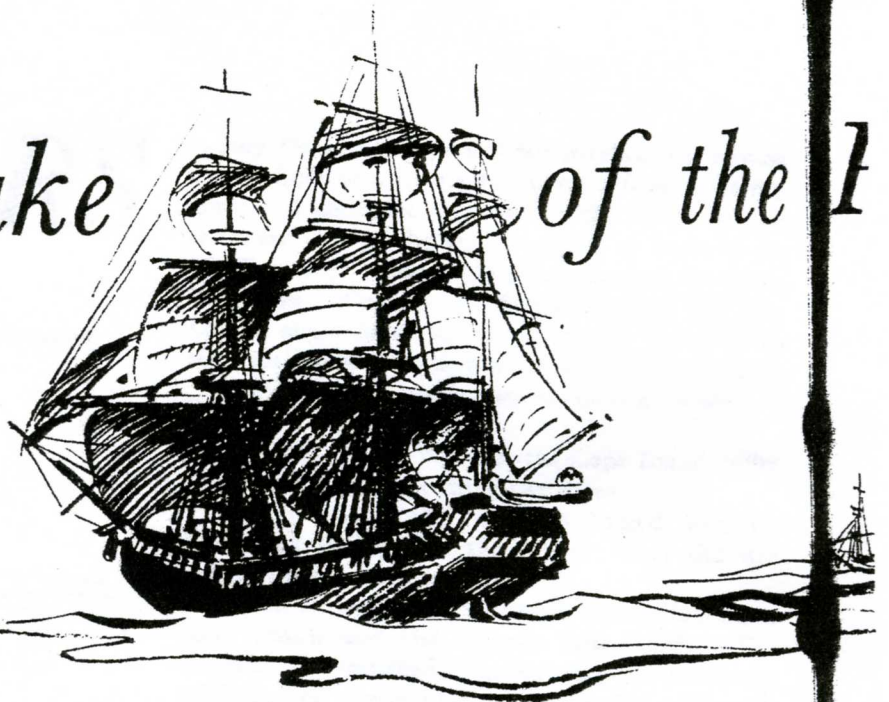


In the Wake of the *Britomart*

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IN our last issue there were references to Francis Lochée, the second Manager of the Western Australian Bank, who held the position for over forty years (1846-89).

He had been trained in law in England, but, having a bad stammer, decided to seek his fortune in other fields. In 1838 he sailed from Portsmouth in the *Britomart*, bound for Swan River.

The other cabin occupants comprised Samuel Waterman Viveash, M.R.C.S., his wife and their family, Mr. and Mrs. Tanner and family and Miss Wells, Mr. and Mrs. Hardy and family, and Messrs. Robert Viveash (brother of the diarist), John Smith, Henry King, George King, Taunton, Breacher and Curtois. The Captain was William Macdonald.

After arriving in Perth, Lochée started a newspaper called *The Inquirer and Commercial News*, but left this upon his appointment as Manager of the Western Australian Bank.

Dr. Viveash kept a diary of the voyage—an extraordinary one, marked not only by nautical hazards, but also by continual disputes, tipsiness, physical violence, threats and charges of mutinous conduct. The leading figures were the eccentric Captain Macdonald, whose opinion of passengers was seldom printable, and Mr. Lochée, who revealed during the voyage the formidable qualities which were later to guide the Western Australian Bank successfully through so many eventful years.

These brief extracts are reproduced with the kind permission of descendants of Dr. Viveash.

June 28th, 1838. Left Southampton at 9 a.m. and reached Portsmouth at 12.15. Obtained quarters at "King's Head". Attendance bad, owing

to the increased business and bustle of the Queen's (Victoria) coronation. Fireworks good.

June 30th. Went on board the "*Britomart*", taking some luggage. Judging from what we saw on board did not go to bed with very pleasing anticipations of comfort for the future.

July 2nd. Slept on board. Better than we expected.

July 3rd. Went on shore with the Captain of the "*Britomart*"—Macdonald. Returned with the Captain about 4 p.m. We sailed from Spithead about 7-8 o'clock.

July 4th. Afric Tanner tumbled down the skylight.

July 5th. The boy Ricketts had the itch.

July 6th. Ate about 6 prawns and one thin slice of bread and butter. Could not venture down to dinner.

July 7th. The sailors wanted to steer for nearest port, to be put on shore, complaining the Captain doubted their skill; also bad diet of beef particularly. They were supported by the steerage passengers. The Captain not aware that the beef was bad; ordered it to be attended to, but determined to proceed on our voyage.

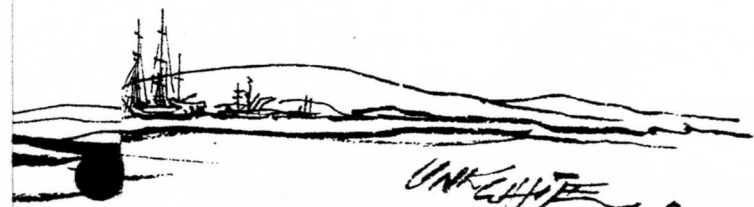
July 10th. Farcical duel between Breacher and Curtois; port wine being put in pistols. The former a complete butt to the young men on board; much encouraged by the Captain. Passed Lizard Point; obliged to tack three times before it could be effected; not a little fear among the passengers, so near the rocks. I did not fear much, relying very much on the Captain's nautical knowledge.

July 11th. Off Penzance. Last evening the Captain gave us the number of persons on board:—

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"In the Wake of Pioneers"
Extract from diary of Dr Samuel Waterman Viveash,
University of Queensland Library. * Bank Staff Magazine

the PIONEERS

The Remarkable Voyage of the *Britomart*



16 cabin adults ; 8 cabin children ; 4 female servants ; 2 boys ; 17 ship's company ; 23 charity boys (for Cape) ; 14 steerage ; (total) 84.

July 12th. Went to see Penzance. Everything very cheap. Geese on 1/6d, some 1/3d ; fowls 1/3d. Returned to the "Britomart" through Newlyn to tea. Enjoyed strawberries and cream on board. Mr. Lochée and Mr. Hardy sang several songs.

July 13th. Heaved anchor at 8. Tacked about Mount Bay. Rather rough.

July 14th. Leak discovered by Captain. Returned to Mount Bay.

July 15th. Went on shore at Penzance.

July 16th. Took a walk about Penzance before breakfast. Capt. Macdonald sent for us to return, the wind being more favourable.

July 17th. Capt. Macdonald and Mrs. Hardy not very friendly, the cooking being carried on near the horses.

July 21st. Alarm given that we were near a rock on the coast of Spain (Point Prior), nearly 100 miles out of our tack. Mrs. V. and others very much alarmed ; bore it myself with Xtian fortitude. Up at 7 a.m. and told we were within a stone's throw of Point Prior which occasioned so much fright. I could not learn satisfactorily how we got so far out of our course, but know full well we had a very narrow escape from a watery grave. Told by Capt. Macdonald that one steersman left the deck before being relieved by another. Also he thought the First Mate (Cunningham) must have gone to sleep, and perhaps the steersman : that, if he had had his clothes off and the vessel not very easily turned, we must most probably have been dashed to pieces.

July 25th. Our steward fell overboard ; having caught hold of a rope saved himself from a watery grave. A ghost seen by some of the sailors on the starboard side of the ship, thought by some to be Mr. Breacher. Also a pig by chance met its death by a blow. Captain Macdonald thought that Mr. Lochée ought to starve for saying that he would as soon eat the bread-basket as the hard biscuit within.

July 28th. My wife regrets leaving home. I do not, if prosperous.

July 30th. Two boys for the Cape found guilty of stealing peas and cutting the ropes.

July 31st. Saw the two boys flogged, each receiving 12 lashes from the other. They did not appear much to mind it.

August 1st. Saw the flying fish for the first time. John Smith and the Captain had words. The Captain not satisfied. Spoke very disparagingly of John and the young men generally on board.

Aug. 2nd. I heard Mr. Hardy's man say that he had not sufficient to eat. Mr. Hardy and Captain Macdonald came to an explanation afterwards and shook hands.

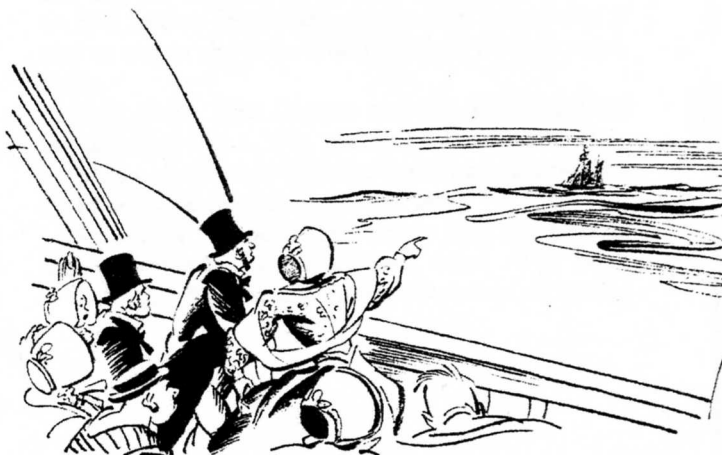
Aug. 5th. Spoke to a Spanish vessel to Cadiz. Our Captain was told that Buenos Ayres was blockaded.

Aug. 6th. I regret to say another breeze with the Captain this night, about killing a sheep. Our man, Rd. Strange, was to have done the deed. Mr. Hardy advised Strange to let his man assist, being a butcher. The latter having done so it offended the Captain who said that he did not intend to have the sheep killed until further orders ; it was very great presumption ; derogatory to his dignity and cruel to his feelings.

Aug. 10th. Nothing particular occurred to-day, except a bad dinner with stinking meat.

Aug. 11th. Captain in a very bad cue. My wife made her dinner off three potatoes. Leg of mutton very offensive. A schooner following us is supposed by many to be a pirate ; the Captain and many others much alarmed.

Aug. 15th. The Captain and Pethers disagreed, the former having taken away his grog.



Aug. 16th. Another rumpus. Capt. Macdonald promised to put on the table some better biscuits if the gentlemen would leave them for the ladies. In the morning Mr. Lochée took one, not knowing of the agreement. The Captain said the person who could not eat this biscuit (taking up an inferior sort) ought to starve and should go headlong to Hell. Mr. Lochée differed. The Captain called him no gentleman. Mr. Lochée in return called the Captain a liar, which so exasperated him that he seized a knife, advanced from his seat and said "Damn your liver"; at the same time flourishing the weapon. Mr. Lochée secured another knife from the table, saying "Two can play with knives", which checked the Captain. Both returned to their seats, the Captain saying that all ought to go to hell who could not eat the biscuit; that Lochée was a rogue and sharper and showed what society he had been accustomed to by leaving his boots outside his cabin door.

Aug. 23rd. Mr. Lochée had instructions to make my Will.

Aug. 30th. Mrs. Hardy had words at the children's dinner table with the Captain; her son John making so much noise in the evening. The Captain says that Mrs. Hardy would set Hell on fire if she were there and told Mr. Hardy he pitied him; that the cabin passengers were nothing more than farmers and humbugs; that we were all against him; that he might be as well amongst robbers and sharpers. Mr. Hardy appealed to the gentlemen present to notice the Captain's language and gave him a note which he had written in consequence of the dinner disagreement telling him to take notice of it.

Aug. 31st. Mr. and Mrs. Hardy told the Captain that they could not take their seats at the dinner table so long as he was there and dined in their

own cabin, which created not a little sensation; indeed almost all sent him to Coventry.

Sept. 3rd. Captain did not breakfast with us nor Mrs. Macdonald. Told by the Captain when alone at tea on deck that Breacher or Curtois had been guilty of shameful conduct; that he would like to make up his differences with the cabin folk. I stated to him the reason he was discarded. First for saying that we were all thieves rogues and everything that was bad; secondly for swearing and using indecent language. I said that I thought that Mr. Lochée was justified in stating what he did with respect to the biscuits. Several days before we had only bits of biscuit covered with dust and dirt, which the Captain attributed to the Steward breaking them into small pieces for the convenience of the passengers.

Sept. 10th. I asked the Captain to let me take a goat from the Cape. He said "Certainly and anything else" I like.

Sept. 13th. Our cook and steward fought for quarter of an hour, having disagreed. Told by Mr. Hardy the Captain did not choose to tell us the latitude or longitude, also directed the mates not to do so. Query—Why?

Sept. 15th. Captain caught a Cape Pigeon. He told me he had never suffered so much in his feelings night and day before.

Sept. 16th. Mr. Cunningham (First Mate) completely drunk whilst on watch.

Sept. 19th. A great sensation produced by being told there was but little water on board.

Sept. 22nd. Rough sea. Never saw the ship so like turning over on her side.

Sept. 23rd. (Sunday) Prayers by Captain. Another fracas between the Captain and Mr. and Mrs. Hardy. Warm words were used by Mrs. Hardy.

Sept. 24th. Mr. Breacher at breakfast accused the Captain of pointing at him the evening before and saying to the Second Mate (George) "Look at that skinny devil and scrub of the earth. He would not be seen at the same table with many of the Cabin passengers on shore". I was told by the Captain afterwards that he did not mean what he had said to Breacher; that when he pointed it was to attract the attention of George Ford to something.

Sept. 25th. The Captain and Mr. Hardy differed about some hay. Not present. I was told afterwards by the former that the latter had accused him of felony and put his fist to his face.

Sept. 27th. One of the sailors and the Captain also had words; I think about duty. The latter, I thought, did not use much discretion in stating

that he did not favour the sailors through love but fear; that when mutinous conduct began aft it was sure to follow in the steerage.

Oct. 2nd. Landed at Cape Town. Very much pleased with the Bay and view of the Lion's Rump. Looking for apartments. Called on Lochée and party.

Oct. 6th. Heard from Strange that our Second Mate and Robert the Sailor much admired Mrs. Tanner's maids and intend paying them a visit on Sunday.

Oct. 8th. Some of the sailors going before the Magistrates in consequence of their not working. Told they must either return to their duty or go to prison. They preferred the latter alternative.

Oct. 13th. On our coming here it was inserted in the South African "Commercial Advertiser" that the "Britomart" had arrived with so many cabin and steerage passengers. Now on the arrival of other vessels names were specified; not being so in our case, Mr. Lochée and others thought the omission was owing to the mean and petty conduct of the Captain, who had taken every opportunity to annoy and insult his passengers. Mr. Lochée forwarded the following to the Editor, which appeared in Saturday's paper October 6th, 1838.

"To the Editor,

Sir. As one of the passengers on board the 'Britomart' . . . may I take the liberty of calling your attention to the manner in which notice of our arrival has been given.

I am informed it is usual to insert the several names of the Cabin passengers and, as some of our party have friends in this Colony, it is very desirable that so good a custom should not be departed from. I have, therefore, taken the liberty of sending you a list of such passengers, which you will probably have the goodness to insert in your next publication. I take this opportunity of mentioning also a report, very current at this time in town, viz. 'that the crew of the "Britomart" are in a mutinous state, in which they have been encouraged by the passengers'.

Now Sir, as regards the crew I know nothing, as I have not spoken six words consecutively to any one of them during the whole passage. At the same time I must say that I consider them a perfectly well-disposed body of men; but, with reference to the charge against the passengers, I have no hesitation to declare that the author of the above report, whoever he may be, has been guilty of a most base and malicious falsehood and

few things would give me greater pleasure than to have an opportunity of telling him so in more direct manner.

I write this on my own responsibility and without consulting any of my fellow passengers, whose sentiments generally would probably incline them to take no notice of such reports, in as much as the charge is too ridiculous to be credited and also as the person, who it is to be presumed has raised it, is too insignificant and contemptible for them to trouble themselves about anything that he may think proper to assert.

Your obedt. humble servant,

Fras. Lochée."

[This letter brought an irate reply from Captain Macdonald in which he declared that publication of Mr. Lochée's "inflammatory" letter had caused the crew to leave the vessel, thus bringing upon themselves terms of imprisonment. Nevertheless he confessed that much credit was due to Mr. Lochée "for his being the only passenger who publicly volunteered to stand by me when six of the crew came in a violent manner and ordered the ship back to port".]

Oct. 16th. Went on board; told by Captain that the vessel was not fit to receive us. Mr. Lochée was told by Mr. Cunningham (Mate) that he was ordered not to admit him on board. Mr. Lochée asked Macdonald if such were the fact. He answered:—"Yes. You are an audacious scoundrel, capable of committing murder". Many low epithets.

Oct. 17th. Sent our goods to the ship, but they would not receive them, as they said they were



taking in water. Mr. Lochée, Mr. George King and Mr. Breacher returned on shore; the Captain will not give them and some of the steerage passengers any food. Mr. Lochée thrashed Capt. Macdonald with a stick opposite to, and in, Mr. Pillan's house of business. A warrant and appearance before the Magistrates. The consequence—a re-hearing to-morrow.

Oct. 18th. Asked by Lochée if I objected to speak to his general good conduct. Certainly not; but if not required, do not call me. Went up before the Baron about 11, whose conduct was good, if not partial, towards Lochée, and took the opportunity of giving the Captain wholesome advice and thought it would be better for us to meet and settle our differences. Captain and Lochée bound over to keep the peace; the latter fined £1. Each pay expenses.

Oct. 20th. Met Capt. Macdonald by agreement at Pillan's office. It was agreed to forget what has taken place the remainder of the voyage and those persons that felt aggrieved to get redress in Australia.

Oct. 24th. Some of the sailors refused to work and wished to be set on shore. Our Captain, having paid 50/- in advance, refused. They appeared to me tipsy and very much insulted the Captain, who went on shore. Mr. Curtois left the vessel, somewhat tipsy.

Oct. 25th. Sailors returned to their duty; Curtois came with them. Left Cape about 4.

Oct. 30th. Mr. Hardy refused the Captain the use of his cutting knife; considered by the latter to be a mean, revengeful and unchristian spirit.

Nov. 3rd. Captain somewhat displeased with Mrs. Hardy at dinner, but mum on the subject.

Nov. 7th. Mrs. Viveash caught 3 bugs and 9 fleas during the night.

Nov. 13th. Informed by Mrs. Tanner that the Captain had removed our goats from the fore hatch. I was told by Breacher that the Captain's time for good behaviour had expired.

Nov. 14th. Mr. Hardy heard Mrs. Macdonald

tell the Captain that some of the passengers had said that he should have put up more sail, which caused him to swear dreadfully.

Nov. 23rd. Mr. Hardy spoke to Mr. Cunningham about the pig running about the deck; it nearly threw Mrs. Hardy down yesterday.

Nov. 24th. Captain M. accused Mr. Breacher of being about to preach to the natives of the Swan River. He replied that he thought the Captain had preached, but did not consider him now in a fit state to do so.

Nov. 27th. The Captain did not appear at breakfast. Mr. King told me that the Captain had sat up drinking until one o'clock, returning to it again about 5 o'clock. Yesterday, Captain M., after the upset, stated that he would give up the command to Mr. Cunningham, if he again met with the like insult. It appears that he, from politic motives, or caprice, or drink combined with fear, gave up the command to his officers this day.

Nov. 28th. Captain M. did not appear at breakfast, though I hear he was taking sights on deck. Therefore, I suppose the fumes of liquor have given way to reason and he is perfectly sensible of his folly. Conversated with my man Quartermain. The Captain stated to him and others the deplorable situation they would be in when at the Swan; their eyes almost put out by flies, ate up by fleas, muscetoos and bugs. That they had much better go to Sydney or Hobart Town.

Nov. 30th. Captain M. complained to me about the steerage passengers giving the Cook their grog. Johnson, having found the bottle, drank it to save the Cook the trouble. The Captain had decided to stop their grog, if it occurred again. Mr. Curtois challenged George King to a pugilistic encounter on the quarterdeck or forecastle; but the offer was declined.

Dec. 2nd. (Sunday) Mr. Breacher after dinner proposed "Safe voyage to Swan River and success to us when there". Capt. M. sent word by steward to remember that it was the Sabbath Day.

Dec. 4th. Up early; saw land very plain.

Dec. 5th. We anchored between 12 and 1. After dinner, went up the Swan in a boat to Perth.

Dec. 6th. Was introduced to the Governor—Sir James Stirling. Mrs. Viveash called on Lady Stirling, accompanied by Miss Wells and Mr. Lochée.

Dec. 13th. Hearing from the Kings that Capt. Macdonald was slandering me, I made up my mind to visit Perth and punish the slanderer if possible. Mr. Lochée dined with us on his way from Moore's to Tanner's.



Dec. 19th. John Smith walked to Perth and gave Capt. Macdonald a thrashing for bad behaviour. He applied to the Magistrates.

Dec. 20th. John Smith fined ten shillings for beating the Captain. Went to Lady Stirling's ball. Captain and Mrs. Macdonald there; taken notice of by no one. The former (with his black eye) kept in the background until after supper, when he made himself conspicuous by a ridiculous speech about nothing.

There is no further mention of the remarkable Captain in the Viveash diary, but in another—that of the Rev. J. R. Woolaston, M.A. [Rector

of Picton, Western Australia 1841-1848, and of Albany, 1848-1856; Archdeacon (first) of Western Australia, 1849-1856]—there is an entry concerning Lochée:

"Sept. 15th, 1843. Our colonial newspaper—'The Inquirer'—I send off (to England) from time to time. It is very cleverly conducted for a young country and may be more safely trusted than any other I know of, as taking correct views and advocating in a talented manner sound colonial principles. A little allowance must be made for an occasional editorial flourish, as in the account of the opening of Fremantle church, wherein 'hundreds of people' are spoken of, whereas, I should think the utmost collected was between two and three hundred. The Editor is a very clever young man of the name of Lochée".

One recalls Captain Macdonald's description of his young passenger as "an audacious scoundrel, capable of committing murder", and realizes that the salty old mariner, in his rough seafaring prose, was simply trying to say (with an allowable "nautical flourish") that Lochée was a robust, courageous, and enterprising individual who wouldn't stand any nonsense from anyone.

