The replica Duyfken left Fremantle Harbour on 8 April 2000 with her course set for Indonesia to begin an expedition of retracing Australia’s earliest history of the discovery of our continent.

The purpose of the new Duyfken’s voyage is to encourage people to board the jacht to experience first hand and appreciate the feats of the early navigators and explorers.

The Dutch may have built the original Duyfken that discovered “New Holland”, now Australia, but it is the Australians who mastered the old Dutch art of recreating their ship building.

Carol Herben

Henry Collings of Wollongong.

by
Carol Herben

Based on '70 years of my life's experience' by Henry Collings.

Henry Collings was born 1850 at Overden the son of Jonathon Collings a wool comber and Ellen (nee Greenwood) a factory employee. When he was four years old he was sent to live with his grandparents Collings at Seante Bothem. A year later the family moved to Coddle. By then Henry’s father was working in a Yorkshire coal mine. The family lived in part of an old rambling farm house. Numerous spiders, owls, bats and rats were in charge of the remainder of the house. The floors of the inhabited section were covered in flagstone where sand was scattered. A favourite pastime of the youngster was to crush the sand with the rockers of the old rocking chair.

No sooner had he settled down when he was sent packing to the place where he was born - “Jumps Farm”- the old Greenwood family’s 40 acre farm near Hebden Bridge right on the edge of the Yorkshire Moors.

The Greenwood family had their own lingo for the family members. Grandfather was known as Bob-o-Jump’s, Henry’s mother as Nell-o-Bob’s-o-Jump’s and Henry himself was known as nothing other than Harry-o-Nell’s-o-Bob’s-o-Jump’s.
With the cream separating in the cellar grandfather Bob declared that the rats were back in the cellar lapping at the cream. Young Henry and old Bob set the traps in the cellar to catch the rats. Little did the grandparents know the rats had not returned but the marks left were from a young child helping himself to the cream.

Reunited with his parents the family moved to Steeress a small fishing village between Whitley and Hartlypool.

When Henry was ten years old he was employed in an cotton mill, but soon left to work in an Iron Stone mine driving a horse and wagon collecting the gravel from the workings. One day his horse would not obey his commands and continued to take off. Young Henry was unable to place the sprag in the wheel resulting in the horse being killed. A new horse was then issued to Henry and this time the pair worked as a team. He was the last to leave the pit one evening when his horse became a little restless. Just at that time Henry’s oil lamp went out. He quickly grabbed his horse’s tail and whipped the horse to bolt from the mine. They got out after all the men had left the pit. On arriving home his mother Nell was frantic.

The family then moved to West Auckland where Henry and his father obtained work in a coal mine. His new job was working the skips at the top of the incline. Different mine a different age group of young men. Being in a younger age group Henry was provoked by a gang to fight but he kindly declined saying that he could not fight all of them. One chap stepped forward and gave Henry a clip on the cheek. This provocation turned him into a tiger and he fought like one. He won the fight fair and square. The chap he fought turned out to be the bully of the gang and he was told afterwards that no one would trouble him any more.

The Collings family, like gypsies, were always on the move. At aged 11, experiencing two moves in 12 months, father and son found employment in South Church colliery. On 10 March 1863 his father Jonathon was injured in the colliery. The family then went into the venture of smoking herrings. Money and success led Jonathon to take to liquor with Ellen becoming too ashamed to venture outside the door. They decided to sell the herring business and invested in a horse and cart moving their goods and chattels back to Hebden Bridge.
His parents commenced a business of selling fish and game and young Henry ventured back to the cotton mill where he first obtained employment. By now he was 13 years old and was earning 15 shillings a week.

Getting into a fight again placed his employment at the factory on rocky ground. Father Jonathon had begun drinking again and came to grieve when he fell and broke his leg. This happened when the fish and game shop was at its peak. Mother Ellen fell ill which meant both Henry’s parents were confined to bed. A violent storm struck and the river Hebden broke its banks and the whole of the Collings yard was inundated. It was up to Henry to save the pony, pigs and fowls and move them to higher ground. By the time that task was done and he returned home the ground floor of the house was fully awash with water.

When Henry was 17 years old his father Jonathon announced that the family was moving north once again and that it was up to them to gain employment in the collieries. The family settled in the County of Durham and father and son gained work at Auckland Park as miners. By now Henry was a strapping young man 5 feet 10½ inches tall and weighing 10 stone. Life at home was not getting any easier and the arguments between father and son were a constant disruption in the home.

Henry was already keeping company with a young lady by the name of Ann Lonsdale and after a short courtship decided to ask her hand in marriage. So on 12 January 1870 they were married at Bishop Auckland Co Durham. Ann Lonsdale was born in 1849 at Benton Co Durham the daughter of Joseph and Eleanor Lonsdale. Ann and Henry moved to a small town called Shildon where he found work in the Little Midderage coal mine. Being only a new colliery the mine face was a mere 24 yards from the surface. A short time later the colliery was closed due to the excessive seepage of water. Henry was now unemployed and looking for a job to support his new wife.
Already owning their own home Henry was persuaded by his father to sell his home and invest some of his money into a business venture with Jonathon’s. As the records show Jonathon Collings again became dependent upon alcohol and he was declared a bankrupt. This left Ann heartbroken at the loss of about £300.

Getting involved with the Wesleyan Church he became choirmaster. Around this time he opened a shop trading as an ironmonger and paint dealer then venturing into house painting. During the days he was involved with house painting and his evenings were spent at the church and choir practice.

Just when life was settling down for Henry, Ann and their two sons in Shildon Henry’s parents Jonathon and Ellen moved nearby. His father still depended on the brandy bottle. The young Collings family would not put up with this situation again and decided it was time to move on.

On 16 November 1875 the family left Shildon for Plymouth, right in the middle of a snow storm. They arrived at the immigration depot and after supper were shown to their bedroom about the size of a horse stall with just enough room to put the children in the upper bunk and Henry and Ann in the lower bunk. Living conditions in this old military barracks were appalling with little or no rest from all the noise created by all the passengers awaiting notice to board the ship. Ann became desperate after two days thinking of the cramped life style ahead for the next three months on board the ship.

On 19 November the Collings family stood on the deck of the Lochee and watched the last of old England fade away. Sea sickness hit the passengers and to think there was three months of this. A meeting took place after two months of putting up with the stifling conditions. Many of the immigrants were complaining about where they would go and what they would do when they arrived in Sydney. Henry and Ann Collings long before deciding to migrate had written away and received as much information as they could about their new country. They decided they would like to settle in Illawarra.
On arrival the passengers were sent to the Quarantine Station. After 10 days of clean fresh air and some warm baths and ridding themselves of the vermin the Collings family were ready to board the steamer for Wollongong. The left Sydney at 11pm and arrived in Wollongong at 4am the following day.

Setting off alone on foot from Wollongong Harbour on Saturday morning Henry asked directions to a where he could find a place where his family could have breakfast. He was directed to the breakfast room of Mrs Rebecca Makin where he ordered ham and eggs for the family. Joseph Makin drove his cart to the wharf and collected Ann and the children. Whilst taking in their breakfast Henry asked where he could obtain accommodation for his family. Rebecca Makin said she knew of an empty house but it is not much of a place. The Makins took the luggage to the house and poor Ann Collings walked in and gasped “but where is the grate, oven and mantle, we must have some way of cooking”. Henry was due to commence work at Mt Keira colliery the Monday after his arrival.

Just as they were organising a list of what they needed to purchase in Wollongong Peter Murphy called to see if there was a need for firewood or coal. No sooner had they settled in when the Wesleyan Minister called on the family and welcomed them. At church the Collings met Catherine Bright who inquired where they were living. When they said where she replied, “Oh! No! That is a terrible place. Surely we can arrange a better place than that”.

Henry also announced to those interested he was a house painter and signwriter.

Monday was his first day at work and he was surprised how soft his hands had become. Word was passed to the family that a new house had been found for them at the Cross Roads.

It was not long before Henry was given work painting two new houses. Not long after he obtained a job with one of the Parsons as a house painter.
At the time when allotments in the subdivision of Smith’s Hill were for sale Henry Collings purchased a lot along Flinders Street for £17-10-0.

By now the Collings family had increased from two children, Robert born 1872 and Joseph in 1875, who came on the Lochee, to four with Ellen born in 1877 and Herbert in 1879.

Being heavily involved with the Wesleyan Church choir as the Choirmaster meant that Henry was spending much of his spare time at choir practise.

On Saturday 4 January 1879, James Orphin, the undertaker, came to see Henry to inform him that his eldest son Robert had fallen in the well and had drowned. He was only 6 years old. Just two weeks later Ellen, the third child aged 2 years, died from a very nasty abscess on her neck. The family could not move into the new house quick enough to get away from the well in the yard at the Cross Roads property. The family moved into the new house shortly after when it was still a shell at an overall cost of £90. Henry lined the house and finished it off whenever he had spare time to devote to the work.

To be continued.

The passing of Captain Jack Davies.

It is with regret that we hear of the passing of Captain Jack Davies on 20 August 2006. Jack Bowen Davies was born in Dinas Powys a village near Cardiff, Wales on 2 June 1909. His school years were spent with his older brother Harry as a boarder at Queens College, Taunton in Somerset. Twelve days after leaving school in 1926 he decided to go to sea and began a 4 year apprenticeship as an indentured cadet with the British India Steam Navigation Company. After 12 months at sea he visited his father who had retired to Sydney from his business as harbour pilot in Penang. On this visit, Jack’s first in Australia, he met a teenager Gwen Wood who in 1939 became his wife.

In April 1935 he resigned from the British India Company as he chose to sail on the Australian Coast. He joined Burns Philp as 3rd Officer on the MV Neptunia. He then went on to join the Huddart Parker company sailing on the MVs Zealandia, Westralia and Wanganella.

At the outbreak of World War II Jack enlisted and joined the RAFA MV Kurumba as 3rd Officer and after his first trip was promoted to master.
Henry Collings of Wollongong.
Part 2.
by
Carol Herben
Based on ‘70 years of my life’s experiences’ by Henry Collings.

Henry Collings found it essential to buy a horse. He went to a sale and came away with a brown mare and also bought a saddle and bridle. The spritely mare would eye Henry off and eventually she had him so scared that he would not dare to ride her; so he got his neighbour to break her in. Everything went fine until one day, when riding down to the wharf, a string of horses and wagons crossed the road. The mare suddenly took flight. She jumped over the back of the third horse drawing a wagon throwing Henry off. The last he saw of the mare was when she was galloping over Smith’s Hill. A man watching the circus unfolding approached Henry and offered him £2 for her. Henry gratefully accepted his offer. He learned later that the horse had been trained and was successfully entered in every Wollongong race under the name of “The Fire Fly”. In the meantime Henry had purchased a pony, this time he paid £5. This one he kept for about two years before selling it.

The Collings family joined the parish of the Wesley Methodist Church and by 1880 had seen the construction of the new church by George Osborne, the local builder and undertaker. Rev Pincombe asked Henry to paint the interior of the church. The ceiling of the church was painted and grained in oak.

In 1882 Henry was appointed Choirmaster of the church. One evening he was approached by two gentlemen who wanted him to teach their church choir to sing the Gloria of Mozart’s 12th Mass. He accepted and taught the choir in one night to sing the Gloria correctly. All this took place in the Roman Catholic church.

His next child, Eva Collings, was born in 1882.

Shortly after his arrival in 1875 he became a member of the Sixth Battery Artillery. Though not very fond of soldiering he found it a pleasant past time and a good form of exercise.

On a cold wet winter’s night when Henry and Ann (Nancy) were sitting in front of the fire they were contemplating the promise they had made when departing England that they would return. It had been over 6 years since they arrived in Wollongong and now there were decisions to be made what to do with their little home. The household goods were auctioned at a Crown Street auction house. They set a price of £300 on the house. All proceeds went to pay for the fares.
It was not long before the family left Wollongong Harbour on the *SS Illawarra* for Sydney to join the ship that would take them back to England. As soon as they arrived they hired a van to take them to the Orient-Pacific line wharf. They boarded the *SS Lusitania* (3,877 gross tons) where they were shown to their cabin. (*This is not the same *SS Lusitania* torpedoed in May 1915 resulting in her sinking.*) The parents were disappointed in the size as they expected something a little better for a Royal Mail service vessel. Bugs encountered on the voyage were a big problem and Henry found it necessary to complain that he did not pay his fare to be the ship’s bug-catcher.

When the vessel made fast at her destination in London at midnight, on a cold and bitter night, all passengers were told to disembark. After having organised for their luggage to be sent onto Kings Cross Station Henry went to look around for accommodation for the night. He was lucky that a policeman on the dock was able to find the family a bed for the night. He directed them to a private home and a kind woman fed them and provided them with sofas to sleep on. In the morning they found their way to Kings Cross Station where they boarded a train heading north. They were met at Burnley station by Henry’s brother who told him that his mother was not expected to live much longer. Ellen Collings, Henry’s mother, only lived two more days before passing away. After the funeral they went back to Co Durham to visit their friends. Henry asked Ann if she would like to live here again. She replied, "It's too black and dirty." Staying only a short time with Henry’s brother they made their way to Shildon, the last town they lived in before emigrating.

After having moved into a house Henry obtained work painting the outside of the Methodist Chapel. Life settled down, but after a while the Collings family became restless in the cold, misty old land and yearned for the Australian sun they so loved. As soon as they had saved the return fare they sold up all their possessions and moved to Auckland and spent the last few days with grandfather Lonsdale.

The return voyage was a nightmare. The ship they had booked their passage on was full of rat holes and during the nights rats were running around the cabins. Henry to rescue! He obtained some tin and nails and covered the holes in their cabins, so at least they could get a decent night’s sleep.

Arriving back in Sydney the family made its way to Wollongong. It was not long before Henry and Ann purchased land to construct a new home in Keira Street. Once again the family moved in when the house was incomplete. Additional land was purchased so that a paint shop could be attached. During this time two further daughters were born Ethel in 1884 and Olive Etta in 1886.
Henry found some difficulty obtaining full time work as a painter. He took on a contract to paint eight railway cottages at Fairfield, Hilltop, Bong Bong, Bundanoon, Marulan, Frankston, Yanco and Henty. Batching on each of the jobs he complained that the only source of bread they could purchase was sweetbread as most of the population were of German extraction. Their favourite food was stewed rabbit, grilled rabbit, roasted rabbit and fried rabbit. Tiring of his variety of rabbit Henry and a boy went to see the cook at a sheep station some miles from Yanco, where they were camping. They came away with bread, damper, spotted dog, a roasted leg of mutton, a tin of dripping to fry rabbits in, bunches of grapes as large as plums and figs.

When the Court House in Market Street was completed Henry won the contract to paint the building at an overall contract price of £244.

A son was born in 1889 who was registered as Lonsdale, his mothers maiden name, followed by Sydney in 1891.

Lonsdale Sydney Collings died from Croup on 10 September 1891 at the age of 2 years.

The depression of the 1890s affected most of the Wollongong community. Despite the hard times suffered by many Henry and Ann made additional land purchases.

Henry described what he observed about “King Mickey”, king of the aborigines. King Mickey lived in a camp three to four miles from Wollongong. He was about 5 feet 3 inches tall. When visiting Wollongong the king would always present himself in an old well worn “John Bull” silk top hat which had been remodelled by the king over many years of use. Wearing a frock coat that had seen many years of good use as well with one of the laps that torn away hanging down to his heel. His trousers would have fitted a man about 6 feet tall and Henry describes how one of the legs had been torn off about half way down the calf and the other was tied around the ankle with a piece of string.

The last Collings’ child born was Reuben in 1893. Henry’s pet names for his children were Eva, Ethel, Olive, Joe, Herb, Sid and Rube. He credited the happy and organised comfortable home to Ann.

With the children grown up it was time to take another holiday and in 1909 Henry and Ann booked a passage on the Orient-Pacific Mail Service ship SS Ortona a vessel of 7,950 gross tons, 500 feet long and able to carry 130-1st class, 162-2nd class and 300-3rd class passengers. The Collings booked their passage as 2nd class passengers. (In 1910 the ship was rebuilt and renamed the “SS Arcadian” and was sunk by a submarine in 1917 whilst in service as a troop ship.)

Arriving in Plymouth after an extensive voyage and many port of calls the Collings’ found the dock area fogged in. Transferring onto a smaller vessel they found that their journey to London was an arduous and long voyage. During
sightseeing around London they decided to book their return passage at the agents office in Fenchurch Street to travel back on the SS Osterley. Travelling around Durham they found that new tenements had been built since their last visit in the 1880s. Each one consisted of a single room measuring 12 x 14 feet where the tenants wash, sleep, cook, eat, live and die. They were shocked at the conditions they saw their fellow country folk lived in now. They moved onto Auckland and Shildon to visit the old sites where both Henry and Ann were brought up. Whilst visiting his old family at Shildon he was graced with his favourite meal “Bilberry Pudding”, a pudding wrapped up like a sausage and boiled in a cloth, a meal of delight which Henry had last tasted 35 years ago, long before he and Ann decided to emigrate to Australia. Travelling back to London they caught the train to Southall and stayed with a Miss Hancock who had at one time resided in Wollongong. During their excursions they visited Windsor Castle on a guided tour. With one day left they decided to take a coach around London on a sightseeing tour. The SS Osterley sailed on her maiden voyage on 6th August 1909 leaving Plymouth for Australia with Henry and Ann on board for this occasion. Arriving back in Wollongong to beaming glows on the children's faces to see their parents again, Ann was impressed and pleased to be home once again. Life returned to normal for a few years for the Collings family with Henry involved with his music and choir along with his business. With the outbreak of WWI they felt the weight on their shoulders when they received the sad news that their youngest son, Sergeant Reuben Collings of the 19th Battalion 1st AIF, was killed on 14 November 1916 aged 23 years. He was buried at Warlencourt British Cemetery, France. In 1920 the Collings could not settle down not knowing what had happened to their youngest son Reuben. Henry left Wollongong and set sail from Sydney on the SS Themistocles in search of information on “Rube”. His fellow cabin mate, Brooks, was on a similar mission. Arriving at Plymouth they travelled onto Tilbury. Arriving in London they made their way to Australia House where they were received with kindness. Henry records that neither the body of Brooks or Rube were ever found. The two of split up and Henry went to see some relatives before returning to London and meeting up with Brooks again to sail on the 19 August 1920 aboard the SS Demosthenes for Australia. Arriving home to see the family was a joy for Henry. The family received a photograph of the grave where their son and brother was buried, it still had the standard wooden cross marking the grave. Ann Collings died on 29 August 1926 aged 77 years and Henry died on 2 August 1933 aged 83 years at his daughter, Olive Frost's home, in Church Street, Wollongong and was buried with his beloved Ann. THE END