



Society of Master Mariners South Africa

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THE BRIDGE WATCH

APRIL 2015



President's Report

It's some time since I've been able to put pen to paper and update our membership about the work of the Society. As I've mentioned previously,

the South African maritime environment is in a constant state of flux (much like the rest of the Country).

For us as a voluntary organisation representing the professional interests of seafarers it is particularly difficult to keep up with all the developments. We are limited by funds and time. I and the Exco members all have busy jobs which have to take priority – we can only spread ourselves so thin.

The upshot of this is that we have to be selective when allocating our resources by choosing the issues in which we believe we can be most effective.

Three of these issues are covered in this newsletter. These are:

- The changes planned by CPUT and DUT whereby students will no longer be able to enter for a 2-year National Diploma (with a year at sea in between) but will have to complete a 3-year Bachelor in Nautical Science (in the case of CPUT) or a 3-year Diploma in Nautical Studies (in the case of DUT).
- Problems members are encountering when revalidating Certificates of Competency whereby SAMSA is only able to issue them with an expiry date of 31st December 2016 instead of for the full 5 years.
- Excessively restrictive requirements by Home Affairs authorities adversely affect crews taking shore leave while in South African ports.



Apart from dealing with issues affecting our members we want to ensure that 2015 is remembered as the year in which we celebrated our 75th anniversary as a Society (actually formed on the 9th December 1940). Exco has been looking at ways of marking this waypoint and I will be discussing it at our Branch AGM's later this year.

I am already working on a history of the Society, which I intend to have completed by the time of our National AGM in August or September. Additionally I will be emailing members snippets taken from the old "Log Books" of the Society to help give you a sense of our history.

I am sure all our members will join me in congratulating the Society's Deputy President, Azwi Mulaudzi, on his promotion to SAMSA Chief Examiner. This is a great opportunity for Azwi and we can assure him of our full support in this challenging role.

Unfortunately Azwi has had to move to Pretoria and so won't be as involved in the Society's day to day business as he has been in the past.

At the same time I would like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing Chief Examiner, John Abercrombie, for the support and insight offered to the Society during his term in office and we wish him well in his retirement (although I believe he will still be active in various roles for some time still).



The Rainbow Warrior was in South Africa from 6 Feb to 3 March this year under the command of one of our members Captain Mike Finken. She visited Cape Town, PE and Durban.

Greenpeace is campaigning to shift energy from



© Trevor Wilkins / Greenpeace

Nuclear debate and refocus it on renewables.

Captain Finken reports that whist in Cape Town, Samkelo

Ndongeni, a student member of SOMMSA, visited the ship looking for a berth. He interviewed him and found him to be well spoken and polite but above all showing of initiative. He signed him on as a cadet/volunteer.

Greenpeace has two volunteer positions on each of their 3 ships. Volunteers do two voyages of 3 months and following a favourable assessment rise up to position of paid deck hand or cadet. Sam is still on board off the coast of Australia and is doing very well.



Sam Ndongeni onboard Rainbow Warrior 1

Towards the end of the voyage, one the other Greenpeace ships was in need of a mate. Captain Finken put the call out to the Society following which he was contacted by a South African applicant. She has since had an interview with the International office in Amsterdam and is scheduled to join one of the ships in the near future. This is excellent news for Greenpeace Africa to have its own nationals on the ships.

Captain Finken further reports that the Rainbow Warrior did not get up to any 'nonsense' on the coast. There were a few land-based activities that did not involve the ship or crew.

They were there as a platform from which to communicate a message and had six "open boats" to the public and averaged one thousand visitors on each of those days. There were other special tours and interviews too.

In port there was about 40 persons on board and at sea about 25, completely provisioned with South African organic produce (he says that was quite something to pull off).

The weather was lousy. They managed to sail out of Cape Town but because he says he wanted to show off a bit and stay in close but thereby fell into the lee off Table Mountain. By midnight they were in a storm off Cape Point and had to strike sail - and that was it for sailing.

On the coast with short transits and tight schedules there is less leeway for sailing - however it is made up for with 80% of Oceanic voyages being sails only. But that said he says he was so hectically busy that it was good not to have the "rags" out. In order to avoid the Benguela current they kept to depths between 20 and 30 meters all the way up - Mike says "what a glorious coastline we have. It had been 20 years since I'd last sailed it. What a privilege it has been".

New SOMMSA logo to celebrate our 75th Anniversary

The Society of Master Mariners South Africa was founded at a meeting in the Bencorrum Hotel in Durban on the 9th of December 1940. Two Durban pilots, Captains George Lindsay and Andrew Reid are credited as the initiators of this first meeting.



Exco has commissioned the logo shown above in recognition of this occasion.

Branches are encouraged to arrange their own ways of celebrating our 75th and ideally to make their local maritime communities aware of the work of the Society and our history.

A new recruitment brochure will be produced during the year, which will provide Branches with membership marketing material market.

We need build on our success at the recruitment of a younger generation of seafarers who we will depend on to see us through to our centenary in 2040!

Following on from a complaint initially raised by one of our members (a serving Ship's Master), the President recently signed and sent off the following self-explanatory letter to the Minister of Transport with copies the Director General: Transport and the CEO of SAMSA:

Dear Minister Peters

The Society of Master Mariners South Africa is a voluntary organisation representing the professional interests of South African certificated seafarers.

These seafarers hold South African Certificates of Competency (CoC) which are internationally accepted as meeting the International Maritime Organisation's (IMO) standard for "White List" status which in turn ensures their acceptance for employment on ship's flying the flags of many maritime nations.

South Africa has very few ships under her own flag and most South African seafarers work on foreign-flagged ships or in foreign ports as Marine Pilots, Harbour Masters etc. where they are recognised as among the best trained and experienced in the world. These seafarers mostly earn US Dollars and make a very useful contribution to the South Africa fiscus.

It is critically important to these seafarers that their South African Maritime Authority's (SAMSA) issued CoC's are technically correct in every respect. The slightest error or omission can have serious, adverse implications for their continued employment and/or for their ship-owners activities.

In order for SAMSA CoC's to remain on the IMO "White List" is must comply with The International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (or STCW), 1978. In 2010 a new set of amendments called "The Manila Amendments" were adopted. These amendments were necessary to keep training standards in line with new technological and operational requirements that require new shipboard competencies. The Manila Amendments were effective as of 1 January 2012.

There is a transition period until 31st December

2016 when all seafarers must be certified and trained according to the new standards.

Seafarers are required to revalidate their CoC every 5 years. Once this has been done they are issued with a revalidated certificate which is valid for another 5 years.

It has recently come to our attention that South African seafarer's revalidated CoCs are being issued by SAMSA with an expiry date of 31 December 2016 instead of for the required 5 years ahead. Our enquiries into the reasons for this indicate that the Department of Transport (DOT) has delayed the progress of the enabling legislation by which SAMSA can issue CoC's in terms of the 2010 Manila Amendments to the STCW Convention – this would allow new and revalidated CoC to be issued valid for the next 5 years - i.e. beyond the cut -off date of 31 December 2016.

Our concerns are compounded by the fact that several thousand CoC need to be re-issued in terms of the 2010 Manila Amendments to the STCW Convention by the end of next year. Even once the legislation is finalised, a bureaucratic process has to take place whereby submissions are made to IMO to register South Africa's full compliance with the amended Convention – a further source of delay.

All these delays imply an increasing "bottleneck" as demand increases for the new CoC's as the deadline approaches. A further concern is that the only one person, the Registrar of Seafarers, is approved to sign SAMSA-issued CoC's. If he is on leave or absent for any reason no CoC's can be issued!

This issue should have been resolved a year ago and now needs to be sorted out immediately. Many seafarers are totally dependent on the quick resolution of this problem as their very livelihoods depend on it.

We urgently request that you, as the Minister of Transport, personally intervene and ensure this process is given the resources it needs to be resolved speedily given the seriousness of the situation to South African seafarers.

Yours etc

Origin of the Master Mariner

MASTER - from the Latin "Magister", "Maitre" - Person in Control, Having complete knowledge. *MARINER* - From the Latin "Marinus", 'Mare"- of the Sea *MASTER MARINER* - Captain of a Merchant Ship (Oxford English Dictionary).

The true origin of the title is lost in the mists of time - indeed amongst the earliest references to ships and the sea is mention of the person in charge of a ship as 'Master'.

In exploring the Red Sea, the Romans discovered a water borne route to an undreamed of world to the East. During the rule of Caesar Augustus, 120 ships each year sailed from Africa's Red Sea coasts south and then east to India's Malabar Coast borne on the South West Monsoon from May to September returning on the North East Monsoon from November to March. These ships were under the command of a person skilled in the ways of the sea, the weather and knowledge of the coasts from which he sailed and to which he directed his course.

To landsmen this voyaging to the unknown and returning from thence was a source of wonder which designated the person capable of doing so a Master of his calling. The term was certainly used in Biblical times for the Bible (King James Version) in the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 27, verses 10 & 11, describing St Paul's shipwreck on a voyage from Caesarea to Rome states - 'and said unto them that this voyage will be with much hurt and much damage not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives. Nevertheless the centurion believed the Master and the Owner of the ship more than those things which were spoken by Paul'.

Alas, with the fall of Rome, so much of the knowledge of that wonderful civilisation has been lost but already, about a thousand years before the Christian era, elements of seamanship and descriptions of places can be found in Homer's *Odyssey*. Later, Greek became the common language of the Mediterranean and the Greeks had a word for the Master of a ship 'Ilioikov' which translates as 'enjus fidei navis concreditur' -

"to whom the government of the ship is entrusted".

Strabo, the Greek traveller and geographer, writes that in a straight line with the course of the Nile lies the island of Rhodes. This by nature of simple navigation made the island the convergence of several trade routes. It is not surprising that Rhodes became a centre of commerce and gave its name to the earliest code of maritime law known as the Rhodian Sea Law. Within that Law there are several references to the Master of the Ship and his responsibilities.

Perhaps the clearest reference to the Master is contained in the Laws of Oleron. Eleanor, Duchess of Guienne, and mother of Richard 1 of England originally promulgated this celebrated Code of Laws, appertaining to maritime matters. The island of Oleron is some sixty square miles in size situated off the coast of France in the Bay of Biscay. In the twelfth century it was, from a maritime viewpoint, a very important place and its Merchants Court was one of high standing. It must be remembered that at that time the Kings of England had vast estates in France and Oleron fell within the Duchy of Guienne. The Laws of Oleron were promulgated in 1160 and written in the language of Gascony. Richard 1, who inherited the dukedom of Guienne from his mother, introduced the Code into England and made some alterations and improvements to it. Successive monarchs further improved it until it received its ultimate confirmation in 1360.

From that date the office of Lord High Admiral was established whose powers have formed the basis of the Admiralty division of the High Court. The Laws of Oleron codified, in its English form and in plain commonsense language, the principles that governed the relations between parties concerned in Maritime trade, Masters and their crew, owners and merchants and prescribed the actions that might properly be taken in various contingencies.

The Laws still form the basis of much of modern law and their importance was

recognised on the 600th anniversary of their promulgation in England when a service was held in St Paul's Cathedral in London and a casket containing an illuminated copy of the Laws of Oleron was carried by one of H.M. Ships to the island where they were originally drawn up so long ago.

Obviously the details of the articles of these Laws deserve a contribution devoted to them alone but here the main point is that throughout they refer to the 'Master'. Therefore it was a well-established form of address for the person in charge of a ship eight hundred years ago. The translator of the Code made a number of notes or 'glosses' to the original Laws which are of the greatest interest. For instance it states that 'The title of Master is so honourable and the command of a ship so important that great care has been taken by all maritime nations that none may be employed but honest and experienced men'. Also 'By the ordinances and customs of the sea it appears that formerly it was not thought safe to entrust a Master of a ship with the vessel and cargo unless he was a freeman of that City and part owner of the ship'.

Many other Codes of Law required high standards of the Master - by an ordinance of the Admiralty of France in 1584 every Master of a ship before he took upon himself that trust was to be examined as to whether he was fit for it. Even earlier in 1576 the King of Spain's ordinances required the same thing. The Laws of Wisby, the Code of the powerful Hanseatic League of Germanic towns, which wielded great influence over maritime affairs in the 14th and 15th centuries, required that Masters should possess not only experience and capacity but honesty and good manners. Coming closer to modern times the term 'Master' was enshrined in the British Merchant Shipping Act of 1865 and now, of course, in the Merchant Shipping Act and internationally in the Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping.

Thus it can be said with certainty that for well over one thousand years the term 'Master' has been conferred by Law upon the

person in charge of a ship. It should be noted however that the term Master is used in many connections and apart from the obvious connections mentioned above it is the conjunction with the term 'Mariner' that makes it so important. Latterly there seems to have been some movement to replace that ancient and honourable title by more anonymous terms. At one stage there was a suggestion that the Master be known as Ship Manager though this seems to have faded with the trend to smaller crews. One can only hope that these efforts come to nought. Perhaps the day may yet come when newly promoted Master Mariners will be as proud to put the letters MM after their names as members of other professions do with theirs.

Captain Ian Fishley recently brought to our attention the following International Chamber of Shipping website:

www.ics-shipping.org/docs/flag-state-performance-table

The purpose of this Flag State Performance Table is two-fold:

- To encourage shipowners and operators to examine whether a flag state has sufficient substance before using it.
- To encourage shipowners and operators to put pressure on their flag administrations to effect any improvements that might be necessary, especially in relation to safety of life at sea, the protection of the marine environment, and the provision of decent working and living conditions for seafarers.

Have a look at it – it makes for interesting reading

Major changes to Marine Education & Training are in the pipeline

The Durban University of Technology's (DUT) reports that the 2015 intake for S1 is 60 for the formal programme and 20 for the Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP) when students will do 4 years minimum instead of 3 years (ie 3 years at DUT and 1 year of experiential learning as opposed to 2 years at DUT and 1 year of experiential learning). This will be the last intake for the National Diploma in Maritime Studies and students will have 5 years to complete.

This means that 2019 will be the final year (S3 and S4) in which the old programme is offered.

DUT's new Diploma in Nautical Studies (3 years full time at DUT) will be introduced in 2016. This programme will not include the seetime component of the past and students will gain a qualification before commencing a sea-going career.

News of the phase-out of DUT's current programme has caused an increase in 2nd year applications with 125 registering for S3 subjects, although almost half of these will be students following the shore-based programme.

On Friday 10th April the Society's President represented SOMMSA at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology's (CPUT) curriculum workshop where Prof Snyders presented the CPUT case for the proposed change from the 2 year National Diploma system to the 3-year degree programme. Several other Exco members were also present at the workshop (namely - Azwi Mulaudzi, Simon Pearson & Keith Burchell) albeit wearing other "hats".

The main purpose of this workshop was, once all the issues had been debated, to request all stakeholders to support this change in writing. Such support would be submitted by the Department of Maritime Studies (DMS) to the Dean of the faculty for onward submission to the university Senate for final approval of the degree programme.

In preparing the Society's formal response to CPUT the following points were considered:

1. The National Diploma system within which the current 2-year S1 to S4 Marine Studies programme operates will be discontinued after 2017.

2. The current National Diploma system is not financially viable with only a 15% graduation rate (CPUT only receives their 60% subsidies from the Dept of Higher Education on a student's graduation).
3. CPUT Senate wants the Department of Maritime Studies (MDS) to offer degrees. If there is not sufficient support for this then the future of maritime studies at CPUT is under threat and it may be lost completely.
4. Although the degree programme is a 3-year one, there is nothing stopping a student from exiting at an appropriate time – say after the first or second year – to pursue a CoC. Such students will have a 10-year timeframe to complete their degree. It is anticipated that the degree programme will commence in 2018.
5. Although the Society believes there is need for non-degree options for entrants to the industry wanting to pursue a CoC directly (i.e. outside of the university system) this is not something we can resolve with CPUT as it is outside of their mandate. Rather it is up to the Society to lobby other institutions such as the South African International Maritime Institute (SAIMI), SAMSA, Department of Higher Education and the Department of Transport to this end.

While the Society fully supports the need for and understands the benefit to South Africa of maritime degrees (and ultimately Masters and Doctorates), we have requested CPUT to consider the following:

- We believe it is in the national interest that any obstacles placed in the way of portability of education credits between various marine-orientated courses or E&T institutions be eliminated so that any worthy candidate with the ability and application needed to achieve Master or Chief Engineer rank can do so.
- Degree programmes must be structured to ensure there is complete compatibility with the SAMSA Code and that candidates who need to pursue a Certificate of Competency (CoC) can exit and re-enter the CPUT system at the end or beginning of the appropriate semester. Further we would hope that all the SAMSA Code subjects can be achieved in the 1st four semesters of the new degree programme as is the case with the current Diploma system.

SHORE LEAVE IN SOUTH AFRICAN PORTS

The Society continues to receive reports from ship's Captains complaining about the South African Immigration authorities excessively restrictive requirements being placed on them and their crews when going ashore during port visits.

The practice over many years was for Customs and Immigration Officers to clear both the ship and the crew into a South African port on arrival. Crew lists were provided by the ship's agents before arrival giving the authorities plenty of time to prepare the necessary documentation.

Crews were then free to proceed ashore as and when they wanted to without further bureaucratic interference.

Our initial enquiries have shown widely varying shore leave procedures being enforced within the different ports of South Africa.

In some cases, crew members are required to visit an immigration office on each occasion that they venture ashore and return to their vessel, having their passports scrutinised and stamped on each occasion. This often results in expensive taxi fares for the seafarers as well as them encountering long delays at immigration offices using up valuable time off from their ship.

Apart from South Africa's moral obligation to welcome visiting seafarers to our country, the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (of which South Africa is a signatory) expressly requires that every effort should be made by those responsible in port and on board ship to facilitate shore leave for seafarers.

SOMMSA considers itself the authoritative voice of South Africa's marine (i.e. sea-going) professionals and, as a long-standing member of the International Federation of Shipmasters' Associations (IFSMA), the Society speaks for both local and foreign marine professionals.

In the absence of any other prominent voices being raised about this important issue we feel it is incumbent on our Society to investigate this further in order to establish the factual situation in all our ports before taking action.

Any member, ship's agents or ship operators with first-hand experience of the South African Home Affairs' requirements on crew members taking shore leave are invited to submit details of such to

mastermariners@icon.co.za for inclusion in our investigation - your anonymity will be guaranteed should you so require.

Exco has also written to the maritime media asking them to publish this request in an effort to get as wide a response as possible.

2015-2016 ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE DUE

Invoice will be going out shortly for the 2015/2016 financial year of the Society.

Subscription amounts are as follows:

MEMBERS – R450.00

ASSOCIATES – R400.00

AFFILIATES – R400.00

STUDENTS – R25.00

At the National AGM in August 2014 the meeting agreed to continue increasing the declared number of members serving or having served as Master, for IFSMA membership purposes. The increase is being phased in over 3 years with our declared number rising from 45 to 60 members this year. This increase together with the weak Rand against Sterling means a significant increase in cost to the Society.

Please pay as soon as you receive your invoice. Your prompt payment will ensure the Society meets all its commitments timeously.

Any member who has achieved a higher CoC than they had when joining the Society must advise the Membership Secretary as it may affect your membership category.

Also, if you are still waiting for your membership certificate please let the Membership Secretary know on mastermariners@icon.co.za

FROM THE ARCHIVES – Durban Harbour Pilots Circa 1950



Back Row L to R: J.R Fishley; [George Lindsay \(SOMMSA founder\)](#); Owen Williams; Robbie Robinson; [Andrew Reid \(SOMMSA founder\)](#); Jellis; Willie Luke.
Front Row L to R: Nocholl; John Cox; Capt Eaglesham; Jarvis; unknown

BURSARY FUND GOLF DAY – Thursday 19th November 2015

Venue: Rondebosch Golf Club, Cape Town

The SOMMSA Bursary Fund golf day (run jointly with the GBOBA Bursary Fund) is the main fundraising event for the Society's Bursary Fund.

Each year it has contributed significantly to the Fund, raising sufficient funds to cover two university bursaries for one year.

Advance notices will be going out shortly to explain the various ways in which members and non-members can become involved in this worthwhile project.

Please use any connections you may have to assist us to fill the 4-balls and find sponsors. Sponsorships are available for sponsored holes, naming rights and prize giving etc. which your company can use a great marketing opportunity within this high profile maritime event.