

Extracts taken from

WILLIAM KENNISH Manninagh Dooie The Extraordinary Manxman

The complete Works of the
Royal Navy Master Carpenter
Inventor
Manx Poet
American Explorer
1799-1862

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My look into the Manx past
is dedicated to my future –
Amy, Katy and Rosalind

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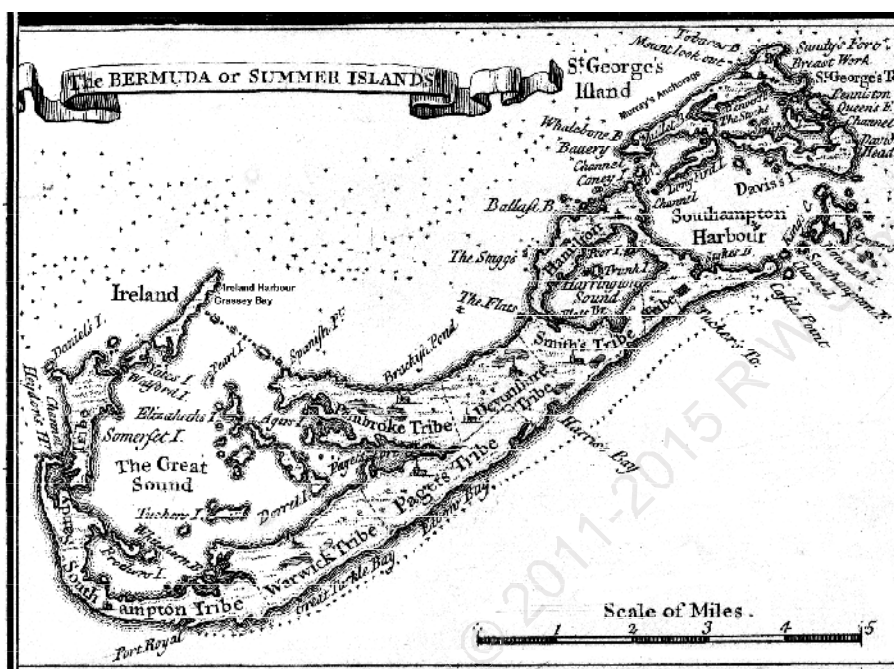


Figure 17 Bermuda from Henry Popple's Atlas of 1733
(with modern additions showing the anchorages)

William's work as Carpenter on Ringdove involved making and keeping the vessel seaworthy and ready for action and he observed at the time that all of the timbers which had been painted black were distorted and many badly decayed, whereas those timbers painted white were "as sound as ever". This observation was not published or acted upon for almost nine years, when later he wrote in detail about his observations as he served on HMS Excellent³⁴.

In April 1827 the ship was taken over by Commander Charles English, and he took them to St John's, New Brunswick in Canada, arriving on the 8th May before sailing on first to Yarmouth, then to Halifax, Nova Scotia, arriving on 16th June 1828³⁵. The ship sailed again on the 25th July, returning to Bermuda on the 3rd August, and then voyaging to St John's New Brunswick once more on the 23rd. During this journey the carpenters were employed repairing various things around the ship, including repairs to the 'Jolly

³⁴ Society of Arts Manufactures and Commerce "On the Disadvantage of Using Black Paint On Board Ship" Transactions 1837-38 Vol. LIII Part 1 pages 101-104.

³⁵ National Archives ADM 53/1134 HMS Ringdove's Ship's Log.

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Boat' (a small four- or six- oared tender) on the 16th August. This work was followed on that particular afternoon by a general call to muster and the firing of four broadsides. Whilst William would have seen various guns being fired at various times including salutes, this was the first time he witnessed a full broadside – in the case of the Ringdove, this was 16 main guns and two long guns.

The conclusions of a full survey of HMS Ringdove taken in 1828 was that it was a ship thought to be at the end of its effective military life. This was due to discoveries of distorted timbers and planking, and the associated problems with caulking and maintaining a watertight and fully functional hull. In January 1829 the state of the vessel must have been very poor as many of the ship's crew had sought permission from Captain English to leave the vessel as soon as she reached Halifax on return from one mission. This request had been passed on to Rear Admiral Ogle, on board the Hussar, who after correspondence with the Admiralty Board, was instructed to take both Ringdove and another sloop called "Sappho" out of commission and sell off or dismantle them in Halifax yard³⁶. He then made arrangements for the Hussar and Tyne to take off any of the Ringdove's crew who were keen to remain in Naval Service. William initially remained with the ship as the rest of the crew were paid off at the end of January 1829. He then worked with the remainder to strip her of armaments and stores before leaving the vessel when she left Naval service.

From the 29th January 1829 until 17th March 1829 William temporarily held the rank as an able seaman on HMS Tyne. He, like many others of the Ringdove's crew, were added to the Tyne as supernumeraries. The 29th January was a force 6 gale, and the Captain, Sir Robert Grant, allowed William and the rest of the Ringdove's former compliment to sleep below decks. At all other times they were forced to sleep on the main deck, giving a graphic indication of the harsh conditions William and his fellow former ship-mates endured during his temporary posting on this overcrowded vessel. HMS Tyne was a 28-gun store ship only built in 1826, of 600 tons berthen, so of relative compact size to William's earlier vessels. Following Admiral Ogle's orders, she was to remain at Halifax over the winter to protect local trade and provide security for the dock-yard. William therefore remained at Halifax during this six-week period whilst the Tyne underwent some maintenance but primarily victualing works.³⁷ Commander English and the remainder of the Ringdove's crew who did not remain on the American Station returned to England on the Packet Kingfisher.³⁸

A number of small packet ships travelled regularly between the various ports on the American station, conveying naval mail and minor goods in addition to a small number of passengers. From the Naval records of William's career he left the Tyne and became a member of the Hussar's crew on the 18th of March 1829. The former was tied up at Halifax

³⁶ National Archives ADM 50/153 Admiral Ogle's Log of January 1829.

³⁷ National Archives ADM 53/1408 Lapwing Captain's Log.

³⁸ United Services Magazine, part 1 1829: , pg 639: Monthly Naval Register published 15th April 1829.

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Whilst William served on the Alfred under Captain Robert Maunsell he became aware of the local magnetic influence of ship's ironwork to the navigation compass⁹⁸. William later wrote about this in a series of articles he provided to the American Railway Review magazine, but no records survive of William writing anything on it to the Admiralty or to the British press.

During February William started to manufacture components for his Broadside Concentrating equipment, and Captain Maunsell recorded William fitting and marking Gun Quoins on the 8th February after making spare gun breechings. Whilst in the harbour the crew were exercised at general quarters on 9th and then a division of great guns were exercised at a target on the 14th. This was repeated on the 15th, 18th, and 20th, followed by William fitting Quoins and beds for the guns before further trials on the 21st and 22nd. During this time his crew were involved with repairing pumps, boats, mess tables and stools, whilst the rest of the ships' crew received daily instruction and practice with small arms and cutlasses. The captain was preparing his crew for battle!

On the 22nd the ship took delivery of sails from the dockyard and prepared for sea, sailing shortly after the arrival of another ship, HMS Procris. The Alfred was now sailing towards the war zone that was Greece in early 1832. Now en-route to Napoli Di Romania – the English name for the Greek port and capital of Nafplion – the Alfred observed “strange sails” during the voyage, and on 7th March the crew was mustered as a precaution. On the 8th Captain Maunsell read the Articles of War to the crew, and on the following day William's own crew were busy making boarding ladders as the Alfred passed HM Brig Cordilia and “exchanged honours”. At 7:00 they burnt a blue light and fired a gun which was immediately answered by the flag ship, where they “hailed up and made sail for d(itt)o.” on 10th March the Alfred anchored 3/4 mile offshore from Napoli Di Romania, where the boats were hoisted out and sent away delivering provisions for the squadron they had now joined. Here were HMS St Vincent (captained by Humphrey Senhouse and carrying the flag of Admiral Sir Henry Hotham) and the flag ships HMS Belvidere and HMS Raleigh; also the French frigate “Ephegenia” bearing the flag of Rear Admiral Hugon, a Russian Man of War Brig, two Greek Brigs and an Austrian Schooner. The Alfred quickly took on supernumerary crew members from HMS Belvidere.

The Alfred formed one part of this combined English, French and Russian peace keeping force mustered to the region following the assassination on October 9th 1831 of Ioannis Kapodistrias – the first Head of State for the newly independent Greece. Ioannis was briefly succeeded as Governor by his younger brother Augustinos. He ruled only for

⁹⁸ Later published after William's emigration to America in a work entitled “Local Attraction of the Mariner's Compass” – American publications covered this in great detail with examples of rectification work William carried out on various vessels.

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This position was confirmed by William after his signature in one of the remaining letters on file which he sent to the Lords of the Admiralty at the time.

This report, published on 1st August 1838¹³⁵, listed the movements of dozens of senior naval officers and NCO's, describing William's new position as Carpenter on HMS Donegal but wrongly stated as being located at Dartmouth. He was now sailing under Captain John Drake in the flagship of Vice Admiral John Acworth Ommanney. This was a substantial development to William's career, because he had not expected to ever be able to sail again after he was injured on board HMS Alfred in 1832. It had taken six years of shore-based duties on the Gramphus, at Woolwich Yard, the Excellent and the Victory for the leg injury to heal sufficiently for him to return to active service on a man-of-war.

The Donegal was a 78-gun second-rate vessel and on 31st July William had been issued with a warrant to join her at her moorings in the River Tagus at Lisbon in Portugal. During an earlier posting to this station, the Donegal had become renowned for its involvement in the capture and return of certain members of the crew of the Portuguese slave ship *Diligente* to the Portuguese authorities in Lisbon¹³⁶ in early 1838. William travelled from England to Lisbon in HMS Tribune, arriving in Lisbon on September 3rd 1838¹³⁷. During this voyage he penned a few verses of poetry as he crossed the Bay of Biscay. These verses re-appeared almost six years later, towards the end of his book *Mona's Isle*. Whilst docked in Lisbon in 1839 William was called upon to investigate and repair a number of other ships, and to work on them with other Ship's carpenters. This period was probably the most busy and demanding of his career as a carpenter, and the work he completed allowed these ships to literally sail into history, permitting them to participate in battles which became key points in British Naval history.

On 20th February 1839 the Admiral sent William and the carpenter of the Tribune to examine HMS Ganges. She had recently arrived from Portsmouth following an accident on the 9th when the crew had been catting an anchor¹³⁸ and 14 men had been injured, some very seriously. William's crew were initially involved in making ten new staves for the capstan¹³⁹.

On 9th December William and two members of his crew were sent on board HMS Trinculo by Captain Drake. Trinculo was a Gun Sloop which had been launched in 1808, and was one of the most sailed vessels in the navy at the time, having run almost 83,000 miles by 1836. During this life she had suffered keel damage and was given a refit in 1832, so she was by now a ship 'feeling her age' when William was called upon to take

¹³⁵ Caledonian Mercury, Thursday August 9th 1838, "Naval Intelligence".

¹³⁶ HM The Foreign Office, "British and Foreign State Papers" 1838-1839 Vol. XXVII, page 542, London

¹³⁷ National Archives ADM 37/9001 HMS Donegal Ships Muster 1st July to 30th September 1838.

¹³⁸ Attaching a hook or 'cat' to the ring at the end of the anchor to retain it in the raised position.

¹³⁹ National Archives ADM 53/567 Ships Log.

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his Carpenter's Crew on board and spend two days fitting her with half-ports¹⁴⁰. The Trinculo also received supplies from the Donegal including food, sails, hammocks and other provisions and equipment¹⁴¹. The Trinculo sailed frequently between Cadiz and Lisbon but was finally scrapped two years later.

The day after completing work on Trinculo's ports, HMS Revenge, a 3rd Rate, 74-gun warship, limped into Lisbon, having lost its main yard in a fierce squall a few days earlier. On December 6th at 43° 5'N, 10° 4'W (a location around 315 miles north of Lisbon, 40 miles West of the Portuguese coast and on a route from England just clear of the Southerly edge of the Bay of Biscay), a South Westerly squall struck the Revenge, which was captained by the Honourable William Waldegrave. At 2am the Mizzen Topsail Sheet was carried away (torn off by the wind) and at 8am the Main Yard¹⁴² was split and also carried away, splitting the Main Sail and Main Topsail. As the Main Yard split into two, one part was carried away but the second part of this huge timber, weighing over a ton, fell to the Poop deck, striking Marine Private and duty sentry John Priest on both the foot and skull, fracturing both and killing him instantly. By 11:30 the crew had bought down the remnants of the Main Yard, and rigged the sails to make best headway without the Main Sail. The damaged vessel then took a further five days to complete the 300 or so miles to Lisbon, and jubilantly fired an 11-gun salute to Admiral Ommanney as they entered port¹⁴³. William, together with eleven of his crew and two armourers were immediately sent to Lisbon dock yard to work on a new main yard boom for HMS Revenge. This work continued well into January 1841, and formed part of what became an extensive refit for Revenge, which did not sail again until July when she departed for Gibraltar. Later that year the now fully

¹⁴⁰ John Fincham "An introductory outline of the practice of ship-building, &c. &c" 1825, page 200: "shifting shutters fixed in the stops of those ports, which have no hanging lids. Those to the quarter-deck and fore-castle ports are in general in one, and made of two thicknesses of slit deals, and to the ports for the long guns have holes in them for the gun to run out; and those to the upper deck, in two parts called buckler half-ports; for long guns, the lower part is to the centre of the gun, when run out and levelled, as they have a hole in them that fits close round the guns; and to carronades, to the under-side of the gun, if not too low, that they may be fixed over them. The lower piece of these half-ports is of fir, and in one piece, to fill up the stops; with a rabbet taken out of its upper edge, to receive the upper part, and with two strengthening bolts driven up and down through it. This piece is in general hung with hinges at the lower part, and kept in its place by sliding bolts. The upper part is made commonly of whole and slit deal, the whole deal up and down, and the slit deal, to cross it, fore and aft."

¹⁴¹ National Archives ADM 53/3317, HMS Trinculo Ship's Log for December 9th and 10th 1839.

¹⁴² The Main Yard or Yard-Arm is the substantial horizontal timber fixed across the main mast which carries the centre and largest sail on the vessel – the Main Sail on the Main (centre) Mast. It was 60 or 70 feet long and almost 24" square at its mid-point. It was a substantial piece of timber reinforced with iron hoops and straps.

¹⁴³ National Archives ADM 53/1153 Ships Log and ADM 51/3663 Captain's Log for HMS Revenge (covering the period 11th May 1839 to 24th February 1842).

THE EXPEDITIONS

At this point the Atrato and adjoining tributaries could not accommodate the bongo, so William and his expedition took to canoes, and over the following weeks sought out the gold-bearing or auriferous regions surrounding Quibdo and conducted further surveys of over 500 miles of tributary streams. Along the Rio Andagueda William located a very productive and high quality source of gold called the **Caicedo Mines**²¹⁹. He obtained samples of its output and placed these into boxes and jars. These samples were then given the Seal of the Province of Choco to provide evidence of their true origin and worth. William purchased the mine on behalf of the company before returning to Quibdo. His plan was then to return via Cartagena to New York in order to procure sufficient equipment to work the mine more effectively.

Whilst in Quibdo he heard local residents' descriptions of other routes from the Atrato to the Pacific Ocean. This changed his plans. A number of other people offered to accompany William on a further expedition of the region, and so as part of his preparations for this further expedition, William sent one of his initial company back to New York with despatches for the Hope Association. William added two interested gentlemen to his expedition – Sr. Juan de Deus who was a Spanish Indian, and Mr Abram Halsey who was a Scotsman. In addition he took a South American servant called Olla and four Pione who were local guides and porters.

The objective of this first transition across the Darien region was made as the simplest and most direct means of reaching the Pacific Ocean. Over a distance of sixty miles, the expedition crossed in a north-westerly²²⁰ direction from Quibdo to Trubaga Bay, the shortest passage being via the Rio Munguico and Rio Suruco rivers and climbing the Cerrania De Baudo range of hills within the Cordilleras, before descending down and crossing the Rio Baudo, following the Rio Cagucho for a short distance before taking a north-westerly route once more to join the Rio Trubaga flowing down to the Trubaga bay on the Pacific coast²²¹. On this route they left tropical heat at Quibdo, experienced freezing conditions at the summit of the Cerrania De Baudo, and the restoringly milder coastal climate at the bay. This journey took the expedition three weeks – or under three

²¹⁹ New York Daily Tribune Friday August 12th 1853, page 7 This newspaper article date is clearly two years after the events described by Matilda Kennish, provided in 1898 to the *Mona's Herald*, but for consistency the details are reported here in the context of William's first reported expedition. The July 1853 date would place the expedition immediately before and additional to the expedition Matilda describes as William's third, which is described later. There therefore exists some uncertainty as to the exact date of purchase of the mine, particularly if the purchase had not been revealed to the newspaper immediately but had been kept secret to maintain a commercial advantage. It may therefore have not been made known to, or the newspaper discovered the facts, until 1853.

²²⁰ Royal Geographical Society – One contemporary map held shows the mouth of the Rio Baudo (emerging into the Pacific at the southern limit of the bay) incorrectly identified as Trubaga Bay. (part of LMS 6).

²²¹ British Library – Maps 83631.(3); From an examination of "Carte De Isthme de Panama et de Darien ed de la Province du Choco" part of the original papers of M. Augustin Codazzi, published by Deitrich Reimer Berlin 1857.

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miles per day. Their route was one through “dark primeval forest, with prolific vegetation of such luxuriant growth that a pathway cut through today would be obliterated next week by large creeping plants and impenetrable undergrowth; a wilderness teeming with animal, insect and reptile life, and threaded by a mountain chain presenting gorges and precipices of Alpine magnitude”²²².

After a short rest and receipt of the hospitality of the local Indians, the expedition continued into the Pacific by sailing canoes using sails created from hammocks and blankets which the party had equipped itself with.

Over the following forty days the canoes covered three hundred miles travelling the western coastline of New Grenada from Trubaga Bay up to the Gulf of San Miguel which was adjacent to the southernmost point of Panama. Some of the journey was spent entirely at sea for day upon day, with others spent close in to the shore, ever mindful of the weather. In many cases nights were spent camped on shore whilst William explored what seemed to be a pass, a suitable inlet or a sheltered bay.

Upon entering the Gulf of San Miguel, the exhausted party struggled to pull their canoes onto the beach at the sheltered bay and harbour of Garichine. The day after they landed, the Scotsman, Mr Halsey died of brain fever, and Sr. Juan de Deus deserted the party and returned home via Panama. The servant Olla was so exhausted and affected by heat-stroke that he was left in the care of local doctors. This left William alone of the original four to continue. He resumed his land-based expedition by exploring eastwards into the lands adjoining Panama in New Grenada, across the region known as the Darien peninsula, and home to the savage and reputedly hostile San Blas Indians.

He set out with his coastal guides up the Rio Tuyra as far as they dared to assist him and thereafter he pressed on alone into the heart of the San Blas region around the Rio Chucunaqui. He spent two nights with men of the San Blas tribe before returning completely unscathed, much to the surprise of his coastal hosts. At the end of this adventure he concluded that this particular route was not a practical one for a canal.

The Rio Tuyra route was the one most favoured by the local boatmen and traders he heard about whilst William sought information at Cartagena. On recollection of their trading methods and the local trend to use paths cut along ridges rather than through valleys, William concluded that the locals, inexperienced in surveying, could easily and erroneously conclude their long established routes were suitable for a canal without the slightest realisation that it would take a stupendous amount of excavation work to create a level transit. William travelled further back down the Rio Tuyra estuary until he reached Garachine where he found Olla had recovered sufficiently to accompany him on the return journey. They used the same canoes as had so well serviced them travelling

²²² From the brief paper on William Kennish's career read by his son William to learned bodies in America and quoted by daughter Matilda to the *Mona's Herald* of September 14th 1898.

THE EXPEDITIONS

Expedition 5 – The Michler Confirmation

The following day President James Buchanan was sworn into office. He had been President Pierce's Minister to Great Britain until recently, and had met Kelly and other canal proponents in London during his time living in England. During one meeting he had suggested to Kelly that he seek government confirmation of his proposals by way of an official US survey.

Just over a week later, William and Mary were present at St Marks Church in Brooklyn for the baptism of 11-year old daughter Jane on Friday 13th, followed by her confirmation on Sunday March 15th.²⁵⁵

On June 1st the first item of Washington news on the front page of the New York Times, telegraphed the night before read **"Lieut. Craven of the Navy is charged with the survey of Kelly's Atrato Ship-Canal route. Two Army officers are to be added to the expedition. It is understood that KENNISH is to act as guide. X.Y.Z."**

William Kennish had thus become the first Manxman to be mentioned on the front page of the New York Times, and in such a manner as to assume the readership knew of his earlier involvement with the project.

Immediately before becoming involved with the expedition, on May 12th 1857, William was granted patent 17,306 for a "Submarine Excavator" to remove material from the beds of rivers. This was a further refinement of the system he had developed in Brooklyn in 1850, and this would appear to be William anticipating the potential need for this type of equipment in the near future especially as he saw the government survey materialising and the prospect of the US Government starting construction shortly afterwards.

On June 9th, the Putnam County Courier, a New York newspaper published in the county where Frederick M. Kelly originally hailed from, took a sceptical view of the political delays in investigating Kelly's proposed routes. It also detailed the business relationship Kelly developed with Messrs Goodine and Co of New Grenada achieving a right of way across the Isthmus "with privileges" in 1852/3. (See earlier notes as to the possible inaccuracy of these reported claims).

On July 9th 1857²⁵⁶ the Adjutant General Mr S. Cooper communicated in Special Order 100 to First Lieutenant Michler of the US Topographical Engineers that he 'will hold himself in readiness for duty, with the "exploration and verification of surveys, already made, of a ship canal near the Isthmus of Darien," and will receive special

²⁵⁵ Baptismal and Confirmation certificates located via Ancestry.com

²⁵⁶ Executive Document 9, Section 7 of the documents supported by the Index to the Executive documents of the Senate of The United States for the second session of the thirty-sixth congress and the special session 1860-1861, Section 7 Part 9 Page 1 et seq. The details which follow of William's contribution to the Michler expedition are taken from "The Report of the Secretary of War, communicating, in compliance with a resolution of the Senate, Lieutenant Michler's report of his survey for an inter-oceanic canal near the Isthmus of Darien". Read February 15th 1861.

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instructions for his government from the war department.’ This was accompanied five days later by an additional letter stating the duties would place him under the command of the Secretary for the Navy, to which Michler speedily replied that he would do everything within his powers to comply and detailed proposals to comply with the appropriation of funds and make plans covering all aspects of the expedition.

Further letters were exchanged with Hon. Isaac Toucey, Secretary of the Navy, and one final communication to both Michler and Lieutenant T.A.M. Craven USN concluded “Your attention is especially called to the preservation of the health of your party” – making it clear again that the sufferings of the Strain expedition a few years previously had not been forgotten. Immediately before the party was due to depart Michler was called away to other topographical surveying work to place the boundary line between the states of Maryland and Virginia.

Craven was tasked with leading the expedition and so considered himself of senior rank to Michler, and this appears to have created great friction between the two officers assigned by Congress to jointly survey the region and validate the Kennish – Kelly reports. Michler was aware of this at the outset of the commission from congress, and sought from the Secretary of the Navy clear instructions for both men, which were not forthcoming, nor was a ruling of who had seniority provided – “in the present case no decision is necessary”²⁵⁷. Michler proposed a detailed plan listing the staff, equipment and route for the expedition, starting in the Pacific and ending at the Gulf of Darien “to finish the most difficult part first whilst all are in good health and spirits, and free from exhaustion”²⁵⁸. It is not clear if Craven saw this or took any note of its contents at all in his part of the expedition. The two Lieutenants were instructed to submit separate reports if they could not agree on a common one. This resulted in a ‘frosty’ but professional relationship throughout the expedition, with possibly a less than ideal level of cross-service cooperation being apparent during the traverse of the Atrato-Truando-Pacific route, which was evident in some of the references each made to the other in their own reports.

William was given the titles of Guide and Assistant, and joined the expeditionary team of 25 or so and was assigned to Craven’s party. Michler had stated in his expedition costing plans that his assistants would be paid \$150 per month plus a per-diem allowance for living in such hostile and basic conditions. It is not clear if William was paid this amount before he transferred to the Michler party part-way through the expedition.

Travelling in the schooner US Varina²⁵⁹ from New York departing on the 16th October 1857²⁶⁰, the two parties including Craven and Michler reached Cartagena in

²⁵⁷ Ibid page 13.

²⁵⁸ Ibid page 6.

²⁵⁹ The vessel is variously referred to by both officers as “Yarina” and “Varina”.

²⁶⁰ Pg 99 Michler Report to Congress.

APPENDIX 5

Copy
Thomas Hastings^{Captain}
Portsmouth Yard

12 November 1835

An account of the stores
with the value supplied to
the Excellent between 12th and
16th October 1835

Carpenter's Stores

Value

		£.	s.	d.
Canvas targets	4 No	7.	10.	4
" Old	100 yds	2.	1.	8
Twine fine	4 lbs	0.	4.	4
Needles Sail	12 No.	0.	0.	5
Leather Liqueured	49 lbs	2.	9.	0
Yoke Metal	1 No.	0.	6.	4
Oars Cutter	20 "	4.	4.	0
Boat Hook Staves	6 "	0.	14.	0
Files Flat	2 "	0.	1.	8
" ½ round	2 "	0.	0.	0
" 3 square	2 "	0.	3.	0
Board Yellow Pine 1 in	99 feet	1.	0.	7
Deals Ordinary	10 No.	1.	2.	2
Board Elm 1 in	82 feet	1.	7.	4
" " ½ in	64 "	0.	10.	8
" Oak 1 in	30 "	0.	17.	6
" " ½ in	20 "	0.	6.	8
Plank fir 1 ½ in	60 "		0.	0
Shivers L.vitae	4 No.	0.	7.	4
Nails Iron 20 do	10 lbs	0.	2.	1
" " 10 do	20 "	0.	5.	2
" Copper Boat	7 "	0.	7.	7
Lines Cabin	2 No.	0.	2.	0
Rope Haw do 1 in	80 fms	0.	10.	11
Iron New Round	1 ¾ cwt	0.	7.	3
" " Flat	30 lbs	0.	2.	5
Nails Iron 6 do	"	0.	4.	1
Brooms guest Harp	2 No.	1.	4.	0
Locks Stock 9 in	1 "	0.	1.	8
" " 10	1 "	0.	1.	11
" " 11	1 "	0.	2.	9
Stones Hand	20 dozen	2.	18.	4
Chain ½ in form				
Guest Warp Boom	23 fms	2.	17.	6
		Total	33.	14. 8

Admiral Superintendant

INVENTIONS AND TECHNICAL PAPERS

River Bed Diving Bell – Brooklyn Harbour June 1850

William's development of this in 1850 to assist dredging for lost gold in Brooklyn harbour appears to have been commercially unsuccessful. Initial mentions of it appear in the New York Daily Tribunes of the 6th and 7th of June, but a letter³⁰ from the head of the Bureau of Ordnance and Hydrography a few years later refused to consider any form of payment for equipment "the usefulness and probable value of which have not been ascertained to the satisfaction of the Bureau". No other records of it remain. The device was described in the paper on the 7th June 1850:

...the machine appeared like and made similar to a large semicircular boiler of about 17 feet long and about 12 feet by ten wide, surmounted at the top by an iron railing about three feet six inches high. In the center was an aperture sufficiently large to admit a full grown person, on either side of which were three valves with leathern hose pipe of some 10 or 15 inches in diameter, for admitting fair and emitting foul air within... the person within audibly making known to those above his wants and wishes during the whole time...

...and the Farmer and Mechanic journal from 1851 added :

...a double-walled vessel of some seventeen feet in height, twelve feet in width and ten feet in length, with a central manhole at the top and three control valves located each side of the manhole connected to 12" leather pipes for the supply and removal of ventilation and ballasting air. The men entered a central working chamber through the manhole, and this chamber was surrounded by a second, unconnected chamber which provided adjustable buoyancy which allowed the vessel to fall and rise in the water...

The article from the Tribune also found its way into the New York Merchants Day Book for June 1850, which was then reported by the Manx Liberal during July³¹, where it applauded the invention, commenting " We have often heard Manxmen accused, at home, of sterility of genius and deficiency of mechanical invention; but a slight consideration of the matter leads us to think that the charge arises more from a want of appreciation and encouragement of native talent by the generality of their own countrymen, than the non-possession of the inventive faculty itself among them." It concluded by saying Mr Charles Tear (who was named in the article as the person actually descending in the device) was also a Manxman, hailing from Ramsey.

³⁰ Manx National Heritage Museum Reference Library; within MD1053 – Loose papers on William Kennish.

³¹ Manx Liberal, 20th July 1850 "New Diving Apparatus Invented by a Manxman in America".

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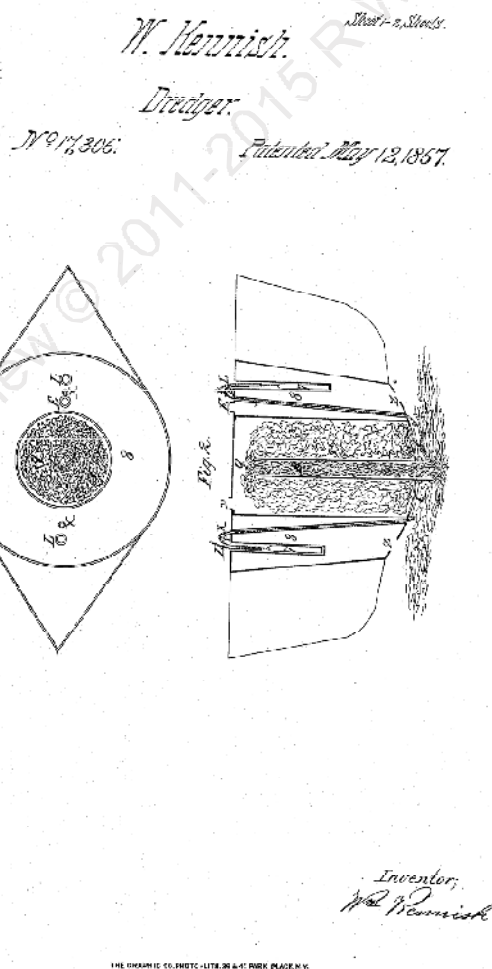
This device was a more sophisticated version of William's earlier "Hydrostatic Diving Machine", now actually "bought to fruition" as the Society of Arts might say, in that it actually operated in a harbour. The earlier device was conical, this machine appeared to be semi-circular but the descriptions are not accurate or detailed enough to be able to create a reliable impression of the second device.

River Bed Clearing Equipment 1857

The front page of this patent clearly shows the device was assigned (sold) on to Andrew B. Gray. Andrew Gray was the United States chief engineer and surveyor, and one of the three founding fathers of San Diego.



Figures 123 Andrew B. Gray



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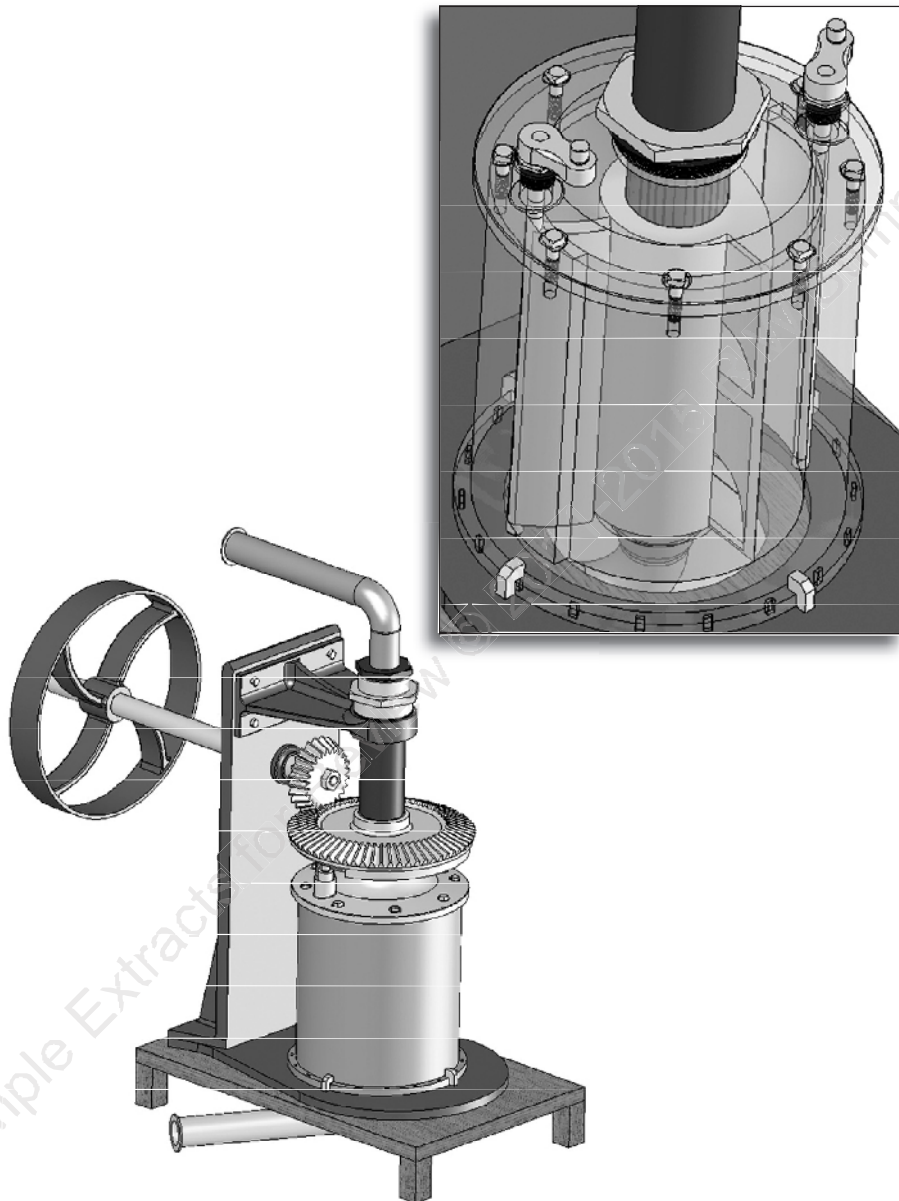


Figure 124 A modern interpretation of the original patent and handbill for William's Hydraulic motor showing in partial transparency the "snail rotor" within the cylindrical motor body.

WILLIAM KENNISH: MANNINAGH DOOIE – TRUE MANXMAN

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Note: All of the Manx spelling in this section is reproduced as far as possible exactly as William Kennish penned it – hence its description as “indifferent Manx” by A. E. Moore. A native Manx Gaelic speaker from birth, William learned to read and write in English when in the Royal Navy from the age of 22, before learning to write in Manx. William is therefore unique in his first spoken language is Manx but it is his second written language. There is also the possibility of childhood dyslexia, detailed in part 1 of the present volume.

WILLIAM KENNISH: MANNINAGH DOOIE – TRUE MANXMAN

WILLIAM KENNISH's ADDRESS TO THE MANX

My countrymen and honest Manx,
 You'll have your humble servant's thanks,
 Throughout his earthly time,
 If you'll but just subscribe your name,
 To this work of little claim,
 To measured feet and rhyme.
 The Genius of my Island stood,
 Before me on the briny flood,
 Enrobed In ancient vest,
 And pointed with her mystic wand,
 Towards her long neglected land,
 While thus she me address'd:
 My son, I've sought thee far and near,
 Throughout the vast terrestrial sphere,
 Since you, to roam
 The distant regions of the earth,
 Far from the Island of your birth,
 And peaceful natal home.
 For I had marked thee long e're now,
 E'en when you held your father's plough,
 At nature's kind request;
 To strike my simple rural lyre,
 And fan the patriotic fire,
 In my young Manxman's breast.
 So saying she drew forth a scroll,
 And said I here thy name enrol,
 And seal it with my wand;
 The go and sing the fertile vales,
 The mountains, rivers, hills and dales,
 Of my neglected land.
 Thus her kind dictates I've obeyed,
 As far as in my power laid,
 And now I come to sue
 Protection in her mystic name,
 To keep alive the magic flame,
 My countrymen from you.
 And should a stimulating glow
 Within your noble bosoms flow

THE POETRY

Towards your bard,
 You'll stir him on with double zeal
 And change his stumpy pen of steel
 That's got so blunt and hard
 For a refined gray-goose's quill,
 The spring of former Poet's skill,
 And tempt the sacred lyre
 To strike with ecstasy of heart,
 The softest note in Poesey's art
 If you'll but fan the fire
 Now to conclude this short address,
 I wish, dear Manxmen, to express
 Myself (the poem to finish);
 Yours most devoutly and sincere
 Through life's foul avenues and fair,
 As long's my name's Will. Kennish

THE MANXMAN'S FAREWELL.

A Mananagh dooie, from the glen I was trowget,⁷
 Close by the foot of the bridge of Cornay,
 Whose keystone was fixed in the year I was rugget,⁸
 Three miles and a half from the town of Ramsay.⁹
 In this rural spot, at the foot of the mountain,
 I pass'd the gay morn of my life's chequered day;
 Alike when December in ice bound each fountain,
 And flowers sprung forth at the mild breath of May.
 To me seemed my cot and the green fields around it,
 The whole of vast nature's dominion below,
 Tho' oft the blue ether that archingly bound it

Caused many conjectures its nature to know.
 In a circle of joy each moment pass'd daily,
 As freely I roved the green meadows or carn,¹⁰
 And sang in my own native language so gaily,
 The Arey Fonaghty or Mailacarain¹¹

⁷ Literally—A Manxman true from the cradle I was reared.

⁸ Born.

⁹ Manx name for Ramsey.

¹⁰ The name of a field.

WILLIAM KENNISH: MANNINAGH DOOIE – TRUE MANXMAN

But oh! cruel fate, in her freak, had designed me,
 To traverse the regions of Old Mother Earth,
 And leave my dear Maning with sorrow behind me,
 The home of my fathers and land of my birth.
 Full well I remember that day yet with sorrow,
 When first from my own Maning Veen I did stray,
 And when I beheld her high cliffs on the morrow,
 Fast sinking below the blue waves far away.
 I thought on my parents who fondly caress'd me,
 And soothed all my sorrows in childhood's fond years,
 And love unrequited that pang which distressed me,
 And forced me away from Maning in tears.
 What language can picture my heartfelt emotion,
 As flew the gay barque on the white-foaming swell,
 When I sighed to the tempest in silent devotion,
 My Maning, my own Maning Veen, fare-thee-well.

WILLIAM KENNISH, R.N.

This first version of “The Manxman’s Farewell” shows some distinct variations in wording and punctuation from the latter examples, where the title had changed to “A Manxman’s Farewell”. William’s phonetic Manx writing of Mannanan as “Maning” is worth noting as writing from a poet who has Manx as his first spoken language but his second written language.

An extract from Mona’s Isle Canto 1 appeared on page 2 of the Manx Sun less than a month later¹². Subtle differences are also to be found here from the wording and punctuation in the latter published version of this poem. The use of lines of asterisks in the newspaper column make this poem appear to have been the editor’s selection taken from a larger number of verses of an earlier rendition of the poem, unless it was a faithful reproduction of Williams manuscript, because this device has been seen in another of his manuscript poems. (The asterisks elsewhere concealing names are those placed by William himself).

Mona’s Isle. – Canto 1.

By William Kennish.

SWEET rural Isle, may I thy rustic son,
 Sing of the charms that through thy customs run?

¹¹ Two popular songs in the Manx language.

¹² The Manx Sun, June 24th 1843.