

In the Wake of the PIONEERS



The Remarkable Voyage of the *Britomart*

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:—

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.



