

## Capt Samuel Charles

(1817 – 1909)

### Founding Member of the League of Ancient Mariners

The *Sydney Morning Herald* on September 24, 1909 on the occasion of the Captain Samuel Charles having Crossed the Bar said;



*'... Captain Charles was one of the foundation members of the League of Ancient Mariners, in the proceedings of which he evinced great interest. On the occasion of the last annual outing, however, he was too feeble to participate; but the steamer chartered by the League hove-to off his waterside residence at Point Piper, and three lusty cheers were given by his comrades from the deck of the vessel.*

*'... Captain Charles, who was on the veranda of his house at the time, was much moved by this demonstration, and waved response. Only a few weeks ago, on the occasion of the first annual smoke concert of the League of Ancient Mariners, a letter was read amid cheering from the nonagenarian mariner, apologising for his inability to attend on account of his advanced age'.*

(The above quote prompts the question of what is a 'smoke concert'? In this we had to research further and quote Wikipedia; *'Smoking concerts were live performances usually of music, before an audience of men only, popular during the Victorian era. These social occasions were instrumental in introducing new musical forms to the public. At these functions men would smoke and speak of politics while listening to live music. These popular gatherings were sometimes held at hotels' ...* Was it case that the League's annual get-together on October 25, 1946 was a 'smoker'? Invitation as per the example in the Archives page, were for the 'Annual Smoke-oh', which included as is the tradition today at annual-get-togethers, live performances of music in the form of the singing of sea-shanties).

from *Sydney Morning Herald (Sept 24, 1909)*

Captain Samuel Charles, M.L.C., the oldest identity of the shipping circles of the Commonwealth, and one of the pioneers of the agricultural industry in this State, crossed the bar last evening at the advanced age of 91 years. He was born in the year 1817, and in early life chose a seafaring career. He commanded many of the finest ships of more than half a century ago, and was able to relate many stirring incidents connected with the early history of New South Wales.

Upon relinquishing the sea very many years ago, the deceased master mariner engaged in our primary industries, and it was largely owing to his foresight and enterprise that the butter export trade, which has now assumed stupendous proportions, was inaugurated and developed. The late Captain Charles in the early days of our agricultural efforts became convinced that a large demand for Australian dairy products was awaiting us on the other side of the world, and he forwarded to England the first consignment of butter from New South Wales.

About 35 years ago Captain Charles entered political life, and was first elected in 1874 as the representative of Kiama. In the Legislative Assembly of this State, he was appointed a member of the Legislative Council in August, 1885, and retained his seat up to the time of his death.

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however, he was too feeble to participate; but the steamer chartered by the league hove to off his waterside residence at Point Piper, and three lusty cheers were given by his comrades from the deck of the vessel. Captain Charles, who was on the veranda of his house at the time, was much moved by this demonstration, and waved response. Only a few weeks ago, on the occasion of the first annual smoke concert of the League of Ancient Mariners, a letter was read amid cheering from the nonagenarian mariner, apologising for his inability to attend on account of his advanced age.

The deceased, who retained his faculties almost to the end, died at his residence, Cliff Towers, Point Piper, Woollahra, in the presence of some of the members of his family. In order that his relatives from all parts of the Commonwealth may have an opportunity of being present at the funeral, the interment has been arranged for Monday. The body will be conveyed by train to North Kiama, where the family vault is situated.

from *Kiama Independent* (NSW) Sept 25, 1909

Captain Samuel Charles, M.L.C., died at his residence, "Cliff Torera," Point Piper, Sydney, on Thursday night last, at the age of 91 years.

The late Captain Charles was born in the north of Ireland, and after receiving a good commercial education, he entered on a seafaring life, which he followed with such application and ardor that in a comparatively short time he became captain of his own ship. Later on he was engaged in the Australian trade, and was the first person to open a coaling trade with San Francisco, and was captain of the first ship that took coal there, thus opening up a magnificent foreign market for one of our most valuable natural products. After experiencing nearly as many losses as profits on the seas Captain Charles finally resolved to try his fortune on land. He, therefore, bought an estate near Kiama, and the speculation proved eminently successful.

In the year 1839 Captain Charles built a small brigantine, which he named the 'Seagull,' on a piece of ground where the Pyrmont bridge abutments are now embedded, and no sooner was she launched than news came of the discovery of gold in California, and with a small party he set sail for there, arriving on New Year's day of 1840. The same year Captain Charles became a digger in California, but fortune did not await him there and he went into business in San Francisco. He recovered sufficiently to purchase a small sailing vessel, and when news of the gold discoveries in Australia reached him there he got together a crew and a full complement of passengers and hurried to Bendigo, Victoria. But his ill luck in California stuck to him, so he returned to Sydney to engage in the South Coast trade. There were then half a dozen small steamers in Australian waters, and he was commissioned to go to England and bring out another. He duly arrived in Sydney harbor with the Kiama, which began to pioneer the produce carrying trade from the Illawarra district. Later the rise in value of property he purchased enabled him to retire and live in Sydney.

Captain Charles at one time represented the electorate of Kiama in the Legislative Assembly, being opposed to Sir Henry Parkes during the greater part of the time. He took an active interest in politics, and spoke on all the larger questions of the day. In 1881 he became a member of the Legislative Council, remaining a consistent attendant right up to this year; the present session, however, he has not attended at all.

Although living retired Captain Charles always took a live interest in maritime matters and as showing that interest the 'Daily Telegraph of yesterday published a letter by him (dated Wednesday last) dealing with the subject of the missing Waratah.

The funeral takes place on Monday, when the remains will be removed from Sydney for interment in the family vault near the mouth of the Minnamurra River.