

The Clifford was a sailing barque of 460 tons belonging to the New Zealand Company. On Monday 13 December the emigrants were taken aboard and on the very first night one of them, a Mrs Badman, gave birth to a baby girl.

The following day the Clifford was towed downstream from Blackwall to Gravesend where she lay at moorings for five days, taking on stores and where the master, Captain Joseph Sharp and the twelve cabin passengers came on board. All but one of the passengers were relatives of Joseph Somes, the Governor of the New Zealand Company, for whom Somes Island in Wellington harbour was named. On 18 December the Clifford was towed by a steamship downstream as far as the Downs and by early evening had arrived off Deal.

The voyage proper began on 20 December and almost immediately most people, including the ship's doctor were seasick and many continued in this unhappy state for a week. However, by then some two hundred miles off Portugal things settled down and there was singing and dancing in the evening.

However, there were other problems. Three children of the Timms family developed measles and this spread rapidly to other children on board and Doctor Hughes decided their mothers should have a daily allowance of a pint of porter, a dark beer or stout made from barley that had been parched or charred before malting, stronger than small beer. Francis Blincoes's wife Ann was one of the ten women listed.

It is not clear whether the migrants paid for their passage or whether they were indentured to the New Zealand Company but it seems that they were entitled to agreed amounts of rations for the voyage that were provided by the ship. It is recorded that they complained that their allowance of potatoes should be cleaned before they were weighed and demanded that their coffee be roasted before it was weighed. These were thought to be absurd and unbecoming requirements.

On New Year's Eve a dance was got up with an allowance of grog and the glim being hoisted on deck fore and aft amidst much cheering and a very merry evening followed. The weather continued fair with the ship making good progress, on some days averaging ten knots; by 12 January they passed the coast of Sierra Leone.

The Clifford was now entering the doldrums and encountered calms or very light southerly winds, making little progress between 9 January and 14 February. Temperature rose to 84oF and a number of children became distressed with heat rash. They were ordered to be immersed in the deck tub every morning. At this stage Captain Sharp found it necessary to ration water down to 5 pints per day. It was during this period that one of the cabin passengers, Mrs Charles Saxton, gave birth to a baby son. Mr Saxton had brought a cow along, presumably in case his wife's milk should fail, but with a shortage of water the cow collapsed and died.

The Clifford probably followed the usual course across the South Atlantic towards the coast of Argentina until they picked up the prevailing westerly winds. At any rate by early March the winds freshened as they cleared the Cape of Good Hope and the voyage continued across the Southern Ocean.

The Island of St Paul was clearly seen on 30 March and the ship sailed 254 miles in 25 hours. Passengers were treated to very brilliant displays of the Southern Lights. By this time the southern winter was approaching and the ship was in the 'Roaring Forties'. It was so cold that the emigrants had to be persuaded by the doctor to go on deck for fresh air.

On April 14 the only death on the voyage occurred, that of Elizabeth Stanton, aged seven years. The following day a son was born to Mrs Cook and another boy was born to Mrs Watson the day before the final arrival at Nelson Haven. So the vessel actually delivered more people to New Zealand than had sailed from London. This was a remarkable record for the period. On much shorter transatlantic routes 10% mortality was common and it sometimes rose to 40%.

On 1st May D'Urville Island and Stephens Island (at the northern entrance to the Cook Strait) were sighted and the Clifford finally moored at Wellington on 5 May. It does appear that the emigrants were contracted to the Company to proceed to Nelson, for special permission had to be sought for two families to go ashore and constables had to be posted by the gangways to ensure that no one escaped. In spite of this six of the crew jumped ship with several more having attempted to do this and one of the migrants, William Mansell, managed to make his escape, leaving his wife and possessions on board. The vessel proceeded to Nelson and landed the emigrants there on 12 May after a voyage of four and a half months.

After such a successful voyage out the Clifford met with disaster as she returned home. Sailing from Nelson to China she struck a reef in the Bismark Archipelago on 16 August and foundered.