Abandoned ship
Where are the crew and passengers?

14 December 1872

Yesterday morning people saw a small sailing ship enter the Bay of Gibraltar. This was not an unusual sight, but the sailors on board were from another ship. The captain of this ship, his wife and child, and the original crew were all missing.

The 31-metre *Mary Celeste* left New York on 7 November and was sailing across the Atlantic to Italy. On board were Captain Benjamin Briggs, his wife Sarah and their two-year-old daughter, Sophie. There were also seven crew members, making a total of ten people. The cargo included 1,701 barrels of industrial alcohol.

A week later another ship, the *Dei Gratia*, left New York for Italy. Captain Morehouse spotted the *Mary Celeste* off the coast of Portugal. He saw that the ship was out of control. He was surprised, he was a friend of Captain Briggs and knew he was a good seaman. He watched the ship for two hours and tried to make contact but there was no reply. The captain decided to send some of his sailors in a small boat to the *Mary Celeste* to have a look.

They found that the ship was in good condition but there was nobody on the ship. Special equipment and all the ship's papers were missing, except the captain's logbook. One of the sailors said, "There was a lot of water inside the ship and the captain's bed was all wet. Also the galley was in a bad state - the cooking pots were everywhere and the cooking stove was knocked over. It looked like they left in a hurry – they didn't take their boots. Perhaps they thought the ship was going to sink."

So how did they leave? The sailor added, "There were no dinghies on board. Also there were ropes hanging over the side, and one was broken. Perhaps they got into a dinghy and the rope broke in bad weather." Captain Morehouse said that the weather was very bad with strong winds and rain before they found the boat. He put half of his sailors on the empty boat and brought it to Gibraltar.

However, why the crew and passengers left the ship and what happened to them next is a mystery.

Abandoned ship
'Ghost boat' found with no crew.

20 April 2007

Yesterday afternoon coastguards in Australia began searching for three men. The air and sea rescue operation included 12 planes and four boats. The search began after a boat was found with no crew.

The 12-metre *Kaz 11* left Arlie Beach on 15 April and was sailing around the coast of Australia. On board were the skipper Derek Batten, 56, and brothers Jim and Peter Tunstead aged 69 and 63. All three are experienced seamen. The men bought the boat last week, they wanted to sail for six to eight weeks around the north to western Australia.

However, only three days later, a plane spotted the boat off the coast of Queensland. The pilot couldn't see any people so he tried to make contact but there was no reply. Yesterday morning a rescue helicopter sent a crewman down to the *Kaz 11* to have a look.

He found that the boat was in good condition. One of the sails was torn but everything else was normal. The table was set and there was food ready to eat. There were two laptop computers on, mobile phones and sunglasses were on the table - but there was nobody on the boat. There were also life jackets and emergency equipment on the boat. The dinghy was also there. The only thing missing was the crew.

The pilot of the rescue helicopter said, "It's almost like they just walked off the boat."

He also said that the lights were on and the engine was on too.

So what happened? A spokesperson said, "It was very windy when the men left on Sunday but this was normal and not a problem. It was good sailing weather. Everything on the boat was in a good state, nothing was knocked over. However, there were three fenders on the side of the boat. These are put out when another boat comes near. To me it looks like they left in a hurry. Perhaps they went on another boat."

However, why the crew left their boat and what happened to them next is a mystery. The search continues.