



The Butler Society Southern Cross Region

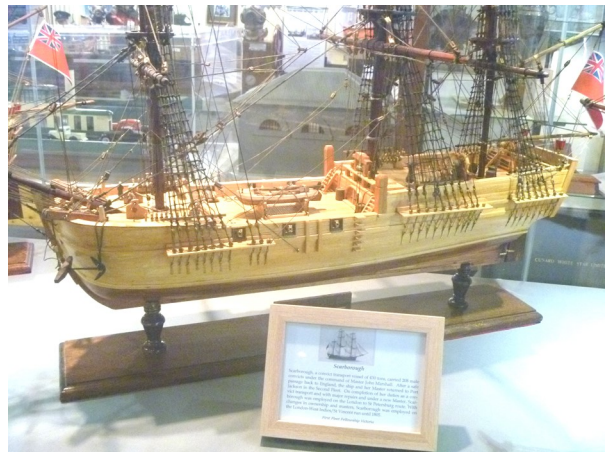
Newsletter No 44 - September 2022

Butlers and Maritime History in Australia

As part of our Southern Cross Gathering in March this year, the group visited the Seaworks Maritime Museum located in Williamstown, the original site of the settlement which became Melbourne. The town centre was later located to the banks of the Yarra River, but Williamstown continued to operate as a busy port and still does. Warehouses and workshops were built in the area, and one of them now houses the Maritime Museum, which has a very interesting collection of ships' models and other artefacts. Several of the items on display have a Butler connection.

THE "SCARBOROUGH"

The very first Butler to arrive in Australia was **William Butler**, a convict on the First Fleet. The Museum has a rare collection of beautifully crafted models of all the ships in the First Fleet, including the "Scarborough" which was the ship that William sailed on. William was born about 1767. When he was 17 he was caught stealing lead to the value of 20 shillings from a building. He was tried at the Old Bailey in London on 7 July 1784, and sentenced to 7 year's imprisonment. He spent 2½ years in prison in England before boarding the "Scarborough" for the voyage to Sydney. After serving the remaining years of his sentence, he gained his Certificate of Freedom in 1791, and married Jane Forbes.



The model of the "Scarborough".

At the time of his trial, William's occupation was given as seaman, but on some records in Australia he is described as a shipwright, which means a ship's carpenter. His skills would have been valued in the colony and apparently he had no trouble finding work as a self-employed carpenter after his release. Within a year William was granted 50 acres of land. He and Jane had at least two children - Ann born 1792, and William born 1793.

William also appears to have been a good farmer, able to grow crops and raise animals to supply the colony. In 1822 the family farm at Parramatta was described as having two acres of wheat, 14 acres of maize (corn), one acre of barley, two acres peas and beans, one acre of potatoes, six acres of gardens and orchards, and 30 pigs. William died about 1837 around the age of 60.



Other models of First Fleet ships.

FLOATING HOSPITAL

At the Museum we also viewed the model of the Floating Dock. In 1852 a meeting was held at the “Ship Inn”, a pub owned by **Walter Butler**, at which it was proposed to establish a local hospital for seamen, to save them having to face the lengthy and uncomfortable journey to the hospital up in Melbourne. The health authorities of the day proposed instead to extend the city hospital, but work did not proceed for several years. So in the meantime an old ship, the “Bethel” was requisitioned and moored next to the Floating Dock at Williamstown. A chaplain and his family were accommodated on board to see to the spiritual welfare of the seamen, and no doubt to conduct the funerals of those who did not survive their injuries or illness.



No picture survives of the “Bethel”, the hospital ship, which was moored next to this Dock .

The Floating Dock was the hull of a large sailing vessel which had had all its superstructure removed. The stern of the vessel would open and a ship would be towed in. The stern would be closed and the water pumped out. As the water level inside dropped, props would be installed to keep the ship inside on an even keel.

Walter Butler was an entrepreneurial businessman (see page 4). He sailed several times between Sydney and Melbourne, and Melbourne to Tasmania. At one time he owned some ships. It appears that he had an understanding of the lives of sailors. The 1852 meeting which was held at his pub flagged a need years in advance of the Mission to Seamen movement which was established in Melbourne in the 1870s, to provide physical and spiritual support for the crews of ships visiting the port. The Mission later moved to a purpose built building, designed by Walter Richmond Butler (no relation), and erected in Flinders Street in 1916, where it still provides a much-needed service.

CAPTAIN THOMAS BUTLER & THE “THOMAS HUGHES”

Another model we looked at was that of a barque, in this case called the “Archibald Russell”. This was the same type and size as the 310 ton barque the “Thomas Hughes” which **Captain Thomas Butler** sailed regularly between Liverpool and Melbourne in the 1840s. Shipping records show that in 1842 the ship arrived on 25 December with 31 passengers, and some general merchandise. Three months later, in March 1843, the ship sailed for Liverpool with 923 bales of wool, 29 tons of bark, and 6 passengers. (The bark from certain trees was used in the tanning of hides.) In July 1844 the “Thomas Hughes” with Captain Butler left

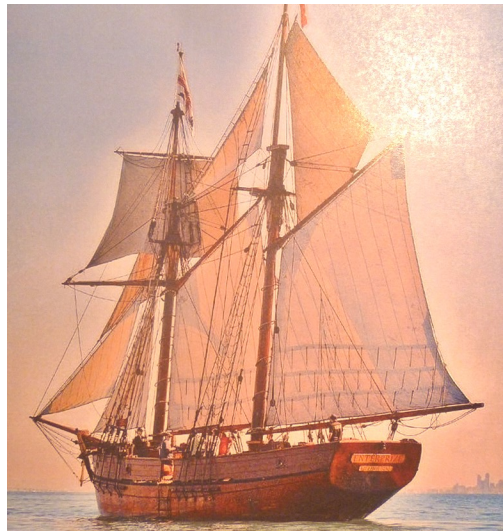


Liverpool and returned to Melbourne with 19 passengers, and their goods and chattels, arriving on 23 November. A voyage lasting 4 months. Three months later the ship returned to London with 4 passengers, 1371 bales of wool, and tallow (animal fat which has been melted down to make candles and other items). The ship was only in London for two months before sailing again for Melbourne with 3 passengers and some general merchandise. After disembarking the passengers, the ship moved around to Geelong and loaded 1422 bales of wool, several tons of bark and a quantity of leather, leaving for London on 13 February 1846. These return trips continued for several years.

Nothing is yet known about the family origins of Captain Thomas Butler.

CAPTAIN CHARLES BUTLER

The model of the schooner “Enterprize” was also looked at with interest. A similar ship, a 27 ton schooner the “Emergency”, sailed regularly between Sydney and Melbourne under the command of **Captain Charles Butler**. Records show that the ship arrived in Melbourne on 3 February 1849 with 3 passengers, some timber and bacon. She returned to Circular Quay on 31 May with no passengers and only ballast on board. The ship was back in Melbourne on 29 May 1850 with 11 passengers and a load of potatoes. A week later she returned to Circular Quay without any passengers or cargo. But two weeks after that she sailed again with a load of palings. Off-loaded those and then returned to Sydney to pick up another load of palings and a passenger. The trade for the owners of the “Emergency” seemed to be always in one direction, from Sydney to Melbourne. Most times the ship returned empty except for ballast, which would not have been profitable for the owners. The sailing time between Sydney and Melbourne was 3-7 days, depending on the weather.

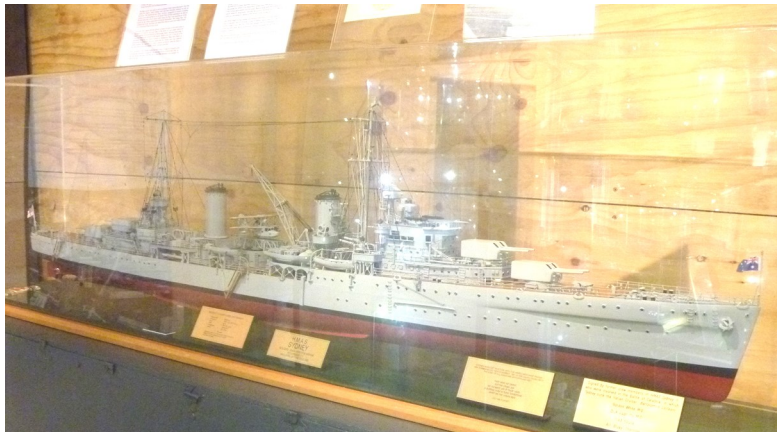


In 1852 Captain Charles Butler signed up with a much larger ship, a 100 ton schooner called the “Adventure”, which made frequent trips between Melbourne and Newcastle.

Another schooner, with **Captain Henry Butler** in charge, regularly sailed between Melbourne and Launceston.

THE “SYDNEY”

The final ship's model we looked at was that of the battleship the “Sydney” which sank off the coast of Western Australia near Geraldton, on 19 November 1941, after a battle with the German Raider the “Kormoran” during World War II. The “Kormoran” had been travelling disguised as a Dutch merchant vessel. By pretending to be in distress, her captain managed to lure the “Sydney” in close enough to be in range of the “Kormoran's” guns.



All 645 officers and men on the “Sydney” went down with the ship. One of the men was **Kenneth Norman Hilton Butler**, a Stores Assistant, who had celebrated his 21st birthday just 4 weeks before his ship sank. He was the third son of the Rev. Claude Elijah and Alice Butler of Perth, WA. Before the War, Ken was a promising sportsman, winning awards and trophies in cricket, tennis and athletics. As a 15 year old schoolboy, he made news headlines when he bowled out, in a practise match, a member of the English Test Cricket team, then touring Australia.

Several attempts were made to find the resting place of the “Sydney” over the years, but it was only in 2007 that the wreck was finally discovered. The seabed where it lies is now a designated War Grave. A memorial with its roll of honour has been erected on top of a hill in Geraldton, looking out over the ocean.

Walter Butler - an Eventful Life

Walter was born about 1807 in Sydney. His father was Laurence Butler, from a town called Ferns in County Wexford. Laurence had been transported to Sydney in 1802 for taking part in the Irish Rebellion of 1798. He was a cabinet maker, and his skills were welcomed in the Colony. He made furniture for the various government offices, but he was soon also making items for private individuals. When he got his Ticket of Leave he set up business in Pitt Street to manufacture and sell furniture, and later also imported and sold a wide range of household goods.

Laurence formed a relationship with a fellow convict, Mary Ann Fowles. Evidence suggests that she was the mother of his son, Walter. A few years later Laurence was living with another ex-convict, Ann Roberts, (whom he later married) and had a further 4 children, only 2 of whom survived. Laurence died in 1820, only 18 years after his arrival in the Colony, but by then he owned 3 buildings in Sydney and had property valued at 2,000 pounds, as well as cattle, horses, the machinery and timber in his workshop, and merchandise in the shop.

Walter was about 14 years old and learning the trade of carpenter and cabinet maker in his father's business, when his father died. His step-mother continued to run the business with the assistance of his father's leading tradesman, but then she died only 4 years later.

A few months later Walter married Margaret Dunn. He was 18 years old, and she was 15. A son was born in January 1829, and a second child in January 1831. But then Walter, at the age of 25, left his wife and children, to run off with Eliza Bodecin, a married woman, who also abandoned 2 children. Not only did Walter leave his wife and children, but he refused to make any allowance for their continued upkeep. He placed an advertisement in the newspaper dated 10 February 1832 to say that "*The public are hereby cautioned against giving any trust or credit to my wife Margaret Butler, as I will not be responsible for any debts she may contract.*"(1) Margaret was 21 years old, with 2 children under the age of 3.

Margaret's father was a retired Chief Constable in Sydney and would have looked after his daughter and grandchildren. Unfortunately he died only two months later. Interestingly he had added a codicil to his will instructing his executors to immediately enter his house on his death and to take possession of all papers, deeds, etc and not to let anyone else see these documents until the executors had put all in order. It is likely that he was making sure that Walter could not make any claim on the estate as Margaret's, still lawful, husband.

When they left their spouses, Walter and Eliza went to Launceston, where Walter worked as a cabinet maker. At that time Launceston was still struggling to get established, and after 18 months Walter returned to Sydney, where he and his half-brother Lawrence sold some of the property they had inherited from their father and became publicans. Lawrence took over the "Goldsmith's Arms" in Pitt Street and Walter the "Manchester Arms" in George Street. From the start Walter saw his hotel as being more than a drinking pub. A paragraph in the newspaper reported that he had purchased 'a handsome grand piano for sixty guineas' and a room was being used for meetings of the Philharmonic Society (2). Other clubs and committees also met there.

Walter returned to Tasmania, and was apparently re-united with Eliza, because she moved to Sydney with him in 1837 and they had 4 children in 4 years. During that time, in April 1840, Walter's wife, Margaret, died in Sydney aged only 31.



Red star shows the location of the Manchester Arms.

Walter Butler - an Eventful Life (cont.)

Early in 1841 Walter again moved, this time to Corio near Geelong, where he advertised his services as a cabinet maker and house joiner. Geelong and Williamstown were both growing in importance as entry ports to the Colony. Walter was apparently observing what was happening and looking for opportunities.

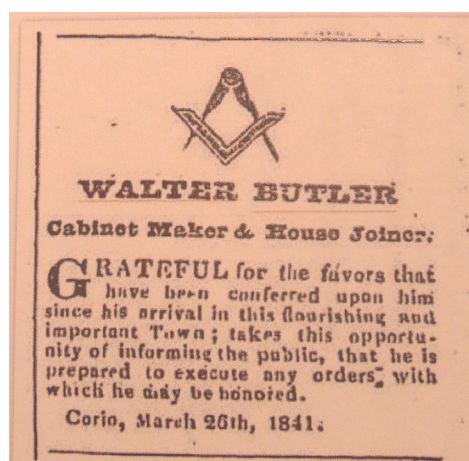
In May 1841 he took over the publican's license for "The Ship Inn" in Williamstown. He then proceeded to renovate the hotel, and 4 months later, proudly advertised in the Geelong Advertiser that he *"begs to state that he has made considerable additions and alterations which will be found to add materially to the comfort and convenience of those who afford him their patronage. The salubrity of the air at Williamstown is well known, and invalids are recommended by the faculty to test its virtues by a residence on the spot, which they cannot better do than by taking up their temporary abode (3) in The Ship Inn and Family Hotel. Walter's alterations and advertising indicate that he again wanted his premises to be more than just a drinking man's pub. He was aiming for a more respectable clientele and to extend the business to attract residents and travelling businessmen.*

It appears that Walter left Eliza and their children behind in Sydney when he moved to Corio, because later that year, on 26 October 1841, he married 21 year-old Frances Jane Catherine Edwards. Walter was 35. Eliza must have been very upset, and concerned about her children's future. Sydney Police Court records indicate that she took action to sue Walter ... *"for neglecting to support his illegitimate children ..."* However, neither party attended the court hearing in January 1843 and the case was dismissed(4).

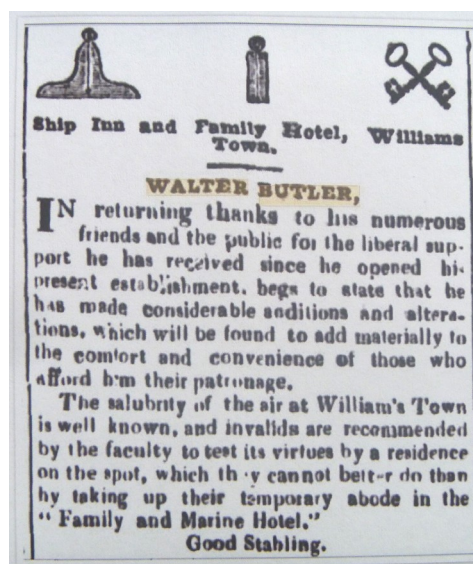
It is possible that Walter made his peace with Eliza and provided some support. Eliza bore another 3 children over the following 5 years, which may or may not have been Walter's. The records regarding paternity aren't clear, although the Butler surname is mentioned. Eliza's marriage with Peter Bodecin was a Catholic one, so there was no possibility of a divorce. In any case, Walter was now becoming a prominent member of the community, through his business activities. Among other things he is recorded as donating money to the new Library, and as a "leading citizen" was called for jury service several times. A wife from an established English family background, and educated in the skills required for socialising with and entertaining doctors, solicitors, businessmen, and their wives, would have been an asset. Frances was the daughter of the Rev William Edwards of Somerset.

Walter's hotel was located away from the waterfront. In 1844 he either acquired, or built, a building on Nelson Place facing the jetties where ships arrived. He moved both the name, "Ship Inn", and its license, to this new location. As it was one of the first buildings people saw when they disembarked, he no doubt did good business with travellers.

But he remained alert to other possible business opportunities. Early mail services between Williamstown and the town centre were erratic, and in 1846 William offered to establish a post office in a room at the "Ship Inn", and act as postmaster. The offer was made on the understanding that the Post Office Department would organise and pay for the transport of the mail to and from Melbourne. Walter pointed out that ... *"every morning at 9 o'clock a*



Geelong Advertiser 27 March 1841



Port Phillip Gazette 28 August 1841

Walter Butler - an Eventful Life (cont.)

party arrives in Melbourne from Williamstown with the Custom House box and returns again at 11 o'clock..... for an additional moderate remuneration, the mail bag could be transmitted at the same time.”(5) No record has yet been found that this suggestion was implemented.

Walter then extended his business ventures to shipping. He invested in whaling expeditions and between 1848 – 1853 he owned several ships. In *“The Australian”* newspaper in August 1844 it was reported that ... *we have had frequent occasions, from information received, to allude to the appearance of whales inside the Heads, and within the last fortnight three large ones have been observed spouting away in undisturbed security. Mr Walter Butler of William's Town has manned two boats, and pulled away for the Heads, to try the effects of a harpoon or two, and establish, if possible, a whaling station.*(6)

In June 1845, it was reported that *Mr Walter Butler of William's Town has at last completed his arrangements for establishing a whaling station at the Heads, so that he can take advantage of the present season which has commenced at Portland Bay. Mr Butler has engaged three boats, with full and able crews. We trust that our enterprising townsman will meet with the success he deserves.*(7)

In 1848 Walter bought the cutter “Mary” which he had hired the previous year for whaling purposes. When the whaling season was over, it was used to transport goods from port to port along the east coast. The next year, in 1849, Walter bought the schooner “Cecilia” which also sailed between Hobart and Melbourne and along the coast of Victoria with mixed cargos and sometimes passengers. A typical cargo in 1850 was 2 casks tallow, 11 casks butter, 13 hides, 2 dozen reaping hooks, 168 cheeses, 1 bale kangaroo skins, 10 bags meal, and 70 tons flour. But after 2 years, Walter sold the “Cecilia” and bought another schooner the “Red Rover”. It was described as a smart little vessel, and is recorded as constantly sailing between Hobart, Launceston, Melbourne and Sydney with passengers and mixed cargos.

The colony of Victoria was initially part of NSW and administered from Sydney. It was not until July 1851 that it was given separate status. Elections were held for the first Legislative Council for the Province of Victoria in that year and Walter took an active part in the election campaign. Political meetings in support of the local nominees were held at his hotel. (Which must have been good for trade!)

An interesting event occurred in August 1851 at the “Ship Inn” when a meeting was held of the Anti-Transportation League, formed by local residents who did not want the new Province of Victoria to become a penal settlement, something which was being proposed by some businessmen as a way to help with its development. Several people spoke against the proposal, painting a picture of all convicts being scoundrels and that the town would automatically become a thieves' paradise. It appears that Walter's father's background wasn't known to the speakers as Walter was elected Treasurer and Secretary of the League. His father's crime had been to take part in a rebellion in Ireland and his sentence had been transportation for life.



Nelson Place where the second “Ship Inn” was located. A fire in 1862 destroyed many buildings in the area.

In 1852 another meeting was held at the hotel to discuss establishing a Hospital for Seamen at Williamstown. It was recorded that 511 ships had anchored in Hobson's Bay in the previous 5 months alone. A Committee was formed to pursue the matter, which again would

Walter Butler - an Eventful Life (cont.)

have put Walter in contact with doctors, church leaders and other influential men. However, medical authorities thought it would be better to add another wing to the existing hospital in Melbourne. The work was delayed for several years. So in 1857 a ship, the "Bethel", was moored next to the Floating Dock to be used as a temporary hospital. (See page 2)

By then Walter was no longer living in Williamstown. He relocated his family – wife Frances and six children - to Hobart in 1853, where he bought land, built a grand house named Newbury House which still exists, and in 1861 purchased an hotel. His life in Tasmania was also a very eventful one and will be the subject of another article. Walter continued to "commute" between Tasmania and the mainland to keep an eye on the business investments he retained in Williamstown. He died in 1870 aged 63.

Source

This is only a brief summary of part of the family history that Barbara Butler has written & posted on -line entitled "Walter Butler (c1807-1870) - the life of a 'currency' lad born in the colony of NSW".

Illustrations:

1836 Map of Sydney

Nelson Place Streetscape - Anna Laurendet, on Pinterest

Sources of Newspaper Quotes & Illustrations:

- 1) *The Sydney Monitor*, 11 February 1832 p3;
- 2) *The Sydney Monitor*, 14 February 1834 p3;
- 3) *Geelong Advertiser* 4 September 1841 p3;
- 4) *Sydney Morning Herald* 21 January 1843 p2;
- 5) *Melbourne Argus* 29 September 1846 p2;
- 6) *The Australian* 27 August 1844 p4.
- 7) *The Launceston Examiner* 28 June 1845 p4.

Butler Place Names

Marney Butler Jones has sent us this photo of her sister, Ann Butler, at Butler Road in the district of Amiens outside Stanthorpe, Qld. Marney and Ann's grandfather, Sydney Howard Butler, was granted about 98 acres of land here after the First World War, under the Soldier Settlement Scheme. Sydney and his wife Laura nee Simonds, and their five children settled here in 1922. A number of WW1 battle place names appear in this region.

The farm concentrated on growing fruit trees - peaches, plums, apricots, but while the orchards were becoming established, other cash crops such as tomatoes, vegetables, and tobacco were grown. The Forestry Department acquired the property after the Second World War. One of Sydney's daughters had married an orchardist in the area, and on this trip,

through their DNA research, Marney and Ann were able to meet up with 6 descendants from that marriage, cousins they had never previously met!



Welcome New Member

A warm welcome to Jules Vovos from Blackheath, NSW, whose first Butlers to come to Australia were Patrick and Margaret Butler from Dublin In 1912.

Society Meeting - 18 September 2022

As usual conversation hummed at our meeting in the Uniting Church Hall in Castlemaine. In summary, the points covered were:

1. IMPLEMENTING NEW SERVICES

a) Members Only Website Section

At our last meeting Abigail suggested that we could include a Members Only section on our website. Webmaster Bruce has investigated the matter, and reported that this could easily be done and would cost \$280 to establish. Those present voted unanimously to proceed with this idea.

b) Digitising the Archive

Marney and Abigail have met to review the Archive and decide how best to make a digital record of the various books and documents. The work will be done progressively. Once digital copies are made, they can be distributed to State Reps to be accessed by members in each State, or could be posted on the Members Only section of the website.



2. MAKING CONNECTIONS

a) New Zealand Cousins

As reported at the June meeting, a couple from New Zealand had contacted Abigail about a First NZ Butler listing on our website. Abigail was able to put them in touch with 19 cousins in Australia, including Alan Squires. Alan gave an illustrated talk about the information he has discovered so far about this newly discovered branch of his extended family.



b) Canadian Link

Alan also reported that he is communicating with descendants, based in Canada, of a Henry Cleeve Butler who married a Caroline Pim. Alan discovered this family link through his DNA test.



3. THE LIBERATOR PROJECT

Alan's final talk was on a visit he and Barbara had made to the Aviation Museum in Werribee where a B52 Liberator bomber plane is being restored. The project was initiated by Burris (Bob) Butler, who was a pilot in WWII.

If you would like to receive a full copy of the Minutes of the Meeting, please contact one of the Committee below.

Next Meeting - Sunday 13th November

Location: 43 License Road, Diggers Rest, Vic 3427

We gather from noon, for a chat, and to view Archive material, etc. Please bring your own lunch. Tea and coffee is provided. The formal meeting starts at 2:00 pm. Afternoon tea is served afterwards. Interstate members who are visiting Victoria are welcome to join us!

Contacts

President: Abigail Butler, 8 Victoria Ridge, Upper Ferntree Gully, VIC 3156.

Secretary: Kerry Phillips, kerrybutlerphillips@yahoo.com.

Webmaster: Bruce Butler, babutler@optusnet.com.au

Our Website: www.butlersocietysoutherncrossregion.com.au.