

Anna Lucas

The Captain's Notebook:

J. K. Davis at Eden, 1912

JOHN KING DAVIS (1884–1967) had a long and interesting career, first going to sea at age sixteen, transitioning from sailing ships to steamers, then settling in Melbourne in administrative roles before eventually retiring as Director of Commonwealth Navigation. Born in Surrey, England, of Irish ancestry, he was remembered by some as gentlemanly and gracious; others recalled a demanding personality, fiery and quick-tempered. As a young man, after sailing as first officer on Ernest Shackleton's *Nimrod* expedition to Antarctica, he captained S.Y. *Aurora* on several voyages for Douglas Mawson's Australasian Antarctic Expedition (AAE) 1911–1914, and was known for his skilled ice-navigation. Oceanography was a relatively new science at the time and Davis was charged with that aspect of Mawson's scientific program. As part of his training, he accompanied the Commonwealth Fisheries Investigation Steamship F.I.S. *Endeavour* on a short trip from Melbourne to the fishing town of Eden on the south coast of New South Wales, not as captain but as an observer, making notes of the equipment and techniques employed in oceanographic procedures. In a small notebook, he recorded his observations of daily activities onboard, of the people he met ashore and what he learnt of the local history while at Eden. His informal notes, supplemented with photographs he took during this trip, offer an alternative interpretation to the historical portrayal that has been perpetuated of a respected but difficult man; they provide instead an authentic glimpse of the young captain, engaged with his profession and his surroundings.

Preparations in Europe

Captain Davis had left London with the AAE's ship S.Y. *Aurora*. Oceanographic equipment onboard included depth-sounding machines, a 5000 fathom Lucas sounding machine¹ and a Kelvin Mark IV.² Other loans and donations to the AAE included trawling nets, dredging equipment, water sampling bottles, deep-sea thermometers, a hygrometer, chronometers, sextants and charts. Before leaving, Davis had visited Antarctic oceanographer William Spiers Bruce (leader of the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition 1902-1904)³ in Edinburgh. Bruce was instructive, helpful and generous; he lent a dynamometer, a reel of seven ply wire to a depth of 2500 fathoms and the greatly appreciated steam-driven winding engine⁴ designed for the sounding machine on Bruce's ship *Scotia*. Bruce was associated with keen oceanographer, Prince Albert I of Monaco⁵ and supplied Davis with a double-headed trawl in the style of those used by the Monaco network, and had a ten foot beam specially made for it in Granton, Scotland.⁶ After visiting a research laboratory established by the prince in Paris, Mawson had become enthused with the potential of this scientific discipline. He sent one of his



Captain J. K. Davis. John King Davis Collection, Australian Antarctic Division
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recruits, Swiss mountaineer Xavier Mertz,⁷ to learn elementary techniques at the newly established *L'Institut Océanographique* in Monaco and was fortunate in obtaining the loan of additional equipment from that institution.

Preparations in Australia

As part of his oceanographic program, Mawson arranged for Frank Wild (leader of the AAE's Western Base in Antarctica) and for Captain Davis to accompany F.I.S. *Endeavour* on separate voyages, in 1911 and 1912 respectively, as trainees. In September 1912, the Commonwealth Director of Fisheries, Harald Dannevig, was preparing for another research trip, part of an ongoing project to ascertain fish populations in Australian coastal waters and to make observations of oceanic conditions. Born in

Norway, Dannevig (1871–1914) had worked with the Fisheries Board of Scotland before arriving in Australia in 1902 at the invitation of the Agent-General for New South Wales. He established a marine hatchery at Gunnamatta Bay, Cronulla,⁸ and for his trawling and oceanographic work, supervised the construction of the purpose-built ship F.I.S. *Endeavour* which was launched in Sydney in 1908. The captain in 1912 was master mariner George Pim who was from a family well known in British nautical circles. He had been in the Lighthouse Service in the Torres Strait and had also been associated with scientific research in New Guinea and nearby islands, charting and describing the region.⁹ Davis sailed with them on this return trip from Melbourne to Eden, after being granted permission by the Department of Trade and Customs¹⁰ and while S.Y. *Aurora* was in dry dock in Williamstown, Melbourne, for refitting and repairs.

F.I.S. *Endeavour* had been built in the NSW Government Dockyard to a slightly modified design of the Norwegian research vessel *Michael Sars*.¹¹ Davis described the ship, the equipment and onboard operations with professional interest, and his notes incorporated social commentary of people he met and of places he visited around Eden during his days ashore. The notebook, part of the John King Davis Collection at the State Library of Victoria,¹² gives us an insight into the hands-on training undertaken by the 28-year-old Davis, a hard-working, experienced seaman, keen to acquire new skills while temporarily freed from the responsibilities of navigation and captancy.

With minor editing (punctuation and spelling), his original notes are reproduced below with some of his photographs taken on the trip, supplemented by other images. Comments in square brackets within his notes are those of the author of this article.

The Notebook of Captain J. K. Davis: from his handwritten notes made during the voyage of F.I.S. *Endeavour*, September – October 1912.

Federal Investigation Ship *Endeavour*.

HC Dannevig, Director.

Capt Pym [Pim].

Built in Sydney Govt Yard 1908.

Melbourne Harbours and Ports.

Left Melbourne at 2:30 Sept 26th.

Passed out of heads at 4:20. Considerable sea on rip, although none outside last quarter off ebb.

Cost £17,000 to build.

To run cost £400 per month.

Forward Trawl Board *Endeavour* to left on board vessel.

Saturday [28th September 1912]



Edén Post Office, c. 1920. National Archives of Australia, C518/1

All day steaming eastward in beautiful calm sea towards Gabo Island. During the afternoon a moderate breeze from SE. Sunset very fine and clear. Vessel making about 10 knots.

The Director tells me that we are to spend Sunday in Twofold Bay which is close to our trawling ground. This will be a good chance of seeing a little of the surrounding country. I took some photos showing the arrangement of the trawling winches sounding machines etc., which appear to be well arranged and powerful. I feel very pleased to have an opportunity of seeing trawling work carried out in a vessel which has been designed and fitted for this work.

Sunday Sept 29th

We arrived after a very fine passage in Twofold Bay¹³ this morning, anchoring in Snug Cove at 6 a.m.

When I got up it was after seven and the sun well up - a beautiful fine morning.

The bay is a wide one and is sheltered everywhere except to the eastward. On the northern side of it a fairly good wharf was to be seen, alongside of which the steamer *Sydney* was lying there. Boats call fortnightly on their journeys round the coast. Our first visitor was

an itinerant fisherman who was anxious if we could supply him with bait, preferably shark, for his lobster pots four of which he carried in the stern of his boat (photo).

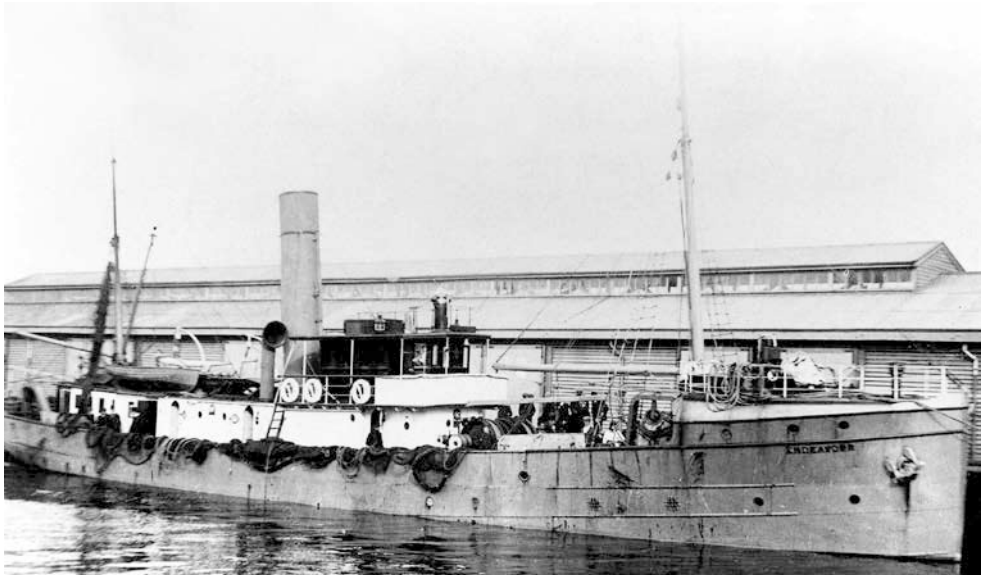
During the morning we remained on board and found it very pleasant sitting about in the bright sunshine. The *Endeavour* gig was put over and the men amused themselves sailing around the bay in her (photo). After lunch the Director and myself went ashore and landing at the wharf, climbed a fairly steep hill¹⁴ towards the small township of Eden (500 people). It was hot and very few people were to be seen and generally things appeared very quiet.

The Director decided to inquire for letters at the post office, which we found with some difficulty.¹⁵ Not being able to gain admittance to the office, it being Sunday, we made our way to the Postmaster's House which was close by. Here, we were received by the Postmaster and his family who welcomed Mr D[annevig] as an old friend and invited us both in to take tea. It was very pleasant to sit down in a comfortable room and drink tea to which our host and hostess welcomed us in so hospitable a manner. On my expressing curiosity as to what there was to see our host offered to show us round. We set off along a good road which runs through partially cleared country, the gum and wattle trees still being plentiful on each side of the road. A few houses are scattered about near the main road, the photo being of a typical one which was named 'The Hollies'¹⁶ and is the residence of a Mr Boyd.¹⁷ After going some distance we retraced our steps and while passing a piece of cleared land our friend pointed out a very fine cow nearly all black which he informed us was a cross between an Alderney and Shorthorn and supplied its owner with 2 lbs of butter and 5 gallons of milk per day. It was named 'The Dove' but from an account of its conduct to two people who annoyed it, this was apparently entirely uncharacteristic of its behaviour.

Leaving the road we struck through a cleared patch of country towards the beach. On our way we passed a brick kiln (photo). The way that a house is built is typical of the resourcefulness of the Australians. A saw mill (worked with an oil engine) is started close to the scene of the building operations. If much is to be done the timber is cut from the bush, the bricks are made out of the clay and sand close by and the workmen live in tents close by until the building is completed. Only the parts which they cannot make here are 'imported.' We soon came to the beach which is of coarse sand formed apparently of granite crystals and very smooth and clear. The cliffs are apparently of sedimentary formation and are much folded and form a striking sight (photo). From the beach we returned to our host's house who insisted on our remaining with them for supper where we had a splendid meal, including homemade bread, butter and jam. Locally, a belief exists in the future of Twofold Bay as a great port and it would seem probable that this place will before long become much more widely known than at present. It used at one time to be a great whaling station but at present this is not as lucrative as formerly.



Water sampling onboard F.I.S. *Endeavour*. Photo in the J. K. Davis Collection, State Library of Victoria



F.I.S. *Endeavour* at Hobart. Image supplied by, and reproduced courtesy of the Maritime Museum of Tasmania

Monday Sept 30th

Light SW airs, smooth sea.

Left Twofold Bay at 6 a.m. steamed West [sic]¹⁸ about 1 hour and shot in 44 fathoms over mud, 6 miles from Red Point¹⁹ which hove S65 W True. This operation is an interesting one to watch. The net which stretches along the bulwark for 80 feet is attached to the trawl boards and is put over, the cod end first. When the net has sunk beneath the surface the vessel steams ahead at full speed and the wire is slacked out slowly from the two winches until 200 fathoms was out on each warp (usually 3 times the depth). Care should be exercised to keep an even strain on the wires. When the wires are out, the vessel steams ahead at 2 ½ to 3 knots with the trawl drawing over the bottom, the boards dragging over it on their edges. At 9 a.m. the trawl was hove in and found to contain a large variety of fish among them being flat head, gurnard, rays, dogfish, a curious sea horse,²⁰ John Dory, sword fish, also a large number of shells most of which were the home of a curious kind of crab which, having a soft shell, takes possession of any empty shell and uses it as a protection and a house. The net is hove up and the cod end emptied into a kind of bath fish pond formed with boards on the deck. The whole is then sorted. Flathead and other edible fish are put into a division and gutted, the others are thrown back into the sea. This would be worth £1 a ton as manure if landed, which would probably be done by a commercial trawler.

Fish in first haul:

Flathead prime 335 weighing 304 lbs.

10 Skate and Boar fish.

(Bullock talk)²¹

Posted negatives.

2nd Haul

Depth: [no entry]

Position: [no entry]

Time: Towed 2 hours.

Result: A good quantity of fish, but mostly unmarketable. Considerable variety.²²

We arrived in Snug Cove, Twofold Bay at 6:30 p.m. and anchored off the pier. A boat came off to us with the pilot Capt. Davies²³ who was evidently anxious to have a yarn with someone as he insisted on our coming ashore and entertained us the whole evening with the history of Twofold Bay, its grievances and its possibilities. This gentleman is pilot, custom house officer, Wharfinger and in charge of the lighthouse, but is not apparently overworked.

It was very pleasant to listen to all he had to tell of this country. He had been 12 years at Eden during which things had not gone ahead as they ought to have done. This he attributed to the fact that the settlement is on the wrong side of the bay and lack of railway communication. He also gave us information about the whaling here which



Postmaster Litchfield (left) and Harald Dannevig at the brick kiln, Eden.
Photo in the J. K. Davis Collection, State Library of Victoria



Ruins of Boyd's Seahorse Hotel (now restored) visited by Davis and Dannevig in 1912.
Image supplied by and reproduced courtesy of the Eden Killer Whale Museum Archives

seems to be a very small business, the average yearly catch being only 8 to 10 whales. The killers [ie, killer whales] chase the whales into the bay between July and November. One of these killers is supposed to return every year and is recognized by its broken fin and called Humpy.²⁴ The killers attack the whales, and drive them into the shallow water where they try to tear out the tongue which they appear to like.²⁵ He told us that one right whale (called a black whale) had been caught in the bay and the bone from this animal fetched £1500. Out of each of the ordinary whales about 4 to 5 tons of oil is extracted which fetches up to £20 a ton.²⁶

Tuesday Oct 1st

Started out at 6 a.m. light airs freshening to moderate NE breeze sea moderate commenced running a line of sounding and temperatures from Green Cape to ESE ward.

Stations are made every three miles and following is a list of temperatures, water samples being obtained at the same time [not included].

At noon anchored vessel in 470 fathoms with 1270 fathoms and a 3 ½ cwt kedge.

S72E true 17 miles off Green Cape.

Light northerly wind and sea.

Vessel not shifting her position at all.

At 6pm started to work Ekman Current Indicator.²⁷

This worked well.

Vessel lying steadily. Readings of it gave surface current setting S13E true approximate at 120 fathoms NNW true approximate. Work was carried on after dark and rendered possible by the vessel being fitted with electric light, two large clusters being placed in close proximity to the sounding station.²⁸

8 p.m. weather very clear and fine. Writing up these notes while current indicator is at a depth of 170 fathoms where it remains 35 minutes before hauling up to read.

Finished work at 11 p.m.

Wednesday Oct 2nd

Commenced work at 6 a.m. hove in wire and kedge which came up clear and took about an hour to heave up. This had held the ship without dragging throughout, the weather being fine.

Preparations were now made to use the Agassiz Trawl²⁹ which I had brought with me.

The Director decided to use the After Gallows and with the vessel steaming ahead and a 50 lb weight attached to the cod end, the net was shot. At 7:45 we were then in 470 fathoms and when 800 fathoms of wire had been paid out the net was found to be on the bottom. Speed was increased a little and trawl towed for two hours on muddy bottom.

The weight [of] 70 lbs, a firebar, was attached so that it would break away when dragging over the bottom. This it did.

L 37 21 S.

Long 150 24 E.

17.5 miles N 70 ½ W of Green Point.

Depth 503 fathoms.

Time 9:50 commenced to heave in.

10:30 Trawl on board.

The trawl came up with good load 3 to 4 cwt of thick dark mud, containing many shells, some protozoa shells (small) and also many small organisms. It was a difficult job to wash out the mud everyone getting plastered with it during the process. At noon attempted to sound with Lucas Machine but as there are no drivers on board the thirty pound lead on the end of the wire was insufficient to indicate when bottom had been reached.³⁰ 2800 fathoms ran out and the wire parted on the first attempt to heave in. (Wire weighs 15 lbs to 1000 fathoms app.) We then proceeded to obtain serial temperatures. These were obtained on a stranded line (wire) led through two lead blocks from the winch with the Ekman Water Bottle fitted with 1 Richter Thermometer and 14 lbs lead attached below thermometer with a line.³¹ Finished a second series of temperatures 15 miles further out than above at 12 midnight.³²

Oct 3rd

At midnight last we finished work and steamed towards the Green Cape light anchoring in 69 fathoms with kedge with 350 fathoms of wire. Work commenced again at 6 a.m.

Light NE winds and smooth.

A series of current observations were taken at this station which indicated a moderate current to North increasing in depth.

11:30 Commenced to heave up anchor as the bottom was rocky. This was a very heavy heave, the vessel at times being hove right over on her side. The anchor came up eventually badly twisted. The big heavy trawling winch was frequently stopped by the strain on this wire which had a breaking stress of 19 tons.

12:30 pm Shot trawl in 48 fathoms with 150 to 175 fathoms of wire.

2.9 S 33E true off Green Point Light.

2:45 Knocked out fairly good bag. Flathead, gurnard, squid, shells, black perch, etc.

3:15 Shot trawl again steaming about in Disaster Bay. At 6 p.m. knocked out and found we had made the biggest bag so far, about 8 cwt of flathead and about 1 ton of other fish (not marketable rubbish as it is called). We then steamed right up the head of Disaster Bay and anchored about a cable from the shore for the night. Everyone busy by the fish pond gutting and sorting the bag, the electric light making this possible.

Finished work at 9 p.m.

Glass falling rapidly.

Weather indicating a probable change.

Oct 4th

Got under weigh at 6 a.m.

Shot trawl in Disaster Bay at 7 a.m.

Glass low.

Weather still fine, mod NE wind but looking dirty.

Hauled the trawl at 11 a.m.

Good bag, though not as large as the one of yesterday evening.

11:30 Shot trawl again.

Weather unsettled, turning to rain and southerly wind at noon.

We knocked out at about 3:30 and as wind was freshening and weather looking dirty steamed towards Eden and anchored in Nullica Bay, which is well sheltered from all except easterly winds.

It was squally after we anchored, but otherwise fine. By the appearance of the sky, it looked as if there had been a hard blow to the southward of Gabo but that along this coast the high land had deflected the strong air currents upwards. I shall be interested to hear what weather they have had in Melbourne today.

Vessel steams 2 ½ to 3 knots an hour when trawling.

Oct 5th

Moderate and cold southerly winds.

Sea smooth, mountains very distinct.

Shot trawl closer in shore just north of Twofold Bay at 9:15.

Knocked out and found we had made the best haul of the cruise, nearly 12 cwt of prime fish, some very fine snapper and a great quantity of flathead. This was in 32 fathoms, about 1 ½ miles east of Bullara I.³³ Shot trawl again standing and knocked out at 2:30 p.m. to the eastward. The catch in this case was a poor one, the fish apparently being inshore. Several whales were seen.

At 3 p.m. we anchored in Snug Cove again and are to remain here till tomorrow night.

Oct 6th

Sunday. At anchor Snug Cove 8 a.m. Light airs, fine clear weather, bright sunshine.

After breakfast the Director and myself with one of the sailors, an Irishman named Paddy, left the ship in the dinghy and sailed over to Nullica Bay which is the SWern [south-western] portion of Twofold Bay.

This part is well sheltered and formed the early settlement. We went chiefly to look at a large white stone house which had been the hotel [Seahorse Hotel] but is now a ruin.³⁴ It is close to the beach, which makes it a conspicuous object for some distance, and was erected by a Mr Boyd who was one of the early settlers and tried to found a township.

Over the door a stone informs you that Boyd Town was commenced in 1843 and apparently did pretty well at first but then for some reason gradually declined and only the ruins of various buildings, including an old church, remain at present.³⁵ The country round here is very pretty and the beach clean and of fine golden sand. We spent the morning here and returned to the Endeavour at 2 p.m. During the afternoon Mr Litchfield, the postmaster, and his wife and daughters visited the ship.³⁶

Oct 7th

Left anchorage at midnight and steamed North, experiencing a strong set to SSE. Arrived off Moruya at 7 a.m. and shot trawl.

9:30 knocked out clean bag of good fish consisting chiefly of flathead. This haul was in 68 fathoms over fine sand.

The two following hauls were not as good as this one. At 5 p.m. anchored in 70 fathoms with 350 fathoms of wire.

18.2S 27W True.

Montague Island Light.³⁷

After tea we commenced Current Observations with the Ekman Current Meter taking records at the surface and at 25 and 50 fathoms, also a series of water temperatures at this depth. Mr D wished to ascertain whether he could trace the tidal influence on the current. Observations were taken every three hours. I went to bed at midnight.

Oct 8th

Started and hove up anchor at 6am then steamed Eastward towards a sounding marked on chart as 305 over S [305 (fathoms) over S, where S = sand]

At 8:30 arrived in this vicinity as the horizon was hazy, land comparatively indistinct. Sounded with Lucas Machine 600 fathoms and no bottom. Lack of wire caused us to stop [at] this depth. Two soundings were then taken with stranded Water Bottle wire. Over 1000 fathoms paid out, but bottom not reached.

The deep sea gear would stand some improvement.

2:15 shot trawl in 65 fathoms.

5:15 knocked out very poor bag.

5:30 course set for Gabo Island.

Homeward bound.

Oct 9th

Passed Green Cape 2 a.m.

Moderate westerly wind and fine weather. Passed Cape Everard at 10:30.

Stiff westerly wind and head sea.

Passed *Otranto* (outward).³⁸

Oct 10th

Off Wilson's Promontory met strong NWly gale and high sea at 8 a.m. off Cape Liptrap making about 40 knots against wind and sea. Wind and sea increasing during afternoon, so sought shelter in Western Port off Flinders.³⁹

Good anchorage for a small vessel.⁴⁰

6:15 left anchorage.

9:30 passed rip flood making no sea to speak of.

Arrived Melbourne 2 p.m [End of Notebook].

The Captain's Subsequent Career

This cruise of F.I.S. *Endeavour* is only briefly mentioned in some publications and not at all in other accounts of the AAE, but the training that Davis received, both with W.S. Bruce in Edinburgh and on F.I.S. *Endeavour* in Eden, proved to be extremely valuable. When he resumed his oceanographic work on S.Y. *Aurora*, by applying the practical skills he acquired on the Eden trip, he made significant contributions to the scientific reports of the AAE, including the discovery of an extensive elevation in the sea floor south of Tasmania, now known as the South Tasman Rise.⁴¹ He made three round trips to Antarctica for Mawson's AAE, interspersed with sub-Antarctic voyages collecting oceanographic data with biologists. Prior to the third voyage, he travelled to England to raise funds to finance Mawson's rescue.⁴² In 1914, Sir Ernest Shackleton, planning his Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, cabled Davis, offering him the captaincy of *New Polaris* (later renamed *Endurance*): 'I depend largely on you for success. Your experience unique.' After some consideration, and further discussion in England, Davis declined.⁴³ During World War I, he commanded troop carriers *Boonah* (Transport A36), taking Australian servicemen to Egypt and Europe, and *Barunga* (A43). While in Australian waters on A43, he was asked by authorities to lead the Ross Sea Relief Expedition to rescue men who had been responsible for the depot-laying of stores for Shackleton's proposed, but aborted, trans-antarctic crossing.⁴⁴ In 1920 he was appointed Director of Commonwealth Navigation, a position he held until his retirement in February 1949. Among his awards were two Polar Medals with clasps;⁴⁵ he was also awarded the Commander of the British Empire (Civil) in 1964.

Davis had his critics, including – at times – Mawson, but was highly respected. Despite their differences of opinion and clashes of command onboard S.Y. *Aurora*, Mawson asked him to be best man at his wedding in 1914, and regarded him as a life-long friend. Davis always maintained that only the captain should be master of his ship. During the first voyage of the British, Australian and New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition (BANZARE) 1929–1930, he and expedition leader Mawson clashed over this issue again on *Discovery* and Davis did not accept command of the second BANZARE voyage.⁴⁶ His autobiography, *High Latitude*, was published in 1962⁴⁷ and his edited Antarctic diaries in 1997.⁴⁸ Captain John King Davis died in Melbourne in

1967. Throughout his life, he kept in contact with his network of Antarctic associates and maintained an active interest in Antarctic matters through the Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions (ANARE). Davis Point, Davis Bay, Cape Davis, the Davis Sea, and Davis, the Australian Antarctic station, were named in his honour.⁴⁹

The Fate of F.I.S. *Endeavour*

F.I.S. *Endeavour* was lost with all hands, including Harald Dannevig, in the Southern Ocean near Macquarie Island (Latitude 54° 30'S, Longitude 158° 50'E) in December 1914. The AAE had established a wireless station and a meteorological station on the island, which were subsequently taken over by the Australian government. F.I.S. *Endeavour* was to take a government meteorologist to the Island to facilitate a changeover of personnel. The outbreak of World War I meant fewer ships were available for local transports but Dannevig took the opportunity to research an area otherwise unlikely to be surveyed, and to assess fish populations there. It was a dangerous location. Macquarie Island was formed by the uplift of oceanic floor and is one emergent peak in a long, submerged ridge.⁵⁰ Much of the surrounding seas were uncharted in 1914 and several ships had been lost in the area. Despite an extended search in Australian and New Zealand waters, no trace of F.I.S. *Endeavour* was found.

In December 1914, Davis was taking Australian troops and horses to Egypt on Transport A36.⁵¹ After learning of the tragedy, he wrote to his father: 'It is a great pity they attempted this trip as the *Endeavour* was a very small vessel for the seas one gets down south of Tasmania.'⁵² Here, he restates a comment made in his notebook, 10 October, on the return voyage from Eden, that he felt F.I.S. *Endeavour* was a small vessel.

A Marine Court of Inquiry in 1915 into the disappearance found that the ship had left for Macquarie Island in seaworthy condition; it was well manned and with sufficient supplies; and it had lifesaving appliances and equipment.⁵³ A gale in the vicinity was recorded in meteorological reports for 5 December 1914 so, after leaving the island on 3 December in thick fog, F.I.S. *Endeavour* in such testing conditions might have struck submerged rocks, and then, severely damaged, succumbed to heavy seas.

Eden, Then and Now

When Davis was in Eden, he noted a population of about 500. Now a hundred years later,⁵⁴ Eden has a population of 3205. Twofold Bay, a natural harbour, approximately 3300 hectares and 36 metres deep, consists of Calle Calle Bay to the north of Eden and Nullica Bay to the south.⁵⁵ Eden still supports a fishing industry, although a tuna cannery there closed in 1999. The original wharf at Snug Cove has been extended and two other wharves added to accommodate the fishing industry. Fish taken in commercial quantities now in October include the flathead, gurnard, squid, perch, snapper, dogfish, John Dory, sword fish, shark, skate and boar fish mentioned by Davis, as well as grenadier, gemfish, ling, whiting, trevally, flounder, tuna, and mackerel.⁵⁶

Whaling in the area had ceased by the 1930s (the Davidson Whaling Station closed

in 1932) to be replaced today by popular whale watching cruises, but the history of whaling and the legends of some individual whales are preserved in the Killer Whale Museum at Eden.

From Snug Cove, the grades that lead into the town are as steep as Davis found them. The post-office that he visited now has the status of an historical building but is no longer a post office; *The Hollies*, originally *The Curalo Retreat*,⁵⁷ adjacent to Curalo Lake, is still a family residence. There is no sign of the brick kiln⁵⁸ where Dannevig and Postmaster Litchfield paused with Davis on their walk to the beach, but the headland that Davis photographed from Aslings Beach has changed little with any development, and the geological feature of folded rock is still ‘a striking sight’.⁵⁹ The white stone building, the Seahorse Hotel (now Seahorse Inn), that Davis saw in ruins at Boyd Town⁶⁰ has been fully restored and extended, and offers beachside accommodation south of Eden. Nearby are the ruins of the old church he described. Boyd Town, as described by J. McKenzie in *The Twofold Bay Story*, was a community rich with historical anecdotes of sailing vessels, colourful characters, enterprise, ambition, murder, and ruin – all in a beautiful bayside setting.

Conclusion

The observations in the notebook give us additional insight into early marine research in Australia, the equipment used, the fish species in Eden waters then, and the prevailing attitudes to whaling.⁶¹ When Captain Davis recorded his impressions of shipboard activities, of land-based industries and of the local townspeople in his notebook in 1912, he was simply making a personal record of what was essentially a working holiday, and he would most likely be surprised to know that we are reading it now with such interest.

Acknowledgements

The original Captain’s Notebook is held in the John King Davis Collection at the State Library of Victoria. This Collection also contains his correspondence and photographs referred to in his notebook. Additional research was conducted at the Mawson Centre, Polar Collection, at the South Australian Museum; the Mitchell Library at the State Library of New South Wales; the Australian Antarctic Division in Kingston, Tasmania; the Eden Killer Whale Museum; and the Eden Access Centre. Material was also supplied by the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries (Far South Coast Fisheries) and the National Archives of Australia, Canberra. The generous assistance given by many librarians, archivists, curators and staff at these institutions is gratefully acknowledged. I would like to thank Dr Elizabeth Leane for the initial proof-reading and helpful comments and I appreciate the additional suggestions made by the referees, which improved the final presentation. Special thanks go to the copyright holders of the estate of John King Davis who gave permission to publish the text of his notebook, and to staff at the State Library of Victoria for facilitating the process that enabled publication of the notebook and photographs of John King Davis.