

Current as of December 27, 2023

The known life of Captain John McMurdo, mariner:

Very little, to my knowledge, has been passed down about the life of John McMurdo, father of Dr. John R. McMurdo. My own personal knowledge of him, prior to the visit of Kevin and Jenny McMurdo to England and Scotland a few years ago related to a few anecdotes of my father. My dad told me that his own father, Dr. John, was a cabin boy on his father's ship, and that he (Dr. John) had made friends with an African chieftain on a voyage. My dad also told me that his father would sit with him as a boy and taught him how to draw square-rigged ships, which he, in turn, taught me to do. The only other things that may have had to do with his father or grandfather were when he used terms like "a bone in its teeth" to describe a fast moving ship with water plowing off the bow, and reciting "red sky at night is a sailor's delight; red sky at morning is a sailor's fair warning". Passed down? Perhaps, perhaps not. The story of being a cabin boy is probably unlikely, but not impossible. Dr. John was about seven when his father died, so perhaps he made a voyage with him, but he seems too young. The African chieftain story may be true, but both of these stories seem much more likely to be about my dad's grandfather, the elder John McMurdo. He went to sea at age thirteen, and in fact visited Africa, possibly more than once, making port in South Africa and the Mauritius Islands as a teenager.

NOTE: Below are dates and some incidents pertaining to the ships that John McMurdo listed having worked on, for his Master's application. He provided dates of service for these ships, names of the ships, and tonnages of them. There is actually a good amount of information existing about almost all of these ships. Researching this part of Captain McMurdo's life has been personally very fascinating. Almost no stories survive of his life passed through family tradition. But with the master's application, it is actually very possible to follow his voyages over a period of more than twenty years. From 1839 until his death, there is a large body of information that allows an interested person to learn about the places he traveled to, and in some cases incidents that he seems to have witnessed or been involved in, and, in a couple of instances, actual manifests of cargo that he carried as a master, or that were carried by ships that he was a crewman on. A fascinating element of this research are notices that were filed daily under "shipping intelligence" in British and American papers in his time (at the birth of the telegraph). Every day, major newspapers would list the arrivals and departures of ships. From these newspaper columns, it was possible (to one degree or another) to follow the voyages of hundreds of British and American ships, whether they were in port, were loading, going through customs, or were at sea. Noteworthy incidents at sea were often recorded to; if a ship or cargo was damaged, or if a ship was lost.

Another component of this information were "spoke" reports, where ships who passed each other at sea, and who spoke through trumpets (like a yell leader's megaphone) would log the latitude and longitude of encountering other ships at sea,

and then report it when they made port. This information would be published, allowing for an update—if often weeks late—of the progress of ships at sea.

In the case of the ships that John McMurdo sailed upon, or those that he commanded, there are quite a few records of the comings and goings of the ships, and surprisingly, a few true, if small, glimpses into the world at sea that he probably experienced personally.

**Sources** (major) : Liverpool Mercury, London Times, Allen's Daily Indian Mail, New York Times, the Library of Congress, Google New Archive, Google Books, Hathitrust.org, lds.org,

## **The Voyages of John McMurdo, Master Mariner**

The beginning section's information is from correspondence with Jenny McMurdo, who has done more research into the life of Dr. John McMurdo than anyone. She had written saying this information is unproven in its ties to our family specifically, but that it seems to fit well and seems reasonably to be the John/Captain John/Dalrymple McMurdo family line.

1752 August 19 at Ayr John McMurtry, son of David McMurtry, innkeeper, marries Barbara Urie.

Ayr was a Scottish seaport, about 60 miles to the west of Dumfries, Scotland.

John McMurtrie was a sailor and there is a Robert McM married 1754 Agnes Logan. Robert McM was also a sailor. There is a family in Dailly with sons John and Robert, so it is possible that John and Robert migrated from Dailly. Dailly is very near Ayr in Ayrshire.

David McM of Eldintoun, Dailly

Joan b 1729

John b 1731

Robert b 1732

William b 1734

John md Barbara Urie (sailor in Ayr)

John 1752

John 1753

Bethia 1755

Dalrymple 1758 md 1783 to Jean Leggatt (sailor)

Dalrymple b 1784

John b 1787

Robert b 1788

Charles 1760  
Eleonorah 1762  
William 1764  
Thomas 1766 (possibly Thomas md1796 Eliz Neill (CF 30) (weaver)

John was in Ayr by 1752, but there are no John McM born prior to that. There is a John b 1725 son of of William McMurtrie who married Mary McCrother in Straiton. But there is no supporting data for this to be more than speculation.

John McMurtrie and Barbara Urie from  
<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~mcmurtriecfr/mcmofayr.htm>

1799, at Flist Flenshire, Wales. Richard Dean, the maternal grandfather of John Richard McMurdo, is born.

1799, November 11, Liverpool, Lancashire, England. Matilda Foy, the maternal grandmother of John Richard McMurdo, is born.

Baptisms: 30 Oct 1822 St Peter, Liverpool, Lancashire, England  
Robert Mc Murds - Son of Dalrymple Mc Murds & Elizabeth  
Abode: Lydia Ann St  
Occupation: Mariner Baptised by: T Kidd Curate  
Register: Baptisms 1822 - 1823, Page 133, Entry 2012 Source: LDSNo 1656418  
This would appear to be John McMurdo's older brother (Dr. John's uncle)

Baptisms: 5 Aug 1825 St Peter, Liverpool, Lancashire, England  
John Mc Murdy - Child of Durrumpel Mc Murdy & Elizabeth  
Abode: Park Lane Occupation: Mariner  
Baptised by: J. Pulford Curate  
Register: Baptisms 1825, Page 125, Entry 996 Source: LDS Film 1656419

Baptisms: 19 Apr 1827 St Peter, Liverpool, Lancashire, England  
Susannah William Mc Murdo - Child of Dalrymple Mc Murdo & Elizabeth  
Abode: Bevington Hill  
Occupation: Mariner Baptised by: J. Pulford Curate  
Register: Baptisms 1826 - 1827, Page 213, Entry 1698 Source: LDS Film 1656419

This would appear to be John McMurdo's sister, and Dr. John's aunt.

Baptisms: 11 Jun 1830 St Peter, Liverpool, Lancashire, England  
Isabella Mc Murdo - Child of Dalrymple Mc Murdo & Elizabeth  
Abode: Stuart St  
Occupation: Mariner Baptised by: William Tyrer Offg. Minister  
Register: Baptisms 1830 - 1831, Page 30, Entry 239 Source: LDS Film 93878

1838 November 14 Liverpool. Matilda Foy Dean, the mother of Lavinia Dean McMurdo, and maternal grandmother of Dr. John Richard McMurdo, dies. She was 39.

Dalrymple McMurdo, presumably John the mariner's father, is listed on one document as a mariner from Ayrshire, which would jibe with the information above. Ayrshire is a county in lowland Scotland on the Atlantic coast, adjacent to Dumfriesshire. Ayr is a seaport in Ayrshire on the Firth of Clyde.

Note: As part of his application for a master's license in 1854, John McMurdo was required to provide a record of his service to date in the British merchant marine. He listed several ships, as well as where they were sailing, and their tonnages. In researching these records, his information shows to be very accurate. As a thirteen or fourteen year old, John McMurdo went to sea and spent much of the rest of his life there.

## **The Voyages of John McMurdo**

### **First Voyage: The Barque Francis Lawson of London, bound for Alabama in the American South /First and Second Atlantic Crossing**

#### **Age 14**

Sept 28, 1839 John McMurdo sails as an apprentice seaman on the ship "Francis Lawson", 210 tons out of London, in the "Mobile trade". He had just turned fourteen years old.

The Francis Lawson was referred to in an ad in the Leeds (England) Mercury in March of that year as:

“...the fine fast sailing Barque Francis Lawson (A.1.)...292 Tons register O.M.J (?)  
Has good Accommodation for Passengers...”

When John McMurdo joined the crew of the Lawson, it had just returned from a voyage to New York and Canada.

The London Morning Post reports the Francis Lawson arriving at Liverpool under a Master named Chapple on Sept. 25, 1839 from St. Andrews, NB (New Brunswick?).

October 8, 1839 The Barque Francis Lawson was “entered outwards from Liverpool (I think this means entered into customs outward bound), bound from Mobile, Alabama.

March 10, 1840 The Charleston S.C. Courier newspaper reported that on March 4, the Francis Lawson, under the master Chaplin, a barque from Liverpool, had arrived at Mobile, Alabama.

**A note:** Before the Civil War, Liverpool was a large hub as a center for importing southern cotton. Later, during the American Civil War, Liverpool ship builders provided the Confederacy with several of their fastest blockade runners.

April 20, 1840 ends service with Francis Lawson. It was described as a “fast sailing barque”. In other descriptions it shows as a clipper ship.

April 24, 1840 the Liverpool Mercury reports the arrival of the Francis Lawson, Clipper, from Mobile [probably Alabama] . (Arrived April 23 at Liverpool).

Liverpool Mercury etc

(Liverpool, England),

Friday, April 24, 1840; Issue 1449.

**NOTE:** In the era before phones and radio, the movements of ships at sea were tracked through daily newspaper columns called “marine intelligence” in many newspapers around the world. It was possible to find the status of loading or delivering goods; where the ships were bound for, the name of the master or the shipping company the vessel sailed for. The condition of ships coming in from voyages, as well as brief reports of their condition and that of their crew, were sometimes reported, as well.

A fascinating part of the marine intelligence columns were “spoke to” reports, where ships at sea encountered each other and spoke briefly via a voice trumpet—much like a yell leader’s trumpet. These encounters were noted by the captains the ships in their logbooks, and reported to the papers when they reached a port. From these incidents, the navigational bearings of ships on certain days were made available.

Several of these reports exist for ships that John McMurdo sailed on or that he was the captain of, and are included below.

## **Second Voyage: The Barque Coaxer of Liverpool, bound for the Caribbean and Canada / Third and Fourth Atlantic Crossing**

### **The Coaxer:**

<b>Name:</b>	<b>COAXER</b>
<b>Type:</b>	<b>Sailing Vessel</b>
<b>Launched:</b>	<b>16/09/1839</b>
<b>Completed:</b>	<b>1839</b>
<b>Builder:</b>	<b>A &amp; R Hopper</b>
<b>Yard:</b>	<b>North Shore, Newcastle</b>
<b>Yard Number:</b>	
<b>Dimensions:</b>	<b>276nrt, 94.6 x 23.2 x 16.1ft</b>
<b>Engines:</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Engines by:</b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>Propulsion:</b>	<b>Sail, rigged as a Barque</b>
<b>Construction:</b>	<b>Wood</b>
<b>Reg Number:</b>	<b>1582</b>
<b>History:</b>	
<b>07/10/1839</b>	<b>John Thomas Carr &amp; William Thomas Carr, Newcastle</b>
<b>15/04/1840</b>	<b>John Thomas Carr, Newcastle</b>

<b>01/06/1840</b>	<b>Michael Hutchinson et al, Liverpool</b>
<b>10/06/1840</b>	<b>Registered at Liverpool</b>
<b>28/01/1857</b>	<b>Robert James Brown, Sunderland</b>
<b>30/01/1857</b>	<b>Thomas Dickinson, Sunderland</b>
<b>25/03/1859</b>	<b>Janet Mills, Bishopwearmouth</b>
<b>29/09/1860</b>	<b>Richard Oliver, Bishopwearmouth</b>
<b>02/02/1862</b>	<b>John Eskdale &amp; James Andrew Eskdale, North Shields</b>
<b>30/08/1862</b>	<b>John Eskdale, James Andrew Eskdale &amp; Robert Cunningham, North Shields</b>
<b>1867</b>	<b>Sank</b>
<b>Comments:</b>	<b>04/04/1867: Departed Cadiz for Newfoundland</b>
	<b>05/1867: Reported adrift &amp; damaged in the North Atlantic after a collision</b>

John McMurdo's record stated that in 1840 he left his service on the Francis Lawson, and joined the crew of the British barque Coaxer. He served on the Coaxer until 1845.

The Coaxer was a Bark rig, wooden hull "sheathed in yellow metal" as described in 1849. She was built in 1839, so it is quite possible that John was either on her first or second voyage.

June 3 1840 The Morning Chronicle of London has Coaxer loading for St. Thomas's

This seems to be St. Thomas , in the Virgin Islands. At the time of the Coaxer's visit, it was a possession of Denmark.

June 5, 1840 The Liverpool Mercury has the Coaxer 316 tons / Ridley for St. Thomas's.

June 20, 1840, John McMurdo sails as an apprentice seaman on the ship "Coaxer", 316 tons on a voyage out of Liverpool for the East [probably West] Indies. .

Monday, July 13 the Coaxer sails for St. Thomas's on fine breezes out of the NE, according to the London Standard.

On June 23 The Dutch brig Topaz out of Rotterdam spoke to the barque Coaxer at sea, ten days from Liverpool at latitude 46 50 longitude 11 40. She was bound for St. Croix, according to the New York American of Saturday Evening, August 29, 1840 I assume the date is in error and was actually July 20.

August 23 Coaxer for St. Thomas spoke with at lat 37 long 12

## **Age 15**

**July 28, 1840 John McMurdo's fifteenth birthday is at sea.**

November 17 1840 The London Gazette has the Coaxer arriving at Deal from St. John's, NB. [more likely Virgin Islands, unless they came from the Virgin Islands up to New Brunswick and then over to Liverpool, which perhaps was possible] "[Winds this day blew] hard at West Southwest, with squalls the greater part of the day, but veered to the eastward in the afternoon, and continued for a short time, when it blew to its old quarter."

November 19, 1840 The Morning Chronicle  
(London, England),  
Friday, November 20, 1840; Issue 22149. Coaxer from Porto Rico at customs house.

## **Third Voyage: The Barque Coaxer of Liverpool, bound for Barbadoes / Fifth and Sixth Atlantic Crossing**

November 27, 1840 The Morning Chronicle  
(London, England),  
Friday, November 27, 1840; Issue 22155 The Coaxer for Barbadoes.

Elizabeth, the baby sister of John McMurdo, dies in 1841 at age 1 or less.



The London Times on January 14, 1841 reported the “first class ship” Coaxer—316 tons, ready to sail for Barbados on January 20, 1841. It was lying at St. Katherine’s Dock. The ad said it had “good accommodations for passengers”. Captain Ridley was the master.

January 28 1841 Coaxer sails from Gravesend for Barbadoes.

Friday April 16, 1841 Coaxer is at Barbadoes.

Thursday, May 6, 1841 The Morning Chronicle of London has the Coaxer arrived at Waterford (Ireland?).

Friday May 7, 1841 The Liverpool Mercury has the Coaxer, Ridley, from Barbadoes off...with 399 h [hogsheads] 47 tc sugar, ...

## **Third Voyage: The Barque Coaxer of Liverpool, bound for Africa and India / First and Second Cape of Good Hope Passage**

1841 May 21 The Liverpool Mercury lists bound for the East Indies 316 Coaxer, Ridley, Cape Good Hope...

1841 May 29 Coaxer at Liverpool is cleared outwards for the Cape of Good Hope.

In 1841, the Coaxer was assigned a semaphoric signal flag number for communicating with land telegraph stations, along with thousands of American, English and French sailing ships. A ship at sea could communicate who they were by raising the numbers in semaphore for their ship, and then communicate via semaphore with telegraph stations in sight of the sea. The Coaxer’s number was 1752, assigned when John McMurdo was a fifteen year old crew member

June 8, 1841 The Coaxer is reported leaving Liverpool for the Cape [of Good Hope].

### **Age 16**

**Sixteenth birthday :**

**July 28, 1841 John McMurdo turns sixteen at sea with the barque Coaxer at sea bound for South Africa.**

August 27, 1841 The London Morning Post reported the Coaxer arriving at Table Bay [Cape Town, South Africa].

Sept. 9, 1841 The Coaxer left Cape of Good Hope for Mauritius on this day.

The Asiatic Journal reported the Coaxer, probably on this voyage, arriving at Table Bay (South Africa) prior to September, 22, 1840 (1841?) . The ship left Table Bay before Sept 20 (sic) bound for the island of Mauritius.

November 12, 1841 The Liverpool Mercury has the Coaxer, Ridley hence at the Cape of Good Hope...

November 12, 1841 The Morning Chronicle  
(London, England),  
Friday, November 12, 1841; Issue 2246  
Arrivals in Table Bay, Cape...1841 Coaxer, 27<sup>th</sup>, from Liverpool

January 26, 1842 The Morning Chronicle  
(London, England),  
Wednesday, January 26, 1842; Issue 22523. "Arrivals At the Mauritius"...Coaxer,  
from the Cape...

NOTE: This part of the Coaxer's voyage seems to fit with one of the only family stories about being at sea. Dad (Dick McMurdo) told me on a couple of occasions when I was a kid about how his father Dr. John McMurdo had sailed as a cabin boy as a kid, and on one of his voyages had become friends with an African chieftain. Reading about the voyages of the Coaxer, I have wondered if Dad heard or was told this story but that it was actually about an experience of his grandfather, not father. There is no record that I'm aware of where Dr. John McMurdo actually went to sea, although he did work on the docks at Liverpool as a young man. It's possible that this is about Dr. John, but my own bet is that the story was from Dad's grandfather.

Feb 17, 1842 The Morning Chronicle  
(London, England),  
Thursday, February 17, 1842; Issue 22542  
Departures from the Mauritius...Coaxer...

On March 3, 1842 the Coaxer is listed by the Asiatic Journal for 1842 as leaving Saugor for Liverpool. Saugor may be Sagar Island, in Bengal Province of India.

March 11 1842 Coaxer "hence at Calcutta"

From the Histoire de l'Afrique, on April 19, 1842 the Coaxer was listed as an arrival at a British port (Liverpool?) from Bengal (India). Captain Ridley was the ship's master.

May 6, 1842 The Liverpool Mercury reports the Coaxer, Ridley...

There appears to be another voyage to Bengal this year.

June 3, 1842 The Illustrated History of the British Empire wrote that the barometer at Calcutta fell to 28.278—the lowest ever recorded at Calcutta. Over 3000 huts and houses were destroyed there at this time. From the times that the Coaxer was spoken with on July 12, it would seem possible that it was in Bengali waters around the time of this storm.

July 12, 1842 The ship Elizabeth, under the master Moffatt, spoke this day with the Coaxer at lat. 4 or 42N, longitude 22 W., as she was bound from Calcutta for Liverpool.

This was reported in the Liverpool Mercury on September 9, 1842

August 8, 1842 the barometer at Calcutta fell to 28.800.

August 21, 1842 Coaxer under Ridley at the Island of St. Helena in the South Atlantic. This was the island that Napoleon Bonaparte had been exiled to after the Battle of Waterloo.

## Age 17

**July 28, , 1842 Seventeenth Birthday. John McMurdo turns seventeen aboard the barque Coaxer, bound for Liverpool from Calcutta.**

September 9 Coaxer, Ridley, fm Calcutta, with... Liverpool Mercury etc  
(Liverpool, England),  
Friday, September 9, 1842; Issue 1635

The Barque Coaxer on September 9, 1842 under "Imports" in the Liverpool Mercury, had arrived from Calcutta with over 400 bags of flour, 2,730 bags of rice, 83 hogsheads of rum, 20 ch[ests?] of indigo, and 4178 b mds (mounds?) of sugar

On September 10, the British magazine Spectator reported that the barque Coaxer, under Captain Ridley, had arrived at Liverpool on September 6 from Bengal. Also shown as arrived from Calcutta.

# **The Fourth Voyage: The Barque Coaxer of Liverpool, bound for Ceylon (Sri Lanka) , India , China and Singapore**

## **The Third and Fourth Cape of Good Hope Passage**

September 30, 1842 The Liverpool Mercury reports the 316 ton Coaxer, Ridley, bound for Ceylon

October 5, 1842 Coaxer for Ceylon and Madras

October 14, 1842 The Liverpool Mercury reports the Coaxer under Ridley, is one of "vessels entered for loading" at Liverpool. The Coaxer is bound for Ceylon.

According to the Histoire de l'Afrique, on November 23 , 1842 the British Barque Coaxer left Liverpool for Ceylon. Captain T. Ridley was the master.

November 25 1842 The Liverpool Mercury reports the 316 ton Coaxer, Ridley, Ceylon.

November 25, 1842 The Morning Chronicle of London reports the Coaxer for Ceylon and Madras has sailed.

1843 Feb 13 Barque Coaxer from London to Ceylon spoke with by ship The Briton at lat 36 S long 18E.

On March 14, 1843 the Indian Mail announced the arrival at Ceylon of the Barque Coaxer from Liverpool.

This entry may be misplaced. According to the Asiatic Journal and Monthly for 1842, the Coaxer from Liverpool arrived at "Kedgerie" on January 18. I don't know if it's January 1842 or 1843. Kedgerie seems to have been a large port based on the number of ships arriving there, but I can't find the place online. Kedgerie is listed as a food, and seems most likely to be in Bengal.

Further research shows Kedgerie was probably Khijri, West Bengal.

On May 17, 1843 the Indian Mail announced the arrival at Madras of the barque Coaxer from Liverpool.

About May 20, 1843:

In the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, the Coaxer is mentioned from a log entry of Capt. Ridley: "The heaviest of the gale commenced about midnight on Sunday (about May 20, 1843), when we hove to under bare poles. 4 pm on Monday the gale moderated; when we made sail gradually; our Barometer was as low as 29. during the heaviest of the gale; we were as far to the Eastward. As 82 deg. 26' by Chronometer."

According to the book "Handbook of Cyclonic Storms in the Bay of Bengal for the Use of Sailors", by John Elliot, "...Cyclone passed from the south of the Bay northward to Ongole" between the 19th and 23rd of May, 1843.

[https://books.google.com/books?id=6mfPAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA167&lpg=PA167&dq=may+1843+bengal+cyclone&source=bl&ots=eA99dQZkCL&sig=6lseeBYZIBcRff\\_H2149242ofA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj7\\_KextYHaAhXpslQKHWPRDu4Q6AEILzAB#v=onepage&q=may%201843%20bengal%20cyclone&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=6mfPAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA167&lpg=PA167&dq=may+1843+bengal+cyclone&source=bl&ots=eA99dQZkCL&sig=6lseeBYZIBcRff_H2149242ofA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj7_KextYHaAhXpslQKHWPRDu4Q6AEILzAB#v=onepage&q=may%201843%20bengal%20cyclone&f=false)

1843 On May 28 the Coaxer is listed as arriving at Madras "from the sea", according to the Indian Mail. As this listing is the same as numerous ships, I would assume that the vessels put out to sea to weather the storm listed above.

1843 June 9 Liverpool Mercury etc (Liverpool, England),  
Friday, June 9, 1843; Issue 1674. Coaxer, Ridley, hence at Colombo[Ceylon] 13<sup>th</sup>...

July 10, 1843 The Caledonian Mercury reports the Coaxer, from London to Ceylon...13 Feb. lat 36, S. long. 18 E by the ...

On July 27, 1843, the Indian Mail announced the departure of the barque Coaxer from Madras for China.

## **Age 18**

### **July 28, , 1843 Eighteenth Birthday . Possibly in China.**

1844 January 2 The Liverpool Mercury shows the Coaxer under Ridley from Madras at China.

In 1844 Lloyd's Register of British and foreign shipping lists the Coaxer as sailing from Liverpool for Ceylon and perhaps London for Calcutta. (this may refer to stops?)

[http://books.google.com/books?id=tYsEAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA67&dq=Rhio+Strait+%2B+1844&hl=en&ei=TaPkTs35I-7IiQLY5NS5Bg&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&res](http://books.google.com/books?id=tYsEAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA67&dq=Rhio+Strait+%2B+1844&hl=en&ei=TaPkTs35I-7IiQLY5NS5Bg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&res)

[num=2&ved=0CDwQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=Rhio%20Strait%20%2B%201844&f=false](#)

1844 February 5 The Singapore Free Press on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February reported the Coaxer had left Singapore bound for London.

1844 Feb 15 The Singapore Free Press reported that on Feb. 7, a barque, believed to be the Coaxer, had become stranded on a reef at a place called Pulo Sootoo, or Round Island, near Strumbo Point, reported by the Dutch authorities in Rhio, in the Dutch East Indies. The Captain of the Coaxer declined several offers of help, believing that the barque would be freed by the rising tide. As of the 15<sup>th</sup>, the ship was still on the point.

1844 Feb. 16 The Liverpool Mercury reports the Coaxer, Ridley sailed from Calcutta...

1844 March 15 The Liverpool Mercury reports the Coaxer, Ridley, from China...both at Singapore

1844 April 15 The barque Coaxer spoke to at lat. 38 long 31 according to London Standard of July 3, 1844

1844 May 9 The Caledonian Mercury reports Feb 15, The Coaxer, Ridley, hence...

1844 May 10 The Liverpool Mercury reports February 15—The Coaxer, Ridley, hence...on the Great Reef, in the Rhio Straits,...discharging part of her cargo

1844 May 16 The Caledonian Mercury reports Feb 23 The Coaxer Ridley hence to London, which was on shore on the Great Reef in Rhio Straits, came off on the 12<sup>th</sup> inst. without damage, and will proceed.

Note: The Rhio Straits are in Indonesia, south of Singapore.

[http://books.google.com/books?id=tYsEAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA65&lpg=PA65&dq=%22strumbo%22+%2B+%22round+island%22&source=bl&ots=gRKBuUTUI&sig=tSIErCP6COJ-OybtGp\\_q6ysHQU&hl=en&sa=X&ei=q6W8UlnaA4n7qwG56YD4Ag&ved=0CCsQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=%22strumbo%22%20%2B%20%22round%20island%22&f=false](#)

June 14, 1844 The Liverpool Mercury reports the Coaxer, Ridley, from Singapore at the Island of St. Helena. (This was the island in the middle of the South Atlantic west of Africa where Napoleon had been exiled after Waterloo. He died in 1821). This was the second time John McMurdo had visited the island.

June 20, 1844 on Coaxer as a Mate, sailing for the East Indies.

July 7, 1844 The Coaxer from Singapore was reported arriving at Deal by the London Morning Post.

July 8 The Coaxer was at the customs house at Liverpool having arrived from Singapore.

July 8 1844 the Asiatic Journal lists the Coaxer as arriving from Singapore.

July 11, 1844 Caledonian Mercury Issue 19379 reports the Coaxer, Ridley from...

**more**

**The Fifth Voyage: The Barque Coaxer of Liverpool,  
bound for Calcutta, India (and possibly Sydney,  
Australia)  
Fifth and Sixth Cape of Good Hope Passage**

**Age 19**

**July 28, 1844 Nineteenth Birthday. John McMurdo probably was at Liverpool.**

On November 13, 1844 the Asiatic Journal and Monthly announced the departure of the Coaxer from Liverpool for Calcutta, India.

23 November 1844 Coaxer, hence (Liverpool) for Calcutta in lat 49 log.11 according to the Liverpool Mercury of December 6, 1844.

December 3, 1844 The Morning Chronicle of London reports the Coaxer from Liverpool to Calcutta...

Dec 27 1844 Coaxer hence (Liverpool) for Calcutta spoke with at lat 5N lon. 21W with loss of main topmast according to the Liverpool Mercury of Feb 14, 1845  
On February 12, 1845 the barque Coaxer on a voyage from Liverpool to Calcutta was spoken to at sea at lat. 37 deg. S long. 21 deg. E. according to Allen's Indian Mail for 1845. I think this is south of the Cape of Good Hope.

In 1845 Lloyds Register lists the Coaxer as sailing from London to Calcutta and perhaps Liverpool to Sydney, Australia.

April 22, 1845 The Coaxer under a Master named Penn had arrived from Liverpool at Bengal.

April 23 1845 the Coaxer under Penn is reported arrived at Calcutta.

May 1845 The captain of the Coaxer, William Penn, died of cholera while the ship was at Calcutta.

August 10, 1845 Isabella Landsborough Payne, John McMurdo's maternal grandmother, dies in West Derby, Liverpool at about age 74. She lived at 55 Woolfe Street. John McMurdo was away at Calcutta when she died.

## **Age 20**

**July 28, 1845 Twentieth Birthday. John McMurdo was away in India.**

November 21, 1845 the Coaxer under Penn had arrived from Bengal (or Calcutta)

November 29, 1845 Saturday. The Colonial Gazette reports the Coaxer arrived at Liverpool from Calcutta on November 20.

This is an interesting advertisement for the Coaxer from probably the year after John McMurdo's time ended on it:

<http://slbplone.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=NZSCSG18460902.2.8.1&cl=CL2.1846.09&l=mi&e=-----10--1----0-->

<http://slbplone.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=NZSCSG18460902.2.8.2&cl=CL2.1846.09&e=-----10--1----0-->



December 5, 1845 Liverpool Mercury reported “In May last, at Calcutta, of cholera, in his 27<sup>th</sup> year, Captain William Penn, of the barque Coaxer, of this port [Liverpool], second son of the late Mr. Joseph Penn, cabinetmaker, Maryport.”

January 12, 1846 ends service with the barque Coaxer.

## **The Barque Naomi**

The Naomi in the voyage after John McMurdo sailed with her became infamous in the UK and America as a “coffin ship”, as about 196 of the total 421 Irish immigrants she carried died aboard her on the voyage to America. These were tenant farmers who had been evicted from their homes in County Roscommon, where the Banahans were from. The Naomi became known as one a “coffin ship”. This incident happened within a year of the conclusion of John McMurdo’s service aboard her.

A painting of the Naomi exists in the British Maritime Museum:

[https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-barque-naomi-173020/view\\_as/grid/search/keyword:naomi--actor:british-school-5156/page/1](https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-barque-naomi-173020/view_as/grid/search/keyword:naomi--actor:british-school-5156/page/1)

## **The Sixth Voyage: The Barque Naomi of Liverpool, bound for New Brunswick, Canada / Seventh and Eighth Atlantic Crossing**

February 29, 1846 sails as a Mate on the ship Naomi, a barque of 410 tons, for North America, out of Liverpool. (Probably Dalhousie, New Brunswick).

April 20, 1846 Naomi under Capt. Collins, sails for Dalhousie, NB, Canada

June 4 1846 Naomi arrives at Dalhousie, NB, carrying Irish famine immigrants.

August 11 1846 The Naomi is reported by the London Times as having arrived from Dalhousie, New Brunswick at Liverpool.

August 14, 1846 John McMurdo’s service on the Naomi ends at Liverpool.

**Age 21**

**July 28, 1846** Twenty first birthday was probably in Liverpool.

## **The Seventh Voyage: The Schooner Porcupine bound for Italy, Oran, Algeria and Greece**

The following entry is at odds with those above, but the master is the same, so who knows? I think the Lloyd's Register showed the anticipated voyages, perhaps it changed, as the ship seems to have operated in the Mediterranean.

Lloyd's of London for 1846 shows this voyage from London to Rio de Janiero. The master's name was Cleveland.

September 13, 1846, John McMurdo sailed as a Second Mate on the Porcupine, 184 tons, apparently a schooner, for the Mediterranean, out of London. Service ends May 12, 1847.

Sept 26 Times reports Porcupine at Gravesend from Leghorn.

September 30, 1846 Porcupine under Cleveland is at London Customs House, from Leghorn (Livorno, Italy—Leghorn is the Old English name for this port).

## **The Eighth Voyage: The Schooner William Crow of Liverpool, bound for St. Petersburg, Russia and Lisbon.**

June 1, 1847, sails as Mate on the William Crow (aka William H. Crow, W.H. Crow), 136 ton schooner or perhaps brigantine out of Liverpool, for the Mediterranean. Returns May 1, 1848.

November 12, 1846 The Morning Chronicle of London has the Porcupine for Athens, &c.

August 4, 1847 The London Morning Post reports the William Crow had sailed for St. Petersburg, Russia from Liverpool.

**Age 22**

**July 28, 1847 John McMurdo celebrated his twenty second birthday bound for Baltic waters.**

Sept. 3, 1847 William Crow under Dixon arrives at Cronstadt Island, probably Kronstadt in the Baltic.

January 11, 1848 Liverpool Mercury reports: William Crow,...hence at Lisbon...

Feb. 11 William Crow, Dixon, Lisbon.

March 14 Lloyd's list for this day lists the Wm. Crow of Liverpool at Studwell Roads .

## **The Ninth Voyage: The Ship Ottawa of Glasgow, Scotland, bound for Quebec, Canada / Ninth and Tenth Atlantic Crossing**

May 3, 1848, sails as Second Mate on the Ottawa, 1134 tons out of Glasgow, Scotland, for North America.

### **Age 23**

**July 28, 1848 John McMurdo's twenty third birthday was spent unknown.**

Service on the Ottawa ends December 20, 1848

## **The Tenth Voyage: The Brig Princess Royal of Glasgow, Scotland / Eleventh and Twelfth Atlantic Crossing**

December 23, 1848, sails as a Second Mate on the Princess Royal, 1104 tons out of Glasgow, Scotland, bound for North America. Liverpool reported a moderate southeast wind that day. The Princess Royal appears to have been a brig rigged ship, her master was Denis Driscoll.

### **Age 24**

**July 28, , 1849 His birthday spent probably in UK.**

Service ends as second mate on the “Princess Royal”, December 1, 1849.  
This ship in February of 1849 was running from Liverpool to Glasgow

November 29, 1849 John McMurdo marries Lavinia Dean at St. Phillips Church in Liverpool. Their ages were listed only as “full”, in both cases. Lavinia’s father, Richard Dean, was listed as a warehouseman. It would be interesting to know if dad was his namesake (this would have been Dr. McMurdo’s grandfather). His sister, Isabella, and Lavinia Dean's sister, Barbara Dean, served as witnesses to the marriage.

## **The Eleventh Voyage: The Barque Achilles of Glasgow, bound for Montreal, Quebec / Thirteenth and Fourteenth Atlantic Crossing**

January 4, 1850, sails as Mate on the Achilles, 654 tons, out of Glasgow, Scotland, bound for North America. Service ends August 8, 1851. He was at Belfast on January 2, 1851 as this is where he filed for Mate’s papers to be sent. The Master on March 10, 1849 was Robert Fraser Taylor. At the time his service began with this ship, John McMurdo was a 25 year old newlywed of a little over a month.

On March 5, 1850 an Achilles is loading for Montreal.

March 25, 1850 the Morning Chronicle of London reports the Achilles for Quebec.

June 11 1850 The Liverpool Mercury reports the Achilles, Morris from London at Quebec.

August 1, 1850 The Achilles is reported by the London Times as having arrived at Gravesend from Quebec.

### **Age 25**

**July 28, 1850 Birthday probably in UK.**

# **The Twelfth Voyage: The Barque Achilles of Glasgow, bound for New York City from Belfast, Ireland / Fifteenth and Sixteenth Atlantic Crossing**

January 30, 1851 At Belfast. John McMurdo is issued a Mate's Certificate by the British Registrar General of Seamen in London for the Board of Trade.

Ad from March 18, 1851

NOW IN PORT, FOR NEW YORK.

SAMUEL McCREA begs to announce to the Emigrating public, that he has the following splendid Passenger Ships now on the berth (where they can be examined):-  
TO SAIL DIRECT FROM BELFAST, FOR NEW YORK, AS FOLLOWS:-

SHIPS	CAPT.	TONS	TO SAIL
MIRAMICHI,	MAIN,	1,225	18th March.
ANNADALE,	PEARSE,	1,325	26th March.
ACHILLES,	MORRIS,	1,253	12th April.
HERCULES,	LONDEN,	1,220	20th April.
SIR C. CAMPBELL,	RANKIN,	1,300	1st May.

FOR QUEBEC.

WATERFORD,	ROBINSON,	900tons,	15th April.
HIGHLANDER,	GRAHAM,	950tons,	25th April.

THESE WELL-KNOWN, SPLENDID Passenger-Ships are fitted up in a superior style, for the accommodation of all classes, having extensive Poop accommodation, with PRIVATE ROOMS for families, or persons who may wish to be select; and their between decks are superior to any Ships afloat.

Ships are furnished, under the recent Act of Parliament, with the following provisions for the voyage:- 15lbs. biscuit, 10lbs. flour, 50lbs. oatmeal, 20lbs. rice, 2lbs. sugar, 5lbs. molasses, 1 1/4lbs. tea, for each passenger; which, with Government, any, and all charges, are included in the Passage-Money.

For further particulars, apply tp

SAMUEL McCREA,

General Emigration Office, 37, Waring Street, Belfast.

S. McCrea will have a succession of first-class Ships to sail direct from Belfast for New York, Quebec, and St. John, New Brunswick, every ten days during the season.

[http://www.worldcat.org/wcpa/oclc/1480480?page=frame&url=http%3A%2F%2Fmelvyl.cdlib.org%2F%2F%3Ffunc%3Dfind-b%26find\\_code%3D022%26request%3D0003-0155%26checksum%3Df0199151838b2ab474de295be120820e&title=Institute+of+Transportation+Studies+Library&linktype=opac&detail=CBT%3AInstitute+of+Transportation+Studies+Library%3AAcademic+Library](http://www.worldcat.org/wcpa/oclc/1480480?page=frame&url=http%3A%2F%2Fmelvyl.cdlib.org%2F%2F%3Ffunc%3Dfind-b%26find_code%3D022%26request%3D0003-0155%26checksum%3Df0199151838b2ab474de295be120820e&title=Institute+of+Transportation+Studies+Library&linktype=opac&detail=CBT%3AInstitute+of+Transportation+Studies+Library%3AAcademic+Library)

Ad from March 19, 1851 reads:

*NOW IN PORT, FOR NEW YORK,  
To Sail Direct from Belfast on the 12th April,*

*The favourite and well known Copper  
and Copper fastened Passenger Ship,*

***ACHILLES,***

*654 tons register, or 1253 tons burthen*

*JAMES MORRIS, Commander*

*This superior ship is one of the celebrated line of  
Pollock, Gilmore & Co's. and has just passed the  
Government Surveyors. She is 8 feet 'twixt decks,  
is a remarkably fast sailer, and will be punctually  
despatched for the city of New York on the above date.*

*This magnificent ship is built of the best materials  
the country could produce, and on inspection, will be  
found a most superior conveyance.*

*The **Achilles** will, as usual, be fitted up in the  
most superior style, for the accommodation of Cabin,  
second Cabin and Steerage passengers, under the  
immediate inspection of Lieutenant Starke, the  
Government Emigration Officer, and will be  
provided with the following scale of provisions,  
free of charge, which is included in the rate of  
passage money.*

*Ships are furnished under the recent Act of Parliament  
with the following provisions, for the voyage:-  
25lbs buscuits, 10 lbs flour, 50lbs oatmeal,  
20lbs rice, 5lbs sugar, 5lbs molasses, 1Â*

April 9, 1851 ***The Belfast News-Letter***

(Belfast, Ireland),

Wednesday, April 9, 1851; Issue 11757. (8236 words)

Now in port for New York..."The ship Achilles, James Morris commander, to clear on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April.

April 16, 1851 Ship News, sailed, April 16 , Achilles, Morris, New York.

April 21, 1851 The emigrant ship Achilles out of Belfast for New York, with 247 ste...passengers, nearly all of the former...

April 19, 1851 Possibly still with the Achilles

migration.- On Wednesday the **Achilles** Emigrant Ship, sailed from this port for New York, with 247 steerage, and 5 cabin passengers, nearly all of these former being small farmers. A number of emigrants also, embarked on board the steamer Nimrod, on Thursday evening, for Liverpool, on their way to the New World

May 21, 1851 The New York Herald reference to the Achilles

May 21, 1851 <http://immigrantships.net/v7/1800v7/achilles18510521.html>

June 3, 1851 The Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser of Dublin, Ireland reported the Bark Achilles (Br), Morris, Belfast...with 254 passengers, to JT Tapscott, ...saw large quantities of ice: 10<sup>th</sup>,.."

June 4, 1851 SHIP NEWS.

The barque **Achilles** has arrived at New York, from this port (northern Ireland)

June 7, 1851 The Irish American Weekly reports the Achilles, under Morris arrived at New York with 254 passengers after a voyage of 50 days from Belfast.

June 13, 1851 The Achilles, Belfast to New York, spoken with at lat. 47N., long. 37 W.

July 25, 1851

**Ship News**

***The Belfast News-Letter***

(Belfast, Ireland), Friday, July 25, 1851;

"The Achilles, Morris, for Belfast..."

August 8, 1851 John McMurdo's doc says he ended service with Achilles on August 8, 1851.

August 11, 1851

**Ship News**

***The Belfast News-Letter***

(Belfast, Ireland),

Monday, August 11, 1851; Issue 11811.

Arrived, the Achilles, Morris

**Age 26**

**July 28, 1851.** John McMurdo's birthday spent probably bound for or at Belfast.

**The Thirteenth Voyage: The Barque Laconic of Liverpool, bound for New Orleans & Charleston, SC / Seventeenth and Eighteenth Atlantic Crossing**

October 20, 1851 sails as Mate on the Barque Laconic out of Liverpool. She was built at Saint Andrews, New Brunswick, Canada.

The Laconic's master was a Captain Miller. The ship sailed in 1851 from Liverpool for Boston. From the book "American Neptune" of the Peabody Museum in Salem, MA of the Peabody and Essex Museum the following:

"...The Bark Laconic, which delivered salt cargoes to several Maine ports between 1851 and 1855 was rather typical [in construction]. Launched at St. Andrews NB [New Brunswick] in 1847, she contained hackmatack, spruce, birch and white..."

November 4, 1851 The Liverpool Mercury reports the Laconic, Miller master, sailed for Charleston.

Winds when they left Liverpool were out of the North and described as fresh.

November 17, 1851 the New York Times reported a telegraph dispatch that the bark Laconic had arrived in New Orleans

Dec 5 1851 According to the US publication "Naval Journal": "Br. Bark Laconic, Miller at this port [New Orleans?] from Liverpool, December 5<sup>th</sup>, fell in with the wreck of the Br. Bark Clutha, of Cork, waterlogged and abandoned."

December 22, 1851 While John McMurdo was on his voyage to America, his father Dalrymple McMurdo, dies in Liverpool. He was 56.



Jan. 27, 1852 Laconic at Charleston according to the Liverpool Mercury.

April 15, 1852 at Liverpool the Laconic from Charleston.

The Liverpool Mercury on April 16 reported the Laconic arriving at Liverpool from Charleston, South Carolina. There were moderate winds out of the southeast as the Laconic arrived at Liverpool.

It would seem likely that this would have been when John McMurdo learned of the death of his father Dalrymple.

## **The Fourteenth Voyage: The Barque Laconic of Liverpool, bound for Eastport, Maine/ Nineteenth and Twentieth Atlantic Crossing**

May 2 1852 The London Times reports the Laconic sailing from Liverpool for Eastport.

June 26, 1852 Laconic at Eastport.

July 13, 1852 Laconic at Eastport.

### **Age 27**

**July 28, 1852 John McMurdo may have spent his birthday in New Brunswick, or at sea for Liverpool.**

September 11, 1852 The New York Tribune reports from Lloyd's List the Laconic, Miller, arrived at Liverpool from St. Stephens [from the context of the rest of the voyage, this would seem to have been St. Stephen, New Brunswick]

## **The Fifteenth Voyage: The Barque Laconic of Liverpool, bound for Newport and Providence,**

## **Rhode Island / Twenty first and Twenty second Atlantic Crossing**

April 4, 1853 London Morning Post reports Laconic from Newport to Rhode Island 22d 46.N

May 10. 1853 Laconic / Miller from Newport at Pro[vidence?]....

### **Age 28**

**July 28, 1853 Where John McMurdo was on this birthday is unknown.**

January 25, 1854 John McMurdo's service with the Laconic ends.

## **1854 John McMurdo, Master Mariner**

January 28, 1854

John McMurdo is granted a Master's Certificate by the Lords of the Committee Privy to the Council of Trade in England. He was granted the certificate upon passing an "ordinary examination" at Liverpool on this date.

His address at this time was 234 Bedford St., Liverpool, England.

The following is the scope of knowledge that a sailor would have been required to know to earn a master's license in the British Merchant Marine when John McMurdo took his exams:

Info about his examination and its costs are here:

<http://www.crewlist.org.uk/data/viewimages.php>

Here from the Mercantile Navy List is a description of the requirements for a master"

"A MASTER must be twenty-one years of age, and have been six years at sea, of which one year must have been as First or Only Mate, and one year as a Second Mate; or two years as First and Only Mate.

"In addition to the qualification for a First Mate, he must be able to find the latitude by a star, &c. He will be asked questions as to the nature of the ship's iron upon the compass, and as to the method of determining it. He will be examined in so much of the Laws of the Tides as is necessary to enable him to shape a course, and to

compare his surrounding with the depths marked on the charts. He will be examined as to his competency to construct rafts, and as to his resources for the preservation of the ship's crew in the event of wreck. He must possess a knowledge of what he is required to do by law; as to the entry and discharge and the management of his crew; and as to penalties and entries to be made in the official log. He will be questioned as to his knowledge of invoices, charterparty, Lloyd's agent, and as to the nature of bottomry; and he must be acquainted with the leading lights of the channel he has been accustomed to navigate, or which he is going to use...

" In Navigation—As the vessels which such Masters will command frequently make long voyages, to the East Indies, and the Pacific, &c. the candidates will be required to work a lunar observation by both sun and star, to determine the latitude by the moon and star, by Polar star off the meridian, and also by double altitude of the sun, and to verify the result by Sumner's method. He must be able to calculate the altitudes of the sun or star when they cannot be observed, for the purposes of lunars, also to find the error of a watch by the method of equal altitudes, to correct the altitudes observed with an artificial horizon.

"He must understand how to observe and apply the deviation of the compass; and to deduce the set and rate of the current from the D.R. and observation. He will be required to explain the nature of great circle sailing, and know how to apply practically that knowledge, but he will not be required to go into calculations. He must be acquainted with the law of storms, so far as to know how he may probably best escape those tempests common to the East and West Indies, and known as hurricanes.

"In SEAMANSHIP.—the extra Examination will consist of an inquiry into the competency of the party to heave a ship down, in case of accident befalling her abroad; of getting lower masts in and out, and to perform other operations of a like nature as the Examiner may consider necessary.

From January 28, 1854 until May 2, 1856, I can't find any record of John McMurdo's service. This is the only missing period of time between 1840 and 1862. There are a few records that limn out his life during this time, however. The spring of 1854 would from appearances have been a happy time for those McMurdos. John McMurdo having just received his master's license, his first and only son John Richard being born about nine or ten weeks later and baptized. His sister Isabella marrying a mariner, Alexander Black that May at St. Martin in the Fields.:

April 1 or 8, 1854 John and Lavinia Dean McMurdo have a son born, named John Richard McMurdo. The name Richard is most likely as a namesake for his maternal grandfather, Richard Dean, a warehouseman in Liverpool. The name of my father and brother, Richard Burke McMurdo, and Richard Burke McMurdo Jr., are actually

combinations of the names of maternal and paternal grandparents of John Richard McMurdo and Mary Ellen Burke.

April 1 was the date that my father Richard Burke McMurdo said was his father John McMurdo's birthday.

April 23, 1854. Liverpool, England. John Richard McMurdo (listed here as MacMurdo) is baptized at the parish church of St. Peter in Liverpool.

25 May 1854 The sister of John McMurdo, mariner, occurs at St Martin in the Fields, Liverpool, Lancashire, England

Alexander Black - 27 Mariner Bachelor of Townsend St

Isabella McMurdo - 24 Spinster of Townsend St

Groom's Father: Alexander Black, Mariner

Bride's Father: Dalrymple McMurdo, Mariner

Witness: Robert M Dowall; Jane McMurdo

Married by Licence by: John Henry Ashley Gibson Curate

Register: Marriages 1848 - 1859, Page 174, Entry 347

April 23, 1854. Liverpool, England. John Richard McMurdo (listed here as MacMurdo) is baptized at the parish church of St. Peter in Liverpool.

April 1 was the date that my father Richard Burke McMurdo said was his father John McMurdo's birthday.

## **Age 29**

July 28, 1854 John McMurdo may have spent this birthday in Liverpool.

**The Sixteenth Voyage\*: A Mate or Crewmember of  
the Clipper Ship Boomerang of Liverpool, bound  
across the South Seas for Melbourne, Australia  
Carrying the Royal Mail  
(First and Second Cape Horn Passage)**

<http://www.rfrajola.com/binders/binderclippers1.pdf>

‘BOOMERANG’ Built 1853. Wood ship of 1823 Tons. T. ST JEAN at Quebec, Canada built her. James Baines bought her in 1855 and she was placed on the Liverpool-Melbourne run. She was abandoned while sailing from Mobile to Liverpool with cotton in 1856.

The Boomerang was under contract to carry the Royal Mail to Australia on this voyage.

1855 February 6, Liverpool. The clipper ship Boomerang of the Black Ball Line sails for Melbourne, Australia. John McMurdo’s Seaman Record for 1854 and 1855 states that he was outbound on the ship Boomerang from Liverpool in 1855. The certificate number for this John McMurdo matches that which we possess, as does another document number –a “ ticket” number.

1855 May 11. The clipper ship Boomerang arrives at Melbourne. It is carrying 27 passengers in cabin, and 835 in steerage.

Among the cargo carried by Boomerang, other than the Royal Mail, is a load of fine quality saddles.

1855 June 7 Melbourne, Australia. The clipper ship Boomerang leaves Melbourne for Liverpool, carrying mail for England.

1855 July 28. The Liverpool Daily Post reports the Boomerang was spoken with at Latitude 4 N. (No other coordinate given)

## **Age 30**

**July 28, 1855 John McMurdo seems to have spent this birthday at sea between Melbourne and Liverpool.**

1855 September 19. Liverpool. The clipper ship Boomerang arrives at Liverpool.

**The Seventeenth Voyage, John McMurdo is a crewmember or mate on the Barque Boomerang, sailing for Mobile Alabama. (Twenty third and Twenty fourth Atlantic Passages)**

**<https://www.marinersmuseum.org/blog/2018/03/how-many-reporters-does-it-take-to-screw-in-a-light-bulb/>**

## **Alternate Seventeenth Voyage\*: Possibly the Master of the Barque Irlam of Liverpool, bound for Guyana & Rio de Janeiro, South America**

**(because this is uncertain, it's not included in the tally of crossings)**

NOTE: according to lists of English masters of the 1850's, John McMurdo was the only McMurdo/ M'Murdo who was a ships master in the service of the British Merchant Marine.

It isn't clear if this voyage was under John McMurdo.

1856 May 2 the Irlam sails from Demerara ( modern Guyana in South America

1856 May 10 Irlam for Rio Janeiro from Liverpool (possibly under McMurdo). Light winds from the NNE

## **The Eighteenth Voyage\*: As Master of the Barque Irlam from Liverpool, bound for the West Indies Jamaica, Cuba and Trinidad, Twenty fifth and Twenty sixth Atlantic Crossings**

Ships' Number 1101

1856 July 28 The barque # 1101 , under M'Murdo sailed from Liverpool for Jamaica. I think this is John McMurdo. He seems to have been the only McMurdo or M'Murdo with a master's certificate at this time. The winds were out of the north northwest at Liverpool that day.

### **Age 31**

**July 28, 1856 John McMurdo probably commanding the barque Irlam spent this birthday leaving Liverpool for Jamaica on winds blowing north northwest.**

1856 Oct. 17 (possibly Sept. 17) the Irlam is reported arriving from Liverpool at Jamaica.

1856 October 20 the Irlam is reported sailing from Jamaica for Cuba this day, by the Liverpool Mercury.

1856 November 3 the Irlam is reported by the Liverpool Mercury as being at Kingston, Jamaica this day.

1856 December 13 The Liverpool Mercury reports the Irlam, from Jamaica for Liverpool, loading at Manzanilla. This is probably Manzanillo de Cuba. It would not make sense that it was Manzanillo, Mexico on the Pacific Coast.

1857 Feb 7 The Manchester Greater Advertizer reports the arrival of the Irlam at Liverpool, coming from Manzanilla.

1857 Feb. 11 The Daily Post reports:

“On Friday next, the 13th instant, at Twelve o’clock, at the Broker’s Office, 13, Tempest-hey,  
30 Tons Cuba FUSTIC,  
Just arrived per Irlam, from Manzanilla de Cuba, Brunswick Dock–  
Apply to Messr’s Bernard Hall and Co., Merchants” or to  
John ROWLINSON, Broker.”

1857 March 24 The Daily Post of Liverpool reports:

“On account of whom it may concern.  
This Day (Tuesday), the 24th instant, at Twelve o’clock precisely,  
at the Broker’s Sale-room, 9, Temple-court,  
14 Bales Yara TOBACCO, damaged by sea water  
Lately landed ex Irlam, from Manzanilla, and now lying in H.M.’s  
Tobacco Warehouse, King’s Dock, –Apply to  
EDWARD SAMUELSON, Broker.”

1857, May 10, Meehrat, India. The Sepoy Rebellion of Indian troops against the British army and the East India Company begins

1857 May 14, Bombay, India. News of the Sepoy Rebellion reaches the British governor of Bombay .

## **The Nineteenth Voyage: As Master of**

# **the Barque Thomas Sparkes of Liverpool, bound for Bombay, India. (Seventh and Eighth Cape of Good Hope Passages)**

Ship's Number 23952

By 1857 John McMurdo was listed as the master of the barque "Thomas Sparks". He was not listed as the master in late March of 1856. The Sparks (also known by the spelling Thomas Sparkes) was built at Workington, England, and was 497 tons.

The Thomas Sparks (aka Thomas Sparkes) was listed in 1858 as a British Registered Vessel with the registered letters of identification N.T.R.Q.

How these flags were used:

[http://books.google.com/books?id=ZV0BAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA11&dq=THE+MERCANTILE+NAVY+LIST+AND+ANNUAL+APPENDAGE+TO+THE+COMMERCIAL+CODE&hl=en&ei=QERvTpWThETliALZ5KDiBw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=4&ved=0CDcQ6AEwAzgK#v=onepage&q=THE%20MERCANTILE%20NAVY%20LIST%20AND%20ANNUAL%20APPENDAGE%20TO%20THE%20COMMERCIAL%20CODE&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=ZV0BAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA11&dq=THE+MERCANTILE+NAVY+LIST+AND+ANNUAL+APPENDAGE+TO+THE+COMMERCIAL+CODE&hl=en&ei=QERvTpWThETliALZ5KDiBw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=4&ved=0CDcQ6AEwAzgK#v=onepage&q=THE%20MERCANTILE%20NAVY%20LIST%20AND%20ANNUAL%20APPENDAGE%20TO%20THE%20COMMERCIAL%20CODE&f=false) or ship #23952.

The baptismal register of St. Peter in Liverpool where John McMurdo and his siblings were baptized, shows that Thomas Sparks, Shipwright who built the barque Thomas Sparks, had a child of his own baptized three months after the brother of John McMurdo was born in 1827.

1857 May 27 Thomas Sparks, M'Murdo, left Liverpool 23 inst. For Bombay. The wind at Liverpool that day was out of the east.

Shipping Intelligence

Caledonian Mercury

(Edinburgh, Scotland),

Wednesday, May 27, 1857; Issue 21112

1857 June 23, Bombay, India. Citizens from the various communities of Bombay offer their support for the governor in maintaining tranquility in the face of the growing Sepoy rebellion elsewhere in the country. Notably missing in their support are the large Muslim population, whose brethren are involved in the mutiny. Uneasiness on this account was gradually mounting, and it intensified with news



of the arrest at Poona of the Muslim Moulvi of the Cantonment Bazaar Mosque and the unearthing of a plot relating to mass murder of Europeans. A rumor circulated that "something unpleasant may be expected to take place on the day of the Mohamedan festival of Buckree Id"

1857 August 14, Bombay, India. The community of Bombay joins in a "Day of Humiliation" praying for peace.

1857 July 26, 1857 The September 23 The Morning Post of London reports the "Thomas Sparks from Liverpool to Bombay 22 S. 31 W."

## **Age 32**

**July 28, 1857 John McMurdo spent this birthday at sea headed from Liverpool for Bombay.**

1857 October 13, Bombay The muslim leaders of a revolt in Bombay planned for this day are discovered. They are sentenced to death and are executed by being tied to the muzzle of a cannon which was then fired.

1857 November 2 at Bombay. The Thomas Sparks under McMurdo has arrived from Liverpool, according to Allen's Indian Mail.

1857 December 2 The Allen's Indian Mail newspaper reports the barque Thomas Sparks, whose master was McMurdo from Liverpool, had arrived at Bombay.

1857 December 2 Liverpool Mercury "Shipping Intelligence" Issue 3068 reports "...Thomas Sparks, M'Murdo hence--..."

1858, January 15  
SHIPPING INTELLIGENCE  
Liverpool Mercury etc  
(Liverpool, England),  
Friday, January 15, 1858; Issue 3093.

1857 December 18 "The Thomas Sparks, which arrived at Bombay November 2, from Liverpool, has badly damaged a portion of her cargo, and we fear such accounts

must continue common so long as ships are allowed to bring so large a quantity of dead weight in proportion to their tonnage—(Mem.: The Thomas Sparks had only 270 tons of dead weight, and it is said the protest will fully account for the damage.)”

In 1858, the comprehensive Mercantile Navy List for 1858, which listed all English ships, as well as their masters and mates, showed John McMurdo as the only McMurdo who was master in the British merchant marine. The examination date and license number match the information that we possess. His license number was 9658.

1858 April 1. John McMurdo has his fourth birthday at Liverpool, while his father is away at sea, in Burma.

1858 April 7 The Liverpool Mercury reports the Thomas Sparks under M’Murdo from Bombay at Rangoon, Burma.

1858 April 9 The Liverpool Mercury “Shipping Intelligence” Issue 3165 reports “Thomas Sparks, M’Murdo from Bombay, at Rangoon.”

April 19 1858 Thomas Sparks , McMurdo for London, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April sailed from Rangoon, according to the Carlisle Journal of June 25, 1858.

1858 April 23 “Thomas Sparks, M’Murdo;...all at Rangoon”  
SHIPPING INTELLIGENCE  
Liverpool Mercury etc  
(Liverpool, England),  
Friday, April 23, 1858

## **Age 33**

**July 28, 1858 John McMurdo probably spent this birthday at sea headed from Rangoon, Burma for London.**

1858 27<sup>th</sup> September. Reported in the Carlisle Journal of November 16, 1858 the following:

“The barque Thomas Sparks,--, from Rangoon, for London, was spoken on the 27<sup>th</sup> Sept., lat 11. 2 N., long. 25. 17 W., out 154 days”.

1858 October 7 The Morning Post reports under “Vessels Spoken With”; “Thomas Sparkes (ship, Rangoon to London, July 27, 36 S 22 E.

1858 October 7 “Thos. Sparks, from Rangoon for London ...22 17 E.

## SHIPPING INTELLIGENCE

Daily News

(London, England),

Thursday, October 7, 1858; Issue 3868.

1858 November 12 "Thos. Sparks (barque), from B [or R] ang...lat 11 2 lon 25 17 W. "

## SHIPPING INTELLIGENCE

Daily News

(London, England),

Friday, November 12, 1858; Issue 3899

1858, November 16

## THE TREATY WITH JAPAN

Caledonian Mercury

(Edinburgh, Scotland),

Tuesday, November 16, 1858; Issue 21573

"Vessels Spoken With

Thomas Sparks, Rangoon to London, September 27, lat. 11 25 W"

1858 December 3 The London Morning Post reports the Thomas Sparks from Rangoon arrived at Deal.

1858 December 3 The London Daily News reports under the listings for "Vessels Spoken With" the following: "Thomas Sparkes, from Rangoon for London, short of provisions, which were supplied, lat 50 N, long 20 W." This may be the same encounter at sea as the listing below on December 7 with the ship "Lotus".

1858 December 6 The "Allen's Indian Mail" reports Thomas Sparks, McMurdo master, arriving from Rangoon at Bombay.

1858 December 7 The Carlisle Journal reports the "The Thomas Sparks, Mc.Mord [sic] from Rangoon:...at Gravesend on the 4<sup>th</sup> inst. "

1858 December 7 The Morning Chronicle reports the Thomas Sparks from Rangoon to London at Lat 50 N Lat. 20 W by the Lotus, of Plymouth.

1858 December 7 The Carlisle Journal reports the "The Thomas Sparks, Mc.Mord [sic] from Rangoon:...at Gravesend on the 4<sup>th</sup> inst. "

1858 The Carlisle [Scotland] Journal of December 10 reports the Thomas Sparks, under master "McMord", arriving at Gravesend from Rangoon on December 4.

1859 January 15 The London Commercial Daily List reports 7000 bags of Rangoon

rice from the ship Thomas Sparks available at Hulbert & Company Brokers, 22 Mincing Lane.

1859 February 25 The London Commercial Daily List reports 625 bags of cutch from the Thomas Sparks, available at Hulbert & Company Brokers, 22 Mincing Lane. Cutch is an extract of any of several species of *Acacia*—but especially *Acacia catechu*—produced by boiling the wood in water and evaporating the resulting brew. It was used as an ingredient in tanning.

1859 March 10 The Liverpool Mercury lists the following ad:

“FOR PRIVATE SALE, the fine A1 Cumberland Barque THOMAS SPARKS; 437 tons o.m. and 497 tons n.m.; built at Workington in 1840, under strict inspection for her present owners, and classed A1 for twelve year; was restored in 1857 A1 for eight years. The vessel is now being newly coppered and thoroughly overhauled, under Lloyd’s surveyors, in Limekiln Dry Dock, London, where inspection is solicited; she has a full poop, and good accommodation for first-class passengers, and ample height between decks for troops and emigrants, for which she is a most desirable ship—Apply to London to Messers. Alexander Howden and Son, 19 Birchin-lane; here to John Sparks and Co. merchants or to CUNARD, WILSON & CO. Brokers.”

1859 April 1 “Sparks from Hong Kong”...

SHIPPING INTELLIGENCE

Liverpool Mercury etc

(Liverpool, England),

Friday, April 1, 1859; Issue 3471

1859 April 1 at Liverpool. John McMurdo celebrates his fifth birthday as his father Captain John McMurdo prepares his barque “Thomas Sparkes” for its coming voyage to Calcutta, India.

1859 Lloyd’s Register of Shipping lists the Barque Thomas Sparks, 437 Tons owned by Sparks & Co. of Liverpool with a master named M’Murdo. This was supposedly accurate through June 30, 1859.

**The Twentieth (?) Voyage: As Master of the East Indiaman Barque Thomas Sparkes of Liverpool, bound for Calcutta, India and Rangoon, Burma. (Twenty seventh and Twenty eighth Atlantic Crossings / Ninth and Tenth Cape of Good Hope Passage)**

1859 April 11 The London Standard reports among "Ships Loading at the Port of London" for Calcutta, the Thomas Sparks, M'Murdo—Howden , A and Son.

1859 April "Sparks, Rangoon"

1859 July 29 the London Times reported "The fast-sailing barque THOMAS SPARKS, A 1, newly coppered is now loading in the London Docks. Has excellent accommodation for a few cabin passengers who would be taken at a moderate price to join those already engaged..."

## **Age 34**

**July 28, 1859 John McMurdo probably spent this birthday at Liverpool**

The Thomas Sparks was lost near Calcutta in 1861.

## **The Twenty First Voyage: As Master of the Barque Pandora of Liverpool, bound for Savanilla, Columbia / Twenty ninth and Thirtieth Atlantic Crossing**

Ships Number 25742

1859 July 8. The Lloyd List reported that on July 8, the Pandora sailed from Savanilla for Liverpool. (Lloyd List August 17, 1859 Page 4).

1859 July 20, London Lloyd List reports at Savanilla, on June 18, the Pandora from Liverpool under McMurdy arrived June 6. It appears to be continuing or arriving from Santa Marta and Cartagena in Columbia. This is the earliest mention of John McMurdo as master of the Pandora.

## **Age 35**

**July 28, 1859 John McMurdo possibly spent this birthday at Savanilla, Columbia.**

1860 In 1860, the comprehensive Mercantile Navy List for 1860, which listed all English ships, as well as their masters and mates, showed John McMurdo as the only McMurdo who was master in the British merchant marine. This John McMurdo's master license number was 9658 (the number that John had been issued), issued in

1854. He was listed as a Master Ordinary. In this capacity, he would have been able "to command any vessel [apparently sail or steam] whatsoever tonnage..."

1860 Lloyd's Register of Shipping lists him as master of the barque Pandora between July 1, 1860 and June 30, 1861 sailing for Savanilla in Columbia, and returning with sugar to Liverpool. This is the first year he was listed as the master of the Pandora. The Pandora was owned by Imrie and Company.

Imrie and Company would eventually become known as the White Star Line, who owned the Titanic.

Published: January 2, 1860 NY Times Marine Intelligence

. "The U.S. sloop of war Vandalia. Commander ARTHUR SINCLAIR...spoke English bark Pandora, 28 days from Callao, for Cork, Nov. 22, lat. 24° 08', long. 30° 53'."

. There were several Pandoras at this time, but only one barque with this name--John McMurdo's ship.

1860 January 19 The Lloyd's London List for Shipping reported the Pandora, under McMurdo, a barque of 297 tons from Liverpool, as a sailing vessel entered outwards for foreign ports, including "S. Mar., Car., & Sav.". "Sav." would seem to be Savanilla, Columbia, the others the others Santa Martha and Cartagena.

January 27, 1860 Pandora under McMurdo sails from Liverpool for Savanilla, Columbia according to the Liverpool Mercury.

April 1, 1860 John McMurdo celebrates his sixth birthday at Liverpool, while his father Captain John McMurdo is most likely away at sea with his barque the Pandora.

**The Twenty Second Voyage: As Master of  
the Barque Pandora of Liverpool, bound for The  
Bahamas and Cuba / Thirty first and Thirty second  
Atlantic Crossing**

1860 May 28

SHIPPING INTELLIGENCE

Liverpool Mercury etc  
(Liverpool, England),  
Monday, May 28, 1860; Issue 3834.

By Electronic and Magnetic...  
Pandora, sailed from Belfast for the Ba...[hamas?]

1860 Aug 21 /22 At Deal The Pandora arrived and anchored from Cuba for London.  
My guess is this is the correct Pandora, as it seemed to be in the Caribbean trade.  
The winds on the day she arrived were strong and out of the south southwest.

1860 August 23 at Deal The Pandora from Cuba is anchored at Deal.

1860 August 23 at Gravesend the Pandora from Santa Cruz (Cuba?) London Times.

## **Age 35**

**July 28, 1860 John McMurdo spent this birthday at Gravesend or perhaps London.**

## **The Twenty Third Voyage: As Master of the Barque Pandora of Liverpool, bound for Valparaiso, Chile (Thirty third and Thirty fourth Atlantic Crossing / Third and Fourth Cape Horn Passage)**

1860 October 24 at Liverpool. The November 1 Lloyd's List of Shipping shows the Pandora, a barque of 297 tons, owned by Imrie, commanded by McMurdo, arriving at Liverpool from Valparaiso, Chile on October 1.

Note: This seems as if it's another voyage, but there's no record of the ship leaving.  
1860 November 15 Lloyd's List of Shipping shows the Pandora, under McMurdo from Liverpool entered outwards that time for Valparaiso, Chile.

1860 November 1. 15 Lloyd's List of Shipping shows the Pandora, under McMurdo from Liverpool entered outwards that time for Valparaiso, Chile.

1860 November 22 The Daily Post lists Pandora under "Murdo" leaving for Valparaiso.

December 11 1860 London's Commercial Daily List newspaper listed the following ad:

"To precede Messrs' T. Edwards and Son

At Five precisely,

By order of the Importers,

At GARRAWAY'S COFFEE HOUSE,

CORNHILL,

WOOD                    396 logs Cuba Mahogany, of  
fine quality and figure, and large  
dimensions, lately landed ex  
Pandora

["ex" means sold direct from: "carpet tiles offered at a special price, ex stock".

108 logs City St. Domingo Mahogany

492 d[itt]o do Satin

11 do American Black Walnut

426 planks Ancona Walnut

900 do Italian do

352 Lance Spars

35 tons Cocus

[Cocus wood is A West Indian wood obtained from the granadilla tree , used for making flutes, clarinets, and other musical instruments.]

30 do Fustic

[Fustic is a tropical American tree (Madura Chlorophora) of the mulberry family with heartwood that yields dyes and other products.]

["do" means ditto/the same source].

40 do Lignum Vitus

[Lignum-Vitae is a unique wood that is used to make Hydro Bearings, Ship Bearings, Saw Blocks and all sorts of unique products. It is 20 times harder than Oak]

C. and G. SHADBOLT, Brokers,  
2, Lime Street Square.



January 12 1861 the Pandora “passed” at Gravesend for London from St. Michaels.

In 1861, John’s family—wife Lavinia, aged 35 and listed as a “Master Mariner’s Wife”, her three children, Lavinia, age 9 and a “scholar”, John (our grandfather) age 7 and a “scholar as well, and Barbara Ellen, aged three, as well as Joseph Billing (a brother in law and mariner), Barbara, his wife and listed as a sister (of which I don’t know) and their daughter—also Barbara Ellen, aged 2 are living in the same home. Lavinia is listed as a native of Liverpool Their address at this time was 253 (alt. 259) Bedford Street.

Lloyd's Register of Shipping 1861-2: barque, yellow-metalled in 1859, 297 tons, owned by Imrie & Co., registered at Liverpool, master Capt.M'Murdo, voyage Liverpool – Savanilla. (a seaport in Columbia) (same information is in the following year's register, but this is annotated "Lost").

1861 Feb. 21 Belfast News-Letter reported: “At this port on the 18<sup>th</sup> inst., the Pandora, from Liverpool, with Indian corn.”

1861 April 1 Liverpool. John McMurdo celebrates his sixth birthday, while his father is away at sea.

1861 April 5 the Pandora at Gravesend from Terocira (sic). This might be Terciera, a port in the Azores.

1861 April 28 Toxteth, Liverpool. Barbara Ellen McMurdo, aged 3 years, the daughter of Captain John and Lavinia McMurdo and younger sister of John R. McMurdo, dies. She is buried in Toxteth Municipal Cemetery on Smithdown Road in Liverpool. It would appear that Captain McMurdo could possibly have been home at this time, his ship arriving in England three weeks earlier.

After John McMurdo has taken command of the Pandora, his old ship, the Thomas Sparks sinks in the River Hoogley, near Calcutta India.

April 30 1861 the Liverpool Mercury reports the Pandora at Valparaiso, Chile.

## **The Twenty Fourth Voyage: As Master of the Barque Pandora of Liverpool, bound for Iquique, Peru (Thirty fifth and Thirty sixth Atlantic Crossing / Fifth and Sixth Cape Horn Passages)**

**Age 36**

**July 28,, 1861 John McMurdo seems to have spent this birthday between Iquique, Chile and Liverpool.**

1861 October 25 The Liverpool Mercury reports Pandora at Pisagua, a port town in Chile.

1861 November 5 Tuesday. The Leeds Mercury reports the Pandora from Iquique for Leith passed in the [English] Channel. Iquique is a city in northern Chile. At the time of John McMurdo's voyage, Iquique belonged to Peru. This would seem to suggest that the Pandora came around Cape Horn at least once, as the Panama Canal was not built until the early 1900's. This is supported below by a Lloyd's List showing Pandora under McMurdo for Valparaiso the previous year.

Update Nov. 27 2121. Liverpool Mercury November 13 1861 reports the Pandora from Pisaqua at Leith. Pisagua is a port city in Chile north of Iquique.

## **The Twenty Fifth Voyage: As Master of the Barque Pandora of Liverpool, bound for St. Thomas, the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico Thirty seventh and Thirty eighth Atlantic Crossing**

1862 Jan 3 London Times reports the Pandora from Deal for St. Thomas's sailed.

1862 January 31 The London Times reports: The Late Gales in the North...Since our

last we have had a continued gale from S. to E.S.E., and very cold. The sea has been very high indeed. Once or twice it appeared as if it would moderate or change some way to the better, but the "gentle south" had lashed itself into such a fury that it could not or would not cease, and what follows, as the results of the gale, will show this. The Pandora sailed from this [London] for Leith on Saturday, the 11<sup>th</sup>, and although all that a first-class clipper master with a good crew can do has been done, she was only able to leave Deersound on the 25<sup>th</sup> inst...."

1862 Feb 17 The Standard of London reports under VESSELS SPOKEN WITH "the Pandora, Leith to St. Thomas's, Jan. 31 Lat 3(5 or 8 hard to read) North, long. 12 W"

1862 February 18, 1862 The Glasgow Herald Issue 6897 Shipping Intelligence "Vessel Spoken With" reported the "Pandora, from Leith for St. Thomas, in lat. 39 deg. N., long. 12 deg. W."

1862 April 2 The Glasgow Herald Issue 6934 Shipping Intelligence reported "Pandora, M'Murdo, from Leith at St. T[homas]..."

April 30, 1862 The London Commercial Daily List reports:

"Lost- The Pandora, loading at Areceibo, with 230 hds [hogsheads], 25 brh Sugar. Wrecked".

Loss reported in the Belfast News-Letter, Friday, 2nd May, 1862:

"The Pandora, Capt. M'Murdo, was wrecked on a reef at Araceibo [Puerto Rico] on the night of the 4th April 1862. She had been loading a cargo for London and had parted her chains in a "heavy Norther". She had on board at the time 230 hogsheads and 25 barrels of sugar. The master [McMurdo] and five men were drowned when the boat they were attempting to abandon the ship in capsized in the surf. "

A hogshead was a large barrel and archaic unit of measure, about 1000lb capacity. It was commonly used for liquids, as well as tobacco and sugar.

There is no evidence that John McMurdo's body was ever recovered. His name is recorded on a family marker in Toxteth Municipal Cemetery in Liverpool, apparently as follows:

"Capt. John McMurdo, who was drowned at Port Arica, 6<sup>th</sup> April, 1862". [Port Arica is likely Puerto Rico]

This headstone apparently still exists, but it appears that the cemetery is subject to a degree of vandalism and misuse.

By pure chance, I was able to find a story, written in a youth magazine of the Mormon Church in the 1890's, which tells the story of the wreck of the Pandora at Arecibo.

For an extended account of the wreck of the Pandora, read here:

[http://books.google.com/books?id=8G8vAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA163&lpg=PA163&dq=pandora+%2B+arecibo+%2B+reef&source=bl&ots=4m\\_LOMg-OU&sig=6oY8PDH\\_Yac\\_yhHMM7o0A1q-D1dU&hl=en&ei=LaGaTYSiF4G4sQPA662DBA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CB4Q6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=8G8vAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA163&lpg=PA163&dq=pandora+%2B+arecibo+%2B+reef&source=bl&ots=4m_LOMg-OU&sig=6oY8PDH_Yac_yhHMM7o0A1q-D1dU&hl=en&ei=LaGaTYSiF4G4sQPA662DBA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CB4Q6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false)

John McMurdo died at age 36, in 1862. His body, lost in the surf off a road head near the village of Arecibo, Puerto Rico, seems to have never been found. He left a wife and two children. He rose from the station of a "greenhand" to mate, and eventually to ship's master. In his youth and manhood, he sailed to at least five continents. He knew the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean, the China Sea and the South Sea, and had stories of tropical islands, of North Africa, of India, China, the East and West Indies, and of North and South America. He left a legacy of personal drive and ambition that was borne out by the life of his son John. Our cousin Missy Shehan wrote of a memory her mother Genevieve McMurdo had of her father Dr. John; that he tried to teach her that nothing of value comes easy in life, that we must be prepared to work hard to earn our rewards. The life of Captain John McMurdo would seem to be a worthy inspiration for a boy who himself would rise to become a successful surgeon.

## Interesting Facts:

John McMurdo probably crossed the Atlantic at least thirty eight times.

He probably sailed around the Cape of Good Hope at least ten times

He probably sailed around Cape Horn at least six times

He visited North and South America, Africa, Australia, Europe and Asia

He visited the islands of St. Croix, St. Thomas, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Jamaica, Trinidad, St. Michael, Ceylon, Mauritius, St. Helena, Sagar Island (Bengal), Kronstadt Island (the Baltic), Rhode Island, possibly Santo Domingo,

He experienced at least one cyclone

He survived the stranding of his ship on an Indonesian reef when he was about eighteen years old.

He may have survived the wrecking of the clipper ship Boomerang.