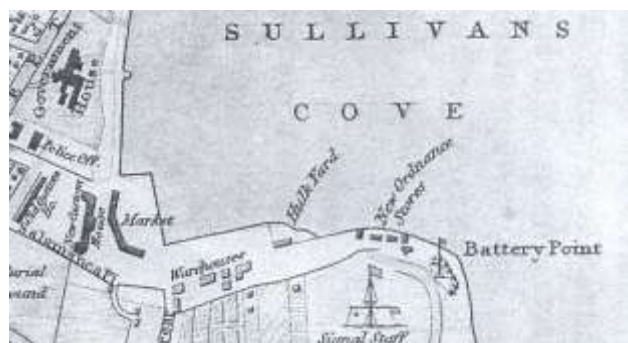


The Alligator

A small coastal cargo vessel

In 1838/9 John Hawdon owned a small sailing cargo vessel named "Alligator" which he used for transporting goods up the coast. She had been built in 1835 in Hobart by William Williamson, whose ship building yard was to the East of Her Majesty's Ordinance Stores near Battery Point.



She was a carvel planked 2 masted schooner of 20 tons net, 33.4 feet in length, with a breadth of 12.4 feet and depth of 6.3 feet.

In 1837 she was purchased by Alexander Imlay who was at the time looking after the Imlay brothers Tasmanian properties. John Hawdon then purchased the boat from Alexander.

She was one of a number of small cargo vessels sailing up and down the coast calling into the smaller river ports. Unlike some she was reported to have reasonable accommodation. In his memoir Alexander Weatherhead reported that in November 1838 after staying at Hawdon's Bergalia property his wife was given free passage to Sydney on the "Alligator".

An interesting advertisement appeared in the Sydney Herald 8th December 1841.

Wanted, twelve good farm labourers to proceed to St Vincent by the craft Alligator as Reapers, to whom 12s will be given per acre for reaping wheat etc, bind and stack. When harvest is over they can meet with constant employment, if industrious and deserving men. Apply to Mr Thomas Dun (sic), Pitt and Bathurst streets.

Whether 12 men actually answered the advertisement is not known, but I am sure they would not have been as comfortable as Mrs Weatherhead if 12 did have to crowd into the available accommodation.

John Hawdon did not keep the vessel for long, in 1839 Jane Thomson of Broulee is recorded as the owner followed by 1841 by Thomas Dunn and then in 1842 with his partner William Aikenhead it was sold to R R Ronald and finally in 1843 to William Roden.

On the 21st of August 1843 the "Alligator" having just returned from the Bellingham River with a cargo of Cedar set sail for Bulli in Balast. On the 1st of September the steamer "Sophia Jane" reported her ashore at Bulli with 2 or 3 holes through her bottom.

Thus ended the short life of another coastal sailing vessel on the coast of NSW.

A note on researching vessels

A search for the name of a particular vessel will bring up a number of vessels and it is not always easy to distinguish one from the other. In the case of the "Alligator" there was another much larger vessel with the same name and another of similar tonnage. The smaller vessel was also built in Tasmania running back and forth from Geelong to Devonport and Port Sorell on the north coast of Tasmania in the late 1840's and 1850's. She was however built at Port Sorell by Robert Taylor Robson at a slightly later date than Hawdon's Alligator.

References

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