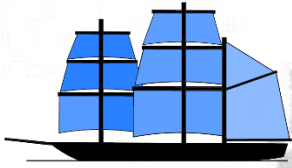


AGINCOURT



Ship-built but converted to barque 543 tons Old Measure, 125' long x 30' 6" wide at her broadest point and 6' feet 8" 'tween decks.

***Built 1844 at Sunderland, Durham, by James Laing owned by Duncan Dunbar of London
Master: Captain Scott, Surgeon Superintendent: Dr Atkinson***

London, June 12, 1848 to Port Jackson October 6, 1848 – 119 days at sea

The *Agincourt* was a relatively new vessel when she made the journey in 1848, having been launched on 19 January 1844. She was built in the Sunderland shipyards of Laing and Company being the first ship built by James Laing after he took over running the family business. Originally intended to be the *Abyssinia*, she slid into the Wear River as *Agincourt* for Duncan Dunbar a ship owner, brewer and wine merchant with his wharf, shipping offices and warehouse buildings on the north bank of the Thames River at Limehouse, a polyglot community of local and foreign sailors. From her launch she was under the command of Henry Neatby and carried immigrants from London to Sydney every year from 1844 to 1848 and returned to London via Chinese, Southeast Asian or Indian ports. Her hull and stores were classified A1 and she was barque rigged. However, at 669 tons (new Act measurements) she was not a large vessel and because of her narrow 30 feet 6 inches beam her steerage accommodation was fitted out with the bunks in two rows down the centre of the vessel and with tables along her hull sides, an arrangement that was not usual and was not favoured by the immigration authorities.

On 7 May 1848 she arrived from Sydney off Dartmouth and on 11 May anchored off Gravesend. A month later on Monday 12 June 1848 with her lacemaker passengers and the Deal pilot aboard and with Henry Neatby in command for the last time, *Agincourt* weighed anchor and a steam tug took her out into the Thames and she headed down river towards the open sea. Two days later after rounding North Foreland, she hove-to off Deal and Captain Neatby, the pilot and the immigrants' last letters were taken ashore. Now, under the command of Captain Thomas Scott, on Wednesday 14 June 1848 the *Agincourt* sailed from Deal bound for Sydney and the voyage to a new life for the lacemakers had begun. As the vessel rounded the Goodwin Sands and entered the English Channel, the passengers could have seen Calais in the distance and no doubt their thoughts turned to family and friends who had remained behind. A few days later on Friday 16 June off Start Point in Devon, the

Agincourt turned south and headed out into the North Atlantic Ocean for the non-stop voyage to Australia.

On 27 June the *Agincourt* passed the island of Madeira and her passengers could see clearly its mountainous outline some 20 miles to the west. Changing course to southwest by south she sailed west of the Canary Islands where the passengers were treated to the spectacular sight of the volcanic peak of Tenerife. This course took the *Agincourt* away from Africa and across the Atlantic Ocean towards the coast of South America. About 11 July, some two weeks later, the *Agincourt* came up with the much larger barque *Castle Eden*, which was also carrying immigrants to Sydney. She had sailed from Plymouth on 15 June and had lost her topmasts in a storm. Following being repaired the *Castle Eden* planned to arrive in Sydney on Monday 9 October, three days after the *Agincourt*. On 20 July, the *Agincourt* crossed the Equator.

After drifting through the fluky winds of the Doldrums, the *Agincourt* continued to sail down the mid South Atlantic Ocean, passing the Martin Vas rocks with their soaring cliffs and colonies of sea birds. Some five weeks after crossing the equator, the *Agincourt*, now well south of the Cape of Good Hope, turned east for the run across the winter weather of the Southern Ocean. The journey south through the squalls of the Bay of Biscay, the fluky breezes of the doldrums on the equator and the autumn storms of the South Atlantic had taken the *Agincourt* nearly three months of what was to be a seventeen week journey, to arrive in the winter gales of the Southern Ocean. It was there on 30 August and some 800 miles south east of the Cape of Good Hope that she spoke to the *Amelia Mulholland*, which was outward bound for Mauritius. The *Agincourt* appears to have then sailed a "safe" but fast route eastwards just inside the "roaring forties", because four weeks later on 26 September 1848 she was sighted some 800 miles south of the Great Australian Bight. Within a few years, ships to Australia and New Zealand were to take a faster but more dangerous route. Rather than round the Cape of Good Hope, they continued south to the fiftieth and even sixtieth parallels of latitude before turning east. They then used the very strong winds at those latitudes to sail, because of the Earth's geometry, a shorter route east often through mountainous seas and past icebergs before turning north again.

However for *Agincourt*, ahead lay treacherous Bass Strait. Safely "threading the eye of the needle" between the islands and the mainland coast, she turned north and on 6 October sailed into Port Jackson where she anchored off Sydney Town. We know what then happened to most of the lacemakers but what of the *Agincourt*?

After her lacemaker passengers went over the side into steam ferries, paddle wheeler and rowboats to commence their journeys to Bathurst, Maitland and Sydney, the *Agincourt* remained anchored in the harbour while her crew did maintenance work and waited for her cargo and passengers for the next destination to come aboard. Before she arrived, her agents had advertised in the colonial newspapers that "*her cabin accommodation is excellent, and she is in every respect a most eligible opportunity for passengers*". However, it appears that the *Agincourt* sailed from Port Jackson on 4 November with neither cargo nor passengers

bound for Hong Kong where she arrived on 15 December 1848. She called in at Singapore, Batavia, Cape Town and St Helena over the next six months on her way back to England where she arrived at Gravesend on 13 August 1849. On 9 October that year the *Agincourt* sailed from Deal for South Australia with another group of immigrants.

The *Agincourt* continued in the ownership of Duncan Dunbar and often carried immigrants from England to Sydney and Adelaide under the command of Thomas Scott and, later, Captain Pashley. During that time she remained in excellent condition until 1855 when her deck was replaced and “large repairs” were carried out during some form of “restoration” work. In 1862 Duncan Dunbar died and his shipping business, including all of his ships, was sold. The *Agincourt* was sold to W. Haynes in 1863 and her homeport then changed to Liverpool. She carried cargo and passengers between England, Aden and Indian ports around Cape Good Hope, as the Suez Canal did not open until 1869. In the 1870s *Agincourt* sailed between England and ports in North and South America including New Orleans and Baltimore. In 1878 the *Agincourt* was again sold, this time to Spanish owners who continued to have her surveyed and registered in England until 1885, after which her fate is unknown.

It appears that the *Agincourt* was still sailing and carrying cargo and passengers for more than forty years after she was launched and long after the lacemakers had disembarked in Port Jackson.

Stephen Black

