

Thomas R. Bruce - The Life of a Saint (1862-1956)

by Ian Bruce

Thomas Robert Bruce was born at Vinall's House, Napoleon Street, in December 1862, the fifth of George Randal and Sabina Charlotte Bruce, neé Tracy's nine children.¹ He was baptised six weeks later at St James Church by the Rev Henry Whitehead. His father worked all his life on the wharf, eventually rising to become Harbour Master, and Tom (as he was called by all that knew him) spent much of his time in or on the water, learning to swim in a little pool on Jamestown beach called Turtles Pond, which unfortunately no longer exists.²



Figure 1: Tom and his Mother, early 1870s.

From his stories, he was an extremely lively child, for example catching feral cats, then tying tin cans to their tails and releasing them with a clatter across the galvanised roofs of houses in Jamestown. Again, he and his friends apparently enjoyed playing “funerals”, a highly insanitary game using the reusable coffins formally used to bury African slaves who had died in the Liberated African Establishment (1840-1864). These coffins had hinged bottoms that allowed corpses to be dropped into graves – the game comprised lifting the coffin with children lying inside and then unexpectedly springing the bottom open to see whether the occupants would fall out. A still more awful story is about the occasion he and his friends dug teeth from some of the slave graves in Rupert’s Bay in the hope of selling them to the chemist for the manufacture of false teeth.

As a child, Tom would have seen the devastation wrought on Jamestown’s buildings by the ‘white ant’, and he was nearly 16 when his father died in 1878. In November of the following year, his sister [Sarah] Leonora Bruce married the captain of a New Bedford whaler, Frederick Tripp. She emigrated to New Bedford in 1881 and Tom often recounted how he followed her shortly after, boarding an American ship as a stowaway and working his passage to America, regaling the story with a vivid description of the challenges posed when coping with calls of nature on a bucking ship of sail in a stiff wind.⁵ He worked his passage and was landed at Boston. There he managed to persuade US immigration officials to allow him into the country on the proviso he travelled directly to his sister at New Bedford.

Tom always claimed to have crossed the equator 13 times. Documentary evidence has been found for nine equator crossings from 1887 onward. It is therefore presumed that in addition to the above undocumented voyage, he probably made a second unrecorded voyage probably between 1881-7.

The *St Helena Guardian* is an important source of biographical information, and it is apparent from advertisements that Tom was back on the island from around 1887 using his musical and engineering skills to make a living tuning and repairing pianos and

harmoniums, probably operating from his mother's Napoleon Street house. His skill in restoring "an organ all in ruins" at the Cathedral was fully reported by Governor Sterndale.⁴ It is known he led a brass band in America between 1889-1894 (see below), so it is likely he developed an interest as a member of W.D. Grant's brass band in the late 1880s. Another of his hobbies was shooting, and he is mentioned as Treasurer of the St Helena Rifle Association in 1889.

The first documented evidence for Tom's travels (although it was probably his third return trip) is from March 1889, when he sailed to New Bedford on the *Lottie Beard*. Arriving in St Helena roughly twice a year, this American schooner (Captain Marquand) brought goods for the island from the USA and then loaded up with barrels of whale oil etc. previously landed by whalers on Jamestown's wharf. Taking about a dozen passengers on each of her passages to her New Bedford homeport, the *Lottie Beard* was important for Saints emigrating to the USA.⁵ This was usually a one-way trip, the ship seldom taking passengers on her outward voyages to St Helena.



Figure 2: The *Lottie Beard* (left) at New Bedford Quay - note the barrels of whale oil on the dock.

Once again, Tom lived with his recently widowed sister Leonora in several rented houses. Trade directories list him as a machinist and we know from a letter written by one of Leonora's sons that Tom worked at the Morse Twist Drill Company,

operating a drill that was the finest in the plant, it made the very small holes for watches and articles of this character. The work was so very fine and exacting that he finally gave it up as he found it affected his eyesight. He was a man of many talents, he composed and taught music, could play any instrument, in fact, he taught pupils to play the piano, violin, banjo, guitar, and all brass instruments, right at our home; he was the leader of a local brass band and composed some of the marches used by them; he was a wonderful artist. Once he made a marvelous picture of The Last Supper. [...] This immense canvass was on display in the large windows of one of the biggest department stores in New Bedford for a long time. [...] He was quite an amateur magician, and helped out at his Lodge or some ladies' sewing circle at the church.⁶

This mention of "his Lodge" is the earliest documentary evidence we have that Tom was a Freemason. He is certainly known to have been a member of the Napoleon Street lodge No 488 in later years, only a few houses away from his mother's house.⁷ In May 1893, whilst still in America Tom's youngest brother [Narcissus] Campbell Bruce⁸ arrived from St Helena, also on the *Lottie Beard*. He and Leonora continuing to live together for most of the remainder of their lives, Campbell dying in Vancouver in 1974, aged 102.

Documents in New Bedford show Tom embarked for St Helena on the *Lottie Beard* in June 1894. He was the only passenger. The voyage took 64 days and cost \$5.⁹ On his return to St Helena, he immediately published advertisements for repairing and tuning pianos, organs and harmoniums. Within a couple of months, the *Guardian* announced that Tom had repaired the harmonium at the Cathedral.¹⁰ About this time, he and Benjamin Grant, son of the newspaper proprietor, published a musical score under the name "Cleopatra". Tom must have been reasonably well known as a musician because he was employed to teach Dinizulu at Maldivia House in the period up to 1895 - relating this story in later years, Tom described how Dinizulu's

preference was for church music.¹¹ He was appointed Lieutenant and bandmaster of the St James' Church Boy's Drum and Fife Band¹² and acted as Secretary of the St Helena Brass Band¹³.

Tom had a wide breadth of interests at this time. For example, he seems to have enjoyed the occasional game of cricket – a newspaper report in January 1896 shows his St James team beating their opponents by 55 runs to 39¹⁴ – maybe both sides had demon bowlers! He also worked as Assistant Overseer of the Poor Society.¹⁵ Again, he invited the governor onto the wharf to demonstrate a new curing process he had developed for extending the life of locally caught fish, allowing them to be exported at ambient temperatures – the Governor took samples to England, but nothing seems to have come from the idea.¹⁶

In September 1896, a British ship, *Zuleika*, bound for New York unexpectedly called at St Helena to make emergency repairs. Tom seems to have seized the opportunity to travel to America. Marched to the wharf steps by the Drum and Fife Band, his was certainly a memorable farewell.¹⁷ He may have visited his brother and sister at New Bedford; although there is a tradition within the family that he at one time earned a living as a musician in New York. After some months, he sailed to England and from there returned to St Helena on the *Doune Castle* in July 1897.¹⁸

Within six months, Tom had been appointed postmaster with effect from January 1898 on a salary of £100 per annum;¹⁹ the circumstances leading to his appointment are not known. There is no indication that he ever worked for the island's civil service before this time. He was the fourth of his brothers to join the island civil service – George Caleb Bruce was Harbour Master; Charles Bruce was the Registrar and Government Printer, whilst Robert Bruce worked at the Colonial Office in a wide range of positions.²⁰ As was the case for most Government appointments, he was employed on a temporary basis for several years (until 1905). In January 1899, he was required to give a £100 bond for the “due discharge of his duties”, which were guaranteed by W.A. Thorpe and by C.E.S. Grant. In August 1899, Tom was co-opted onto an Industrial Exhibition Committee.

One of his early tasks in March 1899 was to retrieve £8,000 worth of obsolete Queen Victoria stamps for sale to overseas philatelists. Throughout his long career as postmaster, he was paid a 2.5% commission on the face value of all stamps sold to overseas buyers over and above his basic salary. In 1900, his annual salary rose to £125, reflecting the considerable increase in mail volumes following the influx of Boer prisoners and British troops.



Figure 3: Thomas R. Bruce, possibly dressed for his wedding, 1899.

In February 1899, Tom married Ethel Mary Thorpe, eldest daughter of William A. Thorpe, founder of Thorpe's business. The wedding was a big affair and was attended by Governor Sterndale. The honeymoon was spent at one of the Thorpe households, Woodcote. Tom had a house built at Briar's village, possibly the gift of his father-in-law, because he seldom had significant savings. He named the house "Fair View" when he sold it in 1920 and this name will be used hereafter.²¹ It still exists, albeit with many changes, and is today occupied by Mr Fred Williams.

Tom and Ethel had four sons: William Thomas, born January 1900; Stanley Thorpe, born January 1902 (died a year later from acute bronchitis), and twins, Donald and Eric, born May 1904. Ethel must have been very sick indeed during her last pregnancy, because she died at the age of 25 from TB, only three months after the twins' birth. She is buried next to her short-lived son Stanley in the Thorpe family plot at Knollcombe cemetery. Ethel's father took over the upbringing of her three surviving sons from Tom. It is not known how willingly Tom entered into this arrangement, but there is little doubt these sons benefited from an affluent upbringing, private tuition on the island and public school education in England.²²

Sometime before 1903 Tom produced a well-known oil painting of the 1846 rollers catastrophe involving the wrecking of 13 ships off Jamestown harbour (see overleaf for an illustration).²³

Tom little knew that his future second father-in-law, Sergeant George Lovelace, had arrived at St Helena in 1902 working in the army warehouse as part of the Army Service Corps (ASC). George was posted to the island a second time in 1906, this time bringing his wife and six children on the *Braemar Castle*.²⁴ His wife was introduced to Tom at one of the governor's monthly receptions at Plantation House and she made a point of introducing her eldest daughter Edith to Tom at the Post Office the next day, then located at the front of the Castle.²⁵ Despite their age difference (Tom was 26 years older than 15-year-old Edith), the two were soon going for long walks round the island together. Edith later said her parents did nothing to discourage the romance, regarding him as relatively affluent, with several house



Figure 4: Tom's painting of the 1846 rollers catastrophe.

servants and a well-paid job. It should perhaps be added though, that in 1907, coincident with the departure of the last British troops, and in line with pay cuts suffered by many other island civil servants, Tom's salary was reduced by £14 to £126 per annum and he was not to have a wage increase for another 13 years.

Tom and Edith's courtship was rudely interrupted by the fact that in July 1906 Edith's father was caught making a false entry on a return.²⁶ This was rapidly followed by a string of other offences - the army threw the book at him! He was court-martialled in August, reduced to the ranks and ordered back to Britain on the next available ship. Tom and Edith rapidly announced their engagement before she returned to England with her family in early September (still being described as one of seven children in the island newspaper²⁷).

Tom must have wondered whether he would ever see Edith again, but Edith received no discouragement from her parents and she set off for St Helena in the *RMS Galeka* nearly two years later in April 1908.²⁸ Unbeknown to Edith, the previous February Tom had obtained special dispensation from Bishop Edward Cannan to marry without banns, enabling the couple to be married the day she arrived, the congregation comprising in fairly equal numbers his family and

friends on his side and a great many of the ship's passengers on her side of the church.²⁹ They lived at Briars in 'Fine View' house, where my father Norman Tracy Bruce, was born in July 1909, the birth being assisted by Dr Arnold. The following year the family moved to the house of Tom's birth in Napoleon Street, so they could take care of his elderly mother. After the birth of their second child George in September 1910, Edith was sufficiently run down for Dr Arnold to send her to New Longwood House, then being used as a sanatorium, for two to three months. Her condition may not have been helped by the fact that whilst she was looking after her mother-in-law during her pregnancy, Tom was heavily involved in forming Bruce's brass band, which first performed in February 1910.³⁰ In addition, about this time, he was described as "an active and energetic deputy" to Dr Arnold (then the acting Governor) at the Overseas Club.³¹ At all events, Tom's sister, Sabina Vinall, returned from Vancouver to take care of their mother (Sabina continued to live at the house until her death in 1945).

Tom and Edith's third child Ronald, today the only surviving member of his generation, was born in September 1912. A few months later, the family moved to the Officers Quarters (now the Pilling Primary School). It is believed, that the Post Office moved from its position in front of the Castle to its present location in Main Street towards the end of 1914.³² With the outbreak of war, a garrison of troops was brought in. The army therefore needed the Officers Quarters and so, following the birth of their first daughter Vera in December of that year, the family moved to the first floor of the Post Office. Tom was given free quarters and it is suspected the same may have been true for his rooms at the Officers Quarters.

My father recalled that all their food was cooked on woodstoves with internal light provided by paraffin lamps and candles, and that all water for cooking and washing was sourced from filtered water in tanks run off the Post Office roof. The First World War seems to have shaken few parts of the British Empire less than St Helena and there was considerable social life with parties, gatherings and a monthly invitation to Plantation House for government officials. Tom's brass band regularly played under the trees at the top of Main



Figure 5: The family photographed on the Balcony.

Street and sometimes from the family's first floor balcony at the Post Office. Performances were usually timed to coincide with the full moon so that players could better read their scores. Tom was able to send off for uniforms with money raised from these concerts.

The adjacent image shows the band leading the troops on the fourth anniversary of the outbreak of the war - it looks a festive, rather than a mournful, occasion.³³

Two other children were born to Tom and Edith at the Post Office - Ada in 1918 and Ernie in 1922. In addition to his brass band interests, Tom was also involved in several other activities. For example, he remained a member of the Overseas Club and is recorded as entering shooting competitions in 1920. He was also appointed manager of the St Helena Savings Fund (later named the Savings Bank) in November 1920 at an annual salary of £40.

Because of his brother Robert's many other responsibilities, Tom was unofficially delegated to work as Harbour Master some time after



Figure 6: Bruce's band leading the Garrison, 4 August 1918.

Robert was appointed to that position in 1903.³⁴ As a result, Tom was heavily involved in the wreckage of the Norwegian ship *The Spangereid* (captain Thorstensen), a large iron sailing ship, in September 1920. Carrying a cargo of coal that caught fire, the ship was manoeuvred close to the shore, so that it sunk with about six foot of decking above sea level. Dynamite was then used to open a hole, enabling a large proportion of the cargo to be extracted using a make-piece grab made out of two steel plates. Nevertheless, many Saints were also able to gather large quantities of coal washed up onto the beach over the succeeding months.³⁵ Considerable quantities of goods were also rescued and were auctioned off the following November "under the trees" - purchasers were required to pay customs duties on all items, which were deemed as imports.³⁶

Because of his artistic skills, Tom was asked to submit designs for a stamp to celebrate the end of the war. Tom's rough designs for the peace stamp, the first to feature the ship and rocks badge emblem, were discovered by the St Helena Museum in 2005.³⁷ This never came

to anything, but several years later Tom was asked to create a design to replace the 1912 George V edition. Featuring several similarities in design to the Peace stamp and issued in 1922, this was used for the next 15 years until the crowning of George VI. Tom never received payment for his work, which was assumed to form part of his duties as Postmaster.



Figure 7: Tom's 1919 and 1922 stamp designs.

The departure of Tom and his family from St Helena stretched over a period of eleven years and is described here in some detail, as it illustrates the unusual employment situation at that time, namely that in the 1920s a much better living could be made on St Helena than in England. The decision to leave the island was made following advice from Dr Arnold that their eldest daughter Vera, who was frail with a heart condition, would receive better medical attention in England. A visit by Edith's mother in 1920/1 provided the opportunity for Vera to be taken to England. They decided Vera's eldest brother (my father) should accompany her on *The Braemar Castle* in February 1921. A tape left by Edith makes clear that it was planned the whole family would shortly follow these two children, initially with Edith setting up a home whilst Tom sent money out from St Helena. However, this plan was delayed by Edith's pregnancy with her last child, Ernie. Disaster struck during this period when their house at Briars village was badly damaged by fire.

If this fire was a disaster, much worse was to follow. Around the time that Edith and her four remaining children finally left the island in April 1922, her father was briefly jailed for embezzling money at the sub-post office he and his wife were running outside Chichester. Edith's mother and eight children (Vera, my father, plus six of Edith's younger siblings) were forced to move to a small house. Edith and her children arrived shortly after. All her money Edith appears to have been used to pay off the debts arising from her father's conviction. Edith therefore had no choice other than to move herself and her four remaining children in with her mother.

The household was now so crowded (two adults and 12 children), that my father and his two boisterous younger brothers had to live outside, sheltering from the winter in an upturned packing case, only being allowed indoors to sleep. For relatively affluent children used to the mild St Helena climate, this was hard enough, but far worse was the fact that there was so little money in the household, that my father and his two brothers spent much of their free time scavenging for food out of dustbins and grubbing root vegetables from nearby fields. Lacking funds, an immediate return to St Helena was not an option. It took several months before Tom could raise enough money from the island to allow Edith to extricate her family, moving to a series of rented houses along the south coast between Littlehampton and Worthing. Money was always short thereafter, but never as critically scarce as when she lived with her mother.

Meanwhile, on St Helena Tom disposed of most of the furniture by auction, from which it is inferred he no longer qualified to have the post office accommodation, and so moved in with his sister at Vinall's House. His stay was lengthened by the need to send Edith fresh funds but he eventually resigned as Postmaster in April 1923. A most unusual document dated the 5th April bears the signatures of 21 members of Tom's Freemasonry lodge expressing their sincere regret at his departure and wishing him a safe and happy reunion with his family. One of the signatories of this document was his eldest son Willie. A few days later, the brass band played a farewell concert in Tom's honour.

In May 1923 Tom left St Helena on the *Guildford Castle*, for what he thought was the last time, accompanied by his brother Robert and family who were emigrating to America. The departure of these two talented brothers was greeted with some dismay by the newspaper. Commenting on Tom, the *Guardian* stated,

During his tenure of office his department has been marked by the highest efficiency combined with altogether exceptional consideration for the convenience of the public. Outside his official duties Mr Bruce is a man of many accomplishments. He has acquired a high degree of skill in music and painting. To his energy and enthusiasm in the face of much lack of support, we owe the existence of the only band St Helena possesses. [...] It should be gratifying to him to leave behind him a gratifying and graceful memorial in his own department. In any work requiring mechanical skill Mr Bruce was at home and in many other ways showed originality and ability.

The *Guardian* stated that

During this long and faithful stewardship he has made many friends and we can add, what is most unusual in a small place like St Helena namely, that during that lengthy period has made no enemies. Always cheerful, courteous and ready to oblige he has been an ideal official [...].³⁸

When reunited with his family at Littlehampton, Tom rapidly realised the difficulties he faced to earn sufficient to support his family, concluding he could earn more in St Helena. He returned to the island on the *Guildford Castle* in October 1923 and immediately placed advertisements in the local newspaper offering his services as a piano and organ tuner. A few months later, in February 1924, Tom was exceptionally lucky and regained his old job as Postmaster. This followed the resignation of George Moss, who had had difficulties travelling each day from his country house to Jamestown. Tom's reappointment was dated from 1 February; his salary remained unchanged at £190 per annum and his duties again included the management of the Savings Bank. All known philatelic sources fail to mention this nine-month break in his service as Postmaster.

Tom also received a letter in February 1924 from the Home Office in London advising he was to receive the Imperial Service Medal in recognition of his long service as Post Master. The presentation was made by the Prince of Wales, the future Edward VIII, the following June. The following October, Tom finally succeeded in selling his Fair View house to Mrs Alice Benjamin for the princely sum of £25.

He reached his 65th birthday on 4 December 1927, but worked an additional year beyond this – his annual pension of £84.11s.8d dates from 7 January 1929, although the records show he finished work a few weeks later, on 31 January. There is no record of his departure from St Helena, but it is very likely he left about February 1929. Once again, he must have thought this would be the last time he would see the island.

Arriving back in England to his family, now living in Worthing, Tom yet again found it difficult to find sufficient work. Discussing their options, Edith's mother suggested the family should move to Croydon in South London, then a rapidly expanding town, where job prospects should be better. Whilst Croydon was certainly a better location for their children to find work, at his age and in the teeth of the great depression, Tom was eventually forced back to the conclusion he could probably bring more money into the household from St Helena than Croydon. He sailed from London in December 1929, again on the *Guildford Castle*, and worked on the island for the next 18 months, this time as a general engineer and carpenter. His final sight of St Helena was from the decks of the *Llangibby Castle* on 14 June 1931.

He moved his family from central Croydon to nearby Norbury, until finally moving a few miles away to Thornton Heath in 1933/34. He continued to earn a little extra tuning pianos, his pension from St Helena remaining unchanged until the day he died.

Apart from growing potatoes amongst Edith's flowers, somewhat to her irritation, Tom was never much interested in gardening. His interests continued to lie in the area of engineering. He built a large wooden shed that he used as a workshop and carpentry shop,

equipping it with a wood and metal lathe with which he spent many happy hours working/playing. He created a large assembly of model ships set at full sail in corked bottles and, with his active mind, regularly drew up designs for perpetual motion machines, normally based on rolling ball bearings. He even once wrote to the War Office during the war with a snorkel-style idea enabling British submarines to extend their period submerged.

For leisure, Tom also enjoyed the football pools, making several small wins that buoyed his optimism and, in the 1950s, was introduced to the wonders of television. By this time, most of my generation knew both our grandparents very well. He was always keen to show us his photograph albums of St Helena and we all have strong memories of seeing images of an island with strangely shaped rocks named Lot and Lot's Wife, barren mountain slopes and a heart-shaped waterfall.

I well remember a small party in December 1956 given by Edith to celebrate Tom's 94th birthday. By this time, he was a little frail but still very alert and ambitious to reach his one-hundredth birthday. To the end, he would do physical exercises and was always able to touch his toes. Alas, a few days later over the Christmas period he developed acute prostrate problems and died several days later. Edith spent much of next two decades visiting friends and relatives, eventually dying in November 1975. Tom and Edith are buried together at Croydon cemetery, Tom's deepest desire, to someday return to the island of his birth, remaining unfulfilled. ∞

Notes and References:

1. Vinall's House is located opposite the Community Centre on Napoleon Street and is named after Mrs Sabina Vinall, Tom's eldest sister, who continued to live there until her death in January 1945.
2. Turtles Pond was still in existence during my father's day. He described the way the sea flowed over the top of the rocks, keeping the pool water fresh. My father related that it was destroyed by a rock fall caused by the vibration of guns being fired in the cliffs above – this probably occurred during the First World War. Thereafter my father and his brothers had to walk round the headland to Rupert's Bay for their swimming.
3. For obvious reasons, there is no documentary proof at St Helena of this voyage and neither the precise date nor name of the ship are known.
4. R.A. Sterndale, *Sancta Helena: An Island "In Extremis"* (London: 1897).

5. An article about the importance of the *Lottie Beard* to the island was published in the *St Helena Guardian*, 2 April 1891. As an example of her cargo, the 20 September 1894 edition of this newspaper stated the *Lottie Beard* had left for New Bedford with 453 barrels of fish oil comprising 180 barrels of sperm oil from the *Sunbeam*, 267 barrels of sperm and fish oil from the *Platina* and six barrels of black fish oil from the *Greyhound*. Documentation at the New Bedford Whaling Museum also shows that a proportion of goods carried on the ship was specifically earmarked for a number of Saints who had previously placed orders from St Helena.
6. Letter written by one of Leonora's sons, Will Tripp, in the 1960's.
7. The present day lodge still use an undated Mark Master Lodge Scroll bearing Tom's signature as the painter.
8. Family tradition tells that his harbour master father, who was very friendly with the master of the ship *Narcissus*, gave Narcissus Campbell Bruce his first name.
9. New Bedford Whaling Museum, Ship Logs, *Lottie Beard*. The log showed the ship was becalmed off the American coast for several days and had to be towed out to sea by a steam ship. Tom's arrival was reported in the *St Helena Guardian*, 6 September 1894.
10. *St Helena Guardian*, 4 October 1894.
11. This Dinizulu story is sourced from family history; no documentary evidence has been found for this claim. According to Barbara George, who is presently researching Dinizulu, he moved from Maldivia House to Francis Plain in 1895 - it seems unlikely Tom would have travelled there from Jamestown to teach the piano.
12. *St Helena Guardian*, 16 January 1896.
13. *St Helena Guardian*, 23 April 1896.
14. *St Helena Guardian*, 2 January 1896.
15. For example, *St Helena Guardian*, 16 April 1896.
16. *St Helena Guardian*, 21 May 1896.
17. *St Helena Guardian*, 7 September 1896.
18. Castle Line passenger lists, *Donne Castle*, 1897 sourced from www.findmypast.com - all other ship embarkation documents are derived from the same source; Tom's arrival reported in *St Helena Guardian*, 8 July 1897.
19. All records regarding Tom's employment have been sourced from government 'Blue Book' at the St Helena Government Archives, Jamestown.
20. See *Wirebird*, No 36, Spring 2008, p.16-21 for article by Robert Bruce, 'Memories of the Early Island Civil Service'.
21. Confusingly, the house was normally referred to as 'The Briars' within the family, a name that is still used by Fred Williams, but which is all too easily confused with name of the village and with Briars Pavilion.
22. William Bruce, known as 'Willie' by the family, married Caroline Grant in 1926 and remained on St Helena, working at Cable & Wireless until his early death in 1946. Donald and Eric Bruce were witnesses to William A. Thorpe's death from a fall down a precipice in 1918 and both eventually left St Helena. Donald worked as a clerk at Chelmsford Hospital. Eric subsequent life is unclear, since he gave contradictory claims and tales about his wartime activities and later career. He died in South Africa.
23. This painting is portrayed in several books, the earliest of which is Emily L.

Jackson's somewhat chaotic *St Helena the Historic Island* (London: Jackson, Ward Lock & Co, 1903). It is illustrated opposite p.16 and discussed on p.250. The painting's present whereabouts are unknown.

24. *Braemar Castle* embarkation papers; *St Helena Guardian*, 6 January 1906.

25. The location of the Post Office is clearly described by Emily Jackson in *St Helena the Historic Island*, p.158. The post office was located on the wharf at an earlier period, possibly near the Customs House.

26. Army records kept for soldiers discharged from the First World War, recorded on microfilm stored at the Public Record Office, Kew, London.

27. *St Helena Guardian*, 7 October 1906.

28. RMS *Galeka* embarkation documents, April 1908; *St Helena Guardian*, 23 April 1908.

29. The marriage certificate and all the documents created ahead of the marriage, including the *Galeka*'s passenger manifest, gives Edith Lovelace's age as 18, but she was actually only 17 when she married.

30. The first performance by the band was reported in the *St Helena Guardian* on the 17 February 1910. On the 14 April of that year, the newspaper reported Tom playing a most unusual brass instrument, a tubeophone.

31. *St Helena Guardian*, 12 October 1911. The Overseas Club was a patriotic association of members who had travelled and lived abroad and that welcomed visitors into its folds.

32. The present Post Office was for many years used as the Officer's Mess. After the final withdrawal of the garrison in 1907 it was used as the Government Lace School. Hugh Crallan's authoritative 1974 report "Island of St Helena - Listing and Preservation of Buildings of Architectural and Historic Interest" unfortunately mistakenly describes it as a "fine building, originally the Officer's Mess and designed by a Victorian military engineer". However, it is at least 50 years older than this, as demonstrated in Robin Castell's *St Helena Illustrated* (1998), which includes a 1787 drawing of the building by Ozias Humphrey, when it was the Lieutenant General's house.

33. It would be interesting to know why this procession assembled on this date. It is difficult to believe the outbreak of this terrible war was actually being celebrated.

34. This is family tradition - no St Helena government documentary evidence that Robert's delegated his Harbour Master duties to Tom have been found.

35. I heard this story about the *Spangereid* from my father, who happened to be one of the first to see the burning ship from the wharf as it approached the island - he also vividly recalled the stupendous sight of three visiting German dreadnoughts some years earlier in February 1914.

36. *St Helena Guardian*, 6 November 1921.

37. The origin of St Helena's ship and rocks badge is uncertain. In 1910, the Colonial Office published an official book of British overseas flags, badges and arms showing a ship with four furled sails on the fore and mid masts and three sails on the rear mast. This pattern of sails was used on the 1913 *St Helena Almanac* and on Tom's 1922 stamp. It is still used to the present day.

38. *St Helena Guardian*, 17 March 1923 and 5 May 1923.