

An Extremely Rare Pair: The South Africa 1834-53 and Arctic 1818-55 Roll

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One rarely encounters the South Africa Medal 1834-53 to the RN and RM in company with other campaign awards. The reason being that a mere five ships gained entitlement: *Castor* (frigate), *Dee*, *Hermes*, *Rhadamanthus* and *Styx* (paddle sloops). A total of 831 officers and men, plus 93 Royal Marines and 40 Royal Marine Artillery from these ships were entitled to medals.

The *Hermes* was very active from the start of the South African conflict 'and had carried Sir Harry Smith to the frontier in his attempt to avert the uprising of December 1850' (an allusion to her mythological moniker, messenger of the gods). *Hermes* and *Styx* afterward saw service in the Second Burma War (March 1852-June 1853), with the former arriving off the Rangoon River on 2 April 1852.

The *Styx* later sailed to Burma, and perhaps 'the short-tempered and impetuous' Commodore G. Lambert (who started the war) relished the new arrival's assistance in transporting Burmese souls across her watery spiritual namesake between Earth and the Underworld.

Both ships' companies subsequently received the IGS 1849-95 with clasp PEGU. Consequently, in terms of time frame, the PEGU clasp is generally thought of as having the closest relationship to the South Africa Medal for several naval and marine personnel. However, a select minority of other Kaffir wars' veterans ventured to chilly climes at the opposite end of the planet, before or after qualifying for their South African medals. The resulting white-ribboned honors and South Africa Medals make for an unusual pair.

The combination of South Africa and Arctic 1818-55 medals is particularly rare: 16 sailors were *entitled* to both medals, but *according to the medal rolls*, both medals were issued in only nine instances. However, readers should bear in mind that, simply because no dispatch details exist for any one intended medal recipient, there is no absolute certainty the medal was not issued. Cases are known where officially named medals appear on rolls without any dispatch details, but they were indeed issued and are extant.



The South Africa Medal 1853 awarded to Carpenter's Mate Nicholas Trenaman, correctly impressed but misnamed 'Frenaman'.

Since the Arctic was not officially named, one can only hope some of the recipients had them privately engraved (or they reside in groups with other named medals).

Interestingly, another South African ship (*Rhadamanthus*/Commander J.T.E. Gowlland), was on Channel Service in 1853 when she provided six volunteers to serve on the Arctic-bound screw ship *Phoenix*. The latter embarked in May with the transport *Breadalbane*, to resupply Sir Edward Belcher's Franklin search expedition. On 20 August, the *Breadalbane* was crushed by ice off Beechey Island, fortunately without loss among her 21-man crew (see *The Witness*, Spring 1991 *Journal*).

One year later, Carp. Mate Nicholas Trenaman volunteered for service in the Frozen Zone from *Rhadamanthus* to *Phoenix*, for a further resupply mission. However, this time she ended up assisting in bringing home expedition members after Belcher needlessly abandoned four of his five ships in the ice.

Rhadamanthus actually had a much earlier connection to Arctic exploration. In 1836 she towed HMS *Terror* to the Orkney Islands at the onset of her near-disastrous voyage to Repulse Bay (northern Hudson Bay).

Two random historical footnotes crept into research for this deceptively modest roll and deserve mention here. In 1833 *Rhadamanthus* was the first British steamship (naval or commercial) to cross the Atlantic, though her limited coal capacity forced her to use sail much of the time. More particular to South African conflicts, the paddle sloop was the first man-o-war on the scene of the *Birkenhead* disaster and conveyed survivors to Simon's Town.

The authors would enjoy hearing of any extant medals to men on the roll below, or any other information concerning their naval service. Please address all comments/questions to Glenn M. Stein (eloasis@earthlink.net).

1) BANCE, Henry Prescott

Midshipman *Assistance* (1850-51)
Additional Lieutenant *Castor*

South Africa Roll: issued 29 July 1861
Arctic Roll: issued 15 November 1859

A suspect pair of medals is known in a private collection: Baltic (unnamed/Lieut./*Algiers*) and Arctic (very neatly engraved in serified capitals, 'HENRY P. BANCE "ASSISTANCE"').

When sold through the London Stamp Exchange in August 1989, both medals were *unnamed* and accompanied by the book, *Rear-Admiral Sir Edward Parry, KT., Late Lieut-Governor of Greenwich Hospital*, Rev. Edward Parry, M.A. (his son); inscribed in ink to Bance: 'Henry Bance with best wishes from C.P. Glunise 1 May 1857.' In April 1990, the lot was offered at Wallis & Wallis with the Arctic now *named*.

Bance was born at the Cape in 1831, the son of a naval captain. Bance Point (Ommanney Bay, Prince of Wales Land) in the Arctic was named after him. He was on the *Castor* from December 1851- June 1852, and the *Algiers* from May - October 1854.

He went to Australia in 1855, becoming an Inspector of Country Post Offices two years later, and eventually rising to an Inspector of Postal and Telegraph Service in the colony of Victoria in 1869. Bance died on 17 April 1879, a retired Captain, RN.

2) CABLETON, John

Ropemaker *Castor*

Able Seaman & Ropemaker *Phoenix* (1853)

South Africa Roll: sent *Diamond* 13 February 1857

Arctic Roll: sent *Waterloo* 20 May 1857

Cableton took part in a sledge party with Capt. Inglefield, 10-17 August 1853. He received the Crimea/Sebastopol & Inkermann (Ropemaker/*Diamond*), which was delivered onboard.

3) FOUNDLING, Thomas

Ordinary Seaman, *Rhadamanthus*

Ordinary & Able Seaman, *Phoenix* (1853)

South Africa Roll: no dispatch details

Arctic Roll: no dispatch details

4) GILBERT, William

Able Seaman, *Rhadamanthus*

Able Seaman, *Phoenix* (1853)

Able Seaman, *North Star* (1853-54)

South Africa Roll: sent to *Cossack* 10 April 1856

Arctic Roll: sent to *Cossack* 8 July 1857

Rhadamanthus' Description Book shows he was discharged to the *Phoenix* on 11 March 1853; 26 years of age, from Antony parish (Cornwall), and Plymouth being his usual place of residence. Poulson and Myres show he was born 27 July 1827 at Torpoint and was an AB when he transferred from *Phoenix* to *North Star* on 22 August 1853. According to Poulson & Myres, Gilbert is believed to have been awarded the NGS with clasp Syria (Boy/*Edinburgh*), St. Jean d'Acre, Crimea, Turkish Crimea and Baltic Medals(entitlement to the last can now be verified as Capt. Main Top/*Cossack*).

5) HARVEY, John

Able Seaman, *Castor*

Able Seaman, *Phoenix & Diligence* (1853)

South Africa Roll: sent to *President* 17 November 1856

Arctic Roll: no dispatch details

South Africa known in a private collection.

6) HODGE, Edwin

Able Seaman, *Castor*

Able Seaman, *Phoenix* (1853)

Able Seaman, *North Star* (1853-54)

South Africa Roll: sent *Desperate* 22 February 1856
Arctic Roll: sent *Desperate* 8 June 1857

Transferred from *Phoenix* to *North Star* on 19 August 1853. Also received the Baltic Medal (Capt. Fore Top/*Desperate*); on roll as 'Edward'.

7) McCREDIE, James

Able Seaman, *Rhadamanthus*
Able Seaman, *Phoenix* (1853)

South Africa Roll: no dispatch details
Arctic Roll: sent *Endeavour* 10 February 1858

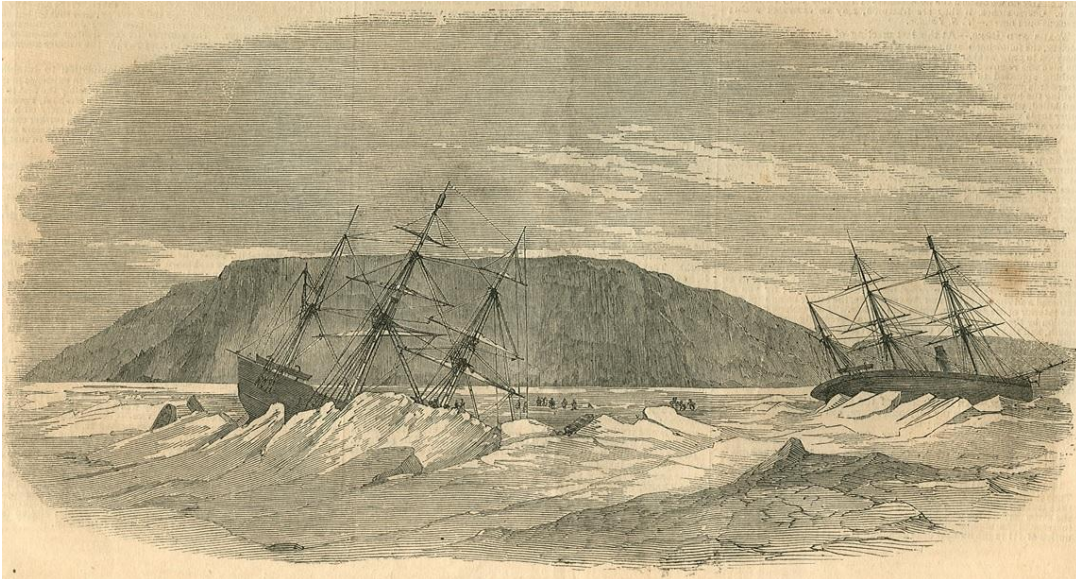
8) McKENZIE, John

Sailmaker, *Rhadamanthus*
Stoker, *Phoenix* (1853)

South Africa Roll: [details not held]
Arctic Roll: sent to *Princess Charlotte* 27 June 1857

Also entitled to Baltic (Boats. Mate/*Colossus*), China 1856-60/no clasp (Boats. Mate/*Sampson*), and New Zealand (dated 1863-64/Boats. Mate/*Curacoa*) – "JOHN MACKENZIE BO'S MATE H.M.S. CURACOA".

New Zealand known in Jon Cray Collection (July 2, 2015).



The loss of the transport *Breadalbane* off Beechey Island. (*Illustrated London News*, 22 October 1853)

9) MULCOCK, John

Able Seaman, *Rhadamanthus*
Able Seaman, *Phoenix* (1853)
Able Seaman & Stoker, *Phoenix* (1854)

South Africa Roll: his mark (no date) and witnessed W. Crampton
Arctic Roll: his mark 7 May 1857

Served as Able Seaman until 26 July 1854, and then as a Stoker.

10) POTVINE, John

Purser's Steward, *North Star* (1849-50)
Purser's Steward, *Rhadamanthus*

South Africa Roll: sent *Cressy* 1 February 1856
Arctic Roll: signed for 21 May 1857

Potvine received the Baltic Medal (Ship's Steward/*Cressy*), which was sent to the *Cressy* on 12 May 1857.

11) ROSE, John [W.]

Ordinary Seaman, *Rhadamanthus*
Ordinary Seaman & Able Seaman, *Phoenix* (1853)

South Africa Roll: no dispatch details
Arctic Roll: no dispatch details

Poulsom and Myres notes a middle initial, but this is not on the medal roll.

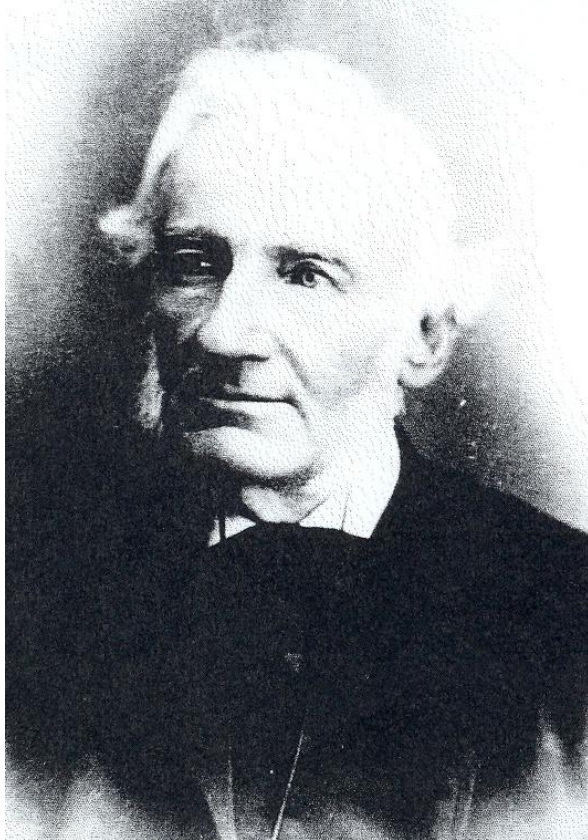
12) SKEAD, Francis

Second Master, *Dee*
Second Master, *Enterprise* (1850-55)

South Africa Roll: issued 24 January 1856
Arctic Roll: issued 10 April 1858

China 1842, South Africa and Arctic known in Africana Museum (Johannesburg Public Library).

Dr. C.J. "Jack" Skead (a grandson of Francis Skead), died 28 May 2006, aged 94 years. He wrote at length about his family's medals, and indicated that his grandfather's China 1842 'is engraved "F. Skead. Master's Assistant".', but makes no reference to a ship's name on the edge. Skead served from August-November 1841 on HMS *Royalist*, thereafter being posted to the surveying schooner *Starling* (leaving her in July 1843).



Francis Skead (1823-91) in later life. (Courtesy Margaret O'Leary)

On 18 April 1848, Skead joined HMS *Dee*, bound for the Cape of Good Hope. The ship's Muster Books show that he left the ship on 23 May 1849. The South Africa is impressed, 'F. SKEAD, 2nd MASTER'.

A Sir Harry Smith's Medal for Gallantry (1851/unmounted) resides with Skead's medals. Smith was Governor of the Cape and the medal was given as a personal award from him. This example is engraved in running script, 'Capt. F. Skead R.N.', and attributed to Francis Skead. He was in the Arctic in 1851, and in addition, only reached the rank of Navigating Lieutenant, was never a Royal Navy captain, and only reached the Cape after Sir Harry Smith had departed from that place. The reasons for the naming remain a mystery, and although research has excluded Francis' brother Frederick (below) as a possibility, it seems possible Francis acquired an unnamed example and had it engraved as a keepsake.

The museum also holds medals given to Francis' brother Navigating Lieut. Frederick Skead, RN (1829-71): Crimea/Sebastopol (loose on ribbon, with a very wide pin brooch/Master?/*Caradoc*)-the *Caradoc* was not entitled to Sebastopol; RHS (silver/1852)-for saving the life of a Naval Cadet Sheepshanks, who had fallen overboard from HMS *Trafalgar* in 3 February 1852. Skead was assisted by Midn. John W. Lambe, who also received a silver medal.

In June 2006, Dr. Skead's cousin, Tom Skead, emailed me a very interesting image of some family numismatic items, to include a riband bar featuring the China 1842, Arctic and South Africa ribands. Also, there were miniatures of these medals that he indicated had been made into shirts studs or cuff links. Finally, a Turkish Crimea (English version) among the items would seem to have belonged to Frederick Skead.

13) STAPLES, William

Ordinary Seaman, *Rhadamanthus*
Able Seaman, *Phoenix* (1853)

South Africa Roll: no dispatch details
Arctic Roll: no dispatch details

14) THOMLINSON/TOMLINSON, William F.

Caulker, *Investigator* (1848-49)
Actg. Carpenter 2nd Cl., *Castor & Hermes*

South Africa Roll: 4 November 1856
Arctic Roll: sent 9 February 1858

Single South Africa known in a private collection. Also entitled to IGS/Pegu (Actg. Carp. 3rd Cl./*Hermes*), but according to the roll it was not issued.

Surname is 'Thomlinson' on the South Africa and Pegu rolls, but 'Tomlinson' on the Arctic roll and *Investigator*'s Muster List. His middle initial is 'F' on the published South Africa roll and on the medal, but 'T' on the Pegu Roll, and 'I' or 'J' on the Arctic roll.

15) TRENAMAN, Nicholas

Carpenter's Mate, *Rhadamanthus*
Carpenter's Mate, *Phoenix* (1854)

South Africa Roll: sent *Falcon* 21 February 1856
Arctic Roll: sent 16 May 1857

Single South Africa known in a private collection, correctly impressed, but misnamed "Frenaman". Also entitled to the Baltic (Carp. Mate/*Falcon*).

Trenaman was born 18 August 1817 at Devonport, Devon. A caulker by trade, he entered the Navy in *Calcutta*, 14 September 1840, and was discharged from the service rated a Carpenter's Mate from *Falcon* on 24 May 1856.

16) WALKER, Samuel

Carpenter's Mate, *Dee*
Carpenter's Mate, *Assistance* (1852-54)

South Africa Roll: no dispatch details
Arctic Roll: no dispatch details

Walker was born c.1821 at Porterstown, Armagh, Ireland, and was a carpenter by trade when he joined the Navy. He served on *Dee* as a Carpenter's Mate from 18 March 1848-10 January 1852, with very good conduct. On 24 February 1852, he joined *Assistance*, and was discharged at Woolwich 17 October 1854.

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Mr. Tom Skead

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