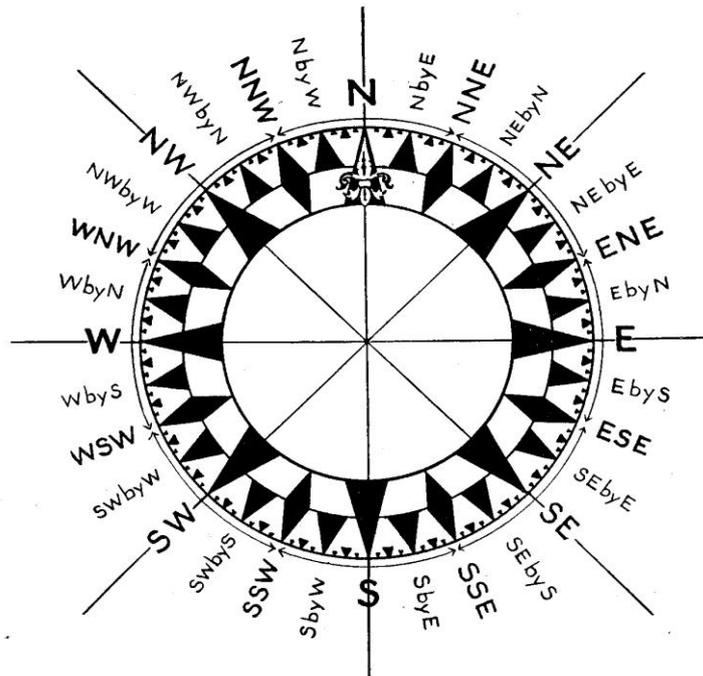




MAY 2014

ISSUE 77



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Editors Note

We were recently in Port Lincoln and visited the Alex Stenross Maritime Museum which we highly recommend to anyone visiting that area.

Next meeting SUNDAY 25th MAY 2014

Skippers Log

Greetings to everyone - well I do think congratulations are in order for Anzac Day, it was a good turn-out for the day. Thank you. It was especially nice to have Derrick Johnston on his gopher join us; also Peter Moore had his new wheels. As usual Mike Day made a great effort coming all the way from Pinnaroo. Vern Evans accompanied by his ever vigilant son Trevor and Tom Billingsley assisted by his daughter managed to walk the whole distance. And to our entire Vindi marchers, well done.



The Cathedral Hotel gave us good service and a great meal. I told the new manager that we all enjoyed it so much we would like to book it for next year. We were considerably well attended to.

Well done everyone for your constant support of the SA Vindi Branch.

A usual request to all those making the next meeting - would you save your egg cartons for me - in good condition please.

Also thank you for bringing raffle prizes along, without them we would have nothing in our emergency funds. Much appreciated. Again more stories for the Newsletter would be appreciated.

Remember there is still time to organise your trip to the Reunion in Western Australia. Tony Harben and Boys will be waiting for you. All details on their web site.

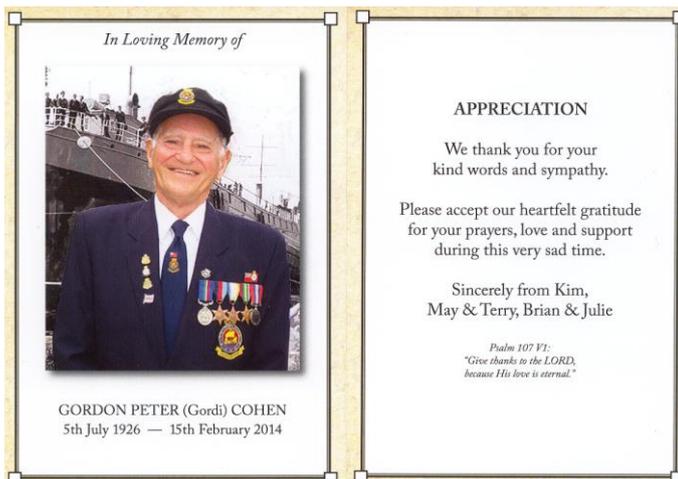
Regards

Tony

From the Almoner's desk

Good news to report that Skipper Tony is now well after a spell in hospital. Anne also about the same time attended the out patients department for an unusual mishap, and we pass on our best wishes.

As always we think of members who are unable to attend meetings because of ill health, we miss you and know you still carry the Vindi comradeship with you.



I sent a condolence card on behalf of our members to Kim Cohen of the Queensland branch. Her husband Gordon (Gordi) recently passed away. Kim replied with a touching letter and wishes to pass on her love and best wishes to our Vindi members.

Congratulations for two special wedding anniversaries. Anne and Jack Nicholls celebrated their 65th with a holiday in Queensland and Anne's 86th birthday at the same time.

Jill and Mick reached their 50th wedding anniversary; no doubt they had a great time celebrating and looking back on 50 golden years. Well done and may Anne, Jack, Jill and Mick have many more happy years to celebrate.



Happy birthday, to those members who celebrated in March. George Hutchings, Brian Toogood, Anne Iles, and Anne Nicholls.

In April it's just me Anne Withey.

May brings birthday wishes for Evelyn Mack, Peter Moore and Vern Evans.

We have a long list of birthdays for June; John Tamkin, Roy Hill, Tony, Winston, Les Cook, John Hines, Shirley and Barbara. Enjoy your special days.

Cheers everyone
Anne Withey

Following on from 'Can't Wait For Next New Years Eve'

Only half a story was told, what a costly cock up, \$110.00 per head, the food was terrible, the wine was worse (although some seemed to be enjoying it). The band got louder and worse as time went on and we were stuck right in front of it. Our requests to turn the sound down, was to no avail, and as our table was by the patio doors leading to the grass area we retreated further and further as the noise increased.

It seems one fellow missed the fireworks display and couldn't even remember the Highland Piper at midnight. I believe he was having a snooze down by the lake (our man not the piper). One couple who were staying at my house were so exhausted by the evening's entertainment that the lady retired to bed on wobbly legs whilst the two old boys then decided that a tot of rum might go down well. Half a bottle later we totter off to bed (different beds). The morning arrives and one married man comes out of the Honeymoon Suite with a big smile on his face and bleary eyes. I thought Allo Allo what's he been up to, seeing the New Year in like old times. Na. He informs me that he has an allergy to cats. Some story, I don't believe it for one moment.

Cometh the dawn on New Years day, one hardy Vindi boy who had volunteered to be duty chef for brunch (this was when he was sober a couple of weeks before) awaits his guests. On the arrival of the living dead, deadly white smiling faces and dark sunglasses, that was just the ladies, true Vindi boys always wake up at sparrows fart, full of life and enthusiasm welcoming the new day. Perhaps they were even looking forward to the hair of the dog that had savaged them the night before. After a large cup of coffee the hero of the day cooked up a storm, scrambled eggs, bacon, bangers, mushrooms, tomatoes, shirt lifters and his famous hash browns all washed down with more coffee. After the usual natter and trying to recall the previous nights escapades a little nap was in order, after all it was nearly 3pm. On their departure one and all saying never again (until the next New Years Eve), another quickly broken resolution. Conclusion of one very fine night and day, I would rather keep them in food for a day than a week. The only tip I got was not to lead them all astray the next year. Why is it that the single man always gets the credit for everybody's lack of restraint?

Brian Toogood

BOOK REVIEW

'THE UNLIKELY VOYAGE OF JACK DE CROW' is an entertaining read by Australian author A J MacKinnon. This true story begins when Mackinnon discovers an abandoned lowliest of the fleet Mirror dinghy in the grounds of Ellesmere College, Whitmere in Shropshire, where he works as a teacher. He renovated the dinghy and decided to row and sail the canals and rivers from Ellesmere to Gloucester on the river Severn. It will be of interest to VINDI members that some important time was spent at Sharpness.

Naively I imagined that travelling peaceful canals and rivers through England's verdant countryside would indeed be a 'piece of cake', not so! The sheer physical effort and ingenuity required at times to make progress was amazing. A huge unexpected bonus were the colourful characters encountered along the way, clearly illustrating that good old fashioned assistance and hospitality offered at the right moment is alive and well.

After many adventurous episodes, our intrepid author far exceeds his original goal; and buoyed by this success proceeded to make future plans that entailed crossing the English Channel to France to tackle canals and major river systems through Europe to the final destination, the Black Sea, a daunting prospect to say the least, especially in such a tiny craft.

A fascinating panorama unfolds, and nostalgically I shared part of the journey through the pages on the same route along the beautiful Moselle and Rhine rivers, having travelled in the comfort of a brand new Rover car, crossing and re-crossing the rivers at whim, to visit picturesque villages, history abounding midst fairytale castles and steeply terraced vineyards, a luxurious road journey compared to gallant Jack and her skipper battling the odds on busy waterways.

The author and Jack de Crow are a delightful combination of eccentricity, derring-do, perseverance and humour. They paint an absorbing patchwork picture, surely worthy of you settling in your armchair and sharing the interesting and extraordinary adventures aboard a trusty Mirror dingy.

Anne Withey

THE CITY OF ADELAIDE LIFEBOAT

Following the wreck of the Star of Greece at Port Willunga in 1888, with considerable loss of life, the colony of South Australia resolved to procure a powered lifeboat. The Chief Marine Officer of the colony travelled to England and purchased a suitable vessel at a cost of £3,500.00 which was donated by Robert Barr Smith (of Elder Smith fame). The vessel was named the City of Adelaide.



The City of Adelaide, a steam powered water jet propelled lifeboat, was built by R&H Green, of Blackwall, England between 1891 and 1895. The boat arrived in South Australia in 1896 and was commissioned at Glenelg shortly afterwards. In 1908 the boiler and steam engine were removed and replaced with a 40hp. petrol engine. In 1911 the jet propulsion and pumps were removed and a propeller fitted. In October 1930 the lifeboat service was disbanded and the vessel was sold to a Mr. Taylor and became known as the Salvation Army's fishing launch. The boat was then sold to Mr. Benno Hage, of Port Lincoln, who operated it for about three years for fishing and transporting sheep, wool and firewood.

A four cylinder tractor engine was fitted. The boat was later sold to Mr. Roly Puckridge who coupled a Fordson kerosene engine to the existing unit. The boat was used to cart sheep and wool. At the end of her operational life the boat was sold to local boat builder Axel Stenross. In approximately 1952 she was stripped of all fittings and then for many years the hulk lay on the beach at Porters Bay. On August 19th 1985 the vessel was relocated to her present sight (Axel Stenross museum, Port Lincoln). The custody of the City of Adelaide is now under the control of the Axel Stenross Maritime Museum Inc., and the History Trust of South Australia. The City of Adelaide is protected under the Historic Shipwrecks Act, 1981. Restoration of the vessel is the responsibility of the Minister of Environment and Planning and the State Heritage Department.

With thanks to the Axel Stenross museum for the use of this article.

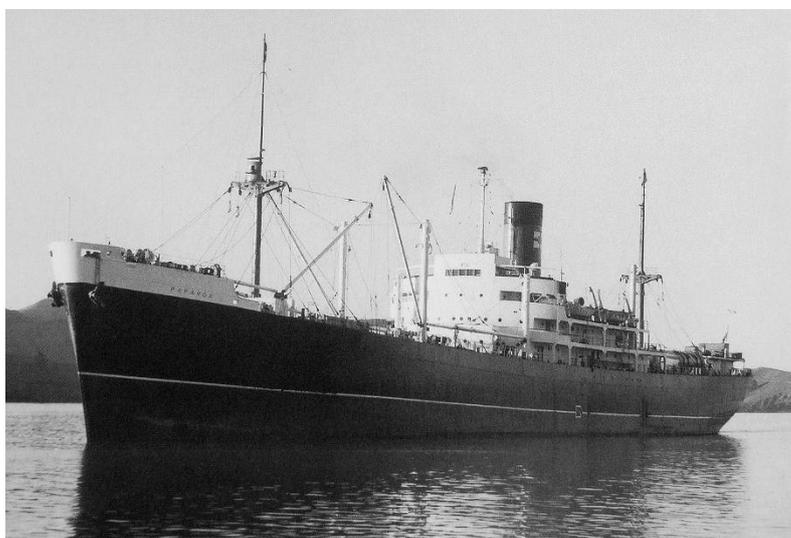


I was born in 1926 in London. My mother was Welsh and my father Cornish. It was the time of the Great Depression and we lived in England and then Wales as my father searched for work. Despite the depression I had a happy childhood as we moved from town to town in Essex. 1939 and World War 11 started, I was then 13 years old and all schooling was interrupted and I was evacuated with other school kids from Southend-on-Sea on the Thames Estuary to Derbyshire to be safe from enemy action should Germany decided to invade England, as it was an area where it was thought an invasion was likely to take place. South Normanton near Alfreton was a mining

village and I was billeted with a nice old couple who had a son in University, I remember a few weeks schooling there which included a visit down a coal mine.

I went home a few weeks later and my father took the family down to Cornwall. We went through and saw some of the bomb damage He'd left Penzance in 1901 to go to sea as a cabin boy aged 12. I started my first job there and my first weeks wage was 7 shillings and 10 pence, about a dollar in today's money. My first job was working at the Co-op and I was a van boy on the Co-op bread cart and my memory of that was riding down a hill and attempting a u-turn in a narrow street and the bakers cart turned over spilling out all the bread. I joined the ADCC which was the forerunner of the Air Cadets, we wore WW1 uniforms and I remember little about what we did except strut around trying to look grown up. While me and some friends were walking along the seafront in Penzance a couple of German fighter planes raced low across the beach firing their machine-guns, another incident was when German bombers dropped mines into Mounts Bay, one missed the sea and landed in the town in Adelaide Street but didn't go of but it destroyed the house on which it landed. I raced up to have a look and helped two old ladies out of the wreckage. After about a year the family moved back to Southend-on-sea in Essex.

At aged 15 I joined the Air Cadets and trained as a Wireless operator /Air gunner, the local airfield was a fighter base and we air cadets went there for extra training and I was lucky enough to fly a Link Trainer. This was a box like structure and luckily it was bolted to the floor of the hanger as according to the instructor I crashed the plane and was twenty feet underground. We also had flights over the Thames Estuary target towing for the Spitfires and Hurricanes to have a crack at hitting the windsocks we towed behind us. I had my turn in target towing sitting in the seat of a Fairy Fulmar which was a Fleet Air Arm Plane. During the week we also did our turn on fire watch duty looking out for incendiary bombs from the roof of the local Labor Party Headquarters, and we took advantage of having the keys to the building and sampling the beer which they never seemed to miss. The age for serving in the RAF was 17 and a quarter and I couldn't wait to join up so I applied to join the Merchant Navy and was accepted and was sent to the Training Ship 'Vindicatrix' belonging to The Gravesend Sea School. At the outbreak of World War 2 she was berthed in the River Thames up in Greenwich but she was towed out of the war zone and tied up in the Sharpness canal in Gloucestershire, she was a sailing ship built in 1890 or there about. It was very cold that winter, the food and accommodation was horrible but we were young and coped. After 13 weeks training as a seaman, I won 1st prize at boxing the compass and my prize was a small bar of chocolate, my only claim to fame. At the end of the course me and the rest of my intake were told, 'we don't need seamen at the moment so you can go home and wait for a telegram or you can go right away as Stewards'. Well all I wanted to do was get away to sea so I put my hand up and the Chief Steward took us below to the Officers Mess and showed us how to lay the table for Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner. We were now Stewards. I didn't mind as my Dad was at sea and had been since Queen Victoria was on the throne, he joined the Army in 1914 and went on to serve in the Dardanelles and was wounded and invalided out, so he went back to sea and went on to serve throughout the second world war and through until the 1950s.



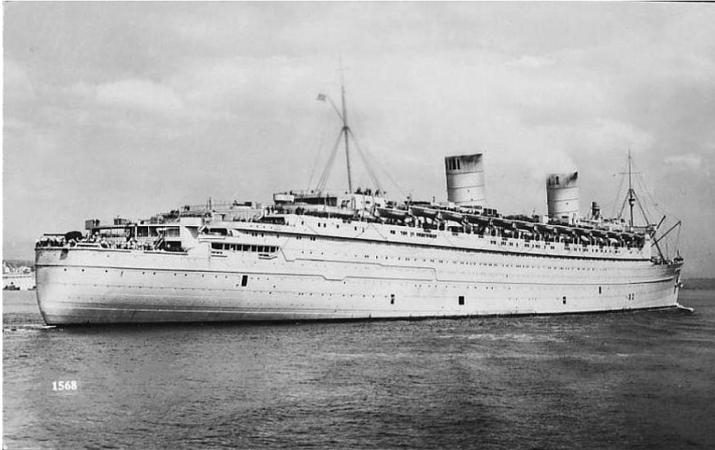
Paparoa

My brother Len was serving at sea on the *Queen Mary* as a butcher, Len first went to sea as a deckhand in 1936 on the *Beaverbrook* to Canada. It was wintertime and I think it put him off for a while and he came ashore for a time and trained as a butcher, then went back to sea on a passenger ship the *Mooltan* running between the UK and India. I came home for a spot of leave and then went to Scotland as a cabin boy to join a ship that had just been built. Her name was the *Paparoa*, she was built on the Clyde by Alexander Stephens Shipbuilder Company for the New Zealand Shipping Company. I joined her in Partick and was paid a wage of four pounds a month plus four pounds a month danger money.

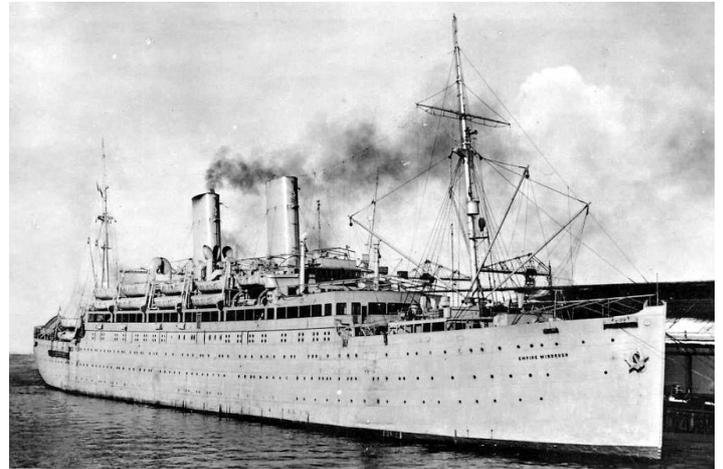
We stayed in Glasgow for a couple of weeks while guns were added to her armament, she already had machine guns on the bridge and rocket launchers amidships, about twelve Gunners from The Royal Maritime Regiment joined us to operate these guns with volunteers from the crew to assist, so I did my little bit by serving as an ammunition carrier. While this was happening I went out for a few beers at night and went to the local dance and danced to the music of Jimmy Shands band, a very popular accordion band.

A small mutiny happened when the engine room crew objected to the baker who joined the ship, as there was a rumor that went around that the baker had lost his last few ships. On leaving port, the 2nd Engineer persuaded them to go back to work by waving a pistol at them. Then we sailed down the Clyde to do sea trials and while we were at anchor I had a surprise visit from my brother Len who'd scrounged a lift from the *Queen Mary*, she had just arrived from New York with around 15,000 American troops aboard. We left the Clyde to form a convoy in Belfast and then set off across the Atlantic to Panama, our brand new ship broke down in mid Atlantic and left us wallowing until the engineers got us going again and we carried on unescorted. We got shore leave in Colon and I went ashore for my first foreign port. Going through the Panama Canal was a unique experience, seeing parrots in the trees and alligators on mud banks kept us on deck for most of the trip through the canal. Then it was on to New Zealand, stopping on the way at Pitcairn Island to unload provisions and take on mail. In New Zealand we loaded up with butter, cheese and lamb carcasses for home. I did two trips on the *Paparoa* then transferred to troopships for the rest of the war.

My next trip was on a Royal Mail ship the *RMS Almanzora*, I did two trips on her, the first to the West Coast of Africa taking on soldiers of the Kings West African Rifles for service in the Burma Campaign, the second was to Italy taking reinforcements and wounded troops to Egypt.



Troopship Queen Elizabeth



Empire Windrush

My next ship was the *Troopship Queen Elizabeth* on the New York /Clyde run carrying troops for the invasion of Europe. I stayed with her until the war ended and came ashore for a while and then went back to sea on another troopship *The Empire Windrush*, my last trip on her was to India to bring home the last British troops out of India following India Independence in 1947. I had my 21st birthday on her at a place called Masawa in the Red Sea and swallowed the anchor in 1947.

I took advantage of a training scheme for ex service men and became an instrument maker, meanwhile courting Anne whose family had been bombed out in London early in the war. We were married at Southend on Sea on the 2nd of April 1949, we raised two children in a one bedroom flat, not all that good accommodation but better than many as housing was difficult at the end of the war. I was lucky enough to join a self build scheme organized by a local councilor and between us 34 men built 34 houses of various design, it took just over four years effort but it was well worth the wait.

In 1963 I got an itchy foot and decided to apply for emigration, I wrote to Australia house and we went up to London for an interview and were sponsored by The Housing Trust of South Australia. The four of us travelled on the *Fairsky*, having a mixed trip, me and our 12 year old son loving it but my wife Anne and daughter Valerie were quite sick. We arrived in Port Adelaide on the 9th January 1964. We stayed at the Elder Park Hostel for a few days then bought a house in Elizabeth. I started work at Holden's as a toolmaker. I had other jobs over the years including time down in Port Adelaide building tugs for the off sea oil rigs in Victoria and as foreman in a factory making fruit boxes for the River-land. Over the years Anne and I had built a lovely house in Port Elliot and when I retired from Holden's we sold up in Elizabeth and moved down to Port Elliot, but for various reasons we went back to Elizabeth where we stayed until my daughter and son-in-law Ray asked us if we would like to live in Normanville next door to them. This offer we took and have now been here for over three years and enjoying it.

Jack Nicholls

A DIFFERENT TIME A DIFFERENT PLACE

Reading the January Vindi newsletter and seeing past indiscretions and the shaking of closets with skeletons within being brought to light I thought I should bring this little tale out of the said closet.

Imagine two good looking, virginal Vindi boys minding their own business in the Fremantle Railway Station during a Down- under re-union a few years ago when they were accosted by a lovely young lady with legs up to her armpits and wearing long boots and a leather skirt so short you could see what she had eaten for breakfast. The said boy's being old and decrepit looked at each other and said, 'I wonder if she gives senior discount or perhaps two oldies might make one good for the right price'. Anyway all our fantasies went up in smoke when one wife who will remain nameless (JS) came out from behind a display cabinet. This young lady must have been Usain Bolt's sister the way she took off. Her high heels sounding like a herd of Vindi boys heading for the bar. Some wives have no sense of humour, luckily this one did. There we were, two old men with hearts pounding and thinking of the one that got away and looking suitably disheartened, (I mean glad that they had been rescued by Mrs JS). Mr MS and Mr BT were escorted out of the station. Going out onto the footpath MS looked at BT or it could have been the other way around as one of us didn't have a wife looking over his shoulder. There across the street was a 'Cat House,' sorry I mean a massage parlour. I think many years long ago passed before our eyes at that moment, with perhaps plenty of happy memories. Not that a good little Vindi boy would ever dream of doing such a thing, yeah right. Who said there is no life in an old sea dog.

By one happy Vindi boy,

THE THEFT OF THE SS FERRET

The *SS Ferret* was built for G & J Burns in 1871 by J & J Thompson and used in the ferry service on the River Clyde until she was sold to Dingwall & Skye Railway Co. Ltd in 1873. In 1878 her new owners were the Highland Railway Co. In October 1880 enquiries were made to the owners for the ship to be chartered for a Mediterranean cruise. Mr Henderson, the leader of the three men making the enquiry said that the cruise was for his ailing wife. With a six months lease agreed upon and the first month's charter paid it was time to set sail. A new crew were assembled and provisions were bought and loaded paid with bills that were later found to be worthless. Sailing from Glasgow to Cardiff to bunker coal and picking up the 'ailing' wife the *SS Ferret* sailed through the Straits of Gibraltar and into the Mediterranean. During the night and with her lights out she sailed back through the Straits heading for the Atlantic. With this subterfuge it was hoped that the authorities would presume that the ship had been lost with all hands somewhere in the Mediterranean.

Mr Henderson and his conspirators spun some yarns and convinced the crew to co-operate or be shot. The appearance of the ship was changed, with the funnel painted black instead of yellow and the lifeboats changed from blue to white. All other items that would identify the ship were thrown overboard. With the chartroom and wheelhouse rebuilt on the aft-deck the ships profile had completely changed. Renamed *Bantam* and with a new set of forged papers she made her way to Brazil. With a newly loaded cargo of coffee bound for Marseilles, they instead headed for Cape Town and once again changed the ships name to *India*, and the coffee was sold in Cape Town for £13,000.00. Mr Henderson's next port of call was to be Port Phillip, Victoria, Australia. On arrival in April 1881 the port authorities were told that they had sailed from Bermuda.

With the disappearance of the *SS Ferret* the owners had placed an advert in various newspapers for any information as to her whereabouts.

Sitting on the wharf where he was employed as a policeman at Queenscliffe, Constable James Davidson, who was a new arrival from Scotland was reading an article taken from the Glasgow Evening Citizen referring to the disappearance of the *SS Ferret* from the Clyde as the *India* steamed past.

Noticing that the *India* had broken several port regulations and that the *India* fitted the description of the *SS Ferret* raised the constable's suspicions so he alerted his superiors to his concerns. The feint appearance under the ships name of other lettering confirmed the hoax and the ship was seized by the custom officials. Mr Henderson and his conspirators were apprehended before they could escape the authorities, and they were eventually charged with conspiracy on the high seas and defrauding the ship's owners, plus other maritime offences.

The ship was sold to William Whinham of Adelaide in 1881 and registered as the *Ferret* in 1883 when it was taken over by the Adelaide Steamship Co. She traded in the Port Adelaide – Spencer Gulf area and on the South Australian coast carrying passengers and general cargo, where it made weekly round trips from Port Adelaide to Port Lincoln, Moonta, Wallaroo and Cowell.

On the 14th November the *Ferret* ran aground and was wrecked on the beach at Reef Head near Cape Spencer. The crew of twenty one were all rescued after walking five kilometres to Stenhouse Bay.

REUBEN JAMES 1776 – 1838

History tells us that Reuben James was born in Delaware, Ohio sometime in 1776 and that his career was to be in the US Navy. During the Barbary Wars the American frigate *USS Philadelphia* was captured by pirates when it ran aground in Tripoli. A group of volunteers including Boatswain's Mate Rueben James under the leadership of Lieutenant Stephen Decatur entered the harbour of Tripoli under the cover of darkness with the intention of burning the *USS Philadelphia* to prevent its use by pirates. Boarding the ship on the 16th February 1804 they were confronted by the pirates whereupon a fight broke out. The now injured Reuben James placed himself between his lieutenant and a sword wielding pirate. With his hands already wounded he took a blow from the pirate's sword, saving the life of the Lieutenant. On recovering from his wounds he continued his naval career, including many years with Decatur. With his health declining, brought on in part by his past wounds he was forced to retire in 1836. He passed away at the US Naval hospital in Washington DC on the 3rd December 1838.

USS REUBEN JAMES (DD245)

The first *Reuben James* was a four stack destroyer with a crew of 101, a main armament of four 4inch guns, a single 3inch gun and twelve 21inch torpedo tubes. She was commissioned on the 24th September 1920 under the command of Commander Gordon W Hines.

After being assigned to the Atlantic fleet from 1921-1922 the *Reuben James* saw duty in the Mediterranean. In 1926 she was based in New York and was used to patrol the Nicaraguan coast to quell the influx of weapons to revolutionaries. In 1933 during the 'The Revolt of the Sergeants', a military coup in Cuba led by Fulgencio Batista, the ship was once again used for patrolling the Caribbean and later transferred to San Diego. In 1939 the *Reuben James* returned to the Atlantic fleet.

With the outbreak of WW11 in Europe, she was attached to the Neutrality Patrol guarding the American coastline and joined the escort convoy force in 1941 to ensure the safe arrival of materials to Britain. The convoys operated as far as Iceland, where they were handed over to British escort ships to complete their journey.

In company with four other destroyers she sailed from Newfoundland on the 23rd October 1941 to escort an eastbound convoy. On 31st October 1941 in the early hours of the morning she was hit forward by a torpedo which blew the entire front end off when a forward magazine exploded, causing her to sink within five minutes. She had positioned herself between an ammunition ship and the known position of a German U-boat Wolfpack. Her 44 survivors were picked up by the *USS Niblack* and *USS Hilary P Jones*.

USS Reuben James (DD245) was the first warship of the US Navy lost in the Second World War (two months before Pearl Harbour).

SS VARVASSI

On 5th January 1947 the Greek owned steamer named *Varvassi* was travelling from Algiers to Southampton and Boulogne with a cargo of tangerines, wine and iron ore. Also on board were seven heifers as a fresh meat reserve to be eaten on board.

In clear weather on Sunday 5th January 1947, in sight of the Isle of Wight Needles the pilot cutter was approaching the *Varvassi* when it was noticed that she was drifting towards the rocks where she finally came to rest on a ledge 90 metres from the lighthouse, where she remained wedged between the rocks in an upright position. The Yarmouth lifeboat was launched but the captain of the *Varvassi* refused assistance, hoping to re-float the ship on the next tide with the help of the tug *Calshot* which was standing by. At high tide the *Calshot* tried to haul the ship off of the rocks breaking her chains in the attempt. It was at this time that the Yarmouth lifeboat was asked to put out again and stand by in case there was a need to abandon ship. The *Calshot* and the captain of the *Varvassi* attempted to re-float her again, but by 9pm it became obvious that nothing further could be done that night as she was taking on too much water. The lifeboat returned ashore at 2am when the crew reported that all was OK. However at 6.15am the lifeboat was again summoned by a maroon to once again attend the ship and take the crew off, who were then transferred to Yarmouth IOW.

The following day some of the crew re-boarded the vessel to salvage what they could. The next day, the weather was too rough to go along side easily, so it wasn't until the Wednesday that it was possible to board again. The heifers, being loaded from a foreign port were not allowed to be brought ashore so had to be slaughtered.

On the 21st January 1947 the *Varvassi* was declared a total wreck. The sunken remains of the *Varvassi* still presents a hazard to shipping, especially the yacht racing around the island.