

WRECK OF THE KETCH G.V.H. INQUEST ON THE BODIES.

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**WRECK OF THE KETCH G.V.H.  
INQUEST ON THE BODIES.  
(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)**

An enquiry was commenced Wednesday, October 16, at the school-room, Cape Barren Island, before Mr. W. Hay Ferguson, coroner, and a jury of seven - Thomas Barrett, William Holt, John Maynard, jun., Edward Stephens, Harold Walker, Edward Brown, and George Maynard. Mr. Edward Stephens was elected foreman. After viewing the bodies and scene of wreck, the following evidence was taken: Philip Thomas, jun., a half caste, sworn, stated - On Sunday evening, October 13, at about five o'clock, I saw the ketch G.V.H.; the wind being north-west, blowing hard; she was coming towards Cape Barren Island, about a quarter of a mile from shore; I came home and did not see her again; there were rocks ahead of her when I saw her; she was about a quarter of a mile outside the Whale Rock. To the foreman - I thought she would be wrecked; the reason I left was I had staked my foot and wanted to get home. To the coroner-I staked my foot and did not think it was my duty to wait and see if the G.V.H. was wrecked; she had sufficient room to put about when I saw her, and clear everything. Clarence Brown, a half-caste, sworn, stated - In company with Philip Thomas, jun., I was on the hill and saw the G.V.H.; she appeared to be trying to clear the rocks on the one board; I could form no opinion as to whether she was in danger or not; if the captain had tried he could have brought her round, and run back to Preservation Island; there was too much sea for her to stay; it was not sundown; the rock could be plainly seen. To the foreman-I thought she was in danger; there was room to wear her when first seen.

To the coroner- I thought she would have cleared the west end, that is the reason I did not wait longer; on Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> inst., when pulling out to the steamer *Charlotte Fenwick* I picked up the figure-head belonging to the G.V.H.; it was about nine o'clock in the morning; this was the first intimation I had of the G.V.H. being wrecked; it was Claud Smith told me the figurehead was off the G.V.H.; I was present when the body of Oscar (other name unknown) was found; it was found on the stones at high-water mark near Bung's Point; the figurehead was at the Flat Rock, Sandford Bay ; I have no doubt the body found was a deck hand on the G.V.H.; the body was a lot knocked about by the rocks; I did not recognise the body till John Mansell told me it was Oscar, but am certain now I have seen him on three or four occasions previously; he was staying on Cape Barren about 10 months ago. John Mansell, half-caste, sworn, stated - I was present when the body of James Milligan, master of the ketch G.V.H., was first observed ; I did not see the face, but could swear to the clothes and head, as the head was very bald.

To the foreman - I knew Milligan for some time, and believed him to be master of the G.V.H.; when found the body was close to Bung's Point; this was about 10.30 Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> inst. ; there was a lot of wreckage along the shore; the hull of G.V.H. and part gear were washed ashore; I saw no other bodies.

Percy Napper, police constable, Straits Islands, sworn, stated- I have seen the five bodies picked up on Cape Barren; I recognize James Milligan, Oscar, a seaman on the G.V.H., and Mr. Newitt, a passenger; the first I heard or knew about a wreck was when the figurehead was picked up in the passage; I heard the previous evening (Sunday, October 18) a ketch had been seen off the west end of a Cape Barren, supposed to be the G.V.H.; I proceeded along the beach to try to find the wreck in company with several others; we first saw some water casks, then portions of the top sides of the ketch G.V.H., clothing, and general cargo; while looking amongst the wreckage I heard a "cooe," and proceeded to the place, where I found the body of Oscar; while looking at Oscar's body I heard another call, and going there found Milligan's body had been discovered; Edward Mansell then took me to where another body had been found, that of a female about 15 years of age; I got the bodies on the bank and continued searching, finding a quantity of clothes which led me to believe there were others on board; on the following day Henry Brown told me he had found the body of Mr. Newitt, which I also recognised; he then informed me he had found a female body, which I knew to be Mrs. Ferguson; I got the bodies carted from the scene of the wreck to the township to await an inquest.

At this stage the enquiry was adjourned till the following morning at 10 o'clock.

On Thursday morning at 10 o'clock the following evidence was taken:- Thomas Smith, a half-caste, sworn, stated - I was on board the cutter *Thorne*; we were in company with the *G.V.H.* at George Town and Waterhouse Island on Sunday, the 13<sup>th</sup>; there were three passengers - two females and one male - on board besides the master and deck hand; I have no doubt but the passengers found on Cape Barren are those that were on board the *G.V.H.*

To a juror - None of the passengers to my knowledge requested the captain to start from Waterhouse; the vessel was not deeply loaded; I am not aware the skipper had defective sight; the wind was to the west when I last saw the *G.V.H.*, shortly afterwards altering to N.W.; she was then making straight for the west end of Cape Barren.

To the coroner-Before leaving Water house the skipper of the *G.V.H.* expressed his intention of reaching Kangaroo Island that night, but failing to get there tried to reach Cape Barren.

Edward Mansell, half-caste, sworn - I found the body of a female on the beach Monday, October 14; I should say her age was about 18.

To a juror-I found the body on Bung's Point, amongst the rocks, about half .tide out ; I called the constable and pointed the body out to him; I was not there when the body was removed; my opinion is the body came from the ketch *G.V.H*; there were two paddles lying close to the body it was about 10 o'clock in the morning; I was one of the first to visit the scene of the wreck with Clarence Brown, John Mansell, and James Mansell; the constable arrived about 20 minutes later.

Henry Brown, half-caste, sworn, stated - On Tuesday morning about eight o'clock I found the body of a female on Bung's Point, close to where the *G.V.H.* was wrecked ; I informed the constable, who took charge of the body. To the foreman-I think all the bodies I saw on the beach came from the *G.V.H.*

Richard Brown, half-caste, sworn, stated - On Tuesday morning, in company with my brother, I found the body of a man, but did not know him; it was about nine o'clock; I found the body in Bung's boat harbour; I informed the constable, who took charge of it; it was close to where the *G.V.H.*, was wrecked, and where portions of her were washed ashore.

John H. Fanning, sworn, stated - I viewed the bodies found on the beach, and can recognise those of Mrs. W. Hay Ferguson, Miss Pauline Garrett, and Mr. Adam Newitt.

This closed the evidence, and after a short deliberation the jury returned the following verdict:-" We find that Elizabeth Ferguson, Pauline Garrett, Adam Newitt, James Milligan, and Oscar (other name unknown) met with their deaths through being on board the *G.V.H.* when she was wrecked on Bung's Point, Cape Barren Island, on the evening of Sunday, October 13, 1895; and we further are strongly of opinion that a Marine Board enquiry should be instituted in the interests of public safety for the future."