

Voyage of the *Sultana* in 1862 from England to Queensland

Transcript of the Diary of John Harrop's passage*

* Extract from the book *Tall Ships on the River : Sultana Voyages 1848-1866*, Kay F. Gassan, Judith A. Grimes, 1994 pp 11-16. The original diary is held by Ken B. Harrop of Urmiston, Manchester, England. It also appeared as an Article published in The Lancaster and Manchester Family History Magazine 1987 contributed by K. Harrop.

John Harrop was a second class cabin passenger and his account of the voyage starts on 26 July at Gravesend.

"Left the docks about 1 pm on the **26th August (sic – should read July)** arrived at Gravesend about 4 pm the same day. We had Music Dancing on the Poop on Saturday.

27th. We had a bible class on board in which I joined. After that we had Church Service. After dinner a bible class & Church Service again.

28th. Left Gravesend about 2 am. Past Dover Castle about dinner time. Had a very pleasant sail all day. The Cellaprated (sic) Iron Clad Frigate sailed past us twice in the Channel. We saw Walmer Castle where old Wellington died & in the distance the town of Calais.

29th. We had a very pleasant sail down the Channel until about dinner time when we past the Isle of Wight then the wind began to blow ahead of us and we had to tack about the Channel. Simeon was sick and went to bed. We are tacking and gaining about 2 miles at 8.

30th. Got up at 8 bells that is 8 o'clock this morning feeling rather sick. Wind rather high at present. Past the ship Mersey in full sail then becoming very sick, went to bed, I stopped there till morning.

1 August. I arose at seven. I feel a deal better, can eat a little. We got in Plymouth Sound last night about 11 o'clock. It is a very nice Bay. We went on shore about 9 o'clock that morning and from there to Devonport I visited the Government Works there. There were several ships a'building. One very large one was to be iron plated. We than visited the Citadel at Plymouth which is very well fortified.

2nd. Arose at seven all right. Visited Plymouth again. Got a jolly good dinner on Mackerel. Set sail about 7 pm with a regular salute from the Citadel and a fair wind.

3rd. Very fine and clam, not a breath of wind scarce the vessel pitching and tossing. Towards evening the wind rose very high.

4th 5th 6th. Sick.

7th. Arose at 7 bells to a rough sea, in the night it was very rough. In the afternoon we came in with a small shoal of porpoises racing and leaping about with great glee. A very pleasant evening.

8th Friday. A very pleasant morning with a pleasant sea. sickness getting over 121 at noon, pleasant sea, speed 5 knots per hour. A schooner in sight to the leeward 4 bells 100 miles out of our course speed 6 knots. Beautiful evening. Oldham people very merry.

9th Saturday. Arose at 4 bells with a smooth sea and Cape Finisterre in Portugal in sight. Cleaned out our cabin then got breakfast. Read a few hours of Shakespeare. Several ships in sight.

10th Sunday end of first week. Warm morning, all looks lively. We had Church Service at ½ past six this evening. The sea calm and smooth as a reservoir.

11th Monday. The sea still calm, hundreds of porpoises, noon misty but calm, evening calm with a steady breeze.

12th Tuesday. Steady breeze calm sea, evening calm and moonlight.

13th Wednesday. Morning calm spoke to a Sardinian man'o'war. 5 o'clock passed another vessel. Evening we had some rain.

14th Thursday. Morning fine, ship in sight. Had a mess meeting and agreed to give the baker 10d each to bake for us during the passage out. We shall have soft bread all the way, rather cloudy.

15th Friday. Very fine and warm till evening when we had some rain. 8½ knots.

16th Saturday. Morning wet, afternoon very fine. In the evening I had the misfortune to sprain my right foot.

17th Sunday. Very fine all day. We had divine service in the morning. My foot rather better.

18th Monday. We have a fine and steady breeze with the sea rather heavier. I am cook for our mess this week.

19th Tuesday. Much as yesterday.

20th Wednesday. Morning fine. Evening fine, we had music and dancing on the poop.

21st Thursday. Very warm, the heat is 82F in the shade. My foot is not all right yet. If you want to see some silly work come here and see husband feeding wives and vice versa. We were very near to running down a vessel this morning as she had no light.

22nd Friday. Very hot, calm sea, heat 100-92 in the shade. It began to be squally about noon.

23rd Saturday. Calm warm wet about 1 o'clock. This morning it began to rain or rather pour. After breakfast till teatime it was very fine, when we had a little more rain, quite becalmed.

24th Sunday. Very fine and calm till after Service when it began to rain, noon fine till evening when it began to rain and continued all night.

25th Monday. Very wet till dinner when it became very fine with a steady breeze which continued all day.

26th Tuesday. Very fine, bouted ship on the other tack. We had a supper this evening 10 of us, we had ham and bread, preserved salmon, preserve tarts, pickles, cheese, beer, porter, wine etc.

27th Wednesday. Two children died today, one 8 months old, the other 2½ years. One was buried at 12 o'clock noon, the other at 5 this evening. We are all enjoying ourselves very well.

28th Thursday. Another child dead, buried at noon. We are out of course a long way with the wind dead against us. We are in Latitude 2 15'. Noon we passed and spoke with a Bark (sic) Gleam of Newcastle laden with coals 28 days at sea bound for Siam. We gain 8 miles on her this morning. We are a long way out of our course going west by one point North with the wind dead against us.

29th Friday. Slept on the forecastle last night, had the head ache all day. Mr Joseph Jackson's child died at noon today and buried at 5 o'clock this afternoon. About 8 o'clock old Father Neptune and his wife came on board with his wife in his car drawn by 2 bears. He brought with him his chief doctor and barber. He had an audience with the Captain who asked him the state of the wind. The God said they were not as they had been. He said he had been expecting him about a week ago from the dispatches he had received. The Captain gave them permission to shave and bottle brandy. The God then bid us goodbye and sailed away in his car of fire. We could see it for miles out at sea behind us.

30th Saturday. We crossed the Line this morning about 1 o'clock at about 24 west Longitude. Old Neptune came on board again about 2 o'clock this afternoon and with a voice of thunder asked for his sons so that they might be shaved and made full sons of the Ocean. The first (class) cabin passengers were first then the Second amongst which was a young man named Jack. The first and second mates took hold of him and told the sailors to take him. They took hold of him shoulder height and pitched into a large sheet of water then lathered him with tar and grease and shaved him with a razor made like a saw from the [blank] of a [blank]. Simeon was excused on account of his face. After that Jack and several others along with the sailors enjoyed themselves by throwing buckets of water over each other, the fun was enjoyed more on account of it being Oldham Wakes. All passed away very pleasantly and the fun was kept up for more than 3 hours.

31st Sunday. It is rather squally this morning. We had Divine Service in the afternoon another two children dead. Evening fine.

September 1st Monday. We have a strong breeze this morning, another child dead. We had some rain in the forenoon, we had half an hour of a squall likewise which tore mizzen, top royal gallan sail to ribbons. About noon the mournful procession of the three children was seen approaching as they were consigned to the deep.

2nd Tuesday. Strong breeze, heavy sea, a few showers during the day. Afternoon rather calmer, evening moonlight.

3rd Wednesday. Steady breeze. Rain during the night, we had music, dancing and other sports in the evening. Saw a large shark.

4th Thursday. Rather cloudy with some rain. Noon death has again been amongst and taken away another Oldham child. It was buried this afternoon. In the I began to make a necktie from a piece of ribbon I had got, but a young lady seeing me, took pity on me and offered to finish it for me. There are 4 of us poor young men sleep in one cabin so the ladies in the Cabin take pity on us and help us through, beautiful evening.

5th Friday. We came in sight of a vessel a long way ahead of us. We all thought she was homeward bound but we had the sad disappointment to find she was bound for the Brazils. In the evening we had music, dancing and other sports by moonlight.

6th Saturday. Sea nice and calm but I am sorry to find that death has again laid his icy hand upon two more children who were buried at noon. I was walking on deck about 12 o'clock and it was beautiful, the wind was still and the sea like a sheet of glass laid in moonlight.

7th Sunday. Not very well this morning. Got breakfast then went on deck. 10 o'clock we had a general muster of passengers to see that all were washed and got clean shirts, and a motley group they appeared having all manners of dress and so many people of all ages. We had a service in the morning and at 4 in the afternoon the doctor read the Prayers and Mr Hoxton read a sermon written by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

8th Monday. Still unwell. We had much rain during the night. Two ships in sight. After dinner we had a sale by auction, there was almost everything from a pin to a rifle. I bought a toothbrush. Evening fine, I got some medicine from the Doctor.

9th Tuesday. We had rain all day until evening when it became fine but very windy. We passed a homeward bound vessel in the evening but it was too dark to make out who or what she was.

10th Wednesday. Strong winds and heavy sea. Simeon sick in bed nearly all day. Passed another homeward vessel but the wind was too strong to speak with her.

11th Thursday. Still raining with a strong wind. We had three sails torn to shreds today. The Cape pigeons and albatross and several other kinds of birds are following in our tracks. The wind lowered a little in the evening.

12th Friday. Morning fine and calm. One of the passengers caught a beautiful Cape pigeon. They are caught with a hook and line baited with a bit of pork. It was very misty one part of the day. They had two men tried by judge and jury in the Steerage today for fighting. They were both Oldham men and were tried by their own townsmen. Bamford was one of the jurymen. The wind rose in the evening.

13th Saturday. The wind very high with a heavy sea. We had the lower stand sails torn away during the night. At 8 bells last night we were going the fastest we have ever gone as yet, for in heaving the log it tore all line off and took the reel out of the mans hands. It is still very misty and wet, the wind has changed, it is dead aft.

14th Sunday. Wind changed again, we are on the opposite tack with a good breeze and heavy sea. No service today. She began to roll, it begins to get colder.

15th Monday. Calm sea, scarce a breath of wind. We have enjoyed ourselves very much today in the forenoon with different kinds of play. In the afternoon I had some very good sport shooting at the sea birds. I killed the first which was a Cape hen, then I missed the next three shots which were at a very large bird called the Mollyhawk, but the 4th shot fetched it down. I then killed every shot after that. The birds were another Mollyhawk, a few Cape hens and pigeons, those in the first Cabin could not kill one. We had music and dancing in the evening, in the steerage.

16th Tuesday. Morning fine with a steady breeze throughout the day. In the evening we amused ourselves with different kinds of games. It was very cold.

17th Wednesday. Not very well this morning, was very hoarse with a cold. Got some coffee and toast for breakfast in bed. I got up at 5 bells with a storm arising. The vessel was pitching and rolling so that we could scarcely stand. One man was standing on the weather side when a wave came over and dashed across the deck and over a barrel on the opposite side. You may perhaps form some idea how it was when we had to sit upon the cabin floor with our dinner, and tea fixed between our knees, such sliding and falling I ne'er saw before. I had a few falls myself. We went to bed very early and lay there like urchins with the wind blowing furious, only three sails up. It rained all day.

18th Thursday. The sea still very heavy and rolling but the wind rather lower. The air is frosty and very cold, we had some hail this forenoon. In the afternoon it was very fine but cold. The Mate told us that about 12 or 1 o'clock this morning the boat on the lee side went in the water with one lurch that the ship gave. We felt the shock when we were in bed but we did not know we were under water, it made all her timbers creak again.

19th Friday. Fine morning but bitter cold, the wind has gone down, but the sea is very heavy. Death has again visited us and taken away another child which was lowered in the deep at noon today. We came in sight of Gough's Island this afternoon. Evening we are quite becalmed.

20th Saturday. Morning fine but cold, sea calm with very little wind, we keep floating and tacking about Gough's Island. Evening the wind began to rise.

21st Sunday. Morning fine, but cold, we are sailing along very pleasantly. Death has taken away another child. Evening began to rain. Morning fine but cold, with a good wind which is rather more in our favour.

22nd Monday. Morning fine but cold. We are sailing along very pleasantly. Death has taken away another child. Evening began to rain.

23rd Tuesday. Morning still raining, very dull dreary and misty. Another child dead. Evening still very misty but no wind.

24th Wednesday. Morning still dull and misty, evening still becalmed in the mist. Whale seen.

25th Thursday. Morning fine with a little wind, evening rain with variable winds.

26th Friday. Morning fine with a nice breeze. Evening a squall arose beginning with rain. It lasted about half an hour during which all hands were at work. Beautiful night but rocks very much.

27th Saturday. Morning squally mixed with sunshine. The water burst open our port hole and rushed in upon Messrs Warbrick and Pulsford. Afternoon cold with some snow. Evening fine.

28th Sunday. Fine frosty morning, we had some snow and it was rather squally. We had some more snow in the afternoon, evening fine, cold and moonlight. Rolls very much.

29th Monday. Morning fine but cold, another child dead, the sea heaving and rolling which causes the vessel to roll very much. Evening moonlight.

30th Tuesday. Morning fine, sea not so heavy, another child dead. We had a sale this afternoon, sea calm with very little wind. Evening fine and moonlight, wind changed.

October 1 Wednesday. Morning wet with a good wind and heavy sea, wind changed again. Sailor in irons. Child born. Bird with string to its legs.

2nd Thursday. We had a squall this morning between 3 and 4 o'clock, the ship near on her beam ends, the wind on our quarter. Breakfast wind changed again aft, rolls very much, sea heaby. Evening moonlight. Sale continued.

3rd Friday. Calm sea, steady breeze, evening moonlight. Sale continued.

4th Saturday. Beautiful morning, noon a mist arose, the sea rising about 3 pm. The wind began to rise, all hands were called to reef the sails, we were in the midst of our tea, joking about the ship rolling, when we were alarmed by the cry of a man overboard. The sailors were stowing away the mainsail when the footrope broke. Some clung to the yards, but this man clung to a rope, which let him into the sea which was running very high at the time. He held on manfully for about 3 or 4 m, when he was torn away. A lifebuoy was thrown out but he missed it and was washed away. Beautiful moonlight night.

5th Sunday. Nothing of any note.

6th Monday. Fine morning but cold. Noon wind rising, ship began rolling, the sea came over the height of the main yards, evening rain.

7th Tuesday. Morning wet, sea running high. Wind changed during the night aft, which made her roll fearfully.

8th Wednesday. Morning fine and calm. About 10 am the wind began to rise, all hands called to reef the sails, the sea rose very high. In the afternoon we had some snow and we had some good sport, snowballing between the poop v. the main deck.

9th Thursday. The sea still very high, a good breeze but cold. We had some rain and snow.

10th Friday. Sea calm, very little wind, sunshine and warm. The wind rose in the evening to a steady breeze. Another child dead. [He is referring to George Robert CRUST, aged 2 who died from infantile fever.]

11th Saturday. Morning fine the sea running high. It began to rain after dinner and continued all day.

12th Sunday. Morning fine with a steady breeze, sea still high. Ship rolls very much especially in the night when she shipped over many seas. Afternoon a few light showers, evening fine.

13th Monday. Calm sea light winds very near a calm 6 pm wind change.

14th Tuesday. Fine morning calm sea, steady breeze, afternoon wind rather stronger. We had a soiree in the Second Cabin in the evening which was patronised by the Captain who enjoyed it very much. I sang a Lancashire song which pleased them very well. It was Fay in ----- ditty.

15th Wednesday. Morning calm, steady breeze, afternoon the wind began to rise. About 3 o'clock pm the mizzen upper topsail yard broke in the centre. Evening the sea running high.

16th Thursday. Morning dull and wet, noon misty with a good breeze and a heavy sea, the spray continually dashing over.

17th Friday. Morning fine and clear, with a good breeze, in full sail. Sea still heavy. Elijah Wilkinson's child died about 11 am and was buried at 5 pm. Evening fine, sea going down.

18th Saturday. Morning fine and clear. In the afternoon we had some slight showers, about 6 pm the wind changed.

19th Sunday. Morning fine and clear, calm sea with little wind. Noon the wind changed aft.

20th Monday. Beautiful day, sailing along very pleasantly in full sail. General washing day. We had another concert in the evening.

21st Tuesday. Much as yesterday.

22nd Wednesday. Calm and clear, little or no wind. A mist arose in the evening accompanied by some drizzly rain. The mist cleared away again about 10 pm.

23rd Thursday. Drizzly rain nearly all day, wind nearly ahead of us. Sea calm.

24th Friday. A birth and a death this morning. a beautiful morning with a clear sky, steady breeze and calm sea. Noon very warm, wind nearly all died away. Changed about 3 pm, afternoon had both wind and rain but it soon died away. About 7 pm a squall arose very suddenly, accompanied by pouring rain which settled down to a strong steady breeze. Sighted Tasman Point about noon.

25th Saturday. Fine with strong steady breeze.

26th Sunday. A gale arose about 7 am which lasted about half an hour which tore up the main staysail, settled down to a strong head wind. About noon another arose which tore up one of the jibsails. It gradually settled down to a strong fair wind. We had some rain this afternoon. Evening fine and moonlight.

27th Monday. Fine morning calm sea. Yard square but very little wind. Afternoon the wind rose strong against us, driving us 3 points out of our course.

28th Tuesday. Fine morning but the wind still against us. Afternoon we passed a ship. A fair wind arose, heavy sea.

29th Wednesday. Fine calm morning, in the forenoon the wind changed aft. Squared the yard and sailed along very pleasantly. Changed again about noon, very changeable all day.

30th Thursday. Fine morning, came in sight of Mount Warning about half past 8 am. Past the steam packet Williams for Sydney about 10 am. Past Point Danger about 4 pm, a bold and rocky coast.

31st Friday. Beautiful morning, calm sea, fair wind. About 3 am the man on the foremast sighted Moreton light. The two men and myself went up the mizzen rigging and saw it ourselves about half past 3. The Captain stopped the ship till daybreak, and signalled with rockets but they did not answer them. About half past 7 am we hoisted our colours signals and numbers, which were answered from the lighthouse. About half past 8 am the Pilot came on board and told us that neither the Utopia or the Prince Consort had as yet arrived. We then began to tack about. Perhaps you don't know the meaning of tacking. It means altering her course. We had to tack about 37 times from 9 am till about 5 pm. About 20 past one we had to drop anchor in 5 fathoms water. They let go the cable chain and, before they could stop it, she ran out 40 fathoms and then struck upon a sandbank. She gave 4 or 5 heavy plunges which made all her timbers creak. The women screamed, the children cried and the men looked pale, but we had a calm sea and not much wind so we got her off again in about 15 minutes. It made us all work, I'll assure you. Mr Patrick, Mr Denison, and myself stood by the topsails braces all the time we were tacking. We sighted the lights from the ships at anchor about half past 6 pm. We dropped anchor about half past 11 pm. Moonlight, the water is about 6 fathoms 25 miles from Brisbane. Here we are snug at anchor after a pleasant passage of 90 days from Plymouth beating 3 vessels.

John Harrop on the ship *Sultana*.