

Vivid memoir of salty life

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From floggings to family discovery, a Mapua man has undergone a fascinating voyage while researching a 108-year-old memoir written by his seafaring ancestor.

The story of Alastair Rose's great grandfather, sea captain Henry Rose, tells of 19th Century sailing ships carrying troops to the Crimean War, Asian labourers to South America and convicts to Australia and settlers to New Zealand.

Henry's memoir has been fleshed out with colourful descriptions of a hard life at sea. Illustrations and much extra research by Nelson writer and historian Karen Stade has produced a book called *Driven by the Wind*.

Alastair spent much of the past two years working with Karen on the book while fellow Mapua resident Paul Bensemann helped in the editing.

Alastair, a retired orchardist said upon first learning of Henry's memoirs, the family had been intrigued by the same two questions arising from the first sentence: "I was born in Mompox, Colombia, South America on the 5th of December, 1833".

"Where is Mompox, and what on earth were Henry's parents doing there?"

Through Stade's patient research it was discovered that Britons had been part of General Simon

Bolivar's Army of Liberation, which fought Spain for the independence of Colombia. A growing ex-pat English community built up around the British military operations and Henry's father was a clerk in the War Office in Mompox (a town in northern Colombia).

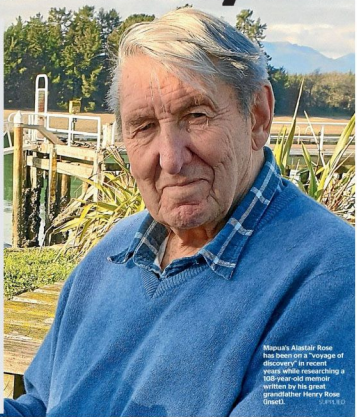
Henry was an incredibly brave and determined young man beginning as cabin boy at age 14, ship's apprentice just shy of his 16th birthday, third mate at 18, second mate at 20, first mate at 22, and master at 24 before taking command of his first ship at 26.

As a third mate, Henry witnessed four convicts being sentenced to 24 lashes each with the 'cat-o-nine-tails' for breaking into a storeroom and stealing rum.

"I had never seen a man flogged... I wrote, 'I shall never forget it'."

Alastair hopes his great grandfather's story will not only give family members and others a glimpse into life on sailing ships, but also an inspiration about 'the adventures which might await if you have the courage to follow your dream'.

Driven by the Wind, the Memoir of Captain Henry Rose, is being launched at the Mapua Boat Club, Mapua Wharf, at 2pm on Sunday, August 11.



Mapua's Alastair Rose has been on a "voyage of discovery" in recent years while researching a 108-year-old memoir written by his great grandfather Henry Rose (inset).