

The following is an extract of an article published in **Western Ancestor** December 1985, page 159. Courtesy of the Fremantle Port Authority
Loss of the Schooner
"Emma"
By Chris Hall

"The EMMA, a two masted, carvel built schooner of 117 tons had been launched in 1859 at Lowestoft, Suffolk. In September 1865 her registry was transferred from London to Fremantle where, in the following year, she was bought by Walter Padbury, a prominent local shipowner.

She was a large craft by sail coaster standards of those days. But Padbury, an ambitious man, purchased only British built vessels of considerable tonnage for it was his intention to monopolise the carrying trade between Fremantle and the ports of the Pilbara coast where he also had pastoral holdings."

During her first two years of trading along the coast the EMMA suffered various mishaps.

"The EMMA was fitted up with new rigging and thoroughly renovated 'aloft and alow' in preparation of her third voyage. Padbury appointed Captain Badcock, former mate in the BRIDGETOWN, to command the schooner. Supplies for the sheep stations of the North West and the settlers' provisions were loaded then the passengers, among whom was Robert J. Sholl the new Resident Magistrate for Port Walcott filed aboard. So on January 22 1867 the EMMA stood out to sea and after an uneventful passage, arrived at her destination

For the return voyage the EMMA'S cargo comprised bales of wool consigned by the Roebuck Bay Company and Messrs Taylor, knight and Co, plus several tons of pearl shell.

Forty-two passengers boarded the vessel at Port Walcott and on March 2, 1867 the EMMA put to sea on her fatal last voyage. She got underway on a good slant of wind which ought to have carried her safely round the North West Cape on an estimated nineteen day passage to Fremantle.

Included among her passengers on that fateful day were several pioneers and many prominent citizens of the Roebourne district almost all of whom were the breadwinners for large families. Mostly they were travelling south to buy horses, cattle, and sheep with which to stock new stations inland.

Unfortunately however, no complete passenger list is extant but the following are known to have been onboard her when the schooner disappeared: Trevor Sholl, son of resident Magistrate; Mr C. Nairn, manager for Walter Padbury at Port Walcott; Captain Abbott late master of Padbury's schooner NEW PERSEVERANCE, which at the time was lying grounded at Butcher's inlet; Mr J. Tays, a master pearler, formerly of Camden Harbour and the Hungarian naturalist Louis Blagrav. Seven Military pensioners returning from duty at Roebuck Bay, four policemen in charge of two or three aboriginal prisoners and three free natives of the Nichol Bay region; European government labourers and tradesmen, with the vessels seven men crew, completed the complement.

A crowd of relatives and friends on the jetty watched the schooner's departure but there were none among them who could have guessed that once out of sight, the vessel would pass out of all human ken.

The first intimation that any concern might be felt for the vessel's safety came on April 24th, when the shipping reporter of Inquirer Newspaper, commented that she was "considerably overdue"

Then, on July 10th, when three months had passed without a word of the missing vessel reaching her owner Walter Padbury, he reluctantly wrote to the press.

"As regards the EMMA there are few, I think, have more reason to lament the sad catastrophe which must have befallen her. As owner of the vessel, with property at stake and relatives aboard, I feel keenly the want of positive intelligence as to her fate, and there are none more anxious to know it.

I had no cause for uneasiness before the end of April and from that time I did what I could to send another vessel. I have my own opinion as to the nature of the accident that has lost the EMMA and should it prove correct, it will show that though we had despatched half a dozen vessels we could have afforded no relief or saved the vessel or her crew."

"The fate of the EMMA in March 1867 remains today one of Western Australia's most puzzling mysteries of the sea"

There is of course much more information in the original article which makes interesting reading. Early copies of **Western Ancestor** are on the shelves in the Australasian Room at WAGS.

Although seven Pensioners are reported to have died on the Emma, our records indicate the following:

BARR - Joseph 22nd Regiment

BYRNE / BYRN - John 45th Regiment and Cape Mounted Rifles

DAVIS / DAVIES - Isaac 69th Regiment

FARRELL - John 28th 22nd and 43rd Regiment

GOODALL / GOODHALL - Edmond 80th Regiment

PURVIS - William 60th Rifles 2nd Battalion

QUIRK - James 20th and 54th Regiment

RADFORD - Edward / Edwin HEIC 2nd Bombay Fusiliers and 104th Regiment

WHITTLE - William 71st Regiment Y