



District Council of Grant
Admella Commemoration Advisory Committee

Admella Newsletter

Newsletter (4): March 2009

www.admella.org.au

Admella 150 Festival:

6th -16th August 2009

Thursday 6th - Monday 10th

Mount Gambier & District

Tuesday 11th

Millicent/Beachport

Wednesday 12th

Robe

Thursday 13th

Mount Gambier & Portland

Friday 14th - Sunday 16th

Portland & Nelson



Did you know?

The Admella's name represents major trading ports of the time: AD Adelaide, MEL Melbourne, LA Launceston



Visitor Information:

Limestone Coast Tourism
phone toll free 1800 087 087
www.thelimestonecoast.com

Mount Gambier Lady Nelson
Visitor & Discovery Centre
phone toll free 1800 087 187

Portland Maritime Discovery
& Visitor Information Centre
phone toll free 1800 035 567

Port MacDonnell Tourism
phone 08 8738 2576

Beachport Visitor Information
phone 08 87358029

Millicent Visitor Information
phone 08 87330904

Penola Visitor Information
phone 08 87372855

Nelson Visitor Information
phone 08 8738 4051

Admella 150 Festival

Commemorating a Tragedy; Celebrating Volunteerism

The wreck of the SS Admella in the early hours of August 6th 1859 was only the beginning of a horrific week for survivors who remained on board, in sight of land, while authorities & volunteers struggled to rescue them from the stricken steamer. The loss of 89 lives, mostly due to dehydration, cold and exposure, makes the wreck one of the worst maritime disasters in Australian history.

The 150th Anniversary of the tragedy will be commemorated, and the bravery, heroism and selflessness of those involved in the rescue celebrated during the Admella 150 Festival; Thursday 6th August — Sunday 16th August 2009.

The Admella 150 Festival is drawing near, and a huge amount of work has been completed to ensure commemorative events are well organised and projects completed on time. A Registration form, Event booking form and Souvenir order form along with a condensed program of events will be forwarded to everyone registered with us very shortly; this information will also be available on-line at www.admella.org.au, or by contacting Linda Hay on 08 87210444.

We are seeking permission on the Registration form to publicly display the names of those attending and their Admella connection. Displaying this information at Admella 150 Festival registration venues may allow attendees to contact distant relatives, update past connections or make new ones. Only your name and Admella connection will be made public; no other personal information will be shared, however we will set up a message board for those wishing to meet with others. It would be sad to find out at a later date you could have caught up with someone and didn't know they were here! This information will also form part of the Admella Commemoration official records and may be kept at local libraries for future reference.

The Admella Commemoration Advisory Committee has planned a diverse program of events aimed to appeal to a variety of ages and interests. Costs have been kept to a minimum & profits from souvenir sales will be used to subsidise official events, pay for Festival promotion & help fund ongoing Admella Commemorative projects. We hope you can join the Commemoration in August!



Photo: Kongorong Primary School releasing balloons in commemoration of the 149th anniversary of the wreck of the Admella last year. (2008)

Tax Deductible Donations

Local Government Associations have supported the establishment of the Admella Committee, but it is expected the majority of funding for commemorative projects & events will come from grants, sponsorship & donations. In association with the Admella Commemoration Advisory Committee, the Port MacDonnell & District Maritime Museum Assoc Inc established the *Admella 150th Anniversary Fund* to support commemoration projects; **any gift over \$2 is tax deductible.**

Commemorative projects will ensure stories of the Admella and those involved are commemorated & celebrated well into the future. Those donating \$500 or more, can also provide the wording for a bronze memorial plaque, which will form part of the Admella Discovery Trail to be launched at the *Admella 150 Festival*; you may consider having other members of your family contribute towards this. A donation form, if not enclosed, can be found at www.admella.org.au or contact the Admella Project Officer.

Many Thanks to our major sponsors:

District Council of



Registered Descendants

About 200 people have registered their extended families connection to the Admella with the Admella Commemoration Advisory Committee. Included are descendants of the following passengers, crew & owners of the Admella, as well as those who helped with the rescue and had salvage rights to the wreck:

Anderson, Robert	Duckering, Robinson	Kean, James	Smith, Henry
Beith, Catherine and 4 children (10yo Catherine & 8yo Robert Beith, 8yo Jane Bowie & unknown)	Dusting, John	Kirken, William	Thomas, Louis
Bowie, William	Fawthrop, James Capt.	Ledwith, Bridget	Underwood, Edward
Bowie, Madlane	Fisher, Hurtle	Livingston, John	Ward, George
Bowman, Amos	Foster, George	McDonell, William	Ward, Thomas James
Brown, Walter	Foster, Emma	MacEwan, Hugh Capt.	Webb, Allan Sebastian
Carey, Abbott	French, Alfred	McInnes, Hugh	Webb, John
Chambers, Edwin Cheshire	Germein, Benjamin Capt.	McIvor, James	Wells, Capt.
Davey, Thomas	Guy, William	Magarey, James	Whittaker, James
Dimond, James	Harris, Charles Wright Capt.	Miller, James	Williamson, Mr
	Hills, George	Patterson, Charles	Wylie, Henry
	Hills, John	Penny, John	
	Isbister, William	Rosevear, William	



Photo: Admella Memorial located at Port Adelaide..

Ledwiths of Morphett Vale South Australia

Mr Warwick Thomas has done some research in order to determine that Ann Avage & Bridget Ledwith are one and the same and he is willing to share this with anyone who may be interested. Email: warwickandbarbara@aapt.net.au or phone: [02]47574979

Warwick writes: *"My great aunt, Bridget Ledwith, a girl of twenty-one, was named as the only female survivor. My great grandfather, Maurice, was Bridget's brother. My grandmother was Maurice's daughter."* *"In a letter to the South Australian Register, 16 March 1905, Mrs Ann Avage of Wendouree, near Ballarat, Victoria, claimed to be Bridget Ledwith, the survivor from the Admella."*

Ways to be involved in the Commemoration

Pass on newsletters & contact details to other interested people; feel free to print information.

Contact your local paper or radio station with the story of the Admella & your family connection. This will help us reach as many interested people as possible prior to the *Admella 150 Festival* in August.

Exhibit an Admella artifact, medal, painting or photo of your Admella ancestor at the *"Catastrophe, Courage and Commitment: the story of the Wreck of the Admella 6 August 1859"* exhibition. All security, transport, loan agreement & insurance is being professionally organised by the Riddoch Art Gallery; the exhibit will run for 6 weeks from August 6th.

Contribute stories and photographs for the Admella Newsletter and promotional articles.

Speak at the Commemorative Dinner on 8th August; consider presenting a short, entertaining & informative presentation about your Admella Ancestor—or ask someone else to.

Host a family information/display site at the *Admella 150 Festival* registration days 7th & 8th August at the Mount Gambier City Hall. Bookings required but no charge for site.

Make a tax deductible donation in memory of your Admella ancestor, to the Admella 150th Anniversary fund.

Attend the Admella 150 Festival in August!

Capt Benjamin Germein



Capt. Benjamin Germein

Information & photo (above) provided by descendant, Sam Germein

Benjamin Germein and his brothers John Jnr, and Samuel arrived at Kangaroo Island from Plymouth in 1837 aboard the Barque *'South Australian'*. All three were selected to set up a trawling station & assist in the expansion & exploration of the fledgling colony & all became captains, pilots & master mariners for sail & steam.

He was the first captain to take a large vessel through the treacherous mouth of the Murray & made several trips into Goolwa in command of the steamer *'Corio'*. He was also master of the government schooner *'Yatala'*, before taking up the position of light keeper at Cape Northumberland, with the added responsibility of selecting & surveying a port to serve the Mt Gambier district.

Germein played a major role in the Admella rescue; he was first to receive news of the wreck from the sailors who made it to shore. After sending news, he made his way to the beach opposite where an Admella lifeboat was found & patched it with soap and canvas. Germein volunteered as coxswain and they finally rescued 4 of the survivors off the ship. He was awarded a gold bravery medal for his efforts.

In 1861 Germein was also involved with the rescue of the *'John Omerod'* shipwreck; he lost fingers during this rescue. His final years of employment were as a Customs Officer and pilot at Semaphore. He retired about 1889. Many of his descendants can be found throughout the LeFevre Peninsula of South Australia.

Admella Teaching Kit, DVD & Painting Workshop

An **Admella Teaching Resource Kit** has been produced to help educate and engage students in the 150th Anniversary of the wreck of the Admella commemoration. The kit has been compiled by a group of working and retired teachers in the Limestone Coast with the assistance of the Department of Education & Children's Services Curriculum Advisor.

It includes a **Wreck of the Admella DVD**, which has been produced for the Admella Commemoration Advisory Committee by Brenton Manser featuring an Admella song, re-enactments & interviews; free copies will be distributed to all schools, museums & libraries in SA's Limestone Coast and Victoria's Discovery Coast & copies will be available for sale from the District Council of Grant and by mail order for \$20 each.

These projects have been made possible by a generous donation from a descendant in memory of William Isbister, part owner of the Admella, and Captain Hugh McEwan, William's brother-in-law and master of the Admella.

The "Wreck of the Admella" DVD and the Admella School's Teaching Resource Kit will be launched on Sunday 26th April 2009 at 10.00am at the Wehl Street Theatre, Mount Gambier. The DVD will be screened as part of the Theatre's Open Day and copies will be available for purchase. If you wish to be part of this event please contact Linda Hay on 08 87210444.

Do you have any photos, artifacts, medals, stories or interesting articles that may be displayed at the Riddoch Art Gallery during the Admella 150 Festival, include in upcoming newsletters or in commemorative promotional articles?

"Water" colour for Everyone from Conception to Exhibition; a workshop by maritime watercolourist and illustrator Julian Bruere will be held on Saturday 23rd and Sunday 24th of May, 10am- 4pm each day at the Riddoch Art Gallery Mount Gambier.

The workshop's aim is to encourage participants to view the process as an exploration of the subject "Admella" & of their response to it. Participants will be encouraged to consider submitting a piece of work for the Admella Community Exhibition; *"Impressions of catastrophe, courage and commitment"*, which will be opened at the Riddoch Art Gallery on 6th August 2009 along side of the official Admella Exhibition; *Catastrophe, courage and commitment; the wreck of the Admella 6 August 1859.*

With thanks to Country Arts SA who have provided grant funding for this project. For more information phone 08 87210444.

John Hills:

John Hills was born in Sudbury, Suffolk, England, on 26th March, 1835. In 1857, with his younger brother Samuel, he left England for Australia as a seaman.

In 1859 John joined the crew of the S.S. Admella as Second Steward for the fateful voyage from Adelaide to Melbourne. The attached photograph taken in Sydney in 1858/9 shows John in his Stewards uniform.

Ian Mudie describes the loss of John Hills in his book 'Wreck of the Admella' page 88:

"John Hills, the second steward, was also drowned on Wednesday. Although he was still weak through loss of blood from a cut on the head and other injuries he received when the vessel broke up, he volunteered to try to



Story & photo provided by descendant Jonathan Hills, Surrey

reach the shore. A raft of some sort was put together for him; then he put on one of the remaining lifebuoys and jumped overboard. When the raft was thrown to him he hesitated, and in that moment it drifted away. He recovered himself, and, being a strong swimmer, made after it. When he had almost reached it he suddenly disappeared, without a cry or an arm flung up for help. Although those aboard had not seen a fin, it seemed to them as if he had been taken by a shark. After his disappearance there was no talk of anyone else trying to reach the shore."

An 1852 family photograph of John, his parents and 9 of his siblings (including Jonathon Hills' G.G. Grandfather Edward) & Letters from Samuel to his family in England referring to the event and sending home John's pocket book, and are still in existence.



One of 3 of Henry Smith's bravery Medals, which is in the care of a descendant.

Henry Smith:

Information provided by descendants, newspaper clippings and the Mount Gambier History Group

Henry Smith was also known by the names Harry Smith and Harry Wiggengaggen.

He was one of the brave volunteers to man the Admella lifeboat, patched with soap & canvas & captained by lighthouse keeper Captain Benjamin Germein. They were responsible for rescuing the first 3 people from the wreck including Capt McEwan, and they were also successful at retrieving another person from the wreck who tragically drowned after the lifeboat was overturned in the rough seas on the way back to shore.

He was Chairman of the Beachport Council for 2 years, owned the Bellum Hotel (near Allendale East SA) for 1 year in 1868, and was a member of the Freemasons lodge for many years. He died in 1885 of a "clot of blood clogging heart action", and is buried in the Lake Terrace Cemetery; Section E424.

One of his bravery medals can be viewed at the Beachport & District Branch of NTSA Old Wool and Grain Store Museum, which features on the Admella Discovery Trail.

CONTACT US:

DISTRICT COUNCIL OF GRANT ADMELLA COMMEMORATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Linda Hay, Admella Project Officer
P O Box 724
Mount Gambier SA 5290
Phone: 08 8721 0444
Fax: 08 8721 0410
Email: linda.hay@dcgrant.sa.gov.au



GLENELG SHIRE ADMELLA COMMEMORATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Elizabeth Foreman, Tourism Officer
Phone: 03 5522-2206

Admella Snap-Shots

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* Samuel Mossman's Narrative of the Shipwreck of the "Admella" (Melbourne 1859)

Edwin Chambers was the son of my great-great grandfather. At the age of 14 years he was travelling from Adelaide by himself to visit his brothers in Melbourne after his Mother had died. It is said that he survived up to three days on the wreck of the Admella and his behaviour was admired by those on board. Adapted from story received from *W. Stent, Vic*

"George's (Ward, cabin boy) sister Ann married William Henry Edward Heywood & named one of their off-spring Admella Elizabeth Heywood who was born in 1865 in Pt MacDonnell. She died in 1952 in Adelaide & is buried in the West Tce Cemetery with her married name of Lewis." *J. Peterson, SA*



"Mrs Harris & family, the wife & children of **Capt Charles Wright Harris**, (pictured left) a master mariner, and passenger on the Admella, who dived for provisions in the submerged cabin of the wreck when he succeeded in securing the small supply obtainable, but succumbed afterwards, chiefly through his exertions on that occasion"; awarded 200 pounds from the Relief and Reward Fund.* *Photo supplied by T. Harris*

"Walter Brown was born in 1838, in Glasgow & was the seventh of thirteen children. He was a marine engineer, as were many other members of the family. His older brother Andrew Brown came

to own William Simons of Renfrew and was an engineering pioneer. Walter was 21 when he perished and left a wife and a young daughter. His wife was Agnes Anderson and his daughter was Janet Doig Brown born in 1858." *D Brown, Scotland*

"Henry Short, who lost his wife & 4 children, besides a quantity of furniture"; awarded the sum of 50 pounds from the Relief & Reward Fund.*

"I am presently engaged in writing a biography of my great-great grandfather, Capt Emanuel Underwood, the father of Edward....Captain Underwood commanded the "Admella" on at least one trip from Melbourne to Adelaide. The family tree, compiled in Brightlingsea, Essex, records one **Edward Edwin Ebenezer Underwood**, born 1844, died 1859. This corresponds with Edward's death at age 14 years as an "Admella" passenger. Edward was the sixth child of the Underwoods," *D. Stewart SA* "E. Underwood a master mariner, & father of a lad among the lost passengers, who was entrusted with his nautical instruments"; awarded 25 pound from the Admella Relief and Reward Fund.*

"1859 Gisborne Expressthat **Catherine Beith** & her two children were travelling with **Madlane Bowie** and possibly her daughter Jane. Madlane's maiden name was Beith and they all came to Australia on the same ship." *S. Jones NSW*

"I am very proud to be a g g granddaughter of **Captain Fawthrop**. In this instance, a picture does not paint a thousand words. When I first began writing my novel & saw his portrait I thought "here was this staunch, rigid, formidable man", but as I researched him I soon found out how wrong I was. Jane Rosevear eloped & married James Ward. His closest friend was Capt James Fawthrop. They were both Tamar River Pilots in 1838. Jane & James Ward had only been married 3 years when tragedy struck & James Ward died, after escorting the brig *Black Joke*, his pilot boat overturned & his body was never found. Jane was left destitute with a 2 year old & a 3 month old baby. Along comes this crusty 35 year bachelor sea captain, who assumed the responsibilities of his friends widow, Jane & her sons. Respect, was soon followed by a love & marriage of nearly 40 years. Jane's children Thomas & James Ward loved him as a father & both referred to him as their father. Both followed as seamen after him. It was his stepson, **Thomas Ward** who was part of his crew in the lifeboat that rescued passengers on Admella. How many men at the age of 55 could do what he did, his capabilities as a seaman at his age inspired the trust of his crew. He also introduced Henry Rosevear Jr., (Jane's brother) to the sea and **William Rosevear** was his Cox in the lifeboat." *R. Wagner*

Admella Commemoration Projects

The **Admella Discovery Trail**, will be a self drive touring route with a series of maritime themed interpretive markers emotively recounting the tale of the Admella to help commemorate the wreck of the Admella. Itineraries & maps will be available online & in print. The Trail is being funded by the Australian National Maritime Museum, History Trust of South Australia, District Council of Grant, City of Mt Gambier, Wattle Range Council, Glenelg Shire and Robe District Council.

We are currently working on wording for the brochure and interpretive markers, which are kindly being made by the Mount Gambier West Rotary Club using recycled hardwood from the Beachport Jetty. Markers should be installed in July for the Launch of the Admella Discovery Trail on Friday 7th August 2009. There is still a short amount of time to donate towards this project in memory of your Admella ancestor.

A **museum scale model** of the S.S. Admella is being built by Melbourne professional model builders Float-a-boat for the Port MacDonnell & District Maritime Museum. The project has been funded by a generous donation made in memory of Admella's Forward Cabin Steward, George Hills, by his 'Hirst' descendants and can be viewed during the Admella 150 Festival.

Greg Johns, (pictured right) an internationally renowned artist, was the guest of the **National Limestone Sculpture Symposium**, recently held in Mt Gambier. Greg has created a sculptural installation in commemoration of the wreck of the Admella which will be installed at Tenison Woods College in Mt Gambier as part of the Admella Discovery Trail. Country Arts SA & the City of Mount Gambier were major sponsors of the symposium. (photo courtesy of Graham Spring of Spring Studio)

