



Letters from the Past No. 26

Letter from Captain John Ross, the first Moruya Pilot to the Sydney Morning Herald in 1863

In the letter that follows Captain Ross is discussing the arrival of the European honey bee in Sydney. In doing so he tells us a little of his early mercantile career before coming to Moruya as our first Pilot. In following issues of the Journal other letters written by him to the Newspapers will give us further insights into the man and his mercantile skills.

To the Editor of the Herald

Sire. In your paper of the 28th July, I see it stated at a meeting of the Acclimatisation society of New South Wales that bees were first brought to this country by Dr Braidwood Wilson, from Hobart Town, in the year 1831. This is evidently a mistake, bees were brought from England to Sydney in the year 1824, in the ship Phoenix, which sailed from Portsmouth in March of that year; landed prisoners at Hobart Town in June, came on to Sydney with a part of the 40th Regiment and Government stores; was stranded on the Sow and Pigs, while entering Port Jackson, in July; but got off, and brought up to Sydney cove; condemned and sold to Government, and long afterwards a prison hulk at Goat Island.

The bees were in charge of Dr Quede, surgeon-superintendent of that ship, in which I was a junior officer; and it was understood on board that they were sent by the Home Government. However that may be, I have the most perfect recollection of being on of the boat's crew who conveyed the bees, accompanied by Dr Quede, from the ship in Sydney Cove to Parramatta, where they were landed near the Factory, in presence of Sir Thomas Brisbane.

After making a voyage to the Islands in a colonial brig named the Hawa, I returned to Sydney in February 1826, when I again visited Parramatta. I was then informed that the bees had greatly increased, and were doing well. Soon after I left for India, and did not Return to Sydney until 1828, when I found bees common in gentlemen's grounds, and was given to understand that they were the produce of the bees imported in the ship Phoenix. If you think this of any importance to the public, it is at your service.

*While I remain, Sir, truly yours,
John Ross. Pilot Station, Moruya, 10th August.
Sydney Morning Herald 13th August 1863, page 5.*

The Acclimatisation Society of NSW.

This Society was formed in 1861 following a visit by Mr Edward Wilson, who had that year founded an Acclimatisation Society in Victoria. The NSW Society's first public meeting was held in November 1861 following an earlier meeting at Mr Mort's rooms to discuss the formation of the Society. The objectives of the Society were the introduction, acclimatisation, and domestication of all innocuous animals, birds, fishes, insects, and vegetables, whether useful or ornamental. It also included the spread of indigenous animals from one locality to another and the exchange these species with foreign parts. Thomas Mort was a member of the inaugural committee.¹

At a meeting the following year Mr Mort brought to the meeting a sugar cane grown in the northern parts of the colony², showing us his very diverse agricultural interests.

European Honey Bees

It is now generally accepted that the first successful colonization of bees in Sydney was by Captain Wallace on the "Isabella" in 1822. These seven hives were auctioned on arrival at Sydney.³

There had of course been a number of attempts to transport the European honey bee to the colony. The

² Sydney Morning Herald 1 October 1862, page 5

³ The Immigrant Bees 1788 to 1898 Vol. IV by Peter Barrett.

¹ Sydney Morning Herald 5 November 1861, page 5.

time taken for the journey and the heat experienced in the hull of the ships however lead to a number of hives being killed by their own wax melting. This is conjectured to be the reason George Blaxland asked for cargo space on the "William Pitt" for a swarm of bees to be kept in his cabin, the hive to be kept in a wire cage. He presumably thought there would be more ventilation in the cabin, though what he had planned to do should the bees escape I do not know. There is no record of his actually being permitted to bring the bees.

The Phoenix

The "Phoenix" was a 589 burthen ton ship built on the Thames in 1798.⁴ She had arrived in Hobart on 21st July 1824 with a cargo of convicts under the command of Captain Robert White. From Hobart she sailed to Sydney, entering the harbour during a gale but with Pilot Gray on board and in command. Unfortunately she hit the Sow and Pigs and was grounded. She was refloated with the assistance of "HMS Tamar" but was deemed to be beyond repair in New South Wales. She was sold to the government for £1000, converted into a prison hulk and moored in Hulk Bay (Lavender Bay). By 1837 she was no longer fit to be a prison hulk and was sold for £145 and broken up in Cockle Bay.

The Captain, Robert White and his Chief Officers, David Salmon, John Funge and Jeremy Doughty, along with the two passengers Mr. E.H. Thomas and John Evans published a letter of appreciation in the newspaper to Captain Bremer of the "Tamar" for his assistance.⁵

It was reported that the Captain made a personal loss of \$1000 as a result of the wreck and it was said to be his first voyage as the commander of the "Phoenix".⁶

Dr Queade (Charles Queade)

Dr Charles Queade was on his 4th Journey as ship's Surgeon to Australia. He applied for a land grant in the Colony but it appears never took up the grant. In the 1851 Census he resided at Margaret Street, Marylebone. The Census records that he was 63 years of age, unmarried and a surgeon of the Royal Navy on half pay. He was born around 1788 in Enniskillen, Ireland. and died at Marylebone in 1866.⁷

⁴ Lloyds Register 1824 in list of ships trading to Van Diemens Land.

⁵ Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser, 8th Oct 1824 p. 4.

⁶ Sydney Gazette and NSW Advertiser, 16 Sep 1824.

⁷ http://www.jenwilletts.com/surgeon_superintendents

John Ross

In this letter John Ross gives us some details of his early career in the Merchant Navy. In 1824 John would have been 19 years of age so he would have already been at sea some years. His letter indicates that he was well educated and a keen observer of nature as well as an enthusiastic reader of the Sydney newspapers.

After the wreck of the "Phoenix" John would have had to find employment as best he could on a ship leaving Sydney.

From 1828 to 1846 we do not have records of John Ross's career path but we do know he married in 1838.

His marriage is recorded to Catherine McAndrew in Stepney, London on 15 December 1838, he is a bachelor and his profession given as Mariner. At the time both Catherine and John were residing at Rhode's Well, Stepney. John's father is listed as John Ross, farmer and Catherine's as Duncan McAndrew, farmer. Their son David was born in the March quarter of 1839 and appears with his mother in Rhodes Well Road aged 2 in the 1841 census. Also living in the household are Ann, Elizabeth and Jane McAndrew. All are given as being of Independent means. The 1851 Census shows Catherine still living with her sisters. Son David McAndrew Ross is now 12, his brother John A is 4 and sister Elizabeth 2. Elizabeth was recorded as born in England but John was born in "British Colonies, Demerara".

The next record we have of Captain Ross is in the Mercantile Navy lists 1848, where he is recorded, on the 23rd April 1847 as receiving his master's certification. This list gives his birth date as 1805 and his vessel the "Hashemy". In Lloyds Register 1847 he is listed as the Captain of the "Hashemy". This is the year the ship changed hands from Heath & Co to Ross & Co. It would appear that once John Ross had received his masters certificate his wife travelled with him on his ship

We know the "Hashemy" was in the West Indies in January 1847 as she was reported arriving in Demerara with 283 Indian Cooly emigrants with Captain Ross in charge. All were reported to "be in high health and without the occurrence of a single death on the voyage".⁸ Catherine Ross must have been on board for this trip as son John was born in Demerara. Whether the eldest son David also travelled with his parents or remained in England with his aunts is unknown.

More of John Ross and the "Hashemy" will be found in our next Journal.

Researched by Wendy Simes

⁸ Public Record Office, Co. 318/171



Letters from the Past No. 27

Letter from Captain John Ross, the first Moruya Pilot Published in the Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News, February 1851

This letter from John Ross is included in a long article in the Journal on Shark's and Champion Bays. The letter is introduced with the following comments from the editor.

"The following letter from the intelligent master of the ship "Hashemy", addressed to the Colonial Secretary, relative to the Southern entrance to Shark's Bay, hitherto deemed impractical, and of the discovery of another island named "Charlotte Island" in compliment to Miss Bruce, cannot fail to be highly interesting to the public both in the colony and in England."

*Ship "Hashemy" Shark's Bay
Near Sunday Island, Jan 6, 1851*

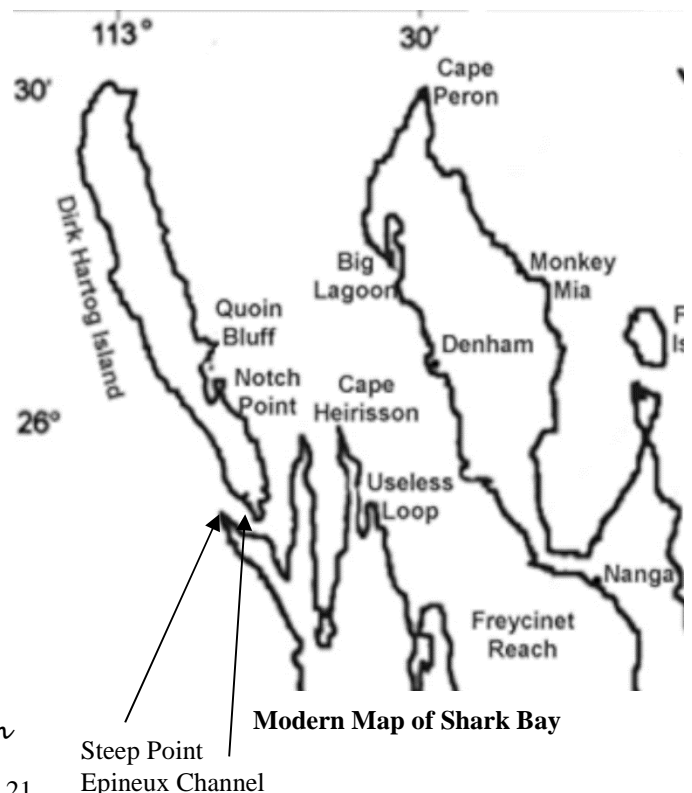
My Dear Sir, Since I had the pleasure of addressing you by the schooner Evergreen, I have been engaged exploring the different Islands containing Guano, and the channels leading to them, in company with Lieut. Helpman, R.N., who will doubtless give you a detailed account of what has been done, and of what has been found.....

Captain Ross then details the explorations of the passage to Freycinet Harbour and reports on the quality of the guano on the various Islands. He then proceeds with detailed navigation instructions for entering the Epineux Channel.

We sailed from the Quoin on the morning of the 1st of January, in company with the "Champion", which was to lead in the Epineux, as being the less draft of water. The "Hashemy" arrived at the entrance of the Epineux channel about 9 a.m. on the morning of the 4th of January, having been three days working up. She passed safely in, and anchored in her present berth about 11 a.m. of the same day. I believe the "Hashemy" is the first ship that has navigated the said Epineux channel, and I shall give you a brief description of the navigation, as it may be of use, and at present the charts do not give any appearance of the channel or any guide that can be of any use in entering.

His instructions were as follows.

Ships about to enter Shark's Bay by the south or Epineux Channel, should steer for Steep Head, a bluff, bold headland, and about a short quarter of a mile from the main, is a small island, which I named Charlotte Island in compliment to our late companion during our voyage out. Miss Bruce. The said Charlotte Island has a reef running north from it a long cables length, on which the sea breaks heavily - pass to the north of those breakers, close to them and without fear, and when Charlotte Island bears to the westward of south, haul up S.E. for about half a mile to avoid a bank which



only three fathoms on it at low water, that stretches across the entrance from the north side, leaving a narrow channel to the south, about a ¼ of a mile in width. In this channel from 5 ½ to 6 fathoms of water is found. Having thus far proceeded, you are over the bar and in perfectly smooth water, and the course is now nearly E.S.E. for about 4 miles to abreast Cape Ransonnet, keeping nearly in mid channel, should the wind allow; but should the wind be S.S.E. or more easterly, as was the case when the "Hashemy" passed in, you will have to work up, and in this case it is necessary that it should be a flood tide, of which more hereafter.

.....
The thermometer in my cabin has not been higher than 78 degrees since we arrived, but the sun burns the skin very much, more than I ever felt in any part of the world. I think it is the reflection from the white sand banks, with only a few feet of water on them. During my stay here I shall pay all the attention in my power to the winds, tides, temperature, height of barometer, &c., &c., and if possible report them to you.

Fish of various kinds are abundant, oysters very fine, and everywhere in the bay, turtle, and any quantity of sharks are procurable.....

I hope to leave by the beginning of February, and, all going well with me, be able to keep my engagement with you by next November. We are all well on board.
I remain, &c. John Ross.

The letter shows us that John Ross was a very experienced seaman and an excellent navigator with an interest in recording and noting details. He also had excellent contacts in the Government of Western Australia. We however know him as the man who eventually settled for the quiet life in Moruya and was happy to grow his own vegetables and live in a permanent home.

The "Hashemy" researched by Wendy Simes

The "Hashemy" had arrived in Fremantle on 25th October 1850 with 131 passengers and 100 convicts. This was her second voyage as a convict ship, the first being the previous year when her arrival in Sydney was met with a hostile reception. At the time there was strong opposition to the resumption of transportation to NSW.

Convict transportation to New South Wales effectively ceased in 1842, however between 1849-50 exiles were transported. Exiles had served part of their sentence in a penitentiary in Britain and were granted a conditional pardon or ticket of leave on arrival in the Colony.¹

In Perth in November 1850 the ships agent Lionel Sampson advertised that the "Hashemy" would be leaving for Madras and London and capable of carrying 600 bales of wool with an added note that the "Hashemy" "possessed superior accommodation for Cabin and other passengers for India and England."

The "Hashemy" did not however leave for London as planned. Captain Ross entered into an agreement to purchase 533 tons of guano at a modified rate from the Government. In exchange for the cheaper rate the "Hashemy" conveyed a considerable quantity of Government freight to Sharks Bay without charge.² Captain Ross at this time was also involved in a plan to secure a steam boat for the Swan River to run between Fremantle and Perth. He offered to take shares in such a venture from £100 to £500.³ It was also stated that he was intending to return to WA with his family to settle.

The "Hashemy" eventually did leave for London, arriving at Gravesend on the 17th August 1851.

By the 19th March 1852 the "Hashemy" was back in Australian waters. The South Australian Register of 22nd March 1852 reported two of the crew were charged with stealing one gallon of rum from the stores. The NSW Mariners records have the ship arriving in Sydney from Melbourne on the 18th June 1852 with Mrs Ross on board, but no mention is made of the children. Mrs Ross is also reported travelling with Captain Ross from Sydney to Wellington later in the year. The first mention of the children is in 1859 when Ross brings out the "City of Newcastle" from Greenock to Sydney on her maiden voyage. His wife and son and daughter are all listed as being on board.

The "Hashemy" was owned by Ross, Corbett and Company of Greenock. The Ross in this company being Thomas Bordley Ross who was born in 1795 in

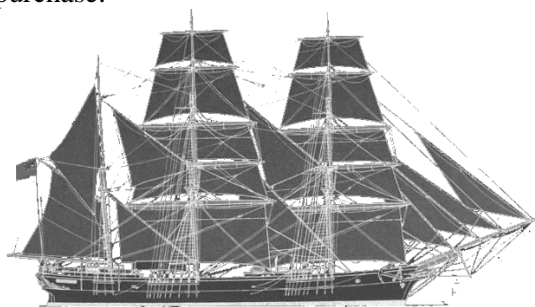
¹State Records NSW.

² Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News 29 November 1850.

³ Inquirer 4 Dec 1850.

Maryland USA, the son of Major David Ross and Henrietta Bordley. Whether Thomas was a relative of Captain John Ross is not known, though family legend says that John Ross was part owner of the “Hashemy” with a relative. The company had purchased the Hashemy in 1846 from Heath & Co with Ross recorded as the master in that year by Lloyds.⁴

We have no illustrations of the “Hashemy”. However we do know that originally she is described by Lloyds as a Ship, but from 1847 onwards as a Barque. In the eighteenth hundreds a ship meant she had at least three masts all square rigged. A barque also had at least three masts all of them fully square rigged except for the sternmost one, which was fore-and-aft rigged. Ross & Co evidently changed her rigging at the time of purchase.



The above illustration shows a barque rigged vessel.

The Hashemy had been built from Teak in 1817 in Calcutta. In the 1830’s there are records of a ship variously referred to as the “Hashmy” and the “Hashemy” built of teak and the same tonnage working as a whaling ship in the South Seas. In 1833 she was described as a teak built ship of 520 tons register⁵ and was reported as being found too large for the whaling trade.⁶ She was reported as proceeding to England in March 1833.⁷ From 1834 onwards she appears in Lloyds Register running primarily between London and Calcutta.

An unusual advertisement appeared in the Sydney Gazette in 1831 for the sale of sperm oil from the “Hashmy”.⁸ It read as follows:-

Sperm Oil

Will be for Sale on Thursday next,
 (per ship Hashmy, Captain – Dead)
 At the Blazing Star 79 George Street.
CAUSES PRODUCE EFFECTS!!!
 The Captain killed the Whale!
 The Whale killed the Captain!
 John White BOUGHT the Oil.
 Here is the effect – Pro-Bo-No.

⁴ Lloyds Register of Ships.
⁵ Sydney Monitor 20th Mar 1833.
⁶ Sydney Herald 14th Feb 1833.
⁷ Sydney Herald 14th March 1833
⁸ Sydney Gazette and NSW Advertiser 24th May 1831.

Lloyds Register of Ships

“Lloyd's Register owes its name and foundation to Lloyd's Coffee House, the 17th century coffee house in London frequented by merchants, marine underwriters, and others, all associated with shipping. The coffee house owner, Edward Lloyd, helped them to exchange information by circulating a printed sheet of all the news he heard. In 1760, the Register Society was formed by the customers of the coffee house. They assembled the *Register of Shipping* in 1764 in order to give both underwriters and merchants an idea of the condition of the vessels they insured and chartered: ship hulls were graded by a lettered scale (A being the best), and ship's fittings (masts, rigging, and other equipment) was also graded by number.”⁹

The Register, with information on all seagoing, self-propelled merchant ships of 100 gross tonnes or greater, is published annually.

Many of the older Registers have been scanned by google and can be found at <http://www.maritimearchives.co.uk/lloyds-register.html>

“In order to make a search you must know the name of the ship, as the Register lists vessels alphabetically by their names. Those Registers published after 1876, however, contain the List of Ship Owners. Those published after 1886 contain the list of Late Names of Ships, which is very useful if you only know the previous name of the vessel.”¹⁰

On the web site listed previously, click on the year you wish to search and then scroll down until you reached the letter required. The results shown below are for the “Hashemy” in 1837/8 and 1847/8.

150	Hashemy S Hyde r.d.&C.33	523	Calcut	1817	Hyde	London	Lon.	China	—	E 1 35
No.	Ships.	Masters.	Tons.	BUILD.		Port	Destined	Classification.		
				Where.	When.	belonging	Voyage.	No. Years	Character	
						to.		in	for	
								the	Hulls	
								and	Stores.	
126	Hashemy Bk J. Ross r.d. 33r. & Y.M. 15pt. B.	523	Calcut	1817	Ross & Co.	London	Lon.	—	E 1 47	

There is a code at the beginning of the Register to tell you what all the letters mean in the various columns.

There are of course many ships of the same name. To distinguish these it is necessary to have some idea of the tonnage.

Happy researching. Wendy Simes

⁹ Wikipedia.org Lloyds Register
¹⁰ Lloyds Register information sheet 44