

# THE SEVEN SEAS CLUB of AUSTRALIA

**“TO PROMOTE AND FOSTER THE COMRADESHIP OF THE SEA”**

**Founded 1968**

**Incorporated 1996**

An elected COM shall run the Club in accordance with the Articles of Incorporation & Standing Orders

## NEWSLETTER No. 95 Spring 2023

### Greetings Members

The recent Open Days at our local Sailing Clubs once again heralded the start of the season with the best sailing conditions we look forward to each year. It was a pleasure to participate in the CYCSA and RAYSA Open Days; always fun, colourful occasions, continuing a yachting tradition passed down over generations.

I have included a story about the SS Admella, which was featured in a display of paintings at the Art Gallery of SA recently and a short article written by Stanley Johnson which was presented by Tim Readman at our November meeting.

As shown in the articles about recent meetings, we have enjoyed the illuminating presentations from our guest speakers and the fellowship of members.

Thank you to those who have sent in contributions for this edition of the Newsletter; in particular:

Ian Small, for the President's Report; Captain Peter Thomas for his monthly historical notes; Trevor Powell, who once again has shared his wonderful random photos of ships at Port Adelaide as well as those photos taken at recent meetings. Peter Allen AM, who has sent in a Report from the Baxter and Grimshaw Foundation, featuring the story of one of the sponsored participants on the recent "One and All" voyage. Also, thanks to Capt. Bob Smedley for sending the bio of our latest Distinguished Member Stan Quin.

Thank you once again for the contributions from our members and please keep the articles flowing in.

I hope to see you at the members BBQ at the CYCSA on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December.

Fair Winds,  
Terry Beaston



**The "One and All" being eased into her berth at the RSAYS for her Open Day Celebrations, November 2023**

### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT Ian Small – November 2023**

Greetings Members, I present my President's Report after a very successful Partners / Christmas Dinner and Talk at the Maid & Magpie Hotel. Forty-nine members, partners and guests attended a very enjoyable night, with good food, drink, companionship and excellent speaker in member, Tim Readman, who spoke on the topic of Tim Severin and his recent reunion in London. He recapped on many of Tim's Adventures

We welcomed Sallyann Geddes as a new member at this Dinner Meeting. We again encourage all members to bring along suitable candidates for Membership to future Meetings to continue the progression of the Club.

We also formally recognized and awarded Stan Quin as "A Distinguished Member of our Club". A very well-deserved honour for our oldest Member.

The COM Sub-Committee has held further meetings to “Progress the Seven Seas Club of Australia, including Increasing Membership”. The Committee consists of myself as Chair, Cpt. Bob Smedley as Secretary and Tim Readman, Keith Bleechmore, Ken Messenger, Kel Watson and John Braendler.

Several major suggestions have come out of this, including a Marketing Plan, prepared by Ken Messenger, which will be circulated to members shortly for comment and approval. This includes a Brainstorming Session, in the New Year, open to all members, to further the Committees’ aims. We would welcome at least one additional Member to assist and contribute to this important Sub- Committee.

Forthcoming Events include a SSC Club BBQ at the CYCSA on Saturday the 10th December and a Banyan Lunch on Wednesday 17th January 2024. More details with flyers shortly.

Our AGM is scheduled for February 2024 and we will call for nominations for all positions on the COM and would welcome nominations for an additional member.

The quest for a suitable Dinner Meeting Venue continues. Whilst the Maid and Magpie provides a good atmosphere, the food, service and parking are excellent and the location central. The problem, like most Hotels, is noise from adjacent areas and it has no storage for the Club dinner auxiliaries. We have had talks recently with the tenant leasing the front part of the Public Schools Club as a restaurant. He admits the conversion has been slow due to Council approvals, but they may be able to accommodate us for the next February Dinner Meeting in the Rear Dining area, with them handling catering. We will advise in the New Year on progress.

Further to our request to the South Australian Governor, Her Excellency The Honourable Frances Adamson AC, requesting again that she considers taking up the position of Patron of the Seven Seas Club. Her secretary has advised that, following the submission of our New Inclusive Rules and election of our first female member, that the matter is now being reconsidered.

As always, we are looking for Interesting and Entertaining Speakers for our Dinner Meetings, Including Partners Nights, and welcome suggestions to myself or Hon. Sec. Cpt Bob. It is seen as essential for the progression of the Club that we put on prominent, knowledgeable speakers on topical maritime and nautical subjects to attract new members. I again thank the COM and especially Cpt. Bob Smedley and Daryl Matthews, as Hon. Sec & Treasurer, for their devotion and hard work during this year to progress the Clubs recovery.

Wishing all Members and their Families a very safe, healthy and festive Christmas and New Year.

Ian Small, President, Seven Seas Club of Australia.

## Recent Seven Seas Club Meetings:

### July Meeting 2023

#### At Sea with George French Angas: Artist, Poet, and Naturalist

Our guest speaker for the evening was Dr Phillip Jones, Senior Curator and Historian at the South Australian Museum, whose recent book “Illustrating the Antipodes”, traces the journey of the artist George French Angas in the 1840s to Australia and New Zealand. The son of George Fife Angas, and only in his early twenties, he excelled at capturing the minute detail of plants and people, objects, and landscapes. A number of the paintings of George French Angas paintings are held in the State Library and the Art Gallery of South Australia.



**Dr. Philip Jones was guest speaker at our July meeting at the Maid and Magpie Hotel.**

### August Meeting-2023

#### Reminiscing - An evening for Sir James Hardy

Our August meeting was held at the Glenelg Surf Lifesaving Club to celebrate the life and recall the many memories of Sir James Hardy.

“Gentleman Jim”, they called him - that is, until they raced against him. A fierce competitor, mild mannered Jim Hardy was a lifelong sailor and one of Australia’s favorite America’s Cup heroes. Hardy was raised on the water by a family of sailors. As sailing advisor to John Bertrand and Alan Bond aboard AUSTRALIA II, he helped bring the Cup down under in 1983.

Sir Jim Hardy’s passion for Cup competitions and his impeccable sportsmanship were admired across the globe. Bill Hardy, Malcolm ‘Pip’ Pearson, David Binks and others recalled their memories of one of Australia’s great sailors.



**David Binks spoke of his long-term association with Sir James Hardy**



**Bill Hardy, Sir James Brother spoke of Sir James many achievements.**

## October Meeting 2023 Trafalgar Night

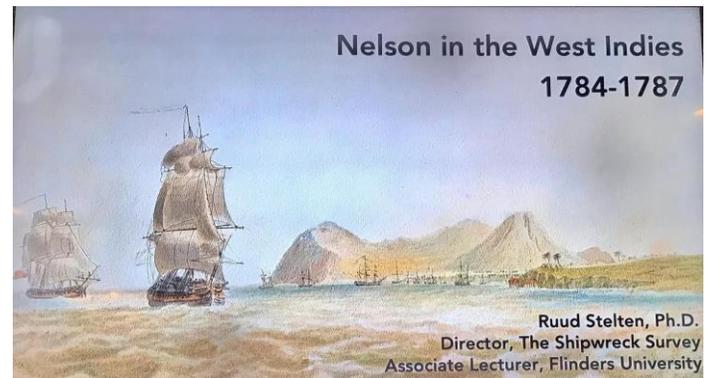
Nelson in the West Indies: 1784-1787

Before rising to fame following the major battles he is mainly remembered for, Horatio Nelson spent a considerable amount of time in the West Indies. During the three years following the Revolutionary War, he commanded HMS Boreas, a sixth-rate frigate that patrolled the northeastern Caribbean. During this time, Nelson vigorously enforced the Navigation Acts and as a result made himself hugely unpopular with colonial administrators, West Indian planters and merchants, and to an extent also the Admiralty. This presentation will explore Nelson's tour in the West Indies and discuss what life was like on board Boreas during those formative years of his career.

Our guest speaker was Dr. Ruud Stelten.

Ruud is a maritime archaeologist whose research has focused on shipwrecks and maritime cultural landscapes in the Caribbean and Indian Ocean. Born in the Netherlands, Ruud earned BA, MA, and Ph.D. degrees in archaeology at the Faculty of Archaeology at Leiden University. He spent 11 years living and working on the Dutch Caribbean islands St. Eustatius and Bonaire. During this time, he led an

archaeological research foundation, set up an archaeological museum, and founded The Shipwreck Survey, an organisation dedicated to underwater archaeological research and exploration. Ruud is currently an associate lecturer at Flinders University. He is a PADI Open Water Scuba Instructor and Specialty Instructor with experience diving all over the world. Besides archaeology and history, his big passion is underwater photography.



**Trafalgar Night at the Maid and Magpie Hotel**

## November Meeting 2023 Partner's Night and Annual Marine Auction

**Tim Readman was our speaker and wrote for this invitation: -**

“Many lives were changed by the remarkable man Tim Severin; explorer, traveller, writer, historian, and Captain.

Sadly, Tim died during COVID but two guys who went on journeys with him, Joe Bayon, doctor on the China Voyage (absolutely a must read as one of the greatest journeys), and Len Shell (Spice Islands Voyage), came up with the idea of a crew call, to have a gathering of all those who sailed with and were touched by, and to honour Tim.”

*-Tim was invited to participate in London and has recently returned to present this story.*

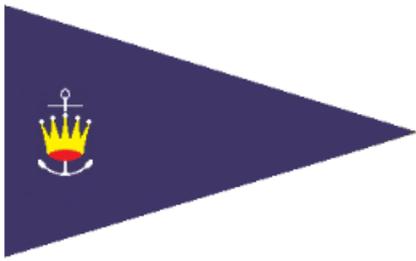


*Guest Speaker Tim Readman*

## Partners Night at the Maid and Maggie

Good food, good company, and an interesting presentation on Tim Severin's amazing life. We also ran our annual auction of maritime objects to raise money for the Baxter and Grimshaw Foundation. Sallyann Geddes was inducted as a new member and Stan Quin made a Distinguished Member.





## On this month

Compiled By Capt. Peter Thomas  
Historical notes for the month of October  
2023

October 1st, 1908, Henry Ford's Model T, a universal car designed for the masses, went on sale for the first time.



October 1st, 1979, after 70 years of American control, the Panama Canal Zone was formally handed over to Panama.

October 3rd, 1952, The RN Frigate *Plym* was vaporised in an atomic bomb test at the Monte Bello islands off Western Australia



HMS *Plym* underway on 12 May 1943

October 3rd, 1990, after 45 years of Cold War division, East and West Germany were reunited as the Federal Republic of Germany.

October 4th, 1957 – The Space Age began as the Russians launched the first satellite into orbit. Sputnik I weighed just 184 lbs. and transmitted a beeping radio signal for 21 days.

October 8th, 1971 -The Oberon class submarine HMAS *Otway* picked up 7 survivors from the 101-year-old ketch, *One and All* which sank after striking Middleton Reef.

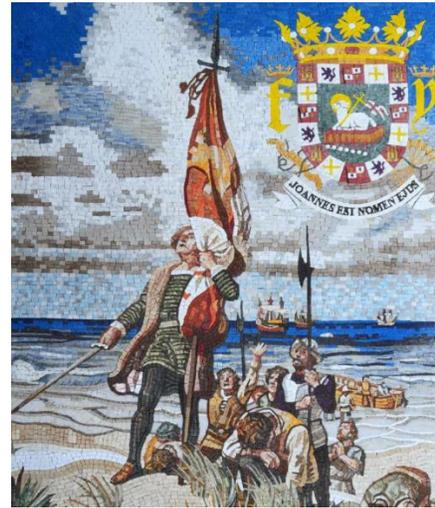
Oct 7th, 1985 -The *Achille Lauro* hijacking took place on 7 October 1985, when the Italian ocean liner *MS Achille Lauro* was hijacked by four men representing the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) off the coast of Egypt, as she was sailing from Alexandria to Ashdod, Israel. A 69-year-old Jewish American man in a wheelchair, Leon Klinghoffer, was murdered by the hijackers and thrown overboard.

Oct 10th, 1913, The Panama Canal joined the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean.

Oct 11th, 1982, The *Mary Rose* is raised in The Solent, England.



October 12th, 1492, after a 33-day voyage, Christopher Columbus made his first landfall in the New World in the Bahamas.



October 13th, 1775, The United States Navy was born after the Second Continental Congress authorized the acquisition of a fleet of ships.

October 13th, 1884, Greenwich was established as the universal time from which standard times throughout the world are calculated.

October 14th, 1066, The Norman Conquest began with the Battle of Hastings in which King Harold II of England, the last of the Saxon kings, was defeated and killed by William of Normandy troops.



October 15th, 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte arrived on the Island of St. Helena beginning a British-imposed exile following his defeat at the Battle of Waterloo.



October 21st, 1805 The Battle of Trafalgar took place between the British Royal Navy and the combined French and Spanish fleets. The victorious British ended the threat of Napoleon invasion of England. British naval hero Admiral Horatio Nelson was mortally wounded aboard his ship Victory.

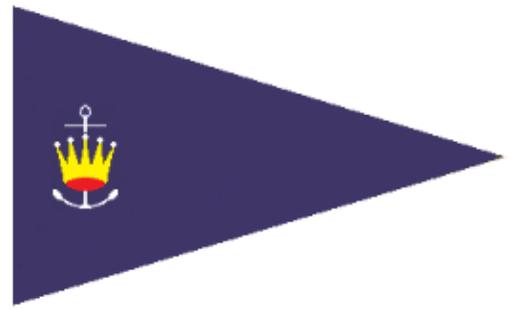


October 21st, 1941, The captain of the submarine Utmost came to periscope depth in the Mediterranean and was startled to find 20 plus mines on the surface. With careful manoeuvring he was able to surface and was somewhat relieved to discover that they were tortoises.

October 22nd, 1790, A court martial held aboard HMS Royal William at Spithead, found that Lt William Bligh had no case to answer for the loss of HMS Bounty.

October 23rd, 1789, Commander Matthew Flinders RN, arrived at Spithead, England, having returned from his imprisonment on Mauritius.

October 31st, 1940  
The Battle of Britain concluded. Beginning on July 10, 1940, German bombers and fighters had attacked coastal targets, airfields, London and other cities, as a prelude to a Nazi invasion of England. British pilots in Spitfires and Hurricanes shot down over 1,700 German aircraft while losing 915 fighters. "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few," declared Prime Minister Winston Churchill.



## **Seven Seas Club of Australia Inc. Distinguished Member - Stan Quin**

Tonight, we honour our longest serving Club member Stan Quin as we make him a Distinguished Member of our Club. I was speaking to him last week and knowing this was going to happen tonight, he said this was "Bullshit" – as always, Stan is very incisive, and he doesn't exaggerate.

Stan must have been close to being a founding member of our Club. If not, he knew most, if not all the original 15 members, many of whom he employed. Brian Frankham and Roly King being two of the young ones at the time.

He has been involved in the maritime industry his whole working life. His ancestors, children and grandchildren have and are still involved in the maritime industry and the Quin family name is steeped in the maritime tradition of this State. Stan presented a talk on it at one of our meetings.

Stan has contributed extensively to the boating, fishing, and maritime industry in general through his company Quin Marine, as a ship's chandlery, providores, service agents for many companies and official chart Agent to visiting and local ships, along with other associated interests such as net making for commercial fishing and sporting organisations.

Stan has been a major supporter of the Baxter and Grimshaw Foundation, having served on the board for many years as well as donating to the original Trust. He has generously donated items for auction for our Club's fund-raising activities.

He has attended most of our monthly dinner meetings and he's also introduced several of his associates and friends to this Club, many of whom have become members. He has been a friend to all and is always eager to share his knowledge and experience.

We must also acknowledge the role that Joyce has played. Joyce has been his bride for 63 years. Thankyou Stan

-  
Capt. Bob Smedley MN – Hon. Secretary, Seven Seas Club of Australia Inc.

(Ed-From the induction of Stan at our November 2023 meeting.)



[www.baxtergrimshaw.org.au](http://www.baxtergrimshaw.org.au)

*Building self-confidence and empowering disadvantaged youth through maritime training and experience.*

The following two talks were presented at different SSC Dinners by recipients of Foundation scholarships (Max Sargood and Reese Szolnoki) on their experiences gained from joining Rotary's Youth Sailing Challenge on the One and All from Adelaide to Melbourne and return from Melbourne to Adelaide in May/June, 2023.

In Max Sargood's Presentation, Caroline Victor, Max's teacher and Sallyann Geddes, B&G Foundation Director, assisted Max prepare her story and give her confidence with its presentation:

"G'day, my name is Max and I went on the One and All. I was very nervous to go since I have not been away from home much. This trip helped me realise that not everyone is out to get me. I learned a lot about myself, I don't want to be called Candice and that I am definitely Max. The One and all was the first time that everyone called me Max.

Another first was going on a boat. I was very nervous as everything was new, but everyone was supportive and that is what I like about it- we were all "in the same boat!" Even though everyone was from very different backgrounds, we all seemed to vibe together. They were all nicer than I thought and were supportive no matter what. Everyone was going through something. Not only me. There was no judgement and the One and All was the most inclusive boat I have ever been on.

The waves started off slow and then got rough, which reminded me of a theme park, and I really like them- I enjoyed the boat rocking and rolling until I got seasick. Luckily, I was only seasick for one day and this showed me that my tolerance for the sea was pretty good.

There were so many sick that we had to stop at Kangaroo Island for everyone to get their sea legs.

We saw many dolphins that were so close- some even touched the boat. If you looked down, you would see them surfacing and playing in the waves. It made swimming look very easy, if only I could swim like that! The stars are very beautiful at sea. I have never experienced the true stars- the only time I have seen them had been with a night light- but this was something else. It made me feel very small, but it looked pretty "glimmered".

The biggest difficulty was getting up at night and doing the night shifts. Getting on the boat was also hard because I was nervous and did not know what to expect. I was worried about having a "melt down" but I managed to stay composed. I did have a little scare on the rat lines, but I did manage to get on the nets out the front, which was very exciting as it was still wavy. I had to cling on for dear life as it was quite rocky, but it was fun.

My leader on my watch was very aware and caring for the group. I felt safe with them and that I was always included and part of the team. Normally, I am ignored in groups, but this time I was a part of it and this made me happy. It would be a wonderful experience for my brother to have so I will be encouraging him to go, it will get him out the house- and stopping him being so screen-addicted!

It was also my first plane experience- flying was not what I expected, it seemed slower at first- but randomly got fast. I thought it would take longer to get to the clouds, but I was surprised at how quickly we reached

them. At the airport, mum and dad were there to pick me up with my brother.

Thank you for this once in a lifetime opportunity. This will be a lasting memory for me and has helped me expand my comfort zone as well as teaching me about who I am."

The following response following Max's presentation by Caroline Victor, SACE Teacher, Ocean View College, Harbor View Campus, reflects the positive impact that Foundation scholarships can have on young disadvantaged people:

"Thank you all for your kindness towards Max and Lisa (Max's mother) and the Sargood family over the past few months. Max felt a part of a group on the One and All during the voyage for the first time in her life. The presentation (to the SSC) was also far removed from her comfort zone. The impact may seem insignificant to some, however, I know it has shaken the family to the core by empowering Max and Lisa to take risks and accept challenges, but more importantly, to follow through with their dreams.

I cannot thank you all enough for the warm-hearted and gracious response to Max's work on Wednesday evening (SSC Dinner). As far as I am concerned, true education occurs with authentic experience. The voyage has been invaluable to the whole family. When they alighted from my car after the event, both were on such a high, it was a privilege to experience.

On behalf of Harbor View Campus and Ocean View College, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation for your Foundation's mission and generous sponsorship."

Reece Szolnoki's presentation:

"Good afternoon, everyone and especially the Baxter and Grimshaw Foundation and the Seven Seas Club.

My name is Reece Szolnoki and my adventure with the Rotary Sailing Challenge began with mum and dad dropping me off at the airport.

Thanks to the Rotary Club's great organisational skills it was a smooth transition from there to the boarding of the "One and All" on the next day. The weather was fine as we set sail from Port Melbourne but it quickly turned rough. Mostly everyone was seasick, but not me, I had quickly found my "sea legs" and it was as if this voyage was in my destiny.

We were all given duties such as steering the helm, climbing up to the "birds nest", polishing the brass and of course swabbing the deck.

It was quite intense but very rewarding, there is never a dull moment aboard "The One and All" and there are always jobs to be done. Teamwork is paramount.

The rewards are immense. You become one with nature; you become part of the boat and crew. You develop a deep belonging.

My highlight was that I was lucky enough to catch a blue fin tuna. This was truly nature's bounty and the fact that it fed us all brought deep satisfaction.

I feel extremely proud and privileged to have taken part in the Rotary "One and All" sailing challenge and I would like to extend my deep gratitude to the Baxter and Grimshaw Foundation and The Seven Seas Club for their sponsorship. Thankyou"



Participants in their colour coded crew shirts aboard the "One and All"

**Thanks to Trevor Powell for these impressive photographs of ships seen at Port Adelaide recently:**



MV BBC DOLPHIN and STV One and All Arriving in Port Adelaide's Inner Harbour - 23/09/2023.



Dry bulk / Handy size Cargo ship MV Da Xiang arriving in Port Adelaide with Windfarm equipment - 11/09/2023.



Wangary slipped at MG Marine, North Arm, Port Adelaide - 24/09/2023.



AK Falie on the slip at the North Arm - 13/09/2023.



Vehicle carrier MV Polaris Leader departing from the Outer Harbor, Port Adelaide. Bound for Nagoya, Japan - 16/09/2023.



New ship Arafura alongside Osborne Naval Shipyard, Port Adelaide - 6/09/2023.

## Flashback

# Stanley Johnson remembers following in Marco Polo's footsteps during a motorcycle expedition, 1961



Three men on a bike: Stanley Johnson, Tim Severin and Michael de Larrabeiti

THIS PHOTO SHOWS us in front of the Gateway of India, in Bombay [now Mumbai], at the end of our expedition from Venice to India: I'm driving, then there's Tim Severin and finally Michael de Larrabeiti.

I met Tim at Oxford. You have a long summer vacation, four months, a wonderful moment to do something adventurous. We decided to try and follow Marco Polo's route from Venice to China, on motorcycles. We wanted a photographer to come along, so we put an advertisement in the *Evening Standard*. Mike answered that and we were very happy to have him.

We persuaded BSA to give us two, brilliant twin-cylinder 500cc Shooting Star bikes. Tim rode one, I rode the other, with Mike riding pillion on mine. We set off on about 10 June 1961, and I don't suppose we got back to England until the second week of October. Our route took us from Venice, where Marco Polo set out, through Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, up into Afghanistan. At this point, Marco Polo crossed into China, but we were under time pressure, and would have almost certainly missed the start of the winter term at Oxford. Also, we didn't have a visa. So we drove down the Grand Trunk Road from Kabul, down to Peshawar, Lahore, and came out in Calcutta [now Kolkata].

I packed the usual things – Horlicks, Marmite, coffee – but we crashed lots of times and threw it all away. We started off with two bikes, but by the time we got to Afghanistan we only had one left, so Tim made his way by bus from Iran to Kabul, where Mike and I met up with him. We all three rode on one bike from Kabul to Calcutta with me driving. We stayed a few days at the Tollygunge Club, then put ourselves plus bike on a train to Bombay and home by P&O.

There were hairy moments. I remember riding narrow, windy roads near Kabul, where Mike and I were nearly run off the road by a big lorry. There weren't many stretches of road where you could go fast, but there was one first-rate stretch between Kandahar and Kabul, a newly tarmacked highway, which we belted along. Tim later described my riding as eccentric, which was fair. I think my whole approach to life has been eccentric.

I actually turned 21 during the trip. We had reached Isfahan in Iran – Persia, as we called it –

**I packed the usual things – Horlicks,  
Marmite, coffee – but we crashed lots  
of times and threw it all away**

and I had my birthday sitting in the desert, looking out at the Great Mosque, one of the most beautiful sights in the world. As I was sitting there, a chap came out of the desert, appearing from nowhere, really, and presented me with a small green apple. I think I wrote a poem about it.

Mike and Tim are both wearing crash helmets in the photo, but I am bareheaded. I had given mine up some time earlier, when Mike and I had cadged some mutton stew on our way, and used my helmet to eat it, then left it, as I didn't feel like putting it back on my head. It's probably still up in the mountains somewhere.

It was a gruelling journey. We wheeled the bike off the train in Bombay and rode a little triumphant tour, which included this photograph. Then we got on a P&O ship that brought us (and the bike) back in some comfort to England.

We all got on well. Tim became an explorer and writer – we lost touch, but I kept up with Mike until his death a few years ago. He wrote the *Borribles* books, and described our trip in his memoir, *Spots of Time*. The bike? I sold it in Oxford for £100.

—Interview by Jeremy Olds

Stanley Johnson recently took part in TOFTigers' Bike4Tigers Challenge; [toftigers.org](http://toftigers.org). His novel *Kompromat (Point Blank)* is available in paperback

## The Wreck of the SS Admella 1859

On a recent visit to the Art Gallery of South Australia, there was a special display of paintings from the Art Gallery's collection based on the theme of Shipwrecks. The wreck of the *Admella* was featured and the paintings were exquisite. I'm sure the story has featured in past shipwreck stories at our meetings but worthy of retelling here with the paintings.

-Terry Beaston



**The Wreck of the SS Admella -Cape Banks, South Australia, 1859 by James Shaw. Art Gallery of SA.**

**SS Admella** was an Australian passenger steamship that was shipwrecked on a submerged reef off the coast of Carpenter Rocks, south west of Mount Gambier South Australia, in the early hours of 6 August 1859. Survivors clung to the wreck for over a week and many people took days to die as they glimpsed the land from the sea and watched as one rescue attempt after another failed.

With the loss of 89 lives, mostly due to cold and exposure, it is one of the worst maritime disasters in Australian history. *Admella* disaster remains the greatest loss of life in the history of European settlement in South Australia. Of the 113 on board 24 survived, including only one woman, Bridget Ledwith. Of the 89 dead, 14 were children. The 150th anniversary of the disaster was marked in August 2009 by events across the south east of South Australia and at Portland, Victoria.

Under the command of Captain Hugh McEwan *Admella* left Port Adelaide for what was to be her final trip early on 5 August 1859, on her usual run to Melbourne with 84 passengers and 29 crew. Her cargo consisted of 93 tons of copper, flour for the Victorian goldfields, general merchandise, and four racehorses. Due to the heavy swell, one of the horses fell over. To right it the ship changed course slightly, while the horse was put on its feet.

At four o'clock next morning, when the vessel was approaching the Cape Northumberland light, the captain believed himself to be far from land. In reality, however, the ship was close to a dangerous reef at 37°52'47"S 140°21'3"E, probably from a current that carried the vessel shorewards.

Suddenly she grated on a reef and, keeling over, lay broadside on to the heavy seas. An effort was made to lower the boats, but two of them were smashed and the third broke adrift. The swell lifted her further on to the reef, impelling her with such force that she lay on the summit of the ridge, with her starboard side high out of the water. In less than 15 minutes *Admella* broke into three parts and several passengers were washed overboard. A few rockets were found and fired in the hope of attracting the attention of lighthouse-keepers at Cape Northumberland, 13 nautical miles (25 km) away, but they were damp and failed to ignite correctly. Meanwhile, those on the wreck turned their eyes to seaward for assistance.

Daylight revealed a deserted coast about 1,100 yards (1 km) away interrupted by raging surf, and plans were being formulated for an attempt to reach shore when a steamer was seen in the distance. Signals were hurriedly erected on the remaining mast and rigging, and the ship's bell rung, but the vessel, *Admella*'s sister ship *Havilah*, passed without seeing them. On the second day the sea was calmer and two seamen, John Leach and Robert Knapman, succeeded in reaching the shore with the aid of a raft. Exhausted, they hurried through the night to alert Cape Northumberland lighthouse.

The lighthouse was without telegraph and so the lighthouse keeper, Ben Germein, set off to ride 10 miles (16 km)<sup>[3]</sup> to Mount Gambier to telegraph authorities in Adelaide 240 nautical miles (450 km) north west and Portland 54 nautical miles (100 km) east. *Corio* left from Adelaide and *Ladybird* from Portland but, due to poor information, both rescue boats had difficulty locating the now desperate *Admella*.



**The Wreck of the Admella by Charles Hill-1859, Art Gallery of South Australia collection.**

Meanwhile, the wreck was battered by the heavy swell. Captain McEwan shared out what little food remained and had to prevent survivors from drinking salt water, which had begun to take the lives of those who drank it. Others, exhausted by their ordeal, simply slipped into the sea to their death. In the words of one lifeboat captain they were:

more like statues than human beings; their eyes fixed, their lips black, for want of water, and their limbs bleached white and swollen through exposure to the relentless surf.

Later-owner of the 1864 Melbourne Cup winner, the recollections of passenger Hurtle Fisher<sup>[4]</sup> were given:

The vessel broke into three pieces when she struck, and two of the pieces went down at once. The portion Mr. Fisher was on was jammed on the rock, and those who had strength remained there for eight days, with next to nothing to eat or drink. Sitting on the bulwarks they could see the sharks all round them, and there was no inducement to jump off and try to swim to shore. One passenger, sitting next to Mr. Fisher, did make an effort to put an end to his captivity, but, as Mr. Fisher put it, when relating the terrible experience, "he jumped in just underneath where I was sitting, and the sharks tore him to pieces at once." When Mr. Fisher went aboard the *Admella* he weighed 9 st. 7 lb, and when he came off, he was 5 st. 12 lb. One of the horses—The Barber—swam ashore, and afterwards ran in Flying Buck's Champion Race. He was clothed and in a box. How he freed himself Mr. Fisher could not imagine.<sup>[5]</sup>

Over the next few days, several rescue attempts were made by *Corio* and *Ladybird* rescue boats. Rockets were fired to try to get lines aboard but mountainous seas and severe winter storms drove the rescuers back and lives were lost as the lifeboats were swamped. A further attempt was made to launch one of *Admella's* own lifeboats, which had washed ashore, but it too was unsuccessful. By Saturday, one full week after the wreck, *Admella's* lifeboat, skippered by Ben Germein<sup>[6]</sup> and *Corio's* boat were launched from the beach and managed to crash through the surf and reach the wreck. Eventually three people made it onto one boat, which then capsized, drowning one man.

The Portland lifeboat which had been towed to the scene by *Ladybird* had made an earlier attempt to reach the wreck but was driven back by the raging seas. Now it was finally successful in coming alongside the wreck and the remaining 19 survivors jumped and fell into the boat. They were transferred to *Ladybird* which returned to Portland. The lifeboat is now housed in the Portland Maritime Museum.

As news of the disaster reached Adelaide and Melbourne, interest in the wreck reached fever pitch; telegraph offices throughout the colonies were crowded, while newspapers printed extra editions only to see them sold out immediately upon release. In Adelaide, the news of the disaster brought hundreds of people to the telegraph office to hear the story as it unfolded; businesses closed and both Houses of Parliament adjourned.

For a few weeks crews who had participated in the rescue were treated as heroes, especially Captain Greig and the crew of *Ladybird*. In the community, businesses and individuals raised money for the *Admella* Shipwreck Reward and Relief Fund for

rescuers and survivors. After the commission of inquiry into the wreck of *Admella*, the loss was attributed to the effects of a current that pushed the vessel off course, although investigations were also held into a magnetic disturbance in the area that may have affected the compasses on iron-hulled ships. The commission found that a contributing factor had been the way that the watertight bulkheads had been inserted – the holes for the hundreds of rivets had weakened the metal. The inquest also resulted in the installation of the telegraph at Cape Northumberland.

The SS *Admella* was cited, at the time, as being a key reason why the Cape Jaffa Lighthouse was commissioned.

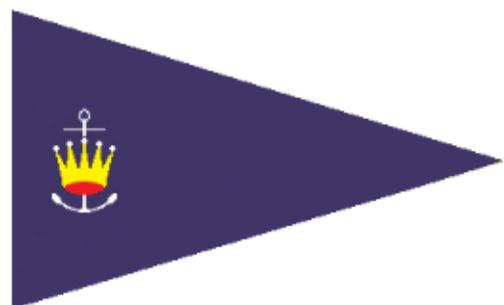
Nearly a century later a much larger *Corio* was wrecked on the same reef and sank, but all aboard were rescued.

*Admella's* wreck site is protected by the Commonwealth Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976, and is at 37°52'48"S 140°21'00"E<sup>[7]</sup> Prior to statutory protection, some salvage work has been conducted on the wreck site over the decades, but due to its very exposed location, diving is difficult in all but the calmest of seas.

In the area between the Victorian border and the Murray River mouth 101 vessels have been wrecked and 218 lives lost. Source: Wikipedia

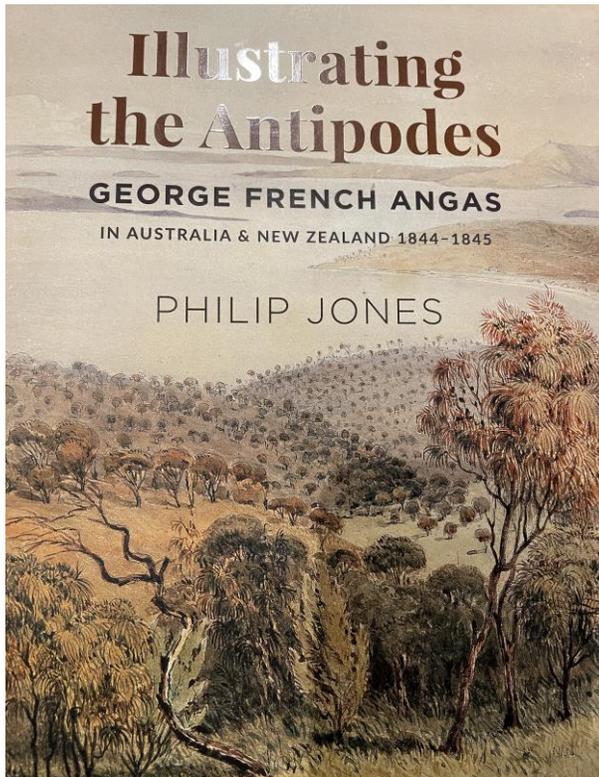


SS *Admella* , South Australia, 1859 by James Shaw. Art Gallery of SA.

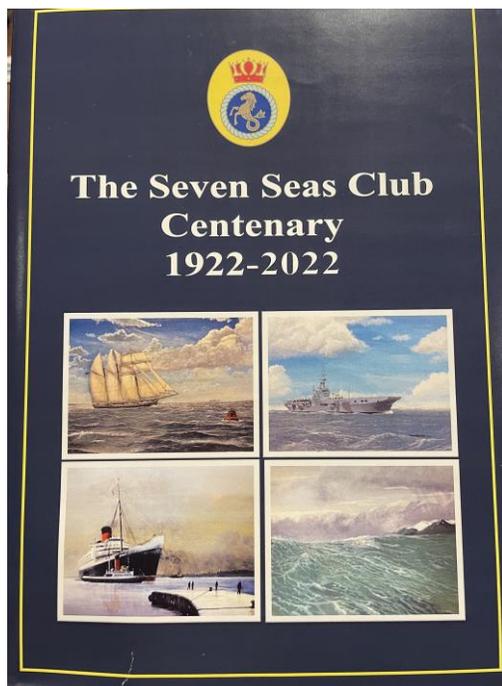
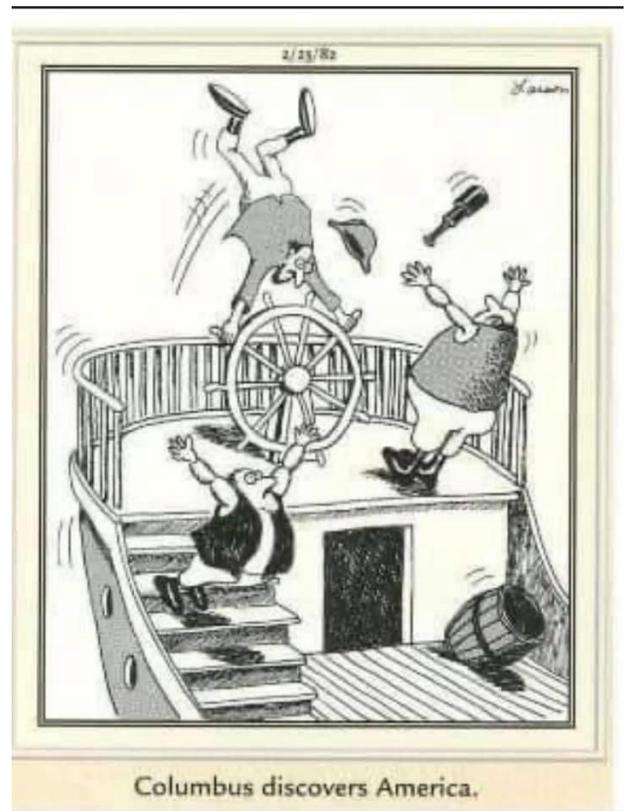


## Book of the Month

## On the Lighter side



This magnificent book of the illustrations of George French Angas was published by our Guest Speaker Dr. Philip Jones. It is available for purchase from the South Australian Museum.



Our Club has recently received a copy of the Seven Seas Club of London Centenary book. A large book with many excellent stories and photographs of the Clubs history. It is now available for viewing from our Library collection.



**Disclaimer:** The views expressed in advertisements and articles published in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the SEVEN SEAS CLUB of AUSTRALIA.

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