

MARITIME HERITAGE ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

Volume 18, No. 3. September 2007

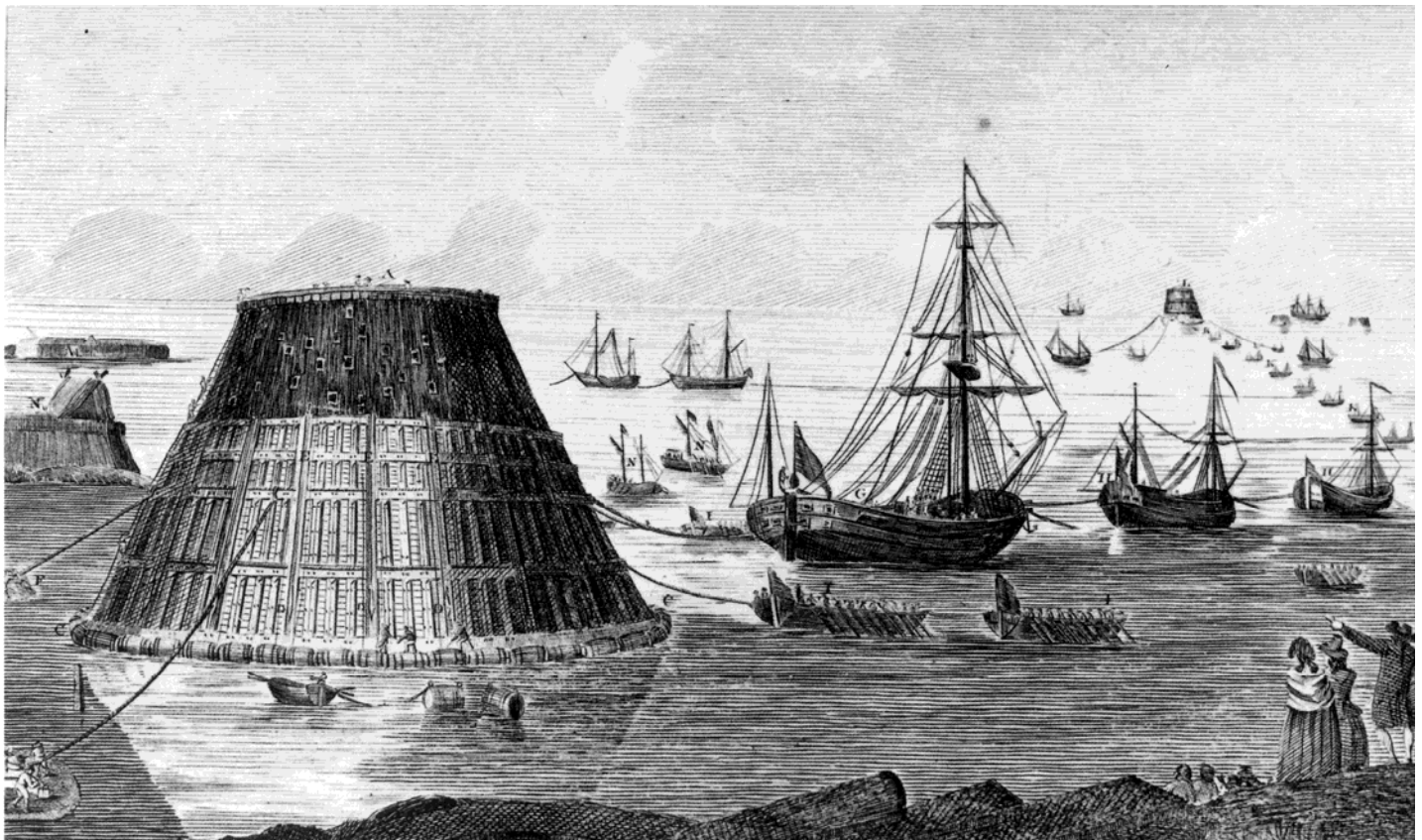
Website: www.maritimeheritage.org.au

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

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



Editor: Peter Worsley. 12 Cleopatra Drive, Mandurah, W.A. 6210



Cone-shaped breakwaters being towed into position off the French coast before being filled with stones.

See article on page 3



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

All of the Association's incoming journals, newsletters, etc. are now archived with Ross Shardlow who may be contacted on 9361 0170, and are available to members on loan. Please note that to access the videos, journals, library books, etc it is necessary to phone ahead.

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

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

Except where shown to be copyright, material published in this Journal may be freely reprinted for non-profit purposes provided suitable acknowledgment is made of its source.

www.maritmeheritage.org.au

EDITORIAL

To begin this editorial I would like to point out that 145 years ago on 1 September 1862 the iron screw steamer *Lord Worsley* (290 tons, length 186', beam 24.8', depth 13.2') was wrecked in Namu Bay, 18 kilometres south of Cape Egmont in New Zealand. No lives were lost and the 3,000 ounces of gold forming part of the cargo were recovered.

Readers may recall the question regarding the canoeist Oskar Speck in the December 2006 edition of this journal. The answers to the question is answered in full in the article by Penny Cuthbert on page 13. This article is courtesy of the Australian National Maritime Museum.

Please note that your remittance for membership dues should be sent to the Treasurer, Bob Johnson, at his new address shown here. (Does this make

Bob a remittance man?)

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

Change of Address

Please note that the new address for the MHA Treasurer is:

**46 Sandgate Street
SOUTH PERTH WA 6151**

All membership dues should be forwarded to this address.

Things They Would Rather Have Not Said

You must reduce armour and increase subdivision... You only want enough thickness of armour to make the shell explode outside and in most places where the armour is put you don't want it at all.

Admiral Lord Fisher, 10 November 1911

Admiral Fisher was convincing Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, on the benefits of his dream ship, the battle-cruiser. The greatest of these battle-cruisers was HMS *Hood*, laid down in 1916, which was hit by a salvo from the *Bismarck* on 24 May 1941. The shells penetrated her lightly armoured deck and the ship blew up, with only 3 out of 1419 crew surviving.



19th century Mulberry Harbours?

A short article showing that much of what we think is fairly new technology is often quite old.

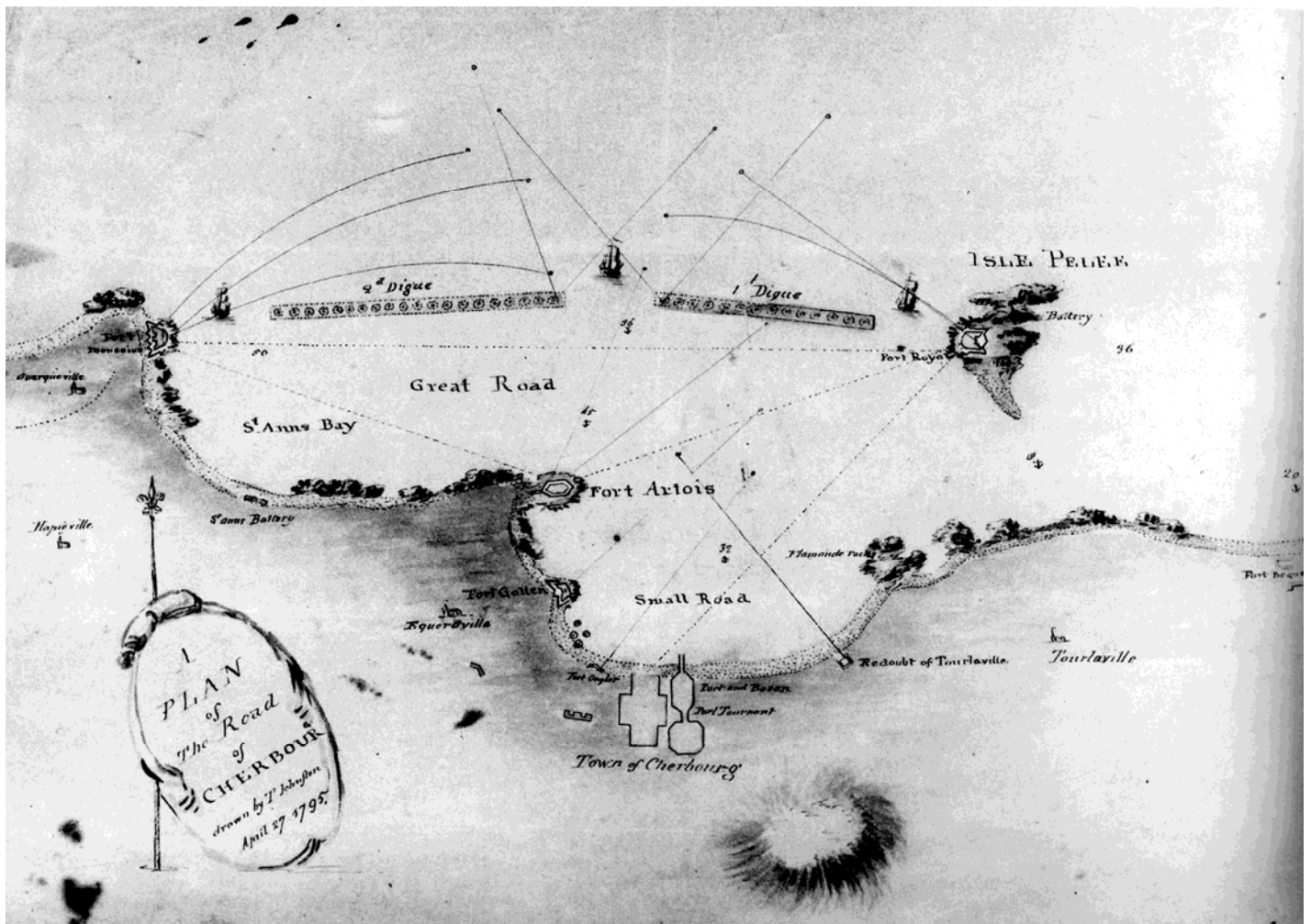
During the wars between Britain and France in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the latter country was badly handicapped by a lack of deepwater ports, or even sheltered natural anchorages, on the English Channel coast with enough room and depth to shelter her larger ships. Britain had a number of good ports such as Falmouth, Plymouth and, of course, Portsmouth, tucked in behind the Isle of Wight. To overcome this the French decided to form two breakwaters off the town of Cherbourg, and thereby convert the open bay into a protected harbour, much after the style of the Mulberry Harbour plans of World War II. The breakwaters were called 1st Digue and 2nd Digue.

The breakwaters consisted of enormous cone shaped cylinders, constructed from timber, which were towed into position and then filled with stones until they sank. The exercise was extremely expensive and proved a failure, as the cones began to disintegrate almost as soon as they were put into place.

Peter Worsley

Reference:

Gardiner, R., (editor), 1996, *Fleet Battle and Blockade: The French Revolutionary War 1793-1797*, Mercury Books, London.



A plan of Cherbourg showing the breakwaters



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 tonnage of a vessel is based on the original conception of the number of tuns it could carry; a tun being a container carrying wine. The “tun” was fixed by statute in 1423 at not less than 232 gallons. However, until physically loaded with the casks, a merchant was never sure of what his proposed vessel’s “tonnage” would actually be. In 1582 Matthew Baker, shipwright, devised what is accepted as the first English rule for measuring tonnage. By 1605 shipwrights were supplying certificates of tonnage when building ships. These were based on length, breadth and depth multiplied, and the resultant cubic capacity divided by 100.

The world’s largest submarine is the Russian Typhoon class with a length of 562.6 feet, a double hull with a beam of 80.7 feet, surface displacement 18,500 tons, submerged displacement 26,500 tons and carrying a crew of 175. They proved unsatisfactory and expensive to operate and have almost all been taken out of service.

The first steam powered flour mill in Western Australia commenced work in mid-July 1839 at the site of the old Swan Brewery. The mill was also capable of sawing timber and was used to saw jarrah for shipment to the Admiralty in England.

Of the 104 soldiers and tradesmen aboard the VOC ship *Zuytdorp* when it sailed from the Netherlands for Batavia on 27 July 1711 less than 40% were Dutch nationals. There were 44 Germans, 39 Dutch, 11 Belgians, 4 Norwegians, 3 Swiss, 2 Latvians and 1 Austrian on board.

James Cook’s circumnavigation and charting of New Zealand in 1769-70 was carried out with such accuracy that the New Zealand navy only withdrew his last chart from their portfolio of charts in 1995.

During Cook’s exploration of New Zealand he named Dusky Bay near the SW corner of the

South Island. He did not fully explore the upper reaches of the bay and this area was therefore left blank, with the words “No-body knows what”. In 1791 George Vancouver did explore and chart the upper reaches of Dusky Bay and his chart bears the words “Some body knows what”.

The first record of crossing the Antarctic Circle was by James Cook on board the *Resolution* on 17 January 1773. The first steam vessel to cross the Antarctic Circle was HMS *Challenger* in 1874 during her famous scientific circumnavigation of 1872-76.

Admiral Sir Edward Pellew, Viscount Exmouth, (1757-1833) became vice-admiral of the United Kingdom. He had a son, Fleetwood Broughton Pellew (1789-1861), who also reached the rank of Admiral. On 24 November 1806 when Fleetwood was only 17 years of age he had command of the *Terpsichore*, and in that vessel he took part in the battle at Batavia between the Dutch and British navies. The *Terpsichore* under his command captured the Dutch ship *William*. He was then given command of the *Psyche* (36 guns), and on 31 August 1807 captured the Dutch corvette *Scipio* off the coast of Java. Not too bad for a teenager!

To victual the Arctic Expeditions, commencing with that of Sir John Franklin in 1845 and continuing with the various search parties that looked for Franklin over the next dozen years, the Admiralty prepared a total of 85,000 lbs of pemmican. This was made at the Royal Clarence Victualling Yard, Gosport. The final, and successful, expedition of the privately chartered yacht *Fox* was issued with 6,682 lbs of the pemmican. The *Fox*, a 177 ton auxiliary steam yacht had been purchased for the expedition by Lady Franklin. Pemmican was made by cutting prime beef into thin slices, drying it over a wood fire then pounding it up with an equal weight of melted beef fat. This was pressed into cases capable of containing 42 lbs each.

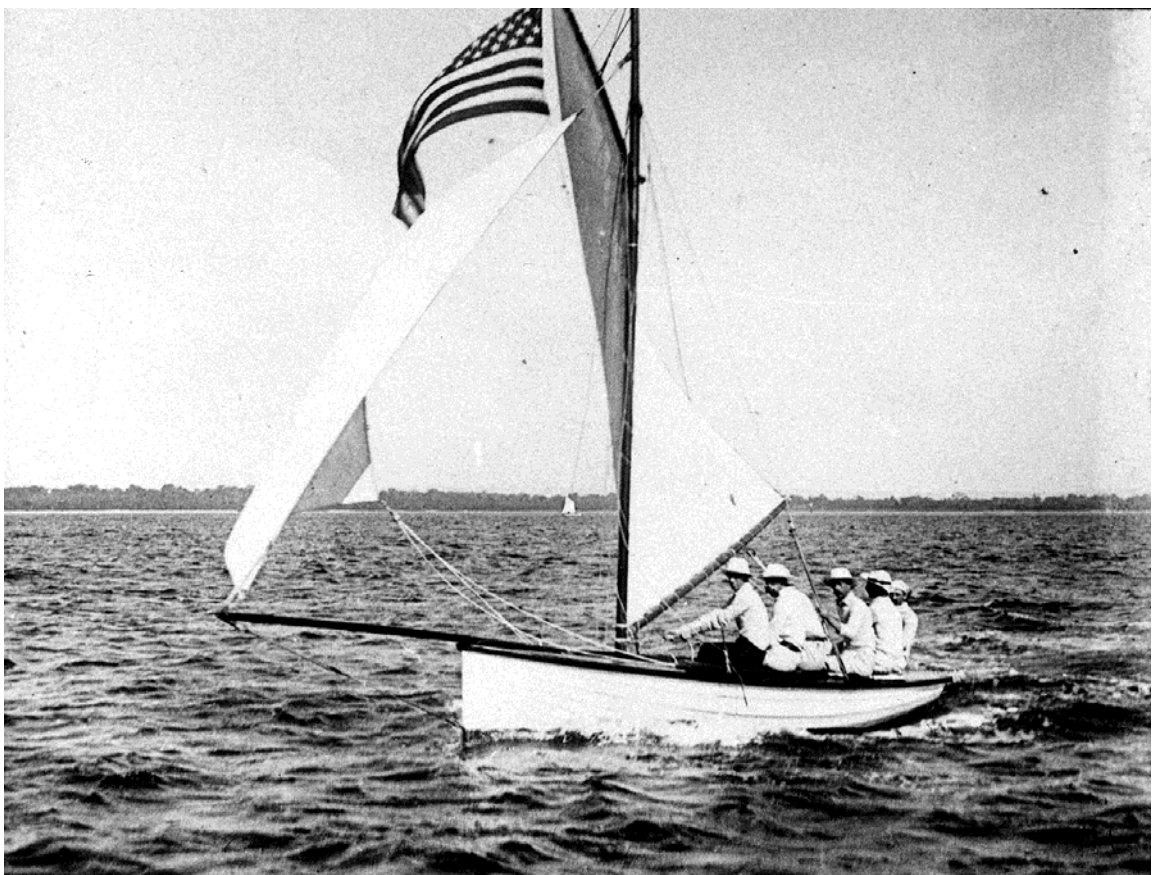


Early Swan River Yachts

Two more photographs from about 1906



Mt Eliza



Mandy Lee



Ships Of The State Shipping Service

by Jeff Thompson

No.11. *Chungking* Official Number 137671

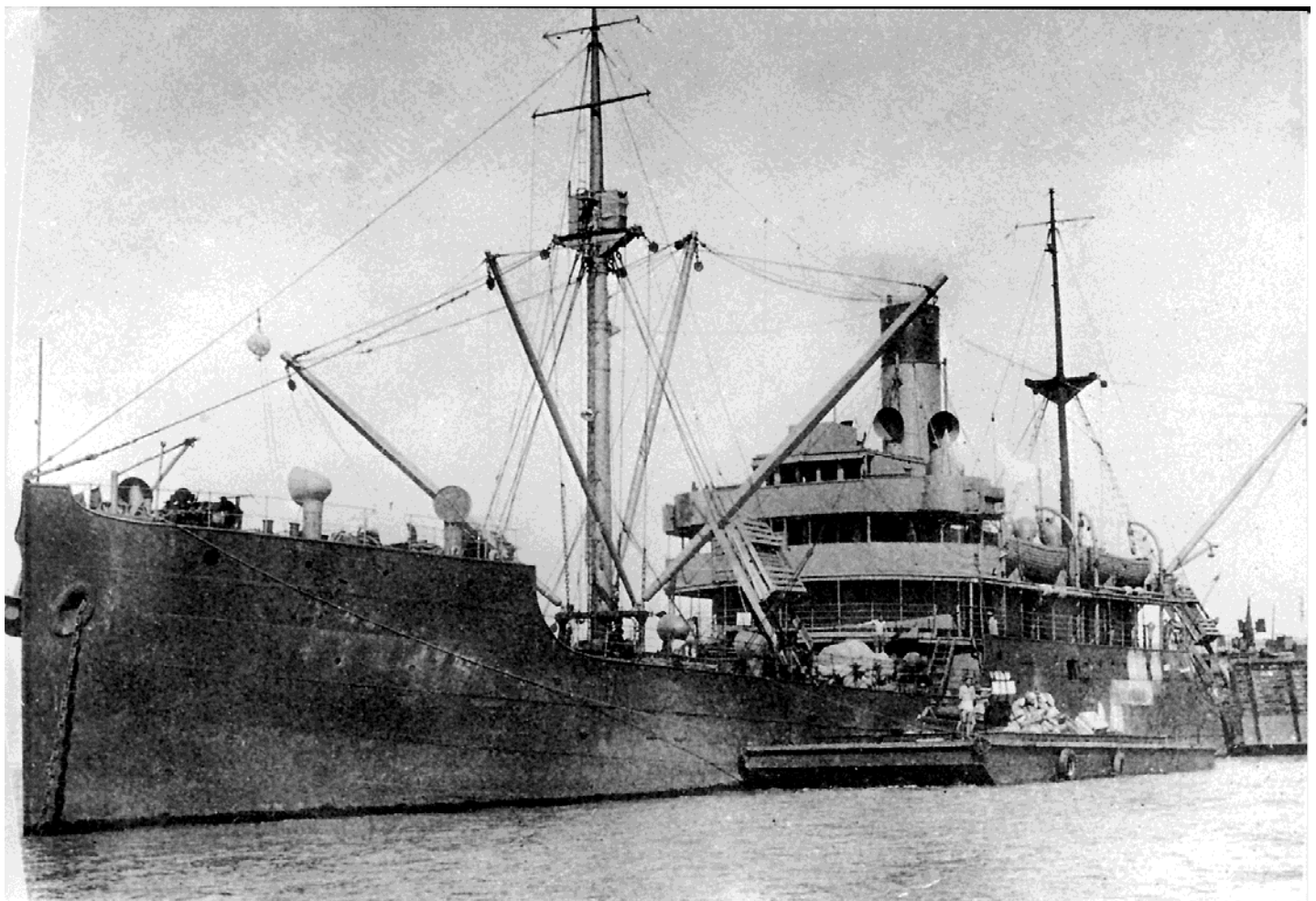
With the Japanese invasion of South East Asia , the vessel *Chungking* arrived in Fremantle in 1942 bringing refugees fleeing the area. The ship then proceeded to be laid up and was later requisitioned by the Australian Shipping Control Board. To fill a gap needed with the loss of the *Koolama* at Wyndham in March 1942, a charter was arranged with the State Shipping Service for the vessel in September 1942. On 22 September 1942 the *Chungking* became the first ship to use the newly completed slipway at Arthur Head, at the western end of Victoria Quay, prior to being accepted on charter.

The *Chungking* was built in 1914 by the Taikoo Dockyard & Engineering Co Ltd, Hongkong, for the China Navigation Co Ltd, (J Swire & Sons Ltd). As built the vessel was 2,171 Gross regis-

tered tons, 1,967 deadweight tons , 86.9 metres long, 13.6 metres breadth. She had a triple expansion engine with a single screw.

Together with the *Koolinda*, the two ships serviced the North West for the duration of the war for the State Shipping Service. With the war over the *Chungking* was returned to her owners in Singapore in June 1946.

In March 1947 the *Chungking* was sold to Tai Ping S. S. Navigation Co Ltd, Hongkong, and renamed *Taichungshan*. On 28 February 1950 the ship was seized by Nationalist Chinese warships near Amoy and held for around two months. The vessel was laid up at Hongkong from 1 May 1964. On 5 September 1964 it was blown ashore by typhoon 'Ruby' and refloated on 23 October 1964. In December of that year the ship was delivered to Hongkong shipbreakers.





SALING BERGANTI and SRI ULU, 1976–7

Part four of Nick Burningham's time under sail

After sailing on SINAR MATOLA I went travelling in Southeast Asia. On Lake Toba in Sumatera I borrowed a large dugout canoe to explore Samosir Island, and at a beach hotel on Pulau Pangkor, Malaysia I made a sprit sail for a little dory-type boat. I also did a lot of walking around Samosir Island. Lake Toba is at about 1000m above sea-level and has lovely mild climate. Medan down at sea-level was terribly polluted with traffic fumes. Like many travelers I developed a nasty cough and lung infection there and made it worse by going to Bangkok.

Towards the end of the year I was back at Benoa where a young Western Australian named Martin had bought a very lovely little lambo called SALING BERGANTI ("Mutual Exchange") originally from somewhere in the Buton region. Martin was doing very much what I'd been doing a year earlier. He arranged for Pak Kendri to do some work on SALING BERGANTI. She really didn't need any work done. She was in excellent condition and seemed to have been built as a show-piece, too small and sharp-lined to carry a useful cargo but meticulously constructed from the best timber.

Martin had to go up to Jakarta to do the registration business and he left instructions that while he was away Pak Kendri should build a cabin to give standing headroom. The problem, as everyone pointed out to him, was that SALING BERGANTI was a very delicately proportioned little twenty-five footer, and the cabin he wanted would be absurdly high. Martin insisted. He was nothing if not stubborn. When he returned, just as he'd been warned, there was something with the proportions of a double-decker bus sitting on top of his pretty little perahu. He wisely asked Pak Kendri to cut it down to a more reasonable height.

I spent some time helping Martin to make sails and set up rigging, I probably did more work than I'd done on ANTARTIKA. But Martin was impossible to get on with for any length of time. A number of young men joined him with the prospect of sailing to Australia, but none stayed for more than a week or two. I was living on board a French friend's trimaran from where we watched Martin's evolving plans with amusement. He decided that he would sail single-handed and that the mainsail would always be set deep-reefed. I can't remember whether he actually had the sail recut. He also decided that he wouldn't take any cooking equipment, he'd just buy lots of oats, sugar, powdered milk and biscuits. Once I'd decided that I wasn't going to be sailing with Martin, it was easier to work with him and to help getting SALING BERGANTI ready for sea.

Martin often had problems with the narrow anchorage at Tanjung Benoa. One evening I went to help him because SALING BERGANTI was slewing

round beam on to the strongly flooding tide and threatening to drag her anchors (which were probably inadequate). Indonesian crews would often dive down with their anchors and make sure that they were set perfectly, but we westerners tend to rely on technology. The anchors did drag and SALING BERGANTI was getting foul of other perahu's anchor lines. The crew from those perahu quickly took control of the situation. I remember being very impressed by an older man who miraculously, in a split second, somehow managed to join two lines with a sheet bend. He did it with only a few centimetres of line free to work on and while the line was under huge load.

When Martin eventually set out in December 1976, it was the first time he'd ever sailed SALING BERGANTI. An hour or two after we'd waved him goodbye, Michele, whose trimaran I was on, remembered that Martin had his Sight Reduction Tables and that Martin wouldn't need them since he'd never bothered to find out what you were supposed to do with a sextant and the tables. So we set off after SALING BERGANTI in the trimaran. We caught up with her about ten miles out, Martin was heading well south to avoid getting drawn into Lombok Strait. SALING BERGANTI was self-steering nicely under deep-reefed mainsail and jib and Martin was down below eating biscuits. We called to him and he came on deck with the end of the anchor cable knotted round his waist and leading back into the cabin like a huge umbilicus.

We collected the tables and gave Martin some provisions in exchange, and then headed back to the Bali coast.

I never saw Martin again but he did return to Benoa about the end of the year. He said that he had been caught in a terrible storm and had cut the mast down to save the vessel—he said that I'd advised him to do that—and that he'd then been driven ashore on the west coast of Sumba. Balinese turtle hunters reported that SALING BERGANTI could be seen stranded on a beach in West Sumba with her mast still standing.

Sometime after Martin sailed I met Peter Thomas who had come to Bali from Bima, Sumbawa, where his Sarawak (Borneo) built sailing boat SRI ULU was lying. (Sri is an honorific, like "sir" or "lady" often used in ship and boat names. Ulu can mean "head" or "headland", it can mean the head-waters of a river, and by extension it has come to mean something like "the back of beyond" or "beyond the black stump".)

Peter was looking for crew for the voyage down to Australia. I volunteered. Peter was returning to Bima just before Christmas with his other recruits. Since I knew my way around Indonesia reasonably well, I said I'd spend Christmas in Kuta where I had a financial



interest in a piglet that was scheduled for spit roasting, and I'd make my way to Bima a few days later. He warned me that it was not a pleasant bus ride across Sumbawa, but I'd been on a couple of fairly arduous bus rides in Sumatera and thought I knew what I was in for.

The journey to Bima first got a bit rough when I reached Labuan Lombok on the east coast of Lombok in the late afternoon and found I would have to spend the night there. There was only one losmen and it was very basic. The most alarming aspect of the losmen was the toilet. It was a traditional Buginese house, built on timber stilts, but the floor was only about three feet above the ground, and the loo was simply a hole in the floor. When I squatted over it to take a crap, a large pig's snout came snuffling up through the hole.

The next day I caught the ferry across Alas Strait to Labuan Alas. There was a magnificent tall-masted perahu pinis riding to anchor outside Labuan Alas.



We landed in the mid-afternoon and traveled to the larger town of Sumbawa Besar. From there I caught the night bus to Bima. It was an elderly bus, actually a truck with a home-made bus body built on to it. I was sat near the back on a fore-and-aft bench. The roof was low and I could only just sit up straight. It wasn't too bad at first. About five miles out of town the sealed road ended and dust started billowing in through non-sealing windows. The bus was completely full when we left Sumbawa Besar and got fuller

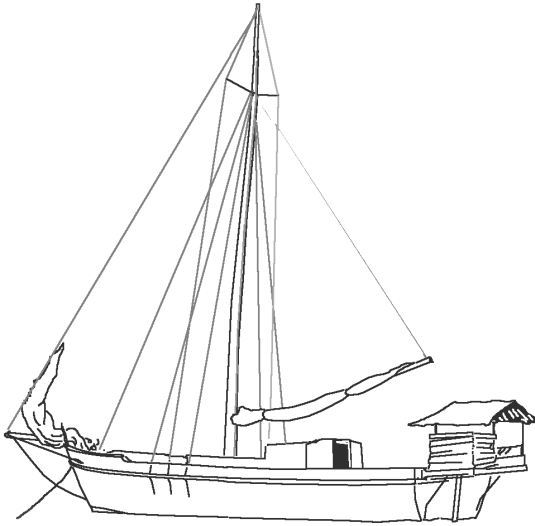
as we traveled east. At some stage several sacks of coconuts were put where I'd previously had my feet. I tried stretching my legs over the sacks but I needed my legs under me to take my weight when the bus bounced over rocks. The bench seat was not properly bolted down and I tended to bang my head on the roof unless I braced myself between the roof and the bench. We stopped in the middle of a grassy plain at some time during the night. There were a few stalls set up beside the road but no other sign of habitation, and on the edge of the loom from a couple of kerosene lanterns, there squatted silent men, with long shaggy hair, hungry eyes, wearing only simple sarongs or blankets, staring at the bus passengers. They didn't seem to speak any language in common with the passengers. Sometime after that stop, a very thin old man who appeared to be dying was loaded on top of the coconut sacks at my feet.

As the bus toiled up into the mountains on the southern flanks of Mount Tambora (at least that's where I think we were) the terrible road got very much worse. At one stage we seemed to be bouncing down a boulder filled dry river bed at such a speed we were certain to roll over. Illuminated by flashes of lightning it was weirdly nightmarish and almost impossible to believe it was really happening. The skin was getting worn off my ankles and shoulder where I was bracing myself against the bouncing of the bus. Everyone's face looked black with dust, though in daylight the dust turned out to be red-brown.

We got to Bima an hour or two before dawn and I booked into a cheap hotel for a wash. Later in the day I went down to the harbour to look for SRI ULU.

I wasn't overly impressed by what I first saw. SRI ULU looked very high-sided and lacked even basic nautical aesthetic appeal. I hailed her and someone came ashore to pick me up in their rather low-sided and leaky dugout canoe. On board I was horrified to find that Peter had recruited half the hippies from Kuta. There were at least ten people on board, including a child, though I should say that they were all thoroughly pleasant people and two of them were very attractive young women. But it was crowded and squalid.

SRI ULU was something extraordinary. She looked as if someone had shown a photograph of a sensible cruising cutter from a battered copy of Eric Hiscock's *Cruising Under Sail* to a man who built serviceable river ferries and fishing boats in Sarawak, and said "Build me one of these". And that is exactly what she was. The profile looked reasonable above the waterline. But she had too much freeboard, a heavy transom stern, a junk's barndoor-shaped rudder, little draft, not enough beam. And having almost no keel she had virtually no lateral resistance. She would sail sideways like a haystack when close hauled. She did have a small diesel motor but it developed very little power and needed huge strength to swing the fly wheel and start it. Jamie Munro, who had been with



the boat all the way from Sarawak was the only one who could start the motor; it was very dangerous undertaking in the confined space under the aft deck and he hardly ever could be persuaded to attempt it.

The remains of the original crew who had sailed from Sarawak were Captain Peter, plus Jamie Munro and Jenni Knox who were a couple. Jenni was several months pregnant and had a dislocated ankle. All three of them were suffering from malnutrition which was why they had felt the need to recruit extra hands for the voyage down to Australia.

Even with ample funds and sound ideas about diet, adequate provisioning was difficult in Eastern Indonesia in the 1970s, and with neither of those advantages SRI ULU was very poorly provisioned indeed. The galley was arranged in one side of a thatched gallery built out over the stern — not one of the recommendations in Hiscock's *Cruising under Sail* though it was convenient in the tropics where cooking down below can be very hot and unpleasant. Less conveniently, the single stove in the galley burnt wood, or charcoal if anyone bought it. This would have been OK if things had ever been arranged so that SRI ULU sailed in the dry season, but she had followed the wet season from the northern hemisphere across the equator to the southern hemisphere.

It was difficult to see how everyone with their gear and the fractious child could be fitted into a sea-going arrangement. We did go for a sail around the harbour one afternoon looking sordid with washing and damp blankets hanging from the lower ratlines and all along the rails. A large lambo pinis came sailing up the harbour and we followed her as she took in her topsails and prepared to anchor.

We spent a few days dilling around in Bima. I can't remember what we did there. We couldn't have spent much time provisioning. Before sailing we beached SRI ULU in a small cove on the eastern shore of Bima harbour in order to clean her bottom and use the traditional trick of burning dry coconut fronds under the hull to kill toredo worm in the planking. We beached on the high tide during the night and I volunteered the expertise necessary to lash the legs to the shrouds and chainplates so that SRI ULU would not fall over. It takes a very firm lashing to carry the load.

As the tide went out, SRI ULU gradually fell over on to her bilge. Although shallow drafted she had some deadrise and a slack bilge so she could lay over a long way. At dawn she was lying on her side in the mud and I was looking pretty silly. Captain Peter was obviously not pleased but not overtly perturbed either, and after a breakfast of steaming hot water and rice porridge, he led most of the crew (all the blokes as I remember it) over the hill behind the village to collect palm fronds. We collected them from a beautiful little valley shaded by coconut palms, soft green turf underfoot and the air thick with butterflies. Carrying the bundles of palm fronds like crosses we clambered back over the ridge on that still steamy morning towards SRI ULU. Just over the top of the ridge we were met by a villager with the news that our perahu had sunk!

We rushed down the track surmising that SRI ULU had filled as the tide rose although she had shown no sign of doing that as the tide went out. Sure enough, she was still lying on her side and the tide was rising around her. It wasn't yet up to the companion way but her topsides were a bit leaky and she was filling. Jenni with her dislocated ankle was leading a small bucket gang trying to keep ahead of the leaks. Most of the newly recruited crew were intent on moving their rucksacks ashore. But we all joined the bucket gang, some voluntarily and others in response to Jamie's offer of a knuckle sandwich. The water level inside the vessel gradually went down while the tide continued to rise. It was fearfully hot on that



steamy tropical morning, heaving buckets as fast as one could down in the bilge. I was heartened and tremendously impressed when Jenni who'd been at it longer than anyone smiled and said:

"Cruising in the tropics, eh?"

SRI ULU continued to lie there on her side like a dead whale until we realised that the legs were not so badly lashed on: rather they had sunk several feet into the clay and were now holding the boat down like huge tent pegs.

With the legs unlashed she rose back to a more even keel and everything was OK. But I was the only member of the new crew from Bali who stayed on board. As far as the rest of them were concerned she'd sunk and wasn't safe even in a harbour. Some of them didn't have the fare back to Australia or anywhere else, but they weren't rash enough to sail on SRI ULU. So, with most of the crew gone, I moved from sleeping on the cabin sole to a relatively spacious and comfortable bunk.

The next morning the lambo pinis we had seen sailing into Bima harbour came to the cove for her wet season lay-up. All the heavy-canvas sails were unbent and sent down. The topmasts were housed and then the big tabernacle masts lowered. Most of the spars, gear and sails were sent ashore and she was beached sitting on dozens of shores to keep her keel off the beach. And it was all done by the crew in a few of hours with absolutely no fuss.

We finally sailed from Bima a few days later and with the first faint breezes of the northwest monsoon made a slow trip along the archipelago, north of Komodo and Rinja, and along the north coast of Flores, keeping well off shore until we reached the volcanic island of Paloe. We were close to the lee (southeastern) side of Paloe at dusk and tucked into a tiny baylet where we tied our stern to a rock beside a hot water spring on the beach and dropped an anchor from the bow which hung down into bottomless depths. We only stayed a few hours. Had a land breeze come off the mainland of Flores we would have been pushed onto the steep rocky beach. At some time in the night we sailed and by the next afternoon we were approaching the town of Maumere, passing the Bajo village of Wuring, where we ran aground in near calm conditions. We got SRI ULU off the reef and as darkness fell we anchored in the rather unsheltered roadstead of Maumere Bay.

We spent some days at Maumere. When squalls came from the west we tried to motor against them to avoid dragging anchor but SRI ULU could not motor against a stiff breeze.

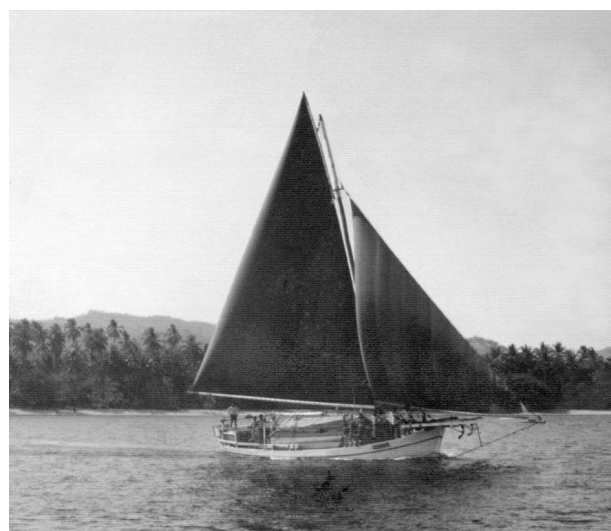
I remember we went to a village in the hills to visit the home of Ignatius, a delightful old man who sold us some traditional ikat cloths. We sat on the

floor of his palm-thatch and bamboo house while the rest of the village climbed the walls and picked holes in the roof and walls to get a look at us, but Ignatius and Wilamena were perfect hosts. We drank good coffee and local arak flavoured with wild honey.

"And will you stay for lunch?" Ignatius asked at precisely the same moment as Wilamena dispatched a squawking chicken on the other side of the bamboo-screen wall. You could hardly say "No", even if you had been enjoying proper food in recent weeks.

Full moon in early January was not a smart time to sail, as some of the locals pointed out. A day or two out of Maumere, trying to round the cliff-girt massif of Flores Head, we got a real west monsoon storm. Fortunately Peter had been keeping well off shore as he always did if he could. SRI ULU lay hove-to under just a small staysail, on her side again, and going sideways. It wasn't really a very strong gale but she couldn't carry much canvas and was too unwieldy to be luffed through gusts when carrying enough canvas to sail. Fortunately the wind eased and shifted enough for us to get around Flores Head and then sail through the Larentuka Narrows at the eastern end of Flores. Anchored in Larentuka roads we found three fine, powerful-looking, perahu lambo, trading sloops, that making their return to their home island of Sabalana for the wet season lay-up had blown out their sails in the storm the previous night. In Larentuka Captain Peter found a supply of salt fish much to his liking. They cost virtually nothing and had absolutely no flesh which made them much easier to cook over a wood stove on a wet evening. We also bought a few bottles of cheap arak (spirits made by distilling palm wine) which Jamie tried to drink all in one sitting but he wasn't able to sit up by the end of the session.

From Larentuka we sailed into the beautiful Solor Straits — deep black waters between mountains and



We met this lambo in Larentuka Narrows



perfect Mount Fuji-shaped volcanoes. With a light breeze, SRI ULU sitting tranquil on the still waters, me playing a haunting plaint on my tin whistle and Jamie retching weakly over the rail. He recovered from the arak and over the following weeks I formed a strong friendship with Jamie. Captain Peter accused the two of us of “roaming the boat in gangs”.

We were a day and a night drifting down that Strait. The next morning we went ashore on the island of Lamakera to cut firewood for the galley, and from there we made a reasonable passage across the Sabu Sea to Kupang, Timor, where we could clear for Australia. In Tenau Harbour near Kupang we were fed by the crew of a small, rusty, kerosene tanker and spent most of the Rupiah we had been hoarding against disasters on beer and a couple of restaurant meals. We also bought some tinned fish which I thought a great treat but Peter did not.

The passage to Darwin was fairly easy, it was a little stormy but we were running with the wind. The full strength of the wet season northwest monsoon came late that year. It was not until we were out on the Timor Sea that we encountered the near constant rain, the silver grey weather in which dawn and dusk have no rosy hues even when the low, scudding, slate-grey clouds have temporarily lifted a little. From Kupang to Darwin navigation isn't too much of a problem even in the rainiest season because you can run straight down towards the Darwin radio beacon. We had one bad night with a very fierce and prolonged squall in which we had to lie-to under bare poles for a few hours, the wind tearing the surface off the sea in white sheets. At one stage the jib started to get loose and Peter would have let it carry away since it was a little dangerous to climb out on the bowsprit, but we got it furled.

The following day we caught several small mackerel which provided a very welcome enrichment of our diet, but on the evening of the day after that conditions were rather too wet and stormy for cooking. Eventually I decided to cook a quick meal of instant noodles and tinned fish. Even that took a long time, much effort and was only achieved by burning lots of the kerosene that we used to start a wood fire without ever getting the sodden wood to burn. I was quite proud of myself when I served the warm meal, but Peter whined that he'd had too much fish the previous day and couldn't face the tinned fish.

We saw the top of the low hills of Melville Island on the horizon to the north before reaching Darwin. We had no detailed chart of Darwin and the shallow muddy water which is everywhere on that coast looked dangerous to a crew who were used to the crystal-clear waters of Eastern Indonesia. Luckily we

were spotted by a Coast Watch aircraft (a Grumman Tracker) and then met by a naval vessel who assured us the entry to Darwin is clear of obstructions.

Once we had been cleared by Quarantine, Customs and Immigration, we anchored in Frances Bay among some of the Barramundi fishing fleet which should have been out fishing in that season. Close by was a barge owned and skippered by Max Sergeant, a genial and relatively sober man (compared to his crew) who remembered the author Xavier Herbert staying at his parents' farm — mainly because Herbert drove his mother mad by refusing to observe a ban on smoking in bed. Sharing a few dozen beers with Max and his crew I asked about finding work in Darwin.

“No worries, I'll take you up the Workers' Club tomorrow. Get you a start with the Finns that do the scaffolding work. Make a fortune” said Colin Powell, a huge Aboriginal man who had been famous as a croc hunter before croc hunting was banned. He was a terrifically generous man.

Sure enough, the next morning before 10:00 huge Colin was alongside in a huge aluminium dinghy with a huge outboard motor and we headed off to The Workers. The Finns weren't there when The Workers opened at ten. They were doing a little bit of work before they started drinking, so we had a few beers while we waited for them. By lunch time we'd had dozen beers and by the time I escaped in the late afternoon I was a staggering, giggling, wreck. I had no idea whether I had been offered a job. Though the Finns did arrive and stayed for a few dozen drinks the subject never seemed to come up. In fact the Finns were men of very few words. There was another bloke who said he knew more about scaffolding and rigging work than they did. He could put an eye splice in one-inch steel cable while hanging by one hand from the jib of a crane, if I understood him correctly, but he hadn't been able to find work in recent months.

SRI ULU sailed on round to Cairns later that year with a different crew, and for some years she worked between Cairns and a community on the Daintree River.



The Hornpipe

The first of a number of articles by Geoff Vickridge on matters nautical.

The word hornpipe conjures up jolly jack tar dancing on the upper deck of a sailing vessel while off watch. But what is a hornpipe?



Renaissance courtiers attributed several spirited dances as being performed to the rustic wind instrument known as the hornpipe. At various times it meant a jig, a reel or even a country dance. Country dances were often stepped to the distinctive 3/2 syncopated hornpipe tunes and these are sometimes called “maggots” from the Italian *maggioretta* meaning a whim or delight. Later in the mid 18th century the 4/4 or 2/4 common time hornpipe appeared, now referred to as the “Jacky Tar”.



The Irish, Scottish or English solo dance has intricate steps and became associated with sailors. As a solo dance it was popular with sailors, who performed it with folded arms and numerous gestures and steps. In days of yore, Sir Walter Raleigh wrote, “Many a hornpipe he tuned to his Phyllis.”

By 1760 the association with the archetypal sailor “Jacky Tar” is well established. A play-bill from Drury Lane in May 1760 announces a “Hornpipe by a sailor from The Royal Sovereign”, a ship of the royal fleet. It is said that Captain Cook would make his crew perform hornpipes as exercise during spells of calm weather. School boys wishing to be sailors practiced it and it was included in 19th century naval training.

The rural origins of the instrument, however, were revealed when a Welshman wrote in the 18th century, “I was delighted to see the young herdsmen with their hornpipes under their armpits . . . herding cattle while piping. In ‘Musical and Poetical Relicks of the Welsh Bards’ published in 1784, another Welshman wrote: “Its tone is a medium between the flute and the clarinet, and is remarkable for its melody . . . it is now peculiar to the Isle of Anglesey, where it is played by shepherds, and tends greatly to enhance the innocent delight of pastoral life.”

The hornpipe consists of a single reed pipe (made of bone or wood) with finger holes and an amplifying bell (sometimes with 2 parallel pipes). The instrument derived its name because the bell was sometimes made from a cow horn. Early reed-pipes have been found in megalithic, Bronze and Iron Age tombs and it is believed that primitive forms of the hornpipe have been played all over the ancient world since time immemorial. The hornpipe in whatever form, is probably the earliest invented of wind instruments. They have been found on all continents except Australia.





50,000 KM BY KAYAK

By Penny Cuthbert, Curator, Australian National Maritime Museum. Reproduced courtesy of the Australian National Maritime Museum. The article first appeared in the museum's quarterly journal Signals (No 58, March 2002). The Australian National Maritime Museum gratefully acknowledges interviews with Oskar Speck by Duncan Thompson in the Australasian Post (1956) and Margot Cuthill for SBS Television, on which part of this article is based.

IN DECEMBER 2001 the Museum unveiled its new core exhibition WATERMARKS adventure sport play. One of its defining themes, Voyagers, salutes individuals who challenge themselves on the world's oceans and waterways. And here we tell the remarkable story of German adventurer-voyager-migrant Oskar Speck and his 50,000-kilometre odyssey, paddling a kayak to Australia in the 1930s. The voyage would take an unprecedented seven years and four months before Speck reached his final destination.

Speck's story can be pieced together from newspaper articles, his letters, diaries, photographs,

passports and 16-mm film footage, from rare media interviews that he gave and through the testimony of those who knew him. From these disparate sources emerges the picture of a complex man whose voyage to Australia through a colonial world epitomized an age of wanderlust. Yet for Speck this voyage was more than just adventure. It was the beginning of a new life far from his homeland.

Oskar Speck was born in 1907 and grew up at a time when the world was in turmoil and transition. His childhood and adolescence in Hamburg were shaped by the First World War and the economic and social changes resulting from Germany's defeat.

As a young man Speck worked as an electrical contractor running a factory with 21 employees. He was a keen competitive kayaker before 1932 and a member of a boating club. Canoeing and kayaking were popular summer pastimes in Europe and Weimar Germany in the 1920s and 1930s. Collapsible kayaks (*faltboot*) could be easily carried on public transport to be reassembled for use on rivers and waterways. Speck owned his own folding kayak *Sunnschien*. This outdoor spirit reflected a Germanic passion for athleticism and physical prowess – qualities reinforced in youth clubs and associations.

In 1932, during the Depression, Speck's business closed and he found himself unemployed along with millions of other Germans. This closure afforded him the opportunity to pursue two of his interests – geology and kayaking. Seeing no future at home Speck sought work in the copper mines of Cyprus (Oskar Speck in interview with Duncan Thompson *Australasian Post*, December 6 1956).

'The times in Germany were very catastrophic... all I wanted was to get out of Germany for a while' Speck has said in an interview recorded



A youthful Oskar Speck. Date unknown



Unidentified paddlers in Speck's kayak, Germany, c1930.

by Margot Cuthill for Australia's SBS TV in 1987. 'I had no idea that I would eventually end up in Australia...but I took my collapsible boat, went to Ulm and then down the Danube to the Yugoslavian border...leaving Germany and seeing the world seemed like a better option.'

The kayak

Sunnschien was a double kayak – for two paddlers – converted for one to make room for luggage and provisions. Its light, flexible wooden frame made it safe for shooting rapids, light for portage and could be collapsed into a small bundle when necessary.

It was constructed from a laminated rubber and canvas skin over the frame and was 5.49 m in length, capable of carrying a load of nearly 300 kg. It was steered by a foot-controlled rudder and propelled by a double-ended paddle. It was equipped with a small gaff sail with an area of 1.49 square metres.

Speck's luggage consisted of a spare paddle, two brass waterproof containers for his films, cameras, clothing, documents, coastal pilots, passports, charts and prismatic compass, and pistol. Fresh water was contained in five-gallon tanks shaped to the side of the kayak. When water was unreliable coconuts provided a much needed drink. He ate local fare where possible and supplemented this with tinned meat, fish and condensed milk. (Oskar Speck in interview with Duncan Thompson *Australasian Post*, December 6 1956).

The leaving

With a small amount of money, some raised by his family, the 25-year-old Speck set off on a bus from Hamburg to Ulm on the Danube River. This modern-day odyssey began on 13 May 1932 as a river journey along the still waters of the Danube and would take him first to the Mediterranean coast.

From the start Speck sought the challenges of white water and rapids. Finding the Danube too tame he decided to travel to Skopje (in what was then Macedonia) to test his skills on the rapids of the Varda River. His five-year-old kayak was damaged in the attempt. He made repairs in Veles while waiting for the frozen river to melt and continued to the Mediterranean coast. Speck was kept in touch with political events in Germany through letters from family and friends.

'We have had another round of elections last Sunday. I think it was the fifth this year. The result is nil. The Nazis lost a bit and the Communists gained a bit...everybody is keen to follow your 'around the world trip'...if you don't manage to enter Turkey etc try Russia – they are looking for trades people – only in case of emergency though' (Letter from Speck's younger brother Heinrich 10 November 1932.)

Rivers to Ocean

To cross the Mediterranean, Speck had to master sailing and paddling during voyages between Greek islands. This involved greater reliance on steering with a foot operated rudder and use of a sail.

'by all sane standards I was mad ... Faltboats are not built for the sea... you may sail while the weather is kind , but you must be constantly active, constantly steering to bring the boat's bow to the right position to meet every single wave'. (Oskar Speck in interview with Duncan Thompson *Australasian Post*, December 6 1956).

While Speck described his kayak as 'a first class ticket to everywhere' the reality of travelling in such a small craft was that he had to paddle close to coastline wherever possible. On shore he slept in the kayak after removing the tanks from the bow and stern to make more room. A makeshift canvas canopy provided shelter from the sun. On the open sea there was no chance to



sleep. To do so would risk capsizing or worse. Speck described paddling a kayak on the open sea like riding a bicycle on the land ‘you must keep pedaling and steering or you fall over...in a faltboot you must be constantly steering to bring the boat’s bow to the right position to meet eve-



Speck’s photograph of an unidentified village in Melanesia captures the tropical exoticism of his great adventure.

ry single wave.’ During the voyage Speck capsized a number of times when surfing into shore. The fact he survived such a perilous voyage is all the more remarkable given that Speck could not swim. He strapped himself into his kayak.

The Near East

From Rhodes Speck followed the coast of Turkey, crossing from Anamur to Cyprus, a distance of 45 nautical miles. (Oskar Speck in interview with Margaret Cuthill for Australia’s SBS TV in 1987) It was in Cyprus that Speck’s plans took an important turn. Although an interest in minerals and the prospect of work in the copper mines had led him to Cyprus, he decided instead to continue his travels.

‘I decided that Suez offered a too well beaten path – why not land on the Syrian coast and take the bus to Meskene on the upper Euphrates...’ (Oskar Speck in interview with Duncan Thompson *Australasian Post*, December 13 1956). True to his word Speck landed at Latakia after two days at sea.

Speck continued down the Euphrates River into the Shatt al Arab (the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers) and then to Al Basrah. From the Shatt Al Arab, Speck crossed the Persian Gulf to Iran.

‘Everywhere I went I was surrounded by crowds of people...no-one had ever seen this type of

boat before,’ Speck recalled in Margaret Cuthill’s 1987 SBS interview.

The manufacturer of his kayak, Pionier Faltboot Werft in Bad Tolz, supplied Speck with four of the craft over the seven-year voyage, becoming his main sponsor. While waiting in Bandar Abbas, Iran, for his first replacement kayak Speck contracted malaria, which would afflict him periodically during the voyage. (Margaret Cuthill SBS interview, 1987). As he coasted along the head of the Arabian Sea, Speck’s kayak and possessions were stolen at the border of Iran and Pakistan. He told the police there was money in his kayak, and the following day they directed him to it.

‘we came upon a dhow, and there across its bow lay my kayak. Not a thing in it had been touched.’ (Oskar Speck in interview with Duncan Thompson *Australasian Post*, December 13 1956). Speck bought it back for forty pounds.

India and the tropics

During his stay in British Baluchistan (Pakistan) Speck met the Governor, Sir Norman Carter, on a beach. He was invited to join the Governor who was being entertained by the Maharajas of Kalat and Las Bellas on a shooting party. Speck continued to follow the Indian coast and in Bombay (Mumbai) with local support Speck was able to give public talks to help fund his journey. In Madras (Chennai) Speck was contacted by the North Madras Boy Scouts Associa-



Villagers in Pakistan inspect Speck’s kayak, 1934.

tion who were keen to entertain him. Here he waited for a new kayak before paddling around the shores of the Bay of Bengal.



Speck was encouraged by friends to try out for the Berlin Olympics in kayaking events.

‘ Kette is about to release the Olympic racing

laya.

Reaching Singapore via the Straits of Malacca Speck collected another kayak and paddled and sailed his way through the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia). In Java he acquired a 16-mm cine-camera. The surviving ethnographic footage taken in 1938-39 details the cultural diversity of people Speck encountered living beyond the Java Sea through to the New Guinea mainland and islands. It transports the viewer into a world of coastal village life, much of which has changed dramatically since this film was shot over sixty years ago.



Speck poses with Javanese household in the Dutch East Indies

While still recovering from a severe bout of malaria Speck left Bali for Lombok. The rigours of the crossing induced a relapse. Speck was cared for and then received by the Kepala Kampong (village chief). After reaching Lakor Island in the Moluccas, Speck was woken one night by 20 people armed with spears, swords and machetes. He temporarily kept them at bay by brandishing an unloaded pistol but was soon dragged from his kayak and bound hand and foot with buffalo hide while his kayak was looted. Speck was slapped and kicked in the head, resulting in a burst ear drum. After several hours Speck managed to loosen his bindings and slip back to his kayak, retrieving the largest tank which held his camera , films and clothing.



Speck the canoe enthusiast couldn't resist documenting this fine specimen, from Geelvink Bay on the northern coast of Dutch New Guinea (today Celuk Cenderwasih in Indonesian Irian Jaya).

Australasian waters

boat in single and double version. That is an indication for paddling races to be run in the Berlin Olympics. Why don't you take part in that? You should be in a state to win a trophy in Germany.' (Letter to Oskar Speck from friend in Altona, 15 April 1935).

The following year while in Burma Speck attempted to qualify for the Berlin Olympics in the 10,000-metre kayaking event but was unable to make the required times. (Margaret Cuthill SBS interview, 1987) He continued his travels which took him down the west coast of Thailand's Isthmus of Kra and peninsular Ma-

In a new kayak Speck crossed from the Kai Islands in the Banda Sea to the Dutch New Guinea coast, a distance of 200 km covered in 34 hours (Margaret Cuthill SBS interview, 1987). His arrival in Dutch territory caused a dilemma for the local administrator who was unsure whether to arrest Speck or grant a travel permit. After a delay a permit was issued and Speck followed the coast of Hollandia to Madang, filming communities along the way. At Samarai Island he stayed with the O'Donnells, an Australian family who operated the local coastal radio station. In a recent oral history interview Bill and John O'Donnell, children at the time, remember listening to a shortwave radio broadcast of Adolf Hitler with Speck and their parents. The following morning the family watched Speck depart Samarai Island from the beach near their



Speck with fellow canoers in New Guinea in 1939.

al weeks until stopped by police in Melbourne.

Dressed in civilian clothes and in possession of a bicycle, Speck was recognised from a photograph by police in Kew. He initially denied he was an internee – but under further questioning admitted to being Oskar Speck. Police described him as ‘a prisoner of ingenuity’ and handed him back to military authorities. His punishment was 28 days in solitary confinement and a transfer to Loveday, South Australia, where he remained for the rest of the war.

house. Speck also stayed with missionaries at Orokolo (New Guinea) while he repaired his damaged rudder.

While interned at Loveday Speck revealed his political views in a letter to the Swiss Consul in Melbourne, Mr J A Pietzcker: ‘This camp is not suited for the internment of Germans who are loyal to the Reich as they have no means at all of ex-

In Daru (New Guinea) Speck learned from fishermen that Australia was at war with Germany. Local authorities allowed him to continue into the Torres Strait to Saibai and then Thursday Island where he was arrested as an enemy alien. His arrival on Thursday Island in September 1939 was photographed by Siri Mendis, a young Sri Lankan living there who remembers the event and has spoken to the Museum about it.



The surprising arrival of Speck and camera in wartime raised questions about his activities in the region, why and for whom he was making a film and whether he was acting as an agent for the Germans. Police were suspicious of the contents of Speck’s film footage and asked Mendis to view the film in his dark room. Mendis was also present when Speck was interrogated by police.



Interned in Australia

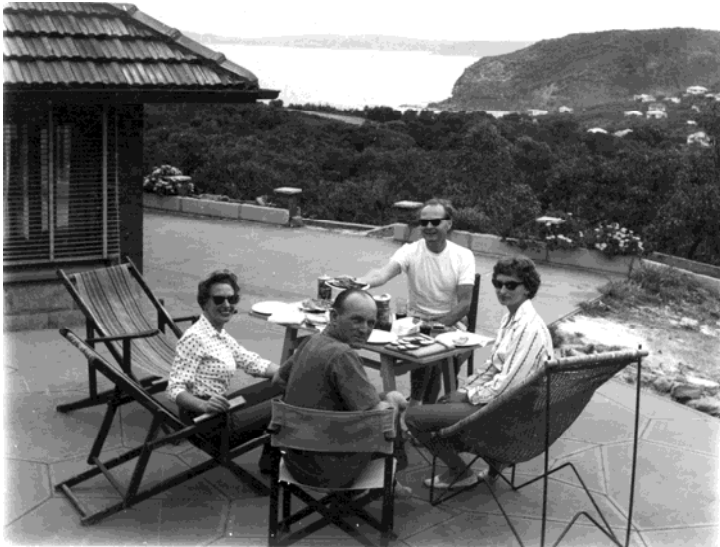
Speck’s adventures ran in the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* as ‘Adventure in the Sunda Sea – tales from a kayak voyage’. The issue of 7 September 1938 shows a drawing of Speck being abducted, when according to the caption ‘...the natives hung to their captive like burrs...’

Speck spent a month on Thursday Island before being transferred by the RAN to Brisbane. From Queensland he was sent to Tatura Internment Camp in the Goulburn Valley of Victoria.

pressing their patriotism eg. Patriotic celebrations etc. I therefore urgently request you approach the responsible authority in order to have me transferred into a German National Socialist Camp.’

On the 9 January 1943 Speck escaped from the camp. He had made a pact with his friend and fellow internee Frederick Embritz to escape and meet in Sydney outside Randwick race course. While Embritz made the rendezvous at Randwick, Speck never arrived. He was on the run for sever-

Was Speck a Nazi? This picture is at odds with



Speck with friends at his house in Killcare Heights.

the views of those who knew him after his release from internment. An acquaintance later described him as a loner who was avoiding returning to Germany as the Reich wanted to exploit his achievements as an example of German heroism, during their Russian campaign. In 1938 Speck's adventure had been serialised in a Berlin newspaper, casting him in the role of courageous hero. Photographs show a swastika pennant prominently displayed on the bow of his kayak.

An Australian life

Four days after his release from Loveday Internment camp, Speck was in Lightning Ridge, NSW, mining opal. He settled into postwar Australia and established a successful opal cutting business. He built his own home on the side of a hill at Killcare Heights on the NSW Central coast and retired there in the 1970s. For 30 years Speck's companion Nancy Steele commuted from Sydney to Killcare each weekend to see him. She lived with him during the last two years of his life. Speck died in 1995 after a long illness.

Although Speck's achievements were well reported in Europe, few in Australia outside canoeing groups knew his story. Speck's double-ended paddle was presented to rower Carl Toovey as a jubilee trophy for winning the Cruising Canoe Club's Nepean 100 mile marathon in 1951 and 1952. This was the first marathon paddling event to be held in Australia. Toovey and Speck became friends and paddled together around Pittwater and Sydney Harbour.

Through a bequest from Nancy Steele's estate,

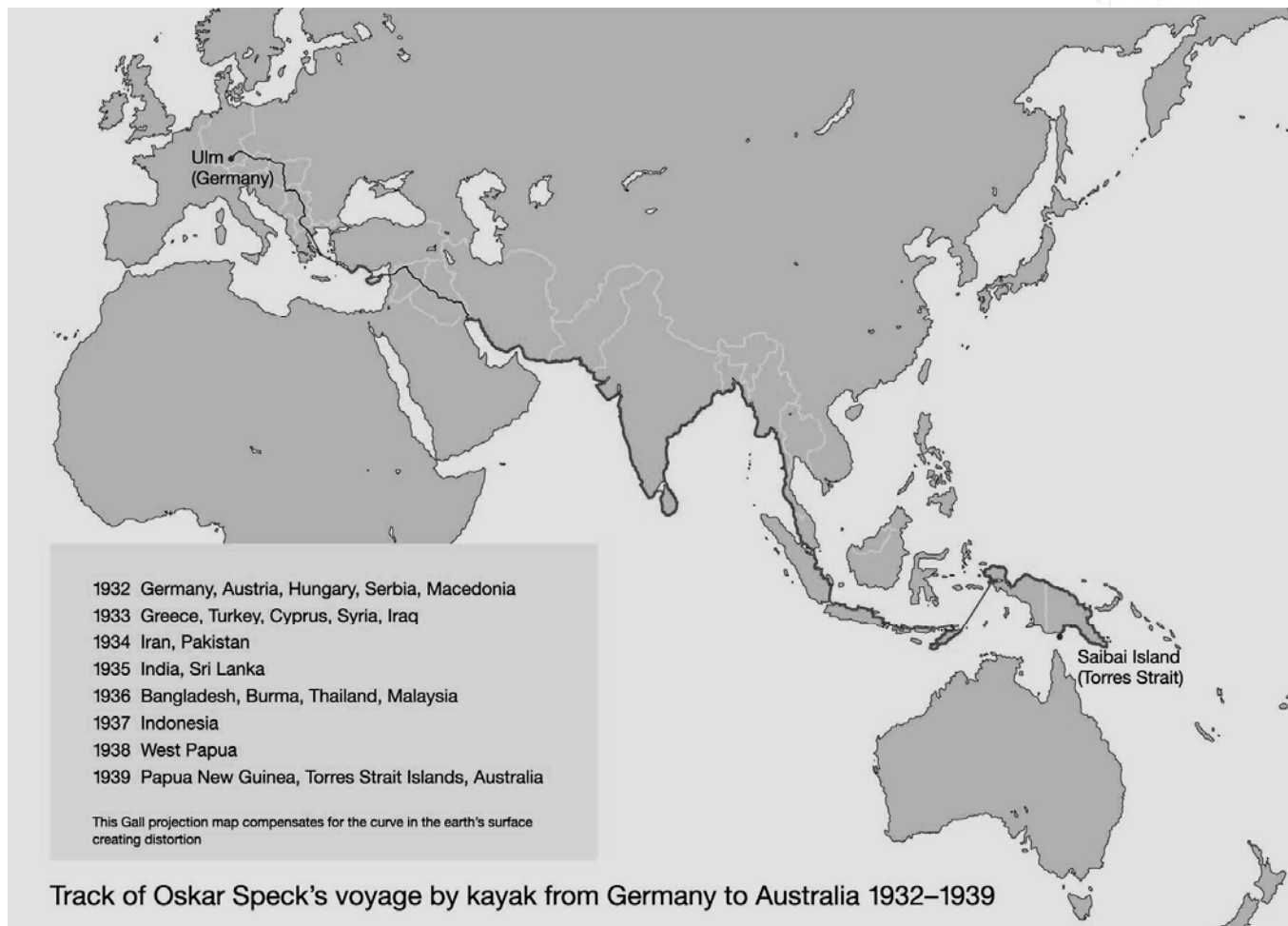
the Australian National Maritime Museum has become the custodian of a selection of Speck's personal effects. These include photographs and 16-mm film, letters and documents, and passports filled with exotic stamps from faraway places. The conservation of this collection, including copying of the fragile film, has been sponsored by the Salvation Army which was a beneficiary of the Nancy Steele Estate.

This material is the key to piecing together his story and tapping into memories of Speck. Existing sources have raised questions and challenged assumptions about this elusive man. One newspaper story about him was headed 'Seven years in a kayak made him Australian'. But Speck's is a complex story about life and fate, experience and identity, which cannot easily be summed up in a sentence.

Certainly, the Oskar Speck story has attracted an extraordinary amount of media and public attention since it was unveiled at the opening of WATERMARKS adventure sport play in December 2001. Research into the Speck saga will continue here at the Museum, as there is still much to learn



This small model of Speck's kayak, fashioned mainly of copper, was made by a fellow internee during the war.



Copyright Australian National Maritime Museum. This article may not be reproduced in part or whole, in any form, without permission from the Australian National Maritime Museum. Contact the publications manager tel 61 2 9298 3647 fax 61 2 9298 3670 email jmellefont@anmm.gov.au



Sydney Harbour Ferries

The cover photo in the June MHA journal showed the Sydney Harbour Bridge just prior to completing the arch. Geoff Vickridge has some interesting information regarding the two ferries crossing the harbour. Geoff is certain that they are the *Kara Kara* and the *Koompartoo*, and he is pretty certain that the ferry in the foreground is the *Kara Kara*. These were both steam powered steel vessels.

The specifications of these two vessels were:

Kara Kara

Built: 1926 by J. Chrichton & Co. Ltd,
Saltney, UK
 Length: 187 feet
 Breadth: 35.5 feet
 Depth: 13.5 feet

Tonnage: 525 gross
 Speed: 14 knots

Koompartoo

Built: 1922 by Walsh Island Dockyard,
Newcastle, NSW
 Length: 182.5 feet
 Breadth: 36.08 feet
 Depth: 11.58 feet
 Tonnage: 448 gross
 Speed: 12.5 knots

Both ferries were taken over by the Royal Australian Navy during World War II and, after being fitted with guns, served as auxiliary boom defence vessels in Darwin.



QUIZ

Answers to June 2007

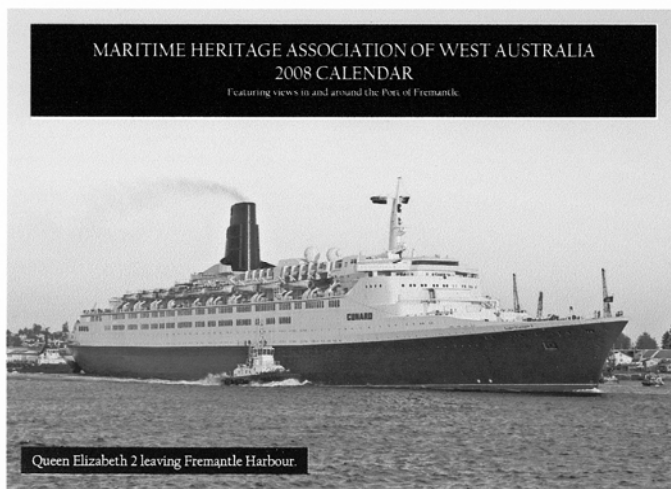
1. A clapper, or tumbler, on a gaff-rigged vessel is a fitting between the jaws of a gaff to prevent chafing of the mast. It spreads the load imposed by the gaff and prevents the gaff from jamming.
2. A spurling pipe is the pipe leading from the deck down which the cable passes to the chain locker. It is also called a navel-pipe or spurling gate.
3. The first vessel to bring adult convicts to Western Australia was the barque *Scindian* (master, James Cammell), which left Portsmouth on 4 March 1850 and arrived in Fremantle on 1 June 1850. There were 75 male convicts aboard.

Questions

1. Careening Bay on Garden Island was originally named Careening Cove. It also has or had another name. What is/was it also named?
2. What is rogue's yarn?
3. What is the variation of a compass?

MHA 2008 CALENDAR

The first MHA calendar will be available in November 2007. The format is a month per opening with a full page colour photograph of a Port of Fremantle activity taken by David Nicolson



Copies are **\$10.00** each + pnp.
 Order now from the Secretary.
email: shipart@iinet.net.au
letter: 23 State Street, Victoria Park,
 WA 6100

Maritime Heritage Association Inc.
 23 State Street, Victoria Park, Western Australia, 6100.

