

THE LOCH TAY

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I first got drawn into the world of magic lanterns and their slides about 20 years ago while clearing out my father's house after he developed dementia and had to go into care. I had known that he used an old mahogany lantern for lectures he gave at adult education classes but this phase of his life had commenced long after I had flown the nest and, given his mental state, he was unable to enlighten me as to the whereabouts of the lantern and, presumably, other slides that had been in his possession.

However, some slides remained, some of which I rescued from the rubbish skip where my brother-in-law had discarded them. Amongst these were around 70 slides of views of Melbourne, Geelong and the Otways (Victoria, Australia), some dated to around 1893-94, which piqued my interest. I borrowed a lantern and did a presentation of these slides to the local Historical Society and the rest, to coin a phrase, is history.

Possibly my favourite slide from this group shows two three-masted wool clipper ships moored at one of the wharves at Geelong (Fig. 1). Also rescued along with the slides were several boxes of half-plate negatives, one of which contained six photographs of shipping at Geelong. I thought it might be interesting to compare the finished lantern slide with the original negative, giving perhaps some insight into the mind of the slide maker as to what was considered the ideal image to be taken from the larger negative. Perhaps it might also be interesting to include some of the history of the part the clippers played in the wool trade between Great



1. *The Loch Tay at the Yarra Street Wharves, Geelong*

2. *Close up of section of Fig. 1 showing name of the clipper*



Britain and Australia at the time. Scanning the slide at high resolution enabled me to identify one of the clippers, the *Loch Tay* (Fig. 2). A further slide in this group shows three ships moored at the wharf (Fig. 3). A comparison of these two slides shows that the two prints are taken from the same negative, but each concentrating on a different section of the original photograph.

From here I moved to the half-plate negatives which I had always thought contained the original of the *Loch Tay* slides. This, unfortunately, was not to be. One negative (Fig. 4) is a photograph of wool clippers at the same wharf, the Yarra Street Wharf, but possibly later than the *Loch Tay* photograph as it now shows a small building on the wharf which is not evident in the other photograph. Here again it is possible to identify one of the wool clippers: the one on the left of the photograph is the *Loch Katrine*, a sister ship of the *Loch Tay*.

A book published in 1966 relates the author's experiences on a voyage of the *Loch Tay* from Melbourne to Glasgow in 1892. George Calcutt was apprenticed to the ship in 1892 at the age of 15 and sailed six and a half times around the world in her before leaving at the age of 21 to become First Mate on another vessel.¹

The *Loch Tay* was built upon the River Clyde in Scotland by Barclay Curle and launched in October 1869. She had an iron hull and was 225 feet in length with a tonnage of 1,191 ton.

She was owned and operated by the Glasgow Shipping Company who merged with the General Shipping Company to become The Loch Line, operating 25 ships named after Scottish lochs.

According to Calcutt, the *Loch Tay* made one voyage a year to Australia. In the voyage described by Calcutt, the *Loch Tay* sailed from Victoria to London with a cargo of wool, taking 82 days, the second fastest journey recorded by the ship, the fastest being 73 days. On arrival at London the cargo of wool was unloaded and a cargo of cement taken aboard for Glasgow. While in Glasgow she was refurbished and then loaded with general cargo for Melbourne, picking up a consignment of gunpowder and explosives on the way.

The *Loch Tay* was converted to a barque in the late 1890s and in 1910 was sold to a Melbourne shipping firm and used as a coal hulk at Port Adelaide until she was broken up in the early 1960s.



4. *Positive scan of half-plate negative of Yarra Street Wharves*



3. *Different print from the same negative from which the slide in Fig. 1 was taken*

1. George Calcutt, *Voyage of the Loch Tay: Melbourne to Glasgow aboard a famous Australian wool clipper*, Maritime Historical Productions, Melbourne, 1966