

1875.
—
VICTORIA.

KING ISLAND.

REPORT OF THE BOARD

APPOINTED TO ENQUIRE INTO THE NECESSITY FOR THE ERECTION OF A SECOND
LIGHTHOUSE ON KING ISLAND, AND AS TO THE BEST MEANS
OF AVOIDING SHIPWRECK THEREON ;

TOGETHER WITH

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE, ETC.



PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY'S COMMAND.

By Authority :

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R E P O R T .

The Honorable the Commissioner of Trade and Customs.

Melbourne, 22nd February 1875.

SIR,

In accordance with the directions contained in your letters of the 5th and 13th instant, we, the Board therein appointed "to take the evidence of shipmasters and others capable of giving an opinion as to the desirability of placing a second light upon the west coast of King Island, or as to what course should, with the best advantage, be taken to lessen the risk of wrecks thereon," have now the honor to submit the following Report :—

The Board met at the Department of Trade and Customs, Melbourne, on the 9th instant, and continued to sit until the completion of the evidence on the 15th idem, and carefully examined the shipmasters and others named in the letter dated the 5th of February, those named by the Chamber of Commerce and Victoria Shipowners' Association ; the Board also notified through the medium of the daily press that any other gentlemen desirous of giving evidence, or an expression of opinion on the subject, such would be thankfully received.

Thirty shipmasters, and others connected with the shipping interest, gave us the benefit of their opinion. The Board confined its enquiries solely to the erection of a light upon the west coast of King Island, and did not enter upon the question of lights upon the mainland or coast of Victoria.

The Board would beg to recommend and suggest the following :—

1. That the evidence, as will be seen from the annexed *précis*, is favorable to the erection of a light on the west coast of King Island as the best course that could now be adopted to lessen the risk of wreck, and that Point Netherby is the best position.

Captains Barnard and Stanley therefore recommend that an additional lighthouse be erected. To this Captain Payne dissents, for the reasons he has previously assigned.

If the light is erected, the Board would recommend that it should be a first-class dioptric light, showing *five flashes and eclipses alternately in a minute*. Such a light would differ entirely from those now exhibited on Capes Wickham, Otway, and Schanck.

A light on Cape Nelson, or some prominent cape on the Australian coast to the westward of Cape Otway, is urged, and is also of the utmost importance.

2. That the sailing directions for approaching Bass' Straits and King Island from the westward be at once revised, and submitted for publication in England, in which shipmasters, especially those of new iron ships, should be warned of the dangers of King Island, and that they should be specially warned to make the mainland of Australia to the westward of Cape Otway their land-fall under every circumstance of weather, it being free from outlying dangers, with regular soundings along the whole coast.

3. That in iron ships, especially new ones, the masters should be cautioned on the absolute necessity of taking every opportunity of verifying and correcting their compasses during the voyage, more particularly before and after hauling to the north towards the Australian coast.

4. That charts for the neighborhood of Bass' Straits should have a current arrow, with notes of its probable set and force after prevailing winds, with other warning notes to guide and caution shipmasters.

Captains Payne and Stanley's reports are already in the hands of the Government ; Captain Barnard's, as submitted to the Colonial Secretary for Tasmania, on his return from King Island, made prior to the sittings of this Board, is now attached, and which he sees no reason to alter after the opinion and evidence subsequently taken.

The Board, in conclusion, have the honor to submit a copy of the evidence taken at the enquiry, together with a complete list of wrecks, compiled to date from official records in the Harbor department.

We have the honor to be, Sir,

Your most obedient servants,

EDWD. K. BARNARD,

Captain, R.N., Master Warden, Marine Board, Hobart
Town, Tasmania.

CHARLES B. PAYNE,

Commander, R.N., Chief Harbor Master, Victoria.

H. J. STANLEY,

Staff-Commander, R.N., Admiralty Surveyor.

APPENDIX A.

KING ISLAND.

PRÉCIS of Answers given by Thirty Witnesses examined relative to an Additional Light upon King Island.

Name.	State the nature of your experience in navigating ships at western entrance of Bass' Straits.	Do you think a second light on the west coast of King Island is necessary?	If so, at what point or place would you suggest that it should be erected?	Might it not be mistaken in bad weather for light on Cape Wickham or Cape Otway?	Would you suggest any other means for preventing wrecks on King Island?
David Nicholas, late master of the wrecked barque <i>Blencathra</i>	None prior to the wreck of my ship	Yes ...	A second light anywhere would suit, but another at New Year's Island would be preferable	Not if the character is quite different from those at Capes Wickham and Otway	The only means that I could suggest is that ships should by every possible inducement be encouraged to make for the Australian bold coast and avoid the dangers of King Island.
James McMeckan, retired master mariner (of Messrs. McMeckan, Blackwood, and Co.)	Since boyhood up to 1853, in ships from 300 to 800 tons	No ...	The light should have been placed originally at New Year's Islands instead of Cape Wickham	Yes ...	I would recommend that the Admiralty should publish a chart from Cape Nelson to Tasmania, and a special notice to mariners published warning masters of the dangers of King Island.
Henry Faulkner Holt, commander of s.s. <i>Somersetshire</i>	Many years ...	For my own sake I should like to see a light on the west coast	Netherby Point ...	I think so, decidedly, in thick weather, when no description of light could be made out	More care in the correction of compasses in iron ships.
Austen Cooper, commander of <i>Carlisle Castle</i>	Have never sighted King Island	If good lights of different character were established it would no doubt be advantageous	About Netherby Point ...	Probably, and for this reason I should carefully avoid the Island in bad weather; but I might make the light in fine weather	If errors in compasses are not carefully looked after ships are bound to drop down on the Island.
Alexander McPetrie, commander <i>Ben Voirlich</i>	Sixteen years ...	Yes; if a very distinctive light	Southernmost point of New Year's Islands	I think not, if of sufficiently distinctive character	Strangers do not know the dangers, and should be made well aware by means of sailing directions specially prepared for their guidance.
Niel McEachran, commander of <i>James Hounsell</i> .	Many years. Three voyages from Europe through Bass' Straits	I think it might if a very distinctive light	Probably, if any, at Point Netherby	Yes ...	I think a light upon Cape Nelson would meet all requirements. Land-fall should be made on the Australian coast.
George Gilmore, retired master mariner	Considerable ...	Yes ...	Point Netherby ...	No ...	Note.—Evidence not orally taken.
Thomas Underwood, commander s.s. <i>Albion</i>	Many years, both north and south of King Island. Narrowly escaped shipwreck on Point Netherby in 1865	Yes ...	Point Netherby ...	... ..	Ships should make the land if possible at or west of Cape Otway; believes that error in compasses to a great extent accounts for the loss of ships on King Island. Note.—Evidence not orally taken.

PRÉCIS of Answers given by Thirty Witnesses examined relative to an Additional Light upon King Island—*continued.*

Name.	State the nature of your experience in navigating ships at western entrance of Bass' Straits.	Do you think a second light on the west coast of King Island is necessary?	If so, at what point or place would you suggest that it should be erected?	Might it not be mistaken in bad weather for light on Cape Wickham or Cape Otway?	Would you suggest any other means for preventing wrecks on King Island?
Archibald Currie, retired master mariner	None, excepting from a colonial point of view	Yes ...	On the west coast, probably Point Netherby	... ..	For masters who have wandered out of their reckoning or forced down upon King Island from unaccountable causes, or through northerly winds, currents, or calms, a second light would be sufficient.
W. Henry Saunders, commander s.s. <i>Tamar</i>	Colonial trade as master since 1843	Yes ...	If practicable at the south end of Stokes Point	No	Too many lights are liable to confound a mariner, therefore the light should be of an undoubtedly distinctive character.
W. Howard Smith, retired master mariner (steamship proprietor)	Six voyages from Europe	Yes ...	I could not suggest a particular site	To avoid this the light should be distinct from every other light on the coast	Vessels should be induced by every means to avoid King Island and make their land-fall on the Australian coast.
George Tickle, late commander of <i>Holmesdale</i>	Seventeen years as commander in the Australian line from Europe	No ...	... ..	Yes	There is something unmistakably wrong about Cape Wickham light. I would suggest that it should be improved. More attention should be given to the correction of compasses in iron ships.
James Elmslie, commander of <i>Sobraon</i>	Eight years as a commander in the Australian line from Europe	Yes ...	Not prepared to say, should think about Point Netherby	Probably, if not of a most distinctive character	I attribute the loss of many vessels partly to compass error, partly to current.
George Burrell, formerly commander of <i>Syria</i>	Ten voyages from London to Port Phillip, from 1839 to 1852	No: quite unnecessary	If a second light is considered necessary to guard against reckless navigation, New Year's Island would, I think, be the best site	Not, if on New Year's	Masters should be urged to make the land between Cape Bridgewater and Cape Otway, and they should be cautioned of the dangers of King Island, in which direction I have experienced a westerly current.
Arthur Devlin, retired master mariner (member of Steam and Pilot Board)	Considerable between 1836 and 1852	Yes ...	One on Fitzmaurice Point, and one on New Year's Island	For this reason I suggest two additional lights	Do away with the Wickham light, which I consider to be a mistaken site, and light up Cape Bridgewater to encourage shipmasters to make their land-fall on the Australian coast.
R. Duncan Espinasse, late commander of <i>Nimrod</i> , now examiner in navigation and magnetism	Considerable, eight voyages in command through Bass' Straits	Yes ...	Upon New Year's Islands ...	Yes, if erected to the southward on the west coast. The master of the <i>Blencathra</i> mistook the Wickham for the Otway, and he might equally have mistaken any light on the Netherby for it; but it would be next to impossible to mistake an additional light on the New Year's in conjunction with the Wickham light	Cautioning commanders to pay great attention to the errors of their compasses. Believes that the error caused by the direction of the magnetism of the earth being for a considerable time, when steering east towards Australia, at right angles to this course causes a large error when this is changed to the north of east.
John Kennedy Freyer, retired master mariner (member of Pilot Board)	Considerable, in command from 1842 to 1852, trading between Europe and Australia	No ...	... ..	Yes	Erect a light on Cape Nelson; and by every available means induce commanders to make the Australian coast as their land-fall. If a second light is to be erected on the island, another should be placed at Cape Wickham, as at the Lizard. Then there could be no mistake; but a light on Cape Nelson would be of great value.

Charles Grey, commander <i>Loch Maree</i>	Thirteen years in the Europe and Australian trade, in both wooden and iron ships	No	...	...	...	...	...	Yes, and lead them into great danger	If commanders knew more of the polarization of the needle, it would be a good thing, and lessen the danger of shipwreck on King Island. A light erected on Cape Nelson or Bridgewater would lessen the dangers of navigation, and induce masters to make the Australian coast more boldly.
Robert Fullarton, harbor-master, Melbourne, formerly master of s.s. <i>Pharos</i>	Considerable, in the neighborhood of the west coast of King's Island	Yes	...	...	Fitzmaurice Point or Cata- raque Point			It might be mistaken, unless of a very distinctive character	Sailing directions should be revised, and masters warned that the light is a <i>warning</i> light, and the coast dangerous. Considers a light on Cape Nelson would be indispensable.
Colin Brown, retired shipmaster	Principally between Europe and Tasmania, but not since 1857; made ten voyages from Europe	Yes	...	...	Point Netherby or thereabouts			It might be mistaken ...	I think that there should be a light on Cape Nelson, and masters cautioned to make the Australian coast as their land-fall.
Daniel McCallum, retired master mariner, examiner in seamanship	Three voyages, between 1851 and 1854	Yes	...	...	In the locality of Point Netherby			No. Of course it would have to be a distinctive light	I think another light on Point Netherby would meet all present requirements; there appears to me no necessity for another on the Australian coast at Cape Nelson, as the soundings appear by the chart to be pretty regular.
John Thompson, commander s.s. <i>Otway</i>	Not much from Europe	One would be of advantage if there could be no mistaking it			About the S.W. extremity ...			It might at times, when not very distinctly seen	It is a dangerous place, and masters should be specially warned to be careful about making their land-fall to the westward of Cape Otway.
James Lowrie, master mariner	Considerable ...	No	...	...	But if erected should be on the New Year's Island			I think so ...	I think so. I think Cape Wickham light has led people into danger; it should have been on New Year's Islands. Erect a good light on Cape Nelson.
W. H. Lamond, retired shipmaster	Considerable prior to 1858	No; I think it quite unnecessary			... ..			Yes ...	Commanders should be cautioned to make their land-fall to the westward of Cape Otway.
William Shepherd ...	Considerable experience from 1853 to the present time	Yes, as a danger light			About the centre of the Island			... ..	Masters should be cautioned to be particularly careful with their compasses, and particularly so as not on any account to make King Island.
Walter Wright, H.M. Customs, formerly master mariner	Considerable in former years	No	...	...	... ..			Yes ...	Issuing fresh sailing directions, and masters should be particularly urged to make the mainland, and point out the dangers of King Island; also erect a light on Cape Nelson, or thereabouts.
Robert Geddes Rac, commander <i>Sea Arrow</i>	I have had experience in sailing to these colonies for 25 years	Yes	...	...	Cataraque Point ...			It should be a light that they could not possibly mistake	Another light should be erected about Cape Nelson, and shipmasters induced to make their land-fall on the Australian coast.
William Sydserff	Considerable ...	Yes; because we could then use the south passage			Extreme south point, "Stokes Point," 600 feet high, with two powerful lights			It might, but very unlikely ...	If there was a light on Cape Bridgewater, there would be no necessity for another light on King Island.
William Cooper, commander <i>Wimmera</i>	Seven years between Europe and Australia	Yes	...	...	New Year's Island, or Point Netherby			... ..	A light should be erected on Cape Bridgewater or Cape Nelson.
Hon. George Ward Cole, Captain R.N.	Two or three voyages through the Straits	Not necessary	...	...	... ..			Yes ...	My impression is that the wrecks have occurred through the want of proper sailing directions for making Cape Otway. Another light should be erected about Cape Nelson or Bridgewater.

APPENDIX B.

KING ISLAND.

REGISTER of Wrecks and serious Casualties to Shipping, from the Year 1835 to 1875, on King Island and adjacent Reefs.

Date.	Name of Vessel. Belonging to—	Rig.	Tons.	Crew.	From. Bound to—	Cargo.	Wind and Weather.			Estimated Loss on Vessel.	No. of Lives Lost.	Site of Casualty.	Remarks.
							Direction.	Force.	Weather and Hour.				
1835	<i>Neva</i> , of London	Ship	...	...	Cork to Hobart Town	Female con- victs	N.E.	8	4 a.m.	£ ...	over 300	Navarino rocks ...	Ran on the Navarino rocks ; broke up in a few hours ; only 50 females saved ; master and part of the crew drowned.
1843	<i>Rebecca</i> , of Singa- pore	Barque	400	...	Sydney to the westward	...	N.W.	6	clear, night	...	1	Between Cape Wickham and New Year's Island	Run right on shore ; was afterwards got off and repaired.
1845 Aug. 4	<i>Cataraque</i> , of Li- verpool	Ship	900	...	Liverpool to Melbourne	Emigrants ...	S.W.	...	thick, 4 a.m.	...	414	Near Fitzmaurice Bay ...	Run on shore near Fitzmaurice Bay during a heavy gale ; broke up in a few hours ; master, crew, and passengers (with the exception of six seamen and one passenger) drowned.
1845 Sept.	<i>Isabella</i> , of Cal- cutta	Barque	...	...	Calcutta to Melbourne	General cargo	N.E.	5	clear, day-time	...	...	Near Fitzmaurice Bay ...	Run on shore in S.W. bay, having struck upon a rock whilst sounding for anchorage.
1853	<i>City of Melbourne</i> , of Melbourne	Steamer	180	...	Melbourne to Launceston	Passengers only	E.	10	thick, day	...	...	... ..	Ran on shore in a gale, being unable to weather the island ; was got off with but little damagg.
1854	<i>Brahmin</i> ...	Ship	650	...	— bound to Sydney	General ...	...	4	clear, 11 p.m.	6,000	7	Six miles south of New Year's Island	Ran on shore, steering a due course for Sydney, about 11 p.m. ; weather moderate ; supposed to have been caused by an error in the reckoning.
1854 Oct.	<i>Waterwitch</i> , of Sydney	Schooner	140	...	Melbourne to Singapore	General and specie	N.W.	10	thick	...	...	Reef off Fitzmaurice Bay	Driven on shore not being able to carry canvas ; became a total wreck.
1855 June 25	<i>Maypo</i> , of Mel- bourne	Brig	168	...	Melbourne to Newcastle, N.S.W.	Ballast ...	N.W.	10	thick	800	3	... ..	Drove on shore and became a total wreck.
1855	<i>Whistler</i> , of Boston	Ship	1,500	...	Melbourne to India	Ballast ...	N.W.	10	thick, day	10,000	...	Between New Year's Island and Netherby	Driven on shore ; became a total wreck.
1865	<i>Arrow</i> ...	Schooner	250	...	Java to Mel- bourne	General cargo	...	...	...	...	...	Ditto ...	Ran on shore in thick weather.
1866	<i>Netherby</i> ...	Ship	...	...	London to Queensland	...	...	...	thick, 7 p.m.	...	...	Fitzmaurice Bay ...	For some days previous to the wreck weather was so thick that observations could not be taken ; no enquiry held.
1867	<i>Europa</i> , of Ade- laide	Brig	190	...	Newcastle to Adelaide	Coals ...	S.W.	gale	squally. 7.30 a.m.	...	...	Sea Elephant Bay ...	Driven on to the island from her anchors, and became a total wreck.
1868	<i>Omagh</i> ...	Barque	326	12	Newcastle to Adelaide	Coals ...	W.S.W.	gale	4 p.m.	...	...	Reef off Sea Elephant Island	Struck on a reef off Sea Elephant Rock, and became a total wreck.
1871	<i>Ocean Bride</i> ...	Brig	261	...	Melbourne for Adelaide	Ballast ...	S.W.	gale	a.m.	...	...	New Year's Island ...	Stranded to save life, vessel having sprung a leak.
1871	<i>Martha and Lavinia</i>	Schooner	52	...	Tasmania to Melbourne	Produce ...	N.E.	light	4.30 a.m.	...	...	N.E. end, nine miles from Cape Wickham	The official court could not account for the loss of the vessel, every care seemed to have been taken by the master.
1868	<i>Mary Ann</i> ...	Schooner	42	4	Corner Inlet to Melbourne	Timber ...	N.N.W.	strong	midnight	...	...	Eastward of lighthouse...	Sprung a leak and foundered.
1871	<i>Loch Leven</i> ...	Ship	1,200	...	Melbourne to Europe	Wool princi- pally	S.W.	fine	clear, 4 a.m.	...	1	On the north end, under the lighthouse	Captain Branscombe was below, and the course ordered was steered ; wreck arose from the officers being kept in ignorance of the position of the ship.
1872	<i>Katheraw</i> ...	Schooner	...	...	Warrnambool to Tasmania	...	...	...	...	...	...	Bight southward of Cape Wickham	Mistook Cape Wickham for Cape Otway light ; total wreck.
1873	<i>Anna</i> ...	Barque	141	10	Freemantle to New Zealand	Jarrah timber	W.N.W.	fresh	fine, night	...	...	... ..	Mistook the light on King Island for Cape Otway ; the master found guilty of gross incompetency in the navigation of his ship.
1874	<i>British Admiral</i> ...	Ship	1,781	39	Liverpool to Melbourne	General mer- chandise	S.W.	strong	fine, oc- casional squalls, night	...	79	Waterwitch Reef ...	In consequence of the loss of the master and chief officer the official court found it impossible to trace the exact cause of the loss of the ship, but assumed that it arose from an error in longitude, the chronometers it was supposed having been disarranged when off St. Paul's.
1875	<i>Blencathra</i> ...	Barque	899	...	Glasgow to Sydney	General mer- chandise	S.S.W.	moderate	10 p.m., thick	18,000	...	Currie Harbor, west coast	The court attributed the wreck of this vessel to the master mistaking Cape Wickham light for that on the Otway.



WRECKS ON KING ISLAND.—SUMMARY.

NORTH END OF ISLAND.	SOUTH END.	EAST SIDE.	WEST SIDE.
1835.— <i>Neva</i> (ran on). 1843.— <i>Rebecca</i> (ditto). 1868.— <i>Mary Ann</i> (foundered). 1871.— <i>Loch Leven</i> (ran on). 1872.— <i>Katheraw</i> (ditto). 1873.— <i>Anna</i> (ditto).	1845.— <i>Isabella</i> (ran on to save life).	1853.— <i>City of Melbourne</i> (ran on). 1867.— <i>Europa</i> (driven on). 1868.— <i>Omagh</i> (struck a rock in daytime). 1871.— <i>Martha & Lavinia</i> (ran on).	1845.— <i>Cataraque</i> (ran on). 1854.— <i>Waterwitch</i> (driven on). 1854.— <i>Brahmin</i> (ran on). 1855.— <i>Maypo</i> (driven on). 1855.— <i>Whistler</i> (ditto). 1865.— <i>Arrow</i> (ran on). 1866.— <i>Netherby</i> (ditto). 1871.— <i>Ocean Bride</i> . 1874.— <i>British Admiral</i> (ran on). 1875.— <i>Blencathra</i> (ditto).

APPENDIX C.

D.75/115.
SIR,

I have the honor to state that the Government is desirous of obtaining the evidence of shipmasters and others capable of giving an opinion as to the desirability of placing a second light on the west coast of King's Island, or as to what course should, with the best advantage, be adopted to lessen the risk of wrecks thereon. To carry out this object, I have the honor to request that you will be so good as to act in conjunction with Capt. Payne, R.N., Chief Harbor Master, and Capt. Stanley, R.N., Admiralty Surveyor, and take the oral evidence of the gentlemen whose names are given in the annexed list, and any others whom the Chamber of Commerce may desire to be examined.

I would request that you should meet on an early day, and invite the gentlemen named to attend before you, for the purpose of tendering their evidence. A shorthand writer will be placed at your disposal.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
EDWARD COHEN,
Commissioner of Trade and Customs.

Capt. Barnard, R.N., Scott's Hotel.

WITNESSES PROPOSED TO BE EXAMINED IN CONNECTION WITH SECOND LIGHT ON KING'S ISLAND.

Capt. McMeckan (McMeckan, Blackwood, and Co.),
" W. H. Smith,
" Currie,
" D. Walker, } Australian Steam Navigation Company (or whoever may be in port),
" Brown, }
" Hall, P. and O. Company, *Nubia*,
" J. McLean, *Otago*,
" Underwood, *Albion*,
" Lucas, } Tasmanian Steam Navigation Company,
" Saunders, or Woods, }
" Elmslie, *Sobraon*,
" McPetrie, *Ben Voirlich*,
" Holt, *Somersetshire* (Money Wigram's),
" Shepherd, *Romanoff* (Aberdeen line),
" Cooper, *Wimmera*,
" A. Cooper, *Carlisle Castle* (Green's),
" Pain, *Barrabool*,
" Shan, *Royal Edward*,
" C. Grey, *Loch Maree*,
" Gilmore.

D.75/139
SIR,

With reference to my letter of the 5th instant, I have the honor to request that, upon the conclusion of the evidence on the subject of the second light on King's Island, you will be so good as to submit the evidence, with a report and recommendation from the Board.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
EDWARD COHEN,
Commissioner of Trade and Customs.

Capt. Barnard, R.N., Scott's Hotel.

APPENDIX D.

SIR,

Melbourne, 6th February 1875.

Having been instructed by you to enquire and report for the information of the Government of Tasmania as to the necessity that exists for the erection of a second lighthouse in the centre of the west coast of King Island, and the Chief Secretary of the Victorian Government having requested that I would co-operate with Commander Payne, R.N., Chief Harbor-Master, and Staff-Commander Stanley, in charge of the Admiralty Survey, I have done so, and submit the following remarks and my report:—

The importance of this subject cannot be more clearly shown than by the number of wrecks, with loss of life that has already occurred by wreck on the north and west coasts of King Island. The list in the margin I have copied from a printed record, and although it extends for a number of years, it shows the loss of 15 ships with 805 lives, while the yearly increasing commerce of the Australian Colonies renders this a most important question to all the mercantile communities interested in their seaboard traffic. Impressed with these grave considerations I feel the responsibility of this enquiry. A long practical experience, extending over forty-five years' active service as a seaman and navigator, an officer of the Royal navy of England, as a captain, having commanded for fifteen years some of the finest ships in the British Royal service, and as an independent gentleman, having no other interest to serve than the colony entrusting me with their confidence and the protection of the lives and property of all interested in Australia, will, I hope, give some weight to the opinion I shall give. I trust that the means I have to propose, if it does not prevent, will lessen the dangers of ships approaching Bass's Straits, where so many lives, so many wrecks, and so much valuable property has already perished.

Ships.	Year.	No. of lives lost.
<i>Neva</i>	1835	300
<i>Rebecca</i> ..	1843	1
<i>Cataraque</i> ..	1845	414
<i>Isabella</i> ..	1845	—
<i>City of Melbourne</i>	1853	—
<i>Brahmin</i> ..	1854	7
<i>Waterwitch</i> ..	1854	—
<i>Maypo</i> ..	1855	3
<i>Whistler</i> ..	1855	—
<i>Arrow</i> ..	1865	—
<i>Netherby</i> ..	1866	—
<i>Europa</i> ..	1867	—
<i>Omagh</i> ..	1868	—
<i>Ocean Bride</i> ..	1871	—
<i>Martha & Lavinia</i>	1871	—
<i>Mary Ann</i> ..	1868	—
<i>Loch Leven</i> ..	1871	1
<i>Katheraw</i> ..	1872	—
<i>Anna</i> ..	1873	—
<i>British Admiral</i>	1874	79
<i>Blencathra</i> ..	1875	—
21 vessels wrecked.		
Lives lost ..		805

No. 4.

Unwilling to form an opinion until I had visited the west coast of King Island with those officers I was in co-operation with, we proceeded in the Victorian Government steamer *Pharos* on the 1st February; Cape Wickham was reached early on the 2nd. Its outlying dangers, the Navarino and Harbinger rocks, on which a heavy westerly swell was rolling, clearly defined their dangerous positions. The lighthouse on Cape Wickham, with a powerful light, 280 feet above the sea-level, and a radius of twenty-four miles, is a warning in this locality. The New Year's Islands, a few miles to the westward, have no outlying rocks; but the whole coast to Currie Harbor is unsafe; a heavy sea was rolling and breaking on it. We landed in Currie Harbor, a small but safe anchorage for very small craft. Men employed on the wreck of the *British Admiral* stated they sometimes saw ships passing along this coast, and recollected four in the four months they had been there, but that was during the day; they never keep a look-out at night. We returned as near the shore as was safe to Cape Wickham, where I called on board the light-keeper by signal. Mr. Spong bears a high character for intelligence, has had charge of the light for upwards of fourteen years, and knows the coast. I put the following questions:—

Q.—From your experience on this coast I wish for your opinion: that if a light was erected at Netherby Point, would it be of advantage or otherwise to ships passing along the coast?

A.—If a *warning light only*, the greatest possible advantage, especially in the winter months, when ships are often driven down with strong currents after westerly winds.

Q.—Do many ships pass the coast steering for Bass's Straits?

A.—Yes. I note them in my journal and send extracts to the Hobart Town Marine Board, and can send this information by the first opportunity.

Information from a man who has lived so long on Cape Wickham is very important and valuable.

I do not feel myself called on to express any opinion as to the advantage or otherwise of increasing the number of lights on the mainland of Australia, but to suggest means of preventing the terrible sacrifice of life and loss of ships and property on the west coast of King Island. I have seen Commander Payne's printed letter on the subject, and entirely concur "that every encouragement and inducement should be held out to shipmasters to make their land-fall on the mainland, and to avoid the dangers of King Island," but I differ with him that a light placed there *as a warning one*, unmistakable from all others in the neighborhood, would be more likely to lead them into danger than to avoid it. Had such a light existed on Point Netherby before the wrecks of the *Netherby* and *British Admiral*, who can say that one or both would not have been saved? The evidence taken in Melbourne, after the loss of the *British Admiral*, shows that her master was a careful navigator, made observations on all occasions during the voyage for correction of any error in his chronometers. A meridian altitude for latitude was obtained on the previous day, and good look-out appears to have been kept, as the chief officer saw the loom of the land before she struck; if a light, that could only have been seen on that night six or seven miles, had been on Netherby Point, she would have been saved, for she was steering a little to the east of north, with the wind on the starboard quarter, under commanding canvas. These facts are in evidence. The loss of so many valuable lives—seventy-nine unfortunate souls hurried into eternity without a moment's warning—would, I feel assured, convince the most sceptical of the necessity of a second light.

Commander Stanley in his letter states that his opinion is that the west coast is not sufficiently lighted, in which I entirely concur. A powerful flashing light of the first order—unmistakable—differing from Cape Wickham and all others on the mainland of Australia—is the only suggestion I can offer as a warning light by night, and a beacon-mark by day, on this coast, for there is no prominent head, cape, or mountain on that side of the island to denote a ship's position if thrown on that coast.

The generality of ships bringing passengers and cargoes to Australia are iron, built for speed, in the view of rapid passages; the compasses of these ships, which are corrected for local deviation, are more liable to be affected than of wooden ships; causes which are not known may also exist; in heavy weather it is often difficult to obtain the delicate observations to detect their deviation. The variation as you approach Australia rapidly increases to the right; and if in one day's run, say 250 miles, one half point is steered to the eastward, either by bad steerage in heavy weather or otherwise, it would, between the longitude of 140° E. and that of Cape Otway or King Island, place a ship on the middle of it. Whatever may be the action in this matter after the evidence that is about to be taken by the Commission, of which I have been named the chairman, I record my own opinion, feeling that in the future that if any such terrible sacrifice of life and loss of ships again take place, I have, without reference to any other theory or expressed opinion of those with whom I co-operate, given what I trust will not only be considered the correct one, and induce the Governments of the several colonies interested to establish *a warning light on Netherby Point, King Island*.

I beg to remain, sir,

Your very obedient servant,

EDWD. K. BARNARD,

Master Warden, Marine Board, Hobart Town.

P.S.—Since this report has been written it is reported that the English ship *Blencathra*, from Glasgow, bound to Sydney, was wrecked on the 3rd instant, south of Currie Harbor, on King Island.

EDWD. K. BARNARD.

The Honorable the Colonial Secretary of Tasmania.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

TAKEN BEFORE THE BOARD APPOINTED TO CONSIDER THE MEANS TO BE TAKEN
TO LESSEN THE RISK OF WRECKS ON THE WEST COAST OF KING ISLAND.

WEDNESDAY, 10TH FEBRUARY 1875.

Members present:

Captain BARNARD, R.N., in the Chair;

Captain Payne, R.N.,

Captain Stanley, R.N.

Captain David Nicholas, late of the barque *Blencathra*, examined.

1. The Government are desirous of having your opinion as to the desirability or otherwise of placing a second light upon King Island?—My opinion is, as to a second light, that it is very necessary that there should be a fixed light on some prominent part of the west side of the island, with a red flash—say every four or five minutes. Of course I am not going to say that that is essential, but I advise that.

2. We only ask your opinion from experience you have gained. What has been your experience as master of ships trading between Europe and the Australian Colonies?—None. I have been more in the Mediterranean trade, and used to lights every ten miles of different characters—mostly flash-lights—on the coasts of Spain and Italy.

3. You have stated that you think a second flash-light placed on King Island is absolutely necessary?—Yes.

4. Do you think if such a light was placed there, it would induce masters of ships to make use of the passage between King Island and Tasmania in preference to making the Australian mainland?—No, I do not think any shipmaster would venture through there with the positions of the rocks doubtful.

5. Are you aware of the number of wrecks that have taken place under King Island, in the neighborhood of Netherby Point?—Yes. Unluckily I have been mate to Capt. Owens before the wreck and after the wreck, in other ships beside the *Netherby*, and he is next-door neighbor to me.

6. Do you think that a warning light placed on Point Netherby would have been the means of saving any of the vessels that have been wrecked there?—Decidedly. It would have saved the *Blencathra*.

7. You were saying something about another light just now—what is your opinion about that other light?—I am of opinion that it leads people astray, because it can be seen over the islands just with the roll of the sea. When the ship lifts up and down it makes it appear like a revolving light. It should be upon a higher place, so as to be seen all over. It is in a bad position, without a second light to warn of the other danger.

8. What position would you recommend?—A second light anywhere would avoid that.

9. What position would you recommend for that one?—The same position, only higher, if it is practicable; for upon the coasts I am acquainted with they would have a light also upon New Year's Island, either a red light or some warning light.

10. From your very recent experience, I should like to ask you whether, in your opinion, a light placed in this position might not be mistaken in either thick squally or misty weather for the light upon Cape Otway or Cape Wickham—that is, at Netherby Point?—Not if the character is quite different.

11. More distinct than that at the Otway and Cape Wickham. Now, looking to the fact that one is a fixed light and the other a revolving light, what distinctive character would you give to the light you propose upon Point Netherby?—Just a dim fixed light—what I call a dim fixed light—and then a very strong flash.

12. A fixed and flash?—Yes, a strong flash.

13. A warning light only?—Like a warning light.

14. What is a warning light. I have looked over the lighthouse chart and every conceivable work upon it, and I see no notification of what a warning light is. What is a warning light?—Any light is a warning light.

15. Every light is a warning light, is it not?—Yes.

16. Again, I ask you what is your opinion as to mistaking this light upon Point Netherby for those placed at the Otway or Wickham?—It could not be mistaken then.

17. It could not be, you think?—No.

18. Supposing you had a light erected upon Netherby Point, and a vessel were bound to Melbourne, do you think she would come through the south channel between King Island and Tasmania to hasten her passage in any way?—No, it would only prolong their passage.

19. Where to?—To go round there.

20. Where to?—To Melbourne.

21. How does it prolong the passage?—By making more distance.

22. Does it?—When they got down there they would be among the dangers.

23. If they got a little out of their course, and so sighted Netherby light, do you think they would be right to make use of that passage?—No, I think not.

24. But with a chart with every danger noted you might do it. But my question is, would a shipmaster be likely to do that to hasten his passage?—I think not, for the tide is so strong there. On one of my charts there is eight knots of a tide marked down there.

Captain David
Nicholas,
10th Feb. 1875.

Captain David
Nicholas,
continued,
10th Feb. 1875.

25. Are you of opinion that if a warning light, such as you have described, were erected upon Netherby Point, shipmasters making the passage from Europe to Australia might be induced to make that in preference to the mainland lights on the south coast of Australia?—Yes ; in case of it being a weatherly ship.

26. Perhaps you do not understand me. I say, taking the passage throughout, where you are running down your longitude, making your easting in 45° , and then you steer up for the entrance of Bass's Straits—would you steer for a warning light at Netherby Point, if one were erected there, in preference to the Otway one or elsewhere on Cape Nelson?—No, I should steer for Cape Otway.

27. Suppose you had a northerly wind before you got clear of King Island, would not you make the other light?—No.

28. What would you do?—I would put her about and try and keep as near the track as I could, and make the mainland if it was not too dark.

29. You would prefer putting your vessel upon the starboard tack in preference to the port ; is that what you mean?—Yes, and going off.

30. Going to the westward rather than the eastward?—Yes.

31. Suppose you saw this light which we will assume to be upon Netherby Point, and to be of distinctive character, and you had a splendid northerly wind that prevents you from working up or taking advantage of that which would be a fair wind, after you passed Cape Wickham, would not you, with a light there, take advantage of your fair wind and go round the south part of the island?—No.

32. Not with the charts?—No.

33. Why?—I would be too much afraid of the danger.

34. But, in making the voyage under unusual circumstances, you would be inclined to try to make the land upon the Netherby, in preference to the Australian main shore?—No, I would not.

35. You were speaking about a light upon Cape Wickham being higher ; do you know that the height of it would enable it to be seen as far as it is possible to see a light?—It cannot be seen the distance it is marked for.

36. If you send a man up to the masthead you gain another 120 feet, so that you get a light 400 feet high?—Yes.

The witness withdrew.

Captain James McMeckan examined.

Captain James
McMeckan,
10th Feb. 1875.

37. You are aware of the object of this enquiry?—Yes.

38. The Government are desirous of having your opinion as to the desirability or otherwise of placing a second light upon King Island. Will you state to the Board what has been your experience as master of ships trading between Europe and the Australian Colonies?—My experience from fourteen years of age up to 1853, constantly trading to the colonies : I have been all about them, and in every portion of Queensland, and the northern colonies. The number of times I have passed through Bass's Straits, is a good many. I cannot remember the number.

39. Can you state how many voyages you made during that time?—Really, I cannot.

40. What has been the class of ship you have generally made your voyages in?—From 800 tons to 300 tons.

41. Have they been wooden ships or iron?—Wooden ships—iron ships were not in vogue when I was sailing.

42. What steps did you take in the ships that you were master of for the correction of your compasses before you left?—My compasses were correct and did not require any corrections—I never found them faulty.

43. Did you ever find any deviation in your compasses in the northern and in the southern hemisphere?—No, I cannot say that I did.

44. How far south is it your opinion vessels bound to Bass's Straits should be induced to run down their easting in?—About from 42° to 46° . I may also remark that, if they go further to the northward than that, they get variable winds. My experience has been that that is the proper position to run your easting down.

45. It depends upon the seasons?—Yes.

46. If you had any reason to believe your chronometer in error?—My chronometers were never in error, for I carried an artificial horizon and corrected them myself.

47. But if you had any reason to believe they were in error, what course would you adopt to make a land-fall?—I would get, as the sailors say, "into the cow-path," that is, the track to make the land. I never made a bad land-fall in my life, and I have gone from Hobart Town and sighted no land till I sighted the Eddystone light at Plymouth.

48. In running down your latitude between 42° and 46° , having made your longitude, you haul up when you get to about 138° east longitude for Cape Otway, if, from error of compasses, bad steerage in heavy weather, or local deviation, or attraction of the compasses, you steered half a point to the right of the correct course, have you any idea of what the error in latitude would be?—I suppose in an easterly course about forty-five miles ; it is a matter of calculation. When you get past a four-point course it would be equal and equal ; it depends upon the distance run.

49. Suppose you are forty-five miles to the southward of your supposed latitude in steering for Cape Otway, between 138° longitude and the longitude of Cape Otway, which is 143° , where would you find yourself on making King Island?—I am not prepared to say from memory, but I would take care to keep clear of King Island.

50. Would not half a point in that position put you right in the middle of King Island?—Yes ; but if I found the ship was making lee-way with the press of canvas, I would take steps to avoid King Island.

51. Of course you would as a prudent captain ; but supposing, with all your caution, you were set down upon King Island, would a warning light upon Netherby Point be detrimental or otherwise?—From the many times I have passed King Island, about ten o'clock in the day I have observed there is a white cloud gathers over King Island at perhaps 20° above the land.

52. That is in the daytime?—Yes, that is in the daytime, and then towards the afternoon it gradually settles down so that the whole of King Island is obscured. In very fine weather perhaps that might not happen, but in the usual course of weather there is always a bank hanging over the top of King Island.

53. You say that is the case throughout the year, that King Island is always obscured by a cloud?—Yes, if the weather is at all bad or there are any drifting squalls about. I have been lying perhaps four days under double-reefed topsails on east side, waiting for a slant to go to the westward.

54. Under the circumstances you have stated, of lying four or five days under the east side waiting for a slant, would a light on Netherby Point, a warning light, induce you to approach that dangerous shore?—No.

55. From your great experience as a shipmaster trading to the Australian Colonies, what means would you suggest of preventing the great loss of life and property that has taken place from time to time on King Island?—I do not know what evidence was got before the Board relative to the loss of the *Blencathra*.

56. Your own opinion only is needed. The Government want to know what measures can be adopted to lessen the risk of wrecks there?—So many ships get into that ill-fated bight, that perhaps it might be necessary to put a light there.

57. Upon that we want your opinion?—Then the great point is, what height to put the light so as to get clear of the cloud that hangs over the island.

58. We want your opinion, from your own experience, to suggest some means to lessen the risk of wrecks upon this dangerous coast?—If you put a light upon either Fitzmaurice Head or the Netherby, it might be the means of preventing shipwreck.

59. There can be no question of that; but, with regard to the west coast of King Island, we want to know your opinion as to what course should be adopted to lessen the risk upon that side only?—In my opinion, Fitzmaurice Head would be the best place.—[*The same was pointed out upon the chart.*]

60. It is called upon the chart Cataraque Point?—When the light was about to be put upon King Island evidence was taken, as it is being taken now, and to the best of my recollection I gave much the same evidence as I am giving now. I asked then to put the light upon New Year's Island, but it was not done.

61. It was decided by the Board that the light should be placed there, and it cannot be moved. What we want to do now is to prevent vessels going upon that coast; there have been no less than three vessels wrecked in one spot. If you put a light upon Cataraque Point and one on Cape Wickham, King Island being often obscured by clouds, they could not check one another?—But the compasses being so often deranged, and there being so much difficulty in making the land, the light upon Point Cataraque would help you through the dangerous passage to the south of King Island. Of course, if you know the passage, it is not so dangerous; but if a man does not know it, it is dangerous, for there are rocks there. I do not think the Cape Wickham light can be seen so far as is stated, although I have never seen it; it was erected after I left going to sea; but, from what I have heard, from twelve to twenty miles is the greatest distance you can see it. It gets above the cloud I speak of, and fellows often take it for a star. Making suggestions as to the saving of lives and property, and preventing ships from going into this fatal centre of King Island, I would recommend that the Admiralty Board publish a chart taking in from Tasmania to Cape Nelson, and that there should be laid down instructions for making the land, and masters should be cautioned in every Custom-house in clearing to beware of the King Island, for it is evident that they have all a fancy for going down there where they have no right to be. It may be said, "But they are fast ships and sail well, and the captain is in a great hurry." But if he is in such a hurry that he cannot wait, I think some means ought to be taken to prevent such a thing as that.

62. That would be a chart of the entrance to Bass's Straits?—Yes.

63. And upon that chart should be put strong warnings about this dangerous place, King Island?—Yes; and it could hardly be done except it were done at all Custom-houses at British ports. I would put the question to the captain, "Have you got that chart of the entrance to the Straits?" and, if not, do not clear his ship till he gets it.

64. The Board is not in a position to enforce all these things; we are enquiring as to the best means of preventing the loss of lives and property; you suggest a light upon the west side?—I do, and I think then you have done all you can. I would suggest another thing, that if my plan of the chart is not adopted, take a large pilot brig and put her outside, and let her tell them all she can before they come in.

65. Do not you think, looking at the lights being placed upon the meridian, or nearly upon the meridian, that it is extremely probable one light would be taken for the other?—Yes, I quite think so; that is one of the dangers of having the two lights, unless some powerful means is taken to prevent it by having different lights.

66. You state from your experience that there is a haze coming down which envelopes King Island; is it not extremely probable that one light would be taken for the other?—I think so.

67. If one is a strong flashing light and the other fixed?—Yes; if no more care is displayed than was on board the *Blencathra*, they would take anything for the light.

68. That is irrespective of what the character of the light is; taking the one as a fixed light on Cape Wickham and the Otway as a revolving light, you could not have more distinct characters of lights?—Yes.

69. And you think there is a danger that one light would be taken for the other?—Yes.

70. One would give you the north and the other the south—Wickham is fixed, Otway revolving, and Netherby must be different?—That would be for the Government to consider what was the best light to put.

71. Otway is a powerful revolving light, Wickham is a first-class fixed light 280 feet above the horizon, if a strong flashing light is put upon any point, to be now suggested, would not it be possible for any shipmaster to mistake either of them (seeing them both together) for the Cape Otway light?—I do not think he could.

72. It was anticipated that the *Blencathra* would see the two lights of Otway and Wickham at the same time, but she saw the Wickham and mistook it for the Otway. Now, looking at these lights being placed upon the meridian nearly north and south of one another, as they came up, expecting to make

Captain James
McMeckan,
continued,
10th Feb. 1875.

one of the three lights, would not one be very likely to be taken for the other?—It is very likely if they took no more pains than this unfortunate ship.

73. You have been thoroughly acquainted with the system of navigation of ships of the present day?—Yes.

74. From your experience here?—Yes.

75. Is it not the case that the mist upon King Island comes with an easterly wind and not with a westerly?—I think it comes in all weathers; there is a nasty kind of haze with the easterly weather, you see about ten or fifteen feet above King Island.

76. In the survey, we found that, however strong the easterly winds were, there was a mist; but then it is a weather shore?—I ran there with all weathers, and I can assure you what I tell you is not gathered from other persons.

77. From your experience of the way vessels are navigated at the present day, do you consider that if a light was placed upon Netherby Point vessels would always endeavour to make this light, if by a northerly wind they happened to be driven down at all?—I think if a light be placed upon either Netherby Point or Fitzmaurice Point the navigators of the present day will make an island before they will a bold land; but it seems a want of judgment, because every nautical man knows that in steering for a land that he has not seen, a bold headland is the place to steer for. But they all seem to make for King Island, the very place they ought not to try for; and if the light is obscured the loss of life will be greater than it is now, for they will keep the canvas on till the last moment while running, and then the ship when hauled up cannot carry sail, and, though the land lies north and south, it would be almost impossible for her to clear it.

78. Then, under these circumstances, King Island would be a lee shore?—It would; it is only thirty-five miles and there is one of the dangers I have always seen. A great many people say I am opposed to the light upon King Island, but I am opposed to nothing that will protect the shipping interest.

79. Are you of opinion, knowing that the *Netherby* and *British Admiral*, and now the *Blencathra*, have been wrecked within a very few miles of each other, that if that warning light had been placed in the neighborhood of Netherby Point either of those ships might have been saved?—The chances are that they might or might not—the way some of those ships went on shore it is impossible to say.—[*The witness produced a paper.*] This shows that as many ships were lost there after the light was put up as before, but I do not think the list is exactly correct—it is as near as I could say.

80. But if there should be a light upon Netherby Point, would either of those ships have been saved?—I think if the light had been there the *British Admiral* could not have been saved, the weather was so bad.

81. Then how was it that the first mate saw the loom of the land—it was said he was leaning over the lee gangway and saw it before the ship struck. Now, if there had been a light upon Netherby Point, in that case, and in the case of the other two ships, might they not have seen the light in time to save the ships?—It is possible that they might have seen it, but then they might not have seen it.

82. I understood that, if you were in charge of a ship making the coast of Australia, bound to Melbourne, you would try and make Netherby Point, provided there were a light there?—I would stand for the Otway, and get in the latitude of the Otway if I could.

83. The fact of a light being upon Netherby Point, would it not induce you to steer for it, being bound for Melbourne?—No, I would steer for the Otway. If I saw the land I would not run away from it, I would go in and make out my position, and make out where my ship was by the land, even if the position was correct by observation.

The witness withdrew.

Captain Henry Faulkner Holt, of the ship *Somersetshire*, examined.

Capt. H. F. Holt,
10th Feb. 1875.

84. Will you be good enough to give your opinion (seeing the number of wrecks that have lately taken place upon King Island) as to what means you would advise to prevent wrecks there or to lessen the chance of them in future?—Being in the habit myself of coming up straight on the land, I have always had great chances of seeing King Island, and I should, for my own sake, be very glad to see a light there upon the west coast.

85. Will you state what description of light you would propose to be put there?—A good first-class light that would materially differ from the other lights already placed.

86. Have you any suggestion to offer that you think would lessen the risk of wrecks beyond the light?—No; I do not think that anything else could very well do it excepting perhaps, as Captain McMeckan said, warning men before they come to such a place.

87. Captain McMeckan was suggesting something about an alteration of a chart. It seems that he thinks it would be a more feasible method of warning captains of vessels of this dangerous locality if a chart of the eastern entrance to Bass's Straits were made, including King Island, as far as Cape Nelson, so as to include it all in one chart?—For myself, I have never been up there, and I have never needed it; I have never seen anything of the west coast beyond Moonlight Head, and I have been sailing past there since 1858.

88. You have been running here a considerable number of years; have you observed any particular strong current or tide in the neighborhood of that west coast likely to affect a ship's course?—Always a little current; but I think much more error is owing to the deviation of the compasses after correcting them in the northern hemisphere.

89. That is in iron ships?—Yes, and in composite ships. I have sailed in both.

90. Running her easting down and then going to the north gives her a tendency to the leeward?—Yes; and when you come to correct your compasses, I think you will find that it is they, more than the current, that produce error.

91. Assuming that to be a kind of danger not generally or publicly known, do you think, as these three lights would be placed (the Netherby, the Wickham, and the Otway) almost on a meridian, that there would be any danger of one light being mistaken for another?—I think so decidedly, for coming in this time myself I had thick banks of fog, and not only myself but other men accustomed to coming in thought it was land every minute; and on that day any sort of light, whatever it was, could not have been made out.

92. Its distinctive character could not have been made out?—Its distinctive character could not have been made out. Capt. H. F. Holt,
continued,
10th Feb. 1875.

93. Do you think a third light upon Netherby Point would have misled you, or would it have been detrimental to navigation?—No, certainly not detrimental, for if there was a light you would know there was some land there, though you might not know what it was; it would warn you you were going into danger.

94. Supposing some unfortunate vessel comes up, her master expecting to make a light, does so, and what he calls “establishes its character,” then keeps away (imagining it is Cape Otway) on his course to Sydney, he goes on shore?—I should say that he was not sufficiently cautious in establishing what light it was that he had seen.

95. You say then it is a difficulty to establish a light?—Yes, but till a man made sure what light he had picked up he would be scarcely justified in running on.

96. And if a very strong flashing light had been put right ahead of him that night, would it have saved him?—I think it would decidedly.

97. We understand you to say that one light might be mistaken for another?—Yes, I say so in the weather I experienced coming up this time.

98. But in approaching a light do not you think a vessel would be able to make out its character or stand a chance of doing so in time to save her from going on shore?—No, she might not, but at the same time of course a man would not stand on till he had thoroughly made out what light it was.

99. That is a prudent man?—Of course a prudent man; but any man may fancy that he knows what he sees.

100. You see the man would be out of his reckoning in any case; supposing he did not sight the land he would be out, and supposing he did he would still be out, only mistaking one light for another; in the one case he would have a chance of discovering its character, but in the other it would have no character to discover?—No.

101. Then your opinion would be decidedly in favor of putting a light?—Very strongly in favor of it. Decidedly put a light.

The witness withdrew.

Captain Austen Cooper, of the ship *Carlisle Castle*, examined.

102. Will you favor the Board with your opinion, drawn from your experience, as to what course you would adopt to lessen the risk of wrecks upon the west coast of King Island?—That is the main point? Captain Austen
Cooper,
10th Feb. 1875.

103. Yes, what course can be adopted to lessen the risk of wrecks upon the west coast of King Island?—On King Island alone, of course that would be certainly a light upon the Netherby. My experience is, that coming up from the southward, bound here, vessels generally bring the Otway to bear about N.E. and by E. before they make for it on the last day, and they are very apt to drop upon King Island from deviation of the compasses and other causes, and yet have got good amplitude the morning before. Of course those things must be looked out for, and if they are not she will drop in there decidedly. On the other hand coming in at E.N.E., as I generally do, making the Otway, I generally like to put her in a little further. I have even made the land about Warrnambool.

104. Do you think that if a light were placed upon Netherby Point so that it and the light on Cape Wickham could be seen together it would mislead mariners?—At what distance would the two ranges cross?

105. The Wickham can be seen twenty-two miles in fine weather; the Netherby, if it were a flashing light, about the same distance; the distance between the two is about twenty miles, so there would be ten miles for each. Would it be an advantage to navigation, or likely to lead vessels into difficulty, if both were seen?—If they were good lights, and of different character, I fancy it would be decidedly an advantage to navigation.

106. Then do you consider that a second light is the only means that can be adopted to lessen the wrecks?—Decidedly, that is my opinion.

107. It has been stated that a light upon Point Netherby is likely to lead vessels to go round the south end of King Island; would you, as a shipmaster, be likely to do that?—I do not think a man would be so frightfully out in his latitude as to do that.

108. But would you be likely to do it to lessen the run—to quicken the passage?—No, I should not. If I were a good pilot, for that bit of ground I might, but there are several rocks there awash. If it were day-time I might, since it is laid down upon the chart, but certainly not at night. The coasters might do it, but they are constantly about there.

109. They do not often use that passage, but it has been alleged that it would be done?—It would be but a very very slight gain for a man who was bound to make the Otway.

110. In making your passages between England and Australia have you ever approached King Island sufficiently near that a lighthouse to act as a beacon by day and a warning light by night could be seen and guide you to your position, it would have helped you in navigation?—I have never sighted King Island on any passage outward bound to the colonies.

111. Looking at the peculiar circumstances attending King Island with regard to the haze, mists, and its generally being obscured (that is, the upper part being obscured and merely the land about the horizon being seen), and the fact that, if a light were placed there, it would be nearly on the meridian of the Otway and the Wickham, and that vessels running in are, as you say, likely to be affected in their compasses, would not people be likely to mistake one light for another?—Not if they were of good separate characters, and the man was careful enough to go up and make sure what he was about.

112. The evidence given yesterday concerning the *Blencathra* was that this man actually went to the mizen-mast head?—Yes, but he could have sailed his ship up to the light, and had a good look at it; if he once saw it, he could have seen it again.

113. He went up and saw it, and was so convinced from its distinctive character that it was the Otway that he went on his course?—I cannot understand that.

Captain Austen
Cooper,
continued,
10th Feb. 1875.

114. As a general rule, were a light placed there, would not vessels under exceptional circumstances try to make it?—Which?

115. Point Netherby?—Bound to Melbourne?

116. If the light were there, and northerly winds came down, a man would desire to make a land-fall somewhere or other, and he would say—"The light is there; I will try and make a land-fall there;"—would it induce him to push on to make King Island, whereas, otherwise, he would haul off?—If it was a clear night, it would induce me to go on and make the light; if it was anything approaching to thickness or foggy, I would clear off.

117. Should you be carried down there in clear weather with a northerly wind?—I would go on.

118. That is, if you could see the light twenty miles off, you would go on and make it?—I would; if I could see it at twelve miles I would go on, if I had clear weather.

119. You would not be induced to go and look for it?—Certainly not.

The witness withdrew.

Captain Alexander McPetrie, of the ship *Ben Voirlich*, examined.

Capt. Alexander
McPetrie,
10th Feb. 1875.

120. Will you have the kindness to tell the Board what experience you have had in navigation between Europe and the Australian Colonies?—I have been twenty years in the Australian trade with the exception of four. I have been out to Melbourne these last seven years.

121. Will you suggest, from your experience, what is the best means to be adopted to lessen the risk of wrecks upon the west coast of King Island?—I was down there the other day at the wreck of that vessel. I would suggest either a light upon Point Netherby, or I would rather prefer a distinct light upon the southernmost of the New Year Islands.

122. In addition to the Wickham?—Certainly.

123. You mean you would have a second light upon the west coast?—Yes.

124. The matter of position is an after-consideration?—Certainly it is an after-consideration.

125. Do you think a light placed in the position you suggest would be likely to mislead vessels?—No, I think not.

126. Would it induce shipmasters to make King Island in preference to the mainland of Australia?—No, I think not.

127. You have lately visited the scene of the wreck of the *Blencathra*?—Yes.

128. Do you think that, had a light been upon Netherby Point, that vessel might have been saved by it?—If a distinctive light had been there she would have been saved.

129. Looking at the state of the weather generally upon that coast, even if the lights were of a distinctive character, might they not be mistaken the one for the other, and cause serious wrecks there?—I do not see how it could cause more there than it does at home. All the lights there are of a distinctive character.

130. You have been a long time in iron ships?—Yes, I have.

131. You know thoroughly the effect of hauling to the northward after running down your easting; the compasses become polarized?—Yes, they do that every voyage.

132. Therefore there is a tendency directly you haul to the northward to make more easting?—Coming along this voyage I tried to make a forty miles northing course, which I thought I did, having good observations; and at noon the next day I found I had made forty miles the other way, making eighty miles out. That was in about 115° E. longitude.

133. You tried to make your land-fall forty miles to the north?—I intended to make a course forty miles of northing, and instead of that I made forty miles southing. I have found that to occur several times.

134. This error applies the more as you get more to the eastward?—Yes.

135. Assuming that to be the case, this is not generally known, except by men of great experience coming out here?—Strangers, of course, coming here do not know it.

136. Would not that have a tendency, with the thick misty weather over King Island, to mislead, if there be an additional light upon King Island?—I think not, if it is distinct enough.

137. Is it the general rule that, where there is a light, officers in charge of ships will always try and make for it, under favorable circumstances?—We always do so, if it does not put us out of our course.

138. If coming to the Otway you meet with a northerly wind (which is generally the precursor of a westerly one), and you want to fix your position, you stand on and make the land at Cape Wickham, would not that rather militate against the safety of a vessel getting in there?—If there is a northerly wind we can lie high enough to make the northerly land. With a north-east wind, lying an east course, we would make Cape Wickham, providing it was not too thick.

139. But if the light was there, we will say under favorable circumstances, you would try and make it?—Yes, to get our position.

140. From the fact of the present light being on Cape Wickham, is it your opinion that a second warning light would be preferable, placed upon New Year Island, or a light further down the coast, in the neighborhood of Currie Harbor?—I am rather doubtful upon that point.

141. Cape Wickham light is a fixed light?—Yes.

142. And now that it is there we cannot touch it. Would not a light placed upon Netherby Point be preferable to another one seven miles south?—It is eighteen miles from Point Netherby to New Year Islands, and seven miles from Netherby to Cataraque Point. It is so doubtful that I can hardly give an opinion. For my own part, I prefer a light on New Year Island—I think that would lessen the risk considerably.

143. If a vessel got upon King Island, south of Netherby Point?—I hardly can conceive of a man so far out of his reckoning as to be there.

144. You were once out eighty miles yourself, and the man who got wrecked was forty miles wrong?—Yes.

145. You quite consider that a second light is necessary?—Yes.

146. That is an established fact?—Yes.

147. But it is a matter of opinion as to its place?—Yes.

148. It is a matter of opinion whether it should be upon the New Year Island or to the southward of New Year Island?—Yes. I prefer it on New Year Island. I think Wickham light is shut in by New Year Island no less than three times, and that makes it appear like a revolving light. I observed it last Monday night very distinctly. It was a dark dirty night, and it was so plain that it would mislead anyone.

149. It is all right if you are the full distance—you see it over the land?—I was not so far out.

150. But directly you get within nineteen miles it is obscured?—Yes.

151. What is the course you generally approach Bass's Straits upon, running up after making easting?—A true east course.

152. You keep well up. One of the captains has given evidence that he runs up a N.E. $\frac{1}{2}$ E. course?—I run up upon the parallel of $39\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$, or thereabouts; but with a southerly wind I always attempt to make Cape Wickham; with a northerly wind I make the Otway.

153. Of course, being down in such a low latitude, you are able to make that course without any danger; but coming up upon a N.E. course, you would obscure Cape Wickham. In your case you cannot obscure it, or you have not the same risk of obscuring it that other vessels upon a N.E. course have?—No, unless you are too far off.

The witness withdrew.

Captain Niel McEachran, of the ship *James Hounsell*, examined.

154. Will you kindly inform the Board what experience you have had in navigating ships between Europe and Australia?—I have only been two or three voyages from Europe, but I was several voyages from Newcastle to Wallaroo in Spencer's Gulf, and made, I suppose, eight or nine voyages in the *Aurifera*, and I have been in the Adelaide in trade steamers.

155. What experience have you had here altogether upon the coast?—I have been twenty years altogether, but not all the time at sea.

156. But what experience have you had between Europe and Bass's Straits?—Only three voyages.

157. What experience have you had upon the coasts of Australia and King Island?—I was three years trading regularly between Newcastle and Adelaide, and passing through the Straits backwards and forwards during those three years.

158. Was that in a sailing vessel?—Three years in a sailing vessel and about twelve months in the *Havilah* steamer.

159. Will you suggest, from the experience you have gained, what means could be adopted to lessen the risk of wrecks upon the west coast of King Island?—My experience of the light upon Cape Wickham is this:—On making it first it appears like a revolving light. You see it in the trough of the sea, and then when the waves rise they obscure the light, and on different occasions it has been reported to me, by the look-out, as a revolving light.

160. That is not quite the point we are upon. We have got a light upon Cape Wickham. Is there any other means you can suggest?—I mention that to show that it might be taken for the Cape Otway.

161. That might happen with any light if you are so far off, but if you are within ten miles you would know?—I think a light upon Cape Nelson would be sufficient.

162. That is upon the mainland?—Yes, but the light upon Point Netherby, or thereabouts, would prevent persons from getting too close.

163. Is there any other suggestion you wish to offer?—Vessels coming here, may make the mainland to the westward; if they have a north-east wind of course they go down towards King Island, and by having a light there it would warn them of their approach to the island. I have experienced strong south-west currents there on more than one occasion in beating to the westward; it swept round the north-west end of King Island. On one occasion, in fact, I was very nearly upon the Harbinger Reef. I ran for shelter under King Island. It came on to blow very hard and was very thick; when it cleared up I was only two miles from Harbinger Reef, and was obliged to go in between it and the other reef. There must have been a strong south-west current to carry me to the westward of the Harbinger.

164. The question we have to decide is with reference to the west coast of King Island. Now the Cape Wickham light is fixed. We want your opinion as to the effect of the second light; and would a second light be the best means to be adopted by the Government to avoid the risk of wrecks at that spot?—I think it would, if it was a good distinguishing light.

The witness withdrew.

To the Chairman and Gentlemen of King Island Lighthouse Board, Harbor Office, Queen street.

GENTLEMEN,

At your request I have the honor to lay before you my views on the advisability of placing a light on the west coast of King Island.

Having navigated for some years in sailing ships the channels both north and south of King Island, being acquainted with its dangers, and having narrowly escaped shipwreck near Point Netherby while running in a gale in May 1865, I beg to state, as my opinion, that there is urgent necessity for placing a light on Point Netherby, which should be of the first order and that could be readily distinguished from the lights on Capes Wickham and Otway.

Ships should, if possible, make the land at or west of Cape Otway; but, as there often will be vessels unable to ascertain their true positions or correct their compasses for days before making land, through thick or cloudy weather prevailing, and will, in consequence, make King Island instead of Cape Otway, a light placed on Point Netherby would serve such ships as a beacon to warn them of the danger they were approaching, and add very much to the safety of the splendid fleet of iron ships we have trading to the ports of Melbourne, Launceston, Sydney, and Queenstown, whose compasses are very unreliable, and, now that so much is set upon speed, often pursue their voyages in uncertainty and at great risk.

I do not consider it would be advisable to shift Cape Wickham light to New Year Island, as it has been long established; it lights the coast trending to the S.E., and ships bound through Bass's Strait to the westward with scant northerly winds stand on and make Cape Wickham light before they tack to N.E.

If it were shifted to New Year Island, vessels navigating the Straits would, in my opinion, be exposed to danger in consequence.

The magnetic condition of iron ships being so changeable, especially when new, and those from home having an error produced in their compasses known as plus + C from magnetism induced whilst their heads are kept in an easterly direction in the run from the Cape of Good Hope.

No. 4.

C

Capt. Alexander
McPietrie,
continued,
10th Feb. 1875.

Captain Niel
McEachran,
10th Feb. 1875.



The effect is to draw the north point of the needle to the starboard side when the course is altered to the northward, and those ships do not make as northerly a course as the compass indicates.

In my opinion, this error alone accounts for the loss of some iron ships on King Island, and points to the urgent necessity of placing a light on its west coast.

In the steamer *Albion* the error plus + C, acquired on the run to New Zealand, amounts to 10°.

An error of the opposite name is induced on the return trip. This we have ascertained by reliable observations.

I have the honor to be, gentlemen,
Your most obedient servant,

THOS. UNDERWOOD,

Master, s.s. *Albion*.

Melbourne, 8th February 1875.

P.S.—This is the substance of a letter I wrote for publication after the wreck of ship *British Admiral*. The late wreck of the *Blencathra* is a convincing argument of the necessity of placing a light on the dangerous west coast of King Island.—T.U.

SIR,

Melbourne, 6th February 1875.

I beg to inform you that I am obliged to leave immediately for Tasmania, and I forward for your perusal a few remarks in reference to our recent conversation respecting the erection of a lighthouse on the west coast of King's Island.

I addressed a letter to the editor of the Melbourne *Argus* in June 1874, in which I expressed my opinions as to the proposed sites for lighthouses on King Island and on the main lines of coast. I beg to enclose you a copy of my letter, which was published in the *Argus* newspaper.

I may inform you that my experience of the western entrance of Bass's Straits commenced in the year 1841, when I entered it in charge of a paddle steam vessel under sail from England. Since that period I have entered it again in command of a steam vessel from England, and upon several occasions as a passenger in ocean sailing ships and mail steamers. In the year 1850 I accompanied Captain Norman in the s.s. *Victoria*, when he was engaged in laying down the submarine telegraph cable between Cape Otway and King Island. During this cruise we anchored under New Year's Islands, and sometimes in the channel between the north shores of King Island and the Harbinger and Navarino reefs. I had on that occasion frequent opportunities of landing on King Island, and when walking along the western shores I was much surprised at the large quantities of wreckage which had been thrown up on the beaches; it was striking evidence of the dangerous character of the coast.

That those in charge of the navigation of ships from Great Britain to Australia do often get to the southward of their reckoning when making for the western entrance of Bass's Straits there cannot be any doubt, for reasons I stated in my letter published in the *Argus*; such errors will be likely to happen again. I beg to observe that my remarks are entirely in reference to long-sea navigators, and, when making their first land-fall on the coast of Australia.

When the emigrant ship *Cataraque* was wrecked on the west coast of King Island and some 500 people perished, the first mate of the ship, who was saved, informed me that so impressed was he that the ship had run on shore on the mainland (which was some eighty miles to the north of her position) that when he received the information that he was on King Island, he was working his way by the coast expecting to get to Cape Otway and so on to Port Phillip Heads. I am aware of other instances of a like character.

I can understand that many of the commanders of steam and sailing vessels trading along the Australian coast to the westward of Cape Otway, are satisfied with the present lights exhibited on Cape Otway and Cape Wickham; but with the advantages attending their frequent shore departures and their knowledge of the coast this is not strange. It becomes a very different matter to the ocean navigator, who at certain seasons of the year might have to sail his ship for days over long distances without any other guide for his position than his dead reckoning, and at the same time he is a stranger to the shores he is bound to.

I consider this question of placing a lighthouse upon Point Netherby, at King Island, ought to have been decided upon long ago; the great loss of life, to say nothing of property, demands it on the grounds of humanity. In conclusion, I cannot help remarking that it is a matter of surprise to me how any British community should have acted with apparently such indifference upon a subject of such vital importance. It is my opinion that a warning light ought to have been erected on the west coast of King's Island, in the vicinity of those fearful wrecks, years ago.

I remain, sir, your obedient servant,

GEORGE GILMORE,
Warden, Launceston Marine Board.

Captain Barnard, R.N., Master Warden,
Marine Board, Hobart Town, Tasmania.

Captain Archibald Currie examined.

Capt. Archibald
Currie,
10th Feb. 1875.

165. You are not now in command of any ship?—No; I am now engaged in business in Melbourne.

166. Will you have the kindness to give the Board an idea of what experience you have had in navigating ships between Europe and Australia?—I never had any experience between Europe and Australia; my experience has been simply from a colonial point of view. I was first in command of a vessel here in 1853.

167. You are aware of the number of wrecks that have taken place from time to time on King Island?—Yes. In 1853 I was upon both the west and the east sides of King Island.

168. From your great experience in the neighborhood of King Island, will you be kind enough to state what steps can now be adopted to lessen the risk of wrecks upon the island?—My opinion is that a lighthouse should be placed upon the west coast of King Island with as little delay as possible; in fact, that has been my opinion since I was connected with the wreck of the *Netherby*—at the time I was over there.

169. A light being placed upon Point Netherby such as you suggest, do you think shipmasters, in making for the land, would be induced to make the Point Netherby in preference to the mainland of Australia when bound to Melbourne or through Bass's Straits?—I do not think so.

170. We shall be much obliged to you if you can offer any suggestions to us as to the means to be adopted to lessen the risk beside the lighthouse which you consider absolutely necessary?—I may say that I have made a number of voyages from China and Java to the ports of Melbourne and Sydney, and I never, of my own free will, went near King Island, and I do not think that shipmasters generally seek King Island. It is not of their own seeking. My notions or ideas for wishing a light there are to assist people who have wandered out of their reckoning or who have been forced down on King Island through northerly winds or currents or calms, and who find themselves close in shore. The land is very low and treacherous, and if they are in that position before they pull themselves up they are on shore or on one of the outlying reefs.

171. From your experience, would you think it likely that the position of a lighthouse placed upon Netherby Point, and looking at the fact that it is an island that, from the evidence we have had here, is

frequently covered with mist and cloud, and in fact receives the first of the bad weather either from the eastward or the westward, that a light placed upon Netherby Point would not, in the first place, be frequently obscured?—I do not propose Netherby Point more than any other point; I say—"upon the west coast, in the place best adapted for the object."

Capt. Archibald
Currie,
continued,
10th Feb. 1875.

172. What is your own opinion upon the best place?—I really think about Netherby Point. They steer for an obelisk placed there by Captain Stanley. I think that would be the best situation.

173. Better than the south side of the harbor?—I think so, simply for this reason that all the ships that have been lost lately appear to have been lost just there—whether from bad luck, or from a current, or some other untoward circumstance, it appears that there is a great attraction for ships in the little bight there. We have only to deal with broad facts. There is where the ships go. Your suggestion about the darkness of the island, the mists, and so on—if that would apply to Netherby Point for a lighthouse, the same objection should apply to Cape Wickham.

174. We do not say it does not apply?—Well, it has been found necessary to place a light there for the safety of navigation.

175. Do not you think it would be frequently obscured?—I think so.

176. Then looking at the fact that there would be three lights almost on a meridian—the Otway, the Wickham, and the Netherby (if it were placed there)—and that vessels coming up from the westward make their northing a little to the westward of that, and, as we have had it in evidence, that they are generally cast more to the eastward, especially iron vessels, on account of the polarization of the compasses—(that what has been put down to the current is in reality the result of polarization of compasses after running down the easting from the Cape)—bearing in mind these facts, and that ships are thrown to the eastward, and taking the case of a vessel expecting to make the revolving light at Cape Otway, which is the most northern of the three, might not a third light, being placed at Netherby Point, have a tendency to mislead vessels as to their actual position?—I do not think so. I really cannot think so. Anyone with a very ordinary judgment could surely know the difference between a revolving and a fixed or a flash-light. Of course if the three lights exhibited the same colors —

177. I say they are distinct. I put them all of the most opposite distinctive characters. You could not have a more distinctive character than a fixed and a revolving light—that is, the Otway and the Wickham, and yet recently we have unfortunately had very strong evidence to show that the one was mistaken for the other?—I think I can explain that. I took particular notice of it on Sunday night. I had a good opportunity of noticing it coming up upon the bridge of the *Rescue*. There are two islands—the New Year islands. To the southward of the southernmost one we could see distinctly the light at Cape Wickham. Then we closed it in with the southern island. Then we opened it again between the two islands; through the Gap we could see it.

178. How long did it take?—The time that the steamboat was going on.

179. The steamer going on like that, you say that that lapse of time would be quite sufficient to induce any person to believe it to be a revolving light?—I do not think it would be sufficient to induce a very careful master; but, at the same time, it is a danger.

180. Now, in your experience, do you not know, as a rule, that where there is a light placed vessels try to make it?—I do not think that any commander necessarily seeks a light when it is placed upon a dangerous coast; for instance the Eddystone on the coast of England; take the Bass Rock upon the coast of Scotland—no man of his own free will searches for the rock or the light—the light is placed there to warn him of the existing danger, but he does not necessarily see the light.

181. No, but from the existing state of our voyages a vessel for Melbourne is run in such close proximity to this danger, not that they seek it, but they must go near it?—My reply would be, light the coast well so as to give them a warning. If we could induce all vessels to make the land to the north-west of Cape Otway it would be a capital idea, but unfortunately people get away down by King Island and lose their ships, and lose valuable property. In my humble opinion, if they are determined to go there, the only safeguard is to light the coast well.

182. You say it is a dangerous locality, and no doubt it is, for the wrecks prove it?—No question about that.

183. But if a light is placed there where there is no trade; if it was a place that would induce a trade, or a passing light the same as the Eddystone placed upon a danger where trade is constantly passing, it could be easily seen that the matter was urgent; but where it is not a place of that kind the difficulty seems to be this, as it appears from all the enquiries that have taken place into wrecks, a man says, "I will make for such and such land," irrespective of the ordinary prudence of navigation—you must recollect he is induced to go upon a dangerous coast, and ten chances to one he is lost, for the wind there suddenly shifts in from the north to the west?—Yes, I have seen that upon several occasions, but I differ from the view put forward in question that it is not a highway—I look upon it as a highway. There is no question in my mind that it is a highway, for it is simply this:—Here is a vessel from England, or even from Calcutta or China, she has a long easting to run down. Vessels are chiefly now built of iron; her compasses may be out, the weather may be thick, and there may be difficulty in getting observations for days. It is all very well to say that a man ought to make Cape Otway, but he does not; he may be eighty miles out, and that puts him on the west side of the island. It is all very well to say that a man must navigate a ship from Cape Leuwin and run the 2,400 miles and hit the Otway.

184. Captain Cooper tells us that he has been trading out here for seven years and has never seen King Island?—It may be he is a careful man.

185. You think the lights would not be mistaken for each other?—Not by a man of intelligence likely to be in command of a ship.

186. You do not think it would induce a man to stand longer towards King Island than he would if there were no lights there?—No, not a careful man, but my notion would be to put a light there and one on Cape Bridgewater—it is simply this, that I am a strong advocate for a light.

187. And you consider that to be the only means to prevent, not the wrecks, but to prevent the risk of wrecks?—Yes.

The witness withdrew.

Adjourned to Friday at Ten o'clock.



FRIDAY, 12TH FEBRUARY 1875.

Members present :

Captain BARNARD, R.N., in the Chair ;

Captain Payne, R.N.,

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Captain Stanley, R.N.

Captain Saunders, of the Tasmanian Steam Navigation Company, examined.

[*Letter 75/115 (vide Appendix C) was read to the witness.*]Capt. Saunders,
12th Feb. 1875.

188. Are you aware of the object of this enquiry?—Yes.

189. What is your experience as a shipmaster in navigating between Europe and the Australian Colonies?—I have been in the colonial trade as a master since 1843.

190. Between Europe and the Australian Colonies?—None at all.

191. What is your experience upon the west coast of King Island?—None.

192. Are you aware of the number of wrecks that have taken place upon the west side of King Island from time to time?—Yes.

193. Can you suggest what means should be adopted to lessen the risk of wrecks upon the west side of King Island?—I think that another light at the south end of the island should be as near as practicable to Stokes's Point, if you can get any high land there. Below Fitzmaurice Bay there is a hill at the south point 308 feet high, and by having a light there any ship that should happen to make a mistake would have a free passage through Reid's channel, between Reid's rocks and the south end of King Island. There is a light at Cape Northumberland.

194. That is not upon King Island?—No, but I am going to explain that it would show the mariner how near the danger he was, by having the lights of different colors.

195. That is the nature of the light you propose to have?—Yes.

196. With your experience in navigating in the neighborhood of King Island, what is the state of the atmosphere—is it cloudy or is it hazy—what is the general state of it?—I have not seen any difference there from any other part of the Straits. If it is thick weather in the middle of the Straits, it is generally thick weather there.

197. Then what distance in thick weather would you be able to see a light placed 300 feet above the sea level?—What sort of thick weather? In thick weather I have been right under a light and could not see it, without any fog.

198. The usual weather in navigating, for instance, in south-west winds, where ships are likely to get upon the west side?—In south-west winds you could see the light twenty-five miles.

199. That would be clear?—Yes.

200. Would you, if a light were placed upon the point you proposed, be induced to use the south channel in preference to the channel between Cape Wickham and Cape Otway, in making for Port Phillip?—Certainly not.

201. Would a light upon that point, with one on Cape Wickham, be any guide to navigators if they approached the land towards the centre of the island?—I think so.

202. The island is thirty-five miles long?—Then two lights would nearly cut one another.

203. The light upon Cape Wickham is cut off by the land in a south-westerly direction?—The two lights would cut within twelve miles of the land.

204. Then you would suggest that a second light should be placed upon the west side of King Island?—Yes.

205. Where about would you say?—Upon the south point, on the west side, below Cataraque Point, near Surprise Point as it is marked upon the chart.

206. Have you ever been to those localities and seen them?—No.

207. Could you tell us how far that is from Point Netherby; how far to the southward?—About twelve miles, I think.—[*The witness measured the distance upon the chart.*] It is eleven miles and a half.

208. Why would you place it there in preference to Point Netherby?—To help a ship if driven down there. It would be a capital guide to her to come through the south channel.

209. That is, come to the southward of King Island altogether?—To go to the southward of King Island; there is a splendid passage through there; all the dangers are above water.

210. Then you think that, with favoring winds, that would facilitate the passage to the southward amazingly?—If the ship has got upon the west side, and the master sees the light—the southern light—it will enable him to come through here without any danger; but if the light is upon Point Netherby, and thick weather, the man would get confused, and get amongst the outlying danger between Stokes's Point and Point Netherby.

211. There are no outlying dangers there beyond about four miles at the utmost. After the Waterwitch Shoal there is no danger beyond that distance right down to the point you propose. You have not been upon that side of the island to observe that?—No, I have not.

212. After that explanation are you still of the same opinion about the light?—Yes.

213. As a general principle if there is a light, and a vessel happens to be within a day's run of it with adverse winds—we will say in this case with a wind bordering to the eastward of north—it would rather tempt a man to stand on closer to the island than otherwise, so as to make the light?—I do not think so. Not the light on King Island, if the man is bound through the Straits. I should say not.

214. You do not think it would induce a shipmaster to stand on for the purpose of what you call making his position, the light being there?—I do not think so.

215. *By Captain Payne.*—I am precluded from asking you any questions about any other lights, for the whole matter here as to the question of lights for navigation is severed. We have only to do with a light upon King Island. The Chairman having read to you the instructions, the original question has been entirely altered. It has been put to other witnesses in this way—Are you of opinion that a light upon King Island would be an injury to shipping at this proposed point?—I do not think so.216. *By the Board.*—Are you speaking of Stokes's Point or Netherby Point?—I speak of a light upon the south part of King Island.

217. You confine yourself to a particular position?—Yes.

218. All this narrows itself down very much to this, whether a light upon the west coast of King Island would be injurious to the safety of shipping?—Will you allow me to make a suggestion? I think a light upon New Year Island would be a better place than Point Netherby. Capt. Saunders,
continued,
12th Feb. 1875.

219. Would you remove the one on Cape Wickham then?—No, certainly not.

220. You mean you would have one there in conjunction?—No, I should like a light upon the south side; but still a light upon New Year Island would be preferable to Point Netherby.

221. What is your reason for saying that?—Because a light seen twenty-five miles would take nearly the south point of the island.

222. It is just a matter of opinion?—That is all.

223. Anything you can suggest to lessen the risk of wrecks in future is what we are seeking for. Your experience there would be a guide. You say you think a light upon New Year Island would be better than Netherby Point; do you consider that a light upon New Year Island would also be better than the one you propose upon the south end?—No, I do not.

224. Have you any other suggestions to make?—Not about King Island.

225. Your idea is that a second light, whether upon Netherby Point or the south side of New Year Island, would not be detrimental to ships from the west?—I think not.

226. Nor likely to lead them into danger in either of those positions—is that your opinion?—Yes.

227. With your large experience in the colonies you have probably heard frequently, in the investigations that have taken place, that one light has been taken for the other—that is, Cape Otway and Cape Wickham have been mistaken?—This is the first time that I have heard it—upon the trial of the *Blencathra* case.

228. Did you hear of the wreck of the *Omagh*?—Yes, the vessel that ran on shore.

229. Yes; and there was a small vessel as well going from Warrnambool to Launceston, the *Katheraw*. Now remembering those facts, do you think, as those lights will be almost upon a meridian—and you could not have the lights more distinctive than they are at present as between Otway and Wickham—the third light being placed down upon the west coast—do not you think that there is a great probability of vessels being thrown upon the coast, expecting to find themselves so much more to the northward and mistaking these lights—the southern light for the light upon Cape Wickham, or Cape Wickham for that upon the Otway?—I admit that too many lights confound the mariner, but if the lights are distinctly marked I do not think there is any danger.

230. It is the peculiarity of these lights. I am referring now, not so much to the intercolonial trade as to the stranger and our over-sea trade vessels coming up from the westward. From the evidence we have had to-day, the effect of the magnetism of the iron ships upon the needle is to draw them always down to the eastward, consequently the ships come upon King Island?—Yes.

231. That and the current has to bear a certain amount of blame for all this. Now finding these two causes acting in that way have a tendency to throw a vessel upon King Island, do not you think that these lights, being in a meridian—that is, the Otway, Cape Wickham, and the new light—it is extremely probable, notwithstanding the distinctive character you propose, the lights would be mistaken one for the other?—I do not think so. There are men, of course, who make mistakes. I think if this man in the last shipwreck had gone up a little higher to the top-gallant yard, he would have observed the difference between a revolving light and a standing one.

The witness withdrew.

Captain William Howard Smith examined.

232. You are living in Melbourne, are you not?—Yes.

233. What was your last ship?—The last ship I was master of was the *Dandenong*. I brought her from England. Captain William
Howard Smith,
12th Feb. 1875.

234. You heard this letter read, and know the contents of it?—Yes.

235. It is to give an opinion as to the advisability of placing a second light upon the west coast of King Island, or as to what course should, with the best advantage, be adopted to lessen the risk of wrecks thereon. Are you aware of the number of wrecks that have taken place upon the west coast of King Island?—I do not know the number, but I believe a great many have taken place within the last twelve years.

236. Will you tell the Board what your experience has been in navigating ships between Europe and the Australian Colonies?—I have come out three times as master of a ship from Hull, and twice from London; once I went to Tasmania.

237. From your experience what would you suggest should be adopted?—I have had no experience upon the point in question, but looking at the chart —

238. But as a navigator, what is your opinion?—I think a warning light should be placed somewhere upon that coast, but judging from the chart I could not suggest where.

239. You think that is the only means to be adopted to lessen the risk of wrecks?—I think so. A light should be there distinct from all others upon the coast, that if the master of a ship saw the light it would be a warning that he was approaching a dangerous coast—a very dangerous coast. I only made one passage up from Cape Otway to King Island; it was an iron steamer; and in that very short distance I found myself seven or eight miles nearer to King Island than I intended to go, and it was a steady running wind. I was bound to Launceston.

240. That was upon the north side of the island?—From Cape Otway. I found that the tide was running at that time to the westward, and I believe I had it very strong, and of course took it upon the port bow.

241. The tide was running to the westward?—Yes.

242. That is contrary to the way it is supposed generally to run?—I could not see anything else that could have done it; there was a beautiful fair wind and moderate weather.

243. Supposing the light was placed upon the west side of King Island, would you, as master of a ship steering for Bass's Straits, be induced to make that light or lights on King Island in preference to the mainland of Australia?—Certainly not.

Captain William
Howard Smith,
continued,
12th Feb. 1875.

244. Do you think a light placed upon the west side would be an advantage to navigation or otherwise?—It would be advantageous to those who happened to get out of their course, as a warning of a dangerous coast.

245. Then what sort of light would you suggest should be placed upon the west side?—I really do not like to say; I have not thought sufficiently over it. Probably to see it very distinctly, a couple of lights; that is, a fixed and a revolving light. Either two lights there or two lights on some of the other parts. I think it should be a very distinct light.

The witness withdrew.

Captain George Tickell, late of the ship *Holmesdale*, examined.

[*The letter 75/115 (vide Appendix C) was read to the witness.*]

Capt. G. Tickell,
12th Feb. 1875.

246. Are you aware of the number of wrecks that have taken place upon the west side of King Island?—Yes.

247. Will you kindly state what experience you have had in navigating ships between Europe and the Australian Colonies?—I was from 1852 to nearly 1869—about seventeen years.

248. What course would you suggest to be adopted with the best advantage to lessen the risk of wrecks upon the west coast?—This light upon Cape Wickham I have always looked upon as a bad light; I do not know from what cause. In coming from Port Philip Heads I never went through the Straits. Coming out, outward bound, I always stood to the south. That light has always had something wrong about it; what it is I do not know; it does not show so bright as it should do, whether from its position or not I do not know.

249. But what can you suggest, from your experience, as some other means of lessening the risk of wrecks upon the west side. We have got a light upon Cape Wickham, and there it is fixed?—Yes; but do not you think it could be altered to be of much more service?

250. The Board cannot express an opinion upon that subject; the light is there, and it is not the removing of the light, but a question of what means can possibly be adopted to lessen the risk of wrecks upon the west coast?—It is one of those extraordinary things that I cannot understand, what men want there. Here is a channel forty-three to forty-six miles wide, and what they want down there I cannot understand.

251. But supposing they are set there unavoidably—they do not want to be there?—It seems to me to be so unnecessary to get there. I used to run to Sydney, but I invariably came up towards the mainland.

252. Would you leave the coast as it is at the present time?—I should alter Wickham light. I should not put another, but I should alter that, and have it better.

253. Where would you put it?—I think more to the southward.

254. The chart before you embodies the latest survey of the island by Captain Stanley—will you indicate upon that what you suggest. Do you think a second light upon the west coast would be detrimental?—I think it would make men careless. I do not think a second light would ever have saved any of the ships that are on there now. I have enquired into this matter, and I must say that I think there has been a very great want of caution. For instance, they run on under such canvas, even in thick weather—the light is only distinguishable at a certain distance in thick weather—there is not canvas upon the ship to handle her, and they would be induced to come on, and they would say, “Oh, there is sufficient light to see—we must see that light.” My own idea is that in the iron ships it is the effect of the needle, as much as anything else.

255. Supposing one of those iron ships to be beset (by local attraction or magnetic deviation or some error that no master in the world could control, for instance, some error in his chronometer) upon the west side of King’s Island, would a light be of any service to him by way of verifying his position?—Of course wherever a man is, a light will serve to warn him.

256. The object is to lessen the risk of wrecks thereon. We do not say that anything will prevent wrecks, but will it lessen the risk of ships getting upon it—would you, for instance, as shipmaster, if you saw a light ten miles off in a certain position that was of a distinctive character and telling you where you were—would you be thankful for it or not?—Of course I should, but you might light any island, the Crozets, or any other place, if the same caution is used in navigation.

257. In the English Channel you are never without the sight of a light—round the north of Scotland and round the west of Ireland you are never out of the sight of a light?—Yes, but it is a fairway, and it is a weather coast—no man ever thinks of going upon the French coast. Then, there is that outlying danger off Cape Grisnez. There was the *Reliance*, and the *Conqueror*, one of our own ships was lost there.

258. But there is Ushant, that is not a leading light?—But no man ever thinks of going there.

259. But a man may be driven there?—Of course; lights are warnings wherever they are, but really you may go putting any amount of lights.

260. Our question is, what, from your experience, would you say would be the best means to adopt to lessen the chance of wrecks; you think a second light would only be leading them into danger?—I think it would let men go to sleep, instead of using that caution that all seafaring men ought to use in approaching the land.

261. If a light was placed there, would not vessels, under exceptional circumstances, endeavour to make it to verify their position; if a light were placed, for instance, upon Netherby Point—the exceptional circumstances being such as those of wind from the north-east, and a man trying to make a land-fall somewhere or other; would the light induce him to get closer to this land than he otherwise would?—Certainly. I should always try to see what light it was. I would not run the risk of mistaking one light for another.

262. Would not that light lead him on?—He would come on with more confidence. I do not always put faith in lights that way.

263. That is not the question; but we want to ascertain from you whether a light, placed in the position that is proposed, would not induce shipmasters to run on for the purpose of making that light, if they happened to meet head winds; let us say winds to the eastward of north. They would say, “I will stand on and make as much easting as I can”?—Yes, that would be an objection.



264. Then he has got the wind to the eastward of north, he would stand on making easting to try and make the light?—I think I should myself, if I was not certain of my position, and there was a light there. I should naturally go on to see where I was. Capt. G. Tickell,
continued,
12th Feb. 1875.

265. Putting it the other way, as to putting a light upon the other coast?—I really look upon Cape Wickham light as a preservation for vessels going to Sydney, for I cannot understand any man running to leeward.

266. But suppose you are driven there?—I do not think I should be driven there; but if he were driven there, no doubt it would not be detrimental to him.

267. Of course a danger light is never put there to get a man to come to it; a danger light is only to warn him of the danger. You do not suggest a second light upon King Island, but what you do suggest is the removal of the Cape Wickham light?—I do, there is something wrong about it. I do not know what it is, for I have never been sufficiently near.

268. Where would you remove it to?—I do not know the elevation of the west coast at all.

269. It is all the same. You can get the same height right along King Island till you come down close to the south point. The north-east side is rather lower, but not very much. All the heights are given—133 feet, 172 feet, 133 feet. Those are the coast hummocks, so that with a tower 100 feet high you could get a good elevation. The highest hill at Cape Wickham is about 300 feet, the others are within 50 feet?—In standing to the westward a light to the southward of that bearing—[pointing to the chart]—a light would be of no use.

270. The question is not of wrecks upon the eastern side of the island; we might want to put all manner of lights upon the east side if trade warranted it; but the track of ships from Europe is upon the west coast?—I say that, if the light be removed from Cape Wickham, it would be no safeguard to vessels standing from the east, and as it is now it is confined to an angle of about eleven or twelve degrees; but if the light were moved to a better position would it not have the same effect to vessels standing to the westward, and be also a safeguard to the islands to the west?

271. You think that the light should be higher so as to be seen above everything?—Yes.

272. That cannot be done. Its geographical position is such that there is no point where it could light the whole coast. Its present position is the most prominent position there is. You do not know the currents off the coast?—No; I have not been there sufficiently long, but I have always calculated that there is about a mile or a mile and a half set an hour to the southward. I should say twenty miles off the land there was not a current of half a mile an hour.

273. As the light cannot be moved, is there any other light that you would desire to be placed upon any particular point to which it might be removed?—I would say the New Year's Island, if a position is to be chosen; but I would not put another; I would simply improve upon the present.

274. Would that improvement consist of the removal of the light from Cape Wickham to some other position, or does it merely mean elevating it in such a manner that it can be seen over all the island?—I do not know that an elevation is always good in a light; sometimes a light moderately low is a better light. I say that, if it cannot be moved, some kind of improvements should be made in the light itself. There is something about it that is not right; it does not show brightly.

275. You say the brilliancy is not what it should be for a first-class light?—No, it is not.

The witness withdrew.

Capt. James Elmslie, of the ship *Sobraon*, examined.

[The letter No. 75/115 (vide Appendix C) was read to the witness.]

276. Will you say what your experience has been in navigating between Europe and the Australian Colonies?—In my experience I have avoided King Island invariably. Capt. J. Elmslie,
12th Feb. 1875.

277. What number of years have you been sailing?—In command of the *Sobraon* eight years, and as officer in other ships six different voyages. I have made fourteen voyages to Sydney and to Melbourne.

278. Are you aware of the number of vessels that have been wrecked upon King Island from time to time, and the loss of life?—Yes, lately, and during the last ten years; previous to that I am not acquainted with it.

279. Can you suggest anything that might be adopted to lessen the risk of wrecks upon the west side of King Island?—I think a second light would be desirable, but I am not prepared to say upon what point it would be best placed; desirable, not only for vessels making the land at King Island, but for vessels bound out, leaving Melbourne, and passing west about. My idea is that a light about the centre of the island would be most desirable. Having a light placed upon Cape Wickham, it is scarcely necessary to have a light upon the New Year's Islands I imagine, but a light upon the west coast would be very useful and very desirable.

280. Do you think that a light placed upon the centre of the island, in the neighborhood of where the wrecks have taken place, would be desirable?—Yes, I think near Point Netherby.

281. Would it induce shipmasters making a passage from Europe to Bass' Straits to endeavour to make the light in preference to going to the Australian shore?—I should say not; it would only be in cases of necessity, where they are driven south by northerly winds in approaching the coast; no man in his senses would attempt to make King Island otherwise. My plan of navigating is always to make the land, if possible, a little to the westward of Cape Otway.

282. In your experience in navigating towards Bass's Straits have you ever found yourself to the southward of the position you supposed yourself to be in?—I have on one or two occasions, a few miles only, on my last voyage out here especially, coming in with a north wind.

283. Then you are of opinion that a second light would be of advantage to navigators?—I am strongly of opinion that a second light, somewhere about the centre of the island, would be a great advantage, and a preventative of shipwreck.

284. What is the *Sobraon*—is she a composite vessel?—Yes, a composite.

285. The question has already been put to you, would masters endeavour to make that light, and you answer in the negative. I put it in another form: suppose that light to be in existence, do you think it would not encourage the masters of vessels, under exceptional circumstances, as they went to the

Capt. J. Elmslie,
continued,
12th Feb. 1875.

eastward, to stand on so as to get in close proximity to the island to see that light?—I think it would some men, but not many; a very small minority might possibly run the risk of doing so. At present there are very few who make Cape Wickham in making the land. I have only seen King Island once, it was last year coming in. I had a strong north wind, which kept me from getting more to the north-east. I came up here late in the evening, and passed within ten miles of Cape Wickham. I ought to have been, according to my noon and afternoon sights, ten miles further north; it was very hazy, and I could not see any stars.

286. Have you ever experienced those very strong currents that set you so much to the southward, or rather to the south-east, that is towards this island, in all your voyages to Australia?—No. I have no distinct recollection of any such current, except the last time.

287. Did your experience lead you to the conclusion that the currents are very much affected by winds?—I imagine they are so very much indeed at the entrance of Bass's Straits.

288. Do you attribute the fact that vessels are thrown down upon King Island more to the currents or to the effect of magnetism upon the compasses?—Partly to both, I imagine. I know my compasses are affected considerably by approaching the land.

289. After you have been running down your easting?—Yes, as much as a quarter or three-eighths of a point, several degrees, not more than that; there is not so much deviation in my compasses as there would be in an iron ship. I should think that the error in compasses has more to do with the position than the actual current. I have never found any current except the last time. I have passed through Bass's Straits bound to Sydney, several times, but never noticed any current to speak of, either north or south, and upon the last occasion, when I was ten miles out, there might have been some slight error in the compasses. I watched the courses very closely myself, and never left the deck.

290. You have had great experience of this voyage, and you suggest a second light?—Yes, it would be very useful.

291. Cape Otway is a revolving light, and Cape Wickham is fixed. Can you suggest of what nature the proposed light should be, so as to be well distinguished from them?—It is difficult to say. Cape Otway is both a revolving and a flash-light.

292. It revolves—it is not a flash light?—It shows every minute—it is too much like a flash-light to have a flash-light upon the coast of King Island—a fixed light of different description from the Cape Wickham light would be probably the best.

293. The only way to do that is to have different colors, and directly you put colored glass you lose power?—Yes, red loses power, and green is of very little use—besides green appears white about eight miles off. I would not like to suggest what sort of a light should be put there, for I am not sufficiently acquainted with the nature of lights to do so.

The witness withdrew.

Captain George Burrell, late of the ship *Syria*, examined.

Capt. G. Burrell,
12th Feb. 1875.

294. Will you be kind enough to tell the Board what your experience has been in navigating ships between Europe and Australia, the long-sea voyage?—I have made ten voyages from London to Port Phillip. From 1839 to 1852, I was engaged in this trade.—[*Letter 75/115 read to the witness. Vide Appendix C.*]

295. Are you aware of the number of vessels that have been wrecked upon King Island?—No, but I think from fifteen to twenty.

296. Do you know that a great many have been wrecked there?—I know there have been a great many.

297. Can you suggest any means that can be adopted with advantage to lessen the risk of wrecks?—Almost every vessel that I remember going on shore at King Island came from the westward, and was bound through the Straits, and I think that every vessel so doing should make the land upon the Port Phillip side, somewhere between Cape Bridgewater and Cape Nelson, somewhere in that direction, always before she got south of the other coast. She should never, if possible, get to the southward of the latitude of the Otway—that is 39°. My reasons for that are—that vessels making the land to the westward will always have a high bold coast, and more likely to be seen than low land like King Island. That is one thing, and my experience has shown me that on several occasions I have found a westerly current setting down towards King Island.

298. Supposing a vessel, from error in compasses, chronometer, or other causes which the master had no control over was sent to the southward of the position which you consider every vessel ought to be in on making the land, what would be the best means of lessening the risk of her being wrecked upon the west side of King Island?—If he has an easterly wind going over?

299. But if she is thrown upon that coast without any control, if he happens to find himself there?—If he happens to find himself there he should stand away to the north, most decidedly. If he finds himself in a place where he has no business to be, he should go to places where he has business to be.

300. The question is as to the desirability or otherwise of placing a second light upon King Island, or other means to lessen the risk of wreck. We have no light from Cape Wickham to the south, where all the dangers exist, and all the wrecks take place. Three vessels have been wrecked within a few miles of each other—the *Netherby*, the *British Admiral*, and the *Blencathra*?—Was not there very thick weather?

301. We are not in a position to say?—I have always been under the impression that the soundings about King Island would show you where you were.

302. We had evidence the other day that a vessel had sixty fathoms of chain out on two anchors, and yet she snapped them both?—Yes, very likely. That is a current which no man knows very much about. I had a conversation with the lighthouse-keeper the other day, and I asked him, and he said he could not tell me anything.

303. Supposing a light was put upon Netherby Point or the centre of the island, would it be an advantage to navigation or otherwise?—It would be only an advantage in navigation in thick weather. If it was not thick she would see the Otway.

304. It is only in thick weather, then, that it would be needed?—Then she would see the Cape Wickham light first, I should think. It can be seen twenty miles.

305. Not in thick weather?—Perhaps not; but then I cannot see the use of a light to the south. It might possibly lead men who are not very careful to come and see the light dragging them to the southward, and as the current frequently comes round the island close to it they would be in very great danger.

306. Then, from the answer to that question, you consider that a second light is not at all necessary?—I do. I cannot see the use of it.

307. May we ask this: that should a second light be placed there, from your knowledge and experience, if a vessel under exceptional circumstances happened to be in that locality, do you think that a master or captain would stand on if he wanted to make his casting, and try and make that land coming to Port Phillip if he met N.N.E. or N.E. winds, knowing that the light was there—would it not attract him to the island with a view of making it?—I think the Cape Wickham light would attract him—both would attract him.

308. If the light be upon Cape Wickham, and there be another light to the southward of it?—Decidedly. Then he might be induced to stand on till he saw the light.

309. And by standing on he would be brought into proximity to King Island?—Yes.

310. And I would ask the reverse of that. Do you think if the light was not there he would be induced to go round, and stand to the northward before he got into proximity to King Island?—I could not say. I think a careful man would keep to the north. It is a bold coast. It is well known that Tasmania has a rocky coast. I call that Cape Otway light a magnificent light.

311. And yet Cape Otway light has not been seen a mile off in misty weather?—It must have been very, very thick. I myself have been close to the rock—within half a mile, and it is a magnificent light.

312. The question we have to get your opinion upon is that, with the number of vessels that have been wrecked staring us in the face—805 lives having been lost—upon this very coast, can you suggest some means by which, in the future, if a ship come into that position, to save life and the ship?—If the weather were thick he would be close in before he could possibly see the light, therefore it would be useful. In thick weather perhaps is the only time that it is required. If that is the object, why you may place lights all over the coast.

313. The object is to try to give these men some land-mark to avoid the great danger known to exist?—The land-mark is there: it is Cape Otway; and he ought to make the land to the westward of it.

314. Do you know as a fact, that as many wrecks have taken place after the light was put upon King Island as before it?—I remember the first wreck; the *Africaine* was the first; the *Cataraque* was wrecked I think in 1845.

315. In the list handed in to us it is 1855?—I think it was 1845; I was here and I offered my services to go down to it.

316. In speaking of getting near the shore—that in the event of your getting near the shore you would put about—that is the shore of the west coast of King Island?—Most assuredly I should get away out of it as soon as ever I could on whichever tack I was.

317. Supposing it to be night time, would you not be more likely to recognise your vicinity to the shore by a light being there than the island being left as it is at present, in total darkness?—Most decidedly; if I saw a light it would tell me my position exactly.

318. You also spoke of getting on the shore of King Island and knowing exactly where you were; are you aware that several ships were wrecked there that actually thought they were upon the Otway coast?—I am only surprised at it, with the soundings there; I have never found that the lead has been cast at all, which would have been a guide upon the Tasmanian coast.

319. You know that it is rather difficult to get shipmasters to heave the lead?—It ought not to be; it is one of the duties of every shipmaster.

320. We know that they do not do it?—I am very sorry to hear it, and I am not aware that it is difficult to cast the lead.

321. Do not you know that a master would be looked upon with some distrust if he did it?—By whom?

322. By his passengers and possibly by his crew?—I should not care for that.

323. Have you been lately at sea?—No, not for eighteen years.

324. Then you will find that, with the class of men that you have now at sea, it would be very difficult to get a man to heave the ship to, and a greater difficulty to get him to heave the lead when he had done so, and when he had done it, nine out of ten of them would not know the depth of water they had got?—Then sailors seem to be degenerating.

325. There are some cases where men are out of their reckoning by some cause or other; these are the cases we have to guard against?—You cannot guard a man against his own folly.

326. But cannot you protect the lives of his passengers and crew?—I do not see that you can guard them further than by a light there. The loss of the *Cataraque* just arose from foolishness, by the folly of two passengers, or one passenger, and the doctor of the ship and his assistant, who badgered the captain, telling him he was afraid to run—and they knew the position of the ship better than he did. He was hove to. At four o'clock in the morning he bore away, and at five o'clock he was lost.

327. If there had been a light upon Point Netherby would he have bore away?—No, certainly not; he would have gone away to the north-east.

328. A light in his case would have saved his ship?—Most assuredly.

329. Take the *Blencathra*, a few days ago. He took the Wickham light for the Otway. He was twenty-two miles to the south of it, and he saw the light dipping, and took it for a revolving light. He was so certain of it that he put up his helm. Now, would a warning light on the Netherby have warned him of his position, or would it have led him on to the danger upon which he was wrecked; would not the chances of his having saved his ship been increased?—Most decidedly if he could see both lights. Was it fine weather?

330. It was not bad weather, for he saw the light twenty-two miles off. Now if he had seen another light to the south of it?—It would have told him distinctly his position.

331. Then would it have been an advantage to navigation or not?—Not to my navigation.



Capt. G. Burrell,
continued.
12th Feb. 1875.

332. But taking navigation generally. You say the *Cataraque* was lost through foolhardiness, and if a light had been there he would have been saved—now I ask you about this last case?—New Year Island appears to me to be a fair place for a light.

333. But we have a light within seven miles and a half of it, at Cape Wickham?—It all depends upon whether Point Netherby or New Year Island is in sight from the ship.

334. But the question is whether a second light would have saved the ship?—I think it would have saved this last ship (the *Blencathra*).

335. But bear in mind that the first light he saw he mistook for Cape Otway?—Decidedly.

336. The first light that he saw, you understand, he took for Cape Otway. Now, seeing another light—say to leeward of him, as this would have been, or right ahead of him—is it not extremely likely that he would have taken this for Cape Wickham light, and put his helm up to run past it, and so been wrecked to the southward of it?—It is possible he would have done so, but I cannot understand a man mistaking a revolving light for a standing light.

337. If he saw the two lights and he was not particular about twenty miles?—No.

338. If the warning light upon the Netherby be made totally different from any other light—either the Otway or the Wickham light—and he saw that ahead of him, would that have led him into danger; say it was a strong flashing light, might it not have been an advantage to him to save his ship?—Decidedly, if he knew the light was there.

339. If a strong warning light were put in that position, is it not probable that it would have saved his ship, as a light there would have saved the *Cataraque*?—Yes.

340. Upon the same grounds, is it not possible that he would have made the same mistake about it as he made about Wickham—might he not have taken it for Cape Wickham, and gone ashore to the southward?—Yes, decidedly. I contend that the master of a ship has no business there at all. Masters should always be instructed to make the land to the westward of the Otway, as the principal safeguard against getting into foul ground to the south near King Island.

The witness withdrew.

Captain Arthur Devlin examined.

Capt. A. Devlin,
12th Feb. 1875.

341. Will you be good enough to state to the Board what experience you have had in navigating ships towards Bass' Straits from the west?—I have not been officially connected with it since 1852, but from 1836 to 1852 I had considerable experience in sailing from New South Wales to South Australia, Tasmania, Launceston and Hobart Town to South Australia, Tasmania to Port Phillip, from Mauritius to this colony or New South Wales, British and Dutch India to these colonies generally, passing through the Straits from west to east, from Mauritius to Victoria and New South Wales, also China to Victoria and New South Wales.

[*Letter No. 75/115 (vide Appendix C) was read to the witness.*]

342. Will you be kind enough, from your experience of this navigation, to suggest some means to lessen the risk of shipwreck upon King Island; a second light is suggested, and your opinion is asked?—In the *Lady Wellington*, about 1837 or 1838, in sailing across from Cape Northumberland, I went about north-west, wishing to pass in the fairway between King Island and Cape Otway; I found the winds had been prevailing about eight or ten days between N.N.E. and N.N.W., and I had not observed from the time of leaving Cape Northumberland. On making what I supposed to be the mainland, or rather sighting mainland, the land was, about midnight, reported to be on each side ahead. I discovered that I was down about the middle of the west coast of King Island. Then it freshened up to a north-west gale, and consequently I had to run round the south end of the island, and I spent a very uncomfortable night. Then again in the *Rapid*, in 1840 I think it was, I was served in the same way, although I shaped a course to pick up the Otway. I was bound to Launceston from South Australia. I found I was away a little, nearer to New Year's Island, a little before dark, and then I had to run to the south, for the wind was veering from the north-west strong; and again in the *Adelaide*, but not so bad, I was set considerably over. The winds had been prevailing from north-east and north-west. I thought I shaped a course well to windward, however I found myself over there, and it appeared to me from many voyages there that, with winds from north-east to north-west, the set is over to the south-west, and hence, I believe, the many disasters that have occurred from people not calculating upon it.

343. From your great experience upon the west side of King Island, you have found that you have been set there in spite of all your endeavours to keep away?—Yes; it is only proper for me to say, that after the prevalence of strong south-west winds and W.S.W., there has been a set, but not to the same extent, to the Cape Otway side. That I found from the prevalence of W.S.W. and S.W. winds.

344. Then, under those circumstances, will you suggest to the Government what means can be adopted to lessen the risk of vessels being wrecked in that locality?—A light upon Fitzmaurice Point, and one on New Year's Island. I think it was a great mistake to put one upon Cape Wickham, a great mistake altogether.

345. But the light being now fixed upon Cape Wickham, do you think it would be desirable to remove it, it having been there a number of years?—I think if we commit a wrong twenty years, and find in the twenty-first year we have made a mistake, we ought to rectify it. At all events, if it be not removed, place a light there in conjunction with the other.

346. Supposing a light to have been placed upon Point Netherby, which has been suggested, would you have found it an advantage or otherwise, when you were set down upon the coast against your will?—Yes, doubtless it would have been a very great advantage; but when I say Fitzmaurice Point, I prefer that from the fact that, supposing a vessel to be embayed upon the island, between New Year's Island and Fitzmaurice Point, or in the vicinity of Point Netherby, and she could not club off to the northward, a light upon Fitzmaurice Point would enable her to run for the southern passage between Reid's rocks and King Island.

347. Supposing you were navigating a ship from Europe towards Port Phillip, and knew that a light was placed on the west side of King Island, would you be induced to make that light to verify your position?—Certainly not.

348. In preference to the main shore?—Certainly not. All vessels, to my mind, that have got to that locality have got there by accident, not from choice; it is a very dangerous coast, particularly with the wind prevailing from W.S.W. to N.N.W. Capt. A. Devlin,
continued,
12th Feb. 1875.

349. You are aware of the number of wrecks that have taken place upon the west side?—Yes, I am.

350. Do you think that in the case of the *British Admiral* or the *Blencathra* a light placed in the middle of the island might have been the means of preventing the wreck?—I think so; of course I cannot say, not having read the evidence of the *British Admiral*, being absent at the time; but in that case either Netherby Point or Fitzmaurice Point would have stood a chance of saving her. In the case of this last man, he mistook the Wickham for the Otway light; he is set by one of these currents that take place to the west, a very considerable distance; and he was running, as he supposed, in perfect safety.

351. Then we understand from your remarks that you are an advocate of a second light being placed upon the west side of King Island?—Certainly. But I firmly believed, and until very recently, that one on New Year's Island would cure all defects; but seeing that ships are wrecked to the southward of that I say place one there.

352. The question was asked, would you endeavour to make the land if the light were placed there; but knowing as a fact that vessels never endeavour to make King Island, I ask you this, that supposing there are exceptional circumstances, and you got the wind to the eastward and north, if a light were placed upon Point Netherby, would you not stand longer upon that tack in order to make the light. Now if the light were there, would it not induce you to stand longer upon the tack to make your easting than it would if there was no light?—I may say that it is an old enemy.

353. But upon general principles?—Ordinarily speaking, if I did not know so much about it, it might be an inducement to me, with the wind off the island, that is, coming east of north.

354. But say about N.N.E.?—No, I would stand to the westward in that case, because the next shift would be from the west.

355. But with the wind N.N.E. would not you be induced to stand on, knowing there was a light, to make out your position?—No. I will tell you why; it is a dangerous breeze; you may have a shift in any half dozen hours to the N.W. or S.W., and they blow round with great force, and I would keep my distance to get an offing to get into the fairway. It is a very nasty coast as a lee shore. I have anchored often on the east coast, dodging about to get to the westward.

356. As far as we understand, you are in favor of a light upon New Year's Island, and also one about Fitzmaurice Point?—Yes.

357. You have observed that most of the ships have been wrecked about the middle of the island?—Yes.

358. Do not you think that upon a moderately dirty night, the light—even the two lights—that you speak of, might possibly not stand the same chance of being distinguished by a vessel in danger about Netherby Point as one on Netherby Point itself?—Yes, it is true; but it would be a great point that a light there would show that you might keep off a point or so, for the land trends.

359. The fact strikes us that the wrecks have occurred, from some reason or other, just in the centre of the island, and if a light were placed there, it seems likely to be useful. Now that is eleven or twelve miles from New Year's Island, and on a moderately dirty night it might be not visible so far, or not at all?—Yes; it does seem, at first sight, that Netherby is a desirable position, but I prefer the positions I show you for the reasons I have stated. However, one thing is very clear, that any prudent man will pick up the land at Cape Bridgewater. But I am sorry to say that this great circle sailing seems to take them down there. I would have a light upon Cape Bridgewater, and let them all make that first.

The witness withdrew.

Captain Robert Duncan Espinasse, late of the ship *Nimrod*, examined.

[Letter 75/115 (vide Appendix C) was read to the witness.]

360. Are you aware of the number of wrecks that have taken place?—Yes, I have given the subject some attention.

361. Will you from your experience give your suggestions to us?—My idea is that there should be a flash-light upon New Year's Island.

362. You are in favor, that is, of a second light, and it should be upon New Year's Island?—I was not before the loss of the *Blencathra*; but when a man is seventy or sixty miles out of his latitude, and mistakes a revolving for a fixed light, I think two lights would be unmistakable. If he had the new light a flashing light, and a fixed light upon the Wickham, it would be impossible to mistake his position.

363. Supposing a flash-light were to the south of him?—He might have made the very same mistake and come ashore to the south. I have just put a few concise words together which I would hand in—[*The witness handed in a paper, which was read by the Chairman as follows*]:—

The placing of a flash-light on New Year's Island recommends itself on the following grounds:—

The distinction between a revolving light on Cape Otway and a fixed light on Cape Wickham being, as in the case of the loss of the *Blencathra*, insufficient, two lights ought to be unmistakable.

The New Year's Islands, laying to the west of King Island, the present light on Cape Wickham could be utilised. A seaman would have three ways of judging his distance from the shore. Cape Wickham light open, in one, inside or shut in with the proposed flash-light, and when Cape Wickham light was lost, a bearing of the flash-light as far as north would keep a ship in safety.

Another single light on or about Point Netherby is liable to be mistaken for Cape Wickham light, and a single light will not, in thick or rainy weather, give a seaman a true estimate of his distance off shore, more especially as Cape Wickham light cannot be seen on a bearing to the S.E. of about N.E.

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364. Taking it, for instance, that the position of the *Blencathra* was that when she saw the Cape Wickham light she was at a distance of upwards of twenty miles when, from the dip of the sea, a fixed light might almost become like a revolving light. Under these circumstances would not a strong flashing light in the middle of the island, to the southward of the position he was in then, be a better guide than one on New Year's Island, which would have been upwards of twelve or fourteen miles to the north of them?—

Captain Robert
D. Espinasse,
12th Feb. 1875.

Captain Robert
D. Espinasse,
continued,
12th Feb. 1875.

I cannot see that anything would have saved that man; he is sixty miles out in his latitude. I cannot see that anything would have saved him, if you had lighted up all the place with lights so that they only could be seen one at a time.

365. Supposing he saw the new light in the middle of the island?—He could not see the other then for it is shut in.

366. If he saw one light twenty-two miles off he would see the new one at only ten miles?—Yes, perhaps, but that would depend upon where he was. I have no doubt that if he saw a light fifteen miles off right ahead of him it would warn him, but when vessels are wrecked there in foul weather it is a question how far off a vessel would see the light. My opinion is that, if a ship saw it seven or eight miles off, nothing would save them with a strong wind and with the sail they would have upon them, with that small time, they would sag to leeward considerably.

367. In the case of the *Bencathra*, if the captain mistook the Wickham for the Otway, if even there was another flash-light there, might he not mistake that for the Wickham—would not he have put up his helm and gone ashore to the southward?—Yes, if you could not see both lights at the same time, but not if he had seen both together.

368. Would he not have a better chance of being saved if he saw a light right ahead of him?—No, not at all, if he could not see both together.

369. Then, what benefit would a light upon New Year's Island be to him, if the other would be no good?—He would see it upon a different bearing—first he would see the Wickham light open of him, and then he would get the two in a line as he came in, and that would be a warning to him.

370. But I take your own illustration that he could not see the light further than eight or ten miles—how could he then see the further light, noticing that the wrecks have generally been about Netherby Point?—That is only accident, I think. I should like to say something upon the courses that iron ships steer for Bass's Straits. I have given the subject some attention. I find that they are all to the southward of their position, the induced magnetism of the ship draws the north point to leeward, so that when the ship is steering say N.E. by E. magnetic, he is really making often a little better than an east course magnetic. I consider that, if captains of ships' attention was drawn to the fact, it would be a great deal more useful.

371. Do not they all know that?—No, none of them know it; only one man that ever I have seen that came to Melbourne knew it at all.

372. Who was that?—Captain Whirland, of the *Galatea*.

373. Our object in sitting here is to give them some undoubted mark to lessen the danger of approaching King Island, and if they do not know the danger arising from disturbance of the compasses, they should at once identify their position and keep out of danger?—Do not you think that if you warn them before hand—give them advice—they would let it alone?

374. That is their own affair, but we want to protect the lives of the passengers. Now if there had been a light placed there the chances are that out of those seventy-nine people some one would have seen it, for the first mate saw the land before they struck?—But the captain of the *British Admiral* took the sun at twelve o'clock upon the day of the wreck; he knew his latitude and went under small canvas from noon to two in the morning; they went about seventy or eighty miles steering N.E. by E., and hit the island. It was the course that he steered that put him there, not the want of a light.

375. Would not a light there have saved him?—No, I think not.

376. Of course that is a matter of opinion?—Of course it is.

The witness withdrew.

Captain J. K. Freyer, late of the steamer *Waratah*, examined.

Captain J. K.
Freyer,
12th Feb. 1875.

377. Will you be good enough to tell the Board what your experience has been in navigating ships between Europe and Australia?—I may state that I hold a master's certificate, first-class, of the Board of Trade. My experience in that navigation has been several years. My first voyage was in 1842, with emigrants to Tasmania—the first free emigrants that went there.

[*Letter 75/115 read to the witness. Vide Appendix C.*]

378. Are you aware of the number of vessels that have been wrecked upon King Island?—I am.

379. Can you suggest any means that can be adopted to lessen the future chance of wrecks?—From my experience in navigating it, I think the best plan would be to light the other coast with a light upon Cape Nelson, or any of the other capes. My reason for such a suggestion or opinion is this—that by placing a light on King Island you induce masters of vessels to do that which they would not otherwise do, namely, make it a land-fall. My reason for suggesting the other coast being lit is that for a long distance along the coast, say ten to twelve miles off, your soundings are regular, and even in thick weather you can stand in with a ship in safety. My objection to King Island is that the currents there are not always to be depended on. I have found them governed by winds. Of course the strength of the current is governed more particularly by the preceding winds. There is so much competition and such a spirit of emulation between masters of vessels as to making passages coming from the westward, that putting a light would be dangerous. Perhaps they are running with a S.W. or W.S.W. gale, they meet with a wind from the northward, in the proximity of the entrance to the Straits, with thick weather. They keep upon the port tack to save time, and make the passage, knowing that there is a light upon King Island and the chance of making it. With S.W. winds, frequent rain squalls pass over, as I have experienced, and for a considerable time of the year the light would be obscured with northerly winds. There is so much marshy land upon the island that it is subject to haze.

380. King Island?—Yes, it is subject to haze, and even a light placed upon Point Netherby, as I have heard some state it has been suggested, would not be seen at all times, and a ship expecting to make it would get into danger that she could not get out of; she would be embayed. I see, by the last ship that was lost there, that Cape Wickham light was taken for a revolving light. Now, to obviate that, if any alteration is to be made, I would suggest that two lights be placed on Cape Wickham the same as the Lizard. Then it would be easily distinguished from that on the opposite side, and there would be no fear of mistaking it.

381. Then still you suggest the second light upon the west side of King Island?—No, I am opposed to that. Put it upon the mainland—Cape Nelson.



382. Now supposing a vessel, from causes over which the master has no control, is set upon the west side of King Island in dirty weather, would a light upon Netherby Point lead him to ascertain his position and to avoid the danger?—It would depend upon the distance he could see it at.

Captain J. K. Freyer,
continued,
12th Feb. 1875.

383. Suppose he did not see it at all?—And it was distinct?

384. Say six or seven miles?—In a merchant ship running, do you mean?

385. Coming up upon the port tack, say with whole topsails, perhaps, and courses, coming up as a ship would be with a south-west wind?—If the weather was sufficiently fair, and the ship could stand to her canvas, and that the light was made sufficiently far off, he certainly might clear the land.

386. It would be an advantage to him to know his position?—Certainly, if he could make it at a sufficient distance.

387. A second light would be an advantage?—Only under those circumstances; but it would have this disadvantage, that is, as I said before, getting ships into too close proximity to get out of it; knowing that the light was there they would stand in with confidence, and run the risk of seeing it, which, if the light was not there, they would not attempt to do.

388. When were you last in charge of a ship?—In 1853 I gave up command, and I have not been at sea since except as a passenger.

389. And were you in command for many years before 1853?—Yes.

390. Will you give us an idea of how long?—My first voyage upon this coast was in 1842.

391. As master?—Yes.

392. Eleven years?—Yes.

393. Trading to these colonies?—During that time I was only two voyages away, one to India and the other to the west coast of South America.

The witness withdrew.

Captain Charles Grey, of the ship *Loch Maree*, examined.

394. Will you state what your experience has been in navigating ships between Europe and the Australian Colonies?—Yes, I have been now thirteen years in the Australian trade, from 1862, between England and the Australian Colonies.

Captain C. Grey,
12th Feb. 1875.

395. In iron or wooden ships?—In both, but chiefly in iron ships.

[*Letter 75/115 read to the witness. Vide Appendix C.*]

396. You are aware of the number of wrecks that have taken place upon the west side of King Island?—Yes, pretty well.

397. Can you, from your experience, offer any suggestions to the Government to lessen the risk of wrecks upon the west side of the island?—Allow me to say—suppose a ship comes from England, say my own ship, which is 1,600 tons, there are only two courses open, either I have a fair wind—S.W.—and fair weather, or a foul wind and thick weather—that is a northerly wind. Now, in the latter case, suppose I had a north wind and thick weather, my course has been for the last thirteen years to make the Australian coast under any circumstances, and I should decidedly say that if a light were placed either at Cape Bridgewater or Cape Nelson it would have a great many advantages, and I believe it would lessen the danger of navigation to a great extent, for it would induce captains of ships to make the coast. Even though they are timid of sighting land it would give them a great deal more confidence to go into that coast much sooner than they generally do, and in consequence of that I think if there were a light upon Cape Nelson it would induce shipmasters to make for that light. Now, in thick weather, if I came up as captain of a ship, I ought most decidedly to come into the Australian coast as early as possible; say when I cross the 40th parallel I ought to be in the meridian of 140°, that would give me a fair chance. Now a man has the light to guide him, and the Australian coast is a fine bold coast, and he can bear off without any risk whatever, under any circumstances, and no matter even if his compasses are not quite correct he can verify them by the land. You can run within a mile of the land without any danger whatever, but if the weather is N.E. and thick, and he has run say 100 miles, and he cannot verify his position, he ought decidedly to stand out even if he lose a day in his run.

398. That is a prudent shipmaster, of course. We believe that it is decided almost that a light is to be put upon Cape Nelson, but we are not considering the advisability of lighting up the Australian coast, but the question is, do you think it would be desirable to place a light upon the centre of King Island. Would it lessen the chances of vessels being wrecked, or lead them into danger?—In answer to that I can only say this, that if the wind is S.W. a man can see the light plain enough if he gets into the vicinity of King Island to be able to clear it under any circumstances; but in thick weather you would not see the light. Now this last time I was coming in I did not see the light at Cape Otway, though I was within two miles of it. I had five days thick weather and had no observation whatever, but I came in without any hesitation.

399. But if you instead of making the Otway had made King Island?—The ship would have been lost.

400. Would that light have helped to save you?—No, not in the least. With a gale of wind how could she have got off? Even if you are very smart, it takes at the very least an hour to reduce sail to close-reefed topsails. Now my ship would run twelve miles in that time, and by that time I should be in such dangerous proximity that nothing could save my ship, for I could not heave up upon either tack to clear the island. Suppose the light were upon Point Netherby, I could not clear it upon either tack, and could not clear the other points either, and before the ship would be under proper canvas I should not be able to get clear of it. I really do not see how it would be any good, it simply might induce captains of ships to run into danger, and when they saw the light it would be far too late to save any ship. Of course, that is only my opinion.

401. Of course, that is only what we ask; how long have you been out here trading?—The last thirteen years, backwards and forwards, continually through Bass's Straits up to Queensland and back again and round Cape Leuwin and up to India and back.

402. You have spoken of the passage out?—Yes.

403. Have you ever made the passage home to the westward of King Island?—Yes.

404. Would the light suggested upon Cape Netherby be of any use to you?—No, not the least.



Captain C. Grey,
continued,
12th Feb. 1875.

405. Captain Elmslie thinks it might be of advantage to shipping?—My experience is that with a southerly wind, even beating out going home, I would never leave the Australian coast.

406. But going home the Horn way?—I should never go so near King Island as to take advantage of the light, owing to the well-known current that there is there. You see if I am running out and going to the west of King Island I should only go close to the island if the wind was easterly, and if it was westerly it would be a most dangerous thing to do.

407. The Government desire to know what means to adopt that would save even only one ship?—I cannot honestly say that I think a light upon King Island would be any good.

408. You think it would be more likely to lead ships into danger than to save them?—I think so; I have been thirteen years upon this coast, and the other coasts as well, and I think that if a particular clause were put into the Board of Trade examination at home, that captains of ships should be asked about this polarization of the needle it would be a good thing.

409. You have a great experience and you know that it is necessary to make the land well over upon the Australian coast, but how are we to guide those captains who, for the first time in their lives, are put in charge of Australian ships; are they to be lost upon King Island?—But would a light upon King Island save them?

410. You spoke of thick weather and a gale of wind, now neither of them was wrecked at such a time, as you suppose; you spoke of such fine weather that a ship cannot get off the land and such thick weather that a light cannot be seen, now is not there something between the two when a ship may be saved?—I do not see it; I do not see, with that tremendous swell that sets upon the island, if there is not sufficient wind how could he get off?

411. Take the last vessel the *Blencathra*?—It was thick.

412. But he saw the Wickham light at twenty-five miles, and thought it was the Cape Otway?—I cannot say about that at all.

413. And then the *British Admiral* case, in which the captain was wrecked with his passengers, it appears that the weather was very squally, but not so thick but that a light would have been seen if it had been there?—But the question is whether it would have been of use if it had been seen. I do not know the particulars of the wreck, but I do not see that the light would have been of any use to him.

414. Would you be looked upon with suspicion as captain of a vessel if you took a cast of the lead when you got within sight of the land?—It is a general rule in my ship to take a cast the day before we make the land.

415. But would you be looked upon with suspicion by your officers or passengers if you did it?—I care very little about that.

416. Now taking the question of adverse winds, not the thick weather that you spoke of, but if the wind be to the eastward of north that you could not at all lay up to weather King Island in coming up from the westward to make your northing—do not you think with the wind heading you that shipmasters and officers in charge of vessels would be rather induced to stand on in the hope of making the light further to the southward?—Undoubtedly, for instance, in the English Channel there is a light at Ushant; with a wind to the east we always stand for that light because there is no danger. I think that is as plain an illustration as can be, there is the Lizard on the one side and Ushant on the other. It is just like Cape Otway.

417. But if the circumstances were different you would not think of going there?—No.

418. But supposing the light were upon the Netherby, it is not an analagous case, for you would scarcely run upon King Island with a fair wind. Would you run upon Netherby with a fair wind?—No, but I was speaking of a foul wind—an easterly wind. Of course, with a fair wind I would not think of making it.

419. But with a foul wind coming up to Melbourne King Island is a weather shore, and you would scarcely get there?—No, but then the light is of no use. I only use an illustration to show that ships would make a light if it were placed there.

420. Would not it be a great advantage to them to verify their position, if they do not go close enough to go into danger?—There is the lead to go by.

421. But if you have doubts of your compasses and have never seen the land, would not a light by night, or a beacon by day be a good thing to verify your position?—I do not exactly understand.

422. If you are coming up from the southward, and there is a strong light upon Cape Netherby, would it not be a great boon to you to say—"Here I am; there is the light upon the Netherby, there is King Island; I am going into danger"?—But we have very violent shifts of wind here, supposing one of them occur while I am looking for the light, what would become of me?

423. There are circumstances, of course, where nothing would save you?—Just so, and therefore I prefer to stick to my first position.

The witness withdrew.

Captain Robert Fullarton examined.

Captain Robert
Fullarton,
12th Feb. 1875.

424. You are not now in command of any ship, I believe?—No, I am Harbor-master at Melbourne.

425. Will you say what experience you have had?—I have made four or five voyages to England and back by way of King Island, and I was four or five years in command of the *Pharos*, Government steamer, knocking about King Island a good deal. I was also mate in several coasting vessels employed in the Portland Bay and Port Fairy trade, and have been as much as thirty days in contiguity to King Island at a stretch upon one occasion, and upon another, fourteen or fifteen days. I have passed many times upon both sides of it, both in sailing and in steamships.

[*Letter No. 75/115 was read to the witness. Vide Appendix C.*]

426. Will you, from the great experience you have had upon King Island and in the neighborhood, give us the advantage of your experience, and state what your opinion is?—I am of opinion, in the first place, that with a view of warning vessels of wreck upon King Island a light should be placed upon Cape Nelson to begin with—the one is the complement of the other. I think if a light is erected upon King Island at the same time the Victorian Government should certainly light Cape Nelson.

427. We are not in a position to speak upon that point—King Island is our specialty at the present moment, but you are of course at liberty to express an opinion?—Yes. I am of opinion that in some circumstances that light upon King Island would be an advantage as a beacon light no doubt, though not for the general purposes of navigating Bass's Straits and making the land. I consider of course that its great advantage to all shipping endeavouring to make Victoria would be to make the land upon the Australian coast, but if through misfortune, either bad steering or error in either latitude or longitude, they get out of their course, I think a light upon the south end of King Island would be useful, not upon Netherby Point. If erected upon any part of King Island it should be near Fitzmaurice Bay or Cataraque Point; and to make it an advantage to shipping it should have a distinct character from any light upon the Australian coast, or in any part of Victoria; but in advocating a light being placed there I must add that, while it is being done, the Victorian Government should add one at Cape Nelson, and that the sailing directions for this port should be revised by the Chief Harbor-master, or the proper authority, and masters should be warned to keep away from King Island as much as possible, and that the light should not be erected with the view of enticing vessels to the coast, for it is very dangerous, especially to sailing ships.

428. Then the light you propose upon King Island is to be only and simply a warning light, of so distinct a description that it could not be mistaken for any other?—Yes.

429. Why do you object to its being placed in the immediate locality of the danger where so many ships have been lost, as it is only a warning light?—I think one reason for not putting it upon Netherby Point is this, that Netherby Point is to the northward and inshore of many of the dangers to be warned against, while it is a recognised axiom that coast-lighting, and all sea lights or beacons, should be placed upon the most outlying danger, which would not be the case if a light were put upon Netherby Point.

430. Would it be upon the point you suggest?—There are no outlying dangers at Fitzmaurice Bay compared with Netherby Point. Besides, if it is erected in Fitzmaurice Bay, and the ship unfortunately found herself upon the lee shore, a ship could run to the east side of the island in comparative safety—she has ten miles of clear water to run. Then I may add, that if a light is exhibited upon any part of that coast, I presume that in erecting the light either upon Fitzmaurice Bay or on Netherby Point they would keep the present northern light; and, besides, it guides the Navarine rocks and the Harbingers. To put it upon New Year's Island would be simply nonsense.

431. But if the Netherby and the Wickham could be seen together it would be better than if you could only see one of them, which would be the case if you put it at Fitzmaurice Bay—it is thirty-four miles off?—I think it is thirty miles, and, therefore, they intersect at a radius of fifteen miles.

432. Would they be seen together in thick weather?—In thick weather the light is not of much use at all. The advantage to be gained is that Fitzmaurice Bay is nine or ten miles more to the southward, and would be picked up sooner by a ship coming from the south. It would have saved the *Blencathra* and the *British Admiral*, and probably the *Netherby* also, for those vessels all passed that point before the other. I think there are many advantages in favor of Fitzmaurice Bay. Then again it would illuminate all round, and light up the whole south end of the island as well, and would guide vessels that were unfortunately driven to go down there.

433. Would not the light encourage you to go through that southern passage?—I think a light anywhere there would encourage people to go there, which is to be deplored. It should be laid down almost as a necessity that people should make the Australian coast and not King Island. In fact I believe many shipmasters coming to this port are so ignorant of the Australian coast that they are frightened of being embayed between Cape Bridgewater and the Otway; and hence they take a middle course and make neither the one nor the other.

434. Of course the Board do not object to your giving any evidence as to lighting the Victorian coast, but our object is to know what steps to take to prevent wrecks upon King Island; so many people are set upon King Island without being able to help themselves?—Yes, that is a fact; and for that reason it is advisable to put a light there. No doubt many of the ships would have been saved if a beacon had been there—they would have adopted measures to clear the island.

435. We would point out to you that the wrecks have occurred near Netherby Point; and you state that those vessels would equally have been saved by a light at the south end, as they would by a light upon the Netherby?—Yes.

436. That appears doubtful, for it has been stated that the *British Admiral* would not have been saved if a light had been upon Netherby Point, close to her, for the weather was so dirty?—I thought it was said just now (and I heard it at the enquiry here) that the mate saw the land clearly before she got ashore. That being so, it was clear enough to see a light seven or eight miles off, upon the direct track, before he made Netherby Point, and the same in the case of the *Blencathra*.

437. If he had seen a light ahead of him it would have saved him?—Yes, or abeam of him.

438. Would it not have been more likely to save him if he had a light just where he went ashore?—No; I think if he had had a light to the south of him he would have had more time.

439. But if the light had been to the southward it seems doubtful whether either the *British Admiral* or the *Blencathra* would have been saved by it?—I think they would have been.

440. You do not think the New Year's Island to be a good place for a light?—No, I think not now. It might have been if you had no light at all and you were going to put one.

441. Now a light at the south end of the island would leave a large space in darkness; it would be shut off by Netherby Point, as Cape Wickham is shut off by the N.W. point of the island?—Before a man is cut off there he would be so embayed that he could not get out. The ships come from the southward.

442. No, they come in about N.E. by E. You acknowledge that the most weatherly point of a danger is the point to be lighted?—I say that it is an acknowledged axiom that a light should be exhibited as far to the seaward of a danger as you can get it—not in shore of it; and I would add, that to make that light as different as possible from any other, you should have two lights exhibited, something like the Lizard, and then there could be no mistake, for so many wrecks have taken place through mistake, that no light approaching a flash-light should be put upon King Island, because Cape Otway is a revolving light, and Cape Schanck is a flash-light.

443. What sort of light would you put?—Two fixed catadioptric lights of the first order, upon two distinct towers.

Captain Robert
Fullarton,
continued,
12th Feb. 1875.

Captain Robert
Fullarton,
continued,
12th Feb. 1875.

444. That is what you do suggest in reference to this letter ; a second light upon the west coast of King Island ?—Yes ; and I give it as my opinion that a light should not be exhibited on King Island till one is also simultaneously exhibited at Cape Nelson.

445. Do you think a light upon King Island, at any point, would induce shipmasters to make that land instead of the Australian shore ?—I think there is a great horror of King Island amongst shipmasters ; but in certain cases it might lead men there, say with N.E. winds ; but I think myself it would have a slight tendency that way. I think no doubt it would. All men are naturally inclined, where they know a well established light is to be found, to make it, and verify their position ; I should do so myself.

446. In navigating the west coast of King Island is there any beacon or land mark by which to fix your position in hazy weather ?—No.

447. Would not a lighthouse built in some position in the middle of the island act as a land mark by day ?—Of course if you make King Island you verify your position at any rate.

448. But if you do not know where you are, if a lighthouse of the first class were built, to act as a beacon by day and a warning light by night, would it be of a certain advantage ?—No doubt it would be an advantage to some extent, because the peculiar construction of all lighthouses would be marked upon the chart, and no doubt a man would be able to verify his position, but nothing beyond that.

449. There is no beacon upon the shore ; nothing to verify your position except the white sand patches ?—That is all, and they are not very well defined.

450. The sum total of your opinion is, that you suggest a second light, and that the position should be south ?—Yes.

451. Do you wish to suggest anything else ?—No. The land is gloomy ; a fog hangs about very often in westerly winds and westerly gales, but I do not think that upon this coast fog horns would be of any advantage.

452. Do you think that in the cases of the last three vessels, the *British Admiral*, the *Netherby*, and the *Blencathra*, if a light had been in the neighborhood of the wreck they would have been saved ?—Yes, if they could have seen it. I think the *Blencathra* would have seen it ; but as for a man who would mistake one light for another, it is hard to tell what he would have done.

453. It is not so very difficult to mistake a fixed light for a revolving one ?—No, not at a distance, if you do not take sufficient means to verify it.

The witness withdrew.

Captain Colin Brown examined.

Capt. C. Brown,
12th Feb. 1875.

454. You have not any ship at present ?—No. I have not commanded any ship since about the middle of 1857.

455. Will you give the Board an idea of what experience you have had between Europe and the Australian Colonies ?—I first came out to these colonies in 1842. I was then principally in the Tasmanian trade. There were no lights here then at all.

456. What experience have you had in the navigation of ships between England and Australia ; how many ships have you commanded ?—Three ships over about ten voyages.

457. Were those ships wood or iron ?—Wood.

458. You have not commanded a ship since 1857 ?—No. The middle of 1857 was my last voyage. That was upon the coast in my own vessel. I was in her two years upon the coast before I left the sea.

459. When was your last voyage from England ?—In 1850 or 1851.

460. Subsequent to Captain Saunders and Captain Woods ?—Yes. We were all in California together in 1850.

461. It is twenty-four years since you made a voyage from England ?—Yes.

[*Letter No. 75/115 was read to the witness. Vide Appendix C.*]

462. Have you ever been upon the west coast of King Island ?—I have made it frequently. I have sailed through the Berrima Channel two or three times.

463. Do you know the number of wrecks that have taken place upon the island ?—I believe eighteen or nineteen. I was in Launceston when the people from the *Cataraque* arrived there in 1844 or 1845. There were 414 people lost.

464. Taking into consideration that a very large number of ships have been lost, and eight hundred and five lives, can you suggest from your experience any means that will lessen the risk to vessels navigating that coast in future ?—I was always of opinion that a light upon the north end of King Island was sufficient, but experience has proved that it is not sufficient. The number of lives and the number of ships that have been lost there show that. I was examined nineteen years ago here before the Lighthouse Board. That was in 1856. They were then projecting lights, and they wanted the experience of captains of vessels to recommend where lights were required between Adelaide and Sydney. I recommended that light upon the north end of King Island, and there was great diversity of opinion then, when it was decided that the light should be upon the north end of King Island. A great many wanted it upon the New Year Island.

465. Under present circumstances, a light being upon Cape Wickham, which shows twenty-two miles, and there being no other light upon the west coast of King Island, do you think it at all desirable that a second light should be placed ?—I do, most decidedly. I think with our experience and the losses that have been there, in the face of such losses we cannot resist it, although I did not always think it necessary, but seeing that so many ships pick up there, it is necessary that there should be a light there. It will not appear as a high-road light, but it will stand as a danger light, either upon Point Netherby or somewhere there.

466. Supposing the Government erect a second light upon the west coast of King Island, would you, as a master of a ship—a careful master, taking every precaution in navigation—be induced to risk your ship by trying to make this light upon King Island in preference to one that may be on Cape Otway, or Cape Nelson ?—Certainly not. I never would, and never did attempt to make King Island a land-fall.

467. But would you be induced, under any circumstances, to do so ?—No, no light would induce me to make King Island. I should endeavour in running down my easting upon the Australian coast to keep

in the clear latitude between the two : there is a distance of forty-eight or fifty miles. There is plenty of room to run down in the clear latitude.

468. You have had a great deal of experience in the last twenty-four years trading here?—Yes, I have owned vessels here, and have always been connected with ships in marine surveying, and so on.

469. From your knowledge of the shipmasters who command ships in these days, do you think any of those men would endeavour to make a light upon King Island?—When I was going and coming out from England, the feeling always was to make the Cape Otway shore, and I do not think, as a rule, that captains of ships intend to make King Island, but they seem to make mistakes, and do it. I cannot divine why they do it.

470. Have you any experience in iron ships?—None.

471. Have you ever heard that the compasses, after running a course for two or three weeks at a time, become polarized?—I have heard that.

472. Do you think that is one cause of the ships being lost?—Yes I think so ; but still vessels coming all the way from England running down their easting have plenty of opportunity to know the error of their compasses.

473. But when they haul to the northward?—Then I understand that the error is less than it is when they are upon an eastern course, so I hear.

474. Then supposing your idea that you suggest—a second light upon King Island—be carried out, do not you think that might lead some ships into danger?—It might ; but I think it has come to this now, from the enormous loss of lives and property, that there must be a danger light placed there. I never was an advocate for a light there, as I always thought it would be a temptation to captains of ships to make King Island as a land-fall. I never would have thought of doing so. However, it is very clear that captains of ships do make it mostly inadvertently.

475. But supposing there is a light there, would it not induce them to make it?—If it induces them—but is it not done?

476. But would it not rather have a tendency to induce masters of vessels to make the island?—I think it might ; but of the two evils I think the less evil would be to put a light and chance it, and give them all the advantage of seeing the danger light when they come down upon the shore.

477. Without knowing their position?—Without knowing their position, and wherever the light is placed upon the west side, whether on Point Netherby or New Year's Island, it certainly must be made distinctive from the Otway and Cape Wickham. I do not know which the Board propose, but I should think a very powerful first-class stationary red light that cannot be mistaken.

478. Do not you know that a red light is a very difficult light to make out in a fog?—I know it is very difficult, and there is also an objection to having red lights now-a-days since ships carry red side-lights, since an officer of a ship seeing a red light might say carelessly—"Oh, that is a ship's light!" That makes it rather objectionable to have red lights. But then how is it to be distinguished from the Otway. Several ships have been lost it seems through the captains mistaking the light for the Cape Otway, which is a revolving light. Whether it be that it was obscured from the *Blencathra* by the hummocks upon his N.E. course, or whether it was the light clouds flying past it, I do not know, but he told me yesterday that the light was intermitting.

479. Did he tell you what distance he was off?—No, but upon the Australian coast there is a good shore to heave the lead upon, but it is not the fashion to do that now.

480. Do you think that Cape Netherby is the best place for a light?—I think in consequence of all the losses happening in that vicinity it would be certainly best to put a light there as a danger light—not as a directing light, or as a leading light.

481. Cape Wickham is not intended as a directing light?—No, but Cape Wickham is upon the point of an island.

482. Coming from England they never endeavour to make it, they only make it by chance?—They never should make it. I cannot understand it. I have been weighing it in my own mind, and I cannot understand it. I have always thought that a competent commander who judged a light would try to make a land-fall much further west ; no one makes King Island.

483. We have all to gain our experience ; some man must be in the command of ships for the first time?—Yes, men who have been in command for some time know how to get out of their difficulties.

484. Have you seen the new chart?—I see it is exactly half-way between New Year's Island and Stokes' Island—that is Point Netherby—fourteen miles from each ; it is the most westerly point of the island.

485. The idea is that a light on Point Netherby would be well within the range of a ship ; she also could see the Wickham light ; some shipmasters advocate Cataraque Point?—It is a matter of opinion, but I do not agree with them.

486. You think a point in the middle of the island would be preferable to the southern point?—Yes, I think so.

487. There is one point we would like to ask you upon ; you think that if lights were placed in any other position upon the Australian shore—the north shore—it would alter your opinion as to the light being placed upon the centre of King Island?—I do not think it would. When I was asked about the matter nineteen years ago, at Adelaide, I recommended a light upon Cape Nelson, which would be a guiding light into Portland Bay, and a light at Cape Northumberland, and also the promontory.

488. We are not directed to enquire into the necessity of re-lighting the Australian coast, therefore I have not gone into it?—I think a light upon Cape Nelson would be a fine thing for a man to calculate upon making as a land-fall, coming in at night-time ; but I know that is not within your scope.

489. What would lessen the risk of wrecks upon King Island?—I think a light upon Cape Nelson would do that, for a man at night could make for that light boldly before he came to the Otway.

490. If a light was put upon Cape Nelson do you think a light ought not to be placed upon King Island?—I think there ought to be both. I do not think a light upon Cape Nelson would be sufficient in the face of the losses ; one big ship tumbling in after another : it is fearful, and something ought to be done.

The witness withdrew.

Adjourned to to-morrow at Ten o'clock.

SATURDAY, 13TH FEBRUARY 1875.

Present:

Captain BARNARD, R.N., in the Chair;
 Captain Stanley, R.N., | Captain Payne, R.N.

Captain Daniel McCallum examined.

Captain Daniel
 McCallum,
 13th Feb, 1875.

[*Letter 75/115 (vide Appendix C) read to witness.*]

491. Will you give the Board some idea of what experience you have had in navigating vessels between Europe and Bass's Straits?—My experience in the matter has not been very extensive, as I have only made three voyages that way, between the years 1851 and 1854.

492. In command of what vessels?—I have not been that way since the year 1854.

493. You were chief officer then, were you not?—Yes, but I have been in command since. I was in the Australian Mail Steamer. I was in command in the *Storm Bird*.

494. Were you in command in any of the three voyages of which you spoke?—Yes, upon two of them I was in command.

495. Are you aware of the number of wrecks that have taken place from time to time upon the west side of King Island?—I know that there are a great number, but I could not specifically define them just now.

496. There is a list?—Commencing with the *Brahmin*, I know all the rest.

497. Will you give the Board the benefit of your opinion in suggesting the means that can be adopted to lessen the risk of wrecks thereon for the future?—I had an idea, at one time, that by removing the light from Cape Wickham to New Year Island it would have answered the purpose, but, upon reconsideration, I think another light is imperatively required further south, so as to take in the whole of the west coast of King Island.

498. Would you as a shipmaster, making the voyage to Bass's Straits, be induced, if the light were placed in the centre of King Island, to make that in preference to the mainland of Australia?—Decidedly not; I would not think of it.

499. Do you think it possible that a light placed as you suggest could be mistaken for the Cape Otway light?—No. Of course it would have to be a distinctive light.

500. Would you suggest what sort of a light?—Two lights.

501. In what position, perpendicular or apart from each other?—No, having two lights, both showing to the westward, one over the other.

502. Would not such a light be liable to lead ships into danger upon that coast rather than keep them off it?—My opinion is that very few shipmasters seek the west coast of King Island as a land-fall. They are there against their will.

503. Is there any other means that you could suggest that could be adopted with advantage to lessen the chances of vessels getting upon that coast?—No, I do not know of anything else.

504. Do not you think that if a light was placed at Point Netherby, that such a light would induce shipmasters to approach the island more frequently than they do at the presenttime?—I think not. Every ship that I have known to be lost has been there against his will, or had no idea of his position; but the ships have been all making the Australian coast, and have been set down either by the current or by an error in the compasses.

505. How fast do you think these currents set?—I have never been upon that coast.

506. Do you think that a light should be placed there in addition to any light upon the Australian coast?—No, I do not know that there is any great requirement for any light in addition upon the Australian coast, for I see by the chart that the soundings are all pretty regular.

507. You think there is no necessity for another light upon the Australian coast?—No.

508. Then your opinion is that a light should only be placed upon King Island?—That is all, I think, to meet the present requirements.

509. Where would you propose that the light should be placed?—I think Point Netherby, or in that locality. Then, working with the Wickham light, it would cover the whole south end of the island.

510. Do not you think that two lights perpendicularly, one over the other, would be likely to mislead. For instance, 150 feet apart from each other, at a distance of twelve or fourteen miles, do you not think the distance would be so small that it would be likely to confuse any vessel looking at them?—I think not. Of course they would have to be constructed so that the rays of one light would between them not intersect the other.

511. Would you have them both fixed lights, remembering that Wickham is a fixed light?—Yes, I would. Any colored lights there would be of no use on account of the fog and cloud with the westerly winds upon the land.

512. Have you considered the question of two lights as opposed to the idea of a single light of a different description from the other?—No, time is not an object. It would not be an object of half a minute, or quarter of a minute from the Cape Otway. It would have to be a light of very different character.

513. Supposing they were lit at the same height as Cape Wickham—that is about 280 feet, and you had a flashing light close down to call attention?—I think a flash-light, low down, would be very defective, for it would be intersected in a thick atmosphere. It is, of course, a matter of opinion. It might be, possibly, an improvement upon my own idea.

The witness withdrew.

Captain John Thompson, of the steamer *Otway*, examined.

514. Have you had any experience in navigating ships between Europe and Australia?—Yes, I have, but not in coming through the Straits. I always came to Portland or Launceston. Some years ago I was four voyages between Launceston and London.

Captain John
Thompson,
18th Feb. 1875.

[*Letter 75/115 read to the witness. Vide Appendix C.*]

515. Are you aware of the number of wrecks that have taken place upon the west coast of King Island?—Only from the reports in the papers.

516. From the experience you have had in navigating in Bass's Straits, and in the neighborhood of King Island, can you suggest any course or any means that should be adopted to lessen the risk of wrecks upon the west side of King's Island? I am very much of an opinion that a light of such a description that there could be no mistaking it, when it was once seen, would be an advantage.

517. In what position would you place that light?—I would not like to say where it would be better to put it, but I think it should not be put at the south-west extremity. It has been suggested that it might induce vessels to come this way. Now, there is some reason in that. There are some fool-hardy men who, probably, would attempt it.

518. Can you recommend a light to be placed in the middle of the island somewhere? I would not like to say in what position it should be; but I say, I think it would not be wise to put it at the S.W. extremity.

519. Taking into consideration the fact that Cape Wickham is established, and that it shows in fine weather twenty miles radius, would you put the other light in such a position that both might be seen together?—I think so, for this reason—though they both would be seen together in one direction, yet vessels very frequently might be out of the radius of the one light and still be within the other, so long as they were in danger of running on the island.

520. Suppose we put a light in the centre of King Island, do you think any shipmasters navigating in the neighborhood would be induced to make that light to verify their position in preference if they were bound to Port Phillip or to the mainland of Australia?—I scarcely think so; really I scarcely think they would.

521. Do you think a light placed in the centre of King Island would ever be mistaken for the *Otway*?—I think it would be advisable to place a light there so distinct that they could not possibly be mistaken. If it were distinctly seen I think it would be impossible to mistake it. I wish just to mention what has given me that idea is that I have been ten or a dozen times up and down the English Channel, and the English coast is very well lighted generally, with a bold shore and very few outlying dangers, and yet the Casket Rocks have three revolving lights. It has not been my experience that we ever attempted to make them, but in passing half a dozen times I have seen them, and then we 'bout ship and away. That was a danger-light, and we kept a long way off; and I think the same would apply here, for if a notice were given that this was a dangerous shore, with low outlying dangers, that would warn masters of ships that it was not a safe place.

522. Are there any other means that you would suggest to be adopted in addition to the light upon the centre of the island to prevent wrecks?—I do not know of any.

523. You say vessels would not be induced to make King Island in preference to the *Otway*?—I think not.

524. I do not suggest that King Island would be made as a land-fall; but putting it in another shape: Suppose they met with N.E. winds, or even northerly winds, do not you think a shipmaster would be induced to stand on to make his easting in the hope of picking up this light?—Possibly he might. Possibly some shipmasters would.

525. And by that means be driven nearer to the island than he otherwise would?—I think in some instances they would do so if there was a light.

526. You say you have never been upon the west coast?—I have never been there.

527. With your experience of the coast, I suppose you are aware of very sudden shifts of wind coming from the north to W. and W.S.W. bringing thick weather?—My experience of ten or twelve years along that coast regularly is that all sudden shifts come a good bit to the southward of west. It is more frequently S.S.W. if it is a sudden shift, even if it sometimes back a little to the westward afterwards.

528. Vessels standing on under these circumstances with a northerly wind inducing them to make King Island, this sudden change of wind to westward and S.W. would rather put him on a dead lee shore, would it not, especially if he was going on with any press of canvas. It would be some time before he could get his canvas in. Under these circumstances would not he be in a very awkward position?—Yes; he would be steering for the light.

529. I do not say steering for it, but keeping upon that tack because the light was there?—I have thought of that, but I have thought of this too, that ships never expect to be there, and there is now nothing to warn them off when they do get there.

530. But where it might save one it might induce twenty others to go there?—I do not think so. I do not think that shipmasters would generally do that. I am quite ready to admit that some would do it but not many, knowing that it was dangerous; and more particularly if it came thick, they would say "Well, it is a dangerous place."

531. Of course not experienced men, but might not strangers do it?—I think not many. Knowing that was a dangerous place, as soon as thick weather came they would say "It is no use."

532. But northerly winds, unless accompanied with rain, are not particularly thick weather?—Northerly winds, and particularly hot winds, are the clearest; you can see the greatest distance.

533. The thick weather about that locality is generally with easterly winds, is it not?—Yes.

534. And westerly winds bring thick weather, do they not?—Yes, for a short time only. Thick weather with westerly winds never lasts long.

The witness withdrew.



Captain James Lowrie examined.

Capt. J. Lowrie,
13th Feb. 1875.

535. Are you now in command of any vessel?—No, I am lately out of one.

536. Will you be good enough to state what experience you have had in the navigation of ships between Europe and Bass's Straits?—Not much, only two voyages from home; but many between this and Mauritius and Calcutta upon the same route. I have been twenty-three years at it. I believe I am one of the oldest here going to the westward, in sailing vessels and steamers as well.

[Letter No. 75/115 was read to the witness. Vide Appendix.]

537. Are you aware of the number of wrecks that have taken place upon King Island?—Yes, quite aware of it.

538. Will you be good enough, from the great experience you have had upon the coast, to suggest what means, in your opinion, can be adopted to lessen the risk of wrecks upon King Island in future?—My opinion, formed long ago is, that Cape Wickham light is in the wrong place. It should be upon the New Year's Island, if any light at all be upon King's Island.

539. As Cape Wickham is established and cannot for very important reasons be removed, since it acts as a light to vessels passing through the Straits from the eastward, are there any other means that you would suggest?—The other means is to erect a first-class light upon Cape Nelson, induce ships to go for a good bold shore, with 150 miles of coast without danger of any kind. To illustrate my opinion: in all my voyages, nearly 200, I never saw King Island but once, and that time I went on purpose to have a look at the light.

540. Now supposing a ship—from error in compasses, chronometer, stress of weather, or other circumstances, over which the most careful master had no control—was set on King Island, and quite unable to make this light on Cape Nelson first, what would you suggest could be done to keep him off King Island?—I suggest to keep the lead going constantly.

541. Supposing a light were placed upon the centre of King Island?—I cannot see any advantage it would be over the other.

542. Would it be liable to lead ships into danger?—I think so.

543. Had a light been placed in the centre of King Island as a warning light, what is your opinion with regard to the case of the *British Admiral* and the *Blencathra* being warned in time of their position, and to have had a chance of saving their ships?—It is just possible; but it is just possible it might have led other ships into danger in thick weather, when they would not have seen the light.

544. We speak of two vessels, the *British Admiral* and the *Blencathra*, about which the question has been asked you as to whether, if a light had been erected, it might not have warned those vessels clear of the coast?—It might have done so.

545. Are you aware of the wreck of the *Loch Leven*?—Yes, I was here at the time.

546. Do you know where she went ashore?—Yes, close under the light.

547. That light did not warn her or prevent her from going ashore?—No.

548. She had only left the Heads from Melbourne the day before?—That is all.

549. It has been asked of other witnesses whether vessels would be induced to make King Island, suppose there was a light upon Point Netherby, in preference to that of the mainland of Australia?—It would be very wrong if they were induced to do so. I would not be induced to make it.

550. Then suppose a light is there, and that you meet with adverse winds in coming up to the Otway, would not you if you wanted to ascertain your position be induced to stand on and make your easting if a light were erected there?—I should not like to do it. I would not like to approach that island in any way.

551. You would not be induced under any circumstances to make the land?—No, I would make the mainland under all circumstances, if the wind would permit me.

552. Have you seen the last chart of the coast from Cape Otway to Cape Northumberland?—No.

553. You speak of the lead as a remedy?—It is a guide but not a good guide upon the west coast.

554. The soundings upon the Australia coast are, I believe, as regular as in the British Channel?—I have not seen the chart, but I have come from Adelaide and come into Port Phillip Heads with a steamer by the lead alone without seeing anything, either an observation or land.

555. Have you navigated the Indian seas as well?—Yes.

556. And the China seas?—Yes.

557. And with the difficulties you have experienced in coming down from there, you are still of opinion that no light should be put upon King Island?—I am. I think the light upon Cape Wickham has led ships into danger.

558. Where should it have been?—Upon New Year's Island.

559. You would not take it away altogether?—No.

560. Would a light upon New Year's Island, in addition to the present light, be of any advantage? That is the place I would put it, if anywhere upon King Island.

560. You do think that you would have a second light?—No; I do not see that a light is required coming from the eastward. You have good charts and good soundings everywhere.

561. You state that you think the light upon Cape Wickham is a mistake?—I do.

563. And that it should have been upon New Year's Island?—Yes; and I have always thought so.

564. How do you reconcile that with your opinion that a light ought not now to be put upon New Year's Island; if a light was formerly necessary there, it is necessary now?—I think the light upon Cape Wickham should be put out, and one put upon New Year's Island, if any is put.

565. That is if any change is made you think that should be the change?—Yes.

566. Do not you then think the change is best to be made, or is it best to leave things as they are?—I think that change is best to be made.

567. If there had been a warning light in the middle of King Island, do you think the master of the *Blencathra* would have put his helm up as he did?—No, certainly not, if the light had been there.

568. Then would the light there have been detrimental?—No, certainly not; the more lights the better, I say.

569. If a light was put there, would it be an advantage or not?—Certainly it would be an advantage.

570. Then you would not recommend that coast to be still left in darkness and in danger, as it is at the present moment?—Anything to prevent loss of life. Capt. J. Lowrie,
continued,
13th Feb. 1875.

571. Then you are of opinion that a light should be there?—But I still insist upon this, that the mainland is the coast to make.

572. That is not what we have to enquire into—we have to enquire into any means to prevent the wrecks in future?—Then my answer is, the more lights the better, provided that they are distinguished the one from the other. There is only this to say that all those lights upon King Island would encourage men to go south.

573. Now how can you reconcile the two opinions you have expressed?—My opinion is simply this, that as you ask the question if a light was there would it possibly have prevented the loss of that ship, I say yes; but I say that the lights upon King Island would induce men to go further south, and there is no necessity for all those lights.

574. You think a light there would induce vessels to go out of their proper course?—I think so; but at the same time it might be the means of saving life.

575. It might?—Possibly it might.

576. It is only a danger that, while saving one ship, it might wreck a hundred?—I think so.

577. Every man who knows these seas knows that King Island is the most dangerous coast in the world?—I cannot understand how men go so far to the south; it is not a question of finishing the great circle, it only makes a difference of some half a dozen miles.

578. Perhaps that is accounted for to some extent by the fact that most of those ships that are lost there are new iron vessels; the magnetism of the ship is not settled, and a great deal is induced in coming to the eastward. That change is not allowed for, and therefore a ship steering N.E. only makes about an E. by N. course; that is the case with new vessels particularly, if not navigated by very skilful men?—That is my opinion, and that being so, the more need for them to make a good bold shore. I certainly say that if a light had been there possibly that ship might not have been lost; but that is not to say that it would not have led others into danger.

579. Are we to understand that, upon the general question of a light, you are opposed or do you approve of a light?—I am opposed to encouraging any man to go near King Island.

580. Then upon the general question, are you opposed to a light upon King's Island or do you approve of a light upon King Island at Netherby Point?—I oppose it. New Year's Island is the point where I would put it if I put a light at all.

The witness withdrew

Captain W. H. Lamond examined.

581. You are not now in command of any vessel?—No, I have not been in command since 1858.

582. What was your last vessel?—The *White Swan*.

583. Will you be good enough to state what your experience has been in navigating ships between Europe and Bass's Straits?—I came here first in 1847, and I made six or seven voyages from London in the *Nelson* and the *Adelaide*.

584. Were those ships wood or iron?—Wood.

585. The object of this Board sitting is that the Government are desirous of obtaining the evidence of shipmasters and others as to the best means to be adopted to lessen the risk of wrecks on King's Island; are you aware of the number of wrecks that have taken place upon this island?—Yes, there were no lights except upon Cape Otway at the time I came.

586. Will you suggest from the experience you have had, what course should with the best advantage be adopted to lessen the risk of wrecks upon King Island for the future?—I agree with Captain Payne as far as I have heard. I do not see the necessity of the light upon Cape Netherby. I may state that of seven voyages I made here I never saw King Island; I always made the mainland.

587. Supposing a ship, from deviation of compasses, error of chronometer, stress of weather, &c., were thrown upon King Island, would a light placed there be of any advantage?—If a man runs and sees the light, of course it would be an advantage.

588. It would fix his position?—Yes; of course, he may go staggering along and not know his position, and if he sees a light of course it would warn him.

589. You are opposed to a light in the centre of King Island?—I think so. I do not see any necessity for it.

590. Will you suggest any other means to prevent wrecks in future?—The only means I could suggest would be that masters of vessels in the trade should make the land away to the westward. From my experience I do not see any need of their being down there; of course we know that there is a current there, and it was known in my time, so that the danger is not great, the current generally sets off, there is no indraft along the western coast till you get past Adelaide into the Bight.

591. We are talking of King Island principally, and the means of preventing wrecks there?—I say that to make the land to the westward somewhere about Cape Nelson is the best means.

592. But if a man is driven upon the island?—If he is driven upon the island of course he must take the best means he can to get off it.

593. You would not help him?—Of course I would help him.

594. In what way?—If he does not know his position he ought to heave to till he does ascertain it, or stand to the northward till he makes the land at the Otway.

595. How would you help him?—I would not put a light there to help him to run upon a lee shore. I do not see the necessity of it.

596. Supposing a ship is out of position, and assuming that a light may be of use to that one ship, and assuming that that light was placed there, is it your opinion that that light may induce a great number of other vessels to approach the island, in order to make the light at times?—If they could not get up to the Otway they would do it with less dread, of course, knowing the light was there.

597. It would draw them towards King Island?—Of course it would.

598. And in your opinion it is a disadvantage to attract vessels towards King Island?—I do not see any advantage in it; it is out of their track, unless they have had strong northerly winds, and cannot get up.

Captain W. H.
Lamond,
13th Feb. 1875.

Captain W. H.
Lamond,
continued,
13th Feb. 1875.

599. You have stated that if a man runs and sees a light, of course that light would be an advantage?—Yes.

600. Would not that apply to a light upon Point Netherby, if a man, by chance, finds himself there and sees the light?—Of course it would apply.

601. Do you think there is no chance of seeing the light now, or less chance of seeing the land than if no light were there?—He would be more likely to see the light than the land, for there is generally a haze hanging over King Island, as I am informed, for I have never seen King Island in my life. I have never found any difficulty upon this coast at all. I was in command of a steamer two years in the Adelaide trade, before there was a light upon Cape Northumberland.

602. You have read, no doubt, the reports in the papers, and have known the circumstances that have led to the wrecks. Now, upon the general question, are you opposed or not to a light being erected upon Netherby Point?—As a beacon to warn them off, if they get down there by mistake or accident, it might be there; but you might light the whole coast all through the Straits, and put a light upon every island.

603. Are you aware in the route round England, Ireland, and Scotland you do not get out of sight of a light?—Yes, I am quite aware of that, and I have been very much confused by it round by Grisez; and all round there it is very confusing with the fishermen's lights.

604. Touching the last wreck—of the *Blencathra*—having seen the Wickham light, and mistaken it for the Otway, would a strong warning light upon Point Netherby have been the probable means of saving the ship?—Of course, if the ship had sail enough on to keep off the land, if he had seen the light in time. For instance, he said he saw the light twenty-five miles off; then he had plenty of time to wear or tack or make sail, or do anything he liked.

605. He took the Wickham for the Otway light?—Yes, and then passed it and had it upon the beam.

606. If he had a strong warning light upon his beam?—Of course no man would run upon the light.

607. Would it have been an advantage to him?—He would have known he was not in the fair way of the channel.

608. Would it have saved his ship?—It might.

609. In the case of the *British Admiral*, do you think there would have been any chance of her being saved if there had been a light upon Netherby Point?—Of course no one can doubt that she might have been possibly saved.

610. Do you remember the wreck of the *Loch Leven*?—Yes.

611. The light was very nearly right ahead of her?—Yes.

612. Did the light save the vessel?—The captain did not see the light; he shut it in with the land, as far as I recollect the evidence.

613. He was wrecked to the eastward of it?—He was wrecked to the eastward of it, and it appears they did not see the light at all; the light is so placed that there is a bluff or headland that shuts it in.

614. Just where he was wrecked there was a bluff, but three or four miles off the light could have been seen?—I suppose they were all asleep then.

615. But upon the general question are you opposed to the light upon King Island?—I do not see any necessity for it.

616. But might it have saved any of the lives that have been lost?—I do not say anything against that.

617. Consider that trade is increasing, and that for one ship now in a few years there will be fifty?—I do not think that any prudent man would make a lee shore of King Island.

618. You, as a navigator, would not violently oppose a light being put upon the west coast of King Island?—No, I would not oppose a light being put anywhere.

619. You do not advocate it?—No, but I think it is quite unnecessary; the light upon Cape Wickham was not there in my time, but still I never saw King Island. In those days we did not run our ships right upon a lee shore; if we were in doubt we hove-to or shortened sail.

The witness withdrew.

Capt. William Shepherd, of the ship *Romanoff*, examined.

Captain William
Shepherd,
13th Feb. 1875.

620. Will you state to the Board the experience you have had in navigating ships between Europe and the Australian Colonies?—Since 1853. I came out first in that year.

621. Have you been navigating from Europe ever since?—I have been twelve or thirteen voyages here; other ten I was at Shanghai.

622. The object of this enquiry is stated in a letter addressed to the Chairman of the Board.—[*Letter 75/115 was read to the witness. Vide Appendix C.*] Are you aware of the number of wrecks that have taken place upon the west coast of King Island?—I have never counted them, but they are a large number.

623. From the experience you have had, what means would you suggest can now be adopted to lessen the risk of wrecks upon King Island for the future?—I should think another lighthouse about half way down the island, or somewhere thereabout, would be a great advantage to us coming along easterly with thick weather and northerly and N.E. winds.

624. Will you look at the chart and give your opinion as to the position you would suggest for a lighthouse, taking into consideration there is a light already placed upon Cape Wickham?—As far as coming along myself is concerned, taking the soundings into consideration, the lighthouse ought to be pretty well down the island, so that we could see it well along the coast northward. I have gone on both sides of the island, and I can see Cape Wickham light well off the northern end, but I have never seen it and the Cape Otway light together, because it is very often rainy thick weather upon the Otway. We never expect to see those lights over fifteen miles.

625. Supposing that a light was placed in the middle of the island, are you of opinion that ship-masters making for Bass's Straits would be induced to make King Island in preference to the mainland of Australia?—I should think not, unless they were strangers. Of course, if I were bound for Sydney I would not go so high up as I would if I were bound for Port Phillip.

626. But would shipmasters attempt to verify their position by that light instead of by the Otway? —I would not do that; it is only for a danger light. With our iron ships now-a-days we cannot trust our compasses after making easting. My opinion is that all iron ships ought to have wooden mizen masts. I asked for it in my new ship, but I could not get it.

Captain William
Shepherd,
continued,
13th Feb. 1875.

627. Is there any other plan that you can suggest to lessen the risk?—I do not think so. I have been knocking about up and down the China seas, without lights, ten or eleven voyages, and there is no more danger about this point than if there is a north wind and thick weather. Up to longitude 139° there is no danger with the set, but after that the danger comes in. I generally steer for Moonlight Head and fetch up about sixteen miles west of the Otway. After northerly winds there is a set round Cape Northumberland. I generally cross latitude 40° at 141°. If I go further in, which I have done two or three times, I get into lighter weather.

628. Which way does the set make?—At 139°; but that has been with strong northerly and N.W. winds. The set runs about S.E. We find about thirty miles in the last day's run of 240 miles. Especially is that the case when the tide sets in too. But we would never think of fetching King Island; we always fetch the mainland, especially when the wind is northerly, fetch Moonlight Head and then with the strong set we just fetch the Otway.

629. But what would a shipmaster without your experience do?—They go mid-channel, and if I had gone mid-channel myself, several times I must have made King Island. One voyage I had five or seven days' strong north winds about 41° south, and I found myself a good thirty or forty miles more south than I expected, and I came up the west side of King Island in 45 or 46 fathoms soundings. I came up by the soundings.

630. And if you had been where you thought you were, you would not have got bottom?—No. I have gone both ways. I have gone south and made Pyramid Island; it is a very good passage with certain winds.

631. On the occasion on which you were first upon King Island, did you see the land?—No, I came up in the night.

632. Then if a light had been upon Netherby Point?—I should have seen it.

633. You see 46 fathoms brings you within ten miles of the shore?—Yes; I was coming up, going fast, and I was drifted both to the southward and to the eastward, otherwise I would not have tacked so far over as this. I would not have gone so far south as it was, only I had four or five days of it, and I was not perfectly certain.

634. Are other ships liable to the same accidents?—Yes; ships in the China trade always take soundings.

635. How many voyages have you made in iron ships?—This is my first iron ship; the rest were composite. I was in the *George Thompson* before.

636. Is she composite?—Partly composite, with iron beams.

637. Iron ribs?—No; no ribs, only beams.

638. Is the *Romanoff* iron?—All iron. I came to Australia in a ship called the *Gwalior* before.

639. You spoke of iron ships?—Yes, generally.

640. Finding yourself so far to leeward of what you expected to fetch, might not that error be partly due to error of compasses?—No, not this time, and not the year before, for we are particularly careful with the compasses. I always made to windward.

641. You think that being set to leeward in that way is entirely due to the current, and not to any error of compass?—No. My last ship I had ten years, and I knew her compasses every way; and it is not on one voyage alone, but a voyage with north winds there is a set. Again, I have come with west or south-west winds, and there was no set.

642. Then you find from your experience that the currents follow the direction of the winds?—Yes; it is very strong coming out of that big bight. We sometimes get 70 miles in our favor by the current from the Cape here.

643. The only suggestion you have to offer is a second light upon King Island. Yes, that is all. I would like to say that I corrected my compasses the afternoon I made the Otway; and we had the sun in the evening, and after I rounded the Otway. I do not know whether it was the influence of the land or what; but if I had steered the course I made for coming in, I would have gone right on shore. I had hauled to the northward previously, and my compasses altered after the alteration of my course.

644. Supposing a light were put at Point Netherby, what is your opinion as to the general practice of the captains of vessels—knowing that a light was there, and that they were to the southward—would not they try to make that light?—I should think not; we are always afraid of the set. Any one who knows anything about it is afraid of coming down there at all.

645. But lights being placed upon a coast give confidence to a man approaching it?—Undoubtedly, if we were beating about.

646. Under those circumstances would it not rather induce men to try and make it? No, not any one who knew about the current.

647. It would not induce men to do so, more especially as you say the west coast is the most dangerous part of any navigation you know?—If we were always sure of the current, we would not think so much of it.

648. But taking into consideration that the currents are very changeable, and you cannot place reliance upon them at all?—They set to the eastward sometimes.

649. Have you ever experienced easterly winds?—Never, except we came under the influence of the land.

650. Assuming all the dangers that you speak about, and the uncertainty that is likely to attend upon the sets, do not you think that, if a light were placed at Point Netherby, a shipmaster trying to find out where he was would (especially with northerly winds) approach the coast of King Island with boldness and say, "Well, here are two lights! I will try and make one"?—I do not think so. He is going to leeward of his course.

651. The question assumes adverse winds?—Yes.

652. All ships try to make as much easting as they can coming in?—Yes, till they get to longitude 143° or thereabouts.

Captain William
Shepherd,
continued,
13th Feb. 1875.

653. Of course if you get a westerly wind it is fair, and then the question does not arise. But with adverse winds, if a light were placed there, would it give confidence to a man making the coast, and would it induce him to go in and try and make one or the other of the lights, to verify his position?—I do not think it; I think they would try to get off. It is always to leeward of the port. A stranger might do it.

654. A stranger there would be led, with the desire to make the light, into one of the most dangerous coasts that you have experienced?—There would not be so much danger if the light was seen upon a clear night, but it is very often in a fog. It is only a danger light. No man of any sense would go down there to look for the light.

655. I do not say he would; but being in the vicinity, and, according to his idea stretching on, he would make the light by continuing to make his easting; would not that bring him closely into proximity to danger, and rather induce him to run on to verify his position?—I do not think it. I think he would tack ship and stand to the north; she is in a better position for Sydney or Port Phillip. Only the man who was driven down there, and did not know of it, would get benefit from it as a danger signal. None of us would ever try and go down there to make the light, for all the Sydney ships go near to be reported at the Otway.

656. From your experience upon the coast, do not you know that very sudden shifts of wind take place after it has been blowing from the northward?—Yes; and sometimes to the southward very strong.

657. Would it be advisable, with a light placed there, under those circumstances, with sudden shifts of wind likely to occur, to go near that coast?—No, not so near as that. We are careful not to get upon the low land on the other side of Moonlight Head on account of those sudden shifts.

658. You think there would be no risk at all of a ship being caught on the west coast of King Island trying to make the land under those circumstances?—No; no man who knows anything about it would ever try to make King Island. He loses on his passage every way. He would keep north of 40°.

659. He would go upon the other tack?—Yes, long before then, in case of strong westerly gales.

660. About four or five vessels in that vicinity, we are told, were trying to make the land?—I do not think so.

661. But they are driven down in that locality?—Yes; a light would be only just a guide to them not to come too near.

The witness withdrew.

Adjourned to Monday next at Ten o'clock.

MONDAY, 15TH FEBRUARY 1875.

Members present:

Captain BARNARD, R.N., in the Chair;

Captain Stanley, R.N.,

Captain Payne, R.N.

Captain Walter Wright, of H.M. Customs, examined.

Capt. W. Wright,
15th Feb. 1875.

662. How long have you been in the Customs service?—For the last twenty-one years.

663. Will you be good enough to tell the Board what has been your experience in navigating ships between Europe and the Australian Colonies?—My first appearance was in Sydney in 1845, in command of a ship, the *Enterprise*, of Liverpool.

664. How many years have you had experience?—Between eight and nine years between Europe and the Australian Colonies.—[*Letter 75/115 (vide Appendix C) read to the witness.*]

665. Are you aware of the number of wrecks that have taken place upon the coast of King Island?—Getting my numbers from the papers, I believe about nineteen during the number of years specified there, that is upon King Island altogether, without reference to the west coast particularly.

666. A list has been given to us, but as it is not an official list it may not be correct. From your experience what means can you suggest to be adopted to lessen the risk of wrecks upon King Island?—Most certainly I would take the earliest means of issuing fresh sailing directions. I mention that first, because I think it is a very necessary and very simple thing, and can be easily accomplished within a very short time.

667. Anything else?—Particularly in these sailing directions I would urge upon captains to make the mainland; point out the horrors, and so on, of King Island as much as possible, both from the outlying dangers and also currents; I have been there.

668. Is that all; have you any other suggestions to make?—I would also suggest that there should be another lighthouse erected as speedily as possible somewhere upon the coast between Cape Northumberland and the Otway.

669. But King Island is our subject; we will take any evidence you give, but King Island is pointed out as the subject of our investigation?—Would the question narrow itself to this—a light or no light?

670. We ask you to suggest any plan to lessen the risk of wrecks upon King Island?—The means that I suggest is one. I also think a more searching investigation into the causes of wrecks that have occurred should be made. I do know that it is a very unpalatable thing to find fault with persons, and very easy to be wise after the event has occurred, but one of the events in particular has been most outrageous. I think if there were lights on all the points upon King Island that would not prevent wrecks.

671. What is your opinion of placing a second light upon the west coast of King Island?—Should the Government have decided upon putting one there?

672. We ask you?—As to the necessity or otherwise?



673. The words are "the advisability"?—I very much incline to think that, if any captain of a ship could so far mistake his business or his duty as to mistake a fixed light upon Cape Wickham for a revolving light upon Cape Otway, if a light is placed upon any of the points further to the south-west, he is just as likely to err also and lose his ship. There is no harbor or anything down there; in fact, to use the common old phrase, "no man has any business there." He should attempt to make the land before he gets so far to the eastward.

a Capt. W. Wright,
continued,
15th Feb. 1875.

674. Supposing a ship making the passage between the Cape of Good Hope and the Australian Colonies, from error in chronometer, error in compasses, or other causes, and gales of wind, could get no sights for two or three days before approaching the Australian coast to verify her position, and they are driven too near King Island, would not a second light—a warning light—upon the island be of great advantage to a man to verify his position?—If that man would only take the trouble to satisfy himself, when he made the light, what it was; but I have known instances where they would not take the trouble. They took it for granted that that was the light that ought to have been seen, and away they go. I came from the Cape of Good Hope on my last voyage in a steamer, and then it was I sighted the island, and under somewhat similar circumstances to what you mention; the steamer broke down, the wind was from the northward, and had been for more than a week.

675. You sighted King Island?—I sighted King Island.

676. In the daytime?—In the daytime.

677. Supposing it had been night instead of day; what would you have said if there had been a flashing light upon Cape Netherby to verify your position?—No, I was not so far to the south as Netherby.

678. You saw the light upon Cape Wickham?—No. I think the light was not in existence then; but I depend more upon latitude than upon lights, and I think shipmasters should think more of the latitude.

679. Our object is to find some means to lessen the risk of wrecks upon King Island—what has gone by cannot be helped; but trade is increasing rapidly, and is carried on in large iron ships, whose compasses become polarized from steering the same course three or four weeks together, and they go upon King Island, and we want to know some means to guard against it, and give them some chance of getting away from the coast?—Then, I say, by all means put a second light upon King Island; but I do it in a negative point of view altogether, for I think the whole of those wrecks have arisen from sheer carelessness, hard though it seems to say.

680. Take the last case—the *Blencathra*. It appears that she saw the Wickham light, bearing about N.E., and she took the light, at a distance of twenty-two miles, for the Otway—a revolving light. If a light had been placed—a warning light—upon the middle of King Island, in the neighborhood of Currie Harbor, or the middle of the island, when she bore up, having made that mistake, would a light there have been of any service to her?—I am not reasoning from the evidence; and I say, where they were, I scarcely think it would have been of any service for them. He mistook the light upon Cape Wickham for the Otway. In all probability he would have mistaken this light for Cape Wickham.

681. If this was a strong flashing light, different from either of the other lights, what then?—I admit that a light might be very serviceable.

682. We want to know some means of preventing such a wreck as the last one?—Then I go back to my first suggestion, and urge that the captains should be induced to make the land earlier.

683. There is no doubt about that being desirable. Go back to the *British Admiral*; do you know where she was wrecked?—I understand not far from the *Blencathra*.

684. Have you ever been upon the coast and seen the position of the wrecks?—No, I came round the south end, and anchored in one of the coves.—[*The place of the loss of the "British Admiral" was pointed out upon the chart.*]

685. She was lost upon Waterwitch Rocks. The first point that was seen of the land was in the middle watch, by the first mate; he saw the land, over the lee gangway, before she struck; is it not possible, under these circumstances, that, if there had been a light, he would have seen it at some distance off?—Yes; and by the same mode of reasoning, he would have seen the breakers, or heard them at any rate.

686. They were three miles off, to leeward; the wind was S.W., upon the starboard quarter; he put his helm down, to bring the ship round, and went right into the rocks; now if there had been a light there, he being upon the look-out for the land, might he not have brought-up in time?—Unquestionably he might.

687. Therefore, if there had been a light, would it not have been of service to him?—I think it would. I do not for one moment mean to say that a light should not be placed there; and, if you ask me if a light would not be useful, I think so; but, at the same time, I should prefer using the simple means that I suggest. A lighthouse cannot be built in a day; time must elapse; and I think that new sailing directions, with my suggestions, might be done almost immediately. I think that notice should be sent home at once, and that by telegraph if possible, advising of this wreck, and the enquiries being made as to this lighthouse, urging the captains to make the land sooner.

688. With regard to sailing directions, are you of opinion that shipmasters in charge of large ships trading to Victoria and Bass's Straits, are not generally aware of the danger of King Island?—I think they are as a rule, or else we should hear of more wrecks; certainly the wrecks are the exceptions. We have so many commanders who take so much interest in their ships, and they come here safely, and when we hear of these accidents—though I think that is too mild a term to apply to them—I don't think the community should be put to expense and anxiety, and have their feelings harrowed, through nothing else but neglect.

689. Supposing the Government decide upon placing a light upon Netherby Point, or the middle of King Island, do you think that shipmasters would be induced to risk their ships upon that coast with the chance of verifying their position by that light in preference to the Cape Otway light, or any other upon the mainland?—Certainly not. I think the majority of ships' captains have better sense. I do not see any absolute necessity for a light upon King Island; but, at the same time, I think there is no harm in putting it up. It may be beneficial, even if it saves only one life.

690. You say, you do not see the absolute necessity of putting that light upon Netherby Point?—I do not.

Capt. W. Wright,
continued,
15th Feb. 1875.

691. Then, if you do not see any necessity for it, you cannot possibly see that any good can be derived from a light there, for, if any good can be derived there must be necessity for the light?—By the same mode of reasoning we might put a light upon every island in the ocean. Upon St. Paul's Island, or the Crozets, or anywhere.

692. If wrecks occur there we should?—They may occur there; we cannot say what wrecks do not take place in these exposed places; we have many ships to account for.

693. You say that there is no absolute necessity for a light, and yet you admit that such vessels as the *British Admiral* and the *Blencathra* might have been saved by it?—I say they might have been saved, or they might not. I say that a man stupid enough to mistake the fixed light upon Cape Wickham for the revolving light upon Cape Otway, is also stupid enough to mistake the new light for the Wickham.

694. It is not at all unnatural for a man to mistake a fixed light for a revolving light?—I can understand it, and make every allowance; but I say that a man seeking a light jumps to the conclusion that that is the light he is looking for, or ought to be looking for, and he takes it for granted without taking the trouble to ascertain it.

695. You observe the position of the Cape Wickham light is shut off by Whistler Point—that is what appeared to be Cape Wickham light—he shut it in by land—he could not verify his position if the light was shut in, and he had no reason to suppose that that was shut off by mists, or simply an indistinct view for that particular time, and then, when it was too late, he found his mistake?—I do not think it is possible for human beings to provide against every error and mistake that every careless or foolish person chooses to make. I do not think it at all possible, speaking in a general way; I think as a matter of sentiment only, not as a matter of theory or experience; I apprehend that one life is of more value to the community than all the lights you can put—that is merely a matter of sentiment, and, therefore, I would say, if it may save a life, put a light. But, if I am navigating the coast, and I am asked, “Do you want the light there?”—I say, “No.”

696. Because you are going from point to point, and do not want to verify your position. But if you had come 12,000 miles, and never had an opportunity of verifying your position by land—depending only upon compasses and chronometers which may be wrong—you might be, in 12,000 miles, 20 or 30 miles out, and might be glad of a light to verify your position?—I speak as a man having experience in the long voyage, both in sailing vessels and steamers.

697. If our own coast were lighted up with more lights than at present, would it induce shipmasters to make their landfall more to the westward than they do at present at Cape Otway?—Certainly, I think so.

698. Then, under the circumstances, if it would induce the masters of ships to make the landfall more to the westward, do you think there is a necessity, even then, of a light upon King Island?—I do not see the necessity of a lighthouse there, and I put it very mildly when I say that when a man has made a mistake he sees the mistake may occur to others, and I then say, “Well, I do not see any harm of it.”

699. If that goes into the broad question of a light upon King Island, or not upon King Island, I suppose the more lights you have the better—if it was lighted every ten miles the better; but if, on the contrary, our own coasts were lighted up, so as to induce shipmasters to make a landfall more to the west than Cape Otway, would there be any necessity for this lighthouse?—None whatever; I do not see any; and I really think that if the coast be lit it would be better. I would like this particular point mentioned in the sailing directions, not in general terms, but particularly. I think only one vessel has been lost upon the mainland upon our own coast, I think only one, and that was the *Schomberg*.

700. There have been two others, one a small vessel running to the west, and the other a French barque, between Cape Otway and Moonlight Head?—I have no hesitation in saying that there has been very great carelessness in navigation.

701. That is the very thing we want to guard against?—Then punish the people who are careless.

702. We cannot punish people who are drowned?—No; but I should be very sorry to have such evidence brought up against me as has been brought forward in some of the cases of these wrecks, for I consider that many of those wrecks have arisen from sheer carelessness on the part of those in charge.

The witness withdrew.

Captain Robert Geddes Rae, of the ship *Sea Arrow*, examined.

Capt. R. G. Rae,
15th Feb. 1875.

703. What is the *Sea Arrow*?—A three-masted schooner.

704. Will you be good enough to give the Board some idea of what your experience has been in navigating ships between Europe and Bass's Straits?—Very little; but my experience between Mauritius and India and China has been pretty large. I have been sailing to these colonies for twenty-five years.

705. The object of this enquiry is contained in the following extract from a letter addressed to the Board. [*The same was read to the witness. Vide Appendix C.*] Are you aware of the number of wrecks that have taken place upon the west coast of King Island?—I am.

706. And from your experience, what course would you suggest to be taken with best advantage to lessen the risk in future?—I think that another light should be placed upon King Island.

707. Will you have the kindness to look at the chart, and give a general idea of where you would suggest it?—At Cataraque Point; to be a light of the first magnitude, so as to cut well in with the Cape Wickham light.

708. Are you aware of the distance between Cape Wickham light and the point you indicate?—About twenty-five to thirty miles, I suppose. It is thirty miles.—[*The witness measured the same upon the chart.*]

709. Do you think that a light placed there, to cut in with the Cape Wickham light, even of the first magnitude, would be likely to be seen sixteen or seventeen miles off in a dark night?—Yes, I think so.

710. In such weather as you have there?—Except it was a thick night.

711. It is on thick nights you know that vessels generally go upon shore?—Yes, it is; but a ship is just as likely to be down by Cataraque Point as further north. My argument is that, if a man is running to the eastward in thick weather four or five days, does not get any observations, does not know his

position, makes allowance, as he thinks, for the current that he thinks is running at the same time, he may be much further south than he anticipates; and I think that if a light were placed there, if it blew a gale of wind, it would show him that he might go through the south channel with safety, because this light would show that it would take him clear of every danger in the channel.

Capt. R. G. Rae,
continued,
15th Feb. 1875.

712. Would a light placed upon that Point Cataraque induce shipmasters to endeavour to make it to verify their position, in preference to one upon the Australian coast?—I do not think so.

713. Do you think a light there would induce shipmasters to stand closer to the island?—I do not think it would induce them to do so. I think that, in case of their making a mistake, which has been done, as we all know, unfortunately, they would be very likely to see this light, if they were coming in from the west and were too far south. I can easily understand a man making the Wickham light, far out to sea, and just seeing it, and supposing it to be a revolving light with a heavy sea on, and thinking he is up near the Otway, for the lift of a ship at sea at a distance will often make it appear like a revolving light. I have often found that in my experience.

714. Can you offer any other suggestion that could be adopted with advantage to lessen the risk of wrecks?—I think there ought to be a light upon Cape Nelson as well, and I think a light being placed upon Cape Nelson would induce shipmasters to make our own coast instead of keeping far down south.

715. Have you been through the south passage?—I have.

716. Do not you think that if you put a light on Point Cataraque you would also want one upon the South Point, which is a very nasty point—it is a low point—the land suddenly descends, and in the sailing directions there is special mention of it?—I simply say that it might be a guide to him in case he was placed there, instead of going ashore, to run his ship through the south channel.

717. Have you thought of this—that, in the event of a light being put upon Netherby Point, a vessel might stand more down south, and there are no more dangers when she is a little to the south of Netherby Point, for the coast is all bold, so that having been once guided by that light she would be in no danger if she went down south, even if there be no light there?—If a man is caught in a W.S.W. wind under a press of canvas, he might run down to the southward instead of trying to weather the danger to the northward.

718. Have you taken into consideration that the wrecks have all occurred in a peculiar manner about Netherby Point—that though it is possible for the ship to make the land further south, they do not do so?—You do not know how many ships make the land down south that have not been wrecked. I know myself, coming from the westward, I have never once in my life time made King Island unless I was forced there.

719. But every additional mile you go south you lessen the chance of making it; she may get far south enough to make Netherby Point, but the further down you go to the south the less useful would the light be, for vessels do not get so enormously out of their reckoning?—There is only thirty miles, and a man might be that amount out. I certainly agree with the last witness, that shipmasters ought to be induced to make our own coast instead of King Island, and I think a light upon Cape Nelson would induce them to do it. I have always endeavored to make the land about Moonlight Head, because it is bold land and there is no danger.

The witness withdrew.

Captain William Sydserrf examined.

720. Are you in command of any vessel at present?—No.

721. You have been a shipmaster?—Yes.

722. Will you be good enough to state to the Board what your experience has been in navigating ships between Europe and Bass's Straits?—I have only come that way once from Europe, but I have been round several times from the Mauritius and China, and in passing between Adelaide and Sydney, I went through there twice in the south entrance in the beginning of 1849.

723. Through Bass's Straits?—Through the south passage, and once again I went through in about 1863 or 1864 in command of a vessel. I was not in command the first two times I went through there.—[Letter 75/115 (vide Appendix C) was read to the witness.]

724. Are you aware of the number of wrecks that have taken place from time to time upon that side of King Island?—No, but I know that there have been a large number.

725. From the experience you have had in the navigation in that neighborhood, what means would you suggest to be now adopted to lessen the risk of wrecks for the future?—If anything was to be done I should propose a light upon the extreme south point—Stokes's Point—if a light could be got high enough, say 600 feet, it would then cut the radius of the present light at a distance of about seventeen miles from the shore.

726. Would not a light 600 feet high be liable to be taken for a bright star, or to be obscured by fog?—I think not, if you particularize the light. I should advise two lights; make it as unlike any other light near hand as possible.

727. Why would you prefer a light upon the south end of the island to one in the middle?—Inasmuch as ships are sometimes jammed down to the southward, and they could make the passage into smoother water.

728. Would not a light placed ten miles to the northward be a good place to verify their position, and enable them still to run down to the south?—If a vessel were up to the northward it would; but in placing it upon Stokes's Point, I should simply give the double advantage by opening this channel to the southward, and rendering it available in the night time too.

729. Would not a light upon the southern end or the middle of King Island induce shipmasters, after making a long passage from Europe, to make for this light to verify their position in preference to making the mainland of Australia about Cape Otway?—I think not. In my judgment a master ought always to make for the boldest and nearest land. Besides he is so far to leeward when he is down there.

730. Do you know Cape Wickham light?—I do.

731. At what distance can you see it?—I have seen the glare of it, I should say, twenty-six miles off.

732. That was upon a clear night?—That was upon a clear night.

733. But upon a dark, cloudy, foggy night, with a S.W. gale blowing, how far would you see it?—I have been within ten miles of it and not seen it.

734. Then if a light be on the S. end of King Island, under the same circumstances of weather, how far would you see it?—I do not suppose you would see it any further under the same circumstances.

Captain William
Sydserrf,
15th Feb. 1875.

Captain William
Sydeserff,
continued,
15th Feb. 1875.

735. Then, taking into consideration that you could only see each of the lights ten miles, could you verify your position by the two?—I should think you could if it could be got that height.

736. Could you be mislead by such a light upon the S. end—that is taking Cape Otway to the northward, and Cape Wickham in the middle, and your proposed light to the southward—could a ship coming in from the westward make a mistake, and take the Wickham for the Otway at a long distance, or the Wickham for the one on the S. end, having only two lights in view?—She might, but it is very unlikely. The one is a revolving light and the other fixed.

737. Do you know anything of the circumstances of the last wreck upon King Island?—Nothing but what I saw in the papers.

738. Upon that occasion he saw the light about twenty-two miles off, and took it for the revolving light at Cape Otway?—I believe so.

739. Under those circumstances would a light upon the south end of King Island have been of any advantage to him?—Not unless he had been pretty close down, of course.

740. Would a warning light of the strongest description, upon the centre of the island, have been of any use to him; would it have been more efficient in guarding him against wreck than a light upon Stokes' Point?—Under those circumstances no doubt it would.

741. When he put his helm up and run in, would a light upon Stokes' Point have been of any good?—I am not sure whether it would cut there.—[*The witness measured the bearings and distances upon the chart.*] I see that it would not.

742. Take the same distance from Cape Wickham: those lights would not cut each other at a distance of say ten miles, which you mention as being the distance at which it was invisible?—Six hundred feet would be seen thirty miles. I think it would have answered.

743. Do you know the height of Cape Wickham lighthouse from the sea-level?—I cannot call to recollection at present, but I think about 400 feet.

744. It is according to the chart 280 feet, and you would put a light 320 feet above Cape Wickham—the land at the S. point being about the same height as Cape Wickham?—I have studied this subject very much—

745. What is the height of Kent's Group?—Nine hundred feet.

746. How often have you seen that?—A little too often; it nearly took me ashore once.

747. Do you know that a fixed light can be visible only a certain distance: first-class lights are only visible twenty-seven miles at the outside: you can only make them of a certain degree of brilliancy?—Then, how is it that you see Kent's Group over thirty miles off? I have seen the Cape Schank light thirty miles off.

748. Are you still (after looking at the chart) of opinion that a light upon the extreme S. point of King Island would be the best mode to be adopted, as regards light, of lessening the risk of wrecks upon the centre of the island—seeing that all the wrecks that we have any record of have taken place upon the centre of the island?—If not there, I should place it about Point Netherby.

749. We ask you, after examining these facts, whether you think that a light upon Point Netherby would be better than upon Stokes' Point?—From my own navigation coming out I would far sooner see a light at the lower point.

750. Because you would go through the South Passage?—Yes.

751. Suppose you did not know the passage or were a stranger coming off a long voyage—is it not a dangerous passage?—I know it is, but we all have to go through a passage for the first time.

752. Suppose our own coast were lighted up, would there be a necessity for a light there at all?—I think if Bridgewater were lighted up there would be no need for a light there at all.

753. Do you mean Cape Bridgewater or Cape Nelson?—Either of them.

754. They are within four miles of one another?—Yes, there would be no necessity—masters who have been a long time at sea have a fear of making the Australian coast, of making the land without a light—there is no actual danger of getting embayed there at all, but they have a fear of it.

755. If a light were there would they have that fear?—I think not.

756. And then would there be a necessity for a light upon King Island?—No, I think not, unless for the purpose of lighting up the South Channel.

757. But, do you think if a light upon the Australian coast were erected there would be no necessity for a light upon Point Netherby?—No, I think not.

758. How can you reconcile that a light, at least seventy miles to the northward, would indicate a vessel's position when she was in danger of King Island?—If I did not see anything I would go back and look for it.

759. But, talking about general navigation, how would a light to the westward of Cape Otway, upon the mainland, indicate to a man driven to King Island by stress of weather, or error of compasses, or error of chronometer, or strong winds, or a current drifting him to the south, what his position was?—Of course then a light would indicate his position.

760. Ships generally make for Cape Otway to the north?—Yes.

761. But if a light is to the westward of the Otway there would be no chance of their being set down on King Island?—No, I think not.

762. From that you reason that if a light be put either upon Bridgewater or Nelson there would be no necessity for one upon King Island?—No, I think there would not.

763. Suppose that by some unlucky chance a man does happen to get down upon the King Island shore, do you think that the fact of there being a light there would be more likely to aid him in getting out of the danger than if the coast were unlighted altogether?—Certainly.

764. Suppose a man has run out of his reckoning?—Certainly a light is always a guide.

765. You know the circumstances of the loss of the *Blencathra* and the *British Admiral*?—Yes.

766. Might a light upon Point Netherby have saved both of those ships?—Yes, no doubt it would have saved both if they had come in at the particular point; a man would not run upon a light.

767. Did you ever hear of the wreck of the *Loch Leven*?—Yes, I heard of it.

768. Do you know where she was wrecked?—I know it was somewhere upon the north point,

769. She ran ashore right under the light?—I do not know the exact place.

The witness withdrew.

Captain William Cooper of the ship *Wimmera* examined.

770. Is the *Wimmera* a regular liner between this and England?—Yes.

Capt. W. Cooper,
15th Feb. 1875.

771. Is she iron or wood?—Wood.

772. Of what tonnage?—1,000.

773. Will you be good enough to give the Board some idea of the experience you have had in navigating ships between Europe and Bass's Straits, or from other parts of the world towards Bass's Straits?—I have made two voyages here as master.

774. And as mate?—As mate five voyages.

775. That is seven in all?—Yes.

776. Have you only made seven voyages altogether?—Yes.

[*Letter 75/115 was read to the witness. Vide Appendix C.*]

777. Are you aware of the number of wrecks that have taken place upon the west side of King Island?—Yes, there have been two or three that I know of; but I do not know how many altogether.

778. Two within the last year?—Yes.

779. From your experience as a shipmaster, what means would you suggest can be adopted to lessen the risk of wrecks for the future upon King Island?—I should think that if a light were put upon New Year's Island, it would warn them off. There is a strong current sets to the south-east; but in winter time I think it would be different.

780. You suggest a light upon New Year's Island, in preference to any other place—have you seen the new chart of King Island—will you look at it—[*The same was examined by the witness and explained to him*] ?—I have been always in the habit of coming in and making Cape Otway.

781. But supposing you had been set down—seeing the number of wrecks that have taken place—we want to devise some means of preventing vessels being wrecked when they are set down upon King Island?—I generally steer more to the westward, and make Cape Otway. There are very few ships lost upon the mainland.

782. Because it is not a dangerous coast; they have regular soundings, and a bold shore, and there is no danger; but when they do get upon King Island, they get into danger among reefs and rocks?—Yes; and it is thick weather very often, and they cannot see.

783. What would you do—to put a leading question, would you leave the coast in darkness, and let them go—you proposed the New Year's Island light under a misapprehension, thinking that all the wrecks took place between that point and Cape Wickham?—The place where the wrecks seem to have occurred appears rather far south for ships bound through Bass's Straits.

784. Can you suggest anything to the Government?—The only thing is to put a light upon this island.

785. Upon the New Year's Island?—Yes.

786. Would you suggest the particular place; you say New Year's Island; but after seeing the chart, with the wrecks marked upon it, and that it is seventy miles from Cape Wickham, upon which there is a light that can be seen twenty-five miles off, would you still prefer New Year's Island to any other point, say the south point of the island, or the middle of the island?—I think Point Netherby would be the best place considering those circumstances.

787. Supposing a light is placed upon Point Netherby, would shipmasters be induced to make the light, knowing there was one there, in preference to the mainland of Australia?—No, I should not think so.

788. A man coming in from the westward after a long voyage, knowing there was a light upon Netherby, and being very anxious to make a quick passage, and thinking he could weather King Island if he knew his position, do not you think he would be induced to come in too close if you put a light in the middle of the island?—I should not think so, seeing the danger that is there; he would steer for Cape Otway just the same, because there is always a strong current setting to the E. and E.S.E.

789. Then you believe that a light upon King Island, upon Point Netherby, is the only means that can be adopted to lessen the risk of wrecks for the future?—Yes.

790. Is there nothing else that you can suggest; would you suggest lighting up the Australian coast?—If you want a light upon the Australian coast, put it upon Cape Bridgewater.

791. We asked you for suggestions?—Yes.

792. If a light was upon Cape Bridgewater, do you think there would be a necessity for a light upon King Island?—Yes, I think so.

793. Do you consider the two should be erected?—Yes.

794. Do you know, as between Cape Nelson and Cape Bridgewater, which is preferable?—Cape Bridgewater is very high land.

795. And Nelson is high also; that is, as high as lighthouses are wanted, and it is the southernmost cape of the two; have you seen the capes themselves?—No, not plainly. I thought I saw Cape Bridgewater this time coming out. Looking at the chart I should say Cape Nelson would be preferable.

The witness withdrew.

The Hon. George Ward Cole, M.L.C., Captain R.N., examined.

796. You are not in command of any ship now?—No.

797. You live in Melbourne?—In the neighborhood of Melbourne.

798. You are desirous of giving your opinion about a light upon King Island?—Yes.

The Hon. G. W.
Cole, M.L.C.,
Captain R.N.,
15th Feb. 1875.

799. Will you tell the Board what experience you have had in navigating ships between Europe and Bass's Straits?—I have not had much experience except making two or three voyages out through the Straits.

800. In command of vessels?—Only once in 1840—on the other trips I was a passenger.

[*Letter 75/115 was read to the witness. Vide Appendix C.*]

801. Do you know how many vessels have been wrecked upon King Island?—I have unfortunately seen a great many of them since 1840.

The Hon.
G. W. Cole,
continued,
15th Feb. 1875.

802. Would you suggest anything to be adopted?—I have made a memorandum of what I consider should be desirable.—[*The witness handed in a paper which was read by the Chairman as follows:—*]

MEMO.

Melbourne, 15th February 1875.

I cannot agree with Captain Stanley and others that another light on King Island would prevent vessels being wrecked upon it.

My impression is that the losses are occasioned by the want of proper sailing directions for making Cape Otway—by at first making the land about capes Nelson or Bridgewater, upon the most eligible of which a first-class light should be erected; for after long consideration I have long thought no time should be lost in doing so.

After passing this light, and paying attention to the excellent surveys and soundings of Captain Stanley, together with the harbour lights of Portland, Belfast, and Warrnambool, there ought to be no difficulty except one great fault, which I think is not so prominently brought under notice as it ought to be, that is the strong current which after S.W. gales must rebound from the south coast on approaching Cape Otway. This sets across the Straits, passing King Island and the west coast of Tasmania. The neglect of considering this has caused no doubt the wreck of many ships, more especially the recent one, the *Blencathra*, and the escape of the *Mary Blair* from sharing the same fate, the latter having made the land about Cape Bridgewater, was evidently affected by the current, as she fortunately did not mistake the light on King Island for that of Cape Otway.

GEORGE WARD COLE, Commander, Royal Navy.

It appears to me that a light on New Year's Island would clear King Island if another light is found necessary in that direction.—G. W. C.

803. Your opinion is theoretical not practical?—No, not practical, but gathered from others.

804. There is a note here about New Year's Island—you say, "It appears to me a light on New Year's Island would clear King Island if another light is found necessary in that direction." It is with the object of finding out whether that is necessary that we are sitting?—I do not think it is necessary to guide you to come here.

805. You know that the land down there is in total darkness inside of a line eight miles from the coast?—There is very thick weather there.

806. In the opinion of Captain Stanley the thick weather has been very much exaggerated. He considers it to be no worse there than anywhere else, and he has formed that opinion from great experience in surveying there for some time?—But my impression is that vessels ought not to be there at all, they ought to be up nearer the Otway.

807. But if they get there what are we to do?—My own impression is that the light would be mistaken. The soundings are laid down upon the chart, and lighting our own coast I consider would be sufficient for any vessel. I ascribe the vessels getting down there to currents setting there—I believe Captain Stanley did not find much current.

808. He did not find a steady current—it exists sometimes but not always, so that it would not do to say to a man "You must guard against current," for he might not meet with it?—No; but I consider that lights upon our own coast should be sufficient for vessels.

The witness withdrew.

Adjourned.

