

John Coping of original entry  
to London (Mrs J Wyllie & Co) of Mrs  
Flaccin Wyllie. Signed Agents here

W357810-0035 1/3

October 7<sup>th</sup> 1876.

Union Dock. Suva  
Idowale

This is to certify that J W. H. Norman joined the Caledonia Dock, Idowale, on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1874 as Foreman under Mr Dean Superintendent and that the ship Iskender Shah was under repair and reclassing for the Coolie trade, Captain Brown Surveyor.

On the afternoon of the same day May 1<sup>st</sup> Madoo Babu, Nephew of the proprietor of the Dock who acts as Manager for the said proprietor came to me and enquired if I was the new Foreman. I answered yes. I was then engaged hiring out some outside planking to go in the above ship. He also asked me what I was doing, when after telling him he requested me not to cut the log of timber as there were plenty of planks ready and called my attention to some very bad and shaken timber adding at the same time that it was quite good enough for the vessel and that they did not cut up good timber for that purpose in the dock, as long as the outside was good was all that was required. I refused point blank to do so and finally cut the timber and put the good planks in, at the same time I informed the Superintendent afterwards who was absent at the time what I had done, who told me to do the best for both parties meaning the dock as well as the ship. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> day afterwards I was again called to account about using so much Oakum in Caulking the seams below Copper line, as I would insist of having every seam after being cleaned out well hoisted up before allowing any of the new Oakum going in and as this entailed double labor and a little more expense in material than the people in the Dock (I am speaking now of the Babus who are paid to watch the proprietors interests as much as possible and never mind the ship) could not see it and asked me not to do it, but knowing my trade as a shipwright what the ship required I still continued on in the same way as I had begun, but not without a great deal of grumbling and watching on my part as I was told it was never done so before, simply for the reason that there was no European to watch them and the



superintendent was occupied in going afloat and over to Calcutta daily, my attention was also drawn a great deal at the same time to the bolting which was going on all over the ship that is to say refastening with thro bolts which were of iron, in several instances I caught them driving short bolts or what are called amongst us shipwrights dunnys. I had these taken out again and I never had any suspicion, the bolts were tried and in several instances I found some not more than 4 or 5 inches long, the outside planking being  $4\frac{1}{2}$  + 5 inches, the reason for this I could not find out as they were paid by weight and the only reason I could assign was that after the weight had been taken the long bolts were taken back to the blacksmith's shop and either got short ones in their places or made one bolt into three or four, whichever they thought proper. I do not know what they did or how the work was carried on before I came, but I can simply say that it took all my diligence all my care to look after them and several times have I seen one sent purposely to watch me in this ship as well as others that came into the dock afterwards, I spoke of these things to the Superintendent, Mr. Dean, who said he would look into it, but it was no use making a stir about it as I had not got used to their way in the latter end of this month, May, we started sheathing the "Iskenders" with  $\frac{5}{8}$  sheathing over gal gal a mixture of lime and oil, in several cases while doing the above the sheathing boards were very bad, some very much split, some had been used for other purposes and it was only thro constant attention and flat refusal on my part to use any of the bad wood that I succeeded in getting a tolerably good lot of sheathing on her. I am not speaking in the way of boasting of these things, but simply to prove that what Captain Cator of the "Magnolia" says is untrue. - That the work can be done with only a Superintendent who spends four hours of a morning afloat, and nearly the rest of the day in Calcutta, and not another European in the dock excepting the people that are in the vessel and how little do they know what or how the work is going on with people whose fashions and ways are strange to them. I will now

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speak of another vessel which was docked in the month of June - The "Lady Melville", and as this ship was under a very heavy repair there was full scope to see what could be done in the Caledonia Dock. I can firmly and assuredly say that had not I or some other European shipwright been in the dock they would never have got thro this work.

After the ship had been opened out it was found that she had a great many bad timbers both in Floors 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> + 11<sup>th</sup> futtocks, so that Captain Stewart ordered her to be stripped from the lower deck shell down to the keelson and in several places the upper deck clamp were removed, after all the bad timbers were taken out, then the job was to replace them with good sound timber, some were very difficult, being fore cants requiring a lot of level and very long others being 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> futtocks requiring great crooks for the turn of the bilge and I can solemnly swear that not a timber went into that ship but what I did not measure and level myself and see fitted, I ask again, could this have been done with only a Superintendent in the dock. Even Mr. Dean acknowledges at the time that it was too much for one man to do, how is it now that the work can be done without that person being present, if it required so much looking after then, it does the same now, these men in the dock are no better now, nor are the Native Babus than what they were 12 months ago. Mr. Dean is fully occupied elsewhere, who then must look after the work that it is done so satisfactorily as Captain Cator of the "Magnolia" says, that is the query. In another instance of the "Lady Melville" one of the outside planking under the fore channels port side had been taken out for the Surveyors to see the timbers, after the timbers had been overhauled the new plank was fitted and I mark myself the thro bolts and rag bolts being called away inside for an hour or night he lies on my returning to look into the plank I found it was all bolted off, something extraordinary!!! and it aroused my suspicion. I went inside immediately to look for the thro bolts of that plank when I could find a single one. I ordered the plank to be taken out and to my



surprise there were scarcely a bolt more than  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch or two inches in the timber in the whole length of plank.

In another case of the same ship I caught them drawing out Copper bolts and replacing them with iron - I again made them take the iron bolts out and fill a size larger Copper ones in their place and was only under a promise that they would not do the like again or I would have reported the matter to Captain Stewart, the Surveyor.

This instance occurred in the month of September 1874 just before the general holidays, whether it was for the men's own benefit or whether they were told to do so by the Babus of the Dock I could not find out, but I examined all the bolts afterwards and found them all right. These and several other things occurred which no one unacquainted with them would have any idea and was only in constant attendance and strictly watching them that the work could be done at all satisfactorily, and I feel confident within my own mind that it cannot be done without a European constantly in the dock. Perhaps the question will be asked why did I allow these things to go on without reporting it, I did so to the Superintendent Mr. Dean several times, whose duty I considered was to bring it before the Surveyor, but seeing no alteration I only being in the Dock a few months did not like to make any disturbance in the dock, but to remedy it in the way I thought would be best, by simply watching the work closely and allow nothing to be done without my knowledge and this now little less than 12 months after the above occurrence and by seeing in the papers what occurred between the *Magnolia*, Captain Cator and Captain Stewart that I thought it my duty to the Surveyor to come forward and make the above statement, and am quite willing and able to substantiate the above. Having been six months in the Dock from May the 1<sup>st</sup> to October the 23<sup>rd</sup> should have more knowledge of how the work is carried on than Captain Cator of the *"Magnolia"*, who was only there a few weeks, who perhaps might



have been in the dock a few hours in the first of the morning, but the rest of the day a myth. On October the 23<sup>rd</sup> I left the Caledonia Dock and joined the Calcutta Docking Co's Union Docks where I have been now close on twelve months and I fully concur in what Captain Stewart says that the work cannot be done satisfactorily unless there is a European Foreman in the Dock.

The Undersigned do solemnly swear that the above statement taken given by my hand and to be true in every respect

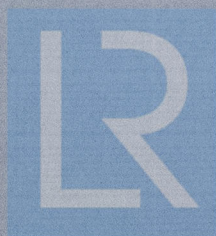
of William Henry Norman.

Assistant to the Union Docks

Dulkea

Howrah.

Dated October the 7<sup>th</sup> 1875.



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