

Last trip Down Under for Scots clipper

Heritage: Charity takes over City of Adelaide

BY CATRIONA WEBSTER

The world's oldest surviving clipper has been transferred to her new owners, before her final journey from Scotland to Australia.

The City of Adelaide – built in 1864 to take emigrants from Europe to Aus-

tralia – is voyaging south for the first time in around 125 years.

The boat has been kept on a slipway at the Scottish Maritime Museum at Irvine, Ayrshire, since 1992 after sinking in the Clyde the previous year. The museum could not afford to refurbish the ship and ap-



GOING HOME: David Mann, left, of the Scottish Maritime Museum, and Peter Christopher of the Adelaide charity in front of the clipper

plied to scrap her and save some of the parts.

The new owner, charitable organisation Clipper Ship City of Adelaide, led a campaign to save and relo-

cate the boat, which will now become part of a new maritime heritage park in South Australia.

The group beat a rival bid from campaigners in Sun-

derland where she was built. The clipper's papers were formally handed over during a ceremony at the museum before she begins the first leg of the 13,670-mile journey.

Sam Galbraith, of the

museum's trustees, said: "The voluntary group Clipper Ship City of Adelaide Ltd has worked carefully and methodically to reach this stage and demonstrated that they had the technical skill and knowledge to complete the conservation of the vessel."

Clipper Ship City of Adelaide director Peter Christopher said: "The movement of the City of Adelaide reflects not only a remarkable engineering feat but also demonstrates what can be achieved through co-operation."

“Faced with the prospect of the vessel being deconstructed, the Scottish Government, to its credit, decided to explore other options.

“The relocation of the ship to the city after which it was named is an appropriate solution to a difficult problem, and one which will benefit future generations in both our countries.”

Jim Tildesley, the museum’s former director and co-ordinator of the project, organised the rescue of the boat when she sank in the Clyde.

He said he has no regrets

“The relocation of the ship to the city after which it was named is appropriate”

about seeing her depart. “Having worked in museums all my working life, our job is to pass the heritage on to the future, and we are passing it on to an organisation that is going to have more resources to look after it,” said Mr Tildesley.

The 450-tonne clipper will carry her last cargo – the letters of schoolchildren from across the UK to their counterparts in Australia as part of a cultural exchange.

The A-listed ship was once regarded as unrecoverable because of the silted river and protected wetland areas around her berth in Irvine, but engineers in Australia created a steel cradle to allow the ship to be rolled across a temporary bridge over the river surface and on to a low-draft barge.

The City of Adelaide is due to leave Scotland within days, depending on the weather.

The barge will take the vessel to Greenwich, in London, where she will moor beside sister ship the Cutty Sark. She will then be lifted into the hold of a cargo ship for the journey to Australia.

The clipper – which in later years was used as a hospital ship, a training boat and a clubhouse – is expected to arrive in Adelaide next spring.



Painting by artist John Ford of the City of Adelaide under sail

Oldest clipper ship ready for final trip to Australia

HERITAGE

The world’s oldest clipper ship is to make her final trip from Scotland to the Australian city after which she is named.

The City of Adelaide was built in 1864 to take migrants to Australia and was later used as a hospital ship, a training ship, and finally as a clubhouse moored on the Clyde in

Glasgow. When in Scotland she was flooded and has been stored on a slipway at Irvine, Ayrshire, since 1992 where she was preserved by the Scottish Maritime Museum.

The museum could not afford to refurbish the vessel and had applied to demolish her to save some of the parts of the ship, but the group – Clipper Ship City of Adelaide – applied to relocate her and the clipper is



The Adelaide lies forlorn and derelict at Irvine

now to become part of a maritime heritage park in

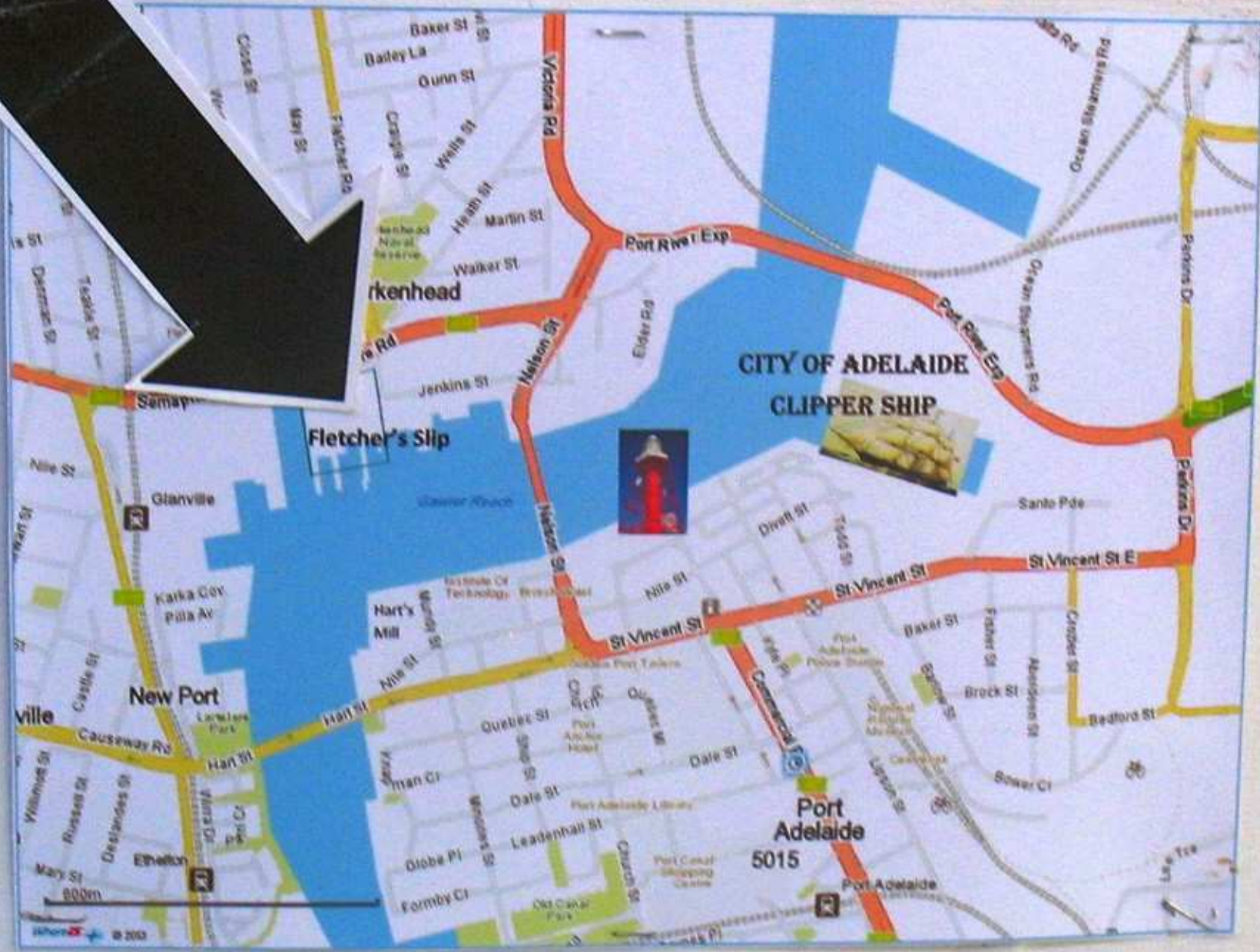
Australia. The ship was regarded as unrecoverable

due to the silted river and protected wetland areas around her, but engineers in Australia created a steel cradle that will allow the ship to be rolled on to a low-draft barge, where she will then sail to London in September for the first leg of her 13,670-mile journey.

She will be moored beside her sister ship, the Cutty Sark, before being lifted on to a huge cargo ship to travel to Australia.

Clipper Ship City of Adelaide boss Peter Christopher said: “I can almost picture the spectacle as the clipper is transported up the River Thames to Greenwich, bringing together the two last original 19th-century clipper ships.”

The cradle made to lift the ship out of her berth in Irvine cost £700,000 to build, with a third of the money coming from public donations in Australia.



**CITY OF ADELAIDE
CLIPPER SHIP**

**Port Adelaide
5015**

'City of Adelaide' Rudder

The 'City of Adelaide' is 148 years old – five years older than the world's only other surviving clipper ship the 'Cutty Sark'. While the 'City of Adelaide' hull survives from the original 1864 build, the rudder is 13 years younger as the original rudder was swept away off South Australia in 1877. That event marked a remarkable story of high drama and seamanship when the Captain, Edward Alston, saved his ship, its crew and his heavily pregnant wife, Grace, from being lost in a fierce storm on the rugged coast of Kangaroo Island.

After leaving Port Augusta for London on 31 October 1877 with a cargo of Flinders Ranges' copper, Captain Alston had cleared the western end of Kangaroo Island and was bearing away to round Tasmania to then head for Cape Horn. On 8 November, a fierce wind and heavy sea knocked away the rudder about 80 miles due south of Kangaroo Island.



Rudder seen on stern of 'City of Adelaide' c1893

For three days they battled with the rudderless ship using a jury-rigged rudder. They were then some 20 miles south of Kangaroo Island when they sighted Young's Rocks dead ahead. By trimming sails and dragging large chains over the sides, they managed to veer past the reef and then past Cape Willoughby on the eastern tip of the island. The lighthouse keepers at Cape Willoughby witnessed this and logged their distress flags as they crept past at three knots, but could do nothing to help the crippled ship as Todd's Telegraph did not extend that far south. Gradually the 'City of Adelaide' was turned northwards through Backstairs Passage and into Saint Vincent's Gulf.

It was on 15 November, seven days after the storm, that the Semaphore anchorage was eventually reached. A tug then towed the clipper into the Port River to Fletcher's Slip. There a new rudder was made from eucalypt timber and new cast metal hinge-pieces made to hang the new rudder. In remarkably quick time the South Australian shipbuilders had the 'City of Adelaide' repaired and ready for sea again.

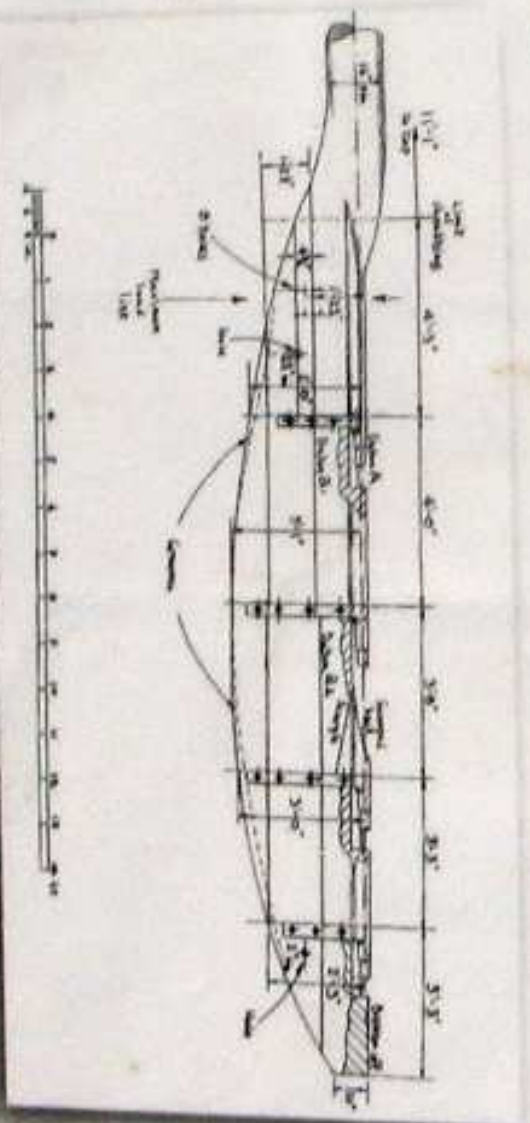


Henry Creechank Fletcher

Three weeks after finally leaving South Australia and at a point roughly half-way between New Zealand and Cape Horn, Grace Alston gave birth to a son. London was finally reached in 103 days, two days better than the ship's homeward average.

For his remarkable actions, Captain Alston was presented with a silver salver and a hundred sovereigns upon the next visit of the 'City of Adelaide' to Port Adelaide in the following year.

In 2005, Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries scientists helped British archaeologists to confirm that the surviving 'City of Adelaide' rudder was the one built in Port Adelaide in 1877. The scientists were able to confirm that the rudder was scrapped and made from Australian grey ironbark proving it to be the 1877 rudder.



The rudder has been extensively researched by Maritime Historian Dr. Alan Parr and Robert Seaton

