

Melbourne Branch

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

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In this issue:

- From the Branch Master
- Membership
- What is this object
- Branch News
- Point Lonsdale Foghorn
- Merchant Navy Memorial
- April Speakers Summary
- Seafarers shortage

NEXT MEETING

Mail Exchange Hotel

Wednesday 31st May 2023 @ 1830
hrs

Speakers

Angela Gillham

Hon. Editor Capt. Ian French
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From the Branch Master

The April meeting was a great success. We had an interesting and eloquent speaker from Port Phillip Sea Pilots (PPSP) and 20 or so members present to enjoy the presentation. We also welcomed Capt. Mike Hansen, MD of the PPSP to the dinner.

HMAS Adelaide and HMAS Sydney ships companies enjoyed excellent port visits to Melbourne from 24-27 April. Ships companies from both units provided contingents for the ANZAC Day March as well as personnel from HMAS Cerberus. The visit of the ships was of particular value for recruiting. Victoria has always been a bit behind in numbers so having two major fleet units was an excellent opportunity to show case the Navy.

Lili and myself will be taking a short holiday towards the end of May. I will not be able to attend the May Court meeting and dinner.

Capt. Patrick O'Sullivan will chair the Court meeting and the dinner

Fair Winds
Graeme

Membership

The Following applications to COMMA were read at the April meeting.

Suraj Joshi has applied for Ordinary Membership of WA. He holds a Masters Certificate issued by India and is currently serving as Coastal Operations Manager at Rio Tinto Marine Fremantle.

Thomas Foster has applied for Ordinary Membership of Queensland. He holds a Masters Certificate issued by Australia. Currently serving as master on "Dragonfly" a privately owned super yacht.

James McAuliffe has applied for ordinary membership of WA. He holds an Australian Masters Certificate and is employed as Master with Solstad Offshore.

What is this Object?



This item was in storage for many years with the Honour Board. It is about one meter long and on the other side has an anchor in place of the seahorse. There is a carved ball captured in the double sided slot. We would appreciate any information as to what it is and its history.

Branch News

The Speaker at this month's meeting will be Angela Gillham the Chief Executive Officer of Maritime Industry Australia Ltd.

Angela has a very broad experience in shipping regulation and policy matters and a strong interest in sustainability and decarbonisation. She represents the industry on many government committees, managed several shipping related research and development projects over the years and represents the interest of the Australian industry in international forums including the International Chamber of Shipping and as industry advisor to the Australian delegation to the International Maritime Organisation.

Angela will speak about the challenges accessing critical maritime skills after many years of Australian shipping industry decline and that the government is looking to support growth in Australia's national maritime capability and strengthen national security and supply chain resilience through a maritime strategic fleet. Angela will also speak about the pressure to decarbonise while serving a global economy hooked on access to cheap shipping.



The refurbished and updated Branch Honour Board and COMMA Flag are now on display at the Stella Maris Seafarers Centre.

Point Lonsdale Foghorn

Victorian Notice to Mariners 159 (T) 2023 advises that the Point Lonsdale Foghorn will be decommissioned on the 12th May.

The Harbour Master made the decision to decommission the Foghorn after extensive engagement with a wide range of stakeholders and a simplified IALA risk assessment.

It was determined that with modern navigational systems such as GPS, DGPS, AIS and 24/7 coverage by Ports Victoria VTS the foghorn was no longer required.

The Point Lonsdale Foghorn dates back to 1928. This historic foghorn was decommissioned in 1993 and replaced with the current unit on top of a shed beside the lighthouse.



The historic foghorn is maintained by a team of dedicated volunteers who operate the foghorn on special occasions such as International Lighthouse Weekend. The foghorn consists of a Gardner Engine driving a compressor which supplies compressed air to two holding tanks. There is a timing device to give the 2 blasts every 30 seconds.

Merchant Navy Memorial

The 58th Annual Commemoration at the Memorial and Columbarium at the Rookwood Cemetery Sydney was held on 16th April , the day after the COMMA Annual General Meeting so a number of the participants at the AGM were able to attend. The address was given by Rear Admiral Christopher Smith, the Australian Fleet Commander. He spoke about the sinking of the Hospital Ship "Centaur" eighty years ago on 14th May 1943.

The "Centaur" was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine 32 miles off Moreton Island. Only 64 of the 332 people on board survived.

Rear Admiral Smith said that Merchant Men suffered the greatest percentage of deaths of any service during WW2. It is our duty to ensure that their great sacrifice continues to be remembered and honoured.

Amongst those who laid wreaths was COMMA Federal Master Capt. Ted van Bronswijk who is a Director of the Merchant Navy War Memorial Fund who coordinated the service



Seated in the small marquee in the background is the Bankstown and Yagoona Brass Band who provided the music for the service. Refreshments were provided by the Rookwood General Cemetery Reserve Land Manager.

April Speakers Summary



The speaker at our April meeting was Captain Damian Laughlin from Port Phillip Sea Pilots. Damian has had a long involvement in BRM and passage planning and manages the PPSP passage planning and situational awareness programs. His talk was entitled “Pilotage in the era of Big Data”

Big Data is defined as extremely large data sets that may be analysed computationally to reveal patterns, trends and associations especially relating to human behaviour and interactions. In relation to pilotage it is particularly usefully in managing risk, data storing, providing real time situation awareness and detecting anomalies faster than with the human eye.

In the past pilotage relied on the pilots experience, knowledge and eye with limited support from the ships staff or external sources. Today with computers, electronic charts and sophisticated navigation systems a large amount of data is available to the pilot and it is easier for the bridge team to monitor progress.

Central to this is the Pilotage Passage Plan. Prior to a ships arrival off Melbourne PPSP send the ship a passage plan which takes into account the vessels size, draft and any other relevant data. This plan can be entered into the ships ECDIS. When the pilot boards the Master/Pilot exchange ensures that both the pilot and the bridge team have the same passage plan. With all working to the same plan and good BRM procedures the risks involved can be minimised.

Damian made the point that you have to be able to stand up to scrutiny after the event and that passage plans should contain provisions for when things go wrong.

Damian mentioned two examples of accidents where there was an inadequate passage plan. The grounding of the "Iron Baron" off the entrance to the River Tamar and the "CMA CGM LIBRA" which grounded on an uncharted shoal while leaving the Port of Xiamen China. After 3 court cases over 10 years the UK Supreme Court ruled that a defective passage plan rendered the ship unseaworthy and as a result could not claim General Average.

Damian spoke about the problems associated with swinging large container ships to enter Swanson Dock. Container ships may be over 100 meters longer than they were when the dock was built but the swing basin is still the same size. He showed how using a portable pilot unit which provides extremely accurate data on the vessels movement and clearing distances takes the stress out of the manoeuvre. As the size of ships increases the margins have reduced.

Using Big Date it is possible to analyse potential areas of risk and then using a simulator develop safe procedures and then promulgate them using data sharing.

Damian gave a very interesting talk that alerted us to what is possible using modern technology and what further developments will be possible in the future.

Seafarer Shortage

For many years the shipping industry has been warned that unless action is taken there will not be enough seafarers to man the worlds merchant fleet.

According to the latest ICS/BIMCO study there will be a shortage of 96,000 seafarers by 2026. There are currently 1.89 million seafarers manning 74,000 vessels. The shortage is more severe with officers and has been steadily growing over the years. 2021 Seafarers Workforce Report states that in 2005 the shortfall of officers was 10,000 and this grew to 13,000 by 2010, 16,500 in 2015 and 26,240 in 2021.

A recent survey found that seafaring is becoming less attractive because:

Reduced time ships spend in port.

Progressive decrease in size of crew.

More responsibility for all levels of crew due to the effects of regulations and technology.

Isolation and being away from home for longer periods

Lack of shore leave for seafarers.

COVID and the Ukraine war have added to the seafarer shortage. 275,000 or 15% of the world's 1.89 million seafarers come from Ukraine and Russia jointly surpassing the Philippines as the biggest supplier of seafarers. Sanctions against Russia have restricted the ability of Russians to travel to join ships. Ukrainian President Zelensky wants his seafarers to stay at home and join the army.

The Ukraine Marine Transport Union believes 55 to 60% of Ukraine's 80,000 seafarers are currently on ships and about 20% of them want to come home and fight.

While the situation regarding crew changes has improved there are still restrictions in many countries. Seafarers remember that at one stage during the pandemic 400,000 seafarers were stuck on ships or ashore and unable to move because of border restrictions.

The intense geographical situation, examples of crew being stranded on board for over 12 months, declining mental health and fatigue have negatively impacted on crew morale and resulted in a decrease in the number of mariners looking to join ships.

In the western world seafarers are aging and the pool of qualified seafarers is diminishing. In Australia the reduced training and employment opportunities for officers has resulted in there being less qualified and experienced people to take up key operational roles such as Harbour Masters, Pilots and Surveyors etc.

US Maritime Administrator Rear Admiral Ann Phillips said MARAD's Ready Reserve Force Fleet is down to 45 ships and that she is not confident that in an emergency all those ships could be manned. This is due to a mariner shortfall and few people have the skill set to run these old steam ships.

To recruit, train and retain qualified seafarers is a challenging issue for governments and private industry.