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From oar to diesel on the Swan

Keith O. Murray

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A Paper prepared by Mr K. O. Murray and read to the W.A. Historical Society on June 24, 1949.

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MUR

FROM OAR TO DIESEL ON THE SWAN

*A Paper prepared by Mr. K. O. MURRAY and read to the W.A.
Historical Society on June 24, 1949.*

PART I.

The commercial life of the Swan River can be divided into four periods: 1829 to 1885, when the river was the fastest, cheapest and most comfortable means of transport between Fremantle, Perth and Guildford; 1885 to 1895, a period of recession following the establishment of the Fremantle to Guildford railway in 1881, but this was the quiet before the storm which gave way to the third period: a period of boom for the river traffic from 1895 to 1920; and the last era from 1920 to the present day, which has seen a gradual decline due to the increasing popularity of sea beaches and the more modern forms of transport replacing the ferries.

Perhaps five periods of fluctuating fortunes on the Swan would be more correct; for in the past two years there has been a marked increase in aquatic sports on the river, and the recent regattas have given a lead to what may be a new period of future prosperity.

1829-1885

This pioneering period saw the use of sail and oar replaced by paddle and screw, a progress synonymous with the Colony's growth. The first recorded regular ferry service was that in 1831 between Guildford and Fremantle once a month by whale-boats. (a) If winds were favourable the crew relied on the sail, but often the majority of the journey was made by sheer dint of muscle swinging long oars. This service in 1840 was run by Fred, James, Henry, and Edward Caporn with a four-oared ship's gig. (b) In those days there was a small hostel at Point Walter at which they called.

In 1833 a punt ferry service was started at the

(a) *Inquirer and Perth Gazette.*

(b) *H. G. Passmore.*

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Narrows to serve settlers travelling between Perth, Canning, Pinjarra and Bunbury, for it was not until 1843 that the first Causeway spanned the river. Mention was made of this ferry in Lieut. Bunbury's journal when he crossed at Mill Point in 1837.

The necessity for river crafts was seen early in the Colony's history, and about 1834 (a) the Government established shipyards on the foreshore in Eliza Bay at the foot of Mount Eliza. However, through lack of funds, the venture failed before any vessel was built, and it was not until 1836 that the first locally-built boat was launched.

On May 19 of that year, the *Lady Stirling*, built of local wood, was launched at Eliza Bay by Capt. Daniel Scott, who had bought the frame from the Government. (b) The shipwright was a Mr. Edwards. Many small boats, complete with a band, turned out to witness the launching.

On March 16, 1842, John Watson commenced a daily service (c) by sailing boat carrying cargo and passengers between Fremantle and Perth, and two months later, on May 25, the *Bride*, a whale-boat owned by Henry Gray, started a daily run to the port, and a twice-weekly service to Guildford and Upper Swan. (d) The same month that the *Bride* was placed in service, the Mill Street Jetty was opened to cater for the ever-increasing river traffic. (e)

THE SPECULATOR

October 13, 1854, saw the first steamer launched on the Swan, and the occasion was even more momentous because she had been entirely built in the Colony. (f) She was constructed in T. W. Mews' shed below Mount Eliza, and her engines were the work of Solomon Cook, a versatile American engineer, who was responsible for the making and installing of many steam engines into river boats. Cook's workshop was situated in Murray Street, near where Boans stands to-day; he built the second Causeway. He was greatly respected, and on his death on February 24, 1871, the *Inquirer* said of him:

(a) Division of opinion.

(b) *Perth Gazette and W.A. Journal*.

(c) *Inquirer*.

(d) *Inquirer*.

(e) *Inquirer*.

(f) *Inquirer*.

"It is to the deceased we owe the first introduction of steam on the river, which has since grown to such importance."

The vessel was named the *Speculator*, and on her maiden voyage from Windmill Point, Canning Bridge, where a small bridge crossed the river, she was in charge of Capt. J. Watson. The paddles were placed on each side of the hull; the boilers were made of steel bullock waggon tyres riveted and welded together, through which steam often escaped; the cylinders were square and had poor fitting pistons, but she was a trim craft and considering the handicaps of the builders, a very serviceable boat.

The *Inquirer* of October 18, 1854, says of the initial trial of the *Speculator*: "On Friday last the river steamer made her first trial trip, she having left Windmill Point about 11 o'clock on the morning of that day. Considering that, though without her condensing apparatus and paddle-boxes, her performance was thought to be highly satisfactory. After cruising about Melville and Perth Waters for an hour or two, she returned to Windmill Point where she has to be finally fitted out. We hear that her next trial trip will be to Fremantle."

LES TROIS AMIS

At this time there was a great need for a larger ferry between Perth and Fremantle, and William Hinton Campbell who had not long been in the Colony made arrangements for a schooner, *Les Trois Amis*, built at Northfleet dockyards, to be sent here to initiate the service. *Les Trois Amis* arrived on March 15, 1855 (a) and was converted into a screw-driven steamer. She was 70ft. long, carried 30 tons of cargo, but unfortunately drew 5ft. of water, which made it impossible to use the existing jetties, which Governor Fitzgerald and an official party discovered much to their discomfort on the trial trip on March 29, when they had to be rowed from the jetty across shallow water and board the steamer more or less in mid-stream. Consequently arrangements were rapidly instigated for dredging channels into the jetties.

In November of that year Mr. Campbell was drowned

(a) *Inquirer and Perth Gazette*.

while swimming to recover a boat which had drifted away from the steamer. The service was continued by Mr. George Shenton, senr., who bought *Les Trois Amis* for £810 in December. However, she was never suitable for river use, and when the *Lady Stirling* arrived, she was sold on January 21, 1857 (a) to Mr. George Green, formerly owner of the *Evergreen*, who for some years used her on the coast, and eventually sold her to G. Randell and Co. She was lost off the coast of Timor in February, 1884, according to Mr. Aubrey Sherwood.

THE LADY STIRLING

Les Trois Amis' successor, the *Lady Stirling*, arrived in parts on board the *Shanghai* on November 17, 1856 (b) and was assembled at North Fremantle. She was imported by Mr. Ross Richard Homfray, who launched her at Fremantle on February 21, 1857. (c) The *Lady Stirling* then had her engines fitted and made her maiden trip to Perth on May 16 under the command of Capt. J. J. Harwood (d) taking two hours to complete the distance. She carried cargo and passengers between Perth and Fremantle, fore-cabin passengers at 1/6, and aft-cabin passengers at 2/6. (e) but when the Fremantle to Perth railway opened on March 1, 1881, the owners lost no time (and apparently still made a profit) in reducing the fares to fore-cabin 9d. single and 1/- return, and aft-cabin 1/3 single and 2/- return. (f) Before the advent of the *Lady Stirling* gigs had charged 6/- a head for the journey.

The *Lady Stirling* passed through many hands. On June 15, 1857, (g) G. Shenton and Robert King, a merchant of Fremantle, bought her, who in turn, on September 19 (h) of the same year, sold her to Mark Dyett of Perth for £1950. He ran the vessel for six years, then sold to Messrs. G. Randell of Perth and C. J. S. Maley of Champion Bay. Members of the crew were: Capt., George Moss; engineer, T. Donegan; deck-hands, Jack Broomhead and Tom Poland. (i) In 1864 Mr. Walter Padbury bought Mr. Randell's interest, and in

- (a) *Advertisements in Inquirer.* (f) *Advertisements in Inquirer.*
 (b) *Advertisements in Inquirer.* (g) *Advertisements in Inquirer.*
 (c) *Inquirer.* (h) *Advertisements in Inquirer.*
 (d) *Inquirer.* (i) *Mr. G. H. Passmore.*
 (e) *Advertisements in Inquirer.*

1868, Mr. Benjamin Mason replaced Mr. Maley in the partnership. Mr. Randell was sole owner from 1871 to 1874, when Messrs. R. F. Sholl, G. C. Knight, W. Lawrence and Randell formed the firm of Randell, Knight and Co., which took over the *Lady Stirling* and other passenger steamers and cargo boats belonging to Randell and Lawrence. (a)

THE PIONEER

On January 15, 1857, one of the most ungainly boats seen on the Swan made its initial run to Guildford from Perth, carrying 20 passengers, and taking two hours five minutes. (b) She was the *Pioneer*, nicknamed the "Puffing Billy." Her owner, Mr. George Shenton, who also owned *Les Trois Amis* at one time, was drowned in March, 1867 (c) when the *Lass of Geraldton* was wrecked near Safety Bay on the way to Bunbury. The vessel, built by Solomon Cook, was on open flat, having a stern paddle and an upright boiler also placed in the stern. Cargo and passengers were carried aft, and when unloaded the bow was well clear of the water, presenting a comical sight. Both the vessel and passengers lost much prestige on the maiden voyage when, after a triumphal cruise up to Guildford, where they were well feted, and an equally satisfying trip back to the Canning, a steam pipe burst with a great explosion at Gibbs' Landing, and some of the passengers, having no knowledge of these modern steam engines, leapt overboard in their Sunday finery.

However, the *Pioneer*, at least, regained face some two weeks later when His Excellency the Governor and Mrs. Kennedy made a successful journey in her to Guildford. (d) At various times her skippers were W. Smith and William Tapping, and engineer J. ("Ponto") Molyneux. (e) She plied the river for many years carrying passengers, wool, sandalwood, and when races were held at the Perth Racecourse, sometimes called the Ascot, she conveyed patrons to the course.

On June 23, 1857, mention is made of the *Pioneer* in

- (a) *Lady Stirling's change of owners from records held by Mr. E. Joll.*
 (b) *Inquirer.* (d) *Inquirer.*
 (c) *Inquirer.* (e) *Mr. G. H. Passmore.*

a paragraph in the *Inquirer*: "Mr. Solomon Cook has a new river steamer in the course of construction which he anticipates will be ready for service about April next. The Pioneer built by Mr. Cook has been found to answer admirably."

A price-cutting campaign against the Lady Stirling was started on May 4, 1859 (a) by Randell and Maley with the 11-ton paddle steamer Friends which was constructed at Mews's boat-sheds and the engines built and installed by Solomon Cook. The Friends carried freight at 7/- a ton compared with 10/- a ton on the Lady Stirling and fares were 1/6 and 2/-. One of the captains was William Tapping, who in his youth was apprenticed to James Caporn, and was later skipper of the Pioneer. The Friends was eventually broken up on December 30, 1872.

The same year, 1872, a large wooden-side paddle steamer, built by Lawrence and Randell, made her appearance on the river. The City of Perth, as she was named, was 87ft. long and, as well as cargo, carried passengers on pleasure cruises at week-ends. Her skippers were "Eve" Hines, who was also engineer, and T. Parkinson. Deck-hands were J. Bowman and B. Whitfield, and a Mr. Scott was at one time engineer. She was later converted to a lighter, and her remains can still be seen under water at Rocky Bay. (b)

THE LAWRENCE FAMILY

The Swan has known many boat builders, but the best known have been the Lawrences. (c) W. Lawrence started business under big trees just below the Perth Technical School in Mounts Bay Road, and in 1862, with his brother Sam Lawrence, he moved to sheds at the foot of Mill Street. They shifted to the river side of Bazaar Terrace in 1891. At present a block of two-storey houses built by W. Lawrence, senr., stands on the site of the original workshop.

W. Lawrence, senr., an American, deserted his ship at Albany in 1841 when 19, and walked alone to Perth.

(a) *Inquirer*.

(b) Mr. G. H. Passmore and A. Lawrence.

(c) History of Lawrence family obtained from records and newspaper cuttings held by Mr. A. Lawrence.

At 21 he married Elizabeth Caporn, of another well-known river family. The Bessie, built in 1879, was named after her daughter Elizabeth. She, Elizabeth, died on April 17, 1890, aged 67. William, senr., and Elizabeth had five sons: Frank, William, Samuel, Andrew and Walter, who were born in a cottage in St. George's Terrace, being the present site of the Adelphi Hotel. Frank was employed as a marine driver by Randell, Knight and Co. and William, junr. and Sam (as he was known) carried on their father's business. The other sons were not employed on the river.

William, senr., who died on July 16, 1859, when 76, financed the first expedition to discover workable gold in Western Australia at Yilgarn. His son, W. Lawrence, junr., was drowned off the Esplanade, after which the remaining son, Sam, who was born on December 8, 1853, carried on the business with his son Albert, who was born on October 28, 1877. Albert's brother, George, who was not employed in the business, died at the age of 67 in 1948. Their father, Sam, was a well-known cricketer, and he was captain of the old Austral team and played till he was 68. He died on March 17, 1943, at the age of 89. Albert Lawrence, now 71, resides at St. Leonard's Avenue, Leederville.

THE DREDGE BLACK SWAN

Another well-known shipwright was Mr. C. Watson, who in April, 1869 (a) built the Premier, a schooner-rigged lighter of 50 or 60 tons which at that time was the largest lighter on the river. In that year the Government imported the Colony's first dredge from England. It lay idle until 1871 when, under Mr. Henry Passmore (b) it was commissioned and worked with convict labour to dredge a channel from the Narrows to William Street Jetty. As the 90ft. vessel drew over 3ft. of water and the buckets worked from the centre, much difficulty was experienced in dredging in shallow water. Before this channel was dredged, boats had to unload half their cargo in mid-stream before being able to pull alongside in the shallow waters surrounding the William Street Jetty, so it can

(a) *Inquirer*.

(b) History of Black Swan from G. Passmore, son of Henry.

readily be understood that the dredge was most unsuitable for this work, mud having to be constantly cleared from the bow by hand to allow the buckets placed amidships to do their work. However, she continued working under difficulties until laid up in 1878.

Nine years later, when it was decided to widen the north passage through the bar at the mouth of the river, Henry Passmore was again appointed in charge. As the bottom had rusted away, he replaced it with jarrah and reconstructed her so that the buckets ran through the bow. She was re-launched at Fremantle, and for the first time christened. From then she was known as the Black Swan.

In 1892 she was sent up the Canning, and it was here, in 1894, that the Dugong was built. A boat was needed to carry supplies to the Black Swan from Perth and Fremantle, and as one was not forthcoming from the Government, Henry Passmore and his son George co-opted the services of John, a Chinese carpenter, and with the assistance of some of the convicts working the Black Swan timber was hewn from the surrounding bush. At last the hull was finished, and then came the problem of an engine. About that time the Thornliebank had been burnt at Fremantle, so winches and an upright boiler were salvaged and went into the making of the engines and paddles. It was a momentous day for the builders when the appropriately named Dugong ungracefully took to the water amid the cheers of the assembled workmen and convicts, some of whom had taken bets that she would capsize and sink.

PERTH'S FORESHORE

In 1897 the Black Swan cleared the first channel to Mends and Coode Streets' Jetties from Barrack Street. Between 1904 and 1911 she was employed with other dredges in reclamation work from Point Lewis to the Causeway. At the time much public criticism was voiced against these works, holding that they were destroying the beauties of the river's natural form. However, it is pleasing to note that one citizen championed the Government's scheme. He wrote under the pen-name of "Perthite," and his letter gives a picture of the foreshore at the time. He stated: "The

foreshore consisted of mud-banks for the most part, and from Barrack Street east there stretched a beautiful straight line of dilapidated back fences, and the only people who had access to that part of the river were the fortunate property owners in St. George's Terrace. The Public Works Department came to the rescue with the splendid Esplanade Recreation Ground as existing at present . . . and the beautiful Barrack Street square, with the imposing boathouses (they were not burnt until 1922). . . . Both of these have been handed to the City of Perth. Then eastward of Barrack Street was resumed the large area which will be one of the finest promenades of any city of Australia. . . . The ground resumed between Barrack Street and Victoria Avenue was likewise handed over to the City Council . . . and instead of that portion of the river being inaccessible to it is now available for the public." This letter was one among many from members of the public, who, unlike its writer, were very strong in their condemnation of Government expenditure on the works. If those critics are alive to-day, they must hang their heads in shame when they view the finished beauty of the work they criticised.

The Black Swan then lay idle at Fremantle until 1923, when she was towed behind the North Mole and sunk. It is interesting to note that a charge of dynamite could not shatter the sturdy jarrah bottom, and finally auger holes had to be drilled to sink her. The history of other dredges on the Swan can be obtained from a paper held by the Historical Society and written by Mr. George H. Passmore, of Ethel Street, Guildford, formerly foreman of the Swan River improvement works under the Harbour and Rivers Department of the Public Works from 1902 to 1934. He retired at the age of 75.

A SALT-WATER MINE

He tells a story of the time when he was master of the Black Swan and of the repercussions of a joke he played on the crew. One day he noticed some coffee rock coming up in the buckets, and thought to himself that it looked like some gold-bearing stone sent

to him by one of his brothers from the Murchison. He went to his cabin, broke a piece of the stone he had received showing gold, rubbed some mud on it from the buckets unobserved, and later pretended that he had just found it. He showed it to his mate, Capt. Moore, and soon all hands were gathered round. Among them was a man who was supplying water to the dredge, and after delivering the water he left. Some time later a launch was seen returning loaded with all the engineers and bosses from the Public Works, who wanted to see the gold and to know where he had struck it. All he could do was to own up to the practical joke, and thought that it had finished there. But on his way home he heard the newspaper boys calling out that a gold mine had been discovered in the Swan. He bought a copy, and there it was with a banner headline, the story of his gold find.

ALPHA AND ENCHANTRESS

The first steam-launch appeared on the river in 1875.

(a) She was the Alpha, built by W. and S. Lawrence for the private use of Mr. R. Sanders, of Mosman.

On December 7 of that year the following account appeared in the *West Australian Times*: "The commodious new steamer Enchantress, built by the owners Randell, Knight and Co. of this city, under the superintendence of Mr. Lawrence made a trial trip yesterday afternoon. Although not in first-class working order, she made one-fourth the distance to Fremantle in 16 minutes. When she has been worked into proper trim, the speed will no doubt increase, so that from Perth to Fremantle may be done in something like an hour." (The Lady Stirling had taken double this time). She had spacious decks and was the speediest, longest and sleekest vessel seen on the Swan to that date. Among other amenities a bar was provided on board. Like many other vessels she was broken up (on April 19, 1888) seven years after the Fremantle to Guildford railway was opened.

For many years sailing flats and cargo boats had carried the majority of cargo on the river, and during

(a) G. H. Passmore and A. Lawrence.

the 'seventies and 'eighties some of those in service were: the Gazel, owned by Mr. George Shenton; another owned by Edwin Watson; one was built on the site of the Esplanade kiosk for J. Grogan: others carrying firewood between the Canning, Perth and Fremantle were owned by Dick Pitts and one by a coloured man named Marchelon. Two sailing flats built by W. and S. Lawrence were the Criterion and Enterprise, which were owned by Whitfield Bros., and carried stone from the Buckland Hill quarry and firewood from Mt. Henry to Mill Street Jetty. (a)

1895-1920

Very little of consequence happened on the river from 1885 to 1895, when on January 1, the Swan River Shipping Co. acquired the fleet of Randell, Knight and Co. (b) The boats included the Pioneer, Endeavour, Transit, Florence, City of Perth, Exertion, Cooljack and Garrenup. (c) All with the exception of the Pioneer were built by the Lawrences.

That year a company which had bought large tracts of country in the Melville district, known as the Melville Water Park Estate Co. Ltd., started a ferry service with headquarters at Coffee Point. The Perth principal of this company was the Hon. Alexander Percival Matheson. He represented the North-East Province in the Legislative Council from 1897 to 1901. The office of this company was in the premises now known as Bible House. The Matheson family bought the estate of Attadale in Scotland in 1730. Mr. Matheson was elected as a Senator of the Commonwealth Parliament and subsequently he became the third Baronet of Lochalsh. (d)

The company's ferries plied between the headquarters, Applecross, Canning Bridge and Perth, giving a regular service to those settling on the estate. The boats inaugurating the service were the Scud and the Melville. The former was a single screw launch with a Simpson Strickland compound engine and was built by W. and S. Lawrence. The Melville was a paddle

(a) A. Lawrence and G. H. Passmore.

(b) Mr. Walkerden, Society Swan River Shipping Company.

(c) Mr. Walkerden.

(d) F. I. Bray.

boat with a compound engine, and was imported from England. The Lady Ord, one of the first steam-launches on the river, built in 1875 by W. and S. Lawrence for Randell, Knight and Co., was taken into service the following year (1876), and apart from carrying passengers, was employed towing coal barges from Fremantle to the Coffee Point bases. Thomas Burkett was her one man-crew.

A TROUBLESOME LADY

In 1904 she was sold to Bill Kennedy, a firewood contractor, and used for towing flats from the Cannings to Perth. The Lady Ord was abandoned shortly afterwards. Apparently Bill Kennedy had a great deal of trouble with her, as is shown by a story of George Passmore's. One evening he came across Bill in trouble; the Lady Ord had blown the top from her cylinders, and Bill was bemoaning the forthcoming towing to Fremantle for repairs. Not to be beaten, George got to work, and soon an improvised head had been cut from a piece of jarrah. It served its purpose, and the Lady Ord reached Fremantle under her own steam.

MELVILLE CO.'S FERRY SERVICE

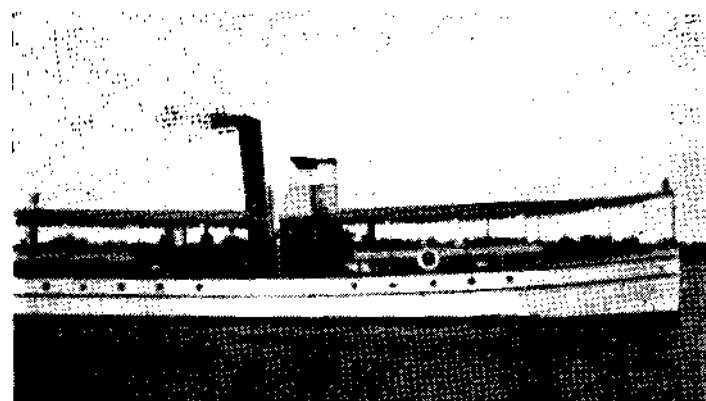
As more land was sold, the Melville Park Co. prospered, and in 1897 brought the Harley and Helena into service. The Harley, a steel paddle boat, 76ft. long, was imported in parts from Scotland, and assembled at Coffee Point by Mr. Hines, who was an engineer sent out from England to do the work. Capt. Fred Croker and Capt. Moore were her skippers. The sister boat Helena was also assembled by Mr. Hines at Coffee Point. The two boats ran week-end excursions to show gardens at Attadale where a horse-drawn tram conveyed patrons to the beauty spot.

These vessels were replaced in 1902 by the Silver Star and they rusted away at Coffee Point. The Silver Star had the trimmest lines of any boat on the river, and was built at Coffee Point. She was a single screw composite craft with triple expansion Simpson Strickland engines and approximately 100ft. in length. Her skipper was Ted Croker; fireman, Ern. Passmore (son of Harry mentioned earlier of the Black Swan);

engineer, Marlow; deck-hand, Evans; and barman, F. Hunter. With the advent of better roads and faster road transport, the Melville Co.'s ferry service closed down in 1909 and the Silver Star was sold to Armstrong and Waters, and later to Capt. C. Douglas, of Albany, who used her in these parts for pleasure excursions. Afterwards she was sold to the Cossack Lightering Co. in 1935, and later abandoned on the North-West coast.



LADY STIRLING



SILVER STAR

FROM OAR TO DIESEL ON THE SWAN

A Paper prepared by Mr. K. O. MURRAY and read to the W.A. Historical Society on July 29, 1949.

PART II.

The era of show-boats was fast approaching when in 1896, Capt. Webster, representing the West Australian Steam Packet Co., purchased three vessels in England: the Manx Fairy, Water Lily and St. Mawes Castle. They left England together under their own power. The Manx Fairy, previously on the Isle of Man run, arrived in Fremantle under command of Capt. Heggie on October 12, 1896, (a) after an arduous journey. The Water Lily berthed at Fremantle on November 4, 1897, over a year later, after encountering terrific storms and being delayed for repairs. Nothing was ever heard of the St. Mawes Castle, and it was presumed that she was lost with all hands.

Soon after her arrival the Water Lily was bought by Millars' Karri and Jarrah Co., who used her around Hamelin and Flinders Bay. She foundered while being towed by Vigilant from Hamelin to Bunbury on February 1, 1907.

THE MANX FAIRY

The Manx Fairy was fitted with twin screws and two funnels, and was sold by auction. She was 130 feet long, of 158 tons, and had a speed of 14 knots. Her new owner, a Frenchman, soon sold her to Zeb. Lane, who ran her on pleasure excursions until 1899, when the Strelitz brothers, Paul and Richard, bought her and formed the Manx Fairy Co. They had an eye to the future, for at the time arrangements were being made for the visit of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York (later King George V. and Queen Mary) and the only suitable craft to convey them from the capital to the port was the Manx Fairy. So in 1909

(a) See full account of trip and ship in the *West Australian* of October 13, 1896.

the Government borrowed the vessel and had her refitted for the Royal visit the following year.

The great day came, and the little vessel performed valiantly, but the best-laid plans often go astray. The Manx Fairy arrived at the port to return the Royal party to the Royal Yacht Ophir, and in fine style swept alongside. Fortunately, the decks of the two boats were on a level so that their Majesties could step from one to the other, but when the stepping was about to begin, the organisers blanched. No allowance had been made for disembarkation, and a double rail surrounding the Manx Fairy's upper deck barred the way. Their Majesties and the lady-in-waiting could not be permitted the indignity of climbing the rail, so a workman on the Royal Yacht Ophir was hastily summoned, and he cut the iron rails. Photographs of the ferry before and after the rail-cutting are held by Mrs. C. G. F. Wahl, whose husband was on board as captain at the time.

However, it was soon apparent that the iron hull was in bad condition, so it was decided to rebuild the vessel, and on July 1, 1905, she was hauled on to the bank at the foot of Mill Street, and as plates were removed, Hoskins Foundry made replicas. Hoskins also refitted the boilers and A. E. Tilley laid the decking and rebuilt the cabin. The work was completed in the remarkably short space of four months, and on November 1, 1905, she was launched broadside on and rechristened by the Colonial Secretary (Mr. Kingsmill) *Steam Yacht Westralian*.

The *West Australian* newspaper reported the trial run on December 3, 1905, in glowing terms. "Two hundred and eight guests partook of the generous hospitality of Paul and Richard Strelitz. . . . The *Westralian*, which is under the command of Captain C. G. F. Wahl, is capable of steaming 16 knots an hour." (Apparently the reporter was not a nautical man).

THE RIVALS

The lightning reconversion of the Manx Fairy to the *Westralian* can perhaps be explained by the fact that a fortnight before she went on the slips a rival had arrived on the river. She was the £2300 *Decoy*, a side-

paddle boat of 113 feet overall, built in Melbourne and imported by Messrs. Miers, Sunman and Tasker, who also bought the Applecross Hotel, a stopping-place in their round trip of the river, where patrons were entertained from the balcony by artists who also gave items during the cruise. The Melville Co. erected this hotel as a residence for the Governor. He inspected but declined the offer for a certain reason. (a)

Competition between the two steamers ran high and tempers ran hot, sometimes to the danger of the public (or so the public thought), as shown by an extract from a letter in *The West Australian* on March 8, 1906, "I think the way the Decoy and Westralian carry on night after night is to be very much regretted. . . . Sunday evening last the way the Westralian carried on was simply disgraceful for she appeared to try to hamper the Decoy's movements after leaving the wharf."

Before the vessels left William Street Jetty of an evening, the band on one boat would try to drown that on the other, and once under way, a favourite pastime of the Westralian, which was much faster than the Decoy, would be to pass the Decoy playing such derogatory tunes as "We Shall Meet in the Sweet Bye and Bye." At one stage Capt. George Henderson instituted a picture show on board the Decoy, the screen being rigged on the open deck forward of the bridge. It was then the delight of Capt. Wahl to shine a powerful searchlight on the screen, but one evening the practice nearly caused an accident, and after strong representation by Capt. Henderson, the show continued unmolested.

THE ZEPHYR

River excursions proved so popular that McIlwraith, McEacharn Ltd., acquired the Zephyr, which was built by R. Davis, of Sydney, designed by W. Reeks, and had a speed of 12 knots and overall length of 130 feet. She arrived on April 2, 1906, and entered into competition with the Westralian and Decoy. The latter vessel could not compete with the two faster ferries, so shortly after the arrival of the Zephyr, she was towed

(a) Mr. F. I. Bray.

back to South Australia where she still plies on the Murray River.

The Zephyr was bought by A. E. Tilley and Co. in September, 1946, and is now captained by Charlie Strue, who was at one time skipper of the Manx Fairy, which he took up the Canning River as far as Mt. Henry, a feat never performed before or since by a boat of that size.

The Westralian was bought in 1906 by Jack Olsen, who was in partnership with Harry Sutton in a Perth boat business. However, it is said that the venture proved too great for Olsen's finances (Sutton had not been in the deal), and on March 3, 1907, Olsen committed suicide. The Westralian was then bought by McIlwraith, McEacharn Ltd., who ran her until 1922, when a Tasmanian firm purchased the vessel. During her stay in Western Australia she was skippered by Alf. Massey, Charlie Wahl and Charlie Strue. Her engineer under Capt. Wahl was Karl Schnabel and mate William Lund, who was later Captain, and another engineer was McWilliam. Deck-hands were Ben Johnson and Dick Dalton.

THE DUCHESS

In 1896 Mr. Joseph Charles, senr., who had bought land on the south side of Suburban Road, South Perth, from Mill Point to the Golf Links, known as Cremorne Estate, went to Melbourne, and after journeying to Lake Wendouree, Ballarat, bought two small side-paddle steamers, the Queen and the Princess. The former vessel was later renamed the Empress. They were taken to Melbourne by bullock waggons and shipped to Fremantle on the deck of the old coastal steamer Burrumbeet. Charles commenced a regular ferry service with them from the old William Street Jetty to Queen Street Jetty, South Perth, subsequently extending to Mends Street. After the Duchess was built in 1898 by Lawrence and Son, the Empress and Queen were discarded and their machinery sold. One of the boilers was unearthed in 1937 during the erection of a building for Copley's Bank in James Street, Perth, but as no buyer could be found, it was reburied and now lies under the building. The

Duchess was sold to Tilley's in 1928, who, after dismantling, used her as a lighter. She sank coming into harbour, but was raised and used as a garbage lighter during the war, being finally towed to sea and sunk. In about 1903 Mr. S. W. Copley became a partner in the business and later bought Charles' share. He ran the business until the State Government took over in 1912.

Another ferry on the service was the Coolanup, built by Lawrence, and prior to use on the South Perth ferry service she was on the Murray River, Western Australia. She was renamed the Countess. A pair of open cabins placed on her decks forward and abaft the engines in much the same manner as the steamer Perth, with an extra top deck, gave her a cumbersome appearance, and in a breeze she became almost unmanageable. She was later sold to the Fremantle Harbour Trust and eventually bought by Tilley's, who used her as a lighter to bring salt from Rottnest. While on charter from Tilley's, the Countess was lost on Point Cloates when returning from the whaling station. The first manager of the service was H. Golding; repair engineer, Bert Smith; skippers, G. Henderson, J. Game, E. Croker, T. Smith and G. Passmore. During the Government tenure the managers have been H. Golding, E. Croker and J. Game.

Soon after the Government gained control of the service the long and often heatedly asked-for new ferry was put into service. She was the Perth, built by Messrs. Denny Bros. and A. E. Brown at Rocky Bay, and launched in 1914. (a)

THE VAL BOATS

The same year that the Black Swan dredged the channel to South Perth and Joseph Charles started his ferry service, another man started a business in much more humble circumstances, but he was destined to become one of the richest boat owners on the Swan. He was Harry Sutton, who commenced hiring out rowing boats at Barrack Street Jetty in 1897 and employed Jack Olsen to repair boats and later took him into

(a) *The West Australian* of January 1, 1915.

partnership. At that time a very irregular time-table had been run to Coode Street, and Sutton and Olsen were quick to grasp the opening and to satisfy a disgruntled public by giving them a regular fast ferry service.

In 1904 they completed the Valkyrie, the first of a fleet of launches to be known as the Val boats. The launch was powered by a 6 h.p. engine, was 30 feet long, and carried 45 passengers. As the business prospered the Valhalla, a 78-passenger launch was built the following year, and in 1907 the Valdemar, carrying 65 passengers, was also built by Sutton and Olsen. This was followed by the Valdavia, built by Tom Hill in 1907, and in 1910 he built the Valthorah. He completed the Valfrida two years later for the partners. The two largest Val boats, built by Lawrence and Son, the Valdana in 1919 and the Valkyrie II. in 1925, were double-deckers designed by Tom Hill. During World War II. these launches were requisitioned by the Admiralty and sent to the Suez Canal.

The Valdemar was the last boat built by Sutton and Jack Olsen, for on May 3, 1907, Jack Olsen died. Harry Sutton then took Oscar Olsen, a brother of Jack, into partnership. The fleet was completed with the Mermaid which had been built for Tom Coombe and Charles H. Keoh. She was used for round-the-bay trips at South Beach in summer and fishing parties in winter. She also ran from South Beach to the South Perth Zoo, and at one time was signed-up for six months with the Government Mends Street, South Perth, ferry service. When this contract finished the Mermaid made regular week-end runs to Sandringham and Guildford, and for a time on the Como service. She was then sold to Sutton and Olsen, who renamed her the Valmeda.

FIRE AT UNION JACK SQUARE

In 1922 Sutton and Olsen had established a thriving business, but on the night of February 22 of that year, their boat-sheds at Union Jack Square were destroyed by fire. Others burnt out in the blaze were Mrs. Pound, storekeeper; Chas. Hawkins, boat hiring; Tom Rann (one-time G. McCarter) boat letting and

builder; and Woodhead and Flower, boat letting. The boat-sheds had been built by and belonged to the Government. However, no more sheds were erected by the Government, and the only two tenants to carry on after the blaze were Tom Rann and Sutton and Olsen. Tom Rann still conducts his boat-building business in sheds at the foot of Mill Street, and part of one of the shed walls is that salvaged from the fire.

Harry Sutton died soon afterwards of pneumonia on September 27, 1922, at the age of 57. He had come from New South Wales in 1892 where he had immigrated from Sweden. His first five years in this State were spent in prospecting. On his death Oscar Olsen and Percy Sutton (Harry Sutton's son) ran the business with Mrs. Sutton, who sold her share to Olsen in 1931. Four years later the Swan River Ferries Co. was formed under Nat. Lappin, and they bought the business in October, 1935, for £10,000. On October 31, 1948, the Coode Street service was discontinued, due to patronage of the faster service offered by road transport, but the Val fleet still operates on pleasure cruises.

Tom Rann was employed by George McCarter when the pleasure launches Ophir I., II., and III. were designed and built at the Royal Ophir Boat-sheds between 1906 and 1907. Rann later went to the Eastern States for some years, and on his return bought out his former employer. Another launch built by George McCarter and Peter Anderson in 1908, the Mayflower, ran on the South Perth service.

1920-1949

Although this era has seen the decline of river traffic, the closing of ferry services and the disuse of river jetties, one company has shown steady progress. That is the firm of Alf. E. Tilley and Co. Ltd., which operates the largest fleet of boats on the river to-day.

The founder of the firm, Mr. Alf. E. Tilley, who came to Western Australia in 1896, was apprenticed to Tilley and Williams in Hobart, Tasmania, when a lad, and on arrival in this State commenced business as a

builder and also built rowing boats. He started a boat letting business shortly afterwards, and his first sheds were near the site of the old convict-built bridge in Fremantle. When the new traffic bridge was built in 1938, the sheds were removed to the present site farther downstream where the Black Swan was first assembled and later reconstructed.

In 1905 he built his first launch, the Rocket, which attended mail-boats and was used for pleasure excursions. In those days many coal-burning mail-boats anchored in mid-stream to load coal from hulks which pulled in on both sides of the ship. The Rocket was employed between these ships running a service for passengers to and from the wharf.

Alfred Tilley died after a short illness in 1932 at the age of 65, and was succeeded by his son, Harold Tilley, who still conducts the business. Harold was apprenticed to his father when 16 years of age until he was 23. Shortly before his father's death the firm of Alf. E. Tilley was formed.

The only large pleasure boats on the river to-day, the Emerald and the Zephyr, are owned by the company. The latter vessel was built by R. Davis, of Sydney, in 1905, and arrived in Perth on April 2, 1906. McIlwraith, McEacharn Ltd. ran her on pleasure excursions until they sold her to A. E. Tilley in 1946. The Emerald, like the Zephyr, was designed by W. Reeks, and plied on the Queensland coast for some years until in 1912 the Commonwealth Government bought her for use at Naval Base as a tender. She was bought by Tilley in 1924.

The company also runs a number of launches which mostly work round the harbour, and at week-ends and evenings are hired for pleasure excursions. These boats include the following, which were built by Tilley's: Dauntless (1914), Koala (1911), Sunbeam (1924), Invincible (1907) and the Ripple (1936), recently stolen from her moorings at Fremantle and not yet found (1949). Other vessels in the fleet are the Henley, built in 1901 by Tom Hill, and formerly known as the Francisca when owned by A. E. Morgan, who sold to Sumpton and Gablesen, who in turn sold to Tilley's; the Dawn'l, built by J. Hall in 1934 for D. Cooper, of

Claremont, from whom Tilley's bought her in 1942; and the Sambo, built by S. M. Solomon in 1938.

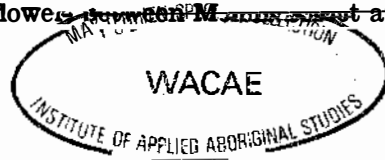
Another well-known launch built by Tilley's in 1914, which carried mails to Rottnest from Perth, is the Thor, until recently run by Gus Jansson, who died last year (1948). Other small ferries operating in the harbour are the Princess, Wandoo and Aussie, run by J. Prince from Victoria Quay.

Since 1900 three Water Police launches which have been seen in Perth waters: the Lawyer, whose skipper was Harry Zeplin and engineer Frank Bray (incidentally, the father of Mr. F. I. Bray, a member of the Council of the W.A. Historical Society), the Waratah (1906-1909) and the Cygnet, which replaced the Lawyer in 1902.

The Waratah, which operated in the main from Fremantle, was a 50-foot steam launch which had very fine fittings of tallow wood and kauri. She was built in Victoria and brought from Tasmania for the Fisheries Department. The police acquired the launch in 1906, and for years she was skippered by W. J. Kestel, who obtained his ticket while on the Manx Fairy. Bill Lyon was the engineer serving with Kestel. The Fisheries Department fitted a 25 h.p. steam engine in the Waratah, which drove her at about 11 knots. She went to Albany in 1909 for use as the pilot launch in the harbour.

The Cygnet was acquired by the Water Police in 1902 on the death of her owner, Mr. C. Y. O'Connor, who had brought her from England in 1891, where she was built by Simpson and Strickland on the Thames. The Cygnet operated under steam until 1905 when a Thornycroft engine was installed by Lawrence and Son. A young engineer, Albert Marchel, was sent out to Perth from England by Thornycroft's to adjust the engine during installation. Lawrence reconverted her to steam in 1921. Her skippers have been W. Rewell and J. Kinghorn.

The State Ferries had the first Diesel ferry built by Tom Rann in 1937. Named the Duchess II., she now plies on the last of the ferry services with the Perth and the Mayflower between Marmston and Barrack Street.



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