

Melbourne Branch

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



NEXT MEETING

ZOOM MEETING DATE AND TIME
TO BE CONFIRMED

SPEAKER

CAPT. SHELDON RODRIGUES

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Hon. Sec., Alexandra Evered
Email alex@baysideshipping.com
Tel 03 5424 1224

From the Branch Master

COVID-19 continues to play havoc with our activities. For the second year running the Merchant Navy Day commemorations had to be cancelled and the Shrine of Remembrance produced a commemorative broadcast which was available on the Shrine web site. During the broadcast Commodore Greg Yorke spoke about the vital role that merchant ships play during war time and pointed out that the campaigns our troops fought all began at sea and were generally sustained from the sea.

Our August meeting was another casualty of the lock down but we did hold a short business meeting via zoom. It was apparent that the lock down would not allow us to hold our usual September meeting so we decided on a zoom meeting with a speaker. Captain Sheldon Rodrigues from Melbourne VTS will give a presentation on Ports Victoria which is the recent amalgamation of VRCA and VPCM and how Melbourne, Geelong, Hastings and Portland will interact under this one umbrella. His presentation will include the technology used by VTS to track and control ship movements within the ports.

Another victim of the disruption caused by COVID-19 is the Australian Antarctic Divisions ice breaker RSV "Nuyina". Construction of the ship commenced at Damen's shipyard in Romania in May 2017. By July 2020 the ship was 98% complete but delays brought on by COVID-19 delayed the sea and ice trials. The ship was finally handed over on 19th August 2021 and sailed for Australia on 1st September. Nuyina is expected to arrive in Hobart in October, a year later than the original schedule.

Ten Years ago when Euan Crawford was Branch Master he was very concerned about the criminalisation of seafarers. He wrote many papers on the subject and spoke about it often. The examples he used were all from overseas where in some jurisdictions, in the event of a serious incident involving a ship, the first reaction was to arrest the Captain and then begin enquiries into what had happened.

We now have a case of a ship's Captain facing criminal charges in Australia.

The 8,400 TEU Container ship Maersk Surabaya anchored about 500 meters away from a cable protection zone off Perth. On 1st August it is alleged that the ship

dragged its anchor in high winds and damaged the Australian Singapore Cable which connects Perth to Singapore with connections to Christmas Island and Indonesia. The cable repair ship "Reliance" was nearby and was able to repair the cable in 12 days at a reported cost of A\$1.5 million.

When the Maersk Surabaya berthed in Melbourne the 59 year old Ukrainian Master was arrested and charged by the Australian Federal Police with negligent conduct which resulted in damage to the cable in violation of the Telecommunications Act 1997. The offence carries a potential maximum penalty of 3 years imprisonment and a \$40,000 fine. The Master was granted bail with strict conditions and is currently in COVID-19 Hotel Quarantine.

Membership Applications

The Following applications to join the Melbourne Branch have been received.

Harshvardhan Kumar has applied for Ordinary Membership. He obtained his Indian Masters Certificate in 1993 and is a Senior Marine Surveyor/Chartered Loss Adjuster-Marine with Charles Taylor Marine Technical Services.

Tristan Shandy has applied for Ordinary Membership. He obtained his Masters Certificate in the UK in 2014 and is a Senior Transport Safety Investigator with the Australian Transport Safety Bureau.

Amandeep Singh Riar has applied for Ordinary Membership. He has a Masters Certificate and a Bachelor of Business and is employed as a Marine Surveyor with Yarra Marine Surveyors.

Mark McIlwain has applied for Associate Membership. He is an Associate Member of Australasian Institute of Marine Surveyors and is the proprietor of George & Sims

AMSA National Compliance Plan

AMSA has released its 2021-2022 National Compliance Plan which consists of five compliance focus areas for domestic commercial vessels and Australian and foreign flagged commercial vessels in Australian waters.

Focus areas were selected by safety data analysis to identify areas of greatest risk and greatest opportunity for improvement.

Focus area 1 – Port State and Flag State Control

Focus area 2 – Maritime Labour Convention

Focus area 3 – Domestic commercial vessels

Focus area 4 – Search and rescue (beacon registration)

Focus area 5 – Environment

Port and Flag State

Inspection data shows increases in deficiency rates in 2020 compared to previous two years. A large number of deficiencies have been found in navigational safety particularly in regard to electronic chart displays, voyage planning and familiarity with navigation systems.

In 2020 six vessels were detained for failures in their planned maintenance that would reduce the risk of critical equipment failure. Amongst other areas AMSA will continue to monitor compliance of coastal pilots with fatigue and rest management plan and the minimum under keel clearance for vessels under pilotage through the Torres Strait.

Maritime Labour Convention

AMSA will apply a zero tolerance approach to breaches of the living and working conditions that compromise seafarer's welfare. Maximum continuous service on board limits in accordance with MLC will be enforced. AMSA will conduct a focused inspection campaign on hours of work and hours of rest.

Domestic Commercial Vessels

AMSA will conduct targeted inspections based on vessel class and inspection history. Safety management system deficiencies made up the majority of compliance failures in 2020. Failures of risk management of construction barges resulted in 27 incidents including one fatality last year. An education campaign and focused inspections will aim to reinforce passenger safety monitoring requirements. AMSA will work with state authorities in a campaign to increase awareness of fatigue management training and guidance.

Dory fishing operations in the Great Barrier Reef resulted in 6 search and rescue operations in 2020 and inspections found a deficiency rate 100% higher than for fishing vessels operating in other offshore restricted waters.

AMSA estimates that 50 – 60% of incidents in the Domestic Commercial Vessel Sector are not reported and will commence an education campaign to increase compliance. AMSA will conduct an audit to ensure compliance with the surveyor's accreditation guidance manual. This follows a number of failures by marine surveyors resulting in show cause or suspension action last year.

Search and Rescue

AMSA will work with all stakeholders to increase EPIRB registration rates. In 2020 AMSA responded to 2018 beacon activations of which 13% were incorrectly registered. A high percentage of activations are from recreational vessels.

Environmental

Domestic commercial vessels with an engine size greater than 130 KW are required to comply with nitrogen oxide emission limits. Currently an estimated 2500 domestic vessels do not have evidence of compliance.

AMSA will continue to conduct random sampling of fuels used by Australian and foreign ships to validate the accuracy of the bunker delivery note.

In the last 12 years there have been 22 incidents involving the loss of containers in Australian waters. Inspections have shown an increase in corroded and defective lashing equipment and containers not secured in accordance with the cargo securing manual.

Australian Shipwrecks

There are nearly 8000 registered wrecks in Australian waters ranging in age from the 1600's to the present day. Any wreck 75 years or older is protected by the Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976 which also covers relics and artefacts in public and private collections.

The oldest recorded wreck is the *Tryal* a British East Indiaman which was wrecked on a reef off the north-west coast of Western Australia on the 25th May 1622. The ship was on its maiden voyage from Plymouth to Batavia. The wreck was located in 1969 by divers from the Fremantle based Underwater Explorers Club.

A number of wrecks are of great historic significance.

HMS *Sirius* the flagship of the first fleet which arrived in 1788 was wrecked on a reef at Norfolk Island on 19th March 1790.

HMS *Mermaid* was a 17 meter shallow draft cutter which was used by Lieutenant Philip Parker King between 1817 and 1822 to explore and survey the coast of Australia. In HM Cutter *Mermaid* Parker King circumnavigated Australia and conducted the first reliable survey of the Great Barrier Reef Inner Route. *Mermaid* was wrecked on Flora Reef off the Queensland coast in 1829.

HMS *Pandora* sank on 29th August 1791 after striking the outer edge of the Great Barrier Reef. She was returning to England after capturing some of the mutineers of the *Bounty*.

The Dutch East India Company ship *Batavia* was Wrecked on the Houtman Abrolhos off the coast of Western Australia on 4th June 1629. The Captain Francisco Pelsaert sailed one of the ships boats to Batavia to get help leaving Jeronimus Cornelize in charge. By the time Pelsaert arrived back on a rescue ship, Cornelize and his men had murdered at least 125 men women and children. Cornelize and six of his men were hanged on the island.

The Second World War resulted in a number of wrecks. Amongst the best known are HMAS *Sydney* and the German raider HSK *Kormoran*. Both sank as a result of their battle on 19th November 1941.

HMAS *Sydney* went down with all hands but the survivors of *Kormoran* were able to disembark into the ships boats and wait for rescue. The first ship to arrive was the

Blue Funnel Line ship Centaur which towed the boats to Carnarvon where the Germans were arrested and interned for the duration. Centaur was latter converted into a Hospital Ship and maned by a Merchant Navy crew and Army Doctors and Nurses. On 14th May 1943 while on route to New Guinea she was torpedoed by the Japanese submarine I-177 killing 268 of the 332 on board. The wreck was located in December 2009 by the Defence Maritime Services vessel Seahorse Spirit 30 nm east of Moreton Island.

The Great Barrier Reef was the graveyard of many vessels in the early days before accurate charts were available and beacons and lights had been established. There were stories, some from the legends of the Aborigines of Spanish ships in the reef in the days before settlement and some artefacts of Spanish origin were found.

There were many wrecks of unknown origin sighted by the first ships in the northern sections of the reef.

On 28th February 1890 the British India Steamship Company passenger steamer Quetta hit an uncharted rock in the Adolphus Channel in Torres Strait and sank in 3 minutes with the loss of 134 lives.

Uncharted rocks were not the only hazard. On 23 March 1911 the Adelaide Steamship Company's Yongala sank in a cyclone off Cape Bowling Green. All 122 passengers and crew were lost.

Tasmanian waters have some of the largest and most recent wrecks such as Blyth Star 1973, Lake Illawarra 1975 and Iron Baron 1995.

The most famous wreck in Victorian waters is the iron clipper Loch Ard which struck Mutton Bird Island near Port Campbell on 1st June 1878. There were only two survivors. Amongst the salvaged items was the Minton Potter's Loch Ard Peacock which is now housed at the Flagstaff Hill Maritime Museum in Warrnambool. Other Artefacts are displayed at the Port Campbell Visitors Information Centre.

Other notable Victorian wrecks are ss Cheviot which was wrecked near Point Nepean in 1887, ss Alert sank off Cape Schanck in 1893 and tss Kanowna which sank in Bass Strait in 1929.

There are 130 wrecks in Port Phillip including HMVS Cerberus and the paddle steamer Ozone. There are wrecks of all types dating from the establishment of Melbourne. Some of the more unusual are two WW1 J Class Submarines and three aircraft, two Firefly and a Vultee Vengeance.