

# VOYAGE OF THE BOANERGES FROM ENGLAND TO VICTORIA IN 1862

By Allen Evans

The *Boanerges* was a large ship of 1237 tons. She was built at New Brunswick in 1856 and was owned by Isaac Horton & Mr. Beach of London. The ship belonged to the port of London. She was part felted and sheathed in 1857. Iron bolts replaced the existing ones in the wales and topsides in that year. She was felted in 1860 and yellow metalled, part felted and doubled in 1862. Lloyds gave her an A1 rating in February 1862.

Her master for the voyage to Australia was James Charles Dunn. Dr. John T. S. Jolley was appointed as surgeon-superintendent. His job was to look after the physical well-being of the passengers. Rev. J. J. Crouch, B.A. was appointed religious instructor. Mrs Jane Gale, a Middlesex lady aged 50, was the matron. She would be responsible for looking after the many single female passengers during the voyage. The cargo agents for the journey were George Martin & Co., and the brokers were Walton Bros. and C. Dunn. There were 51 crew members on the *Boanerges* for this voyage, and of these, 47 were British.

The Victorian Government had accepted tenders for the conveyance of immigrants from Britain from the owners of four ships for 1862. The *Boanerges* was one of these four, and the contract rate was £13-12-10 per adult. Conditions relating to the type of immigrants to be included were set out by the Government. In general, there was a shortage of farm labourers and female servants in the Colony, and these were the occupations of the bulk of the *Boanerges* passengers.

As the *Boanerges* lay in the docks, she was an object of attraction. The London Times described her as a splendid ship, and added that she was:

'one of the finest vessels we have ever seen engaged in the emigration service. She is fitted with every comfort and convenience for the emigrants.'

The ship left her dock on Saturday 15th March. The wind was blowing from the ENE, and the temperature was about 50°F. After leaving her dock, she was visited by Mr. S. Walcott, one of the Emigration Commissioners. Captain Lean, the Emigration Officer of London, and Mr. Cooper accompanied him.

On the evening of Tuesday March 18th, she left Southampton for Melbourne. The temperature was about 40°F, and an east to northeasterly wind was blowing. By the next morning a mist had set in, however, there was no rain. The emigrants started their voyage on a relatively calm sea. On their way to Melbourne were 445 Government immigrants, comprising fifty married couples, 272 single women, 6 single men, 59 children aged from one to twelve, and eight infants. This equated to 407½ statute adults. The passengers came from all over Britain. There were 255 people from twenty-nine counties in England and Wales, 111 people from eighteen Scottish shires and 79 people from nineteen counties of Ireland. According to Colonial Office records, the *Boanerges* could legally carry only 400 passengers, however, this figure might have related to the number of statute adults.

As well as the 445 Government immigrants, the *Boanerges* carried a varied cargo. Sixty casks of whiting, 100 cases of currants, 784 bushels of malt, 450 boxes of candles, 10 hogsheads of ale, 48 trunks of boots and shoes and 150 tyres were among the items on board.

Also on board was one of Dr. Normandy's distilling apparatus. This was used to distil fresh water from salt water. It was capable of producing 500 gallons of fresh water a day for the passengers.

The *Boanerges* emigrants were no doubt pleased to find that they were the first recipients of a gift of money from a charity which was to become known as 'Kelsall's Emigration Charity'. Mr. Charles Kelsall of Hythe, near Southampton, had died in January 1857. He had given the residue of his considerable property to be distributed among poor emigrants. The sum to be given to each person was to be between £1 and £2 and was to be given to persons emigrating under the superintendence of the Government Commissioners. The money was held by trustees, and distributed through the Government local agents at Liverpool, Birkenhead, Southampton and Plymouth. It was decided that the first payments from the charity would be made to female emigrants from the above ports to Australia. Mr E.A.Smith, R.N., the Government emigration officer at Southampton made the first distribution to 358 emigrants travelling on the *Boanerges*. These emigrants received a total of £426-10-0, being £1-3-10 each. The London Times commented:

'The sum appropriated to each person may to some of our readers appear small, but it was highly appreciated and thankfully received by the poor emigrants, many of whom will have reason to bless the memory of Charles Kelsall who, though rich himself, "cared for the poor and lowly".'

During the first part of the journey the only two deaths for the voyage occurred. Harriet Vincent, a single woman, aged 30, died of apoplexy on 31st March, and George Virgin, the infant son of Simon and Amelia Virgin from Somerset, died on the 18th of May.

After about six week's sailing in the Atlantic, the *Boanerges* arrived at Cape Town in the South African colony of Cape of Good Hope on the 28th of May. She anchored in Simon's Bay, and after a short stay, left on Tuesday the 3rd of June. Captain Dunn obtained a copy of a Cape Town newspaper, which he carried with him to Melbourne. On arrival in Melbourne, this was given to the Age newspaper so that Melbourne residents could be kept up to date with news from the Cape.

For the next five weeks, the ship crossed the Indian Ocean and travelled along the south coast of Australia. As she neared the heads of Port Phillip Bay on 9th July a strong northerly wind built up, preventing her and another ship from England, the *Surrey*, from making good time. Neither of the ships had reached the Bay by sundown, and the immigrants had another night at sea before reaching Melbourne.

At about 10 pm on the night of Wednesday 10th July, the *Boanerges* arrived at Hobson's Bay and dropped anchor.

The passengers were reported to have been in excellent health throughout the voyage. Captain Dunn, Dr. Jolly and the officers were complimented on this and the clean state of the ship on arrival. Of the 455 passengers, only two had died. One of the 51 crew had also died. There were three births during the voyage.

After the ship had arrived in Hobson's Bay, the passengers would have been disembarked and transferred to Cole's wharf in Melbourne by steamer. The day after her arrival the *Boanerges* was lying alongside the Railway Pier at Sandridge (now Port Melbourne) in company with the *Roxburgh Castle*, *Lightning*, *Moravian*, *Surrey*, *Dean*, *Gothenburg*, *Tasco*, *Welesley*, *Rangatira*, *Meander*, and *Spahis*. She then spent some time at anchor discharging her cargo. She was still being unloaded on July 18th, the cargo being ferried to the shore in lighters.

The *Boanerges* eventually left Hobson's Bay on 11th September bound for Otago, New Zealand. She returned to Melbourne from Otago on the 27th of October.