

A Passenger by the *Fiery Star*

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An almost insignificant paragraph in the Catholic paper *The Age*, was the stimulus to investigate further. It reported the death of a Sister of Mercy 90 years ago and referred to events of exactly 150 years ago this month. Subsequent research was to reveal a pioneering Catholic family involved in the early history of Brisbane, a tragedy for that family and others, and a maritime mystery which was never solved.

This is that 1925 paragraph:

Sr. Mary Comegene Hartley died at All Hallows Convent on Wednesday morning. She was formerly Miss Mary Ann Hartley, daughter of the well-known Hartley family who in the old days, lived next to St. Stephen's Cathedral. Entering religion in her early youth, Sr. Mary Comegene led an active life as a devoted Sister of Mercy. Most of her religious life was passed in All Hallows. Her brother, Mr. Peter Hartley, was chosen by the late Bishop O'Quinn to go to Ireland and study for the priesthood but unfortunately the ship on which he sailed was wrecked and he lost his life. RIP.¹

The name Hartley was known in Brisbane by 1846 at least. Dean Rigney told of visiting the Stradbroke Island mission site with ‘an old servant of the Fathers’ named Peter Hartley. That was in 1858, twelve years after its closure. He wrote: ‘There they met a young aboriginal man who as a boy had learnt to serve Mass but now all traces of his religious education had completely vanished from his mind. Not one word of the Lord’s Prayer could he say although Peter Hartley who knew him well and saw him often serving Mass, tried to bring back former lessons to his mind.’² Sometime then between 1843 and 1846 when the mission functioned, Peter was involved.

It is probable too that the steersman who piloted the splendid whaleboat with the native crew up to Brisbane town from Dunwich for supplies was Peter Hartley himself. James Demarr, an observer on the river bank, assumed him to be one of the Passionist Fathers and praised his skill in handling the men and the boat.³

At the age of 45, Peter was married to Anne Devine in St Mary’s Cathedral Sydney on 14th January 1845. They were both ‘of Sydney’, but only Peter could sign and did so in a very fine style. He had been born in Co. Louth, Ireland, the son of Samuel and Margaret Hartley. Anne Devine was a Dublin-born widow aged 32, who in October of 1832 had married John Ryan to whom she had two children, Bridget and Patrick.⁴

In mid 1846, three significant events indicated that Brisbane was a growing town: the ‘Moreton Bay Courier’ commenced publication initially as a weekly, the steamer *Experiment* began a service between Brisbane and Ipswich, and a branch of the Customs

Department was established. The Moreton Bay Collector of Customs ('a tax collector') was Mr. W.A. Duncan, a staunch Catholic. His staff - 'Duncan's satellites' – consisted of a landing-waiter William Thornton, a coxswain, and a boat crew of four. The coxswain or steersman was Peter Hartley. He was possibly appointed because he was a boatman familiar with Moreton Bay and undoubtedly known to Duncan.

The honest Peter submitted the following advertisement for publication in 1848:

The undersigned has in his possession a Tarpaulin found near the settlement. Any person proving his claim to it may have it on paying the expenses of advertisement.

Peter Hartly [sic]

Coxwain, Custom House Boat.⁵

Other references give his livelihood as 'Customs House Officer', 'Messenger', 'Government Officer', or 'Boatman'. Thus, being in government employment enabled Peter to provide for a large family, purchase considerable property, and contribute generously to the church and other causes.

The family to be supported came to consist of perhaps the two Ryan children and the Hartleys themselves – James born in Brisbane in 1846, Peter, Mary Anne (later Sr. M. Comegene) in 1849, William in 1851, Samuel in 1852, Francis in 1854, and Margaret who died only a few weeks old in early 1858.

Having married rather late in life and with an increasing number of children, Peter believed in securing the

family's future by purchasing property. He was to die a quite wealthy man and as was said, 'his wealth was accumulated over many years of earning and self-denial.'⁶ His first investment was in 1848 when he bought 31 acres in what is now Newstead for £46.10.0. Then at auctions for town land he acquired two allotments near St Stephen's church property – in 1849 No 1 in Edward Street, and in 1854, No 8 in Creek Street. Later additions were No 7 in Charlotte Street and No 12 in Elizabeth Street. Another was to become part of St. James' School property and so there is to this day a Hartley street nearby. All these allotments were to pass to the family and the Sisters of Mercy and ultimately 7 and 12 were to become part of St. Stephen's Cathedral land in Section 33.

Being a land owner, the electoral rolls for Stanley, North Brisbane, list 'Peter Hartley, freeholder, of Edward St' as entitled to vote.⁷ From 1846 he paid his annual subscription to Fr Hanly and later various gifts of £10 to Bishop Quinn. And in 1853, to promote progress in North Australia, he promised to give £10 to the Gold Find Subscription Fund to promote the 'discovery of a gold field worth working'.⁸

The first Hartley home seems to have been on their allotment on the Edward-Charlotte street corner. They shared pew No 6 with the Gilfoyles in the 1850 church and the children are mentioned as pupils at St Stephen's school, initially a slab building but considered adequate for the purpose. One teacher, Denis Kelly, was very successful and popular while another, James Freney 'instructed in English Grammar and the rudiments of

Latin Grammar along with pronunciation’.⁹ Henry Ensor who was a pupil there at the same time as the Hartleys remembered the rough state of the town’s streets: ‘Creek street was then a tidal creek, the favourite swimming place of the school boys. The town always seemed full of blacks. I counted as many as a hundred on a morning walk to school. They were nearly all selling fish which had been trapped in Breakfast Creek.’¹⁰ In 1855 one of their number ‘Dundalli’ was hanged not far from the school. When the drop fell the yells of the blacks watching from a distance could be heard all over the town.’¹¹

There were happier events however to amuse the townsfolk as the account of the Australia Day regatta tells:

Shopkeepers closed their houses, workmen threw down their implements of labour, and all with their families in holiday attire wended their way to the north and south banks of the river. Contests between various classes of sailing and pulling boats had been arranged. Helmsman of the “Lucy Long” in the 4th race for whaleboats pulling five oars was Peter Hartley. The course of twice around the flagship and buoys was to earn the winner £5. Unfortunately the “Lucy Long” came in third. For the 6th race, three whale boats, manned by blackfellows lined up. Peter Hartley’s “Lucy Long” with its crew of Amity Point blacks won as 1st prize a bag of flour.’¹²

Previously when listing Peter and Anne Hartley’s children it may have been noticed that second son Peter’s date of birth was omitted. The reason is that he never officially existed! There is no birth record, no

baptismal entry, there is no death certificate. He is the Peter Hartley who was born and grew up in Brisbane then was lost at sea. He may have become known to us as Fr Peter Hartley, the first local boy to have been ordained. Details on a family certificate of 1857 include 'Peter, aged 10'.¹³

Although educational opportunities were extremely limited in the Brisbane of those times, it is apparent that Peter had qualities to cause Bishop Quinn to single him out as a candidate for the Priesthood. There was one man in particular who almost certainly tutored him in Latin and other relevant subjects prior to his departure for formal training in Ireland. This was the erudite Matthew Charles Devitt.

Matthew Devitt had studied for the Priesthood at Maynooth but left due to ill health before making his way to Brisbane via Melbourne. In 1863 Bishop Quinn put him in charge of the recently founded boys' school near old St Patrick's in Wickham Street, the Valley. In May of that same year he ordained him in St Stephen's pro-Cathedral, the first such ceremony in the colony. He was described as 'possessing a splendid disposition with all the qualifications which were to make him the perfect pastor'.¹⁴ At the school the popular teacher continued to be known as 'Mr Devitt'. He taught the academic subjects in addition to tutoring a class of fully twenty boys in Latin, dress, and rubrics for altar service at St Stephen's and St Patrick's. He was strict about one thing in particular – the boys were forbidden to steal away for a 'bogey' (a naked dip) in the river or the mouth of the creek near Hartley's place during dinner hour as he had

frequently seen sharks in the area. 'Thus when resuming after dinner hour he would glance around and if he had any suspicions his orders had been disobeyed, he would run his hand through the hair of the suspects and, if damp, investigations would follow.'¹⁵

During Peter's final school years his father was busy too. The family's future was further consolidated when he had built the Exchange hotel in 1863 on the corner of Edward and Charlotte streets followed by the Queen's hotel in 1865 on the corner of Creek and Charlotte streets. They proved sound investments over many years due to the fact that the A.S.N and other shipping firms established wharves and related maritime facilities in the area which became the gateway to Brisbane for fifty or so years. These hotels had to be extended several times. The Queen's in particular was considered for a time among the best in town. The family had a house built in Charlotte street between the Queen's and the Cathedral property where the Rush Centre now stands. Peter snr continued his occupation as a boatman. When the lifeboat from the immigrant ship *Queen of the Colonies* was found on the foreshore at Caloundra in 1863, it was successfully retrieved as reported in detail: -

The castaways' boat was brought back to Brisbane yesterday by Mr. P. Hartley. He left Lytton in a boat with five blacks on Sunday morning and proceeded through Bribie Passage to Caloundra Head, a short distance off Moolooloo. He found the ship's boat lying on the beach on the north side of the head and as she was uninjured she was immediately launched for the return to Brisbane. Mr. Hartley arrived with the boat at Kangaroo Point late on Tuesday night.¹⁶

The immigrant ship *Fiery Star* arrived in Moreton Bay on its second trip in late 1864. From then until March of 1865 she lay in the Brisbane roads discharging cargo and loading up for the return voyage to London. *Fiery Star* was no ordinary ship. She was described as ‘an extreme clipper’ and her logs and sailing records proved that she was among the best few. She had been launched in New York in 1851 and named *Comet*. A description ran: - ‘She was a particularly handsome ship in every way and was afterwards conceded to be one of the most successful sailing ships ever launched from any shipyard. She had long hollow entrance lines and a fine run aft. She was very strongly built, her frame being diagonally iron strapped. The poop deck extended forwards to the main mast and the cabins were large and elegantly furnished; she was provided with flushing W.C.s, smoking and bathrooms as well as a fine library.’¹⁷

A report in the ‘Brisbane Courier’ quotes the comments of a ship’s captain:

She is the most perfect model of a clipper I have ever seen and is fully equal to her appearance. Her hull is a model of beauty and graceful symmetry – a first rate sea going craft and a clipper of extraordinary speed. Her master Captain W.H. Yule is to be congratulated in commanding one of the fastest vessels afloat.¹⁸

The Courier then reported that the *Fiery Star* is now rapidly loading for London and it is expected she will get away soon as only her ground tier of wool will be pressed. The small river steamers *Bremer* and *Nowra*

were taking down from Ipswich full loads of about 150 bales at a time to be loaded aboard.¹⁹

As the hold filled with 2,041 bales of wool and cotton, 134 casks of tallow, 1,519 hides and 9,013 horns, sailing day drew near. It was planned to be 23rd March. Captain Yule hoped to be well clear of the floating ice and bergs that would be forming up in the vicinity of Cape Horn during that oncoming winter of 1865. The official notice read:

The “Fiery Star” for London. The above vessel will be despatched positively on 23rd instant. Parties wishing to proceed to England by this opportunity are requested to secure their passages at once. Saloon £50, Second Cabin £30, Steerage £22.10.0.²⁰

The next day’s published passenger list showed 8 in the Saloon, 8 in the Second Cabins, and 21 in the Steerage. With a crew of 55 there would be 92 aboard *Fiery Star*. A saloon passenger was ‘Peter Hartley jnr.’

When some of the Hartleys were up at the Customs House checking and loading Peter’s trunks, ‘a nasty snake made its appearance. William Hartley, a boy of 13, stepped forward and ably despatched it.’²¹ There was a discovery of a different type aboard the *Fiery Star*. It was found that one of the seamen who had signed on was in fact ‘Sarah Johnstone’. She was arrested and sentenced to two months imprisonment with hard labor.²²

Having been cleared to sail, *Fiery Star* made ready to depart Moreton Bay on Sunday afternoon, 26th. The coastal steamer *Williams* was to have towed her out to

sea where a breeze might be picked up, but owing to a heavy fog that steamer did not proceed to the Bay. Later in the day the small Brisbane paddle tug *Diamond* 'went down with a portion of the crew, Mr Sargeant the chief officer, and some of the passengers. A party of ladies and gentlemen also went down to bid their friends farewell.'²³ We can be sure that members of the Hartley family and perhaps Bishop Quinn and Fr Devitt were aboard the *Diamond* to see Peter off to Ireland on his way to the priesthood.

Fiery Star got under way but no breeze sprang up for several days. A week later the Cape Moreton light keeper telegraphed: '*Fiery Star* still in sight to the east.' She did however pass out of sight overnight. She was to follow the usual homeward route of rounding New Zealand, crossing the south Pacific to round Cape Horn, pass into the Atlantic, then turn north to cross the equator. The voyage was expected to take three months. By April 11th *Fiery Star* was off the south end of New Zealand. April 16th was Easter Sunday.

Moving forward now to 26th May, it is exactly two months since the *Fiery Star* was farewelled from Moreton Bay. It was a bleak and cloudy Friday afternoon in Brisbane, a reminder that winter was closing in. A telegram was received from Melbourne. It conveyed news of 'a catastrophe which shed a gloom over many households as the sad news was spread from lip to lip'.²⁴ The telegram read: "'Fiery Star" burnt 400 miles off New Zealand. The chief officer (Mr. Sargeant), John Omand (a passenger) and 17 of the crew saved. Captain and remainder of the crew and passengers missing in

ship's boats." An accompanying paragraph added little: 'These are the meagre outlines of this sad occurrence, but gloomy as they are, there is yet room for hope that the missing passengers and crew may be picked up by some passing vessel.'²⁵

While relatives and friends of the missing hoped and prayed, a report from New Zealand told how during the night of 11th May the barque *Dauntless* making for Auckland saw a glow on the horizon and subsequently found a ship on fire from stem to stern. They took off Mr Sargeant and his exhausted crew who had fought the fire for twenty one days then watched as the flames leapt up and completely consumed the once fine ship. Fearing the inevitable a raft had been constructed on deck. Mr Sargeant said that 'for the safety of the 78 passengers and crew Captain Yule had left the burning ship in the 4 boats on 20th April. With the intention of making for the Chatham Islands, a distance of between 300 and 400 miles, he had taken the ship's chest and navigational instruments. Heavy gales had come on soon after they left the ship and so great fears are entertained for their safety.'²⁶

A week later it was feared that the captain and the 78 passengers had perished.²⁷ The New Zealand government steamer *Brisk* had gone out and searched the surrounding islands and seas. At the Chathams which included Pitt Island, the resident magistrate Captain Thomas had arranged for the native boys to run around the islands to look for clues but nothing had been found and the *Brisk* returned with 'no good tidings'.²⁸

It is from the log kept by Mr Sargeant that the details of the passengers' last days aboard the *Fiery Star* are found in graphic detail:

On 19th April, in lat. 46° 10 S. and long. 170° W. (i.e. three weeks after leaving Moreton Bay) one of the crew named John Adams came aft and reported a strong smell of smoke in the forecabin. Captain Yule and the mate went forward, took the fore hatch off, and were horrified to find the smoke come up in clouds from the lower hold. Every hatchway in the ship was immediately battened down and all ventilation stopped up as securely as possible. The vessel was then 400 miles from the Chatham Islands.

20th April: Strong breeze and squally. The crew were employed pumping water on the hatches. The passengers were obliged to leave the cabin – the smell from the burning wool which was strongly impregnated with arsenic having become insufferable. Took down several sails from aloft in order to secure the hatches.

Up to this time no flame had been seen and strong hopes were felt that the fire might be kept under till the vessel was safe in one of the ports of New Zealand. At 6 o'clock in the evening however, flames burst out through the port bow and through the waterway on the deck. This seems to have discouraged the captain and he gave up the attempt to run the ship to land and commenced preparations to abandon the ship. The *Fiery Star* had lost two of her boats by a heavy sea which struck her only two days before the fire was discovered so that but four were left. In these the Captain, all the passengers but one and most of the crew embarked. When the boats were

quite filled, it was found that 17 of the crew still remained on board. The mate (Mr. Sargeant) with a praiseworthy courage said to the men still in the ship, "Well lads, I'll stick by you if you'll stick by the ship and we'll go to work and keep down the fire." It is supposed that the Captain meant to steer for the Chatham Islands. When the boats left the fire was rapidly gaining strength, and Mr. Sargeant asked them to lie by them all night which they promised to do. The 17 then turned their attention to the burning ship, got the steam pump in order, and vigorously set to work to keep down the fire.

21st April: Moderate breezes and fine weather. At daybreak looked out for the boats, but no sign of them could be seen. Tacked about a little to try to fall in with the boats. Some hands were employed in keeping down the fire, and others in constructing a raft out of spare spars should things come to the worst...²⁹

The log continues to record the struggle against the flames and the efforts to keep the ship afloat by working the pumps. An entry a few days later indicates just how bad the situation was. 'The men lived entirely on deck eating the fowls from the coops. There were ten pigs on board and their stys having been used to keep up the steam pump fire, they ran about so maddened by the heat of the deck that they had to be killed for fear they would attack the men.'³⁰

The statement later provided by the ship's engineer who operated the steam pump (Mr. Maber) includes a brief account of the passengers, one of whom was his son, going into the life boats:

Captain Yule and Mr. Sargeant examined the lower part of the ship and discovered a great amount of smoke. On the following day, the Captain called all hands – passengers and crew – to muster and told them that the ship was on fire and that she might last two or three weeks, and that he hoped when the time came to get into the boats there would be no rushing as there was only one leader and that was himself. About 6 o'clock that evening flames burst out on the port side forward. Captain Yule with four seamen and a few lady saloon passengers got into the life boat and stood off. The gig was the next boat that left and was taken charge of by Mr. Addy, the 2nd mate. The next was the jolly boat, crowded to a great extent. Then the waist boat, which had the stern post knocked off and had only a piece of canvas nailed to keep the water out and she kept two men continually at work bailing her out. I begged my son to stop with me but he would not, so I lowered him into her thinking one of us might be saved. Now all the boats had left the ship...³¹

When back in Auckland Mr Sargeant said in a statement that it did not appear at all certain how the fire originated but he presumed it arose from spontaneous combustion owing to packing damp wool – a practice often attended with most serious results and loss by fire. When the fire was first discovered it appeared to make such headway that it soon seemed hopeless to try and save the vessel, and he did not attach blame to the captain for abandoning the ship under the circumstances. The flames were bursting through the ship's sides when the boats left, and no doubt the captain surrounded by the men, women and children on board as passengers had yielded to their entreaties and pressure and betook himself with

them to the boats in the hope of saving their lives. He thought that in doing so the captain had acted pretty much in the same way as anyone would have acted under similar circumstances – he had yielded to the dictates of nature and endeavoured to save human life when it appeared hopeless to save the ship or make the land with her. When it was determined to take to the boats it was found that there was not room enough for all. Some must remain behind because two boats had been smashed previously. It was proposed to cast lots for who should remain, but this Mr Sergeant objected to. He volunteered to remain on board and work the ship as long as he could and he induced 16 of the crew and one passenger to remain behind with him.³²

Uncertainty left grounds for hope. A seaman wrote to the *Brisbane Courier* confident that ‘a man of Captain Yule’s experience would have taken advantage of the prevailing breezes and currents to head the open boats for the shipping paths to one of the New Zealand ports, and so we have fair grounds for asserting that there is still hope.’³³ Another recalled Captain Bligh’s voyage of 3,600 miles in an open boat. ‘Sperate’ penned a verse containing the lines:

Still worse than death the dread incertitude
Which shrouds the fate of those for whom we sigh
Our uncurbed thoughts will, fearsome, wander out
Where heave the surges on New Zealand’s main...’

Then what was described as a cruel rumour was spread that the *Fiery Star* boats had been found but it soon was proved to be incorrect.³⁴ Yet again the facts were put

into perspective: 78 people had crowded into the four remaining lifeboats, one of which was unseaworthy, and launched into the windy southern seas at nightfall. Heavy gales had come on soon after leaving the ship and therefore hopes of survival were slim.

The *Maryborough Chronicle* conjectured that the longboat containing Captain Yule and the ladies might yet reach New Zealand or fall in with some friendly sail. It added: 'The most of the passengers were old colonists on their way to visit England. Dr. Bell's wife was on board and also Mr. Peter Hartley's son, a very promising youth, was on his way to enter a university.' The cargo of the *Fiery Star* was valued at £95,000. Also aboard was 'a valuable shipment of birds and animals comprising emus, tallegallos, bronze-winged pigeons, rose cockatoos, wallabies etc., all destined for Zoological Societies in London, Paris, and Brussels.'³⁵

When there seemed nothing more to be said about the *Fiery Star* tragedy, other events of 1865, local and international, made the news – the railway from Ipswich to Bigge's Camp (Grandchester) commenced operation, the first Brisbane cross-river bridge was opened, St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney was completely destroyed by fire, and President Lincoln was assassinated in Washington.

Then there was a sudden and startling re-awakening of interest. In late September, i.e. five months after the life boats had cast off from the *Fiery Star*, three men struggled ashore from a patched up dinghy on Stewart Island off the south coast of New Zealand. After the wreck of the *Grafton* they had been marooned for twenty

months on one of the Auckland Islands, that inhospitable group of rocky islands 150 miles south of New Zealand. Two other survivors still awaited rescue there. Captain Musgrave, one of the three, stated that while there he had on several occasions seen smoke rising from one of the adjacent islands and felt sure people must be living there.

Captains Musgrave and Cross went back immediately to the Aucklands to rescue the remaining two seamen and to carry out further investigations. At the old whaling station they discovered the body of a man who had obviously died of starvation and exposure. He had been dead for about three months, was fully dressed and lying on a camp stretcher. 'Round his neck was a Roman Catholic relic.'³⁶

It was not Peter Hartley. In expectation of being found sooner or later he had scratched his name on a piece of slate left nearby. Only 'James' could be discerned. These events triggered speculation that survivors of the *Fiery Star* might yet be found. The *Sydney Morning Herald* said: 'Rumours are abroad this morning respecting the possibility of learning something more of the lost passengers of the "Fiery Star". Are they ashore somewhere? As the missing people have many sorrowing relatives in Brisbane whose feelings will be painfully excited by this report, it is to be hoped that the case will meet with immediate attention from the Government.'³⁷

Letters to the press expressed indignation that the New Zealand Government steamer *Brisk* had given up the search too soon, others that the Queensland Government had done nothing: 'Sir, I can no longer refrain from

expressing my sense of the shameful apathy which has existed... After some months of torturing suspense we learn at last that the missing passengers, or a portion of them, may possibly be discovered on Auckland Island. But what has been done now that the body of a man has been discovered and smoke seen on different parts of the island? I feel disgusted...'³⁸

Public opinion forced the Governments of Queensland, NSW and Victoria to send out the steam sloop *Victoria* to conduct a thorough examination of all waters and islands even though previous searches had been in vain. The *Victoria* returned to Melbourne with nothing to report.

While that search was under way, it was determined that the surname scratched on the piece of slate and found beside the body was 'Hodgson'. But there was no James Hodgson aboard either the *Fiery Star* or the *Grafton*! The mystery remained and speculation continued. The *Sydney Morning Herald* writer was determined to find an answer: 'Is it not possible that there may be survivors of some other ship on the islands?' He was right – there had been another shipwreck.

In May 1864 nineteen crewmen made it ashore to Auckland Island from the Scottish barque *Invercauld*. During the next twelve months sixteen died one by one from starvation. James Hodgson was one of them. The remaining three were picked up by a small Portuguese vessel which took them to South America from where they were able to return to London. Word of all this reached Melbourne in mid-October of 1865 – right at the time that the *Victoria* returned with no news.

There were now some answers that brought finality. It had to be accepted that the passengers of the *Fiery Star* were lost without trace – in escaping fire they had succumbed to drowning, perhaps east of the Chatham Islands. The discovery of the body and the sight of smoke at various times over parts of the Auckland Islands were explained by the survivors of the *Invercauld*. It was nevertheless considered strange that all these tragedies should have occurred within a relatively short space of time and two groups of castaways were simultaneously living on the Auckland Islands yet never met.

In two voyages out, *Fiery Star* had carried over 1,100 immigrants to Queensland, about 500 of whom were from Ireland many under the arrangements of Quinn's Immigration Society. It was considered a very safe and happy ship under Capt. Yule.³⁹ There had been few deaths, a fact attributed to the hygienic facilities aboard. Neither was *Fiery Star* the first nor the last wool-laden vessel to be totally destroyed by fire, wool being such a dangerous cargo in a wooden ship. Peter Hartley aged c. 17 was among the 78 victims of this risky practice.

Peter Hartley snr, his father, died in 1869.⁴⁰ Soon after, Mary Anne Hartley, his sister, entered All Hallows Convent. It was through her that the Sisters of Mercy came into possession of the Queen's Hotel which was a source of revenue benefiting the Convent until 1940 or so when they sold to Castlemaine-Perkins. It was through her also that the Sisters owned allotment 7 in Charlotte Street and initially allotment 12 in Elizabeth Street. By a convenient arrangement, Bishop Quinn was

able to procure the latter allotment to preserve the Cathedral surrounds.⁴¹

In 1911, Archbishop Dunne and the Sisters decided to sell these two allotments by now all of 7 and the major part of 12, as one parcel of land. It was with some surprise then when in 1993, the trustees of the Roman Catholic Church bought *Hesketh House* to find the names Robert Dunne and the Trustees of the Sisters of Mercy on the title deeds as previous owners. The Rush Centre opened in 2005 stands therefore on former Hartley property, allotment 7 having been the site of their home from which son Peter left for Ireland to prepare for the priesthood 150 years ago.

APPENDIX

No trace of survivors or *Fiery Star* life boats were ever found, yet a strange and unexplained event occurred ‘on a clipper bound for Australia when the nearest land was Easter Island almost a thousand miles to the north’. This locates it in the mid-Pacific. The date is not given and the event is told as a strange happening at sea:

It was about four bells of the middle watch – the churchyard watch as the four hours after midnight are called – that it happened. The men of the mates watch were on deck when suddenly apparently close on the port hand, there came out of the darkness a frightful wailing cry, ghastly in its agony and intensity. It was as if a dozen men undergoing the most frightful torture were crying out in their agony.

The men on deck rushed to the side of the ship and stared out into the blackness but could see nothing. Other men below in their bunks, startled out of their sleep, rushed on deck including the captain. There was a long moment of silence and then once more the fearful cry fading away. Every man on board felt the blood freeze in his veins. They stood as rigid as stones waiting for the cry to come once more but there was no other sound.

For days afterward the men could speak of little else and old timers who were on that voyage claimed that many years afterward the very thought of it would send shivers down their spines.

What was it? One theory was that it was the cries of shipwrecked men in a boat who had seen the ship's running lights and raised a fearful sort of death scream as they saw their last hope go rushing by. Who knows?

(From Basil Heatter, *Eighty Days to Hong Kong. The Story of the Clipper Ships*, An Ariel Book, Farrer, Straus, & Giroux, New York, 1969)

¹ The Age, 1 August 1925

² Moran, Card. P.F., 'The History of the Catholic Church in Australasia', p. 419

³ Demarr, James, 'Adventures in Australia Fifty Years Ago, 1839-1844', p. 256

⁴ St Mary's Cathedral records, Sydney

⁵ Moreton Bay Courier, 24 June 1848

⁶ Thornton, William, Executor of Peter Hartley's will, letter to a member of the family dated 8 November 1877.

⁷ Moreton Bay Courier, 4 March 1854

⁸ Moreton Bay Courier, 17 December 1853

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- ⁹ Moreton Bay Courier, 31 December 1859
- ¹⁰ Brisbane Courier, 31 July 1924
- ¹¹ Brisbane Courier, 18 January 1919
- ¹² Moreton Bay Courier, 31 January 1852
- ¹³ Birth certificate of Margaret Hartley, Reg-General (B.M.& Ds.), Brisbane, 17 December 1857
- ¹⁴ J.J. Kelly, Notes on 'Old St Patricks', edited and published in Catholic Advocate 26 September to 10 October 1925. Copy in BAA.
- ¹⁵ J.J. Kelly, Notes on 'First Boys' School', BAA etc as above
- ¹⁶ Brisbane Courier, 7 May 1863
- ¹⁷ Howe, Octavius T. and Matthews, Frederick C., 'American Clipper Ships', Vol 1, pp. 96-97, Dover Publications, 1986
- ¹⁸ Brisbane Courier, 25 November 1863
- ¹⁹ Brisbane Courier, 6 January 1865
- ²⁰ Brisbane Courier, 15 March 1865
- ²¹ Brisbane Courier, 24 March 1865
- ²² Brisbane Courier, 1 April 1865
- ²³ Brisbane Courier, 27 March 1865
- ²⁴ Brisbane Courier, 27 May 1865
- ²⁵ Brisbane Courier, 27 May 1865
- ²⁶ Auckland Herald, 30 May 1865
- ²⁷ Brisbane Courier, 12 June 1865. The exact number of passengers lost varies from 75 to 84: 78 is the number given at that time, but may not include children. It was printed that there were on board 63 passengers and 42 crew, making a total of 105 souls. Captain James Banks, Brisbane agent for the Black Ball Shipping Line, estimated that 'the long boat would have contained Captain Yule, the surgeon (Dr. Plowman), the female passengers numbering c. fifteen, some crew (four or five) and the children.' This totals perhaps 28. The remaining 50 at least, all male passengers and crew, 'would have crowded into the life boats'. Their miserable lot was stormy seas, seasickness, freezing temperatures, all followed by the awful final moments.
- ²⁸ Brisbane Courier, 12 June 1865
- ²⁹ Brisbane Courier, 3 June 1865
- ³⁰ Brisbane Courier, 3 June 1865
- ³¹ Brisbane Courier, 3 July 1865
- ³² Daily Southern Cross, (NZ), 31 May 1865, p.7

³³ Brisbane Courier, 13 June 1865

³⁴ Brisbane Courier, 15 June 1865

³⁵ Maryborough Chronicle, 7 June 1865

³⁶ Brisbane Courier, 6 October 1865

³⁷ Sydney Morning Herald, 2 October 1865

³⁸ Brisbane Courier, 2 October 1865

³⁹ Captain W.H. Yule and Mr Sargeant were each highly commended by the Black Ball Shipping Line – Capt. Yule for putting the welfare of the passengers first by abandoning the burning vessel, and Mr Sargeant for his valiant effort to try to save the ship and ultimately the 17 crew members left aboard. As a reward William Claude Sargeant was promoted to the captaincy of the ‘Golden City’ which he brought out to Moreton Bay in 1866. When he retired from the sea, he made Brisbane his home. He died in February 1910 and is buried in Toowong cemetery. His diary of the 21 days whilst on the burning vessel is in the safe keeping of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland.

⁴⁰ Peter Hartley snr died in October 1869. His wife Mary Ann died in August of 1888. A solid monument marks their resting place in Nudgee cemetery.

⁴¹ Brisbane Courier, 5 March 1879, *Hartley v Taaffe*, Supreme Court, Brisbane. The Hartley home had been on allotment 7 and several rental cottages were on allotment 12.

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