

# BIRKENHEAD HERITAGE

— SOCIETY INC —

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Saturday November 9<sup>th</sup> 2-4pm**  
**St Andrews Church Hall, 172 Hinemoa Street**  
Share 'Memories of childhood entertainment'  
(table games and outdoor activities,  
concerts, movies, and school fairs....)  
Followed by our End of Year special  
afternoon tea and raffles.

**Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> Feb. Guest Speaker**  
**St Andrews, details Jan./Feb. Newsletter.**

## PAST EVENTS October

Our Society held : Two Heritage Walks,  
Megan Hutching's talk on 'Journeys,  
Children's activities at Farrington House,  
Sunday openings, and a visit by  
Papakura and Districts Historical Society  
bus trip to Farrington House. A total of  
122 joined our Heritage Festival Events.

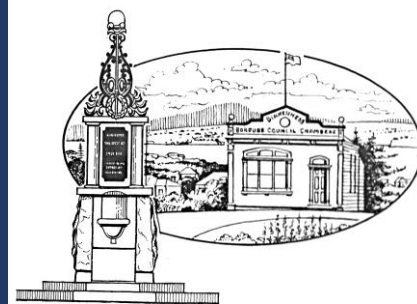
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# November - December 2019

**Auckland Heritage Festival Theme 2019**  
'Our People Travelled to Tāmaki Makaurau  
by Sea, Air or Land'



**Photo** - our Children's Activity – 'Games that  
children played aboard ship'

## CONTENTS

### **P2-6 Voyage of the *Birman* 1841-2**

A Surgeon's Diary records the reality of daily  
life on an Emigrant ship sailing to New  
Zealand.

**P1/6 - Photos of children's activities taken by  
Colleen Durham, with parent's permission.**

## CONTACT US

President – Marcia Roberts 418 0397

Vice President – Brian Potter 483 3400  
Vice President – Colleen Durham 483 4001

## The Voyage of the *Birman* 1841

Ray Johanson, Life Member of our Society, has provided a unique perspective from 1841, a Diary written by Surgeon on the barque *Birman*. The ship sailed from Gravesend, London, 13th October, with 157 adults, 96 children and babies, plus crew, arriving Wellington 1st March 1842. On board during the long voyage was Ray's Great Grandparents, **George and Sarah Perkins**, newly married 26th Sept 1841 in Bath, Somerset.

**Dr J.R. Motherwell** describes his efforts to keep the Emigrant passengers' healthy and their quarters clean. His responsibilities included distributing weekly food supplies, attending to the sick, births and deaths, and acting as chaplain. He found himself settling disputes between couples, individuals, and facing constant challenges from some Emigrants to the ships regulations.

**11<sup>th</sup> October**-Emigrants mustered and inspected by the Government Agent and a Mr Allstein. The ship lying at Gravesend, waiting for Despatches.

**12<sup>th</sup>** Still waiting at Gravesend, only attended the sick – a few cases Diarrhoea & Coughs Despatches with my instruction received 11pm.

**13<sup>th</sup>** Sailed at 6am. A child of the cook diagnosed with measles, and removed to the ship's hospital. The ship spent 8 days in the Downs – a stretch of water outside the Thames Estuary, East of the Kent Downs, wet and stormy.

**14<sup>th</sup>** Lying at anchor further up the Downs. Regular cleaning of the area between decks occupied by the Emigrants commenced, "area scraped and well cleaned, sprinkled with Solution of Chloride of Lime." Seasickness affected many, rice water with lime juice and sugar given. Children given boiled rice.

**15<sup>th</sup>** Divided the Emigrants into 21 Messes starting at Berth No.1, about 8 per mess, keeping children with parents, to whom food is distributed.

**16<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>** Remained in the Downs with strong winds, wet and stormy; weather very bad.

### Routine distribution of food well documented.

I have commenced getting their allowance of Tea Sugar Coffee Butter Suet and Raisins served out weekly. Flour is served twice a week. Rice and Potatoes on the days - according to the Dietary, and Meat daily. My Assistant, Mr Mills takes their allowance to the Steward and then divides it amongst the Messes. A barrel of Pork 50 pieces, and Beef 42 pieces, mustard and pickled cabbage, also ships biscuits, peas and Cannisters of Soup and Bouille (boiled or stewed meat).

Within a week he was writing to the Secretary of the N.Z. Company relative to the allowance of porter (a dark beer) given to "the women giving milk" and regarding the conduct of some Chartrists aboard.

(A Chartrist/Chartist was a member 'mostly work persons' of the Chartist movement 1838-1848 trying to extend the vote in England to workers.) In particular one Chartrist (Mr D) caused him much trouble and confrontation throughout the voyage.

**22<sup>nd</sup>** Weighed anchor, but slow progress.

**24<sup>th</sup>** Anchored at Motherbank, Isle of Wight.. Being a Sunday the Emigrants were mustered, inspected for cleanliness, divine service read to a thin congregation. His record continues with the routines as above with distribution of food; a full muster and regulations read out every Sunday, followed by Divine Service.

Some dancing and enjoyable events are recorded, relaxing on the deck, dispersed with various incidents. Bedding was aired on the deck whenever weather allowed..



## The Voyage of the *Birman* ctd.

Some men were reported beating their wives – a few repeat incidents led to with-holding supplies, and finally to applying handcuffs.

### Health concerns and various issues.

**23<sup>rd</sup>** Mrs Tanks, safely delivered of a daughter  
**30<sup>th</sup>** Mrs Phillips, ill since coming aboard, confirmed Phthisis (wasting disease – tuberculosis), and her children a form of TB with enlargement of lymphatic glands in the neck. The Surgeon had understood this family was not to sail in this ship, otherwise he would have objected, and his doubts they would not endure the voyage was warranted. Cases of measles, and diarrhoea mentioned frequently.

**1<sup>st</sup> November** - A school for children was commenced on the Poop, Mr Harding Schoolmaster, and his wife in charge of females. Later the volunteer teacher gave up because of unruly children. He observed the parents do not seem to have much control over them. One mother was able to put her children to bed at 8pm, but complained others still up and about. He doubted he could make them go below in fine weather; however all children were off the deck by 9pm, and adults by 10pm. Complaints came of people's food being burnt by the cook. A father complained of another who had struck his children, the offender abusive to the Captain.

**3<sup>rd</sup>** There were ongoing issues trying to stop Emigrants cooking in the Galley too early. Orders stated not to cook before breakfast which is served at 8, as per the Regulations – also problems trying to stop late rising, or eating amongst the bedding, unless sick.

**4<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>** Mainly rough weather. Rations weighed and given out by Mills, he divides it amongst the 21 Messes, serving his own mess last, and whatever is short is generally given to him by the Captain, as he has confidence in Mill's integrity.

**11<sup>th</sup>** A daughter to Mrs Penfold, baptised Esther, on 2<sup>nd</sup> December.

**19<sup>th</sup>** A son to Mrs Morgan. Mrs Chapple's child and another with diarrhoea. 2 with Measles.

**20<sup>th</sup>** Mrs Morgan's new son was overlaid and found to have died.

**23<sup>rd</sup>** Mrs Tanks, a daughter, baptised Janet.

**24<sup>th</sup>** Mrs Chapple's youngest child died.

**26<sup>th</sup>** The surgeon commented he believed the Company must have been deceived in the character of some of the immigrants, some married after brief acquaintance for the sake of the free passage. Some refused to assist with tasks, when requested, such as pulling in a sail, or helping with cleanliness.

**7<sup>th</sup> December** he decided to take those under 7 or sickly off salt meat dinners and to introduce rice and sugar 3 days, potatoes and butter 2 days, and Soup and Bouille on Sundays and Thursdays. This became very popular with the children and more asked to be included.

**8<sup>th</sup>** Mrs Penfolds child Henrietta died after being ill, her baby well - 4 children on boarding.

**10<sup>th</sup>** Several ill, Mrs Chapman's child, Mrs George Buck, and Mrs Phillips.

**13<sup>th</sup>** Mr. D. with Measles, recovering by 22<sup>nd</sup>, and allowed some Porter.

**16<sup>th</sup>** Appointed Mr Sparks Schoolmaster and Mary Patterson Schoolmistress. Mrs Phillips's children have measles.

**23<sup>rd</sup>** Haigh, one of the cooks very ill with Dysentery, and another appointed.

**24<sup>th</sup>** The Chartrist's continue to complain, dissatisfied grumblers/ groundless accusations.

**25<sup>th</sup> Christmas day**, fine, mustard cabbage with potatoes, a glass of rum for each Emigrant. Mrs Ducks child ill with serious lung infection

**26<sup>th</sup>** - Mrs Duck's child died, extensive infection both lungs.

**27<sup>th</sup>** - Land sighted, anchored Table Bay Cape Town.

## **The Voyage of the *Birman* ctd.**

**28<sup>th</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan. Cape Town.** Out of quarantine – Captain and Surgeon ashore for supplies - no Emigrants ashore. Milk for infants, oranges for the children, bread for the women, fresh meat and vegetables taken aboard. No spirits. Male Emigrants later given a glass of rum each for assisting with supplies. Fresh meat and vegetables served while in port.

Mrs Chapman's child died on 3<sup>rd</sup> January.

**4<sup>th</sup> January** - Put to sea 6am. Most Emigrants seasick. Fine weather over several days.

**8<sup>th</sup>** Mrs Tonk's baby heard by Surgeon to give a Croupy cough, which followed a cold, informed it was very serious, became worse overnight and died about 5am next morning.

**11<sup>th</sup>** Blowing fresh, weather colder. Mrs Richards child has a cold and lung infection, brought on deck too soon after measles.

**12<sup>th</sup>** Mrs Lowndes delivered of a male child, her first. Mrs Richards child worse. Mrs Mills child, sickly since London, much emaciated, feared cannot live long.

**14<sup>th</sup>** Rice running out.

**16<sup>th</sup>** Mrs Richard's child died. Mrs Lowndes child doing well.

**17<sup>th</sup>** Mrs Sargent's child very ill, lung infection after measles. Robert Startup, previous cook caught beating his wife, disrespectful to the Captain, resisted removal, eventually handcuffed, broke doorlock when put in the Men's Hospital, crying then cursing overnight.

**18<sup>th</sup>** Startup was sorry the next day. Mrs Sargent's baby rather worse.

**19<sup>th</sup>** Mrs Sargent's baby died, the funeral service read and committal followed. Phillip's two youngest children checked by stethoscope when the ship was quiet – lungs so far diseased, not expected to live long.

**22<sup>nd</sup>** Mrs Mills child very weak with chronic hydrocephaly.

**23<sup>rd</sup>** Sunday very cold and wet, muster held between decks. Mr Mills came to tell his child dying. This the Surgeon had expected, and prepared the parents for. It was the Surgeon's duty as Chaplain to take the funeral service and 'commit the body to the deep'. Next Mrs Torr's child very ill with infection of Lungs.

**24<sup>th</sup>** Day wet, blowing hard in evening. Mrs Buck's child has infection of Lungs from Cold.

**25<sup>th</sup>** Mrs Torr's child and Mrs Bucks rather better. Mrs Pinfold's infant had convulsions, very ill, now better. One Sailor ill, in fever.

**28<sup>th</sup>** Rations required – only half allowance of butter this week, butter nearly expended. No 2 Mess allocated meat had a large bone, and refused to take it. Another mess used it.

**31<sup>st</sup>** Robt. Carpenter, fell off the forecandle and broke his left arm a little above the elbow.

**29<sup>th</sup>** Youngest Phillips child sinking fast. Died about 12'o'clock on 30<sup>th</sup> committed to the deep and funeral service read. Fumigated the Berth, and Berths about.

**1<sup>st</sup> February** Wind strong but favourable. Some would never bring up their bedding in this weather unless forced, while some few bring them up and shake them each morning. On the 1<sup>st</sup> fine day plan to make all bedding be brought up, and to fumigate the place.

**2<sup>nd</sup>** Wet and Stormy. More fighting between a couple – I hope soon to be done with such troublesome characters. Another couple have also been fighting – wife is very lazy, impossible to get her out of bed in the a.m.

**3<sup>rd</sup>** Mrs. R. wished to throw herself overboard. Sent below and threatened to make her fast if she came up again that night. Washing Day. Below scraped, well cleaned and fumigated.

**4<sup>th</sup>** Good, all going well except Mr D. – tries every opportunity of annoyance. Found Sailors in the habit of getting into the spirit room.

## The Voyage of the *Birman* ctd.

**5<sup>th</sup>** Sailor who was ill in Fever, much better.

**6<sup>th</sup>** Carpenter's arm going on very well.

**7<sup>th</sup>** School in Cabin. Information derived is comparatively little, but keeps children out of harm's way.

**8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>** Weather wet and cold, unpleasant. Many Sailors ill with coughs - chest infections. Although there have been 5 deaths of those entitled to Soup and Bouille, we have no diminution in quantity served.

**11<sup>th</sup>** Messes 19, 20, 21 not served Suet as it was expended. Butter allowance served. Half allowance of Raisins, and same weight in Sugar in lieu. Biscuits are given out each day.

**12<sup>th</sup>** Mustard and Cabbage for ensuing week served out. Only half allowance of Mustard as expended. Several Sailors unwell, between 30 and 40 Emigrants put their name voluntarily to keep watch in turn and be ready to assist the crew. Mr D was not amongst them.

**14<sup>th</sup>** Feb. Porter getting scarce, have put the Women (nursing mothers) on ½ pint daily.

**15<sup>th</sup>** Mrs Taylor's infant is very ill.

**16<sup>th</sup>** Haight the cook and Monk had a boxing match this morning; separated by the Captain. Monk and Startup sent out at the expense of their Parish in England – it is such characters that all unpleasant annoyances have arisen.

**18<sup>th</sup>** Fine day, wind favourable expect soon to get to New Zealand. The Captain wished a half weeks allowance should be served. Raisins expended, same weight in sugar served out.

No suet as none onboard, nor nothing in lieu. The Captain saw Mr. D's sister throwing ships biscuits overboard, when spoken to she was insolent, he said he would stop her biscuits, ... he would not allow them to be thrown away.

**19<sup>th</sup>** Wind favourable; saw part of New Zealand. Some complaining lack of suet....'they would have it by force'. However, the Surgeon believed not an ounce remained aboard.

**20<sup>th</sup>** Weather fine, wind variable. Muster held, Mr. D. and a few others did not attend – I believe from downright laziness. He also reported another bad container of Soup and Bouille 14 Cases served out, provided by Cope and Co, 'one bad - unfit to be put in the soup'.

**21-22<sup>nd</sup>** Weather wet, then blowing hard – worst gale since leaving England. No chance to enter Cook Strait. Half weeks allowance served.

**23<sup>rd</sup>** Weather moderate, towards evening calm. Many of the beds on deck this day. Only ½ pint of Porter to nursing mothers and invalids as Porter nearly out. Young Clapham jammed his fingers in a pully, nails and tops of left hand torn off.

**24<sup>th</sup>** Blowing hard, wind against us. Remarkable how well Mr D. and his wife have been living since I stopped his rations. Called last night to stop a fight between a couple.

**25<sup>th</sup>** Friday. Blowing hard, wind adverse. Served half a week's allowance of Sugar and Tea – coffee now expended so week allowance of tea in lieu. Sugar in lieu of raisins. Served flour for 2 days. No suet or butter. Porter found to be expended this day.

**Mrs Sarah Perkins was safely delivered of a Male child this morning, father George 23, and Sarah 22. The baby was George Perkins (jnr.) born in Cook Strait, elder sibling of Ray Johanson's grandmother, Emma born in 1846.**



**The Birman arrives in Wellington**

**26<sup>th</sup>** Weather moderate, attempting to beat up Cooks Strait.

**27<sup>th</sup>** Had Emigrants mustered, inspected as to cleanliness. Listed those who did not attend. Did not read divine service as the Captain said he did not know when he would be obliged to tack the Ship, and all Emigrants were looking at their destination. Another bad case of Soup and Bouille found.

**28<sup>th</sup>** Through Cooks Strait last night, past Cape Terawhiti South West tip of the North Island ..... We got by mistake into Palliser Bay, when it fell calm. Towards evening a breeze sprung up, we stood off until next morning.....

**1<sup>st</sup> March** We anchored in Port Nicholson about 9 o'clock am. Boarded by Customhouse Officer, Quarantine Doctor, and Mr Riddiford, the Emigration Agent. The Captain went on shore and saw Colonel Wakefield, and mentioned the supplies that had expended. The Colonel desired the back rations be given to the Emigrants; which at once acceded to by the Captain.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Commenced to land** the Emigrants, gave each of them 2 days rations to bring ashore with them.

**PART OF LAMBTON HARBOUR PORT NICHOLSON NEW ZEALAND 1842**

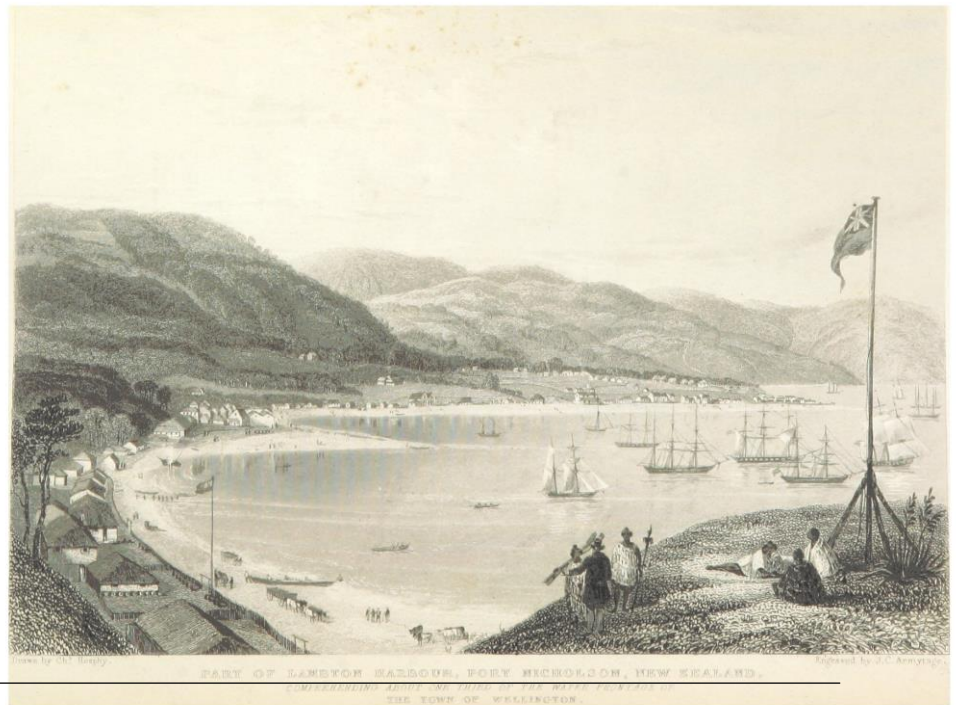
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**IN PORT.**

Barque *Clydeside*, Mathieson.  
Schooner *Governor Hobson*, Skelton.  
——— *Mary Ann Wade*, Tulett.  
——— *Lady Leigh*, Roche.  
Ship *Clifton*, Cox.  
Schooner *Henry*, Daymond.  
Barque *Bolton*, Robinson.  
Schooner *Gem*, Phillips.  
Barque *Birman*, Cleland.

**NEW ZEALAND GAZETTE AND  
WELLINGTON SPECTATOR,  
VOLUME II, ISSUE 122, 9  
MARCH 1842**

- REPORTS THE BIRMAN UNDER  
CAPTAIN CLELAND HAS ARRIVED  
IN WELLINGTON



PART OF LAMBTON HARBOUR, PORT NICHOLSON, NEW ZEALAND.  
THE TOWN OF WELLINGTON.

Children at  
Farrington  
House with  
peg dolls and  
board games  
during the  
Auckland  
Heritage  
Festival

