



The Binnacle

October 2023

Volume 45 Issue 10

Victoria Model Shipbuilding Society

Notice of Meeting – Oct 12 / 23

Victoria Model Shipbuilding Society AGM

St Peters Anglican Church Hall

October 12, 7:30pm

**Ken Lockley
In the Workshop**



**Edward White
HMS Beagle.**



From
the Bridge

2023 Executive Committee

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On the Radar!

Our Annual General Meeting is on Thursday 12th. October, 7:30 pm. It will be in person at St. Peter's Church Hall.

Please make every effort to attend!



Regular General Meetings
2 nd . Thursday, 7:30 pm. St Peter's Anglican Church Hall,
St. Peter's road, Lakehill.
Next meeting 12th. October.



Every Sunday Morning, 9am-ish to 11:30-ish at Harrison Model Yacht Pond, Dallas road.



The Langford Lake Navy.
Wednesday Mornings 9 :30 ish, Leigh Rd. At Tillicum.

IN THE WORKSHOP: October 2023

Ken Lockley



Another Great picture by Mac Mackay, “Point Vim” working in Halifax Harbour in snowy Winter conditions. Point Vim and her sister ships, four in total, are another series of Quebec built tugs for Foundation Marine based in Montreal and serving all of the Atlantic coast. These tugs were constructed with single screw and later fitted with Kort’s. Ninety feet in length by 27 foot beam making for a handy size for Great Lakes and St Lawrence Seaway operation. Marine Traffic show’s “Point Vim” still operating out of Quebec’s South Shore of the St Lawrence. Recently reading Fawley Mowat’s “Serpents Coil “ has had me researching what’s left of Foundation Marine’s fleet.



A couple of pictures from Marine Traffic’s web site of “Point Vim”

BASSWOOD FACTS

Basswoods Tilia

The basswoods, or lindens, supply welcome shade on city streets. Their soft, light-colored wood is a carver's delight. And their pale, fragrant flowers yield nectar that bees transform into a most flavorsome honey. All three North American species have heart-shaped leaves and straplike bracts.

.....Reader's Digest North American Wildlife c. 1982

A Basswood can grow 65 to 120 feet tall and is indigenous to the Midwest and Northeastern United States with the highest quality Basswood coming from Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin. Basswood is used by skilled artisans and craftsmen alike to create many unique and lovely objects.

Basswood is the wood of choice for wood carving and other wood crafts. It takes paint and stain well and many people love Basswood for its beauty and its softer workable quality.



I recently discovered that Home Depot is now sell Basswood in lumber lengths in there Kiln Dried wood area of the store. Basswood has lots of good qualities, easy to work with, glues and stains well. It's ideal for wooded superstructures and cabins on model boats as it's light weight yet structural sound. In many cases a better choice than Balsa. In comparison to other K.D. woods it's cheap in cost. We often walk to Home Depot as it's close and there are very interesting things going on at what was the old University Heights Shopping Centre. Yesterday we walked home with a 6 foot length of Douglas Fir as it also makes for good deck beams, carlings general hull construction.



I have often been asked how do I cut my narrow strips for hull planking 1/16 x 5/16 inches. I use a blade very similar to this Plywood Blade on my 65 year old Rockwell Beaver table saw. I use 36 " inch lengths and can usually get some good quality strips for planking the hull.

The straighter the grain of the wood the easier it is. A slow steady push through the blade is essential.

Watching your fingers is most helpful.....

The blade above sells for under \$20.00 at Home Depot and is another one of the afternoon walk purchases. The recent addition at the Shelbourne Street store has made for a much better store. More selection in almost every section. It's a great facility to have on my doorstep!!! So my boats have a lot KMS, Lumber World and Home depot in every boat.

Over the last few weeks, my current build, "Moorcock" has gone together very well. There's always a few hiccups to overcome and they are mostly of my own making. Looking at the profile, you can see in the pictures I really didn't allow any extra space for a larger prop if needed. That's maybe my main concern. In another build I must think where bollards are to be installed and have heavier backing under the deck for fastenings to be more secure. One positive aspect is the discovery of "ACE PAINTS" for the hull. A very smooth paint for brushing. First coat takes 24 hours to dry, after that 10-12 hours. It's an oil based paint, so clean up isn't quite as easy.

Recent pictures of "Moorcock" at varying stages of construction through September 2023





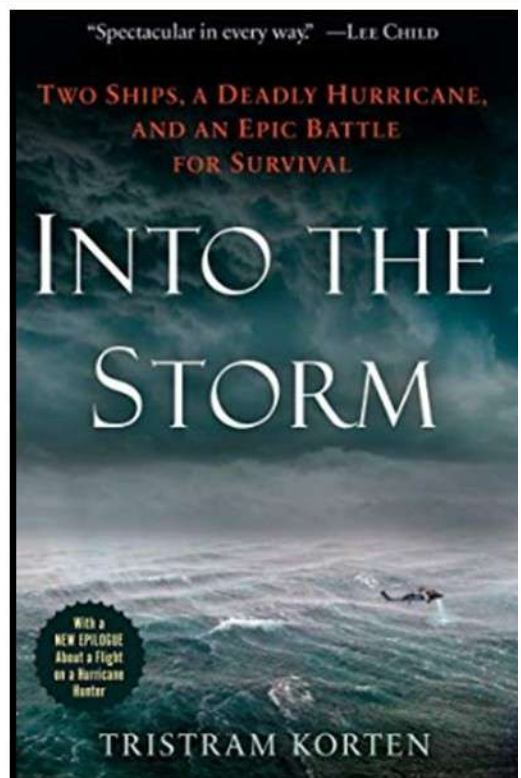
Last January we heard that a large freighter was in trouble off our West Coast. It eventually, with the help of tugs, it got docked at Ogden Point until repairs could be arranged. The vessel was CSL's MV Tecumseh, which is the vessel above back in service. She's leaving Orcca Sand and Gravel docking facilities just north of Port Mc Neil, taking part of Vancouver Island to Southern California. Canadian Steamship Lines is the shipping company and runs about 4-6 ships a month taking aggregates to the California market for US Concrete Ltd. This vessel was built in 2013 for this run. This photo was taken in September from our Cabin.

This month's book selection is a true account of two ships caught up in a Force 4 hurricane in the waters off San Juan, Porto Rico. An 800 ft container ship and 250 foot general cargo vessel. Both vessels were lost at sea.

The author has made a great read about how the US Coast Guard deal with rescues at sea. When I started the book I had no idea that this true description of these two marine disasters would keep me reading every free time I had available for 3 days .

This is the first book by the "Tristan Korten", his writing background is newspaper journalism. I understand he has another book under way and I'll be sure to read it.

This was a \$15.00 Amazon purchase.



HMS Beagle, 1820.



Charles Darwin's famous voyage around the world, from 1831 to 1836, was aboard HMS Beagle, as a supernumerary guest of the Captain, Robert Fitzroy. Darwin spent only about 18 months of those five years actually at sea. The rest of the time he was on land while the ship was, for the most part, carrying out surveys and mapping of the coastlines that they passed. That was the Beagle's principal purpose, surveying the southern oceans for the purpose of supporting trade and colonization.

The Beagle's story is then very different from Darwin's, and I am proposing in this article to tell the story of the ship, rather than that of its most famous passenger.

Let's start with historical context. 1772 is a very good pivotal year. By 1772 Thomas Cook had completed his first circumnavigation of the world in Endeavour, (A ship born as a carrier of coal in the North Sea), and had brought back to Britain a huge wealth in navigational knowledge of the Pacific. The Admiralty sent him right back out for more, in two colliers this time, (Resolution and Adventure) complete with the new navigational super-weapon, K1, the first copy of Thomas Harrison's Chronometer. With this, he could determine his longitude with accuracy, and established, once and for all, that there was no great Terra Australis.



Figure 1: K1 now in the Greenwich Museum.

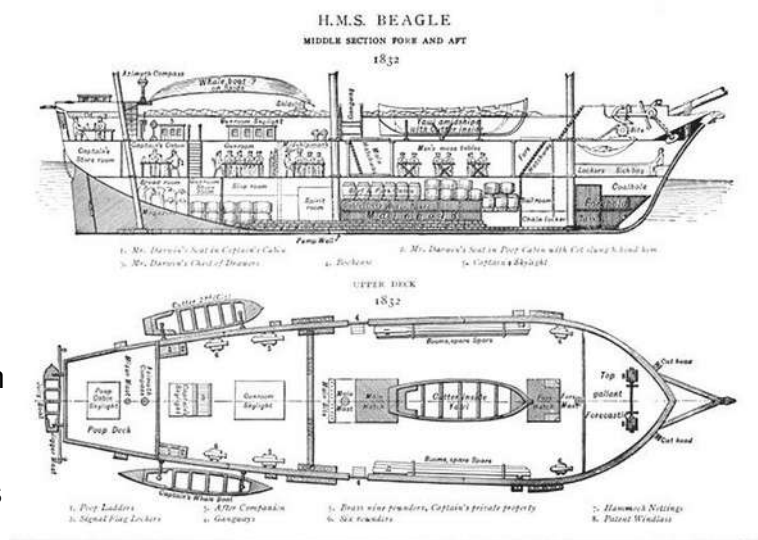
Thirty three years later, 1805 Britain came away from the Battle of Trafalgar as the undisputed master of the high seas, and with a burgeoning world wide empire. The Admiralty's future was very clear, it was to maintain that mastery and to support British trade and Empire by all means. It obviously needed many more smaller ships, armed enough to defend themselves against piracy and to threaten more backup force if needed. So in 1807 Sir Henry Peake came up with the design for the "Cherokee" class of brig-sloops.

That's a two masted small ship with a full suit of square sails on both masts. Sir Henry was a fan of the Carronade, a short, large barreled, gun that was not much good for distance work but terribly destructive at close quarters. Much lighter than an equivalent cannon, it gave these little ships a seventy two pound broadside at close quarters. They mounted eight of these carronades and two long six pounder cannon "chasers" on the bow.

They were 90 feet long, 24 feet six inches wide, and relatively shallow draft at 12 feet six inches. They carried a complement of 75. They were fast, manoeuvrable, and nasty when they chose to be. They had a reputation for their habit, with their low freeboard and lack of a forecastle, of shipping water over the bows and retaining it on deck between the solid bulwarks. But 115 of them were built over a period of twenty years by the world's most professional navy, so there wasn't that much wrong. The very last to be ordered were cancelled before their keels were laid and they were re-ordered as paddle steamers. So that's where their place was in history, at the end of the age of sail, and the beginning of the age of steam.

Which brings us to Beagle. Costing 7,803 pounds sterling, she was launched on 11th May 1820, with the slight modification to the original design of adding 6 inches to the height of the bulwarks at the stem and 4 inches at the stern. Her first duty was a simple trip up the Thames, attending the celebration of King George IV's Coronation. After that, there was no particular need for her service and she was laid up in ordinary,(masts and rigging and armament removed), until 1825.

Captain Pringle Stokes was appointed captain of Beagle on 7th. Sept. 1825 and the Beagle was docked at Woolwich to be repaired and fitted out as a survey ship for the Hydrographic office. Her armament was reduced to 6 guns from 10 and a mizzen (third) mast was added at the stern to improve her manoeuvrability.



Pringle Stokes had gone to sea as a midshipman on HMS Ariadne in June 1805 at the age of 12, quite usual at the time. By the end of 1819, he had risen to lieutenant and was appointed to the frigate HMS Owen Glendower. Coincidentally, a new student was on board, aged 14, named Robert Fitzroy, of whom much more later.

Owen Glendower's job was to join the South American Station where she was to become the flagship of Admiral Thomas Hardy, (Yes, that Hardy, Nelson's flag captain at Trafalgar!). That didn't happen, but she was to visit St. Helena to check on the conditions of Napoleon's imprisonment, and afterwards to complete an extended voyage to the west coast of South America, involving significant political skulduggery.

That, though is a whole other story, and suffice it to say that she arrived safely back at Spithead in January 1822, after a huge advance in experience for both Stokes and Fitzroy.

Stoke took on a second cruise in Owen Glendower, this time to suppress the West African slave trade. (The Slave Trade act of 1807). He took temporary command of Owen Glendower when the Captain, Mendes, died of

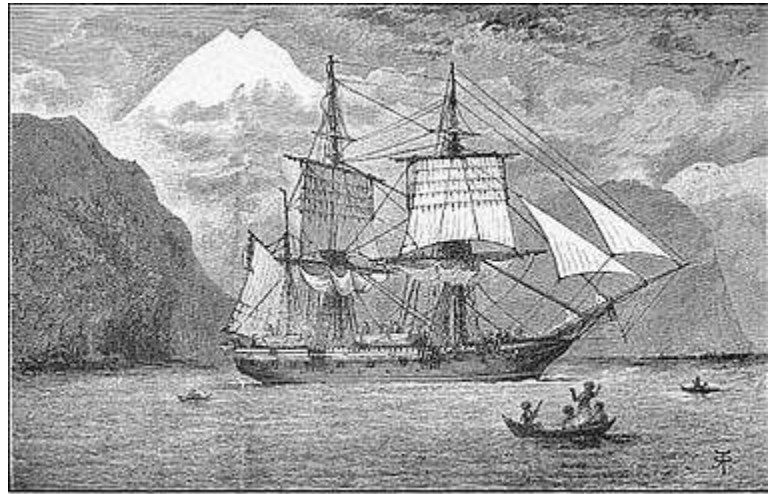
cholera but was soon superseded by John Filmore and returned to Britain at the end of 1823. But he had not wasted his time and he studied mathematics in Edinburgh to make himself eminently qualified by both experience and learning to take the captaincy of Beagle as she was converted to a survey ship. Known as an indomitable seaman, learned in the South Atlantic and South Pacific, he was an obvious choice.

Beagle's mission was, with and under the command of the larger HMS Adventure, Captain Philip Parker King, to survey the South American coastline from Montevideo, Uruguay to the north coast of Chiloe Island, where South America's fjord land ends and the mainland faces the Pacific directly.

As the smaller of the two ships, Beagle was destined to get the majority of the close-in dirty work on this, the world's most forbidding coast.

The two ships reached Montevideo in November 1826, and then surveyed the coast of southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego until returning to Rio de Janeiro in April 1827, (autumn in those latitudes). They returned to the Straits of Magellan in December, making their headquarters in Port Famine, (now Puerto del Hambre). From there Pringle Stokes was to take the Beagle out of the strait and explore the west coast islands north to latitude 47 degrees south.

I really do recommend that at this point you fire up Google maps and take a look at the south of South America.



H.M.S. Beagle in Straits of Magellan. Mt. Sarmiento in the distance.

Stokes and Beagle tried for 5 months. Here's a quote from his journal from June 1828:-

"Nothing could be more dreary than the scene around us. The lofty, bleak, and barren heights that surround the inhospitable shores of this inlet, were covered, even low down their sides, with dense clouds, upon which the fierce squalls that assailed us beat, without causing any change... Around us, and some of them distant no more than two-thirds of a cable's length, were rocky inlets, lashed by a tremendous surf; and, as if to complete the dreariness and utter desolation of the scene, even the birds seemed to shun its neighbourhood. The weather was that in which... "the soul of man dies in him."

And Pringle's soul did indeed die. Beagle reached Port Famine again on July 27 with Lieutenant William Skyring in effective command. Pringle had not left his cabin for four weeks. On the 1st of August he shot himself, but remained alive and coherent with the bullet in his brain for another 11 days. His grave is a couple of miles north of Puerto del Hambre, still visible and marked today.



Parker King of the Adventure confirmed Skyring as commander of Beagle, and the two ships sailed back north to Montevideo, Adventure sailed on North to Rio de Janeiro where she met with HMS Ganges and the commander

of the South American station, Robert Otway. (Yes, that's the same Ganges that the Saltspring Island town is named for!). Otway ordered Beagle to join them for refit and provisioning and replaced Skyring with his flag lieutenant, Robert Fitzroy, in December 1828.

That's the same Robert Fitzroy who was a student and eventually midshipman under Stokes on Owen Glendower. I told you he'd be back!

Fitzroy took Beagle south again to complete the objectives of the survey and by the time Beagle got back to England in October 1830, he had fully established his reputation as both a surveyor and a commander. He caused a considerable stir in society by also bringing back four Fuegian natives that he had taken as hostages after their families had stolen one of the ship's boats.

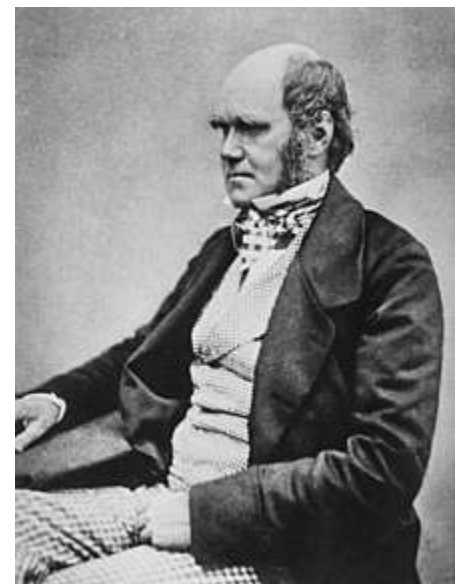


In June 1831, he was re-appointed captain of the Beagle for another major expedition. The major objective of this was to establish a complete "circle of longitude", a measurement of the position of many landmarks around the entire world that would return to a first point to measure how accurately all the points had been determined. To save you unnecessary suspense, Fitzroy completed this circle at Salvador, Brazil, with an error of only 33 seconds, after a voyage of five years and tens of thousands of miles. That's the equivalent of 15 kilometres. Thereafter, any ship passing any of these points could check its navigation with what was then superb accuracy.

Before the voyage started, Fitzroy refitted Beagle mostly at his own expense. He raised the main deck and built a low forecastle to minimize the problem of seas swamping the deck, and between him and the admiralty, there were 23 chronometers on board, in a separate room complete with a technician to maintain them. He even fitted one of the newly invented lightning rods.

He had also given much thought to the strain and loneliness he would experience as captain, knowing of the previous captain's suicide and others, and asked permission to take on board a suitable intellectual companion, not part of the ship's company, but of a scientific background, with whom he could share conversation as equals. This man would pay his own way on land, spending time ashore while Beagle did her survey work in the vicinity, he even had to pay 500 pounds for the privilege of eating from the ship's stores while on board.

Eventually a young Charles Darwin was selected for this position. It was a great success, of the five year voyage, Darwin was to spend a total of 3 1/2 years ashore, and only 18 months actually aboard Beagle. But, with a few rows, they kept each other company and always had something to discuss about their discoveries while apart. This was a time when new theories in geology were challenging the biblical story of creation. Darwin became more convinced of the new interpretation, but while Fitzroy was impressed, he still clung to a literal interpretation of the Bible. No-one thought at the time, or for many years afterward, that history would judge this voyage almost entirely by the thoughts it planted in Darwin's head. This was about the far more important and glamorous business of ships' navigation.



It does say something about the care with which the two men approached their relationship, that when Fitzroy returned to England and shortly after got married, Darwin was amazed, since not once in the five years had Fitzroy mentioned his engagement.

After their return on 2nd. October 1836, the two remained in touch and cooperated on the official account of the expedition. Darwin used his diaries and scientific notes to write the third volume, titled "Journals and Remarks", and published in 1845. This proved by far the most popular part with readers and it was republished many times, with a revised second edition eventually becoming "The Voyage of the Beagle".

The Beagle herself was repaired and re-provisioned over the six months following and set out again, under John Clements Wickham, who had been the first lieutenant under Fitzroy and, as assistant surveyor, John Lort Stokes, who had been aboard Beagle on both previous expeditions.



Clements



Wickham

This time their objective was a detailed survey of the coast of Australia, and they reached the Swan River colony, (now the city of Perth) in November 1837. They surveyed north along the western coast as far as the Fitzroy River and then backtracked to follow the south coast all the way to the Bass Strait, where she surveyed both the Australian and Tasmanian coasts. She was joined by the colonial cutter Vansittart and the pair sailed up the east coast to complete their survey work across the north coast, and the circumnavigation of the continent. Wickham fell ill in 1841 and retired from the Navy, and the command was taken by Stokes, who completed the voyage, including surveys of New Zealand and Timor, and brought Beagle home in 1843. That was the end of her voyaging.

In 1845 Beagle was converted to a static Customs watch ship and moored in the River Crouch to deter smugglers. She spent some time there and in 1851 was moved to the River Roach at Paiglesham. She was finally sold to be broken up in 1871.

By any standard Beagle was an heroic ship, her service, largely in that worst place for sailing ships in the world, the south of South America, was immensely valuable and she enabled safe navigation of the southern oceans and the development of Australia.

There are several static model kits available, and very few more worthwhile of your attention.



Superb model of HMS Beagle, as modified in 1831

We thank our corporate supporters



**Our Website is,
vmss.ca**