

Melbourne Branch

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



NEXT ZOOM MEETING

27th OCTOBER 1700 HRS

SPEAKER CAPT. MARIO D'SOUZA

**STOLT GROENLAND FIRE AND
EXPLOSION**

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From the Branch Master

COVID-19 restrictions continue to interfere with COMMA's areas of activity. Our September meeting was held via Zoom and Sheldon Rodrigues gave us a very interesting talk on the Melbourne VTS. This month's meeting will again be a Zoom meeting and again the speaker will be a branch member. This month Mario D'Souza will speak about the explosion and fire on the chemical tanker "Stolt Groenland" in 2019

The Mission to Seafarers Maritime Art Show Official Opening on 14th October was held as a Zoom meeting. In normal years hundreds of sponsors, supporters and artists gather at the Mission for this important occasion.

The annual National Merchant Navy Memorial Commemorative Service in Canberra which was to have been attended by the Governor General was cancelled and on the same day the Seafarer' Church Service in St Pauls Cathedral could only be shown on line.

Arrangements for Remembrance Day on 11th November are still to be finalised but at this stage it seems there will be limitations on public attendance.

This edition of the LOG contains a short story by David Wharington about his time as an Apprentice on the Princess of Tasmania. I can sympathise with David spending the last 7 months of his Apprenticeship living in a cupboard. One ship I sailed on as an Apprentice had carved into the timber above the door the Apprentice's cabin the words "Certified for 2 Seamen". One voyage for reasons I can't remember, three Apprentices had to occupy the cabin. We complained to the Mate and showed him the notice above the door. He looked at the notice then looked at us and said "the three of you don't equate to one seaman let alone two". Oh well at least we had a porthole which I suspect was more than David had.

You must all must have a story from your time at sea that would be suitable for the LOG so please send it in. Stories like David's make the LOG a much more interesting read.

September Speakers Summary

The speaker at our September Zoom meeting was Captain Sheldon Rodrigues a Melbourne VTS Operations Officer. He started his talk by tracing the changes in the administration of the Port of Melbourne leading up to the newly formed Ports Victoria.

The history of the port goes back to 1835 when “Enterprize” arrived carrying settlers from Tasmania. The 1850’s gold rush caused accute congestion resulting in the building of the Melbourne to Hobsons Bay railway and the construction of Station Pier.

The Melbourne Harbour Trust was established in 1876 and administered the port until 1978 when it became the Port of Melbourne Authority. This was in turn superceded by Melbourne Ports Corporation in 1996 and the Port of Melbourne Corporation in 2003.

In 2016 the Victorian Government leased the Port of Melbourne’s commercial operations to the Lonsdale Consortium for 50 years for \$ 9.7 billion. That year Victorian Ports Corporation (Melbourne) became the successor to Port of Melbourne Corporation.

This year following a review of the Victorian ports system the VRCA and Ports Victoria (Melbourne) were combined to form Ports Victoria which will manage commercial navigation in port waters of Melbourne, Port of Geelong and Port of Hastings and oversee channel management of Port of Portland. It also has responsibility for emergency and pollution response.

Sheldon then went on to talk about the Melbourne VTS which replaced the previous Harbour Control System. The new system involved major hardware and software upgrades. New operational procedures were introduced and the staff trained and certificated.

The aim is to improve navigational safety and operational efficiency by the collection and intergration of high quality data from four radar stations, AIS, CCTV and camera installations. The area covered is shown on the accompanying map.



The northern half of the Bay is known as Melbourne VTS and the southern half as Lonsdale VTS. Information on navigational and operational matters is provided to ships using standard marine communication phrases. Because of its coverage of the port VTS is able to co ordinate the movement of ships, tugs and bunker barges etc in an efficient and safe manner. Current and wave height information can be provided to pilots as can dynamic underkeel clearance calculations for deep draft vessels. Other functions of VTS are the monitoring of the position of vessels at anchor and the promulgation of strong wind warnings. Sheldon gave a very interesting talk on a system which is still being developed.

World Maritime Day 30th Sept. 2021

World Maritime Day is an initiative of IMO and is celebrated each year on the last Thursday in September. The purpose of the day is to celebrate the Maritime Industry's contribution to the world's economy.

The theme this year is "Seafarers at the core of shipping's future". Speaking during a webinar on World Maritime Day the IMO Secretary General Kitack Lim said "We must ensure a diverse and expert workforce for the ships of the 21st century and beyond".

MIAL CEO Teresa Lloyd said "Seafaring Skills are not just critical for working on ships but are also fundamental to shore based activities and to the broader economy". She said the workforce in the shipping industry was aging but the opportunities to train are reducing at a time when the demand for qualified and experienced officers is as great as ever.

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau in a statement said 'World Maritime Day is an opportunity to highlight the professionalism and dedication of the 2 million seafarers who serve the world's merchant fleet.

While the theme is about the future many took World Maritime Day as an opportunity to highlight the need to provide support to seafarers during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Because of travel restrictions thousands of seafarers cannot be repatriated home at the end of their contracts. Seafarers are denied shore leave and there have been cases of sick or injured seafarers being denied access to medical treatment ashore. The demand on seafarers' welfare organisations is great. In the UK Stella Maris is fortunate to have sponsorship from Britannia P&I whose Claims Director Eil Hagel said "The past year or so has been especially challenging for seafarers and support provided by charities like Stella Maris is more important than ever to support the welfare and wellbeing of crew.

The Mission to Seafarers said World Maritime Day will help to shine light on the many challenges to seafarers caused by the COVID -19 Pandemic The Standard P&I Club sponsors the Mission to Seafarers "Happiness Index" and the Sailors Society Wellness at Sea program.

Australian Mariners Welfare Society Chairman David Parmeter said it is important that governments designate seafarers as essential workers to ensure access to COVID vaccinations. There is a clear need to raise awareness of seafarer's crucial role in world trade and increase their visibility.

Shipping Australia CEO Captain Melvyn Noronha said "We owe seafarers a debt of gratitude and compassion. It is about time that some governments and their agencies which portray all care and no responsibility start acting to support and protect seafarers.

In a display of solidarity, Cape Naturaliste Lighthouse in WA, Bustard Head Lighthouse in Queensland and Australia House in London along with the IMO Headquarters and many other buildings around the world were lit blue on the evening of 30th September.

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Memories of the "Princess of Tasmania"

By Captain David Wharington

The "Princess of Tasmania" was handed over from the builders, the State Dockyard in Newcastle, in September 1959. Her Maiden voyage across Bass Strait commenced on 2nd October 1959. Whereas many people predicted that she would, like her predecessor the "Taroona", fail to capture the public's support, there was overwhelming demand from the public wanting to travel in her. She was frequently overbooked from the very start.

The two Masters of the ship (Captains Bill Williams and Harry Hadley) requested that a Fourth Mate be provided to assist with the very high workload of the Deck Officers. The Line declined this, partly due to a lack of any suitable space which could be converted into an Officer's cabin.

Instead they converted a very small internal store room immediately behind the Pursers Office in the main foyer, into a cabin for a Deck Apprentice. The work was done whenever the ship was in Melbourne. I was then appointed to join the ship as her first Apprentice.

I was effectively the Fourth Mate except for my cabin, official rank and wage. I joined her on 25th July 1960 and left her on 24th February 1961 when I went ashore to study for my Second Mate's Certificate.

I met my late wife who was traveling with a group of teacher trainees aboard the "Princess". Her father was then a ship Carpenter (not a Shipwright) with the Melbourne Harbour Trust. He subsequently became one of their Wharf Superintendents responsible for the maintenance and any new construction work on the wharves,

When I passed my Second Mate's exams, there was a surplus of Deck Officers in ANL. Consequently my first job with a brand new ticket, was as Mate on a couple of the MHT dredging hoppers servicing the bucket dredge 'A.D.McKenzie' working in the Yarra. It only lasted for a very short time, before I was able to return to ANL as Third Mate in the "South Esk"

The "Princess" was sold by ANL in 1972. After sailing under various names, she was finally broken up as the "Tebah 2000" at Alang in March 2005.



Nigel Porteous Retires from MtSV Board



Captain Nigel Porteous OAM has retired from the board of MtSV after over 20 years of service.

When Nigel joined the Mission it was in danger of closing due to financial problems. Nigel was instrumental in establishing new fund raising activities including the annual Maritime Art Prize and Exhibition.

In recognition of his contribution to MtSV the archive which houses the Missions Heritage Collection has been named in his honour.