

Basic Detail Report



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Title

Illustrated log of the whaling barque **TERROR**

Date

1846 - 1847

Primary Maker

Henry William Downes

Medium

Paper, ink, watercolour ink, leather

Dimensions

Overall: 345 x 293 x 28 mm, 1.78 kg

Name

Journal

History

The illustrated log of the barque **TERROR** was kept by its master Henry William Downes between 17 September 1846 to 17 July 1847. During this voyage the track of the **TERROR** took it past Moreton Bay (Brisbane), Cato, the Bellona Reefs, the Isle of Pines, along the west coast of New Caledonia, San Cristobal and Malaita (Solomon Islands), the Treasury Islands, and back via Malaita, Stewart Islands, Torres Island, the Banks Islands, Whitsun Island and Paoom, the Isle of Pines and Moreton Bay. Downes, from a sea-faring family from Cork, Ireland, offers us more than an informative insight into Australian deep-water whaling during the mid-19th century, with its detailed descriptions of life on board and the hazardous hunt carried out from the ship's boats. Downes was a skilled and lively writer, and he conveys vividly the spirit and the language of those intrepid times. In addition, he was an accomplished watercolour artist, and his written account is complemented by his own illustrations. The log contains about 50 views of different places visited during the 10-month cruise, along with 25 illustrations of whales and 25 paintings of ships, rigging and crew members. Pasted down on the front page of the log is a small carte-de-visite photograph of the author. These fluent sketches invite us to share many facets of the voyage. The drama and danger of the hunt is well-conveyed, as well as the more mundane aspects of the work. Exotic landfalls are captured, as well as their exotic inhabitants. We meet the crew in moments of leisure, and there is a strong sailorly interest in the other ships encountered. Unfortunately for the author, his desire to be an active participant in the whale hunt cost him his life. For his next voyage he was transferred to the barque **LUCY ANN**, another vessel in the Boyd fleet. The previous captain had difficulties maintaining discipline among the crew, partly due to the poor quality of the provisions, and had to terminate his voyage early when the crew was close to mutiny. Port records for the arrival of the **LUCY ANN** shows that half of the the

crew returned in poor health and suffering from scurvy. Downes, it would appear, was a well-liked captain and was put on board by his employer Ben Boyd to remedy the problems of the earlier voyage. While in pursuit of a whale, Downes' boat was taken down. Like so many sailors of his time, he was unable to swim and he drowned. His friends erected a plaque to his memory in Saint Mary's Anglican Church in Balmain, Sydney. His brother Captain Richard Izod Downes erected a plaque to the Downes family including Henry William in Highgate Cemetery, London.