

## Melbourne Branch

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



**NEXT MEETING**  
**CANCELLED Due to COVID-19**

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## From the Branch Master

It was pleasing to see so many members at the June meeting and we were looking forward to a similar attendance this month to hear Maurie Hutchinson from the Peninsular Ship Society talk about the “Koolama” incident.

Unfortunately COVID has again forced us to cancel our meeting and we must expect that there will be further disruptions for the rest of the year. We will try to schedule this talk for later in the year.

Details of the proposed amendments to the constitution have been sent out to members along with a voting paper. At this stage the last opportunity to vote will be at the August meeting provided it is not cancelled by COVID. If it is cancelled then we will have to rely on members returning the voting paper either by mail or email.

A service to commemorate the 79<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Operation Pedestal will be held at the Shrine of Remembrance at 1200 on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> August. If you are interested in learning more about this four day battle that became an epic of courage, determination and sacrifice I can suggest a book published this year entitled “Operation Pedestal The fleet that battled to Malta 1942” by Max Hastings. The author has written a number of books on war history and gives a warts and all account of the battle. While most of those involved performed superbly a minority failed to do so. Mistakes were made on both sides which is not surprising given the complexity of the operation. The copy I read was from my local library.

If you are confined indoors with nothing to do can I suggest you write a story on Australian Shipping for the Master Mariners Magazine.

Stay Safe Stay Well

## 50 Year Member Capt. Donald James



Donald James went to sea as an apprentice in 1953 with H.C.Sleigh on the tanker Harold Sleigh. 14 years latter he was in command of the same ship transporting fuel from Singapore to South Vietnam for the US Army.

Donald spent 26 years with H.C. Sleigh and served as Master on the passenger ships Francis Drake and Marco Polo.

In 1980 Donald joined the Department of Marine and Harbours in S.A. as a pilot.

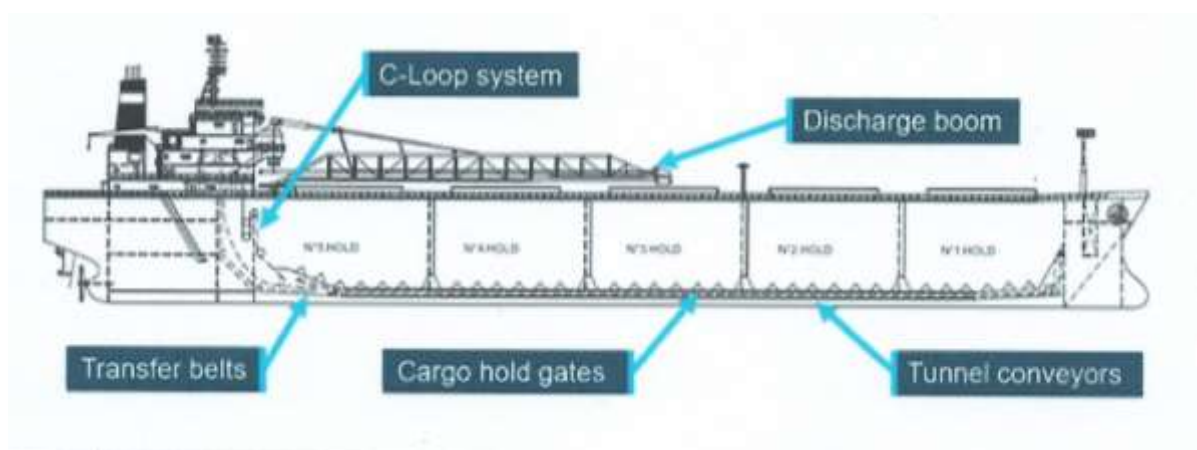
Donald spent 6 years as Harbour Master/Pilot in Port Pirie before moving to Adelaide. When he retired he moved to Melbourne and joined the Melbourne branch in 2005. Congratulations on 50 years of membership.

## June Speakers Report

The speaker at the June meeting was Dr Patrick Cook, a Consultant Forensic Scientist and Engineer at Minton Treharne & Davies. His special area is fires and explosions and is involved from the insurance and regulation perspective. The title of his talk was "Fire fighting when a vessel is at berth". Although Dr Cook did not mention the vessel by name it was apparent that he was talking about the "Iron Chieftain" that suffered a major fire while discharging dolomite at Port Kembla on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2018.

The 50,000 DWT Self unloading bulk carrier was built in 1993 and is owned and operated by CSL.

During discharge the duty officer is stationed on the bridge and controls the operation and a rating carries out an inspection of the cargo handling system every two hours. The self-unloading system consists of cargo hold gates which control the flow of cargo onto conveyor belts running in tunnels under the ships holds. From there transfer belts take the cargo to a vertical conveyor system known as the C Loop elevator which transfers the cargo to a conveyor belt on the discharge boom which is plumbed over a hopper on the wharf.



The discharge was almost completed with only a small amount of cargo remaining in Number 3 hold. It was during the 0300 inspection that the duty rating saw smoke coming from the internal cargo handling space. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Officer who was on duty on the bridge stopped the cargo discharge system.

The crew were mustered and boundary cooling was commenced. The Fire Brigade was called and the Harbour Master informed. The bulkhead between the cargo handling system and the engine room became very hot and the conveyor belt on the discharge boom caught on fire. The engine room was sealed and flooded with CO<sub>2</sub>. Most of the crew were evacuated ashore. At 0730 the emergency generator ran out of fuel.

Boundary cooling was provided by tugs but at times this was interrupted when the tugs were required for towing duties in the port. The heat of the fire caused the fuel oil tanks adjacent to the C Loop space to rupture and added oil to the fire. The amount of water in the holds caused free surface concerns. There are many examples of ships capsizing as a result of firefighting water. The fire was extinguished after 5 days by using foam. It took several months to treat and dispose of the contaminated firefighting water. The damage was so extensive that the ship was declared a constructive total loss and was towed to Turkey for scraping.

Dr Cook gave a very good explanation of the various issues involved in fighting the fire.

An investigation into the fire was carried out by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau. The report is available at [www.atsb.gov.au](http://www.atsb.gov.au)

The investigation found that the most likely cause of the fire was a seized idler bearing at the bottom of the C Loop space which created friction causing enough heat to ignite the rubber conveyor belt.

Under existing regulations there is no requirement for the SUL system spaces to be equipped with a fire detection system or with fixed fire extinguishing equipment and conveyor belt rubber does not possess any fire resistant properties.

The ISM Code requires SUL ships with internal conveyor systems to have regular fire safety risk assessments. An assessment of the system on “Iron Chieftain” in 2013 identified unacceptable fire risks and that there were no emergency contingency plans for fires in the SUL system spaces. These deficiencies had not been sufficiently addressed and the required monthly SUL fire drills were not conducted as required by SMS.

Flag state audits and inspections had not identified the deficiencies in the ships fire safety, risk management and emergency response.

The decision by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Officer to stop the conveyor belts was contrary to instructions and procedures for dealing with shipboard conveyor belt fires and contributed to the development of the fire as heat could not dissipate. The conveyor belts should have been kept running and cooled with water. The decision to activate the engine room CO2 system was made on incorrect information and resulted in the loss of electrical power and many ship systems and equipment that may have assisted in fighting the fire.

The investigation found that the NSW Fire Service lacked specialised marine firefighting expertise and experience due to the rarity of major shipboard fires.

The Port Authority of NSW is also updating and improving their contingency plans as a result of the investigation.

The ships owners CSL will improve fire detection and suppression technology as a result of the fire. The company has fitted fire detection equipment in its SUL vessels and developed emergency contingency plans for fires in SUL spaces.

AMSA will raise with IMO the inadequate fire safety standards for SUL spaces. AMSA's inspection of SUL bulk carriers will concentrate on fire safety and emergency preparedness.

## “Ever Given” to leave Suez Canal

After being detained for 106 days the “Ever Given” has been released by the Suez Canal Authority (SCA) after an agreement was reached with the ship's owners and insurers.

Details of the settlement are not known but it has been reported that the SCA was demanding \$550 million in compensation with \$200 million in advance with the remaining \$350 million to be paid as letters of guarantee. The SCA Chairman said that a tug with a bollard pull of 75 tons would be part of the settlement.

The grounding of the “Ever Green” blocked the Canal for 6 days. About 12 percent of the world trade volume uses the Canal. Last year nearly 19,000 ships or 51.5 ships per day with a total tonnage of 1.7 billion tons passed through the Canal.

## Port State Control

AMSA has published its Port State Control Annual report 2020. It consists mainly of statistical information but I found some of it quite interesting.

Despite COVID-19 restrictions AMSA inspectors undertook 3021 PSC inspections during 2020. While this was a reduction of 6.2% from the previous year there were 8.4% less port arrivals in 2020.

There was a slight increase in the detention rate from 5.1% in 2019 up to 5.9% in 2020. In 2020 AMSA refused access from entering or using Australian ports to five ships for periods ranging from 3 months to 12 months. Four of these involved significant breaches of the Maritime Labour Convention.

During the year 6081 foreign flagged ships arrived in Australia and 3021 of them were subjected to PSC inspections. These inspections found 6387 deficiencies of which 270 were detainable deficiencies.

The most common cause of detentions were deficiencies in the implementation of the ISM Code (28.1%) Fire Safety 13.7% Lifesaving Appliances 13.7% Emergency Systems 13.0% and water/weather tight 8.1%

Port Headland was the busiest port for foreign ship visits followed by Newcastle, Brisbane, Gladstone and Melbourne.

AMSA conducted 87 FSC inspections on 77 Australian Flagged ships during 2020 resulting in 210 deficiencies being recorded of which 5 were detainable deficiencies resulting in one ship being detained.

The rate of deficiencies was slightly higher compared to foreign flag ships but the detention rate was well below that of foreign flagged ships.