



***The New Zealand Company of  
Master Mariners***

**ON DECK**

**March 2015**



**1864 - vessels berthed along Gibson Quay, Hokitika**

Hokitika on the bar-bound mouth of the Hokitika River, sprang into life in 1864 when gold was found at her back door and despite its hazardous entrance and the snags that infested the river Hokitika was officially gazetted as a port on 8 March 1865 by the Canterbury Provincial Government who were desperate for revenue. By 1866 Gibson Quay was usually crowded with small ships. Over the years it suffered at least 43 shipwrecks, and some say, possibly more that were not recorded. Between 1865 and 1867 there were 108 strandings – 32 of which were total wrecks. The Hokitika Harbour Board came into existence in 1876 but after the gold rush trade



**Hokitika, 60 years on - Gibson Quay 1924**



**Port of Foxton 1923**

By 1888 Foxton had become a transport centre of relative importance. A modern railway terminus served both the borough and its fast developing hinterland and the recently rebuilt and extended wharf played host to regular as well as diverse shipping services. Changes in the transport web, however, meant that by 1943, when the Whirokino Cut diverted the river flow away from the port, Foxton had ceased to function as a port. Towards the end of 1951 the old railway wharf was sold for removal and on 16 November, 1956 the Harbour Board was finally abolished. The round roofed railway store was demolished in 1950 and only the dilapidated old wharf store remains today.



Forlorn site of Port Foxton 2015.

All that's left is the old harbour board store that's been re-invented as the local indoor bowls clubrooms.



## ***The New Zealand Company of Master Mariners***

Incorporated under the patronage of  
His Excellency Lieutenant General The Right Honourable  
Sir Jerry Mateparae GNZM, QSO, Te Kāwana Tianara o Aotearoa  
Governor-General of New Zealand.

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**On Deck is the Official Journal of the New Zealand Company of Master Mariners**



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**ANOTHER PLEASING MEMORY FROM DAYS GONE BY.**

A wonderful impression of the Union Steam Ship Company's TEV *Rangatira* 1931-64 dressed in the usual flood-lit display before her nightly sailing from either Wellington or Lyttelton by renowned Otaki artist Wallace Trickett. A wonderful example of a truly handsome ship and typical of the days of elegance, splendour and pride that once graced each sailing and was the norm for all passenger ship travel in past generations when service, care and civility were customary in our society. Possibly still one of the fastest ships ever to be in the New Zealand Merchant Navy. Certainly she was in her time, and as a troop ship in WW2, seldom sailed in convoy as her speed exceeded that of most naval ships. In the days before officer cadetships were offered in New Zealand many of our older members gained their early sea time and career awareness in these express ships as their complement always included four deck boys and a bucko.

**Blue Star line's SS *Tojan Star* in background.**

## ASSOCIATED AND RELATED PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATIONS.

**The Honourable Company of Master Mariners  
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**New Zealand Merchant Navy  
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[www.nautilusint.org/default.aspx](http://www.nautilusint.org/default.aspx)**

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**The New Zealand Ship and Marine Society  
[www.nzshipmarine.com](http://www.nzshipmarine.com)**

**The Company of Master Mariners of Australia  
[www.mastermariners.org.au](http://www.mastermariners.org.au)**

**The Company of Master Mariners  
of Sri Lanka  
[www.cmmsrilanka.lk](http://www.cmmsrilanka.lk)**

**The Warsash Maritime Academy  
College of Maritime Studies  
University of the Solent  
[www.warsashassociation.net](http://www.warsashassociation.net)**

**Panama Canal Pilots Association  
[www.canalpilots.org](http://www.canalpilots.org)**

**The Nigerian Association of  
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**Asociación de Capitanes Nautilus  
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[www.vdks.org](http://www.vdks.org)**

**The Round Table of International  
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[www.marisec.org](http://www.marisec.org)**

**The Association of Master  
Mariners Kolkata  
[mastermarinerskolkata.com](http://mastermarinerskolkata.com)**

**The Southampton Master  
Mariners Club.  
[cachalots.org.uk](http://cachalots.org.uk)**

**Master Mariners Association of  
Tasmania.  
[mistrat@aapt.net.au](mailto:mistrat@aapt.net.au)**

**Confederation of European  
Shipmasters Associations**

Email addresses to other international Master Mariner and Maritime organisations are available to Company Members on application to Editor.



**Lieutenant Dumont d'Urville's vessel d'Astrolabe exploring and charting in New Zealand 1839-40**

**BRANCH CONTACT DETAILS; also see [www.mastermariners.org.nz](http://www.mastermariners.org.nz)**



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**City of Christchurch Arms**

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Luncheon Meetings are held at Noon each 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday from February to November, in the Bay Plaza Hotel, 40 Oriental Parade. Annual dinner and social is held early in December.

See also: [www.mastermariners.org.nz](http://www.mastermariners.org.nz)

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## EDITORIAL

### IS OUR COASTAL SHIPPING SAFE?

In December the Transport Accident Investigation Commission made its long awaited findings of its enquiry into the grounding of the container ship *Rena* off the Tauranga coast in 2011.

As expected, the blame was laid on the multiple failings of the Master and Second Mate. Their passage plan did not meet standards of best practice and the taking of a short cut to Tauranga which led the ship onto the Astolabe Reef 'contributed directly' to the grounding.

The Maritime Transport Act, 1994, and its Regulations require all ships of more than 500 tons operating on the New Zealand coast to continually operate their Automatic Information System. Surely, if ships are required by New Zealand law to operate their AIS then the administrator of that legislation should have ensured that the system was monitored 24/7.

Had the *Rena's* voyage been monitored, then the master could have been promptly contacted by Maritime New Zealand and warned during the ship's erratic voyage past Portland Island and later when overtaking a ship that had to step aside.

Another shipping danger on the coast is the lack of a 'ship rescue' capability. The major harbour boards maintained one or more ocean-going tugs that could be called upon to help in the event of a ship becoming distressed. When the harbour boards were privatised the role of port companies did not include providing ocean assistance. Most of today's ships are larger than 20 years ago and powered by a single engine. Should that engine fail, which happened recently in the Bay of Plenty, where is a tug to help the cripple avoid drifting ashore?

Should there not be ocean going tugs available in the major ports? While it would not be economically feasible to have a salvage tug on standby, the government should consider funding the upgrading of several large port company tugs to have an ocean-going capability. To reduce a crippled ship's rate of drift, and avoid it rolling, a large sea anchor with several hundred tons bollard strength are available from a New Zealand manufacturer which could be delivered and deployed by helicopter.

While it is easy for the Government to 'point the finger' following a shipping disaster, we all know that it is New Zealand's environment that will suffer.

**Gerry Wright, Auckland**

### GROUNDING OF HOEGH OSAKA

At about 21:30 GMT on 3 January 2015, Hoegh Osaka developed a severe list shortly after sailing from Southampton, Hampshire, United Kingdom for Bremerhaven, Germany. According to the owners she

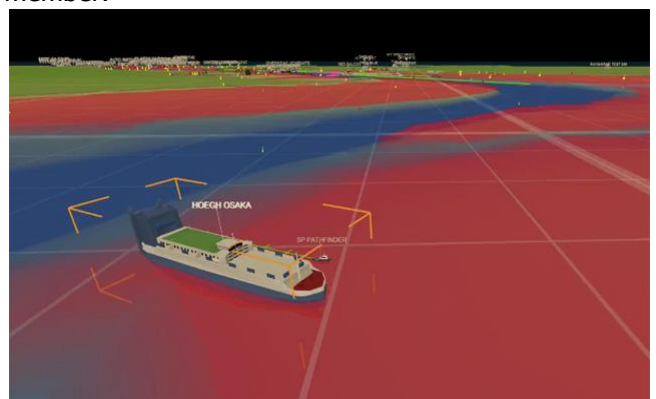
was beached intentionally on the Bramble Bank in the Solent off the Isle of Wight and settled with a 52° list. Her 24 crew and a pilot were rescued by Coastguard lifeboat, Royal Air Force- Sea King. She was also attended by four tugs.

She was later moved to Alpha anchorage near the east jaw of the Solent and dewatering and re-stabilising commenced.



**Hoegh Osaka stabilised at Alpha anchorage, in the Solent**

Captain Bruce Campbell, Senior Pilot, Port of Southampton, while keeping in touch with family members in New Zealand mentioned he had been assigned to pilot the ship within the exclusion zone in rear of the *Hoegh Osaka*. In this situation he managed to stop and hold his VL containership within the shipping channel and co-ordinate the initial rescue efforts. He believes the *Hoegh Osaka* grounded herself, as in his opinion, without power, it would have been very difficult to seek out the Bramble shallows. Bruce is the son of Captain Angus Campbell, a Wellington Branch member.



**Electronic re-creation of the grounding.**

Members may be interested in viewing the video link below. It was made by SRT Marine Technology, a UK-based AIS technology firm and demonstrates another advance in marine technology that continues to foster safer maritime operations.

<http://gcaptain.com/3d-dynamic-replay-hoegh-osakas-grounding->

#This will open the article and video in gCaptain posted 3 January,

2nd



Leader

## Passage Planning

### Lifeboat Drill from Lloyds List When lifeboats become death boats. by Michael Grey

Reprinted from [www.mastermariners.org.nz](http://www.mastermariners.org.nz)

Why would you not be frightened out of your wits every time you were required to carry out a lifeboat drill? When regulators, safety authorities and manufacturers seem unable to get a grip on the numbers of deaths and injuries caused when lifeboat drills go badly wrong, might your confidence in this so-called "life-saving" equipment be somewhat lacking?

There was another fatal incident just recently, when an emergency boat being recovered aboard a Princess cruise-ship in Colon plunged from a great height, killing a seaman and injuring the boatswain.

There just doesn't seem to be any real sign that all the recommendations, procedures, regulations and guidance that have been produced since this scandal was recognised has even begun to have an effect.

You might suggest that in the great scheme of things, the drip, drip, drip of one person killed here, two there, five in one exceptional case, lack the impact that might provoke a great wave of revulsion that would accompany, say, a whole tender full of passengers plunging to their doom.

But people know better than to expose passengers to the risk that crew members have to face on a regular basis, if international regulations on monthly boat drills are to be fulfilled.

The truth is that we don't actually know how many seafarers are killed and injured, such is the cavalier fashion we have for recording these small tragedies, with a substantial number of flag states failing to transmit details of such accidents to the International Maritime Organization.

We know from the records and the casualty investigations of those states which have the will and the capability to carry them out that there are a lot of these accidents, but we also know that nothing very much appears to be improving. It is small wonder that lifeboat drills are such a source of worry to seafarers, who have no great confidence in their equipment.

We know why people are ending up dead and maimed. The on-load mechanism fails with the boat in the air, because of its inadvertent release, as a result of its useless design, its hopeless complexity, its poor maintenance (it may be just about impossible to maintain).

The crew might be unfamiliar with the equipment, perhaps not surprising with some 70 different

manufacturers involved in providing this gear, or there have been communication failures or unsafe practices. The wire falls may have corroded and parted at the worst possible moment. There is, you might think, plenty of scope for an accident, although it is perhaps the ultimate irony that equipment put aboard to save lives has probably harmed more people than it has ever saved in the past quarter century.

Dennis Barber, casualty investigator for the Bahamas Register and a marine safety expert was, by coincidence, giving a lecture about lifeboat accidents in London recently. He was speaking to members of the Royal Institution of Naval Architects, probably a good audience in that if you are looking for change, it is those who design things who have the capability of producing it.

He has investigated fatal lifeboat accidents and has perhaps understandably strong views about the design problems which emerged after 1986, when all-enclosed boats with on-load release hooks came mandatorily into operation. He suggests that it is these features which combine to produce such problems, in a boat where there is no deck space outside the "pod", it is difficult to get at the hooks and falls and bousing tackles, with the gear too complex for its own good.

He seems to suggest that there is little justification for all enclosed craft, as long voyages are not contemplated in boats these days, while actually being in one of these craft in a seaway is a horrible experience. He recalls the master of the MCS Napoli speaking about how their boat hugely overheated as they got clear of their damaged ship, with everyone seasick and two crew members seriously ill by the time the helicopters arrived.

He listed a whole range of problems which have led to deaths and injuries. Davits where the weight of the boat stays on the fall wires as they go over a block are an invitation to steel wires to corrode at this point.

He criticised the simple systems of the past giving way to complexity, where it is difficult or impossible to maintain anything, or even grease it. He could not understand why safety pennants were disapproved of, when they really could save lives with this extra layer of insurance, although he conceded that most davits do not have a securing point where these wires could be attached.

There is no shortage of guidance from the IMO and flag states, although Capt Barber suggests that it tends to be written for lawyers and requires 'translation' before seafarers can properly understand it. And if most accidents actually take place in drills, why is there such reluctance to talk about these specifically?

There are changes taking place, which will require hooks to be changed if they are thought dangerous and manufacturers to do more maintenance, but are we really going far and fast enough? Maybe we should be asking ourselves whether enclosed boats are really needed and whether the small crews aboard a modern merchant ship could be served with something rather simpler and a good deal safer and which doesn't scare its users witless at the thought of a safety drill.



## TO MASTER'S ORDERS



**Captain Kenneth D Watt**

Most, if not all, of our members have access to the internet. This technology allows us to keep abreast of developments in the maritime world whether it be advice on the latest maritime accident, the most recent launch of a new vessel, the takeover of a well-known company or, importantly, where to sail if one is to avoid pirates.

Earlier this year headline news in the maritime world were the arrivals of the *Pieter Schelte* and CSCL Globe in European ports after voyages from far eastern shipyards. They are, respectively but in reality for a short period of time, the largest vessel in the world and the largest container vessel in the world. Also reported shortly after each incident, came the headline news of the purposeful grounding of the car carrier *Hoegh Osaka* after she left Southampton, the fire stricken ferry *Norman Atlantic* in the Mediterranean and the tragic sinking of the *MV Cemford* in the Pentland Firth.

All of this information serves to stimulate the interest of master mariners who are either currently serving or have retired following a career in the maritime industry. A natural curiosity for knowledge can be easily satisfied with the click of a button to view websites such as Shippingnews Clippings or gCaptain, both of which are very informative.

In addition to the printing of our own 'On Deck', modern communication also allows us to read the Journal of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners as soon as it is published. This latter magazine, when received by our General Secretary, is distributed to our members via branch secretaries which itself provides an immediate insight on the thinking of the executive officers and members of that organization.

The Nautical Institute, to which many of our membership also belong, holds itself to be the representative body for maritime professionals. It also has an interesting website the content of which serves to remind us, as a kindred body, of our aims and objectives.

Contrasting with the immediate availability of maritime news is the fact that the final report by TAIC of the grounding of the *Rena* on Astrolabe Reef in October 2011 was not released until December last. This was over two years after the event and one can only be left mystified as to why it took so long to finally pronounce the cause of the grounding. Clearly the fundamentals in ship navigation learned by us all on our way to passing examinations for competency as master mariners were either not understood or followed in the

case of those in charge of the *Rena*. The standards of training of Philippine seafarers are highlighted in the report as being well below international requirements. This situation must therefore increasingly lead to inevitable concern for a properly qualified Master Mariner or watch-keeper when another vessel, crew nationality unknown, heaves up on the horizon!



**Kenneth and Julienne Watt representing the Company at Government House Garden Party, Wellington, observing Waitangi Day, on 6 February.**

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## LETTERS

### **NEW ZEALAND WILL RATIFY MARITIME LABOUR CONVENTION**

*Letter from the Ministry of Transport to the  
General Secretary, Captain Cornelis van Kesteren*

I am pleased to report that New Zealand will begin the process of ratifying the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006. This was announced by the Minister for Workplace Relations and Safety, Hon Michael Woodhouse and Associate Minister of Transport, Hon. Craig Foss.

Thank you for taking time to consider New Zealand's ratification of the Convention and for providing the Ministry of Transport with feedback. As you know, the Convention sets minimum standards for the health, safety and welfare of seafarers on commercial vessels.

#### *Next steps*

New Zealand law, which applies to New Zealand registered ships, is already largely consistent with the Convention. However, minor changes to New Zealand maritime law and Maritime Rules are required to enable New Zealand to fulfil its obligations under the Convention. New Zealand can then ratify the Convention.

A Parliamentary Select Committee will consider the text of the Convention and may produce a report with recommendations to the Government.

The Convention will enter into force for New Zealand one year after the Government ratifies the Convention. The Convention is expected to be ratified by New Zealand in 2015, and come into force in 2016.

Once ratified by New Zealand, the Convention will apply to all ships that are:

New Zealand-registered, or foreign-registered and operating in New Zealand (excluding ships that navigate exclusively in restricted limit areas) of 200 gross tonnage and over, or smaller ships engaged in international voyages ordinarily engaged in commercial activities, excluding ships engaged in fishing or similar pursuits.

Information on the Maritime Labour Convention is available on the Ministry of Transport's website.

Kind regards

**Nick Brown**

General Manager Aviation and Maritime,  
Ministry of Transport – Te Manatū Waka

### **MARITIME LAW ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND (MLAANZ).**

*Received and distributed from the office of the General  
Secretary.*

I understand that you are the General Secretary of the New Zealand Company of Master Mariners. I am the Secretary of the New Zealand branch of the Maritime Law Association of Australia and New Zealand (MLAANZ).

We are holding our annual MLAANZ branch conference on 1 May 2015 in Taupo. One of the topics that we intend to include in our programme this year is the

increased criminalisation of seafarers. We expect that your members would have some interesting and informative views on this topic and were hoping that someone would be available and interested in giving a short presentation on the topic from the perspective of Master Mariners, as part of our conference programme. Do you know of someone who might be interested? Would you please pass this message on to them? Please let me know if you need any further information at this stage.

Thanks for your help.

Kind regards

**Kerryn Webster**

Secretary, NZ Branch Committee MLAANZ

### **THE DRONE SHIP**

For some time now we have been receiving information on, what is considered by the remote control experts, the best way to get rid of Seafarers in larger quantities than has been the case over recent years.

One can only wonder what the reason for this could possibly be, why would any sane-minded person or group, consider that it would be safer to have hundreds of thousand tonne vessels travelling over the oceans, either singly or in flotillas of 5 or more all controlled by a group of highly trained wizards, who have an overall knowledge of all the world's trade routes and ports operating from a plush control room, somewhere, rather than have a fully trained, competent and dedicated crew of experienced seafarers 24/7, ensure that their vessel makes its trips in complete safety.

We are assured by the unmanned ship technicians that their controls will be so marvellous that they will be able to sense every change in the marine environment that could possibly affect the safety of the vessel or vessels under their control, I think not and I am sure most Seafarers will agree.

We are assured that the final product will be bullet-proof and reduce the loss of life at sea, how this assertion can be made is remarkable, however, all the thousands of other vessels will not be bullet-proof and what will happen if one of these unmanned shells hits a large passenger vessel, carrying thousands of passengers and crew, will their loss of life not be too bad?

All who have operated radar will have learned that even the most sophisticated sets do not see everything and can also see things that do not exist. I have had several experiences of this unusual circumstance, one in particular occurred off the Australian coast. We tracked this echo for several hours, on a clear, calm day, and no one was able to see any object or vessel as indicated, even though it apparently passed very close to our vessel.



**Typical experimental drone fleet and the Rolls Royce unmanned vessel concept.**

There is also the consequence of the 35 metre storm wave/swell, now proved to exist. How would the marvellous bullet-proof vessel handle one of these. Of course the wonderful sensors would see it coming and just what would the controller do about it? There would be no time to think and if it was part of a flotilla, how are they all controlled? Do they have a lead ship which can control the others or does each vessel in the flotilla send its own signal to the controller or controllers. If you are not confused by this time, I certainly am.

Can you imagine the approach to a very large and busy port, such as Singapore, will the port authorities permit these vessels to dock under the control of someone in say Sweden or will control be transferred to a control room in Singapore? Local area control rooms could become necessary all over the world and the cost for all this colossal infrastructure would far exceed manning ships with dedicated seafarers.

I have no doubt that many other seafarers could make a considerable amount more of valid adverse observations about the operation of these bullet-proof vessels, however, what is evident, the moguls of this form of sea transport do not appear to be seeking the necessary information from seafarers. Maybe they are all locked in their control rooms and only have an electronic view of the outside.

As one observer said, "As long as nobody tries to promote an unmanned commercial aeroplane, with 'just' 200 people on-board, we could be sure that a 3000 passengers unmanned cruise ship will never exist".

There are also the questions of insurance, maintenance and recovery if it stops dead.

Over recent years we have seen a great reduction in positions for seafarers as companies carry out their under-manning policies, their main complaint being the enormous cost of crew wages, leave and conditions. One must ask if the crew cost is as enormous as they claim, some estimates put it at approximately 8% of the total venture, other reports claim 44% of running costs on a daily basis. What we need is a true cost of crew per tonne. Most certainly a more detailed investigation needs to be made. In recent years, having perused the crew living quarters

on some vessels visiting the Port of Tauranga, I have been appalled by the small, cramped and poorly furnished accommodation. Quite obviously the standard continues to decline to a remarkable degree. Possibly they are awaiting the unmanned bullet-proof vessel to appear which will have zero accommodation, crew and catering facilities.

It was most pleasing to note that our Government has finally agreed to ratify the 2006 Maritime Labour Convention. Unfortunately, they do not see a need for a viable New Zealand Merchant Navy.

**Captain Guy Dennison**

### **LEARNING TO SHIP HANDLE FROM STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOP) AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

Not many years ago most nautical training was done on the job by doing the task with mentoring from senior staff. Some of us went to school for a short time to hone up on some subjects especially mathematics or compass.

This has now changed with the academics taking charge and now much time is spent at school where efforts are made to teach a student everything that these academics think a student should know.

Our industry is very different from the aviation industry, which we have slavishly followed. There are only two major builders of commercial aircraft and all cockpits are fitted with similar equipment. so a lot of practical experience can and is gained from simulator training. Not so in our industry where every bridge layout and its equipment is different (and I have seen some shocking examples of 'committee designed' or 'accountant influenced' bridges in recent years), where every ship has different characteristics and propulsion systems, where every port has its own unique problems and where every country uses different systems and procedures.

In recent years many authorities have commenced analysing all accidents, big or small and then publishing a report which concludes with "lessons learnt" or a comment about what these academics think went wrong and what was not done and what should have been done. This it is believed will prevent a recurrence, however the increasing frequency of marine accidents seems to indicate these methods do not work.

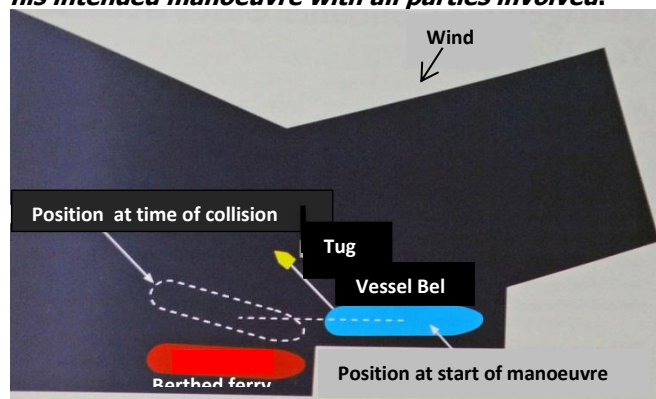
The causes of many shipping accidents could be fairly accurately found in a short time by experienced mariners, which was the practice until about 20 years ago.

One of the accident reports recently published by the UK MAIB drew my attention to this modern method where the Chief Accident Investigator gave his opinion on ship handling.

***Vessel B was berthed starboard side alongside and was preparing to depart. The wind speed had been variable and was now 40-45kts (force 8-9), acting on the vessel's port side. The master decided to employ a tug to assist manoeuvring. With the tug secured on the vessel's port quarter, the vessel was manoeuvred astern with the tug applying 20% power away from***

***the berth, and the bow thrusters on full power to port. The vessel increased speed astern at an angle of about 10° from the berth until it became apparent that the bow would not clear the ferry berthed astern. The master instructed the tug to stop pulling and set the propeller pitch combinators to zero in a conscious attempt to bring the vessel bodily alongside the ferry and so minimise any resulting damage. The master acted in accordance with the management company's standard operating procedures in employing a tug on the port quarter in the prevailing wind direction and speed. However, he had limited experience of manoeuvring the vessel with a tug and had not previously carried out the manoeuvre in similar wind conditions.***

The Chief Accident Investigator's comment was;  
***The manoeuvre carried out by the master reflected his normal departure procedure from the berth and did not take full account of the extent to which the strong wind would counter the effect of the bow thrusters and tug. It also did not take account of the reduced sea room available in which to manoeuvre the vessel as a result of another ferry having berthed directly astern; the changed circumstances required a review of his original plan, and an updated briefing of his intended manoeuvre with all parties involved.***



No one will learn anything from these comments. If the Master was following this recent invention called the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) he was apparently doing everything correctly, however it did not work, so obviously the SOP are not correct. Having a ferry berthed astern would I presume be a normal occurrence and had nothing to do with the accident as if it was not there his ship would have hit the wharf.

The silliest piece of advice was that he should have had a briefing with all parties involved. In New Zealand this may have included the union delegates and the cook!

By using the tug on the stern as he did there was no way the ship would safely depart the berth in those weather conditions and showed a complete lack of experience. However these were the instructions contained in the SOP and he will probably never learn an alternative and successful method if he follows those instructions.

No SOP will ever detail how to handle a ship in all the various winds, tides, drafts, types of tugs and experience of the master. All the committee meetings with all the parties involved will never make a good ship handler nor prevent these accidents from

happening nor will well intentioned advice from an accident investigator whose ship-handling experience is probably limited to what he was taught at a Maritime College or in New Zealand the Police College.

**Captain John A. Brown**

### **ARAHINA, WELLINGTON PILOT LAUNCH 1925 - 1987**

*(Copy of letter to editor Professional Skipper.)*

The article on the life of the ex-Wellington Pilot boat *Arahina* by Chris Howell P.68 of your December 2014 issue, requires a very important correction. Chris has stated that Captain Newell was in command of *Arahina* when he rescued 55 stricken passengers out of the sea from the *Wahine*. For the record the master of *Arahina* was the late Captain Douglas Newey. Those survivors were very close to the rock-strewn eastern shores of Wellington Harbour and this was possibly the largest number of rescues by any ship, launch etc. that went to the aid of the *Wahine*.

It was obviously a great piece of ship-handling and seamanship displayed by Captain Newey and for reasons unknown he was never acknowledged by his employer, the Wellington Harbour Board, or the media, or any other organisation that should have given him his due credit. Captain Newey was neither a self-promoter nor a limelight chaser, otherwise he may have received his just recognition. Nonetheless, he was extremely disappointed in not being acknowledged and went to his grave many years later still feeling bitter. Doug could not be blamed for this. Information has it that, unlike other persons who achieved lesser feats on that fateful day, he never received invitations to the odd functions/events held in later years. The initial fault for the lack of recognition surely rested with the Wellington Harbour Board. Perhaps because of it's very Victorian attitude and snobbish values they would not have a Launch Master on the same podium as their Deputy Harbour Master, Captain Bill Galloway who was also a very fine seaman.

As reported by Chris Howell, the *Arahina* did not have bridge control, at this time, and the engines were manoeuvred by telegraph communication to the engineer. When the master required to go from ahead to astern, the engines were stopped and restarted by running them in the opposite direction. This often took some 20 to 30 seconds before the engine was re-started and stern power obtained. Obviously the same applied when going from astern to ahead. This required far more skill in ship-handling than the bridge control that most ships have today. Add bow thrusters, twin rudders, and powerful tugs so that ship-handling requires much less skill now days.

Considering the old technology for engine manoeuvring that the *Arahina* had in 1968, Captain Doug. Newey displayed great seamanship to rescue so many people so close to the rocky shore in the heavy swells that were still running in the Harbour entrance at the time. May he rest in peace.

**Captain Ronald A. Palmer**

### SAILING VESSELS' PROBLEMS

I found Richard Cullerton's two-page article on the collision in Wellington between a container ship and a fishing vessel, (see March 2014, On Deck) was both interesting and timely. I can only agree that I also see the MSA as having some responsibility to clarify the situation on 'not impede', for the benefit of mariners.

I acknowledge that in the past I too have interpreted the words to indicate that the impeding vessel forfeits any other claim to right of way. However, I am prepared to accept Captain Cockcroft's opinion as the expert.

It appears that the container ship's underwriters have done so too but I imagine the negotiated figure would have taken into account some liability on the part of the fishing vessel for not also taking appropriate late action to avoid collision.

Captain Cullerton's comments pose a valid question. The container ship saw only a red sidelight and if this had actually been a sailing vessel I ask, 'How could such a vessel keep out of the way if there was no wind?' What could/should she do in these circumstances?

A sailing vessel in Wellington would most likely be a yacht. She could desperately attempt to turn into the wind if she had any steerage way at all, drop her sails, and then what? Perhaps she could anchor in a hurry? But in a fairway? (That might be better than doing nothing in the circumstances.)

What other thoughts? She has few options although not many yachts sailing at night would lack an engine, even an outboard motor.

**Captain C.B.Thompson RD FNI Hon.FIIMS**

### PILOT TRANSFER



**Picton is in a class of high speed, 19.5m pilot launches designed by Camarc Ltd and built for the Authority by the local firm, Mustang Marine (Wales) Ltd.**

#### **Pilot Transfer in Heavy Seas from BP Oil Tanker**

This video shows a pilot transfer in far-from-ideal conditions outside Milford Haven, Wales. The tanker is BP Shipping's 2003-built Aframax crude oil tanker *British Robin*. As you can see, the pilot makes his way down the ladder as the ship rolls heavily in the wind and waves. While the video cuts just short of showing the actual transfer, it goes to show the dangers pilots can face just doing their jobs, as well as the skill needed to pull transfers like these off safely. The pilot boat shown is the *Picton* and the video made on January 15, 2015.

(This report was referred to one of our members who



had acted as a pilot boat launch-master, for a few years in Wellington, where most transfers are outside in the open waters of a turbulent Cook Strait. His comment "Looks pretty routine to me." Ed.)

Watch at <http://gcaptain.com/watch-pilot-transfer-heavy-seas/Pilot>

### TEMPORARY BEHEMOTH?



**The Pieter Schelte, seen entering the port of Rotterdam, is more than 120 metres wide.**

The *Pieter Schelte* is a twin-hull behemoth, a veritable giant, the world's largest vessel, the world's largest catamaran, the world's largest offshore vessel and the world's largest crane ship. A lot of largest! But for how long will she reign as biggest in any of these fields as merchant ships continue to grow in size, type and complexity?

## A BRIEF ENCOUNTER WITH THE ROYAL NAVY

Captain Graham Williams

In 1955 I was on my third voyage as 3rd Mate of the *Australia Star*. We sailed from Liverpool on 4th August with a full general cargo for discharge at ports round the Australian Coast. Our first port was Fremantle and we berthed there on the North Side and commenced discharge.

A couple of days after we arrived the British cruiser H.M.S. *Newcastle*, the Flagship of the British Pacific Fleet, came into Fremantle and berthed astern of us. She was on a 'showing the Flag' visit to Australian and New Zealand ports. She was berthed head up river and we were lying head down, so our sterns were not far apart; approximately 10 feet.



**MV Australia Star**  
1935-64



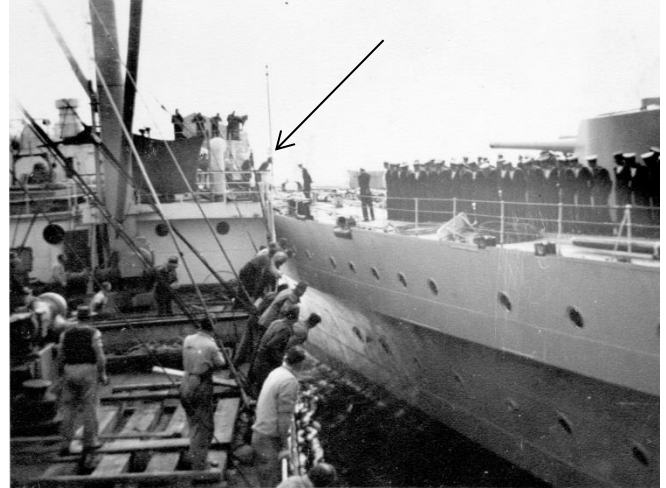
**HMS Newcastle**  
1934-59

The night before *Newcastle* was due to sail they held a very formal cocktail party on the Quarter Deck to which our Captain and four officers were invited. I attended along with the 2nd Mate and two engineers. We had a very pleasant evening and learned that they were due to sail at 0900 hours the following morning; that they would not use a tug and they would not have a Fremantle Pilot. They would have an Australian Naval Officer on board well acquainted with the Port. In the meantime our Captain had been advised by their Captain that we might require additional mooring ropes as they were going use their engines to get off the berth.

The following morning our deck hands put out additional head and stern ropes as well as additional back springs and, of course, checking the original moorings. I was instructed by our Captain to stand by at our stern with a note book. I guess he envisaged the worst. One of our Cadets positioned himself on the port side at the after end of our boat deck with his camera.

Departure time came, 0900 hours, they let go their stern ropes and using their engines and presumably a head rope got their stern clear of our stern and out into the stream. They let go their head rope and then things went wrong. The full force of the current of the Swan River caught them and in spite of using all their engine power they began moving towards our stern. It was inevitable that they were going to hit us but exactly where and how hard was the question. It all seemed to be happening in slow motion. I was making notes and times. And then the thump came, on our port quarter and right under where I was standing. I stepped back, the deck plate buckled slightly and a

glance revealed that the plating on our port quarter had been somewhat bent and was well stove in. There was a grinding of steel on steel as she moved along until the power of her engines took over and got her out into the harbour. The cadet took an excellent photograph, as shown. I am the person leaning over our port quarter, in fact, talking to the officer on the forecandle with whom I had been talking the previous evening.



**The author (arrowed) on the port quarter of the  
poop deck of the Australia Star**

Within minutes officers of the R.A.N. were on board to survey the damage, followed a little later by Lloyds Surveyor. The damage was sufficient to stop us going to sea, not that we had finished discharging Fremantle cargo. In the meantime *Newcastle* called us up with her signal lamp and our Captain and a Cadet who happened to be on the bridge answered their message which read "Sorry for scrape, will supply you with paint in Melbourne".

By mid-morning riggers had rigged staging round our stern, the affected plates were being cut out and any other damage repaired. By the following morning repaired/re-rolled plating was being welded back in place; the whole area of our stern was cleaned up and a coat of red lead primer applied. It was a very slick and efficient operation by the Royal Australian Navy and Lloyds were happy for us to proceed to sea to our next port, Melbourne.

Our Captain was invited to their cocktail party in Melbourne; they were berthed at the Port, we were in the Victoria Dock; and they didn't supply paint although their Captain did come and inspect the damaged, now repaired, area.

Our next encounter was in the central Tasman; we were light ship bound for New Plymouth and having a rough time in some foul weather associated with a deep depression in the central Tasman. We were at reduced speed to ease the motion of the ship and take some of the strain off our twin diesels. We came upon and passed close to the *Newcastle*, hove to because of the heavy seas. Our 4th Mate who was on watch could not resist calling her up asking if she required assistance. They politely declined.

## Captain R. E. Pugh-Williams. 'Captain Pugwash'



**Ray Pugh-Williams 1917-1994**

**A highly competent shipmaster, a fine friend  
and an all-round 'good bloke'**

I also had my mentors. In seafaring matters, it was Captain Ray Pugh-Williams. In the latter part of his sea-going career he grew a distinguishing Edwardian nautical beard and became affectionately known as 'Captain Pugwash', after a children's T.V. cartoon character.

Ray was not the conventional ship's master. He was a motivator and an innovator. I had first met him in 1967 when I joined the Union Steam Ship Company's interisland ferry T.E.V. *Maori* as Second Officer (you were never called 'Second Mate' on the Company's passenger ships!)

I quickly became aware that here was a Master with a difference – all challenges on the vessel that came his way as Master were approached in a positive manner. His wartime naval background had made its mark on him. He was a 'Blue Ensign' man. (Years later, he achieved this honour to fly the Blue Ensign when the *Wahine's* replacement, the new T.E.V. *Rangatira*, entered service - it was registered in London.) His standards were high but fair – you knew exactly where you stood. Do your job well and it was acknowledged: do it poorly or sloppily and you were in trouble. He ran a tight ship, but also a happy ship.

He was always striving for a better, safer and happier ship. He approached these goals in different ways. One of his innovative ideas to improve the fire safety on board was to organise a fire-fighting course. A small group of all ranks, including the Master, found ourselves in Wellington at the Fire Training School in Island Bay, learning in a hands-on way to deal with fires on board a ship and how to use the equipment to do so. From this developed the courses all seafarers must now go on today.

Another was going out to the Wigram Air Force Base in Christchurch and learning to inflate a life raft in their enclosed heated swimming pool. We then had to practice getting the raft upright if it was upside down, and hauling ourselves aboard. Again, this has now become a normal part of training for current-day seafarers.

That particular experience went one step further for me. I found myself with a bunch of naval volunteers, bouncing around overnight in a life raft, attached by its painter to an anchored naval patrol launch in a bay at the entrance to Lyttelton Harbour. Again, a Pugh-Williams initiative. This experience taught me how it was likely to be in the real thing. And we were only bobbing around in calm waters – it was still an uncomfortable and sleepless night because of the gentle chop of the waves rocking the raft. Most of us were sick. Although an unpleasant night out, the experience was terrific!

Ray was a thinking Master, always trying to improve the way things could be done. The Inter-Island Ferry Service was a routine nightly run between Lyttelton and Wellington. You could easily become lackadaisical about your work, especially as the nature of the run lead to a regular lack of sleep. Equal time on and off the vessel had not yet been 'invented' for the officers. Crew that are weary and in-a-rut frame-of-mind from the routine nature of their work, are more likely to be the cause of shipboard accidents. Captain Ray tackled this challenge by arranging with the Master on the Company's new Flagship, T.E.V. *Wahine*, (and with the Company's approval) for all deck and engineer officers from both ships, one rank at a time, to have a week on the other vessel 'trailing' the officer of their rank around to see if there was anything good they could pick up that would be beneficial on their own vessel. In other words, he was trying to make you think about you own job, but with none of the responsibilities while on the other vessel. We would do one week on the *Wahine*, they would do one week on the *Maori*. My career changed dramatically as a result of this scheme, and lead to new unforeseen career opportunities.

We introduced on our ship, the *Maori*, a new checking system for the non-return valves on the vehicle decks, to ensure they were clear of any rubbish that collected in them. We introduced a new system for the night porters in how they carried out their fire rounds to ensure they were 'thorough'. A system of 'moving tags' was introduced around the ship. A small motor out-of-sight around an alleyway corner had overheated and caused a fright and we needed to think of a new

system to overcome human frailties! The 'moving tags', placed round corners, ensued those doing the rounds went there and looked while collecting the next tag to move on to its next position. I introduced this system years later at Scott Base, for similar concerns.

Other memorable moments on the *Maori* come to mind. 'Captain Pugwash' and his 'pirates' would entertain each year the kids and staff from the Cholmondeley Children's Home in Governor's Bay, at the head of Lyttelton Harbour. Some of the seamen, dressed as 'pirates', would arrive by ship's lifeboat and board the ship. The rascally looking pirates would then disperse presents to the children, while making appropriate pirate sounds. A pirate-like picnic lunch would follow, either outside on an upper wooden deck or on the vehicle deck, depending on the weather. It brought out the good pirate in all of us.

Lifeboat sports was another motivating event, though a not-so-popular one for some of the crew! Every Monday morning, the vessel would be winched off its wharf at Lyttelton and positioned in the middle of the basin between it and its neighbouring wharf. 'Pugwash' would instruct a whistle to be blown and all lifeboats would be lowered on both sides. The whistle would be blown again and crews would set off rowing around the ship and back to their positions. Chaos sometimes occurred when each group of boats met the other lot coming the opposite way. But it was good training and you couldn't get out of it, if you wanted to remain on that vessel!

Outside his work obligations afloat, Ray had a full life ashore. He was active in the Sumner Lifeboat Association where he was President and later became its Patron. He was always a keen swimmer and another activity was going round schools to carry out lifesaving examinations. In Wellington, when on the *Maori*, he always started his day by walking around to the Freyberg Heated Swimming Pool and swimming a predetermined number of lengths of the pool.

Ray was not a gardener! But he was interested in cooking. So when he retired, he enrolled at the local polytech and did a Cordon Bleu cooking course; this was followed by a silver service course so he could hire himself out as a butler at fancy functions! As a result, I shared many enjoyable meals at the Pugh-Williams' home on the Cashmere hills, overlooking Christchurch city. Either Ray would have produced the first course and his wife, Val, the second or vice versa. By now, Captain Ray had become much more than just 'sir' but also a very good friend. Ray had become my maritime Mentor many years before the time I left the *Maori*. But he also took a great interest in my new

polar career. Val's father had been the clerk in Sir Joseph Kinsey's office when the telegram came through reporting the death of Scott and his comrades. Her father went on to manage that company and they had inherited numerous small items from those early polar expeditions, which they later donated at various times to the Canterbury Museum.

Ray always had a great interest in local history and was employed by his old secondary school, Christchurch Boys High School, as the researcher for the author writing a book on the history of the school. I called on him once in his own small office at the school, where he could put his notes into some sort of order for the author. This interest had probably come about by wanting to know as much as he could on the history of the Lyttelton and Wellington harbours he had visited so frequently. Those fortunate passengers who were invited to the bridge for departure, were always in for a special treat of information and tales – he was a hive of information. The life of Vancouver, one of Cook's men, also fascinated him and he researched and collected books about him widely.

Ray Pugh-Williams had a huge influence in shaping my future seagoing career – I was very privileged to have known him.

## Ray's Naval Career



**Ray Pugh-Williams**

**as a naval rating teenager in 1930s**

Captain Raymond Pugh-Williams joined the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve in 1936, training as a reservist aboard the minesweeper HMS *Wakakura*. In December 1939 he was called up and joined the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve.



After a brief training period in HMS *Philomel* he was posted to the cruiser HMS *Achilles* which at that time was operating in the Pacific. Throughout 1940 he served in various harbour protection vessels and also aboard both the converted merchant ship HMS *Gael* and later the converted Government ship HMS *Matai*. In 1941, he was sent to Australia to do a number of courses; upon his return to New Zealand joining the 25th Minesweeping Flotilla. In early 1943 Ray became captain of a Fairmile submarine chaser and served in that capacity until 1944 in the Pacific Islands based on Guadalcanal. After the Japanese surrender, and towards the end of World War II he was sent to Britain where he was appointed to the destroyer HMS *Avon Vale*. He was discharged from the navy in early 1946 at the end of WW2, having attained the rank of Lieutenant.

In 1947 Ray extended and continued his maritime career in the Merchant Navy and joined the Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand as a deck officer. He was appointed master in 1960 after which he commanded several of their inter-colonial vessels and in 1963 became one of their senior masters. During this time he commanded most of the Company's significant passenger and cargo ships.

Later he joined the Royal New Zealand Naval Reserve and was active in completing considerable periods of naval service particularly in the survey vessel HMNZS *Lachlan*. In recognition of his exceptional maritime record he was promoted to the rank of Captain in the RNZNR in 1969 and retired from the reserve in 1980.

## WELLINGTON TUGS SOLD



**Delta 300 (ex-Ngahue) at left and Delta 200 (ex-Toia) at right**

After four decades of service, Wellington's two tugboats have been sold off to a Dubai-based port operator.

The *Ngahue* and *Toia* will leave for the Middle East in the next few days, and they've got an adventure ahead. Captain Nanne van Cranenburgh will spend the next months on an old tug. He's part of a crew taking Wellington's two former tugs on a long, slow trip to their new home – a port in Dubai.

"See the world in slow motion' – a phrase we often use," he says.

The slow-moving vessels will navigate waters where piracy is a serious risk – the threat given the Hollywood treatment in movie *Captain Phillips*.

"You get used to it," says Mr van Cranenburgh. "You know how to act and of course we have countermeasures."

Those countermeasures are likely to include armed guards – a necessary move, because as well as being slow, the tugs are low-sided and easy to board.

"It is part of the job, but of course I have a wife and kids who want to see daddy back home."

Mr Van Cranenburgh isn't expecting problems. Most of the trip should be plain sailing, with enough time to catch dinner.

The tugs have been replaced by newer vessels with twice the pulling power, but Mr van Cranenburgh says the two older tugs have plenty of life in them.

"I instantly fell in love," says Mr van Cranenburgh. "Like I say, it's well maintained."

That could mean Wellington's two old tugs will be pushing and pulling ships in Dubai for another 20 years.

## LADE AS HAVE DESIGNED A UNIQUE SHIP

Norwegian designers at Lade AS have designed a unique ship that they say would achieve fuel savings of 60 percent and reduce emissions by 80 percent. Their Vindskip (or Windship) has a specially designed hull that works like a symmetrical airfoil harnessing wind somewhat like the wing of a plane to generate "lift." The ship would also use a liquefied natural gas-powered electrical generator for additional power.



**Their Vindskip (or Windship)**

It is a return to the days of wind-powered cargo ships - but with a very modern twist. The makers of the wind-powered hybrid merchant ship say that while engines are still needed, their design could achieve fuel savings of 60 per cent while reducing emissions by 80 per cent. Special software will monitor the wind conditions and calculate the best route for the ship. see more at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2426577/Vindskip-cargo-vessels-huge-hull-acts-SAIL.html#ixzz3K1Qc6PaD>

## SEAMANSHIP THE FORGOTTEN FACTOR?



It has been repeatedly observed that nowadays, *seamanship* on-board commercial cargo ships tends to be extinct. If it is indeed so, one cannot help but wonder in what degree this has taken place, which factors contributed and how severe are the related consequences for the shipping industry. But how important is the term '*Seamanship*? In order to comprehend the gravity of the term an attempt for an analysis can be performed. *Seamanship* shouldn't be interpreted only within the literal sense of the word, which involves the practical art of operating a ship. It should be attributed a wider meaning which is a combination of experience, knowledge, professionalism, safety culture and performance ability onboard a vessel. It's worth also to mention that *seamanship* involves a knowledge on a variety of fields and development of specialised skills including but not limited to: management, navigation, weather meteorology and forecasting, watch keeping, ship-handling, operation of deck equipment, cargo pumps, anchors and cables, communications, precise execution of various duties such as cargo handling equipment, cargo pumps, dangerous cargoes, tank cleaning operations, dealing with emergencies and more. The degree of knowledge needed within these areas is dependent upon the nature of the work, rank and the type of vessel on which a mariner is employed. We should not omit to mention that *seamanship* is transferred from one generation of *seamen* to another. In a nutshell, *seamanship* is a 'best practice guide' based on all aforementioned elements. But is *seamanship* still at play, or it has been lost somewhere in the immense volume of bureaucracy? Nowadays one might claim that *seamanship* tends to be obsolete and consequently the number of accidents tends to increase. Should one wonder why, the reasons are quite transparent: each one of us, members of the shipping community, has contributed in transforming Captain and crew to bureaucrats. Seaman's life isn't as it used to be twenty years ago. One can recall that a ship's Master had only one or two folders behind his desk whereas nowadays

there are forty. Taking into account the mass of paperwork created and maintained onboard a vessel,

the additional paperwork required to meet each Oil Major's criteria and of course adding the actual operation of the ship, Master and crew are under constant pressure. As a consequence, it is almost certain that there will be an impact both on vessel maintenance and safe operation with potentially severe and domino consequences, including possibly loss of human life and environmental impact. It should not be omitted that the combination of required paperwork and operational/commercial necessities increase the fatigue onboard, since the number of crew is either decreased or remains the same – at best.

The shipping industry has invested a vast amount of resources in training and education of seafarers for better performance onboard, safety and survival at sea. There are numerous training programs, manuals, requirements of the International Maritime Organization, rules and legislation that modern seamen are required to be intimately familiar with. However training and education are not enough for safe navigation in the so-called 'paper ocean' and the fearful storms blowing within. If one collected all the requirements that seafarers have to respond to, in one single volume, we would be surprised: "20 thousand leagues under the sea" – the novel of the famous writer Jules Verne – would be a small notebook compared to that book. But are all these regulations sufficient in order to establish high quality standards and achieve good *seamanship*? Could the increasing ocean of paper and bureaucracy be the main contributing factor which corroded *Seamanship* as we knew it? Seamen are constantly being judged for their overall *seamanship* skills. In case of a marine incident it is often concluded that the root cause was human error. 'Errare humanum est' – to make mistakes is part of the human nature. Many factors are taken into account while investigating reasons for accidents. Fatigue, stress, lack of experience, short period of adaptation... However in many cases, all the findings could be summarized as '*lack of seamanship*'. There is no objection that the ISM era has brought a level of quality in the shipping industry. But since then, numerous new requirements and regulations came up – and are still increasing. It is self-evident that all regulations in the form of conventions, codes, resolutions and circulars had and have only one scope which is the establishment of high standards for the Safety and Quality in the shipping industry. One can realise that most of these were deemed necessary and in fact might contribute to some improvements. However, we truly cannot express satisfaction with the

overall picture of shipping as of now. Quite possibly shipping would be drastically improved by embracing and restoring the lost traditional ideals of being simple, safe, straightforward and above all: practical. This is not feasible without reducing -as far as possible- uncontrolled bureaucracy and the associated 'paper kingdom'. In addition, implementation of good *seamanship* and achievement of *Safety Onboard* will be attained through continuous onboard training, frequent supervision, attendances of experienced ex

mariners, marine superintendents, management of risk and implementation of good or -as typically called- best working practices. Good *seamanship* commands that each one of the mariners serving onboard a vessel should have strong self-initiatives and moreover have set their personal high professional standards. Crew bonding and participation is of paramount importance for morale boosting purposes. A glimpse of light will then be visible at the end of the tunnel: the lost seamanship

Captain Charis Kanellopoulos started his seagoing career in 1998 having graduated from the Greek Merchant Marine Academy of Aspropyrgos. Served on crude, product and chemical tankers and in 2007 he obtained the Master's Class A degree. In 2009 he joined Mare Maritime Co.S.A as a Marine Superintendent dealing with Vetting and CDI inspections. He has extensive experience and knowledge of ECDIS, enhanced from the fact that

## ULSTEIN: 'NURTURING A CULTURE OF INNOVATION'



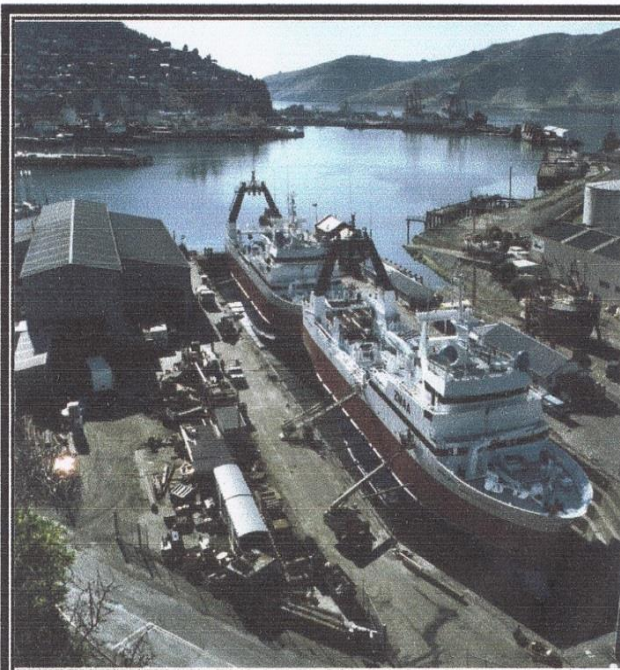
The story of Ulstein's X-Bow design is one that reminds us all that opportunities for innovation are right in front of us if we know where to look. Since unleashing this ground-breaking concept to the market in 2005, it's unique hull form has been widely


accepted by the offshore oil and gas sector. Roughly 10 years later on 14 January 2015, Ulstein announced Bernhard Schulte/WINDEA Offshore placed the 100th new-build order for an Ulstein X-Bow that also features their new X-Stern concept.

"We can now see that X-Bow has been a huge success in the more recent history of Ulstein. When we sold our UT design to Rolls-Royce in 1999, we decided to build a new design portfolio and quickly came up with the concept for the new hull design," says Deputy Group CEO, Tore Ulstein.

"The characteristics of the first ships with this hull design allowed them to sail in heavy seas at higher speeds, or to maintain their speed while consuming less fuel. At the same time, you avoided bow impact from waves, which increases comfort for the crew on board. Also, the waves do not climb over the top of the hull. Also, there is less spray being generated, meaning there is less ice formation in cold waters – something that is very important from a safety perspective," says Tore Ulstein.

Listen to their story here, filmed in 2005: [http://gcaptain.com/ulstein-nurturing-culture-innovation/?utm\\_source=feedblitz&utm\\_medium=FeedBlitzEmail&utm\\_campaign=0&utm\\_content=261222](http://gcaptain.com/ulstein-nurturing-culture-innovation/?utm_source=feedblitz&utm_medium=FeedBlitzEmail&utm_campaign=0&utm_content=261222)



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## SALVAGE BEAST *William Langewiesche*

### The Most Valuable Man On The Seas

With roughly 100,000 large merchant ships in the water at any time, scores sink, burn, break apart, run aground, or explode each year—often with toxic consequences. It is Captain Nick Sloane's job to board troubled vessels and salvage what he can. Against heavy odds, he recently refloated the doomed cruise ship *Costa Concordia*. William Langewiesche explains why Sloane may be the most valuable man on the seas.

Every ocean voyage involves risk. This has always been, and will always be. Currently well over 100,000 large merchant ships sail the seas. If past patterns hold, during the next 10 years some 25,000 of them will be categorized as insurance casualties. Another 1,600 will be lost—roughly one ship every two and a half days. Some fraud is involved, but most of the losses are real. Though safety is said to be improving, it is evident that the oceans remain wild and will not soon be tamed.

In that light one of the greatest seafarers at work today is neither a naval commander nor an old-salt merchant mariner but a certain marine salvage master with a taste for chaos and a genius for improvisation. He is a burly South African, aged 53, by the name of Captain Nick Sloane.

His job is to intervene where other captains have failed, and to make the best of ships that are sinking, burning, breaking apart, or severely aground. Usually those same ships are threatening to leak bunker fuel—the sludge that powers them—along with crude oil or other toxins in quantities that could poison the environment for years to come. Sloane boards the ships with small teams—by helicopter from overhead, or by Zodiac from oceangoing tugs—and once he arrives he stays aboard and fights, sometimes for weeks at a stretch.

He is tenacious in part because of the financial stakes involved. By well-wrought tradition, rescuers are not recompensed for saving lives at sea, but those who save a ship have a claim to a large part of its value, including its cargo. The final pay-out involves calculations not only of the ship's total value but also of the difficulty and danger involved in making the save. Today the pay-out is usually determined through Lloyd's of London, after the work is done, and on average amounts to perhaps 12 percent of the assessed value, except in disputed cases referred to



**Captain Nick Sloane**

arbitration, where the pay-out may climb higher. Such cuts amount to millions of dollars. On the other hand expenses have to be paid out of pocket, and if the salvors fail to save the ship, they may win nothing at all—not even a thank-you for trying. For bounty hunters this is known as the principle of “No Cure, No Pay,” a formulation printed in bold at the top of the Lloyd's Open Form, the predominant salvage contract. In recent years, insurers have softened the edges by recognizing the value of attempting to avoid environmental damage even if a ship is ultimately lost, but to a large degree the business remains an all-or-nothing gamble.

Sloane is not a stakeholder but a man trusted by salvage companies to roll the dice. Since 2011 he has been self-employed as a gun for hire. He lives in a beautiful valley near Cape Town with his wife, three children, and two dogs. He sees himself as every bit an African, and because he is white, this confuses people abroad. Beyond English he speaks some Zulu and Afrikaans. He believes in the future of a multi-ethnic South Africa. For practical reasons he tries to impart the humanistic principles of *Ubuntu*—in essence, that all people share a common bond—to the tough multi-national crews under his command. Whatever they may privately think, when he explains

the word to them they show no scepticism. Sloane may be a humanist, but he is not a man to be defied. His life has played out in a series of challenges, many of which would have defeated others. There have been all the storms at sea, all the ships and oil rigs saved, all the wrecks attended to. There have been two helicopter crashes. There was the crash landing of a cargo plane in which he was badly injured. There were deployments to more than 34 countries. Somewhere in there he married his wife and managed to make it to the wedding, but he missed the birth of each of his children. In those ways especially, his path has been tough. Nonetheless he has never backed off. Most recently he directed the removal of the *Costa Concordia*, the Italian cruise ship that ran aground and capsized in 2012 off the Tuscan island of Giglio, with the loss of 32 lives. For more than two years he stayed on the island, managing a team of as many as 530 people to roll the enormous ship upright and attach external flotation tanks in order to refloat it and tow it away to be scrapped. It was the most expensive such effort in history, with a budget of more than \$1 billion, and it paid Sloane well. Nonetheless, in the end it was just a wreck removal, performed on the basis of a tedious cost-plus contract and requiring soul-deadening feats of bureaucratic wrangling. Last I checked, Sloane had 84,000 e-mails in his *Concordia* in-box, of which only 2,500 remained unread. The routine was hard on him. Speculative salvage is what he prefers. He is an adventurer at heart.

As a boy Sloane repeatedly read *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. He was born to a middle-class family in landlocked Northern Rhodesia, in 1961. Three years later, the country became Zambia. After another six years the family lost everything when they were expelled on 24-hour notice because of the historical transgressions they represented. They resettled near Durban, on South Africa's eastern coast. Soon afterward, when Sloane was 10, he and his father began to sail centreboard dinghies on a local reservoir. They graduated to an open keelboat, which they raced on Durban Bay. So, Sloane grew up sailing. He was a natural. And he was not afraid of weather. He came to see winds above 25 knots as an advantage because tactics mattered less and endurance counted for more. At a regatta during his last year of high school he met a visiting Dutchman, who mentioned that he was a master mariner. Sloane asked what this meant. The Dutchman said, "You're the captain of a ship for six months, and the other six months you sail." That sounded so good to Sloane that he put aside thoughts of college and signed on to a cadet-training program

with a South African company, SafMarine, that ran cargo ships around the world. For the next few years he remained at sea almost entirely, rising to the rank of third officer and shuttling among continents. By the end he knew that he did not want to become one of the officers he saw around him—unhealthy men who rarely had time to go ashore, and lived a lonely, peripatetic existence.

On an August day in 1983—winter in the Southern Hemisphere, when the weather is worst—Sloane was in SafMarine's Cape Town office waiting to fly home on leave when word came of trouble about 25 miles offshore. There had been an explosion and fire aboard the a Spanish supertanker that had been rounding the Cape, bound for Europe carrying 250,000 tons of Arabian oil. The chief engineer and two others had been killed, and the surviving crew members had abandoned ship. Scuttlebutt had it that the explosion occurred after crew members entered the tanker's pump room—a dangerous space because of volatile vapours—and attempted to tap illicitly into the crude-oil cargo and feed it to the main engine in order to save on fuel. So great was the quantity of crude on tankers the size of the *Castillo* that it was possible at the time to sail an entire voyage from the Persian Gulf to Europe on stolen oil without the loss being noticed. Whatever the truth in this case, a spark had ignited vapours in the pump room, and the resulting conflagration spread to the cargo tanks. Now a thick column of smoke was drifting inland and raining oil particles onto pristine sheep country. At sea, the *Castillo* had broken in two, and a major spill was under way.

SafMarine had a salvage division that called for volunteers. Sloane joined on as a deckhand and set off on a tug toward the wreck. By the time they arrived, the *Castillo's* stern section had rolled over and sunk, dragging the engine room, superstructure, and as much as 100,000 tons of crude oil to the bottom. The bow section remained afloat and was continuing to spew so much flaming oil that the ocean itself seemed to be burning.

To Sloane the scene was awe-inspiring. The teams paused to improvise a plan, then attacked using powerful saltwater pumps and hoses to push the floating flames toward the wreck, and finally to smother them on the bow itself. This took two days to succeed. By then the bow was standing straight up out of the water, with the forward section of the hull, containing perhaps 60,000 tons of oil, extending deep below the surface. The tanks had stopped leaking, but



***Castillo de Bellver* on fire and surrounded by burning oil 25 miles off Capetown in 1983**

the technology did not yet exist to tap into them and remove the oil. So now what? Eventually, the South African government approved the best of the bad solutions—a plan to tow the hulk farther out to sea and sink it in deep water. SafMarine got the job, and Sloane volunteered to go onto the wreck and secure the tow wires to the ship's anchors. With three other men he was reeled down from a helicopter. They attached themselves with ropes to fixtures at the tip of the bow and cautiously climbed down to the anchors. The work took about a week to accomplish, but then the wires were secured, and a tug got the wreck under tow. When it reached a position 200 miles offshore, Sloane returned to the wreck with explosive charges. He was back on the tug when the charges were detonated, and the last of the *Castillo* settled and disappeared.

Sloane had tasted his first blood. When he returned to Cape Town, he immediately requested a transfer to SafMarine's salvage division. Eventually he was assigned to one of the company's deep-sea salvage tugs, the 310-foot, twin-engine, 26,000-horsepower *Wolraad Woltemade*. That ship and its SafMarine twin, the *John Ross*, were the most powerful tugs in the world—purpose-built bounty hunters capable of dashing to the rescue at more than 20 knots and punching through even the heaviest storms. They claimed their richest prizes during the Southern Hemisphere winters, particularly among supertankers and bulk carriers rounding the Cape in mountainous seas. During the summers, when the Cape seas are relatively calm, the tugs went out globally at flat rates for some of the biggest towing jobs to be found. Sloane was in his element. By late 1987, he had passed the necessary exams and at the age of 26 was serving as first mate—second-in-command—on both of the super-tugs. One of his captains was a tough, chain-smoking, six-foot-six Englishman who was

known as a drinker, a brawler, and an excellent ship handler. He was hard on his crews. Any man who showed hesitation on the aft deck when it was being swept by waves was fired at the next port of call—told to piss off and find a berth on a container ship if he preferred. Speaking of pissing off, Sloane once witnessed a junior officer mutter those same words to the captain, who answered by punching him in the face and breaking his nose, then putting him ashore. Tug captains were gods in those days. Sloane thought this one was a tyrant, but he learned from him about seamanship and towage.

Over the next few years, Sloane saw a lot of action. There were storms with 100-m.p.h. winds and waves of 90 feet, and two supertankers with their bows torn entirely off. There were ships that burned, ships that foundered, and ships that went on rocks. There were ships that simply broke down. Sloane grew adept at boarding them, fighting fires, and attaching the tow wires securely. More important, he was unusually adroit mentally. As a result, the company (which through a merger had become Pentow Marine) appointed him as a full-fledged salvage master and in the winter of 1992 sent him out on the *Wolraad Woltemade* to try his luck at hunting.



**The mighty *John Ross* and her sister *Wolmaade Waltemade***

With an augmented crew of 26 men, the tug sailed into the South Atlantic and anchored in the shelter of the remote British island of Saint Helena, to wait for trouble to occur. Life there was famously pleasant. Once the ship had been rigged for action, the men went ashore a few at a time to wander the island's small town, or took to the boats to explore the

immediate coast. Back on the ship they enjoyed clean accommodations, decent food, plenty of movies, and a stock of good wine. In the officers' saloon, meals were served by stewards in white jackets. But everyone was keyed up for the job, and the radios were monitored at all times.

After nearly two weeks the radio watch paid off. At two in the morning, a distress call came in from the *Rio Assu*, a 590-foot Brazilian freighter bound for Southeast Asia. A fire had broken out in its cargo of paper rolls and cellulose, and was burning uncontrollably. Aboard the *Wolraad Woltemade* the radio officer made contact and established the ship's position—345 miles to the south of Saint Helena. Within 30 minutes, the tug had raised anchor and was throttling up to full speed. A storm had passed to the south the day before, but conditions had settled to Force 5 with 20-foot swells. Sloane contacted the home office, woke someone up, and said, "Listen, we've got this. It's the *Rio Assu*. She's on fire, but we're on our way. Get hold of the owners." On the tug, Sloane printed out the standard 'No Cure, No Pay' contract, the Lloyd's Open Form, and prepared it for *Rio Assu's* captain to sign.

They came upon the casualty at four in the afternoon. It was an unremarkable ship creeping downwind with barely discernible smoke rising from a midship cargo hold. Sloane and his team shuttled to it by Zodiac, climbed onto the deck, and through an open cargo hatch peered at the fire below. The hold was a cavern 55 feet deep; the burning paper and cellulose lay within it in unstable piles of densely packed bales. It would later be determined that the fire had started with a cigarette, presumably tossed aside by a stevedore in Brazil. The flames were climbing the sides, leaving the tops of the piles unburned.

Sloane met the captain on the bridge and had him sign the Lloyd's Open Form. The captain was exhausted after days of struggling with the fire; he said they thought they had extinguished it, but when they opened the hatch to check, it flared up again, and with heat so intense that it buckled the deck and jammed the hatch cover open. With the ship's structure now at risk, Sloane needed to move fast and get water onto the fire. He discovered, however, that the ship's fire hoses were useless because of leaks, and indeed that much of the fire-suppression system had rotted.

The first order of business was to assemble a replacement system across the deck using hoses and equipment brought over from the tug. This took hours to accomplish, but by midnight the job was done, and the salvage team had secured an aluminium ladder

into the centre of the burning hold, where it reached the fire-free peak of the cargo. Sloane and another man suited up in full protective gear, put on breathing masks and tanks, and descended the ladder to survey the fire and install four fixed hoses. It was extremely hot work, with limited visibility, carried out on a steep, unstable pile inside a ship that was rolling in moderate seas. Around four in the morning the pile suddenly shifted and collapsed, leaving the two men hanging from the ladder as a fireball exploded past them. They returned to the deck, installed a longer ladder that could reach the re-formed pile, went back down, and finished positioning the hoses.

The nozzles were set to spray rather than gush. This was more than a firefighting measure. Sloane intended to use as little water as possible. He was concerned about the sloshing that could occur, and the effect that a flooded hold might have on the ship's stability, but mostly he was determined to preserve as much of the cargo's value as possible. As a corollary he had to reduce the oxygen content in the hold. The second day was spent cutting steel, winching the giant hatch cover closed, and sealing it the best they could with rope, oakum, and tape. The fire was still active, but as the internal atmosphere filled with steam, the cargo began to smoulder rather than flame.

By the end of the third day, the immediate crisis had been handled. The next step was to get to Cape Town, 1,700 miles to the southeast, where fire-suppressing carbon dioxide could be pumped into the hold and cranes could be used to remove the cargo. *The Rio Assu* could not make the trip on its own power. Its engine could be run at low speeds only by burning diesel fuel, of which it did not have enough; if the engine was run on the standard bunker oil, of which there was plenty, it could not be throttled back, and the resulting winds across the deck would find their way into the hold, bringing the flames back to life and out of control. The problem was advantageous to Sloane, who having captured a prize was not inclined to let it go. He attached a wire from the *Wolraad Woltemade*, and the long slow tow began.

It took 12 days to reach Cape Town. Sloane remained aboard the *Rio Assu* for the duration, as he did at the pier for the six weeks following, during which the fire continued to flare up as the cargo was unloaded. Once the hold was empty, Sloane oversaw temporary repairs to the main deck, reloaded undamaged cargo, and returned the ship to its owners in a condition that allowed for the onward voyage to Asia. According to Sloane, after arbitration at Lloyd's, the payout to

Pentow Marine was \$3 million. Sloane's team received a bonus. He was 31 years old. His capture of the *Rio Assu* was seen as a small affair, but perfectly executed and a promise of larger prizes to come.

### The Coffeehouse

The business of maritime salvage is not hard to understand. Lloyd's of London stands at the heart of it, as it does of shipping generally. Lloyd's is not Lloyds Bank, which is a bank. It is not Lloyd's Register, which is a risk-management organization. It is not Lloyd's List, which is a publication. And it is not even an insurance company, though it is often mistaken for one. Instead it is a forum in the City of London where brokers representing shippers wanting to hedge their risk meet with syndicates willing to underwrite that risk for a price. Lloyd's vets the players, supervises the encounters, provides rules and information, and stands by with a central fund should an underwriter fail to meet its obligations. The system dates back to 1688, when it began in a London coffeehouse, called Lloyd's, where maritime traders gathered to swap information and bargain over vessels and their cargoes. The conversations were global from the start. The business was naturally wild. Beyond the standard problem of market swings, it had to contend with the special dangers inherent to seafaring. Financing those risks was so important to world trade that at the coffeehouse it eventually became the only business being done.

Today, Lloyd's occupies a glass-and-steel building considered to be a masterpiece of modern design. It contains a dramatic glass-roofed atrium overlooked by open-office galleries and populated by hundreds of buttoned-down brokers and underwriters who sit in clusters under their group names, peering at flat-screens and murmuring into phones with a British calm that belies the intensity of the decisions they must make. Marine coverage now constitutes only about seven percent of the activity, but it continues to define the Lloyd's culture.

Here's how it works. A smallish containership at half-life may be worth \$25 million and carry a cargo of equal value. The owner goes to a Lloyd's broker, who negotiates basic coverage for the ship with the syndicates there. That coverage typically excludes liability for loss of cargo, pollution, and wreck removal. To handle those risks the owner joins one of several "protection and indemnity" (P&I) clubs, almost all of which cluster near the Lloyd's building. The P&I clubs are shipowner mutual societies that spread the risk among their members and may also take it to re-

insurers, most likely back at Lloyd's. In the end, therefore, the ship is insured by a consortium, and Lloyd's is at the helm. To control some risks, the consortium requires that the ship meet the standards of a classification society.



**Lloyds of London Building, 1 Lime St, London**

Classification societies are non-governmental organizations, invented at Lloyd's in the 18th century, which oversee the technicalities of ship construction and operation. There are at least 40 such organizations in the world, some with integrity. To keep insurance costs down and maintain good standards on his ship, the owner might choose DNV GL, a Northern European group. So, all is well, and the ship cruises the world making money, until one day in a storm the engine breaks down, and the ship—all \$50 million of it, vessel plus cargo—starts drifting toward a dangerous shore. At that point Nick Sloane shows up with the Lloyd's Open Form and offers a tow in return for partial possession. For the insurers and P&I clubs, the choice is obvious. They know Sloane and his reputation. They will have to pay out perhaps \$5 million but may avoid the full loss. The decision is purely financial, with no emotion involved. This is how the business is supposed to work, and often does.





**Antim space, Lloydfs Building, London**

But there is also a murkiness to the arrangement that sometimes comes into view. There are shipowners, agents, and salvors who believe it is only normal to game the system hard. The simplest technique is to pay a crew to take an old ship out to sea and scuttle it. This may explain why ship sinkings increase when scrap-metal prices fall. The problem, however, is that the owners are reimbursed only for the value of the hull. Far better are the possibilities afforded by salvage, in which the value of the cargo is taken into account, and the ship returns to service after the deed is done. It is widely assumed that a system of kickbacks exists by which certain unscrupulous tug companies, awarded a salvage contract, are expected to return a percentage of their gains to the shipowners who gave them the job. This leads to a recurring scam in which shipowners arrange to have a vessel break down in a convenient location, get it salvaged by friends, then repossess it and carry on to the original destination. The underwriters in London are usually wise to these cases, but for lack of proof have to pay up.

And then there was the *Brillante Virtuoso*—a Greek-owned tanker ostensibly carrying \$120 million of high-grade fuel oil from Ukraine to China—which was boarded by pirates off Yemen in 2011. During the attack, its engine and pump rooms were nonsensically set on fire. After the pirates rifled the ship's safe, they and the crew escaped in separate directions, leaving the ship to drift. A Greek company got the salvage job and dispatched a team from Aden, who extinguished the fire and took the ship under tow. Sloane was sent in to assist but is tight-lipped about the case, which remains in dispute. The record is nonetheless abundant. The pirates had arrived in a patrol boat and were dressed in Yemeni uniforms. Initially this was reported as a clever ruse by nefarious Somalis, but given that they had not done what pirates do—take the ship, take the cargo, take the crew—suspicions

soon grew that the reverse was true, and that they were in fact Yemeni authorities pretending to be pirates. A few days later a British insurance investigator named David Mockett inspected the ship and made the mistake of sending an e-mail expressing his opinion that the attack was a fraud. He wrote that he had scheduled a meeting for the following day that would prove it. He copied Sloane on the e-mail, along with his wife and a few others. It is widely presumed that the e-mail was intercepted or leaked. The next day a powerful bomb detonated beneath Mockett's car and killed him. The Yemeni government blamed al-Qaeda. A year later, after an investigation by Scotland Yard, a detective testifying at a British inquest said he believed that Mockett had been killed for getting too close to the truth. By implication, Yemeni authorities were involved. An average salvage pay-out on such a ship might have amounted to \$40 million—plenty to spread around.



**The 274 metre *Brillante Virtuoso* on fire 23 miles west of Aden in July, 2011**

Suspicions were further raised during the transfer of the cargo to another tanker when it was discovered that the *Brillante Virtuoso* may have been carrying junk oil worth barely more than half the declared value. This time, it seems, the scheming had gone too far, and London has not yet paid out for the claim. The Greek salvage company, however, describes the *Brillante Virtuoso* operation as a success and reports that the ship was delivered back to its owners.

### **Raising the Dead**

In the late 1990s, because of growing sensitivity to the health of the oceans, and the liability that results, particularly from oil spills, the marine-insurance industry decided to create an incentive for intervention even in cases where it is unlikely that ships can be saved. This was achieved through the addition to the Lloyd's Open Form of an optional 'special

compensation' clause known as SCOPIC, which, if invoked by salvors, guarantees them payment at fixed daily rates for their teams and equipment, with up to a 25 percent bonus on top. The arrangement is complicated and does not preclude a much larger claim if the ship is saved. But it gives salvors the choice of opting out of the traditional 'No Cure, No Pay' gamble, and therefore expands the choice of shipwrecks that may be taken on.

The SCOPIC clause came into effect in 1999. A few months later, Sloane's company, now called Smit Pentow, invoked it for the first time. It was winter in Cape Town. A ship reporting cracks in its hull dropped anchor about six miles offshore, near penguin breeding grounds. The ship was a large bulk carrier named the *Treasure*, bound for Brazil with a load of iron ore. Its tanks contained 1,344 tons of bunker oil, 56 tons of marine diesel, and 64 tons of lubricating oil. When surveyors went aboard they discovered that 27.4 metres (90 feet) of plating was missing from the side of the hull and that a cargo hold was flooding, threatening to sink the ship at any moment. Authorities ordered the *Treasure* to raise anchor immediately and head farther out to sea, but the crew refused and took to the lifeboats instead.



**The MV *Treasure* sinking off the southwest coast of South Africa**

The *John Ross* was in port and rushed out to hook up a tow, but the ship went down as the connection was being made. It sank fast, bow first, hit the ocean floor, 160 feet below, and snapped in two, rupturing the fuel tanks. More than 1,100 tons of bunker oil rose to the surface and contaminated the penguin habitats. The recovery took more than two months to accomplish. It involved removing the remaining oil from the submerged wreck, cleaning the waters and shores, and rescuing the penguins. To his surprise, Sloane, the hard-driving salvage master, found himself on the penguin side of things, working with environmentalists and about 12,000 volunteers to capture and save

40,000 exposed birds, half of whom had been soaked in oil. As the clean-up of the shores continued, the penguins were washed and dried, then trucked hundreds of miles up the coast, where they were released into the ocean to find their way home. This they did with impressive determination, as indicated by the progress of electronic beacons attached to some of them. On the way, however, groups were distracted by an area rich with squid, and went into a feeding frenzy. The local fishermen went out with shotguns to protect the stock, and Sloane reacted by trying to call them off. "Please stop shooting the penguins," he said. "They cost hundreds of dollars each to wash." This was the new world of salvage contracts, and Sloane found that he liked it.

His next encounter with environmentalists came about a year later. On September 5, 2001, a large oceanic storm hit the Cape of Good Hope with violent winds and 50-foot waves. Sloane had just returned from a job laying a pipeline in the Caspian Sea and was heading out to lunch with friends when he got a call from his company about a ship in distress about 30 miles down the coast. He was told to assemble his team and get to a helicopter fast. The ship was a Singaporean dry-cargo carrier named the *Ikan Tanda*, 475 feet long, and loaded with 15,500 tons of fertilizer and pesticides, some in bulk form, some in bags. It had lost power at five in the morning, 17 miles offshore, and was drifting into a cauldron of breaking waves in an exposed and rocky bay. As an added complication, the bay adjoined the Cape Point Nature Reserve, a national park, and was overlooked by a privileged little community called Scarborough, known for its pristine beach and an ethos of rigid environmentalism. Furthermore, all the television crews of Cape Town were a short distance away. If you made a list of the best places not to wreck your ship, Scarborough's bay would be one. Sloane knew this full well. He told me that as he boarded the helicopter with his team he was thinking, Shit, I should have had lunch. But he was also thinking about how to land the ship on the shore, and, if it did not then break apart, how best to refloat it later.

He was going in with SCOPIC invoked from the start. The chance of failure was high. The helicopter flight was rough. Sloane had a six-man team. They found the *Ikan Tanda* lying broadside to the weather about two miles offshore. It was rolling heavily and was being swept by seas so large that the entire deck was going under, and waves were bursting over the top of the superstructure. The waves were running 14 seconds apart, an interval just large enough to allow

each member of the team, in helmet and life vest, to be winched down onto the deck and take cover. They landed on one of the massive cargo hatches, unhooked from the harness, rolled to the edge, and dropped down to the side deck to crouch behind a coaming—the raised steel perimeter around a cargo hatch—just as the next wave swept across.

On deck the roar of the storm precluded verbal communication. Sheltering behind the coamings, moving in short dashes between the deluges from waves, the salvors worked their way aft to the ship's superstructure. Once inside they climbed through the accommodation decks to the bridge, where they found the captain and all 23 of his crew wearing life jackets and seeming upset. Sloane handed the captain his card and said, "I'm Nick Sloane, the salvage master." Two air-force helicopters arrived and began rescuing the crew members, plucking them directly from the sheltered wing of the bridge. Soon, only four remained, including the captain.

The ship was still floating, shuddering and rolling but not yet touching the bottom. Through the turmoil outside, Sloane caught a glimpse of the Scarborough beach. To the captain he said, "You need to ballast down right away. Open your valves." To ballast down is to flood special tanks with the weight of water. Normally this is done for stability or hydrodynamic efficiency when a ship is light and otherwise would be riding too high. The *Ikan Tanda* by contrast was fully loaded. The captain said, "You're going to sink my ship!" But a grounding was inevitable, and Sloane wanted it to occur in the deepest possible water. He said, "Flood everything you can."



***Ikan Tanda* scuttled on a beach 200 miles west of Capetown, in October, 2001**

It was a necessary move. But by flooding the tanks, and lowering the ship below its designed draft, he exposed the topsides all the more to the sweeping waves. About an hour after Sloane's arrival, with the

bridge now regularly inundated, the ship touched bottom and began to bounce. Inspections of the engine room and bilge showed that the hull was holding. They seemed to be hitting a seafloor of sand gently up-sloping to the beach. The *John Ross* appeared but could not get close enough to hook up a tow. The bouncing continued for two days, until the storm abated, and the ship came to rest about 300 yards off the beach. A rocky reef lay just 30 feet away; had they hit it, the ship would have been lost.

Sloane and his team camped in the captain's cabin, which was wet but the driest place to be found. The first order of business was to transfer the ship's bunker fuel internally to get it away from the vulnerable lower hull, and then off-load it entirely using giant barrels known as sea slugs, which could be towed through the surf to the beach. There were two reasons for urgency. The first was protection of the coast should the ship break up. The second was the possibility that the fuel would come into contact with the cargo of fertilizer and transform the ship into a massive bomb. Any rupture of the *Ikan Tanda's* fuel tanks would likely have caused the evacuation of Scarborough and might have destroyed the town as well.

Sloane got the fuel off, but the residents were upset nonetheless. When he started emptying cargo by having sacks of fertilizer slit open and dumped over the side, he got a message from an anonymous group that claimed to have a sniper rifle and threatened to start shooting if the dumping did not stop. Sloane answered that if they fired a single shot they wouldn't just have sacks of fertilizer in the surf—he'd leave the wreck, and they'd have the whole damned mess. Believing that communication had to be improved, he organized a town community meeting. The meeting was strange, Sloane said—he and his rough-hewn crew trying to explain realities to a crowd largely of flower children and hippies—but by the end of it even the environmentalists understood the need to dump cargo. Afterward they quieted down.

The dumping continued for six weeks, frequently interrupted by storms. Sloane installed powerful pumps on the deck for eventual use during the refloating attempt. He rigged a complex system of ground tackle attached to the stern, and strengthened the bow for the tow. Conditions aboard were extreme. The ship was still being pounded and could at any time have broken up and died. Three of the cargo holds flooded uncontrollably when their hatch covers could not be closed. During the worst times helicopters stood by overhead in case a sudden evacuation was

needed. Thousands of tourists drove the coastal road to watch the action. The police had to limit access to avoid traffic jams from happening. The press expressed doubts throughout, as did industry experts. But then it was done. The *Wolraad Woltemade* came in and made the connection, and Sloane activated the deck pumps to empty water from the holds. As the ship grew lighter, it rotated to the right and developed a 25-degree starboard list—a deck angle that caused the pump lubrication systems to fail. Sloane found solutions, and on the second day the *Ikan Tanda* was suddenly free, floating precariously behind the powerful tug, and heading out to sea. Sloane expected the tow to proceed to a nearby harbour, but word arrived that access had been denied—and not just there but to any other refuge. After a week of wandering, during which the owners pleaded in vain with the authorities, the owners and their insurers gave orders for the *Ikan Tanda* to be scuttled. This was accomplished in deep water 200 miles offshore on October 27, 2001. A crew cut holes in the hull above the waterline, then opened the valves and ballasted down. The ship sank slowly beneath the surface on an even keel. It was a sad end for the salvage, but Sloane had nonetheless pulled off a remarkable feat. Never before in history had a shipwreck been refloated from the violent South African shores.

Since then, of the five other wrecks refloated in South Africa, four have been refloated by Sloane, and refloating has become a favourite challenge of his worldwide. That is partly because refloating represents the pinnacle of a salvor's craft—something akin to raising the dead. It is also partly because, systematically, in each case that Sloane has taken on, others in the business have said it could not be done. Sloane delights in proving them wrong. One case, in 2006, involved a Canadian containership called the *Valour*, which ran aground in a turbulent bay in the Azores in December 2005. A former boss of Sloane's was heard to say at a party at Lloyd's, "It's about time that ship-owners and underwriters listen to us. For example, look at what's happening with the *Valour*. We told you she can't be refloated. She's still there. And next year you will call us up and beg us to come and help you out." This made the front page of Lloyd's List. The man was Dutch.

There is a saying in the salvage business that you're not much if you're not Dutch. Especially if you are a South African. The former boss's scepticism about refloating the *Valour* was seconded by another man at the same Lloyd's party, an executive from an American

company called Titan Salvage. Sloane laughed it off. To me he said, "I know we're Third World citizens, but they don't have to treat us like that. No, no, no." Sloane eventually refloated the *Valour*, in the teeth of a hurricane, and that too made the front page.



### **Costa Concordia salvage operations near the harbour on the island of Giglio**

Six years later, in April 2012, Titan and an Italian company called Micoperi won the contract to refloat the *Costa Concordia* and turned to Sloane to lead the effort. The *Concordia* had grounded and capsized three months earlier. It was a large ship, 952 feet long, with 13 accommodation decks, 1,500 cabins, five restaurants, 13 bars, four swimming pools, a casino, a children's play area equipped with video games, and plenty of bad public art. Now that it was dead and lying on its side in the middle of a marine sanctuary, it presented a difficult challenge.

This was going to be one of the largest refloating jobs ever done, and the most expensive. The conventional approach would have been to come in with barges, cut up the ship, and haul it away in pieces, but the owners were concerned about the environmental consequences of such a plan, and the possibility of contaminating the evidence at a crime scene. So, what about rolling it upright, raising it from the depths, and towing it away whole? The scheme was irresistible, all the more so because once again there were plenty of doubters.



**After being raised and righted the Costa Concordia is shown, supported by giant caissons, under tow to her home port of Genoa**

He thought the work would require a year. It took more than twice that. For the tricky righting operation, in September 2013, when the ship was rolled upright onto an artificial seabed, Sloane's wife and children flew to Italy to stand by his side. His wife, dismayed by all the press that had assembled for the occasion, said to him, "What are you, a movie star or a salvage master?" Sloane is a gregarious man but neither seeks nor enjoys publicity. When I sought him out, through friends in the maritime industry, he agreed to speak only on the condition that we would not discuss the *Concordia*. The most he said on the subject was that in his darkest moments he sometimes feared he would tow the *Concordia* toward some scrapyards only to have it sink again before delivery, trapping him in the project for years to come. It didn't happen that way. Last July the ship was successfully refloated and towed to a secure position in Genoa, and Sloane at last was able to go home.



**The *Costa Concordia* securely at rest in her home port of Genoa. Dismantling operations are predicted to last two years**

Over a long dinner in London, I once asked him if there is a younger generation in the industry who will be able to replace him. He said, "Without a doubt there are guys coming up who are better than I am technically. But the question for any of them is: Will you be able to withstand the pressure—the demands of the industry and your family? Because before your kids are born it's one thing, and after they're born it's something else. When they're growing and you're often gone, it's hard to maintain the desire to be a salvage master, but that is what's required, a commitment for life."

I asked, "What about you?"

He looked a little sad, perhaps because he was thinking about the personal compromises he has made.

"For me," he said, "it's not a commitment. It's a love."

**"No man will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into jail; for being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being drowned."**

## SHALLOW WATERS

The global insurer Allianz has recently pointed out that in terms of marine-related claims, those involving grounding now represent the most expensive. This perhaps should not be surprising, as those of wreck removal nowadays invariably magnify the costs, with the authorities having realised that salvors now have quite astonishing abilities in this respect. Accordingly, wrecks that would once have been dismissed as total losses and left on the seabed are now the subject of removal contracts. That of the *Costa Concordia*, it can be assumed, has had a major effect upon the statistics.

At the same time, the question perhaps ought to be asked about why, in an era when the navigation of ships has been more precise and easy than ever before, we are afflicted by grounding casualties? It is a matter that has recently provoked comments from the UK Marine Accident Investigation Branch, whose Chief Inspector has noticed something of a rash of groundings in which Electronic Chart Display systems were being used by the navigators of these ships.

In that the industry is still in something of a transitional state from its traditional paper-based navigation to the screen-based variety, such accidents might be expected as ships' officers become accustomed to a very new sort of navigation and chart-work. There may be something of a problem in that senior officers, who have been trained and accustomed to paper charts, are now sailing with junior officers, who may have known nothing other than ECDIS in their shorter careers.

Whereas the Master might have been extremely competent in the old dispensation and well able to mentor the juniors to his own exacting standards, he may lack the experience to ensure that his "generation Y" junior, such an apparent expert on the ship's electronics, has not done something stupid in the voyage planning; something that was a factor in one of the most recent groundings reported on by the MAIB.

It is not helped that the 'generic' training, which is undertaken ashore, might be difficult to transfer to the equipment afloat, with complaints often made about the inability of the manufacturers to develop any sort of commonality or standardisation in their equipment. Just as it is possible to "get by" with a low level of expertise on a personal computer, it is clearly possible to operate ECDIS without being fully competent in all its functions. Accidents have been caused when inexperienced people have 'edited out' aids to navigation, obstructions and even sandbanks, or have employed the wrong scale.

Hopefully, this will be a phase that better training and greater familiarity with the equipment, will eventually eliminate. It might be recalled that the arrival of radar, arguably as revolutionary a development as electronic charts, gave rise to the 'radar assisted collision, which persisted for some time until everyone had been trained in the use of this new navigational aid.

Source: BIMCO. See also:

<http://www.hellenicshippingnews.com/watchkeeper-shallow-waters/>

## ECDIS ASSISTED GROUNDING INVESTIGATED *Steve Clinch*

Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents at the U.K. Marine Accident Investigation Branch has some scathing things to say about current generation ECDIS equipment and the training needed to use it.

Mr. Clinch's comments come in his foreword to the MAIB report on a chemical tanker grounding in which, among other things "the OOW followed the track shown on the ECDIS display but had such poor situational awareness that it took him 19 minutes to realize the vessel was aground."

"This is the third grounding investigated by the MAIB where watch-keepers' failure to use an electronic chart display and information system (ECDIS) properly has been identified as one of the causal factors," writes Mr. Clinch." As this report is published, there are over 30 manufacturers of ECDIS equipment, each with their own designs of user interface, and little evidence that a common approach is developing. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) mandates generic ECDIS training, but it is left to Flag States and owners to decide whether or not type-specific training is necessary and, if so, how it should be delivered. As experience of ECDIS systems improves, evidence indicates that many owners are concluding that type-specific training is essential, though some are resorting to computer-based training once the watch-keeper is on board. In this accident, however, despite dedicated training ashore on the system they were to use, the operators' knowledge of the ECDIS and ability to navigate their vessel safely using the system were wholly inadequate.

"Unfortunately, the current generation of ECDIS systems, though certified as complying with regulatory requirements, can be operated at a very low level of functionality and with key safety features disabled or circumvented. Training and company culture may mitigate these shortcomings to some extent, but can only go so far. While systems allow individuals to operate them in a sub-standard manner, there are

those who will do so: such is human nature. For all shipping companies navigation is a safety-critical function and failure to navigate effectively can and does result every year in pollution, loss of vessels, and loss of life. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the next generation of ECDIS will embody features making them less vulnerable to the vagaries of human performance to achieve a better level of assurance that safe navigation is being maintained and failure to navigate effectively can and does result every year in pollution, loss of vessels, and loss of life. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the next generation of ECDIS will embody features making them less vulnerable to the vagaries of human performance to achieve a better level of assurance that safe navigation is being consistently achieved."

Following is a summary of the MAIB report on the investigation of the grounding of the chemical tanker, *Ovit*, on the Varne Bank in the Dover Strait on September 18, 2013.

- In the early morning of 18 September 2013, the Malta registered chemical tanker, *Ovit*, carrying a cargo of vegetable oil, ran aground on the Varne Bank in the Dover Strait. The vessel remained aground for just under 3 hours; there were no injuries and damage to the vessel was superficial. There was no pollution.
- *Ovit's* primary means of navigation was an electronic chart display and information system (ECDIS) and analysis of this system, its installation, training and operation form the backbone of this report. Key safety factors identified were:
  - The passage plan was unsafe as it passed directly over the Varne Bank. It had been prepared in ECDIS by an inexperienced and unsupervised junior officer and was not checked by the Master before departure.
  - **The OOW followed the track shown on the ECDIS display but had such poor situational awareness that it took him 19 minutes to realize the vessel was aground.**
  - **ECDIS safety settings were not appropriate to the local conditions and the audible alarm was disabled; after the accident, the historical track could not be recovered from the system.**
  - Dover coastguard's Channel Navigation Information Service (CNIS) had a system and procedure for warning ships approaching the Varne Bank. However, on this occasion, the warning was not issued to *Ovit* as **the coastguard watch officer operating CNIS was unqualified, unsupervised and distracted.**

.Read the full report here:

September 16, 2014.

[http://www.marinelog.com/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=7734:maib-reports-on-ecdis-assisted-grounding&Itemid=231](http://www.marinelog.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=7734:maib-reports-on-ecdis-assisted-grounding&Itemid=231)

## REMEMBERING OLD SHIPMASTERS

Murray Robinson



**CAPTAIN J. (Eric) PEAKE**

Search for Captain Peake's name in the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, a website run by the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, and you'll not find him. Yet he deserves to be there. Of all the men and women who have commanded roll-on roll-off ferries on Cook Strait during the past half-century, Captain Peake was the first. He also served as master of tss *Tamahine*, which ran the Wellington-Picton trade from 1925 to 1962. On 16 January 1962 Captain Peake was appointed to stand-by GMV *Aramoana*, first of the rail ferries, while she was fitting out at the River Leven shipyard of William Denny & Brothers in Dumbarton, Scotland.

John Eric Peake was born at Nottingham, England on 28 May 1911. He went to sea as an apprentice with the Commonwealth and Dominion Line (renamed the Port Line in November 1937) and qualified for his second mate's certificate on 15 January, 1932. Because of the Great Depression, Mr Peake was forced to work as an able seaman until, with recovery of trade in the mid-1930s, he gained a junior deck officer position with the Commonwealth and Dominion Line. On 9 October, 1936 he passed the examination for his first mate's foreign-going certificate before joining the Union Steam Ship Company at Wellington on 7 December that year. By then Eric Peake had nine years of sea time and had served as fourth officer in sole charge of the 8 to 12 watch aboard tsmv *Port Hobart* (7,448/1925, Captain S.C. Cottell) tss *Port Napier* (8,491/1912, Captain GL Hazlewood) and tsmv *Port Gisborne* (8,001/1927, Captain WG Higgs).

His first ship with the Union Company was the 2,563 grt collier *Karepo*, to which Eric was appointed third officer on 26 January 1937. By year's end he was senior third officer of the trans-Pacific liner *Niagara* (13,415/1913). He remained with the *Niagara* until 9 May 1939, after which he was promoted to second officer of mv *Karu* (1,044/1935) running

between South Island ports and New Plymouth. The *Karu* was also Eric's first ship as chief officer when he rejoined her on 9 September 1943. Immediately prior this, he had been second officer of the hospital ship *Maunganui* (7,527/1911).

Without exception, all the masters under whom he served described him favourably: 'very reliable,' 'a good navigator,' 'a most capable and attentive man.' Captain S E Gaskin, master of the steamer *Korowai* (2,525/1938) went further, reporting that he was 'very sorry to lose Mr Peake's services when the time came to transfer to his next ship. Captain E. J. McClellan, the Union Company's Deputy Chief Marine Superintendent, wrote in 1951 that 'for many years Mr Peake has been regarded as one of our most ...conscientious officers...possessing outstanding ability.' On 27 November that year, aged 40, he was promoted to master, taking command that day of the 925 grt *Kanna* at Wellington.

Such was Captain Peake's reputation that he was chosen to bring out not only GMV *Aramoana* but also the 4,542 grt *Aranui*, second of the Cook Strait rail ferries. gmv *Aranui* reached Wellington on 28 May 1966 from her builder, Vickers-Armstrong (Shipbuilders) Ltd at Newcastle upon Tyne.

Captain Peake made his final sailing as the *Aranui's* master on 1 February 1971, having earlier transferred to the Union Company's Tasman Seacargo Express vessels. Even ship handlers as skilled and accomplished as Eric Peake could find themselves in bother when manoeuvring large ships in high winds. On the afternoon of 28 August 1970 matters went spectacularly wrong when he attempted to berth the *Maheno* (4,510/1969) stern-first at Wellington's Taranaki Street Terminal in a 70 knot north-northeasterly gale. Refusing to answer helm and engines, the *Maheno* was blown diagonally between the terminal and the cross-wharf immediately to the north, her port quarter swinging heavily against the wharf timbers. A headline from the tug *Tapuhi* carried away and was sucked into the starboard bow aperture of the *Maheno's* Pleuger transverse thrust unit, jamming the thruster machinery.

MV *Union Wellington* (2,638/1973) was Captain Peake's last ship; he retired from the sea on 27 March 1975. He and his wife moved to Waikanae but sadly Captain Peake did not enjoy a long retirement, dying at Palmerston North Hospital on 2 January 1977 aged just 65. His ashes were committed to the Tasman Sea from the stern of MV *Union Sydney* (4,752/1972) at sunset on Thursday 27 January 1977.

Sources: *Wellington City Archives*.

*Union Fleet* by Ian Farquhar

*The Tyser Legacy* by Ian Farquhar.

**Continued  
in Part 2**