

Captain James Edward Lelean and his son Captain John Edward Lelean

Document penned by my father FRED LELEAN concerning the death of his grandfather in Mevagissey Bay.

My grandfather James Edward Lelean was drowned in Mevagissey Bay after he retired whilst fishing for pleasure with his friend. The boat he was fishing from was run down by a ship outward bound from one of the China Clay ports (probably Charlestown).

The suspected ship's Captain was interviewed on calling at Falmouth, but he denied any knowledge of running a boat down, but upon examination of the vessel, the tell-tale marks of a collision were found on the ship's stern.. Neither the boat or either of the two occupants were ever washed ashore.

My father Captain John Edward Lelean was drowned in 1901 aged 47 in the sailing ship the Elliott whilst on a voyage from a South American port (probably Valparaiso - Chile) to Boston carrying a cargo of manganese ore. It is suspected that the cargo shifted and the ship capsized as they rounded Cape Horn.

Three other vessels that left South American ports within a day or so also went missing during the hurricane which prevailed around the Cape at that time.

Another vessel caught in the storm did manage to reach Montevideo in a dismasted condition and she remained there for eight months for re-fitting after sails, spars and rigging were sent out from England.

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Captain John Edward Lelean first went to sea at the age of 14 aboard the Delsey. His father Captain James Edward Lelean was the ship's Captain at the time. John Edward Lelean took command of the Delsey at the age of 25 in 1879. A year earlier he had married Louisa Over from a well established Mevagissey family, both were born in 1854. He commanded three ships, the Delsey, the Queen of England and the Elliott

They had three children Edward born in 1881, Louisa (Louie) born 1884 and Fred (my father) born 1891 Because of the accident that befell her husband Louisa Lelean would not allow her sons to go to sea.

Edward moved to London and for a time worked in the Admiralty, before joining Whitbread's Brewery. Louie was a school teacher at Goran six miles from Mevagissey and Fred served his time as an apprentice in his Uncle Steve's blacksmith shop, before also going to London to work as an aircraft engineer with the famous aviator Claude Graham-White at Hendon.

Later during the first world war he moved to Bristol working for the then Ministry of Aircraft Production involved in setting up a factory making aircraft parts. It was whilst in Bristol he met his wife Marjorie Evelyn Oakford, who had been drafted into factory work at aged 19 as all young non working girls were during the first world war. His final job was as the maintenance engineer for the London Electric Wire Company at Leyton, East London.

John Lelean.....11th March 2002