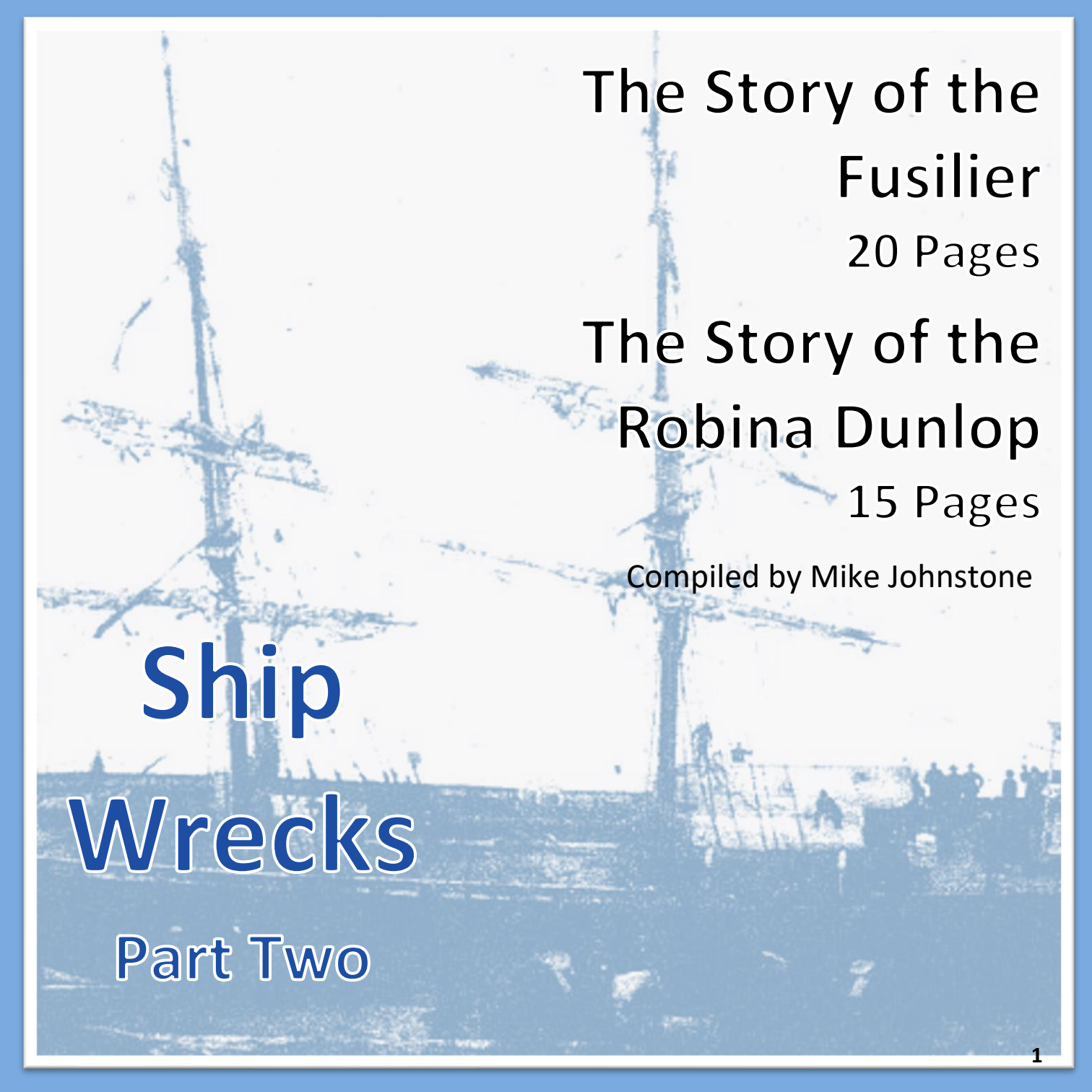




The Story of the Fusilier

20 Pages

The Story of the Robina Dunlop

15 Pages

Compiled by Mike Johnstone

Ship Wrecks

Part Two

Ship Wrecks:

Part Two

Part Two contains two stories, one each on the wrecks of the Robina Dunlop and the Fusilier by *Mike Johnston, MSc (Hons) in Earth Sciences*.

Mike presented an information evening for Koitiata residents in the Koitiata Hall in September 2018, the main subject being about the Robina Dunlop, and subsequently he provided these stories for inclusion in the Koitiata/History web site.

Mike was at that time working with a team of *Maritime Archaeology Association of New Zealand (MAANZ)* members researching the wreck of the Robina Dunlop.

He has also provided his well-researched and informative story about the wreck of the Fusilier.

The Story of the Fusilier by Mike Johnston A ÀÄÁÄÃ

The Story of the Robina Dunlop by Mike Johnston ÃÄ ÄÄÁÄÃ

FUSILIER



The Story of the Fusilier

Introduction

On 16th January 1884, the three masted barque Fusilier came ashore some eight kilometres east of the Turakina River during a gale. The Fusilier which was sailing in ballast for South Australia had left Wellington some xx days before. The Fusilier was commanded by Captain John Nevison Harkness, owned by E.C. Friend & Co of Liverpool and built by Sunderland in August 1860. An initial report identified Messrs Shaw, Savill and Co.¹ as being the owners, but this was incorrect.

Fortunately, all 13 onboard were saved. While there were high hopes in the early days after the foundering that the ship could be refloated, this did not come about. She remained stuck fast, so that a century later the remains of the Fusilier could still be seen on the landward side of the dunes at the back of the beach at Santoft. This is when my interest in the history of the Fusilier was triggered.

Between 1984 and 1988 I was involved with a coastal monitoring project that required regular surveying, at the site of the Fusilier wreck, of a line over the dune and down the beach. The most readily identifiable fixed point in the area was the wreck, so that became the datum for the survey line. By the time of my last survey, the rate at which the dune was accumulating sand indicated that the Fusilier would disappear within the next few years. This is the reason for the wreck's disappearance, contrary to one explanation that suggested the wreck had been intentionally buried².

The research for this story is based primarily on material available on the internet. A major source of information was archived newspapers available at the National Library website³. The publication, 'The Wreck of the Hyderabad'⁴ available on the Victoria University website⁵, also provided useful information.

The events before the Fusilier's final voyage

The Fusilier had eventful voyages prior to coming out to Wellington in 1883. The Wanganui Herald reported⁶ that she "left Falmouth (in United Kingdom) for Middlesbro on 14th June 1882, to load cargo for Buenos

¹ Daily Telegraph , Issue 3899, 18 January 1884, Page 3

² http://www.underwaterheritage.co.nz/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13:fusilier&catid=1:north-island&Itemid=4

³ <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz>

⁴ Ian Church, 1978, 'The Wreck of the Hyderabad', Chapter 8, Dunmore Press, Palmerston North

⁵ <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz>

⁶ Wanganui Herald, Volume XIX, Issue 5262, 19 January 1884, Page 2

Ayres, thence to Rosario, thence to Rio Janiero, thence to Trinidad, and from there to New York”.

The Fusilier left New York bound for Wellington on 16th June 1883, with 6100 cases of kerosene⁷. The arrival of Fusilier was anticipated some months before she actually entered port as evidenced by the a number of Port of Wellington Shipping notices, an early one being on 25th September 1883⁸ (as shown) with these notices continuing through to November.



There is a news report in late November⁹ stating “not a little uneasiness is being caused by the long passage of the barque Fusilier, which left New York for Wellington on the 16th June. She is 154 days out to-day, and, therefore considerably overdue”.

The Fusilier finally arrived in Wellington on 2nd December 1883. The vessel had taken 169 days to sail from New York. The reason for the length of the trip, according to the ship’s captain^{10 11} was because a number of the crew came down with scurvy. At one time, there was only the captain, two officers and a boy to work the ship. Running low on water, added to the trials of this tedious trip¹².

By comparison, New York to New Zealand voyages in those days averaged about 115 days, some voyages as quick as 91 or 92 days, and the longest being around 135 days¹³.

Another news report¹⁴ provided a more full explanation for the Fusilier’s slow voyage:

The barque Fusilier, for whose safety some anxiety was felt, owing to the very long passage she was making, arrived in harbour yesterday forenoon. Captain Harkness reports having left New York on the 17th June, crossed the Equator on the 17th August, and made Cape Farewell on 24th ult. The very length of the passage of 168 days is accounted for by unfavourable weather, also to the fact that five of the crew had been laid up by scurvy

⁷ Timaru Herald, Volume XXXIX, Issue 2756, 24 July 1883, Page 2

⁸ Evening Post, Volume XXVI, Issue 74, 25 September 1883, Page 2

⁹ Nelson Evening Mail, Volume XVIII, Issue XVIII, 20 November 1883, Page 2

¹⁰ Hawera & Normanby Star, 4 December 1883, p2 – article title ‘A long trip’

¹¹ Nelson Evening Mail, Volume XVIII, Issue 284, 3 December 1883, Page 2 - ‘A long passage’.

¹² Wanganui Herald, Volume XIX, Issue 5262, 19 January 1884, Page 2

¹³ Papers Past from <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz> and summarized at: <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nzbound/ny.htm>

¹⁴ Evening Post, Volume XXVI, Issue 132, 3 December 1883, Page 2

the greater part of the voyage, and four hands are still ill. One of the seamen fell from aloft, and was so badly injured that he has not been able to work since. For a whole month there were only the captain, two officers, and a boy able to assist in working the ship. It is not therefore to be wondered at that the vessel was so long making her appearance. Messrs W. and G. Turnbull and Co. are agents for the Fusilier. She was berthed at Queen's Wharf this morning.

Once the cargo had been discharged, the ship's agents W & G Turnbull & Co advertised¹⁵ for the rendering of claims and accounts by 12th December 1883. Later that month, W & G Turnbull & Co placed several advertisements for the sale of the Fusilier¹⁶ describing it as an 'A1 iron barque' of 404 tons. This attempt to sell the vessel was later referred to in the Nautical Enquiry, following the foundering of the ship.

Some of the crew were a problem for the captain. A newspaper report on 4th December¹⁷ refers to a serious charge against a sailor on the Fusilier:

Robert Wolsely was brought before the court charged with having committed an act of gross indecency on board the barque Fusilier on 15th June last year, in New York harbour. Captain Harkness, of the Fusilier, deposed that several times during the voyage the accused had grossly misbehaved himself, and at one time had been put in irons. The prisoner was a British subject, and had boasted that he was a deserter from the man-of-war Seagull. At this stage of the case Sergeant Anderson obtained a remand for a week. The accused was also remanded on two further charges.

Further on, in this same newspaper was another Magistrates Court report titled "Threatening Language":

The hearing of a charge of threatening language against Robert Walsely*, on board the barque Fusilier, was adjourned for a week.

** this is most likely Robert Wolsely*

A further newspaper report on 12th December¹⁸ referred to several cases of desertion before the Magistrates Court:

Charles Eaton, a young man, was brought up charged with having unlawfully deserted from the barque Fusilier. The accused pleaded guilty. Captain Harkness asked that the prisoner might be kept in custody until the departure of the vessel, which was awaiting orders from Home. In reply to the Bench, Eaton said that he had left the ship because the master would not give him any money. Captain

¹⁵ Evening Post, Volume XXVI, Issue 139, 11 December 1883, Page 3

¹⁶ Evening Post, Volume XXVI, Issue 151, 27 December 1883, Page 3

¹⁷ Evening Post, Volume XXVI, Issue 133, 4 December 1883, Page 2

¹⁸ Evening Post, Volume XXVI, Issue 140, 12 December 1883, Page 2

Harkness informed the court that things on board the vessel were at sixes and sevens – everyone trying to put him and the owners to as much trouble and expenses as possible. The accused belonged to Massachusetts, United States of America, and received fourteen dollars per month. The Court ordered the accused be detained in custody until the departure of the vessel. William Pool, a duly-articled apprentice, was similarly charged. He pleaded guilty, and in reply to the Bench stated that he had left the vessel because he had heard the captain say that he did not want anyone to remain on board. Captain Harkness said he did not recollect having made such a remark. Accused stated that he h.. ..* subjected to any cruelty on board ..* but did not like to hear the cap.. ..* men down with the scurvy “blood....*ckers” and “cowards”. The Court ordered the accused to be detained in custody until the sailing of the vessel.

** text missing in report*

Another news item on 3rd January 1884¹⁹ indicates William Poole attempted to desert again, just before sailing:

It will be remembered that William Poole, an apprentice of the barque *Fusilier*, was recently sent to gaol for being absent without leave from his vessel. The last night he was taken on board the barque, which was lying some distance out in the harbour. Between 6 and 7 this morning he jumped overboard and made a daring attempt to escape. He got some distance from the vessel when he was discovered, and a boat being sent after him he was recaptured and brought back to the ship.

Jumping ship in New Zealand in the early days seems to have been prevalent. An article on 22nd December 1883, explains Captain Harkness' predicament²⁰:

During the progress of a case of desertion heard at the Resident Magistrate's Court in Wellington, Captain Harkness, of the barque *Fusilier*, informed the Bench that few people in this quarter of the globe were aware of the difficulty, which masters experienced in getting crews in New York. There was little trouble in inducing men to place their names on the articles, but his experience was that it was no easy thing to get them out of the harbour. Frequently the men were chloroformed and taken out of the ships by people interested in retaining them in port, and for some days before he left New York for Wellington he had been obliged to place an armed watch on board in order to prevent the sailors from being taken away.

¹⁹ Evening Post, Volume 03, 3 January 1884, Page 2

²⁰ Otago Witness 22 December 1883 pg 15

The Fusilier's final voyage

The Fusilier sailed from Wellington on 4th January 1884 with 160 tons of ballast and seven months of provisions²¹ to pick up a cargo of grain from Adelaide. Some reports say she was bound for Newcastle, but these are incorrect²². Ten days passed before she rounded Cape Terawhiti as she was a slow and awkward sailer. Pilot Sims, who piloted the Fusilier out of Wellington Harbour, considered the ship to be a "very unweatherly vessel", taking twice as many boards (i.e. tacks) than is usual to clear the harbour and capable of six knots with all sails set and lying close to the wind²³.

At this time, the stretch of coast where the Fusilier was headed was well recognised as dangerous. The early sailing ship masters were wary of a lee shore such as the stretch of coast between Waikanae and Wanganui. Three factors help explain why this coast was particularly notable for ship wrecks - the combination of lee shore, strong winds and difficult landmarks²⁴. Captain Harkness of the Fusilier was about to find out.

By 16th January the Fusilier was at the mercy of a heavy northwest gale. There were plenty of reports of a major gale in the region at the time. For example, on that day, newspapers reported a 'furious gale' in Wellington^{25 26}. Another report²⁷ refers to a storm of 'almost unprecedented violence' and documents the intensity of the storm. This report states that in Wellington winds started to increase about 1am and continued increasing until by daylight it was almost impossible to stand in an open street. Rain began to fall in torrents and the wind remained very strong but started easing about 2pm. During this time squalls caused sheeting spray across Wellington harbour and visibility was greatly reduced. Even the next day, the wind was of a force seldom experienced in the colony. Surprisingly little damage occurred in Wellington, although a cutter was washed ashore. Another report²⁸ said that the cutter Agnes was wrecked on the coast at Waituna Point near the entrance to Porirua Harbour. While sheltering from the gale at Mana Island, the ship's cables snapped and the Agnes was driven on the rocks when trying to reach the harbour.

A weather forecast for Wednesday 16th January 1884²⁹ advised of winds between NW and SW and heavy seas on the west coast. Gale warnings were sent to all stations.

²¹ Wanganui Herald, Volume XIX, Issue 5261, 18 January 1884, Page 2

²² Evening Post, Volume XXVII, Issue 31, 6 February 1884, Page 3

²³ Evening Post, Volume XXVII, Issue 33, 8 February 1884, Page 2 – enquiry into the beaching

²⁴ Ian Church, 1978, 'The Wreck of the Hyrabad', Dunmore Press Ltd, Palmerston North, p95

²⁵ Taranaki Herald, Volume XXXII, Issue 4550, 16 January 1884, Page 2

²⁶ Wanganui Herald, Volume XIX, Issue 5259, 16 January 1884, Page 2

²⁷ Manawatu Standard, Volume IV, Issue 42, 17 January 1884, Page 3

²⁸ Wanganui Herald, Volume XIX, Issue 5259, 16 January 1884, Page 2

²⁹ Wanganui Herald, Volume XIX, Issue 5259, 16 January 1884, Page 2

A news report³⁰ provided a full account of the Fusilier's progress after leaving harbour, and the difficulties she faced in the conditions:

Leaving Wellington, she stood across to Cloudy Bay, and owing to contrary winds, anchored there till Sunday night, the 6th, when she weighed anchor at 7 o'clock and started off. A strong N.W. breeze, which afterwards increased to a gale, drove the ship towards Cape Campbell. Here she lay for four or five days until the gale moderated. Made sail again and stood up Cook Strait; passed Terawhiti at 6 o'clock last Sunday evening, when the wind nearly drove the ship ashore. Weathering Terawhiti; passed the Brothers, then got abreast of Stephen's Island, bearing S.S.E. 12 miles. The wind here fell light for five or six hours, then came up strong from N.W. Stood over towards Cape Egmont; tacked again to Stephen's Island, gale increasing, and heavy blinding sheet rain, which prevented us seeing further than 100 yards from the ship. After running as far as prudent, we wore ship to N.N.E. again. At 5 p.m. on Tuesday the weather cleared up sufficiently to allow sights for longitude; sounded at 6 p.m. at 58 fathoms – green mud. Then wore ship and stood to the southward, and at midnight we experienced very vivid lightning and heavy rain, the wind shifting three points to W. by S. Wore ship to northward, and stood on that tack till 5 a.m., sighting Kapiti S. half W., distance 15 miles. Stood on same tack until 8 a.m., sighting lowland Rangitijei river, and still expecting the wind to shift to the S.E. Barometer rising, stood on, and about 11 a.m. saw there was no hope of saving the ship. Consulting with the mate and crew, thought it best to beach her, to save life. Since beaching, every tide has sent her higher up. The hull is sound, and everything outwardly is in good order. Officers and crew all agree in saying the only course to save life was the one adopted by the captain.

So, faced with not being able to see a hundred yards from the ship at times and the wind driving the barque into the bight, Captain Harkness consulted with his officers and decided to beach the vessel to save the lives of the crew. At midday on 16th January 1884 she drove onto the sand five miles (8km) south of the Turakina River. There were many newspaper articles reporting the stranding and that all the crew were saved. One report³¹ refers to a crew of 17, but the correct number was 13³².

Although the wrecksire was quite isolated, on 17th January³³ the Feilding Star reported that a large crowd of local Turakina people congregated on

³⁰ Wanganui Herald, Volume XIX, Issue 5262, 19 January 1884, Page 2

³¹ Nelson Evening Mail, Volume XIX, Issue 14, 17 January 1884, Page 2

³² Evening Post, Volume XXVII, Issue 31, 6 February 1884, Page 3

³³ Feilding Star, Volume V, Issue 7, 17 January 1884, Page 3

the beach when it was heard the barque was drifting in. Once she had beached, that day people could walk right round the vessel. Thus, the report concluded, "there seems no hope of getting her off". This showed notable foresight at this early stage as the efforts to refloat the Fusilier continued for another five months, ultimately to be unsuccessful.

A report from Wanganui on 17th January³⁴ said that the Collector of Customs had been advised that the Fusilier was high and dry at low water, being four feet into the sand with no leakage. The Wanganui Herald³⁵ on 18th January stated that the Fusilier was lying broadside on, her head bearing NW and that she was buried 6ft aft and 5ft forward, lurching heavily and getting deeper every tide. At that time the rigging was in good order but the rudder was showing signs of 'starting'.

Other reports on 18th January^{36 37} stated the Fusilier had sustained no damage whatsoever and there was a possibility of getting her off, although news was received later that 'every tide is driving the vessel further up the beach'. Captain Bendall, of the Underwriters Association, was dispatched to see if the barque could be floated³⁸.

The Wanganui Chronicle's report on Friday 18th January³⁹, just two days after the stranding, observed that the vessel was "fast silting up which could render her increasingly more difficult to get off, even if it was worthwhile to do so". The Chronicle had some interesting observations, which were to be raised later at the Nautical Enquiry into the beaching:

How the vessel came to be ashore is not known with any degree of certainty. She was in ballast and was very light for the northwest gale which blew on Tuesday and Wednesday last. The exact amount of injury the Fusilier has sustained has not been ascertained, and it is believed that she is not insured in this colony, the lines probably having been taken by Lloyds at Liverpool She is a three masted vessel and is said to be 26 years old and barely seaworthy, her plates being frail and decayed. Several attempts to sell her in this colony, and one such attempt proved abortive just before the Fusilier left Wellington on Friday last.

³⁴ Nelson Evening Mail, Volume XIX, Issue 14, 17 January 1884, Page 2

³⁵ Wanganui Herald, Volume XIX, Issue 5261, 18 January 1884, Page 2

³⁶ Star, Issue 4902, 18 January 1884, Page 3

³⁷ Daily Telegraph, Issue 3899, 18 January 1884, Page 3

³⁸ Grey River Argus, Volume XXX, Issue 4783, 19 January 1884, Page 2

³⁹ Wanganui Chronicle, Volume XXVIII, Issue 10509, 18 January 1884, Page 2

The Nautical Enquiry

The nautical enquiry commenced on 6th February at 11am⁴⁰ before Mr Hardcastle R.M. (a District Court Judge⁴¹), Captain Watt (of the Lady Jocelyn) and Captain Home (the Sergeant-at-Arms) as the Nautical Assessors. The enquiry ran for three days - see the Appendices for reports on each day of the enquiry.

A large number of witnesses was to be called. The enquiry had apparently been delayed because the ship's captain wanted it held in Wellington⁴².

Captain Harkness gave evidence on 6th February. He referred to the fury of the gale driving the Fusilier into the bight and that there was no hope of beating the Fusilier to windward. He conferred with his officers and decided to beach the vessel to save lives⁴³.

The official enquiry established that the ship was well founded and fully equipped, and attributed the stranding to the leewardly qualities of the ship, the hazy weather and the effect of the wind repeatedly heading her. Some of the crew gave evidence that the ship was deliberately placed in a dangerous position since she was losing money for her owners but this was denied, which was accepted by the Court, and the officers' certificates were returned⁴⁴.

The final days

The Fusilier was sold on 19th February for £275, at auction⁴⁵. Some weeks later a Capt Gannaway, who had either purchased Fusilier⁴⁶ or had been engaged to relaunch her⁴⁷, was of the view in early March that 'she could be got off using anything but her own spars'. At that time he was apparently "sanguine" about ultimate success.

There were several reports on 13th May^{48 49} that attempts to refloat the Fusilier seemed likely to be successful. It was reported that she had been moved 50 feet, and it was expected she would be got off shortly. But a few weeks later on 2nd June^{50 51} it became obvious that the Fusilier was

⁴⁰ Evening Post, Volume XXVII, Issue 30, 5 February 1884, Page 2

⁴¹ Manawatu Times, Volume X, Issue 1185, 26 February 1884, Page 3

⁴² West Coast Times, Issue 4523, 22 January 1884, Page 2

⁴³ Grey River Argus, Volume XXX, Issue 4797, 8 February 1884, Page 2

⁴⁴ Evening Post, Volume XXVII, Issue 33, 8 February 1884, Page 2

⁴⁵ Grey River Argus, Volume XXX, Issue 4807, 20 February 1884, Page 2

⁴⁶ Manawatu Standard, Volume IV, Issue 79, 1 March 1884, Page 3

⁴⁷ Grey River Argus, Volume XXX, Issue 4831, 19 March 1884, Page 2

⁴⁸ Star, Issue 5000, 13 May 1884, Page 3

⁴⁹ Grey River Argus, Volume XXX, Issue 4877, 13 May 1884, Page 2

⁵⁰ Grey River Argus, Volume XXXI, Issue 4894, 2 June 1884, Page 2

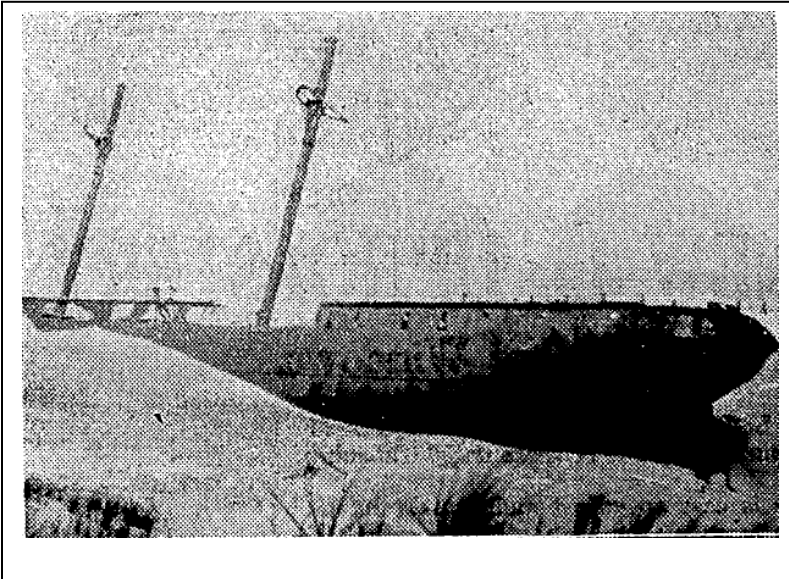
not likely to be got off as she was broadside to the sea and everything that could be saved was being stripped from her.

Her spars and one of her masts were sold and were used in various woolsheds and farm buildings in the district. The hull and two masts remained intact for a long time, serving as a target for Ohakea pilots to practice on during the Second World War. However sometime after 1949 the masts fell and the sand-dunes encroached over the hull, separating it from the beach⁵².

⁵¹ Timaru Herald 2 June 1884 page 2.

⁵²http://www.underwaterheritage.co.nz/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13:fusilier&catid=1:north-island&Itemid=4

PHOTOGRAPHS



**The Fusilier in
1934⁵³**

"THE BARQUE FUSILIER: A photograph taken recently by an Eastbourne resident on a visit to Turakina, near Wanganui, showing the remains of the English barque Fusilier, which was wrecked at that locality on January 10, 1884. The wreck lies approximately seven miles south of the Turakina River."

*Quoted from the Evening Post.
Note the date the Fusilier was
beached is wrong.*



**The Fusilier about
1940⁵⁴**

After hope of refloating the Fusilier vanished, parts of the ship were used for structures on local properties, and with time the Fusilier disappeared under the sand dunes. During World War Two the wreck was used as target practice by training pilots.

⁵³ Evening Post, Volume CXVII, Issue 41, 17 February 1934, Page 6

⁵⁴ http://www.underwaterheritage.co.nz/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13:fusilier&catid=1:north-island&Itemid=4

The Fusilier about 1978⁵⁵



Here, the wreck is on the inland side of the foredune. In 1884, the Fusilier was beached at high tide – that mark is now about 75-100m seaward of the wreck (i.e. on the other side of the foredune).

This is an indication of how much the beach has migrated seaward over the past century.

The wreck has gradually been covered over as windblown sand accumulated on the foredune.

Photo by: Frank O’Leary



The Fusilier wreck in August 1983, positioned on the landward side of the sand dune, about 80 metres from the present shoreline. The wreck is shown here at right angles to the shoreline i.e. "broadside on to the sea" as described in the last news reports of June 1884. The sand from the dune is gradually covering the wreck which will finally disappear from sight.

Photograph: Mike Johnston

⁵⁵ Ian Church, 1978, 'The Wreck of the Hydrabad', Chapter 8, Dunmore Press, Palmerston North

THE ENQUIRY

Serial 1

The Stranding of the Barque Fusilier.

NAUTICAL ENQUIRY

Evening Post, Volume XXVII, Issue 31, 6 February 1884, Page 3

An official enquiry into the circumstances connected with the stranding of the English barque Fusilier at Turakina on 10th of last month was commenced at the Resident Magistrate's Court at 11 o'clock this morning, before Mr. E. Hardcastle, R.M. and Captains Horne and Watt, assessors.

Mr. Fitzgerald appeared for Mr. H.S. McKellar, Collector of Customs, who was present in person. The captain and owners of the vessel were represented by Mr. H.D. Bell.

Mr. Fitzgerald having briefly opened the case for the Crown, called Captain John Nevison Harkness, master of the Fusilier, who deposed that the vessel arrived in Wellington from New York on 3rd December. Her registered tonnage was 404, and she was registered A1 at Lloyds. She was build of iron, in the year 1860, and was barque rigged. She was owned by E.C. Friend and Co., of Liverpool. Neither he nor any of the officers had any interest in the vessel. Her official number was 28,649. He could not say whether she was insured. It was a long time since she had been in Liverpool. He could not say whether she was insured when she left Home. He had been in the vessel for over three years, all of that time acting as master. She was well found in every respect. Her sails were in good condition, and she was supplied with a proper number of anchors. He left Wellington for Adelaide on the 4th of last month, in ballast. He was instructed to go to South Australia, by the owners, who cabled him to that effect. He had 160 tons of ballast on board, which was quite sufficient. He had been 24 years at sea and had held a master's certificate from the Board of Trade since the 13th of May, 1871. From that time until the present he had filled several positions of trust in connection with the sea. When the barque left Wellington the wind was blowing N.N.W., and his course lay through Cook Strait. He anchored in Cloudy Bay and left there about 6 or 7 on the 6th January. The sky was cloudy at the time. He stood across to the Wellington shore, but owing to the contrary winds, the vessel being in ballast, he made no headway. He was obliged to take in some sail. She continued to drift. She was a slow vessel, and made considerable leeway. The first place sighted on the Sunday after leaving Cloudy Bay was Cape Palliser. He was beating about all the week, and did not see Cape Palliser until the 13th. The wind went round on the 13th, and he was then out of the Strait. Owing to the thickness of the weather, he could not take any observations of Cape Palliser. On the 13th he was steering N.E. by N. When he sighted the Cape he was about five or six miles off. He mistook Cape Palliser for Cape

Terawhiti, owing to there being no landmark of any kind. The barque was then running free.

When passing Taurikarai there was a good gale blowing. He passed Cape Terawhiti on 13th, about half a mile off, the tide rip and the wind heading the barque. After clearing Terawhiti he steered north by west and nothing by west. He sighted the Brothers about 8:20p.m., very dirty weather prevailing, and passed the lighthouse about 9:15, five miles distant. Stephens Island was sighted about 2 o'clock on Monday morning, and he then reckoned he was nine miles off. The wind was fair and she was carrying all the sail with the exception of the royals. The wind changed about 7 a.m. and he then took the bearings. When the wind came round again he stood her port tack and steered northward. He continued on that tack until noon, there being about a five knot breeze. She was then carrying all sail. He sighted Waitotora Point on going about, but could not say how far off she was. Again going about, the wind veered around and blew very freshly, compelling him to take in some sail. He sighted Stephen's Island on coming back on the other tack, and estimated that he had lost about two miles in making that board. Finding that it was impossible to go about again, he wore the ship and stood to the northward until about 10p.m. He then wore to the southward until 11 o'clock the next day, the 15th. The weather was very thick at this time, and the rain was blinding. It was so thick that he could not see 100 yards in front of him, and neither he nor any of his officers went down for their meals. He carried a patent log, but did not heave it. One of the officers might have hove it. He and the mate very rarely used the log, because they had been together in the vessel for 21 months, and knew the rate at which she was going by merely looking over at the sea. At 11a.m. the wind blew fresher, and he wore round again to the port tack. He could see that he had lost two or three points. The wind continued north-east until 5 that afternoon. In ordinary weather she took about 14 points to go round. Until 5p.m. the weather continued very dirty, and he remained on deck the whole time. At that hour he had considered he had run 25 miles. At 5 o'clock the weather cleared up, but he was unable to see any land. He took an observation at eight minutes to 6 o'clock, when the vessel was about 22 or 23 miles off the Manawatu River. The wind did not increase, and about 8 o'clock he wore off to the south. Three hours later very heavy lightening and rains took place, and the patent sounding machine showed 60 fathoms, with a bottom of sand and mud. He wore to the north about midnight. At this time he considered he was about 15 or 16 miles off the land. She was making about 2 or 2½ points leeward. He could not see any land or light. At midnight he wore round, and she was on the port tack until she went ashore. When he wore round he did not see the Brothers, but he estimated that he was about 22 miles off that point. The Fusilier was a very dull ship, and was then making only 2½ knots. The wind increased after midnight, and she was only carrying two close-reefed topsails. At midnight, shortly before going on shore, she was lying over with that quantity of canvas. He did not think that she could have carried any more sail. He was then of the opinion that unless a change of wind occurred, or a powerful steamer came to the rescue, that nothing could save the vessel. When Kapiti was sighted she was heading N.N.W. This was 7a.m. on the day she went ashore. The wind increased in strength, and was blowing about half-a-gale. Putting on more canvas would have

sent her on shore sooner. He carried the same course until she got into the breakers. She went ashore about half-an-hour after noon on 16th. He took the smoothest part of the breakers, and in order to save lives of those on board he beached her. He first consulted with the officers and men on the desirability of beaching the vessel. [Left sitting]

The Enquiry: Serial 2

The Stranding of the Barque Fusilier.

NAUTICAL ENQUIRY

Evening Post, Volume XXVII, Issue 32, 7 February 1884, Page 2

The enquiry into the circumstances connected with the stranding of the barque Fusilier was continued until 6 o'clock yesterday evening. We continue our report of the proceedings —

Captain Harkness added that it was about high water when he put the vessel ashore. She was drawing ten foot of water at the time. It was impossible to have fetched any place of shelter, and he was convinced that if he had tried to fetch Kapiti she would have run ashore sooner than she did. He did not consider he would have been justified in running further on the starboard tack. He did not think he had miscalculated his distance. The vessel was lying about five miles from the Turakina River, and she would have to be shifted half a mile before she could be successfully re-launched.

By Mr. Bell — He was making all he could on the night of the 15th.

To the Bench— The Fusilier had been advertised for sale in Wellington by instruction of the owners. Her bottom was painted in June last, and was not very dirty.

At this stage of the proceedings the Court adjourned for lunch.

On resuming, Captain Harkness said that the vessel had not been swung since he had been in charge of her. There were four compasses belonging to the ship and two belonging to himself. The vessel was not supposed to be swung before leaving the United Kingdom. **John B. Woods**, chief officer of the Fusilier, deposed that he had a certificate as master, and had been at sea for 30 years. He considered 140 tons of ballast was quite sufficient for the Fusilier. She beat very poorly. She was flat in the bilge and very full aft. In his opinion, the captain kept too close in to Terawhiti. No log was hove from the time the vessel came in sight of Stevens' Island until she went on shore. The log was very rarely thrown over, because the captain and he could generally tell about the rate she was going. When Kapiti was first sighted the captain asked him whether he thought she could weather that island, and he replied that he thought she could not. He estimated that the vessel was about 200 yards from the beach when the anchor was let go. The breakers extended about a mile out. When she was run ashore her head was north-west.

By Mr. Bell— About an hour before the ship went on shore the wind moderated. The sea was very high. The captain asked him whether he thought the anchors would do any good, and he replied that he thought her bottom would bump out in the outer breakers if the anchors were put down. He did not think the vessel could have been got off at the first favourable change of weather.

By the Court— The vessel had 120 fathoms of cable to each anchor. He did not think putting out the anchors would have done any good. There was no intoxication on board when she went ashore. Liquor was never served out except for medicinal purposes.

John Crotty, able seaman on board the Fusilier, was the third witness. His evidence relative to the events of the week after leaving Cloudy Bay was very similar to that of the previous witnesses. About 8 o'clock on the

evening preceding the day the vessel went ashore the mate called out to the men below to hold themselves in readiness, as it was likely the vessel would go ashore and shortly afterwards the man at the wheel told him that the barque was going on shore. The wind was west. The vessel could lie within six points. When the helmsman told him she was going ashore he went and dressed himself in his bait clothes. (Laughter) In his opinion the vessel could have been saved by putting her on the starboard tack.

McCarthy, the helmsman, said to witness— "He (meaning, witness thought, the captain) is going to run her ashore. Keep your clothes on." A perfect gale was blowing some time before the vessel went ashore, but just before she struck the weather cleared up. She was going two or three knots at the time, and was quite full." He did not see any land astern.

Henry Barry, A.B. shipped in Wellington for the run to Adelaide, deposed that in consequence of what one of the young fellows told him, he went forward, and saw that the "devil's claw" was upon the starboard anchor, so that only 15 fathoms of chain could run out. He was told that the chief officer had given instructions to do this. There was nothing the matter with the other anchor. At 7 o'clock, shoal water was on one side and deep water on the other, and it stuck him as very suspicious that the master should have kept on the tack which would take her towards the land. The steward told witness and others that a day before the vessel went ashore he overheard the captain and the mate arrange about putting her ashore. The day before she was beached, the crew generally understood that the vessel was to be put on shore.

By Mr. Bell - For six months prior to going on the Fusilier he was working for the contractor for cleaning Government windows. Before that he had been at sea. He had been properly treated by the master, and was not dissatisfied with his treatment. It was after the ship went ashore that the cook and steward told the men that he had heard the captain and chief officer arrange to beach the barque. The cook, who was a man who usually minded his business, had never said in his hearing that he would make it warm for the captain.

By Mr. FitzGerald - Witness was not actuated by spite against the captain. By Capt. Horne — They were to get £8 (at the run to Adelaide. This amount had been paid to them by the master. Hugh McCarty, A.B., also deposed to having heard the chief officer say that it was very likely they would go ashore by the morning. It was his opinion that if the vessel had had sufficient sail put on her she might have been able to get out of the bay. The steward told him in the galley about 8 o'clock on the morning she struck that he had overheard the captain and mate arrange to beach the vessel. Witness was steering the barque when she went ashore. The anchor was let go ten or fifteen minutes after she was ashore. No heavy seas broke over her. The sea was going down when the barque went ashore. He did not think the anchors would have held on such a sandy bottom. **Robert Hughes, cook and steward** of the vessel, who had shipped at New York, stated that before the ship went ashore he about 18 hours before she was beached the chief officer told him he was afraid the vessel was going on shore. On the Tuesday evening he overheard a conversation between the captain and the mate. The captain said he thought he would put her ashore, and the mate replied that if he had the money the captain possessed he would put the barque ashore. Witness did not know what money he referred to. The captain further said that the vessel was a Jonah to her owners and was sinking money.

By Mr. Bell— He had his suspicions about the intention of the matter, and on the evening preceding the disaster he went into the store-room for the purpose of listening to the conversation. Since the vessel had gone on shore he might have said that he would make it as hot as he could for the captain. It was not a fact that he had over and over again said that he would make it warm for the master. At this stage of the case the certificates of the master and mate were called for by the Court. At 6 p.m. the enquiry was adjourned until noon to-day.

The Enquiry: Serial 3

The Stranding of the Barque Fusilier.

NAUTICAL ENQUIRY

Evening Post, Volume XXVII, Issue 33, 8 February 1884, Page 2

THE CONCLUSION OF THE ENQUIRY

The enquiry was brought to a close after we had gone to press yesterday. We conclude our report of the proceedings:-

The first witness examined by the defence was **Pilot Simms**, who deposed that he had been connected with the sea for 22 years. He piloted the Fusilier out of Wellington on the 3rd of last month. In the first boards she had made Lowry Bay; other vessels usually made Ward Island. She took eleven boards to get to Worsley Bay, the usual number was about four of five. She was a very unweatherly vessel. Lying close to the wind with all sails set she would go about six knots an hour. He knew about the Robina Dunlop, Felix Stows, Hyderabad, and the City of Auckland going ashore on the beach where the Fusilier was lying. Captain Holmwood told him that during the gale he let the anchors go and they snapped like packthread. By Mr Fitzgerald- If he had been in charge of the Fusilier he should have run her to Gorde's Bank and anchored. It would not have been safe for a stranger to have done this. By Mr. Bell- Placing the log overboard would not have enabled the captain to ascertain his position much better than otherwise.

Captain Fiske, of the s.s. Napier, deposed that the vessel lay under Kapiti on 15th and 16th of last month. She came out on the 17th, the day after the Fusilier went ashore. A heavy sea was running on the 15th and 16th, and a heavy wind was blowing all the time. Sometimes with a northwesterly wind it was very rough at Kapiti and quite calm at Turakia, and vice versa. By the Court- After leaving Kapiti on the 17th the sea was so rough that he was obliged to run into Rangitikei.

Alfred Jardine, a clerk of the Department of the Commissioner of Telegraphs, produced copies of the two telegrams received by Captain Harkness in the months of December and January.

Captain Harkness, recalled, produced the private code-book used between him and his owners, and deposed that he had no intention of wrecking the vessel. He did all he could to save her. For two days before sighting Cape Palliser he had been unable to "take" the sun, owing to the want of reliable observations. Cape Terawhiti was the last place he should have thought of to put the vessel ashore. She would not have lasted there two seconds. With reference to the conversation overheard by the cook, the witness explained that he asked the mate's opinion about the position of affairs, and the chief officer replied that the only course he could see was to beach the vessel. Witness replied that he was of a similar opinion, and that he considered, in order to save the lives of those onboard, it would be the best to run her ashore. One of the cable messages received from Home contained the word "Doctor", which meant "Don't accept" (alluding to a proposed freight), "but wait until further

advised". The second consisted of the word "Waggon", which meant that he should go to Adelaide and load with grain at 40s. On the Tuesday (the day before the stranding) he considered he was perfectly safe.

J.B. Woods, chief officer, was re-called. The night before the vessel went ashore the captain called him down to the cabin and asked him whether he thought the vessel would weather the land. He replied that he did not think she would. Captain Harkness said, very despondingly, that if he ever got out of that scrape he would resign and go Home. Witness remarked, "Well if I had your money I should certainly clear out of here".

Counsel having addressed the Court, the bench retired at 5:30 o'clock, and returned at 6:5 p.m. with the following finding:-

"We think the stranding resulted from the leeward qualities of the ship, from the hazy weather she encountered, and the wind repeatedly heading her. We think the course the captain held on the 15th is open to difference of opinion, but do not consider it such an error of judgement, under the circumstances as calls for censure. We do not think the absence of precaution in heaving the log improper, but we do not think it was an impropriety which caused this casualty. About the conduct of the mate there is no question. The certificates of both officers are returned. We do not think it necessary to notice the imputations suggested by some of the witnesses. No order is made as to costs".

THE FUSILIER INQUIRY.

THE JUDGEMENT

[PER UNITED PRESS ASSOCIATION]

Poverty Bay Herald, Volume XI, Issue 3005, 8 February 1884, Page 2

WELLINGTON, this day.

In the Fusilier enquiry the mate's evidence was similar to that of Captain Harkness. Crobby and Barry, sailors, deposed the steward told them the day before the Captain had determined to beach her. Hughes, the steward, deposed that just before the ship went ashore he had suspicions she was going to be lost. Eighteen hours before the beaching the chief officer told him she was afraid she was going onshore. He overheard a conversation between the captain and mate. The said he thought he would put her ashore, and the mate replied that if he had the money the captain possessed he would do so – he did not know what money was referred to. The captain further said that the vessel was a Jonah to her owners, and was sinking money. He had suspicions of the intentions of the master, and one evening preceding the disaster he went into the storeroom, for the purpose of listening to the conversation. Since the vessel had gone on shore he might have said that he would make it as hot as he could for the captain, but had not over and over again said that he would make it warm for the master. McDonald, boatswain, deposed he did not think the vessel could be saved. Wm. Robb, seaman (who had shipped at Wellington), said from what he had seen and heard, he thought that the barque was not to reach Adelaide. He thought it was suspicious to keep her so close to Terawhiti. For the defence, the pilot who took her out proved that the vessel behaved very poorly in beating out. He had to make eleven boards – while the usual numbers were four – though she had the tide with her, and a smooth sea. The Court after an hour's deliberation, gave the following judgement:- "We think the stranding resulted from the leeward qualities of the ship, from the heavy weather she encountered, and the wind repeatedly heading her. We think the course the captain held on the 15th ult., is open to difference of opinion, but do not consider it such an error of judgement under the circumstances as calls for censure. We do not think the absence of precaution in heaving the log improper, but we do not think it was an impropriety which caused this casualty. About the conduct of the mate there is no question. The certificates of both officers are returned to them. We do not think it necessary to notice the imputations suggested by some of the witnesses. No order is made as to costs".

ROBINA DUNLOP



THE STORY OF THE *ROBINA DUNLOP*, WRECKED IN 1877 AT TURAKINA RIVER MOUTH

Compiled by Mike Johnston, August 2017

The barque *Robina Dunlop* was built in 1874 at Sunderland, 493 tons net weight, Official Number 68101, classified A1. The name of the builder was Crown. Registered dimensions – 142ft 9 inches long, 29ft 7 inches breadth and 17ft 5 inches depth. She was yellow metalled and copper fastened. Her hull was salted. The owner was J Neil and her first master in 1874 was A Jack.¹

The *Robina Dunlop* was an attractive vessel from all accounts, employed carrying goods and merchandise between Great Britain and New Zealand. Unfortunately, she met an untimely end on the beach at the mouth of the Turakina River in 1877. This story of the *Robina Dunlop*, her short life and the circumstances surrounding her demise, comes mainly from newspaper articles of the time.

We pick up the story from shipping reports in May and June 1875 when the *Robina Dunlop* was expected in Auckland.² Her arrival was reported on 21st July 1875 and she was described as a ‘fine new barque’. *Robina Dunlop* had left Gravesend on 29th March, the voyage taking 113 days. She was consigned to the NZ Shipping Company. On the way out she had variable winds but encountered ‘a terrific gale which lasted 8 hours ... during this the sea washed away port bulwarks and the longboat’.³

Another newspaper item described the *Robina Dunlop* as a ‘smart little clipper barque’ and she carried what was referred to as general cargo. It was varied cargo of building material and hardware and included 6 package sausage machines, 11 rolls of wire netting, 2361 iron bars, 1 boiler plus 249 fathoms of chain.⁴

In early August 1875, *Robina Dunlop* was being loaded by the NZ Shipping Co ready to sail for London⁵ when three of the crew found themselves in the Police Court on 5th Aug. Able Seamen Horace Chandler and Martin Kenny were charged with fighting and AB William Wood with disobedience. John Graham, who was now the master, deposed that at one o’clock while at dinner Chandler and Kenny commenced fighting over a bone. Wood was so drunk he could not join the fray and stood grinning but tried to part the combatants without success. They refused to go to their work in obedience to the master’s orders. Wood had been well behaved up to the time of coming ashore. Other crew members Alfred Wyatt and Henry Russell provided evidence that the prisoners were disobedient. Wood was sentenced to 24 hours imprisonment (without hard labour) and Chandler and Kenny to seven days.⁶

¹ Lloyds Register of Shipping 1874-75, Official Number 68101, 601

² AUCKLAND STAR, VOLUME VI, ISSUE 1656, 9 JUNE 1875; and
DAILY SOUTHERN CROSS, VOLUME XXXI, ISSUE 5557, 18 JUNE 1875

³ AUCKLAND STAR, VOLUME VI, ISSUE 1692, 21 JULY 1875

⁴ NEW ZEALAND HERALD, VOLUME XII, ISSUE 4271, 22 JULY 1875

⁵ DAILY SOUTHERN CROSS, VOLUME XXXI, ISSUE 5598, 5 AUGUST 1875

⁶ AUCKLAND STAR, VOLUME X, ISSUE 1705, 5 AUGUST 1875

In September 1875, the projected departure of *Robina Dunlop* for London was reported ⁷ along with a notice that mail closed at 4:30pm on 22nd September.⁸ She left on 26th September with a cargo valued at £40,000⁹ (about \$NZ7 million now) and arrived London on 2nd January 1876. That calculates to a 98 day voyage.

On the return trip, *Robina Dunlop* left London on 18 March 1876 bound for Auckland.¹⁰ The weather on the way out was reported as 'fearful'.¹¹ Prior to arrival, on 4th July her cargo was advertised – a general cargo including 4 bales, 16 cases of saddlery and saddlers' ironmongery.¹²

Robina Dunlop featured in an article on social change. The article proclaimed the benefits of steam power and improved machinery which contributed to reduced cost of common goods, such as carpets and furniture that was now affordable by the "working classes" that a few years before only the wealthy could afford.¹³

Robina Dunlop was reported as in harbour on 10th Aug 1876.¹⁴ In September 1876 there was trouble in port with the crew again when a serious case of stabbing occurred on board the *Robina Dunlop* and came before the Police Court.¹⁵ On 27th September, a sailor named James Brookfield returned to the vessel very drunk. During an altercation, while James Smith (the chief mate) and some of the crew were trying to subdue Brookfield, he started lashing out with a knife and stabbed Smith in the inner thigh, inflicting a severe wound two to three inches deep, and also sliced the clothes of the other crew involved. The wound was so severe that the captain found a Dr Goldsbro to dress Smith's wound, which was "in dangerous proximity to the femoral artery". In court, Dr Goldsbro advised that the injured man was unable to attend, so Sub-Inspector Pardy asked for a remand until the Saturday.¹⁶

The Court resumed before Justices T. Macfarlane and C.C. McMillan. When Smith gave evidence he had to be seated. The prisoner had come on board drunk at about 2:15pm. William Henry Maine, a steward on the *Robina Dunlop* gave evidence that Brookfield came aboard drunk, using obscene language. During the altercation, Maine called a warning to the second officer that Brookfield had a knife. Brookfield made about a dozen blows and gave Smith three stab wounds. The knife was eventually taken from the prisoner by John Mort, seaman, and several others. Constable Sampson arrested the prisoner. In court Brookfield stated that he was too drunk to know what he had done and was "greatly astonished when he was informed of the charge". The prisoner was committed for trial at the Supreme Court. When Brookfield appeared he was found guilty and sentenced by the Supreme Court to two years' imprisonment with hard labour.¹⁷

⁷ AUCKLAND STAR, VOLUME VI, ISSUE 1738, 9 SEPTEMBER 1875; and

AUCKLAND STAR, VOLUME VI, ISSUE 1746, 18 SEPTEMBER 1875

⁸ DAILY SOUTHERN CROSS, VOLUME XXXI, ISSUE 5625, 22 SEPTEMBER 1875

⁹ PRESS, VOLUME XXIV, ISSUE 3143, 27 SEPTEMBER 1875

¹⁰ AUCKLAND STAR, VOLUME VII, ISSUE 1991, 27 JUNE 1876

¹¹ AUCKLAND STAR, VOLUME VII, ISSUE 1999, 6 JULY 1876

¹² NEW ZEALAND HERALD, VOLUME XIII, ISSUE 4567, 4 JULY 1876, SUPPLEMENT

¹³ AUCKLAND STAR, VOLUME VII, ISSUE 2021, 1 AUGUST 1876

¹⁴ PORT OF AUCKLAND. UNKNOWN, VOLUME XXXII, ISSUE 5250, 10 AUGUST 1876

¹⁵ AUCKLAND STAR, VOLUME VII, ISSUE 2070, 28 SEPTEMBER 1876

¹⁶ NEW ZEALAND HERALD, VOLUME XIII, ISSUE 4643, 30 SEPTEMBER 1876

¹⁷ NEW ZEALAND HERALD, VOLUME XIII, ISSUE 4646, 4 OCTOBER 1876

In October 1876 *Robina Dunlop* prepared for another run to London. Cargo was transhipped from the island schooner *Coronet* into *Robina Dunlop*.¹⁸ Her cargo for export was listed in the *Auckland Star*¹⁹ and included cases of kauri gum, leather, bags of copra, bales of wool, bags of hair, horns and bones, cases of pearl shell, manganese and zinc ingots and bales of cotton. She also had six passengers. *Robina Dunlop* was then cleared by Customs.²⁰ The cargo was valued at £61,135 (about \$NZ10 million now) including 9255 ozs of gold (value £39,526).²¹ On 17th October she departed early with a NE wind, clearing Rangitoto Reef by 9:00am. The news item wished her a speedy and pleasant passage 'home'.²² *Robina Dunlop* arrived in London on 23rd Jan 1877²³, a 98 day run.

Robina Dunlop left London on 17th March 1877²⁴ and arrived Wellington with a general cargo of 800 tons (but no passengers) on 16th July²⁵ after a 118 day voyage. It was a challenging voyage as she struck a gale and lost the fore-topsail and fore-topgallant sail and later heavy weather took away a portion of her bulwarks. She then struck a hurricane and hove-to for eight hours under bare poles.²⁶ In this newspaper report *Robina Dunlop* was described as 'a neat little barque'.

Robina Dunlop left Wellington in ballast for Batavia on Saturday 11th August 1877.²⁷ She had been lying at the outer anchorage of the harbour for the week prior, waiting for the winds to turn favourable.²⁸

On 15th August the first news reports of the wrecking of the *Robina Dunlop* started to appear. The *Evening Post*²⁹ said that a Captain Rose had received a telegram the night before announcing the vessel had been wrecked at the Turakina River mouth and all hands were saved. It was reported that the vessel had been driven ashore at about 8 p.m. on 13th August in very dirty weather and the crew had got off by ropes at 6 a.m. the next day. The crew were then hospitably received at a pah in Turakina and were to arrive in Wanganui on 15th August.

Also, on 15th August, the *Wanganui Chronicle*³⁰ reported that a Mr Lethbridge of Turakina had communicated news of the wreck to the Collector of Customs and this information was wired to Wellington. This report, gave the number of the crew as 14.

In further telegrams, when Captain Graham was asked if the assistance of a steamer was needed, he had responded that it would be useless as the barque was a total wreck. Captain Rose was unable to

¹⁸ AUCKLAND STAR, VOLUME VII, ISSUE 2080, 10 OCTOBER 1876

¹⁹ AUCKLAND STAR, VOLUME VII, ISSUE 2077, 13 OCTOBER 1876

²⁰ AUCKLAND STAR, VOLUME VII, ISSUE 2077, 14 OCTOBER 1876

²¹ WANGANUI HERALD, VOLUME X, ISSUE 2951, 31 OCTOBER 1876; AND
DAILY SOUTHERN CROSS., VOLUME XXXII, ISSUE 5309, 18 OCTOBER 1876

²² AUCKLAND STAR, VOLUME VII, ISSUE 2087, 17 OCTOBER 1876

²³ AUCKLAND STAR, VOLUME VIII, ISSUE 2207, 2 APRIL 1877

²⁴ WANGANUI HERALD, VOLUME XI, ISSUE 2911, 24 APRIL 1877

²⁵ NEW ZEALAND HERALD, VOLUME XIV, ISSUE 4888, 17 JULY 1877

²⁶ EVENING POST, VOLUME XV, ISSUE 164, 16 JULY 1877

²⁷ NEW ZEALAND TIMES, VOLUME XXXII, ISSUE 5113, 13 AUGUST 1877

²⁸ SHIPPING. NEW ZEALAND TIMES, VOLUME XXXII, ISSUE 5112, 11 AUGUST 1877

²⁹ EVENING POST, VOLUME XV, ISSUE 190, 15 AUGUST 1877

³⁰ WANGANUI CHRONICLE, VOLUME XX, ISSUE 3441, 15 AUGUST 1877

get any more clarification. In a prophetic statement, given what happened in the enquiry soon after the wrecking, the paper went on to say:

‘it is difficult to understand how a vessel could have got into such a place unless there had been great carelessness, for with either a northerly or southerly wind a vessel could keep clear of the deep bight in which the scene of the wreck is situated; in fact the vessel had no business to be anywhere near there at all’.

Captain Rose advised by telegram to guard the wreck but the response from Captain Graham said he had gifted the wreck to Reuben (Reupena Kewetone), a Maori chief, in return for the hospitality shown on the night the crew were cast ashore. The crew had reached Reuben’s pah on Monday 13th August. The report went on to comment that ‘this singular transaction loses some of its lustre by the fact that the vessel did not belong to the liberal donor, and it is possible that some considerable complication may ensue’.

Another report, provided by a Mr G. Wilson³¹, ‘native teacher at the Maori pah in Turakina’, took a more sympathetic tack, Mr Wilson presumably basing his report on the stories from the shipwrecked crew. Mr Wilson reported that the weather on the night of the wreck had been ‘very dirty’, the wind had increased and every endeavour was made to keep the vessel off land but without avail and the ship struck shore. The crew had got ashore the next morning by means of ropes but were unable to save anything, some of the men landing without boots and only partially clothed. The crew were hospitably treated at the Tini Waitara pah near Turakina [the marae address is now 200 Turakina Beach Rd³²].

Further to this, a news item on 16th August³³ considered that the direct cause of the disaster was the vessel losing her rudder. One of the crew had apparently broken an arm and the crew had nothing but what they stood up in. Another news item³⁴ said that Captain Graham had saved the two chronometers and ship’s papers except the log but everything else was entirely gone.

This news item also gave better information on the circumstances. Reporters had spoken with the crew who were put up at Heywood’s hotel, Wanganui. [It was actually the Phoenix Hotel, proprietor Thomas Heywood³⁵]. These reporters discovered that the second mate was a relation of the owners.

Their story continues. At 8 o’clock on the night of the striking, breakers were seen. At the time the captain was lying asleep on the companion, having had no rest since leaving port. ‘So little idea did the officers have of their proximity to shore, it was not until the second bump that any alarm was felt’. The ship was backed off but in doing so her keel caught and the rudder was carried away. Striking once or twice heavily, the barque went around and heeled over to starboard, presenting her decks to the sea. [Captain Graham, in his evidence to the enquiry, said she fell ‘over on her port beam ends’]. Waves then commenced breaking over her. The first wave came on board and smashed in the hatchways which then gave full play to succeeding seas. [At the enquiry, Captain Graham said the sea carried away the house on deck and all three boats, washed off the skids and

³¹ WANGANUI HERALD, VOLUME XII, ISSUE 3011, 15 AUGUST 1877

³² http://archivescentral.org.nz/en/rangitikei_dc/images/show/6449-turakina-maori-reserve-aerial-photograph-tini-waitara-marae?view_size=large

³³ WANGANUI CHRONICLE, VOLUME XX, ISSUE 3442, 16 AUGUST 1877

³⁴ WANGANUI HERALD, VOLUME XII, ISSUE 3012, 16 AUGUST 1877

³⁵ WANGANUI HERALD, VOLUME XII, ISSUE 2950, 5 JUNE 1877, LICENSING COURT

the long boat off the main hatch]. The crew then cut away the fore and main rigging, and both masts went by the board. They then took refuge in the mizzen rigging and stayed there until morning.

By the 15th August, the vessel was completely 'broken up into thousands of pieces' (to quote the newspaper). The figurehead had come ashore with her nose broken, and that was the largest piece of timber landed.³³

On the morning of 17th August 1877, the Collector of Customs, JG Woon, convened the enquiry in the Custom House.³⁶ The full newspaper reports of the enquiry are annexed.

Captain Graham gave his evidence first on 17th, followed on 18th August by the First Mate (George FAC Von Schoen), then Neils Blom (AB seaman, look-out at the time of the foundering), Hugh Hood Lawrie (holding a Second Mate's certificate), and Malcolm McKenzie (carpenter). Mr CS Cross of Wanganui gave evidence about the wreckage on the beach. The master, John Graham was briefly recalled, then Benjamin Webb (apprentice) gave evidence.

Much of the evidence was about the *Robina Dunlop*'s final course and the conditions preceding and at the time of the loss. There seemed to be a lot of unity among the crew as each witness corroborated the evidence of previous witnesses. There was one notable exception. Captain Graham said ship's stores of one case of brandy, six bottles of whiskey, a case of port wine and a barrel of bottled beer were held in his cabin for safekeeping. The first mate had no knowledge of this, as he had not been aboard when the stores were loaded. Most of the witnesses were questioned at the enquiry about the sobriety of those on board. All claimed the crew was sober, however the captain did say that he and the men had several glasses of whiskey after leaving Wellington. The captain swore that he and the men were sober and that they obeyed orders and worked well together.

The enquiry before the Collector of Customs closed on 18th August and the evidence was sent to Wellington.³⁷ No decision was given by the Collector of Customs, and there was a delay until the Court delivered its judgement more than a week later.

In the meantime, Wanganui Chronicle Shipping News recorded that Captain Graham and the crew of the *Robina Dunlop* were passengers on the *Manawatu*, a 103 ton vessel whose master was Captain Harvey, bound for Wellington. Cleared to leave Wanganui on 20th August.³⁸

At this time also, an 'acknowledgement' in the columns of the Wanganui Chronicle³⁹ refers to a 'Mariners' appeal and thanks Messrs CS Cross and CP O'Hanlon and the general public for contributions collected 'on behalf of the shipwrecked and destitute seamen of the ill-fated vessel.' There had been a liberal response from the people of Wanganui and clothing was bought for the crew. It was also noted that some of the men had a 'trifle of wages' coming to them.

On 29th August, the Court delivered judgement on the wrecking of the *Robina Dunlop* on 13th August.⁴⁰ In reviewing the evidence, the Court remarked on three issues:

³⁶ WANGANUI HERALD, VOLUME XII, ISSUE 3012, 17 AUGUST 1877

³⁷ EVENING POST, VOLUME XV, ISSUE 194, 20 AUGUST 1877

³⁸ WANGANUI CHRONICLE, VOLUME XX, ISSUE 3446, 21 AUGUST 1877

³⁹ WANGANUI CHRONICLE, VOLUME XX, ISSUE 3446, 21 AUGUST 1877

⁴⁰ EVENING POST, VOLUME XV, ISSUE 202, 29 AUGUST 1877

- 1) While Captain Graham estimated the distance run at the time of the striking to be about 50 miles, the actual distance was 66 miles. The Court concluded that the vessel must have been set back 7 or 8 miles by the strong adverse tide, therefore must have been going 8½ knots, not 5½ knots which the captain calculated, a difference the Court considered any seaman should have perceived.
- 2) Although Captain Graham said he had hauled in the log several times, the steersmen did not see him do it.
- 3) If Captain Graham had hove the lead appropriately he would have got bottom and realised the vessel was in extreme danger.

Consequently, the New Zealand Times reported⁴¹ the Court's judgement was that the ship was lost by the culpable negligence of the master, John Graham. The Court therefore decided to suspend his certificate for two years, and to express its opinion that the chief officer, George Von Schoen, merited severe censure. The Crown was to pay the costs of the Inquiry. Captain Graham's council, Mr Quick, questioned what effect the decision would have on Captain Graham's certificate as mate. Mr Stafford (council for the Crown) pointed out that the Act empowered the Governor to issue a lower certificate than that suspended, and Captain Graham could petition the Governor. The Court concurred.

Mr Stafford also asked the Court to express disapproval of the conduct of the collector at Wanganui, who at a preliminary inquiry, had taken it on himself to exonerate Captain Graham from all blame, which was not part of his duties, and might have caused considerable difficulty. The Court considered, as it was outside its powers to censure, the issue should be handled by the Customs authorities.

Captain Graham, on advice of his council, petitioned the Governor to set aside the decision of the Court of Enquiry by which his certificate was suspended for two years. It was contended that the enquiry was not properly instituted, that the Court was not properly constituted, and that the proceedings were irregularly conducted⁴². I have not been able to find the Governor's decision.

There was a rather severe editorial in the New Zealand Times⁴³ on the findings of the enquiry. The editorial pointed out that Mr Quick (Captain Graham's council) had tried to use the findings of the preliminary hearing by the Collector of Customs at Wanganui (which exonerated the captain and crew of blame), to argue that the Crown was unduly pressing for a conviction. In response, the Crown's council, Mr Stafford, said that the Collector of Customs at Wanganui had exceeded his authority which was simply to hear and record the facts of the case. Instead, the Crown had carefully scrutinised the evidence and, to ensure the safety of the public, had concluded a formal inquiry was needed. Mr Stafford also noted that the Wanganui Collector of Custom's opinion was of little value as he had not been assisted by a nautical assessor. In the formal enquiry, the nautical assessor's opinion appears to have had a major influence on the findings.

The editorial highlighted that the Court found the captain had not paid enough attention to navigation, reinforced by the fact that none of the men at the wheel saw the captain use the patent log as he had claimed. Nor had the crew seen the first officer take soundings as he had claimed. The editorial then questioned whether the captain in any case was justified staying so long on one

⁴¹ NEW ZEALAND TIMES, VOLUME XXXII, ISSUE 5128, 30 AUGUST 1877

⁴² EVENING POST, VOLUME XV, ISSUE 209, 6 SEPTEMBER 1877

⁴³ NEW ZEALAND TIMES, VOLUME XXXII, ISSUE 5130, 1 SEPTEMBER 1877

course when he knew this coast to be dangerous. The editorial ended indicating the result of the enquiry would be a warning to careless navigators and inspire confidence in the minds of the sea-going public. It proposed that in view of recent cases of the wrecks of the *Ocean Mail*, *Queen Bee* and *Robina Dunlop*, respective captains should never again have command of a ship.

The fate of the wreckage is reported in several news items in September 1877. The wreckage was sold by Mr Freeman Jackson to Mr GH Blair for £18. The news item suggested that 'with a little care and trouble much may be recovered from the wreck'. The anchor and chains alone were estimated to be worth five times the sum paid for the whole wreck, not to mention the remains of an entire set of sails. The report said the 'driftwood strews the beach for miles'.⁴⁴ Ten days later a note in the *Wanganui Chronicle* said Mr Blair had done well out of his purchase – he had about £200 worth of property.⁴⁵

For months after the wrecking, advertisements continued to appear for merchandise from the *Robina Dunlop's* last cargo out from England. In late August, and in September and October 1877 there were advertisements for 'an assortment of pianofortes ... direct from the manufacturers and [to be] sold at the lowest possible prices'.⁴⁶ In March and April 1878, E.L Humphries and Sons advertised in the *Taranaki Herald*:– 12 casks of R.W.R Rum, 2 casks of very old Isla Whiskey, 30 casks of Bass's Ale (pints and quarts), 50 cases of Hennessy's 1 star and 20 cases of Hennessy's 3 stars.⁴⁷

Almost a year after the foundering, in July 1878 the *Wanganui Herald* reports⁴⁸ that a spar from the wreck of the *Robina Dunlop* (another report said it was the *Robina Dunlop's* mizzenmast⁴⁹) would become the new foremast of the *Forest Queen*, a 51 ton ketch which had been damaged when she was blown onto the Bridge at Wanganui. The ketch had lost much of her for'ard gear, and to save the vessel, which was loaded with £3000 – £4000 worth of locomotive, the mast had been cut away.⁵⁰ A Captain Robert Daniels had been entrusted with the repair work. The new mast was to be stepped at the Railway wharf, then fitted to the *Forest Queen* along with new rigging which had arrived by the *Stormbird*.

The *Forest Queen* had also had an eventful existence.⁵¹ At the end of 1878 she was used as a lighter to assist with salvaging cargo from the *Hydrabad*, wrecked at Waitarere beach. She would be loaded with the *Hydrabad's* salvaged cargo and towed to Wellington by the steamer *Glenelg*. It was dangerous work. The *Forest Queen* lost her mate on 3rd December 1878, drowned when a huge wave capsized the vessel. On 14th January 1879, the *Forest Queen* was driven ashore in a westerly storm.⁵² Attempts to tow her out to sea were made by the *Glenelg*, however the towline parted several times and the ketch was left lying in 3 feet of sand. It took a fortnight to kedge the vessel off the beach. She sailed to Wellington for repair, arriving there on 5th February.

⁴⁴ GREY RIVER ARGUS, VOLUME XXI, ISSUE 2832, 10 SEPTEMBER 1877

⁴⁵ WANGANUI CHRONICLE, VOLUME XX, ISSUE 3472, 20 SEPTEMBER 1877

⁴⁶ EVENING POST, VOLUME XV, 28 AUGUST, 8 & 18 SEPTEMBER, 5, 6, 7, 12, 24, 25 & 26 OCTOBER 1877

⁴⁷ TARANAKI HERALD, 2 MAR 1878, 29 APR 1878

⁴⁸ WANGANUI HERALD, VOLUME XII, ISSUE 3188, 26 JULY 1878

⁴⁹ NEW ZEALAND TIMES, VOLUME XXXIII, ISSUE 5405, 24 JULY 1878

⁵⁰ WANGANUI CHRONICLE, VOLUME XXI, ISSUE 3805, 16 JULY 1878

⁵¹ Ian Church, 1978, *The Wreck of the Hydrabad*, Dunmore Press, Palmerston North.

<http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-ChuWrec-t1-body1-d8.html>

⁵² EVENING POST, VOLUME XVII, ISSUE 319, 14 JANUARY 1879

The *Forest Queen* was again wrecked in 1894 off the coast of NSW⁵³ (7 miles from Cape Hawke), sold for £10, refloated and registered, went aground in 1902 at the inner entrance to Port Stephens and again refloated and continued coastal trading. About 1907, she is believed to have finally met her end, wrecked in Vila Harbour, New Hebrides (Vanuatu), becoming a total loss.⁵⁴

References to the *Robina Dunlop* continued for many decades. Initially, in 1878, *Robina Dunlop* gets a mention in the New Zealand Herald⁵⁵ when the vessel's first master, Captain Jack, sailed into Auckland as master of the *Clan Ferguson*, an 800 ton barque built in Glasgow in 1876. *Clan Ferguson* was a very modern ship for her day and sailed out from London in 89 days.



Figure 1. *Forest Queen*, believed taken about 1895. If so, the for'ard mast is the *Robina Dunlop*'s mizzenmast.

The continued loss of ships in the Rangitikei Bight prompted other references to the *Robina Dunlop*. In 1878 three large vessels came to grief – *Hyderabad*, *Felixstowe* and *City of Auckland*. Insurance losses amounted to over £110,000. An article in the Evening Post⁵⁶ about these losses, also referred to the loss of the *Robina Dunlop* as 'the first big vessel lost'.

As late as 1935, the wrecking of the *Robina Dunlop* was being referred to in news articles. Under the heading, 'Perils of the Otaki Coast', she is mentioned in the Evening Post⁵⁷, along with *Hyderabad* and *City of Auckland* (wrecked within four months of each other in 1878), and *Felixstowe*. The article advocated installation of light houses at Kapiti and Stephens Islands, as 'at least a dozen vessels each year mistook' one island for the other. It would appear that the author of this article did not know the official reason for the *Robina Dunlop*'s demise.

The *Robina Dunlop* continued to have press attention well into the 20th Century with references to her figurehead, which it will be recalled, was the 'largest piece of timber' that came ashore'.³³ In 1924, the Manawatu Standard profiles Mr John Grant of 'Tullochgorum', Turakina, when he attended an All Black game. At age 73, Mr Grant was a 'lissom and upright figure' whose claim to fame in our story (and the news item) is that 60 years earlier he had carried the carved figurehead of the wrecked *Robina Dunlop*, on horseback from the beach to his father's home. In 1924, the figurehead was still standing in his father's garden. It was 'a beautifully carved life-sized representation of the lady after whom the vessel was named' claimed the paper.⁵⁸

⁵³ http://www.plimsoll.org/images/65133_tcm4-278577.pdf

⁵⁴ <http://wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?50234>

⁵⁵ NEW ZEALAND HERALD, VOLUME XV, ISSUE 5333, 19 DECEMBER 1878

⁵⁶ AUCKLAND STAR, VOLUME IX, ISSUE 2660, 26 OCTOBER 1878

⁵⁷ EVENING POST, VOLUME CXX, ISSUE 72, 21 SEPTEMBER 1935

⁵⁸ MANAWATU TIMES, VOLUME XLVIII, ISSUE 2435, 29 JULY 1924

PHOTO COLLAGE OF THE *ROBINA DUNLOP*'S FIGUREHEAD IN THE 1930S



Figure 1: NEW FIGUREHEAD FOR NAVAL BASE - The figurehead of the ship Robina Dunlop, which is being renovated aboard H.M.s. Philomel prior to erection in the dockyard.⁵⁹



Figure 2. Figurehead of the Robina Dunlop at Devonport Naval Base, Auckland.⁶¹



Figure 3: FURTHER ADDITIONS TO UNIQUE COLLECTION OF SHIPS' FIGUREHEADS AT THE DEVONPORT NAVAL BASE RESERVE. The Robina Dunlop's figurehead is pictured with two others (Prince of Wales and an unknown vessel).⁶²



Figure 4: The caption starts 'IN DEVONPORT'S UNIQUE COLLECTION of sailing ship figureheads you will see' and goes on to show pictures of 16 figureheads, including No. 2 which was from the barque Robina Dunlop.⁶³

Ten years later the figurehead featured in several news articles. In July 1934 the Auckland Star posted a picture (Fig 1) of the *Robina Dunlop's* figurehead, with a caption that it was under restoration aboard *HMS Philomel*.⁵⁹ Later, in November 1934, the Evening Post advised that the figurehead, which had been presented by Mrs M Grant of Turakina, had been added to the collection at the Naval Base.⁶⁰ In this news item, in contrast with others, the figurehead was described rather plainly as a 'woman's figure, carved in wood'.

The Devonport Naval Base comes into this story because five years earlier, the officer in charge of the base, Commander Nelson Clover, had conceived the idea to collect figureheads of relics of the past.⁶¹ *Robina Dunlop's* figurehead was one of them (Figure 2) and it was initially restored by the *HMS Philomel* shipwright at Devonport.

In 1936, the Auckland Star has a picture of the *Robina Dunlop's* figurehead (Fig 3) along with two others under repair at Devonport (the others being from an unknown vessel and from the Prince of Wales which was then a hulk in Wellington).⁶² The *Robina Dunlop's* figurehead was mounted just inside the naval base gates. At the time her face needed to be painted 'to restore her pristine beauty. She wears a gold chain with a locket about her neck, and her dress is old-fashioned It bulges at the hips, as though madame had worn bustles'.

The collection at Devonport grew to around 19 figureheads,⁶¹ and they were displayed along the road network within the naval base. In 1938, the Auckland Star displayed collages of 16 of the figureheads, of which one was the *Robina Dunlop's* (Fig 4).⁶³ Between 1942 and 1947, the figureheads were stored temporarily at the Auckland museum. Over time they deteriorated and maintenance costs became a problem. Eventually, after 1960, the figureheads that had survived were dispersed between the naval base (which retained two), the Auckland Museum and the National Maritime Museum. Which figureheads made it to the museums is unclear. However, a report in 1957 indicated the head only of the *Robina Dunlop's* figurehead remained, but this may not be correct as it is believed the figurehead met its end sometime during the 1950s.⁶²

⁵⁹ AUCKLAND STAR, VOLUME LXV, ISSUE 159, 7 JULY 1934

⁶⁰ EVENING POST, VOLUME CXVIII, ISSUE 108, 3 NOVEMBER 1934

⁶¹ Peter Dennerly, 2003, 'Clovers Folly. The Figurehead Collection of HMNZS Base Devonport', RNZN Museum, p6

⁶² AUCKLAND STAR, VOLUME LXVII, ISSUE 73, 26 MARCH 1936

⁶³ AUCKLAND STAR, VOLUME LXIX, ISSUE 214, 10 SEPTEMBER 1938, SUPPLEMENT

ANNEXURE TO THE STORY OF THE *ROBINA DUNLOP*

SHIPPING INTELLIGENCE.

WANGANUI HERALD, VOLUME XII, ISSUE 3012, 17 AUGUST 1877

OFFICIAL INQUIRY INTO THE LOSS OF THE BARQUE *ROBINA DUNLOP*.

J.G. Woon, Esq, Collector of Customs, assembled the whole crew of the *Robina Dunlop* in the Custom House yesterday forenoon, and briefly informed them that the enquiry he proposed holding was in accordance with the Act, and preliminary to an inquiry into the cause of the wreck, to be held in the R.M. Court, should such be found necessary.

THE CAPTAIN'S NARRATIVE

John Graham, Master mariner, deposed: I hold a certificate of competency (produced). I was recently the master of the barque *Robina Dunlop*, of Glasgow, 443 tons register. We left Wellington on Saturday morning last, the 11th August, at 10a.m. The pilot left the ship at noon of that day, just outside the Heads. We commenced beating through the Straits, the wind N.W, and W.N.W. The wind was variable. All went well until 11 a.m. on Monday 13th. Jackson's Head bearing N.W by W., by compass. Distant 2½ miles, we tacked ship and stood to northward and eastward. At 7.55 p.m. on the Monday, the Mate reported to me that there were breakers ahead and the ship immediately struck. The ship's courses are as follows: From 11 a.m. until noon, course N.N.E., by compass, distance 6 miles, by patent log; from noon until 4 p.m. course N. by W., distance by patent log 24 miles; from 4 p.m. until 6 p.m., course N.N.W. distance 19 miles, by patent log; cast of the lead, no bottom at 20 fathoms; from 6 until 7.50 p.m. course N. by W., distance 10 miles, no bottom at 20 fathoms; ship at the time being under reefed topsails; hazy weather. 7.55 p.m. breakers reported ahead by first Mate to Master. Nulsbloom, A.B., on the lookout. The ship instantaneously struck. Immediately hove fore and main yards aback, the second shock carried away the rudder, and the ship continued to strike and labour heavily, the sea making a clean breach over her. Seeing that we could do nothing with the ship by backing and filling the yards, and the rudder being gone, the ship getting broadside on to the sea, she commenced to fill, the sea washing right over her and carrying away boats and everything moveable about the decks, and falling over on her port beam ends. Having consulted with my officers for the safety of all concerned, I found it advisable to cut away the fore and main masts to ease the ship, as the sea was washing right over her, carrying away the house on deck, and bursting in the main hatch. Seeing then that all the boats (three in number) were gone (washed off the skids, the long boat off the main hatch,) there was no other help but to wait for daylight, as we could see no land owing to the thickness of the night. At 12 p.m. the ship commenced to break up. All hands mustered aft. At daylight one of the hands swam ashore with the head line, by means of which all hands landed safely, saving nothing but two chronometers and two weather glasses. On landing, I found I was not far from the Turakina River. I was told it was the Turakina River afterwards. The ship was breaking up fast. We proceeded in search of some habitation for food and shelter. We met a man on the hills after walking about five miles. This man directed us to the Maori Pa, we were hospitably received and entertained by the chief Reupena Kewetone. He gave us food and let us dry our clothes. Some of the Maoris went up to the township and reported the wreck about four hours after our arrival at the Pa. A white man came down with a horse, and took me up with him to the township. The men came up the next day to Turakina. We all came into Wanganui yesterday (Thursday 16). Before leaving Turakina we all went back to the ship

on Wednesday to see if we could save anything. There is a small quantity of stuff on the beach which I left with the constable. The articles referred to were one or two sails, a cask of butter, some ropes and blocks. The vessel was in ballast carrying no cargo whatever.

By the Collector – Soundings were taken all the time after the pilot left the ship until she struck. The compasses were in good order, there were four all together. The standard compass was just abaft the house on deck. The distance from off Jackson's Head where we were at noon on Monday to Turakina River where the vessel struck is 65 miles or thereabouts, by chart, was measured by compass. The patent log showed an average of 6 knots an hour. I was laying on the grating next to the wheel all the time of Monday, being in a sort of half sleep from want of rest from the time we left Wellington. I gave strict orders to keep a sharp look-out. It was dark about 6 p.m. on Monday. There was no moon to be seen. It was as dark as the grave. I cannot say when the last soundings were taken before striking, because I was, as already stated, half asleep, and would not probably hear the cast. The ship was well found in every respect, and staunch; she was pumped only once night and morning. I had the pumps tried directly after she struck. Twice the carpenter told me she was making no water. Side lights were out at the time, one on each side according to regulation; they were extinguished by the sea when we struck. The vessel became perfectly unmanageable after losing her rudder, which occurred after the second or third bump. I cannot say whether the vessel was insured or not. She was wooden built, of Sunderland, in 1874, owned by John Neil, of Glasgow, as shown on the certificate of registry produced. Managing owner, Thomas Dunlop, Esq., also of Glasgow. The New Zealand agents are N. Z. Shipping Company. The vessel, when I left Turakina, being shattered to fragments, and scattered for miles along the beach. There was one case of brandy on board at the time of the wreck, being ship's stores taken on board at Wellington. There was also six bottles of whiskey, and a case of port wine, also a barrel of bottled beer; they were kept in the cabin under my own charge. The steward could not get at them without my knowledge. After leaving Wellington, I gave the men several times a glass of whiskey, they having been working hard, and I had not then set the watches for the voyage. I took two glasses of whiskey myself during the Monday, no more. I swear to having been perfectly sober. All the men were sober. They obeyed my orders and worked well. I have no complaint to make. We were bound to Batavia in ballast. I sent a telegram to Glasgow before leaving Wellington, stating we were ballasted and ready to leave for Batavia. I did this to let the owner know of the movement of the vessel, being a chartered one; but I forget the name of the charterer. The N.Z. Shipping Company chartered the vessel from London for the voyage out to New Zealand.

OFFICIAL INQUIRY INTO THE LOSS OF THE BARQUE ROBINA DUNLOP.

(Continued)

WANGANUI HERALD, VOLUME XII, ISSUE 3014, 18 AUGUST 1877

THE FIRST MATE'S NARRATIVE

George F.A.C. Von Schoen, a native of Danzig, deposed:- I hold a master's Colonial certificate of competency, (produced). I was the chief officer of the barque *Robina Dunlop*. I was on board of her at the time of the wreck last Monday night. (The evidence of the captain was read, and this witness corroborated it in every respect except with regard to the storage of beer and spirits of which he knew nothing at all). I was not on board at the time the stores were shipped, so I cannot say therefore what quantity there was.

By the Collector – I was on duty the whole time after leaving Wellington, with the exception of two hours sleep on Sunday night, and on Monday forenoon an hour, I was on deck and on duty at the

time the vessel struck. There was a stiff breeze blowing from the westward on Monday. We shortened sail about 5 p.m. Taking in fore and top main-gallant sails, furling the mainsail, took a reef in the fore and main topsails. The inner jib and fore topmast staysail were set. It was not foggy but hazy. At 6 p.m., I told the man on look-out to keep a sharp look-out, and report everything he saw. I went down below, and had my tea with the captain, the second mate stopping on deck. At 6.30, after having my tea, I took a cast of the lead myself and found no bottom in 25 fathoms. Went up to the top-gallant fore - a good look-out for land right ahead, and a light on the starboard bow, supposed to be Wanganui Heads. I then cast the lead again myself twice at about quarter to eight. I found no bottom at 20 fathoms. All hands were employed at the pumps at this time except the man at the wheel. Shortly after 7.55, I saw something like a heavy tide ripple at some distance right ahead. It was very dark, and I considered it to be a bar. I called out "breakers ahead," although I did not think it was breakers. I ran up to the captain who was lying on a grating by the wheel, and putting a hand on his shoulder, I told him we were close to some bar, and asked if I should back the vessel off by throwing the yards back, he said, "yes," and at the same time the ship struck rather heavily at first, I ran forward myself, and let go the lee fore braces, backing the fore yard. With the second or third bump she carried away her rudder, and swung broadside on to the surf. For the next two hours we tried to back and fill the yards, but to no avail, I think it was about 10.30 p.m. when the captain called me aft and asked if it would not be wise to cut away the masts, the second mate was present. We all agreed that it was the best thing we could do, and we went to work immediately. Shortly after that the gig and pinnace went overboard, skids and all, and about midnight the long board went also, being blown right out of her chain grips, the sea making a clean breach over her all the time, and staving in her main hatches. We hung on to the vessel until daylight, when she was already a perfect wreck. We got ashore by means of a rope. I cannot account for being so close in shore, because we allowed for a three knot current through the Straits. The tide was low when we struck. We had a nautical almanac on board, which however, I did not consult. I know about the currents &c., from the charts produced. The wind was N.W. by W. shifting round. Our course after putting the ship about at 11 a.m. on Monday, 2½ miles off Jackson's, was N.N.E. by compass. Yards braced up sharp, going at 6 knots. All plain sail set. At 12 o'clock the wind shifted to between W.N.W and W, Then heading N. by W. from noon till 4 o'clock, when the patent log showed a distance run of 24 miles. From 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. she made two courses, one N. by W. for 2 hours, and another N.N.W. until she struck about 18 miles. There was a sharp look-out kept all the time. I know the danger of the Cook's Straits. I have been with Captain Fairchild in the *Hinemoa*. The vessel did not seem to make more than a quarter of a point leeway. In the last courses we allowed a point and a half for leeway reckoned to be going about N. magnetic. I had some port wine. I do not take spirits. During Monday I took only one glass of wine. I had another after the masts went by the board. I have never been drunk in my life. The rest of the crew were sober, and did their duty. Discipline was kept up to the last. I have no fault to find with either the crew or Captain.

Neils Blom, a Norwegian, deposed – I was an A.B. on board the barque *Robina Dunlop*. I was on the look-out of the vessel from 6 to 8 p.m. on Monday morning. I was on the top-gallant forecastle head. It was dark at 6 o'clock; but not very dark; I could see objects around me. I did not notice any moon. It was blowing rather hard and squally; the wind was from the west. The mate came to me and told me to keep a good look-out for land and a light on the starboard bow. I neither saw land or the light. At 7 o'clock it was darker and very thick; I could not see anything a-head. The ship was making about 6 knots and was under reefed topsails. At about quarter to eight she struck; I did not notice breakers; all I saw was little white streaks, which I thought were caused by the current; I did not call out until the vessel struck. The mate was on the poop. She did not strike heavily the first

two bumps, but she struck heavily afterwards, and we backed the yards, which caused her to slew around, but not to move off. It was so dark I could not see anything but the white foam from the breakers. I could see the others moving on the deck, but I could not see any land. We all stayed aboard until daylight and then got ashore by a rope which Christopher Lund, an A.B., swam ashore with. I saw the second mate and the steward casting the lead during Monday.

Hugh Hood Lawrie, second mate of the *Robina Dunlop*, holding a second mates' certificate of competency from the Board of Trade (produced), corroborated the testimony of previous witnesses with regard to the navigation and weather, but was in his berth asleep from 6 p.m. till the occurrence, when he was aroused by the shocks, and went on deck to assist in getting the yards aback, which caused the ship to pay off a little, striking more heavily afterwards. In his opinion, the wreck was a pure accident and unavoidable.

Malcolm McKinnon the carpenter gave evidence with regards to the soundings and the pumps, corroborative of the statements of previous witnesses.

John Graham, the master, recalled, said that he had never been in Cook's Straits before, but that having made every allowance for the current as laid down in the charts, he could not in any way account for the leeway made by the ship.

Benjamin Webb, apprentice on board the *Robina Dunlop*, gave evidence corroborative of the testimony of the previous witnesses, and deposed to the sobriety of the captain and the discipline of the crew.

This closed the enquiry before the Collector of Customs.

EVENING POST, VOLUME XV, ISSUE 200, 27 AUGUST 1877

On Saturday, after we went to press, the *Robina Dunlop* inquiry was continued. Captain Williams, who was called as an expert, gave it as his opinion that Captain Graham, judging from his own statement, had not acted cautiously or prudently, because he ought to have tacked so as to avoid the Wanganui bight at night; the vessel would have done anything if properly handled. Captain Williams stated that the ship's chart produced are correct. The inquiry was adjourned until 2.30 this afternoon, and was proceeding when we went to press.

THE ROBINA DUNLOP ENQUIRY

EVENING POST, VOLUME XV, ISSUE 202, 29 AUGUST 1877

(Before the Hon. J. Johnston, and Mr J.G. Holdsworth, J.P.'s, and Captain Johnson, Nautical Assessor.

The Court delivered the judgement at 11 a.m. in the case of the *Robina Dunlop*. After reviewing the evidence and commenting about the various discrepancies as to course, distance, time &c., and remarking on the facts – (1) that whereas Captain Graham estimated the distance run at the time of striking at about 50 miles, the actual distance was 66 miles, although the vessel must have been set back fully 7 or 8 miles by the strong adverse tides, therefore must have been going fully 8½ knots instead of 5½ knots, a difference any seaman ought to have perceived; (2) that although Captain Graham stated that he had hauled in the log several times, the steersman, who failed to see him, yet did not see him do it, and (3) that Captain Graham must have been aware when he hove the lead that if he got bottom at that place the ship must have been in extreme danger – proceeded to deliver judgement as follows:- “We are of the opinion that the vessel was lost through the culpable

negligence of the master in not paying greater attention to the navigation of his ship, particularly with reference to the course and distance run, and not taking proper soundings. We are also of the opinion that the chief officer is highly blameable for not having paid proper attention to the course made and the distance run. The Nautical Assessor fully concurs with the above report. Having decided the ship was lost because of the culpable negligence of the master, John Graham, the Court decides to suspend his certificate for two years, and expresses its opinion that the chief officer, George Von Schoen, merits sever censure."

Mr Stafford, without wishing to press for costs, asked if the Court would make any order.

The Court expressed the opinion that, in accordance with the usual practice, the costs should be paid by the Crown.

Mr Quick asked the Court to express some opinion as to the effect of its judgement on Capt. Graham's certificate as the mate, as, if the latter were also suspended, he would be deprived of all means of livelihood, unless he went to sea before the mast.

The Collector of Customs said that the Board of Trade had decided that the cancellation of the captain's certificate involved that of his certificate as mate also.

Mr Quick pointed out that in this case it was not cancelled, but only suspended, and possibly, had the Court considered that one involved the other, a lighter sentence might have been passed.

Mr Stafford suggested that the 18th section of the Act would meet the difficulty, as it empowered the Governor to issue a lower certificate in lieu of that suspended. Thus Captain Graham could petition the Governor accordingly.

The Court assented to this view.

Mr Stafford wished to call attention to one more point. The Collector of Customs at Wanganui, in forwarding the evidence taken at the preliminary enquiry on the spot, had appended an opinion of his own upon the case, completely exonerating Captain Graham, who, if he had depended on that as clearing him of blame, and had allowed his witnesses to leave, might have been placed in serious difficulty, and no doubt the present decision of the Court, after such strong gratuitous expression of opinion from the Wanganui Collector, would be a great blow to him. He asked the Court to express disapproval of the conduct of the Collector in exceeding his duty.

The Court held that to be no part of its duty, but to rest with the head of the Customs Department.

This concluded the business, and the Court then rose.