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PLANKA
 No. 7

THE STORY OF THE

Parmelia

The Ship which brought Governor Stirling
 and the First Settlers to Western Australia

[June 1st, 1829]

By

Cygnat

The SEVENTH of a series of booklets dealing with
 the Early Days of Western Australia.

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by *Cygnét*

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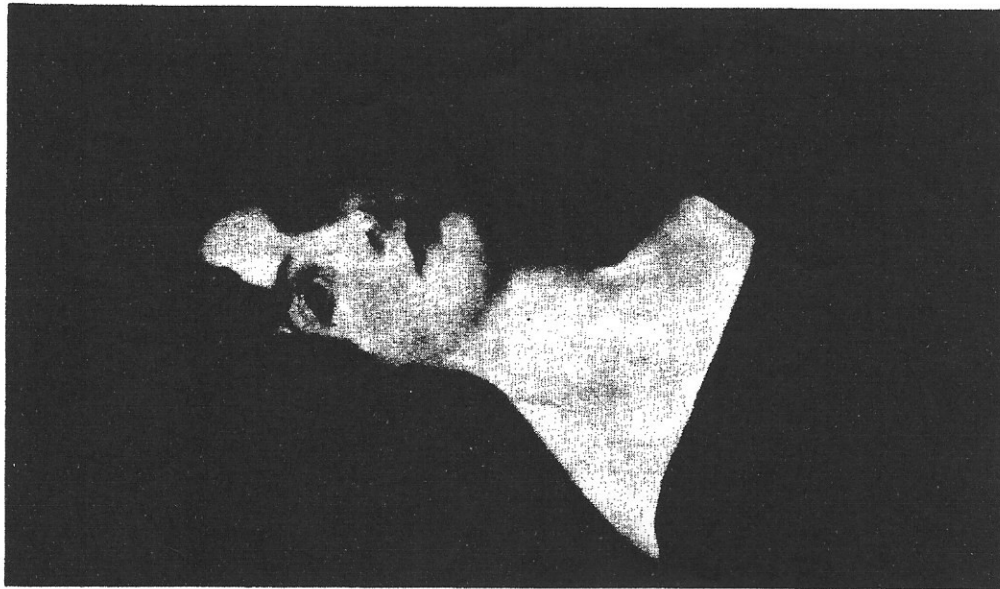
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Very sincerely yours,

Cygnét.

SWAN RIVER PRESS, 882 HAY STREET, PERTH. ::



LADY STIRLING.

Wife of Sir James Stirling, Founder and First Governor of Western Australia.

Lady Stirling came to the colony on the *Parmelia* and during the voyage gave birth to a son, Frederick Henry, who afterwards commanded the British Navy on the Australian Station. Her maiden name was Ellen Mangles. Ellen Brook is named after her, and portion of Newcastle Street was formerly Mangles Street.

THE STORY OF THE

Parmelia

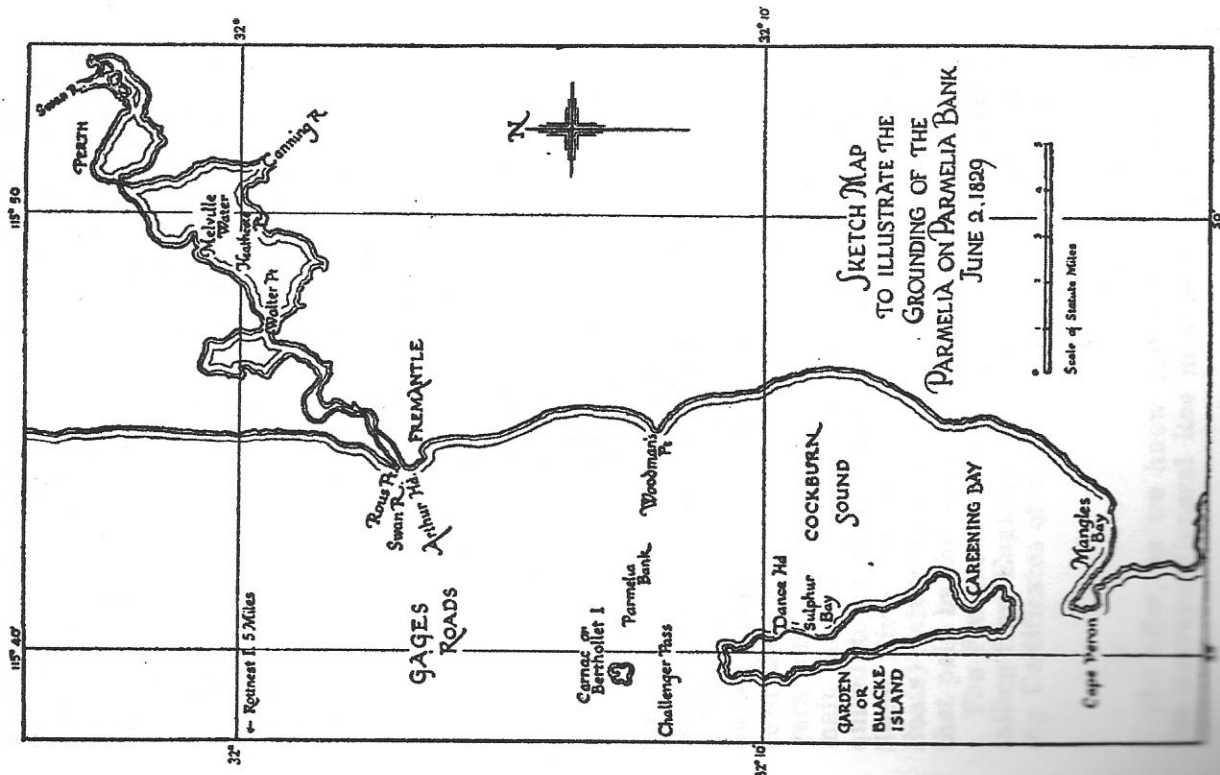
The Ship which brought Governor Stirling
and the First Settlers to Western Australia
June 1, 1829

In every story of the foundation of Western Australia the name of the Parmelia looms large, the little, old, wooden sailing vessel which the British Government hired for the purpose of transporting Lieutenant-Governor Stirling, and his officials, and the first settlers, to the Swan River. It was described as a barque, 443 tons, and into this tiny ship nearly 150 men, women, and children, passengers and crew, were packed, together with their personal belongings, the stores, cattle and poultry, and much of the equipment required to set up the new colony. It is unfortunate that so little is known of this historic vessel, but such knowledge as we do possess is told in the story which follows, a story which will keep green the name of the Parmelia in the annals of Western Australia for all time.

* * * * *

The engagement of the Parmelia to transport Lieutenant-Governor Stirling and his establishment to the Western Coast of New Holland was an afterthought. It had not entered into the plans of Downing Street that two vessels would be needed for the expedition, it being the fixed intention of the British Government to spend as little money as possible on the venture. Accordingly it was hoped to spare the Treasury by employing a man-of-war for the purpose, and on November 16, 1829, Stirling was informed that H.M.S. Sulphur had been chosen for the purpose. Stirling, however, soon saw the impos-

8.



sibility of transporting everything and everybody, stores, officials, equipment, and troops on one ship, especially on a warship, and such a small warship as the Sulphur; and he at once urged the engagement of a second vessel which, he insisted, would not only be necessary but cheaper in the long run, and would also enable him to take with him a select number of settlers so that the new colony could be made self-supporting from the start. His recommendation was grudgingly approved and he was given permission to select a suitable vessel. His choice fell on the barque *Parmelia*, whose owner thereupon offered her to the government in the following letter:

Great Aile Street,
23 december, 1828.

Captain Stirling, R.N.,

Sir,—I beg leave to offer to you the Ship *Parmelia*, 443 Tons, to convey such Passengers, Stock, Stores, and Goods as you may think proper to embark in her from hence to Swan River on the West Coast of New Holland at £4 10s. 0d. per Ton Register, the owners to provide Water Casks for the Passengers not exceeding eighty in number.

The Vessel to be in the Downs complete on the owner's part on the 4th January next, and to proceed thence to Portsmouth to embark the Passengers, and to call at the Cape of Good Hope and remain there 14 days if required. Thirty days, if required, to be allowed for landing the Cargo, etc., at Swan River (which is to be done with the ship's Boats); after that, Demurrage at the same Rate as that paid by the Navy Board.

The Freight to be paid, one-third on the Vessel's sailing from England, and the remainder on producing Certificates of the Completion of the Service.

I am, etc.,

J. LACHLAN.

The offer, as we know full well, was accepted; but Surveyor-General Roe in a letter to his father

dated December 30, 1828, takes us a little behind the scenes of this transaction.

"The *Parmelia*, a ship of about 450 tons, was taken up by the Colonial Office on Saturday for the conveyance to Swan River of the stores, provisions, and offices of the Colony. I understand that Captain Stirling applied for £800 or £1,000 to enable him to convey out himself and retinue (including all the offices of the establishment, etc., etc.) but they considered the sum so great that they have taken up the *Parmelia* for £2,200 to perform the voyage and have allowed us our passages in her. It is quite uncertain when she will sail but is now ready as far as her own equipment is concerned, and the majority of voices speak of the 16th January as the most likely time. Orders have been sent down to Chatham for H.M.S. *Sulphur* to be off by New Year's Day, but she is said not to be in a sufficient state of forwardness for that purpose and it is considered probable that the *Parmelia* and the *Sulphur* will go out together."

The "voices" that Roe heard were wrong, for January 16, 1829, came and went and the *Parmelia* was still in the Thames at Deptford. And she seems to have remained there until the end of January at least, as we may gather from another letter written by Roe to his father from the Quebec Hotel, Portsmouth on February 3, 1829:

"... After all our disappointments, conjectures, and probable embarkations, the *Parmelia* at last anchored at Spithead where we hope to join her in about an hour. She had a most tedious voyage from the Downs where she was left by the Government steamboat on Wednesday last, and to crown all had the misfortune to ground upon a shoal while passing through the Needles Passage yesterday afternoon, which prevented her arriving here at the anchorage she now occupies as early as we had anticipated. The wind being now fair for our preceeding westward, "the authorities" have expressed their in-

tention of sailing in course of the day and I have just completed some arrangements with Mr. Brown, the Colonial Secretary, for our taking a boat between us to embark without any further delay. . . . The *Parmelia* does not seem to have suffered at all by touching the ground and got off with evening's flowing tide—but she is represented to be in a sad state of confusion with the additional baggage, sea-stock, etc., etc., which has been taken on board since her arrival and which has not yet been stowed away. This makes it desirable that we should get on board as early as possible in order to effect every possible arrangement for the comfort of the female community before the ship puts to sea."

That night everyone was safely on board the *Parmelia*, as witness the following:

Ship *Parmelia*, Spithead,
4th February, 1829.

H. Twiss, Esq., M.P.,

Parliamentary Under Secretary for the Colonies.
Sir,

I have the honor to inform you that the Officers and others intended for the New Settlement of Western Australia were embarked yesterday. The wind having been ever since contrary I have not been able to proceed but will do so as soon as it is favorable.

I have the honor to be, etc.,

James Stirling, Lt. Govr.

But it was two days before the wind was favorable, an event which was not without its good side since it enabled the passengers to put their belongings ship-shape before being tossed at the mercy of the ocean. Roe gives a glimpse of them settling themselves down in a hurried note which he dashed off at 11 a.m. the next day, February 5, 1829:

"You see, my dear Father, that we are not yet off, the wind having changed round from the westward before we were ready to sail. As it has again shown an inclination to come round from the north, pre-

parations are now made to lift the anchor and to make a trial to get down Channel. I therefore take advantage of a boat going ashore to say that after a great deal of bustle and confusion putting to rights a ship quite full of packages of every description we are beginning to be a little more comfortable and in a day or two will probably be as much as, under all circumstances, can be expected. My dear Matilda embarked with me and I regret to say was then suffering from swelled face resulting from cold; but she is now fast getting rid of such an unwelcome visitor. My own health and general feelings will be materially improved by a good bout at sea sickness—for the hurry and anxiety that have attended all my movements of late have made me rather bilious and require some such remedy to make matters square again. . . . It is early yet to say what we think of all around us but in the Colonial Secretary (Mr. Brown) and his wife I anticipate a great acquisition, as also in a few others; but time will develop all characters and does not yet permit me to say anything decisive."

On Board the *Parmelia*.

Roe had no sooner despatched this note than the wind began to grow favourable until in the afternoon of the same day the anchor was weighed and sail made for Plymouth. From Portland, Roe sent off his last letter written from the *Parmelia* in English waters. It is the most precious of them, a priceless document, conjuring up before our eyes as it does the bustling scene on board the *Parmelia* as passenger after passenger clambered on board in those quaint suits and dresses and costumes and hats of a hundred years ago. He headed his letter "*Parmelia*, off Portland, February 6, 1829":

"We sailed from Spithead about 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon with the wind just fair and the weather very fine, but the former has since shifted somewhat against us though the water is very smooth and the ship too steady to produce anything

like serious inconvenience to any but bilious subjects. Notwithstanding my ranking myself at present among the latter description of personages I have not yet felt the least disposition to be affected as I had anticipated—which I somewhat regret, as a good bout of sea-sickness would have done me all the good I had intended. . . . I am sorry to say Dear Matilda has been rather queer in the head since we sailed, but is this evening infinitely better and in a few days will laugh with the best of us. Our mess and accommodation improve as we advance and under the management of our Captain (Luscombe), who is a very superior man in his station, promises to be very comfortable. Most of the ladies have been, and still continue, unwell from the effects of Neptune's want of civility and respect of persons—though in a few days all will probably be well. We are, as you may suppose, very much crowded and cramped in our room for stowage and have not a single square inch to spare—indeed when the fresh passengers and their voluminous baggage were pouring aboard at Spithead the scene almost defied anything like description and it was as much as each individual could do to get to his cabin. But the arrangements that have since been made, and the quantity of things which have been put below to fill up every little hole and corner, have made matters considerably better. **Our cabin** is now decidedly the most comfortable and clean on board, although piled to the deck in some parts with trunks and cases and quite tightly filled up underneath the bed place.

"We have not yet seen Mrs. Stirling who is suffering from the motion of the ship, but must contrive shortly to have a regular introduction to her. Mrs. Captain Currie and Mrs. Secretary Brown and Mrs. Commissary Morgan are very pleasant women, and so may also be Mrs. Sutherland, the wife of my assistant; but she is very retiring in her manners and has not yet spoken a dozen words, which prevents a fair opinion being given of her. Mr. Drummond, the Agriculturist, is the only other married

man amongst us, and has 6 or 7 children from 18 to 6 years of age. His wife feels rather out of her element and will, I hope, improve, as she seems disposed to be rather touchy. I have, however, almost forgotten to mention Mrs. Daly, wife of the Assistant Surgeon of the 63rd Regiment, who is a good motherly woman with six children under 8 years of age, and is said to be an accomplished as well as prolific wife. Mr. Drummond has a daughter on board 16 years of age, a son 18, and another about 14; all the other children to the number of 13 are small fry.

"You have now a pretty correct list of our numbers and general description, with the exception of Captain Stirling's establishment which consists of 2 or 3 relatives and followers, one little son about 3 years of age. . . . Dr. Simmons, the Colonial Surgeon, is the only bachelor amongst the officials, and although appearing rather strange from speaking broad Yorkshire may nevertheless prove a clever man."

That Roe's language in speaking of the crowded state of affairs on the *Parmelia* was on the mild side can be gathered from a perusal of the belongings which Peter Brown, the Colonial Secretary, took with him on board. He took on the *Parmelia* a cow, a bull, 2 sows, 2 pigs, a goat, 2 dogs, 2 horses, an assortment of fowls, geese, turkeys, and ducks, a general assortment of agricultural tools, seeds, plants, provisions, a gun, pistols, ammunition, and sword, and miscellaneous articles such as furniture and clothing apart from the personal baggage of himself, his wife, his two children, and his brother, and he had also a half-interest in two mares booked under his partner's name!

Goodbye to England!

The exact date of the departure of the *Parmelia* for the Swan River is shrouded in some mystery, for the accounts of various "authorities" differ; but Peter Brown, the Colonial Secretary, who might be

expected to know, and who kept a Journal of the voyage in his official capacity, gives the date as February 13, 1829. It is also from Peter Brown's Journal, and from the Log Book of J. S. Roe, that we gather the only details available of that momentous voyage. The passengers (we learn) settled down to their sixteen weeks' confinement on the small ship very quickly. To some extent Stirling saw to their comfort; he arranged games for them, but strongly forbade any card games; Religious services were, of course, arranged each Sunday. They had good weather to start with, and they had the Sulphur to look at most of the time for that warship did its work conscientiously and hovered over the *Parmelia* constantly, except once when they were separated by a storm. Frequently the vessels sailed so close that those on board could speak to each other.

On February 22nd they sighted and passed Ten-eriffe, after which the course was towards South America to get the benefits of the winds. On March 9th the expedition had a strange adventure. Two strange sails appeared in the middle of the Atlantic and, coming closer, a boat was lowered from the *Parmelia* and an officer sent on board one of these vessels. What should this vessel's name be but the *Batavia*, from *Batavia*—a strange coincidence, indeed, this, since Western Australia's history practically commences with the wreck of the Dutch ship *Batavia*, bound for *Batavia*, on Houtman's Abrolhos on June 4th, 1629! A week later, March 15th, another boat was lowered from the *Parmelia* and sent aboard the Sulphur to find out at first hand how things went on that vessel, and to give information how they themselves fared. On March 24th another incident served to break the monotony although there was more than a touch of fear in this rencontre. The excited people on the *Parmelia* saw in a ship that bore down on them a pirate, but all that the captain of this suspicious craft wanted was provisions, of which he had run perilously short.

Of the most important event which occurred on the voyage of the *Parmelia*, however, we have not a single mention, not the slightest hint. This event was the birth of a son to Mrs. Stirling, the Lieutenant-Governor's wife—a son, Frederick Henry, who, in after years returned to Australia as Commodore of the British Navy in Australian waters. At what part of the voyage the birth took place it is only possible to guess from a despatch from Stirling on his arrival at Swan River, which showed in the passenger list the name of Frederick Stirling, aged four months. From this, then, it is to be gathered that the interesting event took place very shortly after the *Parmelia* sailed from Plymouth; yet, as I have said, not by hint or word is the event referred to in any account of the voyage!

The *Parmelia* entered Table Bay in a squall. The date was April 16th, 1829, and they remained there 13 days. Captain Stirling was called on to pilot the ship into the harbour. Next day everyone who desired to do so went ashore. Stirling busied himself seeing what the country could supply him with in the shape of food should he need it in the new Colony he was to found; and while he was about it he purchased a plough, and a wagon, and four draught oxen—and some verdigris! The stay at Table Bay was productive of a sad misfortune, the drowning of Dr. Tully Daly, Assistant Surgeon of the 63rd Regiment, who because of his large family (a wife and five young children) could not be accommodated on the Sulphur with his regiment and so travelled on the *Parmelia*. On April 25th, 1829, while returning to the ship with his eldest daughter in one of the ship's boats manned by the second mate and a crew of four sailors, the boat swamped as it brought up against the ship's side. Everyone was thrown into the sea, and though the *Parmelia's* whale boat was at once launched it only succeeded in bringing in the doctor's body; the child's body was not recovered. Surgeon Daly was buried the next day ashore at Cape Town, the passengers from

the Parmelia and soldiers from the Sulphur following the body to the grave. Surgeon William Milligan, who at the moment was in Cape Town attached to the detachment of the 63rd Regiment stationed there, took Dr. Daly's place and immediately embarked on the Sulphur. He was not the only official embarked at the Cape. Stirling managed to persuade H. W. Reveley to come to the Colony as Civil Engineer, and he embarked with his wife on the Parmelia.

The start on the final stage of the journey from Cape Town was made on April 30th. The nearer Stirling approached the Australian coast the more his responsibilities weighed on him, and he was moved to begin assembling the machine which was to help him perform the vast task he had undertaken. He drew up a set of Regulations for the Surveyor-General's Department, and these were handed to Roe headed "Parmelia, at Sea, 12th May, 1829." A much longer list of Regulations for the Colonial Secretary's office was dated May 16th, 1829. The Colonial Secretary was to open his office at 8 a.m. daily, to wait on the Lieutenant-Governor with all documents at 10 a.m., and to close for the day at 2 p.m. On the same day Stirling set up a Board of Counsel and Audit to manage the property of the crown, and made a number of other appointments so that those concerned could know their duties and be ready to carry them out at once on landing.

At the Swan River.

The afternoon of May 31, 1829, marked the journey's end for those on the Parmelia, but not the end of their adventure. That was only just begun. That night they anchored off Garden Island, and the next day the attempt was made to enter Cockburn Sound between Carnac Island and Garden Island. The attempt failed because of contrary winds and currents and perforce the Parmelia had to set to sea again and come to anchor that night under the shelter of Rottnest. The next day, June 2, 1829, the Master

of the ship handed over the command to Lieutenant-Governor Stirling who, from his prior knowledge of the place gained two years before when he had explored the Swan River in H.M.S. Success, believed himself capable of navigating the ship between the rocks and shoals that beset their passage to the safety of Cockburn Sound. His confidence was sadly misplaced for the Parmelia was soon hard and fast on the shoal between Woodman's Point and Carnac Island, known to this day as Parmelia Bank. For 18 hours the fate of the ship was in the balance when by good fortune it floated off and a terrible disaster was averted. I have told the story of those anxious hours in **Swan River Booklet No. 2, "THE STORY OF FOUNDATION DAY, JUNE, THE FIRST, 1829,"** and it is unnecessary to repeat it here save to state that while some of the ladies were transferred for safety to the Challenger, a number more of them (28 in fact) were deposited, together with the stores, on Carnac Island under the charge of Mr. Morgan where—with but one mug and one knife between them!—they endured for four days the utmost misery, without food, without tents or blankets, exposed to a vile rain the whole time, and with nothing to gaze on but the sight of their ship on the bank and in imminent danger of being dashed to pieces at any moment! It was an unpleasant introduction to the new land of their adoption.

The Parmelia emerged from her ordeal on Parmelia Bank in a sorry state, having lost her foreyards, rudder, windlass, spare spars, long boat, and skiff. Her other damage was investigated by the Masters and carpenters of the Challenger and Sulphur under Lieutenant Henry of the Challenger, who reported that she was not in a fit state to go to sea. As a consequence of this, Captain Fremantle ordered her to be "careened," and his disgust was great when it was found that apart from a little copper rubbed off her bottom she had sustained no damage.

It was well for the infant colony that it was so, for Lieutenant-Governor Stirling found it necessary to re-engage the *Parmelia* at once to proceed to Java for stores. She sailed from Fremantle on September 22, 1829, and returned to the colony on January 21, 1830, much to the relief of the Colonists who were already beginning to suffer from the thoughtlessness of those persons who had overlooked the necessity of arranging that the first Colonists should arrive in this new country at such a time of the year as would permit them to sow crops instead of depending on their basic foods being brought to them from other countries.

It is the last we hear of this historic ship. Having discharged her cargo of food stuffs at Fremantle the *Parmelia* sailed away for parts unknown and into an oblivion which, as the pioneer vessel of the Colony, she certainly does not deserve. It is a task for some Western Australian to trace her after-history and complete her story.

THE PARMELIA'S PASSENGERS.

The passenger list of the *Parmelia* is frequently quoted but often wrongly. This is due to the fact that while some quote the passengers who embarked, others quote those who disembarked, and there is a considerable difference between the two lists. The following, however, is as correct as it is possible to make it:—

Captain James Stirling, R.N. (38), Lieutenant-Governor.
 Ellen Stirling (22), his wife.
 Andrew Stirling (3 years), his son.
 Frederick Henry Stirling (4 months), his son; born on the *Parmelia*.
 William Stirling (30), his cousin; died in Perth, 1831.
 Peter Brown, later Broun (31), Colonial Secretary. *
 Caroline Brown (23), his wife.
 McBride Anderson Brown (2), his son.
 Anne Brown (1), his daughter.

14.

Richard McBride Brown (29), brother of Peter Brown; later Government Resident, Fremantle.
 Lieutenant John Septimus Roe, R.N. (32), Surveyor-General.

Matilda Roe (23), his wife.
 Dr. Charles Simmons (27), Colonial Surgeon; died 1832.

H. W. Reveley (40), Civil Engineer; embarked at Cape Town.

Amelia Reveley (17), his wife; embarked at Cape Town.

Captain Mark J. Currie, R.N., Harbour Master, Fremantle.

Eliza Jane Currie (31), his wife.

John Morgan (36), Government Storekeeper.

Rebecca Morgan (35), his wife.

Rebecca Morgan (13), his daughter.

G. W. Mangies, Superintendent of Stock; Mrs. Stirling's cousin.

H. C. Sutherland (25), Assistant Surveyor; later Treasurer.

Anne Sutherland, his wife.

James Drummond (42), Superintendent of Government Gardens.

Sarah Drummond (40), his wife.

Thomas Drummond (18), his son.

Jane Drummond (17), his daughter.

James Drummond (15), his son.

John N. Drummond (13), his son.

Johnston Drummond (9), his son.

Euphemia Drummond (3), his daughter.

W. Shelton, Clerk, Civil Service.

P. P. Smith, Clerk, Civil Service.

Thomas Blakey (37), Government Messenger.

Sarah Blakey (27), his wife.

Jane Daly (32), widow of Assistant Surgeon Tully Daly, drowned in Table Bay.

Joseph R. Daly (6), her son.

H. I. Daly (4), her daughter.

Edward N. Daly (2), her son.

Eliza Daly (6 months) her daughter.

15.

John McKail (22), grandfather of Hal McKail.
 Thomas Davies, smith; also spelt Davis.
 Catherine Davies, his wife.
 John Davies (3), his son.
 Charlotte Davies (2), his daughter.
 John Davies (13), his nephew.
 Alexander Fendall (40), cooper.
 Mary Fendall, his wife.
 William Hokin (37), artificer; also spelt Hoking.
 Mary Hokin (39), his wife.
 John Hokin (14), his son.
 William Hokin (12), his son.
 Mary Hokin (10), his daughter.
 Thomas Hokin (8), his son.
 David Hokin (6), his son.
 Charles Hokin (2), his son.
 James C. Smith, boat builder.
 Sarah Smith, his wife.

— Cameron.

George Elliot (11).
 James Elliot.
 Richard Evans
 John Ferguson
 Jane Fruin (21).
 Eliza Gamble (30).
 John Hall (31).
 John Kelly.
 Eliza Kelly.
 Stephen Knight.
 Frederick Ludlow (33).
 Mildred Ludlow (26),
 Patrick Moonie.
 James Moore (32).
 Patrick Murphy (49).
 Margaret McLeod (26).
 Ann Skipsey.
 Mary A. Smith (21).
 Michael Studzor (23).
 Maria Studzor (20).
 Thomas Welch.
 Charles D. Wright.

16.

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