

## **DRAMA AND INTRIGUE – A TANGLED TALE ON THE STAG**

September 2022

- The EPG SIG has reviewed the 1855 Stag (pictured).
- Interestingly, there were charges, not upheld, brought by some of the EPGs and their wives against the Ship's Surgeon Joseph Caldwell (c1811-1886)
- It gives an insight into conditions on-board, to say the least
- The 2-day case was reported in the Inquirer at the time (attached)
- The inquiry weighed up mainly medical matters, exonerating Caldwell
- According to him, small-pox, measles, all matters of health or discipline devolved to him
- The Stag had 89 EPG passengers, 225 convicts and the crew, well over 300 people
- The EPG passengers came on board via 3 intakes once at Deptford and twice at Plymouth
- The only adult females on board were the 24 wives of EPGs
- At sea, 2 children were born and 5 children and 2 seamen died
- The case largely centred around the "alleged" rough treatment of EPG wives in particular Elizabeth Brown who was described as a very disruptive influence

### **Caldwell's treatment of some EPG wives:**

- EPG John Murphy thought his wife Susan, Ann Weir and Susan Mash were under medical treatment for symptoms that he thought exceedingly strange for married women
- Susan Murphy submitted to examination through fear of punishment – she meant being put into the 'Black Box' or kept down below
- Susan Mash objected to being examined by him and the treatment of Elizabeth Brown
- EPG John Mash also gave testimony re the state of his marriage
- Elizabeth Jerrold and Ellen Sargent objected to his rough treatment and conduct
- Elizabeth McGrath stated she was examined and did not voice an objection.
- However, she said the examination of another woman took about half an hour and other women could not see the woman under examination. When she told her husband he said there were enough of us, meaning the women, if we did not agree to it, to put the Doctor on deck

### **Elizabeth Brown's behaviour and Caldwell's punishment of her:**

- Henry Clark, Stag's Master said she was very quarrelsome, noisy and had he been aware of it he would have done all in his power to prevent her embarkation
- EPG Sergeant George Beasley said her conduct was very bad, she was a quarrelsome backbiting woman, a great liar and the cause of all the disagreements between the other women on-board
- Beasley's wife was exempted from examination by Caldwell
- Elizabeth Brown's behaviour saw her variously gagged, handcuffed and also incarcerated in the 'Black box' ... Beasley didn't hear her making any noise after she was put there
- EPG John O'Brien said he forbade his wife to associate with Elizabeth Brown
- EPG William Riseam said he had no personal quarrel with Elizabeth Brown until she accused him of cohabitating with Margaret Denman. Brown was a most quarrelsome woman
- EPG TuoHill aka Davis gave evidence against Elizabeth Brown
- 4 other EPGs or their family also testified or were mentioned

See the Stag at <https://enrolledpensionerforcewa.org.au/ships/stag/>

**DURING** the past week an investigation took place in Perth, before a Board of officers appointed for the purpose, into certain charges, preferred against the Surgeon Superintendent of the convict ship "Stag," brought by the Pensioner Guard, which came out in that vessel, tending to show that Dr. Caldwell had not properly treated the families of the said pensioners during the voyage. The points to be decided by the Board were principally bearing upon medical matters. The investigation lasted during a portion of two days, and the result has been that Dr. Caldwell has proved, to the satisfaction of the Board, that his treatment was in all respects such as was called for under the circumstances of the ship. With the small-pox and measles on board a convict ship, and all matters, whether of health or arrangement of discipline, devolving upon him, Dr. Caldwell had no easy duty to discharge as Surgeon Superintendent; but we understand that he acquitted himself in every respect with remarkable credit.



#### What happened to Elizabeth Brown?

- Elizabeth Brown b Weymouth Dorset b 1812 in 1851 Census
- Elizabeth Brown m Henry Woods Bunbury 1864
- Henry Woods 96th Regt stationed in WA 1847-1849 married 7.7.1864 (Bunbury C/E) Elizabeth BROWN (widow) daughter of James Beale (seaman).
- Elizabeth Brown now Woods left Fremantle on "Ann Saunderson" 2 Mar 1865 and arrived in Adelaide on 26 Mar 1865. The voyage is substantiated by Elizabeth's record in Adelaide Hospital Admissions Volume 3 Number 652
- Henry Woods, wife and child departed Fremantle March 1865 "Ann Saunderson" for Adelaide. No information about the child who travelled with them at the time of writing.
- Elizabeth Woods b 1816 Weymouth in 1866 Adelaide Hospital Registers
- Elizabeth Woods d 27 March Adelaide, South Australia, died of "Morbid Cordis" but a hospital admission 7 months prior was for "Alcoholismus."