

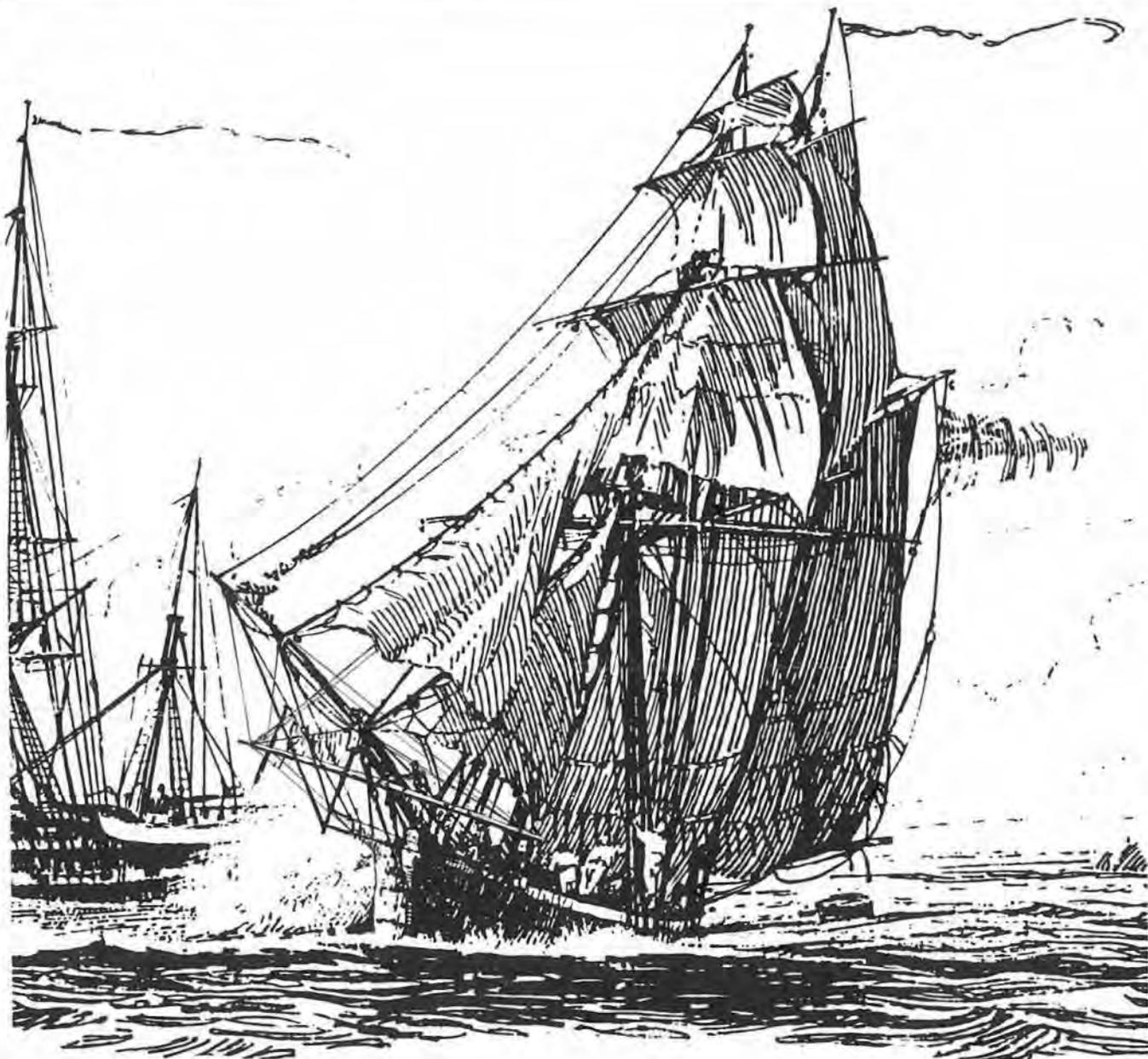
# MARITIME HERITAGE ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

Volume 6, No. 4. December, 1995

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

c/o PO Box 1100  
Fremantle  
WA 6160

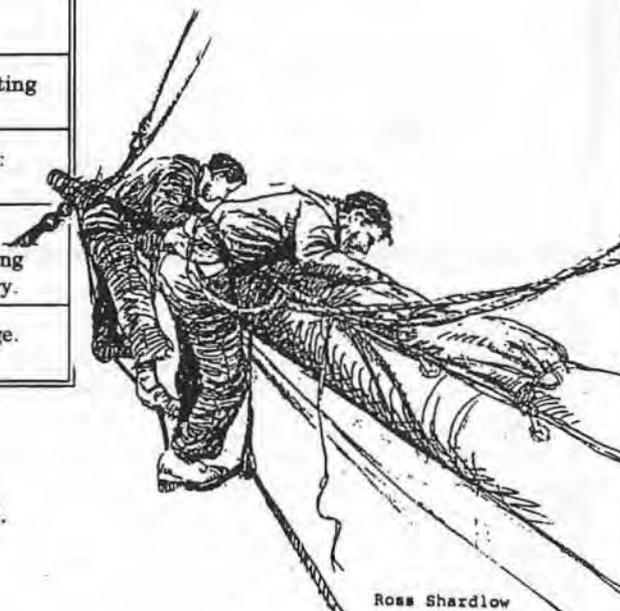
Editor: Chris Buhagiar. 13 Solomon St., Palmyra 6157



Detail of a drawing by Ross Shardlow of the Colonial Schooner CHAMPION. (See Roy Dedman's feature article beginning on page 9.)

## Schedule: S.T.S. LEEUWIN ADVENTURE VOYAGES

No.	Departure	Arrival	Remarks
24/95 10 days	FREMANTLE 12/12/95 Tue	FREMANTLE 22/12/95 Fri	Post TEE voyage, visiting Busselton.
1/96 10 days	FREMANTLE 99/1/96 Tue	ALBANY 19/1/96 Fri	School holidays, visiting Augusta.
2/96 10 days	ALBANY 23/1/96 Tue	ESPERANCE 2/2/96 Fri	School/ Uni holidays: visiting Hopetoun.
3/96 10 days	ESPERANCE 6/2/96 Tue	ESPERANCE 16/2/96 Fri	University holidays, general public, visiting Eyre bird observatory.
4/96 10 days	ESPERANCE 20/2/96 Tue	ALBANY 1/3/96 Fri	Eco adventure voyage. \$1595.00



- Day sails 26th, 27th, 29th & 30th December 1995.
- Also 1st, 6th & 7th January 1996.

For information on all voyages, contact:

**THE LEEUWIN SAIL TRAINING FOUNDATION**



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Material for publishing or advertising should be directed, preferably typed, to: the Editor, 13 Solomon Street, Palmyra 6157, Western Australia (09) 339 2625.

Articles will be published at the earliest opportunity.

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(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; it may just be interested in archiving the collection.)



# The SAMUEL PLIMSOLL

by Peter Worsley



*During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and even well into this century, some of the thousands of sailing vessels that had outlived their economical sailing lives were relegated to serve as hulks in one port or another around the world. Vessels of many different hull and rig types became floating warehouses for all manner of goods ranging from coal to convicts. Stripped of spars and rigging, and with large holes often cut in the hull for easy access, these neglected hulks sank one by one, were abandoned, taken away to ships' graveyards and scuttled, or burned for the metal they contained. The Falkland Islands is one of the few places left in the world where hulks are still regularly used because of the islands' proximity to Cape Horn, with its notorious weather conditions, and the lack of available repair materials and facilities for storm-damaged ships. The area has naturally become a mecca for people interested in old ships, and a number of the lucky survivors have been taken away, at great expense, to be restored in the UK and USA.*

One of the best known of the hulks to end her days in Western Australia was the SAMUEL PLIMSOLL. Her claim to fame rests on the fact that she was one of the fast and glamorous clipper ships of the latter part of the nineteenth century, a contemporary of the CUTTY SARK and the THERMOPYLAE, although built a few years after them.

SAMUEL PLIMSOLL was launched in September 1873, by Mrs. Boaden, the wife of her first master, Captain R. Boaden. At the launching was none other than Samuel Plimsoll (1824-1898), after whom the vessel was named. Plimsoll had entered Parliament in 1868 and had tried to get a Bill passed on unseaworthy and overloaded ships. He failed, but wrote a book entitled *Our Seamen* and through the interest aroused by its publication managed to have a Royal Commission appointed by Parliament. A second Bill was introduced in 1875, but this too was abandoned because of political pressure from shipowners. The following year the Bill was reintroduced, and passed as the Merchant Shipping Act. Samuel's name is immortalised in the Plimsoll line, the markings on a ship that regulate the extent to which she can be loaded.

The registered measurements of the SAMUEL PLIMSOLL were: tonnage - 1 444 tons; length - 241' 3"; breadth - 39'; depth of hold - 23' 1". She was built of iron by the Aberdeen firm of Walter Hood & Co., for George Thompson's Aberdeen White Star Line. The ships of this line all had their hulls painted green, with the spars and lower masts white. This company also owned the famous THERMOPYLAE, launched in 1868, a composite ship also built by Hood, and arguably the fastest of the tea clippers.

At this stage in the history of shipbuilding there were three main types of construction for vessels: wood, iron and composite. Wood was the predominant construction material. All the major components that made up a vessel were of wood fastened with a mixture of metal and wooden fastenings. The fast ships of the American shipbuilder Donald McKay, such as the LIGHTNING and FLYING CLOUD are examples. During the middle of the nineteenth century, most fishing boats, coastal trading vessels and the majority of conventional cargo ships were of wooden construction.

An iron ship was built of riveted iron plates on an iron framework of keel, frames, beams, stem and sternpost, etc. This was the "new" method of construction, which included the SAMUEL PLIMSOLL and the famous GREAT BRITAIN, although the latter's keel construction was commenced as early as 1839. Iron construction had been around since the late 1780s in smaller vessels but was still in its infancy as far as building large ships.

Composite construction utilised wooden planking over an iron skeleton. It had the benefits of imparting stiffness, lightness and a little more internal space because the frames were smaller. Composite construction also facilitated maintaining a cleaner hull below the waterline because of the ability to use copper or copper-based paints, which reacted adversely to iron. The CUTTY SARK and the THERMOPYLAE are the best known examples of composite construction. These British ships, tea clippers, were relatively small when compared to the earlier McKay softwood clippers. LIGHTNING and FLYING CLOUD were over 1 500 tons registered measurement, while the two British tea clippers were less than 1 000 tons.



THE SAMUEL PLIMSOLL was specially fitted out for passengers and emigrants and carried between 350 and 400 passengers from Plymouth on each voyage. Her first fifteen voyages were to Sydney. The remainder under the Aberdeen White Star's flag were to Melbourne. On the homeward trips she carried cargoes of wool but, as Basil Lubbock states "... she could never rival the earlier wood and composite-built clippers on this passage".

She departed Plymouth on her maiden voyage on November 19 1873, and made the trip to Sydney in 74 days, arriving on February 1 the following year. This was the year's fastest passage, beating the CUTTY SARK's time by four days and PATRIARCH's by five. Her second voyage took 88 days out and 103 home. The third was again a fast trip – 75 days out and 83 home; her fourth passage was only average, 78 days out and 92 back – despite a very good week's run between 41° and 97° east longitude and 41° south latitude. (During this particular week she covered 2 227 miles.) On her fifth voyage, in 1878, and carrying 405 passengers, she could only manage an outward passage of 86 days, but her return, loaded with wool, was the fastest of the year – only 80 days.

In 1879, when fifteen days out from Plymouth and near the equator, the SAMUEL PLIMSOLL was struck by a squall which broke the bobstay and consequently the bowsprit, the foretopmast, and then the main topgallant mast. An American clipper sailing in company and also bound for Sydney offered to carry the passengers on to Sydney, but Captain Boaden declined the offer and set about repairing his ship. When the American reached Sydney the captain reported having left the SAMUEL PLIMSOLL dismasted in the North Atlantic – only to be told that the SAMUEL PLIMSOLL had beaten him to Sydney by a few days, having only taken 83 days, and despite the mishap!

The ship was under the command of Captain A. Simpson for the round voyage of 1881 due to Captain Boaden being in poor health. A Captain Henderson took over the passage home from Sydney of the next voyage, again because of Captain Boaden's health.

The following year, 1883, SAMUEL PLIMSOLL made her fastest passage to Sydney, taking only 72 days. She had passed Wilson's Promontory in Bass Strait only 66 days out, but had a slow six-day trip up the coast to Sydney.

In 1888 the ship made the first of what would

become regular voyages to Melbourne. This first trip took 79 days, and subsequent voyages were of a similar duration. In 1895, on her return trip and heading for Cape Horn, she covered 4020 miles in fifteen days. She remained under the command of Captain Henderson until sold at the turn of the twentieth century, to Young Savills.

Her first, and only, voyage to New Zealand commenced in June 1902, from Glasgow. A reasonably fast passage out found her off Cape Saunders. Here she hove-to in a south-east gale – until the mainmast snapped about four feet below the main deck. Basil Lubbock states: "The result was perhaps the most extraordinary in all the annals of dismasting – the main cap carried away and the mast somehow leapt overboard, taking with it the fore and mizzen topgallant

masts, without doing any more damage than slightly bruising the teak topgallant rail." The SAMUEL PLIMSOLL then headed for Napier under foresail and foretopsail, after plugging the hole in the deck. She travelled so well that a trawler that put out to offer assistance could not catch her. However she was eventually towed into Gisborne and afterwards Port Chalmers, where she was sold as a coal hulk. She subsequently sank within Fremantle Harbour (date unknown) and was raised, in pieces, and dumped at

... When the American reached Sydney the captain reported having left the SAMUEL PLIMSOLL dismasted in the North Atlantic – only to be told that the SAMUEL PLIMSOLL had beaten him to Sydney by a few days ... despite the mishap!

Beagle Rocks off the South Mole, on top of the LYGNERN wreck site. The 80-ton floating crane PELICAN and the barge ROCKINGHAM were used in this task.

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*Peter asks whether any reader knows when she sank or when she was scuttled, or whether her remains are still visible. I once read that she was dumped in the ships' graveyard off Rottnest. Can anybody supply definitive details? What of the steam crane PELICAN? Its still with us in Fremantle Harbour, though looking neglected and forlorn. Is a reader able to throw some light on its history? PELICAN has been around for such a long time that it will have witnessed and participated in a great many noteworthy events, and must be considered quite*

*historic in its own unglamorous right. I personally think it would be yet another sad loss to the local maritime scene if it ended up ignominiously scuttled or scrapped. Unfortunately, while many dream about recreating the days of sail, and spend great sums and energy attempting to make the dreams reality, they appear oblivious or indifferent to opportunities to preserve what is or was until fairly recently still around. I give as examples PELICAN, CHEYNES 11 and, a little further back, WYOLA, YUNA, and WILGA.*

*Opportunities only come once. (Editor)*

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## *Maritime Themes in* **Izzy Orloff, Photographer:** *Researched and Compiled by Hoffman, L & Jeffrey,* *C. Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1989*



*Abraham (Izzy) Orloff was born in Russia in 1891. As a Jewish boy, Orloff faced conscription to the Tsarist Russian army for no less than twenty-five years from the age of twelve. His family must have thought this rather too long, for when he reached that age they migrated to Palestine. Izzy migrated from there to Western Australia to join his older brother in 1910.*

*During the First World War he was employed using his considerable linguistic skills in the Intelligence Branch of the Army and it was probably then that he took up photography. After the war he travelled to Paris to study photography and in 1922 he set up his first studio in Barrack Street, Perth. He also practiced successfully as a free-lance photo-journalist. In the mid 1920s, he moved his studio to High Street, Fremantle. The better fishing at Fremantle was probably one of the motives for his move to the port city. Orloff was a keen and very skilled fisherman; it is possible that he worked on a fishing boat before the Great War. Certainly he took to boating and yachting at any opportunity soon after his arrival in WA.*



A number of photographs reproduced in the Fremantle Arts centre publication of his work show ships and boats that caught Orloff's eye. One of the earliest shows a very trim little gaff-rigged day-sailer called SHAMROCK running before the wind and towing an equally stylish clinker dinghy not very much smaller than SHAMROCK. Behind SHAMROCK the crew on another yacht are setting their huge gaff mainsail. The boom has been hauled up with the topping lifts so that the gaff can be fully peaked up more easily – a useful and standard traditional procedure now virtually forgotten by the gaff-rigged fraternity.

On his trip to Paris in 1919 (via Suez) Orloff took a beautifully composed portrait of a *felucca*-barge on a canal in Alexandria which emphasises the tall latteen rig of those vessels. A 1922 picture of Nedlands Jetty shows four apparently identical boats about 14' long with enormously long booms and bowsprits, and rigged with running backstays. They would seem to be a one-design racing class – does any reader remember them? Another picture of racing dinghies shows the famous 18 ft skiff MELE BILO "well ahead in the championship race" running under a cloud of sail including a large ringtail.

Ships that Orloff photographed in Fremantle harbour include the State Ship KOOLINDA, and the RN battlecruiser HMS HOOD, which Orloff managed to give an imposing appearance to, though in many photographs she appears rather low and almost frail. There is a square-rigged Argentinian sail-training ship PRESIDENTE SARMIENTO and in 1935 an un-named Japanese battleship or battlecruiser. She is loading coal in baskets and is very obviously a veteran of the destruction of the Russian battle fleet in 1907. Very much in the "Dreadnought" style, she has a little admirals gallery below deck level on the stern and her main aft armament is one big double turret. She is taking in coal from a coal hulk alongside, and that

hulk has derricks rigged on the three lower masts that once supported the rig of a fully-rigged ship. Her lines look very fine, suggesting that we are looking at the hulk of the Aberdeen White Star clipper SAMUEL PLIMSOLL (see Peter Worsley's article. Editor).

Perhaps the most interesting photograph is the one simply captioned "Italian Fishing Boats 11-4-33". There are three gaff-rigged ketches, two of them at anchor or moorings and the third tied bow-on to a jetty in South Bay where the fishing boat harbour now is. They are lying head-to a light sea breeze with main and mizzen set and the staysail sheeted to starboard to push them off on starboard tack when they get under way. Jib halliards appear to be made fast to the bowsprit ends but there is no jib stay so the jibs must be set flying cutter-style. This is not quite the same rig as the pearling luggers had. The mainmast is relatively taller while the mizzen is shorter and stepped further aft. And there are two headsails whereas the luggers normally carried a single headsail and had no forestay rigged to the stemhead. The rig is quite large and these are obviously not auxiliary sailers.

All the vessels have attractive semi-elliptical counter sterns, more-or-less the same style as the luggers except that the luggers usually had lower gunwales and had open gunwales around the stern. The accommodation is midships, there are low cabins quite yacht-like in style. All-in-all these are very attractive vessels. The large but simple gaff ketch rig would make them manoeuvrable and reasonably fast sailers, although their windward performance would not be great and they were presumably not very deep drafted. I wonder would fibre-glass copies of one of these boats, fitted with auxiliary engines, make saleable cruising yachts. They would certainly look a lot better than many motor-sailers and cruising yachts.

**Justin Tomes**



## PORTHOLE PRINTS

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# Classic & Wooden Boat Festival 1995

The seventh festival was held on the weekend of October 28/29 at the Royal Perth Yacht Club annexe, Challenger Harbour. This year's festival saw an increase in the number of vessels and activities on the water and a particularly attractive gathering of Old Gaffers.

The marquee was filled to capacity with exhibits, the Old Gaffers' Association winning the "Most Interesting Exhibit" award. This display featured an eye-catching model of the 1992 winner of "Best Old Gaffer" award, ORIEL. Owned and restored by Mike Igglesden, this fine vessel so impressed renowned model-maker Brian Lemon, that Brian crafted the superb model and presented it to Mike at the Hicks' Maritime Museum earlier this year. Mike assisted by making the trailer! International recognition was given to the restoration of ORIEL when she was featured in the July 1995 issue of the Classic Boat magazine.

There were more displays on the hard-standing than last year. The contrast between the comforting, rhythmic chugging of the working marine engines display and the impressive drills and exercises of the Naval reserve cadets demonstrated the Festival's diversity of displays and activities.

The members and Committee of the MHA thank the Leeuwin Sail Training Foundation, the Department of Transport and the Committee of the Classic & Wooden Boat Festival for organising another successful event. We also thank the Royal Perth Yacht Club annexe for generously providing the venue and facilities and Morgan Timbers and Sika Australia for sponsoring the Build-a-Boat-in-a-Day Competition. Our special thanks go to MHA Committee member Mike Igglesden for the excellent organisation of the marquee exhibits.

The weekend's gate proceeds were donated to the Leeuwin Captain's Fund, for the sponsorship of LEEUWIN voyage places for financially disadvantaged youth.

## AWARDS

### *Most Attractive Launch:*

M.V. LEANDER - 1963; 36' Halvorsen; oregon. D.Q. Copeland.

### *Most Attractive Sailing Boat:*

FLAME - 1953; 37', 22 m<sup>2</sup> yacht; NZ kauri and mahogany. Alan Skinner.

### *Most Attractive Open Boat:*

ULYSSES - 1957; 19' motor sailer; jarrah and meranti. Claude Lo Presti.

### *Most Interesting Exhibit:*

Old Gaffers' Association, represented by Frank Marchant.

### *Best Old Gaffer:*

TI-TU - 1929; 24' gaff cutter; kauri pine. John Horley.

**Ross Shardlow**



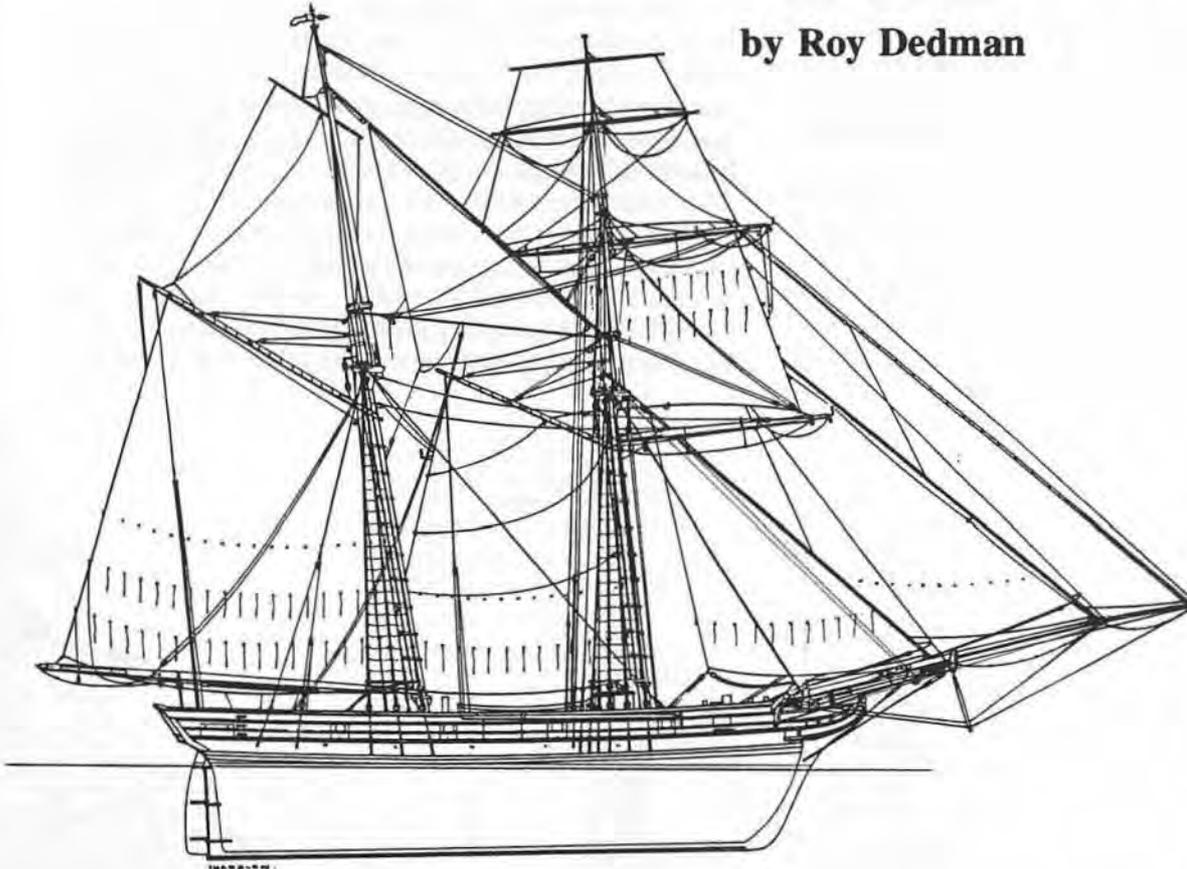
Left: MEANDER, D.Q. Copeland, winner of the "Most Attractive launch" award; below: the Naval Reserve cadets impressively demonstrating the drill "Protecting and Escorting an Officer"; bottom: winner of the "Most Interesting Exhibit" award, the Old Gaffers' Association, featuring a model of ORIEL, owned by Mike Igglesden (beaming at centre), and constructed by Brian Lemon.





# H M. Colonial Schooner **CHAMPION**

by Roy Dedman



*From 1827, when the first settlement in Western Australia was established at King George Sound, until the arrival of convicts in 1850, the colony of Western Australia suffered a long period of what can only be described as weak infancy.*

*Following settlement at the Swan River, further settlements were made at Augusta, Vasse (Busselton) and Leschenault (Bunbury), in that order. All of these settlements were very small and totally dependent on sea communications – as was in fact the Swan River settlement itself. Consequently, the need for a vessel under the control of the local government was not a luxury but a necessity.*



The first such vessel was the schooner ELLEN of 83 tons, built in Bombay in 1819. From August 1831 to March 1835, the ELLEN did sterling service, and her master, aptain Toby, became a well known figure at all the settlements. Following the sale of the ELLEN in Hobart, the schooner SALLY ANN (Captain Howes) was chartered for six months to make monthly trips to the outports. By the time this contract had been completed, the SALLY ANN had been purchased by Stephen Henty and with his bride Jane Pace on board he departed for Portland in Victoria. Unfortunately Captain Howes was drowned in King George Sound. Stephen Henty, despite lack of qualification took command of his vessel and set off for Portland; but he missed Portland, did not like the look of the entrance to Port Phillip Bay, and finally finished up at Launceston.

On November 1st 1836, the brigantine CHAMPION arrived at Fremantle from the Eastern Colonies, and was promptly purchased by the Government for £1 500. Thus commenced some fourteen years of service to the State, a service that must be recognised as a vital factor in the State's

survival.

From November 1836 to January 1840 the CHAMPION had a total of four captains: two, Lieutenants Henry Bull and Peter Belches were settlers, but previously officers in the Royal Navy; Captains Haggert and Dring were merchant captains. During this four-year period, the CHAMPION gave good service to the Colony and received the most press comment when not available through being overseas, winter lay-ups with lack of crew, or laid-up with storm damage.

For example, in June 1837, the CHAMPION (Lt. Bull) departed Fremantle for Vasse, with passengers John Bussel, two Miss Bussels, and Lieutenant Bunbury (Army), who had been based at Wonnerup and was proceeding there to pick up his personal belongings before going overseas on the brig HERO. After battling gales for a week, they suffered considerable damage and were forced to return to Garden Island for protection – and where they blew out their last sail. For nearly three months the CHAMPION was under repair and during this period it is believed that her rig was modified to a topsail

schooner, possibly due to a shortage of materials but also to make her more efficient at coastal work.

During the winter of 1838 (May – July), she was laid up in Cockburn Sound with, of course, her crew paid off. Because two ships from Asia had called at Albany during this period, the settlement there had plenty of food supplies, while because no ships had called at the Swan River, the settlement was running very low. This situation stirred up the press pens, and on Saturday, July 21 1838, the Perth Gazette complained:

*the expense of this vessel [CHAMPION] is a very heavy draft upon the Colonial revenue and apparently for no useful purpose.*

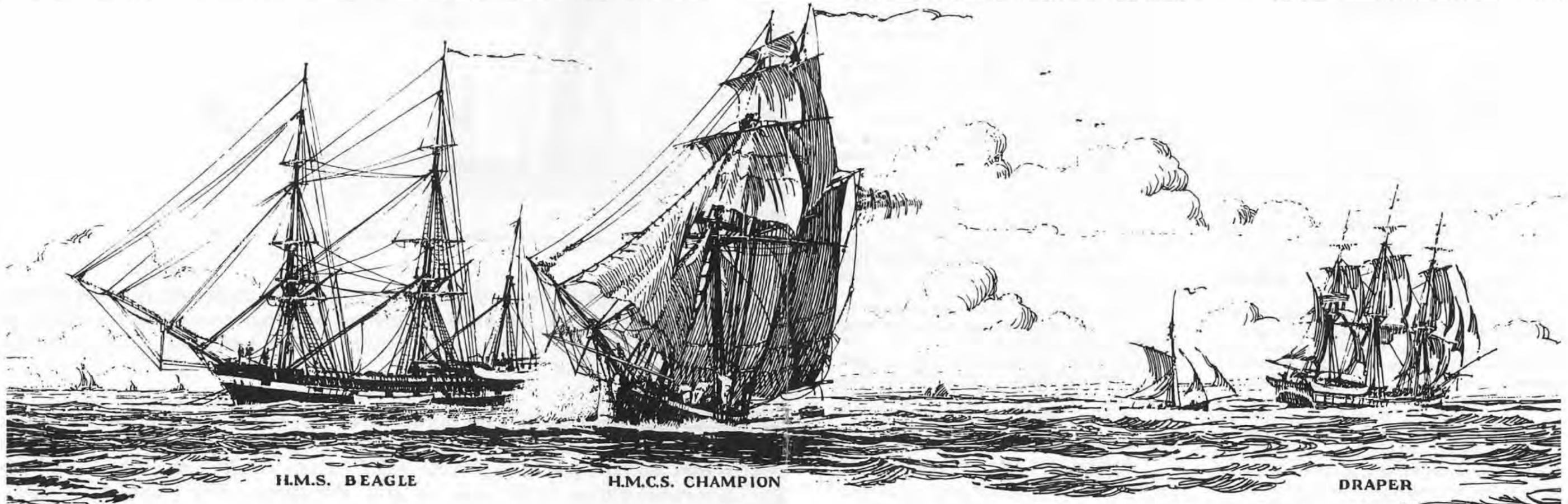
The following year, with the CHAMPION once again absent for the winter – having taken Governor Stirling to the Cape for him to catch a ship to England – the food situation was reversed, with Albany now close to starvation. But, of course, no comment from the Perth press other than comments about CHAMPION's long absence. All was forgiven, however, when the CHAMPION arrived in Fremantle on August 13th., with flour and beef for the Government and a large

number of boxes and parcels for various settlers. The latter had accumulated at the Cape awaiting a ship for Fremantle.

In February 1840, Lieutenant Benjamin Franklin<sup>x</sup> Helpman RN was appointed captain of the CHAMPION, and so began an association that, with one break, was to last over ten years. It was ten years of remarkable service to the community in almost every possible way. In fact, it can be said that under Helpman's command, the CHAMPION became the people's ship, because a touch of humanity was added to the wide range of duties that the ship provided. The Reverend Wollaston provides us with an example. He recorded that on Sunday, October 8th. 1843, he was returning to Bunbury from the Vasse when he found some 28 people assembled at Chapman's house. So he stayed and held an evening service.

He then recorded:

*In the course of the evening was heard a gun from the Bay and Lieutenant Helpman of the 'Champion' with his splendid Newfoundland dog, which always accompanied him, made his appearance on Monday to breakfast, having*



H.M.S. BEAGLE

H.M.C.S. CHAMPION

DRAPER

RH SHARDLOW '95.

*The Colonial Schooner CHAMPION coming to anchor Fremantle March 1840*



*waded through the Estuary. The 'Champion' brought an exchange of soldiers [to Wonnerup] and is going to Bombay soon with Government despatches. [Picton Journals]*

Thus by delaying his departure and going to a good deal of trouble wading through the estuary, Helpman gave this large group of settlers an opportunity to correspond with friends and relatives in the United Kingdom. At this time there was no regular mail service from Fremantle to anywhere! Such an opportunity would never have been forgotten.

Another side to Helpman's humanity is well illustrated by his handling of the Parkhurst lads who were indentured to him and who were required to serve on the CHAMPION. These boys were generally the ones who had proved difficult to handle ashore, but under Lt. Helpman, some remarkable changes occurred. James Nimmo (born 1824) arrived in the Colony in 1842. By March 1845, Lt. Helpman reported a remarkable change in the lad's behaviour and attitude. A.J. Kent, who had arrived in January 1846, had been indentured to Helpman for four years; in December 1848, Helpman submitted a very good report on Kent and applied to the governor for a reduction in Kent's sentence.

As Lieutenant Helpman is such an integral part of the story of the CHAMPION, it is interesting to note how he had arrived in the Colony and why he chose to stay. Through the recent publication *Mariners Are Warned. John Lort Stokes and HMS BEAGLE in Australia 1837 - 1843*, by Marsden Horden, we are fortunate in having considerable detail of the Lieutenant and his problems while serving on the BEAGLE. He had been born on December 21 1814, to an old Devonshire family, and he emerged from his schooling [Winchester?] as a compassionate, deeply religious man, with a sense of humour and a sharp intellect.

By the time Helpman joined HMS BEAGLE in 1837, he had already been in the Navy for nine years and had risen to the rank of Lieutenant. But by nature he was not the stereotype naval officer and even on the Beagle was frequently in trouble with Captain Wickham or the First Lieutenant, John Lort-Stokes. As Marsden comments, although his qualities may have been an asset to colonial society:

*... in the exercise of his duties he was at times feckless, irresponsible and a sore trial to his superiors.*

But the long period BEAGLE spent on the northern coasts of Australia appears to have matured Helpman into a more responsible officer; but it did not stop him from protesting to the First Lieutenant when he considered the crew were very much overworked, nor did it stop him from visiting the forecabin and sitting

by the bunk of a dying cook.

On the return of the BEAGLE to Fremantle, Helpman heard that command of the CHAMPION was vacant, and decided to apply for the position. To command her would be a fine promotion and, besides, the prospect of settling in Fremantle was attractive:

*For he had lost no time in renewing his acquaintance with Ann Pace, one of the two girls who had so touchingly 'piper their eyes' at his departure from the Swan River eighteen months before and the affair was going well. [Marsden, p. 210]*

Whatever the motives of Stokes and Wickham may have been in supporting his application, his appointment to the CHAMPION was indeed a fortunate one for the people of Western Australia.

Helpman married Ann Pace on December 14th. 1842, and she duly bore him nine children, five boys and four girls. Ann was not averse to accompanying him on the CHAMPION, particularly if she could visit her sister Mrs. Stephen Henty, at Portland.

#### ABSTRACT OF VOYAGES

The day-to-day story of the CHAMPION cannot be told here in detail, but a sample of her voyages will illustrate the range of her activities:

*16th. May 1840. Departed Fremantle for Madras, and returned on the 3rd. September 1840. Then completed three trips to the outports before the end of the year.*

*17th. August 1842. Departed Fremantle for Batavia, and returned on the 1st. December with a cargo of sugar, rice, wine, coffee, etc.*

*13th. March 1843. To Bunbury with a detachment of soldiers, and then on to Hobart Town. Arrived Fremantle 5th. July 1843 from Hobart, Sydney, Launceston and Portland. Passengers, two officers and twenty other ranks of the 51st. Light Infantry. Cargo of supplies and a quantity of vines and fruit trees that prompted the call at Portland for water. The press praised Helpman for the delivery of these plants in good order.*

*January - March 1844. Voyage to India, followed in July by a visit to Bunbury, Vasse, Augusta and Albany with flour and general supplies. On the 18th. December 1844 the CHAMPION returned to Fremantle after an exploratory trip to the Hutt River and the Abrolhos. They narrowly missed an uncharted reef.*

During 1845 the CHAMPION made two voyages to the outport; a voyage to Bombay, with Mrs. Helpman a passenger; a voyage to Hobart, with convicts - and



returned with cargo, passengers and three thousand pounds in specie; a voyage to Albany, Adelaide, Portland and Sydney. Mrs. Helpman stayed over at Portland with her sister.

In 1846, a voyage to Adelaide and Hobart; a supply voyage to Bunbury and Vasse; a voyage to Batavia and Singapore, departing Fremantle on 3rd. August, carrying three passengers and, included in the cargo, 4.5 tons of sandalwood, 1 ton of potatoes, and sixteen planks of mahogany (jarrah). These items were to test the market and were the forerunner of the lucrative sandalwood trade. CHAMPION returned to Fremantle on 18th. October; a supply voyage to outports; a December 3rd. voyage to Champion Bay to examine coal deposits. On board were Mr. Gregory, Messrs. Meiklejohn, Hazelwodd and Kirby, and five soldiers. Also included were three horses and a cart, to carry specimens.

1847 was a similar programme, but included a voyage to Singapore for 21 Chinese labourers.

In 1848, a further voyage was made to Singapore to bring back 31 Chinese; on 8th. July departed Fremantle for the outports with one of her duties to transport the Reverend Wollaston and his family from Bunbury to Albany. (Much to Wollaston's annoyance, Lt. Helpman insisted on their goods being loaded on a Sunday, but by the time they were near Cape Leeuwin in a north-west gale, he understood Helpman's "fidgets", as he called them, to get out of Koombana Bay.

Wollaston's journal provides a vivid picture of such a voyage in the middle of winter – the misery for the passengers and the pounding sustained by the vessel. No sooner had the passengers been landed in Albany, than the CHAMPION proceeded to Cape Riche to the rescue of the crew of the wrecked WAVE. Later in the year, while in Adelaide, the CHAMPION was again the vessel to go to the assistance of another vessel, the TIGRESS, wrecked at the mouth of the Onkarparinga River.

In 1849, once again back in Adelaide, complaints were made that the CHAMPION should not be exempt from port charges while carrying private goods. On this occasion, the private goods included a donkey for the Bishop of Adelaide, and liquor for Lionel Samson. Despite needing repair, CHAMPION made a trip to Doubtful Island Bay, a trip to Angiers with mails, and another trip to Adelaide. In November she proceeded north to Champion Bay with passengers Messrs. Purkis and Gregory, Lt. Elliott, and thirty other ranks of the 99th. Regiment. There were also probably some free settlers. The cargo included stores and equipment for the Geraldine Mining Company. [Thus the CHAMPION was directly involved in the development of the northern districts.]

By September of 1850 the CHAMPION was laid up as it was considered that costly major repairs were needed. But this was not to be, for by November, the rush of ships to load guano at Shark Bay was under way and the CHAMPION was sent there to oversee the Colony's interests.

In 1851, still at Shark Bay, the CHAMPION was sent to Exmouth Gulf to check whether any ships were loading guano in that area. Sending a sick ship into the cyclone area was tempting fate, but they were fortunate and they returned to Fremantle. In August of that year, the CHAMPION was finally laid up at Garden Island, and on 22nd. January 1852 was sold by auction for £57.10.00, about the value of her copper.

Thus ended the story of the CHAMPION as the Government schooner. In the 142 years ensuing, the vital role she played in the very survival of the state of Western Australia has sunk into almost total obscurity – more the pity.

The State was also to lose Lieutenant Helpman. He was given command of the next Government schooner, the ELEANORA, but her life was very short as she was full of rot. Lt. Helpman left her in Adelaide, returned to Fremantle where he resigned from the service, and moved his family to Portland. Then, in partnership with his brother-in-law Stephen Henty, he went to England and purchased a steamer. Naming her the CHAMPION, she was sailed out to Australia, calling at Fremantle, and then traded from Melbourne to the western ports of Victoria and Adelaide.

In August 1857, the s/s CHAMPION collided with the LADY BIRD off Cape Otway. The CHAMPION was lost, together with thirty-two lives. Helpman survived, and despite being cleared of all blame, this tragedy appears to marked the end of his seagoing career. In 1861 he was appointed Harbour Master at Warrnambool, and he retired from this position eight years later. He died on the 18th. February 1874, at the age of 59.

I think it is most important that we broaden our horizons to encompass the sea, so that the contributions made to our early development by such people as Lieutenant Benjamin Helpman RN and such ships as H.M. Colonial Schooner CHAMPION may be better appreciated.

*(Title page illustration by Ross Shardlow is of a typical contemporary English Schooner-Brigantine of 115 tons.)*



# Old Crap Muddies State's History ...

*What a shameless piece of old crap it was that appeared on the front page of **The West Australian**, Saturday, November 4, under the headline "Old Map Rocks State's History". Could Associate Professor Emeritus Leslie Marchant really have been unaware of the map in question (Bunting's map of 1581) until shown it by a local print gallery director? The very same map was reproduced in a paper by W.A.R. Richardson<sup>1</sup> to illustrate "a salutary warning of the dangers of uncritical acceptance of superficial similarities. The essence of Richardson's argument relating to the Bunting map is that the apparent similarity of a land mass shown south of India to Western Australia can hardly be taken as evidence that Western Australia had been discovered and mapped when the rest of Bunting's map is so extraordinarily inaccurate even by the standards of the 1580s.*

**A** number of 16th century maps show a land mass to the south of Java, rather closer to the actual longitude of the Australian coast, with a western coast vaguely like that of Western Australia. In many cases that land, usually called Java Major, Java-la-Grande, or Beach, is joined to a huge antarctic continent which also includes Tierra del Fuego, and which was a theoretical construct invented to balance the land masses of the Northern Hemispheres. The Bunting map seems to show part of that Great Southern continent in the bottom right-hand corner, a little to the south of where Albany would be if we were looking at Western Australia.

A number of scholars have devoted a great deal of energy to trying to prove a discovery of Australia prior to DUYFKEN's voyage of 1606. Unless one supports the theory of extra-terrestrial intervention, it is

incontestably the case that the forebears of Aboriginal peoples made voyages that brought them to Australia a very long time ago, but that is not what these people seek to prove.

The Portuguese are the favourite candidates for a European pre-DUYFKEN discovery, and Kenneth McIntyre<sup>2</sup> has been the most prominent proponent or propagandist for that discovery. McIntyre developed some ingenious arguments to explain the very considerable differences between Java-la-Grande on 16th century maps and the real location and shape of Australia. However, the analysis of Captain Ariel<sup>3</sup> has shown that McIntyre's navigational calculations are wrong in their basic premise, and Richardson's several papers, based primarily on reading of the inscriptions on the maps, have shown that Java-la-Grande is a cartographic invention to fill a hole in the map and comply

with a corrupt version of Marco Polo's travels. For example, the supposed east coast of Australia is actually the coast of Vietnam and southern China lifted from another map.

The problem with the pseudo-scholarship that supports the claims of evidence for prior discovery is that it muddies the waters of research and public understanding of the questions. Richardson is right when he states that there is "no evidence the Portuguese, Dutch, Arabs or Chinese had visited Australia before the Dutch first arrived in 1606". But that is not quite the same as saying that none of those peoples ever did visit Australia before 1606 – they might have done, but there is no sound evidence to show that they did. The various forms of Java-la-Grande that appear on 16th century maps may well reflect some Asian knowledge of land to the south of



Indonesia. Indeed, an Indonesian captain told the Italian traveller Ludivicio Varthema that there was a land to the south some years before the Portuguese first reached Southeast Asia. Similarly, the Portuguese/Macassarese cartographer Eredia, who is known to have been a fantasist, may have reflecting the knowledge of Macassarese and other Indonesian seafarers in his largely fictional geography and voyages. The pity is that researchers such as Richardson must focus on debunking the interpretation of Eredia by McIntyre *et al* rather than following more positive lines or research.

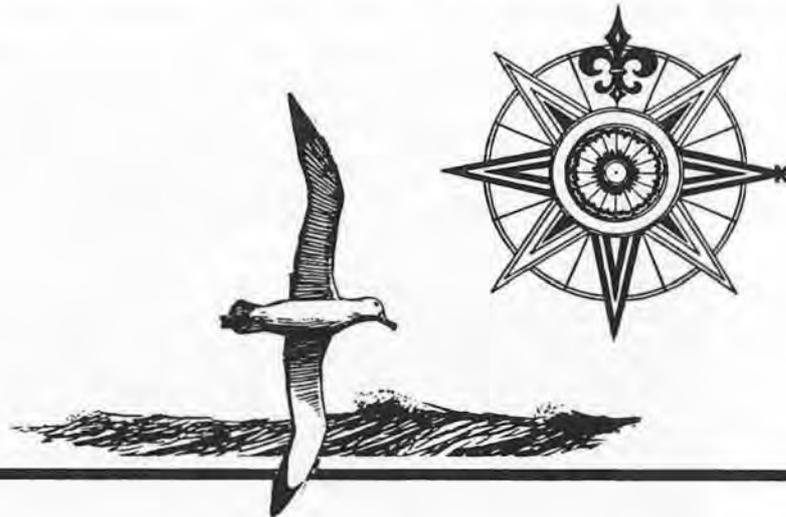
Leslie Marchant is quoted in *The Western Australian* as saying:

*It's an exciting mystery that leads to an even greater mystery - who was Australia's Columbus?*

It should be no such thing. Europeans reached America before Columbus, but Columbus started the historically-recorded process of mapping, recording and opening up the New World. Similarly, Captain Willem Jansz and his little ship DUYFKEN start that process for Australia.

- <sup>1</sup> Richardson, W.A.R., 1988. *The Portuguese Discovery of Australia: Fact of Fiction?* National Library of Australia Occasional Lecture Series, No. 3.
- <sup>2</sup> McIntyre, K.G., 1977. *The Secret Discovery of Australia.*
- <sup>3</sup> Ariel, A., 1984. *Navigating with Kenneth McIntyre: a professional critique.* The Great Circle, 8(2).

**Nick Burningham**



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# Learning Life's Lessons ...



*Two teenage boys are scrambling down the old iron-runged ladder set into the slimy tidal basin wall. Upon reaching water level, the first boy hooks the bow mooring of his boat with his left foot and then pulls her towards him. After neatly stepping aboard, he holds the line taut to enable his companions to follow his example. From above, a small canvas bag descends, lowered on a light line by a third boy and which is then neatly stowed into a locker built under the centre thwart. Boy number three then joins his mates in the 16' x 5'6" plumb stem and stern ex*

*ship's boat which many years before had been converted into a gunter-rigged sloop and was now the pride and joy of the eldest boy. He had spent many months using very limited skills and finance, restoring the wreck he had found in the back garden of a bombed out house in Dover in late 1944. All his spare time for the next couple of years endeavouring to put some of the counselling of Arthur Ransom, Percy Woodcock, Adlard Coles and a dozen more of his nautical mentors into practice.*

**H**ere he was, with his younger brother and a friend, off for a sail in the harbour – or such was their intention. The tide was ebbing. The rudder shipped, the moorings slipped, then, since no wind was apparent under the lee of the two dock walls, the two younger members of the crew pulled strongly on the oars, whilst the skipper commenced the preparations for the day's sail. The heavy steel dagger board was lifted off its stowed place on the floorboards and carefully lowered into its case, and in anticipation of a following breeze, a nail pushed through a hole halfway down the plate prevented it falling into its fully-down position. The mainsail's throat and peak halyards were bent on, the jib unstowed from under the little fore peak, hanked onto the forestay, and the sheets set up.

Halfway down the length of the Prince of Wales Pier the boat was luffed into the light North Easter and sails hoisted – thrashing around until subdued by paying the boat off into a broad reach heading for the end of the pier. This was the point of sailing "SEAFARER" really enjoyed with her long Park Avenue boom (which never really functioned as it was designed to do – the athwartships slides, designed to give the foot of the sail an aerofoil shape, seldom slid) holding out the large tie-dyed looking main with the bamboo gaff falling to leeward enough to match the angle of the boom. The capacity of Mum's copper had proved to be just a little too small to take the complete immersion of the mainsail in a rather belated tanning

process. The hand-sewn patch the boy had put in the full length of the luff (about 20') bore tribute to the soundness or otherwise of the sail's material. But still it had, until then, served the boat well and given many hours of fun. By the time the end of the pier was cleared, the breeze had picked up to a beautiful ten knots. Sunshine touched the little white horses and life was good. Discussion arose as to just how to spend the day. A beat into the outer harbour, or, how about venturing outside? The closest they had previously been to venturing outside – an area often fraught with strong tides and large waves – was the fishing spot over the blockship sunk in the Western Entrance during the war. How about sailing outside through this entrance, now only a few hundred yards ahead, and then beating up to the Eastern Entrance, a distance of less than a nautical mile, to return inside the harbour in time for an early tea. Food was never far from their thoughts. We will do that.

In order to clear the blockship with its breaking waves around the jagged remaining superstructure, the boat was headed for the end of the detached mole which, together with the end of the Admiralty Pier, forms the Western Entrance to Dover Harbour. This was an adventure, and one which, fifty years later, is still vivid in the mind of at least one of the crew.

The huge granite blocks forming the mole towered above the boat, its skirt of seaweed swaying and lifting into the greeny-grey three foot swell. The sails



suddenly became limp spreads of cloth as they came into the wind shadow then filled again as the tide pushed the boat, destined to be for her last time, out into the Channel.

Sea conditions were perfect for small boat sailing. The light northeaster gave a relatively flat sea and good sailing breeze. The irresponsibility of the exercise had not yet dawned upon any of them. The boat was ballasted with cast iron sash weights so any capsize would be a sinking. No one had been told of the intended destination of the voyage or of its probable duration. In fact they should not have even been sailing in the harbour under those conditions, of course, but attitudes to safety were, to say the least, casual in 1947. Indeed, the intended destination changed every few minutes. "Why don't we sail down to Folkstone? Its only six miles and we could be there and back in four hours. Twelve o' clock now so there is plenty of time." The boat was gybed over and a course set for Folkstone. The canvas bag which had earlier been stowed in the ship's locker was broken out and its contents of sandwiches and chocolate distributed. About half a mile offshore the chalk outcrop which is Shakespeare Cliff, The Warren (a marvellous stretch of untamed foreshore which had been their camping site a few days earlier) and the other familiar landscapes slid past, all looking so different and exciting from a seaward viewpoint.

There were a couple of ships out to sea and a fishing boat putting out from Folkstone but otherwise the seascape was their own. Absolutely beautiful – but nagging doubts had already begun to spoil the day for the eldest boy. But nothing could spoil the incredible feeling of achievement and excitement upon entering Folkstone Harbour. The first landfall ever experienced. A foreign port.

The breeze was just strong enough for the little boat to stem the ebbing tide into the Outer Harbour. By 1330 hours she had been made fast to the railings lining the stone steps, a stern line put out to an anchor and the crew, after giving their ship a harbour stow, climbed ashore to "explore" the town. That they travelled by bus or bicycle at least once a week during the summer months from Dover to the swimming pool below the Lees and that they knew this town almost as well as their own, did not diminish to any extent this

excitable pleasure.

"We will just have time to check on any interesting boats in the Inner Harbour, buy an ice cream and then we must set off home again." Both these worthy aims were accomplished and by 1415 hours the boys were back at the steps. Mud patches were appearing on the harbour floor. Mooring lines and chains which had spent the previous hours restlessly sea-sawing narrow trenches in the mud were now visible and still. All the fishing boats were lolling to port or starboard and little streams of brown water were cutting deep-sided channels towards the harbour mouth. SEAFARER was just afloat, but it was obvious that she was to be in her present berth until the beginning of the next flood tide.

What to do ... ? Go home on the bus? The Harbour Master would have to be found to obtain permission for the boat to be moved to a more suitable berth for an overnight stay. Contact with officialdom was in itself somewhat of a deterrent, with the strong possibility in their minds, of at least a reprimand.



There was also the probability of a weather change from the light/moderate conditions being enjoyed, to that of a more boisterous nature – not unusual in the English Channel. The advice of an "old fisherman" (he probably was at least 40) who was leaning on the railings and had been regarding the boys

with a somewhat whimsical smile was sought: "She'll be afloat again in a couple of hours. Weather will hold until tomorrow morning. You will have a foul tide up to Dover. Take you three hours in this breeze which is getting round to more of a Southeaster".

Discussion arose: "Lucky with the wind shift. If we leave at 1530 hours we should be home at 1830 hours. Lets do that". None of the boys had telephones at home and even if they had it would have been doubtful if a call would have been made. "With some luck we'll be back before we are missed."

By 1550 hours, punting with the oars, rowing and paddling slowly, SEAFARER was eased toward the harbour mouth. None of the fishing boats were stirring on their moorings, still held hard and fast in the black mud. The mud also held hard and fast to the oars and on the boys' arms and hands as they pulled themselves along any convenient mooring line which would help their progress. The daggerboard was lowered about 50 yards from the entrance and sail was made. Some



*SEAFARER and a considerably younger Mike Igglesden, together in Dover Harbour in 1946. Note that Mike appears to be wearing a jacket and tie, perhaps indicating an after-school jolly.*



difficulty in clearing the moles against tide and wind was experienced but by about 1545 hours they were in the open sea heading for Dover.

By keeping inshore it was hoped that the adverse tide of about 2 knots would be minimised as with a 10 knot Southeaster blowing they could just lay their course on starboard tack. This is a very rock-strewn foreshore and the swell of about four feet capped by two foot waves made for exciting sailing for the inexperienced. Every now and then a cheeky wave would slop aboard and some of which was returned by means of a large biscuit tine bailer which was scraped along the floorboards as the boat rolled and the water sloshed towards the bailer boy. In spite of the warm sunshine they were all getting cold. None wore waterproof clothing and their lumbar jackets and long grey school trousers were by now very wet. The mood aboard was apprehensive but cheerful. Although keeping well out from the surfline, every once in a while a larger wave would rear up and carry the boat a few yards towards the beach. On each of these occasions the skipper found himself more firmly gripping the ash axe handle, which had, when making up the rudder, been chosen by him mostly for its pleasing shape and converted into the boat's tiller. Concern for the safety of his young crew for whom he rightly felt responsible and of course the fate of his beloved boat, was rising rapidly. It would only take the shipping of one those extra menacing waves to spell the end of the voyage and, possibly, the end of them all. He considered running through the surf and attempting a landing on the steep bank of stones and pebbles of Shakespeare Beach. The boat would be lost, of course, but since they could all swim well enough to probably survive such a landing, it was a real option. This was decision to be made now. The huge grey wall of the Admiralty Pier was looming up three-quarters of a mile ahead. The roar and suck of the pounding waves on the beach could now be clearly heard. To make the harbour entrance, a tack would have to be made out to sea for about half a mile and then the Western Entrance, with its hazard of the blockship, would be visible. "Ready about." The boat was swung onto port tack and headed away from the beach, her motion changing as her new course took her more squarely into the waves. The wind had increased and SEAFARER was over-canvased. They had never ever attempted to reef down while sailing, let alone in these conditions. The long overhanging boom touched the wave tops to leeward more and more often as the sheet was eased to relieve the wind pressure on the mainsail. Should have reefed an hour ago. Too difficult now. To handle in the jib would result in the boat having too little drive to punch through the head sea. The skipper could not hide his concern, which anyhow had been shared by his shivering crew for half an hour now. It was two and a half hours since they had left the safety of Folkestone

and the wrong decision to sail had long ago been uppermost in their minds.

The design of the boat, with its narrow forward sections and straight stem gave little reserve buoyancy, causing her to shovel into the waves, some of which were breaking over the starboard bow. Bailing was now continuous. The boy not bailing was sitting out on the windward gunwale using the tail end of the lee jib for support. The skipper, due to the short length of the tiller, was unable to do likewise. He was occupied in trying to ease the boat over the most menacing waves and control the mainsheet to keep the boat moving towards their immediate goal – to clear the Admiralty Pier and enter the Western Entrance. Time dragged on ... Each minute took at least an hour to pass. The next go about would be critical. Look for a flat spot between the waves. "Ready about." SEAFARER, with her long straight keel, always took an age to respond. Very slowly she came into the wind, a wave smacked her port bow and her swing onto the other tack was aborted. She gathered sternway. The boy on the helm pushed the tiller away from him towards the port side of the boat. The next wave struck the bow head on and pushed her further astern. "Back the jib." She swung round and was safely on her new course heading for the entrance. What relief. Surely now we will make it. Three hundred yards from the entrance the boat's motion changed as the waves were now broadside on. The full force of the south west setting side was now in evidence and was running down both sides of the detached mole at two and a half knots and pouring out of the entrance. Impossible to make it through the gap without fouling the blockship. "We will have to sail along the outside of the mole and come in at the other end." The respite from bailing which had been enjoyed since the last change of course was short lived. Now the sea was very confused, tide, wind and waves rebounding from the mole made for lumpy conditions with pyramids of broken water rising up from nowhere and returning with a reluctant plop into the trough it had formed.

Fear gripped the crew. The skipper was the most calm of the three since he had a job on hand which called for complete concentration. This was the first time in his short life he had been really frightened – even the worst part of the London blitz had not been this bad. Then it had been the luck of the draw; now he had a chance to control his destiny, and that of his terrified crew. The bailing was now continuous and accompanied by sobbing. Bail, bail, bail ...

A white-capped seething wave would come roaring down on them, pass under the boat, collide with the mole, which had been built as a bastion against the sea, now only fifty yards away, to return to the attack on the other side of the boat. The outboard end of the boom was now continuously in the water with the sail



shuddering and cracking as it was eased off to relieve the overpowered craft. A jumble of thoughts surged through the young skipper's mind. He had rove a new main halyard a couple of weeks ago but most of the other gear was definitely suspect. It would have been nice to have some money to spend. Didn't matter now. Surely the people fishing on the mole, watching three boys about to drown, would run to the Harbour Control people and get help? No. One even waved to them. If we capsized would the sash weights and the bags of shingle ballast fall out of the boat? If this were to happen, it would at least give the boat enough buoyancy to provide some support until help arrived – if it arrived. Bail, bail, bail ... Later in life the skipper was to realise that here was a classic situation that confirmed the old adage that the world's most efficient bilge pump was a frightened boy with a bucket – but in this case a biscuit tine.

The bilges were now a foot deep in the sloshing cold water and the floor boards were responding by lifting and surging around, substantially hindering the efforts of the boys to fight the loosing battle to keep the sea outside the boat. With aching backs and blanked minds, where survival was the only thought, progress toward the Eastern Entrance was hardly noticed and seemed of little consequence.

Eyes stinging with salt, the skipper made out the Eastern end of the mole. We have just to clear that and

then we are safe. Wind and tide then controlled their destiny and the little boat was swept through the entrance, round under the lee of the mole and within a few seconds was in calm waters. An indescribable mixture of feelings – joy, remorse, exaltation, thankfulness and relief then engulfed the exhausted boys. The memory is still able to recall those feelings, to savour completely, undiminished, even after the passing of fifty years.

Inside the harbour, the citizens of Dover were enjoying a beautiful summer evening. A mixed fleet of dinghies was engaged in and around the harbour race. People were fishing from rowing boats, in the distance could be seen deckchairs on the beach and brave souls swimming and diving. SEAFARER was not sailed back to the tidal basin. The closest possible place to leave her was on a groyne outside the submarine pens. They moored her as best they could, allowing for the tide range of about sixteen feet. Then, a group of wet, shivering and very shaken boys had to face both a two mile walk home and the music to follow. Next morning, SEAFARER had sunk. All loose gear, floorboards, rudder, boom, oars were gone. Not a total wreck – but ... The next restoration was made to a Snipe, also found on a bomb site.

## Mike Igglesden

