

CAMBERWELL HISTORY

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A VOYAGE AMONG ICEBERGS

Bill Mackie

When sailing ships brought immigrants from Britain to Australia in the mid-nineteenth century they sailed the Atlantic Ocean to the southern latitudes known as The Roaring Forties. Here the prevailing strong westerly winds helped ensure a rapid passage to Australia. This story is about the voyage of the family of my great-great-grandfather Robert Reid of Leven, Scotland, who made the journey, without any ports of call, from Liverpool to Melbourne in 1855.

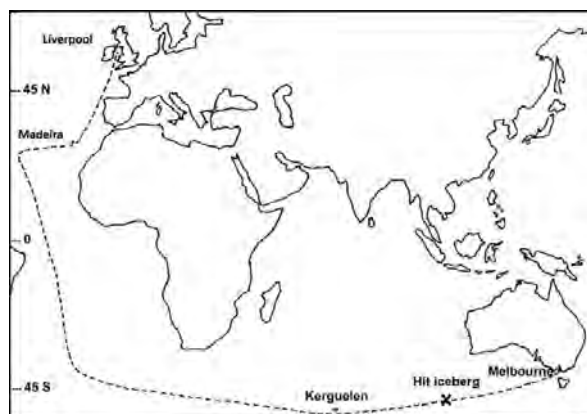
On 4 January 1855 the new sailing ship *Ralph Waller*, of 1,057 tons, commenced its maiden voyage as it was towed by a steam tug from the Mersey River to the Irish Sea. On board there were some 180 passengers and forty crew. On the first night very strong head winds made a rough sea and caused most on board to be sea sick. From then on calm or contrary winds caused a week to elapse before the ship passed Land's End into the Atlantic Ocean. After nine days that embraced good and bad weather the *Ralph Waller* passed by Madeira to sail westerly to take advantage of trade winds from the north east. Thence it sailed south, crossing the Equator on 6 February, when a holiday was declared for all on board to celebrate 'Crossing the Line'. This was a major celebration with grog made available; neither the ship nor its doctor, passengers and some of the crew had previously paid tribute to King Neptune or participated in the traditional ceremonies.

The ship continued its journey southwards under generally favourable conditions; on many days the ship made 12-15 knots all day. Almost all passengers enjoyed good health and passed their time with games, dancing and other pastimes. Attempts to catch birds with a fishing line failed, but one passenger shot an albatross that was not retrieved. By 27 February the ship had reached latitude 45° South and travelled eastwards through cold weather with hail and snow. On 2 March it passed the first iceberg, about eight miles distant and its height estimated to be 100 feet above water; some others were thought to be 200 feet high and up to three miles long. Many pieces of ice passed within 100 yards of the ship and much snow was falling. Snowball fights commonly occurred after a good fall.

From 10 to 14 March some severe storms caused

much damage to sails, booms and spars, while heavy seas caused some flooding between decks. On 15 March seas were calmer and the ship passed within two miles of the Kerguelen Islands (formerly named Desolation Island by Captain Cook). During this period and for the next week the ship maintained a good 10-14 knots, although icebergs were seen in the distance, so expectations were high for reaching port soon.

On 22 March, after a day of good of sailing at about 10 knots and into one hour of darkness, the ship rammed a small iceberg, apparently splitting it so that its two parts floated past the side of the ship, their height above water being that of the ship's bulwarks. The ship's position, at 48° S and 105° E, was about 1,700 nautical miles (3,100 km) southwest of Melbourne.



Map of route taken by the *Ralph Waller* from Liverpool to Melbourne, showing Latitude 0° (Equator) and 45°S, region of 'Roaring Forties'

While passengers crowded the quarterdeck and lifeboats were made ready, the damage to the ship's bow was examined by the captain and carpenter. Fifteen minutes after the ship struck water was fifteen feet deep in the hold. All pumps were manned and the carpenter was able to block the main leak by spreading a sail over the ship's bow. Much cargo was jettisoned. Next day about ninety male passengers were formed into gangs to man the pumps in shifts so that they could each have six hours sleep daily. Some

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progress was achieved in lowering the water in the hold but eight days after the collision a severe gale caused the ship to roll so much that the main yard touched the water. Eight days later land was sighted and on 5 April a pilot boarded and steered the ship through Port Phillip Heads. Most passengers disembarked on 7 April but those destined for Sydney departed from Melbourne a week later.

On its return voyage from Sydney to England the *Ralph Waller* was lost at sea without further trace. Did the shooting of the albatross contribute to the ship's disasters in the manner of Coleridge's epic poem?

Robert Reid, aged forty, died six weeks after landing in Melbourne, apparently as a result of trauma and illness after the ship's disastrous collision. Young Robert, aged twelve, commenced work in a drapery shop in Collins Street to help support his mother's family of six girls and a boy. The family home was in Punt Road, Richmond. His career in the soft-goods trade made great progress. He married Mary Jane Clancy in 1865 and in 1870 they bought a small house with a few acres in Whitehorse Road close to Deepdene. They named their home *Belmont* because of its position on a small

hill with a pleasant view.

Acknowledgements

Much of the information in this story about the Robert Reid family was obtained from studies carried out by Bill Bell who is married to a Reid descendant.

Three important primary sources of information about the voyage of the *Ralph Waller* are:

BUTTERS, JAMES D. *The Diary of the Voyage of the Clipper Ship Ralph Waller: Liverpool to Melbourne, 4 January 1855* (With transcription by Dina Broughton, 1993) MS., Mitchell Library, Sydney.

The Argus, 'Shipping Intelligence', Melbourne, Monday 9 April 1855.

Table Talk, Melbourne, Friday 29 November 1889. 'Robert Reid'.

A further article by Bill Mackie will discuss the various houses designed by Edward Albert Bates for members of the Reid family on the Belmont Estate, Balwyn.

EXHIBITIONS

The following exhibitions are open in Melbourne:

- 6 May - 6 August 'Celebrating 100 Years of Flinders Street Station' Royal Historical Society of Victoria, 239 A'Beckett St, Melbourne CHS is arranging a conducted tour of this exhibition for Saturday, 24th July.
- 14 May – 17 October 'Titanic – Artefact Exhibition' Melbourne Museum

BANKS IN BOROONDARA

Trevor Hart

This article recounts the beginnings and development of banking in Boroondara and mentions some of the more colourful aspects of its history.

Banking was slow to come to Boroondara simply because the population was too small to support it.

The first bank to open in the present city of Boroondara was the English, Scottish & Australian Chartered Bank (ES&A) which opened at Lower Hawthorn, near the SW. corner of Burwood Road and Power Street, Hawthorn on 16 April 1872. John Toon was the manager. Toon had been a clerk on the original Boroondara road board before becoming town clerk of the Borough of Hawthorn from where he retired to take the management of the new bank branch at Hawthorn 'his personal influence being known to be very great'. It was unusual for a manager to be appointed who had no

previous banking experience and clearly Toon's connections were a major qualification. Later, progression to management for a bank clerk followed from on the job training, commenced when a boy started his career at the age of about sixteen. (There were never any girls.) In the early years however, there was not a pool of trained staff in the Australian banks and of necessity they came from outside, either as senior men from competitor banks or from England, Scotland or Ireland. Toon also simultaneously managed the ES&A's Kew branch: this dual management was not unusual for small branches. Toon was missed from home



John Toon 1825-1882
Hawthorn Historical Collection



on 13 December 1882 and his body was found in the Yarra the following day. An inquest found that he was suffering anxiety from land speculations, but an examination of his accounts, both private and at the bank branches, found no cause¹. Following Toon's death the management of the two branches was split between Robert Warner Browne at Hawthorn and Joseph Clements Matthews at Kew.

Tenders for a building for the ES&A at Upper Hawthorn (between Glenferrie Rd & William St) were called by Leonard Terry on 2 August 1873.² The present building in Burwood Road just west of Glenferrie Road was built by Overend Robb & Co for £13,689 17s 6d. This 'gothic' style building was the first of some twenty to be built in similar style by the ES&A over the next nineteen years (of which only six remain in Victoria) and must surely have reflected the taste of the bank's general manager Sir George Verdon who had taken office in 1872.³ This 'official' style culminated in the opening, in 1887, of the palatial new head-office for the bank in Melbourne which has come to be known as 'The Gothic Bank'.

The Hawthorn office served as a branch of the bank and as the residence of the Melbourne managers, George Robert Tyssen and later, Seymour George Pilkington Davies. As befitting the importance of the inhabitants, the building was grand. The hall to the private residence was 28 feet by 20 feet; the dining room 21 feet by 18 feet nine inches; and the drawing room 23 feet six inches by 21 feet. The rooms had 16 foot ceilings.

As the business centre moved from Burwood Road to Glenferrie Road the branch became less viable and the bank looked to moving. The residence here was too grand for a mere branch manager and 'for years [they had] had a policeman in residence as caretaker'. For nearly ten years the bank tried to sell the building and it was not until 1923 that it was sold to the adjoining church for £7,000.⁴ The bank moved out of the premises



ES&A Bank, Kew, no date
Reproduced with permission of Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Limited



NBA Hawthorn 1918
Reproduced with permission of National Australia Bank Ltd Archives

in December 1923.⁵ The ES&A's Kew branch was opened in 1873 in Bulleen Road, which was also known as Main Road but later changed to High Street. The competition moved in too. The National Bank of

Australasia (NBA) opened its branches in the district in Hawthorn and Kew in 1885.

The decade of the 1880s, known as the 'Land Boom', saw the suburbs expand rapidly as land changed hands at ever increasing prices supported by banks and building societies. Many subdivisions were created in Boroondara, but when the crash came many blocks remained un-



Tara
Victoria and Its Metropolis

-built on - some for decades. One of the larger subdivisions in Camberwell was the Tara estate with the sale taking place on 27 October 1888. Tara, with eighteen rooms, was built in the 1860s by Sir John O'Shanassy. Three times premier of Victoria, and wearing the decorations of Knight Commander of the Order of St Michael & St George and the Papal Order of St Gregory he must have been a colossus in Boroondara (he even had the village of Ballyshanassy named after him). But, as a promoter of The Colonial Bank of Australasia of which he was chairman until 1870, he had no banking role in Boroondara.⁶ This bank, taken over by the NBA in 1918, did not venture into Boroondara.

The crash of the 1890s had a big impact on Boroondara banks. Many banks in Victoria, and consequently Boroondara, closed for some time. The Commercial Bank closed first on 6 April 1893 and had already reopened (6 May) by the time the last, The Bank of Victoria closed on 10 May. In turn the ES&A closed (13 April to 19 August), then the NBA (1 May to 26 June), and the Colonial (6 May to 10 July) ending with the Victoria (10 May to 19 June). The banks reconstructed as new companies. The ES&A, in searching for ways to reduce costs advised its London board on 4 July⁷ that it had decided to formally close nine branches and agencies (which had effectively closed on 13 April). This would 'save twenty officers and about £3,000 in salaries'.⁸ Three weeks later the general manager reported that all nine offices had closed and sixteen staff dispensed with.⁹ One of these offices was Surrey Hills, a branch in leasehold premises. Another casualty appears to have been the Commercial's receiving office in Auburn.

1 The Boroondara Standard 21 Dec 1882; *Australasian Insurance & Banking Record* 11 Jan 1883
2 *The Age* 2 Aug 1873.
3 *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol 6, p330
4 ANZ Archive. E/3/5. London Letters. General Manager to Secretary, 19 Mar 1923
5 ANZ Archive. E/109/1. Victorian Property Officer's Diary 1923-1943
6 Blainey, p6 *et seq*
7 ANZ Archive. E/143/6 General Manager's Letters Outward to London.
8 *Ibid.* 4 Jul 1893
9 *Ibid.* 1 Aug 1893

To be continued



MEETINGS FOR 2010

22 July	‘Our Forgotten Heroes – The Boer War’	Hon. Michael Baden-Powell, Chairman, and Mr Peter Kemp, member of the Boer War Memorial Committee (Victoria)
23 September	‘Clocks’	Mr Vivian Kenney
18 November	‘Beyond the Facade – Flinders Street Station, more than just a railway station’	Jenny Davies
All meetings held at	Meeting Room, Hawthorn Town Hall (side entrance via car park) 360 Burwood Road, Hawthorn	

LAST MEETINGS

25 March

On Thursday, 25 March we were honoured to have the Society’s Secretary, the Honourable Wendy Baden-Powell speak about **The Founding of the Girl Guide Movement.**

In speaking to her subject Wendy gave an outline of the lives of two women in her family, her grand aunt, Agnes Baden-Powell, who along with her brother Lieutenant-General Sir Robert Baden-Powell (later Lord Baden-Powell), co-founded the Girl Guide movement and Olave, Lady Baden-Powell, her grandmother who played a large part in fostering the growth of the movement during her lifetime. Wendy then went on to give some historical background and her fascinating personal recollections of the first generation of the Baden-Powell family together with the family background of Agnes Baden-Powell, and her sister-in-law Olave, Lady Baden-Powell.

Lord Baden-Powell is well known for his founding of the Boy Scout Movement and for his military career, in particular the part he played in ‘The Siege of Mafeking’ during the Boer War.

April 2010 was the centenary of the founding of the Girl Guide Association which on the 25 September 1915 was granted a charter of incorporation, giving it the government’s official recognition as an established movement. A biography of Agnes Baden-Powell by Reverend Katherine Garner is to be published to mark the centenary.

Agnes Baden-Powell

Wendy described Scouting’s popularity and how

Agnes became involved in the movement becoming president of what became the Girl Guide movement. Along the way she wrote the first ‘Handbook for Girl Guides or How Girls Can Help to Build Up the Empire’ published in 1912. She encouraged Guiding worldwide, wrote for the *Girl Guides’ Gazette* and helped to develop the Guiding Movement that we know today. Agnes was not noted for being an efficient organiser and for a while it looked as though Guiding might have to be taken over by the Boys Scouts. When Princess Mary, Daughter of King George V became President Agnes adopted the role of Vice-President. She died in 1945 at the age of 86. Agnes, who liked to call herself the ‘Grandmother of the Guides’, is often the forgotten member of Guiding and was rather overshadowed by the more vivacious Lady Olave.

Olave, Lady Baden-Powell, G.B.E., World Chief Guide

After her marriage to Lord Baden-Powell the very shy Olave Soames entered into a very public life with appearances at Scouting and other functions. In 1916 she became a warranted County Commissioner for Sussex and set up various Guide committees, and in February 1918, she became Chief Guide. With the death of her husband in Kenya 1941 Olave returned to England where she continued to carry on the work of promoting and encouraging both the Scout and Guide movements. In 1930 she was acclaimed as the World Chief Guide and for her services to the Girl Guide Movement she was appointed a Dame Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire (G.B.E.) in 1932. Olave was granted a ‘grace and favour’ apartment at Hampton Court Palace. She died on 25 June 1977. Wendy spoke with great affection of her grandmother and with a deep knowledge of the family and the Guide movement. TH

27 May

Commissioner Wesley Harris addressed the Society on the ‘History of the Salvation Army.’ A report of this meeting will appear in the next issue.