

# The 'Dairymaid' – The 'Peterborough' and The Jetty

As the Gerringong district developed and the produce increased in the mid 1870s, local farmers and store-keepers agitated for Boat Harbour to be put to better use.

Fortuitously at the time, the Shellharbour Co-operative Navigational Company (S.C.N.C.) decided to replace its ageing coastal sailing fleet with new Steamers.

In order to help defray the cost of two new vessels, the S.C.N.C. called a Public Meeting at Gerringong's 'Ocean View Inn' [Site today: Scoop's & Cherry Red] to propose that Gerringong join them and purchase a third share in its new £3,300 Steamer, ['Dairymaid' was still under construction] which once built, would service the combined Gerringong and Shellharbour shipping trade.

Of the 3600 shares on offer, 1200 were set aside for Gerringong.

After much enthusiastic discussion by the locals, it was no surprise to many, that when the time came to put the money down, only 150 shares were sold at the meeting and a further 100 later. Naturally, this was a great disappointment to the S.C.N.C.<sup>1</sup>

The 'Dairymaid' was launched by Miss Davis, the daughter of the builder, on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1876.<sup>2</sup> After its successful Sydney Harbour trial on 31<sup>st</sup> March,<sup>3</sup> the [82 tons, 88' long x 18' beam x 9' hold] screw steamer was advertised to leave on its maiden voyage south, from the Caledonian Wharf at the end of King St Sydney, on 6<sup>th</sup> April at 8pm under the command of Captain W. Wilson.<sup>4</sup>

Expecting the steamer to arrive at Shellharbour on the following morning and then immediately depart for Gerringong's Boat Harbour; *'at an early hour visitors crowded from all parts of the district to this most picturesque little spot'* to have a picnic and greet its arrival. *'By noon there could not have been less than 350 persons present.'*<sup>5</sup>

Quite unbeknown to the assembled gathering however, the 'Dairymaid', through an accident to part of its machinery, had not left Sydney.

Not to spoil a good party though and in true Gerringong spirit, everyone had a wonderful time and eventually sauntered back home in the late afternoon.

The 'Dairymaid' finally arrived on the 12<sup>th</sup> April, to pick up its first combined consignment of Gerringong / Shellharbour cargo: *'56 kegs butter, 15 pigs, 21 calves, 40 sides of bacon, 20 hides'*.<sup>6</sup>

The new steamer, and for a few months its sister ship, the 'Blackwall', [wrecked in July 1876]<sup>7</sup> called regularly on a weekly basis at Gerringong on Mondays and Thursdays leaving at 10 a.m. - weather permitting. Single fare to Sydney was 10 shillings. Return fare, with passage from Sydney on a Tuesday or a Friday night, was 15 shillings – eight day validity.<sup>8</sup>

With no Jetty available, the 'Dairymaid' had to be anchored to a harbour buoy some 400ft. out in deep water.

All produce and passengers were required to be rowed out in the ship's cargo boat to be hauled up

over the side. On many occasions this procedure was quite difficult, extremely dangerous and very time consuming.

On steamer days *'the village is crowded with shippers and others on their way to the shipping port.'*<sup>9</sup>

In October 1878, *'the largest rope ever made in the colony has just been completed for the moorings of the steamer 'Dairymaid.' It is an 18 inch rope, manufactured from the best No.1 coir yarn and is 50 fathoms in length.'*<sup>10</sup>

On 1 November 1878, disaster struck when: *'the steamer 'Dairymaid'...went ashore off Bulli, during the dense fog that covered the coast on that morning...we learned that the unfortunate vessel above mentioned was supposed to be a total wreck.'*<sup>11</sup> Later that day more disheartening news came through that *'the Dairymaid is still on the reef, evidently breaking up. Some cargo was salvaged from her to-day, but little hope of saving her is entertained.'*<sup>12</sup> When this news broke, there was a feeling of total disbelief throughout the Gerringong and Shellharbour communities.

Divers were immediately sent from Sydney to try to salvage the vessel and through the tireless effort of many people over the next three weeks, there was much joy and relief, when on 22 November it was announced that *'the Dairymaid' was successfully floated today, and left in tow for Sydney for repairs.'*<sup>13</sup>

For a short period a chartered steamer, the Minx, was used as the vessel's replacement and on 24 December 1878, the Sydney Morning Herald advertised the departure of the 'Dairymaid' once more, from the Caledonian Wharf at 4p.m. for Shellharbour and Gerringong.

From the 1860s, numerous Gerringong meetings and deputations by its citizens and Council had taken place with the Government regarding the construction of a much needed Jetty.

On the 24 July 1879, the Government finally appropriated, but not secured, £300 for the Jetty's construction<sup>14</sup> and in November 1879, instructed one of its planners, R. Longmore of Mittagong, to conduct a feasibility study as to the best location for its construction and to draw up a rough plan.<sup>15</sup>

On 6 January 1880, Gerringong Council received, through the help of the local Member, Sir Henry Parkes, the £300 Government Grant to construct a 200ft. Jetty.<sup>15-2</sup>

Council immediately called tenders for the Jetty's construction and R. Longmore was asked to submit his final plan and specifications for the proposed Jetty.<sup>15</sup>

Council also wrote to, and visited David Berry, Esq. at Coolangatta, requesting permission to take timber off his land for the Jetty's construction, at no cost to Council.<sup>15</sup>

The request was duly granted and gracefully accepted.<sup>16</sup>

By early April 1880, R. Longmore's final plan and specifications were received by Council.<sup>16</sup>

As Council now intended using the old Kiama railway iron as a cargo tramway down the centre of the Jetty, Alderman Lee [the District's Wheelwright], who in consultation with Alderman Hindmarsh, requested Council write to Longmore advising him of this and requesting him to revise his specifications for the Jetty's piers, taking this fact into account.

Once R. Longmore's revised specifications were received by Council in mid April 1880,<sup>11</sup> and as the Government was badgering Council that they *'have not submitted the necessary statement of accounts showing the expenditure of the sum of £300 handed over to it on the 5<sup>th</sup> January last to be*

*laid out in constructing a Public Wharf*,<sup>17</sup> Gerringong's Mr J.B. Taylor's tender, [only two were received], for £284 to build the Jetty was accepted, and work on its construction commenced immediately.<sup>17-a</sup>

To the community's great joy and Council's extreme satisfaction, J.B. Taylor had the Jetty, along with its track and trolley, completed by September 1880, in readiness to receive the steamer.

Sadly however, after all Taylor's hard work and through no fault of his, it was found that the 'Dairymaid' was unable to draw alongside the Jetty.

At low tide, the harbour floor was too shallow to enable it to do so, and at high tide, even with a moderate swell, it proved far too dangerous to secure the vessel to the Jetty as there was every possibility that the whole structure would be pulled apart.



Gerringong now had its Jetty, but to its disappointment, the 'Dairymaid's' cargo boat was the only vessel able to use it.

Instead of sitting around feeling sorry about their current predicament, the District's citizens rallied together and decided to forge ahead for a £1,000 extension to the Jetty.

In very short time, Council was presented with a Petition for such, and the petitioners asked that it be forwarded to the Government on their behalf.<sup>18</sup>

In context, it must be remembered that Gerringong was a Government town and all money needed for any major improvements '*not considered a public convenience*',<sup>80</sup> had to come through various Government Departments and not through the Local Council.

Also all monies thus granted, had to be strictly accounted for and any not spent, even if only a few shillings, had to be returned to the Audit Department.

Although so many requests for improvements had always been refused, its citizens were adamant '*that they were entitled to consideration at the hands of Government, and that when they were*

*asking for improvements, they were not asking for a favour from the Government, but were asking for what they were legitimately entitled to, when it was considered that the proceeds of one day's land sales in Gerringong contributed £20,000 to the public treasury.'*<sup>19</sup>

In January 1881, the sum of £50 was granted to pay for a recently built cargo-receiving shed and placement of a crane fixture at the end of the Jetty.<sup>20</sup>

The disappointing news which arrived at the same time, was that Mr. Moriarty, the Engineer in-Chief for Harbours & Rivers, had informed the Local Member, Dr. Tarrant M.P., that *'he [Moriarty] was opposed to any further outlay on harbour improvement at Gerringong.'*<sup>20</sup>

This was subsequently followed in February 1881, with the *'Department of Works declining to comply with Council's request for further sum of money to extend jetty at Boatharbour. The refusal was based on an adverse report from the Engineer for Harbours & Rivers.'*<sup>21</sup>[Mr. Moriarty]

At the time, all this appeared to be 'sour grapes' or a 'throw-back' to February 1866, when Mr Moriarty first came down to Gerringong to inspect Boat Harbour.

After finishing that inspection, his report was *'to the effect...that if the jetty were made, vessels could not be brought to it'*.<sup>22</sup>

Dissatisfied with such a negative report, a delegation of prominent Gerringong citizens travelled to Kiama and politely pointed out to the local Member, The Hon. Henry Parkes, Colonial Secretary, [later Sir Henry Parkes – 1877] that Mr. Moriarty had actually arrived at Gerringong by steamer and *'embarked at the place where it was said steamers could not safely approach'...They were therefore disinclined to give up on their project.*<sup>22</sup>

Again in February 1880, Gerringong's ex- Mayor informed Council that the Minister for Works in Sydney had told him that Mr.Moriarty's son, who lived in nearby Wollongong, *'would be instructed to prepare a plan and specification of wharf, the question then arose whether the Council would still employ Mr. Longmore. Alderman Hindmarsh said the name Moriarty in connection with Gerringong harbour improvements was enough for him. It was a well known fact that Mr. Moriarty had always been opposed to a jetty at Gerringong, and in this respect, the son was not likely to be much better than the father. He for one would much rather employ a practical man like Mr. Longmore, and he moved a resolution accordingly, which was seconded by Alderman Campbell, supported by Alderman Brown, and carried unanimously.'*<sup>22-1</sup>

Council met twice in March 1881, to discuss this latest refusal.

Initially it wanted all the inhabitants of the District to sign a petition to the Government, but in the end *'its outgoing correspondence consisted of a letter to Dr. Tarrant M.P. acquainting him of the refusal of the Government to grant a small sum of money for the extension of the jetty at Boatharbour and requesting him to bring the matter before Parliament.'*<sup>23</sup>

Dr. Tarrant replied *'advising Council to wait awhile before submitting to Parliament, and in the interim he would use his best endeavours with the Minister for Works to get him to sanction the expenditure asked for.'*<sup>24</sup>

In June<sup>25</sup> and again in August 1882, Council wrote to Government stating that:

*'With the sum granted by government namely £350 this Council constructed 200feet of Jetty and erected the necessary shipping appliances, and I am happy to be able to report that the work erected*

*at such a small outlay has withstood the storms of two years without the slightest damage. The person who built the present Jetty [J.B.Taylor] is confident he can make the proposed extension equally permanent and is prepared to proceed with the addition as soon as the necessary funds are available. The existing Jetty which is a great boon... accommodates only the cargo boat, but when the wharf has been run out a few hundred feet further, the steamer [Dairymaid], now visiting Gerringong twice a week, will be able to come alongside and the boon will be increased tenfold'. Council then politely requested 'the sum of £500 be placed at its disposal as early as possible'.<sup>26</sup>*

On 6 August 1883, Council requested R. Longmore to journey down to Gerringong, as it *'contemplates making an extension of a few hundred feet to the Jetty at Boatharbour'* and it would like him to prepare the plan and specifications.<sup>27</sup>

In September 1883, Council finally received £600 enabling the work to be carried out<sup>28</sup> and tenders for the work were to be invited.<sup>29</sup>

As only 2 tenders were received and both considered too high, new tenders were called.<sup>29-1</sup>

Next, Council communicated with Alexander Berry at nearby Coolangatta: *'There being no place within this municipality or indeed for many miles around, where the proper kind of timber can be procured except on your land, the Council very respectfully requests that you will allow the timber to be cut on your property.'*<sup>30</sup>

Council was subsequently informed by Mr. Morton, Berry's Estate Manager, that any timber required for the proposed jetty, which it had hoped would have been donated, was no longer available, as all existing timber on the Estate was needed for its own requirements.<sup>30-1</sup>

The timber therefore, would have to be sourced and purchased elsewhere.

By the time tenders were received, Council on 30 October 1883, needed to inform Government that *'it will take nearly £700 to extend the present [200ft.] jetty, 200 feet further. When this has been done, it will still require another 100 feet to enable the "Dairymaid" to come alongside the wharf... could we please have a further sum of £500 placed on the estimates for completion of the Jetty.'*<sup>31</sup>

As only one tender for the Jetty's extension was received, J.B.Taylor's offering at £3 per foot with timber sourced from Jervis Bay, was accepted and work started immediately.<sup>32</sup>

Since Taylor was making such excellent progress on the 200ft. extension by February 1884,<sup>33</sup> Council wrote to Dr.Tarrant enquiring: *'re vote of £500 for extension of jetty [the extra 100 feet] at Boatharbour, stating while Taylor had his plant on the spot, it would be a great saving to have the necessary extension completed at the same time'*.<sup>34</sup>

In late March 1884, Alderman Lee *'and Mr R. Miller waited on Dr. Tarrant on his recent visit to Kiama for the purpose of ascertaining what steps had been taken with regard to money required for completion of the jetty. That gentleman informed them that the delay was caused through the Engineer-in-Chief for Harbours and Rivers [Yes, you guessed it! – Mr. Moriarty] not sending in his report in time to appear on the Estimates, and he promised that the amount would be placed on the additional Estimates, and he had no doubt it would be passed.'*<sup>35</sup>

By June 1884, Taylor had almost completed the 200ft extension but Council still had not received the finance for the extra 100 feet extension which was now required to make the Jetty fully functional.<sup>36</sup>

In desperation, Council once more wrote to the Government stating that the requested £100 was urgently needed, before the builder finished his current contract and moved all his equipment away – but to no avail.<sup>37</sup>

To Council's great joy and satisfaction however, J. B. Taylor completed the 200ft extension in mid June 1884.

*'The Mayor reported that he and several other members of the Council had inspected the extension of the Jetty. He spoke in the highest terms of the manner in which the work had been done. Alderman Hindmarsh said he endorsed all that the Mayor had stated; he thought that if they searched the district through, they could not have got a man to do the work better than what Mr. Taylor, the contractor had done it. He also stated that 9 tons weight of mooring chains were on board the Dairymaid, but could not be laid until favourable weather.'*<sup>38</sup>

The Jetty with its small handling platform and loading-crane, now projected 400ft out into the harbour, from a location approximately in line with today's boat ramp.

*'The jetty is now completed, and as soon as proper chains are laid, the Dairymaid will be enabled to come along side and discharge her cargo on the jetty, from whence it will be conveyed by means of a trolley-truck to the cargo store...Every convenience has been made for the shipping and safety of produce brought and conveyed by her; even the pens for the pigs are so constructed, that the pigs are driven into the trolley-truck, from whence they are conveyed to the end of the jetty, and then driven into the steamer through an enclosed gangway. The whole affair has been constructed with such ingenuity and good workmanship as to reflect great credit on the contractor, Mr John Taylor.'*<sup>39</sup>

Nine extra tons of mooring chains were then laid down by Harbour Pilot Sharpe, *'and the 'Dairymaid' for the first time was enabled to come alongside the jetty on Thursday last. [7 August 1884] There is now no more wading through the water in taking produce to the cargo boat. The steamer can now be loaded and unloaded in less than half the time that it formerly took and with half the amount of labour.'*<sup>40</sup>



When the Jetty came into operation, a Jetty Master was appointed to oversee the smooth handling of cargo. A small Council-leased annex was built [adjacent to the leased S.S.N.C. cargo store] to accommodate the Jetty Master and his family. When the Carswell's were doing the job, Council received complaints about fowls destroying grain in the Company's store.<sup>40-1</sup> [see photo of fowls outside the annex, at the time of 'Dot' Morrow's tenancy as Jetty Master – Morrow St., half-way down Jupiter St., is named after him.]

Although the extended Jetty was a tremendous improvement, it was still not totally satisfactory, as on many occasions the steamer was still unable to use it.

Meanwhile, with the volume of freight ever increasing, the Shellharbour Steam Navigation Company began discussions on the feasibility of replacing the small 'Dairymaid' with a larger and faster steamer. If this were to take place, the Jetty would definitely have to be extended, to accommodate the requirements of such a vessel.<sup>41</sup>

In October, the Government passed £500 in payment for the recent extension<sup>42</sup> and then in November 1884, Council, while still badgering the Government for yet more money decided they could wait no longer and made *'arrangements with Mr. Taylor to extend the jetty at Boat Harbour another 100 feet: Mr. Taylor had agreed to erect the same at the rate of £3 per foot and to erect a jetty fender for £60. This the Council considered a very moderate charge, taking into consideration that the piles and fender required for the work would have to be obtained at Jervis Bay, and also that the water is much deeper where the present extension is to be carried out, than where the original contract was performed, still the price was the same.'*<sup>43</sup>

By the end of May 1885, the 500ft Jetty was complete, with steel-rail trolley line, loading crane and a wide cargo handling platform with fender at the end. [See photo of extended Jetty].

To stabilize the whole structure, the piers were cross-braced along its length and the crane's loading platform was given added strength by horizontal beam-bracing on its southern berthing and warping side.

At May 29 Council Meeting, *'Alderman Hindmarsh stated the work had been done in a most satisfactory manner; he had been on it in all kinds of weather, and as far as he could judge it was well and faithfully built.'*<sup>44</sup>

At Council's next meeting, June 12, ratepayers raised a most 'pressing' issue regarding *'the necessity of having a place of convenience erected at Boatharbour'*.

[Considering the harbour complex had been in operation for over 40 years, it seems almost inconceivable today, that such an important public amenity wasn't already available.]

*'Alderman Lee thought it was not a matter for the Council to deal with but rather for the S.S.N. Company. The Company had not assisted in any way towards the improvement of the harbour and even refused to pay a small rent for the cargo shed. The least they could do, would be to erect such a place as proposed.'*<sup>45</sup>

On September 18, the following correspondence appeared in the Kiama Independent:

*'Sir,- I wish to draw the attention of the aldermen of the Gerringong Municipal Council to a public nuisance, which exists in the form of an out-house erected near the Boat harbour street, the stench being something unbearable that issues from it; but worse than this, through the scarcity of water, the majority of the towns people have to depend upon a spring of water which flows immediately*

*under the out-house, and thus it is caused to be unfit for human beings to drink.*<sup>45-1</sup>[The spring, which at one stage flowed into a well, still flows today.]

This was not the first time complaints of stench, associated with Boatharbour had been raised. During an inspection of the Jetty, carried out a year earlier by the local Member, Dr. Tarrant - November 1884 - the Doctor *'expressed his displeasure at the nuisance which existed near the Boatharbour, the effluvia proceeding from the same, being something fearful'*. Alderman Lee, who accompanied the Doctor throughout that inspection, was later to report to Council that he had also seen the nuisance, *'the stench of which was unbearable'*.<sup>45-2</sup>

To many at the time, the waters of the harbour were considered to be the natural repository for 'all and sundry', especially any dead livestock - dead horses were the favourite.<sup>45-3</sup> The nearby piggery even had *'Council permission to have pigs killed at the place'*.<sup>45-2</sup> Being 'out of sight, out of mind', it was all too easy to simply dump the offal into the harbour, in the hope the sharks or surging tide would carry it away.

Visiting this beautiful little Harbour today, and reflectively looking out from the boat ramp to 'Big Rock' - especially during times of gale-force winds and boisterous seas - one can only marvel as to how J. B. Taylor, with little or no specialised equipment, was ever able to build a wooden Jetty in such a hostile environment. More intriguingly, how he was ever able to get the whole structure to hold itself together during its period of construction.

The little 'Dairymaid' stoically served the needs of Gerringong from 12 April 1876, till 18 September 1886,<sup>46</sup> and during that time she paid 602 visits to this beautiful part of the coast.<sup>46</sup>

It was not always 'smooth sailing' for her, as on numerous occasions she had to plough her way through massive seas to get here.

Many times her mighty battles with 'Mother Nature' were all for nothing. With sights firmly set on her final destination, even she had to concede defeat when conditions proved too dangerous for her to enter. Obliging, she reluctantly turn around and, with nostril flaring, steamed back home in the knowledge that she was still in one piece - ready the battle the hostile elements another day.

Over her ten years of service under the command of Capt. W. Wilson, this marvellous little steamer moved thousands of kegs of the local district's butter, pigs, calves, sides of bacon and bundles of skins along with hundreds of coops of fowls and boxes of eggs.<sup>46</sup>

In September 1886, she was gracefully retired by the S.C.N.C. when its new 159 ton steamer s.s. 'Peterborough', [*'a wholly Australian production'*] with sumptuous accommodation for 30 Saloon passengers and a capacity for 120 tons of cargo on a light draught, replaced her on the Sydney-Shellharbour-Gerringong run.<sup>47</sup>

The s.s. 'Peterborough' held its trial on Sydney Harbour on 21 September 1886,<sup>47</sup> and left Sydney from the Company's Caledonian Wharf at 6p.m. on 24 September, on its maiden voyage to



Shellharbour and Gerringong, under the command of Capt. W. Wilson.<sup>48</sup>



At Gerringong, the 'Peterborough quickly settled into its stride as she continued the wonderful work commenced by the 'Dairymaid'.

Taking full advantage of the extended jetty, she was able to load and unload freight and passengers in very quick time and before long her loyal customer base had increased dramatically.

As with all things in life however, with the good times come the bad.

The 'Peterborough' was no exception and she soon to experience the first of the many hazards that Mother Nature had in store for her.

In late October 1886, strong winds damaged the crane at Boatharbour jetty, making it quite useless. *'5 tons of flour had to be hauled up from the Peterborough by hand, very much to the annoyance of the wharf labours'*.<sup>48-1</sup>

At the end of October, the jetty also received minor damage and repairs were carried using mahogany timber. At the recent Council meeting, Mr. Taylor expressed the opinion that it *'would be just as serviceable as turpentine'*.<sup>48-2 48-3</sup>

This storm was followed in February 1887, when *'during the terrific sea which raged along the coast on Sunday... made a clean sweep over the jetty at Gerringong without causing any damage.'*<sup>48-4</sup>

Freight wise for the S.S.N.C., everything was running very smoothly at Gerringong, however, at Shellharbour, things were not so rosy.

On 9 November 1887, the Sydney – Kiama [Bombo] Railway line was opened and with this momentous event came a dramatic shift in loyalties.

As Shellharbour was now blessed with its own Railway Station at Dunmore, [even though it was located somewhat out 'in the sticks'] many producers, who up to now were dependent on the local harbour for transportation of their produce to Sydney, began to transfer it across to the 'iron horse'.

The S.S.N.C. rapidly came to realise that without new business coming its way, its current trade being sourced out of Gerringong, combined with the now depleted trade from Shellharbour, was now no longer a viable proposition for the Company. *'There was even talk of the steamer Peterborough being disposed of.'*<sup>49</sup>

In May 1889, therefore, the Company sent the 'Peterborough' down to Ulladulla to solicit new business.<sup>50</sup>

Intense negotiations were conducted between the various parties and on 22 June 1889, it was reported: *'The Ulladulla shippers have signed an agreement to patronise the Shellharbour S.N. Company's s.s. Peterborough for twelve months, and have obtained a reduction of 25 per cent. on their previous arrangements. The Peterborough made her second trip to Ulladulla on Thursday last. On each occasion she has taken up a large cargo.'*<sup>51</sup>

By December 1889, the new venture was so successful that the Peterborough was obliged to service Ulladulla twice weekly<sup>51-1</sup> and sadly for Gerringong, it was cut back to one shipment weekly, using either the 'Trident' from Sydney<sup>52</sup> or Kiama<sup>53</sup> or the 'Peterborough' from Sydney.<sup>54</sup>

*'The bi-weekly service had proved a serious loss to the Company, and moreover they had lost the confidence of the Gerringong people.'*<sup>54-1</sup>

Immediately this happened, John Hay from the Berry Estate seized upon the opportunity to expand his shipping business.

After seeking and then obtaining permission from the S.S.N.C., through the Gerringong Council, for usage of the jetty facilities at Boatharbour,<sup>55</sup> Alexander Berry's vessel, the s.s. 'Coomonderry', called at Gerringong on Fridays, starting, January 1890.<sup>56. 56. 1-3</sup>

Still being serviced once a week by the 'Peterborough', Gerringong was now also part of the Shoalhaven to Sydney run.

This amicable arrangement continued until mid 1890, when the 'Coomonderry' suddenly pulled out. Its last advertisement for travel to Gerringong was placed in the SMH of 30 June 1890.<sup>56-4</sup> As of 1<sup>st</sup> July, all shipping out of Gerringong reverted solely to the S.C.N.C., with the 'Peterborough'<sup>57</sup> and on a very few occasions, the 'Trident', doing the work. The 'Peterborough' resumed *'her former berth at the Caledonian Wharf on and after TUESDAY. July 1.'*<sup>57</sup>

Throughout the 'Peterborough's working life, it made over 300 trips to Gerringong's Boat Harbour<sup>58</sup> and faced similar conditions to those experienced by the 'Dairymaid'.

On numerous occasions the seas, even for her, were to prove far too rough to enable her to berth<sup>59</sup> and on 4 November 1887, she was nearly wrecked in the harbour when the mooring chains broke.<sup>60</sup>

In April 1891, all shipping at Gerringong was severely curtailed when a massive storm extensively damaged the Jetty, lifting out its piles.<sup>61, 61-1, 61-2</sup>

Council on 8 May 1891, requested the Minister of Works to *'send an Officer of your Department to inspect the structure with a view to its repair.'*<sup>61-3</sup>

In July 1891, a second storm, this time accompanied by gale-force winds, battered the end section of the Jetty causing two of its spans to be washed away and causing the crane to collapse into the sea.<sup>62</sup>

A Government Inspector was immediately sent down to inspect the damage and the Harbours Authority authorised £500 be sent to Council, for repairs.<sup>63</sup>

*'Considerable inconvenience is being experienced by the settlers around Gerringong owing to the dangerous state of the public jetty at Boat Harbour. It is feared that should there be a return of the late boisterous weather, the structure will collapse.'*<sup>64</sup>

At the insistence of Capt. Wilson temporary repairs were carried out on the jetty by J.B. Taylor, to enable the Dairymaid to discharge and receive its cargo.<sup>65</sup>

After all the publicity about the dangerous state of the jetty, the following appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald of 19 August 1891.

*'At a meeting of the Gerringong Municipal Council, a letter was read from the Harbours and Rivers branch of the Department of Public Works, forwarding a plan and specifications of additions and repairs to the jetty at Boat Harbour, Gerringong, for which tenders are receivable by the Department until the 2<sup>nd</sup> September proximo. A perusal of the plan and specifications shows that the Government intends making the structure thoroughly secure against the force of any storm likely to visit the coast. It is intended also to make such additions to the jetty as will give it strength and greater adaptability to the purpose for which it was erected. The Council and ratepayers hail with satisfaction the prompt action of the Government in this matter, as the jetty in its present state is none too safe.'*<sup>66</sup>

In June 1892, the Government eventually gave the contract for repairs to Mr W. Bright, a local Gerringong contractor. The job however, proved far too difficult for him and he decided to relinquish the work after only a few weeks.<sup>67</sup>

Almost a year was spent in trying to find someone to complete Bright's original contract.

Finally, a tender from Mr S. Brown of Wollongong was submitted and rapidly accepted, in August 1892.<sup>68</sup>

Shortly after Brown had commenced working on the Jetty, hurricane force winds, which at times reach the rate of 120 miles per hour around various parts of N.S.W.,<sup>69</sup> carried some of the repairs out to sea and he was devastated by the loss.<sup>70</sup>

After the storm, Brown reluctantly returned to fulfil his contract.

Council then wrote to Mr. G.W.Fuller Esq. M.P.on 16 November 1892, requesting *'that you will wait upon the Minister for Works and represent to him the urgent necessity for immediate repairs to the old portion of the Jetty at the Boat harbour, Gerringong. It appears that in this portion of the structure several of the piles have sunk 12 inches or more from the girders thereby weakening the Jetty to such an extent that it is danger of being carried away by a storm. The Mayor suggests that the work of repair should be attended to at once, not only for the sake of the safety of the Jetty, but because the contractor for the other portion of the wharf will finish in two or three weeks, and while he is on the ground with his plant it can be done more cheaply and expeditiously than later on.'*<sup>70-1</sup>

A subsequent inspection of the storm damage, determined that the cause of the collapse was a structural failure in components of the old Jetty, to which the new repairs had been attached.<sup>71</sup>

When the much anticipated opening of the Kiama – Nowra [Bombaderry] Railway line took place 2 June 1893,<sup>72</sup> enormous pressure was immediately placed on the local shipping industry.

The Railway, with its reliability as a mode of speedy transportation for the fresh milk and other local perishables, rapidly gained an increasing traffic and the shippers lost considerably in the transfer of their trade.

What was despatched at the Gerringong Railway Station in the morning could now be conveyed to Sydney by the easiest and most expeditious means. By late afternoon, the fresh produce arriving at Central, was able to be displayed, still in peak condition, at the nearby City Markets to the greater satisfaction of the city customer. The fresh milk was transported [initially in cans] to facilities nearby where it went through all the various processes required at the time.

The S.S.N.C. sent a letter to the Gerringong Council in October 1893, notifying it that the Company would not require the cargo store at Boat Harbour any more as it is about to cease 'running their steamer to Gerringong owing to the slackness of trade'.<sup>72-1</sup>

Fittingly, the last recorded vessel to call at Gerringong Boat Harbour was the 'Peterborough' on 24 November 1893, under the command of Captain W. Wilson.<sup>73</sup>

When we look back over the history of Gerringong's unique shipping industry, we owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Capt. Wilson, for without this great man's remarkable tenacity to get the job done throughout his seventeen years of bringing ships to this unique coastal Roadstead, this little town would not be what it is today.

In a location where sixteen known ships tragically came to grief over many years [Read the article on Shipwrecks] and of which in 1842, the Illawarra Correspondent for the Sydney Herald wrote the following scathing comment: *'it is madness sending any craft to such an open place, exposed to the full force of the S.E. gales; nor can all the art of man make a harbour of it.'*<sup>74</sup> and again in January 1859, when Gerringong's early pioneer, Mr Miller highlighted at a public meeting when a harbour was first mooted *'the utter fallacy of ever dreaming of making the harbor of Jerringong available as a shipping port as even in his time (1837 - 1859) seven vessels had been wrecked there.'*<sup>75</sup> Captain Wilson, with true grit and displaying the sheer determination of an 'old salt', was able to prove them all wrong.

His intricate knowledge of the Sydney –Gerringong coastline was next to none and this, combined with his superb skill, tremendous seamanship and unique ability to be able to manoeuvre his 'two ever-obliging girls' around such a confined space, in all kinds of weather conditions, leaves many of today's 'boaties' wondering how he 'bloody-well' did it.

In January 1894, a deputation of three ladies requested *'Council's assistance in having a portion of the space between the piles of the jetty...so fenced off as to provide a bathing place for the ladies of Gerringong. Mrs G. Hindmarsh stated that if Council favourably considered their request, they would endeavour to raise sufficient funds to defray the cost.'*

Council promised to look into the matter.<sup>76</sup>

At Council's next meeting of 22 January, *'Alderman Taylor stated that he had prepared an estimate cost of constructing a bathing place at the Gerringong jetty as suggested by a deputation of ladies at the previous meeting. The scheme he proposed was to plank the piles of three spans of the jetty and*

*enclose the outer end. This met with the approval of the deputation, and he believed they had decided to go on with the work, the cost of which would be slightly under £20. He believed this would provide an excellent bathing place, and also materially strengthen the jetty.'*<sup>77</sup>

Council however, was not prepared to proceed with any construction, unless Government was willing to appoint it as Trustees of the old Jetty.

An application for this to be considered was made.<sup>78</sup>

In order to add community support to Council's application, Miss J. Hindmarsh wrote directly to the Government requesting a Ladies Public Swimming Baths for Gerringong.

The letter was forwarded to Council by Mr. Fuller M.L.A. stating that *he 'did not think the Minister for Works would grant the proposed use of the jetty to any committee or other body other than Council.'*<sup>79</sup>

Council replied to Fuller's letter on 12 February 1894:

*'G.W.Fuller Esq M.P. Sydney. Sir;- I have the honor by direction of this Council to inform you that your letter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> inst. addressed to Miss J. Hindmarsh on the subject of Public Swimming Baths at Gerringong has been handed to this Council for consideration. The letter was before the Council at its last sitting, and I was directed to request that as a preliminary step to the carrying out of the baths matter, you will apply to the Government to have the Gerringong Council appointed Trustees of the Jetty. The Council wishes you to point out to the Minister for Works that there can be no objection to the proposed conversion of a portion of the Jetty into a Swimming bath, as the part to be enclosed is at the land end where the sea has little or no effect upon the structure. It is intended to enclose only from the low to the high water mark, and practical persons who have given some thought to the matter, are of the opinion that the contemplated improvements, will not only not endanger the stability of the Jetty but will add to its strength. The Council hopes you will be able to overcome any apparent difficulties that may be in the way of carrying out this project, as the baths are much needed and will be a great boon to the inhabitants. Yours faithfully, etc.'*<sup>79-1</sup>

The Department of Public Works then replied to Council *'stating that the Secretary for Public Works had approved of the jetty being handed over to the Council on condition that they agreed to take all future responsibility in connection with the structure. On doing this, the Council would be permitted to use the underneath portion of the jetty for the construction of a bath for which, being a public convenience, all funds must be supplied by the people.'*

Council decided to delay its acceptance of this proposal while it investigated an alternate site.<sup>80</sup>

Subsequently, Mr. Fuller M.L.A. *'was hopeful of the Government giving the Council control of the baths at the jetty without having to incur the responsibility of taking over the control of the jetty.'*<sup>81</sup>

The battle over the responsibility of the Jetty, if the baths were built, continued for the next few months.

In October, *'The Mayor advised the Council to have nothing to do with taking over the jetty.'*

Alderman Taylor however, *'said he had prepared a plan of the proposed bath for the previous Minister who then thought the proposed structure would not hurt the jetty. If that plan were laid before the present Minister, the work would probably be allowed.'*

It was then arranged that the Mayor and Alderman Taylor should wait on Mr, Campbell, M.P. the local Member, so as to brief him fully on the matter and have him relay it to the Minister.<sup>82</sup>

In November 1894, a deputation of Mr. Campbell M.P. and three Gerringong Aldermen, met with the Minister for Works and explained the Council's predicament. *'The Minister said he did not understand much about jetties, consequently was not able to give a definite answer. He promised to make inquiries into the matter.'*<sup>83</sup>

On 29 November 1894, Council wrote to *'Alderman John .B. Taylor Toolijooa Sir;- The Department having asked this Council [Letter 12/11/1894:No. 94/11612 H and R.] to furnish a sketch of the baths which it is proposed to construct under a portion of the jetty at Boat harbour, I am directed to request that you will prepare and for to me a plan of the work similar to the one you sent to the Government a few weeks ago. Yours faithfully, James Summerville Council Clerk.'*<sup>83-1</sup>

Alderman Taylor duly submitted his plan and on 3 December 1894, Council wrote to: *'The Honorable, The Minister for Works, Sydney. Sir; - I have the honour by direction of this Council to acknowledge receipt of your letter. No 94/11612 H and R., dated 12 November 1894, addressed to Alex. Campbell M.P. requesting to be furnished with plans showing showing the manner in which it is proposed to enclose a portion of the Jetty at Gerringong for a Ladies' Bath, and in reply to forward the enclosed sketch prepared by the contractor who built the jetty, and who is of the opinion that the carrying out of the proposed work will undoubtedly strengthen the structure. Your faithfully, etc.'*<sup>83-2</sup>

Eventually in January 1895, the Public Works Department informed Council *'that there was no objection to the inner end of the jetty at Boatharbour being enclosed for the purpose of constructing a ladies' bath.'*<sup>84</sup>

J.B. Taylor immediately commenced construction of the Baths and while this was being carried out, the Ladies Committee was busily engaged in raising the required money.

Council even took a bold step by committing itself to the venture and on the 8 February 1895, wrote to the Ladies Committee:

*'Mrs G.J.Hindmarsh, Gerringong. Dear Madam;- At last meeting of the Gerringong Municipal Council, Alderman Nelson handed in the sum of £8 collected by you towards the construction of the proposed ladies' baths, and intimated that you expect by a further canvass, and by a concert, to raise a few pounds more. Alderman Nelson also intimated that the promoters of this movement expect the Council to supplement their efforts by granting a sum of money for the baths, and I have much pleasure in stating that at a subsequent stage of the business it was decided to do so, to the extent of one year's rent from Boat Harbour Store conditionally upon your raising as much money as you can in the meantime. Boat Harbour Store is let at 4/- per week - £10:8:0 [remember those days?] per year.'*<sup>84-1</sup>

As eventually, 'all good things come to those who wait', the ladies were 'over the moon' when the pool was finally opened in early March 1895.

Sadly for the good ladies however, they hadn't counted on Mother Nature having HER say in the matter. [They should have known the vagaries of Boatharbour by then!]

A few weeks after the opening, *'Alderman Taylor regretted to announce that the baths erected at the jetty had suffered during the late heavy sea. The backwash of water had removed a quantity of*

*sand from the piles, causing the bath to be opened out and become considerably destroyed. He believed the Council would have to repair it, and he was sorry to say this would incur considerable expense. Three of the piles would be required to be replaced by new ones, and the one that was now holding up about 60 feet of the jetty would have to be drawn and replaced.'*<sup>85</sup>

Council decided to cut its losses and construct a concrete pool for the Ladies at the site of the present pool.

Minor repairs continued on the Jetty over the next few years.

However, after a severe storm hit the coast in September 1901 and severely damaged what remained of the Jetty, the Government directed that *'the timber of the jetty at boat harbour at Gerringong, be given to the Gerringong Municipal Council for the repair of bridges, culverts, &c., in the municipality'*.<sup>86</sup>

Tenders were called for its removal but Council did not accept them as they were considered to be too high.<sup>87</sup>

In February 1902, Council considered a petition *'from a large number of residents, ratepayers and visitors praying that Council reconsider its determination to remove the old jetty.'*<sup>88</sup>

A suggestion was put forward that Council *'repair the decking and erect a handrail and seats.'*<sup>89</sup>

Mr. Taylor *'opposed doing anything to the jetty, beyond replacing the planks that had been removed. He looked upon it as being a source of danger to children and thought it would be better for the Council, instead of making it a promenade and putting seats there, to put a notice up warning persons not to go onto the jetty.'*<sup>90</sup>

The 'bits and pieces of the Jetty' that still remained were totally destroyed by yet another storm in June 1904, when *'the late heavy seas completely wrecked the historic structure...the materials are strewn along the beach north and south of the harbour'*.<sup>87</sup>

*'The Mayor reported that the late heavy seas had completely wrecked the old jetty at the boat harbour, and the timbers which formerly constituted the structure (the piles excepted) were scattered from the north end of Ourie [now called Warri] beach to a point some distance south of the site of the jetty. He further stated that men had been employed gathering and placing the timber out of the reach of the waves, and made some suggestions as to how the heavier timbers such as girders and piles, could be removed and stored.'*<sup>87-1</sup>

Today as we stroll, picnic or swim down at this beautiful part of Gerringong, we can reflect that from earliest times, the Wodi-Wodi people used its natural resources - shells, seafood, flora, fauna and its stone for tools.

Following the arrival of the first European settlers, the harbour was central to the establishment and development of the surrounding district.

In 2013, the only reminders of the early shipping-trade, are a few fixed warping spikes embedded in the harbour rocks which can still be seen at low tide.

The nearby memorial is dedicated 'to the ships that called, the men that sailed them and our Pioneers of that time 1810 – 1893.'

1. *Kiama Independent*, 20 January, 1876
2. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 February, 1876
3. *SMH*, 3 April, 1876
4. *SMH*, 5 April, 1876
5. *Kiama Independent*, 11 April, 1876
6. *SMH*, 14 April, 1876, *Coastal Shipping IN*
7. *Aust. Town & Country*, 29 July, 1876
8. *Kiama Independent*, 2 June, 1876
9. Bayley, *William Blue Haven* p.84.
10. *Maitland Mercury*, 22 October, 1878
11. *Kiama Independent*, 1 November, 1878
12. *Wollongong Mercury – Telegram* at end of KI 11 Article.
13. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 November, 1878
14. *Kiama Independent* 15 August, 1879
15. *Kiama Independent* 20 January, 1880
- 15-1. *Kiama Independent* 17 February, 1880
16. *Kiama Independent*, 9 April, 1880
- 17-17a *Kiama Independent*, 23 April, 1880
18. *Kiama Independent*, 17 September, 1880
19. *Kiama Independent* 13 January, 1885 p1.
20. *Kiama Independent*, 5 November, 1880
21. *Kiama Independent*, 15 February, 1881
22. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 February, 1866
- 22-1. *Kiama Independent*, 17 February, 1880
23. *Kiama Independent*, 1 March, 1881
24. *Kiama Independent* 25 March, 1881
25. *Gerringong Council Correspondence* 5 June, 1882
26. *Gerringong Council Correspondence* 5 August, 1882
27. *Gerringong Council Correspondence* 6 August, 1883
28. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 September, 1883
29. *Kiama Independent* 5 October, 1883
- 29-1. *Kiama Independent* 19 September, 1883
30. *Gerringong Council Correspondence* 18 September, 1883
- 30-1. *Kiama Independent* 2 November, 1883
31. *Gerringong Council Correspondence* 30 October, 1883
32. *Kiama Independent* 16 November, 1883
33. *Aust. Town & Country* 4 February, 1884
34. *Kiama Independent* 21 March, 1884
35. *Kiama Independent*. 4 April, 1884
36. *Gerringong Council Correspondence*, 6 June, 1884
37. *Kiama Independent* 13 June, 1884
38. *Kiama Independent* 17 June, 1884
39. *Kiama Independent* 20 June, 1884
40. *Kiama Independent* 15 August, 1884
- 40-1. *Kiama Independent* 17 April, 1885
41. *Kiama Independent* 11 August, 1885
42. *Kiama Independent* 3 October, 1884
43. *Kiama Independent* 14 November, 1884
44. *Kiama Independent* 29 May, 1885
45. *Kiama Independent* 12 June, 1885
- 45-1. *Kiama Independent* 18 September, 1885
- 45-2. *Kiama Independent* 28 November, 1884
- 45-3. *Kiama Independent* 14 May, 1901
46. *Sydney Morning Herald Coastal Shipping* April 1876 – Oct. 1886
47. *Sydney Morning Herald* 22 September, 1886
48. *Sydney Morning Herald* 24 September, 1886
- 48-1. *Kiama Reporter* 27 October, 1886
- 48-2. *Kiama Independent*, 12 November, 1886
- 48-3 *Kiama Reporter* 8 December, 1886
- 48-4. *Sydney Morning Herald* 16 February, 1887
49. *Sydney Morning Herald* 29 January, 1889
50. *Kiama Independent* 17 May, 1889
51. *Aust. Town & Country* 22 June, 1889
- 51-1. *Northern Star Lismore* 4 December, 1889
52. *Sydney Morning Herald* 14 January, 1890
53. *Sydney Morning Herald* 14 January, 1890
54. *Sydney Morning Herald* 21 March, 1890
- 54-1. *Kiama Independent* 23 May, 1890
55. *Kiama Independent* 3 January, 1890
- 55-1. *Kiama Independent* 17 January, 1890
56. *Sydney Morning Herald* 18 January, 1890
56. 1-4. *Sydney Morning Herald* 20 January, 1890 - 30 June, 1890
57. *Sydney Morning Herald* 30 June, 1890
58. *Sydney Morning Herald Coastal Shipping* Oct. 1886-Nov 1893
59. *Sydney Morning Herald* 1 March, 1889
60. *Sydney Morning Herald* 5 November, 1887
61. *Sydney Morning Herald*. 24 April, 1891
- 61-1. *Sydney Morning Herald* 12 May, 1891
- 61-2. *Sydney Morning Herald* 21 June, 1891
- 61-3. *Gerringong Council Correspondence* 5 August, 1891
62. *Sydney Morning Herald* 1 July, 1891
63. *Sydney Morning Herald* 7 July, 1891
64. *Sydney Morning Herald* 21 July, 1891
65. *Kiama Independent* 21 July, 1891
66. *Sydney Morning Herald* 19 August, 1891
67. *Sydney Morning Herald* 26 September, 1891
68. *Sydney Morning Herald* 24 August, 1892
69. *South Australian Chronicle*, 1 October, 1892
70. *Sydney Morning Herald* 27 September, 1892
- 70-1. *Gerringong Council Correspondence* 16 November, 1892
71. *Kiama Independent* 12 January, 1893
72. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 June 1893
- 72-1. *Shoalhaven News* 7 October, 1893
73. *Sydney Morning Herald* 25 November, 1893
74. *Sydney Herald* 8 March, 1842
75. *Kiama Examiner*, 15 January, 1859
76. *Kiama Independent* 9 January, 1894
77. *Kiama Independent* 23 January, 1894
78. *Kiama Independent* 6 February, 1894
79. *Kiama Independent* 7 February, 1894
- 79-1. *Gerringong Council Correspondence* 12 February, 1894
80. *Kiama Independent* 17 April, 1894
81. *Kiama Independent* 29 May, 1894
82. *Kiama Independent* 30 October, 1894
83. *Kiama Independent* 13 November, 1894 & *Kiama Reporter* 14 November, 1894
- 83-1. *Council Correspondence* 29 November, 1894
- 83-2. *Gerringong Council Correspondence* 3 December, 1893
84. *Kiama Independent* 22 January, 1895
- 84-1. *Gerringong Council Correspondence* 8 February, 1895
85. *Kiama Independent* 30 April, 1895
86. *Sydney Morning Herald* 3 September, 1901
87. *Sydney Morning Herald* 29 June, 1904
- 87-1. *Kiama Independent* 1 August, 1904
88. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 February, 1902
89. *Evening News* 6 February, 1902
90. *Kiama Reporter* 22 February, 1902

**Photos: Jetty (2)-** Ken Miller collection; **Working Jetty** - Joe Chittick collection;

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