

**Mystery Model in the Museum**

**An Emigrant Ship Disaster**

**The Story of the SS Kapunda**

**S. Trevor Whittley**

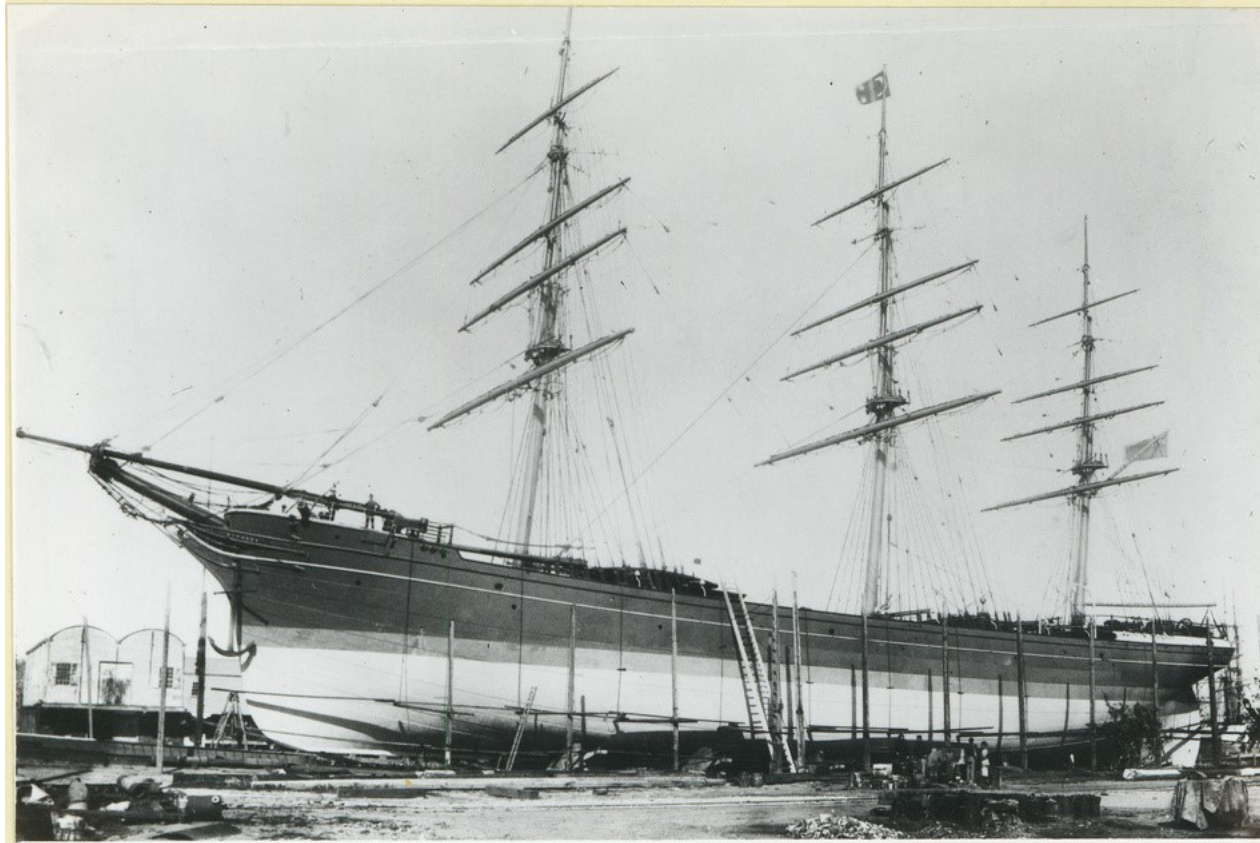
**Queensferry Heritage Trust**

**16<sup>th</sup> January 2019**

Family story – cousin sank aboard the Titanic?

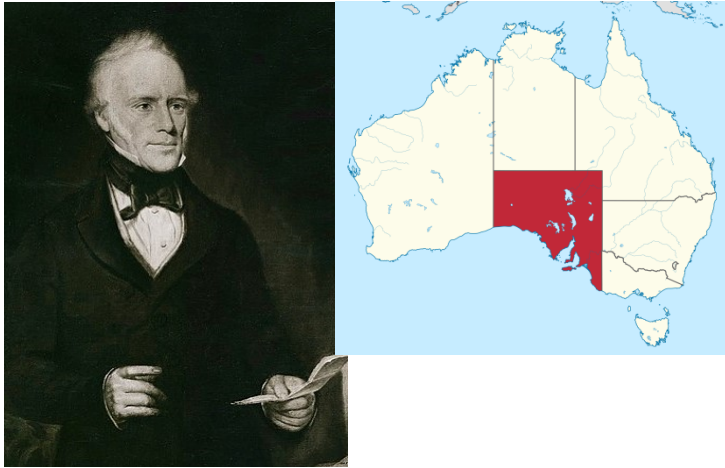


# SS Kapunda



**On the slip at Adelaide in 1876  
after her maiden voyage.**

# South Australian Company



## Founders (1835)

George Fife Angas

Raikes Currie

Thomas Smith

Henry **Kingscote**



# Anderson Ship-owners

**John Rogerson  
Anderson**



**Roger Charles  
Anderson**



**Arthur Anderson**

**“Do Weel an’  
Persevere!”**



**James G. Skelton  
Anderson**

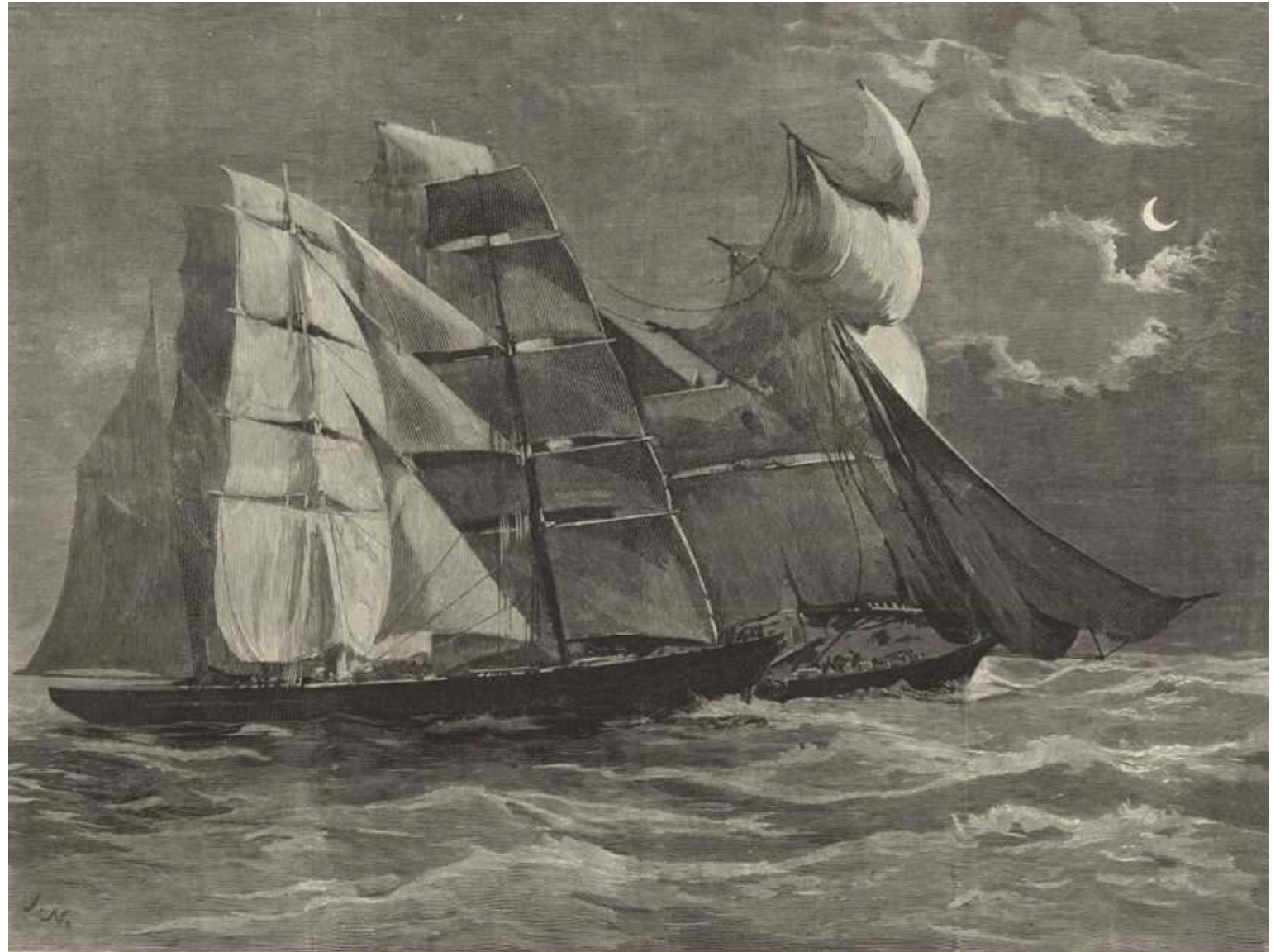
**Elizabeth Garret  
Anderson**

# Emigration



**Catastrophe!**

**Collision of  
SS Kapunda &  
SS Ada Melmore  
off Brazil  
20 Jan 1887**



# Kapunda disaster

## Board of Trade Enquiry

- Questions in Parliament
- 313 souls on board; 297 drowned
- Lifeboats only for 163
- No folding boats or rafts
- **Met all Board of Trade Regulations**
- 29 single women trapped below - locked in for their own safety
- 8 male passengers survived because they were sleeping on deck.
- Captain of Ada Melmore, Milliken, found guilty of not showing lights and taking wrong evasive action. Certificate suspended for two years.
- Outcry: many thought punishment far too lenient given the loss of life





# Mystery Ship's model in Queensferry Museum



# Caption on reverse

- Ship Kapunda of London. Built Dumbarton 1875.
- Left London Dec 1886, with a double crew and 279 immigrants to Freemantle, Western Australia.
- When off the Brazil coast, early on the morning of 20<sup>th</sup> January 1887 she was rammed and sunk in a few minutes by the Belfast barque Ada Melmore homeward bound from Coquimbo with a Cargo of iron ore.
- Only 8 of the crew and 8 male passengers were saved. No sailing ship ever conveyed immigrants after this catastrophe.
- (Signed). J.R.McEwan, February 1938

# Museum founder - Dr. John Mason



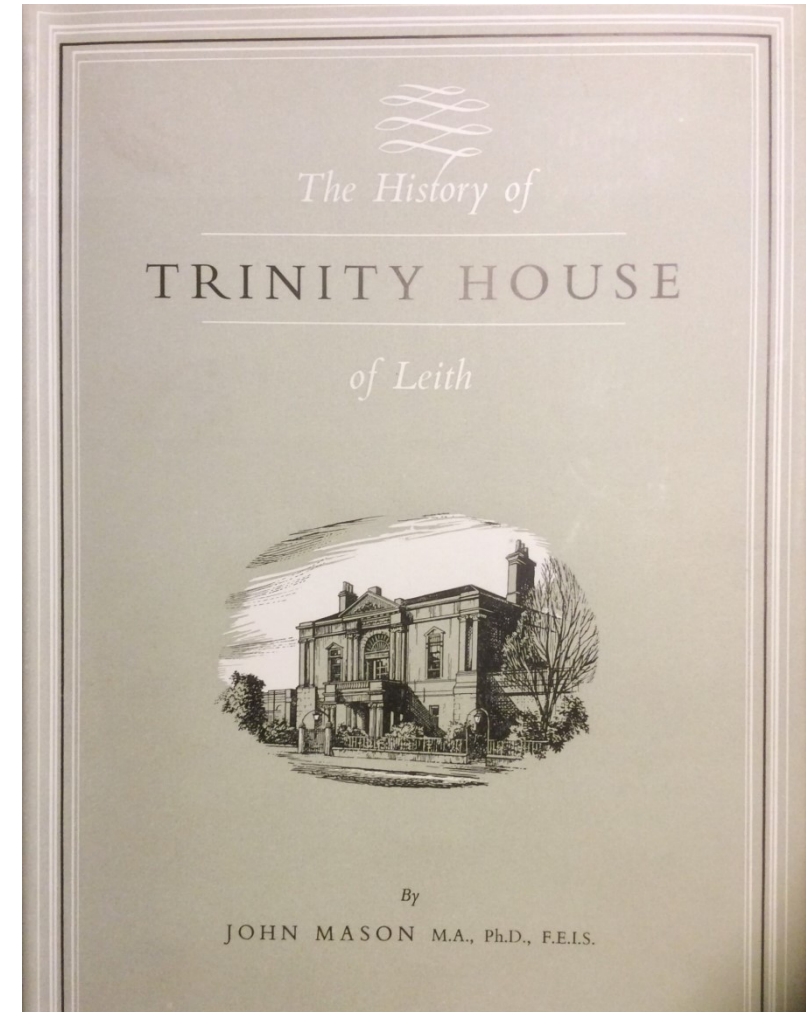
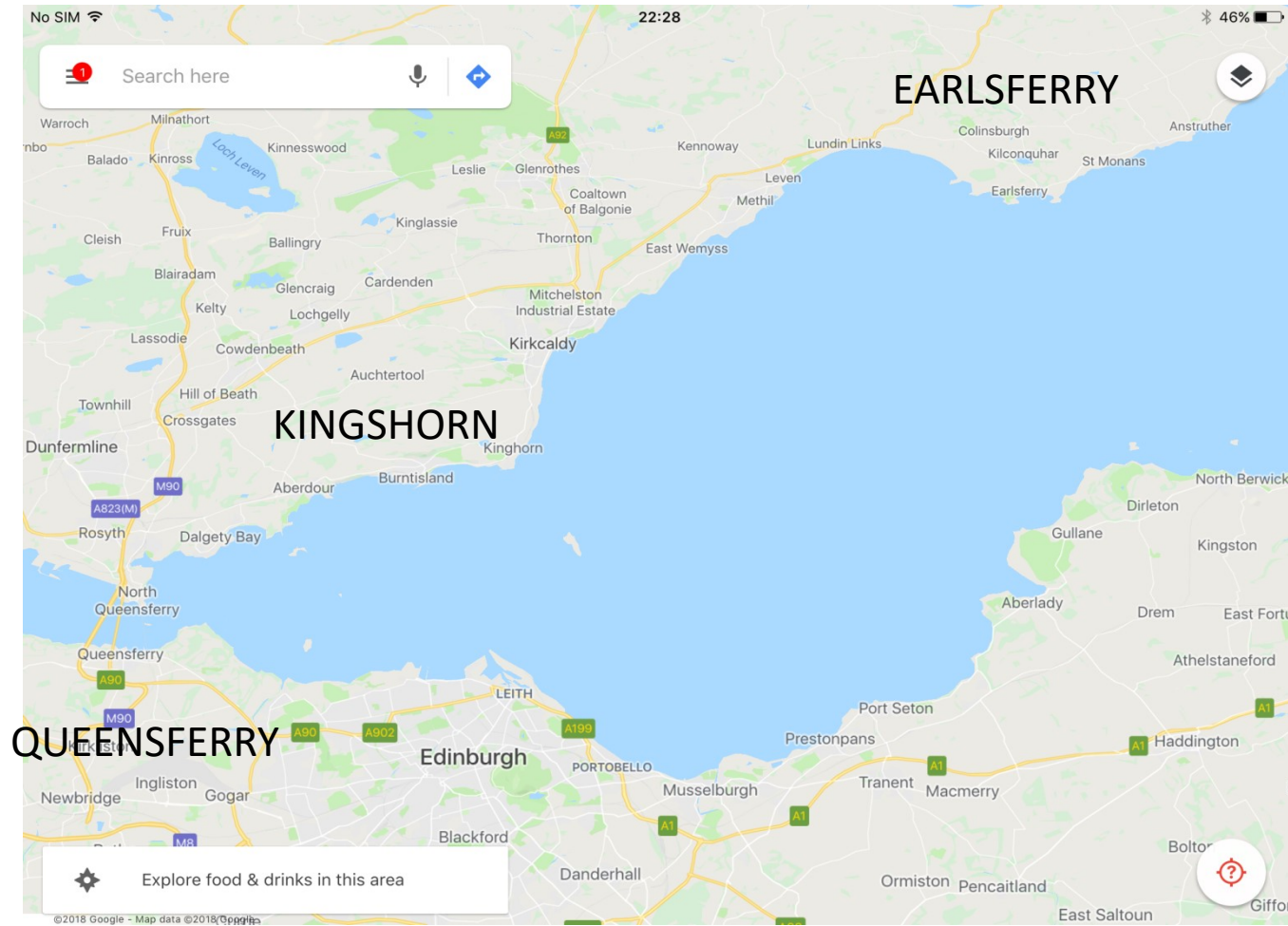
- Much respected School Master
- “South Queensferry has been the scene of many stirring events, both in history and romance. There I know I will find much to interest me and occupy my mind” – July 1922
- Founded museum in April 1951

# Mason Connections ??

- **Dr John Mason** – Queensferry museum founder
- **John Masson** – last captain of the Kapunda
- **Richard A. Mason** - Last captain of the Ferry boats (Denny's)



# Dr. John Mason - Seafaring background

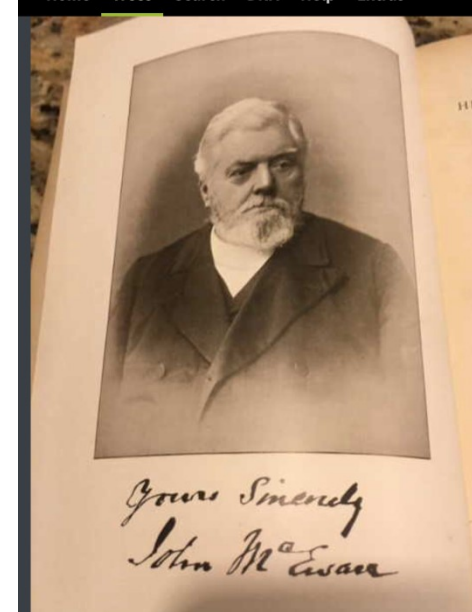


# Kapunda Model Sponsor – J.R. McEwan



Portrait courtesy of  
Mrs Tricia Irish

- Lt. Comdr. John Robert Anderson 'Jack' McEwan RNR
- Father: Rev. John McEwan of John Knox's Church, Edinburgh
- Born 1865 in Edinburgh
- 1884 : Apprentice sailor aboard the S.S. Kapunda to Sydney, NSW
- Superintendent of Fisheries Board Scotland 1907
- WW1: Maritime patrol & mine sweepers
- Awarded OBE in 1921 for services
- Died 1942
- Brother was Dr. William McEwan, PrestonPans Regatta.



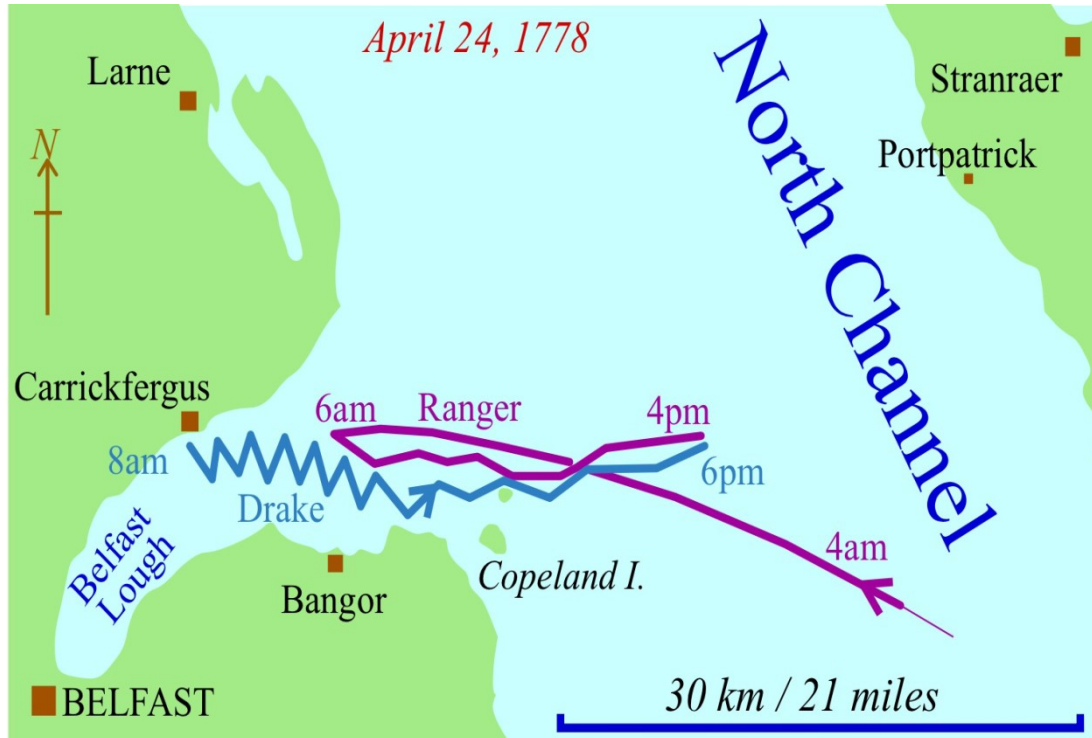
# Other Significant Scottish emigrants.



- David Mitchell had emigrated to gold rich Melbourne in 1852
- Returned as Australian Commissioner to Colonial Exhibition in London (1886)
- Daughter Helen Porter Mitchell (Opera Diva Dame Nellie Melba)
- Funded his sister, Annie **Sheriff**, and her family to sail to Australia aboard the Kapunda.



Ada Melmore – Capt. Milliken history.  
1778: Jean Paul Jones, USS Ranger  
attacks HMS Drake off Carrickfergus





## 1779: John Paul Jones attacks the Forth & Leith



**Rev. Sheriff 'Shirra'**

# Guardship in Forth – Commander Kingscote

## HMS Lord Warden



## Loan House



# Future?



- A better position for the model in the museum?
- An expanded exhibition round her?
- More on Queensferry seafaring connections.
- Emigration stories
- Booklet?

# Acknowledgments

- Queensferry Museum
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- National Archives (Kew)
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- National Maritime Museum of  
Scotland
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