

## Navigating through the Centuries

The passenger steamer *SS Warrimoo* was quietly knifing its way through the waters of the mid Pacific, on its way from Vancouver to Australia.

The navigator had just finished working out a star fix and brought the master, Captain John Phillips, the results.

The *Warrimoo's* position was Latitude 0 degrees - 31 minutes North and Longitude 179 degrees - 30 minutes West. The date was the 30 December 1899.

"Know what this means?" first mate Dayldon broke in. "We're only a few miles from the intersection of the Equator and the International Date Line".

Captain Phillips was prankish enough to take full advantage of the opportunity for achieving the navigational freak of a lifetime. He called his navigators to the bridge to check and double check the ships position.

He changed course slightly so as to bear directly on his mark. Then he adjusted the engine speed.

The calm weather and the clear night worked in his favour. At midnight the *Warrimoo* lay on the Equator at exactly the point where it crossed the International Date Line!

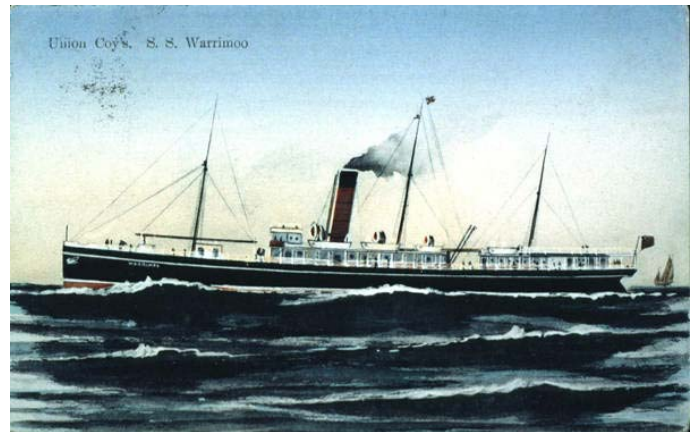
The consequences of this bizarre position were many.

The forward part of the ship was in the Southern Hemisphere and in the middle of summer.

The stern was in the Northern Hemisphere and in the middle of winter.

The date in the after part of the ship was 30 December 1899.

Forward, it was 1 January 1900.



The ship was therefore not only in two different days, two different months, two different seasons and two different years, but in two different centuries - all at the same time.

Whilst the passengers missed out on a New Year's Eve celebration, and one entire day, 31 December, disappeared from their lives, the people aboard *Warrimoo* were, undoubtedly, the first to greet the new century.

(Ref: The Australian Water Transport 'Log Book' No 85 - June 1998, Page 7)

*The above contribution, which I hadn't seen before, was forwarded by Rodney Burnet and seems to have been circulated by Vintage Port, an internet group for ex Port Liners.*

*I found a slightly longer version on the net, at*

[www.prweb.com/releases/2004/11/prwebs181111.htm](http://www.prweb.com/releases/2004/11/prwebs181111.htm)

*and I fear that this splendid anecdote may be apocryphal.*

*Apart from the reference above, which I have been unable to verify, there is a reference to an article by D.A. Clulow, "Towards the Millennium", in Sea Breezes, vol 70, 1996, pp 945-946, which I have also been unable to find. Mr. Clulow is the author of a couple of books on the Manchester Ship Canal and may be an ex Blue Star man.*

*There WAS a "Warrimoo" engaged on that route, in fact Mark Twain travelled from Vancouver to Australia on her in 1895, but I find it strange that there are no earlier references to this incident which I am sure would have entertained the Victorian public as much as it does us. The tale only surfaced as we approached the Millennium.*

*And at that time, of course, the Americans had to get in on the act and their nuclear powered submarine, "USS Topeka" repeated the feat, this time 400ft down, "because of the number of vessels at the surface"!*

*They didn't go as far as to claim which end was in which hemisphere (maybe classified) but I expect that their navigation was a lot more accurate than Capt. Phillips was able to achieve.*

*Great yarn though, and if anyone is able to access those references perhaps they could let us know.*