

The LIGHTNING

The American clipper ship LIGHTNING was a 3 masted, fully rigged extreme clipper ship; 3175.15 tonnes (3,500 tons) burthen, she was 74.37m (244ft) long, with a beam of 13.4m (44ft) and a depth of 7m (23ft).

She was commissioned by James Baines, of the Black Ball Line in Liverpool, England, during the time of the Australian Gold Rush for the trade of passengers and cargo between England and Australia. Her cargo listed early consignments of livestock and animals, including rabbits sent to Thomas Austin of Barwon Park, Winchelsea, Victoria.



Queenscliffe Maritime Museum Inc

submitted by Graham Pope and Robert Styles

<http://maritimemuseumsaustralia.com/profiles/blogs/lightning-strikes>

The LIGHTNING

HISTORY

The LIGHTNING was built in 1854 by shipbuilder Donald McKay, of East Boston, USA. She was described as spacious and comfortable, and one of the smartest ships known.

The LIGHTNING set many speed records for her sea crossings and became one of the most famous of the racing clippers and one of the fastest ever launched. In 1854, with Captain 'Bully' Forbes and Mate 'Bully' Bragg, LIGHTNING made the return trip from Melbourne to Liverpool in only 64 days, 3 hours and 10 minutes; a record for all time.

Captain Enright became the new Master of LIGHTNING soon afterwards. He has been described as one of the finest mariners in the Australian trade. One of Captain Enright's innovations was to publish a ship's paper called The Lightning Gazette. (Captain Forbes had left to captain the SCHOMBERG.)

In January 1855 Capt. Enright sailed the LIGHTNING from Liverpool with over 700 passengers and returned home carrying gold as her cargo.

In 1857, for a very brief time under Capt. Byrne the LIGHTNING was used as a troop ship, taking British officers and soldiers, stores, and ammunition, to fight in India.

In 1859 she then returned to her run between Liverpool and Melbourne, apart from 1867 when she made a special trip between Melbourne and Port Chalmers in New Zealand.

In 1869 the LIGHTNING was sold to Thomas Harrison of Liverpool, and she continued to sail for the Black Ball Line.

Master of LIGHTNING, Captain Henry Jones, sailed her to Geelong in October 1869, and whilst docked, he had her loaded with a cargo of wool, copper, wire, tallow, and other goods. At about 1am on 31st October 1869, whilst still docked and fully laden, a fire was noticed on the LIGHTNING. Efforts to extinguish the fire were unsuccessful, so she was towed to the shoals in Corio Bay, where she eventually sank, losing all cargo but no lives.



Model of *Lightning*. Queenscliff Maritime Museum Collection

The LIGHTNING

Black and white photograph (3292) of the burning of the clipper Lightning in Corio Bay Geelong, Sunday Oct 31st 1869.

Photograph shows the Lightning in the process of burning, smoke billowing above the deck. Another sailing ship, plus several small boats, are in the bay, with a crowd on the pier.



Victorian Collections

<https://victoriancollections.net.au/items/521606eb19403a17c4ba1218>

The LIGHTNING

This photograph (3293) shows the remains of the clipper ship LIGHTNING as it continues to burn to its end in Corio Bay, Geelong, 31st October 1869, finally being sunk by cannon ball fire and holes cut into her hull.



Victorian Collections

<https://victoriancollections.net.au/items/521606eb19403a17c4ba1219>

The LIGHTNING

Nationality: USA

Vessel type: 3-masted Clipper

Date launched: January 3rd, 1854

Date lost: November 1, 1869

Cause of loss: Fire

Number of Casualties: Nil

Discovery date: N/A

Location/water depth: Off Geelong in 27 feet (8.22m) of water

The USA-built Lightning, reputedly the fastest wooden sailing ship afloat, was loading cargo at Geelong pier when she caught fire early on the morning of November 1, 1869.

Efforts to extinguish the fire at her mooring were unsuccessful, so she was towed out to deep water to protect the wharf and other ships from being set alight.

Attempts were then made to sink her by firing cannon balls into the hull and by sawing holes into her waterline. She finally sank in 27 feet (8.22m) of water later that evening.

However, the Lightning had sunk in the fairway and still posed a threat to shipping. Every effort was then made - unsuccessfully - to raise the hull, and finally she was blown up into smaller pieces in April 1870.

Who, or what, started the fire remains a mystery, and although her cargo was insured the "Lightning" was not.

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HISTORICAL INFORMATION

In the early nineteenth century larger Australian wool producers sent all their wool by sailing ship to London, where colonial auctions were held in November, January, February, and March. Wool bales were carried from the farm on drays or wagons pulled by bullocks, horses, or camels to port warehouses. In these times, wool transport could take anything from a week to six months. Ships, such as the Lightning, were then loaded and raced each other to get to London ahead of their rivals.

BUNNY BUSINESS

The first rabbits arrived in Australia in 1788 with the First Fleet but they were not released into the wild.

On Christmas day 1859 Thomas Austin, a self-made wealthy settler from England, released 13 European wild rabbits on his estate, at Winchelsea, Barwon Park, Victoria. They had been specially collected and sent to him on the "Lightning" by a relative in England, where rabbit hunting was a popular sport.

Who would have believed that in a few short years, rabbits would be in plague proportions with the population spreading across the whole continent?

SIGNIFICANCE

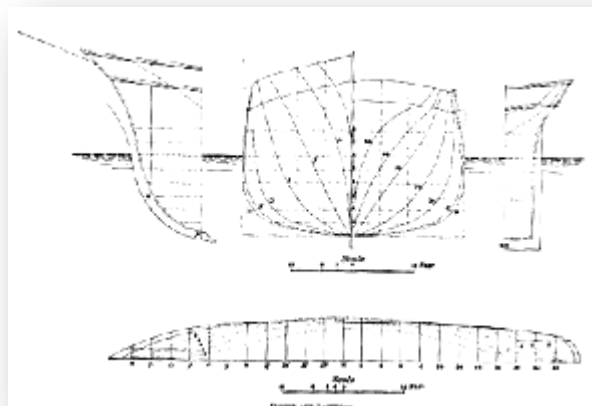
The LIGHTNING is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register VHR S415.

She is historically significant for being one of the fastest wooden ships ever built, the first clipper built in the USA for British owners and being the worst shipping disaster in Geelong's history.

Lightning spent her whole 15 year career carrying cargo and immigrants from England to Australia.

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An extreme clipper ship built in 1854 by Donald McKay, East Boston. Her dimensions were: 226'×44'×26' [load 243'] and tonnage: 2084 tons.



Duncan McLean gave a detailed description of the ship in [The Boston Daily Atlas](#) Tuesday, January 31, 1854. A very similar description was printed in John W. Griffiths' [U.S. Nautical Magazine and Naval Journal](#), Vol. III (1855-56).

Griffiths also presented dimensions and calculations of the ship on pp [188-189](#) and discussed the masts and spars on pp [336-340](#) in the same volume.

1854 January 3

Launched at the shipyard of Donald McKay, East Boston, MA, USA, for the Black Ball Line (James Baines & Co.), Liverpool.

No timid hand or hesitating brain gave form and dimensions to the *Lightning*. Very great stability; acute extremities; full, short midship body; comparatively small deadrise, and the longest end forward, are points in the excellence of this ship.

John Willis Griffiths: *Monthly Nautical Magazine*, Vol. IV (1855), August.

1854 February 18 - March 3

Sailed Boston - Liverpool in 13 days, 20 hours under command of Captain James Nicol Forbes who had left the [Marco Polo](#) to take command of Donald McKay's new clipper.

In a Letter to the Editor of the [Northern Daily Times](#) dated, March 8th, 1854, Captain Forbes disputes a claim from Captain Eldridge of [Red Jacket](#) of having done the fastest Atlantic crossing.

Not a ripple curled before her cutwater, nor did the water break at a single place along her sides. She left a wake straight as an arrow, and this was the only mark of her progress. There was a slight swell, and as she rose, one could see the arc of her forefoot rise gently over the sea as she increased her speed.

Duncan McLean: *Boston Daily Atlas*, 1854.

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1854 March 1

On the this day the *Lightning* sailed 436 miles, which is the longest day's run recorded by a sailing ship.

March 1. — Wind S., strong gales; bore away for the North Channel, carried away the foretopsail and lost jib; hove the log several times, and found the ship going through the water at the rate of 18 to 18½ knots per hour; lee rail under water, and the rigging slack; saw the Irish land at 9:30 p.m. Distance run in the twenty-four hours, 436 miles.

From the *Abstract log*.

1854 May 14 - July 31

Sailed Liverpool - Melbourne in 77 days. The round trip from England to Australia and Back has been discussed by John Willis Griffiths in the [*U.S. Nautical Magazine and Naval Journal*, Vol. III \(1855-56\)](#). Excerpts from a passenger diary from this passage have also been reprinted in the *Dog Watch* No. 18 (1968) & 19 (1969).

1854 August 20 - October 23

Sailed Melbourne - Liverpool in 64 days 3 hours.

1855 January 6 — March 20

Sailed from Liverpool to Melbourne in 73 days [78 days according to Stammers]. Captain Anthony Enright succeeded Captain Forbes as master who was to assume of command of a new ship, the unlucky *Schomberg*.

1855 April 11 - June 29

Sailed from Melbourne to Liverpool in 79 days. Eleven issues of *The Lightning Gazette* printed onboard during the passage have been reprinted in *Sea Breezes* Vol. 18-19 (1954-1955).

1855

Sailed from Liverpool to Melbourne in 81 days.

1855 December 28

Sailed from Melbourne to Liverpool.

1856 May 6 — July 13

Sailed from Liverpool to Melbourne in 68 days 10 hours.

1856 August 28 — November 20

Sailed from Melbourne to Liverpool in 84 days.

1857 February 5 — April 15

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Sailed from Liverpool to Melbourne in 69 days 6 hours.

1857 March 19

Sailed 430 miles in 24 hours while bound for Australia. This is the second longest day's run recorded by a sailing ship.

1857 May 11 — August 1

Sailed from Melbourne to Liverpool in 82 days.

1857 August 25 — November 20

Sailed from Portsmouth to India in 87 days with 650 men and officers of the 7th Hussar regiment.

1859 February 20 — 11

Sailed from Melbourne to Liverpool where she arrived on May 11 after 80 days.

1859

Sailed from Liverpool to Melbourne in 69 days.

1861 June 10 — August 30

Sailed from Liverpool to Melbourne where she arrived on August 30 after 81 days.

1862 November 30

Struck a previous unrecorded submerged rock near Point Nepean at Port Phillips Head. At the time the *Lightning* had a cargo of 4372 bales of wool and 18.650 oz. of gold. The received damage to the forefoot and keel was quickly repaired.

1867

Sold to Thomas Harrison, Liverpool, but continued to sail for the Black Ball Line.

1869 October 31

Burned while loading wool at Geelong. The disaster was described in the [Geelong Advertiser](#), November 1, 1869.

In a Letter to the Editor of the *Scientific American* published November 26, 1859, Donald McKay writes:

Although I designed and built the Clipper Ship *Lightning* and therefore ought to be the last to praise her, yet such has been her performance *since Englishmen learned to sail her* that I must confess I feel proud of her. You are aware that she was so sharp and concave forward that one of her stupid captains who did not comprehend the principle upon which she was built, persuaded the owners to fill in the hollows of her bows. They did so, and according to their British bluff

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notions, she was not only better for the addition, but would sail faster, and wrote me to the effect. Well, the next passage to Melbourne, Australia, she washed the encumbrance away on one side, and when she returned to Liverpool, the other side was also cleared away. Since then she has been running as I modelled her. As a specimen of her speed, I may say that I saw recorded in her log (of 24 hours) 436 nautical miles, a trifle over 18 knots an hour.

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For fifteen years did the Lightning plough her native element conveying thousands to these shores, and in less than a day almost everything that can bring her to mind, except perhaps a few happy hours spent on board, has been obliterated by an element she was never built to encounter.

Both the vessels mentioned had valuable cargoes on board, one being just about to conclude her voyage, the other just about to commence one, and certainly we think the shock has been greater in the case of the Lightning, as accidents though often occurring at sea are seldom anticipated in port, besides which she was so well and favourably known by the people of Geelong.

Shortly after two o'clock yesterday morning the deathlike stillness that prevailed in the lower part of the town was broken by the clanging of the bells of the fire brigades. As, however, the wind was blowing off the shore many residing in the upper portion of the town never heard the fire-bell, whilst others heard the ringing but attributed it to a false alarm, being unable to see any glare in the town. Thus the news did not become generally known till eleven or twelve o'clock in the morning, and some even then seeing the smoke attributed it to the funnels of the Resolute, which had come down on the previous evening to tow the Lanarkshire out to sea.

Those of the firemen however who did hear the alarm, went quickly to the station and at a quarter past two o'clock No. 1 engine arrived at the wharf, quickly followed, by No. 2, and shortly afterwards the Newtown engine.

On arriving at the end of the wharf very little flame could at times be seen, but when alongside the ship the fire was bursting out of the fore hatch. Here, it might be stated, blue lights and rockets had been sent up at intervals since the fire was first discovered by the captain of the Aboukir, and these had been the means of calling assistance from the Lanarkshire, which was anchored out ready for a start on her homeward voyage. The Lightning was moored on the west side of the wharf, the Aboukir having been towed on Saturday into the opposite berth.

In five minutes the firemen were at work, the hose was run aboard, and a stream of water began to pour down on the fire, a hundred such streams however would not, it is thought, have had the desired effect. At half-past two, or perhaps a little later, the ship moving away from the wharf the hose broke. A few minutes afterwards she was brought back again to the wharf, and again did the firemen do their utmost, being assisted by the force-pump belonging to the vessel, and by the three crews, who hauled water up over the side in scores of buckets.

At a quarter past three she was finally hauled away from the wharf into deep water, and an attempt made to scuttle her, the operation being superintended by Captain Jenkins, of the Aboukir. This, however, signally failed. The fire by this time had become almost unbearable, the flames working their way aft with a fierceness that defies description. Still the Volunteer firemen and sailors on board persevered.

As fast as the stevedore's men engaged below could send up the wool, sails, and furniture, &c, they placed them on board the tug Resolute, lying alongside. Capt. Williams' boats also rendered material assistance; and so the work continued, the flames gradually driving the men aft. When the moon rose and began to sparkle across the waters, brightening the sides of the vessel, which belched forth lurid flames and dense smoke, the scene as viewed from the wharf was striking in the extreme, and one that will not easily be forgotten by those who saw it.

At half-past seven o'clock the Resolute came alongside the wharf from the Lightning, conveying a number of sails, ship's furniture, stores, &c, Capt. Nicholson, the harbour master, landed by her and placed himself in communication with Mr Stephen, of Messrs Swanston, Willis, and Stephen, the agents of the ship, and Mr Douglass, the agent for the Cornwall Insurance Company. These gentlemen at once had an interview with Capt. Williams, of the Lanarkshire, and agreed to pay him twenty-five pounds demurrage if he would allow the Resolute to again go off to the burning ship, and save what wool she could.

Capt. Hayes's lighter was also at the wharf with a load of wool. She quickly discharged and proceeded to the scene of the disaster. Captain Nicholson's boat conveyed Messrs Stephen and Douglass onboard, and the latter superintended the getting out of wool from the main hatch, where the stevedore's men continued to work with a will; bales were lifted on deck in quick succession, and put into the lighter alongside by willing hands. Seldom, in fact, did we ever see a body of men work, with greater determination; amateurs and professionals vied with each other as to who should do the most

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good, and many of them got rather severely burnt by pieces of lighted canvass falling on the bales they were so anxious to remove.

In a very short time the after hatch and skylight were cut-away, and the wool discharged from thence. This work was necessarily slower, the bales having to be handed up by a tackle. When he had got the work of discharging into full swing Captain Jones, who appeared cool; and collected throughout, ordered a number of useless hands on shore and so made more room for the most able of the workmen in the space that was getting continually more limited. He also ordered the lanyards of the iron foremast to be cut, and as the fire was raging all around its base it was expected every moment that it would go by the board. Such, however, was not the case, it stood the intense heat for over an hour and then melting it gave a spasmodic sort of twist, the upper portion coming down with a crash over the side of the vessel and sending up a column of sparks like so many fireworks. The iron, mass did not break, the lower part apparently stood in its socket, and, bending about five or six feet above the main deck remained in that position throughout the brilliant scene. In its fall it brought down a lot of the top hamper of the other masts with it, and several who had, we understand, previously been cautioned to stand further aft, had a very narrow escape from being smashed to death.

As it was, some of the burning canvas materially injured their clothing and uniforms, but was extinguished before it had done more than scorched them. The devouring element then caught hold of the ship's launch and it was soon simply impossible to work at the main hatch, where thanks to the exertions made all the available wool 'tween decks had been sent up. A retreat was accordingly beat to the after hatch. Not much further work had been done here when the mainmast took fire, and Captain Jones, fearing loss of life, ordered all wool on deck to be thrown overboard, and everybody to leave the ship, as he would be blamed, he said, if any lives were lost.

Nearly everybody on board then got on the wool-laden steamer, one or two firemen remaining a few minutes longer to show that they really were salamanders. Most of the wool thrown overboard was scoured wool from the between decks. The bales bobbed about on the waves, like so many corks, until they became saturated, and began to sink. Most of them were, however, rescued during the day by boats, and brought to shore drenched to the very core. The number of bales saved during the day was between four and five hundred, and it will be satisfactory for our volunteer firemen to know that their services were highly appreciated by Captain Jones, and also by his first mate, Mr Jones, who himself worked very hard indeed.

The Geelong Volunteer Firemen were under the command of their foreman, Mr Miller, who, we believe, was one of the "Salamanders," the Newtown firemen being directed by Mr Seeley. Some very opposite guesses were made as to the origin of the disaster. Two gentlemen from the Lanarkshire a little before one o'clock, state that at that hour there was not the least sign of fire or smell of smoke. They, however, met some drunken sailors coming down the wharf. Mr Jones, the first mate of the Lightning, states he heard two sailors coming down the wharf singing, but they went on board the Argo barque.

Several experienced hands gave it as their opinion that the fire arose from spontaneous combustion, and that the wool had been smouldering for two days; others again mentioned that no matter how wet the wool might have got coming down the country, it had not been long enough on-board ship to ignite.

With regard to the fire originating in the fore-castle, it is worthy of mention that the fore-castle is on the main deck, that there were no crevices in the flooring for any fire to get through, and any fire originating there could, in the opinion of the firemen as well as the sailors, have been easily extinguished by the vessel's own force pump.

Some of the firemen state that had the fire broken out in the fore-castle, it would be impossible for it to have increased in volume in so short a time without being seen from the shore, and the policeman on the beach states he heard the bell of the ship ring, but did not see any fire until informed that such was the case by a sailor belonging to the Aboukir running up the wharf. There were four decks forward, and it was the third deck just under the fore-castle where the sailors believe the fire broke out. On the fourth deck the beef and pork were kept, whilst underneath this again was the coal hole.

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In this latter place the mate, as will appear by his statement published below, had been at work on the Saturday, and there was no fire there. It is hardly likely fire would originate amongst beef and pork, and, as previously stated, there were no crevices for fire to fall through the floor of the fore-castle into the deck where the wool was closely packed just below. Had the fire broken out in the fore-castle, the sailors would quickly have discovered it; instead of which the first intimation was given by the boatswain, who, rushing out in his night-shirt, had no time to save his other garments after giving the alarm.

An interesting incident, which occurred at the commencement of the fire, has been related to us. A young sailor named Hany Evans, who rushed out on deck when the alarm was given, might have saved his clothes; but, instead of this, he bethought that an old townsman of his, also a sailor named John Jones, was a heavy sleeper, and, rushing back, he succeeded in saving his life by bringing him on deck half asleep half awake.

But we must return to the burning wreck, which between 9 and 10 a.m. was standing in the fair-way channel, deserted by everybody. The wharf was gradually getting crowded with sightseers, who took advantage of every point from whence they could best witness the novel scene.

The decks of the Aboukir were packed with a living throng, the top weight causing the vessel to "list" tremendously toward the wharf. The work of destruction still went on, fire could be seen the whole length of the vessel, and round the main and mizen masts, which seemed to be trying to stick by the old vessel. At a quarter to eleven o'clock there was a cry of "There she goes;" the mizen could stand it no longer and gave an uneasy lurch. Suddenly down it came, bringing what remained of the mainmast with it, and causing the waters between the ship and the wharf to seethe again. Some of the burning fragments going, it was imagined from the wharf, uncomfortably near a little boat, of which there were scores bobbing round the wreck.

At eleven o'clock another crash was heard, caused by a large piece of the bulwarks falling over the side. It was now observed as the cargo was being consumed the fore part of the vessel was gradually lifting, until the scuttle holes cut from the star board counter to the main rigging instead of being under water were two or three feet above. What should be done? was the question; and several volunteer artillerymen were applied to for their guns to fire into the vessel. Captain Isard, of the mounted artillery had guns but no ammunition. Major Heath had guns and ammunition, but unfortunately the gallant major was absent on a cruise in the Haidee, and the junior officers did not care about taking the responsibility.

Eventually Captain Rashleigh was sent for, and in the meantime the captain of the Resolute tried if he could cut the vessel down to the water by means of his tug. The shell, however, had not burnt thin enough. He succeeded in making two or three large holes about six feet above waterline, but of course these had no effect on the Lightning, which was now one mass of flames from bows to stern.

Captain Jones, Captain Williams, and others had now to content themselves with looking on, the heat being too great to allow of any boat approaching close enough for further scuttling, burning timbers falling occasionally from the top rendering such work still more dangerous.

At half-past twelve a cannon was heard booming, and crash went a thirty-two pound ball against the hull, striking it amidships just above the water line, a splendid shot. Looking round we noticed the volunteers had got a short thirtytwo pound gun in position on the old steamboat-wharf opposite Mack's Hotel. Their next shot was anxiously looked for. Boom went the gun again, but this time the ball missed the ship altogether, creating considerable laughter. Firing was continued for some hours, another gun, a long thirty-two pounder, having been placed in position on the Yarra street wharf, the short gun having been brought round to keep it company.

Under the command of Captain Rashleigh over thirty rounds were fired, and the volunteers completely made up for the miss by repeatedly striking the ill-fated vessel just above the water line. All their efforts were of no avail; the ship as it became lightened rose in the water until the bows, which on Saturday were drawing 20 feet were only drawing 12 feet. The stern was much deeper, being kept down by 200, tons of copper ore and 150 tons of fresh water in tanks.

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Between the shots Captains Jones, Nicholson, and Williams, would occasionally go off to see what effect the fire was having, and our reporter on the last occasion went with them. He found the hull completely riddled on the land side for 20 or 30 feet just above the water line, and a stream of fire occasionally falling through the holes. The fire was not visible to so great an extent on the outer side, but now and again a ping! ping! caused by the falling of a blazing timber into the water, reminded the boat men they must be cautious, and an intense roar could be heard inside the hull. Coming back the harbor and wharf presented a most attractive appearance.

Scores of sailing and pulling boats dotted the waters of the Bay, whilst the wharf, and decks and lower rigging of the Aboukir was one vast collection of human faces, a most appropriate background being furnished by the beach, which was patronised by thousands of visitors. Never but on one occasion, the landing of H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh, has such a gathering been seen in Geelong.

The artillerymen, for want of powder, had to discontinue firing shortly after three o'clock, but if their reports did nothing else they gave warning to people living in the country, who flocked in to see what was going on, and thus the town was made to present an unusually lively appearance. The firing was heard out on the beach near Bream Creek, and many visitors at the wreck of the Victoria Tower came from a scene of past to one of present disaster.

At about four o'clock, Captains Jones, Williams, and Nicholson took a number of ship carpenters to the wreck, and these quickly cut her down to the water's edge in several places. Their efforts, however, did not meet with immediate success, and the only noticeable event that occurred between four and five o'clock was the falling of the figure head "Pluto," which had held its proud position during the heat of the day.

At half-past six the scuttlers met with their reward, the hull could be seen visibly sinking and in less than five minutes the water rushed through the holes and over the lower portions of the sides. The hull sunk in twenty-seven feet of water, and nothing remained to show that the Lightning had existed but a few burning beams jutting above the placid waters of Corio Bay. In a few hours all was nearly over and the word "home" was sounded by the hundreds who had waited on the wharf to see the last of her. Just as she was going down the Haidee hove in sight filled by a joyous crew who sailed round her, the contrast between the two vessels being very striking.

The Lightning was built in 1854 by Donald McKay, of Boston, and for years occupied the position of first favorite among the Black Ball Liners. She was 1769 tons register, and for the last four years was commanded by Captain Jones, under whose command she effected some remarkably quick passages, on one occasion coming out here in 67 and returning home again in 63 days. Although 15 years old, she was on Saturday considered to be as good a ship as ever, having been lately furnished with new decks, caulked, coppered, and fitted with 1500 turnels along her bilge.

On Saturday she had 4600 bales on board, 3000 of these being greasy wool; also 200 tons of copper ore, a quantity of tallow, and 35 casks of colonial wine, the latter being, we believe, some of Dr. Hope's Hermitage. Between four and five hundred bales were saved yesterday, and it is believed that all the wool in the lower hold, nearly 2000 bales will also be got out. The tallow was not burnt, and the copper, and, let us hope, the colonial wine will be recovered.

Most of the cargo was, we believe, fully insured. It was stated that Mr Haworth was a loser of £4000, but this, like many other idle rumours set about it, we have every reason to believe, a false statement. The Lightning belongs to Mr Harrison, of Liverpool, who also owns the Champion of the Seas and the Donald McKay. It is doubtful whether he was insured. During the day, we might mention, five out to seven of the boats were brought to shore, and the total loss may be estimated, supposing the wool in the lower hold, etc., to be saved, at close upon £70,000.

CHIEF OFFICER'S STATEMENT.

The following is the statement of the Chief Officer, Mr Jones:—On Saturday afternoon myself, the boatswain, and a seaman were engaged taking in eight tons of coal in the fore-hatch. We were down below trimming the coals, and everything was then comfortable. In pumping out the engine fouled, and we thus were not able to finish pumping until a quarter to 9 o'clock on Saturday evening, and at 9 p.m., when the carpenter again went down, he found everything secure. The Captain went to bed on Saturday night at about half-past 10 o'clock. I went to bed at about 20 minutes after 11. Everything appeared to be right up till about a quarter before 1, when the first boatswain's mate ran aft, and informed me that the ship was on fire, and that the men had been nearly smothered in the half-deck and fore-castle. I immediately ran forward, when it was reported to me that the carpenter was down in the half-deck. I said I would save him, but failed in doing so, the heat being too great, and the flames rolling up the hatch in immense circular volumes. I then heard the carpenter was on shore, and acting under the instructions of Capt. Jones, I ordered the force-pump to be worked and pointed the hose myself on to the fire, which was coming up in streams from the second deck. Stopped here as long as I could, water at the same time being thrown down the hatchway by means of buckets, the crews of the Aboukir, Lanarkshire, and Lightning all assisting. The blaze then broke out forward. At about two o'clock Captain Jones sent word to say that the harbor-master desired that the ship might be cast off from the wharf. Upon this I cut the twelve-inch hawser forward in two places with an axe and slipped springs-fore and aft. Slacked the ship off the wharf with a stern line. When we had got some distance away, word was sent that the fire engines had come down.

The captain ordered the tug to heave astern, and the ship was brought up to the wharf again. The firemen worked well until the hose parted, and it was then considered that all was lost. We got a stern line and were towed out into deep water where we remained with the steamer astern and made every effort to save all we could, the firemen and a volunteer rendering valuable assistance. We succeeded in loading Hayes' craft once and the steamer twice with wool which was conveyed to shore, Collins the stevedore's men being below breaking up the cargo and sending the bales up the hatchway. By the order of Captain Jones I had the lanyards and rigging of the foremast cut, but it was an hour and a quarter (the mast being of iron) before it melted sufficiently for it to bend. Captain Jones also ordered the lanyards of the maintopmast and mizentopgallant backstays to be cut to allow of the maintopmast going down with the foremast, which when went it took the maintopmast. The main yard knocked the maintop all to pieces, and drew away the mizentopgallantmast, a lot of men running aft having a very narrow escape, although they had previously been told by the captain to keep aft. When the captain found there were not sufficient craft to take the wool away to shore he ordered it to be thrown overboard, and when we got the decks clear and he found it, owing to the encroachments made by the fire, impossible to save any more, expecting every minute the main and mizen masts would go by the board, he ordered every man out of the ship, saying if any man was killed there he would be blamed for it. We all jumped into the steamer, and the captain was, I believe, the last to leave when he found he could do no more to her. This was, I believe, at about nine o'clock this (Sunday) morning.

LATEST PARTICULARS.

3 a.m.—A few timbers burning like torches just above the water, and casting a lurid glare for some distance around.

The LIGHTNING

CHIEF OFFICER'S STATEMENT (Transcript)

The following is the statement of the Chief Officer, Mr Jones:—

On Saturday afternoon myself, the boatswain, and a seaman were engaged taking in eight tons of coal in the fore-hatch. We were down below trimming the coals, and everything was then comfortable. In pumping out the engine fouled, and we thus were not able to finish pumping until a quarter to 9 o'clock on Saturday evening, and at 9 p.m., when the carpenter again went down, he found everything secure.

The Captain went to bed on Saturday night at about half-past 10 o'clock. I went to bed at about 20 minutes after 11. Everything appeared to be right up till about a quarter before 1, when the first boatswain's mate ran aft, and informed me that the ship was on fire, and that the men had been nearly smothered in the half-deck and fore-castle.

I immediately ran forward, when it was reported to me that the carpenter was down in the half-deck. I said I would save him, but failed in doing so, the heat being too great and the flames rolling up the hatch in immense circular volumes. I then heard the carpenter was on shore, and acting under the instructions of Capt. Jones, I ordered the force-pump to be worked and pointed the hose myself on to the fire, which was coming up in streams from the second deck.

Stopped here as long as I could, water at the same time being thrown down the hatchway by means of buckets, the crews of the Aboukir, Lanarkshire, and Lightning all assisting. The blaze then broke out forward. At about two o'clock Captain Jones sent word to say that the harbor-master desired that the ship might be cast off from the wharf. Upon this I cut the twelve-inch hawser forward in two places with an axe and slipped springs fore and aft. Slacked the ship off the wharf with a stern line.

When we had got some distance away, word was sent that the fire engines had come down. The captain ordered the tug to heave astern, and the ship was brought up to the wharf again. The firemen worked well until the hose parted, and it was then considered that all was lost. We got a stern line and were towed out into deep water where we remained with the steamer astern and made every effort to save all we could, the firemen and a volunteer rendering valuable assistance.

We succeeded in loading Hayes' craft once and the steamer twice with wool which was conveyed to shore, Collins the stevedore's men being below breaking up the cargo and sending the bales up the hatchway. By the order of Captain Jones I had the lanyards and rigging of the foremast cut, but it was an hour and a quarter (the mast being of iron) before it melted sufficiently for it to bend.

Captain Jones also ordered the lanyards of the main topmast and mizentop gallant backstays to be cut to allow of the main topmast going down with the foremast, which when went it took the maintop mast. The main yard knocked the maintop all to pieces, and draw away the mizentop gallantmast, a lot of men running aft having a very narrow escape, although they had previously been told by the captain to keep aft.

When the captain found there were not sufficient craft to take the wool away to shore he ordered it to be thrown overboard, and when we got the decks clear and he found it, owing to the encroachments made by the fire, impossible to save any more, expecting every minute the main and mizen masts would go by the board, he ordered every man out of the ship, - saying if any man was killed there he would be blamed, for it.

We all jumped into the steamer, and the captain was, I believe, the last to leave when he found he could do no more to her. This was, I believe, at about nine o'clock this (Sunday) morning.

LATEST PARTICULARS. 3 a.m.—A few timbers burning like torches just above the water, and casting a lurid, glare for some distance around.