

## **SS COMMODORE**

### **The History of the Wreck off Sheringham**



**Researched by Sue Gresham**

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## FOREWORD

For over one hundred and twenty-five years, the wreck of the *Commodore* has lain buried under sand in the shallow water just west of Sheringham's lifeboat station since she ran aground in November 1896. Like other ships wrecked along the North Norfolk coast, parts of the vessel would sometimes be seen protruding from the seabed.



*Commodore* lying on the sea bed

The extent of the ship, her outline and full length were revealed only after the weather and tides in September 2021 scoured away the sediment, revealing the *Commodore's* skeleton of wooden beams and rusting steel plates.

Local photographer and filmmaker Chris Taylor discovered the ship while he was snorkelling and his underwater and aerial photographs – which appeared in local, national and international media – show how close to the shore the *Commodore* is and how much of her was, temporarily at least, visible. The full outline of the shipwreck could be clearly seen on the sea floor, lying East to West, in only about 3' of water, with large parts of the ship's metal structure lying nearby.

The *Commodore* is certainly known of locally but how much do we actually know about her history and the mariners associated with her?

I was intrigued to find out more and what I discovered caused me to drift into uncharted waters and I found myself exploring "hidden depths"!

My report details the history of the *Commodore*, her construction, ownership, and the circumstances of her loss. It also reveals a number of surprises, not least that the *Commodore's* wrecking off Sheringham was not a singular event but a case of "third time unlucky".

Heinrich Adolphus Zur Nedden, the man who captained the *Commodore* on what was to be her final voyage, was one of three generations of a seafaring family. He was also not the only Captain Zur Nedden to command the ship.

The elements of maritime and family history are much interwoven and this research has, therefore, gone beyond just the *Commodore* herself. It travels from Germany to Canada via Newcastle and Sheringham and tells the story of a father, two brothers and a son who all became mariners, sometimes serving on the same ships either severally or together. It relates how two members of the Zur Nedden family commanded the *Commodore* and of how another member became a Commodore.

## NOTE



The Master of the *Commodore* which went aground and wrecked off Sheringham was Heinrich Adolphus Zur Nedden. He and members of his family were born in Germany but applied for Naturalisation and were granted British Citizenship.

Some original records contain forenames and surnames spelled according to the original German manner and style of naming, others are anglicised. Similarly, the surname Zur Nedden is often contracted - in records and by the family members themselves - as Nedden.

References in this report are to the full German forenames and the surname Zur Nedden and also to the anglicised versions.



Numbers given for the ships referred to are the official registration numbers.

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This research may be used free of charge for academic or other not-for-profit purposes but the material must be acknowledged as the work of the author.

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## SS COMMODORE – THE SHIP

The SS *Commodore* was an iron, single screw steamship – official number 62336 – and the first of five ships to be built in 1870 by (John) Wigham Richardson & Co. at Yard Number 62, Neptune Yard, Low Walker on the Tyne. She was launched on 1st January 1870 and completed on 4th March 1870.

The *Commodore*'s dimensions were: Length 219' 7" x Breadth 29' 9" x Depth of Hold 16' 8"; her gross registered tonnage was 882, net registered tonnage 565, and deadweight tonnage 1200.

The ship was schooner-rigged and fitted with two compound engines of 96 horse power (combined) and built by R. & W. Hawthorn & Co Ltd., Newcastle. She was found in trials to be capable of 8.5 knots.

### The Ship Builder

John Wigham Richardson founded Wigham Richardson in 1860 on the site of two former yards at Low Walker; it was set up with less than £5,000 given to him by his father.

John Richardson bought the four-acre yard with three berths and operated with a workforce of two hundred men. This enabled him to found the Neptune Shipyard at Wallsend, where larger passenger ships were built.



Low Walker Shipyard – circa 1870

In 1903 the company merged with C.S. Swan and Hunter and Tyne Pontoons and Dry Docks Co. specifically to bid for the contract to build the *Mauretania* for Cunard. The bid was successful and the new company named Swan, Hunter and Wigham Richardson was registered on 15th June 1903. Their yard covered 80 acres with river frontage of 4,000 feet.

### The Engine Builder

R. and W. Hawthorn Ltd. of Forth Bank Works in Newcastle was originally a locomotive manufacturer and maker of marine and other engines, but from the 1850s onwards the company placed more emphasis on marine engines and over the next twenty years constructed two hundred sets of them.

During the 1870s the company acquired other works and began the construction of marine boilers, in addition to the existing manufacture of locomotives for main line service and works. The works were enlarged in 1882 to meet the growing business from many foreign navies and in 1885 the company amalgamated with the shipbuilder A. Leslie and Co. to become R. and W. Hawthorn, Leslie and Co. Ltd. based at Hebburn Yard, Hebburn-on-Tyne.

## The Launch

The *Commodore* was launched on 1st January 1870 by Frances Bell Lishman, wife of William Shevill Lishman, the managing owner.

LAUNCH ON THE TYNE – Messrs J. Wigham Richardson, and Co., launched from their shipbuilding yard at Low Walker, on New Year’s Day, a fine modelled iron screw-steamer, of 1,350 tons burthen. The launch was witnessed by several spectators, amongst whom were Mr John Clarke, of the late firm of Clarke and Dunn, Mr W.S. Lishman, Mr Robert Clarke, engineer, Newcastle; Mr Thomas Charlton, North Shields, &c., &c. The ceremony of christening was performed by Mrs W.S. Lishman, who named the vessel the “Commodore” as she glided into the water. She is the property of Messrs John Hall and Co., of Newcastle, and partners, and is, we understand, intended for the southern trade.

Shields Gazette and Daily Telegraph - Monday 3rd January 1870

LAUNCH AT WALKER – On New Year’s Day, a screw steamer of 100 horse power, and 1,300 tons burthen, was launched from the yard of Messrs Wigham, Richardson and Co., at Walker. She was christened the “Commodore” by Mrs Lishman, the wife of the managing owner, and immediately after the launch was towed up to the 60 ton crane to receive on board her engines from the works of Messrs R. and W. Hawthorn. We were pleased to see one of the principal owners assisting at the ceremony – Mr Clarke, of Messrs Clarke and Dunn, who is perhaps the oldest, and certainly not the least respected, shipowner of our town. It was remarked during the afternoon that the first vessel ever towed out to sea by a steam-tug from the Tyne was one of Mr Clarke’s ships. There are now from two to three hundred tugs constantly plying on our busy river.

The Newcastle Daily Journal - Tuesday 4th January 1870

The 1871 Census shows William Lishman, 46, Merchant, Ship Broker and Ship Owner, his wife Frances, 43, their six children aged from four to twenty-four years, and three servants living at Helenside West in Elswick, Newcastle.

## The Owners

The first owners, in 1870, of the *Commodore* were J. Hall & Co of Newcastle but ownership of the ship changed three times subsequently.

In 1878 her sole registered owner was William Shevill Lishman of Newcastle, in 1880 Ward, Holzapfel of Newcastle and, lastly, in 1882 until she was wrecked in 1896, Pyman, Bell & Co, of Newcastle. Thomas Bell of Newcastle was appointed as her managing owner on 14th December 1881.

Pyman, Bell & Co. continued in the coal and timber trade until 1929 when their last ship was sold.

## 1888 – THE FIRST STRANDING

The *Commodore* had been in service for eighteen years when, on the morning of Friday 26th October 1888, she was stranded and suffered “material damage” off Oland Island in the Baltic when en route from Stettin, Poland, to Rafso, Finland, in ballast.

Editions of the “Shipping Gazette and Lloyd’s List” chart the *Commodore*’s sailings, reporting on Friday 26th October 1888 that the *Commodore*, Captain – Edgar, had arrived at Stettin from Newcastle on Monday 22nd October, and on Saturday 27th October that the *Commodore*, Captain – Edgar, had sailed from Stettin on 25th October. The publication of Monday 29th October gave more detail, reporting that the *Commodore*, Captain – Edgar, had sailed on 25th October from Swinemünde, Poland, for Rafso.

Two days after the *Commodore*’s departure from Swinemünde, “The London Evening Standard” of 27th October reported, “A telegram from Stockholm reports that the *Commodore* has gone ashore at South Oland; forehold full of water”; other, further information was also received on 27th October.

**COMMODORE** (s).—*London, Oct. 26.*—The following telegram has been received from the Neptun Salvage Company :—“*Commodore*, Captain Edgar, ashore South Oland, forehold waterfilled. Poseidon (salvage str.) despatched.”  
**COMMODORE** (s).—*Calmar, Oct. 27, 10 5 a.m.*—Commandor (? *Commodore*), British steamer, *Edgar*, from Stettin for Rafso (ballast), ashore at Morbylilla, Oland, and there will be apparently some trouble in getting her afloat; vessel partly water filled.

Shipping Gazette and Lloyd's List – Saturday 27th October 1888  
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A telegram from Stockholm reports that the *Commodore*, which had gone ashore south of land, has forehold filled with water. The Poseidon (salvage steamer) has been despatched to her assistance.

The Glasgow Herald – Saturday 27th October 1888  
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A formal Board of Trade investigation under the terms of The Merchant Shipping Acts 1854–1876 was held at the Moot Hall in Newcastle-on-Tyne on 29th January 1889.

It was reported that the *Commodore* left Stettin for Rafso on 25th October 1888, “in water ballast in her after tank and peak”, with a crew of eighteen hands and twenty passengers, under the command of John Edgar, who held a Certificate of Competency as Master. The ship was drawing 8ft. 6in. forward and 11ft. 6in. aft, “the vessel being in good condition”.

The *Commodore* left Stettin at about 7.00 am on 25th October, in the charge of a compulsory river pilot, who the Master discharged on arrival at Swinemünde. A compulsory sea pilot was taken on board until the ship crossed the bar and he left the ship at about 11.20 am.

The investigation heard that the compass course was then set N.E.½N., and the patent log (a mechanical device towed in the water behind a boat to measure its speed and distance travelled) was put over. At about 7.30 pm on the same day the light on the S.E. end of Bornholm Island was abeam, bearing N.W.½W. at a distance estimated by the Master at 10 miles, but he did not verify his position at that point. The log here showed 72 miles from the Bell Buoy. The weather was clear, with a light westerly wind, and the ship continued her course at full speed, making about 9 knots an hour.

With the weather clear, the Master came on deck at 3.00 am and an hour later took charge, the patent log showing 156 miles. The weather was hazy and by 4.15 am had become dense fog. Captain Edgar immediately blew his whistle and, still going at full steam, telegraphed to "stand by" and gave the orders "easy", "stop" and "go astern". However, the ship "took the ground and remained fast, a large boulder having gone through her bottom and her fore tank filled with water".

The boatswain was directed to sound round the vessel and found nine feet on the starboard side, nine feet six inches on the starboard side, twelve feet under the stern, with the keel just clear of ground. Land was sighted at 7.00 am and the crew found that the *Commodore* had grounded on the western side of Oland Island in the Baltic Sea and, consequently, was on the wrong side of the island.

The Master went ashore and contacted the British Consul who organised for a salvage boat, which arrived at 3.00 pm. A diver went down and reported on the condition of the bottom. Attempts to float the *Commodore* were unsuccessful and, with sea moving around the vessel, caused further damage.

It was not until 4.30 pm on 2nd November that, with the combined efforts of the salvage boat and the *Commodore's* own engines, the stranded vessel was got off; on 4th November she was taken to Oscarshamn, Sweden and docked, where it was found that the ship was "materially damaged, five plates being found holed".

At the conclusion of the evidence and in response to questions raised by a representative of the Board of Trade, the following points were confirmed.

- ⊗ All three compasses on board the *Commodore* were in good order and sufficient for the safe navigation of the vessel. The pole compass was made by Emmerson of Hartlepool, but the manufacturer of the combined bridge standard and steering compass and the compass at the after wheel was not known. It was noted that the *Commodore* had swung off West Hartlepool on the night of 15th October 1888 and a deviation card supplied by Emmerson.
- ⊗ The Court heard that Captain Edgar had ascertained the deviation of his compasses when an opportunity offered by shore bearings in the Baltic but it was doubtful that the errors of the compasses were correctly ascertained and the proper corrections applied.
- ⊗ In the prevailing weather conditions, the *Commodore* was "navigated at too great a rate of speed" on the morning of 26th October and the "total neglect of the lead ... was most unjustifiable".
- ⊗ On leaving Swinemünde, a proper course was set but not made good and no allowance was made for currents. While a good and proper look-out was kept, there was "negligent navigation" by the Master, particularly in not using the lead, and the Tribunal determined that the vessel was not navigated with proper and seamanlike care and found that the Master alone was in default.

The Court judged that the "stranding and subsequent material damage were caused by the negligent navigation of the Master, and the total neglect in using the lead". It also found the Master alone in default for the stranding and damage. The Court suspended Captain Edgar's Master's Certificate for six months and agreed to recommend to the Board of Trade that he be granted a Mate's Certificate in the meantime.



## 1889 – THE SECOND STRANDING

Less than a year after she was grounded on Oland Island, the *Commodore* was stranded a second time, also in the Baltic, on Saltaker Shoal, when she was on passage from Newcastle to Oaxen, near Stockholm.

“The London Evening Standard” of Saturday 29th June 1889 reported that she had stranded at Landsort with a coal of coal and a salvage boat *Hermes* and a steamer had been sent to her assistance; subsequent information was that this was 6 miles W. by S. of Landsort Lighthouse. The Master on this occasion was a Captain Thomas William Carter and the ship had a crew of eighteen hands.

A formal Board of Trade investigation under the terms of The Merchant Shipping Acts 1854-1876 was held at the Town Hall, North Shields on 6th and 7th September 1889. Evidence was given to the Tribunal by Captain Thomas William Carter, the Master; George Gunn, the Chief Officer; William John Greig, the Second Officer; William Sutcliffe, the Chief Engineer; and William Norman Massingham, Peter White and James Tate, Able Seamen.

Evidence having been given by Capt. Thos. Wm. Carter, the master; Mr Geo. Gunn, the chief officer; Wm. John Greig, the second officer; Mr Wm. Sutcliffe, chief engineer; and Messrs Wm. Norman Massingham, Peter White, and James Tate, able seamen, Mr Temperly, who appeared for the master, and Mr Dendy addressed the Court, and the inquiry was adjourned until to-morrow at 10.30, when judgment will be given.

The Shields Daily Gazette and Shipping Telegraph - 6th September 1889

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It was reported that the *Commodore* left Newcastle on 21st June 1889, drawing 15 ft 5in forward, 16 ft 5 in aft, with a cargo of 1,070 tons of coal, and was bound for Oaxen, near Stockholm. All went well until 26th June when, at 2.30 pm, they arrived safely off Haradskur Lighthouse from which, an hour later and by a four-point bearing, they found themselves seven and a half miles distant, the lighthouse bearing  $W\frac{1}{2}N$ .

A course was then steered  $N.E.\frac{3}{4}N$ , magnetic, and they continued until 7.30 pm. The previously clear and fine weather had by this time become thick and hazy and they altered course to  $N.E.\frac{1}{2}E$ . and the engines were slowed to half speed. Shortly after, at 8.00 pm, the *Commodore* struck heavily on a shoal of rocks and remained fast. The tanks and bilges were sounded but no water found. Soundings were taken round the vessel, which gave one and three-quarter fathoms at the bow to 15 fathoms at the stern. The engines were put full speed astern and the crew ran from side to side of the vessel to try to start her, but without success.

Some of the cargo was jettisoned and by about 9.25 pm on the 27th June the crew had thrown about 160 tons overboard. The vessel was floated with the aid of the engines was taken to Landsort in charge of a pilot and from there, in charge of another pilot, proceeded to Oaxen, arriving at 2.00 am on 28th June where the remaining cargo was discharged. Having suffered damage to ten plates and also a part of the keel, the *Commodore* then sailed to Stockholm for repairs.

The Tribunal heard from the Captain that, when the vessel was on shore on the reef, there had been a strong current setting to the westward and estimated to be running a knot to a knot and a half an hour, to which he attributed the stranding of the ship.

The *Commodore* carried a general Baltic Sea Chart for 1887, which was sufficient for ordinary purposes; however, for the intricate navigation of the particular coast and the port the ship was bound for, a larger scale coast chart showing depth of water and the different bearings between the rocks, shoals and channels would have been preferable.

A proper course was set from the position of Haradskar Lighthouse to Landsort Light but a westerly current put the ship slightly off her course and this was not rectified. When the Captain saw the land and rocks around Ensjar, only 3½ to 4 miles off his port beam, he should have realised that the ship was off course and should have stopped and sounded, and a larger scale coast chart would have pointed out the ship's position by depth of water and bearings. Instead, Captain Carter altered the course to N.E.½E. magnetic, as the weather had become thick and hazy, and, in continuing in this altered course, the ship struck the Saltaker Shoal.

The Court expressed some doubt about whether the shoal was marked on the chart used to navigate by and took account of the very slight difference – between it and Admiralty charts – concluding that the Shoal was marked but not named due to the smallness of the scale. On this, the Captain was given the benefit of the doubt.

At the conclusion of the evidence and in response to questions raised by a representative of the Board of Trade, the following points were confirmed.

- ⊕ All three compasses on board – the pole compass, the steering compass on the bridge and the binnacle compass aft – were all in good order and sufficient for the safe navigation of the ship. There was no evidence to show who had made the compasses but they were last adjusted on 24th March 1889 by Little and Carter of South Shields.
- ⊕ The Master had ascertained the deviation of the compasses frequently by observation, the errors were correctly ascertained and proper corrections to the courses applied.
- ⊕ The ship carried a general chart which was sufficient for ordinary navigation but it would have been better if a coast chart on a larger scale had been provided for such intricate navigation.
- ⊕ Proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the ship's position at 3.30 p.m. on 26th June but not afterwards.
- ⊕ A safe course was set but not made good. No allowance was made for current.
- ⊕ The alteration of the course made at 7.30 pm was in the right direction but insufficient. No allowance was made at any time for current.
- ⊕ The evidence was conflicting as to the thickness of the fog but the Court felt that the Master showed sufficient caution by reducing the speed of the vessel to half speed.
- ⊕ The usual look-out was kept from the bridge.
- ⊕ The total neglect of the lead was not justifiable after the Master saw the rocks on his port beam.
- ⊕ The vessel struck on the Saltaker Shoal which was marked on the chart but not named on account of the smallness of the scale.
- ⊕ The casualty was caused by the vessel not making good the course set and by the non-use of the lead after the rocks were seen.
- ⊕ The vessel was navigated with proper and seamanlike care up to the time the rocks were seen on the port beam but after that the Master neglected the warning and failed to make use of the lead.

The Court found the Master in default but, given the circumstances, particularly of there being no large-scale chart on board, did not deal with his Certificate.

One of the crew members of the *Commodore*, and who gave evidence to the Inquiry, was a Norfolk man, Able Seaman William Norman Massingham.

William Massingham was born on 4th December 1862 in Field Dalling, son of William Massingham, a Labourer. Two years after the stranding of the *Commodore*, William Massingham, 28 and a Sailor, married Matilda Edith Thompson, 23, daughter of Robert Thompson, a Labourer, at Blakeney Parish Church on 22nd October 1890. Matilda Thompson was born in Wiveton on 14th March 1867.

William and Matilda Massingham had evidently moved from Norfolk shortly after their marriage for the 1891 Census shows the couple living in Westoe, South Shields. Ten years later, still in South Shields, the couple had two children, William, 8, and Caroline, 6, both born in South Shields. The 1911 Census shows Matilda and her two children living in East Bolden. William was presumably at sea.

William Massingham continued to serve at sea; medal records show that he was a merchant seaman and was awarded campaign medals during World War I.

William and Matilda Massingham were still living in Bolden at the time of the 1939 Register.

## 1896 – THE THIRD STRANDING AND WRECKING OFF SHERINGHAM

Shipping reports in local and national newspapers give details of the *Commodore's* penultimate and final journeys.

The ship left Calais for the Tyne on Wednesday 4th November 1896 and arrived at Tyne Dock, Newcastle on Friday 6th November. The *Commodore* then left the Tyne at 5.00 am the following morning, Saturday 7th November, bound for London with a cargo of coal. She went aground off Sheringham in the late evening.

### WRECK OFF SHERINGHAM

Our Sheringham correspondent telegraphs on Sunday: – S.S. *Commodore*, Captain Nedden, 546 tons register, is ashore here. The weather is bad, and the sea very high. The crew of fourteen were rescued by the lifeboat Henry Ramey Upcher. The vessel struck about eleven o'clock on Saturday night. The night was very dirty and thick with rain. The wind was off shore, and nothing was seen to indicate danger until the ship grounded on the rocks. She was then observed by the fishermen, who at once went to her and in small boats, the sea being smooth. About an hour after she struck, a gale of wind burst from the E.N.E. and the sea at once became rough, so that the lives of those aboard were in danger. The small boats returned to the shore, leaving three fishermen aboard, and distress rockets were fired. The Henry Ramey Upcher was soon afloat, and went alongside the vessel and took off the crew, who were landed about 2 a.m. on Sunday. The crew were drenched. They were taken to the coffee-house, where they changed their clothes, and hot drink and food were supplied them. The captain stated that, whereas the distance from Flamborough was 83 miles, his log only showed about 70 miles. There must have been a very strong inward current, as he had pointed a more outward course than usual. This account is supported by the fact that two steamers previously grounded not far from the same spot, one on Saturday morning, and the other in the evening. These got off without assistance. It is feared that the *Commodore*, which lies half-a-mile to the west of Sheringham, will become a total wreck, as the sea is very high. She is laden with coal. At present, a small sailing vessel is not far from the shore, and is being watched carefully. She will have a difficult task to keep off shore if the wind keeps on, but it is thought she will probably keep clear of the main if her sails stand.

Eastern Daily Press and Eastern Evening News – Monday 9th November 1896

### SHERINGHAM

THE WRECKED STEAMER – The s.s. *Commodore* which ran aground on Saturday night, and the crew of which were rescued by the lifeboat Henry Ramey Upcher, became a total wreck on Sunday evening. The gale increased on Sunday and, when the flood tide made up, the sea became very rough, and broke over the unfortunate vessel, and she speedily went to pieces. She presented a sorry spectacle on Monday lying on the sands. At low water she was almost dry, and crowds of people came to see her, and the Beach, with these and the fishing part of the community carting home pieces of wreckage, &c., presented quite an animated appearance. The cargo, which consisted of gas coal, was all lost. Some of the stores were salvaged. The vessel was bound from Newcastle to London. The crew left for their homes on the 11.23 train on Monday. The captain, however, stayed behind.

Eastern Daily Press – Tuesday 10th November 1896

The *Commodore* sustained heavy damage while lying on the beach and was first said to be lying "split in two", later "lying almost in three pieces".

COMMODORE (s). – Cromer, Nov. 9. – Last night's gale and this morning's flood tide have made a complete wreck of the steamer *Commodore*, the vessel lying almost in three pieces. Cargo swept away; a few stores salvaged.

Shipping Gazette and Lloyds List – Tuesday 10th November 1896

Subsequent reports gave more information about the loss of the *Commodore*, her stranding and salvage.

**THE WRECK OF A TYNE STEAMER  
THE CREW AT SHIELDS**

The s.s. *Commodore*, belonging to Messrs Pyman, Bell and Company, Quayside, Newcastle, stranded at Lower Sheringham on Saturday night at 11 o'clock, while apparently making Cromer Light. A gale sprang during the night, and the whole of the crew were landed by the lifeboat at an early hour on Sunday morning. A telegram has been received from the owners stating that the steamer has completely broken up and is now a wreck. Efforts are being made to save part of the stores and cargo, which consisted of coals from Tyne Dock, the steamer having left Tyne Dock on Saturday morning, bound for London. The steamer was built in 1870, at Messrs Wigham, Richardson and Company's yard, Walker. Her registered gross tonnage was 880.

The whole of the crew of the steamer *Commodore* reached South Shields today with the exception of the master, Captain Nedden. In an interview with a member of the crew, our representative learned that the *Commodore* sailed from Shields on Saturday morning bound for London. She did not strand during the storm, but went ashore in thick weather. The vessel struck about eleven o'clock on Saturday night, the weather being very dirty and thick, with rain falling. The wind at this time was off the land, and there was nothing to indicate any immediate danger. Some of the men who were below when she was grounded did not feel the shock and were not aware of the fact until they were told of it. Her engines were kept going with the object of getting her off, but to no purpose. Several fishermen observing the *Commodore* ashore put off in small boats to render assistance, the sea being then comparatively smooth. About an hour after she struck, a fierce gale sprang up from the N.E., and within a short time the sea ran very heavily. The small boats returned to the shore, three fishermen being left on board. The lifeboat was launched and went alongside, and as the crew were in danger of their lives they left the vessel, and were landed at two o'clock on Sunday morning, being drenched to the skin through the flying spray washing over them. The *Commodore* was a complete wreck, when the crew left for the journey home, and was rapidly going to pieces.

The latest information says the steamer *Commodore* is lying broadside to the sea. Her stern post is gone, rudder unshipped, and she is much strained, and apparently a complete wreck.

[The Shields Daily Gazette and Shipping Telegraph - Tuesday 10th November 1896](#)

**A STEAMER WRECKED OFF SHERINGHAM**

The steamer *Commodore* (Captain Nedden), 546 tons register, went ashore about half a mile to the west of Sheringham, at about 11 o'clock on Sunday night. The crew of 14 were rescued by the lifeboat *Henry Ramey Upcher*. The night was very dirty and thick with rain. The wind was off shore and nothing was seen to indicate danger until the ship grounded on the rocks. She was then observed by the fishermen, who at once went to her aid in small boats, the sea being smooth. About an hour after she struck, a gale of wind burst from the E.N.E. and the seas at once became rough, so that the lives of those aboard were in danger. The small boats returned to the shore, leaving three fishermen aboard, and distress rockets were fired. The *Henry Ramey Upcher* was then launched and took off the crew. The captain stated that, whereas the distance from Flamborough was 83 miles, his log only showed about 70 miles. There must have been a very strong inward current, as he had pointed a more outward course than usual. This account is supported by the fact that two steamers previously grounded not far from the same spot, one on Saturday morning, and the other in the evening. By Sunday evening the steamer had become a total wreck. She presented a sorry spectacle on Monday, lying on the sands. At low water, she was almost dry, and crowds of people visited the spot, while the fishing part of the community were busy carting home pieces of wreckage, &c. The cargo, which consisted of gas coal, was all lost. Some of the stores were salvaged. The vessel was bound from Newcastle to London. The crew left for their homes by the 11.23 train on Monday. The captain, however, stayed behind.

[The Norwich Mercury - Wednesday 11th November 1896](#)

A report in the "Whitby Gazette" corrected the supposition that the *Commodore* had gone aground during a storm, citing accounts by the crew that the stranding occurred in fog, followed by a gale and wild sea.

#### THE WRECK OF THE S.S. COMMODORE

Information was received by telegram on Sunday by Messrs. Pyman, Bell, and Co., of Newcastle, owners of the steamer *Commodore*, which left the Tyne at five o'clock on Saturday morning, with a cargo of coal for London. It was supposed that the vessel had stranded whilst making Cromer Light during a heavy gale. Telegrams received on Monday from Messrs. Pyman, Bell and Company's agents stated that the vessel stranded at eleven o'clock on Saturday night, and was completely broken up, few stores being saved. At two o'clock on Sunday morning Captain Nedden and the crew were taken off by the lifeboat. All the hands belong to Tyneside, whither they have been sent and arrived on Tuesday morning. The *Commodore*, an iron screw steamer of 880 tons gross, and 546 tons net register, classed A1, was built in 1870 by Messrs. Wigham Richardson and Co., Wallsend. The crew of the vessel brought further particulars of the loss of their vessel. The *Commodore* did not go ashore during a storm as at first supposed, but in a fog. An hour afterwards a gale came away from the N.E., and the sea made rapidly. Every effort was made to get the ship off, but without avail, and as their position became more and more critical with the increasing storm, the crew got into the lifeboat, which put off for them, and were landed at two o'clock in the morning. The vessel afterwards became a complete wreck.

[Whitby Gazette - Friday 13th November 1896](#)

While many local people and members of the fishing community had visited the site of the wreck and evidently removed pieces of the wreckage and items from it, three days after the *Commodore* was wrecked, her owners, Messrs. Pyman, Bell, & Co., instructed Messrs. Turrell and Torkildsen of Yarmouth to act as their agent, and Mr W.H. Turrell to proceed to Sheringham for the sale of salvaged cargo.



[Salvage team on the SS Commodore - 1896](#)

The "Eastern Daily Press" advertised a sale of stores, equipment and fittings from the *Commodore*, most of which had been taken to the Coastguard Station. These included her anchors, cables, kedges, masts, spars, ship's boats, hawsers, compasses, the ship's bell, sidelights and cabin fittings.

**TO-MORROW.  
LOWER SHERINGHAM.  
TO SPECULATORS, IRON MERCHANTS,  
AND OTHERS.**

**SALE OF SHIP'S STORES, ANCHORS, CHAIN  
CABLES, MASTS, SPARS, COPPER PIPING, &c.**

**W** G. SANDFORD has been instructed to Sell by  
Auction, on WEDNESDAY, 11TH NOVEMBER,  
1896 (for the benefit of the Underwriters, or those  
concerned), all that may remain of the HULL,  
Engines, or the Wreck thereof of the Iron-built Screw  
Steamer *Commodore* (of 1000 Tons burthen), stranded  
on Sheringham Beach on a voyage from the Tyne to  
London with Coal, in such Lot or Lots as may be  
determined upon at the time and place.

Also all her well-found Stores, Gear, &c., Anchors,  
Cables, Kedges, Masts, Spars, &c., Ship's Boats,  
Hawsers, &c., a quantity of Small Stores, Compasses,  
Ship's Bell, Sidelights, Cabin Fittings, Scantling, &c.

The Sale will take place at 2 to 2:30 in the After-  
noon, as the tide may allow. Most of the Stores are  
at the Coastguard Station.

For Further Particulars apply to Messrs. Turrell &  
Torkildsen, Great Yarmouth; or to W. G. Sandford,  
Lloyd's Agent, Cromer, who are jointly concerned.

[Eastern Daily Press – Tuesday 10th November 1896](#)  
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The sale of items salvaged from the *Commodore* took place on Wednesday 11th November.

**SHERINGHAM**

THE WRECK – Mr. W.G Sandford on Wednesday sold the stores, &c., which were salvaged from the wreck of the s.s. *Commodore*. The wrecked hull was knocked down to Mr. C.T. Baker for £20.

[The Norfolk News – Saturday 14th November 1896](#)

In the aftermath of the wrecking, the "Shipping Gazette and Lloyd's List" listed abstracts of the "Depositions recently sworn before a Receiver of Wreck or Justice of the Peace", including that by the Master of the *Commodore*, Henry Adolphus Nedden.

**MARITIME DEPOSITIONS**  
**The following are abstracts of Depositions recently sworn before a Receiver of  
Wreck or Justice of the Peace**

COMMODORE (s), of Newcastle, from the Tyne for London: Deposition of Henry Adolphus Nedden, master, (No. of Cert. 018,034). [4,414]. – Sheringham, Nov. 9.]

[Shipping Gazette and Lloyd's List – Saturday 14th November 1896](#)

For the third time in eight years, the *Commodore* was the subject of a formal Board of Trade investigation under the terms of The Merchant Shipping Acts 1854–1876.

The investigation was held at the Moot Hall in Newcastle-on-Tyne and took place over two days, on the 4th and 7th of December 1896.

It was reported that the *Commodore* left the Tyne for London at 5.15 a.m. on 7th November with a cargo of about 1,250 tons of coal. She was under the command of Henry Adolphus Nedden and had a crew of fourteen hands. Her draught of water on leaving was 16' 4" and 15' 7" forward.

Course was set to take her down to the Norfolk coast. She would have to pass several lightships and buoys and there was a powerful light at Cromer.

The ship arrived off Souter (a lighthouse located in the village of Marsden in South Shields) at 5.40 a.m., when the weather was clear and the sea smooth, with a moderate westerly breeze off the land. When Souter was abeam, the patent log, which ran about 5 per cent fast, was streamed and Whitby Light was abeam at 10.50 a.m. At 2.20 p.m., Flamborough Lighthouse was abeam, distant, according to a four-point bearing taken by the Second Officer, two miles, the patent log showing 74 miles from Souter.

The Master then set a course S. by E. easterly by compass, allowing three-quarters of a point for westerly deviation, deducting from that a quarter of a point for set of flood tide, making a magnetic course of S. by E.  $\frac{1}{2}$ E. easterly. The Master assumed that this course would take him a mile and a half or two miles to the east of the Dudgeon Light vessel (marking a dangerous shoal off the Norfolk coast).

The fore topsail, main staysail, and fore staysail were set, and the Master stated that there was a slight list to port. He came on the bridge at 4.00 p.m., at which time the weather was hazy with drizzling rain, the wind falling lighter, and he remained there on and off until 5.15 p.m. At five o'clock, as it was then dark, the crew took in the fore trysail in order to obtain a better view ahead.

The Master returned to the bridge at 6.00 p.m. It was then very dark but ships' lights were visible up to about two miles off.

At about 8.30 p.m., the Dudgeon Light should have been seen but nothing was observed until between 9.15 p.m. and 9.30 p.m. when the Master stated that he momentarily saw a bright light abaft (in or behind the stern of the ship), which he took to be the Dudgeon.

Also at about this time, the man on the look-out reported that he thought he heard a bell on the starboard side but, as neither the Master nor the chief officer heard it, no further notice was taken of it.

The Inquiry heard that it was certain, and in fact admitted by the Master, that the light seen was not the Dudgeon and, at this time and as subsequent events proved, the *Commodore* had been carried considerably to the westward of her course. If the Master, on failing to recognise the Dudgeon, had resorted to the use of the lead, he would have ascertained immediately that he was out of his assumed position.

The bell reported by the look-out was undoubtedly that on the eastern edge of the Blakeney Shoal and this again should have raised the Master's suspicions that he was off course and ahead of his reckoning.

At 9.30 p.m. the course was altered to S. by E.  $\frac{3}{4}$ E. – easterly by compass – giving S.E. by S.  $\frac{1}{4}$  S. magnetic. This course was continued until the stranding at 10.50 p.m., when the Master, who was in the chart-room, felt a slight shock, the man on the look-out having, a few seconds before, reported land on the starboard bow.

It was discovered subsequently that the ship had taken the ground three-quarters of a mile N.W. of the Sheringham Coastguard station.



The Master rushed on to the bridge, ordered all hands on deck, took in staysails, and ran the engine full speed astern. The bilges and wells were sounded but it was found that the vessel was making no water. Soundings taken round the ship gave 14 to 15 feet, sandy bottom. The engines were continued running astern until 11.30 p.m. when, the Master finding he could not back the ship off and that the tide was falling, preparations were made to get out the stream anchor with the aim of trying to float the ship on the following high water.

Some local fishermen came on board, with whom the Master was "making terms" with the object of floating the vessel, when suddenly at 12.30 p.m., the wind shifted to E.N.E., rapidly increasing to a gale with high sea. All except three of the fishermen left at once to save their own boats. The Master ordered the starboard lifeboat out and the anchors put over the bow and let go to prevent the vessel driving further on the shore.

The ship's lifeboat was broken up alongside and at 1.30 a.m., with wind and sea increasing, rockets were fired for assistance. The volunteer lifeboat *Henry Ramey Upcher* came in response and took the crew ashore. The sea at this time was breaking over the ship, which was bumping heavily.



The Lifeboat – Henry Ramey Upcher

During the night, the *Commodore* was driven about half a mile towards the shore and within 400 yards of the cliffs. At about 2.00 p.m. at dead low water the Master walked on board and found her a complete wreck and buried about eight feet in the sand. No lives were lost.

At the conclusion of the evidence and in response to questions raised by a representative of the Board of Trade, the following points were confirmed.

- ⊕ All three compasses on board – the standard compass in front of the wheel on the bridge by which the courses were set and steered, a pole compass also on the bridge, and a third compass aft – were in good order and sufficient for the safe navigation of the ship. They had been adjusted on or about 3rd February 1895 off the Tyne by Ainslie of South Shields.
- ⊕ The Master had ascertained the deviation of the compasses by observation from time to time, the errors were correctly ascertained and proper corrections to the courses applied.
- ⊕ Proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the ship's position at or about 2.30 p.m. on 7th November, when off Flamborough Head, when a four-point bearing was taken by the Second Officer but no measures were taken to ascertain or verify the ship's position.
- ⊕ A safe and proper course was set and steered up to the time the Dudgeon Light vessel should have been seen, at about 8.30 p.m. on 7th November; however, this course was not made good as the Master did not, on failing to pick up the Dudgeon Light, take steps to verify his position and the subsequent courses were not "safe and proper".

⊕ Due and proper allowance was made for normal tide and currents; that his ship had been carried out of his course to the westward, the Master attributed to an extraordinary set occasioned by an easterly gale of wind which shortly afterwards broke on the coast and of which he, at the time, had no knowledge.

The Court considered this explanation reasonable but had the Master, on failing to make the Dudgeon Light, used the lead, he would have found that he was being carried to the westward of his assumed position.

⊕ Up to the time the Dudgeon Light should have been seen, the vessel was not navigated at too great a speed but subsequently, having regard to the state of the weather and to the fact that the Master had not verified his position, the Court considered the rate of speed excessive.

⊕ The lead was not used and the Master was not justified in omitting to use it.

⊕ A good and proper look-out was kept.

The Court judged that the casualty was caused in the first instance by the vessel being carried out of her course by an unexpected current and subsequently by the Master failing to use the lead to verify his position. The vessel was, therefore, not navigated with proper and seamanlike care.

It found the Master, Henry Adolphus Nedden, alone in default and suspended his Certificate for three months from the date of the Inquiry but, on the application of Henry Nedden's representative, agreed that he be granted a Mate's Certificate for the period of the suspension.

## **"SWINGING THE LEAD"**

### **Origin of the Expression**

In the reports of all three of the Tribunals, there was one finding in common, the Master's failure to use the lead.

In the first stranding in 1888, it was judged that the "stranding and subsequent material damage were caused by the negligent navigation of the Master, and the total neglect in using the lead".

Subsequently, while the *Commodore* was navigated properly and with care, a factor in the second stranding in 1889 was the Master's failure to use the lead after rocks were sighted and a warning given.

When the *Commodore* was wrecked in 1896, the casualty was caused in part by the Master failing to use the lead to verify his position.

Before the days of sonar, ships would determine the depth of the water by posting a sailor at the front of the ship with a lead weight attached to a long rope, which would have a knot at every fathom (6 feet).

The sailor's job was to swing the weight forward into the water and, when the ship passed directly over the weight, determine the depth of the water. As retrieving the lead weight was hard work, a less than conscientious sailor would swing the lead as if he were about to release it. He would either just swing the lead in the air, calling out a fictitious depth, or keep swinging it until such time as he thought he was being watched and only then release it into the water.

A sailor who was being lazy was thus described as swinging the lead and this is the origin of the expression which is still in current usage.

## THE WRECK

The wreck of the *Commodore* lay on the shore off Sheringham for seven years before, being considered a danger to local people, she was blown up.



SS Commodore – circa 1897

These explosions did not entirely clear the site of the ship's wreckage and further explosions were required.

### SHERINGHAM WRECK BLOWN UP

On Tuesday morning the wreck of the s.s. Commodore, which ran ashore upon Sheringham Beach some six years ago, was blown up. The wreck was taken in hand by the Trinity officials, who commenced operations upon her on Friday last, and by Tuesday everything was complete as to charging, etc. a little before noon the first explosion took place, the charge being fired by electric battery from the shore. When the charge exploded a huge column of water shot into the air. This explosion was followed at intervals of about ten minutes by five or six others. It was high tide at the time, and the result cannot be ascertained until low water. The clearing away of the wreck will be a great advantage, as, where she lay, she was a menace to local fishermen.

The Norwich Mercury – Saturday 3rd October 1903

"The Norfolk Chronicle and Norwich Gazette", also of Saturday 3rd October 1903, carried a similar report but added, "The Trinity steamer sailed on Wednesday afternoon. The work has been successful, as there is left hardly a vestige of the wreck." Subsequent newspaper reports suggest that this was not an entirely accurate assessment.

### SHERINGHAM

The Whitstable Salvage Company are again engaged in blowing up the remains of the old Commodore wreck, which went ashore a few years ago on the beach.

The Norfolk Chronicle and Norwich Gazette – Saturday 23rd January 1904

Some time passed until further efforts were made to clear the remaining iron wreckage. Although the ship lay some distance from Sheringham, the further explosions caused iron to be thrown up and over the cliffs and to travel across the Links, tremors to be felt in the town and shrapnel to fall very close to the town itself. The new houses referred to, in North Street, were approximately a third of a mile from the site of the *Commodore*.

#### **SHERINGHAM**

On Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning the Trinity House men resumed operations on the old iron wreck *Commodore*. Some months ago they partly accomplished their task, but the old iron hull had got so embedded into the sand and marl that a complete charge was impossible. So, further blasting operations were continued on Tuesday and Wednesday, as the wreckage was dangerous for the fishing boats. The explosions shook the town, and large pieces of iron were hurled over the high cliffs and carried, in two or three instances, some hundreds of feet across the Links, one piece going perilously near some new houses in North Street. The clearance of the wreck is still incomplete, and operations will be resumed at a convenient date.

[The Norwich Mercury – Saturday 25th June 1904](#)

#### **SHERINGHAM**

The Trinity boat *Argus* visited Sheringham on Tuesday and blew up the wreck of the iron steamship which came ashore there about seven and a half years ago. The wreck, which lay to the west of the town, was, in certain states of the tide, most dangerous to fishing boats and other small craft, and it was as the result of local petitions to the authorities that the obstruction was removed. The report of the explosion was very great, and could be heard for several miles.

[The Norfolk Chronicle – Saturday 25th June 1904](#)



[Sheringham from the Golf Links](#)

The two newspaper reports seem contradictory: "The Norwich Mercury" suggested that further clearance operations were required, "The Norfolk Chronicle and Norwich Gazette" that the obstruction had been removed.

No subsequent newspaper reports refer to clearance operations being resumed so it is assumed that the wreck was indeed cleared, from the beach at least, for the recent underwater photographs reveal that pieces of equipment and parts of the ship's metal structures lie not far beneath the surface.



The application gives a description of Henry Nedden's physical appearance; he was 5' 9 1/2" tall, his complexion dark, swarthy, with black hair and brown, light hazel eyes, and he had a scar on his forehead.

Henry Nedden passed the examination on 3rd March 1887 and his "Certificate of Competency as a Second Mate", number 018034, was issued from the Port of West Hartlepool on 5th March 1887.

### First Mate

Henry Nedden was still at 58 Scarborough Street, West Hartlepool and residing with a G. Gray when he applied for his First Mate's Certificate on 31st August 1888; he had not previously failed an examination for this Certificate.

**G.—List of Testimonials and Statement of Service at Sea.**  
(The Testimonials to be numbered consecutively according to the number given in Column 29 below)

Ship's Name.	If Service on Board Ship.			Service of Applicant.							Trade in which employed.
	Reg.	Tonnage.	Port of Registry and Official No. of Ship.	Capacity.	Date of Commencement.	Date of Termination.	Time employed in this Service.				
							Years.	Months.	Days.		
27.	28.	29.	30.	31.	32.	33.	34.	35.	36.	37.	
<i>O. Hoban</i>	<i>Lk</i>	<i>422</i>	<i>Antal Norway</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>27 82</i>	<i>5 83</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>F</i>
<i>S.S. Semamirco</i>	<i>sch</i>	<i>649</i>	<i>Spain 65766</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>11 83</i>	<i>2 83</i>		<i>1</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>F</i>	
"	"	"	"	<i>15</i>	<i>2 84</i>	<i>2 84</i>		<i>3</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>F</i>	
"	"	"	"	<i>15</i>	<i>2 84</i>	<i>2 84</i>		<i>4</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>F</i>	
<i>Malta</i>	<i>ship</i>	<i>1110</i>	<i>Spain 25121</i>	"	<i>22 84</i>	<i>2 85</i>		<i>5</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>F</i>	
<i>North</i>	"	<i>129</i>	<i>Spain 54904</i>	"	<i>22 84</i>	<i>2 86</i>		<i>10</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>F</i>	
<i>S.S. Cordova</i>	<i>sch</i>	<i>1122</i>	<i>Spain 41475</i>	"	<i>22 84</i>	<i>2 87</i>		<i>1</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>F</i>	
"	"	"	"	"	<i>22 87</i>	<i>2 87</i>		<i>1</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>F</i>	
<i>S.S. Yarm</i>	"	<i>903</i>	<i>Spain 70126</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>28 87</i>	<i>2 88</i>		<i>1</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>F</i>	
"	"	"	"	"	<i>28 87</i>	<i>2 88</i>		<i>2</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>F</i>	
"	"	"	"	"	<i>28 87</i>	<i>2 88</i>		<i>2</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>F</i>	
"	"	"	"	"	<i>28 87</i>	<i>2 88</i>		<i>2</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>F</i>	
"	"	"	"	"	<i>28 87</i>	<i>2 88</i>		<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>F</i>	
"	"	"	"	"	<i>28 87</i>	<i>2 88</i>		<i>4</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>F</i>	
Total Service at Sea from <i>27 82</i> to <i>24 88</i> <i>5 3 19</i>											
Time served for which Certificates are now produced										<i>1 5 5</i>	
Time served for which no Certificates are produced										<i>4 8 14</i>	

The Local Marine Board in South Shields advised Henry Nedden that he should show on his application that, since 1882, he had served at least five years at sea within the last seven years.

Henry Nedden's "Statement of Service at Sea" to accompany his application for qualification as a First Mate shows that his total service at sea from 27th March 1882 to 24th July 1888 was 5 years, 3 months and 19 days.

Since obtaining his Second Mate's Certificate in 1887, he had spent all the time since his qualification serving on the SS Yarm of Liverpool - number 70126 - from 28th March 1887 to 24th July 1888. This was marked (in blue pencil) as 1 year, 3 months and 8 days.

Henry Nedden passed the Examination for Competency as a First Mate on 7th September 1888 and his "Certificate of Competency" was issued from the Port of West Hartlepool on 11th September 1888.

Although qualifying as a First Mate, Henry Nedden continued to be engaged as Second Mate on the SS Chester of West Hartlepool - number 65512 - from October 1888 to January 1889 and then as Second Mate on the SS Elfrida of Newcastle - number 96133 - from January 1889 to February 1890.

It was only from 6th February 1890 to 14th May 1891, still serving on the Elfrida, that he was shown as First Mate.

The "Statement of Service at Sea" was amended (in red pencil) to show that his service on the Elfrida totalled 1 year, 2 months and 24 days.

**G.—List of Testimonials and Statement of Service at Sea.**  
(The Testimonials to be numbered consecutively according to the number given in Column 29 below)

Ship's Name.	If Service on Board Ship.			Service of Applicant.							Trade in which employed.
	Reg.	Tonnage.	Port of Registry and Official No. of Ship.	Capacity.	Date of Commencement.	Date of Termination.	Time employed in this Service.				
							Years.	Months.	Days.		
27.	28.	29.	30.	31.	32.	33.	34.	35.	36.	37.	
<i>Yarm</i>	<i>S.S.</i>	<i>903</i>	<i>Spain 71126</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>28 87</i>	<i>2 88</i>		<i>1</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>F</i>	
"	"	"	"	"	<i>28 87</i>	<i>2 87</i>		<i>2</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>F</i>	
"	"	"	"	"	<i>28 87</i>	<i>2 87</i>		<i>2</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>F</i>	
"	"	"	"	"	<i>28 87</i>	<i>2 87</i>		<i>2</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>F</i>	
"	"	"	"	"	<i>28 87</i>	<i>2 88</i>		<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>F</i>	
"	"	"	"	"	<i>28 87</i>	<i>2 88</i>		<i>4</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>F</i>	
<i>Chester</i>	<i>S.S.</i>	<i>722</i>	<i>Spain 65512</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>10 88</i>	<i>1 89</i>		<i>2</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>F</i>	
<i>Elfrida</i>	<i>S.S.</i>	<i>1445</i>	<i>Spain 96133</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>12 89</i>	<i>2 90</i>		<i>1</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>F</i>	
"	"	"	"	"	<i>12 89</i>	<i>2 90</i>		<i>2</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>F</i>	
"	"	"	"	"	<i>12 89</i>	<i>2 90</i>		<i>3</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>F</i>	
"	"	"	"	"	<i>12 89</i>	<i>2 90</i>		<i>5</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>F</i>	
"	"	"	"	"	<i>12 90</i>	<i>2 90</i>		<i>1</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>F</i>	
"	"	"	"	"	<i>12 90</i>	<i>2 90</i>		<i>1</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>F</i>	
"	"	"	"	"	<i>12 90</i>	<i>1 90</i>		<i>2</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>F</i>	
"	"	"	"	"	<i>12 90</i>	<i>1 91</i>		<i>3</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>F</i>	
"	"	"	"	"	<i>12 91</i>	<i>5 91</i>		<i>2</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>F</i>	
Total Service at Sea										<i>9 0 0</i>	
Time served for which Certificates are now produced										<i>5 5 21</i>	
Time served for which no Certificates are produced										<i>5 3 9</i>	

It was while serving on the *Elfrida* as Second Mate that Henry Nedden displayed conspicuous bravery in two rescues, apparently on the same voyage, of the crews of the barque *Nordcap* of New Brunswick, USA – number 96726 – and of the sailing vessel *Calliope* of Bremerhaven, Germany.

**A TYNE-LADEN SHIP DISMASTED  
SUFFERINGS OF THE CREW  
RESCUE BY A TYNE STEAMER**

Yesterday, the screw steamer *Elfrida*, of Newcastle, Captain Rasmussen, owned by Pyman and Bell, arrived in the Tyne from Bremerhaven, and reports having picked up the full-rigged ship *Calliope*, belonging to Bremen, in a totally dismasted condition, with pumps choked, and crew exhausted, which vessel was on a voyage from the Tyne to Valparaiso, coal laden. It appears that the *Elfrida* was proceeding to the Tyne, and was about one hundred miles from Bremerhaven, when early in the morning, a ship was reported at a distance flying signals of distress.

On this being observed, the steamer was hove to for the purpose of rescuing the men. The ship on close observation presented a shattered appearance, and bore unmistakeable evidence of having encountered the full force of the late terrible gale. She was lying on her beam ends. Her three masts were gone. The steamer's life boat was quickly launched, although rather a strong sea was prevailing at the time, under the command of the master, with the second mate (Mr Nedden), and three sailors, who were not long in getting alongside of the *Calliope*. The master of the *Calliope* stated that she left Shields on the 16th of January, bound for Valparaiso, laden with about 3,000 tons of coal, and after getting into the North Sea some fearful weather was experienced. Through the constant rolling of the ship her cargo had shifted to the port side, completely throwing her on her beam ends, huge seas breaking on board. The crew were thoroughly exhausted from continuous duty. The main-mast was broken, partly lying over the side. The other two masts were gone several feet above the level of the deck. Tremendous waves had swept over the ship breaking in the hatches, where the water had found its way into the hold. It was fully calculated that there was upwards of six feet of water in the hold. The pumps were manned, but they would not draw.

All the clothes and effects of the seamen had been washed out of the forecabin. The master's compartments were flooded. The vessel had been in that condition for three days, the crew being exposed the whole time. It was afterwards determined by the master of the *Elfrida* to tow the *Calliope* to Bremerhaven. A hawser was made secure, and after two nights and a day hard towing they safely arrived at that place.

[The Shields Daily Gazette and Shipping Telegraph – Tuesday 4th February 1890](#)

**A WEAR-BUILT STEAMER IN THE STORM**

The screw steamer *Elfrida*, of Newcastle, has arrived in the Tyne, and the master reports that during the voyage he fell in with a dismasted and totally disabled fully-rigged ship, which proved to be the *Calliope*. The steamer's lifeboat was launched amid great peril, as a pretty high sea was running at the time, and manned by the captain, the second mate (Mr Nedden), and three seamen. Communication with the distressed vessel was safely obtained, and it was ultimately determined to take her in tow. A hawser was passed from the steamer to the ship, and, after towing for two days and nights, both vessels reached Bremerhaven in safety. It will be remembered that the *Elfrida*, which is owned in Newcastle by Messrs Pyman, Bell, and Co., landed at Dover, on the 14th ult., twelve men forming the crew of the American barque *Nordcap*. These men were rescued under circumstances of conspicuous bravery during a severe storm in the Atlantic, in which the *Nordcap* was wrecked, by the crew of the *Elfrida*, which was then on her passage from Savannah to Bremerhaven. This steamer was built last year by Messrs Osbourne, Graham, and Co., of Hylton.

[Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette – Wednesday 5th February 1890](#)

Henry Nedden subsequently became Master of the *Elfrida* and is recorded as such in shipping records from 1892 to 1904.

## Master

Henry Nedden was living at 90 Whitby Street, West Hartlepool and residing with a Mr Taylor when he applied for his Master's (Ordinary) Certificate for square rigged vessels on 13th June 1891. As for all his previous Certificates, this was his first application, he had not previously failed the examination. Henry Nedden passed the examination on 16th June 1891 and his Master's Certificate was issued from the Port of West Hartlepool on 22nd June 1891, when he was twenty-four years old.

BOARD OF TRADE EXAMINATIONS.—The following candidates were successful at South Shields: W. Dodson and J. Ayton, chief engineers; J. Lewis and J. Cockburn, second engineers; H. A. Nedden, master; R. V. Skellon, first mate; E. Hasker, second mate. The above were prepared by Messrs Taylor and Wake, Engineers and Nautical Academy, Athenæum, West Hartlepool.

Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail - Friday 19th June 1891

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Three years after obtaining his Master's Certificate, Henry Adolphus Nedden was married in early 1894, in South Shields, to Annie Elizabeth Peterson, who was born in 1873. Annie's father, Frederick, was Danish; he was described variously in records as a Publican, Boarding House Keeper, Outfitter and Tailor. Her mother was born in Scotland. The couple were apparently comfortably off for the 1881 Census shows them living in Westoe with four children, a servant, and seven boarders, all foreign seaman. The 1891 Census shows Annie Peterson, aged 18, living at 35 Laygate Lane, Westoe, South Shields with her mother, her five siblings and a General Servant. Ann Peterson was a Dressmaker and Outfitter, her daughter Annie her Assistant. While the Census records that Ann Peterson was widowed, it was in 1898 that her husband Frederick's death was registered.

Henry and Annie Nedden had three children, Henry Frederick born in 1895, Annie in 1897, and Henry Adolphus in 1898. Henry Nedden's father died on 21st March 1898 in North America but Probate, the record shows, was granted at South Shields, to his son.

Henry Adolphus Zur Nedden applied for Naturalisation and was granted British Citizenship on 21st September 1899. He described himself as being thirty-one years old, married, with three children residing with him: Henry Frederick, 4 years; Annie, 2 years; and Adolf, 1 year. The family's address was 14 Stanhope Road, South Shields.

No. 11026 B29751

(A).  
NATURALIZATION ACTS, 1870.

Certificate of Naturalization to an Alien.

HOME OFFICE, LONDON.

WHEREAS *Henry Adolphus zur Nedden*,

an Alien, now residing at *14, Stanhope Road, South Shields, Durham*

has presented to me, the Right Honourable *Sir Matthew White Ridley, Bart.*, one of Her Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, a Memorial, praying for a Certificate of Naturalization, and alleging that he is a *subject of Germany, having been born at Frankfurt, Imperial City of Germany, and is the son of Henry Frederick and Emily zur Nedden, of the age of thirty-one years, a Master Mariner, is married and has three children under age residing with him, viz:*

*Henry Frederick aged 4 years*  
*Annie " 2 "*  
*Adolf " 1 year*

and that in the period of eight years preceding his application he has resided for five years within the United Kingdom, and intends, when naturalized, to reside therein;

And whereas I have inquired into the circumstances of the case, and have received such evidence as I have deemed necessary for proving the truth of the allegations contained in such Memorial, so far as the same relate to the Memorialist;

Now, in pursuance of the authority given to me by the said Acts, I grant to the aforesaid

*Henry Adolphus zur Nedden*

this Certificate, and declare that he is hereby naturalized as a British Subject, and that, upon taking the Oath of Allegiance, he shall be the United Kingdom; he shall be entitled to all political and other rights, powers, and privileges, and be subject to all obligations, to which a natural-born British Subject is entitled or subject in the United Kingdom; with this qualification, that he shall not, when within the limits of the Foreign State or States of which he was a Subject previously to his obtaining this Certificate of Naturalization, be deemed to be a British Subject, unless he has ceased to be a Subject of that State in pursuance of the laws thereof, or in pursuance of a Treaty to that effect.

In witness whereof I have hereunto subscribed my Name this

*14<sup>th</sup> day of August 1899.*

*W. W. Ridley*

Oath of Allegiance.

I, *Henry Adolphus zur Nedden*

do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, Her Heirs and Successors, according to law. So help me GOD.

(Signed) *H. A. zur Nedden*

Sworn and subscribed this

*10<sup>th</sup> day of September 1899* before me.

(Signed) *William A. Hedderly*

Justice of the Peace

A Commissioner for Oaths

21 Sept 1899

Henry Nedden - Naturalisation Documents - 1899



The first successful Naturalisation in South Shields was in 1879, twenty years before Henry Nedden's application. Of the total fifty-one Naturalisations there in the period 1879-1902, twenty-nine were for Master Mariners. The process of obtaining naturalisation was a bureaucratic and expensive one, which would have cost Henry Nedden a fee of five pounds in addition to any legal expenses.

The applicant had to complete a "Memorial", a sworn petition containing personal information, for submission to the Home Office. In addition, signed and witnessed affidavits had to be provided from at least four referees guaranteeing the applicant's moral integrity and respectability, as well as the bona fides of statements in the Memorial itself. Mariners at sea for long periods, with very short time at home between voyages, had little option but to rely on lawyers or others ashore and paid agents or solicitors often handled this part of the process.

The Home Office would then, in what might be described as a "vetting" process, forward the Declaration to local officials for them to investigate the respectability of not only the applicant but also the referees. If all was in order, local bodies would return the Memorial with their report to the Home Office; a Certificate of Naturalisation, accompanied by a loyalty oath to be sworn and witnessed, was issued to the applicant or to his agent. The Certificate of Naturalisation was not effective until the Oath of Allegiance was witnessed, and the applicant was then expected to keep the document on his person.

Bureaucratic processes apart, there could be delays due to documents with errors being returned, documents mislaid, neglect or fraud on the part of the mariner's agent, and delays in the Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen confirming a man's maritime service record. The Home Office might retain a seaman's records of prior employment long enough to jeopardise his means of income; this was evidently the case for Henry Nedden whose solicitor protested that the "applicant cannot go to sea without them".

The Census of 31st March 1901 shows that Henry Nedden and his family were still living in Stanhope Road, South Shields but had moved from number 14 to number 277. Henry was presumably at sea.

Name	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age	Rank, Profession or Occupation	Where Born
Zur Nedden, Annie E.	Wife	Married	28	Wife of Henry Adolphus Zur Nedden, British S/S Captain - Abroad	South Shields, Durham
Zur Nedden, Henry Frederick	Son	Single	6		South Shields, Durham
Zur Nedden, Annie	Dau	Single	4		South Shields, Durham
Zur Nedden, Henry Adolphus	Son	Single	3		South Shields, Durham
Hancock, Annie	Serv	Single	20		South Shields, Durham

1901 Census

A daughter, Eleonore Marie Zur Nedden was born on 14th July 1901 at 277 Stanhope Road, South Shields.

The marriage between Henry Adolphus and Annie Nedden was sadly very short for, almost a year after her daughter's birth, Annie Nedden died on 9th July 1902, aged 29. She was buried at Westoe Cemetery.

Several months later, Annie Nedden's sister-in-law was advertising for domestic help and the inference is that, the widowed Henry Nedden, aged 35, being at sea, his four very young children - Henry, Annie, Henry and Eleonore - were being looked after by his brother and sister-in-law Henry Emil and Margaret Nedden.

**W**ANTED, Experienced GENERAL, good home for suitable person, none need apply without good references, between 6 and 8 to-night.—Mrs NEDDEN, 277 Stanhope Road, West Park.

Shields Daily Gazette - Tuesday 28th October 1902

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Newspaper reports in 1904 show that Henry Nedden had to be landed from his ship and taken to hospital.

DOVER – Nov. 17. – The master, Nedden, of the Elfrida (s), from the Tyne for Civita Vecchia, has been landed ill.

[Shipping Gazette and Lloyd's List - Friday 18th November 1904](#)

**Captain H. A. Nedden, master of the s.s. Elfrida, of Newcastle, for Italy, was yesterday landed at Dover and taken to the Hospital suffering from paralysis of the left side. He was attended to on board ship by Dr. Murphy, and conveyed on the police ambulance to the Hospital.**

[The Dover Express and East Kent News - Friday 18th November 1904](#)  
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Henry Nedden was only thirty-seven years old but his condition was said to be serious and the suggestion is that he had suffered either a transient ischaemic attack or stroke. His condition was evidently cause for concern but, the following day, was reported to be improved. Charles Edward Murphy was a Physician and Surgeon in Dover.

**ILLNESS OF A SOUTH SHIELDS SHIPMASTER**

Information has been received in South Shields that Captain H.A. Nedden had been put ashore at Dover somewhat seriously ill. Captain Nedden left the Tyne in command of the Newcastle steamer Elfrida, owned by Messrs Pyman and Bell, only on last Tuesday, and it was found necessary to call at Dover and land the patient there and convey him to hospital. The numerous friends of Captain Nedden, who is particularly well-known in this district, will learn with much gratification that he is, according to news to hand, showing signs of recovery. The precise nature of Captain Nedden's illness has not yet transpired.

[The Shields Daily Gazette and Shipping Telegraph – Saturday 19th November 1904](#)

Subsequent references to the *Elfrida* do not name the Captain until December 1906 when it was reported that the ship had sunk off Flamborough Head, when her Master was a Captain Devine.

Henry Nedden remained in South Shields and the 1911 Census of 2nd April shows him visiting a family in Harton Village, South Shields.

Name	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age	Rank, Profession or Occupation	Where Born
William Joseph Muitt	Head	Married	46	Fruit Salesman (Worker)	Newcastle upon Tyne
Annie May Muitt	Wife	Married	43		Stockton on Tees
Grace Westlake Muitt	Daughter	Single	17		Newcastle upon Tyne
John Moffatt Peterson	Visitor	Single	33	Outfitter and Shipping Agent (Employer)	South Shields
<a href="#">Henry Adolphus Zur Nedden</a>	Visitor	Widower	43	Master Mariner	Germany Resident Nat. British Subject 1899

1911 Census

The other visitor, John Moffatt Peterson was the brother of Annie Elizabeth Peterson, who married Henry Adolphus Nedden, and of her younger sister Margaret Ellen Peterson, born in 1876, who married Henry Emil Nedden. The two Nedden brothers had married two Peterson sisters.

Henry Nedden's son and daughters were not with him in 1911 and Census and other records show that they were all at school in Ireland. Newspaper reports of 1908 and 1910 show that Henry Frederick Nedden was a pupil at St Peter's College Wexford. The 1911 Census (College and Boarding School Return) shows that Annie, 14, and Eleonore (Nora) Nedden, 9, were both pupils at the Loreto Convent in Spawell Road, Wexford. The Return records that both girls spoke English and Irish.

Ten years after his wife's death, Henry Nedden suffered further tragedy. The inscription on his wife Annie's grave shows that their son Henry Adolphus, who was born on 15th March 1898, died on 7th September 1912 and was also buried at Westoe.

Henry Nedden's brother and his wife had emigrated to Canada, Henry Emil Nedden in 1910 and Margaret Ellen joined him in 1911, and it was to that country too that Henry Adolphus and his surviving children went to live, first his daughters, he and his son subsequently.

Outward Passenger Lists show "Miss A.E. Nedden, 16, a Domestic" and "Miss E.M Nedden, 11, Child", travelling 2nd Class, embarking from Liverpool on 20th September 1913 on the White Star Dominion Line SS *Canada* bound for Montreal.

Incoming Passenger Lists show sisters Annie, 16, now described as a Governess, and Eleonore Nedden, 11, a Scholar, arriving in Montreal, Quebec on 28th September 1913. Their "Country of Intended Future Permanent Residence" was Canada. These records show that neither of the sisters had been to Canada before, their destination was British Columbia, and they were "going to (stay with) aunt"; this was Margaret Ellen Nedden.

Henry Nedden's two daughters had lost their mother when Annie was about five years old and Eleonore an infant aged one. Their brother Henry Adolphus had died in September 1912, the year before they sailed for Canada. The inference is that, with their widowed father at sea, the two daughters were going to live with their aunt and uncle, Margaret and Henry Emil Nedden.

The widowed Henry Nedden also took up residence in Canada, the date is not known but was certainly by 1918, from which year Arriving and Departing Passenger and Crew Lists - specifically the "List or Manifest of Aliens employed on the Vessel as Members of Crew" - give information about his maritime service in Canada. No earlier records have been found.

In the period from December 1918 to December 1919, Henry Nedden was serving as the Third Officer of the 992-ton SS *Amur* of Vancouver - number 114447 - whose owner was the Coastwise Steamship & Barge Company Ltd. of Vancouver. In January 1920 he was serving as her Second Officer.



SS Amur

The next records relating to Henry Nedden's career are dated September and October 1928 when he was the Second Officer of the 1,485-ton SS *Griffco* of Vancouver - number 154731 - whose owner was also the Coastwise Steamship & Barge Company Ltd. of Vancouver.

Henry Nedden had been a Ship's Master in England but it appears that, on both the *Amur* and the *Griffco*, he had taken a reduction in rank since settling in Canada. Records of Henry Nedden's (assumed) service between *Amur* (1919) and *Griffco* (1928) have not been found.



SS Griffco

In December 1928, Henry Nedden is recorded as being the Master of his assumed last ship, the 904-ton SS *Rochelie* of Vancouver – number 135231 – owned by the Pacific Lime Company Limited of Vancouver.



SS Rochelie

Henry Nedden's daughters Annie and Eleonore had settled in Canada, living with their aunt and uncle as, in June 1921, did his son.

Records of "Ocean Arrivals in Canada" in June 1921 show that Henry Frederick Nedden, a Seaman, aged 26 and unmarried, arrived at the Port of Quebec from Liverpool on the SS *Megantic* on 12th June 1921 and would travel onwards to Vancouver. He was the last member of the family to go to live in the country.

Henry Frederick's Nedden's time in Canada was sadly short; less than a year after settling in the country, he died on 13th January 1922, aged 26.

American and Canadian records give more information about circumstances and whereabouts of other members of the Nedden family.

Henry Nedden's elder daughter, Anne Elizabeth Nedden (Annie) was married to Pleasant Henderson Davidson on 23rd November 1932 in Dallas, Texas, but the marriage evidently ended in divorce.

Marriage records for Virginia show that Elizabeth Nedden, aged 47, now calling herself Nancy, married Joseph Joshua Skinner, 59, a widower, on 26th February 1944 in the State of Virginia. Joseph Skinner died on 3rd October 1960 in Florida.

In 1937, Henry Nedden's younger daughter Eleonore Nedden was sailing from Washington via New York to Southampton. She named her father as her nearest relative and his address as c/o The East Hope Brothers Ltd. (actually Easthope Brothers Ltd, a manufacturer of marine engines) of 1745 W. Georgia Street, Vancouver, also her uncle Henry Emil Nedden, whose address was given as 6507 Cypress Street, Vancouver South.

Henry Adolphus Nedden died in Vancouver on 26th August 1945, aged 77.

His sister-in-law Margaret Ellen died on 11th July 1951, aged 74, and his brother Henry Emil on 9th March 1952, aged 75, both in Vancouver.

Henry Nedden's daughter, Nancy Skinner (Annie Elizabeth Nedden) died in May 1980 when her last residence was said to be the US Consulate in Canada. His younger daughter Eleonore Marie died in Vancouver on 13th June 1985, aged 84. She was unmarried.

## THE CAPTAIN'S FATHER – HEINRICH FRIEDRICH ZUR NEDDEN

### Master Mariner

Henry Adolphus Zur Nedden's father Heinrich Friedrich was born on 10th January 1840 in Grevesmühlen, Mecklenburg, Germany, son of Adolf Friedrich Carl and Eleonore (née Klüss) Zur Nedden.

He was married on 1st December 1863 to Emilie Koop, aged 20, in the parish church at Wustrow, Mecklenburg, Germany. Four years later, the 1867 Census for Wustrow shows Heinrich, 28, Emilie, 24, and children Maria, born in 1863, and infant Adolf (Henry Adolphus), born in October 1867. A daughter Eleonore Maria Magdalene Franziska was born on 28th December 1873 in Ribnitz.

Heinrich Friedrich Nedden was a Master Mariner and his Master's Certificate was issued on 10th February 1881 from the Port of Leith, under the name of Henry Nedden.

Shipping records show that from 1883 Henry Nedden was Captain of *SS Pernambuco*, the ship on which his two sons also served, and the *SS Dalton* and the *SS Douglas*. In 1887 he had command of the *SS Madeline* – number 67550 – a large schooner-rigged iron steamer of 1,310 gross registered tonnage, built at West Hartlepool.

Henry Nedden had been a ship's Captain for over eight years when, in October 1889, while in command of the *Madeline*, his ship was involved in a collision in which Richard Britton, a crew member from the other vessel, the *Elizabeth*, lost his life.

An inquest into Richard Britton's death was held on Thursday 28th November 1889, preceding the Board of Trade Inquiry. Captain Henry Nedden was evidently not present but at sea when the inquest opened and it was adjourned until "the captain of the schooner returns from the Baltic". As the newspaper report shows, remarks made by members of the jury suggested, without evidence from Captain Nedden, that the incident would have had a different outcome had the Master of the *Madeline* been British.

#### ALLEGATIONS OF GROSSLY INHUMAN CONDUCT

On Thursday afternoon an inquest was held at the Red Cow Inn, Canvey, before Mr C.C. Lewis, coroner, and a jury, over which the Rev H. Hayes was the foreman, touching the death of Richard James Britton, who was drowned on the 30th October near the West Blyth Buoy, Sea Reach, through the sinking of the barge Elizabeth.

P.C. Spooner proved finding the body on the 26th October, near Deadman's Point, Sea Wall, Canvey Island.

William James Britton said he lived at 133 Shortland-road, Sittingbourne. He was master of the barge Elizabeth belonging to Messrs Smeed, Dean, and Co., brick manufacturers. On Wednesday morning, 30th October, at about two a.m., they were going up the river southwest of the West Blyth Buoy. Going from Merston, Kent, to Abbey Mills, Stratford, laden with flints. Deceased was with witness on board the barge. They had the side lights burning together with the stern light, which he held up in his hand. He first saw a steamer between Thames Haven and Mucking Flat. She was also going up the river and was on the north shore. There was little or no wind and witness's vessel was only driving up on the south shore. The distance between the barge and the steamer when first seen was about a mile and a half. Witness kept straight up the river. It was very dark but starlight. The steamboat when opposite witness's barge starboarded her helm, came right across the river, and struck the barge fair in the middle, on the starboard side. The barge sank a minute afterwards. Witness ran out on to the mizzen boom and jumped for the boat, but missed it and fell into the water. He called out to his brother as he got into the boat to hold on to the painter and jump into the water, saying he would try and save him. Deceased said "No, Bill; scull up and you will save me. Quick Bill, make haste."; witness heard no more of him. The ship's crew had time to throw ropes to save him if they had wished to do so. There were men standing on the ship's bows

Contd/

### ALLEGATIONS OF GROSSLY INHUMAN CONDUCT / Contd

The steamer backed away from his barge. She took the whole of the rigging away with her. Witness sculled to the ship, and they lowered a rope down, which he made fast to his painter. They towed witness as far as the Hope, where they half-filled his boat with water. Witness shouted out "Stop the boat, or you'll drown me". The steamer eased her speed, and slackened his boat from the stern to the ladder of the ship, and witness went on board with his dog in his mouth. Nobody asked him whether he would like a dry pair of socks.

A Juryman: It is a shameful piece of business.

The captain asked witness if he was the captain of the barge he had just run down. Witness said "Yes". He asked witness who was drowned, and witness told him it was his brother. He again asked what was lying on the deck, and witness said it was his dog, whereupon the master said, "What, save your dog, and not your brother?" The steamer anchored at Gravesend. Witness reported the occurrence to the Custom House authorities at Gravesend, and also telegraphed to the owner of the barge. Mr Andrews came up and saw the captain.

Re-examined: Deceased must have let go the boat as the ship struck the barge. Witness was steering, and deceased was looking out. The steamer was named Madeline, of West Hartlepool. She was laden with timber from the Baltic.

A juror: He (*the captain*) was not an Englishman, or he would not have done as he did. Witness, continuing, said there were four bawleys (*broad-beamed shallow-draft cutter-rigged fishing boats used for shrimping and catching whitebait around the Thames and Medway estuaries*) lying there, and he thought that in starboarding his helm he came round too sharp and could not stop, and so ran into the barge. They never asked witness to go on board, but after giving him a rope went on and towed him alongside. When he got on board he was inhumanely treated; no one asked him if he wished for any food.

A Juror: it is scandalous and a shabby thing.

Adjourned until the captain of the schooner returns from the Baltic.

[The Southend Standard – Thursday 5th December 1889](#)

A Board of Trade Inquiry was held shortly after the inquest, on 6th and 7th December 1889 at North Shields, before two magistrates and three nautical assessors. The Board of Trade, the owners of the *Elizabeth* and of the *Madeline*, and the relatives of the deceased seaman were all legally represented.

The Inquiry heard that the barge *Elizabeth* had left Murston, near Sittingbourne, at 1.45 a.m. on 29th October bound for Abbey Mills, Bow and was carrying a cargo of flints. She had a crew of two hands, the Master William Britton, aged 24, and his brother Richard, aged 15, the Mate.

When near the Mucking Light, on the eastern part of the Mucking Flats on the banks of the Thames estuary in Essex, the Master was holding the tiller with one hand while holding a bright light with the other to show over the stern of the vessel in case of emergency.

Captain Britton observed a steamer, the *Madeline*, coming up the river on the north shore. The *Madeline* – number 57550 – had left Soderhamn on 24th October with a crew of eighteen hands and a cargo of deals and battens part of which were stowed on deck, bound for London.

On rounding the point, the *Madeline* appeared to starboard her helm for the apparent purpose of clearing the fishing nets which were lying at anchor. The *Madeline* then headed straight for the *Elizabeth*. The Master of the barge kept his course and held up the bright light and shouted a warning and, seeing that a collision was becoming inevitable, shouted to the mate to launch the boat. He tried unsuccessfully to draw the boat alongside the barge because the painter had become entangled with the mizenboom.

Captain Britton ran along the mizenboom to clear the rope and, in doing so, fell into the water but scrambled into his boat. The *Elizabeth* was by now some yards ahead and he pulled after her in order to take his brother on board. While doing so, the *Madeline* struck the barge and the blow carried the *Elizabeth* further away from him and, before he could reach her, she had sunk. Pulling towards the place where the barge had foundered, he heard his brother calling out, urging him to "Make haste, Bill, and you will save me yet". He pulled ahead but never saw his brother again. The *Madeline* stopped and took Captain Britton on board, landing him at Gravesend.

Captain Nedden stated that the *Madeline* had arrived a little below Lower Hope Point at about 2.00 a.m. on 30th October and was proceeding at full speed to the northward of mid channel when he ordered the helm to be starboarded for the purpose of rounding the point. Immediately after this was done, the green light of a vessel was seen a point and a half off the port bow and from one to one and a half cable distant. The helm was immediately put hard a-starboard but the *Madeline* was apparently not responding and the mate went to assist the man at the wheel. Evidence given by the helmsman and the mate suggested that the deckload might have caught the wheel chains and prevented the vessel responding when the hard a starboard order was given.

Captain Nedden, seeing that a collision was imminent, telegraphed to reverse engines, which was done but before the way was off the vessel, the *Madeline* struck the *Elizabeth* on the starboard side aft, cutting into her and causing her to sink.

Captain Britton bore out the opening statement of the Board of Trade's legal representative and stated that the *Madeline* could only have avoided the barge *Elizabeth* by running herself on the shore.

Captain Nedden had immediately ordered a boat to be launched but this was not done because Captain Britton came alongside and reported that the mate had gone down and it was no use their attempting to save him.

Captain Nedden attributed the casualty to several factors: the *Elizabeth* not showing a stern light; the *Elizabeth* not being seen until they were one and a half cable lengths off; and the steering gear of the *Madeline* apparently becoming jambed.

Evidence was given by William Britton, Master of the *Elizabeth*, Captain Henry Nedden and others. The inquiry was then adjourned and resumed until 11th December.

#### **A MASTER'S CERTIFICATE SUSPENDED**

The inquiry regarding the loss of the barge *Elizabeth*, of Faversham, by collision with the s.s. *Madeline*, of West Hartlepool, on the Thames, on 30th October last, was resumed yesterday, in the Town Hall, Saville Street, North Shields, before Mr J. Robson and Mr T. Jackson, borough magistrates, and Admiral Powell, Capt. Richardson and Capt. Anderson, nautical assessors. The magistrates at once retired to consider their decision, and on their return into court, gave judgement to the effect that the master of the *Madeline*, Capt. H. Nedden, was solely in default, and suspended his certificate for six calendar months.

[The Shields Daily Gazette and Shipping Telegraph - Thursday 12th December 1889](#)

The Board of Trade Inquiry concluded on 11th December. The Court considered that the *Elizabeth* had complied with the regulations relating to navigation on the River Thames and she had displayed a bright light from her stern. The collision was caused by the *Madeline* crossing the river too fast and by not stopping to reverse when the *Elizabeth's* green light was first reported by the look-out. The most damning findings were that "every effort was not made by those on board the *Madeline* to save the life of the mate of the *Elizabeth*; and the *Madeline* was not navigated with proper and seamanlike care".



The Court found that Henry Nedden was “solely in default” and suspended his Certificate for six months.

#### **A CAPTAIN SUSPENDED**

Yesterday, the Board of Trade inquiry concluded at North Shields respecting the collision between the barge Elizabeth, of Faversham, and the steamer Madeline, of West Hartlepool, in the river Thames, the mate of the Elizabeth being drowned. The Court, in giving judgement, considered that the Elizabeth complied with the regulations of the river, but the Madeline did not. The collision was caused by the Madeline crossing the river at too great a speed. The Court found Henry Nedden, master of the Madeline, in default, suspending his certificate for six months.

Sunderland Daily Echo – Thursday 12th December 1889

An Inquest held by adjournment into the death of Richard Britton was held shortly after the Inquiry, on Saturday 14th December. A number of additional witnesses were called: one who was in the borley *Fiddle*, of Gravesend, a short distance away, said he saw the stern light of the barge; another stated that when he saw the steamer about a mile-and-a-half away from where the collision took place, it was taking the wrong course.

The Jury could not at first agree upon a verdict, two of them objecting to one of manslaughter. Eventually, however, they returned a verdict of manslaughter against Captain Heinrich Fredrich Zur Nedden (who was not present); and the Coroner bound over a Superintendent Hawtree to prosecute.

A warrant for Henry Nedden’s arrest was dated 14th December 1889. The “Barking, East Ham, and Ilford Advertiser” of 21st December 1889 reported further that, following the verdict of manslaughter, Henry Nedden was charged with the offence but given bail pending his committal for trial. Records show that Henry Nedden, Ship’s Captain, aged 50, was received into custody and stood trial on 17th March 1890 at the Assizes held in Chelmsford, Essex for the manslaughter of Richard James Britton at Canvey Island on 30th October 1889.

#### **THE CANVEY ISLAND RUNNING DOWN CASE**

##### **Trial at the Assizes**

At Chelmsford Assize on Monday, Heinrich Frederick Zur Nedden was indicted for the manslaughter of Richard James Britton. The facts of the case, it will be remembered, were that deceased was on board a barge lying in the river Thames and the prisoner was the captain of a steamer. It was alleged that through the latter’s negligence the steamer ran down the barge, thus causing the deceased to be drowned. At the Coroner’s Inquest a verdict of “Manslaughter” was returned. On the case, however, coming before the Southend justices, it was dismissed, but the prisoner was brought up at this Assize on the Coroner’s inquisition. Mr Wedderburn appeared for the prosecution and Mr Beard for the defence. The Grand Jury reported a true bill and the prisoner pleaded “Not guilty”. Mr Wedderburn said as a result of a conference between himself and the counsel for the defence he proposed to offer no evidence, as he felt he could not hope for a conviction. The case was that of a barge being run down by a steamer of which the prisoner was captain, and the man, in consequence of that, who was on the barge was drowned. The question which had to be put to the jury was as to whether the running down of the barge involved negligence of the Captain of the vessel amounting to manslaughter. He did not think they could make that out, and, therefore, he offered no evidence. Mr Beard, on behalf of the prisoner, said the case had already been before magistrates, who had refused to commit, and the prisoner was there on the Coroner’s inquisition only. The prisoner was informed that his presence would not be required before the Coroner, and, therefore, neither he nor his witnesses were present to give any explanation of the matter. His Lordship said of course the strongest point was that the Grand Jury had found a true bill, but he thought they might trust the learned counsel. Of course, the Coroner was quite right to have these things fully investigated and to instruct counsel to thoroughly sift the matter, but as counsel had fully investigated the matter and come to the conclusion that there was nothing in it, he thought it would be a waste of time to listen to the evidence. This was agreed to, and prisoner was discharged.

The Southend Standard – 20th March 1890

Although Henry Nedden had given his full account of the incident to the Board of Trade Inquiry, he had not, his solicitor said, had the opportunity to give an explanation to the Coroner's Jury. The prosecuting solicitor offered no evidence against Captain Nedden as there was no proof that he had been negligent in the collision between the *Madeline* and the *Elizabeth*.

**ALLEGED MANSLAUGHTER OFF CANVEY ISLAND.  
NOT GUILTY.**

*Heinrich Friedrich Zur Nedden*, on bail, was indicted for the manslaughter of Richard James Britton, off Canvey Island.—Mr. WEDDERBURN, who was instructed for the prosecution by the Treasury, said that, with his Lordship's permission, he did not propose to offer any evidence, as he could not expect to obtain a conviction. A tea-ship ran down a barge on the river Thames on a dark night, and the man in charge was drowned. The question which the Jury would have had to consider was whether the running down involved negligence on the part of the Captain, but he felt that he could not make that out to the extent he should be required to make it out.—Mr. ERNEST BEARD, who had been instructed for the defence, mentioned that the Magistrates had refused to commit the prisoner for trial. The prisoner had been committed for trial on the Coroner's certificate, but he understood the verdict by the Coroner's Jury was arrived at without any explanation on the part of the prisoner.—The Jury then returned a formal verdict of not guilty, and the prisoner was discharged.

The Essex Standard - Saturday 22nd March 1890  
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The jury found Henry Nedden Not Guilty and the court ordered his acquittal and him to be discharged.

Reports in the "Shipping Gazette and Lloyd's List" show that Henry Nedden was back at sea, as Master of the *Madeline*, by July 1890 and give details of his sailings subsequently, to and from ports in Europe, India, Russia, and America.

The Board of Trade Inquiry had suspended Henry Nedden's Master's Certificate for six months and in the meantime, it appears, he had applied for a Certificate of Competency as First Mate, which was awarded in February 1890.

A year after the court case, the 1891 Census of 5th April shows Henry Zur Nedden, aged 49, born in Germany but a British subject, on board and the Master of the *Commodore* docked at Tyne Dock, South Shields.

LIST OF OFFICERS, CREW, AND OTHERS ON BOARD THE SHIP OR VESSEL NAMED THE *SS Commodore*  
ON THE NIGHT OF SUNDAY, APRIL 5TH, 1891.

1	NAME and SURNAME.	In what Relation to Vessel.	CONDITION as to Marriage.	SEX.	AGE last Birthday.	PROFESSION or OCCUPATION.		WHERE BORN.	If (1) Deaf and dumb, (2) Blind, (3) Lame, Impotent or idiot.
						State here the nature of each Member of the Crew. The occupation of Passengers and of all other persons should be stated as fully and as clearly as possible; and a cross should be inserted in Col. 7, if it is to signify whether the person is an Employer, if Employed, or is working on his own account.	Employed.		
1	<i>Henry zur Nedden</i>	<i>Crew</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>M.</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>Master</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Germany, Breda</i>	
2	<i>Thomas Peterson</i>	<i>Crew</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>M.</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>Boatman</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Danmark, Laas</i>	
3	<i>Thomas Coggins</i>	<i>Crew</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>M.</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>Stoker</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Suffolk, Sparitok</i>	
4	<i>Peter Peterson</i>	<i>Crew</i>	<i>Single</i>	<i>M.</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>Stoker</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Sweden</i>	
5	<i>Nelson Beagham</i>	<i>Crew</i>	<i>Single</i>	<i>M.</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>Stoker</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Widow</i>	

1891 Census - SS Commodore

The Census record serves to confirm that the *Commodore* was under the command first of Henry Frederick Nedden and that his son Henry Adolphus later succeeded his father as Master of the ship.

It seems poignant that the man who was accused and acquitted of manslaughter was reported, five years later, as saving the crew of a stricken vessel, the barque *Amaranth* of Belfast.

**MENACE TO NAVIGATION**  
**Water-Logged Ship Floating Somewhere on the Atlantic**

WASHINGTON – Jan 17. – A story of shipwreck and of a derelict is given in the following report of Capt. H. Zur Nedden, of the German steamship *Madeline*, to the Naval Hydrographic Office:

I beg to report that I sighted on the night of Dec. 25, at 10 p.m., signals of distress being burned by a sailing ship. After I had ascertained that the ship wanted assistance I stood by him all night and on the next morning (Dec. 26) the vessel was flying the signals, "I am waterlogged; take people off." I bore at once down on him, and saw it was the bark *Amaranth*, of Belfast, from St. Johns to Dublin with deals. At 10 a.m. I had rescued the whole crew, consisting of seventeen hands, all told. I advised the captain before leaving his ship to set fire to her, so as to destroy as much as he could, which was eventually done, and I believe that the bark's quarterdeck is burned down and her mizzenmast gone overboard, but I doubt that the other part is destroyed, and the ship will still be afloat, with her foremast and mainmast standing and her main topsail and fore topsail set. I left her in latitude 49:23 north and longitude 29:36 west, about six hundred miles north of the Azores, and she will form a great danger to steamers bound home from the cotton ports.

[The Indianapolis Journal – Friday 18th January 1895](#)

In 1897, the "South Wales Daily News" of Monday 30th August reported that the *Madeline*, Captain Nedden, had sailed from the Alexandra Dock, Newport for Galveston, Texas, arriving on Thursday 30th September and that this was a port he had sailed to on previous occasions.

The circumstances are unknown but it was in Galveston, Texas that Henry Frederick Nedden died on 21st March 1898, aged 57. Probate, the record shows, was granted at South Shields, to his son, whose family he had evidently been living with, at 14 Stanhope Road.

**ZUR-NEDDEN** Heinrich Friederick of 14 Stanhope-road South Shields master-mariner died 21 March 1898 at St. Mary's-hospital Galveston Texas North America Administration Durham 18 May to Henry Adolphus Zur-Nedden master-mariner Effects £715.

## THE CAPTAIN'S SON – HEINRICH FRIEDRICH ZUR NEDDEN

### Mariner

Henry Adolphus Zur Nedden's elder son Heinrich Friedrich was born in South Shields in 1895. He was seven years old when his mother died in 1902 and he and his two sisters were sent to boarding schools in Wexford, Ireland where they received a Roman Catholic education.

Newspaper reports show that Henry Nedden was a pupil at St Peter's College Wexford, a single sex school for male pupils, and he was evidently a successful scholar. In September 1908 Henry Nedden passed in English, French, History and Geography, Mathematics and Experimental Science in the "Preparatory Grade" of Intermediate Examinations. In September 1910 he was awarded a Second Class Exhibition in a Modern Literacy course and, in the same year, a Junior Grade prize for German.

Incoming Passenger Lists show Henry Frederick Nedden, a Seaman, aged 17, travelling Third Class as a passenger not a crew member, arriving at the Port of London on 2nd November 1912 from Sydney, Australia on the P&O ship *Moolton*. The 9,621-ton *Moolton* was in service between England and Australia via the Suez Canal and had capacity for 519 passengers.

No further references to Henry Nedden have been found until British Army World War I Pension records show that Henry (Harry) Nedden, a Seaman aged 20 years and 10 months, of 9 Seaford Terrace, South Shields attested for general, short service with the Army Reserve in December 1913 and was mobilised with the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers in January 1917.

He was transferred six months later for Home Service with the Labour Corps but discharged in November 1917 as being no longer fit for war service. He had a previous history of rheumatism and his condition, valvular disease of the heart, dating from 1915, was permanent, "not the result of, but aggravated by military service" and prevented it totally.

His degree of disability was assessed as 70% with a recommendation that he be examined in twelve months' time. However, Henry Nedden was discharged with a pension on 27th November 1917, when his address was given as 13 Railway Terrace, North Shields.

Henry Nedden's father and his two sisters had already taken up residence in Canada and in June 1921 records of "Ocean Arrivals in Canada" show that he too - then a Seaman, aged 26 and unmarried - arrived at the Port of Quebec from Liverpool on the White Star liner SS *Megantic* - number 127981 - on 12th June 1921 and would travel onwards to Vancouver. His last address was in North Shields.

His passage had been paid for by his uncle, Captain Henry Emil Nedden, whose address was 1649 Barclay Street, Vancouver, British Columbia.

He had not been to the country before and his "object in going to Canada" was "to go to my father's home", which he gave as the same Barclay Street address as his uncle. It was his intention to remain in Canada permanently and his intended occupation was "Shipping", which he very quickly took up.

U.S. *Megantic* 1921 Date of Sailing - 4 JUN 21  
Inland routing: *S.N.R.* to *Vancouver*  
STATE NAME OF RAILWAY  
DECLARATION OF PASSENGER TO CANADA  
1. NAME **NEDDEN, HENRY F.** Age *26*  
(PRINT IN BLOCK LETTERS, FAMILY NAME FIRST)  
2. Sex *Male* Are you married, single, widowed or divorced? *single*  
If married, are you accompanied by husband or wife? If so, give name of husband or wife  
3. Present occupation *None* Intended occupation *Shipping*  
4. Birthplace *South Shields, England* Race or people *English*  
5. Citizenship *British* Religion *Roman Catholic*  
(IF PROFESSIONAL, STATE OCCUPATION)  
6. Object in going to Canada *To go to my father's home*  
7. Do you intend to remain permanently in Canada? *Yes*  
8. Have you ever lived in Canada? *No* If you have, give Canadian address:  
Part of previous entry Date  
Part of departure from Canada Date  
9. Why did you leave Canada?  
10. Money in possession belonging to passenger *\$50*  
(I am aware that I must have on my arrival in Canada the sum of \$  
11. Can you read? *Yes* What language? *English*  
12. By whom was your passage paid? *Capt H. E. Nedden, 1649 Barclay St. Vancouver B.C.*  
13. Ever refused entry to, or deported from Canada? *No*  
14. Deported to *1649 Barclay St. Vancouver B.C.*  
FATHER  
15. (IF GIVING RELATIVE, FRIEND OR EMPLOYER: 1) STATE WHICH AND IF RELATIVE GIVE RELATIONSHIP: 2) GIVE FULL NEW HOME AND CANADIAN ADDRESS: 3) IF NOT GIVING ANY PERSON IN CANADA, GIVE RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE ADDRESS.  
16. Nearest relative in country from which you came *single*  
*John Nedden* RELATIONSHIP  
*29 Side, Newcastle-on-Tyne, England.*  
(GIVE FULL ADDRESS OF EACH RELATIVE)  
17. Are you or any of your family mentally defective? *No*  
Tubercular? *No* Physically defective? *No*  
Otherwise debarred under Canadian Immigration Law? *No*  
(Before answering question 17 see the prohibited classes named in Immigration Booklet 36A which will be handed to you by Booking Agent.)  
I declare the above statements are true: I am aware that an inaccurate statement constitutes misrepresentation and that the penalty is a fine, imprisonment or deportation.  
Signature of passenger *Harry F. Nedden*  
I hereby declare that the above is the signature of passenger and that I have handed passenger a copy of Immigration Booklet 36A.  
Sig. of Booking Agent

Ocean Arrivals, Quebec - 12th June 1921

Soon after his arrival in Canada, Passenger and Crew Lists – specifically the “List or Manifest of Aliens employed on the Vessel as Members of Crew” – show that on a total seven voyages between July and September 1921 Henry F. Nedden, 26, was one of two Quartermasters serving on the *SS Prince Albert*.



[SS Prince Albert – North and West Vancouver Ferry Docks](#)

The Master of the *SS Prince Albert* was Henry Nedden’s uncle, Captain Henry Emil Nedden. The entries show too that they had previously served together on the *SS Prince Rupert*. Both ships were owned by the Grand Trunk Pacific Coast Steamship Company and built when the Company decided to provide a sea link between Vancouver and Prince Rupert. The inference is that his uncle had offered Henry Nedden not only a home but also a position with the Steamship Company.

Henry Nedden died very shortly after settling in Canada. Although he had been medically discharged from the Army in England, War Graves Registers show that Trooper Henry F. Nedden, who was a Private in the Labour Corps (South Irish Horse), died at Shaughnessy Hospital, Vancouver on 13th January 1922.

The causes of his death were attributable to his pre-existing medical condition and the reason for his earlier medical discharge. His Next of Kin was “Mr H. Nedden, Father, of 1649 Barclay Street, Vancouver, B.C.”

Henry Nedden was buried in a Soldier’s Plot at Mountain View Cemetery in Vancouver. A headstone was erected on his grave in September 1928.



[Mountain View Cemetery](#)

## THE CAPTAIN'S BROTHER – HEINRICH EMIL ZUR NEDDEN

### Master Mariner



Heinrich Emil Zur Nedden - circa 1930

Heinrich Emil Zur Nedden was born on 28th December 1876 in Ribnitz, Wurstow, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Germany.

He began his maritime career in May 1893 and progressed from Boy to Master Mariner in the eleven years to November 1904.

Henry Nedden was first engaged as a Boy on the square-rigged *SV Lucipara* of Glasgow – number 90005 – from May 1893 to June 1894, followed by a month as an Ordinary Seaman on the same ship until July 1894. He then served as an Able Seaman on the *SV Grenada* of Glasgow – number 104591 – from November 1894 to November 1895, the *SV Samoa* of Glasgow – number 90099 – from January 1896 to May 1897, and the *SS Eveline* of Newcastle – number 106615 – from September 1897 to February 1898.

The "Statement of Service at Sea" accompanying his application for qualification as a Second Mate shows that he had failed a previous application in March 1898 in the subject of Navigation but passed in the subject Seamanship. He passed the examination at his second attempt and his Second Mate's Certificate was issued from the Port of South Shields on 9th April 1898 when he was twenty-one years old. Like his brother, he was almost 6' 0" tall, with a dark complexion, dark eyes and hair.

In 1898, Henry Nedden was living at 14 Stanhope Road, South Shields, the same address as his father and brother. A year later, Henry Nedden married his sister-in-law Margaret Ellen Peterson.

Henry Nedden's application for qualification as a First Mate shows that this was also his second attempt for he had previously failed the subjects of Sextant and Seamanship, in June and July 1900 respectively.

His "Statement of Service at Sea" shows that he had served as an Able Seaman on the *SS Eveline* of Newcastle – number 106615 – from July 1897 to February 1898, as Second Mate on the *SS Pernambuco* of Liverpool – number 65966 – from May 1898 to July 1899 and on the *SS Mab* of Newcastle – number 97977 – from October 1899 to April 1901. Notes in his "Statement" show two gaps during his service as Second Mate with the *Mab*, citing "Preparing for Examination". The *Pernambuco* was the same ship that his father and brother Henry Adolphus had served on as Master and First Mate respectively,

An article in the "Daily News – Northern and Central British Columbia" to mark his retirement reports that, after serving on the *Pernambuco*, Henry Nedden entered the service of various companies successively and that during the Boer War he was plying between South America and South Africa with troops and horses.

After eight months, from June 1901 to February 1902, as First Mate on the *Ida* of Newcastle – number 7776 – he had a short period of unemployment before he was serving (intermittently) as Second Mate on the *Starlight* of West Hartlepool – number 98257 – and the *Eversley* of Newcastle – number 106607 – until September 1903 when he was again "Preparing for Examination".

Henry Nedden had spent just over ten years at sea by this time and his studies were presumably for his Master's Certificate, which was issued at the Port of South Shields on 13th November 1903. He then had command of tramp ships, the first being the *Dauntless* of Newcastle – number 106619. Her owner at the time was said to be Alfred Brewis of Newcastle, which dates Henry Nedden's captaincy of the ship as being from 1904 onwards.

As his older brother had done, Henry Emil Zur Nedden also applied for Naturalisation. In his Application made in 1904, he described himself as being twenty-seven years old, the Master of a ship, and married with no children. "In the period of eight years preceding his application", he had "resided for five years within the United Kingdom", in which country he intended to live. He swore his Oath of Allegiance in October 1906.

Henry Nedden's intention to live in the United Kingdom did not come to fruition, his interest in the Pacific coast instead coming to the fore. In 1910, seeing the *SS Prince George* – number 129748 – being built at the Swan, Hunter & Wigham Richardson yard in Newcastle for the Grand Trunk Pacific Steamship Company, he decided to sign on as Second Mate to go out to Canada via Cape Horn.



[SS Prince George](#)

The *Prince George* was one of three ships built for the Canadian National Steamships Company, the others being the *SS Prince Rupert* – number 129743 – built in 1910 and the *SS Prince John* (formerly the *Amethyst*) – number 129472 – built in 1911.

Henry Nedden remained on the *Prince George* as Third Mate on the coastal service between Vancouver and Prince Rupert, the maiden voyage for the route being in September 1910. After twelve months on the ship, he was transferred to the *Prince Albert* as Second Officer and soon became her Chief Officer, spending a large part of the First World War as Master. He then took command for four years of the *Prince John* which also operated the *Prince Rupert* to the Queen Charlotte Islands route.

Henry Nedden subsequently became Master of the two new and larger Grand Trunk Pacific Railway ships, the first being the *Prince Rupert* – number 129743 – once the pride of the coast steamship fleet. In 1921, beginning a long association with the ship, he took command of the *Prince George*, the ship which had brought him to Canada and on which he had served as Third Mate. The *Prince Rupert* and the *Prince George* were both 3,380 ton, 18 knot ships that could carry 1,500 passengers and had state rooms for 220. They operated a weekly service from Seattle to Victoria, Vancouver, Prince Rupert and Anyox.

The 1921 Census of 1st June for the Queen Charlotte Islands, British Columbia shows Henry Emil Nedden, aged 44 and married, sharing a multi-occupancy property with two other similarly ranking mariners in the Skeena District. His occupation was a Master Mariner/Captain and he had immigrated to Canada in 1910. His wife, Margaret Nedden had come out from Glasgow in 1911 on the *SS Prince John*. As referenced earlier, Henry Nedden's two nieces travelled to Canada in 1913 to live permanently with their uncle and aunt.

Just over a month after the Census, a "List or Manifest of Aliens employed on the Vessel as Members of Crew" records the arrival at Seattle, Washington on 18th July 1921 of the *Prince Albert* – number 99584. One of the older ships owned by the Canadian National Steamships Company, having been built in 1892 in Hull, she was registered to the port of Prince Rupert, British Columbia in 1911.

Henry Emil Nedden, aged 44, his nationality British, was the Master of the *Prince Albert* and also serving on the ship, as one of two Quartermasters, was his nephew Henry F. Nedden, aged 26.

Henry Nedden was honoured in 1926 when an island – at the North end of Carmichael Passage, at the entrance to Morehouse Bay – was named for him as Nedden Island.



Henry Nedden – Captain of SS Prince George

Henry Nedden returned at intervals to England in connection with the supervision of the construction of the steamers *Prince Henry*, *Prince David* and *Prince Robert* at Birkenhead. In 1930 he brought the *Prince David* out to Canada and in 1932 brought the *Prince Robert* from Halifax.

In 1932, Henry Nedden became Commodore of the Canadian National Coast Steamships fleet (comprising all steamship companies allied with the Canadian National Railway), serving as Master of the *Prince Robert* on the Alaska route during the summers and back on the *Prince George* during the winters.



SS Prince Robert

By 1939, Henry Nedden was the Commander of the *Prince Robert*, built in 1930 to serve as a small luxury liner serving the tourist trade on Canada's west coast. The ship had joined Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Company in May 1931 and was then one of two ships providing a twice daily return service on the Vancouver-Prince Rupert route. However, the service was not profitable in the Depression and ended in September 1931, following which the *Prince Robert* joined the older ships *Prince Rupert* and *Prince George* sailing between Prince Rupert and Vancouver.

In May 1939, the *Prince Robert* was chosen to serve as royal yacht during the three-week visit made by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth to British Columbia at the invitation of the Prime Minister of Canada. Their Majesties embarked on five ships on the overland tour, the fourth being the Canadian government's auxiliary cruiser *Prince Robert*.



Henry Nedden was Commander of the *Prince Robert* when she brought the royal party from Vancouver to Victoria, accompanied by a naval escort, and he was presented to Their Majesties. The *Prince Robert* also established a record for the trip, taking three hours and ten minutes to cover a distance of 72 nautical miles.

Later in 1939 the *Prince Robert* was acquired, along with her two sister ships, the *Prince David* and *Prince Henry*, by the Royal Canadian Navy and converted into an Armed Merchant Cruiser. Henry Nedden returned permanently to his habitual command, the *Prince George*, from which he retired.

The List of Electors for Vancouver South for 1940 show Henry Nedden, Ship's Captain, his wife Margaret Nedden and niece Nora Nedden, Spinster, at 6507 Cypress Street; in 1945 Henry Nedden, Sea Captain, Margaret Nedden and niece Nora Nedden, Royal Canadian Air Force, were at 4777 Osler Street in the City of Vancouver.

Henry Emil Nedden died on 9th March 1952, aged 75, at Vancouver Hospital, the informant being his niece Eleonore Marie Nedden, still of 4777 Osler Street, Vancouver. He was a Widower, his wife having predeceased him on 11th July 1951, aged 74.

**. VANCOUVER. — Capt. Harry E. Nedden, 76, retired from the Canadian National Steamships in 1941 after serving the company for 31 years in the Pacific coast service.'**

[The Ottawa Journal – 10th March 1952](#)

His Death Certificate shows that he was a Master Mariner with the Canadian National Steamships Company, an amalgamation in 1927 of all the steamship companies allied with the Canadian National Railway. He had spent all his life at sea and last worked as a Mariner in 1942. He had lived in Canada for forty years, thirty-two of them in Vancouver, British Columbia. Both Henry and his wife had been granted Canadian citizenship.

Henry Emil Nedden's background, family and maritime career are best summarised in an article of November 1941 about his impending retirement.

#### **Veteran Shipmaster Retiring**

##### **Capt. Harry Nedden, Commodore of Canadian National Fleet, Is Finishing Off Fine Marine Career**

One Saturday afternoon at the end of November, Capt. Harry Nedden, Commodore of the Canadian National Coast Steamships fleet and one of British Columbia's best known and most popular shipmasters, will step ashore at Vancouver into retirement from the steamer *Prince George*, the same vessel in which he sailed out from Newcastle-upon-Tyne to this coast as second mater thirty-one years ago this fall. Capt. Nedden, although his appearance today would belie the fact, has reached his sixty-fifth year which is the retirement age. During his long career he has sailed the Seven Seas and visited every continent. A familiar figure in every Pacific coast port from Seattle to Skagway and out to the Queen Charlotte Islands, he sums up his career as "just storms and fair weather like the ordinary seaman". Authorities who have followed navigation on this coast over the years will say, however, that Capt. "Harry's" career on this coast has been a remarkable one for freedom from trouble of any kind. "The way in which he has been able to bring through his ships on schedule, despite stress of weather and traffic, has long been a matter of comment. There is something more than luck to this sort of an achievement when it has been so long sustained as in the case of Harry Nedden. He has travelled a million and three quarter miles on this coast and has often walked from Prince Rupert to Vancouver, pacing the bridge of his ship.

Contd/

[The Daily News – Northern and Central British Columbia – Prince Rupert – Tuesday 4th November 1941](#)

Although his paternal grandfather was an Anglican Church clergyman, Capt. Nedden came from a family of seafarers on both sides. He was born at South Shields near Newcastle, the son of Capt. Henry Nedden, a shipmaster first in sail and then in steam for Pyman & Bell. His older brother, Capt. James (*actually Henry Augustus*) Nedden who was also in his early days with Pyman & Bell, now lives in retirement in Vancouver after having served with the Coastwise Steamship and Barge Co.

Going to sea at the age of fifteen as a deck apprentice for the Island Line out of Glasgow, Capt. Nedden also served his time in sail. After receiving his second mate's ticket in 1898. He turned to steam for Pyman & Bell, sailing at first as second officer in the freighter Pernambuco to the Mediterranean in the winter and to the Baltic in summer. In the service of various companies successively, the Boer War found him plying between South America and South Africa with troops and horses. Eventually came command of tramp ships, the first being the Dauntless belonging to Alfred Brewis of Newcastle.

Capt. Nedden's interest was aroused in the Pacific coast as he saw the steamer Prince George under construction for the old Grand Trunk Pacific Steamship Co. at the Swan, Hunter & Wigham Richardson yard in Newcastle-on-Tyne. He decided to make a change and signed on as second mate to come out via Cape Horn to this coast. The voyage took seventy-three days.

Remaining with the Prince George on the coastal service between Vancouver and Prince Rupert, Capt. Nedden was assigned to the duties of third mate. His superior officers at that time were Capt. George Robertson, master; Capt. F.T. Saunders, chief officer, and Capt. Can O'Brien, second officer. The maiden voyage from Vancouver to Prince Rupert was made in September 1910.

Finishing twelve months as third mate of the Prince George, Capt. Nedden was transferred to the old Prince Albert as second officer and it was not long before he became chief officer. A good part of the First Great War saw him master of the Prince Albert. Then followed command of the Prince John for four years. It was during these years that Capt. Nedden became particularly well known on the Queen Charlotte Islands.

In 1921 Capt. Nedden went to the command of the Prince George and a great deal of the time since then he has been associated with that ship. Interludes, however, included return to the old country in connection with supervision of the steamers Prince Henry, Prince David and Prince Robert at Birkenhead on the Mersey. In 1930 he brought the Prince David out to this coast and in 1932 was away again to fetch the Prince Robert from Halifax. In 1932, with the death of Capt. Dan Donald, he became Commodore of the Canadian National Coast Steamships fleet, serving as master of the Prince Robert on the Alaska route during the summers and back on the Prince George during the winters. With the commandeering of the Prince Robert by the navy two years ago, Capt. Nedden returned permanently to his habitual command, the Prince George, from which he will retire.

[The Daily News – Northern and Central British Columbia – Prince Rupert – Tuesday 4th November 1941](#)

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