

*ARTEMESIA***THE FIRST MIGRANT SHIP TO
MORETON BAY****by Ronald Wood FRHistSQ****President, Royal Historical Society of Queensland**

The Moreton Bay Settlement was established in 1824 to receive convicts punished by Colonial Courts in New South Wales and Tasmania. It was first set up on the Redcliffe Peninsula and later on the present site of Brisbane. The convicts remained until 1839, but the area was not open to free settlement until 1842.

The controversial Reverend Dr John Dunmore Lang, who had introduced German missionaries to the settlement in 1835, visited Moreton Bay again in 1845 before going to Britain to organise free settlers for the area which he called Cooksland.

Pastoralists led by Patrick Leslie began to establish sheep runs on the Darling Downs coming overland from the direction of Sydney. Because of an embargo, stores could not generally be obtained through Moreton Bay. A great labour shortage developed, European workmen did not stay long and even Chinese specially imported for this work were disappointing.

In Britain, migration was controlled by the Land and Emigration Commissioners. In a report to Under Secretary Merivale dated 1 August 1848, they stated that they had recently received from parties connected with New South Wales urgent representations to send Emigrant Vessels to ports other than Sydney and Melbourne as it was almost impossible to induce emigrants to proceed into the interior of the Colony once they had landed at Sydney.

The Commissioners accordingly advertised for vessels for Moreton Bay and Twofold Bay. The vessel chosen for Moreton Bay was the *Artemesia*. J.J. Knight in his book *In the Early Days* wrote of the desire of the (NSW) Government to get in their first shipload before that of Dr Lang and there may be some truth in this.

Unlike some migrant ships, the *Artemesia* was a new vessel, a barquentine of 492 tons built at Sunderland in 1847. It was owned by A. Ridley and commanded by Captain John Prest Ridley. According to the Lloyd's Register, the ship berthed in the East India Dock, London and sailed from there to Plymouth on 27th July 1848.

The *Illustrated London News* of 12 August 1848 published some details of the passengers and illustrations of the ship. The British Government gave agricultural labourers, shepherds, wheelwrights, carpenters and other country mechanics free passages (including food) to New South Wales and South Australia. The vessels were first class and proceeded every month to Sydney, Port Philip and Port Adelaide. Migrants had to be of good character, recommended for sobriety and industry, and provide their own clothing. On being accepted they had to pay one pound ten shillings for every child under fourteen as security that they would embark. Two hundred and nine passengers embarked at London and another 31 at Plymouth.

The upper deck of the *Artemesia* was handsomely fitted to accommodate wealthier passengers. The reporter from the *Illustrated London News* tasted the biscuits, beef and pork provided for the emigrants and found them of excellent quality.

Among those on the lower decks were seven boys and two girls from the Ragged Schools at Westminster, who were visited on ship by Lord Ashley. Ragged schools as an institution were begun in 1820 by John Pounds, a Portsmouth shoe-maker, to supply free education and sometimes bodily necessities for destitute children. After the foundation of the Ragged Schools Union in 1844 by Lord Ashley, agencies for the education of the poor became an important part of English life. They lost their importance when free compulsory education was introduced in England in 1870.

The nine Ragged Scholars are not named as such in the passenger list. However, two boys and one girl aged 14 years stated to have come from Westminster may have been three of them.

The *Artemesia* arrived off Sydney Heads on 9 December 1848 and then proceeded to Moreton Bay where it arrived four days later, 120 days after leaving Plymouth. When off Cape Moreton, Captain Ridley was offered the service of Captain Brown of the Schooner *Ann Mary* to pilot him around Combuyuro Point when the Harbour Master boarded her. Ridley was criticized in the Sydney press for not engaging a pilot from Sydney, but was strongly defended in the *Moreton Bay Courier*.

The ship was too large to sail across the bar of the Brisbane River and the passengers were taken to Brisbane by the *Raven* on 16 and 17 December and lodged in the Hospital and other Government buildings. The *Raven* was a small ship carrying cargoes and passengers between Brisbane and Ipswich. During the voyage, three immigrants had died, Elizabeth Faulkner and two infants. There were four births during the voyage. The migrants comprised 38 agricultural labourers, seven shepherds, seven smiths, six labourers, five weavers, four carpenters, two each of sawyers, cartwrights, miners, ironfounders and wheelwrights, totalling in all 84 male workers.

The *Courier* was “rather startled at the rates of wages said to have been received by some of the previous migrants”, as much as 15 shillings a week and hopefully suggested that 5 to 8 shillings would be the usual average.

In three days 182 out of 240 immigrants (including 59 children) were engaged or otherwise provided for. Of these 31 were married couples. Two married couples had left for Sydney. Two had entered business on their own account, 47 unmarried men were hired as were six unmarried women. The wages ranged from 20 pounds to 25 pounds per annum with rations. Married couples with families had obtained 30 pounds to 50 pounds with rations.

By 6 January 1849, the *Courier* reported that only seven persons remained at the disposal of the Immigration Agent: one clerk, four mechanics and two young women. “The labour has been taken gratefully and although it has generally been thought that more men and fewer babies would have met the wants of the place, there has been a general disinclination to look the gift horse in the mouth”.

In her recollections entitled *My Dear Miss Macarthur*, Emmeline Maria Macarthur, said Brisbane in 1848 was a primitive one street town containing some official buildings, a temporary church, a small inn and a few stores. The population was only a few hundred. Arriving at such a remote outpost in hot and humid summer weather surely tested the migrants resolve.

Little is known about the passenger of the *Artemesia* in contrast to those who came by Dunmore Lang’s ships in 1849. This is something that the forthcoming publication by the Queensland Family History Society may do much to rectify. I only have knowledge of one family, John and Christina McIntyre and their seven children. Their second eldest child, Allan, was my grandfather.

REFERENCES

Moreton Bay Courier 16, 19, 23 and 30 December 1848; 6 January 1849.

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