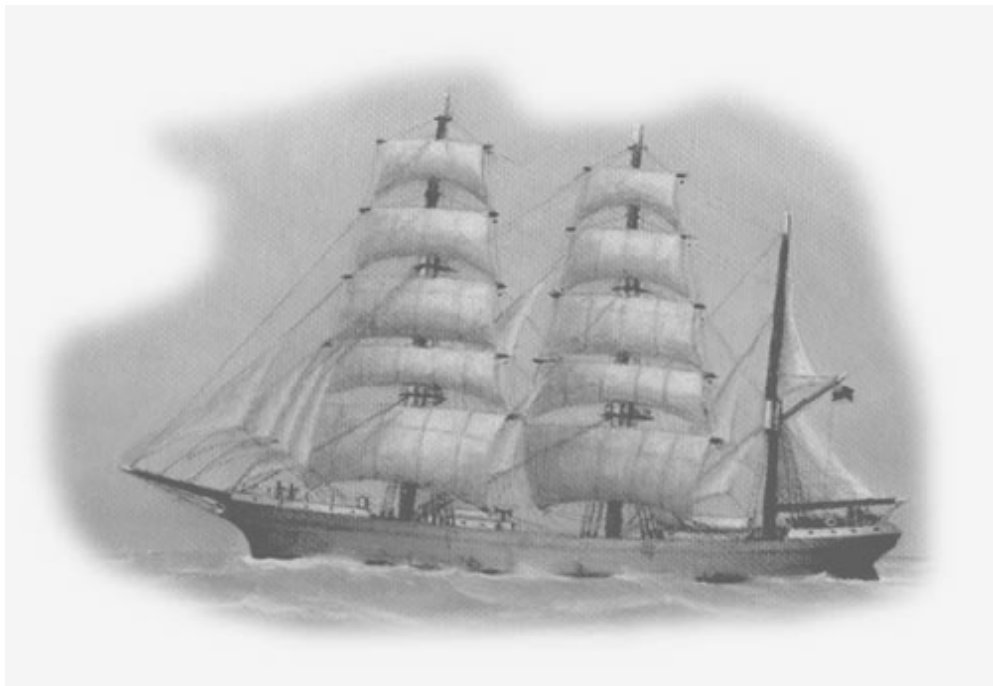


The Surf Coast Family History Group

Vol. 50, Summer, Dec 2013 edition

(Sub group of the Anglesea and District Historical

Inverlochy Log



In this issue....

- Felix Hall
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- What's New in Genealogy
- The Sinking of the SS Nerissa

Quarterly Journal of The Surf Coast Family History Group

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Anglesea & District
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The Surf Coast Family History Group

c/o P. O. Box 98 Anglesea 3230

The Society is housed in the Anglesea Historical Society Museum
McMillan Street Anglesea 3230

Library and Research Facilities

Tuesday 10.30am - 1.00pm

Wednesday by appointment

Saturday 10.30am - 1.00pm

Meetings held on

The 2nd Thursday of the month

commencing at 10am at the

Historical Society Museum

McMillan Street Anglesea 3230

Visitors Welcome

Enquiries:

Pat Hughes Phone 5289 6686

Peter Matthews Phone 5263 1686

Nov 14th Meeting: Simon Clark

“ Rogues, Rascals and Relations.”

Dec 12th Meeting:

Xmas breakup with fun activities
prizes from our lucky dip.

Feb 13th 2014 Meeting: Barbara Harkins

from

“Port Philip Pioneers”

**We are aiming to have
Interesting guest speakers**

**to talk on all matters of research
Please submit topics of interest**

**Newsletter by email
Please forward your address if interested**

Committee Members 2013 - 2014

Chairperson
Vice Chairperson
Secretary
Treasurer
Librarian
Committee Member
Committee Member
Committee Member

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responsible for the accuracy of the statements or opinions expressed by authors of
articles published in this magazine

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO "FELIX HALL"

In 1841 Felix Hall was 8yrs old. His Parents where Richard & Catherine (nee Hazard) Hall.

A letter to his Mother read:

30 July 1855 Woolwich Barracks

Dear Mother and Sisters.

This comes with my kind love to you all hoping it may find you in health and spirits as it leaves me at present.

Dear Mother I wrote a letter to my Brother at Birmingham to tell him how I am getting on.

Dear Mother I am happy and comfortable at work at my own trade and I have given the Farrier Major great satisfaction so much so that I shall soon be made a full Shoeing Smith and put

upon extra pay-all I wish for is to come and see you once more which can only be accomplished

in one way by you getting a letter wrote to me stating that that someone belonging to me is very ill and on the point of Death and wishes to see me then I can show that letter to my Adjutant and he will very

likely get a furlough for if I do not know when I shall be able to for I do not think I shall stay long here for we do not know one day from another when we may get the route to go God only know where.

You will please to give my kind love to all enquiring friends to my sisters and accept my kindest love yourself.

From your affectionate son.

Felix Hall.

Please be very particular in my Directions-as follows

For Shoeing Smith

Felix Hall

45 room 1st Battalion Detachment

Royal Artillery Woolwich Barracks Kent

On 28th May 1854 Britain and France declared war on Russia. The Battery handed over the guns, equipment and horses of O Field Battery and moved via Woolwich to the Crimea, landing at Balaclava on 27th December where it reinforced the Siege Train as part of the right flank attack at Sebastopol where a second claim to the title Blazers originates. The story goes that soon after landing and before the Battery was placed into its bombardment position, the Allied forces were held up by strong Russian opposition and were only supported by a light battery.

A General was heard to say "Wait until I bring up my Blazers, that will shift them", whereupon the Blazers came into action with great dash and in spite of their heavy guns fired to such good effect that the opposition was soon cleared allowing the attack to continue

On 24th May 1855 a force of 15,000 British, French and Turkish troops set sail under the command of General Sir George Brown to capture Kertch, a strategic port that guarded the entrance to the Sea of Azof. The Artillery consisted of W Field Battery and a detachment of two guns from 1st Battery. Resistance was light and the Russians retreated leaving the Sea of Azof once again open for allied shipping. The Battery remained at the Cape of St Paul to defend the straits of Kertch.

Did Felix get shipped out to join the Battalion or did his Mother write that letter. We cannot find any trace of him, but would love to know what happened next.

Members story by John Parsons.



The sinking of the S.S. Nerissa

Captain Gilbert Ratcliffe Watson was born
May 4, 1882 Kendal Westmorland UK



1891 British Census it shows that his father was Charles Watson, a printer-compositor, his mother was Mary Agnes Watson, and that he had 2 brothers, Charles and Robert, and 4 sisters, Ada, Mary, Sarah and Margaret. Gilbert was the second youngest child.

First record we have of Gilbert signing up on a ship was on Dec. 14, 1898. He signed up on the ship Drumlaurig as a boy, age 16. He signed off on April 4, 1900. The following are his next three ships: Drumblair; barge; signed on: 15/6/00; signed off: 28/6/01. Drumblair; barge; signed on: 31/8/01; signed off: 28/3/03. Kinfauns; barge; signed on: 15/6/03; signed off: 20/12/04.

On March 23, 1905 Gilbert received his Certificate of Competency as an Ordinary Second Mate. His personal description shows that he was 6 ft. tall, fresh complexion, and had brown hair and blue eyes. On February 22, 1913 Gilbert received his Certificate of Competency as a First Mate of a Foreign-Going Ship. On October 18, 1920 Gilbert received his Certificate of Competency as a Master of a Foreign-Going Ship.

S.S. Nerissa; master; 17/7/40 to 21/3/41 (torpedoed and sunk April 30 1941).

On the night of 30th April 1941 Captain G.R. Watson's ship was crossing the Atlantic nearing England when it was Torpedoed by U552 The Glasgow-built, Furness Withy-owned 5,583-ton Nerissa was 15 years old in 1941 and she'd been in and out of Halifax and St. John's, Nfld., regularly in the coastal travel business. In July 1940, with Britain reeling and alone in frontline defiance of Nazi Germany, she was drafted into war service. Her new captain, big, handsome Gilbert Watson, 58, had just survived his fourth sinking in two wars and in the next eight months his Nerissa had so many narrow escapes in convoy and in battered Liverpool harbor that the Associated Press would report that her crew saw her as a "charmed ship." In late 1939 Nerissa was modified as an auxiliary transport with accommodation for 250 men and was fitted with a 4 inch gun and a Bofors gun, with gun crews drawn from the Maritime Regiment of the Royal Artillery. Due to her capability to steam at a higher speed than the usual 9 kn (17 km/h; 10 mph) of escorted convoys, Nerissa sailed alone, since she was considered capable of outrunning enemy submarines. On 7 September 1940, she left Liverpool bound for Halifax, with 34 evacuated children under the Children's Overseas Reception Board, their final destination was British Columbia.

By April 1941 Nerissa had made 39 wartime crossings of the North Atlantic. Her 40th crossing began on 21 April 1941 at Halifax, Nova Scotia. Carrying 145 Canadian servicemen along with RAF and Royal Norwegian Air Force personnel, Northern Electric technicians, members of the press, and a number of civilians she sailed as part of a Britain bound convoy. At 10:15 she separated from the convoy to make her crossing alone, and arrived at St. John's, Newfoundland on 23 April, where her captain received his Admiralty orders and she sailed for Britain in the evening.

On 30 April she entered the area patrolled by the aircraft of the Royal Navy's Coastal Command. A Lockheed Hudson aircraft flew over her at nightfall and signalled that the area was clear of enemy submarines; at 11:30 she was struck amidships by a torpedo fired from U-552, 200 mi (320 km) from her destination of Liverpool. The lifeboats were manned and in the process of being lowered when an explosion split the ship in two, destroying the unlowered boats. U-552 had fired an additional two torpedoes to ensure the ship's sinking which had struck together three minutes after the first.

In the short time between the two impacts the ship's radio operator was able to send a Mayday signal along with the ship's position and at first light a Bristol Blenheim of Coastal Command circled the scene. The British destroyer HMS Veteran arrived an hour later at 07:50 and picked up the 84 survivors, who were transferred to the Flower class corvette HMS Kingcup and landed at Derry.

| NAVAL MESSAGE. | | | |
|---------------------|----------|--------------|---------------------|
| To | | From | |
| Priority | | Class | |
| Instructions | | Remarks | |
| IMMEDIATE | | FROM | |
| LIVERPOOL - NERISSA | | G.15 G. W.A. | |
| PROCEED | TO | ASSISTANCE | OF "NERISSA" |
| TORPEDOED | IN | POSITION | 56°08' NORTH 10°27' |
| WENT | AT | 2230 | 30TH APRIL 1941 |
| WHILE | AIRCRAFT | IS | BEING SENT |
| TO | ASSIST | ALSO | ADDRESS VETERAN |
| | | = 2357/30 | |

Will

WATSON, Gilbert Ratcliffe
of 31 Wildman Street, Kendal. Died 30 April 1941 on War Service.
Administration Carlisle. 1st Nov. to Sarella Watson, widow.
Effects £668.19s.

Gilbert Ratcliffe Watson was issued the following Medals and Ribbons:

Mercantile Marine Ribbon issued 24/3/20.

British Medal Ribbon issued 24/3/20.

Mercantile Marine Medal issued 9/4/23.

British Medal issued 9/4/23.

Gilbert in his life time had been assigned to abt 30 ships before being assigned to SS Nerissa.

A quote from Jack Cockrell's article in the Times Colonist August 8, 2001 especially moving.

We owe so much to these men of the Merchant Navy.

"As they watched from the water, the Nerissa's skipper, Capt. Gilbert Watson, a First World War vet who'd been 'fished' - sunk - several times before, stood on the bow. He fired three flares into the air and yelled 'Good luck boys' as he went down with his ship."

Members story: Pat Hughes.



Biographical Database of Australia (BDA)



BDA is a unique resource
for historians and genealogists.

- BDA is a new research tool for historians and genealogists comprising transcripts and indexes of many original records and published biographies of deceased individuals who arrived in or were born in Australia, starting from the earliest times.

An Australian site which is a not for profit site but you still have to pay
It looks a very good site, so check it out.

CHRISTMAS RAFFLE TICKETS

It is that time of year again when we ask for your support.
We enclose 5 tickets at \$2 each
Please purchase or sell to family & friends.
This all helps in the running costs of the group.
We really appreciate your help

**Do you know we have a great facility that is all ready for you to do research
Trove.**

Trove is a discovery experience focused on Australia and Australians.
A researcher searching for information on Nellie Melba will be presented with a
range of results including biographies, pictures, music, newspapers, books etc.
Come along and see what you can find.



Military Records

We have access to Ancestry who have an assortment of Military records
Such has Draft, Enlistment and Service, Casualties, Soldier, Veteran & Prisoner Rolls & Lists
Pension Records, Histories, Awards & Decorations of Honour, News, Disciplinary Actions, Photos
Come and do the research
No need to book

What's new in Genealogy

October 2013

Scotland – On Monday 28 October 2013, the website *ScotlandsPeople* will be releasing the Scottish Property Valuation Rolls for 1920. These rolls include the names and addresses of more than 2.6 million people across Scotland. They list the owners, tenants and occupiers of all types of property. Each record is searchable by name and address. These records will be very useful for anyone wanting to trace their ancestors beyond the 1911 census. ScotlandsPeople already has the 1895, 1905 and 1915 Property Valuation Rolls online. Access is by subscription. [[Scotland 1920 Property Valuation Rolls](#)]

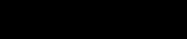
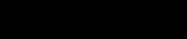
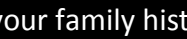
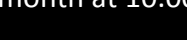
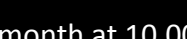
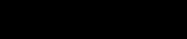
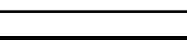
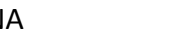
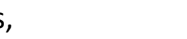
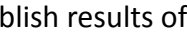
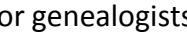
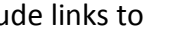
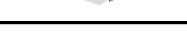
<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/>



UK – FamilySearch.org has added some 1.1 million indexed records to its collection of Norfolk parish records. With this latest addition, FamilySearch.org has managed to transcribe about 76% of the available parish records from the Norfolk Record Office.

These records of baptisms, marriages and deaths span the years from 1685 to 1941. Also included are some marriage banns.

Note: some of the Norfolk parish records include parishes in neighbouring regions of Suffolk, Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire. Access is free, although as of this writing, FamilySearch.org had not yet provided a landing page for searching this collection.



World – FamilySearch.org
This week signed agreements with MyHeritage.com and FindMyPast.com to make records from FamilySearch.org available on these websites. FindMyPast.com will initially host 13 million records from FamilySearch.org with more records to follow. No specific number was given by MyHeritage.com, but according to the press release, more than 2 billion records from FamilySearch.org will be searchable from their website. The big difference is they are not free sites

The main UKBMD website has been updated to include links to websites that offer information about DNA testing for genealogists. Also on this same page are links to websites that publish results of their own DNA based research for specific surnames, or geographical regions.

The new page can be accessed by clicking on the DNA Research button in the menu on the left of the site.

Main page: <http://www.ukbmd.org.uk/>

DNA research page: http://www.ukbmd.org.uk/dna_research

We have guest speakers every second Thursday of the month at 10.00am
Why don't you join us for morning tea and chat about your family history.

All Welcome