



Captain Henry Stratford Ridley was born in Plymouth, England on 27<sup>th</sup> November 1816 to William White Ridley, a ship-owner and Coal Merchant.

Henry became a Master Mariner, along with at least three of his four brothers, and owned his own vessel, the *Courier*, before emigrating to New Zealand with his wife Violetta and son Henry Stratford jnr, aged 3, on board the *Victory* in 1848. The *Victory* was a freight vessel with approximately 29 passengers, enabling the family to also bring some household effects, including carpet.

Having been involved in shipping, the family settled in Portobello where they purchased land upon which, they understood a vessel was being built. Henry had planned to continue with ship building. The building of the ship was found to be incorrect, the vessel was a whaler which had been beached for repairs and all that remained were the marks on the ground where it had been. Captain Henry had intended to make his home on board until he could build a house but instead made a tent out of the carpets he had brought from England, and set up camp. Eventually they built their first home with windows and doors acquired from spare parts of vessels at Port Chalmers.

He had purchased 20 acres and gradually acquired surrounding land to eventually own 73 acres. He cleared the land and established a farm with a few cattle imported from Melbourne, and later sheep and goats.

Three more sons were born, Walter Fletcher Ridley on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1849, being one of the fourteen earliest births registered in Otago, William White Ridley in 1853 and Charles Edwin Ridley in 1855.

Captain Ridley was involved with both the local church and school. He would take church services as the minister only came once a month, and he gave 10 acres of land to enable the school to be built in Portobello. The law required that the land must be paid for, so he was given £5 which he subsequently gave back as a donation towards furniture.

Back in England, Captain Ridley's father had died in 1858, leaving property to his son Henry Stratford in NZ.

Robinson Ridley, a younger brother to Captain H.S Ridley, continued with their father's business and owning and running a shipbuilding yard, the Cremyl Dockyards across the water from Plymouth. In 1871 he is listed in the census as being a shipbuilder employing 16 boys. One of his sons, Robinson Jnr also became a Master Mariner, taking a vessel to Canada where he eventually lived.

Henry Ridley would take produce from his farm in Portobello across to Port Chalmers to provide for the current vessels in port. On 21st November 1866 there was a severe squall and two boats were capsized, one being that of Captain Ridley and his 11 year old son, Charles Edwin Ridley, who were both drowned. Their grave is in the Port Chalmers old cemetery. The other vessel caught in the storm was a fishing boat with two men aboard, one of whom was drowned.

The previous year, on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1865, a survey party was in the Kelso farming area and the eldest son, Henry Stratford Ridley Jnr, a survey cadet, was drowned at aged 20 after developing cramp during a swim in the Pomahaka River. He is buried in a now unmarked site in a paddock on what was then Ardmore Station.

To date, 37 vessels have been documented as being owned by this Ridley family between 1799 and 1876 with the sons working as Master Mariners.

The Otago Witness , Issue 782, 24 November 1866, Page 11 reports:

An inquest on the remains of Captain **Ridley** was held at the Provincial Hotel, Port Chalmers, on Thursday last, by the Coroner, Dr. O'Donohue. The body was identified by Walter **Ridley**, a son of the deceased, and Mr J. F. Liddle, of the Harbour Department, Mr Pilot Patten said that being informed by a man from the Peninsula that a boat had upset, he gave the alarm, and one of the Harbour whaleboats was immediately launched, and he with five men rowed towards Portobello Peninsula. On nearing the point, they observed a boat swamped, towards which they rowed, and picked two men off her. The men being much exhausted, they were landed at Mr Groves's house ; and the crew then made for the spot where they were informed that Captain **Ridley**'s boat had upset. They found the boat turned

over, but not the bodies; but shortly after, they observed that of Captain **Ridley** floating, which they took into the boat. From the time of picking up the body to reaching Port Chalmers an hour elapsed, and believing Captain **Ridley** to be quite dead, no attempt was made to resuscitate the body before it was handed over to the police. It was too rough to attempt to do so in the boat Sergeant Mallard was at Groves's, and observed Captain **Ridley's** boat upset, about 5.30. The Coroner highly eulogised the promptitude of Pilot Patten and his volunteer crew in rescuing the two fishermen in such a gale of wind, and he pointed out to them the means that should be adopted to restore animation to persons apparently drowned. He did not think the body had been placed in the best position in the boat. The jury returned a verdict of death from drowning.

Prepared by the Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of New Zealand ([www.cemeteries.org.nz](http://www.cemeteries.org.nz)) from PapersPast website and information supplied by family member Doreen Hale of Wanaka.

We have received fuller particulars of the accidents at Port Chalmers on Wednesday, a telegraphic report of which appeared in the "Daily Times" of yesterday. A man living at Port Chalmers Peninsula, from his house observed a boat capsize. He immediately ran to the Port, and acquainted Pilot Patten, who with a crew at once proceeded to Portobello. On reaching the boat, he found two men clinging to it, whom he took into his boat. They proved to be two fishermen, named John Fulham and Charles Hamlyn. There had been with them a third, Mr William Geary, a settler, who sank before Pilot Patten reached them. The rescued men were landed at Mr Groves's house, who informed the Pilot that Captain **Ridley's** boat had capsized, and pointed out the direction. Mr Patten at once proceeded to the spot, found the boat, and shortly afterwards found the body of Captain Ridley floating on the water, apparently dead. It was taken on board, handed over to the police at half-past six o'clock, and taken to the Morgue. On examination, the body was found to be warm, over the region of the heart, and for half-an-hour Dr O'Donohu, Sergeant Mallard, and other members of the police force, endeavored to restore animation by Dr Silvester's method, but without success. The police, with the Custom House boat and crew, although it was blowing hard, proceeded to the sunken boats, and, in addition to some stores, obtained some clothing, and other articles, belonging to Mr Geary, but could find no trace of the bodies. Hamlyn and Fulham state that they left Dunedin at half-past two o'clock in the afternoon, with Mr Geary as a passenger to Portobello. They carried small sails; a double reefed main and foresail, and when near the islands at Port Chalmers, they observed a heavy squall coming, and at once lowered their sails. Mr Geary was holding the peak of the mainsail, when the squall struck them. The wind took it out of his hand, filled the sail, and capsized the boat. They were clinging to the boat about half an hour before they were picked up, and saw Mr Geary about a quarter of an hour previously. Mr Groves states that he saw Captain **Ridley** taking down the sails of his boat when opposite his house, and his son commence pulling towards the shore for nearly half an hour, and lost sight of the boat just as pilot Patten was coming up with the rescued fishermen to his house. Efforts have been made for the recovery of the bodies of the drowned persons, and it is thought young Ridley's may be recovered; but from the nature of the bottom where the other boat capsized, there is little chance of finding that of Mr Geary.