

Melbourne Branch

The Log
The Monthly Newsletter of the Melbourne Branch of
The Company of Master Mariners of Australia Limited
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NEXT MEETING

1830 hrs 27th July 2022

Mail Exchange Hotel

Speaker

Capt. Glen Colaco

Cruise ships in Melbourne



Victorian Regional Channels
Authority

From the Branch Master

For our June meeting we hosted representatives from the Mission to Seafarers. Rather than a formal presentation to the COMMA, the event was conducted more as a discussion or what I like to call a fire side chat. There was certainly plenty of comments expressing thoughts on the state of seafaring including the impact of COVID sea/shore time for the crews.

Interestingly there was an extended segment on either SBS/ABC on the conditions of life at sea at the moment. The segment highlighted the trend for crews to be kept on-board in port with owners not allowing leave due to COVID concerns. In addition there was vision of the stricken bulk carrier and tugs in a heavy sea state off Port Botany plus the tragic loss of a ship near Hong Kong. These reports due bring maritime issues to the attention of the public but as with news it comes and then is replaced by the next story. The trick is to be able to leverage of appropriate events to progress the issues that affect mariners.



Melbourne hosted the port visit of HMAS Diamantina berthing at Station Pier during the month. The ship was involved in some survey work in the Bass Strait area. HMAS Diamantina (II) is the fifth of six Huon Class Minehunter Coastal vessels delivered to the RAN between 1998 and 2002 and represents the latest in Mine Countermeasures (MCM) technology.

Diamantina is able to undertake extended MCM operations in widely dispersed and environmentally diverse threat areas within Australia and regional waters.

Diamantina is made of fibre reinforced plastic and has a unique single skin solid hull that has no ribs or frames and provides high underwater shock resistance and very low magnetic and noise levels. This hull is designed to flex inwards if an undersea explosion occurs nearby. All machinery/equipment is mounted on cradles or suspended from bulkheads to further enhance resistance to shock damage and protect ship systems.

The minehunter's principle task is to keep Australia's maritime focal points for trade free from the threat of mines. The ship uses high frequency sonar to search for, detect and then classify mine like objects. Once detected, the ship deploys a remote controlled mine disposal vehicle or clearance divers to identify and if necessary neutralise the mine.

Huon Class Minehunters are all named after Australian rivers. Diamantina is the second RAN ship to carry the name. HMAS Diamantina (1) was a River Class Frigate that was in service from 1945 to 1980. She saw action during WWII and from 1959 to decommissioning was employed as an oceanographic survey vessel.

With regard to the photo competition a clue. The photo was taken at anchor where it would be ideal to enjoy a cup of coffee. IF we have no interest I will consign the idea to the deep.

Fair winds

Graeme

Branch News

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Captain Roy Stanbrook. Roy had been a member of the Melbourne Branch and served on the Branch Court .

He had a distinguished career in the RFA including serving on Sir Galahad during the Falklands War and latter as Harbour Master in London, Gibraltar and Melbourne. The Branch extends our sympathy to his family.

The speaker at the July meeting will be Capt. Glen Colaco, the Station Pier Operations Manager. Glen will speak about the operational issues involved when cruise ships visit Melbourne.

The service commemorating the 80th anniversary of Operation Pedestal will take place at The Shrine of Remembrance and at the Maltese Shelter of Peace at 1100 hrs on 14th August.

Looking further ahead the Annual Seafarers Church Service will be held at St.Pauls Cathedral at 1000 hrs Sunday 23rd October.

We have been asked by retired Professor Peter Reaburn from Bond University preaburne@bond.edu.au for any help in tracing his 2nd great grandfather who arrived in Australia from Scotland in the early/mid 1850's probably on a ship of the Black Ball Line. Any suggestions on where to find passenger lists for that Line would be appreciated.



John Turnbull sent in this photo taken in 1994 when Mike Carolin was Branch Master, Pat Blamey was Branch Secretary and John Carroll was Prime Warden

Presentations



Captain Ian French was presented with a plaque in recognition of his Service as Branch Treasurer, Branch Master and Editor of the LOG



Captain Mario D'Souza was presented with his Membership Certificate. Mario was ratified as a member some time ago but due to delays in the Federal Secretariat his certificate has only recently been received

Australia's Strategic Fleet

In the lead up to the recent Federal Election both major parties announced policies aimed at increasing the size and viability of the Australian Merchant Fleet.

Following their success in the election the Labor Party's "Strategic Fleet" is now government policy.

The policy calls for a fleet of up to a dozen vessels including tankers, cargo, container and roll-on roll-off ships. The ships will be Australian Flagged and Australian crewed and will be privately owned and operate on a commercial basis. They will be available for requisition by the Defence Department in times of national need whether that be natural disaster or times of conflict.

To achieve this the Government will appoint a "Task Force" made up of representatives from the shipping industry, charterers, unions, business and the Department of Defence to guide it on the establishment of the fleet and on what legislative and regulatory reforms are necessary to reinvigorate Australian shipping. The policy says nothing about the cost involved or how it is going to be financed. Support for the policy has come from Maritime Industry Australia's then CEO Teresa Lloyd who said the Strategic Fleet would provide security of key supply chains, jobs for skilled maritime workers and economic stimulus. She said all we need is a level playing field with other nation's fleets in having the right corporate tax structure and seafarers tax treatment to be competitive.

The International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) and the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) both expressed enthusiasm for the policy.

MUA National Secretary Paddy Crumlin said Australian Flagged and crewed vessels are crucial steps towards securing Australia's supply chain and that new cabotage laws would once again allow Australia to have a vibrant shipping industry.

Support for the policy has not been universal. It is expected that the maritime industry will accept Australian Officers but will want owners to have the option of using lower paid non- national ratings which would not go down well with the MUA.

Shipping Australia (SAL) produced a paper which cautions against Government support for national fleets claiming that similar nationalist policies have been tried both here and in the United States and they have been profound failures.

SAL pointed out that the US Jones Act artificially raised the cost of freight and hurt the economy and did not boost US Naval Security. The US still had to charter foreign vessels to deliver military cargoes during the Gulf War.

The Coastal Shipping Act 2012 was set up to revitalise Australian shipping by providing protectionist advantages to domestic shipping to increase the volume of coastal cargo and to increase the number of ships flying the Australian Flag.

In the ten years since the introduction of the Act the number of ships on the Australian Register has fallen as has the volume of coastal cargo. The Australian Register for international trading ships has not attracted a single ship in its ten years of existence.

At the same time, and at great cost, a series of tax incentives and capital grants were introduced to lure owners into registering ships in Australia and to reduce operation costs. None of those incentives met their policy objectives.

SAL also noted that the record of previous government owned fleets is one of failure. Before it was sold off the Australian National Line went bankrupt and was re-capitalised many times. ANL could not compete and was subject to political interference.

The WA government owned State Ships was wound up in the mid 90's after racking up huge debts and was costing a fortune to operate.

SAL concluded that national fleet and protected coastal shipping policies simply do not work.

In response the ITF accused SAL of having a belligerent attitude and continuing to prosecute an ill- informed case against the establishment of a strategic fleet. The ITF did not attempt to rebut SAL's arguments.

There is a general consensus that the current regulatory regime covering commercial maritime operations needs to change but that is where the consensus ends.

The Coastal Shipping Act has been reviewed many times and found wanting. It is now up to the Task Force to develop a system that all parties can support and that the nation can afford.

June Speakers Summary

The Day of the Seafarer was celebrated on 26th June. To recognise this important day the Branch invited Philip Cornish the acting CEO of the Mission to Seafarers and the Chaplain Reverend Punay to speak at the June meeting on Seafarers welfare. Instead of the usual power point presentation on this occasion we opted for a fire side chat format with the audience invited to take part in the discussion. Amongst those who attended the meeting was Seamus Quinn, the President, and Lee-Anne Diano the Manager of Stella Maris who added their experience to the discussion.



Philip Cornish MtS acting CEO and Chaplain Rev Onofre Punay

Philip spoke about the assistance that they gave to seafarers in the Port of Melbourne who could not go ashore due to COVID restrictions. Doing the seafarers shopping was the major activity. The quantity of shopping and the items being bought suggested that it was not for their personnel use or souvenirs to take home. The Mission was not happy to be assisting in trade. The major seller from the Mission's own shop was fish oil which out sold phone cards much to the surprise of the staff.

The restrictions on seafarers going ashore has been eased in fact AMSA issued Marine Notice 08/2022 which draws attention to the importance of providing shore leave to seafarers for ships visiting Australian ports. Under MLC companies are responsible for providing access to shore based welfare facilities. Despite this many seafarers are reluctant to go ashore because while their ship is COVID free the opposite is true of the streets of Melbourne.

Both MtS and Stella Maris are active in providing COVID vaccinations for seafarers. Some Captains and companies are hesitant to approve the vaccination program.

The general feeling was that seafarer's mental health is much better than it was 12 months ago. Those seafarers who do visit the Mission do benefit from being off the ship even for only a few hours. It puts a bit of normality into their lives.

The Mission has provided a news service for 44 ships with Ukrainian crews. This has to be done with sensitivity particularly on ships which have mixed crew of Russians and Ukrainians.

Philip spoke about his involvement with the Mission. The building with its dome and a mix of architectural styles is a source of great interest to the general public. Some older visitors to the Mission remember with affection the dances that were held in the post war years. The building houses a lot of historic memorabilia including memorials to ships sunk during the war.

Unfortunately Philip had no good news to report on the fate of the wind vane that was stolen off the roof. The \$10,000 reward still stands but the feeling is that it was melted down for scrap metal.

It was an interesting and informative evening with plenty of input from the members.



Marine Incidents in Queensland

There have been a number of incidents in Queensland waters this year.

ATSB has issued its preliminary report into the grounding of the tanker “CSC Friendship” in the Brisbane River on 27/28 February this year. The ship was berthed starboard side to head down alongside the Ampol Products Wharf and was loaded with 25,000 tonnes of diesel oil and 7,000 tonnes of gasoline.

The Brisbane River was in flood and this combined with the ebb flow resulted in some of the mooring lines parting and the vessel surging 90 meters down the wharf. The port anchor was dropped and two tugs were made fast and a third tug ordered.



The tugs were unable to prevent the ship breaking free from the berth and grounding on the west side of the channel. A third tug and a pilot arrived. The current was estimated at 5 or 6 knots. The port anchor chain had fouled over the bulbous bow and was leading towards the wharf. An unsuccessful attempt was made to re-float the vessel.

About 3 hours later when the ebb current flow had dropped to about 3 or 4 knots the pilot instructed the tugs to tow the ships stern into the channel. The attempt to weigh

anchor caused the bow to swing to starboard resulting in the stern to swing back to port and the ship's port quarter going aground again.

When the weight was taken off the anchor the stern came off the bank. The ship's engine was put full astern to try and back up into the current and clear Clara Rock. The current acting on the port quarter caused the stern to sheer to starboard towards the Ampol Wharf and the ship grounded on the starboard quarter.

It was the anchor that was frustrating attempts to control the vessel during the re-floating attempts so it was decided to release the bitter end and let the anchor go. Using the tugs, engine and rudder "CSC Friendship" was re-floated, cleared Clara Rock and proceeded downstream to an anchorage in Moreton Bay. An underwater hull inspection revealed some hull damage but no leaks. The ship proceeded to Botany Bay to discharge then to China for docking and repairs.

The ATSB is also investigating the near-miss grounding of the bulk carrier "Rosco Poplar" near Bond Reef, Hydrographers Passage on 4th May.

The ship was proceeding in bound under the conduct of a coastal pilot when the ship's electronic navigational aid indicated that the ship was passing less than 200 meters from Bond Reef. Course was altered to get the ship back on track.

The VTS monitoring the area also received a potential grounding alert from its electronic systems and communicated with the pilot. ATSB will interview the pilot and other relevant persons and analyse recorder data on the ship and ashore.

The ATSB is investigating the breakaway of the containership OOCL Brisbane and the near breakaway of the containership CMA CGM Bellini on 16th and 20th May respectively, at the Fisherman Island container terminal Brisbane.

In both cases the ship's mooring lines parted shortly after another ship passed the berth in the adjacent channel. The investigation is continuing.

On June 21, in the Townsville Magistrates Court, the Master and First Officer of the bulk carrier "Sea Coen" pleaded guilty to operating the vessel in a shipping exclusion zone near the Great Barrier Reef. The breach was detected by a VTS in the marine park. The Master was fined A\$40,000 and the First Officer A\$ 35,000. No damage was done to the reef.