



150th Anniversary of the Wreck of the Admella - August 2009

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NEWSLETTER: 2007:1

Welcome to our first newsletter! I have recently been appointed as the Admella Project Officer with the District Council of Grant, and hope to keep everyone who has registered informed as events and commemorations are planned.

The hardest thing so far has been distinguishing where my professional role and my personal interest begins and ends!! I was sadly unaware of the full story of the Wreck of the *Admella* until recently, and now, along with others on the Committee, want to make sure that my children and their generation are more aware of this important event in our history.

I look forward to hearing more of your stories, and look forward to meeting many of you at the Commemoration Events in 2009.

Kind Regards - *Linda Hay* - Admella Project Officer

The **Admella Commemoration Advisory Committee** was established by the District Council of Grant in May 2004, to plan an event program for the commemoration, and develop a strategic plan to maximise the ability of the region to highlight the significance of the Wreck of the *Admella* on the development of regional cooperation in rescue efforts.

The Aim of the Committee is to:

- Raise awareness of the importance of this historical event and educate the next generation of Australians
- Provide a mechanism to identify descendants of all those involved in the wreck and the subsequent rescue attempts, with the hope of bringing as many as possible of them together in August 2009.

The Committee is made up of representatives from interested individuals, community groups, local government, maritime museums and tourist associations.

WATCH OUT FOR: A 50 cent postage stamp featuring the *Admella* released by Australia Post on 1st May 2007, as part of their Historic Shipwrecks series. It will be available for about 6 months after the issue date.

Please note: a disclaimer covering this and all publications or information issued by the Admella Commemoration Advisory Committee, District Council of Grant, or its suppliers can be found on our website: www.admella.org.au

We are eager to hear from any interested party with information, event ideas, artefacts, stories or pictures of anything relating to the Wreck of the *SS Admella*. We are also eager to hear from descendants of passengers, crewmembers or rescuers, or anyone related to the Wreck.

Just visit the Admella Website at www.admella.org.au and register your information or you can contact the Committee directly on the above numbers.

Some Art Works relating to the *Admella*:

Art Gallery of South Australia:

- **James Shaw**: 'The Admella', 1858 oil on canvas, 'The Rescue', c 1860 oil on canvas, 'The Admella Wrecked, Cape Banks, 6th August, 1859', 1859 oil on canvas
- **Charles Hill**, *Wreck of the Admella, 1859*, 1860 oil on canvas

State Library of Victoria:

- *The wreck of the Admella*, 1859 wood engraving
- **David Michael Hartigan Little**, *SS Admella*, 1900-1960 watercolour
- **Charles Dickson Gregory**, *Admella*, 1905-1930 watercolour

The Torrens Valley Christian School in Hope Valley, SA, has one of the **Admella's Bells**. There is another at the Port MacDonnell Maritime Museum. A third disappeared many years ago - last seen in Portland, Victoria. Where is it now????

The Committee has forwarded a project brief for the production of a Film Documentary about the *Admella* to filmmakers.

We have been thrilled to hear from more than 70 descendants so far. We will be sending an "Image, Artefact & Information Form" to all registered descendants, and would appreciate if it could be signed & returned to the postal or email address above. Personal details will not be given out unless the person involved gives us permission in writing.

Over the page is a list of some of the passengers, crew and rescuers whose descendants have contacted us, and some of the stories *they have provided*. We plan to follow up on as many of these stories as possible - hope you find them as interesting as I did!

Chambers, Edwin
Duckering, Robinson
Fawthrop, James – G.G. Granddaughter
Fisher, Hurtle
Foster, George & Emma – G.G. Niece
French, Alfred – G. Grandson
Germein, Benjamin – 2nd G. Grand niece
Harris, Charles Wright Captain – G.G. Grandson,
 G.G.G. Grandsons, G.G. Granddaughter
Hills, George – 3 descendants
Isbister, William (part owner of the *Admella*)
Kean, James – G. Grandson, G Granddaughter
Ledwith, Bridget – G. Granddaughters, G.
 Grandsons, G. Grand nephew
McDonnell, William – G Granddaughter
Magarey, James
Miller, James – G. Granddaughter
Penny, John – G. Grandnephew, G.G. Grandnephew
Smith, Henry – G. Grandfather
Thomas, Lewis – G.G. Granddaughter
 G.G.G. Grandson
Underwood, William
Ward, George – G.G. Granddaughter,
 G. Granddaughter, G. Grandson, G.G. Grandsons
Whittaker, James

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 An 81-year-old descendant has given us the following story about her Great Grandfather,
James Miller: the crew of the Portland Life boat commanded by Portland's Harbourmaster **James Fawthrop**, rescued Miller. Fawthrop welcomed Miller into his household to recover from his ordeal. Miller ended up marrying Fawthrop's daughter Mary Jane – which also makes this lady the Great Great Granddaughter of James Fawthrop's!

Captain Charles Wright Harris's Great Great Grandson, has completed some research and found Captain Harris, who died on the deck of the *Admella*, was the Captain of the *Waitamatta*, when it was also shipwrecked – What Rotten luck to be ship wrecked twice!!

Henry Smith received 3 awards & 25 pounds from the *Admella Relief and Reward Fund* in Melbourne, for helping Ben Germein rescue the first of the survivors. He had run away from home, changed his name to Smith, worked in Beachport for a Shipping company and 'had' a hotel. He died young and is buried in the old Mt Gambier Cemetery with his wife.

One gentleman remembers the home of his grandparents in Port MacDonnell. It was wooden and had cabin doors and brass knobs. His father told him that when electricity became available, he wired the house and found sails under the shingle roof. It was **built from the wreck** as Schoolrooms and later converted to a dwelling. The Wreck of the *Admella*? We will follow up on this lead.

The only surviving woman on the *Admella*, Bridget Ledwith lived to be 78 years and 11 months old. She married James Avage and had 9 children. She had her last child at 45 years of age. There are plans to update the Head Stone on her gravesite in the old Ballarat Cemetery.

We have had contact from the descendants of her daughter Alice Maude Avage who became Mrs A Dower. They have lost contact with the descendants of Bridget's other children:
 William Avage (killed in the War)
 Addie Avage (became Mrs F Clark of Coburg Vic)
 Annie Avage (became Mrs Gray of Snake Gully)
 Rose Avage (became Mrs Kildahl of West. Australia)
 Louise Avage (single lady of Ballarat Vic)
 Caroline Avage (died aged 7 months)
 Lisbeth May (died aged 13 years)

We have also had contact from the Grandson of Bridget's sister, Catherine Ledwith.

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James Whittaker was a bachelor who did not survive the *Admella* Wreck. At the time of his death he was the owner builder of the Sir James Franklin Hotel Kapunda. James was a convict sent to Victoria, worked for his freedom and then resided at Kapunda where he built many businesses and rented out many properties.

Passed down to the Great Granddaughters of **James Kean** is the remark his brother made as he prepared to help man the Portland Lifeboat "Don't worry James – if you don't come back Ill look after your (the) children!"

Found amongst items left by a Great Grandfather – a medallion inscribed to **William Booth** for 'Heroic Services' in the rescue of the *Admella*. There has been no one in his family by that name & it is a mystery how it ended up amongst his possessions.

George Ward – Cabin Boy on the *Admella*, found his way to Kameruka, near Bega, and became Manager of the Estate. One of his daughters was named *Admella*.

As children in the 1940's and early 1950's the Great niece & nephew of Harry Ward remember him having a lifebuoy in the lounge room of his home at Bondi Beach NSW. It was the round ring type with *Admella* printed on it. Harry was one of the youngest of George Ward's children. He and his wife May were both schoolteachers and were childless; it is unknown what happened to the lifebuoy on their deaths.

Contacts include: George's Great Grandson & Great Granddaughter, *Admella's* Great Granddaughter & the Great Granddaughter of George's brother John.

Steward, **George Hills**, married, became a baker at Port Adelaide, and managed the Port Adelaide Sailors Home.