

H.M. BOMB SULPHUR.

A Forgotten Chapter.

(By 'Cygnet')

WITH monotonous regularity every history of Western Australia copies, the one from the other, the list of passengers who arrived off the Swan River in the transport *Parmelia* with Governor Stirling at their head. Not a one but ignores almost the very existence of an other ship which has as much right, if not more right, to be truly regarded as the pioneer vessel of the Swan River Settlement out of which has arisen the vast country which constitutes the State of Western Australia today. That ship is His Majesty's Ship, or, to give it its proper title, His Majesty's Bomb Sulphur, which escorted the *Parmelia* to these shores and furnished the first white settlers to put axe to the West Australian bush and to thrust spade into its soil. It is the strangest thing how for over a century the Sulphur's complement has been ignored. Some, of course, could not be ignored; our history and our map would be dull and drab without their names to light them up. Perth's own god-mother may suitably head the list, Mrs. Dance, wife to Commander Dance, R.N. (the Sulphur's captain), who, when Mrs. Stirling would not leave Garden Island, braved the 'savages' and was rowed up the Swan to go down into history as the lady who laid the foundation of our capital city by putting an axe to a tree. Others quickly follow: Captain Irwin, military commandant and thrice Lieutenant-Governor, who has left his name indelibly impressed on Perth and on the colony; Dr. Collie and Lieutenant Preston who wrote their names along the Collie and Preston Rivers; Ensigns Dale and McLeod who put York and Avon on the map; Dr. Milligan, the first Surgeon to the Forces, who was honoured by Governor Stirling as the first (along with Irwin) to have his name commemorated by a street in the infant city. Even the good ship Sulphur itself is relegated to a back seat, yet for three years after the foundation of the colony, it explored its coasts; while in June, 1832, it saved our great-grandparents from starvation by bringing provisions from India in the very nick of time.

Bricks, Medicines, and Slops!

On November 12, 1828, the Secretary to the Colonies, Sir George Murray, informed the Admiralty that, the British Government having hired a transport called the *Parmelia* to take Captain Stirling and his settlers to the Swan River, it was desired that one of His Majesty's ships 'of the description of a Bomb" should be employed to act as escort to the same. In the commendably short space of three days Sir John Barrow informed Murray, that "His Majesty's Bomb Sulphur has been ordered to be posted to Chatham," for the necessary preparations to be carried out to her. What these were we do not know, but we do know what they cost, for the Navy Office showed it thus: "Expenses incurred for works upon the hull of His Majesty's Bomb Vessel Sulphur in additionally equipping her for the express service of carrying settlers to Swan River, £3,100; value of stores shipped on board the Sulphur for Western Australia, £1,403/8/9; ditto 10,000 bricks put on board of do. for do., £67/18/8 1/4." After the Navy had put in its bill the Victualling Office sent in theirs. It read: "A/C of quantities and value of provisions supplied between November 29, 1828, and January 15, 1829, to Sulphur and *Parmelia*: Biscuits, 70,224lb.; beer, 1,807 gals.; etc., etc.; medicines, slops, etc., £7,874/4/3 3/4." The War Office now got busy and on December 3, 1828, we find the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Hill (after whom Hill street is named) writing to the Colonial Office that he had detailed 60 rank and file of the 63rd Regiment to embark on the Sulphur for the protection of the new colony, adding that, "as many of the married men as possible shall comprise the detachment, attention being paid to the good conduct of their wives." Captain P. C. Irwin would be in command, the other officers being Lieutenant William Pedder, Ensign David Hume McLeod and Ensign Robert Dale. These officers, it was stated, had no families, but "Assistant Surgeon Tully Daly has a family consisting of five ladies for whom passages should be found in one of the many vessels now fitting out in the river for the Swan River Settlement." As we know, Surgeon Daly was accommodated on the *Parmelia* and, with his eldest daughter, was drowned at Cape Town while returning from a shore trip.

Soldiers of the 63rd.

And now for the rank and file whose names have from the very beginning been hidden in unpardonable obscurity. They numbered 3 sergeants, 3 corporals, 1 drummer (who made history by being the father of the first white child born in Western Australia), and 56 privates; and they were accompanied by 21 women and 12 children. The roll of their names reads:—Colour Sgt. Edward Barrow, Sgt. H. Dawson, Sgt. Pat Smith, Cpl. Thos. Crawford, Cpl. Pat O'Hara, Cpl. John Smallman, Drummer John Mitchell, Privates Peter Broughton, Andrew Burke, Jas. Campbell, Wm. Canham, John Cas serley, Jos. Cobine, Pat. Chester, John Daley, John Dargin, Thos. Darkins, Michl. Dowling, Wm. Elmore, Saml. Ennus, Pat Farmer, Thos. Farmer. Geo. Gamble, Tim. Gorman, Thos. Hall, Pat. Hefron (1), Pat. Hefron (2), Andrew Henesey, Jas. Higinbotham, Geo. Hodges, Thos. Hughes, Jas. Hughes, Richard Jacques, Edward Jeffers, Geo. Leghorn, Francis McCann, Jas. McClure, Hugh McGuire, Thos. McGoldrick, Jas. Mc Kanna, John Mattison, John Milton, Thos. Mulligan, Michl. O'Brien, Nehemiah Ollis, Geo. Ponder. John Reilly (1), John Reilly (2), Jas. Rodgers, Alex. Rodgers, David Ross, John Ross, Wm. Ricketts, Edward Roach, Wm. Seabrooke, John Stanton, Pat. Swift, Wm. Thomas, Thos. Pye, Chas. Warner, John Warner, Thos Wiggins and Jas. Wright; Mrs. Jane Barron (3 children), Jane Phee, Anne Small man (1 child), Jane Mitchell, Mary Broughton, Mary Daley, Margt. Farmer (1 child), Mary Hodges (2 children), Anne Hefron, Margt. Henesey, Ann Farmer (2 children), Margt. Hughes, Mary Mulligan, Margt. O'Brien, Margt. Reilly (1 child), Esther Reilly (1 child), Elizabeth Swift, Mary Wiggins (1 child), Elizabeth Elmore, Elice Jeffers, Isabella Corrigan.

From Plymouth to Perth.

On January 9, 1829 the Sulphur sailed out of Chatham to join the *Parmelia*, but at once she found herself at the mercy of a gale which prevented her putting into Portsmouth and she was carried on to Plymouth. The gale had shown her to be sadly overloaded, her cargo badly arranged, her human freight scandalously huddled together. Dr. Collie (her surgeon) complained bitterly to Commander Dance that the soldiers were in a bad way; "the women were be numbed from wet and exposure, some afflicted with febrile symptoms, and with faintings and hysterical paroxysms from being cramped up, and from want of ventilation." The Admiral ordered Captain Parker of the *Warspite* to report on this and he recommended the removal of 15 individuals, "including a portion of the children and women, some of whom were in an advanced state of pregnancy." Some of the bricks were also put ashore after which the Sulphur sailed, with the *Parmelia* in the offing. The partnership lasted only as far as the Line however, when she began to sag behind the *Parmelia* and she reached Cape Town some days after the transport. Captain Dance gives these particulars in a letter dated May 6, 1829, from Symons Bay and addressed, "My dear Twiss" — that is to the Under Secretary. He alludes to the drowning of Assistant Surgeon Daly and his daughter, and states that under instructions from the Commander-in-Chief he had taken on board the Sulphur Assistant-Surgeon William Milligan to fill the vacancy. The *Parmelia* left Table Bay on May 1, 1829, he states. The Sulphur did not sail until May 8. It was on June 8, 1829, that the Sulphur anchored off Fremantle where the *Parmelia* had hove to on June 2, although it had lain off Rottnest on the night of June 1, 1829. The *Parmelia*'s passengers were in process of being landed on Garden Island, and a few days later some of the soldiers were also sent there from the Sulphur. But the bulk of them remained on board until June 17 and 18, when they were disembarked on to the mainland. Here they were formed up to provide a back ground while Governor Stirling's Pro clamation was read by Captain Irwin on June 18, after which one party of them, under Lieutenant Pedder, relieved the guard from the Challenger which had been placed on the mainland at the mouth of the Swan by Captain Fremantle on his arrival, while the remainder pro ceeded by the Sulphur's longboat (after some difficulty in negotiating the "bar") up the river to what was to be Perth. Official records are mute on the subject whether any of the wives accompanied the party, but it has ever been a tradi tion in the writer's family, never ques tioned nor denied in those days when proof or disproof was easy to find, that Ann Farmer, accompanied by her two

sons, Thomas (aged 2), and Samuel (an infant), went in that very first boat and was carried ashore by the sailors where the Supreme Court now stands. To that spot her great-grandchildren paid many a pilgrimage in the nineties, regarding it with a sort of veneration which it shared with the Causeway, where her first husband was drowned in 1832. But I have been overfast. I have already referred to Drummer (or Bugler) Mit chell's distinction. It was on June 10, 1829, only two days after the arrival of the Sulphur and a week before the soldiers had landed, that John Mitchell (and his wife Jane, of course), achieved that distinction. And they achieved it on the Sulphur, for you may read in the Rev. Mr. Wittenoom's own handwriting that on the above date a son was born to them "at the Sound", the first birth notified at the Swan River Settlement. Two months later, having rejected Point Heathcote as the site of his future capital city, Governor Stirling sent forth the word that brought Perth into existence where we now live and breathe and have our being. Again the Sulphur took pride of place, and on September 9, 1829, we find Commander Dance writing once more to "My Dear Twiss", telling him of this event in a delightfully inconsequential way. "Governor Stirling (he writes) has removed all to the mainland, where at the entrance to the Swan River he has established a town to be called Fremantle, and about 10 or 12 miles up the river, and immediately above Melville Water on the left hand of the Swan River, the Town of Perth. By the bye, the laying of the first stone of the town (which took place on the 12th of August, and on which occasion we made as much noise and rejoicing as our limited means would allow) was laid by Mrs. Dance, she being the only lady who could be persuaded to venture so far into a savage country. ..."

The Sulphur's story does not end here, it but begins. The telling of it, however, must remain for another day; how for the first three years it surveyed our coasts; how it saved the very existence of the colony in 1832 by bringing from India food for the starving pioneers who were paying (whisper it softly in these days) forty shillings a bushel for wheat — when they could get it — and how it carried Lieutenant-Governor Stirling back to England in the following years, whence he returned with new hope for those valiant hearts whose struggles and example should be before us more than ever in these present days of stress.