

FORWARD & PREAMBLE

by Peter B Huxtable

History is a very fragile thing, prone to disintegrate and disappear, if the greatest care is not taken to preserve it.

This local history and true story is even more delicate - requiring the attention of a local historian to ensure that it shall remain alive for those who seek a true knowledge of the past of a Port Augusta Yacht Club member and the history of the copper "port and starboard" lights.

In doing so, I hope my work in compiling this history lesson will bring much enjoyment to its readers, particularly those who treasure their links with the pioneering yachties from early days.

This true story from the past covers a person who lived through that era and passed on their fascinating story, and that now comes alive again – "Old Ken Bottomley".

Kenneth (Ken) Arnold Bottomley

Born: Port Augusta 2 March 1916

Died: Port Augusta Shack, 31 October 2001

Aged 85 years

On Sunday 17 October 2010 at 10am I had the pleasure of opening the "Sailing Season" of the Port Augusta Yacht Club.

Conversation with the Commodore and others in the bar area turned and centred on the two (2) copper port and starboard lights highlighting the bar :-

"Where did they come from?"

"Are they authentic?"

"Who donated them?"

"What was their history?"

"What sailing ship did they come from?"

They have become a symbol of the Yacht Club and of real importance in maritime history.

Well, here's the story

They were donated by an old member and friend of mine of many years – from my childhood days at the Port Augusta Yacht Club, growing up in a sailing environment – Kenneth (Ken) Arnold Bottomley. Ken was born in Port Augusta on 2 March 1916 and died 31 October 2001 at his beach shack "Botts Spot", just a short distance from our shack "Huxties Hideaway".

Many years ago he acquired these lights. It is an amazing story how he did so, and I intend to give you, your family, friends and old sailors, an appetite to find out more about the old days of sailing ships in our local Upper Spencer Gulf.

Ken had a passion and love of old sailing ships. I will strive to embrace as much information as possible, and it can only be hoped that members of the public will recognise the importance of this story and study of passing begone days.

The glorious age of tall ships called "windjammers" as they were huge square-rigged sailing vessels that valiantly challenged the coming of steam on world trade routes. These monsters, it was said, were far too gross (large) and clumsy to sail neatly into the wind, but had to be "jammed" into it, their yards braced way around on the back stays.

In their 50 years or useful life, the "windjammers" expressed the consummate majesty of sail, and the climax of centuries of glorious evolution.

Cecelie Port Augusta Wharf 1909



Herzogin Cecilie

The sailing ship in question, the "Herzogin Cecilie" was on a visit to Wallaroo on the Spencer Gulf, South Australia, and Ken said they had a local yacht race from Port Augusta to Wallaroo. On arrival at Wallaroo and there loading bagged grain was the four-masted giant in port. We had a look over her, and later were invited to a dance on board. After many "neck oils" we persuaded a drunk crew member to part with a port and starboard spare navigation lights from the store. Hence Ken donated them to his yacht club in Port Augusta as a memento to past endeavours.

This sailing club was a way of life for many, with emphasis on adventure and free spirit and showcased the outstanding calibre of "old salts", who set the benchmark for what we have today. Only through a realisation of what yesterday was like, are we able to fully appreciate today.

Stories from the "Yacht Club bar" are littered with examples of people who could make a far greater contribution than their modest past achievements currently allow them. With the right encouragements there is potential for a "storytelling" of older Port Augusta yachties to make a valuable contribution to the history of their own circumstances.

I will attempt to convey the story of this white-winged tall ship which was unparalleled in size, power and beauty.



Idle square-riggers jam a harbor jetty in Newcastle, Australia, in 1900 as they wait for cargoes of coal to ship to Chile and Peru. "The ships," said an apprentice on an English coal ship, "gave the impression of a forest of masts and spars and rigging, in a confused tangle against the skyline."

Many were twice as long as the graceful wooden clipper ships that had preceded them, and almost swift. With acres of sail on their towering masts, they carried thousands of tons of nitrates, coal, grain and timber around the world in their vast hulls. The "windjammers" captured the hearts of sailors and landsmen alike – they set and broke and re-set records, survived incredible storms and hardships. Even in their twilight – during the 1920's and 1930's – their driving spirit was to outsail all rivals. That was the way of the "windjammers". Steamships could ask for mild seas and bland skies but windjammers thrived on brisk gales and fast passages, as befitted by the final celebration of the glorious age of sail.

My research of "Herzogin Cecilie", power and speed, was mentioned and I quote :-

At midnight she was first spotted as a distant shape on the moonlight horizon. By dawn her dimensions had grown to majestic size. Passengers and crew of the British liner crowded the rail to stare at the tall ship they were overtaking. She seemed as apparition from another age. A graceful, white-hulled bark, her four masts crowded with wind, taut sails, she belonged on an earlier ocean – on sea lanes as yet unsullied by the smoke and soot of steamers.

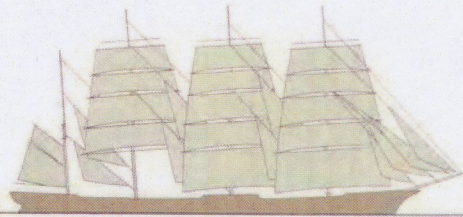
Matching canvas to the fury of the elements

The strength and direction of wind and seas, the particular handling characteristics of the ship, the distribution of cargo weight, the size of the crew, even the personality of the captain—all these factors determined a windjammer's sail load. The *Herzogin Cecilie* could at times carry her full suit of 35 sails in winds up to 40 knots.

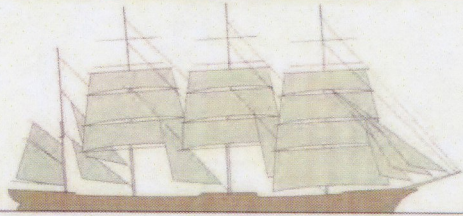
In higher winds, however, excess canvas threatened the stability and even the survival of the ship. Caught unpre-

pared by a storm, an overcanvased vessel could be dismasted, knocked over on her beam-ends or literally driven underwater by a following wind—although more often her sails would simply blow out, leaving only tattered rags on the yards. To avoid such disaster, most shipmasters prudently reduced sail as the force of a storm intensified, following a systematic procedure similar to the one used on the *Herzogin Cecilie*, shown below.

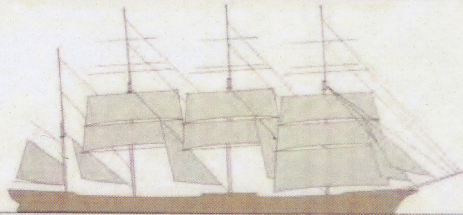
When the wind rose above 40 knots, the first sails to be taken in were the uppermost sails—the royals, upper staysails and gaff-top-sail aft—and the huge crossjack, set at the bottom of the mizzenmast. The furling of these sails reduced mounting wind pressure on the masts. With the wind abeam, these sails tended to list the vessel, which increased drag on the hull and negated any speed the sails added.



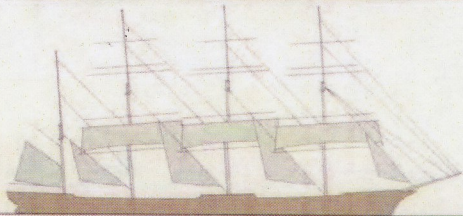
In a strong gale—i.e., one approaching 50 knots—sail was reduced even more by furling the great mainsail, set at the bottom of the mainmast. Then a few hands took in the flying jib, while the rest of the crew climbed aloft to furl the next-highest line of sails, the topgallants and the topgallant staysails. Though now carrying scarcely half her sails, the ship could still make good headway in such winds.



If the wind continued to rise toward 60 knots, again the highest line of sails was furled—this time the upper topsails. With these large square sails secure, the crew dropped the outer jib in the bow and two small fore-and-aft sails in the stern. By now, decks would be awash as the ship beat to windward, and headway would be greatly reduced by heavy seas.



The last great sail, the foresail, was not furled until the wind approached 70 knots. Then came the inner jib, leaving only the lower spanker, the lowest staysails and the lower topsails to drive the ship ahead. In winds of more than 80 knots, the ship often hove to with mizzen lower topsail furled, keeping her bow to the wind with the other seven sails still flying.



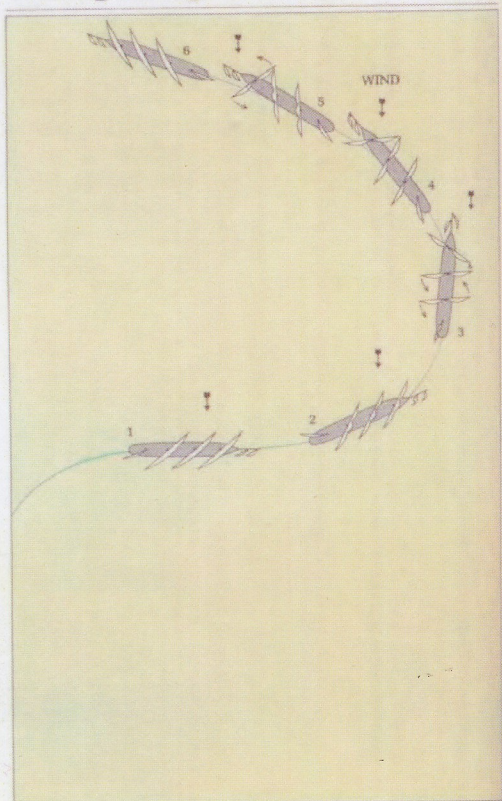
As the steamer drew closer, the *Herzogin Cecilie*'s royals (topmost sails of all) were sheeted home, the mighty windjammer was now wearing her full suit of 35 sails, an incredible 45,000 square feet of heavy canvas. Furious work on powerful deck mounted winches braced the yards so that this vast expanse of sail picked up maximum drive from the rapidly freshening wind.

Now it was blowing at 35 to 40 knots, close to gale force. The *Herzogin Cecilie*'s bow wave arched in the sunlight as she moved faster and faster—16 knots, then 17, almost 18. Her lee rail was awash. Green seas hissed past her quarter. It took two crewmen straining at her massive wheel to hold her on course.

For several moments, steam and sail ran side by side. Then slowly, steadily, the great sailing ship picked up speed on the steamer, and then she began to move away. As the liner slid inexorably astern, her Captain blew three long blasts on his steam whistle in a graceful acknowledgement of defeat: he then dipped his red British ensign in salute to the victor. Aboard the *Herzogin Cecilie* Captain Erikson dipped his blue and white Finnish colours in return.

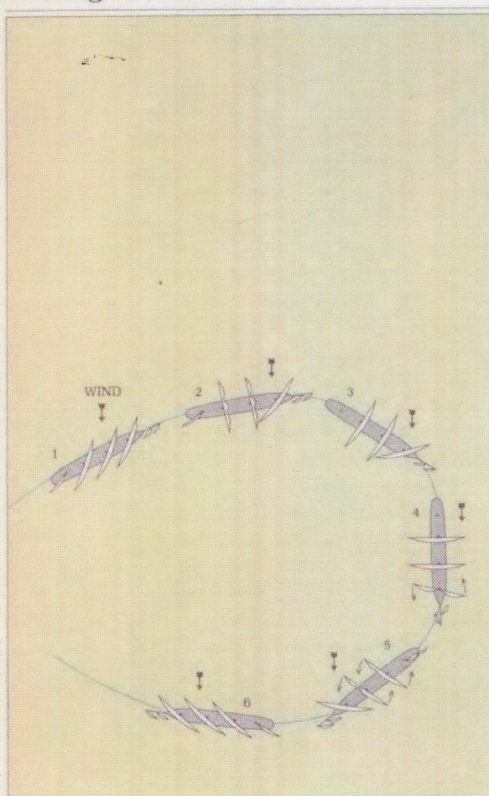
The two ships bore off in divergent courses. Soon the *Herzogin Cecilie*'s masts dropped below the horizon. Her brief but proud moment was over. Nor was it likely to be repeated.

Tacking through the wind



The fastest and most efficient way for a windjammer captain to change course was to tack, bringing the bow across the wind. (1) Sailing on a port tack, the ship was allowed to fall off away from the wind. (2) The helm was put over hard to port, and the spanker sail was hauled to windward to pivot the ship. (3) The main and mizzen yards were braced around: their sails and the jibs fluttered for a moment while the wind struck the front of the foresails, driving the ship to port. (4) The ship rapidly lost momentum, but as she came around, the jibs and the mainsail and mizzen sail filled. (5) As the vessel gained way again, the foreyards were braced around to the new course. (6) With the ship picking up speed, all sails were trimmed for the starboard tack.

Wearing around the wind



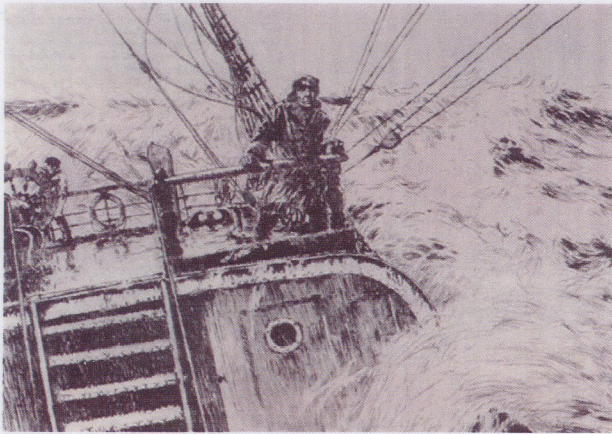
Wearing ship, altering course by bringing the vessel's stern across the wind, was a maneuver used primarily in heavy weather. (1) Under reduced sail, the ship was readied for a run downwind. (2) The spanker was furled, and the rudder was put over to starboard while the mainsail and mizzen sail were squared into the wind. (3) The ship fell off to leeward until the wind aft filled the main and mizzen. (4) With the wind directly astern, the main and mizzen blanketed the forward sails, freeing them to be hauled around for the starboard tack. (5) The forward sails filled, and the main and mizzen were braced around farther to take the wind over the starboard side. (6) Having reversed direction, the ship was trimmed for the new course and the spanker was reset.

The last great age of sail, the magnificent era of the windjammers, was already drifting in the doldrums, from which it would never escape. In truth, before that race across a windy reach of the Atlantic even started, the *Herzogin Cecilie* and all her sister ships were already doomed.

British poet laureate John Masefield had in mind when he wrote of the windjammers "they mark our passage as a race of men, earth will not see such ships as those again". The day of the windjammer was all too brief – only 60 years or so, spanning the end of the 19th Century, and the first third of the 20th Century. Suez Canal proved a real godsend to steamships.

Windjammers were built of iron and steel rather than wood, and new ships were awesome in every dimension. The *Herzogin Cecilie* was 334 feet long, their masts three feet thick at the base which then towered as high as 200 feet above the keel.

Some of the yards from which the sails were suspended were more than 100 feet long, and up to two feet in diameter at the centre. The larger of their sails weighted a ton dry and far more when wet. Laid end to end, the wire and chain and manila line in their rigging would have stretched for miles.



As the seas begin to buck and ramp, a captain takes his post at the weather rail to match wits with the rising winds. Throughout one storm in the roaring forties, the windjammer *Arethusa's* captain kept that post for 36 hours, eliciting from an awed apprentice the observation that, when the grim sport demanded, the captain "seemed able to do without food or sleep indefinitely."



Peering through sextants, a captain and his mate calculate the angle of the sun to fix the ship's position as accurately as possible before a storm. In tempest-tossed oceans, a captain might go for weeks without a celestial fix; indeed, at the tip of South America, said one sailor, "four ships out of five rounded *Fury Island* without their masters really knowing they had reached the area of the Horn."

All night long she race southward. Erikson sent up blue flares to warn other craft of her approach. "Not a soul on board turned in" the *Herzogin Cecilie's* historian wrote later, "normal watches were abandoned, and all hands stood by, unable to do other than watch the great white bark tear madly southward", wondering no doubt whether her canvas would withstand the strain of such driving. She fled through "the Sound", past *Hven Island*, overtaking steamers bound in the same direction, as though they were anchored.



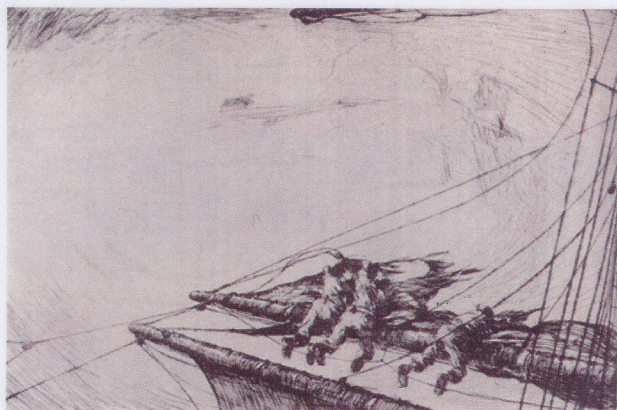
Grasping taut life lines prudently strung in advance, a storm-racked crew manages to stay upright though green seas tumble across a rolling deck. In addition to life lines, safety nets were frequently hung above the bulwarks. Serving as rope seines, they collected men as though they were fish when the waters rushed over the rails and back to the sea.



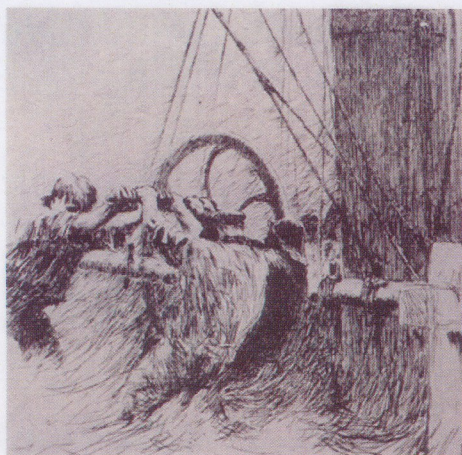
Crewmen struggle to secure a lifeboat torn from its lashings by the wrenching fingers of the sea. Equipment and boats were not all that was tied down: during an especially violent storm, crew members might spend the entire watch lashed to the rails or masts to perform their duties.

At last as she passed Copenhagen at dawn, the gradually diminishing wind fell to a gently breeze and she continued her voyage in more leisurely fashion. Yet her earlier burst of speed had been enough to carry her 164 miles in 13 hours, for an average of almost 13 knots. More amazing was the fact that she was due for day docking to have her bottom cleaned. Further, the rigging of these ultimate sailing ships was a triumph of intricate logic, a logic based on centuries of practical experience.

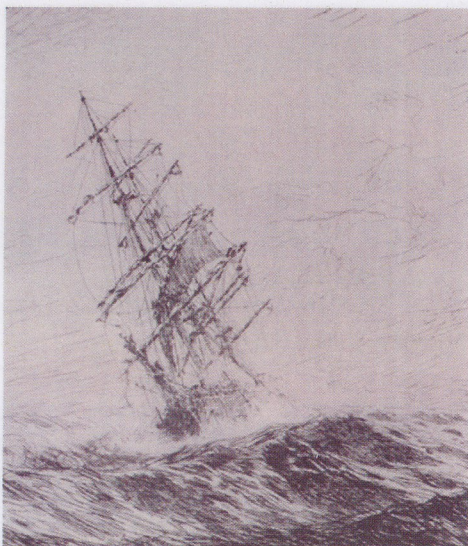
The spires of masts and spider webs of lines reaching to the sky were actually two separate systems, independent of each other. The standard rigging, the shrouds and stays whose function was to fix the masts firmly in place, consisted of wire cables. The shrouds were rigged in pairs with cross wires known as "ratlines" which made rope ladders for the crew to climb.



Their bellies to the yard and their heels to the footrope, three sailors grab for a topsail that has torn loose from its gaskets. A storm-tattered sail might be salvaged if ropes could be lashed around it in time. But all too often, as one sailor recalled, the effort produced only the sorry sight of the shredded canvas "flying to leeward to be swallowed in the welter of foam and spindrift."



Knee-deep in swirling water and drenched to the skin, three sailors strain at the bilge pump on deck. A good pump could lift water from belowdecks at the rate of a ton a minute. In a severe storm, with green water constantly crashing on board, the bilge pumps had to be manned virtually without cessation.



Climbing all the way to the topmost foreroyal yard would take an experienced hand no more than two or three minutes. An apprentice seaman might take as long as half an hour, much of which would be spent conquering this terror at the dizzying heights as he inched higher and higher.

The back stays, heavy wires that lead aft from the mast down to fastenings along the sides of the ship, were sometimes used by show-off veterans, for a quick sliding descent to the deck.

They sometimes ended up with hands coated with coal tar or cut by frayed wire, most used the ratlines. Tough as deck work was, things could be worse aloft, especially when the weather turned sour. Then sails had to be doused quickly, lest an overcanvassed ship sail itself under the waves.

Once a sail was halved up to its yard, the seamen would go aloft to the yard then out along it, their feet on the footrope suspended beneath, their hands on the jackstay (the rail along the top of the yard). The men would pull and punch at the canvas to spill the remaining air out of it.



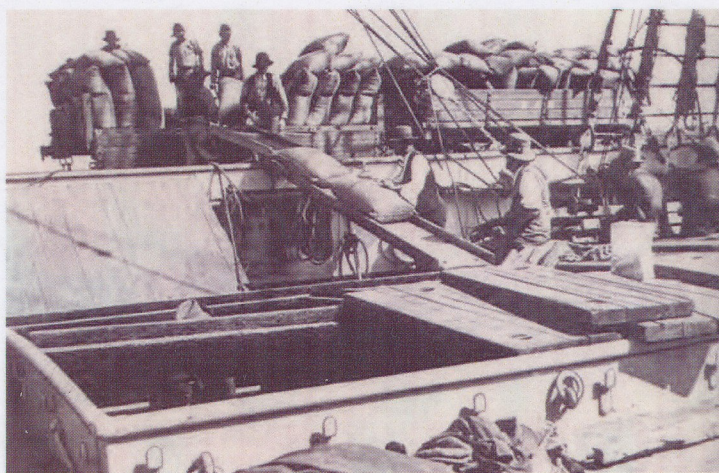
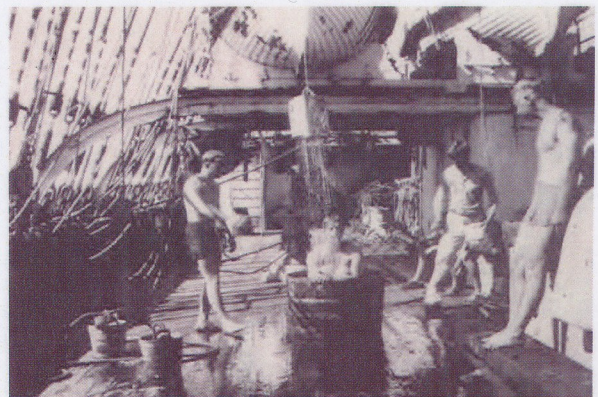
Author and seafarer Alan Villiers described the technique from personal experience, "you begin the fight at the centre of the yard, thumping down the canvas that is bellying back, hauling up the canvas that is hanging down beneath the yard and against the foot ropes, until you have all the canvas up on the yard beneath your stomach; then you make a skin of the last foot or so closer to the yard, punch all the rest neatly into that, brace your knees against the yard, and roll her up, whip the gasket around, and the job's done!"

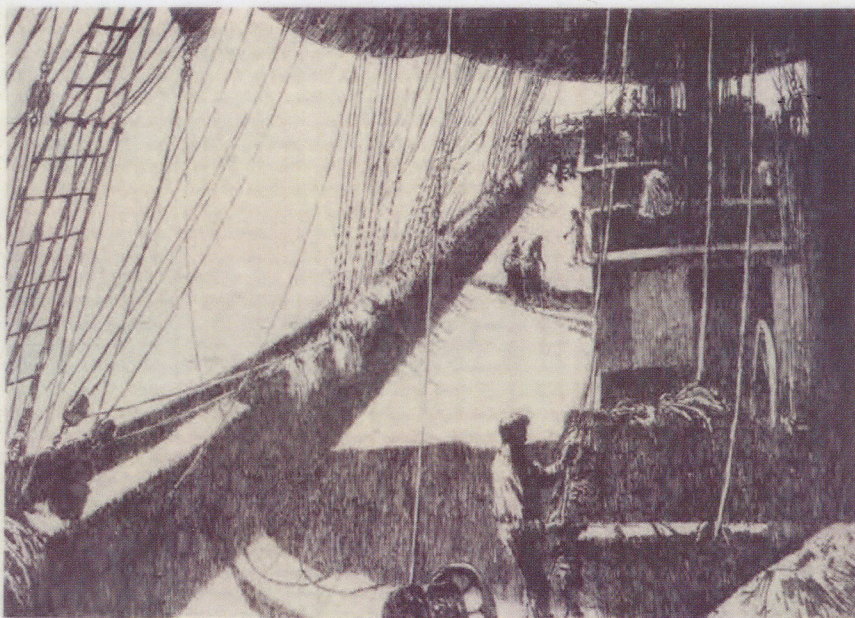
All sailors were well acquainted with the rule "one hand for the ship and one for yourself". Accidents happened all too frequently, and sailors took them for granted. A fall from an upper yard meant almost certain death. Giles M.S. Tod, a lifelong expert on sailing vessels and author about ships and windjammers and the sea, observed in 1934 danger firsthand when he served as a crewman on the four-masted Herzogin Cecilie on a passage from England to Australia and back around Cape Horn.

He recalled a desperate fight to bring in a topsail, all the men exhausted, their hands "blue with cold and red with blood" as the 2,000 square-foot canvas kept eluding them.

Once a steel bunt line, writhing back over the yard, caught "Zimmerman" in the head and brought the swift blood. He reeled a bit, but carried on. Then after a while we saw that he had fainted, and lay in imminent peril across the yard.

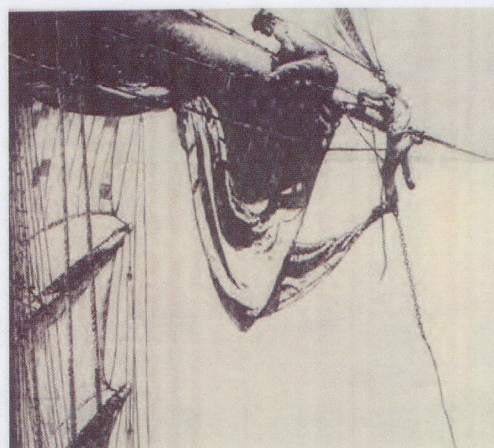
For one awful moment the canvas stayed still, while we fought to him, and then because we could not take him down, we lashed him there. And when we had time to remember him again we found that he had come to, and was working.





Under a tropical sun, a seaman overhauls one of the lines in anticipation of stormy days. The crew paid close attention to the condition of the footropes beneath the yards. "They must be so strong," said one captain, "that nothing shall break though 30 men swing upon the footrope while the torn sail thunders."

Windjammers were very fleet-footed and astonished everyone, except possibly their captains and crews, with the swiftness of their passages, and many records show on 2nd June 1931, the Herzogin Cecilie (yes, the windjammer that outsailed the ocean liner) reached a speed of 20¾ knots off the northeast coast of Denmark, the circumstances were admittedly freakish.



The story goes that the Herzogin Cecilie happened to be sailing from Wales to Finland, through the "Kattegat", the sound that separates Denmark from Sweden. In the relative shelter of these waters, there were no long reaches in which great waves could build up, thus, in a strong wind, a ship could attain her best speed, and that is what happened to the Herzogin Cecilie. In the late afternoon the wind quickened to gale force. Suddenly, with the tide in her favour, she was flying!

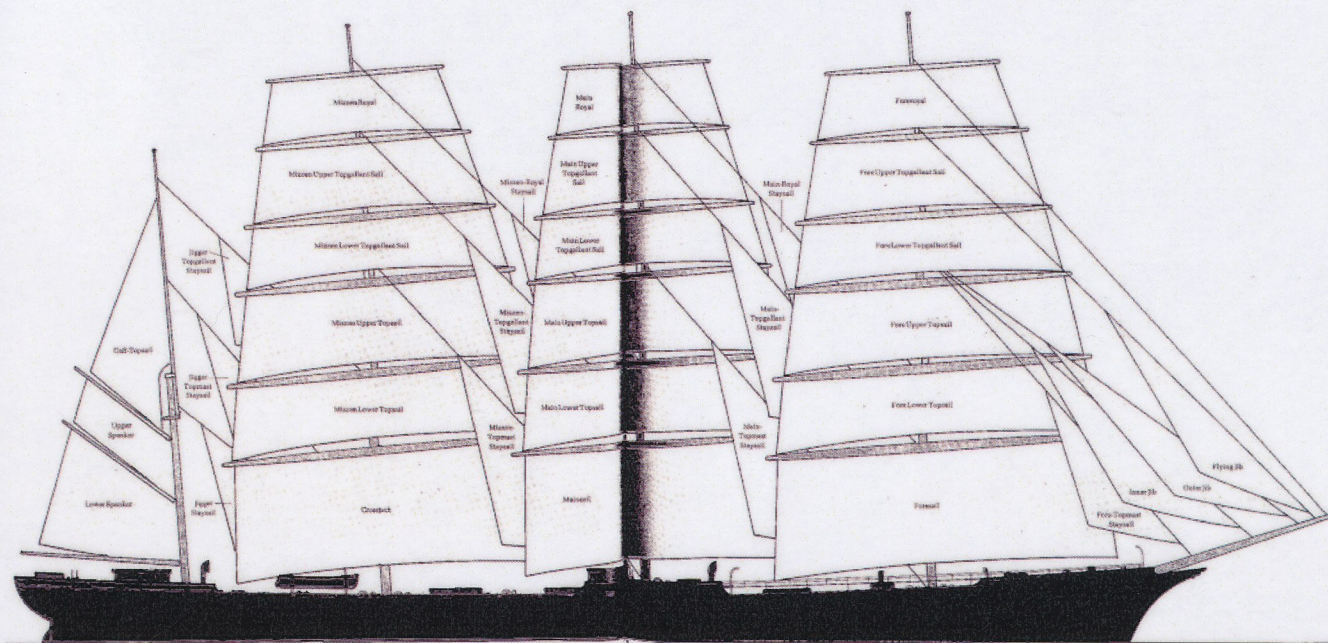
As she heeled over at more than 30° an observer on board computed her speed between two lightships during a 75 minute period – his figures showed she was moving at 34 feet per second, or almost 21 knots. Darkness was approaching and there was some question of stopping the run since Copenhagen sound just ahead was narrow and congested, but the bark's (ships) rush through. The seas were so spectacular that Sven Erikson, her captain, decided to sail on.

The captain of the liner rang his engine room telegraph and signalled for more power. He would give his passengers something to remember; he would close in swiftly on this old windjammer, dramatically crossing her bow, and then proceed on course for Rio de Janeiro.



Using special thimbles held in their palms in order to force needles through the tough canvas, two sailmakers add boltropes to the edges of a windjammer sail while a third selects the sail's clew irons and earings, hanging sausage-like from the wall. Some 14,000 yards of canvas, miles of seams and thousands of stitches went into a windjammer suit.

But on board the big steel bark in the South Atlantic that October morning in 1934, Captain Sven Erikson had other ideas. To him, the Herzogin Cecilie, the 32 year old ship under his command, was no weather-beaten anachronism; outbound from Belfast, Ireland, for Port Lincoln, South Australia, to take on a load of grain, she was to her master a useful deepwater cargo carrier still capable of turning a profit while she did her share of the worlds work. No awkward liner with smoke belching funnels and racketing engines was going to show Erikson her stern – not with a fresh, fair wind piping up and the Herzogin Cecilie moving steadily toward her top speed.



The Herzogin Cecilie was German built, but she had been under Finnish registry since the end of World War 1.

She was manned by seamen from many nations, with a core of mariners from Aland Island (midway between Finland and Sweden) – tough young men in their teens and early 20's, bred to the sea and the hard-muscled life on hard driven ships. Erikson ordered his crew aloft to shake out more sail.

At the extreme eastern end of the Bight, between Cape Spencer and Cape Catastrophe, a tide-torn finger of water reaches 180 miles into the Australian outback country. The inlet is "Spencer Gulf" and there, at ramshackle villages called Port Augusta, Port Germein and Port Pirie, the last of the windjammers lay alongside dilapidated piers to load grain, at the height of the harvest, during the Christmas season.

It was a tedious process, Port Germein for example had a cargo jetty that extended more than a mile but only at its farthest end was the water deep enough to permit a windjammer, and then only one at a time to load. In 1936 Erikson awaited her turn for 40 days. Port Germein was luxury in comparison with Port Broughton and Port Victoria, where the windjammers had to anchor well off shore, sometimes several miles, while farmhands loaded the grain bag by bag onto ketches and schooners for ferrying to the windjammers. By springtime, the job was done and the ships headed homeward, usually by way of Falmouth in southwest England or Queenstown in southern Ireland, for orders about where to unload.

Erikson and his fleet wrote a remarkable record for safe passages during his 30 years as a shipowner. He only lost three ships to the elements, yet each mishap contributed to the eventual doom of the windjammer.

Shortly before 4am on April 25, 1936, the beautiful Herzogin Cecilie, the flagship of Captain Erikson's fleet and for 15 years his greatest joy, went aground only 48 miles out of Falmouth. The Herzogin Cecilie was built in 1902, at the then enormous cost of more than \$200,000 as a cadet training ship, for the North German Lloyd Steamship Company, whose specifications required a fast, smart, four-mastered steel bark ship with generous cargo capacity and accommodations befitting future officers of the Imperial Germany's Merchant Marine. She was named after Dutchess (Herzogin in Germany) Cecilie of Mecklenburg, who later became the Crown Princess of Germany, and she was indeed a princess – even a queen in her own right. She was in fact the epitome of those square-rigged sailing ships, described by an enraptured English chronicler as "the stateliest and most beautiful creation for which the mind of man has ever been responsible in the whole of history".

For 12 years she carried cargo and cadets under the Imperial German flag, a cynosure wherever she appeared. Then, for six gloomy years, she gathered rust as a wartime intern in Coquimbo, Chile. After the war, under retributive terms, the Herzogin Cecilie was allotted to the French, who were getting out of sail as fast as they possibly could. They had no thought but to sell her for whatever she could bring. Late in 1921 Erikson dispatched his most trusted captain, Captain Ruben De Cloux to Marseilles, to inspect the four-mastered "Passat" which was for sale. On the way, De Cloux stopped in the Belgian port city of Ostend and saw the Herzogin Cecilie at anchor there. He looked no further. Upon his captain's advice, Erikson bought her for the astonishing price of \$20,000.

Erikson adored her, made her his flagship. He posed proudly for photographs on her deck. He invited friends about for "kakfests" (cake parties). She retained her gleaming white hull, the pride of the fleet.

The Herzogin Cecilie performed handsomely. It was the custom of windjammers' skippers to engage in races home from Australia, with their cargos of grain, usually two ship affairs, as the windjammers left the port facility in pairs. Speed was judged to be the measure of a masters skill, and a ships mettle, and so every captain worth his papers piled on all the canvas he could prudently carry.

The Herzogin Cecilie's first trip was her worst – 151 days in 1926 from Port Lincoln in the Spencer Gulf to Falmouth. Her best was her last – 86 days in 1936 from Port Victoria, South Australia, to Falmouth. Making the homeward trip from grain ports in fewer than 100 days was called "breaking the hundred". It was an aspiration of captains.

The Herzogin Cecilie's captain gloried in her grace. She seemed to be almost alive, running clean and strong, the sails pulling for all they were worth, no smoke, no dust, no noise, nothing but the music of wind and sea.

The great grain races from down under

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|------|-------------------|---------|--------------------------------------|
| 1921 | Marlborough Hill | Finland | 91 days, Port Lincoln to Queenstown |
| 1922 | Milverton | Finland | 90 days, Melbourne to London |
| 1923 | Beatrice | Sweden | 88 days, Melbourne to London |
| 1924 | Greif | Germany | 110 days, Port Lincoln to Falmouth |
| 1925 | Beatrice | Sweden | 103 days, Adelaide to Falmouth |
| 1926 | Avenir | Belgium | 110 days, Geelong to Lizard Point |
| 1927 | Herzogin Cecilie | | 98 days, Port Lincoln to Queenstown |
| 1928 | Herzogin Cecilie | | 96 days, Port Lincoln to Falmouth |
| 1929 | Archibald Russell | | 93 days, Melbourne to Queenstown |
| 1930 | Pommern | | 105 days, Wallaroo to Falmouth |
| 1931 | Herzogin Cecilie | Finland | 93 days, Wallaroo to Falmouth |
| 1932 | Parma | | 103 days, Port Broughton to Falmouth |
| | Pamir | | 103 days, Wallaroo to Queenstown |
| 1933 | Parma | | 83 days, Port Victoria to Falmouth |
| 1934 | Passat | | 106 days, Wallaroo to Lizard Point |
| 1935 | Prinwall | Germany | 91 days, Port Victoria to Queenstown |
| 1936 | Herzogin Cecilie | | 86 days, Port Lincoln to Falmouth |
| 1937 | Pommern | | 94 days, Port Victoria to Falmouth |
| | Passat | Finland | 94 days, Port Lincoln to Falmouth |
| 1938 | Passat | | 96 days, Port Victoria to Falmouth |
| 1939 | Moshulu | | 91 days, Port Victoria to Queenstown |

In the dying days of the windjammers, the only remaining market in which sail still possessed clear advantages over steam was the "Australian Grain Trade". Captain Erikson managed to prolong the life of the windjammer Herzogin Cecilie by his unerring choice of the only remaining market in which sail still possessed clear advantage over steam.

South Australia was one of the world's great wheat growing areas. Yet shallow reef-infested waters and primitive facilities that often required weeks for loading made the Australian trade both hazardous and uneconomical for deep-draft, high-overhead steamers. Bagged grain offered an ideal cargo for windjammers. It was relatively light, easy to handle and once harvested, almost imperishable. Finally, the schedules of the producers and the carriers dovetailed perfectly.

The big windjammers could make only one round passage a year, to and from Australia, but then the wheat growers could reap only one annual harvest. In the early 1930's as Captain Erikson settled fully into the grain trade, a sort of yearlong fleet ritual evolved. In late autumn after repairs and refitting, the tall ships would set forth. They usually stopped at Copenhagen to take on supplies and adjust compasses, a complex and laborious process requiring several tugs to pull the vessel around to precisely determined headings.

The departure from Copenhagen was described by an admiring British observer "the mates of each ship kept on deck eyeing the weather, and as towards evening the wind slid around to a more favourable quarter their knuckles rattled on their skippers doors to announce the news. The blowing of whistles set off a ruffle of activity in each ship".

The clonk and rattle of anchor chains coming in started the gulls mewing in alarm, and their clamour mingled with the shouts of mates and crews. Figures scuttled along yards, frantically loosening gaskets, and the wings of the big square sails unfolded in drooping points as the clews came out. The jibs fluttered a moment, the helmsman brought the wheel over, the top sails filled their bellies with a sigh, trembling as they tautened, and the windjammers long lean bodies began to slide through the water, gathering speed swiftly as sail after sail flowered aloft.

Ahead, some 15,000 miles (and half a world away on the southern coast of Australia), lay the Great Australian Bight, its bleak coastline extending for 1,600 miles and marked by such forbidding places names as Cape Arid, False Bay and Anxious Bay.

Of the 272 passages between 1921 and 1936 by square riggers, only 29 "broke the hundred". Of these, the Herzogin Cecilie led the list, with four.



After her final sparkling 86 day run from Port Victoria in 1936, the Herzogin Cecilie put in at Falmouth for orders and then at 8:20pm on Friday April 24, she set sail for Ipswich to discharge her grain. She stood out on the starboard tack in a moderate sea amid patches of fog, passed well clear of the dangerous Manacle Point near Lizard Point, and made the last of five course corrections at 3:30am, hauling out 5° in order to give herself more sea room. She was doing seven knots in thick fog.

At 3:50am off the South Devon coast, someone on watch saw – or sensed – a solid mass of fog on the port side. Captain Erikson was immediately called. The helm was put hard starboard and the starboard braces were let run. All too late – the Herzogin Cecilie holed herself on "Ham Stone Rock", and was carried stern first by a swell into "Sewer Mill Cove" where she then struck more rock and held fast about 50 yard from the base of a cliff.

Framed for a moment in the starboard rigging of a passing yacht, the Herzogin Cecilie glides gracefully under full sail across the sun-flecked Baltic Sea in the early 1903s. A profitable globe-tramping cargo carrier even in these late years, she was a rare sight in her own home waters; she returned in ballast like this to Mariehamn only five times in all her 15 years under the flag of the Erikson fleet.

Captain Erikson attributed the wreck of Herzogin Cecilie to a combination of fog, possible magnetic attraction and tides strong enough to throw the ship off course. By every reasonable standard the Herzogin Cecilie was already a total loss, but the old windjammer died hard, and her pain was prolonged although Britain had been among the first to abandon sail for steam.

An appeal for contributions to a salvage and repair fund appeared in British newspapers to save the famous old windjammer. Many a plea, hundreds of letters and telegrams – the British public made it clear that their interest in sail was genuine. The public subscriptions of charge of one shilling and sixpence for sightseers to come aboard the stranded bark rose to more than \$3,000, which was an impressive sum in those depression days.

Could the ship be refloated? On June 19 two tugs made a refloating attempt, straining at their cables until the Herzogin Cecilie shuddered, moved forward, and finally floated free to sea. She was towed to nearby "Starehole Bay" where more work was to be done on her. By now, noxious gas from the rotting grain in the holds had infiltrated the entire ship, eating away paint and varnish and corroding the hull, one day overcoming Erikson who was found lying in bilge water.

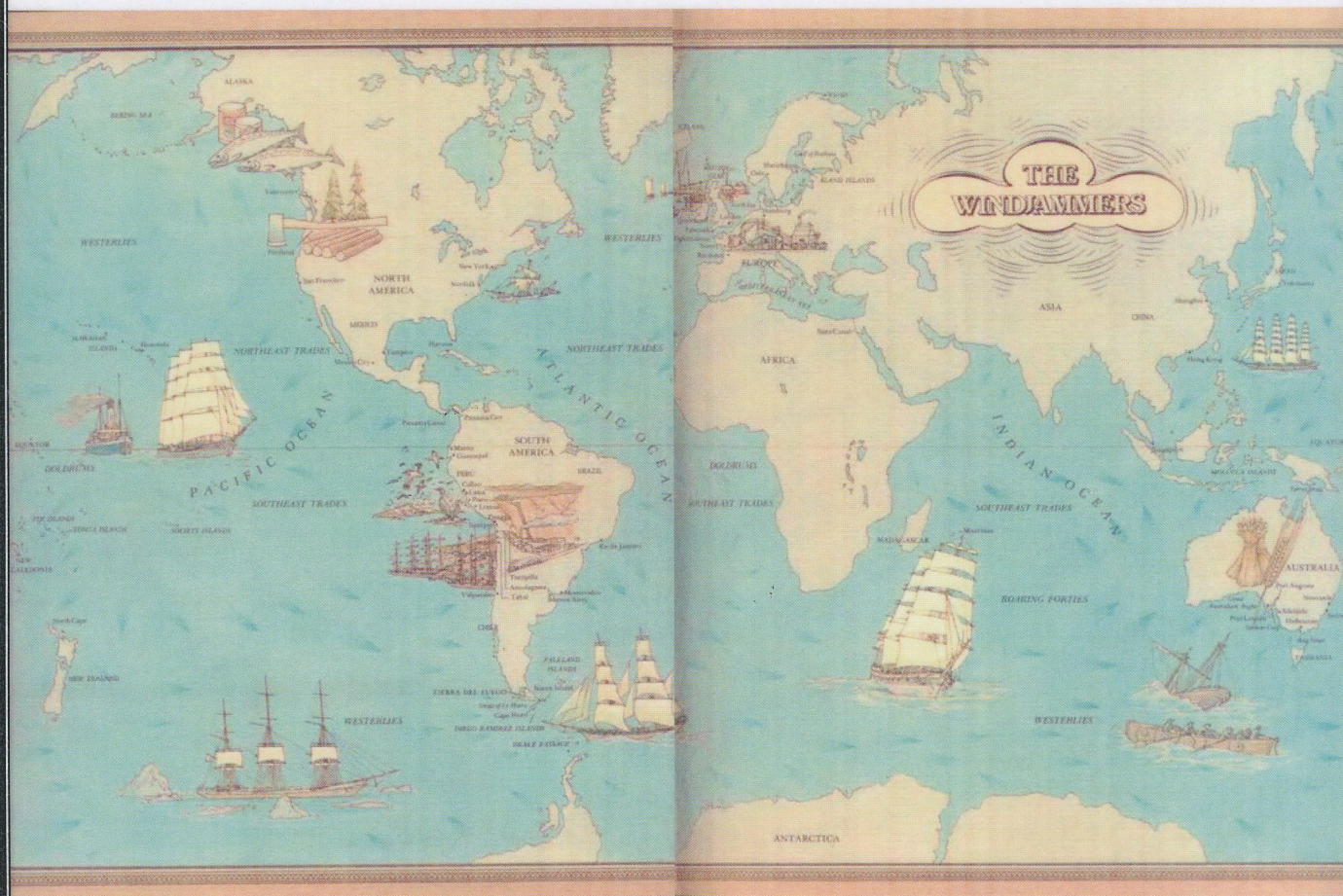
"Starehole Bay" was not much more than a shallow cove, open to ground swells and storm waves. One day a swell rolled in from the southeast and forced the windjammer deep into the sand, where she again found rock beneath her keel.

On the night of July 17 a sudden gale finished the job – the seas lifted her and then flung her down again. After 84 days of agony, the Herzogin Cecilie's back was finally broken. A light and a joy was gone from the life of Erikson, but he stuck doggedly to his trade until World War 2. He died in 1947.

By then only a handful of windjammers were afloat and still raising a sail. Many met their end in scrap yards or Europe, sliced up by acetylene torches for their metal. Others simply rusted away to jagged hulks in obscure back harbours – a few preserved as monuments to a bygone age.

In the 1950s and 1960s a number of nations operated replica 'windjammers' as showpiece training vessels.

So this ends the story of the "Port and Starboard" lights in the Port Augusta Yacht Club, donated by old seadog Kenneth (Ken) Arnold Bottomley for prosperity. But for the old windjammers, those deep-laden cargo carriers sailed for a few leathery-faced mariners in the remote reaches of the world's oceans, the era has come to a final close.



I hope some of the amazing things I have mentioned have given you, your family and friends (as I intended) an appetite to find out more about the days of sail. It is true love – old ships that nobody can forget. Remember the fact that those old ships need to be treated in the same way as women – they need care, a great deal of attention, a lot of time, and quite a bit of passion – with charm!

Peter Bryer Huxtable
Port Augusta
November 2010

Finally a story told by Peter Huxtable. In November 1935 local businessman Ken Bottomley and some of his Port Augusta mates had raced down to Wallaroo in the gaff-rigged open "plankie" yachts of the day, and on arrival were invited to look over the *Herzogin Cecilie* loading bagged wheat at the jetty. They were also invited to a dance on board that evening. The frivolities were enhanced by copious quantities of beer and spirits and a friendship struck up between Ken and one of the officer, who also liked a drink or two, which resulted in Ken getting off with the ship's spare navigation lights. They not adorn the bar of the new Port Augusta Yacht Club, which was established on the same site in January 1881.

Monty Luke
Port Augusta