

Netherby 1866

“ Send help and succour to 500 shipwrecked people. ”

OWEN OWENS Master of the ship *Netherby*



The ship's bell, inscribed 'Netherby 1858', survived the shipwreck.



Above: The wreck of the *Netherby* as it appeared in the *Illustrated Australian News* on 27 August 1866. —STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA

The startled lighthouse keepers at Cape Wickham were presented with this instruction by the second mate of the *Netherby*, Mr Parry, who had trekked across King Island in a desperate bid for help.

In contrast to many of King Island's shipwrecks, this one had a happy ending for everyone. No lives were lost when the ship ran aground. Then the determination and ingenuity of the captain and crew got all the passengers safely to shore through heavy surf.

Once on dry land (well, to be truthful it was pouring rain), the 500 castaways set about creating

what shelter they could. No canvas and precious little food had escaped the wreck, so there was a very real danger of death through starvation and exposure in mid-winter gales. They held on for eight days until help arrived, first from Cape Wickham, and then from Melbourne.

Not one person was lost—in fact numbers increased when a baby girl was born to Mr and Mrs Cubbin.

The passengers were immigrants destined for Queensland. However many chose to stay in Victoria, founding a settlement that still bears the name of Netherby.

Below: Detail from the *Netherby's* survey documents.

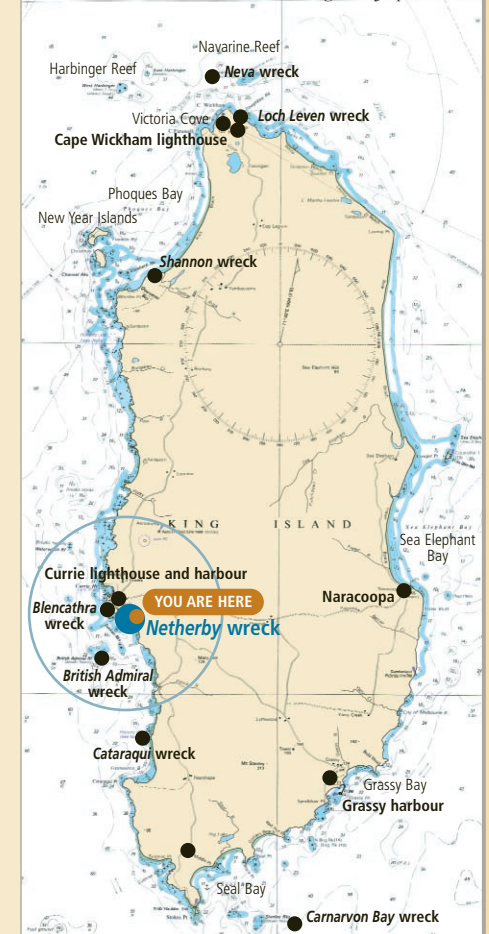
Guess who's coming to dinner

How would YOU cope with an extra 116 hungry mouths to feed? The lighthouse keepers' wives rallied round when assistant keeper William Hickmott led a large contingent of the *Netherby* castaways up to Cape Wickham.

The passengers had already had a very hungry voyage: the Black Ball Line which owned the ship skimped on catering. Nearly all the remaining food was lost in the shipwreck, so they had to endure an exhausting two day march to the lighthouse on very little rations.

Little wonder then that "the 116 men at the lighthouse reported that they had been treated extremely well, and all speak of the great kindness afforded by Mr Spong and his assistants".

—Melbourne Argus 28 July 1866



No. 6553 Survey held at Sunderland Date 11th March 1858
 on the ship "Netherby" Master Bradshaw
 Tonnage Old 904 Built at Sunderland When built 1858 Launched 11th Jan'y 1858
 By whom built P. Thompson Owners E. Graham
 Port belonging to Newcastle Balubta

Facts and figures

Name	<i>Netherby</i>	Date	14 July 1866	Location	Netherby Point
Rig	Ship	Construction	Timber	Tonnage	994
Date built	1858	Place built	Sunderland, UK	Place of register	Liverpool, UK
Length	176'	Breadth	33'	Depth	22'
Owner	Baines & Co			Master	O. Owens
Departure	London, UK	Destination	Brisbane, Qld	Cargo	Passengers
Crew	43	Passengers	452	Casualties	0

Hero of the day

The second mate of the *Netherby*, Mr Parry, emerged as a hero. His quick actions headed off a possible disaster. As soon as the passengers were safely landed, Captain Owens sent him to raise the alarm at Cape Wickham lighthouse. The 35 mile trek took his small party five days.

Realising that time was of the essence, he then decided to seek immediate help from

Melbourne, borrowing the keeper's whaleboat, just 23 feet (7 m) long. "The chance of making the run safely appeared so faint that one of the party refused to embark, and Mr Parry proceeded to sea with only the little middy and two others, none of them having had experience in manning boats." —*Maryborough Chronicle*

After a rough voyage, they landed near Barwon Heads. The first person they

encountered was an elderly shepherd, who ran away, terrified that they were bushrangers. Eventually Mr Parry was able to borrow a horse and ride to Geelong, from where he alerted the Victorian authorities by telegraph.

He returned to King Island with the rescue vessels, piloting them in and assisting with the evacuation of the castaways.

