

Melbourne Branch

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

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**NEXT MEETING
POSTPONED DUE TO
COVID-19**

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From the Branch Master

This month's edition of the LOG contains a contribution from Capt. John Paine. He relates the story of an eventful voyage he undertook as Chief Officer on "Iron Windham". The story would have been published in the Master Mariner but a few weeks ago Mark Beal of the WA Branch who was to have been the editor advised that he would not be taking up the position.

With COMMA and other maritime industry organisations in lock down it is difficult to get articles for the LOG so contributions from our members are particularly welcome. If you have a story or anything of interest please send it to me otherwise the LOG will be a very thin publication.

Enough time has now passed to look back at the response to the handling of the cruise ships and in particular Ruby Princess during the COVID-19 epidemic. At one time there were 20 cruise ships with 16,000 crew members in Australian waters and with the experience of Diamond Princess in Japan in mind the various Australian governments were keen to see these ships leave our waters.

A number of commentators and some members of maritime organisations including COMMA were critical of the handling of the issue. The criticism typically contained a reference to Australia's obligations under various international conventions and a call for compassion and to do more for the crew of these ships.

AMSA is the body responsible for seeing that Australia lives up to its responsibilities and also that the owners of visiting foreign ships live up to theirs.

Email correspondence between Robert McMahon, a member of the Sydney Seafarers Welfare Committee and Allan Schwartz the AMSA General Manager Operations was circulated to members of various seafarer's welfare organisations and other people including members of COMMA.

In the emails Allan Schwartz made the following points regarding Ruby Princess.

Action is in place to ensure the provision of medical care for crew remaining on board as required by Regulation 4.1 of the MLC.

Australia is actively facilitating delivery of essential medical supplies, fuel, water, spare parts and provisions to the ship.

Aspen Medical has been contracted to assist the on-board medical team who are responsible for crew health.

Aspen Medical conduct daily health monitoring and temperature checks and COVID-19 symptoms checklists and COVID-19 testing when required.

Crew displaying mild symptoms are managed in cabin isolation and are treated by the ships medical staff supported by Aspen Medical. Serious cases are medevac'd from the ship to land based medical services for treatment.

Arrangements are constantly under review for repatriation of crew members from Ruby Princess.

AMSA has adopted a pragmatic approach to MLC compliance as outlined by IMO. ILO has noted that the current circumstances might render compliance with some of the obligations of MLC 2006 impossible and encourages states to be pragmatic in their approach under current circumstances.

AMSA engages with other Commonwealth authorities and there is a clear objective to ensure that when the vessel departs it does so safely.

By the time Ruby Princess left Port Kembla for Manila, which was the home of the majority of the crew, about 100 crew members from various countries had been repatriated home by air and there were no positive cases of COVID-19 on board.

What more could Australia do?

Centenary of Jones Act

On 5th June 1920 President Woodrow Wilson signed into law the Merchant Marine Act of 1920. Commonly known as the Jones Act its major proposer was Senator Wesley Jones of Washington State.

The Act gives jurisdiction over vessels transporting goods between US ports. The ships must be built, owned and operated by US citizens or permanent residents.

While the Act is mainly about cabotage it is also important for seamen's rights and for the first time allowed injured seamen to obtain damages.

Loss of Containers from APL England

On 24th May the Singapore flagged container ship APL England suffered a temporary loss of propulsion in heavy seas about 35 miles South East of Sydney. During heavy rolling at the time a number of container stacks collapsed and 40 containers fell overboard. The ship proceeded to Brisbane to have the collapsed stacks of containers discharged. AMSA inspectors boarded the ship and found that lashing arrangements were inadequate and there was heavy corrosion on securing points on the ships deck.

This was not the first time APL England has lost containers. In 2016 when under different management the ship lost 37 containers in the Great Australian Bight. Charges have been laid against the ship's Master for offenses relating to pollution and damage to the marine environment.

AMSA General Manager Operations Allan Schwartz said the ship would be detained in Brisbane until serious deficiencies have been rectified and the ship's insurers Steamship Mutual provide financial security of \$22 million to cover the estimated cost of the clean-up.

This incident occurred only 16 days after mv "Pride" completed the recovery of 63 containers and tonnes of plastic and other rubbish from the ocean floor resulting from the June 2018 loss of containers from YM Efficiency. In a media release AMSA CEO Mick Kinley said Yang Ming and their insurers Britannia P&I have tried every trick in the book to attempt to shirk their responsibility to clean up their mess. AMSA has commenced legal proceedings to recover the cost of the recovery operation of about \$17 million.



“Iron Wyndham” Gas Pipes to Taiwan

By Captain John Paine

In the mid 60's pipe makers Stewart and Lloyd secured a contract to supply a trial shipment of about 6000 tonnes of 16 inch gas pipes for a new project in Taiwan.

The Iron Wyndham was tasked to complete the delivery of the pipe and commenced loading at the steelworks at Port Kembla. So far so good and as there was potential for a considerable increase in sales if the product arrived in pristine condition there was a continuous stream of “experts” even some with actual seagoing experience, to help supervise the loading and stowage of the pipes.

The pipes had a machined face at each end to allow for the exacting standards required for the automated welding machines that would be used when the pipes were laid so to protect this surface each pipe was slung aboard singly using a padded hook each end. Each tier was laid on 12 inch wide dunnage the full width of the hold with the pipes rolled together and the space at the outboard side of the tier chocked off with 4 inch by 4 inch timber which was the usual type of dunnage used by the BHP stevedores when loading steel products. Suggestions that any slack between the pipes should be removed by using hydraulic jacks and more robust timber should be used to properly secure the outboard end of each tier was met with scorn and a less than polite refusal on the grounds that it would all cost too much. Very difficult to influence a change of decision made by experienced “in house” stevedores when you are a very new chief officer especially when it was only a gut feeling and the proposed stow looked safe and secure.

Due to the regular carriage of bulk minerals the holds of the Iron Wyndham were constructed with large sloping sides which extended from mid depth of the hold down to the tank tops and wing tanks that sloped in the opposite direction up to the tween deck hatchway so the full load of pipes filled each of the four lower holds in what appeared to be a neat tight well contained stow.

The Iron Wyndham then sailed overnight with an exceptionally calm trip to Newcastle to load the tween decks with 6000 tonnes of steel billets also destined for Taiwan.

The prospect of overseas trip was considered a very welcome change from the routine carriage of iron ore from Yampi Sound to Newcastle and everyone on board

was looking forward to becoming proper international sailors even if it was for only a couple of months. So Torres Strait pilot on board and duty free shopping lists in hand off we sailed out past Nobbies. Just clear of the breakwater there was a significant roll either way followed by a fairly loud clang from somewhere in the lower holds that got everyone's attention. A very rapid exit from the bridge and down the hold ladder at No.3 hatch revealed that the apparently solid stow of pipes was in fact anything but and the whole block of pipes was in motion.

Using a hatch board as a surf board it was possible to slide over the top of the pipes to the ships side where shock and horror it was possible to see right down to the tank tops before the whole block of pipes slid a meter sideways with the roll and thundered up against the frames slamming the whole ship sideways through the water.

A very long 10 minutes to find a safe anchorage off Newcastle then everyone and anyone who was free were used to try and secure the loose pipes. First up hatch boards were dropped down the outboard side of each stack of pipes to close the gap that opened with each roll only to have the timber turned into matchwood at the next roll of the vessel. While this was in progress several old mooring lines were fed into the stow in an attempt to at least slow the momentum of the pipes but these were chopped to pieces within minutes. Obviously the problem was beyond the resources we had on board and as we were still rolling at the anchorage there was the possibility of more dunnage slipping through the tiers which then increased the range of movement of the pipes and the real possibility of doing the vessel some serious damage.

No mobile phones back in those days but we were fortunate that at least we could communicate with BHP shore staff through Nobbies VHF and as it was now around 10 o'clock at night there was a considerable delay while the very sympathetic duty signalman managed to convey the nature of our situation to the right level of shore management. As soon as we had departed our berth under the steelworks cranes another vessel had shifted in and commenced loading steel products for overseas so discharging the steel billets from the tween decks to allow access to the lower hold was not an option. Finally a layup berth was allocated and the entire permanent shipping repair crew from BHP descended on the vessel to restow as much of the pipe cargo that could still be handled. There was still some space between the top of

the pipes to the underside of the tween deck beams so the outboard 6 pipes on each side were pulled to the centre of the stow with chain blocks and the 12 inch dunnage that had been laid between the tiers cut and removed. This process was completed for the top 3 tiers in each of the 4 holds, a very difficult time consuming and sometimes quite dangerous task but it allowed each tier to bind together so that the weight of each pipe was sufficient to reduce the movement of the pipes in a seaway. Finally the tween deck beams were welded in position, heavy timber laid the full width of the holds and ratchet jacks were used to apply constant downward pressure from the hatch beams to the top of the pipes. At the same time the ends of the pipe stow were secured by wire and chain lashings so that each lower hold looked like a spider's web. The whole procedure took around 10 days with the shipping repair gang and the on board deck personnel working round the clock so time at home with the loved ones was limited to say the least.

Once we finally departed Newcastle the voyage to Taiwan was quite uneventful with reasonable weather all the way. After our initial experience with the movement of the pipes we made sure that each hold was inspected twice a day, the jacks tightened and any slack taken out of the chain and wire lashings to the extent that additional chocks had to be added due to the extent of the settlement of the whole stow. This activity kept Chippy, 3 cadets and the Mate very fit but with an intimate knowledge of each and every pipe.

