

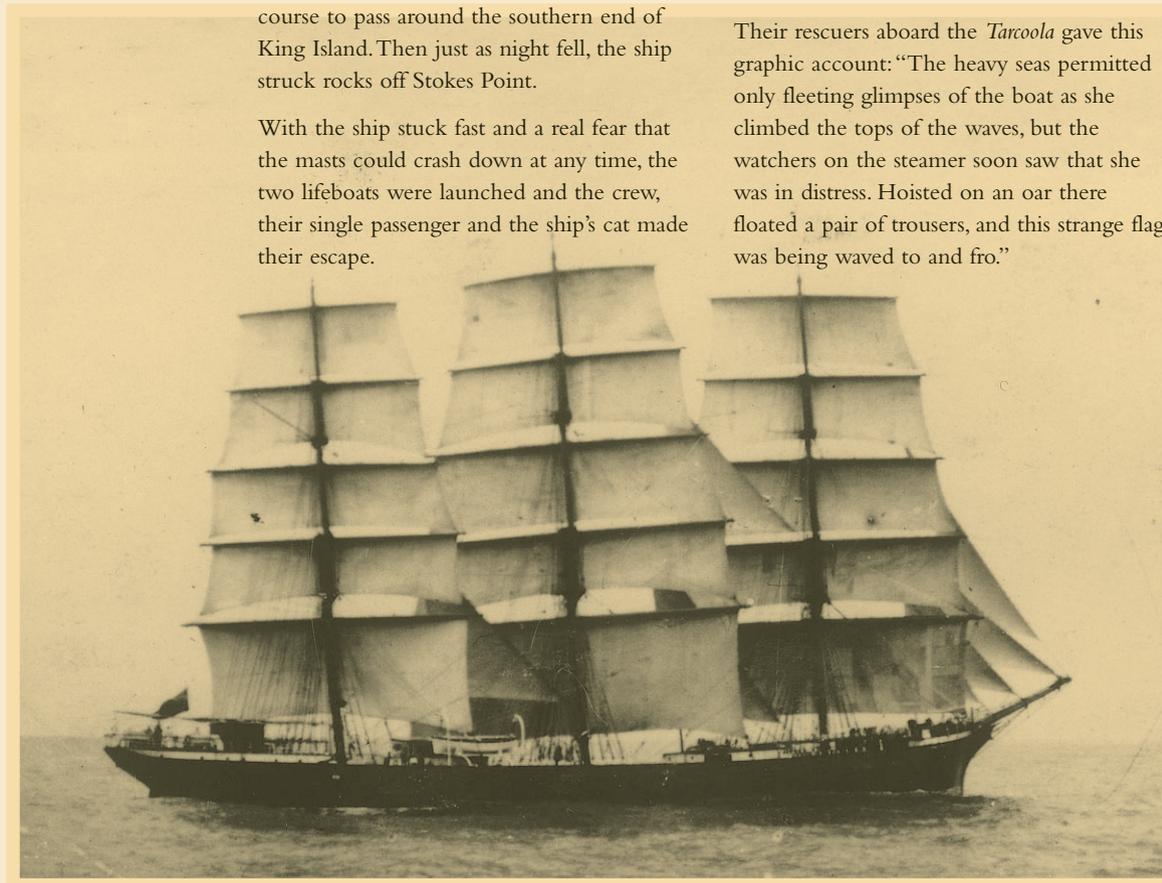
Carnarvon Bay 1910

“... They might have had a very hard time getting ashore at King Island.”

JOHN SMALLEY *Second mate aboard the Carnarvon Bay*

A fine steel clipper with the wind in her sails, the *Carnarvon Bay* entered western Bass Strait on 15 September 1910, much further south than planned. Captain Griffiths altered course to pass around the southern end of King Island. Then just as night fell, the ship struck rocks off Stokes Point.

With the ship stuck fast and a real fear that the masts could crash down at any time, the two lifeboats were launched and the crew, their single passenger and the ship's cat made their escape.



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One boat set sail for Launceston, but unable to find a safe landing spot, they were forced to alter course for Victoria. Eventually they were picked up in a state of exhaustion.

Their rescuers aboard the *Taroola* gave this graphic account: “The heavy seas permitted only fleeting glimpses of the boat as she climbed the tops of the waves, but the watchers on the steamer soon saw that she was in distress. Hoisted on an oar there floated a pair of trousers, and this strange flag was being waved to and fro.”

A search was immediately launched for the other lifeboat. Twenty-year-old second mate John Smalley expressed fears for the safety of its crew: “The mate is a fine sailor ... But he is not a young man. He is about 50 years of age, and not as well able to stand the exposure and the hardships of an open boat as I am. They might have had a very hard time getting ashore at King Island.”

In fact the opposite was the case. The mate, Chief Officer Newnham, had made a decision to strike out for the closest landfall, visible from the wreck. With some hard rowing they came ashore on King Island within a few hours, and Newnham's experience allowed them to make an easy landing. In the words of apprentice Errol Monk, “We were carried so far up the beach that the receding wave allowed us to step out of the boat literally dryfooted.”

No lives were lost (although we don't know the fate of the ship's cat). But the 3,000 ton cargo had disappeared forever, and even today, the site of the wreck has not been conclusively determined.

Some of the shipwrecked crew on their way to Melbourne, photographed at Burnie for the *Weekly Courier*, 29 September 1910.

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Facts and figures

Name	<i>Carnarvon Bay</i>	Date	15 Sep 1910	Location	Stanley Rocks
Rig	Ship	Construction	Iron	Tonnage	1932
Date built	1894	Place built	Glasgow, Scotland	Place of register	Liverpool, UK
Length	265.4'	Breadth	40.1'	Depth	22.9'
Owner	Roberts, Owen			Master	W. Griffiths
Departure	Liverpool, UK	Destination	Sydney, NSW	Cargo	General
Crew	31	Passengers	1	Casualties	0

A day in the life of an apprentice

Errol Monk had signed on as ship's boy on the *Carnarvon Bay's* previous voyage, from Port Adelaide to Dublin with a cargo of wheat. The excitement of life at sea made up for his low pay: one shilling a week.

The return voyage, with Errol now serving as one of seven apprentice seamen, had been long and difficult. Finally land was sighted—a storm-beaten coastline on the port bow”.

As the only Australian on board, he was invited by the captain to come and have a first look at his native land.

It turned out to be the treacherous coast of King Island.

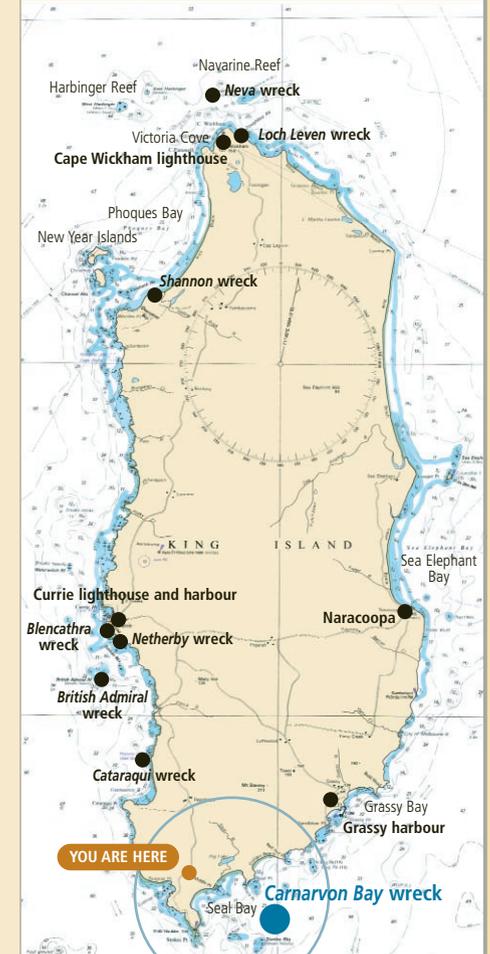
Reminiscing some eighty years later, Errol recalled the sea chest he took with him aboard the *Carnarvon Bay*, “zinc-lined and so heavy

that it was never removed from the half deck where it served as a seat and table and is still there, I imagine, serving Davy Jones”.

Three cheers for the islanders

The fifteen castaways, still in their oilskins and seaboots, set off across the island to find help. They were taken in by farming families, fed and made comfortable, and taken to Currie by bullock dray. Grateful for the generosity shown to them, the departing crew gave “three rousing cheers” in thanks before setting off aboard the steamer to Melbourne.

Young David Hardy, the ship's only passenger, stayed behind. He had set off from England with King Island as his final destination. Author Richard Hooper comments that “...of the many whose passage from England had been rudely terminated at King Island, Hardy was probably the only one who had actually been seeking to visit the island”.



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