls.

The low-pressure system did not stay stationary for long, with the 5pm report advising slow movement to the east again. Fortunately, it moved inland overnight and disintegrated, allowing us to untie next day and get away to Gove with the favourable morning tide.

A few days later, on 08 March 1984, the monsoon trough spawned another weather swirl in the Gulf of Carpentaria with Cyclone Jim forming 100km north-east of Weipa and moving west-southwest across the Gulf at 17kph. The central pressure fell to 980mb as the system moved rapidly towards Groote Eylandt, with winds reported at 170kph near the centre. After three days of

strong winds and heavy rains in Gove, Jim crossed the western shore of the Gulf between Groote and the Roper River mouth and disintegrated over land. We were experiencing an interesting Wet Season.

We upgraded from the Yamaha 50cc step-through, that we had abandoned at the Galiwin'ku tip, to a 70cc model in more respectable trim which happened to be for sale. To gain some protection from the salt air we swathed it in plastic sheeting when carrying it on *Singa Betina*. We stocked up on fuel and supplies as usual, with a second-hand lawnmower for an optimistic Yolngu on one of the outstations, and perhaps more realistically, two small chainsaws. We encouraged orders from people, and did our best to get them whatever they wanted.

We arranged for another \$1,000 worth of kava from the Tongan, who said it was the last time he could give me kava because he wasn't doing it anymore. He was nervous and ill at ease, and left me wondering what was going on in the background. The local politics surrounding kava were a mystery to me at the time, but it soon became obvious that there was some entrenched opposition to an expanding market.

In a stroke of well-timed luck, a friend handed us a scrap of brown wrapping-paper he had found while scrounging at the rubbish tip. It was originally part of the packaging of a kava consignment, with a rubber-stamped address of a Chinese merchant, Say Tin Fong, based in Sydney. I rang the business, which specialised in South Pacific imports, and after wiring them some money, they airfreighted up an order which we would pick up when we were next in Gove.

We were under way again on 17 March, via Ngarrayun to overnight stops at Dholtji and Mata-Mata. A few days before, a forty-foot timber baramundi fishing boat under lease to a couple of inexperienced professional fishermen went up on a reef in the very narrow and treacherous channel between Mallison Island and the eastern mainland, about eight miles south-west of Mata-Mata. The boat was attempting to enter Arnhem Bay through this channel, which can only be described as a foolhardy thing to do. The current pours through the restrictions at 15 knots or more at the



peak of the flow, and the tortured bottom is a mass of jagged reef which here and there protrudes to the surface in the murky waters, producing strong eddies and whirlpools in the currents. George G., a Warramirri man from Dholtji, was travelling past in a dinghy when he saw the boat grounded. He pulled alongside and offered to take the two crew off in his dinghy, but they declined. They had gone aground on a neap falling tide, and reasoned that they would re-float safely when the tide turned. George went on his way, returning on the rising tide a few hours later to find the vessel submerged and the two men clinging to the top of the short communications mast above the wheelhouse. This time they accepted George's offer of assistance and clambered into his dinghy.

Singa Betina turned up at Mata-Mata a couple of days after all the excitement. I asked if there was any wreckage left, but no-one knew, so we set off in the outstation dinghy next day to have a look at the site over the low tide. We scooted along to a short sandy beach about mid-way through the channel where the boat had met its end. The tide was past the full and flowing out, but there was nothing to be seen until the water dropped enough to expose the reefs and rocks.

A fire was lit and a couple of the fellows picked up their fish spears and womeras, and stalked passing schools of diamond-scaled mullet along the beach. In half an hour they had about eight decent-sized fish. With his knife, Johnny M. made a small incision in the gut cavity of each fish and disposed of the gall bladder. The fish were then buried in the coals and hot sand until cooked, when everybody tucked in.

Johnny M was my brother-in-law from Gikal; an observant and dignified older man who was a master of the country and seas around the English Company Islands. We went for a walk past the end of the beach, he with his fish-spear at the ready and me tagging along beside. There were peculiar rock formations where the beach ended, with many narrow crevices which allowed a flow of water when the tide was high enough. As we were negotiating the area, there was a loud gurgling sound which I thought sounded like a surge of water in a confined space. Johnny spoke out towards the source of the noise, identifying himself in Yolngu heredity. He explained my presence with him, and assured the gurgle that we were not looking for trouble, and it was silent. A little further on, a tuft of grass quivered as we passed. Johnny lifted his spear and stabbed the bush, pulling out an impaled Northern Quoll in a

well-practised reflex action. I was witnessing a land of plenty.

The quoll was singed briefly on the fire to burn away the fur, then gutted and buried in the coals for a while. I was given a hind leg to try – a small mouthful indeed, with an agreeable, slightly gamey taste. My nephew Bruce commented to me: “See, Wawa - Yolngu eat anything!”

A few years later, I was camped with Bruce and a mob of brothers on Dhakeling Island, at the north-eastern end of Inglis Island. While out fishing in my dinghy, we were drifting over a shallow reef in exceptionally clear waters with the outboard engine pulled up, when I noticed the bottom was literally crawling with black sea-urchins. I stabbed a couple of them with my fishing knife as we floated along, and took them back to camp. We knew that Maori people ate them somehow, but the Yolngu were very sceptical about their edibility.

I chucked them on the coals of the camp fire, and raked them out after a few minutes, cracking them open to find the inside had melted to a thin, brown liquid, which tasted like a very strong French onion soup. I offered some to Bruce, but he declined. I reminded him that he had once said that “Yolngu eat anything” – what happened? He retorted: “Look. My *great-grandfather* never ate that thing. My *grandfather* never ate that thing. My *father* never ate that thing. *I don't eat that thing!*” I noticed with other Yolngu that they were very hesitant to try any food they did not know as part of their culture. I also found out later that the edible bits are the gonads of the sea-urchin, which are eaten raw.

The carnivorous Northern Quoll was recently recognised to be in critical danger of extinction from eating the poisonous cane toad (*Bufo marinus*), an unwelcome feral immigrant from the cane fields of Queensland. A conservation program was set up with a number of quolls of breeding age released on one of the English Company Islands near Cape Wilberforce. There are no cane toads on this island, and under monitoring by the Indigenous Sea Rangers of Galiwin'ku, the relocation has been successful, with increased numbers of quolls reported. Interestingly, Bruce is a member of the team of Rangers, but I think they carry sandwiches to eat nowadays.

Back at the wreck site, at low tide we motored over to the reef in the centre of the channel, which was strewn all over with fishing lines and bits of



mangled rope and twine. Johnny found a hand reel and wound in a full length of heavy fishing line, disentangling it from the rocks. The lay of the lines indicated that the vessel had been swept over the reef and into deep water by an incoming tide, with no visible signs of wreckage now left; no hull, no dinghy, no anchors and no chain. When the tide rose again to cover the reef, it was

as if nothing had ever happened there. The murky waters rinsing the silt from the mangrove forests and hiding the rocks and reefs of the Northern Territory coast have erased the evidence of many such disasters, with nothing left but a passing memory to give life to the history.

To be continued.....



Two MHA members, Tony Duvollet and Bob Johnson, at the Wooden Boat Festival in Hobart earlier this year.

Tony, a semi-retired shipwright, was demonstrating caulking. This is the third year that the organisers have asked him to give this demonstration.

Photos: Bob Johnson

