

Now there IS a Model of The Cospatrick

My wife and I lived in Fifield until a few years ago when we moved to the Hartrigg Oaks retirement community in York.

During our time at Fifield I was intrigued to read the inscription on the memorial on the green at Shipton-under-Wychwood. It commemorates the death of seventeen persons from the village comprising three generations of two linked families, the Townsends and the Hedges. They were among the passengers on a ship called the 'Cospatrick' which sailed from London in September 1874 carrying a large number of poverty-stricken agricultural workers on assisted passages to New Zealand where they all hoped to establish better lives for themselves.

A Terrible Tragedy

For a full history of the 'Cospatrick' see *The Wychwood* Feb/March 2005. Shortly after midnight on 17th November 1874 when the ship was about 220 miles south-west of the Cape of Good Hope she caught fire; the fire spread quite rapidly in this wooden ship. Tragically there were only three survivors from among the 479 persons who were aboard and the cause of the fire was never established. The 'Cospatrick' had been built in Burma in 1856 and was constructed of teak. She was originally owned by David Dunbar of London and had been named after one of his ancestors, the Earl of Northumberland. She had been bought in 1873 by the



Shaw-Savill line who used her regularly for their New Zealand trade.

The Model

To the best of my knowledge there was no model in existence. After visits to the Maritime Museum

at Greenwich it became clear that there were no plans of the ship either. I had a small copy of a photograph taken at Gravesend just before her final voyage and using that I drew my own plans, laid off sections from which the shapes of the ribs (or frames) could be drawn and, eventually laid down the keel. I had the dimensions from the Board of Trade report, and so I was able slowly to build up the hull by planks on the frames - all done to scale.

The masting and rigging presented many problems, but a book entitled *The Masting and Rigging of the Clipper ship and the Ocean Carrier* was able to give me the information I needed.

The model was finally completed in April of this year. Many of the residents at Hartrigg Oaks became interested in the story of the ship and its historical significance, as well as in the model itself and asked if the model might stay here in York.

It is my hope that eventually the model might be housed somewhere in the Wychwoods where it may be seen and complement the memorial on the green.

Arthur Ashton