Coastal shipping in 19ᵗʰ and 20ᵗʰ Century Australia

Colonial transport in Australia

- Often the only way to travel between major ports and centres was by ship
- Coastal ships were the 'backbone' of Australian trade.
- The 'canal' of Australia - movement of people and cargo.

Why shipping?

- Natural Terrain of Australia – ravines, ranges, coastal rivers, swamps
- Settlements mostly on the coast
- Lack of communications and transport between coastal cities
- Railways developed inland from the ports, rather than between ports.

Ship, passengers or freight?

People can be interested in:
- the history of the ship, a photograph of it, and where it was built, where it was wrecked.
- how people moved from place to place – finding passengers on coastal ships.
- History of shipping companies – Burns Philp, John Burke, AUSN etc – archival records.

The First Shipping Routes - 1831

- First paddle steamer was the "Sophia Jane" which was used between Sydney and the Hunter River in 1831.
- "William the Fourth" first ship built in Aust.
  "At that time it was not considered at all likely that two steamers could be found profitable employment in the Australian coasting trade"
  PIONEER STEAMSHIPS IN QUEENSLAND WATERS. (By A. G. Davies). (Read at a meeting of the Historical Society of Queensland, March 31, 1936.)

Coastal Steamships or Coasters

- By 1837, steamships began to operate longer coastal voyages – Sydney to Melbourne and Brisbane e.g. "James Watt".
- 1841 Hunters River Steam Navigation Co – 3 paddle steamers – Sydney to Moreton Bay, Sydney to Melbourne and Tasmania.

ASN – Australasian Steam Navigation Co

- Trade expanded rapidly
- Gold discovery in Victoria 1851 – more trade and development of passenger services.
- Hunters River Company became ASN, with more steamers built in Britain.

First Regular Steamer to Qld

- Moreton Bay service began in 1842 with the "SS Shamrock".
- First trip – Gov. George Gipps landed at Cleveland in mud – he was not amused and
- Chose Brisbane rather than Cleveland as capital of Northern districts.

Expansion to Queensland

- Queensland Steam Navigation formed to compete with ASN - formed in 1860.
- First sailed Queensland coast and then south to Sydney in 1864 but
- ASN bought it out in 1868.
- British India Line, 1881 – formed subsidiary – Qld Steam Shipping (QSS).

The Ports

- Moreton Bay, Wide Bay, Port Curtis and Fitzroy River were established prior to separation. Qld had 11 ports by 1873
- At separation, Qld had to provide navigation, lighthouses, lightships, beacons and buoys along the 2,000 mile coastline….and, pilot boats for ports.

The Harbour Masters of Moreton Bay

- Harbour Master, Moreton Bay – W.H. Geary 1851-1861,
- G.P.Heath 1862-1890.
- Responsible job with 400 pounds p.a.
- Heath could afford a grand house -Hanworth House, East Brisbane.

Pilotage

- Pilot Vessel "Spitfire" (3 pilots, 9 boatmen in Moreton Bay) – 170 miles of channel.
- Moreton Bay – Cowan Cowan station in 1860 – Pilots, boatman lived in 'wretched conditions"
- Maryborough and Rockhampton – 60 miles of intricate tidal naviation.

Changes in the 1860s

- Improvements to navigation lights – e.g. Cowan Cowan raised to 34 foot. Depth of Port at Brisbane – 26ft.
- Number of vessels rose steadily until downturn of 1867/68.
- Select committee on Rivers and Harbours of the Colony 1864 – resulted in dredging, beacons, buoys.

Competition on the Coast

- ASN now had 30 ships, many older vessels used as cargo ships
- Qld Steam Ship Co had 10 vessels
- 1887 – Combination of two companies - merged as AUSN – Australasian United Steam Navigation with 37 vessels.

Queensland Steam Ship Co

- First ship, "Queensland" – 1861.
- "Warrego" and "Maranoa" 1883
- "Barcoo" in 1885 – "Arawatta" in 1889.
- Sydney to Cooktown via intermediate ports.

Howard Smith Company

- Captain Smith came to Australia in 1854.
- One vessel – developed two companies
- Huddart-Parker Coy and Howard Smith.
- Development of their own wharves – Howard Smith wharves.

Names of the Coastal Ships

- Australian names predominated
- Yongala, Kyarra, Arawatta, Kanowna, Wyreema, Kuranda, Bingera and Indarra.
- Movements were reported in the newspapers
- Advertisements for schedules and ports visited also in the newspapers.

Lengthy Journeys

- Sydney to Freemantle – Saturday, Tues.
- Melbourne to Cairns – Thursday, Sunday.
- Times taken:
    - Brisbane to Sydney – 3 days.
    - Melbourne to Sydney 35 hours, 20 mins.
    - Moreton Bay to Launceston 7 days

Shipping Companies 1900

- Adelaide Steamship Coy
- Melbourne Steamship company
- Howard Smith
- AUSN
- Huddart Parker
- McIllwraith, McEacharn.

Truly Palatial

- Golden Days – Federation to WW1.
- Bewildering choice for passengers.
    - Yacht like vessels – Huddart Parker
    - Miniature Trans-atlantic liners – McIlwraith
    - Howard Smith's racey passenger fleet – speed.
- Speed of liners important – make port first.

SS. Katoomba

- On board luxury – hot and cold water.
- Surgery and hospital, with doctor.
- 209 1st class, 192 second class, 156 third class. First and Second class smoking rooms. Dining Saloon. Katoomba Ladies Orchestra – new attraction at the turn of the century.
- Fastest liner – service speed of 16 knots.

SS. Indarra

- 9,735 tons – 1913 – Most palatial.
- Larger than any other coastal liner.
- 150 First class, 200 2nd Class, 3rd Class.
- Electric Lift, Swimming Bath, Gymnasium
- Verandah café.
- Deep draft and coaling from both sides.

Peak of the Trade

- 1914 was the peak of the passenger trade.
- 31 passenger vessels in service
- Ships requisitioned as troop ships for World War 1.
- "Kyarra" made 7 trips to Egypt and Britain - Carried invalided troops home as a hospital ship.

After the Great War – Decline!

- Disruption by war
- Long distance railways developed – East West – Perth to Sydney.
- Coastal rail link between Sydney and Brisbane
- Air travel took the First class trade.
- Liners sold – last one sold in 1961 "Manoora"

    "1961 - For the first time in 130 years, impossible to travel by sea on the Australian coast." Parsons, p   11.

Finding immigrants on Coasters

- Shipping Movements were listed in the newspapers
- Mariners and Ships in Australian Waters – online website – passenger lists for ships – search by year.
- Customs House Shipping Records into Brisbane - Queensland State Archives.
- Outwards lists for other Ports at QSA.

In the Steerage!
- Every newspaper included shipping intelligence and movement columns on a daily basis, with Captain's name.
- In shipping columns, arrivals of Cabin passengers are listed, and also an indication of how many souls in the steerage. Names of steerage passengers never listed.

Mariners and Ships in Australian Waters http://marinersandships.com.au/

- If you find a number of passengers listed as "in steerage", you may be able to find their names by using "Mariners and Ships in Australian Waters".
- Browse by year, month and ship for the years 1845-1922
- Can find crew, cabin and steerage
- Alternate search – search by name across all years but very difficult to ensure that you have all of the lists covered.

Customs House Records - J715

- Inwards passengers and crew into Brisbane
- **National Archives Australia** Record Search http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/recordsearch/index.aspx provides access to 20th Century indexes and lists for all Australian states. For 1898-1966 check *Passenger Arrivals Index* tab in Search screen. Also available are Brisbane incoming lists, 1852-1964, Series no. J715, Rolls 1-42 (Use advanced item search and know the date range).
- Name index – *Queensland Customs House Shipping 1886-1899 : passengers and crew* / Queensland Family History Society. QCFS 929.39431 [CD-ROM] Available at Level 3.

OZShips Passenger Lists http://www.ozships.net/ozships/

Early Shipping in Moreton Bay

- Compiled by Winifred Davenport
- Vol. 1 – 1846-1859; Vol. 2 – 1860-1863, available at level 3 desk.
- Chronological list of ships, with saloon passengers listed by name, and details of the cargo.
- Taken from *The Moreton Bay Courier*

Examples of Entries:
- Jan 1849 – 'Fortitude' – Immigrants bought provisions – 30 tons coal, 2 cows.
- Nov 1854 – "Ketch 'SS Vision'. Mr Strange and companions lost in the Percy Islands – killed by Aborigines"

- April 1858 – 'SS. Gazehound' – "The boats had drifted into the Glasshouse Mts – crew were killed by blacks."
- July 1859 – 'SS Clarence' – "Captain and 2 crew suffering from having eaten poisonous fish.
- Oct 1859 – 'SS Yarra Yarra' – Large alligator shot - taken to Sydney Museum.

Queensland Indexes

- *List of shipping arrivals in Queensland ports, 1861-1895*
  Open Access, level 4   REFJ 387.5 que
- *Queensland Customs House shipping 1852-1885 : 1886-1899 and passengers and crew* – 2 CD-ROMs level 3 (QCFS 929.39431 2014).

New South Wales

- *State Archives & Records NSW Guide to Shipping and Free Passenger Records* – Index to Microfilm & records – held at level 3 desk at State Library
- State Archives & Records NSW – Outports – available via SRNSW.
  e.g. Sydney, Newcastle, Tweed River, Pt Curtis, Coffs Harbour, Byron Jetty etc

Tasmania

- *Tasmania – Index to Departures 1817-1867* – Libraries Tasmania
  https://librariestas.ent.sirsidynix.net.au/client/en_AU/names/
- Index to Passenger arrivals and Departures Launceston 1829-1865 [CD-ROM]
  QCFS 929.3099465 2007, held on level 3

North Queensland and the Islands

Burns Philp – Townsville, Bowen, Cooktown, Pacific.
- Partnership began in 1883 –
  - provided mail, freight and passenger services to the South Pacific
- Records – ANU Archives

Other Australian ports and colonies

- *Western Australia arrivals at Freemantle from interstate 1885-1908* in microfiche folders, level 3.
- *Victorian Coastal Passenger lists,* 1852-1924. Available on FindMyPast at State Library.
- *Passengers arriving at Port Adelaide from South Australian coastal and intercolonial ports between 1837-1845.* Request and collect from level 3 (CAG 929.394 1980)

Resources – Ships

- *Australian Shipowners and their fleets* – in 24 volumes [vol 18 Brisbane 1851-85] / Parsons, R. (PAM 387.5240994 1972-), Request and collect from level 3.
- *Australian coastal shipping.* MUP, 1979. / Pemberton, Barry. (G 387.20994 1979)
  Request and collect from level 3.
- *Coast to Coast: The Great Australian coastal Liners.* Plowman, P.
  Open Access, level 2   387.5420994 2007
- *Steamers on the River.* Torrance, W. GSB 386.2209 1986, request then collect from level 3
- *Motor Ships of the thirties.* Torrance, W. GSB 386.2209 1988, Open Access, level 2
- *Maritime sources for historians and genealogists* (PAM 929.1072 1988) by Vaughan Evans - outlines the scope of interest for different researchers, and the information and sources available. Request then collect from level 3.
- *Port and Harbour Development in Queensland* / Davenport, W. Open Access, level 2, GSB 387.1 1986
- *Pure merinos and others: The 'shipping lists' of the Australian Agricultural Company* / P.A. Pemberton Request then collect from level 3 (G 929.3944 1986).

Photographs, Records

- Ships photographs. Request at level 4, JOL Desk.
- Newspaper Clippings – by ship name – request at level 4, JOL Desk.
- *50 years of shipbuilding in Queensland.* JOL. David Simpson Typescript 1952 OM74-03

Archival Records

- *30018 John Burke Shipping Company Records 1920-1987*
  Box 9054 ; 19894-19896 O/S; Boxes 19880-19893. Request and view on level 4.
- *R 407 John Burke Limited Records 1915-1980*
  Boxes 3910 and 3911. Request and view on level 4.
- *G. Davies Cuttings Book and Photographs 1880-1918* OM95-18   Queensland Shipping.
- *L.H. Bunce Papers ca. 1851-1969* OM74-65
  Consists of lists, notes, notebooks, essays, loose cuttings, cutting books, magazine pages, photographs, letters and Queensland Parliamentary papers relating to ships and shipping, both historical and modern.

Other resources and Registers

- Lloyds Register of Ships – in hard copy at State Library and Historic lists are Online at https://hec.lrfoundation.org.uk/archive-library/lloyds-register-of-ships-online
- Built in Brisbane – Norman Wright & Sons Register of Vessels Online, http://www.wrightsons.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Vessel-Directory-30.10.13.pdf
- *Reports and decisions on shipping accidents*, Marine Board of Queensland. 1888 to 1935 Request then collect from level 4 (RBQ 363.123 MAR).
- *Australian Register of Historic Vessels.* Australian Maritime Museum, Sydney.
  https://www.sea.museum/discover/arhv

State Library Research Guides

- Immigration and shipping: getting started
- Immigration and shipping: More than lists
  https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/research-collections/family-history/family-history-research-guides

List your sources

- Be methodical
- Compile reference list as you go
- Always cite where information came from
- Using online resources – always put the date when accessed

Need further information?

(07) 3840 7810 | https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/plan-my-visit/services/ask-us

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