

The museum has started on the modernisation process by becoming the first of any museum in the world to release an e-book, *100 Stories from the Australian National Maritime Museum*.

Around the world, maritime museums are recognising the revolution required to educate the next generation, by revitalising the way they share their collections and showcase current maritime practices and stories.

Kevin Sumption was appointed director of ANMM in early 2012 and came to Sydney from the Royal Museums Greenwich in the UK where he led the state-of-the-art gallery redevelopment program, which was completed in time for the 2012 Olympic Games.

New DVD features history of Sydney's Captain Cook Dock

The Naval Historical Society of Australia has recently produced a DVD recounting the history of the Captain Cook Dock at Garden Island, which was commissioned on 24 March 1945.

This is a comprehensive account of the construction of a major piece of infrastructure which now ranks as the nation's second biggest engineering achievement. The narrative covers the selection of the site; pre-planning decisions as to size; its construction, modifications and its official opening by HRH The Duke of Gloucester, then Governor-General of Australia.

The 30-minute documentary is supported by three short features. The first provides an insight into the development of maritime servicing facilities in Sydney from the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788. It covers the early dock facilities in Sydney and the development of Cockatoo Island from a convict prison through its many years of service before it finally closed in 1992. The second feature relates to the technical discussions surrounding the size of the dock and also presents some of the earliest plans. The last feature includes a collection of images of some of the ships seen in the dock during its lifetime.

The need for a naval graving dock in Australia became crucial with the deteriorating international situation in the 1930s. In 1938 the Cabinet responded by approving, in principle, the construction of an Australian naval graving dock. The Government approached the British Admiralty seeking its assistance with the selection of a suitable site. As a result, Sir Leopold Seville KCB, a senior principal in the British engineering firm Sir Alexander Gibb and Partners, was invited to Australia to investigate and report on the most suitable site.

He concluded that three sites would fulfil the necessary requirements. One was at Adelaide while the other two were in Sydney Harbour. Construction of the graving dock between Garden Island and the foreshore would best fulfil all the requirements; it was already well protected, provided easy entry for the fleet, and would enhance the importance of the existing Garden Island Naval Depot. In early 1940 this location was finally decided upon. The planned basic dimensions of the graving dock were: 1,139 feet 5 inches (347.29 metres) long, 147 feet 7.5 inches (45 metres) wide and with 45 feet (13.72 metres) draught of water on sill at spring tide.

However, before work on the dock itself could begin, it was necessary to reclaim an area of 30 acres (12 hectares) between Potts Point and the southern tip of the island. Between December 1940 and February 1942, a huge coffer dam was formed from which the sea was then pumped, leaving a large basin in which the dock would be built.

The fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942 added to the

urgency of the work inasmuch as the dock at Singapore was now unavailable, while Sydney's Cockatoo Island was engaged in the construction of new ships for the Navy.

Work on the graving dock continued night and day, with additional labour being hired as the project progressed. The average workforce was 1,750, rising to a peak of 4,125 in July 1943. It was an amazing sight, especially at night when the blaze of lights illuminating the work area contrasted with the darkened city.

The dock was ready for initial flooding in September 1944. Three 60-inch centrifugal pumps allowed the dock to be emptied of its 57,000,000 gallons (259,122,000 litres) of water in about four hours.

The construction was sufficiently advanced to allow the emergency docking of HMS *Illustrious* on 2 March, 1945, three weeks before the official opening ceremony later that month.

Copies of the DVD are obtainable for \$25.00 per copy (post free) from:

The Naval Historical Society of Australia
The Boatshed, Building 25,
Garden Island NSW 2011

Telephone for enquiries (Tuesday and Thursday only):
(02) 9359 2372.

Vale Robert Shearer

As reported in the Chairman's message, Robert Shearer, the last of the three residents of the Sydney Sailors' Home at Circular Quay who, following its closure in 1979, eventually moved to home units purchased by the Society in Horizon Towers at Hornsby (NSW), died on 21 March a few days before he would have turned 85.

Rob, a Yorkshireman, could truly be described as a "seaman's seaman". He came from a seafaring family – his father, two brothers and about 20 of his extended family were all fishermen in the North Sea and in 1943, at the age of 15, Rob joined them. Apart from routinely contending with the adverse weather for which those waters are known, other hazards to be faced during wartime included dealing with floating mines which occasionally would be caught in the fishing nets.

In 1949, with ambitions to see more of the world, Rob signed on a cargo ship in the UK-West Africa trade, subsequently serving in other vessels which took him to ports in South America, New Zealand, Australia and India. Eventually he joined the Australian National Line (ANL), ultimately serving as Bosun in *Australian Venture* on its round-world voyages.

On retirement in 1990, Rob chose to spend his remaining years in Australia. He often remarked on having stayed in Sailors' Homes at many ports throughout the world before finally lodging at the Home in Sydney. He regularly expressed his gratitude to the Society for providing him with comfortable accommodation in his retirement and taking an interest in his welfare.

Sadly Rob's final years were marked by declining health but those who spent time with him during this period remember his acceptance of incapacity with uncomplaining fortitude and his sense of humour never deserted him.

At his request, a private cremation was held and his ashes were scattered at sea.



The Mariners' Lifeline

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALIAN MARINERS' WELFARE SOCIETY
A division of the Sydney Sailors' Home
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Chairman's report



Captain Alan Tait,
OAM – Chairman,
The Australian
Mariners' Welfare
Society

It is with great sadness I report that our Rob Shearer passed away on the 21 March at Netherby Aged Care Facility at Wahroonga (NSW.) He was the last of the 'old school' of Sydney Sailors' Home residents lodging at the Home when it closed in 1979. (See *Obituary on page 4.*)

As our readers will know, Rob had not enjoyed the best of health for some time and had been bedridden for the past two years. In spite of this, he always remained an absolute gentleman, maintaining his wry sense of humour and with little complaint during this difficult period.

Rob and I became good friends. In due course I found myself sharing details of my family life with him and in his own quiet way, I am sure he liked to hear the latest news. He was absolutely trusting of my handling of his affairs and it was a privilege to be able to be of service to him in this way.

I must also make special mention of Joe Dryburgh, our Horizon Towers tenant, who regularly visited Rob every Sunday, something which Rob himself treasured. Rob maintained an interest in current affairs and welcomed the news that Joe would always bring to his bedside. I have lost a mate and I will miss him and our condolences go to his sister Peggy Fisher in Queensland.

On a happier note both Joe Dryburgh and John Cleaver at Horizon Towers are well and Joe himself is making a good recovery from some recent health problems.

Our new Councillor, Captain Chris Green has already brought hands-on experience to the table, ensuring we are kept updated with current shipping industry developments.

It is pleasing to report that so far this year we have been able to assist an applicant for one of our scholarships. Mr Lee Clarke, an indigenous Australian currently studying at TAFE Newcastle for a Deck Watchkeeping Certificate, met our scholarship criteria coming as he does from a family where both his father and grandfather are commercial fishermen. Lee is fluent in both Japanese and Indonesian and holds tertiary degrees in Science and the Arts. Hopefully, the Government's recently released National Maritime Workforce Development strategy will expand the base of students eligible to take advantage of our scholarships.

In February we met the newly-appointed Mission to Seafarers Liaison Bishop, the Rt Rev Dr Chris Jones, Vicar-General in the Diocese of Tasmania. He is clearly very supportive of the important role the Church plays in seafarers' welfare and I am sure will bring new insights into what is a rapidly changing shipping and seafaring environment.

The Mission to Seafarers recently farewelled Col Brown following his retirement as National Co-ordinator. He played a significant role in building up the capacity of the MtS in

Australia and we wish him well for the future. The MtS Council intends to appoint a successor in this position.

Finally, I am delighted with the strength of our Society's annual results tabled at our AGM on 21 May. This reflects the diligence and wise counsel which members of our Finance Committee bring to their task and we are looking forward to a productive year ahead.

Alan Tait
Chairman.

A chaplain goes to sea

The Reverend Garry Dodd, Senior Chaplain for the Mission to Seafarers (MtS) Newcastle reports the centre welcomed 10,787 seafarers through its doors last year, a 55% increase over 2011 and a growth of 271% since 2009. As a result, the entire property is about to be redeveloped as a modern facility to be able to cope with ever growing demand, with the port expected by 2017 to double the tonnage it currently handles. In his ministry Garry, in a bid to deepen his own awareness and understanding of what it is like to work, eat and sleep, 24/7 with 24 other crew members, wanted to experience something of a seafarer's life. This led him to spend three weeks as a crew member of the Hong Kong-flagged, 16,860 dwt bulk carrier mv Ma Cho, sailing from Melbourne to Lae (PNG) with a cargo of bulk wheat. This is Garry's voyage report.

Firstly I would like to express my deep appreciation to Mr Christopher Rabbidge from Fenwick Shipping Services (Australia) Pty Ltd, Captain Ferdows, the Master of the *Ma Cho*, my colleagues at the MtS and my wife Paula for making it possible for me to undertake this voyage.

Whilst one vicariously learns much about the seafarers' world through ship-visiting and being involved in the maritime industry, I also thought it would be good to learn about myself in the process: will I get seasick? How will I go eating rice three times a day, every day? Is there life being in mid-ocean for three weeks without a mobile, SMS, Internet or even a carrier pigeon? This last was actually a serious question: what is it like to have no contact with family, not knowing if they were sick or in any need and not be in a position to help? These are just the beginning of a litany of issues seafarers must routinely face when they sign on to serve up to a year at sea.

My initial vision of shipboard life, donning on overalls and rubbing shoulders with the crew soon came to fruition as we worked all day chipping rust and painting the decks. The first two days in port were frantic as the crew raced against time to clean the holds and prepare to receive the bulk wheat cargo – Australia has a high standard and the staff of the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service know the importance of their task. If the vessel had failed this inspection, it may have had

to move to an anchorage to complete the work. I had fun scraping, sweeping and generally trying to help out; the crew apparently thought I was either a ship surveyor or one of the agents but when they found me still on board after the ship had sailed, there was much confusion! Why would an Australian Chaplain want to work, without pay, on a vessel?

Vessels are busy workplaces with round-the-clock watches. Consequently, noise is kept to a minimum since crew are often either working or resting. I asked one of them what he did during his time off duty and he said "sleep and wash (clothes)". Despite sailing into the tropics, I was often cold and found myself thanking God for the dozens of people who knit beanies for our seafarers and wished I had taken one with me. Importantly, though, I came to understand at firsthand how seafarers fight loneliness and isolation, especially in vessels with multiracial crews speaking various languages.

One incident brought home to me just how dangerous shipboard work can be. On one occasion, the main engine failed and we were left helplessly bobbing around the ocean



mv Ma Cho outward bound
(Photo courtesy MarineTraffic.com)

as the engineers frantically tried to fix the problem. A high swell tossed us around like a cork, whilst down below men used heavy machinery to raise a massive part of the engine to reach the problem. I couldn't believe how skilled

they were under such difficult conditions – I myself could hardly walk as the ship pitched and rolled in heavy seas, yet they were able to make the repairs and set us back on course.

By the way, I was seasick. About 30 nautical miles off Brisbane, a swell of about seven metres had waves smashing across the deck as we relentlessly pounded through them. It was in this ordeal that I recognised the beauty of being part of such a small community. Various people came to enquire after me, offering support and advice and I found it extremely humbling to have such a high level of genuine care. Many retired seafarers have told me how they have made lifelong friends after serving at sea and I can now understand why.

The greatest insight I came away with is experiencing imposed solitude. As an Anglican priest I know what it is like to go on a silent retreat to meditate and spend active time alone with God in conversation. The retreats, and level of silence, are voluntary and I can always sneak away to call my wife or respond to an email, if I ever felt like it. My time at sea has reinforced the need to offer places of hospitality ashore for seafarers, warm friendly places of refuge where they can have a stranger look them in the eye and to know they are valued and cared for. Clearly I have a love and passion for the Mission and have always known how seafarers value us and our work. I realise more substantially that it is not just the provision of a seafarers centre that is important, but the level of interpersonal care that really counts.

Thankfully I have a team of volunteers who give up their time because they have an authentic desire to love our Seafaring family as they walk through our doors. What I have been reminded of is just how precious our friendliness is to someone who feels isolated or burdened with a problem that cannot be shared onboard. I have renewed vigor to increase our ship visitor team in a bid to offer the warmth and care that is often needed by those seafarers who do not have the time to come ashore.

My 21-day voyage reinforced much of what I had already learnt, has challenged some of my assumptions, highlighted issues I had not previously conceived, given me new insights and knowledge as well as a deeper appreciation of life at sea from the viewpoint of the Captain down to the ordinary seaman and what life is like for them. Personally, I feel I have grown through the various encounters with the men who make up the crew of the *Ma Cho*. Their stories, time together sharing and being community together have irreversibly touched me. The lengthy separation from my family was a further experience that I would not choose again and one can only imagine how seafarers with little or no contact survive the many months away from home.

Sydney Service to mark naval centenary

Coinciding with celebrations marking the centenary of the Royal Australian Navy in October, St Clement's Anglican Church in Mosman (NSW) will be holding a special service on Sunday 29 September at 10.00 am. The church is located at 144 Raglan Street, Mosman 2088. All are welcome and representatives of the RAN, the Merchant Navy and maritime-related organisations are expected to attend. An honour guard will be provided by HMAS *Penguin*, the Navy's shore-based facility at nearby Balmoral.

Shipping Australia's Llew Russell AM heads for retirement



Commodore Rod Nairn AM

It was recently announced by Ken Fitzpatrick, Chairman of Shipping Australia Ltd (SAL) that its long-serving Chief Executive Officer Llew Russell AM had proceeded on leave prior to his planned retirement in August 2013.

Pending consideration of a plan to restructure the Association, Commodore Rod Nairn AM joined the Association as Acting CEO on 1 May.

Commodore Nairn completed 37 years service with the Royal Australian Navy at the end of April. His career included four seagoing commands and, since 2004, he had been the Australian Hydrographer while serving concurrently as Director-General Navy Hydrography, Meteorology and Oceanography. He had also completed a two-year term as Chair of the International Centre for Electronic Navigation Charts.

In June 2011 he was appointed Member of the Order of Australia for services to hydrography.

As reported elsewhere in this edition, Llew Russell continues to serve as a Councillor of the Society having been re-elected at the annual general meeting in May.

AGM held in Sydney

The 151st annual general meeting of the Society was held at the offices of HWL Ebsworth at Australia Square, Sydney on 21 May 2013 with the Chairman, Captain Alan Tait OAM presiding.

The motion to receive, consider and adopt the financial report of company for the year ended 31 December 2012 along with reports of the Councillors and the auditors, which had been circulated to members of the Notice of the Meeting,

was carried. In accordance with Articles 29 and 31 of the Company's Constitution, Mr RA Birdsall, Mr PA Jones, Mr L C Russell AM and Captain C Green retired as Councillors, but being eligible offered themselves for re-election and were duly elected unopposed.

In addition to these gentlemen, the remainder of the Council for the year 2013 includes Captain AJ Tait OAM (Chairman), Mr LG Lightfoot AM FAIM (Deputy Chairman), Mr HR Clark OAM, Mr IP McKinnon CPA ACIS, Mr SF Liddy BA LLB, Captain C Saldanha and Mr MB Longstaff OAM. Mr Stan Moriarty is Company Secretary.

New home for MtS Sydney

Seafarers aboard ships visiting Sydney Harbour and Port Botany are now enjoying the new facilities recently opened by the Mission to Seafarers at 24 Hickson Road, Millers Point



Welcoming entrance to the new centre

in The Rocks area near Circular Quay. The move came after 27 years of operations at their previous home in Sussex Street in the CBD.

It also recalls that it occupied its first actual home in 1895 in The Rocks when it moved in to 100 George Street North, where it remained for 80 years. Before that, however, others were doing work in its name.

In 1872, Sydney-born John Samuel Shearston, then aged 19 and committed to missionary work, after rescuing a drunken seaman from an angry crowd in George Street, began on his own initiative visiting seamen on board their ships and those who were in hospital. The London headquarters of the Missions to Seamen (as it was then called), being impressed with his work, appointed him to work full-time duty as its seamen's chaplain in Sydney. Working from his home at Dawes Point in The Rocks area, Shearston ministered to the crews of merchant and naval ships, offering them home hospitality in the evenings.

In 1890, to cater for the large numbers of naval personnel then based in or visiting Sydney, Royal Naval House was built in Charlotte Place (now Grosvenor Street), Sydney using funds raised by public subscription. This property could accommodate 300 men and also provided other recreational facilities including a reading room, dining room, billiard tables and a gymnasium. John Shearston resigned from his work as a seamen's chaplain and was appointed as the first Superintendent of Royal Naval House, which from then on until its closure in 1970 was known universally as 'Johnnys'.

Meanwhile, from the early 1890s, the Mariners' Church at 100 George Street North in Sydney's Rocks area, built by the Sydney Bethel Union in 1859, was experiencing financial difficulties.

Mr James R Fairfax (later Sir James), grandson of the founder of the *Sydney Morning Herald* was Chairman of Trustees of the Sydney Bethel Union. Noting that the seamen's chaplaincy



The communications room at the Mission where seafarers are able to contact family and friends is usually busy. A grant from the Society enabled these facilities in the new premises to be upgraded.

work being carried out in Sydney by John Shearston's successors under the banner of the Missions to Seamen, with

Rev Thomas Henry Distin-Morgan, an experienced chaplain, Fairfax identified an opportunity for the work of the Mission and the Mariners' Church to be integrated. The outcome was a negotiated arrangement in 1895 under which the Mission took a three-year renewable lease of the Mariners' Church from the Sydney Bethel Union for a nominal rental with the building being renamed as the Missions to Seamen, Sydney.

In 1961, the NSW Government foreshadowed a major redevelopment of The Rocks area that included the future resumption of properties on either side of George Street North. This precipitated a move by the Missions to Seamen in 1975 to new premises in nearby Macquarie Place and – ten years later – to a property at 320-324 Sussex Street from where an active ministry serving seafarers in ships in both Sydney Harbour and Port Botany was maintained until the move to Millers Point earlier this year.

Major upgrade planned for Australian National Maritime Museum



The Australian National Maritime Museum (ANMM) in Sydney is planning a modernisation program which will bring history, science and technology to visitors' fingertips, moving beyond traditional displays to provide visitors with interactive, hands-on discovery and exploration opportunities.

The ANMM project is a crucial part of the major redevelopment of the Darling Harbour precinct, the first in 25 years, which will upgrade facilities, including the Convention and Exhibition Centre.

ANMM director Kevin Sumption said that the role of the museum, as guardian of Australia's historical links with the sea, is to ensure the stories of our maritime past continue to be brought to life in ways that are relevant to the next generation of technology-aware Australians.

"We want all visitors to experience the thrill of scientific discovery, of connecting ideas and concepts and investigating ocean science through enjoyable interactive exhibits," he said.

"We are creating a dynamic new forum for Australians to examine our maritime history and explore the important role our oceans and inland waterways play in our lives today and in the future".

The first stage of the plan is expected to be a redevelopment surrounding two of the Museum's existing exhibits. The former RAN vessels, the Daring Class destroyer HMAS *Vampire* and the submarine HMAS *Oxley* will feature in a new pavilion telling the stories of their naval service. Hopefully this will be completed in time for the Anzac centenary in 2015.

Already one of the most popular museums among schools, ANMM aims to provide fun and engaging maritime and scientific education to children, both at the museum and via digital outreach programs to classrooms.