

ACTIVITY: Boat swamped
CASE: **GSF 1863.04.00**
DATE: April 1863
LOCATION: Great Caloundra Heads,
Queensland, Australia.

NAME: Mr. Barnsfield

NARRATIVE: See press clipping

INJURY: Fatal

SPECIES: Not recorded

SOURCE: The Brisbane Courier,
Wednesday June 12, 1889, page 9




AN INTERESTING RELIC.

A REMINISCENCE OF THE "QUEEN OF THE COLONIES."

On the western slope of Great Caloundra Heads stands a pandanus tree, one of many that ornament that pleasant place with their strikingly characteristic limbs and foliage. This particular tree, however, differs from its fellows from having deeply cut into its trunk the simple inscription, QUEEN OF THE COLONIES. Many persons have visited Caloundra and have passed the tree without noticing the inscription, but now that attention has been drawn to it, it has been ascertained beyond doubt that it was carved by one of the crew of the boat which was cast away from the Queen of the Colonies in April, 1863. At the time there was intense excitement in Brisbane over the circumstance, as old residents will still remember, for although it was known that the boat was missing, sixteen days elapsed before the last of the survivors were discovered and rescued.

The Queen of the Colonies was a fine Aberdeen built clipper of 1346 tons, belonging to the well-known Black Ball line, and commanded by Captain Cairncross, formerly of the clipper vessel Cairngorm. She left London on the 24th of December, 1862, with 450 passengers and emigrants, and no less than twenty-six stowaways, and arrived in Moreton Bay on 8th April, 1863. During the passage there were ten deaths, seven births, and one marriage, and she had on board 1200 tons of general merchandise, which, up to that time, was the largest cargo ever brought to Queensland. While just within sight of land one of the passengers, Mrs. Barnsfield, died, and it was decided to bury her on Moreton Island. For this purpose a boat left the ship under the charge of the chief officer, Mr. Edridge (now telegraph master at Dalby), with fourteen persons on board, among whom were Captain Hill, who read the funeral service over the body, Father Stanley, W. O. Hill (now a police-magistrate in the North), and Lieutenant Durant. After performing their melancholy task the party embarked with the purpose of returning to the vessel. Although it was then about dusk, they were plainly perceived by those on board the Queen of the Colonies. A heavy

squall from the west soon after swept down the coast and struck the boat. The squall, together with the ebb-tide, carried the boat past the ship right out to sea in spite of all the efforts of those on board. Nothing more was seen of the boat by those on board of the ship, which was subsequently towed up to Brisbane when the loss of the boat was reported. The party in the boat, after knocking about for many hours in the darkness, eventually ran their craft ashore on a sandy beach close by Great Caloundra Heads. Here on an unknown shore, with no sign of any habitation or settlement, their position was apparently as hopeless as in an open boat. They had no provisions, no extra clothing, and no stimulants of any kind. In front of the hapless castaways the waves of the Pacific dashed heavily on the beach, under the influence of a strong and long-continued gale—behind them a country strange and foreign to their eyes stretched away for miles, presenting the same monotonous aspect of the fruitless and barren Australian bush. Fortunately, however, the rocks at the base of Caloundra Heads are covered with limpets and other shellfish, and on these—their only means of subsistence—the forlorn castaways were enabled to maintain life. Several attempts were made by detached parties pushing inland and along the coast to find settlement, but these all proved futile, as in those early days there was no habitation of any kind nearer than Sandgate. After three or four days the suspense and the privations which they were enduring becoming intolerable, they determined to launch their boat, which was high and dry upon the beach, and endeavour to find succour by that means. For this purpose they stripped themselves of their clothing except their shirts, and putting their cast-off garments into the boat, endeavoured to run her out through the breakers. In doing so, however, a heavy sea struck the boat and capsized her. This disaster resulted in the loss of all the clothing of which these unfortunate people had divested themselves, and to add to their grief Mr. Barnsfield, the husband of the woman they had buried on Moreton Island, who had been conspicuous in his exertions in the attempt to launch the boat, was seized and devoured by two sharks before their eyes.



Nothing more about the shark accident, but the rest of the article is below. . .

Several attempts were made by the Water Police to institute a search for the missing boat when its loss was reported in Brisbane; but for some time a furious south-westerly gale, which lasted for nearly ten days, together with a very heavy sea, prevented the steam-tug Brisbane from putting out to sea. Mr. John Macdonald, who was then inspector of Water Police, at length started in his boat, manned by five men, to discover if possible the fate of the boat and its crew. Many people in Brisbane, including several sea-captains, held the view that the boat had been carried out to sea and that all on board had perished, but there were some who clung to the belief that she had been driven on to Bribie Island or on some part of the mainland between Bribie and Mooloolah. Mr. Macdonald and his crew had a very narrow escape from being wrecked on the reef outside Bribie Passage, the existence of which reef was unknown to anyone on board his boat. Bribie Island was first searched from end to end fruitlessly, and the party then landed on the mainland spot where Mr. Bulcock's jetty now stands. Their provisions, however, by this time had been completely destroyed by salt water, and the men, being hungry, fatigued, and footsore, commenced grumbling. They were therefore told to remain by the boat while Mr. Macdonald, accompanied by one of the men named Campbell (who is now living in Fortitude Valley), continued the search along the coast. At last they discovered the castaways camped under a few bushes on Big Caloundra Head, not far from the lagoon which, although now salt, was at that time a fresh water lake. All the party being practically without clothes had suffered terribly from exposure to the sun and the weather. They had lived for a fortnight on nothing but limpets and water, and while all were hopeless and despairing many were delirious, and in the last stages of exhaustion. The chief officer (Mr. Edridge), the fourth officer, and Lieutenant Durant had been away for two days, and had not returned when Mr. Macdonald found the others; but owing to the state of the survivors he felt compelled to remove them at once, leaving a pencil notice on one of the trees close by, saying that he would either return himself or send immediate succour. All the relief that Mr. Macdonald was able to administer to the shipwrecked crew was the contents of a flask of brandy, which amounted to a table-spoonful apiece. After great difficulties, owing to squally and rainy weather, Mr. Macdonald,

with the rescued people, got to Toorbul Point, where the steam-tug Brisbane was seen about half way over to Humpybong with steam up. Mr. Macdonald attempted to go out with the whole party, but found it was impracticable, as the gunwale of the boat in its heavily-loaded state was only about 2in from the water. He therefore put back and landed the majority on the mainland, taking with him only three of the sailors of the lost boat's crew. After a very hard pull for a considerable time they were at last seen by the people on board the tug, which at once ran down to meet them, and took them on board. Mr. Macdonald then having obtained a fresh crew from the tug returned to the mainland and brought the remainder safely on board, and next day they were all landed in Brisbane. Subsequently, Mr. Macdonald obtained another crew, and a larger boat, and, within a couple of hours of his arrival in Brisbane, went in search of the three men still missing. He found them on the same spot where the others had been discovered, completely exhausted, having lived for sixteen days almost in a state of nudity, on nothing but shellfish and water. Their wants were immediately relieved, as on this occasion Mr. Macdonald had an unlimited supply of provisions and other necessaries. A pandanus tree, mentioned above, still stands close to the place where they were found marked with the name of the ship deeply cut into the trunk by one of the shipwrecked crew. It was recognised and identified a few months ago by Mr. Macdonald, who took his friends straight to the tree, though he had not seen it since 1863. Mr. Macdonald, who lately was superintendent of St. Helena, was for his services on this occasion presented with £100 by the Government, and also with a tea and coffee service valued at 100 guineas by the agent and officers of the Black Ball Line. This interesting and historical pandanus tree, the record of a thrilling event which happened twenty-six years ago, will it is to be hoped be carefully preserved. Twenty-six years, which are as nothing in a quiet English country village, mark an epoch in the life of a young and vigorous colony, but in spite of the wonderful changes that have happened during that period in Brisbane, there are many still living who remember the eventful voyage from London to Brisbane in 1863 of the Queen of the Colonies.