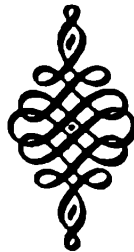




**SIMON'S TOWN
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

BULLETIN



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FLAG OFFICERS OF THE CAPE

Vernon White

Vice-Admiral M. Burmester 1929-1931

Vice-Admiral H.J. Tweedie 1931-1933

Rudolf Miles Burmester, the third son of F.G. Burmester was born on 11 November 1875. His chosen career was the Royal Navy in which he served with distinction during two world wars, becoming a full Admiral in 1938. In 1907 he was promoted to Commander in which year he married Margery Gladys Lloyd, the daughter of Admiral Rodney Lloyd CB. The Burmester's had a son and a daughter. During 1913 Commander Burmester was appointed to the Admiralty as a staff officer and promoted to Captain the following year. From 1915 to 1916 he commanded HMS EURYLUS in the Dardanelles, being awarded the CMG in 1916. He spent the next three years from 1917 to 1919 as Chief of Staff to the C-in-C Mediterranean Fleet, and was made a Companion of the Order of the Bath at the end of that period of service before returning to the Admiralty in 1919 as Director of Signals.

From 1920 to 1922 Captain Burmester was Chief of Staff, Portsmouth Command, becoming Captain of HMS WARSPITE in 1923. In the same year he was made a naval ADC to the King and promoted to Rear Admiral in 1924. Two years later Burmester returned to the Admiralty as Director of Mobilisation, which appointment he held until becoming C-in-C Africa Station in 1929 with the rank of Vice-Admiral. His flagship at the Cape was HMS CALCUTTA, a Carlisle class cruiser of 4190 tons displacement. Admiral Burmester's Flag Captain was Captain S.S. Bonham-Carter RN.

The Africa Station was one of the Royal Navy's most strategic commands, and within the decade Britain and her Empire would be locked in a struggle for survival with Nazi Germany, Italy and Japan. Seemingly, however, at the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s Politicians of the day either ignored or

were not cognizant of developments taking place within the Axis countries. In October 1929 Ramsay MacDonald, the British Labour Prime Minister, visited the United States for talks on naval disarmament, and in January 1930 presided over the London Conference on Naval Disarmament between Britain, France, Italy and Japan. Four months later on 22 April the Treaty of London on naval disarmament was signed, placing a limit on the number of aircraft carriers and submarines each nation should have, the very instruments of war on which Britain was later to depend for victory in the 2nd World War. Of more immediate concern to the British Admiralty and naval Commanders-in-Chief overseas was the outbreak of mutiny in the Royal Navy at Invergordon on 15 September 1931, when seamen of the Atlantic Fleet refused to take their ships to sea in protest of pay cuts imposed by the British Government. Three days after the Invergordon mutiny took place on the far side of the world Japanese troops occupied Manchuria, the first of such international incidents which led up to the outbreak of the 2nd World War in September 1939.

Vice-Admiral Burmester returned to England at the end of 1931 and was promoted to full Admiral being placed on the retired list. It was in 1931 that Adolf Hitler became German Chancellor and the year in which Winston Churchill first warned in Parliament of Germany's re-armament programme. Admiral Burmester became a Knight Commander of the British Empire in 1934 and shortly after the outbreak of war in 1939 he was recalled to active service becoming Flag Officer in charge at Cardiff, which appointment he held from 1942 to 1944. Cardiff was one of the key ports used by Merchant shipping during the Battle of the Atlantic.

Lady Burmester died in 1952 and Sir Rudolf Burmester died four years later on 21 December 1956 at the age of 81 years, at his home at Eaton Mansions, Clivedon Place, London.

Admiral Burmester's successor as Commander-in-Chief at the Cape of Good Hope was Vice-Admiral H.J. Tweedie, who was C-in-C Cape from 1931 to 1933. Hugh Justin Tweedie was born on 5 April 1877, the son of General Michael Tweedie of the Royal Artillery and descended from a Scottish border family whose records

date back to 1125. Hugh Tweedie's grandfather, who came from Lachan in Scotland, served with the Royal Artillery during the Peninsular War and was at the Battle of Waterloo. After that battle Tweedie's artillery unit returned to Rye on the English south coast from where they marched back to their barracks in Woolwich, London. During the march Tweedie fell sick at Rolvenden in Kent, where he was befriended by a local Scott named Forbes who originally came from Aberdeenshire. It was here that Tweedie met and subsequently married Miss Forbes who also came from an Army family. Their son Michael, who became a General in the Royal Artillery, served in the Crimea, was in India during "the mutiny" and saw action in the Red River Campaign in Canada.

Lord Winterton, a friend and neighbour of General Michael Tweedie, nominated Hugh Justin Tweedie for the Royal Navy and in preparation for a naval career, Hugh Tweedie attended Eastman's Academy in Portsmouth run by Tom and Harry Eastman "for young gentlemen aspiring to become naval officers". In 1890, after passing a week of examinations, Hugh Tweedie was accepted for the Britannia Royal Naval College at Dartmouth, and entered the Royal Navy at the age of 13 years. Two years later in December 1892 he sailed from England in the P & O liner *WASSILLIA* and joined HMS DREADNOUGHT in Malta. Her captain was later Rear Admiral Sir Arthur Moore (C-in-C Cape of Good Hope Station 1901-1904) to whom Midshipman Hugh Tweedie became ADC or Captain's "Doggie" for one year. In June 1893 when HMS CAMPERDOWN rammed HMS VICTORIA during fleet manoeuvres in the Mediterranean, the DREADNOUGHT assisted in the recovery of the survivors of the VICTORIA which sank in seven minutes.

Two months later Midshipman Tweedie was transferred to HMS HAWKE (Captain Pelham Aldrich RN) under the tuition of Commander C. Burney RN. In July 1894 Tweedie transferred to HMS RODNEY and in February 1896 he sailed back to England in the P & O liner ARETHUSA after two years and three months away from home. Following a short leave Tweedie joined HMS ACTIVE, a sailing corvette in the Training Squadron, whose 1st Lieutenant Lieutenant Ethelston was later killed at Ladysmith during the Anglo Boer War. The ACTIVE

sailed for the Channel Islands where she stayed for fourteen days before proceeding to Vadso in the far north of Norway via Iceland and the North Cape to witness a total eclipse of the sun. Among the many scientists and astronomers in Vadso to witness the eclipse was Madame Curie. From there the ACTIVE continued her training cruise, and in Tenerife, Midshipman Tweedie transferred to HMS WYE for the journey back to England to enable him to sit for examination at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich. Promoted to Actg. Sub-Lieutenant, Tweedie then went to the Naval College at Portsmouth for whom he played rugby as well as for the United Services.

In 1897 the year in which Sir Alfred Milner arrived in Cape Town on 5 May as British High Commissioner, and in which Lieutenant Winston Churchill was mentioned-in-despatches whilst serving with the Malakand Field Force, Sub-Lt Hugh Tweedie joined HMS VIRAGO (Captain Clifton Brown) one of the new destroyers. He was then appointed to HMS PHOEBE in Simon's Town, sailing to Cape Town in the Union-Castle liner NORMAN. His companion on the voyage to the Cape was Lt Ferguson 1st Lieutenant of HMS BARRACOUTA. On his arrival in Cape Town Tweedie was informed that HMS PHOEBE was away from Simon's Town and he was appointed to HMS MONARCH (Captain S Rolleston). The C-in-C Cape of Good Hope was at that time Rear Admiral Sir H. Rawson, flying his flag in HMS ST GEORGE (Flag Captain Captain G. le C. Egerton). From 1898 to 1899 Tweedie served in the MONARCH on the West Coast of Africa until she was relieved by HMS PHILOMEL, when he returned to England. During 1899 and 1900 Tweedie served in HMS FLYING FOX a destroyer in the Portsmouth command, then in HMS CHAMPION guard ship at Sheerness and finally in HMS MINERVA an experimental wireless ship at Chatham which carried Marconi's assistant on board.

While serving in HMS MINERVA, Tweedie was given command of a torpedo boat No. 56 with the Channel Fleet attached to MINERVA. Between 1900 and 1902 Tweedie was appointed to HMS ALBION (Captain Hewitt) based on Chatham, whose Commander subsequently fought at the Battle of Spionkop with the Naval Brigade. From Chatham Tweedie was posted to the China station, but

in April 1902 he was back in England and was appointed to the Britannia Royal Naval College as Physical Training Officer under Captain Goodenough and Commander Brand. In 1906 Tweedie was posted back to the China Station, being appointed to HMS KING ALFRED, flagship of Admiral Sir Arthur Moore, formerly C-in-C Cape of Good Hope station between 1901 and 1904. Whilst on the China Station Tweedie visited Vladivostock and Korea. In 1907 his fiancée arrived in Yokohama by sea, where it was intended they should marry, but the flagship had already sailed for Kobe, where the ceremony took place.

HMS KING ALFRED paid off in 1909 and on recommissioning Tweedie, only recently promoted to Lieutenant was appointed her 1st Lieutenant. Shortly afterwards Commander Consett, the ship's executive officer fell ill, when Tweedie was appointed acting Commander under the new C-in-C China station Admiral Sir Hedworth Lambton. HMS KING ALFRED arrived back in Portsmouth in March 1910 when Tweedie was promoted to the substantive rank of Commander. Three months later he was given command of HMS BONNETTA, a destroyer in the 5th Destroyer Flotilla based on Devonport. From there Tweedie moved to Dover to take command of HMS CHAMELEON a destroyer in the 2nd Destroyer flotilla, Captain "D" being Captain Brand formerly with Tweedie at Britannia Royal Naval College in 1902.

The 2nd Destroyer Flotilla was moved from Dover to Invergordon, but en route they were met by a severe storm in the North Sea, when Tweedie was badly injured, receiving a compound fracture of the skull. After a month's leave in Switzerland with his wife, Tweedie was appointed Captain of HMS HOPE in which he served from August 1910 to December 1913, when he was appointed Commander in HMS ESSEX (Captain H.D.R. Watson). The ESSEX sailed to Mexico and Jamaica and brought out refugees from Mexico City before sailing to Canada. ESSEX took part in the Mexico campaign under Rear Admiral Sir Christopher Craddock who commanded the South American Squadron and who later died at the Battle of Coronel in November 1914 when his flagship HMS GOOD HOPE was sunk in an engagement off Coronel with the German cruiser SCHARNHORST, flagship of Vice-Admiral Graf von Spey who commanded the

German East Asiatic Squadron. It was during the Mexico landings that Commander Tweedie carried despatches to the British and Foreign embassies in Mexico City, when rail and telegraph communications were disrupted. On his return from Mexico City Tweedie brought back with him over 100 refugees, American women and children from Solidaridad district. During July 1914 the ESSEX conveyed the new Governor General of Canada, the Duke of Connaught, from England to Newfoundland. On 3 August 1914 the ESSEX, while on her way back to Mexican waters, received a signal from the Admiralty informing her Captain of the outbreak of war with Germany, and instructing the ship to patrol off New York. While doing so she intercepted the German merchant ship BETHANIA, which was then towed by the ESSEX to Bermuda.

From Bermuda Tweedie returned to Liverpool in R.M.S. FRANCONIA. On his return to England he was promoted a Post Captain at the age of 37 years and given command of HMS ACTIVE at Scapa Flow. He subsequently commanded HMS GALATEA at Scapa, then HMS CALLIOPE in Chatham, wearing the broad pennant of Commodore le Mesurier. His next command was HMS CHAMPION in the process of being built, before being given command of HMS MARSHAL NEY, a monitor off the Belgian coast. She was a new ship recently launched by Mrs Tweedie. The MARSHAL NEY was not a success and she returned to Newcastle where her guns were transferred to HMS TERROR. Captain Tweedie sailed from Newcastle to take command of another monitor HMS THOMAS PICTON at Ismalia in the Suez Canal. On 30 January 1917 Tweedie left Suez for Scapa Flow to take over as Captain of HMS CHAMPION and as Captain "D" 13th Destroyer Flotilla, and also as Captain Superintendent of Port Edgar at Forth Bridge. During the year he was made Commodore Grand Fleet Destroyers leaving Captain Cherry as Captain Superintendent at Port Edgar. On 21 November 1918 Captain Tweedie witnessed the surrender of the German High Seas Fleet, when a total of 170 destroyers including 49 German destroyers were present at Scapa Flow. From Scapa Flow, Tweedie returned to London to serve on the Post War Committee to consider the lessons of the war. In 1919 he was made a Commander of the Order of the Bath and appointed Captain Superintendent of Coastguard in the Western Division. Appointed to command

HMS MARLBOROUGH, a battleship with the Mediterranean Fleet in 1922, when the Navy helped to rescue Greek citizens from Smyrna and when Turkish troops also entered the neutral zone at Chamak. The following year Tweedie was appointed Commodore Devonport Barracks in Plymouth, but at his request was instead appointed to the Admiralty as Director of Training and Staff Duties. In 1925 Tweedie left the Admiralty and went on half-pay in March 1926. October 1927 saw a change in Tweedie's fortunes when he was appointed Rear Admiral Yangtze, based in Shanghai. His next appointment was C-in-C Cape of Good Hope Station where he flew his flag in HMS CARDIFF (Flag Captain Captain J.W.W. Clegg) from February 1931 to 1933. During this time he visited Rhodesia and Madagascar and at one time acted as British High commissioner in South Africa. In 1933 he was promoted to Vice-Admiral and appointed a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath and became C-in-C The Nore, based on Chatham until 1935 when he was promoted a full Admiral. In 1936 Admiral Sir Hugh Tweedie KCB CB JP RN was placed on the retirement list when he became a Younger Brother of Trinity House, a County Councillor and Deputy Lord Lieutenant of the County of Somerset in England. In 1939 Sir Hugh published "The Story of a Naval Life". Sir Hugh and Lady Tweedie had two sons and four daughters. At the age of 74 years he died, having had a distinguished career in the Royal Navy which lasted for forty-six years.

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CHALLENGER'S VOYAGE IN THE ATLANTIC & IN PART OF ANTARCTICA

THE HMS CHALLENGER EXPEDITION

A.E. READ

This was a scientific exploring expedition sent out by the British Government from 1872 – 1876 for experiments in deep-sea soundings and the investigation of the conditions of life in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Antarctic Oceans. The cruise of HMS CHALLENGER, the first steam vessel to cross the Antarctic Circle, followed that of the LIGHTNING in 1868 and of the PORCUPINE 1869-70. Captain G.S. Nares was naval commander of the vessel, the scientific staff being under Prof. Wyville Thomson. Every kind of scientific appliance was supplied for sounding the depths, mapping the basins, and determining the physical and biological conditions of the oceans.

HMS CHALLENGER reached Santa Cruz in February 1873. Investigations were made at 362 stations. Among numerous places on the route were Madeira, Canaries, W. Indies, Nova Scotia, Cape Verde, Fernando Noronha, Cape of Good Hope, Melbourne, Hong Kong, Japan, Valparaiso, Magellan Straits, Portsmouth and various sub-antarctic islands. The deepest sounding was between Admiralty Island and Japan at 4575 fathoms. CHALLENGER was also charged with finding suitable sites from which to observe the forthcoming Transit of Venus.

Several books were published after the expedition was completed. They were a) Official Reports on the Scientific Results of the Voyage of HMS CHALLENGER (edited by Thomson and John Murray – 50 volumes 1880-1895) and 2 volumes published 1882-1885. b) Notes by a Naturalist on the CHALLENGER 1872-76, 1879 – H.N. Moseley c) Cruise of HMS CHALLENGER – W.J.J. Spry 1876 and d) works of Thomson, Murray, Lord Campbell and J.J. Wild.

Whilst in Simon's Town, where they had arrived from Bermuda, they were busy with checking their instruments but also found time to make observations on the local scene. From "Sketches of many shores visited by HMS CHALLENGER" they have this to say:

"Amongst the ethnological curiosities of the Cape are the descendants of a number of Malay families, which, we were told, were exiled to this colony by their Dutch conquerors. The Orientals still wear the broad-brimmed conical hat and the high wooden pattens – to them, no doubt, sacred symbols of their race and of their long-lost fatherland. Some of them earn a livelihood in the capacity of Coachmen, and a driver surmounted by the pagoda-hat seems to be the necessary complement of a fashionable "turn-out" at the Cape.



"Simon's Town, surrounded as it is by bare rocks and sand-hills, offers but slight temptation to the lover of scenery. The only picturesque spot is a glen at the back of the town. It is traversed by a brook whose bed is strewn with huge boulders, and ends abruptly at the foot of a fine waterfall. Upon the plateau above the fall the geranium may be seen growing wild in tall patches. Its bright scarlet flowers and green leaves form with the white and grey rocks a very attractive combination of colours. The profusion of wild flowers met with at every step redeems the desolate aspect of these mountains; and it would almost seem as if, in the lapse of time, the flowers had quitted the sunburnt plains of the continent, and had taken refuge upon the Cape Peninsula that they might inhale the moist Atlantic breezes.

"An excursion was made by our party to one of the local farms, kept by an

enterprising Scotchman, and situated only a few miles from the Cape, at the foot of the Vasco da Gama Hill. We landed at Buffalo Bay, and following the rough track which leads uphill from the beach, soon came in sight of the farm-house. [This presumably is Mr. McKellar and the farmhouse is now inside the Nature Reserve] The first object which met our eye was one of the gaunt, long and strong-legged fowls leisurely striding about the farm-yard. Familiar as one is with the shape and size of an ostrich, its appearance at first sight is nevertheless a little startling, and it is necessary, as it were, to adjust one's mental focus to the fact that the huge creature before us is a bird. In a fenced-in meadow we saw half-a-dozen more of these animals. It appears they are by no means a kind of "cattle" easily managed; for they are far more timid, and, when enraged, may break the leg or arm of a man with one stroke of their powerful claws. The head of an ostrich, with its broad bill and large eyes, has a most remarkable appearance when seen in front. One of the birds, named Jacob, who seemed to be somewhat of a favourite, was honoured by having his portrait taken; but during the "sitting" he made a snatch at the sketch-book as if objecting to the process. We understand that several of these ostrich farms exist in the colony, and the much-prized feathers form an important item in the export trade of Cape Town.

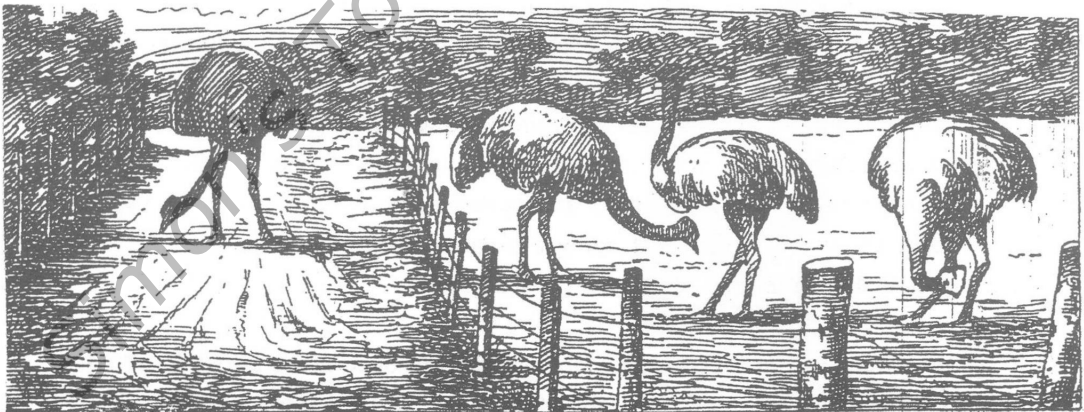
"Upon the beach, a short distance to the southward of Simon's Town, are some extensive shell-mounds, probably marking the site of a former native camp. No doubt this bay, with its abundant supplies of food, has been frequented at all times by the aborigines of the southern extremity of Africa. Large numbers of stone implements have been found in the locality, amongst them fine flint flakes and spherical perforated stones of various sizes, the use of which has not yet been ascertained; also stones with a smooth appearance....."

"We went to Cape Town for docking and are once more afloat in all the pride of fresh paint and new sails. Our arrival in Cape Town was the signal for a series of festivities, receptions, balls etc to which the prospect of

spending the next three months upon the stormy and ice-bound waters of the Southern Ocean gave additional zest. This was a farewell to civilized life in its most attractive form; but before setting out upon our cruise, we had to return to Simon's Bay to take in coal and other necessities.

"Some observations on the temperature of the water revealed the curious fact that Simon's Bay, as well as the whole of False Bay, are alternately occupied by currents of warm and cold water according as the wind blows from a southerly or a northerly quarter. The warm current is probably a branch of the Agulhas Current, while the cold water must be a portion of the Antarctic Current, which is known to flow from the Southern Ocean towards the Cape. On calm nights the water in the bay was phosphorescent. Looking down from the deck, the fish collected about the ship could easily be traced by the long trail of light left behind them and as they turned from side to side their bodies shone like polished silver. The wide space of water between Cape Hangklip and the Cape of Good Hope was crowded with fishing-boats eagerly pursuing their trade."

Our thanks to Dr. S. Cullis for several snippets and photographs regarding HMS CHALLENGER.



OSTRICH FARM NEAR THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE.

THE TRANSIT OF VENUS

PETER VAN BLOMMESTEIN

In astronomy a transit is when one heavenly body passes across the face of another. In our solar system the two inner planets, Mercury and Venus, both transit the Sun; Mercury about 13 times during a century but Venus only has 9 pairs of transits a millennium, so it is a rare event. There have only been six such events since the invention of the telescope: 1631, 1639, 1761, 1769, 1874 and 1882. Incidentally, the patent of the 1st telescope was on 25 September 1608 by Hans Lipperhey of Middelburg, Netherlands. The Transit of Venus was used to measure the solar parallax which is the angle subtended at the centre of the Sun by the Earth's radius. The Solar Parallax is not a distance but an angle.

“Determining the solar parallax was one of the great fundamental problems in astronomy, as this provided a measure of the distance from the Earth to the Sun called the astronomical unit, which effectively determined all other distances in the solar system” wrote W.P. Koorts in MNASSA the official astronomical journal for South Africa (ISSN.002.8266). The earliest recorded sighting of the planet Venus appears in the Venus Tablet, which dates from the 16th century BC, found in the ruins of Nineveh, now in the British Museum. From my source it is not clear if a Transit was recorded or not. Venus was known as Ishtar in Mesopotamia, Aphrodite by the Greeks and Venus by the Romans.

From the Solar Parallax could be calculated the distance of the Earth from the Sun and the distance of all the planets from each other and the sun using Kepler's 3rd Law which stated that the squares of the times of revolution of any two planets about the Sun, are proportional to the cubes of their mean distances from the Sun

$$T^2 = a^3$$

The famous astronomer Kepler predicted a transit on 6 December 1631 but there is no record of an observation, possibly due to the 30 Years War. He did not predict the pair of transits. However, a brilliant young English mathematician and

Simon's Town Historical Society

Sun

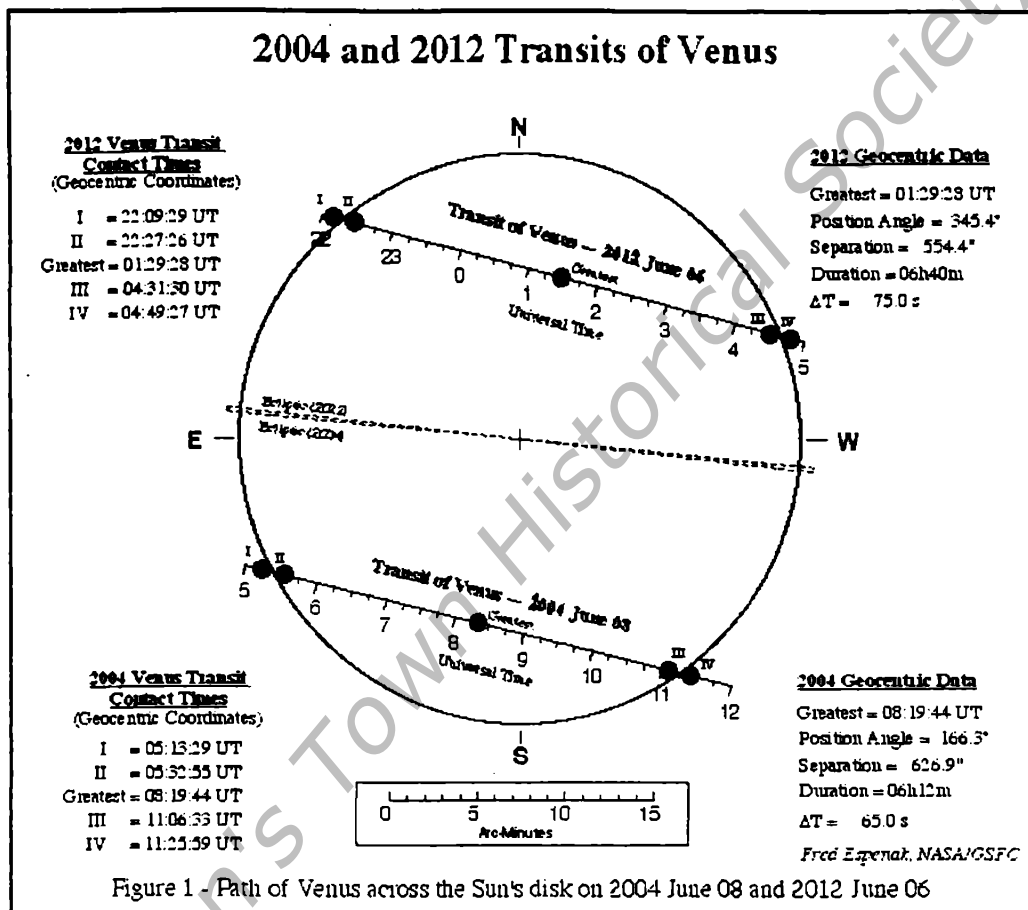
a

149,597.807 Km.

Earth 92,955.807 miles

The angle at a is only a few arc seconds.

2004 and 2012 Transits of Venus



The above diagram/information was obtained from NASA/Goddard Space flight centre, Greenbelt, Maryland, 20771, U.S.A.

astronomer, Jeremiah Horrocks (aged 21), calculated that there would be a Transit on 4 December 1639; this was done only a month before the event, which he observed from Carr House, Much Hoole, in Lancashire, while his friend William Crabtree observed the transit from Manchester. They were the only observers in the 17th century. Tragically both were dead within 3 years. Jeremiah Horrocks correctly calculated the size of Venus as just under one arc second. Horrocks and Crabtree were the first known observers of a Transit of Venus. Later the famous astronomer Halley said that the solar parallax and subsequently the Astronomical Unit could be calculated from a Transit of Venus, but as he died in 1720 he did not live to see the Transits of 1761 and 1769 or the results.

Many governments gave support to expeditions to observe these Transits. It was a coincidence that the famous pair Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon were held up in Cape Town in 1761 on their way to Sumatra so they were able to observe the Transit in Cape Town. They are better known for the Mason Dixon Line in America. In 1769 observers were sent all over the Earth to view the Transit. British astronomers William Wales and James Dymont were sent to Hudson Bay; James Cook and astronomer Charles Green to Matavi Bay in Tahiti, and Neville Maskelyne observed from Greenwich Observatory.

George III who was very interested, observed from his observatory in Kent. French, Mexican, Russian, German and American astronomers made observations at home and all over the world. It is important to remember that due to John Harrison's clocks, time-keeping became extremely accurate, which was necessary for timing transits, as well as for calculating ship's longitude.

From these many observations, the famous German mathematician and astronomer Dr J.F. Encke, calculated the parallax to be 8,5776 arc seconds, making the astronomical unit to be 95.280.000 miles or 153.340.000 km which was not accurate enough, this being due to taking the mean (or average) of two or more observers who observed from the same place. It was not known who was accurate or not. The distance was calculated by Dr Gill (later to be Astronomer Royal in South Africa) in 1877 as 92.876.000 miles, using another method. Later by Radar

measurement it was shown to be 92.955.807 miles.

In 1769 the effect of “black drop” was first reported which seriously affected the timings and subsequent calculations. “Black drop” is when Venus appeared to stick to the Sun as it started moving across the Sun’s disc, and when leaving it, as Venus appeared to be attached by a small meniscus. Have you not seen this distortion when using binoculars or in a camera’s viewfinder? Several seconds could be gained or lost, making a timing inaccurate. It happened to Captain Cook but not to astronomer Charles Green who was with him, as the latter had a better telescope.

It was discovered during the Transit in 1874 how to eliminate the “black drop” by using larger and better figured telescopes. The Transit of 1874 became a rehearsal and a preparation for the 1882 Transit. Dr Gill said South Africa was an ideal place for observations, so a number of viewing sites were chosen. A British expedition from the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, was sent to Montagu Road, now called Touws River, under astronomer Marth Stevens and assistant F. Thornton. They built two piers to support their telescope in what became the courtyard of the former Douglas Hotel, which has now been knocked down. On one of the Simon’s Town Historical Society’s tours on our return from Beaufort West to view Halley’s Comet, we visited this site and saw the twin concrete pillars or piers used to mount their telescope.

The Astronomer Royal Dr Gill, observed from the Royal Observatory in Cape Town with Maclear’s son G.W. Maclear, using a 6” Grubb Telescope. Dr Gill also sent a party to Durban under Edmund Neville, where an observatory was built for the event in the Botanical Gardens on Currie Road, while another group of astronomers from the Royal Observatory, Cape Town was sent to Aberdeen Road, manned by W.H. Finlay and R.T. Pett and equipped also with two 6” Grubb equatorial telescopes. Aberdeen Road and Montagu Road were chosen as they are on the railway line, and the astronomical equipment was very heavy, so it could be used on the spot. However, the best equipped and largest party came to the Huguenot Seminary at Wellington under Professor Simon Newcomb from the U.S.

Naval Observatory, Washington, which also sent a team to Nagasaki in Japan.

A few years before 1882 the Rev. Andrew Murray, the Dutch Reformed Church minister at Wellington had read about a Christian Seminary and boarding school for girls at Mount Holyoke, South Hadley, Massachusetts, so he wrote to the Principal asking if one teacher could be sent to Wellington to start a similar institution at the Cape. He soon received a reply stating that they could send two teachers, Miss Abbie Park Ferguson, Principal, and Miss Mary Elizabeth Cummings, to establish the Seminary in 1874. The Principal was a keen astronomer and friend of Dr Gill. A 6" Fitz refractor was donated to the school and an observatory was built to house it, under the direction of Dr. Gill. This was completed before 1882; hence the selection of the Huguenot Seminary garden as a site by Professor Newcomb. He had a large number of instruments, such as the heliostat, photographic house, meridian transit house, storehouse, octahedral telescope and house and small telescope and house. Two of the piers remained for many years but had been removed before 1936 and even the seminary observatory was knocked down. Professor Newcomb wrote in 1882 "On our departure we left two iron pillars on which our apparatus for photographing the Sun, was mounted, firmly embedded in the ground, as we had used them. Whether they will remain there until the Transit in 2004, I do not know, but cannot help entertaining a sentimental wish that, when the time of that Transit arrives, the phenomenon will be observed from the same station, and the pillars be found in such a condition that they can again be used." I am pleased to say that a group of astronomers will be observing under Mr Sleutegraaf from this site on 8 June 2004.

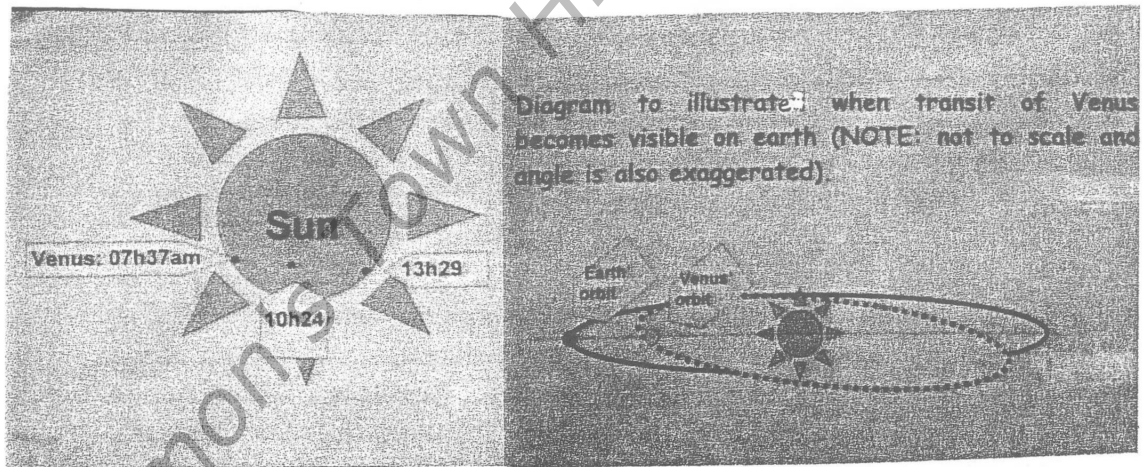
In 1882 there were 24 successful observations of the internal contact at ingress and 33 at egress used for the final reductions by James Stone. The value of 8."942 Arc Seconds for the Solar Parallax with 0".047 Arc Seconds difference came nowhere near achieving the 0".01 goal in the margin of error; which was very disappointing. Dr Gill and Professor Newcomb were both criticised for using the Transit of Venus, as it did not provide the best method of obtaining the Solar parallax, due to the "black drop" effect and the "halo effect" of the atmosphere of Venus.

Dr Gill at another time and place had observed a close approach of Mars by using a heliometer, making morning and evening observations and using the rotation of the Earth as a baseline, he obtained the most accurate calculation of Solar Parallax at the time and that was in 1877 at Mauritius.

For those wishing to view the transit of Venus on the 8th June using binoculars, telephoto lenses or telescopes; be sure to have mylar or other suitable filters, such as arc welding goggles, before you look at the Sun. It is easier and safer to project the image of the sun on to a flat piece of paper, than to try and see Venus without the correct equipment. Use one side of your binoculars for this.

Down here in Simon's Town we will not see the ingress as it will have happened before sunrise at 7.51 a.m. From then on we will have a view of Venus passing across the face of the Sun until 13h29 (1.29 p.m.) when the egress occurs, as was seen on this 2003 transit of Mercury. It will start at the bottom left hand side of the Sun at 20 minutes to - and end at 25 past - over 5 hours later.

(This was a talk with slides given to the Society on 19 May 2004).



A.E. READ

Up to 1939 small boats up to the size of about 80 tons were built locally. When war broke out many ports of the Commonwealth were called upon to help out with the building of small ships and in 1942 the first of the “baby” destroyers – known as Fairmile Motor Launches – were constructed in Knysna, Cape Town and East London.

Each launch was 112 ft long, had a beam of 18 ft and a height from the inside of the keel of about 12 ft and the draught was 5'4" aft. The vessels were constructed on the geoditic principle employed in modern plane construction, stringers running through fore and aft the length of the hull being riveted to each frame. Double diagonal planking was employed, the planks being riveted throughout with copper nails to the extent of about 6 nails to every 5 sq.in. on the hull. Each hull contained many thousands of rivets, the very large number of fastenings, affording great structural strength. The frames were constructed of 9-ply.

Formerly a heavy iron plate with a knife edge capable of cutting right through a submarine was fitted in the area of the water line. In the Fairmiles the underwater section of the hull was completely coppered as a protection against worm. On account of the coppering a brass plate was fitted instead of an iron plate. Each vessel was powered by twin screw engines, fitted with twin balance rudders and electrically equipped throughout in the most modern manner of the time.

The launches were heavily armoured for their size and were fully equipped for escort duty. Due to the design and to the lightness of all materials used in construction, they were exceptionally buoyant. Each launch carried 14 men. They had very adequate accommodation and a fully equipped galley. The bridge side was armoured as was the aft end of the wheel-house. A windbreak was provided round the bridge and there was use of ample awnings throughout. The average time taken to assemble one of these launches was 2½ months to launch

date plus another month for completion. They were produced to a high standard of performance as was shown when 4 of these ships left Simon's Town and sailed straight into a 57 m.p.h. south-easter and they proved remarkably stable for their size as well as being unusually comfortable in these conditions. Despite the bad weather Port Elizabeth was reached 4 hours ahead of schedule. The Royal Navy thought sufficiently highly of the locally built ships to send them on escort duty to the Indian Ocean and ultimately to the Pacific. As well as these "baby" destroyers a considerable number of smaller craft including harbour defence motor launches, harbour launches and motor fishing vessels were built in South Africa as well as several floating docks (see Bulletin Vol. XXI No. 4 p.150).

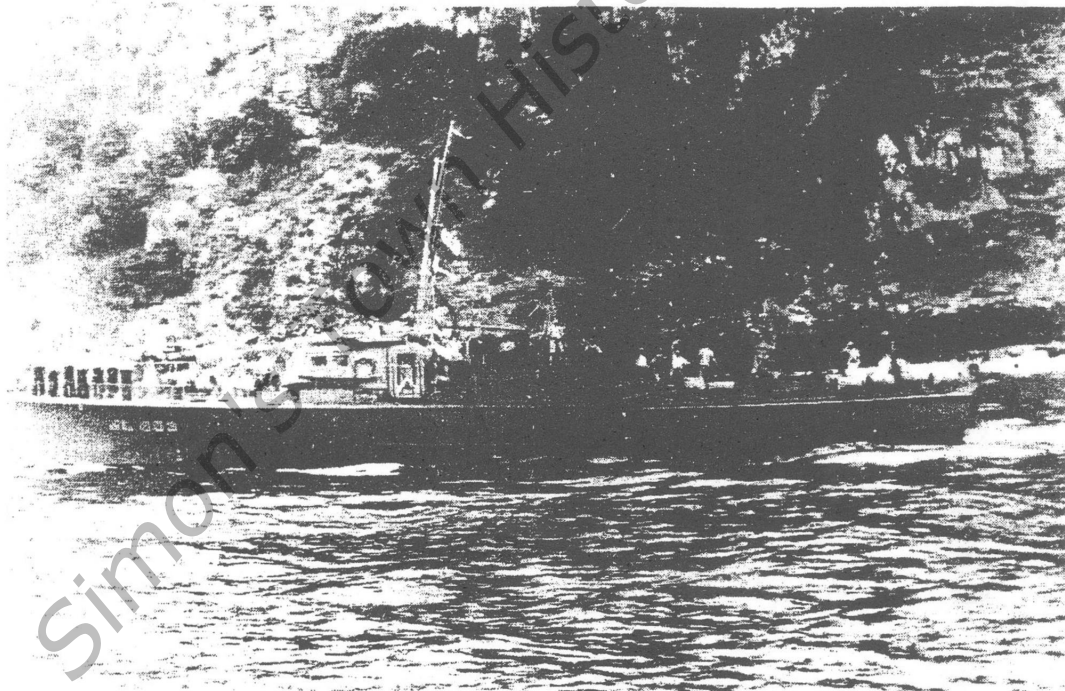
The construction of new lifeboats for the merchant navy and repairs to existing lifeboats were also part of the local boat-building industry during the war. From April 1942 to the end of the war 195 boats were delivered to the British Admiralty by one South African firm alone plus 10 lifeboats for the British Ministry of Transport. Many of the 100 cargo barges produced did good work in the campaign in Burma and the Far East, some being equipped with refrigeration plant which enabled them to be used as food ships on the many rivers in that area. Forty- three firms in the United Kingdom and 38 abroad, were involved in building these ships.

Below is a list of Fairmile "B" launches built in South Africa:

Boat No.	Builder	Date	Commanding & other officers
380	Louw & Halvorson	1942	
381	"	1942	
382	"	1942	
383	"	1943	
829	"	1943	
830	"	1943	
831	Thesens,Knysna	1942	Sub Lt H. Twine
832	" "	1942	Sub Lt N. Paterson
846	" "	1942/3	
847	" "	1942/3	

848	S.A.R. & H.		
	East London	1943	
849	"	1943	
850	"	1944	
851	"	1944	
852	Thesens/Knysna	1943	Lt C.C.Stanley & Sub Lt Viljoen
853	"	1943	Sub Lt Clayton & Sub Lt J. Field
854	Louw & Halvorsen		
855	"		
856	S.A.R. & H.(E.L.)		
857	"		
895	Thesens/Knysna	1944	Lt Dargavel & Sub Lt Hill
896	"	1944	Lt Thorn & Sub Lt Reynolds
4002	"	1944	Lt D.A.Cross, Sub Lt Bardsley & Sub Lt. F. Brookles
4001	"	1944	Lt Lawson, Sub Lt Lubbock-Miller

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Fairmile 853 on trials, 1943.

R.N. SHIPS & THE KNYSNA CONNECTION.

A.E. READ

Sir Jahleel Brenton, the Royal Naval Commissioner in charge of Simon's Town from March 1815 – November 1821, was keen to use timber from the forests round Knysna in the Simon's Town Dockyard in order to contain the cost of importing timber from England.

Just before he left South Africa he seconded Samson Budge, George Johnson, Richard Peek and T. Brand, as shipwrights, to Knysna under a foreman named Griggs. There were also about 10 labourers accompanying them. They arrived on the transport MEDUSA from Simon's Bay in July 1820 and straight away got to work to build the first vessel for the Royal Navy. Budge later returned to Simon's Town to become the town's first Mayor. Unfortunately the mould loft of the boat building operation was burned to the ground in January 1821 and the ship, a brig, was also damaged in the fire. The partly-built frame of the brig and timber which had escaped the fire were loaded onto the transport BORODINO and she returned to Simon's Town bringing the shipwrights, their families, and the labourers, arriving here on 23 January 1822. Not a good beginning to Brenton's plans to ensure the growth of Knysna, for he also hoped to settle retired naval men there and went as far as obtaining land for a township.

Sadly in 1824 a mysterious fire destroyed the reconstructed large shed where the shipbuilding work was to be carried out and which had now been leased to civilians since the Navy no longer needed it as they had abandoned the idea of shipbuilding.

The first Royal Navy ship to enter Knysna was HMS EMU in 1816. She was en route from New South Wales to England to be sold. Her master was Lt Forster RN. Entering The Heads she was blown onto an uncharted rock by a cross wind and was so damaged that she was run onto the nearby shore on 11

February 1817. This shattered Brenton's dream of using her to transport timber to Simon's Town.

Next Brenton sent in HMS PODARGUS (Captain Wallis) to retrieve EMU's stores. With a fair wind and favourable tide she made it through The Heads on 22 April 1817. So thrilled was Brenton that he sent James Goodridge (the Master Attendant or Harbour Master at Simon's Bay) on the brig DISPATCH to load timber and to make a survey of the Knysna harbour area. Goodridge also had to report on the amount of stinkwood available and to note conditions for the growing of hemp for rope-making.

So enthusiastic was Brenton about the development of Knysna that he encouraged Lord Charles Somerset to send a Government expedition to investigate. This was led by Captain Robert Wauchope in HMS EURYDICE. Wauchope landed at Plettenberg Bay and went overland to Knysna and reported very favourably. This in turn led Brenton himself to go to Knysna in November 1817. He took with him the Deputy Quartermaster Col. William Warre and the Commandant of Simon's Town, Colonel Graham. Brenton submitted a full report to the Navy Board. When the project was abandoned it was to be over 20 years before further Royal Navy ships called at Knysna.

1849 saw HMS GEYSER, a steam sloop (Captain Brown) enter.

1851 saw HMS STYX, Commander Hall, call there.

1859 was the next time a ship called. This was HMS HERMES, a steam sloop with Cdr. Wm. Gordon which brought Rear-Admiral Sir Frederick Grey.

1865 HMS RAPID, another steam sloop (Commander C. Jago) visited.

In 1854 HMS RAPID called during December with the sole purpose of erecting an arrow-headed navigation beacon on Leisure Isle.

In 1867 Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, the 23 year old son of Queen Victoria, arrived in HMS RACON with HMS PETREL (Cdr. Wm. Gordon). The latter ship had just returned to Simon's Bay after landing an expedition on

the Zambezi to look for Livingstone., PETREL took the Prince and his party through The Heads as she had the shallower draft and RACOON waited outside.

It was not until 1882 that the next ship called. This was HMS WRANGLER a gunboat (Lt.C.R. Arbuthnot). Then there was a long gap until 1899 when HMS MAGPIE (Lt W.V. Cole) called. This was followed by the proposed visit of HMS WIDGEON (Lt A.F. Gurney) with Rear-Admiral Sir Robert Harris. He wanted to go elephant hunting but called it off because of the expense. 1900 saw two gunboats HMS THRUSH (Lt H. D'oyly) and HMS PARTRIDGE, visit. These were patrolling the coast and probing to see if there were any Boer troops close to the coast.

Then, again there was a long gap, until the 1920s, when it became a habit for the small sloops of the Flower class to call in for a few days when on their annual cruise up the East coast. There was always a very active social programme and several weddings ensued, the last one being Pamela Thesen to Lt Tony Hutchinson of HMS ACTAEON.

In 1924 HMS WALLFLOWER (sloop) Cdr. R.C. Edwards called in and made 6 more visits as did DELPHINIUM and VERBENA (Cdr. L.G. Ingham). In 1925 WALLFLOWER called in to coincide with the visit of the Prince of Wales. He arrived by road, not by sea, as it would have been impossible to accommodate him and his entourage on board.

In 1933 HMS ROCHESTER a sloop (Cdr. J. Paget) made the first of 6 visits and held a party for local children. She was famous on the Cape Station for her excellent children's parties. In 1934 Admiral Evans arrived in a sea plane No. S.1833, from the flagship which was too large to enter. Also in 1934 HMS MILFORD sloop (Cdr. J. Paget) and HMS WESTON also a sloop (Cdr. H. Kirkpatrick) both visited.

In 1937 HMS BRIDGEWATER – minesweeper – Capt. H. Egerton made the

annual visit and in 1938 HMS PENZANCE – a sloop – Cdr A.W. Clarke paid a call and tied up ahead of the CHUBB which had been the Navy's water vessel at Simon's Town and was now being used for trading on the coast between Cape Town and Knysna, calling at Malgas on the Breede River. This was followed in 1939 by HMS LONDONDERRY, a sloop, Cdr T. Beevon and the largest ship ever to enter, the new HMS AUCKLAND (Capt. J. Borret) of 1,200 tons and 188 crew. During the war years 1939-45 there are no registered visitors. All ships were too busy on escort duty with the passing convoys.

HMS NEREIDE (Cdr D.J.B. Jewitt) and HMS ACTAEON (Cdr. G.R. Carver) both sloops, called in annually between 1948 and 1953. The harbour officially closed in 1954 and pilot services were withdrawn. This ended the tradition of members of the Benn family as harbour pilots. Small ships from the South African Navy continued to call and as always it was a great social occasion.

Some captains preferred to use Plettenberg Bay and there follows a list of those ships:

1797 HMS TRUSTY	1798 HMS ECHO
1808 HMS RATTLESNAKE	1808 HMS LIGHTNING
1811 HMS BRITANNIA	1811 HMS STAUNCH
1816 HMS EMU	1817 HMS DISPATCH
1851 HMS DEE	1856 HMS CASTOR
1866 HMS RAPID	1867 HMS RACoon
1900 HMS BARRACOUTA	1900 HMS GIBRALTAR
1900 HMS THRUSH	1903 HMS BEAGLE

References:

Knysna the Forgotten Port - Parkes and Williams

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PLEASE SEE THE PHOTOGRAPH OF HMS PENZANCE & s.s. CHUB ON 109

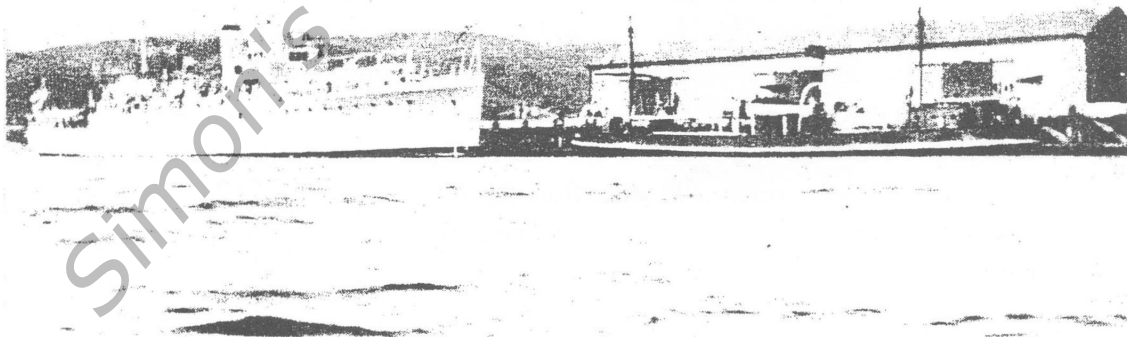
Donald Macfarlane was born on 31 March 1853 in Southsea, Hants U.K. He was the son of Donald Macfarlane and Rebecca Meech. She was the daughter of Henry Meech one of the pioneer settlers in New Zealand. They had 9 children all told. Donald senior was a trained stonemason and was Foreman of Works on the construction of the Somerset Dock in Malta.

Donald junior was a Superintending Civil Engineer to the Admiralty who had worked as Engineer-in-Charge of the great Portland breakwater in Dorset before being appointed Superintending Engineer at Simon's Town for the building of the East Dockyard. From 1912 to the outbreak of WW I he was Director of Works to the Turkish Government where he was busy with the new naval works at Ismid. He died at Pottesham, Dorset on 5 October 1929.

Macfarlane Avenue, Simon's Town, which begins at Miller Road and runs as far as the Golf Course, was named in his memory.

We obtained this information from his great great nephew Andrew McFarlane OBE C.Eng. MIMech E, Commodore R.N. who lives in Bristol. He saw our page on the Simon's Town web site. Andrew McFarlane (notice the change of spelling) is a submarine marine engineer specialist. At the time of writing he was Chairman of the Naval Nuclear Regulatory Panel.

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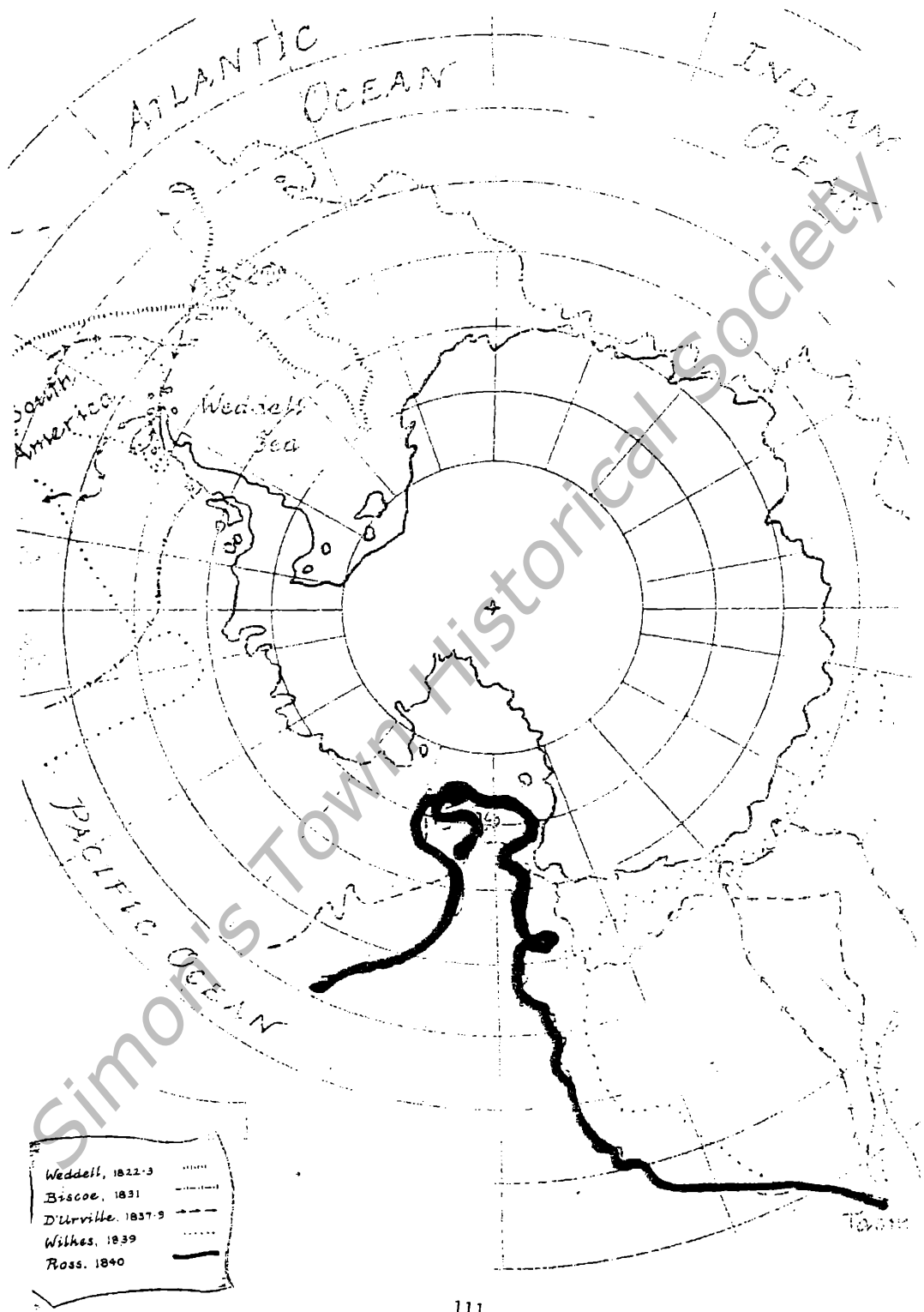


H.M.S. *Penzance* and ss *Chub* at the wharf.

CAPTAIN SIR JAMES CLARK ROSS RN (1800 – 1862)

The Ross Sea in Antarctica bears his name. He was a great explorer in his own right and also sailed with his uncle Sir John Ross (1777 – 1856) when they discovered the North Magnetic pole in 1831. Sir James made altogether 5 voyages in search of the North-West passage and accompanied Perry in his effort to reach the North Pole in 1827. During the years 1839 – 1843 he was in the Antarctic and published "A Voyage of Discovery and Research in the Southern and Antarctic Regions" about his discoveries. These were small ships of 370 tons and 340 tons but strengthened for navigation in the ice. He was elected to the Royal Society in 1848 and was Captain of the ENTERPRISE in the first Franklin search expedition. He had been born in London and died at Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire in April 1862.

On 3 March 1840 they were 450 miles west of the Cape of Good Hope and succeeded in obtaining deep soundings at 2,677 fathoms. The current was setting to the westward, at the rate of a mile per hour; and for several days previous to this they had experienced its influence fully. On 7 March they found that as they neared the coast of Africa they observed a gradual diminution of the temperature of the air and the sea. Before midnight they entered a cold mist which prevented them seeing any considerable distance, the water appearing discoloured and even with a 130 fathom line they did not find bottom. The sea temperature continued to fall, having been 70° it was now 56° and that of the air was 65°. They were at lat. 32°21'S and long. 17°6' E and 45 miles off Paternoster Point. They then found bottom in 127 fathoms on a bed of fine dark sand. This was the first confirmation that a cold current came up although it had long been suspected. Later on 7 March when 120 miles from the coast they found the temperature of the air was 71° and that of the sea 70° with the depth of water being more than 400 fathoms. They found that the cold water depends on the depth of the soundings. It barely reaches 40 miles from the shore where the sea is more than 300 fathoms deep but spreads over double that distance in the shallower parts.



They anchored on the evening of 17 March in Simon's Bay and immediately commenced the necessary comparisons of their magnetic and other instruments, the sandstone formation of the country being more favourable for the purpose than that of any other place they had touched since leaving England. Observations for the effect of the ship's iron on the various instruments employed were made in both ships, as also, by the kind and ready assistance of Captain Puget of HMS MELVILLE the first two-decker on which Sir James had had the opportunity of experimenting and in which it proved to be of very small amount.

The Commander-in-Chief Rear-Admiral the Hon. George Elliot C.B. and the Naval storekeeper J. Deas Thompson, were especially helpful in promptly supplying them with all their needs. The Governor H.E. Lt.-General Sir George Napier offered any portion of the crown lands that might be required for the site of the Magnetic Observatory which Sir James was directed to establish at the Cape and which he was to leave under the superintendence of Lt Eardley Wilmot of the Royal Artillery, who, with his party of 3 assistants, and all the necessary instruments, were now disembarked from the EREBUS. Sir James consulted greatly with Mr M'Lear who had been for several years the resident astronomer and together they decided on a spot adjoining the Cape Observatory. Sir James then went on with further investigations in other regions.

Sir James returned to Simon's Bay on 4 April 1843. The wind was blowing fresh, with frequent squalls, directly out of Simon's Bay and they had to beat up, and it was not until 7.30 p.m. that they anchored close to HMS WINCHESTER, flying the flag of Rear-Admiral the Hon. Josceline Percy C.B. Captain Crozier and Sir James immediately paid a call on the Admiral so that they could report for onward transmission to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that for a third time from the arduous service that they had been engaged in, he had returned without a single individual of either of his ships on the sick list. Captain Crozier was no stranger to Simon's Bay having been heere in 1819-1821 in HMS

DOTEREL. He had also been on expeditions with Perry and had sledged on Walden Island etc. so he was a useful member of the expedition.

The two ships underwent a refit and repeated their magnetic experiments and compared their instruments with those of the permanent magnetic observatory. This took a month. On 30 April at 8.30 a.m. they weighed and it being quite calm, were towed out of Simon's Bay. Fortunately by 10 a.m. a breeze sprang up from the north-west and at noon they rounded Cape Point and stood to westward under all sail. They were homeward bound but still had a few more tasks to complete so they sailed for Rio de Janeiro for magnetic purposes, touching on the way at St Helena and Ascension.

They called at St Helena on 13 May and called on Col. Trelawney of the Royal Artillery, also Governor of the island. Sadly in the next month he was to pass away. They stayed there for a week working on their instruments and on 20 May sailed for Ascension arriving on 25 May. Captain Dwyer of the Royal Marines was commandant of the island. They took on a supply of turtle for both ships and left on 29 May, steering for Rio. It struck them odd that there was a remarkable absence of all sea-fowl. On 3 June in lat. 15°3'S. and long. 23°14'W, in calm and smooth sea, they could not obtain bottom with 4,600 fathoms of line.

By the end of the expedition Sir James had managed to force his way through thick pack ice to reach 1° further south than d'Urville in 1839 and they reached 71° 30'S 14°51'W, 19° east of the southernmost point reached by Weddell in 1822-23.

The Ross family had another connection with the Cape for Sir James' uncle, Robert Ross, had been Colonial Secretary at the Cape in 1837.

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SIMON'S TOWN – LONG AGO & FAR AWAY (1928 – 1931)

E.F.S. Fisher (former Deputy Director of Stores)

Within 6 months of leaving Trincomalee in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) I was at Simon's Town with my wife and daughter; a long way to go to get away from Sheerness where I had been posted on my return from Ceylon. Like Ceylon, the Cape had been seized during the Napoleonic wars, it having considerable strategic importance as commanding the sea routes to India and to the Far East. Simon's Town, some 20 miles from Cape Town by road, had been developed by the Dutch as a winter anchorage since its bay afforded some shelter from the winter north-west gales to which the Cape Town anchorage was open. All the usual Dockyard departments were directly represented at Simon's Town but only two heads of civil departments had a junior Officer on his staff (in each case of Assistant's rank), Works and Naval Stores. The dockyard was in two parts, the original or West Yard, and the separate East Yard, added at the turn of the 19th Century. Official residences fell into three groups. There was Dockyard Terrace (West Gate Terrace) a block of three residences, just outside the West Yard and on the mountain side of the main road (St George's Street). They were the residences of the Cashier, and Victualling Store Officer and were adjacent to the Naval Club. Also on the mountain side of the main road but nearer to the East Dockyard was Old Hospital Terrace, an earlier Naval Hospital which had been converted into residences for shore based Naval Officers, Chaplain, Medical Officers and Dentist. In the East Yard which contained the workshops were various scattered dwelling houses which had become Admiralty property when the area had been taken over for the East yard extension.

The ground rose very steeply behind the main road and the Admiralty had an Aerial Ropeway to the top of the mountain where the Rifle Range and Signal school were situated. Half way up was the New Naval Hospital and here the Assistant Naval Store Officer's residence was in the "Old Laundry", tucked in behind the hospital, up steps and surrounded by a fenced lawn in a corner of which stood the small mortuary building!

The office staff included a First Grade Clerk, on the Supply and Warrant side, and myself in charge of the rest, and I also lent a hand with Annual and Review Demands in their seasons. As the only non-professional Superior Officer in the Yard I came in for various odd jobs including the Secretaryship of the annual dockyard regatta (and also the coaching of Naval Store crews out of the depths of my ignorance).

As elsewhere, Dockyard Officers received a good deal of hospitality, formal and informal, and while we were there gave a Ball in acknowledgement. This was held in the Sale Floor, which, suitably disguised with bunting, was the recognised place for any large assembly. On the voyage out we had shared a table for four with two middle-aged South Africans of English parentage and had become, and remained after landing, on very very friendly terms. After our arrival we were to realise that Mr. Stuttaford was a member of the South African Parliament and a Cabinet Minister; he was also the Stuttaford of "Stuttafords", the largest department store in Cape Town and also in Durban. We invited them and their daughter Joy (whose 21st birthday party we had recently attended) as our guests for the Dockyard Ball, preceded by dinner. At least there would be no problem of how to pass the time after dinner. On their arrival at the Sale Floor, my wife firmly and purposefully introduced Joy Stuttaford to the Flag Lieutenant and when presently we took stock of the situation, she had a full programme. Mrs Stuttaford had booked all the dances she wanted to and Mr Stuttaford was playing bridge with the Governor General and the Commander-in-Chief.

No civil dockyard officer, within my knowledge, had more than one servant, and these were a mixed lot. Eventually we got a treasure, a coloured woman called Sarah, but previously we had had rather a procession including a black girl who could not understand us, nor we her; another coloured woman; and the most arresting, an Englishwoman. She was a fair cook, had a vivid imagination and lived in a mental world of her own. When we had people to dinner we used to employ a Naval Steward from the hospital to serve at table and very good he was.

Apart from a visit to Durban I did not go for a holiday (largely for financial reasons) nor indeed take any spell of annual leave during my appointment but this was largely compensated for by my many afternoons off to play tennis. My frequent duty visits to Cape Town gave me plenty of opportunity to carry out my private errands there. The chief recreations among our community in Simon's Town were lawn tennis and the Races. The R.N. Lawn Tennis Club at Simon's Town had three hard courts with somewhat loose surfaces and my wife and I were regular players. Eventually I became Secretary of the club. We used to play out and home matches yearly with some English fruit farmers at Groot Drakenstein, one of the looked-forward to events of the season. These were played while the cruisers were in port and for the Simon's Town match the whole party would lunch in their respective ward-rooms. On the return match the fruit growers would give us an al fresco lunch and would present trays of export quality peaches to their guests as they left.

The fleet normally went to Durban each year while the July Handicap, one of the chief horse races in the calendar, was being run. On one occasion I went along, with due approval, as an indulgence passenger in the station oiler RAPIDOL. It was most entertaining, if exhausting. The Officers of the RAPIDOL, including myself, were given badges to admit us to the racecourse and members' enclosure and we were also made honorary members of the Durban club. A lawn tennis match, Durban v Royal Navy, had been arranged (in which I had the misfortune to play) in front of the Commander-in-Chief and the Governor General (the Earl of Athlone), his wife Princess Alice and their daughter Lady May Cambridge. I never played worse in my life. The hard courts were finished off with a smoothing of cow dung and were extremely fast. Too fast for me, used as I was to the loose gravelly courts at Simon's Town. The rest of the team must have been similarly affected. Also, the Durban team were much better players and we lost every match.

I was not a member of the Race Club at Cape Town, as so many of the naval community were, but it was usually possible to borrow a badge from a member not attending; my wife went more often than I. It was delightful there with the run of

the Paddock, the members' enclosure and the stand. One Saturday afternoon when at home, I was puzzled to get a telephone message from Roeland Street gaol in Cape Town to say that the Lascar crew of the RAPIDOL who were just being changed, were on hunger strike and would I do something about it. The Master's of merchant ships in these circumstances did not like the outgoing and incoming crews to meet. Lascars were prohibited immigrants and there was enclosed accommodation at Cape Town for the accommodation of exchanging crews. This, it appeared, was already full owing to the unforeseen need to find room for the crew of a wrecked Lascar-manned ship. The Immigration authorities at Cape Town had therefore diverted RAPIDOL's crew to an ordinary prison for safe custody. The crew, however, who knew a gaol when they saw one, protested that they were good men who had done nothing wrong and refused to eat.

The Master of the RAPIDOL was at the Races; the Naval Store Officer was at the Races; the Captain-in-Charge was at the Races! I sent a messenger to bring in two of the Yard drivers and sent lorries to collect the recalcitrant crew. I arranged with the Constructor to borrow a disused Rolling Mill with plenty of vacant space for their accommodation and sent an officer from the ship to find the leaders of the local Muslim community and to arrange for food to be cooked ready for their fasting co-religionists on their arrival. All ended smoothly.

I had the world's worst car while at Simon's Town, a "Clover-leaf" Citroen, 8 h.p., which I bought for £50 and which used almost as much lubricating oil as petrol (40 – 50 mpg) and also had a disconcerting habit of breaking its rear axle. It broke down once when we were on our way to a garden party at the Governor-General's summer residence at Westbrook, at Rondebosch. I was not dressed for disembowelling a reluctant car and while pondering observed a Yard lorry on its way to Cape Town. I flagged it down and we arrived at Westbrook in the driver's cab.

Finance was something of a problem at Simon's Town and I was always under some degree of restraint. The Yard Officers appealed to the Admiralty for an increase in Colonial Allowance and a member of the Secretariat was sent out to

investigate and report. Before his arrival, the Yard Officers met to discuss tactics and it was agreed that no one should offer him hospitality beyond afternoon tea. Some increase was eventually made but an insufficient one we thought. Simon's Town had a small subscription library, subsidised by the Government, of which I eventually became Secretary. The £10 honorarium was a welcome windfall at Christmas. There were other advantages. On Saturday evening I would bring home the shiny English journals and magazines to be gone through in comfort over the week-end and I got a lot of pleasure in compiling the monthly list of books for purchase and in going round the Cape Town booksellers to buy them. One purchase (from the Times Book Club's disposal list) which I have always remembered with regret because I did not buy it for myself, was William Hickey's memoirs of 18th Century India, in five volumes.

The Naval Club opposite the West Yard gate was little used by Dockyard Officers, except perhaps to drop in to read the English newspapers and journals. On Saturday mornings, however, when the offices closed at noon, the Dockyard Officers would foregather for general conversation and discussion of matters of common interest. The Civil Magistrate, a person of local importance, also joined in these sessions.

In August 1929, the Assistant Civil Engineer went home without a relief and there was much speculation as to who would get his attractive residence in the East Dockyard. It was rumoured that two heads of department were after it as being preferable to their existing residences, but it was allocated to me, the natural and proper sequence. The house PENNINGTON or the OLD MANSE had once been the home of the ministers of the local Dutch Reformed Church which they had to give up when the ground on which it stood was taken over for the extension of the East Yard. Built on two floors, it had covered and enclosed verandahs round three sides and was very cool in spite of vandalistic re-roofing at some date with corrugated iron, that scourge of so many places in what were once the Dominions. The top floor was divided laterally by a central corridor on one side of which were the bedrooms and on the other two very large bare rooms divided by a landing. In the early Dutch days the farmers from a wide radius would come into Simon's

Town by wagon, with their families for the six-monthly Nachemaal (Communion service). These large rooms were the dormitories for the two sexes. The house had one admirable feature I have never heard of elsewhere, a chip boiler in the bathroom. One filled its fire-box with chips of splintered wood and almost boiling water would pour into the bath in a few minutes though constant stoking was necessary.

PENNINGTON had a large garden divided at the top from the main road by a high stone wall. On this were sometimes to be seen in the morning, disporting themselves, baboons which had come down overnight from the mountainside. A gate, near the main dockyard gates, opened into a driveway to the house. It led past the coach house, now used as a garage, and a stable. The latter I converted into a hen house but I would have done much better to continue to buy eggs. Outside the driveway gates was a large white boulder. The legend was that a suitor who had been courting the daughter of the Manse, rode away up the driveway on a bright moonlit night. His horse, shying at the white stone, threw his rider who was killed when he landed on it. However, I never saw a ghost to corroborate the story!

In July 1931 we sailed from Cape Town in a half-empty Union-Castle liner, calling at Lobito Bay, then a newly opened port, and at Tenerife. We became very friendly with a young mother with nurse and young baby who was a leading member of Durban society who told us many entertaining stories about the visit in the previous year of the then Prince of Wales. There had been a great deal of heart-burning at Simon's Town on who would be invited to meet him there which did not affect us as we had no expectations. The Duke of York also visited South Africa in our time and we were invited to a reception at Government House, given for him. However, he did not put in an appearance, having suffered sun-burn while bathing in the afternoon, but it was a very good party none the less.

We reached Southampton in Cowes week. Passengers were given the option of going on to London Docks in the ship, which we and our friend were the only ones to accept. It was the finest finish to a voyage I ever enjoyed; bright sunshine, flat

calm, the White Cliffs of Dover. We woke next morning to find ourselves berthed just inside the East India Dock wall and I espied from the porthole a No.15 bus, a service which eventually went within three minutes walk of my parents house in London where we were to stay. I therefore turned over all our luggage to a baggage agent and we finished our homeward journey on another beautiful day, on the front seat of the upper deck of the bus, via Commercial Road, the City, Holborn, Oxford Street, Baywater and Kensington.

(This story was brought to our attention by Mr & Mrs Barnett, members of the Society. Thank you. Editor)

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A photograph of some of HMS CHALLENGER's crew taken at Tristan, in the photograph are the brothers Stoltenkoff, one with pipe, one wearing a smock, who lived on the island.