

COASTAL TRADE.

A LINK WITH THE SIXTIES.

Retired Captain's Memories.

Now in Fremantle, revisiting the scenes of his boyhood, is Captain John Sheridan, aged 88 years, a retired sheep farmer of Kangaroo Island, South Australia. He arrived in this State recently by the Katoomba, and intends to leave again on September 17. One of his first visits was to the Fremantle Round House, where he spent one of the best remembered nights of his long and varied career for refusing to pay a fine inflicted for throwing stones—a misdemeanour of which he says he was wrongfully accused. In recent years Captain Sheridan has several times revisited the State, and on one occasion he flew across.

An interview with the captain recalled vividly to mind the romance of the early convict days, when Fremantle, then a straggling limestone town, was the centre of a flourishing whaling industry. He arrived in this State at the age of nine with his family in the convict vessel Clara; the date of its arrival was July, 1857. His father, a corporal in the 47th Royal Irish Regiment, was an officer in charge of the contingent of convicts aboard the vessel, and on his arrival they took up quarters on the site of the present Immigrants' Home. Perilously near to being blown ashore south of Garden Island in a gale, the Clara had a stiff time of it for several days, but eventually the vessel was brought into Gage Roads and the complement transhipped into flats, which were run up the beach.

Then followed several happy years for young Sheridan, whose eyes were agog at the bustling activity along the waterfront, where Bateman's whalers used to beach their boats after stirring tussles out by the Stragglers and Garden Island. Twice he heard of the open whaleboats being



CAPTAIN JOHN SHERIDAN.

bitten in halves by ferocious whales. Many times he had heard of missing men and missing ships. But the sea was in his blood, and when 17 years of age he signed aboard the barque Tien-Tsin (Captain Jarman) for £1 a month.

Genesis of North-West Settlement.

This vessel had an interesting history. In 1863 it conveyed Walter Padbury's party, with stock and requirements, to the site of the present town of Cossack (originally named Tien-Tsin harbour) for the first attempt at opening up the North-West.

When Sheridan signed on the Tien-Tsin, Padbury's settlement had been established a couple of years, and the activities of the Camden Harbour (now Derby) Pastoral Association of Melbourne, were in full swing. "I well remember," said Captain Sheridan, "Mr. George (afterwards Sir George) Shenton coming aboard on my very first trip, to superintend the transport of a number of sheep to the new settlement. When we got there, we found the new settlement a hive of activity. Tents were pitched everywhere. It was a real canvas town. Things, however, were not too good there. There was no magistrate, and it was said that lynch law ruled in the settlement. We heard reports of some floggings, and believed that complaints had been sent from Melbourne to the West Australian Government. We were not surprised, then, on our next trip up, to see Mr. R. J. Sholl and a number of policemen come aboard, Mr. Sholl having been appointed Resident Magistrate.

"I will never forget," he continued, "the spectacle presented by the big ship Calliance, from Melbourne, when it lay broken-backed on a reef in the harbour at low tide. It was one of the biggest ships I had seen in local waters, and it was a sad sight to see it wrecked in such a way."

The Calliance was a vessel chartered by the association to carry passengers and stock to the settlement. It struck a reef on the way up to Camden Harbour, and after arrival was being examined for damage when wind drove her on to a reef in the harbour. The captain and a large number of stock were drowned.

By the time the magistrate arrived discontent at the settlement had reached its highest point. Sheep were dying in hundreds from some unknown cause, and the Calliance accident was the last straw. An exodus then commenced, and the Tien-Tsin carried part of the first contingent. "It was a hard trip," remarked Captain Sheridan. "We were tacking against head winds all the way, and struck



Captain Sheridan. "We were tacking against head winds all the way, and struck a reef off the North-West Cape on Christmas Eve. From then on it was pump or sink, and I got together some biscuits in case we should be forced to leave the boat. Luckily, however, seaweed had plugged much of the hole."

Trips to England.

Later the Tien-Tsin went to England with a cargo of wool and copper ore; but after his trip from Camden Harbour young Sheridan considered that he had had enough of her. Shortly after he went to London in another vessel, the Fitzroy, and made three voyages on her. His last return trip to Australia, however, was in the Elizabeth Oliver. Paid off the Elizabeth Oliver at Fremantle, he served for a time in Captain Littlejohn's Argo, trading between Fremantle and Champion Bay, and the Bungaree (owned by Batemans) on the Batavia trade, following which he was for a time in harbour service at Fremantle under Captain Croke, the harbour master. Tiring of harbour work, he got his master's certificate and shipped aboard the Laughing Wave, carrying horses for Singapore. On its return, the vessel called in at Fremantle to take whale oil for Melbourne, where Sheridan was paid off.

The year 1872 found him in Adelaide. Here the rolling stone began to settle and gather a little moss. As an able seaman, he joined the crew of the yacht of the then Governor, Sir James Ferguson, and when that vessel passed into the hands of Sir Thomas Elder he went with her. He raced the yacht for Sir Thomas in Melbourne, and gave instruction on it to youths from the old Colonial man-o'-war Protector. Sir Thomas, he said, was willing and anxious that naval recruits should be given training on the yacht. "Training youths straight from the reformatory was no sweet job," he said. He later joined the Protector as captain's coxswain and chief quartermaster.

Followed then a period in Government service. With the steamer Lady Diana, he landed mails at Glenelg from the P. and O. service, and tended lighthouses along the coast. Later he began to acquire a fleet of his own, and among his boats was the former Governor's yacht which he bought off Sir Thomas Elder and turned into a fishing boat. He also bought another boat, the Enchantress, which was later wrecked when running mails along St. Vincent's Gulf. But, withal, his ventures in marine finance were on the whole successful, and near the beginning of the present century he took up 35,000 acres for sheep farming on Kangaroo Island. Until a few years ago he managed this business, but his son now has charge.
