

Historical Events February 1890 At Hr. Grace

HR. GRACE—"The heavy rain of Wednesday, which at times was heavier than any experience, here for years, completed the work left undone in the afternoon by the Vanguard.

On Thursday several sheets of ice broke, and were driven by the gale of wind, then blowing right out of the Bay.

At 12 o'clock, the ice was loose to Bear's Cove Point. In the afternoon, the Vanguard went out to the clear water and returned, being afterwards engaged in cutting the ice inside the beach. Yesterday morning (February 7.) she succeeded in cutting out the Fruit Bowl from the upper room and brought her clear. She left for the West Indies for which place she had received a fish cargo some weeks ago. The Lady Glover was next liberated and she shortly after, left for St. Johns in charge of Capt. Curtis. For the rest of the day the Vanguard was engaged in cutting up the ice.

Capt. Hawkins, about the harbour, in charge of Last night, she opened the way for the Brig. Golden Fleece and the negroes cut through the ice. The channel made by her is again solidly frozen, the broken ice having been cemented together by the severe frost last night (February 7th.)

Oct 4, 1956

HARBOUR GRACE NEWS—Sea Yarns

SINKING OF THE HILDA R. BY SUBMARINE, 1917

HR. GRACE—Visit the North Eastern Fish Plant at Harbour Grace and at a sturdy bulk gate you will meet a sturdy man and ten—Wahman John Sheehan.

If you stop to talk with him, he can tell some interesting stories of the days when he went to sea, but none can be more thrilling than that of the time when he was on the schooner Hilda R. when she was sunk by a submarine. His story was printed after he returned home from that memorable voyage, but it will bear re-telling and re-reading, so here it is:

The good ship Hilda R., owned by McRae & Sons, Captain William Yetman, master, left Harbour Grace with a cargo of No. 1 cod fish in the fall of 1917, bound for Gibraltar for orders. The crew comprised two Newfoundlanders, Capt. Yetman and John Sheehan (seaman-steward), Wm. Swaney, Scotland, mate; Patrick Milton, Dublin, mate; Robert Sheppard, Scotland, and C. Richard, France, seaman.

On the morning of October 20, we sailed out the bay from McRae's premises, but the wind was light and we had only reached Cape St. Francis when the wind veered to the southeast, and we put back to Harbour Grace. There was a French barque at anchor in the stream and we lay alongside her.

The following morning the captain decided to get away, but some of the crew were ashore. After some little trouble and delay they were got on board and in the forenoon the Hilda R. again left port. She

some 35 miles away.

I had given the boys their breakfast, and had cleared away, and was getting my boilers and kettles ready for dinner when I saw two of the sailors going aloft, one to have a look around, and the other to reeve the halliards as the captain had directed them to do.

Nothing was seen and they returned to their duties on deck. I returned to the fore-castle and was peeling some turnips, sitting about four feet from the stove, and knew nothing until the stove went to pieces, the boilers turning over. The whole place filled with steam and water and smoke. There was a shell hole through both bows. I jumped to a bunk where two of the men were and told them we were in trouble and got them out on deck.

We looked around and saw a submarine some 8 miles to leeward and it was still firing on our ship. Very soon after, a direct hit carried away our foremast 5 feet above deck. The mate shouted to get out the boat, but the schooner

At that time, the "Isabella Ridley," which had been built at Pugwash, N.S., was to be launched, and Captain Thomey knew that her spars were only temporary ones. He utilized the "Nil Desperandum" spars for the Isabella Ridley. They were pitch pine and of the very best quality, which probably accounts for the fact that in all his long career, Capt. Thomey was never known to lose a spar, a yard or a man.

He had always a picked crew, and among these was one who served him long and faithfully as cook, and died in his service. He was Pierre Pichet, or Peter Pike, as he came to be called. Pierre was from St. Milo, France, and was believed to have run away from a French ship and settled in Harbour Grace. He married a servant of the Thomey's named "Betty," and they lived at the head of Stretton's Hill.

When Captain Thomey, in the Isabella Ridley sailed into this port, fully loaded, there was great rejoicing. All flags were flying and from the masthead fluttered the red and white checkered flag of Ridley and Sons. All knew that early the next morning, there would be plenty of flippers and

More Of Ships And Men

SHIPWRECK OF "ELLEN MUNN"

HARBOUR GRACE—Where this story came from, or by whom it was written, I cannot tell. It is a story from some old notes and as there is some local interest in it, there may also be interest for those who like to hear old stories of ships and their adventures.

In the year 1838, the Ellen Munn, 80 tons, belonging to John Mann and Company, Harbour Grace, left Kinsale on Christmas Day to do the Coast Trade where she was to be required during the winter.

We met some here for just before George Head and rubbed up into the South East Arm, where we met ice of two slight ridges, so lowered the sails and had food for her when the cry came from below that she was filling with water. The men worked until the plank had reached their waists. In the meantime, I and my young brother got to the pumps, a slight effort of distress was noticed, but the water kept gaining and she filled rapidly.

When the men came from the hold, they looked out the boats and the crew of 23 men, women and children had to jump for their lives with a pistol of food, and with only what clothes they had on their backs.

I was in the stern of the boat, and jumped back onto the deck of the vessel which was almost on a level with the water by this time, and on the horizon out the down-hauling rope to the stern, and ran round to the boat and flung the rope to the men, while I hung to the other with double tenacity and the boats were hauled to safety only one minute. I hung to the other with double tenacity and the boats were hauled to safety only one minute.

Well, there we were without food and shelter in the depth of the forest. Most of the people were very blind to us. They took us for their houses or for, but they were very kind to us. They shared their food with us, they built a house and, though by no means so live in luxury, we made out until spring. I must here give a word of praise to the Hancock family who lived at the deck. Chief among them was "Big Phil" who afterwards settled down in the West Indies.

He was a very good man, and he was very kind to us. He was a very good man, and he was very kind to us. He was a very good man, and he was very kind to us.

Of Ships And Men

HARBOUR GRACE—The sinking of the Ellen Munn as told by one of the crew.

After seeing the distress signal from the Ellen Munn, Big Phil and his men who were that winter building a boat in James Cove came to our assistance.

Big Phil was a typical christian man who had the words of Scripture almost by heart, and his memorable morning words to me that I shall never forget. "Oh Jimmie Flynn, my poor man, how grieved I am to see you in this terrible plight—your vessel going to the bottom with all your winter supplies, besides your bed and bedding and all your household utensils, your wife and children and—bore together on this winter's day, while waiting to call and no shelter. Here under the broad canopy of Heaven, let me remind you of the words of our Divine Redeemer in the Holy Scriptures 'the foxes have holes, but the Son of Man hath no place to lay his head.'

Let us think of the trials and tribulations of our Blessed Saviour for our salvation and let us offer up to the Throne of the Most High, and thank Him with all our hearts for saving you and your family from watery graves. So come with me and by God's Holy Will we will soon have you in shelter. And as long as there is a crust of bread between Man Point and George Head, you and your family will not starve, for we will share the last morsel with you, and let us think of the words of our Divine Redeemer when he said 'The cup of cold water given in My Name' and so He encouraged us with further passages from Scripture. Two other men who were especially good to us at that time were Dick Hancock who was

sometimes called Franklin. I must tell you how he came by the latter name, he was returning from the Labrador when his schooner was wrecked at Brashoon on the French Shore. He went ashore and into the woods hunting curlew and he traversed the country for miles. A thick fog settled over the land and he hurried to the seashore as he thought, but he was going in all the time, and when the shadows of night were falling fast, he sped on and on not knowing where he was going. He lay down near a white and next morning a drift of ice again, still going further inland. When he did not reach the schooner at night, they sent out search parties with guns and scoured the barrens but saw no heard an trace of him, he in the meantime was out of the reach of sound of guns.

Next day, and for several days, the crew scoured the country, but still no sign of the missing man. At last they gave up all hope and returned to King's Cove to tell the sorrowful news of the mysterious disappearance of their comrade. His poor wife (her maiden name was Martha Saunders) became almost frantic with grief and fitted out a schooner from her own private money left to her by her father. They not only put away heavy storms and were forced to return. This voyage was likened to the expedition that Lady Franklin fitted out in England in 1837 to go to the rescue of her husband Sir John Franklin who sought to discover a north-west passage twelve years before. Note: The story ends here but it seems that Dick Hancock was rescued and found his way back for he is said to have met the namesake Franklin from his experience as told in this article.

Historical Records Of Hr. Grace

HARBOUR GRACE—In 1832, Brigus was one of the principal ports in this country both for exports as well as for imports, and could well hold its own with Carbonara and Harbour Grace.

The old veteran, Capt. William Minden, Master and owner of the "Four Brothers" had the first hundred ton vessel built to prosecute the sealfishery and was higher than that year as usual.

The following will give some idea of the foreign trade carried on at Brigus. Jan. 20th, 1832, The Brig "Tantch" Capt. Percy cleared for Alicante, Spain with 2,400 stls. fish.

Jan. 21st, The Brig "Guyborough" Capt. Bennett arrived from Oporo, Portugal with salt and wine.

Jan. 28, The Brig "Blandford" Capt. Coleman cleared for Barbadoes with codfish, mackerel and cod sounds.

Feb. 15, The Barque "John" Capt. Stephens cleared for Barbadoes with a similar cargo.

April, The Brig "Janie" Capt. Percy entered with salt and wine. Hayman entered with large cargo from Liverpool England, consisting of flour, pork, dry goods including pipes and ploughs.

April, The Brig "Anastatia" Capt. Whiteway arrived from Liverpool with a similar cargo.

In June, three vessels all cleared with seal oil and skins mostly for Liverpool. The Brig "Liberty" Capt. Adey, arrived direct from Hamburg with hard bread, butter, peas, leather, hams and brick.

It is interesting to look back at these old clearances and manifests of cargoes to see the changes that have come about since then.

It is many years since flour and pork were imported from England. Hamburg bread was a very important article of food.

It is remarked that it is only necessary to look at some of the older buildings to recognize the quality of the Hamburg brick of which they were built. It was an article to stand for generations as indeed it has in many cases. Over 200 years ago, the waters of Conception and Trinity Bays teemed with mackerel. For many years these fish were little heard of. As far back as 1808 an old record tells that cod sounds were shipped to Liverpool, England by almost every vessel.

Oct 25, 1956

Of Ships And Men

A STORY OF A GREAT SEALING CAPTAIN, CAPT. HENRY THOMEY

HARBOUR GRACE—It seems a pity that the stories which are wrapped around the history of the town of Harbour Grace should be forgotten, especially when they concern the adventure and daring of our great sealing captains of over a century ago. Many of their descendants are among our citizens today, and for them, as well as for those who enjoy reading the bits of history which we write from time to time, this article is written. It tells of one of the most successful sealing captains of his time—Captain Henry Thomey.

When only eighteen years of age, Captain Thomey took charge of his father's vessel, the LEMON, then the ORANGE, next the JOHN and then the SCOTCH LASS, and in each case he brought in full loads of seals every year.

It was, though, in the Isabella Ridley that he achieved his greatest success. In the middle eighteenth century the barque "Nil Desperandum" was lost at Masquito (now Bristol's Hope) and Captain Thomey, with an eye to business took some men and went there to see what he could purchase from the wreck. He was successful in getting the spars and yards of the ship.

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carcasses for the people, and the poor would not be forgotten either.

The Isabella Ridley was considered the most successful ship that ever sailed out of Newfoundland. She was lost about 1884 at Feather Point on the Southside of Harbour Grace. "Thomey's" was a home of hospitality. There was always a ready chair for the traveller or for the poor, and many a story had been handed down to the kindly welcome extended to the visitor in the "good old times" when "Thomey" was a name known throughout the length and breadth of Conception Bay.

THE DAILY NEWS, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1956

THE LOSS OF THE "ERIC" IN 1878

HR. GRACE—In the year 1878, the Brigantine Eric which had been built for the Bartlett at Brigus by Nicholas Hickey was lost. This ship had been bought by John Rorke of Carbonara for the foreign trade, and was commanded by Capt. Edward Rorke, later by Capt. William Tholbert.

In the winter of 1878, the owner of the Eric decided to send her to the sealfishery. Accordingly, she was made ready, and Skipper George Perry was given charge of her and of the fifty or sixty men, with Capt. Tholbert as navigator.

The Thomas Ridley, Capt. Taylor, and the Eric sailed out of Carbonara about March 21st, which was the usual time of sailing in those days.

There was intense frost with the wind blowing from N.W. strong off the north shore of Conception Bay. The skippers could choose their own course and soon the Ridley and the Eric were separated, and never met again. Skipper Perry lost two of his men—Joseph Summers and Charles Tucker—early in March. They fell through the ice and were drowned.

to reach the ship. They came to the edge of the ice, but could get no further, and spent the whole of the night huddled together for warmth. The wind dropped at dawn, and a boat from the vessel came to pick them up. They were all alive, but some were so badly frostbitten and crippled that the Eric had to abandon the voyage and bore up for home.

The Eric was a long distance from the land, but after getting clear of the ice they sighted a steam boat and Captain Perry corrected his course from what the steam boat captain told him, and changed his course for Catalina. He was overtaken by the storm. The wind came from the E.N.E. and increased to a storm, but the captain continued on his way. He was a fearless man, and was determined to sight the land and reach a harbour. The first thing they saw was a break on the quarter, and the master watch shouted; "hard down," and the wheel was put hard down. It proved to be the Flowers Rock. Not knowing where they were the vessel was brought to the wind on the starboard tack, but being so near the land she could not go round, the Bird Islands when they were discovered, and fearing she could not go round Flowers Point if they attempted to do so, they ran in by the lee-side of the island and both anchors were let go.

More About The Loss of The Eric in 1878

A MIRACULOUS ESCAPE HARBOUR GRACE—A vessel was brought to her anchors in a perilous place. There was almost perpendicular cliff all along the ice and only a few hundred yards away. There was not the slightest chance of a life being saved; the anchors and chains gave way. However in order to lessen the strain on her chains, both her masts were cut down to the deck, and she rode in that storm of wind and sea for two days. The men on the mainland out to the edge of the cliff, looking on the vessel, which was all they could do. It was impossible to use a boat in such wind and sea.

There was no ice to be seen anywhere until a stiff breeze from the sea. It came straight around Bird Island and the vessel became hemmed in by it. The string was about half a mile wide and it reached to a part of the mainland where it was impossible to make a landing. It became packed in tight and formed a bridge sufficient to go to the shore.

The crew immediately put some punts on the ice, they laid the crippled men in them and pulled them to shore. From there they reached Bird Island Cove, (now renamed Elliston). Shortly after the men had all been landed, the string of ice was destroyed by the sea, and the Eric, beaten to pieces, became a total loss. The Eric's crew returned home but had to leave the crippled men at Bird Island Cove. Some of them died and are buried there.