



MARITIME HERITAGE ASSOCIATION JOURNAL



Fixing the jockey wheels to the cradle to slide Pelican into the shed with ease

Photo: Ross Shardlow

See page 6

- * Albany Pilot Boat *Pelican*
- * Maritime Anecdotes
- * Ditty Bag
- * Letter to the Editor



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MHA End of Year Wind Up

**When: 10:00am,
16 November 2025**

**Where:
33 Gosnells Road East,
Orange Grove**

**It would be appreciated if you would bring a plate of nibblies
or finger food to share**

Robin and Pam will be supplying tea and coffee

**If you have any books and magazines of a nautical nature to
sell, please bring them along (proceeds to MHA)**

**You must wear enclosed footwear as this is a workshop where
Robin is busy making new spars for *Leeuwin II***

There will be a quilt raffle as usual

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 reaction of shipping to the Victorian gold boom was prompt, and is reflected in the wreck list for 1853. Of the total of 43 wrecks mentioned, 16 were in the vicinity of Port Phillip Heads, and 11 of them were due to the gold fever having infected the pilot service so that masters of ships were unable to obtain pilots and ventured to navigate a tricky port that was also badly lighted and marked.

A 2018 report for the World Association for Waterborne Transport Infrastructure catalogued 35 bridge collapses caused by boat strikes between 1960 and 2015, resulting in 342 fatalities.

On 10 December 1969 the first navigational chart was released by the Hydrographic Office of the Royal Australian Navy portraying depths and heights in metres instead of fathoms and feet. The first chart to be issued in this form was No. Aus.58 for the newly developed port of Dampier in north-western Australia.

10 December 1842

Arrived on Friday 10th inst the Cutter *Chance* from King George Sound. This small craft was built on the Kalgan River and is pronounced to be an excellent sea boat. Her present destination is Batavia to lay in supplies for a whaling crew to be employed during the next season in Bay Whaling on our coast.

In late December 1696 Willem Hesselsz de Vlamingh in the *Geelvinck* anchored off the coast of Rottnest Island. He named the island Mist Island. It was three years before it later became known as Rottenest or Rottnest Island.

There are 8,220 smaller islands around the island continent of Australia.

In 1636 Antonie Caen skipper of Dutch ship *Banda* recorded seeing stately birds 'almost half a yard long, with orange-yellow bills' at sea off the coast of Western Australia. This is considered most likely the first recorded sighting of black swans.

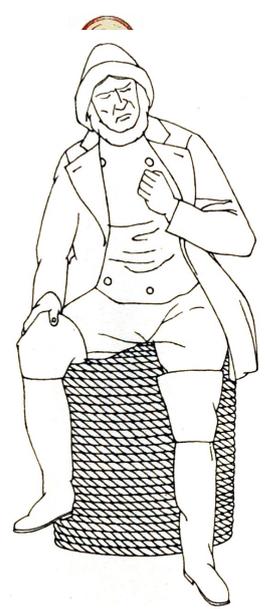
The first recorded birth of a European in Australia took place in 1623, on board the *Leyden*, which was charting Western Australia's coastline at the time. Willem Janszoon gave birth to a son.

In 1912 Cdr Brewis RN was appointed by the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia to report on the lighting of the Australian coast. He was to report on the state of existing lights, recommend improvements to those lights and recommend the placing of additional lights. His report for Western Australia (King George Sound to Cambridge Gulf) contained the extraordinary suggestion that the main Rottnest light station should be moved to Cape Vlamingh on the western end of the island. He proposed that a new ferro-concrete tower be erected and the existing lantern and optical apparatus be re-used. The magnificent Rottnest lighthouse, which is still an active aid to navigation, had only been commissioned 16 years earlier!

In late 1897 Captain Edward Leighton (61), assistant lightkeeper on Jarman Island, died on the island after suffering a heart attack. When reporting his death, a Roebourne newspaper speculated that his demise had been hastened by the shock of an accident in Cossack, in which he had fallen into a woolpress. Four months earlier Leighton had been the victim of another accident. While returning to the island the station dinghy capsized, throwing three men into the water. One swam ashore but Leighton and a Mr Kane clung to the upturned dinghy, which drifted towards a reef. Several rescue attempts were hampered by the state of the sea. When he was eventually pulled to safety, Leighton was 'very much bruised about the head and body by coming in contact with the reefs'.

Rossiter Bay east of Esperance was named by Edward John Eyre who arrived at the bay in desperate need of water and supplies. He found, anchored there, the French whaling barque *Mississippi* under the command of Captain Rossiter, who provided Eyre and Wylie with immediate succour and stores for their onward journey—thereby possibly saving their lives.

The well-known American navigation manual *American Practical Navigator* by Nathaniel Bowditch was first published in 1802.

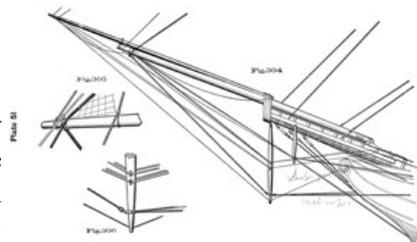




QUIZ

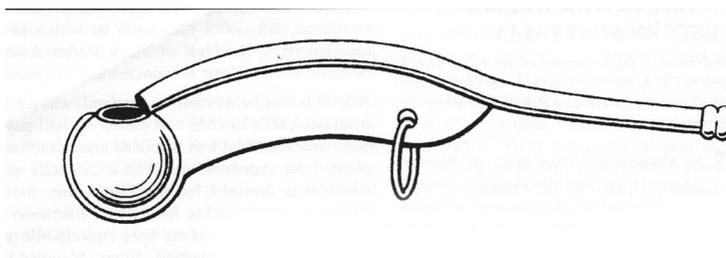
Answers to September

1. The first three ships to arrive at Fremantle in 1829 were:- HMS *Challenger* (Captain Fremantle) 25 April 1829, *Parmelia* (Captain James Stirling) 2 June 1829 and HMS *Sulphur* (Captain William Dance) 8 June 1829.
2. A dolphin striker is a short perpendicular spar under the bowsprit of a sailing vessel to hold the jib-boom down against the pull of the stays and sails. See illustration
3. The Brouwer Route was a 17th century route used by Dutch ships sailing from the Cape of Good Hope to the East Indies. It took ships south from the Cape to and along the Roaring Forties before turning north towards Batavia. Due to the lack of accurate measurement of longitude this sometimes resulted in ships hitting the WA coast.



Quiz

1. This vessel had three names over its years at sea. *Endeavour* was the name of the ex-collier while it was under the command of James Cook. What was its name as a Whitby collier and what was its name when it was deliberately sunk in America?
2. What is this and what is it used for?
3. After which King George was King George Sound named in 1791 by George Vancouver?



Corrections

The Editor is delighted to find that the journal is read so assiduously. The date on page 4 of the September 2025 edition should have read 1660 instead of 1606.

The date on page 9 should have read 1820 instead of 1850.

Thank you Nick. Sack the proof-reader !

Did You Know?

The inventor of the gyrocompass, a compass which did not rely on the earth's magnetic field, was Hermann Franz Joseph Hubertus Maria Anschütz-Kaempfe. In his quest to navigate to the North Pole by submarine, in 1905 he became interested in the concept of the gyrocompass and his firm, Anschütz & Company of Kiel, Germany, were the first to manufacture them. This company still exists as Anschütz GmbH.



Letter to the Editor

The following letter was sent to the Editor on 26 September 2025 regarding the article in the September 2023 journal written by Dr J.K. Haken titled *Army Watercraft of the Vietnam War*

Dear Sir,

I refer to the above article and wish to point out some inaccuracies and discrepancies.

I served on the AS3051 *John Monash* and HQ 1 Terminal Group, its parent unit in 1971 and 1972, during which the vessel voyaged to Vietnam twice.

Contrary to statements in your article, 32 Small Ships Squadron was never located in Brisbane. Its home port was Woolwich dock on the north shore of Sydney Harbour, west of the bridge near Hunter's Hill, along with 35 Water Transport Squadron (operators of 3 landing craft medium (LCM) and 40 Water Transport Squadron, operators of Landing Craft Heavy (LCH) of which the Army only had one, the *Balikipapan*.

The parent unit of these Squadrons was 1st Terminal Group, headquartered at Middle Head, also on Sydney Harbour. 30 Terminal Squadron, the stevedoring unit was colocated with 1 Terminal Group at Middle Head.

32 Small Ship Squadron was disbanded in September 1971 following the sale of the LSMs mentioned in your article. Subsequently, the AS3051 *John Monash* was designated as a detachment of 1st Terminal Group.

Between September 1971 and its sale in 1973, AS3051 *John Monash* completed 3 more voyages to Vietnam: 5 Oct – 20 Oct 1971, 01 Aug – 14 Aug 1972 and 29 Aug – 10 Sep 1972, all designated as Detachment HQ 1 Terminal Group, not 32 Small Ships Squadron.

The statement in your article that the AS3051 *John Monash* completed "seven voyages to Vietnam in six years" is therefore wrong. The ship completed eleven voyages to Vietnam between May 1966 and September 1972.

AS3051 *John Monash* continued in service until 1973, when it was sold to Crescent Ship Owners in Singapore and subsequently renamed the *Asian Queen*. After sale to two further owners and subsequent renaming as *Arabian Victory* and *Sea Rose I*, the ship was ultimately broken up at Gadani Beach, Pakistan in 1984.

I would appreciate you making and publishing the appropriate corrections to your article so as to properly record the service of this vessel.

Kind regards

Geoff Vincent

While every endeavour is made to present accurate information in the journal, it is inevitable that at times information may be presented which is not factually correct or which advances an opinion contrary to information supplied by another contributor. If such a case occurs I will make sure that both sides are represented for readers to form their own opinions.

Peter Worsley, Editor



The Search and Rescue of the Albany Pilot Launch *Pelican*

by Ross Shardlow AM

On the 29 August 2025, the Pilot Launch *Pelican* was successfully lifted from the Denmark Boatshed and transhipped back to her home port of Albany thus completing the first phase of our ‘Search and Rescue’ operation. Now safely secured under cover in the De Bruin Boatshed at Willyung (Albany) plans are now under way for the next phase of the operation – her stabilization and assessment from which a conservation plan will follow.



Pilot Launch Pelican being lifted by Franna crane from Peter Wilson’s Denmark Boatshed to be transported to Charles and Rose De Bruin’s boat shed at Willyung (Albany).

Photo: Barbara Shardlow

The Search:

The people of Albany have been acquainted with their Pilot Launch *Pelican* for over a hundred years. For the past thirty of those years various owners, custodians, ship-lovers and institutions have played a vital role in her preservation. It was not until 2008, however, that MHA member and Master Shipwright Bill Leonard (OAM) first alerted the MHA to a remarkable vessel that he had stumbled across while collecting material in Albany for his forthcoming book: *In Search of Fish and Fortune: along Australia’s West Coast*, WA Museum 2017. Bill immediately recognised the unmistakable grace and beauty of a classic Pilot Launch. Bill’s task at that time was to document the *fishing boats* of Albany, not *pilot boats* of Albany, and the opportunity to record this vessel slipped through his fingers. Bill’s affirmation has long been that we simply cannot save all the old boats we come across. Some fall to bits before our eyes, others are cut up for firewood, some are even scuttled to be shipwreck dive sites - most just disappear. In the time and expense it takes to preserve just one boat, we could preserve a fleet of boats simply by taking off their lines to record their shape, construction, beauty and purpose, a permanent record for posterity. Bill asked if the MHA might take up the task of lofting the pilot launch’s lines as we had done for *Little Dirk* in 2001 and the Navy Cutter *Albatross* in 2004. We had also drawn up a set of plans to replicate an 1854 Pilot Whaleboat for the Rottnest Pilot Station.



The search for Bill's pilot launch proved to be elusive, even evasive. MHA member Ron Forsyth gave us a lead when he asked if we could find the 28ft pilot launch *Pelican* built by his grandfather 'Chippy' Forsyth and last seen at Emu Point (Albany) about 2000. By the time we did find her in 2020, her provenance, even her name, had been lost in the mists of time. We were not even sure if she was the *Pelican*. All we knew was she was a pilot launch that we thought/hoped to be the *Pelican*. Even if she was a *Pelican* we still had to determine which of four *Pelicans* she might be. We were 'reliably informed' she was built either in 1897, 1906, 1913, 1927 or 1952, and she was built by Mews, or A.E. Brown or Chippy Forsyth in Fremantle, or overseas or over east. A talk I gave at the Six Degrees Restaurant during Albany's 'Maritime Festival Month 2025' outlined some of the events leading up to her latest search and subsequent rescue starting from the inception of Albany's Pilot Service in 1827.

The Inauguration of the Albany Pilot Service 24 January 1827:

On the departure of the Colonial Brig *Amity* from King George Sound on the 24th January 1827, Major Edmund Lockyer, commander of the new Settlement at the Sound, appointed:

... two experienced seamen as boat keepers and who would be able to act as pilots to bring vessels into harbour from the Sound . . . John Hobson and George Thomas destitute seamen from the Gov. Brisbane – appointed as pilots and departed by Amity as far as Middle Island to collect their possessions after which they were to return to the Settlement and 'put on rations'.

Pilot Whaleboats:

Albany's first pilot boat was described as an 'oared boat' from the colonial sealer *Governor Hunter* that arrived in King George Sound with eight destitute men on 4 January 1827. The eight men had been abandoned on the south coast by the sealing vessels *Governor Hunter* and *Governor Brisbane*. John Hobson and George Thomas, from the *Governor Brisbane*, were appointed as Albany's first pilots and the confiscated 'oared boat' from the *Governor Hunter* was retained as Albany's first pilot boat.

The oared boat was most likely a five-oared whaleboat commonly used by sealers and whalers. Certainly a new Albany pilot boat, built in Fremantle in 1853 by William Hugh Edwards, late carpenter from the Colonial Brig *Amity*, was a five oared whaleboat. The pilot boat was built for the Rottneest Pilot Station but on completion was sent down to Albany to replace the Albany pilot whaleboat that had just been lost. The replica was built by Wooden Boat Works at Fremantle from plans drawn by the MHA in 1999. The replica pilot whaleboat is now on display in the Pilot Boathouse on Rottneest Island.



Replica pilot whaleboat built by Wooden Boat Works in Fremantle in 1999.

Photo: Ross Shardlow



Another view of an Albany Pilot Whaleboat is shown in a pencil and watercolour sketch by John Thomas Baines. Dated 4 March 1857, this pilot boat may well be the same whaleboat built by William Hugh Edwards in 1853. Baines' journal of 3 March 1857 describes:

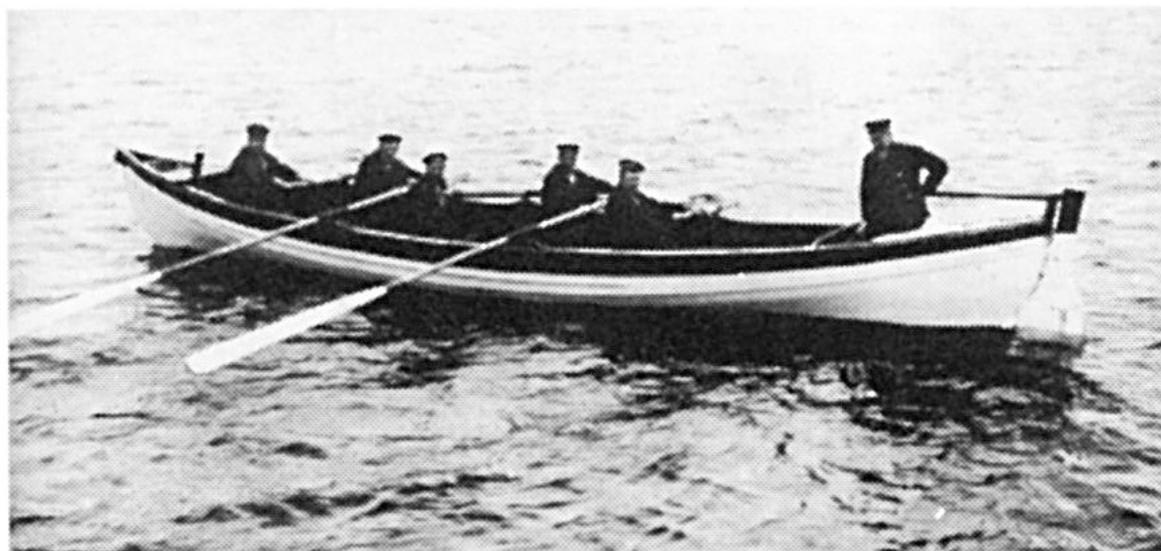
The pilot boarded us in a whale boat manned by natives one of whom was clothed in shirt, trousers and cap, whilst the rest rejoiced in their native costume of grease, red ochre and kangaroo skin . . .



The Pilot Boat King Georges Sound – South West Australia March 4 1857, pencil and watercolour by John Thomas Baines (1820-1875).

Photo: from *Sketches of Thomas Baines* (as filmed by the AJCP) M 397, National Library of Australia.

The Pilot Whaleboat, along with gigs, lifeboats and dinghies, remained in the Albany Pilot Service long after the introduction of motorised Pilot Launches in 1897. The Harbour and Light Department Annual Report for 1904 states that the Albany Pilot Service, 'retains the use of a whale-boat – used only in cases of emergency'. A photograph of the Albany pilot whaleboat taken in 1909 shows the whaleboat still in use with Captain Winzar at the helm and a full five man uniformed crew.



Albany Pilot Whaleboat, c.1909, with Harbour Master Captain Winzar at the helm.

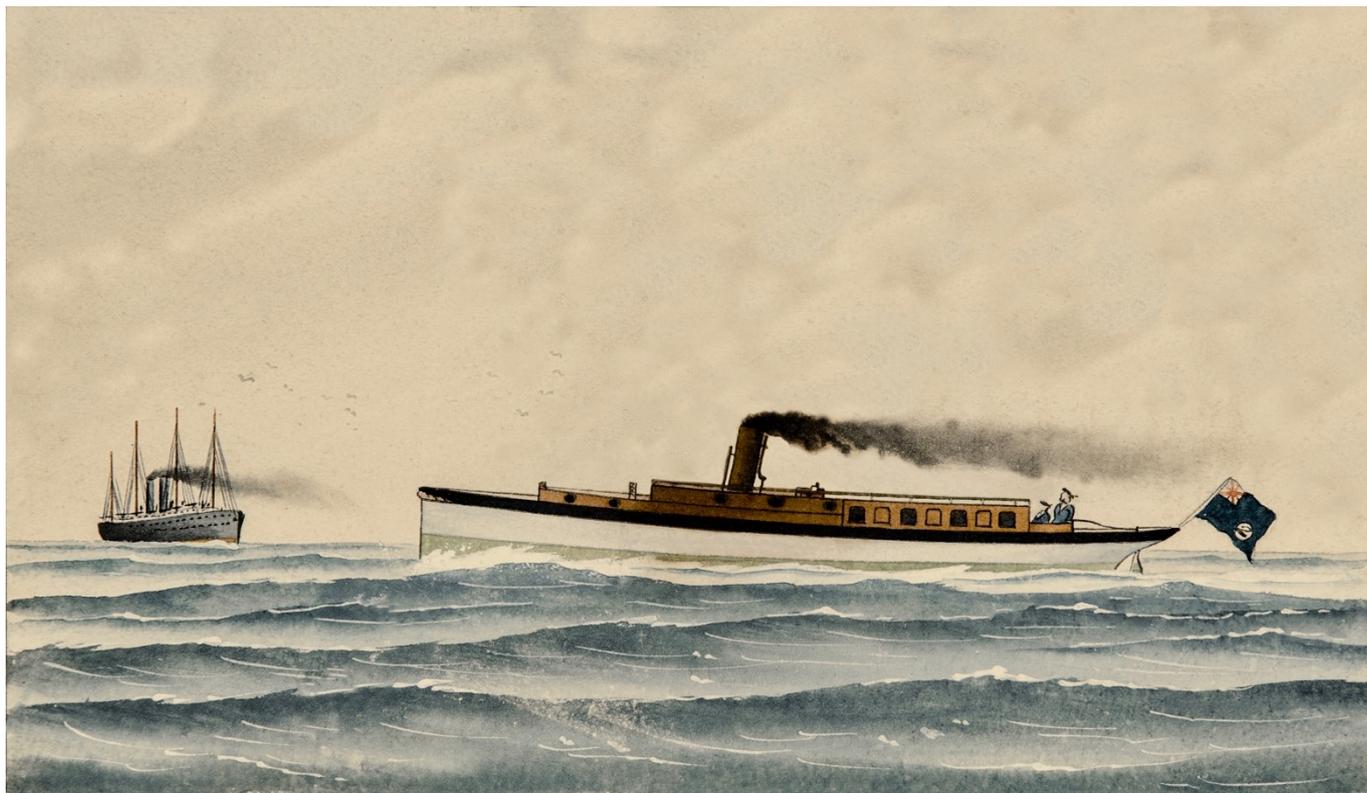
Photo: Stan Austin Collection, from *Emu Point: A Pearl in an Oyster Setting*, Stanley Austin, WA Museum-Albany 2003, page 15.

Motorised Pilot Launches – *SS Petrel*:

The first of Albany's motorised pilot launches was the *SS Petrel*. She was built in England in 1895, 47ft overall x 10ft 6in beam, planked with teak over oak frames and coppered below the waterline. She came out to Albany on the *SS Cornwall* in 1897 and served as the Government Launch, Harbour Master and Pilot Vessel until 1910. In 1912 she was fitted with a new oil engine at Fremantle before



being transferred to the Bunbury Harbour Service for the Harbour and Light Department. In 1960 she was transferred to the Bunbury Sea Scouts. After being blown ashore and re-floated in 1969 she was sold to new owners in Perth to be a leisure craft and showboat. In 1987 she was scuttled off the beach at Rockingham for use as a dive site.



W.A. Govt. Launch "Petrel", watercolour by George R. W. Bourne c.1900. Petrel served as the Albany Pilot Launch from 1897-1910 before being transferred to Bunbury

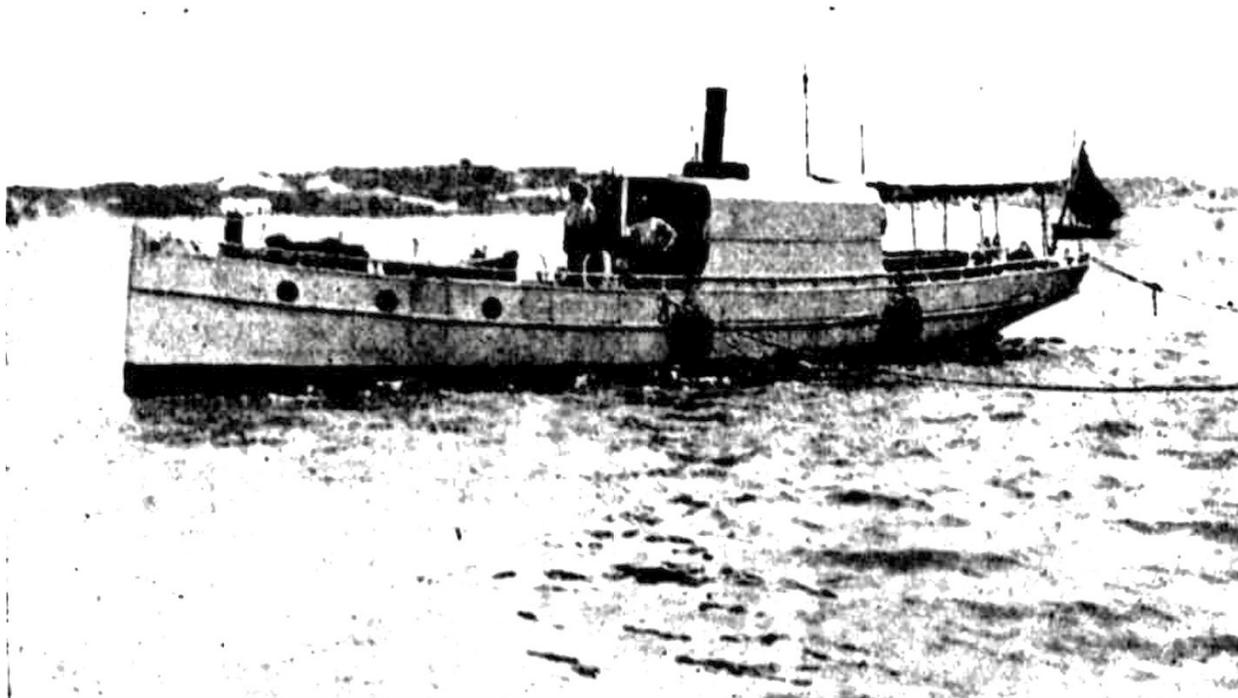
Photo: David Nicolson from Shardlow Collection

Pilot Launch *Waratah*:

The SS *Waratah* replaced the *Petrel* as Albany's next Pilot Launch. The *Waratah* was built in Launceston, Tasmania by Edwin A. Jack in 1893. She was 48.6ft long (55ft overall) x 11ft beam x 5ft depth of hold. She was 15 tons gross and 8 tons net, had a counter stern and was built of Huon pine. She was fitted with a 10 nhp compound surface condensing steam engine. *Waratah* was sold to the Western Australian Government Public Works Department in 1897 to do hydrographic work making coastal, tidal and current observations but was little used except for towing dredging barges on the Swan River. In March 1898 she was engaged as the Health Officer's launch and in August 1906 was taken over as the Police Launch. In 1910 *Waratah* was handed over to the Harbour Master's Department and was towed down to Albany by the Government steamer *Penguin* arriving 20 February 1910 to replace the SS *Petrel* to become Albany's new Pilot Launch. By 1914 Harbour Master Captain Winzar reported that the *Waratah* was 'practically worn out' and she was finally condemned and sold out of service in 1915 to be replaced by the motor launch *Pelican*. *Waratah* was sold to various private owners who intended to use her for towing shell-grit from the Lower Kalgan Bridge to Albany. When that venture failed she was abandoned and sank at the foot of the jetty next to the Lower Kalgan Bridge (presumably the lime shipment jetty south of the bridge on the eastern shore of Oyster Harbour). About 1922 she was re-floated and repaired by Captain (actually late Chief Officer of State Ship *Kybra*) Vernon Vinicombe (aka Charlie) Farley and partners who, with Lionel Austin, refitted her with a London bus engine and rigged her as a two masted gaff-rigged schooner. In January 1927, Charlie Farley obtained a Commonwealth contract for the carriage of stores to the lighthouse on Eclipse Island, a service he ran once a month with the *Waratah* into the early 1930s. *Waratah* was then sold to a consortium who fitted her out for a voyage of adventure around the world. Early attempts to round Cape Leeuwin resulted in her sheltering at Nornalup and then putting back to Albany to make repairs, adjust rig and add ballast. Her second attempt in April 1934 fared no better. Finding the *Waratah* in heavy weather and slow to answer her helm she again put back to Nornalup for shelter.

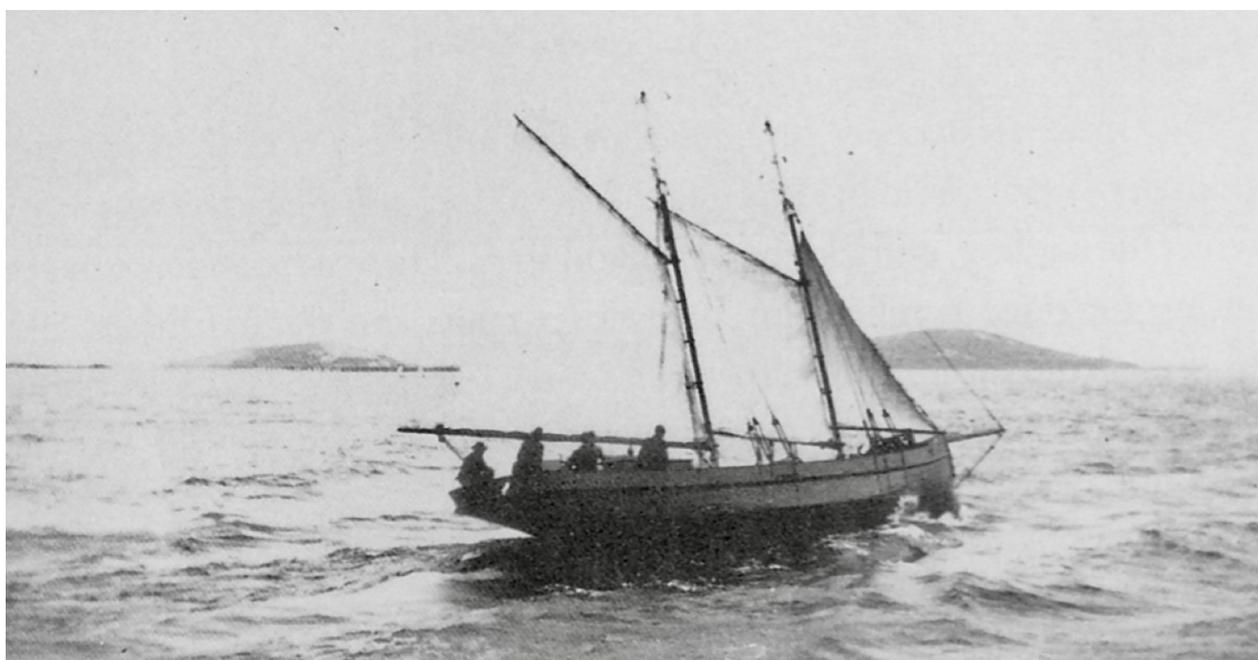


After anchoring off the inlet the rudder fell off. The next day (6 April) she dragged her anchors and ended up on the beach on the east side of the entrance into the inlet. No lives were lost but after five days of pounding by heavy seas she became a total wreck.



SS Waratah, Health Officer's Launch, Fremantle

The Western Mail, 10 March 1899. Article by SE-JE-GE (Sea Horse), real name J. E. Gannon.



Waratah rigged as a schooner, possibly on a test run with Charlie Farley, Lionel and Stan Austin during the Centenary Regatta from Albany's Town Jetty, Saturday 22 January, 1927

Photo: Stan Austin Collection, from *Lighthouses of Albany*, Stan Austin, WA Museum-Albany 2004, page 24.



Pilot Motor Launch *Pelican*:



Pilot motor launch Pelican with Pilot Thomas Wilkinson Howe (left), Albany 1915.

The person sitting on the cabin roof with a peaked cap (right) is most likely the coxswain. The person sitting inside the cabin with hat pushed back (left of the wheel) is most likely William (Bill) Forsyth. The jetty in the background is Albany's Town Jetty. The slipway is attached to the Forsyth and Templer boatshed situated at the foot of the Town Jetty. The occasion is almost certainly the Commissioning of the Pilot Launch Pelican, September 1915.

Photo: History Great Southern – Kaartdijin Bidli Albany, Albany Public Library Photo Collection (2707). Previously listed as Photo 27, City of Albany Local Studies Collection.

The pilot launch *Pelican* was the third motorised pilot launch for the Albany pilot service and the first to have an internal combustion engine fitted as-built, the *Petrel* and *Waratah* being fitted with steam engines while the *Pelican* was fitted with a 15 hp Gardner petrol engine with a 9 gallon fuel tank. I am presuming it was a Gardner engine as it is spelt Gard(i)ner in the Letterbooks. The Albany Harbour Master's Letterbooks for Captain Frank Winzar (1900-1917) confirm that *Pelican* was built in Albany by Messrs Forsyth and Templer in 1915. A letter from Winzar to the Chief Harbour Master Fremantle dated 25 May 1915 states:

As we decided to install a 15 H.P. Gardiner (sic) Engine, I have provided for, so you will see by the specifications, a strongly built boat. I consider the price submitted by Forsyth & Templer is reasonable and I strongly recommend accepting their tender.

On 10 June 1915 Captain Winzar wrote, 'On receipt of your letter I instructed Forsyth to commence Motor Boat', while his report for 2 July 1915 stated, 'Pilot Launch. A new motor launch is being built for pilot work. The old launch "Waratah" has been condemned and is to be sold.'

Forsyth's accounts for building the *Pelican* were submitted 26 October 1915. Frank Winzar's Report for the year ended 30th June 1916, submitted to the Chief Harbour Master Fremantle 20 July 1916,



stated:

Pilot Launch. This was built in Albany and commissioned in September [1915]. She is a good boat very satisfactory.

The significance of the *Pelican* being built in Albany by a resident shipwright in 1915 cannot be over emphasised. William (Bill) Forsyth (aka 'Chippy' Forsyth), was born in Fremantle 18 March 1874. His father George Forsyth was Harbour Master at Fremantle, later Chief Harbour Master. Bill Forsyth was apprenticed to Alfred Edmund Brown in Fremantle around 1888 and married Ethel Marion Gibson in 1903. Bill, Ethel and their two children Keith and Elsie moved down to Albany in 1906 where Bill found employment with the launch proprietors Armstrong and Waters and moved the family into a house opposite Dog Rock in Middleton Road. While working for Armstrong and Waters Bill designed and built the 33ft motor launch *Mary*. In 1913 Bill designed and built the propeller for Albany's first aeroplane and it was about that time he set up his own boatshed at the head of the Town Jetty and went into partnership with Norman Beavis Templer aka Bob Templer. The partnership with Templer did not last and was dissolved by Bill after Templer pocketed money from a client. The Forsyth and Templer boatshed at the head of the Town Jetty was the site where Bill built the 28ft Pilot Launch *Pelican* in 1915, the 50ft *Wolverine* and the 28ft *Ailsa Craig*. When business was slow he built half a dozen fourteen-foot dinghies for hire at Emu Point. Bill's family moved back to Fremantle in 1923 but he did not sell his shed next to the Town Jetty until 1926. Bill returned to Albany in 1928 to supervise a team of eight carpenters and four labourers to refit the crew quarters of the fire damaged steamer *Castlemoor* that was laid up in Princess Royal Harbour after extensive damage from a fire in her coal bunkers.

On his return to Fremantle Bill was employed by the Harbour & Light Department as the department's shipwright and built several pilot launches including the 32ft Geraldton pilot launch *Charles Crowther* in 1936. He also served as a relief assistant lighthouse keeper at the Woodman Point Lighthouse in 1934 and 1937. Bill's son Keith joined the Harbour and Light Department in 1923 and became manager of the department in 1942. During his time with the Harbour and Light Department Keith commissioned five new pilot launches: *Charles Crowther* 1936 (built by Bill Forsyth), *Koombana* 1961, *Princess Royal* 1963, *Champion* 1965 and *Esperance* 1966. The *Esperance* was commissioned by Keith after his retirement from the Harbour and Light Department when he established the Esperance Port Authority.



William Laurence (Chippy) Forsyth died 3 September 1946.

Photo: Ron Forsyth Collection

The late Stan Austin, Albany boatbuilder, historian, yachtsman and legend wrote a paper in 1993 titled 'Boat Building at Albany' which was published as an Appendix (XXII) in *Maritime Albany Remembered: Les Douglas et al, Gordon de L. Marshall, Tangee 2001*. Stan's paper also confirmed that Bill Forsyth built the *Pelican*:



Bill Forsythe (sic) built boats at Albany between the wars and had retired before World War II. He had a boatshed at the foot of the town jetty near the ex-overhead bridge below the old Post Office. Stan Austin's father [Lionel] worked there for a short time. He succeeded Forsythe in about 1929, but not at the same location. Forsythe built the 28ft Pilot Launch Pelican, now at Emu Point . . . his boat building premises were at the foot of the Town Jetty and parallel to it. It had a slipway but the only time there was any water around it was with a very high tide.

A Harbour and Light Department survey report for the Pilot Launch *Pelican* covering the period from 20 July 1961 to 1 July 1964 (the termination of her service with the Harbour and Light Department), gives *Pelican's* measurements as:

Length – 28ft

Beam – 8ft 6in

Depth – 2ft 6in

Tonnage – not given

Propulsion – 3 cylinder 4 cycle “Lister” Diesel Motor (Direct Drive) 27/30 hp.



Pelican on the Pilot Jetty Slipway at the entrance of Princess Royal Harbour and King George Sound. This photo was taken in 1949 and shows a cabin arrangement with raised dodger quite different to her original cabin structure. The roof and chimneys of one of the Pilot Station Cottages can be seen on the far right.

Photo: Westerberg Collection.

The importance of this photo is not just what we can see in the photo, it is the information on the verso. This is one of three photos taken on the same day with the *Pelican* on the Pilot Jetty Slipway. Written on the back of two of the photos in Stan Austin's hand is, 'Pilot Launch Pelican 1949' and 'Pilot Launch 1949', but on the back of one of these photos is the priceless inscription: 'On Pilot Slipway at Deepwater Jetty 28ft Pelican 1912 – Built Albany by Bill Forsythe. Photo 1950s'. The dates are incorrect, *Pelican* was built in 1915, not 1912, and the photo was taken in 1949, not the 1950s. Stan Austin's hand is quite distinctive as is his insistence in adding an 'e' to the end of the name Forsyth(e).



Pilot Launch Pelican on her mooring off the Pilot Jetty

Photo: Westerberg Collection

Another photo from the Westerberg Collection taken about 1952. *Pelican* is on her mooring in Princess Royal Harbour just off the Pilot Jetty. The Deepwater Jetty is in the background. She has the same cabin and dodger arrangements as the slipway photos from 1949 and shows two rectangular portholes per side, and one porthole forward. She has side navigation lights above her cabin and a short masthead light, and is carrying a projecting anchor bow-roller. The fittings for the bow-roller are still in place on the boat today suggesting the projecting bowsprit-like structure was only put in place when mooring the vessel. Of the ten pre-1956 photos we have collected so far all show her with a white hull and none have the word PILOT shown on her superstructure, nor have we seen a flagstaff capable of carrying a Pilot flag. Only the original 1915 photo shows the name PELICAN painted across her transom.



Pilot Launch Pelican on a railway flatcar outside the old Customs House, Fremantle, 1955.

Photo: Jeff Beale Collection

Also available from WA Maritime Museum, Maritime History Department Photo Collection – MHD 325/049



This remarkable photo from the Jeff Beale Collection was taken in 1955. Jeff Beale, we might all remember, was the same Master Shipwright and Museum Volunteer who worked with Bill Leonard to restore the Museum's small boat collection for display in the new WA Maritime Museum, Fremantle. *Pelican* had been sent up to the Harbour and Light Department in Cliff Street, Fremantle to have a major refit. The department's shipwright, Jeff Beale, added an enclosed wheelhouse to the *Pelican*. The cabin has also been altered and now only has one rectangular porthole per side. The propeller aperture has been considerably altered as has the rudder pintle and gudgeon arrangement. Except for the towing arch over the tiller, this is pretty well how the *Pelican* looks today and shows the general arrangement we are likely to adopt for her conservation. According to her survey report she had a Lister diesel at this time. The photo shows the *Pelican* on a railway flatcar outside the old Commissariat and Customs House in Fremantle – now the WA Shipwrecks Museum and Gallery. Of the annual survey reports from 1951 to 1964, all were conducted in Albany except the 1955 survey which was conducted in Fremantle following *Pelican*'s refit. Tied down and secured, *Pelican* is about to be shipped back to Albany by rail.

Pelican was sold out of service in 1964 to be replaced by the Pilot Launch *Princess Royal*. *Pelican* was taken over by Brian (Crash) O'Callaghan, thought to be one of the transport workers on the Albany waterfront, hence 'Crash' O'Callaghan. In the late 60s, Peter Cooper purchased the *Pelican* and used her as a fishing boat. Peter Cooper sold the *Pelican* to Norm Angove who also took her fishing. Norm had trouble with the Lister diesel which was 'as big as a fridge and bloody hard to start'. It was thought Norm replaced the Lister with the Perkins diesel that is now in the *Pelican*. We also heard that Norm had further trouble with the boat and 'abandoned her in a paddock'. Further hearsay suggests *Pelican* was taken over by TS Vancouver Navy Cadets which accounts for her navy blue livery and boot topping but we have not been able to verify that story to date. In the late 1990s the late Jack Baxter from the Albany Maritime Foundation and Valerie Milne (OAM), Regional Manager of the Albany Residency Museum (now the Museum of the Great Southern), with help from Adam Wolfe, managed to squeeze the *Pelican* into the Museum's Woolshed Stores in Albany for safe keeping – and that is where she was when Museum Manager Catherine Salmaggi, Regional Manager of the Museum of the Great Southern, approached me in 2020 to see if the MHA had a use for the boat that was now surplus to requirements.





Pelican kept in safe keeping in the Albany Woolshed Stores, 2020.

Photo: Ross Shardlow

While I was discussing options for a small boat museum with Mike Westerberg, Clive Walker and others, the *Pelican* disappeared. I heard on the grapevine it had been offered to Gavin Mair at Bremer Bay and later heard the *Pelican* had taken flight to Denmark and ended up in the care of boatbuilder Peter Wilson proprietor of the Denmark Boatshed. Peter showed me the *Pelican* at the Denmark Wooden Boat Show in 2023 where we also learnt that Pete was considering selling the Boatshed – and the *Pelican*. When the Government announced in May 2024 that the old Albany Pilot Station would receive \$8.3 million to ‘preserve and celebrate the rich maritime and cultural history of the State’s oldest port’, a small group of enthusiastic Albany MHA members asked Pete if something could be done, even to selling the *Pelican* to us to keep her in Albany with a view of displaying her at the Old Pilot Station. Pete very generously offered the *Pelican* free of cost to our group on the understanding that she would be returned to Albany and given to the Albany Pilot Station by ‘The Friends of Pelican’ (Ross Shardlow, Peter Wilson, Charles and Rose De Bruin and Robert Palmer). Given that Pete now had to clear his property for the sale of his boatshed, Charles and Rose offered the use of their shed at Willyung to store the *Pelican* for safekeeping. The newly formed Friends of Pelican pledged \$20,000.00 to cover the initial costs of building a cradle, transport and static display requirements. Southern Ports Albany have been very supportive with the proposal and have drawn up plans to house the *Pelican* in a safe undercover environment.

The Rescue:



Loading the Pelican onto the Kenworth low loader at Denmark

Photo: Barbara Shardlow

When the *Pelican* was delivered to the Denmark Boatshed three years ago she had a deadweight of 1.8 tonnes. After being out in the weather for three winters she weighed in at 2.8 tonnes. She might take her a season or two to dry out.



Ready to go in to the De Bruin Boatshed at Willyung (Albany). The support cradle made the job a lot easier and safer to handle.

Photo: Barbara Shardlow



Lining her up. The De Bruin Boatshed at Willyung (Albany)

Photo: Ross Shardlow

A few days after we moved the *Pelican* into the De Bruin shed we learnt that Ron and Jay Forsyth were in town, babysitting a friend's house at Bayonet Head. We picked Ron and Jay up and drove them over to Charles and Rose De Bruin's property at Willyung, slid open the shed door and said, 'Ron, I would like to introduce you to the *Pelican*, the boat your grandfather built 110 years ago, the boat you have been searching for these past 25 years.' A few days later Ron's grandson Liam joined him and the two of them returned for a 'photo opportunity' by the *Pelican* – three generations of Forsyths as it were. Now that Ron has a better idea of what he had been looking for, he and Liam have been trawling through the Harbour and Light Department Letterbooks at the State Records Office of Western Australia, Perth WA, and are literally having the time of their life.

For the record, there is no doubt that our conservation plan will include lofting the lines off the *Pelican* according to Bill Leonard's wish. In the meantime, *Pelican* is setting her own course to 'show the way' for the Albany community.



Ron Forsyth standing next to the boat that his grandfather, Bill (Chippy) Forsyth, built in Albany in 1915.
Photo: Ross Shardlow.



Maritime Anecdotes

Another interesting article from Ian Forsyth's research

Bound to the Nor' West.

The departure of the steamer to the Nor' West is always an event at the port, but never in my experience has the excitement attending a departure been so intense as it was yesterday on the occasion of the sailing of the s.s. *Otway* for King's Sound, Kimberly, and Cossack. It was an eventful day, and strange to say, it was the anniversary of the departure of the ill-fated *Macedon* which had sailed under exactly similar circumstances, although she was not so heavily freighted as the *Otway*. Just twelve months ago the *Macedon*, having on board the survey parties for Kimberley, a number of passengers, horses, and provisions, sailed out of Fremantle, and a few hours afterwards struck upon a reef in sight of the port of departure, and became a total wreck. Yesterday a similar event took place, but, I trust not to be attended with the like sinister results. The *Otway* sailed out of our port taking with her about 100 passengers, including a valuable shipment of horses, and four survey parties. The scene at the jetty was one long to be remembered. The approach to the jetty itself was blocked with cargoes of grain, goods, timber, and vegetables, the receiving shed was choked with passenger's luggage and consignments of fruit and vegetables for the far country, while hundreds of people crowded the jetty to bid good bye to friends and relations. It was a sight to look upon this hive witnessing a swarm to the new country. Here a mother was bidding good-bye to a much loved and only son- young hopeful-bound to fresh scenes, and, as I noticed the falling tear on the cheek of a fond mother I could not help feeling how much of deep affection and fervent hope of the future was centred in the parting sigh as she bade adieu to him she loved so well. Brothers, sisters, husbands, fathers, and friends were here congregated bidding adieu to some they would not see again for many years.

Even the poor native prisoner, released from Rott-

nest seemed to realise what it was to be leaving for his own home, there, to meet his tribe, and recount his experience of civilization at the asylum which is at once a prison home to the native and an enchanted palace to the representative of royalty. The hour fixed for sailing was eleven, but so great was the accumulation of packages to be shipped on board that it was impossible to get ready for sea until long after one o'clock, and at that hour the *Ferret* came in from the Southward bringing the colonial mails, for which the *Otway* waited not. A glance at the vessel is interesting. Captain Moon, who so nearly met with his death in Perth a few days ago by falling out of a balcony, is at his post, sound in wind, though maimed in limb; he gives orders with the usual coolness, and I am glad to find him able to take charge, for he is a skilful mariner. The purser Hicks, is cutting about here and there; on the forecastle is a group of natives, some are returned prisoners, others accompany the survey parties. Crosswise is a large craft intended for a ferry-boat; the 'tween decks is full up, while midway the vessel are two four-wheel carriages and a number of horses. I recognise among them two of our crack racers, and I ask myself whether the turf is not degenerating when its best horses are allowed to leave the district. Lowlander, who went lame last year, has been disposed of to Mr. W. Craig for 1200 guineas by Mr. Towton, while Flemington passes over to Mr. A. J. Edwards, and both horses are bound for Cossack. One part of the vessel is penned off and contains a number of sheep, while here and there are valuable dogs in leashes gone to another climate.

High are the hopes of the young people who take their departure to this far off country, while all of them believe in its future. In wishing them bon voyage let us hope they will all reach their destination safe and sound.

The Herald, 22 March 1884

