SECTION THREE:
Profile of Shipping Investment
CHAPTER 6: THE PROFILE OF EARLY SHIP INVESTORS, 1810-1825

This section examines the occupational profile of shipping investors in NSW from 1810-1850, with the aim of identifying those participants, and their motivation for investment. To date, no comparable investigation appears to have been undertaken for NSW shipowners. Several studies, those of Sarah Palmer and R.G. Albion, of shipowners in London and New York respectively provide both templates and sources for comparing the pattern of ship investment in countries at different stages of development.1 Our early maritime history prompts a reminder that Australian development needs to be seen in its global context. While identifying some of the opportunities open to the local maritime industry, I argue that the nature of local shipping activity was qualitatively different from that of Great Britain, being more speculative or opportunistic in character. The business of ship ownership was so fraught with risk that it raises the dual questions of what motivated local investors to undertake such speculation, and who were these investors. I suggest that entrepreneurial activity, rather than investment in shipping per se provided social as well as business leverage.

I will show that the pattern of ship investment among occupational groups in NSW differed in some remarkable aspects to that of London during the same period. There were some wild fluctuations in the numbers investing, in the total of shipping registered, and in the occupational groups investing in shipping. This section will also examine in closer detail the specific characteristics of the major investors, mariners and merchants, the opportunities that made investment shipping attractive and the dynamics of that investment. The fluctuations evident in local shipping investment reflect a greater sensitivity to market opportunities and risks. This, I suggest, reflects the speculative nature of shipping activity in NSW.

On a general level, Henry Davidson, testifying to the Select Committee on the Navigation Laws in 1848, provided one clue to the vexing question of motivation. Davidson had previously been a large shipowner in London, a West Indian plantation owner and an importer from the West Indies. He informed the Committee that “Regularity, Certainty and Convenience were the great Advantages” that ship ownership provided plantation owners during a period when the sugar trade from the West Indies had been assured. It was, he said, “A Matter of Convenience” for the owners of estates there. Another London shipowner in the West Indian trade, John Alexander Hankey confirmed this rationale, saying that he was a shipowner because he was a merchant. To such men as Davidson and Hankey then, ship ownership was merely ancillary to their main occupation as plantation owner and merchant. Ship ownership was not an essential corollary of either profession per se, but in fact represented an additional business risk. For both, investment in shipping was a diversification strategy determined by West India’s geographical isolation from London markets and British Navigation Laws that prevented them from utilising American ships.

Australian historians of the early colonial period would be very familiar with the rationale of Davidson’s sentiments with respect to the early development of the NSW shipbuilding and ownership. Practical necessity ensured that from the very beginnings of settlement, NSW colonial governors were required to overlook their rigorous instructions forbidding ship construction in order to overcome isolation and ensure food supplies. Supply ships visiting from Great Britain were irregular, inadequate and infrequent. In a developed economy, such as that of Great Britain, merchants and landowners could normally expect to secure cargo space for their imports and exports from among available shipping, or alternately charter a vessel. In NSW, however, a

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2 British Parliamentary Papers, First Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords appointed to inquire into the Policy and Operation of the Navigation Laws and to report thereon to the House; together with Minutes of Evidence taken from 9 March –5 May 1848. Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed 19 May 1848. (Trade and Industry: Navigation Laws), Vol..2, p. 70, (hereafter referred to as BPP (1848)).

3 Testimony of Henry Davidson, ibid, 16 March 1848, Question 752, p.70.

4 Ibid, Question 755, p. 70.

5 Hankey was a proprietor of the merchant firm of Thomson, Hankey & Co. of London, plantation owner, and Chairman of the East and West India Dock Company in 1847. Testimony of John Alexander Hankey, dated 17 March 1848, ibid. p. 91.
shortage of available shipping, regulations and distance, and local opportunities, promoted local shipping investment by merchants, landowners and mariners.

There is much evidence of a link between land occupation and ship ownership in the early years of NSW. There is much evidence of a link between land occupation and ship ownership in the early years of NSW. Local topography and soil quality contributed to the pattern of shipbuilding and ownership, with the exploitation of fertile land on the Parramatta and Hawkesbury Rivers providing Sydney’s food basket. Hainsworth and Jan Barkley have commented on the relationship between ship ownership and farming settlement on the Hawkesbury River for the transport of essential food supplies to Sydney. After 1801, the coal, lime and cedar resources in the Hunter and Shoalhaven River regions provided new and lucrative activity for shipping investors. The Great Dividing Range created both a barrier and watershed that continued to influence the pattern of settlement and land use. The eastern river systems provided access to large native forest timbers and fertile lands within the colony’s coastal fringe. The demand for local shipping was closely associated with this settlement and land use. Nevertheless, even within the first fifteen years of settlement, investment in shipping was also closely linked with a desire to exploit maritime resources, including the seal colonies, flax, and sandalwood and bay whaling.

Ralph Davis and Sarah Palmer observed how few British shipowners identified their primary occupations directly as shipowners. Rather, they more frequently identified as merchants, mariners, shipwrights or other miscellaneous occupations. This appears to be at odds with Ralph Davis’ assertion that ship ownership conferred status, and the means for entry into the middle class. While London merchants clearly did not

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6 An examination of very early nineteenth century shipping activity reveals that many investors, for example Andrew Thompson, were landowners whose vessels were extensively employed in the carriage of grain from the Hawkesbury to Sydney. See J.S. Cumpston, Shipping Arrivals and Departures Sydney, 1788-1825, 1963, pp. 44-6; J.V. Byrnes, ‘Andrew Thompson 1773-1810’, Parts I & II, Royal Australian Historical Society Journal, Vol. 48, Parts II & III, 1962.


10 Davis, (within the context of master mariners), ibid, p.84.
require any additional symbols of status, other occupational groups, I suggest, would have welcomed the opportunity to advertise their status as shipowners if Davis’ premise is correct. Palmer’s own statistical analysis of the occupational profile of shipowners (discussed in this chapter) appears to contradict Davis’s assertion. A similar analysis of the occupational profile of NSW shipowners, I suggest, shows even less evidence that they were motivated by a pursuit of social status.

Nevertheless, given Davis’ assertion, it is important to understand its context and implications. A number of witnesses testifying before the British House of Commons Select Committees on the causes of shipwrecks in 1836 and 1843, as well as during the inquiries into the British navigation laws, made observations on shipowners that give some validity to Davis’ point. In 1836 Henry Woodruffe, a British shipbuilder, owner and ex-ship commander, stated that, “it is a point of great honour among tradesmen to have ships; that it is a principal point they wish to attain to”. According to Woodruffe’s definition, “tradesmen” included any “man who is a shopkeeper, or grocer, or a shoemaker, or such like”. He confirmed that ship ownership conferred status, and provided an avenue for social advancement, stating “The tradesman, by having this ship, increases his respectability, that being a kind of fly-wheel to his business,” and that often three or four tradesmen would band together to purchase a ship.

Woodruffe’s own career commenced as a lad in the forecastle of a merchant ship, from which he was impressed into the Royal Navy. Despite his status as shipowner, he maintained empathy with mariners, whose safety he considered endangered by the emerging tendency of tradesmen unconnected with the industry to become primary shipping investors. This new type of investor, being ignorant of the shipping trade, frequently made poor management decisions – from appointing unskilled or unfit

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11 Palmer, op.cit., Table IV, p. 54.
12 3 July 1836, British Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons: Report from the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the Causes of Shipwrecks with the Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index. Sessional papers (Shipping Safety 2), First Report, 1836, Shannon, Ireland,1970. (hereafter referred to as BPP: (1836), Question 296 & 300, p. 22.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid, and Question 300, p. 22.
commanders, to failing to provide essential navigational equipment.\textsuperscript{15} That this was not an entirely new phenomenon is suggested by the comments of the anonymous English grocer who had shares in the ill-fated eighteenth century ship, the \textit{Betsy}, mentioned in Chapter Five. The new trend was not that “tradesmen” were investing in shipping, but rather the fact that there had been a shift from “passive” investment to an active management role as ship-husband.

Woodruffe was one of many concerned about the changing profile of ship ownership in the nineteenth century and its affect on ship safety. As late as 1849, a boatswain interviewed by London journalist, Henry Mayhew, complained that (lately) “a class of petty owners has sprung up – people who were clerks of the large owners”.\textsuperscript{16} Ex-East India Company ship commander and navigation instructor, George Coleman, expressed concern that a system of nepotism existed among some ship owners in Britain allowing owners to put their inexperienced young sons or nephews in command.\textsuperscript{17} It was especially a problem when ships were passed as part of a deceased estate to boys as young as twelve or fourteen years, who immediately declared “I will be captain”.\textsuperscript{18}

This phenomenon was especially true of the group of “tradesmen,” as defined by Woodruffe. If shipping interests were concerned about shipping safety due to the effects of the ignorance of “new” investors, they had apparently even more reason for concern following enabling legislation in 1824, which allowed ships to be registered to joint stock companies.\textsuperscript{19} Captain Anthony Ridley, Chairman of the Shipowner’s Society in 1843, voiced his concern about the risks British shipping faced as a result of this change, when he stated “in the first place, they (joint stock companies) have little to risk personally, and in the next place, they have a salary to mismanage, and

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 1, pp. I-xii, 1-388 and 1-39.
\textsuperscript{17} Ironically this system of nepotism or patronage had long existed within the officer ranks of the British Navy. See for instance J.D. Davies, \textit{Gentlemen and Tarpaulins: The Officers and Men of the Restoration Navy}. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991.
\textsuperscript{18} Testimony of George Coleman, 8 July 1836, BPP: (1836), \textit{op.cit.}, Question 692, p.47.
\textsuperscript{19} Davis, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 319.
not to manage. The ships have disappeared, and they are selling off what little they have left to pay off the debts”.

A.G.E. Jones’ research into the occupational background of some of the British shipowners in the South Seas trade also suggests that in the late eighteenth century ship ownership provided the avenue for some tradesmen to amass wealth and status. Daniel Bennett began his career as an apprentice brazier, Samuel Enderby as an apprentice cooper; while the “respected gentleman,” William Mellish, who died in 1834 with a reported fortune of £2,000,000, appears to have begun his career as a wholesale butcher. Given the high costs of operating British whaling ships in the South Seas, tradesmen seem an extraordinary source for investment. As will be demonstrated in this Section, this same trend is observable in NSW among those who invested in shipping to engage in the sandalwood, sealing and coastal trades before 1820. However, unlike Great Britain, NSW tradesmen were unable to accumulate sufficient capital to invest in pelagic whaling. Early English investors in the southern sperm whaling industry were, of course, heavily subsidised by a British government anxious to encourage the development of that industry following the American Revolution. However, this subsidisation is unlikely to have been itself sufficient to account for the different activity. Rather, it probably reflects the scale of activity and profits from their primary occupation, based on their location in London.

Opportunities for investment in the shipping industry by a wide range of people was in fact made possible by the peculiar features of ship ownership. This investment had traditionally not required the same high level of capital as needed for investments in landed property. While available agricultural land in Great Britain was, by the nineteenth century, scarce and commanded high prices, new ships could be purchased

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22 Ibid., pp. 532, 533, 535.
for as little as £6.15s -£15 per ton in some northeastern ports, to £24 per ton for the
highest class of vessel built on the Thames. Investment in new Thames-built
shipping of 500-tons, completely rigged, coppered and ready for long voyages cost
about £12,000 by 1847. London shipowner, Money Wigram, estimated an
additional £5,452 (for a 691 ton ship) in operating costs per annum (excluding repairs,
pilotage, light dues and primage). Similar estimates by other shipowners placed
these costs at roughly £4,500-£5,000 per annum for a 500-ton vessel in the Australian
or Far Eastern trades.

Unlike landed estates it was a cost frequently shared among a number of shareholders.
R.C. Jarvis has described a system of fractional ship ownership that as early as the
seventeenth and eighteenth centuries provided opportunities for speculative
investment by small shareholders. Ownership was defined in terms of shareholdings
of sixty-four part shares of a ship’s hull, a legal tradition continued in British colonies.
The possibility of entry into ship ownership with the outlay of sufficient money to
purchase as little as a 1/64th (or less) shares, theoretically made this type of investment
available to all but the poorest classes. Providing a ship’s freight was a profitable
one, even the smallest investor had some chance for accumulating additional capital.
Equally, there was also every chance of becoming indebted on the ship’s account.
However, it was not the opportunity of supplementing meagre savings alone that
motivated investment, Ralph Davis argued (in relation to shipmasters), but also the
chance of improving social status. One of the peculiarities of ship investment was
that each shareholder was at liberty to transfer, mortgage, bequeath or sell his own
share regardless of the interests of the other shareholders, and thus their relationship

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24 Testimony of G.F. Young, 20 May 1847, BPP, Navigation Laws 1, op.cit., questions 5239, 5240
&5243, p.70; and testimony of Money Wigram, 26 May 1848, BPP (1848), Navigation Laws 2, op.cit.,
questions 6024, p. 558.
25 BPP, (1848) ibid.
26 BPP, (1848) ibid.
27 Testimony of W. Tindall, 25 May 1848, BPP (1848), op.cit., questions 5693 & 5698, and 5705-14,
pp.515-16.
28 R.C. Jarvis, ‘Fractional Shareholding in British Merchant Ships with Special reference to the 64’
29 It was however more customary for a minimum share to equate to one-sixteenth share, expressed as
4/64 shares.
30 Davis, op.cit. (1962), p.84.
could not be considered as a partnership.\textsuperscript{31} The potential for conflict between shareholders was averted by the practice of appointing a ship’s husband, who actively managed the ship’s business.\textsuperscript{32} This was frequently one of the major shareholders, whose main recompense may have been limited to securing the facility of sharing the burden of operating expenses.\textsuperscript{33} In some cases the position of ship husband was a salaried position. It was most frequently given to very experienced shipmasters who normally undertook such duties when their ships visited other ports.\textsuperscript{34} All business and legal transactions were conducted on behalf of the ship rather than in the name of the owners.\textsuperscript{35}

Fractional ownership also made it possible for many NSW tradesmen and dealers to invest in shipping during the period prior to 1821. In the absence of a strong manufacturing industry, shipping gave investors access to timber, coal, lime and maritime resources (especially seal skins and elephant oil) enabling them to fund other activities. It was a sound risk management strategy in an essentially risky speculation. It was designed to both share the initial costs of capital investment, and to disperse operating costs. The downside was of course that profits were also necessarily shared among all investors. The idea of “tenancy in common,” enabling shares to be transferred on death to the heirs of the estate, also carried with it not only the potential for shares to come into the hands of widows or minors, but to be split into ever smaller portions.\textsuperscript{36} Such division was potentially damaging to the management of the ship and the settlement of her accounts.

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Ibid}. p. 312.
\textsuperscript{33} Testimony of H Davidson, 16 March 1848, BPP, (1848), \textit{op.cit.}, question 754, p. 70.
\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Ibid}. See also testimony of Robert Anderson, shipowner of South Shields, GB, who informed the 1843 Select Committee on Shipwrecks that it was the custom of many commercial houses to employ such a person, among whose duties it was to appoint the ship’s shipmaster and officers. BPP (1843), \textit{op. cit}, question 1959-60, p.123.
\textsuperscript{35} Clear evidence for this practice is to found in the numerous business transactions and accounts of shipmasters, merchants and shipowners, Vice-Admiralty cases relating to wage claims, log books, and insurance claims.
\textsuperscript{36} Only a few examples of such transmission of ownership have been identified, both involving property apparently passed to other family members during the lifetime of their owners to avoid the effects of insolvency - one involving the shares of John Terry Hughes in the Hunter River Steam Navigation Company passed on to his aunt, Rosetta Terry; the other involving shipping owned by shipbuilder, John Korff, passed to his wife and sons.
By 1824 the British Government had formalised the practice of fractional ownership into sixty-four parts. It was a convenient and efficient form of shareholding, but also encouraged “bit” owners to transfer their shares to more viable shareholders, without incurring any stamp duty. Despite this government intervention, shareholdings did not necessarily fall into such neat formulas. To take two later examples, the Sydney merchants, Hughes and Hosking had purchased 43 shares in the ship Mary in October 1836, while Captain Ferrier of the London-registered Bussorah Merchant made 9/64ths over to Alexander Spark before his departure for Singapore, most likely to secure the ship’s debts. However, what the legislation did do was to prevent the possibility of financially untenable shareholdings as occurred when estates were split between heirs.

The Act also enabled Companies to register vessels in the name of their Company rather than in the name of individuals. This was a fairly radical departure from the view of ship investors as “tenants in common,” as it enabled such vessels “to be deemed and taken to be Partnership Property to all Intents and Purposes, and shall be governed by the same Rules, both in Law and Equity, as relate to all other Partnership Property.” Under such rules, partners might find themselves liable for a larger portion of the ship’s expenses, than they would if they were listed as individual shareholders. While there is evidence that by 1825 some local companies were registering vessels in the name of their company, many partners still preferred to have their shares treated as individual holdings. This legislation is also significant in that it enabled joint stock companies to invest in shipping.

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37 6 Geo. IV, cap 105, An Act for the Registering of British Vessels, proclaimed by Governor Darling in on 8 February 1826, came into operation on 5 January 1826, and was published in the Sydney Gazette on 15 February. According to Sections II and XXXII of that Act, registered owners of vessels must possess a number of shares that were integers of sixty-four parts – namely 64, 32, 16 or 8, 4, 2 and 1.
38 Registry Act, ibid. Section XXXII.
40 R.G. Albion, for example, noted some extreme cases of fractional ownership in relation to nineteenth century ship investment in New York, such as that of the 27-ton Emily in 1838 owned by ninety-two investors, Albion, op.cit., p. 9.
41 Registry Act, op.cit.
42 Berry & Co., Eager & Forbes, and Campbell & Co were partnership owners.
D.R. Hainsworth quantified ship ownership up to 1821 according to the status of ship investors as either free emigrants or emancipists.\(^43\) Within his general descriptors it is nonetheless possible to recognise some occupational patterns of ownership. Hainsworth, noting the diversity in the background of investors, observed that the shipping interest “included a fair cross-section of colonial society”, including officers and officials, ship officers or ex-officers, tradesmen, carpenters and shipwrights, farmers, traders and publicans.\(^44\) Ship ownership during the early period was frequently shared among a number of investors, a practice that had long been customary among British shipowners. Twelve investors, whom Governor Hunter had licensed, were involved in one early syndicate in 1797 to provide a vessel for the Hawkesbury carriage trade.\(^45\) This practice is not quite so evident in NSW ship investment after 1824, when fractional ownership (either in the form of individual investors or business entities) was most commonly a feature of “high risk” business investment, such as whaling and steam navigation. In business terms, the high risk was associated with high initial capital investment, high operating costs and significant delays in financial returns on investment before break-even point.\(^46\)

However, both before 1820, and particularly after 1844, fractional or shared ownership was also a common feature of investment even for coastal vessels of low tonnage.\(^47\) This suggests that investors had both limited financial resources and that they were adopting a cautious management approach to their investment by sharing business risk. It was most frequently associated with first-time shipowners, particularly mariners, and tradesmen.

Sarah Palmer, in her study of ship investors in London from 1824-1848, attempted to identify and quantify occupational groups engaged in this activity.\(^48\) A statistical

\(^{43}\) He observed that of 127 shipowners identified in the period 1800-1821, no less than 45 were ex-convicts. D.R. Hainsworth, “The NSW Shipping Interest 1800-1821, A Study in Colonial Entrepreneurship”, *Australian Economic History Review* Vol. 8, No 1 Feb 1968, p. 22.

\(^{44}\) *Ibid*, p. 23.

\(^{45}\) *Ibid*, p. 20.


\(^{48}\) Palmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-68.
summary of her findings is shown at Table One. Her study provides a useful basis for comparing and contrasting the development of colonial ship-ownership during the same period. Sarah Palmer analysed the percentage of major occupational groups who were London shipowners during the years 1824, 1836 and 1848 – those whose occupations could be described as falling into the general description of “commerce and industry” (merchants, retailers and tradesmen), and those whose occupations were “maritime.” This latter group consisted of those whose primary occupation was “shipowners,” mariners, shipbuilders, and “others” (sail-makers, ship smiths, mast and block-makers, and so on).

Table 1: (Shareholders in London Vessels by Occupational Categories)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individuals</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>1824</th>
<th>1836</th>
<th>1848</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commerce and Industry</td>
<td>Merchants</td>
<td>19.34%</td>
<td>19.60%</td>
<td>12.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>14.83%</td>
<td>14.84%</td>
<td>7.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total percentage</td>
<td>34.17%</td>
<td>34.44%</td>
<td>19.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maritime Industry</td>
<td>Shipowners</td>
<td>17.03%</td>
<td>19.45%</td>
<td>36.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shipbuilders</td>
<td>3.11%</td>
<td>2.31%</td>
<td>1.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mariners</td>
<td>23.15%</td>
<td>20.32%</td>
<td>19.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12.73%</td>
<td>9.79%</td>
<td>12.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Percentage</td>
<td>56.02%</td>
<td>51.87%</td>
<td>70.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annual Total Investors</td>
<td>998</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>492</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Trading Partnerships | Commerce and Industry | 70.27%  | 76.56%  | 61.7%   |
|                      | Maritime            | 29.72%  | 23.43%  | 38.29%  |
|                      | Annual No. Total Investors | 74      | 64      | 47      |


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49 Palmer, *ibid*. Table IV, p. 54.
Palmer was able to draw from a much larger sample for her analysis than is possible for Sydney during the same period, simply because London was a significant international port, with a large population. Unfortunately, within the limited framework of her article she was not able to identify individuals or companies or explore their rationale for owning ships, except in the most general terms. With the more limited sample available for NSW during the same period, and with the benefit of available records, it is possible to examine more minutely the lives and business interests of local ship-owners. In the remainder of this chapter, I examine NSW ship ownership up to 1825, and compare investment characteristics with Palmer’s London sample for 1824. The next chapter examines the period 1826-1850, for which there exists fairly sound data (Appendices 6 & 7). Less reliable local data is available for the years 1810-1819 and 1824-5 (Table 2, p.141a). I have included the earlier data in order to identify whether there were any radical changes in occupational patterns that might shed some further light on the development of the industry. Extant information regarding ship ownership pre-1832 is based on a combination of available quarterly reports from the Sydney Naval Officer and from shipping news published in the *Sydney Gazette*, and may not be totally reliable.50

As Table 2 suggests, unlike Palmer’s findings, there was only one shipowner during 1819 that identified specifically as a “shipowner.” Up to 1820 the number of NSW investors from the maritime trades, (predominantly mariners and shipbuilders), outnumbered investors from commerce and industry. As a group, the maritime trades owned over 54% of tonnage in NSW in 1819, comparable to its share of London tonnage between 1824-1836. However, when average tonnage owned is taken into account, the percentage of tonnage owned by those engaged in commerce and industry was in fact higher. Statistically at least, those employed in the maritime trades owned an average of 38.56 tons each in 1819, and just over 93 tons in 1824. By comparison those employed in commerce and industry owned an average of 60 tons in 1819, but by 1824 could command an average of 482 tons. Even allowing for the

50 Naval Officer’s Quarterly Reports, 1810-30 June 1824, Colonial Secretary’s Office, SRNSW, Microfilms 2665-2666. The records vary in legibility. These records, together with reports from the *Sydney Gazette* have also been summarised in J.S. Cumpston, *Shipping Arrivals and Departures, Sydney. 1788-1825*, Roebuck, Canberra 1964.
Table 2: NSW Shipowners, 1810-1825

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>1810-1819</th>
<th></th>
<th>1824-1825</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>% of Total Number</td>
<td>Tonnage</td>
<td>% of Total Tonnage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariners</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28.26</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>24.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipbuilders</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.39</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>15.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allied Marine Trades</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.52</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipowners</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Maritime Trades</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>54.35</td>
<td>964</td>
<td>43.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchants/Traders</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.04</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>32.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companies</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21.74</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>18.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradesmen</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.52</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Commerce and Industry</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>41.30</td>
<td>1155</td>
<td>52.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/n.k.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>3.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>2200</td>
<td></td>
<td>Average: 47.83 tons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures for 1810-1819 are based on Naval Officer’s Quarterly Reports, 1810-30 June 1824, Colonial Secretary’s Office SRNSW, Microfilms 2665-2666. The records vary in legibility. These records, together with reports from the Sydney Gazette have also been summarised in J.S. Cumpston Shipping Arrivals and Departures, Sydney, 1788-1825, Roebuck, Canberra 1964. Figures for 1824-1825 are based on an analysis of shipping information in the Sydney Gazette, with supplementary information from Cumpston, ibid. and Ronald Parsons: Shipowners Registering their Ships in Early Sydney. Ronald Parsons, Murray bridge, S.A., May 2003. The data may be incomplete.
absence of “tradesmen” from this latter category in 1824, Sydney merchants’ average share of tonnage rose by almost 75% from 1819 to 1825.\(^{51}\) This change in the profile of ship ownership coincided with an influx of merchant capital into NSW, particularly that emanating from British merchant houses establishing agencies in Sydney.

The rapid rise in merchant’s share of tonnage also coincided with the return of merchant, Richard Jones, to Sydney. During his absence in London, Jones invested heavily in British ships (as well as in a flock of fine Saxony sheep), probably taking advantage of post-war market prices. By purchasing a number of second-hand A1 British-registered shipping, Jones was able to limit his initial capital investment.\(^{52}\) By 1825 he had acquired 9 ships, with a total tonnage of 2,518 tons, 5 for the purpose of engaging in the pelagic sperm whaling trade, 1 for New Zealand bay-whaling and flax trades, and the remaining 3 for the Australia trade with Great Britain. The purchases coincided with the end of the bonus system that had artificially protected and encouraged the British Southern Whaling Industry. By registering his shipping in London, Jones was able to insure his ships at preferential rates.

His investment represented a brilliant strategy for overcoming the problem of distance experienced by the English whaling industry. With whaling ships operating from Sydney, Jones was able to disperse his fleet almost directly into the fishery. His merchant ships could be utilised to transport the oil, wool and other cargo back to London, returning with British manufactured goods and passengers. This freed his whalers to continue their pursuit of whales. The strategy represented a significant timesaving and capital-return measure, with his shipping, merchant and pastoral investments integrated in a seamless fashion designed to maximise emerging business opportunities, while minimising risks. Jones’ strategy in fact represented risk management at its finest.

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\(^{51}\) Average tonnage held by merchants rose from 119 tons in 1819 to 572 tons in 1824.

\(^{52}\) Jones invested £25,000 in the acquisition of his sperm whaling fleet alone, at an average cost of £5000 each. With operational costs for the five whalers of £7,000, both his initial capital and expenditure and operating costs were significantly lower than those of London whalers of the period. Jones to Murray, 18 May 1829, *HRA*, Series 1, Vol. 14, pp.759-762.
Two other trends are worth noting. While there had been virtually no change in the number of shipowners in the period 1819 to 1824, the number of mariners investing in shipping had more than doubled, with that occupational group representing almost 69% of all NSW shipowners in 1824. These figures only include those mariners already resident, or in the process of settling, in NSW. Equally startling is the total absence of tradesmen from the ranks of those investing in shipping by 1825, as well as a reduction in the number of shipbuilders as investors. These trends are remarkable when compared with Palmer’s figures. A comparison of shipowners in London and Sydney by occupation is represented diagrammatically in Diagram 2 (p.143a). This illustrates quite dramatically the different occupational origins of shipping investors between that of a well-developed, post-war economy in Britain and that prevailing in NSW in 1824.

This level of local investment by mariners is so remarkably different to that suggested by Palmer for London ship investment, as to warrant further attention. In fact, when actual numbers of Sydney mariners are compared between 1819 and 1824, the statistical difference was accomplished with the addition of eighteen mariners. Several had previously been tradesmen and two shifted from their occupation as shipbuilder to that of mariner. The shift also reflects the apparent desertion of tradesmen from the ranks of ship investors. Statistics, however, tell only part of the story. An examination of the identity and history of many individual mariners involved (men like Richard Kelly, Duncan Forbes, Thomas Swindell, George Bunn, Thomas Raine and Joseph Moore), as well as that of mariners who had not invested in shipping, suggest that there was a significant relocation of mariners from Great Britain and India to the Australian colonies in the early 1820s. These were men who had made a conscious decision to settle. They were not deserters, but shipmasters often bringing wives and families, speculative investment freight, and the capital to invest in shipping, land and other commercial enterprise.\footnote{Edmund Cliffe, shipmaster and landowner was typical of this phenomenon, having imported 300 sheep in 1821, with the intention of taking up pastoral pursuits. \textit{HRA}, Series 1, Vol. 17, pp 678-681.} Their decisions to settle were probably uniquely individual, while reflecting an optimistic appraisal of local opportunities.
Diagram 2: Comparing the Ship Investment by Occupational Groups for London and Sydney, 1824.


Sources: Individual investors’ occupations identified from a range of contemporary sources, including Land and Ship Musters, and numbers collated to form the basis for this statistical breakdown.
The rationale for the apparent desertion of tradesmen is more difficult to explain. Some earlier shipowners, such as “dealer”, Garnham Blaxcell, had become bankrupt. What seems clear from the evidence is that there was in fact a fluidity of movement between occupational groups. This enabled mariners (such as Ebor Bunker, George Bunn, Duncan Forbes, Thomas Raine, James Robson and others) to become dealers, merchants or landowners, while dealers became merchants and landowners (Simeon Lord, Samuel Terry, and Edward Wills, Atkinson & Bingle). Some “dealers,” such as Thomas Johnson and Thomas Reibey (Jnr.) reverted back to their profession as mariners. Less frequently, tradesmen became first-time mariners (Thomas Street). Two shipbuilders, John Grono and Jonathon Griffith, temporarily left the NSW shipbuilding industry to pursue careers as mariners in command of their own vessels. This suggests that the demand for shipbuilding and repairs was unprofitable at that time, a hypothesis confirmed by John Grono in a letter to the Colonial Secretary. Thus mobility between occupational statuses, in a few cases, disguises continuity of ownership. Generally before 1821 it might be suggested that for NSW tradesmen and dealers “it was a matter of convenience” to own shipping. I suggest that after 1821 ship-ownership was no longer simply a matter of convenience. Rather it became an attractive investment through which local opportunities could be exploited. Those most able to exploit these opportunities were shipmasters or merchants, the first because of the mobility they could command, and the second group because of their financial resources and connections.

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54 A “dealer”, in the local context, was one category of tradesmen, mainly differentiated from merchants on the basis that they were generally retailers without international networks. Blaxcell absconded from Sydney after accumulating significant debts to the Colonial Government for outstanding duties payable on the importation of spirits, sandalwood and pearls, Macquarie to Bathurst, (with attachments), 3 June 1817, HRA, Series 1, Vol. 9, pp. 416-429.

55 Robert McNab, Muri hikui: A History of the South Island of New Zealand and the Islands Adjacent and Lying to the South, from 1642 to 1835. Whitcombe & Tombs, Wellington, 1909, pp. 268-70. Griffith left NSW for Launceston with his family on his brig Glory, which he was later to command. Sydney Gazette, 10 June 1824.

56 Grono to McLeay, dated 7 November 1833, seeking land and relief from payment of quit rent. Grono wrote, “the business of shipbuilding however advantageous to the Colony at large has of late years not only been unprofitable but ruinous to him” and in consequence, his personal circumstances were “much threatened”. NSW Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 2/7871, Reel 1134, 33/7422.
Tradesmen represented over 28% of all shipowners in 1819. This was well above the average London representation for a group Palmer described within the category of “other commerce and industry”. In 1819 NSW dealers alone represented almost 22% of shipowners.\(^\text{57}\) These dealers were often either ex-convicts, like Samuel Terry and Simeon Lord, or locally born. Tradesmen (whether marine or non-related) represented 13% of the occupational profile of ship owners during the period up to 1819. They included men such as the sail-maker, blacksmith and lime-burner, who shared an interest in the thirteen-ton \textit{Happy Return}. This pattern of investment appears to confirm the observation made by Henry Woodruffe to the 1836 \textit{Select Inquiry into the Causes of Shipwrecks}, that “tradesmen” (in which he includes dealers) were increasingly investing in shipping.\(^\text{58}\) However, unlike the English tradesmen to whom Woodruffe referred, it was not prestige or status that motivated NSW tradesmen, but rather was a matter of convenience and mobility, and an essential adjunct to their core business.

While the total number of shipowners appeared to remain steady, the total tonnage of shipping increased from 2,200 tons (1819) to 8,123 tons (1824). Only two ship-builders were investors, representing a significant shift in the proportion of investment by this group from the earlier period. This statistical trend is worth some additional comment. Although the number of mariners investing in shipping had almost tripled (representing almost 69 per cent of all shipowners), they now controlled a mere third of all local tonnage. Despite this, the general trend for resident mariners was toward shipping of larger average tonnage, but certainly not to be compared with the average tonnage held by a small group of merchants, that amounted to 572 tons. By far the largest merchant shipowners were Sydney merchants Jones and Riley whose vessels were in fact not registered locally, but in England.\(^\text{59}\) Nevertheless, even discounting

\(^{\text{57}}\) D.R. Hainsworth observed that the distinction between merchants and dealers or retailers was rather one of class- gentlemen could be merchants but never retailers. \textit{Builders and Adventurers: The Traders and the Emergence of the Colony 1788-1821}. Cassell, Sydney 1968, p. 14.

\(^{\text{58}}\) See footnote 11 &12.

\(^{\text{59}}\) Pocklington (204), \textit{Mercury} (156) (London reg’d), \textit{Samuel} (schooner, 65) (London reg’d.), \textit{Harriet} (ship, 417), \textit{Woodlark} (part owner) (238), \textit{Avon} (brig, 266, London reg’d), \textit{Alfred} (ship) (with William Walker) (1825) (243), \textit{Prince Regent} (ship) (ditto) (ship, 527), and the \textit{Saracen} (402)
their investment, massive by colonial standards, the average tonnage for other merchants was 383 tons.

The rationale for this change in the pattern of ship owning was a shift in the activities in which shipping was being employed, including pelagic whaling and the New Zealand trades. Higher tonnage not only represented a relatively high initial capital investment, but also demanded higher ongoing operational expenditure. Merchants were in a much better position to outlay such capital than other occupational groups. Not only did investment in shipping represent one of a range of income-producing strategies for merchants, they were also able to access private finance through their overseas transactions rather than depend on the vagaries of the colonial commissariat.

To some in this group, in particular James Birnie, James Robson, and Eber Bunker, this period may be said to represent a transitional stage during which they were making a shift to resident merchant status and/or land ownership.\(^{60}\) By 1815 whaling ship commander, Eber Bunker, for instance, identified himself not as a mariner but as a merchant, as did the ex-commanders of convict transports, George Bunn and James Birnie in 1824.\(^{61}\) Daniel Cooper, better known as the head of the merchant firm, Cooper & Levey and Waterloo Mills founded in 1820, had been the commander of the *Marcia* in 1803, the *Aeolius* in 1809, and the *Unity* during 1809-1810, and in 1818 publican of the Manchester Arms.\(^{62}\) James Birnie, owner and master of the Calcutta-registered whalers, *Star* and *Venus* from 1803 and 1812 respectively, had become a substantial shipowner prior to 1820, in conjunction with the London shipowners and

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\(^{62}\) These elements of his history have been traced in records of the Colonial Secretary’s Office and in the pages of the *Sydney Gazette* during the period.
merchant firm of Alexander Birnie and Co. By 1812, he had virtually settled in NSW, acting as the shipping company’s agent, in addition to his own mercantile interests.63

Not all mariners chose to make this shift. Some shipmasters like Robert Stewart Walker (part-owner of the King George), and Richard Siddons (who had a financial interest in the English whaler, Lynx), both colonial residents, continued their maritime careers into the 1820s. Many shipmasters in the whaling trade, such as Thomas Swindells, also remained in their profession, while supplementing their salaries through shipping investment. The figures in Table 2 do not include a number of shipmasters like Thomas Raine of the Surrey, Robert Duke of the Sisters, and Joseph Moore of the Woodlark, who had a financial interest in ships still registered in Great Britain. All were accruing networks and wealth that were to be of valuable service during their later transition to merchant status. Raine made his transition from mariner to merchant over a ten-year period. By 1824, Thomas Raine had established one of the most substantial mercantile firms in Sydney, in association with his partner, David Ramsay, as well as having substantial shipping and pastoral investments.64

Tradesmen like Simeon Lord, Garnham Blaxcell, Thomas Reibey, Robert and William Jenkins and the firm of Kable and Underwood invested in shipping to access the bountiful resources of the Pacific.65 Investment did not represent an end in itself, that is, a means of acquiring social status through mere ownership. None identified themselves as “shipowners,” but rather as “dealers,” “traders,” or “merchants” and for them, at least, ship ownership was an ancillary rather than a primary profession.

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63 James Birnie, of Sydney and Alexander Birnie and Co. of London, were joint owners of the merchant ships, Star, Venus, and Sydney Packet. See A.G.E. Jones, op.cit., p. 235. Among his mercantile activities were the importation of wine, brandy and dried fruit from the Cape of Good Hope, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1736, p. 43 (1816) and ibid. 4/1743, pp. 131-2, (1819), unfortunate business transactions with Simeon Lord, involving the charter of the Star by Lord & Co., resulted in legal suits after Lord mortgaged the vessel (illegally) to Plummer & Co. With respect to this transaction, D.R. Hainsworth incorrectly asserted that the Star had been purchased by Lord, see op.cit. p. 230. Lloyd’s Register indicates that the registry was held by Plummer & Co. of London from 1809.


65 Their early commercial careers have already been outlined by D.R. Hainsworth, (1986) op.cit.
Similarly, mariners and others in the maritime professions in NSW did not portray themselves primarily as shipowners, but rather according to their professions as mariners or shipbuilders. Shipbuilders invariably had built the vessels they owned, while mariners commanded their own shipping, sometimes investing in additional shipping to supplement their income. Thus they assured themselves of continued employment. Wealth and improvement in social status were therefore merely the outcome of successful maritime business speculation, frequently coupled with equally successful pastoral activity, rather than being end in itself.
CHAPTER 7: THE PROFILE OF LOCAL SHIP INVESTORS, 1826-1850

In the period up to 1826, the profile of ship investors had changed from one in which investment was spread fairly evenly across interest groups to one in which mariners, on the one hand, formed a significant proportion of investors, while Sydney merchants, Jones, Riley & Co., held a large offshore investment in higher-tonnage shipping. After 1824, the profile of potential investors in NSW changed, as the result of an increasing migration of merchants and free settlers, including landowners and skilled artisans, and the inflow of private capital. During this period, an increasing number of shipmasters, previously commanding convict, whaling or merchant shipping, made permanent or temporary career transitions, taking up residence in NSW. Given changes in the demographics outlined, it would be expected that this would be reflected in the profile of ship ownership, after 1825.

A number of other issues potentially affecting the pattern of ship ownership during the period 1826-1850 are of interest. The first of these was the ability of local investors to exploit the whaling and Pacific trades. The second was the effects of the 1824 British legislation enabling companies, and especially joint stock companies, to register shipping in their Company’s name. A third issue relates to the introduction of steam navigation, and the possibility that investors in this industry might be drawn from a wider demographic. Yet another development that could be expected to influence the profile of local ship investment is the extension of settlement along the NSW coastline to Moreton Bay in the north, to Port Phillip, Western Port, Port Fairy, and Portland in the south, and the opening of new colonies at Adelaide, Swan River and New Zealand. During this period, the EIC Company’s charter ceased, enabling legitimate commerce with China possible. Sixthly, there is the effect of the 1840s depression on the profile of ship ownership, and finally, the effects of the Californian gold rush on local ship ownership. I argue that these changes not only created a dramatic local demand for shipping, but also significantly influenced the occupational profile of investors.
Counting –Sources and Limitations:
During the period 1826-1850, it has been possible to obtain complete lists of registered NSW shipping for the years 1832, 1842, 1844, 1847 and 1849. These lists provide the names of major shareholders only, and do not indicate the occupation of the shareholder. Occupational information has been obtained through reference to contemporary records, including shipping records, newspapers, Court papers, (including insolvency records), and Census records, as well as to secondary sources that have accessed Registry papers. Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate any complete registry list of local shipping between 1832-1842, resulting in a ten-year gap during an important phase of NSW shipping history. Hopefully, this gap may be filled in the future by reference to individual shipping registries. While this would be useful in providing a more complete statistical analysis, it is not essential to the narrative, which based on available data from contemporary records. A summary of available information on the occupational profile of NSW ship ownership for the years 1832-1849 is provided in Appendix 6, with a statistical analysis of these results in Appendix 7. Clearly, this profile is indicative only, as it does not show any yearly fluctuations in ownership that may have occurred. For convenience, these results are graphically summarised in Diagram 3 p. (p. 150a).  

As can be seen from Appendix 6, the percentage of owners falling within the categories of “retailer” (including grocers, dealers, publicans, butchers, drapers, tailors and slop sellers) is comparatively small. The same is true for coal or timber merchants and tradesmen, not directly involved in the shipbuilding industry. For convenience, in Appendix 7, I have incorporated the above categories under Commerce and Industry, together with merchants, following Palmer’s model. Landowners and “gentlemen” who appear to have invested in shipping during the first thirty years of settlement, did not continue to play a significant role, although they did constitute an important element among the shareholders in several joint stock companies including the Australian Steam Conveyance Company, Hunter River

1 The identities and occupations on which the raw data and statistical analysis in Diagram 3 are based has been obtained from an extensive search of contemporary sources, including newspapers, census, parish, land and shipping records. Where the owner’s occupation could not be positively identified, these were not included in the analysis (11%).
Diagram 3: NSW Ship Investment, 1818-1850: Percentage per Occupational Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mariners</th>
<th>Shipbuilders</th>
<th>Shipowners</th>
<th>Merchants</th>
<th>Other Commerce</th>
<th>Company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1818</td>
<td>24.49</td>
<td>14.29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18.37</td>
<td>26.53</td>
<td>4.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1824</td>
<td>68.89</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17.78</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1832</td>
<td>11.86</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>5.08</td>
<td>40.67</td>
<td>22.03</td>
<td>7.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1842</td>
<td>16.77</td>
<td>8.07</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>19.98</td>
<td>26.71</td>
<td>4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1844</td>
<td>16.74</td>
<td>9.21</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>21.76</td>
<td>26.36</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>9.09</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>31.58</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td>49.74</td>
<td>7.85</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>9.42</td>
<td>14.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Steam Navigation Company and the Australian Steam Navigation Company formed between 1833 and 1850, which the figures do not reflect.  

Analysis of shipping investment, 1832:

In 1832, those engaged in Commerce and Industry accounted for almost 57% of shipping investors, controlling over 73% of tonnage. By far the largest individual group of investors in the shipping industry in 1832 were merchants, investing either as individual shareholders or companies. Not only did they represent over 41% of shareholders, but they also owned 66% of the total tonnage, an average of 232 tons each. This represented a major shift in the profile of ship ownership from that of 1824-5, when only 18% of investors were identified as local merchants. By comparison, the marine trades in 1832 represented just over 22% of shipping investors, controlled less than 23% of total tonnage, or an average of 148 tons each. Of these, just over 12% of total investors were mariners, suggesting a dramatic shift within the space of six or seven years. Only the three investors identifying primarily as “shipowners” matched merchants in the average tonnage under their control. However, this statistical comparison is illusory, as the character of “shipowners” investment differed generally from merchants, being most commonly spread over a number of vessels of smaller tonnage. The merchant company, Aspinall, Brown & Co. for example, invested in only one vessel of 245 tons (while acting as agent for two others), whereas shipowner, Thomas Street, had nine vessels with a total tonnage of 539 tons, averaging out at less than 60 tons each. Both represented different risk management strategies, a point to which I will return later.

This disparity in tonnage investment reflected the different type of activity undertaken by the shipping in which these two groups invested. Of 86 vessels belonging to the port of Sydney in 1832, 33% were engaged in the whaling trade. The shipping involved in this activity ranged in tonnage from the 68-ton schooner Caroline,

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2 Among the shareholders in the first NSW steam navigation company, the Australian Steam Conveyance Company, formed in April 1833 for example were, H.M. Macarthur, Edye Manning, Francis Stephen, the Reverend Ralph Mansfield and others, see Sydney Gazette, 16 April 1833 and 25 January 1834.

3 Emancipist, Thomas Street, was the leading representative of this group. His shipping investments and career will be discussed in Chapter Eight.
(engaged by George Bunn in the New Zealand bay whaling trade) to the 363-ton
*Elizabeth* engaged by Robert Campbell Jnr. & Co. and Captain Collins, in pelagic
whaling, with the majority being over 200 tons. Almost all were older vessels built
overseas (some having seen service as convict transports) and subsequently sold-off
in the colony. 4 While local shipping investors were frequently able to purchase such
shipping at relatively low cost, the costs of refitting, provisioning and general
operating costs and nature of risk in the whaling industry generally placed this activity
beyond the reach of all but the well-capitalised merchant. 5

In 1832, individual merchants rarely undertook whole risks, preferring to share the
risk with other merchants and/or mariners in combinations of two, three or even four
shareholders. William Walker and Co. were the largest investors in the whaling trade,
with four vessels of 898 tons registered locally – the *Lynx*, *Mary*, *Pocklington*, and
*Tigress* - all involved in pelagic whaling. The firm of Campbell Junior & Co. almost
matched Walker’s in their investment in total local tonnage, however they dispersed
their fleet in three separate activities – pelagic whaling, the New Zealand bay whaling
trade, and trade with Mauritius. The other merchants and companies involved in
whaling activities included Kemmis & Brown, Gordon Brown, Campbell Senior &
Co., J. B. Bettington, George Bunn, John F. Church and Cooper and Levey. Fractional
ownership was the norm rather than the exception among these investors in the
whaling industry.

**Development of the Pelagic Whaling Trade, 1824-1850:**
A summary of the leading shipowners in NSW between 1824-1849 (Appendix 8) is
indicative of the growing importance of pelagic whaling, and the disproportionate
number of merchants involved in this investment. In October 1829 NSW had nearly

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4 Exceptions were the *Australian*, *New Zealander* and *Sir George Murray* – the first built at John
Grono’s shipyard at Pitt Town in 1829, and the latter two built at Thomas Raine’s Hokianga shipyards
in 1828 and 1830 – employed in the whaling and New Zealand trades.
5 By far the greatest investment capital was provided by the merchants firms of William Walker & Co.,
Kemmis & Brown, J.B. Bettington, R. Campbell, Jnr & Co, John Lamb, the Mossman brothers, and
George Bunn. *NSW Calendar & General Post Office Directory for 1832*, Trustees of the Public Library

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5,000 tons of shipping dedicated to the sperm fishing industry. 6 Altogether during the period, NSW shipowners invested in, and deployed, 90 ships in pelagic whaling (Appendix 9). The growth in this sector closely paralleled Great Britain’s declining interest in whaling. 7 For local merchants, investment in both whaling and in the pastoral industry constituted value-adding diversification strategies, by enabling them to control supply of unrelated product lines. 8 The proceeds of whaling and pastoral activities, in effect, helped to pay for imported British manufactured goods. Theoretically, at least, it enabled local merchants to reduce their prices on imported lines to consumers, so essential if they were to remain competitive. Thus, during the height of Pacific whaling activity in the 1830s, merchants such as Aspinall & Brown, J.B. Bettington & Co, Lamb & Parbury, and Hughes & Hosking, invested in non-core activities, such as whaling. Whale products, like timber, hides or copper ore, were essential export complements to the carriage of wool, providing deadweight for ships that might otherwise have carried worthless ballast. (Appendix 10 illustrates the variety of export freight carried by “wool ships” during the period 1843-4). Whaling activity was thus initially complimentary to the pastoral industry, at least until 1843, when tallow became an increasingly valuable export. 9 By the mid 1840s, NSW still had 36 vessels, or almost 9,000 tons, of shipping involved in sperm whaling. 10 However, their productivity was declining (Appendix 4 & 5). This partly reflected unsound fishing practices (such as taking breeding stock) and over-exploitation. It also reflected the economic failure of some of the major investors, in particular Hughes & Hosking, and Duke & Co. A number of whalers remained idle, due to the inability, or unwillingness of their owners to invest sufficient capital to keep them operational. 11

6 Sydney Gazette, 27 October 1829.
7 Browning, 17 March 1847, BPP (1847, 1st.), questions 1398-1399, 1404-1405; George Young, 1 June 1847, BPP (1847, 2nd), questions 5374-5440, pp. 85 ff.
10 Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List, 20 March 1847, pp. 428-9. Of these four had been built locally. A few were inactive, or were in the process of being diverted to sandalwood voyages.
11 Insolvency Records of Joseph & Henry Moore, (1844) and Robert Duke & Co., (1843), SRNSW, CGS13654, op.cit..
By 1845 the whaling trade had declined from its 1838 peak when 1,330 whalers (with a total of 66,485 tons) from America, Britain, France and the colonies patrolled the Pacific in search of the sperm whale. The old leaders of the NSW whaling industry – the Walkers, Duke & Co., Joseph and Henry Moore, Lamb and Parbury, and Hughes and Hosking all left the industry. Newer investors, such as Boyd, Fotheringham, Towns, employed very different business strategies. With the exception of Boyd, all limited their initial capital investment by purchasing cheap, second-hand shipping and equipment in a “bear market”, limiting operational costs by minimising wage and maintenance costs, while engaging in questionable insurance practices. Boyd was also ruthless with regard to wage and maintenance costs, while maintaining the image of the wealthy gentleman, through initially high capital investment, courtesy of British shareholders.

**Investment in Steam Navigation, from 1831:**

Investment in steam navigation in NSW was the most significant maritime development during the 1830s. The first suggestion that the NSW maritime industry was about to experience a technological revolution was H.G. Smith’s proposal to introduce steam navigation into Australasia in April 1830. Smith sought “some peculiar privileges” for his “considerable” investment. He informed Sir George Murray that he planned to return to the colony the following month with a Steam Engine. Smith was one of four brothers in the merchant firm of Smith & Company, another of whom, A.B. Smith, soon became one of these colony’s leading sponsors of

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12 Commercial Advertiser, 16 October 1838.
13 Frederick Parbury informed the Select Committee on the Navigation Acts on 23 March 1848 that his firm had sold all their whaling ships rather than face the inevitable competition from American oil, when Britain passed an Act to remove the tariffs as of 1 January 1849. (BPP, 1848), op.cit. Questions 1474-1484, pp.127-8.
14 Frank Broeze, ‘Australia, Asia and the Pacific, the Maritime World of Robert Towns 1843-1873’, Australian Historical Studies No 95 1990 pp.221-238; Towns v. Underwriters, NSW Supreme Court, reported in Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List, 12 February 1849, pp.94-104.
16 H.G. Smith of Holborn to Murray, 29 April 1830, HRA, Series 1, Vol. 15, Despatch from Hay to Darling 2 May 1830 with enclosure, pp. 462-3.
emigration. There is no evidence that either Murray or Governor Darling responded to his request. On his return to Sydney, Smith commissioned shipwrights, Robert Millard and Richard Linley of Neutral Bay, to build the paddle steamer *Surprise*, propelled by an eighteen-horse power engine he imported.

If Smith hoped to gain market advantage from the element of surprise, suggested by her name, Edward Biddulph’s arrival with the *Sophia Jane* in May 1831 must have been a heavy blow. Nevertheless, the size differential between the vessels destined for two different routes – the *Surprise* for the Parramatta run, and the *Sophia Jane* for the Morpeth (Green Hills) run. A more direct challenge arose from Captain Biddulph’s contract with shipbuilders, William Lowe and James Marshall, to construct another ferry for the Parramatta trade at their Deptford Yard on the Williams River, the *Experiment*, for £1,500. Immediately after she was launched in October 1832, problems emerged from her faulty propulsion. By March 1833 Biddulph was forced to sell her at a significant loss to Edye Manning, a Parramatta land and wharf owner.

In April 1833, technology was given further impetus with the establishment of the Australian Steam Conveyance Company (A.S.C.C.), under the initial chairmanship of merchant George Bunn. The purpose of the Company was to establish a steamer link between Parramatta and Sydney, and £2,000 was voted for the construction of a twelve-horsepower vessel. Among the original Directors were Captain Alexander Pattison (who established the Phoenix Foundry at Blackwattle Bay), and a number of engineers and shipwrights who undoubtedly benefited from the enterprise. In

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18 By July 1831, after her engines were fitted and she had been finally launched, Smith had already decided to divert the to the Derwent trade, *Sydney Gazette*, 12 July 1831.
19 *Sydney Gazette*, 9 October 1832.
20 *Commercial Advertiser*, 22 October 1836.
21 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 April 1833; *Sydney Gazette* 20 April 1833. Major shareholders in the Company included the shipowners George Bunn and Captain Robert Duke, as well as J.T.Wilson, Hannibal Macarthur, Manning, and shipwrights and engineers, such as R.D. Cunyngham, John Struth, W. Morgan and Pattison. According to the original constitution the Board of Directors was to consist of seven “gentlemen” and thirteen “operatives,” or engineers. Ronald Parsons, *Shipowners Registering their Ships in Early Sydney*. Ronald Parsons, Murray Bridge, S.A., May 2003, pp. 55, 90.
22 *Sydney Gazette*, 20 April 1833.
23 *Sydney Gazette*, September 1833; 25 January 1834.
August 1833, Biddulph (a shareholder) won the contract for the construction of a steam engine and boilers for a paddle steamer to be built of local timbers by shipwright, J.W. Russell of Clarence Town, to be called *Australia*.\(^{24}\) Biddulph established engineering workshops at the wharf of another A.S.C.C. shareholder, J.T. Wilson, between Barker’ Steam Mill and Thomas Street’s wharf and shipyard in Sussex Street, to undertake the work.\(^{25}\) However, if either Biddulph and the other shareholders in the newly formed A.S.C.C., or H.G. Smith expected any swift response from the colonial government to requests to clear the flats of the Parramatta River to make it navigable at all times of tide, they must have been frustrated. A contract was finally entered to begin the work, using convict labour in early 1834. An ambitious proposal was also projected for a canal to connect the Parramatta and Hawkesbury Rivers. However, the colony lacked a skilled civil engineer to undertake such a scheme, and the NSW Legislative Council delayed funding for such a position until 1835.\(^{26}\) This delay was prejudicial to the interests of many shareholders in the A.S.C.C., with one notable exception, J.T.Wilson. On 6 August 1835, Wilson informed the public that the Parramatta Steam Packet, *Experiment*, was continuing her regular service from his Wharf at Darling Harbour to the New Government Wharf at Parramatta.\(^{27}\) He noted that passengers using the steamer *Australia* would continue to experience delays and difficulties “until improvements were made to the River”. Wilson’s comments may have reflected the realities of navigation on the river, but reflect even more the highly competitive nature of early investors in the steamship industry. Wilson’s shifting loyalties to the *Experiment*’s new owner, Edye Manning, merely reflected his increasing determination to gain control over the industry.

H.G. Smith and the A.S.C.C. were not the only investors who believed there was a future for steam navigation in NSW. In 1831, a new steamer, *William the Fourth*, was launched from Marshall and Lowe’s shipyard for the Hunter River trade, for J.H. Grose. In 1834, Grose went into partnership with Sydney shipowner, Thomas Street,

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\(^{24}\) *Ibid*, 10 August 1833.

\(^{25}\) Bourne’s takeover was reported in the *Commercial Advertiser* on 13 August 1835. When engineer William Bourne took over Biddulph’s workshop in August 1835, it was described as being located at J. T. Wilson’s wharf. *Commercial Advertiser*, 13 August 1835.


\(^{27}\) *Commercial Advertiser*, 6 August 1835.
to form a new steamship company, the Hunter River Steam Packet Company. They jointly acquired the *Sophia Jane* from Biddulph in 1834, and over the next four years added the imported steamers, *King William the Fourth* and *James Watt*. The Company’s structure represented a simple “Deeds of Settlement” agreement, with the owners jointly liable, and subject to normal partnership rules. While Street’s own direct involvement ceased in 1838, Grose continued to invest in steam navigation, as a major shareholder in the Brisbane Water Steam Packet Company, and later as a shareholder in both the Hunter River Steam Navigation Company and the Australian Steam Navigation Company.\(^{28}\) However, from the start there was ruthless competition between steam companies. This reflected the high capital and operating costs of steam navigation that made this form of investment one of high business risk.

By December 1834, Wilson purchased the steamer *Tamar* from the Launceston Steam Navigation Company, and by early 1835 he placed her in the Hunter trade in direct competition with the *Sophia Jane*.\(^{29}\) With the *Surprise* sold on to Hobart, and Manning’s purchase of the *Experiment* from Biddulph in 1833, Wilson may well have believed that a monopoly of the industry was in his reach. Biddulph’s interest in the engineering workshop was sold to engineer William Bourne, a patron of Wilson.\(^{30}\) When the NSW Supreme Court seized the now bankrupt A.S.C.C.’s assets, Wilson purchased them in July 1836, for the sum of £2,250.\(^{31}\) By November 1836 Wilson left Sydney leaving behind debts in the vicinity of £50,000.\(^{32}\) Forced by his creditors to return to Sydney, Wilson quickly persuaded auctioneer, Abraham Pollack, and others to advance him sufficient funds to procure the steamers *Tamar* and *Sophia Jane*, as well as the sailing brig, *Nereus*.\(^{33}\)

\(^{28}\) The Hunter River Steam Navigation Company was formed in August 1839, under the chairmanship of Richard Jones, *Commercial Journal*, 7 August 1839.

\(^{29}\) Wilson v. Grose, 25 March 1835, Supreme Court of NSW, *Australian* 31 March 1835 and *Sydney Herald* 26 March 1835 and *Commercial Advertiser* of 14 September 1839, page 1

\(^{30}\) *Commercial Advertiser*, 13 July 1836; Letter from William Bourne to the Editor, *Commercial Advertiser*, 5 October 1835.

\(^{31}\) *Commercial Advertiser*, 13 July 1836.

\(^{32}\) Ronald Parsons, *Shipowners Registering their Ships in Early Sydney*. Ronald Parsons, Murray Bridge, S.A., May 2003, p. 90;

\(^{33}\) Polack v. Wilson, Supreme Court of New South Wales, 26 October, 9 & 16, 19 November 1839, *Sydney Herald*, 28 October, 11 November 1839; *Australian* 19, 21 & 23 November 1839.
Grose sold the *Sophia Jane* to auctioneers, Wilson and Abraham Pollack in July 1839 (although only registered in Wilson’s name) for £6,000, of which he received only £1,000 in down payment. During the following months Wilson regularly advertised for passengers and freight for the *Sophia Jane* and the *Tamar* as regular steam packets to the Hunter, demanding payment in cash. When Wilson clandestinely left Sydney in October 1839 to escape his creditors, his two steamers (the *Sophia Jane* and the *Tamar*) were seized as assets by the Supreme Court, and sold for the benefit of his creditors. The General Steam Navigation Company (G.S.N.C.) purchased them for £18,700. The sale was to have significant financial and legal repercussions for their new owners.

The industry was left to the joint stock companies – The Hunter River Steam Navigation Company (H.R.S.N.C.), the G.S.N.C., and later to the Royal Bank, which underwrote Benjamin Boyd’s investments in the *Juno, Cornubia* and *Seahorse*. Joint stock companies proved initially to have a more robust financial structure for would-be investors, as capital and operating costs were shared among a large number of shareholders, while their liability for losses was limited. In August 1839, the H.R.S.N.C., called for subscribers to fund a capital of £40,000 in the form of two thousand shares at £20 per share, voting to purchase two iron steamers from England. Those attending the inaugural meeting in Sydney consisted of merchants, landholders and shipowners.

The G.S.N.C., emerging almost simultaneously with the H.R.S.N.C., had the financial backing of Edye Manning and A.B. Spark, and similarly planned to enter the Hunter

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34 Polack v. Wilson, Supreme Court of NSW, 26 October 1839, *ibid*, and the *Sydney Gazette*, 26 & 29 October, 2 and 12 November NSW. Also, Insolvency Papers of John Thomas Wilson, 1 February 1842, SRNSW, 2/8650, CGS13654, Nos.1-3; and John Thomas Wilson, 8 September 1842, 2/8704, No.430; D. Pike, 'Wilson, John Thomas', *The Australian Dictionary of Biography*, MUP, Melbourne 1990, Vol. 2, pp.610-611.

35 *Commercial Advertiser* of 14 September 1839, page 1.


37 *ibid*, 20 February 1840, p.116, and 6 September 1842, p.144; *Sydney Herald*, 28 February 1840.


39 *Commercial Advertiser*, 7 August 1839.
River market. They voted to purchase a local steamer, the *Victoria* (which was in the process of being built by shipwright John Korff at Miller’s Forest), as well as to send to England for two more within the next eighteen months. They also planned to expand their operation to the Williams and Patterson Rivers. By the end of September the deeds of settlement had been drawn up and were ready for signature. Investment in steam navigation was risky enough, however competition between the H.R.S.N.C. and the G.S.N.C. in a limited and weak market was a recipe for financial disaster. By 1842, the G.S.N.C. had collapsed, and its three steamers, the *Victoria*, *Maitland* and *Sophia Jane* were sold at a loss. Despite, the insolvency of many of its shareholders, the H.R.S.N.C. survived, continuing to add new shipping to its fleet during the 1840s. Eventually, it even ventured into the Bass Strait trade, where Boyd’s steamers were unable to operate efficiently.

Joint stock companies attracted the investment of capital from merchants, pastoralists, professional men, and tradesmen. Most were attracted both by the relative novelty of steam and the possibility for receiving dividends for relatively small investment. The professional management of steam navigation also attracted investors totally ignorant of the maritime industry. This injection of capital provided a significant boost for the maritime industry, particularly those in the shipbuilding and engineering trades. This appears to have had a roll-on effect to sail, creating a renewed interest in shipping.

**Analysis of Ship Ownership, 1842:**

By 1842, the percentage of individual merchants investing in shipping had declined from its peak in the 1830s relative to the number of total investors, a trend paralleled by their falling percentage of total tonnage (Diagrams 3, p.150a & 4, p.159a). This

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40 A.B. Spark, *op.cit.* December 1839.
41 The *Victoria* was purchased from John Edye Manning, Alexander Spark and Korff for £16,000. Spark’s diary for 5 November 1839, *op.cit.* p.112.
42 Commercial Advertiser, 25 September 1839.
43 Colonial Observer, of 16 February 1842.
44 The testimony of Samuel Browning (allegedly Boyd’s London agent), dated 13 March 1847, to the Select Committee on the Navigation Laws, *op. cit.*, throws some interesting light on the cavalier business attitudes of both men and their disregard for the truth (questions 830-1509, pp.80-133).
45 Evident from the increased publicity received in the launch of new shipping in the press during the 1830s & 1840s. (*Sydney Gazette*, *Commercial Advertiser*, *Maitland Mercury*, and *Shipping Gazette & Sydney General Trade List*).
Diagram 4: The Growth of the NSW Shipping Industry: Investors and Tonnage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Local Owners</th>
<th>Total Tonnage</th>
<th>Mariners</th>
<th>Merchants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1818</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2611</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1824</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>8123</td>
<td>2672</td>
<td>5576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1832</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>9056</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>7459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1842</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>23245</td>
<td>2462</td>
<td>9370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1844</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>26685</td>
<td>3350</td>
<td>5006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>20725</td>
<td>2176</td>
<td>4774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>17879</td>
<td>5990</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
trend is apparent even when the figures for merchant companies are included. This reflected the declining yields from whaling as well as their severe financial stress, forcing many to withdraw from non-core business, sell assets, and reduce operating costs. The actual figures, in fact, represent a real increase in the actual numbers of merchants or merchant companies investing in shipping, compared with 1832, as might be expected, but also suggest that risk was being distributed among the partners in private companies, each of whom accepted liability, as only a very small number of business entities were in the nature of joint stock companies.

While all the leading shipowners described their occupations as merchants, at least three (Joseph Moore, Robert Duke and Ranulph Dacre) had been shipmasters, and both John Jones and John Jenkins Peacock were also competent navigators, not averse to commanding their own vessels. Appendix 7 suggests an increasing percentage of the maritime trades, in particular mariners, investing in shipping by 1842. This is represented graphically in Diagram 3 p. (p.150a). Mariners frequently formed partnerships with shipbuilders for the transport of cedar and hardwood timbers extracted and cut by Sawyer gangs in their employment along the NSW coastline.46 Mariners, navigating their own vessels, were in effect purchasing their own employment. This trend became more pronounced toward 1850, however in 1842 it was more usual for mariners to be part owners, in combination with merchants or ship-builders.

Local investment by shipwrights rose from 1.69% in 1832 to 8.07% in 1842. This corresponds with the arrival of shipbuilders with investment capital. Some investment represented genuine speculation, often associated with ancillary timber extraction and saw-milling activities, or (in the case of Sydney-based shipbuilders) transport of timber to their shipyards. However, ship ownership by shipwrights was not necessarily a growth strategy. Shipwrights rarely built speculatively, relying instead on formal contracts with merchants, mariners, landowners or others. There is evidence

46 Among numerous examples of such business partnerships were those between Captain George Coke and shipwrights, Marshall & Lowe, (Insolvency file of James Marshall, 24 July 1844, SRNSW, 2/8783, CGS13654, item 1293); and between Captain Robert Cork and shipbuilders Newton, Ferrier & Malcolm (Insolvency file of Newton, Ferrier & Malcolm, SRNSW, 2/8798, CGS13654, Item 1491).
that some ship ownership by shipwrights was associated with defaulting contractors, rather than with speculative activity.⁴⁷ Whether through speculation or through defaulting creditors, the number and proportion of shipbuilders engaged in ship ownership continued to rise during the 1840s. These figures are significantly higher than those identified by Sarah Palmer for London during the same period.

What is also apparent from the figures in Appendix 7 is that while the numbers of persons in the maritime trades investing in shipping more than doubled in the ten-year period from 1832-1842, the average size of their vessels dropped from 118 tons to 82 tons. By comparison, the number of merchants investing in shipping by 1842 increased from 12 to 54, with a slight drop in the number of merchant companies investing in shipping over the ten-year period. The average tonnage for the commercial sector in 1842 was 254 tons. While whaling remained an important activity, many of the larger vessels were diverted to other trades, including Mauritius, Batavia, India, New Zealand, Canton, Van Diemen’s Land and the South Sea Islands. This trend became more pronounced with the cessation of the EIC charter in 1834.

The following diagram illustrates the fluctuations in the profile of shipping investors during the period.⁴⁸

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⁴⁷ Such was the case for instance with shipwright William Lowe, who had been contracted by Edye Manning, George Coke and others to built the schooner Comet, which he subsequently registered in his own name after the contractors defaulted. R v. William Lowe (Supreme Court, 11/1843 – Select Cases Vol.7, SRNSW, 2/3465. p.85 (from T.D. Castle & Bruce Kercher (eds), Dowling’s Select Cases 1828-1844, Decisions of the Supreme Court of NSW, The Francis Forbes Society for Australian Legal History, Sydney 2005, pp.957-963). A similar dispute occurred between shipwright James Mohan and timber merchant Humphrey McKeon over the ownership of the barque Australian Oak in 1842. See SRNSW, 2/8766, Insolvency Papers of James Mohan, CGS13654, 9 December 1843, Item 1108.

⁴⁸ Shipbuilders are represented both as a single entity and as part of the marine sector in this profile. While merchants and companies are separately represented, the latter were, almost without exception, merchant companies.
Analysis of Shipowners, 1844-49, and the Affects of the Depression:

As can be seen from this diagram, the number of companies and individuals engaged in commerce and industry investing in shipping was falling after 1844. These changes reflected several factors. The first of these related to changes in shipping activity, particularly reductions in the number of ships engaged in the pelagic whaling trade. Another was the economic downturn of the early 1840s, which significantly affected the import and export trade (Appendices 1, 2, & 3). In some cases a number of investors in the shipping industry experienced financial collapse, while others divested themselves of assets that were not part of their core operations. A number of vessels were passed in to creditors or transferred overseas (sometimes in repayment of overseas debt, but at other times to avoid being seized by creditors). It also reflected a greater concentration of shipping in the hands of a relatively few

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49 Lamb & Parbury were among this group. See testimony of Frederick Parbury, 23 March 1848, to the Select Committee on the Navigation Laws, BPP, (1848, 1st Report), pp.122ff.

50 Insolvency file of R.G. Dunlop, 27 July 1843, SRNSW, CGS13654, No. 823; Insolvency file of Henry Terry Sheldon, 7 September 1843, SRNSW, 2/8749, CGS13654, No. 918.
shipowners – including Towns, Fotheringham, Francis Mitchell, Campbell and Boyd (Appendix 4).

Despite a rapid increase in the number of vessels being built in NSW in the period 1844-1849, there was a real reduction in the number of those investing in shipping.\textsuperscript{51} Ship investment peaked in 1844, with a total of at least 239 individuals or companies having some financial interest in shipping. Rather than indicating a healthy industry, I suggest, the increase in the number of investors during this period reflected the break-up of estates through insolvency. Both the individuals previously engaged in the industry, and the occupational profile of some investors in the period 1842-1845, changed. The number of companies investing in shipping declined, reflecting a decline in their fortunes as many were placed in receivership. A few vessels came into the hands of “professionals” such as solicitors and accountants, or auctioneers. Even more, in fact, entered a temporary “no man’s land,” being placed in the hands of creditors, banks or trustees of insolvent estates, while their fate was decided.\textsuperscript{52}

The financial crisis of the early 1840s was a watershed for NSW shipping investment, with investment from the commerce and industry sector falling to 46% in 1842, and continuing its downward trend through 1844 (44.63%) 1847 (39.71%) and 1849 (17.89%) of all shipping investment. During the same period, investment from the maritime industry sector steadily rose, before increasing its margin by over 30% in the period 1848-9, to almost 64% per cent of all investors (Appendix 7). Diagram 3 illustrates the overall fluctuations in the occupational profile of NSW shipping investment, and particularly the sharp rise in investment by mariners between 1847 and 1849.

During the period 1832-47, the maritime sector’s average share of total tonnage registered remained at just under 24%, before rising sharply to over 47% in 1849. In

\textsuperscript{51} Over forty-five per cent of shipping on the NSW Register in September 1849 had been built in NSW during this period. \textit{Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List}, 10 September 1849, pp. 230-1.

\textsuperscript{52} This fact is reflected in the insolvent papers of a number of shipowners, including those of J. T. Hughes, John Hosking, H.T. Sheldon, Joseph and Henry Moore, Joseph Hickey Grose, Richard and John Jones, J.J. Peacock, Ranulph Dacre and others. See bibliography.
1832, the average size of vessels owned by both sectors had not greatly varied, but by 1842 a marked divergence in size can be observed, with vessels averaging out at just under 95½ tons for the maritime sector, while those owned by the commercial and industrial sector averaged out at almost 213 tons at their peak in 1842. (Diagram 4, p.159a) Despite their increasing share of shipping investment however, the average size of vessels owned by the maritime sector in 1849 was only 69½ tons. In fact there had been steady decline in the average size of the vessels in which this sector had a financial interest from over 148 tons in 1832. Although the colony experienced some recovery in its economic health by 1847, it was insufficient to provide much encouragement to those investors for whom shipping was not their core business. By 1849 the number of investors had fallen to about 191 individuals. This is also reflected in the number of vessels and total tonnage registered. Given an increasing shipbuilding rate during the same period, much of the reduction reflects the decommissioning, transfer or loss of many older vessels on the local register in 1844.

In this context, it is useful to revisit the Palmer’s analysis of London shipping investors, discussed in Chapter 6. Palmer demonstrated that, with the exception of ‘shipowners,” the number of London shareholders in each occupational category fell significantly over the period 1824-1848, whether individually or in partnership. Palmer concludes that these figures indicate that ship ownership was becoming a specialised, rather than an ancillary, occupation. In the NSW context, a very different trend was apparent. However, it is also clear from Palmer’s study that the number of ship registrations in London fell from a high in 1825, to almost a third in 1848. An alternative interpretation is suggested from the testimony of British shipowners to the Parliamentary inquiry into the Navigation Laws, who depicted an industry under siege from low freight rates, and the failure of their whaling fleet to survive American competition and the introduction of oil-substitutes. Owners of shipping in the West Indian trade had similarly suffered from American competition and from the inability of their sugar plantations to compete with American plantations using slave labour.

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53 Palmer, *op.cit.*
54 Palmer, *ibid.*, Appendix 1, p. 67.
56 Testimony of A. Geddes, 17 March 1848, BPP (1848), question 830, p.80.
This trend is worth mentioning here as it had some notable implications for NSW ship investment and the shipbuilding industry.

The Transfer of Overseas Shipping Registrations and Local Investment:

As is demonstrated in Chapter 12 and Diagram 8, p.262a, second-hand, or imported shipping (mainly from Great Britain), were a significant and increasing source of investment for NSW shipowners. In 1832, 32 of a total number of 93 locally registered vessels (with a tonnage of 10,532 tons) were built overseas. Merchants, investing in the whaling industry, owned most of the imported shipping. Despite their sizable investment, whaling activities were for these merchants part of a much broader portfolio of investment. Merchant shipowners were primarily wholesale importers, exporters, and shipping agents. They frequently were also large landowners, employing overseers to manage their pastoral enterprises, and collecting rental on their town properties.\(^{57}\) For merchants or merchant companies, shipping investment (whether as owners or charterers), like involvement in pastoral activities, or the leasing of rental property, represented a useful adjunct to their primary activity. Sperm and black oil and whalebone were usually transhipped on English ships, together with wool cargoes to Great Britain in lieu of cash payment for British manufactured goods imported by local merchants.\(^{58}\)

In March 1839, there were 130 ships registered in Sydney, representing 15,000 tons.\(^{59}\) Within two years the number of vessels increased to 161, with a tonnage of 23,255 tons.\(^{60}\) The increase in NSW ship registrations during the period, and the numbers investing in shipping is illustrated in Diagram 4 (p. 159a). Much of the increase represented the transfer of shipping from Great Britain. Many of these vessels were

\(^{57}\) For example, Land Records of Richard Jones, (1827-1842), Colonial Secretary’s Office, SRNSW, 2/7894, Reel 1147; Insolvency Records of Richard Jones, 9 November 1843, SRNSW, 2/8761, CGS13654, No. 1043.

\(^{58}\) Substantial evidence for this can be found in a number of business records including the insolvency papers of merchants, Thomas Goodall Gore & Co., 29 July 1842, SRNSW, 2/8694, CGS13654, No. 342; Henry & Joseph Moore, 10 February 1844, No. 1177, 1178 and 1179; and Robert Duke (& Co.) (Miller’s Point), 29 April 1842, SRNSW, 2/8683, No. 235.

\(^{59}\) Commercial Advertiser, 13 March 1839.

purchased at public auction or in private sales, some complete with stores and rigging. Minimising capital expenditure on shipping was in itself a risky strategy, resulting in the purchase of unseaworthy vessels. The decision to purchase second-hand shipping rather than invest in locally built vessels reflected the speculative and high-risk nature of many local shipping activities, such as the sandalwood and whaling trades. It frequently was associated with non-core, short-term business activities. Unlike many of the London shipowners, initial investment in the NSW whaling trade was minimised through the purchase of second-hand shipping, often for as little as £1,500 for the ship, while shorter voyages meant not only speedier returns but also cheaper outfitting and operational costs. Thus they were able to minimise the speculative risk through both fractional shareholdings in whaling activities and by reduced operational costs.

There were a variety of reasons for the sale or transfer of overseas shipping to NSW. Some had unsuccessful whaling voyages, others had undergone costly repairs in Sydney and the shipmaster was unable to raise a bottomry bond for their repair. Local shipbuilders were therefore sometimes the recipients or purchasers of overseas-built shipping. Shipbuilders also purchased wrecks, on speculation, for salvage and repair “for the benefit of underwriters.” Other vessels had been seized by Customs. Particularly after 1835, when new Merchant Seamen’s legislation was passed, ships were seized by the NSW Vice-Admiralty Court to secure wage claims brought by seamen. In other cases, the owner and shipmaster made a deliberate decision to settle in NSW, and sold his vessel and its freight to fund other enterprise, particularly pastoral pursuits, or to downsize to another type of vessel more suitable for the coastal

61 These sales, and their results were published in the Sydney Gazette, the Commercial Advertiser from 1834, and in the Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List from 1844, with prices for second-hand whalers ranging from as low as £400 to £4,000. These prices bore little relationship to age or size, but rather reflected market demand.

62 A survey of shipping sold by public or private auction during the period indicates that second hand whaling barques of any age, usually sold with fittings, could be purchased for as little as £750 up to an average of £3,000, (independent of age) depending on demand (Based on published sales prices quoted in the Commercial Advertiser and Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List).

63 Wilson Brothers v. Nimrod, 5 October 1838, NSW Vice-Admiralty Court, Sydney Herald, 8 & 22 October 1838.

64 Lyons v. Marshall, Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List, 23 November 1844, pp. 236-7; Meeting of the Sydney shipping interests, ibid, 29 August 1846.
Shipping was frequently heavily mortgaged. Mortgages were often obtained for the purpose of securing marine insurance, store provisions, or fitting out vessels for a whaling voyage. In the absence of a local currency, mortgages or liens over all forms of property, including wool clips, rope and timber, were almost universal. Exact figures are not available, but extensive evidence for this is to be found in NSW insolvency records.

**Tonnage, Deployment and Occupational Groups:**

Changes in the profile of investors during the 1830s and 1840s were matched by changes in the profile of local shipping. In 1832, the maritime industry (including mariners, shipwrights, related marine trades, and those whose primary occupation were shipowners) accounted for almost 22.5½% of investors, while commerce and industry (either individually or as companies) accounted for over 70% of all investors. Diagram 6 (p.168) illustrates the relationship between occupational group and the changing trend in tonnage investment over the period 1819-1849. In the commercial sector, the peak of average tonnage occurred in 1824, and was already on the decline by 1842. By comparison, the average size of vessels owned by the commerce and industry sector was less than 194 tons in 1849. This coincided with a decline in the whaling industry, with a withdrawal of some shipping from the registry as merchants attempted to sell off assets, and (not least) the loss or destruction of some shipping over time. By 1849, 235 vessels were registered in the colony, with over 190 owners. Of these, 191 (representing 8,691 tons, or over 81%) were built in the colony. The maritime industry sector had an interest in over 131 (or 68.6%) of vessels, with mariners being clearly the largest stakeholders within this sector (118 vessels). Despite this sector’s increasing share, however, their overall share in tonnage

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66 Insolvency files of Robert Duke & Co., 29 April 1842, SRNSW, 2/8683, CGS 13654, No. 235; Joseph & Henry Moore, 10 February 1844, Nos. 1177-9; John Jones, 14 May 1844, SRNSW, 2/8780, No. 1263; Richard Jones, 9 November 1843, SRNSW, 2/8761, No. 1043; R.G. Dunlop, 27 July 1843, No. 823, and others.
67 Evidence for this has been located in the insolvency records of merchants such as Thomas Gore & Co. and Hughes & Hoskings, shipwrights such as John Korff, and wharfingers such as Henry Moon.
amounted to just 47%, with an average vessel tonnage of 69½ tons. In real terms, vessel size ranged from a 6-ton ketch to a 388-ton barque.

The typical craft was a schooner or cutter, ideal for deployment in the coastal trade, being better able to respond to small market opportunities, negotiating shoals, and having minimal operating costs. They could be acquired at low initial cost, either new or second-hand. For shipwrights, with access to timber, they represented an ideal strategy for either supplementing unreliable income or “stepping out” of their role as shipwrights. Some, like John Korff, shifted into management and marine surveying. Frequently mariners and shipwrights formed partnerships in these ventures, each contributing their physical and financial efforts to the success of their shipping investment.68 From 1832 there was a rapid expansion of settlement to the north, from Newcastle to Moreton Bay, and to the south of Sydney, to the Shoalhaven, as sawyers

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68 This is evident in the business partnerships of Newton, Ferrier and Malcolm; Buddivant and Dones; McCaffrey and Lenehen; Chowne and Stericker; Chowne and Thompson; Phillips and Coles; Warden and Gee, and others.
took advantage of fine timber stands adjacent to coastal rivers. Raine, Walker and the
Imlay brothers also located a rich source of black whales at Twofold Bay, establishing
a bay whaling station there to complement their pastoral activities. By 1838, in
response to the demand for land, settlements were established at Port Phillip,
Geelong, Portland Bay, Adelaide, and as far distant as the Swan River. As can be seen
from the figures in Appendix 7, mariners and shipbuilders significantly benefited (and
to some extent, pioneered) this expansion during the period after 1832. Shipbuilders
were increasingly retaining ownership of vessels they built, not only to transport
timber and supplies to their shipyards, but as a source of alternative income. This
latter strategy is evident in the fleet of seven vessels shipbuilder, J.W. Russell, built
during the preceding five years, which were actively engaged in transporting coastal
and inter-colonial cargo and passengers. I discuss shipbuilders and the development
of local shipbuilding in Section Three.

Mariners accounted for over 50% of all shipowners by September 1849. Of 98 known
mariners investing in shipping, 49 commanded their own vessels, while some also had
an interest in other vessels. The majority of these vessels were coastal or inter-
colonial shipping, for which activity their size and rigging suited admirably. A few
were vessels active in the Pacific and whaling trade, the latter usually in partnership
with merchants or other mariners. 69 As news of the Californian gold strike reached
the colony in 1849, a significant number of vessels previously active in the coastal,
inter-colonial and Pacific trades, were diverted to San Francisco with passengers and
speculative cargo for the gold fields. Many of the shipmasters and owners were to
seriously regret their decision. A number of vessels were wrecked or damaged in
severe storms, some with loss of life. Others reached their destination only to be
bedevilled by high port charges, insufficient pilots and warehousing, the mass
desertion of crew, highly inflated labour costs, and a lack of markets for their
speculative cargo. 70

69 For example J. Williamson shared ownership of the whaler *Lindsays* with merchant Francis Mitchell;
and R Elliott with J.N. Palmer in the whaler *Proteus.*
70 Journal of John Russell, in Russell and Nichol Families Papers, Mitchell Library, ML MSS.1310, III,
Items 2 & 3. See also SRNSW, Insolvency Papers of John Smith Papps, shipmaster of the *Harmony,* 12
February 1851, CGS13654, No. 3026.
For mariners, investment in shipping provided some insurance of continued employment, albeit risky. For many ship owners, however, investment was a speculative undertaking, rather than a specialist activity. Whaling activities, in particular, represented a risky high-cost diversification strategy. Its speculative nature provided an opportunity for the rapid accumulation of wealth, as well as the potential for financial disaster. Local shipowners were, nevertheless, able to employ a range of strategies to minimise risk, not so readily available to their counterparts in Great Britain. These included the ability to divert their shipping relatively quickly to other trades should the whaling season prove disappointing. Whalers were sometimes diverted into the New Zealand, sandalwood, Mauritius or China trades, converted to coal carriers, or even underwent building alterations to convert them into passenger ships.\footnote{After being engaged in the colonial whaling trade for many years the barque British Sovereign was sold on to merchants Lamb and Parbury who finally had her converted, convinced by declining whale proceeds to withdraw from that industry. Frederick Parbury, 23 March 1848, BPP (1848) \textit{op.cit.}, question 1480, and p.128.}

For London whaling ship investors, the concept of “depreciation” was a useful method of writing off their capital losses, subsequently sold cheaply to NSW shipping investors.\footnote{Depreciation was calculated for each year on the life of a ship on its diminished value, and treated as an operating expense when calculating the ship’s net annual profit or loss. G. F. Young, 8 June 1847, BPP (3rd Report, 1847), question 5832, p. 126.} The new owners could realise profits on their assets much more quickly, due to their flexibility and location close to resources. That many local shipowners still failed financially during the early 1840s bore little relationship to their shipping investments \textit{per se}, but rather to the spread of their investment activities, and their reliance on extended credit and mortgages to fund investment, social image and “lifestyle”. By 1849, the pattern of shipping investment increasingly reflected a return to core business activities.
CHAPTER 8: THOMAS STREET, SHIP OWNER

Superficially at least, distinguishing between shipowners on the basis of occupation appears tautologous. However, as demonstrated, such distinctions become meaningful in determining individual motivation for investment. Very few NSW shipowners identified their primary occupation as “shipowner.” If Henry Woodruffe’s claim that ship ownership was a status symbol, by which “tradesmen” (meaning in this context not only skilled artisans, but also shopkeepers and dealers) measured their rise in social class, we might have expected more shipowners to identify themselves as such.1 However, even during periods when “tradesmen” did form a significant proportion of shipowners – pre-1820, and post-1843 –very few nominated their primary occupation as “shipowner.” Palmer and Davis suggested that ship owning was usually an ancillary occupation or adjunct to the role of merchant, because freights were such an uncertain business.2 Even the wealthy London shipowner Duncan Dunbar complained of the uncertainty of obtaining paying freights referring to the bankruptcy of many colleagues.3

One exception was emancipist shipowner, Thomas Street. Street was also atypical of others claiming to be primarily “shipowners,” in that while they owned one or two vessels of small tonnage, he became a leading colonial shipowner. Despite Street being atypical in identifying his primary occupation as “shipowner,” Street’s shipping activities in fact provide an excellent example of the variety and nature of NSW shipping investment. A study of his career provides many useful insights into the nature of the industry, its development and challenges and some of the strategies employed by shipowners to manage risk. In this chapter I examine his profile and motivation, and assess the strategies he employed to obtain paying freights.

1 Testimony of Henry Woodruffe, 5 July 1836, Inquiry into the Causes of Shipwrecks, BPP.(1836), Question 296, p. 22.
Street’s career has scarcely rated a mention by Australian historians. The chief reason for his omission is that unlike men such as Robert Campbell, Alexander Spark or Robert Towns, Street left no personal records or business papers. He was not among those who became bankrupt in the early 1840s, whose business and personal records can be accessed through insolvency papers. Nor did he die in NSW, and his local probate records are minimal. It is thus only possible to piece together his career through accessing limited related government documents, from the papers of Alexander Riley, and most commonly from newspaper reports throughout the period.

Street was born in London and arrived as a convict on the *Admiral Gambier* in 1811. A twenty-year old blacksmith, he was convicted at the Grand Bailey and initially sentenced to death for grand larceny, having stolen a roll of cashmere cloth from London mercer, Thomas Jenkins of Fleet Street. This sentence was commuted to seven years transportation after the presentation of four good character references. On arrival at Port Jackson he was sent to Windsor as an assigned servant to Charles Smith, who later gained a reputation as a horse breeder.

By 24 July 1813 he received a Ticket of Leave, and was accordingly struck off the victualling list. Some time before the 1814 Muster, Street entered a *de facto* marriage with another convict (and widow) Amelia Bellairs, whom he subsequently married in 1823, after the completion of her fourteen-year sentence of

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5 While Thomas Street and his family had in fact returned to England to live in 1840, no records of insolvency have been located in either Australia or Great Britain, nor is he listed as a debtor or creditor to the estates of other merchants, shipowners or mariners, with the exception of the notorious defaulter John Thomas Wilson, who owed Street a small sum (possibly in rental for his wharf). Insolvency Papers of John Thomas Wilson, 8 September 1842, SRNSW, 2/8704, CGS13654, No.430.

6 Probate Records of Thomas Street, SRNSW, UAD (NSR-ITM-229083), Series 1-3712, (date of death, 4 March 1855), probate granted 7 February 1857. Street’s main probate estate stated to be valued at £18,000 was finalised at the Ecclesiastical Court of Canterbury, England.

7 Ship’s Muster (Admiral Gambier), 1811, Colonial Secretary’s Office, SRNSW; Ticket of leave, 1 July 1813, No. 774; SRNSW, 4/4427, COD 18, Reel 601; Conditional Pardon, 5 June 1815, SRNSW, 4/4430, No.774, p.0087; Carol J. Baxter (ed), *General Muster and Land and Stock Muster of New South Wales*, 1822. ABGR in association with Society of Genealogists, Sydney, n.d.


9 Details of his Condition Pardon, 5 June 1815, SRNSW, 4/4430, No. 774, p.0087.

10 Ticket of Leave No. 21/598, SRNSW, 4/3491, p.520, Reel 6002.
transportation. On 5 June 1815 he obtained a Conditional Pardon, on the recommendation of William Cox. Street rendered assistance to Governor Macquarie’s party during its expedition across the Blue Mountains to Bathurst from February to May 1815 by conveying maize and other supplies by horseback and cart. If Street were a qualified blacksmith, as described at his London trial, then his services in the colony would certainly have been in high demand. His apprenticeship would only have been recently completed, and without the financial backing of family, or some capital, he may have been unable to afford the equipment essential to conduct his trade independently.

By 1816, Street had taken to the sea. The Captain of the American vessel *Traveller* requested the Colonial Secretary to prevent Thomas Streeter embarking on another vessel, the *Mary Ann*, and leaving Sydney, because of existing articles of agreement to serve as second officer on the *Traveller*. The colonial schooner, *Mary Ann*, was a regular coastal packet to Newcastle during this period, while the American schooner, the *Traveller*, chartered by Walter Davidson in China, was seized in 1815 for alleged contravention of the East India Company’s monopoly. Street’s business links with Newcastle, Broken Bay and the Hunter region during the early 1820s suggest an earlier connection with that region. The *Traveller* subsequently left Sydney on 26 March 1816 to proceed on a voyage in the Pacific. Street in fact had already sailed, not on the *Mary Ann*, but on the colonial vessel *King George* sailing for the South Sea Islands on February 1816, under Captain Robert Stewart Walker. This voyage may well have marked the beginning of a personal relationship between the families.

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12 Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/4430, Reel 774, p. 087.
14 Apprenticeships for blacksmiths were usually of five years duration, and commenced when lads were twelve to fifteen years of age.
15 Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 26 March 1816, SRNSW, 4/1736, Reel 6046, pp.68-9.
16 Reports from John Piper of the Naval Office to Macquarie, 30 June, 30 September, 31 December 1815, *HRA*, Series 1, Vol. 10, pp. 80, 85, 89.
17 Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1736, Reel 6046, pp.68-69.
18 *Sydney Gazette*, 10 February 1816, (Notice).
consummated in the marriage of Street’s defacto stepdaughter, Mary Ann Bellairs, and Walker in 1822.  

Street’s next recorded voyage was as Chief Officer of the *Amboyna*, which sailed for Java and India on 1 April 1820.

Street like many of his colonial peers, established more than one occupational and business interest. By January 1820 he was established as a storekeeper near Market Wharf in Sydney, supplying groceries and tea to the citizens of Sydney and outlying communities.  

His defacto wife, Amelia, took an active role in managing his business affairs ashore while he was at sea. In June 1821 Street purchased his first vessel, the 44-ton colonial schooner *Sindbad*, of which he was also shipmaster, advertising her for freight or passage to Port Stephens. In July and August 1821, the *Sindbad* was sent to Port Dalrymple for a wheat cargo. Street also used her to transport over 19,000 feet of cedar to Sydney from Port Stephens in that year alone. He soon had a cedar cutting gang on his account at Port Stephens, and a lime-burning gang operating on the coast. Over the next few years, Street successfully tendered for public contracts to the Commissariat for the supply of wheat, maize and salt pork, to Government Works at Sydney, Liverpool and Windsor for the supply of coals, timber and lime. Colonial revenue records from 1821-1826 indicate that he made a substantial income from these contracts alone. He also gained private contracts with

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19 He and Mary Ann Bellairs had a daughter, Eleanor born at sea on the *Dragon* at Mellina, Tahiti, in the East Indies on 22 December 1822. (Mary Ann born in 1803, was the daughter of Amelia Bellairs). They married at Scots Church Sydney on 12 September 1826, NSW Marriage Registry.  
20 *Sydney Gazette*, 18 & 24 March 1820; Ships Musters, Colonial Secretary Office, SRNSW, 4/4771, Reel 561, COD 420, pp. 224, and 433.  
22 Mrs. Amelia (Street) was listed as a successful tenderer in the supply of wheat to the government during 1821 – *Sydney Gazette*, 6 January, 3 March, 21 April, 22 December 1821.  
23 *Sydney Gazette* 9 June 1821.  
24 Street to Colonial Secretary, 7 August 1821, offering to tender the *Sindbad* to the government for £800, he informed him that she currently was at that Port with 1500 bushels of wheat, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1750, Reel 6051, pp., 32-34.  
25 Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/4771, COD 420, pp. 314 and 331; 4/4774, COD 420, p331.  
26 *Sydney Gazette*, 18 January, 11 October and 27 December 1822.  
28 Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1748, Reel 6051, pp., 136-7, 158; 4/424, Reel 6039, pp. 80, 142, 320-1, 413, 431, 433-4, 441; 4/1760, Reel 6055, p.121-3; 4/1761, Reel 6055, p. 133; 4/6037, Reel 6070, p. 13, 20, 27, 36, 46, 50, 57, 62, 68; 4/1784, Reel 6063, pp. 168a, 174a, 178a, 184a, 187a, 190a.
men such as Simeon Lord for the supply of cedar, rosewood and other hardwoods to
the local and overseas markets.\(^{29}\)

It was evident that initially the demand for timber, coal and lime drove his shipping
acquisitions. These consisted of the schooners, sloops and cutters, *Sindbad, Newcastle, Black Jack, Sally, Echo, Fanny, Elizabeth, Penguin, Speedwell, Darling, Amelia* and *Angelina*, acquired between 1820-1826, for the transport of coals, timber
and lime from Newcastle and Port Stephens.\(^{30}\) During this period Street identified
himself not as a ship-owner, but variously as a “mariner” or “captain” (first of the
*Sally* and later of the *Newcastle*), a “timber merchant”, “publican” and as a “licensed
victualler”.\(^{31}\) He acquired a spirit licence for premises at King Street, Sydney in
1822.\(^{32}\) During 1823 he described himself as a “publican”, however by December
1823 he advertised his services in the press as a “shipping agent”.\(^{33}\) From 1822 Street
also commenced shipbuilding activities at Cockle Bay and at Brisbane Waters,
employing the services of two convict shipwrights, George Dagwell and Johnnie
Johnson, at his property at Brisbane Waters. Free shipwright, John Jones, built the
schooner *Darling* for Street at Cockle Bay.\(^{34}\) In 1824 he was described as a timber
merchant.\(^{35}\) It was only in the mid-1820s that Street more consistently claimed
himself to be primarily a shipowner.\(^{36}\)

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\(^{29}\) *Ibid*. Fiche 3310, 4/1099 2, pp.. 45 and 47; 4/1753, Reel 6052, p.188.

\(^{30}\) At least some of these vessels were built for him at Cockle Bay and at Brisbane Waters, and are
variously mentioned in the *Sydney Gazette* as well as the Colonial Secretary’s correspondence as being
owned him Street.

\(^{31}\) A muster list of the *Newcastle* in August 1823 provides critical proof that the owner and master of
the vessel was indeed identical to the convict who had arrived on the *Admiral Gambier*, SRNSW,

\(^{32}\) *Sydney Gazette*, 22 March 1822. On 23 July 1823, Street placed an advertisement for his store at
King Street in the *Sydney Gazette*, indicating that it continued to provide other items for sale.

\(^{33}\) *Sydney Gazette*, 4 December 1823.

\(^{34}\) Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1763, Reel 6056, p.269; 4/3509, p.153; Fiche
3296, X53, pp. 50, 66, 80; 4/1780, Reel 6061, p. 165; 4/1789, Reel 6064, p. 61; Malcolm R. Sainty, &
Keith A. Johnson (eds.), *Census of New South Wales, November, 1828*.

\(^{35}\) *Sydney Gazette*, 22 March 1822; *NSW Muster 1822, op.cit.*; Colonial Secretary’s correspondence
SRNSW, 4/1839B, Fiche 3112; No. 935, pp..955-962.

\(^{36}\) Old Church Records, St Phillips, January 1827 (marriage) SRNSW; Malcolm R.Sainty & Keith
A.Johnson (eds.), *Census of New South Wales, November 1828*, Library of Australian History, Sydney
1985, No. S2642.
Street’s early shipping investments were thus incidental but essential to his other financial activities, and amounted to no more than about 1,000 tons. In this respect Street fits the profile of many other early colonial shipowners identified by Commissioner John Bigge, who acquired boats to transport essential supplies from Parramatta, the Hawkesbury River and north to Newcastle. Street’s easy shift between occupational descriptions, suggests a man not so much interested in status, but rather in profits. Clearly he was a busy man, willing to undertake a range of activities to ensure not simply freight for his shipping, but shipping for his freight.

The profitable nature of the local timber trade is evident from the correspondence of Justice Baron Field in 1825, which claimed that cedar planks were fetching 45-50s. per hundred feet. The fact that the 44-ton *Sindbad* transported 19,000 feet of cedar in addition to other cargo in three voyages from Port Stephens during 1820, suggests that the additional shipping was a very worthwhile investment. Nevertheless, the prices quoted by Field were *retail* prices fetched in Sydney, not those paid to the primary contractor (in this case Street) to Simeon Lord in 1822. On 10 June 1822 Street signed an agreement to procure 200,000 superficial feet of cedar, rosewood and spotted gum for the account of Simeon Lord, a document drawn up by Francis Shortt (Alexander Berry’s erstwhile South African partner). Street was to be paid the equivalent in manufactured goods supplied by Lord of a total of £1,100, or just 11s. per hundred feet. The document included penalty clauses for late delivery with what one must suspect can only have been an intention of depriving Street of his timber rights at Port Stephens.

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39 Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1809, Reel 6067, pp.. 64-71a, and 72-74.
40 26 August 1822 he signed a contract for the supply of timber to Simeon Lord, SRNSW, 4/1753, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, Reel 6052, p.188. In 1822 he contracted with Simeon Lord to supply timber per Fame, *Minerva* and *Princess Charlotte*, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1099.2, Fiche 3310, pp. 45 and 47.
41 A copy of the articles of agreement between Simeon Lord and Thomas Street, drawn up by Francis Shortt, were enclosed in a letter Lord sent to the Colonial Secretary on 9 June 1823, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1809, Reel 6067, pp. 64 & 74.
42 Street was required to give Lord a preference over all cedar and rosewood cut at Port Stephens in excess of the contract, on penalty of £500.
Lord already had his own cedar-cutting gang at Port Stephens, and his operations in the Hunter were in direct competition with Street’s.⁴³ There was a short-term but fairly vicious attempt by Lord and his associates to undermine Street’s operations – not least in the commencement of a civil action for alleged non-fulfilment of the agreement.⁴⁴ Ultimately, Lord appears to have withdrawn from the action, instead seeking special favours from the government to establish a monopoly of the coastal trade north of the Hunter River.⁴⁵ Lord and Shortt sought “exclusive protection” to the use of the coastal area from Smoky Cape to the tropics for 3-5 years, a request reminiscent of Simeon Lord’s (also unsuccessful) attempt to claim a monopoly over the New Zealand trade.⁴⁶

At the beginning of 1823 the smuggling activities of Lord’s mariners and cedar gangs in the Port Stephens and Hunter region resulted in a temporary embargo on all shipping there.⁴⁷ This immediately compromised Street’s ability to fulfil both his contract with Lord and his government contracts for the supply of timber, lime and coal.⁴⁸ Street successfully petitioned and while the government lifted its embargo, it insisted that all shipowners pay financial guarantees they would not smuggle alcohol.

⁴³ *Ibid*. 4/3505, Reel 6009, p. 402, dated 13 June 1822. However, under the terms of the contract Lord in fact was to withdraw his timber-cutting gang from the area.
⁴⁴ On 9 June 1823 Lord complained to the Colonial Secretary that Robert Campbell Junior had compacted with Street to deprive Lord of his cedar. *Ibid*. Reel 6067, 4/1809, pp. 64 & 74. Four days later, on 13 June 1823 there was a request for permission for Simeon Lord to procure timber from Port Stephens, *ibid*., Reel 6009; 4/3505, p. 402.
⁴⁵ Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, October 1823, SRNSW, 4/1809, pp. 33-35B.
⁴⁶ Five merchants and others (Simeon Lord, Garnham Blaxcell, Richard Brooks, W.H. Hovell & E.S. Hall) established a company called the “New South Wales New Zealand Company, which they were anxious to be incorporated as a joint stock company under charter, Memorial to Macquarie, 24 June 1815, *HRA*, Series 1, Vol. 8, pp. 583-6, and 561.
⁴⁷ Street to Goulburn, 10 February 1822, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1760, Reel 6055.
⁴⁸ Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1809, Reel 6067, pp. 20-21.
into the area.\textsuperscript{49} The impost appears to have coincided with Street’s decision to form a temporary partnership with Robert Campbell Junior.\textsuperscript{50}

Street’s short-term business partnership with Robert Campbell Junior and Co. had clearly begun by May 1823. Its intention may have been to offset some of his capital and operating costs including, in particular, the large government bonds of £500 per voyage, demanded as deterrents to smuggling.\textsuperscript{51} The terms of the partnership included a contract for Street to procure cedar and rosewood for Campbell.\textsuperscript{52} While Street and Campbell were not the only shipowners required to post bonds prior to departure, perhaps the government had reason enough to be wary given Street’s spirit licence.\textsuperscript{53} Nevertheless, the bonds were a particular hardship to shipowners who could never absolutely guarantee that their captains or crew would not jeopardise their sureties by smuggling spirits aboard. Lord himself appears to have been able to evade the penalty, by what appears to have been a veiled threat of legal action.\textsuperscript{54}

During his initial career as a ship owner, Street exercised great moderation in his investments. He purchased a small fleet of local, low maintenance vessels, mostly schooners and cutters of less than forty tons that were kept fully employed, bringing cargoes of coal, lime, timber, wheat, maize and salt pork in fulfilment of government or private contracts.\textsuperscript{55} His employees consisted of a mix of assigned convicts and free colonists, including some skilled tradesmen – shipwrights, sail-makers, carpenters,

\textsuperscript{49} The parties to the agreement, Thomas Street and Robert Campbell Jnr. had to pay a bond of £500 for the release of their vessels to make a coastal voyage to Port Stephens or Newcastle. In addition they were subject to severe penalties for any breach of the agreement relating to the “smuggling” of alcohol or runaways (whether intentionally or not) of £200, or for any person trespassing beyond a five-mile limit from the sea. Copies of the agreements are located in Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/7027, Fiche 32-80, pp. 11-13; 24-29; 39-41.

\textsuperscript{50} Referred to in the bonds, and in Simeon Lord’s complaint to the Colonial Secretary’s Office, 9 June 1823, op.cit.

\textsuperscript{51} SRNSW, ibid.

\textsuperscript{52} Joint bonds signed by Street and Campbell on 15 May 1823, for the Newcastle and Sally, and for the Newcastle on 6 August and 8 December 1823, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/7027, Fiche 32-80, pp. 11-13; 24-29; 39-41. Further evidence is in a letter from Simeon Lord to the Colonial Secretary, previously referred to, which included copies of his articles of agreement and correspondence with Street and Campbell, Lord to Goulburn, 9 June 1823, ibid.

\textsuperscript{53} Sydney Gazette, 22 March 1823. The licence was for premises in King Street.

\textsuperscript{54} Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1811, p. 147; circa January 1825.

\textsuperscript{55} In January 1824 Street tendered for supply of coal from Newcastle to the government at Sydney at a freight of ten shillings per ton, and freights to Newcastle at the same rate. Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1778, Reel 6061, p. 67.
sawyers and brick-makers, as well as mariners. He occasionally advertised for freight or passengers on his outward voyages to Port Stephens and the Hunter, and by at least 1825 was freighting grain to Sydney from Windsor for settlers. He also diversified into shipbuilding on a modest scale, with several vessels built at Port Stephens and others at Cockle Bay. During the two-year period 1822-1824, Street received over £4,000 from his government contract for lime and cedar, and during a nine-month period in 1825 he received an additional £1,800 from the government for the supply of lime at 6½d. a bushel. By 1826 Street identified himself as a “ship-owner,” and had an interest in some sixteen vessels, not all surviving the sudden gales to which the coastline was prone. Between 1825 and 1829 Street acquired twenty vessels, with a total tonnage of over 1,600 tons.

During this time he formed a business partnership with another emancipist, Thomas Hyndes, a timber merchant and ship-builder. The partnership ceased in January

56 Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 31 December 22-30 September 1823, SRNSW, Fiche 3296, 53, pp. 50,66,80; 9 September 1823-20 May 1824, 4/4570D, Fiche 3290, pp.12, 24, 32, 47, 57, 84, and 4/4570D, Fiche 3291, pp.116, 132. In a memorial to the government in December 1824, Street described himself as a “timber merchant” employing seventy men, ibid, 4/1839B, Fiche 3112; No. 935, pp. 955-962; Carol J. Baxter (ed), General Master and Land and Stock Muster of New South Wales, 1822, ABGR in association with Society of Genealogists, Sydney. By 1828, Street was the second largest private employer of labour in the colony, employing one hundred and forty seven persons. See 1828 Census Householder’s Return, SRNSW, CGS 1273-1274, Reels 2551-2552, 2506-7.

57 Sometime during 1825, Street had been conveying 200 bushels of wheat and maize consigned to Underwood from S. Wiseman’s property on the Hawkesbury, when his vessel, the Penguin was wrecked. The grain was salvaged and placed ashore to dry but was subsequently stolen by a nearby settler. The case R. v. West was heard in the Supreme Court on 12 September 1825, and subsequently reported in the Sydney Gazette.


59 Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/424, Reel 6039, pp. 80, 320-321, 413, 431, 434, 441; 4/6037, Reel 6070, pp.13, 20, 27, 36, 46, 50, 57, 62, 68; Treasury Orders drawn, SRNSW 4/1784, Reel 6063, pp. 168a, 178a, 184a, 187a, 190a.

60 Hyndes arrived on the Glatton in 1803. He married Charlotte Green, whose 12-year old nephew, George Green, arrived in 1822 to live with the family, and subsequently served an apprenticeship as a shipwright. In 1822, Hyndes was working as a Master Sawyer (ibid., 4/1833, Reel 3057, No. 28, p. 101); on 30 April 1823 Hyndes received a permit to extract 20,000 feet of cedar from the Illawarra, ibid., 4/3509, pp. 47, 366, and sought permission to build a boat, ibid, 4/1771, Reel 6058, pp. 269-269a. By late 1823, Street was listed in the Sydney Gazette as master of the Sally, on voyages to the Illawarra for cedar cargoes. Hyndes and Street jointly owned the Sally.
One of their final business transactions as partners was the voyage of the *Sally* to the Cumberland Isles from which she returned with six casks of trepang, immediately put to auction together with the vessel.\(^{62}\) Despite the formal end to their business partnership, Hyndes and Street remained friends, working together on Wesleyan church committees, and undertaking a voyage back to Britain together in early 1840.\(^{63}\) Street’s connections with the Wesleyan church were to prove financially rewarding in 1838, when they chartered his ships from London to the Pacific Islands.

While he continued to supply timber, coal and agricultural produce to the Sydney market, Street increasingly became involved in the procurement of seal-skins from New Zealand, and in bay whaling at Twofold Bay, purchasing the brig *Governor Macquarie* and the schooner *Samuel* for those employments.\(^{64}\) Street already had some involvement in the seal fishery, for which the *Sally* was being employed from at least May 1825.\(^{65}\) The price of seal skins in London during 1828 was very fluid, varying between a low of 17s. to a high of 28s.\(^{66}\) Street’s initial investment on a six-month voyage of the *Samuel* at the end of 1828 probably gave him a return of between £544-£896. It was small compared with the return made by consignees of a similar-sized schooner, the *Waterloo*, from Launceston who arrived from a sealing voyage with 1,636 seal skins.\(^{67}\)

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\(^{61}\) *Sydney Gazette*, 5-14 February 1827. Thomas and Charlotte Hyndes were witnesses to the marriage of Thomas Street and Dorinda Cosier on 1 January 1827 at St Phillip’s Mariners Church, Church Hill, SRNSW, Church Records V182749 11.

\(^{62}\) *Sydney Gazette*, 12 September 1827.

\(^{63}\) They left for London on the *Royal Admiral* on 10 January 1840. A few days prior to sailing Thomas Street had made a Last Will, appointing Thomas Hyndes, Lancelot Iredale and William Hutchinson his executors. Probate Records of Thomas Street, died Ealing, U.K. 4 March 1855, SRNSW. Date of (NSW) Probate, 7 February 1857, Series 1-3712, UAID: NSR ITM 229083.

\(^{64}\) *Sydney Gazette*, 18 November 1826, p. 3. Street purchased the *Governor Macquarie* from Cooper & Levey. Letter to the Editor from Street,13 November, *ibid*. The *Samuel* was offered for sale in August 1828, and Street purchased her shortly after that date, as she sailed on a sealing trip for Thomas Street on the 17 September arriving back on the 14 March with 640 seal skins on his account, *Sydney Gazette*, 11 August, 19 September 1828 and 17 March 1829.


\(^{66}\) *Sydney Gazette*, 23 April, p.3; 21 May, p. 2; 4 June, p. 2; 16 July, p. 2; 4 August, p. 2.

\(^{67}\) *Sydney Gazette*, 3 October 1828. Robert Campbell Jnr. and Captain John Guard subsequently purchased her. Her gross returns (London prices) would have fetched between £1,390-£2,290.
In 1827, Street entered a new partnership with Cooper and Levey, employing the brig *Industry* for the New Zealand trade and bay whaling. In that same year Captain Street went to New Zealand (possibly as supercargo for the firm), returning to Sydney as a passenger on Cooper, Levey and John Grono’s *Industry* on 2 September, with a cargo of five tons of pork, sixteen tons of flax, twelve tons of potatoes, five tons of salt, and twenty “specie”. By 1830 New Zealand had become the centre of a voracious competition for the exploitation of its natural resources, seals, bay whaling, flax and timber. Among those in pursuit of these opportunities were Sydney merchants, Joseph Barrow Montefiore and Arthur Kemmis. They chartered the *Elizabeth*, under the command of Captain William Stewart, from its owners, Street and Cooper, to procure flax. The notorious voyage was to disgust Governor Bourke and the British Home Office, as a result of the captain’s alleged complicity in an inter-tribal massacre. The incident was instrumental in the government’s decision to place a British Resident at New Zealand, and in the longer term, in the creation of New Zealand as a separate Dominion.

In May 1828 Street purchased a one-third share in the *Courier*, (the other shares being held by Daniel Cooper, William Hutchinson and Solomon Levey) and in August 1828, he purchased the brig *Ann* from the insolvent estate of Raine and Ramsay, both specifically for sperm whaling. The *Courier* returned from the South Seas fishery in August 1829 with 135 tons of sperm oil. During one season in 1830 the *Courier* returned from Cook Strait with 73 tuns of oil, and 3½ tuns of whalebone on Thomas

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68 Colonial Secretary: Reports of Ships Arrived, 2 September 1827, SRNSW, 4/5198, Reel 1263. In this context, “specie” normally referred to indigenous artefacts (sometimes including human heads), for which there was a thriving market.

69 McNab, *op. cit.*


73 *Sydney Gazette*, 20 August 1829.
Street’s account.\(^74\) The size of Street’s business operations may be partly judged in his employment of labour. In 1824, Street employed seventy men.\(^75\) However, by 1828 Street was among the largest employers of labour in the colony, with 157 employees.\(^76\) Almost four-fifths of these employees were free men, and two thirds were described as “mariners.” Others were employed in timber cutting, shipbuilding, and lime burning, confirming his ongoing involvement with the coastal trade.

Street had quietly and steadily become one of the leading shipowners in the colony, not in terms of total tonnage, but rather in terms of the number of vessels owned. He employed a balanced stratagem, not specialising in any one activity, but employing his vessels in a range of trades. His smaller vessels were employed in the coastal and river trades, either transporting his own produce or engaging freight and passengers. He had regular “packets,” such as the *Fanny*, *Monitor*, *Shamrock* and *Madeira Packet*, plying between Newcastle and Sydney.\(^77\) He had vessels engaged in sealing, collecting salt from Kangaroo Island, in the New Zealand and South Seas trade, bay whaling and in pelagic whaling. His partnership with Cooper and Levey enabled him to enter the lucrative sperm whaling trade, which by October 1829 was employing 5,000 tons of colonial shipping.\(^78\) He also joined in the rapidly expanding New Zealand trade, employing the *Industry* and *Elizabeth*, while his schooner *Darling* continued to be utilized in trade with Port Dalrymple.\(^79\) He also acquired shares in two large merchant vessels engaged in trade with Great Britain – the *Fairfield* and the *James Laing*.\(^80\) He acted as a shipping agent in Sydney, with a wharf in Darling Harbour, near Market Wharf, although the site was not particularly suited for the reception of large ships, and was mainly employed for coastal shipping.\(^81\)

\(^74\) 4 December 1830, SRNSW, *op.cit.*, 4/5201.; McNab, *op.cit.*, chap. XXVII.
\(^75\) Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, August 1824, SRNSW, Fiche 3112, p. 955. Only twenty-four of these were convict, Fiche 3112, p. 959, 17 December 1824.
\(^76\) By 1828, Street was the second largest employer of labour in the colony, 1828 Census Householder’s Return, SRNSW, CGS 1273-1274, Reels 2551-2552, 2506-7.
\(^78\) *Sydney Gazette*, 27 October 1829.
\(^79\) *Sydney Gazette*, 23 June 1829.
\(^80\) *Sydney Gazette*, 28 January 1826 and 22 July 1826.
\(^81\) He was granted permissive occupancy of land at Darling Harbour, SRNSW, Governor Darling’s Despatches, NSW Enclosures, (1831-2), Darling’s despatch, 1831, No. 1208, pp. 1012, 1013, 1016.
Street’s timing in entering the colonial shipping industry was superb, and his careful management of risk through linking his investment in tonnage to demand was brilliant. There is no doubt that Street suffered losses, as indicated in a memorial to the Colonial Governor in 1827, mentioned in Chapter 5, when he professed to have lost four vessels in 1826 alone – one to pirates, one stranded, one foundered, and the other wrecked in a gale.\textsuperscript{82} Street, like other shipowners of the period, also contended with the costs incurred for securing his vessels and freight against theft, fraud and smuggling – including guarantees in the form of bonds, and insurance against loss.\textsuperscript{83} Nevertheless, with the sheer number of small vessels available to him, he was able to minimise his losses, without jeopardising existing contracts or missing new opportunities.

In January 1832 Street went to England with his family on the \textit{Prince Regent} with the intention of returning within eighteen months.\textsuperscript{84} The ship was loaded with a large mixed colonial freight supplied jointly on his own account and that of Cooper & Levey (both of whom now resided in England). It was typical of the freight cargoes from NSW to London at that time, including: 9 casks of sperm oil, 441 casks of black oil, 491 bundles, 3 bales, and 6 tons 16 cwt. of whale bone, 8 casks and 653 seal skins, 465 bales of wool, 225 bales of flax, 2 tons 2 cwt. mimosa bark, 43 logs cedar, 1147 ox and cow horns, 9,700 hoofs and bones, and 3 cases of curiosities. Unfortunately the manifest gives no indication as to what percentage of the cargo was owned by Street, and how much represented freight payable to him as shipping agent. In either case, it was a valuable cargo, the proceeds of which he was to invest to good

\begin{footnotes}
\item[82] Street to Darling dated 16 May 1827, Colonial Secretary’s Land Records SRNSW, 2/4635.
\item[83] In 1829 his schooner \textit{Darling} was seized for alleged smuggling, involving lengthy court cases in both the Vice Admiralty and Supreme Courts, whose outcome was ultimately in his favour, but was to involve the vessel in a significant loss of income. SRNSW, 2/3213 (1) J.J. Dowling, Proceedings of the Supreme Court, Vol. 30, in T.D. Castle, & Bruce Kercher (eds), \textit{Dowling’s Select Cases 1828-1844: Decisions of the Supreme Court of New South Wales}, The Francis Forbes Society for Australian Legal History, Sydney 2005, from 29 December 1829-16 June 1830.
\item[84] \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 9 January 1832.
\end{footnotes}
purpose. Street’s departure in some respects marked the ending of one phase of his shipping career and a change in the direction of his shipping interests.

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Apart from rekindling family relationships and successfully enticed a number of his extended family to settle to NSW in 1833, Street used his visit to England to further his business interests and network. He purchased the barque *Lunar* (165 ton), with the intention of employing her in the whaling trade, and the ship *Richard Reynolds* (312 ton), engaging freight and passengers for both vessels to Sydney. He also paid several visits to Alexander Riley, with the express intention of gaining British parliamentary representation for the colony’s shipping, pastoral and trading interests, and of establishing a London agency representation.\(^85\) Riley was apparently much taken by his visitor’s keen intelligence, while recommending his own company, Donaldson, Wilkinson and Riley to provide London-based services. Riley subsequently wrote to Sir John Jamison, whom the firm represented, informing him of Street’s interest and advocacy on behalf of the colony for adequate parliamentary representation.\(^86\) He had already suggested that Street should contact Richard Jones on his return to NSW to enlist his support for the project.\(^87\)

It seems probable that such representations as Street’s formed the basis for the emergence of the New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land Commercial Association which held its inaugural meeting at the Jerusalem Coffee House in London in May 1836. J.W. Buckle, a London shipowner, chaired the Association, described by historian, Frank Broeze, as an “energetic lobbying group” for Australian merchants and pastoralists, British shipowners, importers, bankers and others in the City.\(^88\) Its Committee consisted of representatives of major exporting and wool importing firms including Donaldson, Wilkinson & Co., Aspinall, Browne & Co., Robert Brooks, Duncan Dunbar & Co., Buckles, Bagster & Buckles, Walker Brothers & Co., and

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John Gore & Co., the Montefiore Brothers, A. Willis Sons & Co., and Cockerell & Co. Many had extensive pastoral interests in NSW. Thomas Street is also likely to have participated in the inaugural meeting, having taken up short-term residence in London with his family from mid-1835 to April 1838.

Street’s interest had also been roused by the possibilities of steam navigation, which was being actively considered by the government toward the end of 1830. When Street returned to Sydney on his ship Richard Reynolds in September 1833, with a large cargo of consignments and passengers, he promptly formed a partnership with J.H. Grose, who already had the locally built steamer, William the Fourth, in the Hunter River Trade. The new partnership of Grose, Street & Co. was announced in November 1833, for the supply of steam navigation between the Hunter and Sydney. They jointly purchased the imported Sophia Jane, as Grose put it “not with a view of monopoly (as has been indecorously asserted), but the hope of mutual advantage both to himself and the Public, who will be equally benefited by the facilities of communication now offered”. They announced their steamers would commence running daily between the Hunter and Sydney, and weekly from the Hawkesbury. Their new steamship company, the Hunter River Steam Conveyance Company was formed in November 1833, just prior to Street’s departure once more for England. Within the six-month period of Street’s sojourn in Sydney, he discharged, sold and organised outward-bound freight for the Richard Reynolds, re-arranged his business affairs, formed a partnership with Grose, and established the new steamship company. Presumably he also had time for discussions with Richard Jones, and promoted and distributed tobacco-growing pamphlets, as suggested by Riley.

89 Ibid. p. 117.
91 Sydney Gazette, 15 August 1833.
92 Sydney Gazette, 16 November 1833.
93 Ibid.
By December 1834 the partnership’s Hunter steamship monopoly was challenged by competition from J.T. Wilson and Thomas Burdekin, who purchased the paddle steamer, *Tamar* from the defunct Launceston Steam Navigation Company, until a collision between the *Tamar* and the *Sophia Jane* placed the *Tamar* temporarily out of action. By 1835 Street and Grose accepted a tender for £4,000 for the construction of a new hull for a 200-ton steamer by local shipbuilders Marshall and Lowe, the *Ceres*. The total cost agreed for the construction of the *Ceres* was £8,150, suggesting that her imported forty horsepower engines and boilers cost £4,150. It was not until early 1836 that she was finally launched and ready to enter the Hunter River trade.

Grose & Street’s timely decision to enter the Hunter River trade gave them an initial advantage. Biddulph’s management of *Sophia Jane*, under charter from its British owners, had been unpopular with residents in the Hunter valley. The only other steam navigation company, the Australian Steam Conveyance Company, now operated only in the Parramatta trade. Here its efforts were frustrated by the tardy clearance of that river. In any case, there were more opportunities for both freight and passenger traffic on the Hunter route. Steam navigation was still in its “honeymoon” phase in the colony, able to capture the imaginations and pockets of settlers, convinced that steam navigation was faster, more reliable and safer than sail.

Nevertheless, Street’s investment in steam represented a high-risk business venture. Initial capital investment was high, with outlay ranging from £8-25,000, inclusive of engines and boilers, and their hulls still had to be sail-rigged. As a novelty, insurance premiums (if accepted by underwriters) were probably also high, compared with their wind-driven counterparts. Operating and maintenance costs were also much higher than sail, with coal prices controlled by the Australian Agricultural Company’s monopoly, the wages of engineers and firemen higher than those of seamen and shipwrights, and coal stations needing to be established and operated at Maitland and

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97 The formation of this company is discussed in Chapter 7.
Sydney. Street’s venture into steam navigation represents a departure from his previously cautious approach to investment.

Street was absent from the colony from November 1833-September 1838, but his time spent in England was certainly not idle. He purchased three paddle steamers for Australia, the 81-ton *King William the Fourth*, and 142 ton *James Watt*, for the NSW trade, and the *Cape Brereton* for the Port Phillip trade.98 The *James Watt* arrived in February 1837 to take her place in the Hunter River trade.99 A year later the *King William the Fourth* made her appearance in Sydney.100 During 1837 and early 1838 he also purchased at least five sailing vessels – the 362-ton ship, *Despatch*, the 194-ton barque *Elizabeth*, and three schooners, the 90-ton *Susannah Anne*, the 73-ton *Letitia*, the 70-ton *Speculator*.101 Street also arranged a number of consignments for the firm of Grose & Co. of British manufactured goods on ships bound for Sydney, suggesting forays into the merchant trade.102 These consignments hardly placed the firm in the category of large merchants, and Street’s main business transactions in England remain centred on the purchase of shipping, and obtaining freight and passengers for his own ships.

Grose managed the company’s shipping during Street’s absence, arranging their employment, refitting and repair. His stewardship of the steamers, *Sophia Jane* (which the company had purchased), *William the Fourth*, and the *Ceres*, was not particularly successful. The collision between the *Tamar* and *Sophia Jane* involved the company in lengthy litigation with J.T. Wilson.103 The *Ceres’* career was very brief from her launch in April 1836 to her total loss off Bird Island and Norah Head in

98 *Commercial Advertiser*, 16 March 1836.
99 London registry 456/1836 in the name of Thomas Street.
100 *Commercial Advertiser*, 20 January 1838.
101 *Commercial Advertiser*, 29 August 1838.
102 The largest probably being one sent on the ship *Renown* from London, which arrived on 26 July 1836, *Commercial Advertiser*, 3 August 1836.
103 Wilson v. Grose, Supreme Court of NSW, 25 March 1835. The verdict was in fact in favour of the defendants, Grose and others. Reported in the *Australian*, 31 March 1835, and *Sydney Herald*, 26 March 1835.
August 1836. According to Norman Parsons and Mike Richards, the company ultimately went into liquidation, however I have found no evidence for this assertion. On the contrary it was J.T. Wilson and the Australian Steam Conveyance Company who were the losers. Early in 1837, Street purchased another steamer, King William the Fourth in London to replace the Ceres, registering her in the name of both partners, indicating he had received power of attorney from Grose to do so.

During Street’s absence from the colony, Grose may have acted on behalf of the partnership when he invested in additional shipping in the form of the whaling barque, Denmark Hill in November 1833, the Elizabeth in May 1837, the brigandine Success in November 1837, and the whaling barque Governor Bourke in February 1838. He also was responsible for the management of Street’s London-registered whaling barque Lunar. On 19 June 1836, the Lunar was reported having been sighted on a whaling voyage for eleven months with 800 barrels of sperm oil. Investment in either the whaling or steam navigation trades was a high-risk speculation, both involving high operating costs. To have attempted both simultaneously seemed a recipe for financial disaster.

Dissolution of the partnership between Street and Grose was formally announced on 1 November 1837, exactly four years after it commenced. Street had still not returned to Sydney, and would not return until August 1838. Grose immediately placed the

105 Parsons & Tolley, op.cit., p. 78; Mike Richards, North Coast Run. Men and Ships of the New South Wales North Coast. 3rd. ed., Turton & Armstrong, Sydney 1977/1996, p.7. On the contrary, it was J.T. Wilson’s Australian Steam Conveyance Company that suffered from the competition, resulting in Wilson’s attempt to elude creditors with a temporary departure from NSW.
106 Parsons & Tolley, ibid, p 170.
107 Commercial Journal and Advertiser 16 March 1836, referred to the purchase of the 253-ton barque Denmark Hill by Grose and Street in November 1833. The Success was purchased by Grose after the dissolution of the partnership in November 1837, but was subsequently transferred to Street, John Jones and John James Peacock in July 1839, R. Parsons (2003), op.cit. p. 70. The history of the barque Elizabeth (194 tons) is less certain. Parsons, ibid, quoting the Sydney Gazette of 4 May 1837, states that Grose and Street purchased her from R. Jones & Co. (ex-Singapore) “as a coal tender for the James Watt”. It is indeed unlikely that a barque of this size would have been utilised for this purpose. In fact, she arrived from London, where she was registered in the name of Thomas Street, on 26 September 1838, Commercial Advertiser, 27 September 1838.
108 Commercial Advertiser, 10 August 1836.
109 Commercial Advertiser, 1 November 1837.
Sophia Jane, the William the Fourth and James Watt up for auction to finalise the partnership operations, but the sale was postponed, there being “too few bidders”.\(^{110}\) By December 1838, after his return to Sydney, Street finally shed his interests in two of the steamers, the Sophia Jane and King William the Fourth to his ex-partner.\(^{111}\) Grose subsequently removed the King William from the Hunter trade, planning to open up a new trade with the Clarence River.\(^{112}\) Street transferred his interest in the James Watt to Grose in December 1839.\(^{113}\)

Street was absent from NSW during much of the period of the steamer’s operation, and the sale of the steamers suggests he had little confidence in their ability to return a reasonable profit. His main role in the firm appears to have been one of financier and its London agent. Wisely, Street extricated himself from any further direct participation in the colonial steamer trade. It was an aspect of the colonial shipping industry that proved to be a poor investment, involving large capital and operating costs, and was comparatively unrewarding in an over-competitive market.

* * *

Street’s continued balanced style of ship investment is reflected in the range of his shipping investments in England. The “temperance ship” Despatch, the first of the six vessels, arrived in Sydney on 20 August 1838, with Street and his family, passengers and a full cargo.\(^{114}\) A copy of the manifest of her cargo, the freight reported by Street to have been worth merely £1,000, with an additional £150 paid to him for passengers, is included as Appendix 16.\(^{115}\) The cargo also included goods imported on Street’s own account.\(^{116}\) As her manifest was similar to many of the merchant

\(^{110}\) Ibid.

\(^{111}\) Both were re-registered in Grose’s own name at Sydney in that month.

\(^{112}\) He advertised cabin passenger tickets for the new destination at £10 per head. Sydney Gazette, 14 May 1839. The King William was subsequently wrecked off Nobby’s in July 1839. (Commercial Advertiser, 6 July 1839) Her engines were recovered and placed in a new steamer the Sovereign built for Grose in 1841.

\(^{113}\) R. Parsons (2003), op.cit, p. 70.

\(^{114}\) Commercial Advertiser, 29/8/38.

\(^{115}\) Testimony of Street to the NSW Vice-Admiralty Court, Slater v. Despatch, Commercial Journal, 20 April 1839.

\(^{116}\) A copy of her full manifest, transcribed from the newspaper has been provided at Appendix 17.
ships from England whose tonnage ranged from 250-500 tons, these freight earnings may be considered “typical” of freight earnings from Great Britain.\(^\text{117}\)

The following month the 164-ton barque, *Elizabeth*, and the schooner *Letitia* arrived in Sydney from London with passengers and cargo.\(^\text{118}\) Both carried consignments for Street of machinery essential to install in steamers.\(^\text{119}\) Whether these were intended as replacement parts for Grose and Street’s existing steamers, or for a planned new vessel, is not known. While Street withdrew from any direct financial commitment to the steam navigation trade, the evidence suggests his investments were now directed at purchasing and supplying steamers and steam ship equipment in England, for direct sale in NSW and other Australian colonies. Within five days of Street’s return to Sydney at least one newspaper reported the recent formation of the Australian Steam Navigation Company in London, for the Sydney-Windsor traffic, “as soon as vessels arrive”.\(^\text{120}\) The timing of the report suggests Street had a part in its formation. By February 1839, this new London-based Company had 651 subscribers (one of whom was Walker & Co.) with a paid up capital of £32,550.\(^\text{121}\) The Company planned to purchase steamers in England. It appears likely that Street had secured a role as the new Company’s shipbroker.

Street planned to return to London on the *Despatch* in March 1839 with a full cargo of wool, oil and other colonial exports. During the latter part of 1838 and early 1839, Street focussed his endeavours on winding up his affairs in NSW. While his barque *Elizabeth* was still unloading, the *Letitia* was despatched to the Friendly Isles with the Wesleyan missionaries who had earlier arrived on the *Despatch*, together with their supplies.\(^\text{122}\) When she returned from “Feejee” on 29 January 1839 with a cargo consisting of 4,900 coconuts, one cask and eighty tierces of tortoiseshell, yams, pork

\(^{117}\) If Street’s statement was correct, it provides some substance for the claim of London shipowner Duncan Dunbar to the 1847 Navigation Laws Committee that he relied on homebound freights to recompense him for low outward freights from London. Testimony of Duncan Dunbar, 11 May 1847, BPP. (1847, 4th Report), questions 4455-5456, pp. 17-22.

\(^{118}\) *Commercial Advertiser*, 26 September 1838, and 2 October 1838. See a copy of the transcript of her manifest, printed in the October edition of the paper, at the end of this chapter.


\(^{120}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{121}\) *Commercial Advertiser*, 2 February 1839.

\(^{122}\) *Commercial Advertiser & Journal*, 23 October 1838, p.2.
and “curiosities,” it was transferred to the Despatch. Meanwhile the Elizabeth was sent to Singapore returning in December with a cargo of sugar, sugar candy, tin, pepper, rope and timber planks which were also discharged into the Despatch. Another of Street’s purchases, the 90-ton Susannah Anne arrived in Sydney on 19 December 1838, from Portsmouth, via the Cape of Good Hope and Launceston from where she obtained a cargo of wine. She was chartered to V. & E. Solomons of Sydney in February 1839, only to be sold to Isaac Nichols for £1,300 six months later. Street’s 97-ton Speculator arrived in ballast from Launceston in November 1838, having left London in May for the settlement of Swan River. The Speculator was then despatched back to Launceston for cargo in December.

The picture of Street’s shipping during this period is one of constant and varied activity. This activity was all centred on the Despatch, in the process of being loaded for London. Street’s whalers, the Lunar, Governor Bourke, Edward, Governor Halkett, and William took turns to transfer their oil casks into her hold, while a large quantity of wool bales from the wharves of Campbell and Street were also being loaded. When the Despatch finally made her departure from Sydney in March 1839, she was fully loaded with a valuable cargo in her hold, and a number of cabin passengers for London. The Despatch’s return cargo in many ways represented a departure from the practice of most British shipowners in the Australian trade. Rather than relying on freight prices alone, Street collected a very valuable speculative cargo utilising his own shipping. Richard Jones employed a similar strategy in the 1820s. Street used his local knowledge to purchase tonnage suitable for the trades for which they were intended, thus ensuring their maximum efficiency. Having served their purpose, Street was quick to place them on the market.

123 Ibid, 25 December 1838.
124 Commercial Advertiser, 26 September 1838, 20 October 1838 and 19 December 1838.
125 Ibid, 21 February 1839, and 14 August and 21 August 1839.
126 Ibid, 6 November 1838 and 26 September 1838.
127 Ibid, 4 December 1838.
128 Ibid, 28 November 1839, p. 4; 24 and 26 January 1839. The paper of 24 January in fact reported her manifest as consisting of 27 tons of black oil, ½ a ton of whalebone, 14 tons of pork, 2 ½ kegs of colonial tobacco, 2 casks of lard for T. Street and J. Grose; 20 tuns of black oil for Duke & Co., and 7 tuns of pork, and 1 hogshead of hams and bacon for the Captain, Francis Leathart. There was no mention of the sperm oil in this report, or in another report of the vessel on the 26 January.
129 Ibid, 22 March 1839.
Unfortunately for Street, the *Despatch* and her cargo caught fire and were totally lost near Lord Howe’s Island, although he, together with his family, passengers and crew, managed to evacuate her and returned to Sydney.\textsuperscript{130} Equally fortunately, the vessel and cargo were insured.\textsuperscript{131} However, the loss delayed his departure for London for almost a year, putting on hold any plans to supply steamers for the new steam ship company formed in London in 1838. After Street finally left Sydney in January 1840, he withdrew from any direct shipping investment in NSW. Instead he settled in London as a merchant, and when he died there in 1855, he bequeathed property worth about £18,000.\textsuperscript{132}

Street’s career strongly suggests that ship ownership in NSW was not an end in itself, designed to improve social status. Instead, Street, like most other investors in shipping was much more interested in the financial rewards. He was not interested in leaving any social mark on his surroundings, and while he was an “opulent shipowner,” he did not move in the same social circles as his compatriots.\textsuperscript{133} That this is not entirely a matter of his emancipist status is evident from the fact that his emancipist business partner, J.H. Grose, was able to broach any “class” barrier the status may have engendered. Similarly, Street did not engage in the large-scale land acquisition that frequently accompanied the quest for social status. Street’s shipping investments were those of a man acquiring the essential tools necessary for income generation. They reflected his sound instincts for market opportunity and demand.

\textsuperscript{130} *Ibid*, 27 March 1839.
\textsuperscript{131} *Ibid*, May 1839.
\textsuperscript{132} Probate Records, *op.cit*. The records contain copies of probate granted at the Ecclesiastical Court of Canterbury, together with a copy of a second will drawn up in London in 1846. The property, containing a large villa on 141 acres was purchased in 1842. (British Archives: PRO IR 29/21/1). Street’s remaining assets in NSW included property at Darling Harbour.
\textsuperscript{133} *Commercial Advertiser*, 20 April 1839.
CHAPTER 9: SHIPMASTERS AND SHIPPING INVESTMENT

Mariners were an important source for investment in the NSW shipping industry. In this chapter I explore the dynamics of shipmaster’s investment, and the implications of investment for social advancement. I suggest that such investment in NSW was possible regardless of social origin. Remuneration offered to all ranks of seamen, from ordinary seamen to officers and shipmasters encouraged at least short-term entry into maritime careers. It provided the means by which frugal mariners could acquire shares in shipping. As suggested in Chapter Four, maritime commercial opportunities were sufficiently attractive to encourage the more ambitious to speculate in marine investment. This chapter explores the processes by which shipmasters acquired the capital and business skills for investment in shipping, and their rationale for ship investment.

London shipowner George Frederick Young stated in 1847, “Every captain of a ship almost looks to obtaining part of a ship or the whole of a ship as the great object of his life.” According to Young, ships were “much more extensively owned by those who have pursued maritime commerce practically, than by capitalists who simply embark their money in it as an advantageous investment.”¹ Local ship ownership, I suggest, was not an end in itself. Rather it was a means of acquiring both command of a ship, and command over one’s own destiny. Ralph Davis has suggested that obtaining command of a ship effected “a transformation in status and a trebling of income, and opened the way to much greater prizes.” He further claimed that, “It took the lucky individual firmly into the middle class”, putting “a fortunate few on the road to real wealth, aldermancy and knighthood.”[sic.]² The realisation of this ambition is perhaps nowhere more evident that in NSW ship investment.

For British merchant mariners, distance provided a great opportunity for wealth and social advancement. Command of a ship gave shipmasters some control over physical

¹ Testimony of George Frederick Young, 10 June 1847, to the 1847 British House of Commons Inquiry into the navigation laws, BPP (1847), op.cit, question 6093, p. 149.
distance between continents and local settlements, over their cargoes, and over the means of communication between distant ports. Primary producers relied on shipmasters to transport their produce to the markets, bring them essential supplies and labour, and carry news and mail. Merchants depended on shipmasters to transport their merchandise safely and speedily, negotiate business transactions on their behalf, maintain accurate business records, and provide them with valuable market and resource information. Shipowners relied on shipmasters for exercising their seamanship, navigational and management skills, as well as their honesty, to safeguard their investment, minimise costs, and negotiate attractive freight rates.

Shipmasters in command of merchant ships bound for Australia, India or China from Great Britain could command a monthly salary of at least £10, and with additional income earned through 2% commission on freight, 10% on passage money, and 2d. for each mail article, they could expect to earn a salary of between £300-£500 per annum, together with having well-stocked cabin provisions during their extended voyage. A wife and family quite frequently accompanied them, thus further minimising their personal expenses. Visiting shipmasters sometimes obtained free hospitality and accommodation by friends, relatives or merchants when they visited Port Jackson or other ports.


4 Evidence for this practice is to be found in reports of arrivals and departures of ships reported in shipping news in contemporary newspapers published in Sydney during the period. The practice was not limited to passenger ships but included local inter-colonial, and whaling voyages.

5 While numerous examples of this may be found, several that may be mentioned here are Captain Thomas Collins, commander of Robert Brooks’ vessel Elizabeth, who with his wife stayed at the home of Thomas Raine in Sydney during November and December 1827, Sydney Gazette, 3 December 1827; Captain Livingstone of Hinton, who had a permanent room with sail-maker Richard Kemp when he called at Sydney, Insolvency Papers of Richard Kemp, 19 April 1842,SRNSW, 2/8680, CGS13654, Item 210; Captain George Blaxland, owner of the whaler Lord Rodney, whose father was NSW landowner John Blaxland; Captain Duke of the Sisters who stayed at the home of Augustus Earle at the Bay of Islands, Augustus Earle, Narrative of a Residence in New Zealand. (E.H. McCormick, ed.) Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1966, p.82; and Captain Robert Walker, commander of the Dragon and King George, who stayed with missionary William Hall, whose hospitality was later to be repaid when he stayed at the home of merchant, landowner and retired Naval Lieutenant, James Walker of Wallerawang, Mal & Rosemary McLennon (eds), Son of Carlisle- Maori Missionary: the Diary of CMS Missionary William Hall. Galson, New Zealand, 2001, 13 November 1816, p. 46 and 13 January 1826, p. 566.
Even shipmasters employed on the small vessels plying NSW coastal waters had the potential to earn significant income. George Thom, commanding the 32-ton sloop *Union* between Sydney and the Shoalhaven Rivers in the early 1840s, had salary earnings of £75 during a four-month period, with a wage of £15 per journey.\(^6\) In addition to his regular wage as a permanent employee of the sloop’s owner, Alexander Berry, Thom earned an additional 15s. per passenger.\(^7\) Commander of the local steamer *Ceres*, Captain Hepburn, achieved an even better salary package, being appointed at the rate of £20 per month, plus “cabin” expenses.\(^8\) While Hepburn and Thom’s wages compared favourably to that offered to shipmasters in England, even local seamen could demand wages of between £4-£4.10s. per month at the beginning of the 1838-whaling season.\(^9\) In October 1840, seamen were being offered £10 for voyages from Melbourne to Sydney, while seamen who had signed articles in London were offered pay incentives to break their agreements.\(^10\) At the height of the financial crisis in 1842, William Hunter, Chief Mate of the colonial brig *Guide*, signed articles of agreement with its owner John Jenkins Peacock for a six-month’s voyage to New Zealand and the Pacific for sandalwood at the rate of £5.10s. a month.\(^11\) These wages suggest a very fluid market, compared with Great Britain.

On British merchant ships bound for Australia, there was a considerable gap between the average monthly pay of the shipmaster and that of his officers, with the Chief Mate earning six guineas per month, the Carpenter five guineas, while the Second and Third Mates earned an average of £4 and £3 respectively per month.\(^12\) While all shared the cabin mess, the difference in their financial circumstances could potentially be a source of conflict, a factor evident in at least some of the disagreements that

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\(^6\) Insolvency Papers of George Thom, 30 October 1843, SRNSW, 2/8758, CGS 13654, item 1022, Schedules A, D & E. Captain Thom’s flamboyant lifestyle and refusal to pay (or collect) some small debts was his financial undoing. With average monthly wages exceeding those paid by London shipowners to their best shipmasters, Thom’s income reflected local market demand.

\(^7\) Thom, *ibid*. These fares would have been paid on the basis of passengers solicited and secured by the shipmaster personally, rather than those procured by the agent or owner.


\(^9\) Commercial Advertiser, 14 April 1838.

\(^10\) *Ibid*, 24 October 1840.

\(^11\) Insolvency Papers of John Jenkins Peacock, SRNSW, 2/8746, CGS13654, Item 904.

\(^12\) Testimony of W. Tindall, 25 May 1848, BPP, *op.cit.*, questions 5705-14.
came to the attention of the either the NSW Water Police or the Vice-Admiralty Court.\textsuperscript{13} Most officers were sensible enough to consider their reputation, being frequently dependent on the recommendations of the shipmaster for their promotion.\textsuperscript{14}

Articles of Agreement for the officers and crew of the English whaler \textit{Nelson} for a voyage between 1828-1832 contain evidence of payment of wages as well as lays or shares in the catch.\textsuperscript{15} Under these agreements the First Mate received £6 per month “outward bound” while the Second and Third Mates’ wages were identical at £4.10s. per month. Boat-steerers and able seamen were employed at the rate of £3 per month, and ordinary seamen at the rate of £2.8s. The carpenter, cooper and surgeon were paid at a higher rate than the officers at £9.4s, eight guineas and (approximately) £8.12s per month respectively. This suggests that the latter’s wages were fixed for the voyage, and not to be supplemented by “lays” or shares of the whale catch.\textsuperscript{16} Unfortunately, Captain Edward David’s own pay arrangements are not mentioned in the documents, although a letter addressed to the ship’s owner Thomas Sturge of London at the Bay of Islands from David on 8 February 1831, suggests that his monthly pay may have amounted to £8.17.6d.\textsuperscript{17}

In Articles of Agreement signed by William Rhodes at Sydney on the 18 April 1836, his share of the catch was agreed at 1/12\textsuperscript{th}, while those of his officers were 1/28\textsuperscript{th}.

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{13}] In the case of R. v Firth et al, (heard in the NSW Vice-Admiralty Court) the first and third mate, and a number of seamen had been charged with piracy and disobedience by the inexperienced Captain Taylor in command of the English whaler \textit{Harmony} after the defendants seized command. Nine were sentenced to death, \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 3 & 13 March 1832. Report re mutiny on whaler \textit{Jane Eliza}, \textit{New Zealand Advertiser and Bay of Islands Gazette}, 30 July & 6 August 1840.
\item[\textsuperscript{14}] Shipowners largely looked to the recommendations and testimonials of their potential employees, by which they laid as much credence as formal tests of their knowledge and skills.
\item[\textsuperscript{15}] Intestate Papers of Edward David, Captain of \textit{Nelson}, whaler (1832), SRNSW, 6/3484, File 73, Bundles 1 & 2; a similar arrangement was made for crew of the English whaler, \textit{Harmony} in 1832, Firth et al v \textit{Harmony}, NSW Supreme Court, \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 3 and 13 March 1832.
\item[\textsuperscript{16}] This was a normal pattern, as none took part in the chase. See Allen Mawer, \textit{Ahab’s Trade: The Saga of South Seas Whaling}. Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1999.
\item[\textsuperscript{17}] In his letter, transmitted through shipmaster Robert Duke of the barque \textit{Sisters} then about to return to London to Sturge David wrote: “Please to pay at light to Captain Robert Duke on this order, this my third of exchange, the first and second of the same tenor and date not paid, the sum of one hundred and six pounds one shilling sterling value received for the use of your Barque the \textit{Nelson}. Your Obed. Hum. Servant.” The date coincides with the end of his third year on the whaling voyage, plus several months. However, the same records do confirm that Sturge was maintaining David’s wife during his absence.
\end{itemize}
1/48th, and 1/75th, respectively. Other shares varied (presumably on the basis of experience as well as market demand at the place shipped) between 1/100th, for a boat-steerer and 1/150th to 1/300th for ordinary seaman. Articles of agreement made with the officers and men of the colonial whaler Lucy Ann on 7 June 1849 varied little in the lays proportions offered for the Australian’s voyage. Unlike the voyage of the Nelson from London, there appears to have been no wage agreement for the colonial crews of whalers or sandalwood ships.

Similar lay arrangements were also made on Joseph and Henry Moore’s whalers, with Captains Stewart, Joseph Bradley, and George Grimes in command of the Clarkstone, Jane Eliza and Woodlark respectively each contracted for 1/12th lay on the profits of the voyage. In Grimes’ case this amounted to £1,075.16.3d. Similar arrangements were in place on Duke & Co.’s whalers, with William Spurling, Captain Allman and Thomas Hector entitled to payments between £691-£1,257 for their voyages. With average voyages of eighteen months, these proceeds from whaling were the equivalent of £38 to over £69 per month – an extraordinarily high return compared with the wages of commanders of other merchant ships, not to mention that of either local skilled shipwrights earning £8 per month, or the wages of most unskilled or semi-skilled workers of £2.10 per month.

There were serious disadvantages in such employment, however, such as the high-risk nature of whaling voyages, in terms of fatalities, permanent incapacity or illness, and uncertain financial returns. Alexander Butcher, commander of the whaler Tamar, lost his barque in a storm at Gower’s Harbour, New Ireland in December 1842,

19 Articles of Agreement for the whaler Lucy Ann, Robert Campbell, jnr. Papers, ML MSS2129, Portfolio.
20 Both Towns and Fotheringham, as owners of whaling and sandalwood ships, had well-deserved reputations for their miserly business practices. See for example, Shineberg, *op. cit.* pp. 84-7.
21 Insolvency Papers of Joseph Moore, 10 February 1844, SRNSW, CGS13654, No. 1177 and 1178.
22 Insolvency Papers of Robert Duke, 29 April 1842, SRNSW, 2/8683, CGS 13654, No. 235.
fortunately without loss of life. Charles Powell, in command of another of Moore’s whalers, the *Cape Packet*, was not so fortunate. He and most of his crew were allegedly captured and eaten by cannibals, and the barque (with 700 barrels of sperm oil) ransacked and destroyed at New Georgia in the Solomon Islands in 1844.

Shipmasters were in a position to add further to their salaries through the purchase of slops, in the form of clothing, alcohol, tobacco and other cheap goods, which were sold to crew members during the voyage at a profit. A list of slops purchased by Rhodes for a whaling voyage from Sydney included assorted clothing items, blankets, cooking and eating pots and knives, tobacco, pipes, soap and sewing gear. His journal contained a price list for each item. Edward David, shipmaster of the English whaling barque, *Nelson* which left London in 1828, maintained a detailed record of the slop bill by crew members of that ship, owed to him personally of over £348.

In addition to these earnings, it was customary for shipmasters to make some personal investment in merchandise for speculative sale at ports of call on their voyage. Historically, limited free cargo space was one of the privileges of the position, as it was for any member of the crew, although such latter privileges were being withdrawn by the nineteenth century. For shipmasters owning shares in a ship, the potential for the accumulation of wealth was greatly increased. Typically, for

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24 Log Book of the *Tamar* reproduced in a protest (insurance claim) by Captain Butcher and boatsteerer, George Washington, in the Insolvency Papers of Joseph Moore, *op.cit.*
26 An able seamen estimated that shipmasters quite regularly purchased £300-£500 worth of slops before a voyage, which were then sold to desperate seamen at a profit of 150 per cent. Henry Mayhew, *The Unknown Mayhew: Selections from the Morning Chronicle* 1849-50 (E.P. Thompson, & Eileen Yeo, eds.), Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1971, Letter XVI, 11 March 1850, p. 375.
29 Nevertheless, even in 1850 an able seaman informed Henry Mayhew, that he and other seamen regularly profited from importing exotic parrots. Mayhew, *op.cit.* Similarly in the New Zealand trade and Pacific trade, seamen regularly brought back artefacts, fauna or even human heads for sale to an eager local market.
shipmasters visiting Sydney during the period, those with existing networks carried a speculative freight on their account.\textsuperscript{30}

Such was the case with Robert Towns, commander and part owner of the \textit{Bonavista} (trading with Batavia) and owner of the \textit{Brothers} (trading between London, Australia and the Far East between 1827-1837). Using a combination of his own accumulated wealth, the extended credit facilities of his employer, London shipowner Robert Brooks, and money he recouped (on behalf of Brooks) from Ranulph Dacre’s insolvent estate, Towns acquired a large stake in the local shipping industry from 1844, convinced that he could profit from his maritime expertise.\textsuperscript{31} He took advantage of the local financial crisis to acquire cheap shipping, wharfage and warehousing.\textsuperscript{32} By November 1851, Towns was the largest shipowner in NSW, with over fifteen ships registered in his name.\textsuperscript{33} The majority of Towns’ shipping acquisitions were intended for whaling and sandalwood, both high-risk trades. Towns’ business strategies incorporated all the features of ruthless cost-minimising principles (cheap shipping, cheap labour and minimal repairs) and competitiveness designed to increase his profit share.\textsuperscript{34} By 1857 he had accumulated at least £245,000 in profits as a result of his trading and shipping activities.\textsuperscript{35} With his election as a member of the NSW Legislative Council in 1856, Towns, in fact, represented an arch-typical example of Ralph Davis’ “transformed” shipmaster.

An analysis of the backgrounds of many of the Sydney merchants in the period 1820-1850, reveals they were men who had been directly involved with exploitation of the South Seas fishery, shipmasters of convict transport, or businessmen in partnership

\textsuperscript{30} The \textit{Florentia} under the command of W.S. Deloitte, which arrived in Sydney from London on 25 January 1834, for example, not only brought consignments for fourteen merchants and landowners, but also a large speculative cargo for Deloitte. \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 4 February 1834.
\textsuperscript{31} Towns to Brooks, 9 September 1844, Towns Papers ML MSS 67.
\textsuperscript{32} In December 1844 he acquired prime wharf and warehousing real estate at Miller’s Point, (possibly that of Joseph & Henry Moore, who had become insolvent by mid-1844), Towns to Brooks, 14 December 1844, Towns, \textit{ibid}.
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Ibid}, p.224.
with former shipmasters. A few British shipowners and whaling interests were to establish agencies and transfer part of their fleet to the Australian colonies of NSW and Van Diemen’s Land in the 1820s and early 1830s as a means of reducing both their costs and length of their operating cycles. Among these were the firms of Raine & Ramsay, Lamb, Buchanan and Co., George Bunn, J.B. Bettington, and James and Edward Kenworthy. Shipmasters or former shipmasters were among those most readily able to capitalise on their knowledge of resources and their business networks to establish agencies or business firms in the colonies.

This process commenced within the first twenty years of European settlement. Among the first was Captain James Birnie, who arrived in Sydney with his wife on the Mary Ann in 1809. Birnie had commanded Samuel Enderby’s whaler, the Kensington during the period 1802-1806. In 1807, he commanded his own whaling ship, the Star, in conjunction with the Calcutta firm of Birnie & Co., before passing command to John Wilkinson. By 1813, Birnie & Co. were one of the many London whaling firms that rapidly emerged as a result of financial and political encouragement offered by the British Parliament. His brother, Alexander Birnie, represented the company’s

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36 The operating cycle of English whalers was frequently a voyage of four to five years, during which period owners had to meet all the ship’s costs, including interest on capital while any financial returns were delayed. In this same period, the ship’s value depreciated at the rate of ten per cent per annum. Testimony of Money Wigram, 26 May 1848, Select Committee on the navigation laws, BPP (1848), op.cit., question 6024, p.558.


40 This was achieved through favourable bounties and tariffs, which discriminated against the importation of both foreign and colonial oil. E.A. Stackpole, Whales and Destiny: The Rivalry Between America, France and Britain for the Control of the Southern Whale Fishery, 1785-1825, University of Massachusetts, 1972; also Margaret Steven, Trade, Tactics and Territory. Britain in the South Pacific,1783-1823. MUP, Carlton, 1983.
business interests in London, while James pre-occupied himself with the company’s whaling interests in the South Pacific, diversifying into sandalwood, banking, and other business investments in NSW, as well as in South America and the Far East. Between 1811 and 1841, the London firm of Alexander Birnie and Co. represented one of the most successful of the English South Seas whaling companies, thanks partly to the efforts of James Birnie in establishing local networks and business resources.  

The Raine family entered the southern whaling trade between 1811-3, with the purchase of two second-hand ships, the *Nimrod* and the *Hercules*. Over the next few years, other ships were added to their fleet including the *Hope*, *Adventure*, *Coquet*, *Mercury*, *Antoinetta* and the *Walker* in 1822. They were owners of the merchant ship *Regalia*, in the Australian trade from London in 1821. It is also likely that Thomas Raine had shares in the convict transport, *Surrey*, he had commanded, and the British-registered merchant ships *Cumberland* and *Elizabeth*. However, after 1822 Raine & Co.’s vessels began to drift off the London Registers of whalers. This probably reflected the changing business interests of the principals, John Raine and his brother Thomas, who by 1823 had settled in NSW as merchants and landowners.

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42 For this and the preceding information regarding the Raine’s shipping interest I am indebted to A.G.E. Jones’ transcription of Lloyd’s Registers, 1801-1832 and the London Society of Merchants, Shipowners and Underwriters, 1801-1832, in Jones, *op.cit.*, p. 251ff.


44 Raine was appointed commander of the ship, following close examination by a panel appointed by Governor Macquarie, after his superior officers had died. He constantly employed the *Surrey*, *Cumberland* and *Elizabeth* from 1817-1827. Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/3493, Reel 6004, pp. 259, 264; 4/1731, Reel 6044, p.2.

45 SRNSW, *ibid.*, pp. 25-141.

In July 1819, Thomas Raine approached the British government with a proposal to establish a regular passenger and freight packet service between London and Sydney, a service which had some initial success with the deployment of at least four ships, the *Surrey*, *Regalia*, *Elizabeth* and *Faith* during early 1820s.\(^{47}\) By 1822 he formed a partnership with Ramsay (and indirectly with Simeon Lord, whose daughter had married Ramsay in 1821).\(^{48}\) Raine’s business interests increasingly diversified as he and Ramsay established one of the leading Sydney merchant companies of the 1820s. Raine became interested in other aspects of the merchant shipping trade, including the flax, timber, sealing and the shipbuilding trades.\(^{49}\) By 1827 he established engineering works in Sydney to develop the colony’s first manufactured steam engine.\(^{50}\) He was a Director of the Bank of NSW, Director of the Sydney and Van Diemen’s Land Packet Company, and established close links with the Edinburgh and Leith Australia Company.\(^{51}\)

Formal and informal partnerships represented an important strategy for mariners seeking financial and social advancement. Such partnerships, rarely lasting more than five years, provided a pooling of monetary, network and skills resources.\(^{52}\) Among the foremost of these in the 1820s were the partnerships of Captain Daniel Cooper with emancipist and ex-London broker Solomon Levey, and Captain Thomas Raine with Robert Ramsay (ex-Naval surgeon) during the 1820s.\(^{53}\) Like Towns, Daniel Cooper progressed up the social and financial ladder, eventually transferring part of his operations to London, where he opened a wool brokerage, leaving his new

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\(^{48}\) Marriage Registry, 31 March 1825, SRNSW. As part of the marriage settlement Ramsay received the property of Dolroyd (Arthur McMartin, ‘Ramsay, David (1794-1860)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 2, MUP, 1967, p.361. (but incidentally also took over payment of Simeon Lord’s mortgage on that property!)


\(^{50}\) *Sydney Gazette*, 22 March 1827 and 4 July 1828.


\(^{52}\) Others included John Lamb and Walter Buchanan, James Kenworthy and Edward Lord, Thomas Street and Robert Campbell, jnr; Thomas Gore and William Dawes. The dissolution of partnerships was publicly reported in contemporary newspapers.

\(^{53}\) Convict Pardons, 8 February 1819, SRNSW. Convicted in London in October 1813 to seven years transportation, Solomon Levey arrived on the *Marquis of Wellington* in 1815.
business partner, James Holt in charge of Sydney operations. His nephew Daniel, who became an active partner in his Sydney operations, was knighted and left an estate worth almost £450,000.

Captain Joseph Moore, who visited Sydney commanding Birnie & Co.’s merchant and whaling ships, the Mary Anne (1812), and the Cretan (1815), followed a similar career path to Birnie, Cooper and Raine, taking up residence in the colony. As captain and part owner of the English whaler Woodlark from about 1818, he arrived in Sydney with his family in 1820, and after several seasons working the South Seas Fishery, joined the Sydney firm of William Walker and Company as their agent and ship husband in 1828. In 1837, Moore had sufficient capital to purchase a sizable proportion of the insolvent estate of Sydney merchants Wright and Long, including a wharf at Dawes Point, warehousing and a counting house. By 1838, he and his son Henry had established a very successful Sydney merchant and ship-owning partnership. That Company owned and operated a large fleet of South Sea whalers, as well as a merchant house trading in tea, sugar and other commodities. The firm had business links with Magniac, Jardine & Co. of Canton and London, Thacker & Co. (through the marriage of Joseph’s daughter Ann to Mashfield Masson of that firm), and to Walker & Co., to whom they consigned their sperm oil exports, in exchange for other commodities and services. However, the Moore’s paid a price for their rapid initial growth during 1837-1840 and continued heavy financial commitment to

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56 1828 Census Householder’s Return SRNSW CGS 1273-1274, Reels 2551-2552, 2506-7; Moore, Joseph, 10 February 1844, Insolvency Papers, CGS 13654, No. 1177 and 1178.
57 In November 1837, Moore’s son Henry purchased part of the insolvent estate of the firm of Wright and Long at Dawes Point, including a three-storey warehouse, counting house, wharf and other property for over £11,000, Colonial Advertiser, 22 November 1837.
58 Joseph Moore, op.cit., Commercial Advertiser: 4 May, 8 May, and 2 November 1839.
59 Marriage notice, Sydney Herald, 15 August 1840.
the pelagic whaling industry. Of seven whalers owned by the family, three were lost or destroyed between 1842-6, two others were “unemployed” in 1844, and two were active but uninsured. Their property and shipping was mortgaged to merchants P.W. Flower, G.R. Griffiths and Frederick Parbury, who finally foreclosed on the company in early 1844, after the firm had amassed debts of over £70,000.

In 1822 other British shipowners, John H. Duke & Co. appointed John’s son, Robert Duke to command the family’s whaling ship, the 

*Sisters*, which continued to operate between London and the Southern fisheries under his command for an eleven-year period from 1823 to 1834. Robert subsequently established permanent residency as a merchant shipowner in Sydney from 1834, continuing to represent his family interests in the shipping industry and colonial trade, specialising in the whaling trade. In 1836, Robert was the owner of the colonial whalers *Lady Wellington*, the *Genii* and *Elizabeth*. He also purchased a very desirable commercial and personal property at Darling Harbour, containing a wharf, warehousing and counting house, the mansion known as Albion House as well as other landed property. By 1839 his family firm had an interest in eighteen merchant and whaling vessels. Duke, in partnership with John James Curtis, continued to concentrate his shipping efforts mainly on the whaling industry, although he also operated a shipping agency, engaging shipping for the export trade. Unfortunately, rather than concentrating his capital in this area, Robert Duke plunged it into a significant investment in the newly formed British Colonial Bank and Loan Company to an amount of over £94,000 when he returned to London in 1840. By November 1841, his local creditors were circling him, partly panicked by rumours of the collapsing Loan Company. In a meeting at

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60 Trustee’s Report, Joseph Moore’s Insolvency Papers, *op.cit.*
61 Insolvency Papers of Joseph and Henry Moore, SRNSW, 10 February 1844CGS13654, No. 1177 – 1179.
63 Duke’s merchant and shipping officers were located in Macquarie Street, Sydney, *Colonial Advertiser*, 6 July 1835.
64 *Sydney Free Press*, of 10 May 1842.
66 *The Omnibus and Sydney Spectator* (based on a report in the *Australian*), dated 20 November 1841.

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Albion House that month, Duke’s affairs were placed into receivership, news of which “unhinged the whole town”.\textsuperscript{67} By 1842, the local company still owned six colonial vessels (some transferred from their London register): \textit{Avon} (jointly with John Curtis), \textit{Caroline}, \textit{ Fortune}, \textit{Julia} (jointly with Robert Milne), \textit{Lady Leith} and \textit{Pocklington}, valued at £10,000.\textsuperscript{68}

A number of other major Sydney merchants and shipowners of the period were ex-Naval or merchant ship commanders. George Bunn, an agent for the Australian Agricultural Company, as well as Bagster & Buchanan, invested in the New Zealand “bay whaling” trade and was Director of the first steam navigation company, had eighteen years experience at sea, including service with the Royal Navy and command of three convict ships.\textsuperscript{69} John Lamb, who established the merchant firm Buchanan, Lamb & Co., and later Lamb & Parbury, also served in the Royal Navy before being retired as a Lieutenant on half-pay.\textsuperscript{70} Like Bunn, he had commanded several convict transport ships.\textsuperscript{71} Lamb later served on the NSW Legislative Council.\textsuperscript{72} Shipmaster and shipowner George Ward Cole, who engaged in the sandalwood, pearling and whaling industries in the Pacific during the 1830s, had served with distinction as a lieutenant in the Royal Navy.\textsuperscript{73}

A number of other shipmasters such as Ranulph Dacre, Alexander Fotheringham, and William Deloitte all became successful merchants and shipowners in NSW. Dacre and Deloitte developed significant business interests in New Zealand and the South Seas

\textsuperscript{67} Sparke, 22 November 1841, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 138.
\textsuperscript{68} SRNSW, 2/8683, Insolvency file of Robert Duke & Co., CGS13654, 29 April 1842, No. 235.
\textsuperscript{69} Evidence of witness, George Bunn, 1827, NSW Supreme Court, SRNSW, 2/3461, Supreme Court – Select cases of James Dowling, Vol. 1. The steam company was the Australian Steam Conveyance Company, \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 16 April 1833 and 25 January 1834.
\textsuperscript{71} G.P. Walsh, \textit{op.cit.}, Vol. 2, pp.72-73.
trade. Fotheringham, like Towns, emerged as a leading colonial whaling ship owner, as well as having numerous other profitable business interests. Dacre, Fotheringham and Towns benefited from their links with British shipowner and merchant, Robert Brooks. Deloitte’s connections with New Zealand were established as shipmaster of Raine’s merchant ship *Faith*, and the latter’s successful contract for the procurement of timber. In 1827, Deloitte negotiated the purchase of 2,000 acres of land at the Bay of Islands, adjoining Raine’s land, presumably for its timber, which continued to be part of his cargo during his voyages to New Zealand over the next ten years. After establishing the firm of Deloitte & Co in Sydney, his main efforts were directed toward providing a shipping agency, located at Bettington’s wharf. It was a typical transitional step employed by shipmasters toward establishing themselves as merchants.

The success of both Deloitte and Towns reflected their relatively cautious financial growth strategy. Both established themselves as regular shipmasters in the Australian trade between England and Australia over a long period – Deloitte as commander of the *Faith* and *Florentia*, Towns as commander of the *Brothers* and *Bona Vista* during the 1820s and 1830s, before finally settling in the colony. Duke’s merchant and ship-owning career took a similar course, as did that of Captain John Lister, who made at least five voyages between London, Sydney and Hobart as commander of the *Wave* and *Fortune* between 1828-1838, before settling in Sydney as a shipping agent. Each of these men’s business careers reveals a pattern of visitation to the region from Britain as captains of merchant or convict ships and whalers, an accumulation of capital in their professions as shipmasters and visiting traders, and a

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74 De Mestre went into a partnership with another captain turned merchant, Matthew Hindson and Harvey to exploit New Zealand flax. De Mestre v Hindson 31/4/35, SRNSW, 2/3463, Select Cases Vol. 4., p.14; and 480-482.


76 Broeze, *ibid*, p. 38 (a task which was ultimately given to Dacre, when Raine’s business plunged into insolvency in 1828).


78 *Shipping News*, in the *Commercial Advertiser* 1835-41; *Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List*, 1842 ff.

79 SRNSW, 4/5198-4/5202, Colonial Secretary: *Reports of Vessels Arriving at Port Jackson*, July 1826-December 1831, AO Reel 1263,. A memorial in the form of a plaque, testifying to Deloitte’s achievements and beneficence, is located on one of the walls of Sydney’s Garrison Church.

final decision to settle in NSW with their families. They formed short-term partnerships with others to invest in landed property, grazing stock, shipping, banking and insurance, and utilising their networks to establish themselves as resident merchants. Their social transformation was reflected in invitations to soirées at Government House, their service on special juries of the Supreme Court, election to Sydney Council or the Legislative Councils of NSW and Victoria, and directorships on the boards of banks, insurance companies, or joint stock companies.

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The location of NSW provided significant opportunities for shipmasters to realise their ambition to improve their social status through ship investment, offering a broad range of maritime activities, including coastal shipping, the New Zealand, Pacific and Indian Ocean trades (including China, Batavia, India and Mauritius) and pelagic whaling. Altogether, NSW registered shipping in 1849 provided employment for 235 shipmasters. With even a minimal investment, men commanding small vessels in the coastal and inter-colonial trades were guaranteed uninterrupted employment, limited living expenses, and the potential to accrue considerable savings.  

81 This employment frequently provided an intermediate stage between a life at sea and employment as shipping agents, ship husbands, pilots, warehouse keepers or wharfingers, timber and coal merchants, and even publicans.  

82 Those who owned their own sailing vessels relied on their earnings from freight and passenger money but could minimise their expenses, as they were not subject to pilot fees and some other harbour charges.  

83 The manifests of these vessels indicate that they were an extremely efficient way of transporting goods and passengers between ports, and rarely had idle space – always a

81 Many of the small cutters and schooners made several voyages per month between coastal ports and Sydney, and with wages up to £15 per voyage, this could amount to £360 or more, Sydney Gazette, Commercial Advertiser and Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Advertiser.

82 Captain John Thom commander of the brig William, operated the vessel as a regular packet between Sydney and Launceston between 1842-1850, making four to six trips per year, ferrying mixed freight and passengers, while speculating in freight cargoes on his own behalf. By 1842 he had established to shipping agencies, one in Sydney and the other in Launceston, employing clerks in both. SRNSW, 2/8768, Insolvency Papers of John Thom: 18 December 1843, CGS13654, item 1124; SRNSW, 4/5221-5237, Colonial Secretary: Reports of Vessels Arrived, 1842-1850, Reels 1269-1277; Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List, 21 December 1844.

83 Brisbane to Earl Bathurst, 14 May 1825, HRA, Series 1, Vol. XI, p. 585 and footnote 163. A list of duties and fees for various types of shipping were regularly published in contemporary newspapers.
potential problem for larger vessels. Those engaged in the coastal trade filled an important niche business activity, serving the needs of extended coastal settlement, and transporting freight to Sydney or Hobart for transhipment to overseas markets.

In 1849 over half of all local ship investors, excluding ex-mariners, were master mariners. For some the investment was quite small, including trading cutters as small as nine tons. Some like T.B. Simpson and Thomas Larkins, invested in brigs of 230 tons or more. Others like as Henry Halcrow owned several vessels, one of which they might command. Mariners commanded 50% of the vessels in which they had a financial interest. In effect they purchased assurance of their command, exchanging uncertain wages for potential profits from freight and passenger money. It was a risky strategy, as many were to discover when they deployed their vessels for voyages to San Francisco between 1849-1850 during the gold rush. Nevertheless, a sufficient number of shipmasters, even those involved in coastal shipping, appear to have been moderately successful.

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The view of the successful shipmaster turned merchant, with landed property, serves to confirm Ralph Davis’ proposition mentioned earlier. Marital connections assisted this transformation, firming up networks with the local élite, those with landed

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84 These were published as import and export reports in Shipping News of the Sydney Gazette, Commercial Advertiser and Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List.
85 See Appendix 7. The ex-mariners included Sydney merchants, landowners, timber merchants, and wharfingers.
86 This was the cutter Rosalind, built in Sydney and operated by its owner Captain Bragg, Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List, 10 September 1849.
87 Ibid. Thomas Beckford-Simpson, an ex-whaling commander, had financed the construction of the brig Freak built by William Chowne at the Clarence River, for the Far Eastern trade. Larkins, who owned the whaler, Nimrod, started his career as a member of a sealing gang (See Appendix D in Margaret Steven, Merchant Campbell 1769-1846, Melbourne 1965, p. 309.
88 Ibid. The three vessels with a total tonnage of 69 tons were all locally built and used in the coastal trade.
89 Of 98 vessels in which mariners had an interest in 1849, 49 of them were under their direct command.
90 Russell and Nichol Families, Mitchell Library, ML MSS.1310, III, Items 2 & 3. SRNSW, Insolvency Papers of John Smith Papps: 12 February 1851, CGS13654, No. 3026. In both the cases of engineer turned trader John Russell and Captain John Smith Papps, commander of the English-registered barque the Harmony, they found the high rate of desertion, harbour and river ferry charges, and other exorbitant costs, together with market saturation made the voyage not only unprofitable but financially disastrous.
property and wealthy merchant houses.\textsuperscript{91} The marriages of Raine to General Worsley’s daughter; Dacre to the daughter of banker, James Sea in 1831; and Towns to Sophia Wentworth, are cases in point.\textsuperscript{92} Captain Frederick Petersen’s marriage connection to Sydney merchant and M.L.C., Richard Jones, certainly assisted him in establishing critical networks for the operation of his shipping agency.\textsuperscript{93} Captain John Northwood’s marriage to Robert Duke’s niece, Phoebe, represented one aspect of an ongoing financial and business arrangement between them, which helped him establish his Sydney shipping agency, the transfer of the whaling ship \textit{Tamar} (under mortgage), and continuing command of that vessel.\textsuperscript{94} The financial significance of dowries involved in these marriages (evidenced in insolvency and probate records), could be fruitfully explored elsewhere. With the possible exception of Towns, these marriages, however, are not indicative of unequal social alliances, as the shipmasters concerned were all educated men possibly all of “good breeding”.

This image appears to conflict with Bateson’s depiction of captains and officers as a “brutish” breed of ignoramuses.\textsuperscript{95} By contrast, other labour historians have suggested that shipmasters were totally separated by social class, interests, and background from the seamen under their command.\textsuperscript{96} The evidence regarding social origins is in fact somewhat ambiguous. The attainment of rank in both the British navy and in the East India Company’s fleet was traditionally a matter of patronage and purchase.\textsuperscript{97} The career of Captain George Bayly with Buckles, Bagster and Buchanan, who supplied

\textsuperscript{91} This is nowhere better represented in the marriages between shipmaster, George Blaxland (son of landowner John Blaxland) to Maria Dowling (daughter of NSW Supreme Court Judge James Dowling) in 1834 and that between Sydney merchant Thomas Walker and Ann Elizabeth Blaxland in 1823. NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, V1834 1279 18.
\textsuperscript{92} NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and marriages, Early Church Records to 1855.
\textsuperscript{93} SRNSW, 2/8761, Insolvency Papers of Richard Jones, 9 November 1843, No. 1043.
\textsuperscript{94} \textit{Sydney Herald}, Marriage notice; SRNSW, 2/8683, \textit{Insolvency Papers of Robert Duke}, CGS13654, 29 April 1842, No. 235, with a copy of an itemised account from his solicitor, Mr Norton, regarding the transfer of the \textit{Tamar} as security on a mortgage by Northwood to settle his account with Gore & Co, 6 August and 6 November 1839.
shipping for the East India Company, demonstrates elements of both. The son of a sail-maker, George gained an apprenticeship on the Almorah through his uncle, Matthew Boyd, a captain and shipowner. By 1828, having served his apprenticeship and time under the tyrannical shipmaster Peter Dillon, Bayly secured a position of second mate on the Buckles’ ship Hooghly after his father purchased a one-eighth share in her from Captain John Lamb. Similarly, Sydney merchant John Lamb owed his position to his family connections with the Buchanan family, and the fact that his father (after employment in the East India Company service) had given meritorious service during the Napoleonic Wars, resulting in three of his sons obtaining naval appointments. In the British Navy, this practice created some notable examples of inappropriate and incompetent command at least up to the end of the 1815, with boys as young as nine or ten sometimes assuming command of men old enough to be their fathers.

Bateson (possibly reflecting the negative views of the emancipist Assistant-Surgeon William Redfern, convicted for his participation in the Naval Mutiny of Nore in 1797), claimed that shipmasters were (almost without exception) “men of little education or refinement…and often so illiterate that they could barely scrawl their own signatures”, asserting they generally lacked the finer aspects of navigation and seamanship skills. These assertions suggest that at least during the early period when Britain was at war with France, command of merchant (or transport) ships devolved into the hands of unskilled ordinary seamen, the exigencies of war perhaps providing an avenue for social mobility. This is, in fact, not borne out either by the

98 Bayly, op.cit., pp.5-7.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid.
101 Evidence of George Coleman examined by the British House of Commons Select Committee inquiring into the Causes of Shipwrecks, 8 July 1836, BPP (1836), pp. 45-55.
103 In evidence to the Select Committee on Shipwrecks on the 8 July 1836, retired Captain George Coleman had suggested that in fact the use of convoys during that war had essentially deskilled shipmasters and officers, as they were no longer required to use their navigational skills and knowledge but merely sailed in tandem with their naval escort, BPP (1836), op.cit., question 766, p. 53.
nature of their voyages, by the shipping records, or by the fact that under the “press gang” regulations, exemptions were specifically made for experienced commanders, officers and seamen of the merchant fleets. The voyages undertaken by the transport ships, sometimes in uncharted waters and unpredictable weather conditions, demanded an extraordinary level of seamanship and navigational skills. To maintain official shipping records, logbooks, to read, interpret and correct naval charts, and to calculate distances, latitude and longitude under demanding conditions required sound education (whether gained aboard ship or ashore). These were not “illiterate” men. On the contrary, they were men capable of practically applying their learning and skills within a very physically demanding environment.

London shipowner and merchant, Duncan Dunbar, considered that British merchant captains and mates were in fact “a very respectable body of men” Dunbar always checked the credentials, character and skills of his shipmasters and officers, for “we know that with regard to captains and mates very frequently we are putting an immense property under their charge, and without any power of control over them in their absence”. London shipowner Joseph Somes asserted that commanders of merchant ships had to be not only “a very good navigator and a good sailor, but he has to charter the ship; he has the power of drawing unlimited sums of money on the owner during the voyage”. Despite the hefty financial responsibility given to shipmasters of merchant ships, neither Dunbar nor Somes considered it a position only befitting “gentlemen.” On the contrary, on the question of formalising examinations and certification of shipmasters and officers, Somes stated that he did not trust the Trinity Board to conduct examinations fairly. None of his captains were qualified “by station and property” for appointment as members of Trinity

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105 Testimony of Duncan Dunbar to the Select Committee on the Navigation Laws, dated 11 May 1847, BPP (1847), op.cit., question 4232, p.5.
106 Ibid., question 4251, p. 6.
107 Testimony of Joseph Somes on 16 May 1843 to the Select Committee on shipwrecks, BPP (1843), op.cit., question 953, p. 63.
He did not accept fees from gentlemen’s sons for appointment as a midshipman. On the contrary he bound boys as apprentices and made them seamen. Similarly, Dunbar appointed officers from among “well-behaved” seamen whom he had bound as apprentices. London shipowner, Money Wigram, used a similar approach, promoting officers from among the more intelligent and ambitious successful apprentices. These received their real training in navigation as third and fourth officers.

George Bayly, in command of the Hooghly in 1838, also expressed concern at the practice of employing young lads “of good birth and education”, unfit to do any work on board the ship, comparing them unfavourably with an apprentice accustomed “to consider that he has his way to make in the world by his own exertions”. He believed that such apprentices, with a willingness to learn, “will gain the esteem of his Commander and Officers and a clever one would very soon gain promotion”. Another shipowner, Henry Woodruffe, described many of the commanders as “regular seamen”. Evidence given to both the British House of Commons Select Committees on shipwrecks in 1836 and 1843 and on the navigation laws in 1847 and 1848 by shipowners suggests that merchant shipmasters and officers were quite often promoted from the ranks of seamen. The careers of a few of the leading shipowners themselves, suggests the veracity of this claim. Shipmasters may therefore not have been “gentlemen,” in the strict sense, but they were not uneducated.

109 Ibid, question 1129, p. 70.
110 Ibid, question 1132, p.70. According to Somes’ testimony, gentlemen could purchase positions as midshipmen on some ships for a fee of fifty guineas.
111 Testimony of Duncan Dunbar, 18 May 1847, op.cit., questions 4997-8, p.53.
112 Testimony of Money Wigram, 26 May 1848, Select Committee on the navigation laws, op.cit., questions 6100, 6104-5, p. 564.
113 Ibid.
114 Bayley, 8 June 1838, op.cit., p.203.
115 Ibid.
116 Testimony of Henry Woodruffe, 5 July 1836 Committee on shipwrecks, op.cit., question 357, p.25.
117 Testimony of Joseph Somes, Duncan Dunbar, George Frederick Young, Anthony Ridley, William Tindall, Robert Anderson, and Henry Woodruffe.
118 Henry Woodruffe and William Tindall were quite certainly promoted from the ranks.
In her examination of the effects of the 1850 Merchant Marine Act making the examination of candidates for the professions of master mariners and officers compulsory, Valerie Burton claimed the Act was an assertion of middle-class values, in an “increasingly class-stratified society”, and a clear demonstration of the “dynamic of industrial capitalism”.\footnote{Valerie Burton, ‘The Making of a Nineteenth-Century Profession: Shipmasters and the British Shipping Industry’, \textit{Journal of the Canadian Historical Association}, 1990, p. 97. This Act was Henry Labouchere’s 1850 Act (13 & 14 Vic. C. 93, S.7), published in the \textit{NSW Government Gazette}, Vol. XXX, No. 79, Supplement of 11 July 1851, and entitled the Mercantile Marine Act, 1850.} She argued that because shipmasters occupied a key position between capital and waged labour, it became essential that their positions (and those of the officers or mates) be “professionalised”, and (like the civil service) “divested of its patronage and privilege”.\footnote{Burton, \textit{ibid}. p. 101.} There is no doubt, given the evidence presented to four House of Commons Select Committees during the period 1836-1848, that efforts were being made to ensure shipmasters were in fact suitably skilled and qualified to undertake their responsibilities for the ships, cargo, passengers, and crew under their command. Rather than being a means of erecting a barrier to promotion for seamen as Burton suggests, it was designed to prevent inexperienced (and sometimes very young) “gentlemen”, sons of shipowners or their connections from securing ranked positions on (foreign-bound) ships to the detriment and potential risk of the ship, its cargo and crew. Ships do not steer themselves. The certification of masters and mates was a financial and safety issue, and one that the British Government could not in its duty of care leave solely to the discretion of shipowners, no matter how responsible they might individually be.\footnote{This “duty of care” is also reflected in the passing of British legislation for improving the safety and conditions of passengers from 1842 (Passengers Act, 5 & 6 Vic, C.107), onwards.}

From a purely practical point of view, the ability to obtain the rank of mate or shipmaster was very clearly a matter of intelligence, motivation and the ability to access education. Before the introduction of universal free education in Britain the latter was not readily available without a combination of personal effort, patronage or apprenticeship.\footnote{John Thomas Bigge (1823), \textit{Report of the Commissioner of Inquiry on the State of Agriculture and Trade in the Colony of New South Wales} published and printed as “The Bigge Reports” by Library Board of South Australia, Australiana Facsimile Editions No. 68, 1966, p. 55; E.G. Thomas, ‘The Old Poor Law and Maritime Apprenticeship’, \textit{Mariner’s Mirror}, Vol. 63, 1977, pp. 153-}
a seaman on a collier, was sufficiently motivated to study navigation at night school. The Protestant parishes of Scotland generally made more efforts at an earlier period with respect to educating youngsters than did those in the rest of Great Britain, and in 1823 the Edinburgh and Leith Seaman’s Friend Society established a Naval Academy for the children of seamen.

Even in Sydney, there were opportunities for both youngsters and ambitious seamen to learn, particularly with the establishment of Captain John Beveridge’s Naval Academy at Prince Street in the Rocks in the 1820s. The Academy offered flexible teaching and (low) fee arrangements for the benefit of visiting seamen. It is probable that the illiterate NSW sealer, Thomas Larkins, used avenues such as this to obtain a belated education sufficient for him to eventually command his own whaling ship. A more regular avenue was provided through apprenticeships. The apprenticeship agreements merchant shipowner Henry Moore signed with two of his boy apprentices, John Tagget and John Purchell, for six years and five years respectively on the 27 February 1843, suggests that there was a genuine commitment to support and educate the lads.

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126 In a List of early registered sealing agreements involving Campbell & Co.’s employees, Larkins signed his name with a cross Margaret Steven, Merchant Campbell 1769-1846, Melbourne 1965, Appendix D, p. 308. The two Articles of Agreement were clearly on a set legal format that not only set out in detail the responsibilities of the parties, but also provided for the annual increasing payment of wages, in addition to board and lodgings when in port. The wage payment appears atypical. Neither was a fee-paying “gentleman” applicant. SRNSW, Insolvency Papers of Henry Moore, CGS 13654, 10 February 1844, No. 1177 and 1179.
payments, in addition to board and lodgings, education and medical expenses. This is not the image of a reluctant shipowner, described by Valerie Burton.  

Compulsory certification was not instituted until after the Inquiry into the Navigation Laws was completed. On the 14 August 1850, the new Act made the examination and certification compulsory for masters and mates of foreign-bound vessels compulsory from 1 January 1851. This placed minimum age restrictions on masters and mates, with the former being over twenty-one and the latter over nineteen years of age. It also ensured that prospective Masters had at least six years experience at sea, while mates had a minimum of four years experience. This was therefore not an Act favouring the “gentleman” interloper, who might pick up a certificate and secure an officer’s post. Certificates of service and sobriety, general good character and conduct, discouraged insobriety, misconduct or “tyranny”. They could be withdrawn from shipmasters and officers in the event of the loss, damage or stranding of a ship directly attributed to drunkenness or misconduct. Shipmasters and mates were now required to have a basic education and specific practical skills of seamanship and navigation of a high professional standard. These were clearly not simply “the self-conscious assertion of professional status,” but genuine job requirements required to conduct ships with safety.  

129 Ibid, Section II, Clause 1.  
130 Ibid, Section V, Clauses 1-2.  
131 Ibid, Clause 2.  
132 Ibid, Section VIII.  
133 Ibid, Clause 3. Candidates who could demonstrate a high level of competence in great circle sailing, spherical geometry, marine surveying, and a more extensive knowledge of astronomy were awarded with the highest class of certificate. (Ibid, Section II, Clause 2). Such men could expect to command whaling or merchant ships in the Australian or Far Eastern trades.  
134 Burton, op.cit., p.98.
What had changed was the level of government intervention to ensure that all those appointed by shipowners were actually sufficiently qualified and skilled enough to undertake the positions they held. British merchant shipmasters and officers in future could no longer be accused of being “ignoramuses,” or “drunkards.” The timing of the Mercantile Marine Act suggests that the British Government was securing the future of British mariners in a world where they were no longer protected by the old Navigation Acts, and would have to make their way in a free market world. As I have demonstrated, there were still plenty of opportunities for ambitious, sober mariners for social and financial advancement in Australasian waters.
IN MEMORY OF

WILLIAM SALMON
DELOITTE

MASTER MARINER

BORN HULL 18TH SEPTEMBER 1797
DIED IN SYDNEY ON
13TH DECEMBER 1870

ARRIVED IN SYDNEY 9TH AUGUST 1826
IN COMMAND OF BARQUE "FAITH"
WHICH HE TOOK TWICE
TO NEW ZEALAND 1826-7
BETWEEN 1828 AND 1838
COMMANDED SHIPS PLYING BETWEEN
LONDON AND SYDNEY NOTABLY
BARQUE FLORENTIA, AFTER
ARRIVING SYDNEY IN FLORENTIA
3RD AUGUST 1838 RETIRED TO BECOME
MERCHANT AND MAGISTRATE
OF THE COLONY.

PLACED HERE BY HIS DESCENDANTS IN 1959.
SECTION FOUR:
Marine Service Industries
CHAPTER 10: SHIPPING AGENTS AND MERCHANTS

Roe, Dallas and Blainey have suggested that the decision to settle NSW was partly determined by a need to provide an “outfitting” station and trading post for British shipping in the Pacific.\(^1\) This section explores the development of maritime service industries in NSW, by examining the activities of shipping agencies and traders, “outfitting”, ship repair and other support services. The importance of these land-based industries to the health of the NSW economy should not be overlooked.\(^2\) They underpinned the whole Australian economy dependent on shipping – the import, export and transhipment of goods and mail, the conveyance of passengers, stock and essential supplies to settlements, and immigration. The value and importance of these services expanded rapidly from 1827. Their monetary value to the NSW economy is difficult to estimate, constituting a form of largely invisible export income.

This Chapter explores the rationale and business activities of shipping agencies. Very few private shipping agencies were active in Sydney prior to 1820, a reflection on both the low levels of shipping activity and the regulatory climate. Shipmasters and supercargoes frequently managed their ship’s business, negotiating with the Naval Office for port entry and clearance, paying duty on freight, arranging for the sale or storage of cargo and all the other miscellaneous duties associated with merchant shipping. In the absence of a well-developed commercial infrastructure, such practices were a tedious and costly necessity, compromising the efficient management of commercial shipping. I suggest that the development of shipping agencies in NSW

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\(^2\) Macroeconomic theories, such as McCarty’s staple theory approach tend to focus on a governmental approach measuring the balance of payments in terms of imports and exports. This focus perhaps undervalues the importance of labour, and ignores arbitrary price differentials that might affect the values of exports and imports. See especially J.W. McCarty, ‘The Staple Approach in Australian Economic History’, *Business Archives and History*, Vol. 4, No. 1, February. 1964; and G.R. Abbott, ‘Staple Theory and Australian Economic Growth 1788-1820’, in *Business Archives and History*, Vol. 5, August 1965, pp. 142-154.
reflected not only the colony’s “transition from paternal convictism to capitalism”, but also its role as an *entrepot.*

While shipmasters frequently managed their ship’s business, it was more convenient to place responsibility for the management and sale of cargo in the hands of professional local shipping agents, or merchants with the facilities to store goods, pending their sale or delivery. Shipping agents offered additional facilities, such as arranging outward cargoes, recruiting replacement crew, arranging the survey and repair of vessels, providing local information, negotiating with customs, refitting and provisioning, and providing unloading, disposal and storage facilities and labour. By utilising the services of shipping agents, shipmasters could avoid the expense of demurrage they might otherwise incur.

Initially, Sydney provided an intermediate destination chiefly for British merchant ships and whalers, who operated as convict transports on the outward voyage. Nevertheless, returns of the colonial naval office indicate that well before 1820, Sydney was also a calling point for foreign commercial and naval shipping. The visits were sufficiently infrequent for the government dockyards, Government Commissariat, and a few local business houses, to service their needs in terms of provisioning and repairs. Even in mid-1825, the Commissariat still acted in the capacity of a quasi-merchant and agent, reportedly supplying £6–£7,000 of provisions to several French ships calling at Port Jackson in addition to that supplied by several commercial houses.

By 1826, a handful of shipping agents, including the firm of Jones & Walker, Cooper & Levey, Aspinall & Browne, Raine & Ramsay, George Bunn, J.B. Bettington, and Matthew Hindson, managed visiting merchant ships as well as their own local fleets. Merchants represented a significant proportion of cabin passengers arriving post-

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4 *Sydney Gazette,* 14 July 1825.

5 Much of the evidence for this activity can be found in the shipping news and advertising columns of the *Sydney Gazette* during the period.
1824. Some (like the Mossman brothers) chartered the ship on which they arrived.\(^6\) Merchants arrived with speculative cargo, representing all or part of their (sometimes borrowed) capital, offered for sale to the Sydney market.\(^7\) After “proving” the value of their assets they became immediately eligible for land grants the size of which were determined by the value of their assets. Superficially, at least, as Butlin suggests, the conversion of assets into merchandise for sale in NSW benefited Great Britain as it resulted in a drain on the limited money in circulation in the colony.\(^8\) Many, like Thomas Gore and James Bettington, were agents for wealthy London business houses.\(^9\) Bettington also had useful commercial links with the Port Louis firm of Thomas Blyth & Co., and maintained an agency for the Leith Australian Company, represented in Sydney by E.M. Scott and Thomas Raine, Ramsay & Co.\(^10\) Such connections provided a useful basis for the establishment of a successful shipping agency.

By 1828, the number of merchant ships arriving with immigrants had risen to 46, and the following year almost doubled, with 86 vessels identified as arriving with immigrants.\(^11\) In one month alone, August 1829, the Sydney Gazette reported the arrival of 15 vessels, 5 of which were from England, and 16 departures. Of the latter, 2 were departing for the sperm whale fishery, 2 each for Launceston, Newcastle, and Batavia, and 1 for Mauritius.\(^12\) The increase in merchant shipping during the latter half of the 1820s represented an important transitional phase in the colony’s development from a primarily penal settlement to a commercial economy. The

\(^6\) Colonial Secretary’s Reports of Vessels Arrived, 1829, SRNSW, 4/5199 & 4/5200, Reel 1263.
\(^7\) J.W. Gosling, former partner in the London firm of Staniforth & Gosling, bankrupted in 1825, borrowed capital to invest in a speculative cargo worth £1,600, which he imported in 1827, forming the basis for his 1920 acre land grant at Bathurst, G.P. Walsh, ‘Gosling, John William (1798-1852)’, Australian Dictionary of Biography, op.cit., Vol.1, 1966, pp. 460-461.
\(^8\) Butlin, op.cit., pp. 100, 190-192.
\(^9\) Hay to Darling 23 December 1826, including letter from Robert and John Gore, merchants of London, December 1826, and other attachments, HRA, Series 1, Vol. 12, pp. 797-8.
\(^10\) Sydney Gazette 25 March 1834; see also previous footnote.
\(^11\) The information is derived from Reports of Vessels Arrived, 1826-1850, SRNSW, 4/4823-4/4907, Reels 1286-2459. Additional information mostly in the form of memorials, and despatches from Earl Bathurst and his Under-Secretaries to successive Colonial Governors on the background and circumstances of arriving merchants is also located in the HRA, Series 1, Vols.10-15, Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, Sydney, 1922.
\(^12\) Sydney Gazette, 5 September 1829.
increase in sea traffic was, of course, a prerequisite for the growth of private shipping agencies.

Bigge’s recommendations for stimulating British business investment and encouraging migration by offering land grants based on investment capital, did much to encourage the entry of British merchants into the colony during the 1820s. Another factor responsible for this migration of merchants to the colony was the financial crisis threatening the financial houses and merchants of Great Britain, America, India and Canton during 1824-6, sending many into bankruptcy. Most of the new Sydney merchants had invested their capital, like Alexander Spark in 1823, Aspinall & Browne in 1824-5, and Phillip Flower in 1829, in a consignment of British goods, with the prospect of not only returning a good profit, but also of obtaining a large selection of land. The migration of merchants also owed not a little to the determined propaganda efforts of some of its leading citizens. When Solomon Levey departed from the colony for London on the Mangles (which the firm of Cooper and Levey had chartered) in April 1826, his intention was to return within two years with capital of “good English money of £50,000-£75,000”. Cooper and Levey had already gained a reputation as financiers in the colony, injecting welcome capital in the often-struggling economy. The Gazette remarked, “We have known many

17 Sydney Gazette 12 April 1826.
18 In 1826 they purchased the failed Captain John Piper’s personal and landed property, including Point Piper, for $100,000 (Sp.), injecting an immediate cash deposit of $50,000(Sp.) Sydney Gazette, 4 March 1826.
astonishing men to arise in this Colony, but Mr. Levey is one of those enterprising characters that has eclipsed not a few”.19

Managing shipping was for some new Sydney merchants an integral part of their business operations. After 1819, convict transports were at least temporarily denied the privilege of carrying private freight.20 Population growth, reduced tariffs, changes to the British navigation laws (and especially to the EIC charter) provided the impetus for British shipowners and private charterers to supply more merchant shipping to Australia. Merchant shipping brought consignments of imported manufactures from Britain, grain from India, the Cape of Good Hope and Valparaiso, sugar from Mauritius, and tea and other China goods from Canton or Macao.21 Wholesale consignments, offered for private sale or by public auction to retailers, formed the basis for merchant activity in the colony. During the 1820s many ships were redirected to India, Manila or China for paying cargoes, to the South Seas fisheries, or to New Zealand to collect timber and spars for the British naval dockyards at Deptford, Chatham, Portsmouth or Plymouth. However, that not all merchants required active management of a shipping agency for the successful pursuit of their mercantile operations is suggested by the commercial activities of Joseph Montefiore. Despite the family’s significant mercantile investments in Sydney, Hobart, Launceston, Adelaide and New Zealand, they did not maintain a shipping agency in NSW or invest directly in shipping.22

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19 Ibid. 12 March 1826.
20 See Chapter One.
22 Montefiore and his wife and children, Moccatto and Furtado arrived in Sydney on the ship Jupiter on 26 February 1829, with a reported capital of £20,000. See Colonial Secretary’s Reports of Vessels Arrived, Reel 1263, SRNSW, 4/5198-4/5202, and Sydney Gazette, 30 February 1826.
While a relatively few shipping agents had managed visiting ships in the early 1820s, increasing levels of shipping activity provided opportunities for the entrance of many more individuals into the profession. In 1836, the number of regular shipping agents in Sydney had risen to approximately twenty, with a few (such as A.B. Spark, Walker & Co., Aspinall & Brown and A.B Smith) dominating the field. In 1836 Spark’s shipping agency handled more than 40% of merchant ships visiting Sydney from Great Britain. While this share had fallen to 16% by 1839, the number of ships he managed almost trebled, and was clearly becoming a source of irritation, rather than pride.  

The explanation for this trend can be found by an examination of Appendices 1 and 2. The number of ships arriving from Great Britain doubled in 1838, continuing to rise until 1841, when it peaked with 251 ships arriving with a total tonnage of 106,332. This sharp increase in shipping arrivals provided opportunities for the formation of new shipping agencies. By 1843, 161 individuals, firms or agencies managed 558 shipping “visits” to the port, representing 110,864 tons of shipping (Appendices 1 and 2).

Shipping agencies frequently offered a transitional phase for some master mariners from command of a ship to the role of merchant. It was a role for which they were well prepared, and required relatively little capital. Agencies also provided a transitional phase for shipping clerks in existing merchant houses. These clerks had developed inside knowledge of all aspects of the business, and a network of useful contacts among commanders, corresponding regularly with merchants, shipping agencies and shipowners in other ports. Sometimes shipping clerks branched out independently with the blessing of the merchant or agency for which they had

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24 The information is drawn from a list of all shipping entering Sydney during the year 1843, published in Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List, 13 April 1844, pp.28-31 and 27 April 1844, pp. 44-47.
25 Among the many mariners who made this transition, or whose activities were of a dual character, were James Birnie, Thomas Raine, Daniel Cooper, William Salmon Deloitte, George Bunn, Robert Duke, Joseph Moore, J.H. Lister, John Thom, Prosper de Mestre, Ranulph Dacre and many others.
26 Thomas Agars, confidential clerk in the Sydney firm of J.B. Bettington from 1829-1837 was a good example of such a transition. Commercial Advertiser, 28 June 1837. See also HRA, Series 1, Vol. 18, pp.428-9.
worked. This occurred most frequently when the operations of the business house concerned became too unwieldy to manage all its existing demands, when it was changing its focus or client base, and where the proposed agency did not directly compete with its own operations.

Agents did not need to invest in shipping in order to manage their entry and departure. Their role required them to arrange for the discharge and distribution or sale of cargoes, facilitate pilotage, customs inspections, and payment of fees and duties for incoming shipping. They might assist commanders and officers by providing local information, perhaps even directing them to suitable accommodation ashore, or providing entertainment while surveys, repairs and refitting were completed and ships were provisioned for their next voyage. They also arranged outward freight, found passengers, and if necessary recruited replacement or additional officers and crew for outgoing voyages. Where there was insufficient cargo for return voyages, or profitable freight prices could not be realised, shipping agents directed shipping to other ports either in the Australian colonies or to foreign ports in search of more paying freights. Not infrequently, shipping agents sold ships on behalf of their overseas owners. Agents essentially performed the role of ship’s husbands.

The development of essential infrastructure, such as wharves, however, did not keep pace with the increase in shipping arriving at Sydney. Shipping agents not owning their own wharves and warehousing used three alternative strategies. Some, like A.B. Spark, often used public wharves such as the King’s (later Queen’s) Wharf, in

27 Captain Joseph Moore, who had worked as a shipping clerk and ship husband in the firm of William Walker & Co. from 1829, set up a merchant house with his son Henry in 1837, to specialise in the tea and sugar trade, while maintaining a whaling fleet.
28 Thus the firm of Walker & Co. were by 1837 specialising in British imports and the export of wool products, and had sold most of its whaling fleet.
29 Evidence for this can be found in the financial records of shipping agents, mainly available through the insolvency and probate records of mariners, agents and merchants.
30 See for example, the intestate records of English whaling master, Edward David, Captain of Nelson, whaler for whom Lamb, Buchanan and Co. acted as shipping agents during his visits to Sydney in 1831, in SRNSW, 6/3484, Intestate Estate File 73, (1832), Bundles 1 & 2.
31 SRNSW, Insolvency Papers for J.H. Lister, John Thom, Robert Duke and John Curtis, Thomas Gore & Co. and others, for which details refer to bibliography. See also the diaries of Alexander Brodie Spark, in Abbott & Little (eds.), op.cit., which provides details of the range of activities preoccupying shipping agents.
32 See p.42.
conjunction with his own warehouse. Some leased private sufferance wharves and warehousing from their current owners who had diversified into other business operations, returned to England, or retired and welcomed the rental income. Others paid existing owners or lessors for the use of wharfage and warehousing space, on a needs’ basis. Despite Hunter and Edwards purchasing T.G. Pittman’s wharf and warehouse complex at Walsh Bay in 1834, they paid the firms of J. & H. Moore and W. Walker & Co. for the use of their wharves for their chartered ships William Mitchell, William Rogers and Ann Gales when those ships arrived in August 1839, as their own wharf was already fully occupied. The charges were quite small (being limited by government regulation) rarely amounting to more than £20 depending on the tonnage and length of time the vessel occupied a berth. These arrangements provided additional sources of income for the larger shipping agents and merchants, while facilitating the growth of new shipping agencies.

One indication of the cost of such rental is suggested by the fact that in April 1842, when the firm of Robert Duke & Co. were experiencing severe financial distress, Duke leased his own wharf and warehouses from his creditors for £100 per annum. However, other evidence suggests that this charge represented a fraction of the real

33 Shipping news, Commercial Advertiser and Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List.
34 Insolvency Papers of John Thom, 18 December 1843, SRNSW, 2/8768, CGS 13654, item 1124.
35 By 1843 the majority of shipping agents fell into this category, as demand for available land and facilities outstripped supply, with developed waterfront land prices by 1837 reaching extraordinary levels of £27 per foot. Commercial Journal, 22 November 1837.
36 Sydney Gazette, 15 January 1833; New South Wales Government Gazette, Abstract No.56, 26 February 1834; Commercial Journal, 7 August 1839.
37 See Footnote 94, Chapter 1. Figures are based on average agency charges extracted from Insolvency file records, for example those of Joseph & Henry Moore, Hughes & Hosking, and others (SRNSW, Insolvency Papers, Series CGS13654).
38 Surviving financial records suggest that Sydney shipping agents’ fees ranged from 1-5% of ship tonnage, with additional commissions earned dependent on the services provided. These figures are based on debtors and creditors journal and ledger accounts located in the insolvency records of captains, shipowners, shipping agents and merchants (SRNSW, Insolvency Papers, Series CGS13654). Unfortunately these records rarely describe the types of services provided with any clarity. However the figures appear to correspond to those identified by Greenberg in his discussion of the Agency House in China for the same period. Michael Greenberg, British Trade and the Opening of China 1800-1842, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1951.
39 Commercial Journal, 20 April 1842. In November 1842, his property was assigned to his chief creditors Prosper de Mestre, John Jones and Frederick Dalgety at a meeting of his creditors, Omnibus and Sydney Spectator, 20 November 1841. The property, which included a three-storey warehouse, various allotments, his wharf and the “marine villa”, Albion House, was subsequently offered for sale in May 1842, Sydney Free Press, 10 May 1842.
cost of leasing such assets. Launceston-based shipmaster and owner of the brig *William*, John Thom, for instance, leased Fotheringham’s wharf at Darling Harbour for the sum of £500 per annum for the purpose of conducting a Sydney shipping agency wharf. He also leased a small sparsely furnished counting house in Elizabeth Street Sydney.  

As Fotheringham acquired the property on a ninety-nine years lease from the government in 1834 for terms of £10 per annum, this represented a significant income-generating strategy for Fotheringham, particularly as he also leased out his patent slip to Martyr & Co. for ship repairs. In 1838, Fotheringham was charging shipowners for use of the Patent Slip at the rate of 1s. per ton for the first day, and 6d. per ton each day thereafter. At the average rate of approximately two ships of 200-500 tons per week, this represented a significant gross income. Nevertheless, the outcome for both Thom and Fotheringham was not as profitable as they had hoped. Thom was forced to sublet his lease to merchant Charles Abercrombie, who in turn sublet it to Robert Anderson. As neither of the sub-leases were recognised by Fotheringham’s agent, Ranulph Dacre, Thom owed Fotheringham over £1,000 in back rent by January 1844.

Shipping agents included several different groups. Firstly, there were merchants, such as Spark, Aspinall & Browne, Richard Jones, Walker & Co., A.B. Smith, who had access to large warehousing facilities, and often their own wharves and repair facilities. Secondly, there were shipmasters owning and managing their own vessels during their visits. Generally by 1840, such practice was limited to captains who owned local or other colonial vessels, like the Australian-born Arthur Devlin

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40 Insolvency file of John Thom, dated 18 December 1843SRNSW, CGS13654, No. 1124.
43 From a debt of £1057.12.7 owed by John Thom to Fotheringham, the latter was to receive a mere dividend of £6.12.2.
44 For example, Captain Sughrue of the ship *St George* on behalf of the firm of Sughrue, Hopkins & Co.
Visiting shipmasters of large merchant ships rarely undertook to manage their own ships in a foreign port, preferring to use the services of professionals, when these were available. Thirdly, there were shipmasters not only owning and managing their own vessel, but also acting as agent for other vessels during their time in port. Finally, there were an increasing group of “specialists”. They included men such as Daniel Egan who established regular “packet fleets” servicing specific Australian or Pacific settlements. However, many in this group, with backgrounds ranging from booking clerks to shipmasters, were evidently using their shipping agencies as a stepping stone in their transition to merchants.

The commencement of a shipping agency was an indicator of a shift from a career at sea to an eventual career as a merchant, and in this respect the role of shipping agent was very much a transitional phase. Raine, Bunn, and Hindson in the 1820s, Deloitte, and Duke in the 1830s, and Towns in the mid-1840s, were classic examples of the successful transition of shipmasters to merchants, through the establishment of a shipping agency. This transition was usually characterised by regular visitation in command of merchant shipping and investment in speculative cargo consigned to a local merchant for sale. William Deloitte initially had such an arrangement with his shipping agent, J.B. Bettington, before acquiring Bettington’s facilities. During such visits shipmasters established networks and became accustomed to local shipping practices.

Not all shipmasters achieved such success, some being forced to revert to their profession of shipmaster. Captain Lister was an example of this type. Lister made at

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46 Captain Robert Towns, commander of his ship *Brothers*, voyaging between London, Sydney and the Far East utilised the shipping agency of Thomas Gore and William Dawes, *Colonial Advertiser*, 25 January 1836. The choice of that agency was most likely to have been related to the friendship of his London sponsor, Robert Brooks, with London merchant John Gore, whom the agency represented.
47 Captain John Thom of the brig *William*, was in the gradual process of moving from the role of shipmaster to that of agent, managing four other vessels.
49 Insolvency Papers of John Hardman Lister, 31 January 1843, SRNSW, 2/8722, CGS13654, Item 629.
least four voyages to Sydney and Hobart, starting with his voyage on the *Wave* in 1828 from London, with merchandise.\(^{50}\) In 1838, he returned to Sydney with his wife and family to settle and work as a shipping agent.\(^ {51}\) In 1839 he formed an agency partnership with merchant Samuel Peek and ship-chandler, Francis Mitchell, for the purpose of outfitting and refitting ships.\(^ {52}\) They secured the use of Fotheringham’s patent slip and wharf in Sussex Street for the purpose, offering Fotheringham £5,200, which they secured by way of a £1,040 deposit and a mortgage for the balance.\(^ {53}\) Over the next few years Lister acted as shipping agent for a few visiting British ships. Unfortunately his timing for entry into his new career meant that he was up against stiff competition, and was irreparably indebted to his former Sydney agents, Willis, Sandeman & Co. (for old unpaid ship insurance policies), to Duncan Dunbar and others, becoming insolvent in 1843.\(^ {54}\)

A variation on the method of entry into the shipping agency business was via local shipping. Those entering the field were usually owner-operators of small vessels, initially acting as their own agents. In this category was Captain John Thom, whose main shipping interests were in Launceston.\(^ {55}\) Thom made frequent voyages between Sydney and Launceston, carrying a wide variety of freight and passengers, as well as carrying his own speculative cargo, from 1836 onward.\(^ {56}\) He employed a manager at his Sydney office, D. McIntyre, at £150 per annum, to manage the accounts and to arrange and sell cargoes. Initially he paid wharfage fees on an ad hoc basis. His decision to lease Fotheringham’s wharf for £500 per annum, suggests a growth strategy.\(^ {57}\) Lister and Thom appear to have shared the same facility, while being separate (and potentially rival) business entities.

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\(^{50}\) *Sydney Gazette*, 4 December 1828 and 9 August 1830.

\(^{51}\) *Commercial Advertiser*, 2 September 1838.

\(^{52}\) Fotheringham Papers ML MS 752, Items 3 & 4.


\(^{54}\) J.H. Lister’s Insolvency Records, *op.cit*.

\(^{55}\) These included shares in the River Tamar Steam Navigation Company, John Thom, *op.cit*.

\(^{56}\) A good example is the list of passengers and exports of the *William* for Launceston, *Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List*, 21 December 1844. These included shares in the River Tamar Steam Navigation Company.

\(^{57}\) Thom, *op.cit*. 

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An examination of the activities of Thom’s Sydney shipping agency during 1843, reflects the difficulties he was facing as an agent and shipowner-operator. Of 14 vessels handled during the period, 9 were for his own brig, the *William*, of which he remained the shipmaster. The other ships were the schooner *Will Watch*, the barque, *Socrates* (making three voyages), and the schooner *Lowestoft*. Most voyages related to trade between Sydney and Launceston, with the exception of two brief diversions to Portland Bay and Newcastle. All were freight and passenger carriers, often carrying “speculative” cargoes on Thom’s own account. This suggests that Thom was in the process of shifting from shipmaster to merchant. Included among Thom’s other debtors were the *Charlotte*, the barque *Augustus*, the *Dorset* (Adelaide), *Oratavia*, *Christina*, *Regina* and *Jean*, representing older accounts. These suggest that activity at Thom’s shipping agency was shrinking.

This is hardly surprising. There was increasing competition for the Launceston trade, by a number of irregular traders and larger shipping agencies, coinciding with the diversion of convict transports to Hobart and the cessation of immigration to NSW in 1843. These included Sydney ship and insurance broker, J.B. Metcalfe (an ex-shipmaster), Deloitte, merchants Thomas Gore & Co., James Cook, and two steamship companies, Ben Boyd & Co, and the Hunter River Steam Navigation Company. Some merchants were diverting shipping, previously engaged on longer voyages, into the coastal and inter-colonial trade. This strategy reflected both an attempt to rein in costs and to generate faster income in order to meet mounting debts.

By far the largest group of shipping agents were resident merchants and shipowners, who managed their own vessels or acted as ship-husband on behalf of other

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59 Ibid.
60 Thom, Insolvency Papers, *op.cit.* Schedule D.
61 Gipps to Stanley, 2 April & 14 May 1842 *HRA*, Series 1, Vol. 22, pp. 2 & 44.
62 The *Seahorse* went out of commission entirely after it was damaged off George Town on 5 June 1843. See case Boyd v Underwriters at Guildhall reported in *Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List*, of 28 November 1846, pp. 326-7.
63 This change of direction is reflected in both the summary of shipping movements of the period (Tables Six and Seven) and the summary of imports and exports (Table Eight).
shareholders. Most had ready access to wharfing and storage facilities, either through ownership or lease. They included men who had already made the transition from shipmaster to merchant. Shipowners occasionally acted as shipping agents for other vessels visiting the port. Among the largest category of shipping agencies were those who managed inter-colonial, British, or foreign shipping visiting the port of Sydney on commission, while having little or no direct financial investment in shipping. These included companies such as A.B. Smith & Co., A.B. Spark and Thomas Gore & Co. The majority of such agencies were merchant firms, handling not only their own import and export business (including assisted immigrants for whom they acted as agents), but also providing wharfage and warehousing facilities for other agents. Merchants had a direct interest in the delivery of consignments to them, and in obtaining cargo space for colonial produce for delivery and sale elsewhere. Most were heavily involved in wool exports, offering advances on wool secured by lien consigned to them by growers. Thus their role as shipping agents was in many ways incidental to their merchant activities as consignees or consignors of freight.

A.B. Spark’s diary provides an insight into the role of a shipping agency. From 1836-1840, Spark was responsible to shipowners and freighters for the management of over 62 merchant ships visiting Sydney, the majority from Great Britain. He acted on behalf of British shipowners, including Duncan Dunbar and the South Australian Company, securing local freight for home bound shipping, arranging charters, or despatching shipping promptly to other ports. It also involved arranging repairs, refitting and provisioning of the ships, the collection or payment of outstanding

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64 As for example W.H. Sawyer, who owned the Coquette and Paterson.
65 These included William Salmon Deloitte, John Jones and Joseph Moore.
66 These included the firms of Rowland, McNab & Co. and ship and insurance broker, J.B. Metcalfe.
67 These were frequently merchants such as A.B.Smith & Co., James Kenworthy & Co., Gilchrist & Alexander, Thacker, Masson & Co. and others.
68 For example the double entry account books of Thomas Goodall Gore provide a very lengthy list of his transactions with local wool-growers, as well as details of his local and overseas creditors, including London wool broker, Samuel Edenborough (with whose family the Gores shared grazing property in the Maneroo area) and the Gore family in London, Cape Town and New York. Insolvency Papers of Thomas Goodall Gore & Co., 29 July 1842, SRNSW, 2/8694, No. 342.
69 This is no more evident than in the diaries of Alexander Spark from 1836 onward.
70 Abbott & Little (eds.), op.cit.
invoices, payment of wages and advances, recruiting officers and crew where vacancies occurred, on behalf of ships’ owners. Spark also arranged charters in his role as shipping agent, as well as chartering several ships for Mauritius, in his role as merchant, to replenish his sugar stock. Both *Pyramus* and *Earl Durham* were chartered to Richard Jones, respectively for £2,100 and £2,800 to collect New Zealand spars and ship them to the naval yards at Plymouth and Portsmouth. Duke chartered *Abel Gower* for £2,000 to convey oil to London; Hughes and Hosking *Morayshire* for a seeking voyage at 17s. per ton (£268.6s. per month), and Wright and Duncan chartered *Mary Hay* at £250 per month for six months.

Spark’s role as a shipping agent had expanded rapidly after 1837, paralleling the formation of numerous other Sydney shipping agencies, responding to heightened demand from shipping from Great Britain during the period 1839-41. This dramatic increase outstripped local agents’ capacity to supply export cargoes. In 1837, almost 80% of British shipping returned directly to Great Britain, however between 1838-1842 the percentage of direct homebound voyages significantly decreased. This trend is reflected in Spark’s diary from 1838, with Spark increasingly directing shipping to alternative ports at Newcastle, Hobart, Port Phillip or more distant ports at Manila, Sourabaya, Canton, Calcutta, sometimes on “seeking voyages”. Sydney’s increasing role as an *entrepôt* during the period is illustrated in Diagram 7 (p.230a).

Sydney shipping agents, particularly merchants, were heavily exposed to world market trends, as London merchants and shipowners such as Robert Brooks, John Gore and Duncan Dunbar desperately sought to balance their books. The impact of a world economic crisis from 1838-43 was reflected in shipping activity at Sydney

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73 *Ibid*, 23 January 1837, and 12 September 1837, p. 82.
Diagram 7: Bar Graph showing the Number of Shipping Arrivals at Port Jackson, 1835-1847, and their Origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Great Britain</th>
<th>Other British Colonies</th>
<th>New Zealand</th>
<th>South Seas Islands</th>
<th>Fisheries</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Foreign States</th>
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<td>1835</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
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<td>60</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>48</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>190</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>251</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>1842</td>
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<td>65</td>
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<td>1845</td>
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<td>1846</td>
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<td>64</td>
<td>75</td>
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</table>
port. The number of (non-coastal) vessels entering Sydney dropped from 714 in 1841 to 558 in 1843, while the total tonnage also dropped from 183,778 in 1841 to 87,539 in 1845 (Appendix 1). The most significant decline in shipping entries was from Great Britain, when the numbers of ships fell from 251 in 1841 to 87 in 1843. It was not until 1846 that inbound shipping began to show signs of recovery, although despite the higher number of total (non-coastal) shipping entering the port of Sydney in 1847 (878 vessels), the total tonnage of those ships (154,904 tons) was well below the figure for 1841, indicating the smaller average size of shipping in that year. Shipping arriving from Great Britain remained relatively low, while shipping from other British colonies, New Zealand, the South Sea Islands and the fisheries increased, as did the number of vessels arriving from other foreign states. A significant number of these vessels were registered in the colonies (Sydney, Launceston or Hobart). Whether successful or not, much of this activity might be best described as “income generating”.

A summary of shipping arrivals and departures (excluding NSW coastal shipping) (Appendices 1 & 2), and of the value of imports and exports at the port of Sydney for the period 1826-1847 by per cent of total for various origins and destinations is shown at Appendix 3. These figures indicate that while shipping from Great Britain declined after 1841, shipping between Sydney and other Australian colonies (particularly between Van Diemen’s Land and Port Phillip), together with the value of imports and exports, increased. A comparison of shipping arrival and departure figures and volumes of imports and exports for Great Britain indicate several trends. While there was a reduction in shipping from Great Britain after 1841, a higher percentage of ships were returning directly, carrying colonial produce. For the first time, the balance of trade between NSW and Great Britain shifted in favour of NSW. This trend was maintained at least until 1850. The figures also suggest that while the number of ships arriving from Great Britain remained relatively low, the size (tonnage) of shipping was increasing. This may have improved their efficiency for the carriage of cargo and passengers, however this trend also had implications for Sydney’s shipping agencies and maritime infrastructure, including wharf and warehouse facilities, and repair docks. As the income of shipping agents was directly affected by the value of imports...
and exports they handled, as well as by the number and tonnage of ships under their management, those agents handling shipping in the Australia trade with Great Britain were directly affected by these fluctuations in shipping and trade. Agents needed to be able to adapt quickly to survive such fluctuations. Those who could develop broad inter-colonial and overseas networks quickly optimised their chances for business recovery.

Unfortunately for the NSW shipping interest (in particular merchants, victuallers and those connected to ship repairs) American and other foreign whalers could not sell their produce on the colonial market under the British navigation laws. Had they been able to do so, Sydney port may have developed a thriving industrial base, as it was estimated over 700 foreign ships were engaged in Pacific whaling in the mid-1840s. American and other foreign shipping requiring repairs, refitting or fresh provisions either paid for them in bullion or notes (often drawn on English banks), or were allowed to exchange the value of these services by trading a percentage of their whale products. During the 1830s NSW shipping agents and merchants had capitalised on New Zealand’s ambiguous legal status to service and supply foreign whalers. With the imposition of customs and other duties imposed after New Zealand was secured to the British Empire in 1841, American shipping was discouraged from visiting those islands for the purpose of refitting, repairs and watering. Instead, American trading posts were increasingly established in other

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77 Gipps to Stanley, 18 July 1842, with attached memorandum from the American Consul based at Sydney, J.H. Williams, dated 6 July 1842, in HRA, Series 1, Vol. 22, pp. 153-4. The firm of Dawes, Gore & Co. were able to find a legal loophole by appointing Augustus Gore as agent of William Morgan of New York, Thomas Gore & Co., op. cit, Schedule E. In February 1836 they exported 700 bales of wool on the American ship Corvo to Boston, Colonial Advertiser, 4 February 1836.

78 Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List, 17 July 1847. The value of provisioning crews of these ships alone was estimated as worth no less than £200,000 sterling.

79 Evidence of Samuel Browning, representing the firm of Benjamin Boyd & Co, to the Select Committee on the British Navigation Laws, 16-23 March 1847, BPP (1847, 1st Report), pp. 95-133. Evidence of Frederick Parbury, representing the firm of Lamb & Parbury, to the Committee on 23 March 1848, BPP (1848), pp. 121-135.


81 J. Backhouse (British Foreign Office), Stephen, 8 December 1840 and 18 March 1841, Russell, Hobson and Gipps, 17 and 18 March 1841, in HRA, Series 1, Vol. 21, pp.279-282.
parts of the South Pacific, particularly on the Fiji Islands and Tahiti, where the French
minimised all port fees.\textsuperscript{82}

Despite the legal discouragement given to American and other foreign shipping, a
number of American ships still found it convenient to call at Sydney. This shipping
provided a niche for shipping agents and merchants, James Kenworthy & Co, whose
wharf was located on the northern side of the harbour.\textsuperscript{83} In 1843 they handled 13 such
ships, 9 departing for the south seas sperm fishery, 1 destined for China, another came
directly from New York and was destined for Calcutta; the American schooner \textit{Petrel}
came via Hobart on its way to Manila, while another American schooner was destined
for the South Sea islands.\textsuperscript{84} The company also acted as shipping agents for 2 British
ships, 1 bound for the South Seas sperm fishery, the other for Batavia.

Shipping agents and merchants, Rowland, McNab and Co., on the other hand,
developed networks in Valparaiso, Lombok, Manila, Guam and Ceylon, handling
3,035 tons of shipping to those ports during 1843.\textsuperscript{85} Merchants, Gilchrist and
Alexander, also had connections in Valparaiso, sending two ships to that port in 1843,
as well as handling another three sent direct to London with cargoes of colonial
produce.\textsuperscript{86} Robert Towns was later to exploit his own wide networks as he built up his
merchant shipping business after securing an extensive wharf in 1844. Rival firm in
1843, Thacker, Mason and Co., also directed three ships with cargoes back to London,
\textit{(Persian, Caledonia and Constant)} while directing others to Manila, Singapore, Guam
and Hong Kong, one to Newcastle and Port Stephens to collect local produce, and
managed another two directing one to Hobart and other to Launceston. They also

\textsuperscript{82} Rhys Richards & Jocelyn Chisholm, ‘The SAD Truth about Bay of Islands Shipping 1803-1840: The
Value of Shipping Arrivals and Departures Lists to the Study of Economic History’, \textit{The Great Circle},
Vol. 15, No. 1, 1993, pp.31-2. The visits of American whalers to New Zealand declined from a peak of
108 in 1839 to only 38 in 1841, following British sovereignty on 6 February 1840.

\textsuperscript{83} James Kenworthy and his family arrived from Liverpool and London on the \textit{Medora} on 2 November
1834, together with another merchant, Alan McGaa, and a cargo of British merchandise, \textit{Sydney
Gazette}, 4 November 1834. He initially went into partnership with Edward Lord, before commencing
business on his own account in September 1838, \textit{Commercial Advertiser}, 20 September 1838.

\textsuperscript{84} Information regarding shipping agency’ activities during 1843 is based on a lengthy summary
published under the title of “Departures During the Year 1843,” published by the \textit{Shipping Gazette and
Sydney General Trade List}, 27 April 1844, pp. 44-47.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
acted as shipping agents for merchant and immigrant ships arriving from Great Britain during 1843, despatching ten vessels with a total tonnage of 3,480 tons.  

During the 1830s the firm of Sydney merchant, Andrew Blowers Smith, with his strong family connections with the British wool manufacturing industry at Manchester and Liverpool, had emerged as one of the leading Sydney shipping agencies. As a key importer of assisted or “bounty” passengers from Britain the shipping handled by his agency was associated with this industry. Smith’s Sydney shipping agency was severely compromised by the cessation of assisted immigration during the 1840s resulting in the financial collapse of the Liverpool-based firm of Smith & Co. Nevertheless, Smith’s Sydney agency survived the financial crisis, and in 1843 managed eight British ships, with a total tonnage of 2,376 tons. However, only three returned directly to London, Smith sending the others to Singapore, Port Phillip, Guam, and New Zealand, while the immigrant ship Templar was sent to Madras and Calcutta for cargo.

By far the busiest of the shipping agencies during 1843 was the relatively new firm of ex-shipmaster, J.B. Metcalfe, a Sydney ship and insurance broker, who also managed the Marine Insurance Company. During that year alone, Metcalfe despatched thirty vessels, representing 4,625 tons. Their destinations ranged from the ports of Hobart, Launceston in Van Diemen’s Land, Port Phillip, destinations in New Zealand including Auckland, the Bay of Islands, Port Nelson, Port Nicolson and Port Russell, to Tahiti, Lombok, and Norfolk Island, and London. Some involved repeat visits, however Metcalf’s shipping agency still was responsible for the management of 18 individual vessels, half of which were managed on behalf of local shareholders.

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89 Stanley to Gipps, 28 February 1844 and 7 July 1844; *HRA*, Series 1, Vol. 23, pp. 421-38 and 658.
91 *City of Sydney Directory for 1844-1845*, (compiled by Francis Low), E. Alcock, Sydney, 1844.
92 *Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List*, 27 April 1844.
Metcalfé’s agency survived the financial crisis of the 1840s when many others failed possibly because he was able to focus his activity on managing the increasing volume of shipping between Australian settlements and New Zealand.

The financial return for managing shipping was directly related to the tonnage of shipping, the number of ships handled, and the quantity of separate services provided. An examination of some of the financial records of ship agents suggests that the fee amounted to as little as 1-1.5% of the ship’s volume, or in the case of freight, 2.5% of the value. Thus, Joseph and Henry Moore owed the shipping agency of J.B. Metcalfe, £19.6.7d. for wharfage and freight for their consignment of sperm oil to England, from Clarkstone and Woodlark, in 1843. They owed shipping agent, Deloitte £42.16.6 for the consignment of twenty-five and 227/252 Imperial tuns of sperm oil to Walker and Co. of London on the barque Spartan in February 1843. These charges were incurred for “wharfage, lading, storage and delivery of oil.” Thacker, Mason & Co., creditors of Henry Moore’s insolvent estate, charged Moore for the use of his own wharf and bonded stores. For one month alone this amounted to £48.1.8d, the debt rapidly reaching £1,361.17.1. Among Thom’s debtors was the barque Augustus for £146.10.1. However, most of the business that can be directly attributed to Thom’s shipping agency was for much smaller amounts - £1.10s. for the Oratavia, £8.5s. for the Jean, and £4.19.5 owed by the Captain of the Regia. His business records suggest that the major source of revenue from his business arose from freight charges and cargo “speculations” on his own account. Thus, for men attempting to break into the business of shipping agencies during the late 1830s and early 1840s

93 Insolvency Papers for Henry Moore, 10 February 1844, SRNSW, CGS13654, No. 1177 and 1179, trustees reports.
94 Ibid. Casks used in the whaling trade normally held 252 imperial gallons, and the fraction therefore represented a cask not completely filled.
95 Ibid. This was similar to the action taken by Robert Duke and John Curtis’ creditors, and was one way of recovering some of the creditor’s debts.
96 Trustees of Moore’s estate were P.W. Flower, G. R. Griffith, and Frederick Parbury, although one of their largest creditors was the firm of Thacker, Mason & Co., who had loaned the firm £13,000, secured on a mortgage over Moore’s wharf and warehouse at an undisclosed date. Joseph Moore’s eldest daughter Ann had incidentally married merchant Mashfield Mason, of that firm, in August 1840, Sydney Herald, 15 August 1840.
97 Ship’s debts were invariably incurred against the ship, rather than its owners, a device no doubt designed to secure creditors against any changes in ownership.
98 Thom, op.cit.
there was both stiff competition and relatively small remuneration. Such agencies frequently required ready access to capital (or at least a reasonable credit rating), and they risked the uncertainty of timely returns. Shipping agencies therefore functioned best as adjuncts to other related activities.

Shipping agencies were a useful and necessary aspect of merchant business, but appear to have offered little intrinsic financial reward. As a shipping agent, Spark was in a position to secure the best prices for his own export freight, while negotiating favourable freight prices for shipowners with other merchants and consignors. As a merchant he was also able to purchase and accept a range of colonial produce into his warehouse for export. During the latter part of 1836, for example, he purchased £4,000 worth of oil and whalebone from Richard Jones & Co., for shipment to London on the convict transport, Captain Cook.\(^9\) He completed the Captain Cook’s loading arrangements, consisting of oil, whalebone and wool, (the value of his own cargo alone worth over £11,000) in 14 April 1837. Together with passengers, this ship earned £3,000 in freight for its owners, a percentage of which he (as agent) received.\(^1\) This agency role, however, did not always mesh neatly with his core business, and he increasingly struggled to manage his diverse activities as merchant, shipping agent, landholder and socialite.\(^2\) A subsidiary activity, his shipping agency was by 1840 beginning to stretch Spark’s constricting financial resources, as there was frequently a considerable delay recouping outfitting costs expended on a ship’s account.

Agents required access to ready capital or good credit facilities to operate successfully. Those who were most likely to prevail in the business were men with established networks both in the colony and abroad, and who maintained good bookkeeping records. Most of all they were probably men who accrued a reputation for good service, for, as the diaries of Alexander Spark suggest, business often expanded on the basis of reputation. That these attributes were still insufficient to

\(^1\) \textit{Ibid}, pp. 76-7.
\(^2\) \textit{Ibid}, 31 December 1837, p. 87. Spark wrote, “I find that I had 550 visitors at Tempe, and that I was Agent for 15 vessels”.

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withstand the onslaught of impatient creditors is evidenced by the heavy toll of insolvencies among ship agents and merchants between 1841-1845. Much of this debt was incurred from the heavy exposure of shipping agencies to extended credit arrangements with defaulting creditors at home and abroad. Ultimately, NSW shipping agencies were as vulnerable to financial risk as ship owners were to all the natural hazards and business risks of investment.
Plate 4: Part of the Memorial erected in recognition of the pioneering efforts of Robert Campbell, The Rocks, Sydney.
CHAPTER 11: THE SHIP OUTFITTING AND REPAIR INDUSTRY

Shipping from Great Britain, the whale fisheries, America and other foreign states provided an important source of business income to NSW ports, most particularly Sydney.1 This took the form of direct income to shipping agents, and to ship chandlers and other local merchants for the purchase of provisions, replacement masts, rigging and timbers. It also provided income and employment to local shipwrights and other artisans for repairs and modifications to their vessels, as well as to a whole range of other service personnel, not least among them publicans, gaming-house keepers, attorneys and prostitutes. In this chapter I identify the impact of government policy on the development of the industry, and the rationale shaping commercial development.

Despite the many legal disincentives described in Section 1, Sydney Harbour was strategically important to both the naval and commercial maritime industry in terms of its facilities for repairing ships.2 When the colonial government established the H.M. Dockyards at Sydney by 1794, its primary function was surveying and repairing visiting ships, particularly convict and naval shipping.3 The Dockyard maintained a sail room, blacksmith shop and stores such as timber, cable, rigging, copper sheathing, treenails and other essential stock for outfitting and repairs.4 Ship construction was a secondary but essential role necessitated by the critical shortage of

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1One NSW shipping agent and broker J.N. Smith modestly estimated at a meeting of shipowners, merchants and shipmasters held in January 1848 that whaling ships alone expended an average of £500-£600 for refitting costs at a meeting of shipowners, merchants and shipmasters, Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List, 19 February 1848. With between 600-700 American whaling vessels in the Pacific alone this represented a potential income of £300,000-£420,000, just for refitting. In a local Petition addressed to the House of Commons Select Committee on the British Navigation Laws in July 1847, the Legislative Council estimated a potential annual loss to the colony of £200,000 as a result of the laws (being the cost of provisions for 200,000 men engaged in the American whaling fleet in the South Pacific, Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List, 17 July 1847, p. 548.


3 Instructions accompanying the appointment of Thomas Moore as Master Boat Builder, 13 September 1796, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, ML Safe 1/18b, Reel 6037. Like Daniel Paine, Moore was also appointed to survey timber for naval purposes, ibid, SZ991, p. 17, Reel 6037.

4 Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/3494, Reel 6004, p. 149.
vessels in the colony to undertake government business in surveillance, exploration, rescue, and the transport of convicts, military personnel and produce between Sydney, Norfolk Island, Port Dalrymple, Hobart, Newcastle and Port Macquarie.\(^5\)

In 1794, the British Admiralty seconded skilled shipwright Daniel Paine to the Dockyard apparently for the primary purpose of assessing the suitability of NSW timber to meet the increasing demands of H.M. Dockyards in Britain to enlarge their war fleet.\(^6\) Despite some adverse assessments, the Secretary for War and British Admiralty decided to proceed with plans to import timber from NSW for the fleet, in view of the serious shortage of the preferred English oak.\(^7\) Admiralty thereafter chartered East India Company vessels to transport convicts to the colony, using them to convey timber cargo on the return voyage to Naval stations and dockyards in India, the Cape of Good Hope and Great Britain.\(^8\) In order to meet Admiralty demands, the local fleet was augmented by construction of small-medium sized vessels at H.M. Sydney Dockyards and by private shipbuilders, to convey timber from the inland and coastal timber stands, and later from New Zealand.\(^9\)

His Majesty’s Dockyards at Sydney provided a source of significant employment for skilled artisans and labour over the first thirty-five years. Of seventy shipwrights identified from the correspondence of the NSW Colonial Secretary in 1821, the

\(^{5}\) As early as 16 March 1815, Governor Macquarie in a Despatch to Lord Bathurst suggested that the vessels, *Kangaroo* and *Emu*, sent out to the colony and manned by Royal Navy personnel were both more expensive to operate and entirely useless for the service intended, by dint of their size and draught of water for employment at Newcastle or the Hawkesbury for the transport of produce, coal, timber and lime. He recommended that in future the colonial government should build its own vessels or employ colonial built vessels on contract. *HRA*, Series 1, Vol. 8, pp. 437-443.


\(^{7}\) Lord Pelham, Secretary of War and Colonies to Governor King, 29 August 1802, with attachments, PRO, Colonial Office, 202/6 ff54, cited in Daniel Paine, Appendix II, *ibid*, pp. 82-4.

\(^{8}\) *Ibid*. It was estimated they would utilise two or three ships per annum for this purpose. The first of these appears to have been the *Glatton*, sailing in 1803. On 7 January 1808, the plan was underwritten by further instructions from the Navy Board, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1795, Fiche 3279, pp. 28-36.

\(^{9}\) By 1811 Sydney merchants were also sending spars (from New Zealand) for use by H.M. Navy at their Cape of Good Hope Station, 25 February 1811, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1726, *ibid*. Reel 6043, p. 41.
Dockyard had provided either temporary contractual or permanent employment to many. In addition, it provided opportunities for colonial-born boys to enter shipbuilding apprenticeships – including Daniel Egan, John Jones (who after serving part of an apprenticeship at the Dockyard was apprenticed out to E.J. Hazard (pump and block-maker), Thomas Day, John Irving and William Henry Chapman. While the Sydney H.M. Dockyard provided a means by which boys might enter into a “respectable trade,” its failure to enter significantly into new construction work essentially compromised successful completion of shipwright apprenticeships. These lads did not receive the full grounding in architectural ship design and practical conversion available at overseas naval or commercial shipyards, a point H.M. Master Boat Builder, Richard Tress belaboured when Thomas Day and William Chapman applied for permanent positions. Both the H.M. Dockyard, and the private shipyard established by Robert Campbell Senior and John George Palmer, utilised existing detailed plans of ship designs and prefabricated vessels in kit form brought from British shipyards, in the absence of skilled master shipwrights.

A few private merchant shipowners also offered apprenticeships to native-born and emigrant youngsters willing to enter the shipbuilding, sail and rope-making trades.

10 Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence Index, SRNSW, This has been reproduced online at http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/indexes/colsec/
12 Richard Tress, Master Boat Builder at the Dockyard, to the Colonial Secretary, 24 May 1822, strongly advised that the “Infant State” of the Dockyard did not provide the breadth of experience to apprentice shipwrights, Thomas Day or William Chapman, to qualify them as shipwrights, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1756, Reel 6053, p. 151. Bigge was also critical of the quality of vessels in the service, and recommended the service of the Dockyard be augmented and separated from the Department of the Chief Engineer, Bigge, op.cit., p.399.
13 The teak ship Elizabeth for example, although built at Campbell’s wharf, was brought out in frame from India. J.H. Watson, ‘The Mercantile Marine: Its Contribution to Australian History’, Australian Historical Journal and Proceedings, Part VI, Vol. 3, 1910, pp.227-257; Governor Hunter had requested that plans for the construction of schooners and cutters, specifically for crossing the locally prevalent sand bars be sent. Captain Hunter to the Secretary of the Board of Admiralty, 31 December 1802, in Paine’s Diary, Appendix II, p.88. The Board of Admiralty acknowledged Hunter’s recommendations in its instructions to the Navy Board of 1 January 1803 (NNM, ADM A/2960, pp.88-9).
The *Sydney Gazette* as early as 1811 regularly carried advertisements from private individuals such as Underwood seeking new apprentices in the shipbuilding industries, in the absence of skilled indentured servants.\(^\text{14}\) Between October 1807 and November 1808, Henry Kable and James Underwood employed forty-five artisans in their shipbuilding yard, including carpenters, blacksmiths and sail-makers, paying wages of between 6-8s. per day.\(^\text{15}\) Thirty years later, wages for marine artisans remained virtually unchanged, with the firm of Walker & Co paying top rates, while some smaller firms were paying significantly less.\(^\text{16}\) These wages were comparatively higher than those offered to similar tradesmen in Great Britain, even in 1849, suggesting that the services of skilled artisans were difficult to secure in NSW.\(^\text{17}\)

Up to 1824, the amount of shipping traffic was relatively light, and local shipowners and agents such as the Jenkins family, utilised the services of H.M. Dockyard apprentices at Sydney during periods of low Dockyard demand.\(^\text{18}\) Merchants, William Walker & Co., were also able to secure copper sheathing from the Dockyard, when their own order from London failed to arrive in time, to effect repairs to their whaler, the *Woodlark*.\(^\text{19}\) While skilled convict marine artisans were in high demand during the 1820s, merchants and shipowners such as Richard Jones and Thomas Walker, Thomas Street, and Scottish shipwright, Robert Cunnynghame, also sought male apprentices from the Orphan School.\(^\text{20}\)

\(^{14}\) Shipowner, E. Wills for example in *Sydney Gazette*, 2 March 1811 wanted several boat-builders as well as a number of active seamen.

\(^{15}\) Lord v. Kable and Underwood, Court of Civil Jurisdiction Case Papers, SRNSW, 2279, Cause 315,.


\(^{18}\) Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 20 February 1810, SRNSW, 4/3490B, Reel 6002, pp. 90, 92-3.

\(^{19}\) Jones, Riley & Walker, 11-12 June 1822, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1756, Reel 6053, pp. 128-128A; *ibid.*, 4/3505, 14 June 1822, Reel 6009, p.403.

\(^{20}\) Orphan Petitions, Colonial Secretary’s Office, SRNSW, NRS783/1/2776 & NRS783/2/2776. Thomas Street was fortunate in obtaining two skilled convict shipwrights, as well as a blacksmith for the construction of a number of vessels at Port Stephens during 1824 and 1825, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1779, Reel 6061, p173e.
By 1821 a number of the artisans who served at the Dockyard had already gone into business on their own account. This had a flow-on effect with their recruitment of other apprentices and artisans. Thomas Day set up a successful boat-building business at Miller’s Point.21 He subsequently offered an apprenticeship to emancipist Thomas Hyndes’ nephew in law, George Green, who in turn went into partnership with Mr. Costin as a boat-builder before setting up on his own account at Lane Cove in 1836.22 Green then engaged at least three apprentices over the next few years, including Joseph Pashley and James Glover, second son of Thomas Glover, the prosperous emancipist owner of the public house, Sailor’s Return.23 Green became a wealthy landowner, especially after his father’s death, purchasing property on the North Shore and (allegedly) in New Zealand.24 Daniel Egan, son of convict Bryan Egan, initially continued to practice as a shipwright at the Dockyards and was appointed Master Boat Builder there in 1824.25 When offered a transfer to the Dockyards at Trincomalee, in Ceylon, when his position was made redundant, he accepted a gratuity instead.26 He used the funds wisely so that by the mid-1830s he had made the transition to shipowner and merchant.27 He established the Hobart Town and Launceston Packet Office near King’s Wharf, exploiting the high demand for regular packet shipping

21 In April 1836 Thomas Day placed his waterside premises (including a two storey four-bedroom cottage) at Darling Harbour, opposite Girard’s Steam Engine on the market for sale or lease. He and his large family were about to visit England. Colonial Advertiser, 27 April 1836.
22 His new shipyard was located at Ball’s Head, Commercial Advertiser, 17 and 24 September 1836; by October 1840 Green had gone into partnership with shipwright Andrew Summerbell, as lessees of William Gore’s estate at Artarmon, in an enterprise combining the repair of shipping and timber supply, ibid., 24 October 1840. By October 1836 Green applied for five acres of land at Willoughby, ibid. 30 July 1836, suggesting that his shipyard may have been located in Middle Harbour.
24 NSW Government Gazette, No. 73, 11 November 1840, p.1177.
25 His formal appointment was made on 18 November 1825, but backdated to 1 October 1824, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/6037, p. 65; Reel 6070 and ibid., 4/424, Reel 6039, p. 462.
between Sydney and Van Diemen’s Land. Another Dockyard shipwright apprentice, William Henry Chapman, also made a partial transition to property and ship ownership, establishing a shipyard, warehouses and wharf at Miller’s Point, where he had received a Crown grant. Clearly the H.M. Dockyard provided the catalyst by which local men were able to enter the middle-class, while providing opportunities for others to join them.

Some early shipwrights, such as Charles Griffin and John Grono, arrived as ship carpenters. Grono established shipyards on the Hawkesbury River at Pitt Town, where his younger sons served their apprenticeship. Andrew Summerbell worked as a ship carpenter on the Nereus, then as a shipwright at Raine’s shipyards in Hokianga, before settling in NSW in 1829, establishing his own shipyard at Miller’s Point. Other early shipwrights (like George Hubbard, Jonathon Griffith, Thomas Crumpton and George Dagwell) or the rope-maker, Robert Williams, had served time as convicts. However, in the period following the cessation of the war in 1815 to 1831, increasing numbers of marine artisans arrived as immigrants. Among these were shipwrights Robert Cunynghame (1823) and James Munn (1824) who set up

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28 Colonial Advertiser, 6 July 1835.
29 The property was advertised for sale in October 1839 after Chapman had experienced a series of financial setbacks. Colonial Advertiser, 26 October 1839. It was described as having a three-storey warehouse, a counting house, wharf with a seventy-foot water front at Darling Harbour, and included a sail-loft, mast house, saw-pit and shipyard.
30 Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, 7 May 1803, SRNSW, ML Safe 1/51, p. 11, Reel 6040; Memorial from John Grono, 7 November 1833, ibid., 2/7871, Reel 1134, No.33/7422., Ship carpenters were also qualified shipwrights, however the trade focused on conducting running repairs on ships rather than new construction. See Christopher Lloyd (ed.), The Keith Papers: Selected from the Papers of Admiral Viscount Keith, Vol. III, 1803-1815. Presented for the Navy Records Society, London 1955, p.165.
31 While his shipyards provided productive employment, utilising local timbers, John Grono returned to sea as shipmaster for almost eighteen years, exploiting his special knowledge of sealing resources around the New Zealand coasts, to provide steady income for his large family. Memorial from John Grono, 7 November 1833, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 2/7871, Reel 1134, 33/7422; Application for land grant, 1-4/1830, NSW Governor’s Despatches, ML A1206, No. 585, Reel CY539, p. 343.
32 9 April 1825, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1785, Reel 6063, p. 158; see also J. O’Connell Ross, William Stewart, Sealing Captain, trader and Speculator. Roebuck Society, No 37, Aranda Press, Canberra, 1987, p. 204. In 1836 Summerbell was leasing part of W. Wright & Long’s property at Miller’s point, for his shipyard in partnership with William Phillips. He subsequently purchased part of that (then bankrupt) estate in 1838. By 30 November 1840 Summerbell had entered a partnership with George Green, from whom he purchased property at Willoughby, Insolvency file of Andrew Summerbell, 25 April 1842, SRNSW, 2/8682, CGS 13654, No. 225; Colonial Advertiser, 19 June 1839, 24 October 1840.
33 Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence Index, SRNSW, op.cit..
shipbuilding yards in Sydney Cove and Darling Harbour, William Lowe and James Marshall (1828), pump and block-maker Edward Gregory Hazard (1822) and sail-makers, Richard Kemp and Peter Rapsey. The latter went into partnership with another new arrival, Francis Mitchell, in what was to be a very profitable sail-making and ship-chandlery undertaking. These were respectable tradesmen with sufficient capital to pay their own fares.

There was an early and ongoing demand for skilled rope-makers and flax-dressers. Emancipist, Robert Williams, pioneered the processing of New Zealand flax, before establishing a ropewalk in Sydney in 1821. Ropewalks were generally long buildings of 300-400 yards in length, and in British Naval yards both rope-works and sail- lofts were part of the complex of buildings associated with shipbuilding. By 1831 the demand for rope for both maritime and domestic use was sufficient to support a number of commercial ropewalks. Among them was that owned by Jacob

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34 According to the NSW 1828 Census, Cunnynghame arrived on the brig Minerva in 1823; on 14 September 1824 he applied for a grant of land at Broken Bay, in order to source timber for his shipbuilding activities, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1836B, Fiche 3084, No. 250; for James Munn see Munn v Bettington, NSW Supreme Court, 31 October 1831, in T.D. Castle & Bruce Kercher (eds.), Dowling’s Select Cases 1828-1844: Decisions of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, The Francis Forbes Society for Australian Legal History, Sydney 2005, pp. 491-2 and HRA, Series 1, Vol. 17, pp. 383-9; Lowe and Marshall, Scottish shipwrights who arrived on the Tiger in 1828, set up shipyards at Clarence Town, where they had purchased church land, Reports of Vessels Arrived, Tiger, September 1828, Colonial Secretary’s Office, SRNSW, 4/5199, Reel 1263; H. Lowe, ‘Lowe, William’, Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 2, Melbourne University Press, 1967, p. 137; Land Records (1848-1853), SRNSW; Hazard arrived as a ship’s carpenter on the Britomart, receiving permission to settle on 12 April 1822, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1760, Reel 6055, p. 24a; Richard Kemp arrived free on the Atlas in 1819, and applied for a land grant on 10 May 1821 and again on 13 August 1824, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1838A, Fiche 3096, No.532, pp.163-9. His application was favourably received with a grant of three hundred acres on 26 August 1824, ibid, 4/3512, Reel 6013, p.266. Kemp established his sailyard and loft at Chapman’s wharf, Colonial Advertiser, 26 October 1839. On 19 February 1842 Kemp declared himself insolvent, by which time he had sold all his landed estate, Insolvency Papers of Richard Kemp, SRNSW, 2/8680, CGSI3654, No. 210. Sailmaker, Peter Rapsey, came free on the Medway in 1822, setting up in partnership with Francis Mitchell as a ship chandler, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1786, Reel 6063, p.65.

35 Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1786, Reel 6063, p.65.

36 For example the Second Commission to Governor Arthur Phillip, dated 2 April 1787 specifically ordered him to prioritise the cultivation of flax, whose “superior excellence for a variety of maritime purposes” made it a potentially valuable naval commodity. HRA, Series 1, Vol. 1, p.13.

37 Bigge, op.cit., p.53.

38 Peter Kemp (ed.), The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea, O.U.P., London 1976, p. 722; Some appreciation of the demand for rope for both the naval and commercial maritime industry can be seen from the fact that even the relatively small ship, the Endeavour, on which Captain James Cook had set out utilised over thirty kilometres of rope for its rigging, Vanessa Collingridge, Captain Cook: Obsession and Discovery, an ABC documentary, 2007.
and Joseph Wyrer (transported to the colony on the ship *Baring* as convicts in 1815), and their brother, Michael, who came free.\(^{39}\) In 1831 the family set up a ropewalk in Castlereagh Street, Sydney, opposite the racecourse.\(^{40}\) Such was the demand for rope and twine that by May 1839, Michael Wyrer recruited an additional twenty ropemakers and ten flax dressers.\(^{41}\)

Private ship-repair facilities were desperately needed for an increasing number of larger merchant vessels visiting the port. Between 14 April 1826 and 15 April 1827 39 vessels arrived in NSW (excluding coastal vessels).\(^{42}\) By 1828 the number of vessels of large tonnage arriving from Britain and the whaling fields had significantly increased.\(^{43}\) It was not simply marine artisans who benefited from this relatively sudden increase in shipping. Between 1826-7, these vessels brought 745 crewmembers, of which a number spent advance wages on refreshments. In 1828 the number of visiting crew increased to over 2,600 men.\(^{44}\) While not all crewmembers spent their wages in port, crew wages provided a valuable source of income to publicans and gaming houses, slop-sellers and innkeepers, attorneys and prostitutes.

As shipping in NSW ports expanded it created an ever increasing demand for low-cost lodgings, short-term rental accommodation, employment agencies (“Houses of Call”), public houses and gaming rooms, prostitutes and crimps.\(^{45}\) A number of licensees of public houses and inns were either in the hands of shipwrights, shipmasters or their close relatives, while the owners were frequently also investors in

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39 Joseph Wyrer, December 1819, Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence, SRNSW, 4/1860, Fiche 3202, p.106.
40 Jacob Wyrrer received title deeds to land near the racecourse in 19 October 1831, *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 2 May 1832, p. 76; ropewalk established at Castlereagh Street, *Sydney Herald*, 27 August 1833.
41 *Commercial Advertiser*, 8 May 1839.
42 NSW Colonial Secretary, Reports of Vessels Arriving at Port Jackson, July 1826-December 1831, SRNSW, 4/5198-4/5202, Reel 1263.
43 SRNSW, *ibid*.
44 An exact figure is not possible, as on three occasions (two of which included a naval vessel) the number of crew was not disclosed.
shipping, including watermen, lighters and ferries.\textsuperscript{46} This is hardly surprising as the occupational groups not only shared a limited geographical space at the Rocks and Miller’s Point but also sought to diversify, or “spread” their investment, across a range of activities. This raises further questions around the activities of “crimps” and the dynamics of that practice, giving further credence to G.R. Henning’s opinion that shipowners, shipmasters and crimps were engaged in a “collusive monopsony” to deprive seamen of their wages.\textsuperscript{47} Indirectly, the maritime industry provided employment for an even wider range of personnel. These included carters, millers and bakers, butchers, soap and candle-makers, and attorneys. Not least, the industry provided employment for a variety of government personnel, from Naval and Customs officials, tidewaiters, lighthouse keepers, pilots and clerks, to the Water Police and judicial system generally.

An important determinant in maintaining the profit margins of ship investors, merchants and agents was the efficiency in loading and unloading facilities. The maritime service industry, therefore, incorporated a number of other land-based occupations supplying such services. They included wharfingers to manage private wharfs, and licensed watermen and lightermen for conveying crew, passengers and cargo between sea and shore. The services of stevedores and wharf labourers were often required when ship crews deserted or were discharged, simply to ensure that ships were not unduly delayed in port loading and unloading cargo. Delays caused by shortages of personnel to unload or load ships efficiently were costly to shipmasters and charterers, who might be forced to pay additional charges in the form of demurrage and insurance costs.\textsuperscript{48} Ultimately they could affect the profits of merchants and shipowners. Delays had a roll-on affect, as shipping lingering in port missed their next assignment. In 1817, Captain Drake, commander of the ship \textit{Chapman}, estimated...

\textsuperscript{46} In 1831 these included the Shipwright’s Arms (John Amner); the Whalers Arms (Joseph Faris), and the Mariner’s Return (Johana Pashley), while the Ropemakers Arms (Joseph Wyer) was linked to boatbuilder George Bullivant through marriage. Shipmasters Edward Catlin, Arthur Devlin, John Cooper and John Smith Papps were among a number who took out publican’s licences.


\textsuperscript{48} The shipmaster of the emigrant ship \textit{Sir Edward Parry}, delayed at Port Phillip one week in February 1848, stated that the delay had cost him £30 per day. Letter published in the \textit{Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List}, 19 February 1848.
additional ship-operating costs caused by delays at an average of £400 per month. On that occasion the delay meant that the ship could not clear for India before the hurricane season commenced, effectively denying that ship a whole season’s employment. Thus shipowners were denied valuable freight, risked loss through wreckage in gales, possibly without covering insurance, as well having to meet additional operating costs. The issue of ships being delayed in port through labour shortages (created by desertions and litigation) assumed local political importance in the 1830s and 1840s, when local merchants and shipmasters successfully petitioned for anti-crimping legislation.

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Visiting shipping represented, of course, a much greater source of income for local merchants, shipping agents, and maritime artisans. The increase in shipping placed a heavy burden on a relatively small number of shipwrights, for whom the archaic practice of careening and heaving down vessels for repair proved time-consuming and inefficient. Prior to 1832, Sydney still desperately lacked sufficient suitable docking facilities for servicing shipping. Even H.M. Dockyards was unequal to the task, particularly as siltage was proving a problem. Shipwrights, Chapman, Day, Jones, Munn and Cunnynghame, all of whom established shipyards in the vicinity of Darling Harbour and Sydney Cove, thrived, as did sail-maker, Richard Kemp, who leased his sailing-loft from Chapman. During a period when there was still a relatively slow market demand for new vessels, repair and refitting work provided a guaranteed steady income, often supplemented by income from sub-leases and timber sales. Merchants, William Walker and Thomas Raine, employed shipwrights and other artisans directly. Not all shipyards benefited from the increasing level of shipping activity. John Grono, whose shipyard at Pitt Town isolated it from taking any real advantage from opportunities to service visiting shipping, lamented on the poor state of the shipbuilding industry in 1829.

49 Testimony of Captain Drake before Judge-Advocate Wylde, Commission of Inquiry into convict deaths aboard the ship Chapman, 20 August to 4 November 1817, HRA, Series 1, Vol. 9, p. 608.
50 An Act for the further and better regulation and government of seamen within the Colony of NSW and its Dependencies and for establishing a Water Police, 4 Vic. 17, 1840, published in the New South Wales Government Gazette, Supplement 68, 24, October 1840, pp. 1088-1090.
51 Writing a Memorial to the Colonial Secretary for land and relief from payment of quit rent he wrote, “the business of shipbuilding however advantageous to the Colony at large has of late years not only
for constructing shipping, not for repairing it.\textsuperscript{52} Most of his income was in fact derived from his activities as a shipmaster in the New Zealand sealing trade, and from his fertile agricultural property on the Hawkesbury floodplains.\textsuperscript{53}

The government’s decision to remove H.M. Dockyard and Lumberyard from Darling Harbour facilitated the commercial development of the NSW shipbuilding industry. The reduction in the size of the H.M. Dockyard at Sydney by Governor Darling in 1831 was a cost-cutting exercise. In a Minute to the Master Attendant, John Nicholson, dated 23 August 1831, Darling warned that “It is to be distinctly understood that the Establishment retained is intended for effecting trifling repairs only, and that any work, which may be required of a more considerable nature, is to be performed by Contract”. He instructed Nicholson to make sure the men were kept constantly employed even when not engaged in minor repairs.\textsuperscript{54} On 13 August 1831, there were a total of 58 persons employed at the Dockyard, including 1 Master Builder, 9 shipwrights, a block maker and turner, 5 carpenters, 6 sail-makers, 3 rope-makers, 3 blacksmiths and 8 apprentices. With the exception of the Master Builder and apprentices, all the tradesmen were bonded servants.\textsuperscript{55} Within ten days the number of employees was reduced to fourteen.\textsuperscript{56} By 1833, the Dockyard had ceased to function and the services it performed were offered for tender by private contractors.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{52} Nevertheless he had been engaged to repair the whaler, \textit{Minerva}, for Cooper & Levey in 1833, probably in part-payment of a mortgage he entered into with that firm the same year.

\textsuperscript{53} Grono (1833), \textit{op.cit.}


\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Ibid.}, Enclosure, Minute 83 from John Nicholson, Master Attendant’s Office: ‘A General Return of the Number of Persons of each Class employed in His Majesty’s Dock Yard at Sydney’, \textit{ibid.}, p.352-353.

\textsuperscript{56} In his Minute No. 83, dated 23 August 1831, Darling reduced the number of persons employed at the Dockyard to: 1 Constable and Overseer; 1 blacksmith; 1 blacksmith and turner; 1 cooper; 2 shipwrights; 2 sailmakers; 3 watchmen; 1 messenger; and 2 labourers. He advised that nails were in future to be obtained from the Lumberyard. \textit{HRA}, Series 1, Vol. 15.

\textsuperscript{57} This was not a novel approach to the method of conducting government business in the colony, as government departments, including the commissariat and engineering department had regularly tendered out provisioning services (from foodstuffs to lime, coal and timber supplies) during the 1820s. In March 1829, the government had tendered for the construction of two boats, \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 5 March 1829.
Darling’s twin decisions – to close H.M. Dockyards, and to move the whaling industry to the northern shores of Sydney Harbour – reflected his desire to reduce government costs and his personal distaste for the “nuisance” of whalers, rather than any real consideration for promoting the commercial potential of the colony. Nevertheless, these decisions proved to be the impetus the colony needed for future growth. Despite most of Sydney Harbour’s foreshore being still undeveloped in 1831, there was an acute shortage of suitable waterside sites in Sydney. Rival claimants, such as merchant J.T. Hughes and shipowner Thomas Street, contested ownership of a site at Darling Harbour.\(^\text{58}\) After his arrival on the Margaretta in November 1831, shipbuilder Henry Tompson Bass, unsuccessfully applied for waterside land on which to establish shipyards.\(^\text{59}\) In desperation, he privately purchased Captain Piper’s mortgaged waterside property at Darling Harbour at “enormous expense”.\(^\text{60}\) He obtained approval to build a wharf to enable him to conduct his ship repair business. By 1834, Bass was joined briefly by shipwright, Joseph Russell, brother of shipbuilder, John William Russell, the latter purchasing land from Bass at Clarendetown.\(^\text{61}\) Other Sydney shipwrights and sail-makers, such as Andrew Summerbell and Richard Kemp, leased premises at Darling Harbour, where they were kept busy with repair work.\(^\text{62}\) Commercial interest in the development of Darling Harbour and Sydney Cove was boosted by the release of land for sale by public auction. Further development of sites occurred at Darling Harbour, Pyrmont and Balmain. Shipwrights, engineers, sail-makers, and other marine artisans maintaining yards at these locations continued to supply repair services to a rapidly increasing merchant fleet using the commercial or public wharves at Miller’s Point, Walsh Bay and Sydney Cove.

\(^{58}\) Colonial Secretary’s Office, Land Records, SRNSW, Nos. 31/10034 and 31/9923; HRA, Series 1, Vol. 16, pp.196, 197, 204-7.
\(^{59}\) 7 August 1833, 25 November 1834, No.34/8555 and 26 November 1834, No.34/8605, Colonial Secretary Land records, SRNSW, 2/7964, Reel 1179.
\(^{60}\) Captain Piper, ex-Naval Officer at Sydney, had been forced by Governor Darling to retire in 1827, owing considerable debts to the government, resulting from mismanagement of his office. He mortgaged his land to the merchant firm of Cooper and Levey in an attempt to save himself from financial ruin, before creditors foreclosed on his estate. David Day, Smugglers and Sailors: The Customs History of Australia., Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1992, pp163-8.
Alternative facilities for repairs for shipping in the Pacific could only be found either by going to Rio de Janeiro, or to dockyards established in India, the latter reliant quite early on supplies from either Britain or Australasia. One enterprising English shipwright established ship repair facilities at Sourabaya, using two heaving down hulks capable of managing ships up to 800 tons. In NSW prior to 1832, ships in need of repair were either careened or heaved down on steep sandy beaches with tackles secured to the masts and under the keel. It was an inefficient practice frequently causing further damage to vessels. Shipwright, James Munn, established a floating dock at Darling Harbour in 1824. However, with the establishment of neighbouring merchant, J.B. Bettington’s wharf in 1831, this initiative was lost. Dry docks were not established until the mid-1850s, following heated discussion in the Legislative Council in 1847, which determined that His Majesty’s government should bear primary responsibility for their cost. In the meantime the location of shipyards was dictated by terrain, with master shipwrights eager to choose sheltered sites, offering deep water close to the shores of harbours or navigable river banks, where they could conduct floating docks for repairs, as well as sandy inclines for constructing launching ways or heaving down vessels.


64 It is uncertain when this enterprise was established, but it had certainly been operational for some years when reported in the Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List on 13 July 1844.

65 Supreme Court Papers, 31 October 1831, SRNSW, 2/3466, p.111. The new wharf changed the critical level of water available at the dock.

66 A Select Committee was appointed by the NSW Legislative Council to investigate the costs if establishing a Dry Dock at Cockatoo Island on 10 June 1847, and excavation work commenced using convict labour. British Admiralty conditionally approved the project on 29 May 1848. As late as 1849 there were no British dry dock facilities anywhere in the Southern Hemisphere, capable of servicing men-of-war. Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List, 29 September 1849, p 246. The Fitzroy Dock at Cockatoo Island was completed in 1857. However before that date a private dry dock had already been completed through the initiative of Thomas Mort at Balmain.

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The establishment of Fotheringham’s Patent Slip at Darling Harbour in 1833, capable of handling shipping up to 700 tons, was a timely response to increasing shipping traffic in the Pacific, providing a high volume of repairs.\(^{67}\) Specifically intended for the repair industry, it employed a large workforce of shipwrights, carpenters, mast and block makers, blacksmiths and labourers, under the superintendence and management of a foreman and superintendent.\(^{68}\) During the 1840s, when Fotheringham leased out the Slip first to the partnership of Samuel Peek, Francis Mitchell and Captain Lister, and later to James Martyr & Co., regular reports in the *Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List* noted an almost continuous demand for repair work at the Slip. In December 1848, for example, the 350-ton barque *Thomas Fielden* was stripped, caulked, re-coppered and launched within 3½ days, and replaced by the whaling barque *Juno*, needing repairs.\(^{69}\)

The organisational structure of the Patent Slip’s workforce created time efficiencies, with each tradesman responsible for one specific area of repairs. There was a frequent turnover of shipping on the slip, from Australian, American, British and other foreign whalers, to merchant ships, Pacific traders and coastal vessels. This may have been welcome news for the owner or lessee of the Slip as well as for shipping agents and freighters. However, such rapid turnover of repairs was not necessarily ultimately in the interests of the shipowners. As Henry Mayhew and James Ballingall observed, this “strapping-shop” approach to ship repairs could result in shoddy workmanship and accidents.\(^{70}\) Individual craftsmanship and personal responsibility were made subservient to routine. Furthermore, seaworthiness and safety were sometimes compromised by cost efficiencies in repair materials. Shipwrights and carpenters who observed faults were not empowered to make the necessary repairs, undermining loyalty and work standards.\(^{71}\)

\(^{67}\) Fotheringham to Goderich, 27 April 1832, *HRA*, Series 1, Vol. 17, pp.618-619.

\(^{68}\) *Towns v. Underwriters*, NSW Supreme Court, April 1849, *Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List*, 14 April 1849, pp.94-104.

\(^{69}\) *Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List*, 16 December 1848.


\(^{71}\) *Towns v. Underwriters*, *op.cit.*.
Despite its scale and obvious technical advantages, Fotheringham’s Patent Slip did not gain a monopoly of the ship repair industry. During the 1830s the number of shipyards, ropewalks and sail-lofts outgrew the confines of Dawes Point and Darling Harbour. When Darling removed the “whaling establishments” to the North Shore, establishing careening coves at Neutral Harbour, Great Sirius Cove and Little Sirius Cove, shipowners, merchants and marine artisans quickly began purchasing or leasing land in those areas.  

The Government’s decision encouraged a number of marine artisans to move there (see Map 2, p.252a). These included shipwrights Robert Millard and Richard Linley, who had a shipyard at Lane Cove, Henry Bass at Bradley’s Head, and Andrew Summerbell and George Green’s shipyard at Greenwich.  

Among the first merchants to capitalise on Darling’s decision was Archibald Mossman, who after purchasing four square miles of land there, invested in a whaling fleet. He leased part of his property from Middle Harbour to Neutral Bay to the ship chandlers and rope-making firm of John McLaren and Quirk.  

The Mossman brothers continued to develop their site at Mosman Bay for the whaling industry, building a wharf, warehouses with a storage capacity of 3,000 barrels of oil and extensive sail loft, accommodation for ship’s officers and crew, and a heaving down facility, adjacent to 700 feet of deep water. This facility, under the superintendence of Captain Stirling, was advertised in 1846, after undergoing extensive improvements.  

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72 McLeay to Mitchell, 28 March 1831, HRA, ibid., p. 184  
73 Robert Millard arrived as a free settler from London on the Australia, on 17 April 1830, SRNSW, 4/4847, Reel 1305; Lin(d)ley on his arrival on a convict transport had been assigned to shipbuilder, Jonathon Griffiths, of Richmond. Bathurst recommended his full pardon, describing him as being of “excellent character”. Macquarie to Bathurst, 18 March 1816, HRA, Series I, Vol. 9, p. 64. Millard and Lindley built the first steamer Surprise at their yard, see Sydney Gazette, 12 July 1831; Summerbell and Green went into partnership in 1840, leasing premises at Artarmon from William Gore, Commercial Advertiser, 24 October 1840.  
74 According to the 1832 Street Directory, Archibald Mossman owned three whalers – the Tigress, William Stoveld and Jane, with a five hundred and ninety two total tonnage. McLaren and Quirk’s company occupied their lease on or before October 1831, Sydney Gazette, 6 October 1831. In January 1836 they were advertising the sale of their lease, Commercial Advertiser, 14 January 1836, and by July, that year, David Scott & Co. occupied it. ibid, 27 July 1836.  
75 Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List, 25 April 1846. Scotsmen Archibald and George Mossman had arrived on the merchant ship Civilian that they had chartered from London in 1828. They subsequently invested in the colonial whaling ships Jane and Tigress.
The numbers of skilled maritime workers began to significantly increase after 1831. This coincided with a concerted campaign in the colony to attract skilled labour that began in the local press. The NSW Legislative Council formed a Committee with the power of appropriating funds to attract immigrants, and among the labourers it sought to recruit were “able-bodied, industrious” shipwrights, of “most respectable character”, preferably married men under twenty-five years. In June 1833, the Committee of Emigrant Mechanics published a list of wages being offered in NSW to maritime workers. These compared extremely favourably with those then offered in Great Britain, with shipwrights in NSW offered 6-7s. per day; caulkers 7-8s., boat builders, 6s., and engineers £2, plus rations. According to an analysis made by Jon Press of shore-based maritime workers in Great Britain during this period, shipwrights were being paid £2.4s to £2.7s. per month, while ship carpenters were earning 21-23s. 4d. per month, with board and lodgings. Based on a six-day week, the equivalent monthly wage for NSW shipwrights ranged from £7.20s. to £8.4s a month. Superficially at least, this might seem a financial opportunity difficult to resist. The reality for post-war skilled maritime workers was a choice between potential unemployment resulting from a highly competitive labour market in Great Britain, or insufficient demand for their labour in NSW.

Just how successful the campaign was is difficult to determine. In testimony before the NSW Legislative Council’s Committee on Immigration on 4 June 1835, Sydney merchant and shipowner, Thomas Walker, stated that he believed there was no shortage of skilled maritime workers and that the wages (of all except seamen) were

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76 Bourke to Goderich, 11 April 1832, HRA, Series 1, Vol. 16, pp. 608-610.
77 Their report was republished as an essay “Hints to emigrants” by Rev. Henry Carmichael in the Sydney Post Office Directory in 1834, republished in London by Smith, Elders & Co. of Cornhill and subsequently used by the Committee on Immigration, NSW Legislative Council, Votes and Proceedings 1824-1837. Sydney Printing Office 1847, List of wage rates, p. 291.
78 J. Press, ‘Wages in the Merchant Navy, 1815-1854’, Journal of Transport History, 3rd Series, Vol. II, 1981, p. 50. The distinction between shipwrights and ship carpenters appears to have been based on length of experience. One definition of an H.M ship’s carpenter appears in the early nineteenth-century papers of Admiral Viscount Keith who stated that carpenters were appointed on the basis of having served a regular apprenticeship with a shipwright, and two years experience as a carpenter’s mate or carpenter’s crew on H.M. ships or H.M. Dock Yard, and had a certificate of good conduct (from Commander, Master Shipwright or Captain) and a Certificate of Qualification. Christopher Lloyd (ed.), op.cit., p.165.
79 It was common for NSW journeymen shipwrights to be paid £8 per month, see for example John Korff’s Insolvency Papers, 19 February 1842, SRNSW, 2/8663, CGS 13654, No. 80.
kept high artificially rather than reflecting market demand. Walker fell short of suggesting that shipwrights were engaging in collusion, and his remarks may alternatively be interpreted as an attempt by local shipowners to attract skilled artisans and keep from selling their services to competitors. Local wages for marine artisans, Walker suggested, were in excess of their living expenses, enabling them to choose to work a four-day week. However, he maintained, he was disinclined to promote any immigration scheme simply to reduce their wages, concluding that if they “were working full time, I think the number of workmen would be sufficient for the present demand, but not to bring down wages”.  

Walker was prepared to pay his men higher than average wages to retain them, namely shipwrights were paid 8s. per day; coopers and blacksmiths 7-8s. per day and sail-makers 6s. per day. Similarly, he was also prepared to pay seamen, while they were in port, 2s. per day with rations, as a retainer, and seamen at sea, 50s. per month with rations. Walker’s attitude to labour relations and employment is worth noting in this context because it varied quite markedly from that of some later shipowners, particularly Benjamin Boyd, Alexander Fotheringham and Robert Towns. Shipowners like Walker set the standard for the rate of payment in NSW for both marine artisans, wharf labourers and seamen. Whether NSW shipwrights and other maritime artisans worked a three, four or six-day week, their wages were approximately two to four times higher than in Great Britain.

Despite the attractive pay rates, the maritime trades were rarely represented among assisted emigrants. Of the bounty emigrants arriving in 1838, for example, there was only one shipwright, accompanied by his wife and children, and one sail-maker with his wife. In the following year, shipwright Thomas Chowne, whose colonial career as a master shipwright was to prove highly successful, was also a rare exception. Many arrived instead as crewmembers, or paid their own fare. This situation was not to change until 1853, when 600 shipwrights, affected by serious wage reductions

82 NSWLC, *ibid*, pp.290-291.
instigated by the British Admiralty at Woolwich and Deptford, formed a society to immigrate to Australia under Mrs. Chisholm’s patronage.\(^83\)

The NSW maritime service industry in fact provided the dynamic link between sea and land. Master shipwrights, with teams of journeymen and apprentice shipwrights, carpenters, ship-joiners, caulkers, coppersmiths, blacksmiths, sawyers and labourers, carried out essential repairs on visiting and local shipping, or refitted ships for alternative activities. Some shipwrights, such as Thomas Day, John Thrum and George Green, specialised in boat building – repairing or replacing lifeboats or whaleboats, as well as constructing a range of commercial, domestic or pleasure boats. Annual Australia Day regattas on Sydney Harbour provided an avenue for comparing and displaying their craftsmanship to the public.\(^84\) Sail-makers supplied new sails or repaired old ones. Pump, block and mast-makers were kept busy replacing masts, blocks and spars and repairing or fitting new pumps to ensure that ships did not founder. At ropewalks, teams of rope-makers and flax-dressers were busy making endless quantities of rope for rigging, whaling line or twine for securing bales of wool or other cargo for shipment. Coopers were always in demand, supplying a range of new and second-hand casks of varying sizes not only for shipping but also for a wide range of domestic and commercial uses.

Many artisans not only served the needs of shipping but also the needs of landowners, grocers and merchants. Even shipwrights occasionally received contracts for other construction work such as bridges, while sail makers, such as Richard Kemp, was asked by one landowner to supply canvas.\(^85\) When rope-makers, McLaren and Quirk, (agents for William Walker and Co.) imported a hydraulic press from Great Britain, designed to press wool and cotton bales for shipment in 1831, its advantages were

\(^{83}\) PRO: SRC BG, 7 May 1853.

\(^{84}\) The contestants and races were well publicised in the columns of the Sydney Gazette, Commercial Advertiser, Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List.

\(^{85}\) In 1847, for example, shipwright Taylor Winship built a warning light for shipping at Cleveland in Queensland (Moreton Bay Chronicle), and in 1856 he erected a bridge across the Norman River at Brisbane. Shipwright, Thomas Chowne won a contract for the construction of the long railway viaduct in Tamworth, NSW in 1864, Insolvency Papers of Thomas Chowne, 28 April 1865, SRNSW, 2/9144, CGS13654, No. 7085. See also Insolvency Papers of Richard Kemp, 19 April 1842, SRNSW, 2/8680, CGS13654, Item 210.
apparent to pastoralists, merchants and shipwrights. By 1836 McLaren’s wharf on the North Shore was being leased to David Scott & Company, for “a Rope and Sail Manufactury” [sic.]. With offices and warehousing located at Sydney Cove, David Scott & Co., supplied the needs of pastoralists and merchants, as well as the shipping industry.

The press, having a 2,000-ton capacity, could be operated by one man, and could compact bales into half the volume of bales pressed manually. Its introduction into the colony represented a boon to shipowners as well as to local shipping agents and merchants. While reducing the cost of freighting wool, it enabled ships to take on additional less bulky cargo. The rope-makers also planned to use the press on the North Shore for the purpose of hauling vessels ashore to be coppered or repaired, thereby reducing the labour involved in heaving-down vessels. The new technology quickly attracted attention, with Scottish shipwright Robert Cunninghame ordering one for his shipyard, situated in the prime location between Campbell’s wharf and Dawes Point.

The arrival of the hydraulic press came at a time when other members of the shipping interest were also starting to invest in technology new to the colony. After 1830, engineers and firemen joined the marine service industry’s ranks as steam ships made their appearance in NSW waters. Many had undertaken apprenticeships in Scotland. Engineers not only serviced, but also manufactured and supplied, steam engines,

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86 *Sydney Gazette*, 6 October 1831. By 1836, David Scott & Co. were operating as rope and sail manufacturers on the site of McLaren’s Wharf, North Shore probably as lessees, with an agency store more conveniently located on the south shore in George Street, near King’s Wharf. Advertisement, *Commercial Advertiser*, 10 August 1836.

87 *Commercial Advertiser*, 23 and 30 July 1836.

88 By 1838, a 200h.p. hydraulic steam press, located at Aspinall & Brown’s industrial complex, handled “the whole annual wool produce of NSW”, *Commercial Advertiser*, 4 August 1838.

89 According to the testimony of Duncan Dunbar, Chairman of the General Shipowner’s Society, freight on wool from Australian ports to Britain was based on a spatial measure rather than a weight measure. Therefore the more compact wool bales enabled shippers to either load more wool bales or other cargoes, such as oil or (later) copper ore. BPP: (1847, 4th Report.), questions 4332-4345, pp. 10-11.

90 *Sydney Gazette*, 6 October 1831.
boilers, lifting and forcing pumps, hydraulic presses, gas cylinders, and cast metal.\textsuperscript{91} Their work was clearly not limited to the maritime industry, as an increasing number of other uses, particularly the steam-powered mills located around Darling Harbour, Sydney Cove and at Parramatta took advantage of the benefits of the industrial revolution. The development of steam navigation in NSW in the next twenty years was to provide fresh impetus to the shipbuilding industry. Investment in the new technology required access to capital, and such capital was more accessible (as has been demonstrated) following the arrival of a number of wealthy merchants during the late 1820s. The local shipbuilding and repair industry received a significant boost as a result of this capital injection and from the promotion of emigration after 1831.

Between 1835 and 1839 there was a substantial increase in the number of vessels visiting Port Jackson, the number and tonnage more than doubling. Those sailing directly from Great Britain rose from 47 to 137 annually, while those arriving from other colonies (Van Diemen’s Land and South Australia) more than doubled (see Appendix 1). This placed a heavy demand on the shipbuilding industry in terms of repairs and refitting, time and energy that might otherwise have been diverted to shipbuilding. Ship repairs and refitting provided ship artisans with a reasonably steady and profitable source of income. It was the “bread and butter” activity of the maritime industry.

How profitable the outfitting, provisioning and ship repair industries is suggested in an 1848 estimate made by local shipbroker and merchant, J.N. Smith, that whaling ships operating in the South Pacific cost an average of £500-£600 to refit.\textsuperscript{92} One British shipowner estimated the cost of a “voyage outfit”, from home, at £8 per ton.\textsuperscript{93} Two French ships visiting Sydney in 1825 purchased a massive £6-7,000 supplies from the Deputy Commissary General, in addition to private expenditure.\textsuperscript{94} While


\textsuperscript{92} \textit{Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List}, 19 February 1848.

\textsuperscript{93} W. Tindall, 25 May 1848, BPP, Navigation Laws, \textit{op.cit.}, question 5755, p. 521.

\textsuperscript{94} \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 14 July 1825.
clearly a complete outfit for visiting shipping would not have been required, refitting such shipping typically required replacement masts and spars, sails and rigging, anchors, pumps and blocks, and slops and provisions. Neither of these figures includes the cost of repairs, which were, of course, highly variable. Some required more extensive repairs, including new copper sheathing. Factors such as the quality of shipbuilding, accuracy of charts, length and nature of voyages, the skill of officers and crew, and weather conditions were important variables in the repair-cost equation. Another variable in determining cost was rigging. The majority of colonial and British whalers were barques or brigs, while many in the American fleet were ship-rigged, with an increased sail capacity.

Some useful evidence for operational costs of whalers visiting Sydney can be found in the meticulous records maintained by shipmaster, Edward David, of the English whaler, the Nelson. This barque left London in October 1828 visiting Sydney twice during 1831. Her provisioning, repair and servicing costs alone while at Port Jackson amounted to over £1,400. This figure only included ship expenditure, not private expenditure by the crew while in port. Thirty-five of the crewmembers received advance wages exceeding £700 in total, to spend in Port Jackson. Direct ship expenses included the cost of repairs by Sydney shipwright Andrew Summerbell, and the replacement or repair of her sails by ship chandler, Francis Mitchell. The whaler’s other costs included payments for replacement planking, the work of a blacksmith, water casks, woodwork, clothing for the seamen, surveys, attorney fees, rum and brandy, and a large account to the ship’s agents, Lamb and Parbury, for general provisions. The British brig, the Nimrod, incurring similar costs for repairs during two visits to Sydney in 1836 and 1837, was forfeited by its Scottish owner to

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95 Findings of the British House of Commons’ Inquiry into the Causes of Shipwrecks, BPP (1836), pp 1-xii, 1-388 and 1-39.
96 See footnote 98.
97 Edward David, Captain of Nelson, whaler, Intestate Estate Papers (1832), SRNSW, 6/3484, File 73, Bundles 1 & 2.
98 The Nelson paid weekly wages to crew ranging from 15s. per week to £2/10/- per week. The size of the advances to seamen (estimated from their nett wages) was due to the vessel having already been on its whaling voyage almost 29 months from London.
99 Edward David, op.cit. A copy of Mitchell’s invoice is reproduced in Appendix 12.
100 Ibid. Lamb and Parbury’s invoice is reproduced in Appendix 13.
Sydney agents, the Wilson Brothers, when they foreclosed on a bottomry bond raised to secure payment for the repairs.\textsuperscript{101}

Whaling vessels were of course not the only source of income for the local maritime service industry. All shipping was subject to the vagaries of weather, accidents, uncharted seas, incompetent navigators or seamen, and not least to natural deterioration. To some extent the cost of repairs was determined by size, age, usage, and the amount of sail a vessel carried. In 1833, local shipwright, Henry Bass, charged over £774 for the repair of the government brig, \textit{Governor Phillip}.\textsuperscript{102} The 226-ton barque \textit{Isabella Anna}, of indeterminate age, was employed extensively in the South Pacific and sandalwood trade before being placed on the Patent Slip for repairs in December 1847.\textsuperscript{103} Her repair bill at the Slip alone amounted to £900, without taking into account any additional work required for the repair or replacement of sails. In 1838, Fotheringham claimed to have spent £1,800 repairing and equipping his newly purchased wrecked ship, \textit{James Laing}, raising her value to £4,000, before placing her in the China trade.\textsuperscript{104} By the mid-1830s, the NSW marine service industries, centred on Sydney, were well positioned to profit from increasing shipping traffic in Pacific waters.

\textsuperscript{101} Wilson v. the \textit{Nimrod}, Court of Vice Admiralty, 5 and 19 October 1838, in \textit{Sydney Herald}, 8 and 22 October 1838.

\textsuperscript{102} Bourke, 16 March 1835, \textit{HRA}, Series 1, Vol. 17, p.704.

\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List}, 12 February 1849, pp. 94-104.

\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Commercial Advertiser}, 20 June 1838.