

Report on research in Falkland Islands Feb.16th to March 2nd 2002

1. I was awarded a Shackleton Foundation Scholarship in May 2000 .My main objective was to carry out research on the history and the archaeology of the wreck of the American ship 'Charles Cooper'. With the exception of the 'Jhelum' this is the most important wreck at Stanley. Built in 1856 in Connecticut, it spent 4 years as a 'packet ship' plying between New York and Antwerp carrying cargo and emigrants . In 1859 it was transferred to 'tramping' and put into Stanley on 28th September 1866 for repairs , was found unseaworthy and was sold to Dean & Co. as a storage hulk. It is the only example of an American emigrant ship left in the world ,other than wrecks on the seabed. x
2. I could not take the Scholarship up immediately because of the pressing needs of my employers, National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside. I did make progress on my research project through correspondence with various contacts in the United States. These have enabled me to gather a substantial amount of information about the 'Charles Cooper's' work as a 'packet' plus copies of all the measurements taken in the survey of 1978.
3. The objective of my research visit to the Falkland Islands was to complete research on the history and archaeology of the American ship 'Charles Cooper'. In particular ,I was anxious to take samples of the wood of the main structural components for identification and to carry an up to date photographic survey on board. In the event , this was enlarged to an assessment of the current condition , possible options for the wreck's future and a survey of the incidence of wood boring molluscs in local wrecks and structures.

It was essential to discover (so far as possible) the history of the 'Charles Cooper' after condemnation at Stanley. It was also important to try and understand Stanley's role as a harbour of refuge for ships damaged off Cape Horn , the vital role of storage hulks and commercial relations between J.M Dean & Co. and the Falkland Islands Company. Dean's records no longer exist but their activities are reflected in the Governor's correspondence and that of the local manager of the FIC.

This involved most of the ten working days of my visit . The FIG and the FIC records are comprehensive and rich sources housed in the excellent new Falkland Government Archives .I was able to gather most of what I needed but there are questions about the final years of the 'Charles Cooper' as an FIC facility which could not be answered. However, I was given the names of former FIC managers who should be able to provide the information.

4. In addition , I was called on by the Falkland Islands National Trust ,FIG

Harbour officers and the Legislative Council to advise on the condition of the historic shipwrecks and possible options for securing their future preservation. This included a survey of the Harbour by launch, onboard surveys of the 'Charles Cooper', and the 'Jhelum' and two meetings. I will be making a further report on possible future options after discussions with colleagues in Liverpool.

5. I carried research on the history and distribution of marine boring molluscs in and around Stanley Harbour and at wreck sites at Uranie Bay and Pleasant Roads to try and explain the current condition of the historic shipwrecks. Discussions with local marine biologists suggested that these creatures had not been the subject of research. I will follow this up by seeking on advice on the identification of species and help with contacts from colleagues in NMGM's Zoology department.

6. I also collected samples of copper sheathing from various wrecks for analysis of their content. They may prove a useful diagnostic for dating 18th and 19th century shipwrecks.

7. I made the local media aware of my project and the Foundation. Before leaving the UK, I gave an interview to Jenny Hargreaves of the BBC. At Standley, I had two news items and a long interview on FIBS and an interview with Juanita Brock for her independent web-based news service. I also had an article published in the Penguin News for 1st March 2002. I will ensure that the Liverpool press and BBC Radio Merseyside hear about my visit. I will also be writing for the specialist maritime magazines to alert them to the disintegration of the 'Charles Cooper'.

8. As a result of my visit funded by the Foundation, I am in possession of most pieces of the jig-saw puzzle that makes up the history of the 'Charles Cooper'. There are still gaps for example, finding out more about the trade and passenger operations in mid-19th century Antwerp; but I have enough material to produce a coherent narrative about this important ship. I hope that I can persuade a commercial publisher to produce this in due course. Although this will be a specialist work, the emigration, the American connection and its unique survival will all help assist in this quest.

9. As an additional follow-up, I have undertaken to produce copies of all my relevant notes on the historic wrecks for the FIG Archives.

10. May I thank the Foundation for their generosity and patience. I must also thank the following people for the help and support while in Standley: John Smith, Curator of the Falklands Museum,

and his staff, Tansy Newman in the Archives who stood in for Jane Cameron who was in the UK, Arthur Nutter, Chairman of the Falklands National Trust, John Clark, Harbourmaster for arranging the launch, Dave Eynon of South Atlantic Marine Services for getting us on to the 'Charles Cooper' and advice on possible ways of preserving it, Ian Strange, Anna Brown and Andrea Clausen of Falklands Conservation for advice on marine molluscs, Robert King of Receiver of Wreck for permission to take away samples of timber and copper sheathing for identification, Joan and Terry Spruce for advice on FIC history and Sukie Cameron of FIG office, London for her continuing support.

Penguin News, March 1, 2002

Shackleton Scholar digs out the *Charles Cooper* story

FALKLANDS wrecks are this month the focus of a study by a Shackleton scholar.

Mike Stammers is the Keeper of Merseyside Maritime Liverpool and first visited the Falklands in 1978. He has carried out research on the historic sailing ship wrecks in the Islands and acted as adviser to the Museum in Stanley since then.

Much of his time has been concentrated on the *Jhelum* because this is the only intact example of a wooden sailing ship built in Liverpool. This work has included the taking of measurements to produce a full set of plans and a book detailing her complete history.

Mr Stammers is now back in the Islands, having been awarded a Shackleton Foundation Scholarship to carry out research on the history of the *Charles Cooper*, the hulk that sits in the harbour in front of the Capstan Gift Shop.

Mr Stammers explained the historical importance of the *Charles Cooper*: "Apart from the *Jhelum*, the *Charles Cooper* is the most historic hulk in Stanley. She is the last example of an American 'packet ship.' Packets were wooden sailing ships that ran to a timetable.

"The *Charles Cooper* was built in 1856 in Connecticut and for three years sailed between New York and Antwerp. She carried a whole variety of cargoes and on the return voyage to New York this included emigrants. They were mainly skilled craftsmen and their families from Holland, Belgium, Germany and

France seeking a better life in the New World.

"The *Charles Cooper* transported a total of 822 people up to 1859. After that she was 'tramping', i.e. moving cargoes between many different ports as the demand arose. For example she carried cotton from Savannah to Liverpool in 1860. Later, she sailed to India and the West coast of the United States."

Mr Stammers described how the *Charles Cooper* came to be in her current location in Stanley: "In 1866, she loaded a cargo of coal at Philadelphia for San Francisco. Unfortunately, she sprang a leak and had to put into Stanley on September 28. The cost of repairs was too much and she was sold to J M Dean & Co.

"Her cargo was transhipped into another American ship, the *Norwester* which arrived on November 12, 1867. Deans made use of the *Cooper* as a storage hulk outside the premises at the West Jetty. She was taken over by FIC in 1888 and was in use until the mid-1960s."

Mr Stammers has spent much of his time in the FIG Archives, trawling through the records to establish the history of the *Cooper* and her two owners. "The Archives are a wonderful historical resource," he commented; he already used them when researching a book on the *Jhelum* published in 1993 and he hopes to write a similar one about the *Cooper* in due course.

Mr Stammers stated that the condition of the *Cooper* is a matter

of concern. The combined effects of old age, tides, weather and the marine boring teredo worm have weakened her and the hull is beginning to break up. He commented, "This is a worry to the port authorities because large sections of timber floating in the harbour would be a hazard to shipping. How

much of the *Cooper* can be saved is a matter of debate."

Whatever the options, any preservation plan is likely to be costly. Mr Stammers has been about to see the latest damage and has met with councillors and port officers to discuss possible ways forward.